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The U.S. Army, Unconditional Surrender, and the Potsdam Proclamation

BRIAN L. VILLA

ON August 10, 1945, the Japanese government finally announced its willingness to surrender on the sole condition that the imperial institution not be prejudiced. In roundabout ways, the American government met the request, one which virtually everyone had anticipated and which many in Washington had long been prepared to make. Still, for both governments these gestures represented an abandonment of intransigent postures adopted in wartime propaganda.

The postwar world might have been very different if the timing had been other than what it was. If the surrender had occurred later, the Russian military position in China, Korea, and Japan would have been much stronger. Conversely, if Tokyo and Washington had reached an agreement earlier, the atomic bomb would not have been used, Russia would not have entered the war in the Pacific, the Yalta agreement on the Far East would have remained a dead letter, and the American military position in Europe would have been much stronger. The many possibilities revealed by an awareness of this contingency and the importance of timing have stimulated an enormous amount of speculation by historians and the public at large.

Two broad trends can be recognized in this speculative enterprise. At the height of the Cold War many Americans felt that the bomb alone had ended the war, that Soviet entry in the Far East should not have been encouraged, and that Russia had reaped the Yalta rewards without any sacrifice. Presumably communist sympathizers within the state department had "duped" the government into prolonging the war to make Soviet entry possible. Historians have recently turned this interpretation on its head. Agreeing that the war had been unnecessarily prolonged, they contend that the purpose was to terrorize the Soviets by demonstrating

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the bomb on a prostrate Japan, something which could not be arranged before August 1945.¹

There may well be an answer to both interpretations: the reorientation of policy required to make peace took more time than seemed necessary simply because there were deep divisions in government, divisions which in any complicated distribution of power could not be decisively resolved without struggle and, ultimately, a redistribution of power through the formation of new decision-making bodies. In this perspective all speculation about what decision makers could do quickly should be tempered by some appreciation of the channels through which they had to work. This essay seeks to explain not so much the particular positions taken by individuals in the internal debates as the process by which they interacted. No attempt is made here to study the decision-making process in Japan.² Nor is any attempt made here to study all aspects of decision making in Washington, though some effort is made to complete what is known about the position taken by the state department. This essay does attempt to describe how the army's position on unconditional surrender came to be formulated and to assess, from this perspective, whether the final peace terms might have been reached earlier.³ For these purposes some understanding of army administrative structures is necessary. Equally necessary is an appreciation of the theory and practice of unconditional surrender in the years before the fateful decision on Japanese surrender was reached.

The war department, a huge structure for conducting the war, had been given a tiered structure of small, manageable, and well-organized policy-making bodies. Army records for 1944 and 1945, incomparably better organized and maintained than state department records, reflect the clarity and thoroughness with which army administrative structures had been established during the war and the importance of the Operations

¹ Athan G. Theoharis, *The Yalta Myths: an issue in U.S. politics, 1945-1955* (Columbia, Mo., 1970), 105-29, 154-79; Gar Alperovitz, *Atomic Diplomacy: Hiroshima and Potsdam: The Use of the Atomic Bomb and the American Confrontation with Soviet Power* (New York, 1965), 14, 237, 239, 241. For a recent reworking of Gar Alperovitz's theme with some added twists, see Charles L. Mee, Jr., *Meeting at Potsdam* (New York, 1975), 205, 238-39, 288-89.

² For Japanese peace-making, see Robert J. C. Butow, *Japan's Decision to Surrender* (Stanford, 1954).

³ The principal unpublished sources for this study are Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) and JCS Committee files relating to the end of the Pacific war; state department files on the Potsdam Conference; Secretary's Staff Committee Minutes and documents; the Joseph Grew Papers (Harvard University), and interviews with Gen. George A. Lincoln, Nov. 1967, and Oct. 1968.

Division (OPD) advising the chief of staff, General George C. Marshall.⁴ With fewer than 200 officers, OPD was the coordinating agency, responsible for all aspects of future military strategy and policy, issuing all military orders emanating from Washington, monitoring the results obtained in each theater, and coordinating army strategy with other departments of the government and with the Allied (United) Nations. OPD attracted and produced some very distinguished American officers, including Dwight D. Eisenhower, Albert C. Wedemeyer, and John Hull.

OPD itself had a small manageable center of gravity—the Strategy and Policy Section (S&P)—which clearly overshadowed the other five major divisions within OPD. The particular responsibility of S&P was army strategic planning at its highest level and its integration with civilian objectives for the war. Headed by a junior brigadier general, S&P carried enormous responsibilities during the war. Between February 1942 and September 1945, four generals successively directed S&P: Thomas T. Handy, Wedemeyer, Frank N. Roberts, and George A. Lincoln. S&P's chief was "the Army Planner" and directly advised General Marshall and the chief and deputy chief of OPD. This remarkable organization placed a junior one star general on top of so important a structure as S&P and beside the chief of staff. There had to be, of course, a substantial measure of confidence between the chief of S&P and his superiors, which was usually the case.⁵ Clearly, the position taken by the chief of S&P would be of crucial importance in determining the army's position on unconditional surrender.

The army, however, did not run the war. Above OPD, and the chief of staff—General Marshall—were the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS), headed by Admiral William D. Leahy, the latter handpicked by Marshall and Franklin D. Roosevelt to be the remote and distant arbitrator over inter-service rivalry.⁶ JCS submitted military policy to the President. In practice army policy worked out in S&P was presented to at least two subcommittees of JCS before being formally considered by the chiefs. Less frequently

⁴ For an example of state department files at their worst, see 740.00119 [Potsdam] 7-2345, General Records of the Department of State, RG 59 (National Archives), a loose unbound file containing over 100 documents from sundry and miscellaneous sources, currently (1973) in no particular order. See also Ray S. Cline, *United States Army in World War II: The War Department: Washington Command Post: The Operations Division* (Washington, 1951), 195, 108-09.

⁵ Cline, *Washington Command Post*, 103, 121, 166, 363 (organizational tables); "General George A. Lincoln on W.W. II," transcript of television program, Department of Social Science, United States Military Academy (West Point).

⁶ Forrest C. Pogue, *George C. Marshall: Organizer of Victory, 1943-1945* (New York, 1973), 7, 8, 70.

the chief of staff would present ideas through JCS to these subcommittees, when he was not pleased with the alternatives being presented at JCS levels.

The most important of these subcommittees was the Joint Staff Planners, comprised of the principal planning staff in the services. The head of S&P represented the army there. Helping the Joint Planning Staff and responsible to it was the Joint War Plans Committee. Important proposals touching on grand strategy might also go through the Joint Strategic Survey Committee, a high level "blue ribbon" review board of senior officers, at times equal in influence to the joint chiefs themselves. From there papers went to JCS and the President.⁷

Policy initiatives did not just rise from below; they also came from the President, from the joint chiefs, and from principal cabinet officers. As far as the army was concerned the unconditional surrender doctrine was just such a gift from on high. Though the state department Committee on Post War Planning had considered forms of surrender and expressed a marked preference for unconditional surrender, the army had not taken part in these deliberations. It is true that Roosevelt had notified the chiefs of staff before the Casablanca Conference that he would announce unconditional surrender as the objective of the United Nations, but the reference to it had been so brief that after the war Marshall could not recall hearing of the formula until it was publicly announced by the President at Casablanca. There certainly was not thorough consultation.⁸

That doctrine was not generally understood at the time, nor have subsequent scholars grasped its full implications, though one has come quite close.⁹ The doctrine was, of course, intended to strike awe in the enemy as it helped develop confidence and a sense of solidarity among the United Nations. But its central purpose was juridical. Roosevelt was aware of the debate over the legality of the Versailles settlement. The Germans

⁷ Cline, *Washington Command Post*, 107-42, 188-212, 234-68. Unfortunately, the volumes of the official history of the joint chiefs have not been published. But copies of Vernon E. Davis, "Origin of the Joint and Combined Chiefs of Staff in WW II" (1972) and Grace P. Hayes, "History of the Joint Chiefs of Staff in WW II, The War against Japan" (2 vols., 1953) are available in the Records of the United States Joint Chiefs of Staff, RG 48 (National Archives).

⁸ [Harley A. Notter] *Postwar Foreign Policy Preparation, 1939-1945* (Washington, 1949), 126-27; Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States: The Conferences at Washington, 1941-1942, and Casablanca, 1943* (Washington, 1968), 506, 506n. JCS formal participation in the subcommittee did not occur until after March 1943. [Notter] *Postwar Foreign Policy Preparation*, 125.

⁹ Paul Kecskemeti, *Strategic Surrender: The Politics of Victory and Defeat* (Stanford, 1958). For the literature on unconditional surrender, see Raymond G. O'Connor, *Diplomacy for Victory: FDR and Unconditional Surrender* (New York, 1971).

argued, with some support in the United States, that they had surrendered their arms on the basis of the Fourteen Points and had then been forced to sign something entirely different. The solution was fairly obvious: next time no political promises would be made prior to an unconditional military surrender. The only guarantees that the defeated would have against abuse by the victor would be those recognized by international law, particularly the Geneva conventions.

Roosevelt would accept no restrictions whatsoever on the victor, from Geneva or elsewhere. "Please note," he once angrily stated, "that I am not willing at this time to say that we do not intend to destroy the German nation."¹⁰ His motivation was clearly announced at Casablanca: "Unconditional surrender . . . does mean the destruction of a philosophy in Germany, Italy and Japan which is based on the conquest and subjugation of other peoples."¹¹ Rooting out a philosophy, Roosevelt recognized, was difficult business. In his mind the process might well have to include such things as war trials, elimination of dangerous parties, prolonged occupation, careful control of all levels of education, de-industrialization, and territorial dismemberment. To achieve these goals it was necessary that a people, a nation, as well as a government be entirely at the mercy of the conqueror. The right even to abuse the defeated was to be claimed. As Winston Churchill expressed it: "If we are bound, we are bound by our own consciences to civilization."¹² Accordingly, in discussing the surrender documents that were to implement this philosophy there was a marked preference for Hobbesian language. Instruments of surrender were to be framed to allow the United States to assume "supreme" or "absolute" power.¹³

There was widespread skepticism among the military toward Roosevelt's unconditional surrender policy based on three important considerations. First, the military questioned the need for a legally perfect *carte blanche* to justify occupation policies. The officers felt that all the legal documents in the world would not add anything to a sound occupation policy, and, similarly, no amount of legal documents could justify an unnecessarily brutal occupation. Second, even if some benefit could be gained from a legally more correct position, the price paid for it would be too high.

¹⁰ Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States: Diplomatic Papers 1944*. Vol. I: *General* (Washington, 1966), 501-02.

¹¹ *Foreign Relations of the United States . . . Casablanca*, 837.

¹² Winston S. Churchill, *The Second World War: The Hinge of Fate* (Boston, 1950), 690-91.

¹³ For example, see Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States: Diplomatic Papers 1945*. Vol. III: *European Advisory Commission; Austria; Germany* (Washington, 1968), 169, 378-81.

The very nature of the unconditional surrender formula caused too much uncertainty for the enemy as to what surrender and occupation might mean, and this uncertainty would be converted into desperate, last ditch fighting. Third, if the officers saw the formula as a legal nicety with a very high price, this was because, for a variety of reasons, they tended not to share Roosevelt's primary objective—the rooting out of evil philosophies. Few shared his belief that international conflicts were basically caused by pernicious philosophies. Even if Roosevelt's analysis proved correct, there was much skepticism that his corrective could be administered by an occupation army. In any case the attempt to uproot a philosophy and instill a new one would take a long time. Roosevelt spoke of an educational process of forty years for Germany.¹⁴ While he never seems to have defined how long the military occupation proper would last, the army was disinclined to think in terms of more than a few years. Nor was the sharing of occupation responsibilities with civilian experts in the restructuring of societies looked on with much enthusiasm. But the most serious consideration from the military point of view was the drain on military resources implied in a prolonged occupation and the risk of retaining troops in one theater for an indefinite period. The prevalent view was summarized by one officer directly involved: the doctrine “. . . was open to serious doubts as to its practical horse sense.”¹⁵

Important civilians within the government supported the military in their doubts about restructuring foreign societies. Their motives for supporting the military were less practical and more ideological. Everyone agreed vaguely that the Axis nations had to be restructured. But when it came to specific planning there was disagreement on how far this social engineering should go, divisions which reflected America's own post-Depression politics. The left wanted to go beyond fostering political change to produce profound, even revolutionary, economic and social changes. The right feared the precedent such massive intervention overseas might have on America. Accordingly, the right tended to be lukewarm in its support of unconditional surrender and the extraordinary measures it implied. There were important exceptions to this division—Cordell Hull, most noticeably—but if one pictures Henry L. Stimson, Joseph Grew, James Forrestal, and William Phillips on the right, resisting unconditional

¹⁴ Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States: The Conference at Quebec 1944* (Washington, 1972), 144.

¹⁵ Interview with Lincoln, Nov. 1967, Oct. 1968; Lincoln to author, Nov. 12, 1970; Charles H. Bonesteel to author, May 28, 1974. See also, *Foreign Relations of the United States . . . Germany*, 380, 419, 509.

surrender, and Harry Hopkins, Dean Acheson, Archibald MacLeish on the left, insisting on unconditional surrender, one can arrive at an idea of the division among American policy makers by 1945.¹⁶

By the end of the war this division over unconditional surrender and the associated occupation policies had produced a certain amount of name-calling. Stimson and Grew were labeled reactionaries. Their opponents came to be dubbed communist sympathizers. The division would have momentous consequences for postwar America. For better or worse, the right, which opposed revolutionary uses of unconditional surrender, came to support the military in their practical objections to unconditional surrender. That alliance would also have important implications for postwar America.

The divisions over unconditional surrender began to manifest themselves with the army's reluctance to insist on unconditional surrender for Italy in 1943. This dissent was blurred by the fact that Roosevelt and many of his advisers were themselves not convinced that unconditional surrender was required of Italy. Roosevelt, in fact, had not intended to include Italy among the powers required to surrender unconditionally. Only at British insistence, partly motivated by colonial and naval considerations, was Italy included.¹⁷ But since neither Churchill nor Roosevelt believed that dictatorship and militarism were anything but superficial grafts on the Italian nation, there was little incentive to insist on unconditional surrender when the Italian government asked for generous peace terms.¹⁸ All the more so, since the Italian request came just as the Allies were about to launch an extremely hazardous invasion of the Italian mainland with insufficient troops. Little wonder that Eisenhower, Roosevelt, and Churchill tried to meet the Italians, compromising here and there until the legal status of the Italian surrender could no longer be sorted out. At the same time, there was just enough insistence on unconditional surrender in the form of refusing Italian requests for immediate co-belligerency status to take away the incentive for a major Italian military effort. The end result was what Eisenhower called "a crooked deal," a failure to exploit the Italian surrender, a particularly cruel extension of the war for Italy, and at

¹⁶ For Franklin Roosevelt's perception of this issue, see Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States: The Conferences at Washington and Quebec 1943* (Washington, 1970), 521.

¹⁷ *Foreign Relations of the United States . . . Casablanca*, 506n., 635n.; *Foreign Relations of the United States . . . Quebec*, 496; Cordell Hull, *The Memoirs of Cordell Hull* (2 vols., New York, 1948), II, 1548; Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States: Diplomatic Papers, 1943*. Vol. II: *Europe* (Washington, 1964), 330-31.

¹⁸ *Times of London*, Dec. 24, 1940; also *Foreign Relations of the United States . . . Washington and Quebec*, 328.

home the feeling that someone had betrayed the unconditional surrender formula as the United States was still doing business with fascists.¹⁹

The experience with the Italian surrender was not likely to resolve the unconditional surrender debate. On the contrary, it encouraged both sides to prepare themselves for the next test of strength. By the Second Quebec Conference these divisions had clearly emerged as disagreements over the occupation policies for Germany proposed by Henry Morgenthau. The army officers, trying to remain aloof, reluctantly allowed themselves to be talked into at least four major revisions of military directives for German occupation. But quietly and decisively the army chief of staff threw his weight against any implementation of the Morgenthau plan, as did Secretary of War Stimson.²⁰

When the time came to present Germany with the actual surrender documents, the military's resistance to the unconditional surrender doctrine became even more apparent. After the experience in Italy, extensive preparations had been made to draft legally flawless surrender instruments for Germany, embodying at least in theory Roosevelt's doctrine in its full rigor. Though the military tried to take some of the harshness out of these, drafts embodying the unconditional surrender doctrine in its most rigorous form were virtually ready for use in May 1945. And still, Eisenhower, thoroughly disgusted with the Italian surrender and convinced that Germany's defeat was clear enough, took the advantage of technical imperfections to shelve the approved drafts and substitute a simple instrument of military surrender for Germany. The Allied Powers found this entirely unsatisfactory and issued instead a proclamation of unconditional surrender for Germany as the legal basis for the occupation.²¹

¹⁹ See Kecskemeti, *Strategic Surrender*; Albert N. Garland and Howard McGaw Smyth, *United States Army in World War II: The Mediterranean Theater of Operations: Sicily and the Surrender of Italy* (Washington, 1965); Robert J. Quinlan, "The Italian Armistice," Harold Stein, ed., *American Civil-Military Decisions: A Book of Case Studies* (Birmingham, Ala., 1963), 203-310; Harry C. Butcher, *My Three Years with Eisenhower* (New York, 1966), 405; Kenneth Strong, *Intelligence at the Top: Recollections of an Intelligence Officer* (London, 1968), 104, 113; *Foreign Relations of the United States . . . Washington and Quebec*, 209, 326, 414, 521, 567, 576, 1261-62; Raffaele Guariglia, *Ricordi: 1922-1946* (Napoli, 1949); *Foreign Relations of the United States . . . Europe, 1922-1946* (Napoli, 1949); *Foreign Relations of the United States . . . Europe*, 332. Harold Nicolson, *The War Years 1939-1945* (New York, 1967), 318.

²⁰ *Foreign Relations of the United States . . . Germany*, 378, 434, 484; Pogue, *George C. Marshall*, 466-69; Walter L. Dorn, "The Debate over American Occupation Policy in Germany in 1944-1945," *Political Science Quarterly*, LXXII (Dec. 1957), 481-501.

²¹ For questioning of unconditional surrender for Germany, see John P. Glennon, "This Time Germany is a Defeated Nation: The Doctrine of Unconditional Surrender and Some Unsuccessful Attempts To Alter It," Gerald N. Grob, ed., *Statesmen and Statescraft of the Modern West: Essays in Honor of Dwight E. Lee and H. Donaldson Jordan* (Barre, Mass., 1967), 109-51. Maurice Matloff, *United States Army in World War II: The War Depart-*

Even before the final outcome of the German surrender was known advocates and opponents of unconditional surrender began to take positions for the final test of strength, the Japanese surrender. Among civilian supporters of unconditional surrender there was already much displeasure over military "obstructionism" and a firm resolve not to be outmaneuvered. Military leaders sensing this had reservations about the wisdom of a direct clash over surrender terms for Japan. If there existed a surplus of force to throw against Japan, if the cost in lives for insisting on unconditional surrender were not too high, then the military might well retreat and allow the Casablanca formula to be implemented. Anything else would defy the tradition requiring subordination of the army to civilian war objectives. But if the military cost of insisting on unconditional surrender should be high then some challenge on practical military grounds could be expected. Thus, military planning for the final defeat of Japan would be crucial to the development of the army's position on surrender for Japan.

Prior to February 1945, planning for the defeat of Japan had not progressed sufficiently to affect decisively the unconditional surrender debate. Until well into May 1944 details of the Normandy invasion absorbed most to the planners' attention. By that time it was evident the break-out in Europe and the gathering momentum of war in the Pacific would absorb more men and materials than had been predicted in the first years of the war. Fearing that manpower resources were limited and that civilian and military morale would be strained in the process, army planners followed civilian leadership in hoping for the speediest possible defeat of Japan. The goal was to achieve victory within twelve months after victory in Europe. Such a rapid conclusion, it was felt, could only be brought about by a direct invasion of the Japanese homeland.²²

But if the desire for a quick conclusion to the war implied invasion, the invasion itself implied delays. It would not only require long logistic

ment: Strategic Planning for Coalition Warfare 1943-1944 (Washington, 1959), 430. *Foreign Relations of the United States . . . General*, 517. On drafting the surrender instruments, see [Notter] *Postwar Foreign Policy Preparation*, 125; *Foreign Relations of the United States . . . General*, 100, 256; *Foreign Relations of the United States . . . Germany*, 162, 216, 447. For Dwight D. Eisenhower's evasion, see John Wheeler-Bennett and Anthony Nicholls, *The Semblance of Peace: The Political Settlement After The Second World War* (London, 1972), 204-65; Herbert Feis, *Between War and Peace: The Potsdam Conference* (Princeton, 1960), 327-28. For documentation, see *Foreign Relations of the United States . . . Germany*, 259. Robert Murphy's admission that Eisenhower's headquarters had "made up its mind" to control the surrender and exclude diplomatic interference is correct. *Ibid.*, 294.

²² *Foreign Relations of the United States . . . Washington and Quebec*, 975-80. See also Cline, *Washington Command Post*, 334-46.

preparations but also provoke a Japanese defense of the homeland. If the Japanese had fought stubbornly to defend their recent acquisitions, how hard would they fight for sacred soil?

The more closely the planners looked at the military situation the more difficult it appeared. In September 1944 a study noting that the Sea of Japan was much wider than the English Channel concluded that an invasion of Japan would be a more difficult and hazardous operation than had been the Normandy invasion.²³ Clearly, the army was just beginning to fathom the magnitude of the problem. The topography of the home islands provided the Japanese with opportunities for resistance much superior to those that had existed in Germany. Even after a successful Allied invasion, the Japanese would have the option of continuing resistance from elsewhere in their still vast empire, notably from China. In preparation for the Malta-Yalta conversations the planners thus began to express some doubts about the twelve-month deadline for defeating Japan.²⁴

There was, then, just enough concern about the problems of defeating Japan to make military leaders worry about the cost of insisting on any surrender formula likely to prolong Japanese resistance. Against this view was balanced the known insistence by Roosevelt and Hopkins on unconditional surrender. The army sought a compromise. In December 1944 one of the army members of the Joint Post War Committee, General George Strong, presented Undersecretary of State Grew with two unsolicited drafts for surrender instruments. Strong made it clear that he preferred a short, more conventional surrender instrument, but his second draft, much longer, attempted to embody most of the unconditional surrender doctrine. Neither of his drafts called for the emperor to resign; both drafts implicitly allowed for the continuation of a Japanese government, even if entirely under the control of the occupiers. The two leading state department experts on Japan, Eugene Dooman and Joseph Ballantine, were shocked because these drafts still departed from unconditional surrender and suggested a softer peace than anything they had dared to suggest.²⁵

The divergence of civilian and military perspectives on the future of Japan had, however, been clearly anticipated. In November 1944 Secretary of State Edward Stettinius had taken the initiative in proposing a "co-

²³ Cline, *Washington Command Post*, 339-40.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 340; Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States: Diplomatic Papers: The Conferences at Malta and Yalta, 1945* (Washington, 1955), 827-33, especially 830.

²⁵ Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States: Diplomatic Papers 1945*. Vol. VI: *The British Commonwealth, the Far East* (Washington, 1969), 497-515, 517.

ordinating" committee which was finally established in February 1945 as the State, War, Navy Coordinating Committee (SWNCC). In theory it was a committee of equals, and the actions of any single department were to be subjected to the common purpose. But the state department was to preside, and since military policy was to serve national policy, the state department would have an effective veto. In effect the committee was designed to prevent the sort of initiatives in policy matters which the army had shown in Italy and was evidencing on Germany.²⁶

SWNCC's ability to restrain army initiatives on surrender policy for Japan was soon demonstrated. As soon as it was organized General Strong's drafts were forwarded for SWNCC's consideration, where they were promptly handed over to its far eastern subcommittee, chaired by Dooman, representing the state department. Not surprisingly, the drafts were substantially modified to comply with the doctrine of unconditional surrender. An additional proclamation was also drafted by which the emperor would announce to the Japanese people his own personal "unconditional surrender," and which would conclude: "I am relinquishing all my powers and authority this day to the Commander in Chief, United National Armed Forces."²⁷

SWNCC's insistence on strict unconditional surrender would appear to be rather incomprehensible if one follows Grew's memoirs or Dooman's later recollections. From those sources one gets the impression that Grew, Dooman, and Ballantine all agreed on modifying unconditional surrender to allow for retention of the emperor and some continued use of a Japanese government during the occupation. In SWNCC and elsewhere their full energies were thrown against those very positions.²⁸

In retrospect it is easy to see why Grew and his staff were circumspect in expressing his views on how Japan ought to be treated in the postwar world. Grew, after all, had been the last American ambassador in Tokyo, and the public tended to assume that if he had "talked straight" to the Japanese the war might have been avoided.²⁹ But Grew had other reasons for

²⁶ See Annex to State, War, Navy Coordinating Committee (SWNCC), 16/2, Feb. 19, 1945, in Combined Chiefs of Staff (CCS) 092 Pacific Ocean Area (POA) (1-31-45), Records of the United States Joint Chiefs of Staff, RG 218 (National Archives). For the formation of SWNCC, see [Notter] *Postwar Foreign Policy Preparation*, 347-48; Cline, *Washington Command Post*, 326; *Foreign Relations of the United States . . . General*, 1466-70.

²⁷ *Foreign Relations of the United States . . . British Commonwealth, the Far East*, 517-29, 522.

²⁸ Joseph C. Grew, *Turbulent Era: A Diplomatic Record of Forty Years 1904-1945* (2 vols., Boston, 1952), II, 1421-22. See also Len Giovannitti and Fred Freed, *The Decision to Drop the Bomb* (New York, 1965).

²⁹ Waldo H. Heinrichs, Jr., *American Ambassador: Joseph C. Grew and the Development of the United States Diplomatic Tradition* (Boston, 1966), 364-86. Joseph Grew's

being reserved. He was, after all, undersecretary, not secretary. The fact that he was often acting secretary during 1945 really changed little in the equation. His decisions could be appealed to Stettinius or James F. Byrnes. More important, Grew had qualms of conscience about exercising his authority arbitrarily in the presence of the new consultative structures established in the state department reorganization of December 1944. Central to the new organization was the secretary's staff committee, which was to assist and advise the secretary. It was composed of the undersecretary, all the assistant secretaries, the legal adviser, and the special assistant for international organization, and it was gradually expanded by such other high officials as the secretary invited.³⁰ Grew religiously met this committee every day and almost always deferred to the majority view.

On the issue of unconditional surrender this committee reflected deep ideological divisions. Conservative views were represented by Grew along with veteran diplomat Phillips and administrative chief, General Julius C. Holmes, all favoring concessions on the emperor issue. Ranged on the other side were MacLeish and Acheson, supported by Nelson Rockefeller and legal adviser Green Hackworth. Assistant Secretary James C. Dunn was the obvious exception of someone relatively conservative—he was once sympathetic to Franco's Spain—who nevertheless sided with the majority against Grew.³¹ Grew fought hard for his views. But clearly he did not have the votes in this division, and to his credit he refused to represent the department's policy other than what it was—opposed to any dilution of unconditional surrender.

The state department thus spoke with one voice, that representing the secretary's staff committee. This effectively muzzled Grew and gave the military officers, in their search for modification of surrender terms, a very

sensitivity to charges of "appeasement" and "pampering the Emperor" were reflected in meetings of the secretary's staff committee. For example, see 27 meeting, Feb. 19, 1945, State Department Staff Committee Files, General Records of the Department of State, RG 59 (National Archives). See also *Foreign Relations of the United States . . . The British Commonwealth, the Far East*, 515-16.

³⁰ [Notter] *Postwar Foreign Policy Preparation*, 349; Grew, *Turbulent Era*, II, 1494.

³¹ For Nelson Rockefeller, Archibald MacLeish, Dean Acheson, and Julius C. Holmes, see minutes of Secretary's Staff Committee, meetings of May 28, June 19, 26, July 19, 1945, in State Department Staff Committee Files. On Dunn, see SWNCC minutes of Feb. 7, 1945, Records of Interdepartmental and Intradepartmental Committees, RG 353 (National Archives). See also JCS 1275/2, in CCS 387 Japan (2-7-45), section 1, Records of the United States Joint Chiefs of Staff. For Green Hackworth, see *Foreign Relations of the United States . . . British Commonwealth, the Far East*, 905. There is no record of Will L. Clayton's position, but a remarkably well-informed columnist, Drew Pearson, identified Clayton with Acheson on this issue. Drew Pearson in the *Washington Post*, July 21, 1945. The ideological nature of the dispute is reflected in the tendency to use the anti-militarist 1945 leftist position as a model in the Vietnam debate. Ralph Stavins, Richard J. Barnett, and Marcus G. Raskin, *Washington Plans An Aggressive War* (New York, 1971), 300.

formidable opponent. Systematically the military spokesmen were obliged to retreat so that in fairly short order the revised drafts of the surrender instruments sponsored by the state department were approved by SWNCC and sent to the joint chiefs for their views. Thereupon the joint chiefs sent the drafts, now designated as JCS 1275 through the various joint committees.³² The drafts were in an advanced stage by the time of the Malta-Yalta discussions; only final approval at the highest levels was wanting.

The purpose of the Malta-Yalta discussions was to provide a high level review of military planning for the defeat of Japan and to determine Russia's role in that campaign, but inevitably these discussions had an impact on the unconditional surrender question. All the problems involved in invading Japan, vaguely perceived in the fall of 1944, now loomed threateningly on the horizon. Understandably at Malta the military chiefs began to place more emphasis on weakening Japan before invasion. But such strategy, involving more reliance on bombardment and blockade, would tend to prolong the war. Soviet assistance would be important, but there was still some feeling that there was a gap between military resources and the objective of imposing unconditional surrender on Japan within twelve months of victory in Europe.³³ Churchill was the first to confront the problem directly and propose a new course. He suggested some "mitigation" of unconditional surrender would be desirable if it led to the saving of a year or a year and a half of a war in which "so much blood and treasure" had been poured out. The prime minister thought such mitigation could be presented in conjunction with a four power ultimatum calling on Japan to surrender at a given moment.³⁴

Churchill's idea, and not the subsequent work of Grew and Stimson, was the true origin of the Potsdam proclamation. The proposal reflected the prime minister's growing concern over long-term European problems and his unwillingness to see any major diversion of American energies to Asia after V-E Day. He attached little importance to America's hopes for China or the democratization of Japan.³⁵ Churchill was aware that his suggestion would not be well received by Hopkins and the other civilian advisers, and thus he made it directly to the military chief. Shortly thereafter army planners began to weigh Churchill's suggestion against the costs

³² SWNCC Minutes, 9 and 11 meetings, Feb. 7, 16, 1945, Records of Interdepartmental and Intradepartmental Committees. For routing, see tally sheet and documentation in CCS 387 Japan (2-7-45), section 1, Records of the United States Joint Chiefs of Staff.

³³ *Foreign Relations of the United States . . . Malta and Yalta*, 395-400, 388.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 825-26.

³⁵ [Charles Wilson] *Churchill: Taken from the Diaries of Lord Moran: The Struggle for Survival 1940-1965* (Boston, 1966), 140, 207.

of the invasion strategy. Among these planners was General Lincoln, chief of S&P, who would have primary responsibility for the actual formulation of the invasion plans.

General Marshall's feeling that the options had to be completely re-examined was reflected in his decision to send Lincoln directly from Yalta to the Pacific to confer with Asian theater commanders on future strategy. Lincoln returned to Washington at the beginning of March with a still more sober view of the difficulties of defeating Japan and obtaining unconditional surrender.³⁶ After consultation with the planners, Marshall abruptly rejected the draft surrender instruments prepared by SWNCC, which had been circulated as JCS 1275. His secretary, Colonel Florence T. Newsome wrote:

The Chief of Staff is not satisfied that all of the military implications in JCS 1275 have been thoroughly considered and assessed in JCS 1275/1. For example it appears that the study has not taken into account the views of qualified Far Eastern specialists in the War Department with respect to various matters, including the advisability of requiring the Emperor of Japan personally to sign the surrender documents. . . .³⁷

Marshall thus took direct responsibility for challenging the surrender policy. Hurriedly an ad hoc meeting of the authorities Marshall had mentioned was convened. There army and navy representatives expressed their opposition to provisions for the emperor's unconditional surrender. But the army spokesmen had not thought through the relationship between unconditional surrender and a prolongation of the war. Army representatives were unable to present convincing "military" reasons against the draft surrender instruments. State department spokesmen argued that such a surrender was a political objective of the war and that it was the military's job to fight until that objective was reached. In the absence of any compelling military arguments to attenuate the surrender policy JCS 1275 would have to stand unaltered.³⁸

Marshall duly noted these conclusions without taking issue; but he suggested that the views of field commanders would have to be obtained before he or the other chiefs of staff could formally consider JCS 1275.³⁹

³⁶ Cline, *Washington Command Post*, 307-08; U.S. Department of Defense, *The Entry of the Soviet Union into the War Against Japan: Military Plans, 1941-1945* (Washington, 1955), 50.

³⁷ Memorandum from Lt. Col. Florence T. Newsome for Gen. Andrew J. McFarland, March 5, 1945, in CCS 377 Japan (2-7-45), section 1, Records of the United States Joint Chiefs of Staff.

³⁸ JCS 1275/2 March 17, 1945, *ibid.*

³⁹ Memorandum from Newsome for MacFarland, March 23, 1945, transmitted by JCS-SM929 of March 23, 1945, to the other chiefs, *ibid.*

Patently, General Marshall was procrastinating. In this he was aided by Admiral Leahy, who concurred with Marshall's suggestion and added that he did not want to hear any more on the subject until the field commanders' reports had been received.⁴⁰ These reports were not complete until April 21. Marshall's action had resulted therefore in a full month's delay.⁴¹ The reprieve would mean nothing unless military reasons could be produced to support modification of unconditional surrender. In delaying final approval, Marshall knew that the entire Pacific strategy was about to come under final review.

By April 12, Marshall in a cable to General Douglas MacArthur was forced to admit that the review had produced some division over strategy for the Pacific. One school of thought still held to "driving straight into Japan," but another school had emerged calling for blockade and bombardment as necessary preliminaries to, perhaps even substitutes for, invasion.⁴² Churchill's suggestion of mitigating surrender terms was not directly mentioned, but it was implicit that bombardment and blockade without invasion would only produce a limited pressure for surrender.

In weighing the options of direct assault or siege warfare the essential problem was the nature of Japanese political and military resistance, and how that resistance might be affected by insistence on unconditional surrender. This continued to be a worrisome imponderable in the debate over unconditional surrender. The relative absence of Japanese surrenders in the Pacific campaigns, the fanatical resistance appearing with every approach to the home islands, and the increasing use of suicide forces, all these factors suggested that Japanese resistance might be longer than that of Germany. Perhaps the Japanese would never surrender.

The planners had requested, therefore, on April 7 that the Joint Intelligence Staff (JIS) make an estimate of the resistance that could be expected from Japan to an invasion of Honshu or any of the home islands before unconditional surrender had been obtained. Because it was feared that some Japanese might never surrender, JIS was also asked to evaluate possible resistance after a formal unconditional surrender. These questions led directly to the political aspects of the problem; Japanese appreciation of the unconditional surrender formula. The planners completed their request to JIS by asking:

⁴⁰ Memorandum of conversation, G. G. Epley with Newsome, March 27, 1945, *ibid.*

⁴¹ CCS 377 Japan (2-7-45), section 1, *ibid.* See also Annex to JCS 1275/3 of May 5, 1945, *ibid.*

⁴² Department of Defense, *Entry of the Soviet Union into the War Against Japan*, 54-55.

a) At what stage of the war will the Japanese realize the inevitability of absolute defeat?

b) Will such realization result in their unconditional surrender, passive submission without surrender or continuing resistance until subdued by force?⁴³

Three days later JIS replied expressing confidence that the Japanese would recognize defeat by autumn. But the report carefully distinguished between recognition of defeat and unconditional surrender. The literal meaning of unconditional surrender, JIS noted, "is unknown to the Japanese. . . . Our meaning of the term cannot be comprehended by the vast majority of Japanese." The report forecast little resistance from the Japanese once a legitimate Japanese government had accepted surrender terms, unconditional or not. But in the more likely possibility that there would be no unconditional surrender, JIS predicted long and determined Japanese military resistance even after invasion. The conclusion of this study was to argue that unconditional surrender ought to be attenuated so that it would resemble what the Japanese could recognize as a simple admission of complete defeat. JIS went on to note: "If without compromising Allied objectives the Japanese can be made to understand that unconditional surrender does not imply annihilation or national suicide, we believe it quite possible that unconditional surrender would follow fairly quickly the Japanese realization of the inevitability of absolute defeat."⁴⁴

JIS further attacked the concept of unconditional surrender by suggesting that a surrender would be accepted by the Japanese people only if they thought the government signing it was acting with the authority and sanction of the emperor. On the occupation problems after surrender, the study concluded: "the resulting political situation in Japan proper would remain fairly stable for as long as this Japanese government . . . remained in power and was supported by the Emperor as well as by Allied authority." Here was a clear implication that the supreme authority during the occupation would be shared, at least nominally, between the emperor and the Allied authority. Here was another blow to the doctrine of unconditional surrender. It gave a military reason for a concession Japan was certain to request, the right to retain the emperor.⁴⁵

The members of JIS and particularly the area teams that prepared this general study on Japanese resistance had considerable freedom in making recommendations. They acted within the staff as experts, not as representatives of their departments. It was otherwise in the Joint Intelligence Committee which reviewed their work. There departmental positions were

⁴³ Joint Intelligence Staff (JIS) 143/M, April 7, 1945, in CCS 387 Japan (4-6-45), Records of the United States Joint Chiefs of Staff.

⁴⁴ JIS 143/1, April 10, 1945, *ibid.*

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

represented. Predictably state department representatives found the study unacceptable. Erle Dickover attacked the implied continuation of a Japanese government after surrender, since "State Department considered that legally no Japanese Government would exist." As for the whole problem of Japanese resistance he thought it was more a function of the force allocated to the occupation and its extent than of the circumstances surrounding surrender and defeat. He thus neatly shifted responsibility for the presence or absence of occupation problems to the military and their relative efficiency or lack of it. The military reasons for modifying surrender were put down to a loss of nerve and energy. He rejected out of hand the possibility of ending the war by autumn with some change in the surrender formula. The question of whether the Japanese ever could accept unconditional surrender without clarification, he similarly dismissed as "pure speculation."⁴⁶

In the presence of this determined protest by state department spokesmen JIS entirely recast the paper, eliminating practically all of the attacks on the unconditional surrender policy. Only an echo of these remained in the redrafted report. It still stressed that, if the Japanese equated unconditional surrender with national annihilation, they would resist until fully subdued by force. Even this substantially revised version was not satisfactory to the state department, which prepared its own separate reply to the original set of questions the planners had asked. This draft entirely glossed over the problems which might occur if there were no surrender prior to invasion. It characterized these as largely "administrative." Fanatical resistance was nowhere suggested.⁴⁷

Concurrent with discussions over the general JIS study of Japanese resistance (JIS 143) a second effort was made to develop military reasons for questioning unconditional surrender. On April 6 the planners had asked JIS for an estimate of the possibility of producing a Japanese surrender by bombardment and blockade.⁴⁸ This time, however, the reply was drafted by the service members of the Far East team, without the explicit concurrence of state department members. Significantly, their approval was neither sought nor obtained. The service members expressed the view that a program of intensive bombardment coupled with a stringent blockade might produce a surrender but only after unacceptable delay, perhaps "a great many years." The service members took the opportunity,

⁴⁶ Minutes, Joint Intelligence Committee (JIC) 125 meeting, April 20, 1945, in CCS 334 Joint Intelligence Committee (10-13-44), *ibid.* (Note that JIS 143/1 was discussed at this meeting under its JIC designation 268.)

⁴⁷ JIS 143/3, April 24, 1945, and appendix, in CCS 387 Japan (4-6-45), *ibid.*

⁴⁸ JIS 141/M, April 6, 1945, in CCS 381 Japan (4-6-45), *ibid.*

however, to express the belief that a "clarification of Allied intentions with regard to the Japanese nation might bring nearer the possibility of unconditional surrender." They further ventured that if such a statement could be made "which would be acceptable to the Allies" the war could be concluded before the end of 1945 or early in 1946. These conclusions echoed and reinforced those made in the other JIS study of the same period. This second study—on resistance to bombardment and blockade—had been prepared by only a portion of JIS and had no formal status unless approved by the full Joint Intelligence Committee. An attempt to secure such approval was certain to draw a state department veto. Accordingly, formal approval was not requested, and the paper was circulated only for purposes "of information."⁴⁹ This was the price that had to be paid for bringing these issues to the attention of the joint chiefs.

By mid-April a formal division of opinion between the military spokesmen, particularly the planners, and state department representatives over unconditional surrender had emerged into the open. With the state department exercising a de facto veto over joint policy, the military spokesmen had no choice but carry forward the plans for the invasion of Japan. But General Lincoln and the staff planners saw to it that the final planning report expressly called for a definition of unconditional surrender for the Japanese and implied that only the refusal to make such a clarification made an invasion absolutely necessary. As the planners expressed it:

Unless a definition of unconditional surrender can be given which is acceptable to the Japanese, there is no alternative to annihilation and no prospect that the threat of absolute defeat will bring about capitulation. The accomplishment of the unconditional surrender objectives then must be entirely brought about by force of arms.⁵⁰

Not surprisingly the joint chiefs decided to advance slowly and give only tentative approval to the invasion plans. Indeed, by August 1945 only the invasion of Kyushu had actually been set in motion and subsequent operations were approved only for preliminary preparations and planning purposes. But even approval for planning purposes meant extensive preparations. As the army moved millions of men into these preparations,

⁴⁹ JIS 141/1, 141/2, 141/3, JIC 266/1, *ibid.*; Cline, *Washington Command Post*, 343.

⁵⁰ JCS 924/15, April 25, 1945, in CCS 381 POA (6-10-43), section 12, Records of the United States Joint Chiefs of Staff. See also Department of Defense, *Entry of the Soviet Union into the War Against Japan*, 61. See JPS minutes, meetings, April 25, Aug. 3, 1945, pp. 199, 212, in CCS 334 JPS Minutes, Records of the United States Joint Chiefs of Staff. Hayes, *History of the Joint Chiefs*, 374; Cline, *Washington Command Post*, 340-45.

⁵¹ Bonesteel to author, May 28, 1974.

opinion samples were quietly taken on whether the Japanese should be allowed to keep the emperor. The ordinary soldier thought the question was irrelevant as long as surrender could be brought about quickly.⁵¹ Few wanted to carry on the struggle simply to dethrone the emperor or give Admiral William F. "Bull" Halsey his vaunted ride through Tokyo on the emperor's white horse. The inevitable conclusion was that army morale during the invasion might be low, unless some better rationale for the invasion were presented.

At the beginning of May, while the invasion preparations were taking shape, General Marshall intervened directly if discreetly in matters affecting unconditional surrender. Using a channel to the President free from state department vetoes, the joint chiefs structure, Marshall reactivated a languishing psychological warfare project to wear down Japanese resistance. On May 9, he asked through JCS structure that the Joint Staff Planners and the Joint Intelligence Committee study one of these projects. It called for the government to demand the unconditional surrender of Japan at a time when Japanese morale was at a low point and before the determination to resist had hardened under the pressure of Allied bombings. Formally the memorandum forwarded by Marshall seemed to be solidly grounded on the unconditional surrender formula. It argued that if the initiative were not seized the Japanese would propose a negotiated peace under circumstances which would undermine American determination to secure unconditional surrender: "War weariness in the United States may demand the return home of those who have already fought long and well in the European war regardless of the effect of such return on the prosecution of the Japanese war."⁵²

The doctrine of unconditional surrender seemed to be in danger, and the draft memorandum proposed saving it by a timely demand to Japan that, at the very least, would have the advantage of recalling to the American people the goal of the war. There was only one hint in the draft of an attenuation of unconditional surrender where it was noted that any surrender would be "essentially military in character" and would "not affect the peaceful pursuits of the Japanese people." But President Harry S. Truman, after consulting the military, had just made this concession in his V-E speech of May 8. In that speech he not only repeated Roosevelt's assurance that unconditional surrender did not mean extermination or enslavement but also emphasized that such a surrender

⁵² JCS 1340, May 9, 1945, in CCS 387 Japan (5-9-45), Records of the United States Joint Chiefs of Staff.

would be effected by the "armed forces of Japan" and not, as Roosevelt had insisted, by the Japanese nation.⁵³

After such review Marshall could duly approve the study (now identified as JCS 1340) after striking out the apparently excessive references to American war weariness. The other chiefs concurred.⁵⁴ An interdepartmental paper for presentation to the cabinet secretaries destined eventually for the President on the subject of unconditional surrender had been approved! Japan would be asked to surrender on the basis of a new statement. Thus Churchill's idea of encouraging Japanese surrender was given new life. The paper did not develop the possibility of reformulating unconditional surrender any more precisely than Truman had, but it certainly opened the door to high level review.

Given the state department's resistance to changing unconditional surrender, it is not surprising that Marshall had chosen this route, relying on extensive staff work and avoiding a frontal confrontation on what was essentially a political question. But by this particular approach he put the question of surrender terms on the treacherous ground of psychological warfare. Concessions to the enemy are notoriously difficult to achieve if approached from the viewpoint of psychological warfare. If the enemy appears strong, a concession is feared as an admission of weakness. If the enemy appears weak, no reason for concession is seen. Even though a strategy of concession might be approved, the correct moment might be hard to find.

In point of fact the problem of timing would be greatly complicated by the Okinawa campaign just then beginning. The campaign would produce the highest army casualty rates of the war. The navy's losses in ships were among the greatest in its history. As a navy spokesman pointed out, this was no time for a surrender demand.

The Japanese military leaders may be able to make us look ridiculous before the Japanese people by pointing out our naval losses at Okinawa. Furthermore they would probably contend that a small number of Japanese were holding off large U.S. forces in the island itself.⁵⁵

This problem had been on the mind of the Joint Intelligence Committee in considering JCS 1340. It had agreed, with the concurrence of the

⁵³ Harry S. Truman, *Memoirs by Harry S. Truman: Year of Decisions* (Garden City, N. Y., 1955), 207; Herbert Feis, *The Atomic Bomb and the End of World War II* (Princeton, 1966), 16.

⁵⁴ Memorandum, Newsome for Secretariat JCS June 4, 1945, in CCS 387 Japan (2-7-45), section 1, Records of the United States Joint Chiefs of Staff; JCS 1340/2, June 9, 1945, *ibid.* JCS 1340 became SWNCC 149 on June 9, 1945.

⁵⁵ JCS 1340/1, May 19, 1945, in CCS 387 Japan (5-9-45), *ibid.*

Joint Planning Staff, to recommend waiting until the operation had progressed sufficiently "to insure success" before issuing the surrender demand.⁵⁶ When JCS 1340 came before the joint chiefs for final approval, Admiral Leahy, while accepting the report, added a personal note that he preferred action a little later, "after the capture of Okinawa."⁵⁷ Chiefs of staff carefully respected each other's personal preferences. The surrender demand would wait. At the end of April, this seemed like a small concession. But the Okinawa campaign turned out to be a difficult test of strength between two exceptionally competent commanders, neither of whom survived their contest. Japanese resistance was fierce and superbly directed. The campaign begun on April 1 dragged on week after week. It was not until June 21 that Okinawa was declared "secure." The losses were incredibly high, nearly 50,000 American casualties and over 350 ships damaged of which thirty-six were sunk.⁵⁸ Even then, with Okinawa seized, concessions to Japan still seemed unwise. The victory seemed very much of the Pyrrhic variety. The Americans had paid a nearly intolerable price for Okinawa. The Japanese could claim that insistence on unconditional surrender or anything like it would cost the Americans many more Okinawas. As a platform to demand unconditional surrender, Okinawa was less than effective.

By placing the question of concessions in the context of war morale and psychological war, Marshall made it necessary to accompany concessions with some more decisive blow than the Okinawa campaign. Inevitably this meant a further delay until the additional shock could be prepared. The shock could take any one of three forms: Russian intervention, invasion of one of the home islands, or, a new possibility, the use of an atomic weapon. Russian intervention still seemed uncertain. The invasion was what everyone wanted to avoid. Understandably, there was a fever of

⁵⁶ See memorandum from secretary JIC for secretary JPS of May 14, 1945, *ibid.* The wording quoted was retained in the SWNCC version (SWNCC 149), June 9, 1945.

⁵⁷ SM 2013, June 4, 1945, *ibid.*

⁵⁸ Roy E. Appleman, James M. Burns, Russell A. Gugeler, and John Stevens, *United States Army in World War II: The War in the Pacific: Okinawa: The Last Battle* (Washington, 1948). Implicitly the present author supports Stimson's assertion that the Okinawa campaign was the reason why a surrender demand was not made earlier. Henry L. Stimson, "The Decision to Use the Atomic Bomb," *Harper's Magazine*, 194 (Feb. 1947), 97-107. Grew noted this explanation, but was very skeptical. Grew, *Turbulent Era*, II, 1424. Privately Grew was even angry saying, in 1947, that Stimson's explanation reiterated in a letter was "no less disingenuous than his article," adding "the fighting in Okinawa was practically over, or at least the issue was no longer in doubt." Grew to Eugene Dooman, June 30, 1947, Joseph Grew Papers (Harvard University). Of course the issue had never been in doubt. What was very much in doubt in May and June was whether Japan could convert defeat into a psychological victory. On the whole Japan succeeded, with tragic consequences.

interest in the third possibility. All three possibilities implied some delay. Russian intervention, if it came, was not expected before the second week of August. The invasion of Kyushu was not to come before November. An atomic weapon would not be ready until the end of July. The schedule seemed almost to impose itself: a demand for surrender late in July, an atomic attack in early August, and finally Soviet entry. The invasion could be kept as a last resort. Between June and the end of July no crushing blow was expected to offset the psychological advantage Japan had gained by her resistance in Okinawa. A surrender demand would have to wait until then.

Grew did not want to wait. He saw the issue of concessions on the emperor as a matter of statesmanship, altogether too important to be jeopardized by the vagaries of public opinion and the need to save face. Thus he took the issue of the surrender demand directly to the President. In doing so Grew made a very substantial contribution to the resolution of surrender terms, for the result of his action was the creation, at Truman's suggestion, of a new committee to study the surrender. This committee, loosely based on the informal Committee of Three, would consist of Grew, Stimson, and Forrestal, two secretaries, one acting secretary drawn from the identical departments represented in SWNCC. But now they were to meet as individuals, not as representatives of departments. It was a situation tailored for Grew, who could now express his personal views. Unlike SWNCC, this committee could be enlarged to include the military chiefs directly. Indeed, Truman suggested that Marshall and Admiral Ernest J. King be brought directly into the discussions.⁵⁹

The President's new, high level committee made possible the creation of ad hoc working committees at a lower level. The most important of these was headed by Assistant Secretary of War John J. McCloy and was to draft the actual surrender demand. The committee included many of the same people who had written SWNCC papers for their respective departments, but the chairmanship went not to a state department representative but to McCloy. Army planner, General Lincoln, who had sought to keep open the possibility of inducing a Japanese surrender, was represented by his very able policy section chief, Colonel Charles H. Bonesteel. With strong support from Marshall, careful guidance from Lincoln, and hard work from Bonesteel, S&P's staff took the initiative in producing the basic draft.⁶⁰ Dooman was present but not as a state department

⁵⁹ Grew, *Turbulent Era*, II, 1423; Truman, *Year of Decisions*, 417.

⁶⁰ The basic reports of this committee are in ABC 387 Japan (15-2-45), section 1B, Records of the War Department General and Special Staffs, RG 165 (National Archives);

representative. Presumably, he could speak much more freely in his capacity as an expert.

Nevertheless, Dooman and Ballantine came very close to wrecking the efforts of McCloy's subcommittee. Still apparently very conscious of the feeling in the state department against any "soft policy" toward Japan, they leaned noticeably in the opposite direction. At the first meeting of McCloy's subcommittee, Ballantine produced a draft surrender demand to Japan heavy with ridicule of Japanese leaders, specific on threats, and extremely vague about any inducement to surrender. It unfavorably impressed the others present in McCloy's office, who found it quite unconstructive.⁶¹

Dooman's interventions in the discussion were even more negative. He seemed to Lincoln to be set against the Stimson-Grew concept of concessions on the emperor. Voicing his concern to General John Hull, Lincoln noted that "Mr. Dooman apparently has so little hope of Japanese acceptance that he is trying really only to insure that the terms will cause no criticism in the U.S." Consistent with the impression of firmness he was displaying, Dooman seemed to emphasize the need for threats, ready to be implemented on short notice. On the central issue of the emperor he wanted to avoid all commitment. As Lincoln rightly noted it was not possible to follow Dooman's advice and still induce surrender. Everyone knew that Japan would insist on keeping the emperor. Dooman and Ballantine were overruled, and a surrender demand allowing the retention of the emperor was drafted. But Dooman and Ballantine dutifully noted that their concurrence was only provisory and that the decisions reached would have to be reviewed in the state department.⁶²

Dooman and Ballantine were right, of course, in predicting a negative reaction by state department officials to the new draft. The President's special committee's recommendation to allow the Japanese to retain the imperial institution if dissociated from militarism challenged the views of the advocates of more extensive social engineering for Japan. In the view of

Cline, *Washington Command Post*, 345-49; Bonesteel to author, May 28, 1975; Lincoln to author, May 12, 1970.

⁶¹ Joseph Ballantine's draft attached to Bonesteel to Lincoln, June 27, 1945, in ABC 387 Japan (15-2-45), section 1B, Records of the War Department General and Special Staffs; Lincoln for John Hull, June 28, 1945, *ibid.* There is reason to take issue here, on the basis of OPD files, with Heinrich and Lisle A. Rose on the drafting of the surrender demand. See Heinrich, *American Ambassador*, 376; Lisle A. Rose, *After Yalta* (New York, 1973), 67-71.

⁶² Memorandum Brig. Gen. Lincoln for Lt. Gen. Hull, June 29, 1945, subject: "Demand for Japanese Surrender," in ABC 387 Japan (15-2-45), Records of the War Department General and Special Staffs; memorandum Brig. Gen. Lincoln for Lt. Gen. Hull, June 29, 1945, no subject, *ibid.*

Acheson and MacLeish such a separation could not be made; the institution of emperor was intimately tied to the Gumbatsu—"the current coalition of militarists, industrialists, large land owners and office holders," the true source of militarism and the principal obstacle to social changes.⁶³

These objections should not have had much impact on the surrender terms since Acheson had never been to the Far East and MacLeish hardly qualified as an authority on that area. Moreover the committee that drafted the new surrender terms had been selected by the President. And yet, though the draft was ready on July 2, the surrender demand was not issued until July 26, and then only with the clause allowing the retention of the emperor deleted.

Once again the shifting nature of decision-making structures came into play in a decisive way. The crucial event was the Potsdam Conference. Some of the President's advisers, most noticeably Grew, would be left behind while others traveled to Potsdam. In such circumstances, the President would inevitably rely on his closest personal adviser, Byrnes, recently named as secretary of state. Not only did this mean that Grew's influence would be eclipsed but also that the President's committee would be virtually disbanded.

What Byrnes thought became crucial. Politically sensitive, Byrnes was very troubled by the discrepancy between the draft Potsdam proclamation and the previously announced positions of Roosevelt and Truman. It took little, principally a call from Cordell Hull, to persuade Byrnes that the recommendations of the President's special Committee of Three were political dynamite. Byrnes' decision against concessions would be final unless challenged directly by the military.⁶⁴

The effectiveness of the army's organization was also reduced by the Potsdam Conference. The departure for Potsdam of Marshall and his key advisers, including Lincoln, served to leave the Washington command post without effective spokesmen for the new surrender policy. Unfortunately, the draft surrender demand had been circulated in the war department only after Marshall's departure, and it had drawn some fire.

On July 14 the "blue ribbon" high level review panel, the Joint Strategic Survey Committee, submitted its comments, which curiously reflected the political objection of Acheson and others in the state de-

⁶³ Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States: Diplomatic Papers: The Conference of Berlin (The Potsdam Conference) 1945* (2 vols., Washington, 1960), I, 896.

⁶⁴ Henry L. Stimson Diary, July 24, 1945, Henry L. Stimson Papers (Yale University); James F. Byrnes, *Speaking Frankly* (New York, 1947), 209. Hull, *Memoirs*, II, 1594-95.

partment. JSSC specifically recommended deleting the paragraph allowing for the retention of the emperor because it would be objectionable to the "radical elements in Japan who might assume major importance at a later stage." This report came rather close to agreeing with Acheson that the radical group should be favored in the occupation.⁶⁵

The prestige of JSSC was such that this report could not be overlooked. OPD staff in Washington was understandably aghast at the development. They noted that everyone in McCloy's committee had agreed that the emperor issue was vital and that there should be "no beating around the bush." They further pointed out the fallacy of deciding so important an issue on the basis of the opposition of a small group within Japan that could neither help nor hinder the projected invasion.⁶⁶ But the staff in Washington could do little to counter the new opposition. The officers most experienced in political and diplomatic matters were in Potsdam.

Marshall's presence in Potsdam offered, however, an opportunity to influence events down to the last minute. With the help of his staff, principally Lincoln, Marshall arrived at a subtle solution to the problem. Cordell Hull's advice and the JSSC report would be accepted, of course. But Marshall would insist that "nothing should be done prior to the termination of hostilities that would indicate the removal of the Emperor of Japan since his continuation in office might influence the cessation of hostilities in areas outside Japan proper."⁶⁷ Marshall's military view expressed so clearly was not one which the chiefs could dispute or the President ignore.

Marshall's success seemed slight. No explicit offer on the emperor would be made from the Allied side. But his recommendation, which became the official JCS policy for the guidance of the President, was that the emperor must remain to help effect orderly surrender throughout the empire. If the emperor survived with some authority through the surrender period and the start of the occupation, he was likely to survive much longer. The Japanese of course asked, and Byrnes, much against his

⁶⁵ The Joint Strategic Survey Committee (JSSC) report, JCS 1275/5, in CCS 387 Japan (2-7-45), Records of the United States Joint Chiefs of Staff.

⁶⁶ *Foreign Relations of the United States . . . Berlin*, 1267-68; Hull, *Memoirs*, II, 1594; memorandum, Maj. Gen. Howard Craig for Lt. Gen. Hull, July 14, 1945, in OPD 387.475, section I, case 1015, Records of the War Department General and Special Staff.

⁶⁷ *Foreign Relations of the United States . . . Berlin*, 39-40, 64; drafts attached to SM-2611, Secretary to JCS, July 17, 1945, in CCS 387 Japan (2-7-45), section 1, Records of the War Department General and Special Staff; interviews with Lincoln, 1966, 1969, 1970. Marshall thus seemed to be opening the door for secret, as opposed to public, assurances to Japan. There is some evidence that a secret approach to Japan was contemplated, but the evidence of an actual attempt appears inconclusive. A secret approach was fraught with danger in terms of inter-allied relations and American public opinion.

will, had to say that the authority of the emperor would be subject to the supreme commander of the Allied powers.⁶⁸ It was a perfect restatement of Marshall's position that the emperor's retention was required by the military. Byrnes could not have made any other response without overruling Marshall and the joint chiefs.

The military officer's attack on the doctrine of unconditional surrender was neither frontal nor complete. Indeed, the joint chiefs insisted absolutely on the unconditional surrender of the enemy armed forces. The army shared with the state department the desire to have a free hand in the occupation. The military respected the psychological importance of the doctrine at home and dutifully reported each surrender as being unconditional. But the army clearly did not like the long range political objectives of the doctrine and in the end refused to prolong the war to secure the *carte blanche* necessary to those ends. The army's requirements were simple: the enemy must recognize total defeat, must surrender militarily and accept occupation. On this basis the army assumed the defeated countries could be easily redirected so that they would not threaten the United Nations in the foreseeable future. Further than this the army would not go, and this reluctance would mean that, for better or worse, Italy, Germany, and Japan would be spared the extremes of American reforming zeal.

Unconditional surrender, though partially or totally circumvented in the Italian, German, and Japanese surrenders, had shown itself to be a tenaciously defended doctrine. No doubt part of that tenacity resulted from the fact that it was presidential policy, which few dared to challenge directly. As MacLeish heatedly argued: "If what we propose is to replace the policy of unconditional surrender . . . we should say so and say so in words which no one in the United States will misunderstand."⁶⁹ Needless to say, no one took up the gauntlet. As a battle cry the doctrine had psychological importance at home, which was clearly reflected in concern over any attenuation of the formula. As the legal underpinning for all the planned political and social reform of the Axis countries, unconditional surrender seemed essential to Roosevelt and the state department. The doctrine crumbled only very slowly.

That the surrender policy for Japan could not have been modified sooner so as to avoid use of the bomb must remain something of a

⁶⁸ Byrnes, *Speaking Frankly*, 209; *Foreign Relations of the United States . . . British Commonwealth, the Far East*, 627.

⁶⁹ *Foreign Relations of the United States . . . Berlin*, 895-96.

tragedy. The reasons for that delay, at least on the American side, are clear; they had nothing to do with any scheme to prolong the war deliberately, either to allow a Soviet entry or to allow a combat demonstration of the bomb. Indeed the anti-Soviet Grew, the loyal and correct General Marshall, and the conservative practitioner of *Realpolitik*, Stimson, all worked to shorten the war by modifying the surrender terms. They shared that goal despite differences of temperament and ideology. If they did not shorten the war as much as they wanted it was for two main reasons: the doctrine of unconditional surrender was powerfully defended by the state department in interdepartmental agencies, and both Grew and Marshall had scruples about how to circumvent that opposition. Eventually they both found ways of dealing with the state department, Grew by approaching the President directly, Marshall by avoiding those interdepartmental agencies in which it was represented, but this took time. There was present the eternal dilemma of truce making, the endless truism, "If the enemy is weak, concessions are unnecessary, if he appears strong concessions look like a confession of weakness." In May, June, and July of 1945 the strength of Japan's defense of Okinawa seriously undermined efforts to attenuate the surrender formula. Japan's prostration in August made Byrnes more or less reluctant to make any concessions. In the heat of war statesmanship did not come easily.