

# An Interpretation of Professor Kamikawa's View of Japanese Diplomacy

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Japan's past expansion in East Asia has been subject to various interpretations among scholars. The interpretations that are rather familiar to Western scholars can be classified into three groups: (1) plot thesis v. Conroy's non-plot antithesis, (2) from Mason's thesis of "rule from below" (i.e., the policy of the field army became the official policy of the Imperial government) to Maruyama's antithesis of "fascism from above" (i.e., the Tosei group, by seizing control of the army, imposed fascism on the Japanese people), and (3) the Marxists' interpretation.<sup>1</sup> The purpose of this paper is to introduce a "geopolitical" interpretation of Japanese diplomacy by way of evaluating Professor Hikomatsu Kamikawa's works on international affairs.

Graduated from the Tokyo Imperial University with a bachelor's degree in political science and a doctor's degree in law, Kamikawa served his alma mater as a professor for twenty years. In 1952 he was awarded the Japan Academy Prize for his three-volume work entitled "Current History of Diplomacy."

Today he is Director of the Japan Institute of International Affairs (Nihon Kokusai Mondai Kenkyu-sho), which is the Japanese counterpart of the British Royal Institute of International Affairs, and also Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Japan Association of International Relations (Nihon Kokusai Seijigakusai).<sup>2</sup> One of Japan's pioneer scholars and researchers of international problems, Kamikawa may well be considered as the dean of diplomatic historians in Japan.

Before dealing with Kamikawa's views on Japanese diplomacy, a brief sketch of his concept of world history in relation to the changing pattern of international politics seems necessary.

## I

Kamikawa's theory of international relations is stated in his *Outline of International Relations (Kokusai seiji-gaku gairon)*,<sup>3</sup> Japan's first systematic and laborious work in the field of international relations. In the light of six thousand years of world history, international politics is viewed as having evolved according to a dialectic system. The state of nature (anarchy) in Greece was followed by Alexander's Macedonian Empire which was replaced by the Roman (world) Empire. The Roman Empire was succeeded by another state of nature, which in turn was replaced by a quasi-world empire in the form of the Holy Roman Empire and the Catholic world church. This quasi-world empire, which was a synthesis of the Roman Empire and the subsequent state of nature, was then followed by a modern quasi-state of nature lasting over five hundred years as the "age of rival chiefs." Today's world is in a transitional stage from this quasi-state of nature to another quasi- or genuine world empire.<sup>4</sup>

In his ambitious attempt to erect laws which would demonstrate recurrence and regularity in history, Kamikawa could not escape being both a researcher and an artist of some license.<sup>5</sup>

As for the coming world empire, Kamikawa concurs with Friedrich Meinecke's view that the present *Englisch-Amerikanische Dyarchie* and *Gesamtbürgerschaft* would last almost indefinitely and that today's world is a harbinger of the Anglo-Saxon's "universal world empire." And thus, he opposes the thesis of "Finis Europe" as variously advanced by Arnold Toynbee, Oswald Spengler and Joseph Kunz.<sup>6</sup> As he concludes that the Anglo-Saxon's empire is predetermined, he holds that one can only strive to see that it becomes a democratically evolved world federation.

To Kamikawa, the most fundamental causes that bring changes in the system and process of international politics are in the following order: (1) the economic factor, (2) the political factor,

(3) the military factor, and (4) the intellectual factor. Kamikawa derives his economic factor essentially from Louis Gumplowiz's *Précis de Sociologie* (p. 370).<sup>7</sup> These arguments appear to parallel the "organismic theory of state" and "theory of Lebensraum," both of which have been the key concepts of contemporary geologists. In explaining the succession from economic expansion to political expansion and from political expansion to military preparation and war, Kamikawa cites approvingly from both Franz Oppenheimer's *The State* (pp. 24-27) and Scott Nearing's *War* (pp. 136-137).<sup>8</sup> The intellectual factor is briefly mentioned to the effect that the intellectual advancement of people has greatly contributed to the economic, political and military "cultures" of human society.

## II

According to Professor Kamikawa, the foreign policy of Japan or any other country can be divided into three elements: (1) the geographic and historic foundations, (2) the political objectives to maintain the nation's existence, security and prosperity, and (3) the appropriate means to achieve these objectives.<sup>9</sup> In complete agreement with Karl Haushofer, Kamikawa characterizes the geopolitical condition of Japan as the most fundamental determinant of Japanese foreign policy.<sup>10</sup>

In its embryonic stage of growth as a modern nation-state, Japan was relatively undisturbed by external pressures. Since Japan was an insular country in the Pacific, only sea powers could exert political or military influence on the island. But, until the latter half of the nineteenth century the only access route between Europe and Japan was a sea route passing the Cape of Good Hope via the Indian Ocean or an overland route across Siberia. Because of its limited contact with Europe and its position off the major trade route, the influence exerted by the European sea powers has been relatively weak and thus Japan to its good fortune was able to escape territorial losses.<sup>11</sup> (This view is also shared by American political geographers.<sup>12</sup>)

On the other hand, Kamikawa argues that by virtue of her geographical proximity to the land mass of Asia, the insular



country is in fact one of the most important "Mittel-lage" (middle zones) sandwiched between land and sea powers. He illustrates this fact with the Mongols' efforts to invade Japan. Carrying this interpretation to the present time he sees that the island is adjacent to three spheres of influence, namely, Slavs, Anglo-Saxons and Hans (Chinese). In such a position, it is inevitable that Japan become a "cockpit of nations." It is this uniqueness of Japanese geopolitics combining the advantage of insularity and the disadvantage of the "middle zone" that has determined the course of the last one hundred years of Japanese history "from glory to the grave."<sup>13</sup>

Meiji leaders sensed intuitively the difficulty of Japan as an international "middle zone," and thus they led a half-century struggle to secure a "free hand" in the "dog-eat-dog" world. As a result, Japan emerged following World War I as one of the five land powers and one of the three sea powers of the world. (There is clear evidence that the Meiji leaders were keenly cognizant of the implications of Japan's geographical location.<sup>14</sup>) However, the resulting position of the growing nation was not without difficulties. It was faced on the continent of Asia by the two world giants—China and Russia—and to the southeast by the two wealthiest and strongest sea powers—Great Britain and the United States. Hence, it was of utmost importance for Japan to have an insight into the shifting balance of power among these giants.<sup>15</sup>

To understand this view, one must turn to Kamikawa's view of history. He interprets history as a constant struggle between the land powers and the sea powers, and in this struggle he sees the world as divided into three zones: (1) the continental Pivot (Heartland) Area, covering most of the U.S.S.R., (2) the oceanic zone of the Outer or Insular Crescent, which is largely under the influence of the Anglo-Saxon sea powers, and (3) the middle zone consisting of the coastland zone of the Inner or Marginal Crescent covering the non-Russian part of Europe and the monsoon areas of Asia.<sup>16</sup> Thus his view of history and world geography is seen to be merely a reiteration of Sir Halford Mackinder's celebrated Heartland theory.<sup>17</sup>

Although the British and Japanese homelands were termed

by Mackinder as the "Offshore Island,"<sup>18</sup> Kamikawa treated them as identical with the United States in the Insular Crescent. In geopolitical terms Japan belonged to the Insular Crescent and thus was destined to come under the domination of Anglo-American sea power. Hence, the ultimate cause which led to Japan's total defeat was that her leaders, oblivious of this fundamental geopolitical fact, led the maritime Japan to clash with the maritime Britain and the United States.<sup>19</sup> (From this it can be deduced that it was a geopolitical mistake for the land-power Germany to attack the land-power Russia.)

As stated before, geopolitically Japan is located in the sphere of Insular Crescent. Nevertheless, historically she has always belonged to the sphere of East Asia, although the historic basis of Japanese diplomacy too is, in the opinion of Kamikawa, fundamentally conditioned by the geopolitical basis. From ancient times Japanese diplomacy was directed toward the continent, and Korea was a viaduct between the continent and Japan. For this reason, the Korean peninsula was viewed as an area of life-and-death importance, just as Flanders was to Britain.<sup>20</sup> Since Korea, Manchuria and most of China were included in the Marginal Crescent, which could not escape the pressures either from the maritime powers or from the continental powers, Kamikawa is not surprised that Japan recently attempted to expand her influence to catch up with other areas of the world and picked these areas as her theater of action.

After successfully challenging China and Russia's influence in Korea, Japan annexed the latter. With Korea as an integral part of the Japanese empire, Manchuria appears in Kamikawa's vocabulary as a "middle zone" of the Far East. He views it as the Balkans or Belgium of the Far East.<sup>21</sup> Despite the fact that Manchuria was almost a cockpit for China, Russia, Japan, England and the United States, beginning in 1931 the Japanese government anachronistically considered Manchuria as a special problem affecting only China and Japan, and the question should therefore be settled between the two. When the Soviet Union proposed to Japan a non-aggression pact immediately after the Manchurian Incident, the Japanese cabinet boldly refused. To Kamikawa, this was a great miscalculation on the part of Japan.<sup>22</sup>



Spurred by the success of the army in the Manchurian Incident, in December, 1934, the Japanese navy informed London and Washington of Japan's decision to abrogate the Washington Naval Agreement. Subsequently, Japanese delegates withdrew from the Naval Disarmament Preliminary Conference in London. Accordingly these actions made Japan a sworn enemy of the maritime powers which saw their own naval supremacy was threatened.<sup>23</sup>

Japan's peculiar geographic location presented her military strategists with two conflicting policies, a continental policy directed toward the northwest (Hokushin-ron) and an oceanic one directed toward the Pacific (Nanshin-ron). On the one hand, the continent possessed important natural resources owned by a weak China, impotent Siam, and lands such as French Indo-China and British Malaya which were controlled by the mother countries having troubles at home. On the other hand, there were insular storehouses of great natural wealth in the Netherland East Indies, owned by a weak, remote state and in the Philippines, close to Japan but remote from her protector.<sup>24</sup> Japan attempted expansion in both directions. The Russo-Japanese Neutrality Pact, which Matsuoka hurriedly signed, failed to reduce the American pressure against Japan as he wished, but did help Japan shift in favor of the oceanic policy. In Kamikawa's eyes, this change brought the Japan-Anglo-American relationship to the breaking point.<sup>25</sup> When the Allied powers started to encircle Japan, she was exposed to a two-front war, the worst strategic situation in which a country can find itself in a war.<sup>26</sup>

In viewing the recent history of Britain which also had the land-sea duality of diplomacy, Kamikawa is of the opinion that it affords a valuable lesson for Japan.<sup>27</sup> Like Japan, Britain played a leading role in the nearby continent. But England fought a land-power as a leading member of the Insular Crescent, while Japan challenged the ruling powers of the Insular world at the same time she opposed China and Russia. Hence, Britain ranks today as a world power and Japan as a "military colony" of the United States. This inferior situation of Japan is to be attributed to a lack of geopolitical insight on the part of the Japanese policy-makers.

No great power except the United States has succeeded in maintaining the world's largest naval force and land force at the same time. The British Empire, which once had 27 per cent of the world's total area and 25 per cent of its total population, managed to become the world's greatest sea power only because she concentrated on the construction of the navy at the expense of her army. Nevertheless, the duality of Japanese military policy—maritime as well as continental—led her militarists to attempt the impossible task of making Japan both a great sea and land power. This task was beyond Japan's means in view of the narrowness of Japanese domain and the poverty of natural resources, both of which are also important elements conditioning the geopolitical character of Japan.<sup>28</sup>

Sophisticated arguments for the "have-not" nations run through most of Kamikawa's publications. It is his major hypothesis that so long as the distribution of world territory and natural resources does not parallel the national needs of powers, it is impossible to maintain the status quo. "More equitable" redistribution of these material elements is, therefore, the price of peace.<sup>29</sup>

In prewar days, Kamikawa argues that the Axis powers which possessed among themselves no more than 1 per cent of the world land area and 10.6 per cent of the world population were challenging the big four—France, the United States, the U.S.S.R., and England—which occupied altogether about 60 per cent of world land area and 44 per cent of its total population.<sup>30</sup> World War I and II were viewed as struggles between revisionist powers and status quo powers. But today, Kamikawa likes to point out that Japan, 40 per cent of which is arable, is extremely limited in resources essential to the functioning of industries. With 1/350th of the world land area Japan is supporting 1/30th of the world population.<sup>31</sup>

### III

In evaluating Kamikawa's views, one might bear in mind their relationship to certain other views. For example, in evaluating his geopolitical formula for redistribution of *Lebensraum* it



can well be compared with the Marxist counterpart for the redistribution of the means of production. In this respect, his geopolitical arguments of the "have-not" nations can be referred to as the nationalistic counterpart of Marxian international dialectic materialism.<sup>32</sup> It is true that, as Marxists explain historical phenomena in terms of economics, geopoliticians consider them in terms of space. Nevertheless, it should be noted that Marxists and Leninists are theoretically opposed to the recognition of any influence on the life of states by their natural environment, and that geopolitical determinism has, therefore, no place in their theory.\*

Kamikawa is right to argue that Japan, deficient in territory and natural resources and a newcomer in modern imperialism, was at a disadvantage in competition against the wealthy imperialist states. However, Japan's lack of colonies could be a cause, but not a justification of territorial imperialism. Kamikawa should realize that much of Japan's continuous expansion was not dictated by objective geography but caused by the policy-maker's subjective interpretation of her natural environment. One's territorial domain should not be viewed as having a "snowballing" effect.

Kamikawa has extended his interpretation to current world politics. He sees an inevitable life-and-death struggle between the Communists and the Capitalists, not because the reason for existence between the two systems is viewed as incompatible regardless of any evolutionary changes, but rather because the struggle is viewed as an "either-or" proposition.<sup>33</sup> Today's bipolar politics is seen as the geopolitical contest between the continental empire and the maritime empire rather than a dialectical one between the Communist and the Capitalist ideologies.

\* The Marx-Leninist theory could not accept geopolitical determinism without contradicting the economic interpretation of the development of states. Moreover, to geopoliticians the life of societies is conditioned by natural environment such as geographic location, not by the "mode of production" nor by the "monopolistic stage of capitalism." For Marx's economic interpretation of the growth of states, see his *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*, translated from the 2nd German edition by N. I. Stone (Chicago: Charles H. Kerr & Co., 1904), pp. 10-13.



In view of his geopolitical ideas, Kamikawa would like to see Japan recover, with American assistance, from the total defeat and from the present status of "sham independence." Japan, like the United Kingdom, is an off-shore island and therefore should be regarded as an equal of the United Kingdom and as the natural ally of the United States, the pillar of the Insular world.

The resulting ties among these three seapowers would enable them to face any of the large landpowers. This is particularly important in establishing a position for Japan as the balancer of power in Asia as England is in Europe. Thus, Kamikawa reiterated the view that was presented as early as 1942 by Nicholas Spykman when the latter suggested that the United States will have to adopt a protective policy toward Japan similar to that existing between the United States and Great Britain.<sup>24</sup>

Thus, today as in the past, Kamikawa's interpretation is contrary to popular sentiment in Japan. Yet his influence among intellectuals of Japan is great, although not in proportion to the exalted positions which he holds (Director of the Japan Institute of International Affairs and Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Japan Association of International Relations).<sup>\*</sup> His geopolitical theory on the rise and fall of the Japanese empire is accepted by certain intellectuals, but of more importance is the attention given it by his many critics. Hence, in any case, the theory deserves the attention of Western scholars.

<sup>\*</sup> In an Asiatic society like Japan, where authority frequently depends on age and experience, it is possible to have a man like Kamikawa in charge of the Board of Editors even when most of the editors may not subscribe to his views. This opinion was reinforced during an interview the author had in Washington, D.C., on August 23, 1965, with Professor Chihiro Hosoya of Hitotsubashi University.

## NOTES

1. For the first group, see Hilary Conroy, *The Japanese Seizure of Korea: 1868-1910* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1960), and Chon Dong, *Japanese Annexation of Korea: A Study of Korean-Japanese Relations to 1910* (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, the University of Colorado, Boulder, 1955); a review article on these two different views is in *The Journal of Asian Studies*, August, 1963, pp. 469-472. For the second group, see Yale Maxon, *Control of Japanese Foreign Policy* (Berkeley: University of California, 1957), and Masao Maruyama, *Gendai-seiji no shiso to kodo*, 2 vols (Tokyo: Miraisha, 1956-1957). For the third group, see Bokuro Eguchi, *Teikoku-shugi to minzoku* (Tokyo, 1948), and Shigeki Toyama, *Showa-shi* (Tokyo, 1951).
2. *The Japan Biographical Encyclopedia & Who's Who* (2nd ed.; Tokyo: The Rengo Press, 1960), p. 483.
3. (Tokyo: Keisho-shobo, 1950.) The author calls it "the textbook written by a pioneer"; it is a consolidation of the views Kamikawa has held for the past thirty years.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 534.
5. This is also true with Professor Toynebee. See K. W. Thompson, "Toynebee and the Theory of International Politics," *Political Science Quarterly*, September, 1956, pp. 355-386.
6. See Hikomatsu Kamikawa, "Gendai Kokusai seiji no kiso koso," *Kokusai seiji*, Winter, 1957, pp. 2-6.
7. Cf. Kamikawa, *Kokusai seiji-gaku giron*, p. 514.
8. *Ibid.*, pp. 516-517, 519.
9. Hikomatsu Kamikawa, "Nihon gaiko heno Prolegomena." *Kokusai seiji*, Summer, 1957, p. 2. (for an English translation of this article, see "Prolegomena to Japanese Diplomacy," *The Japan Annual of International Affairs*, No. 1, 1961); "Gendai Kokusai seijishi ni okeru nihon," *Kokusai seiji*, Autumn, 1957, pp. 2, 19.
10. Haushofer had written eight books on Japanese geopolitics, the classic of which is *Die Geopolitik des Pazifischen ozeans* (Berlin: K. Vowinkel, 1924, 1938).
11. See his *Nihon gaiko no sai-shuppatsu* (Tokyo: Kajima Kenkyu-sho, 1960), pp. 198, 206.
12. See G. E. Pearcy, R. H. Fifield, and Associates, *World Political Geography* (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Co., 1948), pp. 574, 384.
13. "Honsuho Plan," *Kokusai seiji*, Summer, 1957.
14. See Manjiro Inagaki, *Tobasaku ketsuron soan* (Tokyo: Tetsugaku shoin, 1892), Appendix pp. 1, 19, 56, 89, and 100.
15. *Nihon gaiko no sai-shuppatsu*, pp. 239-241, 258; "Nihon gaiko heno Prolegomena," p. 4.
16. "Gendai kokusai seiji no kiso koso," *Kokusai seiji*, Winter, 1957, pp. 12-13.



17. See Halford Mackinder, "The Geographical Pivot of History," *Geographical Journal*, April, 1904, or its reprint in A. Dorpalen, *The World of General Haushofer* (New York: Farrar & Rinehart, Inc., 1942).
18. See H. Mackinder, *Democratic Ideals and Reality* (New York: Henry Holt & Co., 1942), p. 150.
19. "Nihon gaiko heno Prolegomena," p. 6.
20. *Ibid.*, p. 7.
21. *Nihon gaiko no sai-shuppatsu*, p. 232.
22. *Ibid.*, pp. 250-251.
23. *Ibid.*, pp. 232-233.
24. *Ibid.*, pp. 257-258; see also Percy, Field, and Associates, p. 384.
25. *Nihon gaiko no sai-shuppatsu*, p. 273.
26. *Ibid.*, p. 242.
27. "Prolegomena to Japanese Diplomacy," *The Japan Annual of International Affairs*, No. 1 (1961), p. 11.
28. "Nihon gaiko heno Prolegomena," p. 5.
29. "Daiichiiki-shugi no genri to taisai" (Tokyo: Teikoku-shoin, 1945), p. 46.
30. *Ibid.*, p. 48; "Redistribution of Natural Resources as the Price of Peace," *Contemporary Japan*, June, 1957, p. 18, 20.
31. "Nihon gaiko heno Prolegomena," p. 3.
32. See Johannes Mattern, *Geopolitik, Doctrine of National Self-Sufficiency and Empire* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1942), pp. 11-12.
33. See "Gendai kokusai seiji no kiso koso," *Kokusai seiji*, Winter, 1957, p. 10.
34. *Nihon gaiko heno sai-shuppatsu*, p. 96; "One Hundred Years Across the Pacific," *Contemporary Japan*, May, 1950, pp. 403-404. Cf. Nicholas J. Spykman, *America's Strategy in World Politics* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & Co., 1942), p. 470.