

JAPAN’S MASTER PLAN FOR VICTORY: WHAT COULD HAVE BEEN

By Moteki Hiromichi

FOREWORD

If I were to say that Japan had a formula (and a viable one at that) for victory in World War II, what sort of reaction would I get? Perhaps most people would be dismissive, wondering how I could be suffering from such a delusion at this late date. Certainly most citizens of the Western world would react that way.

In *Japanese Military Strategy in the Pacific War: Was Defeat Inevitable?* James B. Wood broaches this topic. The Williams College history professor suggests that Japan was not reckless in waging war against the Allies. His opinion is very much a minority one among Europeans (and of course, Americans). Wood sums up the mentality of the Western world regarding this topic very well, as follows.

“Why were the Japanese so crazy as to take on the United States?” or “How could a country with a GNP about that of Italy or Canada, expect to win?” or “Why should we expect anything else from a country with a feudal warrior code and culture, emperor worship, racial supremacy notions, and a total lack of sympathy or respect for her neighbors?” The implication is that those responsible for Japan’s path to war were ignorant or irrational, perhaps a blend of both, as well as basically evil — a perfectly other counterpoise to the victor of modernity in all respect, the United States.¹

Nevertheless, how do we explain the fact that ignorant, backward Japan, defeated in war and reduced to ashes, managed to recover so thoroughly that 23 years later, its GNP was second only to that of the US? And are the proponents of this negative view of Japan aware that prior to World War II, Japan had a greater naval presence than the US, since the Americans needed sea power on two oceans. I will provide details in due course, but to cite an example, Japan had 10 aircraft carriers in the Pacific, while the US had only two. The US had others, if one includes those operating in the Atlantic, but only seven altogether. They called the Japanese ignorant and irrational, but don’t those adjectives better describe the Americans at that juncture?

¹ Wood, James B., *Japanese Military Strategy in the Pacific War: Was Defeat Inevitable?* (Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield, 2007), 1.

James Wood goes on to write, “Of all the books written during the recent fiftieth anniversary of World War II, only one has clearly taken on such deterministic explanations of the course of the war.” That book is Richard Overy’s *Why the Allies Won*. An excerpt follows.

Why did the Allies win World War II? This is such a straightforward question that we assume it has an obvious answer. Indeed the question itself is hardly ever asked. Allied victory is taken for granted. Was their cause not manifestly just? Despite all the dangers, was the progress of their vast forces not irresistible? Explanations of Allied success contain a strong element of determinism. We now know the story so well that we do not consider the uncomfortable prospect that other outcomes might have been possible. To ask why the Allies won is to presuppose that they might have lost or, for understandable reasons, that they would have accepted an outcome short of total victory. These were in fact strong possibilities. There was nothing preordained about Allied success.²

On the basis of a similar philosophy, Professor Wood discusses Japan’s accomplishments and failures. He also describes thoughts about the sort of world we would have today if the Japanese had had the opportunity to conduct a more manageable war.

Some of Wood’s arguments are extremely useful and instructive. I shall be referring to them throughout this book and elaborating on them, as I demonstrate that Japan had a master plan, a formula for victory, but ended up fighting a war that did not adhere to that plan. I will also delve into the reasons for that failure.

On November 15, 1941, three weeks prior to the Pearl Harbor strike, the Japanese government and Imperial General Headquarters held a liaison conference. Those present discussed the Draft Proposal for the Promotion of the End of the War Against the United States, the United Kingdom, the Netherlands, and Chiang Kai-shek, and decided to execute it. I consider this the master plan, the plan for victory, and will be analyzing it with the aid of practical simulations throughout this book.

The essentials of that master plan are laid out in Section 1 of Objectives (see Figure 3). First, to ensure self-sufficiency and exercise the right to defend their nation, the Japanese military would expeditiously destroy bases established by the US, the UK, and the Netherlands in the Far East. Additionally, they would take action to facilitate the surrender of the Chiang government, and then form an alliance with Germany and Italy. They would use that alliance to effect the capitulation of Britain, which would cause the US to lose the will to continue hostilities against Japan.

Then, after securing Southeast Asian resource-rich regions, they would proceed to the Indian Ocean, where they would block shipments to Great Britain by cutting off supply lines linking it with Australia, New Zealand, and India. The Pacific Ocean, a force of nature,

² Overy, Richard, *Why the Allies Won* (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 1995), 15.

would serve as their weapon against the US. The Japanese military would lure American naval forces into the Pacific, and then ambush and destroy them, using whatever means were necessary.

The Pearl Harbor strike, which does not appear in the Draft Proposal, was a deviation. I will provide a detailed analysis of the attack and why it was made in Chapter 4. Operation 11, which involved dispatching two Army divisions and the main strength of the Navy to destroy the British Far East Fleet and occupy Ceylon. The Japanese were fully prepared to execute this operation in July 1942, but did not.

In a communiqué from British Prime Minister Winston Churchill to US President Franklin Roosevelt sent on April 15, 1942, Churchill expressed his frustration at being unable to halt Japanese advances in Southeast Asia.

I must revert to the grave situation in the Indian Ocean ... arising from the fact that the Japanese have felt able to detach nearly a third of their battle fleet and half their carriers, which force we are unable to match for several months. The consequences of this may easily be: (A) The loss of Ceylon. (B) Invasion of Eastern India with incalculable internal consequences to our whole war plan and including the loss of Calcutta and of all contact with the Chinese through Burma. But this is only the beginning. Until we are able to fight a fleet action there is no reason why the Japanese should not become the dominating factor in the Western Indian Ocean. This would result in the collapse of our whole position in the Middle East, not only because of the interruption to our convoys to the Middle East and India, but also because of the interruptions to the oil supplies from Abadan, without which we cannot maintain our position either at sea or on land in the Indian Ocean Area. Supplies to Russia via the Persian Gulf would also be cut. With so much of the weight of Japan thrown upon us we have more than we can bear.³

I ask readers' indulgence as I demonstrate that the Japanese formula for victory was decidedly not a grandiose delusion, but a solidly realistic plan replete with potential.

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³ Kimball, Warren, ed., *Churchill & Roosevelt: The Complete Correspondence, vol. 1, Alliance Emerging* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984), 452-3.

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Only Akimaru Agency showed the path to victory
20:1 ratio was inflated popular opinion
Fabricators scoff at newly unearthed historical fact
Mass media broadcast manufactured “news”
Bring honesty back to academia
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AFTERWORD

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