

KONOE AND HULL

KAZUO YAGAMI
SAVANNAH STATE UNIVERSITY

Abstract

The failed negotiations between the United States and Japan resulted in Japan's assault on Pearl Harbor in December 7, 1941. Since then, historians have been debating endlessly in their efforts to find a definite answer for the failed negotiations. In such effort, it is rather strange to find that no historian so far has done any comparative study on two individuals: Konoe Fumimaro and Cordell Hull, who, as Prime Minister of Japan and US Secretary of State, respectively, unquestionably played pivotal roles in setting the tone and course of the negotiations. This paper demonstrates contrasting aspects of these two individuals in their family backgrounds, upbringings, personality, and political points of view.

This study done on Konoe and Hull shows that they shared almost nothing in common. While Hull was born as the son of a poor commoner, Konoe was born as an heir of one of the most decorated aristocrats. In such contrast in their backgrounds, it was Hull who had a far more fortunate upbringing than Konoe. While Hull enjoyed warm parental cares, Konoe, due to the strict rituality of an aristocratic life style, his father's reckless political involvement, and also, his loss of both parents at an early age, was almost completely deprived of any chance to have a normal upbringing. Reflecting such contrast in their upbringings, Konoe and Hull sharply differ from each other in their personalities. Predestined in his career choice as an heir of a highly ranked aristocrat and shackled by his personal tragedies at a young age, understandably Konoe was not able to develop a clear sense of direction in his life. Konoe turned to be a wavering and indecisive individual. On the other hand, blessed by abundant love from his parents, his father's firm determination to allow Hull to go as far as he wished in his education, and, the most important of all, the complete freedom from any predestination in his career plan, Hull became quite opposite of Konoe, very focused and decisive. These clear contrasts between Konoe and Hull also mirror their political points of view. While Konoe saw the root of the world conflict in something more fundamental, the unfairly structured world politics and economy, which resulted in dividing the world into two contending blocks, so-called, "Haves and Have-nots," Hull attributed the world conflict to the unlawful acts of nations.

Hull and Konoe

The Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor on December 7th, 1941 came after a long period of negotiations between the United States and Japan. Since then, scholarly debate over the issue of the failed negotiations has shown no sign of ending. It is rather strange to find that, in such persistence of the debate by historians in their effort to find out why the negotiations failed, no

scholar so far has examined this issue with a close focus on two individuals: Konoe Fumimaro (1891-1945), Prime Minister of Japan, and Cordell Hull (1871-1955), U.S. Secretary of State.

The diplomatic dialogues regarding the negotiations primarily took place between Nomura Kichisaburo, Japanese Ambassador to the United States, and Cordell Hull in Washington D.C. Unequivocally, however, it was not Nomura as a messenger but Konoe as Prime Minister who during the crucial period of negotiations from April 1941 until his resignation in October 1941 took the most pivotal role by setting the tone and course of the negotiations with his counterpart, Secretary Hull. It might not be an overstatement to say that the U.S.-Japanese negotiation was also in a sense a political feud between Konoe and Hull representing their nations over interests and policies. In such a context, it is indispensable to achieve clear and comprehensive understanding of Konoe and Hull not only as politicians, but also perhaps more significantly as individuals if there ought to be any definite answer to why the negotiations failed. This paper is a comparative study of Konoe and Hull to illuminate the contrasts of Konoe and Hull regarding their family backgrounds, upbringings, personalities, and political points of view.

Backgrounds and Upbringings

On December 16, 1945, four months after the end of the Pacific War, Konoe Fumimaro, one of the most decorated court nobles and a former Prime Minister of Japan, took his own life because of accusations that he was a war criminal. Contrasting to his highly praised reputation as a Messiah like figure when he was chosen as Prime Minister for the first time in 1937 in order to rescue the deeply troubled nation, Konoe along with Tojo was in the eye of the nation the most hated and disgraced man in the immediate postwar era. Meanwhile, on the other side of the Pacific, Cordell Hull, the U.S. Secretary of State, was enjoying the pinnacle of his political success. While Konoe was portrayed as an enemy against peace and Democracy, Hull became an unquestionable champion for Democracy.

As this sharply contrasting fate of each individual in the aftermath of the war symbolizes, Konoe and Hull shared little in common, except their experiences of living through and becoming the integral part of the epoch-making human event, World War II. Konoe, born on October 12, 1891, was a junior by twenty years to Hull, who was born on October 2, 1871. Among some distinctions between them, stridently clear are their family backgrounds. Hull was born with the in a lower-class family Tennessee in the midst of the national reconstruction in the aftermath of the Civil War with his father, a farmer and later a somewhat successful businessman without almost any education. Konoe Fumimaro was born in Tokyo as an heir to one of the most decorated court noble families, Konoe, which had even mythological origin and had played a role as the head of the five regency families since the early 13th Century.¹

¹ The root of Konoe's family background goes back to even mythological ancestry. According to this mythology, Amenokoyane no Mikoto, ranked highest among the Gods, greeted Ninigi no Mikoto, grandson of the Goddess, Amaterasu, on his descent to Japanese soil. It was from this Ninigi no Mikoto from which perhaps the historically most decorated court noble family, Fujiwara, emerged. The family- name of Konoe was adopted in early 13th century by Motomichi, one of the descendants of the Fujiwara family, when he got into a political conflict with Minamoto Yoritomo, a founder of Japan's first warrior government, and resigned from the post of regent regency. See Yabe Teiji, *Konoe Fumimaro* (Tokyo: Jiji Tsushinsha, 1958), 13-4.

Such contrast in their family background well reflects on the distinct upbringings between Konoe and Hull. As an heir of the court noble family, Konoe grew up without any hardship materialistically in his early age. His father, Atsumaro, in addition to being a court noble, was a successful political figure. In his early thirties he already became the head of Gakushuin (one of the most highly recognized academic institutions for sons and daughters of court nobles and upper class families) and a year later in 1896 became the President of the House of Peers at the age of only thirty-two.

This noble family background of Konoe, however, did not provide Konoe with an ideal setting for his growing up. Just like any other family of aristocracy, the lifestyle of Konoe family inclined to be ritualistic, preventing Konoe from having a normal childhood. The exceptionally highly ranked aristocratic background of his family further intensified this rituality. Brought up mostly by family nurses, Konoe spent his childhood without knowing much intimacy with his parents.² It was even to the extent that Konoe's parents themselves could not have much sense of control in educating their own offspring. This abnormality of Konoe's childhood was further exasperated by personal tragedies. Konoe lost his birth mother, Sawako, shortly after he was born. Atsumaro remarried Sawako's sister, Motoko, before Konoe became old enough to be aware of his surroundings. This maternal change was kept secret from Konoe. Konoe grew up believing that Motoko was his birthmother. Konoe was already a young adult when the truth was finally revealed to him. It left an emotional scar on Konoe. Later in his life, Konoe often mentioned that this experience made him somewhat skeptical about life in general.³

When he was fourteen years old, another tragedy struck Konoe. His father passed away at the age of forty-two. This experience had even a greater impact on Konoe than the loss of his birthmother. As Konoe recalled, this death of his father changed his life drastically not only materialistically but also more significantly in terms of his character development. He suddenly found himself as the head of this highly decorated court noble family. It was a heavy burden for Konoe to carry as a mere fourteen years old boy. Not only that, it financially brought his family into crisis. Atsumaro as a vigorous and very influential politician was reckless in financial matters in order to push forward his political agendas. By the time of Atsumaro's death, the family had accumulated considerable debt. The demise of Atsumaro triggered a swarm of people, who claimed that Atsumaro financially owed them, asking immediate clearance of debts. It plunged Konoe family financially almost overnight from a typical aristocratic lifestyle, which was usually associated with material richness, to that of the poor. It was not, however, this financial difficulty but rather sudden change of people in their attitudes toward Konoe family that greatly impacted on Konoe. Their flattering attitude ceased overnight and was transformed into one of mean spirit. As Konoe himself wrote, through this experience, he became a gloomy and somewhat rebellious young man.⁴ Konoe, therefore, although highly recognized in the eye

² According to Yabe, Konoe recalled later in his life, "My father was usually so busy doing his work that he hardly spent his time home. I have almost no memory of spending time with him in my childhood. Indeed, therefore, what is the most memorable about my father is his death." Yabe Teiji, *Konoe Fumimaro* (Tokyo: Jiji Tsushinsha, 1958), 18.

³ *Ibid.*, 19.

⁴ Recalling the unpleasant experience he had shortly after his father's death, Konoe wrote, "When my father was

of the public as an heir of one of the most salient court noble families, did not find much comfort or joy in his childhood and private life. It was something he had wished to have otherwise.

Sharply contrasted was Hull's upbringing. Although, unlike Konoe, he had almost no association with wealth, power, and prestige, Hull had far more fortunate upbringing than Konoe. While it was unavoidable to have some roughness and hardship physically and materialistically growing up as a son of a farmer and businessman in the wildness of mountain ranges of Tennessee, Hull was given abundant love and care from his parents. When his mother died in the fall of 1903, Hull wrote the following, "Her death was a terrible blow to me not only because she had been my mother in the fullest sense, but also because she had overexerted herself through the years to give us children exceptional attention and care and aid on our upbringing. Her teachings of morals and religion were invaluable to me. No one ever had a better or finer mother."⁵ In addition to this closeness to his parents, his experiences of growing up in vigorous environment and dealing with nature became "bolt and nut" in Hull's life, giving him an opportunity to build up not only his physical but also cerebral strength. Later in his life, Hull often recalled as a distinct memory and adventure of his raft riding in his boyhood to help his father's business of buying timber from the local farmers and selling in Nashville. Above all, however, more fortunate to Hull than anything else was that he as a son of the commoner did not have anything predestined in his life. Hull had almost complete freedom in selecting his own fate, something Konoe could not even dream to have.

Hull's father, William Hull, born in 1840, was a man who would be rather typically found in the ravaged and almost unlawful south in the immediate aftermath of the Civil War. According to Hull's memoir, the episode that best reflects nature of William Hull as a man and also certain characteristics of the contemporary old south in the mid 19th century follows: In the midst of the Civil War, William Hull was shot by a Union guerrilla. The bullet penetrated between his nose and his right eye and came out from the back of his head. As a result, although he miraculously survived, he lost the sight of his right eye. With a determination to make this guerrilla to pay a price for his act, William Hull took justice into his own hand. He chased after the man. Having found him in Kentucky, William Hull came up to him straight without uttering a word and shot him to death. What he did is clearly an unlawful act and would have put him under severe punishment in today's legal system. No one said, however, anything against him and William had never talked about it ever since.⁶

As this episode indicates, Hull's father was straightforward, stubborn, and daring. Hull, although not to the extent of his father's, inherited the same temperament as indicated in his adult life as a career politician with his adamant and uncompromising stance about justices and

alive, various people came to see us from morning to night. I was constantly flattered even through I was only a small child. After his death, all these suddenly ceased. Those who had been taken care of by my father now completely changed their attitudes toward us and urged us to pay back money my father allegedly borrowed from them. Since we did not have much money, we used our valuable possessions to clear our debt. One wealthy fellow refused to accept our offer and kept returning what we gave him." See Konoe Fumimaro, "Waga Henreki Jidai" ("Period of My Journey") *Bungeishunju* (September 1933), 193.

⁵ Cordell Hull, *The Memoirs of Cordell Hull* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1948), 42

⁶ Cordell Hull, *The Memoirs of Cordell Hull*, 3-4

principles in dealing with politics, the character that clearly contributed to bringing Hull where he stood in his career. The best quality, however, regarding his father, to that Hull greatly owed for his glorious success in his adulthood, was William's commitment to provide his sons (Hull grew up as the third son with four other brothers) with the best education possible. Although he grew up without having any formal education and yet somewhat made himself successful, fortunately for Hull and his brothers, their father with progressive and farsighted mind knew that his sons' successes in their lives would be greatly determined by the level of education they were given. Hence, William had no intention to spare his effort to achieve that goal.

Hull, who began to show his strong interest in study already in his early childhood and therefore became his father's favorite son, clearly sensed his father's intent and was eager to take an advantage of it. Hull knew that, although his father made himself somewhat successful in business, his family fortune was not enough to provide all five children with the best education, obliging his father to be selective to determine which of his five sons to be given the best education. Hull wanted to grab every opportunity to earn recognition from his father that it was he who should be chosen. Such opportunity came when Hull took part in a political debate at the age of fourteen in 1885. It turned out to be the most important and fateful speech he made in determining his own future. Hull's father, William, around the time this debate took place, was still debating regarding which of his sons should be given the best opportunity for education.⁷ Knowing that his father would be surely present in the debate and how he do in the debate would greatly influence on his father decision to pick one of his sons as the most fortunate fellow to have the most education, Hull took his participation in the debate into his heart, preparing himself best he could.⁸ Such effort of Hull paid off. Supporting his thesis that George Washington should be given greater credit for defending America than Christopher Columbus for discovering it, Hull delivered the best speech at the night of the debate.⁹ After the debate, William made up his mind that it was Cordell who should be given an opportunity to go as far as he desired to go in obtaining his education, and he was almost certain that he, would be shining in the public arena one day, making him a proud father.

Wavering vs. Resolute

It is clear that Hull had far more fortunate upbringing than Konoe. Such contrast in their upbringings inevitably created distinctive personalities between them. Most weighty and illuminating to such distinction in their personalities are their visions of what they wanted to make out of their lives. With his weak personality as generally perceived and by Konoe himself, Konoe never had any clear-cut idea of what he wanted to accomplish in his life. Konoe's lack of focus or indecisiveness in his career plan is, along with his weak personality, naturally attributed

⁷ Harold B. Hinton, *Cordell Hull: A Biography* (New York: Doubleday, Doran & Company, Inc., 1942), 25-6

⁸ In the debate Hull remarkably spoke about his view that George Washington should be given more credit for defending American than Christopher Columbus for discovering it. This eloquent performance of Hull in debate not only became a determining factor for his career success but also significantly opened up Hull's interest in politics, which Hull ultimately chose as his career profession instead of Hull's early interest, law. Pushed by the fellow who was so impressed by Hull's performance in debate, Hull made his first political speech. He was only sixteen years old. See Hinton, *Cordell Hull: A Biography*, 27.

⁹ Hinton, *Cordell Hull: A Biography*, 25-7.

to his aristocratic background. As stated earlier, as an heir of the highly decorated family of an aristocrat, Konoe was born with fame and power associated with it, but at the same time he had to accept pretty much a predestined life, --for example, as a son of the aristocrat, being a member of the House of Peers was hereditary to Konoe--making it difficult for Konoe to develop a clear sense of desire and discipline to work hard to achieve success, making him rather unfocused.

During his time in high school, Konoe, deeply influenced by his philosophy teacher, Iwamoto Tei, briefly thought about becoming a philosopher. He was, however, never able to form any patent idea about his career plan, drifting one thought to another. This trend of wavering continued even after he graduated from Kyoto Imperial University. By the time of his graduation, Konoe, however, developed his keen interest in politics and began to engage in political issues. A year after the graduation, Konoe wrote a highly controversial article, "Reject the Anglo-American-Centered Peace," earning him international recognition.¹⁰ In January 1919, Konoe followed his political mentor, Prince Saionji Kinmochi, to participate in the Paris Peace Conference. On the way to the conference, Konoe met Sun Yat-sen, a monumental leader for China's revolutionary movement, in Shanghai who happened to be there in exile. Finding common grounds in Sun's political vision, Konoe was deeply inspired by Sun Yat-sen. As far as the conference itself, Konoe could not help but be disappointed. As indicated by Konoe's article about the conference, "Impression of Peace Conference at Paris," in which he said of the persistence of power as an iron rule, the outcome of the conference did nothing but reinforced Konoe's belief in Anglo-American political dominance of the world.¹¹ Then, in the 1920s, Konoe as an "inherited" member of the House of Peers passionately advocated political reform of the House of Peers along with Mori Kaku, Konoe's political companion and an influential member of the political party, *Seiyukai*. In 1933, following his father's footprint, Konoe became the fifth Chairman of the House of Peers at the age of 44.

Despite these rather vigorous involvements and keen interest of Konoe in politics in his young adult age, Konoe did not possess a strong desire to choose politics as his profession. His passion and interest in politics was that of an intellect.¹² Considering why, a couple of reasons could be raised here. Firstly, although speculative, it is understandable that Konoe might have actually developed an ill feeling about the idea of getting into politics as his career profession. To Konoe, in addition to his inheritance as an heir of the aristocratic family, it was the political engagement of his father that deprived him of his normal childhood. It took away from him much chance to enjoy Atsumaro's fatherhood. Secondly, as Konoe himself pointed out, he knew that, having a weak and indecisive personality, he did not have the right quality to be a fine politician as symbolized in his decision to turn down the recommendation from Saionji Kinmochi for selecting Konoe as successor to Prime Minister Abe Nobuyuki in 1936. Eventually he became Prime Minister when Saionji once again nominated him as Prime Minister in 1937. It

¹⁰ For a translation for this Konoe's article, see Kazuo Yagami, *Konoe Fumimaro and the Failure of Peace in Japan 1937-1941: A Critical Appraisal of the Three-Time Prime Minister* (North Carolina: McFarland & Company, Inc., 2006), 17-8.

¹¹ Konoe Fumimaro, *Seidanroku* (Tokyo: Chikura Shobo, 1936), 98

¹² In fact Konoe was a highly recognized intellect. Konoe would have chosen an academic field as his profession if he had not have the predestined lifestyle as an heir of Konoe family.

was, however, the decision against his will. Konoe simply could not turn down the Imperial Order twice.

So, reluctantly Konoe became a leader of the nation at the time the national survival was at stake. Again it was not his will but his fate that brought him to the premiership. His family background characterized by one of the highest court nobilities and the legacy of his father as a highly successful political figure did not give Konoe much choice but following his fate. They created a false image of Konoe in the eye of the nation and followed by the national frenzy to choose Konoe as a “savior” of the deeply troubled nation.

Contrary to this Konoe’s wavering nature with regard to determining a course of his life, Hull had a clear idea regarding his career planning. Although it is not quite apparent about what precisely motivated Hull to become a lawyer, Hull developed a keen interest in choosing law as his career profession at his very young age.

As well exemplified in his participation in the debate to win his father’s recognition that it was Hull who should be given the best education, Hull devoted himself entirely into taking every necessary step in order to achieve his goal. Gearing his school life entirely toward a preparation to be a lawyer, immediately after his graduation from the Cumberland Law School at Lebanon, Tennessee, he became one of the youngest members of the bar association in June 1891 and began practicing law. He was still a teenager.

While his passion toward law was genuine and Hull never wavered from considering law as his lifetime profession, Hull at the same time developed an ardent interest in politics as well. In fact, even before he began his formal law education, Hull was heavily involved in politics. In the summer of 1890, he was unexpectedly selected as the chairman of the Democratic Country Executive Committee. He was only 18 years old. As Hull says in his memoir, this was the beginning of his political career and became an important landmark in his life.¹³ In the summer of 1892, Hull made a decision to run for the State Legislature. He was still a few months under-aged to run. Despite his handicaps of being unknown and also running against the popular incumbent in the primary, Hull won the party nomination and became a public servant for the first time in his life by defeating the Republican candidate in November. He was barely old enough to serve as a state legislator, by just a month

Hull’s winning a seat at the state legislature set the momentum for him to be a career politician. Although he still continued to practice law while serving at the State Legislature and even turned down an offer to run for his third-term to devote himself in law practice, in the eye of the public, Hull was already a reputable politician, someone possessing potential quality to lead the nation one day. While he was still in struggle regarding a choice between law and politics as his profession, Hull was recommended by his friends to run for a Congressional seat in 1906. Hull decided to run even though in his heart he still wished to see himself as a lawyer and also clearly understood that becoming a Congressman meant the end of his career as a lawyer.

¹³ Cordell Hull, *The Memoirs of Cordell Hull*, 24

Hull's decision to run for the Congressional seat should not be taken as his wavering, however. His desire to choose law as his career profession was beyond doubt genuine. At the same time, however, growing up in the midst of the political turmoil due to having gone through the unprecedented national civil strife, it was rather inevitable for Hull, as many other young and ambitious adults did, to develop strong interest in politics. Also, although he went through some struggle regarding a career choice, Hull must have found great conciliation in the thought that, whether he selected law or politics as his lifetime profession, either way served Hull to achieve his ultimate goal in his life, that is, to devote himself to public service. Hull knew that was his father's expectation on him. His father, Williams, wanted Hull to be a shining star in the public arena. So, it was still a struggle for him to make up his mind regarding his profession but by no means anything traumatic or undermining to his political career as indicated in Hull's very solid record as a Congressman.

Hull was elected to the Congress in November 1906. Although neither seen as much shining as actually he was and nor given as much credit as he should have been as a Congressman, Hull served as one of the most skillful and reliable politicians and devoted himself thoroughly to carry out Congressional duties, leaving any doubt about his love and passion in politics.¹⁴ Among the issues Hull made contributions to, passing the income tax bill at the legislature was the most monumental.

According to Hull, what motivated him to closely focus on the income tax bill was his realization that the existing taxation system was unfairly structured against the poor. Hull argued, since the bulk of the government revenue came from customs duties on imports and excise taxes on such commodities as whisky and tobacco, it was clearly unjust to the poor that the poor and the rich had to be equally taxed regardless of huge income imbalance. To Hull, one remedy to such unfairness over taxation was income taxation, which obliged both the poor and the rich to pay tax according to their level of income. Hull also found great merit on income taxation with regard to the federal revenue, arguing that income taxation would create steady flow of revenue and therefore make it possible for the nation to be ready financially in any time to deal with any circumstance such as war, which would surely create sudden decline of revenue from customs duties on imports.

Therefore, to Hull, it was absolutely worth attempting. As Hull was clearly aware, it was, however, a daunting task. When Hull became a member of the Congress, there was almost unanimous consensus that the income tax bill had no chance to become a law.¹⁵ The Republicans in the campaign of 1894 viewed this income tax bill in the following fashion: "In this country, an income tax of any sort is odious and will bring odium upon any party blind enough to impose it. Prepare for the funeral of the political party which imposed such a burden."¹⁶

¹⁴ Hull wrote in his memoir that during his twenty-four years of Congressional service he did spend most of Sundays on studying in his office except only dozen of occasions. See Cordell Hull, *The Memoirs of Cordell Hull*, 46

¹⁵ In the Pollock case in 1895, the United States Supreme Court came up with a decision to declare the income-tax invalid, making an enact of the income-taxation possible only through Constitutional. See Cordell Hull, *The Memoirs of Cordell Hull*, 48

¹⁶ Cordell Hull, *The Memoirs of Cordell Hull*, 48

Undaunted, Hull began his meticulous and tenacious efforts such as making sure that every speech he made always contained a reference to the income-tax, examining the past debates on the income tax bills starting from the Civil War and onward, studying the income tax systems of foreign nations, and also educating many members of the House about income tax. Such persistent effort and determination of Hull eventually paid off. Although he was not successful in the Sixtieth Congress, in which the income tax bill was initially introduced by Hull, the bill became a law as part of the Underwood Tariff Act on October 3, 1913 in the Sixty-first Congress. As Hull himself wrote, now for the very first time the United States possessed a regular income tax as a steady source for national revenue.¹⁷

Being overshadowed by his later achievements as Secretary of State, this success of Hull in the income tax bill, although very monumental, did not earn him as much recognition as Hull should have. What is important to note, however, in this Hull's triumph of income tax bill is not a mere recognition but Hull's demonstration of his unquestionable quality to be able to make relentless effort and show obstinacy until he attained whatever he set up to achieve or whatever he believed to be right. It was the quality that Hull never failed to show throughout his entire career in politics, showing distinct contrast from Konoe, who was known for his inclination to waver or quit whatever he was doing at the moment he found obstacle in his way.

Political Points of Views

The contrast between Konoe and Hull also echoes their political viewpoints. In his book, *Seidanroku (The Talks of Politics)*, Konoe argued that war was dreadful; In World War I, millions of people were killed and enormous fortunes were sacrificed; The world still was suffering from it; As a result of the war, the Allied Powers imposed the huge reparation on Germany, and they themselves owed huge debts to the United States, creating worldwide financial crisis and leading into the great depression.¹⁸ So, no one, Konoe continued, could disagree that the war was dreadful, and mankind had to make an effort to find a way to achieve complete elimination of the war. Those who devote themselves to achieving that goal should be commended. To Konoe, it did not mean much, however, if the war had to be eradicated because of cruelty and huge cost of the war; such advocacy was not based on true pacifism but only based on sentimentalism and would never achieve true elimination of the war.¹⁹

Konoe further argued that, during WW I, all the leaders of the Allied powers claimed that the war was a conflict between peace and aggression, between righteousness and violence, and between justice and evil, and, therefore, it was they who should be considered to be "on the side of justice" not "evil" since they were seeking peace not war. To Konoe, that was nothing but ridiculous claim. He wondered how it was possible to say that nations who advocated peace by making this status quo of "inequality" of world perpetual should be considered to be on the side of "justice." To Konoe, this was nothing but hypocrisy.²⁰

¹⁷ Ibid., 71

¹⁸ Konoe Fumimaro, *Seidanroku*, 242-3

¹⁹ Ibid., 244-5

²⁰ Ibid., 247-8

As indicated in the above argument of his, Konoe truly believed that the world was politically and economically unfairly structured, dividing it into two contending blocks: Haves and Have-nots, and all the turbulence in the early 20th century, including WW I, were attributed to failure to addressing this fundamental problem of inequality. Konoe contended that, unless something was done to eradicate the problem by establishing fairness of world politics and economy, no one could guarantee that another worldwide conflict would never take place.²¹

Konoe said that instead of addressing this root of turbulence, the leaders of the Haves nations, however, were eager to maintain the status quo. As Konoe pointed out, the WW I settlement produced nothing but perpetuation of status quo. Konoe highly praised U.S. President Wilson for his vision of creating true world peace by initiating the 14 points. Konoe particularly had high expectations on the most pivotal point of Wilson's plan--making world trade completely free by eliminating all the trade barriers. To Konoe's great disappointment, the WW I settlement, however, completely failed to address this trade issue. Konoe's disappointment was further deepened when Japanese delegates to the Versailles Peace Conference submitted the proposal to include two significant articles into the final settlement of the Versailles Treaty as one of the conditions for Japan to join the League of Nations: an elimination of all the trade barrier as advocated by Wilson and also a complete elimination of restrictions on immigration. The Allied powers showed no interest in Japan's proposal.

It is interesting to note that, regarding this WW I settlement, Hull wholeheartedly shared Konoe's disappointment. Like Konoe, Hull had a great expectation on the WW I settlement, believing it as a great opportunity to achieve a true peace by eliminating any barrier for free international commerce and trade.²² Hull wrote, "If a real economic peace can now be effected, it will afford the greatest possible assurance of permanent world peace. The accomplishment of this is most desirable and would in no wise conflict with any suitable plan for the League of Nations that may be devised, but on the contrary, would supplement, strengthen, and make easier its operations, in that there would be far fewer commercial and trade controversies for settlement."²³

This consensus between Konoe and Hull with regard to seeing a complete eliminating of trade barriers as a crucial step to achieve a true peace is, despite the profound contrasts between them, a clear indication of their unquestionable desire to make the world safe. What differed Hull from Konoe, however, regarding WW I settlement, is that Hull did not agree to Konoe's assertion that the failure of the settlement was attributed to the Haves-nations' effort to maintain the status quo of the world economic and political structure. Although Hull did not see the world structure completely free from inequality as indicated by Hull's awareness of the existence of trade barriers in world commerce, in essence, Hull disagreed with Konoe's idea of world division – "Haves and Have-nots – and considering it as a "root" of the turbulence in the early 20th century. Instead, for such turbulence, Hull blamed the aggressive acts of nations such as Japan, Germany,

²¹ *Ibid.*, 249

²² In fact Hull proclaims that it was he who had significant influence on Wilson with regard to forming an idea of achieving completely free trade by eliminating all possible barriers - a focal point of Wilson Fourteen Points. See Cordell Hull, *The Memoir of Cordell Hull*, 82

²³ Cordell Hull, *The Memoir of Cordell Hull*, 100-1

and Italy. It was those acts of the aggressors that became threat to existing world “peace,” challenging status quo and undermining Hull’s firm belief that true peace could be established only when every nation of the international community sincerely follow and obey their mutually agreed upon democratic rules and orders and make sincere effort to eradicate any barriers existing among nations, particularly with regard to trade.

So, to Hull, what constituted threats to peace was not “structure” of the world – the division of the world into Haves and Have-nots as Konoe asserted – but an aggressive and unlawful “acts” of nations. It was not “structural” but “policy making.”

Two monumental figures: Konoe and Hull were to face each other in 1941, the crucial period of the intensive negotiations between two nations: Japan and the United States, in their efforts to avoid a fatal and futile destruction. Neither Konoe nor Hull had even the slightest idea about the profound contrasts existing between them.