

# IN THE SHADOW OF THE MONOLITH: YOSHIDA SHIGERU AND JAPAN'S CHINA POLICY DURING THE EARLY COLD WAR YEARS, 1949–54

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"I do not think it will affect Japan very much."<sup>1</sup>

When Prime Minister Yoshida Shigeru made this statement before the House of Representatives Foreign Affairs Committee on 22 February 1950, he was of course referring to the freshly minted Sino-Soviet Treaty of Friendship, Alliance, and Mutual Assistance. One could argue that this pact represented only the latest twist in a "regional triangle of tension [which] had pitted Russia, Japan, and China against each other through ... three-quarters of a century of confrontation and conflict."<sup>2</sup> Certainly, from the signatories' point of view, the Alliance—like its predecessor concluded in 1945—was, at least in part, a legacy of the Japanese Empire in East Asia. The treaty's preamble was explicit: it was directed at preventing "the revival of Japanese imperialism and the resumption of aggression on the part of Japan or any other state that may collaborate in any way with Japan."<sup>3</sup> In McCarthyite Washington, however, in the wake of the "loss of China," the alliance was interpreted as a further act of aggression against the United States. Even the State Department, which had earlier pursued a more flexible policy toward China, could only conclude that Mao Zedong had now "attached China to the Soviet chariot."<sup>4</sup> Thus was the myth of "monolithic communism" born.

It has recently been observed that "when Mao Zedong openly leaned to one side and concluded an alliance with the Soviet Union in February, 1950, the chances that Tōkyō and Beijing would establish anything like strong ties of friendship became very small indeed. Very rarely does the friend of one's enemy become one's friend."<sup>5</sup> During the last years of the

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<sup>1</sup> *Asahi Shinbun*, 23 February 1950.

<sup>2</sup> Allen S. Whiting, *Siberian Development and East Asia: Threat or Promise?* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1981), 3.

<sup>3</sup> See Sergei Goncharov, John Lewis, and Xue Litai, *Uncertain Partners: Stalin, Mao, and the Korean War* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1993), 260.

<sup>4</sup> Clubb to Kennan, 25 April 1950, cited in Michael Schaller, *The American Occupation of Japan* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), 188.

<sup>5</sup> Roger Dingman, "The Dagger and the Gift: The Impact of the Korean War on Japan," *Journal of American-East Asian Relations* 2, no. 1 (spring 1993): 36.

Occupation, the Japanese were indeed under enormous pressure to adopt the Cold War perspectives of their American overseers, but as we shall see, most drew a clear distinction between Moscow and Beijing. To them the Chinese were *akadaikon*: like the radish, their “redness” was only skin deep.<sup>6</sup> Toward “New China,” popular sentiment was still dominated by a sense of war guilt, whereas Stalin’s opportunism during the last week of the Pacific War had redoubled the traditional hostility felt for Russia. There was nothing feigned about Yoshida’s declared indifference to the Sino-Soviet Alliance. As a career diplomat who had seen extensive service in prewar China, he was convinced that a Sino-Soviet rift was inevitable, and believed that the process could be accelerated by building ties to Beijing, as the more vulnerable of the two to seduction by the West. Yoshida persistently sought to persuade the British and Americans of the virtues of this “thesis,” but after 1950 his optimism was increasingly dismissed at home and abroad as mere “wishful thinking.”

Yoshida is widely credited with having laid the foundations of postwar Japanese foreign policy during his seven-year reign as premier, yet he remains an enigma. His China policy, in particular, continues to arouse intense debate. How, for instance, does one reconcile the view that “Yoshida remained a staunch supporter of the Chinese Nationalist government on Taiwan until his death,” with his having “fought a vigorous, rear-guard action against the American peace-treaty negotiator, John Foster Dulles, in order to avoid recognizing the Taipei government instead of the Beijing government.”<sup>8</sup> Were Yoshida’s motives in promoting his “thesis” strategic, as he claimed, or mercantilist, as those who credit him with being the originator of *seikei byunri* (the separation of economic from political relations) would assert. Is it true that: “Throughout the postwar period he never abandoned his private conviction that at some future time, after the Sino-Soviet alliance had collapsed ... the two great East Asian powers [Ja-

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<sup>6</sup> See Richard Story, “Some Aspects of Social Change in Japan,” in *Symposium on Economic and Social Problems of the Far East*, ed. E.F. Szczepanik (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 1962), 440.

<sup>7</sup> Yoshida joined the Foreign Ministry in 1906. He served in Mukden (Shenyang) during 1907–8, was appointed consul in the port of Antung (Andong) in 1912, and the following year became secretary to the governor-general of Korea. From 1922–25 he was consul-general in Tientsin (Tianjin) and then held the same post in Mukden until the beginning of 1928. *Japan, An Illustrated Encyclopedia* (Tōkyō: Kodansha, 1993), 1757.

<sup>8</sup> Janet Hunter, *Concise Dictionary of Modern Japanese History* (Tōkyō: Kodansha International, 1984), 251, and Chalmers Johnson, “The Patterns of Japanese Relations with China, 1952–82,” *Pacific Affairs* 59, no. 3 (fall 1986): 403.

<sup>9</sup> George Jan, “The Japanese People and Japan’s Policy Toward Communist China,” *Western Political Quarterly* 22 (summer 1969): 605.

pan and mainland China] could resume their natural historical relationship.”<sup>10</sup> If so, then we are still left to ponder the extent to which the prime minister’s private views motivated official policy, for his biographer still maintains that, “Yoshida never mounted a serious or sustained campaign to promote a more enlightened China policy by the United States.”<sup>11</sup>

This is a study of diplomatic history without diplomatic relations. Fortunately, recently declassified documents in the diplomatic archives in Tōkyō, Washington, London, and Canberra are throwing new light on the thinking behind the Japanese government’s China policy during the Cold War, but we cannot confine ourselves to the as-yet-incomplete official record. This study will also draw on contemporary published materials and an array of secondary sources in English and Japanese in an attempt to resolve the contradictions outlined above and to answer one fundamental question: to what extent did Japanese policy-makers’ view “New China” through the prism of old China, or alternatively, to what degree were their perceptions shaped by the encroaching Cold War, represented by the Sino-Soviet alliance?

The approximately five-year period from 1 October 1949, when the People’s Republic of China was proclaimed, until 10 December 1954, when Yoshida was forced from office, can be divided into three unequal segments, according to the degree to which he actively pursued the “Yoshida thesis.” The first phase spanned most of Yoshida’s second term as prime minister of Occupied Japan. Initially, the “Yoshida thesis” enjoyed the support of a near consensus of international anti-communist opinion, but it was gradually eclipsed by John Foster Dulles’s “hard wedge” strategy—promoting a rift by increasing Chinese dependency on the Soviets rather than reducing it—at least in the policy councils of Washington. The second phase, a two year hiatus, lasted until May 1954, and the final phase, covering Yoshida’s last eight months in office, saw him make a futile attempt to revive his “thesis.”

### BIRTH OF THE “YOSHIDA THESIS”

As early as November 1948, Yoshida Shigeru, recently restored to the premiership, reportedly viewed: “without any anxiety the possibility of a total [seizure] of China by the communists.” This was reportedly because he believed that a communist Chinese regime would soon prove as nationalistic and xenophobic as its predecessors, and thus rather than contrib-

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<sup>10</sup> John Welfield, *Empire in Eclipse* (London: The Athlone Press, 1988), 41.

<sup>11</sup> John Dower, *Japan in War and Peace* (New York: The New Press, 1993), 233.

uting to Soviet power in Asia, would actually diminish it. He also apparently<sup>12</sup> argued that Sino-Japanese ties could be rebuilt to the benefit of both.

American thinking at this time tended to confirm Yoshida's assessment that "Titoism in China" was a realistic prospect. In March 1949, official United States policy aimed to "augment, through permitting restoration of ordinary economic relations with China, such forces as might operate to bring<sup>13</sup> about serious rifts between Moscow and a Chinese Communist regime." Somewhat contradictorily, however, Washington now extended export controls to include China—albeit less severe than those imposed on the Soviet Union—and GHQ in Tōkyō applied these to Sino-Japanese trade.<sup>14</sup>

Yoshida repeatedly made clear his opposition to all such restrictions, for instance, telling CBS journalist, William Costello, in May 1949:

I don't care whether China is red, white or green, we are willing to do business with her. China is our neighbor. There is a danger that trade between our countries might be permanently cut, but I believe that we shall<sup>15</sup> eventually transcend ideological differences and progress together.

It was noted in Washington "how distinctly assertive, unified, and confident the Japanese appeared on this issue, as compared to the almost cowering remarks on foreign policy that usually emanated from Tōkyō."<sup>16</sup> That summer, while the pro-mainland trade lobby in Japan was busily getting itself organized, the Chinese communists sent a small trade mission to Japan.<sup>17</sup> It bore no fruit, but by year's end, Yoshida's trade minister, Inagaki Heitarō, was confident enough to set a target for China's share

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<sup>12</sup> Schaller, *The American Occupation*, 188. Unfortunately, he does not offer any source to support these observations.

<sup>13</sup> NSC 41, "US Policy Regarding Trade with China," Foreign Relations of the United States [Hereafter FRUS], 1949, IX, 826–34.

<sup>14</sup> Yasuhara Yoko, "Japan, Communist China, and Export Controls in Asia, 1948–52," *Journal of Diplomatic History* 10, no. 1 (winter 1986): 81–82.

<sup>15</sup> William Costello, "Could Japan Go Communist?" *Nation* 168, no. 20 (14 May 1949): 534. See also Schaller, *American Occupation*, 188–89, and Reinhard Drifte, *The Security Factor in Japan's Foreign Policy, 1945–52* (Ripe, E. Sussex: Saltire Press, 1983), 128.

<sup>16</sup> Schaller, *American Occupation*, 189.

<sup>17</sup> The non-partisan Diet Members' League for the Promotion of Sino-Japanese Trade (Nitchū Bōeki Sokushin Giin Renmei) was established that summer with Progressive Party Secretary General Tomabechi Gizō as chairman and an initial membership numbering about ninety. This was soon followed by the Sino-Japanese Trade Promotion Association (Nitchū Bōeki Sokushin Kai) led by Sugi Mi-

of Japan's total foreign trade of between one-quarter and one-third—significantly greater than during the 1930s.

*The "Yoshida Thesis" in Retreat*

Even after the establishment of the PRC on 1 October 1949, Washington in theory remained willing to allow Japan "to maintain normal political and economic relations with the communist bloc and, in the absence of open hostilities, resist complete identification either with the interests of the United States or Soviet Union."<sup>19</sup> Over the next twelve months, however, under the triple impact of the conclusion of the Sino-Soviet Alliance, the outbreak of the Korean War, and China's subsequent intervention therein, the optimism of the spring<sup>20</sup> gradually evaporated, to be replaced by a fear of losing Japan as well.

Yoshida's thinking did not undergo any such transformation. At worst he thought the Sino-Soviet alliance might delay Japan's peace treaty.<sup>21</sup> He remained convinced that "China would never become a slave to the Kremlin." Yoshida's reasoning seemingly owed more to racial prejudice than rational analysis:

Referring to centuries of Chinese history, the character of the Chinese people, their consistent successes in the past in thwarting efforts at domination or absorption, and their superiority to the Russians in intelligence, cleverness and political astuteness, he declared that he had every confidence in the outcome. The Chinese, he concluded, will be "too much for the Russians."<sup>22</sup>

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chisuke of the Ōsaka Chamber of Commerce. See Makiko Hamaguchi-Klenner, *China Images of Japanese Conservatives* (Hamburg: Mitteilungen des Instituts für Asienkunde, 1981), 71; Haruhiro Fukui, *Party in Power* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1970), 241; R.K. Jain, *China and Japan, 1949–80* (Oxford: Martin Robertson, 1981), 26.

<sup>18</sup> *New York Times*, 25 November 1949, cited in Schaller, *American Occupation*, 189. The average figures for 1930–39 were 21.6 percent of Japanese exports and 12.4 percent of imports according to Japan's Ministry of Finance. Okita Saburo, "Sino-Japanese Trade and Japan's Economic Growth," in Szczepanik, *Symposium*, 158. The actual figures for 1949 were 0.6 percent of Japanese exports and 2.3 percent of imports. Gaimushō, *Nitchū bōeki no genjō* (Tōkyō: 1969).

<sup>19</sup> Howard Schonberger, *Aftermath of War* (Kent, Ohio: Kent State University Press, 1989), 152.

<sup>20</sup> Schaller, *American Occupation*, 190.

<sup>21</sup> *Asahi Shinbun*, 23 February 1950.

<sup>22</sup> Memorandum of Conversation [Hereafter MC], Yoshida and Cloyce Huston, 8 April 1950, FRUS, 1950, VI, 1167.

Such views remained widespread in Japan. Just two days after the alliance was signed, *Asahi Shimbun* claimed that "Communist China is already considering itself the leader of the union of socialist nations in Asia. China thinks that this union should be independent of the Soviet Union and should stand on an equal footing."<sup>23</sup> Yoshida was under increasing pressure to hasten the end of the Occupation and spur stagnating Sino-Japanese trade. A multi-party resolution, adopted by the House of Councillors at the end of April, anticipated Washington's de facto recognition of Beijing and called on the government to "leave aside ideological and political differences and ... exchange economic missions with the new China."<sup>24</sup>

### *The Korean War*

The outbreak of the Korean War caused the Truman administration not only to defer indefinitely any prospects for a Sino-Soviet rift, but also to downgrade belief in its own ability to influence the process.<sup>25</sup> Similarly, the Japanese Foreign Ministry issued a statement which presupposed the existence of a "monolithic communism" by suggesting a link between North Korea's invasion of the south and the earlier signature of the Sino-Soviet alliance.<sup>26</sup> Not every Japanese diplomat shared this view. After reports of China's "volunteer army" intervening in the conflict were confirmed in late November, Wajima Eiji, head of the ministry's Control Bureau (Kanrikyoku), privately warned the Americans that "the Japanese ... would be apathetic to an attempted invasion by the Soviets but would resist such an attempt if made by the Chinese communists alone." His explanation for the differentiation was simple, in the former case, "the Japanese would feel that they had better leave such resistance to the Occupation forces," whereas in the latter in-

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<sup>23</sup> *Asahi Shinbun*, 16 February 1950. See also Hongō Gaichi, "Soren to Chūkyō no kyokutō seisaku," *Chūō Kōron* 65, no. 3 (March 1950): 81.

<sup>24</sup> Ishikawa Tadao, Nakajima Mineo, and Ikei Masaru, eds., *Sengo shiryō: Nitchū kankei* (Tōkyō: Nihon Hyōronsha, 1970), 23, and Gordon Chang, *Friends and Enemies* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1990), 73. Yoshida immediately responded by secretly despatching Finance Minister Ikeda Hayato to Washington in an effort to persuade the United States to end the Occupation as soon as possible. The proposal was discussed in Washington at the highest levels, but no official response was forthcoming. Welfield, *Empire in Eclipse*, 46–47; Michael Yoshitsu, *Japan and the San Francisco Peace Settlement* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1983), 34; and Schaller, *American Occupation*, 257–58.

<sup>25</sup> Chang, *Friends and Enemies*, 80.

<sup>26</sup> "Statement issued by the Foreign Ministry for the purpose of clarifying Japan's position in the Korean conflict, 19 August 1950," *Contemporary Japan* 19 (July–September 1950): 463–69.

stance, "the long-standing enmity existing between the Japanese and Chinese would be sufficient to cause them to resist."<sup>27</sup> Yoshida, meanwhile, continued to publicly downplay the seriousness of any communist threat to Japan, telling the Diet the following month, "We do not have the slightest expectation that the communist countries will invade Japan."<sup>28</sup>

The Americans lacked Yoshida's certitude. In December 1950, just nine months after General Headquarters (GHQ) had formally authorized Japanese trade with the PRC, Washington embargoed all exports to China. With no choice but to comply, Japanese trade with the mainland plummeted.<sup>29</sup> Yoshida raised the embargo question with Special Ambassador John Foster Dulles at the end of January 1951:

[He] spoke of the long-term necessity of trading with China, and while he realized that in view of [the] present communist domination of that country it would not be possible to expect great results in the near future, nevertheless, he believed that in the long run the Chinese would adopt the attitude that "war is war and trade is trade" and that it would be possible for a reasonable degree of trade to take place between Japan and China.<sup>31</sup>

This was perhaps the first time that Yoshida gave voice to a concept later to be called *seikei bunri*. It is important to note, however, that he was recommending such a policy for China, not Japan. Tōkyō was to use trade for covert, strategic purposes: "Japanese businessmen because of their long acquaintance with and experience in China, will be the best fifth column of democracy against the Chinese communists," Yoshida claimed.<sup>32</sup>

<sup>27</sup> MC, Wajima and Richard Butrick (Director General Foreign Service), 15 December 1950, 794.00/12-1550, Record Group 59, National Archives, Washington D.C. [Hereafter NA.] Wajima was a senior diplomat with more than twenty years service, including the period from July 1937 to October 1943 in China. *Gaimushō nenkan*, (Tōkyō: Gaimushō, 1961), 567.

<sup>28</sup> John Dower, *Empire and Aftermath* (Cambridge, Mass.: Council on East Asian Studies, Harvard University, 1979), 391. Following the implementation of the "Red Purge," Yoshida was also able to declare: "As far as the Japanese skies are concerned, the Red star is receding," Yoshida Shigeru, "Japan and the Crisis in Asia," *Foreign Affairs* 29, no. 2 (Jan. 1951): 179.

<sup>29</sup> Jain, *China and Japan*, 27.

<sup>30</sup> From a postwar high of \$19.6 million in 1950, exports fell to \$5.8 million the following year, and were just \$600,000 in 1952. Imports followed a similar plunging trajectory. Chae-Jin Lee, *Japan Faces China* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976), 144. See also Howard Schonberger, "John Foster Dulles and the China Question in the Making of the Japanese Peace Treaty," in *The Occupation of Japan: The International Context*, ed. Thomas Burkman (Norfolk, Virginia: MacArthur Memorial, 1984), 234.

<sup>31</sup> MC, Yoshida, Dulles, and Sebald, 29 January 1951, FRUS, 1951, VI, 827-28.

Such talk, however, simply made the Americans more nervous about a future sovereign Japan, which the CIA had already labelled “opportunistic.”<sup>33</sup> Thus, on 23 April, Dulles extracted an oral pledge from Yoshida not to sign a separate peace treaty with the mainland.<sup>34</sup> Even so, right up until his departure for San Francisco,<sup>35</sup> he kept on trying to sell his “thesis” to anyone who would listen.

*San Francisco and the “Yoshida Letter”*

When the San Francisco Peace Conference convened in September 1951, Anglo-American differences meant that neither Beijing nor Taipei was represented.<sup>36</sup> Yoshida carefully avoided the issue of which regime Tōkyō would recognize. His speech—extensively rewritten by the Americans—claimed that “the role of Chinese trade in [the] Japanese economy ... has often been exaggerated.”<sup>37</sup> On his return to Tōkyō, Yoshida initially tried to temporize in the face of harsh Diet questioning concerning a peace treaty with China.<sup>38</sup> However, on 29 October, Yoshida indicated a willingness to place relations with Mao and Chiang on an equal footing. Specifically, he expressed an interest in opening an overseas office in Shanghai (like the one about to open in Taipei) and said he would welcome a communist Chinese office in Tōkyō if its sole purpose were to promote trade.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> MC, Yoshida, Dulles, and Sebald, 29 January 1951, FRUS, 1951, VI, 827–28. Yoshida subsequently withdrew this formulation. MC, Yoshida, and Sebald, 20 February 1951, FRUS, 1951, VI, 828.

<sup>33</sup> Memorandum by CIA, NIE–19, “Feasibility of Japanese Rearmament in Association with US,” 20 April 1951, FRUS, 1951, VI, 998–99.

<sup>34</sup> MC, Yoshida to Dulles, 23 April 1951, FRUS, 1951, VI, Pt.1, 1316.

<sup>35</sup> R.G. Casey to Sir Arthur Tange, “Copy Personal Diary Entry of Talk with Yoshida in Japan in [7 August] 1951,” 9 December 1959, A 1838/280–3103/10/10/2, Australian Archives, Canberra [Hereafter AA], and Murphy, AmEmbTok, to Dept. of State [Hereafter DOS], “The China Policy of an Independent Japan”, 13 May 1952, 693.94/5–1352, NA.

<sup>36</sup> Britain’s Labour government had extended recognition to the PRC in January 1950. For a recent study, see Qiang Zhai, *The Dragon, the Lion, and the Eagle: Chinese-British-American Relations, 1949–1958* (Kent, Ohio: Kent State University Press, 1994).

<sup>37</sup> R.K. Jain, *Japan’s Post-War Peace Settlements* (New Delhi: Radiant, 1978), 372.

<sup>38</sup> AmEmbTok to DOS, 23 October 1951, 694.001/10–2351, Enc. in Perkins to Rusk, FRUS, 1951, VI, 1389.

<sup>39</sup> *sop.* According to Nishimura Kumao (Treaty Bureau Director), Yoshida had acted impulsively. Yoshitsu, *Japan and San Francisco*, 71–72. Both imply Yoshida was being sincere.

<sup>39</sup> Vice Foreign Minister Iguchi, when later “discussing these remarks with Ambassador Sebald, termed them ‘indiscreet’ rather than misleading or a political

The China Lobby in Washington was reportedly furious, believing Yoshida had reneged on his earlier promises. At the same time, a State Department paper inverted the logic of the “Yoshida thesis” to argue that “[increasing Chinese] dependence on the Soviets for economic necessities is more likely to work in our favor than against us by hastening the day when China becomes disillusioned with Russian aid.”<sup>40</sup> The so-called hard wedge strategy was born. Other officials feared that a Sino-Soviet rift might ultimately lead to the development of a Sino-Japanese “third-force.”<sup>41</sup> Dulles was forced to make a fourth trip to Tōkyō.<sup>42</sup>

A compromise was soon reached on the diplomatic front: Japan would recognize the Republic of China as a *government* of China rather than the *government*, and any peace treaty<sup>43</sup> signed would be restricted to the area under actual Nationalist control. However, preferred approaches to the Sino-Soviet alliance were now poles apart: Yoshida remained wedded to his belief that “Japan might be able to play an important role in weaning China away from domination by the Soviet politburo,” something Dulles regarded as no better than “political fantasy.”<sup>44</sup> In his view, with Communist China now representing the primary threat to Japanese security, the “hard wedge” strategy was the only realistic option.<sup>45</sup>

For Yoshida, the resulting eponymous letter represented a postponement of his “thesis” not its abandonment.<sup>46</sup> His sole contribution was a reference to the Sino-Soviet Treaty—“a military alliance aimed at Japan”—as an added justification for Japan’s action. This was disingenuous

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<sup>40</sup> Roger Dingman, “The Anglo-American Origins of the Yoshida Letter, 1951–52,” in *Perspectives on Japan’s External Relations*, ed. David Lu (Lewisburg, Penn.: Bucknell University, Center for Japanese Studies, 1982), 30–31.

<sup>41</sup> David Mayers, *Cracking the Monolith* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1986), 103.

<sup>42</sup> NIE-52, “The Probable Future Orientation of Japan,” (Office of Intelligence and Research (OIR) contribution), 27 December 1951, 794.00/12-2751, NA.

<sup>43</sup> A fortnight before Dulles arrived, in mid-December, Yoshida met with Assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs, Dean Rusk, and promised him that Japan “would not enter into ‘direct negotiations’ with the Peiping authorities without the knowledge of the US.” Rusk then pressed Yoshida on his “thesis,” asking him whether he believed that “the Peiping regime might be on the point of changing its policy or its alignment with the Soviet Union.” Yoshida’s reply lacked its usual conviction: “He knew Japanese who had friends on the mainland and who might be of assistance to him in finding whether there were useful steps which he might take.” MC, Yoshida, Rusk, and Sebald, 27 November 1951, FRUS, 1951, VI, 1417.

<sup>44</sup> MC, Dulles and Iguchi, 12 December 1951, FRUS, 1951, VI, 1437–9.

<sup>45</sup> Sebald to Acheson, 14 December 1951, FRUS 1951, VI, 1450–51.

<sup>46</sup> MC, Dulles and Yoshida, 13 December 1951, FRUS, 1951, VI, 1438–9.

<sup>47</sup> For example, on 1 February, Yoshida said, “The relations with China ... have been intimate geographically and historically, and these relations ought to be

to say the least, for as we have seen the pact had never particularly perturbed Yoshida. It appears to contradict his fundamental belief in the inevitability of the Sino-Soviet<sup>48</sup> rift, and to finally presage his adoption of the United States' world view. Unless, that is, he expected the letter to be published, in which case it can be seen as a useful weapon with which to defend his reluctant decision domestically, in circumstances<sup>49</sup> where even Japan's Socialists were uneasy about the Sino-Soviet alliance.

### *The Japan-ROC Peace Treaty*

Even at this late stage, Yoshida sought to avoid a total commitment to Nationalist China. He hoped to maintain working relations with both Chinas, but the United States<sup>50</sup> would not permit it, and Britain was too weak to intervene. Following the Senate's ratification of the Japanese Peace Treaty, Nishimura Kumao, a close advisor to Yoshida on China policy, described to United States Embassy officials: "Japan's conviction that the Peking Regime is not and will not be really communist, in the sense of being directed by Moscow." He characterized the Taipei talks as "simply ... a local, minor settlement," where the United States should not force the pace "at the cost of prejudicing a possible comprehensive settlement in East Asia."<sup>51</sup> A fortnight later, he described how Yoshida "had many times expressed the view that Japan as an old nation familiar with the Far East, could assist and even guide the US, which is inexperienced in foreign policy and has got itself in a 'circle' on the China question."<sup>52</sup> These diplomatic probes produced no concrete results, however, and ultimately Japan signed a "peace settlement" that also recognized Taipei's jurisdic-

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made better, with the lapse of time and indeed as soon as may be possible. However, this is now impossible, but again this does not mean that these relations have been severed for good. We will continue to pay attention to these relations and try to improve them." Murphy to DOS, "The China Policy of an Independent Japan," 13 May 1952, 693.94/5-1352, NA.

<sup>48</sup> In his explanation to the Diet delivered on 26 January, Yoshida added two further rationales: the support of Beijing for the JCP's efforts to overthrow the Japanese government and the fact that it stood condemned as an aggressor by the UN. DOS, OIR, 2 April 1952, IR 5812, "The China Debate in Japan," *OSS/State Dept., Intelligence and Research Reports, Japan, Korea, South-east Asia and the Far East Generally: 1950-61 Supplement* (Washington: UPA, 1979), and Jain, *Japan's Post-War*, 62-63.

<sup>49</sup> See J.A.A. Stockwin, *The Japanese Socialist Party and Neutralism* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1968).

<sup>50</sup> Richard Storry, "Options for Japan in the 1970s," *The World Today* 26, no. 8 (Aug. 1970): 325-33, Jain, *Japan's Post-War*, 62.

<sup>51</sup> MC, Nishimura and Stokes, "Japan's China Policy", 8 April 1952, 693.94/5-1352, NA.

<sup>52</sup> MC, Nishimura and Finn, 22 April 1952, FRUS, 1952-54, XIV, 1250-51.

tion over territories which in future might fall under its control. The Japanese public, which was overwhelmingly in favor of restoring full diplomatic relations with the mainland, gained the impression that Yoshida had finally turned his back on Beijing.

## POST-OCCUPATION JAPAN

### *Japan Joins COCOM*

During the next two years, Yoshida maintained a judicious silence vis-à-vis the Sino-Soviet alliance. This did not, however, calm American fears regarding his China policy. With the ink barely dry on the Taipei treaty, Robert Murphy, America's first postwar ambassador to Japan, was already warning Washington about "the indigenous policy tendency." While recognizing the constraints Japan's overwhelming dependence on the United States imposed, he asserted that

the Yoshida-Nishimura group ... is determined to pursue a positive policy toward Peking, with a view to establishing a relatively normal *commercial and diplomatic* intercourse as soon as possible ... argu[ing it] would be highly advantageous to long-range US interests because it would be accomplished by Japanese subversion of Chinese obeisance to the Kremlin.<sup>54</sup>

But Murphy also did not rule out the possibility that this was being used cynically as a "gambit in bargaining for increased economic assistance from the US."<sup>55</sup>

The following month, on 1 June 1952, disregarding the hostility of the Yoshida cabinet, three opposition Diet members signed the first unofficial Sino-Japanese Trade Agreement in Beijing.<sup>56</sup> It was a modest effort, aiming for a total of £60 million in balanced trade. The Ministry of International Trade and Industry (MITI) immediately responded by laying down

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<sup>53</sup> An *Asahi Shinbun* poll conducted between 9–11 May 1952, found 57 percent supported normalization, with only 11 percent opposed (Sample 3000). Allan Cole and Nakanishi Naomichi, eds., *Japanese Opinion Polls with Socio-Political Significance, 1947–1957* (Medford, Mass.: Tufts University, 1958), 679.

<sup>54</sup> Murphy to DOS, 13 May 1952, 693.94/5–1352, NA. Italics added.

<sup>55</sup> Murphy to DOS, 13 May 1952, 693.94/5–1352, NA.

<sup>56</sup> Yoshida's government had earlier blocked participation in the Moscow International Economic Conference by a group of Japanese politicians led by Ishibashi Tanzan, Murata Shōzō, and Kitamura Tokutarō. Kurt Radtke, *China's Relations with Japan, 1945–83* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1990), 99, 112, n. 45, and AmEmbTok to DOS, 7 March 1952, 794.00/3–1452, NA.

its own, very strict, conditions for trade with the mainland.<sup>58</sup> The Foreign Ministry apparently felt that MITI was still being too generous, for two days later it declared that “Japan selling production materials to Communist China means<sup>59</sup> contributing to increasing ... her political and military threat to Japan.” That same week, it published a white paper attacking the unofficial trade agreement, and accusing Beijing of aiming to drive a wedge between Japan and its friends.<sup>60</sup>

The Foreign Ministry won this particular battle, as later that month the Japanese government officially announced its desire to join COCOM—the U.S.-led body controlling strategic trade with the communist bloc. There followed three months of difficult negotiations, at the end of which Japan gained admission. This would have represented a significant victory for Yoshida, placing Japan’s trade with China on an equal footing with Western Europe’s, but for the fact that the Americans had insisted on additional bilateral assurances from Japan.<sup>61</sup> Washington was forcing Tōkyō to abandon the “Yoshida thesis” for fear that

Japan may try to take advantage of US-USSR conflict; desiring to restore Japanese influence on the continent of Asia and to regain [the] advantages of China trade, Japan might conclude that an accommodation with communist-controlled areas in Asia would serve Japanese interests.<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> Jain, *China and Japan*, 29. Immediately upon their return home they helped found a nationwide organization to be chaired by former Vice-Minister of Greater East Asian Affairs, Yamamoto Kumaichi: the Japan-China Trade Promotion Association (Nitchū Bōeki Sokushin Kai). *Kōwa Shinbun*, 5 June 1952. The treaty was deliberately denominated in pounds, and trade conducted in pounds, because of Chinese hostility for everything American.

<sup>58</sup> DOS, IR 5941, “Pei-p’ing ‘Trade Agreement’ and its impact in Japan,” 30 June 1952, 693.94/6-3052, NA.

<sup>59</sup> It also described China’s trade as “completely dependent upon the Soviet Union.” Information and Culture Bureau, Foreign Ministry, “The Trade Policy of Communist China and the So-called ‘China-Japan Trade Agreement,’” *World Report*, 7 June 1952.

<sup>60</sup> Radtke, *China’s Relations*, 99 and 112, n. 52.

<sup>61</sup> Yasuhara, “Japan, Communist China,” 87–89.

<sup>62</sup> NSC 125/2, 7 August 1952, FRUS, 1952–54, XIV, 1302.

New Leaders

The New Year reawakened hopes for change. Dwight D. Eisenhower, inaugurated as the thirty-third U.S. president in January 1953, privately “express[ed] ... the belief that there was no future for Japan unless access were provided for it to the markets and raw materials of Manchuria and North China.” His secretary of state, John Foster Dulles, disagreed however, arguing that the embargo could be maintained “for perhaps five years,” while Japan was encouraged to look instead toward the markets of Southeast Asia.<sup>63</sup>

A few months earlier, Niizeki Kin'ya, in charge of the Foreign Ministry's East European Desk, had claimed that Moscow was concentrating its energy on “strengthening ties with its satellites, including Communist China.”<sup>64</sup> Similarly, respected academics, like Professor Ōhira Zengo of Hitotsubashi University, were heard to declare that “at present, Communist China can be called the most faithful, effective, genuine, model satellite of the Kremlin.”<sup>65</sup>

The death of Joseph Stalin in March 1953 sparked renewed interest in prospects for a Sino-Soviet rift. Wada Shusaku, in charge of the Foreign Ministry's South Asia Desk, suggested that “it would be possible to wean China away from Moscow ... [if] Japan was to sever its ties with the Chinese Nationalist and French-controlled Vietnamese regimes and to seek to form a ‘cooperative bloc’ with the Peiping Government.”<sup>67</sup> Three months later, his boss, Wajima Eiji, now Director of the Asian Affairs Bureau (Ajia Kyoku) claimed that “the Chinese communist leaders had been and still were taking their orders, at least in [the] foreign affairs field, from Moscow.” Nevertheless, he felt: “it was only a matter of time before the Chinese reached the point when they would no longer find it to their advantage to cooperate so closely with the Soviets.”<sup>68</sup>

Similar opinions were being expressed outside of the Japanese Foreign Ministry. A poll conducted that spring came up with the interesting finding that for every two respondents who expected the democratic camp to split first, five saw the communist bloc as the more vulnerable to

<sup>63</sup> NSC, 139th Meeting, [dated] 16 April 1953, Declassified Documents Reference System [Hereafter DDRS], 1987/2885.

<sup>64</sup> Niizeki Kin'ya, “Soren sekai seisaku no gendankai,” *Gaikō Jihō* 111, no. 1 (Nov. 1952): 64.

<sup>65</sup> Ōhira Zengo, “Katayotta Chūkyōkan o hai suru,” *Jiyū no hata no moto ni* 1, no. 3 (March 1953): 52. See also Hirasawa Kazushige, “Chū-So wa dō deru: Shinsekai senryaku e no tenkan,” *Daiyamondo* 40, no. 36 (11 October 1952): 48–50.

<sup>66</sup> For example, one commentator predicted that “After his [Stalin's] death, the Soviet pressure upon the satellites will inevitably become weaker and Communist China will become less subordinate to the Soviet Union.” Takaya Kakuzō, *Yomiuri Shinbun*, 5 March 1953 (evening edition).

<sup>67</sup> MC, Wada Shusaku and LaRue Lutkins, 5 March 1953, 690.94/3–1653, NA.

<sup>68</sup> MC, Wajima Eiji and Lutkins, 30 June 1953, 693.94/7–853, NA.

schism.<sup>69</sup> More specifically, Suma Yakichirō, a Progressive Party (Kai-shintō) Diet member, noted China's<sup>70</sup> abandonment of its pro-Soviet Liu Shaoqi line following Stalin's death. According to Ishikawa Shigeru, an expert on Chinese economics, one's views on the subject depended on one's background. Those who saw "Communist China perfectly following Soviet policy" tended to be Soviet specialists, whereas the view "common among China researchers says that communist Chinese nationalists are conscious of the rift in interests."<sup>71</sup>

The United States remained less confident. Remarkably, in view of subsequent developments, the State Department was worried that "the Soviet Union now may have a closer, more productive alliance with Communist China than we do with Japan."<sup>72</sup> Although it was recognized that "the death of Stalin will create many problems of adjustment in China-Soviet relations," and their entente was vulnerable ideologically and nationalistically, it was nevertheless felt that "the Mao regime will continue its allegiance to the Soviet Union."<sup>73</sup>

#### *Korean Armistice*

The termination of the Korean War in July 1953<sup>74</sup> initially led the Americans to reinforce their hard line against China. In Japan the reaction was rather different. Public opinion was already responding favorably to Beijing's "people's diplomacy" initiatives.<sup>75</sup> In September, the Central

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<sup>69</sup> "Which of the two camps will be split first?" "The communists will split first": 29.1 percent; "Democrats will split first": 11.8 percent; "Others": 16.9 percent; "Don't know": 26.2 percent; "Don't know Red China": 15.5 percent. Sample: urban 1,807; rural 1,246. Reply: 87.2 percent (rural data weighted double). *The World and Japan 2* (15 August 1953), Enc. in Berger to DOS, 611.94/9-2253, NA.

<sup>70</sup> Suma Yakichirō et al., "Mō Takutō jidai to Nihon no kiki," *Maru* 6, no. 10 (October 1953): 78.

<sup>71</sup> Ishikawa Shigeru, "Chū-So kankei o kettei suru yōin," *Soren Kenkyū* 2, no. 9 (September 1953): 21. An exception was Takeda Nan'yō, "Chūkyō—Soren ippentō no gendankai," *Soren Kenkyū* 2, no. 8 (Aug. 1953): 36-46.

<sup>72</sup> Office Memo, Young (NEA), to Robertson and Johnson (FE), "US Policies in Japan," 9 September 1953, 611.94/9-953, NA.

<sup>73</sup> J. Barnard to Paul Nitze, "Vulnerabilities of the Sino-Soviet Entente", 3 April 1953, DDRS 1993/727.

<sup>74</sup> Chang, *Friends and Enemies*, 89-90.

<sup>75</sup> In 1953, the number of Japanese visitors to China totalled 139, up from fifty the previous year, and just nine in 1951. *Chūgoku nenkan* (Tōkyō: Ishisaki Shoten, 1959), 57. Moreover, an *Asahi Shinbun* poll conducted in June 1953, found that 38 percent believed Japan should be "neutralist" as opposed to 35 percent "pro-American," 1 percent "pro-Soviet," and 26 percent "other/D.K." The comparable figures for September 1950, were: 22 percent, 55 percent, 0 percent, and 23 percent, respectively. Douglas Mendel, *The Japanese People and Foreign Policy* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1961), 43.

Executive Committee of the Left-Japan Socialist Party (JSP) went so far as to propose that a Sino-Soviet-American joint security guarantee for Japan replace both the U.S.-Japan Security Treaty and the Sino-Soviet alliance.<sup>76</sup> More threatening to Yoshida, however, were the bonds being forged between those business groups interested in trade with the communist countries, Shigemitsu Mamoru's Progressive Party, and the breakaway Hatoyama faction from Yoshida's own Liberal Party (Jiyūtō).<sup>77</sup> On the eve of the signature of the Korean armistice, they helped pass a Diet resolution demanding that the government temporarily reduce its embargo to a level "as low as the Western European countries."<sup>78</sup> Although intended as an attack on the prime minister, it was seized upon by Yoshida as a useful weapon in his battle with Washington over the China trade. A formal request to shorten the list prompted the new U.S. ambassador in Tōkyō, John M. Allison, to complain that "Tokyo ... still basically holds to the theories of the durability of [the] communist capture of China and of the possibility of facilitating the alienation of Peking from Moscow."<sup>79</sup> Dulles's response was more accommodating, however.

In October, while a delegation from the Diet members' League was inspecting trade prospects in China (and signing a second unofficial trade agreement), Yoshida again sent his protégé Ikeda Hayato to Washington.<sup>80</sup> Ikeda's talks, better known for the compromise reached on Japanese rear-

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<sup>76</sup> J.A.A. Stockwin, "'Positive Neutrality'—The Foreign Policy of the JSP," *Asian Survey* 2, no. 9 (Nov. 1962): 38.

<sup>77</sup> Radtke, *China's Relations*, 99, 101. In April, Kazami Akira, an independent Diet member, helped to bring them together in the Alliance for the Promotion of Normalised Diplomatic Relations with China and the Soviet Union (Nitchū Nisso Kokkō Chōsei Sokushin Dōmei). By the autumn it had developed into a general coordinating body: the National Conference for the Restoration of Diplomatic Relations with China and the Soviet Union (Nitchū Nisso Kokkō Kaifuku Koku-min Kaigi), and was led by Majima Kan, a medical doctor. "Nisso kōshō to sayoku no senden katsudō," *Nippon oyobi Nipponjin* 6, no. 8 (August 1955): 34–37.

<sup>78</sup> The resolution was sponsored by the recently revived Diet Members' League for the Promotion of Sino-Japanese Trade led by Ikeda Masanosuke, a leading light in Hatoyama Ichirō's breakaway Liberal Party. The league was by now the largest inter-party organization in the Diet, comprising not only all the socialists, but forty-plus progressives, and more than seventy members of Yoshida's own conservative Liberals. Qing Simei, "The Eisenhower Administration and Changes in Western Embargo Policy Against China, 1954–1958," in *The Great Powers in East Asia, 1953–1960*, ed. Warren Cohen and Akira Iriye (New York: Columbia University Press, 1990), 121–42.

<sup>79</sup> Allison to DOS, "American Leadership and Japan," 3 September 1953, FRUS, 1952–54, XIV, 1495.

<sup>80</sup> Jain, *China and Japan*, 29.

mament, also produced partial agreement on the trade issue.<sup>81</sup> Six months later, on 8 March 1954, Japan and the United States signed the Mutual Security Assistance Agreement and within a few days the United States finally agreed to release Japan “gradually, as appropriate” from its obligations under the September 1952 agreement on China trade controls.<sup>82</sup> It is not difficult to imagine that the former acted as some kind of quid pro quo for the latter. Yoshida’s success produced a 75 percent jump in Sino-Japanese trade, but this was not sufficient to satisfy his critics at home, let alone Beijing.

## THE “YOSHIDA THESIS” REBORN

### *Difficult Delivery*

By late 1953, the Japanese Foreign Ministry once again appeared rather dismissive of prospects for a Sino-Soviet rift. At the China Desk, Takeuchi Harumi told the Americans that he “did not think that there was any chance at [the] present time or in [the] foreseeable future of Japan or any other nation weaning Communist China away from its intimate ties with Moscow.”<sup>83</sup> His boss, Wajima Eiji, was less certain. He basically concurred with the majority view that “a general mutuality of interests in the Far East made continued Sino-Soviet ties a strong probability for some time to come.” But he also believed that if the Soviet Union resisted China’s emerging “peaceful coexistence” strategy, “the opportunity would present itself to approach Peking in an effort to widen whatever crack developed.” Apparently, Wajima was not alone; others in the Foreign Ministry “had considered significant the different manner in which the repatriation of Japanese had been handled during the past year by the Chinese Communist and Soviet governments.”<sup>84</sup> They had also “detected certain differences in the approach taken by the Soviet and Chinese representa-

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<sup>81</sup> Hosoya Chihiro, “From the Yoshida Letter to the Nixon Shock,” in *The United States and Japan*, ed. Akira Iriye and Warren Cohen (Lexington: Kentucky University Press, 1989), 23.

<sup>82</sup> Memo, McClurkin to Drumwright, 14 April 1954, FRUS, 1952–52, XIV, 1634–35.

<sup>83</sup> MC, Takeuchi Harumi and Lutkins, 7 December 1953, 693.94/12–753, NA.

<sup>84</sup> He also mentioned speculation that “Russia might have given Peking pretty much of a free hand in the Far East and might in particular have allotted her the leading role in implementing communist bloc strategy toward Japan.” This “division of labor” theory was to prove very popular in the later 1950s as a way of explaining away conflicting Sino-Soviet policies in East Asia without recognizing the emerging rift. MC, Wajima Eiji and Lutkins, 21 December 1953, 693.94/12–2153, NA.

tives at Geneva.”<sup>85</sup> The Geneva Peace Conference held out the prospect of a new era of détente in East Asia. Opinion polls reported strong support for trade and even diplomatic relations with China from all areas of Japanese society.<sup>86</sup> Perhaps it is not surprising therefore that Yoshida chose this moment to relaunch his “thesis.”<sup>87</sup>

In late May, Yoshida ordered both the Foreign Ministry and the Cabinet Research Office (Naikaku Chōsashitsu) to undertake a high priority study of the immediate prospects for a Sino-Soviet rift and what steps Japan might take to hasten the process.<sup>88</sup> We now know that this recently declassified and detailed report expressed “many doubts about whether Sino-Soviet relations are [characterized by] brotherly love, but they are mutually beneficial.” Hence, it predicted that only “when they are economically equal will it be possible [for China] to become ‘independent.’” Finally, the report’s authors concluded rather pessimistically that “Mao Zedong is totally committed to the Soviet Union ... [and] as long as Mao Zedong is alive Communist China will not become a second Yugoslavia.”<sup>89</sup> Without waiting for the results, however, Yoshida had approached Ambassador Allison, informing him that

by a judicious combination of diplomatic persuasion and pressure exerted from the Western Pacific island chain Peking could be weaned away from its dependence upon and alliance with the Soviet Union and the stage might even be set for the unseating of the Chinese Communist Regime. ... The Japanese ... because of their long

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<sup>85</sup> Interestingly, Dulles suppressed news of “Peking’s displeasure with modest Soviet support ... [lest it] encourage Asian wishful thinking that China was more Asian than communist and that a reasonable accommodation could be reached with Peking.” 26 April 1954, FRUS 1952–54, XVI, 621.

<sup>86</sup> Wilbur Martin, “Some Findings of Japanese Opinion Polls,” in *Japan Between East and West*, ed. Hugh Borton et al. (New York: Council on Foreign Relations/Harper, 1957), 310–11.

<sup>87</sup> Yoshida later claimed that just after the fall of Dienbienphu (7 May 1954) he had once again broached with Dulles his plan to use overseas Chinese as agents to fight the communists in China. Kern to Robertson, 11 December 1958, 611.94/12–1158, NA.

<sup>88</sup> MC, Allison and Yoshida, 28 May 1954, Enc. in AmEmbTok to DOS, 794.00/7–2054, NA.

<sup>89</sup> “Chūkyō no genjō to sono dōkō”, 8 August 1954, [A–0137/10/0009–89], Gaimushō Shiryōkan, Tōkyō. It should be noted that rumors circulating at this time claimed that “the Asian Affairs Bureau’s researches about the Soviet Union and Communist China are low-key.” The reason, it was suggested, was that anyone producing positive reports was blacklisted (*chū jinbutsu*) and in such an atmosphere “no able officers like[d] to remain at the China Desk and those who do keep silent.” Mukohara Tatsuzō, “Gaimushō,” *Chūō Kōron* 69, no. 11 (November 1954): 98–99.

experience on the mainland could play a valuable role in promoting these desirable developments by working to reconcile American and British policies toward China.

The U.S. Embassy dismissed it all as a mere “restate[ment of] the hoary thesis, so dear to Japanese ‘Old China Hands.’”<sup>90</sup> This assessment was confirmed by a former diplomat, Hirasawa Kazushige, when he unfavorably contrasted

the older generation of Japanese diplomats and politicians ... [with] younger informed Japanese bureaucrats [who] are aware that there is little possibility of splitting Communist China from the USSR in the next few years [because] Communist China’s economy and its plans for industrial development are closely geared to the Soviet economy.<sup>92</sup>

The generation gap was not the only dimension to the Japanese split on the “Yoshida thesis.” An “interesting difference of opinion,” for instance, was said to exist “within the Foreign Office between the Soviet and China Desks.” According to Niizeki Kin’ya, in charge of the former:

All signs indicate that the Soviet Union and Communist China are currently bound by the closest ideological, economic and national security ties; there is nothing to indicate that any significant parting of the ways can be expected in the foreseeable future.<sup>93</sup>

In contrast, Ogawa Heishirō, the new man in charge of the China Desk, claimed that “the possibility should not be ruled out, even within the next few years of a real divergence of Sino-Soviet interests, in the economic field at least.” Niizeki predicted a Russian unilateral initiative to normalize relations with Japan “before long,” whereas Ogawa thought that “the apparent inability of Russia to supply all the equipment and services which China desires in order to carry out her industrialization plans ... would lead Peking to adopt a more conciliatory policy toward Japan and the West.” Yet the differences should not be overdrawn. Ogawa was, after all, the main author of the pessimistic Foreign Ministry report commissioned by Yoshida on the Sino-Soviet rift. Moreover, in the long term, Nii-

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<sup>90</sup> Berger to DOS, “Foreign Office Views on Geneva Conference and Sino-Soviet Relations”, 11 June 1954, 693.94/6-1154, NA.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid.

<sup>92</sup> MC, Hirasawa Kazushige and Richard Lamb, 9 July 1954, 794.13/7-2054, NA.

<sup>93</sup> MC, Niizeki Kin’ya and Lutkins, 27 May 1954, Enc. in Berger to DOS, 693.94/6-1154, NA.

zeki thought that “serious potential tensions undoubtedly exist and Russia, for her part, probably feels real concern about the growth of Chinese military and industrial power.” Furthermore, Ogawa recognized that “security considerations and the reluctance of Peking to carry out a major readjustment of the country’s foreign trade, now so overwhelmingly oriented toward Moscow, could operate to prevent the Chinese leaders from proceeding far in [Japan’s] direction.”<sup>94</sup> Yet such intra-ministry differences were probably a factor in the decision by a gathering of Japanese diplomatic envoys in Europe that summer<sup>95</sup> to improve the system for collecting information on China and Russia.

In July, a multi-party Japanese delegation returned from a peace conference in Sweden via Moscow and Beijing. Nishimura Naomi, the Liberal Party leader of the group, was surprised at the “wide differences” he observed between the two. He suggested this might reflect differences between Europe and Asia, or the fact that “the Soviet Union is a grown-up country, whereas Communist China is a young one.” Not every member of the team shared this view, however. Nakasone Yasuhiro (Progressive Party), for example, concluded that “The Soviet Union and Communist China are one and undivided and have organized a strong united front.”<sup>96</sup> Three days later, Foreign Minister Okazaki Katsuo—reversing the logic of the “Yoshida thesis”—claimed that because of the Japan-ROC Peace Treaty it was “much easier for Japan to normalize relations with the USSR than with Communist China.”<sup>97</sup>

It was assumed at the time that Yoshida was not very happy at this.<sup>98</sup> Yet during August, Fukunaga Kazuomi of Yoshida’s Liberal Party and the Foreign Ministry’s Ushiba Nobuhiko were allowed to visit the Soviet Union to discuss trade and fisheries problems.<sup>99</sup> The Foreign Ministry also withdrew its opposition to a visit by a Chinese Red Cross delegation.<sup>100</sup> But most importantly, Ikeda Hayato, now Liberal Party secretary-

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<sup>94</sup> MC, Ogawa Takeo [sic] and Lutkins, 1 June 1954, Enc. in Berger to DOS, 693.94/6-1154, NA.

<sup>95</sup> Memo, 25 August 1954, A 1838/283-731/3/11, AA.

<sup>96</sup> Nishimura Naomi, “Watashi wa akai kuni Soren, Chūkyō o kō mita,” and Nakasone Yasuhiro, “Fukami niwa yoru to yakedo,” *Jitsugyō no Nihon* 57, no. 21 (1 September 1954): 44, 47.

<sup>97</sup> Allison to Dulles, 24 July 1954, 661.94/7-2454, NA.

<sup>98</sup> Allison to Dulles, 30 July 1954, 661.94/7-3054, NA.

<sup>99</sup> “Shindankai ni haita Chū-So kokkō kaifuku,” *Ekonomisuto* 32, no. 45 (6 November 1954): 16-17, and James Morley, *Soviet and Communist Chinese Policies toward Japan, 1950-57* (New York: Institute of Pacific Relations, 1957), 8.

<sup>100</sup> The delegation, led by Mrs. Li Dequan, was the first “official” visit by representatives of the PRC to postwar Japan. Following informal conversations with Ministry of Welfare officials, the delegation signed a new repatriation agree-xxx

general, made a speech to party leaders asserting that "This is not the time for Japan to choose outright between West and East ... Japan's attitude should be characterized by greater flexibility in foreign and economic policy."<sup>101</sup> Ambassador Allison<sup>102</sup> concluded in brutal terms that "Japan is for sale to the highest bidder."<sup>102</sup> As usual, he was over-reacting. Ikeda's "trial balloon" was soon deflated. A report by his party's Foreign Policy Research Council (Gaikō Chōsakai), issued later in August, expressed support for increased trade with Beijing and associated visits, but specifically excluded early diplomatic recognition.<sup>103</sup>

*The Sino-Soviet Joint Declaration and the Fall of Yoshida*

Despite the serious crisis developing in the Taiwan Straits, another multi-party Diet members' mission led by Yamaguchi Kikuichirō visited Beijing in early October, in an effort to undermine Yoshida's official China policy.<sup>104</sup> In wide-ranging talks with Zhou Enlai, the Chinese premier "expressed opinions on Japanese rearmament, economic independence, the historical influence of Sino-Japanese friendship, Chinese industrialization and peaceful coexistence, cultural exchange, the problem of Japanese recognition, war criminals, residents, communications, fishing, and trade problems."<sup>105</sup> The group was told that China wished to sign a peace treaty establishing normal relations as soon as Japan was truly independent, democratic, and free. It would then be possible to conclude a non-aggression pact.<sup>106</sup> Delegates generally agreed that "China was neither Titoist nor a satellite, but rather a junior partner advancing toward increasing equality."<sup>107</sup> For one writer, "This visit became the starting point for the rapid development of economic, cultural and other 'friendly' (non-offi-

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ment. In addition, trade matters were discussed with Murata Shōzō of the Japan Association for the Promotion of International Trade (JAPIT). More surprisingly, several meetings took place between members of the delegation and Ogawa Heishiro, head of the China Desk at the Foreign Ministry, an early supporter of the Chinese visit. Radtke, *China's Relations*, 102, 105, and 114 n. 83. A. Doak Barnett, *Communist China and Asia* (New York: Council on Foreign Relations/Vintage, 1960), 264, and Jain, *China and Japan*, 20.

<sup>101</sup> Allison to Dulles, 11 August 1954, FRUS, 1952–54, XIV, 1698–99.

<sup>102</sup> Allison to Dulles, 25 August 1954, FRUS, 1952–54, XIV, 1714–15.

<sup>103</sup> Fukui, *Party in Power*, 237.

<sup>104</sup> Allan Cole, George Totten, and Cecil Uyehara, *Socialist Parties in Postwar Japan* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1966), 228.

<sup>105</sup> Gaimushō, *Nitchū kankei kihon shiryō shū* (Tōkyō: Kasankai, 1970), 345.

<sup>106</sup> Barnett, *Communist China and Asia*, 265.

<sup>107</sup> *Tōkatsudō* 97 (10 November 1954), cited in Cole, Totten, and Uyehara, *Socialist Parties*, 228.

cial) exchanges between Japan and the PRC.”<sup>108</sup> For Yoshida, however, it was the beginning of the end.<sup>109</sup> The delegation’s visit had coincided with the signature by Mao and Khrushchev, on 12 October 1954, of a joint declaration reaffirming: “their readiness to take steps to normalize their relations with Japan.”<sup>110</sup> In itself this was nothing new, but it now served as the focus for a conservative-socialist marriage of convenience that would topple Yoshida, and install his great rival, the aging and infirm Hatoyama Ichirō, in his stead.

Yoshida himself was away on a diplomatic world tour at this time. In Europe, he repeated the same message in every capital he visited: “Our aim must be to detach the Chinese from the Russians who were not natural friends.”<sup>111</sup> Earlier he had astonished his hosts, and “surprised and embarrassed” the Japanese diplomats present, by dreaming up a new scheme to help bring it about.<sup>112</sup> His plan called for “some sort of organisation in Singapore” to which “the US, UK, French, and the Japanese would send representatives to exchange information and discuss means for countering communist propaganda.”<sup>113</sup> The British refused to support the scheme. He

<sup>108</sup> Radtke, *China’s Relations*, 104. It was also instrumental in reconciling remaining foreign policy differences between the Left- and Right-wing Socialist Parties, thereby accelerating the process of reunification which came to fruition twelve months later. See, for example, Tetsuya Kataoka, *The Price of a Constitution* (New York: Crane Russak, 1991), 138.

<sup>109</sup> While they were away, the organizational structure of the non-communist, but pro-communist-trade movement underwent something of a facelift. In late September, an important new body was formed, the Japan Association for the Promotion of International Trade (Nihon Kokusai Bōeki Sokushin Kyōkai), with Murata Shōzō as president. Other leading members included such liberal politicians as Ishibashi Tanzan, Kitamura Tokutarō, and Fujiyama Aiichirō, and businessmen like Takasaki Tatsunosuke (president of Tōyō Seikan) and Kay Reinosuke (chairman of Tōkyō Electric). The following month saw the establishment of the latest version of the coordinating body founded by Majima Kan.

Now called the National Conference for the Restoration of Diplomatic Relations with China and the Soviet Union, it was to spawn prefectural conferences throughout the country. James Morley, “The Soviet-Japanese Peace Declaration,” *Political Science Quarterly* 72 (September 1957): 375; “Shinten suru tai nisso kokkō kaifuku undō,” *Ekonomisuto* 33, no. 9 (26 February 1955): 18–19, and Oga-ta Sadako, “The Business Community and Japanese Foreign Policy,” in *The Foreign Policy of Modern Japan*, ed. Robert Scalapino (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1977), 179.

<sup>110</sup> Cited in Shao Chuan Leng, *Japan and Communist China* (Kyōto: Dōshisha University Press, 1958), 7.

<sup>111</sup> “Record of Discussions at PM’s Dinner for Yoshida,” 27 October 1954, PREM 11/3852, Public Records Office, Kew [Hereafter PRO].

<sup>112</sup> Allen to Far Eastern Dept., 28 October 1954, FO 371/110418 (FJ 1075/1), PRO.

<sup>113</sup> Blakeney (Washington) to Secretary for External Affairs, 3 November 1954, A 1838/283–730/3/19, AA. The Australians suspected that it was a “propaganda

repeated the proposal in Washington.<sup>114</sup> Dulles politely called the new plan “a very interesting suggestion.” However, following Yoshida’s disrespectful bundling from office in December, the scheme was quietly buried,<sup>115</sup> until resurrected by Yoshida’s protégé, Ikeda Hayato, in April 1963.

## SOME CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

### *Perceptions*

Yoshida’s China policy was rooted in three fixed ideas. First, that the Japan-U.S. alliance was much stronger than the Sino-Soviet one. Second, that “the Chinese communists were Chinese first and communists second.”<sup>116</sup> And third, that through trade the West could infect Communist China with the values of capitalist democracy. Unfortunately for Yoshida, most members of the U.S. government did not share his convictions. Washington, in contrast, felt that Japan was more vulnerable to communist contamination through exchanges with the Socialist bloc than vice versa. And even if Tōkyō did not withdraw into politico-strategic neutrality, it was believed that trade with Japan could only strengthen the communist economies. The United States recognized that the Sino-Soviet alliance rested on strategic and ideological as well as economic common interests, but saw Japan’s international position as determined primarily by commercial imperatives. Hence, the Americans concluded that it was essential to prevent Japan from becoming economically dependent on the communist allies, and to “contain” the latter. With such a large perception gap, it should come as no surprise to hear Yoshida denouncing the American’s inability to understand China:

It is the British and Japanese with many years of accumulated experience in the problems of China who best understand the psychology of the Chinese people. America has not reached the point of truly knowing China.<sup>117</sup>

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exercise ... designed to exert influence through the US on the rest of the free world to adopt more liberal trade policies toward Japan.”

<sup>114</sup> US Summary Minutes of Meeting, Dulles and Yoshida, 9 November 1954, FRUS, 1952–54, XIV, 1779–80.

<sup>115</sup> The specific U.S. objection was that “it would cut across the aims and objectives of the Manila Pact,” meaning SEATO, and they proposed instead “a high-level bilateral consultative body in Tōkyō.” MC, Sebald and Ambassador Iguchi Sadao, 30 December 1954, FRUS, 1952–54, XIV, 1816–17.

<sup>116</sup> Hagiwara Tōru, Treaty Bureau Director, Foreign Ministry, cited in Yoshitsu, *Japan and San Francisco*, 68.

<sup>117</sup> Yoshida Shigeru, *Kaisō jūnen*, vol. 1 (Tōkyō: Shinchōsha, 1957), 270.

Japan's China policy was directed at Washington (and to a lesser degree, London), rather than Beijing. Prime Minister Yoshida Shigeru tried hard to reconcile his essentially post-imperial vision of China with the Cold War realpolitik of U.S. "containment" strategy. He hoped to persuade the Americans to allow Japan to keep open a channel to the Chinese communists, in order to accelerate their disenchantment with Moscow. But once the Cold War turned hot, with North Korea's invasion of the South, the contradictions simply became too great. By channel, Yoshida meant primarily trade relations, although he did attempt to fashion a peace treaty with Taipei that would afford Tōkyō the option of signing a separate treaty with Beijing at a later date. Still, Richard Nixon's assertion that "had [Yoshida] not retired in 1954, Japan might well have reopened [diplomatic] relations with China in the 1950s rather than the 1970s," remains speculative.<sup>118</sup>

#### *Motivations*

If we accept that Yoshida's perception of China was based on his prewar experience, that still leaves unanswered the question of whether it was this that really lay behind his China policy. After a career shot through with contradictions between words and deeds, there will always be areas of ambiguity: but two misconceptions can now be cleared up. First, that his "thesis" was simply a ruse to persuade the Americans to increase their aid to Japan or to relax the embargo against China. If that had been the case, then surely Yoshida would not have persisted with it long after it became clear that its effect on Washington was counterproductive. He would not have frequently lectured his advisors in the Foreign Ministry about how "Chinese ethnocentrism and superiority would inevitably lead to a clash or rivalry with Soviet leaders."<sup>119</sup> Nor would he have expended so much domestic political capital attempting to block the expansion of Sino-Japanese trade. The opposite view, namely that Yoshida was in Washington's pocket—making a show of resisting the US-led embargo for the sake of domestic popularity, while selling out Japanese traders behind their backs—is equally fallacious. If that had been the case, then it would surely not have been necessary for Dulles and others to engage in such prolonged arm-twisting. Moreover, on those occasions when Yoshida sought to block the expansion of Sino-Japanese trade, he did so only in an effort to prevent political opponents at home gaining control of this po-

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<sup>118</sup> Richard Nixon, *Leaders* (New York: Warner Books, 1982), 133.

<sup>119</sup> Fujisaki Masato, Treaty Bureau Section Chief, Foreign Ministry, cited in Yoshitsu, *Japan and San Francisco*, 68.

tentially lucrative relationship. Yet when the “Yoshida thesis” directly conflicted with Japan’s political or economic survival, it was simply not his highest priority.

One might best characterize Yoshida’s position as a kind of safety valve, playing up domestic pro-China-trade sentiment to the Americans and playing down the potential of China trade at home, and thereby preventing a confrontation where U.S. and Japanese national interests came into most direct conflict, i.e., over China. Like Janus, Yoshida had two faces, one for the Japanese and one for the Americans. This was unavoidable because he had two masters: he needed the support of the U.S. government as much as, if not more than, the Japanese electorate and his party colleagues. In short, the picture of Yoshida that emerges from this study is of a moderate pragmatist, an advocate of “soft power,” pursuing a doctrine of suppressed nationalism.

#### *Decision-Making System*

Finally, there is the question of to what extent Yoshida could dictate Japanese policy toward China. He has gained a reputation for exercising a “one-man-rule,” and certainly considered foreign policy his personal prerogative. Yoshida served as his own foreign minister under the Occupation, and thereafter gave the post to an ex-diplomat and loyal subordinate, Okazaki Katsuo. Yet even within the ruling Liberal Party, Yoshida did not enjoy a completely free hand, especially once Hatoyama Ichirō and his associates were released from the purge in 1951–52. Thereafter, they managed to steal the normalization issue and use it to effectively undermine Yoshida’s leadership.

The 1950s was a period when bureaucrats supposedly dominated policy-making in Japan, yet the Foreign Ministry was not invulnerable to political pressure. Ironically, the ministry’s ability to control Japan’s developing relations with the PRC was severely constrained by the lack of official diplomatic ties. This enabled politicians, both within the government and without, to pursue their own agendas. All were examples of “amateur diplomacy” in the eyes of the Foreign Ministry professionals, but were nonetheless effective for that. The Foreign Ministry’s position was further weakened by internal divisions and conflict with MITI.

Beyond this inner ruling circle, a number of other actors competed for a say in the policy-making process. Perhaps foremost among these were business interests. Yoshida was always alert to the demands of Kansai-based traders, who hoped to restore their prewar economic relationship with China. The divided Japanese Left also contributed to the revival of Sino-Japanese trade and helped to negotiate the repatriation of Japanese

nationals from the mainland. It enjoyed considerable popular support but could never command sufficient votes in the Diet or at the ballot box to offer a serious political challenge. Moreover, public opinion in general played a very small role in setting Japan's foreign policy agenda during this period.

Finally, American influence was overwhelming. Japan felt dependent on the United States for its security and prosperity, and naturally Washington exploited this fact. The habits established during nearly seven years of Occupation were slow to die. Tōkyō had very little influence over the policy process in Washington. As one scholar has pointedly observed, "Even if Yoshida was right, Japan lacked the power and economic position to hasten the rift."<sup>120</sup> In short, it was the U.S. "monolith" that was to cast the longest shadow over Japan.

### Notes

An earlier version of this paper was presented at the Japan Politics Group, Fourth Annual Colloquium, University of Sterling, Scotland, 9 July 1996. It forms the first part of a much larger project examining Japan's response to the rise and fall of the Sino-Soviet alliance, 1950 to 1964.

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<sup>120</sup> P.A. Narasimha Murthy, "Japan's Changing Relations with People's China and the Soviet Union," *International Studies* VII, no. 1 (July 1965): 8.