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Yoshiro Miwa : Japan's Economic Planning and Mobilization in Wartime, 1930s–1940s: The Competence of the State before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Japan's Economic Planning and Mobilization in Wartime, 1930s–1940s: The Competence of the State:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Mediocre. Contains some interesting insights but is weak on explanations and analyses of reasons for Japan's defeat. By Bayard B. This is a fairly good book on the subject of

Japanese economic mobilization before and during WW II but is marred by considerable text repetition (especially in Part I). There are also, I believe, considerable issues with illogical statements and then purported conclusions. Consider an example from page 61: "The War with China began just as the long-term plans for production capacity expansion hellip; were given shape. The enemy that those plans envisioned was not China... but the USSR. The hellip; plans did not cover the contingency of a Sino-Japanese war. Even if they were put into action, they were quite inadequate preparation for that conflict." There is no discussion or analysis explaining why the economic plans discussed in the first three sentences were inadequate for the war stated in the concluding fourth sentence. In fact, it makes no sense at all: the USSR was perceived as a stronger military power than China, so surely a war or economic mobilization plan against the USSR would be applicable for war with China. There is no discussion of why this was not the case. Pages 67 and 68 describe the results of a nation-wide industrial capacity survey conducted by the military in 1932 ndash; 1933. The concluding sentence describing the results of these surveys is given on page 68: "It is absolutely impossible that the information collected through these surveys was useful enough for effective control of munitions factories after designation for factory control [by the military]." There is no discussion of how this conclusion was reached. Were the surveys inadequate in some manner? If so, how? Were the wrong questions asked? Did the military lack the personnel to understand how to interpret the results of the surveys? I think that the author is trying to say that the surveys did not provide the information that would allow someone to determine what type of munitions or military equipment a given factory was capable of producing, or how much, but that is not clearly stated anywhere. Later in the book, there is some discussion that the industrialization plans were almost all developed and administered by the Army. But the Army had almost no one who possessed any education or experience running factories or administering an economy at the national level. Civilians who had experience in running large factories and industrial businesses were not involved in developing these war industry mobilization plans or in administering them. Chapter 2 in Part I at least gives some hints of the totally superficial efforts in which the Japanese military engaged when attempting strategic military and economic planning. Page 118 contains the following statement: "hellip; The Basic Outline of Operations stated that the Imperial Army, following the Basic National Defense Plan, must do its best to resolve disputes promptly through preemptive actions that involved Army-Navy cooperation." This is an Operations Plan? This sort of thing is amateurish compared to what the US, Britain, USSR and even Germany developed for economic mobilization and for waging war. Chapter 2 in Part I does accomplish one critical thing, I felt: it described the incredible bureaucracies the Army and the Navy developed in an attempt at strategic planning. These bureaus produced much paper, it appears, but little in the way of firm and achievable plans. Chapter 2 in Part I also describes the structure of the Japanese government: the Prime Minister, the Army Minister, and the Navy Minister negotiated agreements as if they were three foreign countries. There truly was no single person or organization in charge of overall military and economic mobilization policy and execution. Pages 156 ndash; 157 in Chapter 2, Part I, finally summarize a key problem with the Japanese approach to waging war: there was no central person or body that could issue orders or resolve conflicts in a timely manner. The Prime Minister was in a weak political position and had surprisingly little influence on the conduct of the war. Part II discusses the Japanese war mobilization plans (of which there were many). Mostly, the Part describes the ineffective implementation of any war industry mobilization or control planning. Part III is the most interesting and informative part of the book, I felt. This Part discusses "The Naval Air Force: A Study of a Central Player." In particular, it discusses the several major deficiencies that led to the complete destruction of the Naval Air Force. One of the assertions is that the Japanese Navy and associated aircraft industry could not effectively react to changing circumstances. I think the author may have a point here, but (as usual throughout the book) there is little analysis or explanation of why this might be the case. He cites numerous significant examples of poor performance and poor decision-making, but rarely ventures to explain WHY this might have occurred. Part III also gives an example (there are several) of the inept planning and decisions. The Army was in charge of conscription and routinely drafted skilled engineers, technician designers, and factory workers. These technically skilled people would then be killed in combat and would be replaced in industry by inexperienced and unskilled people. The military leadership apparently had no understanding that military industry production required more, not fewer, skilled technical people. This might seem to be incredible, but it happened. I think a major reason for the poor Japanese war industry planning and war mobilization in general was that Japan had little involvement in World War I. The Japanese military and civilian leadership had no direct experience from the 1914 ndash; 1918 war in mass mobilization of a large Army and Navy or in a national mobilization of an economy concentrated on war purposes. Unfortunately, this idea isn't discussed at all in the book. One would have thought that the Japanese leadership could have observed and learned several lessons from the Great War: the need for convoys and protection against attacking submarines, the idea that a single major naval battle (i.e., Jutland) might not be decisive in ending the war, and that in general a war might last for several years with a need for massive industrial output. These lessons apparently were not learned. I think that a general conclusion regarding the Japanese military's ability to wage World War II can be paraphrased from David Evans's and Mark Peattie's book "Kaiun": the Japanese military was well prepared for battle. It was poorly prepared for war. For those of you interested in more detailed information and analysis on this subject, I recommend reading the following:

"Japan's Economy in War and Reconstruction" by Cohen (1949). In my opinion, this is the best book ever written on the subject and is much superior to the present book in detailed analysis. Interestingly enough, it is not listed in the bibliography.

"Kaigun: Strategy, Tactics, and Technology in the Imperial Japanese Navy 1887-1941" by Evans and Peattie (1997).

"Sunburst: The Rise of Japanese Naval Air Power, 1909-1941" by Peattie (2001).

"The Rise and Fall of the Japanese Imperial Naval Air Service" by Edwards (2010).

"The Japanese Merchant Marine in World War II" by Parillo (1993).

"Military Effectiveness in the Second World War, Volume III" by Millett and Murray (1988). Chapter 1 discusses the Japanese Military Establishment. There is good discussion on the correlation of weak industrial output and poor overall national economic management with the debilitating results in military outcomes.

Although most economists maintain a mistrust of a government's goals when it intervenes in an economy, many continue to trust its actual ability. They retain, in other words, a faith in state competence. For this faith, they adduce no evidence. Sharing little skepticism about the government's ability, they continue to expect the best of governmental intervention. To study government competence in World War II Japan offers an intriguing laboratory. In this book, Yoshiro Miwa shows that the Japanese government did not conduct requisite planning for the war by any means. It made its choices on an ad hoc basis and the war itself quickly became a dead end. That the government planned for the war incompetently casts doubts on the accounts of Japanese government leadership more generally.

"A leading skeptic of the Chalmers Johnson view of Japanese bureaucratic competence confronts the reality of a country mired - after remarkable successes - in an ill-planned, muddled, and unwinnable war. For Professor Miwa's admirers (of which I count myself one), this powerful broadside confirms his sure combination of historical research with critical economic analysis. For doubters, this expose of wartime armaments production offers renewed challenges." Leslie Hannah, London School of Economics and Political Science

"A brilliant and prolific economist, Professor Yoshiro Miwa explores the Japanese government's efforts to plan the economy in the 1930s and 1940s. If ever any government operated within an institutional structure that would have fostered economic planning, the Japanese government had that structure here: popular support, a compliant legislature, control over the necessary incentives. Notwithstanding that structure, the government's efforts to plan the economy failed disastrously. With incisive analytic tools, Professor Miwa explores the reasons for the failure." J. Mark Ramseyer, Mitsubishi Professor of Japanese Legal Studies, Harvard University, Massachusetts "... [a] highly detailed evaluation of wartime economic policy and action ... Recommended." W. D. Kinzley, Choice

About the Author Yoshiro Miwa is a Professor of Economics at Osaka Gakuin University, and Professor Emeritus of the University of Tokyo, where he obtained his B.A., M.A. and Ph.D. He writes on a wide variety of areas. Much of his work has been in industrial organization and his current research concerns the effect of government involvement on economic activity in the 1930s and 1940s. Professor Miwa's books include *Firms and Industrial Organization in Japan* (1996), *State Competence and Economic Growth in Japan* (2004), and *The Fable of the Keiretsu* (2006), the latter co-authored by J. Mark Ramseyer.