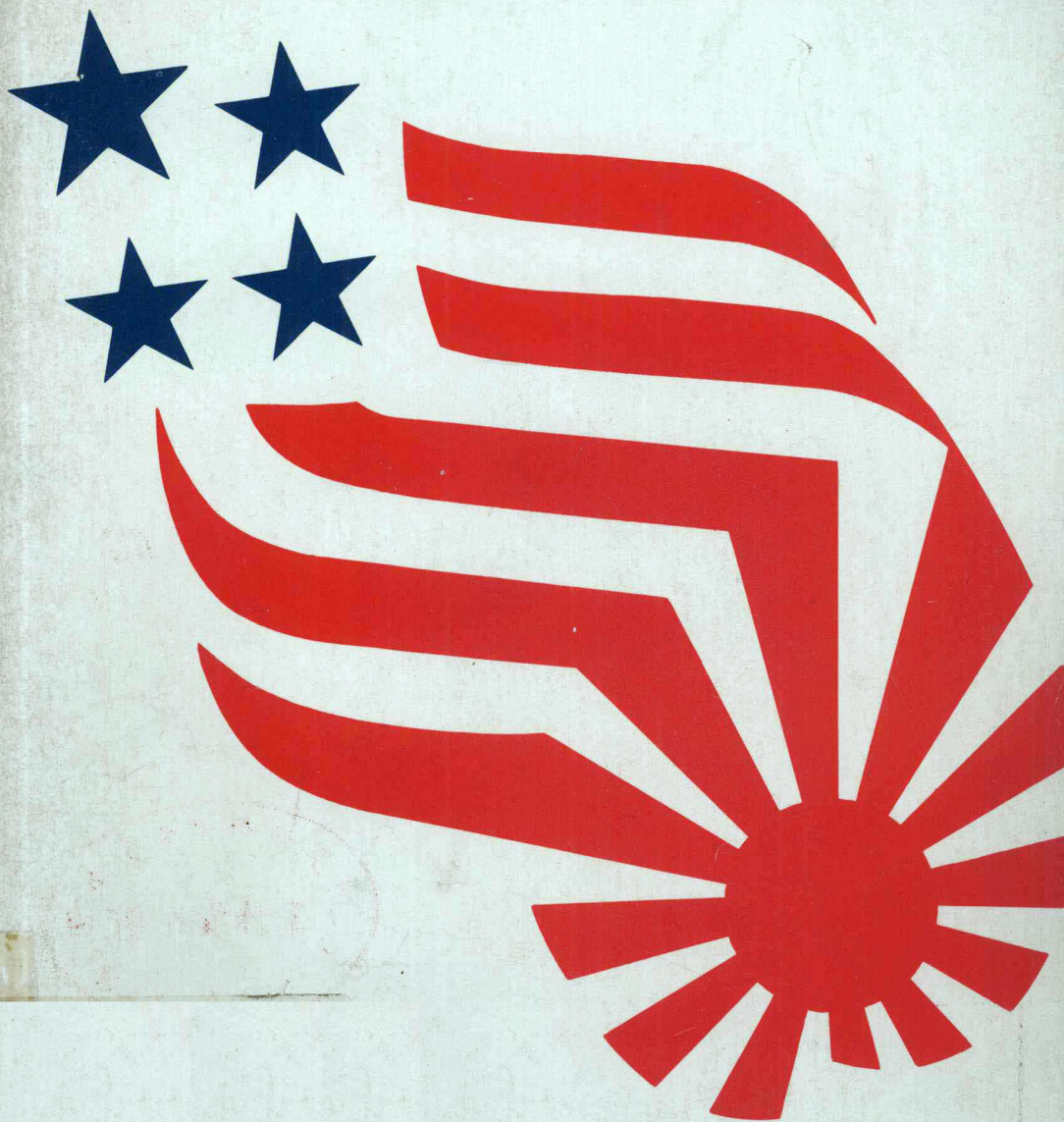# POWER
AND
CULTURE

The Japanese-American War 1941-1945

Akira Iriye

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PREFACE

THIS BOOK IS an inquiry into the meaning of the war in Asia and the Pacific, 1941–1945, from the perspectives of the two major combatants, Japan and the United States. This binational framework distinguishes the study both from general histories of the war, in which the battles and policies of all belligerents are described, and from works that examine it in the context of a single country. I am fully aware that the emphasis on Japan and the United States necessarily distorts aspects of the war, but my principal aim has been not to write a narrative of the Asian war but to treat it as a catalytic event in terms of which the nature of recent international relations may be explored.

My operative assumption is that the actors in world affairs can be viewed as powers and as cultures, that international relations are interpower *and* intercultural relations. Power defines a nation's armed forces, its strategies, war-making potentials, including willingness to use force, and a political system that makes and imposes decisions on society, as well as less tangible factors such as the perception of global balances and of other countries' intentions. A nation is also a culture in the sense that its boundaries are defined not simply geographically but also by a consciousness of common tradition; the sharing of religious, artistic, and literary roots; and informal mechanisms such as customs, ways of life, and a myriad of symbols that impart specific meanings to those belonging to the entity. The study of international relations must therefore entail three categories of inquiry: power-level interactions, cultural interchanges, and the relationship between these two sets of relations.

This is a formidable task, and historians have only begun to unravel the complex issues of methodology and analysis inherent in it. In this book I suggest tentative interpretations of one aspect of the phenomenon by examining the meanings the Japanese and Americans gave to the war. They fought fiercely against each other for physical survival; each side mobilized its total resources to destroy the other, and in the end the side that had greater military strength, better strategy, and a more efficient system of production won. At the same time both nations were concerned with more than physical survival and were keenly interested in defining what

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they were struggling to preserve. They developed visions of what their domestic societies and the entire world would be like when the fighting ended. They sought to articulate their war aims and peace objectives in ways that made sense to themselves, to each other, and presumably to other people.

By tracing the story of the war objectives stated by Japanese and Americans, it is possible to examine the symbolic aspect of the war, and to arrive at certain tentative conclusions about its cultural significance. The contrast between the military and the symbolic aspects of the struggle should enable one to use the Japanese-American war as a case study for understanding the multi-faceted nature of modern international relations. Interestingly, as the book demonstrates, the Japanese and Americans developed a number of similar, and at times parallel, assumptions, so that in the end they both opted for a "conservative" solution—for restoring the kind of international order in which they had once been more compatible. The book explores the question of what kind of international environment was considered most conducive to compatibility among different power and cultural systems. I hope that this approach will stimulate fresh debate about the place of the Second World War in recent history.

THE STUDY OF THE Second World War has been aided tremendously by the opening of the archives in the United States, Britain, Japan, and other countries. Although I have used some of them, I could never hope to exhaust all the available documents. Fortunately, a large number of important monographs on various aspects of the war has been published, some of which are indicated in the bibliography. I am indebted to the pioneering scholars in all countries for their findings and contributions. In concentrating on Japan and the United States, I have freely relied on works by the two countries' distinguished lists of historians. I am particularly grateful to those who have personally and liberally shared their insights with me: Professors C. Hosoya, Y. Nagai, K. Usui, K. Kurihara, S. Asada, I. Hata, N. Hagihara, N. Homma, M. Kōsaka, D. Borg, J. W. Morley, R. Dingman, R. Dallek, J. B. Crowley, W. R. Louis, W. LaFeber, and E. R. May, as well as several colleagues and students at the University of Chicago. The entire manuscript has benefited immeasurably from the careful reading of W. I. Cohen and W. H.
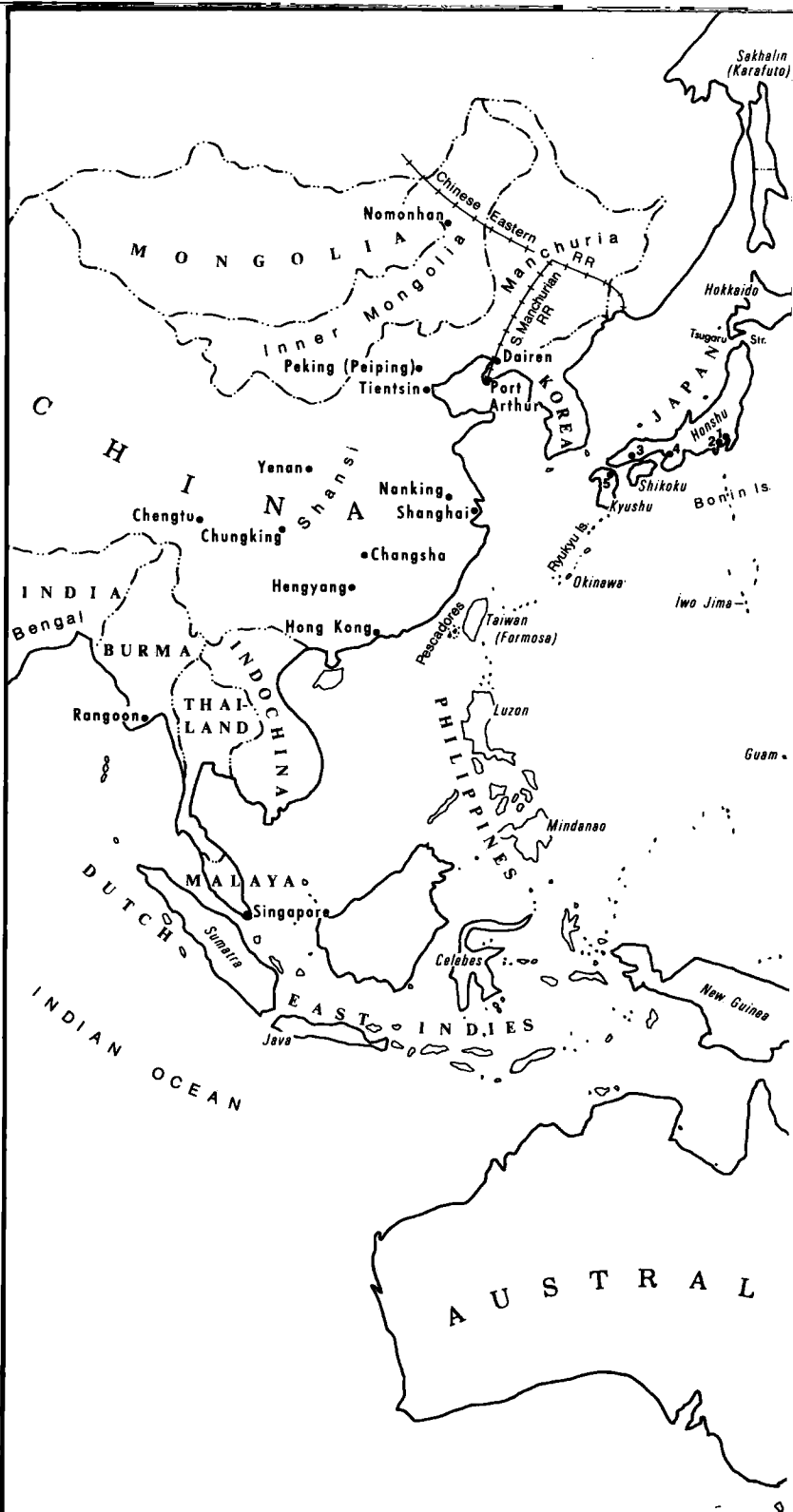
Chicago   A.I.
July 1980

ASIA and the PACIFIC
1941-1945

1 Tokyo
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· Truk

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Melbourne

N Z E A L A N D

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THE END OF
UNCERTAINTY

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THE ERUPTION OF war in the Pacific on December 7 (December 8 in Asia), 1941, was preceded by several years of "cold war" between the United States and Japan. As in the more famous Cold War after 1945, the relationship between the two countries had frequently been expressed in terms of fundamental conflict, impending doom, and total confrontation between opposite political and cultural systems. But much as the United States and the Soviet Union later avoided direct armed hostilities, Washington and Tokyo had managed to preserve a relationship that left room for negotiation. More important, despite mutual denunciations and war scares, the two peoples had not severed all ties; on the contrary, belligerent rhetoric concealed an undercurrent of shared interests and outlooks that both sides viewed as largely compatible. However, the very persistence of these outlooks created a sense of uncertainty, because they were at odds with the rapidly deteriorating governmental relations across the Pacific.

War came fundamentally because Japan's military leaders and their civilian supporters decided to close the gap and put an end to the "cold war." They wanted to bring unity to their national experience, so that war would define all political as well as cultural activities. In so doing, they were determined to part, once and for all, from an earlier definition of national life that had underlain Japan's external affairs since the Meiji Restoration. They had been characterized by an effort to integrate the country into the world economy and to achieve rapid industrial development, conditions

[1]

considered essential for collective survival. In order to achieve these goals Japan had adopted a gold standard, regained tariff autonomy, pushed its export trade, encouraged emigration and colonization, and otherwise tried to act like a member of the community of advanced industrial nations. The task had not always been easy, and there had been occasional friction with other powers, but at least until the 1930s there had been a unified perception by the country's leaders; as a modern industrial state, Japan should cope with its external problems through the framework of multilateral agreements with the other advanced nations, according to the formula of "international cooperation."[1]

In the 1920s the country avidly accepted the framework of international cooperation embodied in the League of Nations and the Washington Conference treaties and led by the United States and Great Britain. The Japanese eagerly turned to Anglo-American ways, adopting the tenets of Woodrow Wilson's "new diplomacy" as guides to their own international behavior. The Japanese economy was fully integrated into the world capitalist system, and the country enjoyed world-power status as the only non-Western member of the Council of the League of Nations. Japan's problems in Asia and elsewhere were legion; in China civil war endangered the safety and interests of foreigners, and in Asia anti-colonial movements were developing, in part inspired by the Bolshevik Revolution and supervised by Comintern operatives. Still, Japan coped with these problems as one of the advanced, colonial, and "treaty" powers through continuing consultation with the United States and Great Britain. Although neither Japan nor the Anglo-American powers were above negotiating separate advantageous deals, the framework of cooperation through economic interdependence with the other industrial nations provided the stable point of reference for Japanese diplomacy.

The world economic crisis that began in 1929 ushered in a period of confusion and uncertainty in international affairs, in long-range perceptions as much as in day-to-day relations among nations. Japan was one of the first countries to decide that the familiar economic order of unrestricted international trade and monetary transactions was being replaced by far more particularistic arrangements and by the division of the globe into autarkic units. In diplomacy as well, the Japanese saw a trend away from inter-

nationalism and toward regionalism, with a few nations establishing control over wider areas. There would still be "cooperation," but in the form of efforts to maintain equilibrium among these autarkic powers, as exemplified by the "cooperation" between Britain and Nazi Germany during the mid-thirties.

Compared with the situation before 1929, the new pattern was more conducive to uncertainty because there were fewer fixed points of reference; the League of Nations, the Washington Conference treaties, and, most important, the world monetary order based on the gold standard and stable rates of exchange—all were losing their effectiveness as devices for defining international relations. The nations of the world were more determined than ever to effect economic growth, maintain domestic order, and promote national welfare, but they were more willing to use force and to act unilaterally to carry out these objectives without regard for international cooperation. Global interdependence, cooperation, and peace were no longer the prevailing rhetoric; more particularistic conceptions—new order, have-not nations, *lebensraum*—emerged to provide ideological underpinnings for foreign policies. The assumption that domestic economic development required a peaceful external environment and vice versa, which had sustained the international system of the 1920s, gave way to uncertainty about the relationship between domestic and external affairs and that between power and nonmilitary aspects of foreign relations.

Japanese policy during the 1930s was intended to overcome this uncertainty, but the attempt was only partially successful. At one level there were programs for economic development and for population resettlement in Manchuria and north China under Japanese control. The plan was that "pioneers" from the Japanese mainland would settle in Manchuria and transform the economy to better serve the interests of the expanding empire, especially through increased agricultural output. A twenty-year plan worked out in 1937 called for eventually establishing one million households, totaling five million Japanese, in the area.[2] About half a million Japanese actually migrated to Manchuria during 1931–1945, including some 250,000 farmers who left their villages in Japan to engage in agriculture and dairy industry in the state of Manchukuo. Even teenagers were recruited, 50,000 of them scattering in the frontier regions.[3] The recent arrivals, along with the South Manchuria Rail-

way and the "new zaibatsu" (industrial-financial concerns), hoped that industrialization would go hand in hand with agricultural development, that Manchuria would provide space for Japan's surplus population and also produce enough raw materials, foodstuffs, and manufactured goods to enable Japan to be more self-sufficient.

After 1935 northern China was considered an extension of this scheme. The South Manchuria Railway sent study missions to survey the area's potential resources and needs, and the Boxer Protocol Army (the so-called Tientsin Army) began to exploit the region's mineral resources. The government in Tokyo formally sanctioned these moves, and in 1936, the cabinet drew up a plan for the economic development of north China under the supervision of Japan and Manchukuo. After the outbreak of the Sino-Japanese War in 1937, north China became an important source of supply for the Japanese expeditionary forces, so the newly created Planning Board undertook a special study of economic opportunities there. One result of this planning was the establishment of the North China Development Company in 1938. Capitalized at 350 million yen, of which the government provided half, the semipublic corporation was to engage in transportation, communication, electronics, iron mining, and other enterprises.[4]

In the meantime Japan promoted intraregional trade with Manchukuo and China—the "yen bloc." Exports to Manchukuo and China increased from 25 percent of Japan's total exports in 1936 to over 40 percent in the first half of 1938, and imports from these countries rose from 14 percent to over 22 percent of the total.[5] The concept of a new East Asian order, enunciated in November 1938, was meant to be far more than an empty slogan, it was actually an ex post facto rationalization of Japan's policy of close supervision of economic affairs in Manchuria and north China, calculated to meet the nation's needs as much as possible within the area.

At another level the pan-Asianist doctrine gained influence within and outside the Japanese government. Publicists expounded on the doctrine of Asian solidarity, cooperation, and resistance to Western imperialism (including Soviet communism). Some were traditional right-wing nationalists who felt they had to justify the aggression in China in the name of a holy war against Western influences. But scores of others who were not simplistic chauvinists were genuinely convinced that the nation needed a new ideology

under which it could unite in prosecuting the war. They believed that Asian unity was the antithesis of nationalism, individualism, liberalism, materialism, selfishness, imperialism, and all the other traits that characterized the bankrupt Western tradition. Instead, the pan-Asianists stressed themes such as regional cooperation, harmony, selflessness, and the subordination of the individual to the community.

The intensity of this propaganda campaign is, paradoxically, evidence of the tenacity of Western influence in Japanese thinking; author after author found it necessary to stress the supreme importance of liberating one's mind from unconsciously following familiar Western patterns of thought. As Uda Hisashi wrote in his influential 1939 treatise on cultural policy toward China, the Japanese had for too long looked down on things Oriental and dismissed Chinese culture as anachronistic. Outside of the army, few had known much about China or the rest of Asia. Now, however, Japan should "totally put an end to the long period of dependence on and copying after the West." The war in China must be sustained through a new cultural ideology for the new age, beginning with the recognition that Western-oriented scholarly and cultural activities had not served the nation. The country's cultural and intellectual leaders must overcome their past infatuation with Western liberalism and individualism and return to "Japan's innate intelligence." Only then would they be able to grasp the significance of the war in China.[6] The Sino-Japanese War was seen in part as an inner war to cleanse the Japanese mind of Western influences and modes of thought, not just as an action to bring the recalcitrant Chinese to their senses. Once they recognized their past mistakes, the Japanese could proceed to rebuild the world order on the basis of pan-Asianism.

During the late 1930s Japanese propaganda laid tremendous stress on rebuilding, regenerating, reawakening, and rebirth, indicating their self-consciousness about ending Western-dominated patterns and restoring Asia to its past greatness. The East, Japanese writers pointed out with monotonous regularity, had had a tradition of cooperation, harmony, mutual respect, integration, and communal unity, quite in contrast to the West's egoism, constant rivalry, friction, and imperialism. Japan was attempting to recall that proud tradition. As the legal scholar Takigawa Seijirō noted, the new

Asian order would be based upon the negation of Western concepts and the foundation of Asian cultural precepts. Japan, as the depository of traditional Asian virtues, was in a position to take the lead in this task. China, as Japan's closest neighbor, was destined to be its first partner in reconstructing the region's affairs.[7] All of Asia, however, was one, as writers repeatedly asserted, quoting Okakura Tenshin, the turn-of-the-century pan-Asianist. All agreed that economic development was necessary for Asian liberation from Western domination, and cultural unity should ensure that this would not lead to excessive nationalism and imperialism as had been the case in Europe and America.

Despite this rhetoric and the military exploits in China that it sought to rationalize, Japan's external affairs lacked consistency and coherence through most of the decade. Although they talked of a pan-Asianist new order, the Japanese were never successful in making systematic plans to implement their vision. Because Manchukuo and north China were able to supply only a portion of Japan's essential needs, the country continued to depend on sources outside the yen bloc for commodities like cotton, wool, petroleum, rubber, and wheat. The bulk of these commodities came from the United States and from India, Southeast Asia, and Oceania, areas that were tied to sterling and other European currency systems, which maintained protective tariff walls against Japanese imports. Thus Japan almost always suffered a trade deficit with the European countries and their colonies. The United States continued to be Japan's most important trade partner, in spite of the confusion of world depression and the enmity generated by Japanese aggression in Manchuria and China. During the first half of 1938, the United States supplied goods worth 460,000,000 yen, of Japan's total imports of 1,-394,000,000 yen, primarily cotton, petroleum, iron, and machine goods. These were essential for the prosecution of the Sino-Japanese War, and no rhetoric of pan-Asianism could enable Japan to do without them.

The Japanese were well aware that their dependence on extra-Asian markets and sources of supply made them vulnerable to foreign economic pressures. As Saitō Yoshie, a former Foreign Ministry official and confidant of Matsuoka Yōsuke, stated in 1938, sustained boycotts by a Western power would damage the national economy severely and ruin its plans for rapid development. Saitō

asserted that fully integrating the economies of Japan and China was the only feasible way for Japan to lessen its dependence on other countries.[8] But the very fact that Saitō had to argue his case in a 400-page volume, printed for confidential circulation within the government, indicates the absence of a blueprint for a pan-Asian economic system.

In fact, lack of adequate knowledge about Asia, let alone a systematic plan of action for the region, was so acutely felt within the government that in September 1938 the Planning Board established a Tōa Kenkyūjo (East Asian Institute) to study ecological, economic, and ethnographic conditions in China, Southeast Asia, and the southwestern Pacific. These surveys were far from completed when the war against the Anglo-American powers began. Within the Foreign Ministry, in the meantime, a planning committee was organized to analyze the effect of world economic trends on Japan's Asian policy. A product of the committee's research was a 500-page volume, which was made available for limited circulation in April 1939. Again the standard clichés were reiterated: the world economic order was being reorganized on the basis of regional blocs, which were stifling Japan's expansive energies everywhere except in Asia. It was incumbent upon the nation to build a new order of economic self-sufficiency in Asia through the cooperation of China and Manchukuo. Japan must expand commercial activities in these countries and promote their industrialization, enabling them to raise their standards of living and contribute to economic growth. Then if there should be war, Japan would be in a much stronger position.[9]

Even this apparently clear-cut assertion contained seeds of uncertainty, however. Japan's bloc policy was justified as a defensive response to the development of regional blocs elsewhere. The implication was that while Japan would go along with present global trends, it would not hesitate to return to the pre-1929 system of more liberal transactions among capitalist countries, if that system were reestablished. Moreover, the East Asian bloc was not truly self-sufficient; Japan, the study noted, still had to obtain oil, rubber, nickel, tin, copper, and other materials from Europe, America, and their colonies in Southeast Asia. Therefore Japan could not be as free of dealings with these countries as pan-Asian policy might dictate. Even as late as 1939, in other words, Japanese foreign policy was not consistently pan-Asianist. An undercurrent of Western-

oriented sentiment arose from time to time, as if to warn the nation that a completely autonomous pan-Asianist order was not likely to be realized. Officials recognized the nation's economic dependence on non-Asian countries and knew that dogmatically anti-Western diplomacy could bring about Japan's isolation and not much else.

If anything, the need for some degree of understanding with the Western powers, in particular the United States, seemed to increase as the war in China bogged down. For one thing the military were becoming anxious about their state of preparedness toward the Soviet Union, and the battle of Nomonhan (May 1939) seemed to prove the superiority of Soviet air power and mechanized ground forces. To cope with the crisis, Japan would have to terminate hostilities in China through political means, but that might require the good offices of Britain and the United States. The government in Tokyo was particularly solicitous of America's goodwill and was chagrined when the U. S. State Department announced in July that it was going to abrogate the commercial treaty between the two countries. Instead of driving the Japanese to reduce their dependence on America, however, this announcement made them all the more determined to placate the United States. The growing importance of the American issue belied all the official rhetoric about a new order in East Asia and pointed up the ambiguity and uncertainty underlying Japanese policy.[10]

If little was being implemented in the economic and political realm to implement pan-Asian regionalism, even less was being done about cultural unity. In the late 1930s the only tangible movement to unite Japan and China culturally was the Hsin-min Hui (the People's Renovation Society) in north China. The society was founded under Japanese auspices in December 1937 to bring together occupied China's prominent educators, journalists, and students under the banner of "hsin-min chui-i" or "the principle for the renovation of people," a concept adopted from the Chinese classic *Ta Hsüeh* (Great learning). From the Japanese point of view, the purpose of this movement was to provide an intellectual and ideological underpinning for the actions of the army of occupation, giving them historic and cultural meaning by stressing the ideal of Asian rejuvenation. From its headquarters in Peiping, the Hsin-min Hui issued newsletters, trained Chinese personnel to establish local branches, opened schools and agricultural experi-