



**Peter Mauch.** *Sailor Diplomat: Nomura Kichisaburō and the Japanese-American War.* Harvard East Asian Monographs. Cambridge: Harvard University Asia Center, 2011. xvii + 312 pp. \$39.95, cloth, ISBN 978-0-674-05599-5.

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*Sailor Diplomat* argues that Nomura Kichisaburo's tenure as Japanese ambassador to the United States in 1941 is best understood not as a series of failures by an ineffective diplomat but in the context of a long naval career marked by extensive experience with the United States. Using Japanese and American archives as well as Nomura's personal papers, the book effectively challenges the scholarly conventional wisdom regarding Nomura and Japanese-American relations on several fronts. Nomura was not a bumbling sailor out of his depth; he possessed a remarkable, realistic understanding of the underlying realities of Japanese-American relations. The Pacific War did not stem from Nomura's failings as an ambassador, but rather proved the accuracy of his pre-war analyses. Mauch emphasizes that Nomura's appointment as ambassador reflected a long-standing Clausewitzian strain within the Japanese navy. Finally, Nomura's advocacy for postwar Japanese rearmament stemmed not from right-wing nationalism or personal vanity, but from a long-standing conviction that Japan must pursue ties with the United States and that rearmament would further that goal.

Nomura's early naval career convinced him of the inseparability of diplomacy, military strength, economics, and politics in gauging national power. Posted to Washington, DC, during World War I, Nomura was struck by America's rapid mobilization and became convinced that Japan must pursue policies that would not antagonize the Americans. This attitude placed him at odds with the majority fleet faction during the Washington naval arms limitation talks. Nomura worked throughout the 1920s and 1930s to preserve and extend the Washington Naval Treaty. Sent to take command of Japan's forces during the Shanghai Incident, Nomura balanced the use of force and diplomacy. Prior to his retirement in 1937, Nomura was sidelined by the fleet faction into prestigious but uninfluential posts largely due to his recognition of "Japan's fundamental inability to bring war against the United States to a successful conclusion" (p. 92).

The combination of the Japanese defeat at Nomonhan, the Nazi-Soviet Non-Aggression Pact, and American abrogation of its commercial treaty with Japan led to sufficient turmoil in Tokyo that Nomura came out of retirement to become foreign minister. Nomura's tenure in this post revealed

deep divisions within the Foreign Ministry over government policy towards the United States. These divisions were reflected in the military, where Nomura and many senior admirals, who were convinced of Anglo-American inseparability, opposed mid-level army officers who thought Japan could attack British possessions in the Pacific without American interference. In part because of Nomura's failure to renegotiate a commercial treaty with the US, the government fell and Nomura was appointed as ambassador to the United States. During the negotiations surrounding his appointment, Nomura had limited success in obtaining negotiating room, though significantly he was the navy's choice, not the Foreign Ministry's. Nomura's realistic assessment of Japan's situation in the winter of 1940-41 found little purchase among officers dreaming of a southern advance into Southeast Asia eased by the expected German victory over Great Britain.

Nomura gained some maneuvering room in his talks with American officials due to the reservations of the navy's leadership over Foreign Minister Matsuoka's spring 1941 trip to Europe. Although Nomura made tentative progress toward an agreement with the United States in March and May, the Japanese navy's leaders were unwilling to lobby as hard as Nomura for an agreement. Mauch traces the growing divide between Tokyo's perception of attitudes and Nomura's perspective. The book also emphasizes the incompatibility of basic negotiating positions between Tokyo and Washington on French Indochina and Japan's presence in China.

Mauch provides helpful summaries at the end of each chapter and his clear writing style makes for enjoyable reading. This book represents an important addition to our understanding of Japanese-American relations in the early twentieth century and the origins of the Pacific War. *Sailor Diplomat* is recommended for graduate surveys, specialists, and those interested in the origins of World War II in the Pacific.

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