

PACIFIC COMMUNICATIONS:
U.S.-JAPAN INTERACTION AND PROSPECTS

by

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION -- COMMUNICATIONS CRISIS

Japanese-American relations have been in a state of crisis, oscillating between highs and lows, for the past few years. The incipient stages of the crisis occurred long before it was publicly acknowledged and heralded by President Nixon's announcement in 1971 of his intentions to visit mainland China. This announcement, besides being a message to the whole world, constituted a basic communication to the Japanese government of a new order in world systemic relations.

Symptomatic of the Japanese viewpoint is this comment which calls attention to an increasing deterioration of relations between the two nations: "Americans appear to have deepened distrust to the extent that they believe it impossible to obtain international cooperation from the Japanese government without driving it into a corner in a forcible manner."¹

It is these communications and other messages which will bear the focus of this study in order to examine and appraise the course of Japanese-American interaction. The transactions between these two nations do now and will increasingly comprise an important element in the dynamics of a multipolar world.

Communication is the underpinning of transnational

action and the transmission of messages, whether by dialogue, actions, or symbolic gestures, and the correct perception (in the view of the sender) of such signals, and the subsequent feedback bear heavily on the next course of action. All too frequently messages go awry; there is a lack of articulation or an apparent ambivalence which causes a misconstruction on the part of the recipient. The lack of definitive purpose or goals can debilitate the meaningful content of a message. And occasionally the verbal feedback bears little resemblance to the feedback found manifest in concrete actions.

The salience of communication to this work leads us inexorably to the utility of a communications paradigm. However, there is no intention to use some of the more complicated models developed in the communications field. The shortcomings of these models as discussed by Davis Bobrow render them inappropriate for this study.² In this paper I shall employ a communications model as a framework within which to incorporate the variables of the Japanese-American interaction. The model in this case does not embody a rigorous, immutable theory for which a claim of universal application can be made. It is, more appropriately, a map by which one can trace or diagram significant events.³

Another step in adapting this model is to emphasize that what will be examined is the content of communication and its effect as explicated by Richard Merritt.⁴ Germane to the importance of content is the question of whether "the originator and recipient of a message see a common meaning in it."⁵

Thus the paradigm will in fact constitute a framework for the appraisal of the content and effect of communications.

Ultimately, however, there is a need for a model to operationalize the variables and empirical evidence and finally to facilitate the arrival at some conclusions. Quite useful for this purpose is the Rational Actor Model. The seminal thought for the evolution of the rational actor was provided by Richard C. Snyder, H.W. Bruck, and Burton Sapin in their "The Decision-Making Approach to the Study of International Politics."⁶ The most recent application of this model can be found in Graham T. Allison's Essence of Decision: Explaining the Cuban Missile Crisis. The decision-makers are operational in the rational actor model which embodies: 1) goals and objectives -- a payoff or utility or preference function; 2) alternatives; 3) consequences -- outcome of choice attached to alternatives; and 4) choice -- selection of that alternative whose consequences rank highest in the decision-maker's payoff function. According to Allison "Rationality refers to consistent, value-maximizing choice within specified constraints."⁷ The analyst acts as a surrogate decision-maker and the examination of alternatives and consequences is accomplished vicariously. The advantage of such a paradigm is that it reduces the organizational and political complications of a government to the simplification of a single actor.⁸ In summation this type of model provides a vicarious analysis which posits a rational choice from the value-maximizing of consequences derived from various alternatives.