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Doctoral Dissertation

The role of Emperor Hirohito in  
postwar Japan-US relations  
(1945-1975)

昭和天皇の戦後日米関係への影響  
(1945年～1975年)

2023

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Names in Japanese are displayed with the family name preceding the given name.  
Unless specified the contrary, all translations from Japanese were done by the author.

# Introduction

The Japanese Imperial Household has captivated specialists from around the world since the Meiji Era. The amalgamation of the roles of Head of State, the head of the national folk cult (Shintoism), and a symbol of national unity within a single individual, the emperor, is a rare phenomenon in international relations. Moreover, Japan stands out as one of the few advanced capitalist economies (G7) that still maintains a monarchical presence in its political system, albeit subtly different from cases such as the United Kingdom and Canada.

Despite the contemporary significance of the emperor in Japanese history, the institution remained largely in the background for most of its existence. From its origins until the mid-nineteenth century, the emperor and the affairs of the imperial court were intentionally detached from politics. He was not widely considered a symbol of national unity, as the majority of the population had limited awareness of the emperor's existence beyond legends and rumors.

During this period, the Imperial Household served a unique function. The deliberate non-involvement in political affairs created a sacrosanct aura, which was utilized by the true rulers - the military caste and the feudal lords who controlled various clans - to legitimize their actions. However, around the early 19th century, certain feudal lords, dissatisfied with the Tokugawa clan's hegemony that had endured for over two centuries, began to emphasize the emperor as the sole political leader of Japan.

Given that this argument lacked historical support, intense theoretical work commenced to justify the Imperial Household's involvement in Japanese politics during this era. In 1825, Aizawa Seishisai, a neo-Confucian scholar, authored a text known as "New Theses", which popularized the term "Kokutai". Aizawa and his school of thought, Mitogaku, accepted the myth of Japan's founding by a descendant of the goddess Amateratsu as a historical fact. Consequently, they asserted that the Japanese nation was an entity with the emperor as its head<sup>1</sup>.

By the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, Japan underwent a rapid transition to capitalism orchestrated by the central government, alongside a process of national construction.

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<sup>1</sup> Aizawa, 1939.

It is not coincidental that the ethnic, linguistic, and religious homogeneity represented in the Imperial Household, and particularly the emperor, became the central element in shaping the Japanese nation. This process is referred to in Japanese historiography as the “Meiji Restoration”, signifying the return of actual power to the throne, even though the emperor historically never held such power. The ideas introduced by Aizawa found further development by other intellectuals like Fukuzawa Daikichi, Kato Hiroyuki, and Minobe Tatsukichi.

Following the commendation of the Meiji Constitution in 1889, Kokutai became the official ideology of the Japanese state, making the emperor the Head of State and the Supreme Commander of the armed forces. The emperor also gained significant authority in international relations. Notably, most of Japan's wars since the Meiji Era, except the invasion to Manchuria in 1931, were authorized by the emperor, although he didn't devise the plans himself but rather acted as a legitimizing entity for strategies agreed upon by Japanese elites and the military.

The emperor's cult grew increasingly profound within Japanese society, particularly after victories against China in 1895 and Russia in 1905, which were used as propaganda to demonstrate the moral superiority of the imperial system in comparison to “backward” China and the Western powers. This phenomenon escalated in the 1920s as the military assumed prominent roles in the state, leading the country toward total war. By the 1930s, the emperor was not just considered a “living god” in religious terms but also socially. All Japanese political discourse revolved around his figure, and imperial indoctrination became an integral part of the educational and military systems. Emperor Hirohito, crowned in 1926, was at the center of this propaganda and played a substantial role in foreign policy after the Meiji Era.

Hirohito (1901-1989) was the only post-Meiji emperor prepared from childhood to fulfill imperial duties and responsibilities. His extensive education encompassed philosophy, politics, science, and the military, allowing him to participate beyond the conventional bounds. According to scholars like Herbert P. Bix, Hirohito was involved in discussions regarding several decisions of the militarist regime. His most notable pre-1945 involvement in foreign policy included the decision to attack Pearl Harbor, leading to war with the United States in December

1941, and the proclamation of unconditional surrender on August 15, 1945, ending World War II<sup>2</sup>.

However, the end of the war and the subsequent American occupation of Japan brought significant transformations for Japanese society and the monarchy. The emperor lost many government prerogatives, such as command over the military and foreign policy. Officially, he transitioned from “Head of State of the Empire” to “the symbol of the State and of the unity of the people” in the 1947 Constitution<sup>3</sup>. Despite constitutional limitations, evidence suggests that Hirohito remained a significant actor in foreign policy, especially concerning US-Japan relations. According to information scattered in Japanese and American diplomatic records, as well as the testimonies of those close to Hirohito, including Japanese prime ministers, interpreters, and palace aides, the monarch held confidential briefings with Japanese politicians and communicated with American officials.

Although the majority of academia recognizes Hirohito's prewar role in Japan's foreign policy, studies on the emperor's influence on postwar Japan's relations with the US are limited, despite available sources. Moreover, existing research often focuses on well-publicized aspects of the monarchy's involvement in government affairs, such as Imperial Diplomacy, overlooking the emperor's actual political impact.

This study contends that Hirohito played a substantial and active role in Japan's foreign policy from 1945 to 1975, particularly in US-Japan relations. With this premise, the research aims to examine the emperor's role in postwar US-Japan relations from a historical perspective. The primary scope of the research centers on diplomatic interactions between Japanese and American leaders and the emperor's involvement in these processes. However, given the complexity of the topic, it is essential to explore related areas, such as the emperor's role in postwar Japanese society and the evolution of US-Japan relations in the bilateral, regional, and global context. These elements provide the necessary context for assessing Hirohito's influence on US-Japan relations.

As stated above, this investigation employs a historical perspective as a core premise, but it also borrows several concepts from Political Sciences. In that regard, “influence” is the most relevant category in this research. Robert Cialdini's definition of influence, as outlined in his book *Influence: The Psychology of Persuasion*,

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<sup>2</sup> Bix, 2000.

<sup>3</sup> Constitution of the State of Japan, 1947.

revolves around the idea that influence is *the ability to shape the behaviors and decisions of others*. Influence, according to Cialdini, involves *persuading individuals to comply with requests, adopt certain attitudes, or take specific actions*. It is a process rooted in understanding and leveraging psychological triggers to guide people's behavior and decision-making<sup>4</sup>. Precisely, Cialdini's explanation matches Hirohito's persuasive power vis-à-vis Japanese politicians in the postwar period, which was not rooted in the monarch's legal or economic position, but in his authority as the apex of the conservative ideology.

Furthermore, "policy-maker" (or "decision-maker") is another category widely used in this research. While there may not be a specific definition of "policy-maker" attributed to a single author, as the concept is generally understood in political science and public policy, various scholars and authors have written extensively about policy-making. One notable figure in this field is Harold Lasswell. Based on the former's contribution, a policy-maker can be understood as *an individual or group of individuals responsible for formulating and implementing policies within an organization, government, or other decision-making bodies*. Policy-makers play a crucial role in shaping the direction and objectives of an entity by creating guidelines, rules, and strategies to address specific issues or achieve certain goals. They may be elected officials, government administrators, executives, *or individuals in influential positions who have the authority to influence or set policies*. Consequently, Laswell's work opens the door for actor other than politicians, such as the Japanese emperor, to be considered as policy-makers within a specific historical context.

Lastly, another frequent category in this research is "conservatism". In *The Logic of Japanese Politics: Leaders, Institutions, and the Limits of Change*, Gerald L. Curtis does address the concept of conservatism in the context of Japanese politics. In that sense, Curtis defines Japanese conservative ideology with four elements: policy pragmatism, incremental change rather than radical reform, nationalism and a strong emphasis on Japan's national security coupled with the advocacy for strong military ties with the US<sup>5</sup>. To Curtis' argument, this research adds that another core element of conservative ideology in the Japanese context is the support for the continuance of the Imperial Household and the awe to the emperor as the Head of State of the country.

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<sup>4</sup> Cialdini, 2006.

<sup>5</sup> Curtis, 2000.



On the other hand, this research encountered several challenges that needed to be addressed to achieve the aforementioned objectives. The first problem is related to the bibliography. Despite the worldwide interest in the Japanese Imperial Household, investigations in this area face a fundamental issue: the scarcity and difficulty in accessing information. The sensitivity and secrecy surrounding the emperor have limited the availability of sources, and the disclosure of such information has often carried political consequences. Additionally, the sources that can be accessed are strictly controlled by the Imperial Household Agency and are only partially published after the death of the monarch in question, intended to prevent criticism of their figure. To address this lack of information, it was necessary to broaden the scope of sources to include as many archival materials, testimonies, and diaries in both English and Japanese languages as possible.

Another challenge that required careful handling in this research is the highly politicized nature of the topic. The existence of the Imperial Household has been a contentious issue throughout the postwar period. While the most acute polarization regarding the preservation of the throne was in the 1960s, sensitivity around the treatment of the emperor still exists, and, in some cases, has led to regrettable acts of violence. The academic community has struggled to remain impartial on this issue. This is evident in the fact that many texts written about the monarchy center around the issue of Hirohito's war responsibility. Some authors have sought to prove the innocence of the monarch, while others have argued for his involvement in wartime decisions. In the postwar period, this debate has evolved into discussions about whether the emperor's political actions conform to the Constitution.

The time framework of this research spans from the end of World War II and the beginning of the American occupation of Japan in 1945 to Hirohito's visit to the US in 1975. It's important to note that although the postwar Constitution, which redefined the emperor's role in Japanese society, was enacted in 1947, the period from 1945 to 1947 holds significant evidence related to Hirohito's anti-communist views and his negotiations with the occupation authorities to avoid trial for war crimes. The time frame is limited until 1975 because, to date, historical sources allow for some exploration of the emperor's role in foreign policy. However, from 1975 onward, information on this subject becomes scarce and significantly less systematic compared to the previous period.

The significance of this research lies in four fundamental aspects: relevance, academic contribution, systematicity, and methodology. Firstly, the Imperial Household is one of the most debated topics in Japanese politics during the postwar period and a core element of Japanese society. Imperial symbolism has influenced various aspects of Japanese life, including education, tradition, politics, religion, and more. Even in contemporary Japan, the influence of the emperor's cult can be observed, with the country's flag and national anthem drawing inspiration from the monarchy. Furthermore, following the enactment of the 1947 Constitution, the emperor was gradually transformed into the de facto Head of State, despite this status lacking constitutional recognition. Thus, understanding issues related to the Japanese monarchy is essential for gaining deeper insights into modern Japanese history and politics.

In addition, although the debate regarding the extension of the emperor's political power ceased during the 1950s, there has been a renewed interest in the Imperial Household, both domestically and abroad, in recent years. This resurgence is driven by questions concerning imperial succession and the potential for a female heir to ascend to the throne due to the lack of male heirs. While this discussion is often seen as a matter of protocol, the symbolic issues at stake are linked to contemporary political debates, including feminism and the role of women in Japanese society. Consequently, a deeper understanding of the monarchy's role in postwar politics can provide valuable insights into current political issues in Japan.

Secondly, the academia on US-Japan relations in the postwar period have traditionally emphasized the role of both American and Japanese politicians in the decision-making process. In that sense, the agency of the Japanese emperor has been generally overlooked in spite of the fact that some authors have advanced convincing arguments in relation to the monarch's influence in Japan's foreign policy. This investigation clearly states that Hirohito had an important role in the policy-making process related to US-Japan relations, and that he was actually crucial in reaching several of the milestones in the bilateral relations. Consequently, the findings presented on this research can offer an alternative understanding of postwar US-Japan relations, further contributing to the scholarly on the topic.

Thirdly, this research offers a systematic and holistic approach to the topic. Many of the studies consulted have a fragmented thematic focus on the postwar history of the Imperial Household. This fragmentation is, in some cases, due to

investigations using events related to the political influence of the monarch to illustrate a particular hypothesis. However, these hypotheses are not necessarily derived from these events but from the emperor's role in Japanese society. For example, some Japanese authors use cases related to Hirohito's intervention in the foreign policy-making process to demonstrate that the monarch acted beyond his constitutional boundaries. In doing so, they overlook the fact that these interventions in foreign policy were driven by specific purposes aligned with the emperor's own agenda and the broader international context. This approach presents the monarch's role in international relations as isolated events rather than as part of a coherent whole. Therefore, this research adopts a systematic approach that integrates all these isolated facts into a coherent framework from which meaningful hypotheses can be derived.

Finally, this research introduces an innovative methodology to investigate the complex theme of influence in historical research. Examining influence poses methodological challenges, especially considering its inherently subjective nature. Determining the extent to which “A” influenced “B” is often intricate. To tackle this issue, we proposed an “inputs-outputs” approach, where specific actions of the emperor are treated as “inputs” (e.g., a foreign trip, a message, a secret briefing), and their foreseeable direct and indirect consequences are regarded as “outputs” (e.g., foreign policy decisions).

Subsequently, both the input and output undergo scrutiny to establish a causal relationship. The analysis places significant emphasis on contextual factors, recognizing that a particular input may only hold political relevance within a specific context (e.g., bilateral negotiations for the US-Japan Security Treaty or discussions on the return of Okinawa). Actually, many of the historical analyses on the topic of the emperor's political role regularly lack meaningful content due to the oversight of contextual elements, even though those authors do present the same facts that are exposed in this research.

While the approach is presented succinctly, the true challenge lies in substantiating a causal link between a specific input and an output. Recognizing the subjective nature of the phenomenon, we proposed employing information analysis techniques to test these causal relationships. This involves extensive archival work to extract essential information from documents related to the emperor. Archival research primarily occurred at the Imperial Household Agency, the Diplomatic Archives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, and the Foreign Records of the

US Department of State, accessible online. Additionally, speeches, official rescripts, parliamentary interventions, testimonies, and statistical data was analyzed when necessary. The inclusion of diverse sources enhanced the robustness of the analysis, and the transparency about challenges underscores the limitations inherent in historical research.

In order to achieve the proposed objectives of this research, two types of primary sources and three types of secondary sources (books, periodical publications, and web documents) were consulted. As for primary sources, these are divided between archive records on one side and diaries and memories on the other. The archive records consist of official documents kept by either Japan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs or the US Department of State. While the Japanese government has carefully disclosed only information that might not threaten the official political neutrality of the monarchy, the Foreign Ministry records were particularly useful for analyzing the internal policy-making process regarding Hirohito's overseas trips in 1970's decade.

Moreover, the US records were accessed online on the official website of the Office of the Historian, labeled 'Foreign Records of the United States.' This collection includes diplomatic communications between American policy-makers and Japanese politicians throughout the postwar period, as well as internal documents of the State Department related to Japan.<sup>6</sup> These archival sources were highly valuable for the research because they provide a detailed account of diplomatic interactions on both sides of the Pacific Ocean, including information regarding the emperor that is not available in any Japanese source. Likewise, the Imperial Household Agency archives were consulted for this research, including the collection *Showa Tenno no Jitsuroku*, published between 2015 and 2018, and the official data regarding the foreign tours of the imperial family, as well as the number of official guests received by Hirohito, available on the official website of the Agency, which were cited in the research.

Additionally, due to the lack of official information regarding the political role of the emperor, the investigation made use of a wide variety of diaries and memories of relevant individuals who interacted with Hirohito throughout the postwar period. These include, for example, the diaries of Douglas MacArthur, Richard Nixon, Henry

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<sup>6</sup> It is worth noting that the US Record of Foreign Posts, a compilation of all documents related to US Embassies, Consulates and Legacies in the world, could not be accessed because it is not available online. These archives provide valuable pieces of evidence which were cited through secondary sources in some cases.

Kissinger, Yoshida Shigeru, Shigemitsu Mamoru, Kishi Nobusuke, Sato Eisaku, Fukuda Takeo, Irie Sukemasa, Terasaki Hidenari, Tajima Michiji, and Kinoshita Michio. While these individuals recorded their respective memories, they tangentially revealed important aspects regarding the emperor's political influence. For instance, several entries in the diaries of Sato Eisaku (Prime Minister, 1964-1972) and Shigemitsu Mamoru (Foreign Minister, 1954-1956) undeniably indicate that they periodically reported to the monarch on recent developments in Japan's diplomacy. Furthermore, Irie Sukemasa, who served as a palace official and Grand Chamberlain (1969-1985), maintained a detailed record of the emperor's daily life, including several secret briefings with local politicians and meetings with American policy-makers.

Another primary source of great importance is the official websites of several branches of the executive and legislative powers of Japan, such as The Prime Minister of Japan and his Cabinet and the National Diet Library. These sources provide access to several laws related to the Imperial Household, as well as public statements made by politicians. In addition, newspapers such as the Asahi Shinbun, Yomiuri Shinbun, and Mainichi Shinbun, as well as electronic media like NHK News and The Japan Times, were used to understand the reactions of the Japanese people and other countries to various events related to the emperor.

The consulted books in this research are divided into three categories. The first category includes works that do not focus on the issue of Hirohito's role in US-Japan relations as their central topic but offer the foundational basis for understanding the overall context of the postwar period. In other words, the conclusions advanced by these authors help elucidate two essential questions: why Japanese politicians continued briefing the emperor in the postwar period, despite it no longer being constitutionally mandated, and why American policy-makers recognized Hirohito as an alliance partner. Regarding both issues, most of these authors concur on the importance of the ideological factor mediating the relations among the monarchy, Japanese conservative politicians, and American officials.

For instance, even though Japanese policy-makers acted under a different constitution throughout the postwar period, several of them held an inexorable awe for the emperor as a result of ideological indoctrination by the militarist regime, supported by the Meiji Constitution. Consequently, most of the prime ministers during this period felt a 'natural' obligation to report to the monarch. The ideological

element also explains the mobilization effect of the emperor's words within Japanese political circles and, to some extent, for the general citizenry (although such effect progressively diminished throughout the postwar). Likewise, American officials who held some degree of responsibility in relation to Japan, such as Douglas MacArthur and John F. Dulles, shared with Hirohito a deep anticommunism, which justified their regard for the monarch as an ally within Japanese politics.

In that sense, these 'foundational' works are separated into two subcategories: one that explains the overall role of the Imperial Household, particularly that of the emperor, in postwar Japanese society, and the other that delves into US-Japan relations.

Among the first subcategory, Herbert Bix's *Hirohito and the Making of Modern Japan* is a necessary reference. Bix contends that Emperor Hirohito was not a passive, apolitical figurehead during Japan's imperial expansion and militarism in the first half of the 20th century. Instead, the book argues that Hirohito's complicity in wartime decisions and his role in the postwar reconstruction of Japan are essential aspects of understanding Japan's history during this period. In relation to the postwar period, the author challenges the conventional understanding of Hirohito's reign and asserts that he had a more active role in shaping Japan's foreign policy alignment with the US, ultimately contributing to the making of contemporary Japan<sup>7</sup>. However, Bix's analysis of the postwar period does not synthesize an overall thesis on Hirohito's influence in foreign policy but presents a recollection of several political interventions of the monarch as random facts.

Similarly, Kenneth J. Ruoff's book, *The People's Emperor: Democracy and the Japanese Monarchy, 1945-1995*, explores the transformation of the Japanese monarchy in the postwar era. The central thesis is that during this time, the Imperial Household underwent a significant evolution in response to democratic reforms and societal changes, ultimately becoming a symbol of continuity and unity in Japan's modern democratic state. Key themes explored in the book include the emperor's relationship with Japanese political leaders and the ways in which the imperial family became a symbol of Japan's postwar identity and aspirations for peace through diplomacy<sup>8</sup>. Even though Ruoff exposes examples of Hirohito's role in politics, the

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<sup>7</sup> Bix, 2000.

<sup>8</sup> Ruoff, 2001.

analysis does not proceed further. In fact, the author gives little credit to the emperor's political role in Japan's postwar evolution.

Likewise, Watanabe Osamu's *Sengo Seiji no naka no Tennosei (The Imperial Household in Postwar Politics)* offers an exhaustive explanation about the role of the monarchy in postwar Japan. In that regard, the author lays the conceptual framework for a periodization of the Imperial Household's postwar history: crisis (1945-1947), adaptation and change (1947-1952), growth (1952-1960), and reinstatement (1960-1989)<sup>9</sup>. Several of Watanabe's assertions are cited in this research, specifically in the second chapter, as they confirm the exposed thesis regarding the re-conversion of the emperor into Japan's Head of State. In spite of his enormous contributions to the academia on this topic, Watanabe argues the emperor was a passive subject within the policy-making process and, therefore, the former was 'used' by Japanese politicians to attain their respective political agendas<sup>10</sup>. Several of the sources presented in this research actually debunk Watanabe's argument, but it is worth stating that the diaries of Irie Sukemasa and Sato Eisaku, which contain definitive evidence that proves the political initiative of the emperor, were published simultaneously or after Watanabe's work came to the public spot. Consequently, the former's thesis was stated taking into consideration the available sources up to that moment.

In the second subcategory, which includes the works that lay the ground for the study of US-Japan relations, it is worth including Michael Schaller's *The American Occupation of Japan: The Origins of the Cold War in Asia*. The author argues that the U.S. occupation of Japan, which lasted from 1945 to 1952, was a pivotal and complex period in the early stages of the Cold War. He contends that the American occupation was not merely a process of demilitarization and democratization but also a strategic effort to influence the political and economic development of Japan and the broader Asian region. In that sense, Hirohito's role during the occupation is discussed in the book, but it is not the central thesis. The book acknowledges that the emperor continued to serve as Japan's symbolic monarch during the occupation, and his status and role were subjects of discussion and debate among the American occupiers<sup>11</sup>. However, it does not present a singular thesis

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<sup>9</sup> Watanabe, 1990.

<sup>10</sup> Watanabe, 1990.

<sup>11</sup> Schaller, 1985.

specifically related to Hirohito's position or actions in relation to US-Japan relations during this period.

Furthermore, John W. Dower's *Embracing Defeat: Japan in the Wake of World War II* explores the social, political, and cultural transformation of Japan in the immediate aftermath of World War II, during the American occupation. While the book primarily focuses on the aforementioned topic, it does address the emperor's position and actions during this period. In the book, Dower discusses how Hirohito's status and role were carefully negotiated during the occupation. After Japan's surrender, there was a deliberate effort by the occupation authorities to redefine the emperor's role as a purely symbolic and ceremonial figure<sup>12</sup>. Dower agrees that the monarch was divested of any actual power, and therefore, the author does not recognize the political role of the emperor in US-Japan postwar relations.

Furthermore, Kuriyama Takashi's *Gaiko Shogen-roku: Okinawa Henkan Nitchu Kokko Seijo-ka Nichibei 'Mitsuyaku'* (*Diplomatic Testimony: Return of Okinawa, normalization of diplomatic relations between Japan and China, and Japan-U.S. 'secret agreement'*) describes the details of the negotiation processes of two relevant achievements of Japan's postwar diplomacy: the return of Okinawa to Japan's sovereignty and the normalization of relations between Japan and China. In that sense, the author argues that those two negotiation processes were actually entangled, as both counterparts (the US and Japan) conditioned their demands on one issue to the attainment of better conditions on the other issue and vice versa. Yet, Kuriyama does not mention the influence of Hirohito in those historic events whatsoever.

The second category of consulted books for the research comprises works that delve specifically into Hirohito's life and postwar reign. This includes works such as Itou Yukio's *Showa Tenno Den* (*Emperor Hirohito's Biography*), Sakakibara Kamenosuke's *Tenno Nenrin* (*The Emperor's Growth*), and Yuri Shizuo and Higashi Kunihiko's *Tenno Goroku* (*The Emperor's Record*). These books, mostly written by Japanese authors, present an 'apolitical' picture of Hirohito's postwar role and do not question the actual influence the monarch had in postwar politics, despite available evidence. However, these works are worth consulting because they contain a detailed account of Hirohito's life, as well as several of his speeches both in Japan and abroad.

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<sup>12</sup> Dower, 1999.



Within this category, it is necessary to highlight Funabashi Seishin's *Koshitsu Gaiko to Shochō Tennōsei (Imperial Diplomacy and the Symbolical Emperor)* because of its in-depth analysis of the foreign diplomacy conducted by Hirohito. The book focuses on the emperor's diplomatic activities and interactions with various stakeholders, including the Prime Minister's office, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Imperial Household Agency, the Imperial Family, political parties, foreign governments, and the mass media. The book's thesis or main argument revolves around examining and dissecting the development of Hirohito's 'Imperial Diplomacy' and the political dynamics surrounding it. Likewise, it provides insights into how Emperor Showa's foreign visits were planned, the political considerations and implications of these visits, the responses and reactions from various quarters, and the outcomes and challenges associated with his diplomatic initiatives<sup>13</sup>. Although Funabashi does not delve into the emperor's political activism per se, the author offers a solid understanding regarding the decision-making process on the Japanese side for the 1975 imperial tour of the US.

The third and final category of consulted works contains books by authors who agree in principle with the argument regarding the political influence of Hirohito in postwar Japan's foreign policy. Along with the above-mentioned Bix and Ruoff's respective masterpieces, other titles such as Sadao Akihiro's *Koshitsu Gaiko ni Miru Koshitsu to Seiji (The Imperial Household and Politics as Seen from Imperial Diplomacy)*, and Yoshitsugu Kosuke's *Sengo Nichibei Kankei to Tenno Gaiko (Postwar Japan-US relations and the Emperor's Diplomacy)* are also included. In fact, the latter delves into American archives in order to present several examples of diplomatic interactions between the emperor and the respective US administrations from the 50's to the 70's decades. In conclusion, Yoshitsugu argues that the shared anticommunism between Hirohito and American policy-makers, as well as the emperor's fear of a likely Soviet invasion of Japan during the first years of the postwar, was the driving factor for a tacit alliance between the monarchy and the US<sup>14</sup>.

Another relevant contribution in this category is Toyoshita Narahiko's, *Showa Tenno MacArthur Kaiken (The Reunions between Hirohito and MacArthur)*. This book analyzes a significant number of historical sources to establish how facts actually transpired during the eleven meetings between the emperor and the American

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<sup>13</sup> Funabashi, 2019.

<sup>14</sup> Yoshitsugu, 2008.

general that took place in the occupation period. This work allows for a deeper insight into Hirohito's strategic thinking on several topics such as the Soviet Union, Japan-US relations, disarmament, and the overall course of the Cold War<sup>15</sup>. Similarly, the author also wrote *Anpo Yoyaku no Seiritsu (The Establishment of the Security Treaty)*, whose main thesis is that the emperor's influence was decisive in inducing Prime Minister Yoshida Shigeru to reach an agreement with the US on several polemical topics that delayed the signing of the Security Treaty circa 1950-1951<sup>16</sup>.

Toyoshita's works were an indispensable support in reaching conclusions about the monarch's role regarding the signing of the US-Japan Security Treaty and the formation of the Japan-US alliance. What's more, Toyoshita was the first author to employ the term "dual diplomacy" (二重外交)<sup>17</sup> as referring to the emperor's diplomatic method of influence, which consisted of simultaneously pressing the Japanese government and communicating with American policy-makers. Although Toyoshita only uses this definition for the period he analyzed (namely, the occupation), in this research, the term is applied for the rest of the postwar because Hirohito systematically conducted with the same methodology in matters concerning US-Japan relations.

Iwami Takao's *Goheika no Shitsumon (The Questions of His Majesty)* is another book within this category worth mentioning. Iwami's main point is that the emperor expressed his opinion on several topics concerning foreign affairs through inquiries directed mainly to the incumbent prime ministers. Given the constitutional limitations imposed on the monarch, Hirohito had to mask his arguments as questions: in fact, according to Iwami, it was somehow understood among conservative politicians that the number of questions the monarch posed was proportional to the importance of that issue on the latter's agenda<sup>18</sup>. However, the author only presents an anecdotal compilation of interactions between the emperor and several politicians, and does not reach any relevant conclusions in that sense.

In general, even though this third category of authors does acknowledge that the monarch had an actual influence in the decision-making process of postwar Japan's foreign policy, and specifically in US-Japan relations, their analysis generally lacks systematicity and depth. For instance, a common characteristic of these works is

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<sup>15</sup> Toyoshita, 2008.

<sup>16</sup> Toyoshita, 1996.

<sup>17</sup> Toyoshita, 2008.

<sup>18</sup> Iwami, 2005.

that they present several examples regarding the emperor's intervention in politics, such as 'the Okinawa message,' the briefings with Yoshida and/or Sato, the messages to American policy-makers, etc. However, they fail to relate those historical facts either to their potential outcomes or to the overall context in which they happened. Consequently, the final conclusions of these studies basically consist of stating Hirohito overstepped his constitutional boundaries and behaved as a relevant political actor, but it is not clear whether the emperor had any influence on the course of events in postwar Japan's foreign policy.

Taking into consideration the above-mentioned elements, the research question of this investigation is the following:

*What was the role of Emperor Hirohito in postwar US-Japan relations (1945-1975)?*

This research explores Emperor Hirohito's multifaceted role in shaping postwar US-Japan relations (1945-1975), emphasizing the ways in which his symbolic position, actions, and interactions with key political figures in both Japan and the US, influenced the evolving relationship between the two nations. Hirohito played a pivotal role in establishing a post-WWII military alliance with the US, finally resulting in the 1951 Security Treaty as the ultimate guarantee for the survival of the Imperial Household. Moreover, the monarch strove to keep the alliance afloat amidst the ebbs and flows of Japanese politics and had a more or less relevant role in several of the main highlights of US-Japan postwar relations. For this purpose, he employed an influence method labelled "dual diplomacy": direct pressure on Japanese politicians and communication with American policy-makers, coupled with his public advocacy for improved US-Japan relations through the monarchy's symbolic position.

This dissertation is divided into three chapters: the first one focuses on the occupation period and the establishment of the US-Japan military alliance (1945-1951). The second chapter analyzes the rest of the 1950s and Hirohito's reconversion to the Head of State of the country (1952-1960). The third chapter presents the 1960s and part of the 1970s, a period when several important developments in US-Japan relations took place, and the emperor's influence was at its peak (1960-1975).

**Chapter I: Hirohito's role in the  
establishment of the Japan-US Alliance  
(1945-1951)**

One of the main factors that explains the survival of the Imperial Household during the postwar period was its intertwining with the US-Japan alliance foundation to a degree that has been seldom considered before in academic papers. There is more or less a general consensus in the academic community regarding the US-Japan Security Treaty ultimately arose as a result of US diplomatic pressure and consent from the Japanese conservatives. The role of Hirohito in the negotiation process of the treaty has thus far, purportedly or not, been ignored.

For example, Michael Schaller attributes the agency of the security treaty only to the respective US and Japan's governments: "Only as a last resort, in 1950, did the Japanese government bend to American pressure to rearm and sign a treaty wholly unacceptable to the Communist powers."<sup>19</sup> In that sense, Schaller's explanation focuses on the role of the top figures related to US-Japan relations, such as Douglas MacArthur, Dean Acheson, John F. Dulles, and Yoshida Shigeru. Even though the author employs a historical approach to the subject to reach a very convincing argument, which portrays the several contradictions that took place within each counterpart and between them, Schaller does not recognize any relevant impact of the Japanese monarch.

Nonetheless, he marginally mentions Hirohito's intervention in the negotiation process. In that sense, regarding the heated debate among the US policymakers related to the separation of Okinawa from Japan, which took place circa 1947, Schaller points out: "Despite the fact that many diplomats insisted on its rapid reversion to Japan, the emperor, he (Gen. Cortland Van Rensselaer Schuyler) revealed, had secretly suggested that Washington take a long-term military lease over the Ryukyus as part of a bilateral security pact and treaty."<sup>20</sup> On another occasion, related to John F. Dulles' 1950 trip to Japan, Schaller explains: "Even the emperor secretly contacted the envoy, urging him to consult with influential Japanese, including some in disgrace 'because of their alleged former militaristic outlook'."<sup>21</sup> In both cases, the author raises two critical elements regarding the emperor's influence on the negotiations, which may lead to additional developments on the subject, but he does not further analyze the matter.

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<sup>19</sup> Schaller, 1985, p. 166.

<sup>20</sup> Schaller, 1985, p. 105.

<sup>21</sup> Schaller, 1985, p. 276.

Furthermore, John Dower also places the decisive influence over the foundation of the alliance on the US and Japanese government exclusively. Specifically, on the subject of Japan's rearmament, he states: "The United States moves swiftly to rearm the erstwhile enemy. Remilitarization was initiated without constitutional revision, without enthusiastic cooperation from the conservative Yoshida government, without great joy in business circles and without enough popular support (...)".<sup>22</sup> He does not mention whatsoever the role that the emperor had in such a decision, nor does he explain how "remilitarization" (actually, rearmament) was agreed in principle even though there was not much support inside Japan for it.

However, Dower does refer to Hirohito but outside of the foreign policy-making process: "Emperor Hirohito remained first and foremost the living manifestation of historical, cultural, and racial continuity (...). In defeat as in war, the emperor remained the great shaman of symbolic politics".<sup>23</sup> While it is accurate to state that the monarch remained an important symbol in Japanese politics, and the Imperial Household a significant point on the agenda of every major political force during the occupation, Hirohito actually stood in both the "symbolical" and the "real" political realms. He intervened systematically in several political decisions that were taken during the 1945-1951 period, especially in relation to the creation of the US-Japan alliance.

Similarly, Jennifer Miller places the responsibility for negotiating the peace and security treaty onto the shoulders of American and Japanese politicians, with no recognition of the monarch's role whatsoever:

(...) in conjunction with a formal security treaty, the peace treaty laid the foundation for the new US-Japan alliance. As with rearmament, it functioned as a site of convergence for U.S. policymakers and the conservative Japanese government, particularly over the need for vigilance and spirit as core democratic values in a newly independent Japan.<sup>24</sup>

Nevertheless, the aforementioned author does mention the emperor's implication in politics but just in the context of the constitutional debate.

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<sup>22</sup> Dower, 1999, p. 547.

<sup>23</sup> Dower, 1999, p. 555.

<sup>24</sup> Miller, 2019, p. 166.

Even the more specialized American literature on the Imperial Household does not fully examine Hirohito's agency in the foundation of the US-Japan alliance. For example, Kenneth Ruoff and Herbert Bix, who wrote respective masterpieces on the Japanese monarchy on the prewar, wartime, and postwar period which are systematically cited in this research, reveal several occasions the monarch intervened in the treaty negotiations. However, the authors fail to connect many of these apparently isolated interventions, and therefore, they are portrayed as random historical facts and not as part of a more general trend revealing the decisive agency Hirohito had in the foreign policy-making of the 1945-1951 period.

On the other hand, Japanese academia tends to be more systematic in their analysis of the emperor's role in the creation of the US-Japan alliance, but it also falls prey to excessive focus. Notwithstanding the fact that Japanese authors are more or less divided between two political positions regarding the Imperial Household (critics vs. supporters), they lean toward focusing on very specific issues regarding Hirohito. For example, Toyoshita Narahiko elaborated a revealing material on the meetings the emperor and MacArthur held from 1945 to 1950 using the accounts of the monarch's translators, but he did not link those meetings to any concrete result in the negotiation process of the Security Treaty. Likewise, other Japanese historians, such as Shindo Eichi, examine exclusively the role of the monarch in the Okinawa problem.

The reasons for the existence of these tendencies regarding the historiography of the emperor might be the scarcity, fragmentation, and/or partial disclosure of the available bibliographical sources. Despite the fact that the Showa era ended more than 30 years ago, the war responsibility issue and many other matters related to Emperor Hirohito still remain a source of fierce historiographical debate with deep political consequences. Therefore, the Imperial Household Agency has become used to reveal only a fraction of the archive materials related to Hirohito, even though, as many Japanese historians point out, he was well known for having a detailed compilation of his memoirs, which unfortunately has not been brought to the public eye yet.

The present research is equally limited by these factors. Apart from the American sources, such as the US diplomatic archives and the John F. Dulles Papers, which are fully disclosed, the use of Japanese archive sources is limited by the same reasons mentioned above. That's why, as in other works in the same field, this study relies heavily on the analysis of diaries of people who were relatively close to the emperor. The only source used in the present research that is quite fresh is the recently

released diary of Tajima Michiji, Chamberlain of the Imperial Household during the treaty negotiations, which was disclosed in early 2021.

Hence, the argument stated in this chapter essentially differs from the previous scholarly on the subject on three aspects. Firstly, the American pressure towards the Japanese government for the acceptance of the US security treaty proposals was not as determining as previously thought by a significant part of the scholarly community. Secondly, the Japanese politicians did not agree *prima facie* on the US proposal; neither did they inexorably have to bend to the American pressure, as they had diplomatic cards of their own which could be used to extract more concessions from the US. Thirdly, the emperor had an important role in the treaty-making process, which explains how the Japanese politicians eventually yielded to the US pressure.

After WWII, the emperor sought to avoid any criminal or moral responsibility for the defeat; for that purpose, he actively approached the US occupation authorities, headed by Douglas MacArthur. However, once he was exempted from prosecution and the Imperial Household from being dismantled, Hirohito started to involve himself more deeply in the foundation of a Japan-US alliance. Even though his meetings with MacArthur were the primary channel of influence from 1945 to the beginning of 1950, the monarch also tried to communicate directly with American officials in Washington, due to fundamental differences with MacArthur regarding the establishment of a security treaty with the US.

Once the bilateral negotiations started properly in 1950, the Japanese emperor opted for a “dual diplomacy” method. On one hand, he approached the head of the American delegation, John F. Dulles, directly on several occasions, either by meeting him personally or by sending messages through various channels. On the other hand, the monarch pressed the Japanese Prime Minister Yoshida Shigeru to yield unconditionally to the American negotiation terms, through a series of secret briefings that took place in 1950-1951. In conclusion, Hirohito's actions were crucial for the final results of the negotiations, as he was instrumental in overcoming the obstacles within the Japanese side and in communicating his willingness to commit to the American counterpart.

Therefore, to fully understand Hirohito's role in the establishment of the Japan-US alliance, this chapter is divided chronologically into eight epigraphs that encompass a total time frame from 1945 (including the context previous to Japan's surrender) to the signing of the peace and security treaty with Japan in September



1951. The first two epigraphs delve into the process that led to the August 15th surrender message and its implications for the Imperial Household, as well as the immediate postwar situation of Japan under the US occupation. The third, fourth, and fifth epigraphs analyze the ten meetings between Hirohito and MacArthur that took place from 1945 to 1950, and also the first attempts of the monarch to communicate with Washington (the “Okinawa Message” in 1947 and the “Ikeda Mission” in 1950).

The sixth and seventh epigraphs examine the bilateral negotiations proper (from 1950 to 1951) and the influence of the monarch on that process. The final eighth epigraph studies the issues that arose during the final stage of the negotiations (after Dulles' second visit to Japan in February 1951 and until September of that year), and how the monarch overcame such problems in order to secure the signing of the US-Japan security treaty.

## **The road to Japan's surrender**

Japan's post-conflict destiny had previously been agreed upon in the Cairo Declaration (December 1<sup>st</sup>, 1943) and the Potsdam Declaration (July 26<sup>th</sup>, 1945), proclaimed between the respective governments of the US, the United Kingdom, and China. In addition to the issues regarding the territorial disintegration of the Japanese Empire and war reparations, both documents established how the future of the Imperial Household would be. The Cairo Declaration stated that the Japanese people itself should decide whether to maintain the figure of the emperor<sup>25</sup>; meanwhile, the Potsdam Declaration radicalized the initial approach by declaring that “the authority and influence of all those who have deceived and led the Japanese people to embark on world conquest must be eliminated (...).”<sup>26</sup> This expression of the Allied Nations put Hirohito and the survival of the Imperial Household itself in danger, because under its banner and symbolism, Japan had devoted to total war.

On top of that, since July 27<sup>th</sup>, 1945, the Far Eastern and Pacific Sub-commission of the United Nations War Crimes Commission had designated around 100 Japanese officials as war criminals; furthermore, ten days before that decision, on the 17<sup>th</sup>, the US Ambassador to China, Patrick J. Hurley had communicated to his

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<sup>25</sup> Cairo Communique, 2021.

<sup>26</sup> Potsdam Declaration, 2021.

government that the Chinese press was starting to demand the trial of Hirohito as a war criminal.<sup>27</sup>

However, during the course of the next month, as the war situation in Asia's war theater developed, US leaders recognized the importance of setting the basis for cooperation with the Imperial Household by agreeing not to take Hirohito to a war trial, even at the cost of quarreling with other allied countries. In an extensive document written by the Under Secretary of State Joseph C. Grew to the Secretary of State James F. Byrnes on August 7<sup>th</sup>, Grew warned that:

If it now becomes known that we have agreed to the listing of the Emperor as a war criminal-and if we take such a position it will almost certainly leak to the public in short order-the effect in Japan would in all probability be to nip in the bud any movement toward unconditional surrender and peace. The result, in all probability, would be to consolidate the determination of the Japanese people as a whole to fight on to the bitter end. Our decision therefore will be of prime importance and many thousands of American lives may depend on its nature.<sup>28</sup>

The US' move to save Hirohito from trial was also extending towards other allied nations: on August 15<sup>th</sup>, the US ambassador to the UK successfully communicated to the secretary of State that the British had agreed not to include Hirohito in the list of Japanese war criminals.<sup>29</sup>

Furthermore, views regarding the Japanese emperor among the US military leadership were similar to those of the Department of State. In an internal document of the General Headquarters of the US Army created on August 8th, military planners conferred a great deal of influence over future directives to the attitude of the emperor towards surrender. In the event of Japan's surrender before an invasion was carried out, "(...) the administrative structure would be basically intact and the transfer of authority from the Japanese Emperor and the Japanese Government to the Allied Military Government would be in an orderly manner. Japanese administrative officers would be instructed by their Emperor to remain in office."<sup>30</sup>

However, if voluntary capitulation was not possible:

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<sup>27</sup> FRUS, 1945, n. 657.

<sup>28</sup> FRUS, 1945, n. 660.

<sup>29</sup> FRUS, 1945, n. 663.

<sup>30</sup> General Headquarters United States Army Pacific, 1945, p. 116.

“(…) the occupation authorities would not have the advantage of assistance by the Emperor and the Japanese Government in bringing about a cooperative attitude on the part of the Japanese people and of Japanese administrative officials. It would be fruitless for the occupying forces to set up an interim Japanese Government to assist in this matter as its lack of constitutional authority would deprive it of influence. The factors leading to confusion, inefficiency and disorder would be at maximum strength and would require great efforts on the part of the occupation authorities to prevent chaos.”<sup>31</sup>

It can be inferred from this document that US military leaders deemed the willing cooperation of the emperor as a vital condition for the success of the occupation, even before it was conceivable that Hirohito himself announced the total surrender of the country. On the Japanese side, some similar thoughts were being born at the same time. The emperor and his closest advisers had already started to realize that, in order for the Imperial Household to survive, they must necessarily collaborate with the US, although their main reason for concern was totally different: the threat of the Soviet Union's entrance into the war.

During a meeting hosted between Hirohito, Kido Koichi (Lord Keeper of the Privy Seal of Japan), and Prince Fumimaro Konoe on February 14<sup>th</sup>, 1945, Konoe warned the emperor regarding the danger that the Soviet Union and the Chinese communists posed for the monarchy. According to Bix's analysis of the meeting, Konoe prophesized that the Soviet Union would enter the war and that if the struggle continued, defeat along with the destruction of the *Kokutai* was inevitable.<sup>32</sup> The members of the Supreme War Leadership Council, as well as Foreign Minister Shigemitsu Mamoru and Hideki Tojo, further issued several warnings about prolonging the war on February 15<sup>th</sup>, 16<sup>th</sup>, and 26<sup>th</sup>.<sup>33</sup>

However, a clear declaration regarding the end of hostilities was still to be stated by the emperor. It was not until the military situation developed decisively against Japan (due to the loss of Okinawa on June 22<sup>nd</sup>, the Soviet entrance into the

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<sup>31</sup> General Headquarters United States Army Pacific, 1945, p. 117.

<sup>32</sup> Bix, 2000, p. 489.

<sup>33</sup> Bix, 2000, p. 490.

war on August 8<sup>th</sup>, and the nuclear bombardment of Hiroshima and Nagasaki on August 6<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup>, respectively), that plans for capitulation and unilateral negotiations with the US were started to be seriously considered by the monarch. In an Imperial Conference carried out between August 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup>, the decision to surrender was finally reached, and Hirohito, who had recently agreed to the capitulation under pressure from several of his advisers according to Bix's argument, gave his sanction.<sup>34</sup>

On August 11<sup>th</sup>, US Secretary of State James F. Byrnes replied to the Japanese proposal of surrender by stating that: "From the moment of surrender the authority of the Emperor and the Japanese Government to rule the state shall be subject to the Supreme Commander of the Allied powers," and that the emperor had to cooperate with the prompt and proper disarmament of Japan<sup>35</sup>. As in the case of the US Army, the US State Department also recognized that the emperor's collaboration was necessary to end the war and to successfully demilitarize the country.

Days later, on August 15<sup>th</sup>, the emperor made a radio broadcast for the nation announcing the surrender of the Japanese Empire. There are, however, some points that ought to be noted regarding Hirohito's speech, especially in the last part:

Having been able to safeguard and maintain the Kokutai, we are always with you, our good and loyal subjects, relying upon your sincerity and integrity.

Beware most strictly of any outbursts of emotion which may engender needless complications, or any fraternal contention and strife which may create confusion, lead you astray and cause you to lose the confidence of the world.

Let the entire nation continue as one family from generation to generation, ever firm in its faith in the imperishability of its sacred land, and mindful of its heavy burden of responsibility, and of the long road before it.

Unite your total strength, to be devoted to construction for the future. Cultivate the ways of rectitude, foster nobility of spirit, and work with resolution – so that you

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<sup>34</sup> Bix, 2000, p. 514.

<sup>35</sup> Byrnes, 1945.

may enhance the innate glory of the imperial state and keep pace with the progress of the world.<sup>36</sup>

If Hirohito's words are to be analyzed in the context of desperately finding some sort of pardon from the US, it can be inferred that he was not only communicating his decision to capitulate to the Japanese people; he was also making a call for order. Having realized that defeat was inevitable and that a foreign army would soon arrive in Japan as occupation forces, by urging the people not to “lose the confidence of the world,” Hirohito and his advisers used the symbolic power of the monarchy in order to pave the way for future cooperation with the occupation authorities.

On the other side of the Pacific Ocean, the US government had also arrived at the same conclusion, although for different reasons: the endurance of the Imperial Household to some degree was necessary to carry out the monumental task of occupying Japan. On August 12<sup>th</sup>, a Joint Committee composed of members from the State Department, the Army, and the Navy released a document that defined the role of the monarch during the occupation:

The Emperor shall authorize and insure the signature by the Government of Japan and the Japanese Imperial General Headquarters of the surrender terms necessary to carry out the provisions of the Potsdam Declaration (...)the authority of the Supreme Commander will be exercised in the interests of the United Nations through the Emperor.<sup>37</sup>

The fact that both Hirohito and the US government needed each other in order to ensure their respective interests certainly catalyzed their relationship once the occupation process started.

In that sense, it's necessary to acknowledge that the public acceptance by Hirohito of the unconditional surrender proposal stated in the Potsdam Declaration was a key development for the survival of the Imperial Household in the postwar period. Had the war continued, the possibility for the monarchy to remain would have been even lower. Furthermore, the emperor was not only risking the monarchy to a full-scale invasion but also to an internal uprising. The acceptance of the Allied

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<sup>36</sup> Kawakami, 2015.

<sup>37</sup> FRUS, 1945, n. 427.

Powers' terms for surrender might be interpreted in a strict sense as a defeat for Japan, but it also gave some leverage to the throne to further negotiate its survival with the occupation authorities. In that sense, Hirohito's acceptance and announcement of unconditional surrender certainly demonstrated that the interests of both parties coincided at the very essential level. Therefore, the radio broadcast of August 15<sup>th</sup> can be traced back as the first clear manifestation of the monarch's influence in the construction process of the alliance between Japan and the US.

## **The US occupation of Japan**

After the radio announcement of Japan's surrender made by Hirohito himself on August 15<sup>th</sup>, 1945, World War II was approaching to an end. The culmination of the conflict represented for Japan the closing of a turbulent stage in its national history. However, the future after the surrender held many crucial questions that needed to be resolved. The fate of the Imperial Household (and specifically, that of the emperor himself) was still to be decided. In Europe, the Allied Nations had previously agreed at the London Conference (June 26<sup>th</sup> to August 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1945) to carry out a set of trials against Nazi Germany war criminals. A similar action was taken one year later in Japan to judge Japanese military officials and political leaders responsible for war crimes in Asia: The International Military Tribunal for the Far East, or shortly, the Tokyo Tribunal.

On the other hand, there was still no clarity about whether or not Japan should align with any of the ideological blocs that emerged after the end of the war. The results of the war in the military theater of Asia were very different from those of Europe. For instance, unlike Germany, whose territory was forcefully occupied by the victors, Japan surrendered before a full-scale invasion was carried out. In that sense, as they were not entirely wiped out by the Allied Powers, both the Imperial Household and Japan's government bureaucratic apparatus retained some legitimacy among the Japanese population.

Furthermore, Japan's surrender did not equate to the end of hostilities in Asia. Not only were several Japanese contingents still fighting in various parts of the region, especially in Southeast Asia, but the dismantlement of the Japanese Empire gave widespread notoriety to the guerrilla movements that had been fighting against Japan's occupation in the Korean Peninsula, China, and Indochina. Suddenly, those

movements, which were led by communist parties in most cases, started to enjoy great popularity and legitimacy within their respective populations. In Europe, communism spread as a direct result of Soviet military occupation (Poland, Romania, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Bulgaria, and the Eastern part of Germany). Therefore, as long as negotiations with Joseph Stalin were carried out, the establishment of communist dictatorships was somehow manageable for both the US, led first by Franklin D. Roosevelt and later by Harry S. Truman, and the United Kingdom, headed by Winston Churchill. In the several conferences that were carried out during and after the war, the “Big Three” organized the geopolitical future of Europe by dividing it into spheres of influence.

Nevertheless, the re-organization of Asia in a post-conflict era proved not to be as malleable to the Allied Powers. An agreement on the partition of Asia was not as easily reachable as in the case of Europe because the rise of communist parties was a challenge to both a recently established hegemonic United States and to the Soviet Union and its para-state agencies, such as the Komintern. The latter, even though it was supposed to be the leader of the international communist movement, could not totally control the ambitions of the local communist leaders. Mao Tse Tung and Kim Il Sung, for example, would prove to be a nuisance to the strategic planning of both superpowers.

On top of that, Japan's own internal situation was not ideal for the prospects of US foreign policy. The over-demanding war effort as well as the bombardment of the main islands by the US Air Force had left the Japanese population with scarce resources for its own sustenance. Japan's most important cities were burned to ashes, and that, coupled with astronomical inflation, corruption, and the moral consequences of the defeat in the “sacred” war, laid the ground for a popular uprising that could have been potentially capitalized by communist ideology. Furthermore, on August 18<sup>th</sup>, 1945, the Soviet Union invaded and occupied the Kurile Islands which represented a looming threat over the northernmost island of Hokkaido. Therefore, the flames of communist revolution and/or Soviet invasion were not only stirring on the continent: Japan's mainland, and of course, the Imperial Household, was also in peril.

There is not much available evidence regarding Hirohito's thoughts on the nation's precarious state after the surrender broadcast. However, there are several public and private communications that show how he was trying to divert any responsibility regarding the war away from him. In an Imperial Rescript to the

Japanese armed forces published on August 17<sup>th</sup>, the monarch placed the responsibility for the defeat on the Soviet Union's entrance into the war, contrary to his August 15<sup>th</sup> surrender message that placed the major cause on the nuclear bombing. Furthermore, he praised himself for the wise decision of making peace with the Allied Powers “in order to maintain our glorious national polity.”<sup>38</sup>

Moreover, Hirohito continued to express an unreflective attitude. On a letter he sent to his son, future Crown Prince and Emperor Akihito, on September 9<sup>th</sup>, the monarch blamed the military for “placing too much weight on spirit and forgot about science.”<sup>39</sup> What is more, once again he adjudicated the credit for saving the nation: “If we had continued the war, we would have been unable to protect the three imperial regalia.”<sup>40</sup> Not only that, more of our countrymen would have had to die. Repressing my emotions, I tried to save the seed of the nation.”<sup>41</sup> Hirohito was certainly not repenting for the destruction the “sacred war” had brought over Japan and a large part of Asia; what is more, he believed that he ought to be at the forefront of the reconstruction efforts in the postwar period. Kinoshita Michio, an Imperial Household Ministry official at that time, recorded the monarch's thoughts on the future path for Japan: “(...) from now on, we must have group training, foster science, and the entire nation must labor hard to construct a new, better Japan than today.”<sup>42</sup>

On September 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1945, Japan and the United States signed the bilateral instrument by which the Asian nation unconditionally capitulated and submitted to the will of the winners. The occupation of Japan, unlike that of the former Third Reich, was carried out almost exclusively by the US (with the exception of a small contingent sent by other Allied nations); ergo, American officials and bureaucrats monopolized the General Headquarters (GHQ), the main body in charge of drawing up the directives of the occupation. Precisely, on September 6<sup>th</sup>, through a memorandum for the secretary of State, the US government officially enacted its plans for the occupation of Japan. In this document, it was clearly stated that:

Although every effort will be made, by consultation and by constitution of appropriate advisory bodies, to establish policies for the conduct of the occupation

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<sup>38</sup> Senda, 1983, p. 394.

<sup>39</sup> Tsurumi & Nakagawa, 1989, p. 39-41.

<sup>40</sup> The Imperial Regalia refers to three mythological items (a sword, a mirror and a jewel) that have a profound meaning in Shintoism, and are kept by the Imperial Household. They are believed to have belonged to one of the founders of the imperial family. However, due to the secrecy around those objects, there is no historical assurance regarding its origin.

<sup>41</sup> Tsurumi & Nakagawa, 1989, p. 39-41.

<sup>42</sup> Kinoshita, 2017.



and the control of Japan which will satisfy the principal Allied powers, in the event of any differences of opinion among them, the policies of the United States will govern.<sup>43</sup>

Additionally, it was also established that “(...) the Supreme Commander will exercise his authority through Japanese governmental machinery and agencies, including the Emperor, to the extent that this satisfactorily furthers United States objectives.”<sup>44</sup>

Douglas MacArthur, commander of the US forces in Asia, was appointed by President Harry S. Truman on September 17<sup>th</sup>, 1945, as the person in charge of SCAP, and he was given the supreme authority to decide over the future of Japan. However, in that same document, the US government recognized that the occupation policies should be carried out “through the Japanese government.”<sup>45</sup> Once again, there was a tacit acknowledgment regarding the importance of cooperating with the Japanese bureaucratic apparatus, of which the emperor was the maximum symbol.

Therefore, it is necessary to answer the following question: why, despite possessing quasi-absolute authority over a country in ruins, the US could not totally abolish the remnants of the militarist regime? The first answer to this question is geopolitical: the division of Germany into occupation zones, the installment of allied regimes to the Soviet Union in Eastern Europe, as well as the dropping of nuclear bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, made it very clear that the fraternity between the US and the Soviet Union had ended, and that a new global conflagration would revolve among the two emerging superpowers after 1945. This, added to the advance of the communist parties in Asia, and especially in China, the most important US ally in the region, posed a great dilemma. If a radical occupation policy was to be carried out on Japan (including the dismantling of the Imperial Household and total disarmament), while the government of Chiang Kai Shek was crumbling in China, the US would be left in an extremely vulnerable position to face the contingencies of the Cold War in Asia.

Furthermore, there were still many Japanese politicians who had been either incarcerated or removed from office during wartime due to their attitude against the

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<sup>43</sup> The State-War-Navy Coordinating Committee, 1945.

<sup>44</sup> The State-War-Navy Coordinating Committee, 1945.

<sup>45</sup> FRUS, 1945, n. 491.

war. Several of these politicians, especially Shigeru Yoshida, were willing to collaborate with the occupation authorities. Another reason why the US had to depend on the Japanese bureaucratic apparatus corresponds to technical-linguistic barriers. According to John Dower, US officials were carrying out a task for which they were administratively unprepared; moreover, language and cultural barriers were so great, and so few occupation staff possessed a minimum level of Japanese language, that applying SCAP measures in reality became impracticable.<sup>46</sup> Therefore, a combination of these reasons, added to the already set strategy of the US regarding the preservation of the Imperial Household, put in motion a series of events that led to the first meeting between Hirohito and MacArthur.

## **The importance of the first meeting with MacArthur**

On September 27<sup>th</sup>, 1945, precisely ten days after MacArthur was given pro-consul powers, the US general and Hirohito met for the first time. This encounter proved to be decisive for the future of Japan, the alliance with the US, and the continuance of the monarchy. Even before Japan's capitulation, plans to judge the emperor as a war criminal were already being set up outside of Japan. Despite US efforts to avoid criminal judgment over Hirohito, an actual diplomatic turf war was in process regarding the monarch's trial. By September 5<sup>th</sup>, both China and India had agreed not to include specific names on the list of war criminals, probably a reference to Hirohito.<sup>47</sup>

However, the British Commonwealth nations were not in total accord regarding not trialing Hirohito. Australian representatives to the United Nations War Crimes Commission still insisted by September 11<sup>th</sup> on including the emperor's name into the list of war criminals, although their proposal was utterly retired as the US War Department "(...) strongly urge that no action be taken on the Emperor."<sup>48</sup> Moreover, the prime minister of New Zealand had warned that "there should be no soft peace" as a reference of not pardoning the emperor<sup>49</sup>. Public opinion in the US was also an important factor to take into account: an unpublished Gallup opinion poll made in June 1945 revealed that 77% of the American public deemed it necessary to

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<sup>46</sup> Dower, 1999.

<sup>47</sup> Department of State, 2018, p. 2582.

<sup>48</sup> FRUS, 1945, n. 676.

<sup>49</sup> FRUS, 1945, n. 676.

punish Hirohito for war crimes<sup>50</sup>. Even in the US Senate, a resolution was passed on September 18<sup>th</sup>, declaring that the emperor had to be trialed as war criminal<sup>51</sup>.

This contradiction between two contending forces, one claiming for the emperor's trial and the other advocating his innocence, defined the background for the first meeting between Hirohito and MacArthur.

In order to examine in detail what happened at this historical meeting, it's necessary to use several sources at public disposal. These include a press release by the Ministry of Interior on October 2<sup>nd</sup>, the memoirs of Douglas MacArthur and the recollection of Okumura Katsuzou (the interpreter of the Japanese side during the first and fourth meeting with MacArthur). Two days before the meeting, Japanese officials had already started to make preparations for whitewashing the emperor of any war responsibility. On September 25<sup>th</sup>, Hirohito granted two separate interviews, to a New York Times reporter, Frank L. Kluckhohn, and to Hugh Baillie, president of the United Press. The response to the questions of the journalists clearly defined that the responsibility over the surprise attack on Pearl Harbor relied exclusively on Hideki Tojo's shoulders because it was never the emperor's intention that his war rescript of December 1941 be used for that purpose.<sup>52</sup>

Likewise, Joseph B. Keenan, chief prosecutor at the Tokyo Tribunal, was also advocating for Hirohito's innocence. In 1946, during a conversation Keenan had with Tanaka Ryukichi, a former major general at the Imperial Army, Keenan explained that in a previous meeting he sustained with Hirohito around the end of September of the previous year (1945), he had stated the monarch would not be brought to a court for war crimes. Although it was still necessary that MacArthur checked the evidence regarding the start of the war, Keenan confessed to Tanaka that he wanted to make the emperor innocent in spite of the facts.<sup>53</sup>

Such preparations were already in motion before the two men encountered each other for the first time. On the 27<sup>th</sup>, the long-awaited occasion took place. The fact that there was no written record of the meeting makes it impossible to accurately know what actually happened then. On top of that, the secrecy surrounding that moment favored that each part gave a different, and sometimes contradictory, version of the facts. For instance, MacArthur praised the courage of the monarch who

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<sup>50</sup> Bix, 2000, p. 544.

<sup>51</sup> Wiener, 1986, p. 217.

<sup>52</sup> Toyoshita, 1990, p. 81.

<sup>53</sup> Toyoshita, 2008, pp. 20-21.

supposedly said: “I come to you, to offer myself to the judgment of the powers you represent as the one to bear sole responsibility for every political and military decision made and action taken by my people in the conduct of war.”<sup>54</sup> MacArthur’s version quickly became established as an official historical fact, although there are some objections to make about it.

Taking into consideration the detailed preparations that Hirohito’s entourage had made before the surrender in order to preserve the Imperial Household by avoiding Hirohito’s trial, it is not very believable that the monarch himself had put his life in danger by accepting all responsibility for the war. The narrative of history that portrayed Hirohito as a mere puppet used by the militarists, already exposed in the briefings with the American journalists two days before the meeting, and carefully tailored by Japanese officials, was not coherent with such a bold, and almost suicidal, statement. What is more, in a moment when several voices inside and outside the US claimed for Hirohito’s trial, such a declaration made even less sense.

Furthermore, other historical records don’t seem to agree with the official narrative. For example, Okumura’s rescript of the facts that happened during the 27<sup>th</sup> is slightly different from that of MacArthur. According to the interpreter, although there were some declarations of “regret” and “apologies” made by the monarch, there was no such thing as taking full responsibility for the war.<sup>55</sup> Additionally, a statement made on October 2<sup>nd</sup> by a spokesperson of the Ministry of Interior seems to support Okumura’s view. According to those official declarations, Hirohito had appreciated the general’s efforts for carrying out an occupation policy without incidents. On the other hand, MacArthur had replied by stating that the monarch’s leadership was necessary for the purposes of a smooth occupation. Both had agreed that the question of war responsibility should be left to historians, and they had compromised to further cooperate for the sake of the occupation. There was no such thing as the emperor taking responsibility for the war, but the rather vague statement of leaving the judgment to future historians.<sup>56</sup> Those sources show that the monarch was trying to avoid any reference to the war accountability issue, which makes his supposed “full responsibility” declaration appear even more an overstatement of the monarch’s actual thoughts.

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<sup>54</sup> MacArthur, 2010, p. 288.

<sup>55</sup> Kojima, 1978, vol. 3, p. 23-24.

<sup>56</sup> Toyoshita, 2008, pp. 10-11.

Despite whether MacArthur's or others' recollections of the facts surrounding the "full responsibility" declaration of the first meeting with the emperor are to be believed or not, what is revealing in this case is that for the first time after Japan's surrender, US' occupation purposes and Hirohito's wish for his own life and for the survival of the Imperial Household could be frankly communicated between the counterparts. Most sources coincide that the meeting went surprisingly smooth, and that, in fact, there were several points in common between MacArthur and Hirohito.

The American general's *Reminiscences*, for example, states that:

The Emperor called on me often after that, our conversations ranging over most of the problems of the world. I always explained carefully the underlying reasons for occupation policy (...) He played a major role in the spiritual regeneration of Japan, and his loyal co-operation and influence had much to do with the success of the occupation.<sup>57</sup>

Okumura's recount offers some insight in this regard: the general praised Hirohito for his decision to end the war, sparing the Japanese population from the horrors of war. He lamented that there were many people who had "hatreds and feelings of revenge," as a reference to the public opinion inside and outside the US regarding trying the emperor for war crimes.<sup>58</sup> Hirohito intervened, saying that he had wanted to avoid the war, to which MacArthur replied by stating that only history could judge them after they passed away.<sup>59</sup> This line, also presented by the Ministry of Interior some days after the meeting, was actually very reassuring to the monarch himself, as it dissipated most of the worries regarding his survival.

Once guarantees over his life and the continuance of the Imperial Household were given, Hirohito stated that he would do his best to carry out the stipulations of the Potsdam Declaration and to help reconstruct Japan. MacArthur appreciated the emperor's cooperative attitude and encouraged him to pass on any advice he might have regarding the occupation policies, ensuring the monarch that such communications would remain confidential.<sup>60</sup> This last declaration was very significant because it left the door open for further meetings between the two men and

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<sup>57</sup> MacArthur, 2010, p. 288.

<sup>58</sup> Kojima, 1978, vol. 3, p. 23-24.

<sup>59</sup> Kojima, 1978, vol. 3, p. 23-24.

<sup>60</sup> Kojima, 1978, vol. 3, p. 23-24.

guaranteed Hirohito a direct channel to influence the occupation policies and Japan's prospects for an alliance with the US.

The MacArthur-Hirohito first meeting was very important for the further development of Japan-US political and military relations. Although both parties already had in mind reaching some sort of agreement that would guarantee protection for the emperor on the Japanese side and the necessary cooperation to carry out the occupation on the American side, this meeting was the occasion to openly state those purposes to their respective counterparts. Doubtless, such a negotiation with such tremendous consequences for the interests of both parties could only take place between those with the power to broker such deal: the American pro-consul and prestigious war hero on one side, and the “demigod” emperor<sup>61</sup> on the other. This meeting demonstrated that the monarch still carried a great deal of influence in the foreign policy-making process, and from then on, he had privileged access to the occupation's top figures.

Secondly, this first meeting was also an occasion for informally communicating to Hirohito that he had been erased from the list of war criminals. MacArthur's memories state that:

I believed that if the Emperor were indicted, and perhaps hanged, as a war criminal, military government would have to be instituted throughout all Japan, and guerrilla warfare would probably break out. The Emperor's name had then been stricken from the list. But of all this he knew nothing.<sup>62</sup>

This reasoning was repeated once again in communications between MacArthur and Dwight Eisenhower, commander of US troops in Europe and future president of the country. In January 1946, MacArthur wrote to Eisenhower that “there was no evidence that the Emperor had committed any crime” and that accusing the Emperor would create a situation of confusion in Japan (he even prophesied the resurgence of armed uprisings) which would demand a greater military presence and huge expenditure of resources by the US<sup>63</sup>.

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<sup>61</sup> Hirohito's “declaration of humanity” (人間宣言), or Imperial Rescript Denying His Divinity, was pronounced on January 1<sup>st</sup>, 1946. Therefore, the concept of a divine emperor was still officially valid.

<sup>62</sup> MacArthur, 2010, p. 288.

<sup>63</sup> Telegram, MacArthur to Eisenhower, Commander in Chief, US Army Forces, Pacific, concerning exemption of the Emperor from War Criminals, January 25, 1946, 2021.

In conclusion, during the first meeting between Hirohito and MacArthur, a sort of trade-off was negotiated that ensured the continuance of the Imperial Household and Hirohito's position, as well as the alignment of the royal house with the US' purposes, at least during the occupation period. This event can be seen as the milestone that marked an informal beginning of the alliance between Japan and the US, and also as the first proof of the emperor's influence in Japan's foreign policy during the postwar period. However, only a first and brief encounter was not enough to configure the alliance relationship between both countries. For that purpose, further meetings between MacArthur and Hirohito, with equally deep consequences, took place.

### **The fourth meeting with MacArthur**

Hirohito and MacArthur met for the second and third time on May 31<sup>st</sup> and October 16<sup>th</sup>, 1946 respectively. In the case of the second reunion, there was no written record of what was discussed between the two men, or it has not been released yet. However, there are some conjectures which explain the debated topic was actually in relation to the Tokyo Tribunal and war responsibility, as the issue was still a hot point of debate<sup>64</sup>. On the other hand, the third meeting took place midst the discussion of the to-be new constitution of Japan (the text was finally redacted in October 29<sup>th</sup>). According to the notes taken by Terasaki Hidenari (Hirohito's translator for the third meeting), the topics of the conversation were the implications of the proposed constitutional text, specifically in the matter of renunciation to war, food scarcity and the strikes organized by the labor movement, which Hirohito criticized<sup>65</sup>.

This third meeting was essentially different than the other two first ones. While the main topic for the first and second meeting, as has been described thus far, was the war responsibility issue and the exoneration of Hirohito from trial, during the third one, the subject of Japan's national security was introduced for the first time in the conversation between the two men. This third encounter showed that there was some sort of transition happening in the postwar role of the emperor in regard to US-Japan relations. Once the monarch was absolved of criminal responsibility for the war

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<sup>64</sup> Toyoshita, 2008, p. 93-94.

<sup>65</sup> 皇室事典編集委員会, 2009, p. 213.

due to the actions of US and Japanese officials, he focused on objectives that surpassed *a priori* the preservation of the Imperial Household and his own life. For that purpose, he already possessed a direct channel of communication with the top officials of the occupation forces, and also some leverage recognized by the US government, to push the issues he considered relevant.

The above-mentioned conditions facilitated that the emperor got involved more deeply in Japan's foreign policy making. The fourth contact between them took place on May 6<sup>th</sup>, 1947. However, before analyzing the historical facts related to this reunion, it's necessary to understand the context surrounding this particular encounter.

More than a year and a half since the first meeting and despite MacArthur's, Keenan's and many other American and Japanese officials' efforts to save Hirohito from trial, to road to final indictment was not an easy one. Actually, 1946 was a vital year for that purpose. From 1945, September 22<sup>nd</sup> to March 6<sup>th</sup> of the next year, Bonner F. Fellers, one of MacArthur's aides, worked in successive interrogatories to Japanese wartime military leaders in order to coordinate their testimonies so that the emperor was freed from any war responsibility<sup>66</sup>.

Fellers met with Admiral Mitsumasa Yonai on March 6<sup>th</sup> and explained to the latter that other Allied nations still wanted to prosecute Hirohito (namely, the Soviet Union), and in order to avoid such an outcome, he requested Yonai to convince Hideki Tojo regarding taking full responsibility for the war. On another occasion, two weeks later, on March 22<sup>nd</sup>, Fellers pointed out his worries regarding Hirohito's trial: "(...) it is extremely disadvantageous to MacArthur's standing in the United States to put on trial the very emperor who is cooperating with him and facilitating the smooth administration of the occupation (...)." <sup>67</sup>

In addition to American efforts for exonerating Hirohito, the Japanese side was pursuing its own strategy. During March of 1946, the monarch's top aides started to prepare the emperor's defense. Interestingly, as the US public opinion exerted a great influence in the Tokyo trials, they chose to focus Hirohito's allegation in regard only to the war with the US and the United Kingdom, grossly omitting the war with China, which had started since 1937. From March 18<sup>th</sup> to April 9<sup>th</sup>, six dictation meetings took place, giving birth to Hirohito's famous "Monologue"<sup>68</sup>.

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<sup>66</sup> Bix, 2000, p. 583.

<sup>67</sup> Takada, 1991, p. 42.

<sup>68</sup> Takada, 1991.



The Tokyo Tribunal was finally convened on April 29<sup>th</sup>, 1946 and opened its first session on May 3<sup>rd</sup>. As a result of the combined US and Japanese efforts, Hirohito's chances for exoneration became likely despite the organization of the tribunal. The American and British representatives to the conclave presented their own lists of war criminals, which didn't include the emperor. The Australians, on the other side, did label Hirohito as a war criminal, but the executive committee of the tribunal managed to take the monarch's name out of the index. The Soviet delegation, by order of Stalin, eventually also dropped the charges on Hirohito<sup>69</sup>.

None of the three Asian delegations to the tribunal (China, Philippines and India<sup>70</sup>), included Hirohito on their war criminal records. While the Philippines delegation officials were very vulnerable to US pressure given the political dependency of the Asian nation to Washington, China's attitude was very significant. China and Korea were doubtlessly the main victims of Japan's expansionism, and suffered a high toll of million deaths, massive rapes, experiments in human beings and many other atrocities. In spite of that, the Kuomintang government led by Chiang Kai Shek, didn't want to risk the US military assistance, which was vital in the wake of a new civil war against the Chinese Communist Party, by including Hirohito in the list of war criminals. China carried out its own trials to Japanese middle echelon military leaders, but retired Hirohito from the list of war criminals. Consequently, on October 10<sup>th</sup>, 1947, Keenan officially announced that the emperor had not responsibility for the war, although Hirohito already knew informally, since March of 1946, that he would be considered innocent<sup>71</sup>.

Nevertheless, Hirohito's fears were not extinguished yet. Even though he would not be brought to justice for the war, there were still many voices that advocated for his resignation, as a way of carrying with his "moral responsibility" for the conflict. Whilst many in Japan, including SCAP, did not want to prosecute the emperor neither abolish the Imperial Household, they did not believe that it was necessary for the same person to remain in the throne. Actually, many nationalists were convinced that replacing Hirohito with Crown Prince Akihito, who was a child

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<sup>69</sup> Bix, 2000, p. 593.

<sup>70</sup> The case of the Indian Justice, Radhabinod Pal, was very illustrative of the political nature of the trials. Pal was a fervent supporter of the Indian nationalist and Pro-Axis advocate Sudas Chandra Bose, and a Japanophile himself. Therefore, he was the only judge that justified Japan's war of aggression as part of the struggle of "Asian liberation of Western oppression". It goes without saying that Justice Pal never thought of Hirohito, or any other Japanese military or political leader, as a war criminal.

<sup>71</sup> Bix, 2000, p. 628.

during the war and held no responsibility, would have been a good choice for restoring Japanese moral after the defeat and improving the image of the country towards other nations<sup>72</sup>.

The first claims for his abdication arose after the first meeting with MacArthur. The famous photograph of the then recently “humanized” emperor standing close to the American victorious general, a metaphorical representation of the occupation, provoked an overwhelming spread of defeatist sentiments in Japanese society. This general anxiety was eventually transformed in some tenuous but sustained claims of resignation as a way to uphold moral responsibility for the defeat. Members of the imperial family were the first ones to convey this message: Prince Takamatsu, younger brother of Hirohito, and who also systematically opposed the war path Japan took since the 1930’s, wrote in his diary in September, 1945, that Hirohito should have abandoned the throne in favor of Prince Chichibu, the youngest brother. Other influential intellectuals of that moment, such as Tanabe Hajime (a well-known philosopher and member of the Kyoto School of thought), Nambara Shigeru (president of Tokyo Imperial University) and Miyoshi Tatsuji (a nationwide famous poet) were also publicly calling for the emperor’s voluntary abdication<sup>73</sup>.

One of the most renowned incidents in this regard was the parliamentary interpellation of Prime Minister Shigeru Yoshida made by Yasuhiro Nakasone, then a member of the House of Representatives, in 1952. On January 31<sup>st</sup>, Nakasone asked the government’s position regarding a possible abdication that would have strengthened the Imperial Household and consoled the victims of the war. To this, Yoshida enragedly responded that anyone that suggested the abdication of the emperor was not a patriot<sup>74</sup>. Such an unfortunate declaration was a proof of the intensity of the debate regarding Hirohito’s position in the postwar period.

On top of that, the political situation within Japan was also changing rapidly during the first half of 1947. On April 25<sup>th</sup>, general elections were celebrated and the Socialist Party led by Katayama Tetsu, became the main political force in the country. Katayama was chosen prime minister on June 1<sup>st</sup>, leading the first ever socialist Cabinet in Japanese politics until that moment. Precisely, the activism of the Socialist and Communist parties, as well of the workers’ unions, was increasing progressively,

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<sup>72</sup> Ruoff, 2001.

<sup>73</sup> Bix, 2000, p. 605-606.

<sup>74</sup> Iwami, 2005, p.16.

which arose some concerns within SCAP as reported in several communications from SCAP's Political Adviser George Atcheson<sup>75</sup>. The communists even threatened to carry out a general strike for February 1<sup>st</sup>, which was aborted due to MacArthur's intervention. In spite of that, the one million people demonstration on May Day was a proof of the strength the labor movement had gathered thus far<sup>76</sup>.

What is more, three days before the fourth meeting with MacArthur, the new constitution of Japan entered into force. Chapter one of the text stripped the emperor of any of his former powers under the Meiji Constitution of 1889, and placed him as the "symbol of the state and of the unity of the people."<sup>77</sup> Any powers to conduct foreign policy, including the declaration of war and the signing of treaties, were taken from the emperor. In the new postwar constitutional text, the monarch did not have *a priori* any possibility to influence the foreign policy making decision process. On top of that, the former Ministry of the Imperial Household had been converted into an agency dependent on the Cabinet, the Agency of the Imperial Household; the assets of the monarchy had been nationalized on its majority; and the court bureaucracy had been cut dramatically. The new constitution also brought down the emperor's material capabilities for influence.

Moreover, the armed clashes in mainland China between the Kuomintang and the Communist Party had been resumed as soon as the Japanese army was defeated in WWII, leading eventually to a new stage of the full-scale Chinese civil war initiated on July 20<sup>th</sup>, 1946 after Chiang Kai Shek attacked communist-controlled territory. By 1947, the military balance was tipping in favor of Mao Tse Tung's army in spite of the massive military aid that the US was granting to the Kuomintang. On the other hand, cooperation between the Soviet Union and the US regarding the occupation of the Korean Peninsula was disintegrating, and both sides were preparing internal arrangements to establish pro-Soviet and pro-American regimes respectively. In that sense, the prospects of a communist victory in China and a divided Korea were not a good omen for the US strategic position in Asia.

Thus far, this was the situation surrounding the fourth meeting between Hirohito and MacArthur. In that context, Hirohito's interests not only included to save himself from prosecution and the Imperial Household from being dismantled: as these

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<sup>75</sup> FRUS, 1947, n. 189.

<sup>76</sup> FRUS, 1947, n. 189.

<sup>77</sup> The Constitution of Japan, 1947.

two elements were somehow guaranteed by MacArthur and the US occupation forces, the monarch also wanted to perpetuate himself on the throne and escape from abdication by appealing to be the essential man for the US, either as a guarantor of stability as long as the occupation lasted, or as a fierce anti-communist ally in Asia.

The record regarding this meeting is not necessarily conclusive as secrecy continued to be the standard norm regarding the monarch. However, there are some sources that illustrate how facts happened. The first news about the meeting surfaced on the next day, May 7<sup>th</sup>, because of a leak that was exposed by the Associated Press correspondent in Tokyo. According to that source, the emperor expressed the worries of the Japanese population, and his own, regarding the new constitution and the renunciation to war clause stated in Article 9. To this MacArthur answered that the US would guarantee the defense of Japan on a long-term basis<sup>78</sup>.

Due to such leaked declarations, several authors identify this meeting as the starting point for the postwar US-Japan alliance. Nevertheless, it seems that the meeting was not as smooth as the AP presented it, neither there was agreement between Hirohito and MacArthur. One day after the meeting record was leaked, on May, 8<sup>th</sup>, MacArthur himself denied the information that had surfaced by stating that the US would guarantee Japan's security as long as the occupation lasted, but after that period, the responsibility laid in the peace treaty and in the United Nations institutions<sup>79</sup>.

Okumura's account of the events also support that there was some sort of discussion between Hirohito and MacArthur regarding the strategic future of Japan.<sup>80</sup> On the issue of disarmament, the emperor commented: "If Japan abolishes its armed forces, its security must be expected from the United Nations. It would be troubling if the United Nations is like the Far East Commission."<sup>81</sup> The monarch was obviously not sure whether the United Nations could have been a good guarantor for Japan's national security. That concern actually has a deeper meaning from the monarch's

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<sup>78</sup> Kojima, 1978, vol. 3, p. 25-26.

<sup>79</sup> Kojima, 1978, vol. 3, p. 25-26.

<sup>80</sup> The Far East Commission was launched on December 27<sup>th</sup>, 1945 after the Moscow Conference in that same month. The objective of this inter-governmental body was to supervise over the occupation of Japan. It was composed by representatives of all the countries that were at war, namely the United States, the Soviet Union, the United Kingdom, the Republic of China, France, the Netherlands, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, India and the Philippines. However, as every member of the commission had the power to veto any decision, and it required too much time for the organization to host any meeting or convey the representatives, the commission was inoperative. In the practice, it became a consultative organ whilst the actual decisions regarding the occupation were taken by SCAP and MacArthur.

<sup>81</sup> Kojima, 1978, vol. 3, p. 26.

point of view. For instance, if Japan ever entered some system of collective security where the US was not as preponderant as in the occupation of Japan, Hirohito's own capacity of influence and privileged access to the occupation top authorities would instantly disappear. The emperor's remaining power was therefore dependent on the US' hegemonic role on the occupation of Japan. If that role was to be shared among other powers (including undesirable ones such as the Soviet Union or a likely communist China), Hirohito's influence would dilute, and probably his indictment from trial and war responsibility issue, might resurface. In fact, the monarch had a deep distrust towards the communist powers: even during the war, he had expressed to one of his aides that: "I don't think that the Soviet Union could be trusted."<sup>82</sup>

To the emperor's concerns, MacArthur answered that: "The fact that Japan is completely unarmed is itself the greatest security guarantee, and this is the only way for Japan to live. As for the future, I think that the United Nations will become a strong institution". As it can be inferred, MacArthur shared an idealistic view of the postwar institutions. However, this perception was radically opposed to Hirohito's realism. For that reason, the monarch continued to dwell on the issue: "In order to ensure the security of Japan, it is necessary for the United States, which is a representative of the Anglo-Saxon (countries/culture), to take the initiative, and we look forward for the support of the Marshal."<sup>83</sup>

Once again, Hirohito resorted to the argument of the US guaranteeing Japan's security in the postwar era. This statement from the emperor was highly relevant, especially in the context of the peace treaty negotiations. On that moment, Japan faced two strategic options regarding its postwar destiny, and there were supporters for both choices on the two shores of the Pacific Ocean. The first strategic choice was a system of collective security centered on the United Nations. This option implied necessarily to give a quota of power to the Soviet Union and a probable communist China, over the future of Japan (for example, by allowing them to participate in the peace treaty negotiations). This necessarily included that those countries would also have a voice over the destiny of the Imperial Household. Taking into account that the strongest claims for Hirohito's trial, as well as the so threatening communist propaganda pertaining to the monarchy, were instigated from those countries; it goes

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<sup>82</sup> Itou, 2014, p. 433.

<sup>83</sup> Kojima, 1978, vol. 3, p. 26.

without saying that Hirohito wanted to shield himself behind the military protection of the other superpower.

For that reason, Hirohito's hopes were closely related to the second strategic choice Japan was facing at that moment: an exclusive alliance with the US. In that sense, a treaty would protect Japan and the Imperial Household from any external "malicious" influence. However, that scenario also implied an overwhelming US military presence, the concession of Japanese territory for bases and to some extent, Japan's re-armament. Many Japanese politicians at the moment, including Yoshida, did not agree with granting such extraterritorial rights to a foreign power<sup>84</sup>.

Although for different reasons, MacArthur himself was neither very fond of that strategic choice, and he expressed so in many occasions. For example, during a meeting with Prime Minister Shidehara Kijuro in 1946, the American general and the Japanese premier agreed on the demilitarization of Japan and on the renunciation to war. According to MacArthur's own account: "For years I have believed that war should be abolished as an outmoded means of resolving disputes between nations."<sup>85</sup>

Moreover, MacArthur was a staunch defendant of the pacifism emboldened in article 9 of the new constitution. On his consideration:

The great immediate purpose Japan can serve in the confusion which overrides all of strife-torn Asia is to stand out with striking and unruffled calmness and tranquility as the exemplification of peaceful progress, under conditions of unalloyed personal freedom. It can thus wield a profound moral influence upon the destiny of the Asian race.<sup>86</sup>

Later, in 1950, he would still insist in Japan's neutrality. On May of that year, in a speech, he expressed: "Japan should be the Switzerland of the Far East and neutral for the same reason that Switzerland is neutral-no matter which side she might join she would inevitably be destroyed."<sup>87</sup> Even in the midst of the escalation of tensions in the Korean Peninsula that would ultimately lead to war just one month after that declaration, MacArthur continued to assert his belief on a neutral Japan, although he changed his position after the Korean War started.

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<sup>84</sup> Toyoshita, 2008.

<sup>85</sup> MacArthur, 2010, p. 303.

<sup>86</sup> MacArthur, p. 304.

<sup>87</sup> Morris, 1960, p.7.

Such a philosophical locus was also shown during the fourth meeting with Hirohito. To the monarch's suggestion regarding the US taking over Japan's security, MacArthur answered:

The fundamental interest of the United States is to ensure Japan's security. I want to assure you sufficiently about this point. In order to violate Japan's security, it must be necessary an amphibious operation that is not only tactically difficult, but this can neither be done as long as the United States has the current naval and air power.<sup>88</sup>

If taken in abstract, MacArthur's statement, especially the first part ("The fundamental interest..."), could be misinterpreted as an offering of some sort of guarantee by the American marshal. However, MacArthur himself denied such an interpretation two days later, after the leaked information got to the press; moreover, such version of the facts is not coherent with MacArthur's public addressees nor with his own memories and ideology. If MacArthur's statement is to be analyzed taking into consideration the overall context, it is feasible to think that the American general did not make any concrete offer to the emperor regarding the US long-term protection of Japan.

What is more, Matsui Akira, one of the emperor's interpreters, revealed the contents of the final part of the meeting, which had been intentionally erased by Okumura<sup>89</sup>. MacArthur's remarks at the end of the encounter shade light on the issue: Japan cannot guarantee its security with any armament. The best weapon to protect Japan is psychological, that is, being a defender of a world of peace. For this reason, I hope that Japan will become a member of the United Nations as soon as possible. Japan should raise a voice of peace in the United Nations and guide its heart towards world peace.<sup>90</sup>

This proves that the general thought of Japan's future as closely related to the Article 9 of the Constitution, and probably to the first strategic choice described above.

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<sup>88</sup> Kojima, 1978, vol. 3, p. 28-29.

<sup>89</sup> Matsui's diary was first published by Asahi Shinbun on August 5<sup>th</sup>, 2002. However, due to the copyright issues, it is not available for the general public. The citations from Matsui's diary were taken from the Asahi Shinbun articles' database.

<sup>90</sup> Asahi Shinbun, 2002.

Therefore, MacArthur's "security guarantee" appears to be something taken out of context, and not focused towards a long-term military alliance.

One may only speculate why the AP's source deliberately leaked only the first part of the conversation record. Nevertheless, the important element revealed during the fourth meeting, was the fundamental disagreement between Hirohito and MacArthur regarding the strategic future of Japan. The two men who had closely cooperated in order to smoothen the occupation process, no longer had their respective intentions aligned. If Hirohito wanted to tip the balance in favor of a US-Japan alliance, he could no longer rely on MacArthur. It was time then to circumscribe the American general's influence.

Another important element regarding this fourth meeting arises from its constitutional implications. It is highly significant that just three days after the promulgation of the new constitution, the one that stripped the emperor of any formal possibility for policy-making, Hirohito was conveying his position regarding the most important decision of postwar Japan. This leads to the preliminary conclusion that Hirohito was not willing to conform to his new symbolic role.

## **The "Okinawa Message"**

Thus far, the monarch had limited to exchange opinions with MacArthur and had not taken any concrete step towards materializing his own ideas. Nonetheless, after his fourth meeting with MacArthur, the emperor proceeded with a very bold diplomatic movement regarding the secession of Okinawa to the US military. As the international situation, particularly in Asia, developed towards a new global confrontation between the US and the USSR, US policy-makers started to highly appreciate the strategic value of the Ryukyu archipelago for the long-term US military presence in the region. This island chain off the Asian mainland is located in a privileged position which guarantees access to mainland China, Japan, Southeast Asia and to the Western Pacific. According to the US military viewpoint stated in several reports of the State Department throughout 1946 and 1947, holding Okinawa was crucial to sustain American naval and air superiority in the region.<sup>91</sup>

Nevertheless, the State and Defense Department could not come to an agreement regarding the administrative and legal status of Okinawa in the event of a

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<sup>91</sup> FRUS, 1947, n. 429.



separation from Japan. The military wanted to apply the same control regime, a strategic trusteeship, for all the Japanese Mandate territories (the former Germany-owned islands that were ceded to Japan as a result of WWI) as well as for the Ryukyu archipelago and other minor islands that belonged to Japan proper. Whilst the State Department officials understood the importance of these territories, their opposition to the strategic trusteeship formula was based on moral (the US had systematically opposed annexation and colonialism under the Truman administration's rhetoric), political (the total separation of the Ryukyu archipelago might have deep political repercussions in the Japanese mainland) and economic reasons (total ownership of the Ryukyus might turn into an economic drainage for the US budget). Several pieces of this debate can be found in the US Diplomatic Records along 1946 and 1947.

On April 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1947, the United Nations Security Council approved the cession of the former Japanese Pacific Mandates to US rule. Nonetheless, the future of the Ryukyu archipelago had not been yet decided within the US policy circles, and the issue was eventually dropped out of the agenda because of the lack of consensus, but this internal conflict ignited again by September of the same year.<sup>92</sup>

On the other side of the Pacific Ocean, the Katayama Cabinet was not willing to cede the islands easily. After the start of his tenure as foreign minister, in June, 1947, Ashida Hitoshi expressed that most Japanese wanted the return of Okinawa and of the Southern Kurile. Subsequently, Ashida presented on July 27<sup>th</sup> a memorandum to Acheson, which highlighted the most important points for a peace settlement with the US<sup>93</sup>. On the territorial issue, the foreign minister stated that:

The Potsdam Declaration leaves to the Allied Powers the disposition of the minor islands adjacent to the four principal islands of Japan. It is desired that in the determination of their territorial status full consideration will be given to the historical, racial, economic, cultural and other relations existing between these islands and Japan proper.<sup>94</sup>

Despite the fact that Ashida recognized the US authority to decide over the future of the “minor islands” (which included the Ryukyus), he subtly suggested that those territories should remain within Japanese sovereignty if US strategic needs

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<sup>92</sup> Elridge, 2001, p. 128.

<sup>93</sup> Elridge, 2001, p. 130-131.

<sup>94</sup> Elridge, 2001, p. 131.

could be met. The US government response to those proposals was overwhelming and left no room for doubts or misinterpretations regarding US intentions towards the archipelago. MacArthur himself, on a letter to the secretary of State dated on September 1<sup>st</sup>, asserted that:

Control over this group (the Ryukyus) must be vested in the United States as absolutely essential to the defense of our Western Pacific Frontier. It is not indigenous to Japan ethnologically, does not contribute to Japan's economic welfare, nor do the Japanese people expect to be permitted to retain it. It is basically strategic, and in my opinion, failure to secure it for control by the United States might prove militarily disastrous.<sup>95</sup>

As a result of the US unmovable position regarding the Ryukyus, Ashida and his advisers devised an intermediate solution in order to accommodate both positions. On the same month of September (on the 13th), the foreign minister presented US General Robert L. Eichelberger, the second in the chain of command of the occupation authorities, a proposal regarding giving bases to the US military in mainland Japan, but only in the event of an emergency, and strengthening the Japanese police force<sup>96</sup>. This second proposal also suggested ceding Okinawa to the US military: "The United States will maintain sufficient military strength on certain strategic points in areas outside of but adjacent to Japan,"<sup>97</sup> although there was no mention of the separation of Okinawa nor the administrative formula that ought to be employed there. However, Ashida's second proposal was not acceptable by MacArthur<sup>98</sup>, who, as explained above, was advocating for the total neutralization and disarmament of the Japanese core islands.

Simultaneously to these developments, the emperor started to act on behalf of his own diplomatic agenda. Firstly, the monarch sent a message through the palace officials asking Ashida to conduct secret briefings on diplomatic matters on regular basis<sup>99</sup>. As a result of this pressure, Ashida held a total of eleven briefings with the monarch during his both tenures as foreign minister and prime minister<sup>100</sup>. On one of

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<sup>95</sup> FRUS, 1947, n. 413.

<sup>96</sup> Elridge, 2001, p. 141.

<sup>97</sup> Elridge, 2001, p. 141.

<sup>98</sup> Hata, 1984, p. 196-197.

<sup>99</sup> Ashida, 1986, vol. 2, p. 13.

<sup>100</sup> Ashida, 1986, vol. 2.

those meetings, hosted on July 21<sup>st</sup>, 1947, Hirohito told the foreign minister that: “In the end, Japan should be in tune with the United States, and I think that it is difficult to cooperate with the Soviet Union.”<sup>101</sup> Moreover, during a second briefing on September 19<sup>th</sup>, referring to the occupation of Okinawa by the US army, the monarch expressed that it would be desirable that the US troops stayed in Okinawa “for a long period of 25 or 50 years under the fiction of a lease.”<sup>102</sup>

It is necessary to note that the first secret briefing between Hirohito and Ashida took place just one day after the foreign minister sent his first peace settlement proposal to Acheson, whilst the second briefing happened six days after Eichelberger received the second Ashida’s memorandum. This timing seems to indicate that the monarch was being informed in real time of the movements of the Foreign Ministry by a source other than Ashida himself. Actually, according to his own diary, the foreign minister was opposed in principle to report to the emperor given the constitutional implications of such meetings. Ashida wrote down the following:

Under the new constitution, to give the impression that the emperor is being overly involved in domestic or foreign affairs is not a good thing for the imperial house or for Japan as a whole. For this reason, I don’t go and conduct briefings. However, I decided that if it was the emperor’s desire, I must go.<sup>103</sup>

Therefore, one might wonder how the emperor obtained the details of the ongoing negotiations regarding Okinawa, or how he was aware of the US strategic needs. Elridge convincingly argues that such information came from Chamberlain Terasaki Hidenari. Before the war, Terasaki was a diplomat stationed in Washington who was sent home after the hostilities started. During the war, he was expelled from the Foreign Ministry as he was suspected of being “pro-Western”, and after the war he was asked by Yoshida (when the former was foreign minister) to become *Goyogakari* (御用掛), or the liaison officer between the emperor and the Foreign Ministry<sup>104</sup>. Terasaki had a fairly impressive network of acquaintances both inside SCAP and in Washington, including the newly appointed SCAP’s Political Adviser, William J. Sebald<sup>105</sup>.

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<sup>101</sup> Ashida, 1986, vol. 2, p. 13-14.

<sup>102</sup> Ashida, 1986, vol. 2, p. 13-14.

<sup>103</sup> Ashida, 1986, vol. 2, p. 13-14.

<sup>104</sup> Terasaki & Miller, 2012.

<sup>105</sup> Terasaki & Miller, 2012.

Coincidentally, later on the same day of the second briefing between Hirohito and Ashida (September 19<sup>th</sup>), Sebald received from Terasaki a message very similar to that the monarch had expressed early to the prime minister. Terasaki's words were the following: "The emperor hopes that the United States will continue to occupy the other Ryukyu Islands, including Okinawa. In the opinion of the emperor, the occupation would benefit the United States and protect Japan." Regarding the sovereignty formula of the archipelago, Terasaki suggested installing "(...) a fiction of long-term lending for 25 to 50 years or more, leaving Japan (residual) sovereignty." Finally, the Japanese official explained that: "This method will convince the Japanese people that the United States has no permanent intentions in the Ryukyu Islands."<sup>106</sup>

After receiving such proposal, Sebald forwarded it to Mac Arthur and to the State Department on September 22<sup>nd</sup>:

According to Terasaki, the emperor hopes that the United States will continue its military occupation of Okinawa and the Ryukyu Islands. In the emperor's opinion this will be beneficial to the United States and it will also ensure Japan's defense. The people of Japan fear the threat from Russia, and its intervention in Japan's domestic affairs. So this policy will have broad support ... According to the emperor, the military occupation of Okinawa should be instituted under the legal fiction that a long-term lease (25 to 50 years) has been extended to the United States by Japan, which retains sovereignty over the islands.<sup>107</sup>

This statement contrasted with Ashida's own proposal to the US military: while the foreign minister was trying to hold Okinawa to the core islands even on the second proposal by no giving any specific concessions, Hirohito was willing to cede it unconditionally in order to gain the American favor and military protection. Politically, the emperor's offer was more appealing to both the State and the Defense Department, as it implied the satisfaction of an urgent American strategic need, and, as it was formulated as a voluntary cession, it avoided any strong accusation about the "annexation" of Okinawa by the US. In that sense, Japanese historians like Ikuhiko Hata and Shindo Eiichi also point out that the monarch's proposal, if compared to that

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<sup>106</sup> Terasaki & Terasaki, 1991, p. 332-333.

<sup>107</sup> Ruoff, 2001, p. 96.

of Ashida, was aiming straightforwardly towards the American interests, and therefore, it was more agreeable<sup>108</sup>.

Nevertheless, many other scholars have raised an objection to the authenticity of this message by doubting that Terasaki really conveyed the opinion of the emperor and not his own<sup>109</sup>. Although there was not an explicit confirmation of the emperor on this regard, due to the obvious political upheaval it would have created, the message seems to be authentic. Firstly, it is highly revealing that on two different historical sources, Ashida's diary and the US State Department records, the same argument of the "long term lease fiction" is repeated, with even the same time specification ("25 to 50 years").

What is more, when the emperor was asked by Irie Sukemasa about the authenticity of this message as the issue came to the public spot after being revealed in 1979, the emperor did not deny it. Actually, his declarations were the following:

Since Chiang Kai-Shek did not participate in the occupation and the Soviet Union did not enter; the country did not become a divided nation like Germany or Korea. At the same time, if the United States had not occupied and protected Okinawa, what would have happened to not only Okinawa but all of Japan? (...) Britain had no such power, and it would have been the best to let the United States occupy it from the standpoint of maintaining the security of Okinawa.<sup>110</sup>

Hirohito's statement proves that he was very aware of the strategic implications of ceding Okinawa to the US military, and how such a decision impacted postwar Japan. Even in the event that Hirohito did not take part in the separation of Okinawa, at least the monarch showed his agreement to the overall consequences of such action.

Furthermore, Sebald himself suspected that Terasaki was really conveying the opinion of the monarch. They met again on October 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1947 to discuss several diplomatic issues. On that occasion, the chamberlain carried a second message from the emperor; according to Sebald's report, the Japanese envoy expressed that:

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<sup>108</sup> Hata, 1984; Shindo, 2002.

<sup>109</sup> Irie, 1991 (Vol X), p. 287-288.

<sup>110</sup> Ruoff, 2001, p. 96.

A realistic policy would be one which adopts, as an American perimeter, South Korea, Japan, Ryukyus, the Philippines, and if possible, Formosa. He felt that the American position in the Orient would be unassailable if a clear-cut line of demarcation of an American security zone were established with the areas mentioned as the outer perimeter.<sup>111</sup>

Sebald had no doubt that this second message represented the monarch's thoughts on security issues: "I have reason to believe that the above views are representative not only of Mr. Terasaki's personal opinions, but result from his discussions with various influential members of the Imperial Household, including the Emperor."<sup>112</sup> Certainly, Hirohito had expressed a similar idea to MacArthur on their fourth meeting regarding a security arrangement between Japan and the US. This also reaffirms that Terasaki was carrying first and foremost the emperor's opinion to Sebald.

Even though the emperor's first proposal to Sebald, known as the "Okinawa message" (沖縄メッセージ in several Japanese sources), is proved to be historically accurate, it does not mean automatically that it managed to influence the US foreign policy decision-making at the time. In order to determine this, further explanation is deemed necessary. Sebald's report on the "Okinawa message" arrived to the State Department on September 30<sup>th</sup>, 1947, at the same time that American policymakers of both the State and Defense Department were quarreling over the future of Okinawa<sup>113</sup>.

On October 14<sup>th</sup>, George Keenan, Director of the Policy Planning Staff, wrote a memorandum which outlined the general US policy towards Japan in the light of the new international situation. On the subject of the Ryukyus, Keenan stated that the options were: "(a) a U.S. strategic trusteeship over those islands and (b) a long-term lease of base areas, nominal sovereignty over the islands being retained by Japan."<sup>114</sup> On the other hand, referring to the possibility of installing military bases on the mainland, Keenan expressed that: "As to whether American base facilities would be required on the Japanese main islands, the Staff does not have the basis for an

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<sup>111</sup> Elridge, 2001, p. 173.

<sup>112</sup> Elridge, 2001, p. 173.

<sup>113</sup> Elridge, 2001, p. 211.

<sup>114</sup> FRUS, 1947, n. 429.

adequate judgment at this time.”<sup>115</sup> In this sense, the US government plainly rejected Ashida’s proposal, and let the door open for a solution that was similar to the emperor’s offer (the option “b” stated above).

In that sense, the emperor’s “Okinawa message” was mentioned for the first time amidst the debate motivated by Keenan’s report. On October 20<sup>th</sup>, General Cortland Van Rensselaer Schuyler tried to argue in favor of a long-term US military presence by stating that: “(...) the emperor, he revealed, had secretly suggested that Washington take a long-term military lease over the Ryukyus as part of a bilateral security pact and treaty.”<sup>116</sup>

Later, in February of 1948, Robert A. Fearey, from the State Department, wrote a memorandum in order to enumerate the advantages of a lease arrangement (since Keenan’s October 1947 recommendation, this was the alternative the State Department had found to the Defense Department’s strategic trusteeship option). Along with his own arguments, Fearey pointed out that one of the political benefits of the lease arrangement, was that the “Emperor of Japan has privately suggested that the United States remain in the Ryukyus under a lease arrangement.”<sup>117</sup> Furthermore, Fearey, as to calm the Army’s necessity for long term bases, also noted that “the Japanese Emperor proposed a period of 25 or 50 years or more.”<sup>118</sup> Both Schuyler’s and Fearey’s respective accounts are very solid evidence that demonstrates that Hirohito’s suggestions actually made it to the US policymakers in Washington.

After a long process of deliberation that took approximately a year, the American bureaucracy reached a decision regarding the separation of Okinawa by October 1948. On the 7<sup>th</sup>, the National Security Council announced its “Recommendation with Respect to US Policy towards Japan”, and on the 26<sup>th</sup>, a paragraph regarding the Ryukyu Islands was included into the text. This statement ordered the immediate development of US military bases in the archipelago, and that international recognition for the *de facto* separation of the Ryukyus from the Japanese territory, ought to be sought.<sup>119</sup>

Even though Hirohito’s “Okinawa Message” did not necessarily create new elements within the US strategic thinking regarding the separation of Okinawa, as the

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<sup>115</sup> FRUS, 1947, n. 429.

<sup>116</sup> Schaller, 1985, p. 105.

<sup>117</sup> Elridge, 2001, p. 220.

<sup>118</sup> Elridge, 2001, p. 220.

<sup>119</sup> FRUS, 1948, n. 588.

State Department was contemplating similar alternatives to the strategic trusteeship, it was certainly as a powerful legitimizing argument in order to defend the lease arrangement proposal. Therefore, the monarch's proposal managed to influence at least indirectly, decision to separate Okinawa from the mainland.

Furthermore, this bold diplomatic movement also reveals other elements. The emperor, as soon as 1947, had started to move behind the supreme commander because of what the former had learned about MacArthur's intentions for the future of Japan. What's more, the monarch was also detaching himself from the official foreign policy of the Japanese government (represented by Ashida), and carrying out his own diplomacy. This attempt to influence US-Japan relations by Hirohito, hallmarked the beginning of a diplomatic practice that was further enhanced during the negotiation of the peace and the security treaty with the US.

## **Between initiative and indecision: The ninth and tenth meeting with MacArthur**

The ninth and tenth meeting between Hirohito and MacArthur took place on February, 26<sup>th</sup>, 1949 and April, 18<sup>th</sup>, 1950 respectively. Before fully analyzing what transpired in those meetings, it is mandatory to understand how the internal situation in Japan, the relations with the US as well as the regional environment in Northeast Asia had changed since the fourth meeting.

On the internal political field, Katayama's Cabinet had collapsed on March 10<sup>th</sup>, 1948. After that, a Cabinet presided by Ashida, which also included some communist and socialist members, was formed but did not last for too long and was dissolved on October 15<sup>th</sup> of the same year. Ashida was succeeded by Yoshida Shigeru, who remained in power for six consecutive years. From the emperor's point of view, this change in politics was a very desirable outcome. Personally, he was not very fond of Katayama, and even less of his socialist ideas. In fact, during Ashida's tenure as prime minister, the monarch met the premier during a secret briefing on March 10<sup>th</sup>, 1948 and confided to him his worries about the socialist/communist influences on the government. According to Ashida's own diary:

I was asked, "Aren't some measures against the Communist Party necessary?"

Next...I was asked about the effect of the entry of the left into the Cabinet, and I said



that so long as it was only to the extent of Kato and Nomizo, who were pro-communist, it would not have much effect, and on the contrary the left's inclusion would perhaps serve to quiet the left.<sup>120</sup>

Ashida's government was the last time some communists and/or socialist representatives would arrive to power almost for the next 40 years during the postwar period (until 1993). On the other hand, the rise of Yoshida also signaled the enthronement of the conservatives within Japanese politics. Precisely, Yoshida himself had a great awe for the Imperial Household: he did label anyone who would ask for Hirohito's abdication as an "anti-patriotic", and also called himself a "servant of the emperor", in the crudest "Meiji man" style, during Akihito's investiture as a crown prince in 1952<sup>121</sup>. Precisely, Yoshida unofficially reinstated and regularized the tradition of secret briefings to the emperor during his premiership: he personally briefed the emperor in several occasions, and recommended also to his ministers to do the same<sup>122</sup>.

Furthermore, the exit of socialist and communist representatives from the government seemed to mark a deeper trend that was happening at that moment in Japanese society: and acute political polarization between leftist extremists and conservatives, as some sort of middle-ground social democracy was waning. The sudden victory of the Japanese socialists that led to Katayama's Cabinet formation in 1947 as the first government under the new Constitution, triggered several alarms within the conservatives and SCAP; even the emperor was aware about the popularity of the socialists/communists and the necessity of taking some sort of action to revert that trend as shown in the briefings with Ashida.

On top of that, from 1946 to 1950, former Kwantung Army (stationed in Manchuria) members that had been fallen prisoners to the Soviet Union and indoctrinated in concentration camps in Siberia, were returned progressively to Japan. Although the majority of the returnees did not supported communism, some of them became staunch advocates of Soviet Union's interests and communist propaganda<sup>123</sup>. This situation, in turn, caused a reaction from SCAP that was materialized in a letter on June 6<sup>th</sup>, 1950 from MacArthur to Prime Minister Yoshida ordering the removal of

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<sup>120</sup> Ashida, 1986, vol. 2, p. 72. The above translation was cited from Ruoff, 2001.

<sup>121</sup> Ruoff, 2001, p. 102.

<sup>122</sup> Ruoff, 2001, p. 102.

<sup>123</sup> Muminov, 2017.

all the top government officials that had communist leaning<sup>124</sup>. SCAP's directive started a process known generally as the "Red Purge", which led to the destitution of more than twenty officials and the ban of several communist organizations. As a reaction, protests opposing this measure started all around the country, headed fundamentally by left-leaning student organizations.

The US government followed these developments closely and was very worried about the polarization in Japanese politics, as shown in internal communications. For example, in a message from Sebald to the Secretary of State Acheson on January 4<sup>th</sup>, 1949, Sebald warned about the political reorganization at that time:

At the present stage of Japanese political development, however, there appears a tendency toward alignment between the extreme right and the extreme left. The more conservative elements are endeavoring to form a single conservative party, while the communists are exerting formidable leadership to organize an extreme leftist group. The important middle political area, from which a future labor party should develop, is unfortunately in a state of disorganization and disintegration.<sup>125</sup>

What is more, on the same communication, Sebald confirmed that Yoshida, due to his conservative leanings and his negation to form a government with the social democrats, was very unpopular among the SCAP ranks. Another reason for Yoshida's unpopularity was his announce on December, 1948 during an interview to the United Press, about the plans of his government to revise some "of the cases of a number of top-flight industrialists who were purged, possibly unjustly."<sup>126</sup> Furthermore, Yoshida's intentions also included the reconsideration of the sentences of politicians, as well as villages and town officials whose collaboration with the militaristic regime was not clearly proved<sup>127</sup>.

Thus far, these changes would have favored a more frequent and deeper intervention of the emperor in politics: for instance, not only did the Liberal Party (Yoshida's party) dominated the January 1949 parliamentary elections by a wide margin, but many of the officials that have served under the Meiji state and were used

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<sup>124</sup> Douglas MacArthur's Letter to Prime Minister, 1950.

<sup>125</sup> FRUS, 1949, n. 3.

<sup>126</sup> FRUS, 1949, n. 11.

<sup>127</sup> FRUS, 1949, n. 11.

to revere the emperor, were back in office due to the “de-purge” process. However, from 1947 onwards, SCAP initiated a systematic reduction on the Imperial Household power by curtailing its financial and political independence. For example, the former Imperial Household Ministry was converted into an agency dependent on the Cabinet, and, at the same time, the staff number was reduced from 6 200 to 1 500 people. Furthermore, the wealth of the imperial family (estimated at 1.5 billion yens at that moment, which was comparable with the biggest monopolies) was confiscated, and the monarchy became dependent on the national budget approved by the Diet<sup>128</sup>. These events severely cut down the information gathering capabilities of the palace bureaucracy, and consequently, reduced Hirohito’s capacity of influence.

On the other hand, the situation in Asia decreased the possibilities for a comprehensive peace treaty as the ideological struggles in several points of the region intensified. On August 29<sup>th</sup>, 1949, the Soviet Union detonated its first nuclear device which represented a turning point in the Cold War. Although at that time, the USSR was not in the condition of challenging US nuclear supremacy, the very fact that the nuclear monopoly was then broken, enlarged Soviet Union’s influence in the world. What is more, Soviet allies could then ask for protection of the Soviet “nuclear umbrella” in the event of a direct military confrontation with the US.

Furthermore, in the interlude between the ninth and the tenth meeting between Hirohito and MacArthur, the communists won the civil war in China and established the People’s Republic of China on October 1<sup>st</sup>, 1949. As a result, the Kuomintang forces were forced to retreat to the island of Formosa (Taiwan), controlled by the US. This event had deep lasting consequences for the region: the US had lost its most important ally in the region, and had to redefine its strategic preferences; as a result of the communist victory in the continent, Japanese communists rose on popularity; and finally, the Chinese Communist Party increased its support to other communist movements in the region, which aggravated tensions particularly in the Korean Peninsula and Indochina.

Once the context surrounding the ninth and tenth meeting has been explained *grosso modo*, it is possible to start analyzing how did the counterparts, the US government and emperor Hirohito, were apprehending the international situation at the time. On one side, it seems that Hirohito was very aware of the complex

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<sup>128</sup> Ruoff, 2001, p. 98.

international scenario and its implications for Japan and the Imperial Household. In spite of MacArthur's negative response to a long-term alliance during the fourth meeting, the emperor did not cede on his objective of securing a strategic bond with the US. For that reason, he started to take concrete steps towards securing an American military guaranty.

In that sense, the emperor sent a message to President Truman via Keenan on December 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1948. The message, which was transmitted orally by Keenan, stated the following:

I wish to do my best to consolidate the closest and most friendly relations between Japan and the United States, and I appreciate the lenient attitude of the American occupation forces and the tolerant treatment of the Japanese people. I am deeply grateful, and from my position as the emperor, I would like to make every possible effort to foster the development of democracy among the people of Japan in the same way as in the United States.<sup>129</sup>

On the other hand, the prospects for a unitary proposal for a peace treaty with Japan were still uncertain within the US government by 1949 because there were still many disagreements between the State Department and SCAP on one side, and the Defense Department and the Army on the other. Precisely, an intense debate within the American side was taking place days before the ninth meeting between Hirohito and MacArthur. On February 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1949, MacArthur, Sebald and Max W. Bishop (Chief of the Division of Northeast Asian Affairs of the State Department) gathered in Tokyo to discuss the security issues of Asia, and specially, the future of Japan.

During this meeting, MacArthur expressed that the situation in the Far East made it impossible to conclude a peace treaty (or, at least, a comprehensive one that included the Soviet Union and a probable communist China)<sup>130</sup>. On the other side of the discussion, Bishop told MacArthur that his office supported the US military deployment at Okinawa, and hoped for long-term military presence. In spite of that, MacArthur reaffirmed at this occasion his intended neutrality plan for Japan. He

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<sup>129</sup> Yuri & Higashi, 1974, p. 283-284.

<sup>130</sup> FRUS, 1949, n. 28.

stated that: “It would be a grave error as well as an injustice (...) to put Japan in any position except that of a militarily neutralized area.”<sup>131</sup>

In MacArthur’s strategic view, the desired course of action for the US in order to counter the Soviet Union’s influence, was to push its western perimeter to the islands off the Asian mainland, which included Okinawa, Formosa and the Philippines, but keeping Japan as a neutral area. MacArthur also shared his impression that the Army, in the person of General George Marshall, was not giving the proper attention to Asia, and that the decision of moving war ships and airplanes from the region to Europe, was a strategic mistake.

Only three days after this meeting, on February 6<sup>th</sup>, the debate on Japan’s strategic future rose to the public view due to a declaration made by Kenneth C. Royall, Secretary of the Army, during and off-the-record meeting held at the US Embassy at Tokyo that was later leaked to the press. Royall’s answers to the questions made to him revealed that, on his point of view: “Japan is, in fact, a liability and that it might be more profitable (...) to pull out all troops from Japan.” He also went as far as to state that: “the US has no moral obligation towards Japan (...) and that even though it was our duty to disarm Japan it is not our responsibility if someone else cuts Japan’s throat as a result.”<sup>132</sup>

The release of Royall’s statement shook public opinion during a very complicated moment for Japanese politics. What is more, at a second press conference on the next day, February 7<sup>th</sup>, Royall expressed that both Washington (as the State Department and the Defense Department) as well as General MacArthur, shared his opinion. Such a declaration was not certain: not only there was not actual agreement at Washington’s bureaucracy regarding the strategic future of Japan as shown in the very US diplomatic archives, but MacArthur himself always thought of the occupation of Japan as a moral obligation to the US which also carried a great strategic value, as expressed in the several previous meetings with the emperor or with other US officials.

As a response to Royall’s declarations, Dean Acheson, recently appointed as Secretary of State at that time, personally denied such ideas. In a memorandum sent to the US diplomatic missions in several points of the planet, he expressed: “(...) The US will maintain its leadership in recovery and reform of Japan and in Japan’s

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<sup>131</sup> FRUS, 1949, n. 28.

<sup>132</sup> FRUS, 1949, n. 25.

development into a self-reliant, responsible and peace-loving state. At the same time, the US will stand firm in the discharge of its military responsibilities”.<sup>133</sup>

One can only speculate how Hirohito reacted to Royall’s declarations. Taking into account that stating the US held no moral responsibility to Japan equaled to saying it did not have any obligation towards the Imperial Household either, the emperor must have been troubled by hearing such statements because it implied that all the efforts made thus far to protect himself and the monarchy beneath the US military shield, would have been in vain. Unfortunately, there is no entrance on Irie Sukemasa’s diary for the 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> of February of 1949 (and the description of the following days is rather normal and there is no mention to Royall’s statement). Nevertheless, the issue did surface at the ninth meeting with MacArthur, which proves that Hirohito was very aware of the intense debate within the US policy-making structures.

Thus far, it can be seen that there were two fundamental positions within the US government: one, based on the Army’s strategic conception of Europe’s superior value compared to Asia, advocated for the abandonment of Japan after the occupation finished, whilst the other, founded on the recognition of Asia’s strategic importance to the US and supported by the State Department and SCAP (personified in MacArthur), proposed the neutralization of Japan by a more desirable multilateral treaty, and the establishment of a US military presence in the Japanese archipelago limited only to the Ryukyu islands.

Nevertheless, apart from the debate itself, the most relevant element to point here is that, at least until the ninth and tenth meeting between Hirohito and MacArthur, there was not a significant advocacy within the US government, not even in the State Department, that supported a unilateral treaty with Japan and neither a long-term US military presence in Japan’s main islands. Precisely, on the National Security Council recommendations of October 7<sup>th</sup>, 1948 (NSC 13/2), there is no specific reference to any security arrangement with Japan other than developing military bases in Okinawa (as explained before) and in Yokosuka, Tokyo. According to the text, the decision on a final US strategy towards Japan was postponed:

A final U.S. position concerning the post-treaty arrangements for Japanese military security should not be formulated until the peace negotiations are upon us. It should

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<sup>133</sup> FRUS, 1949, n. 32.

then be formulated in the light of the prevailing international situation and of the degree of internal stability achieved in Japan<sup>134</sup>.

Neither was Yoshida himself and his supporters in favor of a military alliance with the US, as it would be proved later in this chapter.

Once the context surrounding the ninth and tenth meeting is explained, it is possible to fully comprehend what transpired at both occasions. The ninth reunion started with MacArthur straightforwardly bringing up the topic of the peace treaty by stating: "I think it is desirable to see the conclusion of the peace treaty as soon as possible." However, as a response, Hirohito warned about the conclusion of an early (and multilateral) peace treaty: "If the Soviet Union spreads communist ideas and invades Korea, it is feared that the people will be extremely upset. I think that the Soviet Union's praise for early peace is nothing less than the intention to buy the public's enthusiasm for communism."<sup>135</sup>

Therefore, MacArthur was presented by the emperor with the dilemma between the former's own idealistic plan for Japan's neutrality and the threat of Soviet expansion based on Hirohito's realistic perception regarding the international situation in East Asia. To his, the general replied: "I think we have to think of some way to regain sovereignty and at the same time ensure Japan's security." MacArthur tried to balance between his ideals and the overall reality. He continued to dwell on this subject: "It would be better if Japan could ensure its security by maintaining complete neutrality. However, the United States cannot leave Japan in a vacuum situation that leads to aggression."<sup>136</sup>

Furthermore, MacArthur was also very worried about the prospects of a unilateral treaty with the US, an idea that he personally rejected, and exposed his reasoning to the monarch:

Even if Japan is not completely armed, it will not be able to protect itself from aggression. It will warp and act as a lightning rod, leading to aggression. Not only will Japan not be safe, but it will lead the Japanese economy to collapse.<sup>137</sup>

The only solution that he could possibly foresee to this dilemma was that:

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<sup>134</sup> FRUS, 1948, n. 588.

<sup>135</sup> Asahi Shinbun, 2002.

<sup>136</sup> Asahi Shinbun, 2002.

<sup>137</sup> Asahi Shinbun, 2002.

Anglo-American troops will need to be stationed as a transitional measure for several years. It will be similar in character to the U.S. forces in the Philippines after independence, the British troops in Egypt, and the U.S. forces in Greece.<sup>138</sup>

This was the first time that MacArthur, in the light of the evolution of the situation in East Asia, yielded his ideals partially and complied in part with Hirohito's desire for a unilateral alliance and a long-term US military presence. Nevertheless, as it was shown during MacArthur's previous declarations, the strategic views of the American general and of the Japanese monarch were still far from each other, although they were starting to coincide in the joint response to the Soviet (and Communist China)'s threat.

Hirohito seized the opportunity to refer to Royall's declaration made earlier on the same month:

Despite the subsequent denial, the Secretary of Defense's theory of abandonment of Japan still raises concerns in Japan. There are some worries that the United States will abandon Japan if Chishima<sup>139</sup> is occupied by the Soviet Union as Japan and Taiwan fall into the hands of the Chinese Communist Party.<sup>140</sup>

It can be inferred that this statement reflected the emperor's own thoughts on Royall's declarations which he tried to veil as some sort of generalized concern. Hirohito was doubtlessly worried about the prospects of the internal debate within US policy-making circles regarding the future of Japan, and the implications of that decision for the Imperial Household and, given the penal immunity granted to him by MacArthur and other US officials, for his own life if the issue of war responsibility were to be brought to trial due to communist influence.

MacArthur plainly denied Royall's strategic view by expressing that:  
That statement was truly unfortunate. But US' policy is completely unchanged. The United States is determined to protect the Far East from communist aggression. The

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<sup>138</sup> Asahi Shinbun, 2002.

<sup>139</sup> Chishima was the administrative name of the Kurile Islands from 1869 until the Soviet occupation of 1945.

<sup>140</sup> Asahi Shinbun, 2002.



United States will stay in Japan and fight decisively to defend the peace of Japan and East Asia.<sup>141</sup>

The American general reiterated the statement made earlier in the meeting regarding guaranteeing Japan's security, to which Hirohito answered pleasantly: "I am relieved to hear your argument"<sup>142</sup>. This "relief" feeling from the monarch's side actually signaled that the two men had reached a tacit agreement on the stationing of US forces in Japan after the occupation period finalized (although they were still not on the same track regarding the format of the peace treaty).

MacArthur became more aware of the unfeasibility of his ideals between the ninth and tenth meeting with Hirohito (February 1949-April 1950). On several communications during that period, the American general expressed more frequently the necessity for stationing US troops after the end of the occupation. In that sense, Sebald reported MacArthur's thoughts on the US military forces on Japan during an interview they held on July 23<sup>rd</sup>, 1949: "General MacArthur apparently still feels that a treaty of peace should be negotiated at the earliest possible moment with the proviso, however, that United States troops remain here until such time when their withdrawal becomes feasible."<sup>143</sup> As a result of the regional security situation, the American general did not longer perceive the end of the occupation and the signing of the peace treaty as the deadline for US total military withdraw from Japan, as it was his original stand on the occupation's purposes and timing.

Moreover, on January 9<sup>th</sup>, 1950, US Ambassador to Japan, Philip C. Jessup, held an informal meeting with MacArthur that served for the general to express his personal opinion on the matter of the peace treaty. According to Jessup's report:

This led him to a consideration of the future status of Japan and the possibilities of its long-term neutralization. (...) Japan could, however, be a neutral spot to the advantage of the United States and of the Soviet Union as well. We should be able to convince the Russians that here at least their interests and ours were parallel. (...) He saw no reason why the Russians should not agree to the security provisions which we desire for the Peace Treaty. In any case he thought we should proceed actively to

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<sup>141</sup> Asahi Shinbun, 2002.

<sup>142</sup> Asahi Shinbun, 2002.

<sup>143</sup> FRUS, 1949, n. 120.

negotiate the treaty if necessary ending up with a treaty to which the Soviet Union and China would not be parties.<sup>144</sup>

The US position in the Asian mainland had deteriorated so badly in the eyes of MacArthur (in light of the communist victory in China), that it seems he had considered by the beginning of 1950 and before his tenth meeting with Hirohito, the possibility of a unilateral peace treaty with Japan.

It is not possible to determine to what extent MacArthur's strategic thought was being influenced by Hirohito's realism; however, among the two forces that were pressing the American general to choose sides (the "disengagement" camp from the Defense Department and the "further engagement" from the State Department), the Japanese monarch clearly and fervently stood on the second camp. One can assume consequently, that Hirohito's influence was also part of the efforts for tilting MacArthur towards a unilateral peace treaty.

The tenth meeting between the two men took place on April, 18<sup>th</sup> 1950. On this occasion, as the Chinese communists had triumphed in the civil war, and skirmishes on the Korean Peninsula were escalating, the prospects for a comprehensive peace treaty with Japan were fading away. Moreover, the Soviet Union had reopened the case of Hirohito's war responsibility on February of that year<sup>145</sup>, which gave a stronger motivation for the monarch to achieve a peace treaty which would deny Soviet influence. Precisely, the discussion during the tenth meeting started by Hirohito stating that: "I think that establishing a peace treaty is the first priority for Japan, but the situation of international affairs does not always match, and it seems difficult to agree on the intentions of the four major powers."<sup>146</sup>

At this point, Hirohito and MacArthur had gotten to the same conclusion: although a peace treaty was still desirable, the regional security environment made a comprehensive treaty unviable. It seems that the external situation, as well as MacArthur's perception of that situation, were moving the American general's plans close to those of the Japanese emperor. Even against his own ideals, MacArthur was driven to state that "In conclusion, I regret to say that the establishment of a peace treaty with Japan is uncertain."<sup>147</sup>

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<sup>144</sup> FRUS, 1950, n. 686.

<sup>145</sup> Bix, 2000, p. 640.

<sup>146</sup> Asahi Shinbun, 2002.

<sup>147</sup> Asahi Shinbun, 2002.

Hirohito continued the dialogue by asking: “Regarding Japan's security issue, does the United States have a weaker focus on the Far East than in Europe, doesn't it?”<sup>148</sup> Hirohito was aware of the US “disengagement” in the Korean Peninsula (an action criticized by MacArthur and that would eventually lead to the invasion from North Korea<sup>149</sup>), and the threat that it represented for Japan. MacArthur actually agreed with Hirohito on that point: “The United States has traditionally adopted a Europe-first policy. I think this imbalance has led to the tragedy of China. U.S. public opinion has gradually become aware of the situation and focused on the Far East.”<sup>150</sup> During his previous meeting with Sebald and Bishop, and even on his memoirs, the American general exposed this thought also: he believed that the US’ Europe-first policy was to blame for the communist triumph in China. Furthermore, in a previous letter addressed to the secretary of State on June 16th, 1949, MacArthur had strongly criticized the apparent attempts of the Defense Department to “disengage” from Japan, as it would imply to cede to the advance of communism in Asia<sup>151</sup>.

Hirohito tried to capitalize MacArthur’s disappointment with the overall general US’ strategy by introducing the element of ideological cooperation: “I think we must counter (communist) ideology with the cooperation of nations that share a common view of the world.”<sup>152</sup> To this MacArthur answered: “Communism aims to conquer the world with a dictatorship based on Marxism. The means are skillful and extremely eager to resort to violence. I think liberal countries must be fully aware of the danger and cooperate with each other.”<sup>153</sup> MacArthur was an idealist as much as he was an anti-communist. In that sense, since Hirohito had never been a liberal himself, anti-communism was one of the few points the two men had in common, and a breach that Hirohito started to skillfully explode in order to convince the American general to comply with a unilateral peace treaty. Precisely, when it came to grasping the Soviet threat, MacArthur seemed to incline towards Hirohito’s plans:

It would be ideal for Japan to maintain permanent neutrality. It should also be beneficial to both the US and the Soviet Union. However, the United States cannot

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<sup>148</sup> Asahi Shinbun, 2002.

<sup>149</sup> MacArthur, 2010.

<sup>150</sup> Asahi Shinbun, 2002.

<sup>151</sup> FRUS, 1949, n. 99.

<sup>152</sup> Asahi Shinbun, 2002.

<sup>153</sup> Asahi Shinbun, 2002.

trust the Soviet Union when looking at the Soviet world view and the actual policies of the Soviet Union.<sup>154</sup>

Despite the fact that MacArthur's position had approached that of the emperor, he didn't fully approve the separate peace proposal or the US military bases in Japanese main islands. This was motivation enough for Hirohito to reaffirm what he had learned since the fourth meeting with the general in 1947: the direct channel with SCAP wouldn't be enough to obtain a US's permanent security guarantee. Therefore, he needed to use alternative diplomatic paths to achieve his objectives.

## **Did the Emperor move first? Setting the stage for the negotiations**

By the beginning of 1950, neither the US government nor Yoshida's supporters were in favorable condition to advance with the negotiations of a peace treaty proposal. It has been already shown that the different US bureaucratic branches were quarreling over the strategic future of Japan ("disengagement" VS "further engagement"), for which reason they were in no position to proceed with a viable diplomatic proposal. Furthermore, MacArthur, a person with a decisive influence over Japan at the time, did not support the second option wholeheartedly.

On the other hand, the Japanese side could not muster the sufficient political support to advance in the peace treaty agenda. What is more, Yoshida's government was systematically torpedoed by SCAP. Yoshida's conservative leaning and several of his political decisions, including the controversial "de-purge", were not of the liking of many officials inside the occupation authorities. As result, Yoshida's credibility vis-a-vis the US government was progressively tarnished. Sebald warned about this in the beginning of 1949:

(...) it appears more than coincidental that the frequency of such (SCAP) intervention has increased during the tenure of the Yoshida Cabinet, for there is little doubt of Mr. Yoshida's unpopularity among some sections of General Headquarters (...)

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<sup>154</sup> Bix, 2000, p.115.

Intervention, however, not only undermines Mr. Yoshida's position, but in the present political situation primarily benefits the extreme left.<sup>155</sup>

SCAP's actions towards the Yoshida Cabinet were alienating the only viable political force with which negotiate a peace treaty, given its popularity and the tacit support granted by the emperor.

Yoshida's position was certainly in favor of allowing some US military presence in Japan, but as a result of the complexities of Japanese politics and SCAP's own influence, he became ambiguous by giving "mixed signals"<sup>156</sup> to the US government. Precisely, ten days before the tenth meeting between Hirohito and MacArthur, on April 8<sup>th</sup>, 1950, Yoshida had an interview with Cloyce K. Huston, counselor at the US Embassy to Japan. Despite the fact that the Japanese prime minister avoided "any specific commitments," he allowed "the inference that he would be favorably disposed toward whatever practical arrangements the United States might consider necessary in order to assist Japan in the maintenance of her security in the post-treaty period."<sup>157</sup>

Nonetheless, one week after the tenth meeting, Yoshida sent both Ikeda Hayato, Minister of Finance, and Shirasu Jiro, a diplomat, as special envoys of the prime minister to the United States. On this trip, Ikeda made a very significant statement on the willingness of the Japanese government to advance with the negotiations: "If it is difficult for the American side to offer such a request, the Japanese government may study how to make an offer from the Japanese side."<sup>158</sup> On the other side, Shirasu carried the opposite, and discouraging, message: "It is also constitutionally difficult to prepare US military bases in Japan under this agreement. The number of Japanese who oppose such an agreement will increase."<sup>159</sup>

According to the record of Joseph M. Dodge, financial advisor to MacArthur and member of the American counterpart that received the Japanese delegation headed by Ikeda and Shirasu, neither the US nor Japan were yet ready to compromise on a solid proposal. In spite of his other declaration about a proposal from the Japanese side, Ikeda confessed to Dodge that the Yoshida Cabinet was in no favorable position to make a public offer to the US because of the opposition's continuous

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<sup>155</sup> FRUS, 1949, n. 3.

<sup>156</sup> The term is employed as authored by Toyoshita (Toyoshita, 2008, p. 116).

<sup>157</sup> FRUS, 1950, n. 703.

<sup>158</sup> Miyazawa, 1991, p. 55-56.

<sup>159</sup> Miyazawa, 1991, p. 55-56.

attack on the issue of the military bases<sup>160</sup>. In short words, although they had won a majority of seats in the Diet, the Japanese conservatives were still internally constrained by the repercussion the base issues might have in the public opinion.

Furthermore, Yoshida's public addresses did not show as much commitment to the US long-term military presence as he had shown on private. The main reason for that "ambiguity" was, again, the pressure from the opposition. Yoshida's political opponents, especially the communists and socialists, had seized the opportunity to firmly oppose the cession of territory to the US military and drew the issue to public opinion, which let the prime minister on the horns of a dilemma: to oppose the bases as to please the rampant public rejection to them and to lose the American security guarantee, or to decisively advocate for the bases and forfeit much of the political support his party had earned thus far, which equaled to political suicide. That's why in several interpellations on the Diet, Yoshida had to invoke his pacifist inclinations. Precisely, on July 19<sup>th</sup>, he expressed: "I don't want to lend any military base."<sup>161</sup>

What is more, the American side was very aware of the ambiguous position of the Japanese government, and the reasons behind that posture. During a top-level meeting between officials of the US State Department and Defense Department, the attitude of the Yoshida Cabinet was explained as follows:

There was a recent tendency in Japanese opinion away from the granting of military bases to the United States and that this tendency was likely to harden Japanese public opinion. Whereas Mr. Yoshida had cleverly avoided committing himself for or against bases—although he no doubt favored them—the leaders of the opposition have charged that Yoshida is preparing to grant bases and have publicly taken the position that bases should not be granted (...).<sup>162</sup>

Therefore, if none side of the negotiations was ready to comply with successful peace treaty proposal, how was this stall finally surpassed? There might be two reasons for the ultimate overcoming of the deadlock: the arrival to a final consensus within the American side (motivated by the appointment of John F. Dulles

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<sup>160</sup> FRUS, 1950, n. 714.

<sup>161</sup> Toyoshita, 2008, p. 116-117.

<sup>162</sup> FRUS, 1950, n. 708.

as the chief negotiator, and the outbreak of the Korean War) and Hirohito's direct intervention on the negotiations.

First, one must examine the changes that were taking place within the US government. On April 6<sup>th</sup>, 1950, John Foster Dulles was appointed as a special advisor to the Secretary of State Dean Acheson<sup>163</sup>. Dulles, who would become Secretary of State himself during Dwight Eisenhower's administration (1953-1961), was a seasoned diplomat with more than 40 years of career by the time he was appointed to the post. He was a diplomatic heavyweight who had worked in the US mission to the Versailles Peace Conference after WWI and would lead the US delegation to the San Francisco Peace Conference after WWII, and held many other posts. Ideologically, Dulles was a convinced Republican and a realist (a "God's Cold Warrior", as he has been also labeled<sup>164</sup>), which differentiate him from MacArthur. Dulles' role would prove to be decisive in the final overcoming of several obstacles to the peace treaty within US government, especially the Defense Department/State Department turf, and in the direct negotiations with the Japanese side, including with Hirohito himself.

In that sense, as soon as he was appointed, Dulles started to muster consensus within the American bureaucracy regarding the peace treaty. On April 7<sup>th</sup>, he carried out his first briefing on the issue of the peace treaty. On Dulles' view, there should have not been any neutrality clause on the peace treaty as "it had no meaning for the Russians". On the subject of US military bases on Japanese soil, he didn't see any utility for military bases (outside of Okinawa), although his position was adjusted later in the same year in order to assert the necessity of the bases due to the Defense Department's influence. Dulles was also firm in guaranteeing a sort of defense commitment towards Japan<sup>165</sup>.

It seems that by the end of April, 1950, the State Department and the Defense Department were about to reach a consensus regarding a necessary US military presence in Japan. During the April 24<sup>th</sup> meeting, several top officials of both governmental branches appeared to have accorded on excluding the USSR and communist China from the negotiations with Japan, and holding a perimeter defense line which included the entire Japanese archipelago and not only Okinawa<sup>166</sup>. By May

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<sup>163</sup> His nomination became effective on April 19<sup>th</sup> (Bix, 2000, p. 640).

<sup>164</sup> Wilsey, 2021.

<sup>165</sup> FRUS, 1950, n. 702.

<sup>166</sup> FRUS, 1950, n. 708.

5th, the American side had also agreed that “the treaty should not authorize, nor should it prohibit the rearmament of Japan.”<sup>167</sup>

June 1950 was a decisive month for the final consensus within the American side, and a turning point in the US government indecision towards the strategic future of Japan. On the same month, a delegation from the Defense Department headed by Secretary Louis A. Johnson (June 17-23) and another mission from the State Department led by Dulles (June 21-27), overlapped their respective missions at Tokyo. Furthermore, Dulles met with MacArthur and according to the former’s report, he obtained a tacit consent from the supreme commander to proceed with the treaty stipulations that had been agreed thus far, although MacArthur still insisted in the necessity of Japan’s neutrality. What is more, MacArthur even assured Dulles that the Japanese would give the US the right to deploy military bases on Japan’s soil<sup>168</sup>.

On the other hand, on June 25<sup>th</sup>, North Korean dictator Kim Il Sung launched an all-out invasion on the Republic of Korea. The communist attack surprised the American forces stationed in both Korea and Japan, and shocked the US policymakers as it revealed the several flaws of the US strategic position in Asia, and the urgent necessity for reaching a peace settlement with Japan. Sebald reported the impact of the war in Tokyo in the following way: “The events in Korea have demonstrated to Japanese the dangerous import of Communist line of over-all peace, no bases and connotation of immediate withdrawal of American troops.”<sup>169</sup>

However, the Japanese side apparently was not as ready to commit to a peace treaty as the American side, according to Dulles’ report about the treaty-related mood in Japan. During his June 1950 trip to Japan, Dulles apprehended that there was a unbalance regarding internal consensus and commitment willingness between both sides of the negotiations. Despite the fact that the American policy-makers had progressively arrived to an accord, which would be somehow sketched after the initiation of hostilities in the Korean Peninsula, Japanese politicians<sup>170</sup> were not tuned between themselves, and least with the US’ position<sup>171</sup>.

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<sup>167</sup> FRUS, 1950, n. 712.

<sup>168</sup> FRUS, 1951, n. 721.

<sup>169</sup> FRUS, 1950, n. 726.

<sup>170</sup> Dulles interviewed members from Yoshida’s party, the Democratic Party headed by Tomabechi Gizo and the Socialist Party. It goes without saying that he didn’t converse with any member of the Communist Party.

<sup>171</sup> FRUS, 1950, n. 728.



Moreover, on June 22<sup>nd</sup>, Dulles sustained an interview with Yoshida. The former was disappointed of the latter's inability to commit to a security agreement with the US; on Dulles' words:

Yoshida was vague as to what exact role he envisioned for Japan and did not commit himself on post-treaty security arrangements. He implied that satisfactory arrangement could be concluded, but he could not be tied down as to exactly what he meant (...) There was no apparent realization that it would take more than good intentions to protect Japan, and there was a reluctance, in the face of prodding, to admit that Japan would have to contribute its share in some form or another.<sup>172</sup>

This last statement was probably a reference to the bases issue, and to Yoshida's inability to carry on with the US proposal.

Therefore, if the Japanese side (specifically, Yoshida and other conservative politicians) was not ready to agree with the US regarding the bases issue, why did MacArthur give such an assurance to Dulles about the success of the proposal? One might speculate that MacArthur's confidence was not based on the prime minister's position, but on the conversations he had held previously with the emperor. Precisely, on his last meeting before Dulles' visit (the tenth one), Hirohito and the American general had agreed on the necessity of cooperate as to counter communism in Asia, with a possible glimpse to an US military deployment in Japan. It is possible to affirm that, given the timing of MacArthur's assurance and the fact that within the Japanese side, only the emperor agreed with the presence of the US military in the after-treaty period, MacArthur, and Dulles also, were counting, probably intuitively as evidence allows to examine thus far, on the monarch's influence for the positive outcome of the negotiations.

Precisely, in spite of Dulles' overall dissatisfaction with the little advance Japanese politicians had had even in the aftermath of the outbreak of hostilities in the Korean Peninsula, he was specially surprised by a message sent by Hirohito himself before leaving Japan. But, before analyzing how the emperor was moving in this context, it's necessary to examine the monarch's reaction to the Korean War.

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<sup>172</sup> FRUS, 1950, n. 728.

According to Irie's diary, Hirohito received the news about the war on the same 25<sup>th</sup> by the newspaper: Irie wrote down that the situation on the Peninsula "had become dangerous."<sup>173</sup> After that, Takanobu Mitani, a former diplomat and the emperor's chamberlain at the moment, briefed the monarch on the ongoing situation<sup>174</sup>. According to Mitani's diary, he said to the emperor that the war was only a "nearby fire" as a way to diminish the importance of the conflict, to what Hirohito strongly disagreed by stating that the war was a "fire already approaching the front gate."<sup>175</sup>

Hirohito's comment during the briefing with Mitani shows that the monarch grasped the situation as an imminent threat to Japan had the Korean Peninsula fall entirely to communist influence. During his youth, Hirohito was trained in several military matters, and therefore, he was taught that, in strategic terms, Korea was a "dagger pointing to heart of Japan."<sup>176</sup> Therefore, the monarch interpreted the war as the one of the major threats for the Imperial Household in the postwar period (second only, perhaps, to the Tokyo Tribunal), but also as an opportunity to approach the American delegation that was in Japan at the same time.

Precisely, on the night of same day Dulles had met Yoshida (June 22<sup>nd</sup>), the American diplomat held another gathering with Japanese officials, including Matsudaira Yasumasa, Grand Master of Ceremonies of the Imperial Household and special envoy of the emperor, and Harry Kern and Compton Packenham, two American journalists. They had created two years before the American Council on Japan (Toyoshita also labels this as the "Japan Lobby"), an organization destined to foster economic relations between Japan and the US<sup>177</sup>. Kern and Packenham disagreed with most of MacArthur's occupation policies towards Japan, especially with those related to the Imperial Household, and, on top of that, they had privileged access to several Republican politicians such as Dulles himself because of their ideological similarities<sup>178</sup>.

According to the diary of one of the officials present in this meeting (Watanabe Takeshi from the Ministry of Finance), Dulles strongly criticized

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<sup>173</sup> Irie, 1990, vol 4, p. 314.

<sup>174</sup> Irie, 1990, vol 4, p. 314.

<sup>175</sup> Ruoff, 2001, p. 103.

<sup>176</sup> This phrase was originally stated by Jacob Meckel, a German military adviser to the Meiji government, in the context of the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and as a reference to the contradictions with China that led to the first Sino-Japanese War (1894-1895). The reference is taken from (Ruoff, 2001, p. 103).

<sup>177</sup> Bix, 2000, p. 641.

<sup>178</sup> Toyoshita, 1996.

Yoshida's exposed posture during his previous meeting and reaffirmed that the initiative for Japan's alignment with the US should come from within Japan<sup>179</sup>. Precisely, the last meeting Dulles had in Japan before returning to the US, on June 26<sup>th</sup> (one day after the hostilities in Korean Peninsula started), was held in the presence of Matsudaira, and organized by Kern and Packenham. Having previously known of Yoshida's failure and Dulles's disappointment, the emperor seized the opportunity to send a message via Matsudaira<sup>180</sup>. According to Dulles' report, the Japanese palace official stated that "(...) when officials from the United States came to investigate conditions in Japan they only saw Japanese in the Government or Japanese who had been officially approved by SCAP and that many intelligent Japanese were not available for consultation."<sup>181</sup> In that way, Hirohito was putting the blame of the Japanese side's inefficiency in securing consensus on the new generation of politicians that arose to power as a result of SCAP's occupation reforms.

The message continued as follows: "(...) many of the older people, the majority of whom have been purged, would be able to give most valuable advice and assistance to Americans interested in future relations between our two countries."<sup>182</sup> The monarch was clearly communicating to Dulles that the "true" Japanese opinion was not that of the elected representatives the American advisor had met thus far, but that of the purged officials. In a sense, Hirohito was conditioning his support for a successful end of the negotiations, a very pressing issue for the US at that moment, to the rehabilitation (the "de-purge" process initiated by Yoshida's Cabinet) of those men that served under his orders.

Finally, the message concludes saying that:

There should be set up some form of advisory council of Japanese who would be truly representative of the people in Japan, both official and non-official, and who would be able to be of real aid in helping to obtain a peace settlement which would be lasting and in the interest of both countries.<sup>183</sup>

In that way, Hirohito had achieved to informally become a part in the negotiations for the peace treaty. This was the result of the several meetings he held

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<sup>179</sup> Watanabe, 1983, p. 517-522.

<sup>180</sup> It is likely that the emperor had known of Yoshida's failure to assure Dulles regarding the bases issue via Matsudaira.

<sup>181</sup> FRUS, 1950, n. 728.

<sup>182</sup> FRUS, 1950, n. 728.

<sup>183</sup> FRUS, 1950, n. 728.

with MacArthur and the realization that the future of the Imperial Household and Japan could not be left in hands of the American general given their fundamental ideological differences. MacArthur, who once was Hirohito's "lifesaver" vis-a-vis the Tokyo Tribunal and the war responsibility issue, was no longer useful to obtain the peace treaty the emperor envisioned and, therefore, he was "bypassed" by the monarch. Although Hirohito would still hold another meeting with MacArthur (the last one before MacArthur's removal from office), from then onwards, the emperor's opinions related to the peace treaty were communicated straightly to Dulles.

Moreover, the monarch was boldly and progressively supplanting the Yoshida's Cabinet as the Japanese counterpart in the negotiations by giving the American side a clear and persuasive proposal, something Dulles had not encountered on his other meetings during his 1950 trip to Japan. In that regard, the emperor had found a stable indirect channel to communicate with the US government, and influence the outcome of the negotiations through Packenham and Kern. Several reasons may explain why the monarch chose this channel over other possibilities. At first glance, because of the constitutional restrictions imposed on his capacity of influence, the emperor could not openly contact Dulles, neither the Imperial Household Agency had the enough manpower or financial power to do so. Therefore, all his communications with US officials were to remain in a tight circle of very loyal people which prevented any leaking of information that could bring the Imperial Household under public criticism because of meddling in politics.

Furthermore, this movement proved that Hirohito understood that through his direct channel of communication with MacArthur, even though he held the supreme power over Japan, it was no longer possible to obtain an exclusive security treaty with the US. MacArthur continued to stubbornly defend a strategic future for Japan that was not in accord with the emperor's thoughts. The monarch ought to rely, then, on two Americans who were ideologically closer to him and to Dulles.

One may think therefore, that another option for the emperor was to influence the Japanese counterpart as to mimetically reflect his aspirations. Yoshida was well-known for his reverence to the monarchy, and had privately expressed his intention to come to an agreement with the US. Precisely, on July 14<sup>th</sup>, Yoshida briefed the monarch on the Korean War and the repercussions it might have for the peace treaty negotiations. According to Tajima Michiji's diary (the Grand Steward of the Imperial Household during the first and second round of the treaty negotiations), the briefing

lasted for 50 minutes. Hirohito commented to Tajima some of the points the former had dwelled with Yoshida:

Today, Prime Minister Yoshida came and said that the Korean problem would have a positive impact on Japan as long as the Third World War does not happen, and unless the United States does something wrong. Firstly, blowing up the overall peace proposal has become convenient.<sup>184</sup>

Nevertheless, even if the prime minister was willing to comply with the monarch's intentions regarding the peace treaty, as stated during this July 14<sup>th</sup> briefing, the political climate in Japan constrained Yoshida not to take any further step in the negotiation of the peace treaty, especially on the bases issue. Therefore, Hirohito could not expect great things from Yoshida who did not have any real possibility of materializing a deal with the US, at least during Dulles' first visit.

On this regard, the emperor continued to use this new channel of influence to further communicate with Dulles. On August 19<sup>th</sup>, the American diplomat received a second and lengthier message from the emperor. On this occasion, the message was carried to the US by Kern, who had got the message's text from Packenham<sup>185</sup>. The latter had met in Japan with several "relevant people" or "emperor's aides", although he did not mention if he met with Hirohito himself. Those people had communicated to Packenham that if the US lost in the battlefield in Korea, they would all be "beheaded"<sup>186</sup>, which was actually coherent with the perception Hirohito had about the Korean War and its implications for the Imperial Household. It seems that the reasoning of the monarch was that if the Korean Peninsula fell entirely to communism, Japan would be the next one, which would ultimately lead to the dismantling of the monarchy either by revolution or by the reopening of Hirohito's war responsibility issue. This reaffirms that to the emperor, the negotiations of a security treaty with the US were interpreted as a matter of life or death.

This second message has other interesting points: Hirohito criticized both MacArthur and Yoshida. On this regard, the monarch showed his strong disagreements with the occupation policy and with MacArthur's neutrality plans for

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<sup>184</sup> Tajima, 2021, vol. 1, p. 180.

<sup>185</sup> The Correspondence Series and Speeches Series of the Personal Papers of John Foster Dulles (1860-1988), Part 1, Kern, Harry, 1950 (1950/8/19).

<sup>186</sup> The Correspondence Series and Speeches Series of the Personal Papers of John Foster Dulles (1860-1988), Part 1, Kern, Harry, 1950 (1950/8/19).

Japan<sup>187</sup>. This state of opinion should not be surprising taking into account the conversations held between Hirohito and MacArthur, although the monarch had never dared to criticize so vividly the administration of SCAP in front of the supreme commander. The emperor also rebuked the Japanese politicians: from his point of view, they were “irresponsible” and “non-representative”, and had led to the current state of affairs by ill-advising the occupation authorities. He then rekindled on his previous suggestion of creating an “advisory group” composed by “credible and experienced people” as the only possible to improve relations between the two countries<sup>188</sup>.

Furthermore, the monarch also made a reference to the negotiations of the peace treaty: “If they were in a position to publicly express their ideas, the recent false controversy over the base issue could have been avoided by a voluntary offer from the Japanese side.”<sup>189</sup> Taking into account the internal political climate in Japan, the emperor was probably talking about the July 29<sup>th</sup> Yoshida’s statement to the Diet (“the recent controversy over the base issue”). It is possible to affirm then, that he knew the drawback such declarations regarding not ceding territory for the construction of US bases, meant for the overall bilateral agreement required for the peace treaty. The emperor was trying to assure Dulles that this was just a “false controversy,” which linked to his previous statement that the politicians in office, including Yoshida, were “non-representative,” which meant that Yoshida’s posture ought not to be considered as the actual position of the Japanese side.

What is more interesting here, is the expression regarding a “voluntary offer from the Japanese side”. If one retraces back this declaration, it might notice that Ikeda Hayato had made a very similar statement on his April 1950 trip to the United States, just a week after MacArthur and Hirohito met for the tenth time. If it is also considered that Shirasu confessed on the same trip to Dodge, MacArthur’s adviser, that the Yoshida Cabinet was in no position to make a favorable statement regarding the bases issue<sup>190</sup>, one may conclude that actually there was no contradiction on Ikeda’s statements because he was carrying two different messages from two different

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<sup>187</sup> The Correspondence Series and Speeches Series of the Personal Papers of John Foster Dulles (1860-1988), Part 1, Kern, Harry, 1950 (1950/8/19).

<sup>188</sup> The Correspondence Series and Speeches Series of the Personal Papers of John Foster Dulles (1860-1988), Part 1, Kern, Harry, 1950 (1950/8/19).

<sup>189</sup> The Correspondence Series and Speeches Series of the Personal Papers of John Foster Dulles (1860-1988), Part 1, Kern, Harry, 1950 (1950/8/19).

<sup>190</sup> FRUS, 1950, n. 742.

sources: on one side, the Japanese government public position regarding its inability to commit as a result of the opposition pressure, and on the other, a proposal from the emperor who was not bound by any political turfs and wanted to obtain a US security guarantee as soon as possible.

The connection between the message delivered by Ikeda earlier in April 1950, and this second message to Dulles sent in August, leads to a striking fact: the emperor started to move in order to influence directly the outcome of the negotiations even before Dulles' first trip to Japan. In this sense, it only took a week to Hirohito, between his tenth meeting with MacArthur (April 8<sup>th</sup>) and Ikeda's arrival to the US (April 15<sup>th</sup>), to decide to "bypass" the supreme commander and to communicate with Washington officials. One may even argue that the emperor moved first in the negotiations, because during April of 1950, his counterpart (Dulles) was starting to muster consensus within the American side and would still need another two months to go to Japan and meet with Japanese politicians.

Hirohito's bold actions drew another unexpected result: during this stage of the negotiations of the peace treaty, he progressively supplanted the Yoshida Cabinet and became the only valid counterpart on the personal negotiations with Dulles, which meant that the monarchy had become *de facto* the "Japanese side" on the negotiations between both countries. Hirohito was not as politically restricted as the prime minister: actually, his "symbolic" position was the perfect shield to avoid any suspicion within Japan regarding his diplomatic activities, which eventually gave him free hand in the treatment with US officials.

In parallel, the American side had also recognized Hirohito as the only viable Japanese speaker. Dulles had been pleased by receiving a concrete proposal from the monarch during his trip to Japan, which, if coupled with the disappointment he felt regarding Japanese politicians, might have biased him towards listening to the monarch. Moreover, the US officials were de-legitimizing Yoshida, or any other Japanese politician, as their counterpart because of the latter's indecision to come to an agreement with the bases issue.

Several US documents prove this point. For example, on August 4<sup>th</sup>, 1950, in a report from Sebald to the secretary of State regarding a conversation with the Japanese Vice-Minister of Foreign Affairs (Ohta), the SCAP' political adviser commented that: "(...) no Japanese statesman could at this time publicly declare that he is in favor of granting bases or maintaining US troops in Japan subsequent to peace

treaty.”<sup>191</sup> Moreover, on September 7<sup>th</sup>, the State Department and the Defense Department finally reached an agreement on the peace treaty basic points; Truman approved the principles one day before and, on the 11<sup>th</sup>, the first drafts started to being discussed<sup>192</sup>. On this context, Sebald and MacArthur discussed on October 2<sup>nd</sup> the necessity of a second visit of Dulles to Japan in order to present the final consensus that had been within the American side.

On the question of who should Dulles meet in Japan, MacArthur explained that:

It would be a mistake to attempt to discuss the Treaty with political party leaders, firstly, because there could be no such thing as discussions on a confidential basis; secondly, because Yoshida, as leader of the Liberal Party, would strenuously object; and thirdly, because the opposition party leaders would seize upon the conversations for use as ammunition to embarrass the Government.<sup>193</sup>

Therefore, he proposed that the negotiations be carried on an “informal” base which would allow to adjust the course depending on the Japanese politicians’ willingness. Unconsciously or not, MacArthur and other American officials, partially shut the window of influence for the Yoshida Cabinet. Furthermore, MacArthur’s own meetings with Hirohito had given the monarch a privileged position which presented him as a very good candidate to be consulted in relation to foreign policy by the US side. The Japanese prime minister had been triply abandoned: by SCAP and Washington bureaucrats, by the internal opposition, and above all, by the emperor who was also bypassing him and communicating directly to Dulles without Yoshida’s acknowledgement. It is no surprise then that, when Dulles came to Japan for the second time, he naturally met with Hirohito face to face.

## **1951: Dulles’ second visit and Yoshida’s yielding**

Dulles’ second visit to Japan, from January 25<sup>th</sup> to February 11<sup>th</sup>, 1951, marked the climax for the negotiations of the peace treaty, and a bilateral security agreement between Japan and the US. During this trip, both counterparts ultimately

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<sup>191</sup> FRUS, 1950, n. 746.

<sup>192</sup> FRUS, 1950, n. 757, n. 758.

<sup>193</sup> FRUS, 1950, n. 765.



agreed on the general political and strategic matters, which paved the way for the final signing of both treaties and the end of the occupation of Japan. This visit was also a decisive proof of Hirohito's critical intervention in the negotiation process. However, it is necessary to first examine the context surrounding this historical fact.

The maintenance of the war situation in the Korean Peninsula had a double impact on Japan: it was not only constantly highlighting the strategic vulnerability of the Japanese archipelago, especially of Hokkaido, regarding a Soviet military invasion, but also strained US military capabilities as it had to wage war thousands of kilometers from its mainland (while its enemies, the USSR, China and North Korea, had the proximity advantage), coupled with many other simultaneous military operations in other parts of the globe. This caused that Japanese rearmament was regarded as a more and more urgent necessity by US policy-makers in order to release some forces from Japan.

Precisely, before Dulles' arrival to Japan, communications between Joseph L. Collins, Chief of Staff of the US Army, and MacArthur underlined the strategic vulnerability of US forces in Northeast Asia. To Collins's inquire about the possibility of moving some troops from Korea to Japan in light of Dulles' visit, MacArthur replied that, although he did not believe in the feasibility of a Soviet invasion of Hokkaido, his hands were tied down as it would have been impossible to move troops from Korea without compromising the military situation there. The situation was so dire that the supreme commander even requested that on-training US National Guard Divisions be deployed to Japan. On his final recommendations, MacArthur explained that: "The desirability of a Japanese peace treaty from both a military and political stand point is of such urgency that all practical measures should be taken without delay to negotiate such an agreement."<sup>194</sup>

The political situation was not very favorable for the US either. In Europe, the rearmament of West Germany supported by the US government, had made Soviet sensitiveness increase: actually, Collins' proposal of moving troops to Japan arose from the possibility that the Soviets might launch an amphibious operation using Dulles' visit to negotiate a separate peace treaty and a security arrangement that included Japan's rearmament, as a legitimate excuse. Moreover, the record of conversations between Dulles and Jacob Malik, Soviet Ambassador to the United

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<sup>194</sup> FRUS, 1951, n. 465.

Nations, prior to the former visit to Japan, shows that Moscow was very vocal on its opposition to the reestablishing of a Japanese military force<sup>195</sup>.

Furthermore, due to the relative delay with which the negotiations had been carried out, US' allies, namely the United Kingdom, were starting to devise their own peace proposals with Japan. On a message from Dulles to the Secretary of State Acheson on January 4<sup>th</sup>, 1951, the former warned that:

The British policy in relation to the Far East is different in many essential respects from our own and it can be assumed that the British Commonwealth proposals will not adequately take account of what the United States believes to be its vital interests in this area.<sup>196</sup>

Later, it was known on conversations with British officials that they were planning to invite the Chinese communists to the negotiations, and to severely limit Japan's shipbuilding capacity as to shrink Japan's industrial competitiveness. Dulles was certain on his appreciation on the British intentions towards the future of Japan.

This military and political situation increasingly led to the sensation of a closing window of opportunity regarding the peace treaty with Japan among US policymakers. Not only MacArthur, but State and Defense Department officials were expressing the urgency of closing the deal in order to improve the US' relative power position in Asia. Therefore, this emergency perception provoked the dispatch of a direct presidential order from Truman to Dulles to go to Japan to seek for an immediate agreement with the Japanese side. On a letter sent to Dulles and signed by the US president on January 10<sup>th</sup>, the latter clearly defines the three most important objectives the Dulles' mission must have fulfilled: to negotiate a peace treaty which allows the US to commit "substantial armed force to the defense of the island chain of which Japan forms a part," to urge Japan to "acquire the ability to defend itself" and to explore the feasibility of a Pacific Pact with other allied governments such as Australia, New Zealand and the Philippines<sup>197</sup>.

Another interesting element shown on Dulles communications previous to his departure, is the resonance of the messages Hirohito had sent to him on the previous year (1950). There is evidence to believe that the emperor's suggestions were working

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<sup>195</sup> FRUS, 1951, n. 472.

<sup>196</sup> FRUS, 1951, n. 467.

<sup>197</sup> FRUS, 1951, n. 470.

its way through the American bureaucracy. For example, on the same January 4<sup>th</sup> message to Acheson, when explaining the dangers of delaying the peace settlement, Dulles expressed: “In my opinion, further delay will substantially increase the risk that it will be impossible to obtain an unreserved Japanese committal.”<sup>198</sup> It is highly relevant that, in spite of the failure of Japanese politicians to come to an agreement with the bases issue as shown during Dulles’ first trip to Japan, he still had some faith on the likelihood of obtaining an “unreserved Japanese committal.” One might argue consequently that, taking into account that only Hirohito had systematically made such an appeal to an “unconditional offer” since the “Ikeda Mission” to the US and both messages sent to Dulles in 1950, Dulles’ hopes were placed mainly on the emperor for brokering the peace deal.

Furthermore, on a memorandum about the State Department’s policy towards Japan, dated on January 6<sup>th</sup>, the Director of the Office of Northeast Asian Affairs, Johnson, suggested that, in order for the “most competent leadership” in Japan to arrive to power, the de-purging program needed to be expanded and expedited. What’s more, this program should also assure “the orientation towards the US of those now purged leaders.”<sup>199</sup> This proposal also resonates with Hirohito’s suggestions to Dulles regarding creating an advisory council with purged officials who might prove useful for the conclusion of the peace treaty. Nevertheless, such a connection between the emperor’s messages and the US bureaucracy’s actions it is not supported by direct evidence, and one can only speculate in this sense.

Another element was also progressively tilting the scale on favor of a larger Hirohito’s role in the negotiations: Yoshida’s public disagreement with Japan’s rearmament, an urgent strategic need for the US. On January 25<sup>th</sup>, just one day before Dulles arrived to Japan, Shirasu Jiro expressly conveyed a message from Yoshida. Shirasu tried to explain the prime minister’s recent public declarations on Japan’s rearmament: as with the bases declaration of July 1950, Yoshida had made some statements regarding not rearming Japan that were very worrying for the American side. Shirasu told Fearey that the premier’s position was caused by three main reasons: the inappropriateness of contradicting SCAP and MacArthur’s disarmament policies; the probable criticism from the Australia, New Zealand and the Philippines

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<sup>198</sup> FRUS, 1951, n. 467.

<sup>199</sup> FRUS, 1951, n. 468.

respective governments; and the fact that the Japanese government had not been clearly informed about US' intentions<sup>200</sup>.

Shirasu also added that, in spite of this situation, the constitution could be easily amended as to allow rearmament in the foreseeable future<sup>201</sup>. Once again, the contradiction between Yoshida's private position (allowing rearmament through constitutional amendment) and his public addressees done in the ups-and-downs of Japan's internal political situation, was very frustrating to the American counterpart, as proved in this particular conversation. Yoshida's "ambiguity", on the rearmament issue at this time, pushed him further away from being trusted as a negotiation partner by the American side.

At the same time, Hirohito was laying the ground for meeting Dulles through his "informal channel". On January 15<sup>th</sup>, Kern sent a letter to Dulles suggesting meeting the emperor on his trip to Japan. According to the American journalist, it would be "an extension of proposal the emperor gave to you last summer"<sup>202</sup>; this was a clear reference to the messages the monarch had sent to Dulles during and after the latter's first trip to Japan. In addition, Kern argued that this was a very good opportunity to "build a lasting relation between Japan and the US". Nevertheless, at that moment, Dulles chose to be careful and refused Kern's offer: as a US presidential envoy (which was substantially different to his first mission), he could only meet with Japanese government officials and, also taking into account that after Japan, he had to visit the Philippines, Australia and New Zealand, it was not appropriate to meet the monarch as it would have upset the other US allies that were still resentful due to Japanese aggression during WWII<sup>203</sup>.

However, after Dulles arrived to Japan on January 26<sup>th</sup>, he reopened the possibility for meeting the emperor. On his first staff meeting, Dulles expressed his intentions of meeting few individuals outside of the prime minister's circle, including the monarch. According to Fearey's report: "This did not mean, however, that he would not wish to see a few persons privately, such as a personal representative of the Emperor."<sup>204</sup> On the next day, Dulles met with MacArthur: at his point, it is very insightful to understand Dulles' thoughts on the security treaty with Japan, which he

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<sup>200</sup> FRUS, 1951, n. 480.

<sup>201</sup> FRUS, 1951, n. 480.

<sup>202</sup> The Correspondence Series and Speeches Series of the Personal Papers of John Foster Dulles (1860-1988), Part 1, Kern, Harry, 1951 (1951/1/15).

<sup>203</sup> FRUS, 1951.

<sup>204</sup> FRUS, 1951, n. 481.

explained to MacArthur. The diplomat: “was anxious that the understandings he hoped to achieve be broadly based and not depend entirely on one political party which might lose power soon after the treaty was signed.”<sup>205</sup> Dulles had participated in the negotiations of the Versailles Treaty with Germany after WWI, and personally experienced how the unpopular features of the treaty had been used by the Nazi Party to foster its propaganda campaign, which eventually led the world to another cataclysmic war.

One might wonder whether this reasoning, coupled with the ideological and strategic coincidences, was also compelling Dulles to seek for Hirohito’s help. Certainly, even if Yoshida, or any other Japanese political leader, agreed to the treaty stipulations, it did not mean that such an accord was not based on circumstantial or parochial interests. On Dulles’ view, the treaty should be a matter of long term in order to support US sustained military presence in Asia. If they wanted the treaty to be shielded from the twists Japanese democracy might take, they needed the agreement to be an issue of State, and not just of Government. Thus, in Japan’s context, the person closest to be considered Head of State was doubtlessly, the emperor, even though this official title was dropped in the 1947 Constitution. On this regard, during a meeting on February 7<sup>th</sup>, several US officials (including Dulles and MacArthur), evaluated the possibility of having the emperor signing and promulgating the treaty in order to give further enforcement to it (as had happened with the new Constitution); although this proposal was finally disregarded due to its political implications for other US allies, namely Australia<sup>206</sup>.

Therefore, the consequences of Dulles’ reasoning led to a striking conclusion: the involvement of the Imperial Household in the negotiation process of the security treaty had a dual effect. On one side, the throne became the staunchest guardian of the security system derived from the treaty because it was the ultimate guaranty for the survival of the monarchy in the postwar period, as well as the protection to Hirohito’s life from the possibility of being trialed by war responsibility charges. The other effect is that, by seeking the support of Hirohito for the long-term maintenance of the treaty, the US side was, consciously or unconsciously, *de facto* recognizing the emperor as a Japanese diplomatic representative and investing him with the title of Head of State, both prerogatives that he no longer enjoyed according to the 1947

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<sup>205</sup> FRUS, 1951, n. 484.

<sup>206</sup> FRUS, 1951, n. 504.

Constitution. Therefore, since the very conception of the US-Japan alliance, the emperor was re-started to being considered the Head of the country, although this time, such an acknowledgement was based on a tacit consensus with an external actor and had no legal basis. This coincidence of interest created some sort of “symbiotic relation” between the Imperial Household and the Japan-US military alliance.

On his second trip to Japan, Dulles met with Yoshida for the first time on January 29<sup>th</sup>. The occasion proved to be as disappointing to Dulles as his first trip: according to Allison’s report, Yoshida was very cautious on the rearmament issue and suggested to proceed slowly. Also, the prime minister agreed on the fact that Japan should contribute somehow to its own security, but he didn’t specify to what extent this contribution should amount. Allison concluded that: “It appeared that Mr. Yoshida did not wish at this time to be definitely committed in any manner.”<sup>207</sup> Sebald, on his own report written on the next day, shared a very similar impression: “It is my view that the Prime Minister came to yesterday’s conference totally unprepared to discuss detailed provisions and that his remarks were more in the nature of feelers rather than any effort to come to grips with the real problems.”<sup>208</sup>

Thus, it is highly significant that Yoshida was not willing to agree *prima facie* with the US proposals about the security treaty, even though a war on the Korean Peninsula was going on at that time. Basically, Yoshida’s position was sustained on three elements. First and foremost, it seems that Yoshida’s perception on the Korean War was radically different from that of the American side and that of the emperor. Toyoshita argues that the prime minister did not feel a very great sense of urgency because of this conflict, which in the eyes of Dulles was perceived as “un-awareness”<sup>209</sup>. Yoshida’s perception on this regard could be understood from his ideological standpoint: he was an old-school liberal, and he believed in a classical liberalism old myth that states free trade eventually leads to democracy. Therefore, on Yoshida’s mind, trade was more desirable than military means (in this case, Japan’s rearmament), to counter communism.

This worldview can be examined on several of the Yoshida’s talks with Dulles regarding an apparently unconnected matter to the security treaty issue: Japan’s trade with Communist China. The prime minister opposed the US “confrontational”

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<sup>207</sup> FRUS, 1951, n. 487.

<sup>208</sup> FRUS, 1951, n. 487.

<sup>209</sup> Toyoshita, 1996.

approach towards China and suggested a more subtle stance focused on trade in order to undermine the communist rule on the Asian mainland. For example, on the same January 26<sup>th</sup> meeting, Yoshida expressed that: “(...) In the long run the Chinese would adopt the attitude that ‘war is war and trade is trade’ and that it would be possible for a reasonable degree of trade to take place between Japan and China.” He even ventured to suggest that: “Japanese business men, because of their long acquaintance with and experience in China, will be the best fifth column of democracy against the Chinese communists.”<sup>210</sup> If giving the opportunity, Yoshida would have clearly chosen a very different approach to the US strategic concepts of *contention* and *roll back*<sup>211</sup>.

The second element that sustained the perspective of the prime minister derived from his own political position: Yoshida, unlike the US officials or the emperor, was vulnerable to the attacks of the opposition parties and to Japanese public opinion. Even though he had assured a comfortable majority to rule in the Diet since the previous general elections, and, as confessed to Dulles, his party and the Democratic Party, the second most important political force, had reached a secret agreement to support the treaty<sup>212</sup>, Yoshida always needed to thread carefully in the turbulent water of the 50’s politics. Not only was he susceptible to an attack from the opposition, but he also needed to counter communist propaganda that labeled him as new “militarist” or as being the responsible of “US colonization of Japan”. Therefore, the repercussions of the negotiations with the US needed to be carefully examined by Yoshida, which made him not to rush immediately for a security agreement.

The third element is Yoshida’s own diplomatic ability. It seems that he acknowledged the weakness in US’ relative power position in Asia, and planned to obtain as many concessions as possible from the American side. In fact, Yoshida had a committee of experts draft a proposal to Dulles carrying several trade-offs points that could be exchanged for granting bases in Japanese territory<sup>213</sup>. What’s is more, the American side, namely Dulles before his arrival to Japan, recognized several times

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<sup>210</sup> FRUS, 1951, n. 487.

<sup>211</sup> “Contention” and “Roll Back” were the basic strategic principles the US used to counter communism during the Cold War. Contention referred to stop the expansion of communism outside of the Soviet sphere of influence, whilst *Roll Back* was used to destroy communist regimes where they had been established thus far.

<sup>212</sup> FRUS, 1951, n. 487.

<sup>213</sup> Toyoshita, 1996, p. 194-197.

that their position was not very strong on the negotiations, and they might have to cede many points to the Japanese side<sup>214</sup>.

Actually, the US government was vulnerable from a political standpoint to a reclamation regarding the return of the Ryukyu archipelago to Japanese sovereignty as it would undermine the self-given moral responsibility of “uplifting” the Japanese to a democratic state. Before his second reunion with Yoshida, Dulles met the leaders of the Democratic Party on January 31<sup>st</sup>: as part of the discussions, the American diplomat asked for their cooperation in “(...) discouraging action which might contribute to popular pressure for the return of the Ryukyus”. Later, on the same day, Dulles repeated the said plea to Yoshida: “He (Dulles) had emphasized to Mr. Yoshida the undesirability of allowing a campaign about the Ryukyus to get under way.”<sup>215</sup>

Despite all the diplomatic “cards” which Yoshida could have used to take more concessions from the US side, as well as his ideological and political standpoint, the prime minister yielded unconditionally on his second meeting with the American Mission. Fearey’s report tells that “Ambassador Dulles said that the meeting had been more satisfactory than the first one, specific problems of the security arrangements and stationing of troops having been discussed.”<sup>216</sup> Although there is no written record on this conversation that would allow tracking why and how Yoshida agreed to the conflicting points he had bashed just five days before, it seems that the US side was then surer of the prime minister’s new-found commitment. On several meetings with the British diplomatic personnel in Tokyo after the second reunion with the prime minister, both Dulles and Sebald assured to their counterparts that consensus had been reached on the bases and rearmament respective issues. This led to the start of the US-Japan joint drafting work as quick as February 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1951<sup>217</sup>.

Even though the American Mission had achieved its overall objectives, there was still a pending matter: whether to pay a visit to the emperor. Despite Sebald had discouraged this action on a meeting held during February 7<sup>th</sup>, to which Dulles agreed<sup>218</sup>, on his last encounter with Yoshida, on February 9<sup>th</sup>, the prime minister carried a message from the emperor. Yoshida suggested that Hirohito “(...) would be

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<sup>214</sup> FRUS, 1951, n. 467.

<sup>215</sup> FRUS, 1951, n. 491.

<sup>216</sup> FRUS, 1951, n. 491.

<sup>217</sup> FRUS, 1951, n. 496.

<sup>218</sup> FRUS, 1951, n. 501.



very pleased if Ambassador Dulles would call on him.”<sup>219</sup> The proposal regarding a meeting with the emperor that first came via Kern, was again repeated through the prime minister this time. Hirohito clearly wanted to meet Dulles (to the point that he used Yoshida as his messenger), but his objectives still remained concealed. Although Dulles was not sure about how to proceed regarding this bold request, he was eventually authorized by the State Department to meet the monarch.

The reunion took place on February 10<sup>th</sup>, along with Sebald, Matsudaira, Mitani and Matsui. The full record of the conversation reveals many interesting points about the gathering. Sebald reported it in the following way:

Ambassador Dulles also commented briefly upon the bilateral agreement, in accordance with which, at the request of Japan, United States armed forces will be stationed in and about Japan as a provisional measure, and pending such time as Japan will be able to provide for its own defense.<sup>220</sup>

To this, the emperor answered “wholehearted agreement”<sup>221</sup>: it seems that Hirohito was pleased with the final outcome of the negotiations. His long-standing intentions of securing a military guarantee from the US, which would also protect the Imperial Household, first expressed to MacArthur, later to the State Department via Ikeda, and again to Dulles through Kern and Packenham in 1950, were closer to becoming reality.

The meeting proceeded with Dulles expressing his hopes that the “(...) Emperor would lend his support, if necessary, to the proposed treaty, as, in his opinion, it is desirable that the Japanese people as a whole support the treaty which we believed to be fair and reasonable.”<sup>222</sup> As MacArthur did at the beginning of the occupation of Japan in order to ensure a smooth transition, Dulles requested the emperor’s support as to legitimize the treaty and make it a matter of State, which resonated with Dulles’ previous reasoning on the nature of the security arrangement. Predictably, Hirohito again agreed and “(...) said that he was fully in accord with the concepts mentioned.”<sup>223</sup>

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<sup>219</sup> FRUS, 1951, n. 504.

<sup>220</sup> FRUS, 1951, n. 505.

<sup>221</sup> FRUS, 1951, n. 505.

<sup>222</sup> FRUS, 1951, n. 505.

<sup>223</sup> FRUS, 1951, n. 505.

The reunion then took an unexpected turn as the issue of the war responsibility was resurfaced by the emperor himself. The monarch expressed that:

(...) he was fully aware that Japanese troops had committed many misdeeds in other countries, and that for this reason the peoples of Asia probably were not friendly to the Japanese. He hoped that Japan, by its example, could overcome the bad reputation so made, and that the peoples of Asia would live peacefully side by side with Japan. He also said that he was very sorry not to have had the power to prevent Japan from making war against the United States, but that under the existing circumstances there was little that he could do.<sup>224</sup>

This statement recalls of the first words Hirohito said to MacArthur on their initial meeting in 1945. It becomes necessary to question why would the emperor purportedly brought up the issue of war responsibility despite all the joint Japanese-American efforts to exonerate him from trial during the Tokyo Tribunal. Even though there was no immediate risk for his life and/or for the Imperial Household's survival, the ranging war on Korea coupled with the USSR's decision to reopen the trials on biological warfare, acted as constant reminders to Hirohito of the dangers surrounding Japan and on his personal vulnerability. This was a proof of the compelling reasons he had to broker a deal with the US that would ensure his protection and that of the monarchy in case the geopolitical situation in Asia turned ominous.

Dulles departed Japan on the next day (February 11<sup>th</sup>), and returned to the US on the 26<sup>th</sup>, after achieving an understanding with other Pacific allies and, specially, the long-awaited consent from the Japanese government for a security treaty as envisioned by the US government as possible. While still on Japanese soil, Dulles acknowledged the success: "(...) the Mission had achieved an acceptance of its approach by the Japanese which went beyond formal political acceptance."<sup>225</sup> Dulles himself was pleased with the somehow unexpected turn the negotiations took on his second meeting with Yoshida, which was the foundation for the final agreement. Nevertheless, one might still wonder whether Hirohito played any important role also during Dulles' second visit to Japan, apart from the ceremonial meeting of February

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<sup>224</sup> FRUS, 1951, n. 505.

<sup>225</sup> FRUS, 1951, n. 504.

10<sup>th</sup>. What's more, it can be asked if the emperor had some influence on Yoshida's unilateral yielding to the US proposals.

Certainly, the stark difference regarding Yoshida's attitude between his first and second meeting with Dulles, is suspicious at least. It is very difficult to imagine that Yoshida had proceeded the way he did without any external pressure. It becomes even more intriguing if taken into consideration that the US side, according to Dulles himself, could not exert such pressure, and that Yoshida was in a relatively good bargaining position to extract more concessions from the Americans. Why did he renounce these advantages? Why didn't he try to obtain a better deal out of the US side?

There is no available direct evidence on the Japanese side to justify Yoshida's sudden yielding. However, one might hypothesize that the necessary pressure to make the prime minister surrender came from no place other than the throne. There are at least three reasons to support this argument:

A) Yoshida sustained several briefings with the emperor before, during and after Dulles' visit.

B) The Japanese government's proposals to the drafting process of the security treaty were closely related to the protection of the Imperial Household.

C) Dulles acknowledged the role of the emperor during the negotiations in a personal message sent in 1952.

A) The tradition of secret briefings was not awkward to Yoshida. He had a deep awe for the emperor, and personally took the task of re-instating the briefings even though it was no longer acceptable under the 1947 Constitution. According to Ruoff, Yoshida made the members of his Cabinet inform Hirohito regularly<sup>226</sup>. Actually, Yoshida's plea to Dulles on February 9<sup>th</sup> regarding having an audience with emperor is overwhelming evidence that secret meetings with the monarch were taking place at the same time Dulles was in Japan<sup>227</sup>. Furthermore, the way the prime minister conveyed that message to the American diplomat suggests that he was being ordered by the monarch, although this is only an appreciation of the author.

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<sup>226</sup> Ruoff, 2001.

<sup>227</sup> However, there is no reference to the emperor hosting any audience, not even the one with Dulles on February 10<sup>th</sup>, during the period Dulles was in Japan on Irie Sukemasa's diary.

After Dulles leaved Japan, Yoshida briefed the emperor on several occasions, three of which were recorded by the Treaty Office of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The first of these meeting took place on February 14<sup>th</sup>, just three days after Dulles left<sup>228</sup>. On that occasion, the prime minister informed the emperor of the results of the negotiations with the US. Toyoshita accurately argues that the language of the report as well as the context previous to it (the Treaty Office had worked incessantly overnight in order to prepare an extensive 10,000 characters summary to the emperor), suggest that Yoshida was looking for an “imperial sanction” for the results of the negotiations<sup>229</sup>.

Although Hirohito’s comments and questions during this briefing remain largely undisclosed, the recent disclosure and publication of the diary of Tajima Michiji might shed some light on the specifics of the meeting. One day after, on February 15<sup>th</sup>, Hirohito shared with Tajima his impressions about the briefing. In that sense, regarding the results of the negotiations, the emperor commented: “I was very satisfied overall. Only the trusteeship of Amami Oshima is regrettable, but it can’t be helped. I think that this defeat is fine.”<sup>230</sup> In spite of the fact that Hirohito himself had offered Okinawa to the US military, he never planned the split-up of Amami Oshima. This island, and the rest of the Amami archipelago<sup>231</sup>, had been included in the NSC 13/2 as part of the territories that were separated *de facto* from Japan (“the Ryukyu Islands south of 29° N.”)<sup>232</sup>. However, other than that, the emperor showed his approval to the result of the negotiations, as he had expressed to Dulles on February 10<sup>th</sup>.

Furthermore, both men also dwelled on the issue of rearmament: “Yoshida said he would never remilitarize and that the National Police Reserve would be raised to 25,000. It was said that the ministry would also become the Ministry of Public Security.”<sup>233</sup> This parliament proves that the premier was not a wholehearted supporter of the rearmament of Japan, even though he had accepted the proposal vis-à-vis the negotiations with the American side.

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<sup>228</sup> 平和予約の締結に関する調書第二冊, 2002, p. 372 (1951 年 2 月 14 日の総理の内奏).

<sup>229</sup> Toyoshita, 1996, p. 201-208.

<sup>230</sup> Tajima, 2022, vol. 2, p. 66.

<sup>231</sup> The Amami archipelago is located between Okinawa and Kyushu. It was returned to Japanese sovereignty in 1953, and nowadays is part of Kagoshima prefecture.

<sup>232</sup> FRUS, 1948, n. 596.

<sup>233</sup> Tajima, 2022, vol. 2, p. 66.

These two extracts would imply, consequently, that the prime minister was reporting back to the monarch following some orders that the latter received from the former presumably at some point between the prime minister's first and second meeting with Dulles. Other experts seem to also agree with this point. For example, Associate Professor Tominaga Nozomi of Kyoto University, on an interview to *Nihon Housou Kyoukai* (NHK) related to the disclosure of Tajima's diary, explained his interpretation regarding this February 14<sup>th</sup> briefing:

The fact that secret briefings were performed was already known, but the fact that the specific content of the performance was told from the mouth of the emperor makes it a very rare and fresh record. It is written that the personnel affairs and policies of the Yoshida Cabinet were explained in advance, and I was able to confirm once again that Yoshida reported to the Emperor exactly what was happening in real time.<sup>234</sup>

This further reinforces the argument related to Yoshida's yielding to a pressure that came from no other place than the palace during Dulles' visit.

B) It might still be argued, however, that even if those briefings between Yoshida and Hirohito (or any other form of communication between them), took place during Dulles' visit, they might as well had been purely ceremonial, with the emperor not influencing the prime minister whatsoever. Nevertheless, the second element on this list, the Japanese proposals during the drafting process, proves otherwise.

The first joint drafts of both the peace and the security treaty during Dulles' visit appeared *circa* February 3<sup>rd</sup> and February 5<sup>th</sup> respectively. The drafting board was headed by Allison, representing the US side, and by Sadao Iguchi<sup>235</sup> on behalf of the Japanese government. The most remarkable point on this process was a series of modifications requested by the Yoshida Cabinet to the text of the security treaty. On February 6<sup>th</sup>, the Japanese side asked for one specific change: the addition of "through

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<sup>234</sup> Nihon Housou Kyoukai, 2022.

<sup>235</sup> Iguchi Sadao was a Japanese diplomat who had been purged during the occupation period. He was later "de-purged" in 1950, and from 1952 served as Ambassador to Canada and later to the US. Although his political career, including his return to politics, might suggest that he had some sort of bond with the emperor, no diary neither any type of record regarding any meeting with the monarch has been founded thus far. Nonetheless, on later US diplomatic communications (July 19<sup>th</sup>, 1951), Sebald was informed by Iguchi of the briefings Yoshida was having with Hirohito, which points towards Iguchi's possible involvement in that practice also.

instigation or intervention by outside Power or Powers”<sup>236</sup> to the internal riots clause of the February 5<sup>th</sup> US proposal. This addition later became part of the Article 1 of the security treaty<sup>237</sup>.

If analyzed thoroughly, that modification makes no sense according to the viewpoint of Japanese politicians: why would anyone elected by popular will be afraid of the instigation of an uprising due to foreign powers? What’s more, the abovementioned proposal from the Japanese government also suggested to add a clause “putting an end to the prosecutions of new (war crime) cases.”<sup>238</sup> This scheme had no benefit for the Japanese politicians either. Why would the new generations of political leaders that arose after the war, or the survivors of the purge process (who had been already declared innocent), even bother to stop the prosecution if they were not involved with the militaristic regime?

Despite the fact that Yoshida had actively advocated for boosting the de-purge process, he never explicitly favored halting the search for unpunished war criminals as this action relied solely on the all-mighty SCAP, and Yoshida manifested many times that he did not want to antagonize the occupation authorities. In addition, the de-purge process affected only those who had been previously removed from public office and had no implication whatsoever for any potential un-judged guilty official.

However, if this proposal is understood coupled with Hirohito’s statement regarding his innocence during his meeting with Dulles, it appears to be consistent with the monarch repeated attempts to save himself from trial and the Imperial Household from being abolished. Certainly, the emperor was probably the only one among the Japanese elite at that time who was afraid regarding the re-opening of the war trials and, ergo, the only one that could benefit from a possible exemption clause on a binding treaty, and not only as a verbal promise from MacArthur or Dulles.

In addition, this hypothesis makes even more sense in the context of the Korean War. Given that one of the main targets of communist propaganda in Japan was the Imperial Household, be there a communist uprising instigated by “foreign powers”, namely the USSR, China or a fully communist Korea, the emperor believed

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<sup>236</sup> FRUS, 1951, n. 499.

<sup>237</sup> “Japan grants, and the United States of America accepts, the right, upon the coming into force of the Treaty of Peace and of this Treaty, to dispose United States land, air and sea forces in and about Japan. Such forces may be utilized to contribute to the maintenance of international peace and security in the Far East and to the security of Japan against armed attack from without, including assistance given at the express request of the Japanese Government to put down large-scale internal riots and disturbances in Japan, caused through instigation or intervention by an outside power or powers.”

<sup>238</sup> FRUS, 1951, n. 499.

that he would be a sure target of trialing, according to his many warnings regarding the nearby war. Consequently, the monarch had manifold reasons to press either Yoshida or any other official in charge of the drafting process from the Japanese side in order to include a clause in the treaty which highlighted the dangers of the Korean War for Japan's domestic situation and/or pleading for justice exemption. Precisely, the facts that such a proposal was included and that Yoshida asked for the termination of the war trials, indicate that the monarch might have directly or indirectly influenced the Japanese negotiation team as to advocate his own interests.

Thus far, it is possible to tighten the given hypothesis regarding Hirohito's role on Yoshida's yielding: the emperor was being briefed by the prime minister during Dulles' trip and, given the timing of the Japanese government's proposals regarding the internal riot clause and the termination of the war trials (between Yoshida's first and second meeting with Dulles), it seems that the monarch found a way to pressure Yoshida which would justify the prime minister's sudden yielding to the US proposals on the security treaty.

C) The third element that points towards Hirohito's involvement in the second round of US-Japan negotiations is a personal message from Dulles to the emperor sent on April 28<sup>th</sup>, 1952. On that message, Dulles thanked the emperor for "giving him several opportunities to discuss issues related to both sides" and emphasized the importance of "His Majesty's dedication to the cause of lasting peace between the two countries."<sup>239</sup>

Two important elements arise from this short but revealing exchange. One is, as argued by Toyoshita, that according to the expressions they employed, it seemed like Dulles perceived the emperor not as mere "symbol", but as an actual negotiating partner<sup>240</sup>. This interpretation further reinforces the stated argument regarding the American side's perception of the monarch as the sole viable counterpart who to reach an agreement with. Moreover, although Dulles didn't make any specific reference to which type of "dedication" had the emperor carried out, he was tacitly recognizing that the monarch played some role in overcoming the critical point for the negotiations. Therefore, such message seems to confirm the above hypothesis: effectively, the monarch had influenced the negotiation process.

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<sup>239</sup> The Correspondence Series and Speeches Series of the Personal Papers of John Foster Dulles (1860-1988), Part 1, Hirohito, 1952 (1952/4/28).

<sup>240</sup> Toyoshita, 1996.

In conclusion, if A), B) and C) elements are analyzed together, it might be stated but with a good degree of certainty, that the emperor played a crucial role in changing Prime Minister Yoshida's stance during the second round of negotiations, which eventually led to the achievement of an agreement. Therefore, Hirohito's influence was a game-changing factor in the overcoming of one of the most important obstacles for a quick conclusion of a peace and security treaty between Japan and the US.

One might wonder however why the emperor did chose a different approach to the negotiation process during Dulles' second visit, or why didn't he take a direct path towards the American Mission like that assumed during 1950. There might be two causes that explain that change of tactics: one is related to the US' diplomacy itself. Taking into consideration that Dulles' trip to Asia also included stops in the Philippines, Australia and New Zealand after he finished in Japan, and those countries were still resentful of Japanese militarism (Australian officials claimed vocally for Hirohito's indictment as a war criminal, for example), it was not advisable to offer such public overtures to the monarch. As the US diplomats also needed to consider from a political viewpoint the opinions of the other Pacific allies, both Sebald and MacArthur discouraged Dulles' direct interaction with the emperor, and recommended to carry all negotiations through the prime minister. In this sense, during the second round of negotiations, the US had pretty much closed the door for the monarch's influence, but let a window open through Yoshida.

Secondly, the prime minister was nonetheless an important figure to take into account. Even though the emperor and the US side had devised common interests and a very similar security pact proposal, Yoshida was still an important player in the negotiations: not only was he officially the Head of Government, but also the leader of the majority coalition that was needed later in order to ratify the treaty. Therefore, it was important for both the US side and Hirohito to align Yoshida to themselves. However, only the monarch was in such a position to subdue the prime minister and make it renounce to all of his diplomatic cards in order not to further delay the negotiations.

Both factors explain the different approach taken by the emperor in light of Dulles' visit. Toyoshita (1996) accurately defines this action as "dual diplomacy" (二重外交), as it encompasses both tactics used by the monarch: during Dulles' first visit



to Japan, Hirohito opted for a direct approach, bypassing both MacArthur and Yoshida, in order to make clear to the American representative that the “Japanese side” was willing to give up unconditionally to the US proposals. As the emperor had gotten Dulles’ attention, he was increasingly considered as the only viable Japanese counterpart regarding the peace settlement. During the second round of the negotiations, he had the sufficient flexibility to understand the signals coming from both the US and Yoshida, and abandon the direct approach in favor of a subtle diplomacy carried through the prime minister. The fact that Yoshida yielded surprisingly on his second meeting with Dulles probably as a result of the monarch’s pressure, and that he later acted as a messenger for the former, suggest that Hirohito’s influence was almost ubiquitous during this time.

### **The final part of the negotiation process**

Thus far, Hirohito’s influence has been proved to be decisive for the final agreement between Japan and the US on the peace and security treaty matters. One might rightfully expect that, once an accord for the treaty was finally reached during Dulles’ second trip to Japan, the emperor would have eventually disengaged from politics and accommodate to his “symbolic” functions. Nevertheless, Hirohito continued to intervene in the treaty issues until the very end of the process. In part, the maintenance of the emperor’s intervention in the negotiation process was provoked by the sudden eruption of two political crisis, one in the US and another in Japan, that threatened to undermine the legitimacy of the negotiations results achieved thus far: the dismissal of Douglas MacArthur as Supreme Commander by the US president, and Yoshida’s refusal to head the Japanese delegation to the peace conference.

As events on the Korean Peninsula unraveled from 1950 to 1951, MacArthur’s influence had become even larger. The successful resistance at Pusan, as well as the naval disembark at Incheon, were astonishing victories for the American general, and had helped push the communist forces up to the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel. On that context, Truman and MacArthur were constantly growing apart on their respective war strategies: the US president advocated for a ceasefire, whilst the supreme commander pursued the complete eradication of communism in the Korean Peninsula. Furthermore, there was another turf between both men regarding the use of nuclear weapons on the war,

which the former didn't think was appropriate, but the later approved it as retaliation against Mao's intervention in the conflict.

Tensions between Truman and MacArthur continued to escalate, and the struggle draw public attention as it revealed a deeper contradiction between the civilian and military control of war policies within the US. Finally, on April 11<sup>th</sup>, 1951, Truman relieved the general of all his responsibilities, including the direction of the occupation of Japan. The dismissal of the war hero was a shock to both the American and Japanese public. On the very 11<sup>th</sup>, Sebald informed Yoshida of the presidential decision, and the prime minister was "visibly shaken and said that departure (of) General MacArthur would come as tremendous shock to Jap(anese) people."<sup>241</sup>

Certainly, MacArthur's popularity among Japanese citizens was impressive and his dismissal produced bewilderment. Not only he received tribute from different political actors in the country, including the premier, major newspapers and several legislators, but he was also waved away by a crowd of two million people at the Atsugi Airfield on April 16<sup>th</sup>, the day of this final return to the US<sup>242</sup>. Nonetheless, before leaving Japan, MacArthur sustained one last meeting with Hirohito on the 15<sup>th</sup><sup>243</sup>.

The emperor had known primarily of MacArthur's dismissal because of Yoshida. On the day the prime minister was informed by Sebald, the former expressed that he would brief the monarch about the situation<sup>244</sup>. Effectively, Irie's diary confirms that Yoshida paid a visit to the emperor on the next day, April 12<sup>th</sup>, for about one hour<sup>245</sup> and brief him about the possible implications of MacArthur's dismissal on the treaty negotiations. In the monarch and the American general's last meeting, two important topics arose to surface. The first one, which was brought up by Hirohito, was related to whether there would be any change in the US war strategy regarding Korea. It seems logical that the emperor felt threatened because of MacArthur's dismissal: Hirohito had connected the war in Korea to the survival of the Imperial Household (and his own), and, as MacArthur was one of the most solid anti-communist bulwarks in US foreign policy, the relief of the supreme commander

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<sup>241</sup> FRUS, 1951, p. 2863.

<sup>242</sup> MacArthur, 2010, p. 395-399.

<sup>243</sup> Toyoshita, 2008, p. 118-119.

<sup>244</sup> FRUS, 1951, n. 547.

<sup>245</sup> Irie, Vol V, 1990, p. 23.

might have weakened US military presence in Asia, and consequently, endangered the monarchy.

Actually, this perception was also shared by officials in Washington. On the same day MacArthur's dismissal, Dulles warned about the negative repercussions this decision might have on Japanese morale and on the results of the peace/security treaty negotiations previously achieved. During a meeting with Truman and Acheson, Dulles stated that "it greatly jeopardized our position in Japan and the Far East generally."<sup>246</sup> On the same reunion, it was agreed that the American representative must go to Japan in order to assure Japanese politicians that the US fundamental policy towards the peace and security treaty had not changed, and that the agreement would be carried as accorded<sup>247</sup>. Dulles's new "damage control" assignment demonstrates in fact the importance MacArthur had played in the bilateral negotiations thus far, and the necessity to extinguish any rift on the Japanese side that might surface as a result of the general's relief. That is why, MacArthur himself, as well as Dulles and Mathew B. Ridgeway, MacArthur's successor as Supreme Commander, gave enough assurances to the Japanese side about the immutability of the negotiation results.

Another topic that arose during the last meeting between MacArthur and Hirohito was related to the Tokyo Tribunal. The emperor expressed that "I would like to take this opportunity to thank the commander for your attitude toward the war trial."<sup>248</sup> To this, MacArthur answered that:

I was asked by Washington for an opinion on the Emperor's trial, but of course I opposed it. Both Britain and the Soviet Union had insisted on the trial, but the United States insisted on the mistake and finally the trial issue was not raised.<sup>249</sup>

Those declarations are very significant because, on one hand, they prove unequivocally the political nature of the Tokyo Tribunal, and on the other, they demonstrate that the Imperial Household, personified in Hirohito, was firmly attached to the establishment of strategic relations with the US as it was the ultimate guarantee for its survival.

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<sup>246</sup> FRUS, 1951, n. 549.

<sup>247</sup> FRUS, 1951, n. 549.

<sup>248</sup> Asahi Shinbun, 2002.

<sup>249</sup> Asahi Shinbun, 2002.

After MacArthur's relief, Matthew B. Ridgeway assumed the responsibility of supreme commander. During his stay on Japan (until April 28<sup>th</sup>, 1952), Ridgeway met the emperor seven times, which demonstrates that the monarch's intervention in foreign policy had become so normalized by 1951, that he no longer depended on MacArthur's will to have access to the occupation authorities. Hirohito moved on his own to meet the new supreme commander (as he had done when MacArthur arrived to Japan in 1945), as a reminder that he still held a considerable amount of influence in policy-making in Japan, and ought to be consulted.

During those meetings, both men never treated any political issue regarding the bilateral relation between Japan and the US, nor the peace/security treaty. This contrast with the conversations held with MacArthur, might have two causes. One is that, as stated by Dulles, Ridgeway was not very knowledgeable on the treaty negotiations<sup>250</sup>, which compelled the American diplomat to go to Japan in order to explain the major political issues at stake. The second reason is that, after Dulles' trip in June, and Yoshida's unilateral surrender motivated by the emperor, all three major political compromises (political and military alignment with the US, the bases issues and Japan's rearmament) had been achieved, and therefore, there was nothing else of importance to negotiate with Ridgeway. In that sense, Hirohito expressed during his meetings with Ridgeway his approval of the result of the previous negotiations: "We have achieved a generous peace proposal never seen in history."<sup>251</sup>

Nonetheless, these seven meetings reveal other remarkable aspects. The main topic during those reunions was the war in Korea: the monarch questioned several elements from a varied set of topics that ranged from replacement of troops, anti-guerrilla warfare, US air superiority, to the Chinese Communist Party's war strategy<sup>252</sup>. On the fourth meeting (March 27<sup>th</sup>, 1952), the monarch even asked about the possibility of employing nuclear weapons<sup>253</sup>. Certainly, this facet of Hirohito was very far from the "symbolic" image that part of the media and the political establishment was trying to cover him with. Actually, those meetings with Ridgeway resembled the briefings Hirohito had with his war ministers during WWII, which are thoroughly described on Bix's *Hirohito and the Making of Modern Japan*. Therefore, this attitude (as he were still the supreme commander) of the emperor casts serious

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<sup>250</sup> FRUS, 1951, n. 549.

<sup>251</sup> Yoshitsugu, 2008, p. 218.

<sup>252</sup> Toyoshita, 2008, p. 120-121.

<sup>253</sup> Toyoshita, 2008, p. 120-121.

doubts on his willingness to commit to the limited role he was assigned in the 1947 Constitution.

At the same time that MacArthur was expelled from his charge, and Dulles was trying to minimize the negative repercussions among Japanese politicians, another crisis regarding the Japanese delegation to the peace conference, brewed.

Dulles arrived in Japan for the third time on April 16<sup>th</sup>, 1951, and his first meeting with the Japanese premier took place on the 18<sup>th</sup>. During the gathering, Yoshida raised the issue of who should head the Japanese delegation if the peace conference was to be celebrated in the US or elsewhere apart from Japan. Yoshida's logic, as he expressed it, was that he would not be able to represent Japan if the conference was held abroad given the situation of internal politics. On his opinion, the president of the House of Councilors was more suitable for the task<sup>254</sup>.

Although Dulles didn't pay much attention to the issue at the moment, he raised the example of the Versailles Treaty's failure to assure a German representative delegation<sup>255</sup>. At this time, Dulles was following the same argument he had stated during his second visit: the peace/security treaty ought to be considered as a matter of State for Japan, and for that reason, it needed to be signed by the most important political leaders, which included first and foremost to Yoshida, who was the chief of the most notorious political force by 1951, the Liberal Party.

Dulles also met with Hirohito during this visit: on April 22<sup>nd</sup>, both men discussed minor political issues that were somehow relevant at the moment, such as war reparations to the Philippines<sup>256</sup>. As negotiations were restored to the previously agreed state after MacArthur's dismissal "earthquake," according to a report Dulles issued to Truman on May, 3<sup>rd</sup><sup>257</sup>, both the American diplomat and the emperor did not have to discuss any major point of the accord they had brokered<sup>258</sup>.

However, the issue regarding Yoshida's plenipotentiary rights as the head of the Japanese delegation was still unsolved. The problem resurfaced again on a letter Yoshida sent to Dulles on July 2<sup>nd</sup> explaining the reasons again which he believed he should not head the Japanese delegation. Dulles responded on July 9<sup>th</sup> by asking the

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<sup>254</sup> FRUS, 1951, n. 554.

<sup>255</sup> FRUS, 1951, n. 554.

<sup>256</sup> Toyoshita, 1996, p.185.

<sup>257</sup> FRUS, 1951, n. 571.

<sup>258</sup> Dulles visited Japan for the fourth time on June, 1951, for the purpose of discussing with the Japanese counterpart some economic proposals that had arisen during US-UK negotiations. He didn't meet Hirohito during this trip.

premier to “not close your mind to the possibility of coming yourself (to San Francisco that had been chosen as the definitive place for the peace conference by the US government).” The issue was turning contentious also within the Japanese side. On July 11<sup>th</sup>, Iguchi told to Sebald of “his efforts, so far without success, to convince Yoshida that latter should head Jap(anese) delegation to San Francisco.”<sup>259</sup>

After meeting Dulles, Yoshida sustained two secret briefings with Hirohito, which were carried out on July 13<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup>. In the first one, according to the record of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the premier explained to the monarch the latest modifications to the draft proposal after the US-UK consultations<sup>260</sup>. In spite of the fact that there is no available record of the contents of the 19<sup>th</sup> briefing, sources from the US diplomatic archives suggest that Yoshida agreed to represent Japan at the peace conference as a direct result of the July 19<sup>th</sup> meeting with emperor<sup>261</sup>. Once again, Hirohito exerted his influence over the prime minister to bend the latter’s will and obtain a result favorable to the monarch’s interests.

Although Hirohito was certainly very experienced in secret diplomacy by this time, there seems to be no evidence neither no logical reasoning whatsoever that sustains that the monarch arrived to the same conclusions as the US counterpart by himself. Hirohito had limited sources of information about the bilateral negotiations, and given that no US diplomatic communication arrived to him during this brief period, he could have only known of Yoshida’s refusal through Japanese sources. One might hypothesize that Iguchi was such a source: his involvement with the militaristic regime and de-purge, as well as the treaty draft process that was headed by him on the Japanese side, point strongly towards some sort of relation with the throne. However, there is no solid evidence to prove this argument.

Yoshida communicated officially his decision to assist to the peace conference to Dulles on August, 6<sup>th</sup>; but the American side was formulating a very bold request: the attestation of the treaty by Hirohito himself. The proposal came from the secretary of State: after a dispatch with British diplomats, Acheson communicated to Sebald to explore the possibilities that the plenipotentiary credentials of the members of the delegation be signed by the emperor, and/or having a member of the Imperial Household attached to the Japanese Mission to San Francisco<sup>262</sup>.

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<sup>259</sup> FRUS, 1951, n. 637.

<sup>260</sup> 平和予約の締結に関する調書第三冊 (VI) 日本外交文書、7月13日の総理の内奏、p. 140.

<sup>261</sup> FRUS, 1951, n. 637.

<sup>262</sup> FRUS, 1951, n. 652.

The US continued to tacitly enhance the role of Hirohito in foreign policy by effectively converting the entire Japanese delegation in “Imperial envoys”. However, there were some constitutional restrictions that limited such a bold action. Article 7 of the Japanese constitution, which regulates the powers of the monarch, states that:

The Emperor, with the advice and approval of the Cabinet, shall perform the following acts in matters of state on behalf of the people:

(h) Attestation of instruments of ratification and other diplomatic documents as provided for by law.<sup>263</sup>

According to this, the Cabinet was supposed to approve every action the emperor took on foreign policy matters, and not otherwise. The American proposal intended to invert such constitutional logic by having the monarch authorize the government delegation to the peace conference. Eventually, Acheson communicated to Sebald, on August 8<sup>th</sup>, the State Department’s decision on how to proceed on the matter: the emperor ought to attest the credentials of the delegation; he should grant an audience before the mission departed for San Francisco; and, a member of the Imperial Household (Matsudaira was the most desirable candidate) might be included in the diplomatic party<sup>264</sup>.

Sebald replied on August 11<sup>th</sup> by stating that he had been assured by Yoshida that “the Emperor would attest the credentials of the delegates, grant them an audience prior to departure for San Francisco, and perhaps receive them again upon their return to Japan.”<sup>265</sup> However, as the proposition regarding including a member of the palace clearly mixed the Imperial Household in an openly politicized matter, it turned to be perceived as troublesome and was dropped by the Japanese counterpart<sup>266</sup>. In the end, the Japanese mission was integrated by politicians of different parties (Shigeru Yoshida, Hayato Ikeda, Gizo Tomabechi, Niro Hoshijima, Muneyoshi Tokugawa and Hisato Ichimada)<sup>267</sup>, but not by any member of the Imperial Household.

By Mid-August of 1951, the last two major obstacles that arose on the final track towards the conclusion of the peace/security treaty, MacArthur’s dismissal and

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<sup>263</sup> Japan's Constitution of 1946, 2002, p. 6.

<sup>264</sup> FRUS, 1951, n. 678.

<sup>265</sup> FRUS, 1951, n. 678.

<sup>266</sup> 平和予約の締結に関する調書第四冊, 2002, p. 16 (天皇と全権任状および全権任命についてのダレス特使の問い合わせおよびわか回答).

<sup>267</sup> United Nations Treaty Series, 1952.

Yoshida's refuse to head the Japanese delegation, were overcome. Hirohito's influence proved to be decisive once again, particularly in relation to Yoshida's attitude. The emperor had managed to press the premier and change the latter's mind on the plenipotentiary rights issue to the peace conference during a secret briefing they sustained on July 19<sup>th</sup>. Despite the fact that there is no way to prove that the monarch was aware of the importance the US side attributed to Yoshida's attendance, other than to hypothesize about possible communications through Sadao Iguchi, it is noteworthy that the emperor arrived to the same conclusion regarding the political meaning of the premier's participation, either by himself or by third sources, and comply with the American objectives for the peace conference.

Furthermore, Hirohito's influence on foreign policy had been enlarged even more during this last period of the bilateral negotiations. The emperor brokered the major political matters with Dulles (directly or indirectly through Yoshida) during the former's first and second visit, and, on American request, the emperor gave his approval to the Japanese delegation to the peace conference, which *de facto* turned them into envoys of the monarch. Consequently, on both formal and informal ways, Hirohito had become a key player for the achievement of the peace treaty.

On September 8<sup>th</sup>, 1951, both the Peace Treaty with Japan and the US-Japan Security Treaty, were signed. One day later, Hirohito signed the ratification instruments of both treaties, and expressed his appreciation of Yoshida's mission to the peace conference to the Acting Prime Minister Masutani Shuji.<sup>268</sup> On his return to Japan, Yoshida had to perform an audience with the monarch. According to a report of George Clutton, Minister at the UK Liaison Mission to Japan, who had met with Yoshida on the 20<sup>th</sup>, the prime minister had briefed the emperor on the 15<sup>th</sup> about the contents of the peace treaty<sup>269</sup>. Specifically, Clutton wrote that: "the emperor agreed that the treaty was more generous than he expected. On the one hand, the emperor said that, as the grandson of Emperor Meiji, it was a great pain to have lost all (Japan's) overseas territories during his own time."<sup>270</sup>

Both agreements were ratified by the lower House of the Japanese Diet on October 26<sup>th</sup>, 1951 (The New York Times, 1951) and by the US President Harry Truman on April 15<sup>th</sup>, 1952. They entered into force in April 28<sup>th</sup>, 1952, which

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<sup>268</sup> Yuri & Higashi, 1974, p. 296-297.

<sup>269</sup> Tokumoto, 2007, p. 258.

<sup>270</sup> Tokumoto, 2007, p. 258-259.



signaled Japan's recovery of its independence and sovereignty, except for the Ryukyu, Bonin and Amami-Oshima Islands.

Thus far, it has been explained how, from 1945 to 1951, Hirohito intervened in the negotiation process between Japan and the US. As far as available evidence allows, the different methods and approaches the monarch employed to tailor the relations between both countries to a result amenable to his interests, have become clear. From his first meeting with MacArthur in September, 1945 to the tenth one in April, 1950, Hirohito's approach to foreign policy was carried mainly through the American general. During their first meeting, Hirohito's immediate concern was his war responsibility issue, and the possibility that he might be brought to trial. On the other hand, the US interests were to ensure an occupation as smooth as possible. Therefore, both counterparts made a trade-off between imperial support for the occupation as well as pacific disarmament on one side, and trial exoneration on the other.

Nevertheless, Hirohito's ambition for influence did not stop there. On the fourth meeting with MacArthur, topics related to the strategic future of Japan, started to be discussed. Even though both men shared a deep anti-communism, their motives were essentially different: Hirohito feared for his life and for the survival of the Imperial Household be there a communist uprising in Japan, but MacArthur repudiated communism from a philosophical point of view. Precisely, these differences on their perspectives eventually translated into two opposed future visions for Japan: the latter wished a unilateral security treaty with the US, but the former advocated for a collective security arrangement centered on the United Nations.

Those divergences became starker during both men's ninth and tenth meeting. Apparently, Hirohito had concluded that MacArthur was no longer a proper channel to conduce his thoughts on foreign policy because the American general continued to stubbornly defend an idealistic proposal that the monarch couldn't find acceptable. Consequently, Hirohito started to change his approach in favor of a somehow more direct method to communicate with Washington officials. In that regard, he sent a first message to Sebald through Chamberlain Terasaki regarding the possibility of ceding the Ryukyu Islands to the US military. Furthermore, Ikeda conveyed a message to the State Department which was incidentally very similar to the emperor's commitment with the treaty matters as proposed by the US. At the same time, another channel of communication, which linked the palace (Matsudaira) with Dulles (through Kern and Pakenham) was settled.

During Dulles's first visit, the emperor opted for the direct approach, by sending a message to the American diplomat in order to communicate his positive attitude towards granting the US with military bases. On Dulles's second trip, Hirohito preferred an indirect method and pressed Yoshida to accept the rearmament clause, although the former also sustained a ceremonial meeting with Dulles. By the last months before of the signing of the treaty, the emperor continued using his indirect approach in order to exert influence over the premier and force him to head the Japanese delegation to the peace conference.

As far as diplomatic methods and approaches are concerned, Hirohito used a wide range of those. Consequently, given that the monarch's influence during this period changed from case to case, it's very difficult to formulate any theory to generalize all these historical facts. One might conclude nonetheless that Hirohito's influence was crucial for the final results of the negotiations, as he was instrumental in overcoming the obstacles within the Japanese side and in communicating his willingness to commit to the American counterpart.

Moreover, the involvement of the Imperial Household in the negotiation process of the security treaty had a dual effect. On one side, the throne became the staunchest guardian of the security system derived from the treaty because it was the ultimate guaranty for the survival of the monarchy in the postwar period, as well as the protection to Hirohito's life from the possibility of ever being trialed by war responsibility charges. The other effect is that, by seeking the support of Hirohito for the long-term maintenance of the treaty, the US side was, consciously or unconsciously, *de facto* recognizing the emperor as Japan's representative and treating him somehow as the Head of State, both prerogatives Hirohito no longer enjoyed according to the 1947 Constitution. Therefore, since the very conception of the US-Japan alliance, the emperor was considered the Head of the country, although at that time, such an acknowledgement was based on a tacit consensus from an external actor and had no social nor legal basis. This coincidence of interest created some sort of "symbiotic relation" between the Imperial Household and the Japan-US military alliance.

## **Chapter II: Hirohito's *de facto* re- conversion to “Head of State” (1952-1960)**

After the sign of the Peace Treaty and the US-Japan Security Treaty in September, 1951, and their subsequent ratification by the US Congress, Japan recovered its independence and core territories on April 28<sup>th</sup>, 1952 (with the exception of the Ryukyu, Bonin and Amami-Oshima islands). During the period that spanned from the end of the US occupation until 1960, several major changes occurred within Japanese society, Japan's foreign policy and the role of the Imperial Household on the newly independent country. Several authors point out that, among those changes, the emperor was progressively reinstated as the Head of State of the country. Although the 1947 Constitution had stripped the monarch of such prerogatives, there is a somehow accepted notion nowadays that the Japanese monarch is the Head of State, and has been treated in such way domestically and internationally since the 50's decade.

In that sense, the roots of the re-conversion process can be tracked back to the above-mentioned decade. During that period, conservative politicians, first gathered mainly in the Liberal Party headed by Yoshida, and later on the Liberal Democratic Party led during that period by Hatoyama Ichiro, Ishibashi Tanzan and Nobusuke Kishi, strove to re-institute many of the Meiji political practices, although with different degrees of emperorship. They skillfully combined legal action as in the tentative reform of the Constitution, and a *fait accompli* policy that consisted on the *de facto* re-institution of several prewar political practices and ceremonies somehow veiled during the occupation period. Even though the Japanese Constitution was never reformed properly, it was actually reinterpreted in a way that allowed the emperor to expand his influence in matters of state and diplomatic acts.

This expanded influence can be perceived clearly in US-Japan relations. During the 50's, Hirohito held a stalwart defense of the military alliance he himself had collaborated to create in the occupation period, and employed several tactics to ensure that the security arrangements survived the political turmoil of the decade. It is necessary to point out that even though Japan-US relations were only a fraction of the overall political situation, given the undeniable political controversy that the military alliance generated during the 50's decade and the entanglement of the Imperial Household with the US interests, the emperor's intervention in Japan-US relations contributed to the normalization of his appearance in politics and, consequently, his entitlement as Head of State.

Therefore, the argument of this chapter is that the process of the emperor's postwar transition into Head of State consisted on the re-politicization of the monarchy in both policy-making and symbolic levels. In the secret policy-making level, the emperor intervened in politics in favor of the US-Japan military-alliance throughout the period, specifically during the US-Japan talks regarding Japan's rearmament (1952-1954) and the Japan-Soviet Union peace negotiations (1955-1956). In the symbolic level, the monarch used his representational power to advocate for the maintenance of the military alliance in several public and private appearances (as well as to criticize the opponents of the security arrangements), and endorsed the participation of the Imperial Household in the planned mutual visits between US President Dwight Eisenhower and Crown Prince Akihito as the colophon of the conclusion of a new Security Treaty in 1960.

## **The general context of the 50's**

In order to understand the progressive re-conversion of Hirohito to the role of Head of State, it is necessary to grasp how domestic, regional and international conditions changed throughout the 50's decade. Probably, the most remarkable aspect of Japan's history during that decade was the economic recovery after the war. Even though both the Japanese government and the US occupation authorities had tried to mend the Japanese economy after the devastating conflict (by applying the "Dodge Line" of economic planning), food scarcity, poverty, the proliferation of black markets, etc., were a common staple during the occupation period. Although there is no academic consensus on the specific causes that provoked the recuperation of the country, many authors point out that the structural changes adopted by the US in several aspects such as the tenancy of land, economic concentration and civil rights, fostered the bases for the subsequent solid economic growth.

By the beginning of 1950's, Japanese economy started to recover progressively and such process was further accelerated after the independence. The Dodge Line of economic thinking was partially abandoned and despite the excessive interventionism of the Japanese government in the economy, Japan recovered the prewar levels of production early in the 1950's<sup>1</sup>. In fact, by 1956, the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) growth rate approximated 7%, and by 1960, it surpassed the 10%

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<sup>1</sup> Yoshioka & Kawasaki, 2016.

barrier<sup>2</sup>. During this period, Japan also started to improve its international trade position: even though the country sustained an overall trade deficit throughout the decade, such trend began to be reverted by an aggressive trade policy of export incentives. The tendency was finally countered in the 60's decade and Japan achieved a trade surplus, but, since the 50's, the increasing Japanese exports became a matter of concern for American policymakers due to the internal pressure the cheap and abundant Japanese products, leveraged by state subsidies and US government customs privileges, created within the American market. Actually, the trade frictions that became an important point in the bilateral agenda in the 60's and 70's, had its origin in this decade, as shown in several US diplomatic archive documents<sup>3</sup>.

The economic prosperity the country experienced in the 50's was visibly reflected into Japanese society. The high growth rate was complemented by a sharp increase in consumption. Some elements of daily life that used to be regarded as luxurious, such as meat, coffee or Western-style beds, became common in several households. Furthermore, the appearance of a wide middle class as wages rose and urbanization advanced, also represented an important departure from the previous Japanese living standards and/or customs. Such a transition was often depicted as the substitution of the old three regalia (as a reference to the blade, mirror and jewel of the Shinto mythology) by the "new three regalia": the washing machine, the refrigerator and the black & white television<sup>4</sup>.

The overall population also increased spectacularly from 84 million to 94 million people in the 1950-1960 decade<sup>5</sup>: a 10 million inhabitants' increase, which represented an astonishing boom of approximately 11% of the population (this phenomenon is popularly known as the *baby boom*). Such changes in the everyday life of Japanese people were reflected in an overall sense of departure from the end of the war, even to the point that the press frequently commented by the middle of the decade that "the postwar was over."<sup>6</sup>

Politically, the 1952-1960 period was characterized by two opposites though interconnected trends. On one side, the most important conservative parties, the Liberal Party and the Democratic Party fused into the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP)

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<sup>2</sup> Yoshioka & Kawasaki, 2016.

<sup>3</sup> FRUS, 1954; FRUS, 1957; FRUS, 1960.

<sup>4</sup> Takahashi, 2008, p. 155.

<sup>5</sup> Japan Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications, 2022, p. 10.

<sup>6</sup> Takahashi, 2008, p. 155.

by 1955, in order to counter the left activism and seek the necessary Diet majority to aim for the revision of the Constitution, as expressed in the program of the party. In fact, one of the items of the foundational platform of the LDP was labeled “Promotion of Autonomy and Independence”, and it included, among other points, the strengthening of the Self-Defense Forces, the counter of anti-state demonstrations and the preparation of both the Parliament and the public opinion for the reform of the Constitution<sup>7</sup>.

Nonetheless, as the LDP arose basically for political purposes, it didn't have any internal ideological coherence: it was an amalgamation of even contradictory positions which was regularly commanded by personal and/or factional rivalries among its membership. During the 50's, the party was informally divided between the Yoshida faction, led by Yoshida Shigeru and later by Ikeda Hayato, and the anti-Yoshida factions, such as the Hatoyama Ichiro's and Kishi Nobusuke's. Even though Yoshida's Liberal Party monopolized the conservatives' movement during the first half of the decade, by the time the LDP was created, the anti-Yoshida factions had become hegemonic leading to the respective premierships of Hatoyama, Ishibashi and Kishi.

On the other hand, the radicalization of the leftist groups in Japan (*Zengakuren*<sup>8</sup>, *Sohyo*<sup>9</sup> and *Nikkyoso*<sup>10</sup>) and their scission from the mainstream left represented by the Japan Socialist Party and the Japan Communist Party, was also a feature of the domestic political climate of the 50's. Furthermore, the ideological split that happened in the international communist movement between the ultra-revolutionary Maoism and the more conservative Soviet position, also affected the left in Japan and provoked a rapid radicalization of some leftist groups, but particularly, *Zengakuren*. Those groups resorted to violence several times, motivated occasionally by questionable political practices, such as the incidents in the Diet in 1960. Those violent acts were equally countered with a fierce response by the government, leading to several tragic incidents such as the “Blood May Day” of 1952 and the anti-Treaty protests of 1960.

One of the logical challenges that followed the end of the occupation was the restart of foreign policy. Even though the Japanese government didn't stand idle on

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<sup>7</sup> Watanabe, 1987, p. 262-263.

<sup>8</sup> All-Japan Federation of Student Self-Government Associations, founded in 1948.

<sup>9</sup> The General Council of Trade Unions of Japan, founded in 1950.

<sup>10</sup> Japan Teachers Union, founded in 1947.

diplomatic matters during the occupation, its external connections were severely restricted by SCAP. From 1952 onwards, Japan reopened many of its former diplomatic missions in the world and started sending and receiving international guests. On parallel with this, the Japanese government sought ascension to the multilateral systems of the United Nations created after WWII. After several bids, which included negotiating the support of the Soviet Union, Japan achieved its entrance<sup>11</sup> to the UN in 1956<sup>12</sup>.

Precisely, the end of the occupation also struck Japanese policymakers with a dilemma: which side of the Cold War should the country stand on. Although the internal and international contexts were very different if compared to the occupation period, those two strategic choices remained basically the same. On one side, Japan could stand close to its military alliance to the US, and act as a logistics and operational base for the US military in Asia, like during the Korean War. On the other side, the country could follow a path towards neutralism that consisted on normalizing relations somehow with the Communist powers (the Soviet Union and China) in order to keep the US influence in check. Almost all political organizations in Japan sympathized with either of those choices and, paradoxically, even within the same organization, such as in the case of the LDP, there were supporters for both of them. Such differences of opinions kept the debate regarding the strategic orientation of Japan ablaze during the 1950 decade.

There were also several political changes on the other side of the Pacific Ocean. Dwight D. Eisenhower, who was a renowned military hero from WWII, became president of the US in 1953 and stayed in the post until 1961. Eisenhower chose John F. Dulles, who had previously worked as one of the architects of the peace and security treaties with Japan, to be the secretary of State of his administration. What is more, other American officials who had participated in the occupation apparatus and/or had met Hirohito, were given important governmental posts. For example, William J. Sebald, former Political Adviser to SCAP, acted as Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs for a brief time; and John M. Allison, chief of the American drafter team of the Peace Treaty, was named ambassador to Japan from 1953 to 1957. Douglas MacArthur II, nephew of the American marshal, replaced Allison after 1957 and also became ambassador to Japan.

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<sup>11</sup> Japan had previously joined the General Agreement on Trade and Tariffs (GATT) in 1955.

<sup>12</sup> Japan Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2017.



Eisenhower's administration was characterized for a tough policy against communism worldwide. In Asia in particular, the US government reached an armistice in Korea by using the threat of nuclear retaliation, an option previously abandoned by Truman. Furthermore, Eisenhower supported anti-communist movements in several parts of the world: his administration passed the Formosa Resolution in 1955, which allowed the US president intervening in defense of Taiwan in the event of a military conflict, and also supported the French army's fight against Vietnamese Communists in Indochina. During the same period, the communist regime in China started a turbulent process of internal transformations which impacted the regional stability. Mao's revolutionary ambitions of unifying Taiwan by force resulted in the First (1955) and Second (1958) Taiwan Strait Crisis, driving the US to enforce the aforementioned resolution.

On the other hand, after Stalin's death in 1953 and the subsequent period of internal struggles, a new leadership headed by Nikita Khrushchev arose in the Soviet Union. Khrushchev re-oriented the Soviet foreign policy towards "pacific coexistence", namely, the substitution of military means for internal subversion in order to spread communism internationally. Coupled with that, the USSR and the US entered into an arms race which was intensified after the testing of the first thermonuclear weapons in 1952 (US) and 1953 (USSR). The arms race also expanded towards the extraterrestrial domain as a result of the launch of the Soviet satellite *Sputnik* in 1957.

## **The constitutional debate: defining the "symbolic" Emperor**

As soon as the occupation finished, Japanese conservatives started to explore ways to amend the 1947 Constitution. In spite of the fact that there were different opinions on how to modify the constitutional text, based on political or individual considerations, most of the conservative forces agreed on the necessity of reform. Also, there was a more or less general consensus on which points ought to be primarily reformed: the role of the emperor, the Article 9 regarding the legalization of a Japanese army, the procedures of the Diet, the family system and the powers of the prime minister<sup>13</sup>.

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<sup>13</sup> Watanabe, 1987.

Undeniably, the role of the emperor occupied a central stand within the constitutional debate in the decade. In that sense, the ill-defined category of “symbol” of Article 1, coupled with the ambiguous terminology of “acts in matters of state on behalf of the people” of Article 7, were the main targets of the discussion. But, before analyzing how the debate unraveled throughout the decade, it is necessary to offer some theoretical considerations on the “symbol” category.

A brief comparison between the articles of the former Meiji Constitution of 1889 and the 1947 one, offers an illustrative panorama on how the powers of the emperor changed. Although the first chapters of both texts were devoted to the emperor's faculties, they differ greatly in their scope. In the Meiji Constitution, the monarch is “sacred and inviolable” (Art. 3) and “the head of the Empire, combining in Himself the rights of sovereignty” (Art. 4);<sup>14</sup> while in that of 1947, the relationship between the emperor and the people was inverted: “The Emperor shall be the symbol of the State and of the unity of the People, deriving his position from the will of the people with whom resides sovereign power” (Art. 1).<sup>15</sup>

Also, in the 1889 text, the monarch “(...) in consequence of an urgent necessity to maintain public safety or to avert public calamities, issues, when the Imperial Diet is not sitting, Imperial Ordinances in the place of law” (Art. 8) and “has the supreme command of the Army and Navy” (Art. 11)<sup>16</sup>. These powers were abolished in the 1947 Constitution, leaving the emperor alone with the possibility of carrying out the following “acts in matters of state on behalf of the people” (Art. 7)<sup>17</sup>:

- Promulgation of amendments of the constitution, laws, Cabinet orders and treaties.
- Convocation of the Diet.
- Dissolution of the House of Representatives.
- Proclamation of general election of members of the Diet.
- Attestation of the appointment and dismissal of Ministers of State and other officials as provided for by law, and of full powers and credentials of ambassadors and ministers.
- Attestation of general and special amnesty, commutation of punishment, reprieve, and restoration of rights.

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<sup>14</sup> Japan's Constitution of 1889, 2021.

<sup>15</sup> The Constitution of Japan, 2021.

<sup>16</sup> Japan's Constitution of 1889, 2021.

<sup>17</sup> The Constitution of Japan, 2021.

- Awarding of honors.
- Attestation of instruments of ratification and other diplomatic documents as provided for by law.
- Receiving foreign ambassadors and ministers.
- Performance of ceremonial functions.

As it can be inferred, the emperor's role changed from having absolute power in matters of foreign policy to performing exclusively protocol functions under the strict supervision of the Diet. If only positive law were to be analyzed, it would be impossible to hypothesize that the emperor continued to exert any influence on Japan's foreign policy, since the Constitution wipe out that possibility. However, as it was shown in the previous chapter, the emperor continued to meddle in certain foreign policy outcomes, such as the US-Japan alliance. That raises a paradox: how could the Imperial Household continue to influence Japan's foreign policy despite the fact that the 1947 Constitution offers no chance in that regard?

The initial part of that answer is found in the constitutional text itself: specifically, in the category of “symbol” stipulated in Article 1. First of all, one might ask: what is a symbol? An operative definition might affirm that it is *an entity to which a human community gives a meaning that it does not possess intrinsically, but rather exists for the subjective reproduction of that community*. In this way, a flag or an anthem, the two quintessential symbols of the human community called nation, are nothing more than a type of fabric, or a series of harmonic sounds respectively. Thus, they have no meaning within themselves unless that community gives it to them. It is very easy to examine the issue when analyzing non-human symbols; nonetheless, what would happen if that community establishes a part of itself, an individual, as a symbol? A human being has his own volition, and therefore can interfere willingly in the process of meaning-attribution, which makes the analysis of the matter extremely complex.

In addition, there is another relevant issue. The 1947 Constitution also attempts to radically separate the emperor from politics by making all his acts mediated by the Cabinet or the Diet approval. In this way, there is an attempt to create an artificial division between symbolism (the Imperial Household) and politics (the structure of the State). However, is such separation sustainable? The human being is by definition a *political animal* since the moment he lives in society; therefore, are not all his acts in society, including the merely “symbolic” ones, also political acts? Can

anyone deny the profound political meaning of symbolic acts such as a declaration of independence, the signing of a treaty or a speech? If analyzed from the opposite point of view, it can be established that politics is plagued with symbolism in order to function: What are the categories "people", "left" or "right" (the bases of modern Western politics since the French Revolution), if not symbols that have no intrinsic meaning if it is not given to them through political practice?

In this way, it is reasonable to affirm that the separation between the strictly political and the strictly symbolic is a theoretical oxymoron that, as a result, leaves certain loopholes for the "symbolic" emperor to exert some influence on Japan's foreign policy decision-making process. However, the possibility of extending the category "symbol" to the political field did not necessarily imply its extension. Another series of factors related to the will of the Japanese policy-makers to use the Imperial Household in matters of foreign policy, and the emperor's own will to allow such action, are also necessary.

Therefore, in order to understand how it was possible that Japanese conservative politicians complied with Hirohito's influence in Japan's foreign policy after the end of the occupation even though such action was no longer allowed in the Constitution, it is necessary to survey the ideological context of the 50's beforehand in order to grasp the general reasoning of those political forces regarding the ideal role the monarchy ought to have in Japanese society. In that sense, the constitutional debate that took place during that decade offers relevant insights into the ideological background of the Japanese mainstream political organizations vis-à-vis the monarchy.

According to Tominaga, the first political party to advocate constitutional reform in the postwar period was the Reform Party, created in February 8<sup>th</sup>, 1952<sup>18</sup>. The party was integrated by renowned politicians such as Ashida Hitoshi, Takeo Miki and Shigemitsu Mamoru. Its main political objective was to reform the Constitution in order to lawfully allow the existence of a Japanese army, in contraposition to the Yoshida's government *de facto* rearmament<sup>19</sup> of the country, which the Reform Party members labeled as illegal<sup>20</sup>.

The claims for constitutional reform were also present in the group of conservative politicians led by Yoshida. After a meeting that took place between the

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<sup>18</sup> Tominaga, 2010, p. 127.

<sup>19</sup> Eldridge & Musashi, 2019.

<sup>20</sup> Tominaga, 2010, p. 127.

prime minister and Hatoyama in December, 1953, an agreement was reached to create a Commission on Constitutional Revision within the Liberal Party<sup>21</sup>. Such organ was finally inaugurated in March, 12<sup>th</sup> of the following year and it was composed by eight members, including Kishi as its Chairman<sup>22</sup>. During the process of establishing the Commission, members from Yoshida's Cabinet Law Bureau elaborated a report that contained the most relevant points to be discussed for the purpose of constitutional revision; the following were included in such report<sup>23</sup>:

1. A clear distinction between the acts on matter of State of Article 4 and government authority
2. Should the emperor be the Head of State
3. Should the emperor have the authority to ratify treaties
4. The necessity of Article 8 provisions concerning imperial property<sup>24</sup>
5. To delete Article 20 and allow the government to hold memorial services for the war dead
6. The necessity of Article 89<sup>25</sup>

It is possible to extract many interpretations from the Liberal Party' proposal of reform of the Constitution; however, what is significant from the viewpoint of this research is that out of the total eight points this report stated, six were directly or indirectly related to the Imperial Household and to the powers of the emperor. Points 2 and 3 aimed straightforwardly towards the restoration of some of the Meiji prerogatives, namely the title of Head of State and the treaty ratification, that last one held by the Diet as the embodiment of popular sovereignty. Points 4 was meant to recover some of the financial independence of the monarchy that depended on the parliament for its sustenance; whilst Point 5 and 6 were intended to abolish the separation of the State and the Shinto cult, and were in some way indirectly entangled with the emperor, as the latter is the supreme priest in Shintoism.

The Liberal Party Commission on Constitutional Revision met for the first time in May, 1954<sup>26</sup>. After that, a total of five documents that compiled the

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<sup>21</sup> Tominaga, 2010, p. 128.

<sup>22</sup> Watanabe, 1987.

<sup>23</sup> Tominaga, 2010, p. 128-129.

<sup>24</sup> Article 8 stipulates that: "No property can be given to, or received by, the Imperial House, nor can any gifts be made therefrom, without the authorization of the Diet."

<sup>25</sup> Article 89 bans the government from supporting any religious organization. It stipulates that: "No public money or other property shall be expended or appropriated for the use, benefit or maintenance of any religious institution or association, or for any charitable, educational or benevolent enterprises not under the control of public authority."

<sup>26</sup> Watanabe, 1987, p. 256.

conservatives' political posture regarding several core topics of Japanese society, were produced. The second of those documents summarized the problems related to the role of the emperor in the following way<sup>27</sup>:

1. Is the emperor a symbol or the Head of State?
2. On the authority of the emperor, to clarify the distinction between acts on matter of State and government acts and to arrange which acts on matters of State should the emperor be involved in
3. The necessity of including the Imperial Household Law and the regulations regarding imperial property into the Constitution

Other proposals of the Commission also included granting the monarch with the prerogatives to declare war, peace and state of national emergency, and to dissolve the Diet<sup>28</sup>. Similarly, a group within the Liberal Party was aiming towards abolishing the requirement that the acts of the emperor in matters of state needed to be approved by the Cabinet, therefore granting the monarch with larger possibilities for influencing national politics<sup>29</sup>.

Even though the Liberal Party was aiming for a constitutional reform that enlarged the powers of the emperor, all its members did not share the same devotion for the monarchy than Yoshida, neither were they necessarily in favor of the restauration of the prewar imperial rule. Several of the participants to the Commission meetings argued numerous times about the necessity of setting some limits to the monarch powers even in a reformed Constitution. For example, Kuroda Satoru, a prestigious professor, expressed the following regarding the possibility of granting the monarch the role of supreme commander: "It is very dangerous to bring the supreme command to the emperor. In the case of Japan, the Prime Minister is still less dangerous, isn't he?"<sup>30</sup> On another occasion, Sato Isao defined the latent risk in the proposed role of the emperor as Head of State:

If it is decided that the emperor has the right to ratify treaties, then it means that the emperor has the power to conclude treaties, or that he has the right to appoint or

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<sup>27</sup> Watanabe, 1987, p. 257.

<sup>28</sup> Watanabe, 1987, p. 271.

<sup>29</sup> Ruoff, 2001, p. 74-75.

<sup>30</sup> Kuroda, 1954, p.36-39.

dismiss (ministers), then I wonder if both elements combined won't become the same as the old constitution's way of thinking.<sup>31</sup>

In parallel, the Reform Party from the opposition created its own Commission on Constitutional Revision on April 7<sup>th</sup>, 1954<sup>32</sup>. During its first meeting, Kiyose Ichiro, who was selected as Chairman of the Commission, stated that there were two fundamental points to be reviewed in the enforced Constitution: the renunciation to war and the role of the emperor<sup>33</sup>. On that last regard, the Reform Party members based its studies on the models of four European parliamentary monarchies (the United Kingdom, Norway, Belgium and Denmark). However, they also determined that the European monarchs possessed wide prerogatives related to political affairs, diplomacy, the military and religion<sup>34</sup>, and therefore it might not be feasible to fully apply the European model of constitutional monarchy to the Imperial Household.

Certainly, the Reform Party was aiming towards the consecution of a limited constitutional monarchy. After the second meeting of the Commission, carried out on September 13<sup>th</sup>, a report was published with the Party's proposals regarding the role of the Imperial Household. Those proposals appear summarized below<sup>35</sup>:

- To stipulate the emperor as the Head of State, however, restoration of imperial sovereignty is not intended.
- To add to the powers of the emperor to appoint and dismiss ambassadors and grant credentials, to administer amnesties and pardons, and to ratify treaties.
- (...) To make declarations of war
- (...) Ministers of State shall be appointed by the emperor on the recommendation of the prime minister.
- The current provision of Article 8 is unjust

In summary, by 1954, a relevant group of Japanese conservative politicians, either on the Liberal Party or in the Reform Party, have reached some sort of non-negotiated consensus on the position of the emperor vis-à-vis a possible constitutional revision. Even though the points made by the commissions of both parties differ in some issues, such as the desire of eliminating the separation between the State and

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<sup>31</sup> Sato, 1954, p. 20-23.

<sup>32</sup> Tominaga, 2010, p.129.

<sup>33</sup> Tominaga, 2010, p. 130.

<sup>34</sup> Tominaga, 2010, p. 131.

<sup>35</sup> Tominaga, 2010.

Shintoism (Article 20) expressed by the Liberal Party; all their plans aimed towards augmenting the emperor's powers in matters of foreign policy. In that sense, there seemed to be core suggestions common to the entire conservative spectrum which consisted basically on granting the monarch the title of Head of State and expanding his faculties in matters related to ratification of treaties, declaration of war and limited appointment of ministers.

Nonetheless, none of these political parties were willing to restore the prewar imperial rule, and they were neither in favor of adapting the Japanese monarchy to a Western European-style of constitutional monarchy. According to the discussions held in both Commissions, the conservative politicians believed that such aggrandizement of the Imperial Household would contradict the principles of popular sovereignty and republicanism enshrined in the Constitution.

Therefore, one might wonder why, against this background, the Japanese conservative politicians still insisted in enhancing the emperor's powers. In this sense, Ruoff offers a plausible explanation: the force of customs<sup>36</sup>. Certainly, Japan's Constitution had changed in the blink of an eye and brought numerous benefits to the Japanese people; but the popular sovereignty clause encapsulated in it faced more than sixty years of massive imperial indoctrination<sup>37</sup>. Furthermore, the new Constitution was not the result of an internal democratic process in Japan but was rather introduced by an external agent. Because of all the linguistic ambiguities that exist in its Japanese version as a result of that, several Japanese conservative scholars used its cultural remoteness as an argument against the 1947 Constitution<sup>38</sup>: actually, the Carta Magna was frequently depicted as the "MacArthur Constitution" or as a symbol of the occupation<sup>39</sup>.

Hatoyama Ichiro continued the conservative ambitions for constitutional reform during his tenure as prime minister: on his inaugural speech on December, 14<sup>th</sup>, he stated that one of his main policy objectives was to revise many of the laws enacted under the occupation, included the Constitution, as they were not in tune with the country's situation<sup>40</sup>. For that purpose, and after successful negotiations with the

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<sup>36</sup> Ruoff, 2001.

<sup>37</sup> The origins of the nation-wide indoctrination on the devotion towards the Imperial Household can be traced back to the promulgation in 1882 of the Imperial Edict to Soldiers and Sailors, which was an oath of loyalty to the emperor, even at the cost of one's own life. Although this proclamation began to be used as an ideological tool only within the armed forces, it was soon included in most study programs throughout the country.

<sup>38</sup> Watanabe, 1987.

<sup>39</sup> Watanabe, 1987.

<sup>40</sup> Watanabe, 1987, p. 280.



Liberal Party, Hatoyama established a Commission on Constitutional Reform within the Cabinet on June 14<sup>th</sup>, 1955.

In spite of the fact that the Hatoyama's Cabinet advocated constitutional reform; his government rather focused on the issue of rearmament and dropped the proposals related to the role of the emperor. Part of the explanation to that phenomenon might be on Hatoyama's own views on the Imperial Household (Hatoyama had been raised in a Christian family). In that sense, on February 24<sup>th</sup>, 1956, he was questioned in the Diet about his thoughts on the monarchy. Hatoyama expressed that "the current Constitution does not allow a monarchical government."<sup>41</sup> Furthermore, after being queried about the possibility of expanding of the emperor's powers via a constitutional reform, the prime minister expressed that he had "no intention of changing the system of democratic politics and sovereignty of the people." However, when he was asked if Japan was a republic, Hatoyama avoided touching any politically sensitive nerve by answering that it was "a democracy"<sup>42</sup>.

The matters related to the emperor's role were retaken though, after the conservatives' merge into the LDP in 1955: in November 12<sup>th</sup>, a new Commission on Constitutional Reform was established within such party<sup>43</sup>. Due to the fact that the LDP arose as a political alliance for the sake of holding the necessary majority vote in the Diet vis-à-vis constitutional reform and/or for keeping the Socialists out of power, there was not necessarily any ideological agreement within the ranks of the party, which was clearly demonstrated in the discussions regarding the role of the monarch. In that sense, the Commission was split between two factions: on one side, the conservative "old guard" politicians (closer to the "Yoshida line") who had made their careers under the prewar system, and on the other, the young generation officers who had just started their political life under the 1947 Constitution. The former advocated for a total or partial restoration of the Meiji Constitution, whilst the latter encouraged a modification of the 1947 Magna Carta which would not desecrate the popular sovereignty clause.

For example, Nakasone Yasuhiro, who was part of the young LDP generation, expressed the following on the monarch's role:

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<sup>41</sup> Tominaga, 2010, p. 174-176.

<sup>42</sup> Tominaga, 2010, p. 174-176.

<sup>43</sup> Watanabe, 1987, p. 288.

I think that, in practical terms, the position of the emperor is a symbolic one. Therefore, I am reluctant to increase his effective authority. However, it may be a good idea to increase the authority of the emperor when it comes to granting benefits to the people, such as amnesties and pardons. However, I am opposed to increasing any political authority. I think that the fact that the emperor has become a human emperor is a great step forward. It is necessary to legally secure his position as a human emperor.<sup>44</sup>

Furthermore, the younger ranks of the LDP continued abrogating in the Commission meetings for the limitation of the emperor's powers as to prevent the political use of the Imperial Household by any political party and/or the development of a prewar-like emperor-centered political system<sup>45</sup>. As a result of that continuous pressure from within the LDP, the proposals regarding the augmentation of authority of the emperor were eventually toned down.

In that regard, in April 28<sup>th</sup>, 1956, the LDP Commission issued a report on the several points that had been agreed thus far within the party named "Issues regarding Constitutional Revision". Even though the position of the emperor was the first topic in the agenda, it was largely eclipsed by the rearmament issue when it came to the length of the discussion and the number of proposals. It certainly denoted that a change of political priorities had taken place within the LDP. In that sense, the report states the following regarding the role of the monarch:

The basic policy of the Commission does not include changing the principle of popular sovereignty. In spite of what some people speculate, there is not a glimmer of discussion about making the Emperor the actual sovereign or duplicating the status of the Emperor under the Meiji Constitution.<sup>46</sup>

Furthermore, on the subject of the title of Head of State, the Commission referred that:

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<sup>44</sup> Jiyu Minshuto Kenpo Chosakai, 1961, p. 80-81.

<sup>45</sup> Watanabe, 1987, p. 296.

<sup>46</sup> Watanabe, 1987, p. 297.

There is a debate about whether the expression "symbol" should be changed to another word, and it is being carefully considered (In relation to this, there is the issue of whether it is appropriate to provide an explicit statement to the effect that the Emperor is the Head of State, but this point is said to require careful consideration).<sup>47</sup>

There are some important points to be made concerning those two statements. The first one is that the LDP had come to reject the ambitions espoused by the old guard conservative politicians related to the restoration of the imperial prerogatives stipulated the Meiji Constitution; and, therefore, embraced a more moderate approach closer to that of the young generation. The second one is that the LDP Commission had cautiously avoided suggesting openly that the title of Head of State should belong to the emperor. If compared to the Liberal Party's or Reform Party's previous proposals regarding granting the monarch with such title immediately, the LDP's claims were relatively weaker in that sense, leaving room for some debate. Both elements denote that the reformist faction had triumphed temporarily over the restorationist within the LDP, *ergo* blocking any possibility for increasing the emperor's powers through constitutional methods.

In fact, Kishi Nobusuke, who became prime minister in January, 1957 and stayed in office until July, 1960, did not move significantly towards legally augmenting the monarch's role, even though he had served in several posts in the prewar and wartime political establishment<sup>48</sup>. Nor the LDP aimed intensely for constitutional reform whatsoever during Kishi's tenure<sup>49</sup>. Kishi's administration only revived the Cabinet Commission on Constitutional Reform created by Hatoyama two years before, but that office did not show any relevant progress regarding the constitutional debate. That stalemate also implied that the prospects for a somehow larger monarchy were ultimately abandoned. Therefore, one might question which factors provoked Japanese conservative politicians to eventually lost interest in constitutional reform by 1960, even though the claims for revision were very strong at the beginning of the decade.

Both Watanabe and Ruoff offer a similar interpretation of the causes of this phenomenon: the advance of the notion of popular sovereignty coupled with the

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<sup>47</sup> Watanabe, 1987, p. 297.

<sup>48</sup> Kishi served as Deputy Minister of Industrial Development in Manchukuo, and later as Minister of Commerce and Vice Minister of Munitions in the Hideki Tojo Cabinet.

<sup>49</sup> Tominaga, 2010; Watanabe, 1987.

changes of the political system and the generational change<sup>50</sup>. Even though by the middle of the 50's, less than a decade had passed since the enactment of the 1947 Constitution, the clause of popular sovereignty seemed to have firmly grasped in most Japanese citizens. In that regard, several polls carried out during the decade show how on average Japanese people changed their appreciation regarding the monarchy. For example, in 1954, Tokyo Shimbun asked several citizens whether the emperor should be a symbol or the Head of State. 62% of the respondents supported the current symbolic position, whilst 22% preferred the monarch to be entitled as Head of State<sup>51</sup>. The same poll was again conducted in 1959, and showed that the first category had increased to an overwhelming 76% and the second opinion had reduced to 11% of the respondents<sup>52</sup>.

These elements show that the public opinion in Japan rejected the old ideas of imperial rule and had embraced to a large extent the popular sovereignty clause. Watanabe also argues that, since politicians ought to be elected by popular vote, they could not ignore the interests of their voters in that regard and keep pushing for a reform of the Imperial Household that was undesired by the population<sup>53</sup>. On top of that, by the mid of 1950, Japanese society had largely stabilized due to economic recovery from the war; therefore, it was no longer necessary for politicians to implement tyrannical methods of ideological control, such as the imperial cult, in order to keep communism in check. By 1960, economic prosperity had made Japanese society less interested in politics than just a few years ago, which also meant that a revival of the prewar imperial system was not even considered by most citizens.

In spite of the eventual renunciation to the constitutional revision on the role of the emperor by the conservative politicians, it is important to note that such action was done as a direct or indirect consequence of the overall social context, but not necessarily as a demonstration of a change within the conservative ideological mindset. The LDP party members, even the new generations, still had some awe for the emperor and clearly differentiated him from the average citizen. Even in the heated debates of the LDP Commission, there was an agreement on the importance of the Imperial Household for the Japanese State and the necessity of its endurance. Therefore, it was somehow natural for them to try to increase the emperor's influence

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<sup>50</sup> Watanabe, 1987; Ruoff, 2001.

<sup>51</sup> Cole & Nakanishi, 1960, p. 444-463.

<sup>52</sup> Ruoff, 2001, p. 80.

<sup>53</sup> Watanabe, 1987.

on matters other than the popular sovereignty clause and the public separation of the monarchy from politics.

## **Re-institution of the prewar political practices and ceremonies**

Even though the conservatives ultimately failed in their ambitions for constitutional enlargement of the Imperial Household, they kept a second track in their strategy for making the emperor the Head of State of the country: the progressive re-institution of the prewar political practices and ceremonies related to the Imperial Household. This approach was more subtle than the revision of the constitution as it attracted less criticism. Moreover, the prospects for success for this strategy were larger than the reform of the constitution since many of the rites that the conservatives tried to restore, and eventually did, were already part of Japanese idiosyncrasy as they were firmly tied to Shintoism.

However, the restauration of the ceremonies related to the Imperial Household required a long-term pace in order to be re-accepted gradually by Japanese society. Consequently, this process could not be fulfilled entirely during the 50's decade. Actually, many of the most important achievements of the restorationist movement were accomplished in the 60's, such as the reestablishment of the National Foundation Day (建国記念日)<sup>54</sup> in 1966, or in the 70's, like in the case of the adoption of Era Name Law<sup>55</sup> in 1979. Nevertheless, the historical roots of this movement can be traced back to the last stage of the occupation and the immediately following period.

Unlike the constitutional reform effort, that was mostly engulfed in a legal and historical debate between political parties and within them, the restorationist movement spread amongst many sectors of Japanese society such as politicians, intellectuals, religious organizations, private companies, soldiers and the common citizen. Furthermore, this “cultural battle” was fought in several fields which included,

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<sup>54</sup> National Foundation Day (February 11<sup>th</sup>) celebrates the supposed ascension of the first emperor, Jimmu, to the throne, and it is officially considered to be the day in which Japan was created as a nation.

<sup>55</sup> The Era Name Law is Japan's shortest law and establishes the procedure for naming the period of time a given emperor is in the throne. In that sense, the law's only two articles express: “1) The era name shall be determined by cabinet ordinance; 2) The era name shall be changed only in the case of a succession to the imperial throne” (Kawashima, 2017).

but were not limited to, domestic politics, foreign policy, religion, education, the military, etc. In that sense and given the significant volume of information available on the role of the Imperial Household on post-occupation Japanese society, it is necessary to focus on those restorationist attempts that approached the emperor to the title of Head of State, and those that directly or indirectly strengthen his position on foreign policy matters.

The first element to be exposed is the role of Hirohito in Japan's post-occupation politics. In that regard, the influence of Yoshida Shigeru is worth mentioning. Yoshida continued to be in the post of prime minister for two more years after the independence and strove to restore many of the political ceremonies that involved the monarchy once he was free from the political control of SCAP. Even under the auspices of the guiding principle of popular sovereignty, Yoshida sustained his awe for the monarchy. He wrote the following in his memoirs:

In Japan, the imperial family has been the center of rituals and government, and this is a fact that has not changed throughout history from ancient times to modern times. Festivals and political affairs centered on the imperial family were inseparable, and therefore the history of the imperial family was the history of the nation. Shinto was the religion of the imperial family as well as the religion of the people.<sup>56</sup>

The prime minister held the line of thought about the Imperial Household as an ahistorical entity which ought to be brought back to the center of national politics. For that purpose, he committed to: "taking into consideration his position under nowadays constitution, aim for making the Imperial Household the spiritual and moral center of different aspects of society such as politics, religion and culture among others."<sup>57</sup> As a result of his ideology and the political power he held as the longest serving prime minister in Japan's history up to that moment, Yoshida exerted a doubtlessly vigorous force for the sake of the restoration of many of Hirohito's prerogatives, in spite of the influence of the opposition parties and the critics within his own party.

Nonetheless, as with many other controversial issues the conservatives tried to impulse during the postwar, they needed to tread carefully fearing popular backlash

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<sup>56</sup> Yoshida, 1957, p.71-82.

<sup>57</sup> Yoshida, 1957, p.71-82.

and the advance of the left. For that reason, Yoshida opted for continuing the secretive practice of the briefings. The prime minister briefed the emperor regularly around once a month and stimulated his Cabinet's ministers to do the same<sup>58</sup>. There are records of several meetings of the monarch with Japanese officials left in the diary of Irie Sukemasa and in the Japanese press of that time. For example, on May 31<sup>st</sup>, 1952, Attorney General Kimura Tokutaro reported on the assault of a police office in the metropolitan district of Shinjuku<sup>59</sup>; in July of 1953, the concerned ministers briefed the monarch regarding the floodings that were happening in Western Japan<sup>60</sup>; similarly, Sato Eisaku, who was Minister of Construction, reported in November of 1952 on several infrastructure projects in the country<sup>61</sup>.

Furthermore, on May 13<sup>th</sup>, 1953, Yoshida expressly ordered his subordinates to brief Hirohito on several on-going affairs. Four ministers went to palace: Foreign Minister Okazaki explained the matters concerned to the negotiations of a possible armistice in the Korean War<sup>62</sup>; Chief of the Security Agency (the predecessor of the Defense Agency) Kimura briefed on the situation of the armed forces; Welfare Minister Yamagata exposed on the situation of the Japanese repatriates; and Minister of trade and Industry Ogasawara informed the monarch about Japan's international trade position<sup>63</sup>. The mere fact that those secret meeting were a common practice during the rest of Yoshida's term, drives to the conclusion that the emperor was kept abreast of any significant internal or international occurrences. It means therefore, that the prewar tradition of imperial briefings was kept alive, which approached Hirohito closer to being considered the informal Head of State of the country.

Nonetheless, the end of the Yoshida's Cabinet and the start of Hatoyama's administration proved that the continuance of the briefings was not considered a necessary practice by all conservative politicians. According to several testimonies, Hatoyama tried by all methods not to brief the monarch, and there are several speculations about the reasons for such position. A first plausible explanation might be Hatoyama's own ideas regarding the role of the Imperial Household in postwar

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<sup>58</sup> Tominaga, 2010, p. 86.

<sup>59</sup> Asahi Shinbun, 1952.

<sup>60</sup> Asahi Shinbun, 1953.

<sup>61</sup> Mainichi Shinbun, 1952.

<sup>62</sup> US, Chinese and North Korean diplomats were negotiating since the end of 1952 in order to achieve an acceptable end to the conflict in the Korean Peninsula. The armistice was finally signed on July 27<sup>th</sup>, 1953.

<sup>63</sup> Asahi Shinbun, 1953.

Japan, and how it should be separated from politics as exposed above in the epigraph regarding the 1950's constitutional debate.

Moreover, there was an unpleasant episode regarding a secret briefing during Hatoyama's tenure. Ministers of agriculture were frequently asked several insightful and difficult questions by the emperor, who was an expert on biology himself<sup>64</sup>. The bureaucrats who occupied the highest posts in the Ministry of Agriculture needed to prepare intensively in order to brief the emperor. According to anecdotal accounts, Kono Ichiro, who occupied such responsibility within Hatoyama's Cabinet, was embarrassed by the monarch because of the former's lack of technical knowledge regarding tree production in Japan during one of their meetings, which consequently demotivated other ministers and Hatoyama himself not to brief the emperor<sup>65</sup>.

However, there is evidence that suggests that Hatoyama briefed the emperor in spite of his ideological position and/or the events described above. At least two briefings between the prime minister and Hirohito took place during the former's tenure: on July 5<sup>th</sup>, 1955 and June 15<sup>th</sup>, 1956<sup>66</sup>. Although there is no record of those briefings, it's worth noting that the second one happened before Hatoyama went abroad for the talks that were being held in London with American diplomats (led by Dulles) regarding the normalization of relations between Japan and the Soviet Union.

Because of Hatoyama's repulse to brief the monarch not as frequently as Yoshida did, Hirohito turned to a new source of information regarding the on-going matters: Foreign Minister Shigemitsu Mamoru. Shigemitsu was a career diplomat trained in prewar Japan and held many posts in the prewar and wartime bureaucratic apparatus. He had been sentenced by the Tokyo Tribunal as a war criminal, but was paroled in 1950 by the US. Furthermore, he also shared a deep awe for the Imperial Household and had a high regard for Hirohito himself. On his diary, there is an entrance on November 16<sup>th</sup>, 1955 that shows how he felt about the monarchy:

His Majesty bestowed me repeatedly with his words 'Do your legs hurt?', 'I want you to be healthy', 'Take care of your body'. I replied 'Your Majesty, please take good care of yourself' before leaving. It is the affection of a lord and a vassal.<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>64</sup> Iwami, 2005, p. 23.

<sup>65</sup> Iwami, 2005, p. 170-171.

<sup>66</sup> Asahi Shinbun, 1955; Mainichi Shinbun, 1956.

<sup>67</sup> Shigemitsu, 1988, p. 757.



In that sense, Shigemitsu acted as a faithful servant to the monarch, and as Yoshida did, kept Hirohito informed of the most relevant diplomatic events at that time, especially the negotiations with the Soviet Union. Even though the emperor had not access to the prime minister, he could influence the negotiations via Shigemitsu. In that sense, there are records on Shigemitsu's diary of at least seven briefings with the monarch<sup>68</sup>, as well as the content of several of them; but, given the importance of such evidence, it is analyzed in the subsequent epigraphs.

Other ministers of the Hatoyama Cabinet, such as Minister of Construction Genji Baba and the aforementioned Minister of Agriculture Kono also briefed the emperor on February 20<sup>th</sup> and May 31<sup>st</sup>, 1956 respectively<sup>69</sup>. Similarly, Chief of the Defense Agency Funada informed Hirohito about military matters on August 26<sup>th</sup> of the same year<sup>70</sup>.

There is not much information available on secret briefings during Ishibashi's administration. Kishi, on the other side, continued and even expanded the practice compared to Hatoyama. According to several sources, Kishi briefed Hirohito at least eleven times during his tenure<sup>71</sup>, and several of those meetings were specifically about diplomatic matters. For example, Kishi met the monarch on May 18<sup>th</sup>, 1957, after his first trip to several Asian countries<sup>72</sup>; on July 1<sup>st</sup>, after his visit to the US<sup>73</sup>; on December 16<sup>th</sup> after a second visit to several Asian countries<sup>74</sup>; and on January 12<sup>th</sup>, 1960 before departing for the US to sign the new Security Treaty<sup>75</sup>. Once again, there is no direct record regarding what the emperor said in those meetings; nevertheless, on his memoirs, Kishi wrote that: "The emperor's attitude had not changed particularly."<sup>76</sup> Taking into consideration that Kishi had briefed the emperor during wartime, such a statement reveals that Hirohito continued to have an active role in the foreign policy decision-making process of postwar Japan in spite of the constitutional limitations.

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<sup>68</sup> Those seven briefings happened on May 11<sup>th</sup>, May 23<sup>rd</sup>, June 14<sup>th</sup>, August 20<sup>th</sup>, September 28<sup>th</sup> and November 16<sup>th</sup> of 1955, and July 20<sup>th</sup>, 1956 (Shigemitsu, 1988).

<sup>69</sup> Irie, 1991, p. 264-265; Asahi Shinbun, 1956.

<sup>70</sup> Mainichi, Shinbun, 1956.

<sup>71</sup> Tominaga, 2010, p. 177.

<sup>72</sup> Asahi Shinbun, 1957/5/18.

<sup>73</sup> Asahi Shinbun, 1957/7/2.

<sup>74</sup> Asahi Shinbun, 1957/12/16.

<sup>75</sup> Asahi Shinbun, 1960.

<sup>76</sup> Kishi et al, 2014, p.58.

Furthermore, during Kishi's tenure, not only the ministers of his Cabinet frequently briefed the emperor<sup>77</sup>, but other officials with important political responsibilities informed the monarch on several matters. For example, Speakers of the House of Representatives Hoshishima Niro and Matsuno Tsuruhei visited the emperor and reported to him on the situation of the parliament in July 9<sup>th</sup>, 1958<sup>78</sup>; and Chief Justice of the Supreme Court Tanaka Kotaro also briefed Hirohito on October 6<sup>th</sup>, 1958<sup>79</sup>. Similarly, Vice Chairman of the LDP Diet Affairs Committee Sonoda Sunao reported to the monarch on July 27<sup>th</sup>, 1957<sup>80</sup>.

Those examples show that, by the end of the 50's, briefing the emperor had developed somehow into a normalized drill amongst Japan's top policy-makers. Moreover, it had become a common practice for prime ministers (and frequently for foreign ministers) to inform the emperor after and/or before foreign trips, which implied the possibility for a larger influence of Hirohito in foreign policy. However, Japanese politicians understood the disastrous repercussions such briefings could have had for the domestic political situation, and kept the practice in the utmost secrecy. As a result, there are almost no records of the secret briefings to the emperor occurred during the 1950s, with few exceptions such as the diary of Shigemitsu Mamoru. Furthermore, representatives from all three powers of the State (executive, legislative and judiciary) in addition to the LDP establishment, eventually briefed the emperor during this period, a prerogative that not even the prime minister enjoyed, and which further reinforced the perception of Hirohito as Japan's informal Head of the State.

Moreover, Japan's independence also implicated that foreign relations ought to be restored; *ergo*, several protocol matters concerning foreign affairs within the Japanese state that involved the emperor, needed to be settled. For instance, the Constitution provided in its Article 7 that the monarch might attest instruments of ratification and other diplomatic documents, as well as might receive foreign ambassadors and dignitaries. However, given that during the occupation period, Japan's foreign relations were mediated by the US, there was no procedural precedent on how should the monarchy be officially entangled into Japan's new diplomacy.

Additionally, Japan had no law that regulated how diplomatic documents ought to be created. In pre-1945 Japan, such matters were structured in the "Official

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<sup>77</sup> Tominaga, 2010, p. 177.

<sup>78</sup> Asahi Shinbun, 1958.

<sup>79</sup> Irie, 1991 (Vol 6), p. 29.

<sup>80</sup> Irie, 1991 (Vol 5), p. 305.

Ordinance Law” (公式令)<sup>81</sup> that established the format and standards of all official documents of the Empire of Japan<sup>82</sup>. However, such law was abolished during the occupation period, specifically in 1947. Japanese lawmakers attempted to re-create a new law similar to the old one but it was rejected by SCAP because it had many references to the emperor and didn’t fit the spirit of the new Constitution<sup>83</sup>. As the State was left with no legal guidance on this respect after the independence, Japanese politicians attempted to fill this procedural vacuum with prewar ceremonial practices as much as possible<sup>84</sup>, which also added more elements to the informal consideration of Hirohito as the Head of State of the country.

For example, the format of official documents was maintained practically identical compared to those of the pre-1945 period. The customary use of both the “country seal” (国璽) and the “emperor seal” (御璽) in order to ratify treaties was maintained. Both seals continued to be inherited within the Imperial Household and kept by the Imperial Household Agency. Interestingly, Japan’s national seal inscription changed from the former “Great Empire of Japan” (大日本帝国) to “Great State of Japan” (大日本国)<sup>85</sup>, albeit the official name of the country as recognized in the Constitution is “State of Japan” (日本国), which could be interpreted as a conservatives’ movement in order to protect part of the imperial symbolism.

Similarly, the ceremony for the official ratification of documents continued to be performed under the Meiji standards. The emperor would sign the documents first, and then the prime minister and the concerning minister of State (typically the foreign minister) would do the same: by the Meiji canon, such procedure represented the political superiority of the emperor as both ministers offered a mere “countersignature” of the imperial decision<sup>86</sup>. However, because of the controversial nature of such ceremony, and in order to be in tune with the Constitution, the LDP Constitutional Commission tried to re-signify this act as the proof that, according to Article 7, the emperor had attested the respective document and “advice and approval” had been

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<sup>81</sup> It was created as Imperial Ordinance n.6 of February 1<sup>st</sup>, 1907.

<sup>82</sup> Official Ordinance Law, 1907.

<sup>83</sup> Watanabe, 1990, p. 176.

<sup>84</sup> 自由民主党憲法調査会, 1958, p. 23.

<sup>85</sup> 自由民主党憲法調査会, 1958, p. 34.

<sup>86</sup> Watanabe, 1990, p. 177.

given by the Cabinet<sup>87</sup>. Nonetheless, ultimately, the procedure continued to be identical at the surface level.

In the same way, the ceremony of presentation of credentials of foreign ambassadors to the emperor, was also executed according to the prewar traditions. Such acts were performed in pre-1945 Japan according to the Regulations for Audiences with Foreign Envoys, enacted in 1890 (外国使臣謁見規則), which stipulated that the foreign dignitaries ought to be picked by a horse-drawn carriage and escorted to palace, where they would present their credentials to the emperor<sup>88</sup>. After the end of the occupation, the Yoshida Cabinet strove to perform this ceremony by the Meiji standards: consequently, in 1952, the first presentation of credentials by foreign ambassadors was organized by the Imperial Household Agency and carried out according to the Meiji-era regulations<sup>89</sup>, and that practice has survived in the same format up to nowadays<sup>90</sup>.

Hirohito's role was also expanded in other political and symbolical domains. During the occupation period, specifically in October 1948, Yoshida had tried to dissolve the House of Representatives under the auspices of Article 7 of the Constitution, which states that the emperor has the prerogative, though formal, of dissolving the Diet<sup>91</sup>. At that time, the timely intervention of SCAP prevented Yoshida from carrying such an action and a motion of non-confidence against the government was passed instead<sup>92</sup>. However, after the independence, in August, 1952, Yoshida attempted once again to dissolve the House of Representatives by invoking Article 7, and due to the support of the major opposition parties, the motion was approved and the Diet was dissolved for the first time in postwar Japan by the emperor<sup>93</sup>. Although such an action is not demonstrative of the monarch possessing a larger political power *per se*, it did prove that most Japanese politicians, from different ideological backgrounds (except Socialists and Communists) and in concordance with the opinion expressed in the constitutional debate, were in favor of allowing a closer interaction of the monarchy with parliamentary politics.

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<sup>87</sup>自由民主党憲法調査会, 1958.

<sup>88</sup>外国使臣謁見規則, 1890.

<sup>89</sup>Watanabe, 1990, p. 181.

<sup>90</sup> According to the Imperial Household Agency website, a horse-drawn carriage is provided at the request of the ambassador who will present his/her credentials (Imperial Household Agency, 2022).

<sup>91</sup> The Constitution of Japan, 1947.

<sup>92</sup> Tominaga, 2010, p. 85.

<sup>93</sup> Tominaga, 2010, p. 85.

As part of the restorationist movement, several private events related to the Imperial Household were also converted into State ceremonies, further bonding the monarchy to politics. The first example of said trend can be traced back to the occupation period. On May 17<sup>th</sup>, 1951, Hirohito's mother, Dowager Empress Teimei died, and Yoshida proposed to carry out her funeral as a State ceremony<sup>94</sup>. However, Yoshida's intentions had no legal support because, according to Article 24 and 25 of the Imperial Household Law, the only ceremonies that could be held are the ascension to the throne and the funeral of the emperor<sup>95</sup>. Nonetheless, Yoshida retorted the aforementioned argument regarding the moral and spiritual relevance of the monarchy for Japanese society, and carried out and State funeral for the Dowager Empress in June of that year<sup>96</sup>.

Under that same reasoning, several other private matters related to the Imperial Household were systematically transformed into State acts by the Yoshida Cabinet. On February, 1952, the prime minister decided to hold both the enthronement ceremony and coming-of-age ceremony of Akihito, to be done simultaneously in April, as State acts<sup>97</sup>. Similarly, on May 12<sup>th</sup>, the New Year message of the emperor was also considered as an official act<sup>98</sup>. The trend did not stop there and was followed by Kishi, who declared, in 1959, the intention of his Cabinet to sponsor the wedding between Crown Prince Akihito and Soda Michiko as a State act<sup>99</sup>.

Another matter that was relevant in the efforts for restoring to Hirohito the title of Head of State, and that was indirectly related to his role in Japan's foreign policy, was the relation between the emperor and the Japan Self-Defense Forces. Nevertheless, such topic had attracted little public attention. It is somehow understandable that, given the war responsibility issue that hanged upon Hirohito during the entire postwar period, the palace entourage advocated for hiding any contact the monarch had with the military before and after 1945. Unequivocally, the Imperial Household Agency, in alliance with the US occupation authorities, had carried out a massive public relations campaign to clean Hirohito's figure of any militaristic vestige.

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<sup>94</sup> Watanabe, 1990, p. 182.

<sup>95</sup> The Imperial Household Law, 1947.

<sup>96</sup> Watanabe, 1990, p. 182.

<sup>97</sup> Sato, 1959, p. 36-37.

<sup>98</sup> Sato, 1959, p. 36-37.

<sup>99</sup> Watanabe, 1990, p. 225.

In that sense, the monarch himself never wore again his military uniform neither did he appear frequently on military parades. He even changed his prewar and wartime supreme commander outlook for the appearance of a middle-class citizen. The Imperial Household Agency understood that the existence of a Japanese military in the postwar period was controversial enough not to get the monarchy also engulfed in such political turf. In fact, Japanese politicians also acknowledged the divisionism of such issue and, even some of them argued about the possibility of restoring the emperor the rights of military supreme command, such proposal was eventually abandoned during the constitutional debate of the 50's. Nonetheless, the ties between Hirohito and the Japanese military were re-built on an even stealthier manner than the political briefings.

One month after the very start of hostilities in the Korean Peninsula, in July, 1950, the National Police reserve was created. Later, in 1952, it was expanded and re-branded as National Safety Forces. An additional impulse came when, in 1954, Yoshida formalized the existence of the Japanese military as the Self-Defense Forces (JSDF) by re-interpreting Article 9 of the Constitution. The JSDF received increased financing from the Japanese government and technical support from the US throughout the 50's decade; however, the Japanese military systematically lacked a strong morale during the immediate period after its establishment.

The psychological consequences of the defeat, the national effort aimed towards economic reconstruction, altogether with the controversial status of the JSDF, undermined the public perception regarding the Japanese military as well as the motivation of the soldiers. Japanese and American officials noticed such issue as early as 1953. During a meeting that took place on September 24<sup>th</sup> between US Ambassador Allison, Foreign Minister Okazaki and military personnel from both countries, the participants agreed on the necessity to carry out an "education campaign bringing home to Japanese people facts of life in present world and necessity for adequate defense system."<sup>100</sup> Moreover, officials from the US Defense Department started to devise a proposal to recreate the prewar and wartime Japan's hegemony in East Asia under the imperial system. In September, 1954, the Chief of Staff of the Far East Command, Carter B. Magruder, suggested to "(...) endeavor in every way to kindle in Japan a more aggressive spirit such as (...) by indicating that

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<sup>100</sup> FRUS, 1953, n. 689.

the United States would view favorably the re-establishment of the Japanese Empire under a moderate Japanese Government.”<sup>101</sup>

Even though Magruder’s ideas were not considered by the majority of US policy-makers, the issue of military morale continued to echo throughout the decade as part of the US-Japan defense negotiations. Several Japanese military officers were also in favor of a strongest relation between the military and the Imperial Household. For example, Keizo Hayashi, Senior Superintendent of the National Police Reserve, commented to Colonel Frank Kowalski Jr., who was instrumental in the creation and training of the Japanese military, the following:

I looked into the soldier's eyes, but there was no light. The Japanese people are worried that the soldiers have no spirit. The public asks how a spiritless Police Reserve can fight, who the Reserve fights for, and who is the Reserve's commander-in-chief (...) After much searching for an alternative to the military spirit of the Imperial Army, I have found no satisfactory substitute spiritual education. Before the war, the emperor was the Supreme Commander. Who is the Supreme Commander now? (...) Imperial soldiers gladly died in front of the horse of His Majesty the Emperor. But Colonel, should we now expect our men to die for the sake of politicians? I can't tell the soldiers to give up their lives for Yoshida and Ohashi (...) you cannot expect them to give their lives for democracy.<sup>102</sup>

Hayashi’s predicament was replicated within a group of former Imperial Army officers who had an important influence in the establishment of the postwar Japanese military<sup>103</sup>. In that sense, in order to boost the morale of the military, those officials proposed to maintain the supreme command powers formally on the prime minister whilst investing the monarch with a “moral leadership” over the army. For example, former Army Colonel Hattori Takushiro stated that:

The emperor should hold a worthy position in the new army as the symbol of the unity of Japan and the people, and the emperor should therefore hold the highest

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<sup>101</sup> FRUS, 1954, n. 806.

<sup>102</sup> Kowalski, 1999, p. 18-30.

<sup>103</sup> Tominaga, 2010, p. 102-103.

honor in the new army, and, with the advice and approval of the Cabinet, conduct military affairs under the category of acts in matter of State.<sup>104</sup>

Similarly, other members of this pressure group advocated elevating the role of the emperor vis-à-vis the military. In that regard, Hoshina Zenshiro, ex-Imperial Navy officer, expressed: “It is appropriate that the commander-in-chief of the army rests with the prime minister, and that the emperor should hold the highest honor as the symbol of the army.”<sup>105</sup> Likewise, Inada Masazumi, ex-Imperial Army officer, stated: “The emperor should be the ceremonial head of the army, and the prime minister should be ceremonially subordinate to the emperor.”<sup>106</sup> Interestingly, Japanese military personnel did not aim for the full restoration of the emperor to the former category of supreme commander, but rather supported some formula to accommodate both the principle of popular sovereignty, represented in the formal command of the military by the prime minister, and the moral and symbolic leadership of the monarch.

Taking into consideration the Japanese military’s thoughts about the Imperial Household, spiritual ties between both institutions were systematically restored during the 50’s and 60’s decade, even though the supreme command rights were ultimately an exclusive prerogative of the prime minister. As it has been already exposed, the respective chiefs of the Defense Agency briefed the emperor on military matters throughout the decade; and after 1961, senior commanders of the JSDF also started having secret audiences with the monarch<sup>107</sup>. Moreover, in 1954, Hirohito participated in a boarding parade hosted by the Maritime Self-Defense Forces in Hokkaido<sup>108</sup>.

Similarly, the emperor established strong relations with several veterans’ associations. In that sense, the monarch received periodical briefings from Hirata Noboru, who was his former military aide and vice-president of the Japan Veterans Friendship League<sup>109</sup>. In addition, on August 25<sup>th</sup>, 1958, several veterans’ associations joined with the Association of Shinto Shrines to carry out a memorial service for the war dead; the imperial couple sent a floral offering and a message to this gathering,

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<sup>104</sup> Tominaga, 2010, p. 102-103.

<sup>105</sup> Tominaga, 2010, p. 102-103.

<sup>106</sup> Tominaga, 2010, p. 102-103.

<sup>107</sup> Watanabe, 1990, p. 248.

<sup>108</sup> Tominaga, 2010, p. 103.

<sup>109</sup> Bix, 2000, p. 658.



which was understood as an informal confirmation of the support of the monarch for such events. Hirohito started attending the memorial services from 1963<sup>110</sup>.

## **The rise of Imperial Diplomacy and Akihito's ceremonial debut**

Along with the restart of Japan's international relations, the Imperial Household experienced a deeper involvement into official diplomatic matters in the post-occupation period. Unlike the briefings and the direct communications Hirohito sustained with foreign diplomats, that were secretive by nature, the new diplomatic functions of the Imperial Household were of public knowledge. In fact, contrary to the secretive practice of briefings, the Imperial Household Agency strove to publicize as much as possible the official contacts the imperial family sustained with foreign dignitaries and other royal families<sup>111</sup>. Moreover, those new diplomatic practices provoked that not only Hirohito, but most of his family (especially Crown Prince Akihito), became informal representatives of the State of Japan.

Such phenomenon has been labeled as "Imperial Diplomacy" (皇室外交)<sup>112</sup> by several experts on matters of the Imperial Household. However, those words were employed firstly by the mass media to refer to Hirohito's visits to Europe and the US in the 70's<sup>113</sup>, and were later accepted tacitly within the academia. In spite of the fact that there is a somehow accepted notion on what acts "Imperial Diplomacy" refers to, one might not find many definitions for it. Takahashi Hiroshi conceptualizes "Imperial Diplomacy" as:

(...) the visits of the emperor and members of the imperial family to foreign countries and the interaction with the Heads of State and citizens of those countries, deepening goodwill relations between the two countries and helping mutual understanding. It also refers to when (the imperial family) holds welcoming

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<sup>110</sup> Bix, 2000, p. 658.

<sup>111</sup> Ruoff, 2001.

<sup>112</sup> Imperial Diplomacy is not exclusive to the post-occupation period. Since the start of the Meiji Era, the Japanese monarchy had been involved in official diplomatic matters such as receiving foreign guests, sending telegrams and traveling overseas. Actually, Hirohito, during his tenure as crown prince, was the first notable member of the Imperial Household to travel abroad for diplomatic purposes. This trip took occasion in 1921 and included five European countries (the United Kingdom, France, Belgium, the Netherlands and Italy) and British overseas colonies such as Hong Kong, Singapore, Sri Lanka, Egypt, Malta and Gibraltar (皇室事典編集委員会, 2009).

<sup>113</sup> Watanabe, 2000, p. 288.

ceremonies and imperial dinners, etc. for the Heads of State of other countries visiting Japan, and invites diplomats stationed in Japan to garden parties, lunches, etc., in order to promote friendship.<sup>114</sup>

In that sense, Sakakibara Kamenosuke expresses that:  
It goes without saying that the emperor, who has no authority over national affairs, cannot engage in core diplomatic negotiations. But I don't think there is a single person who doesn't aim for international friendship. As a result, the emperor in his position as a symbol is positive for international relations. This is called 'Imperial Diplomacy' (...).<sup>115</sup>

Similarly, Sado Akihiro states the following on the importance of the diplomatic role of the Imperial Household: "It is certain that it plays a major role as a 'symbol of friendship' in Japan's diplomacy as a whole."<sup>116</sup>

Nevertheless, the Imperial Household Agency does not use the term "Imperial Diplomacy" on its official documents referring to the diplomatic activities of the royal family, probably as a safeguard against any criticism of "excessive political involvement" of the Imperial Household. Instead, the governmental agency labels such acts as "Fostering friendly relations with foreign countries" (国際親善) and includes them into the list of official duties of the royal family<sup>117</sup>. Under the aforementioned category, there are eight officially recognized activities: receiving State guests and official guests, the ceremony of presentation of credentials, audiences (with foreign guests), correspondence, receiving diplomatic missions residing in Japan, audiences with Japanese ambassadors and overseas visits<sup>118</sup>.

In summary, for the purpose of this research, Imperial Diplomacy is defined as *the official and public activities of the Imperial Household in relation to Japan's foreign policy*. This definition includes therefore, the eight examples mentioned above. It is important to remark that the notion of Imperial Diplomacy is associated in principle with *official and public* activities, since it is conducted through the Imperial

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<sup>114</sup> Takahashi, 2008, p. 153.

<sup>115</sup> Sakakibara, 1981, p. 187.

<sup>116</sup> Sado, 1998.

<sup>117</sup> Imperial Household Agency, 2022.

<sup>118</sup> Imperial Household Agency, 2022.

Household Agency and in a fashion that dispels any criticism regarding the political involvement of the monarchy.

However, the intervention of the monarchy in Japan's foreign policy during the postwar period is not limited to those official activities. As explained thus far, there was another kind of secret diplomatic practices, such as the Japanese politicians' briefings to the emperor and the communications Hirohito sustained with American policy-makers, which had an important influence in Japan's foreign policy. Since those activities are carried out in secret channels they ought not to be regarded as part of the official influence of the monarchy in foreign policy, but as the result of Hirohito's own arsenal of diplomatic skills.

In that sense, the role of the Imperial Household in Japan's foreign policy after the end of the occupation had a double quality: on one side, the monarchy as an institution carried out a series of official and public activities (Imperial Diplomacy), and simultaneously on the other side, its members (remarkably, the emperor) secretly influenced the Japan's foreign policy decision-making process and the negotiations with the US through the "dual diplomacy" method.

Taking into consideration that Imperial Diplomacy refers only to the institutional side of the monarchy's influence in foreign policy, the first example of such activities in the post-occupation period aren't Hirohito's overseas trips in the 70's, neither Akihito's trips in 1953 to the United Kingdom and in 1960 to the US. In that sense, the first official interaction of the Imperial Household with diplomatic matters after the independence occurred in the very year 1952, when, in May 6<sup>th</sup>, ambassadors from France and the United Kingdom presented their credentials to Hirohito. By the next month, most ambassadors of allied countries to Japan had performed such ceremony<sup>119</sup> in acknowledgment of the emperor's new role. Hirohito received the first official guest (Prince Axel of Denmark) in November of that same year<sup>120</sup>.

The notion of Imperial Diplomacy is generally attached in the popular imaginary to Crown Prince Akihito. Unlike his father who didn't have any special talent for public relations, Akihito had a natural charisma for addressing the general audience. Moreover, the heir could not be accused of having any moral nor penal responsibility for the defeat, and therefore, his image was more politically neutral than

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<sup>119</sup> Imperial Household Agency, 2017.

<sup>120</sup> Over the decade, Hirohito received a total of 27 official and State guests (Imperial Household Agency, 2022).

that of his father. Whilst Hirohito was taught in the old emperorship dogma mostly by military officers, Akihito was educated under the precepts of the new constitution by an American teacher with special emphasis into the British model of constitutional monarchy and the importance of bringing the monarchy closer to the citizenry. In short words, Akihito was more prepared to face the several tasks of Imperial Diplomacy, specially travelling abroad.

However, by the time of the independence, not all the acts that are currently included into the definition of Imperial Diplomacy, were constitutionally accepted neither had support from most political parties. The political debate on the Imperial Diplomacy arose in 1952 after Yoshida's Cabinet announced the decision to send Akihito to the UK to attend the coronation of future Queen Elizabeth II as a representative of the emperor<sup>121</sup>. There are two important elements to point out regarding this first international overture of the imperial family: the first one is the decision-making process of the trip.

According to the records of the Imperial Household Agency, the invitation from the British government arrived on September 8<sup>th</sup>, 1952. After receiving the offer, Tajima Michiji briefed the emperor regarding the matter on the 13<sup>th</sup>. Hirohito gave his final sanction on January 24<sup>th</sup>, 1953 and the trip was scheduled for June of that year<sup>122</sup>. In that sense, Funabashi points out that the emperor's ratification was mandatory for the attainment of the visit given that Akihito was planned to go abroad as representative of the monarch; which implied therefore that it was the monarch, and not the Cabinet, who possessed the ultimate decision when it came to Imperial Diplomacy<sup>123</sup>. However, as it would be explained later in this chapter, there was never a contradiction of interests between the LDP foreign policy and the Imperial Household's foreign agenda that would have allowed to determine which counterpart held the supreme power in that regard. Regardless, the emperor had a voice, which might have been more or less decisive, in the decision-making process of Imperial Diplomacy and, indirectly, of Japan's foreign policy.

The second element regarding that visit relates to its constitutional implications. There is no reference in the Article 7 of the Constitution about the possibility of the emperor travelling abroad for diplomatic purposes. Even though the

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<sup>121</sup> Ruoff, 2001, p. 62.

<sup>122</sup> Imperial Household Agency, 2017.

<sup>123</sup> Funabashi, 2019, p. 12.

trip was to be carried out by Akihito, since he was representing his father, the matter was discussed with urgency in the Diet as it would have been the emperor himself who was planning to travel overseas. Usami Takeshi, Vice-Director of the Imperial Household Agency, explained the parliamentarians about the nature of such trip on December 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1952<sup>124</sup>.

In that sense, Usami referred that the crown prince would attend the coronation ceremony as “the representative of the Head of State of the country.”<sup>125</sup> Such declaration stirred criticism from the Socialist Party, particularly from his member Kato Kanju, who questioned Usami:

In the answer of the current Vice-Director of the Imperial Household Agency, the word ‘Head of State’ was used to refer to the emperor. But, the emperor is the symbol of the people, and I don’t think that the emperor is the Head of State. From which point of view is the emperor the Head of State?<sup>126</sup>

Because of this dispute, Usami had to back down and replace “Head of State” by “symbol” on his following answers. This argument, and the fact that the Vice-Director of the Imperial Household Agency stopped using the term “Head of State” in this particular public appearance, showed that by 1952 the restorationist movement was still on its embryonic form and hadn’t earned the political capital enough to overcome the resistance from the opposition. However, it’s worth noting that the Imperial Household Agency was aligned with the conservatives’ plans to restore the title of Head of State to the emperor.

Usami was questioned also by Namiki Yoshio about the constitutional implications of the trip. Namiki pointed out that travelling abroad was not part of the acts in matters of state that the emperor was allowed to perform according to Article 7 of the Constitution. In that regard, Usami proposed the following interpretation:

As you said, the emperor’s acts in matters of State in Article 7 are limited, and the last act, “Performance of ceremonial functions”, is interpreted to mean the emperor’s performing ceremonies. Therefore, I think that the emperor’s attending another country’s ceremony, or the sending of a representative, does not from a

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<sup>124</sup> Tominaga, 2010, p. 90.

<sup>125</sup> Committee on Foreign Affairs of the House of Representatives, 1952.

<sup>126</sup> Committee on Foreign Affairs of the House of Representatives, 1952.

constitutional perspective correspond to an act in matters of state. Nor is it (an act) in his private position, but a public action in his position as a symbol; to give an example, (the emperor's) replying to a telegram received from a foreign Head of State, or to give a domestic example, (the emperor's) attendance at the Diet's opening ceremony sponsored by the Diet... are no (acts) of the emperor in his private position, but (acts) carried out from his public position.<sup>127</sup>

Usami took advantage of the false dichotomy between politics and symbolism that is present in Japan's Constitution, and the subsequent legal loopholes related to the role of the emperor, in order to legitimize an entire new category of acts the monarch was entitled to perform, "public actions in his position as a symbol", which thus included travelling abroad for diplomatic purposes. Yoshida's Cabinet rapidly adopted that line of thought as the government's official interpretation regarding the role of the emperor in order to increase the public duties of the Imperial Household<sup>128</sup>.

As a result of the conservatives' victory in this particular legal debate, Akihito represented his father in the coronation of Queen Elizabeth II in 1953. That trip also included another eleven European countries<sup>129</sup>, as well as the US and Canada. Hirohito was pleased with Akihito's performance during the first international trip of a member of the Imperial Household in the postwar period; on the comments to the press, the monarch expressed: "I saw it on the television, it was very good."<sup>130</sup>

During the rest of the decade, members of the Imperial Household, including Akihito, carried out eight international trips and visited a total of fourteen countries<sup>131</sup>. Several of those visits had a cultural and/or pure ceremonial background (celebrating art expositions, anniversaries of bilateral relations, etc.) but some others, such as Akihito's visit to the US in 1960 amidst the new Security Treaty turf, were of questionable political neutrality.

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<sup>127</sup> Yamanouchi & Asano, 1984, p. 222-233.

<sup>128</sup> Ruoff, 2001, p. 63.

<sup>129</sup> France, Spain, Monaco, Italy, Vatican, Belgium, Netherlands, Federal Republic of Germany, Denmark, Norway, Sweden and Switzerland (Imperial Household Agency, 2022).

<sup>130</sup> Yuri & Higashi, 1974, p. 306-307.

<sup>131</sup> Imperial Household Agency, 2022.

## **US-Japan relations during the end of Yoshida's tenure (1952-1954): the creation of the JSDF and Hirohito's role**

The Peace Treaty with Japan entered into effect in April 28<sup>th</sup>, 1952, which hallmarked the restoration of sovereignty and independence to the Japanese state. With the exception of the Ryukyu, Bonin and Amami-Oshima Islands, which were still occupied by the American military, and the Southern Kurile Islands that had been seized by the Soviet Union, Japan retook the full control over its core territories. In conjunction with the declaration of independence, the US-Japan Security Treaty and the complementary Administrative Agreement also entered into force, allowing the presence of 260 000 US troops distributed in 2 824 facilities (without including Okinawa and other territories) in Japanese soil<sup>132</sup>.

The Security Treaty remained a source of controversy during the entire decade: on May 1<sup>st</sup>, 1952, just a few days after the declaration of independence, 8 000 protesters rallied in front of the Imperial Palace in Tokyo in order to express their disagreement regarding the treaty.<sup>133</sup> This action violated the regulations imposed by the Yoshida Cabinet related to the prohibition of manifestation in front of the palace, and therefore it was met with a fierce police response. Ultimately, the clash between the police forces and the protesters turned into a field battle, resulting in two deaths and around 2 300 injured people. This traumatic event is known in Japan's historiography as "Blood May Day"<sup>134</sup> and showed the severity of the ideological conflict surrounding both the US-Japan Security Treaty and the Imperial household in the 50's.

In spite of that, Hirohito repeatedly showed his full support for the agreement on his public addresses after the declaration of independence. On May 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1952, a memorial service for the war dead was carried out with the presence of the monarch. After Hirohito showed his respect for the 2.4 million Japanese victims for the war, he addressed the 1 200 attendees: "I am pleased that the peace treaty has entered into force, and I am sure that there will be many difficulties in the future, but please keep a cheerful spirit and make an effort for the sake of the nation."<sup>135</sup>

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<sup>132</sup> Kapur, 2018, p. 14.

<sup>133</sup> Itou, 2014, p. 473-474.

<sup>134</sup> Itou, 2014, p. 473-474.

<sup>135</sup> Itou, 2014, p. 474.

Moreover, one day later, on May 3<sup>rd</sup> (just two days after the *Blood May Day*), during the celebration for the fifth anniversary of the enactment of the Constitution, the monarch repeated the same words but to a significantly larger crowd of 8 000 people that gathered in front of the Imperial Palace:

The Peace Treaty, long expected by the people, has come into effect and I am truly pleased that Japan has been able to rejoin the international community as an independent country. As I attend this ceremony today, the fifth anniversary of the enactment of the Constitution of Japan, I am overwhelmed with sympathy (...).<sup>136</sup>

Furthermore, Hirohito showed his support for the treaty even in the Diet where there were several opposite voices to it. In his speech during the opening ceremony of the first parliamentary session in the post-occupation period<sup>137</sup>, the monarch expressed the following:

(...) In the midst of the recent domestic and international situation, many efforts are still required in order to lead to greater prosperity and join the United Nations as a member of the international community while gaining the trust of the nations of the world. It is my hope that all of you (...) will join hands with the peace-loving democratic nations and contribute to the development of international peace and democracy.<sup>138</sup>

Doubtlessly, the monarch was advocating for Japan to stand side by side with the “peace-loving democratic nations”, that is to say, to maintain and support the Security Treaty with the US at the same time that to reject any closer interaction with the non-democratic countries, namely the Soviet Union and China. In the Cold War debate regarding Japan’s international alignment, the emperor clearly stood on the side of unilateral alliance with the US. Therefore, the monarch publicly declared himself as an ally of the treaty, and systematically used his symbolic power in order to influence the overall orientation of Japan’s foreign policy in the post-occupation period. Although in theory, he should have kept a neutral position in the conflict,

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<sup>136</sup> Yuri & Higashi, 1974, p. 300.

<sup>137</sup> It is worth noting that the monarch addressed the representatives as he used to do during prewar and wartime by using the word *Shokun* (諸君) that implies a hierarchical superiority, instead of the more egalitarian term *Mina-sama* (皆様).

<sup>138</sup> Yuri & Higashi, 1974, p. 304-305.



Hirohito was well aware of the implications of renouncing to the security guaranty he had striven to ensure during the occupation period.

In that regard, there is evidence in Tajima Michiji's diary that shows the emperor's perception regarding the threat emanated from the Soviet Union and the necessity of the safeguarding the Security Treaty with the US. For instance, during an audience that took place some days before the independence, on April 9<sup>th</sup>, 1952, the emperor pointed out: "History shows that the Soviet Union is an unpredictable country. Despite the Neutrality Pact with Japan and Japan's offer to mediation, the Soviet Union still declared war."<sup>139</sup> The memory of the last days of the war was still vivid in Hirohito's mind, and those past experiences fostered his threat perception about the Soviet Union even though the nature of WWII and the Cold War were essentially different.

Similarly, Hirohito seemed to be worried about the military balance in Japan's vicinity, and especially in the Korean Peninsula. In that sense, on June 17<sup>th</sup>, 1953 he warned Tajima about the new "pacific coexistence" strategy of the USSR: "It is necessary to be cautious regarding the Soviet Union's policy of aggression while preaching peace."<sup>140</sup> Moreover, on June 24<sup>th</sup>, 1953, the monarch commented the following:

Britain is a mature country, old and clever, but its power has fallen. The Soviet Union is more powerful than the United States there (in Korea). The Soviet Union will expand if Korea falls. If it were only Communist China, it would not be enough, but Japan would have to be very firm when it comes to a relationship with the Soviet Union, which it shares a border with.<sup>141</sup>

Since the very beginning of the Korean War, Hirohito had shown his concern regarding the immediate threat the Soviet bloc military presence in Korea represented for Japan, and even though the conflict there had reached a stalemate, the emperor kept preaching on the relevance of the external menace.

Furthermore, Hirohito was also aware of the political campaign the Soviet Union was carrying out by offering to trade with Japan. Actually, the trade limitations between Japan and China, that were imposed by the US as to limit the goods the

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<sup>139</sup> Tajima, 2022, vol. 3, p. 160-161.

<sup>140</sup> Tajima, 2022, vol. 5, p. 58.

<sup>141</sup> Tajima, 2022, vol. 5, p. 77.

Chinese communist regime could have access to, were a constant focus of discussion between Japanese and American policy-makers even after the occupation ended. There are several documents in the US diplomatic records that prove this point. Several members of Japan's largest companies as well as the representatives of economic institutions such as the Bank of Japan and the Ministry of Economy repeatedly advocated for the relaxation of the sanctions. On the other side, the American stubbornness to lift the sanctions was met with constant offers to trade from the Soviet bloc, which actually were of no relevant economic value compared to Japan's trade with the US, but were used as a spearhead to rip political profits in favor of the Soviet Union by swaying Japanese public opinion towards anti-American sentiments. In that regard, on June 30<sup>th</sup>, 1952, Hirohito expressed the following:

The Soviet method, which consists on threatening to go to war if the US stationed troops there (in Korea), and trying to lure Japan into the Communist camp by using sweet words like trade with Communist China, is exactly the same that Germany used before the war: Hitler produced a lot of weapons, used his army to scare and convinced the Japanese that they could obtain profits from becoming Anti-British and Anti-American. The Japanese must be more clearly aware of that point.<sup>142</sup>

Thus far, it becomes clear that the monarch coherently maintained the same anti-communist line of thought he had expressed years earlier to MacArthur on their meetings, although it was further aggravated by 1952 because of the enlargement of the Soviet military power and the pro-communist bloc propaganda campaigns. The logical consequences of Hirohito's anti-communism was that, given Japan's inability to defend itself vis-à-vis the Soviet (and Chinese) threat, it needed both to rearm and the continuous presence of the US military.

In that sense, the emperor also expressed his thoughts on the issue of rearmament during his periodical meetings with Tajima. For instance, on February 11<sup>th</sup>, 1952, the monarch commented: "(...) I think that it would be better to proudly revise only the fair point regarding rearmament without touching other proposals."<sup>143</sup> Likewise, the monarch also linked the necessity of rearmament with his frequent warnings regarding the threat of a Soviet military attack; on May 8<sup>th</sup>, he pointed out:

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<sup>142</sup> Tajima, 2022, vol. 3, p. 239-240.

<sup>143</sup> Tajima, 2002, vol. 3, p. 75.

“I definitely don't want the old warlords to re-appear, but I don't think there is any valid reason to stop the creation of a defensive army as long as there is a threat of invasion.”<sup>144</sup>

On the other hand, Hirohito also justified the need for military buildup from a doctrinaire stand. On March 11th, he portrayed a realistic world view similar to that he had exposed to MacArthur during the occupation period:

A world without police, doctors, or hospitals would be ideal, but as long as there are illnesses, we need doctors, and as long as there are violent people, we need police. If there were no invaders in the world, there would be no need for armed forces. Therefore, to be honest, I would say that both proper armament and culture go hand in hand, but it would be troublesome for me to say that right now.<sup>145</sup>

It is worth noting that, this last phrase is one of the few pieces of evidence regarding Hirohito's awareness of the implications of his intervention in politics. Therefore, the emperor clearly understood the limitations of his “symbolic” role and the necessity of him showing some self-restraint when it came to expressing his political opinions. In spite of that, this also meant that he had decided to step over the Constitution consciously knowing the repercussions such action could have had, and to meddle in Japan's foreign policy decision-making process.

Once Japan was independent and the Security Treaty entered into force, the nature of the US-Japan relations changed drastically. Japan passed from being the WWII enemy into a first-class ally, and a keystone in the US Pacific strategy within the Cold War. Furthermore, Japan was no longer defenseless since it counted with a rudimentary military that was systematically trained by the US Army, but it remained behind the US strategic necessities in East Asia. For that reason, the US-Japan bilateral priorities during the last part of the Yoshida administration (1952-1954) were focused on strengthening the Japanese military and increasing Japan's defense budget.

In that sense, before Dulles assumed the post of Secretary of State, the American diplomat met with Shirasu Jiro as an envoy of Yoshida to the US on December 4<sup>th</sup>, 1952. During that meeting, Shirasu explained that the Japanese government was in no favorable position to carry out a massive rearmament program

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<sup>144</sup> Tajima, 2022, vol. 3, p. 204.

<sup>145</sup> Tajima, 2022, vol. 3, p. 122-123.

due to the constitutional limitations and the popular anti-militaristic sentiments, although the Yoshida Cabinet was very aware of the US pressure in that regard. In response, Dulles argued that Japan should bear a fair share of responsibility for its own defense and not rely excessively in the US military<sup>146</sup>.

On the other hand, after an inspection tour over Japan, Allison checked the veracity of Shirasu's declarations: according to the American diplomat, there was "a great reluctance on the part of the Japanese people to rearm because of the economic burden;" similarly, many Japanese associated the rearmament process with the revival of a military clique that might rule the country again<sup>147</sup>. Furthermore, in a meeting that took place on December 30<sup>th</sup>, 1952 between American officers headed by Ambassador Murphy and Prime Minister Yoshida, the US side criticized the comments made by several Cabinet members in the Diet regarding their unwillingness to carry out a rearmament program, as well as the lack of commitment on the Japanese side to reach the ceiling of 110 000 men in the ground forces<sup>148</sup>. Moreover, the American officers were stunned by the passivity of the Japanese government in military matters despite the fact that the Soviet Union had executed 47 illegal flights over Hokkaido since October of that year<sup>149</sup>, including the downing of a US B-29 plane over Japan's northernmost island<sup>150</sup>.

At the same time, the emperor was taking several steps for the sake of his own agenda, which, according to the comments made to Tajima, included the achievement of rearmament. For that purpose, Hirohito insisted on one of the tracks of the "dual diplomacy" method he had employed during the occupation period: indirect intervention in the foreign-policy making process by pressing Yoshida. In that sense, the monarch consulted Tajima regarding the feasibility of asking Yoshida directly on the matter of constitutional revision as to allow rearmament as early as February 16<sup>th</sup>, 1952; however, the Director of the Imperial Household Agency discouraged Hirohito on the grounds of the latter's constitutional limitations<sup>151</sup>.

Nevertheless, the emperor repeated his plead two days later. On the audience corresponding to February 18<sup>th</sup>, he expressed: "It would be better to ask Yoshida

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<sup>146</sup> FRUS, 1952, n. 619.

<sup>147</sup> FRUS, 1952, n. 620.

<sup>148</sup> FRUS, 1952, n. 622.

<sup>149</sup> FRUS, 1952, n. 622.

<sup>150</sup> That incident took place on October 7<sup>th</sup>, 1952. The case was taken to the International Court of Justice in 1954 as a legal dispute between the US and the Soviet Union (International Court of Justice, 1956).

<sup>151</sup> Tajima, 2022, vol. 3, p. 79-80.

whether the constitution should be revised to allow rearmament.”<sup>152</sup> However, Tajima again sought to avoid any direct intervention of the monarch in politics, but proposed to convey the message by himself. His words were the following: “It seems that there is a considerable debate in the Diet on the issue of rearmament, but I think it would be appropriate to ask a question in such a way that does not convey His Majesty’s thoughts openly.”<sup>153</sup> The Director delivered the message to the prime minister on March 5<sup>th</sup>, but clarified that such action was not to be considered as meddling in politics: “I cannot say that His Majesty has expressed any political opinion when it comes to rearmament and constitutional problems.”<sup>154</sup>

Just three days later, on March 8<sup>th</sup>, Tajima returned with Yoshida’s reassuring answer: “Yoshida, as expected, seems to have caught on to His Majesty’s concerns about the Constitution and rearmament.”<sup>155</sup> Nevertheless, Yoshida replied in the same way he had done to the American diplomats by justifying the tardiness of his Cabinet in relation to the rearmament program because of political factors inside the Diet and the overall public opinion regarding the issue.

Moreover, there is evidence that suggests that Hirohito did not only rely on Tajima’s mediation but also brought the issue of military buildup directly to Yoshida. Even though the dates of such secret briefings are unknown, the entrance on Tajima’s diary for March 11<sup>th</sup>, 1952, reveals the following: “His Majesty has repeatedly told Prime Minister Yoshida to re-arm and revise the Constitution, and he has said that it cannot be done every time, and his thoughts are consistent.”<sup>156</sup> The record does not show the details of Hirohito’s opinion, but, taking into account Tajima’s words, it seemed that the emperor was displeased by Yoshida’s attitude. Certainly, Hirohito’s unwavering support for rearmament contrasts with Yoshida’s uncertainty over the feasibility of the military buildup, as expressed in the latter’s conversations with several American diplomats. Although more than a year had passed since Yoshida committed to Japan’s rearmament during the treaty negotiations, the situation in that regard was in a stalemate with no apparent solution. In spite of both the US government pressure and Hirohito’s intervention, Yoshida could not move further with rearmament fearing popular backlash and the political advance of the left.

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<sup>152</sup> Tajima, 2022, vol. 3, p. 82.

<sup>153</sup> Tajima, 2022, vol. 3, p. 83.

<sup>154</sup> Tajima, 2022, vol. 3, p. 108-109.

<sup>155</sup> Tajima, 2022, vol. 3, p. 116.

<sup>156</sup> Tajima, 2022, vol. 3, p. 123.

In order to break that deadlock, American policy-makers decided to change the approach and opted for a different strategy. By the beginning of 1953, the State Department began to formulate a new plan in order to deal with the Japanese government immobility: to trade non-essential occupied territories for stronger defense commitments. The first mention regarding the return of some group of islands can be found on internal documents of State Department produced on January 12<sup>th</sup>, 1953: on such paper, it was agreed to transfer the Amami Oshima and the Bonin islands to Japan while maximizing the political gains for the US; however, Okinawa had to remain occupied “in case Japan one day restricts United States military facilities in Japan or adopts a position of neutrality.”<sup>157</sup>

The Defense Department was progressively arriving to the same conclusion. On May 20<sup>th</sup>, 1953, Mark W. Clark, who succeeded Ridgeway as Supreme Commander for the Far East since 1952, stated that the return of the Amami Oshima Islands was feasible from a military viewpoint given its relatively low strategic importance compared to the military complex built in Okinawa<sup>158</sup>. However, Clark strongly discouraged any attempt for returning the Ryukyu Islands and/or implementing any different sovereignty formula because the US absolute rights over those territories would become “dependent upon friendly and cooperative Japan, which cannot now be assuredly forecast for the indefinite period of time when US security interests will remain of overriding.”<sup>159</sup> Because of the Yoshida’s Cabinet lukewarm attitude regarding rearmament, both the State and Defense Department were highly skeptical of Japan’s value as an alliance partner and tried to maintain Okinawa as an ultimate guarantee in the event of a radical political transformation in Japan.

Dulles himself took the proposal up to Yoshida during the former’s August 1953 trip to Japan. They met on August 7<sup>th</sup> in order to address the return of Amami-Oshima in connection with the rearmament issue. Overall, Dulles was disappointed by the conservatives’ attitude relative to Japan’s military buildup, particularly “the lack of effort and interest in Japan to develop its own defense or to contribute to the security of the area”<sup>160</sup> The American diplomat urged Yoshida to accomplish a greater

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<sup>157</sup> FRUS, 1953, n. 625.

<sup>158</sup> FRUS, 1953, n. 649.

<sup>159</sup> FRUS, 1953, n. 649.

<sup>160</sup> FRUS, 1953, n. 675.

military effort<sup>161</sup>, but the prime minister argued that because of the opposition in the Diet and financial reasons, the pace of the rearmament could not be accelerated<sup>162</sup>. Nonetheless, Yoshida desired the return of those islands in order to seize a remarkable political victory and increase his chances for staying in power, as he confessed to Ambassador Murphy on April 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1953<sup>163</sup>.

Although there is no written record of the following point, the internal discussions between Dulles and the US Embassy in Japan previous to that meeting with the prime minister, suggest that Dulles might have made it appear that the return of the islands was contingent on an increased Japanese defense effort<sup>164</sup>. On the next day, August 8<sup>th</sup>, Dulles made official the transfer of those islands to Japan's sovereignty; nevertheless, the secretary of State declared that Okinawa would not be returned to Japan for the time being in order "for the United States to maintain the degree of control and authority now exercised."<sup>165</sup> On the other hand, Foreign Minister Okazaki briefed Hirohito on August 11<sup>th</sup> about the re-incorporation of Amami-Oshima islands<sup>166</sup>.

The American strategy seemed to be effective because after announcing the return of those territories<sup>167</sup>, the Japanese side started to commit more intensively to defense issues. In that sense, the prime minister sent Ikeda Hayato, his political protégée and who was said to succeed Yoshida as the head of the Liberal Party, to the US in September in order to negotiate the new plans for Japan's military buildup. After several rounds of bilateral talks, Dulles reported by October 9<sup>th</sup> that a basic understanding had been reached on defense plans for Japan in the event of a Soviet invasion, as well as the military capabilities Japan ought to develop in order to meet the US strategic needs in the Pacific. Dulles was sure that the Yoshida Cabinet's renewed commitment was worthy enough to convince the US Congress to approve new funds for strengthening the Japanese military<sup>168</sup>.

In parallel, Yoshida and Shigemitsu Mamoru announced the amendment of the National Safety Agency Law in order to convert the National Safety Force into

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<sup>161</sup> FRUS, 1953, n. 672.

<sup>162</sup> FRUS, 1953, n. 675.

<sup>163</sup> FRUS, 1953, n. 641.

<sup>164</sup> FRUS, 1953, n. 672.

<sup>165</sup> FRUS, 1953, n. 672.

<sup>166</sup> FRUS, 1953, n. 675.

<sup>167</sup> Amami-Oshima islands were finally returned on December 24<sup>th</sup>, 1953.

<sup>168</sup> FRUS, 1953, n. 698.

Japan Self-Defense Forces on September 27<sup>th</sup><sup>169</sup>. This action, which consisted on a *de facto* constitutional interpretation by the Yoshida Cabinet, assisted by Shigemitsu's Progressive Party, was received as a valuable development by American policy-makers. In fact, Eisenhower himself praised the decision taken by the Japanese government:

In Japan there seems to be some hope that the Japanese will attempt to pick up some of the load and establish their own security organization. Their Constitution, adopted under General MacArthur's supervision, denies them the right to have military forces. But the time has come when they must become responsible for their own internal defense, even though to avoid frightening our other friends in the Pacific, we must always provide the naval and air strength required in that region by the free world.<sup>170</sup>

Therefore, given that the return of those islands was conditioned according to the American "trade-off" strategy, it wouldn't be erroneous to say that Yoshida accepted to increase the pace of rearmament, which ultimately led to the creation of the JSDF, in exchange for the Amami-Oshima islands, which were also of high political value for the prime minister. One might wonder nevertheless if the US bargaining strategy was enough to wholly explain Yoshida's renewed commitment to rearmament.

In that regard, several sources indicate that the emperor also had influence over other Japanese officials who were involved in the bilateral negotiations. During the secret briefing that took place on August 11<sup>th</sup> between the monarch and Foreign Minister Okazaki, the latter informed about the recent diplomatic achievement. Furthermore, the foreign minister also transmitted the greetings Dulles had sent to the monarch in the aforementioned August 7<sup>th</sup> meeting<sup>171</sup>. However, the official documents don't include the emperor's answers, which appear instead on Tajima's diary. In that regard, Hirohito openly displayed his displeasure regarding Yoshida's passive attitude on rearmament by commenting that: "I don't think it's a good idea to be optimistic and carefree." Moreover, the monarch further emphasized his

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<sup>169</sup> FRUS, 1953, n. 692.

<sup>170</sup> FRUS, 1953, p. 697.

<sup>171</sup> 外交記録公開第十一回マイクロフィルム、南西諸島帰属問題、奄美群島、日米間返還協定関係 (1953/8/11).



disagreement: “Currently, it is worrisome that Japan does not care about national power even though the Soviet Union is watching over.”<sup>172</sup>

Hirohito’s criticism of the Yoshida’s Cabinet’s lack of zeal regarding military buildup, which incidentally was a highly politicized matter the monarch was not supposed to be involved in, reveals also how the emperor overrode the prime minister’s authority in front of one of the members of the government. In a sense, this behavior illustrates that the monarch perceived he actually had the right to openly discuss sensitive issues with politicians, and also the impunity to condemn the decisions he was not in favor of.

After briefing the emperor, Okazaki sent a message to the Japanese Ambassador to the US, Arata Eikichi, regarding the meeting with the monarch. Okazaki reported the following:

On the 11<sup>th</sup>, the Minister briefed (the emperor) about the meeting with Secretary Dulles and the return of the Amami Islands, and after insisting that the Secretary would extend his best regards to His Majesty, His Majesty was extremely satisfied and requested to convey his appreciation of the kind arrangements to the resident and the Secretary of State. I would like the ambassador to convey this to Secretary Dulles, and I would like you to arrange for the same to be conveyed by Secretary Dulles to the President.<sup>173</sup>

Iwami Takao (2005) points out that on this version of the telegram sent by Okazaki, the word “request” (沙汰) was actually introduced by a member of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs as a replacement to the term “order” (ご下命) that used to appear in the original version of the telegram<sup>174</sup>. Taking this into consideration, the foreign minister actually followed orders of the monarch to convey a message of appreciation to both Dulles and Eisenhower. Effectively, Arata expressed the monarch’s satisfaction with the return of Amami-Oshima during a briefing with

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<sup>172</sup> Tajima, 2022, vol. 5, p. 121

<sup>173</sup> 外交記録公開第十一回マイクロフィルム、南西諸島帰属問題、奄美群島、日米間返還協定関係 (1953/8/13).

<sup>174</sup> Iwami, 2005, p. 187.

Dulles on August 13<sup>th</sup><sup>175</sup>. Hirohito received the acknowledgment of receipt of his message to the US officers via Tajima on August 28<sup>th</sup><sup>176</sup>.

Additionally, Yoshida himself followed commands from Hirohito systematically. In that regard, the prime minister visited the US in November, 1954 in order to discuss bilateral matters related to defense and economic assistance that had been previously laid out by Ikeda's visit in 1953. On November 9<sup>th</sup>, Yoshida met with Eisenhower and the first remarks were focused on conveying a message from Hirohito. According to the prime minister:

He had been instructed by the Emperor and Empress to convey to President Eisenhower, to Secretary Dulles, and the American people, the great appreciation of their Majesties for the manner in which the Japanese Crown Prince was received on his visit to the United States last year.<sup>177</sup>

This statement indicates therefore that Yoshida had briefed the monarch before departing for the US, which was a usual practice amongst the member of his Cabinet, and he was carrying out the "instructions" he had received in such briefing.

The cases of the interchange of diplomatic notes between Okazaki and Arata, as well as Hirohito's message to Eisenhower through Yoshida, demonstrate that the emperor assumed he had the informal faculty to "order" Cabinet members to carry out determinate actions. What's more, the fact that all three officers, Yoshida, Okazaki and Arata actually followed Hirohito's commands to a full extent, shows that the emperor's words had a mobilizing effect on certain Japanese government members in matters related to foreign policy. Therefore, the emperor's influence is not to be disregarded easily, although there is no direct evidence on how this factor was pondered on Yoshida's course of action related to rearmament.

As pointed out before, the evidence found in Tajima Michiji's diary, shows that the prime minister was pressured systematically not only from the American side, but also from the palace to fulfill the commitments of the Security Treaty. Considering Yoshida's awe for the monarchy and the fact that the prime minister had previously bent his will to Hirohito's wishes throughout the Security Treaty negotiations; it is feasible to conclude that, during the US-Japan bilateral negotiations

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<sup>175</sup> FRUS, 1953, n. 675.

<sup>176</sup> 外交記録公開第十一回マイクロフィルム、南西諸島帰属問題、奄美群島、日米間返還協定関係 (1953/9/1).

<sup>177</sup> FRUS, 1954, n. 825.

regarding the issues of rearmament and the return of Amami-Oshima islands, Yoshida strove to accommodate the US strategic needs, Hirohito's interests and his own personal political agenda. In that sense, the emperor constituted a driving force behind one of the major developments of Japan-US relations in the 1950's decade, the establishment of the JSDF, and therefore, continued to be a stalwart ally of the Security Treaty during the end of Yoshida's tenure. Furthermore, Hirohito's open critics to the policies of the Yoshida Cabinet and his frequent commands to the members of the government indicate that the monarch was already acting as the country's informal Head of State.

### **Hirohito vis-à-vis Japan-USSR peace negotiations: A “powerless” monarch? (1955-1956)**

After seven years in office, the Yoshida Cabinet was forced to dismantle by a non-confidence motion, and on December 10<sup>th</sup>, 1954, a new Cabinet led by Hatoyama Ichiro, from the Democratic Party, came to power. Hatoyama's Cabinet represented a turning point with respect to the Yoshida faction in both the domestic and international political fields. For instance, Hatoyama's Democratic Party was a minority government and therefore had to be supported by another political forces, including the Socialist Party. In fact, the new prime minister did not show an anti-communist attitude and frequently met with Socialist leaders. Shigemitsu Mamoru, who was Hatoyama's Minister of Foreign Affairs, noticed the close relation the prime minister had with the Socialist Party: on May 26<sup>th</sup>, 1955, Hatoyama and Shigemitsu met the leaders of both factions of the Socialist Party, Suzuki Mosaburo and Kawakami Jotaro, and Shigemitsu noted that “Hatoyama's demeanor changed as if he were meeting his brother.”<sup>178</sup> Moreover, and in opposition to Yoshida, Hatoyama was emotionally distant from the Imperial Household and had no special devotion for it, as explained beforehand.

Taking into consideration Hatoyama's alignments in domestic politics, his foreign agenda was expected to be different compared to Yoshida's. In that regard, the new prime minister advocated for an “independent” foreign policy whose highlights were to retreat all US forces in the country, to normalize relations with the

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<sup>178</sup> Shigemitsu et al, 1988, p. 710.

Soviet Union, to increase trade with Communist China and to seek for Japan's ascension to the United Nations<sup>179</sup> (which required the affirmative vote of the Soviet Union). Furthermore, due to the results of the elections of February, 1955, both factions of the Socialist Party reached more than one third of the seats in the House of Representatives, which made rearmament via constitutional revision virtually impossible during the rest of Hatoyama's tenure.

The new prime minister's foreign agenda orientation undoubtedly attracted the attention of American policy-makers. On December 9<sup>th</sup>, the US National Security Council met and discussed the political situation in Japan. Allen W. Dulles, Deputy Director of the Central Intelligence Agency, reported about the anxiety provoked by the developments in Japan's political situation; he summarized the to-be prime minister agenda in the following way: "While pro-American, Hatoyama was known to favor increased trade between Japan and Communist China, on the one hand, and between Japan and the Soviet Union on the other."<sup>180</sup> Certainly, the tentative regarding Japan's neutrality and/or independent foreign policy, or in the worst-case scenario, an alignment with the Soviet bloc, were a matter of absolute concern for the US government.

For that reason, Shigemitsu Mamoru tried to assure American officials about the essential role Japan-US relations had in the strategic thinking of the Japanese government. On January 6<sup>th</sup>, 1955, the foreign minister met with Ambassador Allison and "took occasion to emphasize in strongest possible manner his belief that fundamental basis of Japanese policy was close and friendly cooperation with US."<sup>181</sup> Although the US position in regard to the foreign policy agenda of the Hatoyama Cabinet was not made clear immediately, on January 10<sup>th</sup>, Dulles dictated what he considered to be the "red line" for the new prime minister's "independent foreign policy". In that sense, whilst the US could not prevent Japan from re-establishing diplomatic relations with the Soviet Union, such action could in no way harm the US-Japan security arrangements. Moreover, the American diplomat clearly stated his opposition concerning the recognition of Communist China by the Japanese government<sup>182</sup>.

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<sup>179</sup> Nakajima, 2016.

<sup>180</sup> FRUS, 1954, n. 835.

<sup>181</sup> FRUS, 1955, n. 2.

<sup>182</sup> FRUS, 1955, n. 4.

Shortly after, Dulles reiterated his position in a telegram to the Embassy in Japan dated on January, 26<sup>th</sup>. In such document, the secretary of State also ordered to communicate to Shigemitsu that the negotiations with the Soviet Union could not be inconsistent with the San Francisco Peace Treaty neither with the Security Treaty<sup>183</sup>. Two days later, the foreign minister acknowledged Dulles' concerns via Japan's Ambassador to the US Iguchi Sadao. The Japanese ambassador tried to re-assure the secretary of State regarding the fact that Japan would consult with the US on the reestablishment of relations with the Soviet Union<sup>184</sup>. Dulles also took the opportunity to warn about other aspects of the Hatoyama Cabinet's foreign policy, such as the assistance to the Bandung Conference, which ought to be celebrated on April of that year: in that sense, the secretary of State voiced his concerns about "Asia for the Asians" propaganda, which was interpreted as a pro-Soviet political tool to deter US influence in the region<sup>185</sup>.

Precisely, one of the major issues in Japan-US relations by the beginning of the Hatoyama administration was a rapidly-growing Anti-American sentiment within Japanese society. The US military contingent stationed in Japan implicated that land tenancy and other property rights were normally restricted around the US military bases; moreover, American soldiers frequently were the cause of several tragic encounters with the local population. On top of that, as a result of the first US thermonuclear weapon test carried out on March 1<sup>st</sup>, 1954 in the Pacific Ocean, several Japanese sailors of the crew of a fishing boat that was near the testing area, were contaminated by the nuclear fallout from the explosion. This event, known as the "Daigo Fukuryu Maru Incident", triggered a popular wave of indignation as the un-healed psychological scars of the nuclear bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki resurfaced.

As a result of that situation, fueled by the opportunistic manipulation of such fatidic events by the propaganda apparatus of the Soviet Union and Communist China, amplified by Japan's Communist and Socialist Parties, an active popular movement, whose main claim was the retirement of US military bases, arose in several parts of Japan. For instance, according to an opinion poll carried out by Asahi Shinbun on June, 1953, 47% of respondents were in favor of the retirement of the US military,

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<sup>183</sup> FRUS, 1955, n. 8.

<sup>184</sup> FRUS, 1955, n. 9.

<sup>185</sup> FRUS, 1955, n. 9.

while 27% supported that it stayed. This popular movement also explains in part the pro-independent foreign policy stance Hatoyama had assumed for electoral purposes, and why even Ikeda Hayato, after assuming the leadership of the Liberal Party in August, 1954, advocated for a foreign policy line slightly detached from the US<sup>186</sup>.

Against this background, Hirohito stood decisively supportive for the US military presence. In a meeting the monarch had with former Ambassador Murphy on April 20<sup>th</sup>, 1953, when the latter was close to be relieved from his post in Japan, both discussed about the anti-American sentiment. In that regard, the emperor expressed that:

I am concerned about the impact of the Korean War armistice and the easing of international tensions on public opinion in Japan. I regret that there will be increased pressure within Japan to withdraw US troops, but I am convinced that the presence of US troops will continue to be necessary.<sup>187</sup>

As he had done during the peace treaty negotiations, the monarch addressed the American officials directly when it came to critical matters of US-Japan relations that the emperor considered were not being handled properly by the Japanese government.

Furthermore, according to the records in Tajima's diary, Hirohito was also very vocal on his critics to the anti-base movement. For example, on May 25<sup>th</sup>, 1953, the emperor dwelled on the protests that had happened in front of a US military base in Uchinada, Ishikawa Prefecture. In that regard, the monarch commented:

Even if the US wants to return Ogasawara or the Amami Oshima islands, they won't be able to do it if they are not allowed to rent land in Uchinada or Asama, and those islands will stay under US jurisdiction. Although it is troublesome, as the United States is in charge of national defense nowadays, if there is a need, we should endure and provide Ogasawara and others (territories) to the United States.<sup>188</sup>

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<sup>186</sup> FRUS, 1954, n. 786.

<sup>187</sup> Asahi Shinbun, 2005.

<sup>188</sup> Tajima, 2022, vol. 5, p. 38.

Thus, the emperor not only understood the connection between the return of Japanese split territories and rearmament as shown before, but also between the former and the sustained presence of US military bases in the mainland.

A week later, on June 2<sup>nd</sup>, Hirohito criticized the anti-bases movement directly: “If we talk about peace, I would like the (anti-bases) movement to focus on dispelling the real threat of aggression from the Kuriles and Karafuto. Idealism that forgets reality is troublesome.” To that statement, Tajima replied that: “I think that before (the return of) the Kuriles, they want the retreat of the US Army from Japan.” As expected, Hirohito reacted categorically to Tajima’s comments: “On the other hand, I think that if we take a look at Korea, we will understand it quickly. If we consider the situation in Korea as a real problem, that (the anti-bases movement) becomes a complicated matter.”<sup>189</sup> Therefore, according to Hirohito’s logic, given that the US military bases in Japan’s mainland were necessary for countering the communist military threat, specifically the Soviet presence in the Korean Peninsula and in the northern border of Japan; any attempt to remove the American military from Japan equaled to a menace to the country’s national security, and ought to be avoided.

As the tensions related to Uchinada base continued to unravel, Hirohito kept warning about the incompatibility of the anti-base movement with Japan’s national security. On June 17<sup>th</sup>, he expressed: “Without Japan’s rearmament, we have no choice but to have the United States stationed in Japan to protect us. Considering the Uchinada problem, the current situation is unavoidable.”<sup>190</sup> The monarch also dwelled on the issue from a more general standpoint:

It is often said that diplomacy is weak, but international relations are still driven by interests rather than reason. Therefore, military means, not only diplomacy, are necessary when it comes to defend legitimate claims. As a matter of fact, since Japan renounced to war, it has no choice but to rely on the US military for this end. Those amongst the U.S. military who cause inconvenience are problematic and should be punished, but I don't think that is a good idea that public opinion turns out to be fundamentally anti-American or against the US military presence. Rather, I think that

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<sup>189</sup> Tajima, 2022, vol. 5, p. 51-52.

<sup>190</sup> Tajima, 2022, vol. 5, p. 56.

the US military, which is not in the defense of its own country, should be appreciated and reciprocated.<sup>191</sup>

Hirohito's private declarations correspond perfectly with the remarks he had done previously to Murphy, as well with the several appreciative messages sent to Dulles and Eisenhower. The emperor was truly thankful for the presence of the US military as it represented an ultimate guarantee for the survival of the Imperial Household. Moreover, he advocated for the endurance of the situation in spite of the unpopularity of the US military presence. On November 24<sup>th</sup>, Hirohito stated:

If we discuss the bases issue from our respective standpoints, we may have reasons to argue, but if we understand that it is good for the sake of the whole, we can think that some sacrifices are unavoidable. On the other hand, if we don't compensate the victims, it will be impossible for us to continue to exist as a country. I think it is necessary to think about the fact that if the beautiful sentences of the Constitution are trapped and nothing is done, then the whole will be ruined and the parts of it will also be ruined.<sup>192</sup>

He further added:

I think it's a problem because there is no idea of duty to do for the whole while thinking partly from the viewpoint of one's own interests and placing emphasis on one's own rights. Considering Japan's national defense in line with the current situation, if we understand what Japan should do, I think it can't be helped that someone somewhere will have to bear the disadvantage and make a sacrifice that will be kindly compensated.<sup>193</sup>

In spite of Hirohito's brief praise for the Constitution, he considered that the Japanese citizens that lived near the US military bases ought to endure the situation for the sake of Japan's national security. What lurks behind this false altruism is a collectivist rationalization that actually resembles the several demands made by the

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<sup>191</sup> Tajima, 2022, vol. 5, p. 59.

<sup>192</sup> Tajima, 2022, vol. 5, p. 227-228.

<sup>193</sup> Tajima, 2022, vol. 5, p. 227-228.



Japanese government to the population during wartime in order to endure the hardships of the conflict. The emperor had not only personally agreed with the “sacrifice” of Okinawa, namely the separation of the Ryukyu Islands from Japanese territory after WWII, but was also hoping for the Japanese citizens in the post-occupation period to tolerate the US military presence for the supposedly “higher” purpose of the survival of the nation, which in Hirohito’s mind, equated to the maintenance of the Imperial Household. It is quite relevant that, after eight years since the militarist regime was dismantled and six since the popular sovereignty clause entered into force, the emperor still kept the same way of thinking regarding the superiority of the monarchy in Japanese society.

Likewise, it seems that Hirohito not only harbored critics against the anti-bases movement but he was probably also concerned about the anti-nuclear tests movement that arose as a result of the Daigo Fukuryu Maru Incident, and that was directed especially towards banning US nuclear tests<sup>194</sup>. Irie Sukemasa recorded in his diary information about a secret briefing the emperor had with the Chairman of the Shiogama Fisheries Research Institute, Kimura Kinosuke, on April 7<sup>th</sup>, 1955. It is written that:

There was some information about a member of the Communist Party who was purged, and that he might be able to explain what he thinks about the great damage caused to the fishing industry by the hydrogen bomb; it was mentioned that in advance, but it didn't work out.<sup>195</sup>

Although this statement was recorded as part of a secret briefing, it is not clear whether it was pronounced by Hirohito himself. Nevertheless, it is worth noting that there was an assumption within the palace entourage regarding the connection of the anti-nuclear test movements and the Communist Party, which was incidentally very coherent with Hirohito’s anticommunism.

The growing popular anti-American sentiment coupled with Hatoyama’s agenda for an independent foreign policy, were brewing the most acute crisis of US-Japan bilateral relations of the postwar period up to that moment. In that sense, from

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<sup>194</sup>The Daigo Fukuryu Maru Incident triggered a popular response against nuclear weapons in Japan that was simultaneously spread to other countries. The first relevant achievement of such transnational movement was the organization of the First World Conference against Atomic and Hydrogen Bombs hosted Hiroshima on August 6<sup>th</sup>, 1955 (Hiroshima Peace Memorial Museum, 2022).

<sup>195</sup> Irie, 1990, vol. 5, p. 224.

the American policy-makers' perspective, the Japanese government was dangerously approaching the Soviet Union and China in prejudice of the US interests in the area. Precisely, on a telegram from the Embassy in Japan to the State Department on March 25<sup>th</sup>, 1955, Allison described the overall state of the bilateral relations:

(The) Hatoyama government has consistently ignored US interest in handling almost all pending US-Japanese problems (...) and at same time has made continued concessions to Communist orbit such as latest action on visas to China trade mission. Japanese must understand that we are dissatisfied with current attitude toward relations with US.<sup>196</sup>

Furthermore, Allison proposed a different method to address the ongoing crisis; according to the ambassador:

Japanese are far from unconcerned about US attitude. In fact, many top officials are increasingly worried about 'Washington' getting the 'wrong idea'. I think it is about time we plucked this sensitive nerve. A few discreet expressions of anxiety from 'highly placed' sources might serve to keep the Japanese worried. If Hatoyama government stops taking for granted our good will, they may do a little more than making an occasional statement about the need for good relations with US.<sup>197</sup>

In summary, the US diplomat suggested to press indirectly the Hatoyama Cabinet via other influential elements within the Japanese society. Although there is no mention in such document of whom Allison was referring to with the expressions "top officials" and "highly placed sources", one might hypothesize that the US ambassador was actually thinking of the emperor. For instance, only few people in Japan at that time could be considered to be in a political position "high" enough to possess the chance to press the prime minister. Moreover, it's logical to assume that, given the US distrust regarding Hatoyama's political alignments, the pro-US lobbyists Allison was speaking about were not part of the Cabinet. Likewise, as proven before, Hirohito had constantly made "statements about the need for good relations with US" to both the American diplomatic personnel and to Japanese officials.

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<sup>196</sup> FRUS, 1955, n. 21.

<sup>197</sup> FRUS, 1955, n. 21.

Another element that supports this hypothesis steams from a conversation Japanese officers had with the US Embassy staff on October 15<sup>th</sup>, 1953. Samuel D. Berger, Counselor of the Embassy, met with three members of the Foreign Ministry; among the most relevant topics of the meeting, it was recorded that:

The Imperial institution still provides an ultimate source of allegiance and intervention. The Emperor's influence must be sparingly used, but in an extreme situation his role could again be decisive. This influence is to be measured in extra-constitutional terms, but it is a power factor.<sup>198</sup>

This statement demonstrates that the US diplomats stationed in Japan were aware of the influence the emperor could have in a case of extreme necessity of political intervention. Furthermore, such thoughts resonate with the legitimacy as a valid interlocutor Dulles and MacArthur had conceded to Hirohito during the negotiations of the peace treaty. In summary, the US policy-makers understood the role the monarch could play in order to advance the US interests in Japan's domestic politics. Therefore, it is plausible that Allison was referring to Hirohito in the abovementioned document.

Anyhow, even if such hypothesis is disproved, according to the diary of Shigemitsu Mamoru, Hirohito started to warn frequently about the importance of the relations with the US by May, 1955 (incidentally, just a few weeks after Allison's telegram). In that regard, from May 1955 to August 1956, Shigemitsu recorded a total of seven secret briefings with the emperor on diplomatic matters; although the foreign minister might have had more opportunities to meet the monarch in several official ceremonies such as the presentation of credentials of foreign diplomats and the attestation of powers of Japanese ambassadors. Of those seven briefings, only four explicitly describe the thoughts of the emperor about foreign policy. For example, the first of those meetings took place on May 11<sup>th</sup>, 1955; on Shigemitsu's diary, it is written that both men discussed several diplomatic issues such as Japan's trade mission to China, the negotiations with the Soviet Union, the negotiations with the Republic of Korea, the war reparations and the Bandung Conference. Shigemitsu

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<sup>198</sup> FRUS, 1953, n. 702.

wrote as the conclusions of the conversation that Hirohito was “worried” about the policies of the Hatoyama government regarding the Communist bloc<sup>199</sup>.

Almost two weeks later, on May 23<sup>rd</sup>, the monarch repeated his concern about the path Japan’s foreign policy was taking under the Hatoyama administration. In such occasion, the emperor felt unease about the country’s overall diplomacy as well as about the entrance to the United Nations<sup>200</sup>. Taking into account that for Japan to ascend to the multilateral organization, it required the Soviet Union’s affirmative vote, Hirohito might have felt that the country was being pressed in a way to abandon the security compromises with the US in exchange for the Soviet’s consent.

It must be pointed out that, according to the evidence thus far available, Hirohito began to pressure Shigemitsu once there was a sense of crisis amongst the US policy-makers, and that the latter’s warnings fit the description of “anxiety” given by Allison. Although there is no direct proof of how a petition to influence the Hatoyama Cabinet’s foreign policy could have been sent from the US side to the palace; it might be suggested that, since the emperor was visited regularly by US diplomats, any of those occasions might have been used to deliver said request. In any case, even without implying any kind of secret communication between the palace and the American side, Hirohito’s foreign agenda was in perfect tune with the US interests given the monarch’s anti-communist position.

At the same time, the Japanese government was making several arrangements in order to convince the American side that the negotiations with the communist countries meant no harm for the Security Treaty or the overall Japan-US relations. Precisely, on April 8<sup>th</sup>, 1955, Hatoyama and Allison met. On the occasion, the prime minister “stressed his deep friendship for (the) US and his desire to work closely and in complete accord with (the) US.”<sup>201</sup> However, Hatoyama remarked the several troubles his government was facing and that made impossible to assume larger defense responsibilities. Similarly, he asked for the US side to be patient until the domestic situation was favorable enough to increase the pace of rearmament<sup>202</sup>. On a later internal communication, Allison pointed out that the Japanese government attitude had slightly turned more cooperative with the US in light of Japan’s remarks in defense of democracy at the Bandung Conference, the partial abandonment of the

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<sup>199</sup> Shigemitsu, 1988, p. 703.

<sup>200</sup> Shigemitsu, 1988, p. 708.

<sup>201</sup> FRUS, 1955, n. 27.

<sup>202</sup> FRUS, 1955, n. 27.

intentions to trade with Communist China as well as the “less wishful thinking about forthcoming USSR-Japan negotiations.”<sup>203</sup>

Even though the Hatoyama Cabinet was making several efforts to maintain the trust of the American policy-makers, Dulles was still dissatisfied by Japan’s lack of commitment. On June 21<sup>st</sup>, during a meeting with the United Kingdom Foreign Secretary Harold MacMillan:

(Dulles) expressed his disappointment at the failure of the Japanese to pull themselves together for a role of greatness as the Germans were doing under (Konrad) Adenauer. In earlier years the rivalries of Russia, China and Japan maintained an uneasy equilibrium of power in the Asian mainland. Now with Russia and China allied and Japan inert and lacking power, the United States had to maintain more military power in the Pacific area than it would otherwise choose.<sup>204</sup>

In that sense, the Hatoyama Cabinet needed to assure the secretary of State and for that purpose, a negotiation team headed by Shigemitsu was sent to the US in August of 1955. A week before the foreign minister departed for the US, he had a secret briefing with Hirohito on August 20<sup>th</sup><sup>205</sup>. On that occasion, the emperor sternly warned Shigemitsu about the necessity of cooperating with the US in order to counter communism and about the impossibility of retiring the US military forces from Japan, as had been initially proposed by the Hatoyama Cabinet<sup>206</sup>. Furthermore, the monarch ordered to carry that message to several “acquaintances” in the US; despite the fact that the entrance in Shigemitsu’s diary is ambiguous regarding who were they referring to by using the term “acquaintances”, taking into consideration the foreign minister’s intentions to meet with Dulles, this phrase probably meant to carry the message specifically to the secretary of State. Therefore, Shigemitsu was asked to act as an envoy of the emperor to the US policy-makers in order to assure them regarding the firm commitment the monarchy still maintained vis-à-vis the Security Treaty.

In that sense, Shigemitsu met Dulles and other American policy-makers on August 29<sup>th</sup>, 30<sup>th</sup> and 31<sup>st</sup>. Although the foreign minister’s statement to the first

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<sup>203</sup> FRUS, 1955, n. 32.

<sup>204</sup> FRUS, 1955, n. 33.

<sup>205</sup> Shigemitsu had had a briefing with Hirohito on June 14<sup>th</sup>, although the content was not explicitly recorded (Shigemitsu, 1988, p. 719).

<sup>206</sup> Shigemitsu, 1988, p. 732.

meeting has not been declassified in the US archives<sup>207</sup>, it is possible to infer that, given the responses of Dulles as well as the comments made by other American officers during the three meetings, the Japanese side did not insist on the retreat of the US military from Japan, and that, in any event, such action was conditioned to a simultaneous increase in Japan's military force, which coincided with the US interests. In fact, Dulles praised the results of the conversations in a letter sent to Eisenhower on September 1<sup>st</sup><sup>208</sup>. On the other hand, Shigemitsu briefed Hirohito about the results of the trip on September 28<sup>th</sup><sup>209</sup>. Consequently, the emperor managed to indirectly (via Shigemitsu) assure the US policy-makers about Japan's intentions regarding the protection of the Security Treaty in spite of the negotiations with the Soviet Union.

As far as available evidence allows, the emperor intervened one more time in the bilateral conversations with the US during this period in order to re-state his commitment towards the alliance. By the beginning of 1956, Tani Masayuki was designated as the new Japanese Ambassador to the US; before departing for his official mission, Tani had a secret briefing with the monarch on February 17<sup>th</sup>. On such occasion, Hirohito dwelled on the importance of bilateral relations with the US:

I am deeply grateful by the fact that the military and economic assistance from the United States has played an important role in the survival of Japan after the war... I hope that this assistance will continue... I hope that Japan-U.S. relations will be tight, and I am fully aware of the significance of this for both countries.<sup>210</sup>

What's more, as he had done several times before, the emperor directly ordered Tani to carry this message to Dulles, according to the Japanese diplomat comments to Allison in a subsequent meeting on February 18<sup>th</sup> in the US Embassy in Tokyo<sup>211</sup>. In fact, Tani transmitted the message personally to Dulles during a meeting with the secretary of State on February 28<sup>th</sup>: on such occasion, the Japanese diplomat opened his remarks with the emperor's words of praise for the US assistance in regard to Japan's security and economy as well as the monarch's wishes for the maintenance of such cooperation. Dulles replied not only by committing to forward Hirohito's

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<sup>207</sup> FRUS, 1955, n. 44.

<sup>208</sup> FRUS, 1955, n. 49.

<sup>209</sup> Shigemitsu, 1988, p. 743.

<sup>210</sup> Yoshitsugu, 2008, p.216.

<sup>211</sup> Yoshitsugu, 2008, p.216.

message to Eisenhower, but also by actually acknowledging the emperor's role in postwar Japan-US relations:

The stabilization and unity of Japan the emperor has achieved, although not by himself alone, it is still an important merit (...) the influence of the emperor is very important for the future of Japan and for the development of good bilateral relations.<sup>212</sup>

This exchange of messages between Hirohito and Dulles via Tani, as well as the secretary of State's declarations shed light on several elements regarding Hirohito's influence in Japan's foreign policy. Firstly, even though the overall orientation of Japan's foreign policy had slightly changed, and Hirohito had no longer privileged access to the prime minister, the emperor could manage nonetheless to influence Japan's diplomacy through the briefings he was entitled to have with Japanese ambassadors according to Article 7 of the Constitution. On that same regard, up to 1956, Hirohito kept indirect channels of communication with American top officials that still allowed him to carry out his "double diplomacy" method.

Furthermore, if one compares Dulles's praise for the emperor with the former's regular complaints and disappointment regarding Japanese politicians (and specially, towards the prime ministers), it is very clear that the US secretary of State kept the same line of thought he had espoused during the Security Treaty negotiations: whilst politicians might change, the monarchy represented the continuity of the Japanese State, and therefore, for the Treaty to stay in place for the long term, it was necessary to make it a matter of State, e.g. to bind the monarchy to the alliance. In fact, Dulles' answers to the Hirohito's message clearly demonstrates that the throne was perceived as an important ally of the US in Japan and *ergo*, probably the most valid interlocutor vis-à-vis the US in the 50's.

Nevertheless, several authors point out that Hirohito's influence cannot be overstated<sup>213</sup>. Certainly, in spite of the emperor's several warnings and pressure towards Shigemitsu, the negotiations with the Soviet Union proceeded one way or another. By July, 1956, the bilateral talks were reaching the final stage: in that sense, Shigemitsu had planned to go on an international tour that included conversations with American and Soviet diplomats. Before departing for Moscow, the foreign

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<sup>212</sup> Yoshitsugu, 2008, p. 217.

<sup>213</sup> Bix, 2000, p. 657; Tominaga, 2010, p. 173.

minister had his last recorded briefing with Hirohito, on July 20<sup>th</sup>, 1956, but the content of that meeting remains unknown; it was recorded, however, that it lasted for an hour<sup>214</sup> which is very relevant taking into consideration that the average duration of a briefing was around thirty minutes. One can only speculate that, according to the emperor's anticommunist position, he would have kept stressing about the necessity of the military alliance with the US.

Talks with the Soviet Union were resumed on July 31<sup>st</sup>. Up to August 13<sup>th</sup>, both delegations had agreed on the major issues but the territorial dispute regarding the Kurile Islands and a Soviet proposal that warships of non-participants powers (namely the US) be excluded from the Sea of Japan<sup>215</sup>. Those points of disagreement were, on the other hand, highly dangerous for the US interests in Asia. For instance, the Soviet demands over the Kuriles included the neutrality of the islands to be transferred to Japan (Habomai and Shikotan), which implied that the US-Japan Security Treaty could not be applied to those territories; whilst, the strategic negation of the right of transit to American warships to the Sea of Japan would mean the isolation of the Korean Peninsula from the US military network in the region.

What's more, the domestic situation in Japan marked by the factionalism within the LDP, had made the Hatoyama Cabinet lose authority and consequently, bargaining power in the negotiations with the Soviet Union. Shigemitsu's position was extremely weak and, in spite of the Soviet unfeasible proposals, the foreign minister actually suggested in a press conference held in Moscow on August 13<sup>th</sup>, that it was advisable to conclude a treaty even on the counterpart's terms<sup>216</sup>. For that reason, American policy-makers reacted strongly: Dulles met Shigemitsu in London on August 19<sup>th</sup>, and subtly threatened to separate the Ryukyu Islands definitively from Japan if the Soviet proposals were to be accepted. Dulles' comments were reported in the following way:

The Secretary reminded Mr. Shigemitsu that the Kuriles and Ryukyus were handled in the same manner under the surrender terms and that while the United States had by the peace treaty agreed that residual sovereignty to the Ryukyus might remain with Japan, we had also stipulated by Article 26 that if Japan gave better terms to

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<sup>214</sup> Shigemitsu, 1988, p. 786.

<sup>215</sup> FRUS, 1956, n. 89.

<sup>216</sup> FRUS, 1956, n. 89.



Russia we could demand the same terms for ourselves. That would mean that if Japan recognized that the Soviet Union was entitled to full sovereignty over the Kuriles we would assume that we were equally entitled to full sovereignty over the Ryukyus.<sup>217</sup>

Dulles' declarations shocked the Japanese delegation and were actually decisive in the final course of the negotiations. Once the limits of the negotiations with the Soviet Union were set by the US side, and without being able to muster enough political capital to resist either the Soviet or the American pressure, the Hatoyama Cabinet opted eventually for the so-called "Adenauer formula"<sup>218</sup> (the solution of the less controversial issues first and separately from the most conflicting points that are left for future clarification) by agreeing to the restoration of diplomatic relations in exchange for Japan's entrance to the United Nations and the establishment of a trade agreement. This path finally led to the Japan-Soviet Union Joint Declaration of October 19<sup>th</sup>, 1956 that effectively ended the state of war between both countries although the territorial question remained unresolved<sup>219</sup>.

Thus, it's worth querying on Hirohito's overall impact in the negotiations with the Soviet Union. Several authors (Ruoff, Igarashi, Tominaga and Watanabe) point out that this specific case shows the limits of the emperor's influence in the foreign-policy making process under the 1947 Constitution because, even though the monarch had pressed Shigemitsu in order to undermine the negotiations, the talks proceeded and achieved a partial success. Moreover, according to those authors, the fact that Hirohito was never briefed again by Shigemitsu, at least according to the latter's written record, proves that the monarch was considerably displeased by the foreign minister's diplomatic performance and was punishing him with a "silence treatment", which ought to be excruciating for a supporter of the monarchy such as Shigemitsu.

Certainly, this interpretation of the evidence is plausible because it matches with the role of the emperor in Japan's post-occupation society. Even though during the 50's decade there was a movement to restore some of Hirohito's prerogatives, and specially, the title of Head of State, the emperor's influence in the foreign policy of the post-occupation regime was no longer structural but circumstantial as it depended

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<sup>217</sup> FRUS, 1956, n. 89.

<sup>218</sup> FRUS, 1956, n. 97.

<sup>219</sup> Union of Soviet Socialist Republics and Japan: Joint Declaration, 1957.

on the willingness of each prime minister to brief and “be advised” by the monarch. Hatoyama’s ideological background distanced him from any particular awe for the monarchy, and unlike Yoshida, he felt no particular compromise towards the emperor. In that sense, the fact that Hirohito had to rely on the foreign minister and not on the prime minister for the purpose of influencing diplomatic matters, proves the abovementioned point. Therefore, according to those authors, the logical conclusion is that the emperor was a powerless actor with no agency whatsoever during this specific timeframe.

Nevertheless, the facts regarding Hirohito’s intervention in the Japan-Soviet Union negotiations might be constructed in an alternative though not antagonistic way. The authors that spouse the aforementioned hypothesis assume with a certain degree of reasonability that the monarch firmly opposed the restoration of relations with the Soviet Union. Even though Hirohito’s anti-communist position is a certain fact according to several accounts such as the conversations with MacArthur and Dulles, as well as the diaries of Tajima and Shigemitsu, the emperor never opposed the negotiations with the Soviet Union in principle. Hirohito’s warnings were always directed towards not contradicting the Security Treaty with the US by reason of any concession to be given to the Soviet Union; however, he did not discourage the negotiations *per se*, but the worst-case scenario of such talks according to his view of diplomatic affairs.

In that regard, one might argue that, given the “zero-sum game” of the Cold War, any of Japan’s attempts to settle a dispute with the Soviet Union would mean harm for the US interests and vice versa, and therefore, Hirohito did oppose the negotiations in principle although he never expressed it directly. However, this argument has two important flaws. Firstly, there is no available evidence to assure that the emperor assumed this “zero-sum” logic in his political thought: actually, the fact that the monarch had managed to survive the postwar period and to kindle and alliance with the erstwhile enemy, proves that Hirohito was undoubtedly flexible in foreign policy issues, as any realist would be expected to proceed.

Secondly, neither the Soviet diplomats nor the US State Department assumed a “zero-sum” logic in their respective negotiation strategies. In spite of Dulles’s firm warning on August 19<sup>th</sup>, his other declarations at that time showed that the secretary of State remained generally positive towards the negotiations between Japan and the Soviet Union as long as the US interests were not affected. The State Department

supported that position in several communiqués by stating that the state of war between Japan and the Soviet Union ought to be terminated<sup>220</sup>. In fact, the eventual adoption of the Adenauer formula, which is essentially a “win-win” solution, proves that neither side was embracing an exclusive “zero-sum” strategy.

Therefore, if one assumes that Hirohito’s intentions were not to sabotage to negotiation process but to assure that such negotiations did not damage the pre-established arrangements with the US, it is possible to state that the emperor’s position did prevail in the end. Although diplomatic relations with the USSR were re-established, the Security Treaty as well as the American military contingent deployed in Japan and the US’ prerogatives of free movement around the Japanese archipelago, suffered no change. Hence, the most relevant crisis of US-Japan bilateral relations up to that moment was surpassed without any major consequences for the alliance. Nevertheless, in order to complete this alternative interpretation, there is still a question regarding whether Hirohito’s influence, other than his communications with American officers, contributed to these results.

In analyzing the Japanese government’s position in the negotiation process, the factors related to the domestic political situation and the US pressure have an undeniable importance. Yet, the emperor’s influence is hard to gauge in the overall results. Truly, the final outcome of the negotiations was consistent with Hirohito’s agenda but it does not necessarily mean that he had a voice on it. Other than Shigemitsu’s diary, there are no archive sources that reveals how the monarch influenced the Japanese side in the negotiation process; and even in the case of the foreign minister, there are not much records that allow to estimate how Hirohito’s opinions expressed on the aforementioned seven briefings, impacted on Shigemitsu’s decision-making process. In summary, there is no evidence thus far to prove that the correlation between the results of the Japan-USSR negotiations and Hirohito’s agenda, was actually a causative relation.

Therefore, this lack of information leads to a similar conclusion that the one expressed by the consulted authors, although by a different path: the final outcome of the negotiations between Japan and the Soviet Union did favor Hirohito’s interests since the Security Treaty with the US was not affected, but the emperor had no demonstrable agency in the overall results. In that sense, the fact that his agenda was

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<sup>220</sup> FRUS, 1956, n. 97.

accomplished but not by his own intervention, proves that during this timeframe, the monarch was *prima facie* powerless. Furthermore, it reveals that, even though Hirohito kept communicating with American top officers, his influence on Japan's foreign policy-making process was ultimately dependent on the ideological background of the ruling Japanese politicians.

## **The new Security Treaty and the Imperial Household (1957-1960)**

The Hatoyama Cabinet eventually crumbled and in December of 1956, it was substituted by a government led by Ishibashi Tanzan, who did not survive long in power. In January 31<sup>st</sup>, 1957, Ishibashi's administration also came to an end and Kishi Nobusuke became prime minister of Japan. Unlike his two predecessors, Kishi had a firmer grip onto the premiership (Kishi held the foreign minister post simultaneously during a brief part of his tenure) and was determined to carry out the massive task of re-negotiating the Security Treaty with the US. Likewise, the idea of reforming the existing security arrangements had already sparked within the American political circles as early as 1955. During the discussions of the meeting of the US National Security Council on April 7<sup>th</sup>, 1955, there was agreement on the "willingness to negotiate replacement of the present United States–Japan Security Treaty by a treaty of mutual defense which would include the right to maintain forces in Japan and the right upon Japan's request to aid Japan in resisting subversion or infiltration by unfriendly forces."<sup>221</sup>

Nevertheless, the US side did not communicate those intentions to the Hatoyama Cabinet because of the general distrust regarding the foreign agenda of the Japanese government, and the plan remained undisclosed. At the same time, Kishi was making an appeal on his behalf as the only viable Japanese politician that could defend the US interests: while Shigemitsu was negotiating with Dulles on August of 1955, Kishi met with Sebald and expressed his disagreement about the Hatoyama Cabinet's foreign agenda as well as his political suitability for strengthening the bilateral relations<sup>222</sup>. Certainly, by the time Kishi became prime minister, the US had

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<sup>221</sup> FRUS, 1955, n. 26.

<sup>222</sup> FRUS, 1955, n. 46.

posed several expectations on him in contrast with the disastrous management of the bilateral relations during Hatoyama's administration.

In that regard, in the occasion of the presentation of credentials to the emperor of the new US Ambassador, Douglas MacArthur III, held in February, 25, 1957, the American diplomat met with Kishi. The former's overall impression was that Kishi was more amenable to the US interests and that the American side would benefit from supporting Kishi and suggested inviting him to the US as soon as possible <sup>223</sup>(the visit was scheduled for June of that year). MacArthur III repeated his positive opinion regarding the prime minister on another telegram sent to Dulles on May 25<sup>th</sup>, 1957. In such document, the ambassador pointed out that:

"In Kishi we have at last an able leader of Japan. He indicates he wants to make a bold new start with us because he feels his people growing restive under the old arrangements. Other things being equal, we will fare much better in the long run if we can move constructively forward with him following his visit..."<sup>224</sup>

In fact, during his tenure, Kishi sustained regular meetings with personnel of the American Embassy in Tokyo. Similarly, Dulles developed a sense of trust regarding the Japanese prime minister even though they hadn't met in person yet during the latter's tenure. Before Kishi's June 1957 visit to the US, the secretary of State communicated his faith regarding the future of US-Japan relations to Eisenhower:

Mr. Kishi gives every indication of being the strongest Government leader to emerge in postwar Japan. He has emphasized that he desires the establishment of a full partnership with the United States and that he is thinking in terms of long range goals rather than immediate political expediency. He feels strongly that the time has come to make readjustments in our present relationship in order to make our relations durable.<sup>225</sup>

In that sense, the Japanese prime minister had irreversibly knitted his political career to the US interests, and specially, to the negotiations of a new Security Treaty.

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<sup>223</sup> FRUS, 1957, n. 122.

<sup>224</sup> FRUS, 1957, n. 159.

<sup>225</sup> FRUS, 1957, n. 173.

Even though the US support, expressed by Dulles and MacArthur III's backing, placed Kishi in a very favorable position compared to the latter's political rivals from the LDP, the fact that he unequivocally became "the man of the US" ultimately ended his premiership in face of the massive Anti-American movement developed inside Japan by the end of the decade.

The prime minister finally met Eisenhower on June 19<sup>th</sup> and both discussed a wide array of topics which included the necessity of a new Security Treaty, territorial issues regarding the Ryukyu and Bonin Islands, the bilateral trade situation, among others<sup>226</sup>. On the next day, Kishi met with Dulles and other American military leaders. After an analysis of the overall military situation in the world and in East Asia, the US side repeated its concerns regarding the slow pace of Japan's defense buildup, to which Kishi counter with a commitment to increase the country's military budget and capabilities to a ceiling never matched by his political predecessors in exchange for the progressive retreat of the US military<sup>227</sup>. Finally, the negotiations were a major success as it was expressed through a joint communiqué announced on June 25<sup>th</sup> and the path for the reform of the 1951 Security Treaty started<sup>228</sup>. This milestone also opened the door for the widespread use of the term "new era of bilateral relations" (日米新時代)<sup>229</sup> in the political rhetoric that characterized Kishi's tenure.

In spite of this development, the negotiations for the new treaty did not start straightforwardly after Kishi's visit although there was some progress in the points discussed beforehand such as the retreat of the 50% of all US military personnel stationed in Japan, including all ground forces, by the beginning of 1958<sup>230</sup>. In that sense, the official proposal for the start of the negotiations arose from the Japanese side as Kishi requested MacArthur III to move forward with the bilateral talks because the domestic political situation had begun to deteriorate. The Socialist Party was planning to propose new legislation in the Diet in order to regulate the entrance of nuclear weapons to Japan as well as the free movement of the US military around the archipelago, which would ultimately limit the US deterrence capabilities in the case of an armed attack<sup>231</sup>. As a result of perceiving this situation as a closing window of opportunity, the American policy-makers decided to comply with Kishi and

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<sup>226</sup> FRUS, 1957, n. 181.

<sup>227</sup> FRUS, 1957, n. 186.

<sup>228</sup> US Department of State, 1957, p. 51-53.

<sup>229</sup> Kishi et al, 2014.

<sup>230</sup> Yoshitsugu, 2008.

<sup>231</sup> FRUS, 1958, n. 23.

consented with the start of the negotiations. On the next month, Dulles received Foreign Minister Fujiyama in Washington for the discussion of the main issues regarding the future treaty<sup>232</sup>. By the end of 1959, all major points of conflict had been polished and Kishi extended an official invitation to Eisenhower to visit Japan in 1960 in order to celebrate the conclusion of the treaty.

Nevertheless, one might wonder which influence, if any, Hirohito had in this process. Available evidence shows that the emperor kept involving himself in US-Japan relations during Kishi's administration: for instance, after MacArthur III's presentation of credentials, the monarch sent a message to Eisenhower, which was transmitted via the American ambassador. The missive stated that:

Emperor immediately inquired as to President's health. I replied that President was in excellent health and that I had seen him just prior my departure from Washington. I conveyed President's greetings and best wishes and Emperor asked that his own best wishes be conveyed to President. Emperor expressed deep appreciation for US assistance to Japan.<sup>233</sup>

The last sentence of this transcript evidences that Hirohito continued to support the security arrangements as well as the US military presence in Japan.

Similarly, the monarch had a meeting with Secretary of Defense Neil H. McElroy whilst the latter was visiting Japan on October 6<sup>th</sup>, 1958. The emperor opened the reunion by remarking that: "I am concerned about the vulnerability of Hokkaido given the enormous military power of the Soviet Union."<sup>234</sup> Hirohito's fears were not groundless since, in 1957, the Soviet Union had sponsored two major developments in the military field: in August, the launch of the first successful Inter-Continental Ballistic Missile and, in October, of the first space satellite, the Sputnik 1. The second one had specially created a sense of lagging behind the Soviet military prowess in the US and in several of its allies, which Hirohito was confirming to McElroy.

In response, the secretary of Defense agreed with the monarch regarding the strategic importance of Japan's northernmost island and dwelled on the necessity that the free world nations, specifically Japan and the US, collaborated in order to counter

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<sup>232</sup> FRUS, 1958, n. 26.

<sup>233</sup> FRUS, 1957, n. 122.

<sup>234</sup> Embassy to Department of State, 1958.

communism in a global scale. In that sense, Hirohito expressed his accord with the maintenance of the military alliance between both countries<sup>235</sup>. Even though the monarch had systematically remarked the importance of the US-Japan partnership before, his comment was even more significant if understood in the context of the negotiations for a new Security Treaty. Hirohito was letting the US side know that in spite of how the specific negotiations might turn, the core traits of the military alliance, e.g., the US security guaranty vis-à-vis Japan and the US military presence in the archipelago, would remain unaltered as in the original treaty. At the end of the reunion, the emperor once again expressed his appreciation for the US military presence and assistance to Japan<sup>236</sup>.

The abovementioned examples indicate that Hirohito was implicated in US-Japan relations during Kishi's tenure. Furthermore, there is evidence in the Japanese press regarding the prime minister briefing the emperor after the former's trip to the US. However, unlike Shigemitsu, Kishi did not leak any of the comments made by the monarch on those secret briefings; nor he left any evidence of the emperor's direct involvement in the treaty negotiations in his memoirs. One might conclude, therefore, that this lack of proof does not allow inferring any valid hypothesis regarding Hirohito's intervention in the new Security Treaty negotiations; but, if the past actions of the emperor are taken into consideration, it is possible to deduce a plausible argument for the apparent non-interference of the monarch in the new treaty negotiations.

In the postwar history analyzed thus far, Hirohito had intervened decisively in three moments: during the peace and security treaty negotiations in the occupation period, during the bilateral negotiations regarding Japan's rearmament (1952-1954) and during the Japan-USSR talks for the normalization of relations. All those three scenarios have two characteristics in common, which ultimately provoked a response from the monarch: 1) the emperor perceived that there was a menace for the survival of the Imperial Household which emanated mostly from the USSR and ought to be countered by a further commitment towards the military alliance with the US; and 2) the monarch was displeased with the delay of the solution of the aforementioned 1) because of Japanese politicians' lukewarm attitude. In such cases, Hirohito felt that any progress in the above-mentioned situation could not be achieved through standard

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<sup>235</sup> Embassy to Department of State, 1958.

<sup>236</sup> Embassy to Department of State, 1958.



negotiation methods and therefore, he ought to intervene deploying his “dual diplomacy” method. During Kishi’s administration, the monarch was certainly aware of the Soviet military threat, as he expressed to McElroy, but there is no evidence to grasp Hirohito’s opinion on Kishi’s performance.

Even though, on the very eyes of the American policy-makers, Kishi was a reliable partner, even more than Yoshida had been once. For that reason, and given that the opinion regarding a Japanese politician offered by US diplomats and that of the emperor tended to be aligned (as in the cases of Yoshida and Hatoyama), it is highly probable that Hirohito also praised Kishi secretly. What’s more, the emperor did not oppose the prime minister’s plans for Eisenhower’s visit to Japan in 1960 amidst the conclusion of the new treaty and proudly assumed his ceremonial role of receiving the US president. Consequently, Hirohito’s apparent non-intervention regarding the treaty negotiations during Kishi’s administration might be explained because the emperor felt no need to use his influence to alter the course of the political events since the Kishi Cabinet was already moving in a direction that *a priori* pleased the monarch, although there is no explicit evidence regarding this last point.

This doesn’t mean that the monarch stood aside quietly: even though he wasn’t implicated directly, his symbolic position became entangled with the new Security Treaty. What’s more, not only the emperor, but the Imperial Household had a role in the last stage of the negotiations. By 1960, the bilateral talks were almost finished and as part of the political climate generated by the new agreement, bilateral visits between political leaders of both countries were scheduled. On one side, Eisenhower would visit Japan and Hirohito would receive him, and on the other, Akihito would travel to the US as a representative of his father. Those programmed visits ought to be the colophon of the “new era” of relations between Japan and the US hallmarked by the signing of the novel Security Treaty.

Likewise, the 1960 scheduled visits were also a decisive moment for the final entitlement of the emperor as Japan’s postwar Head of State. According to the argument unraveled in this chapter, after the end of the occupation, there was a political movement led by conservative politicians and organizations from the civil society to re-establish Hirohito as the Head of State by simultaneously using both legalistic and pragmatic approaches. Once the legalistic approach failed because of the lack of consensus to reform the Constitution, all efforts were re-allocated to *de facto* impose this agenda.

In January 19<sup>th</sup>, 1960, the new Security Treaty was signed between Kishi and Eisenhower during the prime minister's second trip to the US<sup>237</sup>. On that occasion, the US president officially accepted the invitation Kishi had extended to him to visit Japan, and announced the intention of his government to receive the crown prince. According to the Joint Communiqué of January 20<sup>th</sup>, Akihito's tour was scheduled for May and Eisenhower's for June, after the US president finished an official tour of the Soviet Union at the request of Nikita Khrushchev<sup>238</sup>. In that regard, the visit of Eisenhower, another country's Head of State (and incidentally the leader of the democratic nations in the context of Cold War), was a perfect opportunity to portray Hirohito on an equal footing with the US president, and by association, as the Head of State of Japan. Similarly, sending Akihito as a representative of the emperor in an official visit to the US, was also a way to harvest international legitimacy for the Japanese monarchy.

Furthermore, both visits were deeply symbolical and noticeably of a political character, even though several actors within Japan's politics, and specially the Imperial Household Agency, tried to mask the events as a purely ceremonial matter. In fact, Usami Takeshi stated several times that the purpose of both visits was to celebrate the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Japan-US relations and had not association whatsoever with the new Security Treaty<sup>239</sup>. However, there are several elements that demonstrate the political nature of both visits and *ergo*, the actual transition of the emperor to Head of State by 1960, which ultimately was provoked because of his public involvement in politics.

Even though Akihito's visit to the US was less traumatic than Eisenhower's ultimately aborted trip to Japan, the crown prince's tour also showed the political entanglement of the Imperial Household. In that regard, Akihito was planned to travel to the US as a proxy of his father, which meant that by 1960 the emperor had a political entity relevant enough to publicly represent the Japanese State internationally, even though he did not intend to do it in person. Therefore, one might ask why Hirohito did not go himself to the US. Undoubtedly, the monarch had many reasons to pay a visit to the US given that he was a stalwart defendant of the US-Japan military alliance and sustained good relations with several American policy-makers.

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<sup>237</sup> FRUS, 1960, n. 134.

<sup>238</sup> FRUS, 1960, n. 134.

<sup>239</sup> Takahashi, 2008.

However, it seems that the political timing during the 50's decade was not appropriate for the monarch to travel abroad. Taking into consideration that the crown prince's first international trip (in 1953) had aroused a debate in the Diet, it was expectable that the same announcement but for the emperor would have triggered an even more intense struggle that would have inevitably merged with the anti-Kishi and anti-Security Treaty protests. In that sense, Sakakibara argues that the concerned institutions, namely the Cabinet and the Imperial Household Agency, were waiting for the consolidation of a national consensus regarding sending the emperor overseas, which had not crystalized in the 50's<sup>240</sup>.

Furthermore, at that time there was no legislation in Japan for regulating the monarch's State activities in the event of absence because of a trip abroad. Such legislation was later drafted in the 60's. Similarly, Hirohito himself had not expressed his willingness to go abroad, probably as a tacit acknowledgment of the dire domestic political situation. Therefore, the fact that Hirohito did not plan to visit the US and sent the crown prince instead evidences that Akihito's tour was indirectly influenced by the political context of the moment.

Furthermore, the decision-making process of the crown prince's tour to the US also denoted a political bias in favor of the US. By 1960, Hirohito had received several state and official guests who had visited Japan. Among them, there were at least six top level dignitaries: Emperor of Ethiopia Haile Selassie I (1956), Crown Prince of Iraq Abd al-Ilah (1957), Prince and Prime Minister of Laos Souvanna Phouma (1958), Emperor of Iran Mohammad Reza Shah Pahlavi (1958), President of India Rajendra Prasad (1958) and the President of the Philippines Carlos Garcia (1958)<sup>241</sup>. According to the international diplomatic protocol, it would be customary that the Imperial Household reciprocate those visits keeping the same priority order as much as possible. Nonetheless, the visit to the US was given precedence above the others.

Such events were recorded in the memoirs of Suyama Tatsuo, Chief of Protocol of the Imperial Household at that time. Suyama met Usami in November, 27th, 1959 in order to discuss how to accommodate the upcoming trip to the US with the other international responsibilities of the Imperial Household. On the occasion, Usami argued that the visit to the US must be treated separately from the other

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<sup>240</sup> Sakakibara, 1981.

<sup>241</sup> Imperial Household Agency, 2022.

international compromises of the monarchy<sup>242</sup>. In that sense, the Chief of the Imperial Household Agency was clearly denoting that relations with the US, and by addition the involvement of the Imperial Household in those relations, stood supreme to any other consideration. Likewise, during a press conference hosted on December 23<sup>rd</sup>, Suyama was asked about the reasons for prioritizing the US in the crown prince's foreign agenda; the former replied that: "Other than the answer that the United States is an important country for Japan, it seems extremely difficult to find a reasonable answer."<sup>243</sup> Suyama's words pointed out that the decision regarding sending the crown prince to the US could not be justified from the point of view of diplomatic protocol, but was rather an arbitrary settlement based on political considerations.

Moreover, the scheduled visit was rapidly trapped into the political turmoil of 1960. Not only was the trip's timing extremely controversial since it was to be carried out amidst the ratification of the new Security Treaty, but it was publicly announced by the January 20<sup>th</sup> Eisenhower-Kishi Joint Communiqué. This action immediately stirred a backlash from within Japan: interestingly, one of the first personalities who opposed such declarations was Usami Takeshi. The Director of the Imperial Household stated:

I thought it was outrageous to include the visit to the United States in a joint statement. A joint statement is the result of diplomatic negotiations carried out by politicians. It may be good over there, but it is definitely troublesome here.<sup>244</sup>

Usami firmly opposed any attempt to openly involve the Imperial Household into politics by the Kishi Cabinet, and for that purpose, he argued that the visit ought to be postponed to September taking into consideration the health of Princess Michiko who had just given birth to the firstborn son of the couple (current emperor Naruhito) on February, 1960<sup>245</sup>.

Similarly, other sectors from the media and the opposition criticized Akihito's visit to the US. On February 9th, House of Councilors member Yajima Mitsuyoshi from the JSP, denounced the political involvement of the monarchy:

There are very strong evidences that the Crown Prince was used for the PR of the deliberation of the Japan-U.S. Security Treaty in the Diet and for the issue of

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<sup>242</sup> Takahashi, 2008, p. 169.

<sup>243</sup> Akahashi, 2008, p. 170.

<sup>244</sup> Akahashi, 2008, p. 174.

<sup>245</sup> Akahashi, 2008.

ratification that will occur afterwards. In order to achieve Mr. Kishi's political life-prolonging plan, there are those in power who will use any means to achieve their goals.<sup>246</sup>

Due to the strong resistance of several sectors, even from within the palace, to the involvement of the crown prince with Kishi's Cabinet politics, the tour was eventually postponed. On May 7th, during a press conference hosted by the Imperial Household Agency, it was announced that the trip was delayed to the last week of September (to the 25th specifically)<sup>247</sup>, as it had been originally intended by Usami. This setback in the intentions of Kishi's administration to simultaneously carry out bilateral visits, was also a prelude of the fiercer political struggle surrounding Eisenhower's trip to Japan.

In that sense, the domestic situation was deteriorating rapidly as the ratification of the treaty in the Diet and Eisenhower's tour drew closer. Since 1959, opposite voices to the new Security Treaty, especially from the JSP and a wing of the LDP, had increased, and organizations such as Zengakuren had turned to violent methods of protest. In that context, the ratification of the treaty in the Japanese Diet was carried out in May 19<sup>th</sup>, 1960 amidst the actual physical confrontation between members of the LDP and the JSP. Due to the unrest inside the parliament, the police was summoned to the Diet building and most of the JSP representatives were expelled from the session. After hours of struggle, a vote was casted amongst the 286 present parliament members, and the treaty was ratified by an immense majority of 248 LDP representatives<sup>248</sup>. The handling of this incident by the Kishi Cabinet triggered an even larger wave of protests around the country.

Although those demonstrations were mainly aimed at Kishi, Eisenhower's visit, and by extension the Imperial Household, were soon trapped in the turmoil. On June 3<sup>rd</sup>, Akira Iwai, Secretary-General of Sohyo, declared that the organization would host massive demonstrations in response to the arrival to Japan of James C. Hagerty, Press Secretary of the Eisenhower administration, and the head of the advanced party that was being sent to examine the preparative for the president's trip.

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<sup>246</sup> Akahashi, 2008, p. 175.

<sup>247</sup> Akahashi, 2008, p. 178.

<sup>248</sup> FRUS, 1960, n. 155.

Iwai also stated that protests against Eisenhower were also likely to happen, although he had personally ordered to avoid any violent incident<sup>249</sup>.

Consequently, on June 10<sup>th</sup>, during Hagerty's arrival to Haneda Airport, a crowd composed mainly by Zengakuren members surrounded the vehicle transporting the secretary and Ambassador MacArthur III, and stoned it and tried to turn it over. Finally, the American party had to be extracted in a helicopter from the place and none of them suffered any real damage<sup>250</sup>. Nonetheless, this episode, known as the "Hagerty Incident", showed that the political unrest in Japan could easily turn into violence, which had a certain deterrent effect regarding Eisenhower's visit.

Consequently, the struggle between several conservative groups regarding the feasibility of the visit intensified. For instance, Yoshida Shigeru, who was considered an elder statesman after his retirement, used his political influence to press Kishi to continue with the scheduled visit through the former's political disciples, Ikeda Hayato and Sato Eisaku, Kishi's younger brother. In a letter sent to the prime minister, Yoshida stated that, due to international protocol, the visit could not be cancelled<sup>251</sup>. It is worth noting that Yoshida's intervention into the issue was actually a request from the US Embassy, specifically from MacArthur III, who suggested reinforcing Kishi's crumbling legitimacy by throwing the support of Yoshida behind the Prime Minister<sup>252</sup>.

On the opposite side, a part of the LDP as well as the police, favored delaying the visit in order to avoid the emperor being caught in the political turmoil. For example, Nakasone Yasuhiro warned about the emperor's security in the very aftermath of May 19<sup>th</sup>: "The emperor must not be dragged into the whirlpool of political strife, and the emperor must be placed aloof as a symbol for the security of the imperial system."<sup>253</sup> Likewise, the Chief of the Police Department Kashimura Nobuo, warned the prime minister in private about the hazardous situation they were facing: "It is physically impossible for the police to forcibly remove the demonstrators who fill the city center and Haneda Airport...There is nothing we can do to stop these protests by the power of the riot police and tear gas alone."<sup>254</sup>

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<sup>249</sup> FRUS, 1960, n. 169.

<sup>250</sup> FRUS, 1960, n. 173.

<sup>251</sup> 読売新聞社会部, 1976, p. 223.

<sup>252</sup> MacArthur III suggested such course of action on May 23<sup>rd</sup>, whilst Yoshida was in New York as part of the celebrations for the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of bilateral relations (FRUS, 1960, n. 157).

<sup>253</sup> Uchida, 1989, p. 154

<sup>254</sup> Suzuki, 1984, p. 28.

In spite of that, up to the aftermath of the Hagerty Incident, the visit was planned to continue as scheduled as both the Kishi Cabinet and the US Embassy were aware of the political consequences of retreat in face of the left's pressure. The stakes regarding Eisenhower's visit were enormous: not only was the US president's personal security compromised in such a turbulent context, but something could also happen to the emperor himself. Taking that into consideration, the Kishi Cabinet had prepared an important police contingent in order to secure both Eisenhower and Hirohito's safety, which Kishi himself detailed to MacArthur<sup>255</sup>. Both dignitaries were meant to be safeguarded by more than twenty escort vehicles, thousands of police officers lined from Haneda Airport to the Imperial Palace, helicopters and, according to reports of the US Embassy, by "friendly demonstrators totaling about 200,000 to 300,000."<sup>256</sup> The security device prepared to protect Eisenhower and Hirohito was of a considerable magnitude and certainly never deployed in Japan's history for the protection of any elected politician, which further reinforced the consideration of the monarch as Head of State.

In fact, when briefed by the Chief of the Police Kashimura about the seriousness of the security situation, the prime minister confessed he would retort to his last resource: deploying the JSDF. Kishi's exact words were as following: "The police are unreliable when it matters. I will ask the Self-Defense Forces."<sup>257</sup> Precisely, Kishi's willingness to summon the military in order to protect the emperor shows that the Imperial Household was doubtlessly involved in the vortex of the most acute political conflict of Japan's postwar history thus far, with a latent possibility of becoming a civil war.

Yet, one might argue that all those circumstances were actually external to Hirohito and that he had no choice but to be dragged into the political confrontation created by the irresponsible administration of Kishi. Actually, several authors point out that the Kishi Cabinet systematically involved the Imperial Household in political events for the sake of the government's own parochial interests. Such term was defined as "political use of the emperor" (天皇の政治的利用) and is commonly found within the specialized Japanese literature about the Imperial Household. Nevertheless, such term has two implied notions that do not necessarily fit the

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<sup>255</sup> FRUS, 1960, n. 180.

<sup>256</sup> Watanabe, 1990, p. 229; FRUS, 1960, n. 171.

<sup>257</sup> Suzuki, 1984, p. 28.

historical facts regarding the monarch. The first one is the negative connotation regarding the involvement of the emperor in politics which is derived from the consideration that the monarch should only play a symbolical role in Japanese society. In that sense, it has been already pointed out in this research that the separation between symbolism and politics is an oxymoron, which in the case of the emperor, leads to ambiguous situations of a supposed “symbol” influencing, for example, the bilateral negotiations with the US in several occasions.

The second implied notion in this concept is that Hirohito was “used” by the conservative politicians in order to accomplish the latter’s objectives. This means, in other words, that the monarch was a passive actor within Japanese politics, which has also been proved not to be accurate given that Hirohito systematically employed his own influence to determine the policy outcomes in relation to the US-Japan alliance. In fact, the monarch was not an acquiescent figurehead in the context of Eisenhower’s visit neither, but voluntarily joined the political struggle at that moment. Precisely, this is the third element that shows the political nature of the visit.

In that regard, against the background of the exacerbation of domestic tensions as Eisenhower’s arrival was drawing closer, the emperor decisively showed his support for the maintenance of the schedule as planned. When presented with several petitions from academics as well as palace officers not to assist to Haneda Airport, Hirohito replied that: “It is my duty to welcome the president at Haneda, no matter the danger.”<sup>258</sup> Therefore, the monarch was certainly aware of the political turmoil that was happening at that time, and yet he actively intended to participate in Eisenhower’s visit. However, it is worth noting that there was never a contradiction of interests between the LDP foreign policy and the Imperial Household’s foreign agenda that would have allowed to determine which counterpart held the supreme power in that regard.

Likewise, Hirohito intervened in the final decision to cancel the visit. On the night of June 15<sup>th</sup>, as a result of hours of violent clashes between members of Zengakuren that had stormed the Diet, and the police, a student from Tokyo University, Kanba Michiko, died. This incident, which in addition was recorded by the press and became a national scandal, put an immense pressure on the Kishi Cabinet in regard with the feasibility of Eisenhower’s visit. However, there is

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<sup>258</sup> Sakakibara, 1981, p. 15.



evidence that suggests that it was Hirohito and not Kishi who ultimately decided on the cancellation of the visit. According to Sakakibara, on the morning of the next day, June 16<sup>th</sup> (at 10:00 exactly), Usami Takeshi briefed the emperor and later telephoned Kishi about the decision that had been taken<sup>259</sup>. Although there is no verbatim record of this briefing, Kishi's public address carried out later on the same day (at 5:15 pm) indicates the influence from the palace was instrumental in the final decision: "In consideration of His Majesty's position, aides of the emperor also requested the cancellation of President Eisenhower's visit."<sup>260</sup>

Moreover, on June 17<sup>th</sup>, MacArthur III handed Kishi a letter from Eisenhower that stated the US president's regret "in missing this opportunity to meet him (Hirohito) as well as my best wishes for his continued health and well-being."<sup>261</sup> Kishi replied on the next day in the following way: "His Majesty the Emperor desires me to convey to you his deep regrets for the postponement and his sincere hope for the pleasure of meeting with you in the near future."<sup>262</sup> Likewise, on June 20<sup>th</sup>, Kishi briefed the emperor regarding the aftermath of the events related to Eisenhower's visit<sup>263</sup>. The fact that Kishi acted as a messenger between Hirohito and the US president in the context of the cancellation of the latter's visit, also demonstrates that the prime minister might have received instructions from the palace in the aftermath of the June 15<sup>th</sup> incident.

It is difficult to determine whether the initiative to cancel the visit actually came from Hirohito, or that he was persuaded by Usami, who had repeatedly warned about the delicate security situation and the necessity of cancelling the visit prior to the June 15<sup>th</sup> Incident. In any event, the relevance of this case stems from the fact that Kishi followed the monarch's orders (either on Hirohito's or Usami's initiative) regarding the annulment of Eisenhower's visit since the decision to cancel had been taken first in the palace and then transmitted to the government. This episode, which might be constructed as a matter of protocol, actually had profound constitutional implications. Article 7 of Japan's Constitution declares that the emperor is allowed to perform several acts in matter of state, such as receiving guests, "with the advice and approval of the Cabinet."<sup>264</sup> However, in the abovementioned case, Hirohito clearly

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<sup>259</sup> Sakakibara, 1981, p. 11.

<sup>260</sup> Watanabe, 1990, p. 234.

<sup>261</sup> FRUS, 1960, n. 184.

<sup>262</sup> FRUS, 1960, n. 186.

<sup>263</sup> Yomiuri Shinbun-sha, 1976, p. 224.

<sup>264</sup> Constitution of the State of Japan, 1947.

overrode the chain of command established in the Constitution and acted as a political entity superior to the Cabinet and the prime minister himself. This proves that the emperor conducted himself, and at the same time was allowed to do so by most Japanese politicians, with political authority enough to elevate himself above the rule of elected politicians.

In conclusion, by the end of the decade, Hirohito had transitioned into the *de facto* Head of State of the country. In that sense, the main driving factors behind this process were the systematic interventions of the emperor in the foreign policy-making process in favor of the maintenance of the US-Japan military alliance throughout the decade, specifically in the bilateral talks regarding Japan's rearmament (1952-1954) and in the Japan-Soviet Union peace negotiations (1955-1956). Similarly, Hirohito used his symbolic power to advocate publicly for the endurance of the military alliance and had an active role in the planned mutual visits between US President Dwight Eisenhower and Crown Prince Akihito as the colophon of the conclusion of a new Security Treaty in 1960.

By 1960, the emperor had irrevocably earned a political entity relevant enough to consider him as an undeniable part of the Japanese State policy making-process. This phenomenon was manifested, firstly, in the more or less general consensus amongst all conservative politicians regarding the moral leadership and authority of the monarchy in Japanese society. Secondly, in the praxis, conservative politicians from several factions and ideological leanings, bowed to that authority and kept several Meiji ceremonies and political practices alive during the 50's decade. Moreover, with some ups and downs, the practice of the secret briefings to the monarch survived the postwar period and by 1960, it had become a common staple among Japanese policy-makers' routine.

Thirdly, the Imperial Household became an international representative of the Japanese State, and arguably the most relevant one taking into consideration the importance foreign counterparts attributed to visiting the emperor or receiving the crown prince. Lastly, with exception of the few occasions the monarch acknowledged his limited political role, Hirohito actually conducted himself in politics with almost no respect for the constitutional boundaries and with relative impunity, which was manifested in his open criticism to in-office politicians and in his frequent instructions to Cabinet members to act as his messengers to American policy-makers. In other words, by the end of the decade, Hirohito acted and was allowed to act as the informal

Head of State of Japan, which was conditioned, among several other factors, by his entanglement with the US-Japan alliance.

# **Chapter III: The zenith of Hirohito's influence on US-Japan relations (1960-1975)**

After the cancellation of Eisenhower's visit to Japan, the Japanese government temporarily assumed a low-profile attitude regarding its relationship with the Imperial Household. The fact that the emperor was almost drawn into an actual political confrontation because of his entanglement with the US-Japan alliance, was a reason compelling enough for Japanese conservative politicians to stop involving the monarch in the public debates of postwar Japan's politics. However, this phenomenon was only a tactical retreat that did not last for long. According to the evidence available, all the Japanese prime ministers that served during the 1960-1975 period (Hayato Ikeda, Sato Eisaku, Tanaka Kakuei and Miki Takeo), as well as several of their respective ministers, kept briefing Hirohito on several national and international issues during the abovementioned period.

In fact, the records of several of these politicians, such as the diaries and memories of Sato Eisaku and Fukuda Takeo (who acted as foreign minister during the last part of Sato's administration), prove that the frequency as well as the duration of the briefings to the emperor increased considerably during the 1960-1975 period. Furthermore, Crown Prince Akihito also started to receive systematical reports from the incumbent Japanese policymakers. Moreover, archival sources from both Japanese and American diplomatic archives suggest that throughout the period, the monarch was involved in some of the most relevant foreign policy matters, such as the reversion of Okinawa to Japan, the economic frictions with the US, and the normalization of relations with China, as well as Japan's ratification of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT)<sup>1</sup>.

What's more, Imperial Diplomacy continued being an important source of legitimacy for the royal family as well as an efficient public relations instrument for Japanese policy-makers. In that sense, the diplomatic role of the Imperial Household was quantitatively and qualitatively enlarged during the 1960-1975: in fact, the number of international tours of members of the monarchy increased dramatically. Furthermore, in 1971, Hirohito himself travelled to Europe, marking the first ever foreign trip of an acting Japanese emperor<sup>2</sup>. Furthermore, in 1975, he repeated this

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<sup>1</sup> The Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons entered into force in 1970 in order to prevent the spread of nuclear weapons and eventually foster nuclear disarmament worldwide. However, the treaty allowed the states that had tested nuclear weapons thus far (the US, the UK, France, the former Soviet Union and China), to retain such arsenal.

<sup>2</sup> Hirohito made a stopover at Anchorage, Alaska in the US before proceeding to Europe. The original plan of the 1971 Europe's visit included a pit-stop in Alaska, but it was finally converted into a full-fledged non-official visit to the US that even included the assistance of President Richard Nixon. Therefore, technically, Hirohito's first trip abroad as emperor was to the US.

achievement by travelling to the US. Both trips were massive public relations campaigns carried by both the Japanese government and its American and European counterparts as to court public opinion in favor of the betterment of bilateral relations, and they also laid an important precedent for Japan's diplomacy. Nevertheless, the natural decline of Hirohito's health prevented him from going abroad again during the rest of his life.

On the other hand, US-Japan relations throughout the period acquired different characteristics. Due to the fact that Japan's economy grew exponentially up to the point of becoming a threat for a sector of American businesses (specially, those related to the textile industry), coupled with the long-lasting occupation of Okinawa and the overall US military presence in the Japanese archipelago, as well as the impact of third actors, such as China; US-Japan relations were more prone to generate successive crises. For instance, the negotiations for the return of Okinawa, Nixon's double announcement of his trip to China in 1971 and the end of the dollar-to-gold convertibility, and the normalization of relations between Japan and the PRC, were three of the most relevant manifestations of the stress posed on the bilateral relations.

It is worth noting that several pieces of evidences and archival sources indicate that Hirohito intervened in the policy-making process in each one of these moments. However, the vast scholarship on Japan's foreign policy and on US-Japan relations during this period has tended to overlook the monarch's influence in such historical developments. For instance, most authors don't dwell on the connection between the emperor and several of the milestones of US-Japan relations such as the reversion of Okinawa, the normalization of relations between Japan and the PRC and Japan's ratification of the NPT; whilst historical sources presented in this chapter clearly demonstrate the monarch's influence in foreign policy matters. Similarly, the fact that Hirohito could generate actual political results from his symbolical position is often disregarded, and consequently, the political impact of the 1971 Anchorage meeting between Hirohito and Nixon and the 1975 imperial tour to the US is minimized.

The monarch's overtures were systematically directed towards minimizing any factor of tension between the two countries to keep the alliance afloat. For that purpose, the emperor used a set of tools such as his connections with the incumbent Japanese prime ministers, the communications with American policy-makers and his symbolic role as to improve the public opinion regarding the state of bilateral relations. Consequently, the 1960-1975 period can be considered as the peak of

Hirohito's influence in postwar Japan's foreign policy and specifically in US-Japan relations.

## **The national, regional, and international context of the 1960-1975 period**

In order to analyze the role of the emperor in each of these moments of tensions in the US-Japan bilateral relations, it is necessary to dwell into the domestic, regional and international context surrounding Japan from 1960 to 1975. Without doubt, the most salient feature of Japan's internal situation during the period was the extraordinary economic growth the country experienced. Even though Japan had completely recovered from the effects of WWII during the 1952-1960 period, the following years were labeled as Japan's "economic miracle".<sup>3</sup> Even though experts in the field claim different causes for this phenomenon, the data in that regard offers a solid understanding of the transformation the country went through: in 1960, Japan's GDP (measured on constant 2015 US dollars) was 583.6 billion dollars but by 1975, that same indicator had multiplied thrice to 1.82 trillion dollars<sup>4</sup>. During the same period, the economy grew at an annual average of 10%<sup>5</sup>, which was also reflected in the lifestyle of the Japanese population: by the start of the decade, the GDP per capita amounted to 475 dollars but by 1975 it had astonishingly increased ten times to 4,674 dollars<sup>6</sup>.

As a result, Japan's international economic position also improved dramatically. By 1975, Japan had become the third largest economy of the world behind the US and the Soviet Union<sup>7</sup>. Japanese companies and products were penetrating in several markets in the world displacing local producers, which also caused several frictions in the cases of the US and Western Europe. Symbolically, this economic growth was manifested in a myriad of international events that took place successively in Japan throughout the period, such as the 1964 Tokyo Olympic Games,

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<sup>3</sup> There is no general academic agreement on the periodization of the "economic miracle". Some authors debate on when Japan's economic growth started (in 1945, in 1952 or in 1960); whilst others disagree on the end date of that process (in 1973 with the eruption of the First Oil Crisis or in 1991 with the burst of Japan's financial bubble).

<sup>4</sup> The World Bank, 2021.

<sup>5</sup> Shiohara, 2023.

<sup>6</sup> Macrotrends, 2021.

<sup>7</sup> Mathisen, 2022.

the 1970 Osaka World Exposition and several other scientific, commercial and sports international events.

On the political level, the LDP remained solidly in power from 1960 to 1975 mainly due to the success of its economic policies. Even though during this time Japanese society was significantly less politicized in comparison to the previous period, the opposition to the LDP, headed by the JSP-JCP as well as student organizations and labor unions, continued their struggle, which was mainly aimed at the US-Japan military alliance. The most relevant demonstrations occurred throughout 1968-1970 by reason of the automatic extension of the 1960 US-Japan Security Treaty. Those manifestations were staged mainly in several campuses along the country and were known as “university struggle” (大学闘争). Moreover, the network of US military bases spread along the Japanese archipelago continued being a constant source of tensions with the local population, which systematically triggered several political demonstrations. Although the Ryukyu Islands were finally returned to Japan in 1972, the fact that the US military stood in the Okinawa prefecture even after reversion provoked that protests against the military alliance keep happening throughout the end of the period.

On the other hand, there were similar trends in the regional and international context from 1960 to 1975: an increase of tensions during the first part of the period, arguably up to 1967-1969, followed by a relative period of de-escalation labeled as “détente”. In that regard, the most salient feature of the Cold War in Asia during the first part of the period was the Vietnam War. Even though conflict had persistently raged in the Indochina Peninsula after WWII, the Gulf of Tonkin Incident<sup>8</sup> in August 1964 triggered a direct military response from the US and its subsequent involvement in the military theater of Vietnam. Furthermore, in 1966, Mao Zedong launched a massive purge movement, commonly known as “Cultural Revolution”, directed towards consolidating Mao’s power within the Communist Party but that ultimately led to the destabilization of China’s domestic situation. This movement also rippled throughout the region as the border tensions with the Soviet Union increased and several thousands of Chinese soldiers were sent into Vietnam to assist the Army of the Republic of Vietnam against the US military.

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<sup>8</sup> On August 4<sup>th</sup>, 1964, a US military vessel on a surveillance mission near North Vietnam’s coast was allegedly attacked by North Vietnamese boats. That event was counterattacked by US airstrikes and the subsequent approbation of a resolution by the US Congress to expand US military effort in the region, which included sending American troops to repel the North Vietnamese Army.



On an international scale, the US and the Soviet Union intervened in several conflicts worldwide and even came close to trigger a confrontation of global proportions. For instance, in October 1961, a stand-off between American and Soviet tanks occurred at Checkpoint Charlie, located in the border between the zones (West and East) of divided Berlin. Similarly, one year later, in 1962, a US reconnaissance plane discovered that the Soviet Union had deployed nuclear warheads in Cuba, which provoked a massive US military mobilization and put the world in the brink of nuclear annihilation.

Nevertheless, due to the ever-increasing amount of military spending devoted by both superpowers, as well as the over-extension of the US military network and the systematic economic crises of the Soviet state-controlled economy, there was a slight decrease of tensions during the second part of the period. After Richard Nixon assumed the presidency of the US, he proclaimed the “Nixon Doctrine”, which basically consisted in the partial retirement of the US military from several operation theaters but with a correspondent and proportional increase of the US allies’ contribution to collective security. Similarly, the Soviet leadership tried to mend the Soviet economy and adopted a more conciliatory approach towards the US, although it continued to exert a tyrannical control over its subject states, as shown in the 1968 invasion to Czechoslovakia<sup>9</sup>. In that sense, the US and the Soviet Union signed several trade agreements and reached relevant breakthroughs in the field of nuclear weapons limitation such as the Strategic Arms Limitation Talks (SALT 1) and the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty, both in 1972.

In addition, the domestic chaos provoked by the Cultural Revolution as well as the escalation of the border conflict with the Soviet Union, forced the Chinese leadership to find a more accommodative solution with the US regarding the balance of power in Asia. Therefore, from 1970, several informal contacts between diplomats and policy-makers from both sides started taking place and eventually led to Nixon’s visit to Beijing in 1972 as the highest point of the Sino-American rapprochement. This process also implied the expulsion of Taiwan from the United Nations and the shift of diplomatic relation from most countries, including Japan, to the People’s Republic of China (PRC).

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<sup>9</sup> By 1968, Czechoslovakia’s domestic policies had departed from the Soviet line of centralized economic planning and political repression by allowing some press freedom and a limited market economy. In response, the Warsaw Pact authorized a military intervention in Prague and a subsequent wave of repression against demonstrators.

Those trends also impacted in Japan's overall foreign policy as well as in the alliance with the US. During the first half of the period, both the Ikeda and Sato's respective Cabinets were tightly aligned to the US' interests on regional and global levels. This statement is particularly true regarding Prime Minister Sato, who even bore the political costs of morally supporting the US war effort in Vietnam and co-sponsoring the "double China resolution" to the UN General Assembly<sup>10</sup>. However, during the second half of the period, the Tanaka and Miki Cabinets, backed-up by the changes on the regional and international contexts, were left with more foreign policy options, especially in regard to China. In that sense, the Japanese government "rushed" to normalize relations with Beijing and achieved it even several years before the US<sup>11</sup>. Similarly, Japanese policy-makers momentarily resisted the US pressure to ascend the NPT due to the spread of nuclear weapons to countries such as India, although Japan eventually ratified the treaty in 1976.

### **The consolidation of the symbolic monarchy**

By the end of the 1952-1960 period, the maintenance of the monarchy as a component of Japanese society was an undeniable fact, even though there were several opponents to the Imperial Household. As explained in the previous chapter, the Japanese conservative politicians gathered in the LDP revived several of the prewar political practices which ultimately re-converted Hirohito into the *de facto* Head of State of the country, even though that title had no constitutional back-up. Those measures were further intensified in the following period.

A relevant element in this regard was Hirohito's relationship with Japan's military. In the previous chapter, it was exposed that, despite the controversial nature of the JSDF and the fear for the re-surface of the issue of Hirohito's war responsibility, the emperor kept close channels of communication with the supreme officialdom of the military through regular briefings with the utmost secrecy. Such ambiguous relationship between the throne and the Japanese military persisted during the 1960-1975.

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<sup>10</sup> By September, 1971, the question of China's representation was debated in the UN General Assembly. The Albanian delegation had presented a resolution to include the People's Republic of China and automatically expulse the Republic of China. As a counter, the US proposed a dual representation of China by both countries, but the American intentions did not gather support enough. Finally, the Albanian resolution was approved and the PRC ascended to the UN.

<sup>11</sup> Japan normalized relations with China in 1972, whilst the US did so in 1979.

An incident in that regard happened in 1968. On June 6<sup>th</sup>, the Chief Director of the Agency of Defense during the first Sato Cabinet, Masuda Kaneshichi, declared that: “the emperor should be the Head of State.”<sup>12</sup> Masuda’s statement was done during an inspection tour of a JSDF base in Nagasaki Prefecture, and therefore it raised an immediate reaction within the Diet. Despite the fact that two days later Masuda denied his own words due to the pressure of the opposition spearheaded by the JSP, his original declarations shed light over the reverence to the emperor within some ranks of the Japanese military.

Furthermore, one of the most critical incidents in Japan’s postwar politics during this period was related to the monarch and the military. On May 26<sup>th</sup>, 1973, the Chief Director of the Agency of Defense, Masuhara Keikichi, held a routine briefing with the emperor<sup>13</sup>, as it had been normalized since the previous period. In that context, the Cabinet of Tanaka Kakuei intended to pass the Fourth Defense Buildup Plan, which represented a massive military spending and it had been severely criticized by the press and the opposition. After the briefing, Masuhara carelessly disclosed Hirohito’s comments to the press. According to the Chief Director, the emperor expressed his opinion in the form of a suggestion:

I do not think the Self-Defense (Forces) capability is that great compared to neighboring countries. The issue of self-defense may be difficult, but it is important to protect the country, so I would like you to not imitate the bad points of the old military but take in the good points.<sup>14</sup>

What is more, Masuhara assured that the emperor’s words inspired the former to press further for the Fourth Defense Plan in the Diet<sup>15</sup>. The Chief Director’s declarations provoked a political crisis within the Tanaka Cabinet and eventually led to Masuhara’s resignation on May 29<sup>th</sup>, just three days after the scandal broke out<sup>16</sup>. This event unveiled several relevant facts regarding the position of the emperor in postwar politics. Even though meetings between the emperor and different politicians had regularly appeared in the newspapers under the title of “reports” (報告), it was the first time in the postwar period that the comments of the monarch were leaked to

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<sup>12</sup> Asahi Shinbun, 1968, p. 2.

<sup>13</sup> Ruoff, 2001, p. 113.

<sup>14</sup> Goto, 2010, p. 173-174.

<sup>15</sup> Goto, 2010, p. 174.

<sup>16</sup> Ruoff, 2001, p. 115.

the public. It was clear then that Hirohito was not a passive entity who simply listened to the statements of the members of the Cabinet, but also replied to them with an authorized opinion that even had the capacity to mobilize certain policy-makers towards specific goals, as expressed by Masuhara himself. In fact, Hirohito stated privately to Irie Sukemasa the former's disagreement with the supposed separation between politics and the throne. Amidst the discussions of the Masuhara Incident, on May 29<sup>th</sup>, Irie recorded the following comment from the monarch: "So I am to be no more than a papier-mâché stage prop?"<sup>17</sup> This statement proves that Hirohito certainly opposed his separation from politics in his private entourage.

Moreover, this specific intervention of the emperor in politics sparked the political debate regarding the position of the monarch in postwar Japan. Representatives from both the JSP and the JCP strongly criticized the government for involving the monarch into a sensitive political issue, and asked for a clarification regarding the legality of the "imperial briefings." In fact, LDP right-wing politicians also accused Masuhara of "disloyalty to the emperor" because of revealing the monarch's thoughts<sup>18</sup>, which demonstrates that emperor-related topics were transversal to the whole political spectrum. Eventually, Prime Minister Tanaka declared to the Diet that briefings were politically neutral in principle and that could be carried under the elastic category of "public acts of the emperor in his position as a symbol."<sup>19</sup> This legal explanation was first advanced by the Yoshida Cabinet in 1952 to justify Akihito's trip to the UK as exposed in the previous chapter, but in this case, Tanaka used it to legitimize an obvious political act, such as the briefings to the monarch, as a routine political practice.

Thus far, most authors specialized in the Imperial Household and politics agree on the aforementioned points. However, there is a relevant element regarding the Masuhara Incident that is generally overlooked by most of them, and that refers to the close relations between the emperor and the Japanese military. Hirohito's insightful comments about the Fourth Defense Plan revealed that the emperor was a connoisseur of the military matters related to Japan and its environment, which could be the result of nothing else but systematic briefings by JSDF officials on that topic. Likewise, the fact that the emperor explicitly ordered Masuhara to follow a specific

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<sup>17</sup> Irie, 1991, vol. 9, p. 46. Translation by Ruoff, 2001, p. 117.

<sup>18</sup> Irie, 1991, vol. 9, p. 46.

<sup>19</sup> Asahi Shinbun, 1973, p. 2.

course of action indicates that the monarch perceived he had political power enough to command not only politicians, but also the military. Moreover, Masuhara was a career bureaucrat who had occupied several posts in the postwar military since the Yoshida Cabinet, and had participated in several US-Japan defense negotiations throughout his political life<sup>20</sup>. Therefore, it is not unlikely that Hirohito received information regarding Japan's military as well as the negotiations with the US via Masuhara since the 50's; although this statement is purely speculative given that the only direct evidence concerning the relationship between Masuhara and Hirohito is the one regarding the 1973 incident.

On the other hand, Hirohito continued to be symbolically tied to the major events of Japan during the period. For example, the emperor inaugurated the first high-speed train (*shinkansen*) in Japan in October 1<sup>st</sup>, 1964<sup>21</sup>. Similarly, few days later on October 10<sup>th</sup>, the monarch presided over the opening ceremony of the 1964 Tokyo Olympics<sup>22</sup>, the first to be held in Japan (and in Asia) and that were considered a demonstration to the world of the country's prowess in the technological and economic fields. Likewise, Hirohito also launched the Osaka International Exposition in March 14<sup>th</sup>, 1970, an event where expositors from 77 countries gathered<sup>23</sup> and further improved Japan's image in the international community. Generally, Hirohito's speeches (known as *O-kotoba*, お言葉) during those occasions were broadcasted nationally and also published in the most relevant newspapers of the country.

In addition, the monarch also participated in several major national events that were not included within his constitutional competences in principle. Particularly, Hirohito's fascination towards sports, and especially with *sumo*, was a common staple in the public relations campaign organized by the Imperial Household Agency. It became customary for the monarch to open the National Sports Festival (国民体育大会) and also to offer a prize on behalf of the royal couple (the Emperor and the Empress's Cup) to the team of the winning prefecture. In that sense, the emperor's public image was molded as to include his passion towards sports alongside his scientific career<sup>24</sup>.

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<sup>20</sup> FRUS, 1950-1954.

<sup>21</sup> Yuri & Kunihiro, 1974, p. 322.

<sup>22</sup> Yuri & Kunihiro, 1974, p. 322-323.

<sup>23</sup> Yuri & Kunihiro, 1974, p. 338-339.

<sup>24</sup> Watanabe, 1987, p. 262-264.

Similarly, in July 12<sup>th</sup>, 1963, the Cabinet of Ikeda revived the system of Imperial Condecorations that had been suspended since the occupation period (1946)<sup>25</sup>. According to the government decision, individuals that have made remarkable contributions to society are granted the highest honor by the emperor himself in a special ceremony that is held twice a year (spring and autumn). Moreover, workers that engage in dangerous tasks (including members of the JSDF), elderly people and relevant artists are also rewarded by the monarch<sup>26</sup>. It is worth noting that, according to the evidence found in the diary of Eisaku Sato, the prime minister and the emperor frequently used the briefings regarding the assignment of honors as a cover for discussing several political matters. For example, the entrance for October 20<sup>th</sup>, 1966 shows that, after discussing the issue of the Order of Culture, Sato briefed Hirohito on the student movement's protests against the war on Vietnam<sup>27</sup>.

Moreover, during this period the restorationist movement that started in the previous period within Japan's civil society, achieved one of its biggest successes of the postwar: the celebration of the first National Foundation Day on February 11<sup>th</sup>, 1966. On December, 9<sup>th</sup>, 1965, Sato's Cabinet amended the National Holiday Law of 1948 as to include February 11<sup>th</sup> within the list of state-sponsored celebrations in Japan<sup>28</sup>. In spite of the fact that the name of the holiday was changed from the traditional *Kigensetsu* (紀元節 or *Festival of the Accession of the First Emperor and the Foundation of the Empire*)<sup>29</sup> to the more neutral *Kenkoku Kinen no Hi* (建国記念の日 or *National Foundation Day*); this holiday kept an undeniable connection with the Imperial Household. For instance, the meaning of the celebrations continued to be to commemorate the ascension of the first emperor to the throne, and similarly to the prewar tradition, February 11<sup>th</sup> was kept as the designated date for Foundation Day<sup>30</sup>.

On June 23<sup>rd</sup>, 1972, Hirohito became the longest-reigning emperor in Japan's history, and one of the eldest monarchs in the world. On the occasion, he stated: "I wish for the happiness of the people, and hope that human society will progress and develop in harmony with nature, and that the world will be at peace."<sup>31</sup> By the 70's decade, the monarchy had become largely legitimized within Japanese society, as a

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<sup>25</sup> Watanabe, 1987, p. 307.

<sup>26</sup> Cabinet of Japan, 2023.

<sup>27</sup> Sato, 1998, vol. 2, p. 501-502.

<sup>28</sup> Cabinet of Japan, 2023.

<sup>29</sup> Ruoff, 2001.

<sup>30</sup> Ruoff, 2001.

<sup>31</sup> Yuri & Kunihiro, 1974, p. 356-357.

result of the combined efforts to keep the Imperial Household afloat, done by the LDP, the Imperial household Agency and the royal family. In that regard, several surveys carried by different newspapers or agencies show the degree of normalization of the postwar status of the Imperial Household and that of Hirohito as a “symbol.” For example, in 1962, the LDP Constitutional Commission performed local hearings in several parts of Japan regarding the status of the Imperial Household. According to the Commission’s report, the results showed an “overwhelming support” for the continuance of the monarchy<sup>32</sup>.

Similarly, “The Survey of Japanese Value Orientations” carried out by NHK regularly since 1973, revealed that from that 1973 until the end of the Showa Era (1989), about half of the respondents manifested having positive feelings (which includes “respect” and “favorable” views in the NHK methodology) towards the emperor; although there was a slight decreasing trend from 53% of the total respondents in 1973 to 50% in 1988<sup>33</sup>. What is more, the positive sentiments towards the monarch were always higher than the indifference regarding the throne; however, that gap systematically closed as the Showa Era’s end drew closer. In addition, the antipathy regarding the Imperial Household stood at only 2% throughout the period<sup>34</sup>.

Likewise, another opinion poll published by Kyoto Shinbun in 1987, shows similar results. At first, surveyed people were asked their views regarding the continuance and/or necessity of change of the monarchy and 83% manifested their support for the status of the Imperial Household. Furthermore, in relation to their thoughts about the position of the emperor, 69% of the respondents viewed the monarch as a “symbol” whilst 19% held a prewar perception of the emperor (“Head of State” or “god-like entity”)<sup>35</sup>.

On the other hand, even though the conservative politicians recognized the relevance of the emperor, the fact that there was no legalistic support for the political authority Hirohito had amassed, complicated certain protocol and diplomatic matters. For that reason, during the 1960-1975 period, the LDP strove to secure a legal base for Hirohito’s capability of international representation of Japan. In that sense, the constitutional debate regarding the emperor was resumed during the Ikeda Cabinet. On November 22<sup>nd</sup>, 1961, the LDP Constitutional Commission published a report

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<sup>32</sup> Mainichi Shinbun, 1962, p. 2.

<sup>33</sup> Kono, 2005, p. 28.

<sup>34</sup> Kono, 2005, p. 28.

<sup>35</sup> Tsurumi & Nakagawa, 1989, p. 732-733.

with several recommendations on the position of the monarch. For instance, the Commission concluded that the issue of the title of Head of State needed to be reexamined in order to clarify whether the emperor should possess such title and consequently conduct himself with relative independence from the government and the parliament. Likewise, the matter regarding the elucidation of the monarch's international representation was brought up to the debate<sup>36</sup>.

The Tanaka Cabinet retook that discussion, specifically on the issue of the emperor's diplomatic capacity. In that regard, on June 16<sup>th</sup>, 1972, the LDP Constitutional Commission reached a landmark interpretation on the matter: the emperor was to be considered as a "representative" of the State of Japan<sup>37</sup>. The decision reached by the Commission was certainly not unfamiliar for the LDP policymakers, who had treated the monarch as the most important representative of the country since Akihito's trip to Europe in 1953; however, for the first time in the postwar period, the ruling party successfully put forward the "external" Head of State theory without disguising it in legalistic rhetoric.

Prime Minister Tanaka himself dwelled on the matter one year later, on June 13<sup>th</sup> of 1973, during an interpellation to the Diet. On the occasion, the premier explained the position enacted by the LDP one year before:

Foreigners often think of the Japanese emperor as the Head of State, as they make requests to meet and have an audience with the emperor. The Constitution does not stipulate that he is not the Head of State, and in the sense that he is a national representative as a symbol of the unity of the people, there is no problem with calling him the Head of State.<sup>38</sup>

Moreover, when Tanaka was confronted by a legislator of the JSP who alleged that according to the Constitution, the emperor was not the Head of State; the prime minister answered the following:

If a head of state is defined as someone who represents the country in all matters of domestic affairs and diplomacy and has control over administrative power, some may argue that (the emperor) is not the Head of State. However, even under the

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<sup>36</sup> Asahi Shinbun, 1961, p. 2.

<sup>37</sup> Asahi Shinbun, 1972, p. 2; Mainichi Shinbun, 1972, p. 2.

<sup>38</sup> Iwami, 2005, p. 66.



current Constitution, the emperor is the symbol of country and he also has the role of representing the country in diplomatic relations, although this is only a part of his overall duties. If the definition of head of state is based in such aspects, the emperor is to be considered as the Head of State.<sup>39</sup>

Despite the technicalities in Tanaka's response regarding the definition of Head of State, there are several relevant elements in these statements. Firstly, the involvement of the Imperial Household in foreign affairs was not only a matter of diplomatic courtesy, but also fostered the domestic and international perception that the royal family was, especially Hirohito, a representative of the State of Japan. In the exact same way than in the previous period, the LDP lawmakers exploited this state of the public opinion to legitimize, in this case, the *de jure* conversion of the emperor into the Head of State of the country. Secondly, the Japanese government quickly adopted the LDP Constitutional Commission's argument regarding the international representation of the monarch as its official position according to Tanaka's speech. This was, in fact, a bold constitutional reinterpretation carried out by the LDP in regard to the emperor's role in Japanese society. Even though the text of the Magna Carta was not changed due to the political constraints that were still present, the ruling party managed to secure a larger role for the emperor in politics.

In that sense, after abandoning the legalistic approach due to its failure during the 50's, the conservative politicians redirected their efforts towards a systematic but long-paced enlargement of the monarch's role in public life under the banner of the "activities in his capacity as a symbol", whilst constantly collaborating with civil society organizations in the "cultural battle" against the Left. By 1972, the LDP's rule was solid enough and the Imperial Household had rooted itself deeply enough within Japanese society as to overcome the obstacles of the previous period and reached the long-awaited objective: re-instate the emperor as the *de jure* Head of State of Japan, even without proper constitutional revision.

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<sup>39</sup> Yomiuru Shinbun-sha Shakaibu, 1976, p. 252.

## **Imperial Diplomacy and Hirohito's first trip abroad**

During the 1952-1960 period, the Imperial Household Agency, under the leadership of Usami Takeshi, had not only been able to maneuver as to keep the monarchy relevant in a semi-republican parliamentary system; but also devoted all its efforts to make the existence of the royal family appear essential for the sake of fostering friendly relations with other countries via the Imperial Diplomacy. This diplomatic practice persisted in the subsequent period of 1960 to 1975 and, in fact, augmented exponentially.

In that regard, throughout the period, members of the Imperial Household performed a total of 40 international trips to 38 countries of Asia, America, Europe, Africa, and Oceania<sup>40</sup>. This represented a five-fold increase in the number of international tours and more than the double of countries compared to the 1952-1960 period. Similarly, Hirohito received 101 State guests<sup>41</sup>, almost a four-fold increase in relation to the previous period. Therefore, while Hirohito consolidated his position as the un-official Head of State of the country, the Imperial Household became an undeniable representative of the State of Japan in diplomatic matters. Even though most countries visited by members of the Japanese monarchy were those with semi-monarchical systems (especially in Europe), the US was the most visited country throughout the period, which also demonstrates that to some extent, there was a subtle coalition between the royal family's interests on one side, and the LDP's foreign policy agenda on the other.

Indisputably, Imperial Diplomacy augmented exponentially during the 1960-1975 period. However, the most relevant fact regarding the diplomatic activities of the Japanese monarchy were Hirohito's first international trips as ruling emperor to Europe in 1971 and to the US in 1975. In that sense, the emperor had expressed his willingness to go abroad since the 50's decade. For instance, on April 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1957, Ashida Hitoshi, who after leaving the prime minister office had entered the LDP because of the merge of the conservative forces in 1955 and acted as a member of the House of Representatives for such party, briefed the monarch about the former's trip

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<sup>40</sup> By chronological order: The US, West Germany, Iran, Ethiopia, India, Nepal, Pakistan, Indonesia, the UK, Sweden, the Philippines, Turkey, Mexico, Thailand, Canada, Denmark, France, Belgium, the Netherlands, Switzerland, Morocco, Italy, the Vatican City, Argentina, Brazil, Austria, Norway, Spain, Malaysia, Singapore, South Korea, Australia, New Zealand, Yugoslavia, Afghanistan, Fiji, Peru and Egypt (Imperial Household Agency, 2022).

<sup>41</sup> Imperial Household Agency, 2022.

to the Philippines for the funeral of former President Ramon Magsaysay<sup>42</sup>. During the meeting, the emperor expressed that he would like to go overseas, and specifically suggested travelling two weeks to the US and three weeks to Europe<sup>43</sup>.

Later, on October 31<sup>st</sup>, the monarch had a press conference with Ambassador MacArthur and Maxwell Love, advisor to President Eisenhower<sup>44</sup>. The conversation between Hirohito and the American officials was about the most recent trip of Queen Elizabeth II to the US<sup>45</sup>. However, MacArthur later reported to the State Department that his impression of the meeting was that the emperor was subtly pushing for the concretion of a diplomatic tour of the US<sup>46</sup>. Even though an imperial trip abroad was never materialized in the 50's, due in part to Kishi's fiasco regarding the cancellation of Eisenhower's visit to Japan, both events abovementioned show that the initiative for sending the emperor abroad came from none actor other than Hirohito himself. This further disproves the thesis regarding "the political use of the emperor", since it was the monarch and not the ranks of the LDP who first advocated for this particular diplomatic agenda. Furthermore, it is worth noting that Hirohito kept using his "dual diplomacy" method by simultaneously influencing the Japanese policy-makers and communicating directly with America officials.

Nonetheless, the emperor could not possibly accomplish a tour abroad on his own and had to necessarily rely on the conservative politicians for this purpose. Even though Japan's Constitution does not straightforwardly forbid any foreign trip of the monarch, at the beginning of the 60's, there were many concerns amongst the LDP members and the Imperial Household Agency regarding protocol matters (e.g., who shall assume the constitutional and extra-constitutional functions of the emperor in the possible event of absence of the monarch due to an overseas trip). Article 4 of the Constitution establishes that "the emperor may delegate the performance of his acts in matters of state as may be provided by law,"<sup>47</sup> but unlike the Meiji Constitution that ruled that possibility in detail, up to the beginning of the 60's there was no legal precedent in postwar Japan for an imperial foreign trip. For that reason, in 1961, the Ikeda Cabinet started to officially advocate for a law that allowed Hirohito to go overseas.

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<sup>42</sup> Imperial Household Agency, 2017, vol. 12 (1957/4/2).

<sup>43</sup> Imperial Household Agency, 2017, vol. 12 (1957/4/2).

<sup>44</sup> Imperial Household Agency, 2017, vol. 12 (1957/11/31).

<sup>45</sup> Elizabeth II visited the US in October, 1957.

<sup>46</sup> Funabashi, 2019, p. 20.

<sup>47</sup> Constitution of the State of Japan, 1947, p. 1.

There is no direct evidence that the emperor intervened in any way in the drafting of the law by the Ikeda Cabinet. Nonetheless, during the study and preparation of the project of law, Hirohito publicly stated his desires to go abroad twice. On the press conference for his 61<sup>st</sup> birthday, the monarch was asked by a reporter about one of the happiest moments of the former's life, and Hirohito answered the following:

The trip to Europe was by far the most enjoyable and impressive experience. Above all, I stayed at Buckingham Palace in England for three days, had a friendly meeting with His Majesty King George V and I was able to learn directly about British politics, which was very helpful.<sup>48</sup>

Moreover, in 1963, amidst the discussions of the bill in the Diet, the emperor was asked in a press conference which countries he would like to visit once the law was passed. Hirohito, aware of the political implications of his response, replied cautiously: "I am leaving the decision to the government since there are also political considerations."<sup>49</sup>

Certainly, the bill had caused an appreciable stir from the JSP and the JCP in the Diet. Representatives from both parties were accusing the LDP of involving the Imperial Household in politics and, consequently, Prime Minister Ikeda himself had to reply that there were no government plans for sending the emperor abroad<sup>50</sup>. The law was finally passed in 1964 under the name of *Law Concerning Temporary Substitution for Acts in Matters of State* (国事行為の臨時代行に関する法律) and established that in the event of absence or physical/mental disability of the emperor, the crown prince or any other member of the royal family with a rank high enough could take over the public responsibilities of the monarch with the advice and consent of the government<sup>51</sup>.

Even though Ikeda denied there were plans for sending the emperor abroad, this law opened the possibilities for future overseas trips. Furthermore, since Hirohito had already expressed privately to both Japanese and American officials his intentions to go abroad; this law was a *de facto* constitutional reinterpretation advanced by the

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<sup>48</sup> Igarashi, 2008, p. 192.

<sup>49</sup> Igarashi, 2008, p. 193.

<sup>50</sup> Funabashi, 2019, p. 17.

<sup>51</sup> 国事行為の臨時代行に関する法律, 2015.

LDP, because it enlarged the acts in matter of state the emperor was entitled to by including possible overseas tours. Therefore, it was expectable that the LDP eventually pressed for the materialization of an imperial foreign tour. What's more, after the passage of the bill, Hirohito kept publicly asserting his intentions for overseas travel. On August, 30<sup>th</sup>, 1966, Hirohito stated: "It goes without saying that I want to go (abroad)... but considering the domestic and international circumstances, I think it would be extremely difficult (...) I am aware that in my position as emperor I cannot assume any political attitude."<sup>52</sup> Even though the monarch had to temper his declarations taking into consideration any possible backlash from the opposition to the LDP, the first part of this intervention highlighted his willingness for having a more active role in diplomatic matters.

Sato was the first prime minister of the postwar period to draw actual plans for an overseas trip of the emperor, which the former included in his political agenda with the same level of relevance of the major foreign policy milestones achieved during his tenure such as the return of Okinawa to Japan. Sato's first traceable thoughts on the issue of an imperial tour can be found in his diary; on February 9<sup>th</sup>, 1970, the premier recorded that on the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Hirohito's enthronement, he planned to carry out several special events<sup>53</sup>. Although it was not explicitly described in Sato's diary, the prime minister had conferred with other LDP officials about the possibility of including an overseas trip as part of the celebrations<sup>54</sup>.

Nonetheless, it was difficult even for the LDP to take the initiative and unilaterally send the emperor abroad considering the internal opposition. In that context, an invitation from a foreign counterpart was necessary to legitimize the conservatives' intentions. Such invitation arrived in April, 1970 from Prince Albert of Belgium, brother of King Baudouin and who was in Japan as part of Belgium's official party to the Osaka Universal Exposition. Albert passed the invitation via Prince Takamatsu, Hirohito's brother, who later transmitted it to the emperor according to the diary of Irie<sup>55</sup>. Once the invitation was received, the Cabinet and the Imperial household Agency started to negotiate the specifics matters of the monarch's

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<sup>52</sup> Takahashi, 1988, p. 126-132.

<sup>53</sup> Sato, 1997, vol. 4, p. 36.

<sup>54</sup> Funabashi, 2019, p. 24.

<sup>55</sup> Irie, 1991, vol. 8, p. 31.

overseas trip: in that sense, Sato and Usami met in July 29<sup>th</sup> of the same year to discuss the issue of an imperial tour<sup>56</sup>.

The exchange of views between both government branches proceeded smoothly and an agreement on the timeline as well as the target countries was eventually reached. However, the destination of the first overseas visit of the emperor was a much-contended issue due to its political implications. In that sense, in August, 1970, the protocol section of the Imperial Household Agency noted that the first three countries to be visited were Belgium, (West) Germany and the UK. What is interesting is that Prime Minister Sato had proposed to include the US in the schedule but his suggestions were rejected by the agency<sup>57</sup>. In that regard, during a meeting between Foreign Minister Aichi and Chief of Protocol Takeuchi on August 13<sup>th</sup>, the latter argued that the visit to the US might generate criticism regarding the political use of the emperor. In response, Takeuchi argued that even if the visit was for the sake of fostering US-Japan relations, he did not think that it was appropriate<sup>58</sup>.

Moreover, in the negotiations with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, officials from the agency pointed out that since there had never been a visit to Japan of an American president, it was disrespectful of international diplomatic protocol to prioritize the US over those European countries whose Head of States had previously visited Japan. Thus, this would denote a political “favoritism” for relations with the US which might in turn drag the monarchy into another political storm<sup>59</sup>. Once again, the Imperial Household Agency was trying to protect the royal family from any criticism, and factually acted as a counterbalance for the conservatives’ plans regarding the first overseas trip of the emperor.

On the other hand, Sato tried to turn the odds in favor of his own agenda by consulting with Crown Prince Akihito on the issue of the emperor’s first international tour. On August 29<sup>th</sup>, 1970, the prime minister briefed the crown prince on the likelihood of success of his own scheme for Hirohito’s trip<sup>60</sup>. Even though Akihito’s response was not recorded, it seems that Sato eventually complied with the Imperial Household Agency’s arguments and accepted the “Europe first” proposal. In that sense, on September 18<sup>th</sup>, the prime minister asked Irie to communicate to the

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<sup>56</sup> Sato, 1997, vol. 4, p. 133.

<sup>57</sup> 竹内儀典長「御外遊について」(1970/8/14).

<sup>58</sup> 竹内儀典長「御外遊について」(1970/8/14).

<sup>59</sup> 竹内儀典長「御外遊について」(1970/8/14).

<sup>60</sup> Sato, 1997, vol. 4, p. 152-153.

monarch that a decision had been reached on the issue of the imperial tour<sup>61</sup>. Later, on October 16<sup>th</sup>, Sato himself briefed the emperor on the matter<sup>62</sup>.

Even though the prime minister temporarily submitted to the Imperial Household Agency's demands, he kept pushing for an imperial visit to the US, which eventually achieved in the form of a stopover in Anchorage, Alaska on September 26<sup>th</sup>, 1971, while the emperor's flight was on route to Europe. The negotiation process for this particular is examined separately in the subsequent epigraphs given its relevance in relation to the role of the emperor in US-Japan relations. In addition, negotiations among all Japanese agencies involved in the monarch's trip as well with their European and American counterparts resulted in the elaboration of the final schedule for the tour: after departing from Tokyo, the imperial couple would stop in Anchorage and proceed to Denmark, Belgium, the Netherlands, West Germany, Switzerland, the UK, and France<sup>63</sup>. The trip lasted 17 days from September 27<sup>th</sup> to October 14<sup>th</sup>, and despite the fact that several popular demonstrations motivated by the still-pending issue of Hirohito's war responsibility happened in the Netherlands, the UK and West Germany, both the Japanese government and the European counterparts labeled the imperial trip as a remarkable diplomatic success<sup>64</sup>.

On the other hand, once all parts agreed on the schedule, it was presented to Hirohito by Usami in order to obtain the emperor's final sanction on October 28<sup>th</sup>, 1970<sup>65</sup>. Moreover, before departing for Europe, on September 4<sup>th</sup>, 1971, Sato briefed the emperor on the last preparations for the trip<sup>66</sup>. Thus, most experts on the field wisely state that, even though the incumbent government agencies decided on the timeline and the target countries, ultimately, the emperor had the final ruling regarding traveling overseas. However, this argument might be contested with a different interpretation of the facts: Hirohito only approved the trip proposal as a ceremonial matter and once "advise and consent" from the Cabinet (in the form of Sato's briefings) had been offered. Consequently, this imperial decision fell within the legal limits established by the Constitution and left no room for discussion regarding the monarch's political neutrality.

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<sup>61</sup> Irie, 1991, vol. 8, p. 63.

<sup>62</sup> Sato, 1997, vol. 4, p. 185-186.

<sup>63</sup> Imperial Household Agency, 2019.

<sup>64</sup> Ruoff, 2001.

<sup>65</sup> 竹内儀典長「御外遊について」(1970/10/27).

<sup>66</sup> Sato, 1997, vol. 4, p. 414.

Nevertheless, the decision-making process for the first overseas trip of the emperor ought to be analyzed with a general perspective. Although there was a precedent from the previous period regarding Crown Prince Akihito's travel to the UK in 1953, it was Hirohito himself who first pushed the matter of an imperial overseas trip by simultaneously pressing Japanese policy-makers and communicating with American officials. What is more, even if there is no evidence that the emperor intervened directly in the draft of the Law Concerning Temporary Substitution for Acts in Matters of State sponsored by the Ikeda Cabinet, the timing of monarch's remarks in the abovementioned press conferences indicates that he tried to mobilize both the public opinion and the conservative policy-makers' efforts, who were ideologically prone to revere the monarchy, towards achieving an imperial tour. Furthermore, Prime Minister Sato kept Hirohito abreast of the relevant developments of the agenda.

Hence, given that Hirohito had sparked the discussion on an overseas trip since the 50's decade, and intervened several times, both directly and indirectly, in the decision-making process until the outcome in 1970, his influence on the consecution of the trip is more crucial than the acknowledged final sanction of the schedule. Accordingly, the monarch was a relevant *de facto* political actor, who not only had strengthened his position as the unofficial Head of State of the country, but also whose authority was decisive in achieving a diplomatic outcome as relevant as the first overseas trip of a Japanese monarch in his capacity as a representative of the State of Japan.

## **Ikeda's Cabinet and Hirohito's role in US-Japan relations**

**(1960-1964)**

The cancellation of Eisenhower's visit to Japan that eventually led to the collapse of the Kishi Cabinet, also impacted negatively in the bilateral trust regarding US-Japan relations, and casted several doubts over the political neutrality of the Imperial Household. In that sense, the LDP, represented in the Ikeda Hayato Cabinet inaugurated on July 19<sup>th</sup>, 1960, strove to improve its reputation vis-à-vis the US and protect the monarchy from any public criticism.



Ikeda was a career bureaucrat who had climbed up the ranks of the state's economic planning organisms even before WWII. He had occupied the post of Minister of Finance within the Yoshida Cabinet during the occupation period and had collaborated closely with the American authorities in the application of the Dodge Line of monetary policy. Moreover, Ikeda was a political disciple of Yoshida; in fact, during a meeting with Ambassador MacArthur on July 28<sup>th</sup>, 1960, the prime minister confessed that, while he was versed on domestic issues, he had chosen Yoshida to be the former's adviser in matters of foreign policy<sup>67</sup>. Moreover, Ikeda also worshipped the monarchy and had acted as a faithful servant of the emperor in the aftermath of WWII. In that sense, Onizuka (2014) states that Ikeda, in his role in the Ministry of Finance, had been instrumental in creating a financial scheme to hide part of the Imperial Household's properties and wealth from Allied inspection in the period from Japan's surrender until the arrival of the first American forces to the mainland<sup>68</sup>. Likewise, Ikeda had systematically briefed Hirohito during the Yoshida administration and acted as an imperial envoy to the US during the security treaty negotiations, as presented in the first chapter of this research. In summary, the new premier had a background of cooperation with both the US and the Imperial Household.

As soon as the new administration was inaugurated, Ikeda started advocating a three-points agenda that consisted on: 1) a shift from an ideological rhetoric to a more technocratic and economist narrative; 2) damage control in US-Japan relations; and 3) shielding the monarchy from public criticism. In that sense, Ikeda's administration was well known for its Income Doubling Plan, an ambitious economic proposal directed towards doubling Japan's economy in order to mitigate the social unrest that was common during the 50's<sup>69</sup>. Although Ikeda's economic policies eventually achieved a remarkable success, the other two points of the premier's agenda are also relevant for this research.

Even before Ikeda ascended to the premiership, the American Embassy had a positive opinion regarding the LDP member. On July 14<sup>th</sup>, MacArthur III reported to the Department of State the following: "Long-time Yoshida protégé, Ikeda has consistently advocated pro-American, anti-Communist policies."<sup>70</sup> Just three days

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<sup>67</sup> FRUS, 1960, n. 196.

<sup>68</sup> Onizuka, 2014.

<sup>69</sup> Kapur, 2018.

<sup>70</sup> FRUS, 1960, n. 192.

after his inauguration, on July 22<sup>nd</sup>, the new premier reached the American ambassador, apologized for the cancellation of Eisenhower's visit, and promised to exert his best for the promotion of common interests<sup>71</sup>. In that regard, Ikeda advanced on a swift repression of several Communist, student and union leaders, and on the strengthening of police forces. Ambassador MacArthur praised Ikeda's actions<sup>72</sup>.

Similarly, Ikeda's Cabinet submitted to the US' interests in relation to Okinawa. During the aforementioned July 28<sup>th</sup> reunion, the prime minister and Yoshida agreed that the return of the Ryukyus was not an issue of contention between both governments<sup>73</sup>. Later, on September 12<sup>th</sup>, US Secretary of State Herter met with Foreign Minister Kosaka, and the Japanese counterpart affirmed that "under the present situation the Japanese Government did not consider it proper to seek return of administration of these islands and that it appreciated the consideration given by the U.S. to the welfare of the Ryukyus."<sup>74</sup> Certainly, the Ikeda Cabinet spent a significant amount of political capital by renouncing to an issue as sensitive as the return of Okinawa in order to recover the trust so the American side.

The John F. Kennedy administration, inaugurated on January 20<sup>th</sup>, 1961, brought some changes for US foreign policy on global terms and in the specific approach towards Japan. The new presidency was willing to adopt a somehow equal attitude in its relationship to its most important Asian ally. Precisely, in June of 1961, Ikeda visited the US for the first time as premier with the purpose of negotiating a new framework of cooperation between both countries. As a result of the discussions, on June 21<sup>st</sup>, both leaders agreed on the creation of a Joint Cabinet-level Economic Committee and a Committee for Scientific, Cultural and Educational Exchanges in order to coordinate their economies policies and foster people-to-people exchanges respectively. Furthermore, it was also established the necessity of bilateral consultation on matters of foreign policy<sup>75</sup>.

Such proposal was materialized during the Lyndon B. Johnson administration<sup>76</sup>. The first US-Japan Policy Planning Consultation took place on September 21<sup>st</sup>-24<sup>th</sup>, 1964. The meeting was attended by officials of the Ministry of

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<sup>71</sup> FRUS, 1960, n. 194.

<sup>72</sup> FRUS, 1960, n. 197.

<sup>73</sup> FRUS, 1960, n. 196.

<sup>74</sup> FRUS, 1960, n. 198.

<sup>75</sup> FRUS, 1961, n. 335.

<sup>76</sup> On November 22<sup>nd</sup>, 1963, Kennedy was assassinated in Dallas, Texas. His Vice-President, Lyndon B. Johnson took over the presidency of the country for the remaining administration period. Johnson won the elections for a second term in 1964.

Foreign Affairs of Japan on one side, and members of the US Department of State on the other. This mechanism was modeled on the North Atlantic Treaty Organization Policy pretended to be hosted every six months with alternate sites between the US and Japan<sup>77</sup>.

However, the “honeymoon” in the bilateral relations during the Ikeda tenure was only a temporary phenomenon. In spite of the aforementioned achievements, the US-Japan alliance continued to systematically generate tensions, especially in the fields of trade and defense. On November 9<sup>th</sup>, 1964, just a few hours after Ikeda stepped down from the premiership, an internal document of the State Department summarized the most relevant friction points in the bilateral relations. On one side, the US policy-makers had been pressing their Japanese counterparts for the purpose of increasing Japan’s military spending and weapons purchases from the US, cooperating in the maintenance of the status of the Ryukyu archipelago and liberalizing the remaining restrictions for American investments in Japan<sup>78</sup>. On the other side, State Department officials reported that the Japanese government complained because the US had imposed restrictions on the access to fisheries in the Pacific Ocean and had shifted towards a protectionist policy in regard to Japanese textile exports<sup>79</sup>. These issues found no solution during Ikeda’s tenure, and therefore, ought to determine the bilateral agenda for the next Japanese administration.

In relation to the monarchy, Ikeda’s policy consisted on shielding the Imperial Household from any criticism derived from the 1960 incidents. In that sense, Watanabe (1990) argues that from 1960, the LDP mainstream stopped making direct political references to the emperor and even decreased the frequency of the briefings. Likewise, Imperial Diplomacy became the main topic in the public agenda regarding the monarchy, whilst the issue of constitutional enlargement of the emperor’s powers was totally abandoned<sup>80</sup>. Certainly, Ikeda’s public addresses were less ideological in nature if compared to Kishi’s or Yoshida’s; however, Watanabe’s argument is only partially true since Ikeda kept the tradition of imperial briefings alive.

In that respect, there is evidence that Ikeda reported to the emperor in several occasions: July 30<sup>th</sup> and October 19<sup>th</sup>, 1960<sup>81</sup>; June 14<sup>th</sup><sup>82</sup>, July 5<sup>th</sup><sup>83</sup> and December

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<sup>77</sup> FRUS, 1964, n. 28.

<sup>78</sup> FRUS, 1964, n. 33.

<sup>79</sup> FRUS, 1964, n. 33.

<sup>80</sup> Watanabe, 1990, p. 246-247.

<sup>81</sup> Tominaga, 2010, p. 178-179.

<sup>82</sup> Mainichi Shinbun, 1961.

26<sup>th</sup><sup>84</sup>, 1961; May 29<sup>th</sup><sup>85</sup>, October 31<sup>st</sup><sup>86</sup> and December 18<sup>th</sup><sup>87</sup>, 1962; September 19<sup>th</sup><sup>88</sup>, October 9<sup>th</sup> and December 4<sup>th</sup>, 1963<sup>89</sup>. Although there is no record or transcription of any of Ikeda's briefings, several of these meetings took place before and/or after the prime minister departed overseas, including to the US, which could potentially mean that the latter was reporting any developments in matters of foreign policy to the monarch. Likewise, Ikeda was well known among Japanese politicians for systematically briefing Hirohito for about an hour, which was proof of the utmost importance the premier conceded to this practice and of the interest Hirohito had in those briefings<sup>90</sup>.

What is more, there is evidence that not only Ikeda, but also members of his Cabinet reported to the monarch. For example, Miyazawa Kiichi, who was a trusted associate of the prime minister and Director of the Economic Planning Agency, and later Prime Minister himself from 1991 to 1993, reported to the emperor during Ikeda's tenure<sup>91</sup>. Similarly, Kondo Tsuruyo, the second woman in Japan's history to be appointed member of a Cabinet, and Director of the Japanese Science and Technology Agency, also briefed Hirohito in 1962<sup>92</sup>. In parallel, the Ikeda Cabinet also started a new political practice that consisted on prefectural governors reporting to the emperor once every four years<sup>93</sup>.

Despite the Ikeda Cabinet's efforts to keep the public political interventions of the emperor to a minimum, Hirohito did not necessarily comply with this agenda. The monarch continued to perform autonomous overtures to American officials during Ikeda's tenure. In that regard, on January 11<sup>th</sup>, 1962, Dean Acheson, former Secretary of State and un-official adviser to President Kennedy, paid a visit to Hirohito in the Imperial Palace<sup>94</sup>. Moreover, after the resolution of the Cuban Missile Crisis, the emperor sent an appreciation message to the US during a garden party hosted in the palace on October 30<sup>th</sup>, 1962.

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<sup>83</sup> Asahi Shinbun, 1961.

<sup>84</sup> Tominaga, 2010, p. 178-179.

<sup>85</sup> Tominaga, 2010, p. 178-179.

<sup>86</sup> Asahi Shinbun, 1962.

<sup>87</sup> Tominaga, 2010, p. 178-179.

<sup>88</sup> Tominaga, 2010, p. 178-179.

<sup>89</sup> Asahi Shinbun, 1963; Asahi Shinbun, 1963.

<sup>90</sup> Hosokawa, 1982, p. 96-97.

<sup>91</sup> Iwami, 2005, p. 2007.

<sup>92</sup> Hosokawa, 1982, p. 97.

<sup>93</sup> Given that there are 47 prefectures in Japan, each year twelve different governors participate in a meeting with the emperor. The rotation is then restarted every four years. (Tominaga, 2010, p. 179).

<sup>94</sup> Asahi Shinbun, 1962.

On that occasion, Hirohito approached Jacob E. Smart, Commander of U.S. Forces in Japan. Smart later reported to the officialdom of the US Pacific Command that the emperor had thanked him personally for the American military presence in Japan. Furthermore, the monarch had expressed his appreciation for the US posture in the resolution of the Cuban Missile Crisis and had hoped the US would continue to exert its power for the sake of peace<sup>95</sup>. American Ambassador to Japan Edwin O. Reischauer also reported this event to the State Department: in that regard, according to the diplomat, the emperor's remarks evidenced a strong support for the US's Cold War strategies. Moreover, the ambassador was pleased by the monarch's appreciation of the US military presence in Japan, whose vital role was rarely acknowledged officially by Japanese politicians<sup>96</sup>.

It is worth noting that the emperor's support the US' policy in that moment of international crisis, was different from the position of several sectors within Japanese society. For example, Kennedy's declaration of a naval embargo against Cuba triggered a heated debate between the LDP and the opposition representatives in the Diet regarding the overall Japan's alignment with the US<sup>97</sup>. In that regard, the JSP was especially vocal in its opposition to the US diplomatic posture and lambasted the Ikeda Cabinet because of the military alliance with the US<sup>98</sup>. Moreover, on October 28<sup>th</sup>, more than 2 000 people gathered in Tokyo to protest against the supposed American intervention into Cuba's internal affairs<sup>99</sup>. Similarly, numerous Japanese people rallied in front of several American military bases claiming for a peaceful resolution of the crisis<sup>100</sup>.

This "Cuban Missile Crisis message" evidences two relevant elements. Firstly, Hirohito kept playing an important role in US-Japan during Ikeda's tenure and did not stop intervening in foreign policy despite the repercussions of the Kishi's fiasco. In fact, it is worth noting that, as abovementioned, Hirohito was briefed by Ikeda presumably about the Cuban Missile Crisis on October 31<sup>st</sup>, but the garden party took place one day before, on the 30<sup>th</sup>. There is no record regarding how the emperor knew about the events in almost real-time (the crisis was solved on the 27<sup>th</sup>); however, it is plausible that he had alternative information sources other than the prime

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<sup>95</sup> Igarashi, 2008, p. 224.

<sup>96</sup> Igarashi, 2008, p. 225.

<sup>97</sup> Asahi Shinbun, 1962.

<sup>98</sup> Asahi Shinbun, 1962.

<sup>99</sup> Asahi Shinbun, 1962.

<sup>100</sup> Whiting, 2022.

minister's briefings. Consequently, this evidences a larger degree of initiative by the monarch, who had remarkable information-gathering capabilities and once again circumvented the premier in order to communicate directly with American officials.

The second conclusion is related to the content of the message. As stated by Reischauer, US military presence was not publicly appreciated by Japanese politicians and media, which was the result of the general negative public opinion in Japanese society regarding the American forces. Against this background, the emperor stood as a faithful defendant of the military alliance, and his posture was highly valued by US officials. Consequently, this further reinforced the perception within the American policy-makers circles and first espoused by MacArthur and Dulles, regarding the existence of the Imperial Household, and specifically Hirohito, as the most viable and long-term US ally in Japanese politics.

## **Sato's "imperial awe" and the return of Okinawa to Japan (1964-1969)**

On November 9<sup>th</sup>, 1964, Ikeda resigned the premiership due to his declining health and Sato Eisaku assumed the direction of the Cabinet. Like Ikeda, Sato was a disciple of Yoshida and therefore a pro-US politician and a die-hard supporter of the Imperial Household. The new prime minister was a career politician who had occupied several posts in the respective Yoshida, Kishi (his older brother) and Ikeda Cabinets. However, unlike Ikeda who was a technocrat, Sato had been immersed in politics from an early stage in his professional career. That accumulated experience regarding the subtleties of Japanese politics eventually helped him to become the longest-serving prime minister in the postwar period, with a record larger than his political mentor, Shigeru Yoshida.

Sato's pro-US stand was a known fact both within and outside Japan, and a reliable presentation card vis-à-vis the incumbent American policy-makers. Few weeks after the latter assumed the premiership, on December 4<sup>th</sup>, the US Embassy in Japan communicated its overall impression regarding the new prime minister: "The new government of Prime Minister SATO shows every indication, by predilection and by objective actions, of moderation in internal and external affairs and of a strong

orientation towards the West.”<sup>101</sup> In fact, Sato had demonstrated his alignment by complying with the movement of US forces stationed in Japan towards the military theater of Vietnam<sup>102</sup>, as well as by allowing port visits of American nuclear-powered submarines to Japan for the first time ever<sup>103</sup>. However, Sato’s views were not identical to those of the American policy-makers in several aspects, such as Japan’s bid for an autonomous nuclear capability. In that regard, US Ambassador Reischauer pointed out that:

(...) I find he indeed lives up to reputation of being less judiciously cautious than Ikeda. His forthrightness and enthusiasm are refreshing, but I see grave dangers too. He needs more guidance and education by us than did Ikeda to keep him out of dangerous courses (such as his implied independent Japanese nuclear stand).<sup>104</sup>

What is more, one of the most important points in Sato’s political agenda was the return of the remaining US-occupied territories, the Ryukyu and the Bonin Islands, to Japanese sovereignty. On December 5<sup>th</sup>, 1964, US Secretary of State Rusk met with Foreign Minister Shiina, and the Japanese diplomat stressed the Cabinet’s strategy for a systematic increase in the autonomy of Okinawa’s administration with the long-term objective of reintegration. These proposals were not welcomed amongst the US military circles as they threatened the flexibility of American forces regarding the theater of operations of Vietnam<sup>105</sup>. Therefore, from the US policy-makers’ viewpoint, Sato’s ideological posture and character was at the same time a valuable resource and a liability. Taking into consideration Ikeda’s legacy of latent tensions, US-Japan relations ought to develop through a cycle of achievements and setbacks.

On the other hand, Sato had a deep awe for the monarchy. Doubtlessly, Sato was the prime minister that briefed the emperor the more times in postwar history: in the former’s diary, there are records of at least sixty-nine secrets briefings during his tenure. It is also worth noting that these meetings lasted for about one hour on average because, according to Sato himself, the monarch regularly asked many questions about the exposed matters. As it was a common practice within the LDP, Sato also

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<sup>101</sup> FRUS, 1964, n. 35.

<sup>102</sup> Between August 2<sup>nd</sup> and August 4<sup>th</sup>, 1964, American and North Vietnamese ships supposedly clashed in the Gulf of Tonkin (although the August 4<sup>th</sup> incident was ultimately disproved by the American intelligence services). As a result of these skirmishes, the Lyndon Johnson administration took retaliatory measures that were further expanded into a full-scale war by a presidential resolution in August 10<sup>th</sup>.

<sup>103</sup> FRUS, 1964, n. 35.

<sup>104</sup> FRUS, 1964, n. 37.

<sup>105</sup> FRUS, 1964, n. 36.

informed Hirohito before departing and/or after arriving from foreign trips. For example, the prime minister reported to the emperor on January 18<sup>th</sup>, 1965, November 21<sup>st</sup>, 1967, and November 28<sup>th</sup>, 1969 after visiting the US<sup>106</sup>; and on October 24<sup>th</sup>, 1967 after touring several Asian countries<sup>107</sup>. Likewise, Sato systematically briefed Crown Prince Akihito on foreign policy issues<sup>108</sup>.

Moreover, Sato's reverence evidenced not only in the frequency of the reports to the monarch, but also in the premier's overall attitude towards the Imperial Household. In that sense, in several occasions, Sato wrote down the joy he felt because of bringing good news for the monarch. Namely, on November 15<sup>th</sup>, 1967, after having achieved a relevant agreement with President Johnson regarding the negotiations for the return of Okinawa, the premier noted: "I am pleased to be able to report to His Majesty."<sup>109</sup> Furthermore, the premier regularly tried to directly reciprocate the gifts he received from the imperial couple<sup>110</sup>, even though it meant to infringe the constitutional regulations<sup>111</sup>. On that regard, Nakasone Yasuhiro, who from 1967 entered the Sato Cabinet, commented to Iwami (2005) the following regarding the relation between Hirohito and the prime minister:

When Mr. Sato became the Chief Cabinet Secretary of the second Yoshida Cabinet, His Majesty said, "Is this okay?" Since it was shortly after the defeat, he was worried about the fact that Sato was Nobusuke Kishi's younger brother. However, he (Hirohito) must have thought that the reversion of Okinawa was particularly successful. I think Mr. Sato was also loyal to His Majesty.<sup>112</sup>

In that regard, other authors, such as Goto (2003), describe the relation between Hirohito and Sato as "the bond between a ruler and his vassal" (君臣情義)<sup>113</sup>. In conclusion, there is evidence enough to affirm that Prime Minister Sato devoted part of his political agenda for the purpose of fulfilling the emperor's own interests.

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<sup>106</sup> Sato, 1998, vol. 2, p. 227; Sato, 1998, vol. 3, p. 180; Sato, 1998, vol. 3, p. 542.

<sup>107</sup> Asahi Shinbun, 1967

<sup>108</sup> There are entrances on this regard in Sato's diary on August 14<sup>th</sup>, 1966; September 19<sup>th</sup>, 1967; and November 21<sup>st</sup>, 1967 (Sato, 1998, vol. 2, p. 472-473; Sato, 1998, vol. 3, p. 136-137; Sato, 1998, vol. 3, p. 180).

<sup>109</sup> Sato, 1998, vol. 3, p. 175-176.

<sup>110</sup> Ruoff, 2001, p. 112.

<sup>111</sup> Article 8 of Japan's Constitution stipulates that: "*No property can be given to, or received by the Imperial House, nor can any gifts be made therefrom, without the authorization of the Diet*" (Constitution of the State of Japan, 1947). Therefore, any gifts Sato intended to offer to the emperor ought to be scrutinized by the parliament first.

<sup>112</sup> Iwami, 2005, p. 32-33.

<sup>113</sup> Goto, 2003, p. 220.



This, in turn, meant that Hirohito had a wider margin for influencing Japan's foreign policy, and specifically the relationship with the US, through his authority over the faithful premier.

Early in 1965, Prime Minister Sato travelled to the US in order to address the more relevant points of the bilateral agenda. In that sense, on January 12<sup>th</sup>, he met with President Johnson and both discussed several topics of common interests such as the Ryukyus' autonomy, the mutual trade issues, Communist China, and the Vietnam War<sup>114</sup>. Even though these conversations only had an exploratory character, they were carried out in a smooth manner according to the US diplomatic records, which demonstrates there were many strategic coincidences between the American and the Japanese government.

What is more, Sato briefed Hirohito after returning from the US. In that sense, the premier noted the following on his diary: "His Majesty listened with great enthusiasm, so it was a very long explanation of one hour and fifteen minutes."<sup>115</sup> The emperor's reaction denoted the latter's satisfaction regarding the Sato-Johnson meeting and the overall course of the bilateral relations. Similarly, Sato visited Okinawa for two days from August 19<sup>th</sup>, marking the first trip of a Japanese prime minister to the southern islands<sup>116</sup>. After returning to the mainland, on August 23<sup>rd</sup>, the premier briefed the emperor regarding the trip to Okinawa<sup>117</sup>.

Both governments continued examining the question of the Ryukyus during the rest of 1965. On July 14<sup>th</sup>, Ambassador Reischauer sent an extensive report to Secretary of State Rusk regarding the current state of US-Japan relations. According to the American diplomat, despite the LDP alignment with American interests, there were domestic trends that eroded the LDP's base and the Japanese people's trust regarding the US, such as the irritation provoked by the status of Okinawa and the general condemnation regarding the US bombing of civilian population in North Vietnam<sup>118</sup>. Furthermore, the Left (as in the JSP and the JCP) had started to capitalize a portion of the society's indignation in order to lay the ground for a repudiation of the US-Japan Security Treaty in 1970<sup>119</sup>. Therefore, Reischauer recommended that the

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<sup>114</sup> FRUS, 1965, n. 41, n. 42.

<sup>115</sup> Sato, 1998, vol. 2, p. 227.

<sup>116</sup> On the occasion, Sato stated that the postwar would not be over until Okinawa returned to Japan (Kuriyama, 2010, p. 33).

<sup>117</sup> Sato, 1998, vol. 2, p. 309.

<sup>118</sup> FRUS, 1965, n. 55.

<sup>119</sup> Article 10 of the Security Treaty states that after ten years have passed, either government could unilaterally terminate the treaty (Treaty of Mutual Cooperation Between the United States of America and Japan, 1960, p. 4).

US government took the initiative in creating the necessary conditions for the return of Okinawa to Japanese sovereignty<sup>120</sup>.

However, the greatest opposition to this policy came from the American military. On December 23<sup>rd</sup>, the Joint Chiefs of Staff clearly stated their rejection to the Department of State's proposal. Specifically, the reasons for such posture were described as following:

Reversion of the Ryukyus to Japanese control would degrade the US strategic posture and seriously impair the US military position in the Far East. Exclusive US jurisdiction over the Ryukyus will continue for the foreseeable future to be essential to US and Free World security interests.<sup>121</sup>

Furthermore, the military commanders added: "Less than full US administrative control of Okinawa would inhibit the operational flexibility of US military forces based there and might directly affect our nuclear capabilities in the Far East."<sup>122</sup>

In that sense, the American military's interests strongly determined the overall US position in the negotiations vis-à-vis Japan. For example, on May 23<sup>rd</sup>, 1966, in a letter to President Johnson, the Department of State stated that the desirable outcome of the negotiations would be unlimited conventional use and nuclear storage rights in Okinawa for the US military<sup>123</sup>. Likewise, on July 7<sup>th</sup>, 1966, Secretary of State Rusk and Foreign Minister Shiina met to discuss the issue. Even though the Japanese official repeated his government's plea regarding returning Okinawa to Japan, the former argued that, in light of the aggressiveness of the PRC and the on-going US military effort in Vietnam, unlimited rights in Okinawa were vital. However, Rusk implied that the US position might change if there were a major defense commitment on the Japanese side<sup>124</sup>. In a similar fashion to the case of Amami-Oshima, the American government intended to condition the return of Japanese territory to a larger military buildup that would help to mitigate the crippling consequences for the US economy of the over-expansion of US military bases all over the globe, which were further enhanced because of the Vietnam War.

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<sup>120</sup> FRUS, 1965, n. 55.

<sup>121</sup> FRUS, 1965, n. 65.

<sup>122</sup> FRUS, 1965, n. 65.

<sup>123</sup> FRUS, 1966, n. 68.

<sup>124</sup> FRUS, 1966, n. 73.

Nonetheless, those conditions were hardly agreeable for Sato. Kuriyama (2010) points out that both the Cabinet and the Foreign Ministry were bargaining for a reversion agreement without nuclear weapons and that applied the same conditions the 1960 Security Treaty guaranteed for the mainland, namely, the previous consultation clause in case of movements of US troops<sup>125</sup>. In fact, the American Embassy was aware of the political constraints for the Japanese leaders: on August 1<sup>st</sup>, 1967, the new American Ambassador, U. Alexis Johnson<sup>126</sup>, communicated to the State Department that it was not possible for any Japanese politician to publicly commit to the nuclear storage rights in Okinawa, even though they might secretly intend to do so<sup>127</sup>.

Furthermore, the prime minister was in no favorable position to overrule public opinion. For instance, the premier's political position started to crumble since the beginning of 1967 due to his alignment with the US military effort in Vietnam. Sato had unequivocally sided with the US since he assumed the premiership<sup>128</sup>, but as the war reached a stalemate and the death toll increased in both sides, especially in the Vietnamese civilian population, this diplomatic stance turned up to be a domestic political problem<sup>129</sup>. In fact, students' organizations, labor unions and the left parties lambasted Sato's Cabinet for its implication in the Vietnam War and increased their activism through demonstrations targeted at the US-Japan military alliance. It is worth noting that the prime minister had reported to Hirohito since 1966 regarding those protests: there are records of such briefings on April 25<sup>th</sup> and October 20<sup>th</sup>, 1966 and September 26<sup>th</sup>, 1968<sup>130</sup>. Furthermore, during 1969, the closer the denunciation window for the Security Treaty drew, the more frequent the briefings to the monarch on the topic of protests against the government became<sup>131</sup>.

Against this background, Japanese and American policy-makers rushed to start negotiations for the eventual return of all remaining occupied territories to Japan: Ambassador Johnson wrote in his memoirs that by the second half of 1967, the time had arrived to give back the Bonin and the Ryukyu Islands to Japan<sup>132</sup>. In that sense,

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<sup>125</sup> Kuriyama, 2010, p. 29.

<sup>126</sup> Interestingly, Edwin O. Reischauer visited Hirohito in the Imperial Palace before stepping down the position of Ambassador and leaving for the US (Asahi Shinbun, 1966).

<sup>127</sup> FRUS, 1967, n. 90.

<sup>128</sup> FRUS, 1965, n. 48.

<sup>129</sup> Kuriyama, 2010, p. 49.

<sup>130</sup> Sato, 1998, vol. 2, p. 415, 502; Sato, 1998, vol. 3, p. 329.

<sup>131</sup> There are entrances in Sato's diary on January 11<sup>th</sup>, April 22<sup>nd</sup>, August 7<sup>th</sup> and September 16<sup>th</sup>, 1969 (Sato, 1998, vol. 3, p. 379, 431, 486, 504).

<sup>132</sup> Johnson, 1989.

reinstating the Bonins to Japanese sovereignty was a relative un-complicated matter because unlike the Ryukyus, there were few US military installations and their strategic value was certainly marginal<sup>133</sup>. Therefore, Sato and Johnson met on November 14<sup>th</sup>-15<sup>th</sup> in order to arrive at an agreement on the abovementioned matters. Given that the US military acted cooperatively in the issue of the Bonin Islands, an accord for their reinstatement to Japanese sovereignty was reached smoothly. Likewise, both leaders decided on the creation of a US-Japan Advisory Committee to the High Commissioner of the Ryukyu Islands<sup>134</sup>, the first concrete step towards the return of Okinawa.

Although most authors do not dwell on the subject, there is evidence about Hirohito's involvement in the bilateral negotiations in a manner deeper than just passively listening to the prime minister's reports. During the meeting hosted between Sato and Johnson on November 15th, 1967, the former carried a message from the emperor to the American president. It is recorded in the US Diplomatic Archives in the following way:

He (Sato) said, with reference to the Joint Communiqué, that prior to leaving Japan for Washington he had been received by the Emperor, who emphasized the paramount importance of Japan's security. At present Japan is secure under the U.S.-Japan Security Treaty, which provides that the United States will defend Japan against external attack. However, Communist China is developing nuclear weapons and Japan may soon be threatened by a nuclear attack. More than two years ago, the President assured the Prime Minister that the United States would live up to her commitment to defend Japan "against any form of attack." He said he wished to ask the President to reconfirm this assurance at this time because of the concern expressed by the Emperor and in view of the discussions on the status of Okinawa.

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According to this message, Hirohito was worried about the likelihood of a Chinese nuclear attack against Japan in the event of an American nuclear retreat from

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<sup>133</sup> FRUS, 1968, n. 91.

<sup>134</sup> Joint Statement Following Discussions With Prime Minister Sato of Japan, 1967.

<sup>135</sup> FRUS, 1967, n. 106.

Okinawa, and the subsequent US course of action. The monarch had been previously informed by Sato about China's first thermonuclear test (carried out on June 17<sup>th</sup>) on June 22<sup>nd</sup><sup>136</sup>, although there is no reference in Sato's diary to any briefing prior to the prime minister's departure for the US. Johnson replied that the US would carry out its military responsibilities regarding Japan, which was reassuring for Sato<sup>137</sup>. In fact, as abovementioned, the prime minister was moved by the fact that he could report this diplomatic breakthrough to the emperor<sup>138</sup>.

The prime minister reported the progress of the bilateral negotiations to the monarch shortly after arriving to Japan. In that sense, the entrance on Sato's diary for November 21<sup>st</sup> reads as following: "His Majesty was impressed, and asked one question after the other."<sup>139</sup> Hirohito's reaction to Sato's report demonstrates that the former was pleased by Johnson's response. Therefore, these pieces of evidence suggest that the emperor requested (via the prime minister) the US assistance in the event of a nuclear war as he probably feared that the American military's retreat from the Bonins and eventually from Okinawa, would abate any previous US commitment towards Japan's security. What is more, the US president actually adhered to appease the monarch's fears. In summary, the fact that Hirohito's words had a mobilizing effect both on Japanese conservative politicians and on American-policy makers (up to the presidential level), demonstrates that the emperor was a valuable ally for the US since he was crucial in keeping the military alliance afloat.

Although the Bonin Islands were returned to Japan on June 26<sup>th</sup>, 1968<sup>140</sup>, the political effect this movement achieved was almost null. Moreover, due to President Johnson's announcement on March 31<sup>st</sup>, 1968 regarding his decision to unilaterally de-escalate the war in Vietnam, even the LDP ranks were asking for an independent foreign policy vis-à-vis the US<sup>141</sup>. Ambassador Johnson reported that this development was interpreted "as pulling rug out from Sato,"<sup>142</sup> who had strongly supported the US military effort in Southeast Asia. In fact, a combination of several factors such as the Tet Offensive<sup>143</sup>, the *Pueblo Incident*<sup>144</sup> and the domestic

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<sup>136</sup> Sato, 1998, vol. 3, p. 91-92.

<sup>137</sup> FRUS, 1967, n. 106.

<sup>138</sup> Sato, 1998, vol. 3, p. 175-176.

<sup>139</sup> Sato, 1998, vol. 3, p. 180.

<sup>140</sup> Message to the Bonin Islanders on the Return of the Islands to Japanese Administration, 1968.

<sup>141</sup> FRUS, 1968, n. 119.

<sup>142</sup> FRUS, 1968, n. 119.

<sup>143</sup> The Tet Offensive was a military campaign launched by North Vietnam in January of 1968. Even though it was a military defeat for the communists, it triggered a larger wave of anti-war sentiment in the US and diluted morale in the South Vietnamese military.

commotion in the US because of the anti-war movement, casted a shadow of doubt among Japanese policy-makers regarding American power worldwide and specially in Asia<sup>145</sup>.

Furthermore, both governments could not stall the popular pressure for the return of Okinawa as the situation in the Ryukyus proper degraded throughout 1968. In that sense, according to several polls carried out in April of 1968, 86% of the residents in Okinawa opposed the stationing of the B-52 bombers in Kadena Air Base<sup>146</sup>. This issue came to the public spotlight when one of the US planes based at Kadena crashed into Kyushu University on June 2<sup>nd</sup>, and therefore, several protests all over Japan were triggered because of the incident<sup>147</sup>. The pressures for reversion were speeded up when Chobyō Yara, a public opponent of the US military presence in the archipelago, was elected as Chief Executive of the Government of the Ryukyu Islands in November of 1968<sup>148</sup>. In that regard, the State Department feared that the agitation in Okinawa had reached a truly dangerous threshold as the American military operations, especially the B-52 sorties, might be halted due to possible demonstrations in front of US military bases<sup>149</sup>.

The internal situation in the Ryukyus was leaving both American and Japanese policy-makers with less time to negotiate a viable solution for the issue of reversion before instability raised to an unmanageable level. Consequently, they ought to rush for a solution to the Okinawa issue preferably in 1969. For instance, Sato had managed to control the internal opposition inside the LDP, and a new administration headed by Richard Nixon, and his National Security Advisor Henry Kissinger, had been inaugurated in the White House with the purpose of re-focusing US foreign policy worldwide. The negotiations were resumed in early February of 1969, and by March 12<sup>th</sup>, Kissinger had stated the American position on the issue of Okinawa: for the US to return the Ryukyus to Japan, it was necessary to have nuclear storage and free conventional use rights even after reversion, as well as the Japanese government bore the costs of relocation and committed to a larger military spending<sup>150</sup>.

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<sup>144</sup> The *Pueblo* was an US intelligence-gathering ship that was captured by North Korea on January 23<sup>rd</sup>, 1968.

<sup>145</sup> FRUS, 1968, n. 120.

<sup>146</sup> FRUS, 1968, n. 125.

<sup>147</sup> FRUS, 1968, n. 122.

<sup>148</sup> FRUS, 1968, n. 135.

<sup>149</sup> FRUS, 1968, n. 138.

<sup>150</sup> FRUS, 1969, n. 4.

As a result of preliminary negotiations with Foreign Minister Aichi on June, 1969, American and Japanese started to meet in a middle ground: the US was to accept the same conventional rights use in Okinawa as in the mainland (e.g., mutual consultation) with the exception of a “contingency” in Korea, Taiwan, the Philippines and Vietnam as long as the war there lasted. Even the Department of Defense had suggested a solution for the issue of nuclear storage: a retreat in principle of all warheads from Okinawa contingent to a possible re-entrance in the event of military exercises or if the security situation in Asia demands it<sup>151</sup>.

Against this background, Sato and Nixon met on November 19<sup>th</sup>, 1969 for the final decision on the issue of Okinawa. Two days later, both governments released a Joint Communiqué that contained the provisions for the return of Okinawa by 1972: paragraph 7 acknowledged that the stipulations of the 1960 Mutual Security Treaty ought to apply to the Ryukyus but they “should not hinder the effective discharge of the international obligations assumed by the United States for the defense of countries in the Far East including Japan,”<sup>152</sup> which effectively confirmed the “Asian contingency scenario” previously negotiated. Although the issue of emergency nuclear storage did not appear in the final document, Nixon reported to the American Congressional Leaders on the same day that the Department of Defense could expect to deploy nuclear weapons in the islands in such eventuality even past 1972<sup>153</sup>.

The November 1969 Sato-Nixon Joint Communiqué hallmarked the final return of all US-occupied territories to Japanese sovereignty, albeit the military provisions abovementioned. It is considered one of the most relevant achievements of Japan’s diplomacy in the postwar period and for the prime minister, it meant the extension of his tenure by a landslide victory in the December 1969 elections<sup>154</sup> and the eventual suppression of most of the Left opposition to the LDP. In fact, Sato wrote in his diary he was very pleased with the outcome of the talks with Nixon<sup>155</sup>. However, one might wonder what role the emperor had in this process, if any.

Hirohito was informed by Sato of the progress of negotiations throughout 1969: interestingly, as the prospects for reaching a final agreement on Okinawa became bigger, the frequency and length of the briefings to the monarch also

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<sup>151</sup> FRUS, 1969, n. 25.

<sup>152</sup> Joint Statement Following Discussions With Prime Minister Sato of Japan, 1969.

<sup>153</sup> FRUS, 1969, n. 34.

<sup>154</sup> FRUS, 1969, n. 37.

<sup>155</sup> Sato, 1998, vol. 3, p. 537.

augmented. In that sense, on August 7<sup>th</sup>, the prime minister reported on the latest Joint Cabinet Meeting and the latter's encounter with US Secretary of State William P. Rogers. Sato's diary entrance reads as following:

From 10 am, I briefed His Majesty about Diet procedures and current issues of domestic and foreign politics. Amidst the economic growth, the biggest issue is the university protests (...) I focused on the conversation with Secretary Rogers on the reversion of Okinawa in the recent Joint Economic Cabinet Meeting. His Majesty showed a deep interest. The briefing lasted for an hour and fifteen minutes.<sup>156</sup>

Sato briefed Hirohito again on September 16<sup>th</sup> and November 15<sup>th</sup>, just before departing for the US in order to meet Nixon<sup>157</sup>. Furthermore, the premier visited the emperor after returning from the US. Sato's diary entrance for November 28<sup>th</sup> states the following: "I briefed His Majesty for one hour from 3 pm. His Majesty seems to be in a good mood."<sup>158</sup> Certainly, the monarch was pleased by the good news regarding the Joint Communiqué and the proposed return of Okinawa by 1972.

In that regard, there is no information in Sato's diary or in any other bibliographical that indicates Hirohito directly manipulated the negotiation process to fulfill his own political agenda. Whilst this fact might be constructed as a sign of passivity towards the return of Okinawa, there might exist as well an alternative interpretation regarding the emperor's apparent inaction. For that purpose, it is necessary to analyze both Hirohito and Sato's thinking regarding the return of Okinawa.

For instance, it had been common for Hirohito to intervene in politics when he perceived that the Japan-US alliance was in danger and no Japanese politician was able to sufficiently commit to the maintenance of the alliance. In a sense, Sato's attitude regarding the US was almost identical to that of his elder brother, Nobusuke Kishi during the conversations for the enactment of the 1960 Security Treaty. Similarly to Kishi, the US Embassy had been pleased with Sato's performance from the very beginning of the latter's tenure, because even in the light of mounting opposition both in the mainland and in Okinawa, the prime minister kept a foot in the

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<sup>156</sup> Sato, 1998, vol. 3, p. 486.

<sup>157</sup> Sato, 1998, vol. 3, p. 504, 534.

<sup>158</sup> Sato, 1998, vol. 3, p. 542.



negotiation table. In fact, Secretary of State Rogers acknowledged Sato's commitment to the US prior to the November 1969 talks:

The Japanese have been rather forthcoming in our intensive negotiations on Okinawa. They are willing to take real political risks by agreeing to positive communiqué language and a unilateral statement by Sato regarding post-reversion use of bases on Okinawa and Japan to meet an armed attack on Korea or Taiwan and for continued use for Vietnam if needed.<sup>159</sup>

If compared to Yoshida's attitude during the negotiations of the 1951 Security Treaty that eventually caused the emperor to meddle in politics, there was no indication of distrust on Sato's ability to commit from the American policy-makers. What is more, even though Sato and his political mentor had a similar ideological background of worship for the emperor, Sato's political position was fundamentally stronger than that of Yoshida since the conservatives had gathered in a more solid organization such as the LDP and had a firmer grip on power as a result of the success of the party's economic policies. This fact allowed Sato, albeit the opposition to the US military bases, to assume military commitments that might have appeared untenable for Yoshida more than a decade ago without the intervention of Hirohito in politics.

Furthermore, Wakaizumi Kei, a renowned Japanese diplomat and who acted as a secret envoy between Sato and the Nixon administration for the negotiations concerning Okinawa, dwelled in the premier's motivation. On September 16<sup>th</sup>, 1969, Wakaizumi met with the prime minister as to discuss the issue of nuclear weapons in the Ryukyus as part of the negotiations that eventually led to the Sato-Nixon Joint Communique. The former recorded the latter's words regarding the American side's request for the re-entrance of nuclear weapons into the islands: "They may request that a guarantee be made to bind my successor (...) wouldn't it be okay if the foundations of friendship and goodwill were established? As long as the Liberal Democratic Party's government continues, everything will be fine."<sup>160</sup>

Wakaizumi replied that such guarantee to the US might not be possible to extract from any of Sato's likely successors to the premiership considering the internal

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<sup>159</sup> FRUS, 1969, n. 23.

<sup>160</sup> Wakaizumi, 1994, p. 337.

political struggles that took place among several LDP factions. To that argument, Sato replied the following words: “In the end, there will be His Majesty the Emperor. As long as His Majesty is there, everything will be fine.”<sup>161</sup>

According to Wakaizumi’s recount, the conversation ended at that point. This statement confirmed the premier’s devotion towards the Imperial Household and the fact that Sato considered the emperor’s opinion in the foreign policy-making process regarding Okinawa, which is also coherent with Sato’s own memoirs. Moreover, Wakaizumi also argues that Sato might have taken refuge in Hirohito’s authority in order to continue with the negotiations on the return of Okinawa, which was consistent with the prime minister’s loyalty regarding the monarchy<sup>162</sup>.

Likewise, Hirohito’s overall positive attitude during the secret briefings on the matter of the Ryukyus, as shown in Sato’s diary, demonstrates that the monarch was also satisfied by the developments in the bilateral negotiations. Therefore, Hirohito might have felt that it was not necessary to intervene directly in the foreign policy decision-making process since the prime minister could be trusted with the achievement of the return of Okinawa to Japan. Consequently, unlike in the case of Yoshida, the emperor did not act to bend Sato to the former’s interests, but rather took advantage of the prime minister’s deep awe for the monarchy in order to foster Sato’s willingness to push for a deal regarding Okinawa.

The ceremony for the return of Okinawa finally took place on May 15<sup>th</sup>, 1972. The event was hosted by Sato and Hirohito pronounced the words that hallmarked the conversion of the Ryukyus into the 47<sup>th</sup> Japanese prefecture. Nevertheless, there is a last question to be asked regarding Hirohito’s role in the return of Okinawa: why, despite his position as “the symbol of the unity of the people,” did the monarch never wholeheartedly backed up the reintegration of Okinawa to Japan in public? What is more, Okinawa was the only prefecture the monarch did not visit, even after the reversion to the mainland in 1972.

In that sense, there is no record of any private conversation that indicated the emperor supported reversionism. Hirohito publicly expressed his backing for the reversion of Okinawa for the first time in 1969. During a press conference hosted on September 8<sup>th</sup>, the monarch stated the following:

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<sup>161</sup> Wakaizumi, 1994, p. 337.

<sup>162</sup> Wakaizumi, 1994, p. 337-338.

I feel great sympathy for the people of Okinawa who are aiming to return to their homeland. The government is working hard, so I would like you to trust its endeavors. I also sympathize with the northern fishermen. I am hoping for a speedy return.<sup>163</sup>

It is worth noting that these declarations were done within the context of the last stage of the bilateral negotiations that led to Sato-Nixon Joint Communiqué. What is more, that press conference took place after the abovementioned August 7<sup>th</sup> secret briefing, which explains why Hirohito knew about “the endeavors” of the government. Two days later, on a palace garden party, the emperor approached Chobyō Yara and privately conveyed his contentment for the reintegration of Okinawa<sup>164</sup>.

Furthermore, the monarch visited all Japan’s prefectures but Okinawa during his lifetime, even though there were several plans for such trip. For instance, in 1971, the LDP proposed to host an imperial visit for the reversion, but Usami Takeshi rejected the proposition based on the political agitation in the Ryukyus<sup>165</sup>. Similarly, in 1975, at the moment of the inauguration of the Okinawa International Exposition, the prefectural government headed by Yara requested the monarch to assist to the inauguration ceremony. However, the Imperial Household denied the invitation by arguing that a visit to Okinawa would be controversial considering the already scheduled imperial tour of the US<sup>166</sup>.

A third proposal arrived in 1987 upon the Summer National Sports Festival to be held in Okinawa. As abovementioned, those events had been traditionally inaugurated by the emperor in the postwar period. Nonetheless, Hirohito’s health deteriorated quickly and he had to undergo surgery, which consequently cancelled all travel plans for the monarch<sup>167</sup>. After recovering from the surgery, the emperor stated his intentions to visit Okinawa, but his delicate health and advanced age prevented him from fulfilling this endeavor for the rest of his life<sup>168</sup>.

Even though the fact that Hirohito never visited Okinawa is partially a coincidence, the lack of public and private declarations that clearly demonstrated his support for the return of Okinawa, indicates that there was a motivation for this

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<sup>163</sup> Tsurumi & Nakagawa, 1989, p. 515.

<sup>164</sup> Yuri & Higashi, 1974, p. 355-356.

<sup>165</sup> Kawanishi et al, 2019, p. 68-69.

<sup>166</sup> Kawanishi et al, 2019, p. 83-84.

<sup>167</sup> Kawanishi et al, 2019, p. 66.

<sup>168</sup> Tsurumi & Nakagawa, 1989, p. 752-754.

“silence treatment”. For instance, the emperor had complied with the separation of the Ryukyus from the mainland, as shown in the “Okinawa Message” sent to the American occupation authorities in 1947. Therefore, as the postwar status of the Ryukyus was a *sine qua non* condition for the existence of the US-Japan alliance, so it was for the maintenance of the monarchy.

Consequently, the monarch could not advocate for a unilateral reintegration of Okinawa to the mainland that would threaten the American military interests, even though he possessed the symbolic power to push for such agenda as the informal Head of State of the country. Moreover, ever since the John F. Dulles-Yoshida negotiations for the Security Treaty, the American counterpart systematically highlighted the importance of keeping the nationalist sentiment in Okinawa under control in order not to hamper US military operations in East Asia as well as the strategic value of the archipelago. Amidst the negotiations for the return of Okinawa, American Ambassador Johnson acknowledged the attitude of Japanese policy-makers in this regard:

I feel that responsible Japanese Govt. leaders are giving increasing indications of seeing Okinawa as a common GOJ–US problem and that they are increasingly concerned at not permitting political pressures and public sentiment in either Japan or Okinawa to get so far out of hand as to limit their freedom of action.<sup>169</sup>

Although there are not documents which may clearly prove the certainty of this correlation; it is still worth noting that Hirohito’s inaction and silence regarding the return of Okinawa was in total agreement with the US interests. Indeed, the timing of his first declarations in support of Okinawa’s reversion indicate that the emperor waited for the most appropriate moment -once both counterparts had agreed in principle to the return of Okinawa at the bilateral negotiations- in order to throw his public support for the cause of the Ryukyus. This fact, added to the monarch’s previous implication in the separation of Okinawa, indicate that, even if he didn’t directly intervene in the foreign policy decision-making process regarding the return of Okinawa, his odd “silence” certainly contributed to the attainment of a bilaterally negotiated solution for the reversion of the Ryukyus to Japanese sovereignty which protected the US military conventional use and emergency nuclear storage rights.

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<sup>169</sup> FRUS, 1967, n. 90.

Once again, but by inaction this time, the emperor acted as a stalwart defender of the US-Japan alliance.

## **Hirohito's vis-à-vis the “Nixon Shocks”: the importance of Anchorage's stopover (1970-1971)**

The Nixon-Sato November 1969 Joint Communiqué regarding the return of Okinawa to Japan, brought immediate positive results for US-Japan relations. In that sense, the Sato Cabinet obtained the political capital enough to prorogue the Security Treaty without great effort in 1970: in fact, the US State Department valued that the agreement on the Ryukyus “had put our Security Treaty with Japan on a solid footing and had greatly reduced the chance that our bases might become a political issue.”<sup>170</sup> However, the success of the Okinawa negotiations was only temporary as several other issues started to generate tensions on the bilateral relations. Specifically, the trade tensions and the diplomatic recognition and/or entrance of the PRC into the United Nations, dominated the bilateral agenda from 1970 onwards.

One of the goals of the Nixon administration was to attenuate the several unbalances that had grew up within the American economy as a result of an over-extended military network, the enormous military spending in Vietnam and the artificial maintenance of the dollar-gold standard that had been pulverized in fact by galloping inflation. Therefore, in terms of foreign policy, the US government strove to de-escalate the war in Vietnam and to review the trade deficits it sustained with several allies. Those policy measures affected Japan directly and indirectly: for instance, de-escalating the war in Vietnam implied to normalize relations with the PRC, which had been a candent issue in the US-Japan alliance. Similarly, Japan's economy was benefitted by a fixed exchange rate between the yen and the dollar that was no longer sustainable considering a disproportionate trade surplus in favor of Japan.

These issues appeared early in 1970, although they had been somehow present in the bilateral agenda during the postwar period. On January 29<sup>th</sup>, because of conversations within the US National Security Council, it was established the necessity of coordinating with Sato in regard to the normalization of relations with

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<sup>170</sup> FRUS, 1970, n. 41.

Beijing<sup>171</sup>. Therefore, Nixon and the Japanese prime minister met on October 24<sup>th</sup> to discuss the pending bilateral matters. In that sense, both leaders agreed on their support to Taiwan in the United Nations discussions, although Nixon expressed that in the long run it would be desirable to normalize relations with the PRC<sup>172</sup>. The discussion then turned to the issue of trade tensions as the US government demanded Sato to step up the rate of liberalization of the Japanese economy on one hand, and to establish an export quota for Japanese textile products on the other<sup>173</sup>.

Interestingly, Sato's initial remarks in this meeting consisted on an appreciation message from Hirohito to Nixon:

The Prime Minister began the conversation by noting his audience with H.I.M., The Emperor, the day before departing for New York. As requested, he conveyed to the President H.I.M. the Emperor's hopes that Japan and the United States would continue to maintain the strongest, most friendly relations as in the past.<sup>174</sup>

The emperor's request for "the strongest relations" was done amidst the bilateral tensions caused by the abovementioned issues. The monarch was doubtlessly aware of the course of events in that regard according to the premier's diary. For example, on April 24<sup>th</sup>, 1970, Sato briefed Hirohito on the issue of the PRC's entrance to the UN and on economic matters<sup>175</sup>. Likewise, on June 22<sup>nd</sup>, the premier reported on several topics, including the extension of the Security Treaty beyond 1970: Sato also noted that Hirohito was "satisfied" by hearing this information<sup>176</sup>. Similarly, the prime minister briefed the monarch again regarding the China issue on June 25<sup>th</sup> and August 24<sup>th</sup><sup>177</sup>.

Moreover, there is an entry on Sato's diary that allows ascertaining the prime minister briefed Hirohito around October 1970, prior the former's departure for the US to meet Nixon. In that sense, on October 16<sup>th</sup>, Sato noted that:

(...) Next, I touched on my attendance to the United Nations and the contents of the speech, and further extended to the discussion with President Nixon regarding the

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<sup>171</sup> FRUS, 1970, n. 38.

<sup>172</sup> FRUS, 1970, n. 58.

<sup>173</sup> FRUS, 1970, n. 58.

<sup>174</sup> FRUS, 1970, n. 58.

<sup>175</sup> Sato, 1997, vol. 4, p. 77.

<sup>176</sup> Sato, 1997, vol. 4, p. 111-112.

<sup>177</sup> Sato, 1997, vol. 4, p. 113, 149.

Republic of China, so we had a long talk of about one hour and forty-five minutes.

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It is worth noting that not only the contents of this briefing but also its relative long duration indicates that the monarch was extremely interested in the intertwined questions of the PRC's ascension to the UN and China's representation to the multilateral organism. This confirms Hirohito's motivations for requesting, via the premier, the US cooperation in keeping Taiwan in the UN. The prime minister reported back to emperor after the former's return from the US, on October 28<sup>th</sup><sup>179</sup>, although the contents of that briefing are unknown.

One might wonder however, which was Hirohito's particular agenda in the issue of China's representation to the UN. For that purpose, it is necessary to analyze the relationship between the Japanese monarch and the President of the Republic of China, Chiang Kai Shek. For instance, ideologically, both were anti-communist: Chiang had fought the Chinese Communist Party before and after WWII, and Hirohito's ideological stance developed from his fear of abolition of the monarchy, as treated in the above chapters. Furthermore, the emperor was indebted regarding Chiang because in the aftermath of WWII, the Generalissimo advocated that only the US and China had the right to occupy Japan, which factually excluded the Soviet Union from entering the Japanese archipelago (with exception of the Kuril Islands). Later, he renounced to having Chinese troops participating in the occupation of Japan, and therefore, conceded the monopoly of authority over Japan to the American military. This indeed represented a lifesaver for the monarch, who only had to settle with the US occupation authorities in order to avoid indictment at the Tokyo Tribunal, as exposed in the first chapter of this research.

Furthermore, during the postwar period, there were several communications between Hirohito and Chiang. In that regard, in February of 1964, Shigeru Yoshida visited Taiwan as an imperial envoy<sup>180</sup>. Inoue (2010) remarks that before leaving for Taiwan, Yoshida had an audience with the emperor, although the date of such briefing is not clear<sup>181</sup>. Once he met Chiang, the ex-prime minister transmitted the monarch's appreciation for allowing three million Japanese to return from China after the end of

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<sup>178</sup> Sato, 1997, vol. 4 p. 186.

<sup>179</sup> Sato, 1997, vol. 4, p. 194.

<sup>180</sup> Asahi Shinbun, 1964.

<sup>181</sup> Inoue, 2010, p. 274-275.

WWII. Furthermore, Yoshida also expressed that Japan's government, led by Ikeda in that moment, had a tough line against communist and would stand by the side of the Republic of China<sup>182</sup>. Furthermore, Zhang Qun, one of the closest advisers to Chiang, visited the emperor on August 14<sup>th</sup> as to reciprocate Yoshida's overture<sup>183</sup>.

Moreover, Inoue (2010) also points out that, although a growing majority within the LDP (led by Kakuei Tanaka, who was Prime Minister from 1972 to 1974) advocated for normalizing relations with the PRC, Sato delayed that process because he felt some gratitude towards Chiang Kai Shek<sup>184</sup>. Such position was presented to the American policy-makers amidst the discussion regarding the issue of China's representation to the UN. During the October 24<sup>th</sup> meeting between Sato and Nixon, the premier stressed that "the Government of Japan felt a deep sense of obligation to Chiang Kai-shek in view of his past good will for Japan."<sup>185</sup> Therefore, and considering that a) Yoshida visited Taiwan as an envoy of Hirohito; b) Sato also briefed the emperor before departing for the US on October, 1970; and c) both Yoshida and Sato had a deep awe for the monarchy, and consequently, Hirohito could easily influence their respective foreign policy-decision making processes; it is very likely that Japan's official position of support towards Taiwan was actually authored ideologically by Hirohito and then carried out operationally by both Yoshida and Sato.

There are evidences in both the US diplomatic records and in Sato's diary regarding the importance of Taiwan for the emperor. Specifically, after a briefing on January 18<sup>th</sup>, 1971, the prime minister wrote down in his diary that the emperor was "concerned about the treatment of Taiwan"<sup>186</sup>. On the other hand, Armin H. Meyer, American Ambassador in Japan wrote the following in a telegram to the State Department on June 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1971 after a conversation with Sato on June 2<sup>nd</sup>:

Both Emperor and Prime Minister Sato place highest importance on: a) keeping Government of Republic of China in UN, and b) closest consultations with United States Government on China issues (...) Sato noted he had just come from audience with Emperor. While Emperor is supposedly disinterested in political affairs, he had

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<sup>182</sup> Inoue, 2010, p. 274-275.

<sup>183</sup> Asahi Shinbun, 1964.

<sup>184</sup> Inoue, 2010, p. 453.

<sup>185</sup> FRUS, 1970, n. 58.

<sup>186</sup> Sato, 1997, vol. 4, p. 252-253.



urged Government of Japan stand solidly with Chiang Kai-shek noting that Generalissimo had in times past done much for Japan.<sup>187</sup>

That June 2<sup>nd</sup> meeting between the Japanese prime minister and the American ambassador was also recorded in Japan's diplomatic archives. Specifically, the prime minister stated the following:

What worries me the most is the China issue. Actually, when I reported to His Majesty a while ago, His Majesty, who is usually not directly impressed with political issues, was particularly worried about this issue. The Japanese government is considering this matter carefully, partly because it is a matter of loyalty towards President Chiang Kai-shek.<sup>188</sup>

These pieces of evidence are highly relevant as they show that Hirohito had actively pressed Sato to back up Taiwan in the UN discussion<sup>189</sup>, which further supports the argument of the emperor being an ally of Chiang Kai Shek as well as a decisive actor in the foreign policy-making process regarding Taiwan. What is more, the fact that the US authorities considered that the monarch's political position was important enough to include it in their own decision-making process, reveals that Hirohito also possessed some capacity of indirect influence over the American politicians.

Against this background of growing bilateral tensions, two nearly-consecutive announcements of the US government during the period of July-August of 1971, dismayed Japanese conservative politicians. The first of these events, generally known in Japan as the (first) "Nixon shock," happened on July 15<sup>th</sup>, when the American president, without previous consultation with the Japanese government, announced publicly that Kissinger had made a secret trip to China (July 9<sup>th</sup>-11<sup>th</sup>) in order to arrange a proper presidential visit for 1972 as a first step for the normalization of relations between both countries<sup>190</sup>. This bold diplomatic movement surprised Sato, who had had a tough stance on the PRC and diligently followed the US leadership on the China issue. In that sense, Japanese Ambassador to the US

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<sup>187</sup> FRUS, 1971, n. 74.

<sup>188</sup> Inoue, 2010, p. 454.

<sup>189</sup> The briefing Sato mentioned took place on June 2<sup>nd</sup> just before meeting Meyer (Sato, 1997, vol. 4, p. 347).

<sup>190</sup> Memorandum of Conversation between Henry Kissinger [American Delegation] and Zhou Enlai [Chinese Delegation] in Beijing at the Government's Guest House, 1971.

Ushiba speedily transmitted the prime minister discontent with the announcement to the State Department on July 20<sup>th</sup><sup>191</sup>.

Furthermore, Sato himself was very vocal in his opposition to the change of US policy towards China. The premier expressed to David M. Kennedy, Secretary of Treasury, the former's doubts in that regard: "Does the U.S. intend now to drop her 'little friends' by the wayside in order to take up a relationship with the 'big boys'?" Sato added that "he had always followed the 'boss' in these policy matters but this time he was left out and caught unprepared with both the Diet and the press."<sup>192</sup>

Certainly, as highlighted by Kuriyama (2010), the "shocking" element of Nixon's announcement was not the content of the declaration regarding the American administration's change of policy towards the PRC<sup>193</sup>. In fact, several sectors within the Japanese political and business communities had advocated for the normalization of trade relations with continental China since the occupation period. Moreover, even on a non-formal way, by 1970, Japan was the largest supplier of the PRC whilst the Chinese market was second only to the American market for Japanese exports<sup>194</sup>. In that sense, the US new policy regarding the PRC was somehow expectable and even desirable by some lobbies within Japanese politics.

Instead, Sato's displeasure was caused by the lack of bilateral consultation, which had been a common practice since the establishment of the Joint Cabinet Meetings<sup>195</sup>. Consequently, this "surprise" element turned into a domestic political problem for the Japanese premier as he was left in a weak political position vis-à-vis both his rivals within the LDP and the opposition in the Diet. However, the Sato Cabinet eventually complied with the US strategy in relation to China's representation to the UN. For instance, on September 10<sup>th</sup>, Foreign Ministry Takeo Fukuda travelled to the US to meet Kissinger and Rogers. On the occasion, Fukuda pointed out that Sato was willing to accompany the US in co-sponsoring the "dual representation"<sup>196</sup> resolution to the UN General Assembly, even though this action would contradict a large portion of the political spectrum, including some LDP factions<sup>197</sup>. In summary,

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<sup>191</sup> FRUS, 1971, n. 81.

<sup>192</sup> FRUS, 1971, n. 82.

<sup>193</sup> Kuriyama, 2010, p. 112-113.

<sup>194</sup> The New York Times, 1971.

<sup>195</sup> Kuriyama, 2010, p. 112-113.

<sup>196</sup> A group of nations in the UN led by Albania had proposed a resolution in order to accept the PRC into the UN membership and automatically expulse the representatives of Chiang Kai Shek. As a counter, the US government proposed a "dual representation" resolution which stipulated that the PRC would be welcomed into the UN but the Republic of China ought to retain its rights to representation.

<sup>197</sup> FRUS, 1971, n. 97.

Fukuda highlighted that Sato had tied his political fate to the likelihood of success of the American proposal regarding China's representation to the UN.

After this exchange of views between Japanese and American policy-makers, Sato publicly announced on September 22<sup>nd</sup> that his Cabinet would co-sponsor the US "dual representation" resolution<sup>198</sup>. Regarding this point, Inoue (2010) notes that Hirohito might have influenced the prime minister to take this decision, although it might not be the sole explanatory factor. Certainly, Sato had prioritized reporting to the emperor regarding this issue: the secret briefings that took place on August 2<sup>nd</sup> and August 11<sup>th</sup> centered on the PRC's ascension to the United Nations<sup>199</sup>. Furthermore, one day after the September 22<sup>nd</sup> announcement, the premier reported this decision to the monarch. The entrance on Sato's diary for September 23<sup>rd</sup> reads as following: "The main points of the secret briefing are the details on the issue of Communist China's representation at the United Nations announced yesterday and how to handle Taiwan... (His Majesty) is in good mood."<sup>200</sup>

The monarch's mood after hearing the news regarding the Sato's Cabinet decision on the China issue proves that he was pleased with Sato's diplomatic performance. Consequently, that event might be interpreted as a retrospective "imperial sanction" of the prime minister's resolution. This supports Inoue's claim regarding the monarch's agency in Japan's co-sponsorship of the "dual representation" resolution; although, given the amount of political actors and interests involved in Japan's policy towards the PRC, which also includes the US government's pressure, the emperor's influence is by no means a determinant cause.

Finally, the UN General Assembly acted on the China issue on October 26<sup>th</sup>, 1971. In that sense, the US "dual representation" resolution did not pass whilst the Albanian-authored project named "Restoration of the lawful rights of the People's Republic of China in the United Nations", was approved by 76 member states versus 35 that voted against it (Japan voted against)<sup>201</sup>. After the US-backed resolution was dismissed, Chiang representatives left the hall in sign of protests against the General Assembly's voting pattern. For Sato, the failure of the co-sponsored resolution precipitated his own political debacle as the rival factions within the LDP predated on

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<sup>198</sup> Inoue, 2010, p. 456.

<sup>199</sup> Sato, 1997, vol. 4, p. 388-389, 396.

<sup>200</sup> The trip Sato referred to was Hirohito's tour of Europe. The emperor departed four days after that meeting with the Prime Minister, on September 27<sup>th</sup>, 1971 (Sato, 1997, vol. 4, p. 427-428).

<sup>201</sup> United Nations General Assembly, 1971.

the premier's "lack of judgment" on the China issue and opposition parties called for his resignation<sup>202</sup>. However, even though the Republic of China was eventually expelled from the UN, it is worth concluding that Hirohito was among the forces that pushed, and successfully achieved, the consecution of a specific foreign policy course: Japan's Nay vote regarding the ejection of Taiwan even at the expense of Sato's political life.

On the other hand, one month after the first polemical declaration of the Nixon administration, the second "shock" took place. On that occasion, the US president announced the end of the Bretton Woods system, namely the dollar-gold convertibility standard and the fixed exchange rates with most of the foreign currencies in the world<sup>203</sup>. Even though the Japanese government had been noticed previously about the Nixon administration's intentions<sup>204</sup>, the second "shock" had deeper consequences for Japan's economy compared to the first one. For instance, Japanese exports to the US were benefited from the artificial fixed exchange rate but once the yen started to float freely one year later, the relative weight of exports in the Japanese economy decreased considerably. Therefore, most Japanese export companies were affected with the free flotation system. On the other side, once the artificial exchange rate was lifted, the yen started to appreciate naturally; and to revert this trend, Japan's Central Bank emitted an enormous amount of money that eventually generated inflation and the subsequent relative degradation of wages of Japanese workers.

Hirohito was aware of this second "shock". Just five days after Nixon's announcement, on August 20<sup>th</sup>, Mikio Mizuta, an LDP career politician and three times Minister of Finance, briefed the emperor on the repercussions of the new US monetary policy. In that sense, Mizuta recorded the full monarch's comments:

I assume that the government will adopt a public bond policy as an economic stimulus measure, but in that case, what do you think about the relationship with prices? Since prices are high even in a recession, would not prices rise even higher if economic measures were implemented? Newspapers say that if all European countries adopt a floating exchange rate system, Japan will also adopt a floating

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<sup>202</sup> Asahi Shinbun, 1971.

<sup>203</sup> Address to the Nation Outlining a New Economic Policy: "The Challenge of Peace.", 1971.

<sup>204</sup> FRUS, 1971, n. 89.

exchange rate system because it cannot continue as it is now. If the yen is revalued, it means that the yen has become stronger, and in other words, can't we think that Japan has become a better country? The revaluation of the yen is being talked about as something very gloomy in Japan, but I think it is a good thing that the price of Japanese products has increased internationally. Isn't it necessary to inform the public of such a bright side? What do you think about it, Mizuta?<sup>205</sup>

There are several interesting insights in this conversation. Firstly, Hirohito's economic thought has never been sufficiently dwelled on by the academia; however, the monarch had received training during his early years on these matters and therefore he understood basic economic concepts. Secondly, the emperor subtly criticized the government's devaluation policy and the press support of such measures, by arguing that the stronger the yen the better the purchase capacity of the Japanese population. This, either consciously or not, aligned with the Nixon administration request to the Sato Cabinet regarding the appreciation of the yen after the August 15<sup>th</sup> announcement: on September 1<sup>st</sup>, Secretary of State Rogers established that a major revaluation of the yen in relation to the dollar was a necessary condition for satisfactory economic relations with the US<sup>206</sup>.

It is difficult to ascertain whether the monarch had any role in the economic policy of the Japanese government albeit his criticism of the yen devaluation and capacity of influence via Sato. In that sense, the premier also briefed the monarch in detail regarding the Nixon announcement on August 23<sup>rd</sup>, but Hirohito's comments and/or reactions were not recorded by Sato<sup>207</sup>. In any event, by September 10<sup>th</sup>, both governments had agreed on the revaluation of the yen, although the specific percentage was still up to further discussion<sup>208</sup>. Even though there is no evidence to demonstrate that the emperor had any influence in the final decision regarding the appreciation of the Japanese currency, it is noteworthy that the monarch defended a position that was incidentally close to the American interests in regard to this specific topic.

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<sup>205</sup> Goto, 2003, p. 231-232.

<sup>206</sup> FRUS, 1971, n. 92.

<sup>207</sup> Sato, 1997, vol. 4, p. 403.

<sup>208</sup> FRUS, 1971, n. 96.

Nevertheless, Hirohito's role in the aftermath of the "Nixon shocks" was more important than his particular contributions to the decision-making process on the issues of China's UN representation and the yen appreciation. Once the announcement regarding Nixon's trip to China was made public and subsequently the Sato administration faced important political consequences, Kissinger started to move to do "damage control" over Japan-US relations. In that sense, the American policy-maker met with Japanese Ambassador Ushiba on July 23<sup>rd</sup>, 1971, and the former apologized for the ongoing situation. Furthermore, Kissinger stated that Japan was the keystone of US policy in the Pacific and that the American government was not planning on replacing Japan for China as its most important Asian ally<sup>209</sup>.

However, the first "Nixon shock" had been so appalling for the Sato Cabinet that the US government ought to take concrete actions other than Kissinger's regrets in order to mend the relationship. In that regard, the US National Security Council suggested to the presidential advisor in an extensive report sent on August 2<sup>nd</sup> to carry out a diplomatic strategy that included the Imperial Household. Specifically, the emperor's stopover in Anchorage, Alaska on his trip to Europe, which had been decided since 1970, presented an excellent opportunity to restore confidence in the American government. Precisely, the proposal consisted on the following point:

Things seemingly unrelated to China also apply in this context, since everything we do for the immediate future will be interpreted in Japan in terms of how important we regard Japan in comparison with China. For example, the Japanese will be looking with special anxiety now to see how we treat the Emperor's stopover in Anchorage in September.<sup>210</sup>

In fact, due to his academic background and previous studies about Japan. Kissinger was also aware regarding the symbolical importance of the Imperial Household in Japanese society. In that sense, in his diary, Kissinger assesses the role of the monarchy in the postwar period: "(...) Parliamentary democracy replaced authoritarianism, with the emperor remaining as the symbol of Japanese

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<sup>209</sup> FRUS, 1971, n. 83.

<sup>210</sup> FRUS, 1971, n. 84.

distinctiveness. Japan changed its institutions, repaired the wartime devastation, and emerged within less than two decades more powerful than ever.”<sup>211</sup>

Afterwards, on August 5<sup>th</sup>, the US government asked Ambassador Ushiba to convert the monarch’s stopover in Alaska into a full-fledged reunion between Nixon and Hirohito. Ushiba reported to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs that, taking into consideration the current bilateral tensions, a press conference between the “Heads of State” of both countries could pave the way for an imperial tour of the US or a presidential visit to Japan, and would contribute to the betterment of US-Japan relations <sup>212</sup>. Furthermore, the Japanese ambassador asked for the emperor’s cooperation in that regard<sup>213</sup>. Ushiba’s request was certainly acknowledged at the Ministry and the reply from the Parliamentary Vice-Minister of Foreign Affairs Kimura Toshio stated that they would speedily look for an “imperial sanction”, although the meeting was to take place as a mere protocol event without any political overtures whatsoever<sup>214</sup>.

The proposal for a meeting with Nixon arrived at palace two days later, on August 7<sup>th</sup>. According to the diary of Irie, several Imperial Household Agency officials considered the suggestion to be an extremely excellent chance and they would strive to make it reality<sup>215</sup>. Even though there is no record of any briefing to the monarch during that period, on August 11<sup>th</sup>, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs confirmed to Ushiba that the situation had been reported to Hirohito, and the emperor had willingly approved the reunion with Nixon in Anchorage<sup>216</sup>. Consequently, this means that the monarch had the ultimate decision-making power in relation to this specific proposal.

After the second “Nixon shock” took place, Kissinger re-asserted the importance of the Anchorage meeting. In that regard, during a meeting with Ambassador Ushiba on August 21<sup>st</sup>, both diplomats discussed the overall bilateral relations as well as the tensions that had arisen because of the sudden termination of the dollar-yen fixed convertibility. Then, Kissinger stressed the US government

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<sup>211</sup> Kissinger, 1979, p. 323.

<sup>212</sup> Mori, 2006, p. 11-12.

<sup>213</sup> Mori, 2006, p. 11-12.

<sup>214</sup> For that reason, it was deemed necessary to host the conversations along with Empress Nagako and Thelma C. Nixon, First Lady of the US (Funabashi, 2019, p. 104).

<sup>215</sup> Irie, 1991, vol. 8, p. 151.

<sup>216</sup> Kusuda, 2001, p. 627.

willingness to mend ties with Japan and the symbolical meaning of the Anchorage meeting:

Both the President and I want to strengthen our relations with Japan. The President will travel all night to spend one hour with the Emperor. This symbolizes our attitude. The President has a bed in Air Force One, but the rest of us will be very tired.<sup>217</sup>

The American diplomat reiterated the commitment of his government to host a press conference with no political implications, which incidentally aligned with the Japanese counterpart's claims regarding the public neutrality of the monarch.

Nonetheless, the intended "apolitical" character of the Hirohito-Nixon meeting was a debated issue within American and Japanese policy-makers. For instance, several US politicians regarded the reunion between both leaders at the highest political level and even equivalent to Nixon's scheduled trip to China. In fact, on a top-level meeting of members of the Department of State, Defense, Treasury as well as the CIA and the National Security Council, Secretary of State Johnson highlighted that the president's visit to Anchorage was the ultimate measure to reestablish a positive environment within US-Japan relations<sup>218</sup>.

Japanese sources indicate that there was a proposal from the US side to include political topics in the agenda of the conversations between Nixon and Hirohito. In that regard, in a cable dated September 20<sup>th</sup>, 1971, Foreign Minister Fukuda stated that the US government had made a suggestion "lacking in common sense" since the emperor's visit to Alaska was a "mere stopover."<sup>219</sup> Moreover, Fukuda was infuriated by the fact that the monarch might be drawn into political talks, and deemed the American initiative as "terribly annoying to us".<sup>220</sup> Although there is no record of such proposal from the US side, the reaction of the Japanese foreign minister clearly demonstrates that American policy-makers were pushing to negotiate substantive matters directly with Hirohito.

The press conference between Nixon and Hirohito took place on September 27<sup>th</sup>, 1971. It is worth noting that the Japanese monarch was welcomed with all the fanfare corresponding to the protocol of receiving a Head of State, including the

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<sup>217</sup> FRUS, 1971, n. 90.

<sup>218</sup> FRUS, 1971, n. 91.

<sup>219</sup> Kyodo News, 2013.

<sup>220</sup> Kyodo News, 2013.



typical gun salute performed by the American military. On the occasion, the monarch stated the following the speech:

Neither the people of Japan nor myself will ever forget the great assistance, both material and spiritual, provided for the reconstruction and rehabilitation of my country by Your Excellency, US government officials and the American people. I wish to express my sincere gratitude for all you have done. I believe that, without doubt, the friendship and good will between the United States and Japan which has been nurtured over the past quarter century will hereafter be strengthened by the ever closer contact of the officials and people of our two countries.<sup>221</sup>

Hirohito's speech denoted two important points: on one hand, the emperor thanked the US government for its "material" support throughout the postwar period, which included the stationing of American military forces on Japanese soil as to repel any external aggression; and on the other hand, the monarch stressed the importance of strengthening US-Japan relations by "the ever-closer contact of the officials" of the two countries. Against the background of bilateral tensions caused by the "Nixon shocks", this subtle remark was a voucher for deeper political coordination between both governments. In a sense, Hirohito complied with the political strategy regarding the Anchorage meeting as he used his symbolism as an adequate platform to publicly advocate for the betterment of bilateral relations.

After the press conference, Hirohito and Nixon met privately for twenty minutes. Since there was no official statement in that reunion, several authors speculate on the contents of the conversation between both leaders. However, there are some archival documents and testimonies that offer interesting insights regarding such meeting. In that sense, the record of a later conversation between Sato and Nixon which took place on January 6<sup>th</sup>, 1972, suggests that Hirohito and the American president had discussed about the possibility of a proper imperial tour of the US considering the symbolical importance both counterparts attached to such diplomatic action<sup>222</sup>.

Similarly, Masaki Hideki, Imperial Household official and the emperor's interpreter during Anchorage's meeting, points out that the talk focused on Nixon's

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<sup>221</sup> A Visit From the Emperor of Japan, 2015.

<sup>222</sup> FRUS, 1972, n. 111.

visit to China<sup>223</sup>, which had been announced some hours before the arrival of the emperor to Alaska. In that sense, according to Masaki's version, Nixon assured Hirohito that there were no secret dealings with the Chinese communists, and that his visit to Beijing was purely of an exploratory character. To this, the monarch replied that: "That may be true, but there are still many difficult problems between the United States and China."<sup>224</sup> Although the emperor was not specific in his reply, one might infer that the "problems" Hirohito mentioned were related to Taiwan's military abandonment considering an US change of policy towards the PRC. What is more, considering Sato's criticism regarding the American strategy, the emperor's concern was also extended to the US security relation with Japan. Therefore, the monarch cautiously warned Nixon about the repercussions of a possible overture towards the PRC in the established networks of US alliances in Asia.

Even though Masaki's allegations might be contested and consequently, it might be accepted that the meeting between Nixon and Hirohito was only symbolical, the Anchorage's reunion had a relative success. For example, Sato reported on his diary that he was pleased by the Nixon's reception of Hirohito<sup>225</sup>. Later both Kishi and Sato, the leaders of the LDP mainstream, showed their appreciation for the ceremony at Anchorage directly to Nixon on October 22<sup>nd</sup>, 1971 and January 6<sup>th</sup>, 1972 respectively<sup>226</sup>. Similarly, the Japanese press that had generally been critical regarding the LDP administration, offered an overall positive vision regarding the Nixon-Hirohito conference<sup>227</sup>.

Likewise, American policy-makers noticed the ripples caused by the reunion at Alaska. The US National Security Council, the originator of the Nixon-Hirohito meeting as historical sources indicate thus far, underscored the impact of the reunion between national leaders against the background of what the NSC members labeled as "the most difficult period since the end of World War II"<sup>228</sup> for US-Japan bilateral relations. Specifically, a NSC policy study sent to Kissinger on October 1<sup>st</sup>, dwelled on the issue:

The Japanese are deeply conscious of and uncomfortable in the knowledge that the President has announced his intention to visit Peking when there has never been a

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<sup>223</sup> Masaki, 1992, p. 50.

<sup>224</sup> Masaki, 1992, p. 50.

<sup>225</sup> Sato, 1997, vol. 4, p. 430.

<sup>226</sup> FRUS, 1971, n. 102; FRUS, 1972, n. 111.

<sup>227</sup> Asahi Shinbun, 1971; Mainichi Shinbun, 1971.

<sup>228</sup> FRUS, 1971, n. 99.

visit by either head of state between Japan and the United States. The President's trip to Anchorage to greet the Emperor has helped to meet this lack, but it is no real substitute.<sup>229</sup>

According to the NSC's reasoning, the reunion at Anchorage had been an effective albeit temporary solution for the bilateral tensions between the US and Japan. Nonetheless, there was a need to organize proper bilateral visits between "Heads of States", which constituted the background for the 1975 imperial tour to the US. Furthermore, on March 14<sup>th</sup>, 1972, American Ambassador to Japan Meyer addressed a letter to Nixon regarding the current state of relations between both countries. In that sense, the diplomat expressed: "It is my conviction that... thanks to Anchorage, San Clemente<sup>230</sup> and many other reminders, our pragmatic Japanese friends will continue to attach primary importance to their relationship with the United States (...)"<sup>231</sup> Consequently, the Nixon-Hirohito reunion at Anchorage was considered successful by both Japanese and American politicians as it had improved the confidence regarding their respective counterparts. Therefore, the symbolical character of the Imperial Household had an important role in mending US-Japan relations in the aftermath of the "Nixon shocks".

After the Nixon-Hirohito reunion, several bilateral agreements on the economic field were negotiated. For example, on October 15<sup>th</sup>, both governments signed a Memorandum of Understanding for the restriction of the Japanese exports of textiles to the US, which constituted a landmark in the bilateral textile negotiations<sup>232</sup>. Moreover, on December 22<sup>nd</sup>, Kissinger and Ushiba acknowledged that the dollar-yen convertibility issue had already been solved because of a remarkable yen appreciation<sup>233</sup>. It is difficult however, to demonstrate there was a direct causation between the Anchorage meeting and the solution of the textiles and currency problems, given the structural complexity of both issues and the number of internal actors that were involved in the negotiations. What can be established with a degree of certainty is that the Anchorage meeting created a political momentum in US-Japan

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<sup>229</sup> FRUS, 1971, n. 99.

<sup>230</sup> On January, 1972, Nixon and Sato met at Nixon's state in San Clemente, California. The fact that the Prime Minister was welcomed in the President's house was interpreted as a sign of bilateral friendship.

<sup>231</sup> FRUS, 1972, n. 115.

<sup>232</sup> FRUS, 1971, n. 101.

<sup>233</sup> FRUS, 1971, n. 108.

relations that eventually contributed to the solution of the most pressing economic issues.

Hirohito's actual and symbolical intervention in US-Japan relations in the aftermath of the "Nixon shocks," leads to several fundamental conclusions. Firstly, both Japanese and American policy-makers recognized Hirohito as the Head of State of Japan. The LDP's as well as Sato's ideological stance in this regard has been already explained abovementioned. Then, it is worth noting than both President Nixon and Kissinger followed the established practice amongst American policy-makers in regarding to Japan in the postwar period: the consideration of the monarch as the ultimate political ally. This practice, as exposed in the above chapters, was initiated when the occupation authorities headed by MacArthur pardoned Hirohito from being trialed in exchange for his cooperation in the smooth functioning of the occupation. Later, Dulles extended this practice by considering the emperor as a viable negotiation partner in relation to the Peace and Security Treaty; Eisenhower and MacArthur III also applied the same logic by organizing the first presidential visit to Japan and the subsequent meeting between "Heads of State."

In that regard, Nixon and Kissinger (advised by the NSC), devised a scheme to utilize the symbolic character of the Imperial Household in order to mend the state of US-Japan relations in the aftermath of the July 15<sup>th</sup> and August 15<sup>th</sup>, 1971 announcements. Nonetheless, this could not have been achieved without the active cooperation of Hirohito, who offered his "sanction" for the Anchorage stopover to be converted into an official meeting between national leaders. Therefore, the second conclusion is that the emperor was a vital actor who simultaneously used his actual influence through the prime minister and his position as "the symbol of the State and of the unity of the people" to modify the decision-making process related to US-Japan relations as well as the public opinion on both sides of the Pacific Ocean.

Thirdly and finally, the momentum acquired in the US-Japan relations in the aftermath of the Anchorage meeting demonstrate that even a symbolic gesture of the Imperial Household was able to detonate a chain reaction of tangible political outcomes. This further blurred the artificial barrier between the political and the symbolical sides of the Japanese monarchy stipulated in Japan's Constitution. Consequently, Hirohito was able to generate, or at least contribute to the attainment of actual political results from his symbolical platform with the alignment of loyal

Japanese politicians such as Sato on one side, and like-minded American policy-makers such as Nixon and Kissinger on the other side.

## **Normalization with China, the NPT and Hirohito's trip to the US (1972-1975)**

Soon after Hirohito arrived to Japan from Europe, he participated in a press conference with foreign correspondents on November 16<sup>th</sup>, 1971. On the occasion, the monarch publicly re-stated his desire regarding an imperial tour of the US:

I would like to go abroad again to promote friendship, but the timing and place of the visit will depend on the general circumstances. If I could go to the United States, I would have to go to Washington and New York first, but if time allows, I would like to see Florida and cities on the Pacific coast of the United States, such as San Francisco and Los Angeles.<sup>234</sup>

Even though Imperial Diplomacy, and specifically, the foreign trips of members of the Imperial Household had been a common staple in Japan's foreign policy during the post-occupation period, the emperor's trip to Europe, as well as the Anchorage meeting, showed the impact of the emperor's participation in Imperial Diplomacy. Even though the monarch's visit to the US is treated as a symbolic achievement with little or none actual political relevance by the most of the academia, the decision-making process regarding the imperial tour (which spanned from 1971 to 1975) highlights several elements concerning the role of the emperor in US-Japan relations. In essence, as in the case of Anchorage but in a remarkable larger scale, the symbolic power of the Imperial Household helped to mend US-Japan relations in a context of bilateral tensions. What is more, this result was not fortuitous, but systematically intended by both Japanese and American policy-makers as they attached a great political importance to the involvement of the monarchy, and particularly the emperor, in the betterment of US-Japan relations.

Moreover, the monarch advocated for an extension of the imperial tours, and incidentally, the next country he wished to visit was the US. In fact, Hirohito had

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<sup>234</sup> Tsurumi & Nakagawa, 1989, p. 531.

discussed the feasibility of such proposal with Nixon during their reunion in Alaska. The emperor's intentions certainly put pressure on the shoulders of Japanese policy-makers. In that sense, Prime Minister Sato strove for the concretion of a proper monarch's trip to the US during the last part of the former's administration.

In that sense, Sato reported to the monarch on December 31<sup>st</sup>, 1971 regarding the upcoming San Clemente meeting with Nixon. One of the topics of the briefing was precisely the emperor's trip to the US and a possible Nixon's visit to Japan: "It seems that His Majesty has a strong intention to visit the United States, but given the state of affairs in Japan and other factors, I have no confidence in the situation in which we will welcome President Nixon (...)"<sup>235</sup> Even though the premier took the emperor's intentions as a priority item in the former's political agenda, Sato had experienced first-hand the cancellation of Eisenhower's visit to Japan during Kishi's tenure (Sato was Minister of Finance of his elder brother's Cabinet). Therefore, the prime minister ought to carefully gauge the Left's reaction to a possible Nixon's visit in order not to repeat Kishi's fiasco and involve the emperor into the actual political struggle.

In fact, the premier transmitted this point of view to Nixon during the abovementioned San Clemente reunion: according to Sato, although a mutual visit scheme was desirable from the point of view of US-Japan bilateral relations, and the emperor strongly advocated for this cause, the possible opposition of Socialists and Communists might overturn the entire plan. Indeed, Sato recalled the fall of Kishi's Cabinet because of the cancellation of Eisenhower's visit and therefore stated that he would proceed cautiously in order to secure an adequate climate in Japan for the accomplishment of the mutual visits of "Heads of State"<sup>236</sup>. In that sense, the prime minister declared to the press on March 8<sup>th</sup> that it would be appropriate if the emperor visited the US first and such action were corresponded by a reciprocal gesture from the American president<sup>237</sup>.

On the other hand, the American side also supported an imperial tour of the US. For instance, Vice-President Spiro T. Agnew visited Japan in order to participate in the ceremony of return of Okinawa. On May 30<sup>th</sup>, he paid a courtesy call to the emperor in the palace grounds: Irie recorded that the monarch's appreciation for the

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<sup>235</sup> Sato, 1997, vol. 4, p. 495.

<sup>236</sup> FRUS, 1972, n. 111.

<sup>237</sup> Funabashi, 2019, p. 109.

US support for the reconstruction of postwar Japan strongly impressed Agnew<sup>238</sup>. Furthermore, one month later, from June 9<sup>th</sup> to the 12<sup>th</sup>, Kissinger visited Japan in exchange for the Anchorage meeting. On the occasion, he met with Prime Minister Sato, Foreign Minister Fukuda and Tanaka Kakuei, the most likely successor to the premiership. According to Kissinger's report to Nixon, the former passed a presidential invitation for the emperor to officially visit the US to both Sato and Fukuda on June 10<sup>th</sup><sup>239</sup>. Even though Kissinger did not meet Hirohito during the former's trip, Fukuda briefed the emperor on June 12<sup>th</sup> regarding the American proposal<sup>240</sup>. Before departing for the US, Kissinger announced to the press the intentions of his government to host mutual visits as to foster goodwill relations between both countries<sup>241</sup>.

The fact that the US side regularly insisted on hosting an imperial tour of the US after the Anchorage meeting shows that, albeit the success of the Hirohito-Nixon meeting in Alaska, American policy-makers believed that a more relevant diplomatic gesture was in order as to strengthen the alliance. Moreover, the officials of the Nixon administration attached great importance to the diplomatic role of the emperor and his personal influence in fostering a relative stable environment for US-Japan bilateral relations. Nonetheless, Hirohito's trip to the US could not be materialized during the rest of Sato's tenure because of the premier's lack of political power and the opposition of the Imperial Household Agency. Usami Takeshi, who had previously refused the proposal of the US as the first overseas destination for the imperial couple, stated to the press on the same day Kissinger announced Nixon's invitation that, given the deep political connections between Japan and the US, any overture for an imperial tour to the US was likely to be turned into a controversial domestic issue<sup>242</sup>.

On July 7<sup>th</sup>, 1972, Sato stepped down from the premiership and Tanaka Kakuei became prime minister of Japan. The change of the Head of Government also implied the assumption of new foreign policy guidelines: Tanaka had been very critical regarding Sato's anti-PRC stance and therefore the former advocated for a speedy normalization of relations with mainland China. However, the new premier, as most conservative politicians in postwar Japan, had a profound respect for the

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<sup>238</sup> Irie, 1991, vol. 8, p. 246-247.

<sup>239</sup> FRUS, 1972, n. 122.

<sup>240</sup> Irie, 1991, vol. 8, p. 258-259.

<sup>241</sup> Asahi Shinbun, 1972.

<sup>242</sup> Asahi Shinbun, 1972.

monarchy and consequently inherited the plans for an imperial tour to the US from the previous administration. In fact, on the same day the Tanaka Cabinet was inaugurated, the prime minister briefed the emperor and touched upon the trip to the US<sup>243</sup>.

Tanaka's Cabinet foreign policy started to generate new tensions with the US, specifically regarding the issue of normalization of relations with the PRC. Kissinger assessed the matter during his second trip to Japan on August, 1972. In a memorandum to Nixon dated on August 19<sup>th</sup>, the National Security Adviser pointed out that the Tanaka administration was moving rapidly towards a rapprochement with the PRC without sufficiently consulting with the American side<sup>244</sup>. As what had happened one year before during the first "Nixon shock", the absence of political coordination between Japanese and American policy-makers regarding third-country policies, strained the bilateral relations. On top of that, an enormous trade surplus in favor in Japan had progressively accumulated and such situation reverted into internal pressures from US businessmen towards the Nixon administration in order to adopt tough protectionist measures against Japan<sup>245</sup>.

Against this background, American and Japanese leaders planned to address these issues in the Joint Cabinet Meeting to be hosted in Honolulu, Hawaii on August 31<sup>st</sup>-September 1<sup>st</sup>. In that sense, both sides favored the idea of an imperial tour to the US, as preparatory documents for the Hawaii meeting indicate. For example, the North American Section of Japan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs defined the emperor's visit would be extremely significant in terms of further strengthening the relationship between Japan and the United States<sup>246</sup>. Certainly, Japanese politicians considered the imperial tour of the US as a relevant, if not the most relevant, diplomatic gesture in a context of resurgent bilateral tensions.

American officials also had a similar line of thought. On August 29<sup>th</sup>, Kissinger sent to Nixon several key points and recommendations to take into consideration in the upcoming talks with Tanaka. Under the tab "Reaffirmation with Tanaka of the US-Japanese Alliance", Kissinger proposed to reiterate the president's invitation to the emperor to visit the US in the next year (1973)<sup>247</sup>. It is worth noting that this measure was placed in the same priority level that, for example, clarifying

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<sup>243</sup> Irie, 1991, vol. 8, p. 265-266.

<sup>244</sup> FRUS, 1972, n. 126.

<sup>245</sup> FRUS, 1972, n. 128.

<sup>246</sup> 日米首脳会談資料（田中総理訪米、ハワイ会談）関係第三巻, 1972/8/29.

<sup>247</sup> FRUS, 1972, n. 129.



Tanaka's policy towards the PRC, the bilateral political consultations and the US support for Japan's claim of a permanent seat in the UN Security Council. Likewise, on route to Hawaii, Nixon and Kissinger assessed the importance of the emperor's visit in the overall context of bilateral political relations, even though the comments of both policy-makers were not fully recorded<sup>248</sup>. Consequently, this demonstrates that the US government clearly treated the emperor's visit as a political topic of utmost importance and not simply as mere diplomatic protocol matter.

Hirohito's visit of the US was discussed at Hawaii: during the conversations hosted on August 31<sup>st</sup>, Tanaka's opening remarks consisted on a message of appreciation from the emperor for the Anchorage reunion. Moreover, amidst the background of bilateral tensions, the monarch wished for the strengthening of the US-Japan alliance. As a response, Nixon stated that, since the invitation had been accepted by the emperor, he would welcome Hirohito to Washington at any mutually convenient time<sup>249</sup>. This exchange highlights that Tanaka briefed Hirohito before departing overseas, as it had become a common practice for Japanese prime ministers; but, since there are no records regarding the date or the contents of such briefing, it is not possible to ascertain Hirohito's comments to Tanaka.

Thus far, there are several pieces of evidence that suggest the emperor intervened in two relevant matters related to US-Japan relations during the Tanaka administration: Japan's normalization with the PRC and the ratification of the NPT

In the first case, taking into consideration the overall context and the emperor's position regarding Chinese politics, Hirohito might have not agreed in principle with the Tanaka Cabinet's strategy regarding a normalization formula with the PRC that included breaking all relations with Taiwan. As it was stated beforehand, the emperor was personally indebted to Chiang Kai Shek and had pressed Sato to stand by Taiwan's side in the UN negotiations regarding the China's representation issue. What is more, Tanaka briefed the monarch on September 22<sup>nd</sup>, 1972, before the former's departure for the PRC<sup>250</sup>. Such briefing was documented on Irie's diary, but the contents are unknown<sup>251</sup>. However, upon being informed about the Joint Communiqué between Tanaka and Zhou Enlai announced on September 29<sup>th</sup>,

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<sup>248</sup> FRUS, 1972, n. 130.

<sup>249</sup> FRUS, 1972, n. 131.

<sup>250</sup> Tanaka arrived to the PRC on September 25<sup>th</sup> with the purpose of reestablishing relations between both countries. He was received by Zhou Enlai and met with Mao Zedong on September 27<sup>th</sup> (Excerpt of Mao Zedong's Conversation with Japanese Prime Minister Kakuei Tanaka. 1972).

<sup>251</sup> Irie, 1991, vol. 8, p. 285.

Hirohito subtly expressed his opposition to the normalization of relations between Japan and China: “I feel desolate when I think about Taiwan.”<sup>252</sup> Therefore, it might not be erroneous to state that the emperor might have warned Tanaka about breaking relations with Taiwan on the September 22<sup>nd</sup> briefing.

Thus far, it is worth asking if Hirohito had any influence over Tanaka’s foreign policy in relation to the PRC. Certainly, on top of the lack of historical materials, Tanaka himself never acknowledged to act under emperor’s orders, although the premier paid due attention to the monarch’s words. In that regard, on September 22<sup>nd</sup>, Kissinger met with Japanese Ambassador Ushiba to discuss Tanaka’s upcoming trip to China. According to the Japanese diplomat, despite the fact that more than 70% of Japanese people supported a rapid normalization of relations with the PRC, the principal constraint for such diplomatic move was the powerful “Taiwan lobby” within the LDP<sup>253</sup>. In that regard, in previous internal documents, Nixon, Kissinger and Johnson had acknowledged that several “heavy-weights” within the LDP such as Kishi, Sato and Fukuda were loyal to Chiang Kai Shek and ergo integrated the Taiwan lobby<sup>254</sup>. Incidentally, both Kishi and Sato were also faithful to the monarch; in addition, Sato had informed the monarch regarding Tanaka’s trip to China on parallel to the premier’s own September 22<sup>nd</sup> briefing<sup>255</sup>.

Moreover, the other side of LDP spectrum (“the China lobby”) also tried to sway the emperor’s opinion in favor of normalization with the PRC. For instance, on September, 1972, Tanaka announced that, if the monarch were to agree, he would strive to materialize an imperial tour to China by arguing that such diplomatic gesture would mean the “closure of the postwar period”<sup>256</sup>. Although the likelihood of such trip was doubtful considering Usami’s adamant opposition to it<sup>257</sup> and the widespread anti-Japanese sentiment in mainland China, Tanaka intended to use the symbolic power of the monarchy in favor of his own political agenda. Likewise, even the PRC side made some overtures towards the emperor: for example, on October 2<sup>nd</sup>, Zhou Enlai officially greeted the monarch, which was interpreted as a reconciliatory sign by the Japanese press<sup>258</sup>. Likewise, on April 29<sup>th</sup>, 1973, the PRC ambassador to Japan

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<sup>252</sup> Irie, 1991, vol. 8, p. 287.

<sup>253</sup> FRUS, 1972, n. 135.

<sup>254</sup> FRUS, 1972, n. 130.

<sup>255</sup> According to Irie’s diary, Tanaka briefed Hirohito at 10:00 a.m., but Sato arrived to palace at 11:30 a.m, after the premier had finished. (Sato, 1997, vol. 5, p. 199-200).

<sup>256</sup> Iwami, 2005, p. 65.

<sup>257</sup> Iwami, 2005, p. 65.

<sup>258</sup> Asahi Shinbun, 1972.

congratulated the emperor on his birthday and reciprocally, Hirohito sent a felicitation message on October 1<sup>st</sup>, 1973 on the occasion of the anniversary of the foundation of the PRC<sup>259</sup>.

Although the evidence regarding Hirohito's role in the issue of normalization of relations with the PRC thus far seems scarce, some tentative conclusions can be extracted. Firstly, the monarch clearly supported the maintenance of relations with Taiwan, and might have used his influence over some politicians of the "Taiwan lobby" in order to delay the rapprochement with the PRC. Secondly, the emperor's position on this matter seemed to be a decisive factor because Japanese policy-makers from both sides intended to sway the monarch's opinion in favor of their respective political agendas. Finally, given that Tanaka visited China and inexorably cleared the path for the normalization of relations between both countries, it might appear that Hirohito was not able to overturn this diplomatic outcome.

Although this last hypothesis might be likely, further considering that Hirohito did not appear to have the same capacity of influence over Tanaka than over Sato since the former was less subservient to the monarchy; if analyzed from a different perspective, the Tanaka-Zhou Joint Communiqué did not actually pose any threat for the US-Japan alliance nor for the American military presence in Japanese archipelago. Moreover, even though Japan broke official ties with Taiwan as a result of this communiqué, quasi-official relations as well as a relevant trade exchange were maintained with the Republic of China. In that sense, the overall result of the Tanaka Cabinet's policy towards China, including the Joint Communiqué, was not a menace in principle for the interests the monarch had advocated during the postwar period, which included keeping a certain degree of relations of Taiwan. Consequently, in a similar way than the reestablishment of relations with the Soviet Union during 1955-1956, in the face of an inexorable foreign policy outcome that did not accommodate in principle the emperor's agenda, Hirohito strove to ensure any measure taken by the Japanese government did not threaten his first and foremost priority: the survival of the US-Japan military alliance.

The second case of Hirohito's intervention in politics during the Tanaka Cabinet was the ratification of the NPT by the Japanese Diet. The issue of nuclear weapons has a special meaning in Japanese society because Japan was the only

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<sup>259</sup> Mainichi Shinbun, 1973; Mainichi Shinbun, 1973.

country where nuclear weapons were ever used against civilian population. Moreover, such “nuclear allergy”<sup>260</sup> was progressively reinforced by several occurrences such as the above-mentioned *Daigo Fukuryu Maru* Incident or the port calls of US nuclear-powered vessels. On top of that, given that US retaliatory capability was guaranteed in case of a nuclear attack over Japan due to the military alliance with the US, Japanese policy-makers barely felt necessary to advocate for an independent nuclear capacity during the initial 20 years of the postwar period.

Nevertheless, this situation changed when Sato became prime minister. During his inaugural trip to the US, on December 1964, the premier stated his long-term intentions for Japan to obtain nuclear weapons since several neighbor countries (namely the PRC) were testing such devices<sup>261</sup>. As negotiations for the NPT initiated in 1965-1966, Japan’s nuclear potential as well as Sato’s aspirations became an issue for American policy-makers. Specifically, on July 12<sup>th</sup>, 1966, President Johnson received a memorandum that explained Japan’s overall position regarding non-proliferation: in summary, Japanese policy-makers, who were not contemplating a national nuclear program, might nonetheless press for it if India obtained nuclear capability<sup>262</sup>.

Furthermore, on January 11<sup>th</sup>, 1967, the State Department categorically stated that one of US foreign policy objectives towards Japan was to discourage an independent nuclear program by engaging Japan in a broad security framework with other nuclear powers and NATO<sup>263</sup>. In that sense, by 1968, the issue seemed to be partially settled: according to a conversation between US Ambassador Johnson and Foreign Minister Miki on August 21<sup>st</sup>, the latter assured the American diplomat regarding Japanese intentions to eventually join the NPT and consequently renounce to the possibility of developing nuclear weapons<sup>264</sup>. Similarly, on November 1969, prior to the Nixon-Sato Joint Communiqué regarding the return of Okinawa, the premier guaranteed Kissinger that the former’s Cabinet would sign the NPT soon even though there were no plans for ratification<sup>265</sup>. Indeed, the Japanese government joined the NPT in March 1970<sup>266</sup>. However, later, on September 10<sup>th</sup>, 1970, the

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<sup>260</sup> This term seems to have been labeled by the US State Department circa 1968 (FRUS, 1968, n. 113).

<sup>261</sup> FRUS, 1964, n. 37.

<sup>262</sup> India had built a latent nuclear capability after WWII, and several politicians advocated for developing nuclear weapons because of an increase of border tensions with the PRC.

<sup>263</sup> FRUS, 1967, n. 82.

<sup>264</sup> FRUS, 1968, n. 130.

<sup>265</sup> FRUS, 1969, n. 26.

<sup>266</sup> Japan Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2011, p. 14.

Director of Japan's Defense Agency Nakasone confessed to Kissinger that the NPT ratification in the Diet would not necessarily process smoothly<sup>267</sup>.

The issue of Japan's ascension to the NPT regime received little attention during the rest of Sato's premiership because of the tensions generated by the "Nixon shocks". Nevertheless, the prime minister kept Hirohito regularly informed in relation to any international development on the nuclear field. For instance, Sato briefed the monarch regarding the PRC nuclear tests on October 11<sup>th</sup>, 1966 and June 22<sup>nd</sup>, 1967<sup>268</sup>. In that sense, the emperor's position on the issue of nuclear proliferation is difficult to determine since his comments were not recorded by Sato. On top of that, the monarch made few references to nuclear matters in general during his lifetime, which is somehow understandable considering the admonition Japanese society had regarding nuclear weapons.

The only occasion when Hirohito spoke publicly about this matter was in a press conference on October 31<sup>st</sup>, 1975. In that moment, the emperor was asked for the first time about his impressions regarding the nuclear bombing of Hiroshima. The monarch replied the following: "I regret that the atomic bomb was dropped, but since it was in the middle of a war, and feeling sorry for the citizens of Hiroshima, I think it is something that can't be helped."<sup>269</sup> Hirohito's words reveal some hints about his position on the issue: the monarch considered the state of war a justification sufficient to allow the use of nuclear weapons; consequently, he was not opposed in principle to the existence of such weapons, at least in American hands. In that sense, the emperor had also praised the US position in the solution of the Cuban Missile Crisis and according to the records of the November 15th, 1967 Sato-Johnson meeting, the monarch inquired via the premier regarding the American nuclear commitment towards Japan

On the other hand, there is evidence that suggests the emperor supported Japan's ascension to the NPT system. On September 28th, 1973, the Speaker of the House of Representatives, Maeo Shigesaburo briefed Hirohito regarding the ratification process of the treaty in the Diet. Maeo had been part of the Ikeda's and Sato's Cabinet and had systematically briefed the emperor during his political career. Moreover, the latter reported to the monarch after each Diet session during his tenure

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<sup>267</sup> FRUS, 1970, n. 53.

<sup>268</sup> Sato, 1998, vol. 2, p. 505; Sato, 1998, vol. 3, p. 91-92.

<sup>269</sup> Hirano, 2004, p. 261.

as Speaker of the House of Representatives<sup>270</sup>. Maeo recalled that in the above-mentioned occasion, the monarch explicitly asked about the situation regarding the NPT ratification and was displeased because of the lack of progress in that sense<sup>271</sup>.

In summary, the emperor's position on the issue of nuclear weapons was two-fold: on one side, Hirohito buttressed the existence of the US "nuclear umbrella" over Japan as a core component of the military alliance between both countries, and on the other side, the monarch stressed the importance of Japan's ratification of the NPT, which ultimately represents an advocacy for Japan's denuclearized status. Therefore, the emperor's position in this regard coincided with the American government's nuclear policy towards Japan as exposed thus far. Consequently, Hirohito's dual nuclear stance, acknowledgedly or not, backed up the US agenda regarding the postwar Japan nuclear status quo.

Regarding the NPT ratification process from 1972 onwards, during after Tanaka became prime minister, Kissinger reconfirmed to the premier the US government's interest in Japan's ratification of the NPT<sup>272</sup>. However, the Tanaka Cabinet did not wholeheartedly support the de-nuclearized status-quo. For instance, in a meeting with the Chairman of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet Leonid Brezhnev in April, 1974, the Japanese premier underscored that Japan might develop nuclear weapons in the light of a Soviet military threat<sup>273</sup>. What is more, on May of the same year, India carried out a nuclear test which had deep political repercussions in Japan as it fostered the arguments of the proponents of Japan's acquisition of a nuclear capability within the LDP. As a result, the ratification process of the NPT in the Japanese Diet was stalled<sup>274</sup>.

In that context, Maeo briefed Hirohito on June 4<sup>th</sup>, 1974 about India's nuclear test and its influence in the parliamentary debate regarding the NPT. Maeo later commented to his secretary that the emperor had showed a great interest in the topic, but the monarch's position was kept secret<sup>275</sup>. In fact, Maeo was apparently mobilized by the emperor's words and decided to push for the ratification of the NPT in the House of Representatives, as he himself declared:

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<sup>270</sup> Hirano, 2004, p. 152.

<sup>271</sup> Hirano, 2004, p. 151.

<sup>272</sup> FRUS, 1972, n. 120.

<sup>273</sup> FRUS, 1974, n. 187.

<sup>274</sup> Hirano, 2004, p. 143-144.

<sup>275</sup> Hirano, 2004, p. 144.

Every time I reported after the Diet deliberations, I could sense His Majesty's growing desire regarding the ratification of the NPT, and I felt sorry for him. That is why, while I was serving as Speaker of the House of Representatives, I swore to myself that I would accomplish this no matter what (...) Article 4 of the Japanese Constitution stipulates that the Emperor "has no authority over political affairs," but when the government and political parties were unable to do anything, I was determined to carry out His Majesty's "directives".<sup>276</sup>

The treaty was finally ratified on June 8<sup>th</sup>, 1976: it is difficult however to ascertain whether the monarch's influence was determinant in this regard. Although Hirano (2004) points out that Maeo used his position as Speaker of the House of Representatives to strategically push the NPT ratification in the House's agenda, the American government had systematically pressed for Japan acquiescence to the NPT regime for a long time as exposed before. Moreover, new archives documents from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs show that the US demands were carefully considered within the Ministry as well as by the LDP factions<sup>277</sup>.

In any event, regardless of the ultimate cause of Japan's ratification of the NPT, the relevant element in this regard is that the emperor, in a similar way to the Masuhara Incident, used his mobilizing influence to accomplish a specific policy outcome. In addition, the fact that such policy outcome was in alignment with the US interests, demonstrates that the monarch advocated for the strengthening of the US-Japan alliance by supporting Japan's de-nuclearized status quo.

Even though the Security Treaty stood after the normalization of relations with the PRC, US-Japan relations during the Tanaka administration were strained by the almost-chronic trade frictions and third-country policies, specifically North Vietnam in this case. By the end of 1972, a ceasefire has been established in Vietnam in order to negotiate a solution to the conflict; however, violations from both North and South reignited the tensions in January of 1973, which were also accompanied by a restart in the US bombings of the north. Amidst the background, the Tanaka Cabinet's criticized the restart of hostilities, and such position were regarded as a disgrace by American policy-makers.

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<sup>276</sup> Ibiem, p. 159-160.

<sup>277</sup> Takeda & Hyung, 2021.

Specifically, on January 4<sup>th</sup>, Kissinger passed the news regarding Nixon's personal indignation because of the Japanese government position to Ambassador Ushiba. In fact, the US president considered this incident as "the most serious blot which had occurred in our relationship since the present Administration had been in the White House."<sup>278</sup> Later, on January 31<sup>st</sup>, after receiving Sato as a private guest of Nixon, the American president expressed his opinion regarding the ex and the current premier: "Tanaka's a very cocky, jingoistic type, and Sato is the old-line, friendly guy, helping the U.S. like Kishi."<sup>279</sup> Certainly, the accumulation of a series of contradictions between both governments had aggravated Nixon's judgment regarding Tanaka's intentions.

Amidst that new set of tensions, Japanese and American policy-makers restated their plans for the emperor's visit to the US as the ultimate measure to salvage the bilateral political trust. In the above-mentioned January 4<sup>th</sup> Kissinger-Ushiba meeting, both diplomats touched upon the necessity of an imperial tour of the US<sup>280</sup>. Furthermore, on February 16<sup>th</sup>, during a Cabinet meeting, Nixon depicted Tanaka as "not a good ally" in the trade field, whilst at the same time pointing out the importance of the emperor's visit to the US<sup>281</sup>. Likewise, on March 27<sup>th</sup>, Nixon and Kissinger met with Finance Minister Aichi and Ambassador Ushiba. On that occasion, the American side made clear its willingness to welcome the monarch in an official trip: in fact, Kissinger labeled this diplomatic action as one of the "chief objectives of the President's second term,"<sup>282</sup> which shows that the Nixon administration had incorporated the imperial tour as one of its major policies.

On the other hand, the Japanese side also looked forwards towards the emperor's visit of the US in 1973. For instance, on March 2<sup>nd</sup>, LDP representatives to the Diet noted that the imperial tour could have a beneficial effect amidst the trade frictions with the US<sup>283</sup>. In fact, Hirohito himself was committed to carrying out the trip by 1973 despite his health issues. According to Itou (2014), by the beginning of 1973, the Imperial Household Agency was taking several precautions regarding the emperor's agenda considering his deteriorating health condition<sup>284</sup>. In that sense, the

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<sup>278</sup> FRUS, 1973, n. 165.

<sup>279</sup> FRUS, 1973, n. 167.

<sup>280</sup> FRUS, 1973, n. 165.

<sup>281</sup> FRUS, 1973, n. 168.

<sup>282</sup> Nixon was reelected for a second term on November, 1972 (FRUS, 1973, n. 171).

<sup>283</sup> Funabashi, 2019, p. 115.

<sup>284</sup> Itou, 2014, p. 515.



monarch stated his intentions to abdicate to Irie on February 13<sup>th</sup><sup>285</sup>; however, once Hirohito was briefed about the renewed invitation from the Nixon administration, he expressed his willingness to visit the US<sup>286</sup>. Therefore, the emperor felt that it was his duty as the “Head of State” of the country to mend relations with the US regardless of his own health condition.

Nonetheless, the imperial tour to the US could not be accomplished in 1973 due to internal opposition. For instance, Funabashi (2019) points out that both Socialists and Communists, who had been strengthened in the most recent parliamentary elections, were vocal against the political use of the Imperial Household in connection to the US-Japan alliance<sup>287</sup>. In fact, Hirohito himself was aware of the domestic political climate and on April, 17<sup>th</sup> asked Irie to consult Usami regarding the likelihood of postponing the visit for the next year (1974)<sup>288</sup>. Similarly, Sato wrote down in his diary that the Left’s criticism in relation to the political implication of the imperial tour to the US forced the deferment of the emperor’s visit<sup>289</sup>.

Finally, on April 25<sup>th</sup>, Foreign Minister Ohira announced the cancellation of the imperial tour for 1973<sup>290</sup>. Several days later, on May 11<sup>th</sup>, the foreign minister briefed the emperor regarding the cancellation of the visit to the US. On the occasion, Hirohito inquired Ohira whether the Cabinet decision had left the impression of “breaking a promise” to the US government<sup>291</sup>. This statement could be interpreted as a reflection of the monarch’s concern regarding the state of bilateral relations considering the cancellation of the visit.

Considering the two previous failed attempts to materialize a proper imperial visit to the US after the Anchorage meeting, the Tanaka Cabinet opted for a different approach which consisted on a mutual visits scheme composed of a presidential visit to Japan and an imperial tour to the US in that order. Tanaka himself communicated the new strategy to Nixon on July 31<sup>st</sup>, and the president accepted the invitation to travel to Japan in 1974<sup>292</sup>. Moreover, the premier carried a personal message from the

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<sup>285</sup> Irie, 1991, vol. 9, p. 17-18.

<sup>286</sup> Irie, 1991, vol. 9, p. 29-30.

<sup>287</sup> Funabashi, 2019, p. 123-127.

<sup>288</sup> Irie, 1991, p. 33-34.

<sup>289</sup> Sato, 1997, vol. 5, p. 345.

<sup>290</sup> Mainichi Shinbun, 1973.

<sup>291</sup> Irie, 1991, vol.9, p. 40-41.

<sup>292</sup> FRUS, 1973, n. 179.

emperor<sup>293</sup> regarding the latter's willingness to strengthen the relations between Japan and the US<sup>294</sup>, which demonstrated that despite the April announcement regarding the cancellation/postponement of the imperial tour, Hirohito was eager to use his symbolic power for the sake of bilateral diplomacy.

After the Tanaka Cabinet's mutual visits plan for 1974 was accepted by both counterparts, negotiations continued to determine the specific dates. According to Irie's diary, the emperor was briefed about this process on September 18<sup>th</sup> and 26<sup>th</sup>, 1973<sup>295</sup>. Furthermore, on February 13<sup>th</sup>, 1974, Secretary of State Kissinger and Foreign Minister Ohira announced publicly their respective governments' intentions to host a presidential visit to Japan within the year, and also an imperial tour to the US if conditions were favorable<sup>296</sup>. Later, on July 9<sup>th</sup>, Nixon instructed the new US Ambassador to Japan, James Hodgson, to keep close relations with the "old guard" (Kishi and Sato) and to re-state to the Japanese government the American resolve regarding the emperor's visit to the US<sup>297</sup>. Nevertheless, on August 8<sup>th</sup>, 1974, Nixon resigned the presidency due to a series of domestic political incidents, generally known as "Watergate Scandal"<sup>298</sup>, and his Vice-President, Gerald R. Ford took over the presidency.

Despite the political crisis in the US due to the Watergate Scandal, the new American administration re-stated its commitment towards the mutual visits scheme with Japan. One day after Ford became president, Kissinger met with Japanese Ambassador Yasukawa Takeshi and the former proposed to carry out Ford's trip to Japan by November of that year. Kissinger also pointed out that on top of being the first visit ever of an American president to Japan, it would also constitute the first international trip of the new administration, which was a proof of the American commitment towards the alliance with Japan<sup>299</sup>. The news regarding Ford's trip arrived to the Imperial Household Agency on August 10<sup>th</sup><sup>300</sup>, and the emperor was

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<sup>293</sup> Tanaka had briefed Hirohito on July 28<sup>th</sup> before departing for the US (Mainichi Shinbun, 1973).

<sup>294</sup> Mainichi Shinbun, 1973.

<sup>295</sup> Irie, 1991, vol. 9, p. 74, 77.

<sup>296</sup> Funabashi, 2019, p. 133.

<sup>297</sup> FRUS, 1973, n. 192.

<sup>298</sup> On June, 1972, several perpetrators broke-in the Democratic Party Headquarters at the Watergate building in Washington D.C. Later, US judicial authorities found that the Nixon administration tried to cover up the incident, which triggered a political and constitutional crisis that eventually ended with Nixon's resignation.

<sup>299</sup> Irie, vol. 9, p. 158.

<sup>300</sup> Irie, vol. 9, p. 158.

briefed about the plan on September 5<sup>th</sup>, five days before both governments announced officially the US president had been scheduled for November, 1974<sup>301</sup>.

Effectively, on November 18<sup>th</sup>, President Ford arrived to Tokyo, and on the 19<sup>th</sup>, he was received by Hirohito. Masaki (2019) recorded that on the way to the Imperial Palace, the American president commented that he would be honored to welcome the emperor at Washington on the next year (1975). Hirohito replied that if “such proposal were to happen, he would be very happy.”<sup>302</sup> Kissinger, who accompanied Ford on the visit, later declared to the press that the president had extended an invitation to the emperor, and the monarch had personally accepted to travel to the US<sup>303</sup>. In fact, Masaki, who was the emperor’s interpreter, points out that there was a misunderstanding of the monarch’s reply by the American side because Hirohito’s words were supposedly not intended to accept neither decline the American proposal, considering that constitutionally the emperor needed the approval of the Cabinet in matters of diplomacy. Nonetheless, there is no information enough to determine whether this incident was a fair misunderstanding or an intentional manipulation of the emperor’s reply by the American side, given the influence any declaration of the monarch had, in order to press Japanese policy-makers towards the accomplishment of an imperial tour of the US.

In any event, Hirohito’s actual intentions might have not been different of the US government’s interpretation, because the emperor had systematically stated his commitment regarding an imperial tour to the US. After the meeting with the monarch, Ford had a reunion with Tanaka, and both parts finally agreed on the emperor’s visit to the US for 1975<sup>304</sup>. Ford’s visit to Japan, as well as the announcement of Hirohito’s trip to the US was considered as a success within policy-makers circles. For instance, Irie noted that both Ford and Kissinger were extremely content after meeting the monarch<sup>305</sup>. Likewise, Kobayashi recorded that the banquet hosted by Hirohito in the afternoon of the 19<sup>th</sup> was also well received by the American guests<sup>306</sup>. Similarly, on the 26<sup>th</sup> and 29<sup>th</sup>, Hirohito was briefed by members of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs

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<sup>301</sup> Irie, 1991, vol. 9, p. 165.

<sup>302</sup> Masaki, 1992, p. 53.

<sup>303</sup> Masaki, 1992, p. 53.

<sup>304</sup> FRUS, 1974, n. 198.

<sup>305</sup> Irie, 1991, vol. 9, p. 187.

<sup>306</sup> Kobayashi, 2019, p. 33.

regarding the positive effects for US-Japan bilateral relations of Ford's visit as well as the announcement of the imperial tour of the US<sup>307</sup>.

Furthermore, American policy-makers highly valued the emperor's welcome to the president. During a conversation between Ford and Ambassador Hodgson on March 29<sup>th</sup>, 1975, the former stated that the political relations between both countries had relaxed because of the presidential visit to Japan. What is more, the president's meeting with the emperor had a remarkable impact on public opinion on Japan as well as with Japanese policy-makers<sup>308</sup>. Even though the Tanaka Cabinet fell on December of 1974, and Miki Takeo became prime minister, the overall positive bilateral atmosphere that resulted from Ford's trip to Japan, paved the way for the imperial tour to the US.

Consequently, both Japanese and American governments seized the momentum generated from Ford's visit to Japan in order to materialize an imperial tour of the US by 1975. In that sense, on the same day Miki assumed the premiership, December 8<sup>th</sup>, 1974, he briefed the monarch regarding the Cabinet's intentions of finally accomplishing a trip to the US on the upcoming year<sup>309</sup>. In fact, the year 1975 had a special connotation for the monarchy and for Japan because it marked 30 years since the end of WWII as well as the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Hirohito's reign: on January 14<sup>th</sup>, 1975, Miki pled an oath to the monarch to carry out an imperial tour of the US as part of those celebrations<sup>310</sup>.

Despite Miki's intentions, there had been little progress in the negotiations regarding the emperor's visit since his administration was inaugurated. Actually, on February 8<sup>th</sup>, 1975, Hirohito expressed to Irie the former's discomfort regarding the fact that few months had passed since Ford invited the emperor to the US, but there was no official decision yet from the Japanese Cabinet on the matter<sup>311</sup>. According to Funabashi (2019), the process for the official settlement on this issue between the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the American Embassy in Japan, started on February 22<sup>nd</sup>, few days after Hirohito's statement to Irie<sup>312</sup>.

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<sup>307</sup> Irie, 1991, vol. 9, p. 188-189.

<sup>308</sup> FRUS, 1975, n. 202.

<sup>309</sup> Irie, 1991, vol. 9, p. 193-194.

<sup>310</sup> Irie, 1991, vol. 9, p. 214.

<sup>311</sup> Irie, 1991, vol. 9, p. 216-217.

<sup>312</sup> Funabashi, 2019, p. 166.

On February 27<sup>th</sup>, Miki visited the palace to obtain the emperor's approval for the imperial tour to the US<sup>313</sup>. It is worth noting that, according to the Imperial Household Agency records, Hirohito's decision regarding the trip to the US was considered essential<sup>314</sup>, which confirms that the monarch possessed the ultimate authority in the decision-making process of the Imperial Diplomacy, although it was unlikely the emperor rejected a plan he had contributed to create and aligned with his agenda. On the next day, the Japanese Cabinet officially announced the visit, which was scheduled for two weeks during October of that year<sup>315</sup>.

Once the imperial visit issue was settled, both governments needed to address the question of political implications. Even though the Imperial Household Agency had publicized the emperor's tour as a sign of friendship between both countries in the 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the foundation of the US<sup>316</sup>, the fact that the trip was to be carried out amidst the bilateral trade tensions was an undeniable fact. Consequently, both counterparts intended to disaggregate the visit regarding the ongoing bilateral issues. In that sense, on a meeting between Kissinger and Ambassador Hodgson hosted on March 28<sup>th</sup>, the former asked if there could be any "substantive talks" between the emperor and Ford, but the American ambassador warned against such possibility:

Ambassador Hodgson: No, they might talk about culture, but above all the visit must be apolitical and divorced from substance. I believe that in planning the visit there are two overriding considerations: first, it must stay away from politics, and second, we must remember that the Emperor is frail and has limited energy.<sup>317</sup>

In spite of the fact that Hodgson discouraged the implication of the monarch in any actual negotiation, he recognized on the other hand that, given "the emperor's mystique", the latter's visit might have a tremendous impact in US-Japan relations<sup>318</sup>. Later, on September 26<sup>th</sup>, the American ambassador repeated his argument regarding the importance of the emperor's visit in a telegram to Kissinger:

While visit planning has scrupulously emphasized the non –political nature of the Imperial institution and the importance of keeping the visit non-political it is

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<sup>313</sup> Irie, 1991, vol. 9, p. 219-220.

<sup>314</sup> Imperial Household Agency, 2018, vol. 16.

<sup>315</sup> Asahi Shinbun, 1975.

<sup>316</sup> Funabashi, 2019.

<sup>317</sup> FRUS, 1975, n. 201.

<sup>318</sup> FRUS, 1975, n. 201.

nevertheless a highly political event. It will be symbolic at the highest level of the deep ties that bind the two nations and of the regard the two nations have for each other.<sup>319</sup>

Later, on October 1<sup>st</sup>, Kissinger passed the same opinion to Ford: “While billed as non-political, the visit in and of itself has highly political implications -a successful visit would contribute substantially to the US-Japan relationship, while an unfortunate incident would have unpredictable domestic repercussions.”<sup>320</sup> Similarly, the monarch himself was aware of the symbolic role of the visit. On the same day of the departure for the US, September 30<sup>th</sup>, the emperor had a press conference with foreign correspondents. In that regard, the monarch was asked about the reason of his visit to the US; Hirohito replied the following: “I am looking forwards to meeting President Ford and deepening the friendly relations between our countries.”<sup>321</sup> The abovementioned declarations proved that both counterparts were doubtlessly aware of the actual power of the Imperial Household in relation to obtaining concrete political results in US-Japan relations, which steamed from the symbolic character of the monarchy.

Hirohito finally arrived to the US on October 1<sup>st</sup>, 1975, more than four years after the meeting Nixon in Anchorage. The emperor toured around several US cities for two weeks, but the greatest highlight of the visit was his speech at the White House on October 3<sup>rd</sup>. During an evening banquet hosted by Ford, the monarch pronounced the following toast: “I wish to extend my gratitude to the people of the United States for the friendly hand of goodwill and assistance their great country accorded us for our postwar reconstruction, immediately following that most unfortunate war, which I deeply deplore.”<sup>322</sup>

Hirohito’s words resonated on both sides of the Pacific Ocean. Immediately after the monarch’s speech, Kissinger commented to Ambassador Yasukawa that the former had never heard such inspirational words<sup>323</sup>. Likewise, the media coverage of the event was remarkable: the Ministry of Foreign Affairs had planned to grant credentials to 500 American journalists in order to cover the monarch’s tour of the US,

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<sup>319</sup> State Visits-Emperor Hirohito, 1975.

<sup>320</sup> State Visits-Emperor Hirohito, 1975.

<sup>321</sup> Tsurumi & Nakagawa, 1989, p. 625.

<sup>322</sup> Shabecoff, 1975.

<sup>323</sup> Yasukawa, 1991, p. 237-238.

but the actual number rose to 1 500 credentials and yet it was not enough for all media agencies that intended to cover the news. In fact, most major American newspapers published the emperor's speech on their respective front pages<sup>324</sup>. In addition, several American journalists expressed that a new era in Japan-US relations had been opened as a result of Hirohito's speech<sup>325</sup>.

On the other hand, the Japanese press also reported the success of the emperor's speech and the overall visit. Asahi Shinbun published a large editorial on October 15<sup>th</sup>, the last day of the visit, praising the emperor's diplomatic performance<sup>326</sup>. Likewise, according to several surveys published by the same newspaper during 1975 and 1976, 69% of Japanese people agreed with the success of the monarch's visit<sup>327</sup> on one hand, and about half of the surveyed Americans trusted Japan because of Hirohito's trip to the US<sup>328</sup>. Moreover, Mainichi Shinbun pointed out that a "new page" in US-Japan relations was opened by the emperor's visit<sup>329</sup>. What is more, according to a study of the aforementioned newspaper, 80% of Japanese respondents were supportive of the symbolic role of the monarch, especially in the diplomatic field<sup>330</sup>.

Apart from the press coverage and the public opinion, the imperial tour also brought political repercussions. On October 19<sup>th</sup>, 1975, Kissinger met with Foreign Minister Miyazawa Kiichi. In that regard, the secretary of State concluded that "our bilateral relations are in excellent shape" which was due mainly to the reception of Hirohito by Ford and how the Japanese public and politicians positively regarded such action<sup>331</sup>. Furthermore, on October 24<sup>th</sup>, Miki thanked Kissinger personally for the success of the imperial tour to the US and added that: "Their (Hirohito and Empress Kojun) visit was the highest possible tribute to our friendship."<sup>332</sup> One year later, on June 30<sup>th</sup>, 1976, during a meeting between the American president and the Japanese prime minister, Ford expressed that the state of bilateral relations was good as a consequence of the mutual visits carried during 1974 and 1975, to which the premier

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<sup>324</sup> Sado, 1998, p. 219-220

<sup>325</sup> Itou, 2014, p. 520.

<sup>326</sup> Asahi Shinbun, 1975.

<sup>327</sup> Asahi Shinbun, 1975.

<sup>328</sup> Asahi Shinbun, 1976.

<sup>329</sup> Mainichi Shinbun, 1975.

<sup>330</sup> Mainichi Shinbun, 1975.

<sup>331</sup> FRUS, 1975, n. 213.

<sup>332</sup> FRUS, 1975, n. 214.

replied that there were only a few problems in US-Japan relations and none were a major issue<sup>333</sup>.

Fukuda Takeo, who was the Director of the Economic Planning Agency and accompanied the emperor's party to Europe and the US and experienced first-hand the influence of Imperial Diplomacy, recorded his impression on this phenomenon: "As I have always felt while accompanying Emperor Showa, His Majesty's diplomatic influence was typical of a great man. Even hundreds or thousands of people are no match for one emperor."<sup>334</sup> Hirohito was also aware of the political momentum generated by the visit to the US. In the abovementioned October 31<sup>st</sup> press conference, the monarch summarized the result of his trip: "I deeply believe that this will further deepen the friendship between our two countries."<sup>335</sup> In fact, several documents from American diplomatic archives evidence that the tone of bilateral discussions during the end of 1975 and throughout 1976, was generally amicable and cooperative; in that sense, both sides kept recalling the emperor's trip to the US and the positive impact it had for bilateral relations.

During the 1960-1975 period, the Japanese monarchy was consolidated in both symbolical and political fields. For instance, the emperor was tied to major events such as the 1964 Tokyo Olympics, the 1970 Osaka International Exposition, and several sports competitions. Moreover, the Ikeda Cabinet revived the Imperial Condecorations system which linked most scientific and artistic talent in Japan to the monarchy; and at the same time, the restorationist movement reinstituted the National Foundation Day. As a result, throughout the period, Japanese society, and even the Left political parties tacitly embraced the existence of the "symbolic" Imperial Household which was demonstrated in several surveys and by the fact that the Left's adamant intentions regarding the abolition of the monarchy almost disappeared within politics.

On parallel, the monarch reinforced his influence over Japanese policy-makers. There is evidence enough to demonstrate that all prime ministers of this period (Ikeda, Sato, Tanaka and Miki) briefed the emperor. What is more, members of the respective Cabinets, as well as the speakers of both chambers of the parliament, also reported systematically to Hirohito. Furthermore, there were several indications regarding the

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<sup>333</sup> FRUS, 1976, n. 225.

<sup>334</sup> Fukuda, 1995, p. 323.

<sup>335</sup> Tsurumi & Nakagawa, 1989, p. 632-633.



close relations between the monarch and the military, which were manifested in the briefings of the respective chiefs of the Defense Agency and high-rank officials of the JSDF and the police.

Throughout the period, Hirohito recurred to his “dual diplomacy” method. On one side, he took advantage of Japanese politicians’ (especially Sato’s) awe regarding the throne in order to mobilize policy-makers towards achieving specific policy outcomes. In fact, Hirohito had at least three patterns of influence over the respective premiers. Firstly, the monarch “encouraged” the prime minister to maintain a specific policy course by praising the latter or showing “a good mood” during the secret briefings, as recorded for example, in the negotiations for the return of the Bonins and Okinawa. Secondly, the emperor could “discourage” the premier from following a political objective by manifesting his displeasure or subtly expressing his opposition to the prime minister, as in the case of Tanaka’s Cabinet normalization of relations with the PRC. The third influence pattern consisted on direct suggestions from the monarch regarding specific topics, which were heavily considered by Japanese policy makers. The most relevant examples in this sense are Hirohito’s advocacy for an imperial tour to the US and his opinion regarding the 4<sup>th</sup> Defense Plan which finally triggered the Masuhara Incident.

On the other side, the monarch regularly communicated with American policy-makers by either personally approaching them or using the prime minister or other officials as “imperial envoys.” This second diplomatic method reached its peak during Hirohito’s meeting with American presidents: in 1971, with Nixon and in 1974 and 1975 with Ford. Consequently, the emperor was able to intervene directly and/or indirectly in several of the most relevant bilateral political outcomes of the period such as the return of the Bonins and Okinawa to Japanese sovereignty, the support of Taiwan’s rights to remain a member of the UN, the normalization of relation between Japan and the PRC, and finally, Japan’s ascension to the NPT.

Moreover, for the first time in the postwar period, the monarch travelled abroad: to the US (in 1971 to Anchorage and in 1975 to the continental US) and to Europe (in 1971). In that sense, several conditions were necessary for those trips to materialize: firstly, most Japanese conservative politicians supported the existence of the Imperial Household and strove for using its symbolic power for political purposes related to their respective agendas; secondly, due to the stunning growth of Japanese economy, the demographic advance of the middle class as consequently, the

progressive extinguishment of the radical Left as a viable political option, there appeared a domestic consensus regarding the consolidation of the monarchy as a symbolic referent within Japanese society. This consensus paved the way for the emperor going abroad and avoided the repetition of incidents like those of 1960 related to the cancellation of Eisenhower's visit to Japan.

On third place, the foreign counterparts regarded Hirohito as the ultimate diplomatic representative of Japan and tried to tip the scale in negotiations with Japanese politicians by fostering relations with the monarchy and therefore creating political momentum. In fact, the American internal documents reveal how the US government insisted on welcoming the emperor to the US since 1971 in order to mend bilateral relations amidst the "Nixon shocks" and the trade problems. On the last place, for the Imperial Diplomacy to escalate to this level of political importance, Hirohito's own approval was essential. In the studied cases (1971 and 1975 trips to the US), Japanese politicians and officials from the Imperial Household Agency requested the emperor's sanction to carry out those diplomatic initiatives. On the other hand, the monarch himself was aware of the role his symbolic position might attain in the betterment of bilateral relations, and for that reason, he systematically showed his determination to travel abroad, even disregarding the tentative of abdication due to his delicate health. This last point further refutes the argument of most of the academia about "the political use of the monarchy," because the emperor was not a passive actor in the foreign-policy making process between Japan and the US, but an active agent who was willing to advance his own political interests when necessary.

The emperor's trips became the highest expression of Imperial Diplomacy and were qualitatively superior to those of any member of the Imperial Household in terms of political relevance, diplomatic status (since Hirohito was considered by the foreign counterparts as Japan's "Head of State") and media coverage. Similarly, it is worth noting that after the Anchorage meeting, several of the tensions generated by the "Nixon shocks" were alleviated and incidentally both counterparts achieved actual political agreements. Likewise, in the aftermath of the 1975, bilateral relations that had been strangled by the trade frictions, became relatively smooth and the overall political rhetoric was more amenable. This means that Hirohito's diplomatic overtures regarding the US had a "tranquilizing effect" no other initiative could achieve. The fact that both American and Japanese politicians actually acknowledged the emperor's supreme role in the diplomatic field is also beyond dispute.

In comparison to the two previous periods (1945-1951 and 1952-1960), the emperor expanded his role in foreign affairs. In that sense, during the occupation, the monarch intervened in relatively fewer moments such as the separation of Okinawa from Japan and the negotiations of the Security Treaty; later, during the 50's, Hirohito had a somehow broader impact which was manifested in events such as the creation of the JSDF, the normalization of relations with the USSR and Eisenhower's (aborted) visit to Japan; however, from 1960 to 1975, the emperor involved himself in a quantitative and qualitative superior amount of issues related to US-Japan relations such as the return of the Bonins and Okinawa to Japan, the Anchorage meeting, the normalization of relations with the PRC, Japan's ratification of the NPT and finally, the imperial tour to the US. Taking into consideration the above-mentioned arguments, during the 1960-1975 period, Hirohito exerted his maximum influence in postwar US-Japan relations, which was expressed in direct and indirect interventions in the foreign policy decision-making process, and in the exploitation of the symbolic power of the monarchy for the betterment of US-Japan relations.

# Conclusions

In the culmination of this extensive research endeavor, the findings presented herein not only shed light on Hirohito's life but also pave the way for a deeper understanding of Japan's postwar foreign policy, and specifically its relations with the US. As we navigate through the concluding chapters of this dissertation, it becomes evident that the journey embarked upon has not only addressed the research questions posed at the outset but has also unearthed nuanced insights with far-reaching implications regarding the role of the emperor in Japan's postwar foreign policy. This section serves as a synthesis of the key discoveries, a reflection on the research process, and a springboard for future inquiries, encapsulating the essence of a study that has sought to contribute meaningfully to the academic discourse surrounding Japan's Imperial Household.

In that regard, the research question of this investigation was the following:

*What was the role of Emperor Hirohito in postwar US-Japan relations (1945-1975)?*

In order to properly address the abovementioned question, and taking into consideration the historical character of the proposed research, this dissertation employed an "input-output" method; whereas a relevant action of the emperor was taken as an "input" and the predictable direct and indirect consequences of the latter were analyzed as an "output". Then, the available evidence in each case was scrutinized in order to test whether there was a causative relation between given "inputs" and "outputs". It's crucial to note that the context was a fundamental element in this analysis, as a particular "input" may only acquire political relevance within a specific political context.

This method proved to be effective for the partial solution of the most pressing issue of this research: the lack of primary sources directly related to Hirohito's political role. Even though there is almost no explicit evidence regarding the emperor's intervention in the majority of the facts on US-Japan relations in the postwar period; the abovementioned method allowed to clarify a causative relation between several actions of the emperor, which were carried out in a more or less favorable context (LDP politicians' awe regarding the monarchy combined with the

American policy-makers' perception regarding the emperor as an strategic ally), and some of the breakthroughs in US-Japan postwar relations.

Nevertheless, this method also had important limitations, especially in regard to the evaluation of a causative relation between given "inputs" and "outputs" when primary sources were not enough to elucidate the decision-making process on the Japanese side. For example, in the cases of the policy decisions related to the respective administrations of Yoshida and Sato, there was evidence enough (mainly compiled through the diaries of the involved personalities) to demonstrate that Hirohito had the power to influence the internal decision-making process of those premiers, either by pressure as in the case of Yoshida or encouragement as in the case of Sato.

However, in the cases of Hatoyama and Tanaka, it was not possible to fully prove a causative relation between the emperor's attempts to break into foreign policy (influencing Foreign Minister Shigemitsu in the first case or mobilizing the "Taiwan lobby" in the second one) and the final policy decisions of those governments. One of the possible explanations for this ostensive non-causation is that the emperor actually did not have any agency in those policy decisions as his influence over the mentioned prime ministers was dwindling. In any event, as a result of the use of "input-output" methodology, this dissertation synthesized several apparently unconnected facts into a sharper but yet unfinished picture regarding Hirohito's role in postwar US-Japan relations.

Hirohito's role in postwar US-Japan relations was variable in principle and ultimately depended on several factors such as the domestic and international context, the political atmosphere between American and Japanese policy-makers, the role of the Imperial Household in Japanese society, as well as on the personal relations of the monarch with the key policy actors on both sides of the Pacific Ocean. Consequently, the abovementioned research question was addressed according to the periodization presented in the chapter of the dissertation. In that sense, the main findings of this research are stated below.

The immediate historical background that explains the role of the monarch in postwar US-Japan relations can be traced back to the last stage of WWII. By that time, American politicians devised a scheme in order to ensure the monarchy's cooperation in carrying out a smooth occupation. Likewise, the US government strove to disarm several Japanese military contingents that were spread in Asia. In the strategic

calculus of the American policy-makers, the emperor, as the head of the Empire political structure and its supreme commander, held the key power to secure a pacific occupation and disarmament of Japan.

On the other side, Hirohito was also in a position that favored his willingness to compromise with the American forces. Several leaders and an important part of the public opinion of the Allied nations called for the emperor's indictment as a war criminal. Moreover, the entrance of the Soviet Union in the war against Japan in August of 1945 increased the fear of the monarch regarding a communist invasion of the country. In that sense, the emperor's unconditional acceptance of the Potsdam Declaration on his radio broadcast on August 15th, 1945, paved the way for cooperation between the Imperial Household and the American occupation authorities.

Such a tacit agreement became explicit in the first meeting between Hirohito and MacArthur because the monarch traded his support regarding the US military presence for immunity vis-à-vis the Tokyo Tribunal. That reunion demonstrated that the emperor still held a considerable quota of political power in spite of the defeat. Furthermore, considering the political implications of that meeting, it could also be considered as the first of the several milestones that eventually led to the formation of the US-Japan alliance.

However, once the emperor's absolution from trial was granted, the monarch shifted his political agenda towards shaping Japan's foreign policy options in regard to the US. In that sense, Hirohito opted for communicating directly with other American officials because of the eventual disagreement with MacArthur regarding the strategic future of Japan. Thus, on one side, the monarch attempted to tip the scale in favor of his own political agenda, and on the other, American policy-makers used the emperor's words as a legitimizing element of their respective positions in the internal debate, regardless of whether Hirohito's messages actually influenced the decision-making process in the US political circles.

By the beginning of 1950, Hirohito was the only political actor that advocated for a unilateral peace treaty and for a military alliance with the US. This statement contrasts starkly with most of the academia on US-Japan relations since the majority of authors place the relevant agency on this regard on either the American or the Japanese government. In that regard, the emperor was able to commit to a foreign policy agenda that seemed untenable for the Japanese government; and eventually, Hirohito became the sole viable negotiation partner for the US and consequently *de*

*facto* supplanted the Yoshida Cabinet as the “Japanese counterpart” in the negotiations with the US.

In order to settle these issues, the emperor employed a “dual diplomacy method”: on one side, the matter of US military bases was unraveled by sending several messages to John F. Dulles in April (the “Ikeda Mission”) and August (Kern’s message) of 1950. The second issue was solved by Hirohito’s direct pressure on Yoshida as to commit to the US treaty demands. Consequently, the influence of the emperor was crucial in overcoming the internal constraints within the Japanese side and in communicating his own willingness to commit to the treaty demands to the American side. Alongside with Dulles and Yoshida, Hirohito was also a relevant architect of the US-Japan military alliance, although his role was somehow covered and therefore widely overlooked by the academia on US-Japan relations.

The emperor’s involvement in the treaty negotiations meant that ultimately the Imperial Household also became entangled with the military alliance in a sort of symbiotic relation: on one side, the support of the emperor for the security treaty transformed the bilateral security arrangements into a matter of State which was more likely to resist the ebbs and flows of Japanese politics; and on the other, the US military presence in Japan was the ultimate guarantee for the exoneration of Hirohito from any type of war trial and the survival of the Imperial Household in the postwar period vis-à-vis a foreign invasion and/or a communist uprising.

On the other hand, the post-occupation period brought several new challenges such as reestablishment of Japan’s foreign policy and the resumption of several of the State’s functions that had been performed by SCAP. In that regard, during the 1952-1960 period, Japanese conservative politicians sought to reestablish several of the prewar political practices in relation to the Imperial Household.

For instance, policymakers continued briefing the emperor throughout the 1952-1960 period, although the frequency, duration, and content of those briefings depended on the ideological background of the incumbent prime minister and his Cabinet. Moreover, the conservatives’ agenda also included the involvement of the Imperial Household in diplomatic matters as one of the most important representatives of the State of Japan abroad. Imperial Diplomacy assisted in keeping the monarchy’s legitimacy afloat, albeit its diminished official functions, and achieved a somewhat stable degree of engagement from part of Japanese society in matters related to the monarchy.

Furthermore, several other private events of the Imperial Household, such as adulthood ceremonies, weddings, funerals, and the New Year message became sponsored by the State during the 1952-1960 period. In addition, the throne rebuilt its ties with the new Japanese military; but, given the overly controversial nature of the JSDF, such a relation was more of a moral character and manifested through secret briefings from members of the military, with the emperor never becoming the actual supreme commander of the JSDF. As a result, even though the Japanese Constitution was never reformed properly, the systematic restoration of several prewar political practices allowed the emperor to expand his influence in matters of State and diplomatic acts.

This expanded influence can be perceived clearly in US-Japan relations. During the 1952-1960 period, Hirohito held a stalwart defense of the military alliance and employed several tactics to ensure that the security arrangements survived the political turmoil of the decade. It is necessary to point out that even though Japan-US relations were only a fraction of the overall political situation, given the undeniable political controversy that the military alliance generated during the 1950s, and the entanglement of the Imperial Household with US interests, the emperor's intervention in Japan-US relations contributed to the normalization of his appearance in politics and, consequently, his entitlement as informal Head of State. Hirohito's intercession in bilateral relations manifested in three relevant occasions throughout the decade.

Firstly, evidence found in several archive sources and diaries point out that Prime Minister Yoshida was systematically pressured by Hirohito from 1952 to 1954 in order to fulfill the commitment related to Japan's rearmament. In that sense, the monarch constituted a driving force behind one of the major developments of Japan-US relations, the creation of the JSDF, though not the only one. Secondly, Hirohito also tried to influence the decision-making process regarding the establishment of relations between Japan and the USSR from 1955 to 1956. Hirohito's position on the issue of reestablishment of relations with the USSR finally prevailed since the negotiations with the Soviet counterpart did not damage the pre-existing security arrangements with the US nor the American military presence in the Japanese archipelago. Nonetheless, the emperor had no demonstrable agency in the overall results, albeit he did try to influence them. The available evidence does not allow confirming whether this particular input generated a correlative output. This historical event demonstrates that the emperor's influence in foreign policy was contingent on



the ideological background of the ruling Japanese politicians. Thirdly, the last case of the emperor's intervention in Japan-US bilateral relations in the 1952-1960 period was his role in the mutual bilateral visits as the culmination of the 1960 Security Treaty. Hirohito used his symbolic position to support the Japan-US alliance by actively participating in the scheme for hosting a US presidential visit to Japan, albeit the ultimate cancellation of such a plan.

By 1960, the emperor had irrevocably earned a political entity relevant enough to consider him as an undeniable part of the Japanese State policy-making process. This phenomenon was manifested, firstly, in the more or less general consensus among all conservative politicians regarding the moral leadership and authority of the monarchy in Japanese society. Secondly, in practice, conservative politicians from several factions and ideological leanings bowed to that authority and kept several Meiji ceremonies and political practices alive. Moreover, with some ups and downs, the practice of secret briefings to the monarch survived the postwar period, and by 1975, it had become a common staple among Japanese policy-makers' routine. Similarly, the Imperial Household became an international representative of the Japanese State, and arguably the most relevant one. In other words, by the end of the decade, Hirohito acted and was allowed to act as the informal Head of State of Japan, which was conditioned, among several other factors, by his entanglement with the US-Japan alliance.

Hirohito's role in US-Japan relations during the 1960-1975 period was qualitatively and quantitatively superior in comparison to the previous periods. For instance, Sato's premiership meant an exponential growth of the emperor's role in Japan's foreign policy and, consequently, in US-Japan relations. In that sense, during the negotiations for the return of Okinawa to Japanese sovereignty, sources indicate that the monarch actually fostered the prime minister's willingness to reach a deal with the Nixon administration regarding the sensitive issues of conventional use and nuclear storage rights for the US military after Okinawa's reversion. In that regard, given that the emperor was delighted with the pace of the bilateral negotiations, he did not act to bend Sato to the former's interests, but rather became the leitmotiv behind Sato's diplomatic strategy. Additionally, the emperor's agency in regard to the issue of Okinawa also involved the latter's inaction in relation to the popular reversionist claims. In fact, the monarch spoke publicly in favor of this cause only when a deal

that did not affect the US military interests in the archipelago had been brokered between both governments.

Furthermore, Hirohito had a remarkable role in the solution of the bilateral crises generated by the two “Nixon shocks” of 1971. In such occasion, the emperor’s contribution to the continuance of the US-Japan alliance did not necessarily strive from his actual influence in the decision-making process but consisted of the public support derived from his symbolic position. The meeting with Nixon during the stopover at Anchorage created a political momentum that eventually led to the solution of the most pressing bilateral economic issues. Moreover, this particular event demonstrated that the emperor could contribute to the attainment of actual political outcomes from his symbolical position.

Hirohito traveled abroad as emperor for the first time in the 1960-1975 period. His trips became the highest expression of Imperial Diplomacy and were qualitatively superior to those of any member of the Imperial Household in terms of political relevance, diplomatic status, and media coverage. Likewise, in the aftermath of the 1975 US trip, bilateral relations that had been strangled by trade frictions became relatively smooth, and the overall political rhetoric was more amenable. This means that Hirohito’s diplomatic overtures regarding the US had a “tranquilizing effect” that no other initiative could achieve.

Throughout the postwar period, Hirohito recurred to his “dual diplomacy” method in order to alter the state of US-Japan relations. On one side, he took advantage of Japanese politicians’ awe regarding the throne in order to mobilize policy-makers towards achieving specific policy outcomes. In fact, Hirohito had at least three patterns of influence over the respective premiers and other relevant politicians.

Firstly, the monarch would “encourage” the prime minister to maintain a specific policy course by praising the latter or showing “a good mood” during the secret briefings, as recorded for example in Sato’s diary regarding the negotiations for the return of the Bonins and Okinawa. Secondly, the emperor would “discourage” the premier from following a political objective by manifesting his displeasure or subtly expressing his opposition to the prime minister, as in the case of Hatoyama’s administration rapprochement to the Soviet Union or Tanaka’s Cabinet normalization of relations with the PRC. The third influence pattern consisted on direct suggestions from the monarch regarding specific topics, which were heavily considered by

Japanese policy makers. The most relevant examples in this sense are Hirohito's interventions during the negotiation process of the US-Japan Security Treaty.

On the other hand, Hirohito also communicated directly and/or indirectly with American policy-makers. From the very first moments of the occupation period, the emperor had privileged access to the occupying forces' supreme commander, Douglas MacArthur first and Matthew Ridgeway later, and in several occasions expressed his intentions for a unilateral peace treaty and/or a security pact with the US. Moreover, the monarch "bypassed" the occupation authorities and communicated directly with Washington policy-makers when differences with MacArthur regarding the strategic future of Japan arose. Hirohito's messages reached the top American decision-makers and were used both as legitimizing arguments for the separation of Okinawa from Japan, and as a clear signal of the Japanese conservatives' willingness to commit to the American treaty demands.

Regardless of whether Hirohito eventually achieved his political objectives in each specific case, the emperor sustained a considerable degree of influence over the postwar foreign policy-making process because of four reasons. The first one is related to the ideological background of postwar Japanese politicians. In that regard, the fact that the Japanese conservatives ruled uninterruptedly from 1947, coupled with their awe for the Imperial Household, paved the way for the emperor's frequent involvement in the policy decisions of all the conservative administrations in the 1945-1975 period. Moreover, the ideological factor is essential in explaining why Japanese policy-makers, from Yoshida's term to Miki's, kept briefing the monarch, with a more or less degree of fervor, in spite of the fact the former were no longer constitutionally obliged to pay heed to the emperor. The maintenance of a political practice such as the secret briefings, in spite of its extra-constitutional character, is a clear demonstration of an ideological continuum within Japanese conservative circles that stretched from the prewar to the postwar period.

The second one refers to the social background of Japanese society. Even though Japan changed drastically from the generalized devastation state in the aftermath of WWII, to the achievement of an economic power status by 1975, the Imperial Household remained as a constant in several aspects of social life throughout the period. It goes without saying that the monarchy also suffered several transformations in order to adapt to the new societal conditions: precisely, Crown Prince Akihito (as well as Princess Michiko)'s political debut and popularity was a

clear sign of the Imperial Household's willingness to stay relevant within the postwar framework of the "symbolic" monarchy. Furthermore, as a result of the "cultural push" of several conservative sectors within Japanese society, Hirohito was progressively re-considered as the Head of State of the country. This, in turn, had considerable ripples in the field of foreign policy: the Head of State's diplomatic overtures were valued supreme by both the Japanese and the foreign counterparts. Specifically, the monarch's 1971 and 1975 trips to the US helped to ameliorate bilateral relations, and fostered the achievement of actual political breakthroughs.

The third element is the US's recognition of the monarchy's role in Japanese society and in the policy-making process. Even before foreign troops arrived to Japan, American policy-makers understood that in order to carry out a smooth occupation of Japan, they required to preserve some of the institutions of the prewar regime, including the monarchy. Consequently, the emperor had a larger leverage in his negotiations with the occupation authorities, which eventually resulted in the exoneration of Hirohito from the Tokyo Tribunal or any other criminal responsibility for the war.

However, while this reason explains why the Imperial Household survived the war trials, it is not enough to elucidate the emperor's involvement in US-Japan relations from 1947-1948 onwards. In that regard, the often-unstable political situation during the occupation caused that Prime Minister Yoshida wouldn't have the political capital enough to advance a political agenda that fulfilled the most pressing US demands: the lend of military bases and the rearmament of the country. In that context, Hirohito was the only political actor who could commit to the American treaty conditions and at the same time avoid any political repercussions: what's more, since the emperor informally represented the continuity of the Japanese state, to tie the monarchy to the Security Treaty was a long-term guarantee for the US. As a result, US policy-makers such as Dulles, legitimized the monarch as a valid negotiation partner.

Other than the above-mentioned strategic needs of the occupation forces, there were also some ideological coincidences between Hirohito and several of the American decision-makers who were related to Japan throughout the postwar period. For example, Douglas MacArthur and John F. Dulles shared a common anticommunism with the emperor, although they might have had differences in their

respective perceptions of the Soviet threat. This ideological partnership also fostered the US' perception of Hirohito as an important ally within Japanese politics.

This trend in the US strategic thinking regarding Japan continued even after the occupation. In that sense, the Eisenhower administration sought to organize mutual visits between the US president and the Japanese crown prince as the colophon of the extension of the Security Treaty in 1960. In spite of the fact that Eisenhower's visit to Japan was finally cancelled, such scheme demonstrated the undeniable relation between the US interests in Japan and the monarchy. Furthermore, Richard Nixon and Henry Kissinger were also aware of the impact of the monarch's symbolic position in the midst between both countries, and therefore pursued the materialization of an imperial tour of the US in order to mend the state of bilateral relations. Similarly, the fact that the most visited country by members of the Japanese monarchy was the US, reveals that keeping an amenable relation with the Imperial Household was a constant in the US agenda towards Japan throughout the period.

Fourth and final, even with the three above conditions in place, had the emperor chosen to strictly stick to his constitutional role and do not intervene in politics, the historical facts related to his intervention in US-Japan relations as described in this research, would have either occurred in a different way or not occurred at all. Therefore, Hirohito's personality and his own willingness to influence the course of US-Japan relations is an important point to consider. Thus, the question is: why did the emperor willingly intervene in politics in the postwar period?

Even without any direct record regarding the monarch's own thoughts, one can propose certain ideas regarding the above question. A basic answer would be that Hirohito favored a closer alliance with the US in order to protect the Imperial Household and himself from abolition and trial respectively, in the aftermath of WWII. Given that the US had managed to exclude Soviet troops from mainland Japan, therefore virtually obtaining the monopoly of the occupation, any important decision regarding the future of the monarchy depended ultimately on the American policy-makers. What's more, the men on the field, namely SCAP and Supreme Commander MacArthur, were entitled to a large share in that decision-making process; consequently, the emperor chose to approach them and portray himself as an important ally for the pacification of Japan, which was in tune with the US interests regarding the occupation.

However, this first answer only explains Hirohito's intervention in US-Japan relations for a brief period of time: from the end of WWII until US policy-makers unofficially decided to exonerate the emperor from war responsibility. Therefore, a second reason for the monarch's entanglement in politics would be his fear regarding a communist military invasion and the subsequent overthrowing of the monarchy. In that sense, after the American-Soviet partnership disappeared and the "Cold War" started, the military threat that emanated from the Soviet Union became more latent: on top of the occupation of the Kurile Islands, by 1949, the Soviet Union obtained nuclear weapons and Soviet military planes kept flying near the northern Japanese border. Furthermore, the triumph of the communist party in the Chinese Civil War in 1949, and the eruption of war in the Korean Peninsula one year later, increased the sense of menace over Japan.

In fact, Hirohito was deeply aware regarding the developments in Northeast Asia and their implications for Japan, as explained in several of his private conversations. Moreover, the monarch was particularly concerned about the survival of the Imperial Household in the event of a communist invasion and/or an internal uprising fostered by the neighboring communist powers. For that reason, Hirohito advocated for an everlasting guaranty for the post-occupation era: a military pact with the US that would imply a permanent American contingent in Japanese soil and an automatic triggering clause in case of aggression against Japan and/or internal rebellion. The emperor used several resources at his disposition for the sake of achieving this objective: on one hand, he pressed Prime Minister Yoshida to accept whatever demand the American side had in spite of the obvious political costs, and on the other, the monarch communicated with US policy-makers as to ratify the "Japanese side" willingness to commit to an alliance with the US.

Nevertheless, this explanation is not enough for the whole post occupation period. By the second half of the 50's, the Soviet Union had adopted a more conciliatory approach regarding its relations with Japan, and the Chinese communist government was immersed in its own internal turmoil. Moreover, Japan had recovered part of its military capacity as reason of the creation of the JSDF. Therefore, the threat from the communist block diminished and, as a result of that, the monarch had no more excuses to back up his interventions in US-Japan relations. Nevertheless, the emperor kept meddling in Japan's foreign policy but under a different approach.

After the end of the occupation, US-Japan relations evolved into a stable partnership but that nonetheless generated frequent crises due to the essential disparity in the power of both counterparts and the subsequent inequality in the alliance responsibilities. As exposed in the dissertation, the most relevant political crises of the alliance in the 1952-1975 period were the Japan-USSR normalization, the events around the new Security Treaty of 1960, the return of Okinawa to Japan's sovereignty, the "Nixon shocks", the Japan-PRC normalization, Japan's entrance to the NPT and the constant trade frictions. The emperor intervened in each of these events in order to advance his own political agenda, which was basically aimed towards reducing tensions and keeping the US-Japan alliance as the center of Japan's foreign policy.

It is pointless to discuss whether Hirohito's objectives and actions conformed to Japan's "national interest", because, in the end, the emperor was backing the agenda he believed in regardless of whether it was indispensable for the country. Still, the monarch's goals were most of the time similar to those of the American policy-makers, which denotes Hirohito had an acute political sense, or at least, plenty of information regarding the on-going developments. In any event, the emperor acted as a crisis-solving agent in the policy-making process related to US-Japan relations, and for that purpose, he skillfully combined behind-the-scenes guidance over Japanese politicians and the inspirational power of his symbolical position. Hence, given his systematic support for the alliance and the long period he stood in the throne, it is fair to say that Hirohito became the most important ally of the US in Japanese politics in the postwar period: by 1975, the erstwhile deadly enemy had turned into a staunch defendant of the US-Japan alliance.

Other than the above-mentioned reasons for the emperor's voluntary intervention, it is also necessary to address the ideological determinants of the monarch's actions. Similarly to postwar Japanese politicians who started their political life under the prewar and wartime indoctrination system; Hirohito was raised to exert his "emperorship" since childhood. In fact, during the militarist regime, the emperor embodied both the Head of State and supreme commander roles. Hence, from an ideological standpoint, it is difficult to imagine Hirohito would willingly renounce to the exercise of power. In turn, the monarch actively sought to maintain as many as possible of his prerogatives during the postwar period in spite of the constitutional limitations: Hirohito requested Japanese politicians to brief him,

reached American policy-makers, kept ties with the military, and became the highest international representative of the State of Japan, all by his own initiative.

Thus, the emperor was an active policy-maker in regard to US-Japan relations, and had several leitmotifs depending on the historical context and an ideological background that legitimized his political actions. This conclusion debunks the argument regarding the “political use of the emperor” by Japanese politicians. Even though several Japanese administrations intended to take advantage of the monarchy’s symbolism for their own parochial agendas, the monarch was definitely not a puppet of the incumbent prime ministers. At best, there was a likely coalition of interests between the LDP and Hirohito; but, even for the materialization of the overseas imperial tours, which were highly valued by the Japanese and the foreign counterparts because of the political benefits they could rip, the LDP required the ultimate approval of the emperor.

Finally, there is another point to make regarding the symbolic position of the emperor. Despite the Constitution’s spirit in relation to maintaining the monarchy separated from politics as it would never be an instrument of tyranny again, the envisioned symbolic role actually shielded the emperor from criticism. In practical terms, his supposed apolitical role acted as a “cover” that allowed him to intervene in the policy-making process in a way no regular politician could follow considering the public scrutiny. For the public eye, the emperor’s image was that one created by the Imperial Household Agency and tailored as to fit the social conditions of postwar Japan. The fact that the Masuhara Incident came as a shock for part of the political spectrum, the press and the general public reveals that almost no one would have ever imagined the “symbolic” emperor actually had a voice in politics.

Nonetheless, this dissertation is not without its limitations, which merit careful consideration. First and foremost, the constraint of restricted access to primary sources from the Japanese government poses a noteworthy limitation. While every effort was made to extract comprehensive insights from available Japanese archives, as well as from the diaries of relevant people who were related to Hirohito in some way, the absence of more direct evidence hinders a complete understanding of the role of the emperor in postwar Japan’s foreign policy. Additionally, the inability to consult certain US diplomatic archives due to their exclusive residence within American Presidential Libraries constitutes another limitation. These archives, not directly accessible for this study, may hold valuable perspectives that could further enrich the



narrative, especially in relation to the communications between the palace and the American Embassy in Japan. Moreover, language limitations present a distinctive constraint, as only archives in English and Japanese were consulted. The exclusion of potential primary sources in Chinese, Korean, or Russian possibly introduces a linguistic bias and a gap in the exploration of the research topic. Future research endeavors could benefit significantly from overcoming these limitations by fostering international collaborations, expanding linguistic scope, and advocating for broader access to pertinent governmental archives across borders.

Furthermore, it becomes evident that while significant strides have been made in understanding the role of the emperor in postwar US-Japan relations, there remain intriguing avenues for future investigation. Firstly, an exploration into Hirohito's intervention in Japan's policy towards China warrants attention. This study highlighted Hirohito's overall position regarding the PRC-Taiwan conflict, therefore laying the groundwork for a more in-depth examination, which might include the consultation of Chinese-written archives related to the Imperial Household. Secondly, and on that same line, the implications of the monarch's position on Japan-Korea relations could be a fruitful area for future research. Although it was not touched upon in this study due to the time framework, a dedicated inquiry into this particular topic may uncover nuances that further enhance the understanding regarding the emperor's political role. These two lines of research not only extend the current findings but also present opportunities for refining existing theories and methodologies, thereby enriching the academic discourse about the relation between Japan's foreign policy and the Imperial Household in the postwar period.

In 1987, the emperor was diagnosed with cancer, and one year later, he was hospitalized because of his delicate health. Hirohito's life ended on January 7<sup>th</sup>, 1989, at the age of 87. By the time of his death, the *Showa Emperor*, as he was named posthumously, had become the longest reigning monarch in Japan's history, and his reign, one of the lengthiest in mankind records. Hirohito's funeral, carried on February 24<sup>th</sup>, is said to be the largest in Japan's history and the largest in the world at that time, based on to the assistance of several world leaders and foreign representatives, including the American President George H. W. Bush. Such pharaonic display was both an emblem of the economic development Japanese society had achieved, and an acknowledgement of the role of the emperor in the nation's foreign policy, and especially, in the relations with the US.

In the final analysis, Hirohito, the enigmatic figure who ascended the Chrysanthemum Throne, left a lasting imprint on Japan's historical landscape. The grandeur of his funeral mirrored the complexities of his legacy, a legacy that continues to reverberate through the corridors of Japanese historiography. Even in contemporary times, the contentious issue of his war responsibility lingers, casting a shadow on the official narrative propagated by the LDP. This narrative, with its implications for relations with neighboring states, particularly the Republic of Korea and the People's Republic of China, underscores the enduring impact of Hirohito's actions on the geopolitical stage of the contemporary world.

Beyond the ceremonial trappings and diplomatic intricacies, Hirohito emerges not as the mere symbol envisioned by the drafters of the Constitution but as a policy-maker whose influence, both domestically and internationally, was profound yet often underestimated. His role in shaping US-Japan relations during the postwar era was crucial and transformative, fostering an alliance that endured the challenges of reconstruction and that would define the geopolitical landscape for decades to come. Hirohito's engagement with both Japanese and American decision-makers, showcased a leader adept at navigating the complexities of domestic and global politics. Although his funeral marked the end of an era (the *Showa Era*), the events set in motion by Hirohito more than 70 years ago, transcended the confines of his own life span and shaped the trajectory of US-Japan relations into the 21st century.

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