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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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Naval Officer and Diplomat with Pro-American Views: Reappraising the Career of Nomura Kichisaburō

A suspicious reader holds at least three types of prejudices when beginning to read a biography. The reader expects a story aiming to slander the protagonist or, alternatively, to present some kind of rehabilitation. The third category contains narratives describing a seemingly omnipotent character whose thoughts and acts can be used to explain almost anything or everything. In the preface of *Sailor Diplomat*, Peter Mauch convinces his readers that one should not expect a biography that falls within the first or the third categories. His biography of Nomura Kichisaburō tries anything but to repeat what has been argued before. Supported by evidence from archival sources, including Nomura's family papers, Mauch presents two basic arguments. According to Mauch, diplomat Nomura has been misinterpreted, and previous authors who have analyzed the diplomat have neglected the naval officer Nomura.

According to the preface, Nomura was a man who had for decades understood the importance of peaceful relations between Japan and the United States, and who embraced this aim when representing Japan in Washington as an ambassador. Mauch introduces Nomura as a man who was betrayed by the Japanese Navy and who dedicated his postwar career to ensure the compatibility of Japanese and American interests. It is thus tempting to place Mauch's book under the banner of "rehabilitation" biographies. Sometimes rehabilitation is indeed needed and justified. It is obvious that the author makes enviable work when offering a detailed, in-depth, and convincing analysis of Nomura's life. The right and responsibility to make the final evaluation between his conclusions and the interpretations offered by others remain, as they always do, within the jurisdiction of the reader. It would, however, be misleading to argue that the book is only a story about an extraordinary individual. Rather, it is also a story about the emergence and collapse of the first modern non-Western great power, international rules and practices of diplomacy during the first half of the twentieth century, and the functioning of the Japanese foreign policy apparatus.

Nomura was born on December 16, 1877, in a family of impoverished former samurai. He entered the Naval Academy in 1895 and graduated second in his class after which he and his classmates took their five-month-long midshipman cruise to the United States. Nomura joined the Russo-Japanese War as a young naval officer and was posted to Austria in 1908. This was a significant step in his career as he, in the author's words, "grew increasingly aware of the interconnectedness of naval and military power, diplomacy, and politics" (p. 18).

From 1911 to 1918, Nomura served first as a gunboat diplomat in China, then as a naval bureaucrat in Tokyo, and finally as an attaché to the Japanese embassy in Washington. In these roles, Nomura became recognized as one of the navy's foremost American experts who understood its strategic priorities, foreign policy, and economic resources. These capabilities were put in use when Nomura attended the Paris Peace Conference and Washington Conference. Throughout the subsequent era of naval limitation, Nomura appeared as one of the most visible supporters of the system that was to prevent the arms race and the possibility of war with the United States. Eventually, this stance prevented Nomura's emergence as either navy minister or navy chief of staff and labeled him as a left-wing admiral. When Nomura retired in April 1937, he had become a person whose opinions were ignored and who was informed of decisions but not invited to contribute to them.

Nomura's return to the heart of Japan's international affairs came as a backdrop to the Japanese Army's prolonged war in China. As a foreign minister, Nomura dealt with questions on war with the Soviet Union and rapprochement with Nazi Germany. However, according to the author, his overriding objective was to avert the

looming crisis in Japanese American relations. Although Nomura's frustrating term as a foreign minister remained short and he achieved very little, repeated requests and finally a sense of duty toward the disconnected navy made him accept the post of ambassador to the United States.

From the very beginning, Nomura was aware of the difficulties that his mission to Washington would face, but before departing Japan he made clear to his superiors that his intention was not to mislead and lie to the Americans. Despite the early optimism, Nomura's mission turned out just as troublesome as expected. The indecisive and heterogeneous navy withdrew from its earlier stance under pressure from the army and foreign ministries. Eventually naval authorities in Tokyo abandoned the ambassador at his post in Washington. Nomura repeatedly asked permission to resign but resignation was not permitted. During the summer and early autumn of 1941, Nomura ignored his instructions and made his own unsuccessful initiatives that were not in line with the policy of Tokyo and muddled the already blurry situation of US-Japan negotiations.

Nomura and his staff were interned after the attack on Pearl Harbor. After the exchange of embassy staffers, Nomura returned to Japan in August 1942 but did not return to a position that might have offered him a possibility to affect the course of Japan during the war. The occupation period followed the defeat and Nomura emerged as Japan's leading proponent of maritime rearmament whose criticism of early occupation policies resembled, for example, that of American Council for Japan and other Washington policymaking circles in the post-1947 situation.

When he introduces the career of Nomura, Mauch is loyal to his two basic arguments. He describes how, as a young staff member of the navy ministry, Nomura learned to be close to Americans and how Nomura understood, during the First World War, that the United States was emerging as the world leader. Therefore, a heavy dose of realism can be found behind Nomura's pro-American views. Nomura was, after all, a patriot whose stance toward the United States was based on logical thinking and who had the best interest of his country in mind. Namely, Nomura understood that Japan, and the Japanese Navy especially, could not defeat the United States.

Although this book gives answers to numerous questions, it opens a few others. The analysis of Japan's foreign policy is rather navy-centered. The relation or correspondence between Nomura's policy during the 1920s and the so-called Shidehara diplomacy remains untouched. It would also be interesting to learn more about the author's views concerning the position of the protagonist's ideas during the occupation period. Currently the author leaves his readers unaware of the relative importance and uniqueness of Nomura's ideas. The fact that later developments seem to correspond to Nomura's earlier criticism does not automatically mean that the shift in policy was due to Nomura's activities. The vague allusion that Nomura played a role in the 1955 formation of the Liberal Democratic Party comes as a surprise. It is, however, an example of a proposition that is introduced but not explored far enough.

As a perceptive biographer, Mauch is not blind to the mistakes made by Nomura; he agrees with some of the criticism directed toward Nomura. Yet the outcome of his skillful analysis and his position within the existing research can be condensed into a following quotation: "Historians have looked askance at Nomura's contribution to Japanese American friendship. Focusing for the most part on his failed ambassadorial mission, historians have taken Nomura to task for a litany of errors" (p. 249).

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