TAKUMA
MELBER

Contents

- Cover
- Title Page
- Copyright
- Dedication
- Prologue
  - Note
- 1 The Background
  - The road to Pearl Harbor
  - The crisis intensifies
  - Japan’s proposals for resolving the conflict
  - The Hull Note
  - Notes
- 2 The Japanese War Plan
  - Admiral Yamamoto and Operation Hawaii
  - The plan of attack
  - The Kidō Butai sets sail
  - Japanese spies in Hawaii
  - The first encounter
  - Notes
- 3 The Attack
  - The first wave
  - “Tora Tora Tora”
  - Battleship Row in crossfire
  - The second attack wave
  - Egusa’s dive bombers

Notes
4 Consequences
The aftermath
The USA enters the war
The first prisoner-of-war
The Japanese-American victims of Pearl Harbor
Could Pearl Harbor have been prevented?
Conspiracy theories
Operation K
Notes
Epilogue
Notes
Select Bibliography
Index
End User License Agreement

List of Figures

Chapter 1
February 1941: US Secretary of State Cordell Hull and the Japanese ambassador No...
Chapter 2
A Mitsubishi A6M Zero fighter about to take off from the deck of a Japanese navy...
Admiral Yamamoto Isoroku, the commander-in-chief of the Combined Fleet, planned ...
Vice Admiral Nagumo Chūichi, Japanese 1st Air Fleet

Fuchida Mitsuo, who had been made frigate captain a few weeks previously, comman ...

Chapter 3

Planes and hangars wrecked in the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor

The USS Oglala capsized and sinking

Japanese aerial photo of the first attack wave, showing Ford Island, the US batt...

Doris “Dorie” Miller was celebrated in the American press – as in this cartoon –...

Oahu island and the two attack waves

Gun crew during the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor

USS Arizona in flames: 1,177 American sailors lost their lives when the US battl...

Chapter 4

US sailors among burning seaplanes on Ford Island, with an explosion on USS Shaw...

After the attack on Pearl Harbor: firefighters attempting to extinguish the flam...

Japanese conquests 1941/42

A painting of the nine crew members of the five midget submarines in Pearl Harbo...

In a letter to a friend, the Admiral Yamamoto commented sarcastically on the war...

Epilogue

Surrender of the Japanese aboard the USS Missouri. Admiral Chester Nimitz, repre...

Pearl Harbor

Japan’s Attack and America’s Entry into World War II

Takuma Melber

Translated by Nick Somers

polity

Originally published in German as *Pearl Harbor: Japans Angriff und der Kriegseintritt der USA* by Takuma Melber © Verlag C. H. Beck oHG, Munich 2016

This English edition © 2021 by Polity Press

Polity Press
65 Bridge Street
Cambridge CB2 1UR, UK

Polity Press
101 Station Landing
Suite 300
Medford, MA 02155, USA

All rights reserved. Except for the quotation of short passages for the purpose of criticism and review, no part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system or transmitted, in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without the prior permission of the publisher.

ISBN-13: 978-1-5095-3721-1

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data
Names: Melber, Takuma, author. | Somers, Nick, translator.
Title: Pearl Harbor : Japan's attack and America's entry into World War II / Takuma Melber ; translated by Nick Somers.
Other titles: Pearl Harbor. English | Japan's attack and America's entry into World War II
Description: English edition. | Cambridge, UK ; Medford, MA : Polity, [2020] | "Originally published in German as Pearl Harbor: Japans Angriff und der Kriegseintritt der USA by Takuma Melber ©Verlag C. H. Beck oHG, München 2016." | Includes bibliographical references and index. | Summary: "A new account of one of the key battles of World War II told from the Japanese perspective."-- Provided by publisher.
Identifiers: LCCN 2020015550 (print) | LCCN 2020015551 (ebook) | ISBN 9781509537204 (hardback) | ISBN 9781509537211 (epub)
Subjects: LCSH: Pearl Harbor (Hawaii), Attack on, 1941. | World War, 1939-1945--Japan. | United States--Foreign relations--Japan. | Japan--Foreign relations--United States. | World War, 1939-1945--Campaigns--Pacific Area. | Pacific Area--History, Military. | Pacific Area--History, Naval. | World War, 1939-1945--United States.
Classification: LCC D767.92 .M4513 2020 (print) | LCC D767.92 (ebook) | DDC 940.54/26693--dc23
LC record available at https://lccn.loc.gov/2020015550
LC ebook record available at https://lccn.loc.gov/2020015551

The publisher has used its best endeavors to ensure that the URLs for external websites referred to in this book are correct and active at the time of going to press. However, the publisher has no responsibility for the websites and can

make no guarantee that a site will remain live or that the content is or will remain appropriate.

Every effort has been made to trace all copyright holders, but if any have been overlooked the publisher will be pleased to include any necessary credits in any subsequent reprint or edition.

For further information on Polity, visit our website: politybooks.com

Dedication

To my wife Vera and our son Paul Yoshi, to my parents Wilhelm and Yoshiko, and to my siblings Satoko and Makito with their families – with all my love and deepest gratitude

Prologue

After fighting the heavy swell and bad weather in the north Pacific for several days, the Japanese aircraft carrier *Kaga* arrived in position in the middle of the vast Pacific Ocean an hour before sunrise on December 7, 1941. The loud rattle of the engine mixed with the roar of the waves. A Mitsubishi A6M2 fighter aircraft, later known as the Zero, sped down the runway, its propellers spinning. Next in line was Akamatsu Yūji's plane.[1] Akamatsu was the observer-navigator in a torpedo bomber. The pilot, who was responsible for achieving a successful take off, pressed the button as usual to start the propeller engines and slowly maneuvered the plane into position. Akamatsu's aircraft, a Nakajima B5N, had a heavy and destructive payload in the form of an 800-kg torpedo. If the take off failed, all three crew members risked being blown to pieces without having left the aircraft carrier. Akamatsu always screened out any thoughts of dying as the plane took off and reached its flying altitude. As in the earlier exercises, everything went perfectly on this occasion, and Akamatsu's plane joined the 183 fighter planes and bombers in the Japanese aerial armada. “It must look like a swarm of bees,” Akamatsu thought to himself. The armada formed the first attack wave on the US Pacific Fleet lying at anchor in Pearl Harbor in Hawaii. For the time being, the commander had ordered radio silence, and Akamatsu could only hear the roaring of the engines many thousands of meters above the Pacific Ocean. He felt a deep inner calm, coupled with extreme concentration and a sense of exaltedness. He had little understanding of everyday political and diplomatic affairs, nor did he need any. He was a soldier, and his military training required only that he obey the orders of his superiors, who would know what was in Japan's

national interests. There was one thing he did understand, however: the oil embargo imposed on Japan by the USA jeopardized the success of the Japanese expansion on the Chinese mainland.

The war, which had been waged there for several years, had become bogged down. Unlike the Russo-Japanese War of 1904/5, which saw the Japanese emerge as military victors but political losers, Tokyo’s political and military decision-makers no longer wanted to be dictated to by the Western powers. Of course, their ranks included not only warmongering “hawks” but also “doves,” who were attempting right up to the last moment to achieve a peaceful solution. Even as Akamatsu was flying towards the US naval base, Japanese diplomats were in Washington. But did they actually know anything of the war plans? Or was the attack meant to surprise Japan’s representatives in Washington as much as their American colleagues?

Akamatsu’s plane broke through the cloud cover. In the distance he could see the island of Hawaii the pilot was steering towards. The hour had come that would bring Japan glory and honor. The message from Admiral Yamamoto Isoroku passed on at the briefing by the fleet commander still resounded in his ears: the attack on Pearl Harbor would determine the survival or destruction of the entire Japanese nation. If the plan – which was completely reliant on the element of surprise – were to fail, the war would be lost before it had even started.

Akamatsu and the men in the first Japanese attack wave were aware of the significance of their mission: the surprise attack had to succeed at all costs. As they overflew the coast of the main Hawaiian island of Oahu, the bomber squadron maneuvered into formation and headed directly for its target, Pearl City harbor, and the US Pacific Fleet anchored there. Just a few moments after the Japanese

navy airmen had spotted the main US navy base in the Pacific, Akamatsu received a signal informing him of their target, the Tennessee-class destroyer *USS California*, commissioned in 1921. Before Akamatsu knew it, the pilot was diving towards the majestic-looking enemy vessel. When the steel colossus came into his sights, he pressed the button at just the right moment, as he had learned through the months of training, to release the deadly torpedo. At that moment the plane came under heavy anti-aircraft fire. Akamatsu felt as if the US fleet, which had been taken completely by surprise, was directing all of its anti-aircraft fire at him and his plane. While the pilot ascended desperately in an attempt to dodge the hail of bullets, Akamatsu heard a loud explosion, and a blast wave passed through his body. Or was he imagining it? When the plane was finally out of the danger zone, Akamatsu looked back at the scene from a safe altitude. Black smoke was billowing from the *USS California*; he was fairly certain that the torpedo had found its target and penetrated the ship's hull. Akamatsu and his comrades had accomplished their mission. The crew were overwhelmed with a feeling of euphoria and spontaneously cried out a triumphant "Tennō Heika Banzai!" – Long live the Emperor of Japan! Akamatsu proudly set course for the aircraft carrier *Kaga*.

The aerial attack on Pearl Harbor on the morning of December 7, 1941, sent a shockwave through the USA and plunged Japan into a world war with fatal consequences. The military struggle between the Japanese Empire and the United States of America for hegemony in the Asia-Pacific region had begun, and it would not end until the surrender of the Japanese armed forces in the summer of 1945.

Note

1. Japanese names are written in the traditional style with the surname first. The participation of Akamatsu Yūji in the attack on Pearl Harbor is historically documented; see Kira Isami and Yoshino Yasutaka, *Shinjuwan kōgekitai taiin retsuden: Shikikan to sanka tōjōin no kōseki* [Biographies of members of the Pearl Harbor attacking force: the flight route of captains and participating crews] (Tokyo, 2011), p. 105; http://www.shikoku-np.co.jp/national/life_topic/print.aspx?id=20031207000110 (accessed, like all cited internet sources, on June 30, 2016). Otherwise the Prologue is a fictional reconstruction.

1
The Background

The road to Pearl Harbor

On Friday, February 14, 1941, Nomura Kichisaburō made his way to the White House, residence of the US president, in Washington.[1] As a proven expert on America, the sixty-three-year-old Nomura had been appointed Japan's ambassador to the USA.[2] He had already lived in Washington from 1916 to 1918 as a naval attaché. A few years later, he returned as Japan's representative at the Washington Naval Conference.

After its victory in the Russo-Japanese War of 1904/5, Japan joined the group of major powers. The Japanese navy or *Nihon Kaigun* played a decisive role and was the military calling card of the Japanese Empire. In particular, the Battle of Tsushima (May 27/28, 1905), in which the navy commanded by Admiral Tōgō destroyed the Russian fleet, earned the country great respect. From that time on, Japan was recognized internationally as a serious naval power. Some fifteen years after this major military triumph, the Washington Naval Conference of 1921/22, at which Nomura represented the interests of the Japanese navy, agreed on a fleet ratio of 5:5:3 between the US navy, the British Royal Navy, and the *Nihon Kaigun*. According to the agreement, Japan undertook not to launch any battleships for the following ten years. The Western powers were seeking to limit Japan's naval strength and to keep it at a lower level than their own, in terms of both quality and quantity, in order to preserve the balance of power in the Pacific in their favor. This thwarted Japan's plan to build its

“Eight-Eight Fleet” (*hachihachi kantai*) – eight new battleships and eight new cruisers – in the mid-1920s. Just a few years later, however, the Japanese navy was able to negotiate a more favorable ratio at the London Naval Conference in 1930 of 10:7:7 in favor of the USA. Japan’s representatives even achieved a parity ruling for submarines with the Anglo-American naval forces.

When Nomura was sent back to Washington some twenty years after his participation in the Washington Conference, these maritime agreements were already a dead letter. In the mid-1930s Japan withdrew from the Washington and London treaties. A few years earlier, it had revealed its ambitions in the Asia-Pacific region by invading Manchuria on the Chinese mainland in September 1931. Japan wanted to become the dominant power in Asia, and to achieve this aim the government in Tokyo had gradually embarked on a new political course. Hard hit by the 1929 world economic crisis, it had set out in a political direction determined increasingly by the military. Territorial expansion was now at the top of Japan’s foreign policy agenda. The invasion of Manchuria, rich in iron ore, coal, and grain, was the first step to solving Japan’s own economic problems – by acquiring new land for its growing population and gaining access to natural resources. The members of Japanese naval circles, who saw the results of the international naval conferences that guaranteed the balance of power in the Pacific as a limitation on the *Nihon Kaigun*, were making themselves increasingly heard in public and in politics. But it was not only in naval matters that Japan was assuming a more determined diplomatic attitude towards the Western powers. This attitude was also reflected in foreign policy, with Japan’s withdrawal in 1933 from the League of Nations, which had been established by President Woodrow Wilson as a reaction to the horrors of World War I. Japan was distancing itself increasingly from its most important

naval interlocutors: Great Britain and the USA. Instead it turned to the rising German Reich and Fascist Italy – a process that culminated in the Tripartite Pact and the formation of the Rome-Berlin-Tokyo Axis in 1940. The common denominators uniting the three signatories were an aggressive foreign policy and the desire for territorial expansion. The Pact called for the signatories to assist one another in the event that any of them was attacked by a country not yet involved in the wars in Asia and Europe, notably the USA. The Axis powers also divided the world into spheres of interest: east Asia for Japan, eastern Europe for the German Reich, and the Mediterranean for Italy.

By the time Nomura started his diplomatic service in the USA in February 1941, Germany and Italy were already waging war in parts of Europe. The German Wehrmacht invaded Poland on September 1, 1939, and in summer 1940 large parts of northern and western Europe, including France and the Netherlands, were occupied by the Germans. Hitler's army also attempted to defeat Great Britain, the last major opponent in Europe. In the Mediterranean, meanwhile, Italy was pursuing its own expansion plans as Mussolini's troops engaged the forces of the British Empire in North Africa.

War had broken out in Asia earlier on. After Japan's intervention in Manchuria and the establishment of its puppet state Manchukuo, and following the Marco Polo Bridge Incident in Peking on July 7, 1937, when Chinese and Japanese soldiers exchanged fire, the Japanese armed forces were now opposed by Chinese government troops commanded by Chiang Kai-shek, and by the Chinese communist forces. Large parts of China, particularly the north and coastal regions, were occupied by Japan. The capital Nanking fell in December 1937.[3] The Japanese army committed unspeakable atrocities there and massacred thousands of Chinese civilians. This did not by any means

mark the end of the conflict. On the contrary, the military situation in the Chinese theatre of war soon became "bogged down."[4] Japan's advance came to a standstill, and the conflict degenerated into a veritable positional war. The Japanese army units in the hinterland met with constant resistance from Chinese guerrillas. Supplies for the Japanese were slow in arriving, while aid from the West ensured the survival of the Chinese troops. Overall, the war against the Chinese was proving wearing and tough for Japan's army. Many political and military experts in the Japanese Empire sought an end to the hostilities – albeit in the form of either total victory over China or a peace treaty on Japanese terms.

When the Manchurian crisis erupted in September 1931, the then US president Herbert Hoover had rejected the idea of sanctions against the Japanese aggressor. Under Franklin D. Roosevelt, who succeeded Hoover in 1933, US foreign policy in the region changed tack – from isolation to intervention. The willingness of the new president to remain as a bystander in the war on the Chinese mainland had reached its limits. News of the atrocities committed by the Japanese, combined with the outcry in the international media, persuaded Roosevelt and his government to oppose Japanese expansion and side with China. The decision was prompted not only by humanitarian considerations, however, but also by the desire to safeguard the influence of the USA in Asia and, in particular, to protect US economic interests. Roosevelt sought to achieve these aims not by force of arms but through economic pressure on Japan. The first step was taken in 1939, when the US government announced its intention not to renew the US-Japanese trade treaty established in 1911 and due to expire the following year. This measure had its impact, given that the Japanese economy was highly reliant on the USA. The previous year, Japan had exported 23 percent of its goods

there, and 34 percent of its imports – including more than half of its imported oil, iron, and steel – came from the USA.[5] In spite of the cancelation of the trade treaty, Japan still sought to establish its hegemony on the Chinese mainland and to become the dominant power in Asia. This course of aggressive expansion was to be continued. The Open Door Policy pursued by the Americans since the late nineteenth century – designed to give the USA, the European colonial powers, and the Japanese Empire equal access to China as a trading partner and market – had already been rejected by the Japanese government in 1938. In March 1940, Japan installed a new pro-Japanese government in China, led by Wang Jingwei.[6] The US government responded by granting loans worth millions of dollars to the Chinese nationalist government in support of Chiang Kai-shek. After the success of the German Wehrmacht campaign in the west, culminating in the fall of Paris and the occupation of France, Japan exerted pressure on the Dutch government in exile in London to obtain oil from the Dutch East Indies, its colony in Asia. It was also authorized by the pro-German Vichy government in France to station its fighter units in French Indochina so as to be able to launch aerial attacks on central China from there. In September 1940 Japanese troops even occupied the north of French Indochina so as to gain access to its natural resources and to block an important Anglo-American supply route to Chiang Kai-shek. They hoped in this way to be able to end the war in China. The reaction of the major European powers was not long in coming, however. Great Britain resumed the halted provision of supplies to China via the Burma Road. The US government also stepped up its financial support for China and introduced an embargo in mid-October 1940 that drastically limited deliveries of scrap iron and metal and other vital goods, including aircraft fuel, from the USA to

Japan. A total oil embargo, as demanded by hardliners such as Secretary of War Henry L. Stimson and Secretary of the Treasury Henry Morgenthau, was not instituted. Even in 1940, Japan obtained over 90 percent of its oil from the USA.[7] The advocates of a more moderate course still held sway, in particular Secretary of State Cordell Hull and Under Secretary of State Benjamin Sumner Welles, supported by representatives of the US navy. They sought at all costs to avoid provoking the Japanese into a panicked military response.

A mood of crisis thus prevailed between Japan and the USA when the Japanese government sent Nomura to Washington as ambassador in early 1941. In particular, the “China question,” the resolution of the military conflict on the Chinese mainland, which had hardened into an unyielding positional war, put a great strain on bilateral relations. At the time, therefore, it was not in Japan’s interests to exacerbate the diplomatic ill feeling between Japan and the USA to the point of making a military conflict inevitable. Ambassador Nomura’s priority was thus to prevent a war between the two countries.

Nomura, who, after a career in the imperial navy, regarded himself more as a military man than a diplomat, entered the White House on February 14, 1941, to present his credentials as Japanese ambassador to President Roosevelt. The meeting was cordial enough: Nomura and Roosevelt, who had been elected president for the third time in November 1940, were old acquaintances, even friends. They had met when Nomura was a naval attaché in Washington during World War I and Roosevelt was Assistant Secretary of the Navy. After Nomura’s return to Japan, the two had continued a friendly correspondence by mail. Their correspondence reveals, for example, the great regret expressed by them both at not being able to meet in New York in 1929, when Roosevelt was governor and

Nomura was visiting the city.[8] Nomura had also extended several invitations to his friend to visit him in Japan. In a letter of April 6, 1937, Roosevelt wrote: “I hope the day will come when I can visit Japan. I have much interest in the great accomplishments of the Japanese people and I should much like to see many of my Japanese friends again.”[9] Since contracting polio in 1921, however, Roosevelt had been confined to a wheelchair, which considerably restricted his possibilities for travel. Japan’s hope for finding a solution to the tense bilateral relations was thus understandably dependent to a large extent on the good personal contact between the two now elderly men.[10]

A few days after the friendly reunion with Roosevelt, the Japanese ambassador visited another old acquaintance in Washington. US Secretary of State Cordell Hull met Nomura in the latter’s apartment in the luxury Carlton hotel, which the Japanese ambassador had preferred to the official headquarters of the State Department, so as to enable the two men to conduct exploratory talks out of the public eye. Hull was an experienced politician, but Nomura had much greater difficulty in understanding him than he did Roosevelt on account of Hull’s strong Southern accent.[11] He was nevertheless very familiar with the department headed by Hull since 1933, as he himself had been Japanese foreign minister in 1939/40. At their first meeting on March 8, 1941, Hull and Nomura clearly stated the reason for the ill feeling between Japan and the USA, namely the US embargo and Japan’s resultant economic problems. Hull asked specifically whether Japan intended to continue to expand in south-east Asia towards the British stronghold of Singapore and the Dutch East Indies. Nomura denied this, although he added “unless it cannot be avoided.”[12] Although Nomura was in Washington to seek a peaceful solution to the simmering conflict through diplomatic channels, he could not and did not wish to make

any promises to the Americans, not least as there were many advocates back home, particularly in military circles, of *nanshinron* – territorial expansion to the south. In their view, the advances by the Japanese army to date had not gone far enough. Moreover, south-east Asia's natural resources were lucrative targets of further expansion, particularly in view of the US embargo. Nomura was well aware of this situation.

The Americans believed, however, that the expansion in south-east Asia was more likely to be motivated by the Axis treaty with the German Reich and Italy than by the US embargo, as Hull made clear to the Japanese ambassador. At a further meeting in the White House, Roosevelt and Hull emphasized to Nomura that the Japanese Empire must state explicitly that its desire for more influence in Asia was of a purely economic nature. It should demonstrate that it did not intend to expand so as to gain exclusive access to oil in the Dutch East Indies or rubber in the Malayan peninsula by taking possession of those territories.[13]

February 1941: US Secretary of State Cordell Hull and the Japanese ambassador Nomura Kichisaburō meeting in Washington to seek a solution to the American-Japanese conflict.

Underwood Archives/UIG/Bridgeman Images

This clear exposition of the problems gave new impetus in April 1941 to exploratory American-Japanese talks, which Nomura interpreted as a preliminary to official bilateral negotiations. Private parties from both countries submitted a draft proposal to the State Department as a basis for those negotiations. It demanded an end to the war in China and the implementation of the Open Door Policy.

Although Hull was essentially in agreement with the proposal, he considered that its vague formulation left

considerable scope for interpretation. When and to what extent would Japan withdraw its troops from China? And did Washington and Tokyo mean the same thing by the Open Door Policy?[14] These were just two of the questions posed by Hull, who sought in further talks with Nomura to clarify the proposal. He made it apparent that negotiations could be officially started only after acceptance of four Basic Principles: first, a guarantee of the territorial integrity and sovereignty of all nations; second, non-interference in the internal affairs of other countries; third, continued priority for the principle of equality – for example, in terms of economic prospects – and hence the postulate of the Open Door Policy; and fourth, maintenance of the status quo in the Pacific, unless changes were made by peaceful means.[15] Hull, who had announced early on that "we do not make peace with Japan at the expense of China,"[16] dashed any hopes held by Japan that the USA would officially recognize its territorial gains in China achieved by military force. At the same time, the Basic Principles were also an indication of the Americans' desire to resolve the crisis in the Far East by peaceful rather than military means. They saw the Principles as an offer to the Japanese to come over to the American side. Hull was aware that he had a very small margin to work with: US concessions should not be so generous as to allow Japan to accept them and then interpret them at a more propitious date as justification for further expansion. In early 1941, however, Hull believed that "as long as Britain stoutly resisted Germany and at the same time the American fleet remained in the Pacific, [Japan] would try to nibble off what she could without engaging in a major conflict."[17] He nevertheless endeavored to avoid any further drastic economic or military measures that would provoke a direct war with Japan. Open hostility towards the Japanese Empire was not in the interests of the USA and had to be

prevented – in part to enable it to concentrate on the conflict with the German Reich, with which it was not yet at war.

In its inter-war military plans, the strategists in Washington had set great store by War Plan Orange, which focused on Japan as the sole adversary and called for the transfer of the Atlantic Fleet to the Pacific in the event of a war, to enable the USA to engage in a decisive battle with the Japanese navy following the deployment of its Combined Fleet.[18] However, in reaction to Hitler's aggressive European policy in 1938 and 1939, which resulted in the territorial expansion of the German Reich through the annexation of Austria, the incorporation of the Sudetenland and the occupation of Czechoslovakia, American military strategists substantially modified their operative guidelines. After the Wehrmacht occupied large parts of Europe in 1939 and 1940 and was preparing to invade the British Isles, the Americans increasingly regarded the German Reich as potentially the most serious threat to their own country and to world peace. In June 1940, Roosevelt therefore asked his chief army and navy planners to develop a strategy based on the premise of Germany continuing to threaten Great Britain. The Plan Dog memorandum by Chief of Naval Operations Admiral Harold R. Stark in November 1940 stated that in the event of a war on two fronts, with Germany and Japan, Great Britain should be offered every conceivable form of military support – including the deployment of troops by land, sea, and air. The US armed forces should be in a position first and foremost to carry out offensive operations against the German Reich, while the attitude to Japan should be defensive.[19]

British and American military planners met in early 1941 to discuss a joint strategy on the basis of Admiral Stark's memorandum, in the event that the USA should enter the

war. The US government avoided giving the British a specific assurance of military assistance, while the United Kingdom requested in vain that the US Pacific Fleet be based in Manila so that it would be in a better position to protect Singapore. The US government considered its reaction to Japan's expansion the previous year to be adequate. After the annual maneuvers in May 1940, the Pacific Fleet did not return to the West Coast but to Pearl Harbor on the island of Hawaii and hence to a forward position in the Pacific. Even a year later, the Americans regarded this military presence in the Pacific as a sufficient deterrent to further territorial encroachments by Japan in south-east Asia and hence to an unbounded conflict in the Pacific.[20] It was for that reason as well that Roosevelt refused a request from Admiral James Otto Richardson, commander of the US Pacific Fleet, to return the fleet to the West Coast for logistical reasons. This move could have been regarded by the Japanese as a retreat, and neither Roosevelt nor his diplomats wanted under any circumstances to show any sign of weakness.[21]

In April 1941, the US military strategists finally devised the "Rainbow 5" plan, one of several evolving "rainbow plans" considering US involvement in a war on multiple fronts. It provided for parallel US combat against Japan in the Pacific and against the German Reich in the Atlantic. The USA and Great Britain would fight side by side in a coalition, with the US armed forces concentrating on offensive operations in Europe and Africa.[22] The Germany-first strategy later advanced by the Allies, which gave priority to defeating the German threat over a war with Japan, was thus already effectively established at this early stage. The authorities not only in London but also in Washington were focusing on the war in Europe and on the German Reich as the main threat to world peace. As such, the Asia-Pacific region played only a subordinate role in their war plans. The

Americans wished to avoid combat with Japan as far as possible. The highest priority was accorded to defending the Atlantic and protecting maritime links with Europe and the entire western hemisphere, which were seen as a lifeline.

While Nomura was attempting to set up official negotiations in Washington in early 1941, the government in Tokyo was intent at the same time on keeping his exploratory talks secret, in view of the great danger that the German Reich and Italy would misinterpret official Japanese-American negotiations as a rejection of the Tripartite Pact. Moreover, the supporters of the Axis regarded the Principles presented by Hull as a prerequisite for bilateral consultations as conflicting with the Tripartite Pact. If Japan were to agree to the US Principles, its expansion policy would be stopped. In addition, an American-Japanese agreement of this nature could result in British and American troops being transferred from the south-west Pacific to the war in Europe, where in early 1941 the military confrontation between Great Britain and Nazi Germany was well established. Although the USA had not yet joined the war on the side of Prime Minister Winston Churchill, it was nevertheless providing logistical support to the British Empire. For foreign minister Matsuoka Yōsuke, in early 1941, the allegiances were clear, and an American-Japanese agreement would fundamentally jeopardize the Tripartite Pact. Ambassador Nomura saw things differently: in his eyes an agreement with the USA would offer Japan a chance to considerably improve its situation, giving it access to urgently required natural resources that would enable it to put an end to the stalled war with China. In addition, he wrote in a telegram to Matsuoka: