

## Japanese Perspective of Total War

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### Introduction

There is a report entitled “Reflections on the Direction of the War” created by the Investigation Division of the Navy Ministry dated August 1, 1945 and its subtitle is “Various Reasons for Causing the Current Phase of War.” This report was drawn up only two weeks before the end of the Second World War.

The food situation was severely deteriorating and the national life was suffering from poverty in Japan at that time. In addition, mainland air attacks by the U.S. Task Force from the Mariana Base became intense. As a result, the casualty toll reached about 215,000 and the production capacities of the heavy industry and the petroleum industry were lost by about 40% and 65% on average, respectively, during five months from January 1945.<sup>1</sup> In July, the mainland Japan from Hokkaido to Kyushu was exposed to attacks by the carrier-based aircraft of the Allies and coastal cities were hit by naval gunfire. Although ground transportation had barely been maintained, marine transportation was disconnected by mines laid by the U.S. forces.<sup>2</sup> The Japanese political and strategic system was on the verge of collapse.

When situations were rapidly changing because of the atomic bombing of Hiroshima on August 6 and the participation of the Soviet Union in the war on August 9, the Investigation Division of the Navy Ministry explained as follows in the above mentioned report entitled “Reflections on the Direction of the War.”

We strongly believe that our inferior military power to that of the U.S. is not necessarily the sole reason for our defeat in the war. Everyone says that we could not realize the full potential of the empire. Thus we ask the question: Why could we not do so? Why has the true total war system not been established? There are reasons for the need for criticizing the direction of the war.<sup>3</sup>

Needless to point out again, persons in charge of operation of the Army and the Navy predicted

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<sup>1</sup> Sokichi Takagi, *Taiheiyō Kaisenshi (History of the Battles in the Pacific)*, Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, Publishers, 1949, p. 154.

<sup>2</sup> Minoru Nomura, *Taiheiyō Senso to Nippon Gumbū (The Pacific War and the Japanese Military)*, Tokyo: Yamakawa Shuppansha, 1983, p. 370.

<sup>3</sup> Investigation Division of the Navy Ministry, “Senso Shido no Hansei (Reflections on the Direction of the War),” August 1, 1945, owned by Center for Military History, the National Institute for Defense Studies (CMH, NIDS).

before the war commenced that it would be long-term total war. However, Japan had headed toward defeat without “realizing the full potential of the empire” in the total war Japan had intended. Why could Japan not “realize the full potential?”

Thus I would like to examine the direction of the war under a situation of total war, while focusing on the military strategy of Japan during the Pacific War, and then address its problems.

### **1. Military Strategy at the Time When the War Started and Forecast of Protracted Warfare**

The “Draft Proposal for Hastening the End of the War against the U.S., Britain, Holland and Chinang” (hereinafter, referred to as the “Draft Proposal”) adopted by the Liaison Conference between the Government and Imperial General Headquarters on November 15, 1941 could be called the only Japanese war plan or grand strategy already completed before the Pacific War broke out.<sup>4</sup> As a matter of fact, “the Outline to be Followed in the Future for Guiding the War” (hereinafter, referred to as the “Outline”) was revised four times. As a starting point, it provides the fundamental issues for military strategy as well as for other political strategy measures at the different times.

The principle for ending the war the “Draft Proposal” described was to “beat the Chiang regime by active measures and then bring the Britain into submission in cooperation with Germany and Italy for the purpose of depriving the United States of the will to continue the war.”<sup>5</sup> The main enemy was the U.S. However, as Japan did not have the military power to defeat the U.S. in direct confrontation, it intended to discourage the U.S. from continuing the war instead. Japanese leaders as a result came to aim toward defeating China or the U.K., major allies of U.S. in the west and east respectively.

Although defeating China was the only strategy Japan could have achieved on its own, there was no means for Japanese leaders to achieve that goal with certainty for the time being. On the other hand, a military measure Japan could have taken to defeat U.K. was that the Japanese Army would implement a joint operation in West Asia and India in response to the advancement of Italy and Germany into the Caucasus and North Africa to threaten the British sphere of influence. This strategic concept generally called as “western offense” strategy begun to occupy the core of the Army’s strategic concept, but Japanese leaders did not coordinate with Italy and Germany in advance. Japanese leaders had a plan of implementing it depending on a subsequent transition of phase of the war.

In any case, Japanese leaders at that time fully understood that Japan did not have the military power

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<sup>4</sup> Kumao Imoto, *Sakusen Nisshi de Tsuduru Daitoasenso (The Great East Asia War written based on the Operation Diary)*, Tokyo: Fuyo Shobo Shuppan, 1979, p. 57.

<sup>5</sup> Office of the Army’s General Staff, ed., *Sugiyama Memo (Memorandum of Sugiyama)*, Vol. 1, Tokyo: Hara Shobo, 1989, pp. 523-525.

to defeat the U.S. in direct confrontation; Japan did not have sufficient strategic material resources to prosecute long-term total war with the U.S., which was what they highly expected.

Thus, in the guidelines of the “Draft Proposal,” it was planned that “Imperial Japan enforces an armed conflict expeditiously to ensure strategic supremacy in East Asia and the Western and Southern Pacific and to develop a long-term self-sufficient state by securing important supply centers of resources and principal transportation routes.”<sup>6</sup> This means that Japan intended to secure important supply centers of resources in areas it was going to attack and principal transportation routes to transport those resources to Japan with a view to developing a long-term self-sufficient state so that Japan would not be defeated on the premise of victory in the southern operation in the early stage of the war.

The Liaison Conference held on October 25, 1941 predicted that “the initial southern operation of the Army is expected to be extremely difficult but we are sure that we could succeed in the operation” and that “the initial operation and the intercepting operation of the Navy are expected to have a high chance of winning.”<sup>7</sup> They were very confident of the victory of Japan.

The problem was whether physical national strength of Japan could endure long-term total war after the attack toward the south. The steel production ratio of Japan and the U.S. was 1 to 10 and additionally Japan had to fight against the U.K., Holland and China.<sup>8</sup> Japan had to depend on other countries in terms of basic important resources for modern wars such as iron ore (raw material for various weapons and means of production), petroleum (fuel for vessels, aircraft, tanks and vehicles), bauxite (basic raw material for aircraft), salt (scientific and industrial raw material/food) and rubber to a large extent. In fact, the self-sufficient rate of those resources was 7% for iron ore and petroleum, 25% for salt and 0% for bauxite and rubber.<sup>9</sup> The domestic petroleum stock was only enough for satisfying the demand for about two years. That is why Osami Nagano, Chief of the Naval General Staff, who was the leader of the Naval Command, said that it was impossible to plan the war after the third year.<sup>10</sup>

There is a document entitled *Taiheiyo Senso no Mitoshi oyobi Kihonteki Senryaku ni Tsuite* (Prospect and Basic Strategy of the Pacific War)<sup>11</sup> which contains the recognition on situations of persons in charge

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<sup>6</sup> Office of the Army’s General Staff, ed., *Sugiyama Memo (Memorandum of Sugiyama)*, Vol. 1, Tokyo: Hara Shobo, 1989, pp. 523-525.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 364.

<sup>8</sup> Ikuhiko Hata, “Senso Shumatsu Koso no Saikento: Nichibei no Shiten kara (Review of the Vision of War Termination: From the Japanese and the U.S. Perspectives),” in *Dainiji Sekaitaisen (3) - Shusen (World War II, Vol. 3: The Termination of the War)*, Tokyo: Kinseisha, 1995, p. 21.

<sup>9</sup> Yoshio Ando, *Taiheiyo Senso no Keizaishiteki Kenkyu (The Economic Historical Study on the Pacific War)*, Tokyo: University of Tokyo Press, 1987, pp. 83-84.

<sup>10</sup> Military History Society of Japan, ed., *Daihon’ei Rikugumbu, Senso Shidohan, Kimitsu Senso Nisshi (Section of the Direction of the War; the Army General Staff Office, Confidential War Diary)*, Vol. 1, Tokyo: Kinseisha, 1998, p. 180.

<sup>11</sup> “*Taiheiyo Senso no Mitoshi Oyobi Kihontekisenryaku ni Tsuite* (Prospect and Basic Strategy of the Pacific War),” in Motohide Sato and Fumitaka Kurosawa eds., *GHQ Rekishika Chinjutsuroku - Shusenshi Shiryo (Statement Records of GHP History Division: Materials on History of the Termination of the War)*, Vol. 2, Tokyo: Hara Shobo, 2002,

of operation of the Army and the Navy at that time. According to this document, though the attacking and the intercepting operations in the early stage of the war were expected to be successful, a result of subsequent long-term total war was unpredictable. However, the government and the Imperial General Headquarters of the Army and the Navy (the Office of the Army's General Staff and the Naval General Staff) believed that long-term total war was not necessarily unfeasible coupled with an expectation on superiority of Italy and Germany in the European battlefield and that it could lead to end somehow.

On November 5, 1941, what Teiichi Suzuki, President of the Planning Bureau, explained in the Imperial Conference was "as we have a high prospect of winning in the initial stage of the war, we are convinced that we have an advantage in maintaining and reinforcing the national strength by utilizing that assured result compared to a waiting strategy until the enemy starts to oppress us."<sup>12</sup> Reflecting this opinion of the President of the Planning Bureau, the "Basic Strategy of War Economy" decided in the Liaison Conference on November 12, 1941 stated "we expect to secure resources and goods for national defense in the Greater East Asia Co-prosperity Sphere and to expeditiously enhance and improve our country's ability to wage war."<sup>13</sup> National deliberations on each strategic factor such as maritime transportation capacity, petroleum, food and other important strategic goods required for long-term total war after the initial operation would complete had seldom been made until 1940. Deliberations on those factors started on a full scale in 1941, but "they were made on impulse and the opinion that Japan could endure long-term war became dominant in the end."<sup>14</sup>

That is how the "grand strategy" to prescribe the entire war of Japan was designed. Nevertheless, the victory in the initial stage of war was the only prospective measure for success. Thus, excessive emphasis was given on the victory in the initial stage and people believed that it could lead into the victory in the entire war. In other words, Japanese leaders in those days had an optimistic view on the European phase of war, initial operation and national physical strength and determined to wage war based on the judgment that Japan had advantage.<sup>15</sup> With the anticipation or expectation that compromise from their enemies would bring the chance of peace talks, as had happened in previous wars, they drew up the "Outline."

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pp. 793-795.

<sup>12</sup> Office of the Army's General Staff, ed., *Sugiyama Memo*, (*Memorandum of Sugiyama*), Vol. 1, Tokyo: Hara Shobo, 1989, p. 425.

<sup>13</sup> "Senso keizai Kihon Horyaku (Basic Strategy of War Economy)" suggested by the Planning Bureau and decided in the Liaison Conference on November 10, 1941 in the Office of the Army's General Staff, ed., *Sugiyama Memo* (*Memorandum of Sugiyama*), Vol. 1, p. 518.

<sup>14</sup> Minoru Nomura, "Dainiji Sekaitaisen ni Okeru Nippon no Senso Keikaku (Japanese War Plans during World War II)," in *Gunjishi Gaku* (*Military History*), Vol. 14 (March 1978), p. 142.

<sup>15</sup> Kiyoshi Ikeda, "Nippon no Senso Shido Keikaku: Kaisenji no Senso Shuketsu Koso wo Chushin ni shite (The Japanese Plans of the Direction of the War: With a Focus on the Vision of War Termination at the Time of its Outbreak)," in *Hogaku* (*The Journal of Law and Political Sciences*), Vol. 43 No. 2, July 1979, pp. 151-183.

## 2. Discord in the “Outline” and Expansion of Operations of the Army and the Navy

At the beginning of February 1942 only two months after the outbreak of war, deliberations for the first “Outline” initiated, because the southern offensive operation was expected to complete in most part in early March and it was necessary to draw out a subsequent strategic concept as early as possible.

However, it was difficult for the Army and the Navy to reach an agreement over their different opinions. The Army used to place emphasis on the “western offense” strategy and insisted that Japan should shift to a long-term enduring system by controlling the expansion of the battle line once the southern area was occupied. The Army was planning to give priority to the development of important resources and reinforcement of national strength and war capability and to deploy forces obtained by this into the area of India and West Asia that was expected to be a next battle front. The Navy, on the other hand, insisted that such a defensive approach would be dominated by the Allies’ national strength to be reinforced later on so that Japan should implement a continuous offensive operation against enemy’s bases of counterattack.

Both the Army and the Navy refused to yield and the first “Outline” decided in March 7 described both the defensive and the offensive operations.<sup>16</sup> The “Outline” was very provisional and passible in that it stated that future specific measures were going to be decided judging situations.<sup>17</sup>

Later, the Naval General Staff which had given emphasis on Australia as the biggest base of the U.S. and U.K. for counterattack against Japan planned the FS Operation (offensive operation against Fiji, Samoa and New Caledonia) in early June by compromise with the Army with a view to blocking the communication route between U.S. and Australia. However, the Combined Fleet had a more aggressive offensive operation in mind. The plan was to implement the Midway Operation in early June and postpone the FS Operation to early July, as an emergency measure until preparations for the operation of attacking on Hawaii planned in October completed. This was because the Japanese Navy judged that if the operation of attacking the Midway Island, a military outpost of Hawaii, was implemented, a decisive battle with the U.S. Navy would become inevitable and if the Japanese Navy could destroy the U.S. Navy completely, the subsequent FS Operation would be easier to implement. In the end, the operation plans of the Navy in the second phase decided on April 5 clearly reflected the opinion of the Combined Fleet. Therefore, the Midway operation was officially approved in advance of the FS Operation and the

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<sup>16</sup> “Kongo Torubeki Sensoshido no Taiko (Outline of the Direction of the War to be Followed Henceforth),” decided in the Liaison Conference on March 7, 1942, Office of the Army’s General Staff, ed., *Sugiyama Memo (Memorandum of Sugiyama)*, Vol. 2, Tokyo: Hara Shobo, 1989, pp. 81-82.

<sup>17</sup> Office of Military History, National Defense College, Defense Agency, *Senshi Soshō: Daihon’ei Rikugumbū (Series of Military History: The Army Department of the Imperial General Headquarters)*, Vol. 3, Tokyo: Asagumo Shinbunsha, 1970, p. 520.

Aleutian Operation was decided to be implemented simultaneously.

When the Midway and Aleutian Operations were presented to the emperor for his approval in April 16 as the operations of the Navy in the second phase and approved officially, the Army also presented the future operations in the areas of the south and the Pacific to the emperor for his approval by Hajime Sugiyama, Chief of the Army's General Staff.<sup>18</sup> Its content was that the Army would only participate in the FS Operation and would not participate in the Midway and Aleutian Operations among the second operations planned by the Navy. As a future plan of the Army, the southern operation was still in force so that a future operative plan was going to be prepared by the end of April and enforced in accordance with the change of subsequent situations, making modifications to it if necessary. It was because that the Imperial General Headquarters made a judgment on situation that full-scale counterattacks of the U.S. forces would start approximately in 1943.<sup>19</sup>

However, it did not take the Allies much time to develop a counterattack posture. Admiral Chester Nimitz, who was appointed as the Commander of the U.S. Pacific Fleet after Pearl Harbor suffered from a sudden attack, had the task force including two carriers approach the sea off Japan and bomb major cities. A tricky tactic of having bombers take off a carrier and land on mainland China was called as Doolittle Raid and had a strong psychological effect on Japanese leaders in those days. It was decided to dispatch Army forces for the Midway and Aleutian operations led by the Navy inspired by this raid and a large-scale destruction operation of air bases of the enemy (Sekkan operation) of the Army was invoked in mainland China. The Army and the Navy started to expand their operations in two fronts of the Pacific and the continent without establishing a sufficient long-term endurance posture in the southern sphere.

The FS Operation was cancelled, however, because Japan suffered a heavy loss in the Midway Operation on June 5 and four major carriers were lost. Lieutenant General Shin'ichi Tanaka, Chief of the First Bureau (operation) of the Army General Staff Office then, described an impact of the defeat in the Midway operation as "unexpected heavy loss, the supremacy in the Pacific has been lost"<sup>20</sup> in his business diary. He also described that the defeat in Midway "indicated a huge setback of the offensive strategy in the Pacific area and that aggressive measures in the "Outline" decided on March 7 were on the verge of failure."<sup>21</sup> The focus of the subsequent leading of war was put on how Japan could ask the Axis

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<sup>18</sup> "Kongo no Nampo oyobi Taiheiyo Homen Sakusen ni tsuite (On the Coming Operations in the areas of the South and the Pacific)," in "Sambo Hombu Shiryo: Showa 17 nen Joso Kankei Shorui Tsuduri (Materials of the Office of the Army's General Staff: Compilations of Documents Prepared for Presentation before the Emperor in 1942)," Vol. 1, No. 2, owned by CMH, NIDS.

<sup>19</sup> "Sekai Josei Handan (Judgment on World Situations)," decided in the Liaison Conference on March 7, 1942, Office of the Army's General Staff, ed., *Sugiyama Memo (Memorandum of Sugiyama)*, Vol. 2, p. 67.

<sup>20</sup> "Tanaka Shin'ichi Chujo Kaisoroku (Memoirs of Lieutenant General Shin'ichi Tanaka)," Vol. 3, owned by CMH, NIDS, p. 313.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*

for cooperation in war.

In such situation, the Italian and Germany armies under the direction of General Erwin Rommel restarted the attack on May 27 in the North African battlefield. They occupied Tobruk, Libya, on June 21 (the battle was expected to be decisive in the North African battlefield), and then invaded the Egyptian territory two days later. In Japan, the interests of the Army and the Navy were turned rapidly to West Asia and India as soon as the report of success of the Rommel's army in North Africa spread. The Army started to prepare for the Ceylon Island operation and the East India invasion operation, while the Navy planned to implement the Indian Ocean operation in October. It was an opportunistic response along with the European phase of war, because Japan could not find any measure for breaking the deadlock by its own.

The Army and the Navy had implemented the full-scale West Asian invasion operation and the counterattack of the U.S. Army in the Guadalcanal Island started in early August when a momentum for the alliance among Japan, Italy and Germany to bring the United Kingdom into submission as shown in the "Draft" was raised. Although the Japanese Army tried to get the Guadalcanal Island back many times but it resulted in great damage every time. Also, it now became an urgent issue to break the deadlock in the southeast Pacific and the West Asia invasion operation of the Army and the Navy was cancelled taking the alliance with Italy and Germany into consideration and they had no choice but to integrally focus on the Pacific-oriented approach after that.

On February 27, 1943 when the Japanese Army completed the retreat from the Guadalcanal Island, Department of the Army and the Navy of the Imperial General Headquarters reviewed the conventional "policy of the direction of the war to defeat the Britain"<sup>22</sup> and decided a new "Outline" in the Imperial Conference on September 30. The biggest purpose of this second "Outline" was to retreat from fierce war of attrition in the southeast Pacific which had continued after the retreat from the Guadalcanal Island and to diminish the battle line in accordance with the national strength of Japan. The "Outline" set the areas to be secured at any cost as the "sphere including the Kuril Islands, the Ogasawara Islands and New Guinea, Sunda and Burma in the inner south (mid-west) and west Pacific."<sup>23</sup> Japan intended to check the counterattack of the Allies by its counteroffensive strength based on air forces in that sphere.

The formulation of the "Outline" which had been deliberated since February 1943 completed and the discord of the Army and the Navy on tactics and strategies seemed to be corrected to a large extent.

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<sup>22</sup> "Daihon'ei Seifu Renrakukaigi Gijiroku (Minutes of the Liaison Conference)," Vol. 4/6, the 137th Liaison Conference on February 17, 1943, owned by CMH, NIDS. This document said that it was on February 17 when the 137th Liaison Conference took place but that is obviously an error according to the descriptions around the part of the conference and in "Kimitsu Senso Nisshi (Confidential War Diary)," Vol. 5, the item of February 17, 1943. So, the date should be February 27.

<sup>23</sup> "Kongo Torubeki Sensoshido no Taiko (Outline of the Direction of the War to be Followed Henceforth)," Office of the Army's General Staff, ed., *Sugiyama Memo (Memorandum of Sugiyama)*, Vol. 2, p. 473.

However, the concept of establishing a defense line by constructing positions was in nature of ground battle, not of naval battle. Thus, the Army and the Navy agreed on the geographical scope of the crucial areas to be secured at any cost,<sup>24</sup> that is, the “absolute national defense sphere” in the second “Outline,” but their underlying thoughts were different. While the Army intended to counterattack in the principal back line by securing the current occupied areas in the “absolute national defense sphere,” the Navy intended to wage a decisive battle by going forward to the waters of Marshall and Gilbert across 2,000 km of the “absolute national defense sphere.”<sup>24</sup> Such front decisive battle thought of the Navy was obviously different from the absolute national defense sphere thought of the Army.

Nevertheless, the principle of the second “Outline” only described “counterattacking forces of the enemy shall be captured and destroyed as needed”<sup>25</sup> to prevent the different strategic thoughts of the Army and the Navy from being expressed. This “Outline” was, therefore, became to have “different connotations of those ideas.” As Kenryo Sato, Chief of the Military Affairs Bureau, Ministry of the Army, commented after the war, “the decision made in the Imperial Conference on the absolute national defense sphere was nothing but a linguistic accordance.”<sup>26</sup> Therefore, the subsequent operations expanded inside and outside the “absolute national defense sphere” based on the Army’s and the Navy’s agendas.

### 3. Limit of National Strength and Operational Demands

It was possible for the Army and the Navy to expand their own operations in the early stage of the Pacific War without taking the comprehensive national strength into consideration. However, after fierce war of attrition had started against the Allies that landed the Guadalcanal Island from early August in 1942, military goods, vessels and aircraft were lost in large quantity so that it became impossible to approve operational demands of the Army and the Navy without limit anymore. That was because if a large quantity of civil vessels was converted into military vessels to make up for operational vessels, the transportation of resources from the southern area to mainland Japan would be limited, having a great impact on reinforcement of the national strength including the munitions production. As Shin’ichi Tanaka recalled, then arose a problem: “to which the priority should be given vessels for enforcing operations or vessels for building up the nation.”<sup>27</sup>

<sup>24</sup> “Kongo no Sakusen ni kansuru Ken (Regarding the Coming Operations),” September 15, 1943, “Sambo Hombu Shiryo: Showa 18 nen Joso Kankei Shorui Tsuduri (Materials of the Office of the Army’s Staff: Compilations of Documents Prepared for Presentation before the Emperor in 1942),” Vol. 2, owned by CMH, NIDS.

<sup>25</sup> “Kongo Torubeki Senso Shido no Taiko (Outline of the Direction of the War to be Followed Henceforth),” Office of the Army’s General Staff, ed., *Sugiyama Memo (Memorandum of Sugiyama)*, Vol. 2, p. 473.

<sup>26</sup> Kenryo Sato, “Daitoa Senso Shido - Dainidan Sakusenshido (The Direction of the Great East Asia War: The Direction of the Operations in the Second Phase),” December 8, 1941-October 1944, owned by CMH, NIDS.

<sup>27</sup> “Tanaka Shin’ichi Chujo Kaisoroku (Memoirs of Lieutenant General Shin’ichi Tanaka),” Vol. 5, owned by CMH,

After February 1943 when Japan retreated from the Guadalcanal Island, new battles of attrition were fought in the southeastern Pacific including the Solomon Islands and North New Guinea, Japan faced the limit of its national strength. The Army and the Navy, however, requested new supply every time a large quantity of vessels and aircraft is lost. Moreover, in August 1943, the Army and the Navy requested to convert 66 tons of civil vessels into military vessels for operational use and to increase the production of 55,000 aircraft.<sup>28</sup>

In those days, the tonnage of vessels allocated to the private and military sectors was 1.15 million tons for the Army, 1.14 million tons for the Navy and only 1.59 million tons for civil demand. Considering that the civil vessel tonnage required for the people's life was 3 million tons,<sup>29</sup> the civil vessel tonnage in those days was much lower than that and it was almost impossible to squeeze out 66 tons of vessels for operation.

The total production of aircraft of the Army and the Navy was only 18,000 annually, although they were expected to be forces of subsequent counterattacks. The increase in production of 55,000 airplanes was impossible to achieve.<sup>30</sup> Though the Planning Bureau that designed the plan for production increase was aware that it was impossible to meet those demands of the Army and the Navy, "it had to draw up a desk plan of production increase premised on imaginary conditions that are suspected to be enforced."<sup>31</sup> Furthermore, the situation got worse to the point where the Army and the Navy fought over aircraft based on that desk plan drawn up by the Planning Bureau. As the Army and the Navy wanted to obtain as many aircraft as possible, they had been in fierce conflict over limited aircraft by paying budget up-front to aircraft factories such as Mitsubishi Aircraft and Nakajima Aircraft or headhunting engineers of production process each other.<sup>32</sup>

When the dilemma of operational demands and limit of the national strength had started to emerge at once after 1943, the disparity of war capabilities between Japan and the United States further expanded

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<sup>28</sup> Office of Military History, National Defense College, Defense Agency ed., *Senshi Soshō: Daihō'ei Rikugūmbu (Series of Military History: The Army Department of the Imperial General Headquarters)*, Vol. 7, Tokyo: Asagumo Shimbunsha, 1973, pp. 233-235.

<sup>29</sup> The tonnage was figured out after the total amount of iron ore and coal necessary for maintaining the people's life was calculated. Based on that, the conversion into operational vessels was decided. (*Tanaka Shin'ichi-shi Danwa Sokkiroku [Stenographic Record of Comments by Mr. Shin'ichi Tanaka]* in *Naiseishi Kenkyū Shiryo [Materials for Study on history of Domestic Affairs]* Vol. 116, November 30, 1971, owned by CMH, NIDS, p. 47.)

<sup>30</sup> "Shitsugi Oto Keika Gaiyo (Summary of the Process of Questions and Answers)," recitation of Vice-chief of the Army General Staff, the 11th Imperial Conference on September 30, 1943, in "Daihō'ei Seifu Renrakukaigi Gijiroku (The minutes of the Liaison Conference between the Government and Imperial General Headquarters)," Vol. 6/6, February 1943-March 1944, owned by CMH, NIDS.

<sup>31</sup> Shin'ichi Tanaka, *Nippon Senso Keizai Hishi (Secret History of the Japanese War Economy)*, Tokyo: Nippon Senso Keizai Kankokai, 1974, p. 243.

<sup>32</sup> Masayasu Hosaka, *Tojo Hideki to Tenno no Jidai (The Age of Hideki Tojo and the Emperor)*, Vol. 2, Tokyo: Gendai Janarizumu Shuppankai, 1980, p. 75.

by the end of 1943. How should limited raw materials be used effectively to produce weapons and how should limited weapons be utilized for effective operations? They became important questions. The conflict between Ministries of the Army and the Navy supervising internal affairs such as the production of military goods and mobilization of goods and the Supreme Commands (the Army and Navy General Staff Offices) taking control of operations became fierce.<sup>33</sup>

Some measures were taken to deal with such situation. For example, Prime Minister Hideki Tojo enacted the “Special Provision on Wartime Administrative Authority” (Edict No. 133) in March 1943 to strengthen the Prime Minister’s right to give each minister an order with a view to enhance the production of important military goods such as steel, coal, light metal, vessels and aircraft. The Ministry of Munitions was established in November 1943 to centralize the authority over the production of aircraft to this ministry and Tojo himself doubled as Minister of Munitions to strengthen his control.

A series of those measures was a drastic reform after the cabinet’s inauguration to integrate pluralistic military administrative organizations in the past and to overcome unilateralism of each ministry with Prime Minister’s strengthened control.<sup>34</sup> However, the strengthening of Prime Minister’s control and reform of administrative organizations did not match the body of the Imperial General Headquarters of the Army and the Navy and he had to control the phase of war to the end in imbalance of operational demands and limit of national strength or national affairs and military command.

The measure taken by Prime Minister Tojo to fundamentally resolve such situation was to have Minister of the Army double President of the Office of the Army’s General Staff. If Prime Minister Tojo, who had already doubled Minister of the Army, would further double President of the Office of the Army’s General Staff, the separation of national affairs and military command could be integrated into one person and the limited national strength was expected to be exerted in a comprehensive manner.

Nonetheless, this measure for the purpose of strengthening the control over the Army and the Navy and coordinating national affairs and military command could accomplish its objective to a certain extent in terms of the Army, but Prime Minister Tojo could not participate in supreme command of the Navy at all.<sup>35</sup> Therefore, the doubling of Prime Minister Tojo as Chief of the Army General Staff was not advantageous but rather disadvantageous in that the centralization of excessive power and duties in one

<sup>33</sup> Yoko Kato, “Soryokusenka no Sei-Gun Kankei (The Civil-Military Relations under the Total War),” in *Iwanami Koza: Ajia Taiheiyo Senso (2) - Senso no Seijigaku (Iwanami Lecture Series: Asia-Pacific War, Vol. 2: Politics of War)*, Iwanami Shoten, 2005, p. 26.

<sup>34</sup> Sumio Hatano, “*Daitoa Senso*” no Jidai (*The Age of “the Great East Asia War”*), Tokyo: Asahi Shuppansha, 1988, pp. 230-231.

<sup>35</sup> Kyokuto Kokusai Gunjisaiban Sokkiroku 344-go (Stenographic Records of the International Military Tribunal for the Far East, No. 344), December 30, 1947, in *Kyokuto Kokusai Gunjisaiban Sokkiroku (Stenographic Records of the International Military Tribunal for the Far East Shortened Record)*, Tokyo: Yushodo, 1968, Asahi Shimbunsha Hotei Kishadan (Asahi Shimbun Group of Court Reporters), *Tokyo Saiban (Tokyo Tribunal)*, Vol. 2, Tokyo: Tokyo Saiban Kankokai, 1962), p. 901.

person (Prime Minister) caused confusion and measures were not implemented thoroughly.<sup>36</sup>

#### 4. From the Fall of Saipan to the Defeat

In June 1944, the U.S. Army landed on Saipan, a strategic point of the “absolute national defense sphere.” The Japanese Army ventured into a decisive maritime battle under Operation “A,” but Saipan fell into the hands of the U.S. on July 7. Koiso Kuniaki, who succeeded the Tojo cabinet on July 22, deliberated on a new policy of the direction of the war and decided the third “Outline” on August 19.<sup>37</sup> Under a situation where there was no hope for the phase of war to turn around and the production capability of the munitions industry had continued to decline since the beginning of 1944, the “Outline” prescribed that 70% to 80% of the national strength should be thrown into a decisive battle with the U.S. Army and the remaining forces should be used for long-term endurance measures. The third “Outline” was, however, nothing but a writing of little substance, because Japan did not have forces for a decisive battle and there was no hope of endurance.

In October 1944, the U.S. Army landed on Leyte Island, the Philippines. Though the Japanese Army mobilized its troops to wage a decisive battle, the phase of war did not go well as expected. In December 1944, Japan abandoned the decisive battle in Leyte and shifted to a protracted warfare by changing the battle line to Luzon Island. As a result of the defeat in Leyte, the Japanese Navy had lost a large part of aircraft and the communication line between mainland Japan and southern areas with resources was cut off.

In February 1945, the U.S. Army landed on Iwo Island and then the main island of Okinawa on April 1. After the Suzuki (Kantaro) cabinet was established instead of the Koiso (Kuniaki) cabinet, the fourth “Outline” was decided in the Imperial Conference on June 8.<sup>38</sup> The “Outline” stated “Japan persistently complete the war.” However, the situations then were totally different from the content of the “Outline” and it was impossible for Japan to continue the war. Thus, a peace negotiation intermediated by the Soviet Union was sought under the condition of honorable peace.<sup>39</sup> Japanese leaders then had predicted or expected that there would arise an opportunity for peace by compromise even just before the war ended. The Allies, however, required Japan to accept unconditional surrender to the end.

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<sup>36</sup> Takushiro Hattori, *Daitoasenso Zenshi (Complete History of the Great East Asia War)*, Tokyo: Hara Shobo, 1982, p. 571.

<sup>37</sup> “Kongo Torubeki Sensoshido no Taiko (Outline of the Direction of the War to be Followed Henceforth),” August 19, 1944 in *Haisen no Kiroku (Record of the Defeat)*, owned by the Office of the Army’s General Staff, Tokyo: Hara Shobo, 1989, pp. 55-57.

<sup>38</sup> “Kongo Torubeki Sensoshido no Kihon Taiko (Basic Outline of the Direction of the War to be Followed Henceforth) in *Haisen no Kiroku (Record of the Defeat, owned by The Office of the Army’s General Staff)*, pp. 265-266.

<sup>39</sup> *Kido Koichi Nikki (Diary of Koichi Kido)*, Vol. 2, Tokyo: University of Tokyo Shuppankai, 1966, p. 1209.

## Conclusion

The direction of the war of Japan under the total war, as we have seen, lacked a comprehensive strategy in a double sense. The biggest factor was that Japan designed the “grand strategy,” predicting or expecting that an opportunity for peace was going to arise in the end by compromise as in traditional wars. Since the grand strategy, which was to control the war as a whole, was based on the extremely vague above-mentioned vision of the end of war, it was not a surprise that the “Outline” derived therefrom was a “Outline” with the juxtaposition of the different strategic ideas of the Imperial Army and Navy, or different connotations of those ideas.

The juxtaposed or different-connotation “Outline” could not control the operations of the Army and Navy; as a result, the course of the war drastically changed in terms of the goals of operations; and the frontline also gradually extended. In a sequence of process from the “grand strategy” to the “Outlines” and then to operations of the Army and the Navy, we are able to observe the discontinuity between strategies and operations and this was another factor of repeating decision makings following situations based on operations. Operations of the Army and the Navy were not controlled by the “grand strategy” so that their objective and scale extended.

Such strategic disharmony and extension of operations in the Imperial General Headquarters had a strong impact on the Ministries of the Army and the Navy taking control of the production of military goods and mobilization of goods. The Ministries of the Army and of the Navy were thrown into fierce conflict over the allocation of national strength with the Imperial General Headquarters that complained about the limited national strength and strongly insisted operational demands, particularly after 1943 when the phase of war started to worsen. Once an operation initiated, however, the opinion of the Imperial General Headquarters was respected so that operations expanded further. The politics, economy and diplomacy were following those operations.<sup>40</sup>

Japanese leaders in those days recognized that war still meant an armed conflict and it would end by conditional peace in the end.<sup>41</sup> Therefore, the “grand strategy” that prescribed the entire war of Japan was based on an extremely ambiguous image on the conclusion of the war and it could not be a comprehensive strategy harmonized with a variety of factors such as politics, economy, diplomacy and military. Therefore, Japanese leaders of the war decentralized the national strength because of their

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<sup>40</sup> “Tojo Hideki Taisho Omori Kochishonai ni okeru Kangai (Impression of General Hideki Tojo in the Omori Prison),” owned by CMH, NIDS. The material in Tojo’s own hand with writing brush was found in the blank space of Doi Bansui, *Bansui Shisho (Selected Poems of Bansui)*, Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1940, which was fervently read by Tojo in the Omori Prison. Its title was given for convenience of order.

<sup>41</sup> Sadatoshi Tomioka, *Kaisen to Shusen (The Outbreak and the End of War)*, Tokyo: Mainichi Shimbunsha, 1968, p. 56.

continuous wishful thinking and opportunistic response, and failed to realize a fully-united national power. As a result, Japan finally had to face defeat.