

The Buildup to the ‘Greater East Asian War’ from the Japanese Perspective

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With the present situation in the Far East the reverse of what it was in the first part of the last century it is interesting to note that many Japanese have a very different memory of the circumstances that preceded their entry into World War II than prevails in the West. The official Western narrative of Japan’s pre-war history echoes that enunciated by the International Military Tribunal for the Far East (the “Tokyo trial”), which stated that a Japanese “criminal, militarist clique” launched a “war of aggression” for the “domination” of East Asia and “the rest of the world.” Since then the People’s Republic of China (PRC), Japan’s well-armed, though key trading partner, has taken every opportunity to lecture Japan on its past “aggressive imperialism” when criticizing what the Japanese view as domestic matters, such as visits by government officials to commemorative shrines, and corrections to post-war history textbooks. Although the “politically correct” strata in Japan accepts the Tribunal’s condemnation, the view taken by many Japanese of the era before what they call the “Greater East Asian War” remains markedly contrasted from that dictated by the Tokyo trial, and an elaboration of this Japanese view will facilitate a better understanding of post-war Japanese actions. In the first half of the last century, core Japanese interests included raising the people’s standard of living and more equal relations with the West, and to these ends, Japanese policy was molded around that of the United States, a wealthy and powerful state, rather than that of its culturally and racially related neighbor China, which was at that time completely dominated by foreign interests. The more favorable view of Japan’s role sees the country’s pre-war policy with respect to China as having responded intermittently to fluctuating circumstances, through accommodation and appeasement, rather than the attempt to fully subjugate China. In fact, the Japanese today still tend to react in a similar way towards the PRC and believe that a more aggressive reaction could lead to an unfavorable outcome for Japan, as it did in the past.

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In response to shrine visits by Japanese government officials seeking to pay respect to those who died for Japanese interests, and the “revision” of Japanese history textbooks to bring them closer to the war as the Japanese remember it, the People’s Republic of China (PRC) berates the Japanese as having a “lack of proper historical perspective” and speaks of a “revival of Japanese militarism.” Such statements, issued by a one-party dictatorship armed with weapons of mass destruction, are politely taken for granted by the Japanese.³ At issue, however, is that other countries, particularly the United States, Japan’s crucial trade and security partner, fully accept PRC pronouncements. This leads to suspicion in Japan concerning the value of the US-Japan alliance and an erosion of the bonds of cooperation between the US and Japan.

Rather than a “lack of historical perspective,” the Japanese are fully cognizant of their history, particularly with respect to pre-war activity in China. The history viewed in Japan is obviously not the same as that held by the PRC and it is also not the same history taught to those outside of Japan. The current essay describes the Japanese view of events and circumstances that formed the basis of Japanese policy and actions in the early 20th century. An accounting of the Japanese historical view may aid in placing current Japanese policy and actions within a historical context.

The official narrative: Axis “enslavement of the whole word”

The official narrative of the Second World War casts the Allies, the US, Great Britain and the Soviet Union as saviors of civ-

³ Perhaps as a response to constant PRC chiding, most Japanese (53%) state that they have “apologized sufficiently for its military actions during the 1930s and 1940s”. In addition, there are those (17%) who state that “no apology is necessary.” (By way of comparison, a majority of Americans (61%) believe that Japan has either “apologized sufficiently” or “no apology is necessary.” (Pew Research Center, April 2015, “Americans, Japanese: Mutual respect 70 years after the end of WWII.”)) Despite overwhelming public opinion, the Japanese government has almost annually offered condolences and apologies to China (and Korea). In parallel with the Chinese Communist Party, both Japanese and foreign media continue to harangue the Japanese, that they have not apologized enough. (Pew Research Center, September, 2016, “Hostile Neighbors: China vs. Japan.”)

ilization and the Axis, Germany, Italy and Japan as destroyers of civilization. The Second World War was an epic "struggle between good and evil" and, as between the US and Japan in particular, a "contest between a peace-loving nation and an arrogant proponent of aggression and chaos."⁴ President Franklin D. Roosevelt stated that the aim of the "Nazi masters of Germany" was not only domination of "all life and thought in their own country" but also "enslavement" of Europe and the "rest of the world."⁵ The "whole world," FDR asserted, "would be run by threats of brute force." In October 28, 1940, FDR warned America to "guard against the forces of anti-Christian aggression, which may attack us from without." FDR went further on November 1, 1940, stating that "these forces," meaning the Axis, "hate democracy and Christianity as two phases of the same civilization. They oppose democracy because it is Christian. They oppose Christianity because it preaches democracy." In the case of Japan, Japanese "aggression" in Asia was part of a "dark plot against civilization" and, in conjunction with Germany and Italy, sought "military, naval, political, and economic domination of the whole world."⁶

Skipping ahead to the post-war era, "anti-Christian" Soviets controlled half of Europe and the most populous nation on earth was under the thumb of "anti-Christian" Chinese Communists. Viewing these results, one is lead to wonder whether the official narrative of the Second World War drifted from historical facts and is able to explain the grim consequences of the European war. A number of works have shown a striking contrast between the official narrative and the facts.⁷

With respect to the Asian phase of the Second World War, known in Japan as the "Greater East Asian War," there is little En-

⁴ Neumann, W.L. (1953) "How American Policy towards Japan Contributed to the War in the Pacific," in *Perpetual War for Perpetual Peace*. Ed. H.E. Barnes. Cauldwell, ID: Caxton Printers.

⁵ F.D. Roosevelt, *Fireside Chat*, December 29, 1940.

⁶ Minear, R.M. (1972) *Victors' Justice*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press; Indictment of the International Military Tribunal for the Far East, in Minear (1972).

⁷ Barnes, H.E. (1953) *Perpetual War for Perpetual Peace*. Cauldwell, ID: Caxton Printers; Buchanan, P.J. (2008) *Churchill, Hitler, and the Unnecessary War*. NY, NY: Three Rivers Press; Hitchcock, W.I. (2008) *The Bitter Road to Freedom*. NY, NY: Free Press. *Volume 42, Number 1, Spring 2017*

glish language material that conveys the Japanese perspective of the era, wherein westerners dominated Asia and Japanese national survival was entirely dependent on the good graces of westerners. While there are a number of Japanese language books that elaborate the Japanese view of the Greater East Asian War, few have been translated into English. This is unfortunate, as silence sustains the official narrative. A few English language publications from a western perspective have analyzed specific issues from the pre-war and wartime era, such as the so-called Japanese military “comfort women” and Japanese military operations in China.⁸ However, a consideration of the Greater East Asian War from the Japanese perspective would be useful in counterbalancing Chinese Communist propaganda as well as the official narrative. In fact, the persistence of communism in Asia up to the present day invites close scrutiny of the roots of communism in Asia, which will demonstrate Japan’s efforts in combating Asian communism.

Contemporary Japanese have pointed out that a few Americans at the time foresaw the outcome of war between the US and Japan. American diplomat John Van Antwerp MacMurray, stood against Washington, DC’s conventional thinking. In 1935, in a State Department memorandum, MacMurray warned that, “...even the elimination of Japan, if it were possible, would be no blessing to the Far East or to the world. It would merely create a new set of stresses, and substitute for Japan the USSR as the successor of Imperial Russia as the contestant...for mastery of the East. Nobody except perhaps Russia would gain from our victory in such a war.” His warnings went ignored by an internationalist FDR Administration, which viewed the USSR as an emerging, democratic friend of the US. With respect to China in particular, MacMurray stated: “There may be pacifists and idealists who foresee that our victory over Japan would remove her as a disturbing force in the Far East and so open a readier opportunity for closer understanding, collaboration along literal lines between

⁸ Gray, G. (2012) Comfort women, military prostitution and human trafficking. *Electronic Journal of Contemporary Japanese Studies*. 12, e-version; Askew, D. (2004) New research on the Nanking Incident, japanfocus.org/-David-Askew/1729.

the United States and China. That is a delusive hope. The Chinese always did, do, and will, regard foreign nations as barbarian enemies, to be dealt with by playing them off against each other..." While factions within FDR's and then Truman's administration wavered between backing the Chinese Nationalists and the Chinese Communists, Americans were led to believe that the Chinese as a whole were basically "just like Americans." A wartime and then post-war US policy of getting the Nationalists to cooperate with the Communists in building a new, democratic Chinese state ended in failure—and the subsequent deaths of tens of millions at the hands of Communists. Any hope that the Nationalists were the bearers of Chinese liberal democracy evaporated with news that the Nationalist massacred tens of thousands of their own in following their establishment in Taiwan.

The official narrative:

An entirely alien history imposed upon Japan

The Treaty of Peace signed in 1951 officially ended the state of war between Japan and most of the Allies.¹⁰ Article 11 of the Treaty states that Japan "accepts the judgment of the International Military Tribunal for the Far East and of other Allied War Crimes Courts..." The International Military Tribunal for the Far East (IMTFE, the "Tokyo trial") accused Japan of "conspiring" to commit "crimes against peace, war crimes and crimes against humanity," waging "aggressive war," and of violating "international law... sacred treaty commitments... and assurance." To "cast a wide net," or to prosecute, convict and sentence as many of the accused as possible, the accused were said to have engaged in a wide-ranging, long-lasting "conspiracy," from January 1, 1928 until the Jap-

⁹ See Bradley, J. (2015) *The China Mirage*. NY, NY: Little, Brown and Co. Book reviewed in *Journal of Social, Political and Economic Studies*, Fall, 2016.

¹⁰ The then-Soviet Union refused to sign the Treaty. With respect to "China," neither the Republic of China nor the People's Republic of China (PRC) was invited to the signing. While Japan and the Soviet Union normalized relations in 1956, a full peace treaty between the two countries has yet to be signed, the main issue being the return of the "Northern Territories," four Japanese islands occupied by Soviet forces after Japan's surrender—the islands are occupied to this day. Following the US's lead, Japan normalized relations with the PRC in 1972.

anese signing of the Instrument of Surrender “to secure the domination and exploitation... of the rest of the world.”¹¹ The Allies, then, would craft a 16-year period of Japanese history such that it supported the charges, which would, in turn, justify both the tribunal’s proceedings and the Allies’ war against Japan. Perhaps an additional motive in using an extended period of time was to somehow show that “aggression” is an intractable, inherent Japanese trait. Thus, implied in the Allies’ version of history is that the Japanese are not to be trusted—ever.

The general consensus is acceptance of the Tokyo trial’s verdict that Japan waged a “war of aggression.” From the American perspective, there is no point in overly scrutinizing claims of a venerated generation of Americans—the victors. Likewise, most Japanese have accepted Article 11, being compelled to do so at the time by military force and from a cultural sense of humble obligation. Nonetheless, inaccurate history is still inaccurate, even if dressed-up in legal finery. A number of authors, non-Japanese as well as Japanese, not complacent with the emperor’s new clothes, have pointed to errors and lapses in the historical record, thereby rejecting the Tokyo trial’s version of history and challenging Article 11.

While there are a number critical legal issues related to the IMTFE, such as due process, precedents and rules of evidence, it is the Allies’ motivation that demolishes any sense that the trial was an exercise in justice and fairness.¹² Representatives of the Big Four meet in London in late June 1945 to form a charter that would form the basis of trials of German and Japanese leaders. During the proceedings, the British expressed a “preference” for “executive action,” of immediate and unannounced execution of imprisoned enemy leaders—without a trial. Furthermore, the British were unsure if any of the claimed Axis transgressions “can be properly

¹¹ The scope of Japanese “domination and exploitation” was later scaled down in the IMTFE’s judgment to “East Asia, the Western and South Western Pacific Ocean and the Indian Ocean, and certain of the islands in these oceans.” With respect to the charge of “conspiracy,” almost all charged, except two, were found guilty.

¹² Minear, R.M. (1972) *Victors’ Justice*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press; Cassese, A. and Röling, B.V.A. (1993) *The Tokyo Trial and Beyond*. Cambridge, UK: Polity Press.

described as crimes under international law.”¹³ The Americans dismissed such hesitancy, stating that it was best to give at least the appearance of legality before executions, as this would “command maximum public support in our own times and receive the respect of history”.¹⁴ All Allies, nonetheless, long before the opening of the trial, agreed that the “chief war criminals...have already been convicted and whose conviction has been already announced by both the Moscow and Crimea declarations...” The American representative affirmed that “There could be but one decision in this case.”¹⁵ Rather than legal proceedings, the Tokyo trial was merely a grandstand from which the official version of history and the “one decision” against the accused would be pronounced.

Stated IMTFE Chief Prosecutor Joseph B. Keenan, “I think that the foremost service they [the Tokyo trial] rendered was to establish the facts authentically...”¹⁶ Minear asks if the Tokyo trial verdicts in fact meet “minimal tests of historical accuracy.” “If the verdict cannot stand historical scrutiny, then for us the trial loses its last claim to our respect.”¹⁷ A reading of the IMTFE Indictment gives an idea of the Allies’ world view in general and America’s motivation behind the war against Japan in particular. From the outset, we are told that the Japanese leaders on trial are “a criminal, militaristic clique,” and the “cause of serious world troubles... and great damage to the interests of peace-loving peoples...” The accused “... between the 1st January, 1928, and the 2nd September, 1945... participated in the formulation or execution of a common plan or conspiracy...”

The Allies charged that “many [Japanese] leaders acting in pursuance of a common plan,” conspired to secure “Japan’s domination by preparing and waging wars of aggression...” To the contrary, while Japanese policy frequently shifted, the overall goal was to maintain peaceful relations with the US. Over the period

¹³ Minear, p. 9.

¹⁴ “Judge Charles E. Wyzanski... stated... ‘...to regard a trial as a propaganda device is to debase justice.” Minear, p. 127.

¹⁵ Minear, p. 18.

¹⁶ Minear, p. 126.

¹⁷ Minear, p. 125-126.

covered by the Indictment, there was no Japanese political party that had complete control over the government similar to the German National Socialist Party. There was no unbroken chain of Japanese leadership between 1928 and 1945. There were at least 19 changes in the Japanese cabinet. (By contrast, over the same period, the US had 3 different presidents and the Soviet Union had one premier.) By claiming that there was a long-enduring “common plan,” the tribunal demonstrated that it had little knowledge of the functioning of the Japanese government.

At the time, a new prime minister was appointed by the Emperor, based on the recommendation of the Lord Keeper of the Privy Seal and consultations with former prime ministers. The new prime minister would then select members of his cabinet. Given the diverse views of the former prime ministers and the pool from which cabinet members could be chosen, though the goal was to select a united government, there was never unanimity. Furthermore, the prime minister along with the cabinet could fall for a number of reasons. For example, the annual budget could be rejected by the Diet—and the Diet may object to a number of specific items within the proposed budget or even the reason for such items. The rejection of a budget may lead to the prime minister’s resignation. The prime minister may decide to step down if he feels that he does not have the support of the cabinet. The prime minister may resign if he feels he has slighted the Emperor or the good name of the government. The prime minister may also resign to dismiss other cabinet members, because the cabinet folds *en masse* with the resignation of the prime minister. Thus, there could not have been, as the tribunal claimed, a “meeting of minds among the defendants,” and thus “no concrete plan for Japan to follow and no single decision... which lead inevitably to... war.”¹⁸

The tribunal also claimed that a Japanese “militarist clique” conspired to rule all of Asia. The Army and Navy Ministers did indeed have considerable influence as they could bring down the cabinet by disagreeing with the prime minister. The Army and Navy Ministers, in turn, required the support of their respective

¹⁸ Minear, p. 131.

general staff and could be turned out by a show of no confidence. In reality, the "militarist clique" could not even bring Japan under its control, much less "all of Asia." While there was an attempted coup by the Army in 1936, this was suppressed by none other than future prime minister Lieutenant General Tojo Hideki. Moreover, while the rebellious offices appealed for the Emperor's support, the Emperor denounced the rebellion. Rebellious "militarist" officers were purged following suppression of the rebellion. With respect to Prime Minister Tojo's term during the war, because of Japan's deteriorating position, he resigned in 1944 and a new prime minister was appointed. It is unfathomable to conceive such a similar, peaceful transition in government in Nazi Germany under similar circumstances. Because of marked differences in governmental structures between Germany and Japan, "Japan was not Germany; Tojo was not Hitler".¹⁹ Regardless, the tribunal conflated Japan with Germany with the sole objective of punishing the Japanese leadership.

Not only did the tribunal claim that Japan sought to dominate Asia, but Japan also conspired to secure the "military, naval, political and the economic domination of the whole world." As evidence, the tribunal pointed to the "Tripartite Alliance," an alliance signed between Germany, Italy and Japan in September 1940. The tribunal claimed that the Tripartite Alliance was necessary in order for Japan to dominate Southeast Asia and the South Seas and that based on this Alliance, Japan "agreed" to "attack the United States".²⁰

The purpose of the Tripartite Alliance, as stated in its text, was to "promote the mutual prosperity and welfare" of the members, as the three were effectively excluded from global commerce. Political, economic and military means would be used to "assist one another" in case of attack. Japan's primary reason for joining the Alliance was its diplomatic isolation.²¹ Indeed, the US led the way in isolating Japan, denouncing Japanese efforts to establish a

¹⁹ Minear, p. 134; Large, S.S. (1998) *Showa Japan, Vol. II*. NY, NY: Routledge. p. 3-7.

²⁰ Minear, p. 141.

²¹ Minear, p. 142.

colonial state in China (Manchukuo) in 1932, calling for a “quarantine” of Japan (1937), and waging war by proxy by arming Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek’s Nationalist army. Japan hoped for German intercession with the Chinese Nationalists in ending the Sino-Japanese War and German application of diplomatic pressure against Soviet Russia, which was the closest and largest threat to Japan’s security, and the Americans.²²

The Japanese expressed “disappointment” soon after joining the Alliance, however. In early 1941, the Japanese attempted to improve relations with the US, as Japan depended on the US as a source for key industrial materials and as a market for Japanese goods. Chancellor Adolf Hitler “viewed these negotiations with frank alarm,” as this would mean that America’s “back” would be free and an “expected attack or entry into the [European] war by the United States would come quicker.”²³ Hitler needed Japan to attack the Soviets and the US’s “back,” to distract and weaken them—thereby securing victory for his impending war against the Soviets. Hitler had in fact long supported US pressure on Japan, hoping that such pressure would bring about war.²⁴ For their part, as a gesture of good will to the US, the Japanese were willing to withdraw from the Alliance.

In reality, there was little military cooperation between Japan and Germany as called for in the Alliance treaty. Japan signed a Pact of Neutrality with the Soviets in April 1941, which Japan honored for the duration of the war. Throughout the European war, despite prompting from Germany, Japan did not attack the Soviet Union. The Germans, at the same time, never warned Japan of their planned invasion of the Soviet Union in June 1941.

Beyond the Alliance, Hitler demonstrated no great interest in the Japanese as an ally—the Germans in fact preferred the British as an ally. The preference for the British made sense to Hitler since the British were a “colonial, commercial and naval” power.²⁵ Hitler

²² Minear, p. 142.

²³ Barnes, p. 299-300.

²⁴ Barnes, p. 279.

²⁵ Buchanan, p. 325.

also saw the British and Germans as having similar racial and traditional roots.²⁶ Long before the start of the European war, Hitler had no intention of fighting the British at all. A German officer reported, "the Fuhrer has anything but the intention of completely destroying the British Empire, as England's downfall would be to the detriment of the white race..."²⁷ Indeed, Hitler was intent on seeing the British Empire sustain itself in the east, as the beneficiary of its collapse would not be Germany, but Japan.²⁸ Well before the formation of the Tripartite Alliance, Hitler supplied Chiang Kai-shek with weapons and advisors in exchange for strategic materials. Chiang readily agreed to this arrangement, as Germany lost all its colonies in China following World War I. (In fact, the Chinese Nationalists pointed out to the Germans that it was Japan that "grabbed" its Asian colonies following World War I.) Hitler never failed to view events in terms of race. Upon hearing that the Japanese captured the British colony of Singapore in February 1942, Hitler tore up a statement Foreign Minister Ribbentrop had written about the news and stated, "We have to think in terms of centuries. Who knows, in the future the Yellow Peril may be the biggest one for us."²⁹

An interesting inversion of history created by the tribunal concerns Japanese "planning and preparing a war of aggression" against the Soviet Union. As previously noted, the Pact of Neutrality was signed between Japan and the Soviet Union in 1941. It was the Soviet Union, not Japan, that broke "sacred treaty commitments... and assurances," unilaterally repudiating the Pact and attacking Japan on August 9, 1945. Soviet forces swept through Manchuria, capturing close to one million Japanese civilians and soldiers and shipping them to Siberia, where they were kept as slave labor long after Japan's surrender.³⁰ In addition, the Soviets dismantled Japanese properties in Manchuria, including whole

²⁶ Buchanan, p. 326.

²⁷ Irving, D. (1990) *Hitler's War*. NY, NY: Avon Books. p. 298.

²⁸ Irving, p. 312.

²⁹ Buchanan, p. 329.

³⁰ Courtois et al., (1999) *The Black Book of Communism*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press. p. 323.

factories, and shipped them back to the Soviet Union. Immediately after Japan's surrender, Soviet troops occupied the Northern Territories, a string of Japanese islands—despite the declaration in the Atlantic Charter (1941) that the Allies sought no territorial “aggrandizement” or territorial changes. Nonetheless, Japan was charged with aggression against the Soviet Union.

As further insult to injury, the tribunal raises border skirmishes between the Soviet Union and Japan that occurred in 1938 and in 1939. The Soviet Union defeated Japan in both encounters and settlements were negotiated between the two countries. In fact, as part of the settlement, Japan was forced to cede territory. Nonetheless, the tribunal found Japan to be the “criminally liable.” The tribunal’s opinion was that “these agreements [between the Soviet Union and Japan] afford no defense to the criminal proceedings being taken before this International Tribunal.” On the tribunal’s ruling, Minear commented that this ruling suggests that “no international treaty that settles a dispute without affixing criminal liability can be considered final.”³¹ Indeed, to the Japanese, this appears to be the case. While the issue of wartime compensation was settled between Korea and Japan by a treaty signed in 1965, South Korea nonetheless continued to insist that Japan directly compensate Korean wartime “comfort women.” In the hope of improving relations between the two countries, Japan agreed to further compensate the “comfort women” with a 2015 bilateral agreement; relations since then have not improved.³² Thus, the lesson here, to the Japanese, is that agreements reached between governments in good faith may be disregarded as needed.

The United States, South Korea and other countries have willingly distorted their own history to fit the prevailing socio-political temperament.³³ What perceptive Japanese see as remarkable

³¹ Minear, p. 139.

³² In exchange for the equivalent of about USD 8 million, Japan asked that a “comfort woman” statue planted in front of the Japanese embassy in Seoul be removed. Rather than remove the statue, in 2016, Koreans planted yet another statue in front of the Japanese consulate in Busan.

³³ Politically correct American history has been reviewed in detail elsewhere: (e.g.) Murphey, D.D. (1995) *The Dispossession of the American Indian and Other Key Issues in*

is the imposition of a version of history written by a completely alien race from an entirely alien culture. Even more remarkable is that, rather than rejection, a number of Japanese people fully embrace the Allies' version of history. The official history as written by the IMTFE is the cornerstone of current historical narratives of pre-war relations between Japan and other countries, including China. Those who tell a different version of history—the correct one—face the wrath of the politically-correct intellectuals and anti-Japan ethnic lobbies.

Foreign policy two-step:

American policy leads Japanese policy

The 1946 Constitution of Japan imposed sweeping social and cultural changes by the post-war American Occupational authority and pointedly prohibits the use of military force as an instrument of national policy.³⁴ As western nations have freely engaged in “regime change,” “preventative war” and deployment of “peacekeeping” forces in the midst of active civil wars, Japan has been restricted to sending financial or non-lethal aid (“check-book diplomacy”). When Japanese military personnel are sent as peacekeepers, they are under strict rules of engagement and are sent to areas that are no longer considered active war zones.³⁵ At the same time, westerners have expressed dismay over the lack of vigorous Japanese participation in international “peacekeeping” missions, which demonstrates not only a basic misunderstanding of the main role of Japan’s “military force,” the Japan Self-Defense Forces, and its operational limitations but also a lack of awareness that Japan’s constitution, written by Americans, prohibits the exis-

American History. Washington, DC: Scott-Townsend; Woods, T.E. (2008) *33 Questions about American History You're Not Supposed to Ask*. NY, NY: Crown. The inversion of South Korean history, such as attributing North Korean-backed terrorism to South Korean government “oppression,” has been described in: Oh, S. (2015) *Getting over It!* Tokyo: Tachibana Publishing.

³⁴ Article 9: “...the Japanese people forever renounce war as a sovereign right of the nation and the threat or use of force as means of settling international disputes... [L]and, sea, and air forces, as well as other war potential, will never be maintained. The right of belligerency of the state will not be recognized.”

³⁵ warisboring.com/ten-years-ago-japan-went-to-iraq-and-learned-nothing-b7f-3c702dd1f#i80fs17hv

tence of a Japanese military force in the first place.

President-elect Donald Trump has suggested significantly reducing the US military presence in Asia and having Japan shoulder more of its own defense. To allow an even greater role of the Japan Self-Defense Forces, this will mean significant changes to Japanese law or even to the constitution itself. Polls, however, suggest that there is neither a strong desire by the public to change the constitution nor eagerness to engage the Self-Defense Forces in UN peacekeeping missions.³⁶ Contrast Japanese thinking with that of the British, another island nation. In 1982, the UK, with US support, quickly deployed an armed force against Argentina to re-establish control over its “overseas territory,” the Falkland Islands. By contrast, Japan has yet to assert its authority in a similar manner over Takeshima Island, currently occupied by South Korea, or over the Senkaku Islands, which both the PRC and Taiwan have claimed as their own, even though Japanese people strongly assert that both are Japanese territory.³⁷

Whether there is a “re-alignment” of US military forces in Asia or nothing changes at all, the Japanese view their post-war foreign policy as highly contingent on the policies of foreign countries, especially of the US. Indeed, pre-war Japanese policy adopted key elements of US policy, as it was American gunboats that sailed unimpeded into Edo (Tokyo) Bay, compelling Japan to sign a treaty of “Amity and Commerce” in 1854. Under this treaty, Japan lost its right to levy tariffs. Japan lost sovereignty over its own territory as the treaty allowed Americans to reside within designated areas and not to be subject to Japanese law. Americans were also allowed the right to lease land and purchase buildings on leased lands, effectively giving control of the land to Americans. Subsequent Europeans demanded similar treatment, such as foreign control of tariffs and extraterritoriality, in their treaties of “Amity and Commerce”.

³⁶ www.asahi.com/ajw/articles/AJ201605030043.html; mainichi.jp/english/articles/20160503/p2a/00m/0na/003000c; www.mod.go.jp/e/d_act/others/pdf/public_opinion.pdf.

³⁷ link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s12140-015-9243-5

While the Chinese rejected all things outside its realm as barbaric, Japan had seen how easily the European and Russian “barbarians” partitioned its great and once powerful neighbor;³⁸ “no non-white country had ever maintained its independence once a White military force had landed on its soil.”³⁹ Thus, in order to retain its sovereignty, Japan would emulate the West and break with China, a nation with shared affinities in terms of culture and race. Further appealing to Japan was the Western notion that nations share legal equality, in contrast to the Chinese view of China as the center of the universe and that barbarians reside on the periphery.⁴⁰

Standards of living increased as Japan shifted from an agrarian economy to a manufacturing and export-based economy and adopted Western medical and scientific practices. Social and political institutions were modernized in the Western style. In an effort to further temper resistance to foreign encroachment, Japan adopted US foreign policy. General Charles LeGendre was hired by the Japanese Foreign Ministry in 1872 as a foreign affairs and military adviser, consulting “a number of times” with Japanese elder statesmen and Emperor Meiji.⁴¹

The key idea he promoted to the Japanese government during his consultations was a “Japanese Monroe Doctrine for Asia,” a policy resembling “the one taken by the United States in the wake of the European filtration and encroachment into the American sphere of interest,” in which Japan undertakes “to bring the whole of Asia from its barbarous and primitive stage to the civilized stage.”⁴² In order to do this, LeGendre recommended Japan “pacify and civilize them if possible” or “exterminate them or otherwise deal with them as the United States ... [has]....”

³⁸ Ladd, G.P. (1908) *In Korea with Marquis Ito*. NY, NY: Charles Scribner's Sons. Reprinted by Sakuranohana Shuppan, 2015. p. 360.

³⁹ Bradley, J. (2009) *The Imperial Cruise*. NY, NY: Little Brown and Company, online version.

⁴⁰ Dreyer, J. T. (2016) *Middle Kingdom and Empire of the Rising Sun*. NY, NY: Oxford University Press. p. 39.

⁴¹ Bradley, 2009, online version.

⁴² Bradley, 2009, online version.

American territorial acquisition and consolidation did not end with the closing of the western frontier. The late 1800s was characterized by territorial expansion in the Pacific. The US put the Monroe Doctrine to use in the early 1900s, sending troops to Latin America. President Theodore Roosevelt extended the American sphere of influence from the Western Hemisphere to China. The US staked its claim to China while at the same time imploring European powers and Japan to follow an “Open Door Policy,” of “equal opportunity for commerce and industry in China,” respecting Chinese territorial integrity and preventing any one power from dominating China.

Japan’s victory over China in the Sino-Japanese War in 1895 and perseverance against Imperial Russia during the Russo-Japanese War (1904-1905) impressed Theodore Roosevelt and he viewed Japan as a potential guardian of order in China. Roosevelt candidly expressed his view to Baron Kaneko Kentaro, who was sent to Washington, DC to ask Roosevelt to serve as mediator to end the Russo-Japanese War, that Japan should follow a “Monroe Doctrine for Asia,” echoing LeGendre’s earlier advice.

Theodore Roosevelt would later reiterate his support for a “Japanese Monroe Doctrine” in a meeting with Ambassador to the US Takahira Kogoro, who accompanied Baron Kaneko.⁴³ Thus, the idea that Japan should defend interests extending well beyond its own borders was based on American policy and encouragement. America acknowledged Japan’s leading role in Asia numerous times. The Taft-Katsura memorandum (1905) reiterated US recognition of East Asia, including Korea, as within Japan’s (rather than Russia’s) sphere of influence. As the basis of the war with Russia was Korea, Prime Minister Katsura Tarō noted that “Korea will certainly draw back to her habit of improvidently entering into any agreements or treaties with other powers, thus resuscitating the same international complications as existed before the war.” Secretary of War William Taft agreed with Katsura. In exchange, Japan would recognize the Philippines as being within the US’s sphere of influence. The primary goal of the discussion between

⁴³ Bradley, 2009, online version.

Taft and Katsura was to ensure peace in East Asia, which was best achieved through “a good understanding between the three governments of Japan, the United States and Great Britain.”

Korea was to be a crucial launching point for Japan’s “Monroe Doctrine.” Korea had officially been a Chinese vassal for hundreds of years. China either claimed or disclaimed authority over Korea as external circumstances dictated. The corrupt and factious Korean court entirely relied on China to protect its existence from “barbarians” and to suppress frequent domestic rebellions arising from government repression or poor harvests. A Japanese ship ventured near a Korean seaside fort and was attacked. Following a Japanese reprisal attack, a treaty of amity was signed between Korea and Japan in 1876, which specifically noted that Korea was a co-equal—as an “independent state enjoying the same sovereign rights as does Japan.” The Korean court, nonetheless, continued to call upon Chinese troops to keep them in power. During periods of Chinese occupation, Korean officers faced abuse by Chinese soldiers. At times, Chinese troops, in conjunction with Koreans, slaughtered Japanese residents in Korea.⁴⁴ The presence of Chinese troops in Korea not only hindered Korean independence but also threatened Japanese security. A convention was signed in 1885 between China and Japan wherein Korea would contact Japan in case Chinese troops were called into the peninsula. All the while, the Chinese saw the Japanese as upstart barbarians, aping western ways, who needed to be reminded of their place in the Celestial Order.

In 1894, the Korean court once again called in Chinese troops to suppress rioting—without notifying Japan.⁴⁵ In response, Japan sent its own troops to protect its citizens and interests. Confrontation between China and Japan over Korea’s status as an independent state ensued, culminating in the Sino-Japanese War. Following China’s defeat, Japan reaffirmed Korea’s status as a co-equal and independent state in the Treaty of Shimonoseki (1895). With the loss of Chinese influence in Korea, the void was rapidly filled

⁴⁴ Ladd, p. 328-330, 334.

⁴⁵ Ladd, p. 346.

by the Russians, who sought Korea's warm water ports. The Russians advised the Korean court to support anti-Japanese policies and otherwise meddled in Korean affairs, in violation of agreements signed in 1896 and 1898 with Japan to politically stabilize Korea. (While the Russians negotiated with Japan, the Russians and Chinese secretly agreed to a mutual security pact 1896, in which Russia was granted control of large portions of northern Manchuria.) Further negotiations with Russia to stop interfering with the internal affairs of Korea were fruitless and Japan waged war against Russia to protect, once again, Korean sovereignty.⁴⁶ With Russia's capitulation in 1905, and with US diplomatic and political support, Korea was established within the Japanese sphere of influence. As the Korean court was entirely incapable of providing for the welfare of the Korean people, the Japanese provided government advisors and initiated a number of governmental reforms and infrastructural projects with the aim of raising the Korean standard of living.⁴⁷ The Korean court's reluctance to support reforms for the purpose of improving the Korean people's welfare and pursuit of foreign policies that endangered Korean independence led to Korea's protectorate status and, later, Japanese annexation. Foreign governments, including the US, at the time noted how the "weak and corrupt" Korean government was incapable of implementing reforms and expressed their hope that Japan would facilitate the modernization of Korea.⁴⁸

Domestic issues

Due to the implementation of Western medical and hygiene practices during the Meiji Era, lifespan within Japan increased and infant mortality decreased. The population nearly doubled from

⁴⁶ Ladd, p. 370-402.

⁴⁷ Ireland, A. (1926) *The New Korea*. N.Y., N.Y.: E.P. Dutton. Reprinted by Sakuranohana Shuppan, 2013.

⁴⁸ Dreyer, p. 46, 60; *Journal de Saint-Petersbourg*, August 26, 1910; Mears, H. (1948) *Mirror for Americas: Japan*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin; *The Times* of London, September 28, 1904; *The San Francisco Chronicle*, March 21, 1908. Early South Korean presidents have acknowledged the Japanese role in modernizing Korea and further stated that Koreans have only themselves to blame for losing their sovereignty to Japan; Oh, p. 51-52, 73-74, 78-82.

1882 to 1939, from 37,000,000 to 73,000,000—yearly increases were on the order of almost 1,000,000.⁴⁹

Perhaps as a side effect of progress, Japan faced a population crisis. In response, the government increased arable lands within Japan.⁵⁰ Agricultural production was improved in Korea and Taiwan (Formosa), and surplus rice was exported to Japan. The Japanese government also encouraged emigration. However, white European nations in the Pacific region, including Australia, Canada and the US, restricted non-white immigration in response to domestic anti-Asian sentiment. Labor unions, in particular, resisted Asian immigration as Asians were seen as undercutting wages.

In the wake of the global depression following the 1929 Wall Street crash, Congress passed the Smoot-Hawley Tariff Act in 1930, as a means of protecting and reviving the US economy. The bill imposed high tariffs on imports. For Japan, the US was their largest customer—42 percent of all Japanese exports were destined for the US in 1926.⁵¹ In 1934, after passage of the Smoot-Hawley Act, this figure was cut by more than one-half (18 percent). To pay for imports, Japan exported manufactured goods. The loss in export revenue meant that Japan could no longer purchase key resources and goods from the US in quantities needed to sustain the nation. In 1934, Japan also imported about one-third of all US exports.⁵² The US was a key supplier of iron and petroleum. In fact, Japan depended on foreign trade for a number of commodities, as it was resources poor, including cotton, coal and rubber, iron ore, zinc and bauxite.⁵³

The amount of timber, as well as food, was insufficient for the growing population, despite government efforts to expand arable land acreage.

⁴⁹ Kobori, p. 346.

⁵⁰ Kobori, p. 321.

⁵¹ Suzuki, T. (2013). *The USA Is Responsible for the Pacific War*. Tokyo: Horiuchi Printing, p. 269.

⁵² Suzuki, p. 263.

⁵³ Reston, J.B. (1945) "Terms Will Reduce Japan to Kingdom Perry Visited," *The New York Times*, August 14.

Further compounding Japan's commercial problem was Great Britain's creation of an economic bloc in 1932 consisting of its dominions and colonies. The Ottawa Agreement employed preferential duties within the bloc and high tariffs or restrictions were applied to imports from outside the bloc. Other European countries formed economic blocs with their colonial possessions as well. Faced with high tariffs, most markets were closed to Japanese goods—the Japanese economy faced bleak prospects. Following the US, Manchuria and China were the second and third largest markets, respectively, for Japanese exports.⁵⁴ Thus, the survival and existence of Japan hinged on the development of Manchuria and a politically and socially stable China.

Manchuria for the survival of the Japanese people

Manchuria is the home of the ethnic Manchu people, who ousted the ruling Ming in 1644 and established the Qing Dynasty. A modern day Han Chinese conceit is that “to rule China, the [conquerors] had to become Chinese.”⁵⁵ The Han is the dominant ethnic group in China and “Chinese” usually refers to the Han. It is therefore usually not known that the Qing rulers were an entirely different ethno-cultural group than the Han, who ruled during the previous Ming Era. In fact, Sun Yat-sen, the father of the Chinese Republic, considered the Manchus “foreigners”⁵⁶ and promised to “entirely overthrow the utterly corrupt regime” and replace them with “European-advised native Chinese”. As a sign that Sun believed that Manchuria was not an integral part of China, in his effort to finance his armed struggle against the Qing he supported a proposed sale of Manchuria to Japan for 20 million yen and weapons to arm two divisions.⁵⁷ The Japanese government ultimately rejected this proposal.

The Manchus followed completely different customs than their Han subjects, according to contemporaneous writers. “Being

⁵⁴ Hatase, M. (2002) Devaluation and exports in interwar Japan. *Monetary and Economic Studies*. October, p. 143-180.

⁵⁵ Bickers, R. (2011) *The Scramble for China*. London, UK: Penguin Books. p. 67.

⁵⁶ Chang and Halliday, p. 10.

⁵⁷ Suzuki, p. 293.

Manchu was virtually important to them: it was transmitted from generation to generation, articulated, regulated, displayed and protected.”⁵⁸ “Protection” of Manchu identity included Manchu prohibitions against intermarriage.⁵⁹ “Anti-Manchu comments were hunted down because of ...continuing strong ethnic identity, in which important components included the Manchu language, dress and food...” The Manchus were neither “arrogant nor malicious” as were the Han and “quite different” from the Han, who “stole,” “told lies” and were “merciless.”⁶⁰ Ethnic Han were not allowed into Manchuria. However, after the Chinese Nationalist Revolution in 1911 and the fall of the Qing Dynasty, restrictions against Han migration into the sacred land of the Manchu collapsed.⁶¹ In response to centuries of Manchu oppression, Nationalist Han massacred Manchus in major cities.⁶²

Japan received control of the South Manchuria Railway as a result of the Russo-Japanese War, along with the right to station troops to protect it and control the “economic life of Manchuria.” Furthermore, Russia formally recognized southern Manchuria as within Japan’s sphere of influence while Japan likewise recognized North Manchuria and Outer Mongolia as within Russia’s sphere of influence. (After Imperial Russia wrested Outer Mongolia from the Qing, Soviet-supported communists seized control in 1921.) Imperial Russia had already acquired thousands of square miles of “the ancestral heartland of the [Qing] dynasty” in the 1800s.⁶³ Agreements between Imperial Russia and Japan affirming spheres of influence were signed four times between 1907 and 1916. (These agreements were later voided by the Bolsheviks.) The US also acknowledged Japan’s interests in Manchuria as well in an

⁵⁸ Bickers, p. 67.

⁵⁹ Townsend, R. (1933) *Ways That Are Dark*. NY, NY: Putnam. p. 314.

⁶⁰ Suzuki, p. 290.

⁶¹ Kobori, p. 248; Townsend, p. 278.

⁶² Bickers, p. 362.

⁶³ Bickers, p. 154. In addition to the 1896 Li-Lobanov Treaty mentioned earlier, the Qing ceded large portions of Manchuria to Russia in 1858 and 1860. Whereas Japan is regularly denounced by the PRC as having a history of “imperialism,” one would be hard-pressed to hear the PRC level the same accusation at Russia.

agreement signed between US Secretary of State Elihu Root and Japanese Ambassador Takahira (1908), wherein the US allowed Japan a “free hand in Manchuria” (and Korea as well). At the same time, Japan agreed to recognize the US annexation of Hawaii and the Philippines and further agreed to limit Japanese emigration to the US. Each side would endeavor to uphold the status quo and continue the Open Door policy in China. Japan’s “special interests in China, particularly in the part to which her possessions are contiguous,” was again affirmed by the US with the Lansing-Ishii Agreement (1917).

In addition to concluding agreements with the key Pacific powers Russia and the US, Japan sought understanding with the Chinese concerning Manchuria. “Although Japan and Russia came to an understanding as to their respective spheres of influence in Manchuria and Mongolia by treaties concluded between 1907 and 1916, past experience had taught Japan to be very jealous in guarding her rights and interests. Consequently, for that purpose numerous treaties and agreements were signed between China and Japan during the period from 1905 to 1915.”⁶⁴ Despite the existence of these agreements, the Chinese pointedly refused to follow them. For example, while a treaty bound the Chinese to not build rail lines that competed with the South Manchuria Railway, they went ahead with building one. It was only through intercession of a British company that was partnered with the Chinese that the project was eventually cancelled.⁶⁵ Later, the Chinese, under their own initiative, completed competing lines. Despite treaties that affirmed Japanese rights and interests in China, the Chinese demanded that the Japanese withdraw from Manchuria and attempted to “divest Japan and its citizens of their acquired rights and interests, resorting to cunning and malicious means,” including instigating a series of boycotts of Japanese goods and services.⁶⁶ The boycotts were financially crippling, entailing the

⁶⁴ Kobori, K. (2003) *The Tokyo Trials: The Unheard Defense*. Rockport, ME: New England History Press. p. 241.

⁶⁵ Suzuki, p. 138.

⁶⁶ Kobori, p. 287; Osaka Chamber of Commerce and Industry. (1932) *A Synopsis of the*

use of threats and violence against the Chinese who continued to frequent Japanese businesses as well as against the Japanese themselves and were supported by the Chinese government. While the Chinese aimed to expel all foreigners, Chinese xenophobia singled out Japan, as China considered Japan an upstart, barbarian vassal. This anti-Japan hostility has carried into modern Chinese foreign policy and domestic attitudes.

Given that Japan was barred from sending its surplus population to white European countries and that trade with the same was heavily restricted, the only alternative was to commercially develop Manchuria and to encourage western migration, just as America had done during its western expansion in the previous century. Manchuria is about three times the size of the Japanese mainland. The total amount of arable land in Manchuria equals the entire Japanese mainland. Manchuria holds important mineral resources, and key commercial activities include mining, manufacturing and agriculture. Over time, Manchuria became a critical Japanese economic asset. At the end of World War II, *The New York Times* opined that Japan would have eventually become self-sufficient had Japan retained its empire.⁶⁷

Although critical to Japan's economic survival, Manchuria was plagued by banditry, as the Chinese central government was either unable or unwilling to carry out law enforcement responsibilities. Following the 1911 Revolution, for all intents and purposes, China was a "failed state"—at one point three different groups claimed to be the legitimate government of China. Lurking in the background, the Chinese Communist Party, established in 1921, engaged in anti-foreign agitation and terrorism within their strongholds.⁶⁸ Provincial warlords, products of a Qing era policy to decentralize military power, ruled their fiefdoms with ever-shifting alliances and foreign aid.

Boycott in China. Osaka: Hamada Printing.

⁶⁷ Reston, J.B. (1945) "The Power in the Pacific Is Now in our Hands," *The New York Times*, August 19.

⁶⁸ Chang, J. and Halliday, J. (2006) *Mao: The Untold Story*. NY, NY: Anchor Books. p. 40-41, 54, 59-60, 63, 140.

In 1929, in response to a warlord attack on the Chinese Eastern Railway in northern Manchuria, the Soviets retaliated and overran the railway and surrounding areas. Later, the Soviets utilized the railway to supply the Chinese Communists. As an example of selective Chinese xenophobia, whereas Japan's later action in Manchuria evoked boycotts and riots, the Soviet invasion of Manchuria evoked no violent reaction.

In 1929 and 1930, the Japanese government recorded over 400 instances of property and security breaches against Japanese railways in Manchuria which the Chinese government had yet to investigate.⁶⁹

Chinese bandits regularly attacked railway staff and property. In June 1931, Japanese Army officer Nakamura Shintaro along with three others were captured in Manchuria and murdered by a Chinese warlord. The bodies were burned to hide the evidence. The Chinese denied any involvement and further stated that the Japanese merely fabricated the incident. After about three months, however, Chinese authorities admitted the event and even their complicity.

The Wanpaoshan Incident is another example of Chinese xenophobia. Koreans living in Manchuria had long been persecuted by local Chinese. (During the Cultural Revolution, Chinese Red Guards chased Koreans out of Manchuria and into North Korea.) In July 1931, Chinese farmers assaulted Korean farmers over their construction of an irrigation ditch, for which local Chinese authorities had previously given permission but now claimed to be illegal.⁷⁰ When news of the Chinese attacks reached Korea, riots throughout the country resulted in looting of Chinese property and numerous Chinese casualties. The Chinese retaliated by imposing yet another boycott of Japanese goods and services, and further forbid personal contacts between the Chinese and Japanese. Chinese who cooperated with the Japanese could be subjected to severe punishment, including death.

That warlords were able to harass and assault Japanese set-

⁶⁹ Townsend, p. 282-283; also Kobori, p. 242.

⁷⁰ Osaka Chamber of Commerce and Industry.

tlers, as well as locals, in Manchuria without fear of reprisal was due in part to the constrained mission and size of the Kwantung Army, the Japanese garrison in Manchuria. The Kwantung Army's primary mission was protecting the South Manchuria Railway and its immediate environs. The Kwantung Army consisted of 10,400 Japanese troops—Japan was in fact allowed up to 14,000 troops as stipulated by the 1905 Portsmouth Treaty.⁷¹ By contrast, area warlords commanded about 250,000 soldiers. In 1930, the tactical reality was that less than 11,000 troops were responsible for the protection of about 200,000 Japanese and 800,000 Korean civilians, out of a total population of about 36 million, and their property within an area four times the size of Japan.⁷² In addition to internal security, the Kwantung Army secured the border with Russia. (As mentioned earlier, the Soviets intruded twice, in 1938 and 1939, and Japan lost in both encounters.) This Japanese imbalance between mission and manpower remained until 1931.

Officers of the Kwantung Army, responding to an apparent lack of their own government's interest in protecting the lives of Japanese civilians in Manchuria, and elsewhere in China, and the growing Communist menace, commenced to "seize" Manchuria in 1931 (the so-called "Mukden" or "Manchuria" Incident). The Kwantung Army routed the warlords' forces and took their main base in Mukden. Other Manchurian cities were later brought under the army's control, and Manchuria was under the Kwantung Army's control within four months. *The Times* of London understood Japan's desire for restoring law and order in Manchuria, something that the Chinese were incapable of doing: "administrative integrity' of China remained a fiction the Japanese were bound to act to protect their interest in that country, as Britain had done in 1927..."⁷³ On Japan's military action, British Ambassador to Japan Sir Francis Lindley commented, "...The world is, in short, in the position of a country where the dwelling has been made ille-

⁷¹ Kobori, p. 76

⁷² Kobori, p. 244.

⁷³ Suzuki, p. 358. On January 3, 1927, Chinese Nationalists troops raided British settlements in Hankou and Jiujiang. In March, Nationalist troops overran Nanjing, raping and murdering British and other foreign residents.

gal before the population have learned proper manners; and however high-handed the Japanese have been, they have at least taught China that this sort of behavior still brings unpleasant results.”⁷⁴

It should be noted that the Kwantung Army officers acted unilaterally, without the approval of Tokyo. Furthermore, according to the Meiji Constitution, the military was under the direct command of the Emperor. The Kwantung Army did not receive imperial sanction for their requests to move troops from outside of Manchuria to support the takeover of Manchuria. The day after the Incident, government approval was given, as *fait accompli*, with the idea that military activity would be confined to within Manchuria. Imperial sanction was belatedly given as well. Under normal circumstances, the commanders and officers who acted without government approval or even Imperial sanction should have been disciplined. However, the Japanese public saw the officers as heroes and due to the outpouring of popular support, the government was unable to punish the responsible individuals; some officers ended up being promoted. While it is not true that Japan’s foreign policy was dictated by a “militarist clique,” the successful take-over of Manchuria certainly gives this impression. At the same time, the fact that the Japanese government was unable to prevent unilateral military action suggests a lack of clear foreign policy objectives and poor command and control.

Nonetheless, Japan’s control of Manchuria following 1931 was followed by a semblance of peace that was not present in any other part of China. *The Times* of London noted that Manchuria is “a flourishing oasis in a howling desert of Chinese misrule...”⁷⁵ American financier Thomas Lamont said of Manchuria: “...Manchuria is almost the only stable area in the whole of China. The existence of Japan makes it possible for us to expect that Manchuria can be the stabilizing power in the China Problem rather the destabilizing power... The development of Manchuria is actually contributing to the profits of Chinese people... A lot of people are flowing to south Manchuria in a unit of several thousands to

⁷⁴ Suzuki, p. 355-356.

⁷⁵ Suzuki, p. 355.

escape from banditry or plunder..."⁷⁶ In fact, Manchuria's success was such that, as American journalist George Bronson Rea stated, "every freelance bandit chief and warlord... [is looking] forward to restoring his rule over the most prosperous provinces of China..."⁷⁷

In 1932, a collection of Manchurians, now freed from warlord subjugation and wishing to break from Han China, proclaimed an independent Manchurian state ("Manchukuo" or "Manchuquo"). The following year, the last of the Qing rulers, Xuantong Puyi, was installed as the Emperor of Manchukuo. The establishment of Manchukuo further inflamed Han Chinese who claimed Manchu domain as rightfully belonging to them. As predicted by journalist Rea, following the establishment of Manchukuo, clashes occurred between Manchurian warlords seeking to reestablish themselves, with the support of Chinese Nationalist troops, and the Kwantung Army north of the Great Wall, the traditional border between Han China and the Manchus.

The Japanese and Chiang Kai-shek signed the Tanggu Truce in May 1933, setting up a demilitarized zone in a region south of the Great Wall. A Chinese force (a "peace preservation corps") was to patrol the area. The truce contained Japanese forces within Manchuria and away from the rest of China. Following signing of the truce, Chiang planned on uniting the country by first defeating the Chinese Communists and then expelling the foreigners. Occasional skirmishes between the Kwantung Army and Chinese Nationalists occurred, but there were no major engagements between the two sides until 1937.

In addition to protecting Japanese civilians and property, the Kwantung Army had an equally important task—to prevent the spread of Communism into Manchuria and to Japan. As US Ambassador to Japan Joseph Grew noted: "Japan will in all probability eventually guarantee to Manchuria an administration of peace, safety and prosperity which that unfortunate country has never before experienced...and furthermore Japan is acting as a staunch

76 Suzuki, p. 369-370.

77 Suzuki, p. 368.

buffer against the spread of bolshevism eastward which is an item worth considering. If Japan deserves merit for nothing else, we must at least give her credit for the fight she is putting up against communism which is now overwhelming China like a forest fire and would rapidly overrun Manchuria too if Japan hadn't taken a hand."

Following the Bolshevik Revolution, the Soviets focused their efforts on promoting global communist revolution with the goal of replacing democracies with "people's republics". The Soviets formed the Comintern to assist communist groups, including the Japanese Communist Party. One of the Japanese Communist Party's stated goals was to overthrow the Imperial Household—in which "overthrow" meant liquidation of the royal family as was done with the Romanovs in Russia. Ordinary Japanese civilians would not be excluded from such a fate. In February 1920, 700 Japanese were slaughtered when a Bolshevik partisan force captured the port town of Nikolayevsk after overwhelming the Japanese garrison ("Nikolayevsk Incident"). Surviving servicemen and Japanese civilians were imprisoned. Upon learning that a Japanese Army force was approaching Nikolayevsk, the Bolsheviks massacred remaining Japanese captives and several thousand residents, stabbing them and then forcing them under the ice of the frozen Amur River. The Japanese had good reason to fear the communists.

In the end, in August 1945, the Soviets overwhelmed the Kwantung Army and overran Manchuria, handing it over to the Chinese Communists. One could speculate as to whether communist domination might have occurred sooner if Japan had withdrawn from Manchuria in 1931, as demanded by the League of Nations, or in 1941 as demanded by FDR during peace negotiations.

Perils of cooperation

"International cooperation" was a cornerstone of pre-war Japanese foreign policy, the idea being that "international cooperation" would lead to just and fair treatment among "equal" states.

To this end, Japan agreed to quotas on its naval forces at the Washington and London Naval Conferences. It should be highly startling that Japan, entirely dependent on secure sea lanes for commerce, would voluntarily reduce its naval strength as dictated by other major sea powers Great Britain and the US.

Furthermore, the US insisted that Great Britain not renew the 1902 Anglo-Japanese Alliance, a naval alliance between the two countries that at the time countered the Russian and German Imperial navies in the Pacific. The Japanese saw the Anglo-Japanese Alliance as highly prestigious, as one between equals. The treaty had benefited both Japan and Great Britain. During the Russo-Japanese War, Britain prevented France from entering the war on Russia's side. During World War I, Japan sent a naval task force to the Mediterranean and kept the Pacific clear of German forces. At the end of the war, for participation on the Allies' side, Japan received German rights and interests in China and German Pacific territory.

The past notwithstanding, Japan readily went along with the US's insistence and declined to bring up the issue of renewing the alliance with Great Britain. As a replacement for the Anglo-Japanese Treaty, Japan was invited to sign the Nine-Power Treaty (1922), a treaty created in response to the world's concern over continuing turmoil in China. The treaty called for the "status quo" and that members follow an Open Door policy, while China promised to protect the rights and interests of all parties. Japan's hope was that its rights and interests in China would be protected by this treaty. However, in exchange for Japan's signature, Japan was forced to give up rights to the German concession of Shandong, which it acquired following World War I. Moreover, Japan was forced to cancel previous agreements with the US concerning Manchuria as vital to Japanese national interest. Seeing how easily Japan yielded, the US adopted a hard-line stance in future negotiations. In fact, the US led the rest of the world in isolating Japan, condemning it in 1932 for the "seizure" of Manchuria, calling for a global "quarantine" against Japan in 1937, cancellation of the US-Japan Treaty of Commerce and Navigation in 1939 and

cutting off American access to crucial industrial raw materials beginning in 1940.

Japan willingly ignored its national interest in favor of vague notions of “international cooperation” due in part to foreign pressure, but the main source of this diplomatic naïveté was the Japanese leadership at the time. For example, Japanese Foreign Minister Shidehara Kijuro had an extremely sympathetic view of China, promoting negotiations and “indulgence and patience” in solving problems.⁷⁸ Rather than a “conspiracy” or determined effort to conquer China, as alleged by the IMTFE, Japan’s China policy could be described as stop-and-go crisis management, of responding to and containing endless Chinese provocations without an overall objective.

The lack of an effective long-term China strategy is highlighted by frequently arising Chinese government-sanctioned anti-Japanese protests. Boycotts of Japanese goods and services were the usual Chinese responses to Japanese “aggression.” Boycotts were accompanied by other activities, including anti-Japanese propaganda leaflets, anti-Japanese lectures in schools, violent strikes, pillaging of Japanese property and targeted assassination. Overseas Chinese also participated in boycotts and demonstrations.⁷⁹ As the Japanese did little in response to these outrages, other than lodge diplomatic protests with the Chinese, the Chinese gradually increased the stridency of their demonstrations.

The effect of an accommodating policy in China, however, proved to be highly unfortunate for Japan, as the Chinese perceived accommodation as weakness and took advantage of Japan’s naïveté. Rather than respond in kind to Japanese accommodation, the Chinese held fast to their anti-Japanese position. The Chinese government found opportunities to test the limits of Japanese patience.

The Chinese war against the Japanese

Sun Yat-sen claimed that the Chinese Han, unlike the ruling “decadent Manchus,” were “on the side of history.”⁸⁰ Chinese na-

⁷⁸ Dreyer, p. 65; Suzuki, p. 338; Townsend, p. 283.

⁷⁹ Osaka Chamber of Commerce and Industry.

⁸⁰ Bickers, p. 385.

tionalism can, in fact, be viewed as an expression of deep-seated ethnocentrism. The Chinese emperor was a righteous man designated by Heaven to keep order in the universe. This "Mandate of Heaven" formed the basis of the Chinese empire. As an extension, the Chinese empire, the "Middle Kingdom," was the apex of civilization and peripheral states were merely uncivilized, barbaric states.⁸¹ Barbarians could become "civilized" barbarians by observing the proper rituals and paying tribute to the emperor. As the center of the universe, the Middle Kingdom contained everything worth having—modern Western technology (except advanced military technology) meant little to the Chinese. The Qing rejected barbarian attempts to improve Chinese transportation, commercial and communication infrastructure.⁸² Losing repeatedly to barbarians in several wars (e.g., the Opium Wars, the Arrow War and the Sino-Japanese War), the Qing Dynasty belatedly initiated a short-term program of modernization. Despite its efforts, the Qing eventually collapsed in 1912.

In 1935, American diplomat John Van Antwerp MacMurray commented on Chinese ethnocentrism as a basis of Chinese policy: "The Chinese, in their resurgence of racial feeling, had been willful in their scorn of their legal obligations, reckless in their resort to violence for the accomplishment of their ends, and provocative in their methods... Those who sought to deal fairly with them were reviled as niggardly in not going further to satisfy them..." While MacMurray was referring to the Nationalists, this characterization could apply to the present-day PRC as well.

In 2016, the PRC rejected a Permanent Court of Arbitration decision that found that the PRC's demarcation of its South China Sea boundaries (the "Nine-Dash Line"), which claimed numerous islands contested by a number of its neighbors, has no historical basis, and is therefore invalid. The Court also ruled that China unlawfully infringed on the exclusive economic zone of its neighbor (the Philippines). The Chinese, who did not even bother to send a representative to the hearings, dismissed the findings as irrelevant

⁸¹ Dreyer, p. 5.

⁸² Dreyer, p. 37-38.

and contended that the Court had “no jurisdiction.” One could say that such thinking as entirely consistent with historical Chinese thinking, that China is a righteous country and no barbarian court may pass judgment on it.

The confluence of World War I, the Chinese Revolution of 1911 and the Russian Revolution of 1917 thrust China deeper into chaos. President Woodrow Wilson promised “self-determination” and “autonomy” to captive nations during World War I. The Chinese Republicans promised to unite China and to expel the barbarians. At any and all opportunities, the Chinese boisterously denounced European and Japanese partitioning of their country in international forums. When none of the foreign powers budged, Chinese Nationalists and Communists organized violent “anti-imperialism” strikes and demonstrations. More recently, anti-Japanese riots in major Chinese cities in 2004, 2005 and 2012, which brought about much property destruction but miraculously spared lives, were at least tacitly permitted by the ruling Communist Party.

Following the Republican Revolution, Sun’s Republican faction lost a power struggle and established headquarters in Guangdong Province. While having many Western and Japanese backers, Sun requested military assistance from the Soviets in 1922. Stalin saw the potential of the Nationalist Army in defeating Western imperialists in China and as a counterweight to the Japanese Army stationed near the Soviet border. Stalin agreed to fund Sun’s Nationalists—his support of the Chinese Communists began the year before—and he instructed the Chinese Communists to infiltrate the Nationalist Party to ensure that they towed Moscow’s line. The extent of communist subversion of the Nationalist leadership has been elaborated elsewhere.⁸³ In short, the Chinese Communists were in a position to guide Nationalist policy and action, which included directing anti-Japanese agitation. The Communists hoped that the Japanese military would focus their efforts towards the Nationalists and away from them, who were at the time numerically and militarily weaker than the National-

⁸³ Chang and Halliday, p. 131-132; 197-206.

ists. Thus, the Chinese Communists and their Soviet patrons had a significant, but largely hidden, role in engineering a state of war between Nationalist China and Japan.⁸⁴

At the same time, factions within the Chinese Nationalist Party jostled for control. Nationalist cliques sought alliances among other Nationalist cliques and foreigners for support as motivated by personal interest.⁸⁵ To further their own survival, the various Nationalist factions engineered anti-Japanese provocations. For instance, non-mainstream factions of the Nationalist Party wanted to force Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek's clique into a war with Japan, thereby curbing the concentration of power around Chiang and preventing Chiang from engaging in campaigns that would deplete their own forces. However, the factions that continuously provoked Japan did not take responsibility when Japan protested or confronted them. Instead, the factions pinned the blame elsewhere. Such was the state of the "democratic hope" that sought to expel the barbarians and unite China. It is surprising that the American government supported Chiang before and during the US-Japan War without realizing the true state of his Nationalist Party. Such a lack of American understanding domestic politics of foreign countries can be readily observed today—Iraq and Afghanistan come to mind.

In 1926, Chiang seized control of the Nationalist Party following Sun's death, purged open Communists from the Party and launched the Northern Expedition from Guangdong in July, with the goal of unifying China. From Guangdong, the Nationalist Army marched north to subdue the warlords and a rival Nationalist Party faction based in Beijing. Along the way, the Nationalist Army plundered the countryside in order to support itself, in the tradition of Chinese "locust armies," leaving a trail of destruction.⁸⁶

⁸⁴ Perhaps as a means of further neutralizing the Japanese Army on the Soviet Union's eastern flank, the Soviets instructed their mole, US Treasury official Harry Dexter White, to script an antagonistic and uncompromising US policy against Japan that would eventually pressure Japan to attack the US. Koster, J. (2012) *Operation Snow*. (NY, NY: Regnery.)

⁸⁵ Townsend, p. 199-247.

⁸⁶ Bradley, (2015), p. 468-470.

The Chinese Communists used terror to silence or eliminate its enemies. Chiang's Republican Army, the vanguard of democratic China, was no better. The officers, members of the landowning class, were generally well paid. By contrast, the foot soldiers were illiterate peasants who were unluckily conscripted. The vast majority of the conscripts lived a hand-to-mouth existence, looting villages for food and burning anything that may be useful to the enemy. Women who fell into their hands were either used as coolies or gang-raped. Like their leaders, foot soldiers were more than willing to switch sides if promised more pay or better prospects for looting.⁸⁷ Their poor record of fighting the Japanese, despite possession of new, foreign-made weapons, foreign advisors and foreign-educated Chinese officers, has been suggested to be due to a fundamental lack of "courage" and sense of "cooperation." This could in fact explain why less than 11,000 Japanese troops defeated over 200,000 Chinese troops in Manchuria "in a few weeks" in 1931.⁸⁸ (Pro-China admirers at the time bemoaned that if the Chinese had more weapons and money, they would be able to beat the Japanese and unite the country.)

The Chinese were, however, more than capable of murdering unarmed civilians. During the Qing and previous eras, victorious armies massacred hundreds of thousands of captured soldiers by drowning, beheading and live burial.⁸⁹ The Nationalists continued in this line, sending few, if any, live prisoners to prisoner of war camps.⁹⁰ Foreign as well as Chinese civilians who fell into Nationalist hands were subjected to traditional Chinese methods of

⁸⁷ Townsend, p. 208, 226-227.

⁸⁸ Townsend, p. 207-208.

⁸⁹ Hei, S. (2007) *A History of Massacres in China*. Tokyo: Bijinesusha; Courtois et al., p. 468, 471.

⁹⁰ Risking thousand or even millions of lives is no obstacle in the pursuit of victory. In June 1938, Chiang Kai-shek ordered the blasting of the Yellow River banks in Henan Province as a means of stopping a Japanese Army advance. However, "11 cities and 4,000 villages were flooded, the crops and farms of three provinces ruined, two million people [were] rendered homeless..." Moreover, as a consequence of destroying the river banks, a drought in Henan Province in 1942 led to famine (Suzuki, p. 450-451). Between 2-3 million people died in the famine and "many cases of cannibalism were recorded". Courtois et al., p. 469.

torture before being killed.⁹¹

In March 1927, a communist-instigated riot in Nanjing, the nominal capital of China, led to occupation by Nationalist soldiers, who, under the command of Nationalist officers, proceeded to plunder the British, American and Japanese consulates, schools, hospitals and homes and set numerous structures on fire. Chinese Nationalists beat and raped civilians and performed other acts "too indecent to be published."⁹² Thousands of Japanese abandoned their livelihood in China and returned to Japan in response to this incident. Amazingly, while British and American warships shelled Nanjing and landed troops to protect their citizens, Japanese consulate guards were told not to resist. The Japanese sent a token force of one warship, which did not even participate in the naval bombardment. The official explanation was that the Japanese did not respond so as not to provoke the Chinese.

In April, Nationalist troops invaded and occupied the Japanese concession in Hankou, allegedly in response to Japanese military provocation. Chinese rioting was suppressed when Japanese troops moved in to secure the concession. This incident also prompted numerous Japanese to flee Hankou, and elsewhere, back to Japan with nothing but the shirt on their back. The seizure and destruction of foreign property violated the Nine-Power Treaty, yet Japan, America and European countries did not call China to account. More Nationalist Army outrages occurred in May (Jinan Incident), despite previous assurances by Chiang that Japanese civilians would be protected. Also during April and May, Chiang executed "thousands of Communists" in Shanghai.⁹³ The Northern Expedition ended in 1928 with Chiang defeating his rival in Beijing and establishing Nanjing as the capital.

Conflicts between the Nationalist and Japanese military were limited in nature between the signing of the Tanggu Treaty in 1933

⁹¹ The infamous "death by a thousand cuts" (*lingchi*) comes to mind. A survivor of the Tongzhou Massacre (July 1937) recounts ghastly methods of torture employed by Nationalist soldiers and their Chinese civilian collaborators: www.sdh-fact.com/essay-article/854/.

⁹² Townsend, p. 328-329.

⁹³ Courtois et al., p. 469.

and the “Marco Polo Bridge Incident” in 1937. Chiang used this period to pursue the Chinese Communists, which embarked on their year-long Long March in 1934 to northwest China. Surprisingly, while Chiang was in a position to wipe out the Communists, for personal and political reasons he allowed the Communists to reach the safety of their base.⁹⁴

The Chinese war against Japan redux

The Communists issued on August 1, 1935 their “Resistance against Japan, National Salvation” declaration, exhorting the Chinese to stop fighting each other and to resist Japan. The Communists’ call for a “United Front” against Japan should be viewed as a cynical attempt to extend their own lifespan, as the Communists at the time were nowhere near Japanese military units.⁹⁵ Recognizing that it would be folly to directly engage the Japanese military, the Communists nevertheless kept the Japanese off-balance via judicious use of terrorism. Following the August 1 declaration, a number of terrorist acts specifically targeting the Japanese occurred, such as looting and burning of Japanese-owned businesses and the assassination of Japanese civilians and military personnel.⁹⁶ Chinese “collaborators” were singled out for execution as well.

During one of Chiang’s expeditions to annihilate the Communists in 1936, he was betrayed by one of his commanders, Chang Xueliang, a dispossessed Manchurian warlord who sought to regain his former stronghold. Chang captured Chiang and handed over him over to the Communists at Xian (“Xian Incident”). Chairman Mao Zedong wanted to kill Chiang immediately, but Stalin stopped Mao because the death of Chiang and the collapse of the Nationalists would lead to a strengthening of Japan’s position in China against the Soviets. Stalin also promised to release Chiang’s son from captivity in Moscow if Chiang stopped his war against the Communists.⁹⁷ Following Chiang’s release, the Nationalists funded

⁹⁴ Chang and Halliday, p. 128-135.

⁹⁵ Ko, B. (2015) “A Grateful China Should Also Pay Respect to Yasukuni Shrine.” *Reki-shitsu*, March 15 Special Issue.

⁹⁶ Moteki, H. (2015) *How China Started the Second Sino-Japanese War*. Tokyo: Jiyuusha. English Online version: www.sdh-fact.com.

⁹⁷ Chang and Halliday, p. 185-187.

the Communists and gave them territory in which to build their strength. Thus, the so-called Chinese Civil War was temporarily halted and the Chinese Communists were able to rebuild itself while the Nationalists expended their strength against the Japanese military. Despite halting attacks against the Communists, Chiang was reluctant to use his military against Japan. Regardless, the Communists would create an opportunity to put Chiang's army up against Japan.⁹⁸

A company-strength Japanese Army unit, which had previously notified the local Chinese Army garrison, the 150,000-strong 29th Route Army, held night-time maneuvers near the Marco Polo Bridge, southwest of Beijing, on July 7, 1937. The Japanese unit used blank ammunition during the exercise. Shots from the Chinese position were fired at the Japanese unit in at least four instances—the Japanese finally returned fire after the last instance. Local Japanese and Chinese commanders arranged for a truce on July 11. The truce included a statement of Chinese regret over the incident, a promise to punish the person responsible and control of anti-Japan agitation. With respect to responsibility, the Chinese singled out Communists and Chinese fascist elements. With the truce in place, all sides hoped that the no other incidents would occur.

Following the Marco Polo Bridge Incident, the Japanese Government rescinded orders to deploy troops to North China—twice—to reinforce the small contingent already stationed there. Chiang, however, with assurances by the Soviets that they would aid him,⁹⁹ moved his troops into areas prohibited by the Tanggu Truce and declared a policy of “no surrender” in his “The Limit of China's Endurance” speech on July 17, 1937. The possible goal of Chiang's move was to reclaim Manchuria.

Under the mistaken notion that the Japanese military suffered a massive defeat at the hands of the Nationalists at the Marco Polo Bridge and spurred by Chiang's virtual declaration of war, Chinese Nationalists sprang into action. Nationalist troops ambushed Jap-

⁹⁸ Chang and Halliday, p. 197-198.

⁹⁹ Dreyer, p. 71-72.

anese troops on routine maintenance calls (“Langfang Incident”) and routine movements (“Guanganmen Incident”). The July 11 truce was apparently one in name only. In response to deteriorating security, on July 27, 1937, the Japanese government approved the dispatch of three divisions for the Beijing-North China area.¹⁰⁰

While a number of acts of anti-Japanese terrorism occurred throughout China up to 1937, perhaps the most infamous was the Tongzhou Incident. The Jidong Peace Preservation Corps (the “East Hopei Army”) was a police force comprised of nominally pro-Japanese Chinese paid and armed by the Japanese to patrol the demilitarized zone between Nationalist China and Manchuria. On July 29, 1937, the Jidong Peace Preservation Corps massacred Japanese military personnel and then Japanese civilians, going from house to house, dragging victims, including children, out into the streets and then bayoneting or strangling them to death. Some were tortured, mutilated and left to die. Women were raped before being killed. Over 200 Japanese were murdered. Survivors reported that both Nationalist Army personnel and Chinese civilians participated in the massacre. The “mutiny” may have been inspired by a rumor that the Japanese had suffered a massive defeat at the Marco Polo Bridge.

Despite years of violent, Chinese anti-Japanese sentiment, in 1937 only 2,000 Japanese troops were stationed in Shanghai to protect about 30,000 Japanese residents.¹⁰¹ Another 2,000 reinforcements remained off-shore. The presence of Japanese as well as other foreign troops was entirely legal according to the Boxer Protocol (1901) and the Shanghai Ceasefire Agreement (1932). In addition, the Shanghai Agreement made Shanghai, at the time comprised of numerous western concessions, off-limits to Chinese troops.

On August 9, Lt. Oyama Isao and Seaman Saito Yozo of the Japanese Naval Special Landing Force were killed by the Shang-

¹⁰⁰ Suzuki, p. 423.

¹⁰¹ Moteki, (2015) online version. For comparison, the British, the second largest group of foreigners, kept two Army battalions in Shanghai. Americans were protected by the 4th Regiment of the US Marines.

hai Security Corps, Chinese guards responsible for protecting foreign lives and property. The incident was apparently staged by the Communists.¹⁰² An investigation by American, British and French police, who were accompanied by the Mayor of Shanghai, concluded that the Japanese were ambushed and that they failed to return fire in self-defense.¹⁰³ Beyond an investigation, the Japanese government did nothing—perhaps in order not to incite the Chinese.

On August 13, 1937, a Chinese Nationalist force of 30,000-50,000 entered Shanghai, in violation of the Shanghai Agreement, and attacked the Japanese. The following day, Nationalist warplanes bombed the city, killing over a thousand civilians and wounding an equal number. The Nationalists blamed Japan for this outrage, but it was clear to all that the Chinese were responsible—they were later forced to recant. Four days after the Chinese ground assault, the Japanese government allowed two divisions to be dispatched to Shanghai. Another three divisions were later sent. The Japanese finally defeated the Chinese force in October and pursued them to Nanjing.

Rather than the easy fight Japanese commanders hoped for based on previous encounters with the Nationalist Army, the Japanese sustained over 40,000 casualties. By contrast, as Chiang feared, but to Mao's delight, Nationalist casualties were over 400,000, many of whom were trained by German advisors and equipped with the latest European arms.¹⁰⁴ Thus, a war that Japan did not want ensued. The Japanese military, recognizing that the Chinese had over two million soldiers under arms and that the Soviets had a total of over one million soldiers, saw no way in which the Japanese could win against a combined Chinese-Soviet army. The Japanese military insisted upon continued negotiations with Chiang, even though Chiang had ended negotiations.

More Japanese troops would be needed to occupy key cities in order to deny the Nationalists material support and to secure supply lines to feed urban populations, numbering in the tens of

¹⁰² Chang and Halliday, p. 198-199.

¹⁰³ Farrere, C. "Voyage en chine," *Revue des Deux Mondes*, Mai 1938.

¹⁰⁴ Chang and Halliday, p. 199-200.

millions, an entirely unenviable task.¹⁰⁵ For their part, the Chinese Communists would stay on the sidelines and look on as the Japanese fought and lost to the Nationalists in a war of attrition.¹⁰⁶ Weakened fighting the Japanese and further decimated fighting the Chinese Communists, the Nationalists fled to Taiwan in 1949 and left China in the hands of the Communists.

War dictated by security

Perhaps the best way to describe the pre-war period in Japan and Japan's response to the circumstances is to read the words of Supreme Commander of Allied Powers General Douglas MacArthur, head of the American Occupation. General MacArthur made the following comments during a hearing before the Senate Armed Services and Foreign Relations Committee on the Korean War in May 1951:

Senator [Bourke] Hickenlooper: Question No. 5: Isn't your proposal for sea and air blockade of Red China the same strategy by which Americans achieved victory over the Japanese in the Pacific?

MacArthur: Yes, sir. In the Pacific we bypassed them. We closed in. You must understand that Japan had an enormous population of nearly 80 million people, crowded into four islands. It was about half a farm population. The other half was engaged in industry.

Potentially the labor pool in Japan, both in quantity and quality, is as good as anything that I ever known. Some place down the line they have discovered what you might call the dignity of labor, that men are happier when they are working and constructing than when they are idling. This enormous capacity for work meant that they have something to work on. They build the factories, they had the labor, but they didn't have the basic materials.

There is practically nothing indigenous to Japan except the silkworm. They lack cotton, they lack wool, they lack petroleum

¹⁰⁵ Minoru, K. and Lin, S. (2014) *The Reluctant Combatant*. Lanham, MD: University Press of America.

¹⁰⁶ Chang and Halliday, p. 200-202.

products, they lack tin, they lack rubber, they lack a great many other things, all which was in the Asiatic basin.

They feared that if those supplies were cut off, there would be 10 to 20 million people unoccupied in Japan. Their purpose, therefore, in going to war was largely dictated by security.

The post-war era: Has anything changed?

At the end of World War II, though severely weakened, China became the regional power not only by virtue of its sheer size but also due to diligent US efforts to dismantle Japan's ability to carry out foreign policy based on its national interests. The US Occupation decommissioned Japan's military, thereby ensuring Japanese dependence on the US for protection from both China and the Soviet Union. In 1950, while Japan was still under US occupation, the Chinese Communists and Soviets concluded a Treaty of Friendship, the intent of which was to "prevent the revival of Japanese imperialism" and pledge mutual aid against Japan and "any other State that might in any way join with Japan in acts of aggression," clearly referring to the US.¹⁰⁷

Transformation of Japan into a liberal democracy was assured by the imposition of a constitution written by New Deal Democrats and by the purging of "militaristic" and "feudal" elements from political and social spheres. To further liberalize Japan, leftist political prisoners were freed and labor unions were legalized. The PRC reached out to leftist intellectuals and the Japanese media, both of which unquestioningly accepted and disseminated communist propaganda, and to anti-American labor unions and student groups. The Chinese media encouraged the "Japanese masses" to "rise up" against the government and tried to drive a wedge between Japan and other Asian nations by repeatedly evoking the specter of a "remilitarized Japan."¹⁰⁸ A series of violent, pro-communist, anti-American demonstrations, resulting from foreign subversion and an ineffective national government, marked the immediate post-war period.

¹⁰⁷ Dreyer, p. 86.

¹⁰⁸ Dreyer, p. 83-89.

As further demonstration that the Chinese Communists were intent on defining the post-war order in Asia, they denounced the 1951 Treaty of Peace as a sign of revised “Japanese militarism and aggression towards Asia.” In addition to the peace treaty, a mutual security treaty was signed between the US and Japan which allowed the US to station troops in Japan and gave the US permission to intervene in the event of “domestic instability,” pending permission by the Japanese government.¹⁰⁹ The mutual security treaty reminded the Japanese of the unequal treaties of the 19th century. Thus, Japan would join the post-war “family of nations” as a US dependent.

Nonetheless, Japan attempted to define its own China policy as means of enhancing its own economic and international political positions while luring the PRC away from Moscow’s orbit. Much to the consternation of all involved, including the US, Japan set out to build relations with the PRC as well as the Republic of China. Being prohibited by their constitution to own a “stick,” Japan offered nothing but “carrots” in promoting better bilateral relations, in the form of economic assistance (official developmental assistance, OAD) worth billions of US dollars and access to Japanese markets for Chinese goods. In exchange, the PRC would allow Japanese access to Chinese markets. In spite of Japan’s long-standing generosity (economic aid to China would last into the 21st century), the PRC developed an arsenal of nuclear weapons, the world’s largest standing army, and uses any opportunity to denounce “nationalist” Tokyo’s “aggressive” drive to “dominate” Asia. The decline of the Japanese economy and concurrent rise of the Chinese economy in the 1990s raised alarms in Tokyo, but foreign and domestic policies were not to be forthcoming from the leadership as cabinets during this period formed but then collapsed in rapid succession. Perhaps as a sign of resurgent self-confidence and recognition that Japan’s days as a major economic power are numbered with its burgeoning aging population, Chinese rhetoric against “aggressive” Japan decreased, though the frequency of public anti-Japanese rioting did not.

¹⁰⁹ Dreyer, p. 89.

China's eclipse of Japan as the second largest economy, as a culmination of competitive labor cost and technological sophistication, led to resigned acceptance by some Japanese to "also placed" status.¹¹⁰ Indeed, whereas Japan relied on China as its main export market, China's exports were headed for the US and elsewhere. The US's turn to China as a potential key Asian politico-economic partner provoked further anxiety in Japan, in that it was believed that the Americans were looking to relegate the US-Japan alliance to insignificance or perhaps even abandon it.¹¹¹ Perceiving internal Japanese weakness and ambiguous American statements concerning American defense of Japanese territory, the Chinese found the timing fortuitous to assert its authority and initiated vigorous naval patrols in the resources-rich South China Sea and around the Senkaku Islands, encouraging fishing vessels to literally "fish in troubled waters."

The ongoing conflict between China and Japan could well be characterized as ethnic in addition to political. Each side developed unique cultural environments reinforced over generations. Each side draws upon their respective culture's unique behavioral responses to confront outsiders. The Chinese have not demonstrated adaptiveness to foreign influences to the extent demonstrated by the Japanese, as the Chinese have historically viewed the Chinese people being at the center of the universe and that China already has everything it needs. In this vein, negotiating with China merely on the basis of "common interests" will fall on deaf ears. It may be that China is prepared to accept a status quo in its favor

¹¹⁰ Dreyer, p. 374.

¹¹¹ However, a survey suggests that with China's rise in "military and economic power," a majority of Americans (60 percent) see US relations with Japan as "more important" than ever. (Pew Research Center, April 2015, "American, Japanese: Mutual Respect 70 Years after the End of World War II.") In the same survey, most Americans (55 percent) in 2015 saw Japan as having a "fair trade policy" in stark contrast to the 1980s and 1990s, when the majority of Americans viewed Japanese policy as "unfair". More Americans favor "strong economic ties" with China (43 percent) than with Japan (36 percent). Interestingly, those in favor of "strong economic ties" with China (as opposed to "strong economic ties with Japan") are non-whites, under 50 years of age, Democrats and Independents. While the US currently looks to China as a significant trade partner, only 37 percent of Americans view China as having a "fair trade policy."

into the foreseeable future. The dean of Beijing University's School of International Relations summarized relations between China and Japan in this manner: "...complexity and ambivalence will last almost forever."¹¹² Given Japan's constrained policy options and declining economic power and Washington, DC's changing political climate, to avoid recurring frustration and disappointment, and possible war, the Japanese, and others in the Far East, may choose to adapt to an "almost forever" status quo.

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¹¹² Dreyer, p. 379.

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