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Japanese International Negotiating Style

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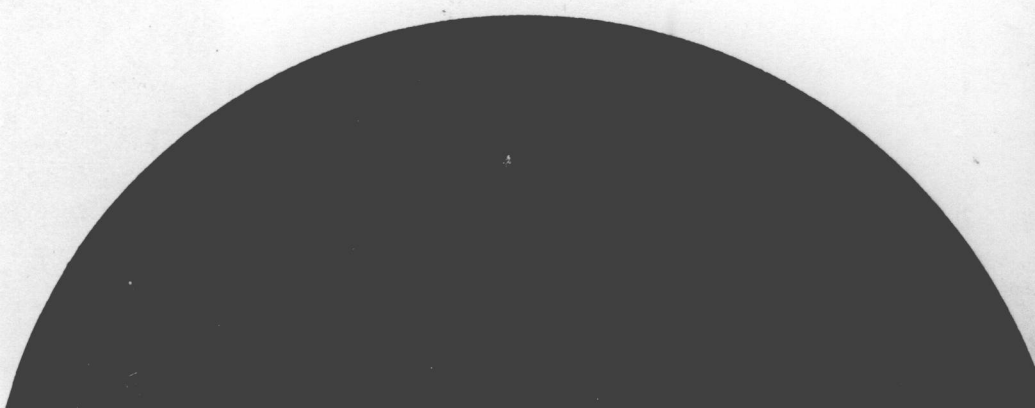
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Japanese edition of International Negotiating Style:

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—Yomiuri Shimbun

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ference table, he concludes that they were highly tenacious and able to concentrate their energies on certain key issues.

In this study Dr. Blaker helps to refute the persistent stereotype of the Japanese diplomat as inscrutable and untrustworthy, a viewpoint encouraged by the writings of such early observers as Commodore Matthew Perry and Townsend Harris. Blaker provides evidence that the Japanese negotiated in good faith and kept bargains agreed upon.

Japanese International Negotiating Style shows Japanese prewar bargaining behavior as consistent, scrutable, and undeserving of much of the criticism it has received. The book is an illuminating treatment of international negotiations and of the diplomatic style of a significant country.

Studies of the East Asian Institute

Michael Blaker is a research associate and director of the Project on Japan and the United States in Multilateral Diplomacy at Columbia University's East Asian Institute. Previously, he directed the Japanese policy studies program of the United Nations Association of the USA. A specialist on Japanese domestic politics and foreign relations, he has written extensively on these subjects. He has visited Japan on many occasions and lived in Tokyo from 1964 to 1966 while studying Japanese at the Inter-University Center for Japanese Studies.

Japanese International Negotiating Style

MICHAEL BLAKER

Japanese International Negotiating Style is the most intense study yet undertaken of Japanese behavior in diplomatic negotiations. Utilizing original Japanese sources, Michael Blaker analyzes eighteen cases during the half-century from the Sino-Japanese War of 1895 to the breakdown of negotiations with the United States before Pearl Harbor. Among other significant cases, Blaker looks carefully at Japan's diplomatic conduct at the Versailles and Washington conferences and its handling of negotiations leading to the Portsmouth Treaty, the Anti-Comintern and Tripartite pacts, and the Soviet-Japanese Neutrality Pact. These studies represent not only a wide range of Japan's bargaining partners but a rich variety of subject matter as well—railroads, coal mines, islands, harbors, national boundaries, and less concrete topics such as diplomatic recognition, the "Open Door," and noninterference in domestic political affairs.

Dr. Blaker's evaluation of these diverse case studies leads him to identify a distinctive and remarkably consistent style of Japanese negotiating behavior. Japanese negotiators, he points out, would carefully analyze their opponent's thinking in order to settle upon realistic goals and then harness all their resources to reach these goals, even when success seemed doubtful. Blaker outlines the many handicaps that Japanese diplomats faced in pursuing this approach in negotiations—cumbersome policymaking processes, ambiguous instructions, bureaucratic rivalries, limited discretionary latitude, a lack of flexibility, and a reputation among opposing negotiators for being unattractive and even treacherous bargaining partners.

Blaker finds that despite these many obstacles, the Japanese were largely successful in negotiations. In exploring the reasons why Japan performed relatively well at the con-

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Japanese International Negotiating Style

Studies of the East Asian Institute
Columbia University

To
Professor Peter Berton

The East Asian Institute of Columbia University

The East Asian Institute of Columbia University was established in 1949 to prepare graduate students for careers dealing with East Asia, and to aid research and publication on East Asia during the modern period. The Studies of the East Asian Institute were inaugurated in 1962 to bring to a wider public the results of significant new research on modern and contemporary East Asia.

Preface

MOST OF THE LITERATURE on pre-World War II Japanese diplomacy and foreign policy is the product of the historian; few works on the subject in either Japanese or English reflect the political scientist's concern with identifying and analyzing political processes and patterns. All too often, studies dealing with Japanese diplomacy have been, at one extreme, mere chronicles with lists of treaties or, at the other extreme, highly interpretative, usually quite biased short accounts of dubious scholarly value. Although some top quality monographs exist that treat certain isolated events with care and in detail, for the most part there has been regrettably little effort in the study of modern Japanese diplomacy to blend political science and history, to apply some of the newer theoretical concepts and approaches to old historical data with the hope that fresh insights might emerge.

One such recent concern of some political scientists has been the conceptualization of international bargaining, or negotiation. Fred Charles Iklé, the most noted of these specialists, defines negotiation as a process of interaction through which governments explicitly attempt to arrange a new combination of their common and conflicting interests. The number of books and articles that focus upon this process of international interaction has risen sharply since Iklé's pioneering work, *How Nations Negotiate*, was published in 1964. With the exception of Iklé's book, and possibly Arthur Lall's *Modern International Negotiation* (1966), however, the emphasis in the remaining literature has been upon Soviet-American negotiations, particularly the postwar disarmament conferences, and Chinese

Communist bargaining behavior.¹ Other research on negotiations, notably that using gaming and experimental modeling techniques, is interesting, but so far has produced little of worth to the historian and the political scientist, who must deal with actual political situations involving the complex interplay of numerous factors. In-depth analyses of the negotiatory behavior of states other than the Soviet Union, the United States, and Communist China are lacking, even though the inclusion of other major actors in the international system is obviously a necessary next step in the evolution of a general theory of negotiation.

Many nations, especially those of Western Europe, appear to have such similar attitudes toward negotiation, bargaining tactics, and domestic policymaking pressures that little if anything resembling coherent, identifiable national "styles" can be isolated.² Communist and totalitarian states also seem to form a separate grouping since they also share generally similar behavioral patterns.

But all nations do not negotiate alike; there are distinctive patterns of bargaining style that characterize the behavior of representatives of specific nations. Variations in national bargaining styles, moreover, seem to be the result of the combination of attributes, which, for purposes of analysis, can be classified into three categories: attitudes toward conflict resolution in international relations and the negotiating process; government bureaucratic and policy-making/communication patterns; and bargaining strategies and tactics.

This study deals with Japan's bargaining "style," with style defined as the composite of those characteristic patterns appearing repeatedly in its negotiatory behavior. It is submitted that there were such recurring patterns in Japan's pre-World War II bargaining behavior. In other words, it is argued that Japan had

¹For example: Dennett and Johnson, eds., *Negotiating with the Russians*; Lall, *How Communist China Negotiates*; Leites, *Styles of Negotiation: East and West on Arms Control 1958-1961*; Spanier and Noguee, *The Politics of Disarmament*; Young, *Negotiating with the Chinese Communists*.

²Fred Charles Iklé, *How Nations Negotiate*, p. 224.

its own peculiar negotiating style that appeared repeatedly over an extended time span under widely varying historical circumstances.

Japan presents a fascinating example of a non-Western, non-Communist country, a latecomer to international conferences and Western diplomacy, whose direction of negotiations during the pre-World War II period reveals conspicuous and consistent features. For one thing, its diplomatic conduct was heavily influenced by domestic political factors. It is hypothesized that Japan, largely because of its cumbersome policy-making apparatus and the fierce competition that took place among domestic groups over foreign policy questions, faced grave obstacles in managing negotiations smoothly and effectively: poor communication between negotiators and the home government, inadequate preparations for bargaining, numerous violations of instructions by Japanese negotiating representatives, recurrent breakdowns in relations among the members of Japan's conference delegations, and a lack of flexibility at the conference table.

It is further submitted that Japan conducted negotiations with a second serious handicap—an extraordinary inability to inspire trust and confidence among opposing leaders and diplomats. Commenting on the persistence of the negative foreign view of Japan, historian Hilary Conroy has stated: "The image of the Japanese as a two-faced people and of Japanese foreign policy as being continuously devious from the Meiji era to Pearl Harbor is a very strong one in the Western world."³

Commodore Matthew Perry was perhaps the first to record an impression of Japanese perfidy when he wrote over a century ago: "A Japanese . . . never takes offence at being charged with disingenuousness or even with duplicity. One would suppose that they consider it a compliment to be thought tricky and deceitful."⁴ Perry's list of complaints did not end with Japanese duplicity. He considered the Japanese to be masters of the art of polite evasion, and given to foot-dragging, meaningless objec-

³Conroy, *The Japanese Seizure of Korea 1868-1910*, p. 181.

⁴Pineau, ed., *The Japan Expedition 1852-1854: The Personal Journal of Commodore Matthew C. Perry*, p. 214.

tions, attention to trivia, foolish tenacity in the face of superior force, and abrupt, pointless policy shifts.⁵ A later American envoy, Townsend Harris, shared Perry's views. Like Perry, he felt that only a policy of firmness would work against the Japanese. As Harris phrased it in his diary: "The more I yielded and acquiesced, the more they would impose on me, while, by taking a bold attitude and assuming a threatening tone, I should at once bring them to terms."⁶ Perry, Harris, and countless others since have played a part in the creation of a negative stereotype of the Japanese as a people prone to courteous hypocrisy and artful mendacity. Whenever foreigners have had occasion to wonder at what was going on behind the "inscrutable," "impenetrable," or "impassive" Japanese countenance, they have assumed the worst. As one observer summed up the Japanese mentality: "In Oriental diplomacy there is no room for scruples . . . the ethics of *bushidō* make no distinction between ways that are dark and tricks which are vain as long as the aim is attained."⁷

This study is concerned neither with tracing the origins of the Western stereotypic view of Japan nor with delineating the features of that view. As the previous sampling of quotations shows, the negative image of the Japanese originated early and has lasted long. More importantly, however, it seems to have had its genesis at least partially in negotiating contexts. The pertinent issue here, given the fact that the Western perception of Japan took shape in part across the conference table during diplomatic negotiations, is whether the Japanese diplomatic "style"—its bargaining methods and behavior—constituted a justifiable basis for such a negative foreign impression.

⁵*Ibid.*, pp. 174–240.

⁶Cozenza, ed., *The Complete Journal of Townsend Harris*, entry for January 9, 1858, p. 496. Interestingly, some 75 years later, during the U.S. Senate hearings after the conclusion of the London Naval Conference in 1930, Rear Admiral H. A. Wiley had this to say on the topic of the Japanese character: "Certainly as for the Oriental, you do not gain any good will from him [by giving away something], you just lose his respect for you, and next time he will ask for a great deal more." United States Senate, 71st Congress, 2nd Session, *Hearings before the Committee on Naval Affairs on the London Naval Treaty of 1930* (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1930), p. 420.

⁷Pooley, ed., *The Secret Memoirs of Count Tadasu Hayashi*, p. 73. This is Pooley's statement.

Because of Japan's incapacity to win the trust of leaders from other countries and its weaknesses, or apparent weaknesses, in formulating and communicating national policy effectively, one might think that it would have performed poorly in international negotiations. In fact, however, Japan only rarely failed to succeed in its international bargaining encounters during the prewar period, at least in terms of satisfying its initial minimum expectations. Final outcomes exceeded preconference expectations in nearly every case.

How was this possible? It is argued here that Japan's success resulted at least partially from an intense commitment to national goals. The ability to establish and hold fast to a given position—what might be termed commitment power—is the main ingredient of bargaining power, and hence of negotiating success. It is also the primary element that permits the analyst to distinguish national negotiatory "styles." Japanese diplomats had a deep sense of personal and national mission, which was expressed during negotiations as a persistent, dogged determination to win. Indeed, a central aspect of this study relates to the tenacity of what might be called Japan's "samurai diplomats" in executing national policies once these had been translated into specific bargaining instructions by the Japanese government, and the intensity of the Japanese diplomat's desire to reach negotiated agreements. It is submitted that this perseverance not only helped shape Japanese bargaining style but on occasion produced success where less dedication might have ended in failure.

METHOD OF ANALYSIS

The consistent patterns in the Japanese bargaining approach are best isolated by systematically examining and comparing selected sets of actual negotiations between Japan and a number of other countries. For this study, eighteen such cases have been chosen for analysis, as follows:

- Sino-Japanese negotiations (Shimonoseki Treaty), 1895
- Negotiations for the first Anglo-Japanese Alliance, 1901-02

Russo-Japanese negotiations (Portsmouth Treaty), 1905
Sino-Japanese negotiations (21 Demands), 1915
Russo-Japanese Alliance negotiations, 1916
Negotiations leading to the Lansing-Ishii Agreement, 1917
Nishihara Loans negotiations (Sino-Japanese), 1918
Paris Peace Conference, 1918–19
Dairen Conference (Soviet-Japanese), 1921
Washington Conference for the Limitation of Armaments, 1921–22
Changchun Conference (Soviet-Japanese), 1922
Peking Conference (Soviet-Japanese), 1924–25
London Naval Conference, 1930
Chinese Eastern Railway Negotiations (Soviet-Japanese), 1932–35
Anti-Comintern Pact negotiations and subsequent bargaining to strengthen the pact (Japan, Germany, Italy), 1936–39
Tripartite Pact negotiations (Japan, Germany, Italy), 1940
Soviet-Japanese Neutrality Pact negotiations, 1941
U.S.-Japanese pre-Pearl Harbor negotiations, 1941

In selecting cases for analysis, several objectives were kept in mind. First, an attempt was made to pick negotiations that would represent the diversity of Japan's prewar bargaining partners. It is frequently asserted that Japan's diplomatic behavior varies according to the relative power position of the adversary. It is also claimed that Japan, whose traditional domestic patterns of conflict resolution have tended to follow strict hierarchical lines, adheres to similar rules in dealing with foreign countries. Further, it is often observed that Japan tends to perform better in bilateral diplomatic encounters than in multilateral conference settings. Detailed study of one type of international interaction—negotiation in bilateral and multilateral contexts against many different opponents—can show whether such differences exist.

A second concern was that a variety of negotiating subjects be included. In some of the cases chosen, the spoils were concrete and measurable—railroads, coal mines, battleships, islands, harbors, and national boundaries. In others, the rewards were political and much more ambiguous—diplomatic recognition,

noninterference in domestic political affairs, the "Open Door," or Chinese "territorial integrity." Such a wide assortment of topics provides some basis for evaluating, for example, how compromise rates and levels relate to the subject matter under discussion, how political and economic issues are interrelated, or whether some subjects are more amenable to compromise solutions than others.

Third, because patterns of political behavior become evident only over a considerable period of time, the cases chosen for analysis cover a broad expanse of the modern Japanese diplomatic experience. They extend as far back as 1895 to the tentative beginnings of Japan's continental involvement and continue to its epochal challenge to the United States at Pearl Harbor a half-century later. Examining a particular type of behavior over such a long period enables the student to transcend at least partially the limits inherent in the investigation of a single case. Any one of the cases outlined for study here could form the basis for a separate analysis, and even a doctoral dissertation. Many, in fact, already have. In any event, the appraisal of a large number of cases provides the opportunity to reach much more reliable and meaningful conclusions regarding the Japanese approach to negotiation than a study confined to any one historical context.

A final concern in selecting the cases for study was that they were researchable. This practical consideration is crucial for two reasons. First, there must be sufficient source material available in primary and secondary English and Japanese sources to reconstruct a full history of the flow of events during bargaining. Second, and most crucially, adequate evaluation of a nation's performance in international negotiations requires some knowledge of the relative preference value of various negotiating proposals and plans. Fortunately, in the case of Japan, the researcher has ready access to an almost embarrassingly rich supply of documents and primary materials relating to the policymaking process in Tokyo before and during negotiations. Moreover, the texts of dispatches and other communications between the Japanese negotiator and the Tokyo govern-