

Key Personages During The Pre-War Period: 1939-1940

Japan*



- ***Konoe Fumimaro:*** Was distantly related to the Emperor and was a protégé of Prince Saionji Kinmochi. He attended the Versailles Peace Conference with Saionji. He served three times as Premier (1937-1939, 1940 and 1941). He took a hardline position regarding China and was an ardent supporter of the Tripartite Pact with Germany. His views began to change in 1941 as he realized war with the US was inadvisable.



- ***Tojo Hideki:*** Established himself within the Imperial Army as an able administrator and a disciplinarian, thus his nickname was “Razor.” Tojo rose to prominence in 1940 when as War Minister he punished officers who exceeded their authority in the occupation of North Indochina. He was a hardliner, especially toward the Soviet Union, but he believed strongly that the US should not impede Japan’s move southward. Tojo became Premier in October 1941 and led Japan into war with the US.
- Japanese names are in traditional Japanese format, which is family name first followed by the given name. This is the reverse of how Americans would display their names.



- **Nomura Kichisaburo:** Long, distinguished career as a Naval Officer. Was an acquaintance of FDR while stationed in the US during World War I. Participated in the London Naval Conference in 1930. Nomura served briefly as Foreign Minister in early 1939. Foreign Minister Matsuoka appointed Nomura ambassador to the U.S. in December 1940. Nomura actively tried to keep the peace between Japan and the US.



- **Kurusu Saburo:** Kurusu was a career diplomat. During his tenure as Ambassador to Germany, he signed the Tripartite Pact on behalf of Japan. In November 1941, Foreign Minister Togo assigned Kurusu to assist Nomura. Togo thought Kurusu understood the Americans better than Nomura and he was more proficient in English (his wife was American). Kurusu, like Nomura, tried to avert war with the US.



- **Matsuoka Yosuke:** Spent nine years in the US and received his law degree from the University of Oregon. Led the exit of the Japanese delegation from the League of Nations in 1933. Later he became President of the South Manchuria Railway. In July 1940, Premier Konoe appointed Matsuoka Foreign Minister. Matsuoka was vocal hardliner and was the prime advocate in the Konoe Cabinet for a German alliance and the establishment of the *Greater East Asia Co-prosperity Sphere*.



- **Sugiyama Hajime:** Became the Chief of Staff of the Imperial Army in 1940. Ardent Hardliner, who after the US froze Japanese assets in July 1941, declared all negotiations fruitless. He advocated war against the United States. Sugiyama said: *“If you are strong, the other side will back down.”*



- **Yoshida Zengo:** Served as Naval Minister during the first Konoe Cabinet. Yoshida opposed an alliance with Germany, but in early September 1940, Zengo suffered a nervous breakdown and resigned his post. His replacement Admiral Oikawa consented to signing the Tripartite Pact.



- **Nagano Osami:** Served as Navy Chief of Staff from early 1941 to February 1944. Initially opposed to war with the United States, Nagano became an advocate for immediate action against the United States, which he saw as the sole option to prevent Japan’s global decline.



- **Togo Shigenori:** A career diplomat, Matsuoka purged Togo's position as Ambassador to the Soviet Union. Togo had opposed the alliance with Germany. Premier Tojo appointed Togo Foreign Minister in October 1941. He believed that he could arrive at a peaceful solution with the United States, but misinterpreting the negotiations around his two peace proposals, led Togo to believe that Japan had no choice but to go to war.



- **Oshima Hiroshi:** Oshima was an ardent Germanophile and a strong admirer of Adolf Hitler. He participated in the signing of the Anti-Comintern Pact in 1936 and was instrumental in backroom negotiations concerning the Tripartite Pact. In December 1940, Matsuoka appointed Oshima Ambassador to Germany.



- **Hara Yoshimichi:** Hara served as President of the Privy Council, which was a group of distinguished leaders who advised the Emperor. Hara would often ask questions on behalf of the Emperor in both

Liaison and Imperial Conferences. While Hara, appeared to oppose war, he refused to make a stand against it.



- **Oikawa Koshiro:** Served as Navy Minister from September 1940 to October 1941. After Yoshida's nervous breakdown, Oikawa stepped in and gave the Imperial Navy's approval to conclude the Tripartite Pact. He had reservations against war with the United States but would not take a strong stand.



- **Yonai Mitsumasa:** Naval Minister from 1937 to 1939. He became Premier in January 1940 with the intent to negotiate a new Commerce Treaty with the United States, find peace in China and block an alliance with Germany. From the start, the Imperial Army was out to destroy the Yonai cabinet and with the blessing of Konoe, it did so in July 1940.



- **Toyoda Teijiro:** Toyoda served as Minister of Commerce, Industry and Overseas Affairs in the second Konoe Cabinet. He agreed with Navy Leadership in its eventual acceptance of the Tripartite Pact. Toyoda, however, became increasingly anti Pact. Premier Konoe selected Toyoda as Foreign Minister in Konoe's third Cabinet where Toyoda assumed two

contradictory positions, i.e., improving US relations while permitting the occupation of south Indochina.



- **Saito Hiroshi:** Served as Japan's Ambassador to the United States from 1934 to 1939. He was the Ambassador when Japanese sunk the USS Panay. The American public, however, perceived Saito as a friend of America and when he died in 1939, the US Navy transported his ashes with honors to Japan on the USS Astoria.



- **Kido Koichi:** Good Friend of Konoe Fumimaro. Kido served in many government positions prior to becoming Lord Keeper of the Privy Seal in 1940. He served as the chief advisor. He recommended both Konoe in 1940 and Tojo in 1941 as Premier candidates to the Emperor.

The United States



- **Stanley Hornbeck:** Hornbeck was the primary political advisor on Far Eastern Affairs to Secretary of State Cordell Hull. Previously he had served the head of State Department's Far Eastern Division. He was the chief hardliner toward Japan within the State Department. He had been a teacher for four years in China, which constituted extent of his exposure to Asia.

He believed in applying both military and economic sanctions to Japan, even those sanctions resulted in war. Hornbeck, however, like most hardliners, did not believe Japan would ever attack the United States or its possessions. He said to a junior US diplomat when asked if Japan would take desperate measures if faced with a total oil embargo:

"Tell me of one case in history, when a nation went to war out of desperation."



- **Dean Acheson:** Joined the State Department in 1941 as Assistant Secretary of State for Economic Affairs. Acheson was also a firm believer in taking a hardline towards Japan and like Hornbeck, did not believe Japan was foolish enough to attack the United States. He played an

instrumental role in the freezing of Japanese assets and export licenses in July 1941. He later served as Secretary of State for President Truman.



- **Joseph Grew:** Grew was a career diplomat who served ten years as U.S. Ambassador to Japan. Unfortunately, his distance from Secretary Hull and Washington DC eroded his influence regarding policy decisions. As a result of his efforts to strengthen and negotiate with Japanese moderates, Hornbeck thought of Grew as an appeaser.

He did not believe China was worth the risk of war with Japan. Grew however did believe in the strategy of keeping Japan guessing as to what steps the US might take. Grew was also a proponent of showing military force, such as the movement of the fleet to key areas to give teeth to sanctions.

The State Department excluded Grew from most diplomatic negotiations that took place between the United States and Japan from mid-October 1941 to December 7.



- **Cordell Hull:** Senator and Congressman from Tennessee. President Roosevelt selected Hull to serve as Secretary of State, which he remained until 1944. Hull was a Wilsonian Internationalist. He believed firmly in the sanctity of treaties, the “*Open Door*” policy toward China, strong international principles and that nations must follow a strict rule of

law. Hull was especially focused on free and open trade, which was a key reason why FDR selected Hull as Secretary of State.

He attempted to collaborate with the Japanese but was deterred by their flagrant, in his eyes, dismissal of existing treaties and their regional, nationalistic approach to business, especially American business.

Hardliners, such as his chief advisor Hornbeck, did influence Hull, however, he himself was not a hardliner. Hull put stock in his principles, which may have narrowed his perspective when negotiating with Japan.



- **Franklin Delano Roosevelt:** Served as the 32nd President of the United States. FDR's grandfather Warren Delano Jr. was a major player in Chinese trade and made his fortune in that part of the world. FDR, however, had a much more Eurocentric view of the world.

FDR was Assistant Secretary of the Navy during World War I and it was in that capacity he became acquainted with Japanese Naval Attache, Nomura Kichisaburo.

Upon being elected president in 1932, FDR set up fact finding missions to Europe with the intent of determining if European countries could pay back their World War I debt. He, however, did not concern himself with Asia except when issues began to spiral such as the congressional debate regarding the US Japan Commerce Treaty.

After Hitler conquered Poland, Norway, Denmark, the Low Countries and France, FDR and the US Military focused entirely on saving Great Britain and later the Soviet Union from German domination. The last thing FDR wanted was a two-front war, which the US was underequipped to handle.

While attempting to interject ideas into the negotiating process, FDR tended to allow subordinates to drive US Asian policy, with mixed results.



- **George Marshall:** George C. Marshall was a career soldier. In 1936, the Army assigned Marshall to the War Plans Division in Washington D.C. Later, the Army reassigned Marshall as Deputy Chief of Staff. In a meeting with FDR, he was one of the few present that challenged the President on FDR's plan to provide aircraft to Britain. Roosevelt overlooked Marshall push back and on September 1, 1939, Marshall became Chief of Staff.

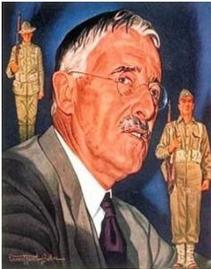
Marshall was a proponent of a "Europe First" and while encouraging the buildup of America's Pacific defenses was no in favor of committing the United States to a two-front. His hope was to create enough of a deterrent in the Pacific by the Spring of 1942 that the Japanese would not consider attacking.



- **Harold "Betty" Stark:** Stark became Chief of Naval Operations in 1939. He oversaw the expansion of the navy from 1940-1941 and authored "*Plan Dog*, which called for a "Europe First" strategy in the event of a war against Japan and Germany. Like Marshall, Stark did not want a war with Japan and the Navy was not yet ready in 1941 to fight a two-ocean war.



- **Frank Walker:** Walker was the Postmaster General and was also a member of the “John Doe Associates” which was a peace group headed by two Catholic Priests which were attempting to find a peaceful solution between Japan and the United States. Walker, himself, was also a member of the Catholic Church.



- **Henry Stimson:** Stimson was Secretary of State during the Hoover Administration. After the Japanese invaded Manchuria in September 1931 and established the puppet state of Manchukuo, Stimson created the policy of “*Non-Recognition*” which meant the United States would recognize no treaty or agreement that was brought about by force of arms and violated the “*Nine Power Agreement*”, guaranteeing the sovereignty of China.

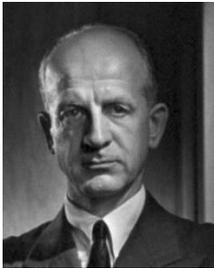
Stimson became the Secretary of War in the Roosevelt administration and adopted a hardline toward Japan. He was quick to call for harsh sanctions against Japan throughout the period 1939-1941.



- **Henry Morgenthau Jr.:** Originally selected by FDR as governor of the Federal Farm Board in 1933, Morgenthau became the

Secretary of the Treasury after the existing secretary resigned due to ill health.

Morgenthau was also a hardliner toward Japan and actively pushed sanctions, so much so that FDR told him, at one point, to desist. He did play a role in the eventual freezing of Japanese assets.



- **Sumner Welles:** In 1937, Roosevelt promoted Welles to Under Secretary of State. Welles was a close confidant of FDR and sometimes a thorn in the side of Hull. Welles led an unsuccessful peacekeeping mission to Europe in 1940. He actively interfaced with Japanese diplomats during the crucial months of 1941.



- **James Drought:** Father Drought was a member of the Catholic Foreign Mission Society of America at Maryknoll, New York. He along with his superior Bishop James Walsh attempted in 1941 to convince both Japanese and American leaders that they had developed a path to peace. They formed an ad hoc group known as the “*John Doe Associates*,” with Father Drought serving in the role of “*John Doe*.” Father Drought authored an initial peace proposal later called the “*Draft Understanding*.” While the document was an amateurish attempt at diplomacy it came close to succeeding.

Germany



- **Eugen Ott:** German Ambassador to Japan. One of the key players from the German side in negotiating the *Tripartite Pact* in 1940. He agreed to a secret clause with Japan that would have given Japan independence in deciding how it would honor the pact. Ott never forwarded the clause onto his superior Foreign Minister Ribbentrop.



- **Joachim von Ribbentrop:** Served initially as German Ambassador to Great Britain. In that position, he helped negotiate and sign the “*Anti-Comintern Pact*” between Japan and Germany in 1936 (Italy later joined the agreement).

In February 1938, Adolf Hitler appointed Ribbentrop Foreign Minister of the Reich by Adolf Hitler. His big coup came a little over a year later when he concluded a non-aggression pact with the Soviet Union, which angered Japan.

As American aid began pouring into Britain, after the Fall of France, Germany, seeing that its Battle with Britain was not going as planned,

decided it needed to divert U.S. attention. On Hitler's orders, Ribbentrop contacted Japan and invited the Japanese to draft an alliance agreement with Germany and Italy. This became the *Tripartite Pact*.



- **Heinrich Stahmer:** Stahmer also contributed to the 1936 "*Anti-Comintern Pact*". Ribbentrop selected Stahmer to initiate negotiations with Japan regarding an alliance with Germany and Italy. He worked closely with Ott and agreed to the Pact's secret clause. Later, Stahmer became the German Ambassador to Wang Jingwei's puppet Chinese government and in 1943 he became German ambassador to Japan.

China



- **Chiang Kai-shek (Jiang Jieshi):** Chiang received his military training in Japan, was a follower of Dr. Sun Yat-sen and the leader of the Kuomintang (Guomindang) Party founded by Sun.

Attempting to defeat local warlords and unite China, Chiang began the Northern Expedition in 1927. That same year, Chiang turned against his Communist allies in Shanghai, which launched a decades long civil war. After the “Xian Incident” in 1936, during which Zhang Xueliang kidnapped Chiang, Chiang agreed to a unified front of all factions, including the Communists, against further Japanese expansionism.



- **Zhang Xueliang:** Zhang became the warlord of Manchuria after the Japanese Kwantung Army assassinated his father Zhang Zoulin. In September 1931, Japanese forces drove Zhang and his forces out of Manchuria.

Zhang and his troops grew weary of fighting the Communists and longed to fight the Japanese. At Xian, he kidnapped Chiang and released him after Chiang agreed to a united front against Japan.

He accompanied Chiang back to the Chinese capital of Nanjing where Chiang placed Zhang under house arrest for 55 years.



- **Wang Jingwei:** Like Chiang Kai-shek, Wang was a follower of Sun Yat-sen. He was the head of the left-wing of the Kuomintang. He broke with Chiang after the former turned on the Communists and set up a series of alliances with different warlords. He eventually rejoined Chiang and retreated with him to Chongqing (Chungking) in 1938 as the Japanese advanced.

Believing that the Japanese were close to winning in China, Wang began communicating with the Japanese Army and eventually, by 1940, established a puppet National Government in Nanjing. The Japanese Army was Wang's main supporter, and the Army would not replace Wang for Chiang as the "real" leader of China. Wang died in 1944 of natural causes.