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ESTA TESIS ESTÁ DEDICADA A MI HIJA VALENTINA MARÍA, A MI ESPOSA IRINA, A MIS PADRES BARRY Y DIDY, A MI HERMANA KIMBERLEY, A NEVING RUDSKJÆR, A PEPE DURÁN, AL PROFESOR RÜDIGER FRANK Y, SOBRE TODO, A LA VIRGEN MARÍA, LA ÚNICA REINA DEL UNIVERSO, SIN CUYO AMOR Y APOYO ESTE TRABAJO NUNCA SE HUBIERA TERMINADO.

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Chapter 1 – Introduction

1.1. Theme of the Thesis/Research Question

Multilateral cooperation through the creation of intergovernmental organizations (IOs), and their regional security persona, Regional Security Organizations (RSOs), has formed a hallmark of the global political architecture at the beginning of the 21st century. As argued by IR scholars already at the close of last century

International institutions have extended their influence into policy areas traditionally the prerogative of states, and patterns of international cooperation have become progressively formalized in international law. By the beginning of the twenty-first century there was virtually no problem of broad international concern for which no international regime existed to express principles and norms of formalized cooperation, and this cooperation almost always involved the participation of international organizations.¹

As noted by Milner, IOs seem to thrive and flourish in most global regions, from North America to Southeastern Asia, structuring behaviour of their members states and patterns of interstate interaction. The region of East Asia, however, seems to form an interesting exception, exhibiting continued resistance towards security cooperation through RSOs. Reflecting upon the challenge EA poses towards regionalism within a wider global context, Gilbert Rozman noted that “no other region of the world may be as confused or as significant for the coming decade of global security and integration. Yet, behind is stretched a ‘decade’ of evidence from efforts to create a new regionalism, offering a record that can divulge a great deal about why cooperation is difficult and what seems to work best.”² Indeed, this ‘difficulty’ in fostering regional security cooperation has been cited by scholars as especially enduring.³ Assisting in elucidating as to why such a ‘security vacuum’ continues to characterize international relations in East Asia through its seeming reluctance to structure cooperation through RSOs will be the focus of this dissertation.

East Asia is a broad concept, both culturally and geographically, and as such, for the purposes of this dissertation, requires to be properly delimited. This dissertation defines the core area of East Asia as comprising Japan, the People’s Republic of China (PRC), the Republic of Korea (RoK), the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (DPRK), Vietnam, Mongolia and the Russian Federation. Given the proposed security focus of this dissertation, however, its geographic scope of what encompasses East Asia will need to be widened. With its economic weight and unique historical heritage, geopolitical prevalence and (mostly) unrecognized political status, the “Republic of China (RoC)” with its close connectivity with Southeast China and further field with Southeast Asia, has been included in this analysis. In light of its profound effect on the political, economic and historic trajectory of East Asia, this thesis has elected, based on Washington’s historical interest and geopolitical presence in the region, to also, for reasons to be expounded in Chapter 4, include the United States of America (USA) as directly comprising part of East Asia.

¹ Stone, Randall, “*Institutions, Power and Interdependence*” in Milner, Helen (ed.), *Power, Independence and Non-State Actors in World Politics*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009, pg. 31.

² Rozman, Gilbert, “*The Challenge of the Northeast Asia Region*” in *Northeast Asia’s Stunted Regionalism*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004, pg. 3.

³ See Acharya, Amitav, *Reassessing Security Cooperation in the Asia-Pacific: Competition, Congruence, and Transformation*, Cambridge: MIT Press, 2007

The region of East Asia is worthy of consideration given its inherently contradictory nature. It is in East Asia where the political interests of the world's three largest nuclear powers (the Russian Federation, USA and PRC) converge with the ambitions of the newest, albeit unrecognized, member of the nuclear club the DPRK. The accompanying issues stemming therefrom take on global importance, well beyond a Korean peninsula still grappling with the consequences of 20th Century conflicts. In security terms, East Asia has been, as a region, ranked by scholars as "amongst the most dangerous on earth"⁴ Beyond security, East Asia is also home to the world's most significant and prosperous economies (Japan, PRC, RoK and "RoC") that have collectively witnessed a major increase in their respective share of global GDP. The geographic space in which such substantive economic output is reached is relatively compact, with the economic heart of the region centering around the East China Sea, dubbed the "Shanghai Circle", that encompasses the major urban centre/economic hubs in Japan, Korea, the PRC, the Russian Federation and "RoC" within a three-hour flight from Shanghai.⁵ Here, within an area equivalent to the size of the USA east of the Mississippi, reside more than 1.3 billion persons that, at the time of writing, account for roughly a quarter of global economic production. In 1960, the East Asian economy comprised 4 percent of world production—by 2020 its GDP share had reached 28.24 percent of global totals.⁶ Unsurprisingly, East Asia has become the second largest trading region, with its share of global trade at 18.3 percent, ahead of both NAFTA (15.7 percent) and the EU (11 percent).⁷

Despite such economic statistics that would seem to speak greatly for East Asia's ability to establish its own formalized organizations and independent regional consciousness, current realities portray a more sobering picture. Notwithstanding its economic credentials, regionalism has repeatedly failed to take hold within East Asia.⁸ Scholars have noted that East Asia, while forming a region in historic, cultural and economic terms, the interest in RIOs to address contemporary issues is low, with observers commenting that "until the late (19)80s, the Asia-Pacific had long been known as a region without any intergovernmental regional institutions."⁹ Yet, according to much of the prevailing IR theories, such credentials should make East Asia an ideal candidate for international cooperation. But so far, no movement has occurred in this direction. Studying the policy focus of 76 RIOs across the globe, Panke and Starkmann found that not a single RIO comprised of all East Asia states had been deemed worthy of analysis as of 2020.¹⁰

⁴ Calder, Kent & Ye, Min, The Making of Northeast Asia, Palo Alto: Stanford University Press, 2010, pg. 3.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ https://www.imf.org/external/datamapper/NGDP_RPCH@WEO/OEMDC/ADVEC/WEOWORLD/EEQ, accessed on 23 December 2020.

⁷ Calder & Ye, The Making of Northeast Asia, pg. 4.

⁸ Rozman, Gilbert, Northeast Asia's Stunted Regionalism, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010, pg. 1.

⁹ Komori Yasumasa, "Asia's Institutional Creation and Evolution", *Asian Perspective*, Vol. 33, No. 3, 2009, pg. 151-182.

¹⁰ Panke, Diana & Starkmann, Anna, "Responding to functionalist Incentives? Exploring the evolution of regional organisations after the end of the Cold War", *Journal of Contemporary European Studies*, 2020, Vol. 28, No. 2. pg. 216-235. Panke and Starkmann in their analysis, identify the following "Asian" RIOs: the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC), Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN), Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC), Council of Arab Economic Unity (CAEU), Central Asia Economic Cooperation (CAREC), Cooperation Council of Turkic Speaking States (CCTS), Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO), Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU),

Attempting to account for East Asia's persistent resistance to structuring cooperation through international organizations, some scholars have underlined that, due to the region's forecited economic weight, serious incentives to promote some forms of 'regionalism' have been created and allow some degree of cooperation to take place despite the East Asia's "stunted regionalism" as defined by Rozman.¹¹ In particular, researchers have noted the role of Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) have had in promoting a degree of regionalist cooperation throughout East Asia, with the so-called 'ASEAN Way' acting as a trailblazer.¹² However, such budding regionalist and institutional cooperation has not only, as noted before, failed to figure prominently when seen in a global context (as Panke and Starkman underline), nor does it imply that it is a phenomenon at all present across the total scope of all possible areas of regional cooperation. Current attempts at East Asian regional integration have been described as a "patchwork of institutional arrangements"¹³ that lack any inkling of a grand strategic architecture or coherence.¹⁴ Here, scholars and practitioners alike have underlined that cooperation in questions of security has lagged behind efforts in other areas of cooperation, with some postulating that "no overriding Asian 'security architecture' is in place, coupled with the proposition that one may not even emerge in the foreseeable future."¹⁵ The contribution of existing organizations in East Asia, such as ASEAN and APEC, to assisting in concretely addressing security-related issues is still the subject of scholastic debate.¹⁶ Therefore, in an area with a limited and uneven depth of regional cooperation through international organizations, cooperation in the area of security is especially sparse, if not outright non-existent. Why is East Asia seemingly resistant to international cooperation via RSOs? What could account for this phenomenon that has repeatedly been cited, as above, as an anomaly within an anomaly? Hence the overarching research question for this dissertation is *"Why are there no RSOs in East Asia?"*

To elucidate this persistent incongruous element of international relations, an approach has been chosen based on the theories of the intellectual traditions of Political Science. At this same time, while being couched in the foundations of this discipline, the selected approach heavily draws upon the concepts underpinning 'historical institutionalism'. Contemporary Political Science possesses the distinct disadvantage of seeking to address current quagmires through, at best, a limited historical perspective and, at worst, a complete historical vacuum. This acts a major hinderance to tackling complex issues, especially when they tread outside the well-trodden paths of explaining international organizations in the Western World under Anglo-Saxon dominance. As will be illustrated in below, such limited focus often undermines the researcher's ability to fully

Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO), Indian Ocean Rim Commission (IORC), Mekong-Ganga Cooperation (MGC), Mekong River Commission (MRC), Melanesian Spearhead Group (MSG), Pacific Islands Forum (PIF), South East Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARU), Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), Southeast Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO), the Pacific Community (SPC) and the UN Special Programme for the Economies of Central Asia (SPECA). None of the aforementioned RIOs include all East Asian states.

¹¹ See Brizeño-Ruiz & De Lombaerde (eds.), *The Political Economy of New Regionalism in the Pacific Rim*, New York: Routledge, 2020; Rozman, Gilbert, *Northeast Asia's Stunted Regionalism*.

¹² See Seng Tan, *Multilateral Asian Security Architecture*, London: Routledge, 2015, pg. 4.

¹³ Cha, Victor, "Complex Patchworks: U.S. Alliances as Part of Asia's Regional Architecture", *Asia Policy*, No. 11 (2011), pp. 27–50.

¹⁴ Tow, William & Taylor, Brendon, "What is Asian Security Architecture?", *Review of International Studies*, Vol. 36, No. 1 (2010), pp. 95–116.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, pg. 116.

¹⁶ See Achayara, Amitav & Goh, Evelin, *Reassessing Security Cooperation in the Asia-Pacific: Competition, Congruence, and Transformation*, Cambridge: MIT Press, 2007.

answer the particular intellectual enigma that has been posed. Indeed, this author rejects the notion, held by liberals and Marxists alike, that history develops in a teleological, linear fashion, but instead embraces the examination of the historical events that furnished the reasons why certain political trajectories were ultimately chosen for pursuit. This method has been previously used in attempting to account for the differences amongst the political systems that comprise the contemporary international system.¹⁷ Accounting for a phenomenon that exists is one thing, exploring why an event did not occur is quite another. Dealing with a negative phenomenon, as the research question implies, necessitates exploring why particular political trajectories were *not* taken. Viewing the research question from a historical approach, while still based through the theories of Political Science, can shed much light on the issue at hand.

1.2. RQ Relevance

Furnishing an answer to this question, this dissertation intends to better understand why multilateral cooperation in security remains largely absent in this region, especially when, compared with other regions where it seems to relatively abound.¹⁸ Finding answers to the above questions would enable the reader to glean a better understanding of the unique security and economic characteristics of East Asia. In order to better focus this dissertation's explanatory power, the present research project will focus on RSOs in East Asia between a concrete historical window, namely the time period between 25 July 1894 and 8 September 1951. These admittedly quite specific dates mark the start of two historical epoch-ending (and hence epoch-creating) wars: the First Sino-Japanese War (1894-1895) and the signing of the San Francisco Treaty of 1951, concluding the Second World War in Asia. Both wars had major implications for the international system, both globally and regionally. Historians underline the importance of the First Sino-Japanese War as “a seminal event in world history”, one that “delivered a coup de grâce to the expiring traditional order in the Far East”.¹⁹ This conflict altered how regional players viewed each other and, conversely, how East Asia was viewed outside its traditional Confucian frontiers. As such, the First Sino-Japanese War ushered in a “new balance of power” that, already in 1895, sealed Japan's status as a World Power in the eyes of the Western decision makers.²⁰ The signature of the San Francisco Treaty not only marked a formal end to the state of war between Japan and the Western Allies but also established the foundation for the systemic reality upon which international relations in East Asia are conducted today. As with the First Sino-Japanese War, the Treaty of San Francisco transformed mutual perceptions of regional players as well as respective conceptions of regional and global security architectures.

¹⁷ Almond, Gabriel, “Comparative Political Systems”, *Journal of Politics*, Aug., 1956, pp. 391-409.

¹⁸ See Hanns W. Maull, ‘The European Security Architecture: Conceptual Lessons for Asia-Pacific Security Cooperation’, in Amitav Acharya & Evelyn Goh (eds), Reassessing Security Cooperation in the Asia-Pacific; Joseph McMillan, Richard Sokolsky, and Andrew Winner, “Toward a New Regional Security Architecture”, *The Washington Quarterly*, 26 (2003), pp. 161–75; Nunez, Joseph, A 21st Century Security Architecture for the Americas: Multilateral Cooperation, Liberal Peace, and Soft Power, Carlisle, PA: US Army War College, 2002; and Benedikt Franke, “Africa's Evolving Security Architecture and the Concept of Multilayered Security Communities”, *Cooperation and Conflict*, 43 (2008), pp. 313–40.

¹⁹ Paine, S.C.M., The Sino-Japanese War of 1894-1895: Perceptions, Power, and Primacy, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003, pg. 3.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, pg. 4.

Some scholars trace the evolution of East Asian RSOs as viewed through the prism of the end of the Second World War. As this dissertation will approach the above Research Question through the prism of both historical institutionalism and Realism, it would seem beneficial to expend our window of inquisition to span the region between two major, epoch-changing events. As noted above, East Asia is home to a plethora of ongoing security issues with both regional and global ramifications. Examples include denuclearization efforts on the Korean Peninsula, the conflict in Korea, or border conflicts between several East Asian states (Japan and the Russian Federation, Japan and the PRC, the RoK and Japan). Understanding why RSOs have not emerged in East Asia would allow academics, foreign policy specialists and a distinct minority of interested politicians a better understanding of RSOs to address regional cooperation and security issues, as well as influence state behaviour. Are they truly necessary in the international structure of the 21st Century context in East Asia? Do RSOs contribute to or, based on events launched in early 2022, fundamentally erode regional security? Given the unique international system in East Asia, due to the above noted factors, further investigation into how such systemic constellations affect the prospects of RSO formation becomes necessary. Through the provision of responses to such questions, in turn, would afford both academics and foreign policy specialists a better understanding of how to address relevant regional questions in a more efficient way, both in East Asia as well as in the global context at large.

Chapter 2 -- State of the Art

2.1. Introduction and Purpose

This dissertation seeks to answer the question “*Why are there no RSOs in East Asia?*”. The universe of IR theory is dense hence this review of the State of the Art will focus on the main elements as laid out by the following Guiding Research Questions (GRQ), namely (1.) “*What prompts states to initiate security cooperation and create RSOs?*”; (1a.) “*How do systemic conditions affect the process of RSO creation?*” Although IR scholarship on the formation of IOs is enormous, most of its pages do not address the query highlighted in this dissertation’s research question, namely accounting for the phenomenon of choosing **NOT** to form RSOs. To accomplish this end, what previous scholarship has already contributed regarding the nature of RSOs; what causes their appearance; system and hegemonic theory; as well as ‘critical juncture’ literature needs to be reviewed.

As a starting point, this dissertation espouses the Realist assumption that states exist in a Hobbesian international system whose base condition is one of perennial geopolitical rivalry. Cooperation is therefore the exception, and not the norm, of international politics. At the same time, for better or for worse, international cooperation does occur and is a political reality. The process of transitioning from a Hobbesian ‘State of Nature’ towards a rules-based and regimented structure of security cooperation is a complicated matter that defies the boundaries a single institutional IR approach. Hence, answers will be sought from diverse IR paradigms with special emphasis on a realist-constructivist axis, given the importance of concept of identity in shaping international relations and the system within which they operate. To better guide this dissertation through the substantial scholarship that has already been conducted, the following sections have been inspired by the above GRQ:

- (1.) RIOs and RSOs: definitions;
- (2.) Reasons for RSO emergence;
- (3.) Effect of systemic conditions on the emergence and operation of RSOs;
- (4.) Consequences of hegemony on RSO creation;
- (5.) ‘Critical Juncture’ (CJ) theory and its effects on the emergence and operation of RSOs;
- (6.) The influence of alternative IR theories on concepts of systemic stability.

As the research question focuses on East Asia in a global context, this State of the Art focuses on IR theory as applied to a general, global context rather than focusing on the region of East Asia as a separate entity.

2.2. RIOs: Definition

This dissertation’s research question has a regional focus, namely East Asia. It does not focus on organizations with a global scope, such as the United Nations (UN) to which all East Asian states belong. Our focus lies a particular breed of Regional International Organizations (RIOs). Researchers have pointed to the rapid proliferation of RIOs after the end of the Cold War,

with Breslin arguing that the 1990s witnessed a “new wave of regionalism” that culminated in every state in the world being a member of some RIO.²¹ Yet what exactly is a RIO?

The term “region” stands out as the chief defining hallmark of an RIO and its equivalent in security matters, an RSO. This traditionally implies a geographic connotation, one that spawned the study of geopolitics by dividing the world into geostrategic regions.²² Hence, “regions” entail something wider than physical boundaries while, at the same time, underscoring finite membership. Russett argued that they were characterized by a high degree of interdependence or “nodes where people are bound together by mutual dependence arising from common interest.”²³ Katzenstein underlined the necessity of taking into consideration the importance of geopolitical and cultural constructions.²⁴ Questions of identity, therefore, are relevant to any explanation of the possible borders of any RSO. In order to qualify for membership of a region (an obvious prerequisite to joining a RSO), a nation must share in a common identity, based on, as defined by Mansfield and Milner, some combination of cultural, economic, linguistic or political ties.²⁵ For example, although the Straits of Gibraltar separate Spain and Morocco by 13 kilometers at their narrowest point, they would not be seen, according to most definitions, as comprising or forming part of the same region. Geographic considerations and current cultural composition are further reinforced by the historic processes that can be used as a tool in determining the existence of a region. These include the historical prevalence and influence of culture²⁶ or key historical events that shaped a region’s development, such as mass migration and access to resources.²⁷ Identity, both current and past, matters.

The above understanding of what a “region” entails, therefore, establishes a limit that encompasses any RIO and reflects a limited membership horizon.²⁸ Inevitable variations in respective concepts of cultural, historic and geopolitical ties, as well as forms of economic interdependence, can lead to variations in RIO scope. Regional variation in institutional design and different focal points on cultural, domestic and geopolitical characteristics account for various degrees of RIO autonomy, decision-making and sovereignty.²⁹ Such variations distilled a further

²¹ Breslin, Shaun et al., New Regionalisms in the Global Political Economy: Theory and Cases, London: Routledge, 2002.

²² MacKinder, H.J. “The Geographical Pivot of History”, *The Geographic Journal*, Vol. 23, No. 4 (April 1904), pp. 421-437.

²³ Russett, Bruce, International Regions and the International System, Chicago: Rand McNally, 1967, pg. 2.

²⁴ Katzenstein, Peter, A World of Regions: Asia and Europe in the American Imperium, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2005.

²⁵ Hoffmann, Andrea Ribeiro & van der Vleuten, Anna (eds.), Closing the Gap? Legitimacy and Democracy in Regional International Organizations, London: Routledge, 2016, pg. 6.

²⁶ See Fairbank, John; Reischauer, Edwin; & Craig, Albert, The Great Tradition, East Asia, Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1960; Fairbank, John K., Reischauer, Edwin O., & Craig, Albert M., East Asia: The Great Transformation, Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1965; Ziltener, Patrick, Regionale Integration in Ostasien: Eine Untersuchung der historischen und gegenwärtigen Interaktionsweisen einer Weltregion, Wiesbaden : Springer Fachmedien Wiesbaden, 2013, Ziltener, Patrick, „Die Gesellschaftliche Heterogenität der Länder Afrikas und Asiens und ihre Entwicklungsrelevanz“, Stuttgart: *Lucius & Lucius, Zeitschrift für Soziologie*, 2006, Vol. 35 (4), pp. 286-30.

²⁷ Diener, Alexander; Grant, Andrew & Bennett, Mia, “Northeast Asia in Regional Perspective”, *Asian Geographer*, 2001, Vol. 38, No. 2, pp. 95-118.

²⁸ Mansfield, Edward & Milner, Helen (eds), The Political Economy of Regionalism, New York: Columbia University Press, 1997, pg. 591.

²⁹ Acharya, Amitav & Johnston, Alistair (eds.), Crafting Cooperation: Regional International Institutions in Comparative Perspective, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007.

commonality between RIOs, namely their possession of a broad mandate that can range from a limited set of tasks to a more encompassing role.³⁰ Such thoughts echo Keohane who defined RIOs as formal institutions which are capable of “purposive action like raising and spending money, promulgating policies, and making discretionary choices”³¹. Subsequent definitions envisioned RIOs as “institutionalized arenas in which three or more states form a defined region, cooperate in several policy areas, [and] also gain formal and informal access to such multilateral negotiations.”³²

In summary, RIOs are international fora where three or more states elect to come together to cooperate in pre-defined policy areas in a format acceptable to states involved. Such cooperation, as opposed to IOs, takes place on a smaller scale. The region in question is defined in terms of geography and/or normative aspects such as identity or shared historical culture. This dissertation, therefore, will define a RIO as an *international institutional arena, defined by geopolitical, cultural or historical criteria, that is mandated to perform a broad range of tasks by its member states*.

2.3. RSOs: Definition

Based on the above definition, RSOs inevitably deal with the question of security. In itself, the term ‘security’ covers a wide field of possible definitions. For the purposes of this dissertation, security is understood in a classic sense as the absence of war between states as defined by Deutsch.³³ This is also echoed by Raimo Väyrynen who defines security as a “low past, present and future probability of using serious coercive force between or within nations.”³⁴

As this dissertation approaches the research question from the perspective of ‘offensive realism’ as defined as follows by Mearsheimer, it takes aboard its core assumptions of the overall anarchic nature of the international system, with states seeking to maximize their relative power with hegemony as their ultimate goal.³⁵ Ceteris paribus, states also seek to prevent their competitors from achieving hegemony within the respective system. While security has more recently been defined by institutionalists as encompassing elements beyond the purely militaristic³⁶, the behaviour of states remains focused on ensuring their respective survival at the expense of others.

³⁰ Hoffman et al., *Closing the Gap?* pg. 6.

³¹ Keohane, Robert, *International Institutions and State Power: Essays in International Relations Theory*, Boulder: Westview Press, 1989, pg. 280.

³² Panke, Diane, “States in international organizations: Promoting regional positions in international politics?”, *International Journal*, 2020, Vol. 74 (4), pg. 630.

³³ Karl W. Deutsch et al., *Political Community and the North Atlantic Area*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1957, pg. 5.

³⁴ Väyrynen, Raimo, “Stable Peace through Security Communities? Steps towards Theory-Building”, Occasional Paper nr. 18:3, The Joan B. Kroc Institute for International Peace Studies, 2000, pg. 165.

³⁵ Mearsheimer, John, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics*, New York: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc., 2014., pg. 22.

³⁶ For example, Adler and Barnett argues that the advent of ‘globalization’ has ushered in the consideration of non-traditional security threats such as economic, environmental and social welfare concerns that merit a coordinated, systemic response: Adler Emmanuel & Barnett, Michael, *Security Communities*, Cambridge: Cambridge Studies in International Relations, 1998, pg. 4.

Nevertheless, the prevention of war has been cited as one of the fundamental tasks in international relations: Immanuel Kant, responding to upheavals in Europe, initially anticipated the modernist trend in the centuries to come through his 1795 theory of Perpetual Peace spread by responsible and republican governments acting as a catalyst for harmony, commerce, and cooperation.³⁷ Since then, there has been a long-held assumption by IR scholars that security issues, in an inherently anarchic world, present a serious challenge to international cooperation and institution-building.³⁸ Deutsch went so far as to underline that the central problem “in any civilization that wishes to survive...is how can men act together to eliminate war as a social institution?”³⁹ Indeed, liberal scholars have gone so far as to argue that RSOs constitute a primary vehicle through which regional security is maintained.⁴⁰

Despite the altruistic objective of eliminating the possibility of war from international relations, and the purported role RSOs play, institution-building is not self-evident. IR scholars maintain that they are products of conscious state decisions and do not arise as a *deus ex machina* from the anarchy of international politics. As previously stated, this dissertation shares the assumption of offensive realism that perennial geopolitical competition, geared towards state survival, is a result of the Hobbesian international system. Lasting peace is elusive, both theoretically and in reality. As Mearsheimer argues, cooperation among states is indeed possible with the caveat that it “is sometimes difficult to achieve and always difficult to sustain.”⁴¹ Here, security cooperation is seen as exclusively voluntary, ad hoc agreements between sovereign states that have the character of a ‘marriage of convenience’, with no potential for longevity or autonomy.

This includes alliances, defined as a formal or informal relationship of security cooperation between two or more sovereign states, entailing a base level of some commitment and an exchange of benefit for both parties.⁴² However, the trust-building intention of such gestures can be limiting: Edelstein demonstrates that uncertainty of states’ mutual intentions render nations reluctant to let their guard down fully should their initial assessment be erroneous.⁴³ Ergo, alliances and other such security agreements, serve as a tool to assist states in managing the inherent anarchy of the international system to facilitate their own survival and not a cornerstone of peaceful co-existence. For this to occur, a deeper degree of trust and cooperation is necessary.

Here, the concept of ‘*security community*’ is of special importance. Under certain conditions (see Chapter 4.3), the international system (or its sub-systems) have the potential to create a ‘security community’ where common norms and identities eliminate geopolitical competition and provide a foundation for peace. Deutsch defined ‘security communities’ as one

³⁷ Kant, Immanuel, Zum ewigen Frieden: ein philosophischer Entwurf, Stuttgart: Reclam, 1984.

³⁸ See Keohane, Robert O., “Institutional Theory and the Realist Challenge after the Cold War” in Baldwin, David (ed.), Neorealism and Neoliberalism: The Contemporary Debate, New York: Columbia University Press, 1993, pp. 269-300; Lake, David A., “Beyond Anarchy: The Importance of Security Institutions”, *International Security* 26 (1), pp. 129-160.

³⁹ Deutsch, Political Community and the North Atlantic Area, pg.1.

⁴⁰ Tavares, Rodrigo, “Understanding Regional Peace and Security: A Framework for Analysis”, United Nations University Comparative Regional Integration Studies, Occasional Papers, 2005/17.

⁴¹ Mearsheimer, The Tragedy of Great Power Politics, pg. 51.

⁴² Walt, Stephen M., The Origins of Alliances, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1987, pg. 1

⁴³ Edelstein, David, “Managing Uncertainty: Beliefs about Intentions and the Rise of Great Powers”, *Security Studies* 12, no. 1, (Autumn 2002).

where states are ‘integrated’ and there exists “real assurance that the members of that community will not fight each other physically, but will settle their disputes in some other way.”⁴⁴ Despite having the absence of war as a common goal, Deutsch further differentiated between two types of security communities: ‘amalgamated’ and ‘pluralistic’. An amalgamated security community comes into existence when its members unify, while the pluralistic version formally maintains the sovereignty of its members.⁴⁵ The Deutschian concept of pluralistic security communities was picked up by Alder and Barnett, who tweaked its definition as “a transnational region comprised of sovereign states whose people maintain dependable expectations of peaceful change.”⁴⁶

Moreover, while security communities can also crystalize over time, the historical record shows that they can likewise dissolve. Researchers have underlined that cooperation in security matters is fleeting and is subject to the ebb and flow of events, including shifts in states’ constructivist perception: Tilly, in examining the post-Columbus European historical record, underscored a link between major systemic changes and the restructuring or re-conception of collective identities that underpinned the notion of security communities.⁴⁷

A RSO therefore, for the purposes of this dissertation, is defined as *an organization comprised of two or more states that, as per Deutsch’s definition of a pluralistic security community, constructs a set of rules and norms to define state behaviour and a ‘sense of community’ attenuated enough to ensure the security of the states involved.*

2.4. Reasons for RSO Emergence

2.4.1. Introduction

IR scholars have enquired as to why IOs emerge in the first place, especially given the rise in their importance and high degree of proliferation in the decades immediately following the end of the Second World War.⁴⁸ Cooperation through IOs is very much, for better or worse, a reality. As this dissertation’s research question deals with RSOs in East Asia, reviewing previous research on the emergence of IOs, and their security-focused incarnation of RSOs, would be useful. Hence, while the literature points towards the possibility of RSO formation, it also indicates that RSOs do not by themselves represent the default state of affairs in the international system. They do not constitute a *sine qua non* to achieving peace but rather represent the culmination of a lengthy process of state interaction.

⁴⁴ Deutsch, Political Community and the North Atlantic Area, pg. 6.

⁴⁵ Ibid., pp. 4-7.

⁴⁶ Adler, Emanuel and Barnett, Michael, Security Communities, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998, pg. 30.

⁴⁷ Tilly, Charles, “States and Nationalism in Europe, 1492-1992”, *Theory and Society*, 23 (1995), pp. 131-146.

⁴⁸ Keohane, Robert, After Hegemony, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984, pg. 5.

2.4.2. Balance of Power and the Maintenance of Peace

All journeys require a starting point. Balance of power theory has been cited as one of the most ancient and fundamental concepts in international relations, acting as the historical bedrock of interstate commerce: David Hume noted it as a “scientific law”⁴⁹, with Snyder referring to it as “the central theoretical concept in international relations.”⁵⁰ Morgenthau underlined balance of power as an iron law of politics⁵¹, while Kissinger viewed it more as an art practiced by political leaders with varying degrees of historical success.⁵² In examining the historical record, balance of power theorists argue that states seek power within the anarchical international system to not only secure their own survival. In line with the tenets of offensive realism, they also seek to expand their own power. Competition amongst states is the natural state of affairs in international politics and a state’s physical survival cannot be divorced from power maximization, both in the international system at large and within regional systems.⁵³ Of interest is the agreement that a balance of power system can be successful at avoiding the outbreak of war between geopolitical competitors. For example, Deutsch classifies the Cold War rivalry between the USSR and USA as successfully maintaining global peace despite not constituting a security community.⁵⁴

This seemingly paradoxical furnishing of peace within a system by states seeking to maximize their own power and influence is cited as an unintended, but central, part of balance of power theory.⁵⁵ Claude underlined the tendency of states to seek a systemic equilibrium through their actions accorded an ‘automatic’ balance that contributed to the maintenance of peace.⁵⁶ Morton Kaplan equates it with an invisible force, not unlike “Adam Smith’s ‘invisible hand’ of competition, the international system is policed informally by self-interest.”⁵⁷ The decisions of some states, however, matter more than others. Balance of power theorists also attribute this equilibrium to the actions of one state, known as the “balancer” or “holder of the balance”.⁵⁸ More recently, theorists distinguish between two terms, namely *balancing* (viewed as a state strategy or foreign policy behaviour) or *balance of power* (establishment of a power equilibrium among states at the systemic or sub-systemic level).⁵⁹ This includes the establishment of an array of security arrangements, ranging from alliances to structured cooperation against perceived common threats.⁶⁰ Stopping much short of the establishment of more formalized, deeper security cooperation, ‘balance of power’ allows states to navigate the anarchical nature of the global system without necessarily reverting to open warfare

⁴⁹ Hume, David, “Of the Balance of Power,” in Paul Seabury (ed.), Balance of Power, San Francisco: Chandler, 1965, pp. 32-36.

⁵⁰ Snyder, Glenn H., “Balance of Power in the Missile Age”, *Journal of International Affairs* 14 (1961): pp. 21-24.

⁵¹ Morgenthau, Hans, Politics Among Nations, New York: Knopf, 1967.

⁵² Kissinger, Henry, A World Restored: Metternich, Castlereagh and the Problems of Peace, Cambridge: The Riverside Press, 1957.

⁵³ Paul, T.V.; Wirtz, James; Fortmann, Michel (eds.), Balance of Power: Theory and Practice in the 21st Century. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2004, pp. 4-7.

⁵⁴ Deutsch, Political Community and the North Atlantic Area, pg. 7.

⁵⁵ Paul et al., Balance of Power, pg. 32.

⁵⁶ Claude, Inis L., Power and International Relations, New York: Random House, 1962, pp. 41-43.

⁵⁷ Kaplan, Morton, “Balance of Power, Bipolarity, and Other Models of International Systems”, *American Political Science Review*, September 1957, Vol. 51, pg. 690.

⁵⁸ Paul et al., Balance of Power pg. 33.

⁵⁹ Ibid. pg. 3.

⁶⁰ Walt, The Origins of Alliances, pg. 7.

As noted, RSOs entail per se a highly developed form of institutionalized cooperation, something that offensive realism views with open skepticism. However, as noted by institutionalists such as Keohane, cooperation through IOs is a political reality and has been for some time. The historical record does, for better or for worse, illustrate their emergence and, as previously noted, prevalence in international relations since 1945. Cooperation in security matters, it is suggested, represents a useful tool for states to create an off ramp from the seemingly cyclical systemic flux of ad hoc agreements that hold little or no currency due to the tenets of balance of power. As will be seen in Chapter 4.3.3., liberal institutionalists study the phenomena of security cooperation almost as a *fait accompli*, without delving into the details of how such seemingly rare conditions were formed in the first place. As this is a key issue to understanding the trajectory towards the formation of RSOs, this dissertation now turns to the conditions under which they emerge.

2.4.3. Stable Peace: A Prerequisite Process towards the Formation of RSOs

To escape this cycle of anarchy and the constant risk of war, scholars note that various policy options are available to states to foster security-based, as well as other forms of cooperation. This entails the establishment of what has been termed as ‘stable peace’. The emergence and stabilization of peace, however, has been qualified as an unstudied and elusive theoretical concept: despite the importance of understanding how and why lasting peace is established between states, scholars note that “little is known about how and why zones of peace form and endure.”⁶¹ One reason cited was that the state of stable peace between states in an inherently anarchic world comprised of power-seeking states is uncommon. Kacowicz et al. noted that the “question of how peace, once obtained, can be stabilized has been barely addressed in the literature.”⁶² The number of scholars that choose to delve into the question of stable peace is modest at best and their findings lean. A major exception, of course, is so called ‘democratic peace’ literature that charts cooperation between democratic states once peace has broken out and been stabilized for some time (see Chapter 4.3.3.). A major shortcoming of ‘democratic peace’ literature is the absence of any indication on how peace between states is established. Seen as a self-evident *fait accompli*, its account of interstate cooperation focuses its analysis within the confines of democratic states who have been at peace with each other for some time.⁶³ Democratic peace scholars, such as Keohane and Nye, have little to contribute regarding the initial establishment of the peace so necessary to ensure institutional cooperation.

Returning to the existing stable peace literature, however limited, where the main question revolves around what is ‘stable peace’ and how is it initially established. How this seemingly inevitable cycle of interstate competition is broken is key to understanding the first steps of how a durable peace is implemented within the international system and allow for the formation of RSOs. Further investigation of this question, especially outside the much-investigated Western democratic paradigm, is important as it would permit scholars to better account for fundamental

⁶¹ Kupchan, Charles, *How Enemies Become Friends*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010, pg. 21.

⁶² Kacowicz & Bar-Simon-Tov, “Stable Peace: A Conceptual Framework” in Kacowicz et al (eds.), *Stable Peace Among Nations*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000, pg. 13,

⁶³ See Keohane, Robert, *After Hegemony*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984; Keohane, Robert O. & Nye Joseph S., *Power and Interdependence: World Politics in Transition*, Boston: Little Brown, 1977.

changes in interstate relations and understand the possible reasons behind the initial formation (or lack thereof) of RSOs.

2.4.4. Definition of ‘Stable Peace’: The Unthinkability of War and Self-Images

According to this dissertation’s base approach to the research question, namely offensive realism, prolonged periods of peace are possible via the balance of power achieved through states pursuing decisions meant to safeguard their survival and expand their power. The concept of a stable peace, however, entails something more profound than a mere lack of open warfare. Given the paucity of scholars, the existing definitions emerging from stable peace literature bear many similar characteristics.

The first is the term itself. Kenneth Boulding introduced the notion of “stable peace” through the publication of his book bearing the same title and defined this condition as “a situation in which the probability of war is so small that it does not really enter into the calculations of any of the people involved.”⁶⁴ Kacowicz et al. explicitly built on Boulding’s work and defined stable peace according to two separate basic dimensions: the cognitive and temporal.⁶⁵ Cognitively, stable peace exists when there is a joint understanding (between states) that war is unthinkable as an instrument for resolving conflicts. Temporally, the authors speak of the longevity of stable peace. However, the base element remains the same as with Boulding, namely the unfathomability of war between certain states. Kupchan defined stable peace as the “emergence of a deeper and more durable peace, one in which the absence of war stems not from deterrence, neutrality, or apathy, but from a level of interstate comity that effectively eliminates the possibility of armed conflict.”⁶⁶ Instead of resorting to overt force, states demilitarize their relations and seek to resolve any disputes by peaceful means. Like with Kacowicz et al., its essence remains basically unchanged from Boulding’s initial definition: the improbability of war as a means of policy, with the authors underlining that stable peace “is recognized both as a cognitive reality that denies war as a policy option and as a continuous, long-lasting peace between nations.”⁶⁷

2.4.5. Stable Peace as the Result of a Process

A second commonality to all three definitions of stable peace is the emphasis on a particular course of development. Stable peace does not suddenly break out; its appearance is rather a result of a process. Boulding’s array into stable peace marked one of the first major treatises focusing exclusively on the study of the transformation of state relations from war to peace; from conflict to non-conflict. In doing so, Boulding took an approach anchored in human individualism rather than the heights of global politics: the ‘taboo system’ or the range of possible behaviours and actions that is available to the individual at any given time.⁶⁸ Actions that lay beyond the ‘taboo line’ are inherently unfathomable and are not considered by individuals (and states) in any serious matter. Interestingly, Boulding also noted that this ‘taboo line’ was subject to change based on the

⁶⁴ Boulding, Kenneth, *Stable Peace*, Austin: University of Texas Press, 1978, pg. 13.

⁶⁵ Kacowicz and Bar-Simon-Tov, “Stable Peace: A Conceptual Framework”, pp. 12-13.

⁶⁶ Kupchan, *How Enemies Become Friends*, pg. 2.

⁶⁷ Kacowicz & Bar-Simon-Tov, “Stable Peace: A Conceptual Framework”, pg. 33.

⁶⁸ Boulding, *Stable Peace*, pg. 15.

prevalence of war or peace (e.g. during a period of peace, a state would consider sinking another state's ships as taboo, an action that is perfectly logical under conditions of war). Boulding referred to the transformations from a system of war to stable peace as a 'phase system', where he differentiated between an 'unstable peace' (where peace holds and "war is regarded as a breakdown of peace which will be restored when the war is over") and 'stable peace' where the idea of resorting to war is per se unthinkable.⁶⁹ The fundamental ingredient able to instigate such a radical metamorphosis in interstate relations is what Boulding referred to as 'self-image'. Here, Boulding argues that "in the case of nation states, the self-image of the state as a potential war maker is so common as to be almost universal", with areas enjoying stable peace comprising a rare exception.⁷⁰ The state of stable peace is attained when the self-image of the states in question have propelled the possibility of military conflict well-beyond the taboo line of acceptable behaviour. In such cases, Boulding opines that "the national images are mutually compatible, the border is disarmed, and the probability of war is extremely low."⁷¹ An important element of Boulding's argument is that cultural commonalities, including ethnicity and common language, do not figure decisively in the construction of self-images that exclude the possibility of war (as aptly illustrated by the bloody history of Latin America and its number of sanguine interstate conflicts following their respective independence from the Spanish Empire).

Boulding noted time is necessary to bolster peace: "the longer peace persists the better chance it has of persisting simply because peace itself increases the strength of the [peace] system."⁷² As with the definition of stable peace, Boulding's initial study of the matter molded much of the contours of theoretical discussion to follow. Rock, building on Boulding, studied the historical process of how great powers may opt to transform their respective relations from 'negative' or 'precarious peace' to 'stable peace'.⁷³ Kacowicz et al. attribute the outbreak of stable peace as the result of a process of stabilization, namely the initial stage after the resolution of a conflict, and consolidation, namely the maintenance and deepening of stable peace over time.⁷⁴

2.4.6. Launching the Gears towards Stable Peace

Stable peace literature argues that the advent of RSOs is one that occurs after a process has taken place. But how is the process of going down the road towards stable peace initiated? Boulding has little to say regarding the reasons why and how the gears of this transformative process are set in motion: peace is a reality, but how it exactly occurs remains to be elucidated. Like Boulding, Rock's findings noted that peace emerges in two stages: first, states deciding to no longer resort to military force to resolve differences and, second, leaders opting to iron out any fundamental conflict of interests between them. Rock, however, does not analyze how peace breaks out, but rather focuses on the impact of geopolitical considerations (economic interdependence, conflicts of interests). While not explicitly dealing with the question of stable

⁶⁹ Ibid., pp. 45-46.

⁷⁰ Ibid., pg. 16.

⁷¹ Ibid., pg. 16. Boulding sites two specific cases to empirically exemplify stable peace through state self-images that have banished martial conflict well beyond the realm of plausibility: relations between the US and Canada and the UK and US.

⁷² Ibid., pg. 62.

⁷³ Rock, Stephen, *Why Peace Breaks Out: Great Power Rapprochement in Historical Perspective*, Chapel Hill, University of North Carolina, 1989, pg. 4.

⁷⁴ Ibid., pg. 24.

peace per se, Seunghoon Emilia Heo studied the process of reconciliation between states and why it occurs in international relations, focusing in particular on how political organized groups of human beings achieve collective reconciliation.⁷⁵ In accounting for reconciliation, Heo underlines the importance of “discussing sustainable peace beyond simple co-existence”⁷⁶, a concept which is very much akin to the above definitions of stable peace. Heo introduces the concept of singling out ‘hereditary enemy states’ and underlines the necessity of transforming their mutual relations and presents an interesting interplay between international and domestic factors in accounting for different types of reconciliation. While concepts such as ‘hereditary enemies’ goes against the tenets of offensive Realism⁷⁷, like other stable peace/reconciliation scholars, Heo does not tread far from Boulding’s definitional base.

Elaborating on the aforementioned research, Kupchan argues a key element in any initial overture to kick-start the process of reconciliation is ‘unilateral accommodation’, where one state makes an initial concession to the other as “an opening gesture of good will”.⁷⁸ This, in turn, unleashes the phase of ‘rapprochement’, where “long-standing adversaries stand down from armed rivalry, agree to settle their disputes amicably, and ultimately develop mutual expectations of peaceful coexistence.”⁷⁹ Such examples include “demilitarizing contested areas, destroying fortifications, and making territorial concessions.”⁸⁰ Kupchan notes that such gestures do not automatically emerge but rather are dependent on three additional criteria. The first is geopolitical necessity: “the state that initiates the effort to back away from rivalry does not do so out of altruism. Rather it faces a threatening environment and lacks the resources needed to deal adequately with those threats.”⁸¹ Efforts to befriend an adversary is born therefore out of necessity, not opportunity. Kupchan’s second triggering condition is that of a preponderant state in the system that anchors the zone of peace, echoing Deutsch’s assumption that security communities form around cores of strength. The third triggering condition is policy entrepreneurship, defined as elites accepting the risks inherent in undertaking a policy of unilateral accommodation. Should these conditions be met, stable peace can begin to emerge through a policy of Realist calculus of self-interest and, if initially accepted by the other party, will result in a rapprochement after “both initiator and target state make such costly concessions and—as a result—attribute benign intent to each other’s actions.”⁸² The end result is a moving away from armed rivalry towards expectations of peaceful co-existence.

Kacowicz et al. view the onset of stable peace as a particular process of learning defined as “strategic” or “complex” that involves mutual learning so that “each party will perceive a mutual

⁷⁵ Seunghoon Emilia Heo, *Reconciling Enemy States in Europe and Asia*, London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012.

⁷⁶ Ibid., pg. 23.

⁷⁷ Realism as an IR school is not prone to concepts such as ‘hereditary enemies’ and rejects the concept outright. Walt, Morgenthau and Mearsheimer all underscore the ever-shifting international landscape of alliances and pacts, all done in the name of increasing the power of the individual state. This is also illustrated in the historical record, with a prime example being the Diplomatic Revolution of 1756 when Austria, under Minister Graf von Kaunitz, abandoned its alliance with the United Kingdom to become an ally of its archrival, France. A more recent example of the inherent flexibility in the international system can be seen with Nixon’s 1972 visit to China that witnessed the normalization of diplomatic relations (see Chapter 4.6.).

⁷⁸ Kupchan, *How Enemies Become Friends*., pg. 35.

⁷⁹ Ibid., pp. 4-5.

⁸⁰ Ibid., pg. 39.

⁸¹ Ibid., pp. 66-67.

⁸² Ibid., pg. 39

interest in establishing and maintaining the peace between them as the most important factor in assuring each other's security and even existence.”⁸³ As with Kupchan, this process is however subject to several conditions without which no stabilization can occur. These include (1.) stable political regimes [democratic or non-democratic]; (2.) mutual satisfaction with the terms of the peace agreement and/or the existing status quo; (3.) predictability of behaviour and problem-solving mechanisms [commitment to solve differences peacefully]; and (4.) Open communication channels including trust and respect between the leaders.⁸⁴ As such, stable peace cannot be attributed to a single cause, but rather is the result of several interrelated factors.

Should the base condition of rapprochement be realized, other more intrusive forms of cooperation can be constructed. This then includes the Deutschian concept of a security community, where Kupchan argues that its members “go beyond peaceful coexistence, developing rules and institutions for managing their relations.”⁸⁵ Indeed, Kupchan prescribes following three conditions for the maintenance of what is, with stable peace having been established, a ‘zone of peace’: (i.) institutional restraint; (ii.) compatible social orders; and (iii.) cultural commonality. Hence, identity, self-perception and other constructivist tenets also assist in the formation of a security community: Deutsch stressed that their emergence could be sparked by the a “sense of community” amongst perspective members—using the post-Second World War North Atlantic as an example. Recall that Boulding also echoed such thoughts in his abovementioned concept of states’ “compatible ‘self-images’” that effectively banished the use of war as a tool of dispute resolution.⁸⁶ This concept was further built upon by the writings of Alexander Wendt who presented a cultural theory of global politics where states’ self-perceptions, and their perception of others, marked a fundamental characteristic of the global stage.⁸⁷ Wendt also applied this social Constructivist approach to the question of RSOs. He sought to elucidate under what conditions IOs were initially formed or, conversely, why states elected to accede to them. In short, Wendt viewed states opting to join RSOs based on “the logic of appropriateness”, namely what they believe to be in line with their individual concept of normative value.⁸⁸

Hence, values per se play a role in the emergence of RSOs, making essential contributions to their initial emergence and even the scope of perspective cooperation. As such, they mark the top of the pyramid of stable peace and a height that few interstate relationships are, when looking at the historical record, able to achieve. Even then, the literature admits that much remains clouded in mystery regarding their concrete operation: Scholars note that the question of under what exact conditions RSOs indeed become relevant institutions able to contribute to regional security remains a largely unanswered empirical question.⁸⁹ Scholars have identified an even higher degree of security cooperation that can arise from a security community. This more intimate and peaceful level of cooperation has been dubbed an ‘amalgamated security community’ by Deutsch and a ‘union’ by Kupchan. and marks the apotheosis of a ‘zone of stable peace’. Here, in the rare

⁸³ Kacowicz & Bar-Simon-Tov, “Stable Peace: A Conceptual Framework”, pg. 25.

⁸⁴ Ibid., pp. 25-26.

⁸⁵ Ibid., pg. 31.

⁸⁶ Boulding, *Stable Peace*, pp. 15-16.

⁸⁷ Wendt, Alexander, *Social Theory of International Politics*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999.

⁸⁸ Ibid., “Driving with the Rearview Mirror: On the Rational Science of Institutional Design,” in Koremenos et al., *The Rational Design of International Institutions*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003, pp. 259–90.

⁸⁹ Dourssen, Han; Kirchner, Emil, “Better a Good Neighbour than a Distant Friend: the Scope and Impact of Regional Security Organizations”, *International Relations of the Asia-Pacific*, 2014, Vol 14 (1), pg. 118.

empirical examples where scholars point to their formation, a ‘union’ or an ‘amalgamated security community’ sees states that “merge into a single political entity, minimizing, if not eliminating, the geopolitical consequences of pre-existing borders.”⁹⁰ As illustrated, the literature maintains that such examples are exceedingly rare.

2.4.7. Security through Interdependence: The Liberal Approach to Cooperation

Central amongst subsequent theorizing on the emergence of IOs are the works by Robert Keohane and Joseph Nye. These authors discussed the phenomenon of complex interdependence and the rejection of the primacy of force prevalent in the realist perspective. In their work, Power and Interdependence, Keohane and Nye argue that resources that produce power capabilities have become more complex, broadening their scope from a narrow focus on the military and define power as “terms of control over outcomes”.⁹¹ This novel concept of power is important when considering the rising tendency of “interdependency”—defined rather unspectacularly as the state of mutual dependency—as guidelines for foreign policy. The concepts of power and interdependence are influenced by “networks of rules, norms, and procedures that regularize behaviour and control its effects”, referred to by Keohane and Nye as international regimes.⁹² The sheer scope of such challenges gave rise to new approaches for states to meet such novel challenges. States, therefore, opted to tackle a growing scope of issues through the creation of IOs, thereby consciously providing institutionalized areas to realize objectives and/or resolve problems that would not be possible on an individual state level.⁹³ Such was the reason d’être for IO creation.

Keohane subsequently chose to delve deeper into the formation and functioning of IOs: his work After Hegemony, as the title implies, argued that Realist assumptions were insufficient in explaining why the demand for international regimes continued to rise, especially at a time when US hegemony was in decline.⁹⁴ Hence a rudimentary link between systemic conditions and IOs was established (see 4.4). Furthermore, Keohane viewed regime formation as a reflection of states’ common interests leading to gains that, otherwise, would not be attainable. Regimes guide cooperation as states, being selfish actors, are unable to do so alone. Hence, states were merely acting in a rational manner by electing to cooperate through international regimes. IOs emerge, therefore, as a result of particular state calculus viewing their creation as forwarding individual state interests. IO creation remains, even under Keohane, an essentially selfish state act. At the same time, seen from the perspective of stable peace literature, the demand for regimes that arises from increased interdependency takes place within conditions whereby stable peace has been in existence for some time (US-Canada; US-Australia bilateral relations). Organizational cooperation does not trigger peace but is a long-term product thereof.

Nevertheless, should their respective creation be triggered, whether by reasons inspired by constructivist theory, as advanced by Deutsch, Kupchan and Wendt, or interdependency as understood by Keohane and Nye, they will seek to bind states institutionally. Ruggie argues that

⁹⁰ How Enemies become Friends, pg. 9. Note that Kupchan only identifies three examples of ‘successful ‘unions’’, namely the Swiss and Iroquois Confederation as well as the United Arab Emirates, while Deutsch cited the United States as the sole empirical example of an amalgamated security community.

⁹¹ Keohane, Robert & Joseph, Nye, Power and Interdependence, New York: Longman Press, 2011, pg. 10.

⁹² *Ibid.*, pg. 16.

⁹³ See Lindberg, Leon, The Political Dynamics of European Economic Integration, Stanford University Press, 1963.

⁹⁴ Keohane, After Hegemony, pp. 135-182.

multilateralism is an “institutional form that coordinates relations among three or more states on the basis of generalized principles of conduct: this is principles which specify appropriate conduct for a class of actions.”⁹⁵ Multilateralism, therefore, accords nation states the opportunity to structure their relations on the foundation of a loosely based rule order. It also affords states, according to Ikenberry, both “powerful and weak, rising and declining, some measure of protection and equal treatment.”⁹⁶ Hence, the more rule-based the order is, the less subject to the anarchic conditions, as advocated by Realists, nation states will be. Herein lies, according to the proponents of multilateralism, its main appeal. Whether or not states are able to profit from its purported benefits, however, seems to be dependent on the existence of a stable peace between them as well as the order of the international system itself.

2.4.8. Conclusion

Based on the State of the Art, and the Realist presumption underpinning this dissertation, cooperation in security questions has been highlighted as an exception in international relations rather than the norm. The historical record points to relations between states as being governed by the dictates of balance of power as argued by Hume, Morgenthau, Kissinger, Claude, Kaplan and Paul. While the degree and conditions under which balancing takes places remains debated, balance of power has the tendency to ensure that some sort of peace, however tenacious, reigns between states competing of power within the anarchy of the international system. Yet the literature shows that, sometimes, more profound states of peace do break out between states, allowing them to escape the seemingly cyclical nature of balance of power.

The literature on stable peace illustrates what factors enable states to do so if they so choose. Based on the literature, stable peace seems to depend on two overarching phenomena: (i.) the culmination of a process; and (ii.) dependency on concrete historical events that influence this process. First, as noted above, Boulding, Kacowicz et al. and Kupchan, when considering the onset of stable peace—a state of relations in which resorting to military means is unthinkable—underlined that such a state was the concrete result of a conscious process initiated by states and not a haphazard, instantaneous transformation. Second, according to the literature, the road towards stable peace is shaped by the benchmark of concrete, historical events. This dissertation has already noted Boulding’s ‘phase system’ in transitioning from war to peace, a case study presented in Boulding’s case study of a stable peace gradually breaking out between Canada, the United States, and Mexico through the twists and turns of North American history between 1776 to the mid-20th century, illustrating that the strength of the respective relationships successively outweighed the strain (and need to resort to force).⁹⁷ As noted, Kacowicz et al. concluded that “mutual satisfaction with the terms of the peace agreement” represented an essential condition for stable peace to break out, thereby implying that historical events determine the scope of possibilities for stable peace to break out. Acting as an encapsulation of previous stable peace research, Kupchan’s triggering conditions, especially policy entrepreneurship, were also linked to concrete historical happenings: “An intrinsic randomness governs the timing of the events that encourage entrepreneurship, regime change and policy innovation often occur amid the period of

⁹⁵ Ruggie, John G., Multilateralism Matters: The Theory and Praxis of an International Form, New York: Columbia University Press, 1993, pg. 11.

⁹⁶ Ikenberry, John, After Victory, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001, pg. xxiii.

⁹⁷ Boulding, Stable Peace, pp. 44-45.

reevaluations and realignment that follow political crisis or military conflict.”⁹⁸ Historical processes therefore seem to play an integral part in shaping the path towards stable peace and the formation of RSOs.

Should peace break out, and the path towards a security community be forged, constructivist factors also play a role. Here, stable peace theory (Boulding, Kacowicz et al., Kupchan) is in line with Deutsch, Wendt, Huntington and Spengler in stressing the importance of the constructivist contribution to explain RSO formation, namely the sense of states sharing the same ‘logic of appropriateness’. However, the emergence of a RSO, as envisioned by the security community of Deutsch, occurs as a zone of peace matures, reflecting the process originally imagined by Boulding. For an RSO to be formed, the necessary conditions of stable peace must already have been established. As highlighted in the literature, the outbreak of stable peace hinges on systemic and temporal considerations. It is this literature that this dissertation now seeks to explore.

2.5. Effect of Systemic Conditions on the Emergence and Operation of RSOs

2.5.1. Systemic Theories: Definitions

RSOs are, without exception, designed by states to serve specific purposes. The overall international structure where such interaction takes place has been cited as relevant to the creation of RSOs. A theory which emphasizes the causal powers of the system to influence state behaviour is considered “systemic”. A systemic theory affirms that explanation for international relations can be found by studying the “structure” of the international system that would determine the behaviour of its individual parts, namely the state. The initial phases of IR research espoused by institutionalists established a link between “regional integration processes and different external political conditions”, namely the international system.⁹⁹

The work of Kenneth Waltz introduced systemic theory to the study of IR. Waltz defined a ‘system’ as a “set of interacting units” in which “the organization of units effects their behaviour and action.”¹⁰⁰ According to Waltz, understanding the functioning of this system was the key to elucidating the mysteries of IR because unit-level explanations, such as domestic politics, would fail to lead to meaningful generalizations on a systemic level. Hence, state behaviour could be explained according to his “outside-in” model. The “outside” of this model, the international system, positioned each individual state in comparison to its respective capabilities against competitors.¹⁰¹ International relations were the vehicle by which the system assigned a particular state its respective rank based on its political and/or economical weight. Though presented as a key Waltzian tenet, this notion was first presented by Herz who pondered the categorical change that nuclear weapons brought to international relations and neatly summarized his understanding of the “system” as “based on the existence of separate, defensible units comparable in power.”¹⁰² Such ideas found affirmation in Waltz’s approach and were subsequently adopted by Keohane, whose

⁹⁸ Kupchan, *How Enemies Become Friends*, pg. 67.

⁹⁹ Nye, Joseph, “Comparative Regional Integration: Concept and Measurement”, *International Organization*, Autumn 1968, Vol. 22, No. 4, pg. 855.

¹⁰⁰ Waltz, *Theory of International Politics*, pp. 39-40.

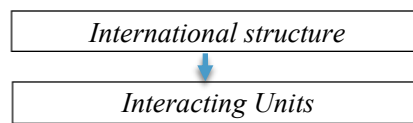
¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 67-73.

¹⁰² Herz, John, *International Politics in the Atomic Age*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1959, pg. 42.

analysis on international cooperation recognized that “systemic analysis of the international political economy begins by locating actors along the dimension of relative power on one hand and wealth on the other.”¹⁰³ From this theoretical starting point, states are required to balance their power against other states rising in power, lest they be “selected out of the international system”, as per the tenets of offensive Realism.

According to Waltz the “in” side of the “outside-in” model, i.e. domestic policies, internal processes and individual particularities of the state, were viewed as constant. The state as a whole, therefore, possessed its own articulated interests that could not be broken down into subsequent internal parts. Waltz cautioned against placing priority on the analysis of the state, or reductionist, level *without* prior consideration how the system affects state behaviour. As maintained by Waltz, how the system operates and shapes state behaviour is much more important than the dissection of the unit level, else the pressures excerpted by the system on states through their constant competition be blurred. Indeed, IR’s focus on analysis at the unit level, and the perceived paucity of explanatory power, constituted a reason for Waltz to search for answers on a wider, systemic scope.¹⁰⁴ The basis of systemic theory could be, therefore, summarized by the following, rather unspectacular table

Table 1: Systemic Theory according to Waltz



Waltz defined the above international structure as leaderless and founded on anarchy. At the same time, as noted, the capabilities of the system’s base units (states) are distributed unevenly. This obliges states to naturally compete with another through the adoption of foreign policies aimed at securing and advancing their own respective interests at the expense of other states. Again, Waltz’ approach is fully in line with the tenets of offensive Realism. According to Waltzian logic therefore, while no answer is explicitly given in the text, one can infer that any RSO created would be a result of the systemic pressures created by the inherent competition between states.

2.5.2. One System to Rule them All?

The international structure exists, but what does it do exactly? Waltz is silent on this point. Does the system, as defined by Waltz, encompass the entire international stage in its scope of validity? Are the same pressures excerpted throughout the entire system? Or do they diverge from one region to another? How would such phenomena be relevant to the emergence of RSOs?

Waltz identified the major cause of war to lie in the relationship amongst states in the anarchical international system itself, rather at the unit level, i.e. states or their respective leadership.¹⁰⁵ War between states is a rare occurrence. Indeed, civil strife within individual states,

¹⁰³ Keohane, *After Hegemony*, pg. 25.

¹⁰⁴ Waltz, *Theory of International Politics*, pg. 18.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, pg. 99.

for example, is a much more common occurrence. Thus, happenings inside the state seem to matter in international politics. As expounded upon above, they are also central in initiating the creation of a zone of peace. The relevance of the idiosyncrasies of individual states seem to increase in relevance in an interdependent world. In developing an alternative systemic theory, Wendt underlined that it was “impossible for structures to have effects apart from the attributes and interactions of agents”¹⁰⁶. Hence, Wendt underlined that the structure did not necessarily have more explanatory power than its interacting units, but rather argued “how agents are differently structured by the system to produce different effects.”¹⁰⁷ Hence, the structure of the system produces a plethora of effects instead of the uniform pressure as prescribed by Waltz. This, therefore, opens up the possibility of a variety of sub-systems to exist within the overall structure of the systemic whole.

Hedley Bull, while arguing for the relevance of the international system as a whole, but noted that a separate system entered into effect “when two or more states have sufficient contact between them, and have sufficient impact on one another’s decisions, to cause them to behave—at least in some measure—as parts of the whole.”¹⁰⁸ According to Bull’s definition, the international system is potentially made up of an almost unlimited number of sub-systems based on his broad definition. Bull prescribes a further agglomeration through his concept of “international societies”. Still part of the overall system, international societies exist only when states possess “common interest and common values...conceive themselves to be bound by a common set of rules...share in the working of common institutions...[and have] a common culture of civilizations.”¹⁰⁹ According to Bull, therefore, the degree and quality of cooperation should be greater should states adhere to an international society rather than a mere sub-group of the system.

Yet systems are much more than lines drawn on maps; scholars have underlined that cultural/civilizational factors play a strong role within the overall international system. Spengler viewed world history as a “problem of civilizations”.¹¹⁰ Spengler viewed each culture as possessing its own civilization that encapsulated the pinnacle of culture, describing them as “the inevitable *destiny* of a culture”.¹¹¹ The importance of cultural factors/identity were also underlined by Wendt, as already noted with his ‘logic of appropriateness’. While, once again, recognizing the existence and importance of the overall international system, Wendt underscored the role played on the unit-level by norms, values and cultural affiliation.¹¹² While confirming the necessity of examining international politics through the prism of the state, Samuel Huntington argued that behaviour is shaped by a world system that reflected cultural preferences, commonalities and differences.¹¹³ Consequently, Huntington mapped out an international systemic structure consisting of nine cultural zones, comprising the nucleus of distinct civilizations. Conflict, therefore, stems from interaction between parts of the system that form different civilizational

¹⁰⁶ Social Theory of International Politics, pg. 12.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

¹⁰⁸ Bull, Hedley, The Anarchial Society, New York: Columbia University Press, 1977, pg. 9.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., pg. 13.

¹¹⁰ Spengler, Oswald, Der Untergang des Abendlandes: Umriss einer Morphologie der Weltgeschichte, München: Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag, 1972, pg. 43.

¹¹¹ Ibid.

¹¹² Wendt, Social Theory of International Politics, pp. 9-14.

¹¹³ Huntington, Samuel, The Clash of Civilizations, New York: Touchstone, 1996, pg. 21.

groupings.¹¹⁴ Cooperation, on the other hand, including IO formation, is possible and indeed greatly enhanced through such zones of the system where there is cultural commonality.¹¹⁵

Of note is the position of scholars, such as Nye and Keohane, who have taken a positive view on the power and influence of IOs and their respective ability to shape international relations. Both Keohane and Nye begin their respective analysis of the supposed power of IOs from the systemic level.¹¹⁶ The international environment is cited as strongly effecting constraints and incentives that produces effects on individual state behaviour. As previously analyzed, it can also trigger the outbreak of war or peace. Like Wendt, Bull, and Huntington, however, systemic analysis by itself is not cited as sufficient, hence attention must be paid to unit-level analysis. According to Keohane, state behaviour is heavily influenced by “the effects of domestic institutions and leadership”.¹¹⁷ Systemic analysis will not yield determinate predictions of states’ pursuit of wealth and power; instead, it is argued that governments act under constraints supplied by the very rules, orders and institutions that they create.¹¹⁸ Such assumptions are in line with the above research and heavily infer that cooperation in areas of the sub-system might produce different results than viewing the system in its entirety, a fact that is indeed borne out by Keohane’s empirical research.

2.5.3. Conclusion

Relevant literature has illustrated a link between the international structure and the behaviour of international states. This, in turn, influences the ability and/or desire of states to engage in cooperation through RSO creation. As Wendt, Bull and Huntington argued, sub-systems based on identity and other constructivist concepts, such as common history and geography, can play a role in increasing the intensity and scope of cooperation between states. Conversely, although not explicitly argued, the lack of such constructivist elements within a sub-system would conversely have an opposite effect, minimizing the chances of engaging in RSO formation.

2.6. Consequences of Hegemony on RSO Creation

2.6.1. What is a hegemon? Money or Guns? Both or None?

The above discussion on system theory has recognized the possibility of sub-systems within an overall international structure. Such sub-systems can be organized based on a number of criteria: cultural, economic and even territoriality. In examining the role of a hegemon on the international structure and its subsystems, the title of McCormick’s article “Every System Needs a Center Sometimes”¹¹⁹ seems to be extremely appropriate. The concept of a hegemon, based on relative power considerations identified in the literature above, is the central ‘ingredient’ by which a particular order is defined.

¹¹⁴ Ibid., pg. 29. East Asia is, according to Huntington, comprised of four civilizational zones: (i.) the Sinic; (ii.) the Japanese; (iii.) the Orthodox (the Russian Federation); and (iv.) the West (US).

¹¹⁵ Ibid., pg. 128.

¹¹⁶ Keohane, *After Hegemony*, pg. 26.

¹¹⁷ Ibid.

¹¹⁸ Ibid.

¹¹⁹ McCormick, “Every System Needs a Center Sometimes” in Gardner, Lloyd (ed.), *Redefining the Past: Essays in Diplomatic History in Honor of William Appleman Williams*, Corvallis: Oregon University Press, 1986, pp. 195-220.

If every system, or sub-system, needs a hegemon, how can one be defined? What key criteria should be used to bestow such a mantle on a single unit of the international structure? As to be expected, there are divergences between scholars in what exactly constitutes a hegemon. Scholars subscribing to system theories place precedence on a state's economic capabilities. McCormick accepted the definition of hegemony as the "simultaneous superior economic efficiency in production, trade and finance."¹²⁰ This position is not accidental but rather a culmination of historical variables such as technological innovation, ideology and super resources. The Hegemonic Stability Theory argues that order in world politics is created by a single dominant power.¹²¹ Kindleberger noted that "for the world economy to be stabilized, there has to be a stabilizer, one stabilizer."¹²² Wallerstein has defined economic hegemony as "a situation wherein the products of a given core state are produced so efficiently that they are by and large competitive even in other core states, and therefore the given core state will be the primary benefactor of a maximally free world market."¹²³ Wallerstein convincingly charts the rise of Great Britain in the Age of Exploration (1600-1750). This contention is pregnant with consequences for more contemporary questions, namely the formation of RSOs.

Here, Keohane asserts that they, too, as part of the international order, owe both their formation and functioning to hegemony. Referring to the role of the United States, especially post-1945, Keohane notes cooperation through international regimes "only makes sense if cooperation and discord are not determined simply by interests of interests and power."¹²⁴ Through economic hegemony, therefore, Keohane argues that a pattern of order can be created. An economic hegemon is assumed to play an essential role in the establishment of international regimes.¹²⁵ The USA in its economic apotheosis in the immediate aftermath of the Second World War is used as an illustrative example. At the same time, Keohane views the importance of hegemony tapering off with time and the international regimes that hegemony creates ultimately evolving into centerpieces of the international structure. Hence, IOs and RSOs pave the way for a post-hegemonic world. While such logic might be appropriate for analysing relations between London and Ottawa or Vienna and Vaduz, it might not be so relevant for relations between Washington and Moscow. There is a need to consider hegemonic concepts outside the purely economic, especially in cases where relations between states may be neutral or even confrontational.

Waltz examined the fluid nature of the concept of hegemons and the difficulty of measuring power.¹²⁶ Criticizing what he sees as confusion surrounding how scholars contradictorily gauge state capabilities, Waltz defines power as a concept that is not 'homogeneous'. Citing examples of countries that were economically strong and militarily weak and vice versa, Waltz cited Nixon's historic 1972 visit to the PRC as unilaterally conferring superpower status on Beijing as a prime

¹²⁰ McCormick, Thomas, "World Systems", *The Journal of American History*, June 1990, Vol. 77, No. 1, pg. 128.

¹²¹ Keohane, Robert, "The theory of hegemonic stability and changes in international economic regimes" in Ole Holsti et al., *Change in the International System*, Boulder: Westview Press, 1980, pp. 131-62.

¹²² Kindleberger, Charles, *The World in Depression, 1929-1939*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1973, pg. 305.

¹²³ Wallerstein, Immanuel, *The Modern World-System II: Mercantilism and the Consolidation of the European World Economy*, New York: Academic Press, 1984, pg. 35.

¹²⁴ Keohane, *After Hegemony*, pg. 31.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, pg. 49.

¹²⁶ Waltz, *Theory of International Politics*, pp. 129-138.

example of his definition of hegemony, namely that it is in the eye of the beholder: “a country becomes a superpower if we treat it like one. We create states in our image.”¹²⁷

Given the broad span of definition of what a hegemon entails, ascribing a concrete definition is challenging. Economic and constructivist tenets, as put forward by Wallerstein, Kindleberger and Waltz are unquestionably essential elements of any hegemony. However, while hegemony is the result of multiple factors, keeping in line with the Realist premise of this dissertation, the *military aspect, as defined in the literature, can be regarded as the trumping element of hegemonic credentials* for its unique ability to fundamentally change any given system within the international structure and, more importantly for this dissertation, its decisive role in determining a state’s ability to prepare for and/or participate in military conflicts.

2.6.2 The Unchanging Changing System

Realist scholars ascribe a broader definition to the concept of hegemony, defining it as a sum-total of power capabilities, most notably the military, instead of exclusive focus of the economic. Hence, scholars focused on the study of systemic hegemony have viewed military prowess as a *sine qua non* of hegemony itself.¹²⁸ Any examination of the historical record tends to view the concept of a hegemon as beyond the purely economic. The quote of West German Chancellor Helmut Schmidt referring to the USSR as “Upper Volta with nuclear weapons” illustrates the practical limitation of Keohane’s focus.¹²⁹ Hence, economic power is not eschewed completely but rather is seen as one of the plethora of tools available to advance national influence. Historians studying the effects of systemic changes within the international structure also tend to agree with broader definition of hegemony. While eschewing the search for rules of any ‘world system’, the “historical record suggests there is a very clear connection *in the long run* between an individual Great Power’s [hegemon’s] economic rise and fall and its growth and decline as a military power.”¹³⁰

However important economic power might be, military power is not only relevant, but ultimately sets the tone and shapes the contours of the international structure. In an international system that operates under the assumptions of ‘offensive Realism’, military power is the sole method under which changes to the international system can be introduced. The power of the sword therefore remains as the ultimate arbiter of any conflict. This concept is reflected in the writing of Gilpin who viewed large-scale military conflict, and its subsequent redistribution of global power, as a key concept in determining a hegemon’s ascent. Change is not inevitable: should no state view it is advantageous to change the international structure, the system is said to be stable. A state will attempt to change the system only if the expected benefits exceed the costs; such change will be forced via territorial, political, and economic expansion until the costs of further change are equal to or greater than the benefits. Once a new equilibrium has been established, the costs of maintaining the status quo are anticipated to rise faster than the economic capacity to support the

¹²⁷ Ibid., pg. 130.

¹²⁸ Gilpin, Robert, *War and Change in World Politics*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981.

¹²⁹ Ditrych, Ondrej, “The Harm in Harmel: What the Transatlantic Alliance needs is a New Containment”, *New Perspectives*, Vol. 23, No. 2/2015, pg. 125.

¹³⁰ Kennedy, Paul, *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers: Economic Change and Military Conflict from 1500 to 2000*, New York: Vintage Books, 1989, pg. xxii.

status quo. Should the disequilibrium in the international system not be resolved, the system will be altered, and a new equilibrium will be established.¹³¹

Gilpin's scheme is important, not only as it charts a course to map systemic change but illustrates why the system *does not* change. In examining the maintenance of the post-Congress of Vienna order, Henry Kissinger sought to explicitly explain why the international structure did not change. Here, Kissinger noted that "stability, then, has commonly resulted not from a quest for peace but from a broadly accepted legitimacy."¹³² Legitimacy, in Kissingerean terms, signifies an international agreement on the nature of workable arrangements of an international structure and implies acceptance of its framework by its members. This acceptance is to say, foreshadowing Gilpin's logic, that all members are satisfied with the current system to the extent that they do not actively seek to overturn it with what Kissinger deemed a "revolutionary foreign policy".¹³³ The behaviour of the hegemon is crucial as it will set the tone for international relations in the subsystem; this does not mean, however, that conflict is inevitable or even a commonplace occurrence. Despite reservations, however serious, they are not sufficient to merit striving towards a change in the international structure. This is not brought about by purposeful action on the part of members of the system, but rather based on the realist calculations of governments based on self-interest. From this systemic stability, and the legitimacy that governs it, we now turn our attention to the order that governs it.

2.6.3. International Orders are Important

While Gilpin has provided a convincing argument as to how and why systems change, systems are qualified as generally stable. Gilpin states stability is the product of the "absence of large potential net benefits from change" that allows the system to remain in a state of equilibrium.¹³⁴ In this equilibrium, the order of the various sub-systems within the international structure would seem to form an essential variable to consider when dealing with the question of RSO formation (or equally important, non-formation).

In his work After Victory, Ikenberry examines the effect of different types of order on domestic and international politics.¹³⁵ Political order is referred to as the "'governing' arrangements among a group of states, including its fundamental rules, principles, and institutions...Political order is established when basic organizing arrangements of the system are set up."¹³⁶ An important caveat is the limit that Ikenberry views inherent in this definition, namely not "referring to all aspects of international co-operation or agreements", referring rather "to the basic rules and principles of order among the states within the system."¹³⁷ The conditions of the international system take precedence over international organizations. Important to note that when such principles are overturned, contested or in disarray, the order has broken down; when new principles have been re-established, order is recreated.¹³⁸ This echoes Kissinger's thoughts above

¹³¹ Gilpin, War and Change in World Politics, pp. 10-11.

¹³² Kissinger, Henry, A World Restored, pg. 1.

¹³³ Ibid.

¹³⁴ Keohane, After Hegemony, pg.13.

¹³⁵ Ikenberry, After Victory, pg. 21.

¹³⁶ Ibid., pg. 23.

¹³⁷ Ibid.

¹³⁸ Ibid.

on the advent of a “revolutionary foreign policy” and is in line with Gilpin’s theory of systemic change.

As systemic theory prescribes, the overarching international structure is defined by several sub-systems based on specific criteria. Ikenberry proposes three major varieties of political order among states that characterizes international relations and state behaviour within sub-systems: balance of power, hegemony, and constitutional order.¹³⁹ An overview of these orders can be found below:

Table 2: Types of International Order

	<i>Balance of Power</i>	<i>Hegemonic</i>	<i>Constitutional</i>
Organizing principle	<i>Anarchy</i>	<i>Hierarchy</i>	<i>Rule of Law</i>
Restrains on concentrated power	<i>Counterbalancing coalitions</i>	<i>None</i>	<i>Binding Institutions</i>
Source of Stability	<i>Equilibrium of power</i>	<i>Preponderance of Power</i>	<i>Limits on the return to power</i>

The Balance of Power Order reflects the closest guise of realist systemic theorists’ essential assumption of anarchy as the dominant characteristic of global politics.¹⁴⁰ Ikenberry grounds most of his understanding of a Balance of Power Order on Waltz’s theory that unit-level action is based on calculations to increase and protect state sovereignty. Coalitions and alliances are formed to balance the power configuration, to enhance state security and increase a state’s relative capacities. International agreements, such as alliances, RSOs are therefore seen as ad hoc creations, able to be modified as the power configuration in the international system fluctuates. According to Waltz, and adopted by Ikenberry, focus of all state action is based on balancing actions in order for individual states to better ensure their survival. Once again, this is within the confines of what Kissinger described as overall system legitimacy. A given state’s motive to engage in security cooperation, including the formation of RSOs, can stem from a plethora of sources, yet all point to international cooperation emerging to counter or enhance a center of power.¹⁴¹

More recently, scholars have subsequently ascribed normative aspects to balance of power theories: Kupchan underlined the states can project “packages of ordering ideas and rules” that can be effective at underpinning systemic order.¹⁴² As Kupchan notes, “systems, whether coercive or more consensual, have a distinctive normative character; order emerges not just from hierarchy, but also from packages of ideas and rules that inform the nature of a given order and govern social relations within that order”¹⁴³. Balance of Power, therefore, can have inherently normative traits that were mirrored through the ideological base of the Cold War but also through the theories of John Fairbank (see 4.8).

¹³⁹ Ibid.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid., pg. 127.

¹⁴¹ Waltz, *Theory of International Politics*, pg. 127.

¹⁴² Kupchan, Charles, “Unpacking Hegemony: the Social Foundations of the Hierarchical Order” in Ikenberry, John, *Power, Order, and Change in World Politics*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 19-60.

¹⁴³ Ibid., pg. 20.

Hegemonic orders are, like the balance of power, based on the distribution of power between states but, according to Ikenberry, operates according to a very different logic. Here “the relations of power and authority are defined by the organizing principle of hierarchy” where “states are integrated vertically with highly defined superordinate and subordinate positions.”¹⁴⁴ Ikenberry therefore views hegemonic orders as states in a hierarchical relationship “although within the order weaker and secondary states are formally sovereign and the extent and mechanisms of domination can be looser and less formal.”¹⁴⁵ While Gilpin argues that a broader set of resources, such as status and ideology, are essential ingredients to the perpetuation of a hegemonic order, at the end of the day, the predominance of leading states furnishes the basis of international cooperation, with the order eroding—or outright collapsing—upon their eventual decay and/or demise.¹⁴⁶ Theorists have also argued that hegemonic orders come in different stripes, with some exhibiting a more benevolent and less coercive nature, with states electing to place real constraints on their exercise of power.¹⁴⁷ However, the extent to which such restraint is due to IO is not explicitly mentioned, a point that deserves more specific attention.

The full force of IOs, in Ikenberry’s vision of systemic orders, is apparent only in its third category, namely the Constitutional Order. According to his theory “Constitutional Orders are political orders organized around agreed-upon legal and political institutions that operate to allocate rights and limit the exercise of power.”¹⁴⁸ Power is no longer the defining element of the system as, in its place, institutionalized processes of participation and decision-making provide for the clear provision of what institutionalists view as the lynchpin of the international system, namely international regimes that define rules, rights protections and commitments. These rules and regulations that bind the members of the system, mimic the constraints that a domestic constitution places on an individual state, hence creating a Constitutional Order on the systemic level. Altogether, Ikenberry argues that they “circumscribe the wielding of power within the order”.¹⁴⁹ The existence of a Constitutional Order is defined by three major characteristics: first, agreement over the principles and rules of order (what Ikenberry refers to as ‘the rules of the game’) that are viewed by participants as legitimate. In a Constitutional Order, therefore, “participants willingly embrace the rules of the game as appropriate and right.”¹⁵⁰ Ikenberry views the voluntary embrace of the basic tenets of the order as the main distinction that separates a Constitutional Order from a more simplistic balance of power.

Second, the rules and institutions that a Constitutional Order establishes set binding and authoritative limits on the exercise of power, with institutions being granted a high degree of autonomy, channeling political processes through established legal and institutional parameters. In the process, the effectiveness and use of power as a realistic political tool to ensure compliance and/or maintain security is practically relegated to irrelevance, with the anarchy that forms the underlying assumption of Realist thought being temporarily suppressed. This limited banishing of

¹⁴⁴ Ikenberry, *After Victory*, pg. 26.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid., pg. 27.

¹⁴⁶ Gilpin, *War and Change in World Politics*, pp. 209-210.

¹⁴⁷ See Snidal, Duncan, “The Limits of the Hegemonic Stability Theory”, *International Organization*, Vol 35, No. 4 (Autumn 1985), pp. 214-35.

¹⁴⁸ Ikenberry, *After Victory*, pg. 29.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid., pg. 31.

Realist principles obliges “holders of power [to] exercise that power within an institutionalized political process”.¹⁵¹ Ikenberry, however, places a caveat on societies that can form a Constitutional Order, namely those whose political institutions “have achieved a high degree of autonomy” and “dampen and mute the political implications of inequality within society.” Hence, without mature, and assumedly democratic, political institutions, states cannot create a Constitutional Order.

Third, once in place, the established rules and regulations of institutions established by a Constitutional Order are entrenched in the wider political system and are resilient to change.¹⁵² Like a country’s constitution, therefore, institutions and the rules they established are not easily subject to change—a phenomenon that only occurs at select moments in history. Ikenberry likens the functioning of a Constitutional Order to the construction of domestic decision processes that aim to institutionalize the politics of accommodation. Citing the work of Arend Lijphart on domestic decision-making in the Netherlands, Ikenberry applies Lijphart’s assumption that Dutch processes of internal political accommodation “resembles politics at the international level.”¹⁵³ This implies that all members of the framework of a Constitutional Order, like in Dutch domestic politics, have a stake in the process and no single bloc dominates. While the existence of a shared national identity is of assistance, Lijphart and Ikenberry view the reality of a functioning political accommodation, as outlined by Lijphart in the Netherlands and extended to the international arena by Ikenberry, as the main reason why diverse political actors remain committed to a given domestic political process or Constitutional Order. Hence, Ikenberry argues that “binding institutions that ties states down and together” is the main vehicle to restrain the exercise of power.¹⁵⁴

2.6.4. The Necessity of an Interested Hegemon

The concept of international order provides a useful guide in explaining the pattern of state behaviour after major changes occur as argued by Gilpin. Hegemons play a key role in both stabilizing the system and, at certain points in history, seek to engage in the process of systemic change. Likewise, RSOs can be a salient feature of the internal system. Hence, further appreciation of the role of the hegemon in accounting for the creation of RSOs is necessary, as no RSO is possible in the absence of one.

In order to further develop the understanding of hegemons in the creation of RSOs, Mattli placed the study of various differing regional integration projects, both contemporary and historic, in sharp focus.¹⁵⁵ Combining institutional and economic analysis—but deliberately eschewing an identity-based approach—Mattli sought to understand what drove integration processes and the factors determining their ultimate success or failure. Despite differing cultural, historical and economic contexts, integration projects in 19th and 20th century Europe as well as modern RSOs in Latin America, North America and Asia since the 1950s were analyzed. Success in this endeavour largely depended on the interests and willingness of a respective leading country. Integration must

¹⁵¹ Ibid.

¹⁵² Ibid., pp. 31-32.

¹⁵³ Lijphart, Arend, *Politics of Accommodation: Pluralism and Democracy in the Netherlands*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1968, pg. 104.

¹⁵⁴ Ikenberry, *After Victory*, pg. 35.

¹⁵⁵ Mattli, Walter, *The Logic of Regional Integration*, Columbia: Columbia University Press, 1999.

be based on concrete actions that drive integration projects into the realm of tangible outcomes. Mattli's research shows that success in this regard is indeed a rarity, with most RIOs not proceeding beyond the stage of bureaucratic dreaming.

Mattli was able to, however, theoretically separate the wheat from the chaff. The driving force of regional integration, and key factor in successful examples, were market actors standing to gain from the deepening of integration, ones that did not necessarily have their origins in political leadership.¹⁵⁶ The phenomenon of regional integration, as defined by Mattli, entailed "the *voluntary* linking in the economic or political domains of two or more formerly independent states to the extent that authority over key areas of national policy is shifted towards the supranational level."¹⁵⁷ Applying the definition, Mattli examines the historical record of integrationist projects of the 19th Century, such as the Zollverein, as well as contemporary examples such as the EU. Mattli strays outside the paradigm of sole focus on Western examples to likewise apply his definition to integrationist projects outside the Old Continent, including Latin America, Africa and South-East Asia. It is important to note that Mattli did not focus solely on RSOs, viewing regional integration in a much broader scope. However, RSOs do form part of Mattli's seemingly universalist approach to studying regional integration. Mattli's goal is to chart the factors inherent in each project's ability to realize the goal of regional integration, stating from the outset that few integrationist projects are ultimately crowned with success (i.e. a functioning economic or political union).

2.6.5. What Sparks a Hegemon's Interest?

System conditions permeate Mattli's analytical framework. Before continuing, it is important to highlight that Mattli analyses the process of regional integration as a whole, including both security and economic, yet chooses to approach his research through the explanatory power of economic factors. As Mattli noted "security issues are far from irrelevant in integration" yet his focus in including paths taken under unchanging military alliance patterns (such as the UK, Norway and Denmark refusing to join the European Community in the 1950s) tipped his analytical scale towards the economic.¹⁵⁸ Nevertheless, as security considerations remained part and parcel of this process, his findings can also shed light on RSO formation.

Hence, for projects to progress towards implementation, both "demand" and "supply" conditions must be satisfied. Mattli notes that states' demand for the establishment of regional rules, regulations and policies (what Keohane and Nye would define as international regimes) "does not come from the top but from the bottom", namely from market actors and not political leaders, as it is the former that stand to reap the rewards from increasingly integrated economies.¹⁵⁹ However, equally important are what Mattli deems "supply" conditions, namely the "willingness of political actors to accommodate demands for functional integration at each step of the integration process, and the presence of an undisputed regional leader that can serve as a focal point in the co-ordination of rules, regulations, and policies, and is able to ease distributional

¹⁵⁶ Ibid.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid., pg. 1.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid., pp. 17-18 & pg. 31.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid., pg. 190.

tensions by acting as a regional paymaster.”¹⁶⁰ Players seeking integration, in Mattli’s view, might be equal in their desire to bring about such a process, but are decidedly unequal in their respective ability to do so. Collective action problems amongst interested states threaten to stifle any nascent integrational tendencies.

To solve this quagmire, Mattli puts forth a “key supply condition”, namely “the presence of a benevolent leading country within the region seeking integration.”¹⁶¹ This leading country serves as both a “focal point in the co-ordination of rules, regulations and policies” while also acting as an arbiter to “help ease the tensions that arise from the inequitable distribution of gains from integration”.¹⁶² Without this leading state, co-ordination of the drive towards integration, and the distribution of its expected gains, becomes very difficult to resolve. The role of the leading state is placed above the role of “commitment institutions”, such as centralized monitoring or third-party enforcement. Interestingly, Mattli views the existence of such institutions and/or treaties as “a subsidiary (or weak) condition for successful integration.”¹⁶³ Integration *can* take place in the absence of such arrangements, which would include international organizations, however, Mattli states that their presence is of importance to assist in catalyzing the process. When the above conditions are not met, integration, include processes in the security realm, is most likely doomed to failure.

Matti presents a convincing argument, grounded both in the contemporary and historical record, that all major success stories in regional integration therefore satisfy these two strong conditions. Hence, Mattli also views the presence of a regional leader or hegemon as an essential ingredient that facilitates integration. This would also coincide with Ikenberry’s concept of a Constitutional Order, where a hegemon has willingly chosen to defuse its power through the creation of an IO or RSOs. The majority of cases analyzed by Mattli, both historic and contemporary, would seem to fall into the systemic category of a Constitutional Order as defined above by Ikenberry. Mattli’s analysis, however, was applied to regional blocs around the globe where the traits of a Constitution Order would not apply. Mattli’s conception of “supply” and “demand” conditionality seem to be equally valid in accounting for the success or failure of an integration project.¹⁶⁴ These ‘extra-European’ cases are valuable as they provide insight into the *failures* of integration projects, or example of integration under different and distinct sub-systemic conditions.

The existence of a hegemon does not necessarily translate into the creation of integration projects in the political and economic spheres. As recalled by Mattli, supply conditions for integration are one “under which political leaders are willing and able to accommodate demands for functional integration.”¹⁶⁵ The process is in no way automatic, as assumed by Institutionalists, but depends “greatly on the payoff of integration to political leaders”.¹⁶⁶ Should political leaders place value on political autonomy and political power, the interest to engage in deep levels of

¹⁶⁰ Ibid.

¹⁶¹ Ibid.

¹⁶² Ibid.

¹⁶³ Ibid., pg. 43

¹⁶⁴ See Chapter 5, Ibid., pp. 139-187, where Mattli applies his analytical framework to the cases of historical and contemporary integration projects outside Europe, namely in Latin America, Asia, and North America.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid., pg. 50.

¹⁶⁶ Ibid., pg. 51.

integration is duly affected. Mattli notes that “if these leaders value political autonomy (absence of interference by supranational agents) and political power, they are unlikely to seek deep levels of integration as long as their economies are relatively prosperous.”¹⁶⁷ In doing so, Mattli provides a rare scientific explanation as to why integration projects, and by extension IOs, are *not formed*. At the same time, a major caveat is that Mattli’s focus lay almost exclusively on economic, and not security, integration (nota bene that the case of NATO, for example, finds scant mention in his analysis). Hence, this dissertation will attempt to, through the framework presented in Chapter 6, adapt elements of Mattli’s logic within the context of charting the success or failure of RSO formation.

2.6.6. Conclusion

As underlined in the above overview of the State of the Art, scholars have presented a convincing case for the link between the existence of a hegemon within the international structure and the creation of RSOs. Defining what a hegemon actually entails covers a broad spectrum of state capabilities and, as Waltz notes, perceptions. However, all concepts of hegemon are derived through the comparison of the capabilities of individual states within the international structure or sub-system. The capabilities used to determine a hegemon vary from researcher to researcher, but emphasis has been placed on a combination of economic, demographic, and military assets. Waltz introduces the concept of hegemony in the eye of the beholder, i.e. the other states comprising the international structure or sub-system. At the same time, given Gilpin’s theory of systemic change, and Realist starting point of this dissertation, the military aspects seem to imply a more meaningful element to determine systemic change, should a given member of the system so desire. Hence, the military capabilities, as well as Waltz’s constructivist concept of hegemonic image, will be used to measure hegemony.

The presence of a hegemon sets the tone for the parameters of cooperation within the international structure or sub-system. Ikenberry’s concept of International Orders is helpful in pinpointing the nature of cooperation possible between sub-systems of the international structure with varying characteristics. Here, effective IO formation, i.e. ones that can establish respected rules and principles by which state action is structured, only takes place in the third variant, namely under a Constitutional Order. Within the parameters of such an Order, the process of meaningful regional integration, including through an RSO, (able to accomplish their respective mandates) arises and operates, accordingly to Mattli, only when there exists an interested hegemon present to act as a vehicle for the integration process. Such action is not guided by altruism, but rather a calculated choice based on meeting the internal demands of the state to further its self-interest.¹⁶⁸

When no clear hegemon is present, such rules and principles fade away leaving anarchy as the guiding principle of state action under a Balance of Power. As Kissinger expounds, there are no general policies aimed at securing general order within the system, but rather an equilibrium of

¹⁶⁷ Ibid.

¹⁶⁸ As noted, Mattli focused on economic factors behind the process of all facets of regional integration, of which security considerations constituted both an important foundation as well as consideration in the design and implementation of certain integration process. For example, Mattli proceeds from the fact that the post-1945 security guarantee towards Western Europe was a key component in instigating European integration, while likewise underlining the security concerns that characterized the scope of said integration given the challenge of the Federal Republic of Germany. See *ibid.*, pp. 69 & 71.

power is achieved through a sense of legitimacy. This means that each member of the system is satisfied enough to an extent that they take no actions to actively overturn the system, as described in Gilpin's theory of systemic change (to be elaborated below). As the use of violence is the avenue through which systemic change is reached, military capabilities take on increased importance. With no clear hegemon, as per Mattli theory of regional integration, the scope and effectiveness of RSOs created within a Balance of Power order will be minimal. The existence of a hegemon does not necessarily translate into the creation of integration projects in the political and economic spheres. As recalled by Mattli, supply conditions for integration are one "under which political leaders are willing and able to accommodate demands for functional integration."¹⁶⁹ The process is in no way automatic but depends "greatly on the payoff of integration to political leaders".¹⁷⁰ Should political leaders place value on political autonomy and political power, the interest to engage in deep levels of integration is duly affected. Mattli notes that "economically successful leaders are unlikely to pursue deeper integration as long as their economies are relatively prosperous." In doing so, Mattli provides a rare scientific explanation as to why integration projects, and by extension RSOs, are *not formed*. This institutional limbo is set to remain stagnant until the next moment of systemic change.

2.7. 'Critical Juncture' Theory and its Effect on the Emergence and Operation of RSOs

2.7.1 Placing RSOs in Time

International systems, as well as the almost endless array of subsystems that can stem therefrom, do not arise as a *Deus ex machina* from a vacuum. This is the same for the emergence of stable peace that gives way to the formation of RSOs. Systems are, as argued by both Realist and Institutionalist scholars alike, product of state interaction based on the unique characteristics and capabilities of their respective units, namely the state. As argued by Gilpin, Ikenberry and Mattli, the emergence of regional organizations, or the lack thereof, is conditioned upon specific actions that are taken by individual states, in particular hegemonies. International relations, however, are rarely based upon a *tabula rasa*. The depth of unprecedented integration within the European Union can at least partially be accounted for by the unique historical circumstances afforded by systemic change in 1945 and 1991. While Deutsch illustrated the importance of values in the emergence of a security community in the specific context of the North Atlantic, systemic conditions played at least as strong a role that led to NATO's creation in 1949. Without an Allied victory in 1945, there would have been very little necessity for cooperation between both sides of the North Atlantic as outlined in the tenets of NATO's Founding Act. Only the systemic contours as defined by the Yalta and Potsdam Conferences in 1945 created the necessary conditions whereby security cooperation between similarly inclined North Atlantic republics was deemed both possible and desirable. Hence, viewing the degree of institutional cooperation through the prism of historical perspective would seem indispensable.

Scholars have noted that studying politics through a historical prism has not constituted a focus in study of IR as a discipline: in reviewing the approach to social science as a whole, Pierson underlined that "there has actually been surprisingly limited attentiveness to the specifically

¹⁶⁹ Ibid., pg. 50.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid., pg. 51.

temporal dimensions of social processes.”¹⁷¹ In particular, political science with its focus on entities such as “states”, “voters” and “institutions” automatically assume that such diverse phenomena are similar units, thereby separating them from their unique contexts and voiding much explanatory power that could be derived therefrom.¹⁷² Arguing that such context is essential to understand the uniqueness of social science phenomena, Pierson underlines the need to “systematically [situate] particular moments (including the present) in a temporal sequence of events and processes stretching over extended periods”¹⁷³ through the establishment of *boundary conditions* to introduce explicit temporal limits when approaching a particular problem. Here, Pierson draws upon the arguments of Abbott underlining that if generalization implies the removal of unnecessary detail, it is “a fine thing”, however, should it result in the suppression of “defining locational information, it is a scientific disaster.”¹⁷⁴ Pierson argues that the establishment of such limits allows the researcher to overcome generalization (removing unnecessary detail) and decontextualization (removing the necessary side conditions) that forms the basis of most rational choice theory, economic, and political science.¹⁷⁵

Boundary conditions, therefore, do not remain on a superficial, general level but allow the researcher to probe deeper. They are more concretely defined by Pierson as “temporal, spatial or both”.¹⁷⁶ Through the fixing of boundary conditions, Pierson argues that the path towards a more ample picture of temporal and special relationships and it worth quoting at length: “Particular actors, organizations, or institutions are shaped in part by their special relationships to other aspects of a social setting. Similarly, a moment in time is part of a broader temporal process. Events are parts of a various sequence of events. Their place in those sequences may play a critical role in determining their meaning.”¹⁷⁷ Through boundary conditions delineating the realm of intellectual enquiry crucial elements of context for social enquiry can be gleaned that, otherwise, might be lost in the fuzziness of scholastic generalization. Pierson highlights that, when the scholar is attempting to understand broad social transformation, relationships studied through the road marks of boundary conditions are a *sine qua non* as “we need to know not just ‘what’, ‘when’, and ‘where’.”¹⁷⁸

Once problems are viewed through the temporal lens of Pierson’s moving picture, defined by temporal and spatial boundary conditions, the question of tracing a problem’s origin to better anticipate its future becomes relevant. Here, the IR concept of ‘historical institutionalism’ (HI) can be seen as a useful tool. In its essence, HI stems from realm of American and Comparative Politics subfields where it is prevalent in debates on rational choice and sociological institutionalism.¹⁷⁹ As such, this theory has been late to be absorbed in general theoretical approaches to IR where its

¹⁷¹ Pierson, Paul, *Placing Politics in Time*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004, pg. 4.

¹⁷² Ibid., pg. 168.

¹⁷³ Ibid., pg. 3.

¹⁷⁴ Abbot, Andrew, “Of Time and Space: The Contemporary Relevance of the Chicago School”, *Social Forces*, Vol. 75, Issue 4, June 1997, pg. 1107.

¹⁷⁵ Pierson, *Placing Politics in Time*, pg. 168.

¹⁷⁶ Ibid., pg. 170.

¹⁷⁷ Ibid., pg. 171.

¹⁷⁸ Ibid., pg. 172.

¹⁷⁹ See a review of these traditions in: Hall and Taylor, “Political Science and Three New Institutionalisms”, *Political Studies*, XLIV, 1996, pp. 36-57.

explanatory power had been consciously neglected by scholars.¹⁸⁰ More recent contributions have, however, underline the utility of HI in explaining political phenomenon, including the emergence and expansion of RSOs.

Simply put, historical institutionalism is defined as a research tradition that “examines how temporal process and events influence the origin and transformation of institutions that govern political and economic relations.”¹⁸¹ The focus is less on historical events themselves but rather how processes instigated by such events shape political outcomes to what extent they influence the respective scope of eventual decision-making possibilities.¹⁸² As Fioretos notes, “the most distinguishing mark of HI is the primacy it accords to temporality—the notion that the timing and sequences of events shape political processes”¹⁸³. Unlike traditional schools of IR, HI argues that such concepts of timing and sequences contribute to *unpredictability* (outcomes may vary greatly), and *inflexibility* (the more time passes, the more difficult it becomes to alter course) as well as *inefficiencies* (missed alternatives may have hypothetically been more efficient).¹⁸⁴ Temporal events, and the actions that they provoke, remain crucial since, as Fioretos underlines, “later events are conditioned by earlier ones”¹⁸⁵ that seek to elucidate the reasons for a particular path of historical or institutional development.

Important to note is that scholars utilizing the HI approach can span both a large number of possible areas of investigation—from constitutional scholarship¹⁸⁶ to structuring world order itself and, in doing so, encompass time frames of investigation spanning several decades. Ertman provided an explanation of various patterns of state-building in early modern Europe using critical junctures, cross-national differences and the sequencing of key historical processes. Noting that different states survived intense military conflict at different times, Ertman concluded that “differences in the timing of the onset of sustained geopolitical competition go a long way towards explaining the character of state infrastructures found across the continent at the end of the 18th century.”¹⁸⁷ HI’s main tenets have also been applied to the study of IOs, with particular focus placed on timing and sequence. As noted above, Ikenberry’s analysis of the international order, and the quality of institutions that followed in the wake of key historical events falls very much into the HI tradition.¹⁸⁸

¹⁸⁰ As late as 2012, historical institutionalism and its potential contributions to IR finds no mention in Carlsnaes, Walter; Risse, Thomas & Simmons, Beth, *Handbook of International Relations*, by Thousand Oaks: SAGE Publications, 2012.

¹⁸¹ Fioretos, Orofeo; Falleti, Tulia & Sheingate, Adam (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Historical Institutionalism*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016, pg. 3.

¹⁸² Fioretos, Orfeo, “Historical Institutionalism in International Relations”, *International Organization* 65, Spring 2011, pg. 369.

¹⁸³ *Ibid.*, pg. 371.

¹⁸⁴ Pierson, *Placing Politics in Time*, pg. 18.

¹⁸⁵ Fioretos, “Historical Institutionalism in International Relations”, pg. 371.

¹⁸⁶ See Raustiala, Kal, *Does the Constitution Follow the Flag? The Evolution of Extra-Territoriality in American Law*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2009, for an analysis of an HI approach to the legal concept of territoriality in US legislation since the founding of the Republic.

¹⁸⁷ Ertman, Thomas, *Birth of the Leviathan: Building States and Regimes in Medieval and Early Modern Europe*, New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997, pg. 26.

¹⁸⁸ Fioretos, for example, argues that Ikenberry’s *After Victory* (published in 2001) represents the first book in IR scholarship to fully adopt an HI approach, highlighting HI’s inherent novelty.

2.7.2. The Essentiality and Essences of a ‘Critical Juncture’

2.7.2.1. Introduction

In reviewing the contribution of HI scholars to overall IR research, one element is common to the approach regardless of the research question posed, namely the concept of the “*critical juncture*”. Indeed, this concept seems crucial to the temporal approach that defines HI and forms an integral part of scholarship. HI attempts to elucidate current and future phenomena through the study of the legacies of the past and the concept of a ‘*critical juncture*’ furnishes HI with a tool whereby the process of political developments, key to the future form and function of RSOs or regional systems, can be analysed.¹⁸⁹ As such, ‘critical junctures’ have, according to theory, two inherent characteristics: (i.) the ability to radically alter the immediate status quo, while (ii.) having the ability to define the scope and pattern of future possibilities.

2.7.2.2. ‘Critical Juncture’ as Altering the Immediate Status Quo

The determinant power inherent in ‘critical junctures’ is not part of an overall process, but rather random and abrupt in nature. Max Weber foreshadowed this trait of a ‘critical juncture’ in his analysis of the cyclical interplay between periods of relative continuity and sharp disjuncture inspired by charismatic leadership that reshape social relations.¹⁹⁰ Crises are, therefore, seen as taking on central importance and they come randomly, and their onset is instantaneous. Such logic is echoed by Krasner in his theory of ‘punctuated equilibrium’ that suggests that the state-building, and conversely institutional-building, “is episodic and dramatic” rather than continuous and incremental.”¹⁹¹ As such, the appearance of a ‘critical juncture’ as an explanatory tool is therefore closely linked with the concept of ‘*crisis*’. The onset of a crisis automatically requires a choice that precludes the pursuit of other options, including the possible most effective outcome. Through his theory of ‘punctuated equilibrium’, Krasner suggests that crises furnish opportunities to provide institutions with innovation or, conversely, an alternative political direction.

Yet what entails a ‘crisis’? With scholars pointing to the importance of crises in shaping scope and direction of political processes, it is important to understand what is implied by the term ‘crisis’, as such moments can arguably be infinite in number. In his analysis of the US administrative state, Skowronek defines ‘crisis’ as “a sporadic, disruptive event that suddenly changes a state’s capacity to maintain and control the boundaries defining the legitimate use of coercion.”¹⁹² As such, crises are viewed as the “watersheds in a state’s institutional development. Actions taken to meet the challenge often lead to the establishment of new institutional forms, powers and precedents.”¹⁹³ The outcome of a crisis will, in Skowronek’s view, depend on existing institutional and political structures as well as the parameters available to decision-makers when

¹⁸⁹As underlined in chapter 4.5.4, in After Victory, Ikenberry chooses the postwar settlements of 1815, 1919 and 1945 respectively to explain the choices made regarding the breadth of the International Order and the possible depth of institutional cooperation therein.

¹⁹⁰ Weber, Max, Economy and Society, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986, pp. 1111-1113.

¹⁹¹ Krasner, Steven, “Approaches to the State: Alternative Concepts and Historical Dynamics”, *Comparative Politics*, Vol. No 16, No 2 (January 1984), pp. 223-246.

¹⁹² Skowronek, Stephen, Building a New American State: The Expansion of National Administration State, 1877-1920, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982, pg. 10.

¹⁹³ Ibid.

tackling such crises. In other words, the institutional/political base combined with the individual responses available to decision-makers during a crisis assist in determining the ultimate outcome. As such, the concept of 'critical juncture' becomes almost synonymous with 'crisis'. Calder also uses the concept of domestic crises to explain public policy profiles. Here, Calder focuses on periods of major political crisis defined as "climactic periods, when long-established patterns are suddenly called into question, and new, unusually enduring relationships are forged."¹⁹⁴ Calder argues that the political/institutional decisions taken within the intense, but temporally limited, confines of a political crisis often endure long after the initial rationale behind such decisions has faded. As such, Calder underscores the necessity for a detailed examination of the domestic historical record, including the pre-existing social structure and newly arising pressures for change during periods of political crises.

2.7.2.3. 'Critical Junctures': Locking in the Trajectory of Future Possibilities

Weber noted that politics and society run on "tracks" that have been laid during formative moments in a nation's history. As described above, new ideas or "world images" would appear and recast the foundations of social interests within a given society; however, aside from such pinpointed moments, both groups and individuals pursue their respective interests by following predefined tracks.¹⁹⁵ Weber's reflections encapsulate the second characteristic of a critical juncture, namely defining the scope of future possibilities beyond the present crisis at hand. This is essential for placing the analysis of an historical event/social science question into Pierson's notion of a 'moving picture'. To better illustrate this process-oriented role of a critical juncture, Verba noted that political developments mimicked a "branching tree pattern" that consists of an infinite number of possibilities; however each choice that is made explicitly precludes alternatives, thereby shaping the subsequent pattern of political development and the eventual scope of future choices.¹⁹⁶ This was echoed in David's 'path dependent' pattern of change where outcomes during a decisive transition establish rigid trajectories where particular outcomes follow particular outcomes.¹⁹⁷

The selection of 'critical junctures' is not limited to time or context and has been utilized in both single-unit, regional contexts, and, ultimately, at the systemic level. Regarding the *single-unit/state level*, Skowronek applies an exclusively domestic focus in his empirical study, confining himself to a particular state (the United States) and a clear timeframe of 1877-1920 where the pressures of the international system play no role. This exclusively domestic focus is continued by other proponents of the 'critical juncture' model: Lipset and Rokkan analyze three separate historical critical junctures of reformation, democratic revolution, and industrial revolution to illustrate the effect on elite choices (from diverse options) that defined the future institutional form

¹⁹⁴ Calder, Kent, Crisis and Compensation: Public Policy and Political Stability in Japan, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988, pg. 28.

¹⁹⁵ Weber, Max, "The Social Psychology of World Religions" in Gerth H.H. & Wright Mills, C. (eds), From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology, New York: Oxford University Press, 1948, pg. 280.

¹⁹⁶ Verba, Sidney, "Sequences and Development" in Binder, Leonard et al, Crisis and Sequences in Political Development, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1971, pg. 308.

¹⁹⁷ David, Paul, "Clio and the Economics of QWERTY", *American Economic Review* 75, no. 2 (May 1995), pp. 332-37.

and scope for potential party development in Europe.¹⁹⁸ Gourevitch also utilizes the model of ‘critical junctures’ within a localized, domestic context noting that crises mirror the happenings within a particular state that will, eventually through the tackling of crisis, influence the state itself.¹⁹⁹

The model of crisis provoked by a ‘critical juncture’ has also been extended outside the confines of a single-unit, domestic setting. On a **regional level**, Ruth and David Collier used comparative historical research to pinpoint and crystalize sources of political change in the Latin American labour union movement in the first half of the 20th Century, namely how such movements were incorporated into each country’s respective political system.²⁰⁰ Of particular value here is Collier and Colliers’s theoretic model that would seem to mimic the placing of a research question within the framework of Pierson’s ‘moving picture’ concept. While Collier and Collier did not conduct their investigation through the prism of the international order or system, they did adapt the concept of ‘critical junctures’ to a regional scale. To accomplish this, they constructed a useful model to consider questions through an analysis of comparable historical processes whose elements are detailed below:

- i. ***Antecedent conditions***: baseline socioeconomic and political conditions prior to the onset of the ‘critical juncture’ that constitute the background for subsequent change;
- ii. ***Cleavages, shocks or crises*** that trigger the outbreak of ‘critical junctures’;
- iii. ***‘Critical junctures’*** are **major episodes of** institutional change or innovation;
- iv. The ***aftermath*** is the period during which the legacy takes shape;
- v. The ***legacy*** is an enduring, self-reinforcing institutional inheritance of the ‘critical juncture’ that stays in place and is stable for a considerable period.²⁰¹

Widening the scope of investigation from the regional to the **systemic level**, Ikenberry, as illustrated in After Victory, viewed the phenomenon of international orders as very much subject to the ebb and flow of historical process: “states have built ordering arrangements in various ways, only to see order eventually breakdown or transform itself.”²⁰² However, Ikenberry views the international order as much more than a ‘rise and fall’ phenomenon, arguing that such an approach cannot be adequate to afford a true understanding of their particular characteristics and numerous variations across time and space. Consequently, comprehending the temporal dynamics using ‘critical junctures’ becomes useful. Ikenberry underlines, examining the historical record,

¹⁹⁸ Lipset, Seymour and Rokkan, Stein, “Cleavage Structure, Party Systems and Voter Alignments: An Introduction” in Lipset and Rokkan (eds.) Party Systems and Voter Alignments: Cross National Perspectives, New York: Free Press, 1968, pp. 1-63.

¹⁹⁹ Gourevitch, Peter, Politics in Hard Times: Comparative Responses to International Economic Hard Times, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1986.

²⁰⁰ Collier, R.B. & Collier, D., Shaping the Political Arena: Critical Junctures, the Labour Movement and Regime Dynamics in Latin America, Berkeley: University of California at Berkeley, 1991.

²⁰¹ Ibid., pp. 30-39.

²⁰² Ikenberry, John, “The Rise Character, and Evolution of International Order” in Fioretos, Orfeo et al., The Oxford Handbook of Historical Institutionalism, pg. 539.

“International order-building exhibits critical junctures logic. Moments open up, giving powerful states the opportunity to lay down the “tracks” along which interstate relations run.”²⁰³ Ikenberry focuses on the systemic choices available to a state in the wake of a ‘critical juncture’, arguing that they likewise “exhibit features of path dependence.”²⁰⁴ Here, however, Ikenberry’s version of systemic path dependency tends towards the locking in of power within institutions that, eventually, become jealous guardians of their own respective sovereignty, underscoring, through postwar settlements since 1648, that states “have sought to entrench their interests in institutions, doing so with the anticipation that those institutions would persist.”²⁰⁵ These initial, post-‘critical juncture’ institutions also, according to Ikenberry “exhibited...increasing returns [to their creators]”²⁰⁶ through the proliferation of institutional legitimacy, transparency and guiding principles throughout the international order in question. While this might be the case for the Constitutional Order in After Victory, very little is said regarding cases where the path dependency of a ‘critical juncture’ limits options in a diametrically opposite direction, namely a situation where the international order is *not* characterized by institutions.

2.7.3. War as the Quintessential Systemic ‘Critical Juncture’

As discussed above, not only do wars define the systemic hegemon, but major military conflicts also serve as the vehicle by which orders are broken, sustained, or created. While Skowronek applies such logic to the analysis of the US administrative state, Gilpin sought answers on a systemic level, referring to such instances as ‘systemic change’, namely moments when the governing rules and institutions are remade to suit the needs of the newly powerful state or hegemon.²⁰⁷ Gilpin noted that such great turning points in history have been furnished by “hegemonic struggles among political rivals; these periodic conflicts have reordered the international system and propelled history in new and uncharted directions.”²⁰⁸ While noting the potential of domestic, unit-level events—such as the Russian, Chinese and Iranian revolutions of the 20th Century—to greatly influence the trajectory of international relations, only conflicts between states have the potential to unleash hegemonic war and change. Hence, in Gilpin’s eyes, war acts as the quintessential ‘critical juncture’.

While underlining the importance of war as is the harbinger of a ‘critical juncture’ of systemic change, Gilpin also hypothesizes on the systemic symptoms that cause such a situation to occur. The essential element is perceived as systemic disbalance and disfunction: “(I)f the disequilibrium in the international system is not resolved, then the system will be changed and a new equilibrium reflecting the redistribution of power will be established.”²⁰⁹ Gilpin specifies the disbalance plaguing the system as its inherent inability to adjust to changed realities, be they a “discrepancy between one’s power and one’s commitments” as well as “the perceived costs of changing the international system have declined relative to the potential benefits of doing so.”²¹⁰ This notion of systemic stability was likewise echoed by Kissinger in his concept of systemic

²⁰³ Ibid., pg. 541.

²⁰⁴ Ibid., pg. 542.

²⁰⁵ Ibid., pg. 543.

²⁰⁶ Ibid., pg. 545.

²⁰⁷ Gilpin, War and Change in World Politics, pp. 41-44.

²⁰⁸ Ibid., pg. 203.

²⁰⁹ Ibid., pg. 186.

²¹⁰ Ibid., pp. 186-87.

legitimacy. According to Kissinger, this implied two aspects: (i.) international agreement about the nature of systemic workable arrangements as well as permissible aims of foreign policy; and (ii.) the acceptance of the framework of the international order by all major powers, at least to the extent that a state is so dissatisfied with it to pursue a revolutionary foreign policy.²¹¹ In this case, using National Socialist Germany as an example, the state would pursue policies that actively seek to radically alter, or simply overturn, the systemic status quo. Both Gilpin's and Kissinger's respective definitions illustrate that the scope of the changes that accompany hegemonic struggle have remained constant over recorded history. They are therefore fundamental in defining the trajectories of future decisions, supporting the arguments of Collier and Collier, Pierson and historical institutionalism: "the great turning points in world history have been provided by these hegemonic struggles among political rivals; these periodic conflicts have reordered the international system and *propelled history in new and uncharted directions*."²¹²

Gilpin also underlines that, as a result of historical systemic wars, the trajectory of constructivist values are, through such hegemonic conflicts, also locked in to form the available scope of future decision-makers: "they resolve the question of which state will govern the system, as well as what ideas and values will predominate, thereby determining the ethos of succeeding ages."²¹³ Hence, the philosophic framework within which future political decisions are made, according to Gilpin, are therefore inherently defined by systemic martial 'critical junctures'. Gilpin follows here the tradition of other scholars who have sought to define an overarching 'historical law' that would divulge a discernable pattern as argued by Toynbee, Wright and Beer.²¹⁴ While such scholarship is beyond the scope of this dissertation, such scholars underline the function of hegemonic wars in steering history into new and unexplored avenues. Their respective assertions of the historical inevitability (based on historical patterns since Antiquity) of hegemonic wars, defined by Gilpin as "a war that determines which states or states will be dominant and will govern the system"²¹⁵, as well as the profound and comprehensive change that arises in their wake, would indicate that their outcomes would shape the quality, scope and utility of RSOs, both globally and regionally. As Gilpin notes, a "peace settlement following such a hegemonic struggle reorders the political, territorial, and other basis of the system."²¹⁶ Hence, the novel quality and scope of an international order, akin to Collier & Collier's concept of a legacy system, arises solely from moments of systemic collapse.

Echoing ideas already present in Gilpin's above definitions, scholars analyzing the harbingers of change to the international system underline that episodes of international order collapse and formation are both irregular and sporadic: Katzenstein views the importance of war, breakdown and reconstitution of an international order, and the relationship between states it inevitably prescribes, as a central element of international change described as a "sequence of

²¹¹ Kissinger, A World Restored, pg. 1.

²¹² Ibid., pp. 203.

²¹³ Ibid.

²¹⁴ For the further investigation of a possible 'historical law', see: Toynbee, Arnold J., A Study of History. Vols 3 and 12. London: Oxford University, 1961; Wright, Quincy, A Study of War, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1942; Beer, Francis, Peace Against War: The Ecology of International Violence, San Francisco: W.H. Freeman, 1981.

²¹⁵ Gilpin, War and Change in World Politics, pg. 15.

²¹⁶ Ibid.

irregular big bangs.”²¹⁷ Such an approach is also echoed by Ikenberry who employs moments of crises as the tool to study the broader question of order in a world of sovereign states. Dubbing such systemic crises as ‘historical junctures’, Ikenberry defines such points in history as “dramatic moments of upheaval and change within the international system, when the old order has been destroyed by war and newly powerful states try to re-establish basic organizing rules and arrangements.”²¹⁸ As such, they serve as the entry point of the victorious power to reflect on the appropriate creation of a possible, postwar order, namely Balance of Power; Hegemonic and Constitutional Order (see 4.5.4.). Here, Ikenberry does underline a caveat, namely the intensity of hegemonic war and scope of systemic breakdown, “the more complex the systemic breakdown, the more fundamental will be the discussion of institutional arrangements.”²¹⁹ Citing 1648, 1713, 1815, 1919 and 1945 as examples, Ikenberry shadows the role of individuals (better said those in decision-making positions) as highlighted by Skowronek, Krasner, Gourevitch and Calder by noting that “newly powerful states [governments and their leaders] have been given extraordinary opportunities to shape world politics.”²²⁰

2.7.4. Conclusion

In the above outline of the State of the Art, researchers have illustrated the possible benefits that can be derived from tackling research questions through, as Pierson frames it, a ‘moving picture’ approach. *Tabulae rasae* would, upon further reflection, seem to constitute a rare occurrence within the social sciences. The use of the tenets of historical institutionalism helps elucidate a varied and diverse scope of research questions. Seeking explanations of social science queries by bestowing temporality as much as place in respective investigation as constructivists bestow on the concept of identity would seem essential, especially when delving outside areas of traditional IR (i.e. Western) cultural boundaries.

As theoretically defined by Pierson and Fioretos, and empirically illustrated by Raustiala and Ertman, historical institutionalism’s focus is placed *not* on the analysis of historical events themselves, but rather how historical events allow or preclude what individual decisions can (or cannot) be taken. Not only the scope and timing of decisions matter, but also their respective consequences: the later path of events is shaped by past decisions that can limited the scope of future possibilities of available action. Past decisions, as defined by the concept of ‘inflexibility’, also lock in paths of action making future changes and/or alterations of course less likely. As illustrated by Ertman and Ikenberry, decisions, whether taken at the unit-(state) or systemic level, play a key role determining the character and scope as well as the overall availability of future options. Seen through this lens, the past determines the contours of the future.

To do so, the State of the Art stipulates the use of a specific empirical tool, namely the ‘critical juncture’. In reviewing the literature, proponents of the ‘critical juncture’ approach ascribe the following characteristic to their use: **First**, ‘critical junctures’ are viewed within the confines

²¹⁷ Katzenstein, Peter, “International Relations Theory and the Analysis of Change” in Czempiel and Rosenau (eds.), *Global Change and Theoretical Challenges: Approaches to World Politics for the 1990s*, Lexington: Lexington Books, 1989, pg. 296.

²¹⁸ Ikenberry, *After Victory*, pg. 3.

²¹⁹ Ibid., pg. 60.

²²⁰ Ibid. pg. 3.

of Pierson's concept of 'boundary conditions' that introduce temporal limits on a particular period of investigation. **Second**, within these predetermined temporal limits, 'critical junctures' are defined as episodes, or 'crises', of major political, institutional, or systemic importance and thereby become the tool whereby processes can be studied. 'Critical junctures' result in serious change. During a 'critical juncture', the analysis of the historical event itself takes second stage to the scrutiny of the scope and ultimate direction of policies they eventually prescribe. **Third**, 'critical junctures' are sporadic and random in their occurrence, however, they can, as illustrated by Collier & Collier, be conditioned by equally arbitrary antecedent conditions. **Fourth**, 'critical junctures' are not democratic by nature. As 'critical junctures' inherently focus on the decisions taken and their implications for the future, the role played by decision-makers, both as individuals and groups, assumes critical importance. Simply put, the choices of decision-makers during a 'critical juncture' not only define the immediate policy but also the range of options and possibilities available to future decision-makers.

Gilpin and Ikenberry underline that such 'critical junctures' are essential in defining the rules and character of international orders, both in their immediate wake as well as determining the scope of future systemic possibilities. While unit-level events are of importance, only hegemonic wars are to be considered as having the innate ability to bring about the abovementioned systemic change of a 'critical juncture'. Through this convergence of systemic collapse and the options available to and consequences of individual choice, a new international order is remade. The importance of 'critical junctures' in ushering in political, social and institutional change—and defining the scope of future trajectories has been illustrated by Collier & Collier and historical institutionalism. Gilpin has underscored the variable of hegemonic war as a constant and key element of instigating systemic change (including the perception of norms and values). Yet the orders that arise out of post-hegemonic wars are a product of concrete decisions made by individual choice through a 'critical juncture' that, in turn, defines the scope within future decisions will be made. The power prescribed to decision-makers at critical historical junctures by Skowronek and Calder is placed on a systemic level by Ikenberry.

2.8. The Influence of Alternative IR Theories on Concepts of Systemic Stability

Researchers are divided on the ability of IOs and RSOs to structure meaningful co-operation in line with the writings of Keohane and Nye. Realist theorists have traditionally downplayed the ability of IOs having much of an effect on state behaviour, especially concerning the main 'life force' of the international system, namely military power, upon which any notion of stability is based. Here, the main tenet is rather the recognition of the state as the basic unit of the international system, each accorded with a nominal degree of equality.²²¹ Of particular importance is Morgenthau's assertion of the concept of power, defined both as the interests which states pursue and, simultaneously, the immediate aim for which all states strive. Drawing on Morgenthau's base, Kenneth Waltz noted that states comprise the "units" of the system that, in their essence, are alike in their fundamental character and function.²²² Anarchy continued, therefore, as the essence of the international system. Key is the assumption that there is no overarching body, or "governments

²²¹ Morgenthau, *Politics Amongst Nations*, pp. 4-16.

²²² Waltz, Kenneth, *Theory of International Politics*, Boston: McGraw Hill, 1979, pg. 95.

over governments” with sovereignty resides in individual states.²²³ Put simply, anarchy is the “absence of a monopoly of legitimate force”²²⁴. In such a competitive environment, states seek security but, as other members of the international system can metamorphose into potential threats, total security is never completely absolute.

Yet as Waltz subsequently noted, this does not translate into an inherent chaotic system, but one that is characterized by security competition and war.²²⁵ With no overarching arbiter, as Waltz argues, the anarchic order compels states “to provide for their own security, and threats or seeming threats to their security abound. Preoccupation with identifying dangers and counteracting them become a way of life.”²²⁶ Security becomes the sole guarantor of survival, the ultimate goal of each of system’s units. The goal of the state is its survival, which itself is a defensive goal, however given the lack of overarching authority on the international stage, aggressive behaviour is sometimes necessary. Stemming from this potential for aggressive escapades, fear becomes a guiding factor in international relations given the dire consequences of any military conflagration. To do so, Waltz describes security as a “self-help” system, with each state bearing the final responsibility for its own survival. This is also echoed by Claude who, viewing the international system as essentially the management of military power, noted that security can be attained through three routes: balance of power, collective security, and world government.²²⁷ In referring to a balance of power, Claude underlines that this concept does indeed entail a *situation* whereby the capabilities of states are balanced, but rather *policy* that achieves this end. Furthermore, Ikenberry understood balance of power as an “inevitable outcome of states seeking to ensure their security in an anarchic system, one that takes places through counterbalancing actions and not the creation of binding institutions.”²²⁸

This logic extends to agreements beyond the purely martial. According to realist scholars, states can and do engage in cooperation that extends to IOs, however this is a mere reflection of “state calculations of self-interest based primarily on the international distribution of power”.²²⁹ More commonplace are ad hoc arrangements of convenience in an ever-mutating international system, as illustrated by the shifts in loyalties and alliances throughout the 20th century.²³⁰ As underlined by Grieco, even when engaging in cooperation, states care about their relative position within the international system and serious concerns about a partner’s ability to compete.²³¹ States engaging in cooperation needed therefore to consider how benefits would be shared, both in absolute and relative terms, be it through the filter of IOs or bilateral agreements. Hence, cooperation in any form is interest-based and fleeting. Such cooperation, as already noted, does

²²³ Inis, Claude, Swords into Plowshares: The Problems and Progress of International Organizations, New York: Random House, 1971, pg. 14.

²²⁴ Waltz, Kenneth, “The Origins of War in Neorealist Theory,” in The Origin and Prevention of Major Wars, Rotberg, R & Rabb, T. (eds.), Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988, pp. 42-43.

²²⁵ Waltz, Theory of International Politics, pp. 88-93.

²²⁶ Waltz, Kenneth, “The Origins of War in Neorealist Theory”, pp. 42-43.

²²⁷ Claude, Inis, Power and International Relations, New York: Random House, 1962, pp. 3-93.

²²⁸ Ikenberry, After Victory, pp. 24-25.

²²⁹ Mearsheimer, John, “The False Promise of International Institutions”, *International Security*, Winter 1994/95, Vol. 19, No. 3, pg. 13.

²³⁰ Walt, The Origins of Alliances, pp. 126-332.

²³¹ Grieco, Joseph, “Anarchy and the Limits of Cooperation: a Realist Critique of the Newest Liberal Institutionalism”, *International Organization*, Volume 42, Issue 3, 2009.

not take place in a vacuum. Indeed, according to Kissinger, it occurs within the parameters of an international structure defined as legitimate, with ad hoc relations between states constituting its most prominent feature as “the characteristic of a stable order is its spontaneity.”²³²

2.8.1. Beyond Westphalia: How do Alternative IR Visions Influence concepts of Systemic Stability?

Recent constructivist-inspired research provides additional light on the structuring of cooperation in the absence of IOs. Given the ascending political and military weight of the PRC in the late 20th and 21st Century, and inspired by the constructivist school as mentioned above, scholars began to examine other concepts of international relations outside what has been seen as a field of research lying solely within the Anglo-Saxon intellectual tradition. International cooperation obviously predated the advent of IOs. As such, IR theory on a whole has been critiqued as being ahistorical and Eurocentric.²³³ Such commentary also reflects the reality that traditional IR frameworks and concepts of statehood originated in Europe and were not absorbed fully globally until the 19th Century.²³⁴ Research has sought to elucidate the concept of non-Western IR theory, most notably as heirs of Chinese tradition and philosophy. As with most questions pertaining to IR, the existence of such a school is highly contested. Nevertheless, the classic view of an inherently Chinese view of international relations was laid out by John Fairbank in the 1960s.²³⁵ Fairbank articulated the theory that pre-modern East Asia itself comprised an isolated system that possessed distinct characteristics that became dislodged during the system’s absorption into the European alternative. The traits that Fairbank ascertained as comprising a Sinocentric world order was a system of hierarchy, with China and its distinct economic and military advantages forming tributary relations with other states in exchange for security guarantees. The system was held together through the influence of Confucian teaching that promoted the ideas of harmony, order and nonviolence. Hence, foreshadowing Wendt’s theory of constructivism, Fairbank ascertained that the diffusion of and adherence to such values explained the absence of major wars within the system and acted as a guide for state interaction. International relations, therefore, dispensed with the notion of IRs, even in its pre-modern form, as the hierarchy inherent in Fairbank’s system regulated relations between states.

David Kang revived Fairbank’s theory and focused on the Confucian element of nonviolence within contemporary international relations, arguing that the rise of the PRC has not led to the destabilization of the international system: neighbouring states have chosen to accommodate the PRC and not sought to balance it.²³⁶ This, as Kang notes, is in stark contradiction to traditional IR theory as outlined above. Key to Kang’s argument is the concept of ‘identity’ that featured prominently in Fairbank’s work, albeit adding a historical twist “Identity is also central in how regional states interpret China’s rise. East Asian states view China’s reemergence as the gravitational centre of East Asia as natural. China has a long history of being the dominant state

²³² Kissinger, *A World Restored*, pg. 3.

²³³ Zhang Yongjin, “System, Empire and State in Chinese international relations”, *Review of International Studies* (2001), 27, pg. 43.

²³⁴ Masaru, Kohno, “East Asia and International Relations Theory”, *International Relations of the Asia-Pacific*, Vol. 14, No 1, pg. 181.

²³⁵ Fairbank, John (ed.), *The Chinese World Order: China’s Foreign Relations*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1968.

²³⁶ Kang, David, *China Rising*, New York: Columbia University Press, 2009.

in East Asia.”²³⁷ This historical parley was elaborated by Kang in his follow-up study, contrasting through study of the historical record, an ‘East Asian system’ with a ‘Westphalian system’ that “emphasizes formal equality between states and balance-of-power politics”.²³⁸ Therefore, Kang outlines what he views as an alternative to current IR theory—unlike Fairbank, Kang does not view the tradition inherent in this pre-modern international system as having been totally annihilated, arguing instead that, somehow, it lives on in some form to influence contemporary international relations. Kang’s theory of regional constructivist uniqueness spawned attempts by IR researchers to distill an IR theory that reflects a novel approach to explain contemporary cooperation based on regional philosophical and historical trends.²³⁹

In line with Kang’s approach, Francis Fukuyama advocated that China pioneered the elements of basic modern statehood and presents its own unique form of state formation, arguing that most of what modern Western scholars view as elements of the modern state were already present in China in the Third Century.²⁴⁰ Central to such claims of Chinese uniqueness rested on its Confucian base that supposedly furnished an exclusively Chinese incarnation of most concepts of statehood as well as the subsequent world order such states comprised.²⁴¹ A fierce proponent of the notion of uniquely Chinese IR-concepts and statehood can be found in writings of Zhao Tingyang who conceptualized a vision of a Chinese world order based on *tianxia* (天下).²⁴² Rejecting the possibility of a Kantian-inspired world peace due to the global cleavages identified in Huntington’s *Clash Of Civilizations*, Zhao presents the concept of *tianxia* as a world-ordering ‘internalizing principle’ based on its two tenets of coexistence and rational reasoning.²⁴³ Peaceful co-existence was already, according to Zhao, an inherent part of Chinese culture since the early Zhou dynasty (circa 1046 BC) and, as such, provided a key link in furnishing coexistence. Zhao presents a 21st century Mackinderesque view of *tianxia*’s construction as a three-tiered conception of geographic, social and political levels—all based on the classical Chinese view of the world.²⁴⁴ Hence, Zhao lays the framework for a distinct political cosmology derived from a distinct world vision, be it based in present or historical concerns. In a similar vein, yet on a much smaller scale, Kaczarski argues that Chinese elites view regionalism in a unique way, primarily rejecting the universalism of Western-made international norms.²⁴⁵ This theory finds its expression in the construction of the Chinese Silk Road.

²³⁷ Ibid., pg. 4.

²³⁸ Kang, David, *East Asia before the West*, New York: Columbia University Press, 2012, pg. 3.

²³⁹ Kristensen, Pieter & Nielsen, Ras “Constructing a Chinese IR Theory”, *International Political Sociology* (2013), 7, pp. 19-40; Dellios, Rosita, “International relations Theory and Chinese philosophy” (2011), *Humanities & Social Science Papers*, Paper 570.

²⁴⁰ Fukuyama, Francis, *The Origins of Political Order*, London: Profile Books, 2011, pg. 19.

²⁴¹ For an overview of the discussion on the singularity of a Chinese World Order, see Kim Youngmin, *A History of Chinese Political Thought*, Cambridge: Polity Press, 2018; Wang Ban, *Chinese Visions of World Order: Tianxia, Culture and World Politics*, Durham: Duke University Press, 2017; Callahan, William, “Chinese Visions of a World Order”, *International Studies Review* (2008), 10, pp. 749-761.

²⁴² Zhao Tingyang, *All under Heaven: The Tianxia System for a Possible World Order*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 2021.

²⁴³ Ibid., pg. 18.

²⁴⁴ Ibid., pg. 51.

²⁴⁵ Kaczarski, Marcin, “Non-Western Versions of Regionalism: the Chinese Silk Road and Russia’s Eurasian Economic Union”, *International Affairs*, Nov. 2017, Vol. 93, Issue 6, pp.1357-1376

Such ideas have unsurprisingly ignited passionate counterarguments, most notable amongst them by Wang Yuan-kang.²⁴⁶ Studying the historical record from the Song and Ming Dynasties, seen by Wang as the most Confucian of the Imperial dynasties, Wang illustrates that value-based thinking played little role in the ruling elite's calculus, whose decisions were based solely on "their assessment of the balance of power between China and its adversary."²⁴⁷ Hence, Wang refutes the notion of a unique international system particular to East Asia, thereby arguing that Realist principles, and their underlying assumptions of cooperation between states, have been part and parcel of East Asian and global history. Indeed, this is in line with Waltz's neo-realist logic, whereby the general nature of this theory would not be beholden to regional or country-specific traits.²⁴⁸

2.8.2. Conclusion

In a situation where IOs and RSOs are not viewed as a preferred way of channeling international cooperation, ad hoc, spontaneous bilateral relations between members of the system constitute the main avenue to conduct diplomacy. Kissinger's caveat of an existing order possessing legitimacy marks an important condition whereby productive diplomacy, defined as the art of restraining power, can be conducted.²⁴⁹ Yet scholars following the intellectual curiosity of Fairbank have placed an interesting joker into the mix. Different historic concepts of statehood and the international system, as pioneered by Fairbank, redefined by Zhao, and followed up in the works of Kang, Fukuyama and Wang Gungwu introduce a possible inherent aversion to structuring cooperation through the tools of IOs and RSOs and potentially harbouring notions of constructing a different type of diplomacy, as defined by Kissinger, altogether.

²⁴⁶ Wang, Yuan-kang, Harmony and War: Confucian Culture and Chinese Power Politics, New York: Columbia University Press, 2011.

²⁴⁷ Ibid., pg. 181.

²⁴⁸ Waltz, A Theory of World Politics, pp. 1-17.

²⁴⁹ Kissinger, A World Restored, pg. 2.

Chapter 3 - Summary of the State of the Art

3.1. Summary of Research Questions

Having reviewed the previous literature on the relevant elements of IR theory pertinent to the overarching research question of “*why are there no RSOs in East Asia?*”, the following working hypotheses (WH), based on the State of the Art, have been formulated to guide the construction of an analytic framework for further testing:

WH1: The outbreak of a zone of stable peace is an essential condition to stimulate the formation of security cooperation that could lead to formation of an RSO:

Stable peace scholars, as illustrated in the State of the Art, agree that the advent of stable peace is neither self-evident nor spontaneous. Boulding, Kacowicz, Heo, and Kupchan found that stable peace emerges after a lengthy process. Furthermore, this process entails some degree of constructivist change. This is most vividly described by Boulding in this concept of the ever-changing taboo line and its connection with a state’s own self-image. As seen, the nucleus of Boulding’s argument has been incorporated by Kacowicz et al. and Kupchan in their respective definitions of stable peace: the unfathomability of war between a given two nation states. Once the specter of war has been banished from interstate relations, Kupchan purports that a ‘zone of stable peace’ is established. Through this ‘zone of stable peace’ the threshold towards more intimate forms of cooperation, such as through an RSO, remains open as illustrated by Deutsch’s concept of a pluralistic security community.

How nation states traverse this threshold towards cooperation, however, remains less clear. While the literature points towards the necessity of an initial formation of a ‘zone of stable peace’ to usher in deeper cooperation, how this exactly occurs remains to be elucidated. Little is known about how and why such zones of stable peace emerge from the ebb and flow between historical periods of war, conflict and non-conflict. While self-images are seen as an essential ingredient and are stated to be the result of process, what concretely triggers a decision to re-evaluate a state’s self-image is absent from Boulding’s (as well as his intellectual inheritors’) respective treatises.

Through the following Analytical Framework (Chapter 6), this dissertation attempts to identify which specific criteria should be met in order to stimulate the emergence of a zone of stable peace, thereby furnishing the foundation for possible, deeper, future security cooperation, including through an RSO.

WH2: Systemic and sub-systemic conditions have a direct effect on the ability and interest of states to engage in security cooperation through the cultivation of stable peace:

As illustrated, Waltz underscored that the inherent anarchic nature of the international system excerpts pressure on states. It does so by placing actors along the scale of relative power (defined in the discussion of the State of the Art as in martial terms), forcing states to balance their respective power lest they be eliminated from the international system. This inherent ranking, therefore, serves as a prime influence on state foreign policy, with the intrinsic anarchy of the system imposing a correspondingly finite range of choices on the unit-(state) level. Hence, Waltz

makes the link between overall conditions in the international system and the behaviour of each individual state. *Ceteris paribus* they could also include, according to the stable peace literature, the all-important initial decision of a state to launch the gears of policy towards stable peace (Kupchan). Hence, Waltz's established connection between the system and state policy decisions matters.

Echoing the importance of the overarching global system, Bull additionally expounded upon the importance of considering the role of smaller sub-systems that can be almost infinite in number (existing when two or more states have sufficient contact with each other and influence each other's decisions). As seen from Spengler, Wendt and Huntington, Bull's definition of 'international society' as sub-system can indeed be value-based. Hence both the overarching system, as well as the plethora of sub-systems that comprise East Asia, need to be taken into consideration to assess how they affect the formation of RSOs.

A prime example of Bull's understanding of sub-systems is to be found in Ikenberry's concept of international order. Ikenberry's definition of "hegemonic" and "constitutional orders" are of value. As seen, when present, a hegemon sets the tone of the respective sub-system over which it dominates. This can be used to engage in, or refrain, from establishing cooperation through RSOs. Institutional cooperation takes place as per Ikenberry after the overarching system has collapsed and is reorganized. As noted, Ikenberry's visions of "balance of power" and "hegemonic orders" are much in line with Gilpin's vision of the international system. However, while both Ikenberry and Gilpin agree on the importance of systemic collapse in shaping the eventual contours of international orders, Gilpin provides scholars with a useful tool to do so, namely the concept of systemic war whose intensity defines the scope of change that is inherent in the subsequent order. Consequently, the advent of systemic war marks the corresponding inflection point that could help researchers guide the trajectory of systemic orders.

WH3: 'Critical Junctures', brought about through the advent of Gilpin's concept of systemic war, have shaped the interests of the unit-level (states) to engage in security cooperation on a systemic level through a zone of stable peace:

Gilpin's inflection points, however, need to be pinpointed for subsequent analysis. Crisis has been illustrated (Weber, Krasner, Calder) as a method to gauge seemingly random political change. Following this logic, Ikenberry selected postwar, Western historical cases (1815, 1919 and 1945) but declined to accord them any overarching theoretical character. Viewing this decision through the lens of Spengler and his writings on the Western concept of time, this is perhaps unsurprising.²⁵⁰ The State of the Art has identified the concept of 'critical junctures' as a useful tool to analyze political developments, systemic characteristics and, finally, even the decision to form RSOs.

Collier & Collier's definition of 'critical junctures' views them as sporadic and random events that result in serious political, institutional or systemic change. They can be influenced and

²⁵⁰ Spengler underlined that the Western categorization of history into the 'Classical Period'; 'Middle Ages'; and 'Modern Age' is an "unbelievably meagre and pointless formula" that hindered Western historical understanding of its connections with the full spectrum of human history, ignoring concepts of time as understood by the civilizations of Antiquity and artificially imposing an illusion of progress. See Spengler, *Untergang des Abendlandes*, pp. 21-43.

conditioned, both arbitrarily and by design, by antecedent conditions (baseline political circumstances existing prior to the onset of a ‘critical juncture’ that constitute the background for subsequent change). Applying Gilpin’s concept of systemic war as the ultimate vehicle through which systemic change, whether by design or accident, is attained propels history in new and uncharted directions. This concept of systemic war therefore serves as useful benchmark to assess this dissertation’s research question. As noted, Ikenberry comes very close to such logic in his assessment of the institutional evolution of the Western systemic order, however, his analysis seems to be imbued with a sense of Fukuyamaesque optimism and inevitability of the progressive nature of international cooperation against which Spengler cautioned so very long ago. As a result, much is said about why ‘critical junctures’ result in institutional cooperation, including in the security realm, but little is mentioned to assist in elucidating why and how such cooperation does *not* materialize. Further enquiry into this phenomenon could therefore be merited.

WH4: Unit-level (state) decisions either before, during or after a ‘critical juncture’ influences the decision to engage in security cooperation that might eventually lead to RSO formation.

While ‘critical junctures’ can take place on the systemic level, they can also be pregnant with consequences for state-level policies. Skowronek argued for the analysis of sporadic, disruptive events that, almost in a Waltzian manner, prescribe the domestic policy options available to decision makers. As reviewed above, stable peace literature shares many theoretical commonalities, one of which is that the decision to engage in the lengthy process of building a stable peace emanates from the state, and not the systemic, level (Boulding, Kacowicz et al. & Kupchan). The decision to undertake an initial unilateral gesture of accommodation (Kupchan) that would beget the foundation of a ‘peace dynamic’ (Boulding) rests solely within the premise of the state. Realist theory (Mearsheimer, Morgenthau, Kissinger) accounts for such policies as necessary responses to changed (or unfavourable) geopolitical circumstances. At the same time, scholars highlight the necessity to also take into consideration other, constructivist concepts about discourse and identity (Boulding) that can also initiate the process towards stable peace.

WH5: In areas of the subsystem where stable peace has broken out, the lack of an interested hegemon is a serious impediment hindering the formation of RSOs.

In areas where stable peace has broken out, liberal institutionalists (Keohane, Nye), ascribe an almost automatic nature to international cooperation in all realms. Yet the above as illustrated that other factors may be at work: Mattli illustrated that the presence of an interested hegemon as a necessary condition to ensure implementation of any regional integration project. To recall, an interested hegemon serves as the focal point of integration coordination as well as acts as an arbiter between parties. This concept greatly overlaps with Ikenberry’s idea of a “Constitutional Order” where a hegemon has willingly chosen to diffuse its power through the creation of IOs (including RSOs). However, Mattli adds a further, critical element: the process initiated by an interested hegemon cannot be simply automatic, but rather depends on the ability of political elites to accommodate demands for functional integration. Without this key theoretical ingredient—as well as the demands for functional integration at the state level itself—Mattli argues that the chances of success could be rather modest.

3.2. Limitations of Existing Approaches

Having briefing summarized the above five WHs, they, when considered together, go a long way in answering this dissertation's RQ, namely "*Why there are no RSOs in EA?*". However, the answers they furnish are not fully complete. This is due to the State of the Art's heavy focus on using theory to account for the formation of RSOs, but simultaneously neglecting to account for cases of their non-formation. Deutsch, when introducing his notion of a security community—while extremely valuable—falls into the same logic as do Keohane and Nye when accounting for the inevitability of the formation of international cooperation, namely that the groundwork to enable such cooperation to take place had been established before any RSO had been initiated. While this reflected the respective contemporary political constellations at the time of writing, the constructivist context is, as noted above, exclusively liberal democratic.

Ikenberry's concept of international orders illustrates the theory's limits as admitted by the author himself when considering the gap between scholarship on the Asia-Pacific region and international relations theory, noting that "the two worlds...don't often meet."²⁵¹ His notion of a "Constitutional Order", however ideal, with a hegemon willing to create rule of law-based institutions to place voluntary limits on the return to power serves as a prime example. Such institutions have, in the security realm, not materialized in East Asia, despite checking his theoretical boxes as described above.²⁵² There are no RSOs currently in existence in East Asia that bind the United States to Japan or the Republic of Korea despite seeming to exhibit all the traits to qualify for the formation of a possible Constitutional Order, according to Ikenberry. To be clear regarding the situation surrounding the contemporary organizations that do exist in areas of East Asia: The Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) does not meet the definition of a RSO as established by this dissertation. AUKUS (Australia—United Kingdom—United States) is a trilateral security pact established by exclusively Anglo-Saxon nations in September 2021. As the membership base of this pact cannot be considered to meet the spatial boundary conditions as established by this dissertation, let alone its definition of a RSO, it cannot be considered to be an East Asian RSO. As a political creation, its membership base does not fully meet the criteria of a regional security organization as defined by this dissertation (see Chapters 2 and 7). The only example of an RSO (within the understanding of a "Constitutional Order"), namely the South East Asian Treaty Organization (SEATO) fell into political irrelevance until it took the decision to disband itself in 1977 on its own accord, an extremely rare (if almost unthinkable) fate for any IO.²⁵³ Hence, following Ikenberry's novel approach to explain the genesis of the post-Cold War Western international order, further research is necessary to attempt to account for the historical paucity of RSOs and their current absence from East Asia.

This dissertation proposes therefore to seek possible answers to its research question through a systemic analysis of East Asia, combining Realist and constructivist IR theory with the use of 'critical juncture' theory to chart the region's evolution via key historical benchmarks.

²⁵¹ Ikenberry, John; Mastanduno, Michael (eds.), *International Relations Theory and the Asia-Pacific*, New York: Columbia University Press, 2003, pg. 1.

²⁵² Ikenberry subsequently attempts to remedy this perceived shortcoming focused mostly on analyzing the foreign policy interactions between selected regional powers (PRC, Japan, US), see *International Relations Theory and the Asia-Pacific*, pp. 2-20.

²⁵³ Buszynski, Leszek, "SEATO: Why It Survived until 1977 and Why It Was Abolished", *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*, Vol. 12, No. 2 (Sep. 1981), pp. 287-296.

Ikenberry, in the tradition of liberal institutionalists, qualified his work After Victory as offering a “more *evolutionary* perspective emphasizing the lineages and continuities in the modern international order.”²⁵⁴ Ikenberry suggested that the durability of the American-led order made it “easy to join and hard to overturn”²⁵⁵, calling into question the associated assumptions of offensive Realist theorists (Mearsheimer) on the future of the global order as laid out above. While drawing on the Western experience, Ikenberry argues that the coming power transitions may play out differently than the tenets of realist theory decree. By applying the above concepts to the East Asian historical record, this dissertation seeks to present an argument as to why, using tenets of existing theory, RSO formation has been elusive, and will so remain in the foreseeable future, especially in light of the commencement of the Russian Special Military Operation against Ukraine on 24 February 2022. Perhaps, put simply, liberal institutionalists might have been correct in their methods, yet when implemented outside the well-trodden path of the Western context, wrong in their conclusions.

²⁵⁴ Ikenberry, After Victory, pg. xxv.

²⁵⁵ Ibid., pg. xxvii.

Chapter 4 - Analytical Framework

4.1. Introduction

To explore why there are no RSOs in East Asia, spatial delimitation is already inherent in the research question. The introduction has defined East Asia as a distinct region within the international structure, one that meets the definition of a region as per (i.) interdependence as defined by Russett and (ii.) geopolitical/cultural definitions as put forward by Spengler, Katzenstein and Huntington. Such concepts will be of value not only in ascertaining the boundaries of East Asia, but also when considering overall systemic conditions.

To recall, an RSO has been defined as follows: *an organization comprised of two or more states that, as per Deutsch's definition of a pluralistic security community, constructs a set of rules and norms to define state behaviour and a 'sense of community' attenuated enough to ensure the security of the states involved through a rejection of war as a means to resolve disputes*. As previously noted, the research question is approached through the tenets of offensive Realism where states seek to ensure their survival and expand their power within an anarchic system. Balance of power, as defined by Morgenthau, Kissinger, Claude and Paul et al, remains the default setting of international relations, with examples of meaningful cooperation being few and far between.

Nevertheless, as much of a challenge security cooperation comprises within an anarchical system, the literature, as well as the historical record, both attest to its occurrence. For rational states in an anarchic system to willingly enter into security cooperation implies a conscious decision to exit the balance of power logic that characterizes global politics as per the tenets of offensive Realism. As seen through the literature on stable peace, this is only possible after a zone of peace, defined by stable peace theorists (Boulding, Rock, Kacowicz et al., Kupchan) *as an area where members recognize the impossibility of resorting to war to resolve disputes*, has broken out between states. Peace is defined as a conscious choice. How states arrive at this choice has serious implications in furnishing an answer to the research question.

Central to this decision is the emergence of a zone of peace. The literature on stable peace cites a number of conditions that must be met for such a zone to break out between states yet remains foggy on ultimate conclusions on how and why this occurs. As with most concepts in stable peace literature—they strongly overlap with each other and straddle the theoretical spectrum from Realist to liberal institutional. In accounting for the outbreak of a zone of peace, Kupchan referred to the essentiality of 'triggering conditions'.²⁵⁶ As the establishment of peace is a *sine qua non* towards the formation of RSOs, examining whether or not such triggering conditions are present in East Asia presents a promising springboard to approach the research question. With no triggers sparking the construction of stable peace, security cooperation is not possible. In its stead, states remained confined in the default setting of the international system, namely the pursuit of balance of power.

²⁵⁶ Kupchan, *How Enemies become Friends*, pg. 66.

Yet stable peace is not the only factor meriting consideration when applying the above concepts to the RQ. The above discussion has illustrated that systemic theory and international orders also have a contribution to make, underlining the link between the overarching international structure and the creation of RSOs. Interestingly, an indirect link has been provided between two theoretical schools: the phenomenon of hegemonic influence is already a concept rooted in the literature on stable peace²⁵⁷. Moving beyond the limited work on stable peace, several theorists—including Gilpin, Ikenberry, Walt, Deutsch and Kissinger—attributed the presence of a hegemon in some form as a necessary condition for peace as well as the formation of security communities. As already noted, Deutsch encapsulated the concept nicely by arguing that security communities arise around cores of strength. To further appreciate Deutsch's logic, the full potential of hegemonic presence needs to be brought into sharp focus: first, on a systemic level, as noted by Waltz, the existence of a hegemon sets the tone for the parameters of cooperation between the units (states) within a region. This is most clearly fleshed out by Ikenberry with his concept of international orders. Second, hegemons also influence a system through the "in" side of Waltz's "outside-in" model. Decisions to pursue unilateral acts of accommodation (as well as decisions to entertain them) and engage in the process of working towards stable peace are all one that are taken at the state level, taking into careful consideration regional political calculus. Given this two-fold importance as ascribed by Waltz and its intimate link with the policy of individual states, in addition to the ability to influence stable peace, the presence of a hegemon within East Asia can be seen as essential element for analysis.

Building upon Waltz's logic, hegemons outline the contours and character of an international system. Ikenberry illustrates this concept neatly through his study of international orders. In particular, the notion of a 'Constitutional Order' is of value, where RSOs can be formed based on the premise of rule of law, binding institutions, and limits on the return to power.²⁵⁸ As well as in addition to ascertaining the presence of a hegemon, the formation/existence of a functioning Constitutional Order will also need to be identified. At the same time, the above discussion has underscored that the existence of a Constitutional Order per se is not by itself a sufficient condition to account for the formation of an RSO. As Mattli has shown through his study of regional integration, the presence of an interested hegemon, namely a state whose political leaders are willing and able to accommodate any demands for functional integration, is essential for any RSO to materialize. Therefore, the presence of interested hegemons, as per Mattli's criteria, within Ikenberry's definition of a Constitutional Order will be investigated.

With the theoretical concepts that will be utilized to furnish an answer to this dissertation's RQ having been identified, the scope of how they will be applied also now needs to be determined. The procedural nature of stable peace and systemic war theory fits neatly within Pierson's concept of placing research questions in both space and, more importantly, time to account for the gradual nature of RSO formation. Hence, to time and space this dissertation now turns.

²⁵⁷ Boulding, for example, ascertained that the strength of an international system may depend on several contradictory factors, one of which is hegemony, albeit linking it to the very un-Realist concept of 'justice': "if a dominant party of a system is self-confident, high in its morale, full of a sense of its own legitimacy, and willing and able to carry out threats, they system may be fair stable even under s string sense of injustice." Boulding, *Stable Peace*, pg. 71.

²⁵⁸ Ikenberry, *After Victory*, pg. 24.

4.2. Time and Space

4.2.1. Establishment of Temporal Boundary Conditions

Placing the research question in time implies a study of temporal sequencing through the analysis of systemic change. Limits are established through the setting of boundary conditions. To apply the concepts identified above they must be placed in their proper temporal context. Pierson and Tilly argue for the imposition of solid and tangible temporal limits to arrive at a deeper understanding of social science query. As Tilly underlined, “*when* things happen within a sequence affects *how* they happen.”²⁵⁹ Ikenberry, in his work After Victory, approaches his study of the expanding scope of choices available to victorious states to resort to institutional strategies within the Western international system by establishing temporal boundary conditions from 1815-1989. Here, Ikenberry seems to follow the path established by Pierson by “making temporal context explicit”²⁶⁰ by fixing temporal limitations to his line of enquiry. His choice is also in line with Pierson’s recommendation for a more contextualized approach to enquiry through the introduction of “temporal boundary conditions on the hypotheses that an analyst wishes to advance.”²⁶¹ Adopting this same method as advocated by Pierson and applied by Ikenberry, this dissertation will now establish and justify its temporal boundary conditions to assist in answering the research question.

4.2.2. Setting of Baseline Temporal Boundary Conditions

The current Westphalian, or modern, system of international relations seems to contain a grain of inevitability that few have chosen to question.²⁶² The modern international system whose evolution towards a purported reliance on international organizations and “rule-based orders” has been traced in detail by Ikenberry in After Victory. The introduction of this modern international order is not self-evident. Scholars argue that the introduction of the Westphalian principles to East Asia coincided with the conclusion of the Opium War (1839-1842) between the Qing Dynasty and the Western governments, however, it did not take hold immediately.²⁶³ The advent of the First Sino-Japanese War (1894-1895), however, has been described as a “clash of two orders,” with Qing China and Joseon Korea representing the traditional order and Meiji Japan representing the future.²⁶⁴ The Japanese victory therefore marked the dawn of East Asia as a part of the Westphalian international system. Given the change in trajectory that this implies, the start of the First Sino-Japanese War—an event that meets all the criteria of a ‘critical juncture’ defined in the State of the Art—makes the year of 1894 a promising starting point to place this dissertation’s RQ in time.

²⁵⁹ Tilly, Charles, Big Structures, Large Processes, Huge Comparisons, New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1984, pg. 14.

²⁶⁰ Pierson, Politics in Time, pg. 169.

²⁶¹ Ibid.

²⁶² Park Saeyoung, “The Death of Eastphalia, 1874” in Haggard, Steven and Kang, David (eds), East Asia in the World: Twelve Events that Shaped the Modern World, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020, pg. 239.

²⁶³ Suzuki Yu, Britain, Japan and China, 1876-1895, London: Routledge, 2020, pg. 1.

²⁶⁴ Paine, S.C.M., The Sino-Japanese War, pp. 3-20.

4.2.3. Setting of Terminal Temporal Boundary Conditions

The rationale behind establishing the initial boundary condition of 1894 has been expounded above. As every beginning needs an end, the closing boundary condition also requires definition. As systemic change and its effect on the creation of RSOs is a central assumption of this dissertation, the advent of the signing of the Treaty of San Francisco in September 1951 would represent an optimal terminal ‘critical juncture’ for the dénouement of the temporal boundary conditions. It remains decidedly outside of the scope of this dissertation to analyse the ‘critical junctures’ beyond the signing of the Treaty of San Francisco. Its legacy system, commonly referred to as the ‘San Francisco System’, will form the subject of analysis as it still constitutes the reference point, at the time of writing, for international relations in East Asia. The legacy of the Treaty of San Francisco constitutes the system that, into the 21st century, still remains valid, despite the significant events that have occurred in the decades following its signature, such as the US decision to recognize the PRC in 1972; the fall of the Soviet Union in 1991; and the February 2022 start of the Second Russian-Ukrainian War. The ultimate trajectory of these events, as well as the contours of any legacy system that could arise from the latter, is obviously impossible to define at the time of writing. What is clear, however, is that critical members of the East Asian region view this event as a clear break with the post-post-Cold War systemic order that had been established in 1991. Sergei Karaganov, Honorary Chairman of Russia’s Foreign and Defence Policy, argued that 2022 had marked the moment of the ‘constructive destruction’ of the global order and its contemporary institutions.²⁶⁵ The idea of fundamental systemic change has also formed a key element in President Putin’s 2022 speech at the Valdai Discussion Club.²⁶⁶ As an aftermath, as defined by Collier & Collier, of the 2022 ‘critical juncture’, Russian President Putin, during his 2023 address to the Federal Council, declared his country’s intention to stop its implementation of the START III arms control treaty, thereby suspending the last major treaty of the Cold War era.²⁶⁷ PRC Foreign Ministry Spokesman’s, Zhao Linjian, statements on Beijing’s view of the current “rules-based international order”²⁶⁸ also gives cause for reflection, or at least enough to justify the possible use of 2022 as this dissertation’s terminal boundary condition. Yet such statements, it will be argued, inherently constitute criticism of the Settlement of 1951, under whose shadow contemporary regional politics are conducted and, as such, justify ending the temporal boundary conditions with the signing of the Treaty of Peace with Japan. This dissertation now turns to the choice of the specific variables that will be used to track sequences within the established boundary conditions: ‘critical junctures’.

²⁶⁵ Караганов С.А. “От конструктивного разрушения к собиранию”, *Россия в глобальной политике*, 2022. Т. 20. No. 2., pp. 52-69.

²⁶⁶ “Заседание Международного дискуссионного клуба «Валдай»”, 27 October 2022. Web, accessed on 18 November 2022, <http://kremlin.ru/events/president/news/69695>; Барабанов, Олег; Бордачёв, Тимофей; Лисоволик, Ярослав; Лукьянов, Фёдор; Сушенцов, Андрей; Тимофеев, Иван, “Мир без сверхдержав”, Фонд развития и поддержки Международного дискуссионного клуба «Валдай», Октябрь, 2022.

²⁶⁷ Address of President Vladimir Putin to the Federal Council, 21 February 2023, www.kremlin.ru/d/70565

²⁶⁸ “Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Zhao Linjiang’s Regular Press Conference on 6 July 2022”, Web, accessed on 18 November 2022, https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/xwfw_665399/s2510_665401/202207/t20220706_10716417.html.

4.2.4. Setting of Spatial Boundary Conditions

With its temporal boundary conditions established, this dissertation now turns towards fixing its spatial limitations of enquiry. Given the fundamental role that the concept of ‘region’ plays in the subject of this dissertation, namely RSOs, it is essential to briefly delimit its understanding of the spatial frontiers of East Asia. As Fernand Braudel wrote “the question of boundaries is the first to be encountered; from it all others flow. To draw a boundary around anything is to define, analyze and reconstruct it.”²⁶⁹ The term ‘region’ has been defined as being comprised of two main features that transcend the purely geographic, namely (i.) geopolitical/cultural contours and (ii.) the existence of interdependence. Through the use of these criteria, this dissertation now turns to further develop its understanding of what these spatial borders entail in order to provide the necessary prism through which its hypotheses will be tested.

4.2.5. Cultural Spatial Boundary Conditions

Geography is more than the study of landscapes, rivers and geology: it investigates the manner in which human beings shape, and are shaped by, their physical environment as well as the way in which they interact within each other in space.²⁷⁰ Defining East Asia by criteria of the purely geographic is challenging at best, with scholars almost unanimously agree to relegate the physical environment to background in favour of other considerations, namely the role of culture. As noted, constructivist notions play an important factor not only in the emergence of IOs but also of RSOs. Indeed, the importance of cultural ties has also been reflected in the writings of institutionalists such as Keohane and Nye as well as constructivists such as Wendt. When defining a region to chart the emergence/non-emergence of RSOs, culture matters. Most scholars writing on East Asia underline the essential role of culture in underpinning the notion of a region. As argued by Spengler, Deutsch, Tilly and Huntington, the notion of East Asia as a region could be seen as a historical construct that is subject to a degree of historical and constructivist flexibility. The geographic spatial boundaries of East Asia shall, for the purposes of this dissertation, reflect these constructivist theories. In particular, the writings of Fairbank are especially instructive. Here, East Asia was defined as a cultural zone, one that was contiguous as an extension of Chinese cultural influence in what Fairbank termed the ‘Sinic Zone’.²⁷¹ Unsurprisingly, Huntington comes quite close to Fairbank’s understanding of regions, even recycling the same nomenclature.²⁷² Like Fairbank, Huntington also noted that, while Confucianism was a major component of Chinese civilization, it also transcended areas under Chinese political control. As illustrated by Fairbank and Huntington, cultural—not ethnic—ties form the basis for East Asia’s claim to regionality.

²⁶⁹ Braudel, Fernand, The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II, Volume I, New York: Harper Collins, 1992, pg. 18.

²⁷⁰ Lewis, Mark Edward, The Early Chinese Empires: Qin and Han, Cambridge: Belknap Press, 2007, pg. 5.

²⁷¹ In laying out the spatial boundary conditions for his theory of a Chinese World Order, Fairbank stressed the following: “The basic fault underlying this Sinocentric world order was the fact that was not coterminous with the Chinese cultural area. The non-Chinese states of the area, forming the Sinic Zone, were umbilically tied to China by cultural bonds such as the Chinese written language and Confucianism” despite the peoples of distinctly non-Chinese culture (Manchus, Mongols, Turks and Tibetans) even though their societies and cultures were fundamentally distinct.” See Fairbank, The Chinese World Order, pg. 3.

²⁷² Huntington, The Clash of Civilization, pg. 45. Huntington justified his qualification of the ‘Sinic Culture’ in the following manner “all scholars recognize the existence of either a single distinct Chinese civilization dating back at least to 1500 BC.

Hence, this dissertation views the contemporary states of PRC (including the “RoC”), Japan, DPRK, RoK, Mongolia and Vietnam as forming the region of East Asia.

4.3. What sparks RSO-non formation: Application of Criteria for Identified ‘Critical Junctures’

4.3.1. Criteria for the Formation of an RSO

The application of ‘critical junctures’ to the historical record is the tool whereby the absence of RSOs in East Asia will be explained. As underlined by Skowronek and Ikenberry, the conscious actions taken by decision-makers are based on a selection of policy options inherently finite in scope as they are shaped and defined by the legacy of ‘critical junctures’. As noted by Gilpin and Ikenberry, the more fundamental the systemic breakdown in the wake of a ‘critical juncture’, the “more fundamental will be the discussion on institutional arrangements”²⁷³. In line with the literature on stable peace, system breakdown can usher in far-ranging changes, from power capabilities of states within the system to the underlining constructivist visions underpinning their existence, as argued by Wendt and Huntington. The formation of a legacy system, as defined by Collier & Collier, can therefore have far-reaching consequences. They also serve as essential benchmarks in the outbreak and/or consolidation of stable peace and possible RSO formation. The legacy of a ‘critical juncture’ therefore entails not only serious changes to the configuration of the system in Realist power terms, and thereby the ability for stable peace to either break out or deepen its consolidation, but also can force revision of concepts of identity and belonging, altering the necessity of states to cooperate, based on geopolitical necessity or constructivist transformation. How ‘critical junctures’ actually accomplish this can only be assessed after the application of the necessary criteria based on the relevant literature.

Such an approach has been utilized before in the analysis of a more ‘positive’ context. Ikenberry in *After Victory* reviewed the historical record of Western Europe, using the peace settlements of 1815, 1919, and 1945 as benchmark. In this work, it was argued that after each settlement, a gradual re-structuring of international relations offered by the umbrella of international institutions—most notably in the security realm—effectively diffused national power and contributed to regional stability. The use of ‘critical junctures’ in the East Asian case will however attempt to explain the exact opposite, namely why each and every legacy system that followed did *not* result in the creation of an RSO. As the research question is a ‘negative’ one (attempting to explain something which did not occur), the criteria that will be required to be applied to the identified ‘critical junctures’ will also necessitate some retooling. Much has been written on the procedural nature of the formation of RSOs: they are not the creation of an act of spontaneity but the result of previous actions whose consequences either diminish or augment the possibility of eventual RSO formation. These criteria can be grouped into two sets of criteria. The first constitutes the conditions necessary for the creation of stable peace between the would-be member of an RSO. While the existence of stable peace is not sufficient per se to allow for the possible formation of an RSO, it marks a *sine qua non* without which even rudimentary security cooperation, let alone the creation of a security organization, remains unfathomable.

²⁷³ Ikenberry, *After Victory*, pg. 60.

Once stable peace has been established, the second cluster of criteria deals with those that contribute to the actual formulation of an RSO. Conditions pertaining to both sets of criteria can be found to exist concurrently in each examined ‘critical juncture’. However, the procedural nature of the criteria places special weight on the first set of criteria, stable peace, given its importance in opening the doors towards deepening security cooperation, of which an RSO marks its pinnacle. Furthermore, the conditions for RSO formation can only be said to exist if all the criteria of both sets are found to be in existence. The absence of one or more of the necessary criteria would negate the possibility of security integration as espoused by the definition of an RSO. The following table summarize the approach that is to be applied to the historical cases of ‘critical junctures’, as defined by Collier & Collier and applied by Ikenberry. Its selected elements constitute the conditions for stable peace as a prerequisite to commence the process towards the formation of a RSO, as defined by Kacowicz et al. and Kupchan in their respective research on stable peace.

Based on the previous discussions, seven key elements (table 3) have been filtered out to be applied to the identified systemic ‘critical junctures’ to answer the research question of “why there are no RSOs in EA?” The elements reflect the necessary procedural nature of stable peace as well as RSO formation literature, given the theoretical indispensability of stable peace having broken out *before* an RSO can be formed. To facilitate their respective application, these concepts will now be defined in detail as pertains to the stipulated ‘critical junctures’ (1895, 1901, 1905, 1919, 1951). RSOs are not spontaneous creations. They are the result of conscious planning made possible by the existence of the appropriate geopolitical conditions, both domestically and internationally. Only if each condition is met in both clusters of criteria, namely stable peace and the formation of an RSO, can the necessary foundation for the creation of an RSO be present.

Table 3: Conditions facilitating the Formation of an RSO

<i>‘Critical Juncture’</i>	<i>Geopolitical Necessity</i>	<i>Policy of Reciprocal Restraint</i>	<i>Satisfaction with Status Quo/‘Legacy System’</i>	<i>Pacific Self-Image</i>	<i>Compatible Social Orders</i>	<i>Existence of an Interested Hegemon</i>	<i>Existence of a Constitutional Order</i>

The colours in table 3 underline the two-stage process that is involved, namely first the creation of a zone of stable peace (blue) and, should all the necessary criteria be filled, a second stage (purple) whose criteria, if present, would enable the formation of an RSO. Hence, the seven chosen criteria must be broken down into two clusters of sub-criteria below and expounded upon in depth:

4.3.2. Criteria for the Formation of an RSO: Cluster I

For the formation of an RSO a base condition must be reached for further security cooperation to be contemplated, namely the establishment of stable peace. This has been recognized by majority of scholars dealing with regional security integration with the oft-cited example of post-1945 US hegemony over Western Europe often cited as a key condition for the creation of security cooperation leading to the formation of RSOs.²⁷⁴ Like with an RSO itself, stable peace is the result of a process of interaction between states following the systemic shock

²⁷⁴ Matti, *The Logic of Regional Integration*, pg. 71; Ikenberry, *After Victory*, pp. 199-200.

of a ‘critical juncture’. For stable peace to break out, rendering the possibility of war unthinkable between states, the following three elements must be present:

- i. Geopolitical necessity
- ii. Policy of Reciprocal Restraint
- iii. Satisfaction with the status quo/‘legacy system’

The definition of these criteria that will be applied to selected ‘critical junctures’ are further defined below:

i. Geopolitical Necessity

The first condition of ‘geopolitical necessity’ is as the term implies: following the onset of a ‘critical juncture’, a state in extremis defines its policy based on the tenets of cold, hard Realism. In other words, the systemic or domestic context simply obliges it to. To fail to adapt would have serious, negative consequences on the viability of the state in the new, post-‘critical juncture’ legacy system. But what exactly does the condition of ‘geopolitical necessity’ mean and what does it impose on a state?

The concept of ‘geopolitical necessity’ was first explicitly introduced in the stable peace literature by Kupchan. Here, this condition was qualified as one of the three principal ‘triggering conditions’ that induce the onset of stable peace.²⁷⁵ The concept of ‘geopolitical necessity’ is one that, according to Kupchan, is derived from the realm of Realist concerns, as “strategic necessity and adjustments in the material distribution of power initially drive the reconciliation that ultimately leads to stable peace.”²⁷⁶ Hence, realist concepts of material power play an essential role—almost in a contradictory manner—in paving the initial path towards stable peace. As seen in the State of the Art, as per the dictates of Realism, there are no situations that give rise to policy altruism. The possible reasons behind the decision of states to come to the realization that securing their survival depends on their improvement of their relations with a more powerful member of the system can be many: raw power; close geographic proximity; a state’s offensive abilities or even a new understanding of another state’s intentions.²⁷⁷ Regardless of the reason, a state that finds itself in such a position in the aftermath of a ‘critical juncture’, must take a concrete decision to alter its policy. Realist theorists have underlined that, when faced with such a choice, states opt for the implementation of concrete strategies. Walt argues that states choose to respond to such a menace through electing to follow the deliberate strategy of either ‘balancing’ or, more rarely, ‘bandwagoning’.²⁷⁸ While accepting the reality of ‘balancing’, Mearsheimer rejects the concept of ‘bandwagoning’ as well as any other state strategy, such as ‘appeasement’, that violates the basic canon of offensive Realism (and the theoretical premise of this dissertation), namely that states maximize relative power.²⁷⁹ However, at the same time, Mearsheimer does admit that both ‘bandwagoning’ and ‘appeasement’ do indeed occur: ‘bandwagoning’ is an act reserved solely for

²⁷⁵ Kupchan, How Enemies Become Friends, pg. 66.

²⁷⁶ Ibid., pg. 19.

²⁷⁷ ‘Bandwagoning’ occurs when a state aligns with a stronger, adversarial power. Walt, The Original of Alliances, pg. 22.

²⁷⁸ See Walt’s discussion in Chapter 5, Ibid., pp. 147-172.

²⁷⁹ Mearsheimer, The Tragedy of Great Power Politics, pg. 163.

minor powers that stand alone against hostile great powers and countries that have no choice but to cave in to the enemy because they are “weak and isolated.”²⁸⁰

The same situation exists with the strategy of appeasement, namely eliminating the underlying motive for war by surrendering all or part of a third state’s territory to a powerful foe in order to placate an aggressor and consequently shift its policy in a more pacific direction.²⁸¹ While Mearsheimer’s definition is perhaps too focused on a particular historic context, Gilpin shares his assessment of appeasement as a policy that has, since the 1938 Munich Conference, “been in disrepute and been regarded as inappropriate under every conceivable set of circumstances.”²⁸² Here, Gilpin is not referring to a great power (the focus of Mearsheimer’s strategic analysis) but states undergoing ‘retrenchment’ (political and economic policies designed to stem decline), a concept that is very much akin to Kupchan’s condition of ‘geopolitical necessity’. Moreover, viewing the totality of the concept of ‘bandwagoning’ and appeasement, Gilpin laments its post-Second World War ostracism from the realm of conceivable state strategies for survival as history has “examples of appeasement that have succeeded.”²⁸³ At the same time, Gilpin does caution that, as a policy, is not without risk. Its fundamental problem is that it is challenging to find a way to pursue appeasement and accommodation without continuing the deterioration of a given state’s prestige and international standing. Gilpin underlines that the need to pursue a strategy of retrenchment is “by its very nature...an indication of relative weakness and declining power.”²⁸⁴ Despite attempts to eschew its importance, Realism does indeed account for strategies that states opt for under the unique circumstances of seeking to advance their survival by actively choosing to placate a stronger state.

As such, Gilpin’s reading of retrenchment, as well as Mearsheimer’s understanding of ‘bandwagoning’/appeasement, seem to be, as illustrated by the definitions above, very close to Kupchan’s condition of ‘geopolitical necessity’. Kupchan stresses that “the state that initiates the effort to back away from rivalry does not do so out of altruism. Rather it faces a threatening environment and lacks the resources needed to deal adequately with those threats.”²⁸⁵ Befriending an adversary is essentially, as alluded to by Gilpin and even by Mearsheimer, a creature of necessity and not choice. Such strategies, while rare, do form part of the historical record and, as Gilpin notes, have indeed resulted in success (state/regime survival). Post-Second World War Iberia provides an instructive example of successful policies of ‘geopolitical necessity’.²⁸⁶ As the

²⁸⁰ Ibid.

²⁸¹ Ibid.

²⁸² Gilpin, *War and Change in World Politics*, pg. 193.

²⁸³ Gilpin cited as an example the UK’s readiness to appease the political and economic rise of the US in the decades leading up to the First World War, where a formerly antagonistic and hostile relationship gave way to the so-called ‘special relationship’. Ibid, pp. 193-194.

²⁸⁴ Ibid., pg. 194.

²⁸⁵ Kupchan, *How Enemies Become Friends*, pp. 68-69.

²⁸⁶ For example, the decision of Fascist Spain to opt for a policy of ‘bandwagoning’ with the United States following the 1945 defeat of Germany secured the survival of Franco’s government with his death in 1975, despite the hostility the international community. Through the 1953 Madrid Pact, the Franco’s Spain agreed to allow the deployment of US forces in Rota Naval Base, Torrejón, Morón and Zaragoza Air Bases in exchange for US economic and military assistance to Spain. Through ‘bandwagoning’, therefore, Fascist Spain managed to survive despite the persistence of a hostile atmosphere. For a detailed account of US-Spanish military cooperation under post-1945 Fascist Spain, see Francisco José Rodríguez de Gaspar, *Otto Skorzeny: El Nazi más Peligroso en la España de Franco*, Madrid:

Iberian example illustrates, the start down the road to stable peace seems to be generated in the wake of crises. As Kupchan notes, a “state facing an array of threats against which it has insufficient resources attempts to improve its strategic environment by seeking to befriend one of its adversaries.”²⁸⁷ It does so by sending a “signal of benign intent through the offer of an unambiguous concession on a matter of mutual interest.”²⁸⁸ Such a strategy is fraught with risk, as Gilpin notes that, by engaging in such a policy, a state signals its waning power; yet neglecting to attempt to befriend an adversary can lead to the unenviable position of an even greater loss of prestige and diplomatic standing through a possible military defeat.²⁸⁹

Hence, the vehicle to initiate the process of rapprochement with a former adversary is the geopolitical necessity of making a gesture of ‘*unilateral accommodation*’ in favour of the opposing state on a serious issue of mutual interest. Given the risks to the systemic standing of the state seeking rapprochement, it needs to be sure that its unilateral gesture of accommodation will be understood correctly by the target capital. Examples of such unambiguous unilateral moves are costly and include demilitarizing contested areas, ceding territory, and destroying contentious fortifications.²⁹⁰ To this list can be added granting of military access, accepting diplomatic representation, accession of trade concessions as well as economic access. As Glaser notes, “a state seeking security should be concerned about whether its adversary understands that its motivations are benign.”²⁹¹ In such instances, the political weight of the unilateral accommodation offered should be obvious enough to signal that, while made in extremis, they are in no way token gestures of placation but hint at something larger. Ergo unilateral accommodation means a state is ready to pursue a costly policy dictated to it by pure geopolitical necessity, one that, under different circumstances, it would most likely not entertain. It is now up to the target state to choose its course, namely rejection of the gesture of unilateral accommodation or, conversely, responding in kind, thereby kick-starting the initial move towards the process of stable peace.

It is important to note, as underlined by the above discussion, the decision to accommodate the demands of another state is associated with relative weakness. Walt goes so far as to say that, if the opposite were the case, the state in question would choose to balance against it, rather than elect to placate it.²⁹² However, Kupchan illustrates that the need to pursue reconciliation through geopolitical necessity can also come through the stronger party that makes the opening move, as “the initiator faces a sufficiently pressing threat environment to induce it to befriend one of its foes.”²⁹³ Hence, the onset of a ‘critical juncture’ can cause a policy rethink across the system, regardless of the relative strength of the state considering to initiate reconciliation out of

Almuzara, 2021. The *Estado Novo* of Salazar represents an even more successful example: not only did Lisbon manage to ‘bandwagon’ its way into receiving assistance from the Marshall Plan in 1947 (denied to Madrid), but also, despite its fascist ideology, became a founding member of NATO in 1949, only to be overthrown in the Carnation Revolution of 1974.

²⁸⁷ Kupchan, *How Enemies Become Friends*, pg. 37.

²⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, pg.38.

²⁸⁹ Gilpin, *War and Change in World Politics*, pg. 194.

²⁹⁰ Kupchan, *How Enemies Become Friends*, pg. 39.

²⁹¹ Glaser, Charles, “Realists as Optimists”, *International Security* (1995), 19 (3), pg. 67.

²⁹² Walt, *The Origins of Alliances*, pp. 147-172.

²⁹³ In particular, Kupchan referred to the case of the Anglo-American rapprochement, underlining that historians are in near universal agreement about London’s concerns over strategic overcommitment at the dawn of the 20th Century as a key reason for the UK actively seeking to avoid resuming geopolitical rivalry with the US. See Kupchan, *How Enemies Become Friends*, pp. 74-85.

geopolitical necessity. Kupchan also provided an additional caveat regarding the likelihood of a state opting for rapprochement, namely the question of cultural commonality: “when geopolitical necessity prompts states to seek to befriend an adversary, that state usually targets a party with which it enjoys an overlapping network of cultural practices and symbols.”²⁹⁴ Hence, this factor also needs to be taken into account regarding the possibility of opting for rapprochement through geopolitical necessity.

In conclusion, the condition ‘geopolitical necessity’ is defined as the conscious policy decision of any state, however painful, that elects to opt for making serious concessions in the realm of national security towards a former enemy and/or rival due to altered geopolitical circumstances following a ‘critical juncture’. This policy can be adopted by states of varying relative power, however, by opting for such a policy, a state elects to make the step towards the required triggering condition of ‘unilateral accommodation’ that, as noted above, can take on various forms. Their sole commonality is that they represent serious concessions on issues of vital mutual interest and are profound enough not to be dismissed outright by the target state. Cultural commonality increases the likelihood that, in situations where geopolitical necessity takes precedence, states will opt for rapprochement to put an end to enmity. Should the gesture of unilateral accommodation be rejected (or taken advantage of for further gains) by the target state, the bilateral relations remain in a state of rivalry. If, however, the act of unilateral accommodation is correctly interpreted as a potential gesture towards reconciliation, the target state will reciprocate by initiating its own accommodating gesture. This initial exchange, born out of geopolitical necessity, kick starts the process towards the eventual formation of a zone of peace, the essential condition that allows for eventual RSO formation. For clarity, a zone of stable peace is an area in which the notion of stable peace, namely the unfathomability of the use of armed conflict as a policy instrument, has taken hold, such as currently exists between Canada and the United States.²⁹⁵ Many further conditions must be fulfilled before a zone of peace can be established, however, without this all-important first step, based on a sober assessment of a state’s relative power position, there can be no progress towards stable peace and the creation of an RSO.

ii. Policy of Reciprocal Restraint

Should a state, regardless of its relative power position within the system, opt for a policy of unilateral accommodation due to geopolitical necessity following a ‘critical juncture’, and this gesture has been both correctly interpreted by the target state and responded to through a reciprocal positive measure, the first step towards stable peace—and the lengthy road to the RSO establishment—is complete. The foundation for pursuing further acts of tension-reduction has been laid. This is accomplished through successive, mutually beneficial gestures aimed at reducing tension and increasing predictability and reconciliation. When applied to issues affecting national security, this can be said to constitute a policy of reciprocal restraint.

Boulding noted the importance of entering this phase of reciprocal gestures of tension-reduction and confidence building in anchoring the process towards stable peace. Boulding ascribes a sense of randomness to its development: in historical cases where stable peace has been ascertained to have been established, it has been the result of an “accidental dynamic of the system”

²⁹⁴ Ibid., pg. 62.

²⁹⁵ Ibid., pp. 100-102.

and has never been the result of a carefully planned and implemented long-term policy.²⁹⁶ Here, Boulding draws upon the cases of 19th Century North America and Scandinavia (Sweden and Norway) as examples. Despite the random nature of the process towards stable peace, Boulding highlighted the necessity of the constant pursuit of reciprocal tension-reducing, confidence-building actions by both states. The process is not a linear trajectory towards stable peace, but rather can accommodate setbacks so long as they do not completely derail the process.²⁹⁷ In its totality, this process of back and forth gestures was dubbed with the mechanical term of ‘Graduated and Reciprocated Initiative in Tension-Reduction (GRIT)’ and encapsulates the envisioned mechanisms well, with the “process beginning by some specific, perhaps even dramatic, statement or act directed at a potential enemy, intended to be reassuring...if the potential enemy responds, then a third act by the first party, a fourth by the second party, and so on” paves the way towards the anchoring of a policy of reciprocal restraint.²⁹⁸ Again, the policy is not aimed yet at the formation of an RSO, but rather the quintessential condition of its formation, namely stable peace.

The importance of the gradual, non-linear, reciprocal accommodation was also underlined by Kupchan. Through the policy restraint that emerges through gestures of mutual accommodation, the process of ‘self-binding’ emerges, namely that the “parties move beyond the exchange of individual acts...by regularizing the reciprocal withholding of power through measures such as demilitarization, territorial concession, and the removal of barriers to commerce.”²⁹⁹ Granting of military access and allowing of diplomatic representation are also classified as a feasible expression of this phenomenon. In short, these policies require strategic restraint, something that can be assumed as a given once stable peace has broken out. However, as such gestures of reciprocal accommodation pertain to security questions in an inherently hostile atmosphere, they are not only rare occurrences, but their very nature attest to their credibility and benign intent.³⁰⁰ Their successful implementation assists in increasing the mutual predictability of behaviour and problem-solving mechanisms available, a key condition in the establishment of stable peace.³⁰¹ Such a dynamic is an important element to keep the process moving forward, leading to a new dynamic of relations between the engaged states. As Kupchan notes, when “states exercise strategic restraint and explicitly reveal their benign motivations for doing so, they are able to endow their power with a magnetic ability to attract and reassure other countries instead of a propensity to threaten them and trigger balancing.”³⁰² Hence, a successful pursuit of a policy of reciprocal restraint would therefore theoretically lead to a lessening of reliance on martial, material power (as per the tenets of offensive Realism) to focus on cooperation and compromise. As seen in the State of the Art, this forms the prerequisite for the base of a pluralistic security community as envisioned by Deutsch and constitutes this dissertation’s definition of an RSO.

The caveat, however, is at this level of cooperation: trust as envisioned first by Deutsch and subsequently by Kupchan implies that the process of reciprocal restraint has advanced to such a level that the states in question have achieved a zone of stable peace between them. As the State

²⁹⁶ Boulding, *Stable Peace*, pg. 93.

²⁹⁷ Ibid. Boulding cited the 1572 St. Bartholomew’s Day Massacre of French Huguenots as an example of a disturbing domestic event, but one not potent enough to derail the consolidation of French statehood.

²⁹⁸ Ibid., pp. 112-113.

²⁹⁹ Kupchan, *How Enemies Become Friends*, pg. 42.

³⁰⁰ Mearsheimer, “The False Promise of International Institutions”, pg. 384.

³⁰¹ Kacowicz et al., *Stable Peace among Nations*, pg. 25.

³⁰² Kupchan, *How Enemies Become Friends*, pg. 44.

of the Art and the historical record illustrate, such examples (barring the oft-cited 19th Century cases of North America and Scandinavia) are few and far between. Hence, the condition of ‘reciprocal restraint’ to be applied to the selected ‘critical junctures’ indicates the existence of an identifiable pattern of mutual accommodation regarding policy questions of mutual security interests. To qualify for ‘reciprocal restraint’, this dissertation will seek to identify ‘critical junctures’ after which states willingly engage in self-binding practices as defined by Boulding and Kupchan. Or, to put it simply, cases in East Asia where strategic restraint “has become the rule and not the exception”³⁰³ in interstate relations within the established legacy system established by a ‘critical juncture’. The aftermath of each ‘critical juncture’ marks an occasion where acts of regular mutual accommodation could result in a policy of reciprocal restraint thereby laying the foundation for a lasting rapprochement between states. Whether or not this eventuality is borne out through the examination of the historical record, however, is another case entirely. The existence of the condition ‘reciprocal restraint’ not only signifies the successful implementation of policy compelled by ‘geopolitical necessity’, but it also marks the fulfillment of an essential benchmark within the process of establishing stable peace and thereby opening possibilities towards the formation of an RSO.

In conclusion, the existence of a policy of reciprocal restraint can be said to be present when the concerned states, moving forward from the initial act of ‘unilateral accommodation’ spawned by geopolitical necessity, choose to engage in policies of mutual accommodation in issues pertinent to national security. Following each of the selected ‘critical junctures’ the existence of the above definition of policies of mutual restraint will be analyzed after the onset of each ‘critical juncture’ and its corresponding legacy system. As the question at hand deals with the formation of RSOs, or rather the lack thereof, these policies therefore must lie in the security field and deal with core questions of national security and sovereignty. The successful implementation of a policy of mutual restraint allows states, as former rivals or enemies, to gradually build and ferment a lasting rapprochement that contains the ability to slowly alter mutual perceptions and build a modicum of trust. The successful implementation of policies of mutual restraint not only push the probability of the use of armed conflict as a means of foreign policy further towards crossing over the threshold of the ‘taboo line’ but also paves the way to stabilizing the regional system through the increase of mutual accommodation and trust in security matters. It should be noted that a policy of reciprocal restraint can take place between states that have elected to pursue, as Kissinger puts it, a “revolutionary foreign policy” aiming at altering the system (yet not the interstate relationship between the target states).³⁰⁴ Should a policy (or policies) of reciprocal restraint in the security realm be found to be present between members in the corresponding legacy system, then it can be assumed that an additional criterion towards the creation of a zone of stable peace has been established. While this peace does not exclude the possibility that war could be used as a policy option, it nevertheless marks important progress towards the establishment of stable peace between regional states. This zone of stable peace does not necessarily have to comprise the entire region but can also be composed on the bilateral level. Should no evidence of

³⁰³ Ibid., pg. 42.

³⁰⁴ An example can be furnished through the Tripartite Pact between Germany, Japan and Italy. Signed in Berlin in November 1940, it officially cemented trilateral cooperation in a formal alliance based on the overarching goal of crowing their respective revolutionary foreign policy through the creation of a new global order. See Goeschel, Christian, “Performing the New Order: The Tripartite Pact, 1940-1945”, *Contemporary European History* (2022), pp. 1-17.

policies of reciprocal restraint be found to have been enacted after the onset of the selected ‘critical junctures’, it can be ascertained that no further progress towards the attainment of stable peace among regional states has been made, thereby negating the possibility of engaging in security cooperation, including the formation of an RSO, leaving regional states locked in rivalry.

iii. Satisfaction with Status Quo/‘Legacy System’

Once a policy of unilateral accommodation has been forced upon a state due to geopolitical necessity and a pattern of reciprocal restraint has been identified, its eventual success is not guaranteed. Stable peace theorists have underlined that further progress towards the formation of stable peace depends on a state’s satisfaction with the systemic status quo and its respective place within the legacy system that arises from a ‘critical juncture’. Simply put, satisfaction with the status quo/legacy system entails that regional states do not elect to actively pursue policies that seek to overturn it. This accords a degree of stability and predictability to the regional system. Hence, in examining the various policies of the regional states following the onset of a ‘critical juncture’, the existence of a nation’s satisfaction with the status quo/‘legacy system’ needs to be analyzed. Should evidence be found that states exhibit satisfaction towards the status quo/‘legacy system’, it can be therefore assumed that another criterion for the establishment of stable peace between two or more regional states has been created. An important element of systemic stability (the lack of overt efforts to undo it) has therefore been imbued. Should no evidence of satisfaction with the status quo/‘legacy system’ arise, then it can be assumed that one or more states are opposed to the post-‘critical juncture’ realities, thereby depriving them of stability, as policy will be geared to forwarding some degree of restructuring, including reverting to the use of war as a foreign policy instrument. Under such circumstances, stable peace cannot be said to have been established, rendering the possibility of the formation of an RSO illusionary at best.

Why is such a criterion important? Satisfaction with a post-‘critical juncture’ status quo has been highlighted as an essential element of maintaining systemic stability. Stability, however, does not signify stable peace. Nor does it signify that any progress made towards the establishment of stable peace, thereby opening the possibility for the creation of a RSO, has been made. Stability, as underlined by stable peace scholars, can constitute a mere reflection of ‘negative peace’. Boulding defined ‘negative peace’ as “peace as the absence of war in the international system”³⁰⁵; Kacowicz et al. characterize a ‘zone of negative peace’ as one where “peace is maintained only on an unstable basis”.³⁰⁶ While peace is technically maintained, the possibility of war remains a policy option. States therefore remain at peace yet no security cooperation beyond the maintenance of the balance of power is possible. At the same time, while the stability that stems from a negative peace does not forward RSO creation, it can constitute a benchmark in the process towards the creation of a zone of stable peace that could, eventually lead to the formation of an RSO. Scholars note that this lack of war provides stability, however precarious, that does reign over the system within the contours of negative peace.

While underlining the importance of satisfaction with the existing status quo as forming a necessary condition for the emergence of stable peace, Kacowicz et al. underlined which specific

³⁰⁵ Boulding, *Stable Peace*, pg. 135.

³⁰⁶ Kacowicz et al., *Stable Peace among Nations*, pg. 21.

elements of mutual contentment could be identified as indicating a state's satisfaction with the status quo. These not only include a state's attitude towards the territorial status quo but also with other terms of a peace agreement that shaped the contours of the system in question.³⁰⁷ This has been also mirrored by Gilpin's and Kissinger's reflections on lack of satisfaction with the status quo/'legacy system' as forming the major cause of the onset of systemic war, especially through the policies of what has been deemed a "revolutionary foreign policy".³⁰⁸ Hence, critical issues involved in reaching an agreement/peace settlement require close examination through focusing on the terms of the agreement/peace settlement as part of a 'critical juncture'. Satisfaction is likewise understood as something greater than contentment with contemporary territorial arrangements but also the "economic, military and diplomatic rules that govern a system".³⁰⁹ As a result, such aspects of foreign policy with a post-'critical juncture' system also require careful analysis and consideration.

Yet how is such satisfaction towards the systemic status quo/'legacy system' manifested? Kacowicz goes so far as to ascertain that "satisfaction means a disposition not only to accept the current order but also to uphold and defend it."³¹⁰ While this dissertation views the latter part of Kacowicz's definition, namely a commitment to defend a particular international order, as going too far (especially in a wider historical context) to act as a generalized definition, his insistence on the acceptance, explicit or tacit, of a given order is indeed an important reflection of systemic satisfaction. Hence, systemic satisfaction can be equated with a minimum degree of stability, as reflected in Kissinger's view that systemic stability exists as long as no overt challenge to the system is made. Such notions are also espoused by Gilpin's theory on war and systemic change where the international system can be said to be stable (in a state of equilibrium) on the condition that no state actively believes it is profitable to attempt to alter the system.³¹¹ While some members of the system may express some elements of dissatisfaction with the territorial, economic, military or economic facets of a given system, the state is nevertheless within its ability to tolerate the contemporary systemic contours. Ergo systemic satisfaction is, at best, exhibited by those who, as Kacowicz argues, are ready to uphold and defend the system, but also, perhaps more importantly, by states who express their satisfaction through acquiescence, i.e. no overt actions to alter the system. In the end, "trust," as Kacowicz argues, "has been not only a condition for consolidating stable peace but also a consequence of its establishment."³¹²

Cluster I: Conclusion—Criteria for the Creation of Stable Peace

The first three conditions for the formation of an RSO act as the base conditions for creating the necessary foundation for security cooperation to take place between nations. Should the three conditions of geopolitical necessity, reciprocal restraint and satisfaction with the status quo/'legacy system' be in existence, one can argue that a high degree of mutual confidence has arisen between the targeted states. Trust has become a currency of interstate relations. Hence, they are assumed to reach a new degree of maturity and mutual confidence, thereby providing the necessary base for

³⁰⁷ Ibid., pg. 25.

³⁰⁸ Kissinger, *A World Restored*, pg. 1.

³⁰⁹ Kacowicz et al., pg. 30

³¹⁰ Ibid.

³¹¹ Gilpin, *War and Change in World Politics*, pg. 10.

³¹² Kacowicz et al., *Stable Peace among Nations*, pg. 216.

security cooperation. A zone of stable peace can be ascertained to have therefore been created. The relatively limited number of stable peace scholars have defined the advent of stable peace as, within the realm of interstate relations, the unfathomability of reverting to war as a means of settling policy disputes. Kacowicz noted that the cognitive dimension of stable peace exists when “there is a joint perception and understanding that war is unthinkable as an instrument for resolving conflicts between states.”³¹³ Kupchan’s definition of zone of stable peace is one where war between states has become unthinkable, with the use of armed force no longer constituting a legitimate tool of statecraft.³¹⁴ This is an approach that this dissertation intends to follow.

From this base, further paths are opened towards cooperation in security matters, including the eventual formation of an RSO. Yet for this event to occur, a further four necessary conditions require fulfillment, namely those that build upon the creation of stable peace and allow states to attain the pinnacle of security cooperation: the formation of an RSO.

4.3.3. Criteria for the Formation of an RSO: Cluster II

The choice of the state to relinquish full sovereignty over its security, as entailed through the formation of an RSO, cannot said to be possible even after the arduous road towards a zone of stable peace has been completed. Given the scope of this dissertation’s definition of an RSO, comprising both constructivist, institutionalist, and Realist aspects, further criteria are necessary to enable their eventual formation. Hence, the following four criteria will be applied to examine each identified ‘critical juncture’:

- iv. Pacific Self-Image
- v. Compatible Social Orders
- vi. The Existence of an Interested Hegemon
- vii. The Existence of a Constitutional Order

These criteria act as benchmarks along the road towards the creation of an RSO, each fulfilling an important aspect of the definition of an RSO. A further crystallization of the definition of these individual criteria to be utilized follows below.

iv. Pacific Self-Image

A zone of stable peace has eliminated the possibility of war between two or more states. Yet further evidence is required for a higher degree of security cooperation, including the formation of an RSO, to materialize. The way each respective nation sees itself and its place in the post-‘critical juncture’ legacy system also is an essential aspect to be considered. This dissertation, therefore, views the emergence of a ‘pacific self-image’ as signifying that not only that stable peace has broken out between the states concerned, but also the foundation for more intimate versions of integration, including the creation of a RSO, as the state in question has not only eliminated the possibility of reverting to martial means to resolve any potential outstanding issue

³¹³ Ibid, pg. 18.

³¹⁴ Kupchan, How Enemies Become Friends, pp. 29-30.

but likewise exhibits satisfaction with the state's respective position in the post-'critical juncture' systemic constellation.

Every destination needs to have a path by which it can be reached for a journey to be successful. While Kacowicz and Kupchan describe the desired end state, namely the creation of an RSO, Boulding's original proposition of "self-image" furnishes the tool through which such a lofty goal could be reached. As Boulding noted, what states do *not* do is just as important as what they do. Indeed, such a notion is in line with the above condition of a state's satisfaction with the status quo/legacy system, albeit through acquiescence or passive disapproval. The self-image of the states involved plays a critical role in dictating behaviour for it also determines taboos or what actions states under no circumstances would undertake.³¹⁵ For example, a state within a post-'critical juncture' legacy system might not be satisfied with some, or even all, of the aspects of the system; however, is considered as being satisfied as long as it does not, as seen above, undertake any actions through a "revolutionary foreign policy". Within the state's self-image, however, reverting to such an overt way to express dissatisfaction with a legacy system could be very much within the realm of possibilities. For stable peace to be advanced, and moreover the possibility of forming a RSO, a metamorphosis of self-images is required.

As argued, such self-images, both on a domestic and international level, are indeed subject to evolution despite, as noted above, the state's near universal self-image as potential war maker. Where self-images have metamorphosed to such an extent to where the use of military force is no longer in the realm of plausible, socially acceptable decisions, stable peace will reign.³¹⁶ The evolution of a state's self-image is, like the breaking out of stable peace itself, is a result of a process. Through the process of mutual concessions through the condition of reciprocal restraint, initiated after geopolitical necessity, this period of reciprocal accommodation plays a key role in creating compatible national images.³¹⁷ Once these states' respective self-images have advanced to the point where the use of military force becomes taboo, a given state can be said to have cultivated a pacific self-image. This is also the understanding of Deutsch, who also writes that the process leading towards security cooperation is characterized by important thresholds.³¹⁸ Deutsch ascribes importance to the concept of 'sense of community', one that is directly linked to a state's self-image, without which "peaceful change could not be assured".³¹⁹

According to stable peace literature, this is the apotheosis of stable peace breaking out. It likewise marks the moment where, for the first time, the creation of a Deutschian security community becomes possible. It is important to recall that the condition of 'pacific self-image' allows states to escape the Realist cycle of balance of power that this dissertation views as its theoretical foundation. Alliances, or other forms of security cooperation, lose the superficial and transient character that they have been ascribed in an inherently anarchic world, as the historical

³¹⁵ To illustrate his point, Boulding refers to the extreme theoretical example of the Ford Motor Company deciding to assassinate Board members of General Motors and blow up their plant as something that would not be entertained by Ford Motor Company as such an act would not be permitted by Ford's self-image, even if it were physically possible. Boulding, *Stable Peace*, pp. 15-16.

³¹⁶ Ibid., pg. 16.

³¹⁷ Ibid., pp. 112-113.

³¹⁸ Deutsch, *Political Community and the North Atlantic Area*, pg. 5.

³¹⁹ Ibid., pg. 36.

record amply illustrates.³²⁰ Take, for example, the 1902 alliance concluded between the Japanese Empire and the United Kingdom. Such an alliance, however expedient to the interest of both capitals, did *not* constitute a RSO as no operational rules and norms were established and no ‘pacific self-images’ characterized relations between Tokyo and London. As this dissertation’s case studies will show, it was finally abandoned in 1921 due to changing geopolitical circumstances. States having cultivated ‘pacific self-images’ are able to initiate, should they so choose deeper forms of cooperation. Following each ‘critical juncture’, an assessment of the existence of pacific self-images within the new ‘legacy system’ will be undertaken. Should this criterion be found to be in existence, it can be concluded that an essential constructive base has been established within the relations between two or more states. In the event that no evidence is found, a key element in forwarding security cooperation is absent that would impede any further movement, including the eventual formation of an RSO.

Pacific self-images, however, while constituting an essential marker along the road towards RSO formation, is in itself insufficient to furnish the necessary criteria. Before this can occur, however, several more conditions must be met.

v. Compatible Social Orders

In envisioning his version of a security community, Deutsch placed heavy emphasis on constructivist logic and the importance that it ascribes to values in facilitating functional security cooperation. Each of the selected criteria for application to the identified ‘critical junctures’ underlines, in some way, the importance of constructivist commonalities between states seeking to not only make the initial decision, but also to continue to pursue the path towards stable peace. Societies with similar social orders find it easier to engage in security cooperation, as illustrated by Deutsch, Keohane and Ikenberry. The importance of compatible social orders has also been stressed within stable peace literature. Boulding originally underlined the importance of a common ethos between societies in forwarding stable peace. Here, Boulding referred to “another of the structural characteristics of society which can affect the peace strength of the system, namely the prevailing ethos, ideology, poetry, history, and educational processes of the society—all of which might be summed up in its “esprit” or spirit.”³²¹

While this definition is much too broad for the purposes of this dissertation, states that share a similar social order have been underlined in the literature as advancing both stable peace as well as security cooperation. Kupchan argued that compatible social orders constituted a key ingredient of stable peace, choosing to analyze the distribution of political power among different classes, political power amongst ethnic groups, racial and religious groups, as well as the organizing principles of economic production and commercial activity.³²² This more streamlined definition is one that can be used to constitute this dissertation’s understanding of its identified condition of ‘compatible social orders’. When social orders are found to be similar, according to Kupchan, the prospect of societal integration advances the political and economic interests of dominant sectors, thereby forwarding both stable peace and security community collaboration. This increases the intensity and scope of cooperation, thereby opening the possibilities of fostering

³²⁰ Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics*, pg. 33.

³²¹ Boulding, *Stable Peace*, pg. 53.

³²² Kupchan, *How Enemies become Friends*, pg. 60.

functional integration, including moving towards the creation of an RSO. Indeed, the high degree of social order interaction, based on reciprocal restraint and pacific self-image, forms the basis for Deutsch's initial concept of a pluralistic security community, as Deutsch chronicles with the initial formation of NATO and in the Anglo-American rapprochement of the late 19th, early 20th centuries. In cases where social orders are not compatible, political and economic interests of these dominant sectors actively sabotage stable peace and any level of existing or possible security cooperation. As examples, Kupchan noted the role of incompatible social orders as a main reason for the collapse of the United States into civil war in 1861 as well as in furthering the demise of the peace that had been established between the USSR and PRC.³²³ Both examples show that the difference in social orders did not hinder an initial stable peace from breaking out, however it did indeed impede the development of pacific self-images, ultimately leading to its respective collapse.

Consequently, following each of the identified 'critical junctures', this dissertation will ascertain the presence of compatible social orders within each legacy system. The criteria to be applied will be based on Kupchan's focused understanding of what social orders entail, given each state's political, cultural (ethnic), and economic orders that arise within the context of a legacy system that follows in the wake of a 'critical juncture'. Should compatible social orders be found to exist among at least two or more members of a legacy system—in addition to the aforementioned criteria of pacific self-image—not only can stable peace be further evidenced to have broken out, but also that an additional benchmark has been established that could forward the conditions whereby the formation of a RSO becomes possible. Conversely, should no evidence of compatible social orders between any members of the legacy system be found, it can be assumed to indicate that no further entrenchment of stable peace has taken place and, more importantly, no evidence has been identified that indicates members of the legacy system meet the necessary criteria to entertain the possibility of deeper security cooperation, including the creation of an RSO.

vi. Existence of an Interested Hegemon

Much time has been spent in the State of the Art discussing the importance of the concept of hegemony. Scholars of all theoretic stripes underline the ability of hegemons to influence both state behaviour and the system itself. This is especially pertinent when pertaining to the emergence of stable peace as well as the formation of RSOs. This dissertation has shown how Deutsch underscored that pluralistic security communities are formed around cores of strength that act as essential keystones of functional integration. The centers of hegemony do, however, necessitate the presence of pacific self-images within the targeted states for their respective hegemony to consider possibly sponsoring the formation of any type of security cooperation. As noted, the more powerful state does not necessarily have to be the first to initiate the conditions for the formation of stable peace as identified above (geopolitical necessity; policy of reciprocal restraint; satisfaction with the status quo/legacy system). At the same time, Kupchan stresses that the most powerful state in the system must be engaged in the process of facilitating stable peace through withholding its respective power and influence, thereby eschewing any purported benefit from its military/material advantages.³²⁴ This approach was obviously taken by Ikenberry in his study of the 1815, 1919 and 1945 settlements in Europe where he argued that the preponderant power sought to "restrain power, reassure weaker potential rivals and establish commitments by creating

³²³ Ibid., pg. 6 & pp. 180-81.

³²⁴ Ibid., 43.

binding institutions.”³²⁵ According to Ikenberry, through this strategy hegemons could link potential rivals together in an alliance through institutions. The hegemon obviously played an indispensable role in not only fostering stable peace but also in sponsoring and encouraging functional integration.

Yet Ikenberry’s conclusions in examining the legacy systems of his identified ‘critical junctures’ imply another element, not specifically expounded in his highlighted case studies. As seen, Gilpin underlines that any systemic order, at any given historical moment, reflects the underlying distribution of the inherent power of states.³²⁶ Building upon this logic, Ikenberry recognizes that the legacy system arising out of the ashes of hegemonic war will reflect the choices and preferences of the emerging preponderant state.³²⁷ The hegemon, therefore, defines the character of the legacy system. The ‘critical junctures’ identified by Ikenberry (1815, 1919, 1945) illustrate that the contemporary hegemonic powers of the UK and US actively “sought to establish mutually agreed-upon rules and principles of order” through the restraint, rather than wielding of, power.³²⁸ While agreeing on the validity of Ikenberry’s conclusion (and Gilpin’s assumption that the post-hegemonic war system reflects hegemonic wishes), this dissertation argues that the limited spatial boundary conditions of Ikenberry’s enquiry (the West) blinded his findings to the simple fact that a “rules-based international order” is not an inevitable outcome of a ‘critical juncture’, but the specific result of the efforts of an interested hegemon.³²⁹ Accordingly, the presence of a particular kind of hegemon is necessary to achieve the high degree of security cooperation envisioned both by Ikenberry’s international orders as well as Deutsch’s pluralistic security community.

Hegemony is, as reviewed in the State of the Art, an important criterion for a RSO being created within a zone of stable peace. Yet it is not an obvious or inevitable undertaking. Any degree of functional integration reflects the express level of interest existing within the preponderant state concerned. As seen in the State of the Art, Mattli’s concept of an ‘interested hegemon’ helps plug this implicit theoretical gap: after having reviewed the relevant literature and broad historical scope of functional integration projects (both those cases resulting in failure and success, i.e. IO formation), the existence of a hegemonic state that possesses the political will and societal mandate to pursue an agenda of deeper and functional integration acts as an “essential supply condition” for the emergence of any IO, including a RSO. However, as recalled in the literature review, Mattli’s ideas have an inherently economic focus and need to be adapted here to deal with the creation of security-based organizations.

Consequently, to establish the criterion of an ‘interested hegemon’, this framework proposes to identify hegemonic states within each of the post-‘critical juncture’ legacy systems. As previously discussed, this dissertation has defined hegemonic status as being accorded through each state’s respective military prowess. Ergo such an understanding of a preponderant state will be applied to members of each legacy system. As per Mattli’s definition, an interested hegemon

³²⁵ Ikenberry, *After Victory*, pg. 8.

³²⁶ Gilpin, *War and Change in World Politics*, pg. 9.

³²⁷ Ikenberry, *After Victory*, pg. 11.

³²⁸ *Ibid.*, pg. 12.

³²⁹ Ikenberry did, however, cite the differences between a coercive and benevolent hegemonic order. In the latter form, consensual, institutionalized relations result via a preponderant state’s refusal to fully exercise the potential of its hegemonic power, thereby muting the malign character of its overt domination. *Ibid.*, pg. 28.

will be one that exhibits readiness to actively sponsor functional integration efforts in the security realm, leading towards the formation a RSO as defined by this dissertation. Should this be the case, and an interested hegemon is indeed identified, its underlying interest in promoting a diffusion of its military power through a RSO is expected to be the result of the preponderant state's political will and domestic consensus. Conversely, should a hegemon *not* be particularly interested in promoting deeper and functional integration through the creation of a RSO, Mattli's criteria would need to be reverse engineered to account for this anomaly through explanations found in the preponderant state's foreign and domestic policies. A hegemon, therefore, can project its hegemony throughout the system without playing the role of an interested hegemon. In such cases, the phenomenon of why a preponderant state does not possess the necessary political will and societal mandate to pursue an agenda of deeper and functional integration needs to be addressed. A hegemony can therefore exist, complete with pacific self-images and compatible social orders, yet without the sponsorship of an interested hegemon intent on implementing security integration, the likelihood that a functional RSO, with its own defined set of rules and norms, will emerge is remote.

vii. Existence of a Constitutional Order

Should the above, previous conditions be met, both those stipulating the outbreak of stable peace and those required for RSO formation, then the possibility of a Constitutional Order, as envisioned by Ikenberry, becomes a distinct reality. Constitutional Orders are systemic orders organized around agreed-upon limits and political institutions that operate to allocate rights and limit the exercise of power.³³⁰ As reviewed in the State of the Art, Ikenberry viewed the existence of Constitutional Orders as being fundamentally different from simple hegemony: they restrain power through its diffusion, with potentially threatening states bound together in mutually constraining institutions. Furthermore, a Constitutional Order establishes what Ikenberry deems the "rules of the game", namely the principles that define the underlying political order, bestowing it legitimacy based on broad acceptance of what members understand is a stable and non-coercive system.³³¹ The institutionalized political process is overseen by what Ikenberry describes as institutional devices and procedures, akin to Mattli's understanding of "commitment institutions" responsible for centralized monitoring and third-party enforcement.³³² Indeed, Ikenberry underlines that the relative strength of a Constitutional Order depends directly on the degree to which the wider set of relations among states are institutionalized in such binding agreements.³³³ As a result, Constitutional Orders are therefore per se resilient and difficult to change. Yet they are, historically speaking, a rare occurrence, only beginning to appear in the historical record due to the conditions present at the end of the First World War. Hitherto, the mere notion of a Constitutional Order would have simply been unthinkable as a concept far beyond any concept of political reality. Yet, as will be illustrated, ideas rise and fall through the process of systemic wars, and the idea of a Constitutional Order is indeed no exception.

Based upon the high level of overall functional integration (including in questions pertaining to security cooperation), the existence of a Constitutional Order fulfills not only the

³³⁰ Ikenberry, *After Victory*, pg. 29.

³³¹ Ibid., pp. 30-31.

³³² Mattli, *Explaining Regional Integration*, pg. 43.

³³³ Ikenberry, *After Victory*, pg. 36.

abovementioned criteria for establishing stable peace, but also the necessary conditions for the formation of an RSO. War has been not only rendered impossible through pacific self-images but also through the binding of states through institutions, including, according to theory, RSOs. However, as Mattli stipulated and argued above, such a high degree of cooperation is indeed conditional on the presence of an interested hegemon. This interested hegemon acts as the core of strength around which a Constitutional Order is built and whose preferences are incorporated into the initial post-‘critical juncture’ construction of the Order. Hence the interested hegemon diffuses power within a Constitutional Order in the way that reflects its institutional preferences.³³⁴ Ikenberry argues that, over time, post-‘critical juncture’ settlements will, according to theory, move in the direction of an institutionalized order, taking on constitutional characteristics.³³⁵ He further ascribes the necessity of each member of the Constitutional Order having fully developed (democratic) institutions that dampen the political implications of inequality within society, building further upon the foundation of compatible social orders.

While this last stipulation of Ikenberry lays well beyond the scope of security cooperation, Constitutional Orders are, as noted, advanced projects of policy integration between states that require stable peace, pacific self-images, compatible social orders and the presence of an interested hegemon. The high degree of trust this begets allows the power of both the preponderant state as well as other members of the Order to be constrained through institutions. Nevertheless, under such an Order, nations still retain some degree of independence. As such they are a step towards, but still far removed from, the concepts of an “amalgamated security community” as put forward by Deutsch or Kupchan’s notion of a “union” whereby states agree to pool sovereignty and go so far as to beget a new political entity. Even so, the notion of security cooperation under a Constitutional Order comes very close to the definition of an RSO as defined by this dissertation. As per this definition, the creation of an RSO requires stable peace and an elevated level of trust and maturity between the states involved. Furthermore, it requires the presence of an interested hegemon to foster the process of deepening security cooperation through the previously analyzed criteria. This dissertation therefore anticipates that only within a Constitutional Order will a RSO be formed.

As such, the application of the above concept of a Constitutional Order, complete with “commitment institutions”, will be applied through the analysis of the selected ‘critical juncture’ case studies. Should evidence of a Constitutional Order be found, this dissertation would expect to see an attempt to replicate the political order of the West, with its dense post-1945 institutional environment, most probably revolving around the same core of strength. Should no evidence of a Constitutional Order be found, an assumption can be made that not only have no RSOs been established within the identified spatial boundary conditions, but that the political constellation present in the system has not allowed for their respective formation due to the lack of necessary criteria as listed above. In cases where a Constitutional Order is found to lie beyond the pale of contemporary rational feasibility, or indeed intellectual contemplation, little option is left available outside of ruling that the existence of an RSO ‘cannot be determined’.

³³⁴ For example, in analyzing the Settlement of 1945, Ikenberry underlined that “American policy towards Europe reflected a more general American orientation as the [Second World War] came to an end. It wanted a world order that would advance American interests.” Ibid., pg. 201.

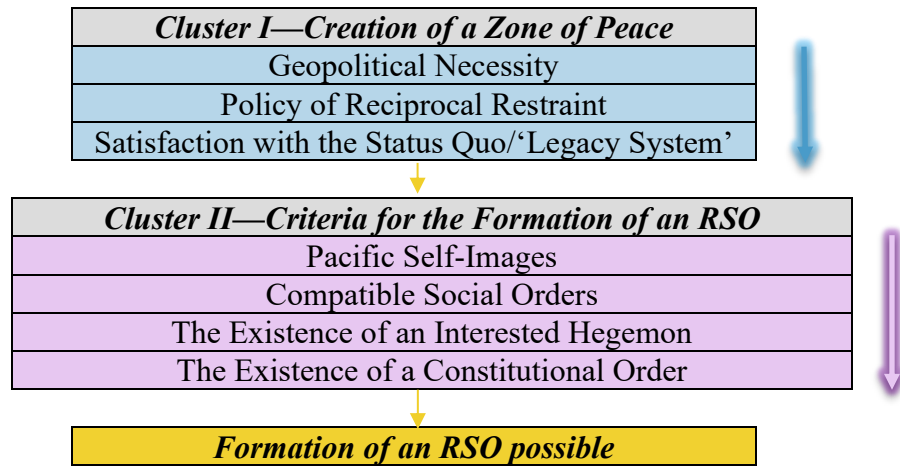
³³⁵ Ibid., pg. 19.

4.3.4. Conclusion

As apparent in this dissertation's title, the focus is on trying to explain what has not happened instead of accounting for what has happened. The above seven elements lay out a path to justify why a particular phenomenon, namely the existence of RSOs in EA, does not currently exist and is something that has not occurred. This dissertation hopes to distill a better understanding of our RQ, namely "why there are no RSOs in EA?" The State of the Art has established the necessity of having stable peace break out *before* any progress can be made towards the formation of a RSO. The selected elements logically reflect this process. The first three concepts (geopolitical necessity, reciprocal restraint, satisfaction with the status quo/'legacy system') encapsulate the major criteria as laid out in the State of the Art for a zone of stable peace to break out. Hence, this dissertation anticipates that in the event of all three elements being present during the analysis of a 'critical juncture', stable peace can be said to have broken out. This is, however, merely the first phase along the road towards security cooperation. The second phase is laid out in elements 4-7 (pacific self-image, compatible social orders, existence of a Constitutional Order, existence of an interested hegemon) and is focused on the possible construction of a RSO as defined by this dissertation: *an organization comprised of two or more states that, as per Deutsch's definition of a pluralistic security community, constructs a set of rules and norms to define state behavior and a 'sense of community' attenuated enough to ensure the security of the states involved.* As a RSO requires much more than simply a transient alliance or ephemeral security pact, both subject to the ebb and flow of political circumstance, these four criteria would be essential to provide the necessary advanced degree of trust and cooperation that act as a *sine qua non* to form such a high degree of security cooperation.

To conclude, establishing the presence of the first three elements would ascertain the existence of stable peace when applied to the selected 'critical junctures'. Both clusters of criteria are essential and attest to the procedural nature of RSO formation. Without stable peace, expedient alliances of a Machiavellian nature can be concluded, and weaker states may opt for the option of 'bandwagoning'. Yet, without stable peace having broken out, deeper forms of security cooperation, including an RSO, remains unattainable. For such cooperation to occur, the presence of the final four are the most crucial, determining whether an RSO is in existence. Both clusters of criteria are necessary for RSO formation to become a reality. Should the empirical investigation of the identified 'critical junctures' illustrate that not all elements are present, one can conclude that there is no RSO present. At the same time, the degree to which criteria necessary for stable peace (1-3) and the formation of an RSO (4-7) are present can determine how far down the path each respective 'critical juncture' was in achieving both stable peace and the formation of an RSO. The path towards facilitating the conditions to allow for the creation of an RSO is depicted in Table 4.

Table 4: Progression of Criteria to Facilitate the Formation of an RSO



The above seven criteria will be applied to the 'critical junctures' that will be identified below within the temporal and spatial boundary conditions already stipulated. For an RSO to be formed, therefore, *all* of the above criteria, both in cluster I and II, must be met. Applying these seven criteria to the East Asian historical record, this dissertation will demonstrate why there are no RSO in East Asia.

4.4. Selection of 'Critical Junctures' as an Explanatory Variable

With the criteria for the formation of RSOs, as well as time and space, having been identified, a further tool becomes necessary to apply to the research question. The concept of 'critical junctures' has been seen by scholars as a useful explanatory variable, especially in studying sequences over time, such as the window established by the above temporal boundaries. Collier & Collier applied the theoretical concept of 'critical juncture' to a specific regional context (Latin America). Skowronek's work on 'crises' illustrated that his understanding was in line with Waltz's 'outside- in' concept, with their demonstrated effect on the scope and trajectory of policy options available at the unit-(state) level. Ikenberry's study of international orders and his application of 'critical juncture' theory on the systemic level and implications for future systemic evolution over a larger time frame spanning several centuries. As Ikenberry notes, "international order-building exhibits critical junctures logic" providing key moments where leading states shape the contours of the international order.³³⁶ Such 'critical junctures' that laid out the framework of the post-Cold War era were identified as having followed in the wake of major wars in 1648, 1713, 1815, 1919, 1945 and 1989.³³⁷ Yet such 'critical junctures' focused on areas far removed from East Asia.

This dissertation therefore will emulate such an approach and apply the seven criteria of the formation of an RSO to the concept of 'critical junctures' within the East Asian historical record. This in line with the procedural focus of stable peace literature as well as the tenets of

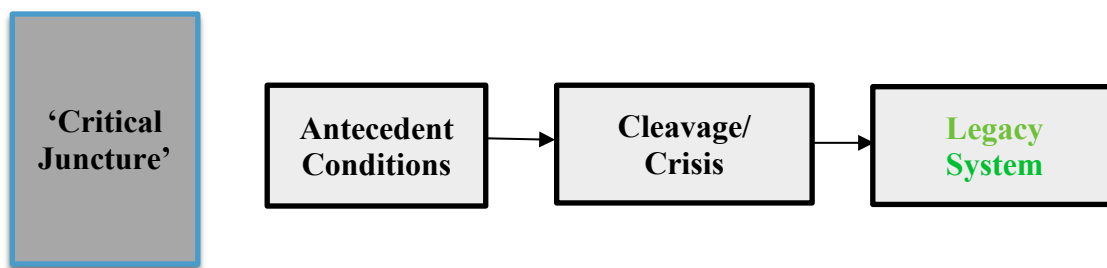
³³⁶ Ikenberry, John, "The Rise, Character, and Evolution of International Order", pg. 541.

³³⁷ Ibid., *After Victory*, pg. xiii.

historical institutionalism, as expounded by Fioretos, where the emphasis of historical sequencing and its effect on the scope of policy options subsequently available to decision-makers takes on special relevance and accounts for why certain political paths were forsaken, never to be explored. Collier & Collier’s definition seems especially promising given this dissertation’s choice of placing its research question in time according to the tenets of Pierson. Hence, this more than merits their application to the East Asian historical record.

As noted, Collier & Collier defined ‘critical junctures’ as “a period of significant change, which typically occurs in distinct ways in different countries and which is hypothesized to produce distinct legacies.”³³⁸ Collier & Collier’s broad definition that includes the totality of a ‘critical juncture’ is of importance, with each ‘juncture’ containing several key elements, namely the following: (i.) *antecedent conditions* (the baseline against which the critical juncture is measured); (ii.) the *cleavage* (or crisis that emerges from the antecedent conditions; and (iii.) the *legacy* or new situation.³³⁹ As such, each identified ‘critical juncture’ will be analyzed using the seven criteria for the formation of an RSO through the investigation of its respective antecedent conditions, cleavage, and legacy system. Accordingly, when examining possible ‘critical junctures’, each respective title reflects the singular cleavage or crisis event that characterized its outbreak. Despite its title indicating spontaneity and instantaneousness, these three elements reflect the deeper mechanism that Collier & Collier advocate both proceeds and follows each ‘critical juncture’. Recall that the base element of a ‘critical juncture’ is the claim that a significant change took place in distinct way and subsequently produces a legacy.³⁴⁰ Hence, understanding how a particular legacy was established through each ‘critical junctures’ antecedent conditions and cleavage is essential to its identification.³⁴¹ As Collier & Collier note “the importance or lack of importance of a ‘critical juncture’ cannot be established in general, but only with reference to a specific historical legacy.”³⁴² The approach that will be followed for the examination of each ‘critical juncture’ is summarized in the following table (Table 5):

Table 5: The Examination of 'Critical Junctures'



³³⁸ Collier & Collier, *Shaping the Political Arena*, pg. 29.

³³⁹ Ibid., pp. 30-31.

³⁴⁰ Ibid., pg. 30.

³⁴¹ It should be noted that Collier & Collier did not stipulate any specific time frame for the onset and playing through of a ‘critical juncture’. Citing the Latin American context of their work, they can range from “moments of significant structural change to an extended period that might correspond to one or more presidential administrations, a long ‘policy period’ or a prolonged ‘regime period’”. Ibid., pg. 32.

³⁴² Ibid., pg. 33.

Following this scheme, the antecedent conditions that preceded the culmination of a each ‘critical juncture’s’ cleavage point will be thoroughly examined, both for their role in creating the crisis—thereby explaining why the previous legacy system failed—and its inability to foster the criteria necessary to generate the formation of an RSO. Each ‘critical juncture’s’ respective cleavage/crisis will likewise be analyzed as it marks a harbinger of major changes to the regional system. Finally, the legacy system of the post-cleavage system will be examined and, as following the reshuffling of the proverbial systemic deck, the seven criteria of for the formation of RSOs will be applied to the new post-crisis constellation.

The next section will now define what constitutes, for the proposes of this dissertation, the ‘critical junctures’ that will serve to divide the East Asian historical record.

4.5. Systemic Wars: Definition and Application

Gilpin highlighted the function of hegemonic war as constituting the “primary means of resolving disequilibrium between the structure of the international system and the redistribution of power”.³⁴³ Consequently, moments of systemic crisis through hegemonic war—as per Gilpin’s definition—have been selected as *the* ‘critical junctures’ that will mark the systemic dividing lines that comprise the East Asian historical record. This dissertation will identify instances of systemic war between 1894-1951 and use them as instances of application for the aforementioned seven criteria for the formation of an RSO. It is anticipated that, following the analysis of the three elements of each identified ‘critical juncture’, the application of these criteria to the post-systemic war legacy system will account for the non-formation of an RSO.

In his definition of systemic war, Gilpin provided three elements that characterized its outbreak. These will serve as the benchmark for identifying systemic wars during the stated temporal boundary limits. Hence, to identify a systemic war ‘critical juncture’ the following criteria will be utilized:

- **First**, a hegemonic war “involves a direct contest between the dominant power or powers in an international system” and “is characterized by participation of the major states and most of the minor states.”³⁴⁴
- **Second**, the issue at stake in a hegemonic war is the nature and governance of the system, thereby challenging the legitimacy of the system itself.
- **Third**, a hegemonic war is characterized by the “unlimited means employed by and by the general scope of the warfare”³⁴⁵, tending towards large, industrialized, global conflicts.

Important to note that this third condition lies beyond the scope of the previously defined spatial boundary conditions, implying conflict on a global and industrial level. Gilpin, when

³⁴³ Gilpin, *War & Change in World Politics*, pg. 197.

³⁴⁴ Ibid., pg. 199.

³⁴⁵ Ibid., pg. 200.

writing of systemic war, was referring exclusively to the international system at large.³⁴⁶ This is beyond the spatial scope of this dissertation. Possible ‘critical junctures’ identified within the boundary conditions, given the time span involved, obviously have varying degrees of industrialization. Until the late nineteenth century, the East Asian members of the regional system were all pre-industrial.³⁴⁷ This dissertation, therefore, will necessarily adapt Gilpin’s third condition to the regional system of EA and instances where military conflict engulfs the entire regional (and not global) system, involving its major players and being as economically and industrially intensive as each respective ‘critical juncture’ permits. As such, this dissertation will employ a modified version of Gilpin’s third criterion that is as follows: *a regional war characterized by, but not limited to, large, economically and industrially intense conflicts.*

Gilpin’s remaining two characteristics meet Ikenberry’s definition of shaping critical systemic moments, those that destroy the rules of the old international order, affording a newly powerful state the opportunity to rethink and rebuild the international order.³⁴⁸ As noted in the State of the Art, Ikenberry stresses that systemic change brings with it new rules and procedures while, as argued, also ushering in changes to constructivist concepts upon which political decision-making is based. Gilpin’s adapted three criteria therefore provide a helpful guide in identifying movements of systemic change in East Asia on offers a helpful variable to track systemic change. Gilpin’s definition of systemic war will therefore be applied to assess ‘critical junctures’ in East Asia within the determined limits of this dissertation’s temporal boundary conditions. The respective peace treaties that resulted from the systemic wars in question will be used as the cleavages/crisis of each ‘critical juncture’. This dissertation now turns to identifying which ‘critical junctures’ will be selected for consideration.

4.6. Identification of ‘Critical Junctures’ with Systemic War Implications

As stated, the spatial boundary conditions of this dissertation lay the foundation for the starting point the temporal span to be analysed, namely as argued above (i.) an epoch when all members of what has been defined as the East Asian region were actively present politically and economically, and (ii.) the full incorporation of the Western-centered, Westphalian order had become established in East Asia. Through the identified temporal boundary conditions of 1894-2022, the relevant regional events with profound legacies on the trajectory of the EA system, as per Collier & Collier’s definition, have been identified as follows:

- 1895: The Treaty of Shimonoseki;
- 1901: The Boxer Protocol;
- 1905: The End of the Russo-Japanese War;
- 1919: The Treaty of Versailles (The First World War);
- 1945: The End of the Second World War;
- 1949: Victory of the Chinese Communist Party;
- 1953: Signature of the Korean Armistice Agreement;
- 1954: Geneva Conference;

³⁴⁶ Ibid., pp. 9-15.

³⁴⁷ Paine, *The Sino-Japanese War*, pg. 63.

³⁴⁸ Ikenberry, John “The Rise, Character, and Evolution of International Order”, pg. 541.

- 1960: The Sino-Soviet Split;
- 1972: The Visit of President Richard Nixon to the PRC;
- 1991: The Collapse of the Soviet Union (End of the Cold War).

Having crystalized the above eleven major ‘critical junctures’ that occurred within the stipulated boundary conditions, this dissertation will now proceed to select the appropriate ‘critical junctures’ based on the application of Gilpin’s definition of systemic war:

The significance of the **End of the First Sino-Japanese War** has already been alluded to in this dissertation’s setting of its boundary conditions. Scholars have concluded that the First Sino-Japanese War (1894-1895) marked the end of the ‘old order’ in East Asia and the dawn of a new one.³⁴⁹ Its revolutionary character is best encapsulated by China’s preeminent expert on the War, Qi Qizhang, who wrote that “the influence caused by (China’s) defeat in the Sino-Japanese War was the most profound and far reaching” even when compared to the five large-scale wars fought between the Qing Dynasty and the Western powers.³⁵⁰ These changes included the expulsion of China from the Korean Peninsula, placing Korea at the “grinding point among three acquisitive imperial powers: Russia, China and Japan” as well as the inception of modern two-China problem, with the War making Taiwan a Japanese colony and transforming Japan into an imperial power.³⁵¹ The legacy system that the First Sino-Japanese War helped forge was one where China remained unified and increasingly looked to Japan to study modernization in the face of the severity of its defeat. Hence, this ‘critical juncture’ opened a possible door to reconciliation between China and Japan with the advent of Chinese study tours in Japan and, vice versa, Japanese advisors in China. However, stable peace between China and Japan did not materialize, as some in Beijing and Tokyo had hoped. Hence, the legacy of the First Sino-Japanese War can still be felt in 21st century Asia. The international system that the Treaty of Shimonoseki (in 1895, thereby serving as this ‘juncture’s’ *cleavage*), officially ending the War with the surrender of the Qing Dynasty, left in its wake was very different than the one that had preceded it. As such, the First Sino-Japanese War very much meets the definition of a ‘critical juncture’ according to Collier & Collier. At the same, the War marked a contest between the ‘old order’s’ dominant powers, thereby meeting Gilpin’s first criteria of systemic war. As noted above, the replacement of a Qing Dynasty-centered international system and its replacement with the Japan-oriented Westphalian legacy one would meet Gilpin’s second condition of systemic war, namely challenging the legitimacy of the system. Obviously, the First Sino-Japanese War can in no way be argued as a truly global conflict, as per Gilpin’s third definition, but it was a regional war of serious, far-reaching consequences, both systemic and political. The War was rife with implications for the international system at large, with “the war rattling the presumption that all important world events emanated from [Western Powers’] activities.”³⁵² East Asia became part and parcel of an all-encompassing global system, with Japan as its vanguard as the only recognized Asian global power. This, of course, came with its own limitations: the legacy of the terms of the Treaty of Shimonoseki were cause for Imperial Russia, Germany and France to intervene (known to posterity as the Triple Intervention)

³⁴⁹ See Greve, Andrew & Levy, Jack, “Power Transitions, Status Dissatisfaction, and War: The Sino-Japanese War of 1894-1895”, *Security Studies*, 27:1, pp. 148-187; Paine, S.C.M., *The Sino-Japanese War of 1894-1895*, pp. 3-20, Seayoung Park, “The Death of Eastphalia, 1874”, pp. 239-259.

³⁵⁰ Qi Qizhang, *The Sino-Japanese War*, Beijing: People’s Publishing House, 1990, pg. 585.

³⁵¹ Paine, *The Sino-Japanese War of 1894-1895*, pg. 6.

³⁵² *Ibid.*, pg. 7.

in protest of the harsh Japanese terms against the Qing and in defence of their own respective political ambitions.³⁵³ Hence, the regional scope of the war and the importance to its dominant powers allows this ‘critical juncture’ to meet Gilpin’s third criteria of systemic war.

The Boxers United in Righteousness (*Yi-hetuan*), known to posterity as the **Boxer Rebellion** (1899-1901), was “a spontaneous mass movement that aimed to drive out all things foreign and restore the Qing”.³⁵⁴ What began as large domestic uprising in the province of Shandong subsequently spiralled out of control, eventually involving seven other countries and instigated a large international crisis that directly to “the dispatch of the largest international expedition force the world has ever seen.”³⁵⁵ Following the initial spasms of violence that began to spread over North China, the Qing Court was at a loss as to how to respond as the attack went from an anti-Christian to a general xenophobic tone. By June 1900, the Chinese government had refused to send in its soldiers to quell the rebellion and protect the growing number of foreigners under threat; the dominant view among Qing Court officials favoured using the rage of anti-foreigner riots to fight back against increasing Western violations of China’s sovereignty.³⁵⁶ On 21 June 1900, Empress Dowager Cixi declared war against all foreign powers, both Western and Japanese, attacking foreign legations in Beijing and murdering Japan’s chief diplomat, Sugiyama Akira. The legations were relieved in August 1900 by a combined force totalling circa 20,000 of the Eight-Nations Alliance (Austria-Hungary, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, Russia, UK, and US), with a third of the force being made up of the Japanese military.³⁵⁷ Faced with this challenge, China, in the person of the Guangxu Emperor, reached out to Japan for meditation and assistance in the face of Western imperialism. As in 1895, Tokyo politely ignored such peaceful overtures. Following the defeat of the Boxers and the regular Chinese armies as well as the exile of the Imperial Court to Xian, a much more bloody and politically significant dimension of the Boxer Rebellion occurred, namely the Sino-Russian War of 1900 that saw China de facto loose sovereignty over Manchuria.³⁵⁸ The Boxer Protocol was signed in September 1901. Highly punitive in nature in terms of future Chinese economic indemnities for damages against foreign interests, US insistence on Chinese territorial and administrative integrity left the severely weakened Qing Dynasty intact.³⁵⁹ China, through the Eight-Nation intervention, had been dealt a near mortal blow that sparked an internal existentialist crisis among the Chinese elite, with the Empress herself writing that “the dynasty has been brought to the precipice.”³⁶⁰ Recognition abounded inside and outside China that Japan, and not the Qing, was arising as a global power and that the millennial-old Chinese civilization needed to be adapted to the challenges of the 21st

³⁵³ Kajima Morinosuke, *The Diplomacy of Japan: 1894-1922, Volume I, The Sino-Japanese War and Triple Intervention*, Tokyo: Kajima Institute of International Peace, 1976.

³⁵⁴ Mühlhahn, *Making China Modern*, pg. 181.

³⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 179.

³⁵⁶ Vogel, Ezra, *China and Japan: Facing History*, Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University, 2019, pp. 145-46.

³⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, pg. 146.

³⁵⁸ Lensen, George Alexander, *The Russo-Chinese War*, Tokyo: Sophia University, 1967, pp. 1-7. Historical Manchuria consists of the three Chinese provinces of Shengjing, Jilin, and Heilongjiang.

³⁵⁹ Zabriskie, Edward, *American-Russian Rivalry in the Far East*, Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1946, pg. 21.

³⁶⁰ Jung, Chang, *Empress Dowager Ci Xi: The Concubine Who Launched Modern China*, London: Jonathan Cape, 2013, pg. 298.

century.³⁶¹ Consequently, demands for reform increased and Chinese society underwent nationalist radicalization, with Chinese nationalism entrenching itself as a salient feature of domestic politics.³⁶² This led to the jettisoning of centuries-old system of civil servant examinations. Given the seriousness of its non-emergence for the contemporary and future trajectory of regional security, this legacy can be said to meet the definition of a ‘critical juncture’ according to Collier & Collier. Regarding Giplin’s definition of systemic war, the Boxer Rebellion can be argued to represent the last contest between the Qing Dynasty and indeed all the international system’s dominant powers, thereby meeting its first condition. The Settlement of 1901 also opened the door to an open contest between the Russian and Japanese Empires for supremacy in East Asia. Likewise, Cixi’s declaration of war against all foreign powers marked a clear challenge to the system’s legitimacy, validating Gilpin’s second criterion. As for this dissertation’s adapted third criteria, the Boxer Rebellion—as noted above—did involve ever major and minor power in the Western system and required the coordination and intervention of a punitive force. As such, the third condition for systemic warfare can be considered to be met.

The **Russo-Japanese War** (1904-1905) was very much a product of the legacy system left in the wake of the Treaty of Shimonoseki, Triple Intervention and the Boxer Rebellion, having placed Japan and Russia on a course of rivalry.³⁶³ While only involving the military might of Tsarist Russia and Imperial Japan, the Russo-Japanese War had “major indisputable repercussions in East Asia.”³⁶⁴ Further Russian expansion in Northeast Asia was halted and Japan established a presence on mainland Asia. More importantly, Japan could crown herself as a member of the select group of modern, global powers.³⁶⁵ As a result, Russian interest in East Asia on the whole was dampened, while the Japanese Empire became emboldened in its expansionist zeal. The legacy system that the Treaty of Portsmouth created, officially ending the war with its signature on 5 September 1905, had consequences both regionally and globally. First and foremost, Tokyo’s costly victory against the Tsar plotted the course that would, eventually, pit the two maritime powers of East Asia, Japan and the United States, in competition with each other. Indeed, the mediation of President Theodore Roosevelt illustrated the increasing US interest in the region. While beyond the scope of this dissertation, the defeat of the Russian Empire in 1905 served as the main catalyst for the Revolution of 1905, leading to major domestic reforms. Hence, the Russo-Japanese War meets Collier & Collier’s criteria of a ‘critical juncture’ both from an East Asian and European perspective. The War did mark a contest between some, but not all, of the region’s dominant powers, obviously limited to Russia and Japan. However, as the Russo-Japanese war took place within the legacy system created by the end of the First Sino-Japanese War, the argument can be made that the Russo-Japanese War took place between the only remaining meaningful regional powers. As such, this dissertation considers Gilpin’s first condition of systemic war as being met. Likewise, as the war broke out in 1904 due to Russian and Japanese tensions over Manchuria and Korea, whose political contours were very much influenced by the Treaty of Shimonoseki and the subsequent Triple Intervention, the war was very much a Japanese reaction to the legitimacy of the system. Hence, Gilpin’s second criterion can be said to be met.

³⁶¹ See Clements, Paul, *The Boxer Rebellion: A Political and Diplomatic Review*, New York: Columbia University, 1915, pg. 616; Mühlhahn, *Making China Modern*, pg. 186; Vogel, *China and Japan*, pg. 147.

³⁶² Mühlhahn, *Making China Modern*, pg. 187.

³⁶³ Kowner, Rotem, *Historical Dictionary of the Russo-Japanese War*, Lanham: The Scarecrow Press, 2006, pg. 6.

³⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, pg. 17.

³⁶⁵ Vogel, *China and Japan*, pg. 147.

Regarding the third definition, the Russo-Japanese War has been qualified as “the first modern war, in the first place in terms of its sheer scale.”³⁶⁶ The Battle of Mukden (1905) marked the largest battle in human history until then; the logistics of supplying both sides’ vast armies literally spanned the Eurasian continent. As such, the third criterion for systemic warfare can be said to have been met.

The **Treaty of Versailles** (1919) brought the First World War (1914-1918) to a formal conclusion through its dictates of peace. Although far from the primary focus of hostilities, the First World War did involve, by 1918, all of the East Asian regional powers. The advent of the First World War in Asia, like in Europe, fundamentally altered the relationship between the traditional regional actors, thereby affecting the balance of power.³⁶⁷ The legacy system constructed by the Treaty of Portsmouth had solidified Japan’s self-image as a regional power. The events of the First World War only seemed to solidify Tokyo’s regional standing. Japanese forces, early after hostilities commenced, seized the vast majority of Germany’s Pacific Empire, most notably the city of Tsingtao on the Shantung Peninsula. The course of the war in Europe and the increasingly anarchical conditions sweeping over China spawned the Japanese government to, in 1915, present the Chinese authorities with its ‘twenty-one demands’, allowing Tokyo to massively improve its political and economic standing in China, bolstering its claim to regional systemic domination. The signing of the Treaty of Versailles further reinforced Japan as the inheritors of German possessions on the Chinese mainland. At the Versailles Peace Conference, the United States played a central role in determining the future of Germany’s former colonies, including its concessions in China, at the time in Japanese possession.³⁶⁸ The US-Japanese rivalry established by the legacy system of the Treaty of Portsmouth between the US and Japan and enhanced by the Treaty of Versailles focused on the two issues of the future of China and the embryonic naval arms race in the Pacific, based on the tripartite rivalry between the US, UK and Japan.³⁶⁹ The desire to avoid an all-out naval arms race led to the convening of the Washington Conference (1921-1922), with its Five-Power Treaty establishing clear naval limits. This ‘Washington System’ that, as Japanese Prime Minister Hara Takashi described, established “the US and UK as world powers, while Japan has been added as the guardian of order in the Far East.”³⁷⁰ Hence, the Treaty of Versailles, given its far-reaching regional consequences in East Asia and the legacy system it created, qualifies as a ‘critical juncture’ as defined by Collier & Collier. Regarding the application of Gilpin’s third criterion of systemic war, the First World War was par excellence an example of a contest between the system’s dominant powers; challenging the legitimacy of the system; and was characterized by regional, industrial war. Accordingly, this ‘critical juncture’ meets all criteria to be considered a systemic war.

The **Second World War** in East Asia began earlier than in Europe and its final dénouement occurred a full six years after the end of hostilities in 1951. The end of the Second World War with the Japanese surrender on the USS Missouri on 2 September 1945, ended a conflict that exemplified all three of Gilpin’s criteria for a systemic war. Japan’s rejection of the contemporary

³⁶⁶ Kowner, *Historical Dictionary of the Russo-Japanese War*, pg. 1.

³⁶⁷ Goldstein, Erik, *The First World War Peace Settlements, 1919-1925*, London: Routledge, 2002, pg. 69.

³⁶⁸ Paine, S.C.M., *The Wars for Asia, 1911-1949*, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012, pg. 172.

³⁶⁹ Goldstein, *The First World War Peace Settlements*, pg. 71.

³⁷⁰ Vié, Michel, « Le Japon pendant la Première Guerre mondiale : fonctionnement de l’État et politique extérieure », *Ebisu, Études Japon*, 53, 2016, pg. 74.

international system was already apparent through its 1933 withdrawal from the League of Nations. As Paine poignantly underlines, “[r]ejection of the order implies plans for another and can be a harbinger of an impending attack on the status quo.”³⁷¹ In July 1937, an incident on the Marco Polo Bridge sparked events that would trigger the Second Sino-Japanese War and eventually lead to Tokyo’s decision to strike the US in December 1941. As Yellen notes “although there was no direct path from the Marco Polo Bridge to Pearl Harbour, the incident in China set off a chain of events that led to war for hegemony in the Asia-Pacific.”³⁷² Obviously, given the scope of the ensuing conflict, its respective legacy in East Asia dwarfed those which it had preceded, not least due to Japan’s role as a member of the Axis. In preparing for a postwar settlement, the legacy system planned was one that marked a regional novelty: at the Cairo Conference of 1943, the RoC was “for the first time in modern history treated as great power with its inclusion amongst the ‘Big Four’ on the invitation list.”³⁷³ However, once the gears of war are released, they take on their own trajectory. The vision of China as a bedrock of postwar East Asian stability did not come to pass. In its wake, East Asia was left with a novel regional composition: Japan had indeed created a new order and ejected the European powers (UK, France, the Netherlands) from Asia, albeit not in the way Tokyo’s policy makers had originally envisioned.³⁷⁴ A new legacy system was basically inevitable. The contours of the postwar order became palpable several years later. In September 1951, the San Francisco Peace Conference was organized, according Japan its status as an independent state following its 1945 surrender. The attendance at the Conference was broad, including the USSR, however it did not include the PRC or RoC due to a lack of consensus amongst the Allies.³⁷⁵ Nor was any Korean representation envisioned or desired. The Treaty of San Francisco, signed a full six years after the official Japanese surrender, created the systemic framework for the conduct of international relations, both during the Cold War and after its conclusion. While a peace settlement was officially negotiated with the Western Allies, none was made with the USSR, China or Korea.³⁷⁶ On the same day it signed a peace treaty with Washington, Japan likewise concluded a security treaty with the US. Scholars have dubbed this event as the inauguration of the ‘San Francisco System’ where Tokyo’s “coordination with the United States [on security policy matters] became the axis upon which Japan’s postwar foreign policy was oriented.”³⁷⁷ The advent of the ‘San Francisco System’, therefore, can be seen as the legacy of the Treaty of San Francisco and, as such, very much qualifies as a ‘critical juncture’ according to the criteria of Collier & Collier.

The 1949 Victory of the CCP in the Chinese Civil War marked a seminal event with the regional system of East Asia. Its end signaled the culmination of a complex, multi-generational

³⁷¹ Paine, *The Wars for Asia*, pg. 174.

³⁷² Yellen, Jeremy, *The Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere: When Total Empire Met Total War*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2019, pg. 2.

³⁷³ *Ibid.*, pg. 199.

³⁷⁴ Morimatsu Toshio, “The War Goals of the Great East Asian War” in *Modern Japanese Military History*, Vol. 4, Okumura Fusao and Kondō Shinji, pg. 294 & pp. 312-315.

³⁷⁵ Hattori Ryuji, *China-Japan Rapprochement and the United States: In the Wake of Nixon's Visit to China*, London: Routledge, 2021, pg. 1.

³⁷⁶ The term ‘San Francisco System’ is a legacy system whose meaning has been “taken for granted” and misunderstood: In its original sense it means “the Northeast Asian security order that was based on the US-Japan alliance. The argument...is that its current meaning as a comprehensive system of security was a later accretion and cannot be supported by the facts.” See Buszynski, Leszek, “The San Francisco System: Contemporary Meaning and Challenges”, *Asian Perspectives* 35(2011), pg. 315.

³⁷⁷ Hattori, *China-Japan Rapprochement and the United States*, pg. 1.

civil war and a protracted regional war with Japan, within a wider context of a global war involving all major powers.³⁷⁸ While the later aspect of the Chinese Civil War clearly met Gilpin's third criteria of a systemic war (global conflict), the last phase of the War, with its sharp focus on the destiny of mainland China does not. The CCP victory secured its control over the Chinese mainland and exiled the Nationalist government to the island of Taiwan. The Nationalist position had become untenable by January 1949, spelling disaster for Chiang Kai Shek's government. Despite a belated interest in the regional Chinese Civil War by Washington, where the US played an historically overrated and highly ineffective role³⁷⁹, the Nationalist government had been de facto written off by the US Embassy as early as 1947: "China for the foreseeable future cannot be a positive asset to the United States; the range of American choice is confined to whether it will be a minor or major liability."³⁸⁰ The last years of the Chinese Civil War (1945-1949) marked a return of geopolitical competition from the global to the regional level, with the remaining global power, the USSR, intervening hoping to secure regional objectives given its geographic proximity.³⁸¹ While increasingly seen in Moscow and Washington as part of the emerging global confrontation between the "free world" and Communism, the final phase of the Chinese Civil War did not meet Gilpin's first criterion of systemic war, namely a contest between the system's dominant powers. On 1 October 1949, Mao Zedong proclaimed the founding of the PRC with Beijing as its capital. A new state and regional power firmly claimed the mantle of Chinese unity, one whose legitimacy was not recognized by the Western Powers. Through the CCP's victory and the adoption of a socialist system, China became part of the international network of socialist states, with "global connections and contexts reaching deeper into Chinese society than ever before."³⁸² Such a decision obviously had major consequences on the international system as a whole. As such, the 1949 CCP victory over the Kuomintang did contribute to challenging the system's legitimacy as a whole, thereby the case can be made that this 'critical juncture' is in line with Gilpin's second criteria. In its totality, however, it falls short of constituting a systemic war and will not be selected as a 'critical juncture'.

The **1953 Korean Armistice Agreement** was signed between the United Nations (with the US in main command of a global coalition of 16 nations), the DPRK and the PRC. The USSR was not at the negotiation table but, while not a belligerent, played a substantial role in supply of material to the DPRK and PRC, with Stalin have substantial influence on the course of events. The Armistice established a ceasefire along the 38th parallel. While the settlement stopped much short of Douglas MacArthur's famous objective of "no substitute for victory", it also secured a commitment to UN principles and South Korean security, coupled with a threat to expand any future Korean conflict to encompass the territory of the PRC.³⁸³ It has been described as "the most active phase of the Cold War"³⁸⁴, with the negotiation process having left a sense of acrimony between the PRC and US that would "make [future] serious dialogue difficult to contemplate or initiate."³⁸⁵ The Korean Armistice, given the scope of states involved in what was seen as an

³⁷⁸ Paine, *The Wars for Asia*, pg. 274.

³⁷⁹ Ibid.

³⁸⁰ *Foreign Relations of the United States*, Vol. 7, *Far East: China*, Washington, 1947, pg. 224.

³⁸¹ Paine, *The Wars of Asia, 1911-1949*, pp. 271-299.

³⁸² Mühlhahn, *Making China Modern*, pg. 355.

³⁸³ Foot, Rosemary, *A Substitute for Victory: the Politics of Peacemaking at the Korean Armistice Talks*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1990, pg. 207.

³⁸⁴ Ibid., pg. 4.

³⁸⁵ Ibid., pg. xi.

ideological struggle—the Communist bloc vs the newly established World Order of the US cloaked in a UN flag—does indeed meet Gilpin’s first criterion of a systemic war, namely a contest between the system’s dominant powers. At the same time, while neither Beijing nor Washington achieved outright victory, they ensured the survival/status quo of the pre-war system and did not make any serious attempts in the immediate aftermath of the ceasefire to call into question its legitimacy. While involving a broad coalition on the UN side, from Ethiopia’s Kagnew Battalions to the Turkish Brigade, the Korean War does not meet Gilpin’s third criteria of a conflict characterized by global warfare. Hence, it has not been chosen as a ‘critical juncture’ for further analysis.

The **1954 Geneva Conference** marked an attempt to settle outstanding issues from the Korean War as well as the war in Indochina, where the French colonial presence in East Asia lived out its last days. The Conference was attended by the majority of East Asian states (US, PRC, DPRK, RoK, France, UK and USSR). The Geneva Agreements had serious implications for the future of Indochina, with Laos, Cambodia and Vietnam becoming independent states. Vietnam was demarcated on the 17th parallel into two separate zones. On the systemic level, the Geneva Conference marked the exit of France as a, albeit minor, East Asian player. More importantly, the PRC Delegation, led by Zhou Enlai, not only took part—despite the refusal of the US to recognize its legitimacy—but played a crucial role in the negotiations making the PRC a great power “in appearance as well as fact.”³⁸⁶ The United States had not yet intervened in Indochina, therefore precluding a general escalation in tensions, yet proceeded to replace France as a security guarantor for South Vietnam. The Geneva Agreements likewise established an International Supervisory Commission (ISC) comprised of extra-regional nations, namely Canada, India and Poland, however this was on a local level (with no wider systemic implications) and the elections the ISC was tapped to supervise never occurred. Regarding the situation on the Korean Peninsula, the conference failed to reach any declaration, signaling the failure of the signatories of the Korean Armistice to honour Article IV (hold a political conference within three months of the agreement’s signature). In summary, while the Geneva Conference laid the ground for the next phase of great power confrontation in Indochina, it did not meet the criteria as laid out by Gilpin for constituting a systemic war and, therefore, has not been selected for further analysis.

The **1960 Sino-Soviet Split** marked the end of the monolithic domination of the Eurasian landmass by a single ideological bloc as well as the bipolarity of the Cold War. While 1960 has been chosen as the year of the ‘critical juncture’ due to Khrushchev’s decision on 16 July 1960 to end Sino-Soviet technical cooperation and withdraw all Soviet advisors. Like the majority of ‘critical junctures’, their origins reflect deeper causes latent in their respective antecedent conditions. None was more important than the growing ideological cleavage between Moscow and Beijing that had been growing since 1955 due to three main issues: economic cooperation, de-Stalinization and international relations (in particular peaceful co-existence and world revolution).³⁸⁷ While the Sino-Soviet Split did not represent, according to Gilpin’s first condition, a contest between all powers of the international system, it certainly represented a struggle within the socialist bloc for ideological domination. Although the socialist bloc splintered into its Soviet

³⁸⁶ Randle, Robert, *Geneva 1954: The Settlement of the Indochinese War*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969, pg. 549.

³⁸⁷ Luthi, Lorenz, *The Sino-Soviet Split: Cold War in the Communist World*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008, pg. 345.

and Chinese incarnations, it did not per se act a contest between the *global* powers. The Western world watched from the sidelines, with the Sino-Soviet Split adding instead a new layer of complexity to relations between the dominant powers. Hence, Gilpin's first condition of systemic war cannot be met.

Regarding Gilpin's second criterion of a conflict with the system's legitimacy, the Sino-Soviet Split certainly represented a contest regarding of the legitimacy of the socialist bloc, with both Moscow and Beijing claiming ideological supremacy. Nowhere was this more evident than in the realm of international relations: by 1959, Mao had developed "uncompromising views on the correct kind of relationship that socialist countries could have with imperialist ones", criticizing Khrushchev's conduct in global affairs and rejecting the USSR's efforts at peaceful coexistence with the Western world to radical support for world revolution, accusing the Soviet Union of "selling out world revolution and of instigating the restoration of capitalism."³⁸⁸ While this further marked the end of the monolithic socialist bloc within the world system, it did not per say challenge its overall legitimacy, but introduced a new challenger (PRC) to contest it. Consequently, the 1960 Sino-Soviet Split did indeed meet the basic criteria for Gilpin's second condition of systemic war. Lastly, the legacy system created by the initial 'critical juncture' of 1960 did, however, almost spark an open war between the USSR and PRC, with the potential to revert to the use of nuclear weapons, following the 1969 Sino-Soviet Border Conflict and Chinese seizure of the disputed Zhenbao/Damanskii Island in the Ussuri River separating Heilongjiang Province and Primorsky Krai in March 1969.³⁸⁹ Despite the dangers of escalation, the aftermath of the Sino-Soviet split did not metamorphose into a wider inter-socialist, and possibly, global conflict, thereby not meeting Gilpin's third criterion of global war. Despite creating a novel, revolutionary pole against the legitimacy of the international system upon the ashes of socialist unity, this dissertation found that only one Gilpin's systemic war criteria had been fulfilled, allowing to pass over this 'critical juncture's' selection.

The **1972 Visit of President Nixon to the PRC** (21-28 February 1972) has been described a seminal moment in Cold War history. Described by President Nixon himself as a "week that changed the world"³⁹⁰, the visit of the 37th President of the US not only marked a revolutionary shift in Sino-American relations, but also signaled a recalibration of the entire international system. The 1969 Ussuri River clashes between the USSR and PRC that were part of the legacy of the 1960 Sino-Soviet Split 'critical juncture' opened a strategic opportunity to profit from the fracturing of the socialist bloc. Until the Sino-Soviet military clashes, US policy makers had viewed both Moscow and Beijing as part of the same monolithic threat.³⁹¹ Washington was presented with a unique opportunity to play the two communist powers against each other to the benefit of the US ambitions in what Nixon termed as 'triangular diplomacy'.³⁹² Through the normalization of relations with the PRC, Nixon sought to reinforce global stability via the construction of a triangular balance of power between the global superpowers in the early 1970s.³⁹³

³⁸⁸ Ibid., pg. 347.

³⁸⁹ Ibid., pp. 340-345.

³⁹⁰ Nixon made this claim in his toast at the banquet on the last night of his stay in China. R.M. Nixon, The Memoirs of Richard Nixon, London: Sedgwick and Jackson, 1978, pg. 580.

³⁹¹ Kuzma, Lynn; Leibel, Steve & Edwards, Jason, Courting the Dragon: Nixon's Rapprochement with China, Washington, DC: Georgetown University, Institute for the Study of Diplomacy, 2003, pg.4.

³⁹² Isaacson, Walter, Kissinger, New York: Simon & Schuster, 1992, pp. 335-336.

³⁹³ Kuzma et al., Courting the Dragon, pg. 1.

Initial secret negotiations with China in Warsaw (cutting out the State Department), Nixon succeeded in implementing his vision of a global system of a triangle of superpowers through the issuing of the Shanghai Communiqué on 27 February 1972 where the US formally acknowledged that “all Chinese on either side of the Taiwan Straits maintain there is but one China” and the normalization of relations would contribute “to the relaxation of tension in Asia and the world.”³⁹⁴ The advent of the establishment of diplomatic relations between Washington and Beijing, as well as the ‘One China Policy’, did indeed trigger a reconfiguration of the international system both globally through the recognition of three superpowers, but also regionally. The US’s step towards normalization with the PRC led to similar gestures from all powers: Japanese Prime Minister Tanaka Kakuei and Foreign Minister Ōhira Masayoshi travelled to Beijing in September 1972 and officially established diplomatic relations and, in line with the ‘One China Policy’, severed relations with Taipei.³⁹⁵

Nixon’s 1972 Visit was of extreme importance for the trajectory of global and regional systems whose legacies are still palpable at the time of writing. At the same time the Visit, however significant, seems to serve as an antithesis to Gilpin’s concept of systemic war. Nixon’s Visit obviously did not meet the first condition of a contest between the system’s dominant powers. The Shanghai Communiqué lowered tensions between Beijing and Washington rather than augment them. Indeed, Nixon’s follow up participation in the Moscow Summit of May 1972, with its signature of the Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) and the Strategic Arms Limitation Treaty (SALT I), marked a further reduction of global tensions towards détente, with the decision to host Nixon in Moscow constituting “a political move aimed at strengthening the Soviet Union’s position in the great power triangle, which was seen as threatened by President Nixon’s visit to Beijing.”³⁹⁶ Hence, Nixon’s visit, and the legacy system of ‘triangular diplomacy’ it created, obviously does not meet Gilpin’s first condition of systemic war. Likewise, Nixon’s Visit seemed to reinforce the contours of the contemporary international system, increasing its legitimacy. As such, Gilpin’s second condition for systemic war is not met. Finally, global warfare neither preceded nor coincided with nor followed Nixon’s Visit to Beijing. Hence, unsurprisingly, Gilpin’s third criterion for systemic war cannot apply to this ‘critical juncture’.

The **Collapse of the Soviet Union** on 25 December 1991 marked the official end of the Cold War. As with the First and Second World Wars, the wide scope of the Cold War, while never spilling into a direct, large-scale military confrontation between the system’s dominant powers, did mark a deep and prolonged conflict over the legitimacy of the international system. Consequently, all of Gilpin’s criteria for a systemic war can be said to have been met, however, with one main caveat: a different ending. As Ikenberry notes “the destruction of societies and political regimes resulted from the collapse of the Soviet empire and not from violence or war”³⁹⁷, marking the end of triangular diplomacy. Its demise was attributed to domestic issues and not the military and defeat and partial or full occupation of the vanquished as in the First and Second World Wars. The end of the Cold War in Asia was brought about through events that transpired

³⁹⁴ Phillips, Steven & Keefer, Edward (eds.), *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1969–1976, Volume XVII, China, 1969–1972*, Washington: Government Printing Office, 2006, Document 203.

³⁹⁵ Hattori, *China-Japan Rapprochement and the United States*, pg. 2.

³⁹⁶ Valenta, Jiri, “Soviet Foreign Policy and the Moscow Summit of 1972”, Washington D.C.: School of Advanced Studies of John Hopkins University, *SAIS Review*, 1973, Vol. (2), pg. 16.

³⁹⁷ Ikenberry, *After Victory*, pg. 215.

on continents far away: the collapse of the Berlin Wall in 1989; German reunification of 1990; and the dissolution of the Soviet-sponsored RSO in Europe, the Warsaw Pact in 1991. As such “the Cold War ended differently in Asia than it did in Europe. There was no easy closure, no date to celebrate, no great fanfare, no great liberation and little credit to be had for changing the world.”³⁹⁸ Save for the events of Tiananmen Square in 1989, nothing of note transpired. At the same time, regarding the regional system, none of the East Asian communist governments, while experiencing severe challenges, collapsed and the US series of bilateral alliances built up during the Cold War remained unscathed.³⁹⁹ One systemic bloc fell and other was left standing. This resulted in a fundamental shift in the balance of international power, with global power asymmetries suddenly tilting strongly in Washington’s favour.⁴⁰⁰ Yet it occurred without a shot being fired. With the collapse of the USSR, the US emerged as the sole global hegemon with its international predominance enhanced in terms of structural power. Yet this hegemony was not established by the collapse of the Soviet Union, rather it marked a bumpy continuation of the Settlement of 1951 that had been established through the signature of the Treaty of Peace with Japan. No major changes to the international system were forthcoming. Indeed, the ‘rule-based international order’ that the US had constructed following the end of the Second World War, with its purported “logic and stability” not only remained standing but was enhanced in both power and legitimacy due to US dominance in the 1990s.⁴⁰¹ Bipolarity fell, but the system that begot it remained very much intact. As such, the legacy system that sprung from the ashes of the Cold War was the ‘unipolar system’ with its center in Washington DC. However, due to the fact that the collapse of the Soviet Union did *not* entail the inauguration of a new system or settlement, it cannot be considered to constitute a ‘critical juncture’.

Having discussed the rationale for the respective consideration of each identified ‘critical juncture’ within the stipulated boundary conditions (1894-1951), the results can be summarized in the following table:

Table 6: Assessment of East Asian ‘Critical Junctures’ as assessed through Gilpin’s Systemic War Criteria

Systemic ‘Critical Juncture’	Condition I: Contest between the System’s Dominant Powers	Condition II: Contest Represents a Conflict with the System’s Legitimacy	Condition III: Contest is Characterized by Regional Warfare
<i>1895: The First Sino-Japanese War (Treaty of Shimonoseki)</i>	YES	YES	YES

³⁹⁸ Radchenko, Sergey, *Unwanted Visionaries: The Soviet Failure at the End of the Cold War*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2014, pg. 3.

³⁹⁹ Yahuda, Michael, *The Post Cold War Order in Asia and the Challenge to ASEAN*, Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2006, pg. 3.

⁴⁰⁰ Ikenberry, *After Victory*, pg. 216.

⁴⁰¹ *Ibid.*, pg. 218.

<i>1901: The Boxer Rebellion (The Boxer Protocol)</i>	YES	YES	YES
<i>1905: The Russo-Japanese War (The Treaty of Portsmouth)</i>	YES	YES	YES
<i>1919: The First World War (Treaty of Versailles)</i>	YES	YES	YES
<i>1945: The End of the Second World War (San Francisco System)</i>	YES	YES	YES
<i>1949: Victory of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) in the Chinese Civil War</i>	NO	YES	NO
<i>1953: Signature of the Korean Armistice Agreement</i>	YES	NO	NO
<i>1954: Geneva Conference</i>	NO	NO	NO
<i>1960: The Sino-Soviet Split</i>	NO	YES	NO
<i>1972: Visit of US President Richard Nixon to the PRC</i>	NO	YES	NO
<i>1991: The Collapse of the Soviet Union (End of the Cold War)</i>	YES	YES	NO

Based on the above discussion, five ‘critical junctures’ have been identified that have met this dissertation’s definition of systemic war. Recall that systemic war is the vehicle by which fundamental change is wrought. Gilpin argued that a “a new status quo and equilibrium reflecting the redistribution of power in the system”⁴⁰²; Collier & Collier attached the importance of a

⁴⁰² Gilpin, *War and Change in World Politics*, pg. 15.

‘critical juncture’, underlining the importance of a particular historical legacy.⁴⁰³ Consequently, having met the necessary criteria in the table above, these ‘critical junctures’ established legacy systems whose creation had the potential to affect the ability to form RSOs in East Asia. Each respective identified ‘critical juncture’, therefore, has the potential to explain why/why not RSOs were/were not formed in East Asia.

4.7. Applying the Analytical Framework to the Historical Record

Identifying the essential seven criteria to allow for both stable peace and, eventually, RSO formation, is, as noted, only an initial step. To furnish an answer to the research question additionally requires their respective application to a concrete time period reflecting serious systemic flux. The selected five ‘critical junctures’ of 1895, 1901, 1905, 1919 and 1951, all meeting Gilpin’s indicators for periods of fundamental systemic change through systemic war, will act as the cases within the historical record to which the existence of the aforementioned criteria of RSO formation can be applied. An answer can therefore be ascertained as to the existence of an RSO—or at the very least the conditions that would allow its formation—after each ‘critical juncture’.

The analysis of each ‘critical juncture’ will follow the model laid out in Chapter 4, namely with emphasis on each of its three elements.: antecedent conditions, crisis, and legacy system. Special emphasis will be placed on the consideration of antecedent conditions, the underlying circumstances that led to the outbreak of each ‘critical juncture’. Given their importance in shaping the conditions that caused the contemporary systemic order to collapse, most often based on the legacy system inherited from the previous ‘critical juncture’, they merit special attention. The second element, each ‘critical juncture’s’ cleavage/crisis, is the systemic war itself. While the course of the systemic war plays an obvious role in reshaping the systemic order, the actual course of the conflict in question will not form the major focus of analysis. Instead, analytical attention will be accorded to the respective peace treaty that marked the conclusion of each systemic war, characterizing the settlement that came in each conflict’s wake. Each peace treaty serves as the centerpiece of its respective ‘critical juncture’, marking a clear rupture from past constellations and recasting its components into a new orbit. Not only do the peace treaties encapsulate the results of the systemic war in question, but each settlement also lays out the foundation upon which the third element of each ‘critical juncture’, the legacy system, will be constructed. The legacy system sets the rules of the game for the new systemic order that each previous war has established. In them lie both the realities of the new geopolitical order as well as, if not properly managed, the nucleus of future conflict. Consequently, the seven criteria for the formation of RSOs will be applied to the legacy system of each identified ‘critical juncture’. This approach can be summarized in the following table:

⁴⁰³ Collier & Collier, *Shaping the Political Arena*, pg. 33.

Table 7: Application of Selected Criteria to the Historical Record

Critical Juncture	Description of Analysis	Analytical Focus
<i>1. ANTECEDENT CONDITIONS</i>	Underlying circumstances leading to the outbreak of the ‘critical juncture’	Importance in shaping the collapse of the systemic order in question.
<i>2. CLEAVAGE/CRISIS</i>	The systemic war representing the culmination of the ‘critical juncture’	Focus on the final settlement that brought an end to the systemic war in question
<i>3. LEGACY SYSTEM</i>	The new systemic norms established following the crisis that shape future interactions.	Implications of the realities of the new geopolitical order, critical for the application of the seven criteria for RSO formation.

The presence of the necessary conditions to facilitate stable peace (geopolitical necessity, policy of reciprocal restraint, satisfaction with the status quo) as well as those necessary to proceed with RSO formation (pacific self-images, compatible social orders, existence of an interested hegemon, existence of a Constitutional Order) will be ascertained. It should be recalled that all seven conditions need to be present for an RSO to be able to be established. Therefore, through the application of this model to the historical record, an answer to the research question can be furnished. It is anticipated that, following the application of all seven criteria for the formation of an RSO to the legacy systems of the five selected ‘critical junctures’ of 1895, 1901, 1905, 1919, and 1951, not one legacy system will have resulted in the necessary conditions to form an RSO. This would therefore account for the contemporary absence of RSOs from East Asia.

And now, this dissertation turns to attempt to elucidate as to why or why not this might be the case.

PART II

Chapter 5 – The Pre-Modern East Asian International Society

5.1. Introduction

The span of the historical record that has been identified for the application of the criteria of RSO formation is admittedly modest, spanning a mere 56 years. The concept of ‘critical junctures’ lays importance on the analysis of antecedent conditions to account for the outbreak of each crisis that results in the fundamental recalibration of any political/historical trajectory. While the five ‘critical junctures’ that occurred between 1895-1951 played a pivotal role in shaping the systemic evolution of East Asia, influencing the ability of RSOs to be established, the antecedent conditions of the initial ‘critical juncture’, the First Sino-Japanese War, did not emerge as a *Deus ex machina*. They, too, were shaped by events past. In line with systemic theory, the pre-1895 interactions between the political entities of East Asia gave rise to its own idiosyncratic regional system. The pre-1895 East Asian system was governed by its own unique political cosmology, founded upon its own philosophical tenets. However, this does not necessarily translate into the region spawning its own version of international relations. As noted by Waltz, “an international political system is one of self-help. In a self-help system, states are differently placed by their power.”⁴⁰⁴ While a distinct political culture and institutions characterized international relations within this regional system, the anarchic systemic environment did not eliminate causes of war at the regional level, even if the domestic traits of states at the unit level were distinct and unique.⁴⁰⁵ Consequently, while heir to a distinct cosmological tradition, the East Asian preference “to use force to eliminate security threats” was very much in line with dominating trend elsewhere within the anarchical global system, attributing “such a *Realpolitik* inclination to culture”.⁴⁰⁶ While the outward practice and rituals might have been different, the underlying dominance of power consideration reigned supreme. Hence, the configuration of power within the regional system that existed before 1895 merits consideration as, in line with Realist theory, the status and power ranking of the societies of East Asia before the onset of the first ‘critical juncture’ inevitably impacted the future regional systemic trajectory. Before embarking on the application of the seven criteria for RSO formation to the selected ‘critical junctures’, the base antecedent condition of the systemic configuration before 1895 needs to be considered, setting the metaphorical tone for the eventual political trajectory that subsequently ensued.

This, however, cannot be done by classifying the entire scope of pre-modern East Asian systemic history into a single ‘critical juncture’. Instead, given the distinct expression of international relations in pre-modern East Asia, an assessment can be made as to whether the ‘base’ regional systemic constellation exhibited any conditions that could have theoretically led to the establishment of stable peace and the formation of an RSO before 1895. Furthermore, the undoing of the pre-modern systemic structure in East Asia was particularly relevant to the outbreak of the ‘critical junctures’ of 1895 and 1901. Through the application of the selected criteria, an assessment can therefore be made of the ‘base’ antecedent condition that preceded the ‘critical junctures’ that shaped East Asian systemic history between 1894-1951.

⁴⁰⁴ Waltz, Kenneth, “Reflections on A Response to My Critics” in Keohane, Robert (ed.), *Neorealism and Its Critics*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1986, pg. 329.

⁴⁰⁵ Wang, *Harmony and War*, pg. 13.

⁴⁰⁶ Ibid.

5.1.1. Assessing Pre-Modern East Asia for RSO Formation Criteria

The intellectual concepts that comprise the contemporary global system, and the almost infinite number of societies that it embraces, are derived from a clear historical provenance, namely the 1648 Treaty of Westphalia.⁴⁰⁷ Through the Settlement of 1648, ultimate sovereign autonomy was conferred on territorial states. No longer were they to be subordinate to any other type of overarching authority, such as the Universal Monarch in the person of the Holy Roman Emperor or the Terrestrial Representative of Christ. Through the Treaty of Westphalia, the rights and autonomy of the state itself were, from 1648 onwards, separated from any distinct religion as well as bestowed equality between the multitude of states that comprised seventeenth century Europe, regardless of its form of government (monarchical or republican).⁴⁰⁸ The state became the sole arbiter of the territory it controlled and metamorphosed into the centerpiece around which the international system revolved.⁴⁰⁹ As such, a major outcome of the Settlement of 1648 was the bestowing upon the plethora of European states that signed the Treaties of Münster and Osnabrück, not only the seeds of what would evolve into modern Western statehood, but also established a series of common social orders across the European continent.

This common social order founded by the Settlement of 1648 became the basis for further diplomatic agreements between European states and, from the seventeenth century onwards, the widening frontier of an ever-expanding world over which they came to negotiate. However, at the same time, concepts of international relations remained a reflection of a particular set of ideas born in isolation as the result of a definite, and traumatic, historical European experience, such as the Thirty Years War (1618-1648). Given contemporary geospatial realities, however, the influence of the diplomatic norms established by the Treaty of Westphalia had clear geographic and cultural limits. Until the major inroads of Western European influence were made in East Asia in the mid-1800s, the region had been characterized by scholars as a “self-contained world, the home of the venerable Chinese civilization that had been little affected by the dynamic, expanding civilization of the modern West.”⁴¹⁰ This isolated universe has been referred to by scholars as the ‘Chinese World Order’ that comprised “a set of ideas and practices developed and perpetuated by the ruler of China over many centuries.”⁴¹¹ On this point, it is worth quoting Zhong and Buzan in full: “that there existed an indigenous social order in the history and politics of what we call East Asia today is beyond dispute, be it called the Chinese world order, the Tributary System, *Pax Sinica*, the East Asian order, international society in East Asia or any other. Acknowledging this is to recognize that East Asian states and peoples had historically chosen and established complex institutions and

⁴⁰⁷ What came to be known to posterity as the “Treaty of Westphalia” was the deliverable of the Congresses of Münster and Osnabrück that convened in October 1648 and brought a peace to the territory of the Holy Roman Empire. The Congresses were groundbreaking both in terms of the numbers of participants, with 145 delegates representing 55 legal jurisdictions (from the Empire’s Free Cities to the Emperor himself) and the unprecedented scope of their negotiations, namely a cessation to the carnage of the Thirty Years War and the creation of a new European order. See Schmidt, Georg, *Die Reiter der Apokalypse: die Geschichte des Dreißigjährigen Krieges*, München: C.H. Beck, 2018.

⁴⁰⁸ Gross, Leo, “The Peace of Westphalia, 1648–1948,” *American Journal of International Law*, Vol. 42, No. 1 (January 1948), pp. 20–41

⁴⁰⁹ Holsti, Kalevi, *Peace and War: Armed Conflicts and International Order 1648-1989*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991, pg. 25.

⁴¹⁰ Kim, Key-Hiuk, *The Last Phase of the East Asian World Order*, Taipei: Rainbow Bridge Book Company, 1980, pg. 1.

⁴¹¹ Fairbank, John King (ed.), “A Preliminary Framework” in *The Chinese World Order: China’s Foreign Relations*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1968, pg. 1.

practices informed by their history and culture.”⁴¹² It is to this social order this dissertation now turns.

The sheer temporal longevity of this East Asian social order, spanning almost two millennia from the founding of the Qin Dynasty in 221 B.C. to the First Opium War in 1839 A.D. also far exceeds that of its Westphalian counterpart and, as Fairbank noted, defined interstate relations for most of regional recorded history. During this lengthy period, the historical trajectory of East Asia “served to confirm the view that China was the center of the world, the suzerain of all lands and peoples on earth and the fountainhead of culture and enlightenment.”⁴¹³ In this Sinocentric order, the values of Confucianism reigned supreme, including within the conduct of international relations. Given such a divergence from the philosophical foundations of the Settlement of 1648, it should come as no surprise that the East Asian historical experience, in systemic and societal terms, was decidedly different from the European, both regarding its fundamental values and interests as well as the overarching rules and regulations that comprised the region’s historic institutions.⁴¹⁴ The societies of East Asia all trace their cultural prevalence from ancient China and evolved within the Chinese cultural area, where the influence of Chinese Antiquity held most weight, in particular the Chinese writing system, Confucian classic teachings on social order, the official examination system, the Imperial Chinese monarchy and web of bureaucracy.⁴¹⁵ Members of the ‘Chinese World Order’, as argued by Fairbank, “did not use concepts corresponding to the Western ideas of nation, or sovereignty or equality of states each having equal sovereignty.”⁴¹⁶ This normative gap complemented the geographic chasm that separated the Westphalian and East Asian, with “the application of Western terms to Asiatic institutions [leading] only to misunderstanding and confusion when these institutions failed to act in the manner of their Western counterparts...this confusion was particularly apparent in the field of international relations.”⁴¹⁷

Consequently, scholars underline the need to consider the existence of this East Asian society “that had existed for centuries, and that China, Japan and Korea knew each other, cross-fertilized each other and traded with each other”⁴¹⁸ in accounting for contemporary political and systemic realities. Scholars have noted that Confucian classic teachings and ethics played an essential role in determining Imperial Chinese foreign policy, therefore setting the tone for international relations in pre-modern East Asia.⁴¹⁹ Just as comprehension of the basic tenets of Westphalian statehood is essential to appreciate contemporary international relations, understanding the philosophical origins that formed the basis of regional political action is necessary to elucidate pre-modern, regional interstate relations, as well as to fully comprehend the

⁴¹² Zhang Yongjin and Buzan, Barry, “The Tributary System as International Society in Theory and Practice”, *The Chinese Journal of International Politics*, Vol. 5, 2012, pg. 10.

⁴¹³ Kim, *The Last Phase of the East Asian World Order*, pg. 1.

⁴¹⁴ Kang, *East Asia before the West*, pg. 2.

⁴¹⁵ Fairbank, *The Chinese World Order*, pg. 1.

⁴¹⁶ *Ibid.*, pg. 5.

⁴¹⁷ Nelson, M. Frederick, *Korea and the Old Orders in Eastern Asia*, Louisiana: Louisiana State University Press, 1946, pg. 3.

⁴¹⁸ Cumings, Bruce, *Parallax Visions: Making Sense of US-East Asian Relations at the End of the Century*, Durham: Duke University Press, 2002, pg. 7.

⁴¹⁹ Zhang Feng, *Chinese Hegemony: Grand Strategy and International Institutions in East Asian History*, Palo Alto: Stanford University Press, 2015, pg. 4.

significance of East Asia's clash with the inheritors to the Settlement of 1648. For when contact with the Westphalian order "materialized in modern times, one clue to China's collapse lay in the very success which China's civilization had achieved in pre-modern times. To understand the collapse, one must appreciate the earlier success."⁴²⁰

In this way the question of how foreign relations were conducted in pre-modern East Asia plays an important role in shaping the subsequent contours and trajectories of the selected 'critical junctures'. To be clear, the entire diplomatic history of East Asia cannot be simply encapsulated in a single, extremely lengthy 'critical juncture'. The scope of time and breath of historical events is simply too vast. Hence, as the basic tenets of pre-modern foreign relations in East Asia were based on underlying institutions and concepts, whose basic tenets remained recognizable over the span of centuries until the definitive end of the Qing Dynasty in 1911, an analysis of the "pre-modern East Asian international society" is possible. While recognizing that the temporal and cultural differences are inevitably markedly distinct, applying this dissertation's conditions as identified in the analytical framework is necessary to determine if East Asia was indeed home to an RSO in its pre-modern incarnation. Likewise, examining the pre-modern international society in East Asia provides insight into the region's quintessential antecedent condition that affected the trajectory and ultimate scope of the selected 'critical junctures'.

The pre-modern East Asian system does not constitute a 'critical juncture' per se. Its prolonged existence and function in defining the contours within which international relations was conducted, however, does justify its examination. Naturally, the concept of an RSO is one that cannot be directly applied as policy makers in pre-1839 East Asia would obviously have no real conception of what an RSO was, let alone craft policy to further its realization. At the same time, the question of whether conditions leading to a formation of an RSO existed in East Asia before the advent of the Westphalian system merits attention. Its analysis will, however, be distinguished from the other 'critical junctures' that will be identified. The overwhelming scope of its 'antecedent conditions', spanning millennia, lies decidedly out the purview of this dissertation. Likewise, there is no particular cleavage/crisis whose legacy system forms the centre of analysis. Viewing pre-modern East Asia in the totality of its systemic history, however, an opening is provided to apply the seven criteria of RSO formation to ascertain if any of them were present.

5.2. The Pre-Modern East Asian International Society: Geopolitical Necessity

While constructivist ideals play an essential role in facilitating the conditions required for the ultimate creation of an RSO, the prerequisite power must be present to initiate the first of the analytical framework's criteria, namely the existence of 'geopolitical necessity'. Hence, an initial exploration of the sheer weight of China, in solely Realist terms, is imperative both as a starting point to fix Imperial China's position within the pre-modern system, but also to determine the scope of political choices available to its other participants. Hence, while the attractiveness of Chinese ideals played an important role in underpinning the structure of the pre-modern system, Imperial Chinese power was equally vital in determining its overall contours and capacity for cooperation.

⁴²⁰ Fairbank, John, "The Old Order" in Fairbank, John (ed.), *The Cambridge History of China: Volume 10: Late Ch'ing 1800-1911, Part 1*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978, pg. 6.

Adherence to the Chinese-centered system was guaranteed by geography and power. Within the geographic frontiers of the East Asian region, China remained the only significant cultural centre for the straightforward reason that “there were simply no immediate external rivals to the early Chinese empire.”⁴²¹ China offered the sole source of regional cultural and political inspiration. More importantly, however, the utter size and might of Imperial China solidified its status as the singular regional hegemon. As previously noted, the concepts of the pre-modern East Asian international society were born during the dawn of Chinese history, with their ideas finding concrete implementation in the Han or, latest, Sui-Tang Dynasties (589-907).⁴²² The formation of the East Asian world was molded in the image of Chinese hegemony, a fact that accompanied this system from its initial inception to its last days. According to Ikenberry, unipolarity can be defined as the distribution of economic, military and technological capabilities.⁴²³ Imperial China, since the Han Dynasty onwards, always maintained a constant, solid advantage in all three categories when compared to its neighbouring societies throughout the period in question.⁴²⁴ Nevertheless, the early Ming Dynasty, spanning the reigns of the Hongwu Emperor (r. 1368-1398) and his son the Yongle Emperor (r. 1402-1424) has been singled out as the prime example to showcase the full extent of China’s hegemony over East Asia.⁴²⁵ By the dawn of the fifteenth century, an international society had been in existence for more than 700 years, allowing Ming China to best exemplify the East Asian tributary order, in all its various facets, based on a sense of cultural Chinese identity.⁴²⁶

An examination of population and gross domestic product (GDP) data underlines the vast discrepancies that existed between China and its neighbours circa the year 1500. Both Imperial China’s population and GDP were estimated at almost ten times greater than that of Japan and Korea. China’s population and GDP constituted circa 66 percent and 68 percent respectively of the totals for the East Asian region. On a global level, China alone represented 23 percent of the planet’s total population and a full 25 percent of global GDP for the year 1500. This data, collected and analyzed by Maddison, is reflected in the following table:

⁴²¹ Holcombe, Charles, The Genesis of East Asia 221 B.C.-907 A.D., Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2001, pg. 30.

⁴²² Ibid., A History of East Asia, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011, pp. 95-131.

⁴²³ Ikenberry, John, Liberal Leviathan: The Origins, Crisis and Transformation of the American World Order, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012, pg. 43.

⁴²⁴ See Broadberry, Stephen; Guan, Hanhui; Li, David Daokui, “China, Europe and the Great Divergence: A Study in National Accounting”, *The Journal of Economic History*, 2018, Vol. 78 (4), pp. 955-1000.

⁴²⁵ Zhang, China’s Hegemony, pg. 12.

⁴²⁶ Ibid.

Table 8: Population and GDP of China, East Asia and the World circa 1500

Polity and/or region	Population (000s)	GDP (million 1990 international USD)
China	103,000	61,800
Japan	15,400	7,700
Korea	8,000	4,800
East Asia in total	53,000	28,688
World in total	438,400	248,300
Ratio: China to East Asia	0.66	0.68
Ratio: China to world	0.23	0.25

Source: Maddison, Angus, *The Contours of the World Economy 1-2030 AD*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007, pg. 116-177.

The above statistics cement China's formidable claim to regional hegemony. Ikenberry linked the post-Second World War creation of a 'liberal international order', and its purported unprecedented "success", to what he viewed as total US dominance, with Washington accounting for circa a "fifth of global GDP and over 40 percent of GDP amongst the established great powers."⁴²⁷ Hence, as Zhang ascertains, the US claim to outright dominance via unipolarity is "slightly less prominent than that of Ming China at the height of its power."⁴²⁸ Naturally, this statistic refers to a period when the contemporary global economy was not in existence; however, it does highlight the economic might of the Ming within isolated regional realities. Furthermore, the Ming fielded circa 2 million soldiers throughout its empire, with 863,000 alone stationed along the northern frontier at the conclusion of the Yongle Emperor's reign.⁴²⁹ The early Ming Dynasty displayed its ability to project its power far beyond the borders of the East Asian regional system, dispatching seven maritime expeditions to the "Western Ocean" under Admiral Zheng He, with a contemporary naval fleet classified as technologically outclassing "any other nation at any time in history"⁴³⁰, although, since the Ming fleet never faced off against its European counterparts, this claim could never really be substantiated. Instead, this period exemplified China's purported extended "sphere of political power and influence throughout the Indian Ocean. Half the world was in China's grasp and, with such a formidable navy the other half was easily in reach, had China wanted it."⁴³¹ Given the totality of power at the beck and call of the Emperor, Imperial China could make a strong case to be considered a military, economic and technological hegemon within the pre-modern East Asian international society, one that—had the level of global interconnectivity been different—could have laid a claim to this title globally. Yet it was not, leaving Imperial China as the most important power within the limits of its regional confines.

⁴²⁷ Ikenberry, John; Mastanduno, Michael; Wohlfort, William, "Introduction" in Ikenberry, Mastanduno, Wohlfort (eds.), *International Relations Theory and the Consequences of Unipolarity*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011, pg. 7.

⁴²⁸ Zhang, *Chinese Hegemony*, pg. 13.

⁴²⁹ Johnston, Alastair Iain, *Cultural Realism: Strategic Culture and Grand Strategy in Chinese History*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998, pg. 233.

⁴³⁰ Needham, Joseph, *Science and Civilization in China*, vol 4., *Physics and Physical Technology*, Part III: *Civil Engineering and Nautics*, New York: Cambridge University Press, 1971, pg. 484.

⁴³¹ Levathes, Louise, *When China Ruled the Seas: The Treasure Fleet of the Dragon Throne, 1405-1433*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1996, pg. 20.

Given the evident disparity in the relative power capabilities that existed between the Imperial centre and its neighbours, it is unsurprising that the condition of ‘geopolitical necessity’ characterized relations between the societies of the periphery and the Imperial centre. While China, as will be illustrated, displayed a certain degree of ambivalence in the exercise of what could be deemed its ‘unipolar system’, the systemic contours obliged periphery states—Korea, Ryukyu, Annam (Vietnam), Laos, Siam, Sulu (Philippines), Burma and for rare periods, Japan—to concede to Chinese hegemony, regardless of their respective political intentions.⁴³² The Qing Dynasty’s verdict on its tributary’s request to bequeath itself with the name “Vietnam” is a helpful example as it illustrates not only the scope of the Imperial centre’s ability to impose the condition of ‘geopolitical necessity’ over its tributaries, but is also instructive on how China took policy decisions in harmony with its own sense of historical understanding. In 1802, the newly founded Nguyen dynasty of Vietnam crowned Nguyen Phuc Anh as the Gia Long Emperor (r. 1802-1820). According to established custom, the Vietnamese ruler submitted his request to the Qing court to receive formal investiture of the new emperor and dynasty. The Jiaqing Emperor (r. 1796-1820) was presented with an unusual request: the new Nguyen dynasty sought Chinese recognition not under its customary name of Annam, but rather “Nan Yue” in Chinese or “Nam Viet” (‘settled south’) in Vietnamese. The Qing court refused the request. This decision was based on the fact that, between 218-111 B.C., the Kingdom of Nan Yue ruled over what were the contemporary Qing provinces of Guangdong and Guangxi, as well as the Red River Delta of northern Vietnam. It only became annexed to China through a military campaign by the Han Dynasty in 111 B.C. Through the Vietnamese request to the Qing, the novel Nguyen Dynasty sought to equate itself with a powerful historic predecessor but also “appeared to be asserting territorial claim over the Qing Dynasty’s southernmost provinces”.⁴³³ The Jiaqing Emperor was not amused; his reaction is worth citing in full:

*“These two characters they wish to be bestowed, “Nan Yue,” absolutely will not do. The name “Nan Yue” is extremely broad. Examining prior histories shows that it includes the area that is now Guangdong and Guangxi. Nguyen Phuc Anh is a little Yi [barbarian] from a marginal area. Even if he possesses all of Annam, the country is still nothing more than the ancient territory of Jiaozhi [northern Vietnam]. How can he suddenly start calling it “Nan Yue”? How do we know that he does not want to build himself up to the outer Yi, and has for that reason requested to change the name of the country?”*⁴³⁴

The Qing Emperor ordered the request denied and had Qing forces at the Sino-Vietnamese border tighten security. Nguyen Phuc Anh likewise was not pleased with the Qing’s refusal, threatening to reject Chinese investiture, thereby promising to break diplomatic relations, should the requested name not be accepted.⁴³⁵ While refusing to concede on historical principle, the Jiaqing Emperor proposed the following compromise which was accepted by his tributary: “We have taken the character ‘Yue/Viet’ and moved it to the front to show that it retains its historic territory. We put the character ‘Nan/Nam’ at the end, to express its newly bestowed status as a

⁴³² This list of tributary states was compiled by Fairbank to reflect the situation in 1818, before Europeans made any serious inroads toward the Qing Dynasty. See Fairbank, “A Preliminary Framework” in *The Chinese World Order*, pg. 11. It should be noted that Japan was not part of this list and has been added for the sake of historical totality.

⁴³³ Baldanza, Kathleen, *Ming China and Vietnam: Negotiating Borders in Early Modern Asia*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016, pg. 2.

⁴³⁴ Ibid., pg. 2.

⁴³⁵ Ibid., pg. 3.

tributary state. It shows that the country is south of the Hundred Yue and of what used to be called Nan Yue. It will not cause confusion.”⁴³⁶ Hence, Annam became Yue Nan in Chinese or Viet Nam in Vietnamese, but the Qing court “continued to refer to the Nguyen kingdom as Annam”.⁴³⁷ This example underlines that systemic pressures, here Chinese hegemony and geographic proximity obliged tributary states to pursue policies in line with the condition of ‘geopolitical necessity’. The Qing Emperor’s rationale for denying his subject’s request illustrated how far Imperial Chinese policy making was in line with ensuring that its substantial power advantage over its tributaries remained firmly in place. While Vietnam’s request to change its official name resulted in negotiations with the Qing court, the result was in ultimate accordance with the hegemon’s wishes and a Chinese understanding of historical realities. At the same time, while pure power calculations remained the main motivation of political action, cultural elements, as will be illustrated below, also played an important factor as Chinese hegemony “resulted when defiance by actors was not socially possible.”⁴³⁸ This added to the plethora of factors at play that enhanced the strategic necessity of submitting to China’s hegemonic position that defined the scope of pre-modern East Asian international relations. China’s sheer power advantage simply did not leave any other option on the table, when it chose to take offence.

5.3. The Pre-Modern East Asian International Society: Policy of Reciprocal Restraint

The hierarchy between the Imperial centre and the periphery that East Asian international society entailed has been well-established. Given that the centre and periphery occupied unequal positions, and the periphery had willingly imported and adapted Chinese culture to meet local administrative and educational needs, pursuing a foreign policy based on gradual gestures aimed at reducing tension did not enter the realm of consideration. This was both the case for Imperial China and its tributary states.

Relations between tributary states within the political orbit of Imperial China were not characterized by foreign policies that sought to exhibit reciprocal restraint. As noted, the compatible social orders that united East Asia gave rise to the construction of lesser hierarchical world orders, each having the respective tributary state in question as its own center of gravity. Over the *longue durée* of pre-modern East Asian international relations, only in one single period did the polities of Japan and Korea view themselves as Imperial Chinese tributaries. The founder of the Ming Dynasty, the Hongwu Emperor, established relations with Koryo Korea soon after its founding in 1368, leading to Korea becoming an official Ming tributary in 1370. Following the resolution of the conflict that characterized the Northern and Southern Courts period (1336-1392), Ashikaga Yoshimitsu became the first and sole Japanese ruler who embraced the Chinese title, “King of Japan”, in 1404. What followed was a singular period in East Asian history where, under the rule of the Yongle Emperor, Japan and Korea simultaneously held the status of tributaries. During the duration of Muromachi period (1336-1573), Japan and Korea pursued a relationship of parity outside the Chinese-centered regional order. They were able to do so, not because of the policies pursued by officials of the Korean Joseon court or Muromachi Shōgun aimed at reducing tension and fostering mutual understanding, but solely because “China maintained a policy of non-

⁴³⁶ Ibid.

⁴³⁷ Ibid., pg. 4.

⁴³⁸ Lee, *Chinese Hegemony*, pg. 58.

interference towards its tributary states as long as its sovereignty was acknowledged and not threatened.”⁴³⁹ Policies of reciprocal restraint were not a factor.

Yet the tributary states—even in relations between each other—still saw themselves as centres of their own circles of influence, in line with Confucian thought. The diplomacy of the Joseon Dynasty readily adopted Chinese investiture and embraced Imperial China as the greater state. However, its relations with other tributary states were guided by the concept of ‘goodwill towards neighbours’ (*gyorin*/교린정책). This policy basically bestowed Korean investiture on select, weaker neighbours, with the Joseon court granting Korean ranks on the Jurchen chiefs on the Manchurian frontier, the Japanese daimyo of Tsushima Island as well as the kings of Ryukyu who, in turn, dispatched their respective tribute compliment to the Joseon court.⁴⁴⁰ There was no direct relationship with Japan, as it was “indirectly done through the Tsushima lord.”⁴⁴¹ Policies of reciprocal restraint did not figure amongst the policy choices. Nor were such policies pursued when tributary states declined to accept Chinese investiture as part of the East Asian system. Tokugawa Japan, for example, refused to accept political titles from the Imperial Chinese court. Instead, it established its own, autonomous, Japanese-centered order, complete with a self-perception that placed it on par with China. Naturally, this implied a sense of superiority over other tributary states. Ergo, instead of pursuing policies of reciprocal restraint, the shogunate (*bakufu*/幕府)⁴⁴² insisted on recognition of its political superiority over neighbouring polities such as Korea and Ryukyu. Yet, despite rebuffing any political investiture from Imperial China, the culture of Tokugawa Japan “oriented more than ever before toward the language and classical culture of continental China.”⁴⁴³ With rising literacy rates, more and more Japanese subjects could read and write Chinese, so much so that the number of Tokugawa works written in Chinese may have eclipsed those composed in Japanese.⁴⁴⁴ Chinese historical figures featured prominently in Japanese popular culture, as the play *The Battles of Coxinga* whose main character was loosely based on Koxinga, the Ming loyalist general who resisted the Qing conquest. The intensification of Chinese cultural dominance over Japan, however, did not bring about a change in approaches, with no policies of reciprocal restraint implemented towards the Imperial centre or its neighbours. The separation of affiliation of Chinese culture from political subjugation to China became an entrenched feature of Tokugawa society. This was replete with consequences for, politically speaking, Japan’s Tokugawa shōguns practically rejected any notion of Chinese centrality long before its first encounters with Western incursions.

⁴³⁹ Etsuko, Hae-Jin Kang, *Diplomacy and Ideology in Japanese-Korean Relations: From the Fifteenth to the Eighteenth Century*, London: Macmillan Press, 1997, pg. 8

⁴⁴⁰ Kim Chun-Gil, *The History of Korea*, Santa Barbara: Greenwood, 2014, pg. 89.

⁴⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴⁴² Bakufu literally meant “tent government” and referred to the field headquarters of general on campaign. It should be recalled that the Tokugawa military establishment always maintained the fiction of ruling in the name of the Japanese emperor. In line with the Japanese concept of *tatema* (‘the image in front’/建前), or façade, the Emperor was maintained as the external face of power in Kyoto, while the true holder of power, or *honne* (本音), was wielded by the shogunate in Edo.

⁴⁴³ Jansen, Marius, *China in the Tokugawa World*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1992, pg. 4.

⁴⁴⁴ Haga Yaichi, “Literature of the Meiji Era” in Shigenobu Okuma (ed.), *Fifty Years of New Japan*, vol. 2, London: Smith & Elder Co., 1909, pg. 424.

5.4. The Pre-Modern East Asian International Society: Satisfaction with the Systemic Status Quo

International relations entailed a high degree of flexibility on the part of the Imperial centre. This phenomenon has been cited as a byproduct of the existence of compatible social norms based on the tenets of Confucian philosophy. Nevertheless, the tributaries acquiesced to Imperial centre's domination largely without remonstrance, especially the domestic political benefits they derived from the institution of investiture, one of purely Imperial provenance. As with overt military conflict, occurrences of manifest dissatisfaction with the regional system were rare. However, they did come to pass.

Japan's position within the East Asian international society was characterized by a more distant, ambivalent relationship to the Imperial centre, one that witnessed its rulers fading in and out of active participation in the system. As seen, most notable samurai leaders of pre-modern Japanese history sought to legitimize their positions as rulers via investiture from the Japanese Emperor and were careful to avoid using Chinese titles or even Chinese era names when sending intermittent tribute missions to China during the Ming Dynasty. However, in the wake of the unification of Japan through the military and political successes of Oda Nobunaga (1534-1582), Toyotomi Hideyoshi (1536-1598) and Tokugawa Ieyasu (1546-1616) in compelling their fellow daimyō to submit to their political control, its unifiers explicitly sought to establish their "own version of hierarchical international relations with Japan at the summit—a Japanocentric order".⁴⁴⁵ The rationale was domestic in nature: Hideyoshi based his mandate to rule over reunified Japan based on military supremacy and, with Japan now united, there simply was nothing left to conquer on Honshu, Shikoku or Kyushu.⁴⁴⁶ He therefore sought to found a new international order that would place Japan at the apex of regional power, with other neighboring countries, including China, in subordinate positions.⁴⁴⁷ Having dispensed with all military opposition on the Japanese home islands, Hideyoshi turned his gaze towards the Asian mainland. The historical record reflects Hideyoshi's growing desire to found a Japanese-centered world order, one that was to be constructed on the ruins of the old, sending "imperious letters" to Ryukyu (Okinawa), the Spanish Philippines, Taiwan and Portuguese Goa announcing his imperial intentions and inviting them to pay him honour.⁴⁴⁸ Hideyoshi's ultimate aim was nothing short of a tumultuous shift in the international order that had hitherto existed: to move the reigning Japanese Emperor from Heian-Kyō (Kyoto) to Beijing to rule over a united empire encompassing Japan, China and Korea.⁴⁴⁹

In May 1592, Hideyoshi made the most serious attempt to challenge Chinese hegemony in the history of pre-modern East Asia, sending a force comprised of 158,000 men and 700 ships to land in Korea with the final goal of toppling China from its mantle of East Asian preponderance.⁴⁵⁰ Initially, Japanese forces overran most of Korea, prompting Ming forces—having interpreted

⁴⁴⁵ Arano Yasunori, "The Formation of a Japanocentric World Order", *International Journal of Asian Studies*, 2 (2005), pg. 206.

⁴⁴⁶ Mason, R.H.P & Caiger, J.G., *A History of Japan*, Tokyo: Tuttle Publishing, 1997, pg. 181

⁴⁴⁷ Aso Naohiro, "Sakoku-sei no seiritsu" 鎖国制の成立 [Development of the Seclusion Orders] in *Kōza Nihon-shi* [Lectures in the History of Japan], vol. 4, Tokyo: Tōkyō daigaku shuppankai, 1970, quoted in *ibid*.

⁴⁴⁸ Jansen, Marius, *The Making of Modern Japan*, Cambridge: First Harvard University Press, 2000, pg. 19.

⁴⁴⁹ Kuno Yoshi, *Japanese Expansion on the Asiatic Continent*, Vol 1, Berkeley: University of California, 1967, pg. 143.

⁴⁵⁰ Kang, *East Asia before the West*, pg. 93.

Japanese actions as a clear threat to the equilibrium of the Tributary System—to cross the Yalu River and intervene two months later. Chinese intervention on the side of Korea was decided not only in the name of the Ming's strategic interests (to protect the “lips which protected China's teeth”) but also as a reward for prolonged Korean loyalty.⁴⁵¹ Chinese intervention and the success of Korean naval operations were too much for Hideyoshi's forces and a four-year stalemate ensued. Negotiations between Ming officials and Hideyoshi's representatives attempted to conclude the war within the framework of the existing regional international society: Hideyoshi demanded the reopening of trade with China and the cessation of four Korean provinces, while the Ming underlined that it required renewed Japanese subservience as a prelude to the resumption of trade, displaying willingness to invest Hideyoshi as the ‘King of Japan’. Having been presented a hollow victory by his negotiators, Hideyoshi reportedly flew into a rage and ordered a second Japanese invasion of Korea in 1597.⁴⁵²

Following Hideyoshi's death in 1598, the Japanese withdrew their surviving armies from the Asian mainland, yet the consequences of the invasions would remain, both in terms of foreign relations with China, but also Korea. The peninsula was left devastated by an unprecedented level of destruction, with almost two million Koreans, or 20 percent of the population, having perished during the Japanese invasions.⁴⁵³ The foundation of Tokugawa Japan in 1600 inherited a broken set of relations with East Asia. While Ieyasu succeeded in reopening relations with Korea in 1609, Japan was unable to reopen trade relations with the Ming, as they failed to meet the protocol requirements from what the Chinese considered a tributary state, including using dates according to the era names of the Chinese calendar. For their part, the Japanese concluded “that the cost—acceptance of a tributary role in China's East Asian order—was incompatible with its dignity and with Japanese sovereignty.”⁴⁵⁴ Contemporary Ming memorials to the court argued that Japanese “pirates” were not to be trusted under any circumstances.⁴⁵⁵ Japan therefore withdrew into isolation, with no Chinese investiture missions coming to Japan, nor Japanese tribute missions dispatched to the Imperial Court. In its seclusion, the Tokugawa bakufu constructed a modest version of a Japan-centered world order through the 1609 seizure of Ryukyu (Okinawa) through the Satsuma samurai. While allowing Ryukyu to maintain its tributary relationship with China by maintaining the ruler in his Okinawan capital, ceremonial visits to Japan by Ryukyuan officials highlighted Japan's standing as centre of its own self-imposed universe. The ambivalence inherent in the Tributary System ensured that the overlapping Chinese and Japanese claim to Ryukyu never spilled over into open conflict as “it was easier for all parties to pretend that this had never taken place; when missions from China came to invest Okinawan rulers, their Japanese supervisors kept a discreet distance.”⁴⁵⁶ The overt dissatisfaction cultivated under Hideyoshi evolved into disgruntled disengagement under the Tokugawa shōguns.

Given the unprecedented scope and the intensity of Hideyoshi's Korean invasions, known to posterity as the Imjin War (1592-1598), the foreign policy course undertaken by Hideyoshi

⁴⁵¹ Swope, Kenneth, “Deceit, Disguise, and Dependence: China, Japan and the Future of the Tributary System, 1592-1596”, *The International History Review*, 24:4, pg. 762.

⁴⁵² Jansen, *The Making of Modern Japan*, pg. 20.

⁴⁵³ Hawley, Samuel, *The Imjin War: Japan's Sixteenth Century Invasion of Korea and Attempts to Conquer China*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005, pg. 564.

⁴⁵⁴ Jansen, *China in the Tokugawa World*, pp. 1-2.

⁴⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, *The Making of Modern Japan*, pg. 86.

⁴⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

encapsulated Kissinger's concept of a "revolutionary power". The Japanese unifier's actions illustrated that war between members of the pre-modern East Asian international society, while relatively infrequent, was well within the realm of possible policy actions. Furthermore, Hideyoshi's challenge to the Ming Emperor for ultimate political supremacy in East Asia likewise illustrated that dissatisfaction with the systemic status quo could indeed occur, with the Imjin War very much resembling one of pre-modern East Asia's few examples of Gilpin's notion of a systemic war. Hence, while for extended periods of time overt satisfaction with the status quo was maintained, the system was not immune to open challenges of participants seeking to, as will be illustrated below, categorically alter the system should the opportunity arise, however rare. As such, a general sentiment of satisfaction with the systemic status quo becomes difficult to be determined.

5.5. The Pre-Modern East Asian International Society: Lack of Pacific Self-Images

As the examples of the Ming invasion of Vietnam and Japanese invasion of Korea demonstrate, in the pre-modern East Asian international society, war as a means of resolving policy disputes remained ever present below the horizon. Despite the pre-modern regional system having resulted in extended periods of peace, the readiness of participants to revert to military force indicates that stable peace within pre-modern East Asia was not in existence. Consequently, as per this dissertation's analytical framework, without the formation of a zone of stable peace, no RSO can be formed. That only two wars of conquest between China, Japan, Korea and Vietnam took place from the end of the Mongol invasions in the thirteenth century to the mid-nineteenth century has no bearing.⁴⁵⁷ Military conflicts might have broken out with much less frequency than in the Westphalian system but expressing power through military means remained an inherent component of pre-modern East Asia. Hence, the possibility of restoring to military conflict remained an underused, but real, policy of statecraft.

This lack of pacific self-images also remained evident through the attempts of the members of the "Sinic Zone" to expand their respective power, both at the expense of their neighbours and the Imperial centre itself, when the opportunity availed itself. Forced attempts to shift and remold the systemic order occurred at select moments in East Asian history. Reflecting the inherent centrality of Imperial Chinese power, serious challenges to the Middle Kingdom that threatened to cause shifts in systemic power seem to have coincided "not with interstate economic or political events but with civil conflict inside China."⁴⁵⁸ Transitions in Chinese dynasties could "temporarily undermine China's dominance over other powerful actors in the region, and the window of opportunity such civil conflict created was sometimes exploited by these other actors", with the correlation between dynastic transition and war within the "Sinic Zone" classified as "remarkable".⁴⁵⁹ The end of the Sui Dynasty (581-618) coincided with a coup in Koryo and the replacement of the Sui-sponsored authorities.⁴⁶⁰ The collapse of the Tang Dynasty (618-690/705-907) gave rise to Vietnam as an independent state, following the violent expulsion of Imperial forces. The collapse of the Mongol Yuan authority in China (1271-1368) led the Koryo Dynasty,

⁴⁵⁷ In particular, Kang referred to (i.) the previously cited Chinese invasion of Vietnam (1407-1428) and (ii.) the Japanese invasion of Korea (1592-1598). Ibid., pp. 83-84.

⁴⁵⁸ Wang, *Harmony and War*, pg. 182.

⁴⁵⁹ Coe, Andrew & Wolford, Scott, "Conclusion" in *East Asia in the World*, pg. 275.

⁴⁶⁰ See Kanagawa, "East Asia's First World War" in *ibid*, pp. 67-80.

in 1370, to attempt to forcefully reclaim territory, namely the Liaodong region, from the Middle Kingdom. The weakening of the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644) led to the demise of the Tran Dynasty in Vietnam (itself having successfully defended against Yuan invasion under Kublai Khan in 1288)⁴⁶¹ and, subsequently, the invasion of the Manchus and the founding of the Qing Dynasty in 1644. Finally, the advent of the Opium Wars (1839-1842) coincided with the opening phases of the Taiping Rebellion (1850-1864) with the first of the series of feverish visions in 1838 of failed civil servant, Hong Xiuquan, calling Han Chinese to battle in the name of Christ against the Manchu Qing Dynasty.⁴⁶²

This cyclical pattern of conflict accompanying the ebb and flow of Chinese political fortunes illustrates that, despite possessing compatible social norms, an interested hegemon, as well as accepted institutions to conduct foreign policy, war remained part and parcel of the policy options available, not only in the eyes of the Imperial centre but those that comprised its tributaries. As a result, the criteria of pacific self-images could not be said to be present within the pre-modern East Asian international society, however long periods of its serene façade reigned.

5.6. The Pre-Modern East Asian International Society: Compatible Social Orders

With Imperial China having held such a marked advantage in Realist power terms, it lay within the realm of possibilities to shape the contours of the pre-modern system in its own image. The compatible social orders, from the Han Dynasty forward, fostered a direct and sometimes intimate cultural connection between the Imperial centre and the societies on its periphery. The modern states of Japan, Korea and Vietnam trace their emergence as political entities to between the seventh and tenth centuries A.D. respectively. Given their voluntary absorption of the main elements of Chinese culture, including forms of government, calendar, language and writing system as well as complex bureaucratic structures, these polities came to bear “more than a ‘family resemblance’ in their organizations, cultures and outlooks.”⁴⁶³ Consequently, these Sinified central political entities formed the basis of a “Sinic Zone”. In line with Confucian tenets, the realm of the ‘son of heaven’ diffused its values through both its example and cultural osmosis and eschewed any overtly forceful imposition of its political philosophy. The willing embrace of the central elements of Chinese culture by the settled societies of East Asia not only established compatible social orders but, more importantly, it entrenched an innate system of hierarchy amongst the Confucian-influenced societies. The seventh and eighth centuries have been cited as Japan’s first period of “great borrowing” where, coinciding with the establishment of the first permanent Japanese capital at Nara in 710 A.D. (then known as Heijō-kyō), “every aspect of Chinese culture was avidly adopted.”⁴⁶⁴ This was accomplished through the periodic consigning of emissaries to the Tang Dynasty (“*kentōshi*”/ 遣唐使) who, upon their return to Nara, sought to “remodel the primitive island kingdom on the lines of the advanced and sophisticated state that they had admired abroad.”⁴⁶⁵

⁴⁶¹ Anderson, James, “The Ming Invasion of Vietnam, 1407-1427” in *ibid.*, pp. 97-107.

⁴⁶² Lovell, Julia, *The Opium War*, London: Picador, 2011, pg. 247.

⁴⁶³ Kang, David and Swope, Kenneth, “East Asian International Relations over the *Longue Durée*” in *East Asia before the West*, pg. 33.

⁴⁶⁴ Morris, Ivan, *The World of the Shining Prince: Court Life in Ancient Japan*, London: Peregrine Books, 1969, pg. 22.

⁴⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

Chinese influence was key in establishing compatible social orders throughout the states of the “Sinic Zone” through the importation and adaption of the Chinese language and script, examination system and hierarchy of administrative practices.⁴⁶⁶ Furthermore, it also resulted in the centralization of power, with China’s neighbouring political entities to the east and south opting to emulate Chinese traditions to not only effectively manage relations with Imperial China, but also to better establish domestic political and social control. It is not a coincidence that the introduction of Chinese culture (and its subsequent local adaptation) also overlapped with the initial gelling of political unity in Japan, Korea and, later, Vietnam, with “Chinese ideas [tending] to be imposed top-down by states as they attempted to centralize authority and extend control over their territories.”⁴⁶⁷ In consolidating their respective political power, they each erected a localized version of the *tianzi* (天子/‘son of heaven’) model, complete with graded concentric administrative hierarchies. For example, as the boundaries of the Nara state materialized “a sharp distinction came to be drawn between the “inner lands” (*kenai*), that is, areas under direct Japanese control, and the “outer lands” (*kegai*) that is, areas outside the zone of administration but still located within the greater Japanese ‘world’.”⁴⁶⁸

Given such a high degree of Sinophilia amongst its eastern and southern neighbours, China’s cultural pre-eminence ensured that the Empire occupied the region’s center of gravity, so much so it was referred to as the “central efflorescence” reflecting what was interpreted as the most complete reflection of the Confucian tradition.⁴⁶⁹ This reflected a high degree of general conformity of the social orders present in each member of the regional system. Each state of the “Sinic Zone” consequently sought to ensure that their respective domains were ones in which the proper patterns of human behavior, as laid out in the Classics, were respected. Should these lands be interpreted as realms where “the importance of texts, written word and morality reigned, they could be qualified as a ‘domain of manifest civility’” (*wenxian zhi bang*).⁴⁷⁰ This designation certified that, in such realms, the principles of Confucianism reigned supreme.⁴⁷¹ As such, for China’s neighbouring states it marked the attainment of the pinnacle of the pre-modern regional understanding of ‘civilization’.⁴⁷² At the same time, despite the proliferation of the hierarchical Confucian model to the east and south, Imperial China remained firmly centered as the East Asian nucleus of cultural, military and economic influence. This could be seen as the lynchpin of the pre-modern East Asian international society, namely the rejection of equality between states and willing embrace of an innate subjugation that, according to the tenets of Confucianism, represented a reflection of the natural order. Such was the path to a harmonious existence, both in the direct

⁴⁶⁶ Kang, *East Asia before the West*, pp. 34-36.

⁴⁶⁷ Ibid., pg. 43.

⁴⁶⁸ Batten, Bruce, *To the Ends of Japan: Premodern Frontiers, Boundaries, and Interaction*, Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2003, pg. 29.

⁴⁶⁹ Kang, *East Asia before the West*, pg. 34.

⁴⁷⁰ Kelly, Liam, “Vietnam as a ‘Domain of Manifest Civility’”, *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*, Volume 34, Issue 1, February 2003, pg. 67.

⁴⁷¹ The task of crafting such a realm could take considerable time, as witnessed by the history of Vietnam where a ‘domain of manifest civility’ had, according to historian Ngô Sĩ Liên, congealed by the late fifteenth century as recorded in his *Complete Annals of Đại Việt*, one of the earliest official histories of Vietnam. See Ibid., pg. 68.

⁴⁷² The contemporary, Western concept of ‘civilization’ was introduced to East Asia through the Japanese concept of ‘*bunmei*’ (文明) during the second ‘great borrowing’ of the Meiji Restoration. It represented a new, universal concept that dispensed with any Sinocentric connotations that were previously in norm in pre-modern East Asia. See Wang Gungwu, “The Chinese Urge to Civilize: Reflections on Change” in *Journal of Asian History*, Vol 18, No 1, 1984, pp. 1-34.

domains of the *tianzi* as well as in those that followed the proper rituals (*li*). As Xunzi emphasized, “human life cannot persist without community.”⁴⁷³ This meant adhering to the hierarchy apparent both in domestic and foreign relations to preserve order: “Competition leads to disorder and disorder leads to poverty. The previous kings despised disorder, so they instituted the distinctions based upon ritual and propriety.”⁴⁷⁴ In order to preserve order and harmony, hierarchy must be maintained, including between the land of the ‘central efflorescence’ and the ‘domains of manifest civility’. Hence compatible social orders, common to all states of the “Sinic Zone”, comprised an essential characteristic of the pre-modern East Asian international society.

5.7. The Pre-Modern East Asian International Society: Existence of an Interested Hegemon

Imperial China’s claim to the mantle of regional hegemony in the pre-modern East Asian international society has been already established under the conditional of geopolitical necessity. The vehicle and manner through which Imperial China exercised its regional hegemony was reflected in the institution of the Tributary System. The existence of compatible social norms between its members facilitated mutual observation in what were considered its main tenets. As an institution, the Tributary System allowed Imperial China to manage foreign relations, maintain a dominant position in East Asia and ensure that its borders with entities that lay within its nominal control remained as peaceful as possible.⁴⁷⁵ Consequently, it was a diplomatic method of welding together both nominal and practical hegemony over the region, prone to its own idiosyncrasies, thereby exercising a method of interested hegemony, one characterized more by form rather than the brute application of raw power.

The Tributary System entailed an innate flexibility regarding the attachment that the Imperial centre held over its subjects. As witnessed by the difference in the frequency of instances of Imperial investiture in Korea and Japan respectively, the pre-modern East Asian international society displayed ambivalence regarding its degree of actual participation, no doubt aided by the universalist façade upon which the concept of *tianxia* existed. This was argued to constitute an example of China’s ‘loose rein’ (*ji mi*/羈縻) as a strategy to deal with external threats.⁴⁷⁶ Indeed, participants could opt to maintain a close network of relations with the Imperial centre; or conversely disappear and reappear according to domestic political needs. The members of the “Sinic Zone” (Korea, Vietnam, Japan, Ryukyu) each held a different degree of intimacy with the Imperial centre, with Korea and Vietnam having cultivated the closest relationships. Korea and Vietnam were no more powerful militarily or economically than Japan, but they were seen as holding a higher ranking by virtue of their relations to China and their more thorough adoption of Chinese ideas.⁴⁷⁷ Japan, conversely, occupied an ambiguous position in the Tributary System, one that saw it fading in and out of the Imperial orbit: following the first period of “great borrowing”, Japan stopped sending envoys to China in 890 and only resumed them during the Ashikaga Shogunate (1336-1573).⁴⁷⁸ During the last years of decades Ming Dynasty (1386-1644), the Tokugawa Shogunate (1600-1848) displayed “ambivalent feelings about participating in the Ming

⁴⁷³ Xunzi, “Kingly System” in *Xunzi: The Complete Text*, pg. 76.

⁴⁷⁴ Ibid., “Discourse on Ritual Practice” in *ibid.*, pg. 201.

⁴⁷⁵ Wang, *Harmony and War*, pg. 147.

⁴⁷⁶ Johnston, *Cultural Realism*, pg. 133.

⁴⁷⁷ Kang, *East Asia before the West*, pg. 57.

⁴⁷⁸ Morris, *The World of the Shining Prince*, pg. 19.

world order from the very beginning” due to its unwillingness to compromise its growing independent structure of legitimacy.”⁴⁷⁹ This attitude continued into the Qing dynasty, with Japan once again dropping out completely given the policies of isolation as chosen by its Tokugawa successors.⁴⁸⁰ Rather than constitute a challenge to the system, such vacillation in participation represented one of its central features and failed to provoke the wrath of the Imperial hegemon. Imperial insistence sought to convince the Japanese court of the benefits of accepting Chinese official investiture, which proved to be a thankless task. Consequently, the Imperial centre denied Japanese merchants the right to trade at the Imperial capital. Non-participation in the functioning of the system had negative consequences, even if outright war with its Sinified neighbours was a rare occasion.

Such an elastic approach, however, should not diminish the concrete security elements that remain embedded in the functioning of the Tributary System. Despite its inherent flexibility and inbuilt ambiguity, in its essence, the Tributary System indeed constituted a security system whose main function was to uphold Imperial Chinese hegemony. This was accomplished through the pursual of an active foreign policy that sought to neutralize perceived threats to the system when they arose, regardless of the historical dynasty in question.⁴⁸¹ While compatible social norms played an important role in legitimizing the entire system, “there could not surely be a stable [‘Tributary System’] without power, sustained power”⁴⁸². Hence, military force was the base element that kept the system together. As illustrated by the Hua-Yi (Chinese and non-Chinese tribes) distinction, where Imperial China was able to impose its perception of world order on foreigners, “they carried out the Confucianization of these people in a spirit of total cultural absolutism.”⁴⁸³ Those that chose to outright reject the notion of Imperial hegemony, such as the tribes of Inner Asia, were “defined as inhuman, therefore deserving extermination.”⁴⁸⁴ Yet the language of power remained the foundation of each foreign relationship with the Imperial centre for, whether as a loyal tributary (Korea or Vietnam) or barbarian enemy (Jurchens or Zhungars), “the iron fist was always held in reserve behind the smooth ritual mask.”⁴⁸⁵ Imperial China did not hesitate to intervene militarily at the request of tributary states, or to intervene should it perceive its interests as slighted for the simple reason that, as leader of the system, “China provided the public goods of security.”⁴⁸⁶ The Ming decision in 1407 to invade Vietnam exemplifies both such cases. During the reign of Ming Emperor Hongwu, Vietnam’s Tran dynasty submitted to China, becoming a tributary state with Imperial investiture as the King of Annam. Simultaneously, Vietnam was embroiled in persistent warfare with the Hinduized kingdom of Champa. As Imperial tributaries, both kingdoms appealed for assistance to the centre to resolve the conflict, with both receiving “verbal admonitions asking both sides to stop fighting and respect each other’s

⁴⁷⁹ Toby, Ronald, “Reopening the Question of Sakoku: Diplomacy in the Legitimation of the Tokugawa Bafuku”, *The Journal of Japanese Studies*, Summer 1977, Vol 3. No 2, pp. 351-352.

⁴⁸⁰ Ravina, Mark, “Japan in the Chinese Tribute System” in Andrade, Toni; Xing Hang; Yang, Anand & Matteson, Kieko (eds.) *Sea Rovers, Silver and Samurai: Maritime East Asia in Global History, 1550-1700*, Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2016, pg. 353.

⁴⁸¹ Wang, *Harmony and War*, pg. 182.

⁴⁸² Wang Gungwu, “Early Ming Relations” in Fairbank (ed.), *The Chinese World Order*, pg. 60.

⁴⁸³ Schwartz, “The Chinese Perception of World Order”, pg. 278.

⁴⁸⁴ Perdue, Peter, *China Marches West*, pg. 548.

⁴⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁸⁶ Wang, *Harmony and War*, pg. 168.

territories.”⁴⁸⁷ Only after the legitimate ruler, as appointed by the Imperial centre, was deposed after a series of usurpations, did the Ming elect to act, namely following the explicit request of the Tran royal family for assistance to depose the usurper, Le Quy Li. In the wake of the massacre of the initial Ming expeditionary force just over the Vietnamese frontier, Ming Emperor Yongle dispatched a full force of 215,000 men to avenge his initial loss and, upon the advice of his commander Zhang Fu, annexed the territory citing its historical connections to China.⁴⁸⁸ Following extended resistance to direct Ming rule, China, in 1428, granted Vietnam tributary status in exchange for a Ming withdrawal where Vietnam reverted to a “mature asymmetric relationship in the context of their unequal empires.”⁴⁸⁹

The existence of the Tributary System can be used as an example of how Imperial China managed to maintain its nominal hegemony over its East Asian neighbours. Maintaining a high degree of flexibility and level of actual participation, it allowed China to maintain its status as an interested regional hegemon. The rare instances of interstate war in East Asia during both the Ming and Qing Dynasties, however, illustrated that Realist power consideration did play a key role in the functioning of the system and, in instances where the Imperial Centre perceived its interests under threat, did not hesitate to resort to forceful interventions. As such, the criteria of an interested hegemon can be said to have been in existence during the pre-modern international society.

5.8. The Pre-Modern East Asian International Society: Existence of a Constitutional Order

Compatible social orders linked the societies of East Asia both culturally and politically and provided the foundation upon which the conduct of foreign relations was constructed. As China occupied the apex of the East Asian cultural world, it is unsurprising that, from the Han Dynasty onwards, Imperial China elected to institutionalize its privileged political position as an interested hegemon. It is through these institutions that foreign relations were accorded their concrete expression. Consequently, diplomatic relations in East Asia “were structured by the Han Court, which defined itself as the central realm.”⁴⁹⁰ It therefore represented the exact metaphysical opposite of the base concept of foreign relations of the Westphalian system whose underlying foundation rested on the principle of equality between states. Amongst European entities, the equality of the Settlement of 1648 was further entrenched by the Settlement of 1713 that ended the Spanish War of Succession (1701-1715) with the signing of the Treaties of Utrecht. In the series of treaties that were signed, comprising the Settlement of 1713, states were viewed as fully autonomous that were not subject to the command or dominion of any other entity: “The triumph of equality is evident from the fact that, at Utrecht, the idea of hierarchy of actor was discarded.”⁴⁹¹ Furthermore, Article 2 of the Peace Agreement between the Kingdom of Spain and Great Britain, explicitly spelled out that peace in Europe could only be preserved if a balance of power between

⁴⁸⁷ Ibid., 152.

⁴⁸⁸ Kang, *East Asia before the West*, pg. 99.

⁴⁸⁹ Womack, Brantly, *China and Vietnam: The Politics of Asymmetry*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006, pg. 118.

⁴⁹⁰ Kanagawa, “East Asia’s First World War”, pg. 67.

⁴⁹¹ Osiander, Andreas, *The States System of Europe 1640-1990: Peacemaking and the Conditions of International Stability*, London: Oxford University Press, pg. 121.

states were to be maintained.⁴⁹² Such tenets, upon which subsequent Western diplomatic settlements were signed, represented the polar opposite of those that underpinned the pre-modern East Asian international society.

Unsurprisingly, given the compatible social orders that governed the region as outlined above, the institutions that characterized East Asia's pre-modern foreign relations were designed to reflect China's preference of entrenching innate inequality. Hence, a necessary vehicle was required whereby such inequality, both in metaphysical and raw power terms, would be institutionally reflected outside the domestic context of China's frontiers. Under Emperor Wu (r. 141-87 B.C.), the Han Dynasty undertook a notable period of expansion—almost unmatched in scope by subsequent Chinese Emperors—sending military expeditions from northern Korea to Yunnan and from the Ferghana Valley to Hainan Island, while repulsing and, in 53 B.C., subjugating China's main Turkic adversary, the Xiongnu, and annexing substantial territory and a plethora of new polities. Given the sheer scope of expansion, a solution was required to be found to maintain the centrality of Imperial rule despite the reality of the Han Dynasty's inability to militarily subdue remote territories or support their economic incorporation into the Empire.⁴⁹³ Here, the Tributary System proved essential. The neighbouring political entities, while not ethnically Chinese, through their adherence to the Chinese way of life “automatically entailed the recognition of the Emperor's mandate to rule all men.”⁴⁹⁴ The high degree of autonomy, if not outright independence, being accorded to its theoretical participants has already been noted. Nevertheless, through a mixture of “economic enticement, military intimidation and skillful diplomacy, the Han Dynasty and most of its heirs succeeded in preserving the vision of the ‘son of heaven’s’ unrivaled position at the apex of the ritual pyramid without inciting much resentment in foreign leaders.”⁴⁹⁵ Consequently, it was possible to assert the Chinese Emperor as a “universal monarch” through the implementation of the Tributary System. From the Tang Dynasty until the fall of the Celestial Empire, relations with the ‘Sinic Zone’ were overseen by the Board of Rites’ Reception Department (‘*Libu*’/禮部) charged with ensuring the correct performance of Confucian rituals. Those tribes not deemed worthy enough to partake in the rites of the Confucian order were managed by another department of the Board of War, with the Manchu Dynasty having developed the Barbarian Control Office (‘*Lifan Yuan*’/理藩院) to manage their relations with the Mongols before their conquest of the Ming in 1644. This became an integral part of the Tributary System to manage relations with the ‘barbarians’ following the installation of the Qing Dynasty in Beijing, encompassing dealings with Tibet and Xinjiang in addition to Mongolia.

There has been much discussion amongst scholars as to the exact role the Tributary System played in shaping the contours of Imperial China's pre-modern foreign relations, one that lies well

⁴⁹² In particular, Article 2 stipulated that the union of the Spanish and French crowns, despite belonging to the House of Bourbon, could never be united and, to maintain the peace in Europe, this possibility needed to be excluded in the future. See *Treaty of Peace and Friendship between Great Britain and Spain, signed at Utrecht, 13 July 1713*, 28 CTS 295, Article 2, pp. 325-326.

⁴⁹³ Pines, Yuri, *The Everlasting Empire: The Political Culture of Ancient China and its Legacy*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012, pg. 35.

⁴⁹⁴ Fairbank and Teng, “On the Ch’ing Tributary System”, pg. 138.

⁴⁹⁵ Pines, *The Everlasting Empire*, pg. 35.

beyond the scope of this dissertation.⁴⁹⁶ Pines' discussion on the emergence and underlying purpose of the Tributary System as established by the Han, and continued by subsequent Imperial dynasties, indicates that the web of rituals and relations that China established came very close to meeting the criteria of a pre-modern Constitutional Order. Not only did it foster a hierarchy of unequal relationships, but it also likewise founded historical institutions to accord such inequality concrete expression. Defined as "a set of institutions and norms that regulated diplomatic and political contact, cultural and economic relations, and established the relationship between the political units", the Tributary System represented a broadly accepted institutionalized process—both by the Imperial center and its tributaries alike.⁴⁹⁷ For obvious reasons, there could be no 'commitment institutions' that distilled a separate, centralized authority and third-party surveillance. At the same time, the system that arose out of the abovementioned unique series of historical and philosophical realities, as well as the Confucian hierarchy that sanctioned it, saw East Asian polities being bound together through accepted "rules of the game" that accorded the region a relatively stable and predictable political order. As such, the Tributary System, apart from solely constituting an expression of Chinese hegemony, represented an "articulation of the existence of an international society in historical East Asia, constitutive of a social order in East Asian history and politics."⁴⁹⁸ Through its implementation, Imperial China—regardless of the dynasty in power—was able to implement the philosophical tenets of *tianxia* while, at the same time, expanding its material power base and preserving its dominance.⁴⁹⁹ The rites and rituals of tributary diplomacy, whose norms, rules and principles bound together the compatible social orders of pre-modern East Asia, functioned as the system's fundamental institution, that revolved around an interested hegemon that facilitated the operation of an accepted regional order.⁵⁰⁰ While falling short of the definition of a Constitutional Order as defined by this dissertation, the Tributary System did furnish the base for a functioning political order in East Asia.

The Tributary System's rules of the game were founded upon the pillars of two key diplomatic practices: The first comprised of 'tribute missions', namely the exchange of envoys between the Imperial centre and the participating entities. The size and frequency of such missions was the subject of negotiations between the centre and the subordinate party and depended on the status of the entity involved. Those that were deemed culturally closer to the Imperial centre (such as Korea) were permitted to undertake more missions and could be accompanied by a larger entourage. While labelled 'tribute missions', they served as the main modus of diplomatic exchange between the centre and the periphery and were dispatched for various purposes.⁵⁰¹ A central function was also trade: immediately following the presentation of tribute to the Emperor

⁴⁹⁶ Lee Ji-Young identified six 'lenses' through which the Tributary System has been viewed through the subfields of history, economic sociology and political science: (1.) the Fairbankian model of Sinocentric hierarchy; (2.) the New Qing Perspective, (3.) the transnational economic history school, (4.) China's borderlands studies perspective, (5.) the investiture model, and (6.) the *Tianxia* system. See Lee Ji-Young, *China's Hegemony*, pp. 28-39.

⁴⁹⁷ Haggard and Kang, "Introduction", pg. 10.

⁴⁹⁸ Zhang & Buzan, "The Tributary System as International Society in Theory and Practice", pg. 5.

⁴⁹⁹ Wang, *Harmony and War*, pp. 147-151.

⁵⁰⁰ Zhang, *Chinese Hegemony*, pg. 170.

⁵⁰¹ In analyzing the function of Korea's tributary missions to China during the Qing Dynasty, Hae-Jong Chun found a total of 26 distinct purposes for which such missions were dispatched, from 'condolences' (offering incense at the Qing Court on occasions of a death in the Imperial family) to requesting to Imperial calendar on an annual basis after 1644. See Hae-Jong Chun, "Sino-Korean Tributary" in Fairbank (ed.), *The Chinese World Order*, pp. 91-95.

merchants received Imperial permission to trade at Beijing for a pre-agreed number of days after the necessary rituals had been completed.

The second institution consisted of diplomatic investiture. This entailed granting formal diplomatic recognition by Imperial China to the authorities in the subordinate entity. This was of benefit to both its neighbouring peripheries as well as the Imperial centre and constituted an essential reason why the “rules of the game” were also beneficial to the system’s tributaries. As concluded by Lee, the symbolic power of the Chinese empire had strategic implications for domestic power struggles in neighbouring states, leading Japanese and Korean leaders to “manipulate that power to their political advantage.”⁵⁰² Imperial Chinese investiture served as an essential ingredient for members of the “Sinic Zone” to entrench their rule as locally legitimate. Titles were granted through the person of the Emperor himself as the Korean and Japanese examples illustrate: throughout the Joseon dynasty (1392-1910), every Korean ruler was accorded investiture as the King of Korea from the Chinese court; while Ashikaga Yoshimitsu (reigned 1368-1394) was the sole Japanese recipient of Imperial investiture.⁵⁰³ Illustrating the differing degrees to which neighbouring rulers were dependent upon acts of Chinese investiture, the above examples likewise highlight that the underpinning legitimacy of the subordinate entities within the system was dependent on Chinese active approval. Despite implying an unequal relationship, the “investiture practice signified Imperial China’s respect for the political autonomy of the receiving country.”⁵⁰⁴ Within the diplomatic leeway granted by the centre, rulers of Imperial tributaries utilized investiture through China—and the legitimacy it provided—to shore up domestic authority, especially during times of political crises. Pre-modern Imperial Chinese hegemony therefore acted as the mainstay of systemic authority, with other members vacillating between strictly adhering to hierarchy, maintaining ambivalence or tumbling into anarchy. As such, the most basic tenets of pre-modern East Asian relations, both international and domestic, remained a function of “symbolic power contingent upon other East Asian actors’ recognition of Chinese ways of defining socially acceptable behaviour.”⁵⁰⁵ Imperial China’s role as an interested hegemon, able to dispense its authority through the Tributary System’s ‘institutions’, was hence essential to the system’s functioning, not only to provide legitimacy to the compatible social norms upon which each of the members’ societies were based, but also to provide legitimacy to both centre and periphery. While the Tributary System provided a solid foundation that structured the course of international interactions throughout pre-modern East Asia, it did not reflect the high degree of integration implied in the criterion of a Constitutional Order, making its existence difficult to determine.

5.9. Conclusion: Was Pre-Modern East Asian International Society Home to an RSO?

Having applied the analytical framework’s selected criteria to the length of what this dissertation has identified as the pre-modern East Asian international society, initial conclusions can be drawn as to whether a RSO was indeed present. The results are summarized in the table below:

⁵⁰² Lee, Ji-Young, *China’s Hegemony*, pg. 169.

⁵⁰³ *Ibid.*, pg. 53.

⁵⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, pg. 50.

⁵⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, pg. 13.

Table 9: Assessment of the conditions for RSO formation present in the Pre-Modern East Asian International Society

<i>Antecedent Condition</i>	<i>Geo-political Necessity</i>	<i>Policy of Reciprocal Restraint</i>	<i>Satisfaction with Status Quo/‘Legacy System’</i>	<i>Pacific Self-Image</i>	<i>Compatible Social Orders</i>	<i>Existence of an Interested Hegemon</i>	<i>Existence of a Constitutional Order</i>
<i>Pre-Modern International Society</i>	YES	NO	CANNOT BE DETERMINED	NO	YES	YES	CANNOT BE DETERMINED

Although differences in constructivist understanding of political terms renders comparisons less than straightforward, Wang has illustrated that respect of offensive Realist concepts of the primacy of strength in an inherently anarchic world could account for the grand scope of Imperial Chinese foreign policy from the Song to the Ming. As illustrated, the sheer economic, cultural and political weight of China within the East Asian region, left little choice to the less powerful East Asian polities to acquiesce to Imperial designs. Hence, through ‘bandwagoning’ in a Sinocentric international society established on Confucian principles, the tributary states of East Asia met the condition of “geopolitical necessity”. The periphery was a willing participant in the international society, having themselves constituted active recipients of Chinese cultural influence and political domination. The inherent ambiguity in relations between the Imperial centre and the periphery, exemplified by the case of Japan, did not signify a more peaceful brand of interstate relations as, through the above cited examples, the Imperial court was able to act decisively on the rare occasions it viewed its fundamental interests as being threatened.

As pre-modern international relations in East Asia were firmly entrenched within the spirit of enshrined inequality, both politically and culturally, the pursuit of a policy of reciprocal restraint was simply not a possibility between the Imperial centre and the periphery. Neither did policies of reciprocal restraint figure within the foreign policy choices of relations between tributary states. There was simply no need to, as the stable inequality that the system offered liberated its members from having to consider the question of stable peace and, as such, the eventual formation of security cooperation, leading to an RSO. As illustrated above, while the pre-modern East Asian order was characterized by long periods without military conflict, rare instances where Imperial China underwent a period of weakness were regularly exploited by the polities of the periphery. The Confucian social orders that bound together China and the periphery also indirectly encouraged the construction of self-centered world orders, with the tributary state at the centre. Japan’s rejection of the Chinese-centred world order and forceful attempt during the Imjin Wars to remake the East Asian system according to the vision of Toyotomi Hideyoshi represented a singular, yet particularly egregious, example. Hence, overall satisfaction with the status quo cannot be said to have been a constant element in the pre-modern East Asian international society, becoming especially pronounced during and after the Japanese invasion of Korea and the establishment of the Tokugawa Shogunate. In examining the results of the application of the first three elements of the analytical framework, it can be concluded that no stable peace reigned within the contours of the pre-modern international society. While peace might have dominated over long

periods of East Asian systemic history prior to the nineteenth century, relations cannot be said to have been characterized by stable peace.

The overall lack of stable peace is compounded by the absence of pacific self-images amongst the participants in the pre-modern East Asian society. The option of using military means to resolve policy disputes was an accepted part of international statecraft, both in relations between the Imperial centre and its periphery as well as between the tributary states themselves. Nevertheless, each of the states of the “Sinic Zone” possessed deep-rooted compatible social orders whose proliferation from China played a key factor in the initial formation of each tributary state. Despite adapting many tenets of Chinese culture to meet their respective domestic political and societal needs—a trend that lasted until the dissolution of the pre-modern East Asian international society—China nevertheless remained the magnetic pole of the region’s cultural compass, even in tributary states that rejected outright Chinese supremacy (Tokugawa Japan). At the same time, this strong link provided by the existence of compatible social norms was not sufficient, however, to banish the spectre of war from the regional system. The pre-modern East Asian international society did however possess an interested hegemon. While Imperial China did not actively seek integration between itself and its tributaries, its role as political and cultural apex of the East Asian region ensured that it played an active role in facilitating peaceful relations through its power and influence. As stipulated by Kupchan’s notion of an interested hegemon, Imperial China did not receive any material advantages through the institutions that it, as the preponderant state, sponsored. The most notable example is the tribute missions to the Imperial court that, while receiving goods from subject nations, had their respective value many times surpassed by the gifts that China itself dispensed in its expected role as regional hegemon. Like many aspects of *tianxia*, it was symbolic in nature. While the peace fostered by Imperial China in its role as an interested hegemon did not meet the conditions of stable peace, it did preside over periods characterized by an absence of war. Pre-modern Imperial China could therefore be stated to be a supplier of ‘unstable peace’ as defined by Boulding. When viewed through the lens of unstable peace, China not only shaped the contours of the pre-modern East Asian international society but continued, through the wielding of its power and influence, to maintain the system as a whole until the pre-modern Chinese society’s final collapse in the nineteenth century following its confrontation with the Westphalian systemic order.

The unstable peace that Imperial China presided over was one that could not be characterized by the presence of a Constitutional Order. War had not been rendered impossible through the casting of pacific self-images, although it did possess institutions based on a broad acceptance of what participants viewed as stable and mostly non-coercive relations. Granted, the institutions of the Tributary System mirrored the philosophical and political preferences of Imperial China, however they were nowhere near as well-developed as those implied in this dissertation’s definition of an RSO. Therefore, after having applied the criteria of RSO formation as laid out in the analytical framework to the pre-modern East Asian international society, nothing approaching an RSO, as defined by this dissertation, can be said to have been in existence. Nevertheless, Imperial China did create and preside over ‘institutions’ that were instrumental in maintaining long periods of unstable peace where war between participants, while always possible, became a rare occurrence. It was this order that provided the intellectual, cultural and political background that came to guide the choices and actions of both the Imperial centre and its peripheries when the Western powers made a sustained effort to penetrate East Asia. While not

per se a 'critical juncture', the principles and functioning of the pre-modern East Asian international society, as outlined above, echoed through those that would follow in the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

Chapter 6 – The First Sino-Japanese War: The Treaty of Shimonoseki

6.1. Introduction

It was a treaty that, quite literally, tore the pre-modern East Asian international society asunder. It was an event that “brought about a fundamental transformation of an East Asian world order that for more than two thousand years had centered around the great empire of China.”⁵⁰⁶ The Treaty of Shimonoseki marked not only the end of the First Sino-Japanese War, but likewise the dawn of a new era. The historical significance of the document was not lost on its negotiators. At the Shimonoseki Peace Conference, the Qing Plenipotentiary leading the Chinese negotiation team, Li Hongzhang (1823-1901), bluntly informed his Japanese counterpart, Prime Minister Itō Hirobumi, that “China has at last been awakened from her long sleep.”⁵⁰⁷ Addressing the Imperial Council stationed in Hiroshima, Prime Minister Hirobumi openly declared that “the Sino-Japanese War is the greatest event since the beginning of our history.”⁵⁰⁸ Such bombastic statements were grounded in a new reality as the former belligerents recognized the gravity of the moment. The signature of the Treaty heralded the introduction of a new regional system in East Asia and the culmination of the drawn-out demise of the millennia-old traditions and values of Imperial China. With the signing of the Treaty of Shimonoseki, a new political order was established regionally, one that was much more in harmony with the ideas and values typically associated with the contemporary understanding of Westphalian statehood. As such, the Treaty of Shimonoseki marked the beginning of East Asia as part of the new, global international order, with Japan earning the perception of a great power from its new Western peers.⁵⁰⁹ It likewise marked an ignoble end to the systemic tradition that had defined regional interstate relations since the dawn of Eastern Antiquity.

The changes wrought by the Treaty of Shimonoseki were far-reaching indeed, yet their articles did not materialize solely due to the military campaigns of the First Sino-Japanese War. Rather they reflected a progressive shift from the tenets of the pre-modern East Asian international society to the Westphalian international system. International societies and the regional order they comprise are very rarely destroyed in a relatively quick time span. This is particularly the case for societies and institutions that have spanned millennia through the definition of social norms and proper political conduct, both domestically and internationally. As stressed by Collier & Collier, antecedent conditions comprise the baseline socio-economic and political conditions existing prior to the onset of the ‘critical junctures’ that comprise the background for subsequent change, in this case the formation of RSOs. An understanding of the events that transpired between the 1840s to the onset of this dissertation’s first ‘critical juncture’ of 1895 is necessary to appreciate the fracturing of the old East Asian international society and its replacement with the Western tenets of the Westphalian order. Here, an examination of these critical decades preceding the onset of this dissertation’s first ‘critical juncture’ is necessary. This is the period when the ideas of the old system conflicted with the advent of the new, as novel concepts “ushered in unprecedented developments in the region as the final stages of the old Confucian order began to give way to a

⁵⁰⁶ Hiroshi, Mitani, “Foreword” in Saya Makito, The Sino-Japanese War and the Birth of Japanese Nationalism, Tokyo: International House of Japan, 2011, pg. ix.

⁵⁰⁷ Jansen, Marius; Chu, Samuel; Shumpei Okamoto & Bonnie B.O., “The Historiography of the Sino-Japanese War” in *International History Review*, April 1979, Vol 1, No. 2 (April 1979), pg. 191.

⁵⁰⁸ Paine, The Sino-Japanese War, pg. 296.

⁵⁰⁹ Ibid., pg. 4.

modern international system of sovereign states.”⁵¹⁰ As such, the Treaty of Shimonoseki was very much a *dénouement* of the pre-existing systemic order and marked the implantation of a foreign one, with regional actors attempting to both learn and implement the new rules of the game.

Given the serious implications of the inheritance of the Treaty of Shimonoseki in shaping the future, and current, trajectories of systemic contours in East Asia, it is necessary to examine how the Treaty of Shimonoseki departed from earlier settlements, both within the context of the agreement signed as well as the systemic principles it reflected. The Treaty limited the future choices from which all East Asian actors could craft their political future. Hence, “uncovering the processes by which the international order had been formed in the past [is] an indispensable tool for reforming it in the future.”⁵¹¹ To fully appreciate the long-term consequences of the Settlement of 1895 on the ability of East Asia to possess the necessary conditions and political will to form RSOs, the consideration of this period of systemic clash is essential.

6.2. The First Sino-Japanese War: Antecedent Conditions

6.2.1. The Treaties of Aigun and Peking

Until the nineteenth century Western European contact was through long-distance trade. After the British defeated the Qing in the First Opium War (1839-1842) and Commodore Perry, on behalf of the US, forcefully opened Japan in 1853, it was no longer possible for East Asia to maintain a separate existence.⁵¹² The arrival of Western power obliged them to become acquainted with Western ways in a far more intimate manner than the diplomatic response to the Portuguese and Spanish excursions to East Asia in the sixteenth and seventeenth century had required.⁵¹³ The immediate threat to the states of East Asia was to ensure their own survival, given it was through military methods that both Great Britain and the US impinged on their respective political and economic sovereignty. The Treaty of Nanjing (1842) signed between the Qing and Great Britain marked the first of the Unequal Treaties that were to characterize the first phase of Western diplomatic penetration into East Asia.⁵¹⁴ At its southern capital of Nanjing, the Qing ceded Hong Kong to London and forced open the treaty ports of Xiamen, Guangzhou, Fuzhou, Ningbo and Shanghai to foreign trade. The obligation of China to sign further treaties with Western powers extended trade and residence advantages (extraterritoriality) that laid the framework of Western economic expansion in China under the banner of so-called ‘free trade’ to be implemented on exclusively Western terms. The news of the Qing’s humiliation to the British even pierced the

⁵¹⁰ Miyoshi Jager, Sheila, The Other Great Game: The Opening of Korea and the Birth of Modern East Asia, Cambridge: Belknap Press, 2023, pg. xvi.

⁵¹¹ Armitage David & Pitts, Jennifer, The Laws of Nations in Global History, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017, pg. 3.

⁵¹² Vogel, China and Japan, pg. 65.

⁵¹³ Portuguese traders arrived in China in the early sixteenth century, with King Manuel I commissioning a diplomatic and trade mission to the Ming. After initial conflicts, the Portuguese signed an agreement, under Leonel de Sousa, with the local authorities of Guangzhou under Provincial Admiral Wang Bo signing the Luso-Chinese agreement of 1554, allowing the Portuguese to legally trade in China, provided taxes to the Ming were paid. The Ming court official allowed Portugal to lease a settlement at Macau in 1577 for the nominal annual fee of 500 taels. The focus of Portuguese settlement was limited to acting as a trade outpost with China and did not represent any major diplomatic or population exchanges. See de Oliveria Marques (ed.), História dos Portugueses no Extremo Oriente, Lisboa: Fundação Oriente, 2001, pp. 13-69.

⁵¹⁴ Lovell, The Opium War, pg. 345.

heavy veil of self-imposed isolation of the Tokugawa Shogunate, with *bakufu* officials nervously querying the Dutch contingent at Nagasaki for further information behind China's defeat.⁵¹⁵ Frank speech and forewarnings did not stave off the inevitable: a similar fate was doled out to Japan through the arrival of Commodore Perry's ominous 'black ships' (*kurofune*/黒船) of historical Japanese lore in Edo Bay in 1853. While after much internal debate, the *bakufu*, unlike the Qing, opted to submit pacifically to the US terms, when it realized that its weapons were of no match those of the foreigners. The subsequent signing of the Convention of Kanagawa of 1854 forced Japan to end its policy of seclusion and agreed open the ports of Shimoda and Hakodate to US ships, thereby marking the first Unequal Treaty between Japan and the West.

As noted by Paine, "Westerners have tended to emphasize their own role in the decline of the Qing Dynasty."⁵¹⁶ The Western powers might have obliged the Chinese to sign such unequal treaties, but the Qing had absolutely no intention of enforcing them. As exemplified by the attitude of Keui-Liang, a Qing treaty negotiator with the British after the Second Opium War (1856-1860), a treaty with a 'barbarian tribe' was "but a means to an end, never an end in itself."⁵¹⁷ Once the original purpose of the treaty had been obtained, or the underlying conditions surrounding its signature had changed, the Qing saw little point in further honouring it. Besides, Confucian ethics "applied only to the Chinese themselves; it was not 'wrong' to rule the unassimilated barbarians with misrule."⁵¹⁸ At the same time, however outwardly humiliating the Qing's military defeat against the UK might have been, the scope of the Opium Wars only affected a select number of ports and coastal areas. Even the articles of the despised Unequal Treaties resulted in the establishment, in 1854, of the Foreign Inspectorate of Customs in Shanghai whose sole purpose was to ensure the equitable collection of tariffs, paid mostly by foreigners, and secure its subsequent unmolested transfer to the Qing Treasury. The same could not be said about the plethora of civil wars and rebellions that plagued China, most notably the Taiping Rebellion (1850-1864) and the Nain Rebellion (1851-1868). Over the long course of these civil wars, entire provinces were devastated, with entire economies and populations having been annihilated. The Taiping Rebellion alone is estimated to have caused the deaths of 20 to 30 million persons, with the five hardest hit provinces—Jiangxi, Hubei, Anhui, Zhejiang, and Jiangsu—suffering a total population loss of circa 87 million people between 1851-1864 (57 million dead from war, the rest never born due to depressed birth rates).⁵¹⁹ Such epic carnage pales in comparison to the ceding of an insignificant rocky island off the Qing's southern shore in exchange to rid China of pesky, meddling Westerners.

The shocking scale of chaos and carnage that engulfed China not only solicited enormous human losses but also political. The Taiping Rebellion attracted an unprecedented amount of

⁵¹⁵ The Dutch informed the Japanese as to the size of the British force in China and the capabilities of steam-powered ships. One official asked openly "Why have the Tartars [Manchus] lost, since they are said to be brave enough?" The Dutch answer was direct: "bravery alone is not sufficient, the art of war demands something more. No outlandish power can compete with a European one, as can be seen by the great realm of China which has been conquered by a few thousand men." See Jansen, *The Making of Modern Japan*, pg. 273.

⁵¹⁶ Paine, *The Sino-Japanese War*, pg. 28.

⁵¹⁷ Hsü, Immanuel, *China's Entrance into the Family of Nations: The Diplomatic Phase, 1858-1880*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1968, pg. 89.

⁵¹⁸ *Ibid.*, pg. 90.

⁵¹⁹ Platt, Stephen, *Autumn in the Heavenly Kingdom: China, the West, and the Epic Story of the Taiping Civil War*, New York: Vintage Books, 2012, pg. 358.

foreign influence in China, not only from the Western powers but also, more importantly, from the Russian Empire, which—alone among the European powers—shared a common land frontier with the Qing. The existence of this historical frontier categorically altered the dimension and scope of the relationship. Whereas other European states met China in their trading vessels, factories, and colonies, Russia and China had, since the 1600s, shared an extensive common frontier where “they fought and traded much like any other nations in geographic proximity. But with a difference. Russia represented the Christian (Orthodox) West, with its special view of the international order.”⁵²⁰ In the steppes and forests of Central and East Asia, the Western understanding of the contemporary international order, with its Westphalian concept of sovereigns as moral and legal equals, ran up against the Confucian notion of the Far East with its decidedly hierarchical view of international relations. Consequently, the Russian and Qing Empires were required to manage bilateral relations through the development of institutions that would allow co-existence despite a substantial philosophical gap in intellectual concepts. The result was a *modus vivendi* creating a treaty system that “institutionally shunned the political and intellectual problems associated with their ideological conflict.”⁵²¹ Russian and Chinese bilateral relations pre-dated the nineteenth century by a substantial margin. The Russians set out east in search of fur, spurring the conquest of eastern Siberia and the settlement of Amuria in the seventeenth century. Contact with the Central Asian nomads, themselves tributaries to the Ming, inspired Russia to attempt to access the fabled Chinese market. By the eighteenth century, the Chinese market, as it was to be for the British in the nineteenth, served as an almost irresistible attraction for the Russian state and private commercial interests.⁵²² However, the Russians were the only European nation to seek to establish land-based trade with China, increasing in attractiveness as Russian settlement expanded in Siberia, given its closer proximity to the Celestial Empire than Western Europe.

The Tsar dispatched its first official embassy to Beijing in 1653 under Fyodor Isakovich Baykov (1612-1663); it lasted until 1657 and sought to establish a diplomatic basis for trade on a permanent basis. However, Russian lack of knowledge and proper understanding of Qing court ceremony ensured that the mission ended in total failure.⁵²³ The settlement of Russian Cossacks in the Amur basin created the hitherto unknown problem of the local tribes switching their payments from tribute to the Qing to the ‘yasak’ (ясак) as demanded by Moscow, causing military conflict in the 1680s, with the newly found Manchu Dynasty seeking to assert its sovereignty. To clarify the ambiguous border and to create the necessary stable conditions to enable trade, the first treaty between the Russian and Qing Empires, the Treaty of Nerchinsk, was signed on 27 August 1689 and named after the frontier town where it was negotiated. It marked the inaugural agreement between two sizeable, well-established Empires whose physical interaction had reached such an extent that it required official clarification. The Treaty of Nerchinsk bore a unique trait that its original version was in Latin, as the Jesuits based in Beijing inserted themselves as crucial mediators, deciding the means of communication. It remained the first treaty that the Qing negotiated, despite the Manchu representatives acting from hierarchical assumptions of tribute and

⁵²⁰ Mancall, Mark, *Russia and China: Their Diplomatic Relations to 1728*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1971, pg. 1.

⁵²¹ *Ibid.*, pg. 2.

⁵²² *Ibid.*, pg. 33.

⁵²³ An example of one of Baykov’s faux pas, besides having been instructed not to bow down or present gifts to anyone save the Emperor himself, consisted of offending the court by refusing to drink a cup of tea boiled in butter and milk. As Baykov was observing the rites of Orthodox fasting, he refused, not knowing that the tea had been sent by the Emperor himself.

suzerainty, on the basis of relative equality.⁵²⁴ This was due to the indispensable role of Jesuit mediation and one of the final examples of Latin being used as a language for intercultural communication and diplomacy. Unlike the Unequal Treaties, both sides achieved their diplomatic goals without extracting unacceptable concessions from the other. Importantly, the Russians were granted, according to Article V, the ability to trade with the Qing, along with the right to freely move into its territory for commercial purposes: “It is to be understood by both Governments that from the time when this Treaty of Amity is made, the subjects of either nation, being provided with proper passports, may come and go [across the frontier] on their private business and may carry on commerce [lit. buy and sell].”⁵²⁵ The Chinese were satisfied with the Treaty’s ability to provide security on their northern frontier. Further territorial clarifications to the Sino-Russian border were made with the 1727 Treaty of Kyakhta, the result of three years of negotiations in Beijing. The Treaty also specified the terms of trade between Russia and China—allowing a Russian commercial mission to trade in Beijing once every three years—as well as establishing the permanent presence of a Russian Embassy in the Qing capital. The Treaty of Kyakhta not only stabilized the Sino-Russian frontier but acted as the legal foundation of their bilateral relationship until the mid-nineteenth century and the arrival of the Anglo Saxons in East Asia.

As a territorial neighbour of the Qing, the Russian watched as the civil strife that accompanied the arrival of the Anglo-Saxons dragged on. St. Petersburg viewed an opportunity to expand its own territory in East Asia at the expense of the Manchu Dynasty. In particular, the Governor General of Eastern Siberia, Count Nikolai Nikolaiyevich Muravyov (1809-1881), sought to reincorporate the Amur River basin, lost in the Treaty of Nerchinsk, into the Empire. Noting that the Qing stationed few forces along the Amur, and those that were present were woefully ill-equipped (Russian reports cited bow and arrows with a few matchlock rifles), Muravyov received permission from Tsar Nicholas I (r. 1825-1855) to occupy the territory: Regular expeditions were sent to the region between 1853-1856 that met no physical resistance and Russian officers received only token protest from the area’s Manchu commanders.⁵²⁶ Murayov sent an official note to the Li Fan Yuan in Beijing, informing the Qing that Russia had stationed forces on the Amur to preemptively protect it from a possible British invasion. The Qing court, given the massive domestic challenges it faced, neither approved nor rejected the Russian presence along the Amur. For St. Petersburg, the main challenge remained how to transform Beijing’s de facto acquiescence into de jure recognition of Russian sovereignty.

The British and the French provided such an opportunity: London and Paris opted, in 1857, to dispatch an expeditionary force to chastise the Qing for allowing the trade system established under the Treaty of Nanjing to totally break down. The Russians declined the British and French offer to join in their punitive actions and, instead, initiated negotiations with the Qing court to secure Chinese recognition of the Amur as territory of the Russian Empire. Under pressure from an Allied invasion of the Second Opium War and major ongoing civil wars, the Qing court allowed the cousin of Xianfang Emperor (r. 1850-1861) and Military Governor of Heilongjiang (Amur), Prince Yashin, to enter into negotiations with Murayov. When confronted with the scope of Russian demands, the Qing officials protested that “it was treasonable to cede the Cradle of their

⁵²⁴ Perdue, *China Marches West*, pg. 172.

⁵²⁵ *Treaty of Nerchinsk*, Signed at Nerchinsk, 27 August 1689, <https://worldjpn.net/documents/texts/pw/16890827.T1E.html#>.

⁵²⁶ Quested, R.K.I., *Sino-Russian Relations: A Short History*, Boston: George Allen & Unwin, 1984, pg. 72.

Dynasty in this way and brought forward proofs of sovereignty showing how they had in the past collected tribute from the population.”⁵²⁷ Such appeals fell on deaf ears. The result was the Treaty of Aigun of 28 May 1858. The Chinese, as noted, did not view such treaties as permanent legal documents and Prince Yashin considered the treaty to be an expedient measure to “buy more time from the Russians before dealing with them more firmly.”⁵²⁸ Reality, however, saw the Treaty of Aigun fixing the Qing-Russian border along the Amur, thereby ceding an immense territory of over 185,000 square miles to the Russian Empire. Nevertheless, the Qing refused to ratify the treaty, however, with no spare forces to be able to be deployed in the north, the Xianfang Emperor had no other option than to tolerate Russian de facto ownership.

Map 1: Russian Territorial Gains through the Treaties of Aigun and Peking



Source: Miyoshi Jager, The Other Great Game

Chaos in China continued unabated: the Emperor’s decision to reject ratification of the Treaties of Tianjin (1858) that had been concluded with the British, French, US and Russians respectively—allowing foreign Delegations to be stationed in Beijing and opening several coastal

⁵²⁷ Nish, The History of Manchuria: A Sino-Russian-Japanese Triangle, London: Renaissance Books, 2016, pg. 10.

⁵²⁸ Paine, The Sino-Japanese War, pg. 69.

cities to Western trade—spurred the Europeans to pursue military action to force Chinese ratification. The British and French incursion into China took on alarming proportions, with their expeditionary force invading Beijing itself and, in October 1860, it burned down the *tianzi*'s Summer Palace in an act of calculated humiliation by the British High Commissioner and Treaty Negotiator, Lord Elgin. In the confusion, the newly arrived Russian delegate in Beijing, Nikolai Pavolvich Ignatiyev (1832-1908), offered to mediate between the Qing and Europeans who, in the eyes of the Chinese, seemed bent on extinguishing the Dynasty in its entirety.⁵²⁹ In exchange, however, Ignatiyev demanded that China accept all of Russia's territorial and commercial demands. The Qing agreed: signed on 14 November 1860, the Treaty of Peking fixed the new border with the Russian Empire along the Ussuri River, giving St. Petersburg over 350,000 square miles of territory that belonged to the Qing Dynasty's Manchu homeland.⁵³⁰ The combined territorial losses from the Treaties of Aigun and Peking were colossal, far overshadowing the miniscule concession of Hong Kong to the United Kingdom, especially in terms of long-term political consequences. With the new Sino-Russian frontier fixed along the Amur and the Ussuri, the Russian Empire not only expanded its land border with the Qing but, for the first time, opened a physical frontier between Russia and Korea along the Tumen River. The existence of a demarcated frontier between the Russia and Chinese Empires was much more transformative in scope for the political trajectories of the region that any interaction with seaborne Western Europeans and Americans: "the need to establish [on the Russian-Qing frontier] customs offices, control immigration, and build railways and ports resulted in the emergence of an arena for international competition and cooperation."⁵³¹ This arena of bilateral interaction only grew larger two years later. Through the Treaty of Peking, China was completely cut off from its previous access to the Sea of Japan, which was recognized as *de jure* Russian territory, granting Russia access to the Japanese Home Islands. From a faraway power in the forests of Siberia and volcanoes of Kamchatka, the Russian Empire had, over the span of two short years, become a permanent factor in East Asia's security landscape. The void of what was once the abode of tributary tribes of the Manchu heartland had, as soon as the poisonous mists of the Taiping and Nain Rebellions cleared, been replaced by the presence of one of Europe's major powers. More than any other event in the nineteenth century, the advent of Russia securing permanent borders with the members of the pre-modern East Asian international society, transformed the region from one of tenacious harmony to an area of open geopolitical and security competition. This would have profound effects on the historical trajectory of East Asia, in the nineteenth century and beyond, impacting all of this dissertation's 'critical junctures'.

Nowhere was this more evident than in the case of the Korean peninsula. Immediately after the incorporation of the Amur and Ussuri regions into the Russian Empire, Korea was faced with novel security concerns that inserted a novel dynamic into the East Asian region. With East Asia's new frontiers as dictated by the Treaties of Aigun and Peking, Northeast Asia become concerned with possible further Russian expansion. This was particularly acute in Korea as the government exhibited concern that Russia would encroach on its north-eastern frontier. This concern was

⁵²⁹ Platt, *Autumn in the Heavenly Kingdom*, pg. 71.

⁵³⁰ To comprehend the weight of ceding the Outer Manchuria homeland to foreigners, the Qing Dynasty, in the seventeenth century, built an entire array of fortifications, gates and outposts, entitled the Willow Palisade (as the embankments were lined with willows) to isolate Manchuria from the Han Chinese and Mongol populations.

⁵³¹ Matsuzato Kimitaka, "Russia as a Decisive Factor in the Modern History of Northeast Asia" in Matsuzato Kimitaka, *Russia and Its Northeast Asian Neighbors: China, Japan, and Korea, 1858-1945*, Lanham: Lexington Books, 2017, pg. xv.

augmented by the immediate challenge that the new areas of the Russian Far East acutely faced, namely, how to transform this vast territory on the far ends of the Asian continent into Russian territory. St. Petersburg possessed neither the human capital nor the logistic network to embark upon serious settlement of the newly acquired territory. Serendipity came to the assistance of the Russian Empire: given the chaotic political and difficult economic circumstances in Korea, a significant number of Koreans began emigrating to the Russian Far East to start new lives, leading the Korean government to become increasingly concerned over the flight of so-called “renegade Koreans” over the Tumen River into what was now Russian territory.⁵³² Between 1864-1867, Russian traders officially petitioned the Korean government to establish trade at the border town of Kyonghung. Such overtures alarmed Korean officials who refused to engage in discussions with the Russians, arresting and executing Koreans who had aided the “intruders” on what had been considered by the Qing and Korea as “forbidden land”.⁵³³ The Korean government repeatedly refused to address its concerns directly with Russia, however Seoul did ask the Chinese to raise the issue with St. Petersburg. In response, the Board of Rites in Beijing proclaimed an edict declaring that all Koreans on the banks of the Tumen “should be sent home”, with Korea responding with its “usual rapt gratitude”.⁵³⁴ In the pre-modern East Asian international society, a declaration by a Qing institution would have settled the matter. In this case, however, nothing happened, as the new Russian authorities in the Ussuri openly stated that the presence of Korean farms on Russian territory was no longer a concern of the Qing.⁵³⁵

The seemingly benign example of the case of voluntary and unexpected settlement of Korean economic migrants along the now Russian banks of the Tumen illustrates the dimensional shift in strategic thinking on East Asian security that had occurred. As noted by Wright, this question illustrated the problems that all East Asian states “faced in consequence of the conflict between the principles of the Tributary System and Western international practice.”⁵³⁶ The advent of the Opium Wars, but more profoundly, the Treaties of Aigun and Peking permanently pierced the isolation of the pre-modern East Asian international society. Now the pre-modern East Asian society shared a lengthy, and strategic, physical frontier with the Russian Empire, a pillar of the Westphalian international order. Although it did not spell the East Asian society’s immediate demise, it did signal the initiation of a period of co-existence of two models of international systemic relations, namely the pre-modern East Asian and the Westphalian. In practical terms, such co-existence is comprised of a “collision between two constitutive sets of interlined conceptual and legal regimes, institutional apparatuses and bureaucratic protocol”, with such changes difficult to discern given the glacial pace of change involved.⁵³⁷ However, despite the slow pace, systemic change did occur and it had a direct impact on the conduct of regional international relations, including the ability to foster the conditions necessary to the establishment of an RSO. The advent of Russian authority on the banks Amur and Ussuri was one of the main

⁵³² Kim, *The Last Phase of the East Asian World Order*, pg. 44.

⁵³³ In 1715, the Qing and Korea agreed to a treaty forbidding the settlement of the Yalu and Tumen Rivers to forestall any conflict between the two nations. Obviously, after the Treaty of Peking, the situation along the Tumen changed, removing any concept of “forbidden land” from the Russian perspective. See Choe Ching Young, *The Rule of the Taewongu’un*, Boston: Leiden, 1972, pp. 82-85

⁵³⁴ Wright, Mary, “The Adaptability of Ch’ing Diplomacy” in *The Journal of Asian studies*, 1958, Vol.17 (3), pg. 374.

⁵³⁵ Ibid.

⁵³⁶ Ibid., pp. 373-74.

⁵³⁷ Park Saeyoung, “The Death of Eastphalia, 1874”, pp. 240-241.

catalysts to set the gears of systemic change in motion, with each member of the pre-modern East Asian international society reevaluating the system and its respective security within it.

6.2.2. The End of Inequality: The Treaty of Kanghwa

For better or for worse, the Westphalian system had arrived in East Asia. As previously described, the Tokugawa Shogunate, at the time of East Asia's systemic collision with the West, occupied an ambivalent, even contradictory, position within the pre-modern international society. Confronted with the raw power of Western technology, and despite the preference of its leadership to resist militarily, Japan opted for a path of rapid Westernization and modernization "in order to deal with the West on an equal footing."⁵³⁸ Hence, the Meiji Restoration of 1868 was a key event that set Japan down the road of transforming an archaic feudal society into a modern state.⁵³⁹ Such a comprehensive metamorphosis likewise entailed the adoption of both western understanding and practice of foreign policy norms at the expense of those that had hitherto characterized international relations. Following the victory of the pro-Restoration forces over the pro-*bakufu* clans, the new Imperial Japanese government in Tokyo wasted no time in recasting its concept of international relations in accordance with Westphalian norms. During the terminal phase of the pre-modern East Asian international society, Tokugawa Japan conducted limited trade as well as congratulatory missions to Korea indirectly, through the intermediation of the Japanese Sō clan of Tsushima, with any contact between the *bakufu* and Korea being purposefully superficial in nature.⁵⁴⁰ In June 1868, Lord Sō received orders that "from now on all diplomatic relations must be through the Foreign Office in Osaka. This applies to relations with Korea."⁵⁴¹ In particular, Tsushima was commanded to refrain from using the seal it had been bequeathed by the Korean court for official communications, as this had been "a questionable practice incompatible with the Japanese national policy" and was notified that all future state messages would be sent in the name of the Japanese Emperor.⁵⁴²

As such, the Sō clan was subsequently instructed to embark on a final mission to "inform Korea that the Tokugawa Shogunate has been abolished and the new government is now established."⁵⁴³ Arriving to notify Korean officials about political changes in Japan, the Sō attempted to deliver the necessary documents, however, the Koreans refused to accept them stating that they were improperly written and, therefore in violation of existing protocol. In particular, the Koreans were displeased with the reference to the Japanese Imperial line, outright objecting to the Japanese use of the Chinese character for emperor ('*huangdi*'/皇帝) in reference to the Meiji Emperor as it had been exclusively used to denote the Chinese sovereign.⁵⁴⁴ The Koreans rudely rebuffed the Japanese request to establish "some new type of 'official' relations."⁵⁴⁵ Furthermore, they mocked the Japanese delegates for wearing Western clothing and deridingly called Japan a

⁵³⁸ Paine, S.C.M., The Japanese Empire: Grand Strategy from the Meiji Restoration to the Pacific War, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017, pg. 7.

⁵³⁹ Conroy, Hilary, The Japanese Seizure of Korea, 1868-1910: A Study of Realism and Idealism in International Relations, Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1960, pg. 17.

⁵⁴⁰ Kim, The Last Phase of the East Asian Order, pg. 113.

⁵⁴¹ Conroy, The Japanese Seizure of Korea, pg. 23.

⁵⁴² Kim, The Last Phase of the East Asian Order, pg. 116.

⁵⁴³ Conroy, The Japanese Seizure of Korea, pg. 23.

⁵⁴⁴ Miyoshi Jager, The Other Great Game, pg. 29.

⁵⁴⁵ Conroy, The Japanese Seizure of Korea, pg. 24.

‘country without laws’, placing it on the level of Western barbarians who, in the diplomatic parlance of contemporary times, were not schooled in the rituals of Confucianism.⁵⁴⁶ An Dong jun, the Korean local official responsible for Japanese affairs in Pusan, stated that the Japanese were “guilty of extraordinary arrogance and informed the Sō that he could not countenance the arrival of a Japanese mission that in any way departed from the usual procedures.”⁵⁴⁷ Although they had, for the last time, full authority from Tokyo, the Sō were unable to proceed further. Consequently, upon their return to Japan, the Sō informed the new Japanese authorities that “Korea does not accept the establishment of the new government. This is because they wish to avoid intercourse with the Imperial government. There is no other recourse than to negotiate with the Korean King face to face in his capital. This they may resist with force. Therefore, you must decide whether to adopt a strong policy.”⁵⁴⁸

The Meiji Restoration government was infuriated with Korea’s refusal to recognize Japan’s novel government. This was, obviously, due to simple political calculations but also, more importantly, because the Korean insults had hit a raw nerve. The Korean accusation that they had betrayed the values that underpinned the pre-modern East Asian international society highlighted to the Japanese that, the “old ways were inadequate to meet the exigencies of the new situation, and they were ashamed that they with samurai swords and *bushidō* spirit, could not hold back the Western wave.”⁵⁴⁹ The abruptness of Korean rejection therefore provoked an emotional rage among Japan’s Great Council of State, one that placed the importance of the Korean issue out proportion to all remaining foreign policy questions at hand. Hence, the Great Council’s attention was consumed with the question of the ‘Subdue Korea’ (*seikanron*/征韓論) policy, so forcefully advocated by Saigō Takamori (1828-1877), the great noble and samurai of the Meiji Restoration. Final decision on whether Japan should inflict righteous punishment for an insult by conquering Korea was deferred given the extended absence of Iwakura Tomomi (1825-1883), a leading contemporary Japanese statesman, who participated in the aptly named Iwakura Embassy from 1871 to 1873 that travelled around the world to learn from the West.⁵⁵⁰ Upon his return, divisions within the Grand Council on how to proceed obliged a decision by the Meiji Emperor. In his audience with the Emperor, Iwakura voiced his opposition to a military expedition being sent to Korea given the fact that the geopolitical landscape in the region had changed. Instead of focusing on the relationship with Korea, Iwakura mentioned the looming presence of Russian regional expansion and its implications for Japan: “at the moment, the incidents frequently occur in Sakhalin (*Kurafuto*/樺太). This is an emergency confronting us right now. It should receive our full attention.”⁵⁵¹ The Meiji Emperor agreed and, on 24 October 1873, issued an Imperial edict against launching any punitive mission to Korea. However, the desire to exact revenge on Korea for impugning Japanese honour was far from quelled. Japan might have temporarily allayed its concerns about other strategic issues, such as the expanding Russian presence in East Asia through the signature of the Treaty of St. Petersburg of 1875—ceding Sakhalin to Russia while Japan retained control of the Kuril Islands—however, a solution was still required for Korea. Despite the Meiji Emperor’s will, Japanese policy makers continued to propose a policy modelled on the

⁵⁴⁶ Miyoshi Jager, *The Other Great Game*, pg. 34.

⁵⁴⁷ Duus, Peter, *The Abacus and the Sword: The Japanese Penetration of Korea, 1895-1910*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995, pg. 31.

⁵⁴⁸ Gaimushō, *Dai Nihon Gaikō Bunsho*, pg. 217 in Conroy, *The Japanese Seizure of Korea*, pg. 23.

⁵⁴⁹ Conroy, *The Japanese Seizure of Korea*, pg. 18.

⁵⁵⁰ See Jensen, *The Making of Modern Japan*, pp. 355-361.

⁵⁵¹ Miyoshi Jager, *The Other Great Game*, pg. 38.

West's 'gunboat diplomacy' which involved the sending of an emissary backed by military force in order to force Korea into negotiations to accept what that Japanese nation state now understood as the "law of nations" and thereby force a diplomatic solution on Tokyo's terms.⁵⁵²

While military conformation did play a role in spreading Westphalian norms throughout the region, diplomatic negotiations played a much larger role in extinguishing the East Asian international society. While the threat of force did remotely overshadow negotiations in the 1870s, it was but a "minor wildfire of the Westphalian transformation", with the "communicative power of legal and political conflict usurping that of military action."⁵⁵³ Nevertheless, Japanese discussions on subduing Korea, as illustrated by the 1875 *Unyo* Incident, stoked consternation in both Beijing and Seoul with Tokyo seemingly harbouring aggressive intentions that, in case acted upon, could trigger unwanted Russian intervention.⁵⁵⁴ Hence, Emperor Meiji and Count Iwakura shared Li Hongzhang's preference for a diplomatic solution to Japanese-Korean tensions. In the pre-modern East Asian international society, China possessed suzerainty over Korea as a 'tributary homeland' and technically held the right to direct Korean foreign policy, although no such right existed that would permit meddling in Korean internal affairs. Hence, the Meiji Emperor elected to send Mori Arinori (1847-1889) as Special Envoy to Beijing to enlist Chinese assistance. The Zongli Yamen—the Qing's Office for the General Management of Affairs Concerning Various Countries—warned Mori that any Japanese advance against Korea would violate the articles of the Sino-Japanese Treaty of 1871. During negotiations with Li Hongzhang, Mori insisted that, from now on, Korea be considered a sovereign state under international law. Despite Mori's entreaties, Li had already advised his Korean counterparts in a confidential communication to have "forbearance and receive a Japanese envoy with proper courtesy."⁵⁵⁵

The result of the arrival of the long-awaited Japanese Delegation to Korea, led by General Kuroda Kiyotaka (1840-1900) and future Foreign Affairs Minister Inoue Kaoru (1836-1915), was the signature of the treaty of Kanghwa in 1876. The tone of the Delegation was borderline hostile, with Kuroda informing his Korean counterpart, Yun Chasung, that continued rejection of Japanese overtures to sign a treaty "was causing considerable amount of hatred against your country from our people and military men."⁵⁵⁶ The goal of Kuroda's mission was threefold: (i.) secure a treaty of friendship based on the equality of the two countries; (ii.) acquire freedom of navigation in and surveying of Korean waters for Japanese vessels; and (iii.) open a port in the Kanghwa area to Japanese trade.⁵⁵⁷ Simultaneously, Kuroda was handed strict instructions that if the Delegation were once again to be subjected to a barrage of insults, they were to withdraw to Tsushima. Should the Korean negotiators wish to, as per the tenets of the pre-modern East Asian international society, seek to solicit the opinion of the Qing before making any decisions, Kuroda and Inoue were to "point out that historically China had never interfered in Japanese-Korean relations"; should the Koreans insist, the Kuroda and Inoue were instructed to demand the right to station Japanese troops

⁵⁵² Duus, *The Abacus and the Sword*, pg. 32.

⁵⁵³ Park Saeyoung, "The Death of Eastphalia, 1874", pg. 246.

⁵⁵⁴ In September 1875, the Japanese ship, *Unyo*, crossed in Korean waters ostensibly on a survey mission yet ended up in a firefight with Korean shore batteries, resulting in Korean casualties and the burning of a town near the mouth of the Han River. Vogel, *China and Japan*, pg. 95.

⁵⁵⁵ Miyoshi Jager, *The Other Great Game*, pg. 50.

⁵⁵⁶ Ibid., pg. 51.

⁵⁵⁷ Kim, *The Last Phase of the East Asian World Order*, pg. 242.

in Korea until the Qing accorded an answer.⁵⁵⁸ The Meiji Government was adamant that equality between nation states, as per the Westphalian order, formed the basis of the new Japanese-Korean bilateral relationship, as laid out in Kuroda's instructions: "if peaceful relations are established, we should not be bound by the Tokugawa example, but should go one step further as follows: there should be an agreement of perpetual friendship and exchange of diplomatic compliments on the same level."⁵⁵⁹ This novel agreement foresaw Japanese and Korean Ministers residing in their respective capitals, having been accorded the same diplomatic ranking. In short, this entailed nothing less than a complete transformation of the Japanese-Korean bilateral relationship and its fixation to the tenets of Westphalian statecraft.

The Korean Court, following long deliberations amid chaotic domestic circumstances, opted to pursue a policy of acceptance towards Japanese demands, with Right State Counsellor of the Joeson Dynasty, Pak Kyu-su, acting as this strategy's chief advocate. Japan's novel diplomatic terminology and protocol, according to his argument, "did not affect Korean national dignity and honour."⁵⁶⁰ In any case, despite the view that, in this new incarnation, the Japanese had become "the mirror image of the Westerners", such questions were seen as trivial matters when Korea was unprepared to properly resist any foreign intervention.⁵⁶¹ Japan proceeded to put forward a thirteen-article draft treaty, with Inoue stressing that the document was based on "'international law' and that, under international law, Korea was an 'independent state enjoying the same rights as Japan.'"⁵⁶² The Korean Delegation did not understand the meaning of Inoue's insistence and asked the Japanese Delegation what it exactly meant by the word 'treaty'. Japan and Korea had traded for centuries in the absence of a 'treaty' and the Korean negotiators saw no need to conclude one now. Yet, following three rounds of negotiations, on 27 February 1876, the Korean Delegation agreed to sign the Japan-Korea Treaty of Amity or what would be known to posterity as the Treaty of Kanghwa.

It was a treaty between the "Government of Korea" and the "Government of Japan" and marked the dawn of the Westphalian concept of independence breaking over East Asia. Consequently, its articles were groundbreaking, both in terms of international law and the conception of foreign relations.⁵⁶³ Article I stipulated the following: "Korea, being an independent state, enjoys the same sovereign rights as does Japan. In order to prove the sincerity of friendship existing between the two nations, their intercourse shall henceforth be carried on in terms of equality and courtesy".⁵⁶⁴ With this first article, the Treaty of Kanghwa represented a major breakthrough for Japan in its quest for diplomatic reform, succeeding in imposing upon Korea an "unequal treaty", one analogous to the Western treaties that the West had unilaterally imposed

⁵⁵⁸ Ibid., pg. 243.

⁵⁵⁹ Conroy, *The Japanese Seizure of Korea*, pg. 63.

⁵⁶⁰ Kim, *The Last Phase of the East Asian World Order*, pg. 243.

⁵⁶¹ Palais, James, *Politics and Policy in Traditional Korea*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1975, pg. 262.

⁵⁶² Kim, *The Last Phase of the East Asian World Order*, pg. 246.

⁵⁶³ Park, "The Death of Eastphalia, 1874", pg. 252.

⁵⁶⁴ The English version is from the uncredited translation from "Treaty of Kanghwa with Japan and Regulations, Etc (1876-1881)." 1895, cited in Park, "The Death of Eastphalia, 1874", pg. 251. The original signed copy of the Japan-Korea Treaty of Amity (in Literary Sinitic) can be accessed at the Japan Center for Asian Historical Records, National Archives of Japan

<https://www.jacar.archives.go.jp/aj/meta/listPhoto?LANG=eng&BID=F2013100114465142654&ID=M2013100114465142657&REFCODE=B13091001400>.

upon the Qing.⁵⁶⁵ Gone was the intermediary role of the lords of Tsushima from the times of old. Its provisions would forthwith govern the contours of the bilateral relationship, with Korea opening two more ports to Japanese trade in addition to Pusan, granting Japanese consular jurisdiction over trade ports and the right for Japanese vessels to survey Korean waters. Japan thereby recognized Korea's Westphalian independence. For Korea, this marked conceding to the loss of real sovereign power that accompanied its entrance as an independent, Westphalian nation state into the global system.

On the surface, Article III of the Treaty of Kanghwa appears to be benign: "henceforth, regarding the official communication (*kongmun*/公文) between the two countries: Japan will use the language of *their* country; for a period of ten years from now, there shall be a Literary Sinitic (*hanmun*/漢文) version. The Government of Korea will use their real language (*jinmun*/真文)."⁵⁶⁶ Hence the Treaty marked the first occasion when Literary Sinitic (classical Chinese)—the "Latin" of the pre-modern East Asian international society did not constitute the exclusive language of legal documents. Prior to the advent of the Westphalian concept of a nation state's arrival in East Asia, the use of a particular script did not signify the merging of national culture and identity as came to be the case post-Wilsonian incarnation of international relations. The usage of classic Chinese implied in no way any link with the Imperial Chinese body politic and the idea that "writing in *hanmun* could possibly even make a Korean less than Korean would have been strange."⁵⁶⁷ Literary Sinitic was, like Latin in the Western High Middle Ages, a common mode of communication that spanned an entire region and was regularly employed to facilitate business, state and cultural connectivity within the region. In short, *hanmun* was the vehicle through which the compatible social orders of pre-modern East Asia were accorded communicative expression. The Treaty of Kanghwa did away with this, prescribing through Article III a short-term horizon of ten-years after which the use of Literary Sinitic would be abandoned. In its stead, Japan and Korea would fall back on the exclusive use of their own respective languages, fracturing the past heritage of a common means of communication for one that bolstered the ties between the use of national language and independent, Westphalian statehood. Article III therefore marked the official dénouement of the use of a common language between the polities of East Asia and the entrance of Westphalian cultural norms into contemporary diplomatic parlance.

In addition to its above two articles, the Treaty of Kanghwa had overall "epoch-making significance in the history of Japanese-Korean relations and far-reaching implications for future international intercourse in East Asia."⁵⁶⁸ The bilateral relationship between Tokyo and Seoul had now been cast, as illustrated through Articles I and III, in diplomatic and systemic concepts that were entirely Westphalian in both scope and character. As such, it signified a complete repudiation of the pre-modern East Asian international society: while China's suzerainty over Korea was not openly rejected, Japan could now legally assert its authority over the peninsula as, per the tenets of Westphalia, an equal member of the international order, with the traditional concepts of pre-modern international relations no longer finding traction in diplomatic intercourse.⁵⁶⁹ Going

⁵⁶⁵ Kim, *The Last Phase of the East Asian World Order*, pg. 252.

⁵⁶⁶ *Treaty of Peace and Friendship between the Empire of Japan and the Kingdom of Corea (Korea), Treaty of Kanghwa, Kokato Treaty*, 26 February 1876, <https://worldjpn.net/documents/texts/pw/18760226.T1E.html>.

⁵⁶⁷ Park, "The Death of Eastphalia, 1874", pg. 253.

⁵⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, pg. 253.

⁵⁶⁹ Kim, *The Last Phase of the East Asian World Order*, pg. 338

forward, the basis for legally binding treaties and agreements would be Western international law, with concepts that were products of Western historical tradition and Westphalian concepts of language in regards to diplomatic protocol and negotiation. The Qing court was very much aware of the implications to its own position in Korea, traditional Sino-Korean relations as well as the wider implications to East Asia at large. Failing to come to an agreement, however, would have risked armed conflict between Japan and Korea, an event that brought with it the danger of Chinese intervention. Given the scope of domestic unrest, having recently emerged from the devastating Taiping Civil War and still enduring the final phases of the Xinjiang Muslim Rebellion (1862-1877), China was simply not able to muster enough strength to mount a military challenge to counter Japanese ambitions. Ergo, despite its negative implications to the Qing, Beijing was in no position to make any objections to this open Japanese challenge to China's traditional regional role in both Korea and over the region as a whole.

6.2.3. A Strategy for Korea: Novel Ideas and their Consequences

The Treaty of Kanghwa not only acted as an anchor that firmly established Westphalian systemic principles in East Asia, but also served as a base to further entrench Japanese strategic interests in Korea. The advent of the sudden Russian burst of expansion into East Asia and the introduction of Westphalian systemic norms had transformed one of the region's most isolated dynasties, in an incredibly short time span of two decades, into an arena of nascent geopolitical competition. In this novel geopolitical atmosphere, it was perhaps inevitable that the first shades of security cooperation, approaching the concept of a RSO as defined by this dissertation, began to assume an embryonic form. Given China's weakness following its series of prolonged internal upheavals, the Qing court—as evidenced by its acquiescence of the Treaty of Kanghwa—observed the possibility of foreign intervention on the Korean Peninsula with growing consternation. Li Hongzhang expressed anxiety that Korea could fall victim to further Japanese expansion, especially in the wake of the Japanese seizure of the Ryukyu Kingdom. While the Meiji Government declared that the island kingdom of Ryukyu was integral Japanese territory in 1872, the façade of independence, and therefore a tributary relationship with China, was tolerated until the Japanese incorporated it as Okinawa Prefecture in 1879, becoming the first East Asian state to have its ancient tributary ties forcefully terminated. Seeking to fend off any Japanese incursions towards Korea, Li underlined that “the trend toward global intercourse is irreversible and not in man's power to check” and recommended that Korea engage in signing commercial treaties with Western powers so that their respective economic interests would stave off any overt Japanese intervention in Korea.⁵⁷⁰

China's concern was not solely directed at Japan. The tension with the Russian Empire surrounding its occupation of the Ili Valley led to an acute crisis with the threat of military intervention looming in the background.⁵⁷¹ The Russian Imperial Navy continued to build-up

⁵⁷⁰ Ibid., pg. 285.

⁵⁷¹ Prolonged disorder in Xinjiang negatively impacted Russian economic and security interests in Central Asia, leading the Russian Army to, in a quest to maintain order, cross the border with the Qing and occupy the Ili Valley. St. Petersburg agreed to return the territory after the Qing had successfully quelled the Xinjiang Muslim Rebellion and was able to guarantee future order. Following the successful suppression of the insurrection, the Qing, in 1878, requested the Russian Tsar to fulfill his promise. As this request took Russian officials entirely by surprise, a diplomatic dispute ensued that culminated in 1879 with the threat of war. A mutually satisfactory treaty was signed in 1881 that facilitated a Russian withdrawal.

capacities at its new founded Pacific base at Vladivostok. The Chinese court sought to elucidate seemingly intransigent Korean officials as to the dangers that might lay dormant in Russian regional aspirations. These concerns were also shared by the Qing's new Japanese rivals, with the Meiji Emperor's diplomatic representative in Pusan, Hanabusa Yoshitada (1842-1917), expressing alarm in 1877 that St. Petersburg would use the Russo-Turkish War (1877-1878) to pre-emptively seize Port Lazarev, better known as the Korean city of Wonsan. Amid this growing regional alarm, King Kojong dispatched a diplomatic mission to Japan to negotiate several demands that had arisen following the signature of the Treaty of Kanghwa, first and foremost tariffs. The Korean Delegation was headed by Kim Hong-jip (1842-1896), one of the Korean court's most pro-reform officials. While in Japan, Kim was handed a groundbreaking paper by a Chinese diplomat stationed in Tokyo, Huang Zunxiang (1848-1905), where, for the first time, a Chinese vision of Korea's novel position in the emerging modern international order in East Asia was articulated.⁵⁷² Entitled "*A Strategy for Korea*", Huang based his policy paper entirely on new realities, namely the systemic tenets and diplomatic principles of the modern Westphalian system. Huang envisioned the use of the 'balance of power' principle, one that has been recently introduced to Qing intellectual circles through W.A.P. Martin's translation of Henry Wheaton's *Elements of International Law*.⁵⁷³ Armed with such unorthodox ideas, Huang's policy offered an overview of the new international order taking shape in Asia, one which remained poised to supplant the pre-modern East Asian international society in its entirety. While doing so, Huang's ideas offer an analysis of the challenges posed by such a fundamental change and proposed possible remedies to the Korean court.

Huang's treatise, while employing the language and historical metaphors from the pre-modern international society had its policy gaze resting firmly on contemporary challenges and mirrored the general angst that Russian eastward expansion had provoked amongst the nations of East Asia: "Thwarted in its Western expansionist aims, Russia has suddenly turned its attention eastwards. Over the last ten years, it has taken control of Sakhalin and the eastern part of Heilongjiang, at the expense of Japan and China respectively. It has also secured a highly strategic position by deploying its troops in the Tumen River estuary. Given Russia's resolve in these operations, its ambitions in Asia leave no room for doubt."⁵⁷⁴ Cognizant of Korea's strategic positioning in East Asia, Huang argued that any further attempts to push forward Russian regional expansion would start with an encroachment on Korea: "today [Russia] has set its sights on East Asia and Korea is about to pay the price."⁵⁷⁵ Consequently, the Chinese diplomat viewed it imperative that Korea, and the region as a whole, urgently prepare to meet this Russian challenge as Huang underlined that "should a major crisis erupt in Korea, its repercussions would make themselves felt in China and in Japan."⁵⁷⁶ In order to meet such an unprecedented challenge, Huang advocated for Korea to "self-strengthen herself by having intimate relations with China, association with Japan and an alliance with the United States."⁵⁷⁷ Huang's rationale was based on the systemic concepts of the Westphalian order as view through the now fading lens of the old pre-modern international society: China had always acted as the protector of Korea, with Seoul having

⁵⁷² Miyoshi Jager, *The Other Great Game*, pg. 59.

⁵⁷³ Ibid.

⁵⁷⁴ Huang Zunxian & Guex, Samuel (translator and annotations), "Stratégie Pour la Corée", *Asiatische Studien*, 2020, Vol. 74 (3), pg. 717.

⁵⁷⁵ Ibid., pg. 718.

⁵⁷⁶ Ibid., pp.717-718.

⁵⁷⁷ Ibid., pg. 718.

been China's tributary state for over a millennium. Yet, Huang viewed the Sino-Korean relationship as forming something more profound than China possessed with other tributary states such as Vietnam or Cambodia. This was due to "deep friendship, a common culture, similar political and religious systems, as well as their close geographic proximity" that formed the base of compatible social norms that straddled both nations.⁵⁷⁸ Hence, with China and Korea presenting themselves as one family towards the Russian Empire, Huang argued that St. Petersburg would be obliged to exhibit self-restraint.

Huang advocated that Korea embrace friendly relations with Japan to promote his proposed grand strategy, recommending that Seoul fulfill its obligations under the Treaty of Kanghwa in order to decrease the likelihood of a Russian advance, while justifying such actions through historical analogies drawn from the Warring States Period of Chinese Antiquity, with Russia occupying the position of the metaphorical 'Qin'.⁵⁷⁹ Together, Japan and Korea would be able to promote "great things". The idea of an alliance with the United States was seen by Huang an additional element to safeguard Korean independence from any Russian, as well as Western European threat. Unlike the contemporary European powers, even when analyzing its recent foreign policy actions in East Asia (the opening of Japan), the United States was viewed by Huang as being the sole power that "has upheld justice...and has renounced all hegemonic ambition."⁵⁸⁰ As such, the United States could play a key role in ensuring that no foreign power would be able to achieve any aggressive ambitions directed at Korea. As for Korean self-strengthening, this would be accomplished through the economic cooperation between China and Korea, with Japan playing educative role as a source of Western learning: "it is necessary to encourage Chinese merchants to Pusan, Wonsan and Incheon to hinder a monopoly by Japanese merchants".⁵⁸¹ Regarding the military sphere, Huang advocated even tighter cooperation, with the Korean ground and naval forces "adopting the military banner of the Qing that should be considered as the national symbol."⁵⁸² Huang's strategy mirrored China's new "strategy for Korea" that envisioned a strong, regional counterbalance against the perceived Russian threat. As such it reflected the idea of Li Hongzhang and other leading members of the Qing court who sought to strengthen China's strategic position domestically and diplomatically.⁵⁸³ In doing so, China was consciously making a major policy shift away from its traditional role of non-interference in domestic affairs that had been a hallmark of the pre-modern East Asian international society. This had the effect of modify China's authority over Korea from one of a symbolic/ceremonial significance to one that entailed concrete authority. At the same, the path that the Qing was proposed was bold indeed. At the dawn of the Westphalian age in East Asia, therefore, the Qing court was, through Huang, proposing their Korean counterparts to engage in basic policy elements that, according to this dissertation, could have laid along the path to stable peace and, eventually, the formation of an RSO.

Huang's treatise did not, however, produce the desired effect. Returning to Seoul, Kim presented the strategy to King Kojong and sought to convince the young king on the merits of its implementation. At the same, after having his current and past ministers read him Huang's treatise,

⁵⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁷⁹ "When the Kingdoms of Han, Zhao, and Wei were aligned against the Qin, it did not dare advance eastwards". Ibid., pg. 719

⁵⁸⁰ Ibid., pp. 719-720.

⁵⁸¹ Ibid., pg. 30.

⁵⁸² Ibid.

⁵⁸³ Kim, *The Last Phase of the East Asian World Order*, pg. 296.

King Kojong became convinced that his nation's isolationist foreign policy was no longer tenable and that Korea should begin to cultivate relationships with the Western powers.⁵⁸⁴ Indeed, Korea, having created a new office to handle the country's foreign affairs to do so (the *T'ongnigimu Amun* or the Office for the Management of State Affairs), signed the Treaty of Peace, Amity, Commerce and Navigation with the US on 22 May 1882, after much Chinese encouragement and active diplomatic involvement. At the same time, the opening of Korea also exposed its fragile domestic situation, previously shielded by its tributary status within the pre-modern international society, to the brute force of international geopolitical competition that Huang's strategy had sought to avoid.

6.2.4. The Imo Rebellion and the End of the Pre-Modern International Society

While King Kojong was impressed with Huang's treatise, others were decidedly not. Korea's Confucian scholars were adamantly opposed to the ideas presented in the strategy and oppositions to its novel tenets grew, the most notable being the "Memorial of Ten Thousand Men of Kyongsang-do" by Yi Man So'n, a Confucian scholar. The author condemned Huang's ideas as nonsense, arguing that Korea had no reason to like or dislike the "Russian barbarians"; for bringing such ideas into Korea, Yi Man So'n demanded that Kim Hong-jip be punished and all copies of Huang's booklets burned.⁵⁸⁵ It was easy for the Korean ruler to imprison the Confucian scholar under house arrest for his insolence; less straightforward was how to dispel the growing outrage amongst the Korean literati aimed at the King and his advisors. The disenchanted intellectuals began to coalesce around King Kojong's father, Grand Prince Hungson Taewongun, who planned to use their rage as a vehicle to return to power, especially given the Grand Prince's proven penchant for adhering to a strict isolationist foreign policy. In 1881, the literati attempted to replace the King with his elder, illegitimate brother, however the conspiracy was uncovered and all plotters, including the King's brother, were executed.⁵⁸⁶

This attempt to depose King Kojong did not entail any active collusion of foreign powers, it was not long however before the increasingly unstable domestic situation on the Korean Peninsula would provide an occasion for direct foreign involvement. The woeful state of Korean finances had deteriorated to such an extent that the military payrolls and soldiers' rations in Seoul had not been met for a full fourteen months, save for the needs of the King's personal—and Japanese trained—guard, the *Pyŏlgigun* (Special Skill Force). The Japanese involvement stirred up xenophobic tendencies in a society being ravaged by crop failures and economic hardship that had been popularly blamed on the opening of foreign trade. When the regular soldiers finally began to receive their rations, they discovered that the rice had been tampered with and mixed with chaff. The soldiers' anger boiled over into open rage and resulted in the Imo Incident of 1882 when, on 23 July 1882, exasperated Korean rioters went on a rampage. Grand Prince Hungson quickly seized upon the riot as an opportunity to regain power and emboldened the rioters to take even more audacious steps, namely to murder Queen Min—the icon of corruption in the contemporary popular eye—and to attack the Japanese legation and eliminate Japanese influence from Korea.⁵⁸⁷

⁵⁸⁴ Miyoshi Jager, *The Other Great Game*, pg. 61.

⁵⁸⁵ Lee, Peter (ed.), *The Sourcebook of Korean Civilization*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1996, pp. 335-336.

⁵⁸⁶ Chien, Frederick Foo, *The Opening of Korea: a study of Chinese Diplomacy, 1876-1885*, Hamden CN: Shoe String Press, 1967, pg. 96.

⁵⁸⁷ Kim, *The Last Phase of the East Asian World Order*, pg. 317.

In the ensuing frenzy, the mob stormed the Royal Palace and assaulted the Japanese legation where they sought out and cut down Horimoto Reizo, the drill instructor of the King's despised Special Skill Force, and proceeded to burn the building down. What had originated as a localized riot was now metamorphosizing into a full military insurrection. Hanabusa Yoshitada, now Japanese chargé d'affaires in Seoul, and a small group of legation personnel fought their way through the siege and make their way to Incheon where they were attacked again by local troops before being evacuated by ship to Japan. All in all, seven Japanese died during the riots and five had been wounded.⁵⁸⁸ In the meantime, on 25 July 1882, Kojong capitulated to the popular demands, announcing that "from now on, all official business, large or small, shall be reported to the Taewongun for decision."⁵⁸⁹ As calm was returning to the streets of Seoul, regional capitals were awaking to assess the geopolitical consequences of a domestic situation that had spun out of control, this time, with severe ramifications for regional peace and security.

The Grand Prince Hungson, as one of his first acts of state, was to abide by the tenets of the pre-modern international society and petitioned China for official investiture of his new government.⁵⁹⁰ Li Hongzhang was, since shortly before the Korean riots, on leave observing filial piety due to his mother's passing and his replacement, Zhang Shusheng, was not in the loop on the Korean file. Hasabusa cabled the news of the attack on the Delegation and murder of Japanese citizens to Tokyo upon his arrival in Nagasaki on 29 July 1882. Alarmed at the attack on Japanese property and lives, the Japanese government opted for military intervention, sending four warships and a battalion of soldiers to Korea. The Qing had learned of the happenings in Korea through its Ambassador in Tokyo, Li Shuchang, from where it also cabled confirmation that the Japanese were intending to intervene. The Zongli Yamen quickly grasped the gravity of the situation and Zhang Shusheng sanctioned the dispatch of two Chinese warships and 2,000 Anhwei Army troops to Korea, marking the first time China had ordered its forces into the peninsula since 1636. The decision was based on the Qing's assessment that Japan had long been seeking to establish control over Korea through the assistance of pro-Japanese Koreans. Should Japan be allowed to oppress the rebels on behalf of the Korean government, this pro-Japanese faction would gain a dominant position in the Korean government, thereby damaging China's influence in Korea at the expense of Japan.⁵⁹¹ Yet the actions of the Grand Prince posed even greater problems, namely the deposition of King Kojong's government that had been given formal investiture by the Qing. Once the Chinese expeditionary force arrived in Seoul, the Qing generals organized an audience with the Grand Prince and expressed the *tianzi*'s deep displeasure with his political machinations for they went against the principles of the pre-modern East Asian international society. The Chinese accused him of conspiring against the authority of the Chinese Emperor by deposing a Qing-invested ruler, with the Chinese negotiator Ma declaring "your sin is unpardonable. Considering the fact that you are the father of the King, we will not press hard on you. Please go to Tianjin to receive whatever punishment is to be bestowed upon you."⁵⁹² Thereafter, the Grand Prince was carted off by Chinese soldiers and the political status quo ante was resumed, with King Kojong once again placed on the throne.

⁵⁸⁸ Miyoshi Jager, *The Other Great Game*, pg. 68.

⁵⁸⁹ Kim, *The Last Phase of the East Asian Order*, pg. 317.

⁵⁹⁰ Paine, *The Sino-Japanese War*, pg. 54.

⁵⁹¹ Kim, *The Last Phase of the East Asian World Order*, pg. 320.

⁵⁹² Djang, Chu, "Chinese Suzerainty: A Study of Diplomatic Relations between China and her Vassal States 1870-1875", PhD diss., John Hopkins University, 1935, pg. 152.

The riots in Seoul marked a new era in regional relations, especially regarding China's foreign policy in its immediate neighbourhood. A week after learning of the riots in Seoul, the Qing opted for Chinese intervention in Korea, with the Grand Prince being forcefully removed precisely one month after he regained power. None of these policy decisions were based on negotiations with, nor were they sanctioned by, the Korean government. As noted, the Qing had already abandoned its policy of non-interference in the foreign policy of tributary states by assisting the Korean government negotiate its Western treaties. Nevertheless every action the Qing undertook regarding Korea could, somehow, be justified within the framework of the pre-modern East Asian international society.⁵⁹³ Once the legitimate ruler had, however, been returned to the throne, the question of the future contours of Chinese policy towards Korea was placed in sharp relief. While Li Hongzhang ardently sought to return to the tradition pattern of bilateral relations as soon as possible, with China providing behind the scenes advice and policy guidance, the regional situation had changed beyond recognition.⁵⁹⁴ Conservative forces in the Qing court argued for the establishment of a much different bilateral relationship, one that lay well outside the boundaries of traditional Sino-Korean tributary relationship. Arguments were put forward advocating for the direct incorporation of Korea into the Qing Empire or, alternatively, the stationing of a Qing high commissioner in Korea to oversee the operation of the Korean government and permanently station the Qing military on its territory.⁵⁹⁵ As such, Huang's regional strategy to protect Korean sovereignty from regional challenges through sowing the seeds of stable peace and regional security cooperation lay in ruins and, ironically, assisted in achieving the exact opposite effect. China's newfound substantive authority of Korea had been, albeit inadvertently, transformed through the Soldiers Riots of 1882: instead of maintaining the Sino-Korean bilateral relationship as one based on the tenets of the pro-modern East Asian international society, the Qing court opted to assert outright political control over the peninsula as the new form of Chinese suzerainty.

6.2.5. Changing Realities on the Korean Peninsula

While Huang's treatise laid out a possible path towards eventual stable peace, the consequences of the dissemination of his treatise played a role in furthering the already rife political chaos on the Korean peninsula. The expansion of the borders of the Russian Empire to the banks of the Tumen River sparked geopolitical competition between the nations of the now waning pre-modern international society, transforming Korea into a geopolitical battleground. Instead of fostering cooperation, as implied by Huang's treaties, the chronic political instability in Korea left the nation vulnerable to outside intervention, both planned and unintentional. The Imo Incident illustrated how civil disorder, spun out of control, enabled an unplanned military intervention by both China and Japan, giving their dormant geopolitical competition concrete expression. A different systemic logic was gaining traction.

⁵⁹³ Larsen, Kirk, *Tradition, Treaties and Trade: Qing Imperialism and Choson Korea*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2008, pg. 95.

⁵⁹⁴ Deuchler, Martina, *Confucian Gentlemen and Barbarian Envoys*, Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1983, pp. 138-140.

⁵⁹⁵ Ibid.

Qing and Japanese soldiers were now stationed in Korea, with the Chinese acquiring more and more overt control of the Korean administration, leaving whatever traces had been left of the hierarchical nature of the pre-international East Asian society in tatters. In the wake of the chaos of 1882, Qing officials redoubled upon their inherent claims to suzerainty over the peninsula by concluding a commercial treaty that brought with it lopsided advantages to Chinese commercial interests at the expense of other nations: the Regulations for Maritime and Overland Trade between Qing and Korean Subjects secured Chinese merchants the right to live and work in Seoul and to travel into Korea's interior, as well as according China the favourable tariff rate of five percent.⁵⁹⁶ This agreement marked this first time that the Qing "proactively sought to promote Chinese commercial interests beyond its borders through the use of [Westphalian] treaties and international law."⁵⁹⁷ The Japanese viewed such policies as trying to reverse the opening of Korea that Tokyo has secured with the 1876 Treaty of Kanghwa. The respective Korean policies of the Qing and Japan, both in military and economic terms, were now diametrically opposed. It was not long before tensions, once again, boiled over. The Japanese expressed their impatience to the Qing on the pace of the reform of the Korean administration. With the adoption of the Westphalian system by Japan, its government had become a source of inspiration for the Korean liberal movement. With China embroiled in the Sino-French War (1884-1885), the Japanese adopted a more aggressive stance towards Korea, with the newly appointed Japanese Minister in Korea, Takazoe Shinichiro (1842-1917), openly voicing Tokyo's staunch support for the Korean reform movement.⁵⁹⁸ Japan backed such words with tangible action, lending backing to the 1884 plans of two Korean reformers, Pak Yong-hyo and Kim Ok-Kyun, to kidnap the King (known as the Kapsin Coup) and install a new, pro-Western government. It failed completely. When tidings of the Japanese-assisted planned coup d'état spread in the Korean capital, its enraged inhabitants attacked the Japanese legation and, once again, burned it to the ground, with the Japanese staff having to be evacuated.

With calm having returned to Korea, the Qing and Japan teetered on the brink of war. The Chinese sought to further enhance its special status over Korea and, in 1885, nominated Yuan Shikai (1859-1916) as Imperial Resident in Seoul, who pursued a strict policy of enhancing Qing ritual suzerainty and strengthening China's already solid informal imperial rule.⁵⁹⁹ Chinese efforts in this regard were aided by Japanese foreign policy according top priority to the renegotiation of the 'unequal treaties' with the West. The Meiji government opted to dispatch one of its senior statesmen, Itō Hirobumi (1841-1909), to Beijing as Ambassador to attempt to bridge the substantial differences that had now emerged between both countries. As Itō stated upon his arrival for negotiations at Tianjin, "Let us first talk about the future...The reason we have soldiers in Korea is due to the violence of the Korean people, but we do not expect to continue this forever...It is likely that in the future if there are Japanese and Chinese soldiers in Korea, there will be trouble between them. This is as logical as for a fire to burn. Therefore if we want friendly relations these forces should be withdrawn."⁶⁰⁰ Lengthy discussions between Itō and Li Hongzhang aimed at resolving the contemporary quagmire and the future of both nations on the peninsula resulted in the Convention of Tianjin of 18 April 1885, also known as the "Li-Itō Convention".

⁵⁹⁶ Miyoshi Jager, *The Other Great Game*, pg. 75.

⁵⁹⁷ Larsen, *Tradition, Treaties and Trade*, pg. 90.

⁵⁹⁸ Chien, *The Opening of Korea*, pp. 149-150.

⁵⁹⁹ Larsen, *Tradition, Treaties and Trade*, pg. 132.

⁶⁰⁰ Conroy, *The Japanese Seizure of Korea*, pg. 173.

The Convention of Tianjin, following the Westphalian example already set by the Treaty of Kanghwa, was drafted in two official versions, both in Japanese and Literary Sinitic.⁶⁰¹ Under Article I, the Qing and Japan agreed to withdraw its forces to predetermined positions in Korea (Masanpo and Incheon respectively) within four months, while Article II permitted, with the explicit agreement of China and Japan, the modernization of the Korean armed forces under instructors who possessed neither Japanese nor Chinese nationality. At the same time, should the situation in Korea once again deteriorate, Article III of the Convention foresaw that both countries would notify each other if they opted to deploy military forces to the peninsula: “In case any disturbances of a grave nature occurring in Korea, which necessitates the respective countries or either of them to send troops to Korea, it is hereby understood that they shall give, each to the other, previous notice in writing of their intention so to do and that, after the matter is settled, they shall withdraw their troops and not further station them there.”⁶⁰² As a result, the Convention of Tianjin accorded equal right of military intervention in Korea to both Tokyo and Beijing. During the negotiations, Itō had also attempted to insert the explicit mention of Korean sovereignty or a reference to the political autonomy of Korea into the written agreement.⁶⁰³ The Qing refused; however Japanese negotiators may have assumed that bequeathing Japan the same rights as China to intervene militarily for all intents and purposes implied the same.

While averting any further escalation, stability between the two powers was established on the Korean Peninsula largely at the cost of China’s pre-modern image of traditional suzerainty. The Convention effectively eliminated the Qing’s claim to possess exclusive influence over the Joseon Dynasty and transformed what had been viewed as China’s closest tributary state into what was in effect a co-protectorate of both Tokyo and Beijing.⁶⁰⁴ With both Beijing and Tokyo having the right to dispatch forces to Korea in case of need, Japan’s political influence, in principle, was placed on equal ground with China’s. In practice, however, the Convention of Tianjin obliged Japanese acquiescence to the unprecedented increase in Qing control over the Joseon Dynasty and Korean domestic and cultural politics at large. Responding to the growing Japanese challenge, the millennia of hierarchy, tributary relations and non-interference that characterized Sino-Korean relations in the pre-modern East Asian international society, rapidly gave way to the heavy-handed assertion of Chinese hegemony over Korea through the rule of “his Imperial Chinese Majesty’s Resident in Korea”, Yuan Shikai, who dominated Joseon politics between 1885-1894 as the de facto director of Korean affairs. Instead of laying the ground for stable peace, Huang’s “Strategy for Korea” inadvertently paved the way for towards escalation of tensions and increase of geopolitical rivalry over the Korean peninsula. Although the path towards potential conflict had been temporarily stabilized through the Convention of Tianjin, the overall international political climate as well as heightened level of geopolitical competition over the Korean peninsula, could not permit it to be abandoned entirely. As a result, the next serious confrontation over the fate of Korea would quickly escalate into the outbreak of the First Sino-Japanese War.

⁶⁰¹ *The Convention of Tientsin*, 18 April 1885, <https://worldjpn.net/documents/texts/pw/18850418.T1E.html>.

⁶⁰² *Ibid.*

⁶⁰³ Conroy, *The Japanese Seizure of Korea*, pg. 174.

⁶⁰⁴ Hsü, Immanuel, *The Rise of Modern China*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999, pg. 331.

6.3. The Outbreak and Course of the Sino-Japanese War

Reflected in the logic of antecedent conditions lie also the origins of wars: underlying grievances between powers give way to policies aimed at pursuing mutually exclusive foreign policies that often suddenly give rise to a proximate cause that sparks an open military conflict. The above chapters have charted out the underlying causes of conflict between the Qing and Meiji Japan. For open military action to be resorted to, an immediate spark was required. The continued political instability in Korea, even in the wake of the Convention of Tianjin, continued unabated and, in January 1894, the greatest rebellion in Korean history broke out in its southwestern provinces against the Korean government's oppressive taxes and incompetent financial administration.⁶⁰⁵ Its supporters were adherents of a religious movement that dubbed itself 'Tonghak' or Eastern Learning whose tenets demanded the prosecution of corrupt officials and the expulsion of foreigners from Korea.⁶⁰⁶ By the end of May, the Tonghaks had already occupied the city of Jeonju, the region's major urban centre, with Korean officials recognizing that the domestic situation had, once again, decidedly spun out of control. This had likewise been confirmed by the mission of a Japanese General Staff Officer who had been dispatched to Pusan for a firsthand assessment of the situation. On 20 May 1894, he reported witnessing an organized rebellion, led by a rebel army armed with some modern weapons and in possession of an effective command and control system that was determined to overthrow the government. As the prospect of an openly anti-Japanese faction seizing power was unacceptable to Tokyo's interests, he recommended sending troops to protect the more than 9,000 Japanese nationals in Korea.⁶⁰⁷ In the meantime, the Korean court had come to the conclusion that its own forces were not sufficient to quell the rebels and, at the recommendation of the Qing's all-powerful Envoy to Seoul, Yuan Shikai, sought to petition the Qing Emperor, according to the tenets of the pre-modern East Asian international society, to expedite military assistance. The Qing responded to King Kojong's request, however, Li Hongzhang, ever attempting to avert war with Japan, ordered Chinese force not to protect Seoul, which would have most upset Tokyo, but to instead head off a possible Tonghak march to Seoul.⁶⁰⁸ When the Tonghak rebels received word that both the Qing and Japan were pondering open military intervention in Korea, they hastily agreed to a ceasefire with government officials on 1 June 1894, thereby theoretically depriving both Tokyo and Beijing of any pretext for involvement. Practically, however, the gears of war had been unleashed.

Upon hearing that Qing soldiers were entering Korea, the Japanese government voiced its displeasure, with the Japanese Imperial Army being especially irate. The advent of a xenophobic (anti-Japanese) rebellion and Korea's growing political dependency on the Qing threatened to

⁶⁰⁵ Paine, *The Japanese Empire*, pg. 20.

⁶⁰⁶ Donghak ('Eastern Learning') was a religious movement founded by Choe Jewu (1824-1864). It appealed to peasants that suffered under the traditional exploitation and incorporated elements of Confucianism, Buddhism and Taoism and "rejected the Neo-Confucian rigidity of the feudalistic ancient regime of yangban scholar-officials". Calling for an egalitarian society, the Donghak movement "offered redemption to the people suffering under a corrupt social system." Due to his radical ideas, the Korean court ordered the execution of Choe Jewu in 1864, yet his ideas continued to strike a chord amongst the Korean peasantry. As their number of adherents increased, a movement demanding vengeance for Choe Jewu's death arose in 1892-1893, leading to the outbreak of a rebellion. Their adherents often resorted to military revolt with uprisings occurring in 1885, 1888, 1889, 1890, 1891, 1892 and 1893. See Kim Chun-Gil, *The History of Korea*, pp. 128-32.

⁶⁰⁷ Drea, Edward, *Japan's Imperial Army: Its Rise and Fall, 1853-1945*, Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2016, pg. 79.

⁶⁰⁸ Vogel, *China and Japan*, pg. 118.

erode the policy of Imperial Japanese Chief of Staff Yamagata Aritomo (1838-1922) that sought to create an independent, equal and neutral Korea. Initially, Japanese Prime Minister Itō Hirobumi, negotiator of the Convention of Tianjin, proposed cautious action, knowing that any gesture from Tokyo that would be directed towards Korea could result in war with the Qing. Discussing the rumors of the arrival of upwards of 5,000 Qing soldiers, Foreign Minister, Mutsu Munemitsu (1844-1897) and Deputy Imperial Army Chief of Staff, Kawakami Sōroku (1848-1899), convinced the Cabinet that, in light of setbacks to Japanese Korean policy as a result of the 1882 and 1884 rebellions, in order to preserve the military balance, it needed to dispatch military forces before China did.⁶⁰⁹ Hence the Japanese cabinet, on 2 June 1894, decided to send troops to Korea should the Qing also do so as well.⁶¹⁰ In accordance with Article III of the Tianjin Convention, Beijing proceeded to inform Tokyo on 7 June 1894 of their army's deployment of 2,000 soldiers at the request of the Korean government. Within hours of receiving this notification, Japan gave its own notice to the Qing and also sent troops, ostensibly to protect the Japanese legation.⁶¹¹ Yet, despite Korea's explicit request not to intervene militarily, over 2,000 Japanese troops soon disembarked at Seoul. Diplomatically speaking, however, the rationale behind their presence was more than superfluous. The Japanese Envoy to Korea, Ōtori Keisuke (1833-1911), suggested on 11 June 1894 that Tokyo suspend its troop deployments, as the pretext for intervention under the Tianjin Convention, namely the Tonghak Rebellion, was no longer valid.⁶¹² Indeed, Yuan Shikai was so distressed by the number of Japanese soldiers arriving in Korea that he went to see Ōtori to discuss a joint withdrawal of troops, with Ōtori willing to consider reducing the newly established Japanese presence in Incheon if the Chinese would reciprocate at their inland encampment at Asan.⁶¹³

The domestic climate in Japan, however, would not permit any compromise in the wake of this latest Korean domestic crisis requiring Japanese intervention. Tokyo responded by altering the entire pretext for its intervention, thereby obliterating an even cosmetic adherence to the Convention of Tianjin. The Itō government was under pressure from domestic opposition to intervene strongly in the 'Korean question', with Ōkuma Shigenobu (1838-1922) head of the Constitutional Reform Party and key rival of Itō, arguing that "it was Japan that first opened the Hermit Kingdom [Korea] to the benefit of modern civilization, and Japan also introduced Korea to the world as an independent state". As such it remained Japan's "duty to lead the little Kingdom along the path of civilization and help it grow in prosperity and power. Thus Japan's duty is to suffer no other Power to retard the progress or endanger the independence of Korea."⁶¹⁴ No compromise with China was, as seen from Japan's populist viewpoint, possible as the time had come to assert full Japanese tutelage over Korea. Hence, at the beginnings of the First Sino-Japanese War, the initial manifestations of Japan's sense of its special civilizing mission in Asia as the torch bearers of Westphalian institutions and legal understanding, combined with a modern industrial and infrastructural base, began to become discernable.⁶¹⁵

⁶⁰⁹ Drea, *Japan's Imperial Army*, pg. 79.

⁶¹⁰ Paine, *The First Sino-Japanese War*, pg. 113.

⁶¹¹ Lensen, George, *Balance of Intrigue: International Rivalry in Korea & Manchuria, 1884-1899*, Vol 1, Gainesville: University Presses of Florida, 1982, pp. 126-27.

⁶¹² Saya, *The Sino-Japanese War*, pg. xiii.

⁶¹³ Miyoshi Jager, *The Other Great Game*, pg. 127.

⁶¹⁴ Cited and translated in "Count Ōkuma on the Korean Question", *The Japan Weekly Mail* (Yokohama), 16 June 1894, pg. 721.

⁶¹⁵ Paine, *The First Sino-Japanese War*, pg. 116.

The Itō government responded accordingly, arguing that—in order to address the conditions that had led to the outbreak of the Tonghak Rebellion—Japan was officially calling for domestic political reforms in Korea, a policy strongly supported by influential Japanese liberals such as Fukuzawa Yukichi (1835-1901).⁶¹⁶ By cloaking Japan’s continued presence in Korea with a guise of an East Asian ‘*mission civilisatrice*’, Tokyo not only framed its policy in a ‘humanitarian’ guise—one completely identifiable to the Western powers—but also placed the Itō government in a favourable light in the eyes of both its liberal opposition and wider Japanese populous. As Foreign Minister Mutsu reminisced in his memoirs, “after strenuous effort and careful deliberation, Japan’s foreign policy had now taken a momentous step forward.”⁶¹⁷ The reforms that Tokyo had envisaged for Korea included mimicking the steps Japan had undertaken in the wake of the Meiji Restoration: formation of a new government structure; a new judiciary; a more rational accounting for government finances with a regular budget and tax system; and a modern military. Japanese economic primacy would be the main vehicle to facilitate political change.⁶¹⁸ As Mutsu wrote “in my view, the reforms in Korea should focus on primarily on Japan’s national interest.”⁶¹⁹

Foreign Minister Mutsu met, on 16 July 1894, the Qing Ambassador to Japan, Wang Fengzao, to discuss the latest Korean crisis and underline the need to press for reform. Ambassador Fengzao relayed the Itō government’s Korean reform measures to Li Hongzhang, who, after careful consideration, viewed them as unacceptable for the following reasons: (i.) the Tonghak Rebellion had been quelled removing the need for both Qing and Japanese forces; (ii.) while, given the seemingly perpetual cycle of popular uprisings, Korea might be in need of serious reform, this was neither the remit of China nor Japan, for Korea constituted—as the Japanese repeatedly underlined—an independent nation; and (iii.) the Convention of Tianjin explicitly stated that “after the matter [in Korea] is settled, they [the Qing and Japan] shall withdraw their troops and not further station them there.”⁶²⁰ In light of these points, Li explained that Japan’s proposal was in clear violation of the Convention.⁶²¹ Anticipating that the Qing’s objection would not stand in the way of Japanese policy, Li attempted to involve European powers to assist in obliging Japan to withdraw. Meeting with the Russian Ambassador to China, Arturo Paul Cassini (1836-1919), Li enquired about possibilities for Russia to mediate a simultaneous troop withdrawal. Only after Li’s quest for mediation failed, did the Zongli Yamen agree to send Qing reinforcements to Korea, an act that Prime Minister Itō viewed as making war inevitable. This resulted in a delay of Chinese mobilization that would have future, negative consequences for China.⁶²² Great Britain had also offered to mediate, with Tokyo strategically drawing out London’s offer for it was involved in negotiations aiming at treaty revision with Great Britain, thereby seeking to overturn the unequal treaties with which Japan had been saddled for decades. Once the Anglo-Japanese Treaty of Commerce and Navigation was signed on 17 July 1894, legally and systemically bequeathing

⁶¹⁶ Hwang, In Kwan, “The Korean Reform Movement of the 1880s and Fukuzawa Yukichi”, PhD Dissertation, Washington University in St. Louis, 1975, pg. 230.

⁶¹⁷ Mustu, Munemitsu, Kenkenroku: A Diplomatic Record of the Sino-Japanese War, 1894-1895, Tokyo: University of Tokyo Press, 1983, pg. 23.

⁶¹⁸ Jansen, The Making of Modern Japan, pg. 431.

⁶¹⁹ Mutsu, Kenkenroku, pg. 19.

⁶²⁰ *The Convention of Tientsin*, accessed 1 July 2023.

⁶²¹ Mutsu, Kenkenroku, pg. 24

⁶²² Fung, Allen, “Testing the Self-Strengthening: The Chinese Army in the Sino-Japanese War of 1894-1895”, *Modern Asian Studies*, Oct. 1996, Vol. 30, No. 4., pg. 1014.

Tokyo an equal position with the Western powers, Restraint was no longer needed. Foreign Minister Mutsu authorized Ambassador Ōtori to undertake “whatever measures he felt appropriate in bringing about a clash between Japan and China.”⁶²³ Ōtori, on 19 July 1894, sent a letter to King Kojong, demanding he expel Qing forces as Tokyo viewed them in Korea under the pretext of “protecting a ‘vassal state’” which represented a serious violation of Korea’s independence and sovereignty, as guaranteed by the Treaty of Kanghwa.⁶²⁴ Ōtori gave the Korean court until 22 July 1894 to respond. There was never any real expectation that King Kojong would agree to pursuing reform. On 23 July 1894, the Japanese broke into the Korean royal palace, captured the Queen and the one surviving prince and held them for “safekeeping”, once again installing his father, the Taewongun as regent who now, informed Ōtori that he “had been invested with full authority in all affairs of government and reform by the King and would henceforth consult with the Japanese on all matters.”⁶²⁵ The fog of war, aided by Japanese control over Korea’s limited telegraph services, slowed the spread of information, with the Qing court only discovering of the coup in Seoul on 26 July 1894.

By then, however, blood had already been spilt between Japanese and Qing forces. On 25 July 1894, Japanese patrol ships fired upon three Chinese vessels near Seoul. They proceeded to forcibly interdict them and—after Japanese naval commander Tōgō Heihachirō carefully examined the relevant provisions of Westphalian international law—subsequently proceed to sink the Qing ship *Kowshing*, leased from Great Britain and transporting 1,100 Qing soldiers to Korea, drowning some of the best soldiers in the Chinese military.⁶²⁶ Japan waited until 1 August 1894 to formally declare war on the Qing. The outbreak of the First Sino-Japanese War was very much a result of the Itō government ceding into enormous domestic political pressure.⁶²⁷ The warm welcome the Japanese populous gave to the outbreak of hostilities can be attributed to two reasons: First, having framed the conflict as one between a progressive Japan and traditional-minded China, the war allowed Japan to see itself as the vanguard of Western civilization and enlightenment in East Asia. Fukuzawa echoed Japanese and Korean progressives alike stating that “Japan is a doctor, responsible as a teacher of civilization... Japanese interference in Korea should not be made in a retiring manner, but strongly and swiftly to bring Korean entrance into civilization.”⁶²⁸ Second, the enduring historical memory amongst the general Japanese population, especially the legacy of Saigō Takamori, both as his role as leader of the 1877 Satsuma samurai Rebellion, but also as the embodiment of the ardent rage felt by the Japanese following the 1873 refusal of the Korean court to accept what was viewed as ‘rightful’ subordination to Japan, or a renewal of ancient privileges and authority.⁶²⁹ As such, the Japanese masses viewed the coming of war as an opportunity to fulfill Saigō’s vision, “the aspiration of “punishing Korea” that Saigō had envisioned but failed to achieve.”⁶³⁰ War with the Qing meant the fulfilment of the *seikanron*, this time meaning much more in scope than a punitive expedition, but rather the reenactment of history

⁶²³ Mutsu, *Kenkenroku*, pg. 82.

⁶²⁴ Saya, *The Sino-Japanese War*, pg. xiii.

⁶²⁵ Mutsu, *Kenkenroku*, pg. 83.

⁶²⁶ Vogel, *China and Japan*, pg. 119.

⁶²⁷ Saya, *The Sino-Japanese War*, pg. 8.

⁶²⁸ Conroy, Hilary, “Chōsen Mondai: The Korean Problem in Meiji Japan”, *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society*, 15 Oct. 1956, Vol 100, No 5., pg. 447.

⁶²⁹ On the role of Saigō Takamori’s enduring popularity in stoking pro-war sentiment a full 17 years after his death in the Japanese popular opinion, see Saya, *The Sino-Japanese War*, pp. 2-23.

⁶³⁰ *Ibid.*, pg. 12.

(Hideyoshi's invasions in 1592 and 1597) as well as the reassertion of the ancient idea of Korea as being subject to Japanese rule.

The Itō government did not share in its population's optimism, with the Meiji Emperor having been said to be unenthusiastic at the prospect of war, declaring "this is not my war".⁶³¹ Japan's military planners also held a skeptical view of their respective chances: on paper, the Qing could claim an immense army at its disposal, with Japanese sources placing its numbers at over 1 million, while Chinese assessments hovered at a more modest, but still formidable, 140,000.⁶³²

Map 2: The Course of the First Sino-Japanese War (1894-1895)



Source: Miyoshi, *The Other Great Game*

Japan's mobilized army, operating out of the Imperial General Headquarters (IGHQ) at Hiroshima, grew to more than 220,000 men, including in all seven divisions which at wartime strength numbered circa 125,000 personnel.⁶³³ On the seas, China possessed four fleets, with a total of 82

⁶³¹ Drea, *Japan's Imperial Army*, pg. 80.

⁶³² Nash, *The History of Manchuria*, pg. 22.

⁶³³ Drea, *Japan's Imperial Army*, pg. 81.

warships that included the modern Beiyang Fleet. Built in Germany and Great Britain under the direction of Li Hongzhang, it starkly outnumbered Japan's 28 ships. The Imperial Japanese Army had initially planned to directly attack Zhili province, near the Qing capital of Beijing, to oblige Chinese surrender. However, this plan was discarded in favour of a campaign to subject the entire Korean Peninsula under Japanese control before the arrival of winter. The northward marches of the Imperial Japanese forces were met with success: Seoul fell effortlessly in August with Pyongyang—the ancient western capital of the Koryo kingdom—succumbing to Japanese forces on 16 September 1894 after a bloody battle. This wave of early victories contributed greatly to the steeling of Japanese morale. The Qing, discombobulated by these defeats, opted to try and hold the Japanese in Korea and, mimicking the past success of naval operations in the Imjin Wars, harass Japanese shipping to Korea, hoping to sue for a dignified peace. However, on 17 September 1894, a key naval engagement took place at the mouth of the Yalu River that forced the Chinese Navy to withdraw to its base at Port Arthur (Lüshun) and ceded command of the Yellow Sea to the Japanese. This victory allowed the Second Japanese Army to land on 24 October 1894 unopposed on Dairen Bay, 100 miles north of the Chinese fortress at Port Arthur, with Chinese defences surrendering or retreating in quick succession. The rapid collapse of Chinese defence in Port Arthur stunned the Qing court, with the Japanese conquering the town on 21 November 1894. As the Japanese Second Infantry Regiment entered Port Arthur, they were greeted with the severed heads of captured Japanese soldiers hanging by the roadside and underneath the eaves of a house.⁶³⁴ Combined with circulating rumours that the Chinese had issued special orders to civilians to fight the Japanese from their homes, the Japanese entered the town in order to exact revenge. What followed was a three-day massacre that was witnessed by Western war correspondents present in the city, most notably James Creeman, whose reports of up to 20,000 civilian deaths shattered the image of Japan's 'civilized army' in Western eyes.⁶³⁵

Li Hongzhang, following the shock of the fall of Port Arthur, gave a letter to Customs Commissioner at Tianjin, Gustav Detring, to pass to Prime Minister Itō, signaling Li's personal wish to negotiate an end to hostilities. Arriving in Kobe on 26 November 1894, Detring was dismissed by the Japanese government for lack of proper credentials. The Japanese subsequently crossed into Manchuria from Korea and with General Yamagata pressing his Japanese First Army, against the plans of IGHQ, to occupy the strategic communications centre at Haicheng. While Yamagata's unwelcome initiative took IGHQ and Prime Minister Itō by surprise, the quick fall of the city spurred the Qing to dispatch a second peace mission.⁶³⁶ The Japanese were not pleased that the Qing's selected representatives, Zhang Yinheng and Shao Youlian, were of relatively low rank, despite being accompanied to Hiroshima by former US Secretary of State, John Foster.⁶³⁷ The Qing obviously did not choose the member of this peace mission in a haphazard manner: electing to send high-ranking Chinese officials would give Tokyo the impression of being considered an equal, something Beijing was still not ready to acknowledge. To the Japanese negotiators, however, this gesture called into question the Qing's sincerity of negotiating a peace treaty in good faith and possibly signaled Beijing's efforts to bring about the end of the war through

⁶³⁴ Miyoshi, *The Other Great Game*, pg. 152.

⁶³⁵ Liu Wenming, "Who are the barbarians" in Monteath, Peter & Fitzpatrick, Matthew (eds.), *Colonialism, China and the Chinese*, London: Routledge, 2019, pg. 164.

⁶³⁶ Lone, Stewart, *Japan's First Modern War: Army and Society in the Conflict with China*, New York: MacMillan Press, 1998, pg. 41.

⁶³⁷ Foster, John, *Diplomatic Memoires*, London: Constable, 1910, pg. 113.

mediation of the Western powers. Following the Japanese discovery that the Qing's two envoys arrived in Japan with no letter of investiture from the Chinese Emperor, the Japanese Foreign Ministry promptly sent them packing. Following the capture of the Chinese port of Weihaiwei and the destruction of the Beiyang Fleet by General Ōyama's Japanese Second Army on 17 February 1895, the Qing court decided to settle the war, officially appointing Li Hongzhang with the proper credentials necessary to sue for peace. Receiving the news that Li was appointed as emissary, Foreign Minister Mutsu commented that "it appeared that the Chinese had finally made up their minds to negotiate in good faith."⁶³⁸

6.4. The Negotiations on a New Order

Li arrived in the Japanese southern port of Shimonoseki on 19 March 1895, asking for an immediate armistice. The decision of the Qing court to nominate Li, China's foremost foreign affairs expert and military commander, also allowed the Manchu dynasty to deflect the blame of Chinese defeat on the Han Chinese and it was Li who was therefore designated to bear the humiliation of an agreement that could only be signed from an unenviable position of weakness. The choice of Li was acceptable to the Japanese who had finally extracted from Beijing a serious negotiator. The scope of the Chinese military collapse left precious little option, with the Qing having to choose between terminating the war or risking a coup d'état, if not through a direct Japanese march on Beijing—as favoured by First Army General Yamagata—or through disillusioned Han subjects.⁶³⁹ Finding a way out of the current dismal military situation was paramount. Yet the negotiations also proved challenging to Tokyo: The Japanese military clearly expected a treaty that reflected the scope and scale of Japan's unprecedented victory. As a result, Li's immediate request for an armistice was unsurprisingly denied. Tokyo had made the decision to draw out the war to ensure the most favourable peace possible. At the same time, however, there existed substantial disagreement amongst factions in the Japanese government as to how harsh any future peace agreement with the Qing should be. With the proven successes of its forces in the field, the Imperial military, bolstered by public opinion, pushed for a total victory and humiliation of the Qing which was to culminate in a Japanese march on Beijing. Prime Minister Itō and elements of the Japanese government were cautious as such a move would be wrought with political consequences, not only for the Qing, but also for Japan, given the ever-present spectre of foreign intervention. On the Japanese side, Prime Minister Itō was selected as the Japanese chief negotiator.

The Li-Itō negotiations were also characterized by a peculiar novelty, namely that they were conducted in English, with Li speaking through an interpreter and Itō, fluent in English, addressing the Chinese Delegation directly.⁶⁴⁰ Hence, the Japanese underlined, through their choice of language, that Westphalian norms formed the bedrock of any future agreement. The Japanese disdain of the norms of the pre-modern international society were also evident in the initial presentation of credentials between Li and Itō. The Japanese Prime Minister noted that Li's documents contained the seal of the Guangxu's Emperor (r. 1875-1908) and not, as per Western practice, his signature, commenting "I would not press the matter now; but why does not China observe the rules of all other nations?", to which Li responded, "We have no such precedent, and

⁶³⁸ Mutsu, *Kenkenroku*, pg. 166.

⁶³⁹ Paine, *The First Sino-Japanese War*, pp. 247-248.

⁶⁴⁰ "Letters from Shimonoseki," *The Japan Weekly Mail* (Yokohama), 30 March 1895, pg. 366

it would not become me to attempt to press the change.”⁶⁴¹ Li countered by underlining the compatible social norms that had characterized relations between China and Japan through the centuries, “On the Asiatic continent China and Japan are close neighbours and the written language of the two nations is the same. It is well that we should live at enmity? The conclusion of our present differences in a lasting peace should be our great concern, for prolonging hostilities will but injure China without benefiting Japan.”⁶⁴² Li proceeded to cite the hesitation with which Western powers approached the question of war, “(a)nd we, representing the principal countries of the East, should follow this example of Europe. If Your Excellency and myself thoroughly appreciate this we cannot but conclude that the policy which should rule the Asiatic continent, is that we should establish an enduring peace in order to prevent the yellow race of Asia succumbing to the white race of Europe.”⁶⁴³ The Japanese appreciated such rhetoric but cited the inability of China to undergo westernizing reform, as suggested during the negotiations of the 1885 Convention of Tianjin, as problematic. Li asked for an immediate armistice. As a response, Foreign Minister Mutsu proceeded to underline armistice terms that were practically impossible for the Chinese to accept, including the Japanese occupation of Dagu (the fortress guarding the sea approaches to Beijing); Tianjin; Shanhaiguan (a location of symbolic importance to the Manchus where the Great Wall meets the sea); Japanese control over China’s only railway; and Chinese financial contributions to fund the occupation.⁶⁴⁴ According to Foreign Minister Mutsu, “as Li read this memorandum to himself, his face changed colour and he appeared stunned. Over and over, he muttered that the terms were too severe.”⁶⁴⁵ After consultation with the Zongli Yamen, Li refused the Japanese offer.

In the end, however, an armistice was declared, albeit due to circumstances neither side could envisage. Following negotiations, Li was unexpectedly shot in the face by an extreme Japanese nationalist, Koyama Toyatarō, while retiring to his quarters in Shimonoseki. The sheer shock and surprise of the assassination attempt spurred the Meiji Emperor to announce a three-week armistice, whose fine print brought hostilities in mainland China to a halt, but allowed Japanese operations against the Pescadores Islands and Taiwan to continue, with the Japanese seizing the former on 30 March 1895. The Chinese Chief Negotiator survived and, after treatment in Japan, returned to the negotiating table on 10 April 1895. After much negotiation, with Li making as much as possible from a weak hand, the final version of the peace treaty was agreed upon on 17 April 1895, after many attempts by Li Hongzhang to lessen the financial burden that was to be borne by China, citing his longstanding relationship with Prime Minister Itō. Li’s attempts were in vain, leading the Chinese Viceroy to comment, perhaps encapsulating the Chinese attitude towards the Japanese intransigence displayed throughout the negotiation process, “I shall not forget this hard and relentless treatment.”⁶⁴⁶ Yet the Qing was in no position to further bargain and had to, however begrudgingly, accept the tenets of the Treaty of Shimonoseki that officially ended the First Sino-Japanese War.

⁶⁴¹ Unknown Author, Verbal Discussions During Peace Negotiations: Between the Chinese Plenipotentiary, Viceroy Li Hung-Chang, and the Japanese Plenipotentiaries Count Ito and Viscount Mutsu, March-April, 1895, Tientsin: Tientsin Press, 1895, pg. 2.

⁶⁴² Ibid.

⁶⁴³ Ibid.

⁶⁴⁴ Paine, The First Sino-Japanese War, pg. 261.

⁶⁴⁵ Mutsu, Kenkenroku, pg. 170.

⁶⁴⁶ Unknown Author, Verbal Discussions During Peace Negotiations, pg. 19.

6.5. The Settlement of 1895: Treaty of Shimonoseki

6.5.1. The Treaty and the Triple Intervention

The Treaty of Shimonoseki's central provisions were spelled out in the King's English as follows: **Article I** secured the "full and complete independence and autonomy of Korea", formally declaring that "the payment of tribute and the performance of ceremonies and formalities by Korea to China, in derogation of such independence and autonomy, shall wholly cease for the future."⁶⁴⁷ With this first article, the final bastion of the pre-modern East Asian international society met its final demise. **Article II** obliged China to cede the Pescadores Islands, Taiwan, and the Liaodong Peninsula, an integral part of the Manchu homeland of Manchuria, to Japan. **Article IV** forced the Qing to pay an indemnity of 200 million Kuping taels. This sum alone was equal to three-fourths of the Qing's entire budget and was to be paid in full over a period of four and a half years.⁶⁴⁸ **Article VI** stipulated that new treaties of commerce and navigation were to be negotiated between Tokyo and Beijing, "all treaties between China and Japan having come to an end in consequence of war." This forced the Qing to open four more Chinese ports in the interior (Shanghai, Chongqing, Suzhou, and Hangzhou), cede railroad rights to the Japanese, and place Japanese citizens on par with those of the Western powers by granting them unilateral extraterritoriality in several industries and manufacturing sectors in northeastern China. No longer would Japan pay the transit tax (*lijin*/釐金) on goods passing through tolls as they were transported through China. **Article VIII** sanctioned the temporary Japanese military occupation of Weihaiwei and, mimicking the British following the First Opium War, secured Japanese control over Chinese customs revenues to ensure payment of the indemnity stipulated in Article IV. Finally, **Article X** required the Qing to cease all military operations following the Treaty's ratification.

The Treaty of Shimonoseki was signed on 8 May 1895 in the Chinese coastal city of Yantai, near the birthplace of Confucius, in the presence of warship delegates from the Russian Empire, Germany, Italy, France, the United States and Great Britain, sealing international recognition from the Western powers for the Treaty's terms. The gravity and totality of the Treaty's implications for the regional and global system did not go unnoticed by the Western powers. The new frontiers of the Russian Empire extending to the Amur and Tumen Rivers as well as the Sea of Japan accorded St. Petersburg a vested interest in the political situation in Korea and northeastern China. During an internal meeting of the Russian government to discuss possible peace terms to end the war, Minister of War Pyotr Simyonovich Vannovsky (1822-1904) stressed that St. Petersburg should actively prevent Japanese moves towards Korea and in no way agree to the conditions Japan laid out during the peace talks. The Russian Minister expressed specific concern regarding the proposal to rip the Liaodong Peninsula away from China."⁶⁴⁹ While the Japanese military argued that the Qing would not be able to contest the cessation of the Liaodong Peninsula, Japanese diplomacy accurately forecasted the above Russian opposition to such plans, especially given the repeated warnings that emanated from St. Petersburg signaling that it would not tolerate a Japanese concession in Manchuria.⁶⁵⁰ While Foreign Minister Mutsu remained overall apprehensive regarding foreign intervention in the Sino-Japanese hostilities, he had expected such moves to

⁶⁴⁷ MacMurray, John, *Treaties and Agreements with and concerning China 1894-1919, Volume I, the Manchu Period*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1921, pg. 18. The entire Treaty of Shimonoseki can be found in Appendix X.

⁶⁴⁸ Vogel, *China and Japan*, pg. 125.

⁶⁴⁹ Miyoshi, *The Other Great Game*, pg. 200.

⁶⁵⁰ Paine, *The Japanese Empire*, pg. 39.

emanate from Great Britain, with its vested interest in preserving the territorial integrity of China.⁶⁵¹ Prime Minister Itō also shared such fears and wished to dispense with territorial acquisitions on the mainland, however he was overruled by the army and naval officer corps. At a conference in Hiroshima on 27 January 1895, the military's argument prevailed. The Meiji Emperor endorsed the Japanese demand for the annexation of the Liaodong Peninsula. The German Foreign Secretary in Tokyo, Felix Freiherr von Gutschmid (1843-1905), received telegraphed instructions from Berlin on 6 March 1895 to "state confidentially that the Kaiser recommends to the Japanese government the expediting of peace and the moderation of its terms. European powers [have been] requested by China to intervene...for Japan direct and reasonable settlement most advantage. Japanese demand for surrender of territory on mainland to provoke intervention."⁶⁵² The German envoy passed the message on as instructed to Hayashi Tadasu (1850-1913), the Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs, however, Foreign Minister Mutsu remained unconvinced of the possibility of intervention. The Japanese disregard for the Kaiser's "advice" prompted Berlin to enter discussions with St. Petersburg regarding the problematic nature of any Japanese expansion into the Chinese mainland. The Russian military began to ready itself for a possible expansion of the hitherto regional conflict, having transferred its Mediterranean squadron to the Sea of Japan in March 1895, and proceeded to commence with the mobilization of its units in the Russian Far East the following month. Given France's alliance with the Russian Empire, Paris also indicated its willingness to intervene.⁶⁵³

On 23 April 1895—six days after the agreement of the final terms of the Treaty of Shimonoseki—the Russian, German, and French envoys met with Vice Foreign Minister Hayashi to unveil the Triple Intervention to Tokyo. The document presented was couched as "friendly advice", stating unambiguously that "the possession of Liaodong Peninsula claimed by Japan would be a constant menace to the capital of China, and would at the same time render illusory the independence of Korea; it would henceforth be a perpetual obstacle to the Far East."⁶⁵⁴ The Japanese, taken aback by the firmness of the statement and readiness of the Europeans to intervene, realized that their navy could not cope with any decided action to intervene, which would simultaneously signify the scrapping of all of the articles that Japan had imposed on the Qing. Under no circumstances could the totality of Japanese gains be placed at wonton risk. The Japanese Foreign Ministry presented Tokyo's submission to the demands of St. Petersburg, Berlin, and Paris in terms of a "magnanimous gesture".⁶⁵⁵ On 10 May 1895, the Meiji Emperor issued an Imperial Rescript explaining to a displeased Japanese populous and press that "by concluding the Treaty of peace, China [had] already shown her sincerity of regret for the violation of her engagements and thereby the justice of our cause has been proclaimed to the world. Under these circumstances, we can find nothing to impair the honour and dignity of our Empire if we now yield to the dictates of

⁶⁵¹ Iklé, Frank, "The Triple Intervention: Japan's Lesson in the Diplomacy of Imperialism", *Monumenta Nipponica*, Vol. 22, No. 1/2, 1967, pg. 124.

⁶⁵² Lepsius, Johannes, Mendelssohn-Bartholdy, Thimme, Friedrich (eds.), *Die Große Politik der Europäischen Kabinette 1871-1914, Sammlung der Diplomatischen Akten des Auswärtigen Amtes*, Berlin: Dt. Verl. Ges. f. Politik u. Geschichte, 1922-1927, pg. 253.

⁶⁵³ Bee, Minge, "The Origins of German Far East Policy", *The Chinese Social and Political Review*, 65 (1937), pg. 90.

⁶⁵⁴ Iklé, "The Triple Intervention", pg. 128.

⁶⁵⁵ Mutsu, *Kenkenroku*, pp. 203-202.

magnanimity and, taking into consideration the general situation, accept the advice of the friendly powers.”⁶⁵⁶

Despite the Triple Intervention depriving Japan of one of its prime territorial acquisitions, the other remaining tenets of the Treaty of Shimonoseki remained unscathed by the Western Powers and were subsequently enforced by Tokyo. While the countries of the Triple Intervention granted Japan, under the terms of the amended treaty, an additional 30 million Kuping taels for heeding ‘friendly advice’, it represented a glaring, and very public, signal that Japan, despite its zeal in adhering to the tenets of the Westphalian system, was still not fully accepted by the West.⁶⁵⁷ The treaty that retroceded the Liaodong peninsula was signed in Beijing on 7 November 1895 and, with this, the contours of the ‘critical juncture’ of the Settlement of 1895 were now firmly set. A new regional order had been established over East Asia. It marked the dawning of the first order that had been accorded—through the modifications imposed by the Triple Intervention—both international recognition and legitimacy. This dissertation will now turn to examine how the provisions of the Settlement of 1895, as well as its antecedent conditions, effected the ability of East Asia as a region to establish a stable peace, providing the necessary base for the establishment of RSOs, through the application of the conditions as stipulated in its analytical framework.

6.5.2. The Settlement of 1895: Geopolitical Necessity

Seen from the former opposing sides, the Settlement of 1895 represented either total humiliation or, in wake of the Triple Intervention, almost total victory. This was the conclusion of both countries trying to navigate their respective way through the hitherto unknown situation of international systemic change as illustrated through the antecedent conditions of the Treaty of Shimonoseki. At the same time, it marked the diplomatic dénouement of a process that had been raging since the mid-nineteenth century, one that reflected the primacy that both Beijing and Tokyo had accorded to military force in the years leading up to the First Sino-Japanese War.⁶⁵⁸ Power considerations came first in Sino-Japanese relations, and the course of the war afforded both sides an opportunity to display that power, both to each other and the world at large.

The course of the war, as illustrated, was far from a convincing portrayal of Chinese military power. Proceeding from one Qing military defeat to the other on both land and sea, the various departments of the Japanese government saw an opportunity to demand maximum concessions from their adversaries. Prime Minister Itō viewed an opportunity to diplomatically emulate the German victory over France in the Franco-Prussian War of 1870-1871, one that was seen as having unified the German state and thereby raising its reputation on the international stage. As Itō had modeled the Meiji Constitution on that of the Kingdom of Prussia, so did he seek the Settlement of 1895 to mirror the 1871 Treaty of Frankfurt, namely territorial annexation, a large indemnity, occupation of an enemy city to facilitate payment of the indemnity and an exponential increase of his country’s prestige both regionally and globally.⁶⁵⁹ The convincing victory of the Japanese military over the Qing in the field provided an opportunity for Tokyo to

⁶⁵⁶ For the Meiji Emperor’s full Imperial Rescript, see “Imperial Rescript”, *The Japan Weekly Mail* (Yokohama), 18 May 1895, pg. 565.

⁶⁵⁷ Vogel, *China and Japan*, pg. 130.

⁶⁵⁸ Iriye Akira, *China and Japan in the Global Setting*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1992, pg. 36.

⁶⁵⁹ Paine, *The Sino-Japanese War*, pg. 265.

concretely implement this objective. The Chinese government, however, had no other option but to concede to humiliating terms due to an unprecedented instance of geopolitical necessity.

The Qing's poor military performance shook the Dynasty to the core. It was a lesson which the Chinese had, in its own idiosyncratic way, earnestly endeavoured to avoid. With each subsequent encounter with the Western powers, the Celestial Empire begrudgingly understood that, in the Westphalian world, military power enjoyed ultimate primacy. The Westphalian system was decidedly foreign; however, it was one that the Chinese elites realized they were required to understand. The Confucian world view allowed a certain degree of fluctuation with the interaction of ying and yang, but the concept of linear change was foreign, with the word "reform" being an English-language concept that does not correspond to a single idea in Chinese.⁶⁶⁰ Hence, the challenge was how to go about understanding such an alien entity while taking action to their own culture as well as their social and political institutions upon which their Weltanschauung was constructed.⁶⁶¹ Given the primacy China and Japan placed on power after the appearance of the Western states, the adoption of military technology to defend the Qing came to be regarded as the primary task. Simply put, foreign martial technology could be adopted, alien ideas however could not. Following the defeat against the British in the First Opium War, Qing statecraft scholar Wei Yuan (1794-1857) called for a change in China's domestic and foreign policy under the slogan "learn the superior techniques of the barbarians in order to control them."⁶⁶² Using European technology and assistance, Qing officials, through books such as the Illustrated Treatise of the Maritime Kingdom ('*Haiguo Tuzhi*'/海國圖志) published in 1843, expounded on plans to manufacture firearms and build warships that would, one day, surpass the West. Li Hongzhang, having played a pivotal role in using modern arms to suppress the Taiping, took forward this notion of 'self-strengthening' ('*zìqiáng yùndòng*'/自強運動) aimed at augmenting the overall power of the Qing: "if [the Chinese] can stand our ground, [the Japanese] will be subordinate to us, and we can watch for opportunities to compete with the Westerners. If we have no wherewithal to strengthen ourselves, then Japan will follow the Westerners and share their source of profit at our expense."⁶⁶³ In order to meet the challenges of a new age, Li Hongzhang recommended to the Court the construction of the Qing's modern industrial base, encompassing such sites as the Kiangnan Arsenal for artillery manufacture in Shanghai or the Fuzhou Arsenal focused on the production of modern ships as well as constructing institutes to learn foreign languages. The fusion of Western technology and Chinese philosophy would, so the theory went, provide a firm base for the Qing Empire to overcome the novel array of systemic challenges.

On the eve of the outbreak of the hostilities of the First Sino-Japanese War, the Qing earnestly believed that it could stand the onslaught of the modernized Japanese military. The Beiyang Fleet was rated amongst the most modern in the world, with its size and armaments outclassing the Japanese foe.⁶⁶⁴ The Qing anticipated that it could secure the command of the seas,

⁶⁶⁰ Fairbank, John, "Opening Remarks" in Schreker, John (ed.), Reform in Nineteenth-Century China, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1979, pg. 3.

⁶⁶¹ Ssu-yu Teng & Fairbank, John, China's Response to the West: A Documentary Survey 1839-1923, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1954, pg. 1.

⁶⁶² Kennedy, Thomas "Li Hung-Chang and the Kiangnan Arsenal, 1860-1895" in Chu, Samuel, Kwang-Ching Liu (eds.), Li Hung-Chang and China's Early Modernization, New York: Routledge, 1994, pg. 197

⁶⁶³ Kwang Ching Lui, "The Beginnings of Chinese Modernization" in Chu & Kwang-Ching, Liu Hung-Chang and China's Early Modernization, pg. 7.

⁶⁶⁴ Olender, Piotr, Sino-Japanese Naval War, 1894-1895, Hampshire: Stratus, 2014, pp. 24-26.

thereby depriving the Japanese military of its access to Korea and Manchuria, or, in the worst-case scenario, use its land forces to ably defend Beijing, with the Manchurian winter assisting in wearing down Japanese forces through prolonged attrition.⁶⁶⁵ As illustrated by the Settlement of 1895's antecedent conditions, this strategy did not materialize on the battlefield. Despite being in possession of excellent warships along with a large supply of rifles, the persistence of the pre-modern methods of command and control ensured that coordination between China's various, locally-based units remained difficult, with the Japanese—following their acquired Westernized methodology—being better trained, more disciplined and better organized.⁶⁶⁶ As described, the result was an unmitigated military disaster for the Qing, with Japan winning every engagement without losing a single ship. This was thanks to Tokyo's focus on not only augmenting its military strength, but also on overall modernization, with more officers trained in contemporary Western science, technology, public education, industry, commerce, law, public health, transportation, communication and foreign affairs.⁶⁶⁷ The Qing, on the other hand, lacked a governing system that could adapt and implement changes in a rapidly evolving era of systemic change. As such China's defeat was not only felt in military terms, but also civilizational. While the Qing could understand Western motives, they could not comprehend the scope of the transformation that Japan had undergone as “[the Chinese] simply had no analogies for such a phenomenon...It was the clearest and most forceful indication that, as a world order, [Chinese] Civilization had failed.”⁶⁶⁸

Geopolitical necessity to accept whatever terms Japan offered remained the sole avenue to exit a major crisis. Not only was the Chinese military completely compromised, but serious cracks also appeared in the foundation of the Qing Dynasty itself. In the eyes of the Han Chinese, the Manchus had lost the mandate of heaven, creating the perception that they had been responsible for gross incompetence in governance and that its ultimate demise was merely a question of time.⁶⁶⁹ Should Li Hongzhang not have travelled to Shimonoseki to submit, the Japanese would have had full opportunity to strike at the heart of the Dynasty in Beijing, with unknown domestic consequences. Already after the Battle of Pyongyang, infuriated at the loss, the Manchu Qing Court began to publicly assign blame on its highest Han official, Li Hongzhang, and deprive him of his two highest honours, the decoration of the three-eyed peacock feather and yellow riding jacket. Dispatching Li to Shimonoseki, the Qing Court accorded him full authority to negotiate whatever terms might be salvaged from peace negotiations with the Japanese, therefore making him officially shoulder the responsibility for the harsh terms the Manchus were cognizant would follow. When the final treaty arrived at the Qing Court for ratification, the opposition was so great that Li, discredited to such an extent by the negotiations, was obliged to send Foster to the three members of the Grand Council and plead for its approval.⁶⁷⁰ With the survivability of the Dynasty at stake, geopolitical necessity dictated this course of action and the submission to the harsh terms of the Japanese. The Chinese public reaction to the treaty was one of outrage, so much so that the Manchu court attempted to hide the Treaty's exact terms in secrecy. The Guangxu Emperor's primary concern was not the general standing of China within East Asia or the general welfare of his Empire, but rather securing the fate of two cities of strategic importance for his Dynasty,

⁶⁶⁵ Paine, *Sino-Japanese War*, pp. 153-154.

⁶⁶⁶ Vogel, *China and Japan*, pg. 122.

⁶⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, pg. 130.

⁶⁶⁸ Howland, D.R., *Borders of Chinese Civilization: Geography and History at Empire's End*, Durham: Duke University Press, 1996, pg. 241.

⁶⁶⁹ Paine, *Sino-Japanese War*, pg. 303.

⁶⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, pg. 276.

namely Beijing and Mukden (Shenyang) host to the ancestral tombs of the Manchu.⁶⁷¹ The diverse array of Chinese officials rejected the notion that the Celestial Empire should cede any territory or pay any indemnity, whatever the amount: “for the past fortnight the Emperor has been deluged with memorials from the province, not a single Viceroy, Governor, Tatar [Manchu] General or Provincial Commander-in-Chief having abstained from his privilege of memorializing the Throne and advising the rejection of the clauses of the [Treaty of Shimonoseki] where the cession of territory has been agreed. They vote for a continuance of the war providing Japan insists upon the observance of the whole treaty [a position which also] seems to have been unanimous on the part of these officials, who furthermore guarantee funds for the prosecution of the war but not the payment of the indemnity.”⁶⁷² Amongst Qing officialdom, there was a stubborn inability to accept that China had been militarily beaten, given their deep conviction in the inherent superiority of Chinese civilization. In May 1895, some went so far as to present a six-point plan calling for the Qing to invade Japan itself by dispatching its Southern Fleet and attack the Japanese Imperial Headquarters at Hiroshima.⁶⁷³ Reality, however, was somewhat different and the Qing had no other option but to sign and adhere to the humiliating terms.

In the end it was the Triple Intervention that salvaged some honour for the Qing Dynasty, preventing a complete collapse of its authority—a move that would have de jure ended the ‘unequal treaties’ each Western power had in force with Beijing—and reversing its most humiliating territorial concession; however, the very bedrock of the Dynasty’s authority had been severely shaken, leaving the Qing little authority in the eyes of its subjects and none with the Japanese victors. The Triple Intervention also illustrated that Japan, despite its resounding victory in the First Sino-Japanese War, was also subject to the condition of geopolitical necessity. While Tokyo could—and did—dictate harsh terms that would signal its metamorphosis into an internationally recognized Empire, St. Petersburg, Berlin and Paris chose to, in turn, deprive Japan of the Liaodong Peninsula, its coveted territorial acquisition on the Asian mainland. Presenting its ‘friendly advice’ to Vice Foreign Minister Hayashi, the German Envoy, von Gutschmid, bluntly threatened that, in the advent of its refusal, Japan would stand no chance of victory against the combined might of Russia, Germany and France.⁶⁷⁴ The Imperial Cabinet subsequently met, in the presence of the Meiji Emperor, in Hiroshima to discuss the demands of the Europeans. Foreign Minister Mutsu suggested first consulting London, Washington and Rome to secure diplomatic support to hold out against the ‘friendly advice’. The Japanese military, represented by War Minister Yamagata Aritomo and Navy Minister Saigō Tsugumichi (1843-1902), recommended the acceptance of the tripartite demands given the fact that the Russian Navy had concentrated at least thirty units at Vladivostok.⁶⁷⁵ As Britain did not reply to Mutsu’s overtures, Prime Minister Itō agreed with the military that Japan had no other choice but to submit to the retrocession of the Liaodong Peninsula. Tokyo did, however, attempt to salvage a remnant of the territory that it had forced China to relinquish, and offered to vacate the entire Liaodong Peninsula, save the city of

⁶⁷¹ Ibid.

⁶⁷² “The Effects of the Treaty”, *The North-China Herald* (Shanghai), 10 May 1895, pg. 683.

⁶⁷³ Chu, Samuel, “China’s Attitudes toward Japan at the Time of the Sino-Japanese War” in Iriye Akira (ed.), *The Chinese and the Japanese: Essays in Political Cultural Interactions*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980, pg. 89.

⁶⁷⁴ Iklé, “The Triple Intervention”, pg. 128.

⁶⁷⁵ Mutsu, *Kenkenroku*, pp. 509-510.

Port Arthur.⁶⁷⁶ The representatives of Russia, Germany and France collectively rejected the proposed Japanese amendment. Facing outright war in case of Japan's continued instance on maintaining some territorial hold in mainland China, the full Imperial Cabinet, again in the presence of the Meiji Emperor, elected to adhere to the suggested advice and abandon one of its most coveted gains acquired through the Treaty of Shimonoseki on 4 May 1895. As such, the budding Japanese Empire also had to succumb to the tenet of geopolitical necessity, not only to hold on to the rest of their gains through the Treaty, but also secure subsequent recognition by the Western powers as an equal member of the Westphalian system, although the advent of the Triple Intervention accorded Japan a decidedly humble rank amongst the cohort of end of century powers.

In conclusion, therefore, both the Qing and Japan, in respective defeat and victory, were subject to the condition of geopolitical necessity. Both were forced to accept painful concessions to secure their newly won gains or, in China's case, the very survivability of the Dynasty. Hence, the Settlement of 1895 was characterized as a Treaty whose final contours were shaped by and implemented through geopolitical necessity. At the same time, the stark necessity of accepting the final version of the Treaty of Shimonoseki did not imply any acts of unilateral accommodation, neither by China nor by Japan. Tokyo chose to implement each and every demand as set out in the Treaty of Shimonoseki. As laid out by Article VI, annulling all previous commercial treaties between China and Japan, the Qing was obliged to negotiate a new trade treaty that clearly indicated Japan's intentions towards its defeated foe. Signed on 21 July 1896, the Sino-Japanese Treaty of Commerce and Navigation formally terminated the era of reciprocal relations between Beijing and Tokyo.⁶⁷⁷ By the articles of this treaty, most favoured nation status was applied to Japanese interests in China, explicitly mimicking the tariffs rules in place between the Western powers and the Qing.⁶⁷⁸ Likewise unequal treatment was entrenched by explicitly granting "jurisdiction over the persons and property of Japanese subjects in China [to be] reserved exclusively to the duly authorized Japanese Authorities, who shall hear and determine all cases brought against Japanese subjects".⁶⁷⁹ With this treaty, China had been dealt a final humiliation by a small, hitherto insignificant neighbour that, until recently, had been an object of Western imperialism.⁶⁸⁰ Under such circumstances, given the severity of the Settlement of 1895 and the new unequal relationship established between Tokyo and Beijing through the 1896 Treaty of Commerce and Navigation, China's geopolitical necessity to submit could not be complemented by a gesture of unilateral accommodation as such a move would have undermined the remaining stability upon which the Qing dynasty shakily rested.

6.5.3. The Settlement of 1895: Policy of Reciprocal Restraint

Major changes in the international system can be accompanied by the need, due to geopolitical necessity, to adopt policies to reduce tensions, thereby embarking on the road towards stable peace, providing the necessary conditions for the formation of an RSO. The Settlement of

⁶⁷⁶ Lepsius; Mendelssohn-Bartholdy; Thimme (eds.), Die Große Politik der Europäischen Kabinette 1871-1914, IX, pg. 274.

⁶⁷⁷ Paine, The First Sino-Japanese War, pg. 278.

⁶⁷⁸ "Treaty of Commerce and Navigation", Number 1896/4 in MacMurray, Treaties and Agreements Concerning China, pg. 70.

⁶⁷⁹ Ibid., pg. 72.

⁶⁸⁰ Jansen, Marius, Japan and China: From War to Peace, 1894-1972, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1975, pg. 24.

1895 did provoke a metamorphosis in mutual perception amongst regional states, especially when seen through the policies of Tokyo and Beijing. Whether such novel conceptions could qualify as fulfilling the condition of a “policy of reciprocal restraint” will now be the subject of examination.

Theory has stipulated that geopolitical necessity often begets the need for a weaker state to adopt a policy of unilateral accommodation to its stronger counterpart. In the context of the Settlement of 1895, however, the absence of a gesture of unilateral accommodation by the defeated Qing Dynasty towards the victorious Empire of Japan seriously limited the ability of both states to engage in a process of reciprocal restraint, an essential theoretical element to proceed down the road towards stable peace. The Japanese were insistent that, both before and after the Triple Intervention, the Qing comply in full with each and every condition as stipulated at Shimonoseki, anchoring Japan as a Treaty Port Power, on par with the privileges and immunities that were equally accorded to the Western nations. At the same time, the Settlement of 1895’s antecedent conditions, as illustrated by the ideas presented in Huang Zunxiang’s “*Strategy for Korea*” following the 1876 Treaty of Kanghwa, raised the idea of promoting cooperation between the nations of East Asia. During the negotiations on what would become the Treaty of Shimonoseki, Li actively raised the possibility, however ephemeral, of enhancing cooperation between China and Japan. This included possible cooperation in the security field, as noted when pleading with his Japanese interlocutors: “The conclusion of our present differences in a lasting peace should be our great concern, for prolonging hostilities will injure China without benefiting Japan. The European Powers which maintain vast armaments take the greatest care not to provoke war. As we, representing the principal countries of the East, should follow this example of Europe. If Your Excellency and myself thoroughly appreciate this we cannot but conclude that the policy which should rule the Asiatic continent, is that we should establish an enduring peace in order to prevent the yellow race of Asia from succumbing to the white race of Europe.”⁶⁸¹ Such gestures were dismissed by Prime Minister Itō as having already been attempted in vain, referring to the Japanese government’s demands to the Qing to engage in institutional reforms, made during the negotiations on the 1885 Treaty of Tianjin. However, against the intellectual background of the last phase of the pre-modern East Asian international society, ideas of promoting cooperation between regional states hovered quietly in the background and, for the most part, remained underdeveloped by policy makers, thinly veiled by the calculus of geopolitical necessity.

The scope of the Qing’s defeat, however, not only discredited Chinese military capabilities in the eyes of the Western Powers but also disparaged the results of the last thirty years of the Chinese “self-strengthening movement” that had preceded the outbreak of the First Sino-Japanese War. The movement’s main proponent, Li Hongzhang, was openly scapegoated for fulfilling the hopeless task of negotiating a humiliating surrender at Shimonoseki and dispatched on a trip around the world. In the wake of defeat, the question of addressing relations with a victorious Japan, as well as the issue of promoting domestic and military reform, fell to the provincial Governor Generals of Zhang Zhidong (1837-1909), Lui Kunyi (1830-1902), and Yuan Shikai—all figures who had played a pivotal role in ensuring the survival of the Manchu dynasty during the turbulent period of the Taiping Civil War. This stormy period of Chinese history “revealed that the state ultimately depended on military power...and the awareness that the state’s armed force was what kept the country together.”⁶⁸² Here, the Qing had decidedly failed. The course of the war

⁶⁸¹ Unknown Author, *Verbal Discussions During Peace Negotiations*, pg. 7.

⁶⁸² Iriye, *China and Japan in a Global Setting*, pg. 11.

provided solid evidence that Japan's fast-track, comprehensive modernization strategy had succeeded while China's military-focused, single-sector approach had failed.⁶⁸³ How Japan had managed to achieve such a feat since the islands' forced opening in 1853 emerged as a critical policy question to reform-minded Qing officials as "rethinking modernization as a total national process and structuring policies accordingly became a matter of survival."⁶⁸⁴ The direness of the situation provided an unprecedented opening to develop a national strategy to address the many Qing shortcomings that the First Sino-Japanese War had exposed. There was, however, no agreement in Beijing on what particular course should be pursued to address them. While the contours of this debate lies squarely beyond the scope of this dissertation, reformist thinking began to convalesce around two basic poles: the first was Zhang Zhidong's *t'i-yung* approach that favoured the preservation of the substance (*t'i*) of Chinese cultural tradition through the adoption of the function (*yung*) of Western reforms, encapsulated in the formula "Chinese learning for fundamental principles and Western learning for practical application".⁶⁸⁵ Opponents of this view, espoused by Qing bureaucrat Kang Youwei (1858-1927), saw institutional reform as the sole avenue for a wounded Dynasty to catch up with a changing world. Yet both visions held a common denominator, namely Meiji Japan as a source of inspiration. Hence, limited cooperation with Japan to promote the reform and modernization of the Chinese state apparatus acquired a growing consensus amongst the Qing elite in the initial postwar period. Studying the success of Meiji Japan became to be seen as essential.

What Japan as a model meant in practice, however, was not actually well defined in the minds of Chinese would-be reformers. The First Sino-Japanese War marked the first time there had been large-scale, personal contact between Japanese and Chinese.⁶⁸⁶ Prior to the outbreak of hostilities, mutual contacts were few and far between. Chinese diplomats stationed in Tokyo neither reported on current events in Japan nor did they attempt to chronicle the steps the country was making in adapting western modernization to Japanese needs.⁶⁸⁷ A notable exception occurred in 1887 when Huang Zunxiang published a multivolume study, entitled Treaties from Japan, covering the totality of the Meiji's modernization efforts, concluding that if a "second-rate country like Japan could achieve success in thirty years, China could do so in three."⁶⁸⁸ In the period following the Settlement of 1895, Huang's work influenced reform-minded bureaucrats like Kang who, following his appointment by Zhang to a senior position with the Board of Works in Beijing, was able to advocate for the need to study the Japanese experience in detail. Kang, already in the 1880s, established a translation bureau with the overarching goal of translating 7,750 Japanese titles into Chinese. While it remains unknown whether or not the entirety of the planned works were finally translated, the project was financed in its entirety by Kang as the Qing authorities were still then unpersuaded of Japan's economic and military advantage over China.⁶⁸⁹

⁶⁸³ Vogel, China and Japan, pg. 134.

⁶⁸⁴ Harrell, Paula, Sowing the Seeds of Change: Chinese Students, Japanese Teachers, 1895-1905, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1992, pg. 23.

⁶⁸⁵ Kwong Luke, "The T'i Yung Dichotomy and the Search for Talent in Late Ch'ing China", *Modern Asian Studies*, 27, 2 (1993), pg. 253.

⁶⁸⁶ Jansen, The Making of Modern Japan, pg. 433.

⁶⁸⁷ Vogel, China and Japan, pg. 135.

⁶⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁸⁹ Harrell, Sowing the Seeds of Change, pg. 25.

In his newfound position amid the shock of Chinese defeat, Kang managed to use the opportunity to push forward his reform-minded ideas. Kang remained a nationalist, deeply opposed to the severity of the terms of the Settlement of 1895, petitioning the throne shortly after the signature of the Treaty of Shimonoseki to oppose the proposed peace terms, underlying the growing gaps between ruler and officials and, subsequently, the officials and the people.⁶⁹⁰ This opening gradually widened in the aftermath of the Settlement of 1895, allowing Kang to present to the Guangxu Emperor a paper, urging his Celestial Majesty to take the Meiji Emperor—alongside Peter the Great of Russia—as a role model to emulate. In his subsequent Study of Japan's Reforms, presented to the Guangxu Emperor in 1898, Kang argued that Meiji Japan provided a potent example for the Qing to follow as it managed to promote 'national reconciliation' through progressive policies, all the while firmly maintaining the Japanese Emperor System (*tennōsei*/ 天皇制) that provided a continual source of cultural and national identity.⁶⁹¹ Kang likewise repeatedly underlined that the world had entered an age of international competition and, as such, the state needed to reinvent itself to be able to compete in this ruthless environment. The Japanese model furnished the path to allow the Qing to also partake in this new era of international rivalries. Hence, for the first time in its history, China was open to engage in a policy that actively sought to acquire, understand and incorporate foreign cultural ideas. Hence, making an overture to Japan in order to learn from its success at adapting to an alien world was necessary.

At the same time, Zhang Zhidong presented his series of essays to the Qing Court, entitled An Exhortation to Study. Advocating for a complete overhaul of the ancient civil-service exam, Zhang sought to centralize Chinese education planning as well as promote a study abroad programme that specifically mentioned Japan as its prime destination.⁶⁹² Zhang favoured Japan over Western countries for mostly pragmatic reasons, namely geographic proximity, cost, language similarities and the enduring basic similarity of their respective social orders. Petitioned by such reform-minded advisors, the Guangxu Emperor ultimately opted to pursue progressive policies in a short-lived period of unilateral Imperial edicts, known as the Hundred Days' Reform, lasting from 11 June to 21 September 1898. Within this period, the Zongli Yamen issued a document stating that the Northern and Southern Commissioners, Provincial Governors and the Zongli Yamen Language School would be permitted to nominate students for study in Japan. The failure of the reform movement, with dowager Cixi and her reactionary supporters rescinding Emperor Guangxu's reforms, inevitably had an effect on the evolution of the study abroad programme, with student numbers remaining at no more than 100 until at least 1900.⁶⁹³ Nevertheless, the decision of the Qing Court to consent to dispatch students to Japan so soon after its calamitous defeat in 1895 illustrated a novel policy perspective. An obvious result of the unprecedented scope of the Qing's military defeat, it represented for the first time in the breadth of Chinese history, the desire to facilitate an opening to the world outside the boundaries of the Celestial Kingdom, one that was endorsed as part and parcel of Chinese national policy.⁶⁹⁴

⁶⁹⁰ Zarrow, Peter, After Empire: The Conceptual Transformation of the Chinese State, 1885-1924, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2012, pg. 40.

⁶⁹¹ Ibid., pg. 42.

⁶⁹² Vogel, China and Japan, pg. 137.

⁶⁹³ Harrell, Sowing the Seeds of Change, pg. 28.

⁶⁹⁴ Ibid., pg. 4.

There existed also reciprocal interest in circles of the Japanese elite to act as a model for the defeated Qing to follow. Following the Japanese defeat of the Qing exposing the Dynasty's military impotence, the Western powers began to seek primacy in the areas of China most important to their strategic and economic interests.⁶⁹⁵ Japan, now placed amongst their number, sought where possible to counter such expansion and simultaneously secure Tokyo's political and economic interests in a now weakened and exposed China, a policy encapsulated by the Treaty of Trade and Commerce of 1896. In order to safeguard Tokyo's interests on the mainland, elements of Japanese society began to reconsider their country's approach to China in an era of international geopolitical competition. Politician and journalist, Prince Konoe Atsumaro (1863-1904), was at the forefront of this postwar trend. As head of the prestigious Peers School (forerunner of the present-day Gakushuin University), Konoe conceived of an entirely new framework of thinking, from a Japanese perspective, about China and the rest of Asia, openly questioning the true nature of Western goodwill towards Japan and the Japanese.⁶⁹⁶ Konoe viewed contemporary Japanese policy makers, especially after the Triple Intervention, as being oblivious to the reality that the East and West were—as echoed by the pleas of Li Hongzhang during the Shimonoseki negotiations—on a collision course, with race as the central issue: “East Asia is ultimately destined to face a racial struggle between the yellow and white races, in the course of which both the Chinese and the Japanese will be regarded as the bitter enemies of the white race.”⁶⁹⁷ Common understanding between the nations of East Asia was therefore a necessity. To facilitate Japanese interests on the mainland through the cloak of pan-Asianism, Konoe oversaw the agreement between the Japanese and Qing governments to, one year following the Settlement of 1895, facilitate the first-ever study-in-Japan programme for Chinese students.⁶⁹⁸ In April 1896, the first group of 13 Chinese students arrived in Tokyo to enroll in a special three-year course at the Teachers College. While only seven eventually completed the curriculum, they marked the start of what would eventually grow to become a cohort of thousands, constituting the first large-scale study abroad programme in the world. According to Konoe, studying in Japan offered mutual benefits to both East Asian nations: for the Chinese, the occasion to learn the techniques of modernization, for the Japanese, an opportunity to exert influence over the next generation of Chinese leaders which could, in turn, assist in developing a counterforce against a common threat, namely the threatening spectre of the Western powers in East Asia.⁶⁹⁹

The Sino-Japanese exchange would mark a first point of cooperation between the two nations, with Konoe founding a “Common Culture Association” (*Dobunkai*/同文会) to improve Sino-Japanese bilateral relations; inform the Japanese public about Chinese affairs and assist in the coordination of Japanese business, media and education projects in China. Konoe's efforts were groundbreaking in the realm of pan-Asian groups, with the emphasis being placed not on geographic location but on a “common culture”, shorthand for “same culture, same race” (*dobun doshu*/同文同種), implying that Sino-Japanese cooperation “had something unique to justify it”.⁷⁰⁰ Konoe's emphasis on constructivist elements, especially his insistence on the innate similarities between Chinese and Japanese culture, foreshadowed modern concepts of successful alliance

⁶⁹⁵ Jansen, *The Making of Modern Japan*, pg. 438.

⁶⁹⁶ Vogel, *China and Japan*, pg. 140.

⁶⁹⁷ Harrell, Paula, *Asia for the Asians: China in the Lives of Five Meiji Japanese*, Portland, Maine: MerwinAsia, 2012, pg. 43.

⁶⁹⁸ Vogel, *China and Japan*, pg. 140.

⁶⁹⁹ Harrell, *Sowing the Seeds of Change*, pg. 6.

⁷⁰⁰ Vogel, *China and Japan*, pg. 141.

building, using ideas such as race, shared history and language as cornerstones. As such it implied harnessing a broad base of support, one that moved far beyond the confines of the elites that comprised the Qing leadership, seeking to also embrace the Chinese masses. While Konoe recognized the necessity of fostering cultural cooperation, its rationale remained rooted in geopolitical necessity. Arguing that the main causes of Western aggression in East Asia were racial, Japan had no other alternative than to assist the Qing in opposing them: “the survival of the Chinese people is by no means a matter of someone else’s welfare, it affects the vital interests of the Japanese themselves.”⁷⁰¹ Hence, the cultivation of reciprocal cultural understanding, through study and travel, would enable both East Asian nations to acquire the necessary wisdom to adopt the correct policies to ward off any Western challenge. Through mutual learning, the path towards stable peace between the East Asian nations could be charted through programmes of mutual confidence-building, as envisioned by the condition of reciprocal restraint. Indeed, Konoe’s pan-Asiatic ideas reflected those expressed by Li Hongzhang while negotiating at Shimonoseki, “[a]s close neighbours, China and Japan cannot always be at strife as now, sooner or later they must make peace, and it should not be a disgraceful peace for China lest the whole nation, high and low, chafe under the humiliation; peace under such conditions cannot be lasting.”⁷⁰² While the Japanese government, through the Settlement of 1895, opted to humiliate its Qing foe, the idea of fostering cooperation between the former enemies quickly began to assume concrete form.

Meeting for the first time in Wuhan in 1899, Konoe and Zhang agreed to a three-part programme of study tours, technical assistance and overseas training. Despite the turmoil of domestic Qing politics, all three programmes were established as envisioned and placed upon a trajectory of growth, with the increasing numbers of participants in such activities “signaling a mutually beneficial relationship.”⁷⁰³ Sending students to Japan acted as a new indicator of a never before witnessed level of contact, created in the wake of the unique conditions of the Settlement of 1895, when “an increasingly pragmatic China and a Japan with a growing sense of mission saw their interests coincide.”⁷⁰⁴ Successful initial cooperation on student exchanges led to the expansion of the scope of the postwar Sino-Japanese cultural programme. Zhang, Governor-General of Hubei and Hunan provinces since 1891, sought to transform Wuhan into the industrial heart of the middle Yangtze, complete with advanced technologies and the necessary personnel to produce and maintain them. Zhang wholeheartedly supported Konoe’s proposed expansion of Japanese education assistance through study tours for Chinese educators, dispatching Japanese teachers to instruct in China, as well as increasing the scope of the existing study-in-Japan programme for Chinese youth.⁷⁰⁵ In 1901, circa 20 Japanese teachers and advisers were sent by the Japanese government to assist Chinese provincial leaders. The number increased to 150 in 1902 and reached a peak of 550 advisors in 1909. The selection process of potential experts was a joint Sino-Japanese affair: Tokyo vetted the candidates and proposed a list to Chinese officials, central and provincial, who selected the final candidate and issued the invitation. The Japanese applicants for teaching positions in the Qing were adherents of Konoe’s East Asian Common Culture Association (*‘Tōa Dōbunkai’* 東亜同文会).

⁷⁰¹ Jansen, *Japan and China*, pg. 163.

⁷⁰² Unknown Author, *Verbal Discussions During Peace Negotiations*, pg. 6.

⁷⁰³ Vogel, *China and Japan*, pg. 164.

⁷⁰⁴ Harrell, *Sowing the Seeds of Change*, pg. 7.

⁷⁰⁵ Vogel, *China and Japan*, pg. 145.

Formed in 1898, Konoe's ideas of pan-Asian cooperation as propagated through his organization could be summarized by his statement during his meeting with the Chinese reformer Kang: "Asians alone should have the right to solve Asia's problems...presumably it is this very notion that is the principle behind America's Monroe Doctrine. And, as a matter of fact, the task of developing a Monroe Doctrine for Asia is the responsibility of your country and mine."⁷⁰⁶ In the wake of the First Sino-Japanese War, the Japanese military realized the Settlement of 1895 implied a very much altered strategic landscape. Japanese officers began to visit China's reform-minded leaders to discuss the possibility of military co-operation. Kamio Mitsuomi (1856-1927), for example, visited Zhang Zhidong in December 1897 with the message that Japan "urgently desires alliances with Great Britain and China as a means of resisting Russia and Germany and as a strategy for self-protection."⁷⁰⁷ This was followed up by another visit by a Japanese officer, Kajikawa Jūtarō (d. 1902) to Hunan-based reformer Tan Sitong (1866-1898). Kajikawa expressed remorse for the Japanese war with China and proposed "a league or union between China and Japan, and to offer Japanese assistance".⁷⁰⁸ While such discussions resulted in the dispatching of Chinese military study missions to Japan to inspect its martial system, reform-minded Chinese officials did not pursue such ideas wholeheartedly given their wish to remain loyal retainers of the Qing Emperor. Zhang, for example, argued that new knowledge of military affairs "should be used quietly to nudge Beijing to carry out urgent tasks for the sake of the country."⁷⁰⁹ Hence, the idea of forging security arrangements between China and Japan remained squarely in the domain of provincial couloir discussions.

Despite the pan-Asian ideology pregnant in Japanese rhetoric, and the gradually expanding nature of Sino-Japanese educational cooperation into an early version of twinning programmes, the modest base of bilateral cooperation remained inherently limited. Lofty ideological considerations mattered little to the Chinese, more concerned about tackling present challenges in the new post-1895 world. As such, "what made Japanese advisers attractive to their Chinese employers was that, either directly or indirectly, they were a source of Western expertise."⁷¹⁰ As the defeated party, alluded to by Li's statements on pan-Asian cooperation at Shimonoseki, Chinese reformers saw the need to modernize like Japan; moreover they remain convinced, to satisfy the wounded Chinese national pride, on the need to do so at a much faster pace than did their vanquishers. Ergo, China's postwar overtures to Japan were not founded on any innate desire to establish a stable peace or construct a tangible method of ensuring security cooperation between the two East Asian nations. In the post-1895 system, geopolitical necessity drove policy, with a sense of East Asian affinity being decidedly absent from the Qing's political calculations. In short, the decision to embark on educational exchanges "was simply a question of self-interest, a desire to use Japan for quick access to Western technology and as a likely ally in checking the Russian military buildup on China's northern borders."⁷¹¹ Geopolitical necessity and the competition inherent in the international system trumped any possible ideological motives on the part of the Qing to foster cooperation between Beijing and Tokyo. While the post-1895 Qing elite could be viewed as divided into isolationists and those, such as Zhang Zhidong, who were more reform-

⁷⁰⁶ Harrell, *Asia for the Asians*, pg. 21.

⁷⁰⁷ Reynolds, Douglas, *China 1898-1912: The Xincheng Revolution and Japan*, Cambridge: Council of East Asian Studies, 1993, pg. 24.

⁷⁰⁸ Ibid., pp. 24-25.

⁷⁰⁹ Ibid., pg. 27.

⁷¹⁰ Vogel, *China and Japan*, pg. 155.

⁷¹¹ Harrell, *Sowing the Seeds of Change*, pg. 28.

mind, their desire for transformation stemmed from Realist, power calculations. Seen from Japan's interests, Tokyo's main concern lay in upholding its gains on mainland China through the Settlement of 1895 and maintaining, or even enhancing, its ability to compete with the Western powers for influence over China's progressive leaders.⁷¹² Here, the late-Qing flirtation with Japan had its most resounding degree of success, with Japanese education having marked the formation of some of China's most important personalities of the twentieth century, such as Sun Yat-Sen (1866-1925), Chiang Kai-shek (1887-1975), and Zhou Enlai (1898-1976). Despite such an impressive result, the short-lived Sino-Japanese cooperation after 1895, motivated by concrete political interests, could not be considered as reflecting the tenets of reciprocal restraint and, as such, did not mark a substantive landmark along the path to stable peace. Instead, the severity of the conditions imposed by the Settlement of 1895 outweighed any moves towards cooperation by a heavy legacy of Chinese bitterness.⁷¹³ Hence, despite the colossal scope of changes wrought to the regional system in the wake of the Settlement of 1895, the absence of a gesture of unilateral accommodation, coupled by the effective—but ultimately modest—scope of confidence-building measures undertaken by the Qing and Japan, were insufficient to qualify as reflecting a policy of reciprocal restraint.

6.5.4. The Settlement of 1895: Satisfaction with Status Quo/Lack of an Interested Hegemon

Satisfaction with the systemic status quo has been highlighted as a key pillar upon which stability is built, enabling the establishment of stable peace. A 'negative peace' might stave off open military conflict, but it does not dispel the latent possibility of military conflict breaking out. As seen in this 'critical juncture's' antecedent conditions, the two most powerful nations in East Asia—the Qing and Japan—were presented with examples of the Western powers exhibiting displays of overwhelming force. Consequently, both countries entered into a tacit and shared understanding on the necessity to transform their countries into military strong powers, as "they saw the mighty nations of the West primarily as military powers, with strong arms, a powerful class of military leaders, and overseas bases, colonies and spheres of influence."⁷¹⁴ As a result, both elites decided that they needed to develop along similar trajectories. First and foremost, this entailed the development of a Western-style empire to enable each nation to compete in the new Westphalian order. Striving to achieve, or maintain, regional hegemony became an inherent measuring stick as to whether each respective regional nation could express their satisfaction with the status quo established by the Settlement of 1895. Yet, as the dust settled following the First Sino-Japanese War, and the newly established order began to crystalize, it became evident that regional powers were not satisfied with the status quo founded by the Settlement of 1895. Furthermore, this broad dissatisfaction with the status quo of 1895 was amplified by the absence of the ability of any systemic power to claim regional hegemony. Instead of stability, the Settlement of 1895 triggered an unprecedented period of global competition in and amongst the nations of East Asia and beyond.

As highlighted over the course of negotiations, the tenets of the original Settlement of 1895 were crafted by Japan's desire, given the terminal decline of the pre-modern East Asian international society, to secure what it viewed as its rightful place in the emerging international

⁷¹² Vogel, *China and Japan*, pg. 138.

⁷¹³ Paine, *The Japanese Empire*, pg. 40.

⁷¹⁴ Iriye, *China and Japan in the Global Setting*, pg. 9.

order. Following the Meiji Restoration, the political generation that rose to power saw its overall objective as “the preservation of Japan’s security and independence in the face of Western imperialism.”⁷¹⁵ Concluding that contemporary international relations viewed empire as the most significant attribute of a great power, Japan, in the face of extra regional challenges, elected to pursue policies that forwarded this ambition. As Ōkubo Toshimichi (1830-1878), Lord of Home Affairs, wrote in 1873 in what has been described as the foundation document of Meiji Japan, the path to lasting and secure independence lay through the pursuit of domestic reforms to dissolve the treaty port system and, subsequently, establish a claim to empire on the Asian mainland, with Korea occupying a prime position in Tokyo’s strategic thinking: “the first thing is to revise the [unequal] treaties [with the Western Powers], the Korean business [conquest] comes after that.”⁷¹⁶ Therefore, the notion of empire as envisioned by policy makers in Tokyo, while part of a grand strategy to safeguard Japanese sovereignty, necessitated the overturning of the already severely compromised contemporary regional order. Japan’s newfound sovereignty would therefore be based upon the ruins of the old order. The Settlement of 1895 anchored both Japanese acceptance as a limited regional power by the West as well as provided an expanded territorial foundation for its newly solidified status as an Empire. However, the situation following the Treaty of Shimonoseki was far from a panacea. The Settlement of 1895 neglected to resolve the first challenge as laid out by Ōkubo, namely the question of Korea, for which no final answer had been found.⁷¹⁷ Furthermore, the new status quo failed to satisfy Japan’s second desired strategic goal as, through the Triple Intervention, it had been deprived of its hard-won territorial acquisition on the Asian mainland, returning it to the defeated foe in the name of geopolitical necessity.

The Triple Intervention had illustrated to Japan’s civilian and military leadership that, despite having thrown off the yoke of the unequal treaties, the new Japanese Empire was under the precarious threat of the Western powers, whether acting alone or in unison. The decision by Russia, Germany and France to oblige Japan to relinquish its most prized acquisition at Shimonoseki came as a shock to a Japanese public that had become intoxicated at the success of the Empire’s military in the field. Japanese journalists, first and foremost Tokutomi Sohō (1863-1957) founder of the magazine *Kokumin no tomo* and newspaper *Kokumin Shimbun*, were enraged at their government’s swift capitulation.⁷¹⁸ Japanese historians have underlined the importance of *Kokumin Shimbun* as “reflecting perfectly the prevailing psychology of [Sohō’s] fellow citizens.”⁷¹⁹ Sohō was a staunch supporter of Japan’s annexation of the Liaodong Peninsula, travelling with the Meiji Emperor’s direct representative, Prince Komatsu Akihito, to the occupied port of Weihaiwei in April 1895 to support Japan’s claim to the territory. Sohō’s celebrations were short-lived, as his elation gave way to intense frustration upon learning that the peninsula had been returned to the Qing: “I was so seized by vexation that even tears would not come. I was not angry with Russia or Germany or France. I was angry at our diplomats who bowed to their intervention. And specifically Count Itō and his cabinet...the reason things ended up this way was the result of

⁷¹⁵ Paine, *The Japanese Empire*, pg. 8.

⁷¹⁶ Conroy, *The Japanese Seizure of Korea*, pg. 48.

⁷¹⁷ Jansen, *The Making of Modern Japan*, pg. 454.

⁷¹⁸ The *Kokumin Shimbun* was founded in 1890 under a populist banner and strove to maintain its independence from any particular political party or faction. While its circulation was much less than its competitors, such as Japan’s largest newspaper, *Tokyo Asahi Shimbun*, it was one of the newspapers that invested heavily in the reporting of the First Sino-Japanese War, dispatching nearly thirty war correspondents to cover the course of the campaign. During the war, *Kokumin Shimbun*’s circulation rose from 7,000 subscribers to 30,000.

⁷¹⁹ Saya, *The Sino-Japanese War*, pg. 155.

weakness. I became convinced that no matter how just or proper one's cause, it had less than half its value without the strength to back it up."⁷²⁰ Widespread indignation was harnessed into concrete political action, with a mass rally organized in Tokyo to condemn the return of the peninsula, while popular culture mirrored public anger, with contemporary prints portraying the European powers robbing the Japanese of their gains, only to acquire additional concessions for themselves in China.⁷²¹ As echoed in the ideals of Konoe, Sohō tapped into the rising popular sentiment that, in the face of the Triple Intervention, reliance on military power and a growing sense of rivalry with the Western powers were the true fruits of the Settlement of 1895. Sohō expressed these ideas in his editorial of 1 June 1895, encapsulating the Japanese populous' rejection of the Triple Intervention and understanding of the new post-1895 realities and is worth quoting in full: "Japan is no longer Japan solely for the sake of Japan: it has established its place in the Orient; and not merely in the Orient, but in the world. The time when China and Korea were our rivals is past; the time when our rivals are Russia, France, Britain and Germany has arrived. From now on, Japan must equip itself with sufficient credentials to compare favourably with, and to compete with, these nations... It is said that military power is the ultimate persuader in international affairs. The supreme qualification for status as a great power is armaments. From this day on, Japan's first task must be to arm itself mightily and stand tall."⁷²²

Such sentiments were also quickly absorbed by the Japanese elite both civilian and military, with the Triple Intervention obliging all ranks of Japanese society to be conscious of the necessity to not only be recognized as a member of the world powers, but also to be able to compete with their numbers. Military strength, therefore, following the Settlement of 1895 became imperative "to defend Japan's prosperity and future independence" and ensure that future gains would not be collectively deprived from the Empire in such an unceremonious fashion.⁷²³ The Japanese humiliation of the Triple Intervention was to be a one-time event. Under the newly appointed War Minister Yamagata, the military, already in April 1895, recommended a ten-year project of military expansion in order to protect Japan's new territorial acquisitions and maintain stability in East Asia at large.⁷²⁴ Accordingly, the expansion of the Japanese Army began in 1898, with the creation of six new divisions, two new cavalry brigades and two new field artillery brigades, with the increase in force structure necessitating a doubling of the conscription rate. The expansion of Japanese military power was accompanied by further modernization of arms, with Major Murata Tsuneyoshi (1838-1921) redesigning his made-in-Japan service rifle in 1897 to adapt it to the lessons learned during the First Sino-Japanese War. This substantial expansion was reflected in the major increases allotted to the military budget, with expenditure amounting in 1896 alone to JPY 73 million, marking a threefold increase over 1893 totals, and would peak at over JPY 100 million in 1900.⁷²⁵ On the seas, the Japanese integrated its twelve captured modern Chinese warships into the Imperial Navy. This was part of the general plan to expand the Japanese Navy by quadrupling their fleet to equal Italy or Germany and to, likewise, surpass any other navy in East Asia, including anything the Russian Far Eastern Fleet could muster.⁷²⁶ Such a programme of expansion was necessary in the wake of the humiliation of the final contours of the Settlement

⁷²⁰ Ibid., pg. 156.

⁷²¹ Jansen, *The Making of Modern Japan*, pg. 433.

⁷²² Saya, *The Sino-Japanese War*, pg. 157.

⁷²³ Paine, *The Japanese Empire*, pg. 42.

⁷²⁴ Drea, *Japan's Imperial Army*, pg. 93.

⁷²⁵ Ibid., pg. 95.

⁷²⁶ Paine, *The Japanese Empire*, pg. 42.

of 1895 as dictated by the Triple Intervention. Given the deep scar it had left on Japanese national pride, it was the only historical event invoked by Emperor Hirohito in his surrender speech on 14 August 1945, as the sole landmark that had hitherto left such an enduring impression on his nation: “the decision I have reached is akin to the one forced upon my Grandfather, the Emperor Meiji, at the time of the Triple Intervention. As he endured the unendurable, so shall I, and so must you.”⁷²⁷

There was little to console the Qing in the status quo of the Settlement of 1895. The string of battlefield defeats brought the legitimacy of the Manchu dynasty to the brink of collapse, with the Western powers concluding that China was incapable of reform and that administering themselves the duties that the Qing was simply incapable of carrying out marked the only sure way to secure their respective commercial interests.⁷²⁸ During the negotiations at Shimonoseki, Li Hongzhang prophetically warned against the victorious Japanese seizing too grandiose a territorial gain from their defeated foe: “It is part of wise statesmanship, to negotiate such a peace as will make true friends and allies of these two great nations of the Orient, who are and must remain neighbours, and who have in common so many things in their history, literature, art and commerce ... Nothing will so arouse the indignation of the people of China and create in them a spirit of undying hostility and hatred, as to wrest from their country important portions of their territory.”⁷²⁹ Prime Minister Itō blatantly disregarded Li’s counsel. Consequently, the Settlement of 1895 included the transfer of territory, economic privileges and immense financial reparations that shook the bedrock of dynastic stability. While China, through the Triple Intervention, was able to retain control over the Liaodong Peninsula, the Qing was obliged to sign over control of its island province of Taiwan. The Chinese of Taiwan, however, did not consent to become a part of Japan’s fledgling Empire and, two weeks following the signature of the Treaty of Shimonoseki, on 23 May 1895, revolted and, under the leadership of the Chinese provincial governor, General Tang Jingsong (1841-1903), proclaimed an independent Republic of Taiwan. While Tang fled to the mainland, Chinese forces under General Lui Yongfu (1837-1917) resisted the Japanese forces for five months before the nascent Republic was extinguished. In time, the Chinese “became increasingly bitter by the loss of their island”, intensified by Japan’s rejection of their hitherto compatible social orders and destruction of the pre-modern East Asian international society which successive Chinese dynasties had successfully promoted for so long.⁷³⁰ China’s territorial losses fostered a sentiment of humiliation and defeat that began to characterize the long-term contours of Sino-Japanese relations, a trajectory that extends into the 21st century. Additionally, the massacre of Chinese ex-combatants and civilians that followed the Japanese conquest of Port Arthur played a strong role in enhancing mutual mistrust and dislike.⁷³¹

The Settlement of 1895 and its new status quo was one that was explicitly rejected by the Qing. There was, however, given the aforementioned scope of Chinese defeat, little that Beijing could do, save to adopt a strategy to ensure the survival of the Manchu dynasty and, in future, reverse the trajectory of spiraling Qing impotence. The order imposed by the Settlement of 1895 obliged the Qing to seek allies to, one day, overturn its denigrating tenets. While learning the secrets of modernization were important to reviving China’s chances of competing in the new

⁷²⁷ Butow, Robert, *Japan’s Decision to Surrender*, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1954, pg. 208.

⁷²⁸ Paine, *The Japanese Empire*, pg. 45.

⁷²⁹ Kajima, *The Diplomacy of Japan*, vol. 1, pp. 223-231.

⁷³⁰ Paine, *The Japanese Empire*, pg. 42.

⁷³¹ Jansen, *The Making of Modern Japan*, pg. 433.

order, more tangible guarantees against the prospect of future Japanese aggression were required by policy makers in Beijing. As such, Russia's stern opposition to Japanese territorial acquisitions in Manchuria, as well as St. Petersburg's offer of loans to the Qing to cover its indemnity to Tokyo amounting to 100 million taels in the first year of payment—an essential source of income as China, with an annual revenue of 89 million taels, did not possess enough money in its coffers to commence payments of its tribute obligations under the Treaty of Shimonoseki—won the gratitude of Chinese policymakers.⁷³² While visiting St. Petersburg for the coronation of His Majesty Tsar Nicholas II (1868-1918) in 1896, Li Hongzhang attempted to form an alliance with the Russian Empire, something Li viewed as the cardinal principle of future Chinese diplomacy. Meeting with Finance Minister, Count Sergei Witte (1849-1915) and Foreign Minister Aleksey Lobanov-Rostovsky (1824-1896), discussions focused on two main issues: a treaty for protection for China against Japan and the provision of Manchurian railways by Russia.⁷³³ Witte's main argument for constructing Russian railways through the Manchu heartland was to ensure the shortest possible connection between her European railways and Vladivostok, thereby enabling Russia to accord China armed assistance in case of need. Li insisted that, in exchange for the railway concession, Russia commit to the territorial integrity of the Qing Empire, to which Witte and Lobanov-Rostovsky argued that the railway concessions would be “neither the cause for the invasion of Chinese territory nor the violation of His Majesty the Emperor's sovereign rights.”⁷³⁴ Li, satisfied with this response, proceeded to recommend to the Zongli Yamen the approval of a secret alliance with Russia, underlining that “the main idea is that if anything happens to China, Russia will stand up and help us.”⁷³⁵

The Secret Sino-Russian Treaty, signed on 3 June 1896, focused on the following main principles: **Article I** stipulated that in the event of a Japanese invasion of the territory of Russia in Eastern Asia, or the territory of China, or the territory of Korea, “both contracting powers promise to dispatch all the military and naval forces that can be mobilized for mutual assistance”⁷³⁶; **Article IV** foresaw the cessation of a strip of land for the construction of a railway “in order to in the future facilitate the rapid and safe transportation of Russian troops for opposing the enemy” through the territory of Heilungkiang and Kirin to connect with Vladivostok, with a Russo-Chinese Bank charged with its management.⁷³⁷ **Article V** allowed for the peacetime transit of military goods and personnel through the newly constructed railroad. **Article VI** specified the treaty of alliance's duration for a period of fifteen years. The treaty marked a major Russian expansion, both politically and economically, into the Manchu heartland as the creation of the Chinese Eastern Railway (CER) involved the cessation of over 250,000 acres of territory, linking the Trans-Siberian Railway with Vladivostok, making it one of the largest and most important foreign territorial concessions in China.⁷³⁸ Like the territorial concessions of the Treaty of Aigun, Russia managed to achieve its strategic goals at little or no cost to its Empire. The CER, mostly financed by French banks, remained an arm of Russian foreign policy, with Witte congratulating

⁷³² Hsü, Immanuel, “Late Ch'ing Foreign Relations, 1866-1905” in Twichett, Denis & Fairbank, John (eds.), The Cambridge History of China, Vol. II, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978, pg. 110.

⁷³³ Nish, The History of Manchuria, pp. 26-27.

⁷³⁴ Miyoshi, The Other Great Game, pg. 220.

⁷³⁵ Ibid.

⁷³⁶ The Sino-Russian Secret Treaty of 1896 quoted in Elleman, Bruce, International Rivalry and Secret Diplomacy in East Asia, 1896-1950, London: Routledge, 2019, pp. 100-101.

⁷³⁷ Ibid.

⁷³⁸ Ibid., pp. 12-13.

Nicholas II on the diplomatic victory his negotiations with Li had enabled: "China has finally broken its century-old policy and allowed Russia to construct a railway through its most revered Manchurian province. This is a very important event...It is difficult to predict all the important consequences [of the CER's construction] but I already know that it will be the subject of one of the most important pages written about Russia's history in the Far East."⁷³⁹ As of 1896, therefore, the Russian Empire's economic and military position in the Far East was dependent on its continuing control of the CER. In an ironic twist of fate, the Qing's dissatisfaction with the Settlement of 1895, and its efforts to mount an eventual challenge, actively contributed to further undermining China's sovereignty and territorial integrity.

Far from stabilizing the geopolitical situation, the Secret Sino-Russian Treaty of 1896, born out of the Qing's desperate strategic straits, ushered in a scramble between the Western powers for concessions in China. Unsurprisingly, the remaining countries of the Triple Intervention lead the way. Germany sought to extract a naval base in China, citing that all other major European powers had already established a presence (Britain in Hong Kong, France in Indochina, and Russia in Vladivostok). Berlin's initial overtures to the Qing were met with refusal. Following the murder of two German missionaries in Shandong in November 1897, German forces seized Qingdao and obliged the Qing to sign a 99-year lease as well as a concession for two railways.⁷⁴⁰ With the German occupation of Shandong, the Qing immediately sought to activate its secret alliance with St. Petersburg. The Russian Empire decided, as with the precedent established by the 1860 Treaty of Aigun, to utilize a territorial incursion by a Western power to achieve further strategic expansion and secure its hold on the CER. Newly appointed Foreign Minister, Count Mikhael Nikolayevich Muravyov (1845-1900), opted to dispatch Russian forces to occupy the strategic ports of Port Arthur and Dairen: "[t]hanks to the Chinese request, we could easily explain our occupation of any location in Chinese territory by our desire to have firm support for our squadron in case of further adverse situations for China which may occur in the Pacific Ocean."⁷⁴¹ It should be noted, however, that Sergei Witte, negotiator of the Secret Alliance, remained opposed to any Russian incursions on the Liaodong Peninsula, arguing that such a move was contrary to the 'spirit' of the 1896 treaty: "it is appropriate for Russia to do what we promised to protect China from [the occupation of Chinese territory]...We should not follow the German example and we should do everything possible to dissuade Germany from occupying Qingdao."⁷⁴² Muravyov underlined that, according to his reading, the Sino-Russian Treaty applied only to perceived Japanese aggression, with German designs on Chinese territory not being explicitly covered. Consequently, Russian naval forces took control of Port Arthur and Dairen in December 1897, two and a half years after Tokyo obliged the Qing, under the original terms of the Treaty of Shimonoseki, to cede this coveted province to the nascent Japanese Empire.

The Chinese were decidedly unhappy about this turn of events. The Guangxu Emperor expressed his anger to Li Hongzhang when called to the court to explain his actions in March 1898: "You said Russia could be depended upon and signed a treaty with her, giving her great benefit.

⁷³⁹ Записка по поводу заключенного между Китайским Правительством и Русско-Китайским банком договора на постройку и эксплуатацию железной дороги в Манжурии | Президентская библиотека имени Б.Н. Ельцина (prlib.ru), 1896, <https://www.prlib.ru/en/node/687662>

⁷⁴⁰ Hsü, Immanuel, "Late Ch'ing Foreign Relations, 1866-1905" in *The Cambridge History of China*, Vol. II, pg. 112.

⁷⁴¹ Пролог русско-японской войны : материалы из архива графа С. Ю. Витте / с предисловием и под редакцией Б. Б. Глинского. - Петроград : тип. АО "Брокгауз и Ефрон", 1916, pg. 32.

⁷⁴² Ibid., pp. 44-45.

Now, not only was [Russia] unable to prevent [Germany from taking Qingdao] but [Russia itself] revokes the treaty and demands land? You call this showing friendliness?"⁷⁴³ Li replied that, should Russia be given Port Arthur and Dairen, the Sino-Russian Treaty of 1896 would still remain in force. This was of little consolation to the Guangxu Emperor. On 7 May 1898, the Qing signed the Convention on the Lease of the Liaodong Peninsula, permitting the Russian Empire to lease Port Arthur, Talienwan, and the Liaodong Peninsula for an unspecified period. Russia was additionally permitted to construct the terminus of the CER at Port Arthur and Talienwan. Significantly, Article V agreed that the Qing would not, without Russia's explicit consent, neither cede any territory on the peninsula for the use of other powers, nor allow other powers the use of the peninsula's ports for commercial or military purposes, nor grant any other power mining or transport concessions.⁷⁴⁴ Consequently, less than three years after the Treaty of Shimonoseki, Russia wrestled de facto control over the very peninsula where Japan had sought to establish its territorial bridgehead on the Asian mainland.

This political development marked the culmination of Japanese strategic fears. Tokyo had been apprehensive of St. Petersburg's diplomatic actions with the Qing, qualifying the Sino-Russian Treaty of 1896 as an "anti-Japanese alliance".⁷⁴⁵ Not only did the treaty, along with the construction of the CER, alarm Japanese policymakers with Russia's increased ability to project military power in the Far East, but it threatened to undermine Japan's position in Korea that, under the Settlement of 1895, remained weakened and unresolved. This has been described as a reflection of Tokyo's uncertainty as to what its concrete war aims should be in Korea, displaying "no well-defined idea other than countering the Chinese."⁷⁴⁶ While the Japanese sought to expand their economic presence in Korea, Tokyo placed substantial focus on promoting reform, necessary in the Japanese view to promote Korea's independence and autonomy. These words, however, harboured a very special meaning for the Japanese as 'independence' and 'autonomy' meant in actuality the elimination of Chinese influence.⁷⁴⁷ Tokyo sent Inoue Kaoru as representative to Seoul, given his extensive experience in Korea, to help advance a pro-Japanese reformist agenda and bolster the August 1894 agreement between Japan and Korea that called for augmenting Japanese economic and political influence. Yet the internal political situation in Korea remained convoluted, with Inoue doubting that the Koreans were sincere in their desire to implement the necessary reforms, cabling Foreign Minister Mutsu that "what the Koreans do is not always what they say and they cannot be trusted."⁷⁴⁸ By 1895, the Japanese began to realize that "independence" meant something quite different to them than it did to the Koreans: "While [the Koreans] tolerated Japan's prodding for institutional reform, they were less willing to place their country under its economic yoke."⁷⁴⁹ As the First Sino-Japanese War drew to an end, Inoue was struggling to implement a policy of increased Japanese economic penetration into Korea, under the guise of reform, without giving cause for alarm amongst the Western powers that Japan was seeking to establish an outright protectorate over the peninsula.

⁷⁴³ Miyoshi, *The Other Great Game*, pg. 225.

⁷⁴⁴ MacMurray, *Treaties and Agreements with and concerning China*, pp. 127-128.

⁷⁴⁵ Nish, Ian, *The Anglo-Japanese Alliance: The Diplomacy of Two Island Empires, 1894-1907*, London: The Athlone Press, 1966, pg. 41.

⁷⁴⁶ Duus, *The Abacus and the Sword*, pg. 69.

⁷⁴⁷ Jansen, *The Making of Modern Japan*, pg. 435.

⁷⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁴⁹ Duus, *The Abacus and the Sword*, pg. 91.

The advent of the Triple Intervention had profound implications for Japanese policy towards Korea. The Koreans realized that the advent of Western intervention “signaled the end of undisputed Japanese ascendancy in their country and their political allegiances shifted accordingly.”⁷⁵⁰ The Japanese were aware of this shift and Mutsu instructed Inoue to abandon ‘strong methods’ in his negotiations with the Koreans, out of concern for a possible negative Western reaction.⁷⁵¹ Along with depriving Japan of the Liaodong peninsula, the Western powers were equally determined to ensure that Tokyo not be accorded sweeping concessions following its victory over the Qing. On 5 May 1895, the American, German, British, and Russian ministers to Korea dispatched a joint message to the Korean Foreign Minister, lodging an official protest against Japan’s attempts to secure special concessions in the country. The American Minister to Korea, John M. B. Sill (1831-1901), noted that “it seemed to be the determination of the Japanese to force from the Koreans, prior to [the Treaty of Shimonoseki], all manners of exclusive concessions for railroads, telegraphs, mines and other industries, as well as special treaties for open ports to be occupied by the Japanese exclusively, the garrisoning of Korean cities by Japanese troops, and the exclusion of all foreign employees except the Japanese, several of whom are now employed in every Governmental department.”⁷⁵² With such open displays of Western interests in the peninsula, the Korean officials realized that foreign influence could be an effective tool against Japanese encroachment. This fact was begrudgingly recognized by the Japanese, as illustrated in Inoue’s communication to Foreign Minister Mutsu as the First Sino-Japanese War drew to a close: “[the Koreans] were smart enough to see that as soon as peace has been declared Japan alone cannot have free play.”⁷⁵³ The Triple Intervention gave rise to exactly this scenario. In addition to depriving Japan of territorial gains on the Asian mainland—that in itself would have seriously compromised Korean independence—the Western powers likewise forced Japan to reluctantly back off from its designs on Korea, thereby inflicting upon Tokyo a second substantial geopolitical setback.

The Korean elite took little time to cultivate an active foreign counterbalance against existing and future Japanese inroads. Already in 1895, Queen Min contacted the Russian Consulate General to Korea, Karl von Waeber (1841-1910), to solicit Russian assistance in blocking Japanese influence in Korea, underscoring Tokyo’s fear of St. Petersburg in the Far East and likewise echoing Li Hongzhang’s motivation for promoting the Sino-Russian Secret Treaty: “[Japanese fear] is shown by the fact that Japan was forced to return the Liaodong Peninsula. Russia will never interfere with Korea’s independence so if we rely on the Russians and seek their protection, we will be safe.”⁷⁵⁴ Queen Min adopted an openly pro-Russian stance and began to expunge Japanese sympathizers and appointments within the Korean administration. Japan’s desperation at the pro-Russian leaning of Queen Min, and the effectiveness of her administrative purge, obliged Tokyo to replace Inoue with Lieutenant General Miura Gorō (1847-1926), an advocate of a hardline approach to defending Japan’s now threatened interests in Korea. Miura’s ultimate goal was to, once again, raise the Taewongun to power on condition that he not interfere with official appointments and not hinder Japan’s preferred course for Korean reform.⁷⁵⁵ To accomplish this

⁷⁵⁰ Paine, *The Japanese Empire*, pg. 45.

⁷⁵¹ Duus, *The Abacus and the Sword*, pg. 97.

⁷⁵² Ibid.

⁷⁵³ Ibid.

⁷⁵⁴ Miyoshi, *The Other Great Game*, pg. 206.

⁷⁵⁵ Duus, *The Abacus and the Sword*, pg. 110.

end, Miura opted to eliminate the source of pro-Russian sentiment at its source and carried out the murder of Queen Min on 8 October 1895. While successful in eliminating the Queen, little else was successful about Miura's coup. King Kojong, having survived the coup, took refuge in the Russian legation from where he fired his pro-Japanese ministers and appointed a new pro-Russian cabinet, bringing the Japanese reform movement in Korea to an ignoble end.⁷⁵⁶ The assassination of the Queen also served as one of the causes of Korean resentment towards the Japanese that would infect the long-term trajectory of bilateral relations. Miura was recalled to Japan to face trial where he was acquitted. Yet the long-term damage to Japanese designs on Korea had already been done, with Miura's coup achieving the exact opposite of its stated aim: "the irony of the émeute of 8 October 1895, was that it had paved the way for Russian domination of the peninsula, not prevented it."⁷⁵⁷ Less than a year after the Treaty of Shimonoseki, the Settlement of 1895 had evolved into a status quo system that seriously downgraded Japan's presence, power and influence on the Asian mainland (Liaodong Peninsula, Korea), contradicting the very trajectory of power ascension that Ōkubo Toshimichi's foundation document of Meiji Japan had advocated.

In conclusion, in the wake of the geopolitical shifts that the Settlement of 1895 introduced to the region, none of the East Asian nations exhibited satisfaction with the status quo it had established. Not only did it fail to foster stable peace, but it placed the region on a trajectory to future conflict.

6.5.5. The Settlement of 1895: Pacific Self Images

The erosion of the East Asian international society over the second half of the nineteenth century was accompanied by an evolution in the respective self-images of the members of the East Asian system, deepening the diverging paths chosen by Qing China, Meiji Japan, the Russian Empire and the Kingdom of Korea. Against the backdrop of rapid geopolitical change, a metamorphosis of the self-images of the East Asian nations began to take shape. As ascertained in the discussion on the pre-modern East Asian international society, compatible social orders were identified as straddling the region. Conversely, given the varying degrees of engagement in the Tributary System, pacific self-images could not be identified as characterizing the pre-modern regional order. The Settlement of 1895 shattered any remnants of compatible social orders and enhanced an ever-expanding divergence of pacific self-images that had laid dormant within the order of the pre-modern international society.

As the intrusion of the Westphalian order progressed into East Asia, so did it produce an effect on the respective self-images of the regional actors. While the Qing, as argued, appreciated the importance of pure military power, Japan opted for a more comprehensive approach to modernization, entailing the abandonment of the Sinified social orders that had characterized Japanese society since the Nara period. The goal, however, was to remake Japan into a Western-style Empire, in emulation of those that forcefully came to open the islands to foreign trade in 1853. Japan's military victory over the Qing had achieved one of the principal political goals of the Meiji Restoration, namely equality in foreign relations that negotiations had previously failed to bestow. This process, as previously elaborated, was accompanied by a "surge of

⁷⁵⁶ Paine, *The Japanese Empire*, pg. 46.

⁷⁵⁷ Miyoshi, *The Other Great Game*, pg. 210.

nationalism...[that] united the nation in a single effort.”⁷⁵⁸ In other words, Japanese society crafted its own self-image as a modern nation state in the Westphalian model. The Japanese decision to westernize marked the parting of the ways for the Japanese and Chinese economic and political development.⁷⁵⁹ The Japanese consciously elected to reshape their society along the images of a Westphalian state, willfully abandoning their former institutions which had been based on Chinese models. First and foremost was the centralization of power, the essence of the Westphalian state, through the Charter Oath of 1868, breaking with Japan’s feudal tradition and caste system, and serving as the first article of the Constitution promulgated that same year. Its fourth article made a final break with the Sinified and native traditions of Japan’s history: “Evil customs of the past shall be broken off and everything based upon the just laws of Nature.”⁷⁶⁰ This entailed sacrificing the position and revered tradition of the samurai and replacing it with the less romantic institution of a conscript army. It meant the next generations of Japanese children receiving an education based on Western and not Sinified values. So, too, did it signify Japanese men casting their votes in the nation’s first general election in 1890. One of the few pre-Meiji values that was left unscathed in this social uprooting was the traditional folk religion of Shintō which not only survived modernization, but was actively promoted by Meiji reformers as a social glue to bind society, cementing citizen loyalty to the divine emperor now seated in Tokyo.⁷⁶¹ As a uniquely Japanese phenomenon, the promotion of Shintō at the expense of Buddhism, imported to Japan from China, served to further alienate what had been common constructivist elements of identity. As a result, Japan began the Meiji period as one of the modern world’s most fractured polities and emerged a generation later as one of its most centralized states.⁷⁶² Compatible social orders with the Qing and Korea, that had defined regional relations for centuries, had been jettisoned to make room for something novel. The events of 1894-1895 marked a culmination of this recasting of self-imagery, representing a “radical transformation in the discursive universe of modern Japan”, a milestone in the way the Japanese saw themselves and their rightful place in the world around them.⁷⁶³

Increasingly, this meant reference to what the Japanese gradually began to see, following the Meiji Restoration and the recasting of their domestic self-imagery, as their ‘mission’ in the world. This self-image was built on two fundamental pillars: (i.) the first to cement Japan’s self-proclaimed missionary role in East Asia; and (ii.) expand Japanese territory in order to be able to compete with the Western powers. Such ideas were espoused by the prominent Christian thinker Uchimura Kanzō (1861-1930) who summarized Japan’s mission on the eve of the First Sino-Japanese War as “to reconcile the East with the West; to be the advocate of the East and the harbinger of the West.”⁷⁶⁴ Written in English, it sought to bequeath to Western readers a closer glimpse of how the Japanese saw themselves and their role in a changing system that now encompassed the entire globe. Uchimura believed that the mission of Japan was to act as did the ancient Greeks in relation to Europe regarding their relations with Asia. As for the second pillar of Japan’s new self-image, territorial expansion, this concept had been a growing part of Japanese self-imagery and strategic planning since the 1870s. As seen, the expansion of the sphere of

⁷⁵⁸ Hackett, Roger, Yamagata Aritomo in the Rise of Modern Japan, 1838-1922, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1971, pg. 167.

⁷⁵⁹ Paine, The Japanese Empire, pg. 7.

⁷⁶⁰ Jansen, The Making of Modern Japan, pg. 338.

⁷⁶¹ Paine, The Japanese Empire, pg. 7.

⁷⁶² Jansen, The Making of Modern Japan, pg. 334.

⁷⁶³ Saya, The Sino-Japanese War, pg. 166.

⁷⁶⁴ Kanzō Uchimura, Japan and the Japanese, Tokyo: The Minyusha, 1894, pg. 150.

Japanese interests had been part of the ‘grand strategy’ of the Meiji Restoration, as laid out by Ōkubo in October 1873, where Japanese initial designs on Korea had been formulated.⁷⁶⁵ Such ideas further emerged as the Meiji Restoration proceeded in its modernization goals. These found concrete echo in Prime Minister Yamagata’s inaugural speech to the Japanese Diet on 6 December 1890. Here, Yamagata introduced a concrete definition of Japan’s self-image as a regional power: “the independence and security of the nation depend first upon the protection of the line of sovereignty (*shukensen*/主權線) and then the line of advantage (*riekisen*/利益線)...if we wish to maintain the nation’s independence among the powers of the world at the present time, it is not enough to guard only the line of sovereignty; we must also defend the line of advantage.”⁷⁶⁶ Here, Yamagata defined the ‘line of sovereignty’ as the territorial limits of Japan, i.e. the Home Islands in their 1890 borders. The ‘line of advantage’ was seen as encompassing a strategic buffer zone that should be under Japanese control lest it fall into unfriendly hands. Here, Yamagata defined that principal territory in question as Korea, an area that would become the centre of geopolitical competition after Russia’s completion of the Trans-Siberian railway, threatening Japan’s interests on the peninsula and posing a menace to the Home Islands themselves. In order to secure this ‘line of advantage’, Yamagata argued for “military expansion and stronger patriotism among the people through education.”⁷⁶⁷ The success of Yamagata’s policy is evident in Uchimura’s writings, who reflected the prevailing popular sentiment on the eve of the First Sino-Japanese War of Japan’s image as the “leader of Eastern Asia” championing the “weak” (Korea) against “the strong” (the Qing).⁷⁶⁸ Japan’s self-declared crusade to modernize Korea was seen as a righteous reflection of Japan’s self-image as the leader of East Asia. As such, even Fukuzawa Yukichi’s progressive newspaper, *Jiji Shimpō*, qualified the First Sino-Japanese War as “a war between civilization and barbarism”⁷⁶⁹, with Japan viewing itself as the political model of the modern nation state throughout East Asia. Hence, the legitimate nature of Japan’s territorial ambitions and self-appointed missionary role vis-à-vis the rest of Asia formed a core element of Japan’s self-image both prior to and after 1895.

Chinese self-images were decidedly less distinct and very much connected with the elements of the ancient cosmology that comprised their world order. These characterised how the Chinese viewed themselves and the world around them.⁷⁷⁰ First and foremost, they reflected the tenets of *tianxia* and *tianzi*, especially when comparing the Celestial Empire to the other members of the fading pre-modern East Asian international society. Despite the tumultuous changes of the Settlement of 1895, these cardinal points still held their magnetism. In the nineteenth century, the Chinese “had always regarded only domestic events as truly important. Events outside China interested only a very small fraction of the Chinese people.”⁷⁷¹ Happenings beyond the Empire’s

⁷⁶⁵ Ōkubo, in 1873, rejected war against Korea as it would not be of ultimate benefit to Japan in its modernization efforts: “if there is a war we must have more than 100,000 soldiers, laborers, ships, etc. It will cost many times 10,000 yen. Even though we are victorious, the expense will be far beyond the profit...It is said we cannot endure Korean arrogance, but this is an insufficient reason and it would be very bad to open fire without thinking of our security and people’s welfare”, see Conroy, *The Japanese Seizure of Korea*, pp. 47-48.

⁷⁶⁶ Hackett, *Yamagata Aritomo*, pg. 138.

⁷⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 139.

⁷⁶⁸ Saya, *The Sino-Japanese War*, pg. 20.

⁷⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, pg. xvii.

⁷⁷⁰ This dissertation’s analysis of Qing pacific self-images is concerned with attitudes as reflected by the Chinese elite. However, as Chu argues, “there is strong reason to believe that mass attitudes did not depart significantly from those of the articulate elite.” See Chu, “China’s attitudes towards Japan”, pg. 76.

⁷⁷¹ *Ibid.*, pg. 77.

frontiers were of little concern. The Qing elite was much more focused, for example, on the sixtieth birthday of the Empress Dowager Cixi (in 1895) than war with Japan. Chinese attitudes towards Japan reflected the insular nature of Chinese philosophy that had characterized the breath of the pre-modern East Asian international society. In the lead-up to and during the First Sino-Japanese war, “the Japanese occupied in the Chinese mind the curious position of being at once the familiar and the ignored.”⁷⁷² Furthermore, amongst the select Qing officials that did concern themselves with foreign relations, Japan occupied a very low rank in Zongli Yamen priorities, with Chinese diplomacy willfully neglecting all aspects of the bilateral relationship: “Japan...was sometimes regarded as belonging to the group of tributary states headed by Korea, Annam and the Ryukyus. Yet Japan did not have regular tributary relations, so it did not even rank in terms of ceremonial importance.”⁷⁷³ Despite the tumultuous rebellions and civil wars of the nineteenth century, China still perceived itself as the economic and military hegemon of the region. This was also the case in terms of cultural understanding. As such, the Chinese were dismissive of Japanese customs. In the pre-modern East Asian international society, the Chinese looked down upon the ability of the Japanese to select elements of Chinese culture and modify them to their own cultural needs. This selective incorporation of Chinese values “was seen only as evidence of their failure to model themselves upon the Chinese more perfectly.”⁷⁷⁴ Such denigration only increased with Japan’s progressive modernization following the Western model, leading those in the Qing familiar with processes in Japan to openly ridicule Tokyo’s decision to ‘ape’ the West. Many Chinese regarded Japan as a “derivative civilization”, with one Chinese critic “observing how could Japan offer anything culturally to China when it had no culture of its own?...The Japanese might have excellent gunboats and efficient factories but, after all, these were invented in the West”.⁷⁷⁵

This combination of dismissiveness and contempt proved to amplify the shock of the Qing’s string of military defeats during the campaigns of 1894. Despite supreme confidence in Chinese civilization and martial prowess, Qing forces had been decisively defeated, leaving Japanese soldiers poised to strike at the gates of the Chinese capital itself, with the mighty Qing not being in a position to do anything about it. Such attitudes, fortifying China’s rectitude in face of such wonton impunity, were rampant after the Settlement of 1895. A useful summary of such prevalent self-images amongst the Chinese elite is presented by the words of Yi Shun-ting, a member of Governor General Liu Kunyi’s entourage. Following the war he issued a statement encapsulating, in the colourful language of the Qing literati, the totality of China’s wounded pride: “the island barbarian Japanese have inscrutable temperaments and petty dispositions. Their hearts are like those of jackals and wolves, and they possess poison like the bees and scorpions...they dare to title their emperor as the son of heaven in the land of the rising sun. It took them 48,000 years before they made contact with China, while in 3,600 years they still have not accepted our celestial calendar...illegitimately assuming the reign title of Meiji (Enlightened Rule), they in reality abandon themselves all the more to debauchery and indolence. Falsely calling their new administration a ‘reformation’, they only defile themselves so much the more...They annexed the land of Taiwan and had further designs on our frontiers...however we always bent over backwards

⁷⁷² Chu, Samuel, “China’s Attitudes towards Japan at the Time of the Sino-Japanese War” in Iriye Akira (ed.), The Chinese and the Japanese, pg. 78.

⁷⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁷⁴ Ibid., pg. 80.

⁷⁷⁵ Duus, Peter; Myers, Ramon; Peattie, Mark (eds), The Japanese Informal Empire in China, 1895-1937, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989, pg. 165.

to show our broadmindedness and tolerance in the hopes of living in peace with them. As for Korea, all the world knows that it is a vassal of China, yet Japan took military action there without reason. Is this not deliberately provocative? How can we tolerate this willingness to act like ‘the dog of ancient tyrant *Chieh* barking at the sage-king *Yao*.’ Both the immortals and humankind are angry, the entire world takes offense.”⁷⁷⁶ Yi’s frustration reflected the general consensus amongst the Qing elite that its vision of world order had been seriously compromised and the Chinese elite harboured a special resentment for the Japanese as, while Europeans were not expected to know the intricacies of Chinese society, the Japanese certainly were. A full century later, Chinese authors would refer to the Treaty of Shimonoseki as the country’s “greatest humiliation”.⁷⁷⁷

The unthinkable, however, transpired with the Treaty of Shimonoseki. It was not something the Qing ruling class was ready to accept, with “the loss to Japan not enough to make [Dowager] Cixi and the nobility reform China’s government in any meaningful way.”⁷⁷⁸ As such they avoided any policies that would have palpably reduced their power and continued to cultivate the self-image—to themselves, their subjects, and the world around them—of their continued cultural superiority and refused to adhere to any notions of equality. The post-1895 self-image, therefore, was one that was “unwilling to sacrifice the symbols of [the Qing’s] cultural superiority to focus on ameliorating the economic and strategic ones.”⁷⁷⁹ While the elite’s refused to bend or break to changed geopolitical realities, post-1895 Qing self-images, as reflected in the contemporary popular discourse, were rich in both self-criticism and resentment against the Manchu dynasty: “no matter how great their pride in their culture’s general accomplishments, [the Chinese literati] saw China as a loser, not a pacesetter, in the historical race.”⁷⁸⁰ While the Chinese nation possessed the possibility of historical redemption, such efforts would have to emanate from the people themselves. This forced intellectuals “to question what was known as Chinese...[and] increasing their comprehension of the international sphere and China’s place in it.”⁷⁸¹ The perceived humiliation from the Qing’s loss to Japan seeped into all corners of postwar Chinese society, launching widespread public engagement over critical policy questions. Reform was seen as the only tool to reverse what authors would describe as a national humiliation, an issue that would culminate in the Hundred Days Reform under the Guangxu Emperor.

The short period of Chinese recasting of self-images and demands for reform reflected a cultural awakening in China’s development.⁷⁸² Such calls did not mean implicating the hoi polloi in state policymaking, but the Qing’s defeat did legitimize literati calls for reconstituting the Qing state.⁷⁸³ At the same time, the trauma caused by the Settlement of 1895 spawned a “turning point

⁷⁷⁶ Ibid. pp. 74-75.

⁷⁷⁷ Gries, Peter Hays, *China’s New Nationalism: Pride, Politics and Diplomacy*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004, pg. 71.

⁷⁷⁸ Silbey, David, *The Boxer Rebellion and the Great Game in China*, New York: Hill & Wang, 2012, pg. 32.

⁷⁷⁹ Ibid., pg. 30.

⁷⁸⁰ Zarrow, Peter, “The Reform Movement, the Monarchy, and Political Modernity” in Karl, Rebecca & Zarrow, Peter (eds.), *Rethinking the 1898 Reform Period: Political and Cultural Change in Late Qing China*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2002, pg. 20.

⁷⁸¹ Huang Yingying, “*The Alien Eye: Chinese Self-images and the External Observer, 1874-1911*”, PhD Dissertation, Purdue University, 2018, pg. 53.

⁷⁸² Hu Huilin, “On the Formation and Evolution of Chinese National Cultural Security Issues in the Twentieth Century” in Yu Keping, *On China’s Cultural Transformation*, Leiden: Brill, 2016, pg. 271.

⁷⁸³ Zarrow, “The Reform Movement”, pg. 18

in the shaping of China's modern political culture.”⁷⁸⁴ The foundations of the Qing dynasty, and the Chinese monarchy in general, began to be questioned by Chinese educated classes. Given the overriding importance of the institution of the monarchy in the Chinese cosmology, this would have profound implications on China's self-image as, “to put it crudely, if the sage-kings' creation of civilization (that is, China) did not survive the debacle of 1898, then what became of national identity?”⁷⁸⁵ In 1898, no clear answer was found. However, between 1895 and 1898, the literati, through their clubs, academies and journals, challenged the Imperial Court's rights to be the sole arbiters of policy. While the reform movement ultimately failed with the ‘coup d'état’ of Empress Dowager Cixi, the breadth of the reform movement of 1898 marked a “pivotal movement in the creating of a distinctively *Chinese* national identity, defined in political terms through mass citizenship that implied—at least potentially—full-fledged political rights and participation and immediate membership in a community of ethnic, historical, and cultural ties.”⁷⁸⁶ The Settlement of 1895, therefore, cast the Chinese civilizational self-image into period of unprecedented flux and reorientation against the backdrop of ruling class intransigence.

The Russian Empire's self-image also, given its exponential expansion of geopolitical influence and power projection capabilities in East Asia since 1860, played an important role in defining the Settlement of 1895. Russia's defeat in the Crimean War (1853-1856) had soured its relations with the European powers, leaving behind a sentiment of betrayal. Following this defeat, a period of increased Russian expansion into Central Asia as well as the Amur Basin took place. Consequently, a new sense of national identity began to appear in certain segments of Russian identity discourses, namely the Orthodox Empire's role in bringing civilization to the “savage peoples of Asia.”⁷⁸⁷ Such sentiments were present in the writings of Russian author Fyodor Dostoevsky (1821-1881) who argued in his book, *A Writer's Diary* (*Дневник писателя*), that since Peter the Great, Russia has tried to become European but Europe has “never accepted us as Europeans no matter how much we have tried, prefers to view us as Asiatics. Furthermore, Europeans have been callously ungrateful given that Russia has often sacrificed its own interests for the sake of Europe.”⁷⁸⁸ Expansion into Asia and the Far East would afford the Russian Empire a new identity, one free of the preconceptions of the past: “in Europe we were hangers-on and slaves, while in Asia we shall be masters. In Europe we were Tatars, while in Asia we are the Europeans.”⁷⁸⁹ Russian influential Orientalist, Prince Esper Ukhtomsky (1861-1921), argued that Russia had a ‘natural role’ in Asia, one that he saw as inevitable: “Russia in reality conquers nothing in the East, since all the alien races...are related to us by blood, in tradition, in thought. We are only tightening the bonds between us and that which, in reality, was always ours.”⁷⁹⁰ This is not to argue that the Russian Empire suddenly perceived itself as an Asian nation. This view was certainly not adopted by most St. Petersburg elites. Yet, despite the writings of Dostoyevsky and Ukhtomsky, such ideas formed part of a pivot to Asia that was spurred by the geopolitical actions of other European powers and the options available to St. Petersburg given its massive

⁷⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁸⁵ Ibid., pg. 24.

⁷⁸⁶ Ibid., pg. 19.

⁷⁸⁷ Bassin, Mark, *Imperial Visions: Nationalist Imagination and Geographical Expansion in the Russian Far East, 1840-1865*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999, pg. 275.

⁷⁸⁸ Достоевский, Федор, *Дневник писателя*, Москва: Институт Русской Цивилизации, 2010, pg. 799.

⁷⁸⁹ Ibid., pg. 803.

⁷⁹⁰ Miller, Chris, *We Shall be Masters: Russian Pivots to East Asia from Peter the Great to Putin*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2021, pg. 112.

territorial reach. Russia's sense of national identity, in this period, did extend however to "relocating [Russia's] imagination out to the entirely novel theatre of Siberia's remote fringe."⁷⁹¹ No other project sparked this fascination than the realizing of the long-standing intention of linking the expanses of the Far East with central Russia by rail. In 1892, the plan for a great Siberian railway all the way to Vladivostok—with securing financing and a concrete timetable towards completion—became a reality allowing Russia to "force an entry into the sphere of international economic and political competition in the Pacific."⁷⁹² As such, a growing awareness of the importance of an eastern dimension of the Russian self-image, due to its unique geopolitical position straddling the Eurasian continent, came into effect as a result of the Settlement of 1895.

The Settlement of 1895 also signaled major changes in how Koreans viewed the question of their own self-image and their nation's place in a changed world. As noted, the Treaty of Shimonoseki dissolved the old tributary linkage between China and Korea, with Article I recognizing the absolute sovereignty of Korea for the first time. While this independence was "welcomed by many Koreans, who had been working to end the tributary relationship, [it] was seen as a hallow sovereignty" that was granted, and not earned.⁷⁹³ The changes for Korea's self-image following the Treaty of Shimonoseki were just as dramatic as for the Qing. The increasing political and economic importance of Japan on the Korean peninsula, reflected through the treaties analyzed in the 1895 'critical juncture's' antecedent conditions mirrored the growing understanding of Meiji Japan as a centre of East Asia. Korea was now, under the Settlement of 1895, an equal member of the international community according to Westphalian systemic understanding. This lead Koreans—for the first time—to reexamine their historical relationship with China, where the Celestial Kingdom had also held a central position. Entitled "the decentering of the Middle Kingdom", Koreans began to reappraise the centuries long cultural Sino-Korean relationship, laying emphasis on an emerging national culture, sovereignty, and carving out a niche for the Korean nation in the ongoing regional geopolitical transformations.⁷⁹⁴

While various versions of how Korean identity should respond to these contemporary challenges appeared "they all agreed that China's military loss to Japan was symbolic of what they referred to as the 'old knowledge' succumbing to the 'new knowledge'", reflecting a shift in the definition of civilization away from "one hegemonic system with its geographic locus in China toward another, centered on the West."⁷⁹⁵ The new horizons that the Treaty of Shimonoseki provided to Korean identity were neatly summarized by Seoul's *Capital Gazette* (*Hwangso'ng sinmun*/황성신문) in 1899: "The only thing [Koreans] knew was to revere China as the central plain, scorn Japan...and call all other countries barbarians. Now, for more than ten years, our doors have been open, and we have welcomed guests coming from all places. With our ears we can hear and with our eyes we can see the customs and laws of Western countries. We can now generally judge which countries are the civilized ones and which countries are the barbarous ones."⁷⁹⁶ China now often was agreed upon by most Korean observers, post-1895, to be decidedly lacking in 'civilization'. With rivalry heating up between the Russian and Japanese Empires for dominance

⁷⁹¹ Bassin, *Imperial Visions*, pp. 275-276.

⁷⁹² Romanov, B.A., *Russia in Manchuria*, New York: Octagon Books, 1974, pg. 1.

⁷⁹³ Schmid, Andre, *Korea between Empires, 1895-1919*, New York: Columbia University Press, 2002, pg. 27.

⁷⁹⁴ Ibid., pp. 55-56.

⁷⁹⁵ Ibid., pg. 57.

⁷⁹⁶ *Hwangso'ng sinmun*, 29 March 1899 quoted in *ibid.*

over the newly sovereign Korea, the Kingdom's "independence in the contemporary world system came to be contrasted with what was increasingly decried as past Korean dependence on China"⁷⁹⁷ Consequently, the Settlement of 1895 disconnected Korea completely from the ritual structures of the pre-modern East Asian society and, following the Qing's defeat, representations of China as 'barbarous' and politically impotent began to percolate through an emerging Korean identity, marking "rearticulation of Korean identity outside the bounds of the East Asian regional order."⁷⁹⁸

6.5.6. The Settlement of 1895: Compatible Social Orders

The transformation of self-images within the East Asian regional states marked a definitive end of any semblance of compatible social orders that might have lingered from the pre-modern East Asian international society. The Japanese victory against the Qing marked the culmination of the Westernizing reforms initiated by the Meiji Restoration. The Japanese Empire now was governed by a Western-style constitutional monarchy, complete with a parliament, the Diet. Fukuzawa Yukichi, one of Japan's most outspoken advocates of pro-Western reform, underlined the scope of this transformation, not only for Japan but also for the wider region at large. Writing in 1892, Fukuzawa stressed that "the adoption of a constitutional system of government and establishment of a Diet has been a change of the greatest magnitude, an event unprecedented in Japan".⁷⁹⁹ This reflected Fukuzawa's firm belief that "Western civilization holds undisputed sway over human beings and is impossible to challenge...the Japanese can only stand to gain by adopting its good points."⁸⁰⁰ The victory in the First Sino-Japanese War was viewed by Fukuzawa as a confirmation of the world's acceptance of the Japanese Empire's new Western-style internal reforms, one that carved out Japan as a beacon for change in Asia. Commenting after the signing of the Treaty of Shimonoseki, Fukuzawa declared that "the Sino-Japanese War is the victory of a united government and people...in truth, the Sino-Japanese War does not amount to much, but it is a prelude to Japan's future diplomacy, and it is no occasion for rejoicing."⁸⁰¹ Standing alone in Asia with no unequal treaties and the recognition of the Great Powers, the Japanese social orders therefore provided a model for which Asia, too, could emulate.

The nearest candidate to coax into following the Japanese example was Korea. As noted, Japanese liberals such as Fukuzawa were strongly in favour of stimulating the development of a novel social order in its neighbouring Kingdom. Hence, the Japanese occupation of Korea was used not only as a way to politically sever the remaining official ties between the peninsula and the Qing, but also "push the Korean government to move in ways more amiable to Japanese interests."⁸⁰² This included a decided campaign to push Japanese-style Western reforms on the Korean Government, breaking any lingering influence of the old orders of the pre-modern international society and entrench Korea in the Westphalian system. This not only included the announcement of the termination of all Korean tribute missions to the Qing Court but also the

⁷⁹⁷ Ibid., pg. 61.

⁷⁹⁸ Ibid., pg. 60.

⁷⁹⁹ Craig, Albert, Selected Essays by Fukuzawa Yukichi: On Government, London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2019, pg. 169.

⁸⁰⁰ Ibid.

⁸⁰¹ Kiyooka Eiichi (trans.), The Autobiography of Yuichi Fukuzawa, New York: Columbia University Press, 2007, pg. 415.

⁸⁰² Larsen, Kirk, "Competing imperialisms in Korea" in Seth, Michael (ed.), The Routledge Handbook of Modern Korean History, London: Routledge, 2016, pg. 34.

formation of a new Cabinet that sought to implement reforms. This set of Japanese-demanded reforms, known as the *kabo* and *ulmi* reforms aimed at “modernizing Korean political and society along Western lines.”⁸⁰³ The Japanese Foreign Minister, in the run-up to the outbreak of the First Sino-Japanese War, instructed Minister Ōtori to actively interfere in domestic Korean politics by using “either sweet words or stern threats , which ever means are deemed suitable” to promote the pro-Japanese position in Korea, noting that a “reasonable amount” of money could be used for bribing Korean politicians.⁸⁰⁴ Previous attempts a instigating Western-style reform through a bill presented by Minister Ōtori was refused both by the Korean and Qing Courts. Following the new Cabinet’s drive to push Korean society towards Westernization, and therefore towards the new example of Japanese social orders, resistance to such top-down changes “coalesced around defiance of the so-called top-knot edict, which required Korean males to cut off their customary top-knot and wear their hair Western (or recent Japanese) style” and the opposition of Queen Min.⁸⁰⁵ With the assassination of the Korean Queen, most of the planned reforms remained unimplemented. This was due to both significant domestic Korean opposition and also the advent of the Triple Intervention.⁸⁰⁶ With Japan having incurred a strategic defeat by having to retrocede the Liaodong Peninsula, Tokyo was weary of pressing too hard at establishing its influence over Korea. However, the severing of the tributary relationship between the Qing and Korea, as well as the increased pressure from Japan to initiate Western-style reforms placed the Korean Peninsula within the Westphalian System and towards the eventual emulation of the novel Japanese social order.

With the traditional Chinese social orders as espoused by the Qing discredited with its military defeat against Japan. The new pole of the Japanese social orders began a process to attempt to replicate, preferably by osmosis but if need by force, the success of the Japanese Empire and, likewise, expand its political influence. In doing so, Japan purposely juxtaposed itself against the social orders prevalent in the East Asian region. As such, the criterion of compatible social orders could not be said to apply to the Settlement of 1895.

6.5.7. The Settlement of 1895: The Existence of an Interested Hegemon

The Japanese victory over the Qing and the initial harsh conditions Tokyo imposed on Beijing revealed the intention to establish the Japanese Empire as the primary hegemon in East Asia. Indeed, one of the major aims of the Japanese war effort was to establish Japanese hegemony through the military humiliation of China; as noted by Western observers “the Japanese are greatly elated over their [military] successes and feel very keenly the contemptuous treatment with which China has extended to them in the past and are inclined to humiliate her as much as possible.”⁸⁰⁷ The Treaty of Shimonoseki included provisions for securing concrete Japanese commercial advantages through the abolition of the *lijin* and payment of a hefty indemnity as well as securing Japanese dominance over the strategic islands chain south of Kyushu. It also purposely attacked any symbolic vestiges of China’s extended hegemony that it possessed in the pre-1895 East Asian

⁸⁰³ Ibid.

⁸⁰⁴ Young, Lew, “Korean-Japanese Politics behind the Kabo-Ulmi Reform Movement, 1894 to 1896”, *The Journal of Korean Studies*, 1981, Vol. 3, pg. 46.

⁸⁰⁵ Larsen, “Competing imperialisms in Korea”, pg. 34.

⁸⁰⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁰⁷ Paine, *The First Sino-Japanese War*, pg. 269.

systemic constellation. Such gestures extended to Article I and the breaking of any tributary relationship between the Qing and Korea but also focused on securing the “symbolically crucial ancestral home of the Qing Dynasty, Mukden, located in the district Fengtianfu...to ensure Chinese compliance with the treaty terms.”⁸⁰⁸ The new Western-styled Japanese Empire would be one built over the ashes of Imperial China.

Such designs, as noted, failed to escape the geopolitical analysis of St. Petersburg, Berlin, and Paris, their actions motivated by securing their own respective interests in China but as a clear signal against Japanese regional hegemony. The Triple Intervention and Japan’s decision to abide by the interventionist powers’ ‘suggestion’ to retroactively cede the Liaodong Peninsula to the Qing following the signature of the Treaty of Shimonoseki poignantly illustrated that Tokyo’s bold geopolitical vision simply outstripped its capabilities to achieve it. The concessions were not cosmetic in nature. Instead, they represented “important portions of the war gains obtained by the efforts of the Government and the nearly unanimous support of the people”.⁸⁰⁹ The geopolitical necessity that compelled Japan to abandon its claims over the Liaodong Peninsula has been detailed above. This decision however also concretely illustrated the limits of contemporary Japanese power and the inability of the nascent Empire to enforce its self-proclaimed interested hegemony over the region. To illustrate this gap between policy goals and hegemonic reality, the internal Japanese deliberations on a possible diplomatic response to the powers needs to be considered. Faced with the gravity of the foreign demands of the interventionist powers, an Imperial Council was convened at Hiroshima with Prime Minister Itō, War Minister Yamagata, Foreign Minister Mutsu, and Navy Minister Saigō in attendance. The ensuing discussion on Japan’s appropriate reaction to the demands of the interventionist powers distilled three available policy options: (1.) even at the cost of making “more enemies by doing so, we should definitely reject the advice of the three powers”; (2.) Japan should convene an “international conference with the powers and settle the problem”; and (3.) Japan should “return the Liaodong Peninsula to China as a favour, accepting the recommendation of the three powers.”⁸¹⁰

Initially, the Council veered towards the organization of an international conference to settle the issue and, in doing so, press Tokyo’s justification for the imposition of the Treaty’s territorial terms. Yet, in probing the details of what an international conference would entail, Mutsu expressed his resolute opposition to any such notion. Mutsu argued that it was not known if any of the interventionist nations, or any other Foreign Power, would agree to attend a conference and, even if they did, what the exact time frame would be needed to make such a diplomatic endeavour a reality. Second, by offering the Treaty of Shimonoseki as a subject of international discussion, it would be “difficult to limit the discussion to the question of the Liaodong Peninsula only...[the danger existed that] the powers would present various demands with the result that the Shimonoseki Treaty would be wholly destroyed.”⁸¹¹ All of what Japan had gained, save the cessation of the Liaodong Peninsula, could therefore be lost. Conferring with the Japanese military, the generals and admirals admitted that the current state of Japanese forces could not meet the

⁸⁰⁸ Ibid., pg. 267.

⁸⁰⁹ Kajima Morinosuke, *The Diplomacy of Japan, 1894-1922, Volume I, Sino-Japanese War and Triple Intervention* Tokyo: The Kajima Institute of International Peace, 1976, pg. 297.

⁸¹⁰ Ibid., pg. 298.

⁸¹¹ Ibid., pp. 299-300.

combined challenge of the navies of the Russian Empire, Germany and France.⁸¹² Foreign Minister Mutsu concurred and underlined that no real assistance from the United States and the United Kingdom could be relied upon in the event of an outbreak of extended hostilities. Following the deliberations at the Imperial Conference, it was officially decided that “it was not a good policy for Japan to increase the number of enemy states under the current circumstances” and, as such, Japan “could not help but consent to all or at least part of the recommendations of Russia, Germany, and France if those countries insisted on their intervention.”⁸¹³

On 8 May 1895, the Treaty of Shimonoseki was ratified by Japan. Two days later, on 10 May, the Meiji Emperor issued the Imperial Rescript that announced the retrocession of the Liaodong Peninsula to the Qing. Japan strove to establish a territorial presence on the Asian mainland, seriously advancing its claims to East Asian hegemony, only to have this substantial territorial acquisition erased following serious foreign intervention. The Imperial discussions on Japan’s reaction to the demands of the interventionist powers is revealing. While the Japanese Government toyed with the idea of discussing the issue at an international conference, they quickly came to the realization that such an approach would probably not suffice in successfully defending Tokyo’s claims to a portion of mainland China, but also at the same time jeopardize all of Japan’s gains under the Treaty of Shimonoseki. They were cognizant that although Japan possessed the political will to establish its own regional hegemony, it could not independently enforce it against the combined might of the interventionist powers. The hegemonic interest had been stoked in the thrill of repeated Japanese victories against Qing forces, however, in the new context of a truly global international system, Japan’s power potential was simply insufficient.

While the Treaty of Shimonoseki did establish Japan as the pre-eminent East Asian power through its defeat and purposeful humiliation of the vanquished Qing, the advent of the Triple Intervention illustrated that even such a bombastic display of Japanese technology and military prowess still remained inadequate for the Japanese Empire to impose all of its desired treaty terms over the Qing. While the final terms of the Treaty of Shimonoseki went a long way to improving Japan’s economic and strategic position in East Asia, it was unable to achieve all its stated war aims, including cementing regional hegemony. When challenged over Liaodong, the Japanese Empire had no other realistic option than to cede to the demands of the interventionist powers. Consequently, this inherent geopolitical impotence on the part of the nevertheless victorious Japanese Empire meant that, in the legacy system that was established by the Treaty of Shimonoseki, no regional hegemon could be ascertained.

6.5.8. The Settlement of 1895: The Existence of a Constitutional Order

The Treaty of Shimonoseki, while representing one of the first Westphalian treaties in the region, focused on a limited portion of East Asia, namely between Imperial China and Japan, with some articles extending to Korea. While it reflected Japan’s desire to officially reformulate its relations with the Qing, the Treaty did not seek to establish a new system over the entirety of the region. This inherent limitation of the Treaty of Shimonoseki would disqualify it from reflecting the criterion of introducing a Constitutional Order. Furthermore, the very concept of a Constitutional Order lay decided beyond the diplomatic norms of the close of the 19th century and,

⁸¹² Nish, Ian, *Japanese Foreign Policy, 1869-1942: Kasumigaseki to Miyakezaka*, London: Routledge, 1977, pg. 40.

⁸¹³ Kajima, *The Diplomacy of Japan, Volume I*, pg. 300.

as such, could not be reflected in any settlement agreed between Japan and Imperial China to conclude hostilities. Hence, this criterion was not evidenced in the legacy system of 1895.

6.5.9. Conclusion: The ‘Legacy System’ of the Settlement of 1895

Having applied this dissertation’s analytical framework to the ‘critical juncture’ of the Settlement of 1895, initial conclusions can be gleaned as to whether the Treaty of Shimonoseki assisted in creating a stable peace that could lead, eventually, to the formation of an RSO. The results are outlined in the table below:

Table 10: Assessment of the conditions for RSO Formation present following the Settlement of 1895

<i>Antecedent Condition</i>	<i>Geo-political Necessity</i>	<i>Policy of Reciprocal Restraint</i>	<i>Satisfaction with Status Quo/‘Legacy System’</i>	<i>Pacific Self-Image</i>	<i>Compatible Social Orders</i>	<i>Existence of an Interested Hegemon</i>	<i>Existence of a Constitutional Order</i>
<i>Settlement of 1895</i>	YES	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO

The Settlement of 1895 laid to rest any lingering vestiges of the pre-modern East Asian international society. The condition of geopolitical necessity both obliterated its last traces and obliged both victor and vanquished to concede to painful concessions in the name of state survival. The sheer weight of the Japanese victory forced China to formally dissolve its links with its last remaining tributary state, the Kingdom of Korea, and—while it was spared from ceding part of mainland Manchuria to the Japanese—it was required to part with the island of Taiwan and was saddled with enormous reparations that, as documented, further eroded an already shaken Qing authority. Geopolitical necessity rendered the Qing surrender at Shimonoseki essential for securing the very survival of the Dynasty, whose claim to the Kingdom of Heaven would be in danger should Japanese troops have chosen to march on Beijing in the event of a failure of negotiations between Li Hongzhang and Prime Minister Itō. The Qing was forced to opt for what was seen as an obvious humiliation to safeguard any future for China’s Manchu ruling elite. As noted, the Japanese victory that its elite believed to be total was, in fact, a limited one. The territorial concessions that the nascent Japanese Empire had won from the Qing were, in fact, a step too far in the eyes of the Western powers. The advent of the Triple Intervention reminded the Meiji Emperor that while his nation had managed to throw off the yoke of the unequal treaties, it was not at liberty to remake the East Asian region according to its own political designs. Japanese hegemony would therefore be actively opposed. The Triple Intervention warned Tokyo that Western approval was still required for any serious changes in East Asia that would see the interests of the European powers put in jeopardy. As witnessed through the return of the Liaodong peninsula to China—as well as the Western powers note to the Korean Foreign Ministry, hindering Japan’s designs to establish a political and economic monopoly over Korea—the nascent Japanese Empire would not be allowed through the Settlement of 1895 to establish a territorial foothold on the Asian mainland as prescribed by Yamagata’s ‘line of advantage’. The Western powers did,

however, consent to the rest of Japan's gains, namely the acquisition of unequal treaty rights when dealing with the Qing, as negotiated in the Treaty of Trade and Commerce in 1896. However, Japan's civil and military rulers were cognizant that they could not overcome the combined might of the powers of the Triple Intervention and, therefore, the same condition of geopolitical necessity could be applied to Tokyo's decision to agree to the Triple Intervention's terms, however unjustly viewed by the Japanese elite and general populous. Both vanquished and victor alike of the Settlement of 1895 required to submit to the condition of geopolitical necessity to ensure the survival of both polities.

As underlined, the scope of the Qing's defeat left little room for gestures of unilateral accommodation, the necessary first step to gradually launch a policy of reciprocal restraint. In the wake of the Settlement of 1895, realist calculations forwarded policies that seemed to mimic the tenets of a policy of reciprocal restraint, namely back and forth gestures of policy concessions that pave the way for reconciliation and, in time, stable peace. The decision of the Qing and Japanese authorities to embark on the world's first state sponsored educational exchange—eventually expanding to encompass twinning programmes in key areas of Chinese industry and administration, as well as modest first steps towards possible military-to-military cooperation—would, at first, seem to fit this bill. However, upon closer analysis, these confidence-building programmes were, in their entirety, spawned by desires to increase the power capabilities of the respective participant: for the Qing, it was securing access to, in Chinese eyes, the begrudgingly successful process of western modernization; for the Japanese, while sometimes couched in pan-Asiatic rhetoric, such policies were motivated by the opportunity to extend Japanese economic influence further into China as well as influencing the next crop of Chinese leaders. On this latter point, Japanese policy was largely successful. At the same time, the modest moves towards a Sino-Japanese rapprochement, despite the recognized common threat posed by the European powers following the Settlement of 1895, did not materialize into any form of reciprocal policies aimed at reducing postwar tensions.

The Settlement of 1895 left a legacy of deep dissatisfaction with the system it had established. The Qing rejected and raged against the snuffing out of the pre-modern international order and its defeat against what had been formally an ignored tributary. The Japanese remained unsatisfied with the deprivation of their most coveted gain of the Treaty of Shimonoseki, the Liaodong peninsula. Likewise, Japanese goals in Korea, a main reason why Tokyo opted for war against the Qing in 1894, were not advanced through the Settlement of 1895, with the Western powers making it very clear to both Seoul and Tokyo that further Japanese encroachments on Korean sovereignty would not be tolerated. The sole concession to Japan, regarding Korea, in the Settlement of 1895 was that the age-old tributary relationship between China and Korea was officially dissolved, serving as harbinger to the dénouement of the Chinese-dominated old order. Ironically, in the wake of the harsh terms of the Treaty of Shimonoseki, the Triple Intervention, and the assassination of Queen Min, Tokyo saw its two most important strategic goals—control over the Liaodong peninsula and a monopoly over Korea—slide away under Russian influence. The Western powers, first and foremost Russia, saw an opportunity to expand their relative spheres of influence and privileged economic position in a weakened China, while allowing a debased Japan to keep the gains that the West had left them. The Settlement of 1895 was seen as a step forward to advance their own ambitions in East Asia. As such, the ultimate status quo of the

Settlement of 1895 was one that was, in some form or another, resented by all participants of the new regional order.

Likewise, the Settlement of 1895 helped reinforce the nascent self-images that had been crystalizing amongst the regional powers, making reciprocal cooperation impossible and the road to stable peace unlikely. In no way did any of the respective self-images reflect a pacific nature, with each regional player fully able to envision the use of war as an element of a justified foreign policy. The First Sino-Japanese War marked a clash brought about by the diverging perceptions of self-images that had been cultivated by the Qing and Japan in the period of the 1895 'critical juncture's' antecedent conditions. Japan viewed itself as having assumed the mantle of the role of the enlightened liberator of East Asia, as reflected in Uchimura's writings, with successful Western modernization having bestowed the Meiji Empire with the 'duty' to promote pro-Japanese reform movements, such as in Korea, to advance Tokyo's interests. Result of an ongoing process since the Meiji Restoration, this Japanese self-proclaimed 'mission' became very much anchored in the popular self-image of the Japanese nation and a synonym for what it meant to be 'Japanese'. The self-image of the Qing was an exercise in contrast with the developments of its neighbours, with the Qing elite holding tight to what it viewed as justified indignation of what had been seen as a failure of its millennia-long civilization. Post-1895, a disbelief set in amongst both Qing literati and elite alike that the Celestial Empire had been humbled by the willfully scorned peoples of Japan, amplifying the calls for societal reform to allow for China to compete in this new alien international system. A new national discourse emerged openly questioning the Qing Court's monopoly on policy making and an expansion of the belonging of the Chinese state to include, in some degree, a wider population. With the completion of the Trans-Siberian railroad, Russia, while decidedly an Orthodox European power in cultural terms, began to see itself as beginning to cultivate elements of a Far Eastern personality. By this, St. Petersburg saw ample opportunity to extend Russian influence further into East Asia as the pre-modern international society faded away. The Settlement of 1895 allowed the Russian Empire to deepen its involvement in the region. Through its 1896 Secret Alliance with the Qing, and its subsequent betrayal of that alliance through the seizure of the Liaodong peninsula in 1897, as well as installing a pro-Russian cabinet in Seoul following the assassination of Queen Min, St. Petersburg found itself in a much more favourable geopolitical situation than the antebellum status quo. The Settlement of 1895 provided the base for the cultivation of a self-image of the Russian Empire that viewed itself in ascendancy in the East, while not necessarily forming an integral part of it.

The official demise of the pre-modern East Asian international society that accompanied the Settlement of 1895 marked the end of the Sinified compatible social orders that had unified China and its now former tributary states of Korea and Japan. While the old social order lingered in Korea, it had been openly rejected by the Japanese who pursued a wide-ranging programme of modernization that westernized most elements of the post-Meiji Restoration society. As noted above, the outright rejection of traditional, Sinified elements of Japanese society was incorporated into a central pillar of Japan's newfound self-image. Hence, the Settlement of 1895 shattered the regional unity that had characterized pre-modern East Asia, with each respective nation cultivating its own unique social norms to meet the unprecedented challenges of systemic change.

The post-1895 system opened the doors to an unprecedented period of geopolitical competition in East Asia. This can be attributed to the fact that the post-1895 system failed to

produce a state that could qualify as a regional hegemon. The Triple Intervention had actively rolled back Tokyo's moves to establish its own regional hegemony, but it did not establish any one country's ability to project hegemony across East Asia. Instead, it led to a further weakening of an already crumbling former hegemon. The Japanese humbling of the Qing exposed its military weakness, leading the Western powers to attempt to expand their political and economic influence in China through the establishment of new and lucrative concessions. The period immediately following the Treaty of Shimonoseki saw a significant expansion of European military bases in the Far East, with Russia making further substantial inroads into Manchuria, directly threatening Yamagata's stated 'line of advantage'. Both the Qing and Japan were powerless to stop these developments, save for preparing for future conflicts, with Tokyo opting to undertake an unparalleled programme of army and naval expansion, and the Qing attempting to address a plethora of challenges that slowly eroded at the authority of the Manchu dynasty. Hence, the Settlement of 1895, rather than produce an interested hegemon seeking to diffuse its power through a rule-based order, opened the door to a further intensification of geopolitical competition where war was more than a theoretical possibility.

In conclusion, the Settlement of 1895 replaced the systemic order furnished by the pre-modern East Asian international society, thereby splintering any lingering elements of stable peace and cooperation that characterized the old order. The Treaty of Shimonoseki "dismantled Chinese culture. It was the first time that an international treaty intentionally destroyed Chinese cultural institutions that had existed for millennia, leaving the door to an unprepared China wide open."⁸¹⁴ As such, born of geopolitical necessity, the Settlement of 1895 furnished an unstable peace amongst nations engaged in deep geopolitical competition, very much able to pursue their strategic goals through the use of military force at the expense of other regional powers. Not only did the Settlement of 1895 open the door to an intensification of regional rivalry but its harsh tenets, especially as imposed by the Japanese against the Qing, combined with Tokyo's failed intrigues against Korea, were seen as an undignified humiliation and start of the beginning of the end of Imperial China and an inheritance of bitterness and animosity that would stain the future trajectory of bilateral relations between Japan, China and Korea.

⁸¹⁴ Hu, "On the Formation and Evolution of Chinese National Cultural Security Issues", pg. 271.

Chapter 7 – The Boxer Rebellion: The Boxer Protocol

7.1. Introduction

The origins of the Boxer Rebellion traced their roots to the humiliation and defeat that the Qing had suffered through the Settlement of 1895. This was compounded by the lingering vestiges of the pre-modern international society that characterized the attitude harboured by elements of the Qing Court as well as the Chinese masses at large. The Boxer Rebellion, that led to the eventual Settlement of 1901, was a multi-faceted event whose significance stretches far beyond its main plot of an international Coalition relieving Beijing. It also bears the distinction of being a product of fundamental diplomatic misunderstanding between the foreign corps diplomatique and its Qing hosts, with the low-quality of Western diplomats playing a major role both in stoking tensions with and provoking hostile reactions from the Chinese Court. The Rebellion has been characterized as “the last, the supreme, the most desperate effort of all to keep the Middle Kingdom riveted to the standards of antiquity”.⁸¹⁵ The failure of the Boxer Rebellion and the conservative policies of the Empress Dowager, extinguishing any smoldering vestiges of the pre-modern international society, helped determine the future viability of the Qing Dynasty and the ultimate trajectory of China as a political entity. Yet once ignited, however, the fires of the ‘critical juncture’ of the Boxer Rebellion spread far beyond Beijing’s Legation Quarter. It not only brought the intervention of the combined might of all the international system’s Foreign Powers, but also provoked a separate full-scale war between the Russian and Qing Empires in Manchuria. The advent of these two events would not only form the basis of the Settlement of 1901, namely the Boxer Protocol, but also define the contours of regional geopolitical competition that arose out of a system that made no real attempt to collectively and comprehensively contain them.

Through the ‘critical juncture’ of the Boxer Rebellion, the power position of the Qing was fixed within the international system, with obvious long-term consequences for the ability of the establishment of stable peace and, eventually, the potential formation of an RSO. The Boxer Protocol accorded China the status of a ‘subject’ of the international system, one whose agency as an independent foreign policy actor was severely dented. Through the organization of an ad hoc international coalition, literally the entire pantheon of Foreign Powers intervened in China to oppose its collective will and dictate the limits within which the remnants of Chinese statehood and sovereignty would be allowed to operate. Despite having united to intervene against the Qing, the international coalition failed to establish a *modus operandi* to deal with a weakened China and contain growing international geopolitical competition. The fuzzy contours of the Open Door Policy, as championed by the US, while cosmetically defining rules of the game for foreign action within the Qing, did not develop into a meaningful mode of international cooperation. The terms of the Boxer Protocol would serve as the only benchmark to define China’s role and rights within the international system and nothing more. As such, the Settlement of 1901 did very little to forward the establishment of stable peace in East Asia at the dawn of the 20th century and, despite having spawned one of the first international campaigns of military intervention, did not create any of the necessary conditions for the formation of an RSO. Instead, it implanted the seeds for a future trajectory of further systemic disruption.

⁸¹⁵ Clements, The Boxer Rebellion, pg. 15.

7.2. The Boxer Rebellion: Antecedent Conditions

7.2.1. Flashpoint in post-1895 Shandong

The impact of the Boxer Rebellion was truly global. The original movement that sparked what came to be known to posterity as the “Boxer Rebellion” was, however, decidedly not. Throughout the length of its existence, the ‘Boxers’ remained a regional movement confined to the Qing provinces of Shandong and Zhili of the North China Plain.⁸¹⁶ This area was one of the more densely populated regions in China and, given the pace of economic and societal transformation, also one of the poorest. The area was prone to flooding as the river from the Shandong mountains flowed into the low-lying farmland, regularly submerging the plots along the Yellow River. By the end of the nineteenth century, the population of northwest Shandong had become so poor that it had largely been abandoned by the gentry, with banditry having become a seasonal occupation that led to frequent intervillage feuds.⁸¹⁷ This traditional problem of lawlessness became particularly acute following the First Sino-Japanese War. The growing trend of industrialization and modernization of the Chinese economy, a process that had been ongoing since the 1840s, had a profound effect on the Chinese workforce, resulting in the introduction of railroad networks, built with foreign credit. In addition to indebting the Qing to foreign creditors, it also cast an enormous number of Chinese out of work, as railroads rendered the boatmen and labourers of the traditional canal transportation system obsolete. This was felt particularly hard in Shandong where the canal intersection of the Yellow River had disappeared completely, resulting in “the substantial dislocation of both people and industries and the loss of livelihoods for an entire generation of locals.”⁸¹⁸ Additional serious social-economic pressures were placed on an already stressed Shandong province. A particularly substantial challenge followed in August 1898, when the Yellow River burst its dikes, flooding 34 counties and submerging thousands of villages, leaving over a million people homeless and resulting in widespread famine.⁸¹⁹ The ensuing drought of 1899 edged the local community towards starvation, forcing many of those that had been spared the previous year’s floods off their lands. While floods were, according to local Chinese tradition, the product of human intervention; drought required divine assistance, with ‘rainmaking’ an important part of religious ritual that was even practiced within the walls of Imperial palaces.⁸²⁰ This traditional belief, and the scope of calamities the population faced following 1895, left the common people with a resentment that “could easily be directed toward any tangible evidence that was thought to have destroyed the natural balance.”⁸²¹

The area of Shandong had a reputation of being “warlike, industrious, and intelligent”, with the province nurturing a long tradition of “local resistance to external impositions, whether from the national government or foreign powers.”⁸²² As a result, “from Qing times to the present, army recruiters have looked to Shandong for strong, loyal, and courageous soldiers to defend the state.”⁸²³ These martial virtues were exemplified in the bandit adventures of the fourteenth century

⁸¹⁶ Esherick, Joseph, *The Origins of the Boxer Uprising*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987, pg. 1.

⁸¹⁷ Fairbank, John, *China, A New History*, 2nd Edition, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2006, pg. 230.

⁸¹⁸ Silbey, *The Boxer Rebellion and the Great Game in China*, pp. 38-39.

⁸¹⁹ Esherick, *The Origins of the Boxer Uprising*, pg. 177.

⁸²⁰ Xiang Lanxin, *The Origins of the Boxer War: A Multinational Study*, London, Routledge, 2003, pg. 105.

⁸²¹ Ibid.

⁸²² Silbey, *The Boxer Rebellion and the Great Game in China*, pg. 47.

⁸²³ Esherick, *The Origins of the Boxer Uprising*, pg. 45

novel *Water Margin* (*‘Shui Hu Zhuan’/水滸傳*). Set in Shandong province on Mount Liang, the story revolves around ‘righteous bandits’ assisting the poor and dispossessed. This tradition lived on in the secret societies that characterised the increasingly anarchical province, a product of its martial tradition. Popular culture obviously stressed military virtues, such as martial arts (dubbed as ‘boxing’ by contemporary China-based foreigners) and swordsmanship, with “martial arts teachers [being] a common sight displaying their prowess in the markets of the North China plain.”⁸²⁴ These societies banded together to provide a source of order as the authority of the Qing eroded. It was common for such groupings to also adopt religious connotations, acquiring the common name of the *Yi He Yuan* (*‘Boxing Society United in Harmony’/義和拳*), wherefrom the West extracted the generalized terminology of ‘Boxers’. Given the tumultuous record of rebellion that traced its origins to secret societies—such as the White Lotus, Heaven and Earth, and Ge Leo Societies—the Qing viewed them as subversive and deemed them subject to suppression. In the wake of the defeat of the Qing armies in the First Sino-Japanese War, the already diminished footprint of the dynasty was reduced to a minimum, amplifying the problems stemming from chronic unemployment and widespread lawlessness. Although most of the war’s military campaigning took place in Korea and Manchuria, the Shandong peninsula was also affected when the Japanese captured Weihaiwei and subsequently sank or disabled most of the Chinese fleet. While spared the larger land battles, the primary effect on the interior of Shandong “was to strip the area of its garrison forces as more and more men were sent to the front. This left a power vacuum into which both bandits and [secret societies] quickly moved.”⁸²⁵

7.2.2. The Second Wave of Christian Missionaries in China

Into the void created by both natural and manmade calamities stepped another important factor in sparking the Boxer Rebellion: Christian missionaries. Attempts to convert the Chinese to Christianity had been nothing new, with the Jesuit missionaries of the High Renaissance, led by Father Matteo Ricci (1552-1610), focusing their efforts on converting the Chinese elite to Catholicism. Following the Opium War, however, the contemporary missionary zeal abandoned the court elites to favour the targeting of the Chinese masses instead.⁸²⁶ While the Ming dynasty had appreciated the abilities of the Jesuits, as witnessed with soliciting their mediation during the negotiations on the Treaty of Nerchinsk, the Qing elite “considered the mass-oriented proselytizing movement [as] seditious.”⁸²⁷ This second wave of missionaries were both Catholic and Protestant in denomination, however, the Catholic missionaries soon grew in political importance and patronage. In the nineteenth century, France ironically—given the anti-clerical tinge of its Republican governments—assumed the protectorate of all Catholic missionaries in China, “often asserting herself in religious affairs when she could not challenge the British supremacy in trade.”⁸²⁸ In 1844, for example, the French secured from the Daoguang Emperor (1782-1850) an edict of toleration for Christianity. Catholic activity in Shandong province gradually increased with an establishment of a bishop, seminary and college in Xian County, becoming one of the most important centres of French missionary activity on the North China plain. French actions were soon joined by the Germans in the 1880s, with the arrival of the Society of the Divine Word

⁸²⁴ Ibid., pg. 46.

⁸²⁵ Esherick, *The Origins of the Boxer Uprising*, pg. 73.

⁸²⁶ Xiang, *The Origins of the Boxer War*, pg. 31.

⁸²⁷ Ibid.

⁸²⁸ Esherick, *The Origins of the Boxer Uprising*, pp. 74-75.

(‘*Societas Verbi Divini*’/SVD). The German government insisted that its missionaries be accorded protection and privilege under Germany’s unequal treaties with the Qing, removing them from French immunity. The head of the SVD in China was Johann Baptist von Anzer (1851-1903) who had established himself as bishop in Shandong in 1886 and was described by Kaiser Wilhelm II (1859-1941) as his “First Courier of Christianity”.⁸²⁹ Von Anzer promoted an aggressive approach to proselytization, insisting on expanding the SVD’s activities to the city of Yanzhou, a city sensitive to the Qing officials given the importance of its Confucian and Mencian temples. While the Qing denied Anzer’s request, his obsession with setting up a base within Yanzhou nearly provoked a riot in the city. Such aggressive behaviour was accompanied by the SVD’s unselective, mass conversions of local Chinese and an extreme willingness to intervene on behalf of their followers in secular disputes.⁸³⁰

Such an antagonistic approach was characteristic of Western proselytization efforts at the end of the nineteenth century. While the Jesuits showed reverence for Chinese traditions and Confucian culture⁸³¹, the second wave of missionaries failed to display the same level of admiration. The new missionaries often demonstrated open contempt for Chinese culture, looking down upon traditional Chinese values and traditions, being described as “often ignorant, dismissive, or contemptuous of the native culture, [the missionaries] and their aggressive proselytizing threatened the very fabric of Chinese family and village life.”⁸³² In an obviously contradictory fashion, SVD members arriving in China openly wrote of their disdain of local traditions and culture.⁸³³ Such sentiments were felt by both sides. Christian missionaries were disdained by Qing officialdom, as representing an opposite and alien world view, one the Unequal Treaty System explicitly upheld. This unique political status allowed Christian missionaries to develop rapidly after 1870 and the signing of the Treaty of Tianjin between the Qing and France which extended the area of missionary activities beyond the originally designated treaty ports.⁸³⁴ Problems with missionaries were particularly acute in Shandong as the province’s coastline facilitated church access, resulting in the area “[finding] itself overrun by missionaries in the late nineteenth century, much to the inhabitants’ resentment.”⁸³⁵ In the wake of the ‘Scramble for China’ following the First Sino-Japanese War, the dividing line between the political and spiritual became blurred within the Qing Empire, with “world politics and missionary politics [becoming] almost completely intermixed.”⁸³⁶

The social conflict that accompanied the missionaries to Shandong province was substantial. Given the political and legal protection afforded by the Unequal Treaties, it was most often earthly considerations, and not spiritual ones, that won over the majority of Chinese converts.

⁸²⁹ Silbey, *The Boxer Rebellion and the Great Game in China*, pg. 45.

⁸³⁰ Esherick, *The Origins of the Boxer Uprising*, pg. 83.

⁸³¹ See Ricci, Matteo, *China in the Sixteenth Century: the Journals of Matthew Ricci*, New York: Random House, 1942.

⁸³² Preston, Diana, *The Boxer Rebellion: The Dramatic Story of China’s War on Foreigners*, New York: Berkley Books, 2000, pg. x.

⁸³³ Esherick, *The Origins of the Boxer Uprising*, pg. 81.

⁸³⁴ This treaty of Tianjin (1870) was the result of a major religious dispute that culminated in the burning of the Catholic cathedral and murder of the French Consul in Tianjin. Lanxin, *The Origins of the Boxer War*, pg. 33.

⁸³⁵ Silbey, *The Boxer Rebellion and the Great Game in China*, pg. 47.

⁸³⁶ Wehrle, Edmund, *Britain, China and the Anti-missionary Riots, 1891-1900*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1966, pg. viii.

Given the trajectory of Chinese history, however, the Qing had banned all underground religious sects in order to prevent a repetition of the Taiping Civil War that had nearly torn the country asunder. Hence, in the eyes of the locals, Christian Churches in China, thanks to the Unequal Treaties, were the only legal religious movement permitted to openly operate within the Empire. As such, “the Church...had become a legitimate but equally heretical religious sect. Many pragmatic Chinese were drawn into the Church for specific reasons: political asylum, debt evasion, legal disputes, dissatisfaction with low social status resulting from failures in the imperial examinations, etc.”⁸³⁷ The missionaries were, thanks to the Treaty System, exempt as foreign nationals from prosecution under Chinese law. While Chinese Christian converts were still subject to local legislation, the missionaries would regularly intervene on behalf of Chinese Christians should they find themselves in any legal dispute, allowing society’s lowest elements to gain almost complete impunity for any crimes. The Chinese soon created a colloquial expression to encapsulate this novel phenomenon, namely “relying on foreign strength” which was seen as a reprehensible act.⁸³⁸ The local Chinese harboured deep resentment against the alien creed, reflected in the desperation of the provincial government, with the governor of Shandong, Li Bingheng, underlining the direness of the situation in his province to the Qing throne in 1896: “After the Western religion moved into China, the converts are often bad elements with normal professions. They depend on the missionaries to win court cases or intend to escape the law after committing crimes.”⁸³⁹

Contacts with missionaries marked the sole source of foreign interaction for the vast majority of rural Chinese.⁸⁴⁰ Given the high degree of legal impunity afforded the converts, Chinese local opinions of the foreign missionaries were rarely positive. As tensions increased, violence became a common way for the local population to oppose the growing influence of the Churches over everyday rural life. Given the weakened domestic footprint of the Qing, popular action was deemed by the local population to constitute one of the only effective methods of staving off foreign influence and righting perceived increasing societal injustice. There were warnings that the situation was getting out of control: in 1891 anti-missionary riots swept through the Yangzi Valley, followed by anti-Christian riots in Chengdu, Sichuan and Fujian. Such actions were met by threats of force by the Western powers against the Qing, for example, following the above incidents, London threatened to use the Royal Navy against Chinese ports in the event that the Governor-General of Sichuan was not demoted, and the perpetrators of the violence executed. The Qing had little choice but to obey the British ultimatum. As seen, the murder of two German missionaries in 1897 paved the way for German intervention in Qingdao, leading to the Russian seizure of the Liaodong peninsula. Hence, the ground had been prepared for widescale acts of perceived retribution against Chinese Christians and their foreign sponsors. Such vigilante action could only be undertaken at a local level. While “China had been defeated before in war with the West...never had she been so humbled as in the 1890s—defeated by Japan, hounded by the Western powers demanding the dismissal of officials for anti-missionary incidents and soon to be carved up into ‘spheres of influence’...but to the ordinary villager of North China, the unequal treaties, the gunboat diplomacy, the concessions along the coast were of little consequence. If such folk ever saw a foreigner it was certainly a missionary—and the foreign presence meant the

⁸³⁷ Xiang, *The Origins of the Boxer War*, pg. 34.

⁸³⁸ Esherick, *The Origins of the Boxer Uprising*, pg. 83.

⁸³⁹ Xiang, *The Origins of the Boxer War*, pp. 59-61.

⁸⁴⁰ Silbey, *The Boxer Rebellion and the Great Game in China*, pg. 47.

‘foreign religion’...linked to all the other faces of Western imperialism in China.”⁸⁴¹ Hence, if the Qing dynasty was unable to push back against the perceived lawlessness of the Chinese Christians, then the people of Shandong—steeped in their vigilante tradition—would fill the void to offer resistance on behalf of a slighted civilization.

7.2.3. Explosion in Shandong

Into the chaos of 1898-1899 that engulfed Shandong province stepped the ‘Boxing Society United in Harmony’.⁸⁴² Members of this still outlawed sect engaged in healing rituals, practicing martial arts that allowed them to claim invulnerability as the result of ceremonies that were purported to be the product of spirit possession. As such, the Boxers believed that, in combat, they were immune to both swords and bullets. Recruiting local farmers that had been displaced by the flood of 1898, the Boxers began to openly call for the end of the special privileges that the Qing had, albeit under duress, granted Christian missionaries and their Chinese converts. As a result, both Christian missionaries and converts became targets for attacks under the slogan “Revive the Qing, destroy the foreign” (*fu Qing mie yang* /扶清滅洋) and calling upon the local population to “expel the foreign devils.”⁸⁴³ Unlike the Taiping, the Boxers were a highly decentralized organization, with a red sash as the only discerning trait of membership. There was no central command, with attacks being carried out with complete disregard for the initial disapproval of local Qing officials. As such, the Boxers lashed out at the easiest local targets that engendered the most resentment, namely the missionaries and their Chinese converts. Attacks in the Shandong-Hebei border area increased in frequency, to the alarm of the Western powers. In particular, the British were concerned that Reverend Brooke, a subject of the Queen, was murdered in December 1899 while travelling in Shandong province, prompting Yuan Shikai, the newly appointed governor of Shandong, to conduct a campaign to suppress the Boxer movement.⁸⁴⁴ Unlike his predecessor, Yuan was decidedly anti-Boxer in his outlook and his campaign against the Boxers was the first operation of his Newly Created Army, a modern military force generated by the Qing in the aftermath of the First Sino-Japanese War. By early 1900, Yuan’s army was able to successfully cleanse Shandong of any Boxer activity, to the open criticism of many Qing conservatives.⁸⁴⁵

The same could not be said, however, regarding Zhili province, home to the capital Beijing and the key port of Tianjin where Governor Yulu was not able to handle the Boxers. Zhili was much more exposed to foreign influence given the relatively large foreign presence in Beijing as well as its large concentration of Chinese Christians (circa 100,000 mostly Catholics—out of a 1896 total of 533,000—were resident in Zhili).⁸⁴⁶ Throughout 1899, Boxer groups roamed the streets and attacked, and sometimes killed, Chinese Christians, extending their rage to those that possessed foreign objects such as lamps, clocks or even matches.⁸⁴⁷ Naturally, attacks in the proximity of the epicentre of the foreign diplomatic representations in China presented a political quagmire as to how to structure the appropriate official Chinese reaction. The Boxers did not limit

⁸⁴¹ Esherick, *The Origins of the Boxer Rebellion*, pp. 94-95.

⁸⁴² Spence, Jonathan, *The Search for Modern China*, New York: Norton, 1991, pg. 232.

⁸⁴³ Ibid.

⁸⁴⁴ Miyoshi, *The Other Great Game*, pg. 241.

⁸⁴⁵ Chen, Jerome, *Yuan Shih-Kai*, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1972, pp. 66-67.

⁸⁴⁶ Xiang, *The Origins of the Boxer War*, pg. 35.

⁸⁴⁷ Spence, *The Search for Modern China*, pg. 233.

their attacks to converts and missionaries, with a growing list of victims including European engineers working on China's modest but expanding network of foreign-funded railroads. The Boxers additionally began attacking the railways themselves, ripping up their tracks, burning down their stations and cutting telegraph lines. Such acts of vandalism and violence were nevertheless being committed in the defence of Chinese civilization and the Qing Dynasty, as declared by the Boxer placards that sprung up over Zhili province:

*“There are many Christian converts
Who have lost all their senses,
They deceive our Emperor,
Destroy the gods we worship,
Pull down our temples and altars,
Permit neither joss-sticks nor candles,
Cast away tracts on ethics,
And ignore reason.
Don't you realize that
Their aim is to engulf the country?
...To arouse our people and display an array of weapons
In order to protect the realm from decay.
Our pleasure is to see the Son of Heaven unharmed.
Let the officials perish
But the people remain invincible.”*⁸⁴⁸

As such, the Boxer movement was compelling the Qing elite to uphold its duties, lest the Court be seen as deserving of being deprived of the Mandate of Heaven. With increasing attacks, both in number and severity, the call of the Western powers to stem the assaults on their citizens and economic interests grew louder. The conundrum the Qing court faced on how to deal with the situation was summed up by Sir Robert Hart (1863-1911), the incredibly competent British Inspector-General of the Chinese Maritime Customs Service: “The Court appears to be in a dilemma. If the Boxers are not suppressed, the Legations threaten to take action—if the attempt to suppress them is made, this intensely patriotic organization will be converted into an anti-dynastic movement. *Que faire?*”⁸⁴⁹ How the Qing and the Foreign Powers found themselves on a collision course—and how the Qing government adopted an irresolute policy towards the Boxer movement—had very much to do with the intrigues that took place within the inner echelons of the Qing Court itself as well as the new crop of Western diplomats that assumed their duties in Beijing following the Settlement of 1895.

7.2.4. Changes to the Western Diplomatic Personnel and their Consequences

The Qing's 1895 defeat, as previously chronicled, only confirmed the Qing's incompetence and impotence in the eyes of the Western powers, added to the decline of the Chinese nation's domestic authority, with the Great powers realizing that China's territory and law could be easily violated with impunity. So began the era of the ‘Scramble for China’. In the wake of the Treaty of Shimonoseki, while the Western powers began to establish their respective concessions in China,

⁸⁴⁸ Silbey, *The Boxer Rebellion and the Great Game in China*, pg. 63.

⁸⁴⁹ Miyoshi, *The Other Great Game*, pg. 242.

the quality of the diplomats sent to the Foreign Legations in Beijing plummeted: “understanding China on its own terms, starting with language competence, was considered rather below the ‘white gentlemen’, an abject enterprise which should never be indulged in.”⁸⁵⁰ After 1895, the vast majority of the West’s experienced China hands were recalled. Given the ‘Scramble for China’ that the Settlement of 1895 initiated, a number of prominent diplomatic appointments to the Qing were either Africanists by training or possessed a keen knowledge of the processes and results of the Scramble for Africa⁸⁵¹: French Legation head, Stephen Pichon (1857-1933); Italian Legation head, Giacomo De Martino (1868-1957); and British Legation head, Sir Claude MacDonald (1852-1915), could all claim serious experience on African files, while possessing none on East Asia. While the US and Russia did not, for obvious reasons, follow suit (due to their absence from the Scramble for Africa), their respective post-1895 choices for diplomatic representation saw the recalling of experienced representatives to be replaced by oblivious successors. As such, few newly appointed diplomats bothered to learn Chinese or attempted to understand local customs.⁸⁵² As such, at the beginning of 1900, the *corps diplomatique* stationed in Beijing “happened to be an ill-suited group of amateurs on Chinese affairs. The Manchu Court had first allowed a foreign diplomatic presence in Beijing in the 1860s [with Russia, as previously noted, constituting the sole exception], but never before had the diplomatic corps been so collectively ignorant of and insensitive towards the Chinese body politic.”⁸⁵³

Unsurprisingly, while the European powers were diplomatically preparing themselves to—according to their own whims—carve up the Qing Empire, such prefatory changes of diplomatic representation came at the cost of local political understanding and intelligence gathering. The stark devolution of Western understanding of China made, for the most part, analysis of the domestic situation extremely challenging, with “few foreign envoys in Beijing [paying] much attention to the rapid change in Chinese internal politics after the [First] Sino-Japanese War...Hardly anyone noticed that a strong anti-foreign current among the Manchu elite had grown uninhibited.”⁸⁵⁴ The collective ignorance and incompetence of the Western *corps diplomatique* in Beijing not only numbed the ability of the Foreign Powers to understand the significance of what was happening around them, but the lack of relevant diplomatic experience and mutual trust amongst the Legations themselves inhibited their respective ability to formulate and carry out concerted diplomatic efforts in a competent manner. This was apparent in (i.) the inability of the foreign powers to understand the degree of relevance the Boxer phenomenon actually held in the eye of the Qing Court; and (ii.) the Foreign Powers’ half-hearted attempt to intervene collectively,

⁸⁵⁰ Xiang, *The Origins of the Boxer War*, pp. 29-30.

⁸⁵¹ Defining the Scramble for Africa, Wesseling provides a helpful definition: While the Conference of Berlin in 1888 divided Africa geographically, this “did not mean that, at that time the British flag flew, British taxes were collected, or British law was used in this area. It merely meant that the European states recognized that the claimed area was a British possession, colony protectorate or something similar. Save for a few examples, [the Scramble for Africa] was anything else but a real factual conquest or administration of these territories, but rather a political agreement between European statesmen regarding this question.” Wesseling, Hans, *Söndra och Härska*, Lund: Historiska Media, 2006, pp. 17-18.

⁸⁵² For example, the interpretation skills of the Foreign Legations were appalling, so much so that the Chinese interpreter at the German Legation, Heinrich Cordes, was so incompetent that he was fired on the spot upon the arrival of the new German minister, Edmund von Heyking, also an Africanist by training. The interpreter of the Italian Legation, Guido Vitale, bragged about mastering five Asian languages, including Mandarin, however when tested by his Minister, required a servant who spoke English to get his message across.

⁸⁵³ Xiang, *The Origins of the Boxer War*, pg. 134.

⁸⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, pg. 30.

through the *entente active*, at the rising tide of provincial violence mostly focused against Chinese converts.

7.2.5. Changes to the Inner Manchu Court

Though beyond the analytical comprehension of the Foreign Legations, the fact of the matter was that the seemingly transitory phenomenon of Boxer unrest in Shandong was far from being the major concern of the Manchu Court in 1899.⁸⁵⁵ In its stead, the focus of the Qing inner circle was devoted to the question of deposing the Emperor without violating the law. In 1876, the Empress Dowager circumvented tradition and hand-picked her own nephew, the future Emperor Guangxu, to assume the throne, against the stern opposition from the Court. Yet, through carrying out the Hundred Days Reform, the Guangxu Emperor had betrayed Cixi; through this reform-minded drive, the Empress Dowager became convinced at the need to replace her disloyal nephew. There was no real reason to replace the Emperor as he was young and both physically and mentally fit. Furthermore, succession was an exclusively Manchu affair and had nothing to do with the Han Chinese, especially in the eyes of the Empress Dowager, as they could not be trusted given their support for the reform movement. As a result, the plot to overthrow the Guangxu Emperor was hatched by a close-knit group of officials extremely loyal to Cixi, changing the dynamics at Court: “for the first time since the eighteenth century, the ruling circle at the Court was manned and surrounded almost entirely by [Manchu] princelings, eunuchs, Bannermen and aristocrats.”⁸⁵⁶ Hence, the Court was firmly in the hands of an elderly elite staunchly opposed to any reform and, more importantly, all things foreign. On 24 January 1900, an Imperial Decree was announced in the Guangxu Emperor’s name declaring that, due to the supposed infertility of the Emperor, Pu Jun, son of anti-reform conservative Prince Duan (1856-1923), was nominated as Heir Presumptive. While not outright discharging him from his function, this proclamation paved the way for his eventual removal.

This decree, however, provoked an unprecedented reaction amongst the Han Chinese. Jing Yuanshin, a Han businessman heading the Shanghai Telegraphic Company, organized a petition to the Zongli Yamen vehemently opposing this move: “The population are [sic] disturbed. We have learnt that Great Powers may send troops [to overturn the Imperial Decree]. We plead for the princes to remain unselfish and loyal to the country. We also plead for the Emperor to try his best to attend Court affairs and not to harbour any thoughts of abdication.”⁸⁵⁷ Yuanshin’s telegram was followed up by the Viceroy at Nanking, reformer Lui Kunyi, who publicly voiced his opposition to Cixi’s plans, “The relationship between the Emperor and his ministers has already been fixed, while the mouths in and out of China cannot be easily silenced.”⁸⁵⁸ This very public telegram and announcement from a grand old southern Chinese statesman damaged the prestige of the Manchu Court, openly questioning the legitimacy of the Empress Dowager’s sequestration of the Guangxu Emperor and hinted at the yet unfounded possibility of Western military intervention in Qing domestic affairs.⁸⁵⁹ This subject had increased in sensitivity given the onset of the ‘Scramble for

⁸⁵⁵ Ibid., pg.129.

⁸⁵⁶ Ibid., pp. 129-130.

⁸⁵⁷ Sheng Xuanhuai to Li Hongzhang, *Complete Works of Li Hongzhang*, Telegrams, vol. 1, pg. 886.

⁸⁵⁸ Tan, *The Boxer Catastrophe*, pg. 27.

⁸⁵⁹ Jing Yuanshin was forced to flee, following the publication of his petition, to the Portuguese colony of Macao. The Qing government demanded his extradition, but Beijing’s numerous requests were rejected outright by the Portuguese Governor.

China' that the Settlement of 1895 had triggered. Hence, intrigues occupied the attention of the Manchu palace elite who considered the events in Shandong as a "minor irritation", with some elements of the Court even taking delight in the sudden eruption of anti-foreign sentiment, while others being more reserved given the weakened, and now publicly challenged, legitimacy of the Qing dynasty.⁸⁶⁰ The result was a decidedly ambivalent policy towards the Boxers, waxing and waning between fear (as a challenge to the legitimacy of the Dynasty) and support (as a possible bulwark to halt the steady erosion of Chinese sovereignty). As the century closed out, there was a lack of communication between the *corps diplomatique* and the Manchu Court. While there was no inherent link between the Boxer riots in Shandong and the Manchu succession scheming, the attitude of the foreign diplomats, in their blissful ignorance, forced this non-existent connection to become explicit.⁸⁶¹

The foreign powers in Beijing collectively refused to recognize the new Heir Presumptive as laid out in the Imperial Decree of January 1900. Prince Duan had allegedly made elaborate preparations to receive the congratulations of Beijing's foreign dignitaries who, in turn, did not even bother to show up.⁸⁶² This coordinated diplomatic insult towards the Qing was, however, in no way coordinated between the Foreign Legations and their respective capitals, who remained ignorant of their respective embassies' *Alleingang*.⁸⁶³ With the foreign representations adopting a local non-recognition policy towards the succession of the Qing Dynasty, the *corps diplomatique* began to strongly insist that the handling of the Boxer unrest lay squarely within the responsibilities of the Chinese government. These attitudes effectively alienated the Foreign Legations from any meaningful diplomatic intercourse with the Qing Court. Additionally, where there was contact, the behaviour of the Foreign Legations towards the Qing Court seemed to insist on provoking the Chinese government as much as possible: for example, the joint insistence of the Legations to send a foreign doctor to medically examine the Guangxu Emperor (thereby purportedly ensuring his safety), a demand to which the Court acquiesced. The obvious lack of respect the Western diplomatic community showed to the Empress Dowager's succession plan proved to serve "as a decisive factor in changing [her] attitude towards the Boxer movement...A simple calculation would suggest that these potential rebels could be used to put pressure on the foreign governments and their representatives."⁸⁶⁴ Hence, in the early months of 1900, a severe deterioration of relations had taken place between the Qing and the representatives of the Foreign Powers, one that had almost completely alienated the Chinese government from contact with the outside world, without the knowledge and consent of their respective capitals.

7.2.6. The Foreign Powers and the Anti-Boxer '*Entente Active*'

In the wake of the December 1899 murder of Reverend Brooke, the Foreign Powers began to harden their demands against the Chinese government to suppress all Boxer activity against converts and missionaries alike. The Qing Court, on 11 January 1900, responded with a decree—mainly for the domestic audience—confirming the continuing hesitation of the government to

⁸⁶⁰ Xiang, *The Origins of the Boxer Rebellion*, pg. 133.

⁸⁶¹ *Ibid.*, pg. 138.

⁸⁶² *Ibid.*, pg. 139.

⁸⁶³ Xiang notes that "there is no evidence that the governments of the Great Powers had issued explicit instructions opposing the Manchu succession decision. Hence the unauthorized policy of non-recognition was largely improvised on the spot." See *ibid.*, 140.

⁸⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

commence an all-out campaign against the Boxers. The text declared that “when worthless vagabonds form themselves into bands and sworn confederacies and relying on their numbers create disturbances, the law can show absolutely no leniency to them. On the other hand, when peaceful and law-abiding people practice their skill in martial arts for the self-preservation of themselves and their families, or when they combine in village communities for the mutual protection of the rural population, this is in accordance with the public-spirited principle of ‘keeping mutual watch and giving mutual help’.”⁸⁶⁵ This decree was seen by the foreign diplomatic community in Beijing as extremely provocative, as it was interpreted as manifesting the intent of the Chinese government to assist the Boxers. For the first time, the Foreign Legations in Beijing (Britain, the United States, Germany, France and Italy) banded sloppily together and presented a note verbale in protest to the Zongli Yamen, on 27 January 1900, three days after the Imperial Decree on succession was released. The Russian Empire refused to partake in the joint note.

The Qing Court was not impressed with the note verbale, with its timing “making it impossible for the Court not to connect the two occurrences.”⁸⁶⁶ The Chinese government chose to ignore the Legation note. Worse still, however, Ambassador MacDonald, in his meeting with the Zongli Yamen, charged the Qing Court with covertly supporting the Boxer movement. The Foreign Legations began to locally devise ways, completely independent of their respective capitals, to protect Chinese converts and suppress the Boxers, with Ambassador Pichon suggesting the creation of an *entente active* amongst the Christian Powers. The Qing Court caught wind of this and created “a fatal and false impression with the Chinese government...that the Powers had a prior policy agreement either to partition China or to restore the Emperor to power.”⁸⁶⁷ Meanwhile, the foreign representatives were incensed at the silence towards their note verbale that emanated from the Zongli Yamen. The *entente active* presented another note verbale to their Chinese counterparts on 2 March 1900, demanding the publication of a decree banning the Boxers to be published in the *Peking Gazette*. The Qing refused, underlining that the Chinese government considered all secret societies to be illegal. The presentation of note verbales underscored the lack of understanding between the Zongli Yamen and the Foreign Legations, with the *corps diplomatique* failing to comprehend the contemporary intricacies of Chinese politics. The behaviour of the missionaries was, as prescribed by the unequal treaties, beyond the control of the Qing, while the diplomatic community insisted that their protection was the sole responsibility of the Chinese government. The refusal of the Foreign Legations to understand this fact caused the Chinese to likewise question the rationale behind their hostile non-recognition policy towards the Heir Presumptive. At the same time, the Qing Court took note of the fear of the Boxer movement that seemed to motivate the Foreign Powers’ policy towards China. Therefore, the quasi-independent policy of the Foreign Legations in Beijing played a major role in placing the Qing Court and the Foreign Powers on a collision course, making the ultimate trajectory of the Boxer Rebellion somewhat of a self-fulfilling prophecy.

7.2.7. Unrest Spreads to Beijing

The first Boxers appeared in Beijing in May 1900, adding a novel power dynamic to the capital. Crowds in red sashes commandeered the city’s public spaces and intimidated the despised

⁸⁶⁵ Ibid., pg. 143.

⁸⁶⁶ Ibid., pg. 144.

⁸⁶⁷ Ibid., pg. 146.

Westerners who had become accustomed to a decidedly placid attitude of the local population. Rumours amongst Beijing's Han Chinese were circulating that "eight million men would descend from Heaven and exterminate the foreigners", allowing the long-awaited rain to come to quench the country's thirst.⁸⁶⁸ By the end of May 1900, the xenophobic atmosphere and reports of damage done to Western citizens and assets had prompted the British Ambassador MacDonald, on 24 May 1900, to call for a meeting of the heads of Foreign Legations. This resulted in an official request to dispatch a portion of the limited western presence at Fort Degu to help guard the Legations in Beijing. A modest contingent of foreign soldiers, totaling 400 men from eight nations, departed for Beijing on 31 May 1900, with the approval of the Zongli Yamen.⁸⁶⁹ Boxers had been active in Beijing's Han Chinese City, but also began to penetrate the Tartar City where the Legation quarters were located.⁸⁷⁰ Placards calling for the destruction of foreign facilities began to appear with increasing frequency. Ambassador Pichon, on 3 June 1900, was the first to raise the possibility of a Boxer siege of the Legations, underlying his concern at the slack attitude of the Qing authorities. The next day, Ambassador MacDonald reported to London that a siege of the Foreign Legations was indeed a possibility and requested "concerted military action at [Fort] Dagu to relieve Beijing."⁸⁷¹

There was little doubt amongst the Foreign Legations that contacts had been established between conservative members of the Qing court and elements of the Boxers in early June 1900, with an agreement having been struck, not only to allow the Boxers to penetrate the capital, but also to establish themselves in certain areas.⁸⁷² Security in Beijing was controlled by the slighted Prince Duan—now no longer shy in openly declaring his stated mission of fighting the 'barbarians'—along with his equally conservative-minded brother, Duke Lan, who had been appointed the command of the Beijing police. The government order demanding the police to arrest the Boxers within Beijing was rescinded and passes were issued instead. The atmosphere in the capital was becoming decidedly tense, with a Court official, assistant royal tutor of the Hanlin Academy Yun Yuding, recording the following in his diary dated 6 June 1900: "I learnt that the Empress Dowager...intends to rely upon the Boxers to resist foreigners. This is considered a policy of strengthening China."⁸⁷³ Rumours began circulating in the Chinese City that the Boxers were planning on setting fire to the Legation Quarter. Outside Beijing, the provincial governor of Zhili—who had hitherto followed an anti-Boxer course as prescribed by the Court—began to openly assume a relaxed policy towards their activities. This allowed thousands of Boxers to enter and occupy strategic locations in Tianjin. It also presented a potential flashpoint for conflict, given the large contingent of foreign warships stationed there. The Boxer's message found fertile ground in Tianjin, with anti-foreigner propaganda against the Japanese being particularly effective, with the Japanese-owned newspaper *Guo Wen Bao* being openly targeted for destruction: "Guo Wen Ban's [anti-Boxer] language is mad, because it was bought by the Japanese in 1899...Heaven will not tolerate this paper and will dissolve it into dust."⁸⁷⁴

⁸⁶⁸ Silbey, *The Boxer Rebellion and the Great Game in China*, pg. 74.

⁸⁶⁹ Ibid., pg. 77.

⁸⁷⁰ Qing Beijing consisted of two called cites, the norther inner city and the southern outer city. The inner city, known as the Tartar City, was home to the Manchu elite and the seat of Qing governance, housing the Forbidden City, Imperial Palace of Tiananmen Square.

⁸⁷¹ Xiang, *The Origins of the Boxer War*, pg. 236.

⁸⁷² Ibid., pg. 231.

⁸⁷³ Ibid., pg. 232.

⁸⁷⁴ Gaimushō, *Dai Nihon Gaikō Bunsho*, vol. 33, supplement 1, pg. 15.

7.2.8. The Particularities of the ‘Missionary Coalition’

Ambassador MacDonald, on 9 June 1900, telegraphed Vice Admiral Sir Edward Seymour (1840-1929), Commander of the British China Squadron at Tianjin, noting that the “situation is extremely tense; unless steps are made for the immediate advance on Peking, it will be too late.”⁸⁷⁵ Seymour likewise had anticipated that the situation might take a turn for the worse and, already on 5 June 1900, assembled a council of naval commanders of the Foreign Powers stationed in the port of Dagou with the aim of organizing concerted action. This meeting on the HMS *Centurion* marked the first military coalition operation of the modern era, convening the Rear Admirals of France, Russia, the United States, Germany, Italy and Japan (Austria-Hungary would join starting from the second council).⁸⁷⁶ The council wielded together a relief force of 1,876 men under Seymour’s command and marched towards Beijing on 10 June 1900. This concerted international effort came to be known as the ‘Missionary Coalition’. While the relief force was allowed to pass by General Nie Shicheng’s (1836-1900) regiments along the road to the capital, the first major clash with the Boxers took place on 13 June 1900 halfway between Tianjin and Beijing. On 11 June 1900, the chancellor of the Japanese Embassy, Sugiyama Akira, went down to supposedly wait for the relief force at the train station but instead was murdered by regular Chinese troops.⁸⁷⁷ The Zongli Yamen urgently demanded Ambassador MacDonald to stop the deployment of the relief force, a request that was immediately rejected by the British. On 13 June 1900, the Boxers launched their first attack on the Legations which coincided with a large-scale massacre of Chinese converts. The telegraph lines to the Foreign Legations were cut on 14 June 1900 and, by 17 June 1900, the Legations were effectively besieged by the Boxers. The Qing court finally showed their cards openly and ordered Governor General Yulu to use force to halt the advance of Seymour’s relief force, with the international column opting to retreat to Tianjin.⁸⁷⁸ Their forced retreat dispelled the notion that a small group of modern foreign soldiers could march from one end of China to another without meeting any resistance, with the Missionary Coalition subsequently estimating that the force pool required to march on Beijing would range from 25,000-100,000 men.⁸⁷⁹ Reinforcements were clearly needed. As the threat in Beijing and Tianjin became more acute, the ‘Missionary Coalition’ façade of foreign unity against the emerging threat took ever more obvious proportions.

7.2.9. Russia’s Policy towards the Boxer Rebellion

As the prospect of an attack grew ever more plausible, St. Petersburg realized that the Western powers who were primarily affected had little manpower in the area to use in case of an escalation. The Russian Army, however, did. Russia held no sympathy for the Christian Missionaries in China, with His Majesty Nicholas II viewing the hatred of the Chinese masses as justified. In the eyes of Tsar, the Western European missionaries comprised the “root of all evil, shameless and

⁸⁷⁵ Quoted in Miyoshi, *The Other Great Game*, pg. 244.

⁸⁷⁶ Otsuka Umio, “Coalition Coordination during the Boxer Rebellion”, *Naval War College Review*, Vol. 71, No. 4 (Autumn 2018), pg. 111.

⁸⁷⁷ Silbey, *The Boxer Rebellion and the Great Game in China*, pg. 78.

⁸⁷⁸ Tan, Chester, *The Boxer Catastrophe*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1967, pp. 66-67.

⁸⁷⁹ Powell, Ralph, *The Rise of Chinese Military Power, 1895-1912*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1955, pg. 114.

commercial tyrannies screened by the Holy Name of Christ.”⁸⁸⁰ The Russian Orthodox did not attempt to proselytize across its frontier with China. While there were representatives of the Orthodox Church within the Qing Empire, the total number of Russian subjects in China only totaled 250 by the end of 1899.⁸⁸¹ While the situation was most unfortunate for the Western Legations, any further increase in tensions could have implications on Russian policy in China. To cope with any eventuality, Foreign Minister Muravyov, already on 25 May 1900, requested His Majesty Nicholas II to authorize the dispatch of 4,000 troops to Tianjin “to avert the danger of Japanese or other foreign troops being summoned to their Defence.”⁸⁸² The Russian Foreign Ministry was concerned that any attempt by the Western powers to suppress the Boxers would also imply attacking Qing government forces and, therefore, be tantamount to opening hostilities with China. Given the Sino-Russian Treaty of 1896, this could result in severe foreign policy consequences.

As the French and British Legations were cabling for assistance, the Russian government, on 4 June 1900, outlined its policy in the event that the situation in China should come to a head. Nicholas II and Muravyov’s policy document’s point of departure was “the profound conviction that Russia’s task in the East is absolutely at variance with the policy of the European states” and contained the following points: “(i.) on no account to seek the command [of the ‘Missionary Coalition’] for Russia; and (ii.) without disruption of concerted action with the other European detachments to limit Russia’s contribution to 4,000 to safeguard the security, life and property of Russian subjects and supporting the legitimate authority in its struggle with revolution...The presence of the Russian detachment would prevent the powers’ embarking on any political undertakings without [Russia’s] consent.”⁸⁸³ This policy document accorded St. Petersburg the status of a watchful observer and, should the situation come to a head, cemented its status as an uncommitted participant in any Western undertakings while, simultaneously, not seeking to jeopardize its relations with the Qing.

7.2.10. The Qing’s Declaration of War against the Foreign Powers

The Russian Foreign Minister’s premonitions were correct. On 16 June 1900, the Empress Dowager convened the Imperial Council for an emergency meeting, focusing on the increasingly anarchic situation in Beijing. While the former *de facto* head of the Zongli Yamen, Prince Qing (1838-1917), called for the quelling of the Boxers, fearing the reaction of the Western powers should conflict break out. This approach was rejected by Prince Duan as such a policy would “turn the people’s hearts against [the Qing]”.⁸⁸⁴ Cixi echoed the necessity of Duan’s harsh stance: “Magic power may not be relied upon, how can’t people’s hearts be relied upon? Today’s China is weak to the extreme, the only thing we can depend on now is the popular support.”⁸⁸⁵ Cixi, concerned that the relief force’s actual purposes might be to restore the Guangxi Emperor, focused on how to stop Seymour’s troops from reaching Beijing. The most expedient way was to promise the security of the Foreign Legations, thereby depriving any reason for the ‘Missionary Coalition’

⁸⁸⁰ Romanov, *Russia in Manchuria*, pg. 179.

⁸⁸¹ Xiang, *The Origins of the Boxer War*, pg. 156.

⁸⁸² Romanov, *Russia in Manchuria*, pg. 178.

⁸⁸³ *Ibid.*

⁸⁸⁴ Miyoshi, *The Other Great Game*, pg. 246.

⁸⁸⁵ Xiang, *The Origins of the Boxer War*, pg. 291.

to move against the capital. Should the Western powers, however, still insist on the reinforcement of their respective legations, then the Qing would view “the provocation [as] coming from their part”, with instructions being ordered to Qing forces in Zhili to not allow foreign troops to march to Beijing unhindered.⁸⁸⁶ Furthermore, the Qing court began to make preparations to use the Boxers to defend the Dynasty, with many of the Manchu elite believing that they could be harnessed into a useful fighting force: “Although there is no evidence that the Boxers can avoid fire power, their courage, the spirit of defying death can truly deter enemies...the only problem is the lack of discipline”, hence there existed a pressing need to recruit them into the army.⁸⁸⁷ Yuan Shikai was therefore ordered to bring his forces from Shandong to Beijing in order to prepare for war, should the Western powers so choose. At the same time, the Empress gave no discussion on the option of pre-emptively declaring war on the foreigners, however it was understood that she was ready to go to war if necessary to defend China.⁸⁸⁸

The situation eroded the next day. The business district in Beijing had been completely burnt down. Yet on 17 June 1900, Cixi was informed by Tianjin’s Viceroy that, days earlier, the foreign powers had issued an ultimatum to the local Qing authorities at Tianjin, instructing the Chinese to hand over the Dagu Forts. The tone in which the foreigners had made their ultimatum did not sit well with the Empress Dowager, reminding her of the happenings of 40 years before when the British and French took the Dagu Forts before burning down the Summer Palace. Cixi proceeded to call a second meeting in the Forbidden City whose discussions focused on the question of war or peace. According to Yun Yuding, participant in this fateful meeting, the Empress Dowager became enraged at a mysterious note that, allegedly, had come from the foreign representatives and made four explicit demands: (i.) specify an official residence for the Emperor; (ii.) provincial revenues and grain to be collected by the foreign authorities on behalf of the Chinese government; (iii.) the Chinese military authority to be transferred to the foreign powers; and (iv.) compel the Empress Dowager to return power to the Guangxu Emperor.⁸⁸⁹ Whatever the origin of this document, its contents, combined with the Western non-recognition policy of her succession plans, justified Cixi’s suspicion that the Western powers aimed to overthrow her government and, therefore, consisted a *casus belli*: “by declaring the note an official diplomatic communication, [the Empress Dowager] was able to justify the decision to go to war.”⁸⁹⁰ Cixi instructed the Qing court, however, to still refrain from making radical decisions, dependent on the situation in Tianjin.

On 19 June 1900, Cixi received word from Governor Yulu that the foreign powers had commenced with the bombardment of the Dagu Forts days earlier, giving the impression to the Imperial court that hostilities had been initiated by the coalition. This news prompted the Qing court to officially declare all Foreign Legations *persona non grata*, obliging all foreign staff to depart the Chinese capital within twenty-four hours. To the foreign diplomats stationed in Beijing, the unprecedented step of expelling the entire diplomatic community was viewed as “sheer madness

⁸⁸⁶ Ibid., pg. 292.

⁸⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸⁸ Tan, *Boxer Catastrophe*, pg. 75.

⁸⁸⁹ While Chinese historians have debated the authenticity, and even existence, of this mysterious document, Xiang presents a convincing case that this document, while perhaps not a diplomatic note, did indeed exist and in some way reflected the contemporary thinking of the Western powers regarding their decision to dispatch the relief force. See Xiang, *The Origins of the Boxer War*, pp. 294-296.

⁸⁹⁰ Ibid., pg. 296.

and a display of a lack of rationality.”⁸⁹¹ The German Minister, Clemens August Freiherr von Ketteler (1853-1900), was especially incensed and was convinced that the Qing officials had gone mad or did not intend to fulfill their own ultimatum and was adamant that the Chinese did not have the right, under international law, to sever diplomatic relations.⁸⁹² The next day, determined to explain to the Zongli Yamen the error of its ways, Minister von Ketteler, while on his way to his 8:00 appointment, was instead shot dead by Boxer assailants. The murder of the German Minister shocked the foreign community in Beijing, convincing them of a pending Boxer assault. On 21 June 1900, Cixi released a declaration of war against the eleven Foreign Powers which held representation in China: Great Britain, France, Germany, Russia, Japan, the United States, Austria-Hungary, Italy, Spain, Belgium, and the Netherlands. Written in the Emperor’s name, it stated that: “for the past thirty years, [foreigners have] taken advantage of China’s forbearance, to encroach on China’s territory and trample on the Chinese people, and to demand China’s wealth. Every concession made by China increased their reliance on violence... They oppressed peaceful citizens and insulted the gods and holy men, exciting the most burning indignation among the people... All our officials high and low are of one mind; and there have assembled without official summons several hundred thousand patriotic soldiers [Boxers]... Those others [foreigners] rely on crafty schemes: our trust is in Heaven’s justice. They depend on violence; we, on humanity. Not to speak of the righteousness of our cause, our provinces number more than twenty million and it will not be difficult to vindicate the dignity of our country.”⁸⁹³

7.2.11. Requests for Japanese Mediation and Intervention

Not all the court viewed the declaration of war against the collective might of the foreign powers as an especially wise idea. On 29 June 1900, the Emperor Guangxu issued a completely contradictory rescript calling for the restoration of order as well as the resumption of friendly relations with foreign countries.⁸⁹⁴ The confusion was due, it was said, to the declaration of war having been composed by Prince Duan, with the 29 June 1900 version actually reflecting the Emperor’s sincere opinion.⁸⁹⁵ Such a position seems to have been corroborated by the 3 July 1900 telegram Emperor Guangxu sent to the Meiji Emperor asking him to intercede to restore order to China. In the spirit of the new system of international relations, Emperor Guangxu addressed the Meiji Emperor as his equal, citing that Sino-Japanese relations were based on mutual dependence that was “as close as lips and teeth.”⁸⁹⁶ Echoing once again the unheeded words of Li Hongzhang at Shimonoseki, the Guangxu Emperor cautioned that “should China be unsuccessful in opposing the West, Japan’s independence will [also] be threatened, so China and Japan are on the same footing, and should put their differences aside to preserve their national existence.”⁸⁹⁷ The Qing Emperor apologized for the murder of Legation Secretary Sugiyama and argued that “an alliance with Japan would succeed in dispelling the present troubles and restoring order; the Emperor of

⁸⁹¹ Ibid., pg. 326.

⁸⁹² Heinze, Wolfgang, Die Belagerung der Pekingischen Gesandtschaften: eine völkerrechtliche Studie, Heidelberg: Carl Winters Universitätsbuchhandlung, 1901, pg. 37.

⁸⁹³ Tan, Boxer Catastrophe, pg. 51.

⁸⁹⁴ Keene, Donald, Emperor of Japan: Meiji and His World, 1852-1912, New York: Columbia University Press, 2010, pg. 559.

⁸⁹⁵ *Meiji tennō ki*, 9, Yoshikawa kōbunkan, 1968-1975 quoted in ibid.

⁸⁹⁶ Keene, Emperor of Japan: Meiji and His World, pg. 559.

⁸⁹⁷ Miyoshi, The Other Great Game, pg. 247.

China in all sincerity applied to the Emperor of Japan for aid in restoring order.”⁸⁹⁸ The Japanese Emperor responded curtly to the Guangxu Emperor’s request. While thanking him for the apology over the assassination of Sugiyama, the Meiji Emperor underscored that “the action of the insurgents [Boxers] is in complete violation of the principle of international law.” Should the Qing prove indeed able to suppress the rioters and relieve the Legations, Japan would be ready to assume its traditional friendship with China. Should, however, this not be the case, Japan would have no alternative but “to pacify the rebels and rescue its citizens.” The Meiji Emperor concluded his letter with an offer to mediate between the Foreign Powers and the Qing: “Japan will not decline to use her good offices [of mediation] on behalf of China. If your Majesty’s Government, therefore, at once suppresses the insurrection and rescues the foreign representatives, Japan will be prepared to use her influence, in eventual negotiations between Your country and foreign nations, with a view to conserve the interests of Your Empire.”⁸⁹⁹

The Guangxu Emperor’s pleas, like those of Li Hongzhang at Shimonoseki five years earlier, went unheeded. The needs of Empire were greater than regional solidarity. Japan’s self-image, established since the Meiji Restoration, was its role as the harbinger of the West in the East. The European Powers, upon the Chinese declaration of war, were short of manpower in East Asia. Consequently, Tokyo was the only Foreign Power with forces available for deployment in the area, however, this was a difficult situation for Japan because she was a non-Christian country.⁹⁰⁰ The British Empire faced by the Second Boer War (1899-1902) in South Africa, had no forces to spare, with London being weary of thinning its garrison in India due to internal security concerns. The Japanese, like the Russians, had a sober grasp of the chaos afflicting the Qing, and did not burn with an overwhelming desire to embroil themselves in the Chinese quagmire. However, Japan did seek to firmly establish itself as a member of the Western Powers on equal footing, a status that the Triple Intervention denied. On 8 July 1900, the British Ambassador to Japan offered Foreign Minister Aoki Shūzō (1844-1914) one million British pounds in exchange for more reinforcements.⁹⁰¹ This also afforded Tokyo a possibility to showcase the efficacy of its post-1895 military expansion and reform programme to the Western Powers. As a result, Japan augmented its force, dispatching a total of 23,000 soldiers to continental Asia.⁹⁰² As the second relief force began its campaign towards Beijing, the Imperial Japanese Army was determined to show themselves as a highly disciplined, courageous and effective fighting force to the world. The Japanese acquitted themselves on all accounts, with the officers of the 5th Division enforcing draconian standards of discipline to ensure the admiration of all outside observers.⁹⁰³ To the new international relief force assembled in July 1900, Japan contributed a strength of nearly 13,000, marking nearly 40 percent of the 33,000 total.⁹⁰⁴ The zeal of Japanese forces to augment the status of their Empire was marked in combat, with Japanese forces taking more than half of the allied casualties during the 13 July siege of Tianjin. Japanese soldiers led the relief force when it set out for Beijing on 4 August 1900, fighting the first engagement the next day with Chinese regular troops at Beicang.⁹⁰⁵ Reaching Beijing on 14 August 1900, Japanese troops led the assault against

⁸⁹⁸ Ibid., pg. 248.

⁸⁹⁹ *North China Herald*, 1 August 1900.

⁹⁰⁰ Nish, *History of Manchuria*, pg. 34.

⁹⁰¹ Drea, *Japan’s Imperial Army*, pg. 98.

⁹⁰² Nish, *History of Manchuria*, pg. 34.

⁹⁰³ Drea, *Japan’s Imperial Army*, pp. 98-99.

⁹⁰⁴ Ibid., pg. 98.

⁹⁰⁵ Miyoshi, *The Other Great Game*, pg. 249.

the Dongzhi and Qihau Gates, sustaining two-thirds of allied losses in the process.⁹⁰⁶ The Japanese actions permitted British forces to make their way, almost unopposed, to officially relieve the Foreign Legations by 15:00 on 15 August 1900. The Empress Dowager, the Guangxu Emperor and the rest of the Ming Court fled far from the coast to Xian for safety, while the second international coalition proceeded to loot Beijing.⁹⁰⁷ The Chinese capital fell under allied occupation, with each member of the 'Missionary Coalition' given responsibility for a sector of the city.

As fighting in the Chinese capital had ended, the question of who would assume control of Beijing remained opened. Along the road to Beijing, the coalition was, as documented, run by an international council of senior officers, this ad hoc arrangement could not be considered a lasting solution for, despite the major role Japan played in providing the manpower and martial bravado necessary to lift the Legation siege, it was German Commander, Field Marshall Alfred von Waldersee (1832-1904), and not Japanese commander, Fukushima Yasumasa (1852-1919), who was chosen by the 'Missionary Coalition' to assume control of the international force following Beijing's capture. The decision was a blow to Japanese pride and, likewise, Tokyo's quest for an equal position amongst the contemporary Great Powers. Kaiser Wilhelm II, also eager to expand Germany's international prestige, had appealed directly to Tsar Nicholas II to support von Waldersee's nomination. The Tsar acquiesced to the Kaiser's appeal, especially since it gave St. Petersburg the opportunity to poke "the modern Carthage" [Britain] in the eye with a stick."⁹⁰⁸ It was also a calculated decision by St. Petersburg to keep Japan out. Faced with the German-Russian agreement on von Waldersee's nomination, the British and French had little choice but to consent. The Japanese did as well, however, Tokyo was deeply disappointed. Prime Minister Itō was especially appalled: "I was extremely shocked when I learned Emperor Meiji replied that he supported the German plan. Even if the Russians had come up with this plan, they should have informed the Japanese [government] directly. We must be prepared for what happens next. This problem had been bothering me and is keeping me awake all night."⁹⁰⁹

7.2.12. The Sino-Russian War of 1900

The Japanese were concerned at Russia's policies towards China ever since Foreign Minister Muravyev's proclamation on St. Petersburg's insistence on maintaining a distance from the policies of the other Foreign Powers. Likewise, the Russians were not pleased at the quantity of soldiers that Tokyo placed at the disposal of the 'Missionary Coalition', with His Majesty Nicholas II openly voicing his suspicion of ultimate Japanese intentions. The occupation of Beijing was unpopular amongst the coalition members, with generals seeking to restore order as rapidly as possible in order to deploy home—the prospect of permanent occupation was too costly in men

⁹⁰⁶ Drea, *Japan's Imperial Army*, pg. 99.

⁹⁰⁷ During the looting of Beijing, which last for several weeks, Russian General Nikolai Petrovich Linyevich (1839-1908) forbade his soldiers from looting the Forbidden City but declared the rest of the capital open. The Japanese stole three million silver teals, the government silk, and rice stores. The Germans raided the Imperial observatory and shared the spoils with the French. The British organized auctions of plundered loot on the streets of the capital. See Warner Denis & Warner, Peggy, *The Tide at Sunrise: A History of the Russo-Japanese War, 1904-1905*, London: Angus & Robertson, 1974, pg. 120.; Silbey, *The Boxer Rebellion and the Great Game in China*, pp. 218-219.

⁹⁰⁸ Silbey, *The Boxer Rebellion and the Great Game in China*, pg. 143.

⁹⁰⁹ Miyoshi, *The Other Great Game*, pg. 250.

and treasure.⁹¹⁰ Following the relief of the Legations, the Japanese began to withdraw their forces, partly for financial reasons but also to encourage other the other Foreign Powers to follow. The Russians were the next to react. As the Chinese court had left Beijing, new Russian Foreign Minister, Vladimir Nikolayivch Lamsdorff (1845-1907), ordered his Minister, on 25 August 1900, to relocate to Tianjin in the absence of the recognized Chinese government.⁹¹¹ Soon thereafter, the Russian contingent withdrew from Beijing and North China, however, it did not vacate Chinese territory, dislocating instead to Manchuria. The reason was that the Boxers had started to pose a threat to Russia's greatest investment in China, the CER, the crown jewel of the Sino-Russian alliance of 1896. Yuan Shikai's suppression of the Boxers in Shandong had forced many to flee into Manchuria. The situation remained calm until the middle of June 1900 when the Boxers attacked Mukden, killing Christian converts, and more importantly, attacking the southern line of the CER. The CER's private defence forces were unable to provide effective protection. With the Russian Court concerned at developments that underlined the vulnerability of the CER, Sergei Witte underlined to the Tsar that "for the present, it would be detrimental to introduce our troops to Manchuria."⁹¹² Hence, to preserve Witte's preferred policy of facilitating Russia's peaceful economic absorption of Manchuria, St. Petersburg relied on the personal efforts of Li Hungzhang, as an intimate advisor to Cixi, to maintain peace by taking measures to safeguard Russian interests (the CER).⁹¹³ Other members of the Russian Court, most notably Minister of War, General Aleksey Nikolayevich Kuropatkin (1848-1925), urged the Empire to take advantage of the increasingly chaotic situation in China. Kuropatkin subsequently prophesied that "this [the Boxer Rebellion] will give us an excuse for seizing Manchuria".⁹¹⁴

Li's efforts with the Empress Dowager proved to be overtaken by the pace of events. Following China's 21 June 1900 declaration of war against the Foreign Powers, Qing government soldiers, together with Boxer contingents, occupied all the major settlements along the CER, blocking station guards in Harbin. The Boxers proceeded to destroy 970 out of 1,400 kilometers of railway, all telegraph lines within reach and burned all railway stations.⁹¹⁵ Consequently, Chinese contract workers were forced to abandon the railway, obliging its construction to come to a halt. The violence that began to spread across Manchuria took on a unique ideology that distinguished it from the riots that had characterized the unrest in Shandong and Zhili: as the Boxer movement spread into Manchuria, "it took on a distinctly anti-Russian, as opposed to anti-Christian, character."⁹¹⁶ Chinese anger towards the Russians were based on the dire conditions under which the CER had been constricted as well as the encroachment on their lands.⁹¹⁷ Descending on the CER, Chinese troops carried out a policy of absolute destruction against anything Russian: "everywhere everything Russian was put to the torch, and up and down the railway line, as far as the Russians could see, fires lit up the sky. The Chinese were not content with driving out the foreigners. Russians captured at isolated posts were ridiculed and tortured,

⁹¹⁰ Silbey, *The Boxer Rebellion and Great Game in China*, pg. 215.

⁹¹¹ Nish, *History of Manchuria*, pg. 35.

⁹¹² Romanov, *Russia in Manchuria*, pg. 180.

⁹¹³ Ibid.

⁹¹⁴ Tan, *The Boxer Catastrophe*, pg. 159.

⁹¹⁵ Zatsepine, Victor, "The Blagoveshchensk Massacre of 1900: The Sino-Russian War and Global Imperialism" in Smith, Norman & Flath, James, *Beyond Suffering: Recounting War in Modern China*, Vancouver: UBC Press, 2011, pg. 109.

⁹¹⁶ Miyoshi, *The Other Great Game*, pg. 258.

⁹¹⁷ Nish, *History of Manchuria*, pg. 40.

then beheaded and their corpses thrown to the pigs...Instead of appropriating [Russian] possessions, the Chinese wantonly destroyed them.”⁹¹⁸ Tension began to spread to the Sino-Russian border along the Amur River, with Chinese units bombarding the Russian border city of Blagoveshchensk, only to be repulsed with severe losses. The Russians responded by forcefully expelling ethnic Manchus from the Russian side of the Amur River, a process that culminated in the 17 July 1900 massacre of 3,000 Chinese civilians in Blagoveshchensk.⁹¹⁹ The intensity of the violence the Chinese wrought on Russian assets and subjects, as well as the direct threat posed to Russian territory in the Far East, rendered it only a question of time before Russia decided upon military intervention.

Map 3: The Sino-Russian War of 1900



Source: Miyoshi Jager, The Other Great Game

⁹¹⁸ Lensen, The Russo-Chinese War, pg. 19.

⁹¹⁹ Zatsepine, “The Blagoveshchensk Massacre of 1900”, pp. 110-113.

St. Petersburg began preparations for the Russian army to cross into China on 26 June 1900 under the command of Admiral Yevgenii Ivanovich Alekseyev (1843-1917), Commander of the Russian Pacific Fleet. On 11 July 1900, the Russian army commenced deployment along the Amur River in order to suppress any Chinese rebels. Witte informed the Chinese Minister in St. Petersburg as to Russia's intentions to intervene in China in order to suppress the "rioters" and if the Tatar [Manchu] Generals of China's three northern provinces agreed to cooperate, with the Russian forces to be withdrawn as soon as the unrest had been quelled.⁹²⁰ In late July 1900, the Russian army crossed the Chinese border in earnest, taking the border town of Aigun and leveling it. The remainder of the Qing's 10,000-man army began a retreat to the south.⁹²¹ As a result, Russian Cossack detachments proceeded to capture all major towns in northern Manchuria. An additional direction of Russian attack was launched from the Sanghau River aiming to relieve the besieged CER hub at Harbin, capturing it on 4 August 1900. Yet another Russian column advanced from Dairen towards Mukden, securing the southern line of the Manchurian railway. On 2 October 1900, Cossacks successfully completed their capture of Mukden, hosting the Russian flag in the city's Imperial Palace, birthplace of the Qing Dynasty.⁹²² By October, a total of 210,000 Russian soldiers were now occupying the three Chinese provinces of Manchuria.⁹²³ Yet the capture of the dynastic capital did not complete the pacification of Manchuria with local bandits, literally called the 'Red Beards' ('*Honghuizi*'/紅鬍子),⁹²⁴ continuing to ravage the countryside, as well as Russian positions, with Russian military expeditions continuing in Manchuria well into 1901.

7.2.13. Negotiations to End the Boxer Rebellion: Two Wars and One Treaty

By August 1900, the Qing elite realized that the military situation was no longer tenable and, once again, nominated Li Hongzhang as plenipotentiary to negotiate a truce with the Foreign Power. Initial contact with Chinese Ministers abroad indicated foreign willingness to meet Chinese representative before allied forces reached the capital. In particular, the US government stated its willingness to offer its good offices, provided that the other Foreign Powers agreed.⁹²⁵ On the basis of these reports, Li attempted to organize the dispatch of Zongli Yamen ministers to the front to commence ceasefire negotiations while, at the same time strongly advising the Qing court not to abandon Beijing to move west.⁹²⁶ Both telegrams that Li had dispatched to the Court and Zongli Yamen respectively did not arrive. Instead, the collapse of the Chinese armies was so swift so as to necessitate the Court's speedy evacuation. With the main military campaigns both in the north and the capital ending in total Chinese collapse, the question now turned to formalizing the end of hostilities with a formal peace agreement. After the fall of Beijing and the escape of the Qing Court to the west, "Li Hungzhang was looked upon as the only person who could save the country."⁹²⁷ The task, however, was monumental. In autumn 1900, the allied coalition was administering Beijing; however, much more serious was Russia's de facto possession of the whole of Manchuria.

⁹²⁰ Tan, *The Boxer Catastrophe*, pg. 159.

⁹²¹ Zatsepine, "The Blagoveshchensk Massacre of 1900", pg. 113.

⁹²² Lensen, *The Russo-Chinese War*, pg. 230.

⁹²³ Nish, *History of Manchuria*, pg. 40.

⁹²⁴ The *Honghuizi* did not arise due to the Russian occupation of Manchuria but had operated long before under the Qing. They proved to be one of the Russians' major problems in securing control over Manchuria following the end of the main campaigns of the Sino-Russian war.

⁹²⁵ Tan, *Boxer Catastrophe*, pg. 122.

⁹²⁶ *Ibid.*, pg. 111.

⁹²⁷ *Ibid.*, pg. 124.

With one power controlling a substantial portion of Chinese territory, the specter of the partition of the Qing Empire loomed large in the background.

The Russian Empire, given its substantial investment in and strategic importance of the CER, placed special significance on the future of Manchuria. Deciding upon its future on Russia's own timetable was of particular importance. The other Foreign Powers were particularly concerned at the Russian presence in Manchuria, especially the Japanese, who informed the US negotiators that as long as Russian soldiers would remain in Manchuria, Tokyo would not order the "withdrawal of Japanese troops from Beijing."⁹²⁸ The Russian Foreign Ministry was well aware of the suspicion of the other powers that the invasion of Manchuria had provoked. New Foreign Minister Vladimir Nikolayevich Lamsdorff (1845-1907), before official negotiations had commenced, sent out a circular to his counterparts, underlining Russia's readiness to withdraw its forces "as long as the mode of action by the other powers does not serve as an impediment to this."⁹²⁹ Through this circular, Lamsdorff underlined openly St. Petersburg's determination to pursue an independent course in Manchuria while, simultaneously, linking the issue with the overall joint course of Foreign Power negotiations with the Qing, to which Russia was a party. Russian officials were divided at which course St. Petersburg should adopt as regards to the future of Manchuria. Sergei Witte was against a long-term occupation, seeking China to instead provide the manpower necessary to defend both Russian railroads and borders. Minister of War Kuropatkin, however, opposed any early withdrawal, arguing that their presence should be maintained until at least the CER has been completed. On 23 October 1900, a compromise seemed to have been reached, with the Russian government indicating to the resident Chinese Minister Yang Ju that St. Petersburg remained willing to return Manchuria to China, but a portion of the Russian force would be required to remain to ensure the protection of the railways.⁹³⁰ Yang Ju reported this to Li who became convinced that, ultimately, the Qing would see its sovereignty over Manchuria returned, and ordered the Imperial Court to nominate Governors-General to receive their respective provinces back from the Russians.

Before the Qing's nomination decree reached Manchuria, however, Admiral Alekseyev began his own series of negotiations with Kirin's military governor, General Zengqi. Alekseyev was concerned that St. Petersburg would relinquish control of Manchuria with no conditionality imposed.⁹³¹ General Zengqi, following the fall of Mukden, received a telegram informing him of the fall of Beijing and bluntly stated that, should fighting not cease, no negotiations could be opened to end the conflict. As such, Zengqi began to negotiate with Alekseyev, underlining that the talks were to focus solely on Kirin province.⁹³² On 9 November 1900, a nine-article agreement was signed between Alekseyev and Zengqi's representative whereby Russia assumed formal military and administrative power in Manchuria: Russia would only return administrative functions to China together with the restoration of order; Chinese forces in Manchuria would be limited to unarmed police forces, supported by the Russian Army; all Chinese forces in Kirin would be disarmed and Boxer sympathizers punished; to consolidate Russian control, a Russian commissar would be assigned to the local Chinese administration of the Liaodong Peninsula and

⁹²⁸ Miyoshi, *The Other Great Game*, pg. 263.

⁹²⁹ Paine, S.C.M, *Imperial Rivals: China, Russia and Their Disputed Frontier*, London: Routledge, 1986, pg. 216.

⁹³⁰ Tan, *Boxer Catastrophe*, pg. 163.

⁹³¹ Paine, *Imperial Rivals*, pg. 217.

⁹³² Tan, *Boxer Catastrophe*, pg. 164.

supervise “all important matters”.⁹³³ His Majesty Nicholas II was so pleased with the Alekseyev-Zengqi agreement that he used it as a model for his *ukaz* of 17 December 1900, establishing Russian supervision over all Manchurian civilian and military administrations. Receiving a copy of the agreement, the Qing Court professed to be “surprised and indignant” and refused to ratify it.⁹³⁴ Qing officials leaked the document to the Beijing correspondent of the London *Times*, triggering a major diplomatic scandal as this document indicated St. Petersburg’s desire to establish a permanent presence in Manchuria.⁹³⁵ Under such pressure, the Russian Foreign Ministry abandoned the Alekseyev-Zengqi Agreement, letting it lapse in January 1901. However, having illustrated St. Petersburg’s intention of staking a claim to at some, if not all, of Manchuria, the Agreement served to poison the atmosphere between the powers in their common approach to a peace agreement with China.

In the meantime, the eleven powers signed a joint note on 22 December 1900, detailing the conditions necessary for a restoration of the Qing Dynasty. The foreign powers’ demands included formal apologies to Germany and Japan for the murders of their respective Ministers; punishment for supporters of the Boxers; an arms embargo; an unspecified indemnity and the transformation of the Zongli Yamen into a Western-Style foreign ministry.⁹³⁶ While forming part of the ‘Missionary Coalition’ negotiation to reach a general agreement with China, the Russians, with de facto control over Manchuria, remained true to their June 1900 policy note and sought to seek a separate treaty with the Qing. Consequently, in order to conceal its intentions from the other foreign powers, Russia held negotiations on the future of Manchuria directly with Yang Ju, Chinese Minister to the Russian Empire, in St. Petersburg. Li Hongzhang was weary of the Russian request, as he preferred to hold talks in Beijing with Prince Ukhtomsky, a personal friend of the Tsar and Director of the CER who had displayed a friendly attitude towards China. Nevertheless, Li acquiesced. The Russian negotiation strategy was based on a political compromise between Finance Minister Witte and Minister of War Kuropatkin entitled “Principles of Russian Control in Manchuria”. St. Petersburg had concluded that neither the cost of annexing Manchuria, or significant parts of it, was desirable; nor was spending the enormous sum required to station Russian forces over the geographic vastness of Manchuria in the medium- to long-term future. Instead, Russia would seek to exclude foreign economic interests from Manchuria and North China while maintaining administrative control over the area. This policy was endorsed personally by the Tsar on 13 December 1900. Consequently, Witte presented a thirteen point proposal of Russian demands to Yang Ju, on 17 January 1901, including a large indemnity to compensate Russia for the damage to its railways during the Sino-Chinese War; Russian control over the Manchurian administration; exclusion of foreign concessions from Manchuria, Mongolia and China’s northern provinces; the replacement of the United Kingdom with Russia for the collection of Manchurian

⁹³³ “Preliminary Russo-Chinese Arrangement regarding Manchuria—January 30, 1901” in MacMurray, *Treaties and Conventions with and concerning China*, pg. 329.

⁹³⁴ Tan, *Boxer Catastrophe*, pg. 168.

⁹³⁵ Intrepid Beijing-based London *Times* reporter, George Morrison, published the Agreement in the 3 January 1901 edition of his paper. This agreement took the Western diplomatic community by surprise, with British envoys to St. Petersburg and Beijing ascertaining that Morrison’s article did, in fact, contain the authentic treaty signed.

⁹³⁶ See “Joint Note regarding Conditions for Re-establishment of normal relations between China and the Power—December 22, 1900, and January 16, 1901” in MacMurray, *Treaties and Conventions with and concerning China*, pg. 329.

customs and Russian control of all railways leading to Manchuria, with Russia evacuating Manchuria “by degrees.”⁹³⁷

While eager to facilitate a withdrawal of Russian forces from Qing territory, Yang Ju argued that agreeing to Witte’s demands would be tantamount to establishing a Russian protectorate over Manchuria. Yang Ju was especially worried of the precedent that such a treaty would create regarding the ambitions of the other powers towards China, “[Russia] has repeatedly declared that she has no selfish ambitions in China. Now all countries...which have large business in China, are watching keenly the Sino-Russian negotiations...[and] may follow the example of Russia.”⁹³⁸ Having received Yang Ju’s dispatches from St. Petersburg, the Zongli Yamen sought out the advice of Komura Jutarō (1855-1911), head of the Japanese mission in charge of negotiations on the overall peace agreement between the foreign powers and China. Tokyo became alarmed at Russia’s demands, with Komura underlining that China must “not cede Manchuria to Russia and not allow them to station their troops there.”⁹³⁹ Meanwhile, the Japanese Minister in St. Petersburg informed the Russian Foreign Ministry that the Russian position in Manchuria “might very well cause alarm if Russia did not give some positive assurances of her intention to evacuate the area.”⁹⁴⁰ Lamsdorff responded curtly, “the Manchurian question is a matter which concerns only Russia and China. I have no need to answer questions to the Japanese government.”⁹⁴¹ However, the advent of Chinese opposition, supported resolutely by Japan, gave Russia cause for concern and a reason for Witte to step back from the negotiations. Foreign Minister Lamsdorff took over and, on 16 February 1901, presented Yung Ju with a revised draft treaty, very much similar to the earlier version. It further detailed the broad scope of Russia’s planned sphere of influence in northern China, with St. Petersburg holding complete military, economic, and administrative power, at the expense of any other foreign power, complete with rights over the railway to the Great Wall.⁹⁴² The draft treaty conditioned Russia’s withdraw on China’s ability to comply with its points.

Faced with increased Russian demands, the Qing leaked the Russian draft treaty to the Japanese government through its Minister in Tokyo, Li Shenduo. The Japanese government was incensed at its content. Tokyo insisted that Russia retract its proposed treaty given the threat that Russian domination over Manchuria would signify for Japanese interests in Korea. Additionally, the Japanese informed the other foreign powers about Russian intensions in Manchuria. Between 15 February and 22 February 1901, China received separate notes from Japan, Great Britain, Germany, Italy, Austria-Hungary and the United States “all urging it not to set any precedents with Russia which the rest [of the powers] would then feel obliged to follow.”⁹⁴³ While Li Hongzhang was concerned that the rejection of the Russian treaty would lead to a rupturing of diplomatic relations with St. Petersburg, the diplomatic support rendered to the Qing, with Japan in the lead, allowed the Qing Court to reject any separate treaty. On 23 March 1901, an Imperial Decree was proclaimed, declaring that a separate agreement with Russia would be considered a “break of the

⁹³⁷ Paine, *Imperial Rivals*, pg. 218.

⁹³⁸ Tan, *Boxer Catastrophe*, pg. 174.

⁹³⁹ Miyoshi, *The Other Great Game*, pg. 268.

⁹⁴⁰ Tan, *The Boxer Catastrophe*, pg. 177.

⁹⁴¹ Warner, *The Tide at Sunrise*, pg. 123.

⁹⁴² See “Alleged Secret Russo-Chinese Treaty regarding Manchuria—February 1901” in MacMurray, *Treaties and Conventions with and concerning China*, pg. 330.

⁹⁴³ Paine, *Imperial Rivals*, pg. 218.

Boxer Protocol that was being negotiated with the powers in Beijing.”⁹⁴⁴ Lamsdorff was livid and threatened China to annex Manchuria outright should it not sign the proposed treaty. In the end, however, on 4 April 1901, after three months of trying to pursue a separate treaty with China, the Russian government withdrew its draft, issuing a circular one day afterwards declaring that, while Russia maintained full freedom of action in Manchuria, it would act in harmony with the other powers. While both China and the other powers were apprehensive that the failure of St. Petersburg to secure a separate treaty with the Qing would result in the scuttling of the Coalition’s peace negotiations, this did not come to pass, and the Boxer Protocol was finally signed on 7 September 1901.

7.3. The Boxer Protocol: The Settlement of 1901

7.3.1. The Terms of the Boxer Protocol

The Boxer Protocol, consisting of twelve articles with nineteen annexes, was signed by the eleven foreign ministers and Li Hongzhang one year and 24 days after the ‘Missionary Coalition’ had relieved the Foreign Legations.⁹⁴⁵ The Protocol’s articles faithfully reflected the Joint Note presented to China in January 1901 and did not strongly deviate therefrom. The question of punishment and indemnity proved to be the most controversial amongst the powers which, coupled with the fallout from the Sino-Russian War, delayed the final signature of the document.⁹⁴⁶ The Qing did not expect, nor did they receive, any leniency from the Foreign Powers:

Article I obliged the Qing Court to convey to the German Emperor the regrets of the Chinese Emperor for the assassination of Freiherr von Ketteler. The Chinese government would construct a commemorative monument on the spot where he was gunned down.

Article II suspended the official civil service examinations for five years in cities where foreigners had been.

Article III forced the Chinese Board of Finance to convey its regrets to the Meiji Emperor for the assassination of Counsellor Sugiyama.

Article IV the Qing was to erect an expiatory monument in each of the foreign or international cemeteries which had been desecrated or destroyed.

Article V prohibited the import of arms and ammunition to China.

Article VI imposed an indemnity on the Qing in value of 450 million taels to be paid with 4 percent interest over a period of 40 years. Here, the indemnity was divided amongst the Foreign Powers, with Russia accounting for its largest beneficiary, receiving 29 percent or 130 million taels.⁹⁴⁷

Article VII saw China agree to cede the Legation Quarter completely to the Foreign Powers and forbade Qing subjects from residing there. **Article VIII** forced China to raze the Taku Forts, while

⁹⁴⁴ Miyoshi, *The Other Great Game*, pg. 269.

⁹⁴⁵ For the full text of the Boxer Protocol see: Number 1901/3 “Final Protocol for the settlement of the disturbances of 1900” in MacMurray, *Treaties and Conventions with and concerning China*, pg. 330.

⁹⁴⁶ Tan, *Boxer Catastrophe*, pp. 215-233.

⁹⁴⁷ Paine, *Imperial Rivals*, pg. 219.

Article IX permitted the Foreign Powers to occupy all points between Beijing and the seas necessary for the maintenance of communications.

Article X published Imperial edicts confirming the prohibition of anti-foreign societies and pledged to bring to justice all Qing officials involved in anti-foreigner violence. **Article XI** forced China to negotiate all treaties of commerce and navigation as demanded by the individual Foreign Powers.

Article XII obliged China to transform the Zongli Yamen into a Ministry of Foreign Affairs [based on the Westphalian model] and agree to modify the Court ceremonies regarding the reception of foreign representatives, erasing even the last ceremonial vestiges of the pre-modern East Asian international society⁹⁴⁸. The Boxer Protocol likewise envisioned the evacuation of Beijing by allied troops—save for the Legation Quarter—on 17 September 1901 and from all of Zhili province on 22 September 1901.

Following the signature of the Boxer Protocol, the Qing Court could finally commence its return journey to the Imperial capital. On 7 January 1902, it finally arrived once again in Beijing to take up residence. The Boxer unrest had been quelled and all international forces had evacuated Qing territory, save for the allies in the Legation Quarter and the Russians in Manchuria. Two years of exile and upheaval had been brought to an end. However, the antecedent conditions that preceded the signing of the Boxer Protocol of 1901 marked an additional step in the anchoring of the Westphalian system in East Asia as well as defining the further trajectory of its evolving contours. This dissertation will now proceed to analyze the conditions of stable peace and RSO formation to ascertain whether the Settlement of 1901 played a role in advancing both.

7.3.2. The Settlement of 1901: Geopolitical Necessity

The Settlement of 1895 was marked by the Qing's defeat that necessitated territorial concessions and exposed an urgent need for the Empire to attempt to adapt itself to modern, Westphalian realities. A different kind of geopolitical necessity descended upon China with the Settlement of 1901. It would not be the first time in the twentieth century that a peace agreement would entail a military coalition dividing a capital city into sectors, exacting a clause of guilt for initiating hostilities, and demanding punishment for those responsible; however, it marked the first treaty of its kind and served as a culmination of the last political contest between the West and the Qing Dynasty. Like the Rebellion itself, the Settlement of 1901 was an improvised solution to a sudden onset of a 'critical juncture'. As illustrated, the *corps diplomatique* in Beijing that had arrived after 1895 played a major role in fermenting misunderstanding with the Qing Court. This

⁹⁴⁸ Annex 19 of the Boxer Protocol specified the intricate details of protocol to which the Chinese Emperor would hitherto have to adhere when dealing with the Foreign Powers: all solemn audiences involving the Foreign Powers would be held in the Palace of Heavenly Purity ('*Qianqing Palace*'/乾清宫). The representatives of the Powers would be carried to such audiences in their chairs as far as the exterior of the outer gate. There they would alight from the chairs and would be born in small chairs as far as the foot of the main gate. When a foreign representative would be accredited with the Qing, the Chinese Emperor would be obliged to send a chair to the residence of the said representative, bearing the Imperial yellow tassels and upholstery, normally reserved for the use of princes of the Imperial family.

mutual misreading of intentions transformed a rural uprising against foreign missionaries into an international military clash. While the foreign missionaries had played an essential part in convincing the Legations that the Chinese *hoi polloi* was intent on exterminating all aliens in the Empire, the diplomatic community's overall ignorance of the political situation in China, steeped in their Africanist experience—along with its willful policy of non-recognition of Qing succession plans—helped give rise to a military conflict out of an essentially benign, diplomatic one. The ultimate military showdown was the result of frustration and perceived necessity. As the Empress Dowager stated during her flight from Beijing “I originally insisted on not breaking up relations with the foreigners. But during the middle period [the establishment of the Heir Presumptive and the Boxer Riots] because the foreigners bullied me too hard, I inevitably became a bit angry.”⁹⁴⁹ The gap in understanding between the foreign representatives and the Qing elite became too large to overcome. Hence, Cixi's fear of her “neighbours in the East [Japan] and the West” had contributed to her declaration of war against each Foreign Power—a decision which, ironically, ultimately saved her Dynasty and indirectly, through China's acceptance of the Boxer Protocol, put an end to the Scramble for China (see 9.3.2).⁹⁵⁰

Yet the price to achieve such minimalist objectives was high. That the Qing Dynasty was able to secure an agreement that permitted the Dynasty's basic survival at all has been attributed to the diplomatic skill of the head Chinese negotiator with the Foreign Powers, Li Hongzhang.⁹⁵¹ His recommendation that conditions stipulated in the Joint Note, his willingness to accept the high sum of indemnities, and readiness to acquiesce to the demand that high ranking Qing officials be punished with execution, suicide or exile—against the wishes of the Qing Court—permitted the survival of the Qing as a political unit. The definition of the condition of geopolitical necessity guided Li's strategy through his negotiations, namely “to oppose what was impossible and to accept what was inevitable.”⁹⁵² While able to secure such basic objectives, the inevitable carried a heavy price. The main focus of the negotiations lay on the establishment of the indemnity which China would have to pay the Powers. It was purposely equipped with features that were designed to be extraordinary complex, with “a self-defeating economic impact, a continuing diplomatic and political nuisance value and unexpected [additional] negotiations which would create confusion and paradox.”⁹⁵³ Negotiations stemming from the indemnity question prescribed by the Boxer Protocol only ended with the foundation of the People's Republic in 1949. Coalition powers were allowed to station their respective armies between Beijing and Tianjin to protect their nationals and establish secure communication with the coast. Japan, for example, created the China Garrison Army for army units stationed in North China under the terms of the Boxer Protocol.⁹⁵⁴ Hence, the Boxer Protocol dealt a fatal blow to critical elements of Chinese sovereignty, both in the financial and security realms. Yet there was no other option but to bow down, once again, to its tenets. As with the Settlement of 1895, the resentment that it caused—along with the domestic consequences for the Qing stemming from the Settlement of 1901—did not create an opening for gestures of unilateral accommodation.

⁹⁴⁹ Xiang, *The Origins of the Boxer War*, pg. 355.

⁹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, pg. 356.

⁹⁵¹ Tan, *Boxer Catastrophe*, pg. 240.

⁹⁵² *Ibid.*, pg. 241.

⁹⁵³ King, Frank, “The Boxer Indemnity—‘Nothing but Bad’”, *Modern Asian Studies*, 40, 3 (2006), pg. 664.

⁹⁵⁴ Drea, *Japan's Imperial Army*, pg. 99.

A major factor contributing to the absence of any unilateral accommodation on the part of Beijing was that the Settlement of 1901 marked the death knell of the Qing in politics, both domestically and internationally. The tenets of the Boxer Protocol pushed the Qing further towards the edge of collapse, as the detailed articles of the diplomatic settlement were of less importance than the impact that it had on the Chinese government and population.⁹⁵⁵ The terms of the treaty heaped further humiliation on an Empire that had, with the Settlement of 1895, seen the last vestiges of its cultural institutions and regional sphere of influence obliterated. The Settlement of 1901 now entrenched a second-class status on China both in domestic and international affairs. Following the Boxer Protocol “the court in Beijing no longer functioned as a meaningful factor in protecting either Chinese culture or autonomy.”⁹⁵⁶ The heart of the Chinese world order was fractured, opening the door to another period of warring states over the cadaver of the Qing Empire. As the ramifications of the Boxer Protocol, and the entrenchment of foreign economic and military power over China were apparent to all, the question then became: who was responsible for this new defeat against the Coalition?⁹⁵⁷ In the public eye, the Qing elite, namely the Manchu princes and officials of the Court, were squarely to blame, discrediting the conservative policies that had stifled the Hundred Days of Reform in 1898. No reform could thus be expected to emanate from a decrepit and humiliated Court. Given the intimate connection between Chinese culture and the right to govern, the Qing’s humiliating defeat by the Coalition forced the Chinese to openly consider how to “save the race and save the nation,” maintain national security and expel foreign influence.⁹⁵⁸ As a result, the traditional concept of cultural nationalism in China began its metamorphosis into something that more closely resembled the norm in other Westphalian nation states. Accordingly, the prominence of Manchus amongst those that supported the Boxer Rebellion caused Han Chinese to question the capacity of the Qing Dynasty to continue to guide China during a time of profound crisis.⁹⁵⁹ Debates on how to save the Chinese state, couched in terms of ‘saving the nation and the people’ began to become commonplace in all social classes, especially when confronted with enduring foreign occupation of the Legation District and Russia’s continued hold on Manchuria.

At the same time while the Chinese began to question the base upon which contemporary Chinese governance rested, the Settlement of 1901 discredited the notion of any popular involvement in the rule of the Chinese nation. The Boxer Rebellion was, in its essence, an expression of populist frustration against a particular kind of foreign influence. In its wake, the Boxers would leave the Chinese elite and literati, both Manchu and Han, “extraordinary fearful of any involvement of the ordinary people in the political affairs of the nation.”⁹⁶⁰ This was especially evident in the approach of Yuan Shikai, one of the few Chinese to come out from the Settlement of 1901 in a strengthened domestic position. A Han Chinese, his suppression of the Boxers in Shandong province not only protected the province from further foreign encroachment but gained

⁹⁵⁵ Cohen, Paul, History in Three Keys: The Boxers as Event, Experience and Myth, New York: Columbia University Press, 1997, pg. 55.

⁹⁵⁶ Kissinger, On China, pg. 86.,

⁹⁵⁷ Esherick, The Origins of the Boxer Upheaval, pg. 312.

⁹⁵⁸ Hu, “National Cultural Security Issues in the 20th Century”, pg. 273.

⁹⁵⁹ Esherick, The Origins of the Boxer Upheaval, pg. 312.

⁹⁶⁰ Ibid.

him foreign admirers as well as a potential source of political stability.⁹⁶¹ In December 1901, Yuan was appointed as Governor-General of Zhili province, assuming power over military and foreign policy in North China. While Yuan was a supporter of military modernization and centralization of the post-1901 Chinese state, popular opinion had no role in the goings-on of Chinese domestic politics, preferring to reserve that privilege to a restrictive class based on the noble elite. Hence, a lasting effect the geopolitical necessity of the Settlement of 1901 instilled was a lasting popular apprehension of the Chinese elite, including reformists and revolutionaries, towards the country's peasant majority.⁹⁶²

7.3.3. The Settlement of 1901: Policy of Reciprocal Restraint

The absence of any gesture of unilateral accommodation on behalf of the vanquished party, as with the Settlement of 1895, severely limited the ability of the Qing and the Foreign Powers to engage in policies of reciprocal restraint following the signature of the Boxer Protocol. The additional pressure the Settlement of 1901 placed on the continued viability of the Qing Dynasty, combined with the erosion of its ability to maintain order within the Empire, rendered the adoption of such policies extremely difficult. Finally, the xenophobic sentiment that ignited the Boxer Rebellion only added an additional layer to the anti-foreign sentiment that had formed a part of contemporary Chinese *Weltanschauung*, with the phrases “revere the Emperor and expel the barbarians” and “protect China against barbarians” forming deep-seated cultural slogans of the Chinese people tracing their respective roots to the Hua-Yi distinction of the pre-modern international society.⁹⁶³ While the Boxer Rebellion exposed the Foreign Powers to the intensity of Chinese resentment of foreign influence in the nation, it was explained away in Western capitals as “a reaction of a proud but fundamentally uncivilized people.”⁹⁶⁴ Under such circumstances, policies aimed at willful restraint with the goal of mutual accommodation and reconciliation could only serve as counterproductive.

The Settlement of 1901, however, did introduce some elements of policy restraint, though they were mostly coincidental and limited in scope between the Foreign Powers themselves. While, diplomatically, the European Powers were preparing to partition the Qing (or ‘slice the melon’ in the parlance of the times), US Secretary of State and former US Ambassador to China, John Hay (1838-1905), suggested a different approach to address the question of the decay of Chinese power. The Russian advance into Manchuria with the construction of the CER had alarmed policy makers in Washington and London. Meeting with Hay during his posting in Beijing, Lord Charles Beresford (1846-1919), member of the UK Parliament and Royal Navy Admiral suggested an Anglo-American commercial alliance “based on the integrity of China and the open door for all nations’ trade.”⁹⁶⁵ Hay remained intrigued with Beresford’s notion but was skeptical that the US Congress would authorize a policy that would see the US entering Chinese domestic affairs. An exchange between Hay’s office and the British inspectors of Chinese Maritime Customs ensued with the focus on a document that would ensure the “equality of opportunity” for all Foreign Powers. Here, both Washington and London viewed that the most

⁹⁶¹ Ibid.

⁹⁶² Ibid., pg. 313.

⁹⁶³ Hu, “National Cultural Security Issues in the Twentieth Century”, pg. 273.

⁹⁶⁴ Esherick, *The Origins of the Boxer Uprising*, pg. 313.

⁹⁶⁵ Miyoshi, *The Other Great Game*, pg. 233.

important goal was not to become mired in the question of Chinese reform, but how to halt the Russian advance into Qing territory that threatened to result in the country's partition.⁹⁶⁶ An open market for commerce in China could, therefore, achieve this goal and foster peaceful commercial interaction between the Powers and China. Hay became convinced and drafted his First Open Door Note on 6 September 1899 and dispatched it to London, Berlin, as well as St. Petersburg, underlining that their full cooperation could be confidently expected.⁹⁶⁷ Its contents were based on three principles: "(i.) [The Powers] will in no way interfere with any treaty port or any vested interest within any so-called 'sphere of interest', or leased territory it may have in China; (ii.) That the Chinese treaty tariff of the time being shall apply to all merchandise...to all such parts as are within said 'sphere of influence' no matter what nationality it may belong to and that duties so leviable shall be collected by the Chinese Government; (iii.) That it will levy no higher harbour duties on vessels of another nationality."⁹⁶⁸ Through this document, aimed at transforming China into a free trade zone, Hay hoped to limit overt foreign rivalry through the preservation of China's territorial and administrative unity: "[the policy] would powerfully tend to remove dangerous sources of irritation and possible conflict between the various Powers [and] it would reestablish confidence and security."⁹⁶⁹ Additionally, the Open Door Note would discourage the signing of 'secret treaties', such as the 1896 Sino-Russian alliance, that had entered into the regular practice of East Asian diplomacy after the Settlement of 1895.

On 20 May 1900, Hay declared that all the Powers had agreed to his Open Door Note and that Washington considered their respective concurrence as "final and definitive."⁹⁷⁰ There were nevertheless two glaring mistakes with Washington's introduction of a potentially initial phase of a policy of reciprocal restraint. First, Secretary Hay interpreted opposition to his three-point plan as confirmation of its validity. While having received unequivocally positive answers from Japan, Germany, Italy, France, and Great Britain insisted that the Note did not apply to Kowloon—across the straight from Hong Kong—while Russia explicitly excluded its principal base on the Liaodong peninsula, Port Arthur.⁹⁷¹ The Russian Foreign Ministry assessed Hay's third point as especially dangerous, as it seemed specifically aimed at neutralizing Russia's railways in Manchuria, these being in 1899 the only foreign railways in China.⁹⁷² Hence, when the American Ambassador in St. Petersburg, Charlemagne Tower Jr. (1848-1923), approached the Russian Foreign Ministry, Foreign Minister Muravyev half-heartedly signaled Russia's general compliance to the Open Door Note "as long as the other powers agreed to the same terms, promising that Russia would not seek 'special privileges' for its own subjects to the exclusion of other foreigners."⁹⁷³ In other words, Russia was ready to go along with the general consensus but, in reality, promised nothing. Be that as it may, Hay took this answer to at the very least signal Russian acquiescence. Secondly, Qing officials had not been included in the Open Door Note negotiations. Wu Tingfang (1842-1942), the Qing's Minister in Washington, did not know anything about the Note until he read about it in

⁹⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁹⁶⁷ The original Open Door Note was followed by respective notes to Tokyo on 13 November; Rome on 17 November; and finally to Paris on 21 November.

⁹⁶⁸ Elleman, *International Rivalry and Secret Diplomacy in East Asia*, pg. 107.

⁹⁶⁹ Silbey, *The Boxer Rebellion and the Great Game in China*, pg. 53.

⁹⁷⁰ Elleman, *International Rivalry and Secret Diplomacy in East Asia*, pg. 107.

⁹⁷¹ Anderson, David, "To the Open Door: America's Search for a Policy in China, 1861-1900", PhD Dissertation, University of Virginia, 1974, pg. 280.

⁹⁷² Romanov, *Russia in Manchuria*, pg. 175.

⁹⁷³ Miyoshi, *The Other Great Game*, pp. 234-35.

the local newspaper. As such, Hay's announcement of an agreement on his Open Door Note marked an additional huge blow to China's pride and international diplomatic standing.⁹⁷⁴ The Empress Dowager was incensed upon learning that the agreement, for all intents and purposes, relegated her Empire to the status of a powerless observer, even regarding its own policy.

The Open Door Note, presented once again by Hay on 3 July 1901, played an important role in the negotiations that led to the preservation of the vanquished Qing's territorial integrity. It served as a basis for talks, one that could furnish a modicum of consensus amongst the diverging interests of the Powers, as Japanese Foreign Minister Aoki noted "China's inability to pay a large indemnity [and the seeming] determination of many of the Powers to acquire further territory, the United States, without territorial ambitions, was the only power that could broker a credible solution to the China problem."⁹⁷⁵ In the end, the safeguarding of Chinese basic autonomy and territorial integrity was a result of coincidence rather than a success of US policy. While all the Powers agreed in principle to Hay's second Note, "no one had cared to repeat in writing and sign the pledge about the territorial and administrative integrity of China."⁹⁷⁶ However, during the negotiations on, and following the signature of, the Boxer Protocol, a serendipitous consensus amongst the Powers behind the US approach emerged on keeping an Open Door, granting all equal access to China's market in exchange for respecting a basic form of "territorial integrity" for the Qing's borders.⁹⁷⁷ While paying lip service to the principles of Hay's note, they were—for the most part—respected and the Chinese 'melon' was never sliced. This limited, almost accidental, policy of reciprocal restraint amongst the Powers managed to secure China's survival as a political entity. Even though, as the Japanese Minister to London, Kako Takaaki (1860-1926) noted, such policy was the result of mutual Realist calculations, "If the Foreign Powers partitioned China and acquired their own territory there, they would be merely increasing their expenditures to no real end, for their advantage would be no different than at present. For that reason, nearly all the foreign powers are agreed that the status quo in China should be maintained, that no country should violate it, that China's independence should be maintained, and that the [Powers'] own interests should be maintained through the expansion of commercial rights in China's interior."⁹⁷⁸ While Russian policy proved an exception in this regard, in overall effect of this decision was to sanction the continued existence of a Qing Empire that possessed questionable authority over its own domestic and foreign affairs. Hence, the scope of pursuing a policy of reciprocal restraint between the nations of East Asia after the Settlement of 1901 was extremely limited at best.

7.3.4. The Settlement of 1901: Satisfaction with the Status Quo

Satisfaction with the status quo introduced after the Settlement of 1901 was limited. Regarding the nations that comprised the East Asian region, the system established by the Boxer Protocol held little charm. The severity of the agreement against the defeated Qing and the deprivation of its role in shaping its own domestic and foreign policy agenda signified yet another diplomatic affront to the Chinese nation. This, combined with the wanton looting of Beijing by

⁹⁷⁴ Taliaferro, John, All the Great Prizes: The Life of John Hay, from Lincoln to Roosevelt, New York: Simon & Schuster, 2013, pp. 364-365.

⁹⁷⁵ Miyoshi, The Other Great Game, pg. 263.

⁹⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁹⁷⁷ Esherick, The Origins of the Boxer Upheaval, pg. 312.

⁹⁷⁸ Duus, Peter "Introduction" in The Japanese Informal Empire in China, pg. xxiii.

Coalition forces as well as the Qing's obligation to erect monuments to the Coalition's fallen and cancel the examinations for five years in the cities stipulated by the treaty, deepened the sense of resentment felt amongst Qing elite and subjects alike. Hence the status quo of the Settlement of 1901 brought with it little solace. Amongst the victors of the Settlement of 1901, however, the level of satisfaction with the new status quo was equally as questionable, albeit for different reasons. This was most evident in the foreign policy actions of the Russian and Japanese Empires both preceding and following the signature of the Boxer Protocol.

The Settlement of 1901 did not fulfill the political ambitions of both St. Petersburg and Tokyo, as each had vested interests in Manchuria and Korea. Both Empires were well aware of the nascent competition that had only grown following the Settlement of 1895 and Russia's key role in the Triple Intervention. The Boxer Rebellion also caused concern to both Empires regarding their respective positions in Korea. In the run up to the outbreak of the uprising, Russia and Japan attempted to place their rivalry over Korea on hold through the signing of the 1898 Nishi-Rosen Agreement (referred to as the Tokyo Protocol in Russian). This committed St. Petersburg and Tokyo to recognize Korean independence, but also allowed both nations to dispatch troops to the peninsula—with mutual pre-notification—in case of need. The Japanese preferred a conciliatory approach, seeking to buy time to complete their programme of military reform and rearmament. In the meantime, the Korean Court under King Kojong—who to solidify his nation's sense of independence and equality with other East Asian states had himself crowned as Emperor—opted to use this reprieve of foreign rivalry to initiate reforms to his new Empire. The advent of the Boxers and the Missionary Coalition, however, placed the question of Korean policy squarely on the political agenda, reawaking geopolitical competition. Now Emperor Kojong, given the growing popularity of Christianity in Korea, was acutely aware of the possibility of anti-Christian/anti-foreign sentiment violently spilling over the Yalu River. This would signify both the end of his reform programme as well as jeopardize Korea's independence. On 27 June 1900, the Korean Emperor, in an effort to ward off such a possibility, invited all foreign representatives in Seoul to his palace and declared that, should the Boxer uprising spread to Korea, he would be obliged to seek “good advice” and, in case of need, “actions”.⁹⁷⁹ The Japanese Minister to Korea, Hayashi Gonsuke (1860-1939), responded that “all the Great Powers have acted in complete accordance with one another and would undoubtedly also act unanimously in Korea”, a statement which left the Korean Emperor with a “dire expression” from words that were interpreted as a veiled threat.⁹⁸⁰

Following Emperor Kojong's audience, the Russian Foreign Ministry became wary that the Japanese were seeking to use the Boxer rebellion in China as a pretext to occupy the Korean Peninsula. The Ministry instructed the Russian Minister in Seoul, Alexander Ivanovich Pavlov (1860-1923), to approach Emperor Kojong with the request to make every effort to strengthen law and order in Korea, as the slightest carelessness of the local authorities could lead to “an incalculable and unexpected disaster.”⁹⁸¹ A similar warning on possible Japanese intervention in Korea was dispatched to the Russian Minister to Japan, Alexander Petrovich Izvolsky (1856-1919) warning of possible Japanese intervention should instability spread from China to Korea. As a result, Foreign Minister Lamsdorff warned Izvolsky that, in the event of such a scenario, Russia

⁹⁷⁹ Пак, В.Д., *Россия и Корея*, Москва: ИВ РАН, 2004, pg. 326.

⁹⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁹⁸¹ Ibid., pg. 327.

would be obliged to send its forces into Korea, asking him to convey his concern to the Japanese Government. Foreign Minister Aoki assured Izvolsky on 20 June 1900 that Japan shared Russia's concern at the events in China (and their possible effect on Korea) and verbally stated that both sides, according to the Nishi-Rosen Agreement, could send forces to restore order, if necessary.⁹⁸² However, such mutual understanding was stillborn. Prime Minister Itō's cabinet collapsed in May 1900 and was replaced by Katsura Tarō (1848-1913) who decided to pursue a double track regarding Korea, namely to seek negotiations with Russia over Korea but, simultaneously, seek an agreement with Great Britain, a nation that had not participated in the Triple Intervention. Katsura, a veteran of the First Sino-Japanese war, shared the general sentiment of bitterness at Japan's rotten harvest from the Settlement of 1895 and 1901.

Tokyo was decidedly unimpressed with the agreement ultimately reached to formally end the Boxer Rebellion. Japan was the only other Power to agree with the US proposal during negotiations to reduce China's indemnity to a level that Beijing could afford paying, meaning a sum of not more than USD 150 million, with payments being accorded to respective powers on the basis of the individual losses they had suffered.⁹⁸³ Ishii Kikujirō (1866-1945) served as liaison at the Japanese Legation in Beijing and participated in the Boxer Protocol negotiations. He expressed his utmost dissatisfaction at the compensation finally received by Russia: "Russia sent her army to several strategic spots in Manchuria, but her actual relief army [in Beijing] was only half the size of Japan's...compared to the amount of money each country demanded for themselves and the size of their relief force, there was an obvious contradiction. Japan requested a very fair amount."⁹⁸⁴ The Japanese had suffered the largest number of casualties during the Coalition assaults on Tianjin (400 of 730) and in Beijing (280 of 453).⁹⁸⁵ With Russia being granted the largest indemnity, Tokyo did not see the zeal that its Imperial Army had displayed throughout the Coalition's intervention, and the blood it had spilt, as being reflected in the articles of the Boxer Protocol. The Japanese negotiators in Beijing, although they signed the final treaty, were left with the feeling that the Western Powers had taken advantage of them through their contribution to the Coalition, harking back to the not-so-distant shame of the Triple Intervention. Prime Minister Katsura was hence determined that Japan would, following the Settlement of 1901, not sacrifice anymore of its foreign policy interests, most importantly in Korea.

The Japanese accordingly began to take a forceful approach to regional foreign policy. Under instructions from Katsura, The Japanese Minister in St. Petersburg, Komura Jutarō, informed his Russian colleague that Japan, under current circumstances, viewed the 1898 agreement as insufficient, as it required further additions and adaptations. With the advent of the Sino-Russian War, the situation in Korea intensified. Komura argued that since the Russian occupation of Manchuria was likely to become "an accomplished fact, Japan should propose a 'delimitation of spheres of influence': Japan would have a free hand in Korea and Russia in Manchuria while each would guarantee for the other commercial freedom in its sphere of influence."⁹⁸⁶ The Russian Foreign Ministry reacted coldly to the idea of foregoing Russia's advantages in Korea. For the first time, therefore, the Japanese had expressly linked the Russian

⁹⁸² Ibid.

⁹⁸³ Miyoshi, *The Other Great Game*, pg. 269.

⁹⁸⁴ Ibid., pp. 269-270.

⁹⁸⁵ Drea, *Japan's Imperial Army*, pg. 99.

⁹⁸⁶ Nish *Japanese Foreign Policy*, pg. 55.

presence in Manchuria with Japan's Korean policy, with the geopolitical realities of the Boxer Rebellion fusing these two key questions together. This was one of the origins of the "*Man-Kan kōkan*" (exchange of Manchuria for Korea) proposals that were to assume great significance following the Boxer Protocol.⁹⁸⁷ Answers to both issues were obviously not to be found in the Settlement of 1901, leaving the regional players to act independently. This overt dissatisfaction with the new systemic realities contributed to stoking, rather than overcoming, geopolitical rivalry.

In the wake of the Russian refusal, overt geopolitical competition returned to the Korean Peninsula. Yet attempts to furnish a base for the fostering of stable peace within the unclear contours of the Settlement of 1901 were still made. Realizing the growing threat to Korea, Emperor Kojong informed Minister Pavlov of Japanese attempts to warn him of Russian intentions to divide the peninsula between them, with Minister Hayashi cautioning the Emperor that "saving yourself and your Empire can only be accomplished by rendering them entirely under the protection of Japan and the security of its armed forces."⁹⁸⁸ In August 1900, a Korean diplomatic mission arrived in Tokyo under Minister Cho Byon Sik (1832-1907), with the instructions to negotiate the possibility of a Japanese protectorate over Korea, but also, as Emperor Kojong disclosed to Minister Pavlov, the idea of having Japan initiate the recognition by the Powers of Korea as an internationally recognized neutral state along the lines of contemporary Belgium and Switzerland.⁹⁸⁹ The idea of a neutral Korea was dismissed outright by Foreign Minister Aoki, who instead tried to convince Cho of the need for Korea to allow Japanese troops to use Korean territory in event of a Russo-Japanese clash over Manchuria. Subsequently, Prime Minister Katsura permitted Itō to travel to St. Petersburg in November 1901 to follow up his earlier statements on reaching a new Russo-Japanese agreement on Korea and present a draft to Foreign Minister Lamsdorff. Itō underlined that there must be no room for misunderstanding between Russia and Japan as maintaining freedom of action "was a life and death issue for Japan."⁹⁹⁰ The Japanese proposal included mutual guarantees of Korean independence; the renunciation of use of Korean territory for strategic aims; recognition of Japan's free hand in Korea's commercial, political and industrial policies; as well as the exclusive right of Japan to dispatch assistance to Korea, including military, to restore order.⁹⁹¹ The Russians countered with their own version that included the following elements: "(i.) mutual guarantees of Korean independence; (ii.) mutual engagement (or Japan engages) not to use any section of Korean territory for strategic purposes; (iii.) mutual engagement (or Japan engages) not to make on the shores of Korea any military preparations threatening free passage through the Korean gulf; (iv.) recognition by Russia of Japan's freedom of action in Korea in political, commercial and industrial aspects and, likewise, of Japan's exclusive right, by agreement with Russia, to aid Korea; (v.) in the event...Japan engages to send [for the suppression of uprisings] to Korea only the absolutely necessary number of troops and to withdraw them as soon as their mission is completed. It is understood that Japanese troops shall never be stationed along and in proximity to the Russian border; (vi.) Japan recognizes the preferential rights of Russia in the provinces of the Chinese Empire contiguous to the Russian border and promises in no way to hamper Russia's freedom of action."⁹⁹²

⁹⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁹⁸⁸ Пак, *Россия и Корея*, pg. 328.

⁹⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁹⁰ Miyoshi, *The Other Great Game*, pg. 284.

⁹⁹¹ Duus, *The Abacus and the Sword*, pg. 175.

⁹⁹² Romanov, *Russia in Manchuria*, pg. 236.

Discussions with the Foreign Ministry were followed up by negotiations with Finance Minister Witte who underlined that agreement with Japan was of the utmost importance, especially given the pending tasks of the completion of the CER, increasing the Russian population on the eastern frontiers of the Empire, the establishment of military districts across the Amur River, and the fortification of forces stationed at Port Arthur. Such goals, as Witte explained to Itō, were “not just desirable, but existentially necessary.”⁹⁹³ Witte continued that “if Russia were to choose between a military conflict with Japan and a complete cession of Korea—the second option would be the lesser of two evils. By sacrificing our interests in Korea, we would eliminate our constant misunderstanding with Japan.”⁹⁹⁴ St. Petersburg was, therefore, ready to concede a gesture of unilateral accommodation to Tokyo, based on a mutual understanding of interests. Witte also hinted that Russia, should Tokyo be willing to accord St. Petersburg a free hand in Manchuria, the Russian Tsar would be ready to grant Japan “*tous ce que vous voulez.*” While Itō was satisfied with the outcome of his visit to St. Petersburg, Prime Minister Katsura was not. Korea was seen as the foundation stone of Japan’s national Defence (as stipulated earlier in Yamagata’s strategic concept of the ‘*line of advantage*’) and the Japanese cabinet judged that, as long as Russia maintained troops in Manchuria, they would menace Korea and also deprive Japan the freedom of supplanting Russia as the dominant power in North China.⁹⁹⁵ For these reasons, Prime Minister Katsura opted instead to sign a formal alliance with Great Britain, Russia’s main geopolitical competitor, on 30 January 1902. This surprise turn of events stunned the Russian Court and brought with it an abrupt end to Itō’s attempt to find an understanding with the Russian Empire. As Minister Izvolsky wrote from Tokyo “henceforth the node of Russo-Japanese relations would no longer be here but in London and any understanding between us and Japan was now hardly possible without the full knowledge of and direct approval...of the Saint James cabinet.”⁹⁹⁶

With Japan having secured a de facto free hand in Korea from London, St. Petersburg likewise opted to create its own *fait accompli* in Manchuria, bending the status quo of the Settlement of 1901 to its own liking. While the Japanese negotiated with the British on the terms of their alliance, Russia was engaged in its own negotiations to withdraw its forces from Manchuria. The sudden news of Tokyo’s entente with London “knocked [Russia] out of position with regards to the [discussions on] the evacuation treaty.”⁹⁹⁷ Following the news of the Anglo-Japanese alliance, the Qing presented to the Russian Legation a treaty “for acceptance without alterations”, threatening that “if the evacuation agreement was not concluded soon the Foreign Powers would take advantage of facts to interfere in the matter.”⁹⁹⁸ Witte was in favour of signing an agreement, even though he did not view it as ideal. Consequently, the Russian government issued, on 12 April 1902, a circular to the Powers justifying its actions in Manchuria as an action of friendship and stressing that the Empire held no ulterior motives. Russia promised to withdraw its forces from Manchuria as soon as order had been restored to the areas. In exchange, St. Petersburg demanded that the Qing accord it temporary guarantees. Russia also shared a text of a withdrawal agreement, signed on 8 April 1902, that had been worked out between Russian

⁹⁹³ Пак, *Россия и Корея*, pg. 330.

⁹⁹⁴ Miyoshi, *The Other Great Game*, pp. 285-286.

⁹⁹⁵ Duus, *The Abacus and the Sword*, pg. 176.

⁹⁹⁶ Romanov, *Russia in Manchuria*, pg. 249.

⁹⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, pg. 242.

⁹⁹⁸ *Ibid.*

Minister to Beijing, Pavel Mikhaelovich Lessar (1851-1905), and Chinese negotiator Prince Qing—Li Hongzhang having passed away in November 1901. By the four points of this agreement, Russia agreed to evacuate the occupied territories in three six-month stages “provided that no disturbances arise and that the actions of the other Powers should not prevent it.”⁹⁹⁹ The three stages of withdrawal were set to be completed by October 1903, with Russia restoring the status quo ante Manchu administration. China would, in turn, guarantee the CER and limit their military deployments in Manchuria, consulting with Russia before any foreign nation would be granted railway concessions in the area.

The first round of troop withdrawal proceeded as planned.¹⁰⁰⁰ However, at a meeting of the Russian Court dedicated to a review of the Empire’s general policy towards the Far East, on 24 January 1903, the government recommended adding additional requirements to continue with the Russian evacuation of Manchuria. Witte and Lessar argued that, while the question of outright annexing Manchuria was currently inopportune, there remained the necessity to “surround” Russia’s evacuation “with the necessary guarantees that, after the Russian detachments left, [the country’s] lawful interests in Manchuria would not be transgressed neither by the Chinese Emperor nor by other powers.”¹⁰⁰¹ As a result, the Court adopted the suggestion of Minister of War Kuropatkin to pause Russia’s withdrawal from Manchuria, suggesting to formally renegotiate the treaty with the Qing to buy time. Hence, the Russian military did not comply with its second-stage withdrawal from Manchuria by 8 April 1903. Instead, St. Petersburg presented new conditions to proceed with the evacuation of its forces, including Manchuria becoming an exclusively Russian sphere of influence, taking the management of Qing customs from the British at Yingkou; furthermore, China would agree not to change the existing administrative system in Manchuria or Mongolia, hindering these regions reintegration with China.¹⁰⁰² Prince Qing responded that an agreement had already been signed and that any revision of the treaty would mean an infringement of Chinese sovereignty, proposing instead to “postpone any discussion on Manchuria to after the evacuation.”¹⁰⁰³ Prince Qing proceeded to leak the Russian demands to the other Powers, which viewed them as a violation of the Open Door Note, with the US, Great Britain, and Japan being especially vocal.

The Russian Court did not bend and discussions continued on what policy the Empire should pursue, with Witte advocating a withdrawal and Kuropatkin, outright annexation. In the meantime, Russian troops remained in place while the debates in St. Petersburg and Port Arthur continued. Like Japan, St. Petersburg’s dissatisfaction with the Settlement of 1901 led to Russian policy returning to an attempt to bend East Asian reality to its policy dictates. The Russian Empire, while having officially signed up to its tenets, was not satisfied with the Boxer Protocol. Granted, the tenets of the Boxer Protocol per se did not include any specific reference to Manchuria, however, the basic understanding of the Open Door Note, to which Russia was a signatory, was intended to apply to all areas of the defeated Qing Empire. At the same time, Russia was the only Western Power that shared a land border with the Qing, with the rest of the imperialist powers

⁹⁹⁹ “Convention with regard to Manchuria”, 4 August 1902 in MacMurray, *Treaties and Agreements with and concerning China 1894-1919, Volume I, the Manchu Period*, pg. 327.

¹⁰⁰⁰ Russia withdrew more than half her troops from Manchuria between 26 March 1902 and 26 January, keeping the rest in place. Romanov, *Russia in Manchuria*, pg. 248.

¹⁰⁰¹ *Ibid.*, pg. 290.

¹⁰⁰² Paine, *Imperial Rivals*, pg. 221.

¹⁰⁰³ Romanov, *Russia in Manchuria*, pg. 292.

being separated by a considerable distance from East Asia. Hence, to policymakers in St. Petersburg, being granted the same rights to a neighbouring territory in which Russia had substantial economic interests and shared security challenges—as illustrated by the Sino-Chinese War—as a distant Western European or North American power was simply unacceptable. Russia was deeply dissatisfied with the signing of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance, viewing the alliance as “an obstacle to her diplomacy, if not a diplomatic defeat.”¹⁰⁰⁴ St. Petersburg kept an outwardly calm diplomatic air, while on the sidelines, strove to co-ordinate an appropriate reaction with the Triple Intervention powers of 1895 (Germany and France). Berlin refused; however, France—being in a formal alliance with the Russian Empire since 1894—assented. In March 1902, therefore, St. Petersburg and Paris released their official reaction to the Anglo-Japanese Alliance: “The allied Governments of Russia and France have received a copy of the Anglo-Japanese Agreement of 30 January 1902, concluded with the object of maintaining the status quo and the general peace in the Far East, and preserving the independence of China and Korea, which are to remain open to the commerce and industry of all nations, have been fully satisfied to find therein affirmed the fundamental principles...[that] form the basis of their policy. The two Governments consider that the observance of these principles is...a guarantee of [Russia’s and France’s] special interests in the Far East. Nevertheless, being obliged to take into consideration the case in which either aggressive action of third Powers, or the recurrence of disturbances in China, jeopardizing the integrity and freedom of action of that Power...the two allied Governments reserve to themselves the right to consult in that contingency as to the means to be adopted for securing those interests.”¹⁰⁰⁵ Hence, Russia and France, reserved the right to pursue their own policies, extending the Russian-French alliance from Europe to East Asia. Indeed, upon the signature of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance, itself a result of failed negotiations between Russia and Japan to fill the political void left by the Settlement of 1901, St. Petersburg viewed the only course of action would be, as stated in the above Declaration, to unilaterally move towards the securing of its substantial commercial (the CER) and political interests in North China. The failure of two main regional powers to have their respective geopolitical interests addressed in the Settlement of 1901 proved, therefore, to be a powerful factor in its erosion and, ultimately, its collapse.

7.3.5. The Settlement of 1901: Pacific Self-Images

7.3.5.1. Introduction

The existence of the conditions of geopolitical necessity and dissatisfaction with the status quo make it challenging at best to cultivate a pacific self-image as stipulated in the analytical framework. How nations see themselves determine what policy options are available, leading to the furtherment of stable peace or contributing to its detriment. The Settlement of 1901 was accompanied by changes in how regional countries viewed themselves and, consequently, their competitors. Dissatisfaction with the systemic realities following the Boxer Rebellion, in Japan and China, was also interconnected with how the Settlement of 1901 marked a further point in the development of their respective self-images. None of these changes were inherently pacific in nature and war remained an essential possible tool to deal with potential enemies, and even former allies. Yet recording such changes in self-images of how China and Japan viewed themselves

¹⁰⁰⁴ Kajima, Morinosuke, *The Diplomacy of Japan, 1894-1922, Volume II: Anglo-Japanese Alliance and Russo-Japanese War*, Tokyo: Kajima Institute of International Peace, 1978, pg. 85.

¹⁰⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 85-86.

remain relevant as their evolution effected both the probability and intensity with which foreign policies would be pursued. Hence, a more detailed look at this condition is merited.

7.3.5.2. Japan's post-1901 Self-Image

The disappointment inherent in Tokyo's reaction to the status quo of the Settlement of 1901 was also connected with Japan's self-image. The Settlement of 1895 signified Japan's coming of age as a recognized, Western-style regional power. The Emperor Meiji's decision to offer its services as mediator, and not take sides, when approached by the Guangxu Emperor in July 1900 for an alliance to restore order was additionally seen as a sign of Tokyo's commitment to adhere to the tenets of the new systemic reality. The shadow of the Triple Intervention marked a clear illustration that, while the Western Powers would tolerate Japan's status as an independent nation, its foreign policy aspirations would be subject to the approval of its aspired peers. Joining the Missionary Coalition in 1900 represented another attempt for the nascent Japanese Empire to maintain its hard-won systemic clout, but also to illustrate that it deserved a rightful place amongst the global powers. Tokyo's motivation to align itself against the Boxers was a "widespread feeling [in the Japanese Foreign Ministry] that the Powers were treating the disturbances as a moment of opportunity to teach China a lesson and that it might have serious repercussions for Japan if she were not on the scene."¹⁰⁰⁶ The Japanese Armed Forces, making up the second largest contribution to the Coalition, would use the opportunity to prove the validity of its self-image as a Power on equal footing with those of the West. The vehicle to ensure this recognition was the bravery and impeccable conduct of the Japanese Army during the campaign in China, enforcing "draconian discipline on its own soldiers, warning of harsh penalties for unjustified or wanton theft, arson, or violence, against the Chinese."¹⁰⁰⁷ This strategy seemed to prove successful, with Sir Robert Hart recalling that, during the relief of Beijing, "the Japanese contingent [Hart witnessed] numbered only twenty-five men, but the work they subsequently did and the way they did it won everybody's admiration, and would have done honour to five times their number."¹⁰⁰⁸ Yet no quantity of diplomatic gestures to, or amount of praise by, the Western Powers "could calm Japanese anxieties about their self-perception as an inferior nation"¹⁰⁰⁹

In the immediate aftermath of the Settlement of 1901, such anxieties seemed to be validated despite the hefty weight of Japanese contributions to the Coalition. While it was recognized as one of the occupying powers in China, its diplomatic goals were not achieved during the negotiations of the Boxer Protocol, namely the size of the indemnity imposed on China and the nomination of the Commander of the international force in Beijing. However, events over the course of the Boxer Rebellion illustrated the strategic necessity of incorporating Japan into the global systemic architecture. Here, Japan's contribution in quelling the Boxer Rebellion played a key role. Japan had won widespread respect in Great Britain which, following the Settlement of 1901, recognized the positive contribution Japanese forces had played during the relief of Beijing, with British Minister to China, Claude MacDonald, acting as an especially strong advocate.¹⁰¹⁰ Hence, based

¹⁰⁰⁶ Nish, *Japanese Foreign Policy*, pg. 52.

¹⁰⁰⁷ Miyoshi, *The Other Great Game*, pg. 247.

¹⁰⁰⁸ Hart, Robert, *These from the Land of Sinim: Essays on the Chinese Question*, London: Chapman & Hall, 1901, pg. 10.

¹⁰⁰⁹ Miyoshi, *The Other Great Game*, pg. 248.

¹⁰¹⁰ Nish, Ian "The Origins of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance: In the shadow of the Dreibund" in O'Brien, Phillips Payson (ed.), *The Anglo-Japanese Alliance, 1902-1922*, London: Routledge, 2004, pg. 17.

on London's rivalry with the Russian Empire, and its positive assessment of the Japanese role as a Boxer Protocol power, Great Britain became willing to allot Japan a role as its principal partner in Asia through the 1902 signature of the Anglo-Japanese alliance.¹⁰¹¹

The signature of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance was of special significance to Japan as it conferred with it the status of an Empire with a truly global scope, validating Tokyo's aspiration to "be a factor in power politics among nations."¹⁰¹² This was in harmony with the self-image the Japanese Empire had been carefully cultivating since the Meiji Restoration. At the same time, Japan opted for the alliance not due to geopolitical necessity—as Tokyo the Settlement of 1901 did leave Tokyo with strategic options—but based on careful political calculation. Russia's conduct during the Boxer Rebellion and the independent course that St. Petersburg had opted to pursue, while maintaining the façade of a united front with the Coalition, had alarmed Tokyo, with the Japanese Foreign Ministry becoming convinced that Russia sought to secure its own benefit from the conflict. As a result, Japan was posed to be the largest geopolitical loser should an independent Russian course succeed in East Asia. As described, Prime Minister Itō, while not pursuing a pro-Russian course, sought to make 'diplomatic enquiries' in St. Petersburg to ascertain clarity on Russian intentions.¹⁰¹³ Itō's cautious approach was thrown in the wind by Foreign Minister Komura, who responded positively to London's initial overtures at the possibility of an alliance. Not only would an alliance with Great Britain serve Japanese interests, namely giving Tokyo a free hand in Korea, but its status as a partner—even a junior one—in an alliance with a European nation would allow Japan to realize its self-image as a great Westphalian power in accordance with the systemic realities of the early twentieth century.

Japanese policy makers had, in the 1880s, discussed the possibilities of seeking an alliance with France (then engaged in war in China) or with Germany, not only to increase Japan's overall systemic standing but to quiet the cabinet's concerns that Japan would, like the Qing, succumb to Western imperialism.¹⁰¹⁴ It should be noted that Japan did not enter into the alliance due to any special affinity for Great Britain: Tokyo harboured resentment against London for its conduct during the Boxer Rebellion and negotiations over the Boxer Protocol. Great Britain had not joined the Triple Intervention, but London did recommend Tokyo capitulate to its demands. Consequently, Japan had also rebuffed British offers to initially provide Tokyo with a million-pound subsidy to increase Japanese participation in the suppression of the Boxers.¹⁰¹⁵ The final decision to enter into an alliance with Great Britain was made in the first week of December 1901 by the Inner Cabinet and the Meiji Emperor, with consensus reached on the need to proceed with the alliance offer while it was still valid.¹⁰¹⁶ The preamble of the alliance specifically stated that both nations were "actuated solely by a desire to maintain the status quo and general peace in the Extreme East [and were] moreover specially interested in maintaining the independence and territorial integrity of the Empire of China and the Empire of Korea."¹⁰¹⁷ Hence, Japan—together

¹⁰¹¹ Iriye Akira, "Japan's Drive to Great Power Status" in Jansen, Marius (ed.), The Cambridge History of Japan, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989, pg. 774.

¹⁰¹² Ibid.

¹⁰¹³ Nish, Japanese Foreign Policy, pg. 66.

¹⁰¹⁴ Ibid., pg. 67.

¹⁰¹⁵ Ion, Hamish, "Towards a Naval Alliance: Some naval antecedents to the Anglo-Japanese Alliance" in O'Brien (ed.), The Anglo-Japanese Alliance, pg. 23.

¹⁰¹⁶ Nish, Japanese Foreign Policy, 68.

¹⁰¹⁷ Ibid., The History of Manchuria, pg. 45.

with Great Britain—saw itself as the upholder of the current regional boundaries, clearly in opposition to Russian policy towards Manchuria. Under the terms of the alliance, Japan and Great Britain committed themselves to joint action in the event that any fourth power joined with Russia, thereby removing any fear of a repeated Triple Intervention.¹⁰¹⁸ The Japanese cabinet was pleased with this clause, noting that, through the alliance, “[Japan] was able to improve her international standing which had been insecure since 1895.”¹⁰¹⁹ As such, the Anglo-Japanese alliance marked the apotheosis of Japanese endeavours to solidify its self-image as not only a regional, but global power, marking the “final and full ‘arrival’ of Japan in international society; it now became a player in world diplomacy.”¹⁰²⁰ Unsurprisingly, therefore, the Anglo-Japanese alliance became the centerpiece of Japanese foreign policy for the next twenty years.

7.3.5.3. China’s post-1901 Self-Image

Questions of self-image had obviously very different implications for the Qing. China, as the vanquished party saw the most transformative effects on self-image after the Settlement of 1901. The defeat of Chinese forces, as previously noted, left the Qing as a territorial integral state but one that was “totally subservient to the wishes of the Foreign Powers.”¹⁰²¹ In such dire circumstances, still from her exile in Xian, the Empress Dowager signed a decree, issued in the name of the Guangxu Emperor, initiating reform on 29 January 1901: “After we moved out of the capital city, the empress has been constantly busy with state affairs. As emperor, I deeply regret my mistakes. In the past decades, problems have accumulated and been papered over as we mindlessly followed the old ways, leading to the calamity we face today. Now that peace negotiations are underway, we should reform all political affairs so that the country can become strong and prosperous.”¹⁰²² This edict would mark the beginning of the New Policies (*xinzheng*/新政) and stemmed from the Empress’ concern that the Foreign Powers would dismember the Empire or that the Guangxu Emperor would be bequeathed full executive power over the government.¹⁰²³ As such, the reforms introduced by the New Policies focused on four areas, education, military, public administration and the introduction of constitutional government. The unprecedented scope of these reforms marked a radical departure for the Chinese state and involved a sustained effort to import foreign models and adapt them to Chinese realities.¹⁰²⁴ The decision to allow a constitutional monarchy was seen as the only way for the Qing elite to navigate their way out of this massive, existentialist crisis. While the implementation of the New Policies is beyond the scope of this dissertation, the discussions that they invoked have been cited as the beginnings of the modern Chinese state.¹⁰²⁵

¹⁰¹⁸ Article III of the Anglo-Japanese Treaty that in the event of war “if...any other Power or Powers should join in hostilities against that ally [Great Britain or Japan], the other High Contracting Party will come to its assistance, and will conduct the war in common, and make peace in mutual agreement with it.” For this article, and a full version of the treaty, see Dennis, Alfred, *The Anglo-Japanese Alliance*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1923, pg. 100.

¹⁰¹⁹ *Nihon naikauku shiroku*, Dai-1 hoki, pg. 385 quoted in Nish, Ian “The Origins of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance: In the shadow of the Dreibund” in O’Brien (ed.), *The Anglo-Japanese Alliance*, pg. 38.

¹⁰²⁰ Jansen, *The Making of Modern Japan*, pg. 439.

¹⁰²¹ Esherick, Joseph, “Introduction” in Esherick, Joseph and Wei, George, *China: How the Empire Fell*, London: Routledge, 2014, pg. 8.

¹⁰²² Dai Angang, “The Reform Predicament” in *ibid.*, pg. 20.

¹⁰²³ Harris, Lane, *The Peking Gazette: A Reader in Nineteenth-Century Chinese History*, Leiden: Brill, 2018, pg. 324.

¹⁰²⁴ Thompson, Roger, “The Lessons of Defeat: Transforming the Qing State after the Boxer War” in *Modern Asian Studies*, 37, 4 (2003), pg. 769.

¹⁰²⁵ *Ibid.*

Together with leading provincial officials such as Zhang Zhidong, Lui Kunyi, and Yuan Shikai, the New Policies were officially promoted to safeguard the Dynasty from revolution and possible extinction, as the Cixi herself admitted when officially affirming her intention to implement them, “for the sake of the Dynasty and people, the Emperor and I have no other choice.”¹⁰²⁶ Yet the metamorphosis that the humiliation of yet another Settlement that entrenched foreign influence over China held lasting consequences for the nation’s self-image. Chinese intellectuals, too, needed to adapt to new systemic realities. The Chinese defeat in the Boxer Rebellion began to transform frustration at China’s plight into outright anger against the ruling Qing. Following the Settlement of 1901, the “perilous condition of their homeland could easily be blamed upon the Qing government, the Manchu court and the Manchu people as a whole.”¹⁰²⁷ The fate of putting Chinese civilization at the mercy of the Foreign Powers created a link between rising sentiments of anti-imperialism to anti-Manchuism. Following the perceived mishandling of the Boxer crisis by the Qing Court, Chinese literati began to publicly criticize the right of the Manchus to rule over China. One of the most vehement opponents of continued Manchu rule was Zhang Binglin (1869-1936) who, in the summer of 1900, announced from Hong Kong in the *China Daily*, the newly founded periodical of the Revive China Society (‘*Xing-Zhong Hui*’/興中會), that he had cut off his queue in an act of overt rebellion—therefore severing his links and loyalty to the Qing Dynasty—and explained his rationale for doing so.¹⁰²⁸ This provoked a wave of intellectuals voicing their opposition to Manchu rule as the only feasible way to regain China’s sovereignty, signaling out the ruling Manchus as an impediment to national process. An article in the *Enlightenment Journal* from 1901 underscores this growing sentiment: “People of our country speak daily of the shame of becoming the slaves of the foreigners, that they overlook the shame of being the slaves of the Manchus. They speak daily of expelling the foreign race but ignore the expelling of the foreign Manchu race.”¹⁰²⁹ Here as well the Qing Dynasty was obliged by the Settlement of 1901 to concede its ethnically-based power structure by allowing for a fundamental change, namely that Han Chinese officials could thereafter hold Governor-Generalships in the metropolitan province around Beijing and Lower Yangzi rice basket at Nanjing, all while accepting a degree of foreign participation in Chinese political life.¹⁰³⁰

Yet, overall, the harshness of the terms against China contained in the Settlement of 1901 proved to augment the sense of rage, not only amongst the Chinese intellectual elite, but also the general population, contributing to the further transformation of popular nationalist self-images. The economic consequences of the Open Door policies entrenched in the Protocol, and the influx of foreign goods that accompanied it, led to a precarious social situation emerging in urban areas.¹⁰³¹ As noted, the total indemnity imposed upon the Qing surpassed its ability to pay. To the overall budget was, apart from the funds that were necessary to carry out the Qing’s campaign

¹⁰²⁶ Dai Angang, “The Reform Predicament” in *China: How the Empire Fell*, pp. 20-21.

¹⁰²⁷ Rhoads, Edward, *Manchus and Han: Ethnic Relations and Political Power in Late Qing and Early Republican China, 1861-1928*, Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2000, pg. 12.

¹⁰²⁸ The Revive China Society, precursor to the Kuomintang, was founded by Sun Yat-sen in October 1895 and decidedly anti-Manchu in character, evident in its slogan ‘Expel Tatar [Manchu] barbarians, revive *Huaxia*, and establish a unified government’. Ibid.

¹⁰²⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰³⁰ Fairbank (ed.), *China: A New History*, pg. 233.

¹⁰³¹ Lee Kam-keung, “The Fujianese Revolutionaries, 1895-1911” in So, Billy, Fitzgerald, John & Chin, James, *Power and Identity in the Chinese World Order*, Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2003, pg. 45.

against the Missionary Coalition, was now added the necessary funds to carry out the New Policies which Cixi now deemed so necessary. In the coastal province of Fujian alone, in 1902, the local government was required to pay as much as 800,000 taels towards the Boxer indemnity alone, hence—in order to carry out the New Reforms, Fujian’s various department and districts introduced 79 new miscellaneous taxes to ensure they were funded, a move that coincided with an 50-60 percent increase in basic commodity prices that outstripped any rise in wages.¹⁰³² The result was a widespread popular resentment of the Manchu Dynasty that echoed the thoughts of the Chinese literati, encapsulated by the proclamation of local government: “We Fujianese were subject to oppression under Manchu rule...with the connivance of the Qing government, the officials robbed us of our assets...under the pretext of reforms they exploited the people’s money, the country was in chaos”.¹⁰³³ Such popular grievances undermined the legitimacy of the Qing to govern and contributed to the overall transformation of the popular perception of China’s self-image. Hence, anti-Manchu sentiment became enlaced in the development of an emerging Chinese nationalism. As noted, however, the pre-modern East Asian international society did not conceive of a concept that could be considered akin to the modern, Westphalian understanding of “a nation”. In the wake of the Settlement of 1901, Chinese self-image began to be shaped by a type of “cultural nationalism” that sought to “use foreign tools to fight off foreign forces...with Chinese culture and a system of Western culture as a means.”¹⁰³⁴ Hence, to the base of Chinese Confucianist culture was added an element of political opposition to the Manchu Dynasty, with the Han Chinese elite beginning to “boldly demand a greater role for themselves, whether in the form of a constitutional monarchy or a republic.”¹⁰³⁵ With little option to oppose such demands, the Settlement of 1901 helped introduce the construction of a novel Chinese self-image, one that did not lead towards the formation of an RSO but rather one that would have severe effects on the future trajectory of China’s domestic and foreign policy far beyond the years remaining to the Qing Dynasty.

7.3.6. Settlement of 1901: Compatible Social Orders

The Settlement of 1901 added little in terms of congealing any compatible social orders that could foster mutual understanding and generation of the conditions necessary for RSO formation across the region. As illustrated through the changes in Chinese and Japanese self-images following the signing of the Boxer Protocol, the social links that connected Beijing and Tokyo, based on the traditional values inherent in the pre-modern international society, had been largely severed. Cooperation that did exist remained firmly based on the Qing’s desire to selectively modernize along the lines of its rival, implying new social orders that were distinctly alien to East Asia. Japan’s self-image as a Western-style power was constructed on the explicit rejection of any commonality with traditional Chinese social orders, now seen, as illustrated by the attitudes of the Western Powers towards the Qing, as the product of a proud, but inherently ‘inferior’ civilization. The Japanese decision to reject the July 1900 request of the Guangxu Emperor to establish a defensive alliance between the Qing and Japan to resist western encroachment was seen as definitive proof that Tokyo had definitely “departed Asia”.¹⁰³⁶ The

¹⁰³² Ibid., pg. 46.

¹⁰³³ Ibid., pp. 46-47.

¹⁰³⁴ Li Weichao, “Modern Chinese Nationalism and the Boxer Movement” in Kerr, Douglas; Tong Q; Wang Shouren, Critical Zone 3: A Forum of Chinese and Western Knowledge, Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2008, pg. 149.

¹⁰³⁵ Rhoads, Manchus and Han, pg. 285.

¹⁰³⁶ Miyoshi, The Other Great Game, pg. 248.

Guangxu Emperor couched his request for Japanese insistence on underlining the ‘equal footing’ that he considered a product of Sino-Japanese cultural interaction. This, however, was not in line with the image of Japan that Tokyo sought to promote, nor was it in harmony with the new social orders, based on Western lines, upon which Meiji Japan had now based its society. While certain elements of cultural connection continued to bind both Beijing and Tokyo, making cultural exchanges much more feasible, the Settlement of 1901 underlined the total break that had occurred between Meiji Japan and the cultural traditions that had preceded it.

7.3.7. Settlement of 1901: Existence of an Interested Hegemon

7.3.7.1. Introduction

The Settlement of 1901 was characterized by the obvious absence of a hegemon. While the Boxer Protocol regulated the future relations between the Missionary Coalition and the Qing, as seen in the examination of satisfaction with the status quo, it did not venture into tinkering with the wider geopolitical competition that existed between the Foreign Powers. Unresolved questions, like Korea or Manchuria, were to varying degrees left to simmer, without the Protocol attempting to provide any sort of elucidation. The absence of a hegemon, able to project its interests across the region played a large role in allowing such emerging tensions to subsequently amplify, increasing the importance of military strength as a means to implement concrete foreign policy goals. Hence, to analyse hegemony, or the lack thereof, the military strength of the regional nations needs to be compared. As such, the lack of an overall regional hegemon following the Settlement of 1901 can be summarized by examining the military statistics of each nation, summarized in the following table:

Table 11: Comparison of Military Strength in East Asia following the Boxer Protocol (1902)

<i>Country</i>	<i>Strength of Army (estimated)</i>	<i>Strength of Navy (estimated)</i>
Japan	150,000 ¹⁰³⁷	6 battleships (1 st class), 3 battleships (2 nd class) ¹⁰³⁸ , 18 cruisers, 2 gunboats ¹⁰³⁹
Russian Empire	64,000 ¹⁰⁴⁰	7 battleships, 16 cruisers, 8 destroyers ¹⁰⁴¹
The Qing Empire	360,000 ¹⁰⁴²	--

¹⁰³⁷ Drea, *Japan's Imperial Army*, pg. 94.

¹⁰³⁸ Towle, Philip, *From Ally to Enemy: Anglo-Japanese Military Relations, 1900-1945*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2006, pp. 9-10.

¹⁰³⁹ Nish, Ian, *The Russo-Japanese War*, London: Longman Press, 1985, pg. 199.

¹⁰⁴⁰ Papastratigakis, Nicholas, *Russian Imperialism and Naval Power: Military Strategy and the Build-up to the Russo-Japanese War*, London: I.B. Taurus, 2011, pg. 197.

¹⁰⁴¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 199-200.

¹⁰⁴² This figure is based on the estimates of the Chinese Boards of War and Revenue and included provincial militia, Defence Army, Disciplined Forces and modern troops: Powell, *The Rise of Chinese Military Power*, pg. 46.

United States	100,000 ¹⁰⁴³	1 cruiser, gunboats and support vessels ¹⁰⁴⁴
Korea	18,000 ¹⁰⁴⁵	1 lighthouse tender, 1 cruiser

7.3.7.2. Japan's Military Position after the Settlement of 1901

As previously analyzed, the Japanese Empire harboured resentment against the status quo of the Settlement of 1901 that impeded upon its self-image as an Empire that regarded itself as a member of the select few contemporary global powers. All of Tokyo's policies were directed at fulfilling this aim, as following the signing of the Boxer Protocol, Japan's leaders remained unwavering in their conviction that the nation required an Empire to prosper.¹⁰⁴⁶ Japan's response in the wake of the Settlement of 1901 was the continued expansion of its military, as witnessed following the bitter harvest of the Settlement of 1895. Japan's military budget continued to consume a disproportionate percentage of the country's financing, with 27 percent of the total budget being dedicated to military expansion in 1902 alone (the army received JPY 4,660 million; the navy 2,841 million).¹⁰⁴⁷ Despite the financial crisis of 1900-1901, the Japanese government remained intent on fulfilling its military goals, even dipping into citizen's postal saving accounts when Japanese bonds were degraded on the global market.¹⁰⁴⁸ There was rationale behind Japan's steadfastness. The Settlement of 1901 had crystalized the view of the Russian Empire as Tokyo's main geopolitical competitor in East Asia. Such an impression had been hardened by Russian actions in Manchuria and St. Petersburg's continuing influence in the Korean Peninsula, the territory which, in the minds of Japanese leaders, remained essential to the defence and future prosperity of the Japanese Empire. Two attempts to reach a cordial delimitation of spheres of influence on the peninsula resulted in failure: in 1896, General Yamagata approached his Russian counterparts with the offer of dividing Korea into respective Russian and Japanese spheres, with a line drawn along the 38th parallel, acting as a harbinger of future events. As this would entail Russia forgoing southern Korea's warm water ports, Yamagata's overture was rejected by St. Petersburg. Following the Russian occupation of the Liaodong Peninsula, Tokyo sought once again to delimit spheres of influence in Korea, a move that again was rebuffed by Russia. Additional attempts to secure some sort of understanding over Korea between the two Empires continued, to no avail, between 1900-1902.¹⁰⁴⁹

With Russia activating its military potential and digging into its geopolitical ambitions in Manchuria and North China, the Japanese General Staff began to articulate its operational planning against the Russian Far East. Initial plans involved an assault on the main Russian naval base at Port Arthur with an attack against Russia's Far Eastern provinces—they were subsequently adapted after the Russian refusal to withdraw from Manchuria to focus on defending Korea.¹⁰⁵⁰

¹⁰⁴³ McAllister, Brian Linn, *Guardians of Empire: The US Army and the Pacific, 1902-1940*, Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1997, pg. 53.

¹⁰⁴⁴ Based in Manila. Cole, Bernard, "America's Asiatic Fleet", *Naval History*, October 2011, Volume 25, Number 5.

¹⁰⁴⁵ "Military System of the Great Han Empire (Daehanjeguk)", War Memorial of Korea [archived], retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20150518085934/https://www.warmemo.or.kr/newwm/eng/main.jsp>.

¹⁰⁴⁶ Paine, *The Japanese Empire*, pg. 50.

¹⁰⁴⁷ Drea, *Japan's Imperial Army*, pg. 96.

¹⁰⁴⁸ Ibid.

¹⁰⁴⁹ Paine, *The Japanese Empire*, pg. 51.

¹⁰⁵⁰ Drea, *Japan's Imperial Army*, pg. 100.

To implement these plans, Japan could rely on the heavily increased number of army and navy units that it had at its disposal, as illustrated in Table 11. Marking an increase of 33 percent over the totals of its combined military force in 1896, the number of Japanese forces in 1902, while not yet securing a position for Tokyo to precipitate its desired regional hegemony over East Asia, it certainly secured that nation a position as a serious contender. Japan's credentials were further enhanced by the signing of the 1902 Anglo-Japanese alliance, not only cementing Tokyo's role as a bona fide world power but providing its acute interest in regional hegemony a significant boost.

7.3.7.3. Russia's Military Position after the Settlement of 1901

The Russian Empire while not possessing, nor attempting to cultivate, a self-image as an Asian nation, had, since 1895, sought to augment its role as an Asian power. This trend was augmented not only by the gradual encroachment of the Western Powers in East Asia, but also due to Russia's settlement programme of the Russian Far East. The 1891 decision to connect Russia's territories on the edge of the Pacific with its European rail network, not only solidified St. Petersburg's presence, but also attracted a wave of Slavic settlement to the region, with 5 million settling the region in the quarter century after the commencement of construction, many arriving along the frontier with the Qing.¹⁰⁵¹ Once again, the land frontiers the Russian Empire shared with China and Korea played a decisive role in shaping Russian interests in the region. The Manchurian railroad was seen both by the Ministry of Finance and War as a key Russian interest in the region, albeit for economic and military reasons respectively. The Boxer attacks against the CER, followed by the Qing's military operations against Russia along their common frontier of the Amur, obliged Russia to intervene in the Qing, becoming a vital area for the safeguarding of Russian interests in the Far East. The sheer cost of Russian investment in Manchuria—totaling 32 percent of overall investments in China—was one of many reasons that amplified St. Petersburg's East Asian interests. The military need to defend its Siberian border against any possible incursion from a foreign power, along with St. Petersburg's desire to showcase Russia as a world power, establishing hegemony over North China remained an essential part of overall strategy.¹⁰⁵² Following the Boxer Rebellion, Russia began an increase in the militarization of the Russian Far East, with its troop levels increasing by 400 percent between 1893 and 1903.¹⁰⁵³ While Russia carried out the first withdraw of its forces from Manchuria according to schedule in April 1902, its second military evacuation was not only not implemented, but Russian troops were deployed into hitherto unoccupied parts of southern Manchuria. This turn of events placed the Russian Empire at odds with the other Powers and placed Russian policy on a collision course with Japan.

However, as illustrated, Russia's resources, as well as logistic possibilities in the Far East were limited. Russia's administrative expenses for Russian East Asia exceeded revenues by a factor of two or three.¹⁰⁵⁴ While Russian leaders intended the construction of the Trans-Siberian and Manchurian railways as essential to tip the balance of power in St. Petersburg's favour, both projects remained incomplete. Furthermore, the general military outlook following the Settlement

¹⁰⁵¹ Miller, *We Shall Be Masters*, pg. 132.

¹⁰⁵² Paine, *Imperial Rivals*, pg. 215.

¹⁰⁵³ Ibid., "The Chinese Eastern Railway from the First Sino-Japanese War until the Russo-Japanese War" in Elleman, Bruce & Kotkin, Stephen (eds.), *Manchurian Railways and the Opening of China: An International History*, London: Routledge, 2015, pg. 28.

¹⁰⁵⁴ Ibid., pg. 35.

of 1901 looked bleak. As Russian strategic planning following the Settlement of 1901 indicates, the Russian General Staff were skeptical regarding Russia's possibility of establishing hegemony over East Asia. In 1901, Commander of the Russian Pacific Fleet, Nikolai Skrydlov (1844-1918), submitted his analysis on the naval balance of power in case of war with Japan or Great Britain. His conclusion was that the combined force of the Russian Fleet, as documented in Table 11, was neither powerful enough to gain superiority over the sea nor prevent a Japanese landing in Korea or Russia proper, with Russia's naval offence action being limited to a *guerre de course*.¹⁰⁵⁵ While Alekseyev disagreed with Skrydlov's conclusion, deeming the strength of his fleet to be sufficient, he likewise undertook war planning with the Army's Far Eastern Command. Their conclusion was equally as pessimistic: with Japan likely to undertake offensive operations in the event of war, Russia's land forces in the Far East would, given the disbalance of forces in Table 11, be obliged to assume a defensive position until reinforcements would arrive from Siberia and Europe.¹⁰⁵⁶ Here, too, Russian military strength was insufficient to project hegemony over East Asia, a position weakened by its diplomatic isolation following the Boxer Rebellion, with Witte and Lamsdorff concerned at the degree of anger reflected in the international reaction to Russia's continued presence in Manchuria. However, given Russia's unique position of possessing an extended land frontier with China on the Amur, Mongolia, and Xinjiang, St. Petersburg felt that the dictates of geopolitical reality left the Empire with no real choice.

7.4.7.4. China's Military Position after the Settlement of 1901

Following its defeat against the Missionary Coalition and signing of the Boxer Protocol, China had lost even its nominal claim to regional hegemony. The defeat of the Qing left its military powers in the hands of a few Chinese Governor-Generals, such as Yuan Shikai, Zhang Zhidong and Liu Kunyi to whose loyalty the Dynasty rested upon to remain in power.¹⁰⁵⁷ Hence, the Settlement of 1901 deprived the Qing of the potential for any offensive action, with the armed forces in great need to be able to respond against both external pressures and internal threats. The Settlement of 1901 initiated the commencement of military reform that would last to the end of Imperial China ten years later. The New Policies sanctioned by the Empress Dowager focused on reorganizing and upgrading what remained of Qing forces. The military figures presented in Table 11 were the remnants of the provincial forces that had comprised the Chinese military for the preceding duration of the Qing Dynasty. While numerous on paper, Chinese land forces were antiquated and had no central command. In 1901, the traditional foundation of the Qing military began to be dismantled, namely its two main distinct branches, the hereditary Banner Army of the Manchus and the masses of the Han Green Standard. A weeding-out process was initiated as part of the thrust towards military modernization to establish Western-style forces in each province, with the best troops to be re-educated in Western warfare, with the second-best being reorganized as reserve units and the rest simply discharged.¹⁰⁵⁸ Further Qing reforms, advised on and implemented by the Governor-Generals, focused on three main trends: the creation of standing army units, the establishment of military schools in each provincial capital, and, finally, the shift

¹⁰⁵⁵ Papastratigakis, *Russian Imperialism and Naval Power*, pg. 196.

¹⁰⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, pg. 197.

¹⁰⁵⁷ Powell, *The Rise of the Chinese Military*, pg. 136.

¹⁰⁵⁸ McCord, Edward Allen, *The Power of the Gun: The Emergence of Modern Chinese Warlordism*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993, pg. 34.

toward the employment of Japanese techniques and instructors.¹⁰⁵⁹ The Chinese navy, equally as fragmented, was still reeling from the 1895 destruction and capture of the modern Beiyang fleet—then considered to be the eighth largest in the world—at the hands of the Japanese, with the remaining Chinese naval forces, by 1902, being regarded as so disorganized that they were not even considered a viable military force.¹⁰⁶⁰ Slowly, New Armies began to take shape, most notably the Beiyang Army that—now organized along modern lines—grew to comprise six divisions by 1906 under the guidance of Yuan Shikai. Given their provincial organization, these New Armies were seen as the personal armies of Governor-General, serving to bolster regional autonomy first and the authority of the Qing a distant second.¹⁰⁶¹ Hence, the road towards the era of the warlords had been paved, extracting a centralized China from the regional strategic picture, transforming it into a powerful object—and not a subject—of geopolitical interest for the next five decades. Following the Settlement of 1901, therefore, visions of Chinese regional hegemony lay squarely within the pages of the Chinese classics.

7.3.7.5. The Military Position of the United States after the Settlement of 1901

The Settlement of 1901 marks the debut of the United States as a regional actor in East Asia. The Spanish-American of 1898 paved the way for Washington's regional entry. The outbreak of hostilities between Spain and the United States had little to do with Madrid's continued sovereignty over the Philippines whose Spanish outpost at Manila (founded in 1571) once served as the main European port for the lucrative silver trade with China.¹⁰⁶² In the ensuing Treaty of Paris of August 1898, Spain ceded its sovereignty over the Philippines to the US, with the last details (including a US indemnity of USD\$ 20 million to Madrid) being finally clarified in the 1900 Treaty of Washington. As a result, the US began to formally govern its new Asian territory, animating Washington, due to the Philippines' geographic proximity to both Japan (now occupying Taiwan) and mainland China, to take a more active role in East Asian affairs. Although the result of happenstance, and not grand strategy, the annexation of the Philippines did mark a significant deepening of US involvement in East Asia: US expansionist diplomat John Barret (1866-1938) viewed that, due to the Spanish-American War, the US rightly deserved "a generous share of trade and development opportunities" that were to be derived from Washington's suzerainty over the Philippines, declaring the US to be "the paramount power of the Pacific."¹⁰⁶³ Other, more experienced and sage US figures also viewed this event as a seminal one, stoking more alarm at its effect on the future trajectory of US policy rather than extolling the virtues of empty fanfare. The profound change that Washington's entry into the Pacific as an expansionist power had on the United States as a nation was recorded by US Major General Smedley Butler who underlined that "Until 1898, [the US] did not own a bit of territory outside North America. At that time our national debt was a little more than USD 1,000,000,000. Then we became 'internationally minded'. We forgot George Washington's warning about 'entangling alliances.' We went to war. We acquired outside territory."¹⁰⁶⁴

¹⁰⁵⁹ Powell, *The Rise of the Chinese Military*, pg. 131.

¹⁰⁶⁰ Elleman, Bruce, *The History of the Modern Chinese Navy, 1840-2020*, London: Routledge, 2021, pg. 94.

¹⁰⁶¹ McCord, *The Power of the Gun*, pg. 35.

¹⁰⁶² Del Rey, Miguel y Canales, Carlos, *Atlas Histórico de España*, Madrid: Editorial EDAF, S.L.U, 2021, pg. 115.

¹⁰⁶³ Pletcher, David, *Diplomacy of Involvement: American Economic Expansion Across the Pacific*, Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2001, pg. 296.

¹⁰⁶⁴ US Major General Butler, Smedley, *War is a Racket: Written by Two-Time Congressional Medal of Honour Recipient*, Seattle: Loki's Publishing, 2013, pg. 9.

The issuing of Hay's Open Door Notes in 1899 and during the Boxer Protocol negotiations illustrated Washington's heightened interest in East Asian affairs. The US military presence in East Asia was primarily aimed at imposing Washington's authority over the Philippine Archipelago. Given US policy of favouring economic expansion into East Asia—as inherent in the tenets of Hay's Open Door Note—Washington did not seek to embroil itself in additional regional adventures. The US military presence in East Asia reflected the accidental nature of its acquisition of the Philippines. The arrival of US forces in Manila in 1898 was meant to initially dislodge the Spanish. These same forces subsequently and suddenly found themselves having to assume the role of their former foes in suppressing the Philippine nationalist uprising. Soon the newly arrived US forces were involved in a full-scale war against Filipino nationalists. The need to occupy its newly annexed territory required soldiers to establish a US presence throughout the archipelago to “restore law and order”.¹⁰⁶⁵ As a result, by 1902, when Washington declared an end to the war in the Philippines, the US contingent had been raised to 100,000, including 12,000 Filipino volunteers, as reflected in Table 11. Prior to this, the US, as noted, dispatched 4000 troops as part of the relief of Beijing. This was part of President William McKinley's (1843-1901) intention of underlying Washington's new role as a formidable Pacific power.¹⁰⁶⁶ Yet, the annexation of the Spanish Philippines aside, the US stuck to a position of commercial expansion, with Secretary Hay being especially convinced that US economic influence in a united Qing was “essential to China's progress and to the US future as a Pacific power.”¹⁰⁶⁷ These policies of open door commerce and upholding Chinese territorial integrity, however, placed the US in direct opposition to Japan and to the continental European Powers.¹⁰⁶⁸ Hence, having no interest in establishing direct military hegemony over East Asia, the US military presence in the region was confined to securing its newly established regional role, with Washington's own desire to construct an East Asian Empire only in its initial stages. Yet this haphazard decision to assume control of the Spanish Crown's Pacific possessions would be subject to evolution. Major General Butler, writing in 1935, highlighted the transformative nature of the US entry into the Pacific: “What does the ‘Open Door’ policy mean to [Americans]? Our trade with China is about USD 90,000,000 a year. Or the Philippine Islands? We have spent about USD 600,000,000 in the Philippines in thirty-five years and we (our bankers and industrialists and speculators) have private investments there of less than US 200,000,000. Then, to save that China trade of about USD 90,000,000, or protect the private investments of less than USD 200,000,000 in the Philippines, we would all be stirred up to hate Japan and go to war—a war that might cost tens of billions of dollars, hundreds of thousands of lives of Americans, and many more hundreds of thousands of physically maimed and mentally unbalanced men.”¹⁰⁶⁹ Indeed such a reckoning was, in time, the ultimate fruit of Washington's entry as an East Asian power.

¹⁰⁶⁵ McAllister, *Guardians of Empire*, pg. 13.

¹⁰⁶⁶ Hunt, Micheal; Levine, Steven, *America's Wars in Asia from the Philippines to Vietnam*, Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2012, pg. 15.

¹⁰⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, pg. 16.

¹⁰⁶⁸ Sprout, Harold, *The Rise of American Naval Power: 1776-1918*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, pg. 244.

¹⁰⁶⁹ Major General Butler, *War is a Racket*, pg. 8.

7.3.7.6. The Korean Military Position after the Settlement of 1901

As noted, the Boxer Rebellion coincided with a period of attempted political change in Korea, with the now Emperor Kojong promoting his latest set of reform, known as the Kwangmu Reforms. Events in China, combined with Japan's continued interest in the peninsula, pressed upon the need for the fledgling Korean Empire to bolster its meagre defences. To reform the Korean military, foreign instructors had been specifically imported, most notably from Russia, after Minister of the Military, Min Yonghwan (1861-1905), visited St. Petersburg in 1896. By 1897, a total of 800 selected men had been trained by 14 Russian instructors that had been stationed in Korea. Further efforts were made to reform the military, often with foreign loans or concessions, and improve Korea's basic infrastructure, namely telegraph lines, road improvements or the construction of major railways.¹⁰⁷⁰ By 1901, Emperor Kojong had expanded the size of the newly trained Korean military, organized in provincial armies, to a total of six divisions, comprising 18,000 soldiers, as shown in Table 11. The Korean Empire did not possess a functional navy and did not have a single modern warship until 1900.¹⁰⁷¹ Emperor Kojong's desire to establish some sort of naval power saw Seoul acquiring two modern vessels (the KIS *Yangmu* and KIS *Guangjae*). Obviously, this decision, while consuming a major portion of Korea's military budget, did not produce a serious effect on Korea's ability to defend itself or project any meaningful naval power. Hence, while the Korean Empire was attempting to modernize and increase the modest military forces at its disposal, the policies introduced were not sufficient to seriously stimulate any serious entertainment of hegemonic foreign policies that the Korean Court might have harboured. Following the Settlement of 1901, the focus of Emperor Kojong was on ensuring his Empire's survival and pursuing his reforms as best as could be accomplished under such geopolitical circumstances. As such, the Korean Empire of 1902, like the Qing, remained an object of systemic competition.

7.3.7.7. Conclusion

Reviewing the balance of forces of the East Asian nations following the Settlement of 1901, the lack of a hegemon, able to impose its will over the region, was lacking. At the same time, there were regional members who cultivated such intentions and, accordingly, prepared to attempt to impose their respective visions on the region. Most notable was the geopolitical positioning of the Russian and Japanese Empires, who strived to amass the necessary military resources to back up their foreign policy goals. By 1902, attempts at mutually accommodating both imperial visions had come to naught, and an unstable peace reigned over the region, one where the use of military conflict loomed ominously over the horizon. While the Settlement of 1901 marks the appearance of the United States as a regional power, its foreign policy was directed against the main tenets of Japan and the European Powers, namely imperialism, and focused on consolidating its gains in former Spanish East Asia. The Qing and Korea remained unable to aspire to any degree of regional hegemony, with the Settlement of 1901 obliging them to focus upon their nation's survival as an integral state. Given the contemporary military balance, this was a challenging policy to implement, as Emperor Kojong's inability to secure internationally recognized Korean neutrality in August 1900 illustrates. Hence, the Settlement of 1901, while successful in preserving the basic

¹⁰⁷⁰ Schmid, *Korea Between Empires*, pg. 29.

¹⁰⁷¹ Kim Hyung-Chan, "George C. Foulk in Korea: A Sailor on Horseback" in *Korea Journal*, The Academy of Korea Studies, 1986, Vol. 26 (12), pg. 27.

tenet of the Qing's territorial integrity, did very little to diffuse the rising tensions between aspiring hegemonies in East Asia. As the balance of forces in Table 11 underlines, there was no obvious regional hegemon, making the Settlement's inability to reflect their theoretical policies decidedly unsurprising. At the same time, the lack of an interested hegemon deprived the Settlement of 1901 with a cornerstone upon which the conditions solidifying stable peace, and thereby the path towards the formation of an RSO, could be constructed.

7.3.8. Settlement of 1901: Existence of a Constitutional Order

The intellectual concept of a Constitutional Order lay well beyond the intellectual horizons of the Delegations that negotiated the Boxer Protocol and the Settlement of 1901. While fixing the post-rebellion obligations under which the Qing would have to structure its domestic and foreign relations, the Settlement of 1901 did not establish any collective international approach to manage the increasing geopolitical competition in China and East Asia as a whole. The sole agreement that remained in existence to structure international cooperation as regards to China remained Hay's Open Door Policy of 1899. As noted, the US sought to actively hinder the dismemberment of the Qing Empire into foreign territorial concessions in order to prevent the inevitable negative effects on Chinese governance. As noted by a colleague of Hay during the Boxer Protocol negotiations, "[the US] sought to prevent...the dismemberment of China either by avowed concessions of territories or by arrangements which, under the guise of leases or otherwise, left her a nominal title to her domain, without administrative power or control."¹⁰⁷² While the Open Door agreement overtly preserved China's territorial and administrative unity, clandestine agreements between the foreign powers nevertheless expanded their spheres of influence in China.¹⁰⁷³ The Open Door agreement contained no enforcement mechanisms to concretely dissuade foreign powers from violating Chinese sovereignty and, therefore, was simply politely ignored. Indeed, "so long as there was not an international organization to monitor foreign activity in China, the most the United States could do was exert diplomatic pressure on the other powers; there were no international sanctions for countries that encroached on Chinese sovereignty."¹⁰⁷⁴ The Open Door agreement remained a high-minded, but ultimately unenforceable one.

Consequently, as such a coordination of foreign policy was beyond the diplomatic norms of the period, the Open Door agreement was unable to act as a cornerstone of international cooperation towards China. Hence, the existence of a Constitutional Order cannot be determined.

7.4. Conclusion: The Legacy System of the Settlement of 1901

Like the Settlement of 1895, the Settlement of 1901 brought little stability to East Asia, a region still adapting to the systemic realities that accompanied the introduction of the Westphalian structure into an alien region. While the intensity of the transformational shocks had faded, the Settlement of 1901 did not furnish the conditions whereby a path towards stable peace could be initiated, excluding therefore the formation of an RSO. The analysis to support this assessment is presented in the following table:

¹⁰⁷² Elleman, Bruce, *International Competition in China, 1899-1991: The Rise, Fall, and Restoration of the Open Door Policy*, London: Routledge, 2014, pg. 61.

¹⁰⁷³ Ibid., pg. 58.

¹⁰⁷⁴ Ibid

Table 12: Assessment of the Conditions for RSO Formation Present Following the Settlement of 1901

<i>Antecedent Condition</i>	<i>Geo-political Necessity</i>	<i>Policy of Reciprocal Restraint</i>	<i>Satisfaction with Status Quo/‘Legacy System’</i>	<i>Pacific Self-Image</i>	<i>Compatible Social Orders</i>	<i>Existence of an Interested Hegemon</i>	<i>Existence of a Constitutional Order</i>
<i>Settlement of 1901</i>	YES	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	CANNOT BE DETERMINED

In terms of concrete criteria for the formation of an RSO, the Settlement of 1901, as per Table 12, only lead to the establishment of the condition of geopolitical necessity. As noted, the defeat of the Qing was of such nature that required complete capitulation to the Foreign Powers. Beijing’s only solace was US policy that insisted upon the maintenance of the territorial and political integrity of the Chinese state, albeit only to serve Washington’s mercantilist ambitions. Yet the condition of geopolitical necessity imposed by the Boxer Protocol did not trigger any gesture of unilateral accommodation on behalf of the defeated Qing. As illustrated, the reason for this was largely because the Boxer Protocol had provided the Foreign Powers with a degree of economic and political penetration into China that made further unilateral concessions from the Qing impossible. At the same time, as the case of Sino-Russian negotiations over Manchuria underscore, the Chinese state following 1901, despite its weakness, remained averse to conceding any more gestures of unilateral accommodation after the Settlements of 1895 and 1901 had devastated the Qing of so much. As seen, the Qing remained committed to securing the Russian military withdrawal from Manchuria despite its deep awareness of the strategic and economic importance of the region to the Russian Empire. While the Settlement of 1901 destabilized the Qing Dynasty to its foundation, eliminating any former traces of its Imperial glory and paving the way for the ultimate fracturing of unified Chinese authority, the demise it imposed on China did not give rise to any possibility for the initial triggering of the necessary conditions to the path towards stable peace.

With no act of unilateral accommodation, either from the vanquished nor the victor, the Settlement of 1901 likewise did not provoke a policy of regional restraint between the East Asian nations. Hay’s Open Door Note did foster an accepted policy of reciprocal restraint between the Powers that permitted the maintenance of a basic form of Chinese sovereignty, yet it was an agreement signed without the participation and consent of the nation it concerned most, the Qing. Serving more as a roadmap for joint economic penetration into the Chinese market, Beijing’s protests were simply dismissed as a reaction unworthy of response. As such, the level of restraint agreed upon between the Powers did more to stoke resentment on the part of the Chinese government, rendering further independent conciliatory gestures towards the Powers unlikely, as the Settlement of 1901 deepened the second-class systemic status to which the Qing had been relegated since 1895. This was confirmed once again by the Boxer Protocol’s tenets of war responsibility that explicitly entailed punishment for Qing officials involved in the Boxer Rebellion, and erection of monuments to foreign dead on Chinese soil. Instead of fostering an

atmosphere enabling policies of reciprocal restraint, the Settlement of 1901 served to heighten geopolitical competition and deepen resentment at foreign intervention, especially within Qing society itself. As noted, this would have profound implications for the short-term viability of the Dynasty itself and China's future geopolitical trajectory.

In terms of facilitating satisfaction with the status-quo established by the Boxer Protocol, the Settlement of 1901 did very little to accommodate the concerns of the region's most powerful actors. During the Boxer Protocol negotiations, both the US and Japan, expressed their opposition to a harsh indemnity being foisted upon China, lying beyond its ability to pay, and dismay that the Russian Empire was awarded the largest share of reparations. Furthermore, Japan did not feel that its contribution to the Coalition cause, in terms of blood and iron, was properly rewarded and viewed that its foreign policy concerns were not included in the Final Protocol. The Russian Empire took a double-tracked approach from the start, seeking to pursue independent negotiations with the Qing on Manchuria, while paying lip service to the negotiations and final agreement of the Settlement of 1901. St. Petersburg illustrated its dissatisfaction with the status-quo through its pursual of what it viewed as its sovereign strategic and economic interests in Manchuria and strategic necessity as being the only European Power to share a land border with the Qing and Korea. This policy vacillated between annexation and withdrawal, but these were debates held exclusively within the Russian Court and did not involve any outside actor, a sign of a lack of confidence in the international system. While detailed negotiations were conducted between Tokyo and St. Petersburg to attempt to resolve their outstanding grievances over the Settlement of 1901, namely Korea and Manchuria, they were not aimed at fostering steps towards stable peace. The threat of war, however undesirable, always remained at the disposal of Russian and Japanese policymakers. As such, the absence of satisfaction with the status quo played a large role in ultimately rendering moves towards future systemic change inevitable.

The Settlement of 1901 marked another benchmark in the evolution of regional self-images that had been instigated with the collapse of the pre-modern international society. The events of the Boxer Rebellion altered the self-images in China and Japan, fundamentally changing how these nations viewed their respective selves. These transformations were in no way pacific, as war remained as an acceptable method of achieving foreign policy goals; however, in the aftermath of the Settlement of 1901, these changes held consequences for the trajectory of the outbreaks of future 'critical junctures'. The defeat of the Qing obliged the Empress Dowager to abandon her conservative policies—and adherence to the last vestiges of the pre-modern international society—and embrace the modernization of the New Policies. The entrance of alien ideas into China was also accompanied by the erosion of the ethnic-based system of governance, with the Manchu ruling class having to open avenues to the Han Chinese majority. The conditions of the Settlement of 1901 caused an even more radical shift in perception in the Chinese literati, even trickling down to the masses of Chinese peasants, cursing the Manchu ruling class for their woes and viewing them more as an occupying force over the Han population. While Japan did not see its carefully cultivated self-image as an internationally recognized Empire of global importance recognized in the Settlement of 1901, its decision to embark upon active geopolitical competition that resulted from this absence quickly resulted in the Anglo-Japanese alliance of 1902. This not only accorded Japan a free hand to pursue its long-held imperialistic ambitions towards Korea, as well as securing the gains it had accumulated since 1895, but also implied direct recognition of the Japanese by one of the world's most significant powers. Marking the pinnacle of Japanese diplomacy to date, the

advent of the Anglo-Japanese alliance would heavily influence not only how Japan viewed itself but how it pursued its regional foreign policy objectives. The emerging self-images in China and Japan were not pacific in nature with armed conflict, both domestically and regionally, remaining entrenched as an accepted method to achieve policy goals.

No regional hegemony was confirmed by the Settlement of 1901. As illustrated by the comparison of regional forces available in its wake, no one country emerges as an immediate candidate for hegemony. Both the Japanese and Russian Empires nurtured the interest to establish their respective regional hegemony, yet both countries had not yet undertaken steps to concretely implement their foreign policy goals. The absence of the Settlement of 1901, focusing exclusively on China, did not assist in calming the growing geopolitical tensions between Tokyo and St. Petersburg, leaving regional militarization as both a viable and logical option. The remaining regional actors neither possessed the ability, or in the case of the US, the ambition to strive for hegemony. The Settlement of 1901 confirmed China's status as an object of regional geopolitics, depriving it of any independent subjectivity. While able to defend its interests where possible, as illustrated by the Qing's negotiations with St. Petersburg over Manchuria, its ability to tangibly defend its foreign policy interests—and domestic authority—deteriorated. While the Settlement of 1901 did not formally cover Korea, the nascent Korean Empire constituted a main bone of contention between the aspiring regional hegemons, with little or no ability to offer any military resistance in case of conflict, a likely perspective given the Japanese strategic interest in Korea to bolster their conception of Empire.

The Settlement of 1901 remains unique as it brought together all the Foreign Powers, as well as China, to bring a local conflict that had needlessly exploded into a war involving the entire globe to a close. As such, its focus was exclusively on China and the punitive measures that the Powers sought to dictate to the Qing. No attempt was made to settle the simmering geopolitical tensions that had emerged since the Settlement of 1895; nor were any steps introduced that could have resulted in the establishment of a regional stable peace. This is due to the multi-dimensional character of the Boxer Rebellion as a 'critical juncture'. The Boxer Rebellion is often portrayed in Western chronicles as the saga of the relief of the Foreign Legations from enraged and xenophobic Chinese masses. It was the advent of the Sino-Russian war, an integral part of the Boxer Rebellion, that changed the geopolitical trajectory of the region. Acting to defend its lengthy common frontier with the Qing, along with its substantial economic interests under attack in Manchuria, the Russian Empire's decision to militarily occupy China inadvertently triggered overt geopolitical competition between the two most powerful, regional actors in East Asia. The same reasons that provoked the initial Russian intervention in Manchuria also motivated the Russian Foreign Ministry to include the questions raised by the Boxer Rebellion in North China to be handled in concert with the Foreign Powers. Russia therefore paid rhetorical lip-service to the tenets of the Boxer Protocol, while managing to negotiate the largest indemnity, and pursuing an independent course regarding the future of Manchuria. As such, the tenets of the Settlement of 1901 were limited in scope and had no real chance of initiating the road to stable peace on a regional level. No meaningful regional initiatives were launched outside of the Boxer Protocol and no overarching order was established, save for the Imperial Powers attempts to safeguard their respective interests. Yet, as illustrated by the analysis of the conditions for the formation of stable peace/RSO, the Settlement of 1901 did introduce profound geopolitical and constructivist changes that would have an important impact on the emergence of future 'critical junctures'.

Chapter 8 –The Russo-Japanese War: The Treaty of Portsmouth

8.1. Introduction

The Russo-Japanese War has been dubbed by historians as “World War Zero”.¹⁰⁷⁵ This title not only reflects the technological innovations, such as worldwide media coverage in real time, and innovative tactics used over the course of the war, more closely foreshadowing those of the First World War, but also, more importantly, the global ramifications that the war left in its wake. No longer did East Asia constitute an isolated sub-region of the global system but now became an integrated part of it. The global impact of East Asia on the international systemic conditions became apparent with the signing of the Anglo-Japanese alliance in 1902. Such diplomatic interlinkages between East Asia and the global international system at large would only deepen in the wake of the Treaty of Portsmouth. The Russo-Japanese War illustrated the full ability of ‘critical junctures’ in East Asia to have a transformative affect, not only on the trajectory of regional integration, but on the course of global politics as a whole. More importantly, the Settlement of 1905 that followed the negotiations and signature of the Treaty of Portsmouth established the conditions that allowed for the emergence of a base for stable peace, marking a clear distinction from the Settlements of 1901 and 1895. The Settlement of 1905 was characterized by a level of cooperation and willful compromise that East Asia had, since the appearance of the Westphalian system, not yet witnessed. Given this important idiosyncrasy, both the antecedent conditions of the ‘critical juncture’, namely the outbreak of the Russo-Japanese War; the subsequent military campaign; and the negotiations leading to the signature of the Treaty of Portsmouth require examination in detail to understand a case where former enemies opted for reproachment and peace over prolonged conflict. This dissertation will now seek to explain this rationale behind this instinctively counterintuitive evolution.

8.2. The Russo-Japanese War: Antecedent Conditions

8.2.1. The “Bezobrazovtsy” and the Yalu Timber Concession

Following the Settlement of 1901, as underlined by the conclusions of Alekseyev’s and Skyrldov’s Far Eastern wargames, a general skepticism prevailed on the ground regarding Russia’s ability to effectively respond to any act of Japanese aggression. This cautious attitude was also reflected in members of the Russian Court, most notably Sergei Witte. While committed to completing the CER and enhancing the economic power of the Russian Empire in East Asia, he remained decidedly cautious of provoking a conflict with Japan. Writing to Foreign Minister Lamsdorff, Witte noted that war with Japan would be a “great disaster” for Russia, warning that “the main point is that, in the eyes of Russian society, war with Japan over possession of far-away Korea would arouse negative reactions and, on the basis of latent dissatisfaction, those undesirables [Russian peasants] could greatly aggravate disturbing phenomena in [the country’s] social life, which even now in times of peace make themselves felt.”¹⁰⁷⁶ Yet such cautionary attitudes were not shared by the entire Russian Court. Supporters of an expansionist foreign policy in East Asia were given a substantial boost with the arrival of Captain Alexander Mikhailovich

¹⁰⁷⁵ Steinberg, John et al. (eds.), *The Russo-Japanese War in Global Perspective: World War Zero*, Volumes I & II, Leiden: Brill, 2005.

¹⁰⁷⁶ Пак, *Россия и Корея*, pg. 331.

Bezobrazov (1855-1931), son of a wealthy Marshall of the St. Petersburg nobility, into the trusted circle of Tsar Nicholas II's associates. This brought with it a sharp change in the tone and implementation of Russian foreign policy in East Asia.

Under Witte's oversight of Russia's Far Eastern policy since the Settlement of 1895, the Korean peninsula played a minor role when compared to the geostrategic and economic importance of Manchuria and North China. The Russian Finance Minister had looked upon Korea as a possible area where Russia could acquire an ice-free port as a winter stopover for the Pacific Fleet as well as a possible commercial terminus for the Trans-Siberian railroad.¹⁰⁷⁷ Following the botched Japanese assassination attempt on King Kojong, St. Petersburg managed to install pro-Russian ministers of finance, customs and the military, granting Russia an advantageous situation to fend off any potential Japanese advances. With the Russian acquisition of Port Arthur and the Liaodong Peninsula, however, Witte rapidly lost interest in Korea, with the finance minister no longer advocating further expansion into the Korean Peninsula, as he viewed Russia's interests as now being well served in China. In Witte's mind, Russian policy towards Korea had been settled. While King Kojong was sheltering in the Russian Legation to Seoul, following the murder of Queen Min, he sanctioned, in 1896, the transfer of a 20-year timber concession—comprising 5,000 square kilometers of land in northern Korea's Yalu basin—for a sum of 15,000 rubles to a Vladivostok-based Russian merchant named Boris Yuliyevich Briner (1889-1949). Work on the concession, however, would have to be started within five years, else Briner would automatically forfeit all rights. Founding the "Korean Timber Company", Seoul signed an agreement that granted the Korean Government ownership of a quarter of all real estate constructed in the region and allowed it to claim a quarter of all future profits.¹⁰⁷⁸ Briner realised that, despite possessing substantial lumbering assets within the Vladivostok market, he lacked the sufficient capital to embark on the development of the Korean concession. The St. Petersburg International Commercial Bank rejected Briner's application for assistance, forcing him to sell.

Yet word about the existence of a Yalu concession began to circulate in the capital, eventually reaching the ears of Nikolai Gavrilovich Matyunin (1849-1907), Russian Minister to Korea, a supporter of an active Russian foreign policy towards Korea, who began to develop ideas of what could be accomplished.¹⁰⁷⁹ Matyunin envisaged transforming Briner's concession into "a large Russian industrial enterprise on the model of chartered companies, thereby regaining for Russia the position it had lost in Korea, and the gradually shifting activities into the Priamur territory and Siberia."¹⁰⁸⁰ As this idea went squarely against Witte's Korean policy, Matyunin approached then Foreign Minister Muravyev to accord his support to "Briner's Concession". He also simultaneously approached Bezobrazov.¹⁰⁸¹ Through his mediation, Bezobrazov managed to secure the keen interest of several members of the inner circle of His Majesty Nicholas II in developing the project along the Yalu River. This list included Grand Prince Alexander Mikhailovich (1866-1933), Count Illarion Ivanovich Vorontsov-Dashkov (1837-1916), Prince

¹⁰⁷⁷ Lukoianov, Igor, "The Bezobrazovtsy" in Steinberg et al. (eds.), The Russo-Japanese War in Global Perspective, Volume I, Leiden: Brill, 2005, pg. 66.

¹⁰⁷⁸ Пак, Россия и Корея, pg. 337.

¹⁰⁷⁹ Lukoianov, "The Bezobrazovtsy", pg. 69.

¹⁰⁸⁰ Ibid.

¹⁰⁸¹ For his zeal in promoting the development of Briner's Concession, the Russian Foreign Ministry quickly demoted Matyunin to head the Russian Legation in Melbourne, Australia. Crushed by this decision, the Tsar was merciful, allowing Matyunin to return to St. Petersburg.

Felix Felixovich Yusupov (1887-1967), and Admiral Alexey Mikhailovich Abaza (1853-1917), with these figures collectively forming a faction of staunch advocates for the “Korean direction” of Russian foreign policy in East Asia.¹⁰⁸² While Witte and the Russian Foreign Ministry had abandoned any further moves on the Korean Peninsula, Bezobrazov and Vorontsov-Dashkov managed to convince Nicholas II to purchase the Yalu concession indirectly through His Majesty’s cabinet for 65,000 rubles.¹⁰⁸³ Following its purchase, on 12 May 1898, the Grand Prince and Vorontsov-Dashkov presented the Tsar with a note, underlining the urgent need to send a deployment of a ‘military avant-garde’ of 20,000 soldiers, disguised in the garb of lumberjacks, and “to conduct, under a commercial flag, military reconnaissance and initial work to establish operational bases and lines of communication.”¹⁰⁸⁴ This second note followed up a first report, presented on 26 February 1898, highlighting the necessary political dimension of the creation of an East Asian Company: “Russia needs people in Korea, not just for the enrichment of a few...but for implanting Russian ideas.”¹⁰⁸⁵ His Majesty Nicholas II took a shine to this proposal as laid out in these two notes and accorded his approval to the idea of creating an East Asian Company with a political tinge, and an initial budget of 70,000 roubles, with two initial surveying Delegations (seven and five members respectively) being dispatched to Korea in May and June 1898, with Grand Duke Aleksei Aleksandrovich (1850-1908) appointed as overseer of the Imperial endeavour. Witte was not notified of the expedition as “there were no finances required from the treasury and the success of the expedition depended upon its total secrecy”.¹⁰⁸⁶ Hence, at the very moment when the Russian Finance Ministry and Foreign Ministry had abandoned the idea of launching any further serious moves on Korea, the Tsar personally sanctioned a policy—albeit at the behest of his Court—that directly opposed his own ministers—and “renewed [the idea] of a ‘peaceful’ conquest of Korea at his own risk.”¹⁰⁸⁷

When the members of Nicholas II’s Delegation arrived in Korea, however, they immediately began to demand concessions of their own to develop. For example, literally on the day of his arrival, popular journalist, orientalist and member of the Delegation, S.N. Syromiatnikov, informed the Korean minister to the Court, anti-Russian in his outlook, of his plans to construct a railroad from Nampo to the Russian border.¹⁰⁸⁸ Obviously, the Koreans reacted coolly to this impulsive declaration, with the Korean Government drafting a statement underlining that Korea would itself build such a rail link. Members of the second Delegation fared little better: engineer, N.I. Neporozhnev, an official from the Tsar’s personal cabinet, moved to extract a large concession to work the royal mines, however, Emperor Kojong did not approve the arrangement, especially after St. Petersburg had rejected his proposal for assistance against the Japanese. The Delegations additionally offered the chance to start a forestry company, on the mouths of the rivers Tumen and Yalu, along the entire extent of the Korean border from the Yellow to Japan Sea “that would form a barrier between [Russia] and the Japanese who are intruding in southern Korea...giving Russia an opportunity to defend her commercial enterprises.”¹⁰⁸⁹ The activation of concession frenzy in Korea was viewed alarmingly by the new Russian Minister in Korea,

¹⁰⁸² Пак, *Россия и Корея*, pg. 337.

¹⁰⁸³ Романов, *Russia in Manchuria*, pg. 268.

¹⁰⁸⁴ Пак, *Россия и Корея*, pg. 338.

¹⁰⁸⁵ Lukoianov, “The Bezobrazovtsy”, pg. 70.

¹⁰⁸⁶ Miyoshi, *The Other Great Game*, pg. 291.

¹⁰⁸⁷ Романов, *Russia in Manchuria*, pg. 269.

¹⁰⁸⁸ Lukoianov, “The Bezobrazovtsy”, pg. 71.

¹⁰⁸⁹ Пак, *Россия и Корея*, pg. 338.

Alexander Ivanovich Pavlov (1860-1923) who warned that “if in the Far East, Russian companies would appear in Korea with too wide a mandate, it would be inconsistent with the present political situation and the goals pursued by the Government of Korea; if they were to seek any exclusive rights and advantages over other foreigners; if they were to seize and control too extensive territorial advantages and wish to formally preclude foreign access; if by a careless step they give rise to the unfounded conclusions of both the Korean and foreign governments that the Russian government is, in fact, involved in this enterprise—which we present as strictly private and commercial—and that political goals are actually behind such an enterprise, then it can be stated that [such plans] will be met with stubborn opposition.”¹⁰⁹⁰

The content of Pavlov’s cautionary report reached Witte, who, along with the Foreign Ministry, was outraged. The Court opted therefore to wait until Neporozhnev’s personal report to the Tsar, signaling a desire of the Russian Government to distance itself from the scheme, with the Grand Duke having stepped down as its head.¹⁰⁹¹ Instead of advocating further encroachment on Korea, the Grand Duke, after consultations with Witte in March 1899, drafted a note on Korea, favouring an equal economic partition with Japan. However, Bezobrazov refused to abandon his plans and, between 1899 and 1900, together with his supporters, he outlined his own detailed vision of an East Asian Company. The company was to be considered a “‘political institution’, directed by the sovereign will of the Russian Emperor, for the development of the ‘Russian principle’ in Korea.”¹⁰⁹² The Boxer Rebellion and ensuing chaos in Manchuria afforded Bezobrazov an opportunity to denounce Witte’s Far Eastern policy to the Tsar as a failure, with the economic burden of the CER having been foisted by Witte on the Russian economy. Instead of an erroneous penetration to the “centre of the Chinese world”, Bezobrazov argued, in an official note to the Tsar for the necessity of “neutralizing” Korea.¹⁰⁹³ Despite Witte’s vehement opposition, the Committee of Ministers, on 29 June 1901, approved a charter creating the East-Asian Industrial Company, with the caveat that, within six months, the organizers had to capitalize 20 percent of the company’s shares for its activation. This condition failed to be met by February 1902, hence putting the matter to a theoretical end. The events of the Boxer Rebellion, however, weakened Witte’s overall position and, most importantly, his relationship with the Tsar. In a conference in Yalta on 27 October 1902 in the presence of Nicholas II, Witte advocated an end to Russia’s proactive policy in the Far East, including Manchuria, even going so far as to suggest focusing on the construction of an Amur rail line exclusively on Russian territory. This suggestion of a full retreat from economic expansion in China was not to the liking of Nicholas II who still harboured vision of Russian hegemony over East Asia.¹⁰⁹⁴

Given the lack of any policy alternatives to the Tsar’s liking, Bezobrazov suggested a plan to unite all Manchurian and Korean concessions and open southern Manchuria to foreigners and engage Chinese bandits to drive them out after they had established themselves. Despite the unorthodox nature of this plan, Nicholas II dispatched Bezobrazov on an official mission “of a very confidential nature” to the Far East at the end of 1902.¹⁰⁹⁵ On 1 March 1902, the main office

¹⁰⁹⁰ Ibid., pg. 339.

¹⁰⁹¹ Lukoianov, “The Bezobrazovtsy”, pp. 71-72.

¹⁰⁹² Romanov, *Russia in Manchuria*, pg. 269.

¹⁰⁹³ Lukoianov, “The Bezobrazovtsy”, pg. 75.

¹⁰⁹⁴ Ibid., pg. 77.

¹⁰⁹⁵ Miyoshi, *The Other Great Game*, pg. 294.

of the “Russian Lumber Association” opened in Port Arthur, to the official dissatisfaction of Japan. Arriving in Port Arthur, Bezobrazov acted in a bombastic manner, causing even the hawkish Minister of War, and staunch advocate of Manchurian annexation, Kuropatkin, to openly express his dismay by writing that, in the Far East, “one incredible scheme of Bezobrazov followed another.”¹⁰⁹⁶ Such reflections mattered little as, on 6 May 1903, having earned the confidence of the Tsar, Bezobrazov was appointed State Secretary to assume control of the new lumber company and “help direct Russia’s direction in policy.”¹⁰⁹⁷ From Port Arthur, Bezobrazov set to work on concretely implementing plans for his timber company, inviting 600 Russian soldiers in disguise as well as 3000 *Honghuzi*, while simultaneously ordering Admiral Alekseyev to deploy another 600 Cossacks to the Yalu River.¹⁰⁹⁸ The Korean governor of Uigu (in today’s North Pyongan Province of the DPRK), in May 1903, reported to Seoul about “a concentration of Russian troops in Andong [China], intending to cross the Yalu.”¹⁰⁹⁹ Hence, through the implementation of his grand scheme, Bezobrazov dispatched Russian (and irregular Chinese) military formations along the Yalu. This was done upon the express order of the Tsar, without any previous consultation with the Ministry of War.¹¹⁰⁰ Kuropatkin was appalled, signalling to St. Petersburg that “[Russia’s] actions in the basin of the Yalu and our behaviour in Manchuria have excited a feeling of hostility to us, which, upon our taking any incautious step, may lead to war [with Japan].”¹¹⁰¹ The Minister of War was especially concerned that the use of Chinese bandits (*Honghuzi*) would lead to clashes with regular Qing forces, resulting in an additional strain on Sino-Russian bilateral relations. Furthermore, as Kuropatkin retrospectively penned “these measures were particularly serious and injurious to [Russia], for the reason that they were taken at the very time when [Russia was] under obligations to evacuate the province of Mukden [Manchuria] altogether.”¹¹⁰² Despite such open misgivings, there was little opponents of Bezobrazov could do, especially given the unique structure of decision-making that Nicholas II had placed over Far East policy in 1903.

8.2.2. Russian Strategy in East Asia: The Viceroyalty of the Far East

In May 1903, the Tsar announced that Russia was setting upon a “new course”, one where Manchuria was to be considered an integral part of Russia’s exclusive political and economic interests in the region, thereby rejecting the Open Door Policy of 1901, and underlining the need for the Empire to use the concession along the Yalu River “as a pretext to strength its position in Korea.”¹¹⁰³ This had not, however, calmed the simmering conflict in the Russian Court between those advocating an expansionist policy in East Asia (Bezobrazov) and those pleading for a more moderate line (Kuropatkin). The advocates of these mutually exclusive approaches came to a head during a dedicated “summit of experts” in Port Arthur to discuss Russia’s eastern problems on 1 July 1903. The majority of Russia’s diplomats in the region and administrators of the Russian Far East were present: Admiral Alekseyev; Russian Minister to China, Lessar; Russian Minister to Korea, Pavlov; and Major-General Konstantin Ippolitovich Vogak (1859-1923), Russian Military Attaché in Beijing. Kuropatkin and Bezobrazov took opposing views on Russia’s future course,

¹⁰⁹⁶ Warner, *The Tide at Sunrise*, pg. 157.

¹⁰⁹⁷ Miyoshi, *The Other Great Game*, pg. 294.

¹⁰⁹⁸ Пак, *Россия и Корея*, pg. 342.

¹⁰⁹⁹ Ibid.

¹¹⁰⁰ Warner, *The Tide at Sunrise*, pg. 148.

¹¹⁰¹ Miyoshi, *The Other Great Game*, pg. 295.

¹¹⁰² General Kuropatkin, “The Secret Causes of the War with Japan”, *McClure’s Magazine*, September 1908, pg. 488.

¹¹⁰³ Miyoshi, *The Other Great Game*, pg. 294.

with the former arguing that Japan should not be antagonized by expansion into the Yalu River and, instead, Russia should concentrate on northern Manchuria. Bezobrazov, supported by Admiral Alekseyev, offered opposition to any idea that Russian troops should be withdrawn, with discussions being governed by “disunity in thinking and enmity at personal level, especially between Kuropatkin and Bezobrazov and the current expansionists in Korea.”¹¹⁰⁴ Kuropatkin warned the experts present that Japan was better prepared for war than Russia and that St. Petersburg should avoid all aggressive acts towards Korea; to which Bezobrazov countered by arguing that any Russian conciliatory gestures in East Asia would be taken as a sign of weakness and “would, therefore, only lead to disaster.”¹¹⁰⁵ The summit of experts did not agree on any prescribed policy course to resolve pressing issues such as the situation in Manchuria and along the Yalu River. It did, however, provoke a restructuring of Russia’s authority in East Asia and the policy direction it would henceforth pursue.

On 12 August 1903, Tsar Nicholas II openly sided with the hardline faction, deciding to implement a new administrative structure over Russia’s East Asian territories and created the Viceroyalty of the Far East. Admiral Alekseyev was appointed as the Viceroy of the Far East, making him commander in chief of both land and naval forces in theatre, as well as emissary in charge of all diplomatic correspondence with Japan, Korea, and China.¹¹⁰⁶ The Viceroyalty of the Far East was centered in Port Arthur and included the Liaodong Peninsula, the Russian railways in China, the Transbaikal, Amur and Maritime territories. The Viceroy’s powers superseded those of any local representatives and officially answered to only a Special Committee for Far Eastern Affairs, headed by the Tsar himself. Since the committee never met, the Viceroy of the Far East enjoyed direct access to Nicholas II. Alekseyev was a blood relative of the Tsar and, as an illegitimate son of Alexander II, remained therefore only answerable to his favourite uncle, Nicholas II. While seen as a “probably genuine attempt to decentralize decision-making from St. Petersburg and integrate the diplomatic, military/naval and economic administration on the periphery in the region itself”, it placed primary policy recommendations in the hands of those who staunchly supported Russian expansionism in East Asia.¹¹⁰⁷ The traditional ministries found themselves frozen out of policy making; while Lamsdorff remained Foreign Minister, Nicholas II ordered that all diplomatic telegrams on Far Eastern Affairs be directed through the new Viceroy Alekseyev.¹¹⁰⁸ The establishment of the new Viceroyalty, while marking a fundamental change in Russian policy towards the Far East, also coincided with the Tsar’s decision to fire Sergei Witte as Minister of Finance. While Bezobrazov and his supporters undoubtedly played a role, the sacking of Witte was seen as having as much to do with his failed China policy as his lack of new ideas or approaches to tackle Russia’s many Asian challenges, costing him the trust of the Tsar.¹¹⁰⁹ The Tsar displayed his relief following the dismissal of his “harsh and unkindly” former Minister, a sentiment reflected in the Tsar’s diary on the day of Witte’s sacking: “Now I rule.”¹¹¹⁰ In the

¹¹⁰⁴ Nish, Ian, “Stretching Out to the Yalu: A Contested Frontier, 1900-1903” in Steinberg et al. (eds.) in The Russo-Japanese War, pg. 60.

¹¹⁰⁵ White, John Albert, The Diplomacy of the Russo-Japanese War, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1964, pg. 70-71.

¹¹⁰⁶ The full text on the “Russian Imperial Order regarding Imperial Lieutenancy of the Far East—12 August 1903” can be found in MacMurray, Treaties and Conventions with and concerning China, pg. 122.

¹¹⁰⁷ Nish, “Stretching Out to the Yalu”, pg. 60.

¹¹⁰⁸ Lukoianov, “The Bezobrazovtsy”, pg. 82.

¹¹⁰⁹ Ibid., pg. 81.

¹¹¹⁰ White, The Diplomacy of the Russo-Japanese War, pg. 74.

absence of Witte, therefore, Nicholas II took full personal control of Russian strategy towards East Asia and openly sanctioned an aggressive regional policy. Kuropatkin made a last attempt to dampen the Tsar's verve: on 14 August 1903, at a meeting between the Foreign Ministry with the Ministry of Finance and War dedicated to the Manchurian and Korean questions, Kuropatkin openly spoke on Russia's relations with Korea, warning that "in the interests of a peaceful and robust settlement of the Manchurian question, [Russia] needs to refrain from implementing any active policies in Korea."¹¹¹¹ While the collective ministries agreed with this position, they likewise underlined the importance, as Foreign Minister Lamsdorff telegraphed Viceroy Alekseyev, of ensuring that the 'forestry enterprise' in Korea should nevertheless receive "the assistance that all Russian commercial and industrial enterprises have the right to rely on."¹¹¹² As such, the conference underlined that the Russian ministries, despite their respective attempts to resist Nicholas II's 'new course', began to adapt to this new direction. Consequently, the Yalu concession continued to move sloppily ahead, with the Russian Lumber Association only beginning to cut timber in November 1903.

8.2.3. The Russian Position in Manchuria

St. Petersburg, as noted, had signed a withdrawal agreement from Manchuria on 8 April 1902. Kuropatkin approved the first two phases of the evacuation, according to the treaty's articles, constructing barracks between Khabarovsk and Vladivostok to house the evacuated soldiers. Admiral Alekseyev, however, cancelled any further implementation of the withdrawal. As with Russia's policy towards Korea, the planned Russian evacuation of Manchuria had become a bone of contention between two rival Court factions, each advocating opposite positions of East Asian regional policy.¹¹¹³ Consequently, by April 1903, the situation regarding the Russian position in Manchuria had undergone a radical change. The 'expert session' of July 1903 framed a new set of conditions to put to the Qing to allow the now halted Russian withdrawal from Chinese territory to proceed. This was further confirmed by the joint meeting of the Ministries of War and Finance on 14 August 1903, where a Russian withdrawal from Manchuria was ruled out due to the need to reposition Russian forces to protect the CER.¹¹¹⁴

St. Petersburg's new conditions were subsequently presented by Minister Lessar to the enfeebled Qing Court on 6 September 1903 and formally linked the evacuation of the Russian military to the following conditions: "a prohibition against the cession or lease by China to a foreign power of any part of Manchuria; a guarantee to Russia of the right to use and protect certain river and telegraph communications; a prohibition against the imposition of heavy duties on good transported by railway; and the assurance that the Russian-Chinese Bank would be protected and the city of Yingkou kept under [Russian] control."¹¹¹⁵ Lessar additionally handed over a revised schedule of Russian troop withdrawals, in case of Chinese acceptance. Through such revised demands, St. Petersburg sought to set up a semi-Russian monopoly over Manchuria, one where the Qing would nominally be in charge, but the area would come under de facto Russian

¹¹¹¹ Пак, *Россия и Корея*, pg. 347.

¹¹¹² Ibid., pg. 348.

¹¹¹³ Nish, "Stretching Out to the Yalu", pg. 51.

¹¹¹⁴ Пак, *Россия и Корея*, pg. 348.

¹¹¹⁵ White, *The Diplomacy of the Russo-Japanese War*, pg. 70.

control.¹¹¹⁶ St. Petersburg viewed, therefore, that a full withdrawal from Manchuria could wait. The Japanese Foreign Ministry expressed its alarm at the lack of Russian withdrawal and new demands made upon China, stating that “[Russia desires] to completely exclude from Manchuria all foreign enterprises and ventures other than her own.”¹¹¹⁷ The Qing refused Lessar’s proposals, with further negotiations on the evacuation of Russian forces from Manchuria being postponed indefinitely later in September 1903.

8.2.4. Japanese Strategy towards Korea

The Japanese government grew increasingly apprehensive at the Russian activities along the Yalu River. As of April 1903, Tokyo began receiving reports about the establishment of a trading settlement at Yongampo. Japanese intelligence subsequently dispatched military observers from the Foreign Ministry’s Consulate in Yingkou and reported that “there was no clear distinction between Russian troops, guards and wood-cutters,” confirming similar reports from Korean Maritime Customs officials deployed in the area.¹¹¹⁸ The reception of such reports began to seriously alarm the Japanese government, coinciding as it did with the Russian refusal to evacuate its forces from Manchuria as well as its fundamental restructuring of its administrative structure in the Russian Far East with the creation of the Viceroyalty. Tokyo was not isolated in its concerns. The Foreign Legations in Seoul, most notably the British and US, also began receiving information regarding Russia’s growing presence on Korean territory. In line with Tokyo’s diplomatic strategy aimed at keeping Korea in check, the Japanese Minister to Korea, Hayashi Gonsuke, began to pressure Seoul to open the Yalu River to international trade. In doing so, Japan sought to expose Russia’s activities in northern Korea to the other Foreign Powers. As the Yalu River served as the frontier between Korea and the Qing, the Japanese viewed themselves as justified in calling for the freedom of trade in the area, even though it technically only pertained to Chinese territory. This would mark the first of several future Japanese attempts to couch its foreign policy moves against the Russian Empire by referring to international law.¹¹¹⁹ Here, by calling for respect for the Open Door Policy, Russia would be legally deprived from having exclusive privileges in Yongampo and Uiji by the virtue of its proximity to the Chinese border. The Japanese Legation to Korea was keenly aware that both London and Washington were concerned with the continued Russian delays in its evacuation of Manchuria, with Secretary of State Hay having sent official diplomatic protests to St. Petersburg in 1902 and 1903 to underline Washington’s dissatisfaction.¹¹²⁰

With Russian actions in Korea creating the impression of a second *fait accompli*, this time in northern Korea, Hayashi presented, at the end of April 1903, to the Korean court an official demand from the Japanese government to open the Yalu River to international trade and proclaim Yongampo an open port.¹¹²¹ When presented with this Japanese *démarche*, Russian Minister Pavlov asked the Korean Emperor to clarify what the demands actually met and cautioned that Russia would not provide the Japanese, or any other foreigners, “with any satisfaction” and that

¹¹¹⁶ Nish, “Stretching Out to the Yalu”, pg. 52.

¹¹¹⁷ Paine, *Imperial Rivals*, pg. 224.

¹¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, pg. 58.

¹¹¹⁹ Kato Yoko, “Japanese Justifies War by the ‘Open Door’: 1903 as Turning Point” in Steinberg et al (eds.), *The Russo-Japanese War*, pg. 223.

¹¹²⁰ Miyoshi, *The Other Great Game*, pg. 297.

¹¹²¹ *Ibid.*

the question of opening a port along the Yalu River “will not progress any further.”¹¹²² The Japanese legation in Seoul continued to push the Korean government to designate one of the ports along the Yalu River as open to international trade. In August, Hayashi threatened to breakoff diplomatic relations with Korea, should a port city in the concession zone not be opened for international trade. Japanese actions were given concrete support by Washington, with the US Secretary of its Legation in Seoul, Gordon Paddock (1865-1932) appealing to the Korean government, in the name of free trade, to open ports along the Yalu River. Great Britain also joined its Japanese ally in insisting upon an Open Door policy along the Yalu. Nevertheless, Emperor Kojong refused to yield to the international pressure, underlining to Tokyo, London, and Washington that the question of the opening of Yongampo would be resolved in such a way so as not to cause “discontent amongst powers that share a land frontier with Korea”, adding that “the discontent of the powers distant from Korea by the sea does not seem so important.”¹¹²³ Hence, by November 1903, the question of the internationalization of trade along the Yalu remained unresolved.

8.2.5 Japanese Strategy towards Manchuria

While Russo-Japanese relations were seriously eroding throughout 1903, the Manchurian question was of equal concern to Tokyo.¹¹²⁴ The Russians had refused to comply with their treaty with the Qing to evacuate Manchuria, given St. Petersburg’s strategic interest in, and political/financial commitment to, the CER. By July 1903, the CER was “ready for exploitation” at total cost of USD 223,332,502, with an additional USD 40,507,732 for the South Manchurian branch to Dairen.¹¹²⁵ Russia now had a functioning rail link connecting Russian territory with the major urban centers of Manchuria, which had sprung up due to the construction of the CER, with its terminus within the fortress of Port Arthur. The Japanese High Command nervously watched the progress the Russian railways were making that would, upon eventual completion, allow Russia to bolster its long-term economic and political ambitions in East Asia. With, however, St. Petersburg refusing to evacuate its soldiers from Manchuria according to schedule, Tokyo came to view the serious tangible progress being made towards the nailing of the railway’s last spike as a ‘time-bomb’ ready to thwart Japanese foreign policy goals.

On 21 April 1903, the Murin-An Conference was held at the garden villa of Yamagata Aritomo near Kyoto to discuss the consequences of Russia’s refusal to withdraw and express growing alarm at St. Petersburg’s activities in northern Korea. Prime Minister Katsura, Foreign Minister Komura—representing the Cabinet—were in attendance, while Itō Hirobumi and Yamagata represented the elder statesmen (‘*genrō*’/元老).¹¹²⁶ The four men agreed that Japan’s

¹¹²² Пак, *Россия и Корея*, pg. 345.

¹¹²³ Ibid., pg. 351.

¹¹²⁴ Nish, “Stretching Out to the Yalu”, pg. 58.

¹¹²⁵ ‘Operations of the Russian Railways’—Extract from *North Manchuria and the Chinese Eastern Railway*, Harbin: CER Printing Office, 1924, in Nish, Ian (ed.), *The Russo-Japanese War, Volume I*, London: Global Oriental, 2003, pp. 86-87.

¹¹²⁶ The ‘*genrō*’ served as an unofficial designation to select, esteemed elder Japanese statements who served as extraconstitutional advisers to the Emperor following their respective retirement during the Meiji, Taishō, and Shōwa eras. As part of the Meiji system, the Emperor “was careful to never display his powers, but to always work through the *genrō*. Thus, the *genrō* shielded the Emperor from blame when policies failed, and the institutionalized charisma of the Emperor provided legitimacy for the *genrō*.” See Vogel, *China and Japan*, pg. 206.

future policy towards Russia would be based on four general principles: (i.) should Russia fail to withdraw its troops from Manchuria, Japan should lodge an official protest; (ii.) taking the opportunity afforded by the Manchurian issue, Japan should begin direct negotiations with Russia to solve the Korean problem; (iii.) Japan should have Russia recognize Japan's preponderant rights ('*yūetsuken*'/優越権) in Korea and should make no concessions whatsoever to Russia as far as Korea was concerned; (iv.) with the aim of reaching a complete solution to the Korean problem, Japan should recognize Russia's preponderant rights in Manchuria.¹¹²⁷ The esteemed gentlemen opted, therefore, to revert to old idea of the '*Man-Kan kōkan*', namely accepting Russian predominance in Manchuria in exchange for recognition of explicit Japanese sovereignty over Korea. However, on one point all participants were firmly agreed, namely that "maintaining Japan's sphere of influence over Korea was so vital to [Japan's] security that any measure necessary to achieve that purpose should be taken."¹¹²⁸ Itō and Yamagata viewed such policies as ultimately leading to a peaceful compromise with Russia, an idea which was viewed with skepticism by Prime Minister Katsura. With the Murin-An Conference having forbidden any Japanese flexibility in regards to its stance towards Korea, the Prime Minister "saw very little hope for reaching an agreement with Russia."¹¹²⁹ This pessimistic stance was also shared by Foreign Minister Komura who prepared to enter into negotiations with St. Petersburg, a process which he fully anticipated would end in war.

While not invited to Murin-An, the Japanese military was becoming concerned that Russia sought to covertly seal the Qing-Korean frontier through the de facto occupation of both banks. Japan's ability to respond depended on its choice of timing. Having viewed Russia's non-withdrawal from Manchuria and its activities in northern Korea with concern, Army Chief of Staff Ōyama Iwao (1842-1916), informed the Meiji Emperor that Russia's continued aggressive stance in East Asia "would erode the overseas gains Japan had made since the [Meiji] restoration and that Russian domination of Korea would threaten national security."¹¹³⁰ Russian actions in Manchuria, and now Korea, served as a prime example. As a result, the Japanese High Command began to actively press for war. While the navy leadership, especially Admiral Yamamoto Gonnohyōe (1852-1933), remained cautious; the Japanese Army was ready to fight, citing a staff report from Ōyama, suggesting that Japan could effectively take on the Russian presence in East Asia.¹¹³¹ Ōyama went on to caution that should Tokyo not seize the opportunity immediately, given the process towards the completion of the Trans-Siberian Railway, the Russians would eventually be able to outmatch Japanese forces through an arms race. While St. Petersburg could possibly be dealt with diplomatically, how to resolve tensions over Korea was another question altogether. Should war break out with the Russians, the Japanese could not have any certainty that Seoul would not simply ally with St. Petersburg, making it therefore imperative that Tokyo handle the Korean Court using exclusively political methods, as Prime Minister Katsura noted to Foreign Minister Komura, "[Japan] must place [Korea] under our authority by real force, but the best policy would be to choose means that are nominally correct."¹¹³² Following the Murin-An Conference, should diplomacy with Russia fail, the Japanese military would be therefore obliged to resort to war.

¹¹²⁷ Okamoto Shumpei, *The Japanese Oligarchy and the Russo-Japanese War*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1970, pg. 69.

¹¹²⁸ Ibid.

¹¹²⁹ Ibid., pg. 71.

¹¹³⁰ Drea, *Japan's Imperial Army*, pg. 101.

¹¹³¹ Duus, *The Abacus and the Sword*, pg. 177.

¹¹³² Ibid.

8.2.6. Japanese Societal View of Manchuria

The Japanese Foreign Ministry, as agreed in Kyoto, followed through with the first stage of its policy towards the Manchurian question, namely by registering an official diplomatic protest with St. Petersburg over its conduct. This act was seen as representing “a coming of age for Japan which had kept quiet [on this issue] in the past.”¹¹³³ The novelty of the firmness of Tokyo’s response reflected the growing importance of the Manchurian question in Japanese society. In foreign policy questions, the Japanese government was very sensible to the perceptions and demands of the wider Japanese society at large. As noted, the advent of the Triple Intervention—where St. Petersburg was popularly perceived as its true orchestrator—had sparked anti-Russian sentiment amongst the Japanese masses. Russia’s occupation of the Liaodong Peninsula (signed over to Japan in the original Treaty of Shimonoseki), combined with St. Petersburg’s repeated refusal to comply with its troop evacuation schedule as negotiated with the Qing, and permanent threat this posed to Japanese interests in Korea, only added to a sense of general resentment. As a direct response to these developments, in 1901, the Black Dragon Society (‘*Kokuryūkai*’/黒竜会) was formed by Uchida Ryōhei (1873-1937). Named after the Mandarin name for the Amur River (‘*Heilong-jiang*’/black dragon), the Society traced its intellectual roots to Konoe Atsumaro’s pan-Asianist ideas, including the East Asian Common Cultural Association, that gained widespread traction in Japanese society at the close of the 19th century. Seeing Japan as the predominant power in Asia, whose influence was viewed as rightfully extending through Manchuria to the Amur River, the *Kokuryūkai* argued against Russian policy towards Japan, but also against Russian influence in China and Korea. The Black Dragon Society focused on foreign policy “aiming to inform and influence policy makers and basing its stance on research conducted on Japan’s neighbours.”¹¹³⁴ Uchida expounded upon his ideas in a book entitled *Russia’s Demise* (‘*Roshia bōkokuron*’/露西亜亡国論). Published in 1901—and subsequently banned by the Japanese government—Uchida argued that Japan would lose too much time waiting for an “inevitable conflict” with Russia; the Trans-Siberian Railway would bring countless Russian reinforcements to East Asia until it would be too late to win any conflict. The name of the patriotic society was in no way selected at random, as the *Kokuryūkai* “advocated the Amur River as Japan’s boundary, and thereby envisaged a comfortable zone for Japanese expansion.”¹¹³⁵ The society likewise organized large public events, complete with prominent speakers, arguing forcefully for a preventative war with Russia, while Tokyo still held a military advantage, to secure further regional gains.¹¹³⁶

In June 1903, seven Japanese professors stemming from the pan-Asianist movement, presented a document, entitled “*A Memorandum Concerning the Manchuria Problem Representing the Opinion of Seven Doctors of Jurisprudence*” to Foreign Minister Katsura. The main argument was that Tokyo had a right to defend the principles inherent in the Open Door

¹¹³³ Nish, *Japanese Foreign Policy*, pg. 69.

¹¹³⁴ Saaler, Sven, “The Kokuryūkai (Black Dragon Society) and the Rise of Nationalism, Pan-Asianism, and Militarism in Japan, 1901-1925” in *International Journal of Asian Studies*, 11 2 (2014), pg. 132.

¹¹³⁵ Jansen, Marius, *The Japanese and Sun Yat-Sen*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1954, pg. 35.

¹¹³⁶ Jacob, Frank, “Secret Societies in Japan and Preparation for the Russo-Japanese War (1904-1905)” in *Diacrone: Studi di Storia Contemporanea*, No. 28, 4, 2016, pg. 14.

Policy as they applied to Manchuria and Korea. This approach argued that Russia was not only obliged to legally evacuate Manchuria, but also withdraw soldiers who had been stationed on Chinese territory to guard the CER. The Seven Doctors' arguments were incorporated into the position of the leader of the Japanese Diet, Ogawa Heikichi (1869-1942), who was simultaneously a member of the 'Anti-Russia Society' and supporter of a hawkish foreign policy.¹¹³⁷ As such, Ogawa openly criticized any option of trading Korea for Manchuria and, following the Boxer Rebellion, advocated for the need to rally around a national consensus regarding opposition to Russia and support for East Asian territorial integrity.¹¹³⁸ In the 18th Diet session of 4 June 1903, Ogawa openly addressed the issue of Russia's refusal to withdraw its soldiers from Manchuria, basing his arguments on the principles laid out in the legal tract of the seven doctors. The fact that Russia had not withdrawn its forces from Qing territory as agreed was not the principal issue, but rather St. Petersburg's desire to station troops to protect the CER. Ogawa argued against Japan recognizing any sanctioning of a Russian presence in Manchuria. More importantly, Ogawa suggested the establishment of a Manchurian open-door policy, informing that Diet that "since America, England and countries throughout the world have expressed approval of the Manchurian open-door policy, Japan should take the necessary steps to open up Manchuria to development as quickly as possible."¹¹³⁹ Japanese newspapers echoed Ogawa's arguments in the Diet, focusing on the need for Japan to uphold the Open Door policy as applied to Manchuria, with the *Yomiuri Shimbun* arguing in its editorial on 24 July 1903: "Russia's occupation of Manchuria is occupation in breach of [its] treaties, and if this were interpreted from a legal point of view it is illegal occupation...ignoring the fact that Russia's actions have reached the point they are at today and allowing Russia to continue to occupy Manchuria will clearly endanger peace in the Far East. Japan has every right in the world under international law to chastise Russia for her high-handedness."¹¹⁴⁰ Hence, Japanese society increasingly began to view Russia as being in grave violation of one of the only tangible international legal agreements that indirectly emerged out of the Settlement of 1901, namely the Open Door Policy on the Qing's territorial integrity, and claimed the legal right to act, in case of need.

8.2.7. The Korean Reaction to the Seven Doctors' Essay

The July 1903 publication of the Seven Doctor's Essay in the popular Korean newspaper, Imperial Gazette ('*Hwangsong sinmun*'), sparked widespread popular discussion.¹¹⁴¹ A traditional proponent of Korea's self-strengthening movement, the newspaper had been a strong advocate of commercial reform and capitalist development, as well as openly viewing Russia's territorial encroachment in East Asia following the First Sino-Japanese War as having the goal of "Korea ultimately becoming a Russian protectorate." The Imperial Gazette often espoused in its editorial opinion that cooperation with Korea's East Asian neighbours, Japan and the Qing, could serve as perhaps the only way to actively thwart such a possibility.¹¹⁴² Following its publication of the Seven Doctors' essay, the *Hwangsong sinmun* began to support the argument that Yongampo and Uiji should be opened as per the Japanese professors' demand, with free trade and commerce

¹¹³⁷ Miyoshi, *The Other Great Game*, pg. 300.

¹¹³⁸ Koto, "Japanese Justifies War by the 'Open Door'", pg. 215.

¹¹³⁹ Ibid.

¹¹⁴⁰ Ibid., pg. 222.

¹¹⁴¹ Miyochi, *The Other Great Game*, pg. 300.

¹¹⁴² Tikhonov, Vladimir, "Images of Russia and the Soviet Union in Modern Korea, 1880s-1930s: An Overview", *Seoul Journal of Korean Studies*, 22, no 2 (December 2009): pg. 230.

viewed as the best path towards Korean prosperity, arguing in editorials—published on 13 and 14 July 1903 respectively—that “Uiji lies at a strategic location in terms of trade and commerce, much could be gained in terms of the area’s development should we open it up to trade” and “assure that no one country gains a monopoly in terms of concessions. This policy of opening up only one port represents the best means of assuring [Korea’s] territorial integrity.”¹¹⁴³ The *Hwangsong sinmun*, also began in its 18 August 1903 editorial—in addition to embracing an open-door policy for the Korean Peninsula—to advocate for cooperation between Korea, Japan and the Qing, as an effective barrier against Russian advances into East Asia, “as the present situation is very much reminiscent of the Warring States Period, the three countries should cooperate with one another in order to stop Russian encroachment in the region”, setting the stage for the future justification of the arguments “in favour of war with Russia as put forward by the Seven Doctors”.¹¹⁴⁴ However, despite public support for opposing the establishment of a Russian monopoly over northern Korea through the adoption of an open-door policy, the Japanese Legation to Seoul lamented that such an arrangement was politically not possible given “several opponents in the [Korean] court, the anti-opening campaign of the Russian minister, and the uncertainty of the Kojong Emperor’s position.”¹¹⁴⁵ Ideas regarding fostering regional security cooperation between the East Asian Empires, as propagated by the *Hwangsong sinmun*, gained no traction outside the realm of popular discourse. In fact, Emperor Kojong refused to accept the Japanese demands to open Korean ports along the Yalu river, pleading for Russian support should Japan respond through military intervention.¹¹⁴⁶ As such, by 1903, Japan could muster very little influence on policy formation within the Korean Court, leaving Minister Hayashi of the opinion, as reported to Foreign Minister Komura, that “there is no other way than...to counter Russia’s maneuvers, regardless of our agreement with Korea.”¹¹⁴⁷

The Japanese government, in August 1903, repeated its request to the Korean Court to open its ports along the Yalu River. Minister Hayashi informed the Kojong Emperor of Tokyo’s continued concern regarding Russian activity in northern Korea that, combined with further Russian reinforcements arriving in Manchuria, had “forced [Japan] to come to the conclusion that Russia was preparing for a full-fledged invasion of Korea.”¹¹⁴⁸ Hence, Japan requested Korea’s consent to the dispatching of 45,000 Imperial Army soldiers to the Yalu River in order to assume the protection of Korean coastlines, including such areas as Incheon, Pyongyang and Uiji. This was followed up by another Japanese démarche underlining Tokyo’s opposition to Russia’s timber concessions and, should the Korean Court not annul its recent decision to provide Russia with further timber areas in the Yongampo area, “Japan would have no choice but to occupy an area of the same size.”¹¹⁴⁹ Emperor Kojong proceeded to, out of fear, leak Minister Hayashi’s demands to Minister Pavlov. On 20 July 1903, the Korean Forestry Department reached an additional agreement with a Russian timber company to accord another Yalu River concession. While

¹¹⁴³ Kim Yun-Hee, “Direction of Public Opinion during the Taehan Empire and the People’s Perception of Their Era during the Period of Russo-Japanese Conflict—with a special focus on *Hwangsong sinmun*” in *International Journal of Korean History* (Vol. 7, Feb. 2005), pg. 58.

¹¹⁴⁴ Ibid.

¹¹⁴⁵ Hayashi to Komura, 27 June 1903, quoted in Miyoshi, *The Other Great Game*, pg. 301.

¹¹⁴⁶ Park, Bella, “Russia’s Policy Towards Korea during the Russo-Japanese War” in *International Journal of Korean History* (Vol. 7, Feb. 2005), pg. 38.

¹¹⁴⁷ Hayashi to Komura, 20 June 1903, quoted in Miyoshi, *The Other Great Game*, pg. 302.

¹¹⁴⁸ Park, “Russia’s Policy Towards Korea”, pg. 39.

¹¹⁴⁹ Ibid.

Minister Pavlov aimed to have the draft agreement ratified by the Korean Emperor by the end of August 1903, the forcefulness of Tokyo's demands in this regard shook the Korean Court, with Emperor Kojong informing the Russian Minister instead that "he had no choice but to acquiesce to the Japanese demand regarding the opening of the port of Uiji in order to soothe [Tokyo's] apprehension over the Korean decision to given a concession to Russia in Yangampo."¹¹⁵⁰ Seoul's stance on this issue alarmed St. Petersburg, with Emperor Nicholas II ordering Pavlov to prevent "the establishment of an extraterritorial settlement [under Japanese control] in Uiji that would limit [Russia's] interests."¹¹⁵¹ However, the Russian Legation was unable to display a serious enough gesture of support from St. Petersburg to allow Emperor Kojong to go against the Japanese demands, with Pavlov promising only "assurances of Russia's sincere affection and moral support."¹¹⁵² In response to such flimsy statements, Kojong approached the Japanese Legation and requested them to submit a formal protest over the decision to grant Russia any further concessions. Minister Hayashi responded on 15 October 1903 by demanding that, in addition to Uiji, Yongampo be likewise opened to Japanese trade, with Hayashi basing Tokyo's argumentation on that fact that, since "the Russians had failed to abide by their decision to withdraw their troops from Manchuria, Japan would dispatch a large number of troops to northern Korea to protect [Japan's] own interests."¹¹⁵³ Hence, through the application of the open-door arguments of the Seven Doctors to the Yalu River, the Japanese Legation directly conveyed to the Korean Court Tokyo's readiness to go to war with the Russian Empire.

8.2.8. Russo-Japanese Negotiations on the Manchurian/Korean Questions

The international community of 1903 saw the Russian refusal to withdraw from Manchuria as a matter of not only regional but also global concern. Through St. Petersburg's refusal to abide by its own treaty obligations, Russia's continued presence on Qing territory was viewed, especially in the United States and Great Britain, as an open challenge to a main understanding of the Settlement of 1901. At the same time, both capitals preferred a peaceful resolution to the issue, with both London and Washington seeking to reach some sort of agreement with Russia. Consequently, Great Britain advised its new East Asian ally "to keep in close contact with the United States [on this issue]."¹¹⁵⁴ The Japanese government, however, was of the opinion that maintaining the top-secret nature of bilateral negotiations with Russia, directly eschewing the involvement of any other powers, constituted a more sage approach.¹¹⁵⁵ As Foreign Minister Komura stated to Claude MacDonald, now British Ambassador to Japan, "the Japanese Government [is] anxiously striving for peace, but thinks that the best and only means of obtaining it is by negotiating directly with Russia, and that any delay in doing so will provoke war."¹¹⁵⁶ Yet in opting for secret, bilateral negotiations with Russia, the Japanese Government opted to attempt to quietly build its own, acceptable order between the two largest military rivals in East Asia—one where the fundamental geopolitical interests of each power would be maintained—while, at the same time, paying lip service to the legal order that had been established by the Settlement of 1901. Hence, in case bilateral negotiations came to naught, a case could be made for Japanese

¹¹⁵⁰ Ibid.

¹¹⁵¹ Пак, *Россия и Корея*, pg. 349.

¹¹⁵² Ibid.

¹¹⁵³ Park, "Russia's Policy towards Korea", pg. 41.

¹¹⁵⁴ Ibid.

¹¹⁵⁵ Koto, "Japanese Justifies War by the 'Open Door'", pg. 221.

¹¹⁵⁶ Kajima, *The Diplomacy of Japan, Volume II*, pg. 100.

intervention based on respect for the principles of international law. As such, a closer examination of the Russo-Japanese negotiations to create an acceptable de facto bilateral order in East Asia merits further attention.

8.2.8.1. Japanese Preparations for Bilateral Negotiations with Russia

Given the steady and constant rise in Russo-Japanese tensions, the Japanese military had been, since May 1903, secretly preparing for possible offensive action. The initial decision to raise the alarm was made following the General Staff's confirmation of Russia having infiltrated Korean territory and having established a logging colony at Yongampo. The General Staff defined its overall objective as to seek to commence all-out offensive operations against Russian targets, but to enhance the overall state of Japanese military readiness across the region.¹¹⁵⁷ The main conclusion of the April 1903 Murin-An Conference, namely averting war with Russia through negotiations, was again confirmed on 23 June 1903 following the convening of an Imperial Conference aimed at formally determining Japan's position regarding the upcoming negotiations. As such, Japan's negotiation strategy was accorded the seal of approval of the highest members of Japanese society in the presence of the Meiji Emperor himself: *Genrōs* (Elder Statesmen) Itō; Yamagata; Ōyama; and Inoue along with Prime Minister Katsura; Navy Minister Yamamoto; and Army Minister Terauchi Masatake (1852-1919).

Both *Genrōs* and Cabinet members were presented a memorandum written by Prime Minister Katsura on how to approach negotiations with Russia. Its main points were encapsulated by the following articles: (i.) in pursuing the objectives of national defence and economic development, Japan must pay particular attention to the situation in Korea and Fujian [China], representing Japan's most vital links to the Asian continent; (ii.) of these two areas, Korea was the most pressing as "the peninsula was like a dagger pointing at the heart of Japan and its possession by a foreign power could never be tolerated."; (iii.) Russia's conduct in Manchuria and Korea was leading toward eventual [Russian] domination of Korea—therefore now was the time for Japan to engage in direct negotiations with St. Petersburg to settle the serious problems of the Far East; (iv.) the main aim of these talks should be "to maintain the security of Korea, toward that end, Japan should endeavour to restrict the Russian conduct in Manchuria within the limits of existing treaties"; (v.) as principles to guide Tokyo's approach to Russia, Komura suggested: "(1.) the preservation of the independence and territorial integrity of the Qing and Korea; (2.) mutual recognition of the rights that Japan and Russia, respectively, possessed in Korea and Manchuria and the measures necessary for their protection; (3.) mutual recognition of the rights of Japan and Russia to send forces when necessary to preserve their interests or repel uprisings in these territories; and (4.) Japan's special right to advise and assist Korea in carrying out internal reform."¹¹⁵⁸ Hence, the Imperial Council of 23 June 1903 prescribed a certain amount of flexibility regarding concessions to Russia over Manchuria, however, no compromise on Korea could be allowed, with "Korea being requested not to cede to Russia any part of her territory for any reason whatsoever."¹¹⁵⁹ With these base negotiation conditions established, aimed at establishing a reliable bilateral framework for relations with the Russian Empire, Tokyo formulated its first draft treaty to St. Petersburg.

¹¹⁵⁷ Okamoto, *The Japanese Oligarchy and the Russo-Japanese War*, pg. 72.

¹¹⁵⁸ Ibid., pp. 76-77.

¹¹⁵⁹ Kajima, *The Diplomacy of Japan, Volume II*, pg. 99.

8.2.8.2. The First Japanese Treaty Proposal

On 12 August 1903, the Japanese Minister in St. Petersburg, Kurino Shinichirō (1851-1937), presented a document to Foreign Minister Lamsdorff containing Tokyo's vision of an agreement with Russia and contained the following main principles: **Article I**: mutual engagement to respect the independence and territorial integrity of the Chinese and Korean Empires and to maintain the principle of equal opportunity for the commerce and industry of all nations in those countries; **Article II**: Reciprocal recognition of Japan's preponderating interests in Korea and Russia's special interests in railway enterprises in Manchuria, and of the right of Japan to take in Korea and of Russia to take in Manchuria such measures as may be necessary for the protection of their respective interests as above defined; **Article III**: mutual obligation on the part of Russia and Japan not to interfere with each other's industrial and trade actions: Japan in Korea and Russia in Manchuria; **Article V**: Recognition on the part of Russia for the exclusive right of Japan to give advice and assistance in the interest of reform and good government in Korea, including necessary military assistance.¹¹⁶⁰ Tokyo's initial offer to St. Petersburg was very much focused on facilitating the practicalities of an Manchurian-Korean exchange, however, the draft presented by Kurino was tilted heavily towards securing core Japanese interests, as outlined in the Imperial Council of 23 June 1903.

Unbeknownst to the Japanese Foreign Ministry, Minister Kurino presented the draft treaty on the very day that His Majesty Nicholas II had opted to establish the Viceroyalty of the Far East, granting Alekseyev sole power over the negotiations with Japan. This was accompanied by a request to the Japanese Foreign Minister to establish Tokyo as the place for all further negotiations, given the fact that the newly established Russian Office of the Far East required local knowledge to proceed. While agreeing to this Russian request, the Japanese Government "was infuriated at this request as they felt that the Russian Government were treating them as if they were a government of a Russian dependency."¹¹⁶¹ Japanese negotiators never did appreciate the added bureaucratic layer that the Viceroyalty of the Far East imposed upon the negotiation process, deeming them "laborious and almost necessarily protracted."¹¹⁶² The Russian Foreign Ministry, having analyzed the Japanese proposal, concluded that Tokyo sought to recognize Russia's special interests in railways in Manchuria—including a possible connection with the CER and Korean railways (possibly up to the Yalu River)—while simultaneously granting Japan full freedom of action in Korea and reserving for itself the right to interfere in Manchurian affairs. As a response, St. Petersburg opted to propose signing an agreement that focused exclusively on the Korean issue, thereby signaling to Japan that Manchuria, in Russian eyes, lay completely beyond Tokyo's sphere of interests.¹¹⁶³ His Majesty Nicholas II was a staunch supporter of the firm separation of the Manchurian and Korean question, viewing it as desirable to "come with Japan to a real agreement on Korea-based issues."¹¹⁶⁴ The local Russian administration in Port Arthur advocated for a maximalist position, with Far East Viceroy Alekseyev, who the Tsar had placed in charge of

¹¹⁶⁰ For Articles I, II, V see Okamoto, *The Japanese Oligarchy and the Russo-Japanese War*, pp. 79-80; for Articles III see Пак, *Россия и Корея*, pg. 354.

¹¹⁶¹ Kajima, *The Diplomacy of Japan, Volume II*, pg. 103.

¹¹⁶² White, *The Diplomacy of the Russo-Japanese War*, pg. 73.

¹¹⁶³ Пак, *Россия и Корея*, pg. 354.

¹¹⁶⁴ Lukoyanov, Igor, "Russia and Japan in the Late 19th to 20th Centuries: the Road to War and Peace" in Streltsov, Dmitry & Nobuo Shimotomai (eds.), *A History of Russo-Japanese Relations: Over Two Centuries of Cooperation and Competition*, Leiden: Brill, 2019, pg. 67.

drafting Russia's reply, outright refusing to cede the whole of Korea to Japan,. Instead, Alekseyev proposed the creation of a 'neutral zone' between the two powers that would run along the Yalu River basin, forming a buffer area with the deployment of military forces being prohibited.

8.2.8.3. The First Russian Counterproposal and Japanese Reaction

Fifty-two days after Japan presented its first draft treaty, Russian Minister to Japan, Baron Roman Romanovich Rosen (1847-1921), presented St. Petersburg's official reply to Foreign Minister Komura in Tokyo on 3 October 1903. While Russia—respecting the independence and territorial integrity of the Korean Empire—would, via **Article II**, “recognize the predominance of the interests of Japan in Korea and the right of Japan to provide assistance...in the form of improving the civil administration” and, via **Article III**, “oblige Russia not to interfere with the commercial and industrial enterprises of Japan in Korea and not to oppose any measure taken for the purposes of their protection”.¹¹⁶⁵ **Article IV** recognized the right of Japan to send troops to Korea for the same purposes, however, such a move would require explicit Russian consent. Yet, in actuality, Article II-IV would only apply to southern Korea, as **Article VI** established the “mutual obligation to consider the part of Korean territory lying north of the 39th parallel as a ‘neutral’ zone.”¹¹⁶⁶ Furthermore, **Article VII** obliged Japan to recognize that all of Manchuria and its costal islands lay explicitly outside its sphere of influence. The Russian reply, therefore, underlined St. Petersburg's continued insistence on its traditional diplomatic approach to Manchuria, namely that it remained a question that only concerned both Russia and the Qing. Consequently, the Russian counterproposal focused on settling questions regarding political competition between the two Empires solely within the confines of the Korean Peninsula, leaving a window open for the continued pursual of Russian commercial interests along the Yalu River.

Given the overall Japanese negotiation objectives as defined at Murin-An and confirmed by the 23 June 1903 Imperial Council, Foreign Minister Komura reacted to Rosen's draft treaty reply with suspicion, viewing the establishment of any 'neutral' zone in northern Korea as an invitation for the establishment of a de facto Russian protectorate, especially given the pro-St. Petersburg leanings of Emperor Kojong and the presence of Russian timber companies in the Yalu River basin. On 30 October 1903, the Japanese officially responded to Rosen, rejecting most of the treaty articles as proposed by St. Petersburg and, instead, “put forward 11 articles that reflected fundamentally new content.”¹¹⁶⁷ Foreign Minister Komura accepted Russia's request for free navigation through the Korean Straits and the Russian proposal of a neutral zone, however pushed it further to the north, to be located 50 kilometres on either side of the Yalu River (spanning Qing and Korean territory alike). Additionally, Japan consented to recognize that Manchuria lay outside Japan's sphere of 'special interests' upon the conditionality that Russia accord Japan similar rights on the Korean Peninsula, marking a “significant concession on the part of Japan, as it represented a renunciation of her original intention *not* to make any territorial concessions in Korea.”¹¹⁶⁸ The Russians reacted coolly to the Japanese counter-proposal, still viewing the linking of the Korean and Manchurian issues as unacceptable, as Russian troops had been in Manchuria for several years and no Japanese troops were stationed in Korea. Viceroy Alekseyev, upon hearing of the Japanese

¹¹⁶⁵ Пак, Россия и Корея, pg. 355.

¹¹⁶⁶ Ibid.

¹¹⁶⁷ Ibid.

¹¹⁶⁸ Kajima, The Diplomacy of Japan: Volume II, pg. 104.

second draft treaty, ordered the reoccupation of Mukden with 1000 men, expelling the Qing garrison, to display his obvious dissatisfaction.¹¹⁶⁹ This step was one too far for the Russian Tsar who, upon hearing of Alekseyev's moves in Manchuria, immediately cabled his Viceroy informing him that he did "not want war between Russia and Japan" and ordered all measures to be undertaken to prevent this from happening.¹¹⁷⁰ In St. Petersburg, Nicholas II decided therefore to continue negotiations "quietly, but persistently", without making fundamental concessions.¹¹⁷¹ Throughout November 1903, the Russian Tsar took more interest in the negotiations with the Japanese, sidelining the bellicose approach of Viceroy Alekseyev and his administration in Port Arthur and returning the focal point of Russian negotiation strategy to the Court at St. Petersburg for the next move in the negotiations on a possible bilateral Russo-Japanese order in East Asia.

8.2.8.4. Russia's Second Counterproposal and Japan's Final Amendments

On 12 November 1903, Foreign Minister Lamsdorff met Minister Kurino for follow-up discussions but apologized that the proposed adaptations to the Japanese counterproposal could not be presented to the Tsar due to the prolonged illness of the Russian Empress. Japan underlined that Tokyo was ready to recognize that Manchuria lay explicitly outside Japan's sphere of influence, including the recognition of Russia's political rights, in return for Russia doing the same regarding Korea. Kurino stressed that Tokyo was even willing to accept the consideration of a 'neutral zone'—as long as it lay on both sides of the Yalu—on condition that St. Petersburg recognize Japanese political rights over Korea. After several requests from the Japanese Legation in St. Petersburg, Nicholas II personally ordered Japan be sent a formal reply to its proposed amendments. Hence, Minister Rosen presented to Foreign Minister Komura Russia's second counterproposal on 11 December 1903. Russia continued its fundamental approach of considering the Manchurian and Korean questions in isolation, removing all provisions concerning Manchuria, save for explicit references to railways. St. Petersburg offered to remove restrictions on Japanese troops entering the Korean Empire, leaving a demilitarized zone on the 39th parallel as a disputed matter.¹¹⁷² The second Russian counterproposal, therefore, implied that St. Petersburg rejected any *Man-Kan Kōkan* while not proposing any further points of compromise.

The Japanese Government convened a *Genrō* conference, attended by the same mix of elder statesmen and Cabinet members, on 16 December 1903 to discuss the merits of the Russian response. The *Genrō* attempted to argue for a continued conciliatory approach towards Russia, however, these were countered by Foreign Minister Komura, with the conference deciding that no further concessions could be made, and that Japan should formally request Russia "to reconsider its position on the subject" as well as reintroduce Manchuria into the negotiations.¹¹⁷³ Hence, Japan opted to allow Russia some time for further reconsideration of its latest draft treaty. This decision to reject any additional concessions was also accompanied by a surge in pro-war sentiment in Japanese society at large, with the anti-Russian societies presenting a memorial directly to the Meiji Emperor at the *Genrō* conference, underlining that "the maintenance of peace in the East was Japan's sacred mission, that Russia had no intention of negotiating an agreement with Japan,

¹¹⁶⁹ Nish, Ian, *The Origins of the Russo-Japanese War*, New York: Longman Group, 1985, pg. 186.

¹¹⁷⁰ Ibid., pg. 190.

¹¹⁷¹ Lukoyanov, Igor, "Russia and Japan in the Late 19th to 20th Centuries: the Road to War and Peace", pg. 68.

¹¹⁷² Ibid.

¹¹⁷³ Okamoto, *The Japanese Oligarchy and the Russo-Japanese War*, pg. 98.

and therefore the time had come to start fighting.”¹¹⁷⁴ Additionally, with continued Russian expansion of economic activity in northern Korea, combined with St. Petersburg’s refusal to withdraw from Manchuria, Japanese business circles began to voice their concern at being forced out of opportunities in Korea. While not interested in going to war with Russia over Manchuria, they regarded the preservation of Japanese commercial interests on the Korean peninsula as essential. The 1 December 1903 edition of the *Tokyo Asahi Shinbun* mirrored the changing opinion of the business community noting that “the ill-effects of an endless ‘uneasy peace’ are worse than those of a temporary war. This is why people wish to solve the problem swiftly, even if it means war.”¹¹⁷⁵

With the window to peacefully solving the Manchurian and Korean questions—the foundation of any potential Russo-Japanese East Asian order—slowly closing, the Prime Minister Katsura decided that the Manchuria question should be left as much as possible to diplomatic negotiations, and therefore going to war would not constitute a final means for resolving the issues; however, with regards to the Korean question, “Japan would sufficiently explain its revised proposal, and should Russia not accept this, as a last resort, Japan would push through its demands by going to war.”¹¹⁷⁶ Subsequently, Tokyo presented a note verbale to the Russian Government on 23 December 1903. The Japanese proposed to re-formulate Article II of the Russian proposal with what would be its final amendments: “Russia’s recognition of Japan’s predominant interests in Korea and Japan’s right to give Korea advice and assistance in improving the management of the Korean Empire”; as well as pledging not to undertake the construction of military fortifications on the Korean coast.¹¹⁷⁷ The idea of the establishment of a neutral zone should be entirely withdrawn.¹¹⁷⁸ Furthermore, the note verbale made explicit Japan’s insistence upon including Manchuria in any further negotiations.¹¹⁷⁹ This third set of amended Japanese counterproposals underscored that Russia’s draft was unacceptable and hardened Tokyo’s negotiation stance.

The Russian reaction to the Japanese note verbale was mixed. Viceroy Alekseyev continued to advocate a hardline approach, while Foreign Minister Lamsdorff wished to continue negotiations. To coordinate a Russian response the Tsar convened a Ministerial Meeting on 28 December 1903, with Grand Duke Alexei, Minister of War Kuropatkin, and Foreign Minister Lamsdorff in attendance. Kuropatkin strongly advocated for neutralizing Korea above the 39th parallel and insisted upon his traditional line that Russia should consolidate northern Manchuria and not risk war over the south.¹¹⁸⁰ While all in attendance agreed on the desirability of maintaining peace with Japan, the meeting was unable to reach a unanimous consensus regarding Russia’s future approach on any major issue. To attempt to break this impasse, Bezobrazov unconventionally met with the translator of the Japanese Legation in St. Petersburg, Tani Yukata, to explain that the Tsar was “ready to meet Japan’s ambitions in Korea, but not in Manchuria.”¹¹⁸¹ Minister Kurino reacted to this overture by meeting with the now out of favour Witte, criticizing

¹¹⁷⁴ Ibid., pg. 84.

¹¹⁷⁵ Ibid., pg. 92.

¹¹⁷⁶ Katō Yōko, “What Caused the Russo-Japanese War: Korea or Manchuria” in *Social Science Japan Journal*, April 2007, Vol 10, No. 1, pg.101.

¹¹⁷⁷ Пак, *Россия и Корея*, pg. 356.

¹¹⁷⁸ Kajima, *The Diplomacy of Japan, Volume II*, pg. 105.

¹¹⁷⁹ Nish, *The Origins of the Russo-Japanese War*, pg. 202.

¹¹⁸⁰ Ibid.

¹¹⁸¹ Lukoyanov, Igor, “Russia and Japan in the Late 19th to 20th Centuries: the Road to War and Peace”, pg. 69.

Russia's overall policy in East Asia, accusing Russia of trying to stall on reaching an agreement until Russian forces were in a position to impose their will unilaterally. Kurino confessed that Tokyo did not believe that Russia would recognize Japan's presence in Korea through any agreements.¹¹⁸² Foreign Minister Lamsdorff tried to convince Nicholas II that a continued Russian presence in Korea would accord Japan the possibility to demand its rights in Korea through the international community while actively opposing the Russian presence in Manchuria.

8.2.8.5. The Third and Final Russian Counterproposal and the Japanese Amendments

Against this background of conflicting opinions in St. Petersburg, Minister Rosen handed the third Russian reply to the Japanese Foreign Minister on 6 January 1904. The Russian text attempted to find a compromise between Japan's insistence on reinjecting Manchuria into the negotiations while recognizing Russia's 'special interests' over the area. Its most relevant point suggested that "Japan recognizes Manchuria and her littoral as being outside her sphere of influence, while Russia, within the limits of that province, will not impede Japan, or any other power, in the enjoyment of rights and privileges acquired by them under existing treaties with China, exclusive of the establishments of settlements."¹¹⁸³ For the first time, St. Petersburg offered to explicitly respect the international agreement, most probably because Russia was aware of the low level of foreign investment in the area. While this was not the respect for the Open Door policy that the United States and Great Britain had envisioned, it provided—from St. Petersburg's perspective—some degree of compromise. At the same time, Russia asked for a Japanese commitment not to use any part of the Korean Peninsula for 'military purposes.'¹¹⁸⁴ The establishment of a neutral zone, however, remained a main issue of contention, with Russia continuing to insist upon its creation.¹¹⁸⁵

Upon receiving the third Russian proposal, the Japanese were becoming further convinced that Katsura's policy of securing Japanese rights in Korea through military action formed the only viable alternative. Japanese decision-makers saw Russia's new proposals, especially an agreement not to use Korean territory for strategic purposes, as confirming the futility of any further negotiations, validated by the conclusions of an additional Imperial Council of 12 January 1904.¹¹⁸⁶ As per usual practice, the Council included Japan's Elder Statesmen as well as the Katsura Cabinet and Army and Navy General Staffs. The conference passed a resolution that "Russia had made no adequate concession over Korea and had even refused to enter into negotiations over Manchuria, while [Russia] was at the same time trying to build up [its] military strength there."¹¹⁸⁷ Even those Elder Statesmen who had advocated for a negotiated settlement with Russia, such as former Prime Minister Itō, recognized that erecting a bilateral Russo-Japanese order in East Asia, based on respect and understanding of fundamental strategic questions, was no longer possible. Itō retrospectively expressed his disappointment in a memorandum, entitled "*An Account of the Breakdown of Russo-Japanese Negotiations*", penned in February 1904: "There is no question but that Russia's aim was from the start to increase her military and naval forces and

¹¹⁸² Ibid.

¹¹⁸³ Nish, *The Origins of the Russo-Japanese War*, pg. 203.

¹¹⁸⁴ Kajima, *The Diplomacy of Japan*, Volume II, pg. 103.

¹¹⁸⁵ Lukoyanov, Igor, "Russia and Japan in the Late 19th to 20th Centuries: the Road to War and Peace", pg. 70.

¹¹⁸⁶ Okamoto, *The Japanese Oligarchy and the Russo-Japanese War*, pg. 100.

¹¹⁸⁷ Nish, *The Origins of the Russo-Japanese War*, pg. 206.

then reject Japan's demands. In this way [Russia] could fulfil [its] ambitions in Manchuria and Korea without interference. This being so, if Japan does not now go to war and defend her threatened interests, she will eventually have to kowtow to the Russian governor of one her frontier provinces."¹¹⁸⁸ Given such prevailing sentiments in Tokyo, the Imperial Council therefore opted to issue a final proposal to the Russian Government. The Japanese proposal rejected outright a prohibition on the use of Korean territory by the Japanese military, likewise Tokyo refused to consider any creation of a neutral zone—at the same time, Japan offered to recognize that the whole of Manchuria lay outside its sphere of influence, conditional upon St. Petersburg's respect for Chinese territory, with Tokyo additionally calling for recognition of Japan's freedom of action in Manchuria, as well as demanding Russia's acknowledgement that Korea fell outside its sphere of interests.¹¹⁸⁹ Additionally, Japan added a final article that recognized Russia's special interests in Manchuria and its rights to defend those interests, in case of need. Minister Kurino informed the Russian Foreign Ministry that St. Petersburg's reply should not be unduly or unreasonably delayed, with his note concluding that "the Imperial Government further hopes for an early reply from the Imperial Russian Government, since additional delay in the solution of this question will be extremely disadvantageous to the two countries."¹¹⁹⁰

Receiving the modified proposal, the Russian Court once again convoked a special consultation in St. Petersburg at the ministerial level, that was met with confusion and disarray, reflecting the growing uncertainty of Russia's fraying East Asian policy. The majority of attendees supporting to cede Korea over to Japanese interests with the retention of Russia's point on the establishment of a neutral zone. However, the deep divide between Russian high officials as to what actual unified policy St. Petersburg should pursue in the face of the Japanese ultimatum could not be overcome, with Nicholas II's failure to opt strongly for any particular option, save to dispatch orders to the Russian Legation in Tokyo to "possibly keep any article referring to a neutral zone a secret, which the Tsar demanded Minister Rosen in Tokyo persuade the Japanese to sign 'at any cost.'"¹¹⁹¹ In the end, however, the suggestions that were agreed upon did not include any demands regarding a neutral zone.¹¹⁹² History would have it, however, that the Russian consultations would ultimately constitute a moot point. Given the confusion in the Russian Court as to what policy would be most appropriate, Foreign Minister Lamsdorff informed Minister Kurino that he could not guarantee, despite Kurino's insistence on haste, when an official reply would be furnished to Japan. Eventually, however, Kurino was informed on 4 February 1904 that St. Petersburg's reply had been sent to Viceroy Alekseyev who "would not make drastic changes", with Russia agreeing to delete the article concerning the neutral zone as well as the article that would recognize the contract rights of foreigners in Manchuria. Lamsdorff underlined that "Russia hopes to maintain the same principle of the independence and territorial integrity of Korea and at the same time is in need of the free navigation of the Korean Strait. Russia would be willing to make a great as concession as possible, but she does not want to see Korea being utilized for strategic purposes against Russia. As for...firmly establishing amicable relations between Russia and Japan, she believes it useful to set up by agreement a buffer zone...between the two

¹¹⁸⁸ Ibid., pg. 207.

¹¹⁸⁹ Kajima, *The Diplomacy of Japan*, Volume II, pg. 106.

¹¹⁹⁰ Okamoto, *The Japanese Oligarchy and the Russo-Japanese War*, pg. 100.

¹¹⁹¹ Lukoyanov, Igor, "Russia and Japan in the Late 19th to 20th Centuries: the Road to War and Peace", pg. 70.

¹¹⁹² Ibid.

countries.”¹¹⁹³ In the end, such proposals and Russia’s planned amendments never saw the light of day—as three hours before Tokyo received news on the latest update from Lamsdorff, Japan officially severed diplomatic relations with the Russian Empire.

The same day as Lamsdorff was explaining Russia’s delay in providing an official response, 4 February 1904, another Imperial Council was held in the presence of the Meiji Emperor in order to draft the text of the final note to be sent to St. Petersburg. The text read as follows: “As it is intolerable to let the present situation drift any further, the Imperial Government have decided to terminate the pending negotiations and to take such independent actions as they deem necessary to defend their position menaced by Russia and to protect their rights and interests.”¹¹⁹⁴ Kurino was instructed to terminate diplomatic relations with St. Petersburg. The telegram presented to the Russian Foreign Ministry stated that Japan had been obliged to take this decision “as relations between Japan and the Imperial Government of Russia...have become of no value as the result of the failure of their multifarious efforts to make all possible compromises as for the purpose of removing causes of future disputes and of the failure to receive due consideration to the just suggestions that made for a firm and lasting peace in the Far East.”¹¹⁹⁵ The repeated refusal of Russia to recognize Japanese interests, both commercial and military, in Korea, led to the collapse of Japanese efforts to carve out a separate, bilateral order between Tokyo and St. Petersburg. With Russia refusing to accord full Japanese control over Korea, Japan opted instead to pursue its own geopolitical vision in East Asia by military means, rejecting the status quo by means of force.

Despite the surprise and severity of the Japanese move, most Russian officials did not necessarily view that this move signified that war was imminent. Many reactions bordered on outright anger and disbelief: upon being informed of Japan’s decision to rupture diplomatic relations, the Russian Far Eastern administration in Port Arthur expressed its indignation, with the prevailing sentiment underlining that “Japan was not a country that can give an ultimatum to Russia, and Russia could not receive an ultimatum from a country like Japan.”¹¹⁹⁶ Tsar Nicholas II expressed serious alarm at a possible conflict, yet given the confusion and indecision surrounding the formulation of Russian policy towards East Asia, the Russian Emperor adopted a fatalistic attitude, declaring on 6 February 1904: “if it is war, let it be war, if it is peace, so shall it be peace.”¹¹⁹⁷ The Tsar’s sentiments were ultimately not misplaced, as Japan had long begun to cultivate a military solution to defend its perceived regional interests.

8.2.8.6. The Japanese Decision to Go to War

The Japanese had slowly begun to become disillusioned in their attempt to forge a separate, bilateral negotiated order with Russia in East Asia over the course of the negotiations. Following Russia’s second counterproposal that sparked the convening of the 16 December 1903 *Genrō* conference, Japan’s decision makers had given up almost all hope for establishing a bilateral order with Russia in East Asia. Thereafter, the Japanese Government regarded the negotiations “more

¹¹⁹³ Kajima, *The Diplomacy of Japan*, Volume II, pg. 155.

¹¹⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, pg. 153.

¹¹⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, pg. 154.

¹¹⁹⁶ McCormick, Frederick, *The Tragedy of Russia in Pacific Asia*, Volume I, London: Grant Richards, 1909, pp. 45-46.

¹¹⁹⁷ Lukoyanov, Igor, “Russia and Japan in the Late 19th to 20th Centuries: the Road to War and Peace”, pg. 70.

as a means to earn time for military preparations than as serious efforts for a peaceful solution.”¹¹⁹⁸ The continued Russian refusal nourished Japanese growing suspicions that their core interests in Korea, as outlined by Tokyo’s overall strategy, could not be accommodated through the growingly lengthy negotiations with St. Petersburg. Russia’s continued insistence in February 1904 to erect a neutral zone on Korean territory confirmed the futility of further negotiations to Japanese decision-makers.¹¹⁹⁹ On 24 January 1904, the Prime Minister held an audience with the Emperor and reported the following summary of the strategic situation: (1.) should Russia accept the Japanese proposals of 12 January 1904 completely, Japan would not need to start a war; (2.) should Russia reject the Japanese proposals, Japan would have no choice but to commence hostilities against Russia immediately; (3) should Russia accept some of the Japanese proposals and make acceptable concessions, Japan would have to further consider what policy should be followed.¹²⁰⁰ While the Russian Court was mired in internal deliberations as to what policies should be pursued, the Japanese oligarchy interpreted the silence from St. Petersburg as a delaying tactic to enable Russia to better prepare militarily for an impending conflict. *Genrō* Itō, the main proponent of striking a bilateral agreement with Russia, had become so disillusioned with the negotiating process that he remarked that any compromise with Russia would only result in the establishment of a “temporary peace”, while the Chief of Army Staff Ōyama advised the Emperor that it was essential for Japan to strike first.¹²⁰¹

On 4 February 1904 an additional Imperial Conference was held in the presence of the Meiji Emperor and the decision was taken to go to war immediately.¹²⁰² The Japanese decision was heavily influenced by intelligence reports from Siberia, Manchuria, and Korea that the Russian Army had transferred artillery and two battalions of infantry to the Korean frontier. The Russians had additionally asked the Japanese commercial representative in Vladivostok to withdraw to Khabarovsk, in preparation for a possible war. Hence, the decision not only to sever diplomatic relations, but also commence military operations, was issued. The Imperial Conference also issued orders to improve bilateral relations with the United States. Vice-Chief of the Army General Staff, Kodama Gentarō (1852-1906) argued that Japan, following the initiation of hostilities, would be able to carry on the war for an indefinite period, however, a third power would eventually offer its good offices.¹²⁰³ As such, *Genrō* Itō dispatched Harvard-educated lawyer and diplomat Kaneko Kentarō (1853-1942), an old acquaintance of now President Theodore Roosevelt, to the United States to promote good relations between Washington and Tokyo. The Japanese efforts to improve relations with the United States was directly related to Kodama’s reference to eventual third-party mediation, with the Japanese oligarchy viewing the United States as the sole viable candidate. Hence, in initiating war, Japanese decision-makers were already contemplating how to make peace. Yet the question at hand was war. The final decision for Japan to launch a pre-emptive attack was prompted by the conviction that Russian activities in Manchuria represented “a serious threat to Korea and, consequently, the security of Japan.”¹²⁰⁴ Negotiations with Russia proved futile in carving out an acceptable regional order to Japan, hence Tokyo opted to create one itself tailored to its own specifications.

¹¹⁹⁸ Okamoto, *The Japanese Oligarchy and the Russo-Japanese War*, pg. 99.

¹¹⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, pg. 100.

¹²⁰⁰ *Ibid.*

¹²⁰¹ *Ibid.* pg. 101.

¹²⁰² Nish, *The Russo-Japanese War*, pg. 212.

¹²⁰³ Okamoto, *The Japanese Oligarchy and the Russo-Japanese War*, pg. 101.

¹²⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, pg. 102.

8.2.8.7. The Question of Chinese Neutrality

As the clouds of war descended over East Asia in the first months of 1904, Japanese diplomacy was not only active in firming up its good relationship with the United States. As the Japanese military was fully aware that any operations against Russia in East Asia would imply operations on both Chinese and Korean territory—Kodama's overall plan for initial military operations called for "striking first and striking through Korea."—the question of diplomatically managing any eventual Qing and Korean reaction to a regional war breaking out became essential.¹²⁰⁵ A serious concern for the Japanese Government, therefore, was what attitude the Qing would assume once a Russo-Japanese war had broken out. In December 1903, the Japanese Foreign Ministry decided that it would oblige China to adopt a policy of neutrality, dispatching the following instructions to Japanese diplomats stationed in China: "the Cabinet has decided to make China observe neutrality...cautious preparations and resourcefulness are needed in order to make China ostensibly observe strict neutrality while, in practice, supporting [Japan] indirectly without violating neutrality."¹²⁰⁶ There were other consideration than the purely military. Japanese decision-makers were likewise seeking Chinese neutrality in order to prevent any war between Russia and Japan from assuming a regional, or even global, character, concluding "that it was most desirable to confine hostilities to Russia and Japan, otherwise, if China joined in and other powers followed, a world-wide conflagration could not be avoided".¹²⁰⁷ This was not an idle concern. The Russian-French response to signature of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance of 1902 stipulated that Paris or St. Petersburg would come to the other's defence should they be attacked by a third party. Should the Qing, therefore, decide to openly side with Japan against Russia, France would have been obliged to come to its ally Russia's defence. This would, in turn, activate Great Britain on the side of Japan. Given this diplomatic reality based on the constellation of the contemporary treaty system in East Asia, Japan preferred to actively discourage any discussion amongst its decision-makers to encourage any *direct* Chinese intervention. Given the extreme weakness of the Chinese state, it was hardly worth risking world war, as the Qing following the Settlement of 1901, was both diplomatically and militarily "impotent on the world stage", lacking the capacity to seriously prevent any military conflict from spreading onto its territory.¹²⁰⁸

Despite its weakness, as tensions increased between Russia and Japan, China still viewed its primary interests as reclaiming sovereignty over its three eastern provinces under Russian occupation. The Qing viewed siding with Japan as being strategically more advantageous than siding with Russia, yet decided on adopting of policy of neutrality to avoid being attacked by and internal or external enemy sometime around November/December 1903, a timeframe that coincided with Tokyo's diplomatic overtures.¹²⁰⁹ Prince Qing bluntly stated that "while China should logically have negotiated on her own behalf with Japan over Manchuria, she could in the present circumstances see no other course but to observe neutrality in the event of hostilities

¹²⁰⁵ Nish, *The Russo-Japanese War*, pg. 214.

¹²⁰⁶ Kajima, *The Diplomacy of Japan*, Volume II, pg. 176.

¹²⁰⁷ Nish, *The Russo-Japanese War*, pg. 200.

¹²⁰⁸ Stevens, Keith, "Between Scylla and Charybdis: China and the Chinese during the Russo-Japanese War 1904-1905" in *Journal of the Hong Kong Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society*, 2003, vol 43 (2003), pg. 131.

¹²⁰⁹ Hirakawa Sachiko, "Portsmouth Denied: The Chinese Attempt to Attend" in Steinberg (ed.) *The Russo-Japanese War*, pg. 532.

between Russia and Japan.”¹²¹⁰ Yet in late January 1904, the Qing proposed its own solution to looming war. As the Qing was cognizant of its military and political limitations better than anyone, the Court decided to test if China could attempt to prevent a war breaking out through mediation efforts. Chang Poxi, an official of the Ministry of Administration, and Lian Fang, a representative of Viceroy Zhang Zhidong, informally asked the British, French, and US Ambassadors to China for joint mediation.¹²¹¹ The British refused outright; the French displayed interest, while the US Ambassador, Edwin Conger (1843-1907), belittled the Qing initiative, stating that Washington was better informed of the ongoing Russian-Japanese negotiations. Conger also cautioned the Qing against taking any French willingness to agree to Chinese mediation earnestly. Hence, Conger had “no intention of seriously considering China’s request”, leaving China to face the prospect of war breaking out on its own territory with no real means to prevent it.¹²¹²

Following the outbreak of war, therefore, the Qing promptly declared its neutrality on 12 February 1905. The Chinese Government ordered its officials in its eastern provinces to fulfill China’s neutrality policy and commend the protection of foreign property, applying a concept of ‘strict neutrality’ from its understanding of international law. Throughout the hostilities, despite its impotence, China would continue to insist that its neutrality could be applied to the battlefield and covered all of Chinese territory, including Manchuria.¹²¹³ As witnessed by the scale of the engagements that were to take place on Qing territory, Russia and Japan bended the concept of Chinese neutrality to suit their respective Empire’s individual interests.

8.2.8.8. The Question of Korean Neutrality

Korea, however, was less of a straightforward case. As noted, Emperor Kojong had tried in vain to secure the position of Korea as an internationally recognized neutral state. In 1903, Russian diplomats, most notably Minister Pavlov in Korea, Izvolsky in Tokyo, and Cassini in Washington, put forward a plan of the “neutralization” of Korea, jointly guaranteed by Japan, Russia, and the United States.¹²¹⁴ The Japanese were firmly opposed to this idea and convinced Washington to not involve itself in this Russian project. Yet, with the spectre of impending war, it was evident to the Korean Court that its territory would act as its theatre. In August 1903, Emperor Kojong renewed his appeal for securing the neutrality of Korea “so that, if in future war should break out none of the operations will take place within our borders and we should have no bodies of troops marching through our territory.”¹²¹⁵ The Korean Government presented an official note on 3 September 1903, requesting Japan to formally guarantee Korean neutrality in the event of war. As a response, Foreign Minister Komura refused to engage by underlining to the Korean Minister in Tokyo on 26 September 1903 that “[Japan] thinks it unpropitious and also very untimely to discuss warfare and neutrality now.”¹²¹⁶ However, given the serious threat that war would be the result of the protracted Russo-Japanese negotiations, the argument for neutrality within the Korean Court began to break down, with the officialdom splitting into either pro-

¹²¹⁰ Nish, *The Russo-Japanese War*, pg. 214.

¹²¹¹ Hirakawa, “Portsmouth Denied: The Chinese Attempt to Attend”, pg. 535.

¹²¹² *Ibid.*, pg. 535.

¹²¹³ *Ibid.*

¹²¹⁴ Nish., “Stretching out to the Yalu”, pg. 56.

¹²¹⁵ *Ibid.*, *The Russo-Japanese War*, pg. 214.

¹²¹⁶ Kajima, *The Diplomacy of Japan*, Volume II, pg. 129.

Russian or pro-Japanese factions.¹²¹⁷ Emperor Kojong increasingly viewed stronger relations with Russia as Korea's only alternative to safeguarding its independence, going so far as to send a secret message to Russia on 14 November 1903, stating that "in the event of war, we will cooperate with your country's army", calling for "even closer cordial relations at this time of impending crisis for Korea."¹²¹⁸ As a response, Russia commenced to increase the number of soldiers by 120 to protect the Russian Legation in Seoul, a fact Minister Hayashi nervously reported to Tokyo.¹²¹⁹ The traditional friendship Emperor Kojong displayed towards Russia was obviously to Japan's distinct displeasure. With negotiations seeming to collapse, the Japanese Cabinet, meeting on 30 December 1903, ordered the Foreign Ministry to seek out a secret agreement with Korea whereby Korea would 'request' Japanese assistance to ensure the safety of the Korean Royal Family as well as, in case of need, safeguarding Korean independence and the physical safety of the capital, Seoul. The Japanese proceeded, throughout January 1904, to strongarm Korea into signing such an alliance. The Korean Court insisted on concrete assurances from Japan that its sole objective was the safeguarding of the Royal House and the country's independence, given that Korea's previous experience of such guarantees from 1895 [leading to the assassination of Queen Min] were not particularly reassuring.¹²²⁰

Yet on 21 January 1904, all Foreign Ministries of the Foreign Powers received a telegram in French composed by the Korean Foreign Minister, Yi Ji-Yong (1870-1928). Sent from the city of Yantai in China (to circumvent Japanese control over the telegraph system), it underlined a clear stance of Korean neutrality given the contemporary geopolitical tensions: "Given the complications that have arisen between Russia and Japan and, given the difficulties that have been met by the negotiations on a peaceful solution, the Korean Government, by order of his majesty the Emperor, declares that it has taken the firm resolution of observing the strictest neutrality, regardless of the results of the current negotiations between the said Powers."¹²²¹ This was combined by a *démarche* conducted by the 11 Korean Ministers stationed abroad, with some powers, such as Great Britain, agreeing to respect Korean neutrality. At the same time, Russia, the United States, and Japan—countries that were in a position to guarantee Korean neutrality—did not respond at all.¹²²² Nevertheless, this was tantamount to a public declaration, despite all the geopolitical challenges the country faced, on Korean neutrality. The advent of this telegram and the associated *démarches* was uncomfortable for the Japanese Government. Nevertheless, Minister Hayashi in Seoul continued to hammer away at the signature of a bilateral 'alliance' with Korea, securing Korea's signature on 24 January 1904. Emperor Kojong, however, insisted that the agreement's ratification would only take place after Japan had given the necessary assurances regarding Japan's respect for Korean neutrality. Minister Hayashi pleaded with Tokyo to provide such assurances, despite the fact that they contradicted the very essence of the proposed 'alliance'. Given the recent Japanese setback regarding Foreign Minister's Yi Ji-Yong's telegram, however, Tokyo decided to abruptly abandon the conclusion of its 'alliance' with Korea, with Japanese

¹²¹⁷ Lee Sung-Hwan, "Korea's Neutrality Policy and the Russo-Japanese War" in Chapman, John & Inaba Chiharu (eds.), *Rethinking the Russo-Japanese War, 1904-05, The Nichinian Papers*, Volume II, Kent: Global Oriental, 2007, pg. 114.

¹²¹⁸ *Ibid.*, pg. 115.

¹²¹⁹ Duus, *The Abacus and the Sword*, pg. 179.

¹²²⁰ Kajima, *The Diplomacy of Japan*, Volume II, pg. 137.

¹²²¹ *Ibid.*, pg. 138. The Korean telegram was sent to the capitals of Austria, Germany, Great Britain, Italy, China, the United States, Russia, France, and Japan.

¹²²² Lee Sung-Hwan, "Korea's Neutrality Policy and the Russo-Japanese War", pg. 115.

Foreign Minister Komura, writing to Hayashi on 25 January 1904, that “Japan’s position [on Korea] is considerably different from that of Britain, a third power, because Japan is a party directly involved in the present state of affairs. Regarding the pending question of the secret agreement, its conclusion is not considered either of such necessity or of such ultimate interest as to require Japan to risk the world’s misunderstanding of her position and prevent her freedom of action in the future. You will act accordingly.”¹²²³ Repeated Korean inquiries for a clarification of Japan’s position were met with statements that Tokyo did not propose to reply for the time being. In the meantime, the Korean Court had leaked the proposed terms of the secret alliance to Russian Minister Pavlov who, in addition to pressuring King Kojong not to agree, promptly reported them to Tsar Nicholas II who commented that “everything stated [in Pavlov’s report] gives [Russia] a very large pretext for raising the issue of Japan’s ruination, in addition to everything else, of Korea’s inviolability and neutrality.”¹²²⁴ Following its diplomatic failure, Japan was obliged to pursue a military strategy that knowingly and willingly violated Korean territory and sovereignty.

8.2.9. The Course of the Russo-Japanese War

8.2.9.1. The Japanese Surprise Attack

The decision to initiate a surprise attack against Russian positions in China and Korea reflected Japan's conviction of its need to act with the utmost haste. For several days after his sanctioning of military action, the Meiji Emperor could not sleep or eat, “dreading to have to report a defeat to his ancestors...conferring to his wife that it was not his wish to fight Russia and worried about facing his subjects if Japan lost.”¹²²⁵ Despite lingering apprehension’s about their military capabilities to defeat Russia—the Imperial Army calculated that Japan had a fifty-fifty chance of winning the war¹²²⁶—the Japanese Navy, on 8 February 1904, launched a surprise attack against the Russian squadron at Port Arthur, without any formal declaration of war. Simultaneous attacks were launched by the Japanese against Russian vessels in Vladivostok and Palmido Island off Seoul. Following the naval attack near Seoul, the Japanese Army landed an initial force of 2500 soldiers to quickly and efficiently capture the Korean capital. The Japanese tried to win over the Koreans by stating that the amphibious landing “did not take place before a state of war actually existed between Japan and Russia”, a statement based on the specious assumption that breaking diplomatic relations automatically introduces a state of war.¹²²⁷ The Koreans were taken by surprise by the Japanese landing and taking of Seoul. Emperor Kojong expected that an ‘illegal’ dispatch of Japanese soldiers would quickly beckon foreign intervention, but that hope faded rapidly.¹²²⁸ The Russians were caught totally off-guard by the Japanese landing, with Minister Pavlov being evacuated, with Japanese permission, by French ships to Shanghai, placing the Russian Legation under French protection. Following the Japanese seizure of Seoul, Minister Hayashi proceed to cajole Emperor Kojong to sign a separate agreement with Tokyo allowing Japanese forces to undertake military operations on Korean territory.

¹²²³ Ibid., pg. 144.

¹²²⁴ Пак, *Россия и Корея*, pg. 364.

¹²²⁵ Drea, *Japan’s Imperial Army*, pg. 102.

¹²²⁶ Okamoto, *The Japanese Oligarchy and the Russo-Japanese War*, pg. 101.

¹²²⁷ Nish, *The Russo-Japanese War*, pg. 216.

¹²²⁸ Duus, *The Abacus and the Sword*, pg. 181.

8.2.9.2. The Japanese-Korean ‘Alliance’ of February 1905

After two weeks of pressure, the Koreans assented to sign a bilateral protocol with the Japanese. Signed on 23 February 1904, Japan agreed to “guarantee the independence and territorial integrity” of Korea and to “take necessary measures” if the Korean Royal House or the territorial integrity of the country was “endangered by the aggression of a third Power or internal disturbances.”¹²²⁹ In return, the Koreans allowed Japanese forces to occupy strategic areas of the peninsula to achieve the aforementioned goals. Additionally, Korea was strictly forbidden from signing any arrangement with a third power.¹²³⁰ The negotiations conducted between Hayashi and the Korean Court were strictly confidential, so much so that Japanese Privy Council—the administrative organ charged with the scrutinizing of all foreign treaties—were not informed of the treaty until after its signature.¹²³¹ Following the new ‘alliance’, Hayashi proceeded to expel anti-Japanese members of the Korean Court from the country. The public reaction to the treaty was overtly negative: following the leaking of the terms by the Korean-language newspaper *Taeguk Shimmun*, public rallies were held demanding the repudiation of the treaty and dismissal of officials who had signed it.¹²³² Yet the 23 February 1904 agreement marked a breakthrough in Japanese attempts to secure its hegemony over Korea. While other more intrusive agreements would follow, following the treaty’s signature, “the peninsula had come under the military and political protection of Japan.”¹²³³

8.2.9.3. The Official Japanese Declaration of War

The official Japanese declaration of war against the Russian Empire followed belatedly on 10 February 1904. Issued in Tokyo, the Proclamation issued by the Emperor underlined Japan’s strategic concerns that motivated the undertaking of military action and is worth quoting at length: “the integrity of Korea is a matter of constant concern to this Empire...because the separate existence of Korea is essential to the safety of our Realm. Nevertheless Russia, in disregard of her solemn treaty pledges to China and her repeated assurances to other Powers, is still in occupation of Manchuria and has consolidated and strengthened her position and is bent on their final annexation. And since the absorption of Manchuria by Russia would render it impossible to maintain the integrity of Korea and would in addition compel the abandonment of all hope for peace in the Extreme East...We cannot in the least admit that Russia had any serious desire for peace. She has rejected the proposals of Our Government; the safety of Korea is in danger; the vital interests of Our Empire are menaced. The guarantees for the future which we have failed to secure by peaceful negotiations, we can now only seek by an appeal to arms.”¹²³⁴ Imperial Japan, therefore, openly declared its desire to secure its special interests on the Korean peninsula by force, once bilateral negotiations with St. Petersburg resulted in failure. This was to be accomplished by unilateral action, cloaked in a veil of adhering to the respect of ‘international law’ via reference to Russia’s actions in Manchuria and their violation of the Open Door policy.

¹²²⁹ Ibid.

¹²³⁰ Nish, *The Origins of the Russo-Japanese War*, pg. 216.

¹²³¹ Duus, *The Abacus and the Sword*, pg. 181.

¹²³² Ibid.

¹²³³ Nish, *The Russo-Japanese War*, pg. 216.

¹²³⁴ Kajima, *The Diplomacy of Japan*, Volume II, pg. 162.

Following the surprise Japanese attack against Russian forces in East Asia, Minister Rosen in Tokyo cabled the Tsar Nicholas II. His Majesty cancelled the court ball and penned the single phrase “This is absolutely absurd” on the report’s margin.¹²³⁵ The Russian Court, while recognizing that diplomatic relations had been severed, did not view a state of war as *de jure* existing between the two Empires. Thereafter, the Tsar acted swiftly, issuing an Edict of War on 9 February 1904 following a conference attended by Minister of War Kuropatkin, Foreign Minister Lamsdorff and Grand Prince Aleksei. The significant portion of the Tsar’s edict read as follows: “We expressed our consent to the proposal of the Japanese Government to revise the present agreement between the two Empires concerning the Korea problem. However, Japan has informed Russia of her suspension of negotiations and rupture of diplomatic relations even without waiting for the arrival of the latest reply of our Government. The Japanese Government, without giving a warning that this rupture of diplomatic relations meant the opening of warlike actions, has ordered their torpedo boats to attack suddenly our squadron off Port Arthur. Immediately after the receipt of this report from our Viceroy of the Far East, we issued the order to accept Japan’s challenge by force of arms.”¹²³⁶ Minister of War Kuropatkin informed the Tsar that the Japanese landing in Korea would ensure that Japan would remain bogged down in Korea for some time, allowing Russia to harness its military forces in Manchuria, an obligatory decision given Kuropatkin’s skepticism at Russia’s ability to challenge Japanese forces in Korea, with the Minister informing Viceroy Alekseyev that “provided [the Japanese] do not direct their operations against us, you should not take any measures against them, whether in landings in southern Korea or the eastern coast as far as Gensan. But if the Japanese fleet, with or without landing parties, were to cross the 39th parallel on the western coast of Korea, you may attack without warning without waiting for them to fire the first shot.”¹²³⁷ On 20 February 1904, the Tsar appointed Kuropatkin commander of land forces in Manchuria and Vice Admiral Makarov as commander of Russian naval forces in East Asia. The stage was set for all-out war.

In the wake of the surprise Japanese landing at Seoul, additional landings were made by General Kuroki Tamemoto’s (1844-1923) First Army at Suncheon Bay on the southern coast of Korea, also reinforcing the Japanese garrison that had captured the Korean capital. By mid-February, the Japanese Twelfth Division had already reached Pyongyang, whose capture was followed up by additional landings of Japanese troops at Nampo on 13 March 1904. The Japanese forces began to march north towards the Yalu River where Russian and Japanese ground forces in Korea skirmished for the first time on 28 March 1904. Obeying their orders, the Russian Cossacks did not actively engage the Japanese, in an action that set the tone for the entire war.¹²³⁸ Between 30 April-1 May 1904, Kuroki’s First Army defeated the Russians at the Battle of the Yalu River, while pushing the Russians from the banks of the Yalu, the battle had global ramifications for it marked the first occasion where “the Japanese, regarded by many in the West as a quaint little people from an exotic land, had defeated Caucasian troops of a world-class power.”¹²³⁹ Suddenly, stock markets in New York and London displayed unaccustomed confidence in Japan and foreign purchases of Japanese government bonds and offers of loans stimulated the wartime economy. Indeed, the USD 1 billion needed to finance the continued Japanese continental campaign “made

¹²³⁵ Nish, *The Russo-Japanese War*, pg. 218.

¹²³⁶ Kajima, *The Diplomacy of Japan*, Volume II., pg. 164.

¹²³⁷ Nish, *The Russo-Japanese War*, pg. 217.

¹²³⁸ Miyoshi, *The Other Great Game*, pg. 322.

¹²³⁹ Drea, *Japan’s Imperial Army*, pg. 103.

Japan an accepted state on the world's financial markets.”¹²⁴⁰ At the same time, the human cost of the engagement at the Yalu marked a harbinger for battles to come: facing the Russians, Japanese casualties reached over 900—a total that surpassed the amount incurred in the entire First Sino-Japanese War—shocking the Japanese public and obliging the Ministry of War to issue a statement that the high number of casualties were due to “modern weapons technology, not incompetent leadership.”¹²⁴¹

8.2.9.4. The Campaigns in Korea and Manchuria

The Battle of the Yalu was followed in short order, on 5 May 1904, by the landings of the Second Japanese Army under General Oku Yasukata (1847-1930), totaling 39,000 men, on the east coast of the Liaodong Peninsula. They were met with no significant resistance until they reached a line of prepared Russian defences at Nanshan on the narrow neck of the peninsula on 25 May 1904. Only after ten assaults did the Japanese force a Russian retreat, causing an unprecedented 3,817 casualties—so much so that when the officers at Imperial Headquarters in Tokyo received the first official casualty report, they dismissed it as a clerical error.¹²⁴² The Russian casualties, despite their defeat, were estimated at 450. The Battle of Nanshan underlined the dramatic changes that would accompany the conduct of the Russo-Japanese War, illustrating the “great disparity of casualties between attacker and defender in an assault against a well-defended position covered by effective obstacles (mines and barbed wire-fences) and rapid-fire weapons”, a situation more akin to the First World War than anything that had preceded it.¹²⁴³ Nevertheless, the costly Japanese victory at Nanshan severed railway connections between the two major Russian-controlled ports of Dairen and Port Arthur, with the Japanese capturing the former unopposed on 26 May. The Japanese promptly surrounded Port Arthur which had become an epicenter for Russian soldiers and civilians fleeing from Nanshan and Dairen. The lengthy siege of Port Arthur, the headquarters of the Russian Viceroyalty of the Far East, had commenced.

On 19 May 1904, the Japanese Fourth Army under General Nozu Michitsura (1840-1908), with a force totaling 60,000 men, landed on the Manchurian coast at Takushan. The Japanese High Command envisioned having the three Japanese armies in the field march towards the interior and converge on at Liaoyang, where the Russian Manchurian Army was concentrated. In response, Kuropatkin opted to form a defensive line with the 35,000 soldiers and 3,500 cavalry of the First Siberian Army Corps. However, Russian intelligence faced a serious challenge to pinpoint the exact location of the Japanese armies advancing in the field “[Russia] did not know the destination of one-half of the enemy’s army and thus were not in possession of two important pieces of knowledge which were necessary before any operations of a decisive character could be undertaken—namely, the position of the enemy’s main forces and their probable plan of operations.”¹²⁴⁴ In the meantime, a freshly mobilized Third Army, under the command of General Nogi Maresuke (1849-1912) arrived at the newly conquered Dairen in mid-June 1904 to march south and capture the besieged Port Arthur. However, intelligence gaps occurred on the Japanese

¹²⁴⁰ Jacob, Frank, *The Russo-Japanese War and its Shaping of the Twentieth Century*, London: Routledge, 2018, pg. 94.

¹²⁴¹ Drea, *Japan’s Imperial Army*, pg. 103.

¹²⁴² *Ibid.*, pg. 104.

¹²⁴³ Miyoshi, *The Other Great Game*, pg. 346.

¹²⁴⁴ Kuropatkin, Aleksei, *The Russian Army and the Japanese War: Being Historical and Critical Comments on the Military Policy and Power of Russia and on the Campaign in the Far East*, Project Gutenberg, 2019, pg. 215.

side as well, with General Nogi failing to have noticed to substantial improvements to the defences of the city-fortress. On 19 August 1904, Nogi ordered a frontal assault against the Russian Defences at Port Arthur, failing to take the city and resulting in at least 16,000 casualties.¹²⁴⁵ Shortly thereafter, the Japanese assault on the Russian Manchurian Army at Liaoyang (25 August–3 September 1904) resulted in over 23,000 casualties, with General Ōyama being unable to encircle the Russian forces and Kuropatkin managing to organize a retreat in good order.¹²⁴⁶ The high rate of casualties incurred by Japanese forces in their invasion of Manchuria not only stunned public opinion at home, but the “combination of heavy losses and the inability to encircle and destroy the enemy shook Japanese regimental and division commanders’ self-confidence.”¹²⁴⁷ Given the level of carnage seen at Liaoyang, the Japanese First Army’s officers and soldiers anticipated ceasefire negotiations and were crushed when they realized that the campaign was far from over. As a result, discipline suffered to such an extent that the Japanese Army resorted to field gendarmes to drive soldiers into battle.

Despite the massive Japanese investments into military expansion since the Settlement of 1895, that brought about the total amount of mobilized men to 190,000 in 1903, the Japanese were unable to compensate for the sheer scope of losses in Manchuria.¹²⁴⁸ After the Battle of Liaoyang, Japan found it increasingly difficult to supply its units with munitions, with the production capacity of Japanese factories unable to meet the demands of the Manchurian front—a problem only solved through purchases from Krupps in Germany.¹²⁴⁹ The Vladivostok Naval Squadron began to sink Japanese transport ships with all on board on route to the mainland, resulting in a wave of domestic panic. In early October 1904, a surprise Russian offensive was launched against the Japanese Second Army at the Shahe River. In the subsequent battle the Japanese armies once again failed to surround the Russians, however, while an indecisive Japanese victory, losses were heavy: more than 41,000 Russians and 20,000 Japanese fell during the week long battle.¹²⁵⁰ Disease also ran rampant through both armies, with beriberi, typhoid, and dysentery beginning to run rabid and sidelining thousands of more soldiers as both Russian and Japanese armies dug into their positions for trench warfare. Meanwhile, the siege of Port Arthur continued. While the Japanese population was preparing lantern celebrations in honour of a Japanese victory, impatience grew at the slow progress of the Port Arthur operation, so much so that the Meiji Emperor, in October 1904, issued an edict cautioning his subjects against “excessive nationalism and urging that their energies be devoted instead to increased efforts for the war.”¹²⁵¹ Port Arthur, whose siege captivated the attention of the Western press, finally fell to the Japanese on 2 January 1905, at a cost of over 59,000 Japanese casualties.¹²⁵²

8.2.9.5. The Battle of Mukden

In late-January 1905, the Russian High Command, unable to wait for reinforcements from European Russia, attempted to force the Japanese back to Liaoyang, seeking to inflict as many

¹²⁴⁵ Drea, *Japan’s Imperial Army*, pg. 105.

¹²⁴⁶ Ibid.

¹²⁴⁷ Ibid.

¹²⁴⁸ Ibid., pg. 107.

¹²⁴⁹ Okamoto, *The Japanese Oligarchy and the Russo-Japanese War*, pg. 106.

¹²⁵⁰ Drea, *Japan’s Imperial Army*, pg. 108.

¹²⁵¹ Okamoto, *The Japanese Oligarchy and the Russo-Japanese War*, pg. 108.

¹²⁵² Drea, *Japan’s Imperial War*, pg. 108.

casualties as possible. In the ensuing Battle of Mukden, fought between 22 February and 10 March 1905, the Japanese committed everything they had left in Manchuria to action, deploying 250,000 soldiers against 300,000 Russians.¹²⁵³ This marked the largest land force that had been ever assembled in the history of warfare.¹²⁵⁴ Once again, the Japanese forces failed to encircle their Russian opponents and, despite massive losses of 90,000 Russians and 70,000 Japanese, Japan's chronic shortage of ammunition allowed the main Russian army to slip away, locking the Manchurian campaign in stalemate. The ensuing Russian retreat resulted in the Russian officer corps losing complete control of their soldiers, with "the mass of troops retreating from Mukden (more than 300,000 men) not having been given any hot food for days" given the Russian Army's poor handling of the logistic situation, resulting in general chaos on a scale Russia had not seen since its defeat to Sweden at Narva in 1703.¹²⁵⁵ While a Japanese victory, the Battle of Mukden left General Ōyama with the "sobering assessment...that Japan had no means for forcing the Russians to capitulate, short of attacking Moscow or St. Petersburg, which of course was impossible."¹²⁵⁶ The Japanese forces in Manchuria were exhausted, with ammunition shortages, logistic deficiencies, and recent personnel losses so severe that they were unable to collectively muster an attack on the city of Harbin, some 250 miles away. The Russian losses at Mukden compelled Tsar Nicholas II to replace Kuropatkin with General Nikolai Petrovich Linyevich (1839-1908) on 15 March 1905. The new Russian commander, now in charge of forces that outnumbered the Japanese three to one, was determined to search for an opportunity to turn the tides in Manchuria. With most of Russia's forces now consisting of newly arrived crack troops, one more major battle would have finished Japan off.¹²⁵⁷ Yet General Linyevich never struck. Given the disarray following the retreat from Mukden, Linyevich's first task was to restore the faith of his troops in their commanders, which the Russian General Staff viewed as "a tough assignment."¹²⁵⁸ Consequently, Russian forces dug in and awaited the arrival of reinforcements from Europe that would cut off the supplies of the Japanese forces on the mainland, forcing an eventual capitulation.

Following the Battle of Mukden, Tokyo estimated that, in order to pose a challenge to the Russian forces deployed in Manchuria, Japan would have to increase its forces by six divisions and obtain an additional JPY one billion for war expenses.¹²⁵⁹ Taking into account the extreme price of Japan's string of victories in Korea and Manchuria, Chief of the General Staff Yamagata requested the Cabinet to end the war by diplomatic means on 23 March 1905.¹²⁶⁰ On 28 March, the Chief of Staff of the Japanese Manchurian Army Kodama was called to Tokyo by Imperial Order to report the details of the Battle of Mukden to the Emperor, however, his main objective was to urge the Japanese Government to make moves towards peace. After briefing the Emperor, Kodama met with Japanese decision-makers, including the *Genrō*, the Cabinet, and military leaders at Imperial Headquarters. Kodama was dismayed at his perceived ineptitude of the General

¹²⁵³ Paine, The Japanese Empire, pg. 68.

¹²⁵⁴ Miyoshi, The Other Great Game, pg. 385.

¹²⁵⁵ Airapetov, Oleg, "Revolution and revolt in the Manchurian armies, as perceived by a future leader of the White movement" in Heywood, Anthony & Smele, Jonathan (eds.), The Russian Revolution of 1905: Centenary Perspectives, London: Routledge, 2005, pp. 95-96.

¹²⁵⁶ Drea, Japan's Imperial Army, pg. 109.

¹²⁵⁷ Paine, The Japanese Empire, pg. 68.

¹²⁵⁸ Airapetov, "Revolution and revolt in the Manchurian armies", pg. 97.

¹²⁵⁹ Okamoto, The Japanese Oligarchy and the Russo-Japanese War, pg. 109.

¹²⁶⁰ Drea, Japan's Imperial Army, pg. 109.

Staff, chastising them as “stupid”, stating “if one has started a fire, he must put it out. Have you forgotten this?”¹²⁶¹ The Japanese Government, given the military situation, was cognizant of the need to end the war, however resigned themselves nevertheless to a protected conflict unless diplomacy could secure satisfactory peace measures.

8.2.9.6. The Revolution of 1905

In St. Petersburg, Tsar Nicholas II viewed the arrival of the Second and Third Pacific Squadrons as an opportunity to obliterate the Japanese Navy and starve out the beleaguered Japanese forces entrenched in Manchuria.¹²⁶² Dispatched from the Baltic Sea in October 1904, the Russian squadrons made an eight-month, 10,000-mile journey around the Cape of Good Hope to reach East Asia and the zone of hostilities. As Port Arthur had already fallen to the Japanese, the Russian squadron’s final destination could only be the port of Vladivostok, a fact easily discerned by Japanese naval intelligence. On 27-28 May 1905, the Russian squadrons were decisively defeated in the Tsushima Strait where the combined fleet of Vice Admiral Tōgō Heihachirō (1848-1934) sank twelve first-line Russian ships and captured four more.¹²⁶³ Ironically, the Russian defeat on the seas had absolutely no impact whatsoever on the Manchurian front: the Japanese victory at Tsushima, however decisive in concrete terms, had an exponentially greater effect on the undermining of Russian morale.¹²⁶⁴

The succession of increasingly bloody military losses incurred by Russian forces influenced the country’s overall domestic morale, as prophesied by Sergei Witte in the lead-up to the outbreak of war. Indeed, as the war progressed the events of distant East Asia began to have an effect on the internal affairs of the Russian Empire and thereby on the balance of power in Europe as well. Following the Russian defeat at the Battle of Tsushima, anti-war demonstrations broke out throughout the Empire, most notably the crew of the battleship *Potemkin*, the most powerful ship in the Russian Black Sea Fleet, whose crew revolted in June 1905 in Odessa. Underlining the global scope of the Russo-Japanese war, Japanese intelligence based in Europe—most notably through the efforts of Colonel Akashi Motojiri (1864-1919)—actively promoted mutinies amongst the crews of the Russian Navy through clandestine payouts, including in Odessa.¹²⁶⁵ This was part of a wider Japanese effort to ferment internal unrest in Russia through cooperation with radical Russian political movements. By late 1904, Russian recruits began rioting at assembly points in European Russia; while on 22 January 1905, Russian soldiers opened fire on demonstrators in St. Petersburg who came to petition the Tsar to address their growing economic and political grievances. The massacre, known as ‘Bloody Sunday’ would act as a catalyst for further political unrest in Russia that became known as the Revolution of 1905, with the unprecedented scale of the Russo-Japanese War “producing a revolutionary movement that no longer trusted the Tsar, willing to not only change the political situation in Russia, but also to eradicate the former symbol of Russia’s special relationship between ruler and ruled.”¹²⁶⁶

¹²⁶¹ Okamoto, *The Japanese Oligarchy and the Russo-Japanese War*, pg. 111.

¹²⁶² Paine, *The Japanese Empire*, pg. 68.

¹²⁶³ Drea, *Japan’s Imperial Army*, pg. 109.

¹²⁶⁴ Paine, *The Japanese Empire*, pg. 69.

¹²⁶⁵ Walker & Walker, *The Tide at Sunrise*, pp. 522-523.

¹²⁶⁶ Jacob, *The Russo-Japanese War and its Shaping of the Twentieth Century*, pg. 80.

As a response to the unrest, Nicholas II opted to suspend his mobilization decrees in the first half of 1905 to ensure that the newly recruited would not join the political riots. Hence, his majesty the Tsar opted to prioritize domestic stability over his war effort in East Asia. The domestic instability in Russia likewise produced a detrimental effect on the fighting capabilities of the Russian Army on the frontlines. Even those re-enforcements that reached the trenches in Manchuria had their morale severely compromised by their arrival, given the immense distances travelled between European Russia and East Asia: “the [Russian] troops had practically nothing to do on the journey and their most common request, whenever the train stopped, was for something to read. This of course provided a wonderful opportunity for the dissemination of revolutionary propaganda.”¹²⁶⁷ As a result, many reinforcements from Russia arrived extremely demoralized on the front lines. As Viceroy Alekseyev wrote in June 1905 in dismay “were our army not corrupted by the idea that the whole of Russia is yearning for peace, and that it is *pointless* and *hopeless* to fight on, then our position in Manchuria would have to be considered very sound and solid.”¹²⁶⁸ The final defeat for the Russians came with the Japanese invasion on the island of Sakhalin. On 24 June 1905, Lieutenant-General Haraguchi’s (1847-1919) Thirteenth Division landed on the island with 14,000 soldiers and were able to, by 1 August 1905, defeat the rag-tag group of convicts who had been given concessions by the Russian local government to help defend the territory.¹²⁶⁹ This marked the first time that the Japanese had seized territory belonging to the Russian Empire proper. Given the recent domestic turmoil and concern at the impact that another defeat would have on the already abysmal morale of the Russian armies in the field, as well as the immediate threat that Japanese control over Sakhalin posed to Vladivostok, the Russian leadership became open to the prospect of peace negotiations. On 11 July 1905, even before Sakhalin had capitulated, His Majesty Nicholas II formally agreed to peace negotiations.¹²⁷⁰

8.2.10. Negotiations to End the Russo-Japanese War

8.2.10.1. Prelude to the Portsmouth Negotiations

Following the Battle of Mukden, the land campaign ground to a halt—with both sides refusing to go on the offensive. The Japanese pyrrhic victories in Manchuria had given a serious impetus to peace negotiations. US President Theodore Roosevelt (1858-1919) was keenly following the course of the war, especially given his concern of Russian expansionism in Asia and commitment to the upholding of the Open Door policy, as agreed as part of the Settlement of 1901.¹²⁷¹ Already in December 1904, following Roosevelt’s November election victory, the President-Elect was approached by Japanese envoy, Baron Kaneko Kentarō—dispatched explicitly to Washington for this purpose after the decision to go to war had been taken—to discuss the possibilities of bringing hostilities to an end. Roosevelt underlined that “I am in full sympathy with Japan and during my tenure of office my Administration will always respect the interests of Japan...I sounded out the opinion of the Russian Government after [October 1904], telling them it was a good opportunity to make peace, but Russia at the time did not accept my advice...next

¹²⁶⁷ Airapetov, “Revolution and revolt in the Manchurian armies”, pg. 102.

¹²⁶⁸ Ibid., pg. 103.

¹²⁶⁹ Высоков, М.С. (ред.), История Сахалина и Курильских островов с древнейших времен до начала XXI столетия, Южно-Сахалинск: сахалинское книжное издательство, 2008, pg. 372.

¹²⁷⁰ Paine, The Japanese Empire, pg. 70.

¹²⁷¹ Miyoshi, The Other Great Game, pg. 394.

spring a chance might arrive when I might be able to work for the sake of Japan. But this will entirely depend on the progress of the war”.¹²⁷²

Unlike the peace negotiations between the Qing and Japan that led to the Treaty of Shimonoseki, which was a completely regional affair, peace negotiations to end the Russo-Japanese war had global implications. The involvement of the Russian Empire directly involved the balance of power in Europe, ensuring that all contemporary powers took a keen interest in the war's resolution as it would inevitably have a direct effect on the geopolitical situation in Europe, as well as East Asia. Initial discussion with various European and Japanese Ambassadors on the possibility of peace negotiations underlined to President Roosevelt the difficulty of the task, given the complexity of the global political situation, as well as the overall lack of trust that existed between the European Powers. Following consultations between the Russian, Japanese, British, French, and German Ambassadors to the United States, Roosevelt confided to his Secretary of State, John Hay, in April 1905, that the Europeans did “not wish a congress of the powers to settle the Japanese-Russian business. As things are at present I cordially agree”.¹²⁷³ Consequently, bilateral US mediation seemed to serve as the only acceptable manner in which a negotiation process could be launched.

After the Battle of Mukden, President Roosevelt advised the Japanese Government to submit peace terms to St. Petersburg. While the Japanese were in favour of accepting bilateral US mediation efforts, Tokyo refused to lay out its peace terms as military operations were still ongoing, as Japanese Ambassador in Washington, Takahira Kogorō (1854-1926), informed the President: “we believe the time has not yet come for [Japan] to decide upon the final and definite terms of peace, because the terms cannot escape being altered with the progress of war...Unless and until Russia reaches the stage where she expresses her sincere desire for peace, we cannot expect that she has any intention of accepting any terms proposed by Japan.”¹²⁷⁴ Japan proceeded to ask Ambassador Takahira to officially request the United States for assistance in starting peace negotiations on 31 May 1905. At the same time, Roosevelt actively sought out means of gauging a possible reaction from St. Petersburg on the prospects of negotiations. Japan expressed through a third party in London that Tokyo would be ready to have “a private exchange of views”, however such overtures were rejected outright by the Russian Foreign Ministry stating that it would be strange to start negotiations after a military failure.¹²⁷⁵ Furthermore, information reaching the Russian Court that Japan was interested in a negotiated settlement was offset by information coming from the field that Tokyo was approaching both military and financial collapse, with General Linyevich stressing that, following a year and a half of constant attrition, the Japanese armies were exhibiting signs of reaching the breaking point.¹²⁷⁶ On 2 June 1905, President Roosevelt met with the Russian Ambassador to Washington, Arturo Cassini, informing him “that the war was hopeless for Russia and the Russians should look for a way to end the conflict. If national pride prevented Russia from taking the first step, [Roosevelt] was willing to serve as the intermediary to set up talks”; furthermore, the US President stated that St. Petersburg should be

¹²⁷² Kajima, *The Diplomacy of Japan*, Volume II, pp. 202-203.

¹²⁷³ Jacob, *The Russo-Japanese War and its Shaping of the 20th Century*, pg. 91.

¹²⁷⁴ Kajima, *The Diplomacy of Japan*, Volume II, pg. 212.

¹²⁷⁵ Lukoianov, I.O., “The Portsmouth Peace” in Ericson, Steven & Hockley, Allen, *The Treaty of Portsmouth and Its Legacies*, Hanover: University Press of New England, 2008, pg. 44.

¹²⁷⁶ Walker & Walker, *The Tide at Sunrise*, pg. 526.

expected to concede territory and pay an indemnity.¹²⁷⁷ Cassini, unphased by Roosevelt's words, stated that Russia was too great a power to accept defeat, but promised to transfer his message to His Majesty. Hence, Russia opted to play the waiting game, with President Roosevelt expressing his frustration that "no side wanted to take the first step."¹²⁷⁸

Nevertheless, initial exchanges began to take place. St. Petersburg communicated to Washington that any peace terms could not include any Russian territorial concessions and a financial indemnity. The annihilation of the Russian Baltic Sea Fleet at the Battle of Tsushima changed how both St. Petersburg and other European capitals viewed the war. Reacting to Tsushima, a *Zemskii Sobor*—the traditional consultative assembly of the Tsars—was convened on 6 June 1905 to discuss the continuation of the war where Nicholas II declared "now we find ourselves in a situation which, if not desperate, is extremely trying. Our internal welfare is more important than victory. It is imperative to try to ascertain Japan's peace terms immediately."¹²⁷⁹ The Tsar's growing interest in peace was bolstered by pressure from other European capitals, especially Germany, who informed the Russian Court that Berlin had approached Roosevelt about initiating peace negotiations and urged an immediate end to the war. On 7 June 1905, the newly accredited US Ambassador to Russia, George von Lengerke Meyer (1858-1918), was granted an audience with the Tsar where the Russian Emperor agreed to Roosevelt's mediation efforts, after His Majesty Nicholas II informed the American that he had "come at a very psychological moment."¹²⁸⁰ Having secured the tacit consent of both warring parties, the White House, on 9 June 1905, made public its call for direct negotiations to end the war between St. Petersburg and Tokyo under US sponsorship: "The President feels that the time has come when, in the interest of all mankind, he must endeavour to see if it is possible to bring an end the terrible and lamentable conflict now being waged. With both Russia and Japan, the United States has inherited ties of friendship and good will...The President suggests that these peace negotiations be conducted directly and exclusively between the belligerents...without any intermediary."¹²⁸¹ Both Japan and Russia promptly agreed and the stage was set for bilateral negotiations. There was short hesitation regarding the location, with Russia first insisting on The Hague, however quickly thereafter consenting to meet in the town of Portsmouth, New Hampshire, a cooler venue that avoided the "lethal summer heat" of New York or Washington.¹²⁸² Given the lengthy travel time, President Roosevelt announced that the negotiations would commence in the first week of August.

8.2.10.2. The Question of Chinese Participation at Portsmouth

As the process towards initiating peace negotiations to terminate the Russo-Japanese war continued unabated, large scale-operations in Manchuria, given the level of casualties incurred in previous engagements, were suspended with both armies settling down to the monotony of trench warfare. Yet this war between Russia and Japan was being fought exclusively on foreign territory: first Korean, and then, Chinese—with the most sanguineous battles being decided on Qing soil. As with the negotiations on the Open Door Policy on the eve of the Boxer Rebellion, however,

¹²⁷⁷ Esthus, Raymond, *Double Eagle and Rising Sun: The Russians and Japanese at Portsmouth in 1905*, Durham: Duke University Press, 1988, pg. 40.

¹²⁷⁸ Lukoianov, I.O., "The Portsmouth Peace", pg. 45.

¹²⁷⁹ Ibid., pg. 46.

¹²⁸⁰ Walker & Walker, *The Tide at Sunrise*, pg. 527.

¹²⁸¹ Kajima, *The Diplomacy of Japan*, Volume II, pg. 224.

¹²⁸² Lukoianov, I.O., "The Portsmouth Peace", pg. 45.

China was conspicuously absent from the international efforts to bring the war to an official end. Despite its insistence on maintaining neutrality, China incurred serious damages from the industrial-scale battles that took place on its northeastern provinces. Over 20,000 Chinese civilians were killed as the Russian and Japanese armies stormed Manchuria, inflicting over 70 million tael in property damages.¹²⁸³ Violations of Chinese neutrality throughout the war was not limited to Manchuria with Russian forces regularly marching through Xinjiang and Mongolia, even going so far as to expel the small Chinese garrison from Kashgar in January 1905, occupying the city until the end of the war. The fighting destroyed local agriculture, with cultivation having been halted, thereby severely disrupting commercial activities. As a result, cities were filled with corpses, refugees and disease. Consequently, local officials “repeatedly appealed for an immediate armistice and peace to the central government.”¹²⁸⁴

The Qing Court attempted to, as it did before the outbreak of hostilities, stop the war through attempts at instigating outside mediation. In March 1905, Prince Qing and Yuan Shikai approached US Ambassador Conger and requested Washington to take the initiative in starting international arbitration. Furthermore, they asked the US “not to allow unnecessary despoilment of China in terms of the [peace] settlement.”¹²⁸⁵ As with his reply to the Qing’s previous attempts to mediate, Conger furnished Prince Qing and Yuan a superficial answer assuring his interlocutors that Washington “could in future, as in the past, be relied upon to do whatever, as a friend to China, she might properly and legally do to secure [China’s] fair treatment, save her people from spoliation, and protect the international right which she, together with other Powers, had acquired in the Empire.”¹²⁸⁶ Despite such assurances, Conger left his post in Beijing the following week and, unsurprisingly, the Chinese heard nothing more of the matter as President Roosevelt had already opted to offer his good offices exclusively to Japan and Russia. Despite Conger’s dismissal of Chinese concerns, Yuan Shikai remained convinced of Washington’s ability to act as a possible guarantor for future Chinese control over a postwar Manchuria.

As news of the bilateral negotiations in Portsmouth became known to the world, the Qing Court began to formally ask its high-ranking officials to make suggestions toward the coming peace conference and the Manchurian issue.¹²⁸⁷ Prince Qing visited the newly appointed US Ambassador to China, William Rockhill (1854-1914), and underlined Beijing’s strong interest in participating in the upcoming peace negotiations. Prince Qing stressed that the Guangxu Emperor was planning to send an appeal directly to President Roosevelt to request US assistance to secure China’s sovereign rights in any settlement. Rockhill quickly squashed any illusion regarding Chinese participation at Portsmouth, declaring “While the President would be undoubtedly pleased to receive a telegram from the Emperor evidencing His Majesty’s belief in the friendly disposition of [the United States], it did not seem to be at all necessary. The policy of the United States in Far Eastern affairs is well known to him, and to the world generally, by our often repeated declaration in favour of the integrity and independence of the Empire. No new declaration on our part is needed.”¹²⁸⁸ Rockhill continued by underlining the US position that terms involving China’s

¹²⁸³ Paine, *Imperial Rivals*, pg. 245.

¹²⁸⁴ Hirakawa, “Portsmouth Denied: The Chinese Attempt to Attend”, pg. 537.

¹²⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, pg. 538.

¹²⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

¹²⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, pg. 541.

¹²⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

sovereign rights would not be settled at Portsmouth and that Washington took the view that Japan had no inherent desire to expand its territory at the Qing's expense, concluding with the US conviction that "[Japan] would do nothing in the peace negotiations to shake our faith in her."¹²⁸⁹ The US disinterest at Chinese involvement in the peace negotiations, despite the extensive share of Chinese blood and treasure that had been spilt, was attributable to the weakness that US policymakers viewed as endemic in the Chinese state. Rockhill viewed the Qing foreign policy making structures more as a liability to the establishment of a durable peace in East Asia than a contribution to a solid settlement. The US Ambassador did not hide his disdain for the disorder he viewed as reigning in the Qing Empire: "the lack of any settled policy among the high officers of the Chinese government, I refrain from using the word statesman as I fear there is not one to be found in China at the present time, is terribly evident. Indecision and a determination to drift with any current is shown on every side. It is manifest to the most casual observer that China is quite unable to manage her international affairs without strong support and constant pressure from without."¹²⁹⁰ Given such a low opinion of Chinese diplomatic capacity, the United States, despite the ravages done to the country, sought to keep Chinese participation at Portsmouth at arm's length.

Tokyo shared in this assessment; all be it out of its own geopolitical calculations. Given the continental aspirations of Japanese secret societies, such as the *Kokuryūkai*, certain segments of the Japanese diet were interested in securing Tokyo's interests on the Asian mainland following any peace agreement. Japanese patriotic societies remained ready and eager to strengthen Tokyo's position in Manchuria and China.¹²⁹¹ In June 1905, Diet member Hiraoka Kotaro, well known for his advocacy for Japanese expansion in Asia, visited Prince Qing and questioned China's ability to reabsorb Manchuria. Hence, Japanese resistance to Chinese participation was partly based on ensuring that it had a free hand in its negotiations with St. Petersburg on Manchuria, one of the main bilateral negotiation points between the two Empires in the years leading to the outbreak of the war. Before departing for New England, Foreign Minister Komura sent a confidential note to the Japanese Ambassador in Beijing, Uchida Kōsai (1865-1936), reminding his envoy that "no interference and participation [of China] was allowed in the Russo-Japanese negotiations. Matters regarding Chinese interests will be negotiated and decided directly with China at appropriate times."¹²⁹² Uchida was subsequently horrified to discover that the majority Qing officials were in favour of Chinese participation in Portsmouth and had even gone so far as to unofficially appoint a man named Natong, a Manchurian officer at the Chinese Foreign Ministry, as Chinese plenipotentiary, with Natong himself calling on Uchida declaring "Manchuria is China's territory and therefore our participation is different from others'. Other nations as well as Russia and Japan should have no objection."¹²⁹³

Uchida moved to quickly stifle such aspirations and called upon the Chinese Foreign Ministry, whereupon Uchida was informed by Prince Qing that Beijing had abandoned the idea of sending a Delegation to Portsmouth. Instead, China would inform Russia and Japan that the Qing

¹²⁸⁹ Ibid., pg. 542.

¹²⁹⁰ Ibid.

¹²⁹¹ Jansen, *The Japanese and Sun Yat-Sen*, pg. 111.

¹²⁹² Hirakawa, "Portsmouth Denied: The Chinese Attempt to Attend", pg. 541.

¹²⁹³ Ibid., pp. 541-42.

would not approve any China-related articles without previous consultation with Beijing.¹²⁹⁴ The Japanese Foreign Ministry was equally as disturbed at this latest proposition as it had been with the idea of full-fledged Chinese participation. Prime Minister Katsura ordered Uchida to ‘persuade’ China to stop dispatching such letters or else Japan “could not help withdrawing the initial declaration on the restoration of Manchuria and take free action.”¹²⁹⁵ Despite the efforts of Uchida, he could not stop the Chinese Foreign Ministry from sending its letter of inquiry. Prime Minister Katsura was particularly upset at being handed the very letter he had ordered to suppress by Yang Shu, the Chinese Ambassador to Japan. The Guangxu Emperor followed this letter up with a message to President Roosevelt, thanking him for Washington’s staunch support for the Qing’s territorial integrity and hoped that the US would continue to do so during the negotiations. The US answer came from Acting Secretary of State, Herbert Pierce (1849-1916)—and *not* the President—that the “United States is only endeavoring to bring [Russia and Japan] together and will have nothing to do with the negotiations themselves.”¹²⁹⁶ Washington therefore made it clear to China that, not only it did not welcome its participation, but other than continuing to defend the Open Door policy and the territorial integrity of the Qing, the agenda of the Portsmouth negotiations would be left entirely to the two countries warring on Chinese territory.

In the wake of this underwhelming response from the US, China abandoned any further attempts to attend the negotiations or to secure say in any discussions that pertained to Manchuria. Washington’s rationale in actively excluding China stemmed from its view that the Qing simply did not belong to the same Great Power rank, due to its domestic and foreign policy weakness, as did Japan and Russia. Also, Washington’s behaviour, as illustrated by Ambassador Rockhill’s comments, seems to have been motivated by complete faith in Japan’s intentions to completely uphold US interests in China through its respect of the Open Door policy as showcased by the Essay of the Seven Professors. The US hesitation was utilized by Japan, not only to exclude the Qing from peace negotiations, but also to advance its own political and economic interests on the Asian mainland, first and foremost in Korea, but also—given the physical presence of substantial Japanese armies—Manchuria. As with the Open Door Policy of 1899, the Treaty of Portsmouth and the Settlement of 1905, although containing serious implications for China, was one that was signed without direct or indirect Chinese participation or consultation, reflecting the second-rate status the Qing Dynasty had been accorded by the Great Powers in the last years of the Imperial era as an object, and not subject, of the regional system.

8.2.10.3. Governmental Instructions to the Delegations headed to Portsmouth

With the final contours of participation having been decided, the respective governments proceeded to issue their instructions to their Delegations. The Japanese Government appointed Foreign Minister Komura and Ambassador Takahira as plenipotentiaries to the Portsmouth negotiations. *Genrō* Itō, given his experience at Shimonoseki, was the Emperor’s first choice to lead the Japanese Delegation, however, as Itō was unsure the negotiations at Portsmouth could bring peace, he refused. Nicholas II sought to nominate one of Russia’s ambassadors to Europe as head of the Russian Delegation to Portsmouth. At first, the choice fell upon the Ambassador to Russia’s ally France, Aleksander Ivanovich Nelidov (1837-1910), who promptly refused due to

¹²⁹⁴ Ibid., pg. 542.

¹²⁹⁵ Ibid.

¹²⁹⁶ Ibid., pg 545.

poor health. The Tsar subsequently sought the assistance of his former Ambassador to Japan and future Foreign Minister, Alexander Izvolsky, however, he refused to relinquish his current posting in Copenhagen. The Tsar then opted to accord the position to the Russian Ambassador to Italy, Nikolai Valerianovich Muraviyev (1850-1908) as plenipotentiary of his Delegation.

Since July 1904, the Japanese Government had been formulating terms of possible peace, amended several times in the wake of major battles, anticipating that peace negotiations would commence.¹²⁹⁷ Before departing for Portsmouth, on 30 June 1905, the Japanese formulated their final peace terms at an Imperial Council, approved by the Meiji Emperor on 5 July 1905. The instructions handed to Komura were divided into two separate sets of objectives: ‘absolutely indispensable items’ and ‘relatively indispensable items’. Understood as critical Japanese objectives were (1.) Russia acknowledges Japan’s complete right to freedom of action in Korea; (2.) that Russia withdraw its troops from Manchuria within a period to be specified and the same time Japan withdraws its troops from the region; (3.) that Russia cede to Japan the leased area of the Liaodong Peninsula and railway between Harbin and Port Arthur.¹²⁹⁸ Hence, while entrenching its coveted monopoly over Korea, with no thoughts to Open Door policies, Tokyo sought to reverse the humiliation of the Triple Intervention and reclaim what it viewed it had rightly won through the First Sino-Japanese War. The Emperor instructed Komura to obtain the following objectives “insofar as circumstances permit”: (4.) that Russia pay our war expense; (5.) that Russia transfer to Japan all Russian war vessels that have found refuge in neutral harbours; (6.) that Russia cede to Japan Sakhalin; (7.) that Russian grant Japan fishing rights along the coast of Primorskoye Krai.¹²⁹⁹ Should Komura see an opportunity, his instructions advised him to secure the following terms: (8.) to limit Russian naval strength in the Far East; and (9.) the demilitarization of Vladivostok to make it a commercial port.¹³⁰⁰ With such goals, sanctioned by the Imperial Government, Komura set off for New England, ready to re-arrange them according to the fluid demands of diplomatic negotiation as well as his own, hardline convictions of what a final peace should resemble.

In St. Petersburg, Foreign Minister Lamsdorff drafted the instructions for the Russian negotiation team following consultations with the Ministries of War, Navy, Finance and Viceroy Alekseyev. The new Minister of War, Viktor Viktorovich Sakharov (1848-1905), proposed a hardline course, declaring that “in the present circumstances, it is impossible for Russia to conclude peace since it is impossible to admit that Russia would recognize herself as conquered by Japan.”¹³⁰¹ Unless His Majesty the Tsar decided otherwise, Sakharov suggested conceding the possible return of Port Arthur to China and entertained the idea that the Russian railway company sell the Port Arthur-Harbin line. Questions regarding a possible indemnity or territorial concessions were simply not up for discussion. This uncompromising approach was echoed by the Russian Navy that likewise rejected any possible limits placed on Russian forces in the Far East and dismissed any notion of turning over Russian vessels in neutral ports to Japan. The Minister of Finance, Vladimir Nikolaevich Kokovtsov (1853-1943), held a more moderate view—while there should be no cession of territory and no consideration of any indemnity, St. Petersburg should

¹²⁹⁷ Okamoto, *The Japanese Oligarchy and the Russo-Japanese War*, pp. 112-120.

¹²⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, pg. 124.

¹²⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 124-125.

¹³⁰⁰ Kajima, *The Diplomacy of Japan*, Volume II, pg. 234.

¹³⁰¹ Esthus, *Double Eagle and Rising Sun*, pg. 60.

recognize Japanese dominance in Korea, given that the conclusion of peace was, from a financial point of view, extremely desirable.¹³⁰² Alekseyev likewise held a moderate line: he viewed the status ante bellum in Korea as now defunct and unable to be revived; instead Russian goals should focus on ensuring that Manchuria did not fall under Japanese influence. As such, Russian continued control over the Manchurian railway to Vladivostok was essential.

A report summarizing such suggestions was presented by Lamsdorff to the Tsar for his final consideration. Having read the opinions of the various ministries concerned, His Majesty Nicholas II dictated the instructions for the Russian Delegation, writing at the top of the draft “I am ready to terminate by peace a war which I did not start, provided the conditions offered by us befit the dignity of Russia. I do not consider that we are beaten; our army is still intact, and I have faith in it.”¹³⁰³ On 11 July 1905 the final Russian draft instructions were signed by Nicholas II. In line with his overview of the situation, the document underscored that the Delegation was under the “heavy necessity” to make peace *but* that the Tsar would not hesitate to relaunch military action should Japan insist on peace terms that “tarnished the honour and worth of Russia as a great power.”¹³⁰⁴ This translated into the Delegation being ordered to refuse (1.) the cession of Russian territory; (2.) payment of an indemnity; (3.) disarmament of Vladivostok; (4.) imposition of a Russian force limit in East Asia; and (5) the surrender of the railway line to Vladivostok. Hence, most of the terms described as ‘absolutely indispensable’ by the Japanese Imperial Council had already been explicitly rejected by the Tsar. Russia remained ready to recognize Japan’s preponderance in Korea, on condition that Tokyo pledged to recognize its independence. Here, Russia’s instructions aimed at calling out Japan’s loud, public championing of the Open Door policy when addressing the international community and contrasted it against the stark reality of Tokyo’s policy aims towards Korea: “when establishing treaty conditions regarding Korea, one should not lose sight of the unauthorized occupation of Korea by Japanese forces contrary to all provisions of international law and a flagrant violation of its treaty ensuring the independence and inviolability of the Korean state.”¹³⁰⁵ Furthermore, the Russian Delegation was instructed to outright dismiss any attempt by the Japanese to refer to its February 1904 ‘alliance’ with Korea, as the Tsar considered it as having been concluded against the explicit will of the Korean Emperor. Preparing to depart for Portsmouth, therefore, the Russian Delegation’s instructions and demeanour reflected anything but that of a side that had been militarily and morally defeated in battle.

After the Tsar issued his instructions, however, Ambassador Muraviyev abruptly requested that he be relieved from his participation in the negotiations. With experienced candidates running low, Foreign Minister Lamsdorff suggested appointing the former Finance Minister, Sergei Witte, to lead the negotiations in New Hampshire, arguing that “the Japanese could be effectively dealt with only by a delegate who enjoyed indisputable authority in the field of financial politics” and was an expert on East Asian issues.¹³⁰⁶ His Majesty was less than pleased, remarking “anyone but Witte.”¹³⁰⁷ However, he had run out of candidates and had no other choice but to appoint Witte to

¹³⁰² Ibid., pg. 61.

¹³⁰³ Ibid.

¹³⁰⁴ Ibid.

¹³⁰⁵ Пак, *Россия и Корея*, pg. 375.

¹³⁰⁶ Esthus, *Double Eagle and Rising Sun*, pg. 55.

¹³⁰⁷ Walker & Walker, *The Tide at Sunrise*, pg. 528.

head the Russian Delegation, despite his wounded pride. Upon accepting, Witte informed the Tsar that he would ensure that neither an indemnity would be paid nor Russian territory ceded; furthermore, Witte counseled the Tsar that, concomitant with peace negotiations, Russia would seek an agreement with Japan, with St. Petersburg offering Tokyo “assurance of Russian’s friendship and support in the conclusion of some kind of alliance or entente.”¹³⁰⁸ The Tsar agreed wholeheartedly and proceeded to issue Witte the necessary written instructions to achieve this objective. Hence, as Witte departed for Portsmouth, he had the task not only to bring the current hostilities to an end without impugning the honour of the Russian Empire, but also more importantly to continue the bilateral negotiations of 1904, broken off by Japan’s surprise attack, on establishing a bilateral order in East Asia based on mutual respect of St. Petersburg’s and Tokyo’s interests.

8.2.10.4. The Negotiations at Portsmouth

As the Delegations were making their respective way to New England, hostilities continued unabated in East Asia. While the trench warfare of attrition continued in Manchuria, the only major change that effected the trajectory of negotiations upon the Delegations’ arrival at Portsmouth on 8 August 1905 was the Japanese capture of Sakhalin. Hence, upon arrival in New England, Witte and the Russian Delegation were faced with a new situation in which Japan had militarily occupied a piece of Russian territory. While seemingly insignificant, this meant that negotiations would have to focus on determining the fate of what St. Petersburg considered to be its integral territory, despite its status as a penal colony. Such was the situation when the first preliminary meeting was held on 9 September 1905. Witte, despite the capture of Sakhalin, still held fast to the conviction that there were no victors or vanquished in Portsmouth. Komura, however, was intent on extracting the maximum concessions from Russia, as outlined in his instructions from the Imperial Council, especially as regards to a financial indemnity. The Japanese Delegation was especially radical on this point, with special envoy Kaneko confiding to President Roosevelt on the eve of negotiations that Japan should receive JPY one billion six hundred million, or USD eight hundred million.¹³⁰⁹ The high amount shocked the US President, who counselled against towing a hard line. The maximalist position as adopted by the Japanese was, however, anticipated by Witte.

There was therefore no surprise in the Russian Delegation when the Japanese list of 12 peace conditions were presented during the course of the first plenary session. The terms were introduced by Komura as having been determined by the Meiji Emperor “in his desire to restore peace between Russia and Japan for the sake of world peace and humanity...in a spirit of moderation and conciliation”¹³¹⁰ and were as follows—Article I: the acknowledgement of Japan’s preponderance in Korea; Article II: the Russian withdrawal from Manchuria and relinquishing of any Russian rights that impaired Chinese sovereignty or were inconsistent to the principle of equal opportunity; Article III: Japanese reconstruction and reform of Manchuria (“subject to the guarantee of reform and improved administration”); Article IV: Japan and Russia reciprocally respect “any general measure common to all countries, which China may take for the development of commerce and industries in Manchuria”; Article V: Sakhalin and all its properties to be ceded to Japan; Article VI: Russia’s leased territories on the Liaodong Peninsula [Port Arthur and Dairen]

¹³⁰⁸ Ethus, *Double Eagle and Rising Sun*, pg. 64.

¹³⁰⁹ Ibid., pg. 81.

¹³¹⁰ Kajima, *The Diplomacy of Japan*, Volume II, pg. 242.

pass from Russia to Japan; Article VII: Russia transfer to Japan the railway between Harbin and Port Arthur; Article VIII: Russia to retain and work the Trans-Manchurian railway for commercial and industrial purposes; Article IX: Russia to pay Japan an indemnity for the actual expenses of the war, with the exact amount subject to future agreement; Article X: surrender to Japan of Russian warships in neutral harbours; Article XI: Russia to engage to limit her naval strength in the waters of East Asia; Article XII: Russia to grant Japan full fishery rights along the coasts and bay of its East Asian possessions [Sea of Okhotsk and Bering Straits].¹³¹¹

The Russians retired to consider the Japanese conditions. As expected, the Russian Delegation viewed them as “more heavy than anything it was possible to expect”, with Witte underlining the need to prepare a hasty response so as not to create the impression that the Russians had been intimidated by Tokyo’s demands.¹³¹² On 12 August 1905, Witte presented his reply to Komura. Given Witte’s inherent opposition to Russia’s ante bellum Korean policy, he had no problem in conceding Japanese political and economic preponderance in Korea, however, Russia insisted that the rights of the Korean Emperor be respected. Likewise, given that Russia had already committed to Beijing to withdrawal Russian forces (however delayed) in 1902, Witte saw no problem in conceding the second article. Should China approve the transfer of Port Arthur and Dairen to Japanese control, Russia would have no objection. However, on Articles V, IX, X, and XI, Russian consent was impossible. On the issue of Sakhalin (Article V) there could be no compromise as “Sakhalin is only the natural extension of Russian territories in Asia”.¹³¹³ Russia refused to pay an indemnity to Japan (Article IX) and the rationale as explained by Witte in his official reply to Komura is worth quoting at length: “reimbursement of war expenses is only to be made by a conquered country, whereas Russia is not conquered. A country could not consider herself conquered when its territory has scarcely been attacked by the enemy. Even if Japan had taken the entire Maritime Province [Primorskoye Krai] of the Amur, the main Russian forces would not have been destroyed at all and she would continue fighting. Only when a victorious Japan invaded the interior of Russia could the Russian nation comprehend the question of reimbursing war expenses.”¹³¹⁴ The Russian reply also evoked the Congress of Paris which had, in 1856, ended the Crimean War, noting that even after the fall of Sevastopol, the Russian Delegation did not give into the British and French demands to compensate war expenses. As to the surrender of Russian warship in neutral harbours (Article X), the Russian reply simply refused any further consideration, noting the lack in international precedent to justify such demands. Lastly, on the imposition of limits on Russian naval forces in East Asia, St. Petersburg refused as “such an engagement imposed by a foreign Power...would be equally incompatible with [Russia’s] dignity.”¹³¹⁵ As such, Witte openly underlined to his counterpart that, while the Tsar would welcome peace with Japan, he would not do so at any price and certainly not according to the maximalist version of Japanese demands as presented by Komura, as they inherently treated Russia as a vanquished power. Through the Russian reply, Witte highlighted his Delegation’s distinct view of the outcome of the last one and a half years of war: Russia had not lost and was interested in an understanding with Japan on equitable terms.

¹³¹¹ Ibid., pp. 246-247.

¹³¹² Ethus, *Double Eagle and Rising Sun*, pg. 84.

¹³¹³ Kajima, *The Diplomacy of Japan*. Volume II, pg. 250.

¹³¹⁴ Ibid., pg. 252.

¹³¹⁵ Ibid.

Given the fundamental differences on four of the twelve articles, the Delegations had agreed to conduct further plenary sessions in secrecy, addressing each point independently. Komura insisted fiercely on the need for a Russian indemnity to Japan, despite the fact that this objective had not been defined by the Imperial Council as ‘absolutely necessary’ as part of a peace agreement with Russia. The Japanese Foreign Minister’s tenacity could be explained by the dire financial position Tokyo had found itself in following the start of its military campaign in Manchuria. The ongoing war was costing the Japanese treasury USD one million per day, with Japan having no more than USD 200 million to its credit in London and New York, with a full 53 percent of its budget going to war expenses.¹³¹⁶ Prospects of further loans from Western capitals were bleak. Hence, Komura viewed Japan as in desperate need of not only concluding peace to stop the financial bleeding, but to refill its depleted coffers. Komura also displayed similar insistence upon the Russian cession of the whole of Sakhalin to Japan—an item once again that had been deemed by the Imperial Council as non-essential. Discussions continued on the outstanding points, however no signs of compromise emerged, so much so that President Roosevelt sent a personal message to Nicholas II on 21 August 1905 urging the Tsar to accept a compromise solution, partitioning Sakhalin in two at the 50th parallel and Russia agreeing to pay an indemnity to Japan for its evacuation of the northern half. The US Ambassador Meyer followed up his President’s letter by personally appealing to the Tsar in St. Petersburg to acquiesce to Roosevelt’s suggestions. Finally, Nicholas II expressed his willingness to part with southern Sakhalin but, under no circumstances, pay an indemnity. In the meantime, Roosevelt sent a similar appeal to the Meiji Emperor through special envoy Kaneko, pleading him to forego Japan’s demand for an indemnity. Despite the personal intervention of the 26th US President, both Russia and Japan refused to cede to any spirit of compromise.

With stalemate now having descended upon the negotiations, Komura, still pushing forward with his hardline approach, decided that the peace talks had “reached a complete deadlock” and reported to Tokyo his desire to terminate further negotiations at the next plenary session, following the refusal of Russia to concede to Roosevelt’s suggested compromise.¹³¹⁷ Komura’s telegram reached Tokyo on the evening of 27 August and the seriousness of the situation and the threat to break off negotiations compelled the convocation of another Imperial Council. During the discussions between the Cabinet and the *Genrō*, the vulnerability of Japan’s military and financial position was highlighted: under considerable duress, Japan was able to secure new foreign loans to cover war expenses and occupy Sakhalin; nevertheless, Japanese forces were unable to strike a blow against the newly arrived forces of General Linkevich in Manchuria, nor were they able to fully eliminate Russian forces still operating in northern Korea.¹³¹⁸ Despite Komura’s tenacity during the negotiations, his hardline position was not backed up by the military reality of the front. The Chief of Staff of the Manchurian Army Kodama and the Minister of Navy Yamamoto both pushed for Japan to make concessions and conclude peace.¹³¹⁹ The Imperial Council therefore decided that Japan must make peace before its military operations on the Asian mainland disintegrated completely. Negotiations with Russia, therefore, despite St. Petersburg’s refusal to accede to all demands, could not be broken off. On 28 August 1905, the Cabinet telegraphed the following instructions to Komura: “The Government fully understands that it is

¹³¹⁶ Walker & Walker, *The Tide at Sunrise*, pg. 532.

¹³¹⁷ Kajima, *The Diplomacy of Japan*, Volume II, pp. 344-345.

¹³¹⁸ Okamoto, *The Japanese Oligarchy and the Russo-Japanese War*, pp. 152-153.

¹³¹⁹ *Ibid.*, pg. 153.

extremely difficult to continue the negotiations now that Russia has absolutely rejected the compromise proposal. However, the Government, in full consideration of the military and economic situation, and taking account of the fact that the important problems related to Manchuria and Korea constituting the objectives of the war have been settled through your negotiations have decided to make peace now, even if there is no alternative to giving up the two problems of reparations and cession of territory. However, as we think it is appropriate to give up first the claim for reparations while maintaining the demand for the cession of territory, you will propose as follows at the next meeting: *the Japanese Government deeply regrets that the Russian Government does not accept the compromise proposal made at the initiative of the Plenipotentiaries of the two countries. Nevertheless, the Japanese Government, for the sake of humanity and civilization and taking account of the true interests of both Japan and Russia, are prepared to withdraw completely their claim for war reparations as their final concession on condition that Russia will recognize as a fait accompli the Japanese occupation of Sakhalin.*"¹³²⁰ When the Japanese Government received information that Nicholas II was ready to cede southern Sakhalin, the Cabinet's instructions were amended accordingly, presenting this as Japan's "final concession". Upon receiving these instructions, Komura became dejected, muttering "this is what I thought they would tell me" and proceeded to unwillingly obey the Imperial Council's instructions.¹³²¹

In the meantime, His Majesty had grown weary of Japanese intransigence and, on 28 August, the day the Imperial Council was in session in Tokyo, Witte received a telegram from Foreign Minister Lamsdorff, conveying the Tsar's own words: "send Witte my order to end discussion tomorrow in any case. I prefer to continue the war than to await gracious concessions on the part of Japan."¹³²² The Russian Delegation was at odds at what to make of the Tsar's words. Ambassador Rosen viewed them as instructions to break off negotiations. Witte, however, opted instead to repeat a peace offer that included the cession of southern Sakhalin. If nothing more, it would place the onus of the continuation of the war on the Japanese in the event that negotiations were to be broken off. Witte sent his reaction to the Tsar's instructions arguing that "it would be a great mistake for Russia to give the Japanese a way out and accept the guilt in the eyes of the whole world for continuing the war."¹³²³ Sending off his telegram to St. Petersburg, Witte could already gather indications from the growingly somber mood of the Japanese Delegation in Portsmouth that peace on Russian terms could be achieved. Nevertheless, Witte ordered the Russian Delegation to pack their bags and settle their hotel bills.

On 29 August 1905, the Russian and Japanese Delegations met. Witte accepted the new Japanese terms and Komura broke down and wept. With peace achieved, Witte informed the Tsar that "Japan accepted our demands concerning peace conditions. In this fashion peace has been restored thanks to your wise and firm decision and in exact conformity with your demands. Russia will remain a great power in the Far East, the same great power she was until now and which she will always remain."¹³²⁴ His Majesty the Tsar was not pleased at the fact that Witte disobeyed his instructions and insisted upon continuing with one final round of negotiations. Recording in his diary "this night there came a telegram from Witte with news that the negotiations about peace

¹³²⁰ Kajima, *The Diplomacy of Japan*, Volume II, pg. 349.

¹³²¹ Okamoto, *The Japanese Oligarchy and the Russo-Japanese War*, pg. 155.

¹³²² Ethus, *Double Eagle and Rising Sun*, pg. 158.

¹³²³ *Ibid.*, pg. 159.

¹³²⁴ *Ibid.*, pg. 161.

have been brought to an end. All day after that I went around as if in a trance.”¹³²⁵ Nicholas II remained fully convinced that the Russian army remained undefeated and that victory against an exhausted Japan was imminent. The fact that the Tsar could not, in the end, force a Japanese submission by force of arms made him sad. Yet peace had been made and declared to a waiting international community. Hence, Nicholas II, without a word of thanks to Witte, ordered the peace treaty to be signed.

8.3. The Treaty of Portsmouth: The Settlement of 1905

8.3.1. The Terms of the Treaty of Portsmouth

The Russo-Japanese peace treaty was signed at Portsmouth on 5 September 1905. Following Komura’s and Witte’s signature, Ambassador Rosen gave a speech, announcing that “a Peace Treaty has just been signed. It will be engraved on the pages of history and shall never perish. It is not we, the parties directly engaged in concluding this treaty, who can pass judgement over the importance and significance of this treaty. We, as negotiators representing Russia and Japan, can state calmly and in sincerity that we have done everything in our power to restore peace for which the entire civilized world has longed.”¹³²⁶ Komura followed by saying that “the Peace Treaty which we have just finished signing will contribute to humanity and civilization and it is my pleasure to believe that this will bring firm and everlasting peace between the neighbouring empires.”¹³²⁷ Rosen’s and Komura’s words upon the signature of the Treaty of Portsmouth not only represented the necessity of diplomatic protocol following agreement on a major treaty, but reflected what would be the major achievement of what would become the Settlement of 1905, namely a redefinition of the systemic contours of East Asia based on mutual respect and accommodation of Russian and Japanese interests.

The most relevant articles of the signed version of the Russo-Japanese Peace Treaty have been highlighted as follows:¹³²⁸

Article I: There shall henceforth be peace and amity between Their Majesties the Emperor of Japan and Emperor of all the Russias.

Article II: The Imperial Russian Government, acknowledging that Japan possesses in Korea paramount political, military, and economic interests, engage neither to obstruct nor interfere with the measures of guidance, protection, and control which the Imperial Government of Japan may find it necessary to take in Korea. Russian citizens shall be treated in the same manner as the subjects of other foreign Powers. It is also agreed that, in order to avoid all cause of misunderstanding, Japan and Russia will abstain, on the Russo-Korean frontier, from taking any military measure which menaces the security of Russian or Korean territory.

Article III: Japan and Russia mutually engage (1.) to evacuate Manchuria completely and simultaneously except the territory effected by the lease of the Liaodong Peninsula; (2.) to restore

¹³²⁵ Николай II, *Дневник Императора Николая II*, Берлин: Книгоиздат «Слово», 1923, pg. 214.

¹³²⁶ Kajima, *The Diplomacy of Japan*, Volume II, pg. 389.

¹³²⁷ Ibid., pg. 390.

¹³²⁸ The full text of the Treaty of Portsmouth and Additional Articles can be found in *ibid*, pp. 390-399.

entirely and completely to the exclusive administration of China all portions of Manchuria now in the occupation or under the control of the Japanese or Russian troops. The Imperial Russian Government declares that they have not in Manchuria any territorial advantages or preferential or exclusive concessions in impairment of Chinese sovereignty or inconsistent with principle of equal opportunity.

Article IV: Japan and Russia reciprocally engage not to obstruct any general measure common to all countries, which China may take.

Article V: The Imperial Russian Governments transfers and assigns to the Imperial Government of Japan, with the consent of the Government of China, the lease of Port Arthur, Dairen and adjacent territories and territorial waters and all rights, privileges and concessions connected with or forming part of such a lease.

Article VI: The Imperial Russian Government engages to transfer and assign to the Imperial Government of Japan, without compensation and with the consent of the Chinese Government, the railway between Chang-Chun and Port Arthur and all its branches.

Article VII: Japan and Russia engage to exploit their respective railways in Manchuria exclusively for commercial and industrial purposes and in no way for strategic purposes.

Article VIII: The Imperial Governments of Japan and Russia, with a view to promote and facilitate intercourse and traffic, will, as soon as possible, conclude a separate convention for the regulation of their connecting railway services in Manchuria.

Article IX: The Imperial Russian Government cedes to the Imperial Government of Japan in perpetuity and full sovereignty, the southern portion of the Island of Sakhalin. The 50th degree of latitude is adopted as the northern boundary. No fortifications should be constructed on either side's portion of the island.

Article X: It is reserved to the Russian subjects, inhabitants of the territory ceded to Japan, to sell their real property and retire to their country; but, if they prefer to remain in the ceded territory, they will be maintained and protected in the full exercise of their industries and rights of property on condition to submitting to Japanese laws and jurisdiction.

Article XI: Russia engages to arrange with Japan for granting to Japanese subjects rights of fishery along the coasts of the Russian possessions in the Japan, Okhotsk, and Bering Seas.

Article XII: The Treaty of Commerce and Navigation between Japan and Russia having been annulled by the way, the Imperial Governments of Japan and Russia engage to adopt as the basis of their commercial relations, pending the conclusion of a new treaty of commerce and navigation on the basis of the Treaty which was in force previous to the present war.

Based on the above articles, the final version of the Peace Treaty between Japan and Russia, save for the last-minute decision by the Tsar to cede the southern half of Sakhalin, did not differ much from the initial version as proposed by Witte as a response to Komura's maximalist demands.

Through Article II, Tokyo had achieved its long held strategic desire to establish political and economic preponderance on the Korean Peninsula. While Russia secured lip service to protecting its nationals and preventing a militarization of its frontier with Korea, the principles of the Open Door policy were not to be applied to Korea which had become a zone of exclusively Japanese interests. Article III-IV transferred Russia's rights on the Liaodong Peninsula as well as the Russian railways that had, in the lead up to the Russo-Japanese war, been the focal point of Russian interests in China. These articles all, of course, paid the necessary lip service to the illusion that Chinese sovereignty and territorial integrity would be upheld. Yet, as illustrated by Article VII, Russia still maintained its railways in northern Manchuria, keeping the door open to future cooperation between the former enemies as expressed in the coordinating actions of Article VIII. The details of a minor transfer of territory, namely Sakhalin below the 50th parallel, is covered with Article IX and X; while Japanese fishing rights throughout the frigid waters of the Russian Far East was granted through Article XI and a new commercial treaty between St. Petersburg and Tokyo would be established via Article XII. Such were the contours of the Settlement of 1905.

The signature of the Treaty of Portsmouth was heralded as a great event in world history.¹³²⁹ Not only did it bring to a close the largest war that had been hitherto seen in modern times, but it provided clarity on the regional systemic structure—although this would only be fully fleshed out in the years following its signature. The immediate reaction to the Treaty of Portsmouth signature differed greatly in the capitals concerned. Witte returned to St. Petersburg to a lack of fanfare in late September 1905, being met by only a few family members upon arrival. The next day, however, Witte received a personal message from His Majesty Nicholas II, officially welcoming him home “after having brilliantly carried out the mission of first-class state importance”, inviting him to vacation with the Royal Family at Björkö in Russian Finland where Witte was accorded the rank of a Count. The Russian popular opinion, however, was much less appreciative. The St. Petersburg municipal council voted down a motion to hold a celebratory banquet in Witte's honour who soon became to be known in the Russian satirical press as “Count Half-Sakhalin” (*Граф Полусахалинский*), both by social democratic and right-wing journals.¹³³⁰ Yet, despite the mockery of the Russian press, the Court viewed Witte as having extracted a dignified settlement from the dangerous, and expensive, military stalemate that had emerged in Manchuria. While it marked a major reconfiguration of Russia's position and interests in East Asia, Witte's negotiations at Portsmouth ensuring that St. Petersburg would, despite the loss of so much blood and treasure in Manchuria and Korea, remain an important regional player.

Global opinion seemed to also deem Witte's effort in the peace negotiations as a success and victory for the Russian Empire. Kaiser Wilhelm sent Nicholas II a telegram of congratulations. Even Japan's official ally, Great Britain, viewed the negotiations as a triumph of Russian diplomacy, with UK Ambassador to Japan, Claude MacDonald, writing to the Foreign Office “there is no doubt that the R[ussians] have jockeyed our little Allies pretty severely over these peace terms.”¹³³¹ Reporting from New Hampshire, the *New York Times* reported that “the judgement of all observers here, whether pro-Japanese or pro-Russian, is that [Witte's] victory is as astonishing a thing as ever was seen in diplomatic history. A nation hopelessly beaten in every

¹³²⁹ Ethus, *Double Eagle and Rising Sun*, pg. 195.

¹³³⁰ Minin, Oleg, “Art and Politics in the Russian Satirical Press, 1905-1908”, PhD Dissertation, University of Southern California, 2008, pg. 85.

¹³³¹ Miysohi, *The Other Great Game*, pg. 410.

battle of the war, one army captured, and another overwhelmingly routed, with a navy swept from the seas, dictated her own terms to the victors.”¹³³² Along with Witte and the Russian Delegation, the Treaty of Portsmouth raised the global diplomatic standing of its host country, the United States, and its President, Theodore Roosevelt, with the US public at large seeing the signing of the Treaty as a “substantial achievement”.¹³³³

In Japan, while it had been expected that the Japanese Delegation would achieve all of its most important peace terms, the information presented to the Japanese public regarding the course of the war gave the distinct impression that all was proceeding favourably for Japan, with the public having little doubt over Japan’s military supremacy. Censorship throughout the war had left the public unaware of the weak position of the Japanese armies following the Battle of Mukden, a fact which the General Staff and *Genrō* knew well.¹³³⁴ When the terms of the Treaty of Portsmouth were released to the Japanese public, they were met with complete disbelief, leading to the Hibiya Park riots of 5 September 1905, where violent protesters—echoing the anger at the Settlement of 1895—called on the Emperor to reject peace and the treaty’s ratification. The Katsura Cabinet had little choice but to declare martial law to restore order, however, the protests marked a concrete manifestation of popular frustration over yet another botched foreign policy defeat built on the blood of Japanese military victories. Komura—after recovering from an unexpected illness in New England—returned to Japan, disappointed and in fear of his life, and was even given a special security detail after he reassumed his position as Foreign Minister on 18 October 1905, following the treaty’s ratification two days earlier.¹³³⁵

Taking into account the initial reaction to the official end of ‘World War Zero’, this dissertation now proceeds to apply the conditions leading to the establishment of a stable peace and RSO formation to the Settlement of 1905 in order to view whether or not its contours assisted towards stable peace and possible RSO creation.

8.3.2. The Settlement of 1905: Geopolitical Necessity

8.3.2.1. A Shared Sense of Geopolitical Necessity

Viewed from both Tokyo and St. Petersburg, the Settlement of 1905 was born out of geopolitical necessity. The fact that this applied to both victory and vanquished is testament to the ground-breaking nature of the Russo-Japanese War. The scope and nature of “World War Zero” was much more akin to the slaughterhouses of the battles on the Western Front of the First World War than any conflict that had preceded it. By the dawn of the twentieth century, “the second generation of the industrial revolution had made available improved technologies and methods for widespread military application, the sum of which exposed greater masses of manpower to increasingly lethal means in ever more remote locations.”¹³³⁶ Hill 203 outside Port Arthur best exemplifies the new reality of the Russo-Japanese war, one that would act as a harbinger for the century’s future wars. In order to allow Japanese artillery to gain a clear line of fire on the First

¹³³² Walker & Walker, *The Tide at Sunrise*, pg. 535.

¹³³³ Jacob, *The Russo-Japanese War*, pg. 101.

¹³³⁴ Nish, *Japanese Foreign Policy*, pg. 76.

¹³³⁵ *Ibid.*, pg. 77.

¹³³⁶ Steinberg (ed.), *The Russo-Japanese War*, pp. ix-xx.

Russian Pacific Squadron at Port Arthur, General Nogi Maresuke ordered a charge that led, in the span of a few hours on 22 September 1904, to the deaths of 5,000 Japanese soldiers in exchange for a few hundred square meters of useless terrain.¹³³⁷ As the course of the campaign continued, the industrial scale of the combat involved merely increased. Both Russia and Japan engaged in total mobilization and dispatched conscript armies to the Manchurian front, totaling 1,300,000 and 1,200,000 respectively.¹³³⁸ This entailed the creation of the necessary logistical networks to ensure the transportation of these conscripts to the front where the challenge of maintaining more than a quarter million troops on each side remained substantial. As such, the scale of military operations was more akin to what would be witnessed in World War I than anything that warfare had been seen in preceding conflicts. During the Battle of Mukden, which lasted 11 days, 20.11 million rifle and machine gun rounds were spent, and 279,384 shells were fired, totals that exceeded in a single battle, the amount of ammunition consumed over the entire span of the Franco-Prussian War (1870-1871).¹³³⁹ While not approaching the total war that would characterize the ultimate evolution of the First World War, the Russo-Japanese War certainly approached something much more resembling this state than had been experienced before.

8.3.2.2. Peace as a Geopolitical Necessity for Russia

Given the industrial scale of the war, social consequences on the home front were inevitable. As noted, the Russian military—while avoiding a total collapse of their armies in East Asia—did not fare very well, with General Kuropatkin not able to muster a single victory in the string of engagements from Korea to Manchuria. The initial news that Russia had been the victim of a surprise attack by Japanese forces helped unleash a wave of nationalist fever throughout the Empire, with patriotic demonstrations and public prayer meetings for the victory of Russia being organized. Following the outbreak of war, even the usual restive students of the universities of St. Petersburg, Kharkov and Kiev professed public verbal and written statements of loyalty to the Russian Emperor.¹³⁴⁰ This patriotic fervour, however, was short lived: with the Russian public receiving word of defeat after defeat, it did not take long for the overall mood to sour. Given the Russian press's presentation of the Japanese military as no match for the Russian Army, this turn of events was incomprehensible. The repeated defeats Russia experienced in its East Asian battles started the public's inevitable questioning of the reason behind such inexplicable failures, with people becoming convinced that "great Russia was being defeated by little Japan because Russia was inferior, stagnant, and unsuited to conditions of technical progress."¹³⁴¹ The frustration and disbelief at Russia's military performance in East Asia played into the reasons for the outbreak of the Revolution of 1905.

This was not the only reason that tilted the Tsar's mind towards the negotiating table. The costs of waging an industrial war likewise began to cause problems for the Russian Empire. At the beginning of hostilities, the Russian Ministry of Finance calculated that more than 700 million

¹³³⁷ Drea, *Japan's Imperial Army*, pg. 108.

¹³³⁸ Steinberg (ed.), *The Russo-Japanese War*, pg. xx.

¹³³⁹ Tohmatsu Haruo, "Approaching Total War: Ivan Bloch's Disturbing Vision", in Steinberg (ed.), *The Russo-Japanese War*, pg. 191.

¹³⁴⁰ Tsuchiya Yoshifuru, "Unsuccessful National Unity: The Russian Home Front in 1904" in Steinberg (ed.), *The Russo-Japanese War*, pp. 326-327.

¹³⁴¹ *Ibid.*, pg. 332.

rubles could be mobilized, enough for war until January 1905 at a spending rate of two million a day, noting however that should the Russian armies encounter a protracted war, or worse (defeat), then the Empire would be facing bankruptcy in early 1905.¹³⁴² As destiny so ordained, by early 1905, Russia was facing both. With New York and London providing Japan with the necessary capital to continue the war, St. Petersburg was finding available capital increasingly hard to find with its French ally and a sympathetic Germany, especially following the Battle of Mukden, reluctant to accord funds. Sergei Witte began to sound the financial alarm, noting that “[for Russia] to continue the war, we will need much money and a broad draft. Further spending will distort the financial and economic situation in the Empire, the main artery of all states. Poverty increases and, in parallel, anger and depression. Russia will lose her credit rating and all foreign holders of our securities will become our enemies.”¹³⁴³ The Russian leadership, as illustrated at various levels from the Tsar in St. Petersburg to General Lin'yevich, continued to have faith in the Russian Army. Bettered by a string of bloody defeats, still searching for its first military victory, Russia's military remained unbroken in Manchuria. While the Russian troops welcome the arrival of Lin'yevich as the new Commander, the defeat at the Battle of Mukden and the obliteration of the Russian Baltic Fleet at Tsushima, combined with the growing unrest in Russia, began to seriously erode the morale of the Russian armies in Manchuria, even after proving their ability to cohesively re-group after a resounding defeat. As Viceroy Alekseyev underlined after reviewing the front in June 1905, “I have been obliged to meet several of the ne'er-do-wells sent to reinforce our *so-called* infantry regiments, those sent against their will from Russia, believing that they may kill, but not be killed, and preferring any kind of peace to a short continuation of the war.”¹³⁴⁴ The string of seemingly never-ending defeats had sapped the army of its belief in victory, leaving behind a force that was able to defend, but not able to undertake offensive operations.

The sagging morale of Russian forces was accompanied by an equally precarious financial situation. Leaving for the negotiations at Portsmouth, Witte was given a sober briefing on the situation by Grand Duke Nikolai who comparted the following assessment: the Russian Army in Manchuria was now powerful enough that it could no longer undergo defeat such as at Port Arthur or Mukden, however undertaking offensive operations was out of the question; should Russia receive ample reinforcements, the possibility existed that the Japanese could be driven back to Port Arthur and the Korean border—however, “this would require a year's time, a billion rubles, and a cost of 200,000-500,000 wounded and killed.”¹³⁴⁵ While Witte refrained from commenting on the military aspects, he was well aware of the financial implications. The former Finance Minister knew that neither foreign nor domestic loans could cover spending another billion rubles, noting the war was “running up the debt, that the finance minister can no longer raise serious money in Russia, since all means are already exhausted, and no one will give money any longer overseas.”¹³⁴⁶ Continuing the fighting was possible only at the price of complete financial and economic collapse.¹³⁴⁷ Due to geopolitical necessity, therefore, despite holding a theoretical military advantage, stark financial realities also underlined that, for Russia, there was no alternative to peace.

¹³⁴² Ananich, Boris, “Russian Military Expenditures in the Russo-Japanese War, 1904-5” in Steinberg (ed.), Russo-Japanese War, pg. 452.

¹³⁴³ Витте, Сергей Юльевич, Воспоминания, Издательство «СЛОВО», Берлин, 1922, pp. 573–74.

¹³⁴⁴ Airapetov, “Revolution and revolt in the Manchurian armies”, pg. 103.

¹³⁴⁵ Ethus, Double Eagle and Rising Sun, pg. 64.

¹³⁴⁶ Ananich, “Russian Military Expenditures in the Russo-Japanese War”, pg. 458.

¹³⁴⁷ Витте, Воспоминания, Vol. 2, pp. 396-99.

8.3.2.3. Peace as a Geopolitical Necessity for Japan

The situation was not dissimilar regarding Japan's necessity to make peace with Russia. While Japanese morale had been invigorated by their string of victories on land and sea against the Russian foe, they had come at an extremely high cost. The price of victory in a continental war against Russia became strikingly evident following the Battle of Mukden, where alone the Japanese incurred an unprecedented 70,028 casualties out of a total of 182,678 suffered over the span of the entire war.¹³⁴⁸ In the wake of Mukden, the Imperial General Headquarters informed the field commanders that manpower was, in effect, spent and that it could form no more than one or one-and-a-half divisions to replace such immense losses. Further offensive action was, therefore, unthinkable. General Yamagata Arimoto, the grand strategist behind Japan's policy towards Korea, underlined the dire situation that Japan's forces now faced in Manchuria: "First, while the enemy still has powerful forces in [Russia], we have already exhausted ours. Second, while the enemy still does not run short of officers, we have lost a great number since the opening of the war and cannot easily replace them."¹³⁴⁹ With no power to drive the Russians further north towards the Amur, and with questionable ability to resist a possible Russian offensive, military geopolitical necessity behooved Japan to make peace.

Financial considerations also played a role in obliging Tokyo, despite its string of victories, to come to the negotiation table. The Russo-Japanese War cost Japan a total of JPY 1,730,050,000, an expenditure 8.5 times greater than for the Sino-Japanese War, circa seven times more than regular revenues for 1903, and almost twelve times more than the ordinary revenues.¹³⁵⁰ Consequently, the war needed to be financed by domestic and foreign loans, 80 percent of which were secured at high interest rates in New York or London, with Japan's national economy "naturally unable to bear the cost of the war."¹³⁵¹ Japan's heavy reliance on foreign munitions began to exhaust in USD 40 million exchange reserves and the decline of silk prices on the world market by 30 percent hit the Japanese economy hard, leading to "chatter of national bankruptcy."¹³⁵² Nevertheless, from a financial point of view, by the time the negotiations at Portsmouth were in full swing, Tokyo still had enough money to carry on the war for another six months, with USD 175 million of foreign loans remaining unspent.¹³⁵³ It would seem, therefore, that the US desire to secure peace in East Asia through its sponsorship of the Portsmouth negotiations was a driving factor in convincing Japan that, despite its success in garnishing foreign loans from global markets, the money would stop flowing should peace not be made. As noted, during the last week of August 1905, the negotiations were reaching a deadlock, with both sides preparing to break off the talks and depart. On 25 August 1905, Jacob Schiff (1847-1920), head of the New York banking house of Kuhn, Loeb and Co.—a close ally of President Roosevelt and sponsor of major Japanese loans—warned Takahashi Korekiyo (1854-1936), Vice Governor of the Bank of Japan (and future Minister of Finance and Prime Minister), by letter that should "war

¹³⁴⁸ Drea, *Japan's Imperial Army*, pg. 119.

¹³⁴⁹ Paine, *The Japanese Empire*, pg. 70.

¹³⁵⁰ Okamoto, *The Japanese Oligarchy and the Russo-Japanese War*, pg. 127.

¹³⁵¹ Ibid.

¹³⁵² Miller, Edward, "Japan's Other Victory: Overseas Financing of the Russo-Japanese War" in Steinberg (ed.), *The Russo-Japanese War*, Volume I, pg. 470.

¹³⁵³ Ibid., pg. 479.

continue, US and European investors would spurn new issues.”¹³⁵⁴ During the Imperial Council of 28 August 1905 that ordered Komura to abandon Japan’s demand for an indemnity, Finance Minister, Sone Arasuke (1849-1910), reported to the Meiji Emperor that it would be impossible to find additional funding to continue the war.¹³⁵⁵ The Japanese home front, however, did not experience nearly the same degree of turmoil as did the Russian. Despite the unprecedented casualties and monetary cost, “the Japanese people endured these financial and human losses with stoic heroism. No murmur was heard among the people by outsiders.”¹³⁵⁶ Nevertheless, despite a unified home front, both military and financial geopolitical necessity, as reflected in the official Cabinet decision as communicated to Komura, played a role in obliging Japan to make peace.

It is a matter of conjecture as to what would have happened should Russia and Japan not have concluded peace at Portsmouth. Japan could claim victory in the Russo-Japanese war due to her multiple and successive victories against Russian forces on the Asian mainland, topped off by its annihilation of the doomed Russian Baltic Sea Fleet at Tsushima. The decisive campaign on continental Asia, however, descended into stalemate following the Battle of Mukden, with Japan unable to press forward and Russia once again using the depth of its land mass, as it did against Napoleon a century earlier, to reorganize its forces. While the war had, until the summer of 1905, gone decisively in Japan’s favour, the military stalemate that had emerged in Manchuria more closely resembled Witte’s statement of “neither victor nor vanquished”. As illustrated, both sides for military and financial reasons were forced by the condition of geopolitical necessity to make peace. Here, the growing instability in Russia herself, following the Revolution of 1905 and the role that the Russo-Japanese War had in stoking the minor annoyance of domestic resentment, played an additional fact in motivating the Tsar to search for an honourable peace, an issue that was not present in Japan’s geopolitical calculus. Yet, all in all, decision makers in St. Petersburg and Tokyo were equally convinced that their respective armies had reached the end of their capabilities and that no other reasonable option was available other than to sign the Treaty of Portsmouth. To do otherwise for Japan, given the Imperial Army’s inability to launch offensive operations and the numerically superiority of its Russian adversaries by August 1905, could have entailed the loss of Japan’s bloody gains in Korea and China that formed the rationale behind Tokyo’s decision to launch a surprise attack in the first place. For Russia, as noted, the possibility of retaking lost territory in Manchuria and driving Japanese forces into Korea existed, but at an astronomical financial and military cost that would further endanger the already compromised internal harmony of the Empire. Geopolitical necessity obliged both sides to terminate the war.

8.3.2.4. Russia and Japan opt for Unilateral Accommodation

The geopolitical necessity that begot the Treaty of Portsmouth contained an additional element that distinguished the Settlement of 1905 from its predecessors: unilateral accommodation. As highlighted in the State of the Art, a unilateral accommodation takes place under conditions of geopolitical necessity when a state opts to make a gesture of unilateral accommodation towards an adversary on a serious issue of mutual interest. While geopolitical necessity brought the Russian and Japanese Delegations together at Portsmouth, both Russian *and*

¹³⁵⁴ Ibid., pg. 481.

¹³⁵⁵ Okamoto, *The Japanese Oligarchy and the Russo-Japanese War*, pg. 154.

¹³⁵⁶ Ibid., pg. 128.

Japanese gestures of unilateral accommodation not only paved the way for the end of the Russo-Japanese war, but also opened the path to future reconciliation.

In formulating its negotiation position, the Russian Court made very clear the inadmissibility of paying any sort of indemnity to Japan, both for reasons of national pride as well as the purely financial. As seen, there was a clear red line in the negotiation instructions signed by the Tsar and given to Witte's Delegation. The attempted mediation of President Roosevelt himself, attempting to convince Ambassador Rosen on 19 August 1905 to accept submitting the question of reparations to a lengthy process of non-binding arbitration was met with firm Russian rejection.¹³⁵⁷ Proposed compromises on couching the payment of an indemnity through various clever guises (such as Russia paying Japan to return its own territory of northern Sakhalin) did not gain the slightest traction. This sentiment was aptly illustrated in Lamsdorff's final telegram to Witte conveying the Tsar's negotiation instructions when the talks at Portsmouth had reached a breaking point: "His Imperial Highness has said the last word [on the question of reparations], and back from that he will not step."¹³⁵⁸ The matching desire of Komura to extract an indemnity from the Russians to assist in covering Japan's substantial war cost has been highlighted—so much so that by 26 August 1905—both Delegations were ready to break off negotiations and thereby resume hostilities. While Komura presented a hardline front, decision-makers in Tokyo were growing apprehensive that excessive demands would lead to the collapse of negotiations and a resumption of war. Chief of the General Staff Yamagata wrote to the Navy Minister Yamamoto underlining that the Cabinet needed to "take great precautions against Komura bringing negotiations to the breaking points by making excessive demands."¹³⁵⁹ At the Imperial Council of 28 August, Yamagata—who had recently toured the Manchurian front in late July—underlined his pessimistic view of Japan winning another military victory against Russia, a sentiment that was echoed by War Minister Terauchi who declared that the lack of officers meant that war could not be continued. Japan decided for peace. This meant in practice making a gesture of unilateral accommodation to Russia forgoing Tokyo's desire for an indemnity payment. In reality, the Imperial Council had declared its readiness to make an additional gesture, instructing Komura to withdraw Tokyo's demand for Sakhalin, as well as the demand for a financial indemnity, if necessary to make peace.¹³⁶⁰ The Council had realised that such painful concessions would have to be made in order to establish peace and secure the gains that Tokyo had won through its year-and-a-half war against the Russian Empire.

Gestures of unilateral accommodation were not limited to the Japanese side. The Imperial Council's decision to step away from Japanese demands on Sakhalin was not known to the Tsar. On 23 August 1905, in his audience in St. Petersburg with US Ambassador Meyer, Nicholas II had decided to cede southern Sakhalin to the Japanese. Meyer's arguments were based on the fact that Sakhalin had only been officially acquired as Russian territory in 1875, before which it was under Japanese jurisdiction, making it, according to the US Ambassador, as Russian as Port Arthur.¹³⁶¹ This, combined with the threat of a prolonged military campaign where his Empire could theoretically suffer additional military defeats, was sufficient to convince the Tsar that this

¹³⁵⁷ Ethus, *Double Eagle and Rising Sun*, pg. 132.

¹³⁵⁸ Ibid., pg. 150.

¹³⁵⁹ Ibid.

¹³⁶⁰ Ibid., pg. 150.

¹³⁶¹ Miyoshi, *The Other Great Game*, pg. 407.

sacrifice was worth making to ensure peace. Russia's readiness to concede a gesture of unilateral accommodation was cabled by Ambassador Mayer to President Roosevelt. Yet for some unexplained reason, the US President neglected to inform the Japanese Delegation, with whom as a mediator he was in regular contact.¹³⁶² Whatever the reason, only a serendipitous conversation between the Head of the Commerce Bureau, Ishii Kikujiro (1866-1945), and the UK Ambassador to Tokyo, Claude MacDonald, provided the Japanese Government confirmation that the Tsar was ready to compromise on southern Sakhalin. As noted, Komura's instructions were amended accordingly.¹³⁶³ Yet this belated action on the part of the Japanese Government did not alter the fact that the Imperial Council had instructed Komura to abandon any territorial claims on Russia. Instead, the Tsar himself had agreed to undertake a gesture of unilateral accommodation and cede Sakhalin south of the 50th parallel to Japan, regardless of Tokyo's decision to instruct Komura to abandon this claim.

Hence, in response to the crisis during the negotiations at Portsmouth, both the Japanese and Russian Governments, in order to terminate hostilities, opted for the policy of according their foes a gesture of unilateral accommodation on key issues that threatened to derail the signing of a peace treaty. The sole commonality between the decisions of St. Petersburg and Tokyo was their desire to terminate a costly war that had degenerated into a stalemate and could no longer be continued by either side without incurring serious, unknown consequences. There was no synchronization of the Russian and Japanese gestures, each took place independently of the other based on each capital's own geopolitical assessment. Nevertheless, it should be recalled that ,with the nomination of Sergei Witte to head the Russian Delegation at Portsmouth, Nicholas II became convinced of his former Finance Minister's advice to attempt to achieve what the ante-bellum bilateral negotiations had failed to do, namely create a *modus vivendi* between Russia and Japan in East Asia. The mutual gestures of unilateral accommodation through the Treaty of Portsmouth, therefore, not only ended a bloody and costly war, but also marked the first step towards fostering a postwar understanding between the two Empires. Like in all diplomatic treaties, however, the devil is in the details.

8.3.3. The Settlement of 1905: Policy of Reciprocal Restraint

8.3.3.1. Policymakers and the Decision to Engage in a Policy of Reciprocal Restraint

According to stable peace theory, gestures of unilateral accommodation pave the way for the implementation of further tension-reducing policies. The Treaty of Portsmouth laid the foundation for the gradual adoption of policies of reciprocal restraint between Russia and Japan. Witte, despite having fallen out of favour with the Tsar in 1903 over his continued resistance to Russia's expansionist policy in East Asia, had been completely vindicated through his efforts to conclude the war on terms acceptable to Nicholas II. The gestures of unilateral accommodation at Portsmouth, upon which the Settlement of 1905 was constructed, had a longer history. Before departing for the negotiations, the Tsar's instructions on trying to find a political accommodation with Japan in East Asia has been noted. This idea, however, was not the result of a whim, but had its history in the ante-bellum negotiations between St. Petersburg and Tokyo on the creation of a

¹³⁶² Tosh Minohara, "The 'Rat Minister': Komura Jutaro and U.S.-Japan Relations" in Steinberg (ed.), The Russo-Japanese War, Volume II, pp. 561-564.

¹³⁶³ Ibid., pg. 563.

bilateral regional order in East Asia, best exemplified by the proposed *Man-Kan kōkan* exchange. As Witte himself recalls in his memoirs: “I insisted [before dismissal by the Tsar] the Manchurian problem must be solved. I argued that after securing certain guarantees we must evacuate the province. In July 1903, it became a matter of urgent necessity to come to a definite decision regarding the Manchurian situation. At the same time Japan renewed the negotiations with us regarding the division of our respective spheres of influence in Korea and Manchuria...the Japanese proposal was, upon the whole, acceptable.”¹³⁶⁴ As illustrated, the ability of the *Bezobratsovtsy* to convince the Tsar to pursue a hardline course with regards to the Yalu concession, as well as St. Petersburg’s indecisive and ineffective approach to the negotiations, resulted in their ultimate failure through war. Yet the Russian diplomatic victory at Portsmouth not only rehabilitated the reputation of the once disgraced Witte but proved that the idea of a rapprochement with Japan was an idea worthy of consideration.

Witte was not alone in this conviction. Ambassador Rosen, at Witte’s side during the negotiations at Portsmouth, underlined his ardent attempts to achieve a bilateral understanding with Tokyo during his tenure as Russian Ambassador to Japan. He retrospectively lamented St. Petersburg’s “non-acceptance of the perfectly fair and advantageous offer made to [Russia] by the Japanese Government in March 1898 [to divide Korea and Manchuria into distinct Japanese and Russian spheres of influence]”, a refusal that, according to Rosen, was paramount in pushing Tokyo to sign the Anglo-Japanese Alliance of 1902.¹³⁶⁵ Rosen strongly believed that Russian intransigence in refusing this offer played a role in the outbreak of war. Be that as it may, the Russo-Japanese War had changed the scope of what a possible Russo-Japanese rapprochement would look like. The string of military defeats of Russian forces in Korea and Manchuria had not only dispelled any Russian ideas of maintaining influence in Korea, but also forced St. Petersburg to relinquish its hold on the Liaodong Peninsula as well as southern Manchuria. Any rapprochement with Japan would have to be based on such new political realities. The Treaty of Portsmouth was seen as paving a way to attempt to, while recognizing that Russia’s realm of influence in East Asia had changed, achieve post bellum what ante bellum efforts could not. As another former Russian Ambassador to Japan and Foreign Minister as of 1906, Alexander Izvolsky, underlined: “the Treaty of Portsmouth may be considered as favourable to Russia in itself, but that which gave it especial value was its opening the way for a resumption of normal relations with Japan and more than that—a veritable *rapprochement* and even an alliance between the two countries...Count Witte deserves great credit for having foreseen this possibility even before he went to Portsmouth...While nothing was accomplished in that direction at the time, Count Witte had not lost sight of his objective when it came to define the conditions of the treaty, and it was that which gave me the opportunity later, when I was Minister for Foreign Affairs, to pick up the thread of his ideas and to bring about an understanding with Japan which, in its development, bore results so beneficial to Russia”.¹³⁶⁶ Hence, since at least 1898, high ranking Russian policy makers dealing with East Asian affairs had spoken out in favour of coming to a political agreement with Japan on the regional division of respective spheres of influence. As underlined by Izvolsky, the Settlement of 1905 as established at Portsmouth provided a second chance at achieving such goals, albeit with changed political circumstances.

¹³⁶⁴ Витте, *Воспоминания*, Vol. 2, pp. 121-123.

¹³⁶⁵ Rosen, Roman Romanovich, *Forty Years of Diplomacy*, Volume I, London: Allen, 1922, pg. 189.

¹³⁶⁶ Izvolsky, Alexander, *The Memoirs of Alexander Isvolsky: Formerly Russian Minister of Foreign Affairs and Ambassador to France*, London: Hutchinson, 1920, pg. 129.

The Settlement of 1905 left Japan, for the first time in its history, control over significant territories on the Asian continent. The main challenge to Japanese policy makers was how to protect and exploit its war gains. With the formation of a new Cabinet on 7 January 1906 of Prime Minister Saionji Kinmochi (1849-1940), tensions remained high between the former belligerents. Under the new administration, Yamagata therefore began to formulate a comprehensive plan of National Defence that was “based squarely on the [Japanese] conviction that Russia might seek revenge for her defeat.”¹³⁶⁷ On 16 October 1906, the Japanese General Staff presented the “Plan of National Defence for the Empire” (*Teikoku kokubō kōshin*) to the Meiji Emperor. The plan included army-navy joint offensives in the event of war, with Russia to be regarded as the main enemy, either through a direct clash with Japan in East Asia or arising through Japan’s fulfillment of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance in case of a clash between Great Britain and Russia in Central Asia. While China also featured prominently, along with—in the first version—references to the United States, the Japanese military and political leadership viewed the Russian Empire as the nation’s most serious threat to undermine the gains achieved through the Settlement of 1905. As the Japanese military planned for war, the government weighed the possibility of pursuing peace. On 13 April 1906, a confidential document from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs urged that Japan improve its relations with Russia “since the first principle of diplomacy with Russia required that it, as a victor nation, must be open-minded and make Russia forget old grudges and encourage friendship between the two countries.”¹³⁶⁸ Even Yamagata Aritomo argued that a Russian-Japanese partnership should be considered should it not be in contradiction to the terms and spirit of the all-important Anglo-Japanese Alliance. Other geopolitical considerations likewise needed to be taken into account, namely, as Yamagata argued, “Britain [is] about to achieve a better relationship with Russia in Central Asia and the British and American sentiment toward Russia is greatly improved. Such sentiments explain why Japan must attempt to establish lasting peace in the Far East by building a closer relationship with Russia.”¹³⁶⁹

Japan’s first priority in the wake of the Treaty of Portsmouth, however, was focused on securing its newfound gains, both politically and against a Russian Empire that might seek to avenge its defeats. Given the level of Japan’s material and financial exhaustion after the Russo-Japanese war, victorious Japan, by virtue of the scope of its gains from the Settlement of 1905 was obliged to prioritize investments in their infrastructure and security, out of fear of Russian revenge.¹³⁷⁰ *Rapprochement* took a decided back seat to security concerns. The Settlement of 1905 defined the outline of a new geopolitical order in East Asia that Japanese decision makers needed to defend. It did so, however, in wholly negative terms. The provisions of the Treaty of Portsmouth “were almost wholly negative. The two parties here said ‘We will not’. Time and experience were to be required to develop the policy of saying, ‘We will.’”¹³⁷¹ For example, regarding Korea, through Article II Russia surrendered any claim to its national interests on the peninsula,

¹³⁶⁷ Hackett, *Yamagata Aritomo in the Rise of Modern Japan*, pg. 234.

¹³⁶⁸ Kurosawa, “Japanese-Russian Relations after the Treaty of Portsmouth” in Streltsov (ed.), *A History of Russo-Japanese Relations*, pg. 88.

¹³⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 87-88.

¹³⁷⁰ Shulatov, Yaroslav, “The Key Rivalry: Russo-Japanese Relations and International Order in Northeast Asia, 1895-1945” in De Angeli, Aglaia; Robinson, Peter; O’Conner, Peter; Reisz, Emma & Reiko Tsuchiya (eds.), *Competing Imperialisms in Northeast Asia: New Perspectives: 1895-1953*, London: Routledge, 2023, pg. 126.

¹³⁷¹ Batson Price, Ernest, *The Russo-Japanese Treaties of 1907-1916 Concerning Manchuria and Mongolia*, Baltimore: John Hopkins Press, 1933, pg. 24.

recognizing Japan's "paramount political, military, and economic interests" as well as pledging not to interfere with Japan's "guidance protection and control". What exactly these terms meant remained decidedly undefined. Likewise, Article V and VI accorded Japan the right to station troops and assume administrative control over the Liaodong Peninsula, as well as ownership of property and managing a railroad, but the concrete implementation of such elements was left undefined. The world of the Treaty of Portsmouth, therefore, served as an invitation for further future negotiation between St. Petersburg and Tokyo to jointly determine how such articles would be defined.

8.3.3.2. Reciprocal Restraint in Action: Korea

Following the Settlement of 1905, the Japanese moved fast to implement Article II, namely to concretely entrench Japan's political and economic preponderance in Korea that Russia was now bound to respect. As illustrated by the discussions in the Imperial Council where Tokyo opted to abandon its demand for an indemnity, Japanese policy makers were well aware that the country, despite its string of military victories, could not afford to continue, or re-start in the short term, offensive operations against Russia. The consolidations of what had been agreed at Portsmouth was imperative. In doing so, the Kojong Emperor lost one of his remaining levers to help secure Korean independence, namely calling upon Russian diplomatic assistance. The relationship between Kojong and Nicholas II had remained amicable, even during the Russo-Japanese War. Confronted with Japanese forces battling through and overrunning his nominally neutral Empire, Kojong sent a personalized plea to Nicholas II, transmitted through the French Chargé d'Affaires in Seoul, "For five months since the declaration of war, Korea has suffered innumerable disasters from Japan. The trial my state is going through depresses me with grave grief...I firmly hope through the gracious care of Your Majesty, under the generous patronage of Russia, Korea's happiness and prosperity will be ensured and the existing friendly relations between our two countries will become stronger."¹³⁷² The Tsar's reply to the besieged Korean Emperor underlined his continued political interest in the peninsula: "I can assure Your Majesty that the fate of Korea remains dear and close to our hearts and that feelings of friendship and sincere affection...remain unchanged."¹³⁷³ Japan's victory and the terms of the Settlement of 1905 had changed all this. Emperor Kojong could foresee that a Japanese protectorate was on the horizon, leaving the Korean ruler with no choice but to try and secure as many minimal concessions as could be wrought.

On 15 November 1905, *Genrō* Itō met with Kojong to discuss the conclusion of a new, obviously unequal, treaty. Officially known as the Japan-Korea Protectorate Treaty (in Japanese sources dubbed "*Dainiji nikkān kyōyaku*" /第二次日韓協約), the Japanese insisted on total control over Korean affairs, including all responsibility for foreign policy, with Japan assuming all Korean diplomatic and consular presentations abroad. As Korea retained its formal independence, such a provision went contrary to contemporary international law. Another provision allowed Japan the right to name a Resident General at Seoul, having the privilege of being received in private and personal audience by the Korean Emperor.¹³⁷⁴ Despite the Kojong Emperor's last-minute attempts (such as refusing to affix the Imperial seal) to withhold his signature, Kojong and his ministers were forced by Itō, Minister Hayashi and General Hasegawa Yochimichi (1850-1924),

¹³⁷² Пак, *Россия и Корея*, pg. 375.

¹³⁷³ Ibid.

¹³⁷⁴ Batson, *The Russo-Japanese Treaties of 1907-1916*, pg. 28.

Commander of Japanese forces in Korea, to sign the Protectorate Treaty on 17 November 1905. Predictably, the reaction from the Korean public was one of outrage. The patriotic newspaper *Hwangsong Sinmun* distributed tens of thousands of copies of the text all over Korea, leading to petitions to Kojong to reject the treaty and punish the minister who had signed it. On 20 November 1905, Tokyo published an edict in order to announce its actions in Korea to the international community. Due to “the unwise and imprudent actions of Korea more especially in the domain of her international concerns [which had] been the most fruitful source of complications...to permit the present unsatisfactory condition of things to continue unrestrained and unregulated would be to invite fresh difficulties...[Japan, therefore] must take the steps necessary to put an end once and for all to this dangerous situation...[to ensure] the peace and stability of Asia.”¹³⁷⁵

The Russian Government refused to recognize Japan’s protectorate over Korea, with Foreign Minister Lamsdorff attempting to exert pressure on Tokyo regarding its key foreign policy priority. Consequently, the Russian Foreign Ministry insisted that, even after the Settlement of 1905, the recognition of Japan’s dominant interests in Korea did not signify the abolishment of previously signed Russian-Korean bilateral treaties, arguing that the Treaty of Portsmouth still envisaged Korea as an independent country (Article II).¹³⁷⁶ St. Petersburg, on 24 November 1905, officially enquired the United States, France, and Germany as to their respective attitude “towards the new international position of the Korean Empire.”¹³⁷⁷ Two days later, the Tsar received a letter from Lee Beom-jin (1852-1911), Korean Minister in St. Petersburg, composed by Emperor Kojong himself, complaining that the Japanese had, despite his resistance, forcibly made him sign the Protectorate Treaty and ask Russia “to transmit this message for the consideration of the governments of the [European] Powers. I am convinced that they, together with other Powers, will act in accordance with the interests of civilization and human rights.”¹³⁷⁸ The Russian Foreign Ministry passed on Kojong’s message noting that the Korean Emperor still protested the violence carried out by Japan and the violation of the basic tenets of international law that ensure the independence of the Korean state. Responding to the Russian request, St. Petersburg was notified that, from now on, the United States would conduct its diplomatic relations with Korea through the Japanese Ambassador in Washington.

This policy was based on a previous understanding between Japan and United States, reached in July 1905 during the visit to Tokyo of the US Minister of War and future 27th President, William Taft (1857-1930). On route to the Philippines, he met Prime Minister Katsura for a confidential conversation dedicated to the “maintenance of general peace in the Far East” that Taft saw being facilitated by a “good understanding between the three governments of Japan, the United States, and Great Britain.”¹³⁷⁹ Discussing the postwar fate of Korea, Taft, expressing his personal opinion, remarked that “the establishment by Japanese troops of suzerainty over Korea...was the logical result of the present war and would directly contribute to the permanent peace in the

¹³⁷⁵ Miyoshi, *The Other Great Game*, pg. 418.

¹³⁷⁶ Pestushko, Yurii, “The Controversy between Russian and Japan around the Question of the Issuance of Consular Permission”, Conference Paper, Far Eastern State University: Khabarovsk, 2019, pg. 115. (https://www.elibrary.ru/download/elibrary_37302510_73957955.pdf)

¹³⁷⁷ Пак, *Россия и Корея*, pg. 381.

¹³⁷⁸ Ibid.

¹³⁷⁹ Larsen, Kirk & Seeley, Joseph, “Simple Conversation or Secret Treaty? The Taft-Katsura Memorandum in Korean Historical Memory”, *The Journal of Korean Studies*, 19, No. 1 (Spring 2014), pg. 61.

East.”¹³⁸⁰ Katsura also dutifully informed Taft that Japan harboured no aggressive designs whatsoever against the Philippines. This private conversation was subsequently given President Roosevelt’s stamp of approval and its principles were codified as the Taft-Katsura Memorandum. Hence, despite loudly trumpeting the importance of Open Door policies as they applied to China, the US was willing and able to defy applying the same standards to the Korean Empire under contemporary international law. The ‘rules-based-order’ in US foreign policy, applied for some countries, but not to others. By the end of November 1905, all Western powers followed suit and had withdrawn their diplomatic representation from Korea, with US envoy, Edwin Vernon Morgan (1865-1934), leading the way.

As the Western Powers quickly recognized Korea as a Japanese Protectorate, the Russian Foreign Ministry attempted to resume the activity of the Russian Mission in Seoul, which had been expelled by Japanese troops in 1904 and placed under the French flag. This Russian move was left unsupported by the international community, with the Japanese Foreign Ministry informing the Russian Ambassador to Beijing, Dmitri Dmitrivich Pokotilov (1865-1908), that “the Japanese Government would have extreme difficulty agreeing to admit a new representative of a diplomatic nature to Seoul.”¹³⁸¹ Furthermore, the Japanese underlined that both under the May 1904 Japanese-Korean ‘treaty’, as well as Article II of the Portsmouth Treaty, such matters were to be discussed exclusively with Tokyo. St. Petersburg decisively refused these Japanese demands and informed the Japanese Foreign Minister that “in essence, the fact of the abolition of contractual rights by order of one of the parties, who has not entered into war with another, is unprecedented and cannot be justified by legal, or even logical, considerations.”¹³⁸² Consequently, in 1906, the Russian Foreign Ministry continued to insist that the Japanese Foreign Ministry had no legal authority to accredit its appointed Consul to Seoul, Grigorii Antonovich Planson (1859-1937). St. Petersburg tried to solicit support for its approach to maintain existing treaties with Korea amongst the other Powers, only to be told by US Secretary of State, Elihu Root (1845-1937), that Russia’s attempts to revive its status in Korea through its appeal to the validity of abolished treaties as “very interesting”, underlining that, in Washington’s opinion, St. Petersburg was wasting its time as Russia had already conceded Japanese preponderance in Korea at Portsmouth.¹³⁸³ The Japanese viewed the question of its complete suzerainty over Korean foreign policy as a matter of principle, maintaining the steady line in its correspondence with the Russian Foreign Ministry, that Japan exercised sole rights on all matters pertaining to Korean foreign affairs.

Faced with continued Japanese insistence on its hegemony in Korea, and the complete lack of support from the Powers to maintain previously signed treaties with Korea, Russia decided to comply with Tokyo’s request. On 12 May 1906, the Russian Minister communicated the following information to the Japanese Foreign Ministry: from the point of view of international law, the Russian Government could not agree with the fact that accreditation of the Russian Consul in Seoul would be executed from Tokyo, however, “Russia sincerely wants to establish friendly relations with Japan and is therefore ready for issue of accreditation for G.A. Planson from the Japanese

¹³⁸⁰ Ibid.

¹³⁸¹ Пак, Россия и Корея, pg. 385.

¹³⁸² Ibid.

¹³⁸³ Pestushko, Yuri, “The Controversy between Russian and Japan around the Question of the Issuance of Consular Permission”, pg. 117.

Government.”¹³⁸⁴ Despite the tension of bilateral relations following a bloody war, Russian policy makers, while not disputing their recognition of Japanese domination over Korea, opted to relinquish their insistence on accrediting the Russian Consul in Seoul through a now extinct Korean Foreign Ministry. This could be seen, therefore, as representing a first Russian gesture of policy restraint within the context of the Settlement of 1905 on the fundamental issue of Japanese domination over Korea, one where Tokyo would exhibit no compromise. Others would follow.

By 1906, whatever freedom of action Emperor Kojong retained was quickly being eliminated. On 20 January 1906, under the watchful gaze of the local Japanese administration, Emperor Kojong signed a decree abolishing his own Foreign Ministry. In March 1906, Itō Hirobumi was appointed as Korea’s first Resident-General, tasked with bringing about a fundamental institutional and economic transformation of Korea, with the close cooperation of General Hasegawa and his Korean Garrison Army (*Kankoku Chusatsugun*/韓国駐劄軍) of 30,000 soldiers (two divisions) and 100,000 reservists. Seeing the last glimmers of Korean independence fading, Emperor Kojong dispatched another plea to the only nation that had, in some way, insisted upon the nominal independence of his Empire. In the beginning of 1906, Nicholas II received a letter from Kojong which stated “Your Imperial Majesty has graciously thought about Korea and...correctly identified the state of peace in Korea. As for the fate of my lands and subjects, it is impossible not to pay the most serious attention to this. What is constantly on my lips is autonomy and sovereignty. Since the new Korea-Japan treaty was forcibly concluded, the tense situation is increasing every day. Your Imperial Majesty has already thought about the measures to save the independence I possess...”¹³⁸⁵ The Emperor and the Korean elite, therefore, attempted to, through the assistance and possible mediation of Russia, retain some degree of independence for the Korean Empire. Indeed, based on its recent war with Japan and insistence on the bare minimum of at least nominal Korean sovereignty, Russia was the sole nation to which the Korean leadership could make such an embattled appeal.

Yet 1906 brought within it changes within the structure of the Russian Government. In May 1906, Ambassador Izvolsky was nominated by the Tsar as the new Russian Foreign Minister. Heavily influenced by the disaster which the unbridled ambitions of the *Bezobrazovtsy* had wrought to open Russian policy towards East Asia, Izvolsky instated upon a new foreign policy based on “harmony and balance”, believing that Russia’s security could only be ensured if it sought cooperation with all Great Powers, from East Asia to Europe.¹³⁸⁶ Due to his first-hand experience in Japan, Izvolsky recognized and understood the importance of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance, due to factors of international recognition as well as realist power calculations, in Tokyo’s overall strategy. Hence resolving disputes with Great Britain was a major element in ensuring that a foundation for rapprochement with Japan would bear fruit, as the Minister himself declared “For me it was clear that an agreement with Japan was impossible as long as we were in strained relations with its ally, England.”¹³⁸⁷ However, success with London did not necessarily entail the same with Tokyo. A distinct policy of reconciliation would, therefore, have to be pursued. Upon departing for Seoul, in August 1906, Izvolsky conferred the following instructions to Consul

¹³⁸⁴ Ibid., pg. 118.

¹³⁸⁵ Пак, *Россия и Корея*, pg. 384.

¹³⁸⁶ Kurosawa Fumitaka, “Japanese-Russian Relations after the Treaty of Portsmouth”, pg. 88.

¹³⁸⁷ Following lengthy negotiations, Izvolsky was able to realize this goal through the signature of the Anglo-Russian Entente, signed on 31 August 1907, that settled disputes in Tibet, Afghanistan, and Persia.

Planson, underlining that Korea, in the eyes of the Japanese Government, constituted a “sore spot” that cannot be touched if Russia does not want to undermine “trustful relations” with Japan. He ordered Planson to maintain relations with the Korean Government through the Japanese authorities, thereby “sincerely and openly” recognizing Tokyo’s dominance.¹³⁸⁸ Japan both saw, and appreciated, Russia’s gradual abandonment of respect for Korean independence and steps that moved toward full recognition of the Protectorate Treaty. This was underlined in an editorial article published in the Japanese newspaper *Hoshi* (Star): “At one time in Russia, there existed the opinion that the Treaty of Portsmouth was a mere armistice agreement and some facts seemed to confirm this, for example, the position taken by Russia on the question of the Consul General in Seoul and its incomprehensible stubbornness. With the accession of Izvolsky to the post of Minister of Foreign Affairs, the situation immediately changed. He made it clear that he would adhere to a policy of rapprochement with Japan.”¹³⁸⁹ While not breaking off its engagement with the Korean authorities completely, Russian policy began advocating stoic acceptance of the post-1905 situation, with Planson informing Kojong’s confidants who called upon the Russian Consulate to refrain from “careless steps in order to deprive the Japanese a reason for new violent actions” and to rather focus on “preserving a share of personal independence”.¹³⁹⁰

With Izvolsky as Foreign Minister, the course was firmly set towards reconciliation through Russia’s unilateral changing of course on its postwar policy towards the Korean Peninsula. As Russia began to gradually signal its acceptance of the Japanese approach to Korea, Tokyo began to increase the pressure on what little remained of Kojong’s independence. On 3 July 1907, a telegram was received in Seoul to herald the arrival of a group of three Koreans at the Second Hague Conference, a forum to address the conduct of warfare and settlements of international disputes. The Conference would bring together delegates from 44 countries, including 17 from Central and South America, and Kojong took the decision to send his representatives to the Hague to rekindle direct diplomatic relations between Korea and a plethora of international states. The Korean would-be delegates were instructed to “notify the other powers about Japan’s infringements of [Kojong’s] rights” and to restore direct exchanges between Korea and other powers, “which was Korea’s right as an independent country.”¹³⁹¹ The beleaguered Emperor Kojong was convinced that the international community would swiftly come to Korea’s aid and secure its independence once it had been presented with the full facts surrounding Japan’s policy and oblige Tokyo to renounce its treaty. Kojong’s optimism was gravely misplaced. When Russian Foreign Minister Izvolsky was informed about the Korean mission, he dispatched an urgent message to Ambassador Nedilov, Russian Ambassador to France and President of the Second Hague Conference, instructing him to “refrain from reacting with the delegates in case they really go to The Hague and petition for your cooperation.”¹³⁹² Receiving these instructions, Nedilov and the Russian diplomats present refused to meet with any Koreans, receiving the expressed thanks of the Japanese First Commissioner “for the correct attitude of the Delegation towards these envoys.”¹³⁹³ More than that, Nedilov, with the support of and coordination with Japan, refused to let Korean envoys into the conference. Kojong was deprived of any opportunity to present his case

¹³⁸⁸ Пак, *Россия и Корея*, pg. 392.

¹³⁸⁹ *Hoshi*, 20 August 1906 cited in Пак, *Россия и Корея*, pp. 392-393.

¹³⁹⁰ Ibid.

¹³⁹¹ Ibid., pp. 394-396.

¹³⁹² Miyoshi, *The Other Great Game*, pg. 440.

¹³⁹³ Пак, *Россия и Корея*, pg. 397.

to the collective international community. The Russians had, for the first time, publicly fallen in line with the rest of the international community, opting to turn their back on Korean independence for the sake of sending the strongest signal regarding their seriousness of seeking rapprochement with Japan.

8.3.3.3. Reciprocal Restraint in Action: The Fishery Convention

Article XI of the Treaty of Portsmouth stipulated that Russia would arrange with Japan fishing rights for its vessels in Russian territorial waters of East Asia. The Settlement of 1905 obliged, as with all treaty provisions, St. Petersburg and Tokyo to negotiate what ultimate form, once agreed upon and implemented, this article would assume. In analysing possible policy avenues whereby rapprochement between Russia and Japan could be facilitated, the Russian Foreign Ministry noted that the Japanese envoy to St. Petersburg, Motono Ichirō (1862-1918), underlined that Japan's principal economic interest stemming from Portsmouth was the provision of fishing rights.¹³⁹⁴ Apart from the important role fish played in national Japanese diet, the issue was also connected to the well-being of Japanese agriculture, as the majority of contemporary fertilizers in Japan were extracted from herring fat. Given the sparse population of the Russian Far East and—following the Battle of Tsushima—the absence of a Pacific Fleet, Tokyo had the impression that Russia was no longer capable of physically controlling nautical areas teeming with fish, with Japanese incursions in Russian waters sometimes leading to armed clashes.¹³⁹⁵ The local Russian Far East Administration was against according Japan broad fishing rights for security reasons, namely that it could possibly pave the way for a large influx of Japanese settlement and undermine the existing Russian policy of attracting Slavs from European Russia. In the summer of 1906, negotiations on a fisheries convention began; however, by October 1906 they were beset by serious impasses on two key points: the definition of the sites in Russian waters that could be designated for Japanese fishing as well as the type of marine products that could be caught.¹³⁹⁶

On the first issue, the Japanese believed that Article XI allowed Japanese vessels to fish in all the waters of the Russian Far East, including the Sea of Japan, Okhotsk and Barents Sea *as well as* their respective bays and inlets. The Russian Delegation disagreed as bays and inlets were a traditional first destination of Slavic settlement in the Far East and the granting of rights to the Japanese in these areas could undermine state economic and migration policy. While the Russian proposal would grant Tokyo access to 2865 of the 7400 miles of Russian coastline, the Japanese Delegation responded that this would amount to an “illusionary” granting of fishing rights.¹³⁹⁷ On the second issue of the type of sea products that could be caught in Russian waters, St. Petersburg argued that Article XI granted Japan access to “fish and [to] obtain all kinds of sea products”, however the Japanese interpreted their rights to fishery as including the harvesting of marine mammals (whales), invertebrates, and algae. The disagreements became so serious that Motono made an appeal to Izvolsky to eliminate the serious stalemate that had emerged. The Russian Foreign Minister agreed to intervene in November 1906 to prevent a complete collapse of

¹³⁹⁴ Pestushko, Yurii & Shulatov, Yaroslav, “Russo-Japanese Relations from 1905 to 1916: from Enemies to Allies” in *A History of Russo-Japanese Relations*, pg. 105.

¹³⁹⁵ Шулатов, Я.А. «На Пути к Сотрудничеству: Российско-Японские Отношения в 1905-1914 гг.», Хабаровск: Изд-во института востоковедения РАН, 2008, pg. 52.

¹³⁹⁶ Pestushko & Shulatov, “Russo-Japanese Relations from 1905 to 1916”, pg. 104.

¹³⁹⁷ Шулатов, «На Пути к Сотрудничеству», pg. 56.

negotiations between the two Delegations that could jeopardize Izvolsky's overall goal of rapprochement with Japan. The Russian Foreign Minister preferred to make concessions on the negotiations regarding a fishery convention, counting on a reciprocal flexibility from the Japanese on political issues, as the Foreign Minister himself admitted in a circular letter updating the heads of Russian representations abroad: "I had [rapprochement with Tokyo] in mind and consciously made concessions on this issue, understanding the importance for Japan."¹³⁹⁸

Izvolsky's first compromise was a simple one, as marine mammals and algae did not form part of the Russian national diet, this point could be easily ceded to the Japanese. Following five rounds of negotiation, and much discussion on the exact interpretation of geographic terminology, Izvolsky agreed to a final definition of geographic scope that was much closer to Japanese demands. The Fishery Convention was thereby signed on 28 July 1907. A total of 90 lots along the Russian coastline were designated for Japanese fishermen and 85 were already allotted by year's end, with Russians only accounting for 15-18% of all active fisheries and a mere 11% of total seafood production.¹³⁹⁹ The smaller scale and more modestly equipped fishing industry of the Russian Far East could not compete with the scope and modernity of its Japanese competitors which now had access to pristine resources. Izvolsky's decision to accept a final convention more aligned with Japanese interests has been described as "an economic price for a military defeat."¹⁴⁰⁰ With the sheer scale of Japanese fishing that established itself in Russian waters following the convention's signature leading to the depletion of several sectors along the coasts of the Russian Far East, Izvolsky would comment that "of all the obligations imposed on [Russia] by the Treaty of Portsmouth, the heaviest is the provision of fishing rights in our waters to the Japanese."¹⁴⁰¹ The issue of fishing rights was seen in Tokyo as the most important economic issue arising from the Treaty of Portsmouth that required concrete definition through negotiation. Izvolsky's decision to make a gesture of conciliation towards Japan on this paramount economic issue was well received in Tokyo, as it marked a willing Russian capitulation to resolve the fundamental economic disagreement between St. Petersburg and Tokyo following the signature of the Treaty of Portsmouth. Consequently, Japan indicated that it would be willing to discuss further prospects for the development of political relations with Russia, as having defined the economic aspects of the Settlement of 1905, both Empires judged that it would be both appropriate and beneficial to discuss the political. As such, the difficult negotiations surrounding the Fisheries Convention served as a steppingstone towards the official establishment of regional cooperation between Russia and Japan.

8.3.3.4. Reciprocal Restraint in Action: The 1906 Decision to Withdraw from Manchuria

Article III of the Treaty of Portsmouth obliged both Russia and Japan to withdraw completely from Manchuria, with the Liaodong Peninsula being the sole exception for Japanese forces. This article was likewise slow to implement given the postwar suspicions in both the Russian and Japanese militaries that the Settlement of 1905 was a mere reprieve, and that war could resume at any moment. The Russian Generals, noting the general uproar that the peace terms provoked throughout Japan, assumed that Japan would soon launch an offensive to satisfy public

¹³⁹⁸ Ibid., pg. 69.

¹³⁹⁹ Ibid., pp. 69-70.

¹⁴⁰⁰ Anatolii Mandrik, leading Russian Far East fishing historian, cited in *ibid.*, pg. 70.

¹⁴⁰¹ Ibid.

opinion, with the Japanese military remaining convinced that Russia had, like in 1902 and 1903, no real intention of pulling out and sought to fight a war of revenge in Manchuria.¹⁴⁰² Consequently, the Japanese military refused to withdraw its forces from the region until Russia had initiated its evacuation as prescribed per Article III, with Army Minister Terauchi Masatake ordering that six to seven divisions remain stationed in Manchuria.¹⁴⁰³ The perceived loss of the Russian military had demoralized troops in Manchuria, leading to widespread unrest and dissent amongst Russian soldiers stationed in the Far East as well as the Russian community in Manchuria awaiting repatriation. Following the Tsar's October Manifesto, promising social reforms, the mood as well as the protests intensified. Since the end of the war, food had become increasingly scarce due to the failures of the civil administration, with General Linyevich stating that by mid-November 1905 he was no longer able to provide bread for his soldiers stationed in northern Manchuria.¹⁴⁰⁴ These provoked demonstrations by soldiers—made susceptible in their weakness to socialist propaganda—demanding demobilization and a speedy return to European Russia, especially by reservists and Cossacks. In November 1905, mutinies amongst soldiers and sailors broke out in Vladivostok that eventually spread to Harbin, with the unpredictable situation continuing into 1906. Despite the chaotic circumstances that prevailed in the Russian Far East, the evacuation of these military formations would still have to be carried out.

Immediately following the signature of the Treaty of Portsmouth, the Russian Government believed that the continued presence of so many Russian units in the Far East was superfluous and expressed a willingness to consent to their withdrawal, so long as this process was “not subject to Japanese pressure.”¹⁴⁰⁵ Under the terms of Article III, the Russians ceded to the Japanese control of the southern portion of the CER, with Russia retaining control of 1650 versts of track in northern Manchuria. Hence, under the Settlement of 1905, the Russian Empire was granted the right to station 25,000 guards to secure its railways on Qing territory. Negotiations on coordinating the withdrawal of forces from Manchuria as well as the transfer of the southern portion of the CER quickly got underway between General Linyevich and Marshal Ōyama. On 30 October 1905, at Syipingai Station, the Russian and Japanese militaries reached an agreement on the withdrawal of forces from Manchuria. According to the document, the evacuation was divided into four stages with the last remnants of Russian and Japanese troops scheduled to depart on 15 April 1907. In addition to the provisions regarding withdrawal, the Syipingai Memorandum placed serious travel restrictions on the movement of ‘outsiders’ in the occupied zones of Manchuria: for Russian citizens to southern Manchuria, while restrictions applied to Japanese citizens in the north. The main motivation in Russia seeking such restrictions was to stem the expected flow of Japanese entrepreneurs into northern Manchuria “in order to weaken foreign competition.”¹⁴⁰⁶ Likewise, the Japanese were suspicious of any Russian travel into their occupation zones, with the Russian envoys to the Qing and Japan often having to intervene on behalf of Russian citizens unable to receive the necessary permission to traverse Japanese-controlled territory. On 14 February 1906, the Japanese Foreign Ministry officially responded to St. Petersburg's *démarches*, stating that “travel restrictions were purely temporary and that they were connected to the withdrawal of

¹⁴⁰² Nish, *The History of Manchuria*, pg. 57.

¹⁴⁰³ Asada Masafumi, “The China-Russia-Japan Military Balance in Manchuria, 1906-1918”, *Modern Asian Studies*, November 2010, Vol. 44, No 6, pg. 1289.

¹⁴⁰⁴ Kusber, Jan, “Soldiers’ Unrest Behind the Front after the End of the War” in Kowner, Rotem *Rethinking the Russo-Japanese War, 1904-05, Volume I, Centennial Perspectives*, Manchester: Global Oriental, 2007, pg. 281.

¹⁴⁰⁵ Шулатов, «На Пути к Сотрудничеству», pg. 28.

¹⁴⁰⁶ Ibid.

Japanese troops”, with all restrictions scheduled to be lifted once the agreed-to evacuation procedures had been completed.¹⁴⁰⁷ This was followed by a report of 10 April 1906 from the Japanese Chargé to the Qing, addressed to Prime Minister Kinmochi citing military reports confirming that Russia was withdrawing its troops from Manchuria according to schedule. Hence, initial indications were being received by Tokyo that the Russian Empire no longer intended to pursue an aggressive foreign policy in East Asia.

As the restrictions imposed by the Japanese regarding foreigners in Manchuria were applied not only to Russians, but also Anglo-Saxons, Tokyo began to receive criticism from Washington and its allies in London that Japan was not respecting the Open Door policy towards its occupied Qing territories. As a result, with Tokyo feeling uncomfortable at receiving criticism from the West and having to open Japanese-controlled Chinese cities to Western trade, the Japanese approached the Russians in April 1906, to cancel the Syipingai Memorandum. This Japanese request was vehemently opposed by Russian entrepreneurs in the Far East as they feared the markets of northern Manchuria being exposed to Japanese competition. The Russian military also expressed resistance to the Japanese request. Consequently, a session of the Council of Ministers in St. Petersburg was convened in July 1906, with the Tsar agreeing to annul the Syipingai Memorandum on 9 September 1906.¹⁴⁰⁸ As the Russian Government had already decided that the large presence of Russian forces on Qing territory was no longer necessary, St. Petersburg announced, in December 1906, that it intended to withdraw its troops from Manchuria before the deadline as stipulated in the Syipingai Memorandum. The Russians completed the process one month before the agreed deadline, namely by March 1907, despite having to grapple with challenging conditions.

The Russian withdrawal from Manchuria can also be seen as a gesture of reciprocal restraint from St. Petersburg to Tokyo. As noted, given Russia’s ante-bellum foreign policy towards Manchuria, St. Petersburg refused to withdraw its forces according to the schedule agreed with the Qing. The Japanese had no guarantees that Russia would adopt a similar approach towards its forces on Qing territory following the Settlement of 1905. Yet, having determined the futility of maintaining large forces in northern Manchuria immediately following the conclusion of peace, and the policy turn that accompanied Izvolsky’s nomination as Foreign Minister, Russia opted to withdraw its forces according to schedule as a peaceful overture to Japan. Furthermore, St. Petersburg likewise chose to lift any and all movement restrictions that it had imposed on Japanese citizens (merchants) operating in northern Manchuria, electing to abolish the Syipingai Memorandum, despite a high level of opposition from local Russian business circles and the military that provoked the intervention of the Council of Ministers. As such, the relatively swift resolution of the issue surrounding the evacuation of troops from Manchuria could be seen as a friendly political gesture of restraint towards Japan in the hopes of building rapprochement.

8.3.3.5. Conclusion

The inevitable negotiations that followed the conclusion of the Treaty of Portsmouth obliged the Russians and Japanese to further define the general terms that had been agreed between Witte and Komura. As underlined, both Russian and Japanese militaries did not anticipate the

¹⁴⁰⁷ Ibid., 29.

¹⁴⁰⁸ Ibid., 30.

Settlement of 1905 to be a lasting one, each making plans to confront the other in what they saw as a likely return to war. The political leadership in St. Petersburg and Tokyo, however, were acutely aware at how the condition of geopolitical necessity dictated the need to make peace. Indeed, based on the experience of negotiating a separate bilateral order with Japan before hostilities erupted, Witte managed to convince the Tsar to return to such an approach, albeit from a much different starting point. Gone was Witte's beloved CER, its southern portion ceded to the Japanese under Article VI, as well as Russia's concessions on the Liaodong Peninsula acquired during the Triple Intervention. Following Portsmouth, Russia was left with a zone of occupation in northern Manchuria and the satisfaction that it would not pay an indemnity, thereby creating the impression in the international community that it had 'won the peace'. The set-up of the Treaty of Portsmouth requiring further negotiations to define the concrete meaning of each article provided Russian policy makers with the ideal opportunity to create a post-bellum rapprochement with Japan.

The cases of Korea, the Fishing Convention, and the Russian commitment to the early withdrawal of its forces from Manchuria represent important questions of Japanese interests in the political, economic, and military realms. Each needed to be further defined through the process of bilateral negotiations. In each distinct case, Russia willingly chose to make concessions to Japan in the expectation that, at some point in the future, Tokyo would be willing to reciprocate regarding political issues. Russia gradually relinquished its remaining influence in Korea following the Settlement of 1905, culminating in Russian representatives in Seoul being accredited through Tokyo and refusing to meet with Korean delegates in The Hague, understanding that any new Russo-Japanese regional order could only be constructed upon St. Petersburg's recognition of Japanese preponderance in Korea. After its defeat in 1905, Russia finally showed willingness to accord Japan a political goal it had been pursuing in negotiations with St. Petersburg since at least 1898. On Japan's main economic interest arising from the Treaty of Portsmouth, Izvolsky took the difficult decision to grant Japan access to Russian territorial waters on a final geographic definition much more akin to Tokyo's demands at the clear expense of Russian industry and resources. On the most significant military issue, the withdrawal of troops from the trenches of Manchuria, despite the innate difficulties in organizing the repatriation of Russian forces, the Russian political leadership had decided that their continued presence was no longer necessary. The decision was taken to use their withdrawal as a way of building confidence with the Japanese whose military still viewed Russia as the primary threat. Agreeing to withdraw its troops according to the schedule worked out jointly with the Japanese military—and doing so earlier than pledged—illustrated that Russia no longer intended to pursue an aggressive foreign policy in East Asia. Furthermore, given that Russia had not respected its bilateral agreement with the Qing, the final Russian withdrawal of its forces from Manchuria in 1907 (save the railway forces provided by the Treaty of Portsmouth) signalled to Japan that Russia could be trusted to honour its agreements.

Russia's purposeful policies of accommodating key Japanese political, economic, and military interests in the post-1905 regional landscape did not go unnoticed by Tokyo. Given the changed geopolitical context of the Settlement of 1905, a growing number of Japanese policy makers viewed a partnership with Russia, especially following St. Petersburg's conciliatory gestures, as a viable path to securing Japan's growing Asian Empire. Russia, following the Treaty of Portsmouth, still retained the CER in northern Manchuria, its substantial territories in East Asia, as well as its lengthy frontier with China. Consequently, Japan was prepared to reciprocate

Russia's policies of rapprochement and reconciliation through similar geopolitical concessions as they pertained to remaining Russian interests in East Asia following the Settlement of 1905. In doing so, Japan and Russia went far beyond the discussion on establishing a bilateral order in East Asia and began concretely implementing one. The result was the Russo-Japanese Treaty of 1907 that, through the policies of reciprocal restraint, introduced a new regional status quo following the Settlement of 1905.

8.3.4. The Settlement of 1905: Satisfaction with the Status Quo

8.3.4.1. Codifying Mutual Status Quo Satisfaction: The Russo-Japanese Treaty of 1907

Japan's military victory had, through the Settlement of 1905, marked the attainment of its long-held strategic goal of securing a line of advantage (*riekisen*/利益線) through a political and economic monopoly over Korea. Indeed, the Settlement of 1905, accorded Japan much more than that. Not only did Japan acquire the rights to the Liaodong Peninsula, thereby washing away the shame of the Triple Intervention, it also gained control of southern Sakhalin, but infinitely more important, the southern half of the Russian railway concession in Manchuria. The Settlement of 1905, therefore provided Japan with the beginnings of an Empire on the Asian mainland, thereby realizing "a key overarching objective of the Meiji generation."¹⁴⁰⁹ Japan's overarching priority, therefore, was to secure these gains, most importantly in Korea and southern Manchuria. Through acts of political, economic, and military accommodation, Russia had de facto recognized Japanese dominance over Korea, accorded Japanese industry an important—and lucrative—economic concession in Russian waters, and de-escalated the situation in Manchuria. As such, Russia signalled its acceptance of a regional status quo based on the gains that Japan had acquired in 1905.

Russia sought to therefore secure a Japanese guarantee of the Settlement of 1905 status quo. Comprehending the link between easing tensions with Tokyo in close synchronization with an easing of tensions with London, the Russian Foreign Ministry approached Motono, on 19 January 1907 asking him to convey the following message to Foreign Minister Hayashi: "the Russian Foreign Minister expressed his opinion that, unless a satisfactory agreement between Russia and Japan, which guarantees the peace concerning the future relations between the two countries, were reached, an agreement with Britain would be meaningless, and that he wishes the conclusion of an Anglo-Russian agreement to be left until after the conclusion of an agreement between Russia and Japan...the Russian Foreign Minister told me...if Russia could obtain Japan's guarantee of the peace in the future relations between the two countries, Russia would not mind making more concessions to Japan."¹⁴¹⁰ Hayashi responded positively to Izvolsky's overtures, underling that "if Russia were to propose some sort of agreement, the Japanese Government would be willing to consider it."¹⁴¹¹ In the meantime, an article had appeared in the *Contemporary Review*, penned by the *Daily Telegraph's* correspondent in St. Petersburg, arguing that the Portsmouth Treaty was but a truce; Russia still constituted a great power in the East and elsewhere; and that two paths were open towards Russia and Japan: the collapse of the Treaty of Portsmouth into "another and more sanguinary war, or else by means of a complete and business-like

¹⁴⁰⁹ Paine, *The Japanese Empire*, pg. 71.

¹⁴¹⁰ Masato Matsui, "The Russo-Japanese Agreement of 1907: Its Causes and the Progress of Negotiations", *Modern Asian Studies*, 1972, Vol. 6, No. 1, pg. 38.

¹⁴¹¹ Ibid.

settlement".¹⁴¹² Meeting Izvolsky on 4 February 1907, Motono underlined that the Japanese Government agreed with the opinions expressed in Dillon's article and that Tokyo would engage to sign an agreement with great pleasure. Conveying Izvolsky's answer to Hayashi is worth quoting at length: "what the Russian Foreign Minister wishes is not only to conclude satisfactorily various pending treaties but also to establish a foundation for the maintenance of a lasting sincere and friendly relationship with Japan. The reason why Russia advanced the date of withdrawal of her troops is nothing but a part of the execution of her peace policy...According to Izvolsky's firm belief, Russia's long-range plan is on the one hand to promote friendly relations with Japan and on the other hand to successfully conclude an agreement with Britain. Thereby, she should help to maintain world peace and build up her national strength, and shift the emphasis of her diplomatic policy to Europe. Fortunately, his opinion has been recently agreed upon by the Cabinet members and approved by the Emperor...what he is seriously concerned about is whether or not Japan would adopt a genuinely friendly policy toward Russia...Russia has no desire but to maintain the territories she presently possesses in the Far East. To be specific, if Russia could obtain Japan's guarantee that she would not violate the northern half of Sakhalin and the territories along the Pacific Coast which Russia possesses in the Far East, she will acknowledge all the fruits gained by the Russo-Japanese War and will never dispute about them in the future."¹⁴¹³

Receiving confirmation that St. Petersburg was willing to negotiate an agreement to solidify the post-1905 status quo with Japan, Itō Hirobumi, now Resident General in Korea, took an active interest in formulating Tokyo's response. It should be recalled that, along with Yamagata Aritomo, Itō had been a long-standing advocate of reaching an agreement on a bilateral regional order with St. Petersburg that would have avoided the Russo-Japanese War. Itō thereby brought the Saionji Cabinet on board with his anti-bellum policy in a post-bellum context more favourable to Japan. On 20 February 1907, the Russian Foreign Minister delivered the first draft Russo-Japanese agreement, proposing through two articles to (i.) guarantee each other's territorial integrity based on the Treaty of Portsmouth; and (ii.) respect each other's treaty rights. Receiving the document from Izvolsky, Motono forwarded it to Tokyo and added his own personal suggestions, namely to request Russia's formal guarantee of China's territorial integrity, especially in the Mongolian area; to obtain Russia's approval for Japan's future annexation of Korea; and, finally, to clearly demarcate the spheres of influence between the two countries in Manchuria.¹⁴¹⁴ The *Genrō* Council on 3 March 1907 and agreed with Motono's suggestions, adding articles on Russia's approval of the planned Japanese annexation of Korea and partition of spheres of influence in Manchuria. Izvolsky agreed to the four articles as proposed by the *Genrō*, however suggested making the Japanese additions as part of a Secret Convention. Likewise, the Russian Foreign Minister suggested adding a third article to this Secret Convention, namely: "Article III. Japan, recognizing the preponderance of Russia's interests in Mongolia and the bordering territories of China outside of Manchuria, engages to undertake nothing that may bring prejudice to those interests. In order to prevent any possibility of misunderstanding, Japan engages not to seek to obtain on her own account or in behalf of Japanese subjects or others any concession in matters of railway, telegraph, mines etc. in the territories above mentioned. She also agrees to abstain from sending into said territories scientific or commercial expeditions as well as emissaries

¹⁴¹² Dillon, Emile Joseph, "Japan and Russia: How Peace was Brought About", *The Contemporary Review*, London, Vol. 91 (1 January 1907), pg. 270.

¹⁴¹³ Matsui, "The Russo-Japanese Agreement of 1907", pg. 39.

¹⁴¹⁴ Ibid., pg. 40.

such as missionaries, officers, instructors, etc.”¹⁴¹⁵ Through Izvolsky’s additions, Russia was asking for reciprocity to the gestures of accommodation that he had shown Japan in the areas where Tokyo’s interests mattered most.

Mongolia had been loosely ruled over by Chinese dynasties for centuries, by keeping them divided not only administratively but also religiously. Under Qing rule, that part of Mongolia lying to the north of the Gobi Desert was referred to as “Outer Mongolia” and that to the south of the Gobi Desert as “Inner Mongolia”.¹⁴¹⁶ The Qing pursued a policy of protecting the independence of Tibetan Buddhist institutions which held strong links to Tibet while, simultaneously, cultivating links between local princes and the Court in Beijing, ensuring that the Mongol tribes could not pose a united threat to Manchu hegemony over China.¹⁴¹⁷ Nevertheless, Mongolia remained restless and during the second half of the nineteenth century revolts against Qing rule were commonplace. Following the Treaty of Aigun in 1860, where Beijing ceded its mostly uncolonized areas in northern Manchuria to Russia, the Qing opted for a policy of Han Chinese colonization in Mongolia for both political and economic rationale.¹⁴¹⁸ Nevertheless, Manchu policy towards Outer Mongolia treated local institutions with much more caution than in Inner Mongolia, given the fact that Outer Mongolia shared a frontier with the Russian Empire.¹⁴¹⁹ Nevertheless, in the wake of the political and demographic changes being pursued by the Qing, a growing number of Mongols began to view Russia as a possible counterweight to Chinese domination. Given Outer Mongolia’s lengthy frontier with Russia, and the presence of a significant number of Russian subjects of Mongolian extraction, Buryats—with a long history of serving as auxiliaries in the Russian army, St. Petersburg had a natural interest in this common frontier with the Qing Empire in Inner Asia.

Despite such direct links to Russia’s border area with the Qing, the initial Japanese reaction to Russia’s expressed designs on Mongolia was muzzled, reflecting Tokyo’s newly anchored role on the Asian mainland. The Japanese Foreign Ministry believed that Russian aspirations in Mongolia were too one-sided, as it violated the independence and principle of equal opportunity for commerce and territorial integrity of the Empire of China. The question of Mongolia dragged out the negotiation process, yet while St. Petersburg and Tokyo held opposing views on the issue, the talks proceeded smoothly.¹⁴²⁰ Itō underlined to the Japanese Government that the annexation of Korea would likely become more difficult the longer the Japanese occupation lasted. Hence, he advised settling negotiations with Russia quickly, even though it would signify recognizing St. Petersburg’s interests in Outer Mongolia.¹⁴²¹ Following Kojong’s botched attempt to secure international assistance to support Korean independence through attending the Second Hague Conference, Itō decided to put a firm end to such shenanigans through the restructuring of the entire Korean government, resulting in the abdication of Emperor Kojong, and the signature of yet

¹⁴¹⁵ Ibid., pg. 42.

¹⁴¹⁶ Nakami Tatsuo, “Qing China’s Northeast Crescent: the Great Game Revisited” in Steinberg (ed.) The Russo-Japanese War, Volume II, pg. 514.

¹⁴¹⁷ Paine, Imperial Frontier, pp. 277-278.

¹⁴¹⁸ Fletcher, Joseph, “The Heyday of the Ch’ing Order in Mongolia, Sinkiang, and Tibet” in Fairbank (ed.), The Cambridge History of China, pg. 361.

¹⁴¹⁹ Salomon, Hilel Benami, “China’s Policy towards Outer Mongolia, 1912-1920”, PhD Dissertation, Columbia University, 1969, pg. 14.

¹⁴²⁰ Kurosawa, “Japanese-Russian Relations after the Treaty of Portsmouth”, pg. 88.

¹⁴²¹ Matsui, “The Russo-Japanese Agreement of 1907”, pg. 43.

another unequal treaty with Korea that accorded the Japanese Resident General full control of the government. This latest Japanese-Korean treaty was signed on 25 July 1907, on the eve of the conclusion of the Russo-Japanese Convention. As such, in exchange for Russia's consent to Japan's annexation of Korea, Japan signaled its readiness to accept St. Petersburg's preponderance over Outer Mongolia. Japanese readiness to include Mongolia in the text of the proposed convention should be regarded as a Russian diplomatic success, given that Russia's position in this far-flung portion of the Qing Empire was nowhere near as entrenched as the Japanese in Korea. Nevertheless, Tokyo, having secured its main post-1905 gains through co-operation with Russia, exhibited its readiness to reciprocate earlier Russian concessions with a gesture of accommodation of its own in order to build a regional status satisfactory to both Japan and Russia.

The final version of the Russo-Japanese Convention of 1907 was signed on 30 July between Izvolsky and Motono in St. Petersburg. As initially envisioned **Article I** constitutes a commitment by both Russia and Japan to respect the territorial integrity of the other, and well as all the rights derived from their respective treaties with the Qing, the Treaty of Portsmouth, and "the special conventions concluded between Japan and Russia."¹⁴²² The latter was, of course, a reference to the Secret Convention which acted as the bedrock of the Russo-Japanese bilateral status quo that would form the heart of the agreement. **Article II** pays the habitual lip service to respecting the territorial integrity of and equal opportunity in the Qing Empire, however, its real significance lies elsewhere. According to Article II, both parties "engage to sustain and defend the maintenance of the *status quo* and respect for this principle by all the pacific means within their reach."¹⁴²³ Such language was completely absent from the Treaty of Portsmouth and its successor treaties. This *status quo* in no way signified a freezing of the situation that existed in East Asia upon the Convention's signature, but rather a mere prelude to the preparation for the one which would be introduced through the Secret Convention attached to the public articles which would serve as the foundation for a new status quo based on the partition of East Asia into Japanese and Russian spheres of influence.

A closer inspection of the Secret Convention illustrates the boundaries of the new status quo established by Tokyo and St. Petersburg. In broad strokes, as illustrated in the negotiations between Izvolsky and Motono, this secret treaty accorded Japan a free hand in Korea in return for Russia receiving the same in Outer Mongolia. The 'Motono-Izvolsky line', running from Korea through Manchuria, divided north-eastern China into distinct spheres of influence, with Russia pledging not to interfere south and Japan promising to do likewise north. This secret treaty was intended to "obviate for the future all cause of friction or misunderstanding with respect to certain questions relating to Manchuria, Korea, and Mongolia."¹⁴²⁴ In **Article I** of the treaty, Russia promised not to obtain "any concessions in the way of railways or telegraphs" south of the Motono-Izvolsky line and Japan promised not to interfere to the north.¹⁴²⁵ **Article II** obliged Russia not to "interfere with nor place any obstacle in the way of the further development" of Japan's special relations with Korea, in exchange for Russia being granted "most-favoured-nation" status; **Article III** stated that "the Imperial Government of Japan, recognizing the special interests of Russia in Outer Mongolia, undertakes to refrain from any interference which might prejudice those

¹⁴²² Batson Price, The Russo-Japanese Treaties of 1907-1916, pg. 34.

¹⁴²³ Ibid.

¹⁴²⁴ Ibid., pg. 107.

¹⁴²⁵ Elleman, International Rivalry and Secret Diplomacy in East Asia, pg. 116.

interests.”¹⁴²⁶ All in all, the Secret Convention—rather than exchanging Korea for Manchuria as the Russians had proposed since 1898—saw Japan and Russia swapping Korea for Mongolia, dividing Manchuria into two distinct spheres of bilateral interest. Such was the status quo that emerged from the Settlement of 1905, one that was tailored to the specific needs and geopolitical interests of Russia and Japan through negotiations since the Treaty of Portsmouth.

8.3.4.2. US Acceptance of the Status Quo: The Road to the 1908 Root-Takahira Agreement

Since the annexation of the Philippines and Hawaii in 1898, the United States had very much become an East Asian power, that motivated Washington’s close observation of, and ultimate offer to mediate an end to, the Russo-Japanese War. The United States had been growingly suspicious of what it saw as Russian expansionism in East Asia, with Secretary of State Hay not bashful in his loathing of all things Russian.¹⁴²⁷ In the period leading up to the war, Washington’s sympathies had laid squarely with Japan, with the journalist George Kennan (1845-1924) who published 26 pro-Japanese articles, painting Tokyo in a positive light and enabling Japan to gain what would prove invaluable access to New York financing in order to fund the Imperial Army’s grandiose continental campaigns. Roosevelt himself described his policy towards Japan on the eve of the Portsmouth negotiations: “I wish to see the United States treat the Japanese in the spirit of all possible courtesy, and with generosity and justice.”¹⁴²⁸ Geopolitical calculations also played a role, as US policy makers assumed that a Russian victory would threaten US economic interests in East Asia—especially in China—prompting President Roosevelt to prepare a US assault against Vladivostok.¹⁴²⁹ Yet the seemingly unstoppable string of Japanese victories against the Russian military gave President Roosevelt pause to consider the effect on the regional balance of power through Japan’s growing influence. While the US was prepared to sacrifice its Open Door policies in regards to the Korean Peninsula, as the Katsura-Taft Memorandum illustrated, the maintenance of the Open Door throughout China remain an essential element of US regional policy.

Speaking to US and European officials in June 1904, Suematsu Kenchō (1855-1920), former Japanese Home minister, attempted to assuage Western fear by stating “No matter how successful Japan may be in the war now in progress, this will make no difference to her well-defined policy regarding Korea and Manchuria, or China generally...Japan desires no rights [in Manchuria] other than those enjoyed in common by all the Powers.”¹⁴³⁰ Following the Settlement of 1905, however, the situation looked rather different. The US railroad magnate, Edward H. Harriman (1848-1909) was particularly interested in maintaining the Open Door policy towards China as he envisioned it in a link in his proposed transportation network that would span the entire globe. Following the Treaty of Portsmouth, the Japanese were accorded the southern portion of the CER, renaming it the Japanese South Manchurian Railway (SMR) in 1906, and later developed it into the main artery of postwar continental expansion. Harriman arrived in Tokyo to present his vision to the Japanese leadership: “If I can secure control of the South Manchuria Railroad from

¹⁴²⁶ Ibid., pp. 116-117.

¹⁴²⁷ Saul, Norman, “The Kittery Peace” in Steinberg (ed.), *The Russo-Japanese War*. Pg. 486.

¹⁴²⁸ Moore, Gregory, *Defining and Defending the Open Door Policy: Theodore Roosevelt and China, 1901-1909*, Lanham MD: Lexington Books, 2015, pg. 189.

¹⁴²⁹ Jacob, *The Russo-Japanese War*, pg. 93.

¹⁴³⁰ Miyoshi, *The Other Great Game*, pg. 423.

Japan, I'll buy the Chinese Eastern from Russia, acquire trackage over the Trans-Siberian to the Baltic, and establish a line of steamers to the United States. Then I can connect with the American transcontinental lines and join up with the Pacific Mail and the Japanese transpacific steamers. It'll be the most marvelous transportation system in the world. We'll gridle the earth."¹⁴³¹ The Japanese Government, given the dire financial situation that the country found itself in after the conclusion of hostilities, realized that it lacked the monetary means to reconstruct the Southern Manchurian Railway that had been heavily damaged during campaigning. Harriman offered Tokyo to provide money for the railroad in exchange for part ownership and control. This idea had the added bonus of, in 1905, securing Japan's railway gains from a vengeful Russia in case of a renewed outbreak of hostilities. Hence, the Katsura-Harriman Agreement of 12 October 1905 was signed and envisioned the formation of a syndicate of investors under Harriman that would provide capital for the purchase of the CER, acquired by the Japanese Government, and its rehabilitation, under joint Japanese-US ownership.

Following the signature of the Treaty of Portsmouth, and the violent riots that ensued in Tokyo, a substantial portion of the Japanese Cabinet, including Komura, expressed their opposition to what amounted to giving away Japan's main gain from the peace agreement. In November 1905, therefore, Harriman was informed by Tokyo that his understanding with the Japanese Government was null and void. The prospect of, for a second time in ten years, giving away the fruits of Japanese victory was simply too much for the Japanese Government and public to bear. This decision, however, came with particular consequences, with Japan finding itself confronted with the same policy options as the pre-bellum Russian Government regarding railways in Manchuria. This became even more obvious during the negotiations between the Qing and Japan in November 1905. Like Witte before him, Itō argued that "Japan neither wanted Manchuria nor was she strong enough to maintain a large garrison indefinitely on the remote borders of that province. [Japan] had already made explicit declarations that she would respect the integrity of China... and considers that integrity to be of utmost importance...provided that it was always accompanied by the policy of the Open Door."¹⁴³² Arriving in Beijing to negotiate the transfer of the rights on the Liaodong Peninsula and railroads to Japan, Komura informed his Chinese counterparts, Prince Qing and Yuan Shikai that Japan had sacrificed much for 'peace and security' in East Asia, underlining that "the Chinese Government should consider how China might have been negatively affected had Japan not chosen to fight a war against Russia and how many sacrifices the Japanese have made on China's behalf."¹⁴³³ In short, Japan had no intention of relinquishing to China what it saw as having been rightfully acquired through war with Russia. Prince Qing and Yuan Shikai agreed to transfer the rights to its railroad and territory, heavily insisting however that Manchuria still remained Chinese land, with Yuan Shikai demanding the immediate withdrawal of Japanese forces. Komura flatly refused, stating that Japanese troops would be withdrawn simultaneously with Russia. Furthermore, Komura made the Qing delegates sign a Secret Protocol on 22 December 1905 which further impugned upon Chinese sovereignty: Article III forbade China to independently construct any railway line out of fear it could damage the profitability of the CER; Article VIII forced China to open places for commerce in Manchuria only after consultation with the Japanese Minister in Beijing; and Article XIII saw China agree to only dispatch troops to quell

¹⁴³¹ Chang, Richard, "The Failure of the Katsura-Harriman Agreement", *The Journal of Asian Studies*, 1961, Vol. 21 (1), pg. 67.

¹⁴³² Miyoshi, *The Other Great Game*, pg. 430.

¹⁴³³ Ibid., pg. 431.

banditry after the relevant Japanese commander in the region had been informed.¹⁴³⁴ Rather than wage war for the sake of Open Door policies in the Qing, a Japanese administration had merely replaced the Russian in Manchuria.

Following the Sino-Japanese Treaty of December 1905, the Western Powers, especially the US and Great Britain, were showing growing concern that, like Russia before it, Japan would not subscribe to the Open Door policy as it applied to Manchuria. Indeed, with the advent of the Russo-Japanese Agreement of 1907, Japan lost its function as an anti-Russian buffer zone in East Asia. With the bilateral regional order established between Russia and Japan, Tokyo was free to pursue a continental foreign policy, something that it was unable to do prior to the Russo-Japanese War. With the option of constructing a continental empire to protect its protectorate in Korea, the Japanese opted to quietly shelve their previous statements regarding respect of the Open Door policy in Manchuria. The South Manchurian Railway (*'Mantetsu'*/満鉄) became the administrative headquarters for the Japanese authorities in Manchuria. As a model how to steer Japan's role in Manchuria, contemporary Japanese researchers "were assigned to study how the Dutch East India Company conducted its business while representing Dutch interests abroad."¹⁴³⁵ As such, the Mantetsu became a quasi-government institution with Japanese industrial, financial and agricultural officials serving within its ranks. In November 1906, Gotō Shinpei (1857-1929) was transferred from Taiwan, where he served as the first civilian governor since 1898, to become head of the Mantetsu. It became obvious, therefore, that Japan had no immediate plans to relinquish its domination over southern Manchuria. Japan's ally, Great Britain, frankly informed the Japanese Foreign Ministry through its Ambassador in Tokyo that its current policy course towards Manchuria was "alienating all those countries which had once sympathized with Japan during the war."¹⁴³⁶ In March 1906, Washington and London lodged an official protest to Japan, demanding an Open Door policy for Manchuria.¹⁴³⁷

With Japan in blatant violation of the Open Door policy, US policy makers began to lose the sympathy they had cultivated for Japan both prior to and during the Russo-Japanese War. While the US was not overtly against the status quo established by the Settlement of 1905, Japan's blatant disregard for a cornerstone of US regional policy was not particularly appreciated. Tokyo's decision not to honour the Katsura-Harriman Agreement, combined with the Sino-Japanese Treaty of December 1905, underlined Japan's budding policy of cementing its own continental Empire built on the ruins of the Russian Viceroyalty of East Asia. Consequently, the status quo of the Settlement of 1905 commenced a process of political and military estrangement between Tokyo and Washington. Rhetoric that was normally reserved by US media for Russia, denigrating the country as dangerous and uncivilized, began to be applied towards Japan, with the added implication that Tokyo posed a military threat to US interests.¹⁴³⁸ In 1907, for the first time, the US's War Plan "Orange" listed Japan as a possible adversary in an emerging war in the Pacific while, in the same year, Japanese planners reciprocated by according the US the same designation.¹⁴³⁹ While not rejecting the status quo of the Settlement of 1905, a policy of suspicion

¹⁴³⁴ Treaty and additional agreement relating to Manchuria between Japan and China, 22 December 1905 in MacMurray, *Treaties and Agreements*, pp. 549-553.

¹⁴³⁵ Vogel, *China and Japan*, pg. 190.

¹⁴³⁶ Miyoshi, *The Other Great Game*, pg. 434.

¹⁴³⁷ Matsui, "The Russo-Japanese Agreement of 1907", pg. 36.

¹⁴³⁸ Jacob, *The Russo-Japanese War*, pg. 106.

¹⁴³⁹ *Ibid.*

towards Japan was a direct result of Japan's contradictory policy on the Open Door in Manchuria that would place the two nations on an increasing, and inevitable, trajectory of geopolitical competition and enmity.

While overt conflict between the United States and Japan would be put off for another day, the tone of bilateral relations had changed. Japan's policy in Manchuria, as well as a crisis surrounding the US policy of introducing discriminatory legislation against Japanese labourers in California, had soured relations, with President Roosevelt, by the summer of 1907, dwelling on the possibility of war with Tokyo, admitting that he was "more concerned over this Japanese situation than almost any other. Thank heaven we have the navy in good shape."¹⁴⁴⁰ The possibility of war had entered into the realm of policy choices in Washington and Tokyo. Yet President Roosevelt did not wish to push the United States into conflict with Japan over the status quo of the Settlement of 1905. Together with Secretary of State Root, President Roosevelt opted to maintain US interests in China in a manner that sought to "keep Japan from perceiving the United States as a potential enemy", entailing that it "was more important to allow the Japanese a little leeway in Manchuria to actively oppose their policies there."¹⁴⁴¹ While Washington had officially expressed its displeasure with Tokyo in 1906, US dissatisfaction over the status quo that had emerged was far from sufficient to create a situation that could damage the newly-emerged balance of power. The Roosevelt administration therefore sought a way to put an end to "absurd rumours of ill will between America and Japan."¹⁴⁴²

A very public way was found with the 1908 visit of Secretary of State Root to Tokyo to bury any possible hatchet between the two countries and, despite Washington's uneasiness at Tokyo's post-1905 policies, continue Roosevelt's policy of forging good relations with Japan. On 30 November 1908, Root initialed together with Japanese Ambassador to Washington, Takahira Kogorō, what became known to posterity as the Root-Takahira agreement. In its essence, this agreement was to uphold the status quo of East Asia following the Settlement of 1908. While the US might not have been fully comfortable with Japan's policy towards Manchuria, such an issue was certainly not worth spoiling what had, until then, constituted a friendly bilateral relationship. Nevertheless, Washington had become concerned at Tokyo's foreign policy course towards the Qing, choosing to accept the contemporary status quo rather than embark on an overtly confrontational course. Hence, the Root-Takahira agreement was the chosen vehicle of both capitals to publicly reduce friction and misunderstanding. The introductory paragraphs of the notes mention that Japan and the US hold "important outlying insular possessions in the region of the Pacific Ocean"; while Article I declares that "the Governments of the two countries are animated by a common aim, policy and intention in that region."¹⁴⁴³ Article II commits both the United States and Japan to maintain and uphold what it viewed as the regional status quo: "The policy of both Governments, uninfluenced by any aggressive tendencies, is directed to the maintenance of the existing *status quo* in the region above mentioned and to the defence of the principle of equal opportunity for commerce and industry in China."¹⁴⁴⁴ Article III declares that the US and Japan are "firmly resolved to respect the territorial possessions belonging to each other" in East Asia;

¹⁴⁴⁰ Moore, Gregory, Defining and Defending the Open Door Policy, pg. 190.

¹⁴⁴¹ *Ibid.*, pg. 191.

¹⁴⁴² *Ibid.*, pg. 193.

¹⁴⁴³ Baston Price, The Russian-Japanese Treaties of 1907-1916, pg.41.

¹⁴⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

while Article V commits Japan and the United States to mutual consultation regarding any alteration in the 1908 contemporary status quo: “Should any event occur threatening the *status quo* as above described or the principle of equal opportunity as above defined, it remains for the two Governments to communicate with each other as to what measures they may consider useful to take.”¹⁴⁴⁵

The Root-Takahira agreement openly anchored US acceptance of the status quo of the Settlement of 1905, despite its contradictory nature. As noted, Washington was fully aware that Tokyo was openly violating the Open Door policy as it established its rule over southern Manchuria. The Taft-Katsura agreement signed off on Washington’s acceptance of Japanese policy towards Korea. Hence, Root decided to accept the status quo, despite Washington’s dissatisfaction with Japanese actions in northern China, rather than continue down the road of confrontation and, perhaps, open hostility. It is no secret that Roosevelt expressed his concern at the US ability to effectively defend its possessions in the Pacific, with the 27th President referring to them as America’s “heel of Achilles” in his correspondence with Taft.¹⁴⁴⁶ With the recognition of the status quo of Japan’s policy in Manchuria and Korea, less concern needed to be given to protecting far-flung pieces of the nascent US empire in East Asia. While there were elements of the Settlement of 1905 that were decidedly not to US liking and the case could be made that it also provided Washington’s indirect sanction of the 1907 Russo-Japanese Treaty (public as well as secret), the Root-Takahira agreement evidenced that, despite its flaws, the contemporary status quo was acceptable to the Roosevelt Administration.

8.3.5. The Settlement of 1905: Pacific Self-Images

The Settlement of 1905 did not result in the appearance of pacific self-images within the consciousness of East Asian policymakers. Each power still could easily conceive plausible scenarios under which war could be utilized as a viable tool of foreign policy. War, and the rumours of wars, were very much on the minds and horizons of each respective policymaker. Yet a change had taken place since the Settlement of 1901. The major powers of East Asia had indicated their satisfaction with the status quo following the Treaty of Portsmouth and the legacy system that had emerged through the Russo-Japanese Treaty of 1907 and the Root-Takahira agreement of 1908. Hence, while pacific self-images in Tokyo, St. Petersburg, and Washington had not emerged per se, the agreements that had been reached since the Treaty of Portsmouth indicated the satisfaction of each respective capital with the new political realities post-1905, thereby decreasing the likelihood that war would constitute a serious policy instrument.

The Qing and Korea had likewise not cultivated pacific self-images; however, the Settlement of 1905 accorded Beijing and Seoul a very much different status than that enjoyed by Japan, Russia, and the United States. In the Settlement of 1905 and the legacy system that was shaped by its contours, China and Korea were objects of regional historical processes and not subjects. For both nations, a steady decline in actual sovereignty and independence had been a clear trend since the Settlement of 1895. In the Settlement of 1905, however, these trends metamorphosized into long-term phenomena, seriously compromising national sovereignty. In the case of Korea, the Settlement of 1905 laid the foundation to the ultimate evaporation of Korean

¹⁴⁴⁵ Ibid.

¹⁴⁴⁶ Moore, *Defining and Defending the Open Door Policy*, pg. 190.

independence, all with the explicit approval of the international community, with the Russian Empire being the last to accede to what other Powers had already deemed inevitable.

The Qing, however, took a different trajectory. China's subject status had been confirmed through the United States' outright refusal to allow it a seat at the table in Portsmouth, therefore depriving Beijing of the opportunity to participate in shaping the region's diplomatic future. The Articles of the Portsmouth Treaty contained perfunctory references about China's territorial integrity, however, Beijing's automatic acceptance of the treaty's terms was seen as a fait accompli. Komura's demeanour towards Prince Qing and Yuan Shikai in December 1905, namely that Japan had full intent not only to usurp, but also maintain, Russian former economic and military rights in Manchuria in the wake of its military victory served as a prime example. No one had respected the Qing's request for neutrality in 1904 and, after having fought through its territory for one-and-a-half years, no one bothered to consult China to construct and help solidify the new regional systemic order. The inherent weakness of the Qing government did not go unnoticed by the ruling elite and their subjects alike. Following the Japanese victory, interpreted as a demonstration of the superiority of constitutional [Meiji Japan] over autocratic policies [Tsarist Russia], the Qing court sent ministers to "investigate political systems abroad and on their return initiated a gradual transition to constitutional government."¹⁴⁴⁷ As such, pro-Qing reformers were hoping that government-sponsored reform would be sufficient to start a wholesale restructuring of what was viewed as a decrepit system. In 1905 the millennia-old examination system was abolished nation-wide, with the responsibility of producing administrative cadres having shifted to an underdeveloped network of modern schools.¹⁴⁴⁸

Not all anticipated change from above. The trend of Chinese students studying Japan that had become an established movement since 1895 witnessed an increase in the number of Chinese students shooting up to over 10,000 following Japan's victory.¹⁴⁴⁹ Confronted with an unprecedented level of Japanese power and self-confidence, many Chinese students were met with outright condescension now that, with the Treaty of Portsmouth, Japan was seen as having replaced China as the premier regional power. Consequently, "this did not mean that [Chinese students] became pro-Japanese. In fact, the reverse was often the case...Most of them absorbed its spirit while rejecting its direction. Just as European nationalism had aroused Japanese patriotism, Japanese thought now turned many Chinese against Japan."¹⁴⁵⁰ Japan therefore became a hotbed of anti-Qing sentiment amongst the younger generation of Chinese students. The most prominent contemporary figure was Sun Yat-Sen (1866-1925) who founded a secret society dubbed Chinese Revolutionary Alliance ('*Tongmenghui*'/同盟會) while in his Tokyo exile in 1905 under the sponsorship of pan-Asian societies in Japan. While Japanese pan-Asian secret societies attempted to politically profit from supporting revolutionary movements against the Qing, the Japanese Government was decidedly against sponsoring any machinations that would lead to the collapse of the internationally recognized, and incredibly weak, Qing rule over China. Japan, therefore, was happy to agree to Beijing's request to expel Sun Yat-Sen in 1907. In doing so, Tokyo willingly relinquished a chance to accord support to elements of Chinese society opting to oppose the hopelessly antiquated and corrupt Qing political system, thereby missing a chance to foster closer

¹⁴⁴⁷ Esherick, *China: How the Empire Fell*, pg. 5.

¹⁴⁴⁸ Vogel, *China and Japan*, pg. 147.

¹⁴⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, pg. 168.

¹⁴⁵⁰ Jansen, *The Japanese and Sun Yat-Sen*, pg. 113.

cooperation between China and Japan in East Asia, based on what was left of their common cultural tradition.¹⁴⁵¹ Instead, with the rise of Han Chinese national sentiment in the Dynasty's urban centres, the Japanese became perceived as enemies.¹⁴⁵² Anti-Japanese sentiments became lodged as an integral part of Chinese self-images. As Japanese contemporary author, Kita Ikki (1883-1937), notes in his book, An Informal History of the Chinese Revolution ('*Shina Kakumei Gaishi*'/支那革命外史), "the weak and the strong are seldom friends."

8.3.6. The Settlement of 1905: Compatible Social Orders

The Russo-Japanese war marked a contest between a constitutional monarchy and one based on the eternal truths of Orthodoxy. While sharing a monarchy, the antebellum social orders of both Empires were very much distinct and underwent a transformation as a result of the 'critical juncture' of 1905 that would impact their respective future trajectories.

Meiji Japan's victory over the Qing in 1895 consolidated its position as a recognized international power, albeit of junior rank, and confirmed, in the minds of its policy makers, the righteousness of its quest for a predominant role in East Asia. The Russo-Japanese War marked another stage in the transformation of the Japanese social orders. The international observers that viewed the Japanese war effort reported on the unity of the Japanese nation in facing the Russian foe, characterized by 'unity of the nation' ('*kyokoku itchi*'/举国一致). Largely a product of Japan's propaganda machinery that tightly controlled images of Japan that were disseminated abroad, this view has been criticized as "simplistic".¹⁴⁵³ The picture that has since been gleaned is more complex. The course of the Russo-Japanese War held an important function in promoting "patriotism and selfless loyalty of the 'national subject' (国民/'*kokumin*')", a term that, by 1905, reflected "the Japanese state's strongly modernist political agenda, to change people into 'Japanese people', by shifting their collective consciousness from their predominantly locally based identity to the centralized national identity of the New Japan."¹⁴⁵⁴ Their collective experience over the course of the Russo-Japanese War was the "defining event as consolidating the identity of the ordinary Japanese as *kokumin*" which in turn became a defining characteristic of the Empire's social order.¹⁴⁵⁵

The sheer scope of the Japanese war effort between 1904-1905 was larger than the efforts required to defeat the Qing in 1895 and intervene to quell the Boxer Rebellion in 1900. The Empire's efforts to expand its influence into Manchuria required mass mobilization that was decidedly absent from previous war efforts. As the largest military operation of the Empire to date, "the war with Russia caused considerable social dislocation".¹⁴⁵⁶ The numbers of soldiers required to man the trenches in Manchuria meant implementing a wide programme of conscription, something that the First Sino-Japanese War and Boxer Rebellion had spared Japanese society. Mass mobilization efforts led to rural Japanese conscripts not only leaving the Home Islands for

¹⁴⁵¹ Jacob, The Russo-Japanese War, pg. 63.

¹⁴⁵² Ibid., pg. 64.

¹⁴⁵³ Shimazu Naoko, "Patriotic and Despondent: Japanese Society at War, 1904-05", *Russian Review*, Vol. 67, No. 1, Jan. 2008, pp. 34-35.

¹⁴⁵⁴ Ibid., "Reading the diaries of Japanese conscripts: forging national consciousness during the Russo-Japanese War" in Shimazu Naoko (ed.), Nationalisms in Japan, London: Routledge, 2006, pg. 41.

¹⁴⁵⁵ Ibid.

¹⁴⁵⁶ Shimazu, "Patriotic and Despondent", pg. 41.

unfamiliar foreign territory, but also travelling within Japan for the first time.¹⁴⁵⁷ The diaries of Japanese conscripts detail their fascination of travelling through Japan, marveling at sites such as Himeji and Osaka Castles and the Itsukushima Shrine in Miyajima, the latter often on explicit orders of the Imperial military.¹⁴⁵⁸ These journeys on route to the front became an essential element in forging a united Japanese social order, one based on a truly national identity. The mass mobilization process served as an “instrument of ‘conversion’ of these soldiers, not only in bonding the soldiers with ordinary people, but also in merging them with the ‘quintessentially Japanese’ landscape, and thereby providing them with another source of national identity.”¹⁴⁵⁹ As such, newly-minted Japanese soldiers arriving in Manchuria saw themselves as the staunch defenders of a novel Japanese *kokumin* that set it apart from the Asian and foreign ‘other’.

Yet behind the officially promoted national identity, the course of the Russo-Japanese War, a plurality of Japanese social orders began to manifest itself the longer the conflict on the Asian mainland drew out. The high casualty rate amongst Japanese forces, by far outnumbering any losses incurred in the Empire’s previous wars, led to the appearance of social-economic problems. This was “particularly acute for lower-class families that depended on the labour of young men—their mobilization robbed many poor households of their principal breadwinner.”¹⁴⁶⁰ This was inevitably accompanied by other social malaises that appeared with economic hardship, such as poverty and prostitution. Hence, behind the vaunted *kokumin* lurked a feeling of ‘war-weariness’ (*‘ensen’*/厭戦) that “prevailed among the majority” of Japanese society.¹⁴⁶¹ The sacrifices of mostly lower class Japanese were consequently framed by the media that “sought to portray an idealized society united in patriotic sacrifice.”¹⁴⁶² The masking of the suffering experienced by a majority of Japanese through patriotic verve led to another change in the Japanese social orders, one that would subsequently become embedded in the successive ‘critical junctures’. Large public parades were held across Japan to celebrate important victories in the field. Lantern parades were held in honour of Japan’s first, relatively easy victory of the Imperial Navy’s surprise attack on 9 February 1904. Sponsored by large commercial enterprises, such as Ebisu Beer and the Tokyo Textile Association, these parades would, besides being highly choreographed events that provided an outlet to the war-weary populous, illustrated “the difficulty that the state had in dealing with popular sentiment” as a result of stocking popular nationalism, with such parades often spiralling out of control.¹⁴⁶³ The increasingly negative news from the front and the large number of casualties lost in Manchuria showed an unexpected side to the carefully-nurtured, state-sponsored nationalism.

The most significant outburst of popular nationalism was marked by the Hibiya Riot of September 1905. The publication of the terms of the Treaty of Portsmouth, and Tokyo’s decision to forgo any claim to reparations, led to outrage amongst sectors of the Japanese public. A resulting demonstration of 5 September 1905 by ultra-nationalists led to the “largest episode of mob violence in the history of modern Japan” that led to 70 percent of the police boxes in Tokyo being

¹⁴⁵⁷ Ibid., “Reading the dairies of Japanese conscripts”, pg. 52.

¹⁴⁵⁸ Ibid., pp. 53-54.

¹⁴⁵⁹ Ibid., pp. 56-57.

¹⁴⁶⁰ Ibid., “Patriotic and Despondent”, pg.41.

¹⁴⁶¹ Ibid., pg. 35.

¹⁴⁶² Ibid., pg. 44.

¹⁴⁶³ Ibid., pp. 44-46.

set on fire.¹⁴⁶⁴ Civil unrest soon spread to the rest of Japan, with 253 spontaneous assemblies gathering to publicly demand that the Japanese Government seek better peace terms. Martial law was imposed on the Imperial Capital from 6 September to 29 November 1905. The outpouring of nationalist-stoked disorder through the Hibiya Riot represented “exactly what the [Japanese] state had feared all along: it overturned the semblance of social order that the state had desperately tried to maintain during the war.”¹⁴⁶⁵ Japanese policy makers were confronted for the first time with the potency of popular nationalism and its effect on Japanese society as “a force that was difficult to control and that could easily become a source of social disturbance.”¹⁴⁶⁶ The state, for the first time, showed its weakness towards the sub-culture of Japanese popular nationalism that had now, through the sacrifices of the Russo-Japanese War, become entrenched in the Empire’s social orders. As will be illustrated, it would not be the only occasion where this movement would make its presence felt. Hence, while the ‘critical juncture’ of 1905 gave rise to a new type of Japanese social order that encompassed the totality of the nation, constant emphasis on the ‘unity of the nation’ required to be advocated “precisely because the Japanese society was not so united—in reality it embodied many elements of conflicting and challenging views.”¹⁴⁶⁷

The effects of the Revolution of 1905 on the social orders of the Russian Empire have already been briefly sketched out in this ‘critical juncture’s’ antecedent conditions. The social unrest that accompanied Russian military defeats led to a momentary change in the autocratic structures that had characterized Russian governance throughout the Romanov Dynasty. Immediately following the signature of the Treaty of Portsmouth, His Majesty Nicholas II issued the Manifesto on the Improvement of the State Order (Манифест об усовершенствовании государственного порядка), commonly known as the ‘October Manifesto’ on 30 October 1905. Such reforms, while resisted by His Majesty, were advised by Witte in order to display a compromising attitude towards his subjects, especially given Witte’s overall conviction on a strong link existing between the recently terminated war and the unrest in the Empire.¹⁴⁶⁸ The October Manifesto’s gestures included the granting of a constitution and the formation of a parliament, the Duma. However groundbreaking these reforms might have seemed to the Russian social orders, they were “half-hearted” and Nicholas II, with the power to veto any resolution passed by the Duma, sought to revert to his familiar autocratic methods. As such, the superficial reforms of the Russian social orders wrought by the ‘critical juncture’ of 1905, and their failure to stem popular discontent signified that future revolutions were only a matter of time, should the necessary trigger be provided.¹⁴⁶⁹ Indeed, the required spark to set the Russian Empire alight would be found in the subsequent ‘critical juncture’.

The social orders in Korea underwent a fundamental change with November 1905 establishment of the Japanese Protectorate over Korea. The idea to eliminate any vestige of Korean independence had been taken by the Katsura Cabinet in April 1905 with Tokyo’s decision to assume full control over Korea’s foreign policy and place its domestic politics under the stewardship of a Japanese resident. The social orders of Korea would therefore be amalgamated

¹⁴⁶⁴ Ibid., pg. 47.

¹⁴⁶⁵ Ibid., pg. 48.

¹⁴⁶⁶ Ibid., pg. 49.

¹⁴⁶⁷ Ibid.

¹⁴⁶⁸ Frank, *The Russo-Japanese War*, pg. 84.

¹⁴⁶⁹ Ibid.

under Japanese control. Yet on the verge of the signing of the Treaty of Portsmouth, Yamagata Aritomo viewed the assumption of such a task with decided pessimism: “It goes without saying that Korean politics are corrupt and disorderly, and its people lack the ability or the spirit to make progress...Hoping that Korea will institute sudden changes as our country did during the Restoration is like trying to catch a fish in a tree. At the time of our Restoration nearly all who took part in the most important affairs of state realized the need for the country to make progress, and knowledgeable men outside the government vied to introduce the country to Western things...Korea has neither the basic knowledge nor sufficient capacity to absorb the new civilization. The Korean people, high and low, are indecisive and rather indolent.”¹⁴⁷⁰ Such an unflattering portrayal of the possibilities inherent in Japan’s new protectorate gave rise to the severity that would characterize Japanese sovereignty over the Korean Peninsula. Hence, the ‘critical juncture’ of 1905 marked a pivotal phase in the Japanese long-term plan to de facto annex the Korean Peninsula and absorb its social orders into the Empire.

. The ‘critical juncture’ of 1905 inaugurated a remarkable period of transformation that would impact the subsequent systemic trajectory of East Asia. Both the Japanese and Russian Empires emerged from the Treaty of Portsmouth with radically altered social orders that held little commonalities. The advent of a Japanese protectorate over Korea marked the absorption of Korean independence and its social orders under the responsibility of the Japanese Empire. The Qing, still suffering from the impotence imposed upon the Dynasty by the Settlement of 1901, was too weak to prevent the first industrial battles of the 20th century taking place on its territory, with the Court in Beijing inspiring little confidence, both domestically and abroad. Consequently, the criterion of compatible social orders was not to be found in the Settlement of 1905.

8.3.7. The Settlement of 1905: Existence of an Interested Hegemon

8.3.7.1. Analysis of Military Strength in 1910

Following the Treaty of Portsmouth, only Japan, the United States, and the Russian Empire could claim to harbour designs on any type of regional military hegemony. To support this claim, a cursory examination of military power is necessary. The year of examination chosen is 1910. This year was selected as it marked when the legacy system of the Settlement of 1905 fully came into fruition: Korean independence completely disappeared, along with its ruling Yi Dynasty that had been in power since 1392, following the peninsula’s official annexation as an Imperial province of Japan. Furthermore, 1910 saw the negotiations and signature of the Second Russo-Japanese Treaty that set the tone for power relations between the regional powers. Consequently, with these two events, the Settlement of 1905 had produced the ultimate scope of its geopolitical contours. As such, examining the approximate contemporary military strength of East Asia’s regional players, the ultimate arbiter of power, through the lens of each nation’s respective 1910 force level is therefore appropriate in order to determine any possible claims to regional hegemony that might have arisen from the Settlement of 1905. Therefore, the approximate strength of the ground and naval forces of the regional East Asian powers in 1910 is summarized by the following table:

¹⁴⁷⁰ Duus, *The Abacus and the Sword*, pg. 197.

Table 13: Comparison of Military Strength in East Asia following the Treaty of Portsmouth (1910)

Country	Strength of Army (estimated)	Strength of Navy (estimated)
Japan	500,000 (active) 150,000 (reserve) ¹⁴⁷¹	8 first class battleships, 8 armoured cruisers ¹⁴⁷² , 6 light cruisers, 50 destroyers, 12 submarines. ¹⁴⁷³
The Russian Empire	280,000 (<i>Asiatic Russia only</i>) ¹⁴⁷⁴	2 cruisers, 17 destroyers, 3 torpedo boats, 1 gunboat, and 4 submarines ¹⁴⁷⁵
The Qing Empire	450,000 (“New Troops” regulars) 354,000 (“New Troops” reserves) 310,000 (Provincial troops/Xunfangdui) 337,000 (Green Banner troops) ¹⁴⁷⁶	--
United States	75,000 ¹⁴⁷⁷	1 cruiser & gunboats ¹⁴⁷⁸

Following its military victory against Russia, the Japanese military had the strongest claim to any regional military hegemony, possessing the largest, battle hardened, modern army and navy of the region. In order to defend its hard won territorial gains on mainland Asia, the Imperial National Defence Plan of 1907 sought to raise the number of active divisions to 25 (from the contemporary level of 19) as well as create 25 reserve divisions.¹⁴⁷⁹ According to the instructions

¹⁴⁷¹ Humphreys, Leonard, *The Way of the Heavenly Sword: The Japanese Army in the 1920s*, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1995, pg. 17.

¹⁴⁷² Likewise based on the Imperial National Defence Plan of 1907, the policy called for the construction of an ‘eight-eight’ fleet (*‘Hachihachi Kantai’*/八八艦隊), complemented by the construction of several lesser warship types, including cruisers and destroyers. See: Evans, David & Peattie, Mark, *Kaigun: Strategy, Tactics, and Technology in the Imperial Japanese Navy, 1887-1941*, Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 1997, pg. 150.

¹⁴⁷³ Halpern, Paul, *A Naval History of World War I*, Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 1994, pg. 19.

¹⁴⁷⁴ This figure also included both Cossack units and Frontier Guards stationed in the three military districts that comprised Asiatic Russia, namely the Omsk; Irkutsk; and Priamur Military Districts. See: *Czarist Army - 1910* (globalsecurity.org), accessed 19 November 2023.

¹⁴⁷⁵ Halpern, *A Naval History of World War I*, pg. 18.

¹⁴⁷⁶ As a basis for the formation of a modern military force in the Chinese Empire, a reform plan was drawn up by the Committee for Army Reorganization under Prince Qing in September 1904. The modern New Army, with its so-called “New Troops” were in a process of being built up into a force, to be completed by 1913, comprising of 36 divisions of 12,512 men in peace time in both regular and reserve categories. Each of the Qing’s 22 provinces retained an auxiliary force of 5 infantry or cavalry units. The antiquated Green Banner forces were divided into 75 groups and scattered throughout the Empire. See: Brunnet, I.S.; Gagelstrom V.V.; Kolesov, N.F.; Bielchenko, A.T. & Moran, E.E., *Present Day Political Organization of China*, New York: Paragon, 1911, pp. 285-288; 308-309 & 337-340.

¹⁴⁷⁷ With the insurrection in the Philippines having been ended, this total reflected the size of the US Regular Army in 1910, with on average one third of its troops serving on assignments overseas, including Asia. This represented a number far below the limit of 100,000 that Congress had authorized in 1902. Neumann, Brian, *The US Army in the World War I Era*, Washington: Center of Military History, 2017, pg. 12.

¹⁴⁷⁸ Based in Manila. Cole, Bernard, “America’s Asiatic Fleet”, *Naval History*, October 2011, Volume 25, Number 5.

¹⁴⁷⁹ Humphreys, *The Way of the Heavenly Sword: The Japanese Army in the 1920s*, pg. 17.

of Prime Minister Saionji, the military expansion was carried out in stages to accompany the growth of the civilian economy, with the military expenditure (army and navy) reaching 33.6 percent of the overall budget by 1912.¹⁴⁸⁰ Japan, in 1910, had enough military power to defend its newfound Empire on mainland Asia, yet its lessons in continental warfare—especially the corresponding cost in blood and treasure—was not lost on the Japanese leadership. Following the 1907 decision to disband the Korean army, a rebel ‘Righteous Army’ took up arms against the Japanese, with 80,000 fighters alone waging guerilla warfare against the Korean Garrison Army by 1908, requiring Japan to invest heavily in counter-guerilla operations across the peninsula.¹⁴⁸¹ This placed a strain on the Japanese budget which had already been pushed to the point of exhaustion by the continental campaigns of the Russo-Japanese War. While Japan harboured an interest to overtly claim regional hegemony, it had to content itself with the incorporation of Korea and securing its territorial foothold in northern China, while strengthening its arms to one day take on new rivals. The legacy system of the Settlement of 1905 afforded Japan an opportunity to do exactly this, both militarily and diplomatically.

In the wake of the Russian decision to make peace and not pursue further military action against the exhausted Japanese armies in Manchuria, the peacemakers of Portsmouth, first and foremost Sergei Witte, understood the need to reconfigure Russian foreign policy in East Asia. Given Russia’s all important land border with China and Korea, there could be no question of abandoning Russian interests in the region. As illustrated by the Tsar’s order before Portsmouth, Russia would have to secure its postwar interests with diplomacy and not military means as in 1904. Hence, Russia kept enough military forces in the region to defend its territory and respond to any challenges that might arise in its post-1907 sphere of influences, but lacked the means and, most importantly, the desire to actively seek regional military hegemony. This is best illustrated by the decision of the Russian military to focus on Europe and its plethora of contemporary challenges in the Balkans and leave a bare minimum of forces in East Asia. This policy was also an essential element in convincing the Japanese that a postwar rapprochement was sincerely desired by St. Petersburg. Nevertheless, the weary state of Russian defences on the Asian frontiers of the Russian Empire, especially given the absence of close coordination with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, “resulted in a heightened state of alarm among the [local] military command and the Priamurye Governor General, Paul Simon Unterberger (1842-1921), who can be described as one of the main ideologues of anti-Japanese sentiment within the Russian establishment”¹⁴⁸², illustrating that despite diplomatic breakthroughs, bastions of local tension remained.

The position of the US was similar to that of Russia. Washington, in 1910, harboured no interest in overtly transforming its Pacific possessions as a base for regional hegemony, despite its growing geopolitical commitments in the region. This is best illustrated by the 1910 decision of the US Navy to reconstitute the Asiatic Fleet, according it a mandate to not only defend the Philippines and Guam, but also to enforce the US Open Door policy in China by actively protecting US-flagged shipping on the Yangtze River, restarting a US practice that dated from the 1850s. US land forces were well below levels that seriously indicated any US desire to establish itself as a hegemon over East Asia, however, the level of its naval forces in the region was sufficient for defensive purposes as well as securing pre-defined US policies, such as the Open Door, when

¹⁴⁸⁰ Drea, *Japan’s Imperial Army*, pg. 130.

¹⁴⁸¹ Miyoshi, *The Other Great Game*, pg. 449.

¹⁴⁸² Pestushenko & Shulatov, “Russo-Japanese Relations from 1905 to 1916: from Enemies to Allies”, pg. 107.

Washington deemed necessary. The sharp decline in relations between Washington and Tokyo following the Treaty of Portsmouth, however, cast future US policy in a new light with beginnings of hegemonic rivalry between the US and Japan becoming apparent.

While on paper, the Chinese military forces, in the midst of their reform initiatives following the Settlement of 1901, seemed numerous, the Qing Dynasty however remained very much an object of regional policy. The Chinese military, regardless of their numbers, watched on the sidelines as the Qing was refused admission to the negotiations at Portsmouth and watched helplessly as Russia and Japan entrenched their respective spheres of influences over Manchuria. Whatever interest the Qing might have had to re-establish its now long-lost regional hegemony, translating such aspirations into concrete actions remained a practical impossibility. While Japan held the largest claim to hegemonic status after the Settlement of 1905, its overall economic position and requirements to entrench its control over new territories on mainland Asia made taking actions to bolster such claims practically impossible. While the Russian Empire and the United States also aspired to some degree of hegemony—St. Petersburg over its areas of the Motono-Izvolsky Line and Outer Mongolia; and Washington with its Open Door policy towards the Qing—their respective economic and military positions in 1910 did not include a policy based on the achievement of hegemonic status. The Qing remained an object of regional political competition. A similar situation existed following the Settlement of 1901, with no clear hegemon emerging from the peace agreement, and an argument can be made as to how this contributed to the outbreak of war. Why, then, did regional war not break out after the Treaty of Portsmouth? To answer this question, it is necessary to examine how the Settlement of 1905 continued to reign in hegemonic aspirations through cooperation via public and secret diplomacy.

8.3.7.2. Public and Secret Diplomacy Offset Aspirations towards Interested Hegemony

In the Settlement of 1901 geopolitical rivalry was settled through military might. In the Settlement of 1905, cooperation through balance of power defined the regional system. Unlike its predecessors, given the lack of a regional hegemon, the Settlement of 1905 partitioned East Asia, directly or indirectly, into spheres of influences between its major powers. While the end result of the US-Japanese diplomatic interactions following the Treaty of Portsmouth failed to directly recognize Japanese domination in Korea (the Katsura-Taft Memorandum) and southern Manchuria (the Root-Takahira agreement), Washington tacitly chose to indirectly acknowledge Japanese suzerainty over its newly acquired territories. Such a policy did not fit neatly within the defined contemporary US foreign policy towards East Asia, especially in light of Japanese actions in Manchuria, yet Washington opted to indirectly accept Tokyo's hegemony, even at the cost of the interests of US industrial visionaries such as Harriman. The Russo-Japanese treaty of 1907, most obviously with its Secret Protocol, directly divided East Asia into Japanese (Korea/southern Manchuria) and Russian (Mongolia/northern Manchuria) spheres of influences. Neither Imperial Japan, nor the Russian Empire, nor the US were in a position to excerpt outright hegemony and thereby impose their respective policies upon the region. Consequently, while overt geopolitical conflict was avoided, the Settlement of 1905 reconfigured the aspirations of East Asian main powers and the policies whereby they sought to realize them.

After the Japanese had informed Harriman that his signed understanding with Tokyo was no longer valid, the US did not give up on its economic ambitions in the Qing. The US Consul

General in Mukden, Willard Dickerman Straight (1880-1918), sought to “substitute for the existing scramble for concessions some measure of international financial cooperation in lending money to China and in providing the machinery for her industrial development” and believed that post-1905 Manchuria would act as an optimal starting point.¹⁴⁸³ Given the Russo-Japanese Treaty of 1907, it represented a rather odd choice since the agreement between St. Petersburg and Tokyo de facto eliminated all scrambles of concessions between the relevant powers. In 1907, Straight secured the support of the local Qing Governor Tang, as well as British, French and German interests, to build a northern extension from some point on the existing Imperial line from Beijing to Mukden. In 1908, after consulting with Secretary of State Root who was in the midst of negotiations with Ambassador Takahira, Straight presented Harriman with a “a draft agreement between the Manchurian administration and a group of American financiers for the investment of American capital in Manchuria.”¹⁴⁸⁴ While Straight’s efforts were not enough to persuade the State Department, which elected to sign the Root-Takahira agreement, it rekindled Harriman’s interest who sent Straight back to China in a private capacity as his representative at the head of what had now become the “American Group”. In 1909, the American Group under Straight’s direction signed a preliminary agreement to construct and operate a railroad from Jinzhou to Aigun on the Russian border. The Japanese and Russians viewed this development, given the amount of investment each Empire had made in its assigned section of Manchuria, with outright alarm, especially given the financial support of the US and UK. St. Petersburg and Tokyo opted for consultations to counter this threat of pending economic penetration of Manchuria by other Powers, with Russian Finance Minister, Vladimir Kokovstev, agreeing to meet *Genrō* Itō in Harbin on 26 October 1909. Tokyo had instructed Itō to “attempt to prepare the way toward a closer understanding for the protection of the Russo-Japanese interests”¹⁴⁸⁵, with Japan opting for cooperation with the Russian Empire to offset this threat that included active support and participation from its erstwhile ally, Great Britain. The planned talks were definitively cut short with the assassination of Itō by a Korean radical and nationalist, An Chung-gun (1879-1910), on the same day as his meeting with Kokovstov.

Itō’s abrupt murder did not stop Russo-Japanese negotiations on how to jointly halt any possible US breaching of their respective spheres of interest. Ambassador Motono began discussions on an updated Russo-Japanese treaty in December 1909, noting that the US proposal a “a clear proof of the necessity of bringing about an understanding between Russia and Japan in the Manchurian question.”¹⁴⁸⁶ Bilateral negotiations lasted six months until on 4 July 1910, the national day of the treaty’s intended target, the Second Russo-Japanese Treaty was signed. Like its predecessor, this second treaty was split into public and secret versions. The public version of the 1910 treaty exposed to the international community what Japan and Russia had secretly committed to in 1907, namely the obligation of each nation to help the other in ensuring that respective spheres of influence in Manchuria were not penetrated, with Article I reading “For the purpose of facilitating the communications and developing the commerce of the nations, the two High Contracting Parties engage mutually to lend to each other their friendly cooperation with a view to the improvement of their respective line of railroad in Manchuria, and to the perfecting of

¹⁴⁸³ Baston Price, The Russo-Japanese Treaties of 1907-1916, pg. 46.

¹⁴⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, pg. 47.

¹⁴⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, pg. 51.

¹⁴⁸⁶ Siebert, Benno von & Schreiner, George, Entente Diplomacy and the World: Matrix of the History of Europe, London: Allen & Unwin, 1921, pg. 12.

the connecting service of the said railways, and to refrain from all competition unfavourable to the attainment of this result.”¹⁴⁸⁷ Furthermore, unlike the public treaty of 1907, the 1910 version contained neither reference to the territorial integrity of the Empire of China nor to the principle of equal opportunity, both key references in the public 1907 version. Instead, St. Petersburg and Tokyo opted to publicly declare their collective willingness to defend the 1910 status quo by, as Article III underlines, “whatever measures they may judge it necessary, after consultations together, to take.”¹⁴⁸⁸ As such, Russia and Japan move from what was a firm pledge in 1907 to an arrangement that bordered on, with respect to Manchuria, a limited defensive alliance in 1910.

Map 4: Russian and Japanese Spheres of Influence the Secret Treaties of 1907 and 1910



Source: Li Narangoa & Cribb, Robert, The Historical Atlas of Northeast Asia, 1590-2010, New York: Columbia University Press, 2014.

The Secret Treaty of 1910 confirmed this metamorphosis. The Motono-Izvolsky Line of 1907 was reconfirmed in Article I, with Article II undertaking both parties to respect the special interests within these spheres, with Russia and Japan recognizing “the right of each, within its own spheres, freely to take all measures necessary for the safeguarding and Defence of those interests.”¹⁴⁸⁹ Political activity undertaken by either nation beyond its side of the line of demarcation was forbidden by Article IV as were any attempts to “prejudice their reciprocal special interests.”¹⁴⁹⁰ Yet it is through Article V where the defensive character of the Secret Treaty of 1910 between the former enemies of Russia and Japan was elevated to a new level. In addition to “at all time frankly and loyally enter into communication with regard to anything that concerns matters affecting in common their special interests in Manchuria...in the event that these special interests should come to be threatened, the two High Contracting Parties will agree upon the measures to be taken with a view to common action or to the support to be accorded for the

¹⁴⁸⁷ Baston Price, The Russo-Japanese Treaties of 1907-1916, pg. 43.

¹⁴⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 44.

¹⁴⁸⁹ Elleman, International Rivalry and Secret Diplomacy in East Asia, pg. 122.

¹⁴⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, pg. 123.

safeguarding and the defence of those interests.”¹⁴⁹¹ Publicly opting to ward off possible competitors regarding railway concessions, the Russian and Japanese clandestinely pledged to cooperate in regards to fending off any threat that might endanger their respective special interests in Manchuria. While far from a full defensive alliance, as its articles applied to questions surrounding Manchuria, it signaled the most serious pledge regarding common action to protect a portion of the regional status quo between two countries that, five years prior, had fought one of history’s most bloody campaigns. At the same time, the Russo-Japanese Treaty of 1910 was made necessary by the lack of a single hegemon within the region able to impose its political priorities, in this case, obliging the Japanese and the Russians to cooperate to shut the door on any US entry into areas which had been designated as of special interest. Instead of war, regional powers opted instead to accommodate their differences through public and secret agreements.

8.3.8. The Settlement of 1905: the Existence of a Constitutional Order

The Treaty of Portsmouth, and the negotiations that led to its signature, were designed with the sole objective in mind of concluding the Russo-Japanese war. At no time did it entertain any notions of furnishing a solution to the many geopolitical problems of the East Asian region at large, focusing solely on matters of concern to the Empires of Japan and Russia. To the contrary, as the US decision to exclude any Qing representation from the negotiations at Portsmouth exemplifies, the Roosevelt Administration sought to limit the number of those involved in the settlement process to the bare minimum. Hence, as no comprehensive regional order was envisioned, and the very idea of a Constitutional Order lay outside the contemporary political horizons of the negotiators in New Hampshire, the criterion of a Constitutional Order can consequently not be determined.

8.3.9. Conclusion: The Legacy System of 1905

The Settlement of 1905 differed greatly from its predecessors in 1901 and 1895. While the Settlements of 1901 and 1895 marked the gradual permeation of the Westphalian order into East Asia. With the total military and political marginalization of the Qing in 1901, the Settlement of 1905 was one completely conceived and negotiated in Westphalian tradition. It also marked the full incorporation of East Asia into the global international system: peace was not made bilaterally in the minor Japanese port of Shimonoseki, but in Portsmouth, New Hampshire under the personal mediation of the 27th President of the United States who was subsequently awarded the 1906 Nobel Peace Prize for his efforts. The involvement of Russia, a major European power, in one of history’s first industrial wars implied effects on the European balance of power as well as the East Asian. No previous ‘critical juncture’ held such a wide scope of consequences. In examining the conditions of the Settlement of 1905, a situation whereby the path towards stable peace could be initiated has been identified. The analysis to support this assessment is presented in the following table:

¹⁴⁹¹ Ibid., pg. 124.

Table 14: Assessment of the Conditions for RSO Formation Present Following the Settlement of 1905

<i>Antecedent Condition</i>	<i>Geo-political Necessity</i>	<i>Policy of Reciprocal Restraint</i>	<i>Satisfaction with Status Quo/‘Legacy System’</i>	<i>Pacific Self-Image</i>	<i>Compatible Social Orders</i>	<i>Existence of an Interested Hegemon</i>	<i>Existence of a Constitutional Order</i>
<i>Settlement of 1905</i>	YES	YES	YES	NO	NO	NO	CANNOT BE DETERMINED

Based on the above table, the Settlement of 1905 meets all criteria necessary to furnish stable peace. As illustrated in detail, the negotiations at Portsmouth were based on a position of geopolitical necessity, both from the Russian and Japanese perspectives. While this condition has been observed in the pre-modern international society as well as the Settlements of 1895 and 1901, in these cases, no gesture of unilateral accommodation followed geopolitical necessity. The Treaty of Portsmouth resulted in gestures of unilateral accommodations from both sides: Japan through its (albeit Emperor-imposed) decision to forgo an indemnity and Russia through its willingness to cede southern Sakhalin. These gestures of unilateral accommodation were followed by a conscious policy of reciprocal restraint, built in by the articles of the Treaty of Portsmouth. As illustrated, the Treaty of Portsmouth not only accorded Japan Russian territorial rights in the Qing, but it also pledged to start a process of bilateral negotiation between St. Petersburg and Tokyo to clarify important military and economic questions. Through this process of difficult and lengthy negotiations between the Russians and Japanese, additional gestures of accommodation were able to be made. The Russian Foreign Ministry’s decisions, based on the original concept of Witte, were clearly aimed at fostering stable peace with Japan. Consequently, Russia was able to make painful concessions regarding political (the accreditation of the Russian Consul to Seoul); economic (granting Japan wide rights to fishing concessions in Russian territorial waters); and military (completing the Russian withdrawal from Manchuria ahead of schedule) questions. As a result, Japan was able to reciprocate by, through the Russo-Japanese Treaty of 1907, recognizing Russia’s sphere of influence in northern Manchuria and Outer Mongolia.

Based on these mutual gestures of accommodation, both Russia and Japan were satisfied with the post-bellum status quo that the Settlement of 1905 had constructed. Indeed, both nations codified their satisfaction with the second Russo-Japanese Treaty of 1910 whose secret protocols went so far as to pledge mutual assistance in case the established order came under threat. As such, the secret protocols of the Russo-Japanese Treaty of 1910 closely resembled a secret defensive alliance. Furthermore, the road towards stable peace between St. Petersburg and Tokyo also produced a wider effect, promoting tension-reduction between Russia and Great Britain, competitors in Central Asia and Tibet, that would have great significance in the lead up to the First World War. In short, the post-bellum relationship between Russia and Japan reached levels of, albeit unspoken, cooperation that East Asia had not yet witnessed. The Settlement of 1905 did, however, plant the seed of geopolitical competition between the United States and Japan. While Washington was not comfortable with some elements of the Settlement of 1905, most notably regarding the Open Door Policy to China, it willingly acquiesced to major traits of the post-bellum

regional political order, most notably regarding the recognition of Japanese suzerainty over Korea. US satisfaction was sufficient for Washington to refrain from adopting an overt policy to undermine the Settlement of 1905. The Qing was, as with the Settlements of 1901 and 1895, not particularly satisfied with the Settlement of 1905, however there was little Beijing could tangibly do about it. As such, between the regional powers, the Settlement of 1905 began to foster the basis for the development of stable peace.

By 1910, however, the level of peace that had been established was limited. While the necessary elements of fostering a stable peace were present, the more advanced conditions that allow RSOs to be constructed remained decidedly absent. No pacific self-images had been cultivated between regional powers and war constituted a policy tool that could be used in the event that, like 1904, diplomacy was viewed as failing. No compatible orders straddled the nations of East Asia, with the regional powers espousing very different and distinct political systems. The Settlement of 1905 likewise did not result in the emergence of a clear hegemon, let alone one that displayed interest in fostering security cooperation amongst regional states. Consequently, the Settlement of 1905 did not create the conditions that would allow for RSO formation.

As noted in the State of the Art, however, the road to stable peace and RSO formation is a long one. While the creation of a functioning RSO remained outside the realm of postwar possibilities, the Settlement of 1905 is remarkable as it created the necessary conditions for the fostering of stable peace between two former adversaries that chose cooperation instead of conflict in the wake of the twentieth century's first industrial war. As illustrated by the detailed analysis of the criteria of stable peace—the presence of geopolitical necessity, policies of reciprocal restraint, and satisfaction with the status quo—led to the establishment of a durable peace between Russia and Japan in East Asia, one that was accepted with reservations by the United States through the Root-Takahira agreement where Washington and Tokyo agreed to consult on and mutually respect the status quo. As a result, no international conflicts broke out between the regional states of East Asia following the Settlement of 1905 and the established fruitful base of cooperation between Russia and Japan would continue to grow in the years to come. The foundation for the fostering of stable peace that the Settlement of 1905 provided, however, would not be long-lasting. Along with the necessary conditions for rapprochement between former adversaries, it also anchored East Asia both firmly and finally within the contours of the global international system. Events in far off lands, such as Europe, would now have a direct impact on the political trajectory of East Asia. Indeed, it was exactly such events that would lead to the abrupt and unexpected end of the Settlement of 1905 and to whose attention this dissertation now turns.

Chapter 9 - The First World War: The Treaty of Versailles

9.1. Introduction

Within the overall scope of the First World War, East Asia was a mere sideshow. Military actions were limited to the first months of the war and had a spontaneous, rather than planned, character. In a sense, the nature of the relatively modest military campaigns encapsulates the entire ‘critical juncture’ of the First World War and its regional significance. As such, arguments have been put forward that World War One was not truly a ‘world war’ in scope with nearly all significant military operations having taken place a world away, contending that “the First World War did not fully deserve this subsequently conferred name fought as it was mainly in Europe.”¹⁴⁹² East Asia was in no way involved in the outbreak and any of the major operations of the First World War. Yet by the outbreak of the Great War, East Asia had been anchored into the global international system. Japan, since 1902, was the sole non-European ally of Great Britain and had assumed its own rightful place on the mantelpiece of the Great Powers. This trend of direct East Asian involvement in global affairs only increased manifestly following Japan’s victory in the Russo-Japanese War, signaling the first time a major European Power had been defeated by an Asian, as well as the treaties between the Russian and Japanese Empires that facilitated their rapprochement. Indeed, the effect of the Settlement of 1905 on the contours of the global system held a strong sway over its legacy system, obliterating the last vestiges of the glass window that separated the West from East Asia, most evidenced in the pre-modern international society. Consequently, major geopolitical events in Europe no longer were confined to the Western world but had an inevitable echo on the trajectory of political development in East Asia. While admittedly not involved in any meaningful degree in the slaughter of the Western and Eastern fronts between 1914-1918, the inherent systemic interconnectivity that had increased with the Settlements of 1895, 1901, and 1905 inevitably meant that an event as significant as the First World War would unavoidably have serious implications for East Asia. In close examination of the effect of the ‘critical juncture’ of the First World War on East Asia, “the way [in which] the war generated the forces that would transform Asia both internally and externally” can be ascertained.¹⁴⁹³

The transformative power of the First World War was, following its outbreak, well understood in East Asia. Japanese literati were amongst the first to comprehend the transformative power that the outbreak of conflict in Europe would bring to the region and the global order at large. Japanese writer Shimazaki Tōson (1872-1943) foresaw, already on 8 August 1914 that “the effect of this Great War will, no doubt, surpass that of the Franco-Prussian War. Not only will it transform the map of Europe and the destiny of nations, it will decisively alter the twentieth-century stage.”¹⁴⁹⁴ The reconstructive power of the First World War, albeit with its main military focus far removed from East Asia, was also recognized by contemporary Chinese: Liang Qichao (1873-1929), a political activist who spoke out in favour of the Hundred Days Reform and who argued staunchly in favour of China’s entry into hostilities, proclaimed that the First World War presented China with a once-in-a-millennium opportunity to protect its battered national

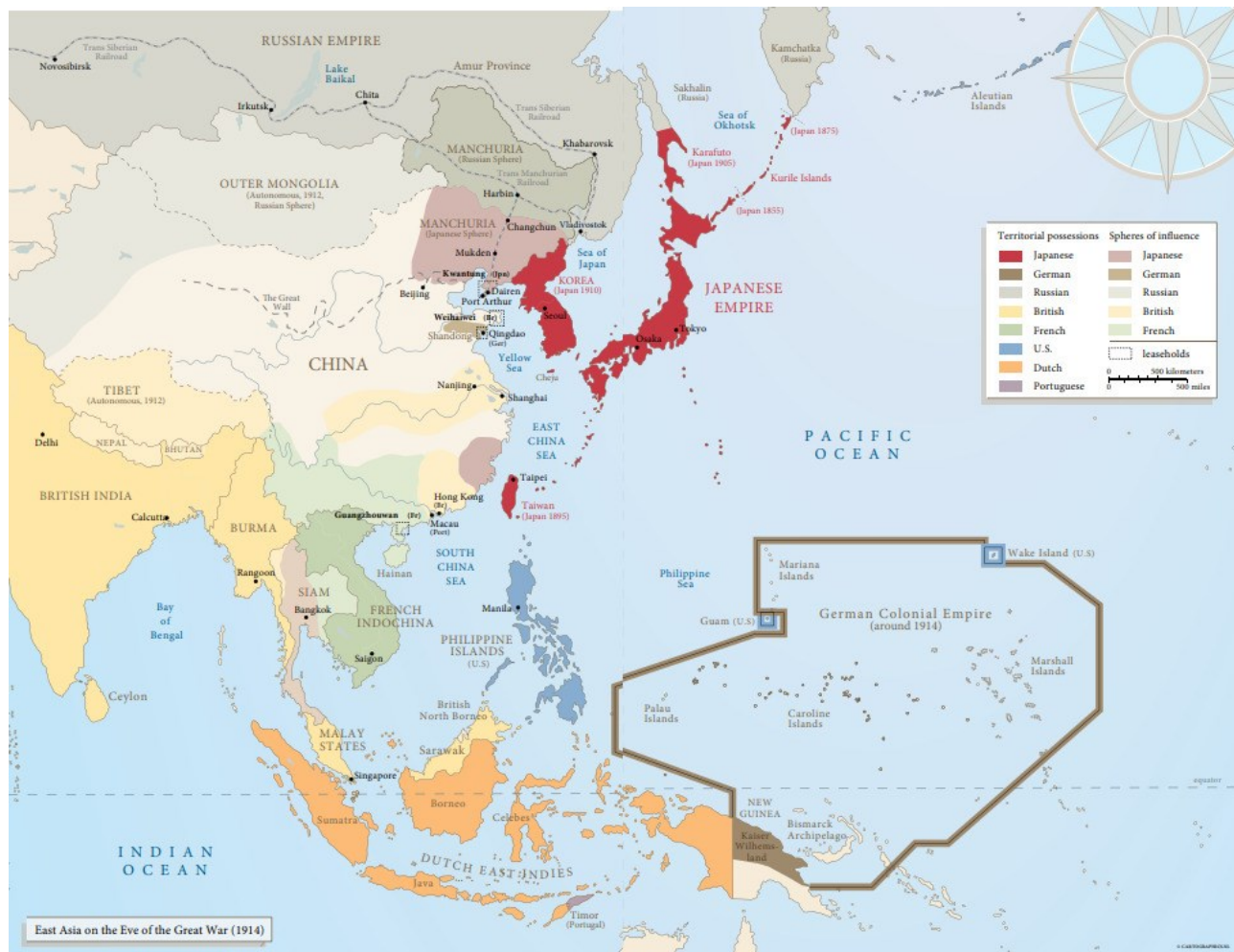
¹⁴⁹² Seth, Vikram quoted in Jones, Heather; O’Brien, Jennifer & Schmidt-Suprian, Christoph (eds), *Untold War: New Perspectives in First World War Studies*, Leiden: Brill, 2008, pg. 65.

¹⁴⁹³ Xu Guoqi, “Asia” in Winter, Jay (ed.), *Cambridge History of the First World War, Volume I, The Global War*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014, pg. 479.

¹⁴⁹⁴ Dickens, Frederick, *War and National Reinvention: Japan in the Great War, 1914-1919*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999, pg. 33.

sovereignty and gain acceptance into the international community.¹⁴⁹⁵ Hence, the advent of the First World War had launched, as will be illustrated in the examination of this ‘critical juncture’s’ antecedent conditions, new processes within each East Asian state that would ultimately not only shape the contours of the Settlement of 1919, but also, more importantly, beyond.

Map 5: East Asia on the Eve of the First World War (1914)



Source: Minohara et al, *The Decade of the Great War*

9.2. The First World War: Antecedent Conditions

9.2.1 Introduction

The Antecedent Conditions of the ‘critical juncture’ of the First World War distinguish themselves from anything that the region had earlier encountered. The causes of initial outbreak of the First World War were numerous however their one commonality, other than leading to the second industrial war of the twentieth century, was that they all lay on the European Continent

¹⁴⁹⁵ Xu, “Asia”, pg. 484.

and, therefore, lie squarely beyond the scope of this dissertation.¹⁴⁹⁶ The end result of this ‘critical juncture’, namely the legacy system of 1919, was of enormous consequence to the region’s trajectory, both in terms of stable peace and RSO formation. Hence, the antecedent conditions that will be described pertain to the situation in East Asia prior to the outbreak of the First World War in Europe, sparking the processes that were to inevitably follow and characterize subsequent regional political development.

9.2.2. The Russo-Japanese Secret Treaty of 1912

9.2.2.1. ‘The China Consortium’

Following the Russo-Japanese Treaty of 1910, the solid foundation of a mutually satisfactory status quo that St. Petersburg and Tokyo had constructed since the conclusion of the Russo-Japanese War continued to be strengthened. The latest understanding between Russia and Japan, as well as the crisis brought about by the assassination of *Genrō* Itō in 1909, paved the way for Tokyo to make decisive moves to firmly establish its hegemony over Korea. On 30 May 1910, General Terauchi was nominated as the new Resident General of Korea, all the while retaining his function as Minister of War. On 22 June 1910, an Imperial Ordinance had been proclaimed, creating the Imperial Colonial Board, with Prime Minister Katsura as President, comprising the territories of Taiwan, southern Sakhalin, the Liaodong Peninsula, and Korea. By the end of June 1910, the Japanese had placed the 17,000 Japanese and 2,000 local police serving in Korea under Terauchi’s direct control. On 25 July 1910, Terauchi was received by the Emperor and Empress of Korea where the Resident General suggested that the Emperor officially petition Tokyo for his Empire’s annexation by Japan. The Meiji Emperor granted the Korean ‘request’ on 22 August 1910, underlining that Japan “had now given to her conception of ‘special interests’ its ultimate interpretation.”¹⁴⁹⁷

The impression left by the Russo-Japanese Treaty of 1910, especially regarding the text referring to the “maintenance of the *status quo*” was one of concern. The Chinese Government viewed these words as a signal that only Russian or Japanese concerns might finance or construct railways in Manchuria.¹⁴⁹⁸ While China begrudgingly accepted the reality of the Russian and Japanese presence on its territory, and the blatant disregard of the Open Door policy this implied, Beijing opted to test the validity of these principles outside the realm of railroads. On 22 September 1910, the Chinese Government met with the US Minister in Beijing, William James Calhoun (1848-1916), to ascertain whether US bankers would “be willing to undertake a loan of about fifty million taels in order to elaborate [China’s] currency reform”.¹⁴⁹⁹ The State Department responded positively and, by contacting a conglomerate of US bankers, Washington expressed its willingness to provide a loan for USD 50 million in gold, a sum that would include a projected ‘Manchurian loan’ of 20 million taels. As sizeable portion of this loan would be allotted for the development of Manchuria, with half of the loan guarantees being in Manchuria.¹⁵⁰⁰ The Qing welcomed the loan,

¹⁴⁹⁶ On the causes of the First World War, see Fay, Sidney Bradshaw, *The Origins of the World War*, Volumes I & II, London: Ishi Press, 2010.

¹⁴⁹⁷ Baston Price, *The Russo-Japanese Treaties of 1907-1916*, pg. 60.

¹⁴⁹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁴⁹⁹ Ibid., pp. 60-61.

¹⁵⁰⁰ Price, Don, *Russia and the Roots of the Chinese Revolution, 1896-1911*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1974, pg. 167.

however refused a separate loan for Manchuria as it did not wish to legally differentiate between integral parts of the Chinese Empire. While Beijing wished to secure exclusively US financing, Washington made the loan conditional on the understanding that it could include “associates”.¹⁵⁰¹ On 31 October 1910, the State Department informed the British, French, German, Russian, and Japanese Embassies of this preliminary agreement, highlighting that “the American Government would welcome the cordial support of the interested Powers.”¹⁵⁰² British, French, and German financial groups displayed interest in an international ‘China Consortium’.

The Russian and Japanese Governments however became deeply disturbed at this turn of events. Foreign Minister Izvolsky noted in his correspondence with the Finance Ministry that Ambassador Motono “expressed to me his great dissatisfaction at the course of the penetration of foreign capital has taken.”¹⁵⁰³ Izvolsky himself echoed Motono’s concern believing that the United States desired “to use foreign, not American, money in order to obtain a double profit: Firstly, a commission for American banks and, secondly, the appointment of an American who will in all probability attempt to exert not only economic but also political influence.”¹⁵⁰⁴ The Russian Foreign Minister was not alone in his opinion, the French also viewed the development loan as bringing clear advantages to US interests in China.¹⁵⁰⁵ Although Paris reassured its Russian allies that it would not willingly engage in an effort that would strike against St. Petersburg’s interests in East Asia, the Russian Foreign Ministry remained unassured. Indeed, the Russian Government was so concerned by the development loan and Paris’s reaction to it, that an extraordinary session of the Ministerial Council was held in St. Petersburg on 2 December 1910, with the Prime Minister, Pyotr Arkadyevich Stolypin (1862-1911), Foreign Minister Izvolsky and Finance Minister Kokovtsov present. At this meeting, the Ministers agreed that the eventual annexation of northern Manchuria was an “imperative necessity”.¹⁵⁰⁶ Such a decision, however, would certainly mean war with the Qing. Russian Minister of War, Vladimir Aleksandrovich Sukhomlinov (1848-1926), argued that the present moment was “all the more favourable for us to take possession of Manchuria in agreement with the Japan, as the Japanese are evidently preparing the annexation of southern Manchuria”; while Izvolsky remained “perfectly convinced that the annexation of northern Manchuria was for us an imperative necessity, but viewed the present moment as unfavourable, as America, England, and perhaps even Japan would oppose our plans.”¹⁵⁰⁷ Kokovtsov underlined the necessity of protecting Russian interests in China but cautioned that, economically, Russia was ill-prepared for war, arguing additionally that the outright annexation of Chinese territory could be misunderstood within Russia. The Ministerial Council concluded that, while Russia “must not withdraw from Manchuria, but [it should rather] attempt to strengthen our position in this country. So far as northern Manchuria is concerned, the Ministerial Council regards an annexation as dangerous at the present moment, but is of the opinion that the trend of events may force Russia to this step. All Ministries must be guided by the consideration that our stipulated privileges must be maintained in full to permit eventually an annexation at some future date.”¹⁵⁰⁸

¹⁵⁰¹ Baston Price, *The Russo-Japanese Treaties of 1907-1916*, pg. 61.

¹⁵⁰² Ibid.

¹⁵⁰³ Ibid.

¹⁵⁰⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵⁰⁵ Terrais, Hugues, « Une Révolution sous Influence : La République Chinoise face au consortium bancaire », *Matériaux pour l’Histoire de Notre Temps*, 2013.1-2 (N. 109-110), pg. 26.

¹⁵⁰⁶ Baston Price, *The Russo-Japanese Treaties of 1907-1916*, pg. 62.

¹⁵⁰⁷ Ibid., pp. 62-63.

¹⁵⁰⁸ Ibid., pg. 63.

The decision was taken, however, to place pressure on China to reject what St. Petersburg viewed as foreign interference into its sphere of influence. Russia exerted pressure through the Ili Settlement of 1881, now approaching the end of its thirty-year length, and, as of February 1911, launching official complaints regarding the Qing's failure to permit the opening of new Russian consulates in Mongolia and Xinjiang. Consequently, St. Petersburg presented Beijing an ultimatum demanding the opening of consulates, extraterritorial privileges, as well as the exclusive rights to acquire property, construct, and manage railway lines into Mongolia and Xinjiang. The Qing, in the early months of 1911, was not in any position to unilaterally oppose Russia by force and, observing an increased concentration of Russian troops near the Chinese border, had little choice but to agree to St. Petersburg's demands. This episode was "probably the most humiliating one in China's foreign relations between 1905 and 1911."¹⁵⁰⁹ It was also the last major geopolitical event along the Sino-Russian frontier before the final collapse of Imperial China.

Despite Russian protests and Chinese concessions, the Qing opted to go ahead with entering into agreement with the "China Consortium" and, on 15 April 1911, signed the Chinese Currency Reform and Industrial Development Loan involving American, German, British, and French financing. According to the terms of the loan, the credit was to be dispersed into two separate accounts, a "Chinese Government Currency Reform Account" and "The Chinese Government Manchurian Development Account" (Article IX); and was obliged to provide quarterly reports in Chinese and English "showing the disbursements for the promotion and extension of Manchurian industry" (Article XI).¹⁵¹⁰ Yet it was Article XVI that would prove the most controversial to St. Petersburg and Tokyo: stating that "if the Imperial Chinese Government should desire to obtain from other than Chinese sources, funds in addition to the proceeds derived from this loan, to continue or complete the operations contemplated under the terms of this agreement, the Imperial Chinese Government shall first invite the banks to undertake a loan to provide the funds required, but should the Imperial Chinese Government fail to agree with the banks as to the terms of such supplementary loans then other financial groups may be invited to undertake the same; and should the Imperial Chinese Government decide to invite foreign capitalists to participate with Chinese interests in Manchurian businesses contemplated under this loan...the banks shall first be invited to participate."¹⁵¹¹ In layman's terms, this article accorded the 'China Consortium' the right of first refusal regarding the undertaking of new, or expansion of existing, projects in Manchuria, cutting out potential Russian or Japanese capital. The two capitals, according to the terms of the Secret Treaty of 1907, opted to act in unison to defend the *status quo*. The Russian and Japanese Embassies in Paris presented a note verbale in protest to the French Government against the whole of Article XVI, in particular, the Japanese, on 26 June 1911, underlined that "Japan possesses in the region of southern Manchuria special rights and interests, and while [Japan] is fully prepared in the future as in the past to respect the rights of others, [Japan] is unable to view with indifference measures which tend not only to menace these special rights and interests but to place her subjects and institutions at a disadvantage as compared with [those] of any other country", closing by demanding "the entire suppression of Article XVI".¹⁵¹² The Russian Chargé in Washington followed up with a similar note verbale on 11 July 1911, stating

¹⁵⁰⁹ Price, Russia and the Roots of the Chinese Revolution, 1896-1911, pg. 168.

¹⁵¹⁰ MacMurray, Treaties and Agreements Concerning China, pp. 841-849.

¹⁵¹¹ Ibid., pg. 848.

¹⁵¹² Baston Price, The Russo-Japanese Treaties of 1907-1916, pp. 68-69.

that “the project in question having a tendency to hinder the development of Russian interests in Manchuria by creating in favour of the [‘China Consortium’] an altogether exceptional position, the Imperial Government...addresses itself to the Government of the United States with the request that it will not refuse to use its influence with a view to having clause XVI of the contract revoked.”¹⁵¹³ With these two note verbales, presented separately in Paris and Washington, Japan and Russia illustrated their willingness not only to coordinate action to defend the *status quo*, but also that Tokyo’s and St. Petersburg’s understanding of spheres of influence went far beyond the question of railways.

While Japanese and Russian protests did little to curb the planned activities of the Qing Government and its cooperation with the ‘China Consortium’, another monumental event in the history of East Asia occurred, offering Russia and Japan further opportunity to deepen their cooperation and expand and protect their respective spheres of influence.

9.2.2.3. The End of Imperial China

The end of the Qing Dynasty came in the autumn of 1911. Through the Settlement of 1901, the authority of the Manchu Dynasty had, in retrospect, been given a fatal blow, one that came so soon after the humiliation of the Settlement of 1895. Following the Settlement of 1901, the necessity of seriously undertaking reform became evident, with the construction of new railways and the training of the New Army, central to enhancing control of the state, seen as the main paths to stability.¹⁵¹⁴ Yet payment of the Boxer indemnity of 1901 took up a large share of the central government’s income and the lack of centralization inhibited the collection of new revenue sources. Modernization efforts were stalling and, in some cases, failing outright. As noted, growing Han Chinese nationalism steadily eroded the popularity of the Manchu elite in the public eye. This growing inability of the Qing to effectively deal with challenges both home and abroad gave rise to the image of the reigning Dynasty as an outside group of rulers.¹⁵¹⁵ Such brewing tensions came to a head suddenly in the autumn of 1911. The local elite in Sichuan province had invested heavily in railway construction and opposed the central government’s attempts to profit from these foreign-financed projects. On 9 October 1911, a revolt broke out in the Russian concession of Hankou, now part of the city of Wuhan, when a group of rebels accidentally exploded a bomb and prevented the Russian police from intervening. The Qing’s attempts to solve the conflict militarily backfired badly and resulted in the defection of the majority of Chinese provinces, declaring their outright independence from the Qing Empire. Under the banner of “expel the northern barbarians” (*‘quzhu Dalu’*/驱除鞑虏) the traditional monarchy that had ruled over China for nearly 2,132 years was no more.

The Revolution of 1911 was, however, “not a coordinated effort by a strong rebel organization able to establish a new order; rather it was a spark that set off the collapse of the old system that had already lost support.”¹⁵¹⁶ In its stead, China openly strove to become a modern nation state, aspiring to a true expression of Westphalian sovereignty. Nevertheless, given the sudden and uncoordinated nature of what posterity would call the Xinhai (‘stem branch’/辛亥革

¹⁵¹³ Ibid., pg. 69.

¹⁵¹⁴ Fairbank, *China: A New History*, pg. 247.

¹⁵¹⁵ Vogel, *China and Japan*, pg. 203.

¹⁵¹⁶ Ibid., pg. 204.

命) Revolution, two main contenders emerged to fill the gaping political vacuum. The so-called “father of the revolution”, the leader of the Chinese Revolutionary Alliance Sun Yat-sen, who was fund-raising in Denver when the revolt in Wuhan broke out, only returned to China in December 1911. Yuan Shikai was recalled from retirement by the Qing officials to lead the New Army to quell the rebellion. At the beginning of the rebellion, it was uncertain if Yuan would side with the Qing to uphold the dynasty or support the rebels. There existed little ideological cohesion amongst the adherents of the sudden rebellion, having “neither political order nor a well-defined vision for the future.”¹⁵¹⁷ The Chinese Revolutionary Alliance announced the establishment of the Chinese Republic on 1 January 1912 at Nanjing, nominating Sun as the first provisional President of China. Yet this was not to last. Despite the political confusion, there existed general consensus “that China should establish a parliament to represent the provinces, that unity was necessary to forestall foreign intervention, and that the reform-minded Yuan Shikai... was the one man with the capacity to head a government.”¹⁵¹⁸ Through a series of compromises, an all-out civil war was averted, mostly due to the fact that Yuan Shikai was able to astutely present himself as a figure of law in order to the most interested foreign powers with commercial interests in Wuhan, namely Great Britain and Japan.¹⁵¹⁹ This, combined with the military support of the New Army, was sufficient to force Sun to realise that Yuan Shikai held the upper hand. Following the abdication of the Xuantong Emperor (1906-1907) in February 1912, Sun handed over the presidency of the nascent republic to Yuan.

The sudden fall of the Qing Dynasty took the Western Powers and Japan by surprise. The Meiji Emperor was deeply shocked by the events in China: in November 1911, in his last address to the Diet, he expressed his deep concern about the events in China and hoped that order would be restored and peace would prevail. After the abdication of the last emperor of China, “it could not but have had an impact on a Japanese Emperor whose ancestors for centuries had sent embassies to the Emperors of China.”¹⁵²⁰ There was no surprise at the demise of Imperial China in the Court of His Majesty Nicholas II. As the oldest European power with firmly established territories over much of the Asian continent, Russia “well understood the fundamental hostility of the Mongols to the Chinese; and, from her vantage point of contact along the northern periphery of the Chinese Empire, [Russia] was in a better position to observe the signs of change.”¹⁵²¹ As early as December 1910, Russia began to place diplomatic pressure on the Qing to abstain from implementing policies that would alter the *status quo* in Mongolia, including refraining from undertaking any military activity. Hence, seeing the growing unresolvable contradictions with China, the Russian Empire began to stake out its area of interests, already signed off by Tokyo through the Secret Agreement of 1907. Following the outbreak of the Revolution of 1911, the Russian Foreign Ministry instructed the Russian Ambassador to Beijing that St. Petersburg should take advantage of the instability in China to oblige the Qing to recognize Russia’s interests in Outer Mongolia.¹⁵²² The Mongolian Khans had, before the outbreak of Revolution in China, sent a mission to Russia to recognize the *Khutuku* (‘Living Buddha)—the spiritual head of Tibetan Buddhism in Mongolia—at Urga who had declared his territory’s independence from Qing rule.

¹⁵¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁵¹⁸ Fairbank, *China: A New History*, pg. 250.

¹⁵¹⁹ Vogel, *China and Japan*, pp. 204-205.

¹⁵²⁰ Ibid., pg. 205.

¹⁵²¹ Baston Price, *The Russo-Japanese Treaties of 1907-1916*, pp. 69-70.

¹⁵²² Feng, “Outer Mongolia during the 1911 Revolution”, pg. 259.

Through its consulate at Kulun (now Ulaanbaatar), Russia began assisting Outer Mongolian princes through the provision of arms, facilitating the political estrangement of Outer Mongolia from Beijing.¹⁵²³ In December 1911, seemingly to replicate its strategy during the signature of the Treaties of Aigun and Peking, St. Petersburg offered its offices as a mediator between Outer Mongolia and China. Given the gravity of the domestic problems the Qing Court faced, no negotiator was ever dispatched to Russia.

The chaotic situation engulfing the Qing also had a direct effect on Japanese and Russian interests in Manchuria, already under assault by foreign loans and the 'China Consortium'. On the eve of the abdication of the last of the Manchu Emperors, the Russian Foreign Minister, Sergey Dmitryevich Sazonov (1860-1927), submitted on 12 January 1912, a memorandum to Nicholas II declaring "Russia and Japan must use the present favourable moment to fortify their position in China and in this way prevent the Chinese Government from continually opposing the political interests of Russia and Japan as has been the case over the past few years...The Manchurian question occupies a first place. It was here in particular that we had to fear China's resistance. We must now endeavour to protect ourselves against a hostile action on the part of China in Manchuria. As our interests in Manchuria coincide with those of Japan...our task will be greatly facilitated by cooperation."¹⁵²⁴ Whether St. Petersburg's and Tokyo's interests, given the novel situation in China, would coincide, however, remained an open question. Two days after the outbreak of unrest, the Qing's Ministry of War secretly requested the Japanese Government, through the Japanese Military Attaché, General Aoki Norizumi, to supply arms and munitions to help subdue the rebellion, a request to which Tokyo responded positively on 16 October 1911, in return for expectations that the Qing change its attitude towards Japan and respect Tokyo's position in Manchuria.¹⁵²⁵ Hence, from the very beginning, the Japanese Government was obliged to define its policy towards the developments in China. On 23 October 1911, a contract between the Okura Industrial Company and the Qing Ministry of War was concluded to supply a total of JPY 2,733, 640 in cannon, rifles, and machine guns, with the Japanese Foreign Ministry requesting the Japanese press to refrain from publishing anything harmful to Tokyo's position on the situation in China. In direct opposition to the Foreign Ministry, the Army's General Staff, as well as the Home Ministry, openly advocated supplying soldiers to the Chinese revolutionaries.

In order to clarify internal contradictions, a Cabinet meeting was held on 24 October 1911 establishing the course Japanese policy would follow in regard to the momentous events in China. Following discussions with the *Genrō*, Cabinet, and General Staff, the basic policy of Japan was as follows: "In view of the fact that Japan had particularly intimate ties, both politically and economically, with China, Japan should always try and strive to preserve its paramount position in that country. Japan should also seek to maintain permanently the *status quo* in Manchuria. We must await the most propitious moment to make a basic settlement of the position there to our own advantage. From now on we must endeavour to establish our influence in China proper and take steps to get the other powers to recognize our ascendancy in that area."¹⁵²⁶ This policy, the document added, should be achieved without alienating China or the other Powers. As such, Tokyo

¹⁵²³ Ibid.

¹⁵²⁴ Baston Price, *The Russo-Japanese Treaties of 1907-1916*, pp. 70-71.

¹⁵²⁵ Masaru Ikei, "Japan's Response to the Chinese Revolution of 1911", *Journal of Asian Studies*, 1966, Vol. 25 (2), pp. 213-214.

¹⁵²⁶ Nish, *Japanese Foreign Policy*, pg. 90.

hoped that by cooperating with the other Powers, Japan would neither alienate the legitimate Qing Government nor the rebels. Following the Cabinet meeting, Home Minister and future Prime Minister Hara Takashi (1856-1921), noted that “in the last meeting...there was no sympathy whatsoever for the cause of the rebel army. The feeling was that we could honestly give our sympathy only to the legitimate government in Beijing. But in this meeting the tendency has been to recognize that honesty alone would not help in achieving our objectives.”¹⁵²⁷ Given the developing chaotic situation in China, Hara’s words would become prophetic. Following the Qing’s decision to activate the services of Yuan Shikai to attempt to rescue the Dynasty, the Japanese agreed on 16 November 1911 that Tokyo would be able to furnish him with considerable aid on the condition that Yuan should “indicate his intention to save the situation by relying on the strength of the Japanese Government.”¹⁵²⁸ In his exploratory meeting with the Japanese Minister to Beijing, Ijūin Hikokichi (1864-1924), Yuan stated that his goal was to establish a constitutional monarchy, despite the growing demands of the rebels to abolish the monarchy outright. Ijūin sent his recommendation to the Japanese Foreign Ministry to adopt a positive policy of support for Yuan and his declared political goal. In response, Foreign Minister Uchida Kōsai (1865-1938) became convinced that Japan, with its aspiring role as dominant foreign power in China, secure the coordinated cooperation of the international community in establishing a constitutional monarchy to steer the Qing out of its troubled waters.

In accordance with the Anglo-Japanese Alliance, Tokyo instructed the Japanese Chargé d’Affaires in London, Yamaza Enjirō (1866-1914) to inform the British that the Powers with significant interests in China could no longer stand by and witness the Qing’s futile attempts to restore order, suggesting that Japan and Great Britain jointly plan and coordinate international action. Before Enjirō had received a reply from the Foreign Office, however, the Japanese Foreign Ministry learned that the British had engaged in separate, bilateral negotiations with Yuan Shikai on an armistice.¹⁵²⁹ Foreign Minister Uchida was stunned and expressed his regret that Japan had not been previously informed of British mediation attempts in China. The British, both in London and in Tokyo, responded evasively. Yuan Shikai contacted the Japanese who sought assurances from the Chinese general that he would respect any outcome of any mediation and would understand the need for Tokyo, as Britain’s ally, to keep London fully in the loop on any mediation efforts in China as well as pledge to establish a constitutional monarchy. Yuan withdrew his proposals to the Japanese once the British, without consulting Japan, secured a truce at Hankow, with Yuan “concluding that the Japanese could be of little help to China and that, therefore, he could ignore their views.”¹⁵³⁰ Consequently, Tokyo’s plans to influence the situation in China lay in ruins. The British-negotiated Hankow armistice and the subsequent organization of a peace conference between northern and southern Chinese revolutionaries in Shanghai “forced the Japanese to reluctantly give up their hopes for a solution through a constitutional monarchy.”¹⁵³¹ Instead of coordinating foreign intervention in the name of the Great Powers, Japan was obliged to watch helplessly from the sidelines as British mediation opted to leave China to its own destiny. To London, this meant respecting the emerging consensus between the Chinese revolutionaries based in Shanghai that contemporary China required a republic. The Japanese attempted to plead

¹⁵²⁷ Ikei, “Japan’s Response to the Chinese Revolution of 1911”, pg. 215.

¹⁵²⁸ Ibid., pg. 218.

¹⁵²⁹ Ibid., pg. 219.

¹⁵³⁰ Ibid., pg. 221.

¹⁵³¹ Nish, *Japanese Foreign Policy*, pg. 90.

their case in Washington, arguing the circumstances in China did not permit the founding of a republican form of government. In a note to the State Department, the Japanese Foreign Ministry recognized “the total impracticality of a return to the type of rule formerly exercised by the Manchus, especially in view of the powerless condition of the Manchu Court, and suggest that the best solution would be to reject the unattainable ideal of establishing a republic and to set up a nominal rule of the Manchus, but with due respect for the rights of the Chinese people.”¹⁵³² The US displayed minimal interest in the Japanese idea and underlined instead the importance of all the Powers maintaining strict neutrality.

Snubbed by Washington and actively ignored by their allies in London, the Government of Prime Minister Prince Saionji Kinmochi (1849-1940) saw its foreign policy viewed as an abject failure, with criticisms “heaped [in the Diet] on the heads of the unfortunate ministers and diplomats.”¹⁵³³ In the wake of Japan’s impotency when faced with the collapse of the Qing Dynasty, the Japanese press began to openly criticize the value of the cornerstone of Japanese foreign policy, namely the Anglo-Japanese Alliance. The *Ōsaka Mainichi*, on 18 January 1912, noted that “the practical terms of the Alliance had been achieved by the time of its renewal in July of the previous year, and that the Alliance itself no longer constituted any guarantee for maintenance of the territorial integrity of China. Japan and Great Britain, far from cooperating in joint action when their rights and interests were threatened, did nothing whatsoever. Britain, in fact, was no longer faithful to the principles of the Alliance. The Japanese Government would be well advised to consider whether the Anglo-Japanese Alliance was still a functioning arrangement” while, on 4 February 1912, the *Kokumin Shimbun* stated that “it would be unsafe to entrust leadership in the formulation of policy towards China to the British. Britain was already burdened with huge colonial holdings, while Japan had little more than a foothold on the Korean Peninsula. With their commitment in so many parts of the world, how could the British have time to deal with the situation in China? If Japan did not maintain a separate policy based on her own initiative, [Japan] would miss each opportunity as it arose.”¹⁵³⁴ The image of Great Britain, despite the hitherto much-vaunted Alliance, as a country with opposing foreign policy interests to those of Japan was now taking root amongst the Japanese public. While the Japanese Government still remained committed to the Alliance, it was obvious that it felt slighted by its allies regarding the most important and sensitive issue of Japanese foreign policy, namely mainland China.

With the opportunity to play a defining role in guiding the political transition in China now gone, the Foreign Ministry attempted to salvage the situation by seeking to secure the rights in China that Japan viewed as rightfully belonging to the Empire. On 23 February 1912, eleven days following the abdication of the Qing Dynasty, Japan presented the Powers with the suggestion of conditioning the recognition of any new regime in China upon a “confirmation of all...rights, privileges, and immunities of foreigners at present enjoyed” along with the necessary guarantees to secure the aforementioned rights.¹⁵³⁵ As with Japanese concerns towards the creation of a Chinese Republic, Washington remained aloof towards Tokyo, responding that the US wished to receive further concrete information “as to the nature and terms of the guarantees proposed.”¹⁵³⁶

¹⁵³² Ikei, “Japan’s Response to the Chinese Revolution of 1911”, pg. 222.

¹⁵³³ Nish, *Japanese Foreign Policy*, pg. 90.

¹⁵³⁴ Masaru, “Japan’s Response to the Chinese Revolution of 1911”, pp. 224-225.

¹⁵³⁵ Baston Price, *The Russo-Japanese Treaties of 1907-1916*, pg. 72.

¹⁵³⁶ Ibid.

St. Petersburg, however, immediately assented to Japan's request and even went so far as ordering the Russian Ambassador to Washington to inform the Secretary of State of Russia's consent to Tokyo's suggestions and to announce Russia's special interests and rights in northern Manchuria, Mongolia, and western China "founded on [Russia's] treaties and conventions with China [where] she must reserve...the right to take such protective measures as may be forced upon her by necessity."¹⁵³⁷ Hearing of Russia's reservation of rights in China, the Japanese Ambassador in Washington followed suit and noting that since "silence might be misconstrued", proceeded to inform the US Government that "Japan must make reservations as to eastern Inner Mongolia (bordering on southern Manchuria)."¹⁵³⁸ The reply of the US Government to the Japanese declaration was one of acquiescence, one that "perhaps inadvertently and perhaps intended to apply only to the particular situation then subsisting, but nevertheless positively, it placed the American Government on record as acquiescing to the use of 'such protective measures' within a 'sphere of interest' in China 'as may be forced by necessity,' provided only 'the rights and interests' to be protected 'were those covered by treaty or concession.'"¹⁵³⁹ Russia had likewise received a similar reply of indifference when declaring its areas of special interests to Great Britain. Hence, both Tokyo and St. Petersburg, when informing other Powers of their respective areas of special concern in an increasingly chaotic China, they received messages of political indifference, clearing the way for both Empires to act.

Russia moved quickly. By May 1912, a separatist government in Kulun (now Ulaanbaatar) and established effective control over Outer Mongolia. After analyzing the overall situation in China and recent diplomatic exchanges over the fate of former Qing territories, the Russian Ambassador in Beijing, Vasilii Nikolayevich Krupensky (1869-1945), urged Foreign Minister Sazonov to take a much more aggressive stance on Outer Mongolia, highlighting that "China's dispatching an army to Tibet and taking measures in Kobdo [a city in Outer Mongolia] show clearly that China is attempting to re-establish its power in areas that have separated from China."¹⁵⁴⁰ St. Petersburg proceeded to issue an ultimatum to the government in Beijing, stipulating three restrictive conditions—most importantly the prohibition of entry of Chinese military forces—for negotiations on Outer Mongolia. While Russia made a move militarily to consolidate its sphere of influence in Outer Mongolia, the Japanese began to insist on recognition of areas of 'special interest' in China concerning western financial support to the new Chinese Government. Due to the Revolution of 1911, the Currency Reform and Industrial Loan of the 'China Consortium' was suspended. In its place, the Consortium declared its readiness to offer financial loans to the new, cash-strapped authorities in Beijing, deemed the 'Reorganization Loan'. However, unlike the negotiations over loans under the Qing, the 'China Consortium' realized that both Japan and Russia would have to be invited to participate, lest St. Petersburg and/or Tokyo withhold all-important diplomatic recognition of new powers in China, thereby considerably complicating any and all future international engagement. Both Empires conditioned their respective participation on the explicit recognition of their zones of 'special interest' in Manchuria and Mongolia. Upon agreeing to participate in the loan negotiations, the Japanese Government informed Washington that it did so on the condition "that nothing connected with the projected loan will operate to the prejudice of the special rights and interest of Japan in the region of southern

¹⁵³⁷ Ibid.

¹⁵³⁸ Ibid.

¹⁵³⁹ Ibid.

¹⁵⁴⁰ Feng, "Outer Mongolia during the 1911 Revolution", pg. 259.

Manchuria.”¹⁵⁴¹ While London and Washington claimed that such demands were political in nature and, as such, lay outside the powers of a private financial group, both Russia and Japan insisted. As a result, the final text of the ‘Reorganization Loan’ contained no reference to Manchurian enterprises and stipulated that no part of the loan would be used to jeopardize Russian interests in northern Manchuria, Mongolia, and western China, as well as Japanese interests in southern Manchuria and inner Mongolia adjacent thereto.¹⁵⁴² As such, no part of this loan was ever used for enterprises in Manchuria, Mongolia, or western China. St. Petersburg and Tokyo were now successfully implementing in practice their policy of cooperation outlined in the Secret Treaty of 1910 to secure the *status quo* under chaotic political conditions.

Having been scorned by its allies in London and ignored by Washington and witnessing the tangible benefits of cooperation with St. Petersburg, the Japanese Government became determined to improve its relations with Russia, re-calibrating its foreign policy to be based upon the continuance of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance and the revision of the second Russo-Japanese Treaty, as Prince Katsura informed Foreign Minister Sergei Dmitriyevich Sazanov (1860-1927) during his July 1912 visit to Russia, “For now on, Japan’s actions in China will be in accordance with the policy of the Russo-Japanese Treaty and the obligations of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance.”¹⁵⁴³ This entailed the deepening of the Russo-Japanese understanding of each Empire’s respective ‘spheres of influence’ in East Asia, as well as enhancing mutual mechanisms to jointly defend them. The result was the conclusion of the Russo-Japanese Secret Treaty of 1912.

9.2.2.4. The Signing of the Secret Treaty of 1912

Signed on 25 June 1912, the Secret Treaty of 1912 was modest in its size, only comprising three articles. At the same time, it deepened the quality and geographic scope of cooperation between Russia and Japan as well as extended and expanded their respective existing spheres of influence in East Asia as laid out in the preamble to the Treaty’s provision’s: “The Imperial Government of Russia and the Imperial Government of Japan, desirous of making precise and completing the provisions of the secret Conventions concluded between the 17/30 July 1907 and June 21/July 4 1910, in order to avoid all cause of misunderstanding concerning their special interests in Manchuria and Mongolia, have decided to prolong the line of demarcation...and to define their sphere of special interests in Inner Mongolia”.¹⁵⁴⁴ **Article I** thereby extended the Motono-Izvolzky line further into Chinese territory, dividing Inner Mongolia into a Russian and Japanese section. The new line, as stipulated in Article I, ran straight through the Chinese capital of Beijing, implying that both St. Petersburg and Tokyo had assumed responsibility for steering the actions of the new Chinese Government.¹⁵⁴⁵ **Article II** committed Russia and Japan to

¹⁵⁴¹ Baston Price, The Russo-Japanese Treaties of 1907-1916, pg. 74.

¹⁵⁴² Ibid., pg. 75.

¹⁵⁴³ Masaru, “Japan’s Response to the Chinese Revolution of 1911”, pg. 227.

¹⁵⁴⁴ Elleson, International Rivalry and Secret Diplomacy in East Asia, pp. 126-127.

¹⁵⁴⁵ Article I geographically demarcated the Russian and Japanese spheres of influences in China as follows: “Starting from the point of intersection of the Tolaho River and Meridian 122° East of Greenwich, the above-mentioned line of demarcation follows the course of the Oulountchourh River and the Moushisha River up to the line of the watershed between the Moushisha River and Haldaitai River; thence it follows the frontier line between the Province of Heilingkiang and Inner Mongolia until reaching the extreme point of the frontier between Inner and Outer Mongolia.” Ibid., pg. 127.

“recognize and respect” the other party’s “special interests” within its own sphere.¹⁵⁴⁶ **Article III** pledged strict confidentiality of the agreement between the Imperial Governments of Russia and Japan.

The fall of the Qing Dynasty, and the inability of Japan to establish itself as the leading international actor in resolving the aftermath of the Revolution of 1911, pushed Tokyo to opt for closer cooperation with Russia. Japan’s attempt to coordinate its response to the unexpected crisis in China with its British allies ended in abject failure, with Tokyo watching from the sidelines as British mediation efforts vainly attempted to find an independent solution. As a result, Japan was forced to pursue the only default policy within its means, namely to defend its existing interests in China. In this regard, the Russo-Japanese treaties of 1907 and 1910 proved a solid base to secure existing interests. The positive results that these treaties had achieved, especially in joint Russian and Japanese efforts to keep Western capital enterprises squarely outside their demarcated spheres of influences, provided a solid foundation to deepen and expand future cooperation, especially in the wake of the collapse of Imperial China and its descent into the warlord era. The cooperation established by the Settlement of 1905, therefore, was given a substantive boost through the expansion of the Russian and Japanese spheres of influence in China, indicating an expansion of an existing and well-functioning partnership. Indeed, following the foreign policy debacle that was Japan’s response to the end of the Qing, one that facilitated the beginnings of an estrangement between London and Tokyo, Russia was left as the only partner with which Japan could cooperate to secure its objectives in North China. As such, on the eve of the Great War, Russia and Japan had enhanced their bilateral relationship, expanding the scope of their defensive alliance. Concealing the provisions of the Secret Treaty of 1912 from both rivals and allies (France for Russia; and Great Britain for Japan) alike, St. Petersburg and Tokyo not only signalled their desire to continue with a bilateral division of the collapsed Qing Empire, but also to formalize their mutual intentions to advance what both contracting parties viewed as a beneficial relationship; so much so that, by August 1914, “the Russo-Japanese partnership had reached the level of allies”.¹⁵⁴⁷ Yet this trajectory of a steady increase in cooperation between Russia and Japan, as exhibited by the treaties of 1907, 1910, and 1912, would be seriously affected by another event that would engulf the attention of all Great Powers, namely the outbreak of the First World War.

9.2.3. The End of the Meiji Era

Before turning to the outbreak of the First World War, another important antecedent condition occurred that altered the East Asian political landscape. Soon after the signature of the Secret Russian Treaty of 1912, the Meiji Emperor, on 30 July 1912, passed away after a short illness in the Imperial Palace in Tokyo. His death literally marked the end of one of Japan’s most rapid and comprehensive eras of transformation, overseeing the introduction of a Western-style bureaucracy and factories, a capitalist economy, and a professional military.¹⁵⁴⁸ As illustrated in the decision-making process of Japanese foreign policy during the ‘critical junctures’ of 1895, 1901, and 1905, decision-making power rested in an oligarchy comprising the Emperor and the *genrō*. The Emperor diffused his power through the *genrō* and remained as the preeminent symbol of the Japanese Empire. With the Meiji Emperor’s passing, Japan entered into a period of uncertain

¹⁵⁴⁶ Ibid.

¹⁵⁴⁷ Pestushko & Shulatov, “Russo-Japanese Relations from 1905-1916”, pg. 110.

¹⁵⁴⁸ Vogel, *China and Japan*, pg. 206.

times, as noted by future Foreign Minister, Makino Nobuaki (1861-1949), “Anxiety grew as it hit home that a shadow was descending on an exalted age.”¹⁵⁴⁹ Yamagata Aritomo, one of the architects of Japan’s stellar foreign policy rise and close confidant of the late Emperor, wrote the following words expressing his sorrow upon learning of his Emperor’s death: “The heavenly light has today gone out leaving the world in darkness.”¹⁵⁵⁰ The success of Meiji governance lay in the quality of the relationship between Emperor and *genrō* as “the system depended on the team of talented individuals serving at a specific time in Japan’s institutional development, after those team members left the scene, Japan struggled with central authority.”¹⁵⁵¹

The Emperor Meiji’s son, the Taishō (‘Great Righteousness’/大正) Emperor (1879-1926), suffered from a neurological disorder and was never able to fulfill his duties as his father did. Far from being the towering figure of the Meiji Emperor, the Taishō Emperor’s accession heralded the beginning of what is called the ‘Taishō period’ in Japanese history, but the new Emperor himself “was in nominal charge only until 1922; he was unimportant in life and his death was irrelevant.”¹⁵⁵² More important were the changes to the decision-making structure of Japanese foreign policy that followed in the wake of the Meiji Emperor’s death. The Taishō period marked a time of transition “from an era of the dominance of a conservative bureaucratic government to an era of contending forces.”¹⁵⁵³ The hegemony of the *genrō* immediately began to erode, especially regarding some of its most influential members. Yamagata, for example, derived his own substantial authority from his close relationship as a personal military advisor to the Meiji Emperor; the new Taishō Emperor held little affection for Yamagata and “showed even less inclination to heed his advice.”¹⁵⁵⁴ Hence, Imperial succession unleashed a process where “instability in China reverberated in Japan to complicate policies that were already in transition from the control exerted by the *genrō*.”¹⁵⁵⁵

The beginning of a new era of the Japanese Empire was therefore accompanied by novel tendencies that had started to openly appear in the wake of the October 1911 anti-Manchu revolt in China and Japan’s failure to devise and implement a coherent foreign policy reaction. Elements in Japan that had observed the country’s continental policy with misgivings saw an opportunity to voice their concerns openly. In particular, “the Chinese Revolution and the Great Power response brought to the surface undercurrents in international relations in East Asia that had been increasing in strength since the Russo-Japanese War. To a growing number of Japanese, the imperialist premises that had justified Meiji expansion were no longer as cogent as they had seemed in 1905. Many Foreign Ministry officials, moderate bureaucrats, Diet members, and navy leaders began openly calling for a re-examination of the nation’s external policies, particularly toward Manchuria.”¹⁵⁵⁶ The Foreign Ministry began to advocate, with the advent of a new republican Government in Beijing under Yuan Shikai, caution and the abandonment of any major foreign policy initiatives. While the Foreign Minister took note of Russia’s expansionist actions in Outer

¹⁵⁴⁹ Dickens, War and National Reinvention: Japan in the Great War, 1914-1919, pg. 29.

¹⁵⁵⁰ Hackett, Yamigata Aritomo in the Rise of Modern Japan, pg. 246.

¹⁵⁵¹ Vogel, China and Japan, pg. 206.

¹⁵⁵² Jansen, The Making of Modern Japan, pg. 495.

¹⁵⁵³ Hackett, Yamigata Aritomo in the Rise of Modern Japan, pg. 251.

¹⁵⁵⁴ Dickens, War and National Reinvention, pg. 29.

¹⁵⁵⁵ Jansen, The Making of Modern Japan, pg. 515.

¹⁵⁵⁶ Tak Matsusaka Yoshihisa, The Making of Japanese Manchuria, 1904-1932, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001, pg. 149.

Mongolia, Japanese diplomats cautioned that “this understanding did not constitute a licence for aggressive initiatives within Japan’s portion of [Manchuria]” as it would merely “encourage the perception...in the international community as an act of Russo-Japanese collusion against Chinese sovereignty.”¹⁵⁵⁷ These sentiments also began to find echo in the Japanese press, with liberal journalist and future post-Second World War Prime Minister, Tanzan Ishibashi (1884-1973), composing a very different epitaph to the Meiji era: “A good many people may think that the defining characteristic of the Meiji period was the advance of imperialism. But I believe the implementation of democratic reform in all political, legal, social systems and thought defines the greatest enterprise of the era.”¹⁵⁵⁸

Despite such counsel, both within and outside the halls of government, the Imperial Japanese Army continued to insist on the pursuit of an aggressive foreign policy on the Asian mainland, despite Tokyo’s inability to geopolitically capitalize on the 1911 events in China. It did not take long for these philosophically opposed visions espoused by the different Japanese services to come to a head.

At the Cabinet meeting of 22 November 1912, the Minister of War, General Uehara Yūsaku (1856-1933), unveiled his plan to expand the Imperial Army by a total of two divisions. Supported by *Genrō* Yamagata, Uehara argued that the Meiji Emperor had approved the creation of four additional divisions, of which only two had been fielded; furthermore, the Minister of War argued that Japan’s interests in Manchuria and the continued provision of order in Korea necessitated a larger force.¹⁵⁵⁹ Prime Minister Sainoji’s Cabinet, having to shoulder the burden of increased taxes and sale of government bonds to help settle outstanding debts from the Russo-Japanese War as well as the incorporation of Korea into the Empire, had promised his electorate a comprehensive 10 to 15 percent budget cut.¹⁵⁶⁰ The Japanese Navy likewise rejected the plan, having had its own plans for aggrandizement shelved due to financial concerns. The Army had implemented cost-cutting measures and saved JPY 1,950,000 from its overall JPY 80,000,000 budget, giving rise to Uehara’s insistence that these savings be transformed into two new infantry divisions. Yamagata was unsuccessful in securing the support of his fellow *genrō*, with even Field Marshall Ōyama advising to postpone Uehara’s plan.¹⁵⁶¹ Sainoji refused to adopt Uehara’s proposal, leading to the latter’s resignation. The Prime Minister tried in vain to find a new Minister of War, appealing to Yamagata himself to help find a compromise on the two-division plan. In a noteworthy exchange encapsulating the new realities of the Taishō era, Yamagata remarked to Sainoji “this is no time for me to interfere. The only way to retain the military is to request a message from the Emperor. But while it was a different matter when the Meiji Emperor was alive, we must avoid worrying the present Emperor about such things because he is young.”¹⁵⁶² All Imperial Army officers eligible for the Cabinet post had, in the meantime, pledged not to serve under Sainoji. Given the inability of the Prime Minister to find a replacement for Uehara, he was forced to resign on 5 December 1912.

¹⁵⁵⁷ Ibid., pp. 153-154.

¹⁵⁵⁸ Dickens, *War and National Reinvention*, pg. 29.

¹⁵⁵⁹ Hackett, *Yamagata Aritomo in the Rise of Modern Japan*, pg. 251.

¹⁵⁶⁰ Drea, *Japan’s Imperial Army*, pg. 131.

¹⁵⁶¹ Hackett, *Yamagata Aritomo in the Rise of Modern Japan*, pg. 252.

¹⁵⁶² Ibid., pg. 153.

The inability to compromise on either the proposed expansion of the Japanese Army or, likewise, to agree on a replacement for War Minister in Sainoji's Cabinet, transformed what had been a dispute between the Japanese Army and Navy over expansion into "a major confrontation between the *genrō* and the political parties."¹⁵⁶³ The subsequent inauguration, once again, of Katsura Tarō, a protégé of Yamagata, as Prime Minister on 21 December 1912, signalled a clear reversal away from the tenets of representative government, undermining the authority of the political parties. The Army had already damaged its case with the public by playing a key role in the collapse of the Sainoji Cabinet and its attempts to manipulate an already mentally ill Taishō Emperor into agreeing to form a pro-military expansion government under Katsura.¹⁵⁶⁴ The result were nationwide popular demonstrations in support of constitutional government in what came to be known to posterity as the 'Taishō Crisis'. Supported by the press and political party activists, for the first time in Japanese history, a coalition of political parties forced the downfall of an oligarchic government, with Katsura resigning when faced with a no-confidence motion on 20 February 1913. An unpresented two cabinets had fallen over a span of less than four months. The Taishō Crisis chased the Army, embarrassed by its political assertiveness, into the political shadows. Consequently, it "had only limited success in reasserting its prominence in society into the 1920s."¹⁵⁶⁵ Following the appointment of Admiral Yamamoto Gonnohyōe as Prime Minister in June 1913, the Army was faced with a Cabinet even more opposed to its designs than the one it had deposed in November 1912. Indeed, Yamamoto advocated civilian rule over the Japanese Home Islands and in Japanese colonies. These developments permitted the coming to power of cabinets that were open to a re-examination of Japanese foreign policy, especially towards Manchuria, and was welcomed in particular by moderate members of the Japanese Foreign Ministry who—in the wake of Yamamoto's appointment—hoped that diminished Army influence would accord them greater formal control over Japan's territorial policy.¹⁵⁶⁶

Hence, the Taishō Crisis provided the beginnings of a period in which advocates of an expansionist foreign policy for Japan would face growing opposition both at home and abroad. With the dawn of the Taishō era, a different Japan had emerged almost as suddenly as the fall of the Qing. What became known as the 'Taishō Democracy' would remain a "symbolic designation for new currents of cosmopolitanism, discontent, and reform" that emerged after the end of the oligarchic rule that had characterised the Meiji era.¹⁵⁶⁷ Japan was no longer the Empire that it had been. Policy making was no longer an exclusive domain of the oligarchs but was subject to competition between political factions. Yet, in light of the World War that was to come, like the Russo-Japanese partnership, any trend towards foreign policy moderation that began to emerge with the Taishō era might appear transient.¹⁵⁶⁸ While the pattern, scope and intensity of the implementation of Japanese foreign policy might have undergone periods of flux and change during the Taishō period of changing Cabinets, the underpinning regionalist ambition of Japanese foreign policy remained a steady constant, although the manner of its expression might be fluid. No better example of this can be found than the study of Japanese foreign policy during the period of the Great War. It is to the outbreak of this 'critical juncture' that this dissertation now turns.

¹⁵⁶³ Dickens, *War and National Reinvention*, pg. 29.

¹⁵⁶⁴ Drea, *Japan's Imperial Army*, pg. 131.

¹⁵⁶⁵ Ibid.

¹⁵⁶⁶ Tak Matsusaka, *The Making of Japanese Manchuria*, pg. 159.

¹⁵⁶⁷ Jansen, *The Making of Modern Japan*, pg. 537.

¹⁵⁶⁸ Tak Matsusaka, *The Making of Japanese Manchuria*, pg. 150.

9.2.4. The Outbreak and Course of the First World War in East Asia

9.2.4.1. Japan's Entry into the First World War

The internal political turmoil that characterized the start of the Taishō period continued under Yamamoto's Government. The country continued to be divided between two opposing political forces and their differing vision of the Japanese state: "on one side stood the Yamagata faction and its vision of a progressively expanding empire supported by a great investment in arms (particularly the Army) and a hegemonic military and bureaucratic elite (the Yamagata faction itself). On the other side was poised a disparate group consisting of the enemies of oligarchic rule, members of Japan's rapidly rising political parties, who pictured greater civilian uses for the national budget and envisioned an age when party cabinets would be the principal locus of decision making."¹⁵⁶⁹ While they might have held different visions on the scope and intensity of Japanese foreign policy, neither of these groups, however, called into question the main creation of the Meiji era, namely the emergence of the modern Japanese Empire. Yamamoto's Government fell in March 1914 following a bribery scandal.

Ōkuma Shigenobu (1838-1922), a former popular rights politician, was nominated as Prime Minister. His Foreign Minister was Katō Takaaki (1860-1926), a former Ambassador to Great Britain, Anglophile and staunch devotee of party politics, who had declared in 1913 that "we must aim at the advancement of the nation's fortunes by the confrontation of the parties and their mutual indefatigability and assiduity...I hope...that, as in England, the opposition of two large parties and their mutual abrasion will contribute to the state."¹⁵⁷⁰ Katō, chief architect of Japan's foreign policy as of August 1914, sought to eliminate *genrō* influence by adopting a more imperialistic policy than the *genrō* had been advocating themselves.¹⁵⁷¹ In terms of foreign policy, Katō was a staunch defender of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance partially due to his admiration for all things British as well as its ability to influence the international balance of power. With this base, though a policy that sought to mix ambition with caution, Katō hoped to use foreign policy as a tool to drive domestic reform. Yet the critical international question, as seen from Tokyo, remained China. Having formalized complete Japanese control over Korea through its legal annexation in 1910, the main priority of Taishō era foreign policy was the expansion of Japan's economic and political hold on Manchuria as well as China. The Secret Russo-Japanese Treaty of 1912 provided an operative framework for implementing this policy in southern Manchuria but, beyond this, Japan's influence in China remained unstable.¹⁵⁷² Japan, before 1914, did not own any commercial rights to major Chinese railways or mines south of the Great Wall and the Japanese Government had successfully attempted to secure rights to the South Manchuria Railway. Furthermore, Japanese businesses remained unsure that they, given the limited amount of capital they had at their disposal, could compete for investments in China, especially against Western investors. Foreign Minister Makino Nobuaki, in office from February 1913 to April 1914, composed a

¹⁵⁶⁹ Dickens, War and National Reinvention, pg. 32.

¹⁵⁷⁰ Duus, Peter, Party Rivalry and Political Change in Taisho Japan, Cambridge; Harvard University Press, 1968, pp. 63-64.

¹⁵⁷¹ Tarning, Nicholas, Asia and the First World War: Implications and Aftermath, Auckland: New Zealand Asia Institute, 2004, pg. 54.

¹⁵⁷² Kawamura Noriko, Turbulence in the Pacific: Japanese-US Relations During World War I, Westport: Praeger, 2000, pg. 11.

memorandum before his resignation detailing the challenges Japan faced in China, underlining his conviction “that the East Asian situation had reached a critical stage...[Makino] urged the Japanese Government to take decisive measures to acquire railway and mining rights and other interests in China.”¹⁵⁷³ Such was the situation faced by Foreign Minister Katō upon taking over the Kasumigaseki once again in April 1914 as Europe was about to enjoy its last summer of peace.

As political gears in Europe were unleashed towards war on 28 June 1914, British Foreign Secretary Grey (1862-1933), informed the Japanese Ambassador in London that British participation in a European war was likely, underlining that “the situation in Europe was very grave. [Britain] had not yet decided what [its] actions should be, but under certain conditions we might find it necessary to intervene. If, however, [Britain] did intervene, it would likely be on the side of France and Russia, and I therefore did not see that we were likely to have to apply to Japan under our alliance, or the interests dealt with by the alliance would be involved.”¹⁵⁷⁴ The Foreign Office viewed the only way for Japan to be brought into any hostilities would be in the event of a German attack on Hong Kong or, conversely, a rebellion in India. Yet the Japanese General Staff, as war in Europe looked increasingly inevitable, began to see the gains that could be wrought from an unrestrained Japanese entry into hostilities: after Russia mobilized its military on 30 July 1914, the Vice-Chief of the General Staff, Motojiro Akashi (1864-1919), who “practically ran the office” composed a letter to the most influential army general, Terauchi Masatake, then Governor General of Korea and future Premier, underlining that the pending conflict in Europe “would likely provide Japan with an opportunity to establish its authority in northeastern China as well as capture the German-leased territories in Shandong.”¹⁵⁷⁵ Hence, both the Army and the Navy began to place pressure on the Cabinet to declare war. For now, however, the Japanese Government responded by dispatching a note outlying the official position concerning the outbreak of hostilities in Europe and Tokyo’s obligations under the Anglo-Japanese Alliance: “the Imperial Government will await and intimation from His Majesty’s Government as to what action they have decided to take before defining their own attitude...Japan has no interest in a European conflict and [Foreign Minister Katō] notes...if British interests in Eastern Asia should be placed in jeopardy...His Majesty’s Government may count upon Japan at once coming to assistance of her ally with all her strength...leaving it entirely to His Majesty’s Government to formulate the reason for, and nature of, the assistance required.”¹⁵⁷⁶ For the time being, as war clouds gathered across Europe, London envisioned very much a secondary role for the Japanese Empire, to be activated in case of need.

On 4 August 1914, Great Britain entered the hostilities in Europe by declaring war on the German Empire. Upon Britain’s entry into the war, London stuck to its policy of not involving Japan unless absolutely necessary. Foreign Secretary Grey, following the declaration of war, informed the Japanese Ambassador in London, Inoue Katsunosuke (1861-1929), that, as Japan had not requested British intervention in the Russo-Japanese War, so would Britain avoid, if possible drawing Japan into any action “but, should a case arise in which we needed [Japan’s] help, we would gladly *ask for it* and be grateful for it.”¹⁵⁷⁷ This lax attitude towards Japanese involvement

¹⁵⁷³ Ibid., pg. 12.

¹⁵⁷⁴ Stephenson, Charles, Germany’s Asia-Pacific Empire: Colonialism and Naval Policy, 1885-1914, London: Boydell & Brewer, 2009, pg. 101.

¹⁵⁷⁵ Kawamura, Turbulence in the Pacific, pp. 13-14.

¹⁵⁷⁶ Stephenson, Charles, Germany’s Asia-Pacific Empire: Colonialism and Naval Policy, 1885-1914, pg. 102.

¹⁵⁷⁷ Nish, Ian, Alliance in Decline: a Study in Anglo-Japanese Relations, 1908-23, London: Bloomsbury, 1972, pg. 117.

in Europe's latest war did not last long. The configuration of German and British naval forces in the Pacific upon Britain's declaration of war that the Admiralty became cognizant of that fact that British regional forces in the west Pacific were insufficient to block the main German Pacific port of Qingdao, to police shipping, and to pursue German vessels, with the Admiralty informing the British Government on 5 August 1914 that, regionally, naval parity existed between German and British naval forces.¹⁵⁷⁸ At the same time, a British Cabinet meeting came to the agreement that, in the opening face of the British attack against the German Empire, German ports and wireless stations in China needed to be seized. Given the sober analysis of Britain's naval posture in the Pacific, such a goal remained unattainable should London act alone. Following discussion with the First Lord of the Admiralty, Winston Churchill (1874-1965), Grey informed Ambassador Inoue on 7 August that the British Government "would gladly avail themselves of *proffered assistance* of the Japanese Government in the direction of protecting British trading vessels from German armed merchant cruisers...while British war ships are locating and engaging German war ships in Chinese waters. As this task will take some time, H.M. Ambassador in Tokyo has been instructed to inform Japanese Government that it would be of the very greatest assistance to H.M. Government if they would be good enough to employ some of their war ships in hunting out and destroying German armed merchantmen in China. British Government realize that such action on the part of Japan will constitute declaration of war with Germany, but it is difficult to see how such a step is to be avoided."¹⁵⁷⁹ The political implications of London's polite request for modest operational assistance were significant.

Receiving the official request for entry into the war from London, Prime Minister Ōkuma called an emergency cabinet meeting at the behest of Foreign Minister Katō on 7 August 1914. Foreign Minister Katō explained Japan's contemporary position in detail, arguing that Japan was justified in entering the war "on the broad basis of the Anglo-Japanese alliance [that] would not only observe the basic intention (*'honshitsu'*/本質) of that alliance but would also be very useful in building up Japan's peace-keeping role in East Asia."¹⁵⁸⁰ In a subsequent meeting with the *genrō* (Yamagata, Matsukata, and Ōyama), Katō's argument was deemed persuasive enough to pass a decision agreeing on Japan's entry into the war on the side of Great Britain. Yamagata wrote later to General Terauchi that the European conflict offered "a one in a million chance" to "resolve" the problem of Sino-Japanese relations.¹⁵⁸¹ The Cabinet agreed upon issuing an ultimatum to Germany and to demand the transfer of its Chinese territories to Japan. As Tokyo presented its intervention plans to London, members of the British Government, as well as its dominions of Australia and New Zealand, voiced concerns at possible Japanese moves against German territories in the South Pacific islands. The British Minister in Beijing, John Jordan (1852-1925), categorically opposed any Japanese intervention stating that "the entry of Japan in the war would, I believe, endanger the stability of the existing regime in China, to say nothing of the inevitable effect it would have upon our future political influence in the country and our prestige in Asia generally."¹⁵⁸²

The US State Department was equally concerned at this prospect, as well as the now evident Japanese designs against German territories in the Far East. China was extremely

¹⁵⁷⁸ Ibid., pp. 117-118.

¹⁵⁷⁹ Ibid., pg. 118.

¹⁵⁸⁰ Ibid., pg. 119.

¹⁵⁸¹ Dickens, *War and National Reinvention*, pg. 52.

¹⁵⁸² Tarling, *Asia and the First World War*, pg. 55.

apprehensive about the prospect of further Japanese incursions into what Beijing viewed as its rightful territory, declaring its outright neutrality on 6 August 1914. Beijing's concern was so great that it instructed its Minister in Washington to petition the US Government and asked it to take the initiative to secure a guarantee from the European Powers that they would commit to maintaining peace in China. With rumours circulating that Japan would outright declare war against Germany, the US was concerned that the last point of the Root-Takahira Agreement, namely mutual consultations on any event that threatened the *status quo*, was not being respected. Despite the looming shadow of a renewed Japanese military campaign on Chinese territory, an event that would certainly meet the Agreement's criteria, US Secretary of State, William Jennings Bryan (1860-1925), decided to forgo any overt efforts to stabilize the situation in the Far East and wait to approach Tokyo "after hostilities occurred before approaching 'all the belligerents simultaneously.'"¹⁵⁸³ Faced with such concern, the British reverted to its policy of attempting to secure a limited Japanese entry into the war, yet seeing Japan's willingness to wage unlimited warfare against German interests in the Pacific, Foreign Secretary Grey formally cancelled, on 10 August 1914, his Government's request for Japanese involvement, informing the Japanese Foreign Minister that London believed that "'acts of war in the Far East will be restricted' to the sea alone and thought it 'desirable to maintain this attitude as long as possible', hence Great Britain would, therefore, 'refrain for the present from invoking action under the Treaty'".¹⁵⁸⁴ The British concern at Japanese military action against German territories in China, and the political complications this might beget, seemed to outweigh any benefits of Japan's entry on the Allied side.

Foreign Minister Katō immediately informed Grey that the British cancellation of Japanese military assistance placed the Japanese Government in an "extremely embarrassing position" as it was "public knowledge that the Japanese Government was about to declare war on Germany."¹⁵⁸⁵ Faced with Japanese insistence at joining the war, the British Government made an about-face and assented to Japan's entry into the First World War. However, Grey attempted to condition Japanese entry on a public geographic limitation of Japan's future area of operations. These would cover, from the British point of view, two important assurances: first, that Tokyo sought no territorial gains at the expense of China, with all German possessions being retroceded to China at hostility's end; and second, that Japan committed to refrain from occupying German islands in the south Pacific.¹⁵⁸⁶ Yet Foreign Minister Katō "firmly refused to give any assurance for the retrocession of Qingdao to China, insisting that any reference to future peace terms should be eliminated from the declaration."¹⁵⁸⁷ Having been informed of this policy reversal from London, the Ōkuma Cabinet proceeded to draft its ultimatum to the German Empire.

The Japanese Government therefore drafted its ultimatum to Berlin independently, without consultation with its British allies. On 17 August 1914, Prime Minister Ōkuma presented the following ultimatum to the German Ambassador in Tokyo and Government in Berlin: "We consider it highly important and necessary in the present situation to take measures to remove the causes of all disturbance of peace in the Far East, and to safeguard general interests as contemplated in the Agreement of Alliance between Japan and Great Britain. In order to secure

¹⁵⁸³ Stephenson, *Germany's Asia-Pacific Empire*, pg. 106.

¹⁵⁸⁴ Nish, *Alliance in Decline*, pg. 121.

¹⁵⁸⁵ Kawamura, *Turbulence in the Pacific*, pg. 14.

¹⁵⁸⁶ Nish, *Alliance in Decline*, pg. 123.

¹⁵⁸⁷ Kawamura, *Turbulence in the Pacific*, pg. 15.

firm and enduring peace in Eastern Asia, the establishment of which is the aim of the said Agreement, the Imperial Japanese Government sincerely believes its duty to give advice to the Imperial German Government to carry out the following two propositions: (1.) Withdraw immediately from Japanese and Chinese waters to German men-o'-war and armed vessels of all kinds, and to disarm at once those which cannot be withdrawn; (2.) to deliver on a date not later than 15 September, to the Imperial Japanese authorities, without condition or compensation, the entire leased territory of Kiautschou, with a view to the eventual restoration of the same to China. The Imperial Japanese Government announces, at the same time, that in the event of its not receiving, by noon on 23 August, an answer from the Imperial German Government signaling unconditional acceptance of the above advice...Japan will be compelled to take such action as it may deem necessary to meet the situation."¹⁵⁸⁸

While issuing its ultimatum to Germany, Foreign Minister Katō sought to reassure the US by informing Washington's envoy to Tokyo that Japan "sought no territorial aggrandizement no other selfish ends through war" and underlined that any Japanese action would not infringe on the interests of any other power.¹⁵⁸⁹ Upon receiving the Japanese ultimatum, the German Government, realizing the difficulty in defending its Pacific possessions, attempted to hand back its possessions in Shandong. However, Japan "totally rejected any measure that would have prevented her taking and occupying Kiautschou.", with Tokyo outright rejecting any recognition of such a transaction.¹⁵⁹⁰ Great Britain was not pleased with Japan's *Alleingang* and its decision to neglect consulting with London on the text of its ultimatum to Germany. On 18 August 1914, the Foreign Office released a statement without the consent of the Japanese Government unilaterally imposing limits on Japanese military action and assuring Beijing of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance's intention of upholding the independence and territorial integrity of China: "It is understood that the action of Japan will not extend to the Pacific Ocean beyond the China seas...not beyond Asiatic waters westward of the China seas, nor to any foreign territory except territory in German occupation on the continent of eastern Asia."¹⁵⁹¹ While Foreign Minister Katō expressed outrage at the British communiqué, he remained satisfied that the British had, through their own declaration, sanctioned Japanese military action against German possessions in the Pacific. Washington soon followed suit on 19 August 1914 by informing Tokyo that the US Government remained satisfied that "Japan, in demanding the surrender by Germany of the entire leased territory of Kiautschou, does so with the purpose of restoring that territory to China, and that Japan is seeking no territorial aggrandizement in China in the movement now contemplated."¹⁵⁹² Despite the palpable apprehension from the Anglo-Saxon Powers, Japan had obtained the explicit consent of London and Washington to nevertheless stake a claim to the German possessions in the Pacific. The stage was now set for military action.

¹⁵⁸⁸ Stephenson, *Germany's Asia-Pacific Empire*, pg. 106.

¹⁵⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, pg. 117.

¹⁵⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁹¹ Kawamura, *Turbulence in the Pacific*, pg. 15.

¹⁵⁹² *Ibid.*, pg. 17.

9.2.4.2. The “German-Japanese War”

The German Government did not respond to the Japanese ultimatum and German Governor of Kiautschou, Alfred Mayer-Waldeck (1864-1928), instead prepared the German concession for Defence. Japan declared war on Germany on 23 August 1914. Within two weeks, Japan landed 20,000 soldiers on the Liaodong Peninsula, with Mayer-Waldeck concentrating all German troops in the port of Qingdao to defend the city. Despite their hopeless military position, Kaiser Wilhelm II ordered his troops to stand firm, commenting that “it would shame me more to surrender Qingdao to the Japanese than Berlin to the Russians.”¹⁵⁹³ The German garrison was able to hold out strongly for two months before surrendering to the Japanese on 7 November 1914. To try and restrain Japanese ambitions, the British sent troops from Hong Kong (the 2nd battalion of the South Wales Borderers) to participate in the Japanese-led operations, however the British were in no position to influence the Japanese military.¹⁵⁹⁴ As ostensibly part of the campaign against Qingdao, the Japanese violated Chinese neutrality and seized the Shandong Railway on 3 September 1914.¹⁵⁹⁵ The Japanese proceeded to seize the railway station at Weixian, where the Japanese Foreign Ministry simply ignored the many Chinese protests and insisted on the continuation of its campaign.¹⁵⁹⁶ Following the surrender of the German administration, the Japanese military established its own rule over the entire former German-leased territory. Beijing, disturbed at such developments, requested the British to use its influence over the Japanese to respect Chinese neutrality, however the Foreign Office replied that Japanese action remained necessary to wrest the railways from German control. Such diplomatic posturing combined with the British Army’s inability to reign in the Japanese through their participation in the Qingdao campaign, giving Beijing the impression of overt British support and active participation in Japanese aims, tarnished London’s reputation in the eyes of the Chinese for the rest of the war. As the British Consul at Tsinan, John Thomas Pratt (1876-1970), reported that “British participation in the expedition to Shantung was a complete farce.”¹⁵⁹⁷

With the Japanese Army having secured the German concessions on mainland Asia, the Japanese Navy expanded its plans accordingly, recasting its strategy towards the South Pacific. Until early September 1914, the Japanese Navy had restricted its activities to transportation duties in support of Japanese operations against Qingdao. Originally the Japanese Navy had planned to strike against the Kriegsmarine in German Micronesia, occupy the territories, and quickly withdraw. However, on 21 September 1914, the Navy eliminated the withdrawal provision. The Japanese Cabinet approved of a limited occupation of the Marshall, Mariana, and Caroline Islands (comprising the whole of German Micronesia) postponing a final decision on their ultimate fate until an unknown, later date. These were occupied by the end of October 1914. In December 1914, however, Foreign Minister Katō informed London that “Japan desired to maintain the islands in

¹⁵⁹³ Edgerton, Robert, Warriors of the Rising Sun: A History of the Japanese Military, New York: Norton, 1997, pg. 227.

¹⁵⁹⁴ Nish, Alliance in Decline, pg. 139.

¹⁵⁹⁵ The Shandong railway’s construction was initiated by Germany between 1899-1904 and, since then, had been placed under joint Sino-German management by a private enterprise named the Shandong Railway Company, with Germany only receiving between 5 to 6 percent of the annual profit. A Chinese police force was responsible for the railway’s security. Hence, Beijing complained that Japanese military actions in seizing the railroad constituted a serious violation of Chinese neutrality.

¹⁵⁹⁶ Kawamura, Turbulence in the Pacific, pg. 17.

¹⁵⁹⁷ Nish, Alliance in Decline, pg. 139.

perpetuity.”¹⁵⁹⁸ This went directly against the war plans devised by the British Commonwealth whereby expeditions from Australia and New Zealand would seize the German territories of New Guinea, Samoa, as well as Micronesia. The thorough state of confusion on the British side was exemplified by the fact that, as late as 23 November 1914, an Australian expeditionary force was about to embark to occupy all German islands in the South Pacific, with Grey urgently informing Australia that it “must hold [its] hand somehow till we have come to an understanding with the Japanese. There are the materials for a tragic row.”¹⁵⁹⁹

Any British doubts as to Japan’s final intentions regarding Germany’s South Pacific possessions were made very clear through a note verbale presented to the British Ambassador in Tokyo, Conyngham Greene (1854-1934), on 1 December 1914, when Katō formally requested London to restrain the Australian military from visiting any of Japan’s newly occupied islands except Yap (the former German communications centre in the South Pacific). Attached to the note verbale was a confidential memorandum stating that “all occupation of German territory by Britain and Japan was without prejudice to final arrangements at the end of the war”, however, “Japan would naturally insist on retaining permanently all the German islands lying north of the Equator” and would count on London’s support at the appropriate moment.¹⁶⁰⁰ Reluctantly, Grey agreed to the Japanese occupation of the islands subject to final determination of their status at war’s end and accordingly informed the Governor-General of Australia, Munro Ferguson (1860-1934), “you ought to in the most gradual and diplomatic way prepare the mind of your Ministers for the possibility that at the end of the War Japan may be left in possession of the Northern Islands and we with everything South of the Equator.”¹⁶⁰¹ By December 1914, therefore, the military phase of the First World War in East Asia, dubbed the “German-Japanese War” (*Nichi-Doku Sensō*/日独戦争) in Japan, had come to a close with a resounding Japanese victory. Japanese efforts would henceforth focus on diplomacy towards making Tokyo’s unanticipated, newfound gains permanent.

9.2.5. Japan’s Twenty-One Demands

9.2.5.1. The Formulation of Japan’s Twenty-One Demands

China lay at the centre of Japan’s foreign policy concerns. This was seen as self-evident by *genrō* and party politicians alike. After the Japanese Government sent its ultimatum to Berlin, Yamagata submitted a document of over 4,200 characters to several ministers of the Ōkuma Cabinet. The *genrō* outlined his view of the coming war as an opportunity “to improve relations with China in order to strengthen Japan’s international position following the end of war.”¹⁶⁰² In order to achieve the overarching goal of locking in the advantages Japan enjoyed in Manchuria and Mongolia “acquired at the sacrifice of some 200,000 lives and the expenditure of almost two billions...to make these advantages secure and develop them further it is necessary both to maintain friendly relations with Russia and harmonize our relations with China by eliminating

¹⁵⁹⁸ Dickens, *War and National Reinvention*, pg. 77.

¹⁵⁹⁹ Lowe, Peter “Great Britain and Japan’s Entrance into the Great War, 1914-1915” in O’Brien (ed.), *The Anglo-Japanese Alliance*, pg. 165.

¹⁶⁰⁰ Tarling, *Asia and the First World War*, pg. 59.

¹⁶⁰¹ Lowe, “Great Britain and Japan’s Entrance into the Great War”, pg. 166.

¹⁶⁰² Hackett, *Yamagata Aritomo and the Making of Modern Japan*, pg. 273.

areas of conflict...At present all the so-called first line powers are involved in the European war. With its extension into the Far East they will not be able to give thought to their interests in China...Now is the opportune time for the Empire to settle on a policy towards China, correct the mistakes and omissions of the past and plan a complete revision.”¹⁶⁰³ Yamagata argued that the overriding goal of Japan’s China policy, therefore, should be improving Sino-Japanese relations and inspiring in Beijing a sense of confidence towards Tokyo. Japan’s track record of overtly hostile actions towards China had begun to backfire. Already “suspicious of the real motives of our Empire, China turns increasingly to America to restrict the activities of the Empire. Should we fail to dispel China’s previous doubts...she will turn away from us and more to America, and America will take advantage of this and multiply her influence in China.”¹⁶⁰⁴ While Yamagata took note of the immigration issues with the US, he believed that Japan’s relations with Washington were fundamentally sound and encouraged Japan to enter into a dialogue with the US on China’s future.

Behind Yamagata’s reasoning of a rapprochement with China was his conviction that the world would eventually be engulfed in a life-and-death racial struggle: “For some time I have felt that in order that Yuan Shikai’s distrust of us might be dispelled and replaced by confidence, he must be persuaded of the general trend towards a racial struggle and the most suitable way to preserve the past and independence of the Chinese people would be to place confidence in us.”¹⁶⁰⁵ In East Asia, only Japan and China possessed independent statehood, hence both countries must be friendly and promote each other’s interests to compete with the Western Powers in the postwar world. Japan’s influence in China should be increased through exclusively diplomatic, and not coercive, means. Hence, Yamagata presented his case that a “strong, friendly China would be to Japan’s greatest advantage”.¹⁶⁰⁶ To achieve this, Yamagata suggested a regionalist approach, namely the formation of “some sort of Sino-Japanese entente or accord pledging ‘union and cooperation’ in which China would promise to consult with Japan whenever it needed to deal with other foreign countries concerning political, military, and economic matters.”¹⁶⁰⁷ With this strategy in mind, he advocated for Japan’s entry into the First World War. Yamagata’s memo formed the basis of an official policy recommendation of the collective *genrō* to the Prime Minister in September 1914 on the conduct of overall Japanese foreign policy, with the first priority being China. Here, the *genrō* advocated four basic tenets, namely (i.) dispelling distrust and doubts harboured by China towards Japan, starting with Yuan Shikai; (ii.) nominate special emissaries to deal with individual problems who enjoyed Yuan’s confidence and respect; (iii.) hold a conference to examine the condition for the return of former German-held concessions in China; and (iv.) conclude an agreement regarding economic and political problems.¹⁶⁰⁸

Yet in the new political realities of the Taishō era, the *genrō* no longer enjoyed a monopoly on the policy making process. Almost as soon as Japan entered the First World War, the Japanese Foreign Minister began to contemplate its own vision of Tokyo’s relationship with China. On 26 August 1914, the Japanese Minister to China, Hioki Eki (1861-1926), sent a telegram to Foreign

¹⁶⁰³ Ibid.

¹⁶⁰⁴ Ibid., pg. 274.

¹⁶⁰⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶⁰⁶ Ibid., pg. 275.

¹⁶⁰⁷ Kawamura, *Turbulence in the Pacific*, pg. 13.

¹⁶⁰⁸ Hackett, *Yamagata Aritomo and the Making of Modern Japan*, pg. 281.

Minister Katō arguing that “the time was most opportune for the settlement of the China issue”, given Beijing’s fear of Japanese operations against German-held concessions, suggesting that Japan should guarantee the return of these territories to China in agreement to an extension of Japanese-held concessions in Manchuria.¹⁶⁰⁹ Katō was warm to the idea but believed the timing was not right. The Japanese General Staff also held its own views on future co-operation with China. Before the Japanese declaration of war, on 7 August 1914, it presented the Foreign Ministry with an outline of a proposed Sino-Japanese agreement, including points on Sino-Japanese joint defence in the event of the extension of European hostilities to East Asia, the granting of autonomy for southern Manchuria and Inner Mongolia, and a Japanese trusteeship of military, administrative, and currency reform in China.¹⁶¹⁰ The scope of these initial demands were subsequently modified by Minister of War, Oka Ichinosuke (1860-1916), in November 1914, abandoning the idea of a Japanese trusteeship and insisting instead on the joint ownership of all railways in southern Manchuria, according the right of Japanese citizens to own land and inhabit the region legally, as well as obliging China to consult with Japan before taking on foreign loans as well as matters pertaining to military reform. Radical organizations went even further, with the *Kokuryūkai* demanding that China be made into a vassal state of Japan, with the Japanese Government assuming full control over Chinese military and economic affairs.

The pressure from both the Army as well as the radical organizations resulted in a much more elaborate set of proposals than Foreign Minister Katō had originally envisioned.¹⁶¹¹ The Foreign Ministry and Army agreed, however, on four common objectives: (i.) the extension of Japanese railway rights in Manchuria; (ii.) securing Japan’s predominant position in southern Manchuria and eastern Inner Mongolia; (iii.) a special position for Japan in Fujian (the province across the straits from Taiwan); and (iv.) securing Japanese rights to construct railways in southern China. Katō used this as a blueprint, entitled “Solution of Pending Problems”, as a base to formulate his document for settling pending issues with China, focusing on areas where Japan had, in the past, already laid claim.¹⁶¹² The result of compromise between all involved Japanese actors was the so-called Twenty-One Demands consisting of five separate groups. The first two groups contained the nucleus of Japan’s future vision for China. Group I therefore called for Beijing to “give full assent to all matters that the Japanese Government may hereafter agree with the German Government respecting the disposition of all the rights, interests, and concessions” Germany possessed in the province of Shandong.¹⁶¹³ Additionally, in order to strengthen Japan’s position in the former German territory, Japan sought to oblige China from refraining to lease any territory and island in the Province of Shandong to a third country, allow Japan to build a railway, and to open select towns and cities of the province for trade. Group II sought to secure Japan’s predominant position in South Manchuria and Eastern Inner Mongolia, therefore underlining the thrust of long-term Japanese foreign policy planning towards the Asian continent, demanding the “extension to ninety-nine years of leases covering [the former Russian concessions of] Port Arthur and Dairen”, as well as Japan’s rights to railways already in its possession.¹⁶¹⁴ Group III concerned securing mining rights in the Yangzi Valley, an area that was considered by the British to be within

¹⁶⁰⁹ Kawamura, *Turbulence in the Pacific*, pg. 22.

¹⁶¹⁰ Ibid.

¹⁶¹¹ Ibid., pg. 23.

¹⁶¹² Dickensen, *War and National Reinvention*, pg. 87.

¹⁶¹³ Kawamura, *Turbulence in the Pacific*, pg. 23.

¹⁶¹⁴ Ibid.

the sphere of its economic influence, and then under nationalization plans under Yuan Shikai's Government.¹⁶¹⁵ Group IV sought to force China to commit to not cede any territory on China's coast to a third country and to allow Japan to reclaim Fujian.

Group V was the outlier, containing seven proposals that, according to Foreign Minister Katō were “entirely different in character” from the first four groups.¹⁶¹⁶ These reflected mostly the demands of the Japanese military and “outside influences”, such as the *Kokuryūkai*.¹⁶¹⁷ As the Foreign Ministry's instructions to Minister Hioki underlined, Group V represented bilateral questions that “have been pending between the two countries [and are] nevertheless highly desirable for the advancement of friendly relations between Japan and China” and were framed as the “desire of the Imperial [Japanese] Government.”¹⁶¹⁸ As such, the Japanese Government required from the Chinese the following: (i.) to engage influential Japanese as political, financial, and military advisers; (ii.) to grant Japanese hospitals, temples, and schools in the interior of China the right to own land; (iii.) to place Japanese police in certain areas in China under Sino-Japanese joint administration; (iv.) to agree to purchase a set amount of weapons from Japan or to create a joint arsenal in China; (v.) to grant Japan the right to construct three railways in southern China; (vi.) to consult Japan should China necessitate foreign loans for economic projects in the Province of Fujian; and (vii.) to grant the Japanese the right to preach in China.¹⁶¹⁹ Should Beijing swiftly agree to all the above proposals, Katō stated that, Japan “may...well consider the question with a view of restoring [Shandong] to China in the event of Japan being given a free hand in the disposition [of that area] as the result of the coming peace conference between Japan and Germany.”¹⁶²⁰ Tokyo therefore awaited the appropriate moment to present its numerous demands to the Chinese Government. Following Yuan Shikai's January 1915 decision to lift war zone status in Shandong—established when Japanese troops first landed—and his subsequent request for all foreign forces to withdraw from Chinese territory, Minister Hioki proceeded to submit Japan's demands.

9.2.5.2. The Reaction to Japan's Twenty-One Demands

The Japanese expected negotiations with China to proceed smoothly as they did not view their requests as “out of line with the immense advantages gained by the Western powers in the previous half-century.”¹⁶²¹ In fact, Minister Hioki assured Yuan Shikai that Japan intended to secure the territorial integrity of the nascent republic.¹⁶²² The Chinese, however, saw matters quite differently. The presentation of the Twenty-One Demands “came to stand as a political and psychological watershed for modern Sino-Japanese relations.”¹⁶²³ Upon receiving the demands, President Yuan Shikai was shocked by what he viewed as unprecedented dictates being thrust upon

¹⁶¹⁵ Dickens, *War and National Reinvention*, pp. 88-89.

¹⁶¹⁶ Kawamura, *Turbulence in the Pacific*, pg. 24.

¹⁶¹⁷ Dickens, *War and National Reinvention*, pg. 89.

¹⁶¹⁸ Jansen, *Japan and China*, pg. 213.

¹⁶¹⁹ Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, Division of International Law, *The Sino-Japanese Negotiations of 1915; Japanese and Chinese Documents and Chinese Official Statements*, Washington: The Endowment, 1921, pp. 5-8.

¹⁶²⁰ Kawamura, *Turbulence in the Pacific*, pg. 23.

¹⁶²¹ Hackett, *Yamagata Aritomo and the Making of Modern Japan*, pg. 285.

¹⁶²² Jansen, *Japan and China*, pg. 213.

¹⁶²³ *Ibid.*, pg. 203.

the nascent republic. According to his Vice-Minister, Cao Rulin (1877-1966), Yuan Shikai convened his Cabinet and declared his opinion that “Japan was trying to conquer China because Group V means that Japan is treating China as Korea, we must not negotiate with Japan”, categorically to breach any issue included in Group V.¹⁶²⁴ While he quickly realized that negotiations with Tokyo were unavoidable, Yuan Shikai undertook several tactics whose consequences would help erode any base of bilateral and popular trust both the Chinese Government and its populous might have held towards Japan. Yuan appointed a new Foreign Minister, Lu Zhengxiang (1871-1949), who possessed substantial diplomatic experience as a previous holder of the position, and neglected to initially respond to Japanese demands for talks, delaying the first meeting until 2 February 1915, organizing sessions once a week. Playing for time, the Sino-Japanese negotiations merely got through Groups I and II over a span of two months, irritating Minister Hioki to such an extent that he, in April 1915, urged Tokyo to issue an ultimatum threatening the use of force.¹⁶²⁵ As a result, Japan reinforced its military contingent in China’s former German concessions by 1200 and by 6000 in Manchuria.¹⁶²⁶ Yuan also ordered Chinese newspapers to stoke anti-Japanese sentiment with, already on 27 January 1915, the *Yaxiya Ri Bao* (Asian Daily News) openly publishing the Japanese demands, commenting that they blatantly constituted a violation of the sovereignty of China and should be dismissed; this was followed by the statements of nineteen warlords to Yuan, as reported by Chinese newspapers, declaring themselves united in opposition to the Japanese.¹⁶²⁷ The reaction of the Chinese populous was equally as strong in expressing its indignation, with civil associations and societies organizing public protests, culminating with a protest in Shanghai of 40,000 on 18 March 1915 against the Twenty-One Demands.

Yuan also leaked the details of the Demands to foreign newspapers and likewise to the new US Minister to Beijing, Paul Reinsch (1869-1923). Selected by US President Woodrow Wilson (1856-1924), Reinsch was a legal scholar and political scientist and was staunchly Christian in his outlook, reflecting what the 28th US President had viewed as one of the United States’ most enduring contributions to modern China, namely Protestant missionaries. Consequently, Reinsch came to Beijing imbued with Wilson’s idealism and political naiveté, with Yuan finding him easily to be used to meet Chinese diplomatic ends. Through his contact with Yuan, Reinsch became convinced that Japan “employed every device of intrigue, intimidation, corruption, and force in order to gain a position for itself in flagrant disregard of the rights of the Chinese people itself, and in oblivion to the rights of others.”¹⁶²⁸ Describing Japan’s actions as a threat to the US and regional stability, he succeeded in convincing the Far Eastern Division of the State Department that it was in Washington’s interest, in response to the Twenty-One Demands, to “ask explanation from Japan and *insist firmly upon rights* [or else] we are in danger of *losing our influence in the Far East* and adding to the dangers of the situation...” Japan, which was not “restrained by the scruple of the West” was becoming a greater menace than ever to the US.”¹⁶²⁹ In Washington, the Japanese Ambassador explained to Secretary of State William Jennings Bryan (1860-1925) that Reinsch’s approach was based on false information, which Bryan was inclined to believe. However, on 18

¹⁶²⁴ Sochi Naraoka, “A New Look at Japan’s Twenty-One Demands: Reconsidering Kato Takaaki’s Motives in 1915” in Minohara Tosh; Tze-ki Hon & Dawley, Evan (eds), *The Decade of the Great War*, Leiden: Brill, 2014, pg. 199.

¹⁶²⁵ Jansen, *Japan and China*, pg. 215.

¹⁶²⁶ Kawamura, *Turbulence in the Pacific*, pg. 26.

¹⁶²⁷ Sochi, “A New Look at Japan’s Twenty-One Demands”, pg. 199.

¹⁶²⁸ Jansen, *Japan and China*, pg. 216.

¹⁶²⁹ Ibid.

February 1915, the Chinese Foreign Ministry leaked the entire contents of Japan's Demands, including Group V. In a rather contradictory move, after Tokyo expressed its assurances to Secretary Bryan that Group V simply did not exist, the Japanese Foreign Ministry confirmed to Washington that indeed such demands had been presented to the Chinese. Japan's British allies had, likewise, been kept in the dark as to the totality of Tokyo's scope of negotiations with Beijing, with the British Minister to China commenting that "Japan's action toward China is worse than that of Germany in the case of Belgium."¹⁶³⁰ Hence, both Washington and London reacted with surprise not only at the totality of Japanese demands against China, but that their most controversial elements (Group V) had been kept hidden from both allies and Treaty Powers alike.

By April 1915, the Sino-Japanese negotiations had entered stalemate, with no real prospects of Tokyo securing Beijing's consent to Group II, III and, of course, V. Japanese frustrations were growing and becoming palpable. Russian Minister Vasily Nikolayevich Krupensky (1869-1945) reported to Minister Hioki that Reinsch, under instructions from Washington, had dispatched a note to Beijing that requested Yuan's Government "not [to] make any concession that would impair in any way the treaty rights of America" and that "the American Government will not recede an iota from the principle of territorial integrity and equal opportunity [in China]", with Hioki becoming firm in the conviction that the US was behind the prolonged intransigence exhibited by the Chinese in the negotiations.¹⁶³¹ As a result, the Okuma Government attempted one last time to resolve lingering differences with China through negotiation. Japan, therefore, presented its 'final concession proposal' to the Chinese Delegation on 26 April 1915, offering to restore the former German concession to China in return for Chinese acceptance of Tokyo's other demands. Foreign Minister Katō viewed this move as an earnest and serious concession from Japan, especially after Tokyo had expended both blood and treasure to wrest control from Germany. Consequently, Katō informed the Japanese Government, that should Beijing not accept what, from his point of view, was a serious concession from Tokyo, Japan would have to resort to the strongest measures to ensure that negotiations were concluded. Katō thereby convinced Okuma to send an ultimatum to Beijing. This move was not approved by the *genrō* who had unhappily watched Katō's propensity to pursue radical foreign policies that could entail serious economic and political consequences for Japan's relations with the US and UK.¹⁶³² Yamagata openly voiced his fear at a meeting between the *genrō* and the Okuma Cabinet on 5 May 1915 and underlined that the use of such coercive measures would irrevocably alienate China from Japan for issuing an ultimatum "for demands as reckless as those included in the fifth group", advising instead that the negotiations convey "an impression of extreme fairness...and not disgracing [Japan] in the eyes of the Great Powers."¹⁶³³ Yamagata blamed the diplomatic deadlock on Katō's insistence and suggested the Foreign Minister meet with Yuan in Beijing to directly resolve outstanding issues.

With Sino-Japanese negotiations now blocked, and the Western Powers fully aware of the scope of Japan's demands to China, both the US and UK began to express concern at the course of developments. The Japanese Embassy in London kept their allies informed on the negotiations, but signalled no intention of softening Tokyo's position, with Ambassador Inoue informing

¹⁶³⁰ Ibid., pg. 214.

¹⁶³¹ Kawamura, *Turbulence in the Pacific*, pg. 27.

¹⁶³² Ibid., pg. 28.

¹⁶³³ Hackett, *Yamagata Aritomo and in the Rise of Modern Japan*, pg. 288.

Foreign Secretary Grey that Katō's concession represented a last attempt by Japan to salvage the situation and that a Chinese refusal "would be hardly compatible with the dignity of Japan, the maintenance of which is a requisite factor in the consolidation of enduring peace in the Far East. It might even render it difficult for us to fulfill the realization of the objects of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance."¹⁶³⁴ Faced with Japan calling into question what had hitherto been the foundation of Japanese foreign policy since 1902, Grey responded that, should a rupture in negotiations occur, London was "most anxious that it should not be on any point that was at all in conflict with the objects of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance."¹⁶³⁵ Great Britain, faced with the increasingly bloody course of the First World War in Europe, saw no choice other than to accord Japan its tacit support for bringing the negotiations to a close without further incident. While Grey offered eventual British mediation, he also informed the Chinese Minister in London, Alfred Sao-ke Sze (1877-1958), that "the nations of the world were now so engaged that [Grey] saw no prospect of any interference in the dispute between China and Japan."¹⁶³⁶ Yet the cautious position of the *genrō*, combined with growing British and American concern, had an effect. Foreign Secretary Grey telegraphed Katō cautioning that, should Japan insist on breaking off negotiations related to any point of Group V (in particular the appointment of Japanese advisors and monopoly of arms supplies), "it would in the eye of public opinion in England be impossible to reconcile the position this created with the terms of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance."¹⁶³⁷ The Japanese Embassy in London also received information that the US was attempting to obstruct the scope of Japanese demands, with the vice director of the foreign department of the *London Times* informing its Counsellor that "certain sectors of American politicians are trying hard to impress [the US] administration that Japan is pushing too far her demands upon China. This comes to me privately from the highest authority in the country."¹⁶³⁸ Followed by such warnings, and after prolonged discussions, Okuma's Cabinet opted to withdraw the contentious elements that comprised Group V, but insisted that Beijing concede all other four groups.

On 9 May 1915, Hioki presented the modified Japanese ultimatum to Yuan, informing China that failing its unconditional acceptance the "[Japanese] Government will take whatever steps they deem necessary."¹⁶³⁹ Yuan had based his negotiation strategy on courting eventual Western intervention on the side of China. On 1 May 1915, Yuan received the ministers of the European Allies who "advised the Chinese not to attempt armed resistance to Japan."¹⁶⁴⁰ With the prospect of meaningful Western intervention now dissipated, Yuan tried in vain to find a compromise solution with Japan, tabling a new proposal before Hioki presented his final ultimatum. With Katō intent on securing China's unconditional acceptance, this proposal was rejected. With Group V no longer figuring in the proposed treaty, Yuan opted to accept, signing the first four groups of the Twenty-One Demands into a new Sino-Japanese treaty on 25 May 1915. According to its terms, Japan secured its paramount position in southern Manchuria; gained an extension on the lease of Port Arthur and Dairen as well as the South Manchuria and Andong-Mukden railways for 99 years, with Japanese citizens now enjoying the right to lease land, enter,

¹⁶³⁴ Tarling, *Asia and the First World War*, pg. 61.

¹⁶³⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶³⁶ Ibid., pg. 62.

¹⁶³⁷ Kawamura, *Turbulence in the Pacific*, pg. 28.

¹⁶³⁸ Ibid.

¹⁶³⁹ Tarling, *Asia and the First World War*, pg. 62.

¹⁶⁴⁰ Kawamura, *Turbulence in the Pacific*, pg. 29.

travel, reside and open businesses in southern Manchuria; and Beijing committing to not allow any foreign military or economic penetration along the entire coast of China.¹⁶⁴¹

The new treaty marked a complete diplomatic victory for Japan. Tokyo was “now able to face the rest of the world with a *fait accompli*, a document usually regarded as an instrument in international law”, with Japan calculating that “it was improbable that other Powers would be likely to object [to the treaty]...and thereby raise the question of the validity of a whole series of official acts by China.”¹⁶⁴² Such a victory, however, came at a very high price. Following Japan’s aggressive approach to conquer and keep Germany’s Pacific colonies, Great Britain—and especially the US—became suspicious of Japan’s regionalist intentions. This impression did not soften after Tokyo attempted to hide the full scope of its demands against China and its questionable decision to initially conceal the existence of Group V. While Yuan’s strategy of courting Western intervention did not bear fruit, it rallied anti-Japanese sentiment domestically and, with the leaking of the entire list of demands, “helped create the popular American image of Japan as an aggressor”, with Japanese diplomatic efforts to dispel such images falling on deaf ears.¹⁶⁴³ The readiness of Tokyo to pursue their objectives by force if necessary did not augment Japan’s case for constructing peaceful regionalism in East Asia.

Washington’s open skepticism was brought to full light with Secretary of State Bryan’s caveat of 11 May 1915, dispatched both to Tokyo and Beijing. Its content announced to the Japanese and Chinese Governments that the US “cannot recognize any agreement or undertaking which had been entered into or which may be entered into between the Governments of Japan and China, impairing the treaty rights of the United States and its citizens in China, the political or territorial integrity of the Republic of China, or the international policy relative to China commonly known as the Open Door Policy.”¹⁶⁴⁴ This note from Washington was met with bewilderment in Tokyo, with Foreign Minister Katō seeking concrete clarification from the US, namely if Washington would voice objections to any particular point. Bryan responded that President Wilson “wished to keep the record straight and that [the US] Government merely stated its position as a ‘precaution’.”¹⁶⁴⁵ Given the course of events in Europe, the Western Allies were in no position but to observe from the sidelines and disapprovingly protest as a new reality was being constructed in China by their Japanese allies. However, Wilson’s non-recognition of the Sino-Japanese Treaty of 1915 placed Tokyo on notice that any further future encroachment on China would not be recognized by Washington and such designs would encounter active US opposition.

9.2.6. The Russo-Japanese Alliance of 1916

Japan’s newly solidified rights in China also impacted the other power who had staked a claim on the former areas of the Qing, namely the Russian Empire. The Sino-Japanese Treaty of 1915 indirectly “conferred on Russia a similar recognition of her parallel claims” on Chinese territory.¹⁶⁴⁶ With both Japan and Russia having strengthened their grip over their controlled

¹⁶⁴¹ Ibid., pg. 30.

¹⁶⁴² Baston Price, The Russo-Japanese Treaties of 1907-1916, pg. 81.

¹⁶⁴³ Ibid., pg. 35.

¹⁶⁴⁴ Kawamura, Turbulence in the Pacific, pg. 57.

¹⁶⁴⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶⁴⁶ Baston Price, The Russo-Japanese Treaties of 1907-1916, pg. 82.

Chinese territories, Tokyo and St. Petersburg opted to augment their already strong cooperation as laid out in the Secret Treaty of 1912 by concluding yet another agreement. With Great Britain and the US having launched protests at the Japanese browbeating of China into submitting to its 1915 treaty, Japan was well aware that a wedge had been created between its increasingly regionalist foreign policy and the interests of Great Britain and the US, especially in regard to developments in China. While the course of the First World War prevented the Western Powers from embarking on meaningful intervention, serious concerns about Japanese foreign policy had been awakened, especially regarding US insistence on the maintenance of the Open Door Policy towards China, one which the Twenty-One Demands seriously called into question. As such, the emergence of palpable tensions between Japan and the Western Powers “forced Russia and Japan into an even closer alliance, resulting in a 3 July 1916 secret convention.”¹⁶⁴⁷

Negotiations on deeper cooperation between the two Empire began sometime in the early part of 1916, with discussions commencing between Foreign Minister Sazonov and Ambassador Motono. In January 1916, Tsar Nicholas II sent his uncle, the Grand Duke, on an official honorific mission to the Taishō Emperor that had a much more practical aim in mind.¹⁶⁴⁸ The military situation in Europe, with Russia’s ongoing campaign in Galicia, was necessitating the full might of the Russian Armed Forces that could not keep its ample manpower supplied with the necessary weapons and ammunition required to sustain operations.¹⁶⁴⁹ Given the extreme pressures that the war against the Central Powers had placed on Russia’s European Allies, London and Paris were in no position to assist St. Petersburg with its needs. Consequently, Russia approached its East Asian ally for assistance to supply the necessary munitions. The situation at the front was such that Sazonov was prepared to make hefty concessions to Japan in order to obtain new sources of ammunition the Russian Empire itself could not produce.¹⁶⁵⁰ For their part, the Japanese were interested in enhancing their bilateral relations with Russia, as outlined by Yamagata in his foreign policy concept presented to the Okuma Cabinet on the eve of Tokyo’s entrance into the First World War where the *genrō* penned that “without relying on England alone, [Japan should] conclude an alliance with Russia now.”¹⁶⁵¹ At an emergency Cabinet meeting in February 1916, the Japanese Government opted to initiate negotiations on an additional treaty with Russia. Ostensibly pushed through by Yamagata and his *genrō*, the result was the Russo-Japanese treaties of 1916, spawned by an increasing apprehension in the Japanese foreign policy establishment to rely on the Anglo-Japanese Alliance as Japan’s sole source of security, despite Katō’s anglophile tendencies and insistence on clinging to the British as the cardinal direction in Japan’s foreign policy compass.¹⁶⁵²

As per previous Russo-Japanese agreements, a public convention and a secret agreement were respectively signed. Regarding the public convention, the first two articles stipulated the following: “**Article I**—Russia will not be a party to any arrangement or political combination directed against Japan. Japan will not be a party to any arrangement or political combination directed against Russia”; while **Article II** stated that “In the event that the territorial rights or the special interests, in the Far East, of the Contracting Parties, recognized by the other Contracting

¹⁶⁴⁷ Elleson, *International Rivalry and Secret Diplomacy in East Asia*, pg. 137.

¹⁶⁴⁸ Nish, *Japanese Foreign Policy*, pg. 107.

¹⁶⁴⁹ Baston Price, *The Russo-Japanese Treaties of 1907-1916*, pg. 82.

¹⁶⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, pg. 83.

¹⁶⁵¹ Hackett, *Yamagata Aritomo in the Rise of Modern Japan*, pg. 280.

¹⁶⁵² Nish, *Japanese Foreign Policy*, pg. 109.

party, should be menaced, Russia and Japan will confer in regard to the measures to be taken with a view to the support or cooperation to be given each other to safeguard and defend those interests.”¹⁶⁵³ On the surface, despite preventing Japan from entering into a separate peace agreement with the German Empire, the public portion of the convention did not add anything of significance to the points already stipulated in previously signed Russo-Japanese treaties. Hence, the real intent—or target—of the treaty lay in its secret protocols.

The Secret Convention of 3 July 1916’s first article leaves no doubt that a defensive alliance existed between Russia and Japan, with both Empires recognizing via **Article I** that “their vital interests demand that China should not fall under the political domination of any third Power hostile to Russia or Japan, [and] will frankly and loyally enter into communication whenever circumstances any demand, and will agree upon the measures to be taken to prevent such a situation being brought about.”¹⁶⁵⁴ Mutual Russo-Japanese commitment to defending their respective interests in China was deepened by **Article II**: “in the event that, in consequences of the measures taken by mutual agreement as provided in the preceding article, war should be declared between one of the Contracting Parties and one of the third Powers contemplated by the preceding article, the other Contracting Party will, upon the demand of its ally, come to its aid, and in that case each of the High Contracting Parties undertakes not to make peace without a previous agreement with the other Contracting Party.”¹⁶⁵⁵ In the event of the activation of the preceding two articles, **Article III** pledged that “the conditions in which each of the High Contracting Parties will lend its armed cooperation to the other Contracting Party...and the means by which this cooperation will be effected, will be established by the competent authorities of the two High Contracting Parties.”¹⁶⁵⁶ Such cooperation is further conditioned on the principle of **Article IV** underlining that “neither of the High Contracting Parties will be bound to lend its ally the armed assistance contemplated by Article II of the present Convention unless it has assured itself of cooperation on the part of its allies, corresponding to the gravity of the impending conflict.”¹⁶⁵⁷ **Article VI** placed the convention under the terms of strict confidentiality.

Taking into consideration the totality of the articles of the Secret Convention, the traits of a particular type of alliance to maintain the status quo becomes discernible. First, the geographic scope of the agreement far exceeded that of the previously concluded treaties that remained limited to designated areas on the frontiers of the now defunct Qing Empire. The present convention extended to encompass the whole of China. Any infringement of the ‘vital interests’ by a third power would trigger an armed conflict with both Russia and Japan, subject to their respective common approach to an eventual engagement. As such, the Secret Convention of 1916 represented both a “defensive and offensive alliance.”¹⁶⁵⁸ The exact target of the clandestine alliance remains clouded by history and the fog of confusion created by the complete collapse of Tsarist Russia. The intended target of the 1916 alliance would, as per Articles I-III indicate, was a power with which Russia and Japan was not yet at war, thereby excluding Germany and Austria, while this same logic excluded Great Britain having been an ally of Japan since 1902.¹⁶⁵⁹ Japanese diplomatic

¹⁶⁵³ Hackett, *Yamagata Aritomo in the Rise of Modern Japan*, pg. 280.

¹⁶⁵⁴ Elleson, *International Rivalry and Secret Diplomacy in East Asia*, pg. 138.

¹⁶⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 138-139.

¹⁶⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, pg. 139.

¹⁶⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁵⁸ Rajendar, Kumar Jain, *The USSR and Japan, 1945-1980*, Brighton: Harvester Press, 1981, pg. 5.

¹⁶⁵⁹ Elleson, *International Rivalry and Secret Diplomacy in East Asia*, pg. 137.

scholar Kajima likewise assumes that while a “third country [could have] meant a victorious Germany, *but*, because this was not clearly specified, this article would equally apply should the United States attempt to control China.”¹⁶⁶⁰ Hence, the only power against which the Secret Convention of 1916 could have been plausibly directed was the United States. This assessment was based not only on Washington’s steadily increasing opposition to Japanese actions in East Asia—from the conclusion of the Root-Takahira Agreement to an explicit American policy denying recognition to the Sino-Japanese Treaty of 1915. Given the pivotal role China and the Open Door Policy played in underpinning US policy towards the Pacific, there was “no doubt that the United States was somewhat nervous about the conclusion of this convention.”¹⁶⁶¹ The US State Department tried in response to goad St. Petersburg and Tokyo into publicly affirming each Empire’s respective commitment to the Open Door Policy. As a result of such efforts, the only indirect reference to the US as a possible target of the 1916 treaty between St. Petersburg and Tokyo emerged in a statement by Foreign Minister Sazanov through a public announcement to the Associated Press, explicitly intended for the American public, heralding that “[the Treaty of 1916 represented]...the natural development of previous conventions...in 1907 and 1910. The former of the conventions expressly mentions the engagement of the contracting parties to respect the principle of equal opportunity for trade and industry in China and to uphold and defend this principle...The new convention does not inaugurate any new policy injurious to American rights and interests.”¹⁶⁶² A similar reply to US enquiries constituted the official response of the Japanese Foreign Ministry to the US Government.¹⁶⁶³

Whatever the objective, the Russo-Japanese Treaties of 1916 marked the apotheosis of a rapprochement between the two Empires that served as a vehicle to extend their respective interests in East Asia. Prior to his resignation in October 1916, Foreign Minister Ishii Kikujirō (1866-1945) issued a statement on his view of the East Asian order: “By concluding the alliance with Russia, we have established with her a relationship of complete cooperation for the final settlement of our policy towards Manchuria and Mongolia and have cemented our defensive policy towards China. By using the British and Russian alliances like a two-house carriage we can maintain permanent peace in the East; and our aim of developing our power there can be even more strongly developed.”¹⁶⁶⁴ Given the unexpected events that lay dormant on the horizon, however, this new level of bilateral relations was not to last as one of the contracting parties would soon cease to exist.

9.2.7. China’s Entry into the First World War

9.2.7.1. Chinese Neutrality

Following the Sino-Japanese Treaty of 1915, China continued to adhere to its position of neutrality regarding the Great War raging in Europe. Given China’s overall military weakness and continuing domestic unrest, President Yuan realized that overt Chinese involvement in the First World War would further weaken an already difficult Chinese position. China’s policy of strict

¹⁶⁶⁰ Kajima Morinosuke, The Diplomacy of Japan, Volume III, 1894-1922: First World War, Paris Peace Conference, Washington Conference, Tokyo: Kajima Institute of International Peace, 1980, pg. 275.

¹⁶⁶¹ *Ibid.*, pg. 275.

¹⁶⁶² Baston Price, The Russo-Japanese Treaties of 1907-1916, pg. 88.

¹⁶⁶³ Kajima, The Diplomacy of Japan, Vol. III, pg. 275.

¹⁶⁶⁴ Nish, Japanese Foreign Policy, pg. 111.

neutrality had obviously not been respected by Japan in its campaign against the German concession in Shandong. Following the capture of Qingdao in November 1914, the Japanese Foreign Ministry publicly announced that, although the fate of Germany's former Chinese concessions would be decided at an eventual peace conference, China would not be invited as participation would only be reserved for belligerents.¹⁶⁶⁵ This stance evoked bitter memories amongst Chinese officials at the negotiations surrounding the Settlement of 1905 where Beijing's efforts at securing representation at Portsmouth were met with open rejection. The Chinese Foreign Ministry began to study in earnest the diplomatic precedents set by European treaty diplomacy of the nineteenth century to secure Chinese participation in an eventual peace conference while simultaneously maintaining its neutral status.¹⁶⁶⁶ During the Sino-Japanese negotiations in the wake of the presentation of Japan's Twenty-One Demands, the subject of Chinese participation in the postwar peace conference was broached, however, Minister Hioki advised Beijing that it should not place too much hope in receiving an invitation. Following the acceptance of the Twenty-One Demands, despite China's faith in the Western Powers having been compromised by their refusal to aid Beijing against Japan, Chinese foreign policy makers nevertheless realized that the international situation required China to link its own aims of securing its own territorial integrity against the ambitions of its powerful neighbour with those of the Allies.¹⁶⁶⁷ Entry into the War on the Allied side, while having nothing to do with bellicose intent against Germany, could assist in safeguarding Chinese independence both presently and in the future in light of Japan's increasingly obvious regionalist agenda.

Such a noble policy aim was easier formulated than implemented. Great Britain had hoped that China would, on its own accord, enter the war on the Allied side. This policy, however, was opposed by Japan, believing that "Chinese participation would enhance China's voice in international affairs and thereby reduce Japan's role as a leader and spokesperson for China."¹⁶⁶⁸ Consequently, London, under pressure from its allies in Tokyo, opted to dispense with negotiations aiming at Chinese entry into the war without prior Japanese consent. In August 1915, with domestic unrest continuing to engulf China, President Yuan Shikai unleashed his monarchical movement in an attempt to centralize authority in Beijing and restore stability to China by crowning himself as the new Hongxian Emperor.¹⁶⁶⁹ In Yuan's attempt to secure international recognition for his new monarchy, an Australian advisor to the Chinese President, Dr. George Morrison (1862-1920), advised Yuan to declare war against Germany to secure Beijing the right to attend any eventual peace conference and thereby possibly secure a path towards the recovery of Shandong.¹⁶⁷⁰ This step would, according to Dr. Morrison, place pressure on Japan by forcing it "either to act in good faith as an ally or openly side with Germany."¹⁶⁷¹ Yuan handed this idea to the Chinese Foreign Ministry that raised it with the British who, in turn, disclosed to Japan that Beijing was extremely interested in becoming an ally to secure participation in the peace

¹⁶⁶⁵ Craft, Stephen, "Angling for an Invitation to Paris: China's Entry into the First World War", *The International History Review*, Feb. 1994, Vol. 16, No. 1, pg. 5.

¹⁶⁶⁶ Ibid., pp. 5-6.

¹⁶⁶⁷ Frank, Jacob, *East Asia and the First World War*, Boston: De Gruyter, 2022, pg. 21.

¹⁶⁶⁸ Etō Shinkichi, "China's International Relations 1911-1931" in Fairbank (ed.), *The Cambridge History of China*, pg. 100.

¹⁶⁶⁹ Young, Ernest, *The Presidency of Yuan Shih-k'ai: Liberalism and Dictatorship in Early Republican China*, Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1977, pp. 210-240.

¹⁶⁷⁰ Craft, "Angling for an Invitation to Paris", pg. 12.

¹⁶⁷¹ Chi, Madeleine, *China Diplomacy, 1914-1918*, Boston: Brill, 1970, pg. 71.

conference and, likewise, to recover its lost territories. Japan immediately shot down such an attempt, with Japanese Foreign Minister Ishii Kikujirō informing Foreign Secretary Grey that the endeavour “to bring China into the war would give the revolutionaries in China the opportunity of making disturbances.”¹⁶⁷² Ishii’s statement was followed up officially by the memorandum of 6 December 1915, stating that while the Japanese Government would cooperate with the Allies to end “German intrigues in China”, Tokyo viewed that China’s entry would result in “dangers of grave and far-reaching consequences in the Far East...with the Japanese Government [deciding] to follow its guiding principle of maintaining peace and stability in China...[saving] 400,000,000 of her people from the horrors of war.”¹⁶⁷³ China was therefore to remain on the sidelines at the behest of the Japanese Government.

9.2.7.2. The China Policy of the Terauchi Cabinet

In the meantime, the domestic situation in China itself continued to erode. The reign of the Hongxian Emperor proved to be short-lived, with domestic revolts forcing Yuan to abdicate on 22 March 1916 after being Emperor for a mere 83 days. Yuan died shortly thereafter in June 1916. As reports of a novel Russo-Japanese Treaty reached Beijing in July 1916, the new Chinese Government headed by Yuan’s former Vice-President, Li Yuanhong (1864-1928), expressed concern at the public treaty’s lack of mention of China’s independence; territorial rights of other states in China; or even the principle of equal opportunity among the powers in China, suspecting the existence of secret articles designed to further undermine China’s fragile sovereignty.¹⁶⁷⁴ Post-Yuan Shikai Chinese political forces opted, therefore, to counter the growing threats from abroad by adopting “a policy of friendly cooperation with Japan within limits”.¹⁶⁷⁵ The coming to power of the Cabinet of a new Japanese Prime Minister, former Army Minister Terauchi Masatake, in October 1916 likewise coincided with the selection of new political approaches in Tokyo. Terauchi was nominated as Prime Minister by *Genrō* Yamagata “in the hope that he would introduce some new policies which would remedy the shortcomings of the party politics which had gone before.”¹⁶⁷⁶ While Terauchi openly advocated a milder China policy than did his predecessors Prime Minister Okuma and Foreign Minister Katō, the underlying scope of Terauchi’s overall political goals towards China remained the same. The first official decision on China reached by the Terauchi Cabinet did not shy away from publicly stating its goal of achieving “a vertically integrated regionalism in Asia under Japan’s leadership”, thereby obliging the Western Powers recognize that consultations with Japan were necessary regarding their respective activities in China.¹⁶⁷⁷

On 9 January 1917, the Terauchi Cabinet adopted its first resolution on Japan’s China policy under its new government, underlining Tokyo’s intent to implement its regional aims: “In order to make China carry out political reform necessary to maintain her independence and territorial integrity, the [Japanese] Empire shall guide and educate the Chinese with sincerity and attempt to promote amity between the two countries.”¹⁶⁷⁸ In putting forward its claim to enjoy

¹⁶⁷² Ibid., pg. 73.

¹⁶⁷³ Ibid., pp. 74-75.

¹⁶⁷⁴ Craft, “Angling for an Invitation to Paris”, pg. 14.

¹⁶⁷⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶⁷⁶ Nish, *Japanese Foreign Policy*, pg. 111.

¹⁶⁷⁷ Kawamura, *Turbulence in the Pacific*, pg. 63.

¹⁶⁷⁸ Ibid.

special rights of tutelage over the Chinese, the Japanese Government declared it only aimed at the maintenance and protection of “Japan’s special privileges in South Manchuria, eastern Inner Mongolia, and Fujian”, leaving the question of the fate of Shandong to be decided at war’s end.¹⁶⁷⁹ As such, Terauchi signaled Japan’s intent to cooperate with the Western Powers to respect China’s independence and territorial integrity. At the same time, the decision also contained a statement declaring that “Japan must take appropriate action in case China became suspicious of Japan’s friendly intent and obstructed Japan’s activities in China”, openly proclaiming Tokyo’s assessment of Beijing as an “inferior partner”. It likewise placed the international community on notice that Japan could resort to unilateral action if disagreements were to arise in the bilateral relationship.¹⁶⁸⁰ Furthermore, the Terauchi Cabinet “expressed [its] intention of obtaining the Western Powers’ recognition of Japan’s ‘paramount position in China’” and expressed its determination to, even while acting together on the international stage with its Western Allies, prevent these very Powers from “launching any activities of a political nature in China without seeking Japan’s initiative or approval.”¹⁶⁸¹ As such, the Terauchi Cabinet’s declaration on its vision of policy towards China of January 1917 set forward to establish what Japanese contemporary foreign policy makers viewed as a twentieth-century equivalent of a Japanese Monroe Doctrine for mainland Asia, modeled on concrete US practice towards Latin America. While the methods of implementation might differ, the core objective of the Japanese Empire’s policy towards China remained very much in place. The question of Chinese entry into World War One signified a latent contest for confirmation of political supremacy of Japan over an increasingly troubled China, both in accompanying her into the Entente camp, but also the domestic consequences this would entail for the Chinese Republic.

As such, Prime Minister Teruchi’s new Foreign Minister, Tokyo’s former Minister to St. Petersburg Motono Ichirō, doubled down on Japan’s commitment to the Entente cause, informing the Allied capitals that “the present government in Japan are determined to carry on the war and do their utmost to help the Allies in every theatre of the war.”¹⁶⁸² Such words were followed up with concrete deeds, with Tokyo agreeing with Great Britain’s request to dispatch Japanese naval assistance to the Mediterranean in January 1917. Yet tangible concessions lay behind the expression of Japan’s lofty pro-Allied rhetoric. Approaching its British allies, the Terauchi Government secured London’s commitment to support Tokyo’s claims to retain the German concession at Shandong, as well as Germany’s former territories north of the equator.¹⁶⁸³ Having now secured Japan’s claim to Berlin’s Pacific Empire beyond any eventual peace conference, the Terauchi Government could now openly advocate for China’s entry into the Great War under Japanese tutelage, thereby anchoring the impression of Tokyo’s political primacy over the troubled Chinese Republic.

¹⁶⁷⁹ Chi, *China Diplomacy*, pg. 116.

¹⁶⁸⁰ Kawamura, *Turbulence in the Pacific*, pg. 63.

¹⁶⁸¹ Ibid.

¹⁶⁸² Chi, *China Diplomacy*, pg. 116.

¹⁶⁸³ La Frague, Thomas, “The Entrance of China into the World War” in *Pacific Historical Review*, 1936, Vol. 5(3), pg. 229.

9.2.7.3. China Breaks Diplomatic Relations with the Central Powers

On 31 January 1917, the Imperial German Government, after having its peace proposals to end the Great War rejected outright by the Entente, announced Berlin's intention to pursue unlimited submarine warfare.¹⁶⁸⁴ This escalation, threatening US clandestine arms supplies to Great Britain, prompted Washington to sever diplomatic relations with Berlin on 3 February 1917. On the same day, possessed by his idealistic vision of an international community acting in unison against perceived transgressions against a chimeric global 'democratic' order, President Wilson strongly encouraged all neutral states to follow the US example in severing diplomatic relations with Germany through the dispatching of a circular note to all neutral capitals. Despite the State Department's conviction that China's eventual response to Washington's demands was irrelevant, US Minister to Beijing Reinsch believed that this presented a "golden opportunity to save China from the 'thralldom of Japan'", thereby enhancing the prestige and influence of the US.¹⁶⁸⁵ The Chinese Government was unsure of how to respond to the US request. China had no quarrel with Germany; Beijing's demands to attend the peace conference only arose due to blatant British and Japanese violations of Chinese neutrality. Moreover, several senior Chinese military officials were open admirers of the German military and believed that Germany would ultimately be victorious and did not wish to tie themselves to the losing side of the war.¹⁶⁸⁶ Reinsch sought to counter such opinions by meeting President Li several times between 4-8 February 1917 to persuade him to follow the US lead, arguing that, in doing so, "China would improve her independent standing among the nations" as well as gain a stronger "tactical position in international diplomacy."¹⁶⁸⁷ Li's Government responded by saying that Germany had provided China with a good relationship and that breaking diplomatic relations with Berlin could also give Japan a reason to forcefully implement Group V of the Twenty-One Demands. Hence, in return for following the US example, Beijing requested that "assurances be given that China would be admitted to full membership in the peace conference" as well as receive financial assistance from the US to train and equip an army able to enter the war effectively.¹⁶⁸⁸ As a result of Reinsch's independent efforts, the Chinese Government sent a note of protest to Berlin on 10 February 1917 yet simultaneously affirmed Beijing's neutrality.

While Minister Reinsch continued his attempts to convince China to positively react to Washington's suggestions, the Lu Cabinet, led by staunch advocate of Chinese intervention State Premier Duan Qirui (1865-1936), presented a list of demands to the Allies in exchange for Beijing's breaking of diplomatic relations with Berlin: first and foremost was the explicit confirmation that neutral states would indeed be allowed to attend the peace conference, China must be accorded an invitation as well as allowed to be present at any conference that would settle East Asian questions.¹⁶⁸⁹ In this case, Reinsch's personal verve exceeded his official instructions and, given a break in the cable connection between Beijing and Washington, hastily announced to

¹⁶⁸⁴ The German Empire made repeated efforts to reach a negotiated settlement of the First World War. All peace overtures were stubbornly and repeatedly refused by the Allied nations. See Fenske, Hans, *Der Anfang vom Ende des alten Europas—Die alliierte Verweigerung von Friedensgesprächen, 1914-1919*, München: Olzog, 2013.

¹⁶⁸⁵ Chi, *China Diplomacy*, pg. 116.

¹⁶⁸⁶ Craft, "Angling for an Invitation to Paris", pg. 15.

¹⁶⁸⁷ Ibid.

¹⁶⁸⁸ Chi, *China Diplomacy*, pg. 117.

¹⁶⁸⁹ Craft, "Angling for an Invitation to Paris", pg. 16.

the Chinese Government that the US had accepted its demands.¹⁶⁹⁰ US Secretary of State, Robert Lansing (1864-1928) informed Reinsch that Washington was not inclined to accept any Chinese requests due to Washington's concern that such questions would raise tensions with Japan and provoke a negative reaction from Tokyo that could undermine China's brittle unity: "the course of events may make such a course advisable, but it is evident that the United States would not be able to give China the assistance proposed...if serious opposition should be offered to such assistance. Attempt to override that opposition might precipitate the very aggression which China fears."¹⁶⁹¹

China proceeded anyway to officially break off diplomatic relations with Germany on 14 March 1917. While Duan intended to follow this move with a full declaration of war, segments of popular opinion in China expressed their categorical opposition. Most significant amongst them was Sun Yat-sen, the leader of the Kuomintang, who argued that "since the outbreak of the war in 1914 China had suffered no injury from the Germans. On the other hand, the Allies, especially the Russians, had caused the deaths of many Chinese laborers through brutal treatment. To judge from the past conduct of the powers...[Sun] would prefer to deal with Germany rather than with any other power", observing that the British sphere of influence in China constituted 28 percent of Chinese territory, the Russian, 42 percent; the French and the Japanese, each over five percent; while Germany's claim in Shandong, which she had lost during the war, amounted to only one percent."¹⁶⁹² Furthermore, Sun cautioned that, should China enter the war, this would give Japan a free hand to take further advantage of China as well as be used by President Li as a cause to diminish the powers of the nascent Chinese Parliament, staunchly opposed to declaring war. This issue sparked, in May and June 1917, another round of domestic unrest between factions supporting the executive and legislature respectively, culminating in another foiled attempt to restore the Manchu Dynasty.

9.2.7.4. Domestic Unrest and the Chinese Declaration of War against the Central Powers

Given the seriousness of the domestic unrest that China's entry into the war had provoked, Secretary of State Lansing dispatched a note to Beijing—now in the US's newfound capacity as a belligerent power having declared war against the Central Powers on 4 April 1917—stating that China's unity was much more important to the Allied cause than its participation in the war and invited the other Entente members to follow Washington's example with similar gestures towards Beijing. US overtures to its new comrades-in-arms, however, were given contrarian responses. Great Britain disagreed with Washington's position and responded that, while a declaration of war might result in internal instability, "the future prosperity and international prestige of China, which means ultimately her unity, cannot be dissociated from her decision to range herself, or not...on the side of the Powers who are fighting for the liberties of the entire world."¹⁶⁹³ Tokyo expressed its displeasure at not being consulted beforehand and underlined that Japan would continue to urge China to declare war. At the same time, Chinese Minister to the US, Koo Vi Kyuin—better known as Wellington Koo—(1888-1985), reported to Beijing that a Japanese Delegation had arrived in Washington to discuss Japan's 'pre-eminent' position in China and stewardship of Chinese economic development, likewise learning that President Wilson had consented in January to allow

¹⁶⁹⁰ La Frague, "The Entrance of China into the World War", pg. 227.

¹⁶⁹¹ Ibid.

¹⁶⁹² Chi, *China Diplomacy*, pg. 122.

¹⁶⁹³ Craft, "Angling for an Invitation to Paris", pg. 20.

Japan to retain control of Germany's former Chinese concession.¹⁶⁹⁴ In Berlin, German Foreign Minister, Arthur Zimmermann (1864-1940), confided to the Chinese Minister to the German Empire, Yan Huiqing (1877-1950), that the Russo-Japanese agreement of 1916 recognized Shandong as Japanese and openly warned that the Allies were not interested in restoring Chinese control to the territory. Minister Yan heeded Zimmermann's counsel and reported to Beijing that a declaration of war would be pointless as Germany had no interest in recovering its lost concession and would hand it back to China; instead Yan recommended maintaining good relations with Berlin while trying to use the US and UK to restrain Japanese ambitions in China.¹⁶⁹⁵

The internal unrest that accompanied the debate over China's entry into the First World War ended with unexpected domestic consequences, namely resulting in the complete ascendancy of Duan Qirui and his military clique to assume control over the republic.¹⁶⁹⁶ The intensification of civil war, combined with growing uncertainty over the fate of Russia, opened another, indirect avenue of competition between the Foreign Powers in China, now beginning to focus narrowly on a contest between the Japanese Empire and the United States. The Terauchi Cabinet had accorded, since 1917, exclusive support to the Duan regime.¹⁶⁹⁷ As a staunch advocate of China's entry on the side of the Entente, Duan did not hesitate in declaring war on Germany and Austria on 14 August 1917. Using the unconstitutional procedure of a presidential mandate, Duan announced China's entry into the Great War in Wilsonian tones, declaring "let the people of this entire nation do their utmost in this hour of trial and hardship to safeguard and develop the national existence of the Republic of China, so that we may establish ourselves amidst the family of nations and share with all mankind the prosperity and blessings drawn from our common association."¹⁶⁹⁸ Hence, securing a seat at the postwar peace conference, as well as the promises of economic assistance that Beijing assumed the Allies would provide China, formed the major rationale for those in control of the central Chinese Government to finally side with the Entente. Realist power considerations played a major role in using China's declaration of war to attempt to offset Japanese influence in China and secure Chinese territorial unity in a post-bellum order, with "efforts to neutralize Shandong...and the sustained quest of an invitation to the peace conference [forming] strategies to remove threats to national security".¹⁶⁹⁹ The declaration of war's impact on the Chinese literati was one that had fundamentally transformed the status of China on the international scene. Legal scholar Tyau Min-Chien (1888-?) wrote in idealistic terms in 1918 that "by accepting Germany's challenge to ride roughshod over all considerations of law and humanity, China is vindicating its prestige in the council of nations. She is no longer the negligible quantity that men used to know before the fateful days of August 1914...China has only by her adhesion to the great principles of international law...been on an equal footing with the nations fighting for civilization."¹⁷⁰⁰ Apart from uttering such lofty ideals, Chinese entry into the war brought the Allies little in terms of military assistance. Despite Duan's grandiose plan to send 40,000 Chinese troops to the Western Front in November 1917, an idea that was vetoed by an indignant Japan, the only Chinese military action during the war was Beijing's quiet but independent takeover of the

¹⁶⁹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁶⁹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶⁹⁶ La Frague, "The Entrance of China into the World War", pg. 232.

¹⁶⁹⁷ Dickenson, National Reinvention, pg. 222.

¹⁶⁹⁸ Tarling, Asia and the First World War, pg. 38.

¹⁶⁹⁹ Craft, "Angling for an Invitation to Paris", pg. 24.

¹⁷⁰⁰ Tarling, Asia and the First World War, pg. 39.

German and Austrian concessions at Tianjin and Hankou that both nations had been granted through the Settlement of 1901.¹⁷⁰¹

Allied government pledges of support were ultimately meaningless, with the domestic situation falling into further chaos. The Chinese Central Government was now in the hands of Duan's military clique openly backed by Japanese financial support that allowed it to remain in power.¹⁷⁰² This was met with a series of strong diplomatic warnings from US Minister Reinsch in Beijing, alerting Secretary of State Lansing to the growing Japanese attempts to indirectly seize de facto control over China, advocating that Washington should accord any and all Chinese financial requests. Such warnings were repeated by Premier Duan himself, noting that "should the American Government now abandon interest in China, the Chinese Government would be driven into the arms of Japan."¹⁷⁰³ This newfound rivalry, sharpened through the contours of the Chinese Civil War, exemplified how the decision to enter the Great War exasperated US-Japanese tensions over China. Likewise, China's entry deepened the already significant domestic rifts in China, with the provinces south of the Yangtse establishing a separate, unrecognized government at Guangzhou, outside of Japanese influence. The Japanese policy of supporting Duan and his military junta inevitably, as the civil conflict drew on, drove his Chinese revolutionary opponents into the open arms of the US.¹⁷⁰⁴ Hence, the question of Chinese entry into the First World War, and intensification of the domestic conflict that ensued, opened another dimension of geopolitical competition between Tokyo and Washington over the crumbling Chinese Republic. This unrest, however, was overshadowed by events in another Entente member whose tragic unfolding led to another collapse of an Imperial Dynasty.

9.2.8. The Collapse of Imperial Russia

As the war continued in Europe, Imperial Russia's General Aleksei Alekseyevich Brusilov (1853-1926) had, by 1916, invented effective tactics for breaking through the defences of the Central Powers along the Eastern Front.¹⁷⁰⁵ Yet economically and socially, the old Imperial order was beginning to buckle under increasingly potent waves of protest, with the St. Petersburg strikes, unfortunately coinciding with the organization of the diplomatically important visit of the Russian Grand Duke to Japan in January 1916. As the Russian colossus began to exhibit signs of cracking, Foreign Minister Ishii expressed his concern at St. Petersburg's continuing commitment to the Allied cause and raised the troubling possibility of the conclusion of a separate Russian peace with the Central Powers—a prospect that posed a severe threat to the security of Japan and thereby could "harm the position of the Entente of which Japan was a member."¹⁷⁰⁶ In early 1917, the Japanese Government increasingly became anxious at precarious domestic developments in what had become its principal Asian partner. As the February Revolution of 1917 exploded on the streets of Russia on 8 March 1917 (23 February according to the Julian calendar in force in the

¹⁷⁰¹ Since 1915, inspired by future Chinese Premier Liang Shiyi's idea to link China's fate with the Allies by providing manual labour to the British and French through 'private companies' to avoid allegations of breaching neutrality, some 140,000 Chinese workers performed manual tasks for the Allies armies on the Western Front. See Xu Guoqi, Strangers on the Western Front: Chinese Workers in the Great War, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2011, pp. 1-9.

¹⁷⁰² La Fargue, "The Entrance of China into the World War", pg. 232.

¹⁷⁰³ Kawamura, Turbulence in the Pacific, pg. 78.

¹⁷⁰⁴ Dickenson, National Reinvention, pg. 222.

¹⁷⁰⁵ Service, Robert, A History of Twentieth-Century Russia, Cambridge: Harvard University Press: 1997, pg. 30.

¹⁷⁰⁶ Nish, Japanese Foreign Policy, pg. 110.

contemporary Russian Empire), His Imperial Majesty Nicholas II was forced to abdicate on 15 March 1917, followed by a moderate liberal government under Prince Georgi Yevgenyevich Lvov (1861-1925) until July 1917 when it was replaced by Alexander Fyodorovich Kerensky (1881-1970). The reaction abroad was overwhelmingly positive: President Wilson, who viewed the Russian Empire as a “classic example of autocracy and backward government” was especially pleased, calling the events in Russia “heartening” and therefore did not hesitate to accord the new regime in Russia official US recognition.¹⁷⁰⁷

The Japanese, too, understood the gravity of the situation. On 18 March 1917, the leader of the majority Seiyūkai party and future prime minister Hara Takashi wrote that “a revolution had erupted in Russia, and the Tsar has abdicated. The situation in Russia is strange. Just as [we saw] in the aftermath of the Russo-Japanese War, a revolution has once again come and constitutional policies are taking hold in Russia. This time, the abdication of the Tsar is truly a great political change.”¹⁷⁰⁸ This echoed the general sentiment in Tokyo to view events in Russia, as in 1905, as deeply connected to the course of the First World War and not per se a distinct political event. This notion was bolstered by the news the Japanese Government received from “Japanese journalists, diplomats, and military staff reporting from Russia that the February uprising was being carried out by patriotic masses who believed that only a total reorganization of the government would bring victory over Germany.”¹⁷⁰⁹ Consequently, given the depth of the Japanese commitment to the Allied cause, Tokyo hoped that the new Provisional Government would help encourage Russian administrative reform, thereby allowing it to be better able to continue the war. The Japanese elite and public alike “welcomed the February uprising and the end of Imperial authority as a sign of Russia’s belated entry into the modern age, rather than the beginning of the end of the established international and domestic order.”¹⁷¹⁰ Such statements echoed the general perception in Tokyo. Japan therefore proceeded to recognize the Russian Provisional Government after it secured commitments that the series of treaties that had formed the basis of rapprochement between Imperial Russia and Japan would be respected.¹⁷¹¹ At the same time, while all Entente Powers were increasingly concerned over the domestic developments in Russia, the prolonged unrest posed a special difficulty for Japan given Tokyo’s status as Russia’s bona fide ally in East Asia and the guarantor of Japan’s claims in China. Following the February Revolution, Russian-controlled cities in Manchuria, such as Harbin, Heilongjiang and Kuling, reported a breakdown in social order with Russian troops beginning to loot Chinese businesses, thereby obliging Beijing to send in its own soldiers to protect its nationals and the Chinese Eastern Railway.¹⁷¹² While still only comprising isolated incidents in Russian occupied-areas of China, they did serve as a poignant reminder to the Japanese of the essential role that, due to the evolution of the bilateral relationship since the Settlement of 1905, Russia had played in achieving Tokyo’s regional objectives in East Asia.

¹⁷⁰⁷ Curry, Roy Watson, Woodrow Wilson and Far Eastern Policy, 1913-1921, New York: Bookman Associates, 1957, pg. 213.

¹⁷⁰⁸ Linkhoeva, Tatiana, Revolution Goes East: Imperial Japan and Soviet Communism, New York: Columbia University Press, 2020, pg. 39.

¹⁷⁰⁹ Ibid., pg. 40.

¹⁷¹⁰ Ibid., pg. 41.

¹⁷¹¹ Grishachev, Sergei & Datsyshen, Vladimir, “Allied Intervention in the Russian Civil War and Japanese Troops in Russia’s Far East” in Streltsov & Nobuo (eds.), A History of Russo-Japanese Relations, pg.137.

¹⁷¹² Craft, “Angling for an Invitation to Paris”, pg. 16.

By 1917, however, the stark reality of the sheer scope of Russian losses on the battlefield had rendered the idea that any revolution would be somehow able to enhance Russia's ability to continue waging a large-scale industrial war as nothing but a *fol espoir*. The Russian Army had lost more than two million soldiers in its engagements with the Central Powers on the Eastern Front since 1914, leading to increased militancy and authority of radical revolutionary parties that became ever more popular amongst disenchanted workers and soldiers alike, culminating in the emergence of two centres of power: the Petrograd Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies, and the Provisional Government.¹⁷¹³ This fragile situation was soon to prove untenable. The coming of the Bolshevik Revolution on 7 November 1917 added a new factor to the already unclear situation in Russia, one that obviously caused serious consternation among the two Allied Powers with growing geopolitical interests in East Asia, namely the Japanese Empire and the United States.

Following the seizure of power by the Bolsheviks, an unprecedented radical approach was taken towards foreign policy, with the new regime openly refusing to continue any of the foreign policies undertaken by both Imperial Russia and its Provisional Government.¹⁷¹⁴ The Japanese, through Ambassador Uchida Kōsai and the Empire's consulates in Vladivostok and Harbin, began to draw a gloomier picture of the events taking place throughout Russia. Japanese military officers, while having been supportive of the February Revolution, were wary of the Bolshevik movement (described in Japanese reports as 'pacifist workers') with the Japanese Military Attaché in St. Petersburg, Ishizaka Zenjirō (1871-1949), openly cautioning about the activities of the self-proclaimed leader of the new Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic (RSFSR), Vladimir Ilyich Lenin (1870-1924), due to his "alleged collaboration with Germany."¹⁷¹⁵ While alarmed, the Japanese Government initially ascribed the success of the Bolshevik movement to mere happenstance. With the morale of the Russian armies now severely depleted, concern began to spread within the Japanese military and civil government alike. Given Japan's general conception of the Russian people as having a "very low level of literacy and [being] ignorant and volatile", policy makers grew especially apprehensive that its former ally would collapse into large-scale violence.¹⁷¹⁶ Abstract fears would soon turn into concrete reality.

9.2.9. The Lansing-Ishii Agreement

9.2.9.1. The Escalation of Tensions between Japan and the United States

With Russia and China sliding deeper into domestic unrest, the United States officially entered the Great War on the side of the Entente in April 1917. Washington and Tokyo were now co-belligerents. The differences in the foreign policy interests of Japan and the US were, however, characterized by serious and growing geopolitical divides.¹⁷¹⁷ The sources of these political rifts were now multiple. China had formed the most glaring foreign policy concern. Japan's China policy, most notably the presentation of its Twenty-One Demands, had seriously alienated its allies and disturbed the US, with President Wilson dubbing them a "suspicious business", placing

¹⁷¹³ Linkhoeva, *Revolution Goes East*, pg. 40.

¹⁷¹⁴ Grishachev & Datsyshen, "Allied Intervention in the Russian Civil War and Japanese Troops in Russia's Far East", pg. 137.

¹⁷¹⁵ Linkhoeva, *Revolution Goes East*, pg. 41.

¹⁷¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷¹⁷ Nish, *Japanese Foreign Policy*, pg. 111.

Japanese ambitions on a collision course with the US role as self-proclaimed protector of the Open Door Policy.¹⁷¹⁸ Apprehension was rife on both sides. The Japanese diplomatic presence in China had taken careful note of US Minister Reinsch's activities in Beijing, which Tokyo had interpreted as having taken a strong anti-Japanese tone. With civil war in China intensifying over the summer of 1917, the Japanese Government openly claimed that the "multiple activities of the American Minister in China's behalf made renunciation of an aggressive policy difficult for Premier Terauchi."¹⁷¹⁹ Washington was becoming increasingly concerned that Tokyo would utilize any opportunity to use US activity in China as a reason to stake a recognized claim to Japan's paramount position in China. Such hopes were not dashed when, on 4 June 1917, Japanese Ambassador to the US, Satō Aimaro (1857-1934), noted in response to the US call for Chinese unity, that "the Japanese people were sensitive concerning China...suggesting it would make a good impression in Japan 'if the United States Government see its way by some way appropriate means to...clearly reasserting its friendly attitude toward Japan in respect of Chinese problems.'"¹⁷²⁰ US Secretary of State Lansing took issue with Ambassador Satō's request for US recognition of a Japanese monopoly over China and underlined that in no way would Washington consider such a policy. Furthermore, Lansing stressed that, while the United States did not harbour political ambitions in China, "its historic interest in the welfare of the Chinese people and the territorial and administrative integrity of the Republic, its treaty relations and extensive commerce with China render it impossible for the United States to be indifferent to matters affecting these interests, which the civil dissension in China...threatened to do."¹⁷²¹ President Wilson wholeheartedly expressed his personal solidarity with this message, underlining his growing concern over Japan's future activities in East Asia.

The collapse of Tsarist Russia added a new element to US-Japanese tensions. The end of the Romanov Dynasty posed significant problems for Japanese foreign policy. Over the span of 1917, Japan's principal ally on the Asian mainland simply evaporated and with it so did recognition of Tokyo's gains through the Settlement of 1905 and the four bilateral treaties that formed the basis of mutual rapprochement. As an initial reaction to the sudden vacuum in the regional order, Japanese foreign policy focused on the territories formerly under Russian control, including Manchuria and Inner Mongolia, as well as asserting more control over Chinese internal politics.¹⁷²² As instability grew in Russia, Japanese foreign policy interests also began to cast a glance towards the provinces of the Russian Far East and eastern Siberia. Yet with the Bolshevik Revolution, however, President Wilson refused to contemplate any Japanese expansion into the territories of the former Russian Empire, adding an additional layer of unexpected tension and distrust between Washington and Tokyo.¹⁷²³

Such was the substantial list of foreign policy questions where Japan and the United States had taken mutually exclusive positions. Further concern was raised by both the United States and members of the Entente regarding the depth of Japanese commitment to the Allied cause. Observing Japanese actions in East Asia gave policy makers in Berlin the impression that Tokyo's

¹⁷¹⁸ Kawamura, *Turbulence in the Pacific*, pg. 35.

¹⁷¹⁹ Curry, *Woodrow Wilson and Far Eastern Policy*, pg. 170.

¹⁷²⁰ Ibid.

¹⁷²¹ Ibid., pg. 171.

¹⁷²² Linkoeva, "The Russian Revolution and the Emergence of Japanese Anticommunism", *Revolutionary Russia*, 31:2, 2018, pg. 264.

¹⁷²³ Nish, *Japanese Foreign Policy*, pg. 112.

link with its allies was already weak and that its aggressive policies were rendering them ever weaker. As early as 1915, on wartime assignment in China after completing his term to Mexico from 1911-1914, Ambassador Paul von Hintze (1864-1941), approached Ambassador Hioki in Beijing and the Chinese correspondent of the leading Tokyo newspaper *Asahi Shimbun* to express the personal views of Kaiser Wilhelm II. The crisis that had ensued over the Twenty-One demands furnished the German diplomat with opportune timing, with the Japanese newspapers making frequent references to the “waste-paper agreement” when referring to the Anglo-Japanese Alliance.¹⁷²⁴ To the *Asahi Shimbun*, von Hintze bluntly stated that together, Germany and Japan and Russia would form an “invincible combination that would ‘dominate the two hemispheres and ensure world peace.’”¹⁷²⁵ To Hioki, von Hintze suggested that Japan should form an alliance with Germany as Berlin would “let Japan keep Qingdao and the Pacific islands after the peace and would allow her a much freer hand in China than would ever be allowed by her Allies”, even hinting at German financial support to accomplish this end.¹⁷²⁶ The Japanese took note but declined to furnish an official response to such overtures. By 1916, many Japanese scientist, professors, soldiers and journalists, already pro-German by education or training, began to openly question the Allies’ ability to emerge victorious, thereby advocating the necessity for the Japanese Empire to find an accommodation with the German.¹⁷²⁷ In January 1916, therefore, von Hintze once again met with the Japanese Foreign Ministry, this time with Tsuneo Matsudaira (1877-1949), Japan’s Consul-General at Tientsin, repeating the same message he had conveyed to Hioki in Beijing the year prior.

Japan kept its allies somewhat informed of the offers received from Berlin. After von Hintze’s meeting in Tientsin, Prime Minister Okuma, during an interview with the newspaper *Kokumin*, admitted that Germany was “secretly endeavouring to conclude a separate peace with Russia and attempting a peace movement with Japan also through influential individuals and various other agencies.”¹⁷²⁸ This was followed up by an official report by Ambassador Inoue to Foreign Secretary Gray on the secret German-Japanese meetings in China. Grey noted officially that Japan’s development in East Asia was her “natural destiny and the powers had no alternative but to recognize this fact”, however, this statement—as well as the idea of rewarding an ally conducting secret discussions with an adversary—fell foul with the British cabinet and was quietly abandoned; however, Grey adopted a “pessimistic view of Japan’s loyalty to the Entente”.¹⁷²⁹ In September 1914, the Entente members of Great Britain, France, and Russia signed the London Declaration, pledging that each nation would not conclude a separate peace with the Central Powers. In early 1915, the Entente made a formal request that Japan sign the London Declaration, a proposal that was met by Japan’s stark refusal, secure as it was with its bilateral agreements with Great Britain and Russia. Given the tension over the Twenty-One Demands, Secretary Grey elected not to press the issue. Hence, legally, the possibility of Japan concluding a separate peace with Germany was within the realm of political possibilities.

¹⁷²⁴ Nish, *Alliance in Decline*, pg.179.

¹⁷²⁵ Tuchman, Barbara, *The Zimmermann Telegram*, New York: Random House, 2014, pg. 56.

¹⁷²⁶ *Ibid.*, pg. 58.

¹⁷²⁷ Nish, *Alliance in Decline*, pg. 178.

¹⁷²⁸ *Ibid.*, pg. 179.

¹⁷²⁹ *Ibid.*, pg. 180.

Consequently, negotiations continued between Berlin and Tokyo, with the Japanese Minister to the Kingdom of Sweden, Uchida Sadazuchi (1865-1942), meeting thrice secretly in Stockholm with the resident German Minister, Hellmuth Freiherr Lucius von Stöden (1869-1934), in April 1916. At the second meeting, von Lucius outlined Berlin's vision of peace with Japan: Germany would concede to Japan all her colonies now under Japanese occupation, if Tokyo would persuade Russia to conclude a separate peace with the Central Powers and compensate Germany for private property and railways in its former Pacific territories.¹⁷³⁰ Informed of the Stockholm negotiations, Secretary Grey became so alarmed he insisted on consultations with Paris and St. Petersburg. After receiving word that London interpreted the German offer as one aimed at the entire Entente, Tokyo instructed Uchida to inform von Lucius that Japan was "not in a position to enter into discussions for a separate peace with the German Government. If Germany is sincerely disposed to make peace such proposals should be addressed to the four Entente governments jointly."¹⁷³¹ Japan, however, remained available to transmit any future peace proposals to its allies. The Stockholm talks collapsed thereafter. One final attempt by Berlin was made in early 1917 to agree to a separate peace between Japan and Germany: von Hintze, following the departure of Minister Hioki, met again with the Japanese Consul-General, offering German recognition of Japanese supremacy in East Asia as well as a free hand in China. With the Chinese rupturing of diplomatic relations with Germany in March 1917, von Hintze left Beijing and the German-Japanese talks ended definitively and would not be revived.

Germany, however, still held out enough confidence in the possibility of enticing Japan into joint action against the United States that Foreign Minister Zimmermann included Tokyo in the German Government's plan to take the war to the United States should Washington opt to enter on the Allied side. At the Supreme Headquarters of the Imperial German Armed Forces in Pleß Castle on the frontiers of Upper Silesia, the decision was taken on 9 January 1917 to launch unrestricted submarine warfare in the Atlantic, should German attempts to maintain US neutrality fail. Zimmermann was charged with drawing up plans should it come to hostilities between the US and the German Empire. As such, the German Foreign Minister became convinced that Mexico, if afforded the chance to regain its territories of Arizona and New Mexico, lost to the US in 1848 through the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, as well as Texas, would do everything possible to acquire assistance and that Japan, having already occupied all what could be absorbed in East Asia under contemporary circumstances, would be seeking further gains.¹⁷³² Such arguments were deemed convincing enough by the German High Command and Zimmermann was given the green light to proceed. The result was a strategic telegram sent by Zimmermann on 16 January 1917 to the German Ambassador to Mexico, Heinrich von Eckardt (1861-1944) announcing that the decision to unleash unrestricted submarine warfare had been taken as well as a second matter: "[Germany] shall endeavour in spite of this to keep the United States neutral. In the event of this not succeeding, we make Mexico a proposal of alliance on the following basis: make war together, make peace together, generous financial support, and an understanding on [Germany's] part that Mexico is to reconquer the lost territory in Texas, New Mexico, and Arizona. You will inform the President [of Mexico] of the above most secretly as soon as the outbreak of war with the United

¹⁷³⁰ Ibid., pg. 181.

¹⁷³¹ Ibid.

¹⁷³² Tuchman, *The Zimmermann Telegram*, pg. 130.

States is certain and add the suggestion that he should, on his own initiative, invite Japan to immediate adherence and at the same time mediate between Japan and [Germany].”¹⁷³³

The telegram was intercepted and deciphered by the British Admiralty Intelligence and presented to US authorities in London and, subsequently, passed on to President Wilson on 26 February 1917. Wilson was in favour of publishing its contents immediately but was dissuaded. On 28 February 1917, Secretary of State Lansing informed Ambassador Satō that the US was in possession of secret information that Germany had proposed an alliance with Mexico and requested Mexican mediation between Japan and Germany. Lansing also forewarned Satō that the US government intended to make the telegram public and that this could result in some anti-Japanese feeling. Ambassador Satō “expressed great amusement” at the idea of a German-Mexican-Japanese alliance and stated “there was no possibility of Japan being party to any alliance with Mexico against the United States.”¹⁷³⁴ The Japanese Government used all available diplomatic channels to eschew any suspicion that it had received, let alone entertained, Zimmermann’s ideas and remained firm that Tokyo had first caught wind of the plan through US newspapers and in no way had been approached by the Mexican Government.¹⁷³⁵ At the same time, Japanese foreign policy towards China had, in the minds of policy makers in London and Washington, rendered Japanese defection into a real, if albeit, unlikely possibility. Japan’s insistence on entering the war independently; its conduct of military operation against Germany in the Pacific in a similar vein; the Twenty-One Demands; Tokyo’s political designs on China as well as Japan’s decision to hold discussions on a separate peace with Germany simply did not sit well with Allied capitals. As one reaction from a leading Whitehall official, deemed as fairly representative of the British attitude towards the Japanese, noted: “Much of this, according to [Great Britain’s] notion, is not merely ‘not playing the game’ but it indicated a certain tendency to a veiled rapprochement between [Germany and Japan] which is slightly disquieting.”¹⁷³⁶

Similar sentiments were to be found in Washington. Amongst US Government officials, suspicion was rife that Japan was not to be trusted as an ally. Following the Zimmermann Telegram, the fear of “a German-Japanese military coalition began to haunt the American official mind.”¹⁷³⁷ The gravity was such that both sides had contemplated resorting to force. Given the degree of tension that had arisen, President Wilson felt little desire to seek an understanding with Japan, noting that “‘while a successful attack on the Pacific Coast was absurd owing to the long distance from the Japanese base’...on the other hand the President thought an attack on the ‘Philippines or some outlying possession was another matter, and presented a possibility that could not be overlooked.’”¹⁷³⁸ The US entry into the First World War had obliged the US Navy to prioritize US interests in the Atlantic theatre, as the main focus of the ongoing war at sea, thereby indirectly weakening its forces in the Pacific, leaving the Japanese Navy a possible free hand. US apprehension of real Japanese intentions was the main reason behind the consideration of a general Anglo-American naval agreement.¹⁷³⁹ While London underlined to Washington that “popular opinion in [Great Britain] would undoubtedly force us to go to the assistance of the United States

¹⁷³³ Ibid., pg. 133.

¹⁷³⁴ Curry, *Woodrow Wilson and Far Eastern Policy*, pg. 163.

¹⁷³⁵ Kajima, *The Diplomacy of Japan*, Volume III, pg. 292.

¹⁷³⁶ Nish, *Alliance in Decline*, pp. 182-183.

¹⁷³⁷ Kawamura, *Turbulence in the Pacific*, pg. 79.

¹⁷³⁸ Curry, *Woodrow Wilson and Far Eastern Policy*, pg. 173.

¹⁷³⁹ Ibid., pg. 172.

if she were attacked by Japan”, the difficulty of Great Britain’s commitments under the Anglo-Japanese Alliance would oblige London to inform Tokyo regarding the start of negotiations.¹⁷⁴⁰ Faced with such legal complications, Great Britain recommended expanding the proposed naval understanding to include Japan, however, President Wilson reacted coolly to this idea. Instead of such a tripartite agreement, the United States would have to seek another *modus vivendi* to deal with Japan in the Pacific.

For their part, the Japanese Government was concerned with US entry into the Great War in April 1917. The status of the US as a co-belligerent of Japan was particularly awkward as it was obvious to Tokyo that Washington had been hostile to Japanese policy towards China since the start of the war, with the US representing the sole power who, should it revert to the use of force, could foil Japanese plans in China.¹⁷⁴¹ US Secretary of State Lansing was well aware of Tokyo’s feelings on this matter, noting that, following the US entry into the First World War, “Japanese statements were apprehensive lest the military and naval forces being organized in the United States were to be used to check Japan’s designs in regard to China.”¹⁷⁴² At the same time, however, the Japanese were simultaneously concerned about the consequences of a military clash with the US. Japanese industry was still dependent on US materials for its war production and rapid economic growth, with any rupture in US supplies of pig iron and steel—due to war with Japan or the diversion of US exports for domestic consumption—ensuring that “the weakness of Japan’s wartime industrialization would be exposed.”¹⁷⁴³ Additionally, the Japanese Foreign Ministry was concerned that the US entry into the war would accord Washington a strong voice at the peace conference and, given Wilson’s principled opposition to Japan’s China policy, could be fraught with implications for Japanese claims to Germany’s former Pacific territories. To avoid these certain eventualities should concern for a US-Japanese war materialize, it became evident to the Terauchi Cabinet that it was imperative for Tokyo to find a way to improve its relations with Washington.

9.2.9.2. The Negotiations on the Lansing-Ishii Agreement

It was Washington that decided to make the first gesture towards Tokyo. On 12 May 1917, Ambassador Satō was asked to call upon Secretary of State Lansing to enquire about the possibility of the Japanese Government dispatching a Special Envoy to the US to discuss issues arising from Washington’s entry into the Great War. According to Satō, Lansing stated that the dispatch of a special envoy “would contribute greatly to relations between the United States and Japan...As the matters to be agreed upon, I have in mind, first of all, the questions of supplies to the Allies, so as to effect economy, and joint operations of naval patrols in the Pacific Ocean, which may later lead to the withdrawal of United States naval forces from the Pacific to the Atlantic. Questions concerning East Asia might also be taken up...however, it is inadvisable for the United States to propose such consultations, and I should be gratified, if Ambassador Satō, assuming he is in agreement, would at his own initiative propose this to the Japanese Government.”¹⁷⁴⁴

¹⁷⁴⁰ Ibid.

¹⁷⁴¹ Nish, *Japanese Foreign Policy*, pp. 113-114.

¹⁷⁴² Curry, *Woodrow Wilson and Far Eastern Policy*, pg. 176.

¹⁷⁴³ Nish, *Japanese Foreign Policy*, pg. 114.

¹⁷⁴⁴ Kajima, *The Diplomacy of Japan*, Volume III, pg. 298.

Lansing's request was presented to the Terauchi Cabinet on 22 May 1917. The Japanese had been inclined to look positively upon such a request. Foreign Minister Motono had spoken out in favour of a rapprochement with the US, noting that the two countries would be, at the end of the war, the two leading members of the Allies.¹⁷⁴⁵ Tokyo immediately assented to consultations on operational matters regarding the conduct of the war. Regarding Lansing's second suggestion for discussions on East Asia, the Cabinet concluded that "circumstances on the side of the United States suggest that the real motive behind the Secretary of State's unexpected suggestion may be rather that he is seeking an opportunity to resolve outstanding problems between Japan and the United States and establish a better relationship for the future."¹⁷⁴⁶ The exposure of the Zimmermann Telegram, as well as the desire to make amends for years of alleged anti-Japanese agitation—and its subsequent effect on the Japanese people—also played a role in the US suggestion to ameliorate the bilateral relationship. The Cabinet therefore took the decision to dispatch a Special Mission to the United States, nominating Ishii Kikujirō as its head, to, as noted in the instructions to Ambassador Satō, facilitate "a mutually frank and full exchange of views...on matters of importance to both countries."¹⁷⁴⁷

In June 1917, two events occurred that would influence the US-Japanese attempt to come to terms with their respective geopolitical interests in East Asia. First, the situation in China dramatically worsened with President Li and the northern military governors becoming involved in a showdown, with a definitive split between north and south China seeming inevitable. Accordingly, US Minister Reinsch warned Washington that "should the military succeed in overthrowing the President, the South will undoubtedly fight and a division of China will result."¹⁷⁴⁸ As noted, the question of China's entry into the Great War had fueled the increase of domestic tensions, with the US dispatching a note, much to Tokyo's displeasure, urging Chinese political factions to prioritize the country's unity over any debate on China joining the war. The Terauchi Cabinet instructed the Vice Foreign Minister, Shidehara Kijūrō (1872-1951), to meet the American Chargé in Tokyo to express Japan's disappointment at Washington's decision to act unilaterally at a time of internal crisis in China. This was followed up by Ambassador Satō calling upon Secretary Lansing to underline that Japan would not stand idly by and allow US interference in Chinese affairs. Lansing, obviously displeased at Satō's message, frankly informed the Japanese Ambassador that "the United States has as much rights as Japan had to express its opinion to the Chinese Government" and that the Japanese Government "had no monopoly on giving friendly advice to Beijing."¹⁷⁴⁹ The Japanese press, having published the US note to China, expressed outrage at this latest move by Washington, with the semi-official *Japan Times* demanding that "The Foreign Office Officials must obtain from the United States an assurance that it will not repeat its action in interfering with domestic affairs in China, completely ignoring the existence and position of Japan...Japan should seek America's recognition of Japan's special position in China to prevent future misunderstandings."¹⁷⁵⁰ Hence, the US bilateral note to Beijing agitated Japanese policy makers to such an extent that the question of securing the recognition of Tokyo's special interest in China by the United States became of paramount importance.

¹⁷⁴⁵ Nish, *Japanese Foreign Policy*, pg. 114.

¹⁷⁴⁶ Kajima, *The Diplomacy of Japan*, Volume III, pg. 299.

¹⁷⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, pg. 301.

¹⁷⁴⁸ Kawamura, *Turbulence in the Pacific*, pg. 80.

¹⁷⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, pg. 81.

¹⁷⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

Another development that would affect the mission of the Japanese Special Envoy was Prime Minister Terauchi's decision, likewise in June 1917, to create the Temporary Council of Foreign Affairs (*Rinji Gaikō Chōsakai*). Aimed at eliminating political party tensions and streamlining foreign policy decision making, the Temporary Council was viewed as necessary by Terauchi and Yamagata alike as the current cabinet was non-party in nature and, since the April 1917 general election, the Seiyūkai Party was in ascendancy in the Diet.¹⁷⁵¹ Composed of nine members (four from the Cabinet; three from the Privy Council; and two from the political parties), the Temporary Council is significant as it “greatly affected the position of the Foreign Ministry”: before the Council's creation, the Foreign Ministry held the reins over the origin of Japanese foreign policy making, adopted “uncritically by the Cabinet and rarely repudiated by the *genrō*”; following its creation, however, the Foreign Ministry “had to fight its way first through the Cabinet and then the new council...often the result was that its policy was torn to shreds.”¹⁷⁵² Hence, the Foreign Ministry had been relegated to the role of mere implementors, with the substantial differences of opinion that existed within the Japanese political system on major foreign policy issues being brought to the fore and discussed within the Temporary Council. For the four years of its existence (1917-1921), the Temporary Council greatly altered the conduct of Japanese Foreign policy, spanning the remaining period of this ‘critical juncture’. As a result, “policymaking became more difficult; but the policy, once made, was more representative”.¹⁷⁵³

The advent of these two events in June 1917 had a direct influence on the instructions issued to Ishii regarding the conduct of his special mission. On 13 June 1917, Foreign Minister Motono issued his first set of instructions whose main focus was on clarifying Japan's special relationship with China and working out a *modus vivendi* between Tokyo and Washington, taking Ishii to work towards the “definition of the Empire's special position in China and harmonization on the part of the two states' future action.”¹⁷⁵⁴ Yet before Special Envoy Ishii departed for the US, Tokyo opted to attempt to pave the way for the recognition of its most important foreign policy objective before negotiations began in earnest. Ambassador Satō conveyed to Secretary Lansing an ‘oral communication’ that commenced with the statement “that Japan has special and close relations, political as well as economic, with China, is well and has been understood by the American Government.”¹⁷⁵⁵ This statement was based on Japan's interpretation of former Secretary of State Bryan's supposed recognition of Tokyo's special interests in Shandong, southern Manchuria and Inner Mongolia. Satō proceeded to suggest that the US Government should simply re-confirm this statement and thereby once adopt a friendly attitude to Japan's China policy. This was followed up by a written memorandum, which seemed to have confused the Secretary of State: Lansing surprisingly “expressed his understanding of Japan's desire and promised to consider an appropriate handling of the matter”, causing Tokyo to believe that Washington was ready to recognize Japan's paramount interests in China.¹⁷⁵⁶

¹⁷⁵¹ Nish, *Japanese Foreign Policy*, pg. 112.

¹⁷⁵² Ibid.

¹⁷⁵³ Ibid., pg. 113.

¹⁷⁵⁴ Kajima, *The Diplomacy of Japan*, Volume III, pg. 302.

¹⁷⁵⁵ Kawamura, *Turbulence in the Pacific*, pg. 82.

¹⁷⁵⁶ Ibid., pg. 83.

Upon receiving this information, the Japanese Foreign Ministry, on 15 June 1917, quickly dispatched Vice Foreign Minister Shidehara to the US Embassy in Tokyo, boldly informing the US Chargé George Wheeler (1869-1956) that Lansing had agreed to its contents. Wheeler telegraphed Lansing from Tokyo, calling to his attention the use of the words ‘paramount interest’ which seemed to be a deviation of the words used by Ambassador Satō in Washington. Lansing was unimpressed by what seemed to be a Japanese maneuver to trick the US into recognizing Japan’s economic and political preponderance in China. Lansing, therefore realized that the US must explicitly renounce any impression that it would be in agreement with Japan’s claim to ‘paramount interests’ in China. Consequently, Lansing sent an official note to Tokyo bluntly stating that “I had no intention in our conversation [with Ambassador Satō] to convey to the impression that this Government recognized that Japan possessed in China a paramount interest”, furthermore declaring that Washington “could not be indifferent to matters affecting the US’s ‘historic interest in the welfare of the Chinese people’ and the territorial and administrative integrity of China.”¹⁷⁵⁷

Realizing that its attempt to bamboozle the US into recognizing Japan’s foremost foreign policy goal prior to Ishii’s arrival to the US, the Foreign Ministry proceeded to issue its Special Envoy fresh instructions. On 24 July 1917, Foreign Minister Motono tasked Ishii to, besides discussing operational questions related to the US entry into the war, focus on Washington’s recognition of Japan’s special position in China, as well as the reconciliation of Japanese and US policies towards the country. As noted in Motono’s instructions, “in Japan’s relations with China, economically speaking, the amount of our capital investment and the volume of trade are incomparably greater than those of the United States, while in the political field Japan’s interests far outweigh those of the United States and the European Powers, being of a special and vital nature closely linked to the security and future welfare of our country. Consequently, should any Power attempt to establish political influence in China in disregard of, or in a manner harmful to, Japan’s position, Japan would as a matter of course be compelled to resort to measures of self-Defence. Because of this...the Imperial Government hope that the United States Government may recognize this situation.”¹⁷⁵⁸ Ishii was instructed to place special focus on the areas where Japan, under its agreements with the now defunct Russian Empire, had already previously secured a degree of international recognition of its paramount position, namely southern Manchuria and Inner Mongolia, areas where Japan “cannot be indifferent to any agreement or contract which nationals of a third country might conclude with Chinese authorities without the concurrence of Japan”.¹⁷⁵⁹ As such, Ishii was ordered to secure from Washington the same degree of recognition for a Japanese monopoly over China that it had managed to guarantee in its now void treaties with St. Petersburg, attempting to obtain through direct negotiation what Satō had failed to do through trickery.

Ambassador Ishii arrived in Washington on 22 August 1917 and negotiations commenced on 8 September 1917. Meeting with President Wilson upon the presentation of his credentials, Ishii was informed of the 28th President’s desire to abolish all spheres of influences in China.¹⁷⁶⁰ Wilson underlined that the US wished nothing more than the preservation of the Open Door Policy

¹⁷⁵⁷ Ibid., pg. 84.

¹⁷⁵⁸ Kajima, *The Diplomacy of Japan*, Volume III, pg. 304.

¹⁷⁵⁹ Ibid.

¹⁷⁶⁰ Nish, *Japanese Foreign Policy*, pg. 115.

and equal opportunity for all nations in China, requesting that Ishii discuss these matters further with Secretary of State Lansing, thereby formally launching the Lansing-Ishii negotiations.¹⁷⁶¹ In a noteworthy turn of events, Special Envoy Ishii was especially taken by Wilson's arguments and, following his discussion with the President, submitted his opinion to the Japanese Government that spheres of influences were indeed "an anachronism" and that "it would be wise to advocate their abolition ahead of other Powers in order to dissolve their suspicions."¹⁷⁶² Stating that he believed "that Japan might be able to gain advantages from the renunciation of spheres of influences, for Japan's trade in China is bound to outdistance the trade of other power and occupy a predominant position as long as the Open Door and equal opportunity are effectively maintained."¹⁷⁶³ Ishii therefore officially requested the Terauchi Cabinet for fresh instructions and suggested that a joint US-Japanese declaration be focused on three points, namely the adherence to the Open Door; renunciation of all Powers' spheres of influence in China; and the recognition of Japan's special position in China due to geographic proximity. The Temporary Council met on 15 September 1917 to consider Ishii's request. The Council's party politicians rejected Ishii's proposals outright and accused the Special Envoy of failing to comprehend Japan's overall policy towards China, while Prime Minister Terauchi recommended enquiring more into the US manner of thinking.¹⁷⁶⁴ Given the new process of Japanese foreign policy making, time was necessary to agree on how Tokyo should respond to Ishii's request.

In the meantime, waiting for instructions from Tokyo, Ishii pressed forward with his three points, viewing this as a reasonable base for a tenable agreement with Washington, launching negotiations with Secretary Lansing. Serious issues soon appeared regarding the issue of including Japan's 'special interests' in China in any US-Japanese agreement. While Lansing argued for the reaffirmation of the Open Door policy, Ishii responded that "the relationship of Japan to China was more important than that of the United States to Mexico" and that to make a declaration affirming China's territorial integrity would have no value, at least to Tokyo, without reference to Japan's special position.¹⁷⁶⁵ Ishii underlined that Japan, alone amongst the Great Powers, would be directly affected by both contemporary and any future disturbances in China and therefore had an innate right, due to geographic proximity, to assume some sort of political stewardship over its distressed neighbour, if only to augment Japan's own security. Lansing proposed that the Allies jointly dispatch advisors to assist China on its path towards political reform, a suggestion which Ishii underlined as especially unrealistic "while China's survival was at stake."¹⁷⁶⁶ On 26 September 1917, Lansing informed Ishii that he would prepare a draft containing a paragraph referencing Washington's recognition of Japan's 'special interest' in China and present it to President Wilson for his personal approval. Given the context of the ongoing war, Lansing insisted on adopting the agreement in haste in order to make "Germany realize that there is no chance in alienating Japan from the United States,"¹⁷⁶⁷

The draft that Lansing and Ishii subsequently submitted to their respective capitals contained the following main elements: "the United States Government recognizes that Japan has

¹⁷⁶¹ Curry, *Woodrow Wilson and Far Eastern Policy*, pg. 177.

¹⁷⁶² Kajima, *The Diplomacy of Japan*, Volume III, pg. 307.

¹⁷⁶³ Kawamura, *Turbulence in the Pacific*, pg. 88.

¹⁷⁶⁴ Nish, *Japanese Foreign Policy*, pg. 116.

¹⁷⁶⁵ Kajima, *The Diplomacy of Japan*, Volume III, pg. 310.

¹⁷⁶⁶ Kawamura, *Turbulence in the Pacific*, pg. 94.

¹⁷⁶⁷ Ibid.

a special relation to China”, with Lansing ultimately refusing to accept Ishii’s suggestion of “paramount interests in China.”¹⁷⁶⁸ The draft also committed both nations to adhere to the Open Door policy as well as a further declaration “that they will not take advantage of the present conditions [the Great War] to seek special rights and privileges in China which would abridge the rights of the citizens or subjects of other friendly states.”¹⁷⁶⁹ Yet both capitals were dissatisfied with the draft as proposed by Lansing and Ishii. In Tokyo, the Temporary Council insisted that Ishii secure US recognition of Japan’s preponderance in China in the text. Ishii reported to the Council that President Wilson was not pleased with the agreement reached as Japan still refused to renounce spheres of influences. Nevertheless, Motono urged Ishii to continue negotiations as he, as Foreign Minister, no longer had the power to override the Council. As such, the Lansing-Ishii negotiations became “bogged down in trivial details”, with eleven meetings organized between 8 October to 2 November 1917, mostly over changes of phraseology proposed by Ishii, with Lansing, until the end, rejecting all Japanese pressure to insert the words “and influence” in the clause “Japan has special interests in China.”¹⁷⁷⁰

On 2 November 1917, with the final exchange of notes, the Japan-United States joint declaration, known to posterity as the Lansing-Ishii Agreement, was made. This note focused exclusively on declaring the policy of the two governments towards China. The text of the document noted that “The governments of the United States and Japan recognize that territorial propinquity creates special relations between countries, and, consequently, the Government of the United States recognizes that Japan has special interests in China, particularly in the part to which her possessions are contiguous.”¹⁷⁷¹ Furthermore, the Agreement stated that both the United States and Japan did not have “any purpose to infringe in any way the independence or territorial integrity of China”, publicly committing both nations to “always adhere to the principle of the so-called ‘open door’ or equal opportunity for commerce and industry in China.”¹⁷⁷²

9.2.9.3. The Aftermath of the Lansing-Ishii Agreement and its Significance

The Lansing-Ishii Agreement was published simultaneously on 6 November 1917 in the US and 7 November 1917 in Japan. The significance of the Agreement was not on the points that were agreed, but the subsequent lack of consensus regarding their interpretation between the Japanese and US Governments. Immediately following the Agreement’s publication, it became evident that the United States and Japan had a diametrically opposed understanding of the text agreed between the Secretary of State and the Special Envoy. The central point of the Agreement, according to Lansing, was its “declaration preserving the independence and territorial integrity of China”, one that successfully committed Japan to the Root-Takahira Agreement of 1908 in a “far more reaching and vital [way] to the preservation of China’s sovereignty than the previous agreement had done.”¹⁷⁷³ President Wilson declined to make a public statement upon the Agreement’s signature, with his secretary, Joseph Tumulty (1879-1954), declaring in the idealistic parlance of the Wilson Presidency that “when the text of the pact is read, the President is confident

¹⁷⁶⁸ Ibid., pg. 96.

¹⁷⁶⁹ Kajima, *The Diplomacy of Japan*, Volume III, pp. 312-313.

¹⁷⁷⁰ Kawamura, *Turbulence in the Pacific*, pp. 97-99.

¹⁷⁷¹ Kajima, *The Diplomacy of Japan*, Volume III, pg. 326.

¹⁷⁷² Ibid., pg. 327.

¹⁷⁷³ Curry, *Woodrow Wilson and Far Eastern Policy*, pg. 181.

that the country will be very much enlightened.”¹⁷⁷⁴ In Japan, the Government elected not to publicly comment on the Agreement. The *Tokyo Asahi* argued that the Agreement heralded the open recognition of Japan’s special interests in China, signifying that, from the Japanese point of view, that “the entire relationship between China and Japan had changed and that Japan’s relationship with China had become more ‘special and close than any other’ beyond the reason of territorial propinquity.”¹⁷⁷⁵ The remaining points of the Agreement, namely the reaffirmation of the Open Door Policy and Chinese territorial integrity, were of little interest because they had already been subject of past treaties. To the Japanese, the Lansing-Ishii Agreement meant the recognition of Japan’s ‘special interests’ in China, while respecting the Republic’s independence, nothing more. While an agreement between Washington and Tokyo was indeed concluded, the major significance of the Lansing-Ishii Agreement was how a document that was intended to smooth over the substantial differences in Japanese and US foreign policies towards China, actually contributed to increasing further misunderstandings.

As per well-established contemporary practice, neither Washington nor Tokyo elected to inform the Chinese Government about the negotiations that focused primarily on China. When Chinese Government officials received a copy of the agreed text on 4 November 1917 from the Japanese Embassy, Premier Duan expressed his concern that the Lansing-Ishii Agreement had created a precedent whereby other countries, namely Great Britain, France, and Russia, could now follow Japan’s example and claim special rights in areas of China bordering their territories.¹⁷⁷⁶ The Agreement was transmitted by the Japanese where “the words “special relations” were translated as “paramount relations”, thereby upsetting the Chinese officialdom and people alike.¹⁷⁷⁷ US Minister Reinsch was equally unimpressed with the Agreement, especially as he had not been informed by the State Department of the negotiations. Having been shown the Agreement by the Japanese Minister in Beijing—naturally being likewise informed that the US had recognized the special interests of Japan in China—Reinsch asked “‘While I understand that the reason which prompted this momentous decision are confidential’, should not an explanation to China be made of the action ‘which so profoundly effects their interests and which at first sight appears a reversal of American policy in China?’”¹⁷⁷⁸ Wilson was taken aback by Reinsch’s assessment and instructed Lansing to send out the necessary assurances to Beijing that the Agreement, in fact, represented a net gain for China, with the Open Door Policy and its territorial integrity having been secured.

Yet the exact opposite impression in China had, through Washington’s silence on its negotiations and Japan’s presentation of the Agreement, been secured. While Minister Reinsch was seeking explanations from Washington, Foreign Minister Motono directed the Japanese Minister in Beijing, Hayashi Gonsuke (1860-1939), to inform the Chinese Government that “this unique geographical position of Japan naturally creates special relations, *political*, economic, and social with China...the new agreement between Japan and the United States declared this fact, but there will be no change in Japan’s policy toward China.”¹⁷⁷⁹ As the Japanese moved to unilaterally explain to the Chinese their interpretation of the Agreement—and the inevitable implications for

¹⁷⁷⁴ Kawamura, *Turbulence in the Pacific*, pg. 99.

¹⁷⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, pg. 101.

¹⁷⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁷⁷ Elleman, *International Rivalry and Secret Diplomacy in East Asia*, pg. 141.

¹⁷⁷⁸ Curry, *Woodrow Wilson and Far Eastern Policy*, pg. 182.

¹⁷⁷⁹ Kawamura, *Turbulence in the Pacific*, pg. 102.

bilateral Sino-Japanese relations—the US began to view Japanese efforts as an attempt to convince the Chinese that they had been abandoned by Washington. Minister Reinsch, given the seriousness of the impressions the Japanese continued imparting, urged the Chinese Government to deliver a memorandum to the US, underlining that China felt itself in no way bound by the Agreement.¹⁷⁸⁰

On 12 November 1917, the Chinese Minister in Washington, Wellington Koo, delivered the suggested memorandum to Secretary Lansing. Koo conveyed that the Chinese Government was especially disturbed by the purported US recognition of Japan's 'special interests' and asked the Secretary of State to explain the meaning of the words, to which Lansing responded that "it was manifestly an axiom that geographical propinquity necessarily gave nations special interests in their neighbours."¹⁷⁸¹ Koo further asked Lansing why this particular axiom was needed to be publicly stated now. Lansing's response was that "to concede a truth, which could not be successfully denied, in exchange for a declaration of a policy which restrained the party was certainly a very desirable thing to do."¹⁷⁸² Furthermore, Lansing explained that the US was anxious to aid China financially but could not do so without explicitly cooperating with Japan, assuring Koo that "China's interests were in his mind throughout the negotiations."¹⁷⁸³ Koo listened and thanked Lansing for his explanations and departed. Through this memorandum, Koo had given concrete expression to the widespread sentiment of Chinese high officials that "nothing very positive could be expected from the United States."¹⁷⁸⁴ Such was the immediate effect of the Lansing-Ishii Agreement on the nation whose concerns it was, according to US strategy, designed to assuage. As such, instead of coordinating and stabilizing the respective US and Japanese approaches to China, the Lansing-Ishii Agreement, through the mutually exclusive interpretation of its elements, contributed to further undermining the understanding between Tokyo and Washington, making a questionable contribution to the maintenance of the status quo. What was designed as an agreement to facilitate rapprochement, as the Russians had set out to accomplish with the Japanese after the Settlement of 1905, failed to fulfil this central objective. Instead, geopolitical tensions were not diffused between the two remaining powers in East Asia as the ruinous effects of the First World War became ever more apparent. Subsequent developments regarding the course and eventual conclusion of the Great War would place the Agreement's contradictions in sharp relief.

9.2.10. Intervention in the Russian Far East

9.2.10.1. Introduction

As 1917 drew to a close, with Tokyo's interpretation of the Lansing-Ishii Agreement in hand, "the prospects for Japanese freedom of action in China were better than ever."¹⁷⁸⁵ Developments in Russia, however, began to cast an increasingly ominous shadow over Japan's China policy. The destabilization of the February Revolution, as noted, gave way after November 1917 to the sheer terror of the Bolshevik regime. The Japanese Foreign Ministry and military were beginning to exhibit concern about the fate of the Russian-controlled areas of northern Manchuria

¹⁷⁸⁰ Curry, *Woodrow Wilson and Far Eastern Policy*, pg. 182.

¹⁷⁸¹ Kawamura, *Turbulence in the Pacific*, pg. 102.

¹⁷⁸² *Ibid.*, pp. 102-103.

¹⁷⁸³ Curry, *Woodrow Wilson and Far Eastern Policy*, pg. 182.

¹⁷⁸⁴ Kawamura, *Turbulence in the Pacific*, pg. 102.

¹⁷⁸⁵ Jansen, *Japan and China*, pg. 220.

as well as the situation in the provinces of the Russian Far East. With the collapse of the Tsarist Empire, Japan's borders with the north were now vulnerable. With its Russian ally, the Japanese Government had developed important economic interests in the Russian Far East that, by 1917, far outstripped those gained from the bilateral treaties of the Settlement of 1905. The key logistic vein of the Trans-Siberian railway was not only essential to keep the Russian Army well supplied, but Japan's wartime trade with Russia's Asian ports of entry, such as Vladivostok and Harbin, had transformed the Russian Far East into Japan's third largest export market, only surpassed by the United States and China.¹⁷⁸⁶

9.2.10.2. Japanese Reaction to Developments in post-Tsarist Russia

The evident decline of central Russian authority over its periphery emerged as an unwelcome, but necessary, consideration amongst Japanese policy makers. As early as March 1917, Japanese Military Attaché in St. Petersburg, Ishizaka Zenjirō, advised Tokyo to seriously consider “exploring new opportunities in Siberia and Harbin because the Russian influence was bound to wane there.”¹⁷⁸⁷ At the same time, Ishizaka, along with Ambassador Uchida, argued against an armed intervention of Japanese forces on Russian territory for fear of provoking a full-scale war. Alarmed at the fluid situation across Russia, Foreign Minister Motono sent the President of the South Manchurian Railway Society (SMRS), Kawakami Toshitune (1861-1935) on a mission to the troubled country between June and October 1917. His report presented to the Terauchi Cabinet on the verge of the Bolshevik rebellion became “the general understanding of the 1917 events amongst the Japanese ruling elite”: attributing the popularity of socialist ideals in Russia as due to the Bolsheviks' promise of a separate peace with Germany, Bolshevism, as a movement was fraught with “unpatriotism” and “dangerous internationalism of socialist theory in general.”¹⁷⁸⁸ Japan's vital interests in the Southern Manchurian Railway accorded Tokyo, therefore, the right to maintain peace in the region through the acquisition of special rights in northern Manchuria and the Russian Far East. This option, according to Kawakami, should be considered only in the event that Russia concluded a separate peace with Germany. Adding to the tension, was the surprise of the Japanese Foreign Ministry upon learning that Washington had dispatched former Secretary of State, Elihu Root, on a high-level mission to the provisional Kerensky government. Suspicion of US intentions in Asiatic Russia were bolstered in June 1917 with the creation of the Russian Railway Service Corps under US tutelage to assist the Russians in the management and operation both of the Trans-Siberian and Chinese Eastern railways.¹⁷⁸⁹ This served as a clear signal to Tokyo that Japan was by far not the only power contemplating how to best secure its interests in the wake of collapsing Russian authority over East Asia.

The situation quickly deteriorated after November 1917. With its successful usurpation of power in St. Petersburg, the Bolsheviks encouraged their followers to revolt locally all over the defunct Empire and establish the Soviet regime countrywide. Despite constituting a small minority in most areas, the Bolsheviks made steady gains eastwards. While the Bolsheviks were not

¹⁷⁸⁶ Morley, James William, The Japanese Thrust into Siberia, 1918, New York: Columbia University Press, 1957, pg. 36.

¹⁷⁸⁷ Linkhoeva, Revolution Goes East, pg. 42.

¹⁷⁸⁸ Ibid.

¹⁷⁸⁹ Dunscomb, Paul, Japan's Siberian Intervention, 1918-1922: 'A Great Disobedience Against the People', Plymouth: Lexington Books, 2011, pg. 35.

powerful enough in force to press into eastern Siberia, local events in both Vladivostok and Harbin “presaged a determined fight for all of Asiatic Russia.”¹⁷⁹⁰ Amongst the cities, of the Russian Far East, Vladivostok held special significance as it had become a major logistics centre of Allied supplies with, by winter 1917-1918, circa seven hundred tonnes of goods, ammunition and weapons in excess of USD 1 billion being stored, albeit somewhat haphazardly, in the city.¹⁷⁹¹ While the majority of Vladivostok was anti-Bolshevik, the movement managed to secure a majority in the executive committee of the local soviet, pushing through a resolution on 1 December 1917 that transferred all local authority to this administrative organ—a decision that the radical Red Guards had, as in other Russian cities, every intention of fulfilling with brute force and thereby threatened to commandeer the Allied supply depot. Likewise in December 1917, after having received a telegram from Lenin to revolt, Bolshevik elements seized power in Harbin, deposing General Dmitrii Leonidovich Horvat (1858-1937), the general manager of the CER since 1903 and de facto administrator of the surrounding territories. The Allies became so alarmed at the prospect of Bolshevik control over one of Manchuria’s central transportation arteries that they officially requested the Chinese *tuchun* (military governor) of Kirin to dispatch a force of 35,000 soldiers to recapture the CER and free Horvat.¹⁷⁹² Quelling the Bolshevik brigands, the Chinese succeeded in restoring national sovereignty over the CER and areas under previous Russian control in January 1918. This unsuccessful Bolshevik action, along with their intention to withdraw Russia from the war, internationalized what had been viewed, up until December 1917, as a domestic Russian event, with the British, French, and US Consuls in Harbin fearing that Bolshevik control over the CER would hinder the delivery of essential war supplies stored at Vladivostok.¹⁷⁹³ A further Allied concern was that the unrest in Russian-controlled territories in China would be used as an excuse for the Japanese to “gain control of the CER and expand [their] influence in East Asia.”¹⁷⁹⁴ On the other hand, Tokyo became anxious that the precedent of Chinese restoration of national sovereignty could be eventually used against Japanese-controlled areas of China, especially at the postwar peace conference.

After December 1917, the general situation took a predictable, but unwelcome, turn. The newly appointed People’s Commissar for Foreign Affairs, Lev Davidovich Bronstein alias Trotsky (1879-1940), announced serious new foreign policy measures that directly damaged Japan’s substantial interests in Russia: the new Bolshevik regime would annul all obligations and debts arising from both the Tsarist and Provisional Governments, including cancelling the substantial amount of money Japan was owed for its supply of much needed ammunition to the Tsarist army on the Eastern Front and proceeded to confiscate the property of Mitsubishi and Matsui within Russia.¹⁷⁹⁵ Worse still, the new Soviet authorities openly made public the secret diplomatic agreements concluded by Imperial Russia, including the secret protocols of the Russo-Japanese Treaty of 1916, thereby revealing its anti-American nature to Allies and foes alike. With tensions rising between Washington and Tokyo over Japanese policy towards China, the threat was grave indeed. While the Terauchi Cabinet had hitherto regarded the ideological views of Bolshevism as an exclusively Russian phenomenon, assessing the movement’s murderous takeover of Russia

¹⁷⁹⁰ Morley, *The Japanese Thrust into Siberia*, pg. 35.

¹⁷⁹¹ *Ibid.*, pg. 38.

¹⁷⁹² Nish, *The History of Manchuria*, pg. 90.

¹⁷⁹³ Linkhoeva, *Revolution Goes East*, pg. 46.

¹⁷⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁹⁵ Linkhoeva, Tatiana, “The Russian Revolution and the Emergence of Japanese Anticommunism”, pp. 263-264.

“only in the terms of the damage it might inflict on Japan’s foreign relations”, events on the ground questioned this policy’s continuing viability.¹⁷⁹⁶ Overt Bolshevik actions aimed at seizing control of Vladivostok and Harbin played a role in debunking Tokyo’s post-February Revolution stance towards Russia, obliging Tokyo to come to terms with events in its collapsing neighbour as more than a transient, domestic phenomenon. It became increasingly clear that one of the main pillars of the existing order in East Asia had, with the tragic advent of Soviet Russia, now fully collapsed and could not be resurrected, taking the balance of power with it. A new approach to regional stability would therefore have to be found in increasingly chaotic circumstances.

9.2.10.3. Japanese Plans for Intervention in the Russian Far East

The Japanese military, considering the gravity of these events, began to take a much sterner approach to happenings in Russia. As illustrated in the subsequent negotiations with its Allies attempting to establish a unified approach to the collapse of a major Entente member, efforts to involve Japan militarily underlined the truly global scope of the First World War. As the Allies’ military fortunes seemed to flag, Japan “enjoyed great diplomatic and military leeway attributable to the battlefield stalemate in Europe.”¹⁷⁹⁷ The increasing focus on introducing Japan to take part in military hostilities in the Western theatre was part of a general, seemingly panicky attempt by the Allies to shore up what, at the close of 1917, looked like a bleak military outlook. Already in August 1917, the French Government approached the Japanese Ambassador in Paris to enquire about the use of Japanese troops on the Balkan front. Collectively, with the Italian front having collapsed against the Habsburgs at Caporetto in 1917, and the virtual certainty of the new Bolshevik regime signing a separate peace with Germany, the Allies began to openly consider the option of harnessing whatever military means lay at their disposal. Inevitably such Allied scheming involved Japanese assistance. At the Inter-Allied Conference in Paris on 29 November-3 December 1917, French Marshal Ferdinand Foch (1851-1929) proposed a fantastic idea, namely sending a joint US-Japanese military expedition into European Russia, now threatened by the outright collapse of Russian forces in the field: “not only would [a Russian collapse] detract from the military power of the Allies, but it would enable Germany to extend its conquests at will deep into Russia, seizing the Russian industrial plants and natural resources. Germany would thereby be enabled enormously to enhance its offensive power in the West and to build itself a base for which to menace Korea and jeopardize ‘the economic development of the lands of the Far East’”.¹⁷⁹⁸ According to Foch, to hinder such an eventuality, Japanese and US forces should take control of the Trans-Siberian railway, first at Vladivostok and Harbin, and then progressively expand their control to Moscow, preventing German penetration into Siberia.

The Japanese Government, concerned about the possible negative postwar effects of Tokyo’s aggressive policy towards China, was unwilling to reject Allied pleas for Japanese manpower outright. While understanding that to make any significant difference in the contemporary military situation, the logistics involved in any expeditionary force to the Western theatres would involve a substantial Japanese contribution, estimated at forty divisions or the total mobilization of Japan’s military. It was therefore clear that Tokyo’s interests could not be served

¹⁷⁹⁶ Ibid., pg. 264.

¹⁷⁹⁷ Drea, *Japan’s Imperial Army*, pg. 141.

¹⁷⁹⁸ Morley, *The Japanese Thrust into Siberia*, pg. 32.

through a bloody engagement so far away from the Home Islands.¹⁷⁹⁹ Consequently, the Japanese military, during its discussions with its Allies, demanded “an independent command, unilateral choice of its theatre of operations, Allied financing of Japan’s operations (estimated at USD 1.5 billion annually), and 600,000 tonnes of Allied shipping to move and sustain the Japanese expeditionary force”, while simultaneously demanding the Allies “recognize Japan’s rights in China and place the Trans-Siberian railroad under Japanese control.”¹⁸⁰⁰ Obviously, such hefty terms could not be contemplated by any of Japan’s hard-pressed co-belligerents. The fast-eroding situation in the Russian Far East, however, was a different matter altogether, especially following the Bolshevik regime’s signature of an armistice with the German Empire in December 1917, thereby eliminating the Eastern Front. To policy makers in Tokyo, “revolution in European Russia was one thing: a revolution in Asiatic Russia, another.”¹⁸⁰¹ Yet it was not ideological motives that guided Tokyo’s geopolitical compass, but geopolitical opportunity. The Japanese Kwantung Army (based in southern Manchuria) realized this and used the rising spectre of the Bolshevik threat to its advantage and reasoned with Tokyo that “Russia would continue challenging Japanese interests in Manchuria unless a strong policy of military intervention” was undertaken.¹⁸⁰² Like the entry into the First World War, the disappearance of effective Russian authority over an area of critical Japanese interest furnished an unparalleled political opportunity that could not be foregone. Japanese involvement therefore appeared a necessity; the question of the concrete extent and objectives of Japanese policy, however, was yet to be determined.

The Lansing-Ishii Agreement provided the Japanese Government with a useful tool to justify its intervention in the Russian Far East. The article conferring upon Tokyo special rights in areas of territorial propinquity “gave [Japan] as a great regional power the right to claim special interests and the obligation to maintain peace and stability in that region.”¹⁸⁰³ The spirit of this agreement could, in the minds of Japanese foreign policy makers, be therefore extended to include Asiatic Russia. With this precedence having been established, Terauchi’s chief foreign policy advisor, Nishihara Kamezō (1873-1954), convinced of the enormous potential of a political vacuum in the Russian Far East, already in November 1917 began to prepare for a major expedition of Japanese troops to northern Manchuria and Asiatic Russia.¹⁸⁰⁴ Likewise Nishihara began to lay the foundations for Japanese political involvement in the former Tsarist Empire. In particular, he became enthralled with the proposal of establishing an independent Siberia under Japanese tutelage, sending a group of Russian émigrés and Japanese adventures to assess such possibilities.¹⁸⁰⁵ Indeed, the Imperial Army would become especially obsessed with the creation of an anti-Bolshevik buffer state in the Russian Far East.¹⁸⁰⁶ Such marked the opening strategy that would culminate in Japan’s overt involvement in the Russian Civil War, lasting until 1925, a story that lies beyond the scope of this dissertation, yet also underlines the extent of Japanese intentions towards the Russian Far East. With Terauchi’s approval, the Japanese military began to make preparations for the deployment of its forces into areas formally controlled by the Russian Empire, focusing first on concrete plans against its now abandoned Chinese territories.

¹⁷⁹⁹ Drea, *Japan’s Imperial Army*, pp. 141-142.

¹⁸⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, pg. 141.

¹⁸⁰¹ Morley, *The Japanese Thrust into Siberia*, pg. 32.

¹⁸⁰² Nish, *The History of Manchuria*, pg. 90.

¹⁸⁰³ Kawamura, *Turbulence in the Pacific*, pg. 108.

¹⁸⁰⁴ Dickenson, *War and National Reinvention*, pg. 182.

¹⁸⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, pg. 183.

¹⁸⁰⁶ Kawamura, *Turbulence in the Pacific*, pg. 117.

The earliest Japanese moves hardly concealed Tokyo's overall ambition to extend its sphere of influence well beyond the limits prescribed by the now defunct Russo-Japanese treaties.¹⁸⁰⁷ On 22 December 1917, Vice Chief of the Army General Staff and future Prime Minister, Tanaka Giichi (1864-1929), instructed that Japan, following the Russian withdrawal, must assume control of the Chinese Eastern Railway Zone, a corridor through Manchuria that Russia leased from China connecting eastern Siberia to Vladivostok. Tanaka based his arguments on the fait accompli that the evaporation of Russian authority in East Asia permitted Japan to "gain a foothold in Harbin and the CER for any future expansion into Northeast China and, following that, Asiatic Russia."¹⁸⁰⁸ Yet, for the time being actions were limited to the extension of Japanese control over territory formally belonging to China. In the meetings of December and March 1918 of the Advisory Council, Foreign Minister Motono began to openly argue for intervention on Russian territory, stating that "Lenin's peace and violation of international responsibilities" provided serious grounds against which to act.¹⁸⁰⁹ On both occasions, Motono's suggestions were rejected, with Yamagata, now in his final years, arguing in favour of a cautious approach, much akin to Japan's participation in the Boxer Rebellion.¹⁸¹⁰ The majority of Council members did not feel that a clear threat to Japan's security existed or that Tokyo's independent action would garnish US support. Yet, in April 1918, the debate was altered by the murder of several Japanese citizens in Vladivostok. With a minimal contingent of Japanese naval troops already in the city since January 1918, Motono insisted upon intervention, lest "further inaction...mean the de facto recognition of the Bolshevik regime, which in turn, would pose a grave threat to Japan's social independence."¹⁸¹¹ Yet Yamagata, given the overall international situation with the Allies beginning to intervene in European Russia in spring 1918, remained resolutely opposed, formally rejecting any plans for independent action in the Russian Far East: "if we are to send troops, we must ask the view of each country; they must be unanimous and we must be truly justified."¹⁸¹² Motono, having his proposal turned down a second time, tendered his resignation in frustration on 22 April 1918.

9.2.10.4. The Secret Sino-Japanese Agreement of May and September 1918

Japan, however, continued to plan for any contingency, especially regarding the changed circumstances in China. The descent of the former Russian Empire into chaos, and the second 'one-in-a-thousand-years' opportunity it presented, required Japan to secure and reinforce its contemporary position in the Chinese Republic. While opposing any independent action in Russia, Yamagata called for, in January 1918, a new policy with China. While, in 1914, the *genrō* advocated augmenting the bilateral Sino-Japanese economic relationship, the unexpected military possibilities that the collapse of the Russian Empire left in its wake begot Yamagata to advocate for increased military cooperation between Beijing and Tokyo.¹⁸¹³ Such preparations had a much larger goal in mind, namely to reinforce Tokyo's position in China to be able to securely intervene in Siberia and the Russian Far East. As such, Yamagata pleaded with Japanese policy makers to

¹⁸⁰⁷ Linkhoeva, "The Russian Revolution and the Emergence of Japanese Anticommunism", pg. 264.

¹⁸⁰⁸ Ibid., pg. 265.

¹⁸⁰⁹ Ibid., *Revolution Goes East*, pg. 49.

¹⁸¹⁰ Hackett, *Yamagata Aritomo in the Rise of Modern Japan*, pg. 312.

¹⁸¹¹ Linkhoeva, *Revolution Goes East*, pg. 51.

¹⁸¹² Hackett, *Yamagata Aritomo in the Rise of Modern Japan*, pg. 313.

¹⁸¹³ Dickensen, *War and National Reinvention*, pg. 184.

create “an offensive-defensive entente” that would allow Imperial forces to deploy to northern Manchuria, Inner Mongolia and the Russian Far East and eastern Siberia, with Chinese troops to operate under the direction of the Japanese Army.¹⁸¹⁴ Understanding that such an agreement would deprive the Chinese Republic of much of its sovereignty, Premier Duan resisted signing. However, when confronted with Japanese threats of withdrawing Tokyo’s military and financial aid to his government, Duan promptly relented. A secret military defence agreement was therefore signed on 18 May 1918 that called for China and Japan to work together “against the common enemy”.¹⁸¹⁵ This was to be accomplished through the provision of Chinese material assistance to the Japanese military with Japan pledging to “respect” the “sovereignty of China” in certain “military areas” that were left undefined.¹⁸¹⁶

This agreement was followed up with a second secret agreement on 24 September 1918 whose signing would have severe consequences for the ultimate postwar fate of Shandong at Versailles. This second treaty focused solely on the territory of the Japanese-occupied German concession and coincided with the pending election of a new President of China, Xu Shichang (1855-1939), who held close ties to the militarists of Premier Duan. According to the terms of the secret agreement, Japan agreed to withdraw the Japanese civil administration from the former German territory and restore formal Chinese civilian control; in return Beijing would manage the former Qingdao-Jinan railway line as a joint Sino-Japanese company, to be patrolled by Japanese policemen.¹⁸¹⁷ The Chinese also agreed to accept a Japanese loan of JPY 20 million as an advance for this railway. Hence, this agreement legalized the presence of the Japanese military and economic control over the province’s main transportation artery even after nominal control had been returned to China, solidifying the Japanese presence on the peninsula. Yet while the Japanese military had, through the Sino-Japanese Military Agreement of May 1918, followed by the secret Sino-Japanese agreement of September 1918, secured a base in China through which to project power into Asiatic Russia, the political decision to cross the frontier was still lacking.

9.2.10.5. US Views on Intervention

The making of such a solid foundation upon which to launch Japanese intervention in Asiatic Russia did not go unnoticed by the United States. Following the establishment of the Bolshevik regime, Washington initially took a clear non-interventionist stance, with Wilson’s foreign policy advisor, Colonel Edward House (1858-1938), declaring to US co-belligerents that “so far as the United States was concerned, any effort at intervention, except at the request of the Russian Government, would be a mistake.”¹⁸¹⁸ President Wilson made this US policy explicit through his 8 January 1918 address to Congress, unveiling to a world at war the idealistic and universalist objectives of the US war effort. Point VI of Wilson’s Fourteen Points openly called for the evacuation of Russian territory and cooperation amongst the Allies to obtain for Russia “an unhampered and unembarrassed opportunity for the independent determination of her own political development and national policy.”¹⁸¹⁹ The 28th President reflected later that he “wrote the

¹⁸¹⁴ Ibid., pp. 185-186.

¹⁸¹⁵ Hackett, *Yamagata Aritomo in the Rise of Modern Japan*, pg. 313.

¹⁸¹⁶ Dickens, *War and National Reinvention*, pg. 186.

¹⁸¹⁷ Elleman, *International Rivalry and Secret Diplomacy in East Asia*, pg. 145.

¹⁸¹⁸ Kawamura, *Turbulence in the Pacific*, pg. 111.

¹⁸¹⁹ Curry, *Woodrow Wilson and Far Eastern Policy*, pg. 218.

passages about Russia in [his] recent address to Congress from my heart. I wish most earnestly that it were possible to find some way to help, but as soon as we have thought out a working plan there is a new dissolution of the few crystals that had formed there.”¹⁸²⁰

By February 1918, the Wilson Administration was receiving ample signs that Japan was intent on undertaking an independent military intervention in Russia. US Minister Reinsch in Beijing informed Washington about certain Japanese proposals to deepen military ‘cooperation’ for joint action in restoring order in the Far East, with US Ambassador to Japan, Roland Morris (1874-1920), reporting on 23 February 1918 that Foreign Minister Motono had “told the French Ambassador that all preparations had been completed for immediate action and that Japan could even act without American consent if Britain and France agreed”, cautioning that the “time would soon come when Japan would not be able to wait any longer.”¹⁸²¹ Along with its own intelligence, Washington was being pressured by its Western Allies, the British and the French, to allow for a Japanese mission to bring the Trans-Siberian railroad firmly under friendly control. The new Foreign Secretary and former Prime Minister, Arthur Balfour (1848-1930), addressed a personal note to President Wilson on 17 March 1918, noting that “Russia...was a ‘sick person’ who ‘must be helped by her friends’ if she were to be saved from ravishment by the Central Powers; and of her friends, only Japan was in a position to help—of course ‘as a friend of Russia and the mandatory of Russia and other Allies.’”¹⁸²² The note also underlined that no Japanese action could really be effective without the active material, and most importantly, political support of Washington. With the military situation in Europe having, once again, undergone a rapid change with the signing of the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk in the beginning of March 1918, Wilson felt somewhat inclined to lift the US objection to Japanese independent action in the Russian Far East. Such an about-face was vehemently opposed by Wilson’s advisors, especially William Bullitt (1891-1967), who appealed to Wilson’s dominant idealistic nature to fortify his resistance to Japanese plans: “The President must oppose the invasion of Siberia by Japan *in the name of democracy and liberalism*. He must act, or his position as moral leader of the world will be lost.”¹⁸²³ Consequently, the Wilson Administration officially informed the Japanese Government that US support for any planned endeavours in Asiatic Russia could not be reckoned with.

With the US having firmly spoken out against any Japanese independent actions, Yamagata, as illustrated, remained intransigent in his own opposition of any intervention, managing to convince the pro-interventionist members of the Advisory Council. It would seem, therefore, that US and Japanese policy towards Russia were displaying signs of overlapping. On 19 March 1918, the Terauchi Cabinet presented a confidential memorandum to Ambassador Morris, thanking Washington for “the absolute frankness with which views of the American Government” had been communicated and pledged that Japan would “refrain from taking any action on which due understanding had not been reached between the United States and the other great powers of the Entente.”¹⁸²⁴ At the same time, the note additionally underlined Japan’s right to act unilaterally should the security situation in the Russian Far East degrade to such an extent that intervention became inevitable. Secretary of State Lansing’s response was one of reassurance,

¹⁸²⁰ Ibid.

¹⁸²¹ Kawamura, *Turbulence in the Pacific*, pg. 114.

¹⁸²² Morley, *The Japanese Thrust into Siberia*, pg. 134.

¹⁸²³ Kawamura, *Turbulence in the Pacific*, pg. 114

¹⁸²⁴ Morley, *The Japanese Thrust in Siberia*, pp. 140-141.

adding that the US “did not suspect Japanese motives, but [Washington] opposed intervention because of the bad effect on the Russian people...[and it] lacked sufficient military justification to compensate for the moral loss entailed.”¹⁸²⁵ With Tokyo and Washington seemingly finding the basis of a common understanding after past tensions over China, President Wilson expressed his satisfaction, noting that the Japanese memorandum was “most gratifying and removes any possibility of misunderstanding which might arise otherwise.”¹⁸²⁶

9.2.10.6. The Advent of the Czech Uprising in Siberia

Shortly thereafter, this superficial understanding between the two remaining major powers in East Asia was to be challenged by the unique constellation of forces unleashed by the First World War. Over the summer of 1918, a group of circa 50,000 Czechoslovak soldiers found themselves scattered across the Trans-Siberian railway. Consisting of former Austro-Hungarian prisoners of war who had surrendered to the Russians and agreed afterwards to fight for the Entente in the hopes of establishing a new Czechoslovak state, exiled Czechs in Paris offered the services of the former Habsburg soldiers to the Allies on the Western Front should, of course, transportation from the interior of Russia to the trenches of France be provided. The French, ever scouring the globe for disposable manpower, graciously accepted, suggesting that a trek across Siberia to Vladivostok would be more logistically feasible than a geographical closer sortie via the arctic port of Arkhangelsk.¹⁸²⁷ The Treaty of Brest-Litovsk transformed the Czechs, from a legal perspective, into a belligerent force within a now neutral nation. The Bolsheviks were not comfortable with a large group of experienced, armed soldiers, not interested in Marxist slogans, travelling along one of the former Empire’s most important transportation routes. They subsequently placed substantial obstacles to hinder the Czechs’ movement. In May 1918, an incident occurred between Czech soldiers and Bolshevik marauders in Chelyabinsk, prompting Trotsky, true to Bolshevik form, to order the forcible sequestration of the Czechs into the Red Army and to shoot all those who resisted.

On 25 May 1918, a first battle ensued between the Czech units—considered as one of the most effective units in the Habsburg Army on the Eastern Front—and a hastily assembled group of Red Army bandits.¹⁸²⁸ The Bolsheviks were no match for the Czechs and were easily broken. The very event that Trotsky had feared, he himself had provoked: the Czech legion was on the loose in Siberia. Soviet authority in the Russian territories of Transbaikalia and Primorye subsequently collapsed, leading to a cardinal change of political forces in Eastern Siberia.¹⁸²⁹ By the end of June 1918, the entire Trans-Siberian railway was in Czech hands, spurring the mobilization of anti-Bolshevik forces led by General Mikhail Vasilyevich Alekseyev (1857-1918) and Anton Ivanovich Denikin (1872-1947) in European Russia and Alexander Vasilyevich Kolchak (1874-1920) in Siberia. This radical change in the political situation altered views regarding intervention, both internationally and domestically within the ruling circles of the United States and Japan.¹⁸³⁰ At the Allied Supreme War Council of 2 July 1918, it was noted that the

¹⁸²⁵ Curry, *Woodrow Wilson and Far Eastern Policy*, pg. 225.

¹⁸²⁶ Kawamura, *Turbulence in the Pacific*, pg. 115.

¹⁸²⁷ Dunscomb, *Japan’s Siberian Intervention*, pg. 49.

¹⁸²⁸ Ibid.

¹⁸²⁹ Grishachev & Datsyshen, “Allied Intervention in the Russian Civil War and Japanese Troops in Russia’s Far East, 1918-1922”, pg. 140.

¹⁸³⁰ Dunscomb, *Japan’s Siberian Intervention*, pg. 50.

advent of the revolt of the Czech legion marked a “complete change” of the situation in Russia, with the Council deciding that “it was the duty of the Allies to save the Czechs as their comrades in arms.”¹⁸³¹

9.2.10.7. Washington Proposes Joint Intervention with Japan

The advent of the collapse of Bolshevik control of most of Asiatic Russia heavily altered the views of contemporary policy makers in Washington. Before the War Council, President Wilson had reacted cautiously to the changing military situation in Siberia, responding to British and French demands to reestablish an Eastern Front with council to “watch the situation carefully and sympathetically, and be ready to move whenever the right time came.”¹⁸³² With Allied forces under heavy German pressure in the summer of 1918, frustration began to mount over Wilson’s trepidation. Yet the advent of the Czech insurgency in Siberia played an essential role to “understand fully either the measure of American responsibility for the turn of events in summer 1918 or...the pressures against which President Wilson was obliged to weigh the problem of intervention.”¹⁸³³ Following the War Council’s decision to support the Czechs, President Wilson called a meeting of his Cabinet to discuss the new situation. While supporting Wilson’s idea that a recreation of an Eastern Front remained impossible, the plight of the Czech troops required the United States and her Allies to form a junction between Allied units in the West and at Vladivostok. From the US perspective, this could only be accomplished through joint action between Washington and Tokyo. With Japan providing the arms and ammunition, and the US footing the bill, the Wilson Administration suggested that a joint mission of Japanese and US forces, each limited to 7,000 soldiers, would be deployed to the Russian Far East with the declared mission of safeguarding the line of communications. Japan would be requested to dispatch her contingent at once, while Allied forces “were to be landed...to take Vladivostok and to cooperate with the Czechs in holding the city.”¹⁸³⁴

Secretary of State Lansing, on 8 July 1918, presented to Ishii Kikujirō, now Japanese Ambassador in Washington, an official invitation to participate in a joint expedition to Russia. While this fulfilled one of Yamagata’s key conditions for approving intervention, the US proposal to Tokyo, in the eyes of the Terauchi Cabinet, “brought frustration rather than elation.”¹⁸³⁵ The US proposal invited Japan to participate in a limited mission, geographically restricted to Vladivostok and the securing of its store of Allied supplies. Hence, the arrival of the US invitation rekindled the debate on the necessity, and more importantly the scope, of Japanese intervention. Discussions were not limited to the confines of government, with the reporting of the Japanese press sparking public discussions on the necessity and wisdom of sending Japanese forces to Russia to ostensibly quell unrest.¹⁸³⁶ Given the general Japanese memory of the bloody campaigns in Manchuria that characterized the Russo-Japanese War, the public realized that any new intervention in Siberia would be categorically different from the limited Japanese military actions of 1914: “involvement in Russia would require far greater number of troops than used so far and much greater expenditure

¹⁸³¹ Curry, *Woodrow Wilson and Far Eastern Policy*, pg. 231.

¹⁸³² *Ibid.*, pg. 229.

¹⁸³³ Kennan, George, *The Decision to Intervene*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1958, pp. 277-279.

¹⁸³⁴ Curry, *Woodrow Wilson and Far Eastern Policy*, pg. 232.

¹⁸³⁵ Dunscomb, *Japan’s Siberian Intervention*, pg. 55.

¹⁸³⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 55-56.

of funds while it risked plunging the Empire into the same war of attrition its Allies were trapped in.”¹⁸³⁷ The new Japanese Foreign Minister, Gotō Shinpei, was in favour of accepting the US invitation and brought the issue to Yamagata. The *Genrō* was now relieved that the US had provided, through its official request, the diplomatic rationale for both Japanese entry to and exit from the Russian Far East and, therefore, accorded his blessing to Gotō’s request by saying “the handle is not grasped to draw a sword until one first knows that it can be sheathed.”¹⁸³⁸

The matter, however, was far from solved. President Wilson’s proposal, unbeknownst to his Administration, “unwittingly touched the most vulnerable spot in Japan’s ambiguous decision making process—the vaguely defined relationship between the supreme command of the military and the authority of the Advisory Council on Foreign Relations.”¹⁸³⁹ As noted, this had been a recurring problem in the Taishō era and would have severe negative consequences on the trajectory of US-Japanese cooperation regarding joint intervention. While Gotō advocated accepting the US offer, he did not support the numerical and geographic limitations imposed by Washington, with Prime Minister Terauchi agreeing that such restrictions were, in fact, unrealistic. Instead, Terauchi advocated for jettisoning the limit on the number of troops in Vladivostok, reserving the right to dispatch forces to other Russian territories based on the rationale of self-defence, simultaneously underlining the need to send one division (14,000-20,000 soldiers) to Vladivostok and yet another to eastern Siberia.¹⁸⁴⁰ Foreign Minister Gotō argued that such an expedition formed a part of Japan’s overall efforts to battle the US, both politically and ideologically. The latter was seen as a particularly potent threat by Gotō who, in his previous post as Home Minister, warned his Prime Minister that “if we probe the real intentions of the US further, it embraces what I call moralistic aggression. It is, in other words, none other than a great hypocritical monster clothed in justice and humanity.”¹⁸⁴¹ Echoing Gotō’s thoughts, the idea of an expansion of interventionist aims, if only to counter an untrustworthy US, was wholeheartedly supported by the Japanese military.

As per now established practice, the Advisory Council met on 16 July 1918 to discuss Terauchi’s counterproposal to Lansing’s offer. While most members supported Terauchi’s expanded interventionist goals, Hara, as leader of the majority party in the Diet, the Seiyūkai, opposed any alterations to the US offer, underlining the importance of securing trust between Washington and Tokyo as the foundation for future Japanese foreign policy. Indeed, Hara was one of the first Japanese civilian politicians to argue, throughout his career, for the maintenance of “cooperative and friendly relations with the US”, having been deeply impressed by the prosperity and potential of the US as an economic and political power during a 1908 visit.¹⁸⁴² As Japan could not hope to compete against such a power, cooperation remained the only logical avenue to be pursued. At the same time, while advocating collaboration with Washington, Hara remained a staunch supporter of the strategic necessity for Japan to retain a monopoly over its sphere of influence in Manchuria, now under threat by contemporary events. This position was very much in line with the reasoning of the Imperial Army’s General Staff. Consequently, Hara’s “inability to balance his conception of US-Japanese cooperation with what he perceived to be Japan’s basic

¹⁸³⁷ Ibid., pg. 56.

¹⁸³⁸ Hackett, *Yamagata Aritomo in the Rise of Modern Japan*, pg. 314.

¹⁸³⁹ Kawamura, *Turbulence in the Pacific*, pg. 121.

¹⁸⁴⁰ Ibid.

¹⁸⁴¹ Dickenson, *War and National Reinvention*, pg. 197.

¹⁸⁴² Dunscomb, *Japan’s Siberian Intervention*, pg. 59.

strategic needs” would characterize much of the future trajectory of Japanese intervention in Russia.¹⁸⁴³

During the Advisory Council meeting, a compromise was struck. While all Council members were in agreement that an expedition should be sent to extract the Czech legion, a member of the Privy Council, Itō Miyoji (1857-1934), argued for an incorporation of the Terauchi Cabinet’s ideas into the US request, noting that “the government is merely trying to incorporate part of the expedition plan for self-Defence into the expedition proposed by the United States” and that “realistically speaking, it is also possible to regard the Siberian expedition as an inevitable consequence of the expedition to Vladivostok.”¹⁸⁴⁴ Hara relented and the Advisory Council approved sending the following compromise declaration on 17 July 1918 as an official response to the US request: “The Japanese Government, being anxious to fall in with the desire of the American Government and also to act in harmony with the Allies and having regard at the same time to the special position of Japan, have decided to proceed at once to dispatch suitable forces for the proposed mission. A certain number of these troops will be sent forthwith to Vladivostok and, if called for by further exigences of the situation, another detachment will eventually be ordered to operate and to maintain order along the Siberian railway.”¹⁸⁴⁵ This counterproposal was sent to Washington on 24 July 1918.

The US was dismayed at the Japanese response to its proposal of a limited joint intervention. The State Department was concerned that no explicit force limit was envisioned, that the document openly hinted that Japanese forces might be sent outside the city of Vladivostok and contained “a cryptic reference to Japan’s special position”—presumably in Siberia. Worst of all, it expressed Japan’s anxiety ‘to act in harmony with the Allies,’ by which were meant the British and French.”¹⁸⁴⁶ President Wilson was especially shocked at the Japanese reply. At first, the 28th President expressed his inclination to cancel the whole endeavour. Washington informed Ishii that Tokyo’s reply did not in actuality constitute acceptance of the US proposal, but constituted “rather a new proposal” which was “indefinite as to numbers, not only now, but as to future reinforcement.”¹⁸⁴⁷ In the subsequent negotiations that ensued between the US and Japan, Washington conceded that it had no issues with Japan sending an entire division, however, the Japanese General Staff would be required to place a fixed limitation of the number of troops to be involved as well as firmly committing to Vladivostok as the sole area of operations. The Japanese military was enraged at the US response, accusing the Advisory Council of willfully undermining the preparations that the Imperial Army had carefully made, with officers expressing their “‘absolute’ determination to prevent the occasion from becoming “a bad precedent of the government’s encroachment on the supreme command”.¹⁸⁴⁸ Hence, upon receiving the US response to Japan’s counterproposal, the military began to seriously weigh the necessity of ignoring the decision from the Advisory Council, a policy which would soon become apparent.

¹⁸⁴³ Ibid.

¹⁸⁴⁴ Kawamura, *Turbulence in the Pacific*, pg. 122.

¹⁸⁴⁵ Dunscomb, *Japan’s Siberian Intervention*, pg. 62.

¹⁸⁴⁶ Kennan, *The Decision to Intervene*, pg. 412.

¹⁸⁴⁷ Kawamura, *Turbulence in the Pacific*, pp. 123-124.

¹⁸⁴⁸ Ibid., pg. 124.

9.2.10.8. The Failure of US-Japanese Joint Intervention

The Japanese Government accepted and published the revised proposal in accordance with the US view on 2 August 1918. Tokyo publicly declared that the main reason for its intervention was the rescue of the Czech legion, as well as for the provision of assistance to the Russian people who were “tired” of revolutionary events.¹⁸⁴⁹ The document additionally stated that Japanese forces would withdraw as soon as order had been restored and renounced any intention of infringing on Russia’s territorial integrity and domestic affairs. The Japanese public declaration forced the President’s hand, leaving him the two options of withdrawing from joint action with the Japanese entirely or consent to US involvement. Regardless of the Japanese reaction to his initial proposal, Wilson remained prepared to implement his interventionist plans, if only not to abandon the Czechs in the area of public opinion as well as alerting to the globe the simmering level of discord between Tokyo and Washington.¹⁸⁵⁰ Wilson therefore proceeded to swiftly authorize the US expedition to the Russian Far East, nominating General William Graves (1865-1940) as commander of the American Expeditionary Force (AEF). General Graves only political guidance on his complicated mission was that of the rough outlines of Wilson’s general policy towards Russia, stating that intervention in Russia was unwise and admissible “only to help the Czecho-Slovaks consolidate their forces and get into successful cooperation with their Slavic kinsmen and to steady any efforts at self-government or self-defence in which the Russian themselves may be willing to accept assistance.”¹⁸⁵¹ Despite the convoluted and contradictory words of the 28th President, the US General “would cling to this *aide memoire* with a stubbornness that would drive his Allied colleagues and associates to despair.”¹⁸⁵² Accordingly, US forces arrived in Vladivostok on 16 August 1918.

The Japanese military was also holding tenaciously to its plans, though they starkly contrasted with the ideas Ambassador Ishii had presented to the State Department. Japanese forces of the 12th Division landed in Vladivostok on 18 August 1918. The very next day, the division commander requested the General Staff to immediately send for reinforcements.¹⁸⁵³ The Terauchi Cabinet agreed not only to this request but announced the mobilization of a third division. Imperial Japanese forces pierced the Russian border, taking Khabarovsk in September and advancing westward to the Amur River, operating as far west as Lake Baikal. By the end of October 1918, more than 70,000 Japanese soldiers were operating in the Russian Far East.¹⁸⁵⁴ To complement their military efforts, the Japanese mobilized an economic mission to ostensibly coordinate relief for the local population as stipulated in Tokyo’s published rationale for intervening. A Special Commission for Siberian Economic Aid (*‘Rinji Shiberia Keizai Enjō Inikai*) was established under the Ministry for Foreign Affairs, closely coordinating its activities with the Japanese Army on the ground, and whose real mandate was “to establish a basis for Japanese economic activities in opposition to the acquisition of concessions by the United States and other countries.”¹⁸⁵⁵ This was followed up by the establishment, in December 1918, of the Russo-Japanese Trading Company; in 1919, the Far Eastern Business Development Corporation; and the Russo-Japanese Bank, all

¹⁸⁴⁹ Linkhoeva, *Revolution Goes East*, pg. 57.

¹⁸⁵⁰ Kennan, *The Decision to Intervene*, pg. 413.

¹⁸⁵¹ Curry, *Woodrow Wilson and Far Eastern Policy*, pg. 236.

¹⁸⁵² Kennan, *The Decision to Intervene*, pg. 414.

¹⁸⁵³ Drea, *Japan’s Imperial Army*, pg. 143.

¹⁸⁵⁴ Ibid.

¹⁸⁵⁵ Linkhoeva, *Revolution Goes East*, pg. 57.

aimed at penetrating the rich natural resources of the Russian Far East. Each of the economic enterprises were created with the active participation of the major Japanese business conglomerates of Mitsui, Mitsubishi, Sumitomo, Kuhara and Furukawa, “injecting a large amount of money into Siberia and fully cooperating with the Army.”¹⁸⁵⁶ The sheer scope of Japan’s now evident political and economic objectives led it to become the only foreign country that actively intervened in the Russian Civil War, coordinating its offensive with Russian Cossacks to destroy Soviet rule in Transbaikalia. While the ultimate course of these events cannot be related here, there could be no disputing that the Japanese intervention completely flaunted the spirit, as well as the concrete limitations, of the agreement Tokyo had reached with the United States.

It was evident to the US that the Japanese had clearly and willfully exceeded any boundaries that they had hoped to secure through a supposedly joint action. President Wilson was surprised at the rapidity with which the Japanese Army had struck out from Vladivostok, commenting that the Japanese were letting the Czech forces “tag along instead of acting themselves as a supporting force.”¹⁸⁵⁷ Upon General Graves’ arrival, he was informed by the Japanese commander, General Ōtani Kikuzō (1856-1923), that Japan had been accorded, upon agreement with the State Department, command of all Allied troops, including American. It is not known how or why Graves was not informed that Washington agreed to operate under Japanese command in Vladivostok, but it is certain that Graves refused to serve under a foreign chain of command, writing somewhat bewilderedly from the field that “I feel that someone had led [Ōtani] to believe that he was in command of all Allied troops.”¹⁸⁵⁸ Consequently, Japanese and US contingents in the Russian Far East never acted as a single force, as was President Wilson’s original intention. Graves was further disturbed by his observations while performing his duties in the field. During a routine inspection of US troops north of Vladivostok, Graves reported on finding all the towns and villages occupied by “ten times as many Japanese troops as necessary”, estimating the total number of Japanese soldiers rather accurately at circa 60,000—a report that President Wilson deemed “exceedingly disturbing, if true”, asking for thorough verification.¹⁸⁵⁹ Any illusion of an idealistic joint Japanese-US force acting together to assist in extracting the Czech legion from Russia had now been firmly dispelled. The US sat idly by and witnessed the Japanese attempt to assert its political and economic control over an area of strategic interest with the same verve and independent determination that Tokyo had displayed during its entry into the First World War, its seizure of the German Pacific Empire, and its insistence on pursuing its own interests at establishing a monopoly over China. Bolstered by its interpretation of ‘territorial propinquity’, as defined in the Lansing-Ishii Agreement, Japanese policy makers—both civilian and military—viewed Imperial Japan as justified in attempting to secure its interests amongst the ruins of its former ally.

¹⁸⁵⁶ Ibid., pg. 58.

¹⁸⁵⁷ Curry, Woodrow *Wilson and Far Eastern Policy*, pg. 237.

¹⁸⁵⁸ Kawamura, *Turbulence in the Pacific*, pp. 127-128.

¹⁸⁵⁹ Curry, *Woodrow Wilson and Far Eastern Policy*, pg. 238.

9.2.10.9. Conclusion

The First World War ended on 11 November 1918 with an armistice declared between the victorious Entente and vanquished Central Powers. With the end of hostilities in Europe, the *raison d'être* of the Allied Siberian Intervention, described as the 'Siberian fracas', also disappeared.¹⁸⁶⁰ The US forces would remain in Russia until the withdrawal of the last Czech forces in 1920, while the Japanese became mired in the Russian Civil War. Like the negotiations on the Lansing-Ishii Agreement that preceded it, intervention into the Russian Far East was designed as policy that would help improve the quality of US-Japanese relations and iron out the tensions that had developed over the course of the Great War in East Asia that left Washington and Tokyo standing, as the result of fateful happenstance rather than shrewd policy, as the two remaining regional powers. As with the Lansing-Ishii Agreement, intervention to the Russian Far East failed to achieve this goal. In fact, quite the opposite was achieved. Wilson was well aware of the desperate attempts of the British and French to use the revolt of the Czech legion in Siberia to reinforce their precarious military situation in Europe. The US explicitly designed its intervention in the Russian Far East to reject these ideas and, in doing so, deviate as little as possible from Point VI of his Fourteen Point peace plan, but also to adhere as much as possible to his understanding of idealism and morality in international relations, a vision that he now, as a victor of the Great War, was preparing to impart to the global system. Yet, for Wilson personally, Japan's wanton disregard for what the President saw as agreed strict limitations of troops to be sent to the Russian Far East, played a key role in alienating Japan further from the United States.¹⁸⁶¹ This marked yet another example to President Wilson of how gestures of reconciliation in word (Lansing-Ishii Agreement) and deed (Russian Far East Intervention) would not be taken seriously, let alone reciprocated, by its intended Japanese target. As the victors and vanquished prepared for the long-anticipated peace conference, mutual suspicions between the US and Japan remained strong, with Tokyo and Washington espousing contradictory foreign policy visions that would become apparent as delegates began to prepare for the Paris Peace Conference.

9.2.11. The Preparations for the Paris Peace Conference

9.2.11.1. Introduction

The Allied Powers wasted no time in convening the much-awaited Peace Conference, assembling delegates in Paris for their first meeting on 18 January 1919. The scope of the Conference was simply immense: following the unprecedented industrial warfare that shattered the entire European continent, claiming no less than 14 million lives, they "had no lesser purpose than to create a new world order that should be just, universal and enduring."¹⁸⁶² While the subsequent Second World War would dwarf the events of 1914-1918—in both level of intensity and number of its victims—there can be "no 'end of history' in interpreting the Great War, for the debacle and its aftermath remain the principal benchmark for the world in which we presently live."¹⁸⁶³ The legacy of the Great War, very much enmeshed with the product of the Paris Peace

¹⁸⁶⁰ Nish, *Japanese Foreign Policy*, pg. 117.

¹⁸⁶¹ Curry, *Woodrow Wilson and Far Eastern Policy*, pg. 248.

¹⁸⁶² Zachmann, Urs, "Introduction" in Zachmann, Urs, *Asia after Versailles: Asian Perspectives on the Paris Peace Conference and the Interwar Order, 1919-33*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2017, pg. 1.

¹⁸⁶³ Dickenson, Frederick, *World War I and the Triumph of a New Japan, 1919-1930*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013, pg. 1.

Conference, namely the Treaty of Versailles, was not only measurable in terms of human and economic losses, but rather in how it acted as the turning point of the main political, economic, and diplomatic trajectories of the twentieth century. As Barbara Tuchman noted, “the Great War of 1914-1918 lies like a band of scorched earth dividing that time from ours.”¹⁸⁶⁴ The chasm is just as valid for East Asia as it is for the rest of the world.

The Settlement of 1919 was, unlike its predecessors, truly global in scope. As noted in the antecedent conditions, while the human, physical, and economic impact of the First World War was largely limited to the European continent, its political ramifications played a major role in shaping the geopolitical course of East Asia. The relevance of the Paris Peace Conference and Treaty of Versailles is, for the purposes of this dissertation, to be seen in the same light. Evidently its main focus lies on Europe; however, the Treaty of Versailles was, in the end, a document that was intended to be truly universal. On his way to Paris aboard the *George Washington*, President Wilson told his fellow US delegates that “their mission was a battle of the new with the old order.”¹⁸⁶⁵ As such, while the main negotiation focus was certainly on reshaping the borders and destiny of Europe, the ideological approach of one of the Conference’s most powerful delegates held no fixed limitations that would mirror the hostilities’ actual geographic scope. It was to be, as the 28th President envisioned, a hallmark diplomatic event. The Settlement of 1919 has been described as a “dramatic transition” from a Euro-centric to a US-centric world order.¹⁸⁶⁶ Like the course of the Great War itself, while the main focus of the Peace Conference lay on Europe, the aspects of its negotiations that touched upon East Asia held a profound impact on the region, both regarding the establishment of stable peace as well as the eventual formations of RSOs. As such, the following examination of the Settlement of 1919 will focus exclusively on those elements pertinent to this dissertation’s purposes, namely limiting consideration to the Treaty’s subsequent effect on East Asia.

9.2.11.2. The Participants’ Goals for the Paris Peace Conference

A plethora of East Asian actors secured invitations to the Paris Peace Conference. Yet, as this dissertation examines this ‘critical juncture’ from a regional perspective, analyzing the Paris Peace Conference from an East Asian standpoint cannot be done without first underlining the position and objectives of the Great War’s main regional victors, namely the United States, the Empire of Japan, and China, before entering into negotiations.

9.2.11.2.1. The United States

The United States, while having contributed militarily to the victory against the Central Powers, emerged from the war unscathed. Surveying the ruins of the European continent following November 1918, the Old World had been rendered unrecognizable: “Austria-Hungary was gone, Russia in revolution; yet France, Italy, and even Britain itself had also suffered heavily in their victory. The only exceptions were Japan...and, of course, the United States, which, by 1918 was

¹⁸⁶⁴ Tuchman, Barbara, *The Proud Tower: A Portrait of a World before the War, 1890-1914*, New York: Macmillan, 1962, pg. xiii.

¹⁸⁶⁵ Curry, *Woodrow Wilson and Far Eastern Policy*, pg. 250.

¹⁸⁶⁶ Dickenson, *World War I and the Triumph of a New Japan*, pg. 17.

indisputably the strongest Power in the world.”¹⁸⁶⁷ The nation whose first President had cryptically warned future generations to stay clear of foreign entanglements now found itself at the pinnacle of global power. How the United States would concretely excerpt this power, however, was intimately linked with President Woodrow Wilson and his unique views on international affairs. The 28th President made, through his Congressional speech outlining his Fourteen Points in January 1918, his post-bellum vision explicit, exhibiting a personal conviction that these Points comprised the sole path that could lead to a just and durable peace. The Fourteen Points espoused Wilson’s idealistic vision of a new world order, underpinned by open diplomacy, freedom of the seas, free trade, with special emphasis on the self-determination of states. None of these points, it should be noted, held any specific reference to political issues in East Asia, when compared to the detailed territorial vision Wilson presented regarding the future of Europe. They did, however, encapsulate what became known as “Wilsonian liberalism”, defined as a “paradoxical mix of visionary idealism and political pragmatism.”¹⁸⁶⁸

The vision set forth for the new world, however, held one overriding priority. According to the US President, the ultimate transformation of the Fourteen Points into concrete practice was contingent on the successful implementation of its ultimate point, namely Point XIV, “a general association of nations must be formed under specific covenants for the purpose of affording mutual guarantees of political independence and territorial integrity to great and small states alike.”¹⁸⁶⁹ Wilson’s prioritization of the creation of the League of Nations was reiterated in his 27 September 1918 address at the Metropolitan Opera House in New York, underlining to his audience that “the construction of that League of Nations and the clear definition of its objective must be...the most essential part of the peace settlement itself”, insisting that “no special or separate interest of any single nation or any groups of nations can be made the basis of any part of the settlement which is not consistent with the common interest of all.”¹⁸⁷⁰ The *raison d’être* of this highest of Wilsonian priorities was underlined in a speech at Guildhall on 28 December 1918. Wilson viewed collective, idealist action as the only sensible method to eradicate the root of conflict in the ‘old order’, namely “the balance of power—a thing in which the balance was determined by the sword...by the unstable equilibrium of competitive interests”, with a League of Nations, once regarded as “something that men could think about but never get...Now we find the practical leading minds of the world determined to get it. No such sudden and potent union of purpose has ever been witnessed in the world before.”¹⁸⁷¹ Wilson saw therefore Point XIV as the main tool with which to break the cycle of balance of power wars that had, in his view, characterized the ante-bellum world.

Wilson’s personal commitment to realizing this utopian vision was mirrored by his decision to attend the negotiations in Paris personally, an unparalleled choice that kept a sitting President outside the United States for a full six months. The US President understood that few of the victorious Entente shared his vision for a new world order, with French President George

¹⁸⁶⁷ Kennedy, Paul, *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers*, pg. xix.

¹⁸⁶⁸ Shimazu Naoko, “Wilsonian Vision for a New Liberal International Order: Symbolic Diplomacy at the Paris Peace Conference”, *Japan Review*, Vol. 3., No. 1, Summer 2019, pg. 12.

¹⁸⁶⁹ <https://www.britannica.com/event/Fourteen-Points>, accessed 17 January 2024.

¹⁸⁷⁰ Kawamura, *Turbulence in the Pacific*, pg. 135.

¹⁸⁷¹ Knock, Thomas, *To End All Wars: Woodrow Wilson and the Quest for a New World Order*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2019, pp. 195-196.

Clemenceau (1841-1929) soberly referring to the Fourteen Points as “a joke on history.”¹⁸⁷² Unsurprisingly, the other Entente leaders advised the US President not to attend personally, a sentiment that vindicated Wilson’s desire to be there, feeling that his allies would exploit his absence, remaining therefore intent to instead “lead the world to necessary reform.”¹⁸⁷³ His personal presence in Paris indicated another political transformation that the 28th President hoped to introduce through the peace conference, namely to preside over a major diplomatic event that would serve as the antithesis of those of the Old World, such as the 1815 Congress of Vienna. Wilson described the Congress that brought relative peace to Europe for roughly a century as “a Congress of ‘bosses’” whereas “Versailles...must be a meeting of the servants of the peoples represented by the delegates.”¹⁸⁷⁴ Indeed, the euphoria that greeted the President upon his arrival in France confirmed, at least to Wilson, that his ideas enjoyed broad public support, at least in a war-ravaged Europe. Arriving in Paris, more than two million Parisians—the largest demonstration in the history of France—took to the streets to welcome the US President and have a chance to see “Wilson, the Just” passing by.¹⁸⁷⁵ To transform the Presbyterian President’s globalist visions into a tangible postwar utopia, Wilson established the American Mission to Negotiate through the occupation of Hotel Crillon on la Place de la Concorde by 1,000 staff, revealing much about self-US perception.¹⁸⁷⁶

The US mission to the Peace Conference had an “unusual degree of experience in Far Eastern Affairs”: Secretary of State, Robert Lansing, had substantial knowledge of East Asian issues; Henry White (1850-1927), a distinguished Ambassador nominated by Wilson as one of five American Peace Commissioners to work on the peace treaty, was an old friend of the father of the Open Door Policy, John Hay, while the US representative on the Allied Military Council, General Tasker Bliss (1853-1930), possessed “a high sense of our national duty in Asia” through his past experience as a former army commander in the Philippines.¹⁸⁷⁷ Wilson relied heavily on his foreign policy advisors, such as the trustworthy Colonel House with whom the President would confer on a daily basis during his séjour in Paris and who was well briefed on East Asian affairs through the State Department. Yet even with such formidable knowledge assembled, the President’s overarching goal of implementing Point XIV remained paramount. For example, when Secretary Lansing suggested that the President downgrade the foundation of the League of Nations as a political priority, “Wilson removed him from any decision-making.”¹⁸⁷⁸ In short, the 28th President’s goal was nothing less than the forging of a new world order with the League of Nations as its centerpiece, including in East Asia.

9.2.11.2.2. Japan

The Japan that had emerged in 1919 differed greatly from the country that existed in 1914. Eager to enter the war, the limited Japanese military operations resulted in minimal casualties and maximum territorial gain. The Japanese economy profited from an unparalleled increase in foreign

¹⁸⁷² Curry, *Woodrow Wilson and Far Eastern Policy*, pg. 249.

¹⁸⁷³ Cude, Michael, *Woodrow Wilson: The First World War and Modern Internationalism*, London: Routledge, 2023, pg. 67.

¹⁸⁷⁴ Shimazu, “Wilsonian Vision for a New Liberal International Order”, pg. 15.

¹⁸⁷⁵ Knock, *To End All Wars*, pg. 195.

¹⁸⁷⁶ Shimazu, “Wilsonian Vision for a New Liberal International Order”, pg.14.

¹⁸⁷⁷ Curry, *Woodrow Wilson and Far Eastern Policy*, pg. 250.

¹⁸⁷⁸ Cude, *Woodrow Wilson*, pg. 68.

trade, catapulting Japan's balance of payments, by 1916, "into surplus for the first time in Japanese history", leading to an economic boom as chronicled by the pages of the *Ōsaka Asahi*: "during the span of the past two years Japan has secured a place in the sun, and she has become one of the happiest countries in the world...Her national wealth has increased leaps and bounds, and the volume of her foreign trade has witnessed an unprecedentedly tremendous increase...not only Japan has almost established herself as a self-supporting country, but she is now supplying the market of the world."¹⁸⁷⁹ This was not only the case economically, but also diplomatically. Since the outbreak of the First World War, Japan likewise enjoyed a period of unprecedented success and, more importantly, attention from the Great Powers. The antecedent conditions of the Settlement of 1919 saw a rise in the ability of Japan to concretely project her newfound Imperial power, be it through the seizure of Germany's far-flung Pacific possessions or imposing her political influence on a brittle Chinese Republic through the Twenty-One Demands and financial support for the Duan Government. This was done at the expense of the influence of the European powers, such as Britain, France, Russia, and Germany, who saw their attention diverted to the conduct of war and found that, by 1919, their power had been eclipsed by the surgent Japanese Empire.¹⁸⁸⁰ More importantly, for systemic purposes, as illustrated in the preceding chapter, as a member of the Entente, Japan was inundated with eclectic requests from various Allied powers for Japanese servicemen to assist in fighting on whatever front seemed at the time most vulnerable. As a member of the Entente, the Empire of Japan had gained worldwide standing.

Tokyo's newfound international standing was anchored in the set-up of the Peace Conference. Japan was accorded membership in the Group of Five "Powers with General Interests" that, as of 13 January 1919, convened as a continuing Conference of Great Powers, acting as the "combined executive and steering committee of the plenary Versailles Peace Congress."¹⁸⁸¹ To represent Japan in Paris, former Prime Minister, Sainoji Kinmochi was nominated as chief plenipotentiary, supported by Chinda Sutemi (1857-1929), Ambassador to Great Britain; Matsui Keishirō (1868-1946), Ambassador to France; Ijūin Hikokichi, Ambassador to Italy; and Makino Nobuaki, who acted as de facto chief representative.¹⁸⁸² The Japanese Delegation came to Paris having a clear focus on the gains which the Empire would like to achieve during the negotiations and has been described as being in a "remarkable state of readiness for the conference."¹⁸⁸³ The focus of Japanese policy makers was decidedly more worldly than the vision espoused by President Wilson. The coming to power of Hara Takashi as Japanese Prime Minister on 29 September 1918, following the resignation of Terauchi Masatake after the Rice Riots, signaled, for the first time, the advent of a civilian assuming the reigns of political power, but also the ascent of a charismatic individual committed to de-escalating relations between Tokyo and Washington. This did not harken change overnight, as the instructions to the Japanese delegates in Paris were based on serious debate and weighty consideration of an unknown global future that were held in Tokyo. While several of Japan's political leaders, diplomats, as well as the military establishment were cognizant of the 28th President's dream of "New Diplomacy" and his burning

¹⁸⁷⁹ Dickenson, *World War I and the Triumph of a New Japan*, pg. 21.

¹⁸⁸⁰ Jansen, *The Making of Modern Japan*, pg. 516.

¹⁸⁸¹ Mayer, Arno, *Politics and Diplomacy of Peacemaking: Containment and Counterrevolution at Versailles, 1918-1919*, New York: Vintage Books, 1969, pg. 410.

¹⁸⁸² Nakatani Tasashi, "What Peace Meant to Japan: The Changeover at Paris in 1919" in Minohara, Tosh, Tze-ki Hon & Dawley, Evan (eds.), *The Decade of the Great War: Japan and the Wider World in the 1910s*, Leiden: Brill, 2014, pg. 176.

¹⁸⁸³ Nish, Ian, *Japanese Foreign Policy in the Interwar Period*, Westport CT: Praeger Publishers, 2002, pg. 18.

desire to create a League of Nations, they simultaneously faced the challenge of, under unclear circumstances, securing the gains which Japan had wrought so easily from its “one chance in a thousand” geopolitical opportunity that the First World War had presented in a changed world order whose contours were, at the beginning of the Peace Conference, yet unclear.¹⁸⁸⁴

Hence, conferring in Tokyo, Japanese policy makers considered three scenarios: “(1.) the restoration of an old international order, in which Great Powers would dominate world politics and compete with each other for the extension of interests in ‘backward areas’...as they did before the Great War; (2.) the emergence of a Wilsonian world, which would not only end the acquisition of new colonies or territories by force or threat, but also rule out any mutual recognition of exclusive interests and privileges as a means of regulating their relationships; it would call on them to remove any economic barriers...to promote international free trade”; [and] (3.) a stable international order would fail to emerge as the European Great Powers, from their traumatic experience of war, were naturally expected to attach importance to state control of economic activities and strive to enclose their own market wherever possible, which would strictly limit the possibility of Japan’s economic development at home and expansion abroad.”¹⁸⁸⁵ While the first scenario had been pursued vigorously over the course of the Great War, culminating in the Twenty-One Demands and intervention in the Russian Far East, Tokyo was aware that such policies had resulted in serious friction with other powers, most notably the United States. While Japanese policy makers strongly preferred a continuation of the ‘old world order’ as espoused by the first scenario, there was also the recognition that some establishment of the idealist tenets of President Wilson “would not be a disaster for Japan...because it could provide the most dependable barrier against the worst scenario: the proliferation of protectionism.”¹⁸⁸⁶ This cautious openness to the ‘New Diplomacy’ was reflected in an Advisory Council debate on 8 December 1918, where Makino Nobuaki argued for a positive approach to Wilson’s ideas, including the League of Nations, that would assist Japan in overcoming racial obstacles to achieve the “just treatment that the Western Powers enjoyed in the international community.”¹⁸⁸⁷ The Paris Peace Conference could, therefore, present another opportunity of forwarding cooperation between Tokyo and Washington.

It should be underlined that the majority of the Advisory Committee did not partake in Makino’s enthusiasm. Itō Miyoji, openly questioned Makino as to his rationale for believing that Wilson’s League of Nations creature “could be anything more than an organization primarily in service of the Western powers, especially the Anglo-Saxons.”¹⁸⁸⁸ Such ideas were also espoused by another member of the Japanese Delegation to Paris, Konoe Fumimaro (1891-1945), first son of the pan-Asian nationalist, Konoe Atsumoro, serving as an advisor to former Prime Minister Sainoji. His ideas merit special attention, not only for their rejection of Wilsonian idealism, but also given the political role Konoe was to play in postwar Japan. On 12 December 1918, Konoe published an article entitled “A Call to Reject the Anglo-American Centered Peace”. In particular, Konoe criticized the captivation of the contemporary Japanese press “by the flowery language of Anglo-American politicians and [the acceptance of] their version of democratic humanitarianism, unable to detect their egoism—be that egoism of a self-conscious or a non-self-conscious kind—

¹⁸⁸⁴ Nakatani, “What Peace Meant to Japan”, pg. 172.

¹⁸⁸⁵ Ibid., pg. 173.

¹⁸⁸⁶ Ibid., pg. 174.

¹⁸⁸⁷ Ibid., pg. 177.

¹⁸⁸⁸ Ibid.

lurking behind it.”¹⁸⁸⁹ Konoe proceeded to advocate for a rejection of the League of Nations as a confluence of peace and humanity that was an antithesis to Japanese-centered thinking: “When I say we should think in a Japanese-centered way, I mean that the Japanese should confirm their legitimate right to survival... This is what humanitarianism dictates. Those who are still obsessed with peace, even when one’s own legitimate right to survival is violated, are enemies of humanity. Pacifism and humanitarianism are not necessarily the same. We must sometimes abandon peace for humanity.”¹⁸⁹⁰ Reflecting some of Makino’s limited openness to Wilsonian idealism, Konoe argues that he is “not at all opposed to the idea of a League of Nations *per se*. If this League could be organized around the principle of justice and humanity in their true meaning, it should be welcomed with open arms for the happiness of humanity and for all nation states”; however, Konoe called for its open rejection as, much in line with the sentiments of Foreign Minister Gotō, in the projected form it presented “an instrument for the great powers to gobble up lesser powers economically... Britain and the United States were the greatest economic beneficiaries of the war... Now, with the League’s arms reduction plans..., they are bent on controlling the world... Other nations, without the forceful means to express their aspirations,... would have to follow Britain and the United States like a herd of obedient sheep.”¹⁸⁹¹

While few Japanese policy makers adopted the harsh tone of Konoe, a convergence emerged between those advocates of some form of consideration for Wilsonian idealism and those who rejected it outright: while the ‘Old Diplomacy’ remained the vehicle of choice to pursue Tokyo’s interests in a post-bellum context, some consideration of how Japan could advance its own interests in a yet undefined postwar order to be characterized in some degree by the ideas of the 28th President became necessary. With this flexibility in mind, the Japanese Government issued its instructions to its Delegation to the Paris Peace Conference.

On 18 January 1919, the Japanese Government formally decided on the provisions it would seek included in the Draft Treaty concerning the Conditions of Peace. While numbering seven articles and four provisions, the essential elements boiled down to what have been deemed the “three principles of peace”. These included: first, the unconditional cession of all former German privileges acquired in China and the annexation of all German islands in the Western Pacific to Japan; second, not to interfere unnecessarily in any negotiation in which the Japanese Empire had no direct interest; and, third, when responding to problems in which all Allied and Associated Powers held a common interest, to cooperate with the majority of the powers.¹⁸⁹² Regarding the contested Fourteen Points of President Wilson, Tokyo ordered its plenipotentiaries to “delay the establishment of the League programme as much as possible.”¹⁸⁹³ Regarding the Fourteen Points, Japanese policy makers had expressed a concern about the concept of ‘self-determination’ as laid out by Wilson in his speech before Congress, noting that the US President’s idea of basing political

¹⁸⁸⁹ Konoe Fumimaro, “A Call to Reject the Anglo-American Centered Peace”, in Hotta, Eri, “Konoe Fumimaro: ‘A Call to Reject the Anglo-American Peace’, 1918” in Saaler, Sven & Szpilman, Christopher (eds.), Pan-Asianism: A Documentary History, New York: Rowman & Littlefield, 2011, pg. 315.

¹⁸⁹⁰ Ibid., pg. 316.

¹⁸⁹¹ Ibid., pp. 316-317.

¹⁸⁹² Nakatani, “What Peace Meant to Japan”, pg. 172.

¹⁸⁹³ Ibid.

authority on an exclusively national ethnic base could, if propagated by China or Korea, “not but collide with Japan’s national interests.”¹⁸⁹⁴

The Japanese Government, faced with the political inconveniences of Wilson’s understanding of ‘self-determination’, convened another session of the Advisory Council on Foreign Relations to hammer out Tokyo’s response. Quickly, the fate of the former German concession in Shandong crystalized as a prime Japanese objective. On 2 December 1918, both the Advisory Council and Hara Cabinet decided that the Japanese Government would return the territorial rights of Shandong to China only *after* Germany’s formal handing over of all of its former rights to Japan, additionally insisting on Tokyo’s inherent right to settle the exact details of any eventual retrocession directly with Beijing.¹⁸⁹⁵ Japan sought in the long-term to maintain its political and economic preponderance in China through, as much as possible, seeking bilateral solutions with China, much in the line of Yamagata’s thought throughout the Great War, ensuring therefore that the Western powers were not involved in such matters of regional concern. The short-term objective, however, was to secure Tokyo’s rights over the territory’s railways and mines which were seen as central to further Japanese efforts to expand into the Chinese interior. Minister of War Tanaka bluntly stated that, should Japan fail to place the Shandong Railway under its control, it would subsequently lose control over the peninsula as whole, leading to a severe loss of diplomatic and political capital. Itō Miyoji agreed on the possible negative consequences of such a move and presaged which nation might insist upon such an eventuality: “our national prestige will be impaired should we demand the permanent retention of Qingdao and later be forced to withdraw the demand because of America’s protest.”¹⁸⁹⁶ Hence, to avoid the materialization of such an unenviable situation, the Advisory Council curtly informed that Japanese delegates at Paris were to set forth “a plain and straightforward political argument based on the rights of a victor”¹⁸⁹⁷

Such specific regional objectives, central to Japan’s newly won standing as a great power, were required to be handled within the context of a global peace conference, dealing with a plethora of sensitive issue under enormous time constraints, and within the intellectual confines of an overall ideological framework of a US President hellbent on introducing a fuzzy concept called ‘New Diplomacy’ through the creation of an equally puzzling creature called the League of Nations. In order to better achieve the aforementioned specific goals, the Japanese Government, nevertheless, reluctantly allowed its representatives to give Japan’s basic approval of each of the Fourteen Points. As will be illustrated below, it is questionable that Japan was fully aware of the implications of its restrained approval, especially regarding Point XIV. Furthermore, the Japanese Delegation was to act in harmony, as much as circumstances allowed, with Japan’s British allies. At the same time however—in using the parlance of the 1990s— the Delegation was to, “keep one’s eyes on the prize”, namely a strengthening of Tokyo’s position in China. Such were the somewhat contradictory objectives that the Japanese Delegation was tasked to fulfill at the conference.

¹⁸⁹⁴ Stegewerns, Dick, “Japanese ‘Civilizational Critics’ and the National Identity of Their Asian Neighbours, 1918-1932: The Case of Yoshino Sakuzō” in Narangoa, Li & Cribb, Robert, Imperial Japan and National Identities in Asia, 1895-1945, London: RoutledgeCurzon, 2003, pg. 111.

¹⁸⁹⁵ Kawamura, Turbulence in the Pacific, pg. 140.

¹⁸⁹⁶ Ibid., pg. 141.

¹⁸⁹⁷ Ibid., pg. 140.

9.2.11.2.3. China

While China did not figure as a regional, let alone, global power at the Paris Peace Conference, Beijing's stance is worth noting. First and foremost, the fact that the Chinese were accorded an official seat at the Versailles negotiations marks a departure from earlier diplomatic endeavours, such as the Open Door Policy or the Settlement of 1905 where Beijing was not permitted to attend. Second, the Paris Peace Conference sparked a great wave of optimism amongst the Chinese public at large, as well as the Chinese Delegation dispatched to Versailles.¹⁸⁹⁸

The size of the Chinese Delegation sent to Paris, comprised of fifty delegates, reflected the great importance that China accorded to the conference. The plenipotentiaries likewise mirrored China's deep desire to finally claim its place within the international community. Comprised of de facto chief plenipotentiary Wellington Koo, Chinese Ambassador to Washington for the Beijing Government; Alfred Sze, the Cornell-educated Chinese Minister in London; Foreign Minister Lu Zhengxian (who represented Chinese interests at the 1907 Hague Conference); and Chengting Thomas Wang (1882-1961), a Yale graduate representing Sun Yat-sen's opposition faction in Washington, the Delegation represented "different generations of China's response to its challenges."¹⁸⁹⁹ Although highly fragmented as a group, the Chinese Delegation had come to Paris, seeking to use China's integration into the 'New Diplomacy' to halt further Japanese expansion, with their hopes having been raised by Wilson's stance on self-determination.¹⁹⁰⁰ Hence, they remained united in their resolution to wrestle back Chinese control over the former German concession of Shandong. From the warm reception the US accorded to the Chinese Delegation upon its arrival in Paris, the Chinese diplomats had every reason to assume that this goal would be successful.¹⁹⁰¹ Furthermore, the US Delegation in Paris had provided a comprehensive draft programme of nine points to assist China in attaining its goals whose major elements included the elimination of all foreign 'spheres of influence' to be placed under Chinese control, withdrawal of all foreign troops, and the neutralization of foreign interest in Chinese railways.¹⁹⁰²

Unlike the Japanese, the Chinese approach to the Peace Conference was very much in line with Wilsonian principles. The erudite Chinese diplomats that gathered in Paris sincerely believed that the postwar conference's main goal was to reset the mould of international relations. Such a goal was reflected in a preamble of a draft formal claim for restitution, presented to the Peace Conference in March 1919, stating that "the repudiation of Imperialism as a rule of action in the transactions of nations' lay at the heart of the objectives at Versailles."¹⁹⁰³ Like with President Wilson, Chinese expectations regarding the end result of negotiations, both within the Chinese Delegation and public at large, were substantial.

¹⁸⁹⁸ Bickers, Robert, Out of China: How the Chinese Ended the Era of Western Domination, London: Penguin Books, 2018, pg. 26.

¹⁸⁹⁹ Ibid., pg. 27.

¹⁹⁰⁰ Vogel, China and Japan, pg. 214.

¹⁹⁰¹ Bickers, Out of China, pg. 26.

¹⁹⁰² Elleman, Bruce, Wilson and China: A Revised History of the Shandong Question, New York: Taylor & Francis, 2002, pg. 38.

¹⁹⁰³ Ibid., pg. 30.

9.2.12. Negotiations concerning East Asia at the Paris Peace Conference

9.2.12.1. Introduction

International peace processes are constrained by two factors, the agenda and time. The negotiations on shaping the post-bellum world after its largest conflagration in history lasted from January to June 1919 and were challenged by both. In the end, considering the worldwide scope of the issues that comprised the agenda, there was a limit to the time that could be seriously dedicated to East Asian issues.¹⁹⁰⁴ Russia had been formally excluded from official participation in the Peace Conference from the outset, ensuring therefore that no issues pertaining to the ongoing Civil War in the Russian Far East would be addressed.¹⁹⁰⁵ Yet issues pertaining to East Asian questions that had been created by the limited military operations in the Pacific did make it on the official agenda. The attention paid to these issues, however scant, helped shape this ‘critical juncture’s’ legacy system. This dissertation now proceeds to an examination of these issues: Japan’s attitude towards the creation of the League of Nations; the fate of the former German territories in Micronesia; the question of Germany’s former concession at Shandong; and Japan’s proposal against racial discrimination.

9.2.12.2. The Creation of the League of Nations

The Japanese Government, with its Delegation arriving in Paris, had not realized that the acceptance of Wilson’s Fourteen Points as the foundation for an armistice signified the basic affirmation of the creation of the League of Nations.¹⁹⁰⁶ Four of the five Delegations of the Big Five nations came to Paris in January 1919 with their own draft versions of their respective vision for the League of Nations. Japan, however, constituted the sole exception.¹⁹⁰⁷ As noted, Japan’s major objective at Versailles was to legally approve its claim to Germany’s former Pacific Empire, all else was of secondary importance at best. Given the vast majority of military action having taken place far from East Asia, Japan was not indebted to the United States, as were the European Allies, for Germany’s ultimate decision to throw in the towel. At the same time, given the constellation of political and economic power in East Asia in 1919, fostering good relations with the United States was essential for the future welfare of the Empire. To add to Japan’s unique position in Paris, the Japanese Empire possessed no experience in multilateral diplomacy, with the Paris Peace Conference marking the first occasion where Tokyo had been accorded a seat at the table of an international meeting where issues of regional and global importance were placed for discussion in a wider format involving all Great Powers. Paris, therefore, presented “new opportunities to achieve world respectability and, at the same time, threatened to circumscribe Japan’s independent, regional prerogatives and even rob the nation of the fruits of war.”¹⁹⁰⁸ The creation of the League of Nations threatened to entrench both positive and negative elements of Japan’s inclusion in multilateral diplomacy.

¹⁹⁰⁴ Nish, *Japanese Foreign Policy*, pg. 123.

¹⁹⁰⁵ Tillman, Seth, *Anglo-American Relations at the Paris Peace Conference of 1919*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1961, pg. 136.

¹⁹⁰⁶ Shimazu Naoko, *Japan, Race, and Equality: The Racial Equality Proposal of 1919*, London: Routledge, 2002, pg. 16.

¹⁹⁰⁷ Burkman, Thomas, *Japan and the League of Nations: Empire and World Order, 1914-1938*, Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2007, pg. 60.

¹⁹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, pg. 61.

Japan's inexperience was highlighted by its lack of preparation for the establishment of the League of Nations. While Japan held, in Wilsonian terms, a strong preference for the 'Old Diplomacy', its policy makers were decidedly nescient on the exact type of creation that Wilson was so intent on conjuring into existence. The Japanese Foreign Ministry remained, until the start of the Paris Peace Conference, "ignorant about the substantive aspects of the new organization", creating an atmosphere of "apprehension and anxiety."¹⁹⁰⁹ Such disquietude was enhanced by the dominant view in the Foreign Ministry that the League of Nations, as an international organization, would be used to erode Japanese national sovereignty. Vice Foreign Minister Shidehara took the position that the League of Nations "would pose a serious problem if it meant Japan's losing control of its own destiny to an international body", while even Makino, who, as seen, had advocated for the League of Nations in the Advisory Council, remained "personally apprehensive about the idea of relinquishing state sovereignty to an international organization" carrying out obligations in concert with other nations.¹⁹¹⁰ Adding to this was the deep suspicion of the US and Britain that had accumulated amongst Japanese policy makers over tensions in China and, more recently, in the Russian Far East. The whole idea of the League of Nations furthermore "seemed too hypothetical and unrealistic to be workable, especially as Wilson, who was its principal advocate, had not yet announced any concrete plan."¹⁹¹¹

Shortly after the arrival of the Japanese Delegation in Paris, Japan's representatives in the Council of Ten, Ambassadors Chinda and Matsui, were informed that the creation of the League of Nations "would head the schedule of conference business."¹⁹¹² At the same time, it came to the attention of the Japanese Delegation that the draft of the League Covenant had already been sketched out in detail by the Anglo-Saxons, meaning that Japan had had no real opportunity to shape its tenets. This became painstakingly clear on 3 February 1919 when President Wilson distributed the draft Covenant, one that "had already acquired an element of permanence that precluded any Japanese attempt to subvert or substantially modify the League scheme."¹⁹¹³ Given their instructions, the lack of Japanese zeal for the League of Nations was apparent. Makino informed the Council of Ten that Tokyo could "not bind itself to the League sight unseen" and protested Wilson's insistence on making the League constitution an integral part of the peace treaty.¹⁹¹⁴ On the other hand, as the debates on the League of Nations continued, China voiced its approval of the creation of the League of Nations, with plenipotentiary Koo declaring that "no people have been more eager to see the formation of the League of Nations than the people of China."¹⁹¹⁵ The Japanese Delegation did not react to Koo's words. Wilson became concerned at the Japanese position. As Japan had, as a member of the Supreme Allied War Council, accepted the creation of the League as a basis for the armistice with Germany, active Japanese support of the League, was something more than expected.

Questions of status, however, tipped the Japanese decision towards according support, however tepid, towards the League Covenant. It became clear to Japanese representatives that the

¹⁹⁰⁹ Shimazu, *Japan, Race, and Equality*, pg. 47.

¹⁹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 47-48.

¹⁹¹¹ *Ibid.*, pg. 48.

¹⁹¹² Burkman, *Japan and the League of Nations.*, pg. 64.

¹⁹¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, pg. 65.

¹⁹¹⁵ *Ibid.*

project of a League Covenant had advanced to the point that had made it impossible for Japan to hinder its adoption. The failure of Japan's racial discrimination proposal, as illustrated below, would concretely underline the inability of Tokyo to impose its will on the Conference unilaterally. As a post-Conference Delegation report illustrates, when confronted with possible inconveniences to Japan that would arise from the League's adoption, such as disarmament and collective sanctions, Tokyo had two options: "first, to join the League while attempting to modify the substance of its charter so as to remove obstacles to the future development of the Empire, or, second, stand completely outside the League and act independently."¹⁹¹⁶ In opting for the latter scenario, Japan might retain total policy freedom but it would simultaneously sacrifice its newfound international standing that had enabled Japanese participation at Versailles. Japan would be "racially and diplomatically isolated" and faced with the prospect of possible boycotts of Japanese exports and would have to negotiate a separate peace with Germany.¹⁹¹⁷ The Japanese mission at Versailles, therefore, viewed that the Empire had no choice but to cooperate in the establishment of the League of Nations. This almost stoic attitude to the League's creation is best summarized by the words of one of its strongest advocates, Makino, who recalled his nervousness while debating the structure and rules of the organization: "It was very unpleasant for me to attend the meetings of the League of Nations Commission because of my apprehension that the collective responsibilities required by the Covenant would somehow resist Japan's rights. Nevertheless, since the Covenant had become the foundation of the peace conference, I had no choice but to join the game."¹⁹¹⁸ All Japanese obstruction to Wilson's international cooperation fetish was lifted. Consequently, having decided to play the game, the Japanese Delegation opted to focus on the implementation of its instructions: adding a clause against racial discrimination in the League Covenant and securing Japanese claims to German territory in the Pacific and its concession in China.

9.2.12.3. The Fate of the German Pacific Empire

The Japanese Delegation had very specific instructions regarding the fate of former German Micronesia (the Mariana; Marshall; and Caroline Islands). As laid out in Tokyo's official claim to the Peace Conference, they were to be annexed to the Empire, and Japan's justification to the conference is worth quoting at length: "Under these circumstances [following Japan's declaration of war against Germany], it became necessary to occupy the German Pacific islands immediately in order to crush the enemy scheme. Thereafter the German possessions to the north of the equator were placed under the occupation and control of Japan. As Japan has been endeavouring to secure a stable livelihood for the inhabitants of these islands by giving them work and providing them with schools for the education of their children, they are quite satisfied with the current arrangement. The total area of these islands is about 2500 square kilometers with a population of a few thousand consisting of many tribes...these inhabitants still remain in a primitive state and have no ability to establish political, economic, and social organizations in a modern sense by themselves. For Japan, which has actually occupied these islands, it is necessary, in view of her contribution in bringing about the current situation and of the agreed popular opinion in Japan, to continue to protect these islanders and to improve their living conditions by making

¹⁹¹⁶ Ibid., pg. 66.

¹⁹¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁹¹⁸ Ibid., pg. 68.

her possession of these islands definite.”¹⁹¹⁹ The Japanese Delegation felt especially justified in presenting its case as it had, as noted, secured promises of support for its claims on Germany’s Pacific Empire from Great Britain, France, and Russia in 1917.

What Japan saw as a symbolic extension of its power into the southern Pacific took on weightier geopolitical consequences during the discussions on a postwar world, with the consequences of such a move awaking concern amongst the British Dominions of Australia and New Zealand as well as anxiety about the defence of the British Empire as a whole.¹⁹²⁰ The sensitivity of the British Dominions’ attitude towards Japan’s territorial claims was echoed in the Australian House of Representatives debate on the Treaty of Versailles in September 1919: “Australia has taken its frontiers northward to Rabaul, but the frontiers of Japan have been brought southward 3,000 miles to the equator, until their front door and our backdoor almost adjoin.”¹⁹²¹ Such statements underlined the threat Japan now provoked in Melbourne and Auckland. President Wilson was likewise concerned about Japanese demands to annex Micronesia, basing his logic on both realist and idealistic consideration. While Wilson did not advocate for US annexation of the former German territories, he opposed their joining the Japanese Empire as such a development could endanger US vital interests in the Philippines and Guam. Furthermore, the President strongly believed that the US could, through its occupation of the Philippines, “enlighten the Filipinos through the implementation of policies imbued with supposedly universal virtues, such as freedom and democracy...[and] doubted that Japan could accomplish the same if it claimed the former German islands.”¹⁹²² Other branches of government took differing views: the US Navy argued that Japanese ownership of the islands would not constitute a particular threat to the US in the Pacific, provided that a clause on non-fortification and the indirect rule through a League of Nations mandate, stating that “Japan could only initiate a surprise attack, not a full-scale war in the Pacific”, while the State Department argued for solving the problem by returning the islands to Germany as it would take years to regain her naval power after the Great War and, as such, could not threaten the US position.¹⁹²³ Yet after consultation with the State Department’s East Asian specialists, the idea of mandating the territories under a mandate of the League of Nations became the suggested path to follow. This was in line with the 28th President’s particular vision of the Paris Peace Conference not tolerating any solutions made in the “old style” and that “only the adoption of a cleansing process would recreate or regenerate the world.”¹⁹²⁴

This idealistic definition of a mandate was an offshoot of Wilson’s Fourteen Points that, in 1918, defined mandates as follows: “a colonial power acts not as owner of its colonies, but as a trustee for the native and the interests of the society of nations...The terms on which colonial administration is conducted are a matter of international concern...and the peace conference may, therefore, write a code of colonial conduct binding upon all colonial powers.”¹⁹²⁵ The mandate

¹⁹¹⁹ Kajima, *The Diplomacy of Japan*, Volume III, pp. 388-389.

¹⁹²⁰ Shimazu Naoko, “Japan at the Paris Peace Conference of 1919: A Centennial Reflection”, *Japan Review*, Vol. 3, No. 1, Summer 2019, pg. 9.

¹⁹²¹ *Ibid.*, pg. 10.

¹⁹²² Takahara Shusuke, “The Wilson Administration and the Mandate Question in the Pacific: Struggle among the Powers over the Disposition of Former German Colonies” in Minohara et al. (eds), *The Decade of the Great War*, pp. 150-151.

¹⁹²³ *Ibid.*, pg. 152.

¹⁹²⁴ Kawamura, *Turbulence in the Pacific*, pg. 135.

¹⁹²⁵ Takahara, “The Wilson Administration and the Mandate Question in the Pacific”, pg. 155.

option provided an ideal solution as it entailed handing over control of a defeated enemy's territory to the international community in opposed to the distribution of spoils of war that characterized 'Old Diplomacy'. The Wilson become adamant that all of former German colonies therefore be governed forthwith by a mandate system and sought to make the League of Nations the sole means for handling postwar territorial issues, thereby making it a staple of the 'New Diplomacy'.¹⁹²⁶ Wilson, therefore, sought to use the former German Micronesia as a showcase for internationalism, making them "the common property of the League of Nations" to be "given to one of the smaller states to administer as the mandatory", all in the name of the betterment of the natives.¹⁹²⁷ British Prime Minister, David Lloyd George (1863-1945), reacted with surprise upon hearing of Wilson's mandate proposal and, after consultation with the Foreign Office and British Dominions, came to the conclusion that the idea was simply unacceptable. Given the strong interest in Australia and New Zealand in annexing the German islands, occupied since 1914, a debate ensued over what the exact meaning of a League of Nations mandate entailed. Confronted with Wilson's insistence on bequeathing a League of Nations mandate on former colonies, the British submitted a draft resolution to solve the issue on 29 January 1919. According to this plan, mandated areas were divided into three categories (Class A, Class B, and Class C) and "determined the administrative policy and mandatory state for each in proportion to their political and economic conditions and location."¹⁹²⁸ Claims to Micronesia, both north and south of the equator, were classified as Class C, indicating a low level of political and economic development, a status which, in practice, allowed such territories "to be administered as part of the mandatory power."¹⁹²⁹ This British Empire compromise, having South African Minister of Defence, Jan Smuts (1870-1950), as its author, combined the realism of annexation with the idealistic obsessions of the 28th President.

The Japanese Delegation was surprised to learn about the mandate plan as it did not correspond in any way to the situation on the ground: the Japanese military had captured the German territories and was already administering them. Combined with the assurances of approval of postwar annexation from London and Paris, Tokyo expected nothing less than formal cession to Japan. Indeed, official head of the Japanese Delegation Saionji confessed that Japan "faced unexpected difficulties" in resolving this issue, with "the members of the Japanese Delegation in Paris...[being] astonished by the unexpected obstacles they now faced in the annexation of the islands."¹⁹³⁰ Faced with some sort of British conformity to the US President's interest in international mandates, the Japanese entered into discussions with the British and quietly abandoned Tokyo's request for outright annexation.¹⁹³¹ Instead, the Japanese expressed interest in becoming an administrator of the islands, thereby agreeing to the British proposal and supporting Australia's mandate claim south of the Equator.

This allowed, on 30 January 1919, an agreement to be reached following fifteen rounds of consultations that had been held since 24 January 1919, with meetings being convened twice daily. The agreed text reads as follows: "Finally, they consider that there are territories, such as South West Africa and certain of the South Pacific Islands, which, owing to the sparseness of their

¹⁹²⁶ Kajima, *The Diplomacy of Japan*, Volume III, pg. 389.

¹⁹²⁷ Kawamura, *Turbulence in the Pacific*, pg. 135.

¹⁹²⁸ Takahara, "The Wilson Administration and the Mandate Question in the Pacific", pg. 156.

¹⁹²⁹ Kajima, *The Diplomacy of Japan*, pg. 390.

¹⁹³⁰ Takahara, "The Wilson Administration and the Mandate Question in the Pacific", pg. 161.

¹⁹³¹ Kajima, *The Diplomacy of Japan*, pg. 390.

population, or their small size, or their remoteness from the centres of civilization, or their geographical contiguity to the territory of the Mandatory, and other circumstances, can be best administered under the laws of the Mandatory as integral portions there(of) subject to the safeguards above mentioned in the interests of the indigenous population.”¹⁹³² Through such an interpretation, the Japanese, supported by the British Empire, were able to cloak outright annexation of the ‘Old Diplomacy’ in the flowery, but undefined, concoctions of President Wilson’s ‘New Diplomacy’. Given the agenda and time constraints of the Paris Peace Conference, President Wilson, despite his idealist visions of League of Nations mandates sweeping away the methods of supposedly bygone eras, in actual practice, accorded “the lowest priority to questions concerning the disposition of the German colonies.”¹⁹³³ Therefore, in the end, “the final draft of the mandate system [as proposed by the Japanese-British Empire compromise] took on the character of annexation.”¹⁹³⁴

9.2.12.4. The Shandong Question

The question of the future of the former German concession at Shandong was also to be decided at the Paris Peace Conference. To say that the political implications of the solution to the Shandong issue as included in the Treaty of Versailles far outweighed the fate of the German Pacific Islands is an understatement. Indeed, the author of one of the first comprehensive histories of the Shandong question, wrote that “in the history of international politics there are but few, if any, incidents, the magnitude and significance of which can at all be compared to the magnitude and significance of the Shandong question...which has stood out so conspicuously as a case of imperialism and international immorality, or which has aroused so much moral indignation throughout the world as has this so-called Shandong question.”¹⁹³⁵ The antecedent conditions prior to the negotiations at Versailles have been established: Germany had leased the Shandong Peninsula from the Qing only to have it captured by Japan at the close of 1914, assuming that, as the victor, Tokyo had overtaken the privileges previously exercised by Berlin. Indeed, China’s ultimate acceptance of the Twenty-One Demands in addition to the Sino-Japanese Agreement of 1918 seemed to confer a legal continuation of this *de facto* reality. Moreover, the fact that Japan had, by the start of the Paris Peace Conference, secured agreements from the Entente, its formal ally Great Britain, France, Russia, and Italy, “put the Japanese Delegation in an almost legally unassailable position at Paris.”¹⁹³⁶ However, given the idealistic approach of President Wilson and the key role of the United States at the Versailles negotiations, what seemed to be an evident conclusion metamorphosed into a seminal moment in Chinese history.

Negotiations to resolve the final status of Germany’s former territory in China commenced on 27 January 1919 when Japanese plenipotentiary Makino presented Tokyo’s official justification demanding the unconditional cession of the rights previously enjoyed by the German Government, including the railway and other rights, most importantly mining, in the Shandong province. It closely mirrored the decision of the Advisory Council in December 1918. Makino addressed the

¹⁹³² Ibid.

¹⁹³³ Kawamura, *Turbulence in the Pacific*, pg. 135.

¹⁹³⁴ Takahara, “The Wilson Administration and the Mandate Question in the Pacific”, pg. 167.

¹⁹³⁵ Wood, Zay, *The Shantung Question: A Study in Diplomacy and World Politics*, Washington D.C.: University Publications of America, 1922, pg. 13.

¹⁹³⁶ Elleman, *Wilson and China*, pg. 8.

Council of Ten, informing the delegates that “the Japanese troops, in cooperation with the British, succeeded in capturing the leased territory and the Tsinan Railway which the Germans were using for military purposes. Since then, Japan has continued to enjoy the rights held by Germany at that time...At present the principle purposes of Japanese participation in the war...have fortunately been attained but Japan cannot rest assured when faced with the situation which is likely to lead to the revival of Germany’s maneuvers in the Far East that may render meaningless all the results achieved at such a great cost.”¹⁹³⁷ After Makino finished speaking, Chinese plenipotentiary, Wellington Koo, requested the right to rebuttal, stating that as “the question was of such vital interest to China” he “hoped the Great Powers would reserve decision until the views of China had been heard.”¹⁹³⁸ The Council of Ten consented to hear the Chinese case the following day. Therefore, on 28 January 1919, Koo, the first Chinese representative to put forward his country’s views on a question that touched upon its strategic interests in peace negotiations since the Settlement of 1895, responded by thanking Japan and Britain for liberating Chinese territory, adding that “since the opening of war between Germany and China invalidated the treaties between these two countries, the Chinese people wish to have not only Kiaochow Bay but also the railway and other concessions returned to her. It is improper and unreasonable to take from Germany what concessions she had and confer them on another country. The Shandong province is where Confucius and Mencius were born...therefore it is not unjust for China to demand its return. I wish to see the decision for its return actually made at the Peace Conference.”¹⁹³⁹ While Koo underlined that China possessed “every confidence in Japan’s assurance” that it would not retain the leased territory and other rights in Shandong, he declared that “between direct and indirect reinstitution”, “China would prefer the first”, as “it was always easier to take one step than two if it led to the same place.”¹⁹⁴⁰ Koo, speaking in the Council of Ten with Wilson and Clemenceau present, insisted therefore on the full and unconditional direct return of the Chinese province, and with it all the rights that had been ceded to Germany, to Beijing’s sole authority. He concluded with an appeal to the principle of self-determination and internationalism as advocated by President Wilson in his Fourteen Points: “The Chinese Delegation therefore trusted the Conference...would give full weight to the fundamental and transcendent rights of China, the rights of political sovereignty and territorial integrity, as well as to her earnest desire to serve the cause of universal peace.”¹⁹⁴¹

This was not in any of the scenarios that the Japanese Delegation had considered, as they viewed the Shandong question as a foregone conclusion rather than the subject of a lengthy debate.¹⁹⁴² Makino was taken aback by Koo’s statement and retorted that the Chinese Government had explicitly accepted the military occupation of the territory through a bilateral treaty. Upon the request of Wilson and Clemenceau, a copy of this treaty was furnished to the Council of Ten, a turn of events that the Japanese Delegation ardently sought to avoid as it could call into question in an international forum the bilateral arrangements already signed between Tokyo and Beijing.¹⁹⁴³ Makino responded that he would first enquire with Tokyo if it contained any secret provisions.

¹⁹³⁷ Kajima, *The Diplomacy of Japan*, Volume III, pg. 363.

¹⁹³⁸ Elleman, *Wilson and China*, pg. 42.

¹⁹³⁹ Kajima, *The Diplomacy of Japan*, Volume III, pg. 363.

¹⁹⁴⁰ Wu Rong, “The Making of ‘Public Opinion’: Media and Open Diplomacy in China’s Strategy at Versailles and the May Fourth Movement”, *Modern Asian Studies* (2023), 57, pg. 1361.

¹⁹⁴¹ Elleman, *Wilson and China*, pg. 42.

¹⁹⁴² Kawamura, *Turbulence in the Pacific*, pg. 145.

¹⁹⁴³ Curry, *Woodrow Wilson and Far Eastern Policy*, pp. 263-264.

Koo objected to this treaty's validity, assuming that Makino was referring to the Twenty-One Demands of 1915, stating that they had been signed under duress and their acceptance was made only "after an ultimatum from Japan...even if the treaties and notes had been entirely valid, the fact of China's declaration of war on Germany had altered the situation in such a way that on the principle of *rebus stantibus* they could not be enforced today."¹⁹⁴⁴ Here, 'Old Diplomacy' reared its head in a rather decisive way. In his speech to the Council of Ten, Koo only made reference to the Twenty-One Demands, and *not* the more recent secret Sino-Japanese Agreement of September 1918. This later agreement was, in fact, the treaty to which Makino was referring. In this context, it was decidedly unfortunate that Koo, and the entire Chinese Delegation—including Foreign Minister Lu—were unaware of this secret agreement's content, including the provision explicitly stating the Xu Shichang Government's recognition of the Japanese military presence in Shandong after its return to China in exchange for railway loans.¹⁹⁴⁵ Makino then cryptically underscored that, due to de facto Japanese control of a territory it had taken by conquest, before "disposing of it to a third party it was necessary that Japan obtain the right of free disposal from Germany...what should take place thereafter had already been the subject of an intercourse of views with China."¹⁹⁴⁶ In presenting its case to the international community on the righteousness of China's claims to its province, Koo's arguments, unbeknownst to him, were referring to a treaty that had been superseded by events. As other issues on the Council of Ten's agenda, including the Convention of the League of Nations, had become bogged down, the Shandong question was not placed on the agenda for the next two months.¹⁹⁴⁷

With the Shandong question in limbo, the diplomatic row between Japan and China continued. The US held a clear position on the Shandong question before the Paris Peace Conference. The State Department took the following view of the overall situation at the moment of the armistice: "with respect to Shandong the German rights there lapsed with all Sino-German treaties upon the declaration of war. As succession of treaty rights from Germany to Japan is therefore not possible", with this view being supported by the Naval Advisory Staff and the Intelligence Section.¹⁹⁴⁸ Moreover US Minister Reinsch in Beijing, a devout adherent of Wilson's 'New Diplomacy', made a personal appeal to President Wilson in Paris. On 16 January 1919, Reinsch openly criticized Japanese wartime actions in China and beseeched President Wilson to intervene personally on China's side to resolve the Shandong issue, writing "I have been forced through the experience of five years to the conclusion that the methods applied by the Japanese military masters can lead only to evil and destruction...only the refusal to accept the result of Japanese secret manipulation in China during the last four years, particularly the establishment of Japanese political influence and privileged position in Shandong" would inhibit total Japanese dominance over China.¹⁹⁴⁹ Reinsch argued, in line with the State Department, that German rights in its Chinese concession had lapsed with the Chinese entrance into the Great War on the side of the Allies and that, therefore, a direct transfer of German rights to Japan was excluded. The Far Eastern Specialists at the American Mission in Paris agreed with Reinsch's assessment and advocated the President's endorsement, underlining the danger that Japanese expansion posed to

¹⁹⁴⁴ Elleman, *Wilson and China*, pg. 43.

¹⁹⁴⁵ Bickers, *Out of China*, pp. 26-27.

¹⁹⁴⁶ Elleman, *Wilson and China*, pp. 42-43.

¹⁹⁴⁷ Kajima, *The Diplomacy of Japan*, Volume III, pg. 364.

¹⁹⁴⁸ Curry, *Woodrow Wilson and Far Eastern Policy*, pg. 262.

¹⁹⁴⁹ Kawamura, *Turbulence in the Pacific*, pg. 137.

East Asia as a whole, concluding that “Japan must be restrained if justice is to prevail or liberty survive in the Far East.”¹⁹⁵⁰

Wellington Koo’s presentation to the Council of Ten was powerful, with Lansing stating that the Chinese plenipotentiary “simply overwhelmed the Japanese with his argument” and, after being informed of Koo’s diplomatic *Alleingang*, President Xi Shichang sent a telegram to Paris comparing Koo’s speech ‘to plucking a pearl from a black dragon’ (*Tàn lí dé zhū* / 探骊得珠), an idiom referring to high risk actions that promise high gains.¹⁹⁵¹ Despite such apparent resounding success, Koo’s reference to previous Sino-Japanese treaties proved to pose a serious legal issue, indicating that the Chinese position held no standing as Beijing had already accepted Japanese military and economic rights in the province.¹⁹⁵² Nevertheless the Japanese Government had been disturbed by having to reveal the details of its secret bilateral diplomacy with Beijing to an international forum. As such, the situation began to degrade rapidly. New Foreign Minister Uchida instructed the Japanese Minister in Beijing to warn the Chinese Government against publishing the details of its bilateral treaties with Tokyo without prior consultation with Japan: “[The Japanese Minister] remonstrated, declaring that his Government was greatly displeased with the statement of Minister Koo to the effect that the Chinese Government had no objection to making known the secret agreements. This ought not to be done without in each case first obtaining consent of the Japanese Government.”¹⁹⁵³

The Chinese, however, seeing that Japan’s claim to rights in Shandong were indeed supported by bilateral treaties, Foreign Minister Lu cabled Beijing and suggested that China mount a strategy of “using public opinion as a backing” of Koo’s speech to the Council.¹⁹⁵⁴ Koo and Alfred Sao-ke Sze advocated for China conduct an active propaganda campaign that would augment domestic and international support for China’s moral claims to Shandong. This was seen as an appropriate compensation for China’s political and military weakness and drew on the success of exposing the severity of Japan’s Twenty-One Demands in 1915 that assisted in softening the final list of demands that Tokyo accepted.¹⁹⁵⁵ Furthermore, public diplomacy had the added bonus of being in line with Wilson’s ‘New Diplomacy’ that was supposed to be open to public scrutiny. As a result, Foreign Minister Lu ordered Government newspapers to publicize Koo’s arguments made at Versailles “in order to reflect the nationwide opinion of the people and to show the solidarity of the country.”¹⁹⁵⁶ With the foundation of a new Republic and the death of Yuan Shikai, combined with the professionalization of the Chinese press through the arrival of Western news agencies, the new Chinese press allowed the public to have, by 1919, unprecedented access to political information: “in urban China, people viewed newspapers as a critically important tool for discussing and finding solutions to society’s problems.”¹⁹⁵⁷ The Chinese campaign also included regular petitioning, even by opposition parties, of international policy makers to outline China’s moral claim to Shandong, as illustrated by the 25 April 1919 petition to President Wilson by Sun Yat-Sen, leader of the opposition Guangzhou government and other

¹⁹⁵⁰ Ibid.

¹⁹⁵¹ Wu, “The Making of Public Opinion and Open Diplomacy”, pg. 1372.

¹⁹⁵² Curry, *Woodrow Wilson and Far Eastern Policy*, pg. 264.

¹⁹⁵³ Elleman, *Wilson and China*, pg. 62.

¹⁹⁵⁴ Wu, “The Making of Public Opinion and Open Diplomacy”, pg. 1362.

¹⁹⁵⁵ Ibid., pg. 1365.

¹⁹⁵⁶ Ibid., pg. 1369.

¹⁹⁵⁷ Ibid., pg. 1370.

southern Chinese leaders, “The Twenty-One Demands of Japan and other secret conventions imposed upon China by threatening war...are contrary to the letter and spirit of the Fourteen Points...There will not be permanent peace [in the] Far East unless they are abrogated.”¹⁹⁵⁸ A large number of groups were organized across China with the sole purpose of supporting and checking on the Chinese Delegation in Paris and actively publicized its actions.¹⁹⁵⁹ Hence, through its mobilization of popular Chinese opinion to counter the existence of previously-signed, valid Sino-Japanese treaties, the Chinese Delegation created a strong link between the domestic situation in China and the resolution of the Shandong question in Paris.

In the meantime, on 4 February 1919, President Wilson received information that the Japanese were seeking to retain “the whole of Shang-Tung permanently”, threatening China with military intervention and a cessation of all financial support.¹⁹⁶⁰ President Wilson was disturbed by this news and instructed Secretary of State Lansing on the following “I recognize the seriousness of this matter and think that it might be well for you to send a message to Reinsch, telling him to advise the Chinese Government to stand firm, and a message to [Ambassador] Morris in Tokyo instructing him to have a friendly conversation with the Minister of Foreign Affairs...and express our distress that there should be these indications that the Japanese Government is not willing to trust the fairness and justice of the Peace Conference.”¹⁹⁶¹ Minister Reinsch agreed and warned President Wilson from Beijing on the domestic consequences of any perceived infringement of a direct transfer of Shandong to China: “The Chinese nation asks for no better fate than to be allowed freedom to follow in the footsteps of America...[if] China should be disappointed in her confidence at the present time the consequences of such disillusionment on her moral and political development would be disastrous.”¹⁹⁶² The 28th President continued to pursue his favoured approach to China while Japan’s outrage continued at an unscripted attempt to publicly undermine a recent bilateral agreement with the Chinese Government.

As such, the opening arguments on the Shandong question created an open clash between the ‘New Diplomacy’, as espoused by the Chinese Delegation, and the ‘Old Diplomacy’, as practiced by Japan. Suddenly, the question of diplomatic reputation for both China and Japan was on the line, a critical concept in the cultural approach to foreign relations of both countries: China would “regard receiving Shandong from Japan as a great dishonour—since Japan had traditionally been considered a tributary state of China”; furthermore China would forego the opportunity to revoke China’s 1915 and 1918 agreements with Japan and accord China standing in the international community by receiving Shandong directly from a European “great power”.¹⁹⁶³ The Chinese Delegation based its argumentation on the idealist universalist rhetoric of President Wilson, no doubt encouraged from the US Delegation in Paris and Minister in Beijing. At the same time, the Chinese Delegation was unaware of the bilateral secret agreement that Beijing had signed with Tokyo, an agreement that was, under international law, unable to be neither unilaterally rescinded nor altered without the consent of all parties.¹⁹⁶⁴ On the other hand, the Japanese

¹⁹⁵⁸ Elleman, *Wilson and China*, pg. 74.

¹⁹⁵⁹ Chow Tse-Tsung, *The May Fourth Movement: Intellectual Revolution in Modern China*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1960, pg. 89.

¹⁹⁶⁰ Kawamura, *Turbulence in the Pacific*, pg. 146.

¹⁹⁶¹ Curry, *Woodrow Wilson and Far East Policy*, pg. 265.

¹⁹⁶² Elleman, *Wilson and China*, pp. 74-75.

¹⁹⁶³ *Ibid.*, pg. 46.

¹⁹⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, pg. 33.

Delegation was equally intransigent in its stance as, in the words of Japanese Minister to Beijing, Obata Yukichi (1873-1947), “to succumb to the Chinese demands because of Western pressure would undermine Japan’s international prestige and national self-respect, and that the Japanese people could not bear such a ‘humiliation’”.¹⁹⁶⁵ Makino’s public announcement at Versailles regarding the existence of legally binding treaties pertaining to Shandong came as a severe shock to the US Delegation, intent on helping China to the fullest.¹⁹⁶⁶ To add to this, the Japanese Delegation presented to President Wilson a copy of the bilateral wartime agreements with Great Britain, Russia, France, and Italy promising each country’s support for the transfer of German rights in Shandong to Japan.

On 21 April 1919, the Japanese Delegation reissued its proposals regarding Shandong, underlining that Japan had “expressed conventions with China dealing with this question and [Japan] means to insist upon their exact fulfillment.”¹⁹⁶⁷ On the same day, another emergency meeting of the Advisory Council was convened to discuss the Japanese approach to the final discussions on Shandong in the Council of Three. The consensus in Tokyo was that China’s actions in attempting to override bilateral treaties through public opinion and manipulation of a US President, signified a “betrayal.”¹⁹⁶⁸ Should Beijing succeed in obtaining its goal of direct transfer, the previous Sino-Japanese treaties would lose any further significance, hence no further compromise, neither in favour of the Chinese nor of President Wilson, could be entertained. It was not only the situation over Shandong that was coming to a head. The Paris Peace Conference had undergone serious challenges since the opening of the debate on the Shandong question, with Italy having officially abandoned negotiations after the proposed Treaty of Versailles refused to accord Rome its desired territorial claims. Tokyo had chosen its timing with intent. On the same day, President Wilson denied Italy’s request for Fiume and other territorial claims in the Kingdom of Hungary. As a result, the Italian Delegation left the Paris Peace Conference in protest on 23 April 1919. The Italian walkout occurred before the apotheosis of the Peace Conference was set to occur, namely when the German representatives were arriving to have the Treaty of Versailles terms dictated to them. The time to conclude pending business on Shandong had, in Japanese eyes, arrived. Makino visited Wilson and underlined that Tokyo would appreciate a decision being made within a week, stating that because of China’s “hostile propaganda attacking Japan...the Shandong problem is no longer a matter of leased territory, but has been transformed into a grave issue in the general political situation in the Far East.”¹⁹⁶⁹ Further high-level statements followed from Tokyo: Prime Minister Hara openly stated that “his government could put up with neither direct restitution to China nor trusteeship by the League of Nations”, while Foreign Minister Uchida issued instructions to the Japanese Delegation in Paris stating that Japan was to boycott the signing of the Covenant of the League of Nations and added that “in order to maintain our government’s dignity there shall be no room for conciliatory adjustment.”¹⁹⁷⁰ Therefore, at a time when Wilson’s overarching goal of establishing the pinnacle of his new world order, the League of Nations, was in jeopardy due to the Italian walkout, Japan explicitly linked a positive decision on Shandong with further Japanese participation in the Paris Peace Conference and ultimate acceptance of the

¹⁹⁶⁵ Kawamura, *Turbulence in the Pacific*, pg. 146.

¹⁹⁶⁶ Elleman, *Wilson and China*, pg. 64.

¹⁹⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, pg. 68.

¹⁹⁶⁸ Kawamura, *Turbulence in the Pacific*, pg. 147.

¹⁹⁶⁹ Ma Jianbiao, “‘At Gethsemane’: The Shandong Decision at the Paris Peace Conference and Wilson’s Identity Crisis”, *Chinese Studies in History*, 2021, 54:1, pg. 51.

¹⁹⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

League of Nations. Consequently, Japan forced the Council of Three (US, Britain, France) to take a decision on the Shandong question within one week. Once it became clear that the Japanese Delegation would in no way entertain a postponement of the resolution of the Shandong question, and indeed would boycott any further proceedings if there were, Wilson had little option but to address the issue.¹⁹⁷¹

With the Shandong issue now thrust upon the official agenda of the highest arbitration panel, the Council of Three, a decision would clearly have to be taken, if only not to run the risk of an additional walkout that would further jeopardize the legitimacy of Wilson's 'New Diplomacy'. Speaking to the Council, Wilson outlined his position clearly: "My sympathies are on the side of China, and we must not forget that, in the future, the greatest dangers for the world can arise from the Pacific."¹⁹⁷² Regarding the existence of the treaties referred to in January 1919 by both Koo and Makino, Wilson asked the Council of Three to study them carefully, adding that—perhaps referring to the recent experience of the complete failure of the joint US-Japanese intervention in the Russian Far East—"I know by experience that [the Japanese] are very clever in the interpretation of treaties."¹⁹⁷³ Yet the response of the US allies, most notably Great Britain, placed a severe obstacle towards acting on any sympathies Wilson had for the Chinese position. Prime Minister Lloyd George bluntly told the 28th President that London viewed its standing agreement with Tokyo on the transfer of German rights in Shandong to Japan as "a solemn treaty", adding a caveat to the Chinese Delegation that "Great Britain could not turn around to Japan now and say 'all right, thank you very much. We wanted your help, you gave it, but now we think that the treaty was a bad one and should not be carried out."¹⁹⁷⁴ China's overall international standing in 1919, despite having secured a place at the Peace Conference, also played a role in securing British support for Japanese claims, as Lloyd George himself declared to Wilson on 29 April 1919, "The Chinese are like the Arabs, a very talented race, but at a stage that doesn't allow them to progress any further... It must be acknowledged that China isn't in the same situation as the Great Powers represented in this conference."¹⁹⁷⁵

Wilson, egged on by his advisors General Bliss, Henry White, and Secretary of State Lansing, still attempted to find a compromise with the Japanese Delegation that would accommodate Chinese concerns in the name of defending the principle of self-determination, going so far as to advocate to allow Japan to, like Italy, walk out of the Peace Conference.¹⁹⁷⁶ On 23 April 1919, the Japanese Delegation defended its bilateral treaties with China, arguing their continued validity, and Tokyo's insistence on indirect transfer of Shandong to China. Wilson continued to attempt to work on a compromise solution, including to try and convince Japan to forgo the entirety of the Twenty-One Demands, stating that "one of the worst features in the whole of these transactions had been the unfortunate Twenty-One Demands and these had... caused the greatest irritation. It was impossible to divorce transactions of this kind from the public impression they made."¹⁹⁷⁷ Slowly realizing that Japan's legal position was unassailable, Wilson attempted to

¹⁹⁷¹ Elleman, *Wilson and China*, pg. 75.

¹⁹⁷² Kawamura, *Turbulence in the Pacific*, pg. 146.

¹⁹⁷³ Ibid.

¹⁹⁷⁴ Elleman, *Wilson and China*, pg. 80.

¹⁹⁷⁵ Bickers, *Out of China*, pg. 29.

¹⁹⁷⁶ Lansing, Robert, *The Peace Negotiations: A Personal Narrative*, New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1921, pp. 255–261.

¹⁹⁷⁷ Elleman, *Wilson and China*, pg. 82.

use the indignation that the 1915 Sino-Japanese agreement provoked to secure concessions from the Japanese Delegation. Relatively radical Chinese proposals—supported by Wilson—of placing the province under an international trusteeship of the League of Nations were dismissed outright by the Japanese.

After intense discussions, Wilson managed to agree on a compromise solution with Japan: Tokyo would retain certain economic rights in the former German concession—including the mines and railways—while agreeing to cede political and military authority to China *only* following the relinquishing of German rights to Japan. Wilson’s advisers cautioned the President, underscoring that this would merely offer China “a shell. [Japan] would keep the kernel.”¹⁹⁷⁸ General Bliss, on the eve of the agreement on 29 April 1919, wrote a last-minute plea to his President criticizing the proposed solution as morally wrong and unjust to China whose closing statement echoed Wilson’s own idealistic language: “it can’t be right to do wrong even to make peace. Peace is desirable, but there are things dearer than peace, justice and freedom.”¹⁹⁷⁹ In any event, Wilson stipulated that, following this deal, the final decision of sovereignty over Shandong would be made by the League of Nations and served as “an outlet to permit the Japanese to save their face and let the League of Nations decide later.”¹⁹⁸⁰ This compromise was acceptable for Wilson as it made no reference to the 1915 and 1918 Sino-Japanese Agreements, treaties that Washington did not recognize. More importantly, there was little choice. Wilson thought that such an agreement would avoid a second walkout from Versailles and entice Japan to engage in international cooperation: “[the President] knew his decision would be unpopular in America, that the Chinese would be bitterly disappointed, that the Japanese would feel triumphant, that he would be accused of violating his own principles, but nevertheless, he must work for world order and organization against anarchy and a return to the old militarism.”¹⁹⁸¹ All the above statements would come to fruition. Yet, to save his overarching objective of bringing the League of Nations into existence, Wilson was compelled to compromise with the Japanese. Justifying his actions with Lloyd George and Clemenceau, Wilson confided to his fellow Council of Three leaders, that “it is necessary to do everything to assure that [Japan] joins the League of Nations...if [Japan] stands asides [Japan] would do all she could want to do in the Far East.”¹⁹⁸² In order to save ‘New Diplomacy’, the 28th President needed to use tools from the ‘Old’.

On 30 April 1919, the Japanese agreed to Wilson’s compromise and, with it, all former German property in Shandong was acquired by Japan. The Chinese delegates were crestfallen when Wilson’s compromise was announced in the press and were obliged to telephone Secretary of State Lansing for confirmation. Given the heavy emphasis the Chinese Delegation had placed on public diplomacy, domestic discontent over the handling of the Shandong question began to appear following the disclosure of the 1918 secret Sino-Japanese agreement. In March 1919, prominent Chinese journalist and political activist, Liang Qichao, openly criticized the Chinese officials that had signed the clandestine treaty with Japan, in a telegram finding wide publication in the Chinese press: “Last September, the German military was on the verge of failure. What was the intention of our government in signing those agreements at that exact time, and thereby posed

¹⁹⁷⁸ Curry, *Woodrow Wilson and Far Eastern Policy*, pg. 272.

¹⁹⁷⁹ Lansing, *The Peace Negotiations: A Personal Narrative*, pg. 261.

¹⁹⁸⁰ Kawamura, *Turbulence in the Pacific*, pg. 148.

¹⁹⁸¹ Elleman, *Wilson and China*, pg. 84.

¹⁹⁸² Kawamura, *Turbulence in the Pacific*, pg. 148.

restraints on itself?”¹⁹⁸³ This marked the beginning of the Chinese public’s suspicion that the central Government had willfully pawned China’s sovereignty. Especially in southern China, the Government in Beijing was branded “traitorous” for its decision to cede rights to Japan in Shandong in the last phase of the Great War, focusing their efforts on discrediting Beijing and the Japanese alike.¹⁹⁸⁴ The Chinese delegates in Paris, acutely aware that they could be held responsible for China emerging from the hallways of Versailles empty-handed, claimed that “two factors had caused China to lose her case in the Peace Conference: one was that Japan had already secured secret pledges from Great Britain and France...another was that our government had made the ‘gladly exchange’ of notes with Japan in September 1918 in respect to the Shandong question. These two fait accompli made it impossible for those who wished to help us do so.”¹⁹⁸⁵ Nevertheless, they soon found themselves confined to their Parisian hotel by the ire of protesting Chinese students.

The disappointment in China itself took a much graver turn. The failure of the Chinese Delegation to secure a direct transfer of German rights in Shandong “shocked the nation.”¹⁹⁸⁶ With the hopes of a dignified Chinese entry into the community of nations now squashed, 3,000 students in Beijing gathered in protest in front of the Tiananmen (The Tianan Gate) on 4 May 1919, resulting in a riot.¹⁹⁸⁷ Aiming to present letters of protest to the Allied Delegations in the Legation Quarter, the students instead ended up in a confrontation with the police and the student’s opted to focus on venting their frustration on the house of the Former Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs, Cao Rulin (1877-1986), who was forced to flee when part of his house was set on fire. The Chinese Minister to Japan, a guest of Rulin’s, was beaten up. Yet the wrath of the Chinese students on 4 May 1919 was not solely directed at the Government in Beijing and its decision to sign the 1918 agreement with Japan. They also focused their outrage at the failure of President Wilson’s idealism and promises. This sentiment was encapsulated by US Minister Reinsch as follows: “probably nowhere else in the world had expectations of America’s leadership at Paris been raised so high as in China. The Chinese trusted America, they trusted the frequent declarations of principle uttered by President Wilson, whose words had reached China in its remotest parts. The more intense was their disappointment and disillusionment due to the decisions of the old men that controlled the Paris Conference. It sickened and disheartened me to think how the Chinese people would receive this blow which meant the blasting of their hopes and the destruction of their confidence in the equity of nations.”¹⁹⁸⁸ The anger of the Beijing students led to a major discrediting of not only the actions of the Chinese Government, but also the new international system itself and its chief architect, Woodrow Wilson. The May Fourth Movement, as it became known to posterity, “embraced an already developing current of intellectual change” that sought to end the mimicry of Western mœurs as in Versailles, for it had brought little to no concrete dividends, and sought to construct something new.¹⁹⁸⁹ As such, this movement would have a profound influence on the future political and cultural trajectory of China.

¹⁹⁸³ Wu, “The Making of Public Opinion and Open Diplomacy”, pg. 1374.

¹⁹⁸⁴ Chow, The May Fourth Movement, pg. 90.

¹⁹⁸⁵ Ibid., pg. 92.

¹⁹⁸⁶ Bickers, Out of China, pg. 30.

¹⁹⁸⁷ Ibid.

¹⁹⁸⁸ Chow, The May Fourth Movement, pg. 94.

¹⁹⁸⁹ Bickers, Out of China, pg. 31.

9.2.12.5. The Proposed Clause against Racial Discrimination

In the instructions issued by the Hara Cabinet, the Japanese Delegation in Paris was asked, should Wilson go through with tabling a concrete proposal on the creation of a League of Nations, to include as far as the situation permitted, an “appropriate safeguard with a view to removing the disadvantages to Japan which could be envisaged to arise out of racial prejudice.”¹⁹⁹⁰ This had been part of Tokyo’s overall reaction to Wilson’s Fourteen Points. Japanese plenipotentiaries Makino and Chinda, therefore, quickly implemented these instructions by submitting the above clause in Japan’s overall peace policy, which became known as the Racial Equality Proposal. On 2 February 1919, two Japanese delegates commenced negotiations with Wilson’s advisor, Colonel House, whom they had the impression was pro-Japanese, to lay out the basis of Tokyo’s proposal.¹⁹⁹¹ Having secured the necessary positive reaction from House, Makino and Chinda submitted four different proposals from 5-12 February 1919, with House conferring personally with Wilson on 5 and 7 February 1919. Wilson agreed to present Japan’s preferred proposal as his own amendment to the religious freedom article. Colonel House however first referenced a potential stumbling block, stating that he trusted a formula could be reached that would not “weaken the American or British Dominions’ position and yet will satisfy the *amour-propre* of the Japanese.”¹⁹⁹² Nevertheless, on 13 February 1919, the Japanese Delegation proposed at the League of Nations Commission the following provision to the freedom of religion clause in Article 21 of the draft Covenant, focusing on the elimination of racial discrimination rather than the outright equality of races: “Equality of nations being a basic principle of the League of Nations, the High Contracting Parties agree to accord, as soon as possible, to all alien nationals of States members of the League, equal and just treatment in every respect, making no distinction, either in law or in fact, on account of their race and nationality.”¹⁹⁹³

The motivation for the Japanese request to include a Racial Equality clause in the Treaty of Versailles was not only linked to the creation of the League of Nations, but more importantly Japan’s status in the post-bellum world order. While many scholars have distilled a plethora of reasons as to why Japan sought international recognition of this clause, “the explanatory category of great power status is the most significant.”¹⁹⁹⁴ This dissertation has covered both the verve with which Japanese foreign policy makers in the Meiji-era stubbornly pursued a long-term goal of abrogating the Unequal Treaties with the West and to place the modernizing Empire on an equal footing, at least regionally, with the Western Powers. At the same time, the pro-Asian leanings of Japanese society, such as Konoe Atsumora and the *Kokuryūkai*, that influenced the implementation of the Empire’s foreign policy has also been documented. This inherent debate over the overall direction of Japan as an Empire continued to rage, with factions supporting Japan’s ‘leaving Asia’ (*Datsu-A Ron*/脱亞論), against those that believed Japan, due to successful reforms, held a rightful claim to the leadership of the Asian continent. As such debates were considered as hitting upon an integral part of Japan’s self-identity, it was also “obviously closely linked with the perception of its international status, [and] the dilemma arose as to whether Japan should consider itself a

¹⁹⁹⁰ Kajima, *The Diplomacy of Japan*, Volume III, pg. 395.

¹⁹⁹¹ Shimazu, *Japan, Race, and Equality*, pg. 17.

¹⁹⁹² Ibid.

¹⁹⁹³ Kajima, *The Diplomacy of Japan*, Volume III, pg. 398.

¹⁹⁹⁴ Shimazu, *Japan, Race, and Equality*, pg. 116.

Western or an Asian great power.”¹⁹⁹⁵ By 1919, therefore, while imitating Western moeurs, Japan had reached unparalleled international status through its admission to the Big Five at the Paris Peace Conference, arbiters over the entire emerging global system. Obviously, Japan was the sole non-Western power to be admitted to this club. This did not, however, automatically imply an equal distribution of status and political power. As the negotiations in Paris opened, Japan soon found itself excluded from the reorganized “Council of Four” and, following the Italian walkout, from the “Council of Three”. Wilson promised the Japanese Delegation that he would “notify and solicit suggestions from the Japanese representatives before the Council of Four...passed any formal resolution”, however, this exclusion left Japan feeling especially offended.¹⁹⁹⁶ Yet as the Conference continued, Japan became increasingly pushed to the sidelines as the leaders of the Council of Four met in isolation and decided upon most major issues. The Japanese Delegation had been informed that such exclusion was due to the fact that no Japanese Head of State was present in Paris, however Secretary of State Lansing underlined that the reason for Tokyo’s exclusion was based on the Western Allies’ perception of Japan as an inferior power.¹⁹⁹⁷

Having attained the heights of systemic status, this persistent example of purposeful exclusion by Western powers, amplified existing debates in Japanese society that had increasingly characterized the period of the First World War. As noted, the period between the Settlement of 1895 and Settlement of 1919 had been fraught with serious challenges to Japan’s goal of achieving great power status. Such examples included the Triple Intervention of 1895, the Western threat perception following Japan’s 1905 victory over Russia, and—while not handled in detail in this dissertation—the Californian Alien Land Law of 1913, all instances where “Japan’s status was regularly being ‘tested’ by the West, which invariably had the effect of undermining Japan’s sense of confidence and security as a great power.”¹⁹⁹⁸ The period of the Great War, from Japan’s entry into the conflict and swift independent action against German possessions in the Pacific; to its aggressive policy towards China; its unique interpretation of the Lansing-Ishii Agreement; the Zimmermann Telegram; and failed joint intervention with the US in the Russian Far East had substantially raised Anglo-Saxon suspicion of Japanese ultimate intentions as a regional power. Although formally still allied, this now crystalized distrust of Japan was illustrated in the UK Foreign Office’s description of the Japanese in its *Paris Peace Conference Handbook on Japan* and is worth quoting in full: “The pride of the race in its achievements is, like its loyalty and patriotism, exaggerated. The astonishing progress the country has made in the last fifty years, the victories over China and Russia, have to some extent turned the heads of the Japanese, and made them think themselves superior to Western nations, and look down with contempt upon other peoples of the East. They do not perceive their own lack of creative talent; they are apt to forget that in this second borrowing from abroad the things taken from the West were material rather than moral, which was not, to the same extent, the case in the first instance, when China was the model; and they are including to overlook the enormous advantage which Japan possessed in the adoption of reforms which were based on Western models. At no cost to herself, with expenditure of time or through, labour or money, she plucked the fruit of generations of toil in Europe and America. She levied toll on all the world. Profiting at once by the improvements made in the course of centuries in every field of human energy, she began her career of constructive progress at the point

¹⁹⁹⁵ Ibid., pg. 95.

¹⁹⁹⁶ Ma, ‘At Gethsemane’, pg. 51.

¹⁹⁹⁷ Burkman, *Japan and the League of Nations*, pg. 62

¹⁹⁹⁸ Shimazu, *Japan, Race, and Equality*, pg. 97.

which other countries had then reached and continued her advance in line with them. Such considerations do not occur to the Japanese mind.”¹⁹⁹⁹ Tokyo’s decision to make the most of two stellar opportunities between 1914 and 1919 to advance the borders and interests of its Empire did not go without consequences.

Such sentiments in the West were indeed noticed in Tokyo. Japan’s mimicry of Western Imperialism had given also rise to suspicions that Tokyo was being internationally isolated, especially given the deterioration with its bilateral relationship between its formal ally, Great Britain, and its emerging regional rival, the United States. As noted, Yamagata also, during this period began to express his concerns over growing tensions between the Asian and European races as the First World War progressed, in his previously analyzed calls for a Sino-Japanese alliance. This rising emphasis on racial identity in foreign policy debates underscored “Japan’s sense of insecurity as a non-white great power.”²⁰⁰⁰ The discriminatory treatment of Japanese subjects, as illustrated by immigration laws in California and Australia, was offensive to Japan and addressing this issue was seen by some, such as former Foreign Minister Katō Takaaki, who “regarded the fight against racial discrimination as a second stage in the Japanese people’s great struggle for equality, following the successful campaign for treaty revision.”²⁰⁰¹ Yet, as the preceding quote, illustrates, eliminating racial discrimination had clear intellectual and practical limitations. An important element in Japan’s decision to request a clause on racial discrimination, therefore, was not a shadow of Wilsonian idealism *à la Japonaise*, but rather concrete recognition of true equality of Japan with the Empires and Republics of the West. The plight of other non-European peoples, as would be implied through a clause on the elimination of racial discrimination, was not really Japan’s concern. This was illustrated by Makino’s recommendation to a Liberian supporter of the Japanese proposal, namely to “go and see Clemenceau directly about racial equality”, or Foreign Minister Uchida’s statement to the opposition party in June 1919 that Japan’s proposal was “not intended to demand universal racial equality of all coloured peoples, but only for members of the League of Nations.”²⁰⁰² Hence, the clause against racial discrimination signified a Japanese attempt to legally anchor Japan within the pantheon of postwar Great Powers, removing what the Japanese viewed as the one outstanding and eternal element that could lead to ostracization. The Chinese reaction to the Japanese proposal is also significant, given its subdued nature. When Makino raised the issue of racial equality, as Koo recorded in his memoirs, “[Makino] looked in my direction. But I remained silent and did not respond.”²⁰⁰³ The head Chinese delegate did not oppose Japan’s initiative at face value; however, with Japan as the sponsoring nation, it was difficult to accord overt credence to Japan’s goal to anchor its status as a global power. As such, overall, the question of racial discrimination “was not seen as particularly important from China’s perspective.”²⁰⁰⁴

While China held an ambivalent attitude, the British Dominions, especially Australian Prime Minister, William Hughes (1862-1852), proved substantial in their opposition. Prime Minister Hughes stated that Japan’s proposal “touched upon a problem of immense practical

¹⁹⁹⁹ Ibid., pp. 104-105.

²⁰⁰⁰ Ibid., pg. 112.

²⁰⁰¹ Burkman, *Japan and the League of Nations*, pg. 80.

²⁰⁰² Shimazu, *Japan, Race, and Equality*, pg. 114.

²⁰⁰³ Kawashima Shin, “Chinese and Taiwanese Perspectives on Japan’s Racial Equality Proposal”, *Japan Review*, Vol. 3, No 3-4 Winter/Spring 2020, pg. 31.

²⁰⁰⁴ Ibid., pg. 33.

importance” and that Australian public opinion, vehemently against the Japanese proposal, could not be ignored.²⁰⁰⁵ Japanese delegates proposed a compromise to satisfy Hughes but this, likewise, was rejected with Australia as the sole holdout. During a meeting of the Prime Ministers of the British Dominions on 25 March 1919, Smuts of South Africa again tried to mediate, however finally informed Makino that should Japan insist “on bringing up the race question at the plenary session and if Hughes opposed it, ‘I shall have to fall in line and vote with the Dominions.’”²⁰⁰⁶ Hence, any support from the British side for the Japanese proposal would not be forthcoming. President Wilson was noticeably silent on the debate, nervous as he was that such discussion would impede or inhibit the establishment of his precious League of Nations: “My own interest is to quiet discussion that raises national difference and racial prejudices. I would wish them, particularly at this juncture in the history of relations with one another, to be forced as much as possible into the background.”²⁰⁰⁷ Cognizant of the domestic opposition to the clause against racial discrimination in the Western US, Wilson and the US Delegation was happy to leave the active opposition to the British Empire.

In the end, Japan also began to show signs of concern that its proposed clause to augment and solidify the Japanese Empire’s standing amongst the top rank of the global powers was independently taking on internationalist tones, with the Japanese Government becoming “much alarmed by the universalist interpretation attached to its ‘nationalistic’ proposal”, growing increasingly uncomfortable at reference to Japan as “the leader of the coloured and oppressed peoples.”²⁰⁰⁸ Japan sought to end any discrimination *it* perceived from the Anglo-Saxon powers and really could not care less about the plights of faraway peoples. With opposition from the British Dominions, and the injection of undesired universalist ideas into a purely Japanese clause, the whole project was becoming an embarrassment. On 30 March 1919, the Advisory Council on Foreign Relations met in Tokyo to discuss how Japan could withdraw the clause against racial discrimination without losing its dignity. The Council’s members realized that the proposal was uncertain of success, with Prime Minister Hara indicating that a vote on the principle “would suffice as a face-saving gesture”, emphasizing that the issue was not significant enough to merit a Japanese walkout or withdrawal from the League of Nations.²⁰⁰⁹ With the Advisory Council having spoken, Makino and Chinda requested the League of Nations Commission to vote on the Japanese amendment. On 11 April 1919, eleven out of the seventeen members present voted in favour of the proposal. China voted in favour of the proposal, not because Beijing was especially pleased about the motion, but the simple fact that China could not oppose the proposal on principle.²⁰¹⁰ The United States abstained. The clause against racial discrimination was defeated. On 28 April 1919, Japanese plenipotentiary Makino addressed the Fifth Plenary Session of the Conference, reacting to the defeat of Japan’s suggested proposal: “I feel in my duty to declare clearly on this occasion that the Japanese Government and people feel poignant regret at the failure of the Commission to approve of their just demand for laying down a principle aiming at the adjustment of this long-standing grievance, a demand that is based upon a deep-rooted national

²⁰⁰⁵ Shimazu, *Japan, Race, and Equality*, pg. 24.

²⁰⁰⁶ Kawamura, *Turbulence in the Pacific*, pg. 143.

²⁰⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, pg. 144.

²⁰⁰⁸ Shimazu, *Japan, Race, and Equality*, pg. 114.

²⁰⁰⁹ Kawamura, *Turbulence in the Pacific*, pg. 143.

²⁰¹⁰ Kawashima, “Chinese and Taiwanese Perspectives on Japan’s Racial Equality Proposal,” pg. 31

conviction. They will continue in their insistence for the adoption of this principle by the League in future.”²⁰¹¹

The reaction by the Japanese public upon learning that the racial discrimination proposal, known as the ‘race problem’ (*jinshū mondai*/人種問題), was struck down by committee, was one of disappointment. The daily *Kokumin* castigated the British and US delegates for “defying humanity in the most outrageous manner in all history”, openly questioning “what attitude will China, Siberia, and other Asiatic nations take towards Japan after she had committed such a diplomatic failure and blunder? The rejection of the racial discrimination clause proposal is decidedly a disgrace to the country, no matter in what beautiful terms it may be explained.”²⁰¹² The Japanese public saw the inability of Japanese diplomats to secure its albeit secondary objective as a reason to support foreign policies that openly defied the Western powers, with the *Asahi Shimbun* recommending Japan imitate “Italy’s ‘brave’ and ‘manly’ rebuke of Wilson’s false rhetoric.”²⁰¹³ While Foreign Minister Uchida publicly regretted letting the issue of race manifest itself as a Japanese objective at Paris, a damaging blow had been delivered, in the eyes of the Japanese people, to the internationalist world order before it had come into its shaky existence.

9.2.13. Conclusion: The Signing of the Treaty of Versailles

With the points pertinent to East Asia having been settled, the preparation for the final signature of the Treaty of Versailles was to mark the apotheosis of East Asian participation in the Paris Peace Conference. The aftershock of the controversial Conference decision over Shandong, however, continued to cause consternation among US representatives at Paris. Having been shouldered with most of the blame for his ‘betrayal’ of China, President Wilson had been selected for exposure to singular criticism, both in China with the May Fourth Movement and within his own electorate at home. Consequently, in May 1919, the US Delegation in Paris laid out the advantages inherent in, together with Great Britain and France, defining on paper Japan’s exact obligations towards China under the soon-to-be-signed Treaty. While taking the heat off the 28th President, it would also furnish an incentive to the Chinese Delegation to formally accept the final Treaty. Given the shock of the Treaty’s direct handover of German rights to Japan, and the public outrage it had provoked in China, the Chinese delegates were extremely hesitant to sign the Treaty. By early June 1919, Minister Reinsch urgently telegraphed Paris regarding the continuation and intensification of the May Fourth Movement in China: “The situation cannot be solved by use of force or repressive measures. The only adequate solution would be revision of the Paris decision re Shandong or a frank statement on the part of the Japanese to do justice to China.”²⁰¹⁴ Wilson agreed with this assessment and ordered the US delegates to follow suit. While the US Delegation toiled hard to lobby Japanese acceptance of such a statement of intent, the negotiations continued into the morning of 28 June 1919, the date on which the Treaty of Versailles was signed. The US presented Makino with an eight-point draft outlining continued Chinese sovereignty of Shandong, restoration of complete Chinese control within two years, and withdrawal of all military forces within the territory. Japan had steadfastly refused any and all US attempts to place its spoils of war to under what surmounted to de facto League of Nations oversight, with Ambassador Chinda

²⁰¹¹ Kajima, *The Diplomacy of Japan*, Volume III, pg. 418.

²⁰¹² Burkman, *Japan and the League Nations*, pg. 85.

²⁰¹³ Ibid., pg. 86.

²⁰¹⁴ Elleman, *Wilson and China*, pg. 119.

reminding Secretary of State Lansing that “the treaty of peace was with Germany and not with China” and that “Japan had already proclaimed her generous intentions...in the Convention [with China] which had been published to the world.”²⁰¹⁵ This final US diplomatic failure was enough for Chinese delegates Koo and Wang to refuse to sign the Treaty of Versailles, in line with the demands of the students of the May Fourth Movement.

The Treaty of Versailles was signed on 28 June 1919. Japan was the sole East Asian member admitted to the League of Nations as a founding member. Despite President Wilson’s vocal commitment to the ‘New Diplomacy’, the signing of the Treaty of Versailles “marked formal recognition of everything that the Japanese had fought for at Shandong and the German South Pacific Islands during the First World War. As the most ardent proponents of Japanese rights in those areas, Japan’s military-bureaucratic elite had much to celebrate.”²⁰¹⁶ The Japan of 1919 had successfully, up until the last minute, defended against Western Power attempts to prescribe some sort of action on Japanese actions in Shandong. Hence, nothing resembling a repetition of the Triple Intervention would be repeated at Versailles. While Japan’s desire to obtain a clause of racial discrimination as part of Article 21 had been rebuffed in plenary, Tokyo’s representatives, following the Treaty’s signature, focused on its task for the short-term future, namely “to ratify and forge its way in the new world order within the formal framework of the League of Nations.”²⁰¹⁷

China’s approach to signing the Versailles Treaty was also a controversial affair. While the US attempted to extract a statement of intent from Japan regarding its Treaty obligations towards Shandong, the Chinese delegates attempted to sign the Treaty of Versailles with reservations, namely regarding the Shandong question. The formal text proposed by China stated that “in proceeding to sign the Treaty of Peace with Germany...plenipotentiaries of the Republic of China, considering unjust articles...which purport to transfer the German right in Chinese Province of Shandong to Japan instead of restoring them to China...[China’s] signing of the Treaty is not to be understood as precluding China from demanding at a suitable moment the reconsideration of the Shandong question, to the end that the injustice to China may be rectified in the interests of permanent peace in the Far East.”²⁰¹⁸ However, on the day of the signing ceremony, Clemenceau insisted adamantly that no reservations on any treaty provisions would be accepted and all reservations would have to be made in a separate, non-binding document. In light of this new information, the Chinese delegates Koo and Wang, refused to sign the Treaty of Versailles. This accorded both diplomats the status of “instant heroes” by the Chinese public for refusing to agree to the indirect transfer of Shandong, even if it meant foregoing any protection that Wilson had assured the Covenant of the League of Nations could afford. Chinese isolation from the League of Nations, however, was, in the end, not long-lasting. The Treaty of St. Germain, concluding peace between the Allies and Austria, was signed on 10 September 1919.²⁰¹⁹ This Treaty also contained the League Covenant and China, as its signature, became a member of the League of Nations without having to consent to “the objectionable features of the German treaty, and was entitled to

²⁰¹⁵ Ibid., pg. 113.

²⁰¹⁶ Dickenson, *Japan and National Reinvention*, pg. 233.

²⁰¹⁷ Burkman, *Japan and the League of Nations*, pg. 94.

²⁰¹⁸ Elleman, *Wilson and China*, pg. 117.

²⁰¹⁹ See “Treaty of Peace between the Allied and Associated Powers and Austria, together with Other Treaties, Agreements, etc., Signed at Saint-Germain-en-Laye, September 10, 1919”, London: H.M. Stationary Off, 1921.

whatever advantages and protection might be afforded by the new experience.”²⁰²⁰ The era of ‘New Diplomacy’ supposedly had commenced.

9.3. The Treaty of Versailles: The Settlement of 1919

The Treaty of Versailles between the Allies and the Associated Powers contained a lengthy list of terms imposed on Germany. These will not be listed here, and this dissertation will focus solely on those elements that are relevant to East Asia. The number of such articles in the Treaty of Versailles is few in number, especially in light of the lengthy number of antecedent conditions that preceded them. Nevertheless, they were the following:

The Covenant of the League of Nations formed Part I, or the first 26 Articles, of the Treaty of Versailles and, as they were internationalist in scope, also applied to East Asia. In particular, **Article 10** of the Treaty pledged league members to “respect and preserve as against external aggression and the territorial integrity and existing political independence of all Members of the League.”²⁰²¹ **Article 11-15** committed League Members to settle any potential disputes between them under the auspices of the League, without resorting to war. **Article 16** stipulated that any Member of the League in violation of the preceding articles, through any decision to resort to war, would be subject to economic, political, and financial sanctions against a ‘covenant-breaking State’ and the rest of the League Members. **Article 18** asked all Member States to register any “treaty of international agreement entered into hereafter” with the Secretariat of the League of Nations, while **Article 20** informed the world that “the Members of the League severally agree that this Covenant is accepted as abrogating all obligations or understandings *inter se* which are inconsistent with the terms thereof and solemnly undertake that they will not hereafter enter into any engagements inconsistent with the terms thereof.”²⁰²² The future of existing and potential alliances were therefore supposedly now taboo in Wilson’s ‘New Diplomacy’. **Article 21**, as Konoe forewarned, affirmed the validity of Anglo-Saxon regional political and economic supremacy by declaring that “Nothing in this Covenant shall be deemed to affect the validity of international engagements, such as treaties of arbitration or regional understandings like the Monroe doctrine, for securing the maintenance of peace.”²⁰²³

The first article that solely applied to the new regional reality in East Asia was **Article 22**, which established the League’s mandate system as it was to be applied to Germany’s former Pacific islands, mirroring the text agreed between Japan and the Allies in January 1919, underlining that the territories “can be best administered under the laws of the Mandatory as integral portions of its territory.”²⁰²⁴

Section VIII of the Treaty dealt exclusively with elements pertinent to the agreed settlement reached regarding the former German concession at Shandong. **Article 156** obliged Germany to

²⁰²⁰ Godshall, Wilson, *Tsingtau under Three Flags*, Shanghai: The Commercial Press, 1921, pg. 275.

²⁰²¹ *Pacte de la Société des Nations*, Société des Nations—Journal Officiel, février 1920, pp. 3-12 https://libraryresources.unog.ch/ld.php?content_id=32971179, accessed 28 January 2024.

²⁰²² Ibid.

²⁰²³ Ibid.

²⁰²⁴ Ibid.

renounce, “in favour of Japan, all her rights, title, and privileges particularly those concerning the territory of Kiaochow, railways, mines and submarine cables which she acquired in virtue of the Treaty by her with China”, while **Article 157** accorded Japan all “movable and immovable property owned by the German State in the territory”.²⁰²⁵ Lastly, **Article 158** obliged Germany to hand over to Japan, within three months of the coming into force of the Treaty, all archival material.

Such were the treaty terms whose tenets were to construct the Wilsonian new world order in East Asia and constituted the Settlement of 1919. While China managed to belatedly sign up through its peace treaty with Austria, the elements of the Settlements of 1919 did not apply to two regional East Asian states, namely Russia and the United States. As seen, no Russian government representative was present at the Peace Conference. The state that eventually emerged from the prolonged chaos of the Russian Civil War, the Soviet Union, found itself likewise internationally isolated and was not an adherent of the Treaty of Versailles.²⁰²⁶ Following its signature, the Treaty of Versailles began the process of ratification under the US Constitution began. Upon his arrival in the US, Wilson faced a “rude awakening” from a US public that was unenthusiastic of the new world order the 28th President had conjured up in Paris.²⁰²⁷ His new Treaty required ratification by two-thirds of the US Senate (64 votes), however, Wilson faced staunch opposition from Senators to the collective security under the League as provided by Article 10. Wilson’s opponents did not care for the Treaty’s “vague, indefinite commitment, and they disliked that the League could potentially allow a president to commit the United States to military action without congressional approval.”²⁰²⁸ Wilson defended the inclusion of Article 10 as the centrepiece of the new global system. On 19 November 1919, the Treaty of Versailles failed to achieve enough votes to receive ratification, with 53 US Senators remaining steadfast in their opposition. Despite Wilson’s pledge to keep fighting for Treaty ratification, calling the Treaty opponents “Un-American”, the Senate never considered the Treaty again for ratification.²⁰²⁹ While Wilson had wanted to run again for a third term, his declining health caused the Democratic Party to decline his nomination as a Presidential Candidate for the 1920 elections, which were won handily by the Republicans under Warren Harding (1865-1923). The United States would thereby remain decidedly outside the League of Nations. Wilson died in retirement in 1924, not able to live to see what tangible consequences of his decisions would wreak on humanity.

9.3.1. The Settlement of 1919: Geopolitical Necessity

The Settlement of 1919 differs from previous settlements as, at least as it pertains to East Asia, the definition of geopolitical necessity as defined by this dissertation, does not apply to any East Asian power. Japan, the United States, and China were victors of the Great War and did not have to make a difficult choice, as did the leaders of the crumbling German Empire, to have to keep fighting or submit to a humiliating treaty. Nevertheless, some elements of geopolitical

²⁰²⁵ *Treaty of Versailles*, 28 June 1919, https://www.files.ethz.ch/isn/125327/1416_Treaty_Versailles.pdf, accessed 28 January 2024.

²⁰²⁶ Miller, *We Shall be Masters*, pg. 185.

²⁰²⁷ Cude, *Woodrow Wilson*, pg. 101.

²⁰²⁸ *Ibid.*, pg. 102.

²⁰²⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 104-105.

necessity are visible from the above discussion on the treaty provisions and how they related to the foreign policies of East Asian states.

The Japanese decision to finally adhere to the Fourteen Points of the Treaty of Versailles, namely Point XIV and the creation of the League of Nations can be seen as some form of geopolitical necessity. As noted, the different factions of the Japanese Government were not enthralled with the prospect of an international treaty that would infringe on Japan's ability to conduct an independent foreign policy, focused on maintaining and expanding the Empire. The advent of Prime Minister Hara, decidedly pro-Western in his demeanour, provided the Treaty with an important advocate in Tokyo, however, as noted, his approval was accompanied by a deep stroke of pessimism as to the viability of Wilson's espoused goals. Questions surrounding the solidification of Japan's entry-level status into the select group of recognized global Great Powers played a central role in guiding Japanese negotiators at Versailles. Tokyo opted to join the League of Nations not out of any solid conviction that internationalism would act as a panacea to the phenomenon of conflict between nations, but a rather from a desire to tolerate such shenanigans to better defend the interests of the Japanese Empire, especially its international standing, one that would internationally be placed in question should Japan reject the League Covenant.

Japan's Realist approach to the League of Nations question depended on the respective issues that were placed on the agenda at the Paris Peace Conference. Defeat on the inclusion of the racial discrimination clause as part of Article 21 did not provoke a Japanese walkout, as Prime Minister Hara was of the opinion, as seen, that a vote outlining Japan's position was sufficient. When it came to issues effecting national security and pride, such as the direct transfer of German rights in Shandong to Japan, Tokyo adopted a decidedly inflexible approach. Given the resistance with which the Chinese Delegation fought against a direct transfer of German rights to Japan, and the open pro-Beijing sympathies exhibited by President Wilson and the US delegates, the supposed promises inherent in international cooperation were not enough for Japan to tolerate a second loss of face regarding Tokyo's rights over Shandong. Following the Advisory Council of 21 April 1919, Foreign Minister Uchida instructed the Japanese plenipotentiaries "not to sign the Covenant of the League of Nations should Japan's Shandong claims be repudiated", with Prime Minister Hara underscoring that his Cabinet would neither tolerate direct transfer of German rights to China nor any mandate of the League of Nations over the territory.²⁰³⁰ Hence, Japan was clearly not prepared to sacrifice its main geopolitical goal of the negotiations in order to join the League of Nations. Resisting the many attempts of the US Delegation, and President Wilson himself, to convince Japan of the benefits of compromise for the greater good, the Japanese Government highlighted its overall commitment to the League of Nations was, if necessary, very much dispensable. Realist calculations based on pure political utility remained Tokyo's sole geopolitical compass, even in the first days of US-imposed internationalism. The condition of geopolitical necessity, therefore, is not relevant to Japan in the Settlement of 1919.

The same is the case for China. In spite of the elegance and erudition of chief delegate Ambassador Wellington Koo, the Chinese Delegation achieved none of its declared objectives at the Paris Peace Conference. China, as illustrated, had been an ardent supporter of the League of Nations as offering the best protection against any further foreign encroachments on the Republic. Rather than sign yet another humiliating treaty with Japan and the Western Powers, Ambassadors

²⁰³⁰ Kawamura, *Turbulence in the Pacific*, pg. 147.

Koo and Wang simply refused to sign the Treaty, knowing full well that the Chinese Republic would remain an outsider of the new globalist system. Their last-minute decision was also apparently in line with the equally spontaneous order of President Xu who was under immense student pressure in Beijing to withhold China's agreement to adhere to the League, even though this instruction would arrive following the signing ceremony.²⁰³¹ Hence, given the perceived inherent humiliation of having Chinese territory transferred from occupier to occupier, the Chinese Delegation, public opinion, and the Chinese Government were in uncoordinated agreement that any protection that might be afforded by the League of Nations was not worth another unequal treaty. No pressure from the United States, morally bankrupt in the eyes of the Chinese delegates, could alter China's position. China would, as noted, join the League of Nations in September 1919. However, this was also a product of Chinese geopolitical calculation, as the peace treaty with Austria afforded China the opportunity to join the League of Nations without having to make any alterations to China's vision of national sovereignty and territorial integrity. In joining the League of Nations, both Japan and China remained entrenched in their respective positions.

9.3.2. The Settlement of 1919: Policy of Reciprocal Restraint

9.3.2.1. Introduction: Reciprocal Restraint in Action—From Paris to Washington

The Treaty of Versailles, as it applied to East Asia, failed to impose the condition of geopolitical necessity on any of the regional states. As such, no gesture of unilateral accommodation was forthcoming by or towards any East Asian nation. As seen in the Settlement of 1905, this acted as an important trigger to kickstarting the process of rapprochement between the Russian and Japanese Empires. Following the Settlement of 1919, no such actions were forthcoming. The rapprochement and restraint that geopolitical necessity had initiated in 1905 would, therefore, have to come from another source, namely the globalist-inspired Covenant of the League of Nations to whose tenets Japan and China had, with varying degrees of optimism, signed up. Yet, in regards in East Asia, a political vacuum had emerged. In the new context of the Settlement of 1919, policies of regional restraint would have to be derived from the unclear contours of nascent internationalism without the country that had been the driving force behind their adoption. In this context, a range of geopolitically sensitive issues—ones that could not be addressed at Versailles—continued to pose a threat to regional peace and stability. Given the limited geographic applicability of the Treaty of Versailles, following its non-ratification by the US, signified that states would need to supply policies of regional restraint that the League was not able to furnish. In addition to addressing direct post-bellum challenges, agreements dated from the era of 'Old Diplomacy' needed to be updated and adapted to the 'New'. First and foremost amongst these now defunct diplomatic relics was the 'backbone' of Japanese foreign policy since 1902, namely the Anglo-Japanese Alliance to whose analysis this dissertation now turns.

9.3.2.2. The League of Nations and the Anglo-Japanese Alliance

The advent of the League of Nations installed a new reality over East Asia. While geopolitical necessity, when applied to East Asia, did not figure in the Settlement of 1919, the Treaty of Versailles did implement an overarching, supranational attempt to inorganically impose policies of reciprocal restraint over the region. As noted, the United States, as the leading world

²⁰³¹ Elleson, Wilson and China, pg. 118.

power, under the principled ideological insistence of the 28th President, arrived in Paris with an “ambitious institutional agenda aimed at binding democratic states in a universal rule-based association.”²⁰³² A large part of this binding process was imposed through the signing by the League Members of the League Covenant under Article 20, with “League Members who had undertaken any obligations inconsistent with the Covenant should take immediate steps to secure release from them” with the Covenant being “antipathetic towards exclusive military alliances.”²⁰³³ Hence, the Anglo-Japanese Alliance, the foundation of Japanese foreign policy since its inception in 1902, faced sudden constraints from a previous unfathomable source as, in order to adhere to the League Covenant, the future of the Alliance suddenly became questionable. Japan, unlike the US, did not encode its policies aimed at regional hegemony, such as the Monroe Doctrine, within the Covenant, hence some modifications to the provisions of the Alliance would have to be altered to meet contemporary post-bellum realities. Whether this could be actually accomplished, however, was another matter altogether.

The Hara Cabinet sought to maintain the Alliance given the overall opinion that Japan emerged from the Great War as a recognized Global Power, one that had provided an introduction to and lasting link with the ante-bellum hierarchy of Western powers. Yet at the same time, Japan had become isolated through its policy of foreign policy adventurism between 1914-1918 and was still required to steadfastly maintain the friendship of its Allies.²⁰³⁴ This position was supported by all members of the Japanese elite, including *Genrō* Yamagata and the Japanese military. Such unanimity in policy making circles reflected an atmosphere of worldwide reciprocal restraint, however unclear, that had dawned upon international relations following the Settlement of 1919. While having expressed concern in Paris at the possible loss of national sovereignty that League membership would entail, Japan’s newfound status as a member of the exclusive pantheon of Global Powers would require an adaptation of Tokyo’s implementation of foreign policy. To adapt to this diplomatic *terra incognita*, and to coincide with the ratification of the Treaty of Versailles, the Hara Cabinet mimicked the founders of the Japanese Empire who, through the Emperor, extolled the Empire’s subjects to adjust to the new mœurs of the world around. As such, in January 1920, in the name of the Taishō Emperor, the Japanese Government issued the Imperial Rescript on the Establishment of Peace and encouraged the Japanese people to illustrate “‘flexibility’ in response to the dramatic ‘transformation’ of world politics.”²⁰³⁵ As such, the Imperial Rescript supposedly imposed a new era of restraint in Japanese foreign policy, declaring the following: “As a result of the negotiations that We dispatched our plenipotentiaries to participate [in Paris], a new agreement on perpetual peace was made, establishing the framework for a League of Nations. We rejoice at this from our heart and cannot help but feel that our state carries a heavy responsibility for the future.”²⁰³⁶

Additional approval of the Imperial Rescript came from all echelons of the Japanese elite, reflecting the attitudes that had permeated Japanese politics following the ratification of the Treaty of Versailles. Crown Prince Hirohito (1901-1989) was increasingly looked upon as the coming ruler given the declining mental state of his father. Hirohito wrote following the Rescript’s

²⁰³² Ikenberry, *After Victory*, pg. 117.

²⁰³³ Nish, *Alliance in Decline*, pg. 288.

²⁰³⁴ *Ibid.*, pg. 290.

²⁰³⁵ Dickenson, *World War I and the Triumph of a New Japan*, pg. 61.

²⁰³⁶ *Ibid.*

publication that he wished to combined military preparedness and the establishment of “eternal peace”: “I too offer my congratulations on the coming into being of the League of Nations. I shall obey the Covenant of the League and develop its spirit.”²⁰³⁷ While this might have been a product of “youthful idealism and optimism”, it did reflect the general atmosphere in Japan following the ratification of the Treaty of Versailles, with the Crown Prince closing his essay espousing the necessity for Japan to achieve “total unity as a prerequisite for realizing the national destiny.”²⁰³⁸ This destiny, however, would have to be realized in a previously unknown internationalist context. Even one of the most ardent critics of Wilsonian idealism, Konoe Fumimaro, wrote upon his return to Japan from Paris, that the Treaty of Versailles “represented a ‘watershed’ in the development of international politics”, adding that “it appears that secret, professional diplomacy has finally become a relic and the age of open, people’s diplomacy is clearly on its way.”²⁰³⁹ This left the Anglo-Japanese Alliance, as a remnant of pre-Covenant days, with a decidedly uncertain future.

Both Japanese and British ministers were unsure of how to handle the question of renewing the Alliance as scheduled in July 1921 in light of new regional and geopolitical realities. On 8 July 1920, Tokyo and London jointly notified the League that “the Alliance now existing between their two countries though in harmony with the spirit of the Covenant is not entirely consistent with the letter of that Covenant.”²⁰⁴⁰ The British were lukewarm at the prospect of the renewal of the Alliance. Given the UK’s depleted post-bellum political and military influence in East Asia, the apprehension in London that Japanese foreign policy had stoked during the Great War, and the unresolved tension with the United States arising out of Tokyo’s policy towards China and the Russian Far East, was sufficient to dissuade many as to the usefulness of the Alliance’s continued rationale. The Foreign Office composed a memorandum on the current state of influence of the Alliance on UK foreign policy: “the interests of Great Britain and the United States of America in China are similar whereas they are often in conflict with those of Japan. The Chinese would prefer to see us ranged alongside of the United States, opposing the Japanese at every step. To do this, [Britain] should have to be sure of the active support of the United States upon which, as recent events have shown us [the rejection of the Treaty of Versailles] we are unable to rely. We should, besides, have to maintain in the Far East a fleet and an army beyond our resources...When we come to draw up the terms of a new instrument for prolonging the Alliance, the determining factor will have to be the necessity of not antagonizing the United States...some sort of Tripartite understanding in the Far East...would indeed be an ideal situation. Until our ideal can be realized, however, we must content ourselves with the next best arrangement—alliance with Japan and intimate friendship and cooperation with the United States”.²⁰⁴¹ London’s opinion, however, was not popular in the British Dominions, with Canadian Prime Minister, Robert Borden (1864-1937), vehemently opposing any extension of the Alliance, both out of concern for Canadian interests and an eventual US reaction. Faced with such opposition, the Foreign Office decided that “furthering of close relations with the United States was Britain’s foremost diplomatic task”, suggesting to Ambassador Hayashi in London that the Anglo-British Alliance be replaced by “a new Anglo-Japanese Treaty which would include the United States as well.”²⁰⁴² The backbone of Japanese

²⁰³⁷ Bix, Herbert, *Hirohito and the Making of Modern Japan*, New York: Harper Perennial, 2001, pp. 91-92.

²⁰³⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 92-93.

²⁰³⁹ Dickenson, *World War I and the Triumph of a New Japan*, pp. 62-63.

²⁰⁴⁰ Nish, *Japanese Foreign Policy in the Inter-war Years*, pg. 25.

²⁰⁴¹ *Ibid.*, *Alliance in Decline*, pp. 298-299.

²⁰⁴² Kajima, *The Diplomacy of Japan*, Volume III, pg. 422.

foreign policy was to be therefore diluted into a regional understanding based on reciprocal restraint.

Ambassador Hayashi wholeheartedly recommended the approval of such an approach to Tokyo, however, Foreign Minister Uchida remained hesitant, “withholding his reply to Britain until he had seen how other powers would react.”²⁰⁴³ After debate in Tokyo, the Japanese Government adopted a position regarding the continuation of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance, namely that it should “be continued with the understanding and cooperation of the United States for the purpose of preventing Japan becoming internationally isolated and consolidating her international status.”²⁰⁴⁴ Upon receiving the news that Britain and Japan were discussing the idea of transforming a bilateral alliance into a regional understanding, the United States informed Shidehara, now Japanese Ambassador in Washington, that it intended to host a conference on the reduction of armaments. While disarmament issues had not made it onto the agenda during the Paris Peace Conference, the inaugural sessions of the League of Nations in Geneva in 1920 had indeed broached the issue. Yet lack of US membership made the issue problematic. Following the US rejection of the Covenant, Washington was of the view that “these matters could only be realistically pursued through bodies other than the League.”²⁰⁴⁵

On 11 July 1921, the US Chargé in Tokyo officially presented an outline of a possible conference that had been endorsed by President Harding. This conference would be regional in scope and would focus on armament questions and would, therefore, obviously have to include China. Once again, the Hara Cabinet convened a session of the Advisory Council the following day to consider Washington’s proposal. The Advisory Council recognized two conditions that characterized the post-bellum era: “that the armament limitation question was receiving increasing support in the Governments of Britain and the United States, and the public opinion in these countries accepted the urgency of bringing about an international agreement on armament limitations, especially a tripartite naval agreement between Japan, Britain, and the United States; two, should Japan not comply with the United States proposal, she could not escape responsibility for interrupting a plan to secure international peace.”²⁰⁴⁶ The question of preserving Japan’s image as a responsible world power, one in harmony with its victorious former Allies, played a central role in motivating Tokyo to agree to travel to Washington. Regardless of the publicly expressed fervor for the ‘New Diplomacy’, the Japanese Government remained concerned at how far the US-proposed international conference would impinge on Tokyo’s national interests. Reciprocal restraint in the post-bellum Pacific was possible, but the degree of Japanese readiness depended on the sensitivity of the particular issue at hand. Accepting the invitation, Tokyo’s reservations on the agenda were clear, “As to the suggestion that the proposed conference should also embrace a discussion by the interested powers of Pacific and Far Eastern problems, the Imperial Government finds a difficulty in expressing their views before they are precisely informed of the nature and scope of these problems”.²⁰⁴⁷ Despite the excitement that internationalism had unleashed on Japanese policy makers and public alike, its superfluous nature was revealed when implying reciprocal restraint on questions of national interest.

²⁰⁴³ Nish, *Japanese Foreign Policy in the Inter-war Years*, pg. 26.

²⁰⁴⁴ Kajima, *The Diplomacy of Japan*, Volume III, pg. 442.

²⁰⁴⁵ Nish, *Japanese Foreign Policy in the Inter-war Years*, pg. 26.

²⁰⁴⁶ Kajima, *The Diplomacy of Japan*, Volume III, pg. 445.

²⁰⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, pg. 446.

9.3.2.3. Negotiations on the Agenda of and Preparations for the Washington Conference

Following the ratification of the Settlement of 1919, despite the fanfare in Japan, geopolitical uncertainty reigned over East Asia, with “the centre of potential threats to peace [having] swung like a pendulum, from West to East...Relations between China and Japan needed immediate improvement; relations between China and other allied powers needed clarification. Political tensions and economic necessity demanded the immediate reduction of the naval armaments of the Great Powers.”²⁰⁴⁸ These were the questions that President Harding sought to resolve at Washington. US motivation stemmed from its concern of independent Japanese action in East Asia, manifested so starkly in China and the Russian Far East; a desire to accord a fractured China some degree of internal stability; as well as the purely financial: Washington was “anxious to end the ruinous arms race before congressional budget cutting limited it unilaterally.”²⁰⁴⁹ The introduction of mutual-negotiated and agreed policies of regional restraint, therefore, could legitimize and regulate pressing issues that had been absent from the agenda in Paris. The implementation of this grandiose idea was left to Secretary of State, Charles Evans Hughes (1862-1948). In particular, Hughes, when crafting the agenda, was mindful of the developing situation in China, and sought “to address misunderstanding which could lead to military conflict”.²⁰⁵⁰ As such this diplomatic undertaking would seek to introduce mutual reciprocal restraint through the willful adoption of regionalist policies.

The initial Japanese reaction was one of cautious reservation. Ambassador Shidehara underlined to Hughes that the ‘Pacific issues’ that Washington sought to discuss, were, in reality, comprised of “countless issues” exemplified by the relations between Japan and China whose problems were rendered much more complicated “due to...geographic propinquity” and that it would prove impossible to resolve these issues at a single conference.²⁰⁵¹ Hughes recognized Tokyo’s position however noted that Japan’s hesitation to take part in an international conference to address outstanding issues could signal a negative international and public reaction as “the attainment of a common understanding on general principles and policies should be the major objective of the conference.”²⁰⁵² The agenda of the Washington Conference, therefore, intended to fulfill for East Asia what the Treaty of Versailles could not, that of the organization of an agreed international framework of restraint for East Asia within which the ‘New Diplomacy’ would operate. The July 1921 formal invitation to Washington was seen in Tokyo as a “bolt from the blue” and resulted in a “‘sense of crisis’ that ‘gripped the nation’.”²⁰⁵³ Indeed, the headline of the *Asahi Shimbun* following the US invitation read “The Day of the Final Accounting of Far Eastern Questions; Japan in Grave Difficulties.”²⁰⁵⁴ Given the overall sense of the ‘New Diplomacy’ coming into fruition through conference diplomacy, the Washington Conference furnished an opportunity to enhance Japan’s standing in this nascent order that was emerging, however, the shadow of Japan’s previous policies towards China and, more recently, its unilateral intervention

²⁰⁴⁸ Wunsz, King, *China at the Washington Conference*, New York: St. John’s University Press, 1963, pg., 1.

²⁰⁴⁹ Jansen, *Japan and China*, pg. 356.

²⁰⁵⁰ Vogel, *China and Japan*, pg. 215.

²⁰⁵¹ Kajima, *The Diplomacy of Japan*, Volume III, pg. 447.

²⁰⁵² *Ibid.*, pg. 449.

²⁰⁵³ Dickenson, *World War I and the Triumph of a New Japan*, pg. 107.

²⁰⁵⁴ Asada Sadao, “Between the Old Diplomacy and the New, 1918-1922: The Washington System and the Origins of Japanese-American Rapprochement”, *Diplomatic History*, April 2006, Vol. 30, No. 2., pp. 214-215.

in the Russian Civil War heavily dampened such high-minded sentiments. Prime Minister Hara, commenting on the prevailing panic in his diary, noted that degree of concern in Japanese society had unleashed a “panic” that was “jeopardizing Japan’s national dignity.”²⁰⁵⁵

Nevertheless, serious concerns had been awoken, both with the public at large and the Government itself. The Hara Cabinet, given the pro-US inclination of the Prime Minister and internationalist esprit that permeated post-bellum Japan, agreed on the need for a conference on naval limitations. At the same time, it remained decidedly apprehensive about holding a public discussion on sensitive issues, such as China, that had arisen over the course of the Great War and at the Paris Peace Conference, especially given the tensions ensuing from the fate of Shandong as prescribed by the Treaty of Versailles.²⁰⁵⁶ As the Hara Cabinet agreed at a policy meeting on 22 July 1921, “Japan is not opposed to Mr. Hughes’s opinion that the main objective of the conference should be to arrive at a common understanding on general principles and policies...However, Japan cannot, naturally agree to *faits accomplis* or issues between specific countries subject to discussion by other Powers.”²⁰⁵⁷ In attempts to influence the agenda, the Japanese Foreign Ministry sought to exclude “problems of sole concern to Japan and China” from the agenda, an approach that was rejected by Hughes out of general principle.²⁰⁵⁸ Despite Japan’s repeated statements of concern, Secretary of States Hughes, on 8 September 1921, presented the following agenda to Ambassador Shidehara that was unmistakably comprehensive in scope and consisted of four main items: (i.) limitation of armaments; (ii.) questions related to China; (iii.) questions related to Siberia; (iv.) mandated islands. Containing items that the Japanese Foreign Ministry had earnestly tried to exclude, Hughes’s agenda “looked like a shopping list of all the issues that were to the detriment of Japan.”²⁰⁵⁹

The US agenda placed Japanese policy makers in a quagmire. The Secretary of State’s refusal to limit the agenda of the Washington Conference to purely regional questions exposed the contradictions of Tokyo’s international position in the immediate post-bellum period. Suddenly, the zeal of nascent internationalism, so much *en vogue* in 1920 Tokyo, ran up against the prospect of key Japanese interests being brought up for international discussion in a regional diplomatic setting. Contemporary Japanese diplomats underlined both the connection to and differences between the two multilateral conferences, noting that the “Japanese delegates who went to Paris felt that they had been asked to serve Japan’s national aims while those who went to Washington were filled with the spirit of internationalism, concerned with global advantage rather than Japan’s domestic advantage” suggesting therefore that Japan “accepted the invitation to Washington in a spirit of willingness to sacrifice her national interest for the sake of the common good of the world.”²⁰⁶⁰ Such statements can be misleading as they tend to brush over serious misunderstandings on the concrete limits of post-bellum internationalism in the minds of Japanese policy makers. As seen, Prime Minister Hara was an enthusiastic respondent to the ‘New Diplomacy’, especially given his personal conviction of the importance of finding a peaceful *modus vivendi* with the US as “leader of the democratization of the world.”²⁰⁶¹ Yet, in May 1921,

²⁰⁵⁵ Ibid., pg. 215.

²⁰⁵⁶ Nish, *Japanese Foreign Policy in the Inter-war Years*, pg. 33.

²⁰⁵⁷ Kajima, *The Diplomacy of Japan*, Volume III, pg. 450.

²⁰⁵⁸ Asada, “Between the Old Diplomacy and the New”, pg. 217.

²⁰⁵⁹ Ibid.

²⁰⁶⁰ Nish, *Japanese Foreign Policy in the Inter-war Years*, pg. 33.

²⁰⁶¹ Asada, “Between the Old Diplomacy and the New”, pg. 212.

the Prime Minister signed off on a Cabinet decision that reaffirmed a basic tenet of Japanese foreign policy, namely that Tokyo's special interests in Manchuria were "required for [Japan's] national defence and economic necessities of the people" and that Tokyo "must endeavour to expand them in the future."²⁰⁶²

While the Hara Cabinet expressed its enthusiasm for collective arms reductions, its exchanges with the US on the concrete agenda points illustrate that similar sentiments were not automatically extended to embrace the centrepieces of contemporary Japanese foreign policy concern, namely China and Tokyo's ongoing activities in the Russian Far East. There existed persistent suspicion among Japanese policy makers that an Anglo-Saxon "intrigue" was afoot to "put Japan to task for its aggressive expansionism and to strip it of the special interests that it had asserted in Manchuria and Mongolia."²⁰⁶³ While Japanese delegates departed for Washington with some degree of internationalist conviction, they also departed to defend Japan's core interests in China from any potential assault by the Anglo-Saxon powers. Indeed, the Japanese Foreign Minister prepared for a worst-case scenario—one where Japan's preponderance in Manchuria and Mongolia would be raised—by formulating an "Open Door in the Pacific" policy. In response to any perceived encroachment on Japan's position in North China by the Western Powers, the Japanese Delegation planned on demanding that "the Open Door must be applied not only to China and Siberia but to the whole Pacific region, where Western powers possessed colonies", with Japan even prepared to go so far as to advocate for the independence of the Philippines and Hawaii.²⁰⁶⁴

In short, Japan pursued a policy of welcoming agreements to further regional reciprocal restraint that simultaneously did not jeopardize its core foreign policy interests. Policy of reciprocal restraint cloaked in the 'New Diplomacy' only triggered Japanese excitement that could result in concrete geopolitical advantage. As such, any desire to willingly set out to implement an agenda based solely on reciprocal restraint, within the realm of contemporary political possibilities, remained seriously hampered.

9.3.2.4. China's Approach to the Washington Conference

China was neither consulted nor informed about the proposed conference. Instead, an initial communiqué was received from the US Chargé in Beijing informing the Chinese Foreign Ministry that, while the gathering would be focused on disarmament, "[this] question manifestly has a close relation to the Pacific and Far Eastern problems and it is suggested that the powers especially interested in the problems, including China, should undertake in continuation of the conference the consideration of all matters bearing upon their solution with a view to reaching a common understanding with respect to principles and policies in the Far East."²⁰⁶⁵ To Beijing, this afforded an unexpected opportunity to raise China's ambitious programme of suppressing continuing foreign interference in China, an essential issue that had not been raised at the Paris Peace Conference, as well as addressing tensions resulting from the Treaty of Versailles's transfer of

²⁰⁶² Ibid., pg. 217.

²⁰⁶³ Asada Sadao, "Japan's 'Special Interests' and the Washington Conference", *The American Historical Review*, Oct. 1961, Vol. 67, No. 1, pp. 63-64.

²⁰⁶⁴ Ibid., "Between the Old Diplomacy and the New", pg. 218.

²⁰⁶⁵ Shieh Jen Chao, "China and the Washington Conference", PhD Dissertation, American University, 1936, pp. 21-22.

Shandong province to Japan. Accepting the US invitation, China appointed familiar faces to head its Delegation to Washington, including Ministers Wellington Koo and Alfred Sze Sao-ke, with the latter heading the contingent. Receiving the proposed agenda, the Chinese soon realized that the majority of issues regarding Pacific and Far Eastern questions were “devoted exclusively to the examination of Chinese problems. Indeed, it looked as though the formidable collection of Unequal Treaties and other related matters [would be] brought to Washington for thorough review or abrogation.”²⁰⁶⁶ From the Chinese perspective, the Settlement of 1919 did not provide any substantial benefit. The focus on Chinese issues in Washington could, therefore, provide the Chinese Government an opportunity to alter the status quo in Shandong as well as to secure assurances from the Western Powers that they would relinquish present as well as forego any future benefits derived from Unequal Treaties concluded with the Qing or the Republic. What could not be achieved in Paris could perhaps be gained in Washington.

At the same time, China was by far a unified actor. Hughes approached the Chinese regarding their participation, suggesting that both Beijing and the Southern Faction, headed by Sun Yat-sen, dispatch representation. Sun Yet-sen refused, claiming that his authorities were the sole legitimate government in China, leaving only representatives from the Beijing Government in attendance in Washington. This, however, proved problematic as “it was not clear how much of China the Beijing Government controlled, nor was it clear who was in charge in Beijing.”²⁰⁶⁷ During the conference itself, the Duan Government was deposed by rival warlords. The continuing chaotic domestic circumstances in China would have a lasting influence on the ability of the Chinese Delegation to truly speak for a unified China. Arriving in Washington, exactly whom the Delegation from Beijing represented remained unclear—a fact that would seriously impede China’s ability to conduct serious negotiations in Washington while simultaneously being treated as equal members of the international community.

9.3.2.5. Reciprocal Restraint in Action: The Agreements of the Washington Conference

9.3.2.5.1. Introduction

The Washington Conference met from 12 November 1921 to 6 February 1922 with nine maritime powers present, namely the US, Japan, China, Great Britain, the Netherlands, France, Belgium, Italy, and Portugal. The numerical scope of the conference was enormous, with 100 to 150 delegates participating from each invited country.²⁰⁶⁸ Conference procedures stipulated that any agreement would require explicit consent from all participants. As with the Paris Peace Conference, the Soviet Union, having consolidated its occupation over Russia, was not invited as Washington had not yet recognized the Bolshevik regime. The Soviet Union sent two notes of protest, in July and November 2021, regarding its lack of invitation which went unanswered. Additionally, unlike the Treaty of Versailles, with the US decision to remain outside the League System meant that each of the agreements signed in Washington were interstate in nature, with no overarching supranational body being theoretically responsible for their respective enforcement. Focusing therefore on the issues related to maritime powers in East Asia, continental issues concerning Russia were decidedly absent. Nevertheless, the Washington Conference initiated “a

²⁰⁶⁶ Wunsz, *China at the Washington Conference*, pg. 3.

²⁰⁶⁷ Vogel, *China and Japan*, pg. 216.

²⁰⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, pg. 215.

network of interrelated treaties that provided the principal framework for international relations in the East for the next decade.”²⁰⁶⁹ To these treaties, and the reciprocal restraint they meant to furnish, this dissertation now turns.

9.3.2.5.2. The Four Power Treaty

The first agreement signed at Washington was the long-awaited replacement of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance.²⁰⁷⁰ Arriving in the US capital, it became evident that local opposition to any continuation of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance remained substantial. As the British Delegation informed Prime Minister Lloyd George, “adherence to the Alliance in its present form will be very unpopular in the United States of America, and will render the conclusion of a satisfactory and enduring arrangement for the limitation of armaments extremely difficult to negotiate. Further, it is undeniable that, with the collapse of the Russian Empire and the elimination of Germany from the Pacific, the conditions which brought the Anglo-Japanese Alliance into existence have disappeared for the time being”.²⁰⁷¹ Negotiations continued bilaterally between London and Washington, with the US openly not wishing to contemplate a scenario where a bilateral alliance would continue to be maintained or one where the old Alliance could be reactivated. The ‘New Diplomacy’ dictated that such practices were now considered to be an anathema. Instead, the Alliance should be diluted and replaced by a regional arrangement. Ambassador Shidehara, negotiating on behalf of Japan, albeit rather confused upon learning that drafts of a bilateral Anglo-Japanese Alliance were being circulated between the British and US Delegations, prepared a counterproposal, one that envisioned a regional consultative pact that would replace an outright military alliance, stating “if in the future the territorial rights or vital interests of any of the High Contracting Parties in the Pacific Ocean and of the Far East should be threatened either by the aggressive action of any third power....[they] shall communicate with one another frankly and fully, in order to arrive at an understanding on the most efficient measures to be taken.”²⁰⁷² Shidehara’s idea of a collective pact fit squarely in line with the US interest in reforming the structure of regional diplomacy.²⁰⁷³ The US also suggested including France in order to render any agreement more general and less evocative of the ante-bellum situation. Such a solution was acceptable to all participants.

The Four Power treaty was signed on 10 December 1921. Seen as a partial successor to the 1917 Lansing-Ishii Agreement, the Treaty marked a written agreement between its four parties who, in **Article I**, “agree...to respect their rights in relation to their insular possessions and insular dominions in the region of the Pacific Ocean” and, should any controversy arise, commit to settling the issue via the convocation of a joint conference.²⁰⁷⁴ Hence, the US, Japan, Great Britain, and France saw their regional rights and possessions mutually guaranteed through the preceding vague and general declaration. **Article II** echoed Shidehara’s draft by committing powers to a free and frank exchange to achieve a joint understanding in case of any perceived aggressive action, while **Article IV** concluded the Treaty by stipulating the public termination of the Anglo-Japanese

²⁰⁶⁹ Jansen, *Japan and China*, pg. 357.

²⁰⁷⁰ Ibid.

²⁰⁷¹ Nish, *Alliance in Decline*, pg. 368.

²⁰⁷² Kajima, *The Diplomacy of Japan*, Volume III, pg. 569.

²⁰⁷³ Jansen, *Japan and China*, pg. 357.

²⁰⁷⁴ “The Four Power Treaty”, *Advocate of Peace through Justice*, Volume 83, 1921, pg. 424.

Alliance upon the Treaty's ratification by the Four Powers. No enforcement mechanism, other than spontaneous consultation between the Four Powers, was foreseen in the case of any serious incident. Like the Lansing-Ishii Agreement, the Four Powers Treaty pledged its signatories to respect the post-bellum status quo in the Pacific, as well as commit to a policy of regional reciprocal restraint, resorting to mutual consultation in the event of a crisis.

9.3.2.5.3. The Naval Disarmament Treaty

In 1921, Japan could solidly lay claim to being one of the world's largest naval powers, with the post-bellum super dreadnoughts *Nagato* and *Mutsu* amongst the biggest in the world.²⁰⁷⁵ Following its victory in the Great War, Japan had embarked on an ambitious naval construction programme and, in 1920, sought to construct eight battleships and eight cruisers, both an ambitious and expensive undertaking. The fulfillment of this quota had been an inherent doctrine of the Japanese Navy since 1907, the year in which an "Imperial National Defence Policy" had been inaugurated. Yet the additional intrinsic assumptions of this policy also called for "the conception of the United States as the Japanese Navy's 'hypothetical enemy'" as well as the maintenance of a seventy-percent naval ratio as overall strategic doctrine.²⁰⁷⁶ In layman's terms, the importance of a seventy-percent lay in the theory that, in order for the United States to successfully defeat the Japanese Navy, it would require at least a fifty-percent advantage over the Japanese fleet, even if the United States would transfer all its naval assets to the Pacific. Anything less would fail to guarantee a Japanese victory, assuring Tokyo "a strength insufficient to attack and adequate for defence", depriving Japan the ability to effectively deter the United States.²⁰⁷⁷

The doctrine of the United States as Japan's chief regional rival was reconfirmed in the 1918 Imperial National Defence Policy. At the same time, however, embarking on a naval arms race aimed at countering US influence in East Asia would inevitably provoke a similar reaction from Washington. As the postwar recession began to hit Japan, the readiness of the Japanese Government to finance the Navy's plans also began to falter. Even within the Japanese military, shades of skepticism began to manifest themselves: Lieutenant General and future Minister of War, Ugaki Kazushige (1868-1956), noting the emergence of a growing national consensus that supported steps towards the new post-bellum *Zeitgeist* of disarmament, declared that "military construction and maintenance hindered the productive development of the nation."²⁰⁷⁸ He would eventually pioneer the 'Ugaki disarmament' ('*Ugaki gunshuku*' / 宇垣軍縮) and reduce the Imperial Army by four divisions. Navy Minister, Admiral Katō Tomosaburō (1861-1923), also expressed his reservations surrounding the economic feasibility of the Navy's expansion plans, noting that "Japan was unable, for financial and technical reasons, to equal the achievements of the leading maritime Powers. She was contented with fewer vessels but aimed at the ideal that her capital ships should equal ship for ship those of the other Powers, hence the construction of the larger type of battleships."²⁰⁷⁹ With the head of the Japanese navy openly doubtful that his eight-eight expansion plan would actually be implemented, the opportunity to resolve the issue with Japan's planned

²⁰⁷⁵ Nish, *Japanese Foreign Policy*, pg. 138.

²⁰⁷⁶ Asada Sadao, "The Revolt against the Washington Treaty: The Imperial Japanese Navy and Naval Limitation 1921-1927", *Naval War College Review*, Summer 1993, Vol. 46, No. 3, pp. 82-83.

²⁰⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, pg. 83.

²⁰⁷⁸ Dickenson, *World War I and the Triumph of a New Japan*, pg. 110.

²⁰⁷⁹ Nish, *Japanese Foreign Policy*, pg. 139.

adversary seemed like an ideal opportunity. The mandate accorded to Admiral Katō, as formulated in Tokyo, reflected the willingness in Japan to positively engage with the US on naval issues: “Although we take the eight-eight fleet as the target for naval strength we are not bound to persist with it as originally planned. We ought to comply with any limitation treaty proposed...provided it includes a ratio of strength in line with that of Britain and the United States.”²⁰⁸⁰

Opening the Conference on 21 November 1921, Hughes proposed a dramatic reduction of ship strength based on the ratio of 10:10:6 for the US, Britain, Japan respectively.²⁰⁸¹ Hughes based his calculation on geopolitical reality, namely that both Anglo-Saxon powers held interests in the Atlantic and the Pacific, while Japan’s strategic scope was limited to the Western Pacific.²⁰⁸² This proposal was met with surprise from Admiral Katō, however, his “intuitive decision” was that positively engaging with the US was the sole real path towards improving the already damaged Japanese-US relations, adding that the “avoidance of war with America through diplomatic means is the essence of national defence”.²⁰⁸³ Yet Katō’s strategy was far from universally embraced. The majority of the Japanese Navy did not support any unilateral reductions in naval force limits.²⁰⁸⁴ Such staunch opposition to a conciliatory approach featured amongst those present within the Japanese Delegation in Washington. Vice Admiral Katō Kanji (1870-1939), the chief naval expert in the Japanese Delegation voiced his vehement opposition to any compromise that would see Japan deviating from the all-important seventy-percent ratio, arguing that Hughes’s proposal was a US ploy to “deprive the Imperial Navy of its supremacy in the Far East,” and insisted upon the strict maintenance of naval parity.²⁰⁸⁵ Despite such opposition, Admiral Katō willingly chose the adoption of a policy of reciprocal restraint, offering to accept Hughes’ proposal as the basis of further negotiations, thereby explicitly sacrificing the navy’s ability to retain a seventy-percent ratio. This remained the safest gesture that could allow both countries to de-escalate from a potential naval arms race. Besides, restraint on naval ratios could, in Katō’s opinion, serve as a base to extract other important strategic concessions from the US. Admiral Katō’s decision to pursue naval arms limitations fell on fertile ground as the US and British Navies likewise sought to use disarmament as a potential off-ramp from rising regional tensions and economic challenges.²⁰⁸⁶

The US military outposts in the Pacific remained focused on the Philippines and Guam, hence securing US agreement to maintain the status quo on military fortifications could be viewed as strategically advantageous to Japan. In return, Japan would accept the sixty-percent ratio as proposed in Hughes’s initial statement. This concession was communicated by Admiral Katō to Naval Command in Tokyo independently, circumventing the principled opposition to any policy of reciprocal restraint amongst the Japanese Delegation in Washington, and secure the agreement of the “naval *Genrō*”, the hero of Tsushima Admiral Tōgō, who accorded his consent.²⁰⁸⁷ Given the degree of opposition to any self-imposed limitations on the Japanese Navy, such backdoor channels were necessary to secure Tokyo’s approval for this significant concession as “only by the

²⁰⁸⁰ Ibid.

²⁰⁸¹ Kajima, *Diplomacy of Japan*, Volume III, pp. 465-469.

²⁰⁸² Evans, *Kaigun: Strategy, Tactics, and Technology in the Imperial Japanese Navy*, pg. 195.

²⁰⁸³ Asada, “The Revolt against the Washington Treaty”, pg. 87.

²⁰⁸⁴ Evans, *Kaigun: Strategy, Tactics, and Technology in the Imperial Japanese Navy*, pg. 193.

²⁰⁸⁵ Asada, “The Revolt against the Washington Treaty”, pg. 87.

²⁰⁸⁶ Evans, *Kaigun: Strategy, Tactics, and Technology in the Imperial Japanese Navy*, pg. 192.

²⁰⁸⁷ Asada, “The Revolt against the Washington Treaty”, pg. 87.

elder Katō's consummate political skill and organizational leadership, ably assisted by his subordinates and allies in Tokyo, was the chief delegate able to gain the support of the high command for overriding and silencing Katō Kanji's opposition to the treaty."²⁰⁸⁸ Through the pursuit of a policy of reciprocal restraint, Admiral Katō was able to secure concessions from the US Delegation, the most important of which was the approval of the non-fortification clause (**Article XIX**) in the Treaty. Although the exact wording of the Treaty neglected to furnish an exact definition of what precisely a "fortification" or "base" entailed, the implied understanding was that these referred to a moratorium on the construction of naval bases, garrisons, and coastal artillery.²⁰⁸⁹ The geographic scope of Article XIX—while exempting Hawaii, Singapore, and the Japanese Home Islands—deprived the US the ability to construct any additional regional bases. Likewise, Japan was accorded the right to retain the warship *Mutsu* which held a symbolic importance for the Japanese Navy and public alike, given its size and prestige.²⁰⁹⁰

By engaging in an independent policy of reciprocal restraint, the Japanese Delegation was able to secure meaningful concessions from the British and, most notably, US Delegations. The reaction amongst significant portions of the Japanese Navy, as well as the Delegation in Washington itself, did not appreciate Admiral Katō's spirit of compromise. Katō Kanji, after Tokyo's acceptance of the new ratio, remained unreconciled in his opposition, declaring that "as far as I am concerned, war with America starts now. We'll get our revenge over this".²⁰⁹¹ This expression aroused much support from segments of the Japanese Navy. While Admiral Katō was well aware of the strength of this opposition, his death in 1923 prevented him from implementing any reforms to strengthen civilian control over the Navy. Consequently, "the *political* decision to accept the compromise settlement failed to take root in Japan's subsequent naval policy; on the contrary, the reaction by the naval men, if anything, reinforced their obsession with the seventy-percent ratio and their notion of the United States as the hypothetical, even inevitable, enemy."²⁰⁹² Nevertheless, through Admiral Katō's decision to pursue a policy of reciprocal restraint regarding the Naval Disarmament Treaty, an overt arms race in the waters of East Asia was avoided, a welcome development for all parties, according each government a necessary economic reprieve. As with the Four Parties Treaty, however, the Naval Disarmament Treaty did not foresee a supranational enforcement mechanism, with the observance being left to the individual discretion of the respective parties.

9.3.2.5.4. The Nine Power Treaty

Given Japan's noted apprehension of discussing areas of key national interest in international forums, discussions surrounding China took on a very different character. Secretary Hughes viewed China as a significant challenge to East Asian stability and therefore undertook in Washington to find a "substitute for all prior statements and agreements" on China.²⁰⁹³ The US, therefore, opted to raise more general issues in connection with the Open Door Policy, with an aim

²⁰⁸⁸ Evans, *Kaigun: Strategy, Tactics, and Technology in the Imperial Japanese Navy*, pg. 196.

²⁰⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, pg. 197.

²⁰⁹⁰ The construction of the *Mutsu* had been partially funded by donations from Japanese schoolchildren. See *ibid.*

²⁰⁹¹ Asada, "The Revolt against the Washington Treaty", pg. 88.

²⁰⁹² *Ibid.*

²⁰⁹³ Jansen, *Japan and China*, pg. 358.

to implicate all Imperial powers in China, “but especially Japan.”²⁰⁹⁴ Tokyo’s initial recalcitrance at discussing issues outside the remit of disarmament indicated strongly that Japan would have preferred altogether to remove this item from the agenda completely. Given the high degree of Anglo-Saxon insistence on its inclusion, however, Japan was faced with the option of rejecting discussions on China or to engage the other Powers with the same flexibility and display of reciprocal restraint as Japan had exhibited regarding the two previous Washington Treaties. Like Admiral Katō, Ambassador Shidehara opted to pursue a conciliatory approach, even regarding a sensitive issue of Japan’s national interest, viewing economic opportunities as more beneficial in the long-term than territorial gains.²⁰⁹⁵ As such, Japan exhibited readiness to engage on the phasing out of extraterritoriality, the evacuation of foreign forces, as well as the cancellation of the Boxer indemnity from the Settlement of 1901, however, adopted a reserved attitude regarding their placement on the plenary agenda, given the sensitivity of the central importance of the bilateral Sino-Japanese relationship.

The Chinese Delegation attempted to guide the overall discussion on Chinese issues at Washington, with Ambassador Sze proposing a list of ten points that aimed securing and enhancing the sovereignty and territorial integrity of China. Its major elements including respect for Chinese territory; application of the Open Door policy to all of China; and the removal of any restrictions on China’s political, administrative and judicial freedom of action.²⁰⁹⁶ Additionally, the Chinese Delegation sought an open discussion on leased territories which, inevitably, provoked the ire of both Japan and Great Britain (Hong Kong). The Powers, however, reacted coolly to the Chinese proposal. While Sze’s points presented China as a sovereign state that merited equality with its international peers, the chaotic domestic conditions that continued to prevail in China undermined the willingness of the delegates in Washington to accept the authority of the Chinese state in its current form. The French Premier and head delegate, Aristide Briand (1862-1932) posed Sze a brazen question, namely “What is China?”, with US delegate Elihu Root proposing to “make a distinction between China proper and the territories over which China exercised suzerainty, and that the resolutions he was to prepare should...be limited to China proper.”²⁰⁹⁷ Ambassador Koo answered that the territory of China had been set by the Chinese constitution, thereby closing the discussion. However, it reflected the general opinion amongst the Powers that the term ‘China’ “could not translate into a clearly defined sovereign authority exercising unambiguous control over a determinate territory.”²⁰⁹⁸

Consequently, recognizing the irreconcilable conflicts plaguing China, Root opted to lay out four basic principles that would represent the ‘firm intention’ of the powers regarding the former Middle Kingdom, namely: “(i.) to respect the sovereignty, the independence, territorial and administrative integrity of China; (ii.) to provide the fullest and most unabashed opportunity to China to develop and maintain for herself a stable government...; (iii.) to safeguard for the world so far as is within our power, the principle of equal opportunity for the commerce and industry of all nations throughout the territory of China; (iv.) to refrain from taking advantage of the present

²⁰⁹⁴ Nish, *Japanese Foreign Policy in the Inter-war Years*, pg. 40.

²⁰⁹⁵ Armstrong, David, “China’s Place in the New Pacific Order” in Goldstein, Erik & Maurer, John, *The Washington Conference, 1921-22: Naval Rivalry, East Asian Stability and the Road to Pearl Harbour*, Ilford, Essex: Routledge, 1994, pg. 255.

²⁰⁹⁶ Kajima, *The Diplomacy of Japan*, Volume III, pp. 503-504.

²⁰⁹⁷ King, *China and the Washington Conference*, pg. 31.

²⁰⁹⁸ Armstrong, “China’s Place in the New Pacific Order”, pg. 255.

conditions in order to seek special rights of privileges which would abridge the rights of the subjects or citizens of friendly states, and from countenancing action inimical to the security of such states.”²⁰⁹⁹ Root’s four points served the basis of **Article I** of the Nine Power Treaty, which marked an reaffirmation of the Open Door Policy and equal opportunity, with Root’s fourth point being taking verbatim from the 1917 Lansing-Ishii Agreement. Discussions continued over an immense agenda ranging from Chinese railways to neutrality and, on 6 February 1921, the Nine Power Treaty was signed.²¹⁰⁰

On the surface, the Powers’ signature of the Nine Power Treaty, most notably by Japan, would indicate that Open Door policy was upheld and that policies of acquiring concessions in China would be abandoned. Yet the fate of any agreement is intimately intertwined with a respective party’s manner in interpreting it; the Nine Power Treaty was no exception. Like the Lansing-Ishii Agreement before it, Japan continued to maintain that it upheld the Open Door Policy, however, Tokyo continued, as before, to regard Manchuria and Mongolia as areas where Japan held a privileged position. Indeed, during negotiations, the Japanese Delegation took the view that “Japan had not abandoned her special interests in Manchuria and Mongolia; and it was unthinkable that any weakening...would result.”²¹⁰¹ Unsurprisingly, therefore, its two main parties, the US and Japan, continued to interpret the Treaty in contradictory ways that threatened to augment, rather than reduce tensions. While Secretary of State Hughes viewed the Nine Power Treaty as annulling all previous understandings and agreements in China in favour of the Open Door, Japan viewed the agreement of the Powers “to refrain from countenancing action inimical to the security of such states” as explicit, ongoing recognition of Japanese preponderance in Manchuria and Mongolia.²¹⁰² Hence, to Washington, the Treaty solidified—yet again—the validity of the Open Door in a post-bellum world; however to Tokyo it meant the recognition of Japanese special interests. With such blatantly different interpretations of the same basic treaty, while appearing to subscribe to a mutual policy of reciprocal restraint, in actuality the Nine Power Treaty did not require any serious concessions or policy alterations from any of its signatories, only vague statements.

Furthermore, the fuzzy nature of the Open Door—and hence the Treaty itself—was also compounded by the actual internal conditions in China which, for all intents and purposes, rendered the significance of the Treaty null and void. Inherent in the Treaty was the assumption that equal opportunity could be attained by the powers “on the assumption that China would become an orderly and organized state.”²¹⁰³ With none of the Powers having any idea as to what extent of actual control the Central Government in Beijing exercised over China, the Chinese Republic seemed very far removed from such a degree of maturity. As such, equal opportunity simply remained a mirage. Far from exemplifying an instance where powers willingly opted to implement policies of reciprocal restraint, the Nine Power Treaty marked “a striking example of a great mistake which the world committed in resolving questions in the Far East.”²¹⁰⁴

²⁰⁹⁹ Kajima, *The Diplomacy of Japan*, Volume III, pg. 508.

²¹⁰⁰ For the full text of the Nine Power Treaty, see https://www.ibiblio.org/pha/policy/pre-war/9_power.html (accessed 7 February 2024).

²¹⁰¹ Kajima, *The Diplomacy of Japan*, Volume III, pg. 554.

²¹⁰² Jansen, *Japan and China*, pg. 358.

²¹⁰³ Nish, *Japanese Foreign Policy in the Inter-war Years*, pg. 43.

²¹⁰⁴ Kajima, *The Diplomacy of Japan*, Volume III, pg. 556.

9.3.2.5.5. Shandong 1922

Like the fate of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance, the question of Shandong was decided outside the official agenda of the Washington Conference. However, given the outrage the Treaty of Versailles's decision provoked in China, discussions on this sensitive issue took on systemic implications. Japan had, since January 1920, attempted to open direct negotiations with Beijing through Minister Obata "with the intention of withdrawing Japanese troops from the Shandong railway zone."²¹⁰⁵ China at first hesitated to send an official reply and, in May 1920, they refused any direct negotiations with Japan, seeking instead to garnish support from the United States. The matter was left in limbo until the agenda of the Washington Conference was made clear, strongly implying that the question of Shandong would once again be breached, either in plenary or in the corridors. Ambassador Shidehara underlined the need for Japan not to forego this opportunity of reducing tensions with the United States. He likewise opposed the principled rejection of discussing bilateral Sino-Japanese issues on the official agenda. At the same time, as Ambassador in Washington, Shidehara acutely understood that "the Shandong issue was more important politically to the United States and to Japan."²¹⁰⁶ Following Shidehara's lead, Tokyo, in September 1921, announced therefore a new initiative on Shandong, offering to restore Chinese control on condition that Qingdao would be made an Open Door port and the former German railway would be transformed into a joint Sino-Japanese company. Tokyo's motivations for embarking on a policy of reciprocal restraint regarding Shandong had been, as with other questions raised at Washington, spawned by growing fear of Japan's "difficult financial position in 1921 and [Tokyo's] international unpopularity."²¹⁰⁷ Perhaps aimed at stealing the initiative for what seemed, in the run up to the Conference, an inevitable discussion, it paved the way for the Shandong question to be raised at Washington. Given the substantial number of items that had been placed on the agenda, and recalling the political fallout for President Wilson over the Shandong question in Paris, Secretary Hughes sought to exclude it as an official agenda item, however offered US mediation between Japan and China. The Japanese Cabinet responded by officially sanctioning Tokyo's September 1921 offer on Shandong, one that China rejected, stating that "if this is [Japan's] final offer, it fell short of solving the question."²¹⁰⁸ Hence, before the opening of the Conference, Japan had laid out a policy of reciprocal restraint to potentially solve the Shandong issue.

Following the opening of the conference, the Chinese Delegation attempted to place Shandong on the official agenda, insisting on resolving the "two most fundamental issues involving violations of Chinese sovereignty: the maintenance of foreign troops and police in various parts of China, especially Manchuria, and the retention by the Powers of numerous territories leased on 'unequal treaties' of the nineteenth century" and presented documentation to support its case.²¹⁰⁹ This aggressive approach from the Chinese Delegation, touching upon core Japanese interests on the continent, forced Japan to retreat into the entrenchments of its well-known positions. As such, Hughes found himself in an impasse much akin to that faced by the 28th President in Paris: Tokyo remained willing to transfer the territory to Chinese authority on the

²¹⁰⁵ Nish, *Japanese Foreign Policy*, pg. 136.

²¹⁰⁶ Asada, "Between the Old Diplomacy and the New", pg. 227.

²¹⁰⁷ Nish, *Japanese Foreign Policy*, pp. 135-136.

²¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

²¹⁰⁹ Armstrong, "China's Place in the New Pacific Order", pg. 260.

basis of the previously signed treaties of 1915 and 1918 and insisted on direct negotiations on the matter with Beijing; China refused any compromise based on Japanese conditionality.²¹¹⁰ In order to somewhat deblock the impasse, Admiral Katō, under pressure from the US Delegation, offered to hold direct negotiations with China on the Shandong question in late November 1921, a request which was accepted by Chinese delegates, despite the ongoing public opposition in China.²¹¹¹ Unlike Paris, however, there was to be no direct outside mediation, with US and British participation limited to the status of observers.

A total of 36 meetings were organized before an ultimate agreement was reached. The Japanese were prepared to offer a concession, but one based on its overall economic interests, namely the former German railway. For the bilateral negotiations, the Japanese Government issued a mandate to its delegates, instructing them to “maintain control of the Qingdao-Jinan railway as an instrument of ‘conquest by rail’”, with Tokyo assuming a much harsher stance than its delegates in Washington.²¹¹² Through Minister Obata in Beijing, Japan approached the Chinese Government with an offer to sell the railroad for a Japanese railway loan of fifteen years, with the further condition that Japanese managers and technicians would continue to be employed on the railroad until full repayment. The Chinese Delegation outright refused, to the open exasperation of Secretary Hughes who, after accompanying the Chinese Minister to visit President Harding, informed him bluntly that it “would be a colossal blunder in statecraft if China were not to take advantage of the Shandong question as the alternative might involve the risk of losing the Province.”²¹¹³ Under such US pressure, the Chinese Delegation finally relented, signing a bilateral treaty with Japan that saw Shandong returned to Chinese sovereignty but, through the provision of the railway loan, allowed Japan to—as with President Wilson in Paris—retain a strong economic presence in the territory. Undoubtedly, Hughes’s efforts to break the deadlock were essential to reach a final agreement, however, no less of a factor were his new esteem and understanding for Japan’s position on the Shandong issue, noting to the Far Eastern Division of the State Department that “Japan had felt the full pressure that the situation admits. It should be remembered that she has her own opinion and the prestige and position of her Government to consider...There are certain limits beyond which she will not go.”²¹¹⁴ Hence, on the fundamental issue of Shandong, Japan exhibited a willingness to display some degree of reciprocal restraint, however, without sacrificing Japan’s underlying economic interests in the territory as well as its overall diplomatic standing. When Japanese forces withdrew from Shandong in October 1922, it had been done based on a treaty that had been signed in total harmony with Japan’s overall policies, without having to resort to any degree of concession or compromise. Consequently, regarding Shandong, no policies of reciprocal restraint were necessary in the end.

9.3.2.5.6. The Russian Far East

With no official Russian representation in Washington, the question of the Russian Far East, where the Civil War was entering its final stages, was difficult to raise. At the same time, the

²¹¹⁰ Griswold, Whitney, *The Far Eastern Policy of the United States*, New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1938, pg. 326.

²¹¹¹ Nish, *Japanese Foreign Policy*, pg. 137.

²¹¹² Ibid.

²¹¹³ Griswold, *The Far Eastern Policy of the United States*, pg. 327.

²¹¹⁴ Asada, “Between the Old Diplomacy and the New”, pg. 227.

Harding Administration realized that Japanese activities in the Russian Far East were not in line with the goal of the Conference.²¹¹⁵ While the last US contingent withdrew from Vladivostok in January 1920, the Japanese remained. The Soviet defeat against Poland in 1921 sapped the Red Army of its necessary strength to deal with the lingering Japanese presence in the Russian Far East. To postpone a confrontation with Japan, the Bolshevik regime opted to create a temporary buffer state in the Amur Basin, coordinating the Congress of the Toilers of the Baikal Region to create the so-called Far Eastern Republic (FER).²¹¹⁶ The purpose of this political creation was to serve as a non-communist state that would be palatable enough to the Japanese to facilitate negotiations with Tokyo on the Russian Far East. Japan, taking the bait, proceeded to recognize the FER in 1920 and opened negotiations on a Japanese withdrawal with its leadership, both out of concern for the increasing domestic criticism of Japan's lingering presence in the Russian Far East as well as international condemnation, especially from the United States, which only intensified in the run-up to the Washington Conference. The Imperial Army consented to withdraw its forces from the Transbaikal region on condition that "the FER would remain democratic and free of communism" yet, simultaneously, remained intent on maintaining influence in the Russian Far East and northern Manchuria.²¹¹⁷

With the commencement of the Washington Conference in November 1921, and the United States focusing primarily on its main goal of stemming the arms race in the ante-bellum Pacific, questions relating to the Russian Far East paled in comparison. On 23 January 1922, the question of the continued Japanese presence in the Russian Far East was placed on the Conference agenda in a meeting of the Committee on Pacific and Far Eastern Affairs.²¹¹⁸ Ambassador Shidehara reminded the attendees that Japan's original intervention in Russia had been jointly undertaken with the US, however concern for Japanese citizens residing in the Russian Far East, as well as hinting at anxiety over the spread of Bolshevism, had forced Japan to remain; nevertheless, Tokyo was looking forward "to see and orderly and stable authority speedily re-established in the Far Eastern possessions of Russia" and therefore supported various White Russian factions "to preserve order and stability".²¹¹⁹ However, as the postwar economic situation in Japan began to slowly erode, support for a costly intervention in Russia became increasingly unpopular with the Japanese people and political parties themselves. Given the prevailing immediate postwar internationalist sentiment, the Imperial Army and Navy began to receive widespread criticism over its Siberian Intervention (*'Shiberia shuppei'*/シベリア出兵) being referred in the contemporary *vox populi* to as the Siberian failure (*'Shiberia shippei'*/シベリア失敗).²¹²⁰

²¹¹⁵ Griswold, *The Far Eastern Policy of the United States*, pg. 297.

²¹¹⁶ Linkhoeva, *Revolution Goes East*, pg. 60.

²¹¹⁷ Ibid., pp. 60-61.

²¹¹⁸ Perhaps unsurprisingly, on various occasions the FER sent telegrams of complaint regarding Japanese actions in the Russian Far East and lack of US recognition to Secretary States Hughes for the duration of the Washington Conference. Subjects ranged from outrage at Japanese seizure of "FER property" to the indifference of the Great Powers to the fate of the "FER people" and their practical sanctioning of Japanese bad behaviour. Indeed, the FER went so far as to publish documents allegedly signed between France, Japan, and White Russians in which France supposedly consented to the Japanese occupation of the Russian Far East, demanding a swift Japanese withdrawal to prove the falsity of the allegations. Other than embarrass the French Delegation, such pseudo-diplomatic shenanigans accomplished little. See Dukes, Paul, *The USA in the Making of the USSR: The Washington Conference 1921-22 and 'Uninvited Russia'*, London: Taylor & Francis, 2004, pp. 96-98.

²¹¹⁹ Ibid., pg. 36.

²¹²⁰ Linkhoeva, *Revolution Goes East*, pg. 64.

Japan required to find an honourable exit, naturally seeking to negotiate the “best possible terms for withdrawal”.²¹²¹ In an attempt to keep this question strictly bilateral, the Japanese conducted negotiations with FER representatives in Dairen starting in August 1921. The Russian Division of the State Department recommended Secretary of State Hughes apply the same degree of “strong moral pressure” against the Japanese presence in Russia as he did regarding Shandong; Hughes, however, sharply refused, underlying that there was no possibility of “driving the Japanese troops out of Siberia without going to war.”²¹²² Consequently, without having to place the question on the Conference’s official agenda. Hughes addressed the matter with Ambassador Shidehara who agreed that Japan, on its own initiative pledge to withdraw from the Russian Far East. Shidehara’s promise was implemented, with Japanese forces leaving the Russian Far East in October 1922, with the only Japanese presence being retained in northern Sakhalin. The FER was dissolved as a state and officially absorbed into the Soviet Union shortly following the evacuation of the Japanese military.

Given the background of the Japanese involvement in the Russian Civil War, it becomes possible to classify Tokyo’s decision to pursue a unilateral withdrawal as a policy of reciprocal restraint, one made possible by the Washington Conference that provided the necessary political motivation—from Secretary of State Hughes—to finally commit to an exit. Save for maintaining its occupation of Sakhalin (a unilateral decision by Tokyo), no conditionality was imposed to initiate the Japanese evacuation. While ending an unpopular and expensive episode of military adventurism, which served the needs of the contemporary government, it acted as a signal of restraint on postwar Japanese foreign policy in general. Granted, no immediate reciprocity was gleaned on the international scene from the Japanese withdrawal from the Russian Far East. Nevertheless, the decision signaled something more, namely “confidence that the nation’s interests would be best served through a policy of ‘international cooperation’” with the end of Japanese involvement in Russian internal affairs indicating evidence of “[Japan’s] faith in the new order of things”.²¹²³

9.3.2.6. Conclusion: The ‘Washington System’ and Reciprocal Restraint

While the terms of the Treaty of Versailles were meant to furnish reciprocal restraint, especially through the creation of the League of Nations, its rejection by the United States; non-inclusion of Russia; and the implicit rejection of the order it created in China through Beijing’s decision to enter the League through the peace treaty with Austria, inevitably meant that the order that the Treaty was meant to create was inherently limited. The Treaty of Versailles, therefore, had limited ability to foster policies of reciprocal restraint. Versailles’s inherent limitations were, however, recognized by the new Harding Administration. Consequently, it sought through the Washington Conference to establish a mechanism whereby a semblance of order could be extended over the Pacific. The highlighted agreements relevant to the establishment of a stable peace differed greatly from the Treaty of Versailles. Aside from being individual agreements, they held no official connection with any supranational enforcement organization and remained interstate agreements between their respective signatories. The resulting regional order, dubbed the

²¹²¹ Nish, *Japanese Foreign Policy in the Inter-war Years*, pg. 52.

²¹²² Asada, “Between the Old Diplomacy and the New”, pg. 227.

²¹²³ Iriye Akria, *After Imperialism: The Search for a New Order in the Far East, 1921-1931*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1965, pg. 25.

‘Washington System’, rested on its main outcomes, namely the Four Power Treaty; the Naval Disarmament Agreement; and the Nine Power Treaty facilitating policies of reciprocal restraint to further peace in East Asia. As such the system that arose from the Washington Conference was based on two main pillars that foresaw interstate cooperation between its signatories in questions concerning naval limitation in the Pacific and political cooperation in East Asia.²¹²⁴

Hence, overall the introduction of policies of reciprocal restraint on key issues lead to an improvement of the conditions for stable peace between Japan, US, and the UK “through formal negotiation and the settlement of difficult issues that could have, if left unaddressed, precipitated a war in the Pacific.”²¹²⁵ Regarding naval limitations and disarmament, the principal actors in East Asia (with navies), committed through the Washington agreement to restrain their maritime forces, both current and future. The results of the agreement were real and palpable, with British reports noting that “Secretary Hughes sunk...more ships than all the admirals of the world have destroyed in a cycle of centuries.”²¹²⁶ As noted, this was notably the case for the US and Japan, eager to spare themselves the economic burden of embarking on a costly armament programme in a time of economic recession. The Naval Limitation Agreement provided both capitals an opportunity to exercise the desired military restraint with dignity, preserving their respective international standing. As for political issues, the Four Power Treaty—replacing the Anglo-Japanese Alliance—committed the Powers to respecting policies of reciprocal restraint in recognizing their respective possessions in the Pacific as well as obliging the parties to find an interstate solution should issues arise. This same logic was extended to the situation in China, where the Nine Power Treaty was supposed to impose a sense of policy restraint between the Powers regarding their respective interests in China. The agreements signed in Washington provided some clarification, most notably solving the lingering tensions over Shandong, and furnished basic political commitment to implement restraint regarding policies towards the Chinese Republic. At the same time, this mutual understanding of the Nine Power Agreement was uniquely interpreted by the two main Powers with interests in China, namely the US and Japan. Like the Lansing-Ishii Agreement of 1917, it could be both simultaneously respected and violated depending on the eye of the beholder. The contradiction between the Open Door and Japan’s interests in Manchuria remained. Hence, the nature of the reciprocal restraint it introduced was inherently limited.

Consequently, the argument has been made that “Japan’s commitment to international cooperation was neither adequately exploited nor fairly tested. Where it was tested, it drew a sharp line between Manchuria and China. Cooperation and internationalization applied to China but not to Manchuria”.²¹²⁷ This is a fair assessment based on Japan’s initial negotiation strategy and posture throughout the talks in Washington. Nevertheless, through this strategy, most notably Admiral Katō’s decision to willingly accept Hughes’s proposed naval ratio, displayed a high degree of restraint on an essential issue of national security. While, as seen through the negotiation on China-related issues, Japan’s willingness to display restraint in the name of international cooperation substantially eroded. A conciliatory approach, where possible, still constituted a core

²¹²⁴ Asada, “Between the Old Diplomacy and the New”, pg. 214.

²¹²⁵ Kearn, David, *Great Power Security Cooperation: Arms Control and the Challenge of Technological Change*, Lanham MD: Lexington Books, 2014, pg. 33.

²¹²⁶ Mukherjee, Rohan, *Ascending Order: Rising Powers and the Politics of Status in International Institutions*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2022, pg. 156.

²¹²⁷ Jansen, *Japan and China*, pg. 359.

element of the Japanese strategy. As such, the reciprocal restraint furnished by the ‘Washington System’ paved the way for “the brief period of peace between the US and Japan.”²¹²⁸

9.3.3. The Settlement of 1919: Satisfaction with the Status Quo

The inherent satisfaction with the status quo needs to consider both the Treaty of Versailles and the ‘Washington System’ as the latter was convened to address the major blind spot of the former. The fact that it did inaugurate a period of peace in East Asia, especially between Tokyo and Washington, indicates enough satisfaction with the status quo that no nation, in the immediate aftermath of the establishment of the Legacy System, saw it fit to be overturned. An examination of the reaction of each of the East Asian regional players seems to confirm this.

The initiators of the Conference and architects of the ‘Washington System’, the Harding Administration, exhibited satisfaction at the results of their endeavours. Opening the Washington Conference on 12 November 1922, President Harding unabashedly placed his central focus on achieving a binding interstate treaty on naval limitations in the Pacific, as illustrated in his opening remarks: “The question, in relation to armament, which may be regarded as of primary importance at this time, and with which we can deal most promptly and effectively, is the limitation of naval armament...The first is that the core of the difficulty is to be found in the competition in naval programmes, and that, in order appropriately to limit naval armament, competition in its production must be abandoned.”²¹²⁹ The US Delegation accomplished President Harding’s goal and extended it through other agreements meant to explicitly furnish some degree of stability in the vacuum that regionally emerged in the aftermath of the US rejection of the Treaty of Versailles. The ‘Washington System’s’ interconnected treaties were lauded as an important step towards establishing international stability: “the prospect of a financially crippling naval arms race had been prevented, the first substantive arms control treaty had been agreed, the navies of the Great Powers were to be limited, a clash between the major powers for dominance in East Asia and the Pacific had been avoided, and the Anglo-Japanese Alliance that had filled other states with such unease had been replaced by a broader agreement.”²¹³⁰ The Harding Administration, adopting a decidedly anti-Wilsonian approach to regional cooperation, understood that an arms control agreement could not exist independently, and that a minimum degree of political stability would simultaneously have to be created to safeguard its main objective. This logic is implicit in President Harding’s statement to the US Senate while personally presenting the Washington Agreements for ratification on 10 February 1922: “All the treaties submitted for your approval gave such important relationship, one to another, that, though not interdependent, they are the covenants of harmony, of assurance, of conviction, of conscience, and of unanimity.”²¹³¹ The Conference did away with—from Washington’s perspective—the benign but annoying Anglo-Japanese Alliance as well as placing restrictions on Japanese fortifications and, through the Nine Power Treaty “for the first time received formal treaty approval of its Open Door Policy.”²¹³² The Senate agreed and, satisfied at the outcome, accorded the necessary ratification to Harding’s system of interstate treaties that

²¹²⁸ Iriye Akira, *Pacific Estrangement: Japanese and American Expansion, 1897-1911*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1972, pg. 252.

²¹²⁹ Kajima, *The Diplomacy of Japan*, Volume III, pg. 465.

²¹³⁰ Goldstein, *The First World War Peace Settlements*, pg. 79.

²¹³¹ Wright, Quincy, “The Washington Conference”, *The American Political Science Review*, Vol. 16, No. 2 (May 1922), pg. 293.

²¹³² Armstrong, “The Icarus Factor”, pg. 134.

Wilson's supranational structure was denied. Indeed, President Harding's satisfaction with the agreements reached was reflected in his closing statement where he noted that the successful conclusion of his main objective of naval disarmament did not exclude the convening of future conferences to maintain stability and address problems if and when they arose, "Since this conference of nations has pointed with unanimity to the way of peace today, like conferences in the future, under appropriate conditions and with aims both well-conceived and definite, may illumine the highways and byways of human activity."²¹³³ Interstate cooperation inherent in the Washington Agreements had proven sufficient to secure US short-term goals, while deferring any possible political issues to a future point in time where the US could likewise act independently. To both President Harding and the US Senate, this approach was more than sufficient.

The Japanese Government officially described the agreements reached as a "new epoch" that secured peace in the Pacific.²¹³⁴ There were indeed grounds for Tokyo's satisfaction. The Japanese goal of pursuing a limited policy of reciprocal restraint was successful in so far as it avoided a naval arms race with the United States, an eventuality that Admiral Katō's deep conviction that Japan could not compete industrially inherently recognized. Some members of the Japanese government applauded the forward-thinking displayed by Admiral Katō's concessions in Washington, with Lord Keeper of the Privy Seal Makino praising the "considerable progress" that had taken place in naval thinking that was, until several years ago, unthinkable.²¹³⁵ Public reception of the treaty was also partially positive. Upon the signing of the treaties, the Japanese press—notably the *Nichi-Nichi*, *Asahi Shimbun*, and *Yomiuri*—wrote positively about what had been achieved in Washington, underlining the Conference as a "crystallization of a new international spirit of peaceful cooperation" and noting their particular pleasure that "the new entente removes the suspicion and fear which, however groundless they may have been, have been instilled in the American mind by the Anglo-Japanese Alliance."²¹³⁶ Indeed, such a public reaction mirrored Japan's willingness to adapt to the cooperative spirit of the Settlement of 1919 and Tokyo's engagement efforts through cooperation in Washington reflected "the broader trends toward internationalism in Taishō Japan", reflecting the adapted priorities of the civilian government.²¹³⁷

At the same time, however, Japan had been less successful in Washington than it had been in Paris.²¹³⁸ In the halls of Versailles, the Japanese Delegation achieved all of their objectives, with its war goals being enshrined as part of the Settlement of 1919. By the conclusion of the Washington Conference, Japan had agreed to substantial naval limitations, pledged to withdraw from the Russian Far East and Shandong (the principal victory at Paris), and nominally accept the Open Door Policy. As the British Delegation at Washington reported at conference close "the growth of feeling that at the Washington Conference Japan yielded everything and gained nothing."²¹³⁹ Japanese policy makers were also concerned at the country's post-Washington isolation, especially with the absorption of the bilateral Anglo-Japanese Alliance into a regional

²¹³³ Wright, "The Washington Conference", pg. 296.

²¹³⁴ Iriye, *After Imperialism*, pp. 25-26.

²¹³⁵ Dickenson, *World War I and the Triumph of a New Japan*, pg. 113.

²¹³⁶ Kawakami, K.K., *Japan's Pacific Policy, especially in relation to China, the Far East, and the Washington Conference*, New York: E.P. Dutton and Company, 1922, pg. 31.

²¹³⁷ Jansen, *Japan and China*, pg. 360.

²¹³⁸ Nish, *Japanese Foreign Policy*, pg. 142.

²¹³⁹ *Ibid.*

understanding. While Tokyo could take solace in the fact that it still remained linked to the international community as a founding member of the League Nations, a second-rate consolation at best, but as leader of the Japanese opposition, Katō Tataaki, surmised “this treaty is better than no treaty.”²¹⁴⁰ The individual agreements that formed part of the ‘Washington System’ were also subjected to criticism from various echelons of Japanese society. The Conference’s result on China “was a disappointment to most Japanese”, with the majority of the population refusing to contemplate any deviation from Japan’s zone of special interest.²¹⁴¹ Yet it was the Imperial Navy, so intent on skuttling Admiral Katō’s concession on naval ratios, that proved to emerge as the most dissatisfied with the impositions of the ‘Washington System’. The limitations on defence spending post-Washington marked an era of major cuts to military expenditure, declining from 49 percent of the national budget in 1921 to 30 percent in 1923.²¹⁴² Katō Kanji, rising to Navy Chief of the General Staff, continued to build opposition to the Treaty, pledging that “the utmost caution must be taken to never again be confronted by joint Anglo-American coercion.”²¹⁴³ The tension that, despite the Nine Power Treaty, still lingered between Washington and Tokyo over Japanese actions in the Russian Far East and China tilted the Japanese military to review its defence policy and, in 1923, despite the international agreements that now traversed the Pacific, the United States was viewed as the most likely military opponent of the Japanese Empire and reflected as such in the Revision of Imperial Defence Policy.²¹⁴⁴ Despite such opposition, Japan did not overtly manifest its substantial dissatisfaction with the Settlement of 1919 in its foreign policy. Instead, Japan committed to “live up to the commitments it had made in Washington.”²¹⁴⁵ Nevertheless, the satisfaction with the Settlement of 1919 and the ‘Washington System’ that sprung from it was, at best, skin deep.

China benefitted little from the Settlement of 1919, with its Washington Conference offshoot providing Beijing with some consolation. The Washington Conference did what the Treaty of Versailles could not, namely accord internationally recognized Chinese sovereignty of Shandong. In addition, the Nine Power Treaty and nine resolutions on China could be classified as a success for the Chinese Delegation. Yet many fundamental concerns that the Chinese Delegation had sought to raise at both Paris and Washington, namely legal jurisdiction and the presence of foreign militaries were “documented but not solved.”²¹⁴⁶ Hence, the Settlement of 1919 only produced a modest step forward regarding Chinese integration as an equal member of the international community. Nevertheless, other than Shandong, it brought little concrete change to China’s position both regionally and internationally. Despite all the efforts of the Chinese delegates at Paris and Washington, Japan and the Western Powers felt that “before China could hope to have her aspirations realized, she must first put her house in order and be in a position to present at least a semblance of stable government.”²¹⁴⁷ While the agreements in Washington provided some appearance of an intermission in geopolitical competition over the fractured Chinese Republic, differing interpretations of the Nine Power Treaty’s actual meaning resulted in nothing more than a façade of stability: “pious assurances contained in [the treaty’s]

²¹⁴⁰ Kawakami, *Japan’s Pacific Policy*, pg. 31.

²¹⁴¹ Nish, *Japanese Foreign Policy in the Interwar Years*, pg. 46.

²¹⁴² Jansen, *Japan and China*, pg. 360.

²¹⁴³ Asada, “The Revolt against the Washington Treaty”, pg. 92.

²¹⁴⁴ Drea, *Japan’s Imperial Army*, pg. 150.

²¹⁴⁵ Jansen, *The Making of Modern Japan*, pg. 521.

²¹⁴⁶ Vogel, *China and Japan*, pg. 218.

²¹⁴⁷ King, *China and the Washington Conference*, pg. 53.

principles...tended to lull China and the other powers alike into a false sense of security.”²¹⁴⁸ Yet, in the end, the ultimate question of Chinese satisfaction with the Settlement of 1919 was obliged to take a back seat to other more pressing issues, namely the Republic’s critical domestic political constellation. As Vogel notes “the assertion that China was not unified was both the cause and the excuse for treating China as less than a fully sovereign state.”²¹⁴⁹

9.3.4. The Settlement of 1919: Pacific Self-Image

The Settlement of 1919, and its Pacific offshoot the Washington Conference, marked a drastic change in the concept of self-images of each East Asian state. A simple review of the numerous antecedent conditions is sufficient to underline the scope and magnitude of the changes that the First World War wrought as a ‘critical juncture’. The end of Imperial China and the Meiji Era was followed by the collapse of the Russian Empire and the prolonged inability of the nascent Chinese Republic to jell into a unitary state marked the systemic landscape and the shaped the contours of the Settlement of 1919. Both China and Russia, as the Legacy System of the Settlement of 1919 was established, were undergoing titanic changes in national identity and self-images, engulfed as both countries were in Civil War, the consequences of which will be examined in the next chapter. Even the United States was not immune to the changes wrought by this ‘critical juncture’. The US claim to moral global leadership of President Wilson, suffered a serious blow to prestige with the US Senate’s refusal to ratify the Treaty of Versailles, leaving the cautious interstate approach of the Harding Administration to accompany the rise of US postwar military and economic importance. Hence, each East Asian nation had, over the course of this ‘critical juncture’, undergone significant changes to their identities and sense of self-perception.

The changes to self-images that accompanied the Settlement of 1919 were especially pronounced in Japan. The Paris Peace Conference had an impact that far exceeded Japan’s proposal of a racial equality clause or indirect transfer of Shandong, but rather “the more fundamental question of national identity” where “Wilson’s appeal for a new order packed a force equivalent to Perry’s ‘black ships’ in 1853.”²¹⁵⁰ The 28th President’s rhetoric on the value of internationalism and democracy seemed to indirectly mount a challenge to the predominant intellectual currents in Japanese domestic and foreign policy making. Japan’s conduct during the First World War—from its independent entry and uncoordinated military campaign; the Twenty One Demands; to its unbridled ambition in the Russian Far East—seemed to be the incarnation of the very antithesis of Wilson’s criticism of ‘selfish and autocratic’ countries, infatuated with ‘intrigue’ and ‘conquest’.²¹⁵¹ While such words were meant for the German Empire, they could have easily applied to the Japanese. The model that Japan sought to most emulate during its march towards the Western World was Prussia. While Tokyo did not seek to establish an East Asian version of the Kingdom, a large number of constitutional provisions of the final Japanese Constitution of 1889 were based on the example of the Prussian model.²¹⁵² This historical fact was not lost on the State Department whose East Asian experts at Paris declared “the spirit of Japan is that of Prussia whom Japanese leaders openly admire and whose government they deliberately

²¹⁴⁸ Ibid.

²¹⁴⁹ Vogel, *China and Japan*, pg. 218.

²¹⁵⁰ Dickenson, *War and National Reinvention*, pg. 207.

²¹⁵¹ Ibid., pg. 210.

²¹⁵² Jansen, *The Making of Modern Japan*, pg. 391.

chose for a model.”²¹⁵³ However accurate these statements were, the fact was that the defeat of Germany, in the Anglo-Saxon mind, meant the final defeat of a supposedly autocratic and militaristic ideology. The Chinese, Russian, Habsburg, Ottoman, and German Empires had fallen, leaving the Japanese still standing in the dust.

The end of the Meiji era, as noted, had introduced an element of democracy into the previously autocratic system, that, by 1919, witnessed the coming to power of Japan’s first true civilian government. Hara’s ascension as Prime Minister symbolized a “break in the political life of the nation” as he had come to the pinnacle of government power through the novel avenue of a civilian politician.²¹⁵⁴ Woodrow Wilson’s pleas for democracy and internationalism were met with general euphoria. They also provided moral support to those elements in the Taishō era that sought to permanently dispense with oligarchic rule.²¹⁵⁵ The public discontent over the military’s insistence on pursuing a prohibitively expensive intervention in the Russian Civil War accorded strength to their voices, now bolstered by Japan’s standing as a founding member of the internationalist League of Nations, finally perhaps in a position to force the Imperial Military under civilian control. Then Finance Minister Takahashi, having analyzed the ‘Siberian failure’, wrote a report to Prime Minister Hara entitled ‘A Personal View of National Policies at Home and Abroad’. Takahashi viewed the time as ripe to press for changes in according civilian operational control over the military, given the questionable policies they had pursued and to place Japan’s self-image more in line with the internationalism supposedly inherent in the Settlement of 1919: “The army does not stop at planning to send troops abroad for military reasons, but interferes in diplomatic and economic decision making as well, so our country does not have a unified policy...Because the Army’s general staff interferes with other state organs we should abolish it and unify the Army’s administration...we should abolish both [Army and Navy] General Staffs at the same time.”²¹⁵⁶ The transformation of international relations into the exclusive domain of the ‘New Diplomacy’ would mean nothing less than a gradual, but total, transformation of the Japanese Empire. As such, the self-image in Japan that began to be cultivated, both in the halls of power as well as amongst the people, was “in essence that of a revolt against the military’s privileged position.”²¹⁵⁷

Such thinking posed a direct challenge to the path of modernization that had brought such spectacular results, catapulting Japan into the status of a global recognized political and economic power. The Settlement of 1919 placed contradictions at the heart of the Japanese Empire, victor in Wilson’s war to protect ‘democracy’, in sharp relief. The Advisory Council on Foreign Affairs was well aware of this overt challenge to Japan’s preferred mode of development. Council member and future Prime Minister, Inukai Tsuyoshi (1855-1932), underlined the problem associated with any strict adherence to the ‘New Diplomacy’: “we may no longer demand even an inch of land for acquisition of territory...it is like saying that we cannot promote any path of development for the Empire except economic relations.”²¹⁵⁸ The consideration of new avenues of foreign policy, not yet trodden by previous governments, would have to be considered by the Hara Cabinet. The

²¹⁵³ Curry, *Woodrow Wilson and Far Eastern Policy*, pg. 253.

²¹⁵⁴ Hackett, *Yamagata Aritomo in the Rise of Modern Japan*, pg. 322.

²¹⁵⁵ Dickenson, *War and National Reinvention*, pg. 236.

²¹⁵⁶ Paine, *The Japanese Empire*, pg. 94.

²¹⁵⁷ Iriye, *China and Japan in the Global Setting*, pg. 36.

²¹⁵⁸ Dickenson, *War and National Reinvention*, pg. 211.

Settlement of 1919 introduced a more tempered approach to Japanese foreign policy towards East Asia, with Hara arguing for a “positive foreign policy” based on formulating Japanese interests in China “to help China herself”, with the ultimate aim of installing in Japan a mission “to assume the responsibility of safeguarding peace in East Asia.”²¹⁵⁹ Caution, however, needs to be exercised regarding the totality of such statements and their actual translation into policy and its subsequent effect on self-image.

The advent of the Settlement of 1919 and the ‘Washington Spirit’ did lead to concrete changes in Japan’s most critical area of interest, namely China. Even after Hara’s assassination, Japan’s policy towards the troubled Chinese Republic saw its halting of its policy of overt support to one particular faction as it did during the 1910s, and instead adopted a neutral and passive approach in line with the Nine Power Treaty.²¹⁶⁰ At the same time, as noted, even the Hara Cabinet reserved a very different interpretation of the Treaty when it came to areas of Japanese special interests in Manchuria. As witnessed by Japan’s negotiations in Paris and Washington, Japan’s self-image clearly included its rights to Manchuria, not to mention Korea and Taiwan. While the Settlement of 1919 and the Washington Conference marked a diminution of bilateral tensions between the US and Japan, it did not eliminate them. As noted, as early as 1923, the US had been singled out by the Japanese military as the most likely potential adversary. The Harding Administration, too, despite its ardent wish to secure stability and security in the Pacific, was not above reverting to military competition and likewise war if its ardent attempts at restraint were not realized. Outlining his basic approach to negotiations on the eve of the Conference, the 29th President assured his audience that “we’ll talk sweetly and patiently [to the other major naval powers] at first; but if they don’t agree then we’ll say ‘God damn you, if it’s a race, then the United States is going to go for it.’”²¹⁶¹ To back these words up with deeds, the Joint Army and Navy Board revised its Joint Basic War Plan Orange which fine-tuned, as it had done since its first conception in 1907, the US strategy for war against Japan and was subsequently adopted by the Secretary of War and the Navy as official strategy on 15 August 1924.²¹⁶² The Settlement of 1919 and the ‘Washington System’ provided a framework of restraint and basis for cooperative diplomacy in East Asia. They, however, did not entrench pacific self-images amongst their signatories. War, pushed into the background by the Settlement of 1919 remained an ever-present threat behind yet another serene façade.

9.3.5. The Settlement of 1919: Compatible Social Orders

The self-images that emerged from the Settlement of 1919 were simultaneously indicative of the social orders that had engendered them. A great portion of East Asia lay in political flux. Social orders were still locked in the throes of civil war that raged over the old territories of the Qing and Russian Empires. The United States and the Empire of Japan were united in their victory over the Central Powers yet little else served to bind them. This included the question of social orders. While elements of US and Japanese society, as illustrated above, displayed an infatuation

²¹⁵⁹ Hackett, *Yamagata Aritomo and the Rise of Modern Japan*, pg. 328.

²¹⁶⁰ Iriye, *After Imperialism*, pg. 27.

²¹⁶¹ Maurer, John, “Arms Control and the Washington Conference” in Goldstein, *The Washington Conference*, pg. 284.

²¹⁶² Miller, Edward, *War Plan Orange: The US Strategy to Defeat Japan, 1897-1945*, Annapolis: United States Naval Institute Press, 2007, pg. 2.

with the prospect of Wilsonian ‘New Diplomacy’, serious differences remained between the social orders on both sides of the Pacific. Secretary Lansing exemplified the suspicion with which US policy makers viewed the Japanese social orders, declaring that “Japanese psychology could not understand America’s altruistic purpose of ‘fighting for liberty and democracy in Europe.’”²¹⁶³ Even the advent of the ostensibly liberal Hara Cabinet did not alter Washington’s calculus of viewing Japan’s social orders as distinct from American democracy. The sentiment was reflected in the comments of Edward Williams (1854-1944), Chief of the State Department’s Far Eastern Division from 1914-1918, in preparation for how to deal with the Japanese Empire at the Paris Peace Conference: “from the beginning of [Japan’s] history...the militarist had brought unity at him by war abroad...[and] aimed at the hegemony of Asia. The present Hara government in Japan was no more liberal than the previous ministries. Japan must be restrained if justice is to prevail or liberty survive in the Far East.”²¹⁶⁴ Hence, from Washington’s point of view, there was very little common ground between the social orders of the US and Japan, despite the fashionable infatuation with the vision of Wilsonian ‘New Diplomacy’ of the initial post-First World War period.

The advent of the Hara Cabinet, as noted above, marked the first Japanese government being formed by political parties. Despite this milestone, Taishō democracy remained a system with limited involvement from wide breaths of Japanese society. Hara actively opposed the expansion of suffrage and the involvement of the labour movement in politics, representing a political current whose transformation upon assuming power was summarized as “outsiders demanding power to insiders exercising it” in what has been deemed ‘Imperial democracy’.²¹⁶⁵ Indeed, Japanese democracy, even in the reformist spirit of the Taishō era was a *sui generis* reflecting the Empire’s unique social development since the Meiji Restoration. Advocates of liberal policies often held a distinct understanding on the need to pursue professedly democratic changes.

Pro-democracy politicians, such as Nagai Ryūtarō (1881-1944) epitomize this approach. Nagai reflected a general consensus on an understanding of democracy that “placed a certain degree of conformity throughout the country and less on diversity and pluralism...the primary goal was to have individuals develop their potential through the opportunities afforded under democratic institutions so that all could work together more effectively to serve the Emperor and nation and at the same time ward off foreign threats.”²¹⁶⁶ Democracy was therefore a means to augment state power. Major reforms to the social orders undertaken following the Settlement of 1919 could be therefore seen through this prism. Following the Paris Peace Conference, many members of the Japanese Delegation began to insist on the introduction of universal suffrage. This was seen as a prerequisite to establish a true constitutional democracy, thereby consolidating national unity. It was likewise viewed as necessary for national mobilization purposes as well.²¹⁶⁷ The decision to extend universal manhood suffrage in 1925, therefore, was part and parcel of the

²¹⁶³ Curry, *Woodrow Wilson and Far Eastern Policy*, pg. 176.

²¹⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, pg. 253.

²¹⁶⁵ Gordon, Andrew, *Labour and Imperial Democracy in Prewar Japan*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992, pg. 61.

²¹⁶⁶ Minichiello, Sharon, *Retreat from Reform: Patterns of Political Behaviour in Interwar Japan*, Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1984, pp. 126-127.

²¹⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, pg. 126.

general efforts to mobilize the “people for national and international objectives.”²¹⁶⁸ Hence, this distinct overarching objective of Japan’s constitutional democracy provided a very different tone to the Japanese social orders following the Settlement of 1919.

In conclusion, while both outwardly proclaiming themselves as having ostensibly democratic social orders, there existed very little compatibility between the distinct versions that had arisen in the United States and Japan respectively following the Settlement of 1919. Adding to the paltry comparisons to be made were the smashed social orders in the former Russian and Qing Empire. Both nations were engulfed in bloody internal conflicts over the question of which social orders and national self-images would come to succeed their respective Empires. The Treaty of Versailles/‘Washington System’ did little to forward a definitive resolution of such fundamental issues. As a result, the criterion of compatible social orders did not appear within the legacy system of the Settlement of 1919.

9.3.6. The Settlement of 1919: Existence of an Interested Hegemon

9.3.6.1. Analysis of Postwar Military Strength

The antecedent conditions of the Settlement of 1919 left two of East Asia’s traditional powers, China and Russia, in tatters, fractured by prolonged Civil Wars. As such, both countries in their shattered state could not claim any realistic aspirations to hegemony, to which their exclusion from the Paris Peace and Washington Conference testifies. Hence, Japan and the United States were left as the only East Asian regional members who could possibly stake a claim to interested hegemony. Following the Treaty of Versailles and the establishment of the ‘Washington System’, hegemony, the hallmark of the ‘Old Diplomacy’ was supposed to be confined to pre-Wilsonian past. Nevertheless, as both Japan and the United States immediately updated their respective war strategies to prepare for any eventuality against the other meant that the question of hegemony, despite the high degree of internationalist fanfare, still mattered.

The Washington Conference limited the numbers of the Japanese military. It did not, however, restrict the number of officers and soldiers seeking to prepare for what was viewed as an “inevitable war”, reflected in the 1923 Imperial Defence Policy.²¹⁶⁹ The nomination of Katō Kanji, the Imperial Navy’s hardliner at the Washington Conference, as Chief of Naval General Staff insured that every ship and tonne of naval shipping that Japan was permitted under the Naval Disarmament Treaty was used to the fullest. Under the naval strategy of the 1923 Defence Policy, Japan planned to immediately seize US bases in the Philippines and Guam and provoke the main US fleet to be dispatched in response to the Japanese advance, after which the Japanese fleet hoped to meet and dispense with the principal US force.²¹⁷⁰ To accomplish this fact, the Japanese Navy could, under post-Washington constraints, muster nine battleships; three aircraft carriers; and 40 cruisers. The Imperial Army faced a similar spirit of downsizing, albeit not due to any limitations imposed by the Settlement of 1919 and the ‘Washington System’. Despite not focusing on the army, the Washington Conference raised expectations in Japan and paved the way for open civilian

²¹⁶⁸ Ibid.

²¹⁶⁹ Kuehn, John, *A Military History of Japan: from the Age of the Samurai to the 21st Century*, Santa Barbara, CA: Praeger Security International, 2014, pg. 183.

²¹⁷⁰ Evans, *Kaigun: Strategy, Tactics, and Technology in the Imperial Japanese Navy*, pp. 202-203.

criticism of the size of the Japanese army. Lengthy debate on army force limitation took place in the Diet, with several of its members demanding unprecedented drastic cuts to the Imperial Army's numbers and resources. In the end, Army Chief of Staff Uehara Yūsaku had no other choice but to reduce army strength in 1922 by 2,268 officers, 57,296 warrant officers and enlisted men, and 13,000 horses.²¹⁷¹ With this reduced strength, the Imperial Army had to support the Navy in its planned moves against US positions in the Western Pacific, in line with the traditionalist “‘short war’ theory” which required a large standing army in order to overwhelm US forces.²¹⁷² As such, the Imperial Defence Policy of 1923 envisioned a peacetime force of 21 divisions that could, during times of war, be expanded to 40. At the same time Minister of War Ugaki, in December 1923, realized that even in the event of a successful short war campaign against the US, the danger existed that Japan would have to fight a prolonged war against a possible coalition, including China and the Western Powers.²¹⁷³ At the same time, Ugaki remained cognizant—as will be illustrated in detail later—that the military and natural resources necessary to sustain such a longer, broader war required policies that were outside the limits prescribed by the Settlement of 1919 and the ‘Washington System’.

The United States also recalibrated its forces following the end of the Great War, seeking to demobilize its forces that had served on the Western Front. The National Defence Act of 1920 foresaw a maximum strength of 280,000, depending on the budget accorded by Congress. The United States viewed itself as an inherently Pacific power; more than that, Washington saw itself not only as the region's preeminent power but the guarantor of Western values within East Asia. In formulating US strategy against Japan, US planners argued that it would be “unfair” to abandon the “‘White Nations’ burden” as it would imply a US abandonment of the Philippines, sacrifice US economic interests, spell the end of the Open Door Policy, and encourage radicals of “‘lesser developed races’ to rebel against their European masters.”²¹⁷⁴ To defend this self-imposed traditional East Asian role against any potential challengers, the United States continued to develop its war plans, despite the negative peace established by the ‘Washington System’. Immediately following the conclusion of the Washington Conference, in May 1922, the Navy began to adapt US strategy through the interpretation of the Washington Agreements that would leave room for the “later upbuilding of military and naval forces in the western Pacific”.²¹⁷⁵ The Joint Army and Navy War Plan Orange, officially adopted as US strategy in August 1924, envisioned three phases of military operations, mostly to circumvent the limitations prescribed by the ‘Washington System’, with the US aiming to, at first, establish an all-important western Pacific base—prohibited under the Naval Armaments Agreement—and then to isolate Japan by sea and force a surrender.²¹⁷⁶ The initial peacetime strength of the US Army would be mobilized to participate in an ‘US Asiatic Expeditionary Force’ that would support Navy operations. While the Settlement of 1919 and its Washington offshoot established limits, the US likewise sought to maximize their circumvention and prepare in the most effective way for a campaign against Japan.

²¹⁷¹ Humphreys, *The Way of the Heavenly Sword*, pg. 62.

²¹⁷² Drea, *Japan's Imperial Army*, pg. 151.

²¹⁷³ *Ibid.*, pg. 153.

²¹⁷⁴ Miller, *War Plan Orange*, pg. 26.

²¹⁷⁵ Braisted, William, “United States Navy's Strategic Assessments in the Pacific, 1919-21” in Goldstein et al (eds), *The Washington Conference*, pg. 109.

²¹⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, pg. 112.

Table 15: Comparison of Military Strength in East Asia following the Treaty of Versailles/ 'Washington System' (1923)

Country	Strength of Army (estimated)	Strength of Navy (estimated)
Japan	Peacetime: 210,000 (21 divisions) ²¹⁷⁷ War: 400,000 (40 divisions)	Nine battleships, three aircraft carriers, 40 cruisers ²¹⁷⁸
The United States	280,000 ²¹⁷⁹	1 cruiser & gunboats ²¹⁸⁰

The peacetime forces of the two most powerful nations in East Asia in 1923, illustrated by Table 15 above, underline that neither Japan nor the United States could lay claim to absolute military hegemony over the region. The naval forces disposable to both parties were in line with the Naval Armaments Agreement, while peacetime ground forces relatively equal. Although both Japan and the United States interpreted the Washington Agreements, such as the Nine Power Treaty, in line with their respective conceptions of idealized regional hegemony, neither nation was in the position as of 1923 to impose this vision over East Asia as a whole. As such, no interested hegemon characterized the Settlement of 1919.

9.3.7. The Settlement of 1919: Existence of a Constitutional Order

The Settlement of 1919 is the first 'critical juncture' where the criterion of the existence of a Constitutional Order can be considered. This is first and foremost due to the policy of the Wilson Administration during the Great War and its desire to bequeath a lasting peace not only upon Europe, but the entire world. The 28th President came to Versailles with "an ambitious institutional agenda aimed at binding democratic states together in a universal rule-based agenda"²¹⁸¹ As noted, the objective of establishing a League of Nations received the top priority for US negotiators, one that, despite the serious reservations of more experienced statemen such as Clemenceau, Wilson was intent on bringing about. Indeed, his calculations to finally succumb to Japanese arguments over the indirect transfer of Shandong were partially made in order to prevent a Japanese abandonment of his beloved project. The core of the matter could be encapsulated in Point XIV of Wilson's Fourteen Points which, in practical terms, entailed the creation of a League of Nations that, in the mind of the 28th President, would form "an association of democracies that would provide mechanisms of conflict resolution and mutual security obligations."²¹⁸² While the main focus of this proposed supranational order lay in Europe, its stated objective was to encompass all of mankind, including East Asia. The 'New Diplomacy' would supplant the 'evils' of Imperialism for the 'New' that would create a bond between all humanity: "America and Europe were not only to be one in sympathy but to be bound together by a charter of freedom which would show that there was to be no difference between American principles and those of mankind."²¹⁸³ This

²¹⁷⁷ Drea, *Japan's Imperial Army*, pg. 152.

²¹⁷⁸ Ibid., pp. 150-151.

²¹⁷⁹ history.army.mil/books/AMH/amh-19.htm, pg. 409, accessed 12 February 2024.

²¹⁸⁰ Based in Manila. Cole, Bernard, "America's Asiatic Fleet", *Naval History*, October 2011, Volume 25, Number 5.

²¹⁸¹ Ikenberry, *After Victory*, pg. 117.

²¹⁸² Ibid., pg. 144.

²¹⁸³ Temperley, H.W.V., *A History of the Peace Conference of Paris*, Volume I, London: Oxford University Press, 1920, pg. 197.

Constitutional Order, therefore, would cement stable peace from Europe to the Pacific. As usual, theory and practice differ substantially, and the Settlement of 1919 is no exception.

The Settlement of 1919, as illustrated, did not enter into the details of political settlements in East Asia. The Treaty of Versailles, despite being globalist in scope, was very focused in practice on the establishment of peace between the Allies and Germany. As such, the only explicit East Asian issues in the Settlement of 1919 pertained to Germany's former Pacific possessions of Shandong and Micronesia. No articles covered the situation in China, nor Russia, nor addressing the tensions between Japan and the Western Powers that had substantially worsened over the course of the Great War. The international League of Nations, with its members all bound by its Covenant, would, as Ikenberry notes, provide a framework where its signatories "would make commitments to each other to guarantee the peaceful settlement of territorial disputes and work collectively to oppose states that did otherwise."²¹⁸⁴ Such a logic might be valid for the unique context of postwar Europe, but its imposition on East Asia, given the postwar political constellation, was unclear. Japan agreed to join the League of Nations not because of any true conviction in Wilsonian ideals, but rather out of concerns that any rejection of the Covenant would damage the nation's newfound standing as a globally recognized Great Power. Moreover, Japan, as illustrated, was more than ready to jettison its adhesion to the League of Nations had Wilson given his pro-Chinese sentiments full sway and transferred Shandong directly to China. While the Chinese Delegation had placed great hopes in the Settlement of 1919, it did not see, following Wilson's decision on Shandong, any particular benefit in sacrificing its principles of territorial integrity to join the League of Nations in a treaty that refused to recognize it. Despite the Covenant's high-minded principles, it did nothing to address the ongoing Civil War in Russia as no Russian representation had been present in Paris. To add to this confusion was the rejection of the Treaty of Versailles itself by its supposedly greatest advocate, the United States.

In Europe, the US was not a direct factor in the determination of the Old Continent's balance of power, a fact that substantially dampened the effects of Congress's non-ratification. East Asia, however, was a different matter altogether. The United States had, since 1899, been involved in East Asia as a territorial player and, by 1919, had become one of its most powerful states. With the US and Russia undisputedly outside the League system, and China an internally fractured signatory, Japan remained the only East Asian state that was bound by its tenets. Hence, the Constitutional Order that the Settlement of 1919 sought to establish in East Asia was woefully insufficient. Wilson's successor, President Harding, recognized that the Settlement of 1919 in its contemporary state left a gaping hole in an area of chief US security concern: the Pacific. Mindful that Article X, obliging League members to use force to deter any acts of aggression, had signaled the death knell of US flirtation with the League, the 29th President sought to address the security vacuum in East Asia through interstate, and not supranational, treaties. This was the rationale behind the Washington Conference and the system of treaties which was its outcome. Even here, the Naval Disarmament Treaty, the Four Power Treaty, and the Nine Power Treaty primarily reflected the interests of the US as a maritime power. As noted, these agreements did assist in furnishing a temporary break in the tensions between both sides of the Pacific. Yet that is as far as the Washington Conference, as a *de facto* East Asian appendage of the Paris Peace Conference, could go. While the Washington Conference did secure Japan's unilateral commitment to withdraw from Shandong and the Russian Far East, questions of security on the Asian continent

²¹⁸⁴ Ikenberry, *After Victory*, pg. 144.

were decidedly absent. Naturally, the civil wars raging in both China and Russia played a major role as to why substantial discussions on such issues were practically impossible, thereby simultaneously providing the nascent ‘Washington System’ with serious inherent limitations.

Hence, in reviewing the practical implementation of the Settlement of 1919 in East Asia, while President Wilson might have had the intent to establish a Constitutional Order over the region through the Paris Peace Conference, the contemporary political constellations would not allow such an order to take hold. While the more realistic Harding Administration attempted to address Versailles’s most glaring shortcomings, its accomplishments, although furnishing what Boulding would describe as a temporary ‘negative peace’ were modest in scope and did little to remedy the security situation on the Asian continent. Moreover, the ‘Washington System’, while effective in cloaking regional tensions, was exclusively interstate in nature and, unlike the Treaty of Versailles, did not foresee any supranational organization to lord over the maintenance of regional peace and security. Hence, no Constitutional Order was established through the advent of the Treaty of Versailles and the Washington Conference.

9.3.8. Conclusion: The Legacy System of 1919

“*Ubi solitudinem faciunt, pacem appellant*” (they make a desert and call it peace) were the words that Chieftain Calgacus spoke before a battle to his soldiers of the Caledonian Confederacy.²¹⁸⁵ The same words could be applied to the Settlement of 1919. The idealism that had inspired a war-weary Western world gave way to a system of treaties that turned out to be very far indeed from achieving the goals espoused by the 28th President’s idealism. Instead, a “‘Wilsonian Moment’ or, rather, ‘Wilsonian Bubble’ lasted from autumn 1918 to spring 1919 and witnessed an inflationary idealism that was completely out of line with reality.”²¹⁸⁶ While East Asia, too, was caught up in this ideological fervor, the Treaty of Versailles provided little impetus to fostering stable peace in East Asia. An international order, as prescribed by the League of Nations, did manage to extend itself to parts of East Asia, with Japan joining through the Treaty of Versailles and China through the Treaty of St. Germain. However, the United States via conscious rejection and Russia through explicit exclusion were absent from the League’s jurisdiction. As noted, the Harding Administration convened the Washington Conference to cover the security gaps in the Pacific that the Treaty of Versailles had left in its wake. Hence, the resulting ‘Washington System’ should be seen as an integral part of the Legacy System of the Settlement of 1919.

After having applied this dissertation’s identified criteria to the ‘critical juncture’ of the First World War, the results can be summarized in the following table:

²¹⁸⁵ Tacitus, Cornelius & Pearce, J.W.E. (ed.), *Agricola of Tacitus*, London: George Bell & Sons, 1901, pg. 33.

²¹⁸⁶ Zachmann, “Introduction”, pg. 4.

Table 16: Assessment of the Conditions for RSO Formation Present Following the Settlement of 1919

<i>Antecedent Condition</i>	<i>Geo-political Necessity</i>	<i>Policy of Reciprocal Restraint</i>	<i>Satisfaction with Status Quo/‘Legacy System’</i>	<i>Pacific Self-Image</i>	<i>Compatible Social Orders</i>	<i>Existence of an Interested Hegemon</i>	<i>Existence of a Constitutional Order</i>
<i>Settlement of 1919</i>	NO	YES	YES	NO	NO	NO	NO

In reviewing the Settlement of 1919 in its totality, therefore, marks the first instance where the condition of geopolitical necessity was not met. This was especially the case for the Washington Conference where only ‘winners’ came to the table with no pressing need to offer up any, let alone painful, concessions. The sole East Asian nation that became a signatory of the Treaty of Versailles, Japan, did so after a calculated decision of the Advisory Council on Foreign Policy and not due to the pressures of war as was the case in 1905. Japan made a conscious choice based on its own national interests to elect to join the League of Nations, despite strong suspicion of the organization as a tool for US or British hegemony. Even after agreeing in principle to adhere to the League of Nations, Japanese negotiators were prepared to walk out of the Paris Peace Conference had President Wilson agreed to the transfer of German rights in Shandong to Tokyo. Geopolitical necessity also did not apply to the convening of the Washington Conference. The original idea behind the Conference was the unilateral decision of the Harding Administration to address burning issues in East Asia that had been left unaddressed both by the negotiations at Versailles, but also directly resulting from the US Senate’s non-ratification of the Treaty. Political and economic calculus motivated President Harding’s decisions, not geopolitical necessity, as the United States was more than ready to engage in a costly arms race should an agreement not have been reached. The posture of the Japanese Delegation during the Washington Conference reflected a similar attitude. Japan managed to keep discussion of the most sensitive issue of its foreign policy, namely China and the Russian Far East, off the official agenda, limiting discussion to the Open Door Policy. As noted during the negotiations, a substantial fraction of the Japanese Imperial Navy, led by Katō Kanji, expressed their readiness to reject the sixty-percent ratio outright. While the pressure of internationalism in the post-bellum context, and the fear of diplomatic isolation, might have played a role in motivating Japan to come to the table, there were many a delegate who were more than prepared to take another more antagonistic approach to the negotiations. Even the fractured Chinese Republic refused to sign the Treaty of Versailles as such a step would imply Beijing’s consent to the indirect transfer of Shandong to Japan, a bridge too far even for a country in the grips of a civil war.

In the absence of geopolitical necessity, the condition of reciprocal restraint took on importance in the Settlement of 1919. The League of Nations theoretically imparted a sense of reciprocal restraint in East Asia but, due to its limited membership, this was more of a moral imperative than a geopolitical reality. The ‘Washington System’, however, was another story. Interstate in nature, with no hint of supranationalism, the main achievement of the Washington Conference, the Naval Armament Treaty, was a product of reciprocal restraint, mainly thanks to the decision of Admiral Katō to adopt a concessionary policy towards the naval ratio proposed by

the US, to the detriment of prevailing Japanese naval strategy. This enabled the US to make subsequent concessions regarding fortifications in the western Pacific that made the centerpiece of the 'Washington System' possible. A readiness for reciprocal restraint permeated the other major agreements reached at Washington (the Four Power Treaty; the Nine Power Treaty) as well as motivating Japan to unilaterally withdraw from the Russian Far East and from Shandong with only economic concessions. Indeed, this 'Washington Spirit' permeated Japan's subsequent bilateral negotiations with China, agreeing to withdraw their forces not only from Qingdao, but also Hankou, and northern Manchuria in addition to dropping Group V of the Twenty One Demands in its entirety, whose consideration was postponed during the 1915 negotiations.²¹⁸⁷ Yet despite such mutual policies of reciprocal restraint, they could not provide the foundations upon which stable peace could be built. Concessions were made in the name of the new postwar spirit of internationalism and not based on the condition of geopolitical necessity. The tenets of the Covenant of the League of Nations and the 'Washington System' were willfully respected; however, they were not based on any geopolitical compunction. While indicating overt satisfaction with the agreements reached, its two main signatories, the US and Japan, both sought to maximize the leeway granted through their respective interpretation of the treaties to better their regional strategic positions, as illustrated by the strategies behind the 1924 War Plan Orange and the 1923 Imperial Defence Plan. The furnished peace, therefore, was negative in nature and, as such, superficial at best. It did not impose any conditionality on Russia and treated the Chinese Republic as a second-rate member of the international community, with an Open Door Policy subject to differing interpretations by the parties. Upon such foundations, no stable peace could be constructed.

With the absence of stable peace, it becomes unsurprising to note that the conditions for formation of an RSO were likewise absent from the Settlement of 1919. This conclusion is of note as, had the tenets of Wilsonian idealism been followed, the nature of the Settlement might have been very different. Yet the antecedent conditions, as they pertained to the East Asian context, rendered such a goal illusory at best, even in the heyday of Wilson's popularity. Besides the obvious problems stemming from the exclusion of Russia and the ongoing domestic turmoil in China, the social order of the Japanese Empire remained unchanged from the early Meiji days. The advent of the Taishō era, and the 'Siberian failure', marked a serious challenge to the domination of the traditional oligarchy. This also entailed per se a questioning of the Imperialist model that had secured Japan's place among the Great Powers. Such methods were amply displayed throughout the Great War in the former German territories, China, and the Russian Far East, seriously calling into question Japan's regional aspirations by its own allies. In the era of the 'New Diplomacy', Japan remained standing as the only Empire in East Asia. While increased civilian control over the political apparatus with the advent of Prime Minister Hara became a reality, it remained a temporary achievement, with adherents to the 'Old Diplomacy' not very far in the background, as illustrated by the negotiations at Washington. Despite the changes that accompanied the Taishō era, Japan remained very much an outlier amongst the islands of democracies in the post-1919 world. Regarding the formulation of Japanese foreign policy following the Settlement of 1919, Japan did not eschew its objective of establishing regional

²¹⁸⁷ Humphreys, *The Way of the Heavenly Sword*, pg. 129.

hegemony, instead choosing to pursue a policy characterized by the “self-restraint of ‘respectable imperialism’.”²¹⁸⁸

Adding to this was the lack of pacific self-images that had begun to take shape following the Settlement of 1919. The Treaty of Versailles and the ‘Washington System’ provided a framework for interstate understanding on key strategic issues. Despite the existence of each of these treaties lurked the expectation of war for which the main regional players continued to prepare. Finally, the absence of a Constitutional Order did not allow for the formation of an RSO. The League of Nations, while incorporating Japan and China, did not include all of East Asia, keeping substantial regional players outside its supranational tentacles. Nevertheless, the League of Nations and the ‘Versailles system’ (*Berusaiyu taisei*/ベルサイユ体制) it begot provided the framework within which Japanese foreign policy would be based in the post-bellum new order, despite the overall impression that its underlying Covenant was in direct contradiction to the Meiji Constitution and the notion of Imperial sovereignty.²¹⁸⁹ Such sentiments would not easily evaporate after the Settlement of 1919.

The interstate agreements afforded by the ‘Washington System’ instead provided the base for a reduction of open tensions in the immediate years following 1922. Dispensing with the supranational oversight of a Constitutional Order, this interstate ‘system’ sought to build trust and mutual confidence between the signatories of its agreements based on the provision of concrete solutions to mutual problems. As Admiral Katō noted “the [Washington] Conference succeeded because the participating nations agreed on the pressing need to establish world peace and alleviate the burden [of armaments]. And these two aims can be accomplished only by freeing ourselves from the old world of exclusive competition among the powers and by creating the new world of international competition.”²¹⁹⁰ Indeed, Japan would continue to observe the limitations on its naval force negotiated by Admiral Katō for a full fourteen years. At the same time, the signatories adhered to the agreements as long as they could live within the contours of the self-imposed peace. Therefore, the argument can be presented that “the Washington Conference failed to set up a new order of cooperative diplomacy in East Asia.”²¹⁹¹ While much more successful in providing a tenacious and temporary peace out of the desert that Wilson’s Treaty of Versailles had left in East Asia, the ‘Washington System’, too, was wrought with serious limitations that rendered the outcome of the conference marginal at best or, at worst, irrelevant. As such, the Settlement of 1919 neither featured a functioning Constitutional Order nor did the stopgap interstate agreement that comprised the ‘Washington System’ manage to provide a fully functioning and inclusive system of regional stability, as illustrated by the Chinese and Russian cases.

Hence, the Settlement of 1919 marks an important initial experiment of the ‘New Diplomacy’, one that was characterized by important successes (Naval Limitation Agreement) but likewise was overshadowed by fuzzy and unenforceable agreements that did little to address the underlying tensions that remained dormant between the regional powers of East Asia. Left to brood, they would soon find a way towards their concrete expression.

²¹⁸⁸ Burkman, *Japan and the League of Nations*, pg. 106.

²¹⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 212.

²¹⁹⁰ Asada, “Between the Old Diplomacy and the New”, pg. 229.

²¹⁹¹ Jansen, *Japan and China*, pg. 359.

Chapter 10 – The Second World War: The Treaty of San Francisco

10.1. Introduction

The Second World War in East Asia was the result of an intricate set of factors whose ultimate trajectory led to an apocalyptic conflict that pushed mankind into the Atomic Age and Japan to the brink of obliteration. Far from constituting a spontaneous event, the outbreak of this ‘critical juncture’ was a result of the regional deficiencies inherent in the Settlement of 1919 as they pertained to East Asia. While these were recognized rather quickly by the Harding Administration through its establishment of the ‘Washington System’, the multilateral order that it intended to project was not accompanied by the peace and stability it intended to engender. The exclusion of the Soviet Union from the Settlement of 1919 would transform the regional landscape, with Moscow utilizing its exclusion to focus on the establishment of an ‘anti-Washington’ system through its involvement in China, leading to a rapid transformation of the domestic political situation, most notably through the steady emergence of more central authority over what had been a fractured shell of a Chinese Republic. The eventual recognition of the USSR as a bona fide regional state would further transform the regional system. Every action has its reaction, and the dissatisfaction of certain elements of Japanese policy makers with the inherent restrictions willfully imposed by Japan’s entry into the ‘Washington System’ was marked by calls for a more active foreign policy, both in the Pacific and in China, Tokyo’s main geopolitical concern. The weakness of the Taishō political system came to the fore, with the Imperial Military gradually taking the reins over the political direction and subsequent actions of the Japanese Empire. Such events would play a key role in not only casting the ‘Washington System’ into practical irrelevance and historical oblivion, but also intensifying the rivalry between the main East Asian states, the United States and the Japanese Empire.

The Settlement of 1919 firmly anchored East Asia, through the signing of the Treaties of Versailles and Saint-Germain, as an integral part of the international system through Japanese and Chinese membership in the League of Nations. Indeed, the lead-up to the ‘critical juncture’ of the Second World War, was assisted by the moot attempts of the Chinese Republic to appeal for supranational mediation following the Japanese invasion of Manchuria in 1931. Influenced by events in Europe, most notably through the rise of the ‘revolutionary power’ Germany, the first version of the international ‘rules-based order’ became increasingly challenged. The entrance of Japan into the Tripartite Pact, and its decision to exploit the defeat of France and the Netherlands by opting to drive south, making open conflict with the United States, the defender of the systemic order in East Asia, unavoidable. The Pacific War was prolonged affair, yet the last-minute entrance of the Soviet Union against Japan adjoined an additional level of complexity to questions of postwar peace and stability. Indeed, the peace settlement that would, in some respects, bring the Pacific War to a conclusion marked an anomaly in diplomatic history, marking the “first major war in history that did not end with a comprehensive peace settlement.”²¹⁹² Unlike the precedent set with the 1919 Paris Peace Conference, no single peace treaty was ever reached between Japan and its wartime enemies. The Treaty of Peace with Japan (known as the Treaty of San Francisco), when it was signed a full six years after war’s end in 1951, was decidedly limited in scope, both

²¹⁹² Ikenberry, *After Victory*, pg. 163.

regarding the number of participants that were invited to sign and the number of concrete issues it chose to address.

Proponents of international organizations note that, “in the years between 1944 and 1951, the United States and its allies brought about history’s most sweeping reorganization of international order” and, when speaking of the Treaty of San Francisco amongst the Western industrial countries and Japan, describes it as resulting in “a dense set of new security, economic, and political institutions, almost all involving the United States.”²¹⁹³ From the perspective of this dissertation, this was decidedly not the case. While a strong argument could be made for the Settlement of 1951 strengthening US bilateral relationships over its chosen allies in East Asia and projecting its ability to defend its interests from its former ally, very few conditions necessary for the establishment of stable peace and the formation of an RSO emerged. The Settlement of 1951 left in its wake a willful inheritance of exclusion and confrontation. Its final contours are of special relevance as, at the time of writing, it continues to provide the geopolitical contours within which the East Asian regional system operates. Hence, analyzing the complex nature of this ‘critical juncture’s’ antecedent conditions and legacy system becomes necessary.

10.2. The Second World War: Antecedent Conditions

10.2.1. Introduction

The Settlement of 1919 was originally intended to encompass the entire international system in an institutionalist embrace aimed at consigning the ‘evils’ of ‘Old Diplomacy’ to history. In practice, however, the Settlement simply pushed supposedly *démodé* concepts into the background, leaving serious holes in its wake. Following the Settlement of 1919, East Asia represented the greatest vacuum where the Washington Agreements hastily pasted some degree of interstate order over a conflict-riddled region. Nevertheless, despite the efforts of the Harding Administration and Japanese spirit of reluctant restraint, major gaps remained within the regional system. Two of the central players in the East Asian system, Russia and China, remained isolated from the agreements reached in Paris and in Washington. Russia, still secluded in its international isolation following the Bolshevik seizure of power, was not included in any of the agreements of the Settlement of 1919 and remained decidedly outside the new regional order. China, while agreeing on its own terms to join the League of Nations, remained trapped in internal disorder, manifesting itself most obviously in China’s *de facto* second-class status at Paris and Washington. Given that the two largest countries in Asia were excluded from all meaningful participation in the ‘New Diplomacy’, and with their long bilateral history that pre-dated that of any of the Western Powers, it is perhaps only natural that they would attempt to establish understanding in isolation.

10.2.2. The Emergence of Sino-Soviet Relations

10.2.2.1 The Karakhan Manifesto

The Bolshevik ideology, in the days following its seizure of power, while its main focus of breeding unrest lay in industrial Europe, revolutionary overtures were also directed at Asia. The most significant statement was made on 22 February 1918 when the Bolsheviks urged the native

²¹⁹³ Ibid.

inhabitants of the Far East to revolt against Western colonialism, a declaration that played a major role in the US decision to deny diplomatic legitimacy to the Bolshevik regime.²¹⁹⁴ Following the outbreak of the Russian Civil War, the Bolsheviks regime closely observed the proceedings at the Paris Peace Conference. Noting that all of China's request at Versailles were rejected by Beijing's fellow victorious Allies, the Soviet regime did not hesitate to issue a manifesto directed towards China, on 25 July 1919, penned by Leo Karakhan (1889-1937) Deputy People's Commissar for Foreign Affairs. The manifesto has been described as "masterful propaganda".²¹⁹⁵ Steeped in Bolshevik anti-capitalist and imperialist slogans, the Manifesto served a more pressing geopolitical goal that lay behind any propagandistic veneer. First, the regime sought to achieve what had become a long-elusive goal of international recognition; while second, it marked a Bolshevik attempt to coerce China into undertaking military cooperation in attacking Russian forces in the Far East. Manchuria was a centre of Russian resistance to Bolshevism, with the Chinese Eastern Railway forming the centre of its military and economic activities.²¹⁹⁶ With their forces occupied in Europe, the Manifesto attempted to court China into assisting the Bolsheviks in engaging Russian forces in a geographic area that lay out of their control.

Although no official text of the original declaration has yet been ever uncovered, a text with the same name appeared in the Bolshevik newspaper, *Izvestiya*, one month after the document's date, predicting the impending 'liberation' "from foreign gold which is strangling the enslaved peoples of the East, first among them the Chinese nation."²¹⁹⁷ Addressed to the "people of China" and also to the "Governments of northern [Beijing] and southern [Sun Yat-sen] China", the document's arrival in Beijing caused a sensation in liberal Chinese circles as "evidence of China's return to her position as a great power".²¹⁹⁸ In short, what became known as the Karakhan Protocol offered to China each and every point of the Chinese Delegation's Ten-Point programme presented, and subsequently rejected, by the Western Powers in Paris. According to the telegram, the Bolshevik regime once again repudiated all foreign debts of the Russian Empire and its share of the Boxer indemnity from the Settlement of 1901, promising to do away with all special privileges and concessions while respecting China's economic independence. In particular, Karakhan took aim at the Treaty of Versailles cautioning that "If the Chinese desire to become free like the Russian people, and to escape the destiny prescribed for it at Versailles in order to transform it into a second Korea or a second India, it should understand that its only allies and brothers in the struggle for liberty are the Russian worker and the Red Army of Russia."²¹⁹⁹ The most significant, and sensational, pledge made by the Bolsheviks in their first overture to China was regarding the CER, also presented as a prominent demand of the Chinese Delegation at Paris, which the regime offered to return without any reimbursement: "The Soviet Government restores to the Chinese people without any kind of compensation, the Chinese Eastern Railway, as well as all concession of minerals, forest, gold and other which were seized by the Government of the Tsars...and capitalists of Russia...Besides these principal points, the Soviet Government...is ready to negotiate with the Chinese people all the other questions and to settle once and for all cases of acts of violence and injustice of Russia, acting together with Japan and the Allies."²²⁰⁰

²¹⁹⁴ Williams, William Appleman, *American-Russian Relations: 1781-1947*, New York: Rinehart, 1952, pg. 123.

²¹⁹⁵ Elleman, *International Rivalry and Secret Diplomacy in East Asia*, pg. 151.

²¹⁹⁶ Wu, Aitcher, *China and the Soviet Union: A Study of Sino-Soviet Relations*, London: Routledge, 1950, pg. 136.

²¹⁹⁷ Whiting, Allen, "The Soviet Offer to China of 1919", *The Far Eastern Quarterly*, Aug. 1951, No. 4, pg. 355.

²¹⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, pg. 356.

²¹⁹⁹ Elleman, *International Rivalry and Secret Diplomacy in East Asia*, pg. 153.

²²⁰⁰ *Ibid.*

What the capitalists at could not deliver at Versailles, the Bolsheviks could partially furnish instead.

To Chinese policy makers, this offer from the still unrecognized Bolshevik regime, engaged in a Civil War against Russia, appeared to signal “a new diplomatic Magna Carta.”²²⁰¹ In concrete terms this meant an offer to renegotiate all previous treaties that the lawful rulers of the Russian Empire had concluded with China, this time however with an anti-imperialist framework: “The Soviet Government proposed...that they start negotiations to annul the treaty of 1896, the Peking Protocol of 1901, and all agreements concluded with Japan between 1907 and 1916, that is to return to the Chinese people everything that was taken from them by the Tsarist Government...We herewith address the Chinese people with the object of making them thoroughly understand that the Soviet Government has given up all the conquests made by the Government of the Tsar, which took away from China, Manchuria and other territories...”²²⁰² A second version, a French translation of the *Izvestiya* article, made its way to the Chinese Foreign Ministry through the ‘representatives’ of the Bolsheviks’ diplomatic front in East Asia, the Far Eastern Republic, reaching Beijing in March 1920. The Chinese students, progenitors of the May Fourth Movement, were ecstatic upon hearing of the Bolshevik offer; the Chinese foreign minister suspected on the other hand that the telegram from the FER was a forgery.²²⁰³ Combined with the fact that the Chinese Foreign Ministry was not of the opinion that the Bolshevik regime would congeal into a stable government, no attention was paid to the Manifesto.

Later, the Chinese began to openly criticize the non-response of the Chinese authorities, both in the North and South, as foregoing an opportunity to, through the recognition of the Bolshevik regime, to immediately seize control of the whole CER instead of allowing it to fall under international control.²²⁰⁴ Such a move would have aligned the Chinese Republic, however fractured, with a recognized Bolshevik ‘government’, thereby de facto creating a counterweight to the inadequate system of ‘New Diplomacy’ that Wilson had established. Due to the Chinese Foreign Ministry’s suspicions, however, such a scenario was not to be.

10.2.2.2. The Soviet Declaration of 1920

Over the rest of 1920 the situation looked manifestly different. The Bolsheviks had managed to end the Allied intervention and secure substantial victories against Russian forces, leaving only Japanese forces fighting in the Far East, while in China one of the most influential contemporary warlords, General Wu Peifu (1874-1939), began advocating for a more independent post-Versailles Chinese foreign policy.²²⁰⁵ These changes in circumstances paved the way for a visit of a Chinese Delegation to Moscow in September 1920, once again prepared through the diplomatic efforts of the FER. Arriving in Moscow, Karakhan presented the Chinese with a second amended document for consideration by the Chinese Government, regretting that his first attempt to establish relations did not bear fruit. The document Karakhan presented intended to specify the points in his Manifesto of a year earlier, thereby establishing friendship and good will between the

²²⁰¹ Wu, *China and the Soviet Union*, pg. 135.

²²⁰² *Ibid.*, pg. 156.

²²⁰³ Wu, *China and the Soviet Union*, pp. 136-137.

²²⁰⁴ *Ibid.*

²²⁰⁵ Yakhontoff, Victor, *Russia and the Soviet Union in the Far East*, London: George Allen & Unwin, 1932, pg. 134.

neighbouring republics. In particular, the proposed treaty renounced all former Russian treaties, seizures of territory, and former Russian concessions in China; established trade and economic relations; and eliminated extraterritoriality for Soviet citizens. In exchange, China would commit to recognizing the Russian Socialist Federated Soviet Republic (RSFSR) and pledge to not support any “Russian counter-revolutionary individuals”—yet most important was **Article 8**, where “the [Soviet] and the Chinese Governments agree to sign a special treaty on the way of working of the Chinese Eastern Railway with due regard to the needs of the RSFSR, and, in the conclusion of any treaty there shall take part, beside China and [the Soviet Union], also the Far Eastern Republic.”²²⁰⁶ This marked a substantial departure from the 1919 Manifesto, where the Bolsheviks had pledged, out of supposed ideological sympathies, to return the CER for free.

China, not having reacted at the initially more enticing offer, also “paid no proper attention to this second declaration.”²²⁰⁷ The situation in Beijing did not render acceptance of any Bolshevik offer to establish relations easy, as the Imperial Russian Embassy, complete with its Tsarist Minister, still held out in the Chinese capital, and claimed sole de jure recognition with the support of the Western Powers. Any Chinese recognition of the Bolshevik regime would provoke a negative reaction from the Western Powers, hence the Cabinet decided instead to suspend recognition of the Russian Empire in China, assuming control of all Russian interests. For the first time, the Chinese Government established a special bureau dedicated to Russian affairs.²²⁰⁸ Following this second rejection, the Bolsheviks turned the task of building relations with China to its creation specially instituted for the task, the ‘free and democratic’ Far Eastern Republic, sending missions to Beijing to work on trade and economic issues. Yet, the Chinese Government, under pressure from France and Japan, “dared not start any negotiations.”²²⁰⁹ The Bolsheviks, however, persisted. The Soviet representative in London approached Wellington Koo, now Chinese Minister in London, with the request to establish friendly relations between Soviet Russia and China on the base of recent treaties signed with Great Britain, Germany, Italy, and Switzerland. After conferring with the Chinese Foreign Ministry, Koo informed the Soviets that China would be prepared to negotiate, however only on the basis of the 1919 and 1920 declarations.²²¹⁰

10.2.2.3. The Fate of Outer Mongolia

The advent of the Russian Civil War provided China an opportunity to regain control of its peripheral territories, most notably in Outer Mongolia. Seeking to deflect the military campaigns of the internal Russian conflict from spilling into Mongolia, the territory formally renounced its autonomy—declared in 1911—and agreed to be restored to its former status as an integral part of China, going so far as to request Chinese forces to protect Mongolia from any Russian incursions.²²¹¹ By 1920, most of Outer Mongolia had been successfully integrated into the Chinese Republic. The internal situation in the former Russian Empire was changing in favour of the Bolsheviks. Having signed a Peace Treaty with Poland following their decisive defeat at the gates of Warsaw, they managed to compel Russian forces to retreat both in Crimea and Siberia, forcing

²²⁰⁶ Wu, *China and the Soviet Union*, pg. 139.

²²⁰⁷ Ibid.

²²⁰⁸ Yakhontoff, *Russia and the Soviet Union in the Far East*, pg. 135.

²²⁰⁹ Wu, *China and the Soviet Union*, pg. 140.

²²¹⁰ Ibid., pg. 141.

²²¹¹ Paine, *Imperial Rivals*, pg. 318.

the remnants of the Russian armies to take shelter on the periphery of the former Empire. Having been defeated by the Bolsheviks, a Baltic-German Russian patriot, Nikolai Robert Freiherr von Ungern-Sternberg (1886-1921), led his Asiatic Cavalry Division into Outer Mongolia in October 1920, seeking to raise a Mongol army under the Orthodox Cross to liberate Russia from the Bolsheviks. In February 1921, Ungern-Sternberg expelled Chinese forces from Urga, the administrative capital, declaring the independence of Mongolia. Ungern-Sternberg used his Tibetan cavalry to liberate the Mongolian Bogda (Living Buddha) from his Chinese captivity and was honoured with the rank of Khan, Great Hero General, Builder of the State and was permitted to wear the symbols of Mongolia's highest nobility.²²¹² The new member of the local nobility then began to systematically murder any socialist sympathizers remaining in the capital. The Chinese were furious at being expelled once again from Mongolia and ordered the warlord of Manchuria, Zhang Zuolin (1875-1928), to intervene and crush Ungern-Sternberg's Khanate. While expecting USD 10 million from Beijing to undertake an expedition, Zhang purposefully stalled as he had close connections with Ungern Sternberg who wholeheartedly supported his desire to restore the Manchu Dynasty.²²¹³ The Japanese at first were supportive of the idea of an independent Mongolia, providing a loan to Russian supporters of pan-Mongolianism and even assisting a Mongolian Delegation to plead their case for recognition at the Paris Peace Conference, without meeting President Wilson, as this fitted in with Japanese designs of creating a buffer state in Mongolia. As the Civil War began to turn to Siberia and the Far East, the Japanese Siberian Command, following Ungern-Sternberg's capture of Urga, "supported and supplied with arms" a coordinated attack by Russian forces against Bolshevik positions, with Ungern-Sternberg launching an offensive from Mongolia to isolate the Far Eastern Republic.²²¹⁴ It should be noted that the Advisory Council of Foreign Affairs attempted in vain to curb such Japanese support to the Russian resistance, however, the Japanese Siberian Command and intelligence services ignored instructions from Tokyo, viewing it as an ideal method to retain control of the CER.²²¹⁵ Despite Japanese assistance, the planned offensive resulted in failure as Ungern-Sternberg's was the only force that actually mounted an attack.

In moving to eliminate Ungern-Sternberg's base in Urga, the Bolsheviks informed the Government in Beijing concerning their intentions to move into Outer Mongolia, after Beijing had explicitly rejected any assistance from the Red Army and even a request for joint Bolshevik-Chinese intervention against Russian forces.²²¹⁶ The Bolsheviks justified their intervention on the necessity to evict Ungern-Sternberg from his Mongolian haven and, in doing so, sent a force of 10,000 soldiers to occupy Outer Mongolia. By July 1921, the Bolsheviks installed yet another puppet 'state' in East Asia under the guise of a People's Government of Mongolia that proceeded to request the Red Army to remain to defend the new territory against the Russians. The new Mongolian authorities declared independence on 14 September 1921, stating that they "will no longer recognize the suzerainty of China", announcing that the Bolshevik regime had annulled all previous Unequal Treaties with the Russian Empire and remained ready to conclude "new" treaties" with the nascent republic.²²¹⁷ With the capital Urga renamed as Ulaan Baator (City of the

²²¹² Sunderland, Willard, *The Baron's Cloak: A History of the Russian Empire in War and Revolution*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2014, pg. 174.

²²¹³ *Ibid.*, pg. 164.

²²¹⁴ Wu, *China and the Soviet Union*, pg. 164.

²²¹⁵ Linkhoeva, *Revolution Goes East*, pg. 58.

²²¹⁶ Wu, *China and the Soviet Union*, pg. 164.

²²¹⁷ Paine, *Imperial Rivals*, pg. 321.

Red Hero), a thorough Sovietization of Outer Mongolia under the People's Revolutionary Party became the order of the day, accomplished through the oversight of cadres imported from Moscow.²²¹⁸ The new Mongolian regime officially regulated its relationship with the Bolsheviks in November 1921 through the conclusion of a treaty of recognition and friendship where "each country recognized the legitimacy of the other's respective government and agreed to prevent subversive groups hostile to the other from operating within its territory" and allowed the Bolsheviks to mediate any Mongolian disputes with China.²²¹⁹ Hence, what had constituted a sovereign part of China in 1920 had, by the close of 1921, become a de facto Bolshevik protectorate.

The Chinese, unsurprisingly, expressed strong reservations regarding the Bolsheviks' treaty with Mongolia which constituted an obvious violation of Chinese rights over the territory. The Bolsheviks sent plenipotentiaries in April 1922 to Beijing to explain their actions to an outraged Chinese Government, meeting the Chinese Commissioner in charge of reassuming Chinese control over Outer Mongolia, Li Yuan. Noting that the Bolshevik-Mongolian treaty was focused only on trade, Li openly decried the Bolsheviks' policy towards Mongolia: "Your government sent troops to Outer Mongolia in the name of guarding against the Whites [Russians], but you have encroached on Mongolian territories. Since your government has now broken its word so many times, how could it be that it does not want to establish socialism in Mongolia!"²²²⁰ The Chinese continued to request the withdrawal of Bolshevik troops from Mongolia, but now it was the Bolsheviks' opportunity to turn a deaf ear. The Bolshevik emissaries simultaneously seized the occasion to elucidate Li on current Bolshevik thinking about its recent offers to China: "some time my government announced the annulment of all treaties from the era of the old Imperial Government, but it did not say that their basis had been annulled because there were still some questions. So your Government mistakenly thought that the 1919 [Karakhan Manifesto] totally annulled the 1915 [Tripartite] treaty. In addition, we did not declare that Mongolian autonomy would immediately be abolished nor that [the] Chinese Eastern Railway would also be returned to Chinese control; This, however, was your country's mistaken understanding."²²²¹ The Chinese had to begrudgingly accept that the initial Karakhan Manifesto was a mirage and, more importantly, that "in spite of numerous protests of the Chinese Government and of equally numerous promises of fair play on the part of the [Bolshevik] authorities, Outer Mongolia had practically been united to the [Bolshevik] empire."²²²²

10.2.3. The Sino-Soviet Agreement and Secret Protocol of 1924

As 1922 progressed, the Bolsheviks solidified their grasp over the Russian Far East. The Japanese withdrawal from the Russian Far East, eliminating the last bastion of support to Russian forces, caused the last remaining centres of resistance to collapse. The façade of the Far Eastern Republic was lifted, and it was absorbed fully under Bolshevik control. On 30 December 1922, the Bolsheviks, having occupied the totality of Russian territory, declared the creation of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR). The reality of Soviet control over the Russian Far East

²²¹⁸ Wu, *China and the Soviet Union*, pg. 166.

²²¹⁹ Paine, *Imperial Rivals*, pg. 382.

²²²⁰ *Ibid.*, pg. 323.

²²²¹ *Ibid.*

²²²² Wu, *China and the Soviet Union*, pg. 172.

obliged China to engage with the new authorities in Moscow. In September 1923, the Chinese Government appointed C.T. Wang as the head of the Sino-Soviet Negotiations Commission and welcomed Karakhan to Beijing in February 1923. The Soviet envoy demanded that China formally recognize the Soviet Union as a prelude to any negotiations, a request that was once again rejected by the Chinese Foreign Ministry.²²²³ Karakhan insisted that his previous offer to the Chinese Government actually entailed an opportunity for Beijing to *buy* back the China Eastern Railway from the USSR in exchange for permission for continued Soviet use of transportation across Manchuria, with the exact price and management arrangements to be established at a Sino-Soviet Conference to be held one month after the Chinese recognition of the Soviet Union.²²²⁴ While agreeing on the need to solve pressing issues, Beijing still refused to concede to Moscow's demand of *de jure* recognition.

Nevertheless, the negotiations continued and, in the meantime, Great Britain and Italy formally recognized the Soviet Government in February 1924, causing public opinion in China to "grow more in favour of obtaining a strong and solid agreement with the Soviet [Union]."²²²⁵ The negotiations, however, remained deadlocked. The fractured state of the Chinese Republic constituted a factor in Beijing's attitude to the continued impasse: when the Beijing Government discovered that the Soviets were undertaking negotiations with the southern factions, Manchuria, as well as Japan, Beijing began to feel itself under pressure. A provisional agreement was signed between Wang and Karakhan that agreed on the establishment of diplomatic relations between China and the USSR and to hold a conference to discuss "(1.) the nullification of all the agreements entered into between China and Tsarist Russia and the replacement by new agreements on the basis of equality...; (2.) the withdrawal of Soviet troops from Outer Mongolia; (3.) the re-demarcation of the national boundaries...; (4.) the conclusion of a Commercial Treaty and Customs Treaty..."²²²⁶ The Chinese Cabinet, however, refused to sign off on the agreement without modifications which Karakhan refused to consider. The Western Powers, having caught wind of the Sino-Soviet negotiations, began to make enquiries with the Chinese Government as to the fate of the CER, with the US Government officially reminding Beijing, on 3 May 1924, of the Washington Conference resolution on the Powers' reserved right to insist on Chinese responsibility to protect foreign investors in the railway. Beijing officially replied that "the reference to the history and agreement of the CER concerned only [the Soviet Union] and China, and asserted that, in future, they would settle all questions relative to the CER at their own discretion."²²²⁷

The moves of the Western Powers obliged Karakhan to resort to secret diplomacy.²²²⁸ On 31 May 1924, two agreements were signed between Koo and Karakhan. The first was an agreement of general principles between the Republic of China and the USSR whereby the countries accorded each other diplomatic recognition and reestablished bilateral relations. This agreement marked a slight modification from the one signed by Wang and Karakhan: **Article II** stated that China and the USSR agreed "to hold, within one month after the signing of the present Agreement, a

²²²³ Ibid., pg. 146.

²²²⁴ Elleman, *International Rivalry and Secret Diplomacy in East Asia*, pg. 159.

²²²⁵ Wu, *China and the Soviet Union*, pg. 147.

²²²⁶ Ibid.

²²²⁷ Ibid., pg. 152.

²²²⁸ Ibid.

Conference which shall conclude and carry out detailed arrangements relative to the questions in accordance with the...following Articles”; **Article III** stated that at this future Conference, both parties “agree to annul all Conventions, Treaties, Agreements, Protocols, Contracts, etcetera between the Government of China and the Tsarist Government and to replace them with new treaties”; **Article IV** went even further and underlined that the USSR, in accordance with its 1919 and 1920 declarations, highlighted that all treaties and agreements of the Tsarist Government with a third party regarding the sovereign rights and interests of China were “null and void”; while **Article V** recognized Outer Mongolia as “an integral part of the Republic of China” and pledged the USSR to respect China’s suzerainty over the territory; finally **Article IX** addressed the fate of the CER, noting that the issue would be handled in detail at the Conference, noting however that until the Conference’s convening the Sino-Russia agreement of 1896 would remain in force.²²²⁹ Indeed, the conditionality of Article IX turned out to encapsulate the significance of the first Sino-Soviet agreement. While, at first glance, this agreement seemed to mark the commencement of a “new epoch in the diplomatic history of China, as it was the first time that China was placed on an equal footing with a Western Power”²²³⁰, the existence of the second secret protocol signed on the same day between Koo and Karakhan quietly nullified such purported accomplishments.

The secret Sino-Soviet Protocol of 1924, though a one-page document, dispensed with much of the supposed fanfare that accompanied the public Sino-Soviet agreement. Upon the signing of the Agreement of General Principles, a clarification to Article III was signed, confirming that until the convocation of the fabled Conference, “it is agreed that pending the conclusion of such new Treaties, Agreements, etcetera, all the old Conventions, Treaties, Agreements, Protocols, Contracts, etcetera, will not be enforced.”²²³¹ From the Chinese viewpoint, the seemed to have finally done away with the Unequal Treaties that characterized the Qing’s relations with the Russian Empire. Yet, abolishing the Unequal Treaties was not the same as agreeing not to enforce them, as Koo and Karakhan pledged with the 1924 secret protocol. Indeed, accepting the non-enforcement of such treaties “actually recognized that [they] existed” and, until the planned Sino-Soviet Conference was held, they would remain valid, albeit unenforced.²²³² This signified that, in actuality, that through this secret protocol, China recognized the validity of the old, Unequal Treaties whose authenticity, while unenforced, remained a *de jure* fact implicitly recognized by both parties. While the stipulated Sino-Soviet Conference was opened in September 1925, it “was unable to work under the political conditions prevailing in China then and since.”²²³³ Hence, the base of the old, Unequal Treaties remained intact. As such, the USSR could retain control of the CER indefinitely. This was accomplished by a second, secret protocol between the Soviet Union and the Manchurian warlord Zhang Zuolin under whose control the CER lay. Concluding an agreement with the “Government of the Autonomous Three Eastern Provinces of the Republic of China”—the official name of Zhang’s unrecognized separatist administration in Manchuria—effective control of the CER shifted from Beijing to the *de facto* authorities in Mukden, after which the railway would be returned to China in 1956, 60 years after the 1896 contract.²²³⁴ The Soviet Union soon gained *de facto* control of the CER administration. The USSR

²²²⁹ Elleman, *International Rivalry and Secret Diplomacy in East Asia*, pp. 163-164.

²²³⁰ Wu, *China and the Soviet Union*, pg. 157.

²²³¹ Elleman, *International Rivalry and Secret Diplomacy in East Asia*, pg. 160.

²²³² *Ibid.*, pg. 161.

²²³³ Yakhontoff, *Russia and the Soviet Union in the Far East*, pg. 137.

²²³⁴ Elleman, *International Rivalry and Secret Diplomacy in East Asia*, pp. 174-175.

also managed to secure the maintenance of its puppet regime and military presence in Outer Mongolia, all the while pledging the Soviet Union's unwavering legal respect of the principle of Chinese territorial integrity which naturally included Outer Mongolia. The diplomatic debut of the Soviet Union in East Asia, while extracting the Bolsheviks from their regional isolation, signaled the return of a regional power intent on using vapid political slogans from a radical ideology to achieve familiar geopolitical objectives.

10.2.4. The Japanese-Soviet Convention of 1925

Following the defeat of Russian forces in Siberia and the Far East, the Japanese began to recalibrate their strategy towards their northern neighbour, withdrawing from most of the Russian Far East in October 1922 under both international and domestic pressure. Even after it became apparent that the Bolsheviks had emerged as the sole political faction able to retain power, Japan refused to recognize the Soviet Union.²²³⁵ As the last Japanese soldiers were withdrawing from the Russian Far East, Japan faced a challenge in framing its relations with a regime against which it had fought since 1918. As the Bolshevik regime, following its consolidation of power, exhibited no signs of collapse, Japanese policy makers actively debated how Tokyo should approach a resurgent regional centre of power on its frontiers. Japanese pan-Asianists welcomed the advent of Soviet power, understanding the Bolshevik uprising as anti-Western in nature, and advocated for close relations, “even for the creation of a Eurasian bloc, in order to resist the Anglo-American world order that was undermining Japan's (and, by extension, Asia's) safety and well-being” and gained strong support amongst sections of the public and policy makers alike, including Gotō Shimpei, now the Mayor of Tokyo.²²³⁶ Japanese concern at US post-Washington Conference intentions regarding Manchuria and the Russian Far East, as well as the spectre of a successful Sino-Soviet understanding spurred the Japanese into action, with Gotō underlining that the question of establishing a rapprochement with the USSR was essential to securing Japanese interests on the Asian Continent.²²³⁷

The signing of the Sino-Soviet Agreement of May 1924 underlined the risk that Japan, still not having recognized the USSR, would find itself in diplomatic isolation at the expense of its interests in Manchuria. Furthermore, the Japanese Navy, which had become dependent on oil from Japanese-occupied northern Sakhalin, sought to secure a steady supply and therefore began to advocate for the recognition of the USSR.²²³⁸ Japan was not alone in seeking to find a way to resume diplomatic relations. The USSR, after having regained most of the Russian Empire's privileges in China by never concluding the Sino-Soviet Conference, sought to redivide Manchuria into the *status quo ante* of 1917 but divided now into Soviet and Japanese spheres of influence.²²³⁹ Secret negotiations opened between Karakhan and the Japanese Minister to China, Yoshizawa Kenkichi (1874-1965) in May 1924. The Soviets sought to nullify the validity of all former treaties, including the Settlement of 1905, and, in their stead, to negotiate new ones. This approach was an anathema to Japan that had profited handsomely from Sergei Witte's conciliatory approach at Portsmouth and made it clear that the status quo would remain unaltered. The coming into office

²²³⁵ Yakhontoff, *Russia and the Soviet Union in the Far East*, pg. 240.

²²³⁶ Linkhoeva, *Revolution Goes East*, pg. 68.

²²³⁷ *Ibid.*, pg. 80.

²²³⁸ Nish, *Japanese Foreign Policy*, pg. 148.

²²³⁹ Elleman, *International Rivalry and Secret Diplomacy in East Asia*, pg. 182.

in June 1924 of the new Foreign Minister, Shidehara Kijūrō, former Japanese Ambassador to the US during the Washington Conference, signaled Japan's readiness to change diplomatic tactics. Already known for his passivist approach to foreign policy, Shidehara likewise sought to undertake a "new policy" (*'shin seisaku'*/新政策) towards the USSR.²²⁴⁰ Recalling Minister Yoshikawa to Tokyo, Shidehara ordered his plenipotentiary to China to "adjust the demands previously made of [the Soviet Union]" and to "not put forward demands which anyone would regard as unreasonable; one must respect the views of the other party and remember the circumstances."²²⁴¹ Regarding the consultations on the establishment of diplomatic relations, Shidehara opted to undertake a policy of reciprocal reconciliation, imitating the strategy of Witte at Portsmouth of 20 years before.

On 4 August 1924, Yoshikawa presented an adapted draft to the Soviets and difficult negotiations ensued. In the end, the USSR recognized that the Settlement of 1905, the Treaty of Portsmouth, would remain valid, however, added the following provision: "recognition...of the validity of the Portsmouth Agreement of 5 September 1905, does not mean at all that the Government of the Soviet Union shares political responsibility with the former Imperial Government for the conclusion of the agreement."²²⁴² In response, the Japanese Government agreed to withdraw the Japanese Military from northern Sakhalin and consented to receive concessions of oil and coal in the now Soviet territory even though they "were considerably smaller than what Japan wanted" and confirmed the uncertainty Japanese companies felt in doing business with Bolsheviks.²²⁴³ These points formed the basis of the Japanese-Soviet Convention on Basic Principles for Mutual Relations, signed on 20 January 1925 in Beijing. The Convention provided the base for peaceful bilateral relations, affirming the desires of both parties to "live in peace and amity with each other, scrupulously to respect the undoubted right of a State to order its own life within its own jurisdiction in its own way, to refrain and restrain all persons...to endanger the order and security in any part of the territories of Japan or the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics."²²⁴⁴ Following the signature of the Convention, therefore, relations between Japan and the USSR resembled those that existed between St. Petersburg and Tokyo. By mutual recognition of the continuing validity of the Treaty of Portsmouth, both parties also confirmed the old Imperial Russian and Japanese spheres of influence in Manchuria. Like in the agreement with China, the Convention proposed convening a Conference to jointly re-examine the treaties of 1907, 1910, 1912, and 1916 whose validity remained in force as the proposed Conference never took place.²²⁴⁵ After the Convention's signature, just like in the wake of the Settlement of 1905, negotiations on defining its terms were held". A Protocol on oil and coal concessions was signed in December 1925, and within six months, two Japanese government companies, the North Sakhalin Oil Company (*'Kita Karafuto Sekiyū Kabushi Kaisha'*/北樺太石油株式会社) and the North Sakhalin Mining Company (*'Kita Karafuto Kōgyō Kabushi Kaisha'*/北樺太鉱業株式会社) were up and running, with the Japanese able to exploit 50 percent of the oilfields in Soviet Sakhalin.²²⁴⁶

²²⁴⁰ Grinyuk, Vladimir; Shulatov, Yaroslav; & Lozhkina, Anastasia, "Soviet-Japanese Relations in the 1920s: from Hostility to Coexistence" in *A History of Russo-Japanese Relations*, pg. 182.

²²⁴¹ Nish, *Japanese Foreign Policy*, pg. 149.

²²⁴² Grinyuk et al., "Soviet-Japanese Relations in the 1920s", pg. 182.

²²⁴³ Nish, *Japanese Foreign Policy*, pg. 150.

²²⁴⁴ Elleman, *International Rivalry and Secret Diplomacy in East Asia*, pg. 186.

²²⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, pg. 184.

²²⁴⁶ Grinyuk et al., "Soviet-Japanese Relations in the 1920s", pg. 183.

The Japanese were pleased at the agreement reached, despite Shidehara being apprehensive that “advantages gained for his realistic, economic foreign policy were extremely uncertain” and hoped that friendly relations could be established.²²⁴⁷ The signing of the Convention, although it meant recognizing the existence of a former foe, was viewed with unease by Foreign Ministry and Internal Ministry officials alike. It was however welcomed by the Japanese Navy—now having secured an oil source independent of the US and the Dutch East Indies—and members of the Japanese political elite, like Gotō Shimpei, who professed their respective opposition to the ‘Washington System’.²²⁴⁸ Likewise, the Soviet Union was content with its ability to reach an agreement on the recognition of its Far Eastern borders “by the most powerful ‘capitalist’ power of the region, thereby restoring de facto Russia’s pre-revolutionary official status quo.”²²⁴⁹ At the same time, the gradual spirit of reconciliation and policy of reciprocal restraint that allowed the Japanese-Imperial Russia relationship to evolve from adversaries to allies in eleven years had, by 1925, completely evaporated. Overlooking the Japanese inherent aversion and mistrust of Bolshevism, the prolonged Japanese involvement in the Russian Civil War and continued support to Russian resistance, following the signing of the Convention, “it would be ludicrous to speak of friendship developing”.²²⁵⁰ The opening of diplomatic relations between the Soviet Union and Japan illustrated an attempt to carve out a mutually beneficial understanding based on contemporary geopolitical calculus. While both parties committed to adhering to the Convention’s tenets, there “were warning signs, however, that things would not go as smoothly as [Shidehara] hoped”: Karakhan bluntly informed Minister Yoshizawa that, while the Convention regulated relations between the USSR and Japan, it did not apply to the activities of the Communist International (Comintern), the Bolshevik organization aimed at spreading its ideology worldwide.²²⁵¹ This warning seemed to be confirmed through the departure speech of the first Soviet Ambassador to Japan, Viktor Kopp (1880-1930), who, while on route to Tokyo, announced to the Communist Party at Harbin that the Soviet-Japanese Convention was as any alliance “with a country with an imperialist system, it is not particularly solid; it will be a mythical treaty...merely giving us the possibility for legal existence in the territory of Japan as the leader organ of the vanguard of the revolution. I leave the conduct of political work in Japan entirely in the hands of the Japanese socialists...making use of Japan as a threat to America in the Far East.”²²⁵²

Of note is that Japan and the Soviet Union likewise reverted to the practice of secret diplomacy, so prevalent in Tokyo’s bilateral relationship with St. Petersburg. While Imperial Russian and Japanese efforts focused on East Asia, the advent of the global scope of the Settlement of 1919, however, extended the extent of Soviet-Japanese bilateral relations to an intercontinental level. With Japan occupying a founding position in the League of Nations, and the USSR completely excluded, Tokyo was in position to sign off on the territorial changes that the League had prescribed in the wake of the Treaty of Versailles. The establishment of diplomatic relations between Tokyo and Moscow, however, presented the Soviet Union with an indirect avenue to influence League politics, provided Japanese consent was secured. Indeed, the USSR sought Japanese assistance to undermine the ratification of the 1920 Treaty of Paris that sanctioned the

²²⁴⁷ Nish, *Japanese Foreign Policy*, pg. 150.

²²⁴⁸ Grinyuk et al., “Soviet-Japanese Relations in the 1920s”, pg. 183.

²²⁴⁹ Ibid.

²²⁵⁰ Nish, *Japanese Foreign Policy*, pg. 150.

²²⁵¹ Linkhoeva, *Revolution Goes East*, pg. 90.

²²⁵² Ibid.

annexation of the former Tsarist territory of Bessarabia to Romania. During the negotiations in Beijing, Karakhan attempted to convince Yoshizawa to secure Japan's non-ratification of this treaty, a move Japan was hesitant to make as it could shake its newfound standing amongst the European Powers.²²⁵³ Following its own establishment of diplomatic relations with the Soviet Union, Italy was the first power to declare that it would not ratify the Treaty of Paris, allowing the necessary political leverage to allow Japan to make what it most likely saw as a beneficial concession for the sake of bilateral relations. Hence, officially responding to Karakhan's request, Minister Yoshizawa responded with a note, sent with the explicit permission of Regent Hirohito, confirming that "unless and until the said treaty shall have been ratified by all the European signatory powers, the Japanese Government have no intention of proceeding to the steps required for its ratification, considering that it deals with an essentially European question."²²⁵⁴ The Soviet Foreign Ministry subsequently confirmed that this secret agreement formed part of the Japanese-Soviet Convention signed on 20 January 1925. Not only did this secret note illustrate the new global contours that 'New Diplomacy' had established, but clearly underlined that certain elements of the 'Old' remained firmly entrenched.

In conclusion, while the political status quo of 1917 had been de facto restored, the fundament on which the nascent relationship between Japan and the USSR was founded was based on cold political calculus. It was a far cry from the short-lived partnership established in 1916. The Soviet Union had managed to establish itself once again, through its agreements with the Republic of China and the Empire of Japan, as a regional power in East Asia. At the same time, the USSR, despite the recognition by its East Asian neighbours and several Western Powers, still remained decidedly outside the League of Nations and the 'Washington System'. Moreover, the US continued to refuse to contemplate recognition of the Bolshevik state, leaving the Soviet Union, as illustrated in the case of Outer Mongolia, alone to attempt to create its own isolated system using all the brute force of its military and ideological power. The Sino-Soviet Agreement and the Japanese-Soviet Convention provided the necessary invitation for the nascent USSR to establish itself as a separate centre of power in opposition to the 'New Diplomacy' world order that supposedly by now had straddled both sides of the Pacific.

10.2.5. A Tale of Two-Systems: East Asia in the 1920s

10.2.5.1. Introduction

The consolidation of the USSR as an internationally recognized state, despite its unique geopolitical and ideological objectives in East Asia, altered regional systemic dynamics. While the Settlement of 1919, with the League of Nations and its offshoot the 'Washington System', having established a network of treaties meant to foster interstate cooperation, the limitations of both hallmarks of the 'New Diplomacy' left large areas of East Asia outside their respective remits. Nature abhors a vacuum, as does international relations. Having been on the menu of geopolitical competition since the outbreak of the Bolshevik Revolution, the USSR now began to independently stake out a role at the East Asian systemic table. Given the revolutionary ideological tilt of Soviet foreign policy, coupled with the USSR's prolonged diplomatic isolation, it was one that expressly put itself in direct contradiction to the established postwar order. Diplomatic

²²⁵³ Elleman, *International Rivalry and Secret Diplomacy in East Asia*, pg. 188.

²²⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 188-189.

recognition by both China and Japan, along with several major European Powers, provided the necessary political foundation for Moscow to actively pursue its interests in constructing a new, alternative systemic order while simultaneously remaining outside any confines prescribed by the 'New Diplomacy'.

China also began, in the 1920s, to undergo fundamental domestic political shifts. While having joined the League of Nations and having participated at the Washington Conference, the Chinese Republic remained a decidedly fractured entity, unable to realistically pursue policy as a unified member of the international community. While China, unlike the USSR, had not been subjected to conscious systemic exclusion, the Republic's lack of a functioning central government made its ability to meaningfully participate in the 'Washington System' extremely limited at best. Agreements at Paris and Washington that bore the signature of the Chinese Delegation were, for all intents and purposes, devoid of any executive power. China was included in the system; however, its niche had been designed with contemporary political turmoil as a fixed variable. China had, since the arrival of the Western Powers in East Asia, been the quintessential subject of the international system, a fact engrained in the documents signed both in Paris and Washington. The contours of the Settlement of 1919 simply did not envision any other role for the Chinese Republic. Hence, the beginnings of China's re-emergence as a systemically relevant actor, kick-started by the appearance of the Soviet Union as a serious factor in internal Chinese politics, would have major implications for a post-Settlement of 1919 system that consciously failed to encompass both nations as meaningful participants. In short, both actors began to challenge the new founded status quo, through the establishment of an 'anti-Washington system' set on overturning the treaty system that acted as the cornerstone of Chinese diplomatic relations with the Powers.

This 'anti-Washington system' emerged very much in response to the Settlement of 1919's failure to comprehensively address the rapidly changing situation in East Asia. The League of Nations did not establish supranational authority over East Asia. To fill this gap, the 'Washington System' relied on interstate cooperation, such as the Nine Power Treaty and Tariff Agreement, that lacked any enforcement mechanisms. This system proved especially inept to deal with the phenomenon of changing internal dynamics in the Chinese Republic. Instead of coordinating policies in the face of a China in political flux, the Washington Powers independently adapted their own foreign policy measures to provide an ad hoc solution to the trajectory of events unfolding in China. In doing so, they gradually unravelled the spirit of 'New Diplomacy' that so characterised the negotiations in Paris and Washington. Such changing circumstances presented a unique challenge to the Japanese Empire, with its hard won international standing as a founding member of the League of Nations and adherent to the 'Washington System' that regulated its all-important bilateral relationship with the US, yet the same time, whose fundamental geopolitical interests had, since the Meiji Restoration, remained fixated upon securing its special interests on the Asian Continent, especially in Manchuria and Inner Mongolia. Shidehara's new policy of reconciliation and restraint, when applied to the China of the 1920s, would come up against the stark realities of an East Asian continent in transformation. With the growing power of nationalism, China began the process of congealing as a national state, one ready to directly challenge the assumptions of Chinese statehood made at Paris and Washington. The 'Washington System's' response to rapidly changing circumstances remained elusive, as evidenced in the failure of the signatories to coordinate any meaningful implementation of the agreements as they applied to China. The inability of regional players to square the circle of the existence of two de facto regional

subsystems within East Asia—namely the ‘anti-Washington’ and the ‘Washington’ Systems—would have an impact on the future trajectory of the regional system as a whole and its ability to furnish stable peace and provide the necessary conditions for RSO formation.

10.2.5.2. The Rise of the ‘Anti-Washington System’

The May Fourth Movement had played a pivotal role in sparking a broad nationalist sentiment throughout China, however it remained devoid of outside political support. Following the Settlement of 1919, Chinese nationalism was described as a “tender shoot...still weak and indeterminable in shape.”²²⁵⁵ By 1925, the Chinese Republic remained a fractured state, with centres of domestic power in Guangzhou and in Manchuria. The USSR, as implied in the 1919 Karakhan Manifesto, sought to establish links with all Chinese factions without exception. During the drawn-out negotiations with the Beijing Government on the establishment of diplomatic relations, Bolshevik plenipotentiaries had also reached out to the Chinese Nationalists under Sun Yat-sen, willing to strike an agreement with the authorities in Guangzhou should an understanding with Beijing prove impossible. Sun Yat-sen had returned to China from Japanese exile in November 1921 and, after laying low in Shanghai for two years, allied with a local warlord to establish a powerbase—this arrangement soon became unstable, obliging Sun to look for alternative would-be sponsors.²²⁵⁶ This coincided with the dispatch of multiple Soviet missions to China to establish links with all relevant political factions.

In 1923, Soviet intelligence, after having assessed Sun Yat-sen, concluded that, despite his capitalist and democratic outlook, he “could be useful to the revolution in China.”²²⁵⁷ Indeed, Lenin’s successor upon his death in 1924, Josef Vissarionovich Dzughashvili alias Stalin (1878-1953), agreed as he too viewed the prospect of advancing Soviet interests in China as more promising through cooperation with the Nationalist Kuomintang than the “fledgling [Chinese] Communist Party (CCP)”.²²⁵⁸ Hence, Sun concluded an agreement with the USSR that pledged to provide advisors and material support to enable Sun to launch a definitive campaign for the unification of China. This was a marriage based on utility and partially the result of scorn, not on ideology. The US Legation in Beijing and the State Department viewed Sun as the representative of an illegitimate government and considered Sun “an impractical dreamer” and they remained completely ignorant that he was cultivating relations with the Bolsheviks.²²⁵⁹ Events in autumn 1923 soon eliminated any illusion. Sun was facing a severe cash shortage, as southern Chinese merchants had been given a heavy financial burden under the Kuomintang. Hence, Sun ordered the seizure of customs surpluses, explaining to the Foreign Powers that, while foreign obligations on the customs revenues would be respected, the remainder would be retained in the southern provinces. Should the request be refused, Sun might be obliged to declare Guangzhou a free port. Faced with Sun’s ultimatum, the “powers responded coolly to the request” and refused to comply as it represented a breach of Chinese obligations to the Foreign Powers under existing treaties. The failure of Sun’s overtures to garnish support from what he viewed as potential Western backers

²²⁵⁵ Jacobs, Dan, “Soviet Russia and Chinese Nationalism in the 1920s” in Chan, Gilbert & Etzold, Thomas (eds), *China in the 1920s: Nationalism and Revolution*, New York: New Viewpoints, 1976, pg. 38.

²²⁵⁶ Vogel, *China and Japan*, pg. 222.

²²⁵⁷ Jacobs, “Soviet Russia and Chinese Nationalism in the 1920s”, pg. 42.

²²⁵⁸ Vogel, *China and Japan*, pg. 222.

²²⁵⁹ Iriye, *After Imperialism*, pg. 47.

finally convinced him of their inherent unreliability.²²⁶⁰ His movement would have to look elsewhere.

At the same time, Sun had dispatched Chiang Kai-Shek to Moscow to explore the possibilities of building cooperation with Bolshevism. Following the repeated rejection of his pleas for international recognition and outright rejection by the Washington Powers, Sun felt he had no option. Fearing that the Kuomintang would turn to other sources for assistance, the Soviets were likewise eager to comply with Chiang's requests.²²⁶¹ Having reached an agreement on assistance, Soviet advisors, headed by Comintern agent, Mikhail Gruzenberg alias Borodin (1884-1951), soon arrived in Guangzhou and proceeded to completely reorganize the Kuomintang along Soviet lines.²²⁶² Borodin's assistance was also central in establishing the Huangpu Military Academy that aimed at providing trained officers for a force to unify China. In completing this task, the Soviet advisor enjoyed Sun's "complete confidence, and he ordered his comrades to follow Borodin's instructions as if they had come directly from him."²²⁶³ The Soviet entente with the Kuomintang provided the Bolsheviks a stellar opportunity to apply Lenin's theory of 'anti-colonial revolution' by advocating for the 'anti-imperialist alliance' between the Kuomintang and the CCP.²²⁶⁴ This necessitated a political front between the Kuomintang and the CCP, an approach evident in the staffing of the Military Academy where Nationalist Chiang Kai-Shek was its commander and the Communist Zhou Enlai one of the political commissaries. At the first National Congress of the Kuomintang in January 1924, with Borodin present as an adviser, the CCP was admitted into the Nationalist Party, with several Communists, including Mao Zedong (1893-1976), becoming members of the Central Executive Committee. This marked the formation of the First United Front. At the same time, while pledging adherence to the Kuomintang's ideals, CCP founder, Li Dazhao (1899-1927), underlined that Communist participation in whatever joint activity to unify China would in no way signify a "fusion of the two groups."²²⁶⁵ With the unorthodox alliance having been cemented, all that was needed was the spark of a call to action.

History would dictate that the formation of a United Front to unify China would also coincide with extended labour unrest in May 1925 when a strike at a Japanese cotton mill in Shanghai led to a Japanese guard killing one of the local protestors. The students at Shanghai University, echoing the May Fourth Movement, undertook broad action against foreign enterprises in and around the International Settlement, with the support of local communist leaders.²²⁶⁶ On 30 May 1925, the ensuing protests around the International Settlement were violently put down by British, Sikh, and Chinese police, resulting in the death of four demonstrators, leading to widespread rioting across Shanghai and a fundamental recalibration of relations between local Chinese and foreigners that "were never to be the same again."²²⁶⁷ Demonstrations took place in at least 28 cities, with protestors levelling the British and Japanese consulates in Jiujiang. What

²²⁶⁰ Ibid., pg. 40.

²²⁶¹ Ibid., pg. 41.

²²⁶² Wu, *China and the Soviet Union*, pg. 314.

²²⁶³ Jacobs, "Soviet Russia and Chinese Nationalism in the 1920s", pg. 46.

²²⁶⁴ Panstov, Alexander, *The Bolsheviks and the Chinese Revolution*, Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2000, pg. 44.

²²⁶⁵ Wu, *China and the Soviet Union*, pg. 314.

²²⁶⁶ Wilbur, Martin, *The Nationalist Revolution in China, 1923-1928*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983, pg. 22.

²²⁶⁷ Ibid., pg. 23.

became known as the 30 May Incident soon manifested across the Republic as an anti-Imperialist symbol and rallying point for renewed Chinese patriotism. The serendipitous timing of the Incident was not lost on Borodin who acknowledged that, for the purposes of sparking a national revolution, the events of 30 May were a “gift” from the proverbial gods.²²⁶⁸ The unrest spread to Guangzhou on 23 June, with protesters now demanding an outright end to the unequal treaties with China, leading to another clash, this time with foreign warships. Enraged at foreign vessels firing on Chinese protestors, a fifteen-month-strike and outright boycott of British trade at Hong Kong and Guangzhou was declared. This clash became known as the Shamien Incident and predicated a strike that was especially popular amongst the provincial proletariat, with 30,000 workers arriving in Guangzhou from other Chinese ports to support the strike subsidised by Soviet advisors in order to, in accordance with the Comintern’s instructions, undermine British economic interests in East Asia.²²⁶⁹ Mass action against the existing imperialist system had become an uncomfortable reality and core element of the ‘anti-Washington system’.

The 30 May Incident served as the first indication of the changes to come in China after the outbreak of organized mass nationalism, yet it was not the only one. With the growing intensity of Chinese nationalism in the south, political changes in the north provided a slim window for facilitating some sort of political centralization. Following the latest round of civil conflict in North China, the victorious warlord Zhang Zuolin was able to impose his choice of candidate to head a national government. The old warlord, Duan Qirui, was provisionally named ‘Chief Executive’ on condition that a ‘Rehabilitation Conference’ be convened to approve a formal government.²²⁷⁰ All major Chinese factions were invited to attend as the first step towards the creation of a National Assembly and, despite the inclination to exclude Sun, the increase of prestige of his movement in the south made this impossible. While the left wing-factions of the Kuomintang voiced their displeasure at Sun’s participation, signifying a possible compromise with the warlords of the north, Sun publicly insisted on the cancellation of all Unequal Treaties with China. Indeed, C.T. Wang, nominated as temporary Foreign Minister, declared that “we wish to remind the friendly powers that China has a right to her own existence. Any conditions derogatory to her rights to exist as a free and independent nation must by necessity be rectified by mutual arrangement as quickly as the exigency of circumstance requires.”²²⁷¹ Such statements were alarming to the diplomatic community in Beijing, continuing to insist that any recognition of a central Chinese Government would be based, as per usual practice, on its explicit recognition of all current treaties.

Moreover, foreign representations, based on Sun and Wang’s anti-imperialist statements, noticed that the Soviet Union was becoming a serious factor in internal Chinese politics. The US Chargé in Beijing, Ferdinand Mayer (1887-1986), reported that “in the present Beijing Government the Soviet influence is very strong, if not dominant. It is working chiefly through the Kuomintang Party.”²²⁷² The Japanese looked with alarm at the joint action between the Nationalists and Communists, forcing Sun to make an impromptu visit to Japan to defend his strategy where he pleaded his case that the Soviets were “really Asians and stood with China and

²²⁶⁸ Vogel, *China and Japan*, pg. 223.

²²⁶⁹ Jordan, Donald, *The Northern Expedition: China’s National Revolution of 1926-1928*, Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1976, pg. 11.

²²⁷⁰ Gray, Jack, *Rebellions and Revolution: China from the 1800s to 2000*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002, pg. 187.

²²⁷¹ Iriye, *After Imperialism*, pg. 43.

²²⁷² Ibid.

Japan against the Western imperialists.”²²⁷³ While Sun’s Japanese supporters were largely pan-Asiatic in outlook, their entrepreneurial nature imbued them with a strong, anti-Bolshevik tinge and therefore they rejected what was interpreted as Sun’s outlandish strategy. Additionally, key members of the Japanese Military held vehement anti-Communist views and Sun’s alliance with the CCP called into question the reliability of the Kuomintang as a trustworthy movement.²²⁷⁴ Sun might have harboured friendly feelings towards Japan and served as a staunch supporter of Sino-Japanese rapprochement, however, the alliance that he forged with the Soviet Union set in motion a liberation movement founded on an anti-Japanese base. The post-Sun Nationalist movement, therefore, would no longer contemplate any reconciliation with Japan.²²⁷⁵ It was becoming evident that the Soviet Union had moved on from its initial position as bilaterally advising the Kuomintang and graduated to play an important role in steering the increasing impassioned outpouring of Chinese nationalism that began to openly question the cornerstone of the contemporary regional system, namely the Unequal Treaties.

The ‘Rehabilitation Conference’ convened in February 1925 however the Kuomintang changed its stance and refused to participate, while Sun died of liver cancer in March 1925. The Kuomintang subsequently broke into several branches, with Chiang Kai-Shek becoming leader of one of its most powerful factions.²²⁷⁶ In the wake of the anti-foreign protests in Guangzhou, the Kuomintang found its ranks invigorated and enjoying newfound widespread support, leading to the official founding of the “National Government” as a “more viable alternative to the Beijing National Government” in July 1925.²²⁷⁷ Chiang Kai-Shek, by 1926, had maneuvered himself to assume the command of the National Revolutionary Army. Yet potential political rivals remained. In the meantime, the Soviet Union had established itself as a substantial source of support for the Kuomintang administration, not only through the training of military cadres and the mass mobilization that allowed the movement to capitalize on the growing anti-foreign sentiment, but also through materiel. The Soviet Military Attaché reported to now Ambassador Karakhan in Beijing that the USSR had, by December 1925, delivered military supplies in value of 2 million rubles.²²⁷⁸ Such training and material support had also begun to translate into increased popular support for leftist ideology amongst Kuomintang members. At the Kuomintang’s Second Party Conference in January 1926, Communists took control of several strategic positions, leaving the appearance that the movement was “almost totally under leftist control.”²²⁷⁹ Concerned at the growing Communist influence, Chang Kai-Shek organized a purge of Communist elements within the Nationalist Army in Guangzhou, solidifying his paramount position within the Kuomintang. Despite having concentrated power at the expense of Communist and other left-minded factions, the Soviet Union did not cut off its support for Chiang, only demanding personnel changes to keep the aid flowing.²²⁸⁰ The rationale behind the Soviet decision was based, once again, on geopolitical calculus: as it was the Bolsheviks that launched the gears of the national revolution, it would be

²²⁷³ Vogel, *China and Japan*, pg. 223.

²²⁷⁴ Ibid.

²²⁷⁵ Iriye, *After Imperialism*, pg. 58.

²²⁷⁶ Vogel, *China and Japan*, pg. 223.

²²⁷⁷ Jordan, *The Northern Expedition*, pg. 29.

²²⁷⁸ Ibid., pg. 19.

²²⁷⁹ Felber, Roland, “Controversies on the CCP’s attitude towards the Guomindang before and after 20 March 1926” in Leutner, Mikhail; Felber, Roland; Titarenko, Mikhail & Grigoriev, Alexander (eds.), *The Chinese Revolution in the 1920s: Between Triumph and Disaster*, London: RoutledgeCurzon, 2002, pg. 57.

²²⁸⁰ Jordan, *The Northern Expedition*, pg. 43.

premature for the Soviet Union to abandon it now.²²⁸¹ Left with continued foreign support and a consolidated political base, Chiang now felt ready to launch his Northern Expedition to extract China from the division of the warlords and disunity of the Beijing Government.

The launching of the Northern Expedition on 4 July 1926 transformed the situation in China.²²⁸² Ching Kai-Shek launched the first phase of his bid to unify China with the support of Soviet advisers and General Vasily Konstantinovich Blyukher (1889-1938).²²⁸³ The goals of the Expedition were revolutionary in scope, aiming to tear down the contemporary web of foreign relations forming the bedrock of the Settlement of 1919. The Nationalist declaration that accompanied the start of the Northern Expedition squarely put the blame for China's many woes on both the warlords and Foreign Powers alike: "the ultimate cause of all the difficulties and sufferings of the Chinese people lies with the aggression of the imperialists and the cruelty and violence of their tools, the nation-selling warlords."²²⁸⁴ In September 1926, the Kuomintang armies captured Hankou along the Yangtze River, now a part of Wuhan, within what had been traditionally viewed as a British sphere of influence. The capture of Hankou was accompanied by a sustained campaign of mass mobilization and propaganda with the CCP focusing on the radicalization of labour groups, leading to the outbreak of anti-foreign strikes.²²⁸⁵ Public outrage against the Unequal Treaties led to clashes between demonstrators and British forces who, reminiscent of the Legation Quarter in 1900, were forced to barricade themselves in the UK concession. The scale of the violence obliged the Municipal Council to handover the concession to Nationalist authorities, evacuating Westerners to the International Settlement in Shanghai to protect them from the widescale looting that took place.²²⁸⁶ While the strikes in Hankou had affected Japanese economic interests as well, the brunt of the anti-foreigner sentiment was directed against the British. Nevertheless, the consequences were grave. London, disturbed at the loss of its concession in Hankou and concerned at the possibility of a Nationalist assault against the International Settlement in Shanghai, secured a Cabinet decision to dispatch a cruiser squadron and an entire British division to Hong Kong to remain on stand-by.²²⁸⁷ For the first time since 1900, the West's Unequal Treaties with China were being challenged by force; a development that placed China growingly at odds with a 'Washington System' that the Chinese population increasingly viewed as dysfunctional, placing their hopes instead in the vision propagated by the proponents of an 'anti-Washington system'.

10.2.5.3. China in the 'Washington System'

Through the adapted spirit of the 'New Diplomacy' in Washington, the regional powers had signed several treaties pertinent to China. Its centerpiece was the Nine Power Treaty where the Washington Powers agreed "not to interfere in China's internal affairs and to refrain from taking advantage of China's trouble for their own selfish ends."²²⁸⁸ Like its preceding agreements, the Nine Power Treaty was subject to very different, even contradictory, interpretations between

²²⁸¹ Jacobs, "Soviet Russia and Chinese Nationalism in the 1920s", pg. 49.

²²⁸² Nish, Japanese Foreign Policy in the Inter-war Years, pg. 55.

²²⁸³ Wilbur, The Nationalist Revolution, pg. 57.

²²⁸⁴ Iriye, After Imperialism, pg. 93.

²²⁸⁵ Wilbur, The Nationalist Revolution, pp. 64-65.

²²⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, pg. 75.

²²⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 75-76.

²²⁸⁸ Iriye, After Imperialism, pg. 27.

its respective signatories. Furthermore, the Nine Power Treaty contained only “abstract principles [that] were by no means committed to uphold China’s diplomatic independence” and thereby encapsulated the approach of the ‘New Diplomacy’ to furnishing peace and stability in China, namely interstate agreements based on the political will of the individual signatories.²²⁸⁹ As the domestic unrest in China intensified, the Nine Power Treaty in actuality meant that the Washington Powers did absolutely nothing save observe as competing warlords challenged each other for authority. As US Minister to China, John MacMurray (1881-1960), commented on the unrest in China, “We have no favourites in the present dog fight in China; they all look alike to us...our various instructions to Beijing have all been drafted with the idea that we should keep out of the mess and merely pray that somebody, whoever it may be, may lick his rivals completely enough to make possible the establishment of some Government which would have to be recognized by the various rival factions—in other words they fight it out to a conclusion.”²²⁹⁰ As interstate agreements, there was an inherent expectation that the Chinese Republic would, as a signatory, live up to fulfill its part of the bargain, as would any other member of the international community. Since the current circumstances in China did not allow its Government to do so, there was very little action that the Washington Powers could do to assist. The more the embittered, and often phantom, central Chinese Government failed to observe what the Washington Powers viewed as China’s rightful obligations under existing international treaties—first and foremost the safeguarding of foreign nationals and property—the more the Washington Powers became disinclined to seek collective solutions to address the increasingly messy Chinese quagmire using the tools available under the ‘Washington System’. When such initiatives were indeed proposed, each individual country placed their own distinct economic interests before any common efforts to improve political and economic stability in China.²²⁹¹ The signatories to the Washington treaties, therefore, opted to simply stand back and watch developments in China as they unfolded.

10.2.5.3.1. Japanese Policy towards China under the ‘Washington System’

The overall aloofness of the Washington Powers coincided with an outward shift in Japanese foreign policy that had been, as noted, deeply involved in domestic Chinese affairs. Foreign Minister Shidehara was intent on upholding a new approach to the continent and especially Sino-Japanese relations. Shidehara opted to extend his new policy of restraint to Japan’s bilateral relationship with China. On 1 July 1924, Shidehara, outlining his foreign policy for the first time to the Diet, emphasized that “Japan will not interfere with China’s domestic politics. Japan will not take any action that ignores the legitimate positions of China. At the same time, we in Japan believe China will not take any action that ignores the legitimate positions of Japan.”²²⁹² After assuming office, the new Foreign Minister reached out to his Chinese counterpart, Wellington Koo, to outline his policy of non-interference and secure Chinese verbal support. Supposedly gone were the days where Japan would actively pursue an expansionist policy and incur the scorn and suspicion of its now fellow Great Powers. A new, more respectable path—one in line with the Settlement of 1919 and the ‘Washington System’ would have to be forged. Shidehara therefore proceeded from the fact that Japan’s only route to the maintenance of its Great Power standing following the Settlement of 1919 was through economic diplomacy: “In our restricted islands we

²²⁸⁹ Ibid., pg. 18.

²²⁹⁰ Ibid., pg. 28.

²²⁹¹ Ibid., pg. 31.

²²⁹² Vogel, *China and Japan*, pg. 220.

suffer from a population increase of 700,000-800,000 annually. There is, therefore, no alternative but to proceed with our industrialization. It follows from this that it is essential to secure overseas markets, and this can only be done by adopting an economic diplomacy. If we try to cure our economic problems by economic expansion, we will merely destroy international cooperation...Japan, being closest to China, has an advantage by way of transport costs and she has also the greatest competitive power because of her wages. It must therefore be a priority for Japan to maintain the great market of China.”²²⁹³ Japan had, since 1910, enjoyed steady growth in the Chinese market, reaching 26.6% by 1920, granting Shidehara the support of Japanese manufacturers for his new policy.²²⁹⁴ The economic focus of Shidehara’s new policy towards China coloured Japan’s view of overall cooperation with other signatories of the Washington agreements: given its market share, Tokyo became decidedly less inclined to cooperate with other powers on China as such an approach did not reflect Japan’s economic interests.²²⁹⁵

Soon after taking the reins at Kasumigaseki, Shidehara backed his words with the appropriate instructions. Following the outbreak of another round of domestic conflicts in 1924 between Zhang Zuolin, Japan’s traditional target of material and military support, and his rivals in North China, Shidehara refused to sanction Japanese involvement. Even when faced with the prospect of Zhang’s defeat, sparking panic in the Japanese Cabinet, Shidehara stuck to his position and found support from Prime Minister Katō as well as other politicians and the Japanese press.²²⁹⁶ Like the other Washington Powers, Shidehara was committed to see Japan firmly on the sidelines. When the 30 May incident resulted in attacks against foreign commercial interests, Shidehara, despite the pleas of prominent Japanese industrialists and official requests from Great Britain, refused to sanction any type of Japanese intervention to suppress the protestors. While such a passive stance might have diverted the anger of the Chinese demonstrators to focus their rage on British interests instead, Shidehara’s inaction was viewed with alarm among certain elements of the Japanese Government, most notably the military.²²⁹⁷ Apprehension grew that Shidehara’s inertia would lead to the steady, or even sudden, loss of Japanese influence in Manchuria and Inner Mongolia. While some Japanese policy makers were ready to tolerate Shidehara’s new policy towards China as a whole, a clear distinction was made when it came to events that affected areas they viewed as encompassing Japan’s special interests. Separating happenings pertinent to Manchuria from the rest of China presented a special problem.²²⁹⁸ Gone were the days where Japan could openly speak of spheres of influence with its fellow Great Powers and Tokyo purposely avoided insisting upon any overt foreign recognition, however, in the minds of Japanese policy makers of all stripes, they certainly continued to exist. Even Shidehara himself was not completely immune. On multiple occasions referred to Japan’s “visible and invisible rights and interests” in Manchuria and Inner Mongolia.²²⁹⁹

This sentiment was likewise especially strong in the Japanese Military which viewed Japan’s rights in China as having been won by the blood sacrifices of the Russo-Japanese War and guaranteed by the Sino-Japanese Treaty of 1915 that gave Tokyo economic and martial benefits.

²²⁹³ Nish, *Japanese Foreign Policy*, pg. 157.

²²⁹⁴ Jansen, *Japan and China*, pg. 367.

²²⁹⁵ Nish, *Japanese Foreign Policy*, pp. 155-156.

²²⁹⁶ Ibid.

²²⁹⁷ Ibid., pg. 157.

²²⁹⁸ Nish, *Japanese Foreign Policy in the Inter-war Years*, pg. 53.

²²⁹⁹ Iriye, *After Imperialism*, pg. 111.

Such ideas were held by the Minister of the Army, Ugaki Kazushige. As Shidehara paved the way for a new style of post-bellum Japanese foreign policy, so did Ugaki introduce a “new era of military policy.”²³⁰⁰ A former long-term Japanese military attaché in Germany, well versed in the principles of the Imperial German Army, Ugaki considered the main lesson of the Great War as the necessity to ensure that the nation was properly prepared to engage in and win a protracted war. After assuming office in 1923, Ugaki pursued overall force reductions under the guise of disarmament yet simultaneously strove to expand Japan’s peacetime “heavy industrial base, diversify its economy and indoctrinate the public with the philosophy of total war.”²³⁰¹ Should war arrive, Japan would therefore need to seize the strategic resources necessary to enable the country to withstand a lengthy conflict. In Ugaki’s strategy, Japan’s spheres of influence remained a *sine qua non*. In Ugaki’s total war strategy, not only did the Chinese territories contain enough iron ore and coal for the Japanese Empire to be self-sufficient, they likewise provided the necessary resource base to sustain Japanese industry. Here, there was no room for the compromise and pacifism of the ‘New Diplomacy’. As Ugaki penned in his diary: “Regardless of what anyone may say, we absolutely cannot concede our existing position in Manchuria...there is no chance that we will consider such matters as a revision of the Twenty One Demands, the retrocession of leased territories, or the return of the Mantetsu.”²³⁰² Adding to this was Japan’s deep involvement in North China, with Japanese units cooperating with local warlords to secure Japanese interests in Manchuria and Inner Mongolia. Hence, Ugaki remained overall convinced that Shidehara’s new policy of non-interference in Chinese affairs was seriously questionable. While the military at first tolerated Shidehara’s conciliatory approach, as the domestic situation in China began to escalate, the stark cleavage separating the Military and Foreign Ministry approaches to dealing with China began to starkly crystalize, questioning the ultimate feasibility of Shidehara’s new policies.

The thinking of contemporary experts on the domestic turmoil in China also coloured the approach of Japanese policy makers. The writings of prominent Sinologist Naitō Torajirō (1866-1934) held a great influence over Japanese thinking about and policy towards China. As the Empire’s preeminent expert on Chinese affairs, Naitō exercised his authority through his various roles as Foreign Ministry Advisor on Sino-Japanese negotiations on Manchuria; member of the Advisory Council of Foreign Affairs as well as the first Chair of Chinese History at Kyoto Imperial University.²³⁰³ In 1924, in response to the growing anti-Japanese sentiment in China, Naitō released *Shin Shina Ron*, a work in which he expounded upon his views of Chinese developments into the “distant future”. Naitō, who additionally served as Kamura’s adviser to the Washington Conference, wrote that the ‘peculiarity’ of Chinese society was, given the total absence of the government on the daily life of its people, a society based on clans and villages. Convinced of China’s inability to govern itself due to the lack of any development of meaningful self-consciousness, the country’s prospects as a unified entity were dismal at best, penning that China resembled “a primitive creature such as an earthworm. If a part of it is cut off, the rest will still live with no sense of loss.”²³⁰⁴ Naitō failed to take the nationalist movement in China seriously, viewing its foreign-educated student protestors as “new people” cultivating unrealistic and naïve

²³⁰⁰ Vogel, *China and Japan*, pg. 221.

²³⁰¹ Drea, *Japan’s Imperial Army*, pg. 151.

²³⁰² Vogel, *China and Japan*, pg. 221.

²³⁰³ Okamoto Shumpei, “Japanese Response to Chinese Nationalism: Naitō (Ko’nan) Torajirō’s Image of China in the 1920s”, in Chan et al (eds.), *China in the 1920s*, pg. 160.

²³⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, pg. 163.

designs for the establishment of national independence through the expulsion of foreigners.²³⁰⁵ As a result, China had been left with no serious political consciousness. To fill this void, Naitō argued that overt international control over China was necessary to implement “true reform...whether the Chinese and foreigners liked it or not.”²³⁰⁶ Here, Naitō argued for a special role for Japan, especially regarding its economic advancement in Manchuria where he compared Japan’s involvement in China as akin to the northern tribes that had, in the past, revived a moribund China, according Tokyo a “vital and indispensable” function to sustain life in China, disregarding all accusations of aggression and militarism as repeatedly levied by the Western Powers.²³⁰⁷ . In line with Naitō’s writings, the Japanese Government consequently did not overreact to the developments regarding the growth of Soviet-sponsored Chinese nationalism and did not seek international cooperation with a mind to block this rising challenge, a general assessment that was very much in line with the other signatories of the Washington agreement.²³⁰⁸ At the same time, therefore, Japanese policy makers underlined the need to continue with its ‘special mission’ towards China, first and foremost through the maintenance of its preponderance in Manchuria and Inner Mongolia. The inherent contradictions inherent in this policy would soon be put to the test.

Japan’s special interests in Manchuria came under severe pressure in November 1925 when a rebellion erupted against Zhang Zuolin resulting in the near collapse of Zhang’s forces, threatening to extend the conflict into Manchuria and destabilize Japan’s position. Shidehara offered to mediate between Zhang and the rebellious leader, Guo Songling (1883-1925), however the Foreign Minister’s efforts came to naught. To maintain the predominance of Japanese interests, head of the Manchurian-based Kwantung Army, General Shirakawa Yoshinori (1869-1932), ordered 2,500 of his soldiers to intervene in favour of Zhang and prevent the capture of Mukden and deprive Guo’s forces the use of the Japanese-controlled railways, severely limiting their mobility. Such initial moves were in direct defiance of instructions to the contrary from Tokyo.²³⁰⁹ The Japanese military viewed themselves justified in their independent response, seeing Zhang as the sole “source of peace and stability in Manchuria which was essential to the development of [an] industrial sphere there.”²³¹⁰ . The Japanese Cabinet eventually, in December 1925, sanctioned the dispatch of forces to Manchuria “for the security of Japanese nationals and [Japan’s] railway rights”, however it amounted to calculated military intervention that allowed Zhang to suppress the rebellion, allowing him to capture Beijing and declare himself ‘Marshall’ in April 1926.

Hence, when confronted with serious events threatening to destabilize Japan’s spheres of influence, Shidehara’s ‘new policy’ towards China made a clear distinction between Japan’s interests in Manchuria, which Japanese policy makers remained determined to maintain with force, and the rest of China, where Tokyo remained open to a common policy in line with the other Washington Powers. As noted, however, this policy was one of largely leaving China to its own devices, with each nation focused on securing its own, mainly economic, interests. Consequently, Japan, following the general post-Washington Conference pattern, “devised its own plans of action in China without necessarily pre-supposing that conflict with a Western nation would result.”²³¹¹

²³⁰⁵ Ibid., pg. 165.

²³⁰⁶ Ibid., pg. 164.

²³⁰⁷ Ibid., pg. 170.

²³⁰⁸ Iriye, *After Imperialism*, pg. 50.

²³⁰⁹ Nish, *Japanese Foreign Policy in the Inter-war Years*, pg. 55.

²³¹⁰ Nish, *Japanese Foreign Policy*, pg. 157.

²³¹¹ Iriye, *After Imperialism*, pg. 161.

While viewing itself in alignment with the Nine Power Treaty, Tokyo naturally continued to view its special interests in Manchuria and Inner Mongolia as an integral element of its foreign policy and that the Empire was “justified in devising special tactics apart from their strategy in China proper.”²³¹² As such, Japan indirectly began to, through its actions in Manchuria and in spite of Shidehara’s public insistence to the contrary, mount its own challenge against the ‘Washington System’ while overtly pledging adherence to its tenets.

10.2.5.4. The Erosion of the ‘Washington System’

As the forces of Chinese nationalism demanding the abrogation of the Unequal Treaties gathered steam after the 30 May Incident, the Washington Powers made a final attempt to act in unison to redefine the basis of the international order in East Asia.²³¹³ The Treaty Relating to the Chinese Customs Tariff was signed on 6 February 1922 and pledged, in Article I, that Chinese Customs Duties would be raised to 5% as soon as possible; in Article II, underlined that the a special conference would be held within three months to abolish the *likin* (a local tax imposed by regional administrations); and, finally in Article III, to agree to levy a 2.5% surtax during the convening of the said conference.²³¹⁴ With France finally ratifying the Customs Tariff Treaty in August 1925, Beijing requested the Washington Powers to formally convene the promised conference. Finance Minister Li Sihao abolished the *likin* by September 1925 and formally demanded that the Chinese Republic be accorded full autonomy over its tariffs, hoping to increase its feeble legitimacy through the regaining of an important piece of Chinese statehood.²³¹⁵ Meeting in October 1925 in Beijing, the conference attempted therefore to reverse the public opinion that was ever loudly clamouring for a revolutionary new relationship with the international community. Soviet-sponsored agitation against the existing treaties, while successful, proved a double-edged sword, serving likewise to alienate the Chinese merchant class from an increasingly leftist-infiltrated Kuomintang.

However, the meeting coincided with a flare up of the Chinese civil war that seriously undermined the little credibility the Government in Beijing could muster. US Minister to Beijing, John MacMurray, reported the semi-surreal atmosphere to the Chief of the State Department’s Division of Far Eastern Affairs, Nelson Johnson (1887-1954), soon after the conference got underway: “you cannot imagine the curious adaptation of one’s mind that is necessary, in order to discuss at one meeting the business of realizing for China its national aspirations towards tariff autonomy and unrestricted sovereignty, and ten minutes later having to discuss whether or not we should telegraph the latest phase of the military situation which seems to make it impossible that the administration with which we are dealing with can continue for more than a few weeks or even a few days...It is an unreal world.”²³¹⁶ Yet instead of adopting a common approach to tariff autonomy, each of the Washington Powers elected to forge independent policies towards solving the issue. Shidehara, viewing Japanese economic interests in China as paramount, opted for a policy that staunchly defended Tokyo’s interests at the expense of considering joint policies with its fellow Powers. As Prime Minister Katō informed the British Ambassador to Japan, the result

²³¹² Iriye, *After Imperialism*, pg. 114.

²³¹³ *Ibid.*, pg. 70.

²³¹⁴ Kajima, *The Diplomacy of Japan*, Volume III, pp. 667-671.

²³¹⁵ Hattori Ryuji, *Japanese Diplomacy and East Asian International Politics*, London: Routledge, 2024, pg. 160.

²³¹⁶ Iriye, *After Imperialism*, pg. 72.

of the conference “would be small. This he said would be to the advantage of Japan for she would be the chief loser if China received tariff autonomy.”²³¹⁷ Japanese policy makers therefore opted to jettison international cooperation in China in favour of bilateral action as “it was evident that the ‘spirit of the Washington Conference’ had brought Japan no visible benefits in its relations with China, and that the renunciation of particularistic diplomacy had served no useful purpose in reconciling Chinese nationalism and Japanese interests.”²³¹⁸ Hence, Japan, knowing full well the weakness of political power that the Chinese state exercised, sought to limit discussion within the realm of decisions made at the Washington Conference, not only in defence of its own economic interests but to simultaneously impede the emergence of an invigorated Chinese state on its eastern borders that could, in future, pose a challenge to Japanese dominance.

Both London and Washington took a diametrically opposite approach to Tokyo. The United States and Great Britain actively sought to focus negotiations on agreements that explicitly departed from the basis laid out in Washington Customs Treaty, with US Secretary of State, Frank Kellogg (1856-1937), arguing that the conference “ought to go beyond the strict scope of its activities as defined in the Customs Treaty and enter into a discussion of the entire subject of the conventional tariff, including proposals looking at ultimate tariff autonomy.”²³¹⁹ Indeed, Kellogg went so far as to propose a bilateral tariff treaty between the US and China that would restore outright tariff autonomy to China and apply a general tariff to US goods for a specified time period. By doing so, Kellogg proposed the establishment of a “new order in the Far East based on Sino-American understanding”.²³²⁰ While going beyond the framework of points agreed under the ‘Washington System’, it also jettisoned one of its basic tenets, namely cooperation and solidarity in questions related to policy making between its signatories. Moreover, by proposing such actions, Kellogg unveiled a foreign policy that attempted to integrate China into the international community as more of an equal partner, a role that the spirit and the letter of the Washington agreements did not contemplate. Hence, the Tariff Conference revealed stark divergences between the members of the ‘Washington System’ and how they viewed the actual functioning of the ‘System’ and, more importantly, China’s place within it, with Japan seeking to use the ‘System’ as a method of status quo maintenance while the United States remained inclined to treat China as a more equal power.²³²¹

Realizing that, with Kellogg’s new policy, China would achieve its goal of gaining tariff autonomy eventually, Japan ceded to agreeing in principle. At the same time, however, Japan had secured agreement from the Chinese Delegation that Beijing would be willing to enter into a bilateral agreement with Tokyo.²³²² With consensus having been reached in November 1925, the delegates agreed to recognize China’s right to enjoy tariff autonomy and pledged to remove tariff restrictions stipulated by existing treaties, with a Chinese National Tariff Law coming into force on 1 January 1929 to coincide with the official abolition of the *likin*. Moving onto surtaxes, the Japanese delegates insisted upon Chinese repayment of its outstanding ‘Nishihara loans’ (made by then private businessman Nishihara Kamezō on behalf of the Japanese Government to Duan in

²³¹⁷ Hattori, Japanese Diplomacy and East Asian International Politics, pg. 163.

²³¹⁸ Iriye, After Imperialism, pg. 74.

²³¹⁹ Ibid, pp. 73-74.

²³²⁰ Ibid., pg. 74.

²³²¹ Hattori, Japanese Diplomacy and East Asian International Politics, pg. 165.

²³²² Iriye, After Imperialism, pg. 76.

1918). The Japanese Delegation remained steadfast in its opposition, even though its members had reported to Tokyo that the United States had displayed serious inclination to cooperate with Japan, albeit for pragmatic reasons.²³²³ Despite his rhetoric seeking to expand cooperation with the US and pledges of non-interference in China, Shidehara signed off on a blunt telegram to the Japanese Delegation in Beijing that had highlighted US willingness to soften Japan's position: "there has been in fact no specific benefit resulting from American goodwill toward us. It is sentimentalism and not national policy to argue that we should give up our long-held and cardinal principles and agree to the irrational and haphazard device of effecting a 2.5 percent surtax, simply in order to repay American kindness and save the face of the country that had initiated the Washington Conference."²³²⁴ Unsurprisingly, discussions remained in a deadlock until April 1926 when domestic events in China, namely the collapse of the recognized Government in Beijing, forced the conference into permanent adjournment.

The Tariff Conference was dead. With it, for all practical purposes, was the concept of the 'Washington Powers' acting in unison to uphold the 'Washington System'. It simply passed into oblivion. While the Tariff Conference did provide one last post-Washington Conference achievement, namely the agreement to restore tariff autonomy to the Chinese Republic as of 1929, the 'spirit of the Washington Conference'—only four years after its conclusion—proved insufficient to provide the essential degree of interstate cooperation amongst the signatories to furnish a functioning basis for regional order. As the tariff discussions in Beijing underscored, each of the Washington signatories believed that their respective interests could be better secured through bilateral agreements with China rather than the ineffective and cumbersome vehicle of multilateral cooperation.²³²⁵ Hence, the 'Washington System' expired without a whimper. Its collapse did not trigger any open antagonism between the Foreign Powers in China, as each began to explore bilateral arrangements to further their respective interests, without—as per the rules of the 'Old Diplomacy'—securing explicit consent. However, the failure of the 'Washington System' to provide a functioning order signified the region's return to a systemic *sui generis* where the international systemic rules as established by the League of Nations did not fully apply. As such, with the collapse of the 'System', the now defunct Washington Powers were "unwittingly putting an end to one act of the Far Eastern drama and ushering in the next."²³²⁶

10.2.5.5. The Northern Expedition and the End of the 'Anti-Washington System'

The de facto collapse of the Beijing Tariff Conference was accompanied by the start in earnest of the Kuomintang's Northern Expedition to bring China under a single political authority. As the Conference did not manage to furnish a common approach between the powers on how to handle the political changes in China, each nation was left to pursue its own, bilateral policies. As such, the non-interference as pre-supposed by the Nine Power Treaty was ignored and replaced by policies that did not discount serious action should events dictate their necessity. The Nationalist assault gain momentum and soon targeted the major cities of Nanjing and Shanghai. Assuming control of Nanjing, control of the city soon eroded into mob rule that began to attack both foreign

²³²³ Nish, Japanese Foreign Policy in the Inter-war Period, pg. 55.

²³²⁴ Iriye, After Imperialism, pp. 85-86.

²³²⁵ Ibid., pg. 87.

²³²⁶ Ibid.

citizens and property. The US and UK dispatched warships to protect both citizens and property, thereby limiting overall casualties; yet Japan chose to watch from the sidelines, a decision that led the Japanese Naval Lieutenant present to attempt to commit *seppuku* after receiving orders from Tokyo that Imperial forces were not to intervene, leaving Japanese citizens and property vulnerable.²³²⁷ This despair would be auguring of sentiments to come. As illustrated by a report sent to the Kasumigaseki by the Japanese Consul, Shōhei Morioka, the attacks targeting especially Japanese and British capital showed signs of heavy Soviet involvement: “the Nanjing incident was a systematic and anti-foreign act of violence which had been planned and prepared by party commissars and communist officers of lower grades...and members of the Communist Party’s Nanjing branch...Chang Kai-Shek and his subordinates have expressed regrets and have been putting forth efforts to maintain security, but it would be the impartial judgment today that the communist ideology has permeated the lower officers and the greater part of the army, and there is nothing which can improve the situation.”²³²⁸ While Morioka’s claim was stated to be short on evidence, it coloured how developments in China were assessed in Japan, especially by the Imperial Japanese Military.

With Shanghai now expected to fall to the Nationalists in early 1927, the fate of the International Settlement was threatened. Shidehara remained firm in his commitment to his non-interference policy, reiterating its tenets in a 21 January 1927 speech that provoked the anger of Japanese businessmen with economic interests in Shanghai. While they strongly petitioned the Japanese Government to intervene, consular officials stationed throughout China began to request that Tokyo reinforce their respective garrisons on the mainland to defend Japanese interests. Faced by the impending threat of an assault against Shanghai, the Foreign Powers, mirroring the disunity of the Tariff Conference, chose to pursue distinct approaches: the British remained determined to defend the Settlement at all cost; the US—while originally siding with London—opted for trying to secure guarantees from the Chinese factions that the Settlement would form a ‘military neutral zone’; with the Japanese Commander in Shanghai expressing his readiness to assist defending the Settlement, should Imperial forces not serve under British command.²³²⁹ Yet such actions were based on individual, not national, decisions. Shidehara steadfastly refused to contemplate Japanese involvement in the defence of Shanghai. Behind such aloofness was his desire to carve out a new Sino-Japanese relationship in the void that had been left by the inaction of the ‘Washington System’, one which the Soviet Union and the Chinese Nationalists were gradually succeeding in filling. Through a patient policy of ‘non-interference’ Japan could “earn the gratitude of the Chinese who would respond by subscribing to the Japanese conception of a new order.”²³³⁰ Indeed, such a policy found its supporters amongst Japanese diplomats, first and foremost, the Japanese Consul General in Shanghai, Yada Shichtaro (1879-1957), whose counsel on Chinese affairs was especially valued by the Foreign Minister: “the best guarantee for the effective protection of Japanese and other foreign lives and property in China lies in the removal of the fundamental causes of the present troubled relations between the Nationalist Government and the powers who continue to sustain the regime of Unequal Treaties...This danger will exist as long as effective government is rendered difficult by foreign insistence on conditions which are at once a humiliation and a menace to a nation that has known greatness and today conscious of renewed

²³²⁷ Nish, *Japanese Foreign Policy in the Inter-war Years*, pg. 56.

²³²⁸ Iriye, *After Imperialism*, pg. 129.

²³²⁹ Nish, *Japanese Foreign Policy in the Inter-War Years*, pg. 57.

²³³⁰ Iriye, *After Imperialism*, pg. 119.

strength.”²³³¹ Hence, through inaction, Shidehara hoped that a new Sino-Japanese understanding would emerge that would inherently protect Tokyo’s economic interests in China.

In March 1927, the Nationalist forces gained control of Shanghai. The Northern Expedition now trained its sights on northern China and Beijing, stoking alarm especially amongst the Imperial Military. On 7 April 1927, Minister of War Ugaki published an opinion paper entitled “Research on the Protection of the Empire’s Foothold in China.” Its main conclusion encapsulated a scathing indictment, albeit indirect, of Shidehara’s policy. Ugaki bluntly wrote that Japan’s contemporary policy of “‘patience and self-restraint’ was incapable of dealing with the Northern Expedition and defending Japan’s special interests in Manchuria and Inner Mongolia” and advocated for the supply of “weapons to the moderate elements of both the northern and southern factions [i.e. Zhang Zuolin and Chiang Kai Shek]” as well as “carry out the extermination and suppression of communist factions in central and southern China.”²³³² Only through such a policy about-face could inhibit the anarchy in China from seriously destabilizing Japan’s core interests. Ugaki’s writings reflected the general opinion within the Imperial Military that Shidehara’s policy was stoking unrest in China, actively prompting Chiang Kai-Shek to continue his operations in the face of perceived Japanese weakness.²³³³

As the Northern Expedition halted its progress in mid-campaign in 1927, with Chiang opting to instead end the First United Front by purging the Communist Party and its supporters from its midst. Tensions had been rising between Chiang and the Soviets since the 1926 party conference where the leftists seemed to have wrought total control over the movement. Having buried his disdain for the Soviet Union given the Nationalists’ utter dependence on the USSR’s assistance, on 6 April 1927, the Beijing Government raided the Soviet representation, seizing documents revealing that Moscow was planning to install a client regime in the embattled Government’s stead, arresting circa sixty Chinese Communists dwelling in the Soviet compound, enflaming Chinese public opinion and concern amongst the Foreign Powers.²³³⁴ Chiang saw this as an opportune moment to distance himself and the Nationalist movement from its Soviet backers, ordering the ‘cleansing’ of the Nationalist Party of CCP influence on 12 April 1927, including the issuing of arrest warrants for Borodin and Mao Zedong. Although the leadership of the CCP largely survived the purge, the summary execution of the Chinese Communists eliminated the substantial Soviet influence in China and, with it, Moscow’s designs for shaping the regional system in East Asia. On 18 April 1927, Chiang, speaking at two separate Kuomintang meetings in Nanjing, justified his moves by accusing the CCP of seeking to place China under the USSR’s sphere of influence, insisting that the Soviet Union had no intention to treat China as an equal—citing Borodin key role in United Front operations—reminding his audience that “[China] must join the world revolution as an independent, free, and equal member; we should not be led into it.”²³³⁵ In response to Chiang’s purge, Stalin issued a defiant telegram in June 1927, urging the radicalized masses to seize land “from below” and the mobilization of a new army of 20,000 communists and 50,000 revolutionary workers and peasants. However, given the political disarray in China following the purge, Moscow’s exhortations were, in the words of the then General Secretary of

²³³¹ Nish, *Japanese Foreign Policy in the Inter-war Years*, pg. 56.

²³³² Hattori, *Japanese Diplomacy and East Asian International Politics*, pg. 167.

²³³³ Drea, *Japan’s Imperial Army*, pg. 163.

²³³⁴ Chang Jung & Halliday, John, *Mao: The Unknown Story*, New York: Anchor Books, 2005, pg. 43.

²³³⁵ Iriye, *After Imperialism*, pg. 135.

the CCP, Chen Duxiu (1879-1942), akin to “taking a bath in the toilet.”²³³⁶ The would-be Chinese revolution under Soviet tutelage was no more. The sidelining of the CCP and abrupt departure of Soviet advisors from China put a definitive end to the ‘anti-Washington system’ that the USSR had attempted to install in East Asia through its co-opting of the Chinese Nationalist movement. While its competitive alternative had collapsed, the continued inability of the Foreign Powers to collectively respond to events in China did little to cover the systemic void still left by the ‘Washington System’. The Powers therefore still opted to pursue independent policies as a response to a rapidly changing situation.

10.2.5.6. Tanaka’s Policy to Establish Systemic Order

A new policy towards safekeeping Japanese special interests would have to be implemented, with or without the Foreign Ministry’s agreement. As the situation in China evolved, so did domestic events in Japan. In April 1927, the collapse of the Bank of Taiwan also brought down the Japanese Cabinet. Out of the elections, retired general Tanaka Giichi emerged as Prime Minister and signalled a change in Japanese policy towards China. Tanaka had been a staunch advocate of securing Japanese access to Chinese resources as essential to the Empire’s national interest.²³³⁷ To ensure this change was implemented, Tanaka also nominated himself as Foreign Minister of his own Cabinet. The Prime/Foreign Minister publicly announced that he harboured no plans to follow up with Shidehara’s earlier designs of evacuating the Beijing-Tianjin area and dispatched a force of 2,000 soldiers from Manchuria to Qingdao, in what was known as the First Shandong Expedition.²³³⁸ All Chinese factions, although embroiled in a civil war, protested the actions of the new Japanese Government.

Tanaka attempted to streamline his differentiated approach to China in a series of conferences between June-July 1927 at the Foreign Ministry, known as the Far Eastern Conference (*Tōhō kaigi*/東方會議). The Prime/Foreign Minister took the view that, through the stoking of Chinese regionalism to ensure that no united government would be able to effectively extend its control over the country, China would hence be deprived of any real possibility to menace Japanese interests or concessions, especially regarding Manchuria. Tanaka expressed a great admiration for Chiang Kai-Shek and, as such, sought to deflect any possibility of conflict with the Nationalist Army through recognizing the now firmly anti-communist Chiang while, simultaneously, supporting the forces of Zhang Zuolin in Manchuria. This would result in a divided China, with “a separation of the north and south between two hegemons each with their own sphere of influence, with Japan maintaining an equal distance from each.”²³³⁹ This Japanese vision of how a possible systemic order could materialize was encapsulated in the Conference’s final document, adopted on 7 July 1927 and entitled an “Overview of China Policy”. Section 2 underscored that Japan possessed “wholehearted sympathy for legitimate national demands based in the self-awareness of China’s moderate elements and [Japan] will cooperate in their rational and gradual realization”; Section 5 asserted that “self-defence measures” would be enacted to ensure the safeguarding of Japanese nationals in China; and Section 7 highlighted that “the Imperial Government should provide assistance as appropriate to influential figures in the three provinces who respect our

²³³⁶ Wilbur, *The Nationalist Revolution in China*, pg. 131.

²³³⁷ Drea, *Japan’s Imperial Army*, pg. 163.

²³³⁸ Nish, *Japanese Foreign Policy*, pg. 158.

²³³⁹ Hattori, *Japanese Diplomacy and East Asian International Politics*, pg. 190.

special status in Manchuria and Inner Mongolia and earnestly pursue measures aimed at improving these regions' political stability", concluding that "in light of Japan's special status in the Far East, it has no choice but to differentiate between China proper and Manchuria/Inner Mongolia in the direction it takes."²³⁴⁰ Hence, if Japan would not be able to defend both its citizens and economic interests through the above outlined policy parameters, jeopardized by civil conflict and boycotts, an alternative policy would have to be found. Instructions were subsequently handed out to the Kwantung Army Headquarters in Dairen from the Cabinet sanctioning direct Japanese military interference in Chinese affairs.²³⁴¹ Consequently Tanaka authorized the subsequent dispatch of an additional 2,200 soldiers to defend Japanese interests on the Shandong Peninsula, bragging, as an "avowed interventionist and hard-liner" of his new "active policy" (*'sekkyoku seisaku'*/積極政策) that he hoped would provide concrete results.²³⁴² Indeed, the "'historical lessons' of the late Shidehara Diplomacy period served as one of the triggers for Tanaka's decision" to authorize the deployment of the Japanese military.²³⁴³

Yet Tanaka's new policy was in no way a systemic outlier and did not represent a 'revolutionary' approach, as defined by Kissinger. While the new Japanese Government acted independently, it was a strategy that was in harmony with methods employed by other Foreign Powers in the wake of the failure of the 'Washington System' and the sudden collapse of its 'anti-Washington' alternative. While Japan was the first to embark on a mission to establish some semblance of order in northern China, it was not the last. In April 1927, the Japanese, British, and US military commanders in Beijing collectively agreed that the number of soldiers comprising their respective garrisons should be doubled, a decision actively supported at Ambassadorial and Ministerial level.²³⁴⁴ The resolution of the Foreign Powers to augment their military presence was met with public criticism from the Beijing Government, who accused them of not acting "in accordance with the spirit of the Washington Conference resolutions."²³⁴⁵ Indeed, the breakdown of the 'Washington System' did not signal the end of bilateral attempts to coordinate policy between the Powers. The United States, the most vociferous critic of Japan's attachment to its zone of special interests in Manchuria, began to soften its stance and went so far as to open negotiations between the Bank of Japan and J.P. Morgan to explore possible US investment in the Mantetsu. In particular, while bilateral policies took obvious precedence, points of convergence, tending towards mutually beneficial cooperation, began to be explored. While no final contract was ever signed, rumours regarding the negotiations in Tokyo reached China, to the distinct displeasure of both the Kuomintang and the northern authorities of Zhang Zuolin.²³⁴⁶

Such protests compelled policy makers in Washington to clarify the US approach to China in face of the changed domestic circumstances. Both US plenipotentiaries to China and Japan independently came to the same conclusion that US-Japanese cooperation in Manchuria, implicitly acknowledging Japan's special interest, could provide the best platform to protect US interests. The US Ambassador to Japan, Charles MacVeagh (1860-1931), actively lobbied for a contract between J.P. Morgan and the Bank of Japan, stating that the US should "make use of the first

²³⁴⁰ Ibid., pg. 198.

²³⁴¹ Drea, *Japan's Imperial Army*, pp. 163-164.

²³⁴² Nish, *Japanese Foreign Policy*, pg. 158.

²³⁴³ Hattori, *Japanese Diplomacy and East Asian International Politics*, pg. 190.

²³⁴⁴ Ibid., pp. 190-191.

²³⁴⁵ Ibid., pg. 191.

²³⁴⁶ Iriye, *After Imperialism*, pg. 187.

opportunity to convince the Japanese that we have an honest desire to help them in reaching a solution of their difficulties when we can legitimately do so.”²³⁴⁷ Given the continuing anarchy in China, cooperation with Japan could serve as the best method to secure and expand the economic interests of both countries. Yet the prospect of US-Japanese cooperation continued to be viewed negatively by both Chinese authorities, with Chinese interlocutors underlining that such an arrangement would have serious repercussions for US relations with both the official government and de facto authorities. Chinese public opinion also began to take a decidedly anti-Japanese tone, with the “anti-foreign animus among the Chinese [switching] from Britain to Japan”.²³⁴⁸ The higher echelons of the State Department, in view of these developments, decided to exercise prudence and their silence on the matter was enough to discourage J.P. Morgan from signing the agreement. However, its exploration illustrates that Japan and the United States were *only* involved in mutually complementary endeavours in China and that serious cooperation on previous matters that provoked serious disagreements was not being considered.

The Tanaka Cabinet also simultaneously attempted to implement its aforementioned strategy of cultivating a partnership with what it viewed as the future power holders in China. After pausing his Northern Expedition, Chiang Kai-Shek, in the fall of 1927, visited Japan both for political and personal reasons. Politically, Chiang wished to seek, at the very least, Japanese acquiescence as his planned route towards Beijing would entail moving through Shandong and Chiang ardently sought to avoid a confrontation with the local Japanese garrison.²³⁴⁹ In his meeting with Tanaka, the Prime Minister/Foreign Minister held a lengthy conversation in which he pledged Japanese friendship if his movement, of which Chiang now undisputedly headed, “would provide an effective counter to Communism” and recommended Chiang concentrate his forces in the south, while Chiang underlined the importance of moving north to prevent “revolutionary forces [becoming] more discontented and radical.”²³⁵⁰ After their two hour meeting, and revealing their respective intentions, both leaders came away with “optimistic views of [their] persuasive powers.”²³⁵¹ A meeting between representatives of the Kuomintang and Zhang Zuolin’s envoys, held during Chiang’s séjour in Japan, agreed on the terms of a conditional truce while simultaneously pledging to purge any lingering Communist factions from their respective territories, an agreement that fitted perfectly into Tanaka’s vision of providing a base for cooperation between Japan and China’s two strongest factions allowing a semblance of peace and order to break out.²³⁵² Furthermore, Chiang assured his Japanese guests that his forces would do their utmost to avoid a repeat of the Nanjing Incident and protect Japanese lives and property. Although the Tanaka and Chiang meeting did not produce “a meeting of the minds”, the encounter did furnish both with a superfluous façade of confidence that a common understanding that the interests of both parties could, despite difficult political circumstances, be worked out.²³⁵³ However, the serious suspicions remained that could not be paved over in post-meeting reflections, with Chiang writing in his diary entry following his meeting with Tanaka, that the Japanese Prime Minister “is absolutely lacking in sincerity; Sino-Japanese collaboration is impossible. The is no

²³⁴⁷ Ibid., 188.

²³⁴⁸ Nish, *Japanese Foreign Policy*, pg. 159.

²³⁴⁹ Vogel, *China and Japan*, pg. 225.

²³⁵⁰ Jansen, *Japan and China*, pg. 370.

²³⁵¹ Ibid.

²³⁵² Iriye, *After Imperialism*, pg. 144.

²³⁵³ Nish, *Japanese Foreign Policy*, pg. 159.

chance he will permit our relations to succeed.”²³⁵⁴ As Chiang returned to China to launch the next phase of the Northern Expedition, Tanaka’s new ‘active policy’ had attempted to secure Japanese interests in Manchuria while simultaneously exploring cooperation with Tokyo’s most important powers. Although such initial moves were far removed from the necessary steps to imbue a region with a functioning international order, they did mark the first serious overtures that had taken place since the collapse of the ‘Washington System’. None of them, however, would be brought to ultimate fruition.

10.2.5.7. The Japanese Military Intervenes: Jinan and Manchuria

The consolidation of the Nationalist movement did little to calm the assessment of the military in Japan. The prospect of a unified China emerging from the Washington vacuum represented an unacceptable vision to the Imperial General Staff.²³⁵⁵ Chiang moved his forces north in April 1928 coinciding with Tanaka retaining power in a closely fought general election. In response to the Chiang’s military advances, on 18 April 1928, Tanaka sanctioned the sending of Japanese soldiers to protect the Empire’s subjects and property in Shandong. Of special importance was the city of Jinan, home to 2,000 Japanese residents, who were to be protected by the 4,000 soldiers under the command of General Fukuda Hikosuke (1875-1959). Chiang’s forces entered the province on 3 May 1928 and, at first glance, with the Kuomintang’s leader camping nearby, “it looked as if the situation was under control so that [Chiang’s] troops would move on peacefully and Japanese troops could exit the city.”²³⁵⁶ Yet something happened which the shadow of history has not yet elucidated, with Chinese and Japanese historical sources contradicting each other regarding the immediate trigger of what ensued.²³⁵⁷ An incident at a residence of a Japanese citizen caused the situation to spiral out of control. On orders from the General Staff Headquarters in Tokyo, Fukuda launched an assault against the Kuomintang’s soldiers, resulting in the death of thousands of Chinese soldiers, including those that had been assured safe passage. The Jinan Incident, as it would be dubbed by posterity, was added to “the growing Chinese lexicon of Japanese infamy.”²³⁵⁸ Unsurprisingly, the Jinan Incident had consequences for the region as a whole.

The Jinan Incident had been cited as representing “a turning point for diplomatic history.”²³⁵⁹ First, the previous anti-foreign protest movement began to view Japan as the prime target for its activities, with anti-Japanese sentiment increasing in intensity in major Chinese cities; furthermore, the Incident “severely damaged major Chinese figures like Chiang Kai-Shek’s views of Japan”, eroding the position of pro-Japanese Chinese officials. The Beijing Government’s Foreign Minister, Luo Bunkan, openly informed Minister Yoshizawa that “the continued dispatch of [Japanese] troops has caused an increased sense of distrust” with Chang Kai-Shek declaring that, following the Incident, “the National Revolutionary Army will, from now on, be utterly unable to shake hands with the Japanese army.”²³⁶⁰ Lastly, the Incident put a definitive end to whatever initial consideration had been accorded to bilateral regional cooperation with Japan,

²³⁵⁴ Hattori, *Japanese Diplomacy and East Asian International Politics*, pg. 205.

²³⁵⁵ Paine, *The Japanese Empire*, pg. 97.

²³⁵⁶ Vogel, *China and Japan*, pg. 226.

²³⁵⁷ Hattori, *Japanese Diplomacy and East Asian International Politics*, pg. 200.

²³⁵⁸ Paine, *The Japanese Empire*, pg. 97.

²³⁵⁹ Hattori, *Japanese Diplomacy and East Asian International Politics*, pg. 204.

²³⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 204-205.

especially since the US had begun to cultivate a close relationship with the Kuomintang.²³⁶¹ The Jinan Incident, in the minds of East Asian regional states, evoked a previous ante bellum image of Japan, thereby stoking suspicion and distrust. As US Minister MacMurray wrote retrospectively in 1935, when reminiscing on the effects of the Jinan Incident, that it represented “evidence of antagonism toward the Nationalists, whom American public opinion continued to favour as though they were the champions of our own ideals.”²³⁶² In Japan, the national press published photographs of the body of a mutilated Japanese civilian, provoking an enraged reaction from the public who held China accountable for the clash.²³⁶³ With emotions amongst policy makers and citizens alike enflamed, what could have been a confidence building measure between Chiang and Tanaka had led to an unmitigated disaster.

Unsurprisingly, the negotiations that ensued between the Chinese authorities and Japan were fraught with difficulties and took several months. Signed on 28 March 1929, the agreement underlined that both sides “hope that, by erasing the unpleasant feeling accompanying this incident from our memories, future relations between our nations will become increasingly sincere and kind”, with consent being given to launch a ‘Joint Investigatory Commission’ and the Nationalists pledging to protect Japanese residents in exchange for Japan agreeing to withdraw its expeditionary forces within two months of the document’s signing.²³⁶⁴ The cumbersome negotiations revealed yet another consequence of the Jinan Incident that would have serious implications for the East Asian system as a whole, namely the ability of the Imperial Japanese Military to conduct its own independent policy in China. Mid-level Japanese officers, opposed to an agreement with the Chinese authorities intervened on several occasions during the negotiation process to thwart a document being signed, leading to the removal of pro-military Foreign Ministry officials.²³⁶⁵ While not able to completely scuttle diplomatic attempts to deal with the fallout of the Jinan Incident, the Japanese military illustrated the ability to derail Tanaka’s diplomacy, with their involvement signaling “a predictable escalation of language and prestige [that] brought to army commanders the backing of their fellows in the General Staff and War Ministry.”²³⁶⁶ Tanaka’s ‘active policy’, therefore, was reaping a very different harvest from the seeds he had intended to sow.

This trend began to establish itself as policy soon in Manchuria. In the wake of Jinan, Tanaka continued to pursue his strategy of dividing China into two spheres of influence, led by Chiang Kai-Shek and Zhang Zuolin respectively, with Japan maintaining an equal distance from each. Yet Manchuria occupied a distinct position in the Japanese mind: not only were these three Chinese provinces home to the battles through which Japan had, through the “blood of [its] fathers” won a place amongst the pantheon of Great Powers, it likewise contained enough resources of coal and iron that would allow Japan to wage a prolonged war without having to depend on Western imports.²³⁶⁷ Japanese control over Manchuria was essential, not only for matters of prestige, but also for the Empire’s continued survival. Hence, the military naturally took a special interest in the fate of this region in a changing China. Ugaki was fully in line with Tanaka’s vision of Japanese

²³⁶¹ Ibid., pg. 204.

²³⁶² Ibid.

²³⁶³ Vogel, *China and Japan*, pg. 226.

²³⁶⁴ Hattori, *Japanese Diplomacy and East Asian International Politics*, pg. 206.

²³⁶⁵ Ibid.

²³⁶⁶ Jansen, *Japan and China*, pg. 372.

²³⁶⁷ Ibid.

dominance in Manchuria being maintained through the benevolent local figure of Zhang Zuolin. While Ugaki, together with the Foreign Ministry, believed that Zhang could not militarily beat the Kuomintang, he remained “the best choice for managing the vast expanse of Manchuria and keeping it out of the hands of the Kuomintang.”²³⁶⁸ As Chiang, following the delay at Jinan, began to push north towards Beijing—where Zhang had declared himself Marshall—the Japanese convinced Zhang to retreat from the capital with his forces intact to Manchuria, thereby enabling Tokyo to organize a peaceful transition.²³⁶⁹ The Japanese Military stationed in China, however, held a dissenting opinion. In the meantime, discussions in Tokyo began to focus on whether Japan should insist on the disarmament of Chiang’s soldiers that sought to traverse the Manchurian frontier.

The Chief Staff Officer of the Kwantung Army, Colonel Komotō Daisaku (1883-1955), believed that Japanese policy should aim at expanding Tokyo’s control over Manchuria, not filtering its authority through a proxy. With Chiang signaling that he did not intent to chase Zhang’s outnumbered forces into Manchuria, Tanaka remained mired in indecision on what policy to take, leading the Kwantung Army officers to decide to act alone, having the actions of General Fukuda at Jinan as a precedent.²³⁷⁰ The decision was therefore taken to assassinate Zhang on his return from Beijing to Manchuria and thereby “throw Manchuria into confusion, which would provide a pretext for military action.”²³⁷¹ The motivation for the Army’s action has been cited as a growing feeling amongst the officer corps that Japan was confronted with a national emergency that demanded an extraordinary response, one that the civilian government was in no way prepared to provide, beholden as they were to narrow party interests.²³⁷² On 3 June 1928, therefore, Zhang’s train was blown up while crossing a bridge. The reaction in Tokyo upon hearing the news of Zhang’s assassination sent policy makers into shock: Ugaki was dumbfounded and called Komotō a “spoiled, traitorous child”, with Takana and Minister of War Shirakawa sought to have the perpetrators tried and punished, meeting several times with Emperor Hirohito himself.²³⁷³ Yet the possible implications of openly admitting Japanese involvement in Zhang’s murder led Tokyo to, instead, cover its tracks. The Imperial Army division heads argued that Komotō in no way should be publicly disgraced as it “would hurt the army in public opinion and support, and publication of the facts would hurt Japan in international esteem.”²³⁷⁴ However, Tanaka felt that he had lost the confidence of the Emperor and handed in his resignation in the face of the Army’s insubordination. Komotō’s actions did not trigger the response that he and his conspirators had hoped. Not only did Zhang’s death fail to plunge Manchuria into chaos, Zhang’s son, Zhang Xueliang (1901-2001) refused to adopt an anti-Japanese posture and declared, in December 1928, his alliance the Kuomintang, thereby completing the process of Chinese unification.²³⁷⁵ Japan was therefore, in June 1929, obliged to recognize the Kuomintang Government as the legitimate authority over a now nominally unified China. Yet the assassination of Zhang marked an abrupt end to Japan’s

²³⁶⁸ Vogel, *China and Japan*, pg. 227.

²³⁶⁹ Jansen, *Japan and China*, pg. 375.

²³⁷⁰ Iriye, *After Imperialism*, pg. 214.

²³⁷¹ Ibid.

²³⁷² Drea, *Japan’s Imperial Army*, pg. 167.

²³⁷³ Vogel, *China and Japan*, pg. 228.

²³⁷⁴ Jansen, *Japan and China*, pg. 376.

²³⁷⁵ Ibid.

strategy to foster bilateral cooperation that had marked Japanese empire-building policies throughout the 1920s.²³⁷⁶

The incidents at Jinan and in Manchuria abruptly ended Tanaka's "active policy", with the Japanese military having effectively scuttled the Prime Minister's vision of filling in the void of the 'Washington System' with his notions of a possible regional order. It also illustrated in concrete form the inability of the civil government in Tokyo to effectively exercise control over the Imperial Military. Their designs were undoubtedly assisted by Emperor Hirohito's decision to approve of the cover-up of the Imperial Forces' involvement in Zhang's assassination.²³⁷⁷ Hence, as the civilian government curtailed the military's designs in the Russian Far East, so now did the Imperial Military derail the Empire's attempts at forming a regional order and, in the process, "hijacked foreign policy for good."²³⁷⁸ In its wake, the regional powers increasingly opted for unilateral solutions to implement their respective foreign policies.

10.2.6. The Fate of Internationalism in East Asia

The failure of interstate diplomacy following the Washington Conference also mirrored the second echelon of international cooperation that had been bequeathed upon the region following the Settlement of 1919, namely the international of the League of Nations. At the League of Nations, Japan, since January 1920, had been accorded one of the four permanent seats on its Council and one senior appointment of an official to the Secretariat, with Nitobe Inazō (1862-1933) serving as Vice Director of the General Affairs section. In a foreword to his English-language book on Japan, published in 1931, Nitobe underlined Tokyo's commitment to the internationalism of the post-WWI order: "Japan's preparations are for peace and the maintenance of peaceful relations with the rest of the world. There is scarcely an international Conference of any importance in which Japan had not participated, hardly any document drawn up for world peace which she has not signed with sincerity, not a single 'universal way of heaven—earth' which she has not accepted as a guiding principle of Government and diplomacy."²³⁷⁹ As the new decade unfolded, such internationalist ideals were beginning to lose steam. While Japan remained mired in a spirit of cooperation with the Western Powers that characterized the foreign policy in the immediate wake of the Settlement of 1919, the unquestioned appeal of international cooperation was palpably waning.²³⁸⁰

Nevertheless, Japanese foreign policy continued to participate in the main treaty negotiations on tools to further entrench international cooperation within the global system. This included the ill-fated Kellogg-Briand Pact. Known officially as the General Treaty of Renunciation, the Kellogg-Briand Pact pledged its signatories to abstain from resorting to war to resolve "disputes or conflicts of whatever nature or of whatever origin they may be, which may arise among them."²³⁸¹ The Pact was ratified by Japan in July 1929, yet not without controversy. Signing the Kellogg-Briand Pact, the Japanese Government acknowledged that the concept of

²³⁷⁶ Tak Matsusaka, *The Making of Japanese Manchuria*, pg. 349.

²³⁷⁷ Bix, *Hirohito*, pg. 207.

²³⁷⁸ Paine, *The Japanese Empire*, pg. 97.

²³⁷⁹ Nish, Ian, *Japan's Struggle with Internationalism*, London: Kegan Paul, 1993, pg. 9.

²³⁸⁰ Bix, *Hirohito*, pg. 206.

²³⁸¹ *The Avalon Project: Kellogg-Briand Pact 1929* (yale.edu), accessed 26 March 2024.

‘aggressive war’ was forthwith a recognized crime under international law, as per Article I, namely “in the names of their respective peoples that they condemn recourse to war for the solution of international controversies, and renounce it as an instrument of national policy in their relations with one another.”²³⁸² Yet the Imperial Diet objected to the phrase “in the names of their respective peoples”, revealing how contemporary Japanese decision makers viewed international law against a backdrop of rising political instability in Japan.²³⁸³ Indeed, during the Pact’s negotiations on ending aggressive war in Paris, the Japanese envoy, Uchida Kōsai, was instructed to liaise with Western delegates to communicate Tokyo’s “real intentions in China and Manchuria and solicit their sympathetic understanding.”²³⁸⁴ Both Washington and London reacted skeptically to Uchida’s overtures. While a positive response from the Anglo-Saxon powers might have allowed Japan to, once again, provide the foundation for a workable order in East Asia, their refusal to engage with Uchida made such an endeavour unrealistic at best. The situation in China, especially following Manchuria’s official reunification under Beijing’s authority, allowed the US to finally realize its long held policy of having a single authority to channel diplomatic support to Chiang Kai-Shek. As Secretary of State Kellogg explained to Uchida, “the present Nationalist Government appeared to be making every effort to build a stable and ordered Government in China.”²³⁸⁵ With vestiges of initial stability beginning to emerge in China, there no longer was any need to entertain any involvement from Japan as a mediator. Despite having its advances rebuffed, Japan proceeded to become a signatory to the Pact.

At the same time, Tokyo began to withhold its agreement on League of Nation projects that it viewed as infringing upon the scope of the Empire’s national interests. In 1928, the Tanaka Cabinet declined to sign an international protocol that banned the use of chemical and biological warfare. The following year in 1929, Japan refused to ratify the Geneva Prisoner of War Convention that had been signed two years prior. The Privy Council and branches of the Imperial Military opined that the treatment of POWs was too lenient “and could not possibly be implemented because the Emperor’s soldiers would never allow themselves to become prisoners of war.”²³⁸⁶ In addition to the failure of new supranational initiatives, other prior interstate agreement that had formed the core of the ‘Washington System’ began to likewise erode. The Geneva Naval Conference of 1927 was organized as a follow-up conference to its predecessor in Washington in 1922. Due to a principled disagreement between the US and British Delegations, the conference ended in failure; however, the Japanese Navy exhibited concern that the ratios established in Washington were no longer being adhered to, with Tokyo insisting that its security could only be sustained if Japan were allowed to maintain at least 70 percent of the tonnage possessed by its Anglo-Saxon competitors.²³⁸⁷ In Tokyo, the Imperial Navy expressed outrage at the members of the civilian Delegation that were nominated to argue their interests in London, seeing it as an overt attempt by the Government to undermine their authority and voiced resolute opposition to any compromises that were on the table.²³⁸⁸ The failure of the Conference however kept such tensions from bubbling to the surface. The determination of both Washington and London to address the failure at Geneva by organizing another naval conference in London in 1930

²³⁸² Ibid.

²³⁸³ Bix, *Hirohito*, pp. 219-220.

²³⁸⁴ Iriye, *After Imperialism*, pg. 242.

²³⁸⁵ Ibid., pg. 243.

²³⁸⁶ Bix, *Hirohito*, pg. 207.

²³⁸⁷ Evans et al, *Kaigun: Strategy, Tactics, and Technology in the Imperial Japanese Navy*, pg. 234.

²³⁸⁸ Nish, *Japanese Foreign Policy in the Inter-war Years*, pg. 67.

reflected the ardent desire of the Anglo-Saxon powers to avert another arms race, yet this insistence upon maintaining international cooperation did not extend into the coordination of policy on China.

Regarding continental East Asia, unilateral foreign policy reigned supreme. As the Nationalist Government regained control over Manchuria, Chiang Kai-Shek grew increasingly suspicious of Soviet incursions into the region, primarily through the Chinese Eastern Railway which had been under joint Sino-Soviet management since 1924. In May 1929, Chinese authorities searched the Soviet Consulate in Harbin and confiscated confidential documents illustrating that Moscow was supporting Chinese Communists and separatist elements in Manchuria, forcing Chiang to dispatch Chinese soldiers along the railway in July 1929, expelling some of its Soviet employees.²³⁸⁹ These were promptly replaced by Chinese officials. The Soviet Union reacted quickly, demanding that China cancel all “arbitrary orders” which had been issued, a demand that the Nationalist Government rejected, leading to the severing of diplomatic relations. As a response, the USSR mobilized soldiers along the Manchurian-Siberian frontier. With war looming on the horizon, the Secretary of State Henry Stimson (1867-1950) viewed the Sino-Soviet crisis as an opportune occasion to test the effectiveness of one of the creations of his predecessor: the Kellogg Briand Pact. As both the Soviet Union and China were signatories, Stimson proposed, on 25 July 1929, “a full and impartial investigation of the facts” through a neutral conciliation committee, a move that sought to, through internationalism, re-establish order to fill the vacuum of the ‘Washington System’.²³⁹⁰ Upon openly voicing US support for such an initiative, Stimson quickly discovered that only France was ready to likewise resolve the issue through an internationalist approach.

The Nationalist Government attempted to negotiate directly with the Soviet Union, however, Moscow clearly underlined that it would not come to the table unless the status quo ante had been restored. The Soviet army, totaling 156,000 troops, entered Chinese territory and engaged Chinese forces at Chalainor. Indeed, Stalin had only given the go-ahead for Soviet intervention after having received information from the Soviet Consul in Tokyo that Japan intended to remain neutral should a Sino-Soviet war erupt.²³⁹¹ This was followed by a second Soviet assault against Manchouli in November 1929. The Soviet advance, coupled with fraying Chinese unity amongst factions in Manchuria, forced Chiang Kai-Shek to negotiate with the Soviet authorities. On 22 December 1929, the Khabarovsk Protocol was signed and formally restored the status quo ante before Chiang had moved against the Soviets. While diplomatic relations between Nationalist China and the USSR would only be restored in 1932, the short Sino-Soviet War of 1929 proved to be a “sobering experience” for Nanjing: not only did the Washington Powers fail to formally disapprove of what was seen as a unilateral policy action against foreign, albeit Soviet, interests, but the brief war simultaneously illustrated that China, in its current state, could not fight against foreign forces.²³⁹² Nor did Japan seek to use the conflict to bolster its ties with the Nationalist Government in undermining Soviet interests in Manchuria, as Shidehara, now back for his second term as Foreign Minister under the new Cabinet of new Prime Minister Hamaguchi Osachi (1870-1931), opted for a policy that would not antagonize the Western Powers by pursuing unilateral

²³⁸⁹ Iriye, *After Imperialism*, pg. 264.

²³⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, pg. 265.

²³⁹¹ Kotkin, Stephen, *Stalin: Waiting for Hitler, 1929-1941*, New York: Penguin, 2017, pg. 30.

²³⁹² Iriye, *After Imperialism*, pg. 267.

interests. At the same time, he also refused to engage multilaterally using the mechanisms established by the Settlement of 1919. In particular, Shidehara expressed his opposition to the invocation of the Kellogg-Briand Pact and, as communicated to Secretary Stimson, stated that such a move would act as an irritant to both Soviets and Chinese, preferring instead to issue a unilateral warning to the Soviet Ambassador in Tokyo on the possible negative repercussions on USSR-Japanese relations in the event of an escalation.²³⁹³ Shidehara was a staunch advocate of peaceful co-existence with the Soviet Union, especially since the Sino-Soviet war coincided with negotiations on the renewal of Japanese fishing rights in Soviet waters.²³⁹⁴ Ultimately, the Soviet success in forcefully compelling a return to the status quo ante on the Chinese Eastern Railway illustrated to all actors, especially the Japanese Military, that unilateral action could achieve concrete policy results in the face of fraying internationalism without triggering the involvement of the Western Powers in East Asian affairs.

The London Conference of 1930 also marked another occasion where Japan's interests openly diverged from those of the Western Powers.²³⁹⁵ Given the failure of the 1927 London Conference, much more careful preparation was made to ensure that a successor document to the Washington Agreement would be signed, thereby closing the gaps left by said treaty. Upon the Conference's opening in January 1930, the Japanese Delegation, led by former Prime Minister Wakatsuki Reijiro (1866-1949), demanded a more favourable ratio than the one that had been agreed to at Washington, however, sought to reign in Japan's budgetary commitments in a time of increasing economic crisis and safeguard cooperation with the Western Powers.²³⁹⁶ In doing so, however, the tensions between the Japanese Government and Imperial Navy that had remained in the background during the discussions in Geneva now came to the fore in London. With the US Delegation presenting a new compromise on tonnage ratio of 69.75 percent and a naval cruiser ratio of 60.02 percent vis à vis the American Navy, the civilian government reported to Tokyo its inclination to accept, arguing that any Japanese counter proposals could jeopardize the future of the Conference. The Chief of the Imperial Navy's General Staff, Katō Kanji, voiced his categorical opposition. While Katō was pleased that, according to Navy estimates, Japan was leading the US in the production of heavy cruisers through the 1920s, the US construction plans in the 1930s would soon mark the overtaking of Japan.²³⁹⁷ As a result, the Navy remained adamant that its old adage of maintaining a 70 percent ratio to the US in heavy cruisers was the sole path towards national security against the US. The Imperial Japanese Navy insisted therefore on having the final say on any compromise negotiated in London, as, in considering accepting such a variant, the civilian Government had overstepped its mandate. Nevertheless Hamaguchi, having secured the blessing of Emperor Hirohito, announced Japan's acceptance of the compromise formula on 22 April 1930, stating that "in view of the fact that the present agreement is binding upon the Powers concerned for a limited duration until 1936 and the naval strengths to be held by the Powers thereafter are to be considered at the next Conference, Japan...in the spirit of accommodation and harmony has gladly agreed to the present Treaty."²³⁹⁸

²³⁹³ Ibid.

²³⁹⁴ Nish, *Japanese Foreign Policy in the Inter-war years*, pg. 72.

²³⁹⁵ Ibid., *Japanese Foreign Policy*, pg. 168.

²³⁹⁶ Ibid., *Japanese Foreign Policy in the Inter-war Years*, pg. 67.

²³⁹⁷ Evans et al., *Kaigun: Strategy, Tactics, and Technology in the Imperial Japanese Navy*, pg. 235.

²³⁹⁸ Nish, *Japanese Foreign Policy in the Inter-war Years*, pg. 68.

The Imperial Navy, led by the efforts of Katō Kanji, attempted to undermine the Treaty's ratification and mobilize public opinion against its tenets. Katō Kanji issued a public statement outlining his disapproval of the "American Plan" and demanded that the Imperial Navy be the sole arbiter over the fate of Japanese naval policy, underlining that the compromise at London "seriously jeopardized national defence".²³⁹⁹ Unable to secure an audience with the Emperor to plead his case, Katō Kanji resigned on 10 June 1930, yet public emotions had been stirred up to such an extent that an assassination attempt was made against Prime Minister Hamaguchi on 14 November 1930, from which he ultimately succumbed to his wounds nine months later. The assassin, Sagoya Tomeo, was a member of the ultranationalist Aikoku Society. Arrested for his crime, Sagoya was sentenced to death only to have it commuted to life in prison, and he was released from custody in 1940.²⁴⁰⁰ While the London Treaty was, in the end, ratified on 1 January 1931, it constituted an embarrassing victory, especially in the eyes of the Western Powers: Japan's civilian Government had managed to push through a domestically controversial international treaty, but not without serious internal repercussions. The Katō Kanji faction in the Imperial Navy openly outed itself as staunch opponents to the international disarmament treaty and "made clear its determination to have Japan withdraw from the entire limitation system when the treaties expired at the end of 1936, and, even before that date, to prepare for the furious new naval race that would erupt once the treaty era ended."²⁴⁰¹ Indeed, to placate the Navy during its attempts to scuttle the London Treaty, the Finance Ministry agreed to the Navy's budget demands, despite the economic depression of 1929, to finance its building programme between 1931-1936.²⁴⁰² Given the vehemence with which the Navy had opposed the London Treaty, US policy makers soon became convinced that the novel compromise ratios would not extend beyond 1936. Hence, through the difficulties borne out by the Treaty's ratification, an inherent Japanese challenge to internationalism could be discerned, one that staunchly opposed the embittered Settlement of 1919. Furthermore, as with the assassination of Zhang Zuolin, the London Naval Conference saw a branch of the Japanese Military openly attempt to defy the policies of Japan's civilian Government and insist on being the final arbiters of national policy, without incurring any serious consequences, thereby paving the way for future opposition.

10.2.7. The Manchurian Incident: 1931

10.2.7.1. Introduction

The actions of the Imperial Military did not stop in their attempts to hijack Japanese policy regarding the London Naval Conference but merely extended them towards the implementation of another strategic element of Japanese foreign policy, namely Tokyo's relations with China. Since the assassination of Zhang Zuolin, the Imperial Military had not only begun to brazenly pursue its own policy objectives in China. The China of the late 1920s and early 1930s was one that was categorically different from the earlier years of the Republic following the collapse of the Qing. The Nationalist Northern Expedition had been successful in bringing large swaths of China under a single authority, including securing international recognition and support. While still very much prone to fractional strife, gone were the days of an overtly fractured China that appeared for

²³⁹⁹ Ibid., pp. 68-69.

²⁴⁰⁰ Vogel, *China and Japan*, pg. 230.

²⁴⁰¹ Evans et al., *Kaigun: Strategy, Tactics, and Technology in the Imperial Japanese Navy*, pg. 237.

²⁴⁰² Nish, *Japanese Foreign Policy*, pg. 172.

negotiations in Washington in 1922. The process of Chinese unification was far from complete, with Chiang Kai-shek still having to impose total central control over China, presiding instead over a “coalition of warlords, whose autonomy had been reduced by the Northern Expedition, but who constantly tested his authority.”²⁴⁰³ Despite lingering domestic tensions, the ability of China to assert itself internationally was increasing, assisted by a growing sense of anti-Japanese nationalism. Yet the ‘Washington System’ in its essence was not built to accommodate such a marginal role for the Republic. Furthermore, unilateral actions of other interested Powers to protect their perceived interests in China were met with success and very little opposition and intervention from the international community. The Sino-Soviet war served as a prime example, with Moscow able to impose its strategic interests with little tangible international consequences. Invocations of internationalist pacts failed to make a dent on the course of action. The inability of the ‘Washington System’ to functionally address security issues on the Asian continent was becoming apparent, especially to the officers of the Kwantung Army. Finally, Shidehara’s ‘New Policy’ in China did not seem to have brought with it any substantial benefit to Japan, save to undermine its strength in the eyes of the Chinese, a strategy the civilian Japanese Government seemed intent on repeating in naval negotiations with Japan’s most serious international rivals.

To the officers in the Kwantung Army, the only avenue open for Japan to finally assert its interests in a strategically essential province of China remained that of force. As such, its officers viewed the intensification of independent action against a perceived hapless civilian Government as the only viable course of action. Consequently, the officers of the Kwantung Army, bolstered by strong public support on the Japanese Home Islands, decided to concretely implement their vision of Japanese hegemony over China. Little did they know that their actions would not only transform Japan’s position in China but, simultaneously, determine the trajectory of Japanese relations both regionally and internationally, thereby marking the death knell of the vestiges of the Settlement of 1919.

10.2.7.2. The Imperial Army Insubordinate

The dispute over the ratification of the London Treaty did not go unnoticed by the Imperial Military, especially the Kwantung Army in Manchuria. While the numbers on the table in London only affected naval forces, the civilian Government’s willingness to find a compromise formula with the Western Powers on a key element of Japanese national security awoke grave concerns amongst the Army leadership that the Government did not take the issue seriously.²⁴⁰⁴ This perception was further entrenched by the Tokyo Government’s refusal to take unilateral steps to defend Japanese preponderance in Manchuria. Viewed on a more global level, some Army officers saw the civilian Government in Tokyo as not only being soft on defence but concluded instead that, through the willingness of elected representatives to compromise on national security, the Japanese political system had failed as a whole as “in their eyes, the quality of national political leadership had degenerated since the rise of party cabinets, which had led to endemic corruption, the narrow pursuit of sectional interests, and the subordination of matters of national security and foreign policy to party strategies in parliamentary elections. The parties, in turn, found themselves beholden to the self-serving, cosmopolitan big business community that financed them. The Manchurian stalemate represented a symptom of a deeper crisis, and only an attack on the roots of

²⁴⁰³ Paine, *Wars for Asia*, pg. 75.

²⁴⁰⁴ Tak Matsusaka, *The Making of Japanese Manchuria*, pg. 378.

the problem could resolve the impasse.”²⁴⁰⁵ With the onset of the effects of the global economic downturn hitting Japan with full force in 1930, the promises of economic liberalism were eroding, giving way to the defensive mechanism of closed trading blocks to counter the impacts of a potentially lingering depression. Instead of relying on the lofty and unreliable promises of Wilsonian idealism, and the increasingly dysfunctional agreements of the ‘Washington System’, the Empire could provide a potential solution to the nation’s mounting challenges. This strategy was exemplified by the Summer 1931 statements of Seiyūkai Diet member, Yōsuke Matsuoka (1880-1946), who declared in session that Manchuria constituted Japan’s lifeline, a saying that gained an unprecedented degree of popular appeal and credibility.²⁴⁰⁶

This lifeline therefore was, in the minds of the Imperial Army’s hardliners, one that was deemed to be protected, especially in face of perceived blatant civilian incompetence. With the international system, as illustrated by the Sino-Soviet war, not providing a source of significant restraint and, with widespread support for action amongst the Japanese public, the Imperial Army in Manchuria assessed that more could be accomplished than lost through the pursuit of radical action.²⁴⁰⁷ A potential coup was planned for March 1931, however, it was exposed before any action could be launched. Despite the coup attempt having fallen apart, the fact that such conspiracies concocted by senior army officers went once again unpunished was not lost on the other radical officers.²⁴⁰⁸

Elements of the Kwantung Army, therefore, began to prepare for unilateral action in Manchuria to protect the Empire’s interests. The idea of independent action was hatched by Lieutenant Colonel Ishiwara Kanji (1889-1949), Operations Officer, and Itagaki Seishirō (1885-1948), Senior Staff Officer within the Kwantung Army. As early as spring 1929, Ishiwara began to conduct reconnaissance to identify key facilities throughout Manchuria, planning for a campaign against Zhang Xueliang’s forces which formed the basis for a full-scale strategy to realize the Japanese annexation of Manchuria. As such, what became known as the Manchurian Incident “was by no means the product of insubordination on the part of free-wheeling military activities. It was the product of meticulous planning and preparation carried out in a context of complex personal and group affiliations.”²⁴⁰⁹ Signs that the Kwantung Army was contemplating independent action began to multiply: At the annual division commanders conference on 4 August 1931, the newly nominated Minister of War, Minami Jirō (1874-1955), announced that he was prepared to solve the Manchurian question single-handedly, with the Imperial Army defending Minami’s statements as preventing the opinions of corrupt politicians and ‘armchair strategists’ from confusing its soldiers.²⁴¹⁰ Following such declarations, the new head of the Kwantung Army, Lieutenant General Honjō Shigeru (1876-1945), and Commander of the Korea Army, Hayashi Senjurō (1876-1943) promised assistance to Ishiwara and Itagaki in the case of any emergency incidents. Soon after, in August 1931, Captain Nakamura Shintarō disappeared in Manchuria while on an intelligence mission, where he was arrested and murdered by the local Chinese police. The Seiyūkai party began to publicly state that the Chinese military was treating the Imperial Army

²⁴⁰⁵ Ibid., pg. 379.

²⁴⁰⁶ Drea, *Japan’s Imperial Army*, pg. 168.

²⁴⁰⁷ Tak Matsusaka, *The Making of Japanese Manchuria*, pg. 380.

²⁴⁰⁸ Drea, *Japan’s Imperial Army*, pg. 168.

²⁴⁰⁹ Jansen, *The Making of Modern Japan*, pg. 580.

²⁴¹⁰ Drea, *Japan’s Imperial Army*, pg. 168.

“with contempt”, resulting in increased Japanese hostility towards China.²⁴¹¹ Such feelings were stoked by the military that conducted a domestic propaganda campaign by dropping leaflets in Japanese cities, explicitly calling for a military campaign in Manchuria. Ishiwara now viewed that the time had now come to implement a forceful solution and, in doing so, dispense with the “self-restraint and forbearance” as exhibited by the civilian Government.²⁴¹²

On 18 September 1931, Japanese engineers of the Kwantung Army organized a small explosion on the South Manchurian Railway, intending to frame the attack as a case of Chinese aggression. This was supposed to accord the Kwantung Army the necessary political and military justification to launch a campaign against Chinese forces. Almost immediately, Japanese forces took control of major urban centres, including the regional capital of Mukden, with the Army of Korea intervening, as pledged, to provide reinforcements. Ishiwara repeatedly disregarded instructions from Tokyo to abandon his course of action, making it impossible for the central authorities to contain the conflict.²⁴¹³ With Japanese troops chasing Zhang Xueliang’s soldiers beyond the railways of Manchuria and towards the Great Wall, the prospect of Soviet intervention began to grow, raising concerns on how the situation, now rapidly spiraling out of control, would impact Japan’s international reputation. Yet the Government in Tokyo proved itself too divided to muster any attempt to effectively control events. At the initial Cabinet meeting held at 10:00 on 19 September 1931, Minister of War Minami announced that the fighting had been initiated by the Japanese in self-defence, a claim that was refuted outright by Foreign Minister Shidehara.²⁴¹⁴

Map 6: The Japanese Invasion of Northern China



Source: Paine, *The Wars for Asia*

²⁴¹¹ Bix, *Hirohito*, pg. 229.

²⁴¹² Tak Matsusaka, *The Making of Japanese Manchuria*, pg. 382.

²⁴¹³ *Ibid.*, pg. 383.

²⁴¹⁴ Vogel, *China and Japan*, pg. 231.

10.2.7.3. The Republic of China's Appeal to the League of Nations

Following the Japanese attack, Chinese generals were given orders to, as much as possible, refrain from active resistance. Consequently, “what is remarkable about Japan’s invasion is the total absence of resistance from Zhang Xueliang’s troops. Of his total army of 200,000 soldiers, fewer than 50,000 were north of the Great Wall in Manchuria; the rest were south of the wall, mainly in Hebei province, securing territory for Chiang Kai-Shek.”²⁴¹⁵ This greatly assisted the speed and scope of the Kwantung Army’s advance. Zhang Xueliang, however, did contact Dr Wellington Koo, Chinese plenipotentiary during the Paris Peace Conference, who recommended that China make an appeal to international bodies for assistance. The Kuomintang concurred and, on 21 September 1931, the Chinese Delegation in Geneva formally wrote to the League of Nations regarding China’s dispute with Japan which had arisen at Mukden on the night of 18-19 September 1931, appealing under Article XI of the Covenant and officially requesting the Council to “take immediate steps to prevent the further development of a situation endangering the peace of nations.”²⁴¹⁶ The Japanese representative in Geneva, Yoshizawa Kenkichi (1874-1965), confronted with the uncomfortable situation of not having been provided any information as to what was happening in faraway East Asia, assured that the Japanese Empire would do as much as possible to elucidate the situation. As such “by this strange coincidence the events of Mukden became an international issue overnight, instead of languishing in the history books as a narrow, local one. The twelfth League Assembly took note of it, leaving the Council to handle it.”²⁴¹⁷ The next day, on 22 September 1931, the Council passed a resolution that appealed “to the Chinese and Japanese representatives to refrain from any action that might aggravate the situation”, declaring that the Council would strive to “in consultation with the Chinese and Japanese representatives, find adequate means of enabling the two countries to withdraw troops immediately.”²⁴¹⁸

The Japanese Government reacted with surprise to China’s fait accompli in addressing the international community for assistance, preferring instead to try and settle the matter bilaterally. The Foreign Ministry was embarrassed by the inability of the central Government to reign in its military in Manchuria, and sought to solve the matter bilaterally, as even the staunch adherent to the ‘New Diplomacy’ Shidehara underlined to the newly appointed Chinese Minister to Japan: “Your country has put the Mukden issue before Geneva. This is an unwise course. Countries ill-informed about the situation in the East will debate it there and view the issue as in a talking shop...I earnestly believe that the best way is for Japan and China to rely on direct negotiations. It is stated in the League Covenant [Article XIII] that, before making an appeal to Geneva, one should exhaust all diplomatic means and that is not good to refer to the League until that has been done. Instead of making it an international issue, the delegates of the two parties whose interests are directly affected should have a tête-à-tête among themselves and enter into sincere negotiations. If they do this, it is unlikely that the issue would remain unsolved.”²⁴¹⁹ Yet the situation in Tokyo was far from obvious, with the Japanese Military looking positively upon the successes that the Kwantung Army had achieved on the ground in Manchuria that had also garnished a high level of

²⁴¹⁵ Ibid., pg. 233.

²⁴¹⁶ Nish., *Japan’s Struggle with Internationalism*, pg. 32.

²⁴¹⁷ Ibid.

²⁴¹⁸ Burkman, *Japan and the League of Nations*, pg. 167.

²⁴¹⁹ Nish, *Japan’s Struggle with Internationalism*, pp. 34-35.

popular support throughout Japanese society. With the Japanese Army continuing to advance into Chinese territory, the field and junior grade officers of the General Staff and Ministry of War were celebrating that “the Manchuria-Mongolia ‘problem’ was finally being addressed.”²⁴²⁰

Such military successes, however, placed Japan as an outsider in the international system in which it had held such a prominent role. The Kwantung Army’s actions were in total violation of the Kellogg-Briand Pact and the Nine Power Treaty. By the time, the League Council met in mid-October, the situation on the ground continued to deteriorate. Most of Manchuria was now under Japanese occupation and the Government was shocked to discover, on 17 October 1931, that Lieutenant Colonel Hashimoto Kingorō (1890-1957) of the Second Division hatched a plan to liquidate the entire Government “by aerial bombardment of a cabinet meeting [after which] a crowd of rightists would then surround the War Ministry and General Staff Headquarters and demand the formation of a military Government.”²⁴²¹ The incident was hushed up by the Army, however the Chief of Staff reported the plans to the Emperor who treated the conspirators with leniency, leading to their speedy release.²⁴²² While the domestic situation escalated in Tokyo, the League Council convened and, on 24 October 1931, called on Japan to withdraw its troops to the Japanese-controlled railways by 16 November 1931, the day on which the next Council session was to convene. Japan had, at the same Council, put forward its vision of conflict resolution, including points on the suppression of all anti-foreigner boycotts and the upholding of Japan’s treaty rights in China, elements which were dismissed outright by the Chinese representatives. The Japanese Delegation responded by arguing that the Council’s call for withdrawal had no legal force as such matters needed to be decided by unanimity, hence Tokyo viewed the declaration as “null and void”.²⁴²³ The League would have to make do with its moral authority, such as it was.

10.2.7.4. From Regional Insurrection to Revolutionary Foreign Policy

Yet the concrete ability of the Japanese Government to adhere to any League declaration was questionable at best. Prime Minister Wakatsuki had reportedly ordered Japanese forces not to cross south of the Chinese Eastern Railway, but the Army “flagrantly ignored” his orders.²⁴²⁴ Instead, the operations of the Kwantung Army had extended to the north and in the south-west, areas far beyond the tracks of the Japanese-controlled railways, an objective already secured in September 1931. The impotence of the civilian Government in Tokyo in the face of the determination of the Kwantung Army to plot an independent course is poignantly illustrated through the account of the meeting, on 16 November 1931, between the Japanese Consul to Mukden, Hayashi Kyūjirō (1882-1964), and Foreign Minister Shidehara. Hayashi had travelled to Tokyo to inform the Foreign Ministry that the Army was refusing to discuss its campaign details with him and warned that the situation was getting quite out of hand. Meeting Shidehara upon his arrival, he gave the following account of the meeting: “[Shidehara’s] demeanour seemed to be discouraged, disappointed and dejected. One could recognize without words how much he was suffering in this unprecedented emergency. I learned later that at a cabinet meeting, [Shidehara] had said that if the Japanese army entered Qiqihar, he would immediately resign as foreign minister.

²⁴²⁰ Jansen, *The Making of Modern Japan*, pg. 582.

²⁴²¹ Ibid.

²⁴²² Bix, *Hirohito*, pg. 243.

²⁴²³ Nish, *Japanese Foreign Policy*, pg. 179.

²⁴²⁴ Ibid., *Japan’s Struggle with Internationalism*, pg. 46.

But even though our Army did enter Qiqhar there was nobody in the Cabinet who took responsibility and resigned. They only told half-truths to foreign countries. That being the case, there was no hope of our relations with foreign countries improving.”²⁴²⁵ Under such desperate circumstances, the Japanese Government could not hold. Given the widespread domestic support for the Imperial Army’s campaign in Manchuria, Prime Minister Wakatsuki was unable to build consensus within his Cabinet on how to regain control over the Imperial Military and, given the support amongst the Diet for the Kwantung Army’s action in Manchuria, Wakatsuki was compelled to tender his resignation on 11 December 1931.²⁴²⁶ Commenting on the fall of the Japanese Government, Consul Hayashi stated that “the Prime Minister and members of the Cabinet have the ultimate responsibility for the incident and did the state much damage by their actions.”²⁴²⁷

The international reaction, outside of the Chinese appeal to the League, was meek and, from Tokyo’s perspective, unproblematic. The Great Powers were not inclined, given the depths of the economic challenges they collectively faced, to contemplate armed intervention against the Japanese Army in Manchuria, even if their actions had dealt the final coup de grace to whatever remained of the ‘Washington System’. Sanctions against Japan were vaguely discussed within the international community, however, while scaring the civilian Government in Tokyo, such contemplations did little to sway the Imperial Army from its expansionist course in Manchuria.²⁴²⁸ Yet the outgoing Government, in its desperate attempts to establish some degree of authority over the Imperial Army in Manchuria, chose to turn, perhaps out of recognition of its innate inability to manage the situation, to the international community for assistance. On 10 December 1931, Japan sponsored a resolution in Geneva, requesting the League of Nations send a Commission of Enquiry to report on the happenings in Manchuria, in a move that “was tantamount to bringing an international doctor to cure some of the ills of the Japanese state.”²⁴²⁹ The last diplomatic act of the Wakatsuki Cabinet was a desperate move against a long-time planned and thoroughly implemented plan by the Kwantung Army to bring all of Manchuria under Japanese control, a challenge that the fundament of Taishō democracy, blinded by the mirage of ante bellum ‘New Diplomacy’, could not withstand. On 13 December 1931, former Advisory Council member and elder statesmen Inukai Tsuyoshi, agreed to form another Cabinet to attempt to lead the Empire through this sudden challenge that had taken on unfathomable dimensions. While Inukai faced an unstable domestic situation, the sheer scope of the Imperial Army’s actions in Manchuria had, by January 1932, convinced even the most internationalist-minded of policy makers that “events had passed the point of no return, and that the restoration of the status quo ante was no longer realistic.”²⁴³⁰ While the believers in internationalism consoled themselves with the task of containing the domestic and global fallout of the Imperial Army’s actions, other policy makers openly fêted the Manchurian developments. Hence, “regardless of underlying attitudes...the Japanese Government had committed the nation to following the Kwantung Army’s lead.”²⁴³¹ The

²⁴²⁵ Ibid., pg. 47; Japanese Foreign Policy in the Inter-war Years, pg. 76.

²⁴²⁶ Vogel, China and Japan, pg. 231.

²⁴²⁷ Nish, Japanese Foreign Policy in the Inter-war Years, pg. 77.

²⁴²⁸ Ibid., Japanese Foreign Policy, pg.181.

²⁴²⁹ Nish, Japanese Foreign Policy in the Inter-war Years, pg. 77.

²⁴³⁰ Tak Matsusaka, The Making of Japanese Manchuria, pg. 384.

²⁴³¹ Ibid., pg. 385.

officers on the ground in Manchuria had now set the tone for the conduct of Japanese foreign policy, unilaterally establishing their own regional system over the ruins of the Settlement of 1919.

10.2.7.5. The Regional System's Reaction to Japanese Actions in Manchuria

The fall of the Wakatsuki Cabinet provoked international concern that the situation in Manchuria could not be contained by Tokyo. Secretary of State Stimson already suspected as early as October 1931 that Shidehara could not control the designs of the Imperial Army in China, especially after Stimson had personally warned the Foreign Minister that Japanese forces should not attack the city of Jinzhou, the headquarters of Zhang Xueliang's forces, which was promptly bombed by Japanese forces after Shidehara's guarantee that the situation would soon be under control.²⁴³² With the Imperial Military's policy in China now having been accepted as a fait accompli by Japanese policy makers of all stripes, Secretary of State Stimson opted to send a clear message to the new Government in Tokyo. On 7 January 1932, Stimson, in what became his Nonrecognition Doctrine, declared that the United States did not "recognize any treaty or agreement" between China and Japan that impaired US treaty rights "including those which related to the territorial and administrative integrity of China."²⁴³³ Hence, any change that the Imperial Army might push through regarding the new status quo in Manchuria would not be recognized by Washington. Yet even despite the Kwantung Army's overthrow of the last vestiges of systemic cohesion in East Asia, some elements of the State Department continued to argue that some sort of systemic understanding with Japan, based on the Imperial Army's imposition of a new reality, was necessary. Undersecretary of State, William Castle (1878-1963), argued that while Japanese action did evoke serious concern, it was not unlike US actions undertaken in the Western Hemisphere to ensure Washington's political dominance, such as the landing of US marines in Nicaragua to protect American interests after a coup d'état in Managua.²⁴³⁴ Hence, accepting Japan's self-proclaimed role as a guarantor of order and stability in East Asia, as the US had done in the Americas, could better serve Washington's long-term interests and provide the base for the systemic stability that was still lacking. Such sentiments were echoed by other Washington Powers, most notably Great Britain, whose foreign policy makers also viewed the Kwantung Army's action positively, with Japanese control being interpreted as preferable to continued anarchy in China. The Soviet Union, having so recently intervened to defend its interests in the Manchurian railways, warily watched as Japanese forces engulfed the Chinese region and approached the poorly demarcated Sino-Soviet border. The USSR chose to offer Tokyo, on 31 December 1931, a non-aggression pact.²⁴³⁵ The Inukai Cabinet simply ignored Stalin's overture, confirming Moscow's fears about Tokyo's ultimate intentions, crystallising in Japan's eventual outright and formal rejection of a pact in December 1932, stating that "the time" was "not ripe for the formal opening of the negotiations."²⁴³⁶

²⁴³² Vogel, *China and Japan*, pg. 232.

²⁴³³ Burkman, *Japan and the League of Nations*, pg. 167.

²⁴³⁴ In 1926, following a coup by General Emiliano Chamorro Vargas, the US intervened in Nicaragua to defend its interests by sending in the Marines who remained in the country, involved in the local civil war, until 1933. Vogel, *China and Japan*, pg. 232.

²⁴³⁵ Bix, *Hirohito*, pp. 248-249.

²⁴³⁶ Haslam, Jonathan, *The Soviet Union and the Threat from the East, 1933-41: Moscow, Tokyo, and the Prelude to the Pacific War*, Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1992, pg. 8.

10.2.7.6. The Creation of Manchukuo

As the international community bilaterally acquiesced to Japanese actions in Manchuria, the officers of the Kwantung Army began to implement their prepared plans to solidify Japanese control over the area, albeit with some modifications. Originally, Ishiwara and his fellow officers had planned through their military actions to occupy, partition, and annex Manchuria; however, by early 1932, the idea of establishing an independent Manchurian state “completely severed from China and under Japanese control” became more appealing.²⁴³⁷ Given what the Kwantung Army saw as possible interference and opposition from Tokyo regarding outright annexation, the establishment of a client state seemed a more palatable option, both to the Japanese civilian Government and the international community. The Foreign Ministry reluctantly came to view such a solution as, under the circumstances, diplomatically acceptable, noting that “claims of Manchurian independence would not deceive anyone, but given an assumption that the powers remained reluctant to intervene, the international community might welcome a pretext for avoiding an open confrontation.”²⁴³⁸ On 1 March 1932, following the formation of provisional committees composed of Chinese collaborators in each of Manchuria’s provinces, the founding of the independent state of Manchukuo was declared. The civilian government in Tokyo followed suit in September 1932, with Foreign Minister Uchida, insisting upon Japan’s continuing respect for the ‘Washington System’, informed the Diet that “the measures we have adopted toward China, especially since the start of the incident of [last] September 18, have been most just and appropriate. I view the formation of Manchukuo as the autonomous will of the people who live there—yet also as a result of the separatist movement in China. Recognition of the new state in no way conflicts with the Nine Power Treaty.”²⁴³⁹ The Empire of Japan signed a Protocol with Manchukuo that gave Tokyo the power to implement unilateral policy at will. The plans of the Kwantung Army had finally solidified as a geopolitical reality in East Asia, one that Tokyo was now obliged to defend.

10.2.7.7. Confrontation in Shanghai

Sino-Japanese tensions soon expanded outside Manchuria. On 18 January 1932, a procession of Japanese Buddhist priests was stoned in Shanghai on route towards the International Settlement, killing one of them. The Japanese Consul General, Murai Kuramatsu (1888-1953), demanded a formal apology from the Chinese Mayor of Shanghai, Wu Tiecheng (1893-1953), as well as the disbandment of all anti-Japanese organizations in the city. An answer was to be presented to the Japanese Consulate no later than 28 January 1932. In the meantime, members of the Japanese Youth Corps undertook vigilante actions against Chinese property in the vicinity of the incident, burning down two towel factories and murdering a Chinese police officer. In an attempt to allay any Japanese retribution, Mayor Wu agreed to Murai’s demands and committed to disbanding the Shanghai Anti-Japanese National Salvation Organization.²⁴⁴⁰ Although Murai expressed satisfaction at the action undertaken by Mayor Wu, Japanese Rear Admiral Shiozawa Kōichi (1881-1943) did not believe the Chinese response was sufficient. He subsequently requested reinforcements from Japan to protect Shanghai’s Japanese residents. A force of 23 ships

²⁴³⁷ Tak Matsusaka, *The Making of Japanese Manchuria*, pg. 385.

²⁴³⁸ Ibid.

²⁴³⁹ Bix, *Hirohito*, pg. 256.

²⁴⁴⁰ Vogel, *China and Japan*, pg. 234.

arrived in Shanghai with 13 dispatched to the mouth of the Yangtze, representing “an incredibly large force to send in response to the death of a single Buddhist priest.”²⁴⁴¹ This blatant overreaction to what should have been a closed case has been explained by the ardent desire of the Japanese Navy to match the patriotic fervour of the Imperial Army in Manchuria. They therefore seized upon the Shanghai Incident as “a tempting chance to demonstrate its prowess to the Army.”²⁴⁴² Indeed, Araki Sadao (1877-1966), the Minister of War in the Inukai Cabinet, assured his colleagues that the “Japanese military could occupy Shanghai within four hours and occupy all of China within three months.”²⁴⁴³ Landing in Shanghai, Japanese Marines took on the Chinese troops and, unlike the occupation of Manchuria, Chinese forces on this occasion were determined to resist. The Japanese General Staff was dismayed to find that its units had sustained heavy losses while engaging the Nineteenth Route Army composed of well-disciplined, German-trained Chinese soldiers led by two vehemently anti-Japanese Generals, Jiang Guangnai (1888-1967) and Cai Tingkai (1892-1968).²⁴⁴⁴ Confronted with sustained Chinese resistance, Tokyo was obliged to organize a full-fledged intervention force to relieve beleaguered Japanese forces in Shanghai, eventually forcing the Chinese to retreat.

International reaction to the Shanghai Incident was weak. The US protested meekly, with Secretary of State Stimson, in a letter to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee on 23 February 1932, hinting that the US might be forced to rebuild its fleet if Japan continued to openly breach the Open Door Agreement in China—yet such threats were simply ignored by Tokyo.²⁴⁴⁵ While Foreign Powers reinforced their respective garrisons in Shanghai to defend their own economic and financial interests, they sought to secure the survival of the Chinese state through offers of local mediation.²⁴⁴⁶ US President Herbert Hoover (1874-1964) sounded out the possibility of invoking a Nine Power Conference, however abandoned the idea after London let Washington know that it would refuse to apply the Nine Power Treaty against Japan.²⁴⁴⁷ To the international community, the Japanese Foreign Minister stated that “the Japanese had no desire to extend their operations into any parts of China and that ‘the sooner they were through with it and pulled out the Japanese people would be pleased’”; however, following Manchuria, foreign representatives could not help but view such developments with grave concerns.²⁴⁴⁸ Sir Miles Lampson (1880-1964), British Minister to China, was dispatched to Shanghai as the conflict broke out and concluded that neither the Chinese nor the Japanese would accept external mediation.²⁴⁴⁹ The League of Nations was slated to discuss the situation in Shanghai on 3 March 1932, before which the Japanese Foreign Ministry desperately attempted to reach a ceasefire, however its efforts were undermined by the Imperial Army who claimed the right of independent action (*‘dokudan senkō’*/独断先行) and rejected any attempts to end hostilities until a total victory had been achieved. Only by appealing to the sensibilities of Emperor Hirohito were pro-ceasefire elements of the Japanese Military able to finally order a cessation of hostilities. Lampson was charged, together with the

²⁴⁴¹ Ibid.

²⁴⁴² Bix, *Hirohito*, pg. 250.

²⁴⁴³ Vogel, *China and Japan*, pp. 234-235.

²⁴⁴⁴ Drea, *Japan’s Imperial Army*, pp. 171-172.

²⁴⁴⁵ Bix, *Hirohito*, pg. 250.

²⁴⁴⁶ Nish, *Japanese Foreign Policy in the Inter-war Years*, pg. 81.

²⁴⁴⁷ Crowley, James, *Japan’s Quest for Autonomy: National Security and Foreign Policy, 1930-1938*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1966, pg. 164.

²⁴⁴⁸ Nish, *Japanese Foreign Policy*, pg. 182.

²⁴⁴⁹ Nish, *Japanese Foreign Policy in the Inter-war Years*, pg. 81.

League authorities in Geneva, to negotiate an armistice under an accompanying League of Nations resolution and a formal Conference in March 1932 to be attended by the Ministers and Military Attachés of the US, Britain, France, and Italy.²⁴⁵⁰ Through this mediation, finally, an armistice was signed on 5 May 1932. Through this League-approved Sino-Japanese truce agreement, China accepted the restriction of remaining outside of a 20-kilometre perimeter around Shanghai and a Joint Commission of the League was created to observe the transfer of Japanese-occupied territory to China. Following the signature of the agreement, Tokyo attempted to organize an international conference to discuss the future of Shanghai. While this idea was supported by the local business community, the international community was left “exhausted” by the six-month fiasco over Shanghai and the proposal was politely, but quietly, shelved.²⁴⁵¹

The creation of an ‘independent’ Manchukuo and the fighting in Shanghai also coincided with a tumultuous domestic period in Japan itself. Right-wing activists marred the general election campaign with a series of targeted assassinations that included the Finance Minister and the Director-General of the Mitsui Conglomerate. Following the February 1932 election, resulting in an overwhelming victory for the Seiyūkai Party, military cadets, supported by radical junior naval officers enraged over the London Naval Treaty and the handling of Shanghai, assassinated Prime Minister Inukai during an attempted coup d’état on 15 May 1932. Despite the overwhelming victory of the Seiyūkai (capturing 301 of the total 466 Diet seats), a non-partisan, national unity Cabinet headed by Admiral Saitō Makoto (1858-1936) was formed. This decision was fraught with geopolitical consequences, both for the domestic situation in Japan but also for the region at large. The formation of the Saitō Cabinet “marked the end of party cabinets in Japan and the beginning of the Army’s domination of the political scene.”²⁴⁵² Internationally, the situation that the Saitō Cabinet inherited was one where Japanese actions in Shanghai seriously undermined Japan’s image, marking a shift in how Western policy makers viewed Japan: while some had taken a sympathetic view of Japanese actions in Manchuria, the Imperial military’s actions in Shanghai gave way to open frustrations about Japan representing a threat to regional stability.²⁴⁵³ Yet the die had, for all intents and purposes, already been cast.

10.2.7.8. ‘New Diplomacy’ in Action: The Lytton Commission and its Report

In the meantime, the League of Nations proceeded with dispatching a Commission of Enquiry as requested by China and instigated by the motion sponsored by Japan. The Lytton Commission, named after its British head Victor Bulwer-Lytton (1876-1947), was formed for this explicit purpose. Despite events on the ground having far superseded the Incident at Mukden in September 1931, the Lytton Commission arrived in East Asia and began its work on 29 February 1932, coinciding with the creation of the Japanese client state of Manchukuo. During the Commission’s stay in East Asia, the Japanese, through Uchida Yasuya—first as President of the South Manchurian Railway and then, after May 1932, as Foreign Minister, attempted to “persuade Lord Lytton that Japanese recognition of and assistance to Manchukuo would bring development to the region and provide a model of stability for China to emulate.”²⁴⁵⁴ Uchida repeatedly

²⁴⁵⁰ Ibid., pg. 82

²⁴⁵¹ Ibid.

²⁴⁵² Drea, *Japan’s Imperial Army*, pg. 174.

²⁴⁵³ Burkman, *Japan and the League of Nations*, pg. 168.

²⁴⁵⁴ Ibid.

underscored that the Manchurian issue was a regional one and therefore best dealt with by bilateral negotiations between the parties. The Commission presented its final report in Geneva on 24 September 1932, shortly after Tokyo's formal recognition of Manchukuo, and was discussed by the Council on 21-28 November 1932. Yet by the time of the report's submission, Japan had already taken moves to maintain its independent foreign policy and vision that had been planned and implemented by Ishiwara and his collaborators.

Japan's intent to chart a unilateral course in Manchuria was becoming more apparent. Meeting with Lytton in July 1932, Uchida informed the League envoy that Japan would deal with the recognition issue on her own and that the existence of Manchukuo was an established and unalterable fact, this despite Deputy Foreign Minister, Arita Hachirō (1884-1965), having assured the British Minister to Japan that the issue would not be dealt with until the Commission had returned to Geneva.²⁴⁵⁵ Despite being a signatory to the Nine Power Treaty, the Japanese Government harboured no intentions to consult with the Washington Powers on a decision that would have fundamental implications for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of China. Uchida made this very clear when he informed the Lytton Commission that "his Government intended to ignore the League entirely."²⁴⁵⁶ The gears were set in motion for a final diplomatic dénouement to the status of Manchuria: the Diet accorded official recognition to an 'independent' Manchukuo on 15 September 1932 in a unanimous vote. Foreign Minister Uchida spoke to the Diet and assured them that he and his ministry was prepared to implement "scorched-earth diplomacy" against those who stood in his country's way.²⁴⁵⁷ Any vestiges of the 'New Diplomacy', the Washington Conference, and Shidehara's 'new policy' towards China had now been completely obliterated. Through Ishiwara's actions, the Imperial Army had opted to impose its own systemic order in what it deemed as its sphere of influences without regard for the opinion or understanding of global opinion at large. Now, having made Japanese control of northeastern China a fait accompli, Tokyo's foreign policy would have to be geared to defending this imposed systemic reality.

The first challenge was the presentation of the Lytton Commission's report and subsequent discussions at the League's bodies in Geneva. To prepare for the reaction of the international community to the Lytton Commission's findings, Tokyo dispatched the elder statesman, Matsuoka Yōsuke, to Switzerland along with Ishikawa whose function was to monitor Matsuoka's actions.²⁴⁵⁸ Matsuoka was chosen as a compromise envoy between the civilians and military that comprised the Saitō Cabinet and "was sufficiently in the good books of the military to be its favoured candidate."²⁴⁵⁹ The final report Lytton presented to the League was one that has been characterized as balanced and in line with the mission's overall goal of helping furnish "a constructive peace" and in no way constituted a blatant condemnation of Japanese actions.²⁴⁶⁰ The report presented assessments of the Mukden Incident—which it was originally charged to investigate—as well as analysing the events that followed thereafter, including the Shanghai Incident and the establishment of an 'independent' Manchukuo. The final parts of the report presented recommendations to the League of Nations and, although not popular with Chinese and

²⁴⁵⁵ Nish, *Japanese Foreign Policy*, pg. 185.

²⁴⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, pg. 186.

²⁴⁵⁷ Jansen, *The Making of Modern Japan*, pg. 584.

²⁴⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, pg. 585.

²⁴⁵⁹ Nish, *Japan's Struggle with Internationalism*, pg. 172.

²⁴⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, pg. 175.

Japanese delegates alike, were aimed at providing suggestions to both the governments in Nanjing and Tokyo.²⁴⁶¹ Some sections of the report were heavily critical of Japanese actions in China, especially in the wake of the Mukden Incident. While the report recognized “the special nature of Japanese rights in Manchuria”, it underlined that the overall administration of the territory should be in line with “the sovereignty of China”, noting in its conclusion that the “military operations of the Japanese troops [during the incident at Mukden] cannot be regarded as measures of legitimate self-defence.”²⁴⁶² The Commission judged the creation of Manchukuo in harsh terms, finding that its formation was “not a spontaneous act of the people of Manchuria” and that independence “was only made possible by the presence of Japanese troops” with the “main political and administrative power [resting] in the hands of Japanese officials and advisors” and that “[these officials] have been constrained more and more to follow the direction of Japanese official authority.”²⁴⁶³

Matsuoka therefore attempted to conclude the matter of the discussion of the report in the Council and not have its contents referred to the League Assembly where smaller nations, angered at Japanese actions against China, were present. During the Council session, however, Matsuoka objected strongly to the presence of the members of the Lytton Commission during the proceedings, leaving the Council little alternative but to pass the case to the higher authority of the Assembly.²⁴⁶⁴ Meeting on 6 December 1932, the Assembly convened to hear the arguments of both the Chinese and Japanese plenipotentiaries. Officially, Matsuoka cited the lack of law and order in China as forming the sole rationale for Japanese actions in Manchuria and continued to insist that the ‘independent movement’ in favour of the establishment of Manchukuo was a valid expression of local popular will: “The people of Manchuria had suffered too long under the oppression of the ruthless dictators; and, seeing the opportunity to organize a civil government, they lost no time in taking advantage of it... Our action in recognizing the State of Manchukuo was the only and surest way for us to take in the present circumstances.”²⁴⁶⁵ When such statements were met by criticism in the Assembly, auguring a diplomatic defeat for Japan, Matsuoka “shocked his hearers by depicting Japan as crucified by world opinion, and predicted that verdicts on Japan would change just as they had on Jesus of Nazareth.”²⁴⁶⁶ Japan soon found itself totally isolated in Geneva.

10.2.7.9. Japan’s Withdrawal from the League of Nations

Following the Assembly meeting, in January 1933, the Imperial Army conquered the Shankaikuan mountains forming part of the plains before Beijing and forced, through the issuance of an ultimatum, Chinese forces to withdraw from Jehol province, expanding the ‘borders’ of the now ‘independent’ Manchukuo. While the civilian members of the Saitō Cabinet had opposed any action in Jehol due to the inevitable consequences on the sensibilities of League members, the military, noting that the discussions in Geneva would take an unfavourable turn for Japan, pressed for action.²⁴⁶⁷ Emperor Hirohito himself, approving the operation, had given specific instructions to the Imperial Army Chief of Staff not to extend operations too far in Manchuria, underlining that

²⁴⁶¹ Ibid., pp. 173-174.

²⁴⁶² Burkman, *Japan and the League of Nations*, pg. 170.

²⁴⁶³ Ibid.

²⁴⁶⁴ Nish, *Japan’s Struggle with Internationalism*, pg. 193.

²⁴⁶⁵ Ibid., pg. 195.

²⁴⁶⁶ Jansen, *The Making of Modern Japan*, pg. 585.

²⁴⁶⁷ Crowley, *Japan’s Quest for Autonomy*, pg. 184.

“we have been very lucky so far in Manchuria. It would be regrettable if we should make a mistake now. So go carefully in Jehol.”²⁴⁶⁸ Yet after completing these imperially sanctioned operations, the Kwantung Army willfully disobeyed the Emperor’s wishes and, together with garrison forces in Tianjin, began to occupy areas south of the Great Wall. The Kwantung Army began making public demonstrations that the League of Nations was not welcome anymore in the region: the de facto authorities of Manchukuo were now, through their New Year addresses, openly criticizing internationalist efforts in Geneva, as ‘Foreign Minister’ Xie Jishi (1878-1954) declared: “The League of Nations, due to ignorance or otherwise, has done nothing but prolong the sufferings and strife in the Far East, thereby keeping unnecessarily the different countries in the Orient at daggers drawn, while they ought to have remained tied with a strong bond of fraternity from racial and other considerations.”²⁴⁶⁹ Despite the criticism it had been subjected to in the League, Tokyo was now openly illustrating its political and military commitment to defend Manchukuo and thereby protect its seedling of a new systemic order that had been planted.

On 24 February 1933, the League Assembly decided, in an official resolution, to “publish a report under paragraph 4 of Article XV containing a statement of the facts of the dispute and the recommendations which are deemed just and proper.”²⁴⁷⁰ The report to be published contained the official assessment of the Lytton Commission underlining that Japanese policy towards Manchuria did not constitute “a simple case of the violation of the frontier of one country by the armed forces of a neighbouring country, because in Manchuria there are many features without an exact parallel in other parts of the world”, advising the creation of “a new administrative arrangement for Manchuria that would adequately protect Japan’s special rights and be consistent with the principle of Chinese sovereignty over Manchuria.”²⁴⁷¹ In true internationalist fashion, the League set up an Advisory Committee to work out some sort of settlement between the parties, even going so far as to invite non-League members the US and the USSR to take part in the deliberations. After the League of Nations reaffirmed its adherence to the non-recognition doctrine as outlined by Secretary of State Stimson, the newly elected 32nd President of the United States, Franklin Roosevelt (1882-1945) agreed to cooperate with the Advisory Committee. The non-recognition of the Soviet Union by a plethora of League members ended any illusions about USSR participation.

As the League prepared to add another layer of bureaucracy to cure East Asia’s contemporary political woes, Japan was already paving the way for its exit from the organization, one whose Permanent Council membership in the delirium of the immediate antebellum period had been seen as an apotheosis of Japan’s global aspirations. On the eve of the Assembly’s decision, anger at the League’s rejection of the official Japanese version justifying its actions in China boiled over and the Saitō Cabinet secretly voted on 20 February 1933 to withdraw from the League.²⁴⁷² Following the Assembly’s vote—where Japan represented the only dissenting ballot—Matsuoka walked out of the session in Geneva. Accordingly, Foreign Minister Uchida issued the following instructions on 28 February 1933 regarding official Japanese policy for handling League Affairs: “In the event of Japan issuing a notice of resignation from the League, we have decided

²⁴⁶⁸ Bix, *Hirohito*, pg. 258.

²⁴⁶⁹ Nish, *Japan’s Struggle with Internationalism*, pg. 201.

²⁴⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, pg. 220.

²⁴⁷¹ Crowley, *Japan’s Quest for Autonomy*, pg. 186.

²⁴⁷² Bix, *Hirohito*, pg. 261.

to continue to observe the policy of pursuing with sincerity the work of universal peace.”²⁴⁷³ In practical terms, this meant that Japan would completely withdraw from the League’s political bodies, such as the Council and Assembly, it “intended to continue participating in the Disarmament Conference, the World Economic Conference and the League’s humanitarian and technical works.”²⁴⁷⁴ Hence, Japan sought to somehow maintain a lesser degree of coordination with whatever non-political bodies remained from the Settlement of 1919.

Uchida’s seemingly contradictory instructions have been explained, drawing from his cables to Japanese representations abroad, as the Foreign Minister’s desire not to antagonize Japan’s eroding bilateral relations with the larger international community.²⁴⁷⁵ Other more tangible interests may have also played a role. Having been informed of Japan’s pending withdrawal by his Foreign Minister, Emperor Hirohito solely enquired about the fate of Japan’s League of Nations mandate over former German Micronesia.²⁴⁷⁶ Yet, the Japanese invasion of Jehol province, with its large coverage in the international press, did not endear the Powers to contemplate placating Tokyo any further—so much so that no major member of the League undertook any steps to dissuade Japan from leaving the League of Nations. Great Britain, one of the most influential League members, did pursue serious discussions on this matter, however, “reached the conclusion that it would avoid discussion on the subject, leaving it to other members of the League to raise, if they wished.”²⁴⁷⁷ International patience towards Japan’s actions in Manchuria had now hardened attitudes, albeit they were still characterized by inaction. As Nish underlined, “Japan had antagonized the world and, while the world powers recognized Japan’s greatness and importance, they were not prepared to genuflect to her.”²⁴⁷⁸ Hence, with the writing on the wall since Matsuoka’s walkout, on 27 March 1933, Japan formally notified the League of its official withdrawal from the organization.

With Japan having given its notice, marking the first time an East Asian League member had ever done so, there was naturally confusion of what exactly such an exit from international cooperation implied. The League Undersecretary General, Frank Walters (1888-1976), considered that it was not legally possible for Japan to withdraw from the League as Japan was in violation of the League Covenant; while the Chinese Delegation argued in a similar fashion that Tokyo needed to fulfill its international obligations before it could be permitted to leave the organization, noting in particular “all [Japan’s] resolutions and decisions of the League of Nations in respect to the present dispute and the other obligations under the Covenant but also all obligations under those international agreements.”²⁴⁷⁹ Given the confusion that reigned in Versailles regarding the procedures surrounding any eventual withdrawal, no member state chose to pursue such arguments further. As a result, Japan was able to structure its own exit *à la carte*, withdrawing completely from the political organs of the League, yet remaining attached to several of the Leagues’ technical sub-organizations until October 1938. In the wake of Japan’s abandonment of its permanent seat, the Chinese Delegation in Geneva wasted no time in trying to stake a claim, underlying in its

²⁴⁷³ Nish, *Japan’s Struggle with Internationalism*, pg. 224.

²⁴⁷⁴ Goto-Shibata Harumi, *The League of Nations and the East Asian Imperial Order*, Singapore: Springer, 2020, pg. 131.

²⁴⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, pg. 132.

²⁴⁷⁶ Bix, *Hirohito*, pg. 261.

²⁴⁷⁷ Goto-Shibata, *The League of Nations and the East Asian Imperial Order*, pg. 132.

²⁴⁷⁸ Nish, *Japan’s Struggle with Internationalism*, pg. 226.

²⁴⁷⁹ Goto-Shibata, *The League of Nations and the East Asian Imperial Order*, pg. 135.

formal request for consideration, that “China hoped and expected that the League would recognize China’s position in Asia as well as its special relations with the League.”²⁴⁸⁰ Discussions amongst the European League members, most notably France and Great Britain were held, but, given the level of internal discord within China, they did not look favourably upon the Chinese request and such efforts by the Chinese Delegation were quietly ignored.

10.2.7.10. Conclusion: Manchukuo as Lynchpin of a New Regional Order

The Japanese withdrawal from the League of Nations marked the culmination of the Imperial Army’s wish to implement its own, unilateral order in East Asia. No longer restrained by perceived interference of the international community, the Kwantung Army was free to construct this new order as it saw fit. In doing so, the Kwantung Army had transformed itself into a rogue army and metamorphosed Japan into a rogue nation.²⁴⁸¹ Indeed, through the deliberate creation of an ‘independent’ Manchukuo after the League of Nations clearly intended to deny such an entity any diplomatic recognition, Tokyo staked out its intent of pursuing a ‘revolutionary foreign policy’ as defined by Kissinger. Challenging the foundations, now *in extremis*, of the Settlement of 1919, Japan highlighted its commitment to implement its own vision of systemic change. To do so, Japan therefore required a new foreign policy strategy. The Saitō Cabinet did not seek to directly confront the Powers but believed that, in time, they would accept the de facto existence of Manchukuo and that some sort of diplomatic modus vivendi could be established.²⁴⁸² On 20 October 1933, the Saitō Cabinet officially approved the ‘Foreign Policy of Imperial Japan’, with final amendments being made by the Japanese Military a month later. This document served as the “initial effort of the Japanese Government to formulate a withdrawal from the League of Nations” and reflected the Imperial Military’s growing weight in the policy making process.²⁴⁸³ The document underlined as its top priority and new national purpose the promotion of peace in Asia through “cooperative and friendly relations among China, Japan, and Manchukuo under the leadership of the Japanese Empire.”²⁴⁸⁴ Hence, the creation of Manchukuo, with its façade of independence, served as the lynchpin of Tokyo’s new East Asian order. This role was exactly the one envisioned by Ishiwara and his fellow officers, one essential to their larger strategic goals, and the idea of a puppet state had been decided upon even before the Kwantung Army implemented its plans in Manchuria.²⁴⁸⁵ Now the plans of the military conspirators had been entrenched in Japan’s official foreign policy doctrine and served as a foundation for what they hoped would be a new regional order to come.

10.2.8. Sino-Japanese Relations and the Emergence of a New East Asian Order

10.2.8.1. Temporary Dénouement in Manchuria: The Tangku Truce

In the face of a new reality unfolding in northern China, the Nationalists were obliged to come to terms with a rapidly altered political reality. The unbridled success of the Kwantung’s Army plans, culminating in the Saitō Cabinet’s sanctioning of the invasion of Jehol, demanded a response from the Nationalist side. Soberly assessing the situation, both military and political,

²⁴⁸⁰ Ibid., pg. 142.

²⁴⁸¹ Vogel, *China and Japan*, pg. 240.

²⁴⁸² Crowley, *Japan’s Quest for Autonomy*, pg. 191.

²⁴⁸³ Ibid., pg. 192.

²⁴⁸⁴ Ibid., pg. 194.

²⁴⁸⁵ Jansen, *The Making of Modern Japan*, pg. 586.

Chiang Kai-Shek opted to attempt to placate the Japanese in order to slow down any further expansion in what has been described as Chiang's "final attempt to appease Japan."²⁴⁸⁶ Fearful that Japan would seek to bring Beijing and Tianjin under its control, Chiang sought to organize a truce with the Japanese and formally bring the hostilities in Manchuria to an end. In negotiating with Japan, Chiang's goals were twofold: to avoid a military catastrophe in North China that would fuel Japanese expansion, thereby seriously damaging Nanjing's international prestige, and second, to minimize the political damage to himself by engaging with an expansionist Japan.²⁴⁸⁷ Hence, like the Kwantung Army, he sought to seek a solution on a local level and requested the assistance of independent politician Huang Fu (1883-1936), fluent in Japanese, to conduct the clandestine negotiations and absorb any eventual blame.

The result was the Tangku Agreement of 31 May 1933. The Kwantung Army had placed stringent demands on Chiang to secure his agreement, including the extension of Manchukuo's borders to the Great Wall as well as effective Japanese control of the Shanhaikuan Pass, additionally establishing a demilitarized zone to the north and east of the Beijing-Tianjin district up to the Great Wall. No time limit was agreed regarding the withdrawal of Imperial Japanese forces, reserving Japan the right to verify the withdrawal of Chinese units. Furthermore, the Kwantung negotiators inserted politically charged conditions designed to infringe upon the sovereignty of the Chinese Government: under the agreement, Chinese forces were prohibited from undertaking any "provocative or disturbing actions" in the demilitarized zone, diplomatically paving the way for any further eventual Japanese intervention.²⁴⁸⁸ While the Chinese were aware of the possible consequences of such jaded language, "the Kwantung negotiators told Huang Fu that they would permit no changes whatsoever in the wording of their draft or there would be no agreement."²⁴⁸⁹ The Chinese therefore had no alternative but to sign. While the Nationalists were permitted to maintain nominal sovereignty over the ceded areas, actual authority was accorded to "local forces that were in no position to stand up to the Japanese."²⁴⁹⁰ From the central Government in Tokyo's perspective, the Tangku Truce marked "another in a long list of arrangements made by its local military in China and then communicated to Tokyo as a *fait accompli*."²⁴⁹¹ The negotiations at Tangku were formulated solely by the officers of the Kwantung Army, with no participation or input from the Foreign Ministry. This would set a precedent for future Japanese actions in Central China, with the military implementing decidedly expansionist actions, effectively voiding the explicit approval of the Imperial Army higher ups and rendering the Government in Tokyo impotent to exercise any nominal control.²⁴⁹²

For the Nationalist Government, the latest attempt by Chiang to find compromise with an expansionist Japan, now on the outskirts of Beijing, was met with indignation amongst the Chinese public. While Chiang saw Tangku as a way to avoid engaging with the militarily superior Japanese, it also reflected growing Chinese frustration with a lack of concrete action in support of China

²⁴⁸⁶ Vogel, *China and Japan*, pg. 239.

²⁴⁸⁷ Coble, Parks, *Facing Japan: Chinese Politics and Japanese Imperialism, 1931-1937*, Leiden: Brill, 1999, pp. 106-108.

²⁴⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, pg. 111.

²⁴⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, pg. 112.

²⁴⁹⁰ Jansen, *The Making of Modern Japan*, pg. 596.

²⁴⁹¹ Vogel, *China and Japan*, pg. 241.

²⁴⁹² Crowley, James, "Introduction" in Morley, James (ed.), *The China Quagmire: Japan's Expansion on the Asian Continent, 1933-1945*, Columbia: Columbia University Press, 1983, pg. 3.

amongst the international community. As Huang Fu informed Chiang, “our national disaster is due to our mistaken faith in obtaining international assistance.”²⁴⁹³ With no signs of Western intervention forthcoming, the Nationalists had seen themselves obliged to come to bilateral terms with the Japanese to limit their designs to northern China. Yet the broad disillusion amongst policy making circles and Chinese public alike at the seemingly lukewarm Nationalist stance led to the Chinese Communist Party, given its severe criticism of the agreement, emerging as a major anti-Japanese force, despite its limited military power.²⁴⁹⁴ Despite having initiated and negotiated the agreement, the Nationalist Government denounced the Truce to the League of Nations, stating that “the document was most painful to read.”²⁴⁹⁵ Yet, even in signing the Tangku Truce, the confidence in having achieved a lasting compromise with Japan was basically non-existent, with Chiang Kai-Shek soon after ordering the packing and removal of the treasures of the Imperial Palace to a safer location in the south. No signatory viewed the Tangku Truce as a long term solution to the new reality in northern China: the Kwantung Army viewed the Truce as another benchmark on their path towards solidifying Japan’s novel position in East Asia; while Chiang Kai-shek, despite domestic setbacks, viewed it as “a crucial victory for...his policy of ‘first pacification, then resistance’”.²⁴⁹⁶ Tangku therefore accomplished precious little to dispel the spectre of war that now hovered closely below the horizon.

10.2.8.2. The ‘First Partition of the Pacific’ and its Fallout

The Tangku Truce was merely a pause along the way towards the implementation of Japan’s newly adopted course to creating a new regional order in China. To achieve the realization of the foreign policy goals espoused by the Saitō Cabinet in their November 1933 official document, not only would the Imperial Army’s designs in Manchuria need to be given superficial sanction, but major policy revisions would have to be made to Japan’s approach to remnants of the existing systemic order in East Asia. The treaties negotiated and agreed at the Washington Conference would, as a matter of course, need to be completely scuttled—this included the naval ratios that had been the result of painful Japanese compromise. Regarding the Asian continent, the ‘Foreign Policy of Imperial Japan’ also required the discovery of a way to establish Japanese hegemony over China while, simultaneously, paying lip-service to the maintenance of ‘Chinese territorial integrity’. As such, nothing short of a complete overhaul of the regional systemic order was required, a fact underlined by Foreign Minister Hirota Kikō (1878-1948) while addressing the Diet in February 1934: “The path of a rising nation is always strewn with problems...Japan, serving as the only cornerstone for the edifice of peace in East Asia, bears the entire burden of its responsibilities. Our diplomacy and national defence are rooted in this important position and its vast responsibilities.”²⁴⁹⁷ Japan now began to publicly project its self-image as the sole arbiter of East Asian affairs.

The new Asian reality that had been created by the Kwantung Army now needed to be presented as legitimate to the international community. How to accomplish this, given the disarray of the regional systemic order, was another issue entirely. The Foreign Ministry had recognized

²⁴⁹³ Iriye Akira, *The Origins of the Second World War in Asia and the Pacific*, Essex: Longman House, 1987, pg. 21.

²⁴⁹⁴ Vogel, *China and Japan*, pg. 240.

²⁴⁹⁵ Nish, *The History of Manchuria*, pg. 169.

²⁴⁹⁶ Coble, Parks, *Facing Japan*, pg. 113.

²⁴⁹⁷ Crowley, *Japan’s Quest for Autonomy*, pg. 196.

the importance of securing some sort of international legitimacy on the new order the Imperial Army was constructing in Manchuria. Ideas were circulating in the Kasumigaseki for Japan to impose its understanding of 'equal opportunity' and 'territorial integrity' as referred to in the Nine Power Treaty, a document which technically held validity despite the de facto order imposed by the Kwantung Army. Instead of sloppily imposing a cumbersome internationally non-recognized state into a defunct regional order, perhaps it would be easier to create a new one in conjunction with the other major East Asian power, the United States.

Consequently, the Japanese Ambassador to the US, Saitō Hiroshi (1886-1939) presented to Secretary of State, Cordell Hull (1871-1955), a vision whereby Japan expressed its readiness to guarantee the possessions and interests of both powers in the Pacific, with the US assuming the role of the stabilizing power in the East Pacific, while Japan would be accorded such a status in affairs pertaining to the West Pacific.²⁴⁹⁸ The proposed 'First Partition of the Pacific' would be finalized and presented to the world in a form of a joint communiqué. Only through joint Japanese-US declaration of policy could, it was argued, "dispel the strong, though unjustified, suspicions that existed between the United States and Japan."²⁴⁹⁹ Furthermore, China would no longer be in the position to play one power against another. Furnishing Saitō's proposal with a response—one presented to President Roosevelt beforehand—Secretary Hull noted that "the numerous countries which make up the family of nations had in recent years been drawn so closely together that each was essentially the neighbour of all....but the conclusion between any two countries of a special agreement along political lines suggested that the signatories had common interests and objectives not shared by, or open to, others...the American people had always been adversely disposed toward the theory and practice of political alliances".²⁵⁰⁰ Politically, therefore, the Roosevelt Administration's foreign policy towards East Asia remained consistent with the principles of the Nine Power Treaty, the Kellogg-Briand Pact, and Stimson's Non-Recognition Doctrine, "confident that a respect for integrity of China, when coupled with armament limitation agreements and the resolution of international disputes by pacific means, would promote stability in Asia more effectively than a Japanese version of a Monroe Doctrine."²⁵⁰¹ As Secretary Hull confided in his memoirs, such overtures from Tokyo, had they been accepted by Washington, "would have made [the US] a kind of silent partner in Japan's aggressions."²⁵⁰² Washington, despite the pressure the antebellum system had been exposed to in East Asia, was insistent on the validity of the Settlement of 1919 and had identified Japan as a source of instability.

The US rejection of the Japanese offer did little to alter Tokyo's calculus. On 17 April 1934, Foreign Ministry spokesman Amō Eiji (1887-1968), responding to enquires from the international press about Japan's opposition to Nationalist China receiving official financial assistance from the League of Nations, proceeded to underline that Japan, and not the Western Powers, was responsible for maintaining peace and security in Asia.²⁵⁰³ Amō based Japanese categorical opposition to the League's and Western Powers' actions as infringing on Tokyo's self-proclaimed new role in East Asia, declaring, "We oppose therefore any attempt on the part of

²⁴⁹⁸ Ibid., pg. 198.

²⁴⁹⁹ Borg, Dorothy, *The United States and the Far East Crisis of 1933-1938: From the Manchurian Incident through the Initial Stage of the Undeclared Sino-Japanese War*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1964, pg. 96.

²⁵⁰⁰ Ibid., pg. 97.

²⁵⁰¹ Crowley, *Japan's Quest of Autonomy*, pp. 188-189.

²⁵⁰² Hull, Cordell, *The Memoirs of Cordell Hull*, Vol. I, New York: Macmillan Co., 1948, pg. 278.

²⁵⁰³ Crowley, *Japan's Quest for Autonomy*, pg. 197.

China to avail herself of the influence of any other country in order to resist Japan. We also oppose any action taken by China, calculated to play one power against another. Any joint operations undertaken by foreign powers even in the name of technical or financial assistance at this particular moment after the Manchurian and Shanghai Incidents are bound to acquire political significance....Japan therefore must object to such undertakings as a matter of principle. Negotiations with China by individual nations on matters of economics and trade may, in point of fact, aid China. But their results will threaten the peace of East Asia, Japan must oppose such aid.”²⁵⁰⁴ While such sentiments stoked little controversy in Japanese policy making circles, the US openly took issue with Amō’s statement. The words of the Japanese Foreign Ministry spokesmen were interpreted as a unilateral attempt by Tokyo to introduce its own self-styled Monroe Doctrine over East Asia, thereby jettisoning the ‘Washington System’ in its entirety.²⁵⁰⁵ In an aide-mémoire of 29 April 1934, Secretary Hull categorically rejected the contents of Amō’s remarks: “In the opinion of the American people and the American Government, no nation can, without the assent of the other nations concerned, rightfully endeavour to make conclusive its will in situations where there are involved the rights, obligations, and legitimate interests of other sovereign states.”²⁵⁰⁶ The US viewed the Japanese as replacing the basis of the ‘Washington System’, where international cooperation was meant to reign supreme, with its own bilateral preponderance over China. Amō’s statement signalled that cooperation in China could be entertained should it go through Tokyo, but Japan would “refuse to cooperate with other countries or with the League in helping China undertake economic recovery and fiscal reforms.”²⁵⁰⁷ Nanjing also issued an official protest against Amō’s statements, underlining that “no state has the right to claim the exclusive responsibility for maintaining international peace in any designated part of the world. Being a member of the League of Nations, China feels it her duty to promote international cooperation and achieve international peace and security.”²⁵⁰⁸

The Japanese Government was particularly offended by the US communiqué and its rejection of Ambassador Saitō’s offer of a joint statement partitioning the Pacific. By the end of 1933, the Japanese Government had become “committed to a policy which proposed to neutralize the influence of the Soviet Union, the Nationalist Government of China, and the Anglo-American nations by a diplomacy rooted in the efficacy of Japan’s military forces.”²⁵⁰⁹ Whatever was left of the ‘Washington System’ had no importance in the future to which the Japanese Empire now laid claim. As Deputy Foreign Minister Mamoru Shigemitsu (1887-1957) decried “Japan’s relations with the Anglo-American countries were...complicated by the prevalence of ‘idealistic notions’...In Asia the promotion of international peace by the abolition of war is impossible.”²⁵¹⁰

Accordingly, Japan opted, on 14 July 1934, to abrogate both the Washington and London naval treaties, thereby practically and officially obliterating the ‘Washington System’ and the Nine Power Treaty which openly ran counter to Japan’s self-proclaimed role of hegemon over China. The signatories of the Washington Naval Agreement were able to engage the Japanese Foreign

²⁵⁰⁴ Coble, *Facing Japan*, pg. 154.

²⁵⁰⁵ Jansen, *The Making of Modern Japan*, pg. 596.

²⁵⁰⁶ Crowley, *Japan’s Quest for Autonomy*, pg. 197.

²⁵⁰⁷ Iriye, *The Origins of The Second World War*, pg. 23.

²⁵⁰⁸ Coble, *Facing Japan*, pg. 155.

²⁵⁰⁹ Crowley, *Japan’s Quest for Autonomy*, pg. 195.

²⁵¹⁰ *Ibid.*, pg. 189.

Ministry in some sort of constructive compromise but ultimately proved unable to dissuade Tokyo from its decision. As Foreign Minister Hirota underlined “[Japan] must abrogate [the Washington Treaties] no matter how much the other powers agree to our proposals.”²⁵¹¹ Over the ashes of the Settlement of 1919, Japan now sought to unilaterally lay down the foundation of its own regional systemic order. As envisioned by the officers of the Kwantung Army, the centrepiece of the Empire was to be Manchukuo. As such, the Japanese Empire began to heavily invest in its de facto creation, with the Japanese big business (*‘Zaibatsu’/財閥*) community striking an uneasy partnership with the Kwantung Army regarding the territory’s development, leading to an estimated JPY 5.9 billion being invested between 1932 and 1941.²⁵¹² Such investments were guided by “two novel ideas of economic governance that were beginning to circulate in the industrial world”: first, Soviet-style state managed economic development and, second, a “self-sufficient production sphere” that represented a new economic mission of development (*‘kaihatsu’/開発*) that foresaw the “coordinated industrialization of Japan and Manchukuo [that] aimed at military self-sufficiency.”²⁵¹³ Initially focusing on infrastructure projects and the swift expansion of railway lines, resource development, such as mining and heavy industry, was aggressively pursued in order to realize the military’s vision of Manchuria as providing the necessary resources for Japan to engage in a prolonged military conflict. As a result, by 1943, Manchuria accounted for 49.5 percent of all Chinese coal production; 70 percent of its iron; 55 percent of its gold; and 33 percent of its total trade.²⁵¹⁴

10.2.8.3. The ‘Golden Age’ of Sino-Japanese Cooperation

Following the Tangku Truce, a brief period of calm did descend over northern China. Chiang Kai-Shek, beset with internal problems of military unification, opted to acquiesce to the creation of Manchukuo and de facto Japanese domination over the area.²⁵¹⁵ Realizing that confronting Japan militarily was currently outside his capabilities, Chiang opted instead to adhere to a strategy of ‘first pacification, then resistance’, a slogan that encapsulated his approach to dispense with his internal enemies and, only then, turn to deal with the Japanese. First and foremost, amongst Chiang’s targeted internal enemies was the Chinese Communist Party, whom Chiang had slated for destruction in his series of “extermination campaigns”, forcing the Jianxi Soviet—the bastion of CCP support in China—to begin its Long March to the northern area of Yanan to escape the Kuomintang.

While embarking on his domestic campaigns, Chiang likewise explored the option of ‘pacifying’ Japan through cooperation. In December 1934, an article entitled “Enemy or Friend?” appeared in the *Foreign Affairs Review*, a journal associated with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and served as a *ballon d’essai*, published under the nom de plume of a ghostwriter, to test the waters for a possible policy towards Japan.²⁵¹⁶ In the article, Chiang elaborated on China’s desire for establishing a lasting peace with Japan and laid out basic elements that could, in his opinion, result in a settlement of outstanding Sino-Japanese issues. First and foremost was Chiang’s

²⁵¹¹ Ibid., pg. 199.

²⁵¹² Young, Louise, *Japan’s Total Empire: Manchuria and the Culture of Wartime Imperialism*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998, pg. 183.

²⁵¹³ Ibid., pg. 43.

²⁵¹⁴ Paine, *The Japanese Empire*, pg. 117.

²⁵¹⁵ Jansen, *The Making of Modern Japan*, pg. 615.

²⁵¹⁶ Coble, *Facing Japan*, pg. 182.

suggestion that China dispose of its current strategy of involving the League of Nations and, instead begin direct bilateral talks with Tokyo: “the present policy [declared by the Chinese Government] of ‘on the one hand resist, on the other hand negotiate’ actually only expresses that the authorities have no way to deal with the problem.”²⁵¹⁷ It had been a mistake, so the article read, to have invoked the involvement of the League of Nations following the Mukden Incident and, by doing so, had pursued a policy advantageous to the Kwantung Army. Hence, a “revolutionary diplomacy” would be necessary to salvage the situation.²⁵¹⁸ Chiang’s article appeared during a period of increased contacts between Japanese and Chinese officials, in what Japanese journalists deemed a ‘golden age’ of Sino-Japanese relations.²⁵¹⁹ Foreign Minister Hirota informed the Diet in January 1935 that the Chinese authorities seemed to have turned away from their harsh anti-Japanese policy, noting that “there is today a growing trend among the Chinese people to appreciate the true motive of Japan.”²⁵²⁰ In order for bilateral relations to improve, the Japanese Foreign Minister underlined that China should move to suppress all anti-Japanese activities in the country and that, additionally, Nanjing should consider joining with Japan and Manchukuo to form a common economic bloc. In May 1935, Japan went so far as to exchange ambassadors with Nanjing and engaged in initial discussions with Chiang Kai-Shek on the creation of an economic bloc; recognition of Manchukuo; and the ending of all unfriendly Chinese acts towards Japan.²⁵²¹

The Imperial Army, having witnessed the success with which they had implemented their strategy in Manchuria, naturally opposed any rapprochement with China. Once again, the Kwantung Army took foreign policy into its own hands. Having communicated their concerns regarding diplomatic engagement with China in its December 1934 document entitled “Matters Concerning Japan’s China Policy” (*Taishi seisaku ni kansuruken*/對支政策に関する件) where the Imperial Army accused the Kuomintang of stoking anti-Japanese sentiments in North China and recommended the elimination of its authority through the creation of ‘independent’ states under Japanese tutelage, akin to Manchukuo. In particular, the Imperial Army sought to remove Kuomintang authority from all five of China’s northeastern provinces in the hopes of establishing a buffer zone against any Soviet designs.²⁵²² Ishiware hoped that such a coalition of states would mark the nucleus for a Japanese-dominated ‘East Asian League’ that would be able to withstand the challenges of both the US and USSR, enabling Japan to emerge victorious in the coming ‘final war’ (*saishū sensō*/最終戦争). Key to accomplishing this goal was the “establishment of control over China proper as speedily and successfully as possible” through the creation of a self-sufficient economic bloc.²⁵²³ Hence, in the first half of 1935, the Kwantung Army began to launch campaigns to expel Chinese forces from the provinces of Hopei and Chahar. By June 1935, the Imperial Army had forced the Chinese into ‘local agreements’, the Ho-Umezu for Hopei and Chin-Doihara for Chahar, that created a demilitarization zone in both provinces and effectively removed any Kuomintang influence. The ease at which these agreements were reached motivated the Kwantung Army to kickstart implementing its vision of detaching the five Chinese provinces in the north to create a Japanese-dominated “autonomous area”.²⁵²⁴ Hence, once again, the Kwantung Army’s

²⁵¹⁷ Ibid., pg. 183.

²⁵¹⁸ Ibid., pg. 184.

²⁵¹⁹ Ibid., pg. 187.

²⁵²⁰ Ibid.

²⁵²¹ Nish, *Japanese Foreign Policy*, pg. 212.

²⁵²² Ibid.

²⁵²³ Ibid., pg. 211.

²⁵²⁴ Coble, *Facing Japan*, pg. 200.

initiatives scuttled the attempts of the Japanese Foreign Ministry to engage in a meaningful process of bilateral rapprochement with Nanjing.

While some Chinese officials had considered the possibility of reaching a broad understanding with Japan through Nanjing's acceptance of Manchukuo's existence, the Imperial Army's actions however, by removing de facto Nationalist control over Hopei and Chahar, dispelled any illusions that the expansionist appetite of the Japanese military could be sedated through negotiation. Such ideas were expressed in the essays of Jiang Baili (1882-1938), a Chinese General who had graduated from the Imperial Japanese Army Academy. Entitled One Foreigner's Study of the Japanese, Baili provided an answer to Chiang Kai-Shek's essay on whether Japan was a friend or enemy of China. He argued that, as no single authority in Japan was in control of the military, "war between Japan and China was unavoidable."²⁵²⁵ Baili likewise maintained that, in a military contest between the two countries, China possessed the potential to emerge victorious and that Japan could not ultimately defeat China. While he failed to specify a strategy, he underlined that a Chinese victory would entail "heavy casualties and [require] the strength to endure humiliation."²⁵²⁶ The short-lived 'Golden Age' of bilateral cooperation had rapidly reached a premature, but predictable, end.

10.2.8.4. 'Crisis 1936'

While the 1935 actions of the Kwantung Army in northern China scuttled any attempts, from the Chinese perspective, to reach a negotiated settlement with Japan, domestic events in Tokyo would also serve to push Japanese foreign policy into a decidedly different direction. While pressing to implement its political vision in China, the Imperial Army had, since a publication in October 1934, warned its recruits and the Japanese public at large of an "approaching crisis of 1936". According to the military, the pending crisis would "involve the following dangers: The London Naval Treaty would expire and the US would embark on a large-scale rearmament which would threaten Japan's position in the Pacific; China would take advantage of this and attempt to regain Manchuria by force, while [the Soviet Union], strengthened by her second Five-Year Plan, would assist China."²⁵²⁷ According to the political calculus of the Japanese Imperial Military, this would mean war between Japan on one hand and China allied with the USSR on the other, with the Western Powers assuredly taking advantage of the situation to engage in hostilities against the Empire. One of this theory's main proponents was the contemporary Minister of War Araki Sadao, leader of the Imperial Way Faction ('*Kōdō ha*'/皇道派). This faction emphasized the primacy of the pure Japanese 'spirit' in existence before the importation of Western values and advocated the direct rule of the Shōwa Emperor and the rejection of modernization, especially what their adherents viewed as corrupting elements in Japanese society, first and foremost Bolsheviks, corrupt politicians, and the *Zaibatsu*. Araki was so fixated with a coming war with the Soviet Union, that he opposed Japan's purchase of the Chinese Eastern Railway in 1934 on the grounds that "it would inevitably be booty after Japan's victory over the Soviets."²⁵²⁸ The Imperial Way's fixation with preparing for a pre-emptive war against the Soviet Union was such that it began to

²⁵²⁵ Vogel, China and Japan, pg. 244.

²⁵²⁶ Ibid.

²⁵²⁷ Shillony, Ben-Ami, Revolt in Japan: The Young Officers and the February 26, 1936 Incident, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1973, pg. 12.

²⁵²⁸ Jansen, The Making of Modern Japan, pp. 595-596.

concern military planners, who emphasized the need to engage in much wide contingency planning.²⁵²⁹ The opponents to the Imperial Way, identified as the Control Faction (*Tōseiha* 統制派) argued for more prudent military expansion in order “to establish [Japan’s] status as protector and leader of East Asia. To do this we must have the power to expunge the pressure of the white races in East Asia.”²⁵³⁰ Hence, instead of focusing on a strike against the USSR, the Control Faction alternatively advocated much broader preparations focusing on the south and east.

The tensions between the two factions came to a head in the only crisis that ended up occurring in 1936, namely the 26 February Incident. On that day, circa 1400 Japanese soldiers, supporters of the Imperial Way, organized an uprising aiming at re-establishing the direct rule of the Emperor, occupying downtown Tokyo, taking control of key ministries, and assassinating the “Inspector-General of Military Education, the Finance Minister, and the Prime Minister’s brother-in-law, mistaking the last for the minister.”²⁵³¹ The Shōwa Emperor expressed his shock at the slaughter of his officials and, after four days, the soldiers peacefully dispersed. In the aftermath of the Incident, the Control Faction began to move against the adherents of the Imperial Way faction that had supported the attempted coup and had them removed from power. The officers that had participated in the coup “bore the full brunt of the Army’s revenge. In late April [1936] they were secretly tried without benefit of defence council and without recourse to appeal.”²⁵³² Civilian supporters of the coup, such as author Kita Ikki, were also arrested and handed death sentences in the ‘interests of the state’. The purge of the Imperial Way sympathisers left the Control Faction firmly in control of the Japanese state. Naturally, this was rife with systemic implications. Gone was the rhetoric behind the purported ‘Crisis of 1936’ and its focus on war with the Soviet Union, a prospect that would have not at all been against the priorities of the Kuomintang who, like the Imperial Army generals, viewed that “suppression of the Communists [in China and across the Amur] had first priority.”²⁵³³ As a result, all Japanese governments following the coup stemmed exclusively from the Tōseida. The victory of the Control Faction during the 26 February Incident now fixed Japanese foreign policy focus towards preparation for a wider war to the south and east aimed at cementing Tokyo’s desired hegemony and new systemic order in East Asia.

Such momentous developments in Japan were also accompanied by those in China. In December 1936, while Chiang Kai-Shek was meeting with the Kuomintang leadership in Xian, he was kidnapped by two Chinese Generals, Zhang Xueliang and Yang Hucheng (1893-1949), the commander of the Kuomintang’s Northwestern Army, in protest of Chiang’s weak response to Japanese expansion. They sought to oblige him to unite with the Communists in common cause against the Japanese. After two weeks of captivity, Chiang agreed to form a Second United Front with the CCP to defeat Japan.²⁵³⁴ As warlord Feng Yuxiang (1882-1948) summarized “if we fight Japan, sworn enemies can become comrades; if we do not fight Japan, comrades will become sworn enemies.”²⁵³⁵ The timing of Chiang’s abduction was critical: his discussions in Xian were

²⁵²⁹ Sims, Richard, *Japanese Political History since the Meiji Renovation, 1868-2000*, New York: Palgrave, 2001, pg. 193.

²⁵³⁰ Samuels, Richard, *Securing Japan: Tokyo’s Grand Strategy and the Future of East Asia*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2011, pp. 27-28.

²⁵³¹ Drea, *Japan’s Imperial Army*, pg. 179.

²⁵³² *Ibid.*, pg. 180.

²⁵³³ Jansen, *The Making of Modern Japan*, pg. 616.

²⁵³⁴ Vogel, *China and Japan*, pg. 245.

²⁵³⁵ Paine, *Wars for Asia*, pg. 127.

focused on finalizing a final campaign to eradicate the CCP and its Yen'an base, where the Kuomintang's forces outnumbered the Red Army at least 10 to 1.²⁵³⁶ His agreement to engage in a struggle against the Japanese in China eliminated any possibility of finding a compromise solution with the Japanese, despite their common interests in fighting Communism. As such, the combined events of 1936—in Tokyo and Xian—placed Japan and China on a collision course.

10.2.9. The Internationalization of the 'Anti-Washington' System

10.2.9.1. The Empire's New Defence and Foreign Policy Concepts

The fallout from the February 26 Incident resulted in the collapse of yet another Japanese Government. Foreign Minister Hirota was nominated as Prime Minister and his deputy, Arita Hachirō, was appointed in his stead to head the Foreign Ministry. The new thrust of Japanese foreign policy as defined by Hirota and Arita was to realize the ultimate demise of the remnants of the 'Washington System'.²⁵³⁷ With Japan no longer seeing itself bound by the naval limitations prescribed during the Washington Conference, the Foreign Ministry decided to move against the Nine Power Treaty. Opting not to repudiate the treaty outright, Japan would undertake a policy of rendering its power over Japanese policy null and void. Such a strategy was in harmony with Arita's broader understanding that Japan "would not feel bound by the interlocking network of treaties that made up the Washington Conference system."²⁵³⁸ Having cast off any obligations both within the 'Washington System' and in Geneva, a new approach—both in foreign policy and military matters—needed to be forged that would be pregnant with both regional and international implications. Following discussions between the Army and Navy Chiefs of Staff, a new Imperial Defence Policy was hammered out that identified the Soviet Union and the United States as the Empire's main theoretical enemies, with each having been assigned the same level of priority.²⁵³⁹ This marked the "first time that a formal state document, as opposed to military plans, had begun to lay out conditions of what would be needed for Japanese domination in East Asia."²⁵⁴⁰ The document's focus on the Japanese Empire's two main opponents reflected the differing priorities of both the Army and Navy. To vanquish the Red Army, the strategy called for an expansion of its force structure to 50 divisions supported by 140 army air force squadrons, and the Navy would build two new battleships and seven new aircraft carriers in order to move southwards against the United States.²⁵⁴¹ Ishiwaru Kanji, Operations Officer at the General Staff, underlined the need for Japan to abandon its strategy of attempting to defeat its enemies in a short war and, instead, prepare for the advent of a protracted industrial war.

The Head of the Operations Section, Shigeru Fukudome (1891-1971), took a final decision in favour of the Imperial Navy and shifted emphasis from the Soviet Union, as insisted upon by the Army, towards favouring a southern advance against Western interests in East Asia. While the Soviet threat still remained a major concern, the new military strategy foresaw diffusing this threat as much as possible through diplomacy. To accomplish this, the Foreign Ministry, Imperial Army

²⁵³⁶ Fan, Simon, *Culture, Institution, and Development in China: The Economics of National Character*, London: Routledge, 2016, pg. 178.

²⁵³⁷ Iriye, *The Origins of the Second World War*, pg. 34.

²⁵³⁸ Jansen, *The Making of Modern Japan*, pg. 616.

²⁵³⁹ Drea, *Japan's Imperial Army*, pg. 183.

²⁵⁴⁰ Jansen, *The Making of Modern Japan*, pg. 616.

²⁵⁴¹ Drea, *Japan's Imperial Army*, pg. 183.

and Navy worked together to produce a unified foreign policy strategy to best mirror the priorities of Shigeru's strategy. The document published in August 1936, entitled 'Foreign Policy Guidelines' contained three overarching objectives, namely the maintenance of Japan's position on the Asian continent, resistance to any Soviet ambitions in East Asia, and Japanese expansion into the South Seas.²⁵⁴² Regarding dominance on the Asian continent, the Foreign Ministry fine-tuned a new China policy that divided the country into two zones: 'North China' and China proper. For 'North China', the Foreign Ministry identified the separation of the five northern Chinese provinces from Nanjing's control in order to create "special zones" following the example of Manchukuo. Regarding China, Japan would try to forge an anti-Communist military pact with Nanjing that would form the base of deeper cooperation, eventually leading to a Sino-Japanese alliance, with Japanese military and technical advisors to assist the Chinese authorities. How these two policies could be accomplished despite their obvious contradictions, however, failed to be addressed by the document.²⁵⁴³ Having decided, in the wake of the February 26 Incident, that moving against Western interests in the South Sea constituted a priority, concrete ways to diplomatically neutralize the USSR were spelled out. While the Foreign, Army, and Navy ministers agreed on the desirability of signing a non-aggression pact with the Soviet Union, they likewise decide to move forward with negotiations with National Socialist Germany that would later culminate in the signature of the Anti-Comintern Pact.

10.2.9.2. The Anti-Comintern Pact of November 1936

The signature of the Anti-Comintern Pact was an agreement of global significance, one that introduced the turbulence of European politics into Japanese foreign policy decisions.²⁵⁴⁴ Its signature did not arise out of a vacuum but was rather a calculated response to address what was seen as the principle contemporary geopolitical challenge. In July 1935, the Seventh Comintern congress was organized in Moscow whose main result was the establishment of a global front against Fascism. The victory of the National Socialist German Workers Party in the 1933 elections, and decision to award the Chancellorship to Adolf Hitler (1889-1945), combined with the Japanese Empire's actions in Manchuria led the Comintern members to identify Germany and Japan as "the main forces for aggression and war", leading the Bolsheviks to call for an alliance of all countries, including the West, to resist Fascism.²⁵⁴⁵ The Comintern had acted as a thorn in the side of the Japanese Military, organizing since 1929 Korean participation in the Chinese Revolution with the goal of stoking rebellion in Korea. More concerning was Moscow's backing of such rhetoric with evidence gleaned from Japanese intelligence that the Soviet Union was engaged in a serious military buildup along its borders with China.²⁵⁴⁶ As a reaction, the Hirota Cabinet opted to open negotiations with Berlin to probe Germany's willingness to counter the USSR's machinations. The Japanese Army was particularly supportive of these efforts, with discussions with Germany being led by Colonel Ōshima Hiroshi (1886-1975), Military Attaché at the Japanese Embassy in Berlin. The result was the signature of the Anti-Comintern Pact between Japan and Germany. It committed the two countries to cooperation against Communist activities. The secret protocol of the Anti-Comintern Pact envisioned closer cooperation, underlining that the USSR intended to fulfill its

²⁵⁴² Iriye, *The Origins of the Second World War*, pg. 35.

²⁵⁴³ Drea, *Japan's Imperial Army*, pg. 185.

²⁵⁴⁴ Jansen, *The Making of Modern Japan*, pg. 616.

²⁵⁴⁵ Iriye, *The Origins of the Second World War*, pg. 29.

²⁵⁴⁶ Nish, *Japanese Foreign Policy in the Inter-war Years*, pg. 112.

objectives through the use of military force and noted that “should one party be unprovokedly attacked or threatened by the Soviet Union, the other party agrees not to carry out any measures which would relieve the position of the Soviet Union but will immediately consult on measures to preserve their common interests.”²⁵⁴⁷ The Soviet reaction to the pact was predictable and Soviet Foreign Commissar, Meir Henoch Wallach-Finkelstein alias Maxim Litvinov (1876-1951), expressed his anger when presented a copy of the pact. More than acting as a counterweight to Soviet ambitions in East Asia, the entrance of Japan into the Anti-Comintern Pact not only effected relations with Moscow, but underlined Tokyo’s desire to alienate itself from the Washington Powers and “signalled Japan’s readiness to associate itself with revisionist powers in Europe.”²⁵⁴⁸

The Xian incident and the establishment of a Second United Front between the Kuomintang and the Chinese Communist Party dramatically effected Japan’s anti-Communist strategy. As a large part of Japanese strategy was aimed at hindering the spread of Bolshevism, with a “strong threat running through Japanese documents of a mission to save China from Communism.”²⁵⁴⁹ Indeed, Tokyo’s aversion to Bolshevism allowed the Japanese Army to turn a blind eye to the substantial, and effective, aid that the Third Reich provided to the Kuomintang. The liberation of Chiang Kai-Shek after his agreement to work together with CCP came as a shock to the Japanese and eliminated any possibility of accommodation with the Kuomintang by building a common front to oppose Bolshevism. Instead, Tokyo was appalled at what it interpreted as Soviet interference in pushing the CCP and the Kuomintang into an anti-Japanese front, going so far as to threaten Chiang should he ally with Communists.²⁵⁵⁰ Such menaces were to no avail. The ending of Chiang’s anti-Communist campaigns was accompanied by a change in policy of the Nationalist Government and media that suddenly began lauding anti-Japanese efforts and urged CCP units to commence their incorporation into the Kuomintang, making “China one of the first countries to subscribe to the Comintern’s call for a global coalition.”²⁵⁵¹ The immediate result of the United Front was visible amongst the Chinese public, increasingly stoked with nationalism, leading to reports of anti-Japanese campaigns throughout China and sporadic skirmishes between Japanese and Chinese forces. As such, the fault lines between two competing and alternative systemic orders run straight through East Asia, with China as a powder keg.

10.2.10. The Second Sino-Japanese War

10.2.10.1. Introduction

As the systemic constellations began to shift in East Asia, the Japanese Empire, following the Xian Incident was left to confront a China not only growingly outraged at Japanese actions in the north, but one that was likewise ready to cooperate with Bolshevism. Once again, Japan’s domestic circumstances did not assist in the formation of coherent policy to meet novel and unexpected events. Another collapse of a Japanese Government in January 1937, due to financial crises, led to the formation of yet another Cabinet under General Senjūrō Hayashi (1876-1943). Despite its short duration, lasting only until June 1937, the new Prime Minister’s foreign minister,

²⁵⁴⁷ Ibid., pg. 110.

²⁵⁴⁸ Iriye, *The Origins of the Second World War*, pg. 35.

²⁵⁴⁹ Nish, *Japanese Foreign Policy in the Inter-war Years*, pg. 113.

²⁵⁵⁰ Paine, *Japanese Empire*, pg. 122.

²⁵⁵¹ Iriye, *Origins of the Second World War*, pg. 36.

Satō Naotake (1882-1971), was a career diplomat and former Japanese Ambassador in France who, seeing the new constellation of forces in China following the formation of the Second United Front, realized the need for Japan to recalibrate its policies towards China. Satō concluded that the Imperial Army's policy of creating pseudo-states in northern China was leading to the Empire's increasing diplomatic isolation and, therefore, attempted to conduct an about face regarding Tokyo's ongoing policy towards China. Speaking to the Diet on 12 March 1937, Satō underlined that the current "crises were of Japan's own making; and she could herself take corrective action."²⁵⁵² In the short three months of Satō's tenure as Foreign Minister, he managed to find political consensus between the Army, Navy, Finance and Foreign Ministry whereby the political activities of establishing a de facto state in Hopei-Chahar would be shelved and instead focus on bilateral economic ties. At the same time, Satō, as with most civilian governments in Tokyo, was simply not able to reign in the Kwantung Army that persisted in its attempts to separate northern China from the rest of the country through establishing autonomous regions.²⁵⁵³ Yet Hayashi's Cabinet fell, and the post of Prime Minister fell to Konoe Fumimaro on 4 June 1947.

Konoe had already, in the wake of the Settlement of 1919, expressed his dissatisfaction with what he viewed as a new, Anglo-Saxon dominated world order detrimental to Japanese interests. At the same time, Konoe inherited the Asianist outlook and headed the organization that his father had founded, the East Asian Common Culture Association. Since then, Konoe had become a staunch supporter of increasing Japan's influence in Asia. Following the diplomatic spat with the US in the wake of the Amō Declaration, Konoe demanded the outright recognition of Japan's new power in Asia, writing in 1935 that "the present structure of international peace embodied in the League of Nations favoured the Western nations that possessed or controlled most of the world's resources. Because the Japanese had previously erred in accepting this international order, they were now justified in seeking, along with Italy and Germany, a redistribution of the world's wealth, an international 'new deal'."²⁵⁵⁴ Konoe's call for an 'new regional deal' in East Asia assisted in setting the main goal of the Shōwa Research Association (*'Shōwa Kenkyūkai'* /昭和研究会), a political think tank of Pan-Asianist leanings that argued for Japan's leading role on the continent. Given his noble lineage and intimacy with the Imperial Family, Konoe "seemed to offer the chance for a new start under his youthful leadership and refreshing sense of the times...rather quickly Konoe became a national saviour, who people believed could tackle the difficult problems of the present and future where others had failed."²⁵⁵⁵ Fate, however, decided that, a month after assuming power, Konoe would be faced with war against China.

10.2.10.2. The Marco Polo Bridge Incident

On the night of 7 July 1937, a Japanese soldier was assumed to have gone missing after gunfire was heard near Wanping, the nearest town to Lugouqiao (Marco Polo Bridge). Japanese units in the area demanded to enter the town to search for the missing soldier. As a matter of routine, the local Chinese population would acquiesce to such Japanese demands; however, on this occasion the Chinese garrison refused the Japanese entry and a skirmish ensued. Whoever fired

²⁵⁵² Nish, *Japanese Foreign Policy in the Inter-war*, pg. 115.

²⁵⁵³ Oka Yoshitake, *Konoe Fumimaro: A Political Biography*, Tokyo: University of Tokyo Press, 1972, pg. 54.

²⁵⁵⁴ Fletcher, William Miles, *The Search for a New Order: Intellectuals and Fascism in Prewar Japan*, Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1982, pg. 95.

²⁵⁵⁵ Oka, *Konoe Fumimaro*, pg. 47.

the first shot “was a matter of dispute among those on the scene and others who later tried to piece the story together.”²⁵⁵⁶ Imperial Army HQ in Tokyo, upon immediate notification, ordered the issue to be resolved locally.²⁵⁵⁷ Yet the fighting between Japanese and Chinese units expanded over the next three days in the vicinity of Lugouqiao. The Chinese interpreted the Japanese moves as another step in the calculated plan of Japanese expansion initiated in 1931; however, unlike in Mukden, by 1937 “the limits of concession had been reached.”²⁵⁵⁸ Hence, resistance to further Japanese incursions seemed the only available course of action. Army Minister Sugiyama Hajime (1880-1945) requested the dispatch of three home divisions to deal with the issue promptly, a request that was rejected by Prime Minister Konoe who was wary of any eventual international reaction. With the arrival of the report of 11 July 1937, informing Tokyo that Japanese intelligence had confirmed that Chiang Kai-shek was preparing to dispatch reinforcements to northern China, the decision was taken to bolster the Japanese China Garrison Army with units from Manchuria and Korea.²⁵⁵⁹

With Japanese forces having been given the green light to reinforce northern China, the question of Soviet intentions loomed on the horizon. The Japanese General Staff intended to force the matter with a quick victory (*sokusen sokketsu*/速戦即決) overwhelming Chinese forces and restoring the status quo, with the possibility of forcing the National Government to recognize Manchukuo. Yet, given the regional systemic constellations, an engagement of such proportions would inevitably have serious global consequences. On the eve of the Incident, the Kwantung Army had been constructing fortifications on Kanchazu island in the Amur River along the poorly demarcated USSR-Manchurian border when on 30 June 1937, Japanese soldiers engaged the Soviet forces and sank two gunboats. While the Soviets brought up reinforcements, the low morale of the Red Army in the Far East in the wake of Stalin’s purges, dissuaded Moscow from seeking a military solution.²⁵⁶⁰ Emperor Hirohito, however, remained concerned that Bolshevik forces would mount an attack on depleted Japanese troops in Manchuria. Meeting with Konoe, Sugiyama, and his Chief of Staff, Prince Kan’in Kotohito (1865-1945), the Emperor enquired “‘What will you do if the Soviets attack us from the rear?’...Kan’in answered ‘I believe the Army will rise to the occasion.’ The Emperor repeated his question: ‘That is no more Army dogma. What will you actually do in the unlikely event that Soviet [forces] attack?’ The Prince said only, ‘We will have no choice.’ His Majesty seemed very dissatisfied.”²⁵⁶¹

With Chinese and Japanese forces refusing to back down and the Japanese having dispatched reinforcements, “local clashes soon escalated to multidivisional engagements” resulting in the capture of Beijing and Tianjin at the end of July 1937.²⁵⁶² When the Imperial Navy took the preventative step of evacuating all Japanese citizens from Shanghai on 1 August 1937, over 200,000 Japanese soldiers had entered North China. The advent of a Sino-Japanese skirmish boiling over into a serious war was looked upon with frustration in Berlin, given that such actions undermined the effectiveness of the Anti-Comintern Pact. German Foreign Minister, Konstantin

²⁵⁵⁶ Vogel, *China and Japan*, pg. 248.

²⁵⁵⁷ Bix, *Hirohito*, pg. 317.

²⁵⁵⁸ Dryburgh, Marjorie, *North China and Japanese Expansion 1933-1937: Regional Power and the National Interest*, New York: Routledge, 2000, pg. 148.

²⁵⁵⁹ Drea, *Japan’s Imperial Army*, pg. 191.

²⁵⁶⁰ Haslam, *The Soviet Union and the Threat from the East*, pg. 89.

²⁵⁶¹ Bix, *Hirohito*, pg. 319.

²⁵⁶² Drea, *Japan’s Imperial Army*, pg. 191.

Hermann Karl Freiherr von Neurath (1973-1956) expressed his distinct displeasure at the course of events to the Japanese Embassy, underlining that Tokyo “must...take into consideration the fact that armed clashes with China now would benefit the Soviet Union exclusively...[he] could imagine that the Bolshevik Government precisely at the present moment were keenly interested in keeping Japan busy in order that she could not take it into her head to exploit the weakening of the [Soviet] Army that had been caused by the execution of so many [Soviet] officers.”²⁵⁶³

While the USSR elected not to intervene directly against Japan, as Emperor Hirohito feared, the question of assisting the undersupplied Chinese forces was another matter. The Soviet Ambassador to China, Dmitry Bogomolov (1890-1937), had been in negotiations with the Kuomintang on improving bilateral relations when the Marco Polo Bridge Incident occurred. The original thrust of Sino-Soviet negotiations was to jointly organize a Pacific Peace Conference that would serve the basis of the USSR’s concept of ‘collective security’ in East Asia.²⁵⁶⁴ Following the outbreak of hostilities in June 1937, discussions quickly moved towards two main questions: first, the signing of a Sino-Soviet non-aggression pact; and, second, the provision of material and military assistance. A little more than a month after the Marco Polo Incident, the Sino-Soviet non-aggression pact was signed on 21 August 1937. Along with pledging not to engage in hostile actions against each other, the pact contained a secret section “detailing closer political and military links and in March 1938, the Soviet Government loaned the Nationalists USD 50 million” as well as granting extensive trade privileges.²⁵⁶⁵ As the Second Sino-Japanese War progressed in both scope and intensity, “the Soviet attitude towards China during her war of resistance was vital. No one could deny that China depended largely on Soviet support. Nevertheless, it was also due to China that the Soviet Union was saved from Japanese attack.”²⁵⁶⁶

Chiang rejected the advice of advisors who, given the insufficient preparations for an extended war with Japan, advocated for a peaceful solution, and instead proclaimed in Lushan (Jiangxi Province) on 16 July 1937, that “it was the duty of all Chinese to defend their country.”²⁵⁶⁷ A decision was taken that would involve the total mobilization of the Chinese people to resist the Japanese. On 28 July 1937, Japan launched a general assault into Central China, with Chiang deciding to open up a second front against the Japanese in Shanghai in August 1937 by deploying the crack, German-armed 87th and 88th divisions to the city’s suburbs.²⁵⁶⁸ The course of the actual military campaigns of the lengthy Second Sino-Japanese War lies beyond the scope of this dissertation. Suffice to say that by the end of 1937, the Imperial forces had sustained over 100,000 casualties and deployed a total of 600,000 soldiers to China.²⁵⁶⁹ Unexpectedly, the Japanese Army found its forces in Central China “exhausted, worn down by heavy casualties, insufficient ammunition stocks and inadequate logistic support”, necessitating the mobilization of ten new infantry divisions on the Home Islands in 1938 and the conversion of essential industries to wartime production.²⁵⁷⁰ Over the next two years, the reinforced Japanese force would emerge

²⁵⁶³ Haslam, *The Soviet Union and the Threat from the East*, pg. 91.

²⁵⁶⁴ Wu, *China and the Soviet Union*, pg. 265.

²⁵⁶⁵ Elleman, *International Rivalry and Secret Diplomacy in East Asia*, pp. 200-202.

²⁵⁶⁶ Wu, *China and the Soviet Union*, pg. 263.

²⁵⁶⁷ Vogel, *China and Japan*, pg. 249.

²⁵⁶⁸ Taylor, Jay, *The Generalissimo: Chiang Kai-Shek and the Struggle for Modern China*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2011, pg. 147.

²⁵⁶⁹ Paine, *The Japanese Empire*, pg. 123.

²⁵⁷⁰ Drea, *Japan’s Imperial Army*, pg. 198.

victorious in each and every major battle and occupy most of eastern and central China, however such victories led to further military exhaustion and, finally, to stalemate.²⁵⁷¹

10.2.10.3. Roosevelt's 'Quarantine Speech'

For the Western Powers the period prior to the outbreak of the Second Sino-Japanese War saw political attention being focused on developments in Europe. Germany, with the 1936 reclaiming of the Rhineland, and Italy, with its invasion and conquest of Ethiopia, seemed to be mounting a direct challenge to the existing systemic order. Both nations, along with the Soviet Union, were openly intervening in the Spanish Civil War (1936-1939) that added another dimension of pressure to an already brittle European security architecture. Indeed, the impotence of the League of Nations to effectively address the Italian invasion of Ethiopia, much more than its attempts to solve the Manchurian crisis, "resulted in widespread discouragement over the ability of the League of Nations to serve as an instrument for the attainment of world peace."²⁵⁷² The international system as established in 1919 was quickly, and obviously, displaying serious cracks in its foundation. Following the lead of fellow Democrat Woodrow Wilson, the 32nd US President began to consider avenues to "reinvigorate the postwar effort to secure permanent universal peace through methods of international cooperation".²⁵⁷³ Roosevelt followed up such ideas with the Buenos Aires Conference of 1936, where he personally encouraged the attendees to strengthen the system of peace preservation that had emerged in the Americas.²⁵⁷⁴ The collective security that internationalism afforded amongst the Americas, resting on the two pillars of collective nonbelligerency and neutrality, remained an idea that could be considered exporting to East Asia as an optimal way of deterring potential aggressions.²⁵⁷⁵ However, the contemporary geopolitical focus of US policy makers remained European in scope and the possible conflict between totalitarian and democratic states, with East Asia constituting an afterthought. Indeed, the US State Department, on the eve of the Marco Polo Incident, regarded the situation in the region as "hopeful", with its Far Eastern Division believing that peace in East Asia could be upheld if China continued to augment its national strength, thereby parrying any further Japanese expansionist moves.²⁵⁷⁶ While this attitude continued to prevail amongst US policy makers in the initial days after the Marco Polo Incident, the intensification of the Sino-Japanese clashes gradually required the attention of the Secretary of State.

Secretary Hull grasped the seriousness of the situation unfolding in China and consequently sought ways towards stemming the onset of a full-scale war. The US briefly entertained, but did not follow up on, suggestions from Great Britain to facilitate joint mediation. As such, US efforts remained limited to bilateral contacts and Wilsonesque moral foreign policy declarations. Secretary Hull urged the Japanese Embassy to the US to recognize the undesirability of war and

²⁵⁷¹ Vogel, *China and Japan*, pg. 249.

²⁵⁷² Borg, *The United States and the Far East Crisis*, pg. 283.

²⁵⁷³ Ibid.

²⁵⁷⁴ In Buenos Aires, Secretary Hull also presented his vision of 'Eight Pillars of Peace' that, in his opinion, constituted a "vitally important" contribution to a "comprehensive peace programme". Such elements included the responsibility for every nation to educate its population in opposition to war from "every platform, every pulpit, every forum." See Borg, *The United States and the Far East Crisis*, pg. 284.

²⁵⁷⁵ Borg, Dorothy, "Notes on Roosevelt's 'Quarantine' Speech" in *Political Science Quarterly*, 1957-09, Vol. 72 (3), pg. 408.

²⁵⁷⁶ Ibid., *The United States and the Far East Crisis*, pg. 285.

“urged [the Japanese] to cooperate with the United States in effecting a programme, such as the Buenos Aires programme, that would lead the world back to international stability.”²⁵⁷⁷ Such appeals were politely listened to but not acted upon. On 16 July 1937, Hull reiterated his ‘Eight Pillars of Peace’ in a declaration which was promptly dispatched to all nations of the world reminding the international community that such principles must also apply to the contemporary situation in China. Hull’s declaration was signed by over 50 countries, including Japan, Germany, and Italy. This was followed up by another moralistic declaration on 23 August 1937 where Secretary Hull, underlining the difficulties of the international community in Shanghai, stated that the principles of Buenos Aires should guide the conduct of international relations as they reflected the spirit of the Washington Conference and the Kellogg-Briand Pact, concluding that the “[US] Government is endeavoring to see kept alive, strengthened, and revitalized, in reference to the Pacific and to all the world, these fundamental principles.”²⁵⁷⁸ Reality, however, had by now far outpaced such high-minded statements.

As the fighting in Shanghai intensified, such idealistic pleas fell on decidedly deaf ears. Adapting to an increasing complicated situation, the US Ambassadors to China and Japan advised Washington “to limit itself to protecting its nationals in China and to refrain from any diplomatic involvement such as was inherent in plans for mediation, or an offer of good offices.”²⁵⁷⁹ This proposal closely reflected public opinion within the United States, exhibiting a strong trend of isolationism regarding US policy towards East Asia and beyond. The US thrust towards an ambiguous neutrality was not lost on Chiang Kai-Shek who expressed his frustration at the inability of the US to facilitate mediation as he “looked to [the US] to maintain her position in the Pacific and to maintain peace there” and hoped that the US “should not lose her prestige in the world as an upholder of international justice.”²⁵⁸⁰ On 12 September 1937, the Chinese Government appealed to the League of Nations, “arguing that Japan had invaded China and invoked Articles X, XI, and XVII of the Covenant.”²⁵⁸¹

The possible loss of US prestige, and the internationalist heritage of the Settlement of 1919, was also not lost on the 32nd President. Since early 1937, he had toyed with the idea, together with Canadian Prime Minister William Lyon Mackenzie King (1874-1950), of establishing an international conference to set up a new world organization which would “seek to maintain peace by peaceful means rather than by economic or military sanctions.”²⁵⁸² After floating his fledgling idea towards the European democracies, the advent of the events in China seemed to have motivated Roosevelt to move from the chimeric to the practical. The growing escalation of the Sino-Japanese conflict was the subject of a US Cabinet meeting on 14 September 1937 where the US President stated that he harboured “‘no intention of making any warlike move’ but he was very keen to defend democracy in his upcoming speech on the 150th anniversary of the Constitution.”²⁵⁸³ At the same time, a speech underlining the need to remind the US electorate of the nation’s ‘responsibilities’, despite its strong isolationist tendencies, to coordinate action amongst the

²⁵⁷⁷ Ibid., pg. 289.

²⁵⁷⁸ Ibid., pp. 307-308.

²⁵⁷⁹ Ibid., pg. 316.

²⁵⁸⁰ Ibid., pg. 309.

²⁵⁸¹ McCulloch, Tony, *Tacit Alliance: Franklin Roosevelt and the Anglo-American ‘Special Relationship’ before Churchill, 1933-1940*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2022, pg. 85.

²⁵⁸² Borg, “Notes on Roosevelt’s ‘Quarantine Speech’”, pg. 408.

²⁵⁸³ McCulloch, *Tacit Alliance*, pg. 85.

international community seemed necessary. Indeed, Secretary of the Interior, Harold Ickes (1874-1952), reminded Roosevelt that the US President was “the only one in the world who can mould or lead world public opinion for the democratic ideal.”²⁵⁸⁴ Roosevelt opted therefore to deliver a speech that would emphasize the importance of enhancing international cooperation in an unstable global environment, arguing that it was in the US public’s interest to act together with the global community to check aggression.²⁵⁸⁵

On 5 October 1937, therefore, Roosevelt addressed a Chicago crowd and informed the isolationist-minded attendants that, despite the “high aspirations” of the Kellogg-Briand Pact, a “reign of terror and international lawlessness began a few years ago.”²⁵⁸⁶ As such, Roosevelt implored that “the peace-loving nations must make a concerted effort in opposition to those violations of treaties...which are creating a state of international anarchy and instability from which there is no escape through mere isolation or neutrality.”²⁵⁸⁷ Those nations that cherish freedom and peace “must work together for the triumph of law and moral principle in order that peace, justice, and confidence may prevail in the world” as “it seems to be unfortunately true that the epidemic of world lawlessness is spreading. When an epidemic of physical disease starts to spread, the community approves and joins in a quarantine of the patients in order to protect the health of the community against the spread of the disease...War is a contagion, whether it be declared or undeclared. It can engulf states and people remote from the original scene of hostilities.”²⁵⁸⁸ The reference to the metaphor of a ‘quarantine’ was later stated by the President to have constituted a step towards preparing the way for the ‘collaborative’ measures between democratic states where the United States, in shades of Wilsonian dreaming, would have to play a central role. As the last line of Roosevelt’s speech underlined “America hates war. America hopes for peace. Therefore, America actively engages in the search for peace.”²⁵⁸⁹ The ‘Quarantine Speech’ failed to specify any particular nation, but it was clear to both US and foreign audiences that Germany, Italy and Japan—or the “bandit nations” as the US President privately referred to them—were the targets.²⁵⁹⁰ Hence, after years of haphazardly watching the ‘Washington System’ slide into practical irrelevance, Roosevelt’s speech sharply underlined his newfound verve to work with other like-minded nations to take concrete measures to defend an increasingly crumbling Settlement of 1919.

10.2.10.4. The Nine Power Treaty Conference

Despite what listeners interpreted as a calculated rhetorical assault by the 32nd President against Japan, the methods that Roosevelt suggested to engender such international cooperation remained a mystery. The President himself said that he envisioned neither sanctions—as “they are out the window”—nor a conference, prophetically declaring that “you never get anywhere with a conference.”²⁵⁹¹ Yet global events made Roosevelt’s Chicago speech seem part of a calculated

²⁵⁸⁴ Ibid., pg. 86.

²⁵⁸⁵ Jacobs, Travis, “Roosevelt’s ‘Quarantine Speech’”, *The Historian*, Vol. 24, No. 4. (August 1962), pg. 484.

²⁵⁸⁶ Quarantine Speech (5 October 1937), <http://millercenter.org/president/speeches/detail/3310>, accessed 27 April 2024.

²⁵⁸⁷ Ibid.

²⁵⁸⁸ Ibid.

²⁵⁸⁹ Ibid.

²⁵⁹⁰ Iriye, *The Origins of the Second World War*, pg. 46.

²⁵⁹¹ McCulloch, *Tacit Alliance*, pg. 86.

move by the international community to address events in China. The League of Nations official investigation into the Marco Polo Bridge Incident, triggered by China's official request, concluded that the Japanese response was completely disproportional to the actual events. Furthermore, the League reprimanded Japan that it was in violation of the Nine Power Treaty and the Kellogg-Briand Pact. This was followed by a statement from the US State Department that likewise declared that Japan was in breach of the Nine Power Treaty, placing US policy in line with Geneva. On 6 October 1937, the League Assembly invited the signatories of the Nine Power Treaty as well as other interested states in East Asia to convene in Brussels to "seek a method of putting an end to the Sino-Japanese conflict by agreement."²⁵⁹² Japan refused outright to have anything to do with the Brussels Conference, informing the participants in its official reply to the invitation extended that "the present affair can never be settled until the Nanjing Government mend their ways, abandon once and for all their anti-Japanese policy, and accept Japan's policy of cooperation and collaboration between the two countries."²⁵⁹³ Despite such a clear rebuff, the remaining Nine Powers did nevertheless convene in Brussels under the auspices of the League of Nations and the relevant provision of the Nine-Power Treaty from 3-24 November 1937.

The idea of a Nine Power Treaty Conference was strongly supported by President Roosevelt who felt "that it was important that [the international community] try to generate a spirit of peace and goodwill at Brussels, and that if Japan refuses to come to the conference [the remaining Nine Powers] should put various questions up to Japan as to what her objectives are...which would become increasingly embarrassing and which would continue to mobilize public opinion and moral force."²⁵⁹⁴ The first act of the Conference was to request an explanation from Japan as to why Tokyo refused to attend. On 12 November 1937, the remaining Nine Powers received an even more explicit refusal from Tokyo: "The Imperial Government, however, cannot do otherwise than maintain its points of view, that since it has been obliged to resort to its present action as a measure of defence against Chinese acts of provocation, this action does not come within the scope of the Nine Power Treaty and that there is no justification for discussing the applicability of the latter; moreover, it could not agree to take part in a meeting based on the provisions of the treaty while it is accused of having violated the terms of that treaty."²⁵⁹⁵ Given the firmness of the Japanese reply, the Chinese delegate Wellington Koo, commented that "now that the door to conciliation and mediation has been slammed in your face by the latest reply of the Japanese Government, will you not decide to withhold supplies of war materials and credit to Japan and extend aid to China? It would be, in [China's] opinion, a most modest way in which you can fulfill your obligation of helping to check Japanese aggression and uphold the treaty in question."²⁵⁹⁶

Such measures, however, would not be forthcoming. On 15 November 1937, the Conference released a declaration noting that, while Japan's violation of the Nine Power Treaty and Kellogg-Briand Pact was indeed a concern to all countries, there was no common agreement

²⁵⁹² Borg, *The United States and the Far East Crisis*, pg. 399.

²⁵⁹³ Statement of the Japanese Foreign Office, 28 October 1937 in *Conference of Brussels, November 3-24, 1937 Convened in Virtue of Article 7 of the Nine-Power Treaty of Washington of 1922* (1938), pg. 13.

²⁵⁹⁴ Borg, *The United States and the Far East Crisis*, pg. 406.

²⁵⁹⁵ Reply of the Japanese Government, 12 November 1937, to the Communication of 7 November from the Conference in *Conference of Brussels, November 3-24, 1937, Convened in Virtue of Article 7 of the Nine-Power Treaty of Washington of 1922* (1938), pg. 53.

²⁵⁹⁶ Borg, *The United States and the Far East Crisis*, pp. 426-427.

on what actually should be done about the situation: “Though hoping that Japan will not adhere to her refusal the above-mentioned states represented at Brussels must consider what is to be their common attitude in a situation where one party to an international treaty maintains against the views of all the other parties that the action which it has taken does not come within the scope of that treaty and sets aside provisions of the treaty which the other parties hold to be operative in the circumstances.”²⁵⁹⁷ Given such a watered-down declaration, it is perhaps unsurprising that the Brussels Conference met for the last time on 24 November 1937 and called for what in actuality was a permanent recess. With that, the abject failure of the ‘Washington System’ was on display for all to see. As the US Ambassador to Japan Joseph Grew (1880-1965) warned, the Conference should not have been convened as it merely underlined “the lack of unity and impatience of the Powers.”²⁵⁹⁸ It would also mark the last attempt to invoke any part of the ‘Washington System’ architecture to seek to resolve regional crises.

10.2.10.5. German Mediation Attempts to End the Second Sino-Japanese War

At the same time the Washington Powers were attempting to apply existing systemic mechanisms to resolve a smouldering conflict, the German Foreign Ministry was attempting to conduct its own bilateral mediation process between Japan and China. As noted, Berlin was displeased at the outbreak of Sino-Japanese hostilities and, as the scope of the conflict intensified, German dissatisfaction with the ongoing war in China became more acute. Having signed the Anti-Comintern Pact in 1936, the German Foreign Ministry viewed Japanese actions as diluting the efficiency of the agreement, as evidenced by an instruction from Berlin to the German Embassy in Tokyo: “Japanese attempts to base measures in China as a fight against Communism on the Anti-Comintern Pact are devious...the Pact has not the objective of fighting Bolshevism in the territory of third states. Rather, Japan’s measures may be considered by us as being contrary to the Anti-Comintern Pact, because they obstruct the consolidation of China thus promoting the spread of Communism in China and, in the end, driving the Chinese into the arms of [the Soviet Union].”²⁵⁹⁹ While being ideologically aligned with Japan against Communism, Germany, at the same time had cultivated an economically and politically important relationship with Nationalist China.

Nationalist China had been courting German assistance since the days of the Northern Expedition when Weimar Germany followed the US in granting recognition to the Kuomintang Government. The 1931 Japanese invasion of Manchuria, however, illustrated to Chiang Kai-shek the pressing need for military reform and industrial modernization.²⁶⁰⁰ As such, after the 1933 National Socialist election victory, economic and military cooperation ensued. In January 1934, the *Handelsgesellschaft für industrielle Produkte* (HAPRO) was founded to unify all German industrial interests in China, in particular the all-important production and export of tungsten, an essential material in armament production. Germany bought half of the world’s tungsten, three-quarters of which came from China, making good relations with Nanjing essential to any

²⁵⁹⁷ Declaration of the Conference 15 November 1937 in *Conference of Brussels, November 3-24, 1937, Convened in Virtue of Article 7 of the Nine-Power Treaty of Washington of 1922* (1938), pg. 67.

²⁵⁹⁸ Borg, *The United States and the Far Eastern Crisis*, pg. 441.

²⁵⁹⁹ Liu, James, “German Mediation in the Sino-Japanese War, 1937-38”, *The Far Eastern Quarterly*, Vol. 8, No. 2 (Feb., 1949), pg. 158.

²⁶⁰⁰ Kirby, William, *Germany and Republican China*, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1984, pg. 78.

rearmament effort.²⁶⁰¹ Indeed, this situation was reflected by Chiang's own words, expressed in his 1936 letter to Hitler, "increasingly, China will be in a position to deliver such quantities of raw materials, that she will play a decisive role for Germany."²⁶⁰² Additionally, Germany acted as an important source of military expertise for reforming the Nationalist Army and transforming it into an effective fighting force capable of taking on the Japanese. By 1937, a peak number of 71 Wehrmacht advisers were employed in training Nationalist Chinese units. Indeed, German advisers, such as Alexander Freiherr von Falkenhausen (1878-1966), advised Chiang Kai-shek personally, taking on such an important role that, following the outbreak of the Second Sino-Japanese War, "much of the planning and direction of the operation of the Chinese Army against the Japanese was the responsibility of von Falkenhausen and other German officers."²⁶⁰³ Hence, German military know-how played a key role in shaping the initial Nationalist strategy to pursue a prolonged war against Imperial Japan, especially during and after the Battle of Shanghai. Furthermore, German arms exports to Nationalist China in 1937, amounting to 82,788,600 Reichsmarks, far outstripped similar trade with Japan, amounting to only 10.9 million.²⁶⁰⁴ Given such important military and economic links with Nationalist China, Germany, despite its ideological connection through the anti-Comintern Pact with Tokyo, declared neutrality, a decision confirmed by Hitler himself on 16 August 1937.²⁶⁰⁵ In practice, this meant that Berlin would maintain the status quo ante concerning bilateral relations with both countries.

The intensity of the Battle of Shanghai, auguring a prolonged and bloody war, sparked members of the German Foreign Ministry to assume a more "positive role in the crisis" and, as such, the German Ambassador to Japan, Herbert von Dirksen (1882-1955), first suggested possible German mediation in his report of 23 August 1937, that could be a means of furnishing peace to East Asia with "the least possible alteration of the status quo."²⁶⁰⁶ Such an idea would not only allow Japan to maintain its strategic value to Berlin in countering Soviet designs in Europe and East Asia, but also not endanger Germany's essential economic relationship with Nationalist China. The Germans first floated their good offices towards China when Berlin explained to the Chinese Government its rationale for refusing to attend the Brussels Conference, given the "futility" of any conference that did not include Japanese representation: "We consider direct negotiations more promising for the present and would, if the occasion arose be prepared to serve as a channel of communication."²⁶⁰⁷ Ambassador Dirksen also approached the Japanese Foreign Ministry with an offer of Germany's good offices as the Battle of Shanghai was reaching its inevitable conclusion, however, as the Japanese remained determined to deliver their quick victory against Chinese forces, the idea was shelved. Only when the Japanese realized that the carnage inflicted upon enemy forces in Shanghai had not deterred the Chinese will to fight did Tokyo opt to turn to Germany as a mediator.²⁶⁰⁸ The Chinese Government did not turn to Germany for assistance until the end of November when it was apparent to all that no meaningful assistance

²⁶⁰¹ Paine, *The Wars for Asia*, pp. 143-144.

²⁶⁰² Letter from Chiang Kai-shek to Adolf Hitler, Nanking, 16 September 1936, <https://digitalcollections.nypl.org/items/b8dede36-a489-b668-e040-e00a18063638>, accessed on 28 April 2024.

²⁶⁰³ Fox, John, *Germany and the Far Eastern Crisis, 1931-1938: A Study in Diplomacy and Ideology*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1982, pp. 244.

²⁶⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, pg. 241.

²⁶⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, pg. 240.

²⁶⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, pg. 249.

²⁶⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, pg. 261.

²⁶⁰⁸ Liu, "German Mediation in the Sino-Japanese War, 1937-38", pg. 160.

would be accorded to China from the Nine Power Treaty Conference at the very time when Japanese forces were advancing upon Nanjing. Given the failure of the Western Powers to undertake any concrete moves towards mediation, the Chinese Government informed the German Ambassador in Nanjing, Oskar Trautmann (1877-1950), that Republican China would accept Germany as a mediator. Consequently, with the Nationalist Government being forced to evacuate to Chongqing in light of the Japanese advance on Nanjing, Ambassador Trautmann, on 28 November 1937, handed over the first Japanese peace offer to the Chinese Foreign Minister. Japan's terms included autonomy of Inner Mongolia; and extension of demilitarized zones in northern China and Shanghai; as well as the Nationalists' commitment to suppress communism and anti-Japanese activities.²⁶⁰⁹ Trautmann likewise handed over the same peace terms to Chiang Kai-shek on the same day. The Nationalist leader answered that "he appreciated the good offices of the German Government and consented to treat these terms as the basis and scope of negotiation on condition that Germany act as a mediator from the beginning to the end in order to guarantee the good faith of Japan".²⁶¹⁰

While German efforts had secured the foundation for possible negotiations, once again, the actions of the Imperial Army in the field seriously compromised any successful mediation. Indeed, the German Foreign Ministry had received information from Rome that the officers of the Imperial Military fundamentally disagreed with the peace offer as tabled by the Kasumigaseki.²⁶¹¹ On 12 December 1937, Nanjing was captured by Japanese forces, leading to "house-to-house searches throughout the city by soldiers drunk with victory and vainglory led to days of murder, rapine, and looting that to this day has never been acknowledged and will forever stain the honour of the Imperial Army."²⁶¹² With a changed military situation on the ground, and a Japanese officer corps and populous emboldened by what was seen as a major victory, the Imperial Army moved forward to undermine the agreed basis for German mediation. Some members of the military and Government argued that, with the whole of Japan "lightheaded" over the conquest of Nanjing, the Nationalist Government had now been reduced to a mere local regime and, as such, "there was no need to negotiate peace with it."²⁶¹³ While an outright rupture of negotiations was vetoed both by the General Staff and Foreign Ministry, both institutions did agree that amendments to Japan's initial peace proposal, as presented to Germany and accepted by Chiang, were necessary. Hence, following an Imperial Headquarters-Cabinet Liaison Conference, the terms of peace were officially revised by Tokyo and presented to Ambassador von Dirksen. Much harsher than the originally mutually agreed basis for negotiations, these revised terms included the Chinese recognition of Manchukuo; the cessation of all Chinese cooperation with Communism; and the creation of autonomous regions in northern China and Inner Mongolia; as well as Chinese reparations to Japan.²⁶¹⁴ This was tantamount to treating China as a defeated nation, reminiscent of the Settlement of 1895. Foreign Minister Hirota, while presenting the revised terms to the German Ambassador, stated that "recent rapid development in hostilities and the great change in the general situation" had obliged Tokyo to reassess its term, underlining that if China "should not be able to accept these terms, Japan—though reluctantly—would be forced to treat the present

²⁶⁰⁹ Ibid., pg. 161.

²⁶¹⁰ Ibid.

²⁶¹¹ Fox, *Germany and the Far Eastern Crisis*, pg. 265.

²⁶¹² Jansen, *The Making of Modern Japan*, pg. 622.

²⁶¹³ Oka, *Konoe Fumimaro*, pg. 67.

²⁶¹⁴ Ibid., pp. 67-68.

situation from an entirely different point of view from that maintained hitherto.”²⁶¹⁵ Hirota also noted that Japan would also desire China to join the Anti-Comintern Pact and abandon the Sino-Soviet agreement, although these terms would not be explicitly demanded. Ambassador Dirksen, shocked at the adapted terms, responded that Chinese acceptance would be “extremely improbable” and asked for a ceasefire to allow time for negotiations to proceed. Hirota rejected this demand outright. Alarmed, von Dirksen warned Wilhelmstraße that, in his opinion the attitude prevalent among the Imperial Army and Konoe Cabinet was to proceed with presenting an offer that China would have no choice but to reject in order “to make it possible to carry through the war of annihilation against Chiang Kai-shek.”²⁶¹⁶

Not without reason, the German Foreign Ministry was taken aback when von Dirksen transmitted the revised terms to Berlin. Nevertheless, Foreign Minister von Neurath insisted that Germany still fulfill its role as mediator between Nanjing and Tokyo and make no commentary to the Chinese regarding the Japanese terms. On 26 December 1937, Ambassador Trautmann passed the Japanese demands to the Nationalist Government. Chiang Kai-shek was disturbed upon receiving the revised terms, including the refusal to contemplate a ceasefire. The Chinese Government discussed internally and concluded that Japan sought not “only the recognition of Manchukuo but [to treat] the rest of China...like a second Manchukuo, so that China’s political, economic, and financial independence would disappear.”²⁶¹⁷ The German Foreign Ministry, cognizant of the improvement of Sino-Soviet relations, sought to appeal to the Japanese Government against any continuation of the conflict, underlining to its fellow Anti-Comintern Pact signatory that “the common interest of Germany and Japan directed against the Comintern requires that normal conditions in China be restored as soon as possible, even if this could be done only by peace terms which not meet all the Japanese aspirations. The lesson derived from the history of the Treaty of Versailles should be pondered by Japan.”²⁶¹⁸ The Japanese chose to ignore Germany’s warning.

As Tokyo waited for a response from Nanjing, attitudes amongst Japanese policy makers hardened. In January 1938, the Imperial Conference adopted the Fundamental Policy for the Disposition of the China Incident that proclaimed: “if the Nationalist Government reflected deeply and sincerely sought peace, Japan would negotiate with it on the basis of the [revised] peace terms, but, if China failed to seek peace, Japan would promote a new regime in China with which Japan would normalize relations...and cooperate in the rejuvenation of China. Japan would proceed to annihilate the present Chinese central Government and make certain that it was absorbed under the control of the new central Government.”²⁶¹⁹ The Chinese Government, through Ambassador Trautmann, asked for further clarification on the Japanese terms. The reception of the Chinese request in Tokyo led to another session of the Imperial Headquarters-Cabinet Liaison Conference. The Imperial Army was divided: while the General Staff insisted that the Soviet threat obliged that peace negotiations be successfully concluded, the Ministry of the Army, however, supported by Prime Minister Konoe and Foreign Minister Hirota recommended the termination of all negotiations. Indeed, Konoe underlined that “Japan, as the victor, has no need to humble itself like

²⁶¹⁵ Fox, Germany and the Far Eastern Crisis, pg. 277.

²⁶¹⁶ *Ibid.*, pg. 278.

²⁶¹⁷ *Ibid.*, pg. 279.

²⁶¹⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 279-280.

²⁶¹⁹ Oka, Konoe Fumimaro, pg. 68.

a defeated nation, allowing China to dictate, or to meekly ask, if the terms are acceptable.”²⁶²⁰ The General Staff backed down thereby ending German mediation efforts to end the Second Sino-Japanese War. Foreign Minister Hirota presented the official decision of the Japanese Government to Ambassador von Dirksen, announcing that “the attitude of procrastination on the part of the Chinese Government reveals no intention to sue for peace by accepting in their entirety the basic conditions for peace negotiations”.²⁶²¹ The German Foreign Ministry announced to both Governments that its role as letter carrier had now come to an end.

Following the termination of negotiations, the Japanese Government announced its intention to pursue full-scale war against China. On 16 January 1937, a day after the Imperial Liaison Conference, Prime Minister Konoe declared that the Empire of Japan would no longer deal with the Nationalists as the legitimate Government of China. This statement, known as the “absolutely no dealing” (*aite ni sezu*/相手にせず) declaration was based on the perception that “the Nationalist Government has not appreciated the good intentions of Japan and persisted in their opposition, showing no regard for either the miserable plight of their own people or the peace and tranquility of all East Asia”; consequently, the Japanese Government would “cease to deal with that Government and look forward to the establishment and growth of a new Chinese regime, on which Japan could rely for harmonious cooperation.”²⁶²² Not only did the Konoe Cabinet deprive the Nationalist Government of Japanese recognition, it also announced an uncompromising policy of full-scale escalation of hostilities with the aim of annihilating the Kuomintang and installing a pro-Japanese regime over all China along the lines of the puppet regimes in Manchukuo and northern China. Peace was now decidedly out of reach.

While the German attempt to mediate an end to the Second Sino-Japanese War ended in failure, it had progressed much further than anything the international community, using the defunct mechanisms of ‘the Washington System’ could muster at the Nine Power Treaty Conference. Through its positive bilateral relations with both Nationalist China and the Empire of Japan, Germany was able to provide a solid first draft of terms, accepted by both parties, that created a base for possible negotiations. Hence, in 1937-1938, it was indeed a ‘bandit nation’ committed to the revision of the current international system, that was able to progress much further towards an end to the Second Sino-Japanese War than the adherents to the ‘Washington System’ who, after three weeks of deliberation in Brussels, were unable to agree on anything more than a “platonic declaration of sympathy for China.”²⁶²³ That Germany was viewed by both Tokyo and Nanjing as the only nation suitable to conduct mediation efforts to resolve what had evolved into a full-scale industrial war underlines the deep dysfunctionality of the Settlement of 1919 and its ability to advance the cause of stable peace. The irrelevance of the ‘Washington System’ as illustrated in Brussels, obliged both Tokyo and Nanjing to seek possible solutions elsewhere, namely with the rather unorthodox choice in favour of a state intent on challenging the current international order. In the end, despite a promising start, the German efforts at mediation ultimately failed, not due to the Foreign Ministry’s lack of effort, but once again the insistence of the Imperial Army on pushing ever forward until the Chinese state had been completely obliterated. Such hubris not only wrecked the chance for a negotiated peace that would have altered the regional system

²⁶²⁰ Ibid., pg. 69.

²⁶²¹ Fox, Germany and the Far Eastern Crisis, pg. 289.

²⁶²² Oka, Konoe Fumimaro, pg. 69.

²⁶²³ Fox, Germany and the Far Eastern Crisis, pg. 270.

and historical trajectory of both Japan and China, but also set Japan along the path to total war, one that was meant to usher in a new systemic order.

10.2.10.6. Konoe's Unveiling of a New Order in East Asia

Following the abandonment of German mediation, the military situation remained challenging for Japan. The Imperial Army, despite its confidence in January 1938, was unable to eliminate the Kuomintang's main armies and, over the summer, regimental sized fighting broke out between Japanese and Soviet forces at Changkuofeng (Lake Khasan) on the Korean-Soviet border, forcing Imperial Headquarters to suspend further offensives in China.²⁶²⁴ The Chinese campaign remained bogged down with no solution in sight. The refusal of the Japanese Government to attend the Nine Power Treaty Conference, marking confirmation of Tokyo's complete abandonment of the 'Washington System', and the prospect of a prolonged campaign in China left the Empire decidedly isolated amongst the international community. In order to attempt to furnish a vision and *raison d'être* for Japanese actions in China, both since the 1931 Manchurian incident as well as the contemporary military campaign, Prime Minister Konoe, on 3 November 1938, proclaimed a "New Order in East Asia" ('*shin taisei*'/新体制) based on two pillars.²⁶²⁵ The first was Konoe's formulation of a "new peace mechanism" that would be rooted in the idea of international justice, an idea that, as seen, had been central to his political writings. As such, Konoe aimed "to replace the universal world order accepted as convention, as symbolised by the Washington System, with a regionalistic world order."²⁶²⁶ The second pillar of Konoe's New Order was the construction of a "new structure of autonomous solidarity" between Japan, Manchukuo, and China that viewed China and Japan as equal partners, marking the first time in Japanese history that a "manifestation of Asianism" became part of Japanese official policy.²⁶²⁷ Hence, Konoe viewed the solving of the situation in China exclusively through this new regional mechanism, thereby eschewing any international involvement through the 'Washington System'. As Konoe declared in his public statement, under Tokyo's guidance, Japan, Manchukuo, and China should jointly cooperate to "carry out a common defence against communism, create a new culture, and bring about an economic combination" in East Asia, one that was "derived from the founding spirit of our nation."²⁶²⁸ Konoe, through his declaration, hoped to create an internationally recognized regional order, akin to what the US had established through the Monroe Doctrine in the Americas, thereby according purpose to the ongoing war in China: "What Japan seeks is the establishment of a new order which will ensure the permanent stability of East Asia. In this lies the ultimate purpose of our present military campaign."²⁶²⁹

China played a central part in Konoe's vision of a new regional order as laid out to the Japanese people in January 1938: "What Japan desires of China is that that country will share in the task of bringing about the new order in East Asia. She confidently expects that the people of

²⁶²⁴ Drea, *Japan's Imperial Army*, pg. 201.

²⁶²⁵ Shoji Junichiro, "The Quest for International Justice and Asianism in a 'New Order in East Asia': Fumimaro Konoe and his Vision of the World" in Murray, Williamson & Tomoyuki Ishizu (eds.), *Conflicting Currents: Japan and the United States in the Pacific*, Santa Barbara: Praeger, 2009, pg. 58.

²⁶²⁶ *Ibid.*, pg. 59.

²⁶²⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁶²⁸ Iriye, *Origins of the Second World War*, pg. 67.

²⁶²⁹ *Papers Relating to the Foreign Relations of the United States: Japan, 1931-1941*, US Department of State, Vol. I, 1943, pg. 478.

China will fully comprehend her true intentions and that they will respond to the call of Japan for their co-operation.”²⁶³⁰ While refusing to deal with the Kuomintang, Japanese policy would henceforth focus on establishing a compliant regime in China, one that would be able to provide the necessary political cover for China’s integration into Konoe’s New Order. As Chiang Kai-shek’s supposed intransigence earned him the designation as a political *persona non grata*, the Japanese government began to seek other potential candidates to establish a regime that could lead a compliant China into the New Order. Tokyo therefore selected Wang Jingwei (1883-1944), a leader of the Kuomintang who had expressed the need for China to accept a negotiated settlement with Japan and believed that the future of Chinese nationalism was wedded to Japanese designs.²⁶³¹ For his readiness to collaborate, Wang was stripped of his functions, leading him to flee to Hanoi to begin a campaign to establish a pro-Japanese regime in China, with the Japanese Government issuing an additional statement declaring Tokyo’s readiness to “adjust its relations with a new China”, namely those “who shared Japan’s concerns and looked to the establishment of a new order in East Asia.”²⁶³² This process of creating the façade of political legitimacy in China would culminate in the formation of the so-called “Reorganized National Government of the Republic of China” in 1940. For his part, Chiang Kai-shek vehemently rejected Konoe’s proposed New Order, arguing that “Japan was intent upon conquering China...; already it was trying to eject Western power from Asia and to upset the international order in the area.”²⁶³³ Hence, Chiang presented China’s struggle against Japan as one being done to maintain the current order against Tokyo’s challenge.

Evidently, the proclamation of a “New Order in East Asia” would influence Japan’s relations with the Western Powers. The recognition of Konoe’s “New Order” would entail the West’s implicit recognition of Japan’s political and economic preponderance in East Asia, naturally at the expense of contemporary Western regional interests. In his proclamation of January 1938, Konoe assumed that such an understanding would be a *fait accompli*: “Japan is confident that other Powers will on their part correctly appreciate her aims and policy and adapt their attitude to the new conditions prevailing in East Asia.”²⁶³⁴ Hence, Japan’s foreign policy towards the Western Powers would reflect this implicit understanding. Japan’s insistence on its “New Order” became evident to Washington through Japan’s official response of 18 November 1938 to a US note of protest to what it viewed as Japanese infringement of US interests and the Open Door Policy: “It is the firm conviction of the Japanese Government that now, at a time of continuing development of new conditions in East Asia, an attempt to apply to present and future conditions without any changes, concepts and principles which were applicable to conditions prevailing before the present incident does not in any way contribute to the solution of immediate issues and further does not in the least promote the firm establishment of enduring peace in East Asia.”²⁶³⁵ Through this communication, the Japanese Government firmly rejected the validity of the treaties and agreements that had constituted the Western Powers’ collective approach towards China, including the main traditional tenet of the Open Door Policy. In the name of “genuine international justice”, the Foreign Ministry informed the State Department that “Japan...is making rapid strides

²⁶³⁰ Ibid.

²⁶³¹ Chambers, Travis, “Japan’s Colonialism and Wang Jingwei’s Neo-Nationalism”, *The Chinese Historical Review*, 28, 2, November 2021, pg. 148.

²⁶³² Iriye, *The Origins of the Second World War*, pg. 71.

²⁶³³ Ibid., pg. 72.

²⁶³⁴ *Papers Relating to the Foreign Relations of the United States: Japan, 1931-1941*, Vol., pg. 478.

²⁶³⁵ Ibid. pg. 800.

toward the attainment of this objective. The successful accomplishment of this purpose is not only indispensable to the existence of Japan, but also constitutes the very foundation of the enduring peace and stability of East Asia.”²⁶³⁶ In no clearer terms could Japan signal to its most important rival that the treaties and agreements of the Settlement of 1919 had, in the eyes of the Japanese, lost any and all validity. In its stead, therefore, Japan would construct its own with or without international consent.

10.2.10.7. The Proposed Japanese-German Alliance

With the war in China dragging on indefinitely, and the ‘New Order’ in East Asia having been established, Japan began to turn to enhance its bilateral relationship with Germany. Following the failure of the German mediation attempt, Berlin’s policy towards Japan underwent a fundamental change. The ascension of the staunchly pro-Japanese Joachim von Ribbentrop (1893-1946) to the post of Foreign Minister in February 1938 marked a turning point in Germany’s relations with East Asia, as Ribbentrop managed to convince Hitler to adopt a policy clearly favouring Japan, ending all military cooperation with Nationalist China. Furthermore, Germany officially recognized Manchukuo’s independence. Yet the closer Japan aligned itself with Germany, the more estranged the Empire grew from the rest of the international community, especially the Anglo-Saxon Powers.²⁶³⁷ Such tendencies became especially pronounced in December 1938 when Japanese planes attacked and sunk the USS *Panay*, strafing the fleeing US sailors in their lifeboats, and shelled the HMS *Ladybird*. The two attacks “impressed American public opinion with aggressiveness, cruelty, and sheer audacity of the Japanese military, which had attacked warships of the two powers most critical of Japan’s actions in China.”²⁶³⁸ Even though Roosevelt refused to implement sanctions against Tokyo, the public image of Japan in the US suffered greatly. Faced by this growing international isolation over its campaign in China and to counter any possible intervention by a foreign power in favour of Chiang Kai-shek, Tokyo developed plans to conclude a military alliance with Germany against the Soviet Union.²⁶³⁹ On 28 August 1938, Tokyo officially agreed that this should form part of the Empire’s official policy and nominated Itō Nobufumi (1885-1960) as special envoy for negotiations. Frustrated at the stalemate in the campaign in China, Prime Minister Konoe resigned in January 1939, however, negotiations on concluding an Alliance continued. A German draft, penned by Ribbentrop, was delivered to Japan on 5 August 1938.²⁶⁴⁰

The main stumbling block, however, was Germany’s insistence on including both Great Britain and France, along with the USSR, as enemies of the renewed pact. The Japanese negotiators, while ready to recognize in principle that London and Paris should be included as targets of the alliance, rejected explicitly including them in the proposal, a move that was categorically refused by Germany.²⁶⁴¹ The Japanese insisted that the thrust of any proposed alliance should exclusively be the Soviet Union. This approach was sanctioned by Emperor

²⁶³⁶ Ibid.

²⁶³⁷ Nish, *Japanese Foreign Policy in the Inter-war Years*, pg. 125.

²⁶³⁸ Bix, *Hirohito*, pg. 340.

²⁶³⁹ Krebs, Gerhard, “Germany and Japan, 1937-45: From the Outbreak of the China War to German Surrender” in Kudō, Akira; Tajima Nobuo & Pauer, Erich (eds.), *Japan and Germany: Two Latecomers to the World Stage, 1890-1945*, Vol. I, Kent: Global Oriental, 2009, pg. 239.

²⁶⁴⁰ Nish, *Japanese Foreign Policy in the Inter-war Years*, pg. 128.

²⁶⁴¹ Ibid., *Japanese Foreign Policy*, pg. 230.

Hirohito himself who opposed the Imperial Army's desire for a formal alliance with Germany as His Majesty strongly felt that any arrangement should be directed solely against the Soviet Union and avoid antagonizing the western democracies.²⁶⁴² The Emperor's advice was wholeheartedly supported by the Imperial Navy. The Admirals' apprehension, however, did not stem from any underlying issues of ideology, but rather concern that, should Japan openly align itself with Germany, the Anglo-Saxon powers would automatically opt to increase their assistance to Nationalist China, thereby further complicating Japan's prolonged continental quagmire. Meeting internally amongst themselves in the Five Ministers Conference of Autumn 1938, Foreign Minister Arita declared that "[any alliance with Germany] should be directed against mainly the Soviet Union, and against the United Kingdom, France, and other countries only if they participate on the Soviet side".²⁶⁴³ Such an approach was sanctioned by the new Prime Minister Hiranuma Kiichirō (1867-1952), announcing that he "was opposed to strengthening the anti-Comintern Pact to the extent of waging war against Britain and France" and threatened to tender his resignation should the Imperial Army decide differently.²⁶⁴⁴ The Japanese Empire thereby refused to become embroiled in the web of alliances that were now forming in Europe. The Japanese refusal to commit to an alliance with Germany in 1939 did, however, produce serious systemic ripples. Frustrated over Tokyo's prolonged hesitation, Germany and Italy decided in May 1939 to enter the bilateral 'Pact of Steel'. While Japan's new Minister of War, former Kwantung Army Staff Officer Itagaki Seishirō, warmly greeted the signature of the alliance, stating that it marked "a welcome contribution to the new rising world order" and hinted that Tokyo might be open to join at a later date, Ribbentrop had taken offence at Japan's refusal to commit.²⁶⁴⁵ Furthermore, the Japanese hesitation had opened the door for Germany to seek a temporary understanding with the Soviet Union in order to avoid the danger of a two-front war.²⁶⁴⁶ Given the ongoing tensions between Japan and the Soviet Union, this decision would have implications both regional and global.

10.2.11. Japan and the Soviet Union: Nomonhan and the German-Soviet Non-Aggression Pact

Those arguing in favour of an official alliance with Germany were no doubt motivated by the ongoing threat posed by the USSR and its long border with Japan's continental Empire. In May 1939, Japanese forces of the Kwantung Army and the Red Army became entangled in skirmishes near the Mongolian frontier town of Nomonhan on the Khalka River straddling the border between the People's Republic of Mongolia and Manchukuo. Given the rising tensions on the poorly demarcated frontier, on 25 April 1939, Emperor Hirohito sanctioned a policy to address the increasing number of clashes with Soviet forces. Entitled "Outline for Dealing With Disputes along the Manchuria-Soviet border", the document espoused an extremely critical view of the cautionary stance of the Imperial High Command.²⁶⁴⁷ Hence, as the clashes increased in intensity, the Kwantung Army saw themselves justified by the Emperor in taking strong measures to reassert

²⁶⁴² Bix, *Hirohito*, pg. 368.

²⁶⁴³ Tajima Nobuo, "Japanese-German Relations in East Asia 1890-1945" in Kudō; Nobuo & Pauer, (eds.), *Japan and Germany: Two Latecomers to the World Stage*, pg. 17.

²⁶⁴⁴ Nish, *Japanese Foreign Policy*, pg. 230.

²⁶⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 129-130.

²⁶⁴⁶ Krebs, "Germany and Japan, 1937-45", pg. 240.

²⁶⁴⁷ Bix, *Hirohito*, pg. 352.

Japan's claim to an ill-defined frontier, culminating in a ground offensive against Soviet forces on 2 July 1939.

The sheer scope of Japanese activities on the Mongolian-Manchurian border caused the new Soviet Foreign Minister, Vyacheslav Mikhaylovich Skryabin alias Molotov (1890-1986), to summon the Japanese Ambassador to the USSR warning Japan that "the Soviet Union will not tolerate any provocations on its frontiers on the part of Japanese-Manchurian military units...We will defend the borders of the Mongolian People's Republic...as decisively as our own border...It is high time to understand that to all patience there is a limit."²⁶⁴⁸ The aggressive approach of Japanese forces to independently engage Bolshevik forces, however, did not form part of any official foreign policy of the Empire. Rather it marked the most ill-fated example of the Kwantung Army's propensity to allow local commanders to act independently without the explicit authority of the Japanese High Command.²⁶⁴⁹ On the frontiers of the Empire, the Kwantung Army had once again taken military matters into their own hands. Full scale fighting between Red Army units and the Kwantung Army continued and, in late August 1939, the Soviets under Grigori Zhukov (1896-1974) broke through the Japanese lines, inflicting more than 18,925 dead, thereby eliminating an entire Japanese division.²⁶⁵⁰ Alarmed at the scope of the defeat, the Japanese High Command, on 3 September 1939, produced an Imperial Order that halted all offensive operations. The independent political-military policies of the Kwantung Army had come to an ignoble end, with the Japanese Ambassador to Moscow having to pick up the pieces and sign a ceasefire with the USSR on 9 September 1939. The shock of the defeat was near total to the Japanese Army. In attempting to independently impose its will on the Soviet Union, Imperial Forces "had employed its premier doctrine, tactics, and equipment it especially designed to produce a lightning victory...instead everything from nighttime bayonet assaults to vaunted spiritual power had failed."²⁶⁵¹ No more would Japanese planners seriously envisage northward expansion at the expense of the Soviet Union, with "most Japanese studies [agreeing] that the lesson learned by the Kwantung Army at Nomonhan made a deep impression and figured prominently in deflecting Japanese expansion from a northward to a southward course."²⁶⁵²

Yet the defeat of the Kwantung Army at Nomonhan was also accompanied by, from Tokyo's perspective, another earthshattering event, namely the 23 August 1939 signature of the German-Soviet Non-Aggression Pact. Indeed, the ill-effects of the German-Soviet agreement on Japan are "not possible to exaggerate."²⁶⁵³ Its influence on Japanese foreign policy was total. While committed under the Anti-Comintern pact to inform Tokyo regarding its dealing with its ideological enemy, the German Foreign Ministry only opted to disclose the Non-Aggression Pact's imminent signature through a phone call from Ribbentrop to Ambassador Ōshima on 21 August 1939. The geopolitical confusion, and tendency to reorientation, that the agreement brought with is illustrated in the following reaction from Manchukuo. The Kwantung Army, still engaged in fighting the Soviets in Mongolia went so far as to have General Ueda Kenkichi (1875-1962) suggest that, given the sudden change in circumstances, Japan "while continuing to strike

²⁶⁴⁸ Haslam, *The Soviet Union and the Threat from the East*, pg. 130.

²⁶⁴⁹ Nish, *Japanese Foreign Policy in the Inter-war Years*, pg. 132.

²⁶⁵⁰ Bix, *Hirohito*, pg. 351.

²⁶⁵¹ Drea, *Japan's Imperial Army*, pg. 205.

²⁶⁵² Goldman, Stuart, *Nomonhan, 1939: The Red Army's Victory that Shaped World War II*, Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 2012, pg. 171.

²⁶⁵³ Nish, *Japanese Foreign Policy*, pg. 231.

relentlessly at Soviet forces around Nomonhan, get Germany and Italy to induce the Soviet Union into offering a ceasefire, then promptly conclude a Japan-Soviet non-aggression pact, and furthermore form a Japanese-German-Italian-Soviet alliance against the United Kingdom so as to eradicate British influence in the East completely.”²⁶⁵⁴ Such fantastic scenarios excluded, the Japanese Empire felt thoroughly betrayed by Germany’s actions as a non-aggression pact violated “one of the accompanying secret articles which had laid down that no separate treaties should be concluded with the Soviets.”²⁶⁵⁵ The Imperial Army bluntly declared that the Anti-Comintern Pact had lost its validity. The Hiranuma Cabinet immediately froze all further negotiations on Japan’s accession to the ‘Pact of Steel’ and publicly denounced Germany’s decision. The unexpected blow of the Pact was such that the Hiranuma Cabinet was forced to resign, with the outgoing Prime Minister expressing his profound dismay at the “labyrinthine state of affairs in Europe.”²⁶⁵⁶ The incoming Cabinet of General Abe Nobuyuki (1875-1953) immediately declared Japan’s neutrality in face of what seemed certain war in Europe. Prime Minister Abe proceeded to announce as much publicly, stating that, while Japan would not interfere in the European war, it would focus exclusively on Chinese affairs.²⁶⁵⁷

Yet, despite Japan’s disbelief in the German-Soviet Non-Aggression Pact, it still remained associated with Berlin in the eyes of Western Powers. To underline this perception, Washington notified Tokyo on 26 July 1939 that the US harboured no intention of renewing the US-Japan Treaty of Commerce and Navigation that was set to expire in January 1940. With this move, provoked by the outcry of US public opinion against the Japanese bombing of Chinese civilians, the US signalled that “serious economic sanctions could follow further acts of aggression”.²⁶⁵⁸ Such a decision jeopardized the flow of vital US imports, such as oil, copper, and iron, necessary for the Japanese military to wage effective industrial war. Furthermore, as the war in Europe commenced in September 1939, despite the US ostensibly declaring its neutrality, President Roosevelt ordered a large part of the US fleet stationed in southern California to Hawaii in order to “relieve pressure on the British, French, and Dutch colonies and Pacific Ocean defences.”²⁶⁵⁹ Japanese actions in China and flirtation with Germany had finally, with the onset of war in Europe, courted the obvious and open suspicion of the Western Powers. Prime Minister Abe and his Cabinet, holding no real ideas on how to deal with the changing global political constellation, consequently collapsed. He was replaced on 6 January 1940 by Yonai Mitsumasa (1880-1948), a former Navy Minister known for his strong pro-Anglo-Saxon sentiments. Yet current events would neutralize any pro-Western policy that his Cabinet sought to espouse.

10.2.12. The Decision to Strike South

While war clouds gathered over Europe, the Japanese military remained bogged down in its prolonged campaign in China. The Imperial General Staff increasingly became convinced that the tenacity of the Kuomintang was due to the supply of arms delivered through the ports of French-controlled Hanoi, as well as British-controlled Hongkong and Rangoon.²⁶⁶⁰ Increasingly,

²⁶⁵⁴ Tajima, “Japanese-German Relations in East Asia”, pg. 19.

²⁶⁵⁵ Nish, Japanese Foreign Policy in the Inter-war Years, pg. 134.

²⁶⁵⁶ Tajima, “Japanese-German Relations in East Asia 1890-1945”, pg. 19.

²⁶⁵⁷ Nish, Japanese Foreign Policy in the Inter-war Years, pg. 135.

²⁶⁵⁸ Bix, Hirohito, pg. 353.

²⁶⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, pg. 355.

²⁶⁶⁰ Nish, Japanese Foreign Policy in the Inter-war Years, pg. 135.

therefore, the Imperial Army viewed the liquidation of Western-held concessions in East Asia as an essential step in cutting off aid to Chiang Kai-shek. Such arguments strengthened those in favour of, following the unprecedented defeat at Nomonhan, striking south to expand the Empire.

In the meantime, the new reality furnished by the German-Soviet Non-Aggression Pact threatened to provide the Kuomintang with another source of possible support. Chiang Kai-shek expressed his satisfaction at the German-Soviet Non-Aggression Pact, and, mindful of the assistance Berlin had provided Nanjing in the past, asked the Chinese Ambassador in Berlin, Chen Jie (1885-1951), to use the opportunity to improve Sino-German relations. Staatssekretär Ernst von Weizsäcker (1882-1951) noted that “the German-Soviet Non-Aggression Pact does not alter our relationship with Japan...[but since] the stumbling block in Sino-German relations was removed in Moscow...[it was] certain that Sino-German relations will be indirectly affected in a positive direction.”²⁶⁶¹ Nationalist China went so far in their newfound pro-German verve that, on 5 October 1939, the Chinese Foreign Minister proposed renewed German mediation to end the Second Sino-Japanese War, suggesting a German-Japanese-Chinese-Soviet partnership aimed against Great Britain, noting that China was “prepared to cooperate with Germany and Japan in advancing anti-British policies.”²⁶⁶² While the upper echelons of the German Government did not sanction an outright rapprochement with Nanjing, the Chinese efforts, to the dismay of Tokyo, succeeded in hindering any German recognition of the pro-Japanese puppet regime of Wang Jingwei.

The swift success of the German Wehrmacht against the European democracies, including the colonial nations of France and the Netherlands, marked another turning point in both the war in Europe and, inevitably, perceptions in East Asia. Having compelled the French Republic to sign an armistice on 22 June 1940, most of continental Europe was now under effective German control. The New Order in Europe, as espoused by Berlin, seemed to be on the verge of becoming reality. Nationalist China swiftly responded by renewing Nanjing’s request for Germany to restart its mediation efforts with Tokyo, with Zhu Jiahua (1893-1963), Chief of the Kuomintang Party Organization Bureau, messaging the German General Staff announcing that China pinned its hopes on “the Wehrmacht taking advantage of its current success to bring about a swift end to the war in Europe, I hope that your country will thereby make an even greater contribution to efforts for world peace.”²⁶⁶³ East Asia became therefore focused on being on the correct side of the seemingly imminent global systemic change. The Imperial Navy, hitherto the most critical amongst the Japanese ministries of an alliance with Germany, began to radically change its strategic course. Having argued that a partnership with Germany would incur an increase in proxy Anglo-Saxon assistance to the Nationalist Chinese, the Imperial Navy began to openly advocate for a military alliance with Germany in order to deal once and for all with the increasingly problematic European possessions in East Asia. Furthermore, as underlined in an internal policy document by Admiral Takagi Sōkichi (1893-1979), a navy policy maker with close ties to the Imperial Palace, “as long as Germany remained allied with the Soviet Union, if Japan became a military ally of Germany, the enthusiasm of Japan’s generals for war against the Soviet Union would be at least dampened.”²⁶⁶⁴ With Paris and The Hague under German occupation, the Imperial Navy now

²⁶⁶¹ Tajima, “Japanese-German Relations in East Asia”, pg. 20.

²⁶⁶² Ibid.

²⁶⁶³ Ibid., pg. 21.

²⁶⁶⁴ Bix, *Hirohito*, pg. 369.

equated the prospect of the conquest of French Indochina and the Netherlands East Indies with picking “fresh rice cakes off a shelf.”²⁶⁶⁵ The Yonai Cabinet, despite its moderate outlook, sent a demand in June 1940 to both Paris and London officially requesting both nations immediately desist from supplying Nationalist Chinese forces through Indochina and Burma. Given the severity of the situation the Allies faced in Europe, such supplies had already significantly dwindled but Tokyo was determined to eliminate them completely. Faced with Japanese diplomatic and military pressure, France agreed to close the supply route to China, allowing a forty-man Japanese team to check all China-destined cargo for military contraband.²⁶⁶⁶ Great Britain was initially inclined to refuse the Japanese demands, with Under-Secretary of Foreign Affairs, Alexander Cadogan (1884-1968), arguing that Britain should go so far as to declare war. Without US assistance, however, this could not be undertaken as serious policy. Hence, London suffered a “humiliating setback” and announced in June 1940 that the Burma route had been closed, a move that Cadogan described as “our far eastern surrender.”²⁶⁶⁷ Furthermore, Tokyo began to contemplate how best to secure the resources latent in the Dutch East Indies in order to ensure that essential imports of oil, tin, and rubber—most vulnerable to any US embargo—remained accessible to the Japanese economy. Such heavy-handed action illustrated that even Prime Minister Yonai had become convinced that “the old order of Asian international affairs was past resurrection, and that Japan must take the initiative to establish a new.”²⁶⁶⁸

Such overt Japanese moves to shut down the Indochinese supply routes to Nationalist China and secure resources in the Dutch East Indies could only awake deep suspicion in the Roosevelt Administration regarding Tokyo’s ultimate designs. However, in practice, the US continued to remain aloof on the sidelines. The Japanese demands caused both Great Britain and France to request US assistance in diverting Tokyo from its designs on their respective Asian colonies. While the Roosevelt Administration agreed that the US represented the only effective force able to counter any further southern Japanese expansion, it refused, given the direness of Allied defeats in Europe, to confront Japan directly. Instead, Washington encouraged the European Allies to “enter into a *modus vivendi* with Tokyo to placate [Japan] and avoid an Asian conflict” while, simultaneously, pledging to keep the US Pacific Fleet moored in Hawaii as a warning to the Japanese.²⁶⁶⁹ While having adopted a ‘Europe-first’ strategy, Washington remained confident that, following the British unprovoked attack and subsequent destruction of the still nominally allied French fleet at Toulon on 13 July 1940, the Royal Navy could withstand any German challenge, thereby allowing the US to maintain its naval strength in the Pacific.²⁶⁷⁰ At the same time, recent Japanese actions openly flouted the effectiveness of the 1939 aberration of the Treaty of Commerce and Navigation as declared by President Roosevelt. Not only had it failed in halting any further Japanese actions against Chinese civilians, it did not hinder the purchase of US material that could be used in the implementation of Japan’s now obvious southern intentions, as a contemporary study from the State Department revealed: “it is a foregone conclusion that practically everything which Japan buys in this country are [sic], strictly speaking, munitions of war destined to further

²⁶⁶⁵ Drea, *Japan’s Imperial Army*, pg. 209.

²⁶⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, pg. 210.

²⁶⁶⁷ Iriye, *The Origins of the Second World War*, pg. 101.

²⁶⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, pg. 100.

²⁶⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, pg. 114.

²⁶⁷⁰ Mandel, Richard, “The Struggle for East Asia’s Rimlands: Franklin D. Roosevelt, the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and U.S. Far East policy, 1921-1945”, PhD dissertation, Cornell University, 1990, pg. 178.

Japan's military activities in China."²⁶⁷¹ Hence, the only solution was to be found in the complete banning of military trade with Japan. Despite proposing harsher measures, the Roosevelt Administration was concerned that any aggressive moves against Japan, both economic and military, would result in pushing Tokyo closer to Berlin. In particular, Secretary of State Hull grew concerned that Germany, now in control of the Netherlands, would simply gift the Dutch East Indies in their entirety to the Japanese Empire, a scenario that caused Hull to "issue a strong warning to Tokyo about using force", while electing to simultaneously refrain from taking any action that could be interpreted as hostile.²⁶⁷²

Yet such warnings, even from the US, failed to produce the desired effect. Having secured a docile Allied capitulation to Japanese demands in East Asia, so soon after the collapse of France, on 25 June 1940, the Japanese General Staff and War Ministry quickly drew up plans to move against Western colonies in East Asia, envisioning a strike against British Singapore supported by Japanese aircraft from French Indochina and Thailand followed by the invasion of the Dutch East Indies.²⁶⁷³ War with the United States was, under the proposed strategy, to be explicitly avoided. Such caution was, however, soon thrown into the wind. After having conducted its own war games, the Imperial Army insisted on moving south regardless of the situation of the campaign in China. Given the changed circumstances in Europe, this plan was explicitly supported by the Imperial Navy contingent on formulating the necessary war plans to concretely undertake military action against the United States. This general strategy was adopted by both the Imperial Army and Navy alike on 3 July 1940. Learning of the joint military plans to move south and prepare for war with Washington, "Prime Minister Yonai Mitsumasa, a retired admiral, rejected such a radical policy shift [and] army leaders brought down his Cabinet."²⁶⁷⁴ It was soon become apparent that the Japanese demands would extend far beyond the closure of the supply routes to China.

10.2.13. The Announcement of the Greater East Asian Co-Prosperity Sphere

The decision to once again call upon Prince Konoe Fumimaro to serve as Prime Minister at this important historical juncture allowed Japan not only the opportunity to implement its projected southern strike but to pave the way for Japanese regional hegemony. Before assuming the premiership, Konoe called the Ogikubo Conference on 19 July 1940. Attended by the soon-to-be-appointed Foreign Minister Matsuoka Yōsuke, the diplomat that led Japan's walkout from the League of Nations; Army Minister General Tōjō Hideki (1884-1948) and Navy Minister Yoshida Zengo (1885-1966), the Ogikubo Conference aimed at re-calibrating the base of Japanese domestic and foreign policy in the face of fast-moving global events. While inconclusive on many aspects, the conference "laid the groundwork for a German alliance and expansion to the south" as the ministers concurred on taking "proactive measures to bring British, French, Dutch, and Portuguese colonies in East Asia into the New Order."²⁶⁷⁵ Japanese hegemony over Asia would be secured through the strengthening of Tokyo's relations with Berlin and Rome. The same day, Hitler, speaking in the Reichstag "made a peace offer to Britain, but three days later the British

²⁶⁷¹ Bernhart, Michael, Japan Prepares for Total War: The Search for Economic Security, 1919-1941, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1987, pg. 182.

²⁶⁷² Ibid., pg. 183.

²⁶⁷³ Drea, Japan's Imperial Army, pg. 210.

²⁶⁷⁴ Ibid.

²⁶⁷⁵ Yellen, The Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere, pg. 35.

Government under Winston Churchill rejected his terms.”²⁶⁷⁶ London’s insistence on continuing the war at any price meant that the struggle over Europe would manifest into a prolonged conflict, with serious implications for Japan.

Konoe officially formed his second Government on 22 July 1940. Immediately upon taking office, the Konoe Cabinet implemented steps to ensure that the Empire would “not miss the bus”, citing a catchphrase that had become popular throughout Japan in the summer of 1940 “as military, political, and public opinion leaders interpreted the Axis triumph in the West as an opportunity to resolve the war in the East.”²⁶⁷⁷ The success of the German Army, placing the Anglo-Saxon Powers on the defensive, produced strong ripples on Japanese foreign policy as “overnight the geopolitical perspectives changed.”²⁶⁷⁸ Konoe capitalized on these sentiments by holding another conference on 24 July 1940 with Matsuoka, Tōjō, and Yoshida that officially reaffirmed that Southeast Asia lay within Japan’s “living space” (*‘seikatsusen’*/生活圏) that would one day encompass India, Burma, Australia, and New Zealand, however the Empire’s initial focus would lie on China, Manchukuo, French Indochina, the Dutch East Indies, and the South Seas.²⁶⁷⁹ The day following his inauguration, Prime Minister Konoe proceeded to present Japan’s new direction to its populous by addressing the airways with a speech entitled “Receiving the Imperial Mandate”. Informing his listeners that the old-world order was now defunct in Europe he highlighted that, consequently, “Japan, too, must be ready to cope with a radically different world.”²⁶⁸⁰ First and foremost, Konoe sought to cultivate unity among the Japanese domestically, yet his vision, while still abstract, extended into foreign policy. Regarding the changing international scene, Konoe underlined that Japan would “stand resolute at the forefront of change and on its own power establish a new order in the world” and, consequently, Japan “must free itself as soon as possible from economic dependence on other countries and concentrate on heightening economic collaboration with Manchukuo and China and expansion into the southern Pacific regions, both of which would be vital for the future.”²⁶⁸¹ The new Konoe Cabinet, having been granted the blessing of the Imperial Navy, now moved to openly challenge Western dominance in the southern Pacific.

In order to support this new policy, the total reform of Japanese society would be necessary, with the education system to be repurposed to “rear a new generation of young people equipped to meet the challenge of supporting the Japanese Empire in total dedication to the doctrine of the national spirit (*‘kokutai’*/国体).²⁶⁸² Konoe’s transformational efforts did not stop there. On 1 August 1940, the Konoe Cabinet unveiled its ‘Outline of a Basic National Policy’, authored by the Army Ministry’s Military Affairs Bureau before its consideration and adoption by the Cabinet. The Outline underlined that “the world stood at a historical turning point, and that Japan, too,

²⁶⁷⁶ Tajima, “Japanese-German Relations in East Asia”, pg. 22.

²⁶⁷⁷ Drea, *Japan’s Imperial Army*, pg. 209.

²⁶⁷⁸ Bix, *Hirohito*, pg. 356.

²⁶⁷⁹ Yellen, *The Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere*, pg. 35.

²⁶⁸⁰ Oka, *Kunoe Fumimaro*, pg. 98.

²⁶⁸¹ *Ibid.*, pg. 99.

²⁶⁸² *Ibid.* *Kokutai* has been translated into English as ‘national polity’ and/or ‘national essence’ and its exact meaning had been under debate since the late-Tokugawa era, focusing on what characteristics best encapsulate the Japanese national character. In the 1930s, such debates were adopted by the Ministry of Education and, in 1937, it released a pamphlet entitled “the True Meaning of Kokutai” (*‘Kokutai no hongi’*/国体の本義) that established an orthodox reference for the term.

‘faced an unprecedented great ordeal.’”²⁶⁸³ The ultimate objective of the Japanese Empire, Konoe highlighted, was the maintenance of world peace. This, however, must be constructed in harmony with the national spirit, whose “first step required the construction of a New Order in Greater East Asia founded on the solidarity of Japan, Manchukuo, and China.”²⁶⁸⁴ Konoe’s address was accompanied by a statement by Foreign Minister Matsuoka to further develop the Prime Minister’s national policy ideas for the Japanese public. As explained by Matsuoka, expansion lay at the heart of the nation’s new *raison d’être*: “The essence of our country’s foreign policy must focus on the establishment of a Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere that centres on Japan, Manchukuo, and China.”²⁶⁸⁵ The idea of establishing future Japanese primacy of an organization of politically aligned Asian states “would replace Japan’s New Order in East Asia as the fundamental vision for the future. In this context, it fit firmly into a long-standing Pan-Asian discourse”.²⁶⁸⁶ At the same time, any possible consideration to return to the framework of the Settlement of 1919 was firmly rejected. Matsuoka’s speech also presented a direct challenge to the United States, not only in terms of influence over Southeast Asia, but also in terms of Japan’s position within the new postwar order. Washington, as Japan’s principal rival in the Pacific, “would have to learn to respect Japan’s sphere as it expected Japan to respect its own; all other paths would lead to confrontation.”²⁶⁸⁷

10.2.14. The Greater East Asian Co-Prosperity Sphere Moves South

Having inaugurated the Greater East Asian Co-Prosperity Sphere, the Konoe Cabinet made moves towards its concrete implementation towards the South Seas, having every intention of harvesting the vulnerable French and Dutch ‘rice cakes’ from the shelf. The demands of the new Cabinet went far beyond the question of supply routes to China but represented the first steps of the Japanese Empire to integrate the East Asian European colonies within the Greater East Co-Prosperity Sphere, anchoring the area squarely within Japanese economic and political hegemony.

The Konoe Cabinet, on 26 and 27 July 1940, decided to move to secure Japanese influence in the far-flung French colony of Indochina, moving beyond eliminating supply routes to instead undertaking measures that would link Indochina to the Japanese economic and political sphere. On 1 August 1940, Foreign Minister Matsuoka submitted Japan’s formal demands to the French Government, namely the right for Japanese troops to transit the territory, the construction of Japanese airfields in the colony, as well as an economic agreement favourable to Japan.²⁶⁸⁸ While the French Government did approach Washington to sound out the prospect of possible US assistance to resist Japanese demands, this issue was dismissed by the State Department. The French authorities had no choice but to submit to the Japanese demands, nevertheless the French requested Washington to make clear to the Japanese Government that it viewed any agreements reached with France as merely temporary in nature. Under-Secretary Sumner Welles (1892-1961) laid out the US policy towards any political changes, both in Indochina and, indirectly, regionally, responding that “[the US] understands the situation of the French Government and, since we are

²⁶⁸³ Ibid.

²⁶⁸⁴ Ibid.

²⁶⁸⁵ Yellen, *The Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere*, pg. 36.

²⁶⁸⁶ Ibid., pp. 36-37.

²⁶⁸⁷ Jansen, *The Making of Modern Japan*, pg. 633.

²⁶⁸⁸ Langer, William & Gleason, Everett, *The Undeclared War, 1940-1941*, New York: Harper & Brother Publishers, 1953, pg. 9.

not in a position to come to its assistance, we do not feel that we have the right to reproach it for according military facilities to Japan. But, if we were to recommend to Tokyo that its occupation be temporary, we would be accepting the principle of it. But this would be a violation of the status quo, the maintenance of which we shall continue to insist upon.”²⁶⁸⁹

On 29 August 1940, Matsuoka and the French Ambassador to Japan, Charles Arsène Henry (1881-1943), signed a political agreement whereby Japan recognized “the permanent French interest in Indochina”, while the pro-German Vichy Government, installed following the June 1940 French capitulation, recognized the “preponderance of Japanese interest in that area.”²⁶⁹⁰ The political agreement was, however, only to come into effect upon the signing of a military accord, the negotiations of which proved more difficult than Japan had assumed. Once again, however, the independent action of the Imperial Army, this time the Canton Army on the frontier with Indochina, precipitated concrete Japanese military action. During the negotiations, the Ministry of War and the Imperial General Staff were divided in opinion on the value of invading the French colony.²⁶⁹¹ On 5 September 1940, however, a Japanese commander independently ordered his unit across the frontier, prompting the French to call off any further talks. Faced yet again with a military fait accompli, Tokyo found itself obliged to force the issue. Consequently, Japan ordered units of the Imperial Army into Indochina on 22 September 1940, with Matsuoka informing Henry that the French colony would be occupied with or without French consent.²⁶⁹² Too weak to resist the Japanese, the French, once again, decided to capitulate. A military agreement was subsequently signed that permitted the stationing of 6,000 Japanese soldiers in Indochina; the transit of Japanese forces; as well as the construction of three airfields at Tonkin. The south of Indochina would, however, remain unoccupied by Japanese forces.

Responding to Japanese moves against Indochina, the US had lodged repeated representations and protests to the Japanese Government, however “since none of these contained even a suggestion of American action as distinguished from mere words, Japanese authorities felt safe in disregarding them and even in retorting with thinly veiled insults.”²⁶⁹³ However, with the military occupation of the French colony, the Roosevelt Administration became so sufficiently displeased that, on 28 September 1940, the US imposed an embargo of scrap iron and steel shipments to Japan as well as underwriting a USD 25 million loan to Nationalist China.²⁶⁹⁴ The US decision followed meetings between Under-Secretary Welles and the Japanese Ambassador in Washington, reminding the Japanese of US policy to assist victims of aggression: “I said that I would be lacking in candour if I did not make clear to the Ambassador that, consistent with its policy with regard to Great Britain, the United States would likewise feel it necessary to furnish means of assistance in the way of supplies, munitions, etc., for these victims in the Pacific area as might be required.”²⁶⁹⁵ The US embargo marked a significant turning point as it deprived the Imperial Army and Navy of one of its main sources of war materiel. Secretary of War Stimson interpreted the importance of the embargo in his diary, writing that “this is a direct hit on Japan, a

²⁶⁸⁹ Ibid., pg. 10.

²⁶⁹⁰ Ibid., pg. 13.

²⁶⁹¹ Drea, *Japan’s Imperial Army*, pg. 211.

²⁶⁹² Ibid., pg. 212.

²⁶⁹³ Langer & Gleason, *The Undeclared War*, pg. 14.

²⁶⁹⁴ Drea, *Japan’s Imperial Army*, pg. 212.

²⁶⁹⁵ Langer & Gleason, *The Undeclared War*, pg. 20.

point which I have hoped we would hit for a long time.”²⁶⁹⁶ The Japanese also understood the gravity of Washington’s moves. The Japanese formal complaint against the US loan to China as an unfriendly act to the Empire was met with a blunt rebuttal from Secretary of State Hull: “If to act in self-defence is an unfriendly act—then we are proposing to do something that is unfriendly.”²⁶⁹⁷ Discussions in Washington also considered extending US reprisals to include an embargo on the most critical export to Japan: oil. In 1940, the Japanese Empire imported over 90 percent of its oil from the US.²⁶⁹⁸ The commodity, however, was explicitly excluded from any punitive measures, as US policy makers feared that such a decision would provoke a Japanese attack on the Dutch East Asia, an oil-rich colony increasingly on Tokyo’s radar screen.

Moves to secure Japanese influence in the Dutch East Indies were simultaneously undertaken with those against French Indochina. In July 1940, it was agreed that Japan should demand from the Dutch authorities in Batavia, without resorting to ultimatums or threatening the use of force, “substantial concessions for Japanese businessmen, public and private, in Indonesian oilfields, rubber plantations, and mineral mines”, with Japanese negotiators presenting a list of specific sites where such concessions were to be exploited.²⁶⁹⁹ The Dutch officials in Batavia, however, remained loyal to their government-in-exile in London and refused to accord Japan any special concessions. The Dutch authorities bluntly informed the Japanese Delegation that any contracts for oil should be directly worked out with the respective oil companies themselves. The head of the Japanese mission, the Minister of Commerce and Industry Kobayashi Ichizō (1873-1957), was exasperated at the Dutch reaction, reporting to Tokyo that “the [Dutch] Governor General does not realize the present situation is so serious that if he remains so old-fashioned as to be concerned with diplomatic formulas only, the existence of the Dutch East Indies will be in danger, and he can keep pace with the changing situation...He evinced not the slightest sign of fervour to try and sound out the true intentions of the Japanese Government towards the Dutch East Indies. In as much as he does not understand our real idea of friendly relations between the two countries, it is no use for us to continue negotiations with such a Governor General. It had made me feel that I have come all this way in vain.”²⁷⁰⁰ Following the Kobayashi Mission, Japan opted not to press the issue of securing economic cooperation with the Dutch East Indies, constituting the first step towards the colony’s inclusion in Japan’s economic orbit. The Japanese Government noted the unhelpful attitude of the Dutch authorities, yet nonetheless found itself obliged to negotiate purchases of the necessary resources in October 1940.

10.2.15. The Tripartite Pact

With the first steps towards the implementation of the Greater East Asian Co-Prosperity Sphere having been made in Indochina and the Dutch East Indies, the necessity of ensuring that the United States would be sufficiently intimidated to respect Japan’s new preponderance over Asia became paramount. Tokyo would, as noted by Konoe, require formal allies. Matsuoka set about to work on drafting terms of a new alliance with Germany and Italy, insisting on the highest

²⁶⁹⁶ Ibid., pg. 21.

²⁶⁹⁷ Schroeder, Paul, The Axis Alliance and Japanese-American Relations, 1941, Cornell: Cornell University Press, 1958, pg. 28.

²⁶⁹⁸ Melber, Takuma, Pearl Harbour: Japans Angriff und der Kriegseintritt der USA, München: C.H. Beck, 2016, pg. 16.

²⁶⁹⁹ Barnhart, Japan Prepares for Total War, pg. 165.

²⁷⁰⁰ Langer & Gleason, The Undeclared War, pg. 8.

level of co-operation with the European Axis, including the possibility of jointly going to war. As the Japanese Foreign Minister wrote into the margins when fine-tuning his proposal with the Bureau of Eurasian Affairs, “one cannot capture a tiger cub without venturing into the tiger’s den.”²⁷⁰¹ Japan’s renewed interests in an alliance with Germany also coincided with Berlin’s wishes. While Germany had, in 1939, shelved the idea of an alliance with Japan given Tokyo’s prolonged trepidation, the inability of the Luftwaffe to pave the way for an amphibious invasion of England signified that the European war would continue indefinitely. Given Washington’s pro-Allied sympathies, Berlin needed to establish an effective mechanism that could neutralize any US desire to commence hostilities with Germany. On 23 August 1940, German Foreign Minister Ribbentrop cabled the Japanese Ambassador to Germany Kurusu Saburō (1886-1954) and declared Berlin’s readiness to dispatch a Special Envoy, Heinrich Georg Stahmer (1892-1978), on secret mission to present Germany’s draft of a possible alliance. In preparation for Stahmer’s arrival, Konoe’s Cabinet convened a Ministerial Conference that foresaw the new global order as being based on four main blocks, East Asia, the Soviet Union, Europe, and the United States. In particular, the ministers affirmed the need to negotiate an alliance with Germany and Italy to ensure that Japan would be able to establish its hegemony over the East Asian bloc.²⁷⁰² While the ministers expressed their support for a German alliance, the Privy Council, meeting with the Cabinet 26 September 1940, expressed serious misgivings. In particular, Ishii Kikujirō, former Foreign Minister during the First World War, remained unconvinced that Japan’s alignment with the Axis would be in Tokyo’s favour. While he viewed the decision to ally with Germany as expedient, he cautioned that Japan “must take great care in any dealings with Berlin.”²⁷⁰³ Yet despite such reservations, the decision was taken to move forward.

On 27 September 1940, the Tripartite Pact was signed in Berlin by German Foreign Minister Ribbentrop; Italian Foreign Minister Ciano; and Japanese Ambassador to Germany Kurusu. The foundation of the Tripartite Pact laid out the foundation for an alternative world order and furnished the pattern of cooperation between the Axis powers until 1945. The preamble noted that “The Governments of Germany, Italy, and Japan, considering it as a condition of any lasting peace that all nations of the world be given each its own proper place, have decided to stand by and cooperate with one another in regard to their efforts in greater East Asia and regions of Europe respectively wherein it is their prime purpose to establish and maintain a new order of things calculated to promote the mutual prosperity and welfare of the people concerned.”²⁷⁰⁴ The individual articles reinforced reciprocal recognition of the regions where each Axis member was to establish their new regional orders: **Article I** stated that “Japan recognizes and respects the leadership of Germany and Italy in the establishment of a new order in Europe”, while **Article II** underlined that “Germany and Italy recognize and respect the leadership of Japan in the establishment of a new order in Greater East Asia.”²⁷⁰⁵ **Article III** envisioned that the three Axis Powers would “agree to cooperate in their efforts on the aforesaid lines. They further undertake to assist one another with all political, economic, and military means when one of the three contracting powers is attacked by a power at present not involved in the European war on in the

²⁷⁰¹ Yellen, *The Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere*, pg. 39.

²⁷⁰² Ibid.

²⁷⁰³ Ibid., pg. 41.

²⁷⁰⁴ *Three-Power Pact between Germany, Italy, and Japan, Signed at Berlin, 27 September 1940*, <https://avalon.law.yale.edu/wwii/triparti.asp>, accessed 10 May 2024.

²⁷⁰⁵ Ibid.

Sino-Japanese conflict.”²⁷⁰⁶ Hence, while committing each Axis member to cooperate with the other in achieving regional hegemony, the Pact also served as a mechanism to ward off the two major Powers yet to be embroiled in the European War, namely the United States and Soviet Union, from taking any concrete action against its signatories.

Despite the fanfare with which the Tripartite Pact was signed, Article III was subject to immediate clandestine clarification between Tokyo and Berlin. On the day of its signature, Foreign Minister Matsuoka sent a letter to the resident German Ambassador to Japan, Eugen Ott (1889-1977), underlining Japan’s particular understanding of Article III. The Japanese Foreign Minister stressed that the signatories were only obliged to declare war after joint consultations were held to determine that an attack had actually taken place. As Ott replied to Matsuoka, “needless to say the question, whether an attack within the meaning of Article III of the Pact has taken place, must be determined through the joint consultation of the three contracting parties.”²⁷⁰⁷ The acceptance of the flexibility of Article III by Germany meant that, in reality, Berlin failed to secure the automatic military agreement that it had sought from the outset. On paper, Germany could point to an agreement that had the potential to deter any further unfriendly action from the United States, but Berlin “could never confidently rely on Japan’s honouring the Pact.”²⁷⁰⁸ In addition to the flexibility of interpretation, Japan also secured a number of concessions from Germany in acceding to the Pact, namely the promise of German assistance should Japan find itself at war with Great Britain as well as confirmation from Berlin of Japanese rule over Imperial Germany’s former Pacific colonies. However, had the secret protocol of the Tripartite Pact been made public, its main purpose, namely to deter the United States from intervening against Germany would have been rendered null and void.²⁷⁰⁹ Emperor Hirohito passively assented to the treaty, justifying his stance as succumbing to the inevitable gears of history, saying in passing to Prime Minister Konoe that “under the present circumstances the military agreement with Germany can’t be helped. If there is no other way to handle America, then it can’t be helped.”²⁷¹⁰ The Emperor’s Imperial Rescript informed his subjects of the new alliance with Germany and Italy and was issued soon after the Pact’s signature: “The great principle of the eight corners of the world under one roof (*‘hakko ichiu’*/八紘一宇) is the teaching of Our Imperial ancestors, we think about it day and night. Today, however, the world is deeply troubled everywhere and disorder seems endless. As the disasters that humankind may suffer are immeasurable. We sincerely hope to bring about a cessation of hostilities and a restoration of peace, and have therefore ordered the Government to ally with Germany and Italy, nations which share the same intentions as ourselves...”²⁷¹¹

Having signed and officially announced the Pact, Konoe’s Cabinet now had to secure approval of the alliance from the rest of the Japanese Government. This was no easy feat to accomplish. Navy Minister Yoshida, fearing that it would result in a war with the United States for which Japan was not prepared, remained a staunch opponent of the Pact.²⁷¹² Furthermore, the approval of the Privy Council had to be gleaned as well as official consent through the convocation of a special Investigation Committee and an Imperial Conference. In each of the subsequent

²⁷⁰⁶ Ibid.

²⁷⁰⁷ Yellen, *The Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere*, pg. 41.

²⁷⁰⁸ Schroeder, *The Axis Alliance and Japanese-American Relations*, pg. 121.

²⁷⁰⁹ Ibid., pg. 122.

²⁷¹⁰ Bix, *Hirohito*, pg. 382.

²⁷¹¹ Ibid., pg. 383.

²⁷¹² Paine, *The Wars for Asia*, pg. 177.

discussions serious doubts were raised regarding the Pact, most prominent among them the probable negative economic and political consequences for Japan's relationship with the US. Some Japanese policy makers were uncertain if the Empire's oil supplies would suffice should an emergency occur; others raised doubts over Berlin's trustworthiness, given Germany's positive relationship with Nationalist China. Yet Japan had previously entered into an alliance with a European Power, namely Great Britain in 1902, in order to check the Russians, Germans, and French after the Triple Intervention, not for its purely military value. The similarity of the contemporary political constellation with that of the early 20th century was not lost on Japanese policy makers. Those in favour of the Pact, including Foreign Minister Matsuoka and Army Minister Tōjō, responded to such doubts with answers that "were sometimes evasive and at other times either deliberately deceitful or amazingly naïve."²⁷¹³ For example, Matsuoka explained that the US's population of twenty million Germans would hinder Washington from joining the war in Europe. More effective, however, were the Foreign Minister's assurances that, following the addition of the secret protocol, "Japan's commitments under the Pact were strictly limited and that she could expect great benefits from it", with Tokyo maintaining complete independence under the Pact and could, therefore, act exclusively within the realm of her national interests.²⁷¹⁴ Tōjō justified the Pact through its ability to limit US assistance to Nationalist China, thereby allowing Japan to at long last settle its campaign in China, now entering its fourth year. Yet the weightiest of the arguments in the arsenal of the proponents of the German-Japanese Alliance was the simple, but accurate, fact that Japan remained isolated in international affairs, "bogged down in China, surrounded by hostile nations, and under increasing economic pressure from the United States."²⁷¹⁵ The Japanese Empire's sole salvation lay in its ability, through the signature of the Tripartite Pact, to send a stern signal to the United States that conflict would entail broad, global consequences. Prime Minister Konoe underlined this message on 4 October 1940 at a press conference in Kyoto, declaring that "if the United States does not understand the positions of Japan, Germany, and Italy, and regards our Pact as a provocative action against it, and if it constantly adopts a confrontational attitude, then the three countries will fight resolutely."²⁷¹⁶

10.2.16. The Soviet-Japanese Neutrality Pact

The decision to secure Japanese entry into the Tripartite Pact required that Konoe's Cabinet not only increase its cooperation with the Axis Powers but also secure an as seamless as possible drive to incorporate the colonies of Great Britain, the Netherlands, France, and even Portugal into the proclaimed 'New Order'. The Japanese defeat against the Red Army in the plains of Outer Mongolia had dispelled any sense of northern expansionism that had been rife in the Japanese Military. Indeed, approving his 'Programme of Measures Responsive to the Changes in the International Situation' of 27 July 1940, Prime Minister Konoe's programme explicitly laid out a policy of limited reconciliation with the Soviet Union. In the second point of the programme, Japan's foreign policy aimed to conclude "a non-aggression agreement with the USSR, so as to take preparation of the armed forces for war to a point that would exclude their defeat", with the

²⁷¹³ Schroeder, *The Axis Alliance and Japanese-American Relations*, pg. 122.

²⁷¹⁴ Ibid.

²⁷¹⁵ Ibid., pg. 123.

²⁷¹⁶ Bix, *Hirohito*, pg. 383.

basis of the agreement being the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact of 1939.²⁷¹⁷ This did not entail, per se, the end of Japanese designs on Soviet territory, as the Japanese Foreign Ministry, in laying out its conditions for the coming negotiations in Moscow included the provision that “at an appropriate time, [the idea] to include Northern Sakhalin and the [Soviet] Maritime Province in Japan’s sphere of influence by peaceful means [as a result of purchase or exchange of territories]” should be considered.²⁷¹⁸ In the likely event of a Soviet refusal, these areas were to be demilitarized. Simultaneous war against a coalition of the US, Great Britain, and the USSR was to be scrupulously avoided through an agreement with Moscow.

Initial overtures were made to the Soviet Union with the Japanese Government signing a border agreement on the Nomonhan area, the site of the defeat of the Imperial Army, in June 1940. Molotov responded verbally on 2 July 1940 by underlining Moscow’s interest in constructing friendly, peaceful relations with the Japanese Empire through the respect of each other’s territorial integrity underpinned by a neutrality agreement. The Japanese Ambassador to the USSR, Tōgō Shigenori (1882-1950), indicated that such an agreement would indeed meet Tokyo’s interests, not least because it would spare Japan from “being encircled and having to fight on two fronts.”²⁷¹⁹ Molotov requested Ambassador Tōgō to convey his idea to the Japanese Government and furnish a reply. With no response forthcoming, Molotov presented, on 14 August 1940, a written request to Ambassador Tōgō, underlining the high degree of political priority the Soviet authorities accorded to this question and noted he remained ready to negotiate based on a mutual consideration of interests. While the written document accused Japan of breaking the Treaty of Portsmouth with its occupation of Manchuria, a violation of Chinese sovereignty, the Soviet Union remained willing to overlook this discrepancy. Instead, the USSR proposed to liquidate the Japanese oil concessions from the Settlement of 1905 and to “guarantee delivery of 100,000 tonnes a year of oil from Sakhalin to Japan”, noting that “the proposed treaty gave Japan maximum benefit, improving its position in the north, so that it could develop active operations in the south.”²⁷²⁰ By the time Molotov’s note had reached Tokyo, Konoe had already explicitly stated his desire to regulate Japanese-Soviet relations on the basis of neutrality, with Foreign Minister Matsuoka explaining to the Privy Council that Japan should not be regarded as an enemy of the USSR, so long as Japan’s ‘New Order’ was being constructed. Hence, the decision was taken to proceed with negotiations in Moscow.

The agreement was to be signed while Matsuoka was dispatched on a working visit to Berlin, where stops were made in Moscow on both legs of the journey. Meeting with Molotov upon his return, the Japanese Foreign Minister underlined that “one of the major tasks of his journey to Europe...was to implement rapprochement with the USSR....Two forces are deciding the fate of Asia—Japan and the USSR. What is better for Asia? For these two forces, the decisive elements in Asia, to quarrel amongst themselves, or to be friends? There could be no doubt it would be better if the two countries were friends, as the opposite meant only darkness and gloom.”²⁷²¹ Matsuoka tried to secure the Soviet sale of Northern Sakhalin to Japan however no

²⁷¹⁷ Slavinsky, Boris, *The Japanese-Soviet Neutrality Pact: A Diplomatic History, 1941-1945*, London: Routledge, 2004, pg. 22.

²⁷¹⁸ *Ibid.*, pg. 23.

²⁷¹⁹ *Ibid.*, pg. 19.

²⁷²⁰ *Ibid.*, pg. 21.

²⁷²¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 38-39.

serious discussion was entered as Molotov regarded the offer as a joke, suggesting rather that the question of the Japanese sale of Southern Sakhalin, a Russian concession in the Settlement of 1905, be considered. In the subsequent negotiations, the USSR conditioned the signing of a Neutrality Pact with Japan on the public liquidation of Japanese oil concessions in Northern Sakhalin and exhibited willingness to extend the same guarantees of neutrality and respect for territorial integrity to the Japanese puppet state of Manchukuo, should Tokyo accord the same to the Mongolian People's Republic. The Japanese refused to move on the question of relinquishing its oil concessions and the negotiations teetered on the verge of collapse, with Matsuoka preparing to return to Tokyo. Stalin's personal invitation to the Japanese Foreign Minister to visit the Kremlin, however, prevented such plans. Although Matsuoka did try once again to buy Northern Sakhalin from Stalin personally, expressing his dismay at the Georgian's refusal to sell, no underlying agreement was reached on detailed issues. This also applied to questions regarding oil concessions and fisheries, confining such matters to future negotiations. The Soviet Union, given the rising tension in Europe, likewise placed priority on the establishment of a modicum of rapprochement with the Japanese Empire. Stalin therefore informed Matsuoka of his willingness to sign a Neutrality Pact with Japan that would constitute "the first step, and a serious step, towards future cooperation on big questions", such as Japan's postwar plans to implement its 'New Order' over Asia and future conflict with the Anglo-Saxon world.²⁷²² While such statements indicate the Soviet leader's openness to some sort of larger accommodation with the Tripartite Pact, such a possibility would soon be relegated to the realm of alternative history.

On 13 April 1941, therefore, the signature of the Japanese-Soviet Neutrality Pact took place in the Kremlin, with both countries pledging, in **Article I**, to "maintain peaceful and friendly relations between them and mutually respect the territorial integrity of the other" and, in **Article II**, obliged both parties to observe neutrality through any eventual conflict with "one or several third parties."²⁷²³ The importance the USSR accorded to the treaty was reflected not only by Stalin's personal involvement in the negotiations, but that the Soviet leader was present at the Pact's signature as well as through the unprecedented gesture of traveling to Yaroslavl Station to personally bid farewell to Foreign Minister Matsuoka.²⁷²⁴ The international reaction to the Neutrality Pact was, in a way expected, with both Japan's allies of Germany and Italy as well as its main rival the United States, expressing reserve and caution. Indeed, out of apprehension of the Japanese-Soviet Neutrality Pact, Washington began to apply economic pressure against the USSR, with the Soviet Embassy in Washington reporting that "the American Government in fact brought [levels of] Soviet-American trade to zero by the end of the first half of 1941."²⁷²⁵ Yet, in reality, despite Stalin's flamboyant diplomatic gestures and promises of future cooperation on larger issues, the Pact changed very little regarding Soviet East Asian policy, save giving the USSR a free hand in the west as much as it gave Japan a carte blanche to move south. On key questions, such as Soviet policy towards China, the testimony of American novelist Ernest Hemingway (1899-1961), made while accompanying his third wife on assignment to China, speaks for itself: on the date of the Neutrality Pact's signature, the Soviet Ambassador to China, Aleksandr Semyonovich Panyushkin (1905-1974) was lunching with Deputy Prime Minister Kung Hsiang-

²⁷²² Ibid., pg. 52.

²⁷²³ *Pact of Neutrality between the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics and Japan*, 13 April 1941, <https://avalon.law.yale.edu/wwii/s1.asp>.

²⁷²⁴ Slavinsky, *The Japanese-Soviet Neutrality Pact*, pg. 56.

²⁷²⁵ Ibid., pg. 58.

his (1880-1967) when Hemingway reported the following conversation “Kung asked ‘We’ve heard it’s intended to sign a Soviet-Japanese Pact.’ ‘Yes, that’s true’, replied the Ambassador. ‘In what way will this pact influence the provision of aid to China?’ ‘Not at all.’ ‘Will you withdraw your troops from the Manchukuo border?’ ‘We shall reinforce our divisions there’, said the Soviet Ambassador. And Lieutenant-General Chyukov, the chief military adviser in China, nodded in agreement.”²⁷²⁶ Nothing more needed to be said.

10.2.17. The Hull-Nomura Negotiations

As Japan officially entered into the Axis, the United States increased its involvement in supporting the Allied effort against Germany. Japan, through the Tripartite Pact, had gone from posing an irritant to US interests in the Pacific to a co-challenger of the international system. Signs of increased US war preparedness began to ripple across the Pacific. On 19 July 1940, the US passed the Two-Ocean Navy Act that funded a 70 percent expansion of the Navy, creating separate Atlantic and Pacific Fleets, the latter of which was designated for operations against Japan.²⁷²⁷ A joint Canadian-American Defence board was created on 18 August 1940 followed by the decision to substantially increase the materiel the US was ready to provide to Great Britain. Finally, in September 1940, the US took the unprecedented step of introducing peacetime conscription. Roosevelt assured Prime Minister Churchill that the United States was fully committed to the British Empire’s survival.²⁷²⁸ At the same time, however, stemming from this pledge, was the US “concern to preserve the status quo in the southwest Pacific, in order to maintain Britain’s Far Eastern lifeline.”²⁷²⁹

The US decision to impose meaningful sanctions against Japan following its actions against Indochina illustrated that Washington was also now committed to taking concrete measures to help maintain what remained of the status quo. Other moves followed. In the wake of the US displaying resolve to counter Japanese expansion, Great Britain reversed its decision regarding the Burma supply road to China, declaring it re-opened on 17 October 1940. London did not hide the fact that this move was a deliberate one to antagonize Tokyo, committing British policy to search for ways “to cause inconvenience to the Japanese without ceasing to be polite.”²⁷³⁰ Chiang Kai-shek took the opportunity this opening afforded by meeting with the US Ambassador to China, Nelson Johnson (1887-1954) and making a personal appeal to President Roosevelt regarding China’s plight against Japan. Chiang underlined that the Chinese economy was on the verge of collapse. The ability of the Chinese to keep the Burma Road open would play a critical role in maintaining China’s ability to effectively resist Japan. Here, Chiang pleaded for the use of US planes, either in kind or manned by US volunteer crews, yet time was the chief concern: “If American planes could not arrive before the road was closed [by Japanese bombardment] or the Japanese stopped the sea routes by occupying Singapore, it would be too late and China’s position would be extremely if not hopelessly critical.”²⁷³¹ President Roosevelt expressed his sympathy with the Chinese plight and, while willing to enter into an alliance with China outside of wartime, he assured the

²⁷²⁶ Ibid., pg. 60.

²⁷²⁷ Paine, *The Japanese Empire*, pg. 147.

²⁷²⁸ Iriye, *The Origins of the Second World War*, pg. 114.

²⁷²⁹ Schroeder, *The Axis Alliance and Japanese-American Relations*, pg. 30.

²⁷³⁰ Bix, *Hirohito*, pg. 385.

²⁷³¹ Langer & Gleason, *The Undeclared War*, pg. 296.

Nationalist leader that “Chinese and American interests ran on parallel lines and it was a premise of American policy that China become capable of setting up an effective democratic state.”²⁷³² Far from warding off Washington from undertaking an active policy to defend the status quo in East Asia, the signature of the Tripartite Pact seemed to have achieved the opposite effect. The US would, from now on, “insist upon supporting China not simply for the sake of principle and of a permanent Far Eastern settlement, but also for the sake of self-defence and national security.”²⁷³³

Washington’s frustration at the inability to diplomatically check Japan’s attempts to construct an alternative regional order were becoming palpable, as US Ambassador Grew confided to President Roosevelt on 14 December 1940: “Dear Frank, after eight years of effort to build up something permanently constructive in American-Japanese relations, I find that diplomacy has been defeated by trends and forces utterly beyond its control, and that our work has been swept away as if by a typhoon, with little or nothing remaining to show for it.”²⁷³⁴ The expansion of the Greater East Asian Co-Prosperity Sphere, having taken aim at French and Dutch regional possessions, had prompted Washington to extend its national security interests across the Pacific and, with the continued assistance to Nationalist China, to the Asian mainland. As the year 1941 dawned, the United States and the Japanese Empire were locked in mutual suspicion and tensions. Attempting to diffuse the increasing explosive situation, Bishop James Walsh (1891-1981) and Father James Drought of the Catholic Maryknoll Order had travelled to Japan on their own initiative to meet with several Japanese policy makers and become acquainted with their views on the reasons for the sharp erosion of the bilateral Japanese-American relationship. Reporting their findings to President Roosevelt and Secretary of State Hull upon their return to the US in January 1941, the President became optimistic about the prospects of resolving several pressing issues.²⁷³⁵ Indeed, the US had received signals that the Japanese commitment to the Tripartite Pact was less than complete, leading to the hope that the tensions between Tokyo and Washington were due to principles and not conflicting strategic aims. While Japan focused on bringing its Chinese campaign to an end as well as developing the core area of the Co-Prosperity Sphere, namely China, Manchukuo, and Japan, the US was dedicated to assisting in securing a British victory in the war in Europe while, simultaneously maintaining the status quo, including through the provision of assistance to China in order to tie down large numbers of the Imperial Army.²⁷³⁶ As such, a review of each nation’s strategic goals could therefore lead to the conclusion that no obvious issue existed that should result in Japan and the US going to war. As such, “if the Japanese would retreat on the issues of the Tripartite Pact and of southward expansion and if the United States would at least compromise on China, war could probably be avoided and relations might be distinctly improved.”²⁷³⁷

Capitalizing on this perceived opening, the Japanese Government sent Ikawa Tadao (1893-1947), a friend of Prime Minister Konoe and executive of the Central Bank of the Industrial Association, and Colonel Iwakuro Hideo (1897-1970), chief of the military section of the Army’s Ministry’s Military Affairs Bureau, to Washington in February and March 1940 to commence

²⁷³² Ibid., pg. 297.

²⁷³³ Schroeder, *The Axis Alliance and Japanese-American Relations*, pg. 28.

²⁷³⁴ Boyle, John, “The Drought-Walsh Mission to Japan”, *Pacific Historical Review*, 1965, 34:2, pg. 141.

²⁷³⁵ Oka, Kunoe Fumimaro, pg. 119.

²⁷³⁶ Schroeder, *The Axis Alliance and Japanese-American Relations*, pg. 30.

²⁷³⁷ Ibid., pg. 31.

negotiations. Together with the newly appointed Ambassador Nomura Kichisaburō (1877-1964), a retired admiral who had served previously in the US as a Naval Attaché where he had already met President Roosevelt, they worked out an initial “Draft Understanding Between the Governments of Japan and the United States”. During the drafting period, the group was in contact with the US, as Secretary Hull had sanctioned the private participation of US Postmaster General Frank Walker (1886-1959). The main items of the document, presented by Ambassador Nomura to Secretary Hull on 16 April 1941, can be summarized as follows:

Article II—regarding the attitudes of both Governments towards the European war, Japan declared that the “purpose of its Axis Alliance was, and is, defensive and designed to prevent the extension of military groupings among nations not directly affected by the European War” underlining that “Japan, with no intention of evading its existing treaty obligations, desires to declare that its military obligation under the Axis Alliance comes into force only when one of the parties of the Alliance is aggressively attacked”; for its part the US “maintains that its attitude toward the European War is...determined by no aggressive alliance aimed to assist one nation against another.”;

Article III—regarding the relations between the two Governments concerning the China War, both the Japanese and US considered the possibility of direct negotiations between Chiang Kai-shek and Japan, based on acceptance of the independence of China; the withdrawal of Japanese troops from Chinese territory; the resumption of the ‘Open Door’; the “coalescence of the Ching Kai-shek and of Wang Jingwei”; and the Chinese recognition of Manchukuo, with the above terms constituting the basis of a peace agreement Tokyo would send to Nationalist China;

Article IV—both the US and Japan pledge not to menace each other militarily in the Pacific;

Article V—both countries “shall assure each other to mutually supply such commodities as are respectively available or required by either of them” and commit to “take necessary steps to the resumption of normal trade relations as formerly established under the Treaty of Navigation and Commerce”;

Article VI—regarding the Economic Activity of Both Nations in the Southwestern Pacific, Japan pledged to carry its activities out “by peaceful means, without resorting to arms” while “American cooperation and support shall be given in the production and procurement of natural resources (such as oil, rubber, tin, nickel) which Japan needs”;

Article VII—on Political Stabilization in the Pacific, the US and Japan “would not acquiesce in the future transfer of territories or the relegation of existing territories within the Far East and in the Southwestern Pacific area to any European Power” while, simultaneously, guaranteeing the independence of the Philippines.²⁷³⁸

According to the ideas of the unofficial negotiations, the concrete expression of each of the aforementioned Draft Understanding’s articles would be further developed and finalized at a

²⁷³⁸ Oka, Kunoe Fumimaro, pp. 120-123.

proposed Japanese-American Conference to be held in Honolulu, in the personal presence of President Roosevelt and Prime Minister Konoe in May 1941. According to the Japanese drafters, a foundation for permanent peace in the Pacific, in harmony with the contemporary political constellation, would be signed. The Draft constituted an encapsulation of Japan's attempts to secure the recognition of the core elements of its Greater East Asian Co-Prosperity Sphere. While exploiting the flexibility of Article III of the Tripartite Pact, Tokyo sought to declare the Pact's defensive nature but stepped back from any declaration that would eschew its involvement with the Axis Alliance, seeking instead to gain *de facto* US recognition of the Alliance as a mechanism of peace.²⁷³⁹ Regarding the Draft's proposals on China, while it paid lip service to the all-important US principle of the maintenance of the 'Open Door', it also sought to secure Washington's acceptance of Japan's major gains in China since 1931 through the recognition of the independence of Manchukuo and accord Japan influence in the Chinese Government through the inclusion of elements of Wang Jingwei's collaborationist regime. Such formulations would allow Japan to not only maintain the core area of its Greater East Asian Co-Prosperity Sphere but also provide an internationally recognized base over which it could excerpt its preponderance over an independent China. Turning to the direct spark of contemporary tension between Washington and Tokyo, namely the southwest Pacific, Japan only committed to cloak its expansion in commercial and economic terms, going so far as to request direct US assistance in obtaining the raw materials the Japanese economy required. Furthermore, all sanctions imposed on Japan by the US were to be eliminated through the abrogated Treaty of Navigation and Commerce. As to the military force posture of both nations, while no concrete proposals were fleshed out in the Draft, the fluid military situations in the contemporary Pacific meant that "neither side, with good reason, trusted the other not to increase its power in the southwest Pacific area."²⁷⁴⁰

Having been shown the Draft, Secretary of State Hull presented Ambassador Nomura with a statement containing four principles "which the United States insisted must be honoured in any treaty between the two Governments."²⁷⁴¹ These Four Points were said by Hull to constitute a *sine qua non* for any agreement to be reached and read as follows: i. Respect for the territorial integrity and sovereignty of each and all nations; ii. Support for the principle of non-interference in the internal affairs of other countries; iii. Support for the principle of equality, including equality of commercial opportunity; iv. non-disturbance of the status quo in the Pacific, except if the status quo may be altered by peaceful means.²⁷⁴² Hull informed the Japanese Ambassador that, in the event that Tokyo accepted these conditions, the Draft could be accepted as the basis for negotiations between the US and Japan. The Secretary of State understood his proposals meant nothing less than a "complete Japanese conversion to the principles of international peace, order, and justice, as he conceived them."²⁷⁴³ Likewise, the Four Points meant a revision of Japanese foreign policy to accept the basic tenets of the Settlement of 1919, implying the retrocession of the gains that the Japanese Empire had acquired since 1931. Ambassador Nomura was cognizant of Hull's comprehensive demands, so much so that he failed to inform his Government of their existence until May 1941 while Japan was drafting its counterproposal.²⁷⁴⁴

²⁷³⁹ Schroeder, The Axis Alliance and Japanese-American Relations, pg. 33.

²⁷⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, pg. 37.

²⁷⁴¹ Oka, Kunoe Fumimaro, pg. 123.

²⁷⁴² Schroeder, The Axis Alliance and Japanese-American Relations, pg. 37.

²⁷⁴³ *Ibid.*

²⁷⁴⁴ Oka, Kunoe Fumimaro, pg. 124.

The return of Foreign Minister Matsuoka from Europe in April 1941 changed the tone of the Japanese proposals that were submitted to the US over the remaining duration of the negotiations. Having just completed a public relations tour in support of the Axis Alliance, the Foreign Minister insisted that the Tripartite Pact be mentioned in the Draft and the US sharpen its commitment to refrain from assisting any one side in the European War. Matusoka went even further in raising Japanese demands regarding China, insisting that US-Japanese cooperation in China be based on the three principles of neighbourly friendship; joint defence against Communism; and economic cooperation, thereby solidifying Japan's position.²⁷⁴⁵ Presenting such revised proposals, Hull would express his disappointment that Tokyo seemed to be completely avoiding any serious consideration of his Four Points, thereby eschewing any possible settlement. Instead, Secretary Hull viewed that Tokyo was attempting to impose its reservations, in Hull's own words, in order to accomplish the following:“(1.) to stress Japan's alignment with the Axis; (2.) to avoid giving a clear indication of an intention to place Japan's relations with China on a basis which in the opinion of the Government of the United States would contribute to a last peace...and (3.) to veer away from clear-cut commitments in regard to policies of peace and of non-discriminatory treatment which are fundamentals of a sound basis for peace in the Pacific area.”²⁷⁴⁶ Discussions continued into June 1941, with the US Government stating its official position for the first time in the draft proposal of 21 June 1941.²⁷⁴⁷ Unsurprisingly, both nations had presented differing and distinct visions of regional order in East Asia. However, there remained little time for further deliberation. The following day, on 22 June 1941, the German Wehrmacht launched Operation Barbarossa, the invasion of the USSR, categorically transforming the scope of the European War as well as its effect on the already brittle geopolitical situation in East Asia.

10.2.18. Operation Barbarossa and its Consequences

During Foreign Minister Matsuoka's mission to Europe, the only insight into Germany's intention to fight the USSR was given by Hitler himself on 27 March 1941, when the Chancellor hinted to the Japanese emissary that a German attack on the Soviet Union was imminent.²⁷⁴⁸ Nevertheless, the news that German armies had crossed into the USSR came as a shock to the Japanese Government. Japanese policy was, once again, thrown into limbo by the course of global events. Many Japanese policy makers were shocked that, for a second time, German actions—taken without consultation with Tokyo—were pregnant with consequences for the Japanese Empire. Prime Minister Konoe was said to have been so distraught he contemplated resignation.²⁷⁴⁹ In signing the Tripartite Pact, Japan assumed that Germany would deal the final death knell to the British Empire; however with the commencement of the German-Soviet War, Berlin would obviously have to give first priority to the defeat of the USSR. No serious assistance could now be expected from Japan's European Allies, leaving Japan effectively isolated in the Pacific. Even Matsuoka, who had told Hitler in Berlin he could rely on Japanese assistance under any circumstances, now confessed to the Soviet Ambassador in Tokyo that “to be frank, Japan

²⁷⁴⁵ Ibid., pg. 128.

²⁷⁴⁶ Schroeder, *The Axis Alliance and Japanese-American Relations*, pg. 38.

²⁷⁴⁷ Oka, *Kunoe Fumimaro*, pg. 131.

²⁷⁴⁸ Paine, *The Wars for Asia*, pg. 177.

²⁷⁴⁹ Nish, *Japanese Foreign Policy in the Inter-war Years*, pg. 150.

finds herself in the most awkward position faced with the war between Germany and Italy, her allies, on the one hand, and the USSR on the other, with whom she had but recently begun to improve relations.”²⁷⁵⁰

A frantic series of Imperial Headquarters-Cabinet Liaison Conferences was convened to determine Japan’s response. The Imperial Navy, given the new geopolitical realities, insisted upon Japan moving to establish military bases and airfields in the unoccupied sector of southern French Indochina, even if such a plan would entail “risking war with Britain and the United States.”²⁷⁵¹ Japanese control would thereby allow the Imperial Military to project power over the Philippines, Malaya, and the Dutch East Indies, as well as permit Japan to access the resources of the Indochinese Peninsula. Foreign Minister Matsuoka demanded that the Japanese Empire immediately declare war on the Soviet Union, thereby postponing any advances into Indochina, arguing that, given the frosty relations between Moscow and Washington, there would be no danger of any negative consequences from the US.²⁷⁵² The Army Chief of Staff Sugiyama Hajime disagreed and supported the Navy’s suggestion to move against the rest of Indochina. Prime Minister Konoe declared his support for the operation against Indochina, underlining that “We should go ahead if the supreme command is in a position to do so.”²⁷⁵³ The Japanese decision to occupy southern French Indochina was therefore finalized in late June 1941.

Having decided to move further south, the Japanese Empire needed to give serious consideration to its new geopolitical position in East Asia as the Wehrmacht continued to advance towards Moscow. On 2 July 1941, the Konoe Cabinet drafted Japan’s official response, namely a document entitled ‘The Main Principles of the Empire’s Policy for Dealing with the Changing World Situation’. The conclusion was the unambiguous approval of the decision to move south, noting that “Japan is committed to a policy leading toward the establishment of the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere, and that policy will thereby contribute to world peace, regardless of the changes in the world situation. Japan will continue its efforts to bring about a settlement of the China War...To do so will require advancing south.”²⁷⁵⁴ Should this result in war breaking out with the US and Great Britain, so be it. Regarding the situation with the Soviet Union, the document did not recommend any conclusions, but allowed the Imperial Army to continue with its secret preparations for war with the USSR, should the situation allow: “Japan will not enter the German-Soviet war for the time being. If that conflict should develop to Japan’s advantage, it will result in the use of armed force to ‘settle the northern question’.”²⁷⁵⁵ Yet to prepare for a possible war with the Soviet Union the mobilization requirements were astounding: the 12 divisions stationed in Manchuria would need to be reinforced by a further 500,000 troops to reach wartime strength, requiring one-third of Japan’s domestic railways for two months.²⁷⁵⁶ Hence, based on the Empire’s ‘Main Principles’, Japan was preparing for military conflicts in the north and south while, simultaneously, waging a full-scale war in China.

²⁷⁵⁰ Schroeder, *The Axis Alliance and Japanese-American Relations*, pg. 48.

²⁷⁵¹ Bix, *Hirohito*, pg. 395.

²⁷⁵² Oka, *Konoe Fumimaro*, pg. 132.

²⁷⁵³ *Ibid.*, pg. 133.

²⁷⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁷⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁷⁵⁶ Drea, *Japan’s Imperial Army*, pg. 216.

Following the determination of its ‘Main Principles’, the Cabinet’s attention turned to responding to the US proposals of 21 June regarding a Draft Understanding. Foreign Minister Matsuoka expressed his distinct dissatisfaction with Hull’s statements, underscoring that Japan “could not abandon the Tripartite Pact” and, as Japan could not hinder any US entry into the war, acceptance of any proposals from Washington would spell the end of the Greater East Asian Co-Prosperity Sphere.²⁷⁵⁷ Prime Minister Konoe, supported by the Imperial Army and Navy Ministers, feared that such an approach would derail any prospect of a negotiated agreement with the US. In order to dispense with Matsuoka’s hard-line stance, Konoe reshuffled his Cabinet and nominated the more modest Admiral Toyoda Teijirō (1885-1961) as Foreign Minister. However, the creation of the new Cabinet sparked fears in middle echelon officers of both the Army and the Navy who suspected that the new Konoe Government would withdraw the Empire completely from the Axis, thereby jettisoning any possibility to implement the now officially sanctioned strike south.²⁷⁵⁸ Both Army and Navy ministers therefore conditioned their support for the new Cabinet contingent upon increased preparations for hostilities against the US and Great Britain. Consequently, the Konoe Cabinet was in the unique position of supporting negotiations with the United States on a regional agreement to avert war while simultaneously remaining committed to carrying out its approved war strategy.

Following the official formation of the new Cabinet on 28 July 1941, Japanese forces occupied southern French Indochina. The invasion initially involved 40,000 Japanese soldiers, however their numbers were soon increased to 185,000.²⁷⁵⁹ The US had caught wind of the Japanese designs and the State Department bluntly informed Ambassador Nomura that, in case of such an eventuality, any further negotiations on a Draft Understanding would be “pointless”.²⁷⁶⁰ Having confirmed reports of Japan’s planned actions, the State Department informed Tokyo on 23 July 1941 of Washington’s intent to break off all negotiations.²⁷⁶¹ This was followed up by even stronger measures. On 26 July 1941, President Roosevelt took a series of measures against Japan that left no ambiguity about Washington’s dissatisfaction. First, the 32nd President ordered US defences in the Philippines to be strengthened, including the dispatch of 272 B-17 long-range heavy bombers and 130 new P-40 fighter planes to protect them.²⁷⁶² General Douglas MacArthur (1880-1964), the retired Army Chief of Staff, was appointed Commander-in-Chief of all US forces in East Asia. Second, and much more significant, President Roosevelt signed an executive order freezing all Japanese assets in the United States, placing “all financial and import and export transactions in which Japanese interests are involved under the control of the [US] Government.”²⁷⁶³ The Secretary of the Treasury, Henry Morgenthau (1891-1967), had always espoused a hard-line against Japanese expansion in East Asia, and therefore happily undertook steps to interpret the presidential order as a way to impose a total oil and gasoline embargo against Japan. Great Britain and the Netherlands quickly followed suit, encircling Japan. The US saw their economic embargo now aligned with the Chinese, British, and Dutch, thereby forming the “ABCD

²⁷⁵⁷ Oka, Konoe Fumimaro, pg. 133.

²⁷⁵⁸ Bix, Hirohito, pg. 400.

²⁷⁵⁹ Ibid.

²⁷⁶⁰ Oka, Konoe Fumimaro, pg. 135.

²⁷⁶¹ Schroeder, The Axis Alliance and Japanese-American Relations, pg. 52.

²⁷⁶² Bix, Hirohito, pg. 400.

²⁷⁶³ Ibid., pg. 401.

group” aimed at blocking Japan and throwing an “economic noose around Tokyo’s [regional] ambitions.”²⁷⁶⁴

The resolute actions of President Roosevelt came as a shock to the Japanese Government. This reaction was all the more surprising given the fact that several former high-ranking Japanese policy makers had personally warned the Prime Minister that any further incursions into French Indochina would provoke Washington’s ire. Former Foreign Minister Shidehara Kijūrō, upon hearing the news that orders had been given for the Imperial Army to occupy southern Indochina, pleaded with Konoe to have them brought back to their bases on Taiwan and kept there, else “[Shidehara] was absolutely certain a full-scale war would erupt as a result of the Japanese action.”²⁷⁶⁵ Neither Prime Minister Konoe nor the Japanese Military were of the opinion that the Imperial occupation of southern Indochina would provoke a strong reaction from the US, let alone lead to a rupture of negotiations on a Draft Understanding. Following President Roosevelt’s 26 July 1941 orders, Konoe placed the blame squarely in the hands of the Imperial Military, writing “it is extremely unfortunate that [the military’s] view was erroneous and has brought such serious consequences.”²⁷⁶⁶ At the same time, the Prime Minister did not heed Shidehara’s council as he failed to rescind the operation. Konoe’s logic in approving the further advance south was motivated by the Army Chief of Staff Sugiyama’s justification that it “would be difficult to settle the China Incident without striking Britain and the United States.”²⁷⁶⁷ Indeed, this was the official rationale presented to Emperor Hirohito to persuade him to sanction the Imperial Military’s action. Given the unprecedentedly harsh US reaction, Prime Minister Konoe became deeply concerned with finding a way to repair the damage to US-Japanese relations the move into southern Indochina had caused.²⁷⁶⁸

On 4 August 1941, Konoe was received by Emperor Hirohito and broached the idea of personally attempting to resolve all outstanding issues with Washington through organizing a meeting with President Roosevelt. Ambassador Nomura approached Secretary Hull with the idea, however, Hull responded coolly, noting that the President was aboard ship, en route to meet with Prime Minister Churchill off Newfoundland, a meeting that would result in the signing of the Atlantic Charter.²⁷⁶⁹ Unsurprisingly, no Konoe-Roosevelt meeting ever took place. Instead, upon his return to Washington on 17 August 1941, the US President called for Ambassador Nomura and handed him two documents. The first was a written statement attesting to US intentions to “take immediately any and all steps it deemed necessary” should the Japanese Government continue to take further steps in pursuit of a policy aimed at military domination aimed at neighbouring countries.²⁷⁷⁰ The President underlined in the document that “Only one nation can open doors now. This time it is Japan’s turn.”²⁷⁷¹ Perhaps in order to facilitate this, the second document was a belated answer to Konoe’s attempts to convene a bilateral summit, with Roosevelt stressing that, should Japan abandon its expansionist policies and commit itself to a peace programme in the

²⁷⁶⁴ Ienaga Saburō, The Pacific War: World War II and the Japanese, 1931-1945, New York: Pantheon Books, 1978, pp. 131-132.

²⁷⁶⁵ Oka, Konoe Fumimaro, pg. 135.

²⁷⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, pg. 136.

²⁷⁶⁷ Drea, Japan’s Imperial Army, pg. 218.

²⁷⁶⁸ Oka, Konoe Fumimaro, pg. 139.

²⁷⁶⁹ Bix, Hirohito, pg. 406.

²⁷⁷⁰ Oka, Konoe Fumimaro, pg. 140.

²⁷⁷¹ Melber, Pearl Harbour, pg. 44.

Pacific, one in line with Hull's Four Points, the US would be ready to resume the negotiations that had been suspended in July 1941. The US President proposed Juneau, Alaska as a possible summit location, but for work on the summit to be launched, Japan would be obliged to "provide a clearer statement that had yet been furnished of its present attitude and plans."²⁷⁷² The Japanese Government eagerly presented such a document to Roosevelt on 28 August 1941, underlining Prime Minister Konoe's personal conviction that an in-person meeting with the President was essential in order to discuss all matters relevant regarding the current situation in the Pacific. Furthermore, the document presented the Japanese decision to occupy southern Indochina as a move made in self-defence, given the pressures the Empire faced in its campaign in China. Consequently, Konoe offered Roosevelt to withdraw all Japanese forces from French Indochina "as soon as the China War was settled or a just peace was established in East Asia."²⁷⁷³ Furthermore, with the Soviet-Japanese Neutrality Pact, Tokyo harboured no ill intent towards the USSR, extending the validity of this logic to all of Japan's neighbours.

The 32nd President was, according to Ambassador Nomura, pleased at Komura's communiqué and repeated that Juneau was indeed a good place for a summit and that he "would like to talk to Konoe for three or four days", with Konoe noting in his memoirs that "perhaps at that time Japan and the United States came closest to another."²⁷⁷⁴ The President's enthusiasm for an Alaska Summit, however, was not shared by the State Department. Secretary Hull was especially skeptical, complaining that the Konoe Government was, during preliminary conversations, already narrowing down the scope of the concessions it had pledged to make, noting in his memoirs that "Japan's insistence on holding the meeting and leaving the 'details' to be worked out later was in itself significant. It seemed to us that Japan was striving to push us into a conference from which general statements would issue—and Japan could then interpret and apply these statements to suit her own purposes, as she had always done in the past. Moreover, she could then say she had the President's endorsement of her actions."²⁷⁷⁵ Hull underlined that it was indeed Prime Minister Konoe who had overseen Japan's 1937 invasion of China; Japan's entry into the Tripartite Pact in 1940; and had established the puppet regime of Wang Jingwei in a blatant attempt to 'normalize' Japan's domination of China. Hull therefore counseled President Roosevelt that Konoe's overture was, in fact, a possible trap: "Unless the President were willing to agree to vague generalities that would all be to Japan's advantage, there was every likelihood that the meeting would end in failure. In that event, Japan's military officials could declare to the Japanese that the United States was responsible for the failure and proceed to prepare public opinion for war in the Pacific."²⁷⁷⁶ Hull convinced Roosevelt that no meeting would be in the interests of the US unless the results had been negotiated beforehand: "President Roosevelt would have relished a meeting with Konoe, at first he was excited at the prospect. But he instantly agreed that it would be disastrous to hold the meeting without first arriving at a satisfactory agreement."²⁷⁷⁷

On 6 September 1941, with the possibility of an Alaska Summit in limbo, the Konoe Cabinet called yet another Imperial Conference, approving the latest document to guide the Empire

²⁷⁷² Oka, Konoe Fumimaro, pg. 141.

²⁷⁷³ Ibid.

²⁷⁷⁴ Ibid., pg. 142.

²⁷⁷⁵ Hull, Memoirs, Vol. 2., pg. 1024.

²⁷⁷⁶ Ibid.

²⁷⁷⁷ Ibid., pg. 1025.

through the increasingly turbulent situation. The ‘Main Points in Implementing the Imperial Policy’ outlined an eventual Japanese reaction to the high probability of the failure of the negotiations between Tokyo and Washington. The document underlined that Japan would complete preparation for war by the end of October 1941 and “would not avoid war with the United States, Great Britain, and the Netherlands, if that were necessary” while, at the same time, underlining that Japan “would utilize all possible diplomatic measures to obtain its objectives.”²⁷⁷⁸ If, however, there were no prospects that Japan could find a diplomatic solution, the Empire would decide to immediately initiate hostilities against the United States, Great Britain, and the Netherlands. The document’s annex laid out exactly what demands Tokyo anticipated would be reciprocated through its negotiations with Washington: (i.) the US and Great Britain would not obstruct Japan in bilaterally coming to a settlement to terminate the China War, including closing the Burma Road and refraining from supplying any and all support to Chiang Kai-shek; (ii.) the US and Great Britain were to refrain from any undertakings that might be interpreted as a threat to the Japanese Empire, including recognizing the “special relationship” between Japan and French Indochina and allow for the maintenance of current Imperial deployments; (iii.) the US and Great Britain would “cooperate to allow Japan’s acquisition of necessary goods”, including fostering economic cooperation with Thailand and the Dutch East Indies.²⁷⁷⁹ To facilitate this, Japan was ready to signal its preparedness to not advance further than French Indochina and expressed its willingness to withdraw from the French colony once the China War had been concluded. The Empire, however, refused to modify any of its obligations under the Tripartite Pact.

At this point, the Imperial Army viewed the attempts to reach a negotiated settlement with the US as especially futile. The day before the Imperial Conference, Prime Minister Konoe and Army Chief of Staff Sugiyama reported to Emperor Hirohito on the newest developments in Japan’s national policy. The Emperor was alarmed at the scope of the document, noting that it gave primacy to military solutions over the diplomatic. To express his anxiety about the possible course of events, Hirohito read the poem his ancestor, the Meiji Emperor, had read before the commencement of the Russo-Japanese War:

*Throughout the world
Everywhere we are all brothers
Why then do the winds and waves rage so turbulently?*

Konoe had become well aware that matters had entered a final stage. In order to make a last ditch attempt to solve the situation diplomatically, the Prime Minister met with US Ambassador Grew and informed him that Japan “conclusively and wholeheartedly” agreed with Hull’s Four Points and expressed “his strong confidence that [the Prime Minister] could resolve the points of contention...through direct negotiations.”²⁷⁸⁰ Ambassador Grew responded that Japan had promised much in the past and delivered little, hence Washington now only could be assured through actions and facts. While Konoe attempted to salvage an increasingly bleak situation, the Imperial Army insisted on respecting the early October deadline for commencing hostilities as stipulated in the 6 September document. On 14 October, in what proved to be Konoe’s last Cabinet meeting before his resignation, Army Minister Tōjō underlined that “for the past six

²⁷⁷⁸ Oka, Konoe Fumimaro, pg. 144.

²⁷⁷⁹ Ibid.

²⁷⁸⁰ Ibid., pg. 148.

months, ever since April, the Foreign Minister has made painstaking efforts to adjust relations [with the US]. Although I respect him for that, we remain deadlocked...Our decision was 'to start the war...if by early October we cannot thoroughly achieve our demands through negotiations.' Today is the fourteenth...We are mobilizing hundreds of thousands of soldiers. Others are being moved from China and Manchuria, and we have requisitioned two million tonnes of ships...As I speak ships are on route to their destination. I would not mind stopping them, and indeed *would* have to stop them, if there was a way for a diplomatic breakthrough...The heart of the matter is the [imposition on Japan of a] withdrawal [from Indochina and China]...If we yield to America's demands, it will destroy the fruits of the China Incident. Manchukuo will be endangered and our control of Korea undermined."²⁷⁸¹ With the Imperial Military intent on war, Konoe, feeling he had lost the trust of the Emperor who supported the bellicose attitude of the pro-Axis elements of his Cabinet, chose to resign. In his letter of resignation, Konoe underlined no less than four times that his preferred course of action was to withdraw Japanese forces to preserve peace with the United States, underlining that Tōjō "had opposed the action and its purpose."²⁷⁸² With Konoe having vacated the post, the Emperor allowed Tōjō, who had vehemently argued against any concessions towards Washington, to assume the premiership.

Under the new Tōjō Cabinet, preparations for hostilities with the United States continued unabated. On 5 November 1941, however, another Imperial Conference decided to allow negotiations with Washington to continue until 1 December 1941, after which Japan would go to war. Orders were issued to Admiral Yamamoto Isoroku (1884-1943) ordering the combined fleet to prepare for attacks against Allied targets. The Empire's strategy was to strike first to secure southeastern Asia's resources to enable Japan to wage a prolonged war against the combined Allies, securing control of the Indian Ocean to sever communications between India and Great Britain, knocking London out of the war, after which the US would supposedly lose its will to fight, allowing Japan to make a final, favourable settlement through the auspices of the Vatican.²⁷⁸³ Such was Tokyo's grand strategy. In the meantime, however, efforts were still being made at somehow achieving an understanding with Washington. The Japanese were pursuing such discussions using two distinct options, A and B, "to be offered in succession": Proposal A, favoured by the Imperial Army, sought a full settlement with Washington as laid out in previous ideas that had been discussed with the US, namely with Japan retaining privileged rights in China and its right to interpretation of the Tripartite Pact. This proposal was handed over to the Americans on 7 November 1941. Proposal B, communicated to Washington on 20 November 1941, did not contain any mention of China and promised that Japan "would not advance by armed force further than French Indochina and would withdraw to the northern part of that colony *after* peace was reached in the war with China" while, in return, the US would restore its bilateral relationship with Japan to the state of affairs prior to the freezing of Japanese assets.²⁷⁸⁴ Both proposals A and B had a deadline of 30 November 1941.

The final act in the Japanese-American negotiations occurred on 26 November 1941. On that date, the Secretary of State handed to Ambassador Nomura a proposal, described by Hull himself as "an honest effort to keep our conversations going, with the forlorn hope that even at

²⁷⁸¹ Bix, *Hirohito*, pg. 417.

²⁷⁸² *Ibid.*, pg. 418.

²⁷⁸³ Drea, *Japan's Imperial Army*, pg. 221.

²⁷⁸⁴ Bix, *Hirohito*, pg. 425.

this ultimate minute a little common sense might filter into the military minds in Tokyo.”²⁷⁸⁵ The document was a ‘draft mutual declaration of policy’ and contained ten points of principle—nine of which were for mutual commitments—that were meant to constitute a binding agreement. While not specifically mentioning Manchuria, the only unilateral commitment the US sought to impose on Japan was to withdraw her armed forces from China and Indochina.²⁷⁸⁶ When handing Nomura what was to become known as the ‘Hull Note’, the US was cognizant that Japan was making full preparations for military action and, although Hull retrospectively presented his document as based on previously received Japanese proposals, President Roosevelt, although he viewed the Note as a “fair deal”, was skeptical about its success, stating “I do not have very much hope. We all must be ready for real difficulties, possibly coming very soon.”²⁷⁸⁷ When the ‘Hull Note’ had reached Tokyo, Prime Minister Tōjō interpreted the US document as “an ultimatum to Japan” although, clearly marked as ‘temporary’, it left specific room for a Japanese diplomatic response.²⁷⁸⁸ Tōjō opted instead to go to war. During the subsequent Cabinet meeting on 29 November 1941, no Japanese minister voiced any outright opposition to Japan opening hostilities. Emperor Hirohito’s brother, Prince Takamatsu (1905-1987), did attempt to stop him from according the final Imperial Sanction, the last formal step necessary before launching a Japanese attack against the United States. Only lasting five short minutes, the Emperor was informed that “the decision this time will be enormously important. Once you grant the Imperial Sanction, there can be no going back. If you have even the slightest doubt, make absolutely sure until you are convinced.”²⁷⁸⁹

The Cabinet meeting of 1 December 1941, with the Emperor present, was the final step where the Japanese decision to go to war was officially sanctioned. The Head of the Privy Council, Hara Yoshimichi (1867-1944), justified the decision to declare war on the US by couching the rationale in the historical context of the rise of the Japanese Empire: “If we were to give in [to the United States], then we would not only give up the fruits of the [First] Sino-Japanese War and the Russo-Japanese War, but also abandon the fruits of the Manchurian Incident. There is no way we could endure this...it is clear that the existence of our Empire is threatened, that the great achievements of the Emperor Meiji would all come to naught, and that there is nothing else we can do.”²⁷⁹⁰ With a subtle nod, the Emperor consented to the minutes of the meeting and General Sugiyama proceeded to brief his Majesty on the 8 December 1941 attacks against the United States and Great Britain.

10.2.19. The Course of the Second World War in Asia

10.2.19.1. Introduction

In retrospect, reflecting on the lead up to the Japanese entry into the Second World War, Kase Toshikazu (1903-2004), a career diplomat involved in the last-minute Japan-US negotiations and Japan’s future first Ambassador to the United Nations, ventured the following: “Thinking back on it now. I’d say I don’t believe it would have been possible to have avoided war in the final Imperial Conference when it was formally ratified. Events sometimes overwhelm you, surge

²⁷⁸⁵ Hull, *Memoires*, Vol II, pg. 1083.

²⁷⁸⁶ Ibid.

²⁷⁸⁷ Melber, *Pearl Harbour*, pg. 79.

²⁷⁸⁸ Bix, *Hirohito*, pg. 428.

²⁷⁸⁹ Ibid., pp. 430-431.

²⁷⁹⁰ Ibid., pg. 432.

around you, and carry you along. You can't always move them. One man's will alone is not enough to do anything. War has a life of its own."²⁷⁹¹ For Japan, its war started by its own initiative on 8 December 1941 (Tokyo time), the Imperial Army, imitating its opening strategy in the Russo-Japanese War, launched surprise attacks against British positions in Malaysia and, about an hour later, Japanese planes bombed the US naval base at Pearl Harbour.

While the psychological shock of the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbour was substantial, both in Hawaii and the continental US, it was not a surprise as this course of events had been anticipated by Japanese and US policy makers alike for months, if not years.²⁷⁹² The Tripartite Pact, so ardently defended by Prime Minister Tōjō, was not informed of the Japanese attack and the German Military Attaché was astounded to find out about it while walking his dog in Hibiya Park.²⁷⁹³

10.2.19.2. Victory and Defeat

It lies beyond the scope of this dissertation to trace the ultimate course of the Second World War in the Pacific, however, its broad strokes can be outlined. The Japanese attack against Pearl Harbour caught the US Navy by official surprise and the Army's landing on the Malay Peninsula was likewise successful. On 10 December 1941, Japanese bombers sank the new British battleship *HMS Prince of Wales* and the heavy cruiser *HMS Repulse*, eliminating Great Britain's Far Eastern Squadron, marking important moments in overcoming a "latent Japanese inferiority complex towards two of the great world powers."²⁷⁹⁴ The initial mood in Tokyo was jubilant as Yoshido Toshio, a full lieutenant in the Intelligence Department of the Imperial Navy General Staff recalled: "In the next couple of days, information about the attack on Pearl Harbour...came pouring in. Soon everyone knew. "Victory! Victory!" Things became raucous with the news...I was stunned by our success. Those in the Operations Section told us, 'We planned this!' They were swaggering up and down the halls, swinging their shoulders. Full of pride."²⁷⁹⁵

Germany followed with a declaration of war against the United States, expanding the conflict into a truly world war. The "Oriental Blitzkrieg" continued unabated "with clockwork and precision". Hong Kong fell on 25 December 1941; Manila on 2 January 1942; and Japanese paratroop units seized the critical Palembang oil fields in the Dutch East Indies on 15 February 1942, the same day that the British surrendered Singapore.²⁷⁹⁶ By the end of May 1942, almost the entire Philippines and Burma were under the effective control of the Imperial Army.

²⁷⁹¹ Cook Taya, Haruko & Cook, Theodore, Japan at War: An Oral History, New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1992, pg. 95.

²⁷⁹² Iriye, The Origins of the Second World War, pg. 184.

²⁷⁹³ Jansen, The Making of Modern Japan, pg. xiv.

²⁷⁹⁴ Ienaga, The Pacific War, pg. 142.

²⁷⁹⁵ Cook & Cook, Japan at War, pg. 79.

²⁷⁹⁶ Ienaga, The Pacific War, pg. 143.

Map 7: The Course of the Second World War in Asia (1941-1945)



Source: Paine, The Wars for Asia

Yet while the six months after Pearl Harbour had extended the Japanese Empire to the frontier of India, the ends of the Indonesian Archipelago, and the Aleutian Islands, defeat was equally “swift and overwhelming.”²⁷⁹⁷ The Japanese attack on Midway Island resulted in the defeat of the Imperial Navy and the irreplaceable loss of four carriers. Hiding its scope from the Japanese public, the Imperial defeat at Midway wrecked Japan’s offensive capabilities and caused the Japanese and German Empires to abandon their ambitious plans to meet up in the Indian subcontinent.²⁷⁹⁸ The US began its counteroffensive against the Imperial Army with its landing on Guadalcanal on 7 August 1942 where the Japanese garrison soon found itself surrounded, deprived of air supremacy and food supplies, and soon became reduced to starvation. This scenario would now repeat itself over the vast expanses of the Pacific. The carnage was described by Yoshida Kashichi, a non-commission officer who somehow survived the ordeal, in a noteworthy work Poems from the Battle of Guadalcanal, encapsulating the Japanese experience in the Pacific following the turning of the martial tables at Midway:

*No matter how far we walk
We don't know where we're going
Trudging along under dark jungle growth*

*When will this march end?
Hide during the day
Move at night
Deep in the lush Guadalcanal jungle*

*Our rice is gone
Eating roots and grass
Along the ridges and cliffs*

²⁷⁹⁷ Ibid.

²⁷⁹⁸ Paine, The Japanese Empire, pg. 159.

*Leaves hide the trail, we lose our way
Stumble and get up, fall and get up*

*Covered with mud from our falls
Blood oozes from our wounds
No cloth to bind our cuts
Flies swarm to the scabs
No strength to brush them away
Fall down and cannot move
How many times I've thought of suicide.²⁷⁹⁹*

The Allied counteroffensive continued to push the Japanese forces back across the Pacific through the US 'island hopping' campaign while garrison after garrison of Imperial forces were annihilated in what the Japanese Government designated as an 'honourable death'. The arrival of further US airpower to support the Nationalist Chinese deprived Japanese forces from their offensive capabilities, with, in the words of the Imperial Army medic serving in China, Yuasa Ken, "Japan's occupation of China [being] no more than a collection of dots and lines in a vast theatre of operations."²⁸⁰⁰ Following the surrender of the German Sixth Army at Stalingrad in February 1943, followed by the Italian 8 September 1943 decision to sign an armistice, the winds of war were beginning to blow in favour of the Allies. Attention now turned to discussions on the structuring of the postwar order to which this dissertation now focuses.

10.2.19.3. The Cairo Conference

In October 1943, the Foreign Ministers of the three powers that constituted the Allies, the US, UK, and USSR, convened in Moscow to discuss the course of the global war and how joint coordination amongst them could shorten the war. While much of the details focused on general principles for a settlement in Europe following an Allied victory, the Moscow Conference was notable as, for the first time, it included explicit Chinese participation. During the first two years of the Pacific war, despite sharing the same verve for joint cooperation towards an Allied victory, there were only sporadic discussions on what a postwar order would look like in practice.²⁸⁰¹ No consistent planning mechanism between Washington and Chongqing was created to handle postwar issues. One of the main stumbling blocks was each country's differing postwar threat perception. Chiang Kai-shek clearly saw the Soviet Union, and its obsession with propagating Bolshevism, as the principle threat to China's future in any postwar order; President Roosevelt assumed a much more idealistic approach, insisting upon "continuous cooperation between the Big Four [US, Great Britain, the USSR, and China] and held Moscow's good will as essential to such a regime."²⁸⁰² Hence, both the US and Nationalist China held different threat perceptions and basic assumptions of the role of the Soviet Union in postwar East Asia. During the visit of US emissaries to Chongqing, Chiang insisted on the creation of an intimate postwar strategic partnership in order to block any eventual Soviet designs in East Asia: "[the] central issue in the

²⁷⁹⁹ Yoshida Kashichi, "When Will This March End?" in Ienaga, *The Pacific War*, pg. 144.

²⁸⁰⁰ Cook & Cook, *Japan at War*, pg. 148.

²⁸⁰¹ Liu Xiaoyun, *A Partnership for Disorder: China, the United States, and their Policies for the Postwar Disposition of the Japanese Empire*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996, pg. 106.

²⁸⁰² Ibid.

Pacific will be whether or not China can successfully prevent the Soviet aggression. In other words, the issue boils down to whether or not China can achieve America's assistance and become a Far Eastern barrier protecting democratic countries...A strong China will be able to assume the responsibilities for preventing the Communists from becoming rampant in the Pacific. Before the war, China used to be a buffer between Japan and Russia. After the war China will be a buffer between America and the Soviet Union."²⁸⁰³ Unsurprisingly, Roosevelt, still enthralled with shades of broken Wilsonian visions, rejected such overtures in the name of international cooperation.

The Anglo-American conference in Casablanca in January 1943 made an unambiguous declaration to the world that the Allies, unsurprisingly, would adopt their traditional approach to warfare and refuse any peace negotiations until the goal of unconditional surrender against Germany and Japan had been reached. Chiang Kai-shek was particularly offended that no Chinese Delegation had been invited to Casablanca, given China's key role in the coalition against Japan.²⁸⁰⁴ Gradually, while remaining disappointed in Chiang's military conduct of the war, Roosevelt came to realize the importance of considering China's role in the future of East Asia, despite any personal differences with the Nationalist leader, as the President explained to Chinese Foreign Minister, T.V. Soong, "Chiang may die...and there still will be China. Split she may be into North and South, and still it will be China. Split into Communist and Kuomintang, China will still be China....with her 425 millions is bound to become the strong power in the Far East and she will be the necessary adjunct to the success of our great enterprise."²⁸⁰⁵ Hence, Roosevelt had recognized that, by 1943, the geopolitical constellations had now shifted and that the Allies needed to come to terms with a categorically different China. Hence, the 32nd President sought to arrange a personal meeting with the Nationalist Chinese leader.

The first traces of such an approach, at least on behalf of the US, were to be seen in Moscow. Following the meeting between the Foreign Ministers of the US, USSR and Great Britain, the Chinese Ambassador to the Soviet Union, Fu Binchang (1895-1965), was invited to partake in the signing of the Joint Four Nation Declaration. While committing the nations to act together towards defeating the Axis enemy, the Declaration also recognized, in Article IV, the "necessity of establishing at the earliest practicable date of a general international organization, based on the sovereign equality of all peace-loving states, and open to membership by all such states, large and small, for the maintenance of international peace and security."²⁸⁰⁶ Article V went even further and agreed that the now four Allied powers "will consult with one another and as occasion requires with other members of the United Nations with a view to joint action on behalf of the community of nations."²⁸⁰⁷ Given the ongoing war, the Declaration was of a declaratory nature, however, with the signature of the Chinese Ambassador, the document officially recognized a one of the four major global powers. Furthermore, through China's inclusion in the Declaration, the nation was accorded a specific role in the shaping of the postwar international

²⁸⁰³ Ibid., pg. 108.

²⁸⁰⁴ Caprio, Mark, "(Mis)-Interpretations of the 1943 Cairo Conference: The Cairo Communiqué and Its legacy among Koreans During and After World War II", *International Journal of Korean History*, Vol. 27, No. 1. Feb. 2022, pg. 141.

²⁸⁰⁵ Liu, *A Partnership for Disorder*, pg. 117.

²⁸⁰⁶ *Text of a Joint Declaration from the Governments of United States, United Kingdom, Soviet Union, and China of 1 November 1943*, <https://congressional.proquest.com/histvault?q=002166-047-0031&accountid=14682>.

²⁸⁰⁷ Ibid.

system and the novel international organization that would shape it. President Roosevelt commented, when reading the Four Power Declaration, that he considered it a “‘great triumph’ that hundreds of millions of Chinese would be on the Allied side in the postwar period.”²⁸⁰⁸

As a follow-up to the Moscow Conference, the Cairo Conference (codenamed SEXTANT) was organized between the US, Great Britain, and China between 22-26 November 1943. Due to its still valid Neutrality Pact with Japan, the Soviet Union declined to participate. The Cairo Conference not only outlined the common Allied position against Japan but also touched upon the configuration of postwar East Asia. The attendance of Chiang Kai-shek personally marked the first time that a Chinese leader was invited to participate in a high-level summit of the Western Powers on equal terms. As such, the Cairo Conference would “end the old era of Chinese-Western estrangement and open a new one of equity and reciprocity in Chinese-foreign relations.”²⁸⁰⁹ However, Roosevelt’s desire to engage with Chiang Kai-shek to discuss new system realities was not shared by British Prime Minister, Winston Churchill. Concerned about the fate of British Asian colonies after the Japanese defeat, the British Delegation refused to engage in discussions with Chiang. Churchill was, in particular, dismissive of Chinese participation, and had no desire whatsoever to meet Chiang Kai-shek, writing to Roosevelt that the British authorities would prepare suitable accommodation for the leaders of the three powers, adding that “for Chiang Kai-shek, to whom he referred to a ‘Celestes’, he had gotten an ‘opinion on Tutankhamen’s tomb.’”²⁸¹⁰ Such typical Churchillian arrogance resulted from Roosevelt’s insistence that all former European colonies should be, once again echoing the globalist ideas of his presidential predecessor, placed under a postwar trusteeship.²⁸¹¹ This fundamental difference in opinion made London less than enthusiastic at Chinese participation in what it viewed as an Anglo-American summit.

President Roosevelt, however, sought to use Cairo to further enhance a four-state approach, not only to ending the current war, but also in constructing its postwar order: “[the President felt] firstly the conference should not be the Anglo-American ‘get-together’ before Teheran [where Roosevelt would meet Stalin] and, in particular, the private conclave with Churchill the latter had wished; and secondly that Far Eastern problems should dominate the agenda”.²⁸¹² Before arriving in Cairo, Chiang had ordered the Chinese Foreign Minister to draft two reports on the former Chinese territories that had been annexed by Japan in the Settlement of 1895. The meeting with Chiang and Roosevelt took place on 23 November 1943. The two leaders agreed that all former Chinese territories that were ceded to Japan in 1895—Taiwan and the Pescadores Islands—would be returned to China. More importantly, this understanding also extended to the territories that had fallen under Japanese control since 1931, namely Manchuria and the Liaodong Peninsula. Chiang also informed Roosevelt that China harboured no intention to claim Japanese territory, such as the Ryukyu Islands that had previously paid tribute to Imperial China, for, as they had never been part of China, there was no rationale behind claiming them.²⁸¹³ Roosevelt then proceeded to propose a joint US-Chinese occupation of the territory, with both leaders stating that the islands should be

²⁸⁰⁸ Tuchman, Barbara, *Stilwell and the American Experience in China, 1911-1945*, New York: The MacMillan Company, 1970, pg. 401.

²⁸⁰⁹ Liu, *A Partnership for Disorder*, pg. 118.

²⁸¹⁰ Ibid.

²⁸¹¹ Caprio, Mark, “(Mis)-Interpretations of the 1943 Cairo Conference”, pg. 145.

²⁸¹² Sainsbury, Keith, *The Turning Point: Roosevelt, Stalin, Churchill, and Chiang Kai-Shek, 1943: the Moscow, Cairo, and Teheran Conferences*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985, pg. 169.

²⁸¹³ Caprio, Mark, “(Mis)-Interpretations of the 1943 Cairo Conference”, pg. 147.

separated from Japan in any postwar settlement. Regarding other European colonies in East Asia, a consensus emerged between the Chinese and American leaders that France, given Paris's "abysmal" record in governing the territory, should not be allowed to return to Indochina, while Hong Kong should be handed back to China, although Roosevelt advised Chiang to not actively raise this issue.²⁸¹⁴ As regards to Korea, Chiang supported the view that the peninsula should be granted postwar independence, a stance Roosevelt supported, however underlined Washington's standpoint that "the Korean people were ill-prepared to handle their independence, they 'should be placed under a 40-year tutelage'".²⁸¹⁵

The final Cairo Declaration outlined a preliminary vision of what the three Pacific allies held for a postwar regional order in East Asia. The Allied Pacific Powers, now with China considered among them, committed to "fighting this war to restrain and punish the aggression of Japan. They covet no gain for themselves and have no thought of territorial expansion. It is their purpose that Japan, shall be stripped of all the islands in the Pacific which she has seized or occupied since the beginning of the first World War in 1914, and that all the territories that Japan has stolen from the Chinese, such as Manchuria, Formosa, and the Pescadores, shall be restored to the Republic of China. Japan will also be expelled from all other territories which she has taken by violence and greed."²⁸¹⁶ After dismantling the Japanese Empire, the communiqué turned to make minor mention of the fate of the Korean Peninsula, noting that the Powers were "mindful of the enslavement of the people of Korea, are determined that in due course Korea shall become free and independent."²⁸¹⁷ Hence, while the Cairo Declaration promised Korea eventual liberation, the time table of its actual postwar independence was unclear and subject to further discussions. The Japanese Foreign Ministry was predictably unimpressed with the Cairo Declaration and, in a report released a week following its publication, it underlined the Allies' contradictions in their statements towards East Asia, noting the Declaration's insistence on "open doors of equal opportunity" but treated Japan as a "third rate country" (*santō koku*/三等国) and ignored the plight of the Asian people still under European government.²⁸¹⁸

While providing a superficial overview of Allied designs for a new regional order in East Asia following a Japanese surrender, the Cairo discussions and Declaration marked the only time that regional issues would be discussed in detail until after the German capitulation of May 1945.

10.2.19.4. The Yalta Conference and the Far East Agreement

Convening in the Soviet resort of Yalta in February 1945, the main focus of the Yalta Conference was on the destruction and dismemberment of Germany. It would represent the last major diplomatic summit of President Roosevelt, who would die in April 1945, and his weakened physical state was obvious when meeting Churchill and Stalin. While East Asia did not figure in the public portion of the Yalta Declaration, the fate of the region was the subject of yet another secret diplomatic protocol that arose from negotiations, namely the Far Eastern Agreement.

²⁸¹⁴ Ibid., pg. 148.

²⁸¹⁵ Ibid.

²⁸¹⁶ *The Cairo Declaration* of 26 November 1943, <https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/cairo-declaration>, accessed 15 May 2024.

²⁸¹⁷ Ibid.

²⁸¹⁸ Caprio, Mark, "(Mis)-Interpretations of the 1943 Cairo Conference", pg. 156.

One of the 32nd President's objectives in the closing stages of the Second World War was to ostensibly save as many American lives as possible.²⁸¹⁹ As early as 1943, the United States became aware that any Soviet entry into the war against Japan would entail accommodating Moscow's interests in the Far East. The Soviet approach was evident to the State Department as of the Teheran Conference where President Roosevelt met with Prime Minister Churchill and Soviet dictator Stalin. While the focus of the Allied discussion lay on plotting the destruction of Europe, elements of future postwar policy towards East Asia were also raised, albeit in the corridors. Meeting at the Soviet Embassy in Teheran, Stalin vaguely informed Roosevelt that the USSR had every intention of assisting "in the destruction of Japan following the defeat of Germany."²⁸²⁰ What would concretely motivate Moscow to action remained, however, unclear. These considerations were subsequently refined by the USSR and presented to Washington through a series of cables from US Ambassador William Averell Harriman (1891-1986) to the President throughout 1944 and should have formed the base for bilateral US-Soviet discussions at Yalta.²⁸²¹ At the Second Quebec Conference of September 1944, where US and British military planners met bilaterally to adopt a final plan for defeating Japan, prioritizing sea and air blockages of Japanese territory and eventually invading the Home Islands. Here, Soviet participation was indeed envisaged, with Roosevelt telegraphing Stalin at Conference's end that "Our countries are waging a successful war against Germany and we can surely join together with no less success in crushing a nation that I am sure in my heart is as great an enemy of [the Soviet Union] as she is of ours."²⁸²²

Interested in securing Soviet intervention in the war against Japan, Washington's concerns were twofold. First, the United States had, through the Cairo and Moscow Declarations of 1943, ushered in Nationalist China as a recognized global power on the international stage. The US priority was to "treat and sustain China as one of the four main members of international political policy" and this point was repeatedly underlined to the Soviet regime.²⁸²³ Yet absence of a Chinese Delegation at Yalta indicated that Roosevelt's earlier vision of securing global peace through cooperation between the 'Four Policemen' (US, UK, USSR, China) had been diluted, leaving the task of ensuring international stability to the Big Three leaders who convened in Crimea. Prime Minister Churchill was especially dismissive of any consideration of China as a postwar global leader, declaring his conviction that considering China as "one of the world's four great Powers is an absolute farce."²⁸²⁴ While China was recognized at Yalta as a unified, independent, and sovereign actor, it was not viewed as a major power on the regional, let alone global, stage. By February 1945, with the US having reconquered the Philippines, Guam, and Saipan—allowing direct US air raids against the Japanese homeland—China's strategic position amongst the Allied

²⁸¹⁹ Boasberg, Leonard, "An Inquiry into the Far Eastern Provisions of the Yalta agreement and a Consideration of some of their Later Interpretations", MA Thesis, University of Nebraska at Omaha; 1964, pg. 104.

²⁸²⁰ Alexander, David, "Yalta Conference—The Far East Agreement", MA Thesis, The University of Mississippi, 1961, Electronic Theses and Dissertations. 2630, pg. 30

²⁸²¹ Ibid., pg. 21.

²⁸²² Iriye Akira, *Power and Culture: The Japanese-American War 1941-1945*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1981, pg. 219.

²⁸²³ Feis, Herbert, *The China Tangle: The American Effort in China from Pearl Harbour to the Marshall Mission*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1972, pg. 226.

²⁸²⁴ Akria, Iriye, "The United States as an Asian-Pacific Power" in Hsiao, Gene (ed.), *Sino-American Détente and Its Policy Implications*, New York: Praeger Publishers, 1974, pg. 12.

coalition inevitably fell.²⁸²⁵ It is likewise possible that such disquietude about China's future, despite its importance in the ongoing campaign against the Japanese, lay in the simple fact that, given the differing postwar aims of the Kuomintang and CCP, a united China remained nothing more than a desirable policy objective. Through the efforts of General "Vinegar Joe" Stilwell (1883-1946), serving as the Chief of Staff of Chiang Kai-shek, Washington was attempting to negotiate stronger cooperation between the Nationalists and Communists to fight Japan, despite growing concerns in Washington over the reliability of the Kuomintang as a partner. Yet the US still remained convinced of its primary responsibility for China. Given Moscow's strong interest in postwar China, the US therefore underlined to its Soviet allies that it sought to avoid a civil war in China while, at the same time, refusing to recognize the CCP as a legitimate political force in China. Concern remained nonetheless that any Soviet incursion into Chinese territory would serve to augment Moscow's designs towards China, as noted by Barney Giles (1892-1964), Deputy Commander of the US Army Air Force, who highlighted that the Soviet Union "considers [that] China shall not become a base for aggressive action against the USSR on the part of another great power, or itself be in a position to threaten the Soviet territories in Asia...[for this reason] the USSR will aim at influence in China that is at least equal to any other power."²⁸²⁶ While no longer committed to according China the same status as it had done in Cairo, the United States maintained every intention of keeping its role as a friend to China, evidenced since the opening of the Open Door policy in 1898 and Washington's steadfast defence of Chinese territorial integrity. Hence, at the Yalta conference, while playing lip service to China's status on the international stage, Roosevelt committed the Big Three to following the US policy of respecting China's territorial sovereignty, refraining from interfering with Chinese domestic affairs, as well as continuing to recognize Chiang Kai-shek as the Government of China.²⁸²⁷

Second, however, was concern at the human cost involved in pursuing a final assault against the remaining Japanese forces in the field and on the Home Islands. The US Joint Chiefs of Staff, mirroring the wishes of President Roosevelt, simultaneously sought an expedient Soviet entry into the war against Japan. On 14 October 1944, they presented their vision of Soviet involvement to the Red Army. In particular, the "principal and ultimate job of the Soviet Union" would be to destroy Japanese forces in Manchuria.²⁸²⁸ Stalin noted that the Red Army would be able to undertake such an operation a full three months after the defeat of Germany to allow for the necessary stockpiling of supplies. At the same time, the Georgian Bolshevik underlined that "certain political aspects...would have to be taken into account. The [Soviets] would have to know what they are fighting for", reminding Ambassador Harriman that the USSR "had certain claims against Japan."²⁸²⁹ On 14 December 1944, Stalin met with Ambassador Harriman and finally revealed the political price for Soviet entrance into the war against the Japanese Empire: "(1.) The Kurile Islands and Lower Sakhalin should be returned to Russia [in order to protect Vladivostok]; (2.) to lease both Port Arthur and Dairen and the surrounding area; (3.) to lease the lines of the Chinese Eastern Railway; (4.) to recognize the status quo in Outer Mongolia [maintenance of the People's Republic of Mongolia an independent state]."²⁸³⁰ Agreeing upon these political terms,

²⁸²⁵ Ryosei Kokubun; Soeya, Yoshihide; Takahara Akio & Kawashima Shin, *Japan-China Relations in the Modern Era*, New York: Routledge, 2017, pg. 26.

²⁸²⁶ Iriye Akira, *Power and Culture: The Japanese-American War*, pg. 231.

²⁸²⁷ Iriye, "The United States as an Asian-Pacific Power", pg. 13.

²⁸²⁸ Feis, *The China Tangle*, pg. 229.

²⁸²⁹ *Ibid.*, pg. 231.

²⁸³⁰ *Ibid.*, pg. 233.

entailing US acquiescence of a complete termination of Chinese claims towards Outer Mongolia and the de facto recognition of Soviet special interests in Manchuria would be the subject of discussion between Stalin and Roosevelt at Yalta.

The concessions demanded by Moscow were neither revealed to the State Department nor to the Nationalist Chinese Government, including Chiang Kai-shek, who sought to keep himself abreast of the Yalta discussions. Harriman, while informing the President of Stalin's political conditions, underlined that in his opinion, "although he was subject to being wrong, if there was no arrangement between the Soviet and Chinese Governments before the Soviet Union entered the Pacific War, the Soviet forces would back the Chinese Communists in the North and turn over to them the administration of the Chinese territories which the Red Army would liberate; and [Chiang] would find himself in an increasingly difficult situation."²⁸³¹ Hence, US policy towards East Asia at the February 1945 tripartite summit between Washington, London, and Moscow at Yalta would be focused on China regaining the territories it had lost to Japan since 1895; assisting China in maintaining its place as one of the four global Great Powers as likewise envisioned in Egypt; securing the necessary degree of Chinese unity to accomplish this; and, finally, ensuring the USSR's entry into the Pacific War as soon as possible while, simultaneously, "guarding against undue Soviet demands for rights or territory as a reward."²⁸³² With these goals in mind, the US Delegation set out for Crimea.

The primary focus of the discussions at Yalta was not East Asia, as the three leaders devoted almost all of their efforts to recreate a new political reality on the European continent. China was not invited to the Conference and any discussions on East Asian political questions were held solely at Head of State level. Indeed, the Soviet conditionality for its entry into the Pacific War was agreed, as confirmed by the new US Secretary of State Edward Stettinius (1900-1949), through a secret agreement reached through private discussions between President Roosevelt and Stalin.²⁸³³ Known as the Far East Agreement, the officially titled "Agreement regarding Japan" was signed on 11 February 1945 and contained the following text: "the leaders of the three Great Powers—the Soviet Union, the United States of America, and Great Britain—have agreed that in two or three months after Germany has surrendered and the war in Europe is terminated, the Soviet Union shall enter into war against Japan on the side of the Allies on the condition that: (1.) The status quo in Outer Mongolia shall be preserved; (2.) The former rights of Russia violated by the treacherous attack of Japan in 1904 shall be restored [the southern part of Sakhalin, the commercial port of Dairen shall be internationalized, safeguarding the pre-eminent interests of the USSR, and Port Arthur leased to the Soviet Union]; (3.) The Kurile Islands shall be handed over to the Soviet Union."²⁸³⁴ While the document required that the provisions pertaining to Outer Mongolia, still claimed by the Republic of China, and the lease of Chinese ports would require the consent of Chiang Kai-shek, it likewise stipulated that "the President will take measures in order to maintain this concurrence on advice from Marshal Stalin."²⁸³⁵ The USSR, in exchange for such concessions, "expresses its readiness to conclude with the National

²⁸³¹ Ibid.

²⁸³² Ibid., pg. 238.

²⁸³³ Stettinius, Edward, *The Diaries of Edward R. Stettinius, 1943-1946*, New York: New Viewpoints, 1975, pg. 255.

²⁸³⁴ Elleman, *International Rivalry and Secret Diplomacy in East Asia*, pg. 214.

²⁸³⁵ Ibid.

Government of China a pact of friendship and alliance between the USSR and China in order to render assistance...for the purpose of liberating China from the Japanese yoke.”²⁸³⁶

Given the extent of the concessions accorded to the Soviet Union, the Far Eastern Agreement remained a top-secret document, “taken immediately to Washington and deposited in the President’s personal safe”, with very few of the President’s closest advisers aware of its existence.²⁸³⁷ Likewise, following its signature, no inkling of the agreement was revealed to the Chinese out of fear of its contents leaking out of Chongqing and a possible negative reaction to the Soviet concessions in Manchuria. Indeed, given the sweeping scope of concessions the 32nd President had opted to make, criticism would be levelled against him for caving in to Stalin’s demands following his April 1945 passing, however, during the summer of 1945, the US Secretary of War Stimson described the US Army’s dogged insistence on bringing the Soviet Union into the Japanese war: “As we understood it in July, there was a very strong possibility that the Japanese Government might determine upon resistance to the end, in all the areas of the Far East under its control. In such an event the Allies would be faced with the enormous task of destroying an armed force of five million men and five thousand suicide aircraft...We estimated that if we should be forced to carry this plan to its conclusion, the major fighting would not end until the latter part of 1946, at the earliest. I was informed that such operations might be expected to cost over a million casualties to American forces alone.”²⁸³⁸ Soviet intervention could, therefore, help neutralize the feared Kwantung Army in Manchuria, thereby substantially contribute to averting the aforementioned scenario as described by Stimson. With Soviet intervention, and supposedly its accompanying respect of Chinese sovereignty now assured, the eventual defeat of Germany would determine the timetable of the establishment of a new front against the now beleaguered Japanese Empire.

At the same time the Far Eastern Agreement underlined, through his efforts to accommodate Soviet demands, Roosevelt’s “dwindling interest in cooperation with China as the cornerstone of his Asian policy.”²⁸³⁹ This also extended to the question of the postwar influence of the European Powers in East Asia, first and foremost Great Britain. The private conversation between Roosevelt and Stalin did not confine itself to granting Moscow its conditions for entering the Japanese war, but also presented the 32nd President’s broad vision of a political settlement for postwar East Asia. Turning to the fate of Korea, Roosevelt “proposed that the Soviets, the Chinese, and the Americans share a trusteeship over Korea.”²⁸⁴⁰ This three-power trusteeship, in accordance with the brief mention at the end of the Cairo Declaration, would last for twenty to thirty years, a period that the President deemed sufficient for the Koreans to prepare themselves for self-government. In doing so, Roosevelt sought to explicitly exclude Great Britain from East Asia, both from any responsibility of Korea, but also reiterating his desire to see Hong Kong returned to China—to which Stalin cautioned that Prime Minister Churchill “might kill us”, should he catch wind of the President’s intentions.²⁸⁴¹ However, the message delivered at Yalta was clear and tacitly accepted by both leaders: the new status quo in East Asia would be subject to bilateral

²⁸³⁶ Ibid.

²⁸³⁷ Stettinius, Edward, Roosevelt and the Russians: The Yalta Conference, Garden City: Doubleday & Company, 1949, pg. 94.

²⁸³⁸ Ibid., pp. 96-97.

²⁸³⁹ Iriye, Power and Culture, pg. 231.

²⁸⁴⁰ Clemens, Diane Shaver, Yalta, New York: Oxford University Press, 1970, pg. 248.

²⁸⁴¹ Ibid.

discussions and cooperation between Washington and Moscow: “Britain and France would be excluded and the Far East would be opened to American influence. The Soviet Union would help fill in the vacuum left by the withdrawal of Japan and the exclusion of the Western imperialists.”²⁸⁴² Hence, nothing more than a vague sketch of a postwar East Asia had been drawn at Yalta by the two powers, a fact that would be crucial in shaping the future regional trajectory.

10.2.19.5. The Potsdam Proclamation

Following the surrender of Germany, the Japanese Empire was left alone against the Allies. The Big Three leaders met in Soviet-occupied Potsdam between 17 July to 2 August 1945, with President Harry Truman (1884-1972) replacing the deceased Roosevelt, to finalize their plans for the dismemberment of Germany and most of Europe. At the same time, like in Yalta, some secondary attention was given to the ongoing war in East Asia and the continuing will of the Japanese Empire to resist. Potsdam did little to alter the Yalta framework for establishing a postwar order, confirming once again the dominant role of the US.²⁸⁴³ However, with the passing of Roosevelt, so did the illusionary visions of harmonious postwar cooperation. In its stead, President Truman began to question the wartime alliance Washington had forged with the Soviet Union as well as Roosevelt’s commitment to basing East Asian regional order on cooperation with Moscow. As Britain and France began to reconquer their respective colonies in the region, the Truman Administration made no attempt to establish an international trusteeship, as so desired by Roosevelt, over the territories. Truman held a very different view on the value of agreements with the USSR. The 33rd US President openly accused the Soviet Union as having violated the agreements reached with Washington and London at Yalta, noting that “Our agreements with the Soviet Union have been a one-way street...it was now or never...[the Soviets] could go to hell.”²⁸⁴⁴ Such belated skepticism in the USSR’s intentions let the Truman Administration to openly question the desirability of continuing insistence on Soviet entrance into the war against Japan. While one school of US thought underlined the Red Army as essential before any US landing on the Japanese Home Islands, scheduled as Operations OLYMPIC and CORONET for December 1945, another underlined that the continued air and sea blockade, combined with large-scale strategic bombing, would in time break the Japanese Government and its populous.²⁸⁴⁵ This second scenario did not necessitate the involvement of the Soviet Union. On 24 April 1945, the US Joint Staff Planners concluded that “because of our estimated ability to interdict Japanese movement between the Asiatic mainland and Japan proper, early [Soviet] entrance into the war against Japan and attendant containing of the Kwantung Army is no longer necessary to make invasion feasible.”²⁸⁴⁶ As US-Soviet tensions grew over the postwar political questions plaguing Europe, Washington was clearly cautious of extending such ‘cooperation’ to East Asia.

While such US reflections marked a higher level of suspicion towards ultimate Soviet intentions in East Asia, it did not mark a change in US policy. By July 1945, President Truman “felt he could not rebuff Stalin’s offer [of attacking Japan] without doing serious damage to the

²⁸⁴² Ibid., pg. 249.

²⁸⁴³ Iriye, *Power and Culture*, pg. 261.

²⁸⁴⁴ Clemens, *Yalta*, pg. 249.

²⁸⁴⁵ Iriye, *Power and Culture*, pp. 242-243.

²⁸⁴⁶ Ibid., pg. 246.

war effort.”²⁸⁴⁷ Indeed, when Truman arrived in Potsdam, he told the Supreme Allied Commander, Dwight “Ike” Eisenhower (1890-1969), that one of his primary objectives at the Conference was to secure the Soviet entry into the war.²⁸⁴⁸ Ike responded that he ardently hope that he had not given anything away in the process as Moscow was eager to get into the war as the Japanese were already a spent force. The US Navy Secretary echoed similar apprehension by writing to the US Secretary of State, James Byrnes (1882-1972) that “he was most anxious to get the Japanese affair over with before the [Soviets] got in...Once in there, it would not be easy to get them out.”²⁸⁴⁹ Persistent US apprehension about Soviet intentions was due to the simple fact that, with the Pacific war edging towards final successful termination, Washington viewed the region as one where its preponderance reigned supreme. Such preponderance was underlined with the issuance of the Potsdam Proclamation. Published on 26 July 1945, it mirrored the US main war goal of staking its claim to the leading role in the future occupation of Japan and the inevitable restructuring of postwar Japanese institutions along the liberal-democratic model. Signed by the Heads of State of the US, Great Britain, and China, the text of the Proclamation recalled the following and set forth the terms for what could be interpreted as an unquestionable unconditional surrender that injected elements of a proposed new regional order based on liberal democratic values²⁸⁵⁰:

“...The result of the futile and senseless German resistance to the aroused free peoples of the world stands forth in awful clarity as an example to the people of Japan...the full application of our military power, backed by our resolve, *will* mean the inevitable and complete destruction of the Japanese Armed Forces and just as inevitably the utter devastation of the Japanese homeland. Thus must be eliminated for all time the authority and influence of those who have deceived and misled the people of Japan into embarking on world conquest, for we insist that a new order of peace, security, and justice will be impossible until irresponsible militarism is driven from the world. Until such a new order is established *and* until there is convincing proof that Japan’s war-making power is destroyed, points in Japanese territory to be designated by the Allies shall be occupied to secure the achievement of the basic objectives we are here setting forth. The terms of the Cairo Declaration shall be carried out and Japanese sovereignty shall be limited to the island of Honshu, Hokkaido, Kyushu, Shikoku, and such minor islands as we determine. The Japanese military forces, after being completely disarmed, shall be permitted to return to their homes...we do not intend that the Japanese shall be enslaved as a race or destroyed as [a] nation, but stern justice shall be meted out to all war criminals...The Japanese Government shall remove all obstacles to the revival and strengthening of democratic tendencies among the Japanese people...Freedom of speech, of religion, and of thought, as well as respect for fundamental human rights shall be established...The occupying forces of the Allies shall be withdrawn as soon as these objectives have been accomplished and there has been established in accordance with the freely expressed will of the Japanese people a peacefully inclined and responsible government. We call upon the Government of Japan to proclaim now the unconditional surrender of all the Japanese armed forces, and to provide proper and adequate assurances of their good faith in such action. The alternative for Japan is prompt and utter destruction.”²⁸⁵¹

²⁸⁴⁷ Ibid., pg. 252.

²⁸⁴⁸ Butow, *Japan’s Decision to Surrender*, pp. 135-136.

²⁸⁴⁹ Ibid., pg. 135.

²⁸⁵⁰ The USSR did not sign the Potsdam Proclamation as, still seeing itself bound by its Neutrality Pact with Tokyo, it was not yet officially at war with the Japanese Empire.

²⁸⁵¹ *Potsdam Proclamation* of 26 July 1945, <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1945Berlinv02/d1382>.

According to Iriye, the Potsdam Proclamation should have ended the Pacific War as the document provided the Japanese Government “peace on the basis of something other than an unconditional surrender.”²⁸⁵² Some contemporary Japanese figures also supported this view. Now Ambassador to the USSR, former Foreign Minister Satō called upon Tokyo to accept the Proclamation to avoid the utter devastation of the Japanese Home Islands. Indeed, the Truman Administration had pressed for such a declaration, believing it would hasten Japan’s surrender without any overt Soviet involvement in the Pacific war.²⁸⁵³ Prime Minister Suzuki Kantarō (1868-1948), however, following a debate with his Cabinet chose to dispense with an official Japanese response to the Potsdam Proclamation, suggesting instead that the Government should simply apply the concept of *mokusatsu* (黙殺), namely to treat it with silent contempt.²⁸⁵⁴ Such was Japan’s official answer, announced to the public 28 July 1945. Ironically, the Suzuki Cabinet had simultaneously opted to make enquiries in Moscow on the feasibility of sending former Prime Minister Konoe on a mission “to request the Soviet Government to mediate an end to the war and to discuss matters relating to the promotion of friendly relations between Japan and the Soviet Union.”²⁸⁵⁵ Other than this, the Suzuki Cabinet did not choose to undertake any concrete action. Emperor Hirohito secluded himself from the public and Government. On 3 August 1945, Suzuki’s Cabinet Advisory Council, headed by the President of Asano Cement, the founder of the Nissan Consortium and the Vice President of the Bank of Japan approached Prime Minister Suzuki and recommended the acceptance of the Potsdam Proclamation as it explicitly permitted Japan to retain its non-military industries, allowing the postwar Japanese economy to re-integrate itself into world trade. Suzuki responded with his Cabinet’s rationale in remaining silent in front of the Allies’ ultimatum: “For the enemy to say something like [the Potsdam Proclamation] means circumstances have arisen that force them to end the war. That is why they are talking about unconditional surrender. Precisely at a time like this, if we hold firm, then they will yield before we do. Just because they broadcast their declaration, it is not necessary to stop fighting. You advisors may ask me to reconsider, but I don’t think there is any need to stop [the war].”²⁸⁵⁶ Hence, the Pacific war would continue.

10.2.19.6. The Unconditional Surrender of Imperial Japan

Japan’s decision to ignore the terms of Potsdam “literally altered the surface of the earth.”²⁸⁵⁷ Had Japan, as Ambassador Satō argued, accepted the Potsdam terms, this would have led to a peace agreement being signed based on the conditions outlined by the three Pacific Allied leaders, leading to the occupation of the Japanese Home Islands by US forces. Great Britain, France, China, and the Soviet Union “would in the meantime have divided East and South Asia into their respective spheres of influence...[while] the United States would have established control over most of the Pacific Ocean and reduced its commitments in the Philippines, China and elsewhere on the Asian continent”, working simultaneously for some regime of international cooperation, “offering its rich economic resources to other nations for their willingness to join

²⁸⁵² Iriye, *Power and Culture*, pg. 263.

²⁸⁵³ Bix, *Hirohito*, pg. 499.

²⁸⁵⁴ Butow, *Japan’s Decision to Surrender*, pg. 145.

²⁸⁵⁵ Oka, *Konoe Fumimaro*, pg. 177.

²⁸⁵⁶ Bix, *Hirohito*, pg. 503.

²⁸⁵⁷ Iriye, *Power and Culture*, pg. 264.

forces for the creation of a more open economic order.”²⁸⁵⁸ While such goals remained the cornerstone of the intended postwar order, the future course of East Asia, along with the entire international system, was forever changed with the dispatch of one sentence in a report sent to the Vice-Chief of the Imperial Army General Staff informing him that, on 6 August 1945, “*The whole city of Hiroshima was destroyed instantly by a single bomb.*”²⁸⁵⁹ On that fateful day, mankind had, consciously or unconsciously, entered the nuclear era. As Iriye notes “the onset of the atomic age made it certain that the world would not go back to the pre-war status quo, that something was being added to the hitherto familiar conceptions of international order...[as] neither the Yalta system nor Wilsonianism had anticipated the need to accommodate atomic weapons. After 1945 the bomb developed its own momentum; it came to dominate foreign policy and strategic assumptions, and future war began to be visualized as nuclear conflict, not a temporary aberration from the norm but an end to all international and domestic order.”²⁸⁶⁰

Such logic was present in the new rhetoric of the Truman Administration. Speaking to the American people to explain his decision to unleash nuclear weapons on a civilian population, far outdoing the already substantial atrocities the Allies hitherto committed over the civilian skies of German and Japanese cities, President Truman declared “We are now prepared to obliterate rapidly and completely every productive enterprise the Japanese have above the ground in any city. We shall destroy their docks, their factories, and their communications. Let there be no mistake; we shall completely destroy Japan’s power to make war.”²⁸⁶¹ Truman openly linked his decision to Japan’s refusal to reject the Potsdam Proclamation, noting that “it was to spare the Japanese from utter destruction that the ultimatum of 26 July was issued at Potsdam. Their leaders promptly rejected that ultimatum. If they do not accept our terms they may expect a rain of ruin from the air, the like of which has never been seen on this earth...”²⁸⁶²

Japan’s decision to ignore the Potsdam Proclamation also altered the trajectory of the end of the Pacific War by according the Soviet Union the opportunity to take advantage of the personal agreement reached between President Roosevelt and Stalin at Yalta and officially enter the Pacific War on the side of the Allies. The Japanese, had noted, had cultivated the *fol espoir* of reaching a peace agreement through good offices of Soviet mediation. Ambassador Satō had been skeptical of such attempts by the Suzuki Cabinet warning Tokyo that it was “unimaginable that the Soviets would ever help Japan...[warning] that although ‘we are overawed that the dispatch of a special envoy is the Imperial wish’, it would not have been anything to the Soviets.”²⁸⁶³ On 9 August 1945, the day that the US dropped its second atomic bomb over Nagasaki, Soviet Foreign Commissar called in Ambassador Satō and did not hand him Moscow’s official response to the dispatch of an Imperial envoy, but rather a declaration of war. Its text underlined that “the demand of the three powers, the United States, Great Britain, and China, on 26 July for the unconditional surrender of the Japanese Armed Forces was rejected by Japan, and thus the proposal of the Japanese Government to the Soviet Union on mediation in the war in the Far East loses all basis...Loyal to its Allied duty, the Soviet Government has accepted the proposals of the Allies

²⁸⁵⁸ Ibid.

²⁸⁵⁹ Butow, Japan’s Decision to Surrender, pg. 151.

²⁸⁶⁰ Iriye, Power and Culture, pp. 266-267.

²⁸⁶¹ Butow, Japan’s Decision to Surrender, pg. 151.

²⁸⁶² Ibid.

²⁸⁶³ Bix, Hirohito, pg. 507.

and has joined the declaration of the Allied Powers of 26 July...In view of the above, the Soviet Government declares that...from 9 August [Tokyo time], the Soviet Government will consider itself to be at war with Japan.”²⁸⁶⁴ The refusal of Japan to react to the Potsdam Proclamation unleashed Soviet military power upon East Asia, further expanding and deepening Moscow’s regional influence and involvement. From the Soviet perspective, this ensured that the USSR would be accorded a formal say in the postwar decisions, rendering the possibility of a separate Japanese-US peace null and void.²⁸⁶⁵

Only two hours after Molotov had handed Ambassador Satō the Soviet declaration of war, the Red Army launched Operation AUGUST STORM, its most ambitious campaign of the Second World War.²⁸⁶⁶ In August 1945, the Kwantung Army was no longer the feared force that had single-handedly transformed Japanese foreign policy throughout the 1930s. The Imperial Supreme Command had, since 1944, used the Kwantung Army as a source for reinforcement for its campaign in China as well as bolstering the Home Islands for an eventual apocalyptic battle. Hence, when the Red Army struck, the Kwantung Army was left with little more than the “spiritual” power to resist.²⁸⁶⁷ Within nine days, the Red Army drove up to 950 kilometres in Manchuria and eliminated the million-man Kwantung Army as an effective fighting force. Over a span of two weeks, the fruits of the victories of the Settlement of 1895, 1901, 1905, and 1919—namely Japanese preponderance over Manchuria and the Korean Peninsula—suddenly evaporated. Former Ambassador to the USSR and Foreign Minister Tōgō Shigenori underlined in retrospect that 9 August 1945 was the “day that [Japan’s] future course was charted.”²⁸⁶⁸ The gravity of the obliteration of Nagasaki and the Soviet deep breakthrough into Manchuria coincided with the convening of an Emergency Imperial Conference. For a surrender decision to be issued, it required the decision of the so-called ‘Big Six’: the Prime Minister, the Foreign Minister, the Army Minister, the Navy Minister, and the Army and Navy Chief of Staffs, each holding veto power. The discussions reflected a lack of unanimity. Even after the scope of such unprecedented calamities, Army Minister Anami Korechika (1887-1945) nevertheless insisted on the Imperial Army being accorded the ultimate honour of defending the homeland in order to preserve *Kokutai* (including the preservation of the Imperial Dynasty), with the Japanese refusing any and all foreign occupation and retaining the right to try its own war criminals.²⁸⁶⁹ All the other participants were cognizant that the end of the Empire was at hand. Suzuki announced that the reality of the atomic age, coupled with the Soviet assault, made it impossible to continue the war and suggested surrendering in accordance with the Potsdam Proclamation. Foreign Minister Tōgō insisted that surrender should be accepted as the Proclamation did not, per se, question the status of the Emperor under contemporary Japanese legislation.

Given the inability of the Imperial Conference to take a decision, Suzuki felt obliged to present the matter to Emperor Hirohito who proceeded to speak “without the slightest hesitation” proclaiming the following decision: “I have given serious thought to the situation prevailing at

²⁸⁶⁴ *Soviet Declaration of War on Japan* of 8 August 1945, <https://avalon.law.yale.edu/wwii/s4.asp>, accessed on 19 May 2024.

²⁸⁶⁵ Westad, Odd Arne, *Cold War and Revolution: Soviet-American Rivalry and the Origins of the Chinese Civil War, 1944-1946*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1993, pg. 9.

²⁸⁶⁶ Paine, *The Wars for Asia*, pg. 208.

²⁸⁶⁷ Butow, *Japan’s Decision to Surrender*, pg. 154.

²⁸⁶⁸ Frank, Richard, *Downfall: The End of the Imperial Japanese Empire*, New York: Penguin Books, 2001, pg. 288.

²⁸⁶⁹ Drea, *Japan’s Imperial Army*, pg. 251.

home and abroad and have concluded that continuing the war can only mean destruction for the nation and prolongation of bloodshed and cruelty in the world. I cannot bear to see my innocent people suffer any longer. Ending the war is the only way to restore world peace and to relieve the nation from the terrible distress with which it is burdened. I was told by those advocating a continuation of hostilities that by June new divisions would be placed in fortified positions at Kujūkuri-hama so that they would be ready for the invader when he sought to land. It is now August, and the fortifications still have not been completed. Even the equipment for the divisions which are to fight there is insufficient and reportedly will not be adequate until the middle of September. Furthermore, the promised increase in the production of aircraft has not progressed in accordance with expectations. There are those that say that the key to national survival lies in a decisive battle in the homeland. The experiences of the past, however, show that there has always been a discrepancy between plans and performance. I do not believe that the discrepancy in the case of Kujūkuri-hama can be rectified. Since this is the shape of things, how can we repel the invaders? I cannot help feeling sad when I think of the people who have served me so faithfully, the soldiers and sailors who have been killed and wounded in far-off battles, the families who have lost all their worldly goods—and often their lives as well—in the air raids at home. It goes without saying that it is unbearable for me to see the brave and loyal fighting men of Japan disarmed. It is equally unbearable that others who have rendered me devoted service should now be punished as instigators of the war. Nevertheless, the time has come when we must bear the unbearable...I swallow my own tears and give my sanction to the proposal to accept the Allied proclamation on the basis outlined by the Foreign Minister.”²⁸⁷⁰ Although legally only representing the personal opinion of the Emperor, Hirohito’s words were enough to persuade the Suzuki Cabinet to take the momentous decision to officially surrender.

On 10 August 1945, cables from the Japanese embassies in Stockholm and Bern were dispatched to the Allies announcing that the Empire had chosen to accept the Potsdam Proclamation “with the understanding that the said declaration does not comprise any demand which prejudices the prerogatives of His Majesty as a Sovereign Ruler.”²⁸⁷¹ Thus, the Suzuki Cabinet was seeking to secure a view of the Japanese nation whereby the Imperial Dynasty was maintained as the cornerstone of Japanese society, asking the Allies to “guarantee the Emperor’s power to rule on the theocratic premises of state Shinto.”²⁸⁷² Receiving the Japanese Empire’s surrender offer, the Allies were split on how they should react, with Molotov underlining that Tokyo’s offer was not in full accord with the Potsdam Proclamation, while US Secretary of State Byrnes, careful to limit his commitments to American actions, quickly replied to the Japanese that “From the moment of surrender, the authority of the Emperor and the Japanese Government to rule the state shall be subject to the Supreme Commander of the Allied Powers who will take such steps as he deems proper to effectuate the surrender terms.”²⁸⁷³ With this declaration, Washington highlighted that governance in postwar Japan would be akin to the system under the Japanese Shogunate with the Allied occupation authorities, and not the Shogun himself, holding the reins of real power. Yet Army Minister Anami, Army Chief of Staff Umezu Yoshijirō (1882-1949), and Navy Chief of Staff Toyoda Soemu (1885-1957) remained opposed to the acceptance of the Allied ultimatum. On 14 August 1945, before an Imperial Conference, Amani petitioned the Emperor to

²⁸⁷⁰ Butow, *Japan’s Decision to Surrender*, pp. 175-176.

²⁸⁷¹ *Ibid.*, pg. 178.

²⁸⁷² Bix, *Hirohito*, pg. 517.

²⁸⁷³ Butow, *Japan’s Decision to Surrender*, pg. 191.

reject the Potsdam Proclamation, yet the Emperor refused and implored the Army Minister to honour his decision.²⁸⁷⁴ While Anami consented, a coup attempt was made to stop Japan's official surrender by destroying the recording of the Emperor's surrender speech and kidnapping the Emperor himself in a move which, had it been successful, would have further prolonged the war. Following the failure of the coup, members of the Imperial family were sent to communicate the surrender to Japan's armies in the numerous theatres where they were fighting. On 15 August 1945 at 12:00, all over the Empire, soldiers and civilians gathered around their radios to listen to the 'Jade Voice Broadcast' ('*Gyokuon-hōsō*'/玉音放送), where the Emperor, revealing his voice to his populous for the first time, informed his subjects that they, together with his Imperial Majesty, must bear the unbearable.

The hesitation and indecision of the Japanese Government in accepting the Potsdam Proclamation, even after the initial decision had been taken on 9 August 1945, created confusion in the field. While the US Military had, following the Emperor's speech, ordered a ceasefire to take effect at 19:00 on 15 August 1945, the orders to the Japanese forces still resisting the Red Army did not arrive until 19 August, when the Kwantung Army negotiated its own ceasefire, furnishing the Soviets a pretext to continue with their advance.²⁸⁷⁵ By 20 August, still pressing forward, the Red Army captured the major Chinese urban centres in Manchuria and the Liaodong Peninsula. Operations to occupy southern Sakhalin continued until 25 August 1945 and it was only under immense US pressure that the USSR abandoned its plans to occupy the northern half of Hokkaido.²⁸⁷⁶ On 19 August 1945, the Red Army issued instructions to proceed with the occupation of the southern Kuriles, areas that never formally belonged to the Russian Empire under the terms of the 1875 Treaty of St. Petersburg. On 1 September 1945, Soviet forces continued their advance, taking the Habomai Islands lying just off the coast of Hokkaido. The USSR therefore utilized the lapse between the ceasefire and official Japanese surrender to ensure that Roosevelt's concessions to Stalin at Yalta became a de facto reality on the ground through the intervention and continued presence of the Red Army.

Only on 2 September 1945 aboard the *USS Missouri*, flying the flag of Commodore Matthew Perry during his 1853 arrival to the Shogunate, did Japan formally surrender by signing the Instrument of Surrender in Tokyo Bay. The document stated that its signatories "acting by command of and on behalf of the Emperor of Japan, the Japanese Government and the Japanese Imperial General Headquarters, hereby accept the provisions set forth in the declaration issued by the heads of the Governments of the United States, China, and Great Britain on 26 July 1945, at Potsdam, and subsequently adhered to by the USSR...We hereby proclaim the unconditional surrender to the Allied Powers of the Japanese Imperial General Headquarters and of all Japanese Armed Forces under Japanese control wherever situated. We hereby command all Japanese forces wherever situated and the Japanese people to cease hostilities forthwith, to preserve and save from damage all ships, aircraft, and military and civil property and to comply with all requirements which may be imposed by the Supreme Commander of the Allied Powers or by agencies of the

²⁸⁷⁴ Frank, *Downfall*, pp. 319-320.

²⁸⁷⁵ Paine, *The Wars for Asia*, pg. 209.

²⁸⁷⁶ Ibid.

Japanese Government at his direction.”²⁸⁷⁷ With the signature of this document, the Second World War finally and formally concluded. Yet, at the time of its signature, the Japanese delay in accepting the terms of the Potsdam Proclamation afforded the USSR the opportunity to smash south of its border with China and physically entrench itself in the core areas of what had been the Japanese continental Empire, namely Manchuria and Korea. As such, following the formal Japanese surrender, the two major powers that would influence the East Asian region would be the US and the Soviet Union, a bipolar reality secured much in part through the course of Japanese recalcitrance, however honourable.

10.2.20. The Long Road to the Treaty of San Francisco

10.2.20.1 Introduction

Like the First World War that preceded it, the hostilities of the Second World War ended but did not bring an immediate new regional order. The Settlement of 1919 was signed in July 1919, a full nine months after the initial ceasefire was agreed in November 1918. The end of the Second World War in the Pacific was a more prolonged affair. The ceasefire of 15 August 1945 was followed up by the official surrender of the Empire of Japan on 2 September 1945. Negotiations on a new regional order, the Settlement of 1951, took a full six years to culminate in the signing of the Treaty of San Francisco on 8 September 1951, and required an additional year to secure its ratification from all signatories on 28 April 1952.

The circumstances leading to the adoption of the Treaty of San Francisco were unique and “did not come into being at a quiet moment of impending peace, but was negotiated in a period of turbulence in the international area during which new and conflicting forces of huge dimensions made their appearance.”²⁸⁷⁸ The war between the Allies and the Japanese Empire had concluded, however the situation left on the ground in the conflict’s wake was anything but straightforward. US occupation forces, first arriving in Japan on 30 August 1945, were greeted with the sights of a ruined empire: burnt-out cities, ruined factories and homeless internally displaced persons. Imperial Japanese forces remained in the field over vast areas of China—where they comprised the largest post-surrender military force—and Indochina. Adding to this were the aspirations of the indigenous populations of European colonies to achieve self-determination, with Ho Chi Minh (1890-1969) declaring Vietnam an independent state on 2 September 1945. Over such large stretches of land Japan’s defeat had created a ‘power vacuum’ that served as the region’s primary characteristic in the immediate aftermath of the cessation of hostilities.²⁸⁷⁹ Indeed, this power vacuum was consciously used by some Allies to secure their political objectives. Following Operation AUGUST STORM, Soviet forces wrestled control of the areas promised to them at Yalta as well as establishing themselves in Manchuria and pushing into northern Korea. Adding to this was the full-scale resumption of the Chinese Civil War in October 1945 between the Nationalist Government of China and the CCP now that Japan’s defeat had rendered the United

²⁸⁷⁷ *Instrument Of Surrender* of 2 September 1945

<https://www.ndl.go.jp/constitution/e/etc/c05.html#:~:text=We%20hereby%20command%20all%20Japanese,Powers%20or%20by%20agencies%20of>, accessed 19 May 2024.

²⁸⁷⁸ Dunn, Frederick Sherwood, *Peace-Making and the Settlement with Japan*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1963, pg. x.

²⁸⁷⁹ Yano Tōru, “Who Set the Stage for the Cold War in Southeast Asia?” in Nagai Yōnosuke & Iriye Akira (eds.), *The Origins of the Cold War in Asia*, Tokyo: Tokyo University Press, 1977, pg. 321.

Second Front obsolete. While the Yalta and Potsdam Conferences spelled out the coordinated war aims of the Allies, they did not, beyond the demand for a Japanese unconditional surrender, include any vision on how to make the broad strokes of a postwar order in East Asia a concrete reality.²⁸⁸⁰ The combination of such unique and often contradictory factors represented the foundation upon which the Allies needed to carve out a peace treaty with their erstwhile Japanese enemies.

The Treaty of San Francisco's main function was to formally conclude a peace with the former Empire of Japan and reintroduce the country into the family of nations. Yet its ultimate signature reflected a process of adjusting the place of Japan into the new realities of the 1950s, one that starkly differed from the Allied vision concocted during their respective wartime get-togethers and reflected the geopolitical realities of a changed era. Hence this dissertation will now turn to examine the postwar events through the filter of their relevance leading up to the signature of the Treaty of San Francisco and the Settlement of 1951.

10.2.20.2. The Collapse of the 'Yalta System'

10.2.20.2.1. Introduction

As noted, the blueprint for implementing Allied intentions towards a postwar Europe were fleshed out in detail at the Big Three meeting at Yalta in February 1945. Hence the 'Yalta System' formed the basis for Europe after the Second World War. This was not the case for East Asia. Only vague sketches that were drawn up in bilateral discussions between Roosevelt and Stalin remained following Japan's surrender and, as such, "would have taken effect only if such agreements had been implemented."²⁸⁸¹ By the time of the conclusion of the final Peace Treaty with Japan, it was evident that the superficial visions expounded at Yalta were no longer in the slightest conformity with reality on the ground. Yalta attempted to furnish some ideological structure to the vague underpinnings of the 32nd President's ideal of a world based on mutual beneficial cooperation, as evidenced in the Conference's final communiqué where the postwar need for "continuing and growing cooperation and understanding among our three countries and among all peace-loving nations" was highlighted in order that "the highest aspirations of humanity be realized—a secure and lasting peace."²⁸⁸² Adhering to these tenets would allow the creation of a favourable environment to foster trade and investment after the extinction of the Japanese Empire, which had ardently sought to assert its economic preponderance in China.

²⁸⁸⁰ Regarding the fate of French Indochina, especially Vietnam, FDR remained, as early as January 1943, determined to prevent any French return to their occupied colonies. The Truman Administration reversed this decision following the death of the 32nd President in response to Paris's demands and Washington's belief that it "was essential to strengthen France as the lynchpin in Western Europe against Soviet expansion." Despite FDR's conviction that the French misrule of Indochina incorporated "colonialism in its worst form", US geopolitical concerns combined with De Gaulle's political blackmailing obliged Washington to cede to French demands to accept postwar French control over Indochina. As Acheson noted "The French blackmailed us...aid in Indochina was France's price for joining the European Defence Community (EDC)", upon which US plans to forge an anti-Soviet alliance rested. See Tuchman, Barbara, *The March of Folly: From Troy to Vietnam*, New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1984, pp. 234-256

²⁸⁸¹ Kimie Hara, "The San Francisco Peace Treaty and the Regional Conflicts: the Cold War Legacies" in Kim Mikyoung (ed.), *Routledge Handbook of Memory and Reconciliation in East Asia*, New York: Routledge, 2016, pg. 357.

²⁸⁸² Iriye, "The United States as an Asian-Pacific Power", pg. 12.

Yet postwar realities often differ from wartime aspirations. Escalating geopolitical competition, originating in Europe and spreading elsewhere, soon fundamentally undermined the political constellations in East Asia, rending any prospect of neo-Wilsonian Great Power cooperation, as envisioned by Roosevelt, decidedly illusory at best. This growing trend became evident in examining the postwar trajectories of the individual states of East Asia as they emerged from the ruins of the Japanese Empire.

10.2.20.2.2. China and the ‘Yalta System’

Given the lack of concrete preparations for postwar East Asia during the discussions at Yalta, the vague notion of ‘cooperation’ was the sole base upon which policy could be based. The situation in China following the surrender of Imperial Japan could afford the Big Three a specific context where “cooperation and understanding” could be realized.²⁸⁸³ Through cooperation on China, the wartime alliance could be projected into an uncertain future and thereby cement a novel antebellum-style system of international relations. Hence, the question of the effectiveness of Great Power cooperation in China would “determine whether their alliance was more than a sheer marriage of [wartime] convenience.”²⁸⁸⁴ At the end of the Second World War, the United States had, in its crusade against Imperial Japan, amassed a veritable Pacific empire. The US not only reconquered its territories that had been under Japanese occupation, but also took under its control the Pacific Islands that Japan had inherited from Germany under the Settlement of 1919. By early 1945, President Roosevelt and his military advisers had opted to retain these Pacific Islands under US sovereignty upon the war’s conclusion. The US Chiefs of Staff informed their British allies that the US had “acted weakly both in 1898 and 1919, in not securing the Japanese islands for America, and they are determined not to fail again...[the US has] been seeking round for some kind of arrangement which in their opinion will give [the US] the highest degree of sovereignty and control over the islands that can be got short of annexation.”²⁸⁸⁵ Hence, the United States not only would maintain its power and influence in the West Pacific, as per the antebellum configuration, but expanded its hegemony over the entire Pacific. Pertaining to East Asia, the United States, in line with longstanding US policy and the agreements at Yalta, viewed that a united China needed to be maintained and the US naturally shared part of that responsibility.²⁸⁸⁶

Yet by mid-August 1945, the cooperation that was supposed to underpin the ‘Yalta System’ needed to accommodate the changed reality on the ground in East Asia. Over 70 Soviet divisions, comprising more than 1.5 million men had advanced over the deserts of Inner Mongolia to the shores of the Sea of Japan.²⁸⁸⁷ Any post war cooperation would have to be based on this stark reality. The presence of the Red Army in Manchuria and Korea had been sanctioned through Stalin’s secret diplomacy with Roosevelt at Yalta and this approach would characterize the USSR’s policy towards defending its interests in East Asia following the defeat of the Axis powers. As argued by Hu Shih (1891-1962), Nationalist Chinese Ambassador to the US, the Soviet strategy towards East Asia was “no more and no less than a strategy of naked militarism aided from time to time by the most unscrupulous use of all possible forms of trickery and deceit. What seem to

²⁸⁸³ Ibid.

²⁸⁸⁴ Ibid., pg. 13.

²⁸⁸⁵ Ibid., pg. 8.

²⁸⁸⁶ Yano Tōru, “Who Set the Stage for the Cold War in Southeast Asia?”, pg. 328.

²⁸⁸⁷ Glantz, David, August Storm, San Francisco: Verden Press, 2015.

differentiate China from the seemingly much easier conquests in Central and Eastern Europe had been the much greater complexity and difficulty of the conquest, which made it necessary for Stalin to resort to the most cunning forms of secret diplomacy in order to overcome the resistance that Nationalist China had been able to summon for over two decades.”²⁸⁸⁸ In Moscow’s view, therefore, the ‘Yalta System’ in East Asia was one where cooperation would be based on secret diplomacy buttressed by the superficiality of official agreements to advance the USSR’s interests. With such an understanding, Bolshevik policy makers turned their glances to a postwar China in transition.

In line with Stalin’s commitment to Roosevelt at Yalta, and with Operation AUGUST STORM in full swing, T.V. Soong visited Moscow, accompanied by Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Shih-chieh, to sign the Sino-Soviet Treaty of Friendship and Alliance. Signed on 14 August 1945, the Treaty ostensibly furnished the recognition of the Nationalist Chinese Government that the Big Three had agreed upon as an essential element of the ‘Yalta System’. The Sino-Soviet Treaty was “based on a give-and-take policy.”²⁸⁸⁹ In the spirit of “strengthening the friendly relations that have always existed between China and the USSR, through an alliance and good neighbourly postwar collaboration”, the official text of the Treaty was anti-climactic, filled with the usual vapid diplomatic bluster that can only be conveyed by empty words.²⁸⁹⁰ The red devil of the treaty, so to speak, was in the details of the secret protocols of the agreement signed between Foreign Minister Wang and Foreign Commissar Molotov.

Nationalist China recognized the following points, mainly favourable to the USSR: (i.) the independence of Outer Mongolia; (ii.) joint management of the Chinese Changchun Railway for thirty years, complete under a directorship with Soviet citizenship; (iii.) the transformation of Dairen into a free port with a harbour master holding Soviet citizenship; (iv.) China’s leasing to the Soviet Union—free of charge—of one half of all port installations and equipment for a term of thirty years; and (v.) joint Soviet-Chinese use of Port Arthur as a naval base, to be defended by the USSR.²⁸⁹¹ For its part, the Bolsheviks committed to a policy of “non-interference in China’s internal affairs”; pledged to “respect China’s full sovereignty over the Three Eastern Provinces [Manchuria] and to recognize their territorial and administrative integrity” as well as to pledge the removal of Soviet troops from Manchuria within three months of Japan’s surrender.²⁸⁹² Through the secret protocols attached to the Treaty of Friendship and Alliance, the Soviet Union formalized the verbal agreements made at Yalta and solidified them as a legal fact that would characterise postwar East Asia. China had recognized the independence of the People’s Republic of Mongolia, the USSR’s first satellite state, and had consented to a de facto zone of Soviet influence being carved out over Manchuria to replace the Japanese. Furthermore, the secret articles to the 14 August 1945 Sino-Soviet Treaty accorded the Soviet Navy control over the islands and waters surrounding Port Arthur and Dailan, a fact that would hinder the US Navy from assisting Nationalist forces in Manchuria.²⁸⁹³

²⁸⁸⁸ Elleman, *International Rivalry and Secret Diplomacy*, pg. 82.

²⁸⁸⁹ Wu, *China and the Soviet Union*, pg. 292.

²⁸⁹⁰ Elleman, *International Rivalry and Secret Diplomacy*, pg. 217.

²⁸⁹¹ Wu, *China and the Soviet Union*, pg. 292.

²⁸⁹² *Ibid.*, pg. 293.

²⁸⁹³ Elleman, *International Rivalry and Secret Diplomacy*, pg. 217.

Initially, although some public confusion existed as to why a treaty of alliance had to be signed literally on the day before Japan's acceptance of the Potsdam Proclamation, the domestic and international reaction was relatively positive. Commenting on the Treaty's signature, Foreign Minister Wang underlined that "as Generalissimo Stalin has assured me, these agreements will benefit not only China and [the Soviet Union], but all Asia and the world at large"; while US Secretary of State, James Byrnes, issued a formal statement noting that he believed "the new treaty between China and [the Soviet Union] and the accompanying agreements constitute an important step forward in the relations between China and [the Soviet Union]. We were kept informed of the progress of the deliberations in Moscow, and we welcome this development as a practical example of continuing unity and mutual helpfulness which should characterize the acts of the members of the United Nations in peace as well as in war."²⁸⁹⁴ The CCP, however, was taken aback by the Sino-Soviet Treaty, not only because it accorded official USSR recognition to the Kuomintang and gave away Chinese claims to Outer Mongolia, but denied Communist forces access to Japanese weapons, as Mao himself commented, the Soviet Union "did not permit China to make revolution...Stalin wanted to prevent China from making revolution, saying that we should have a civil war and should co-operate with Chiang Kai-shek otherwise the Chinese nation would perish. But we did not do what he said."²⁸⁹⁵ Nevertheless, the last-minute Sino-Soviet Treaty of Alliance, based on Washington's reaction, was seen as an integral part of the postwar 'Yalta System' around whose contours Great Power cooperation would be based.

The publication of the Yalta Far Eastern Agreement on 11 February 1946, however, caused a shock to Chinese policy makers and public alike. Reminiscent of the Treaties of Aigun and Peking of the 19th Century, no modern agreement had brought with it so many gains to one country at so little a cost. The Chinese Foreign Office spokesman immediately released a statement underlining that "As China is not a party, she was—and is—not bound [by the Far Eastern Agreement] but by the Sino-Soviet Agreement of 14 August 1945 which is binding on both [the Soviet Union] and China."²⁸⁹⁶ The timing of the release of the Yalta Secret Treaty had a serious destabilization effect on the Chinese domestic situation. On 3 February 1945, on the eve of the Yalta Summit, Stalin promised Mao further information about its results, giving Mao "enough information to conclude that the Soviet Red Army would come back to the Far East in the near future."²⁸⁹⁷ Mao immediately decided to break off the US-sponsored talks with the Kuomintang and wait until the USSR had augmented its influence in East Asia to undertake further action. Following the Japanese surrender, through the cooperation of both the United States and Soviet Union, the CCP and Kuomintang were pressured to engage in a Political Consultative Conference to create a constitution and form a democratic government. While an agreement was reached between the parties on 31 January 1946 in Chongqing, the Yalta Secret Treaty was revealed, giving "an opportunity for anti-Communist elements to start a students' demonstration against the Soviet Union as well as the Chinese Communist Party."²⁸⁹⁸ The students proceeded to demolish the offices of a Communist newspaper, the *Hsing Hwa Daily Herald*, and revealed the depth of lingering animosity between the CCP and Kuomintang. As the spark that triggered the violence,

²⁸⁹⁴ Ibid., pg. 292.

²⁸⁹⁵ Okabe Tatsumi, "The Cold War and China" in *The Origins of the Cold War in Asia*, pg. 229

²⁸⁹⁶ Elleman, *International Rivalry and Secret Diplomacy*, pg. 297.

²⁸⁹⁷ Sheng, Michael, *Battling Western Imperialism: Mao, Stalin, and the United States*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998, pg. 93.

²⁸⁹⁸ Wu, *China and the Soviet Union*, pg. 297.

“without the revelation of the Yalta Secret Treaty, the political development in China might have been quite different.”²⁸⁹⁹ Instead, the violent dénouement of the Political Consultative Conference, combined with the developing situation in Manchuria, were enough to convince Mao to renounce the ‘parliamentary path and instead opt for his vision of armed class struggle.’²⁹⁰⁰ The recommencement of the Chinese Civil War in earnest, therefore, brought about by the revelation of the Yalta Far Eastern Agreement, served to assist in undermining the very postwar cooperation that the Conference had sought to engender.

The Soviet invasion of Manchuria, and the sphere of influence that had been informally granted by Roosevelt and formally by Chiang Kai-shek, also played a role in eroding the ‘Yalta System’. As the Red Army advanced into Manchuria and Korea, Communist General Zhu De (1886-1976) ordered Chinese Communist cadres into Manchuria, taking advantage of the Soviet occupation. Under the command of Lin Biao (1907-1971), who arrived in Manchuria on a Soviet plane, circa 150,000 soldiers arrived, albeit unarmed, in the formerly Japanese-occupied territory.²⁹⁰¹ As Stalin’s priorities, in the initial postwar period, lay in the subjugation of Europe, the Soviet dictator was prepared to play by the cooperation of the ‘Yalta System’ in East Asia. Consequently, not only did the Soviet authorities refuse to arm the newly arrived CCP soldiers but they also tried to force them out of Manchurian urban centres, the only industrial base capable of manufacturing the weapons the CCP needed to engage in armed struggle. Cooperation still had a role in Soviet East Asian strategy. However, the Soviets soon began to make the necessary moves to solidify their nation’s interests in northern China. Lieutenant General Nikolai Roshchin (1901-1960), Soviet Military Attaché in China, undertook a mission to ensure that the future course of the Chinese Civil War would reflect Moscow’s desired outcome. Indeed, this mission was parallel to that of US General George Marshall (1880-1959) who sought to solidify the emergence of a unified non-Communist Republic of China. Obviously, while maintaining the façade of bilateral cooperation, both Powers were simultaneously seeking to influence domestic events in China for their own respective foreign policy objectives. While Roshchin advised the CCP to seal off Manchuria along the Great Wall north of Beijing—perhaps seeking a divided China to forego the possibility of a great power along the USSR’s eastern frontiers—the Soviet Politburo, on 17 September 1945, telegraphed Mao recommending that future CCP actions should focus on Manchuria and should likewise adhere to the strategy of “expanding toward the north and defending toward the south.”²⁹⁰² This was followed by another Soviet promise to deploy and arm 300,000 soldiers in Manchuria within a month, suggesting the Communists abandon the south to the Nationalists and create a new bastion within the USSR’s sphere of influence.

In addition to its attempts to advance its own interests in the Chinese Civil War, the Bolsheviks unsurprisingly engaged in large-scale methodical looting of the industrial capacity of the former Japanese puppet state of Manchukuo. As the crown jewel of the Japanese Empire, and core area of the Greater East Asian Co-Prosperity Zone, Tokyo had expended considerable resources in building up the colony’s industrial capacity. Not only did the Bolsheviks refuse to transfer the factories to the Nationalist Government it had recognized through the Sino-Soviet Treaty of Friendship and Alliance, but, in September 1945, it also began imitating its behaviour in

²⁸⁹⁹ Ibid.

²⁹⁰⁰ Sheng, *Battling Western Imperialism*, pg. 127.

²⁹⁰¹ Paine, *The Wars for Asia*, pg. 238.

²⁹⁰² Ibid., pp. 238-239.

occupied Germany and commenced with the large-scale removal of factories and heavy equipment to the USSR, often down to the last light bulb. While the Nationalist Chinese Government complained to its 'friend and ally' that Manchuria's industrial capacity should rightfully constitute part of Japan's reparations to China, the Soviets insisted such outright massive theft was, in fact, part of Tokyo's reparations to the USSR for a war that lasted little more than a week. The Bolsheviks proceeded to loot "83 percent of Manchuria's power generation equipment, wiping out 71 percent of its electrical capacity, 86 percent of its mining equipment, 82 percent of its cement production, 80 percent of its metalworking industry, 65 percent of its liquid fuels and lubricant production, and so on...All told [the USSR] removed 70 to 90 percent of Manchuria's industrial capacity. It also commandeered fifty thousand railway cars to move the loot home."²⁹⁰³

The above statistics were furnished by the Pauley Commission. Headed by Edwin Pauley, assigned by President Truman as the US Special Representative to the Allied Reparation Committee, he undertook a fact-finding mission to Manchuria in 1946. In his report to President Truman, Pauley underlined that "Japanese assets in conquered areas such as the Philippines, China, including Manchuria, and Korea, were to be taken from Japanese ownership and control and were to be operated for the benefit of the countries where the physical assets exist. Under what conditions full and complete title to these assets is to be vested in the local governments and under what conditions the ex-Japanese industrial plants are to be considered as part of the overall reparation allocation, is still under discussion and awaiting Allied agreement."²⁹⁰⁴ The sheer devastation the Red Army wrought upon the Manchurian economy is meticulously detailed in Pauley's report to the US President, as noted by Pauley himself: "The difference in condition of the Manchurian industrial plants between the Japanese surrender and the dates the Pauley Mission made its survey is appalling...how much of this wrecked condition is a direct result of Soviet removals, and much may be ascribed to pillage, civil war, and other indirect consequences of Soviet occupation cannot be accurately determined. In any case, the Soviet Government must bear major responsibility."²⁹⁰⁵ Pauley underlined that the occupying Bolshevik authorities forsook the opportunity granted by its rapid advances against Imperial forces to establish an orderly occupation and, instead, willfully engaged in large scale looting. Pauley concluded that "As for reparations, the Soviet military effort in Manchuria which lasted only a few days is a minute when compared with the long, tremendous, and costly operations in the Pacific. Therefore, the Soviet Government would not be entitled to substantial reparations from Japanese-owned assets merely on the basis of their operations in this area. Obviously Japanese assets in Manchuria did not belong solely to the Soviet Government. Other nations too are logical claimants."²⁹⁰⁶ Hence, Pauley reported to the President that the wanton Soviet theft of Manchurian industries was, in so many words, a blatant violation of the cooperation of the 'Yalta System', one that severely undermined the postwar Chinese economy and regional stability in East Asia.

Immediate postwar cooperation was defined by General Order No. 1 that was supposed to provide an orderly framework to coordinate the immediate post-surrender actions amongst the respective Allied Powers. As such, General MacArthur's General Order No. 1 of 22 August 1945

²⁹⁰³ Ibid., pp. 240-241.

²⁹⁰⁴ Pauley, Edwin, *Report on Japanese Assets in Manchuria to the President of the United States*, July 1946, (Washington, 1946), pg. 6.

²⁹⁰⁵ Ibid., pg. 7.

²⁹⁰⁶ Ibid., pg. 11.

explicitly laid out the surrender instructions from the Supreme Allied Command to the Japanese Armed Forces. Article 1a stipulated that “the senior Japanese commanders and all ground, sea, air and auxiliary forces within China (excluding Manchuria), Formosa and French Indochina north of 16 north latitude shall surrender to Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek.”²⁹⁰⁷ The spirit of cooperation intended by the ‘Yalta System’ is evident in this surrender order—explicitly stipulating in Article 1b that all Imperial forces within Manchuria, Korea north of 38 north latitude, and Karafuto (Sakhalin) and all of the Kurile Island should surrender to the Red Army. Yet the implementation of this order, however, led to misunderstandings and unilateralist policy instead of fostering the Great Power cooperation that had been envisioned at Yalta.

Following General Order No. 1, the US had taken several decisions that had redefined Washington’s role in China as the main sponsor of Chiang Kai-shek in his fight with the CCP, namely committing the US to dispatch its own forces to stabilize the reintroduction of Nationalist authority as well as assistance for troop landings.²⁹⁰⁸ Consequently, the US sanctioned the landing of 53,000 US Marines in northern China and stationed them in Beijing, Tianjin, and the main railway line outside of the Chinese capital, transporting up to 500,000 Nationalist troops to eastern and northern China to restore Nationalist authority.²⁹⁰⁹ The Marines were acting on the instructions of Stilwell’s successor, General Albert Coady Wedemeyer (1896-1989) who had been instructed to assist Nationalist units in reclaiming the Japanese-occupied zones of China. Wedemeyer, upon his appointment, expressed concern that “an administrative and social breakdown would take place in North and Central China if Nationalist forces were not brought in to disarm the Japanese and establish a new authority.”²⁹¹⁰ Yet the Soviet Union, despite recognizing Nationalist Chinese sovereignty over Manchuria, refused to let Kuomintang forces disembark in the USSR-occupied port of Dairen in October 1945, going so far as to close all Manchurian ports to Nationalist troops in November 1945. This turn of events was exactly what US Ambassador Harriman had feared. As early as 10 August, Harriman had urged US forces to occupy Dairen port immediately, arguing to President Truman that he foresaw the loss of Manchuria as a major setback for Washington’s foreign policy, unless the US “reorient our whole attitude and our methods of dealing with the Soviet Government,” history would refer to “the period of the next generation as the Soviet Age.”²⁹¹¹ Hence, already in the first months following the Yalta Summit, let alone the postwar period, moves towards unilateralist foreign policy had begun to be advocated to replace the multilateral.

At the same time, the Soviet actions through Moscow’s brazen theft of Japanese industry in Manchuria, as well as its move to bolster CCP forces in the area, began to raise concern over what, exactly, cooperation with Bolshevism meant on the ground. Faced with the growing presence of the Chinese Communists in Manchuria, General Wedemeyer’s decision to secure the land approach to Manchuria for the Nationalists through the deployment of so many leathernecks was deemed an ‘unfriendly action’. On 26 October 1945, Communist Chief of Staff, Ye Jianying (1897-1986), launched an official protest against the US Marine actions and, on 8 November 1945,

²⁹⁰⁷ Elleman, *International Rivalry and Secret Diplomacy*, pg. 238.

²⁹⁰⁸ Westad, *Cold War and Revolution*, pg. 101.

²⁹⁰⁹ Clubb, Edmund, “Manchuria in the Balance, 1945-1946”, *Pacific Historical Review*, Nov. 1957, Vol. 26, No. 4, pg. 379.

²⁹¹⁰ Westad, *Cold War and Revolution*, pg. 100.

²⁹¹¹ *Ibid.*, pg. 53.

the Communist press in Chongqing bluntly stated “We consider that the duties of the American troops in North China have been completed. They should promptly withdraw.”²⁹¹² On 15 November 1945, three months after Japan’s surrender, the Nationalists launched their offences against Communist forces along the administrative border with Manchuria that had recently been vacated by Soviet troops. The USSR officially requested a delay in their proposed troop withdraw (three months as stipulated by the Sino-Soviet Treaty), offering to assist the Nationalist takeover. Truman saw in this decision “a prime example of the policy of expansionism that Winston Churchill pointed to in his ‘Iron Curtain’ speech in early March”, remaining convinced that only the presence of the US Marines stopped any further Soviet forward moves.²⁹¹³ The Communists followed the Soviet announcement by making an offer, namely that the dispute in Manchuria should be settled through the establishment of a democratic coalition government for the whole of China, with a government of “local character” being established in Manchuria.²⁹¹⁴ This declaration promoted the US-sponsored mediation efforts through General Marshall and Foreign Commissar Molotov. While General Marshall managed to secure the trust of many of the negotiators, such as Zhou Enlai, allowing him to secure an agreement on the unification of a Chinese National Army and cessation of hostilities, the ultimate failure of his efforts has been recorded above.

By the time these negotiations were underway, however, the mutual perceptions of the Great Powers had undergone serious changes from the vision of seamless cooperation as advocated by the 32nd President. The US Joint Chiefs of Staff interpreted Soviet action in Manchuria as part of “an emerging picture of Soviet enmity towards the United States”, with the USSR just as ready to resort to unilateral action in Asia as they had been in postwar Europe.²⁹¹⁵ On 22 February 1946, George Kennan (1904-2005), dispatched his ‘long telegram’ advocating the containment strategy that would form the base of US policy towards the USSR until the latter’s collapse in 1991. US Military Intelligence had likewise concluded that the USSR was preparing to include northern China and Manchuria “in her concept of a security zone” and was using the CCP to achieve this aim.²⁹¹⁶ Added to this were the reports filtering out to the rest of China on the behaviour of the Red Army during its now prolonged occupation of Manchuria. On 6 March 1946, the Chinese Foreign Minister presented its first formal protest against Soviet violations of the Sino-Soviet Treaty of Friendship and Alliance and demanded the immediate withdrawal of USSR forces from Manchuria. Marshall, too, began to express his concern regarding growing Soviet influence in China, informing President Truman that his Administration’s goal in China should focus on “unification at the fastest possible pace so as to eliminate [China’s] present vulnerability to Soviet undercover attack...I also believe that our Government must shortly do more for China in this matter than give advice.”²⁹¹⁷ This meant both increasing US economic support to China, as well as supporting Kuomintang efforts to establish control over Manchuria. With the Chinese public indignant over the publication of the Far Eastern Agreement and the continued Soviet presence in Manchuria, Chiang was bolstered by the impression that US foreign policy would support him in case of a renewed conflict with the CCP or even commencing operations against the Soviet Union. The Chinese Military Intelligence Bureau reported to Chiang from Washington that the Truman

²⁹¹² Clubb, “Manchuria in the Balance”, pg. 381.

²⁹¹³ Westad, *Cold War and Revolution*, pg. 163.

²⁹¹⁴ Clubb, “Manchuria in the Balance”, pg. 383.

²⁹¹⁵ Westad, *Cold War and Revolution*, pg. 102.

²⁹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, pg. 163.

²⁹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, pg. 153.

Administration “now viewed its conflict with the Soviet Union as global, and that the United States could be expected to support the Chinese Government in any conflict with the Soviets.”²⁹¹⁸

Comforted by such assurances, Chiang ordered a Kuomintang assault against CCP-held Siping, the first battle in the now renewed Chinese Civil War. The resistance of the CCP not only displayed their intentions of denying Nationalist access to Manchuria but also the end of any possible negotiated settlement that Marshall had toiled to bring within the realm of possibility. As Mao informed Lin Biao in April 1946, “everything is decided by victory or defeat on the battlefield; do not put any hope in negotiations.”²⁹¹⁹ With the situation developing rapidly out of control in the spring of 1946, Stalin took the decision to finally honour his agreement with the Nationalist Government and withdraw the Red Army from China. Moscow realized that “Washington’s ability to influence Chinese politics was superior to [the Soviet Union’s]...his fear of American military power in China let him to take actions that destroyed his relationship with the Chinese Government and increased US suspicion of Soviet motives in East Asia.”²⁹²⁰ However, this move backfired as, even after the last Soviet units departed in November 1946, the Truman Administration remained steadfast in its view of the CCP as an instrument for Soviet policy. The US Observer Group in Yanan wrote in its final report that “the Soviet Union is guiding the destinies of one of its strongest satellites, the Chinese Communist Party as it has in the past and will in the future.”²⁹²¹ Reality, as usual, was not as black and white. The Nationalist offensive into Manchuria saw Kuomintang forces rapidly advance towards the important railway juncture of Harbin. Marshall managed to somehow get Chiang and the CCP to agree to a ceasefire on 6 June 1946 in what the Chinese Generalissimo retrospectively deemed his “most grievous mistake.”²⁹²² Contrary to US reports, Communist forces had been reduced to, as Zhou Enlai explained to the resident Soviet Ambassador in Chongqing, “down to no more than three bullets per soldier in an exhausted and weakened force”, with Lin Biao even having given the orders to retreat from Harbin, had Marshall’s ceasefire not rendered such a concession unnecessary.²⁹²³ Stalin still harboured notions that the Nationalists might emerge victorious in China and continued to work with them, eschewing full cooperation with the Communists until the Soviet withdrawal from Manchuria had been finalized.²⁹²⁴ Indeed, the Soviet Union would only supply heavy weaponry to Communist forces as of Autumn 1947 when they were facing almost certain defeat. The importance of Marshall’s ceasefire was in the fact that it allowed the Communists the necessary time to re-group and transform themselves into a conventional force.

Marshall’s ceasefire had lasted only a few weeks in Central and South China when full-scale civil war returned, but it lasted until November 1946 in Manchuria. The Truman Administration, having grown angry at Chiang’s decision to break Marshall’s ceasefire, showcased its displeasure at the Nationalist Government by suspending all military assistance between Autumn 1946 and Spring 1947, when a China under CCP rule became a distinct possibility. Nevertheless, the 33rd President openly deemed Chiang Kai-shek a “thief” and accused him of

²⁹¹⁸ Ibid., pg. 159.

²⁹¹⁹ Ibid., pg. 160.

²⁹²⁰ Ibid., pg. 161.

²⁹²¹ Ibid., pp. 163-164.

²⁹²² Dreyer, Edward, *China at War, 1901-1949*, London: Routledge, 1995, pg. 324.

²⁹²³ Paine, *The Wars for Asia*, pg. 250.

²⁹²⁴ Vogel, *China and Japan*, pg. 295.

wasting the USD 750 million he had received in US assistance.²⁹²⁵ The break in US support and general disarray of Nationalist forces did not allow Ching Kai-shek to feed into his obsession of annihilating the CCP, a force with which the United States, both under Stilwell and Marshall, had tried to accommodate in a unified Chinese Government. Losing the campaign in Manchuria, the US Embassy to China reported to Washington that “China for the foreseeable future cannot be a positive asset to the United States; the range of American choice is confined to whether it will be a minor or major liability.”²⁹²⁶ As defeats piled on, the Nationalist Government began to relocate its forces and funds to the recently-liberated Chinese island of Taiwan.

By 1948, members of the State Department and the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) openly advocated for the removal of Chiang as Nationalist leader, only to be informed by US Ambassador, John Leighton Stuart (1876-1962), that no other viable alternatives were available. As the Nationalist Government began to enter full-scale collapse following irreversible defeats against the CCP, the Truman Administration concluded that the US should “disengage from the Chinese Civil War and the Nationalist Chinese regime, ‘let the dust settle,’ and then attempt to work out some sort of accommodation with the new Communist China.”²⁹²⁷ Truman himself, cognizant of his own reservations over the Nationalist Chinese leadership, believed that enough tension existed between USSR and Communist Chinese interests—for example Soviet rights in Manchuria—that they could be exploited in due time. As such, with the fall of the Nationalist Government on the mainland imminent, Truman viewed that US policy should encourage the coming Communist-led China to veer away from the USSR. Given the Communist Chinese disappointment with Soviet actions in Manchuria and Xinjiang, as well as the Nationalist relinquishing of all Chinese claims to Outer Mongolia, this strategy did contain some promising starting points. A second, more realistic strategy was based on the purely military, namely that a “defence perimeter was also to be established through the chain of islands running along the coast of East Asia, from the Aleutians through Japan and the Ryukyus to the Philippines” that would, in a consensus of US policy makers, form “a new vital defence frontier for the United States” that could be, based on US naval supremacy be defended in the event of war with the Soviet Union.²⁹²⁸ As US forces would prioritize Europe in any future conflict with the USSR, this western Pacific parameter could be held with minimal effort.

A major contradiction belayed the adoption of this two-pronged strategy: the proposed western defensive perimeter ran squarely through Taiwan, the Chinese island whose return to Chinese sovereignty was promised in the Potsdam Proclamation. While the Truman Government concluded that while the cost in blood and treasure, not to mention political standing, of dispatching US forces to save the Nationalist Government on mainland China made poor political calculus, the possibility surfaced “that the United States might deny Taiwan to the emerging Communist Chinese regime at a modest cost to itself.”²⁹²⁹ The US Navy in particular argued for the strategic postwar importance of Taiwan, denying any pro-Soviet naval forces access to the Pacific sea lanes. This approach was supported by the US Joint Chiefs of Staff in National Security

²⁹²⁵ Paine, *The Wars for Asia*, pg. 257.

²⁹²⁶ *Ibid.*, pg. 269.

²⁹²⁷ Garver, John, *The Sino-American Alliance: Nationalist China and American Cold War Strategy*, New York: M.E. Sharpe, 1999, pg. 11.

²⁹²⁸ *Ibid.*, pg. 12.

²⁹²⁹ *Ibid.*, pg. 13.

Council (NSC) Document 37/2 of 4 February 1949. NSC 37/2 underlined that “The basic aim of the United States should be to deny Formosa and the Pescadores to the Communists without ourselves taking any open unilateral responsibility for them or power over them”, suggesting to accomplish this feat by “diplomatic and military means”.²⁹³⁰ The US Joint Chiefs of Staff were well aware that any military occupation of Taiwan by US forces as, the Document reads, “would galvanize all mainland Chinese opinion in support of the Communists, the very thing we must avoid if our political warfare is to have any degree of success in China.”²⁹³¹ As a palatable alternative, they suggested fermenting local Chinese control with elements not closely related to Chiang Kai-shek. However, other US departments held diverging views.

Following Chiang’s escape to Taiwan in November 1949, the State Department predicted that the CCP would place the Chinese island under its control by the end of July 1950.²⁹³² Other than direct military intervention, there was little the US could do to thwart Taiwan becoming part of Communist China. On 30 December 1949, President Truman approved the National Security Council’s recommendation, outlined in NSC Document 48/2, that embraced Secretary of State Dean Acheson’s (1893-1971) vision of US East Asian policy following the establishment of the People’s Republic of China. While diplomatic and economic means should be attempted to deny the CCP Taiwan, the strategic importance of the island did not justify overt US military intervention.²⁹³³ The decision to sacrifice Taiwan had been taken. This was confirmed publicly through Truman’s 5 January 1950 statement to the American people that the United States would neither follow a course that would “lead to involvement in the civil conflict in China” nor furnish military assistance in any form to Taiwan. Secretary of State Acheson, speaking on 12 January 1950 to the National Press Club, underlined that the US western defence perimeter ran through the Aleutians, Japan, the Ryukyus, and the Philippines. Taiwan and South Korea were excluded. Shortly after the adoption of NSC 48/2 and the statements by the 33rd President and his Secretary of State, a seminal event in post-Second World War history occurred that forced Washington to seriously revisit the scope of its commitment to ensuring peace in East Asia.

The creation of the People’s Republic of China on 1 October 1949, marking the apotheosis of the CCP’s hard fought victory against the Kuomintang, changed both the regional East Asian and global landscape. Immediately, Mao was confronted with the enormous task of not only rebuilding a vast country devastated by over twenty years of internal strife, but also securing the CCP’s internationally recognized legitimacy as the rightful rulers of a united China. Securing this Westphalian version of the Mandate of Heaven proved to be a lengthy and challenging task. The CCP, emerging victorious in 1949, was categorically different from the sycophantic and plastic Marxists movements that Moscow forced on its occupied European territories. The CCP victory was achieved over the Kuomintang due to its own ideological and military merit. As noted, Moscow played a minor role in supporting the CCP during the crucial northern Chinese campaigns. While the USSR made an important contribution to the CCP’s logistical and cryptography capabilities—training CCP cadres to break the Nationalist codes—Soviet support remained decidedly within certain prescribed limits.²⁹³⁴ Even as the Nationalist Government began to openly

²⁹³⁰ Ibid., pg. 16.

²⁹³¹ Ibid.

²⁹³² Paine, *The Wars for Asia*, pg. 269.

²⁹³³ Garver, *The Sino-American Alliance*, pg. 20.

²⁹³⁴ Paine, *The War for Asia*, pg. 253.

crumble in 1948, Stalin refused to adjust Soviet policy to reflect the gains of the CCP.²⁹³⁵ While cooperation under the stillborn ‘Yalta System’ remained highly unlikely given US-USSR tensions over Europe, Soviet policy makers still viewed outright US intervention in southern China as on the table, complete with a possible US threat to employ its atomic arsenal. Hence, for the Soviet Union, the risks were simply too great to court serious confrontation with the United States over Soviet support towards a CCP victory in China. Stalin went so far as to propose international negotiations over the future of China in January 1949, a proposal that was opposed by Mao stating that international interference would be an “exact fulfilment of the US Government’s wishes” and “bring much dissent among the people of China, the democratic parties and popular organizations, and even within the CCP, and would be very damaging for our current position.”²⁹³⁶ Stalin, faced with Mao’s refusal, eventually abandoned any further consideration of international mediation, representing another example of the converging Soviet and CCP interests.

Nevertheless, the dire economic and social situation of post-Civil War China needed to focus on domestic reconstruction and international recognition. Mao noted that the new People’s Republic would require “economic assistance. We believe it possible only to receive this assistance from the USSR and countries of the new democracy.”²⁹³⁷ Such assistance would, based on the positive experience the CCP had made with Soviet advisors during the final phase of the Civil War, also include Moscow’s advice on building a socialist society with the CCP as its political nucleus. Likewise, the new PRC required security guarantees, both against a possible negative US reaction to its victory in China, but also against persistent fears of a resurgent Japan. Hence, with such goals in mind, Mao departed for Moscow on his first international visit in December 1949. Mao left for the Soviet capital cognizant of the differences of opinion between Moscow and the CCP, yet the face-to-face meeting between Mao and Stalin had been prepared by Liu Shaoqi (1898-1969), Mao’s second in command, who reported to Stalin the novel role the PRC could play in the worldwide construction of Communism: “the Soviet Communist Party is the main headquarters of the international Communist movement, while the Chinese Communist Party is just a battle-front headquarters. The interest of a part should be subordinated to international interests and, therefore, *the CCP submits to decisions of the Soviet Communist Party*...If on some questions differences should arise between the CCP and the Soviet Communist Party, the CCP, having outlined its point of view, will submit and will resolutely *carry out the decisions of the Soviet Communist Party*.”²⁹³⁸ Such statements helped convince Soviet policy makers that a close, but hierarchical, relationship with the CCP could serve the USSR’s interests in light of increasing tensions with the US, both in foreign policy and military terms. Yet in going to Moscow, Mao was likewise aware that “his new state had to conform [as laid out clearly by Liu Shaoqi] to the Soviet worldview in terms of its domestic policies and, even more important, its international posture.”²⁹³⁹ Stalin and Mao met together while being deeply suspicious of each other.²⁹⁴⁰ Yet such was the price to be paid should the People’s Republic of China secure both the much-needed economic and military assistance as well as secure the all-important international recognition of CCP rightful rule over China.

²⁹³⁵ Westad, Odd Arne, Brothers in Arms: The Rise and Fall of the Sino-Soviet Alliance, 1945-1963, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998, pg. 20.

²⁹³⁶ *Ibid.*, pg. 9.

²⁹³⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁹³⁸ *Ibid.*, pg. 10.

²⁹³⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁹⁴⁰ Garver, The Sino-American Alliance, pg. 21.

The result was the Sino-Soviet Friendship Treaty of 14 February 1950. The Treaty constructed, first and foremost, a military alliance between the USSR and the PRC. **Article I** stipulated that “Should either of the Contracting Parties be attacked by Japan or any other State allied with Japan and thus find itself in a state of war, the other Contracting Party shall immediately extend military and other assistance with all the means at its disposal.”²⁹⁴¹ While the phraseology left some flexibility as to what actual assistance would eventually be provided, the Treaty clearly obliged both the PRC and USSR to mutual assistance in the event of war, both against Japan or other undetermined nations: “The two Contracting Parties undertake to carry out jointly all necessary measures within their power to prevent a repetition of aggression and breach of the peace by Japan or any other State which might directly or indirectly join with Japan in acts of aggression.”²⁹⁴² The new alliance, however, was not merely designed to furnish mutual wartime assistance, but contained a larger, systemic scope that in no way remained confined to East Asia. This was evidenced in the lines of Article I which further stipulated that “the Contracting parties likewise declare that they are prepared to participate, in a spirit of sincere cooperation, in all international action designed to safeguard peace and security throughout the world, and will devote all their energies to the speediest realization of these aims.”²⁹⁴³ The Soviet Union, through its actions in Europe, was, in the eyes of the US, mounting a challenge to mould the postwar order in its image, especially at a moment when the cooperation prescribed in Yalta had faded below the horizon. Such a phenomenon had now extended to East Asia. This, naturally, was viewed in Washington as a challenge to the contemporary world order, both in Europe and beyond.

Article II committed both sides “by common agreement, to strive for the conclusion at the earliest possible date, in conjunction with the other Powers which were their Allies during the Second World War, of a Peace Treaty with Japan .”²⁹⁴⁴ This therefore committed both the USSR and PRC to a common approach regarding a final settlement with Japan. Adding to the overall military alliance forged between the two republics, **Article III** was specifically aimed at solidifying the common military pact, committing both signatories to not “enter into any alliance directed against the other Party, or participate in any coalition or in any action or measures directed against the other Party.”²⁹⁴⁵ This Article did not specify any geographic limitation. **Article IV** extended the realm of Sino-Soviet cooperation beyond the purely military agreeing that “The two Contracting Parties shall consult together on all important international questions involving the common interests of the Soviet Union and China, with a view of strengthening peace and universal security”²⁹⁴⁶, cementing the internationalist scope as laid out in the previous Article and worldwide implications of the new agreement. **Article V** explicitly obliged the USSR and the PRC to non-interference in their respective domestic affairs, while underscoring that the newfound partnership between Moscow and Beijing had been undertaken on principle of “equal rights” between the two nations.²⁹⁴⁷ This marked the first occasion where the PRC had not only been accorded official recognition, but also—in a drastic swing from treaties past—equal *de jure* standing.

²⁹⁴¹ Elleman, *International Rivalry and Secret Diplomacy*, pg. 244.

²⁹⁴² Ibid.

²⁹⁴³ Ibid.

²⁹⁴⁴ Ibid.

²⁹⁴⁵ Ibid.

²⁹⁴⁶ Ibid.

²⁹⁴⁷ Ibid.

While the PRC managed to secure the political and economic support judged as necessary by Mao, the treaty formalized the Chinese concessions that the Nationalist Government had signed away to Moscow through the 1945 Treaty of Friendship. These were specified in secret addendums to the public treaties signed between the Chinese and Soviet Foreign Ministers. While the USSR yet again recognized Chinese sovereignty over its Three Eastern Provinces as well as its territorial integrity, the Soviet Union retained its privileges over Port Arthur and Dairen as well as settled the question of official PRC recognition of Mongolia as an independent state. Soviet assistance towards its newfound military, economic, and ideological allies still came with a price. Looking back retrospective on his two months stay in Moscow and personal negotiations with Stalin in a March 1958 speech, Mao gives the impression of a document sign out of geopolitical necessity painted over with a thin veneer of ideological conviction: “Stalin and I argued for two months in Moscow in 1950. Our attitude toward the Sino-Soviet Treaty, the Changchun Railway, the joint-stock companies and the border issues was to hear the proposals that Stalin made first and then argue with him over the ones that we did not like. The ones that he would push vigorously, we would accept. We did this in consideration of socialism’s overall interest.”²⁹⁴⁸ Both Stalin and Mao were cognizant of the geopolitical differences that separated the two leaders. Yet Soviet assistance was necessary, in Mao’s view, to complete the process of Chinese unification through the taking of Taiwan. With Truman’s January 1950 announcement regarding the island’s place outside the US postwar defence strategy, Mao requested that half of the USD 300 million loan that the USSR had accorded the PRC be used to purchase naval equipment for an eventual CCP operation to unify Taiwan.²⁹⁴⁹ While US intervention on the Chinese mainland could be excluded, Beijing was not entirely sure that Washington would, despite Truman’s statement, stand aside in the event of the CCP’s unification of Taiwan.

To the United States, the public portion of the treaty was considered a direct challenge to the postwar system Washington was trying to establish. The Great Power co-operation in Asia envisioned at Yalta, however illusionary at the start of the new decade, now lay squarely outside the realm of realistic political possibilities. With the signing of the Sino-Soviet Treaty, “Beijing greatly increased the gravity of the threat confronting the United States in the burgeoning Cold War. The United States now confronted a vast Eurasian combination raging from Central Europe to Southeast Asia...It also became...virtually certain that any conflict with the USSR would be global, imposing on the United States simultaneous major wars in Europe and the Far East.”²⁹⁵⁰ As such, it was difficult not to view the alliance as a direct challenge to US strategic interests in East Asia. The new reality was reflected in one of the defining documents to arise from US policy makers as emerging Cold War realities became discernible, namely NSC Document 68, formulated in April 1950. NSC 68’s main focus concerned itself with the new global balance of power: “For several centuries it had proved impossible for any one nation to gain such preponderant strength that a coalition of other nations could not in time face it with greater strength....[the] historical distribution of power...[had been] basically altered” through several factors.²⁹⁵¹ The first was the foundation of the PRC and the CCP’s victory over the Nationalists. Given this new reality, global power was now crystalizing into two poles, one under US leadership and the other coalescing

²⁹⁴⁸ Nakajima Mineo, “The Sino-Soviet Confrontation in Historical Perspective” in Origins of the Cold War in Asia, pg. 212.

²⁹⁴⁹ Garver, The Sino-American Alliance, pg. 23.

²⁹⁵⁰ Ibid.

²⁹⁵¹ Ibid., pg. 26.

under Soviet hegemony. While Europe remained the main focus of Soviet policy, it was Asia, however, that held the most promise for Moscow as Soviet ideals had “found a particularly receptive audience in Asia, especially as the Asiatics have been impressed by what has been plausibly portrayed to them as the rapid advance of the USSR from a backward society to a position of a great world power.”²⁹⁵² China served as a harbinger of possible future Communist successes in East Asia at large, especially “given the political-economic-situation in the rest of South and South-East Asia, [providing] a springboard for a further incursion in this troubled area...Throughout Asia the stability of the present moderate governments, which are more in sympathy with our purposes than any probable successor regimes would be, is doubtful.”²⁹⁵³ Given its newfound postwar position, the Soviet Union was actively “pursuing that initiative in the conflict with the free world. Its atomic capabilities, together with its successes in the Far East, have led to an increasing nervousness in Western Europe and the rest of the free world. We cannot be sure, of course, how vigorously the Soviet Union will pursue its initiative...There are, however, ominous signs of further deterioration in the Far East.”²⁹⁵⁴ Gone was the notion of attempting to immediately exploit the Sino-Soviet conceptual difference to woo the PRC away from its newfound Soviet embrace. NSC 68 presented the Sino-Soviet Treaty as a military bloc aimed at challenging the fragile situation in East Asia that had emerged out of the dust of the Japanese Empire. Any remnant of possible Great Power cooperation had now definitely evaporated, leaving behind an altered US view of a new threat ready and able to challenge US interests in the Pacific.

The Soviet Union was now, according to the thinking of US decision makers, engaged in a policy of unlimited expansion and, given its ideological roots, was not seen as prone to reason or influence, making firm resistance to Moscow’s designs at each point where aggression was threatened the only viable option to contain the USSR.²⁹⁵⁵ A comprehensive policy would be therefore required to guide the US in its efforts to successfully manage the emergence of the USSR and the Communist Bloc as serious adversaries. The Truman Administration consequently argued that a line of defence would have to be erected against such expansionist desires. This would necessitate taking a stand far from the borders of the continental US: “the line to be held against Soviet expansion was the existing boundary of the Soviet empire, not our own national borders or some intermediate line, because successful expansion up to any such line would not satisfy Soviet ambition and it might provide supplementary resources which would make the Soviet Union irresistible in an ultimate struggle.”²⁹⁵⁶ At the same time, Washington could not be the sole guardian against Soviet expansionism and, consequently, a system of alliances with like-minded nations would have to be forged to share the economic and military burden. Such tenets were couched in the moral argument that the principles of “national self-determination and of world law, as proclaimed by the United Nations Charter had been forcibly threatened.”²⁹⁵⁷ With the US viewing the PRC’s decision to cast its lot in with the USSR, posing a direct threat to the newly-won postwar order, Washington was, through its reference to the international system it had largely sponsored, able to link it with a realist policy of active containment of USSR expansion under the banner of the international principles and organization of the United Nations. Such ideas would be

²⁹⁵² Ibid.

²⁹⁵³ Ibid.

²⁹⁵⁴ Ibid.

²⁹⁵⁵ Dunn, *Peace-Making and the Settlement with Japan*, pg. 49.

²⁹⁵⁶ Ibid.

²⁹⁵⁷ Ibid., pg. 50.

put to practice regarding the ultimate signing of a Peace Treaty with Japan and when tested on the Korean Peninsula.

10.2.20.2.3. Korea and the ‘Yalta System’

The entry of the USSR at the very last minute as an ally in the war against Japan rendered Soviet influence in the Korea question an established fact. As illustrated in the trajectory of the Chinese civil war, while Soviet forces were not able to challenge US interests in the Indian and Pacific Oceans, US forces would not be able to effectively counter any Soviet initiatives in northern China and Korea.²⁹⁵⁸ The Cairo Declaration, declaring the Allied intention to re-establish an independent Korea, was the sole document containing any international commitments made during the Pacific War and provided for the establishment of an Allied trusteeship to guide Korea towards independence. In preparations for the Yalta Conference, the State Department put forward elements of US postwar objectives in Korea, recommending that the US reach an agreement with China and Great Britain and, if necessary, the Soviet Union, regarding the establishment of a temporary international administration under Allied military occupation from Korea. The representation in any postwar Korean administration should be limited “to those countries that have a real interest in the future status of Korea and...the representation of other states should not be so large as to reduce the proportionate strength of the United States to a point where its effectiveness would be weakened.”²⁹⁵⁹ The State Department underlined that, given traditional Chinese and now Soviet interests in Korea, dominance of the peninsula by a single power could lead to destabilizing consequences. Trying to avoid a German-style partition that could result in the fracturing of Korea into several units, the State Department advised that “all of Korea [be] administered as a single unit and not as separate zones.”²⁹⁶⁰ As no written agreement regarding Korea was concluded at Yalta, the underlying assumption was that the Great Power cooperation created by the ‘Yalta System’ would provide the necessary stability to gradually proceed, as envisioned in Cairo, from Allied military occupation to the transfer of power to an independent Korean Government. Yet all such ideas remained confined to the papers of the State Department. Indeed, President Truman underlined that Korea, while being mentioned by Foreign Commissar Molotov, was “not discussed at my Conferences with the [Soviet] Premier and the British Prime Ministers at Potsdam.”²⁹⁶¹

Such idealistic planning failed to outlive President Roosevelt. The Potsdam Conference, despite its heavy focus on postwar Europe, did witness military talks between Soviet and US military officials to coordinate strategy giving the pending entry of the USSR into the Pacific War.²⁹⁶² General Marshall informed his Bolshevik allies that the US would not initiate any military moves towards Korea in the immediate future. The US military therefore favoured a joint operation between units of the identified trusteeship nations under an all-inclusive Allied command. Martial necessity, however, dictated that a line of demarcation between Soviet and US forces for any eventual operations in Korea be established. On 26 July 1945, agreement was reached that the 38th

²⁹⁵⁸ Ku Daeyeol, Korea 1905-1945: From Japanese Colonialism to Liberation and Independence, Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2021, pg. 349.

²⁹⁵⁹ Cho Soon Sung, Korea in World Politics, 1940-1950: An Evaluation of American Responsibility, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967, pg. 29.

²⁹⁶⁰ Ibid.

²⁹⁶¹ Truman, Harry, Two Years of Hope, Garden City: Doubleday & Company, 1956, pg. 317.

²⁹⁶² Cho, Korea in World Politics, pg. 41.

Parallel would be the effective operational boundary between US and Soviet forces. While US military planners in Potsdam originally envisioned this line to only apply to naval operations, the actual meaning of the 38th Parallel was left ambiguous, opening the possibility for Soviet land forces to operate north of this boundary, overlooking the stark political consequences of any Soviet occupation.²⁹⁶³ The rapid collapse of the Japanese Empire following the Soviet entry into the Pacific War already provided the necessary political cover for the Red Army to retain a presence north of the 38th Parallel. Indeed, General MacArthur's General Order No. 1 of 22 August 1945 stipulated in Article 1b that all Japanese forces north of the 38th Parallel were to surrender to the Red Army. This is remarkable as there had been no implicit international agreement on the establishment of any dividing lines in Korea that had been agreed upon amongst the Allied Powers, with President Truman writing that the line was "proposed by [Washington] as a practical solution when the sudden collapse of the Japanese war machine created a vacuum in Korea."²⁹⁶⁴

Along with the collapse of the Japanese Imperial Military in northeast Asia after the Soviet entry into the war, so did evaporate any fuzzy visions of realizing an idealistic policy of Yalta-style cooperation over Korea. The arrival of elements of the 25th Army in Korea north of the 38th Parallel raised the possibility that the USSR would establish a puppet Communist regime in Korea, given that the 25th Army's Political Commissar, Major General Nikolai Georgiyevich Lebedev (1901-1992), who had "a taste for political work and seriously influenced North Korean development from 1945 to 1948", was nominated as the head of the Soviet Civil Administration in Korea.²⁹⁶⁵ The Soviet forces began to establish "the basis of a strong pro-Soviet Communist Party as a reliable major political force", a complicated task given the injection of Communist and nationalist elements from their exile in China and the Soviet Union itself.²⁹⁶⁶ On 10 October 1945, Kim Il Sung (1912-1994) was "elected...as the First Secretary of the 'North Korean Central Bureau of the Korean Communist Party'...claimed as the first Korean Communist Party organized by 'the true Communists'" and, of course, with the strong backing of the Soviet occupation authorities.²⁹⁶⁷ As such, while eliminating any trace of the old Imperial Japanese administration, pro-Soviet Communists established themselves as the wielders of power north of the 38th Parallel. Hence, the Soviet Union, aiming at the integration of their de facto zone of control in Korea into the realm of Soviet political and economic influence, implemented "well-prepared plans" and "were prepared to indoctrinate the Korean people to this end as thoroughly and speedily as possible."²⁹⁶⁸ The composition of the Korean population, with circa 70 percent consisting of small farmers and fishermen were, according to a US report on Korea north of the 38th Parallel from 22 June 1946, especially vulnerable to Communist ideals given their "little knowledge of national or international economic affairs...[and were] easily swayed by golden tongues and promises."²⁹⁶⁹ These immediate moves that accompanied the arrival of the Red Army in Korea starkly contrasted with the orders and actions of the US forces south of the 38th Parallel.

²⁹⁶³ Ibid., pg. 52.

²⁹⁶⁴ Truman, Two Years of Hope, pg. 317.

²⁹⁶⁵ Lankov, Andrei, From Stalin to Kim Il Sung: The Formation of North Korea, 1945-1960, New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2002, pg. 2.

²⁹⁶⁶ Cho, Korea in World Politics, pg. 83.

²⁹⁶⁷ Ibid., pg. 86.

²⁹⁶⁸ Ibid., pg. 88.

²⁹⁶⁹ Truman, Two Years of Hope, pg. 321.

US forces, in line with Article 1b of General Order No. 1, arrived in southern Korea on 8 September 1945 to carry out their mission, in accordance with the scant reference to the Cairo Declaration, namely to accept the surrender of the Japanese as well as “establish an effective government along democratic lines and rebuild a sound economy as a basis for Korean independence and train Koreans in handling their own affairs and prepare [them] to govern [themselves] as a free and independent nation.”²⁹⁷⁰ The latter two points of the US mission proved difficult to realize. The Japanese—three days before their surrender—had acquiesced to the formation of a provisional Korean government under Yo Un-hyong (1886-1947) on the condition it protect Japanese citizens and property following the capitulation. The Committee for the Preparation of Korean Independence (CPKI) was formed and, in an open meeting on 6 September 1945, declared the foundation of the People’s Republic of Korea, claiming authority over the entire peninsula. However, when US forces arrived two days later, their instructions only permitted them to deal with the Japanese Imperial Army regarding the concrete surrender details and were not even informed about the existence of the CPKI. With MacArthur claiming authority over Korea south of the 38th Parallel, the US military occupation authority underlined that “United States policy prohibits official recognition or utilization for political purposes of any so-called Korean Provisional Government or other political organization by United States forces.”²⁹⁷¹ This caused a high degree of tension between the US authorities and the Korean populous, determined to achieve independence.

In line with its overarching political and economic goals, the Red Army authorities, immediately following their arrival, began to seal off the north of Korea and limit traffic between the two zones. With the majority of Korean industry being located in what was a de facto Soviet occupation zone, and the majority of agricultural land in areas under US control, three months after the advent of American occupation, the US Commander in Korea, Lieutenant General John Hodge (1893-1963), reported to the Joint Chiefs of Staff that “the dual occupation of Korea...imposed an impossible condition upon our occupation missions of establishing sound economy and preparing Korea for future independence.”²⁹⁷² The deep dissatisfaction of the Korean people towards the planned establishment of a trusteeship also caused concerns that the local population would rise up in revolt, thereby dealing a serious blow to the international prestige of the United States. Hodges therefore recommended that Washington and Moscow agree to a joint withdraw from Korea. State Secretary Byrnes visited Moscow in December 1945 to discuss the situation in Korea, presenting Molotov with suggestions on how to apply measures to streamline communication, commerce, and currency issues. Byrnes underlined to Molotov that, under the Cairo Declaration, the Allied Powers were committed to realizing Korean independence and therefore proposed to move forward with creation of a joint four-power Allied trusteeship that would entail the dissolution of the separate occupation zones. Molotov consented to the establishment of a trusteeship as a long-term perspective and instead suggested that, for the immediate future, a joint commission of Soviet and US commands in Korea discuss the creation of a provisional government. This Joint Commission convened in Seoul on 20 March 1946 however “adjourned *sine die* on 8 May 1946 without ever having come to grips with the problems of the nation.”²⁹⁷³

²⁹⁷⁰ Cho, Korea in World Politics, pp. 63-64.

²⁹⁷¹ Ibid., pp. 70-71.

²⁹⁷² Truman, Two Years of Hope, pp. 317-318.

²⁹⁷³ Ibid., pg. 320.

The contrasting approaches followed by the Soviet and US occupation authorities deepened the social and economic divide between both sides of the 38th Parallel and, by the summer of 1946, “the temporary division of Korea had begun to appear as an indefinite separation.”²⁹⁷⁴ General Hodge proceeded to personally warn President Truman that civil war would break out in Korea, should the Soviet Union and United States not agree on a common policy. Faced with such a stark warning, the 33rd President approved Secretary Marshall’s plan to initiate a final attempt to make the Joint Commission work. With Foreign Commissar Molotov indicating some flexibility regarding the USSR’s position on Korea, the Joint Commission convened again in May 1947. In August 1947, the US proposed that the four trustee powers for Korea as envisioned at Cairo (Great Britain, China, the USSR, and the United States) should convene in Washington on 8 September 1947 to agree on the modalities for elections under UN supervision, for provisional legislatures in the Soviet and US zones aiming at establishing a provisional government over all of Korea in order to, in tandem with the trustee powers, draft a provisional constitution, determine the degree of economic assistance necessary to implement independence, and identify a date a withdrawal for all foreign forces. The Soviet Union refused, arguing that a joint commission represented the only viable way to establish Korean independence. The rejection of the US proposal, led President Truman to conclude that any future negotiation with the Soviets “would be futile” and instructed Marshall to place the issue before the General Assembly of the United Nations, convening in Lake Success, New York, in order to accomplish “what the inability of the two powers to reach agreement” had so far prevented “which was to reunite Korea.”²⁹⁷⁵ Thereby the United States sought to establish a united Korean Government, albeit in name only, and transfer its responsibility to the international organization.²⁹⁷⁶

In the meantime, the failure to implement cooperation under the ‘Yalta System’, not only marked the failure of the last multilateral effort to find a working compromise on an international issue between Moscow and Washington, but also led US policy makers to consider what was rapidly manifesting into a long-term US presence south of the 38th Parallel. In September 1947, the US Joint Chiefs of Staff wrote to the Secretary of State that “from the standpoint of military security, the United States has little strategic interest in maintaining the present troops and bases in Korea....in the event of the hostilities in the Far East, our present forces in Korea would be a military liability and could not be maintained there without substantial reinforcement prior to the initiation of hostilities....at the present time, the occupation of Korea is requiring very large expenditures for the primary purpose of preventing disease and disorder which might endanger our occupation forces with little, if any, lasting benefit to the security of the United States...Authoritative reports from Korea indicate that continued lack of progress towards a free and independent Korea, unless offset by an elaborate programme of economic, political, and cultural rehabilitation, in all probability will result in such conditions, including violent disorder, as to make the position of the United States occupation forces untenable. A precipitate withdrawal of our forces under such circumstances would lower the military prestige of the United States, quite possibly to the extent of adversely affecting cooperation in other areas more vital to the security of the United States.”²⁹⁷⁷ In the wake of the abject failure of the ‘Yalta System’, and its

²⁹⁷⁴ Schaller, *The American Occupation of Japan*, pg. 76.

²⁹⁷⁵ Truman, *Two Years of Hope*, pg. 324.

²⁹⁷⁶ Cho, *Korea in World Politics*, pg. 281.

²⁹⁷⁷ Truman, *Two Years of Hope*, pg. 325.

gradual degradation into the Cold War, this last point became of particular concern to US policy makers. As previous US strategic documents had identified East Asia as particularly vulnerable to penetration by Communist ideology, suddenly consideration of the regional standing of the US vis à vis potential allies took on special significance. Truman's reparations advisor Edwin Pauley, accordingly, argued that the only way to counter Soviet expansionism was through strengthening the capitalist structure throughout East Asia, describing Korea as an "ideological battle ground upon which our entire success in Asia may depend."²⁹⁷⁸ Hence, in order to defend the wider regional interests of the US, it became necessary for Washington to construct a strong capitalist state, despite the weak military position of US forces.

In response to Truman's decision to refer the Korea question to the UN, the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) adopted the US proposal that had been placed before it, with only the USSR abstaining. As such, the United Nations Temporary Commission on Korea was established, charged with supervising the free elections that were held on 10 May 1948 in territories to which the Commission had been granted access as the Soviet Commander would not allow it to operate north of the 38th Parallel. The UN Commission reported that this first free election in Korean history represented a "valid expression of the free will of the electorate in those parts of Korea which were accessible to the Commission and in which the inhabitants constituted approximately two-thirds of the people of all Korea."²⁹⁷⁹ Consequently, the National Assembly, with representatives exclusively south of the 38th Parallel, convened and selected Syngman Rhee (1875-1965) as its Chairman to draft a new constitution. President Truman, in line with the UNGA Resolution, opted to transfer authority from the US Military authorities to the newly formed Republic of Korea on 15 August 1948. The Soviet occupation zone soon followed, formally investing power on 9 September 1948 with the newly established authorities of the Democratic Republic of Korea proclaimed in Pyongyang. The idea, expressed succinctly but clearly in the Cairo Declaration, of establishing an all-Korean trusteeship had proven politically and practically impossible to implement given the degree of postwar tension between the main East Asian regional powers of the USSR and US. In its stead, the consolidation of the temporary Korean occupation zones into independent republics became, by 1948, an undisputed reality, marking a decisive failure of any notions of cooperation, however vague, as discussed in the corridors of Yalta.

The political situation on the peninsula nevertheless remained precarious, especially given the formal withdrawal of both Soviet and US forces by the end of 1948. In response, the UN accordingly, through the approval of another draft resolution, authorized the UN Commission "to observe and report any development that might lead to, or otherwise involve, military conflict in Korea."²⁹⁸⁰ This was followed up by an official request, in June 1949, by the Republic of Korea to continue its work for another year, including the establishment of UN military observers to dissuade any attacks by forces loyal to the DPRK. Despite being of little practical value in this regard, the presence of the UN Observer Mission allowed the organization to act quickly when the situation in Korea came to a head in June 1950.²⁹⁸¹ In the meantime, the US had concluded that the prospect of survival for the nascent Republic of Korea "may be considered favourable as long

²⁹⁷⁸ Schaller, Michael, *The American Occupation of Japan: The Origins of the Cold War in Asia*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1985, pg. 76.

²⁹⁷⁹ Truman, *Two Years of Hope*, pg. 327.

²⁹⁸⁰ Cho, *Korea in World Politics*, pg. 224.

²⁹⁸¹ Ibid.

as it can continue to receive large-scale aid from the US.”²⁹⁸² President Truman, who strongly supported bolstering a functioning capitalist state in Korea, signed a bilateral defensive agreement with Seoul on 26 January 1950. Additionally, Washington agreed to maintain its economic cooperation with the Republic of Korea, however, despite the strong support of Secretary of State Acheson, the initial Korean Aid bill was rejected, allowing Truman to supply only USD 110 million in 1950 in industrial and agricultural development assistance.²⁹⁸³ The initial failure of the Aid bill reflected the lingering scepticism present domestically regarding solidifying US involvement in an area not perceived as absolutely essential to US regional interests. With the ‘loss of China’ there was little appetite in Congress to entrench itself anew on a small outpost of the Asian landmass. Such sentiments were also reflected, before 1950, in the Joint Chiefs of Staff’s Defence Strategy in East Asia. This operated “on the assumption that under no circumstances would the United States engage in the military defence of the Korean peninsula.”²⁹⁸⁴ Indeed, General MacArthur referred to the Republic of Korea, following the withdrawal of US forces, as “the doomed little country”.²⁹⁸⁵ Secretary of State Acheson also publicly excluded the Republic of Korea from the US Defence Perimeter in his 12 January 1950 remarks at the National Press Club. The United Nations instead, according to Acheson, would bear the primary defence responsibility for the new country.²⁹⁸⁶ Added to this were the 33rd President’s belated misgivings with President Rhee’s authoritarian tendencies and strong-armed tactics of governance. However, Truman justified support in his memoirs that the US “had no choice but to support Rhee. Korea had been overrun and downtrodden by the Japanese since 1905 and had had no chance to develop other leaders and leadership.”²⁹⁸⁷ In early 1950, therefore, the US had unwillingly reconciled itself to supporting a capitalist state in Korea. Rhee’s Republic remained a beneficiary of US economic support yet its bilateral relations with Washington were devoid of binding military commitments. This relationship was viewed as a limited face-saving manoeuvre in order to, in conjunction with the United Nations, maintain the overall image of Washington’s policy of containing perceived Soviet expansionism in East Asia.

The DPRK’s invasion of the Republic of Korea on 25 June 1950, however, “became the catalyst transforming American policy throughout Asia.”²⁹⁸⁸ US intelligence quickly concluded that the DPRK’s actions had been encouraged by Moscow in order to destabilize the fragile political situation in Europe as well as challenge US geopolitical interests in East Asia. Secretary of State Acheson showed President Truman a telegram from the State Department that noted “it is possible that South Koreans may themselves contain and repulse [the] attack, and, if so, this is [the best way]. If, however, it appears they cannot do so then we believe that US force should be used even though this risks [Soviet] counter moves. To sit by while Korea is overrun by unprovoked armed attack would start [a] disastrous chain of events leading most probably to world war. We suggest that [the] Security Council might call for action on behalf of the organization under Article 106 by the powers or such of them as are willing to respond.”²⁹⁸⁹ Consequently, Truman ordered US forces, under the command of General MacArthur, to assist with the defence of the Republic

²⁹⁸² Truman, *Two Years of Hope*, pg. 329.

²⁹⁸³ Cho, *Korea in World Politics*, pg. 283.

²⁹⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, pg. 246.

²⁹⁸⁵ MacArthur, Douglas, *Reminiscences: General of the Army*, New York: McGraw Hill, 1964, pg. 323.

²⁹⁸⁶ Schaller, *The American Occupation of Japan*, pg. 280.

²⁹⁸⁷ Truman, *Two Years of Hope*, pg. 329.

²⁹⁸⁸ Schaller, *The American Occupation of Japan*, pg. 278.

²⁹⁸⁹ Truman, *Two Years of Hope*, pg. 336.

of Korea and the dispatch of the US Seventh Fleet to the Taiwan Straits in order to prevent a possible PRC operation towards the Republic of China. US policy makers began to express serious concerns that unchecked Communist attempts at expansion would derail the newly created RSO of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and stoke dissent towards and apprehension of the US occupation forces in Japan and their ability to effectively defend the Home Islands. George Kennan openly warned that, in the event that the US did not resist the DPRK, “there will scarcely be any theatre of the east-west conflict which will not be adversely affected thereby from our standpoint.”²⁹⁹⁰ Viewing the DPRK’s moves as an open attack against the United Nations, Truman placed the issue before the Security Council which adopted a Resolution on 27 June 1950 calling on all UN members states to accord assistance to the Republic of Korea. In a statement on the same day to the American people, the 33rd President couched US involvement, and indeed leadership, of the efforts to contain the now openly referred to threat of Communist expansion in the name of the defence of the fledgling postwar order: “...The Security Council of the United Nations called upon the invading troops to cease hostilities and to withdraw to the 38th Parallel. This they have not done but pressed the attack. The Security Council called upon all nations of the United Nations to render every assistance to the United Nations in the execution of this resolution...The attack upon Korea makes it plain beyond doubt that Communism has passed beyond the use of subversion to conquer independent nations and will now use armed invasion and war. It has defied the orders of the Security Council of the United Nations issued to preserve international peace and security...I know that all members of the United Nations will consider carefully the consequences of this latest aggression in Korea in defiance of the Charter of the United Nations. As return to the rule of force in international affairs would have far-reaching effects. The United States will continue to uphold the rule of law.”²⁹⁹¹ The inability of the now former Allies to implement their policy vision in Korea had now not only failed to provide the peninsula with a path to a united government but now laid the foundation for the first test of military arms between the advocates of communist or capitalist world order. It would also mark the first occasion where the US mobilized a UN ‘police action’ of like-minded countries to combat a perceived threat to its conception of international order.

The course of the Korean War lies beyond the scope of this dissertation and would ultimately end with the signature of an armistice between the United Nations Command and the PRC and the DPRK on 27 July 1953, establishing a demilitarized zone (DMZ) along the 38th Parallel. The Korean War did, however, provoke a major event with serious implications for the regional systemic order in East Asia. On 2 October 1950, following the recapture of Seoul by US commanded UN forces and the collapse of the DRPK army, Mao Zedong took the decision to dispatch PRC forces into Korea to thwart the UN advance towards the Yalu River. It marked the first time that PRC units and US forces faced each other in battle. The decision to intervene in the conflict in Korea was not an easy one for the PRC leadership, yet the major threat to the nascent PRC as posed by the significant military might of the US played a significant role in framing the CCP’s calculus.²⁹⁹² The CCP leadership had not been informed of Kim Il Sung’s decision to attack the Republic of Korea. While he had secretly visited Beijing in April 1950 while returning from Moscow, Kim only “informed Mao of his determination to reunify his country by military means,

²⁹⁹⁰ Schaller, *The American Occupation of Japan*, pg. 280.

²⁹⁹¹ Truman, *Two Years of Hope*, pg. 339.

²⁹⁹² Scobell, Andrew, *China’s Use of Military Force: Beyond the Great Wall and the Long March*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009, pg. 79.

and released no details of his military plan, let alone the date of the action.”²⁹⁹³ Consequently, the PRC was unprepared, both politically and militarily, upon the commencement of the Korean hostilities.

Initially, the PRC leadership showed no intent to intervene in the war, opting only to provide moral support to the DPRK. Washington’s decision to send its Seventh Fleet to the Taiwan Straits, however, provoked open indignation in Beijing. Mao had long displayed his concern at possible US intervention in the final phases of the Chinese Civil War and Truman’s order to protect the Republic of China was officially described as “‘armed aggression against Chinese territory’ that confirmed Beijing’s worst fears about the threat from the United States.”²⁹⁹⁴ Mao viewed the action as an opening for the US to, at long last, become directly involved in the Chinese Civil War to save the Kuomintang and redeployed forces to the Korean border as well as establishing the ‘Committee of Chinese People Against US Invasion of Taiwan and Korea’. Following General MacArthur’s successful landing at Inchon on 15 September 1950, the tide of the campaign was reversed placing US forces on a march towards the PRC-DPRK border. MacArthur’s total victory over the advancing DPRK forces was especially concerning to Mao, given his suspicion of ultimate US intentions towards his newly consolidated regime. Zhou Enlai, on 30 September 1950, issued a public warning noting that “The Chinese People...will not supinely tolerate seeing their neighbours being savagely invaded by the imperialists”, notifying the Indian Ambassador that the PRC would intervene in the war should US troops cross the 38th Parallel.²⁹⁹⁵

The connection made between newfound US determination to defend Taiwan following the commencement of the Korean War was solidified through MacArthur’s August 1950 visit to Taiwan and meeting with Chiang Kai-shek. The leader of the Kuomintang declared that MacArthur, during his visit, had laid the foundation for “Sino-American cooperation” and “final victory” against the CCP while the US General advocated for transforming Taiwan into “a United States defence stronghold.”²⁹⁹⁶ Already on 27 June 1950, the White House had issued a statement following the sailing of the Seventh Fleet to Taiwan noting that any determination of Taiwan’s future status “must await the restoration of the security in the Pacific, a peace settlement with Japan, or consideration of the United Nations.”²⁹⁹⁷ With this declaration, the US effectively committed itself to maintaining the Republic of China and prevented the CCP from definitively ending the Chinese Civil War. With the link between the situation in China and the war in Korea now, in the minds of Chinese policy makers, obvious, a reaction from the CCP, if only to secure its own survival, became necessary. Indeed, the greater geopolitical contours that the war in Korea had assumed was also not lost on the opposing side. Presenting a memorandum in 1952 to newly elected President Eisenhower, outlining a possible solution to what had become the Korean quagmire, General MacArthur noted that “the Korean War has grown to symbolize in the eyes of the world the struggle between the Soviet Union and the United States in which every facet of disagreement in every sector of the world is part of the correlated whole.”²⁹⁹⁸

²⁹⁹³ Hao Yufan & Zhai Zhihai, “China’s Decision to Enter the Korean War: History Revisited”, *The China Quarterly*, Mar., 1990, No. 121, pg. 100.

²⁹⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, pg. 101.

²⁹⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, pg. 102.

²⁹⁹⁶ Congressional Quarterly Inc., *China: U.S. Policy Since 1945* (Washington: 1980), pg. 91.

²⁹⁹⁷ Schaller, *The American Occupation of Japan*, pg. 285.

²⁹⁹⁸ MacArthur, *Reminiscences*, pg. 410.

On 1 October 1950, Kim Il Sung dispatched a telegram to Mao officially informing the PRC of the dire military situation on the peninsula and requested Chinese intervention. A CCP Politburo meeting, lasting for several days, was convened shortly thereafter. Several leading CCP figures, notably Biao Lin and Gang Gao, the Chairman of the PRC's northeastern region, were opposed to any Chinese intervention in Korea. Both Biao and Gang argued that the PRC, having just emerged victorious from the Chinese Civil War, could not meet the current domestic needs, let alone wage a long-term war against the world's greatest economic power, the United States, whose arsenal included the atomic bomb. Furthermore, despite having been driven from the mainland, the Kuomintang remained poised to use residual elements to conduct a destabilization campaign against the CCP. To these arguments, Mao himself countered by declaring "what [Biao and Gang] have said sounds reasonable. But it would be shameful for us to stand by seeing our neighbours in perilous danger without offering any help."²⁹⁹⁹ Believing in the inevitability, following MacArthur's visit to Taiwan, of a conflict between the PRC and US, it would be to the PRC's advantage to engage US forces in Korea, both due to its proximity to China and the Soviet Union, as well as to forestall Korea's transformation into a united nation, hostile to Communism, directly on the Chinese frontier. Zhao Enlai explained Mao's rationale to the PLA in the following manner: "with the decisive duel between China and the US imperialists being inevitable, the question is where to do it; Korea is a battleground chosen by the Imperialists, but in some sense, also by us...it would be much more difficult to wage a war against America in Vietnam...than [Korea]. Here, we have the most favourable terrain, the closest communication to China, the most convenient material and manpower back-up...and the most convenient way for us to get indirect Soviet support."³⁰⁰⁰ Ideological consideration played an important role, given the complete failure of the 'Yalta System' and open struggle between the Communist and Western camp over East Asia. Should the PRC decide to idly stand by while the DPRK was in jeopardy, the USSR could likewise do nothing should the PRC encounter serious challenges, and, as Mao declared, "Internationalism would be empty talk."³⁰⁰¹ Hence, in order to defend its own newly established authority over China as well as defend the overall interests of the Soviet-aligned nations in the Cold War, units of the Chinese 'People's Volunteer Army' (PVA) crossed the Yalu River on 19 October 1950. While the decision to intervene in Korea, solidified the PRC's regional standing as an opponent of US interests in East Asia, thereby strengthening the recently signed Sino-Soviet pact, the contest between the PRC and US in Korea also altered Washington's thinking on the ultimate position of Japan within its new regional system and what type of peace settlement should be striven for.

10.2.20.2.4. Japan and the Search for a Final Peace Treaty

Following the Japanese signature of the Instrument of Surrender on 2 September 1945, Japanese territory had suddenly found itself limited to the four Japanese Home Islands of Honshu, Kyushu, Hokkaido, and Shikoku. Immediately following the surrender, the issue of how to concretely deal with the territories no longer considered as Japanese became problematic and gave rise to specific issues contested by the victorious Powers. Nevertheless, each side agreed to US control over the Japanese Home Islands in exchange for the recognition of Soviet control over

²⁹⁹⁹ Hao & Zhai, "China's Decision to Enter the Korean War", pg. 106.

³⁰⁰⁰ Ibid.

³⁰⁰¹ Ibid.

south-eastern Europe (Romania and Bulgaria).³⁰⁰² Following the arrival of Occupation US forces, the Allies created a framework whereby Japan would be administered through the Japanese Government with the Far Eastern Commission (FEC), consisting of the eleven Pacific War Allies meeting in the former Japanese Embassy in Washington, and the Allied Council for Japan (ACJ), with US, British, Soviet and Chinese representatives meeting in Tokyo, acting as instruments of supervision after their respective establishment in early 1946. The Soviet Union had made attempts to influence the postwar governance over Japan, enquiring about the possibility of creating a Soviet occupation zone over Hokkaido as well as the feasibility of stationing a Soviet General of equal rank to General MacArthur to preside over the US Occupation of Japan, both of which were rejected. Rather than establish the groundwork for the permanent functioning of a postwar Japanese Government, these two inter-Allied bodies were designed to be transitory in nature until the signing of a peace treaty and the re-establishment of full Japanese sovereignty had been achieved.³⁰⁰³ In reality, however, such bodies played little to no role in shaping the emergence of postwar Japan as the ultimate authority of the Occupation lay in the very person of the Supreme Commander of Allied Forces (SCAP) MacArthur who “would seldom brook interference, and his staff occasionally rushed measures in anticipation of directives from the Commission.”³⁰⁰⁴ Hence, while Japan—unlike Germany—was allowed to retain a Government, its policies were intensely directed and supervised by the SCAP and his headquarters. Here the US authorities had little choice as the victors total lack of linguistic or cultural connection to Japan left them with few options other than “to govern ‘indirectly’ through existing organs of government.”³⁰⁰⁵ The Occupation policy began to vehemently dismantle any vestiges of Japanese militarism, abolishing the Imperial Army and Navy and going so far as to monitor the staging of Kabuki plays for any references to Japan’s wide array of martial heroes and creating a register of swords under local military units.

As early as 1947, Japanese specialists at the US State Department had begun to work on the outlines of a Peace Treaty that would officially end the Occupation and restore to Japan its sovereignty and a place amongst the international community. Although any illusions of Great Power cooperation under the ‘Yalta System’ had all but vanished, the State Department built its first vision of a postwar Japan on the geopolitical constellation immediately following Japan’s surrender. Given the mounting costs of the military occupation of Japan, US policy makers, especially General MacArthur, were anxious to restore some facets of Japanese sovereignty while allaying regional concerns over the future temperament of a postwar Japan. Drafted in March 1947, with subsequent revision in August 1947 and January 1948, the focus was placed on restraining any renaissance of Japanese militarism while, at the same time, restoring the country’s sovereignty. The Japanese were “to be permitted no military forces other than internal police and a coast guard;

³⁰⁰²Yasuko Kuono & Shimotomai Nobuo, “From Peace to the Restoration of Diplomatic Relations: Soviet-Japanese Territorial Relations, 1951-1970” in Streltsov & Nobuo (eds.), A History of Russian-Japanese Relations, pg. 355.

³⁰⁰³ Following end of the Second World War, peace treaties were, as opposed to previous diplomatic practice, not immediately signed after the conclusion of hostilities. Despite Italy having suddenly abandoned its Axis alliance and having surrendered on 8 September 1943, a final treaty—the Treaty of Paris—was only formally concluded on 10 February 1947. As regards to Germany, following its final 9 May 1945 capitulation, no peace treaty was signed, representing instead a rare legal case of *debellatio*, a “situation in which a party to a conflict has been totally defeated in war, its national institutions have disintegrated, and none of its allies continue to challenge the enemy militarily on its behalf.” See Benvenisti, Eyal, The International Law of Occupation, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012, pg. 161.

³⁰⁰⁴ Jansen, The Making of Modern Japan, pg. 667.

³⁰⁰⁵ Dower, John, Embracing Defeat: Japan in the Wake of World War II, New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1999, pg. 27.

no research of a primarily military nature...; no manufacture or operation of either military or civilian aircraft; and no stockpiling of military raw materials.”³⁰⁰⁶ No provisions regarding the postwar security of Japan were stipulated and no bases for US forces were foreseen. This absence can be justified by US policy makers’ vision of 1947 whereby Nationalist China would fulfil the role of Washington’s main ally in East Asia.³⁰⁰⁷ Hence, the first draft of a Peace Treaty reflected an outgoing geopolitical vision rather than the reality which was rapidly crystallizing on the ground in China. Yet other practical steps were deemed more pressing.

Major moves towards the restoration of Japanese sovereignty occurred in 1947 with the adoption of a new Constitution. Initial attempts to draft a new Constitution in 1946 by making largely cosmetic changes to the Meiji Constitution were dismissed outright by the SCAP. In its stead came the ‘Peace Constitution’ (*‘Heiwa-Kenpō’*/平和憲法). Drafted in little under a week under the supervision of General Courtney Whitney (1897-1969), head of the Occupation Authority’s Government Section, and, upon its completion, it was presented to Prime Minister Katayama Tetsu (1887-1978) “as a model of what SCAP had in mind, but he correctly concluded that it was more than that.”³⁰⁰⁸ The Far Eastern Commission accorded its approval and, in 1946, the Diet approved the document having been assured that *kokutai* had been retained. Set to become law a year later, Secretary of State Acheson commented in 1946 that the Diet’s adoption of the ‘Peace Constitution’ represented a new era of “the age of Japan’s imitation of things American—not only of American machines but also American ideas.”³⁰⁰⁹ According to the new document, sovereignty was to be resident amongst the Japanese people, with the Constitution’s main feature encapsulated in Article 9 that entrenched demilitarization as a cornerstone of the new Japan, declaring that “Aspiring sincerely to an international peace based on justice and order, the Japanese people forever renounce war as a sovereign right of the nation and the threat of or use of force as means of settling international disputes. In order to accomplish the aim of the preceding paragraph, land, sea, and air forces...will never be maintained. The right of belligerency of the state will not be recognized.”³⁰¹⁰ The Emperor’s status as a national symbol was maintained in Article 1, however, unlike its Meiji ancestor, the constitution dispensed with the hereditary nobility and the Privy Council. This was accompanied by a general purge of all supporters of a military state, along with the dissolution of all right-wing organizations, eventually encompassing circa 200,000 individuals.³⁰¹¹ Sovereignty, once restored, would be therefore relinquished by the SCAP to a very different postwar Japan.

Open cracks had, in the meantime, become apparent in the common Allied approach, however superficial, to the Japanese occupation, with the USSR refusing to attend the FEC meeting of 11 July 1947, noting that Moscow “preferred to have agreements made between the four major Allied powers take precedence.”³⁰¹² The Soviet Union based this approach on its insistence on the United Nations Declaration of 1 January 1942 where the Allied powers “barred the conclusion of a peace settlement with Japan not participated in by all nations which took an

³⁰⁰⁶ Dunn, *Peace-Making and the Settlement with Japan*, pg. 59.

³⁰⁰⁷ Jansen, *The Making of Modern Japan*, pg. 668.

³⁰⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, pg. 671.

³⁰⁰⁹ Dower, *Embracing Defeat*, pg. 400.

³⁰¹⁰ *The Constitution of Japan*, in Tokyo on 2 November 1946, effective as of 3 May 1947, https://japan.kantei.go.jp/constitution_and_government_of_japan/constitution_e.html.

³⁰¹¹ Jansen, *The Making of Modern Japan*, pg. 672.

³⁰¹² Yasuko & Shimotomai, “From Peace to the Restoration of Diplomatic Relations”, pg. 356.

active part in the war.”³⁰¹³ With the new geopolitical reality furnished by the Sino-Soviet Pact of 1950, the Truman Administration realized that a policy aimed at containing the Soviet Union would be in place for the foreseeable future. The shock of the ‘fall of China’ required a US policy rethink extending to revamping Washington’s vision of Japan in a postwar Pacific and global order. To assist the State Department in coming to terms with what an eventual Peace Treaty with Japan should encompass, John Foster Dulles (1888-1959), was appointed as Foreign Policy Adviser to the Secretary of State. In September 1950, President Truman declared that, “in accord with the general effort of the United States to bring an end to all war situations”, his Administration would circulate a corresponding memorandum to the FEC on the content of a possible treaty.³⁰¹⁴ The US made it quite clear that Washington was prepared to sign a Peace Treaty without the active participation of the Soviet Union, should Moscow continue its opposition to procedural or substantial questions. The points presented to the FEC envisioned Japanese membership in the United Nations and reference of disputes to the International Court of Justice; likewise forcing Tokyo to “agree to a United Nations trusteeship, with the United States as an administrative authority, of the Ryukyus and Bonin Islands”, including recognizing the independence of Korea as well as the renunciation of its former territories of Taiwan, South Sakhalin and the Kuriles.”³⁰¹⁵ Dulles believed such a draft memorandum would cover the main interests and sought after territorial concessions of all Allies and could furnish a base for the convocation of the general peace conference to formally end hostilities as per the practice after any major conflict.

The session of the UN General Assembly in autumn 1950 provided the opportune moment for presenting the Truman Administration’s seven points to the FEC members present in New York. Soviet opposition to the US approach to a collective peace treaty with Japan continued to present a major stumbling block towards calling a general Allied peace conference, arguing that the PRC should be part and parcel of any eventual agreement. In October 1950, Dulles met with the Soviet Ambassador to the UN, Jacob Malik (1906-1980), to discuss the US seven-point proposal. During the discussions, Dulles underlined his specific inclusion of southern Sakhalin and the Kuriles, informing Malik that “it could be assumed that if the USSR were a party to the treaty, Japan would by the treaty, cede South Sakhalin and the Kuriles to the Soviet Union.”³⁰¹⁶ Following the outbreak of the Korean War, however, Dulles attempted to exchange international recognition of Soviet claims over the Kuriles in exchange for Moscow excluding the PRC from the Peace Treaty and leaving the Republic of Taiwan without definite national residence.³⁰¹⁷ While Moscow gave some consideration to this proposal, Stalin’s unwillingness to abandon the PRC so soon after signing the Sino-Soviet Treaty by sacrificing Beijing’s presence in any peace conference forced Malik’s hand. The Soviet rationale for cutting off negotiations with the US was explained to the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations in secret testimony in January 1952 where Dulles explained that he “negotiated at very considerable length with the delegates from the Soviet Union particularly Mr. Malik who was designated for that purpose. I met with him on three or four occasions. We discussed the prospective treaty...We had negotiations...which began October 1950 and carried on until February or March 1951. At that time the Soviet Government announced

³⁰¹³ Dunn, *Peace-Making and the Settlement with Japan*, pg. 173.

³⁰¹⁴ *Ibid.*, pg. 107.

³⁰¹⁵ *Ibid.*, pg. 108.

³⁰¹⁶ Sarkisov, Konstantin, “Russia and Japan: The Algorithm of the Kuriles/Northern Territories Problem” in Hara Kimie (ed.), *The San Francisco System and its Legacies: Continuation, Transformation and Historical Reconciliation in the Asia-Pacific*, London: Routledge, 2017, pg. 132.

³⁰¹⁷ *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1950, East Asia and the Pacific*, Volume VI, Washington, pg. 1332.

that they would not carry on any further negotiations with me...I would think that the principal reason...why they did not go along with the treaty was because they, for political reasons, felt unable to go along and make a peace with Japan unless the Chinese Communist regime was also included in that peace. That was a position to which we objected adamantly.”³⁰¹⁸ Moscow continued to therefore insist that the Yalta Agreement of 11 February 1945 included clauses on the return of southern Sakhalin to the Soviet Union and ceded the Kuriles to USSR sovereignty. As such, the Soviet Union refused to have this decision sanctioned by a novel and, in its view, unnecessary agreement. Furthermore, the USSR opposed any territorial expansion as discussed in the Cairo and Potsdam Conferences, thereby openly questioning the right of the US to remove the Ryukyus and Bonin Islands from Japanese sovereignty and place them under a UN trusteeship; as well as requesting the US prescribe a definite date for a withdrawal of all Occupation forces—as had been done in Europe—from Japanese territory as per paragraph 12 of the Potsdam Proclamation.³⁰¹⁹ Following the failure of the Dulles-Malik negotiations, the USSR therefore adopted an antagonistic approach, aimed at undermining important US interests, both regional and in Japan itself, against the background of a changed geopolitical climate in East Asia.

The advent of the new regional security landscape in the wake of the foundation of the PRC and the commencement of the Korean War made it certain that security issues became a major focus of peace treaty negotiations. The position of a sovereign Japan and its posture towards regional security was of paramount consideration, both to guard against a resurgence of Japanese imperialistic ambitions and against any possible Communist threat. Yet the different geopolitical circumstances in 1949 caused a substantial shift in regional threat perceptions amongst the Western Allied victors. As the State Department’s foremost Northeast Asian specialist, Marshall Green (1916-1998) arguing that “the Communist successes in China and Communist threats to other parts of the Far East” caused a decisive shift in how Washington and the British Commonwealth states view the real possibility of a reassurance of ‘Japanese militarism’ in the novel postwar context, realizing that Japan no longer constituted the “principal threat to their security,”³⁰²⁰

Dulles subsequently undertook a regional mission to try and ascertain the views of US allies, incorporating their respective concerns into his vision of a final peace agreement with Japan. Consequently, the basic elements of the Truman Administration’s approach filtered out as follows: first, “the peace should restore Japan as an equal member in the society of nations”, with no restrictions on its sovereignty; second, “the peace should give Japan a chance to earn her way in the world and become self-sustaining”, implying that no heavy reparation burden would be placed on Japan thereby hindering its economic development and fostering social discontent; third, “the peace should encourage close cultural relations between Japan and the West”, anchoring Japan in the camp of free and democratic societies; and, fourth, “the peace should give Japan a reasonable degree of security”, with the US ready to retain its forces in Japan so that “the coming into force of a treaty of peace would not leave Japan as a vacuum of power into which Soviet communism would surely move.”³⁰²¹ While paying lip service to Japan’s pre-September 1945 actions, the main security focus had morphed to address the perceived Communist threat and underlined the need to conclude peace with a Japan that would remain firmly within the Western camp. In order to

³⁰¹⁸ Ibid., pg. 60.

³⁰¹⁹ Dunn, *Peace-Making and the Settlement with Japan*, pg. 131.

³⁰²⁰ Schaller, *The American Occupation of Japan*, pp. 168-169.

³⁰²¹ Dunn, *Peace-Making and the Settlement with Japan*, pp. 129-130.

accomplish this, the United States and Japan would sign a security treaty allowing for US forces to be stationed in Japan after the end of the Occupation, allowing the US Military to retain heavy weapons and contain any internal threats. US policy makers, especially Dean Acheson, was cognizant that such elements of any treaty, either multilateral or bilateral, that forwarded the containment of the new Communist bloc would not be acceptable to both the USSR and the PRC. However, Washington “did not believe that excluding [Beijing and Moscow] from a settlement would impede an eventual treaty.”³⁰²²

Consequently, Dulles set to work to draft the actual text of a Treaty with Japan aimed at promoting peace and stability in East Asia palatable to Washington’s needs. Regarding concrete security arrangements, the United States was faced with a challenge as to how to best share the regional burden in defending against a possible Soviet threat. Dulles conducted his regional mission with the explicit authorization from Washington to unite all existing obligations the US had in the Pacific area into a single Pacific security pact. He set out in September 1950 to lobby for the subscription of the new states in East Asia to his vision of a Peace Treaty that formed an integral part of the new East Asian security landscape. In particular, the defence of Japan, the Philippines, Australia, and New Zealand was regarded as a *sine qua non* in ensuring the strengthening of the free world camp against Communism.³⁰²³ To achieve this goal, however, meant overcoming several complicated challenges. The US military was disinclined to extend blanket security guarantees over the whole of Southeast Asia. As noted, NSC 68 had identified Southeast Asia as most susceptible to Communist influence and, by solely including the Philippines within any nascent RSO, its creation might further erode the already fragile situation in its neighbouring states through their explicit exclusion. Should, however, a new Pacific RSO be limited to the membership of the US, Australia, and New Zealand, its optics would be that of a neo-colonialist organization amidst a region in the grip of decolonialization. At the conclusion of Dulles’s mission, the decision was therefore taken to approach the question of regional security through the signing of three interlocking pacts: first, a bilateral security agreement between Tokyo and Washington to provide Japanese security through the stationing of US forces on its territory upon the explicit invitation of the Japanese Government; second, a bilateral pact between the US and the Philippines; and, third, a three-power pact between the US, Australia, and New Zealand in order to safeguard concerns against both encroachment from renewed Japanese militarism and Communism.³⁰²⁴

Dulles mission replaced the often-cumbersome process, such as witnessed in Versailles, of on-site treaty negotiations. The Special Advisor spoke of his mission to East Asia as constituting an “eleven months peace conference” that allowed Dulles to negotiate bilaterally with the representatives of all concerned parties and, in case of need, to make changes to the draft Treaty.³⁰²⁵ This approach, much different from the complexities associated with agreeing on a peace settlement in a multilateral conference, allowed Dulles to handle difficult questions with each concerned state on sensitive issues, such as reparations, in a controlled manner. At the same time, the series of bilateral meetings to agree on a draft Treaty furnished the appearance of multilateral consultations while simultaneously precluding them, thereby depriving both Beijing

³⁰²² Schaller, *The American Occupation of Japan*, pg. 176.

³⁰²³ Dunn, *Peace-Making and the Settlement with Japan*, pg. 133.

³⁰²⁴ *Ibid.*, pg. 134.

³⁰²⁵ *Ibid.*, pg. 173.

and Moscow room to raise any objections. While Dulles was on mission to Japan, the armies of the DPRK crossed the 38th Parallel, providing the necessary “momentum that carried the United States...toward a separate peace settlement with Japan.”³⁰²⁶ In August 1950, the Joint Chiefs of Staff argued that the changed political circumstances following the outbreak of the war in Korea merited the signature of a Peace Treaty with Japan, with the US military no longer objecting to a long-term presence in the country. The Japanese Home Islands would therefore become an integral part of US security strategy in East Asia. Secretary of State Acheson ordered the State Department, in line with Dulles’s mission, to prepare a Treaty, meeting the US Military’s criteria, through informal negotiations that would culminate in their acceptance at a formal conference for ratification.³⁰²⁷ Even the advent of the PRC’s October 1950 decision to intervene in Korea did not derail Washington’s determination to conclude a peace settlement with Japan. Rather it provoked the opposite reaction. By the spring of 1951, the US Occupation of Japan was becoming an “anachronism” and the Japanese populous was growing weary of the overt US presence in its midst, with Washington policy makers increasingly convinced that Japan needed to take some responsibility for its own security.³⁰²⁸

This decision provoked an about face regarding several US policies that had already been undertaken since the start of the Occupation. The overt US goal was now to foster “a Japan allied with the United States and able to participate in its own defence.”³⁰²⁹ During Dulles’s second mission to Japan, he secretly met with the Emperor who encouraged the US envoy to consult with influential Japanese personalities, some in disrepute, who could act as key sources “of valuable advice and assistance to the Americans” in creating Japan’s own contribution to meeting US defence requirements.³⁰³⁰ Given the stark regional and global challenge unleashed by the Korean War, Dulles approached Prime Minister Yoshida Shigeru (1878-1967) to request his assistance in rebuilding a modest Japanese security force. In July 1950, when US troops were dispatched to Korea, the SCAP approved the creation of a 75,000-man Japanese police force. Yoshida, however, concerned with the economic burden to Japan’s recovering postwar economy that such a move would entail, informed Dulles that the new Japanese ‘peace constitution’ precluded any such possibility. Instead, Yoshida reminded Dulles that Japan “relied for security on American protection and world opinion.”³⁰³¹ General MacArthur agreed with Shigeru’s objections, stating that any force that the Japanese could muster would be of no ostensible military value. Instead, the SCAP argued that Japan could make its own industrial contribution to the manufacture of weapons needed to defend Japan. This decision transformed Japan into the industrial East Asian hub of the expanding web of US regional security commitments following the outbreak of the Korean War. During 1951-1952 alone, US military orders reached USD 800 million per year, with almost USD 3 billion flowing into Japan’s economy by the end of 1954, providing the necessary stimulus and customer base for the re-emergence of Japanese heavy industry and high-technology exports.³⁰³² With Japan’s postwar niche having been found in the US security vision for East Asia, as a democratic society with its social, security, and economic needs firmly rooted in cooperation with

³⁰²⁶ Schaller, *The American Occupation of Japan*, pg. 278.

³⁰²⁷ *Ibid.*, pg. 291.

³⁰²⁸ Jansen, *The Making of Modern Japan*, pg. 701.

³⁰²⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁰³⁰ Schaller, *The American Occupation of Japan*, pg. 276.

³⁰³¹ *Ibid.*, pg. 277.

³⁰³² *Ibid.*, pg. 288.

the US, the Peace Treaty could at long last be presented to the international community for signature.

10.3. The Treaty of San Francisco: The Settlement of 1951

10.3.1. The Basis for Peace: The Treaty of Peace between Japan and the Allied Powers

The document that became the Treaty of San Francisco was extremely similar in content to the Draft prepared by the State Department in October 1949. While previous drafts failed to account for the Cold War, the Draft of October 1949 constituted the first attempt at a Treaty that fully accounted for the wonton failure that was the ‘Yalta System’, reflecting the new containment policy that Washington had elected to counter Soviet moves as mirrored in the tenets of NSC 48.³⁰³³ The Draft foresaw the return of Japanese sovereignty with as little restrictions on sovereignty as possible, with the FEC, Allied Control Council, and SCAP being scrapped. A democratic form of government was to be prescribed for Japan that would guarantee basic citizen freedoms. The primary motivation of the Treaty would be to bind Japan with the US in global affairs so that the USSR and PRC “could not undercut it with a more liberal offer.”³⁰³⁴ Likewise, no security provisions were inserted that might infringe on the ongoing Occupation. This was the basis of the document that Dulles presented bilaterally to allied nations and whose approval he managed to secure during his two East Asian missions. Indeed, the only major difference between the Draft Treaty, as presented by Dulles, was that by 1951 “the ground had been cleared for a [bilateral] security pact with Japan.”³⁰³⁵

On 8 September 1951, forty-eight nations gathered in San Francisco to sign the multinational Treaty of Peace with Japan that would simultaneously end the state of war between them and the US Occupation. At the time of the Treaty of Peace’s signature, the Korean War had reached a stalemate and, to ensure that the carefully choreographed proceedings were not derailed, only a select group of nations received invitations. Despite having borne the brunt of Japanese operations since 1931, the US declined to invite any Chinese participation, with both the PRC and the Republic of China failing to receive an invitation. Dulles underlined that this approach created the impression that Washington could “deal freely with either Chinese regime in subsequent bilateral negotiations.”³⁰³⁶ Nor was any Korean representation present in San Francisco, with neither Korean state having received an invitation. Dulles had sought to secure some Korean representation through an invitation to the Republic of Korea, with the US Embassy in Seoul arguing that “We are strongly of the opinion that the Republic of Korea should be included in some capacity among nations participating in the Japanese Peace Treaty...our feeling [is] that Japanese-Korean problems can be better resolved through an international forum than through bilateral negotiations.”³⁰³⁷ Japanese objections, stating that Korea had not been an Allied power during the Pacific War, accompanied by Tokyo’s fear of the possible demands of circa one million Koreans resident on the Home Islands, persuaded the US to deny Korea any representation. The Treaty of Peace was an instrument to anchor Japan to the United States in the new Cold War environment,

³⁰³³ Dunn, *Peace-Making and the Settlement with Japan*, pg. 83.

³⁰³⁴ *Ibid.*, pg. 84.

³⁰³⁵ *Ibid.*, pg. 85.

³⁰³⁶ Schaller, *The American Occupation of Japan*, pg. 294.

³⁰³⁷ Kim, “The San Francisco Peace Treaty and Korea”, pg. 99.

not a tool to drive a wedge between Tokyo and Washington. While President Rhee protested vehemently against the lack of Korean participation in San Francisco, the very fact that the Republic of Korea, dependant on the US in its fight for its survival against Chinese and DPRK forces, meant that his protests could only be taken so far.

The Soviet Union, to the surprise of the US, actually arrived with a Delegation in San Francisco. The US, following Dulles's failed attempt to negotiate a compromise with Ambassador Malik, was cognizant that the USSR was not amiable to the Treaty. It therefore became necessary to avoid all forms of debate within the conference halls in San Francisco. Hence, the arrival of the Soviet Delegation was a protest to the entire endeavour itself. As the aim of the conference was to secure agreement for a pre-agreed text, the refusal of the US to engage in any serious debate regarding the Treaty's articles, as well as Washington's intent to sign a bilateral military alliance with Japan and the US refusal to extend an invitation to the PRC, resulted in the Soviet Union refusing to sign the final text. Consequently, the treaty that would furnish a peace settlement for postwar East Asia was concluded without the active participation of any Chinese or Korean representation and the outright refusal of the Soviet Union to sign. Even future allies found themselves subject to changes in the diplomatic choreography. The San Francisco conference was a highly managed diplomatic event. Even Prime Minister Yoshida, attending to sign a final peace with his country's erstwhile enemies, "found himself censored when the US Delegation forced him to dispose of his prepared speech and substitute one written by American diplomats."³⁰³⁸ Nevertheless, the US achieved its goal of signing a Treaty of Peace with Japan, with the support of forty-eight 'like-minded nations' containing the following main elements:

- **Article 1** terminated the state of war between Japan and the concerned Allied Powers while, at the same time, recognized "the full sovereignty of the Japanese people over Japan and its territorial waters."³⁰³⁹
- **Article 2** formally marked the dismantlement of the Japanese Empire. In *Article 2a*, Tokyo recognized the independence of Korea and renounced all rights to its territory in entirety. Likewise, in *Article 2b*, Japan renounced all claims and rights over Taiwan and the Pescadores Islands. Furthermore, under *Article 2c*, Japan renounced all claim to the Kurile Islands and "that portion of Sakhalin and the islands adjacent to it over which Japan acquired sovereignty as a consequence of the Treaty of Portsmouth of 5 September 1905" while, simultaneously, renouncing "all right, title and claim in connection with the League of Nations Mandate System" and accepted the transfer of these territories under US sovereignty."³⁰⁴⁰
- **Article 3** obliged Japan to agree to any proposal of the US to the United Nations to place Okinawa under its trusteeship system, with the US as the sole administering authority, with the US having "the right to exercise all and any powers of

³⁰³⁸ Schaller, *The American Occupation of Japan*, pg. 294.

³⁰³⁹ *Treaty of Peace with Japan, Signed at San Francisco, on 8 September 1945*, <https://treaties.un.org/doc/Publication/UNTS/Volume%20136/volume-136-I-1832-English.pdf>

³⁰⁴⁰ Ibid.

administration, legislation and jurisdiction over the territory and inhabitants of these islands, including their territorial waters.”³⁰⁴¹

- **Article 5** paved the legal way for a newly sovereign Japan to enter into its own security arrangements, granting Tokyo “the inherent right of individual or collective self-defence referred to in Article 51 of the Charter of the United Nations and that Japan may voluntarily enter into collective security arrangements.”³⁰⁴²
- **Article 10** saw Japan renouncing all benefits and privileges resulting from the provision of the Boxer Protocol of 7 September 1901, thereby formally losing any claim to special privileges over Chinese territory.
- **Article 11** obliged Japan, as with the Boxer Protocol of 1901, to accept the judgements of the International Military Tribunal for the Far East and of other Allied War Crimes Courts both within and outside Japan and agreed to carry out the sentences imposed on its own nationals.

Such were the terms of the Treaty of Peace that saw Japan’s sovereignty restored and paved the way for the country’s integration into the international community. On the same day as the signature of the Treaty of Peace, 8 September 1951, Japan availed itself of Article 5 and signed a bilateral Security Treaty with the United States. Under its terms, US units would remain stationed in Japan until Tokyo could assume responsibility for its own defence.³⁰⁴³ Likewise, Japan refused to accord similar military rights as granted to the US to third countries without prior US approval. Hence, the signing of a Treaty of Peace and the Security Treaty could be considered to form the two main pillars of the ‘San Francisco System’ that, with the signature of both documents, now came to define the regional security system in East Asia until the present day. It was a system that was created with the explicit exclusion of China, Korea, and the Soviet Union and opened the door to a prolonged US Military presence in Japan as the anointed new major regional ally to defend democracy.

Unsurprisingly, therefore, the Treaty of San Francisco left three types of territorial issues in its wake that, through the agreement’s explicit ambiguity, continue to define contemporary geopolitical realities: territorial disputes; divided nations; and the status of certain territories.³⁰⁴⁴ Regarding territorial disputes, while Japan renounced any rights to Korean territory, the exact extent the newly independent Korea would encompass was not defined, leading to claims and counterclaims regarding the final status of the Liancourt Rocks—known in Korean as ‘Dokdo’ and ‘Takeshima’ in Japanese. The lack of precise delimitation of territories in Article 2b between Japanese and Chinese territory (claimed both by the Republic and PRC) led to the territorial dispute between Tokyo, Beijing and Taipei over the Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands. The same inherent refusal of the Treaty to define the exact extent of Japan’s renunciation of the Kurile Islands in Article 2c

³⁰⁴¹ Ibid.

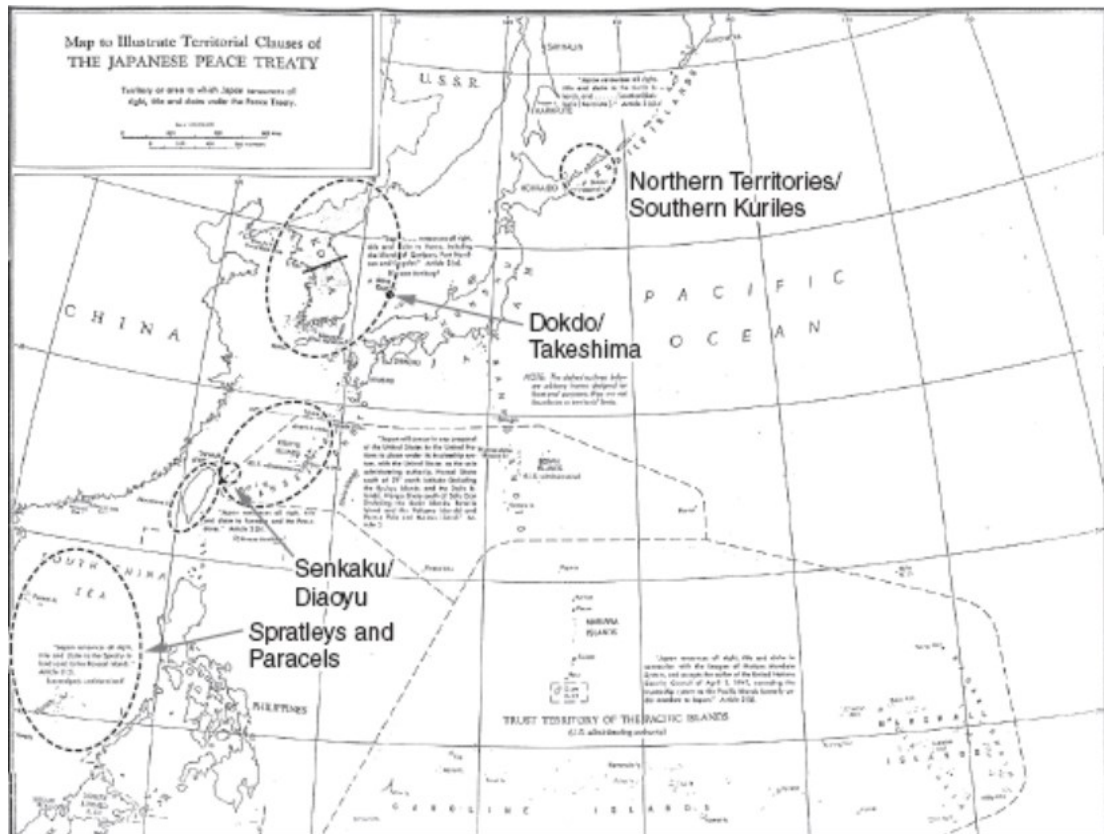
³⁰⁴² Ibid.

³⁰⁴³ *Security Treaty between the United States and Japan*, signed in San Francisco on 8 September 1951, https://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th_century/japan001.asp

³⁰⁴⁴ Hara Kimie, “The San Francisco Peace Treaty and Frontier Problems in the Regional Order in East Asia: A Sixty Year Perspective”, *Asia-Pacific Journal*, Volume 10, Issue 17, Number 1, 22 April 2012.

gave rise to conflicting claims between Moscow and Tokyo. Given the new reality of the Cold War turning hot in the mountains of Korea, it “is no coincidence that the territorial disputes derived from the San Francisco Peace Treaty...all line up along the ‘Acheson Line’, the US Cold War defence line of the Western Pacific announced in January 1950.”³⁰⁴⁵

Map 8: Unresolved Territorial Issues stemming from the Treaty of San Francisco (1951)



Source: United States, 82nd session, SENATE, Executive Report No. 2, Japanese Peace Treaty and other Treaties relating to Security in the Pacific/Report of the Committee on Foreign Relations on Executives, A, B, C and D. Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1952, with related regional conflicts marked by Hara Kimie.

To determine if the Settlement of 1951 furnished the necessary conditions for the formation of an RSO, as defined in the analytical framework, this dissertation now proceeds to their concrete analysis.

10.3.2. The Settlement of 1951: Geopolitical Necessity

No scholar has yet come forward with the theory that the Japanese Empire had any other choice, after two atomic bombings and the threat of physical invasion by the Red Army, but to surrender to the Allied Powers or else face honourable, but definitive, extinction through an apocalyptic defence of its Home Islands. Japan’s situation in August 1945, as noted above, encapsulated the very definition of the condition of geopolitical necessity. The Pacific War and the quest to carve out a Great East Asian Co-operation Sphere had, in the end, “destroyed 66

³⁰⁴⁵ Ibid.

percent of the Empire's national wealth; 25 percent of its fixed assets, 25 percent of its building stock; 34 percent of its industrial machinery; 82 percent of its merchant marine; 21 percent of its household property; 11 percent of its infrastructure; and 24 percent of its production."³⁰⁴⁶ Furthermore, it lost between 3 and 3.5 percent of its entire pre-war population. Yet, despite the fanaticism that inspired the coup to usurp Imperial authority in the final days before Japan's acceptance of the Potsdam Proclamation, many Japanese "had already prepared themselves for defeat. The real question in their minds related to the shape of the Occupation, not its inevitability."³⁰⁴⁷ The Soviet decision to enter the war against Japan added additional weight to the severity of Japan's plight. Having plowed through the remnants of the Kwantung Army, threatening an invasion of the Home Islands themselves, the spectre of a Soviet occupation zone loomed ominously over the horizon. As Prime Minister Kantarō underlined to his Cabinet "If we don't act now [and surrender], the [Soviets] will penetrate not only Manchuria but northern Japan as well... We must act now while our chief adversary is still only the United States."³⁰⁴⁸ Once again the land frontier between the Soviet Union (Russia) played a deciding element in the future political trajectory of East Asia. The question of a possible Soviet occupation was a serious one, given the USSR's determination to establish pro-Moscow regimes in its occupied territories in eastern Europe, Japanese policy makers could not exclude that a similar fate could befall Japan. In such an event, under what would most probably be a Communist authority, there could be no room, however cosmetic, for the Emperor and *kokutai*. Such an option lay outside the realm of contemplation for even the most defeatist-minded of Japanese policy makers. As such, the threat of Soviet occupation of a portion of the Japanese Home Islands would signify nothing more than the obliteration of the traditional Japanese way of life. To counteract this threat, more daunting than the physical destruction the US openly threatened to rain down over Japan at Potsdam, total acceptance of Allied demands remained the only way to stem such a possibility.

Having chosen to submit to the Allied demands made at Potsdam, the Japanese government had little choice but to subject itself to the dictates of the pending Allied occupation. The totality of Japan's defeat was reflected in General Order No. 1, compelling the Japanese Imperial forces to surrender to the Allies, prepare a list of all military installations, plans of fortifications, factories, research institutions, and patents for products involved in Japan's military industrial complex, as well as ordering all "Japanese and Japanese-controlled military and civil authorities [to] assist the occupation of Japan and Japanese-controlled areas by forces of the Allied Powers... This and all subsequent instructions issued by the Supreme Commander for the Allied Powers or other Allied military authorities will be scrupulously and promptly obeyed by Japanese and Japanese-controlled military and civil officials and private persons. Any delay or failure to comply with the provisions of this or subsequent orders and any actions which the Supreme Commander for the Allied Powers determines to be detrimental to the Allied Powers, will incur drastic and summary punishment at the hands of Allied military authorities and the Japanese Government."³⁰⁴⁹ There was little alternative for the defeated to not submit to the will of the victorious Allies, first and foremost the United States.

³⁰⁴⁶ Paine, *The Japanese Empire*, pg. 172.

³⁰⁴⁷ Schaller, *The American Occupation of Japan*, pg. 4.

³⁰⁴⁸ Paine, *The Japanese Empire*, pg. 170.

³⁰⁴⁹ Elleman, *International Rivalry and Secret Diplomacy in East Asia*, pg. 241.

Reflecting the totality of defeat, the early years immediately following the Japanese surrender have been described as Japan's "American interlude" or "more negatively, as an epoch of unusually crude and forced 'Americanization'". In either case, what has usually been emphasized is the imposition of America's will on an alien land."³⁰⁵⁰ Therefore, Japan's August 1945 acceptance of the Potsdam Proclamation marked a clear demarcation between Japan's Imperial past and its new, imposed democratic future. The Japanese themselves had little choice but to accept this change in direction as, as reflected in General Order No. 1, "General MacArthur and his command ruled their new domain as neocolonial overlords, beyond challenge or criticism, as inviolate as the Emperor and his officials had ever been."³⁰⁵¹ The total US domination of postwar Japanese territory and society would, in turn, shape the path upon which a new Japan would return as a sovereign member of the international community. It would also play the role of a central transformative element in the metamorphosis, as will be described below, of how Japanese viewed both themselves and their society.

At the same time, the geopolitical necessity of Japan to completely capitulate to the US was begrudgingly interpreted as a positive inevitability by segments of Japanese society. Months before the Japanese surrender, officials in Tokyo began to seriously consider what form postwar occupation would take, with, as early as 1943, many Japanese bureaucrats having realized the futility of further fighting and thereby pinned their hopes on a conditional surrender.³⁰⁵² The belief, however clandestine, that a postwar Japan should try and establish some modicum of cooperation with the United States to develop the Japanese and Asian economies, as advocated by Japan's civilian leaders prior to 1931, gained currency. The fractures that appeared in Japanese government circles during the Taishō era continued under the surface, quietly gravitating towards the diplomat and future postwar Prime Minister, Yoshida Shigeru. Yoshida had, since the beginnings of the Pacific War, presaged Japan's defeat and, as early as the fall of Singapore in 1941, sought to seek a peace agreement to end hostilities. This loose association of individuals, known to the *Kempeitai* (Japan's military police) as the YOHANSEN group, abbreviation for 'Yoshida Anti-War', who sought to end the war by initiating peace overtures to the Western Allies.³⁰⁵³ The involved individuals, all conservative in their political outlook, were motivated by deep concerns over the ultimate fate of the Japanese nation in the case of a defeat against the Allies or in the event of a revolution at home. While the concrete results of any collective action were indeed trivial, its existence did illustrate that a portion of Japanese elites not only, at a relatively early stage, recognized the geopolitical necessity of extracting the Empire from an increasingly unfavourable situation out of concerns for the survival of the nation. This fear was given concrete expressed by one of YOHANSEN's associates, none other than Prince Konoe, who presented a memorial to the Emperor on 14 February 1945, where he urged surrender to avoid the Imperial system being taken down in a Communist revolution in what was to constitute YOHANSEN's "supreme political act."³⁰⁵⁴ Konoe condemned General Tōjō's restructuring of the Japanese economy along Bolshevik lines, echoing his own warning in 1944 that defeat, however terrible, would be

³⁰⁵⁰ Dower, *Embracing Defeat*, pg. 24.

³⁰⁵¹ Ibid., pg. 27.

³⁰⁵² Schaller, *The American Occupation of Japan*, pg. 5.

³⁰⁵³ Dower, John, *Empire and Aftermath: Yoshida Shigeru and the Japanese Experience 1878-1954*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1988, pg. 227.

³⁰⁵⁴ Ibid., pg. 257.

preferable to “leftist revolution...as frightening, or more frightening, than defeat...if we have a leftist revolution, *Kokutai* and everything will be gone to the ends.”³⁰⁵⁵

Overall, the scope of the Japanese defeat left little room for consideration of another course of action, save for continuation of an honourable defence and eventual, but certain, obliteration and the hands of the vengeful Allies. The choice in 1945 was to submit or witness the total demise of the traditional order. Yet the fear of outright extinction, be it through a martial *Götterdämmerung*, or a decidedly less romantic Bolshevik revolt, did not lead outright to a gesture of unilateral accommodation, out of the simple fact that the degree of Japan’s defeat did not allow the possibility of its consideration. The existence of a segment of Japanese officials, however, that supported Japan’s exit from the Second World War, was also witnessed in the preparations for defeat that had been made in the minds of other members of the Japanese elite. Fujiyama Aiichrō (1897-1985), head of a significant Japanese *zaibatsu* and future postwar Foreign Minister, stated that “when it was learned that the occupying power would be the US...many industrialists uncorked their champaign bottles and toasted the coming of a new industrialist age.”³⁰⁵⁶ As the US Occupation established itself in Japan, and with the decision of the SCAP to retain a functioning Japanese Government, albeit at the beck and call of MacArthur, the new US authorities began to increasingly turn to those individuals who had been associated with YOHANSEN and, therefore, were indirect advocates of some sort of rapprochement between a defeated Japan and a victorious United States. This case is illustrated by the ‘leader’ of its association, Yoshida Shigeru, who was arrested by the *Kempeitai* on 15 April 1945 and detained for two months for his ideas on bringing the war to a conclusion, which the secret policy classified as defeatism, as well as “his perpetuation of ‘sensational rumours’ (*zōgen higo*’/造言飛語).”³⁰⁵⁷ As fate would have it, this turned out to serve as excellent credentials for US Occupation officials with whom Yoshida and his associates, coincidentally, “shared many of the identical political concerns being voiced by those Americans charting a future course for Japan.”³⁰⁵⁸ Consequently, perhaps the only gesture of unilateral accommodation that Japan could make was to begrudgingly welcome the US Occupation and provide the necessary human capital to allow the United States to construct a postwar Japan, one largely in line with those Japanese elites that had envisioned the geopolitical necessity of capitulation long before it became an inevitable and unavoidable reality.

10.3.3. The Settlement of 1951: Policy of Reciprocal Restraint

In its essence, the basic outlines of the ‘Yalta System’ were concurrent with the condition of reciprocal restraint. The Yalta Conference of February 1945 was very much convened not only to discuss the inevitable fate of an Allied-occupied Europe, but also to discuss the postwar order that would be lorded over by the victors. Arriving at Yalta, President Roosevelt, much like his Democratic predecessor Wilson, was intent on establishing a postwar order based exclusively on Great Power cooperation. These ideals, as noted, were inherent in the Atlantic Charter, outlining the Allies’ principles and goals for a postwar world, and in the reflection of, as expressed in the Protocol of the Yalta Proceedings, “[Allied] determination to build in cooperation with other peace-loving nations a world order under law, dedicated to peace, security, freedom and general

³⁰⁵⁵ Schaller, *The American Occupation of Japan*, pp. 5-6.

³⁰⁵⁶ Ibid., pg. 4.

³⁰⁵⁷ Dower, *Empire and Aftermath*, pg. 269.

³⁰⁵⁸ Schaller, *The American Occupation of Japan*, pg. 6.

well-being of all mankind.”³⁰⁵⁹ The Settlement of 1951 was an agreement remaining far removed from the high-minded principles that were spouted in Crimea. Indeed, one could make the argument that, in actuality, it formed its antithesis. At Yalta, questions pertaining to East Asia—Korea, China, and Japan—were discussed between the Heads of States but they deferred on sharing any details.

Discussions on Korea formed a prime example. The Cairo Declaration’s pledge to establish a trusteeship over Korea was indeed broached between Stalin and Roosevelt at Yalta, however, after the conference, the US State and War Departments had no idea that a trusteeship was to be established and based policy on the assumption that the Red Army would proceed to occupy the whole of the peninsula.³⁰⁶⁰ The Soviet entry into the Pacific War brought about a change of thinking in US attitudes on sending forces to Korea as only then did US Ambassador to the USSR Harriman urge Truman to consider amphibious landings to the Hermit Kingdom, and even Manchuria, in order to occupy as much territory as possible under the US flag before its inevitable Soviet capture. The initial lack of details on how exactly a trusteeship would be established after the fall of the Japanese Empire resulted in mutual suspicion taking precedence over cooperation. In December 1945, Foreign Commissar Molotov and Secretary of State Byrnes met in Moscow to attempt to reduce tensions between the two nations in East Asia. Part of the discussions led to initiate efforts on a working level to create a viable international trusteeship over Korea. However, as noted, these efforts only led to a protracted stalemate.

In the shadow of the eroding trust over Soviet moves to absorb eastern Europe firmly into Moscow’s orbit, the Old Continent’s example decreased the trust that the US placed in Soviet intentions in East Asia. Given such increasing apprehension over the future trajectory of bilateral relations, General Hodge, US Commander in Korea, allowed ultra-conservative forces to move ahead and form a de facto regime south of the 38th Parallel, even though Washington continued to pay lip-service to a trusteeship over a united Korea. Naturally, faced with a *fait accompli* in Seoul, the USSR did not hesitate to reciprocate with the creation of a similar de facto regime in Pyongyang. By the end of 1947, therefore, a separate state had been created in the north of the Korean peninsula, with its own borders, government, currency, legislation, army, and police forces.³⁰⁶¹ The political process to create a trusteeship over a united Korea gave way to the establishment of hard administrative realities and inevitably was accompanied by concrete preparations for the outbreak of military hostilities. Indeed, the newly created DPRK General Staff began war planning against the Republic of Korea as early as 1947.³⁰⁶² While consolidating control over their respective zones, both Korean Republics continued to present themselves as the sole legitimate representation of a united Korea. Hence, any pretence of fostering cooperation over Korea, both between the two Republics and the Great Powers themselves, fell quickly by the wayside. The policy of reciprocal restraint envisioned at Yalta was replaced by a policy of reciprocal escalations as the Cold War created a systemic vacuum over Korea instead of the definitive postwar status that had been concocted in Cairo. Soon, escalation gave way to war. The advent of the Korean War in 1950 removed any illusion about meaningful postwar cooperation between the US and USSR. As the course of the Korean War, following the intervention of PRC

³⁰⁵⁹ Clemens, *Yalta*, pg. 304.

³⁰⁶⁰ Schaller, *The American Occupation of Japan*, pg. 74.

³⁰⁶¹ Lankov, *From Stalin to Kim Il Sung*, pg. 41.

³⁰⁶² *Ibid.*

armies, was largely transformed into a military contest between US and PRC forces on Korean territory, implications were rife for how Beijing and Washington viewed each other. The Settlement of 1951 was ultimately signed while hostilities in Korea were still raging. As underlined, Korean questions, along with Korean representation itself, did not feature as a subject of discussion neither regarding the bilateral relations on the Treaty of Peace nor at the conference itself. Questions pertaining to Korean claims following the end of Japanese occupation were simply not placed on the agenda as the desire to anchor Japan as the cornerstone of US containment policy in East Asia took strong precedence. The Settlement of 1951 did not discuss these issues, deliberately creating an ambivalence that would require eventual clarification. But the time was not judged opportune in 1951. The Korea question, instead, was willfully abandoned only to become engulfed in the stark realities of the Cold War.

During the Pacific War, the Second United Front between the Kuomintang and the CCP witnessed both sides initially putting aside their differences to fight against the Imperial Japanese occupation. However, this approach was not long lasting. As of 1941, the Second United Front “existed only on paper”, with Kuomintang forces attacking CCP units attempting to establish themselves in Central China.³⁰⁶³ Since then, there was very little premise for unity in China. During the Pacific War, President Roosevelt insisted that the Republic of China should be included as one of the world’s ‘Four Policemen’. The 1943 Cairo Conference was organized with the participation of Chiang Kai-shek and still marks the only major international wartime conference that explicitly sought out Chinese participation. China had made the jump from the object of the international system, a status to which it had been relegated in the Settlements of 1895 and 1901, to one of its major players. Secretary of State Hull insisted upon the inclusion of the Republic of China and lobbied for the overall acceptance of China’s role as a ‘global policeman’ in the Allied Declarations. The other two major Allied Powers, the USSR and Great Britain, balked at the Republic of China’s inclusion, given its fractured domestic reality and utter dependence on the US for support. Churchill expressed his decisive disapproval, bluntly declaring that “as to China, I cannot regard the Chongqing Government as representing a great World Power”, while Molotov underlined that China was inherently weak and could, as such, contribute little to any Allied declaration.³⁰⁶⁴ Yet US insistence carried the day, and the Republic of China was accorded the status that President Roosevelt saw befitting. This instance would allow the Republic of China to assume a seat at the United Nations Security Council as a permanent member. Yet at Yalta, China’s status as a ‘global policeman’ had evaporated, with no Chinese participation having been considered. Instead, given the perceived urgency in securing the Soviet Union’s entry into the Pacific War, China once again reverted to becoming an object of negotiation within the international system. Great Power cooperation, as envisioned by Moscow and London, took priority over the concerns of the Republic of China, with even the United States willing to compromise the interests of its envisioned ‘global policeman’ as the war with Japan reached its ultimate stage.³⁰⁶⁵

At Yalta, while agreeing to Soviet designs to recover its privileged position in Manchuria, as had been enjoyed by Tsarist Russia, the United States expected that Moscow would come to

³⁰⁶³ Mühlhahn, *Making China Modern*, pg. 338.

³⁰⁶⁴ Clemens, *Yalta*, pg. 48.

³⁰⁶⁵ Davidson, Robert, “The Far East Agreements of the Yalta Conference of February 4-11, 1945, and the Sino-Soviet Agreements of August, 1945” (1969). Dissertations and Theses. Paper 700, pg. 3.

terms with the Republic of China as the legitimate representative of the Chinese people. As such, any US readiness to accede to Moscow's demands were viewed as an attempt to secure the best possible cooperation between the Republic of China and the Soviet Union.³⁰⁶⁶ Consequently, the Nationalist Government concluded the Treaty of Friendship and Alliance with the USSR in August 1945 that secured overt Chinese recognition of Soviet demands. Upon the Japanese surrender, however, the CCP insisted upon its right to liberate Japanese held-territory and, as noted, quickly moved into Soviet-controlled Manchuria. A conflict between the two Chinese fractions was rendered merely a question of time. The post-1945 Chinese Civil War was very much marked by international involvement from its very inception. While both the USSR and the US "watched the situation in China carefully, both were ambivalent toward their respective Chinese allies. Neither Moscow nor Washington had a clear plan for coping with the situation in China."³⁰⁶⁷ No overt negotiations occurred featuring China as a subject of discussion between the US and the USSR. Indeed, at the close of the Pacific War, both Powers sought to establish a coalition government between the Kuomintang and the CCP. Following the Japanese surrender, the unorthodox US Ambassador to China, Patrick Hurley (1883-1963), was convinced in his personal ability to realize such an objective. Mao Zedong flew personally to Chongqing to meet Chiang Kai-shek on 27 August 1945. Hurley's abrasive personality did little to smooth the mediation efforts, calling Zhou Enlai a "motherfucker" and wanting to tell Chiang a dirty joke, earning him Mao's designation as a 'Clown' and Chiang's reference as 'the Big Wind.'³⁰⁶⁸ Despite Hurley's silver-tongued shenanigans, all seem promising until the Kuomintang launched an offensive against the CCP in November 1945, thereby terminating all negotiations. A second, more civil attempt was made under General Marshall who expended substantial effort in 1946 to come to an agreement between the two Chinese belligerents. Nevertheless, Marshall's attempts to reach a coalition government, as noted, came to naught and full civil war resumed in 1947. No further attempts at mediation would be made.

Both instances of US-sponsored mediation efforts marked the only international intervention to attempt to establish order in China. The Soviet Union, following the lead of its US rivals, refused to intervene directly and, consequently, no policy of reciprocal restraint could be implemented between Washington and Moscow concerning the destiny of China. Instead, while averting the scenario of open war that broke out in Korea, both the US and USSR would adopt what would become a characteristic pattern, namely that Washington and Moscow would avoid "direct military intervention...[and instead arm] their trusted agents, satellite countries, and allies to shape the outcome of conflicts in their favour."³⁰⁶⁹ In the initial Chinese test case, the CCP ultimately reigned victorious. The foundation of the PRC in October 1949 was followed up with by an alliance with the Soviet Union, bringing China, at least nominally into the Soviet camp. The Truman Administration, as illustrated by NSC 48, had to adjust as best it could to the 'loss of China', with Washington continuing to recognize the Republic of China "until the situation is further clarified" while avoiding recognition of the "the Chinese Communist regime until it is clearly in the United States interest to do so...[continuing] to express to friendly governments its own views concerning the dangers of hasty recognition of the Chinese Communist regime but

³⁰⁶⁶ Ibid.

³⁰⁶⁷ Mühlhahn, *Making China Modern*, pg. 339.

³⁰⁶⁸ Kurtz-Phelan, Daniel, *The China Mission: George Marshall's Unfinished War, 1945-1947*, New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 2018, pp. 12-13.

³⁰⁶⁹ Mühlhahn, *Making China Modern*, pg. 343.

should not take a stand which would engage the prestige of the United States in an attempt to prevent such recognition. In general, however, it should be realized that it would be inappropriate for the United States to adopt a posture more hostile or policies more harsh towards a Communist China than towards the USSR itself.”³⁰⁷⁰ The United States had sought initial contacts with the Chinese Communist Party during the Pacific War, with Communist guerillas having left a positive impression from the 1937 Battle of Pingxingguan on US General Stilwell as a successful and energetic force. Indeed, the feeling was mutual with Zhou Enlai, after Stilwell’s defeat against the Japanese in Burma, declaring that “I would serve under General Stilwell and I would obey.”³⁰⁷¹ A US military mission, aptly codenamed DIXIE, arrived in Yen’an in July 1944 in order to make contact with the CCP and assess any possibility of establishing official relations with the US. Hence, there were wartime attempts to at least gain mutual understanding and bridge differences. As the US was cognizant of Mao’s reservations towards the USSR, Washington toyed with the idea of attempting to wean Beijing away from Moscow’s sphere of influence, yet the advent of the Korean War obliterated any such illusions. Dean Acheson, attempting to implement the start of such a policy, sought to block the renewal of the 1949 China Aid Bill as a signal of accommodation to Beijing.³⁰⁷² Yet such efforts were too little, too late. With the intervention of Chinese forces in Korea on an express mission to thwart US advances, the PRC entered into the pantheon of the enemies of the ‘free world’, thereby changing Washington’s view on its security needs in East Asia. The ‘Yalta System’, never really applied to China, now gave way to open conflict between the US and, from its viewpoint, an unrecognized and hostile regime in Beijing.

Immediately upon Japan’s surrender, US strategists viewed that China, rather than Japan, would become the bulwark of stability in East Asia as the primary US regional ally. Regional developments in the early postwar years, however, would facilitate a major change in what materialized as a serious flawed assumption. Washington, therefore, directed its diplomatic efforts in crafting a final settlement with Japan to ensure that Tokyo would emerge as the major bastion of regional US influence. Washington’s approach to the Treaty of Peace, and China’s place in it, was adapted accordingly. No attempts to engage Chinese concerns would be raised, nor would any participation in the conference in San Francisco that was ostensibly aimed at establishing peace in East Asia would be contemplated. Communist China became a factor to be contained, not placated. As such, policies of reciprocal restraint held no weight given contemporary realities. The Settlement of 1951 signed, the United States chose to enter into a Mutual Defence Treaty with the Republic of China in 1954, thereby officially taking sides for the first time in the as yet incomplete Chinese Civil War. This was not the original intention of the US. The remnants of the Republic of China on Taiwan were not included in the concept of strategic defence in East Asia with, as noted, NSC 48 having restricted Washington’s support to the realm of the economic and diplomatic. The losers of the Chinese Civil War in no way enjoyed popularity among US policy makers who had the frustration of attempting to assist the Nationalists in the final stage of the Chinese Civil War on the mainland. Kennan expressed the collective opinion of most when he described Chiang Kai-shek as “sitting on Formosa with a group of extraordinarily stubborn and demoralized and selfish

³⁰⁷⁰ *Memorandum by the Executive Secretary of the National Security Council to the National Security Council, the Position of the United States with Respect to Asia*, issued in Washington, 30 December 1949, <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1949v07p2/d387>.

³⁰⁷¹ Tuchman, *Stilwell and the American Experience in China*, pg. 463.

³⁰⁷² Cha, Victor, *Powerplay: Origins of the U.S. Alliance System in Asia*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2016, pg. 66.

and rather pathetic people around him.”³⁰⁷³ President Truman, as late as January 1950 publicly declared US commitment to the Cairo Declaration that foresaw Taiwan’s return to China. Despite preparing itself for an eventual CCP takeover of Taiwan, the US refused to engage diplomatically with the newly established People’s Republic. Hence, following the Cairo Conference there were no serious attempts to engage in a policy of reciprocal restraint either with Chinese representatives or amongst other Great Powers leading to an easing of regional tensions. Territorial promises were made and the intention of including China in the postwar global international order was announced. In the years to follow, however, there was no detailed follow-up of how such goals were to be accomplished. Regarding China, the Treaty of Peace with Japan merely stipulated in Article 2b to renounce its claims to Formosa and the Pescadores and in Article 10 abandoned all claims that Japan received through the Settlement of 1901. No further details were included. Instead, the US and USSR chose to engage through proxies to fight over the destiny of postwar China, with Washington panickily turning to apply a containment strategy when a real threat to its interests appeared with the start of the Korean War.

Establishing a policy of reciprocal restraint was superfluous regarding Japan, given the totality of defeat that it faced in August 1945. Policy making was one-sided and the Japanese, as reflected in the wording of General Order No. 1, simply had no say in the matter. It was left a functioning government that became the vehicle to implement the occupier’s will. If there is any case to be made that the ‘Yalta System’ was able to garnish some limited postwar success, the Japanese case could provide some evidence. The USSR, as noted, agreed to the full US occupation of Japan in return for concessions in Europe and “Stalin made every effort not to produce an impression that the Soviet Union was challenging American hegemony by manipulating the Japanese Communist Party (JCP)”, ensuring that no official relations existed between the JCP and Soviet Communist Party between 1946 and 1949.³⁰⁷⁴ Hence, the ‘Yalta System’ did succeed in paving the way for recognized US domination over Japan. Yet this decision took on its own, unexpected direction following the onset of the Cold War in Asia. From the beginning, General MacArthur formulated his own approach to building a postwar Japan. As he reminisced in his memoirs, the Supreme Allied Commander recalled that “from the moment of my appointment...I had formulated the policies I intended to follow, implementing them through the Emperor and the machinery of the Imperial Government...which would bring Japan abreast of modern progressive thought and action. First destroy the military power. Punish war criminals. Build the structure of representative government. Modernize the constitution. Hold free elections. Enfranchise the women. Release the political prisoners. Liberate the farmers. Establish a free labour movement. Abolish police oppression. Develop a free and responsible press. Liberalize education. Decentralize the political power. Separate church from state.”³⁰⁷⁵ These were the policies that the US occupier would pursue until their satisfactory fulfilment. There was little room for either compromise or negotiation. Yet the case could be made, as will be illustrated below, that the US occupation, adapted by the Japanese Government led to a new bilateral symbiosis between Washington and Tokyo based on the new, postwar power constellations and both nations’ relative position within them. Such an idea was explained by MacArthur himself looking back at his tenure as the ‘Blue eyed Shogun’ of Japan: “but as the reforms progressed and freedom increasingly came

³⁰⁷³ Ibid., pg. 67.

³⁰⁷⁴ Wada Haruki, “Historical Legacies and Regional Integration” in Hara (ed.), The San Francisco System and Its Legacies, pg. 253.

³⁰⁷⁵ MacArthur, Reminiscences, pp. 282-283.

to the Japanese masses, a unique bond of mutual faith developed between the Japanese supreme commander. As they increasingly sensed my insistence upon just treatment for them, even at time against the great nations I represented, they came to regard me not as a conqueror, but as a protector.”³⁰⁷⁶

In conclusion, the Settlement of 1951 did not meet the criteria for reciprocal restraint. While the ‘Yalta System’ played lip-service to the superficial establishment of cooperation between the Great Powers regarding the future of not only East Asia but the entire postwar world, none emerged from the ashes of the Second World War. Korea had been, since the Cairo Conference of 1943, seen as the first test case of a possible multilateral approach with the declaration on the establishment of an international trusteeship. The lack of meaningful details injected into superficial discussions at Yalta and Potsdam meant that the emerging superpowers of the United States and Soviet Union followed the base line of their respective national interests regarding Korea, quickly leading to the establishment of de facto regimes and then a rapid slide into a region-changing war. Processes of negotiation created to jointly manage the establishment of a Korean trusteeship soon became deadlocked and dysfunctional. China was viewed in a similar vain. By 1945, the Chinese diplomatic apotheosis had faded, leaving a weak country devastated by the Pacific War and gripped by a resumption of an ideological civil war over the ultimate destiny of the nation. No policies of reciprocal restraint were initiated with China itself, save for two rounds of US-sponsored mediation, nor did any serious dialogue occur between the US and USSR regarding the situation in China. In its stead, proxy war developed and the USSR, through its treaties with both Nationalist and Communist China, secured what it viewed as core Soviet interests in East Asia, regardless of the ideological colour of the governing authorities. The fate of Japan was similar in nature to that of Korea and China. Other than the Potsdam Proclamation’s stipulation of unconditional surrender and the loss of the territories Japan had gain since 1895, there was very little direction to guide, from a multilateral perspective, the postwar destiny of a defeated Japan. With the sole US occupation of the Japanese Home Islands, it was clear that Washington would be the obvious determinant of the exact contours of a new postwar Japan. While this decision itself was the result of bargaining between the US and USSR, the joint bodies created for common occupational Allied oversight, such as the ACJ, did not play a serious role in shaping Japan’s future. Furthermore Japan as a nation, given the total defeat it had suffered by August 1945, was in no position to offer any meaningful gestures of unilateral accommodation as, by the advent of the signature of its unconditional surrender in September 1945, there was literally nothing that the Japanese Empire had that the Allies could not, in time, take. Hence, policies of reciprocal restraint, between the Great Powers as well as the nations of East Asia, could not be said to have been present in the Settlement of 1951.

10.3.4. The Settlement of 1951: Satisfaction with the Status Quo

Satisfaction with the new status quo established by the Settlement of 1951 was not widespread after the signature of the Treaty of Peace with Japan. This was a logical consequence not only of the failure of the ‘Yalta System’, but also the absence of the emergence of any policies of reciprocal restraint regarding the many outstanding issues following the collapse of the Japanese Empire. Hence, the criterion of satisfaction with the status quo was not unanimous between the

³⁰⁷⁶ Ibid., pg. 282.

states of East Asia, with an obvious divide emerging between the countries of the Asian Continent and Japan/United States.

The Soviet Union, as noted, engaged in discussions with the United States regarding its proposed Treaty of Peace with Japan, best illustrated by the upstate New York meetings between Dulles and Malik in 1950. No agreement regarding the southern Kuriles could be reached and the discussions were not continued. Although the final settlement signed by the US and its allies did explicitly stipulate the renouncement of Japanese sovereignty over the Kurile Islands and the portion of Sakhalin gained by Japan in the Settlement of 1905 (Article 2c), it did not state to which Power this territory would be transferred. The Kurile Islands that were already under Japanese sovereignty prior to 1905 remained in a legal void. Following the discussions at Yalta and Potsdam, this was obviously seen as a violation of the agreements made between the USSR and Western Allies during their overtures to woo the Soviet Union into entering the Pacific War. Moscow made its dissatisfaction with the emerging status quo clear through its attendance of the San Francisco Conference. Representing the USSR, First Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, Andrei Andryevich Gromyko (1909-1989), noted to the attendees that “the Peace Treaty with Japan should, naturally, resolve a number of territorial questions connected with the peace settlement with Japan. It is known that in this respect as well the United States, Great Britain, China, and the Soviet Union undertook specific obligations. These obligations are outlined in the Cairo Declaration, in the Potsdam [Proclamation], and in the Yalta Agreement...The rights of the Soviet Union to the southern part of the Sakhalin Island...as well as to the Kurile Islands, which are at present under the sovereignty of the Soviet Union, are equally indisputable...by attempting to violate grossly the sovereign rights of the Soviet Union, the draft also confines itself to a mere mention of the renunciation by Japan of rights, title, and claims to these territories and makes no mention of the historic appurtenance of these territories and the indisputable obligation on the part of Japan to recognize the sovereignty of the Soviet Union over these parts of the territory of the USSR.”³⁰⁷⁷ The inherent unclarity furnished by the Settlement of 1951 over its promised northeast Asian territorial booty was obviously not to Moscow’s liking.

Furthermore, by 1951, Moscow had concluded an Alliance with and had accorded recognition to the People’s Republic of China, thereby transforming the PRC, from the Soviet perspective, into the sole successor state of the Chinese Republic. Hence, all discussion regarding China, such as it was, that was held between the wartime Allies automatically, after 1950, referred to the PRC from the standpoint of Soviet foreign policy. The United States evidently had no intention of according the PRC the same diplomatic status. Gromyko’s San Francisco’s declaration underlined Moscow’s view that these same wartime agreements “recognize the absolutely indisputable rights of China, now the Chinese People’s Republic, to territories severed from it. It is an indisputable fact that the original Chinese territories which were severed from it, such as Taiwan (Formosa), the Pescadores, the Paracel Islands and other Chinese territories, should be returned to the Chinese People’s Republic...in reality, however, Taiwan and the said islands have been captured by the United States of America and the United States wants to legalize these aggressive actions in the Draft Peace Treaty under discussion. Meanwhile the fate of these territories should be absolutely clear—they must be returned to the Chinese people, the master of

³⁰⁷⁷ *Statement of the First Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of the USSR, A.A. Gromyko, at the Conference in San Francisco (1951)* <https://www.mofa.go.jp/region/europe/russia/territory/edition92/period4.html>

their land.”³⁰⁷⁸ The Soviet Union therefore viewed the Settlement of 1951 as a violation of the legitimate rights of the Chinese people to regain territories that had been conquered through Japanese aggression.

The Soviet Union’s critique of the Settlement of 1951 was not confined to territorial criticism. Gromyko also criticized the absence of any “legitimate claims of states that have suffered from Japanese occupation regarding compensation by Japan for the damages they have suffered”, echoing the criticism of both China and Korea regarding the unacceptability of the Treaty of Peace with Japan.³⁰⁷⁹ The Soviet Union directly criticized the Treaty’s green-lighting of Japanese participation in any postwar security arrangements, not only failing to prohibit Japan’s joining of coalitions against the former Allies, but “on the contrary, is clearing the path for Japan’s participation in aggressive blocs in the Far East created under the aegis of the United States.”³⁰⁸⁰ The bilateral security treaty with the United States signed on the same day as the Treaty of Peace exemplified the essence of Moscow’s criticism. In closing Gromyko declared, as his final objection to the San Francisco Treaty, that the current “draft is not a treaty of peace but a treaty for the preparation of a new war in the Far East.”³⁰⁸¹ Such a statement to the conference reflected the deep dissatisfaction with which the Soviet Union viewed the Settlement of 1951 and justified its refusal to become one of its signatories.

The USSR conveyed the acute disappointment that was felt both by China and Korea, in both their respective postwar incarnations, regarding the Settlement of 1951. The Korean War had transformed the strategic picture in East Asia, and transformed the DPRK and the PRC, in the eyes of the United States, from *de facto* regimes to belligerents. While ceasefire negotiations regarding the Korean conflict had started in 1951, the warfare on the peninsula itself was in full swing, and the US needed to circumvent the issue of Chinese and Korean participation. This approach was also supported by the main subject of the treaty, Japan, with the Yoshida Government growing apprehensive at not only the Republic of Korea’s demands for participation in San Francisco, but also the desire of President Rhee to settle the position of the Korean minority resident on the Japanese Home Islands. Prime Minister Yoshida underlined Japanese objections to Korea being a signatory to the Treaty of Peace with Japan, informing Dulles during his Tokyo round of negotiation that “the [Japanese] Government would like to send almost all Koreans in Japan to their homes because it had long been concerned by their illegal activities”, a point to which Dulles concurred, noting that most were “Communist” in ideological orientation.³⁰⁸² Hence, the decision, despite the noted protests of President Rhee, to exclude Korean representation from the Treaty was taken. Official reaction from the Republic of Korea was mute, seeing as Seoul was still engaged in military operations to secure its survival, with Washington setting to work towards negotiating a separate, bilateral security treaty as compensation.

Both the PRC and the RoC were not involved in the San Francisco Conference and were not invited to sign the final Treaty of Peace with Japan. Unsurprisingly, given the damages suffered by China during its resistance against Japanese expansionism, this could only evoke negative

³⁰⁷⁸ Ibid.

³⁰⁷⁹ Ibid.

³⁰⁸⁰ Ibid.

³⁰⁸¹ Ibid.

³⁰⁸² Kim, “The San Francisco Peace Treaty and ‘Korea’”, pp. 99-100.

emotions. On 16 August 1951, the PRC published a statement by Zhou Enlai, Minister of Foreign Affairs, bluntly stating that the Treaty of Peace with Japan violated the United Nations Declaration of 1 January 1943, the Cairo Declaration, the Yalta Agreements, the Potsdam Declaration and Agreement, and the Basic Post-Surrender Policy of the Far Eastern Commission, noting that “the United Nations Declaration provides that no separate Peace should be made. The Potsdam Agreement states that the ‘preparatory work of the Peace Settlements’ should be undertaken by those States which were signatories to the terms of surrender imposed upon the Enemy State concerned.”³⁰⁸³ Instead, Zhou underlined that Beijing supported the Soviet approach whereby all Allied states that took arms against Japan should be involved in the Treaty’s preparation. The PRC accused the United States of monopolizing this process, to the active exclusion of China, when during a “war of resisting and defeating Japanese imperialism, the Chinese people, after a bitter struggle of the longest duration, sustained the heaviest losses and made the greatest contribution.”³⁰⁸⁴ In particular, the PRC took issue with the planned scheme of reparations from Japan, noting that, under the Treaty, Tokyo would only be liable for damages incurred after 7 December 1941, leaving any claim that the PRC might have had during the first years of the Second Sino-Japanese War decidedly outside the Treaty. Furthermore, Zhou stressed that the PRC refused to recognize the Treaty’s territorial clauses that assigned US control over the former Japanese Pacific Islands and the unclarity regarding the final status of Taiwan, the Pescadores, as well as the southern Kuriles. Additionally, Zhou stated that the PRC rejected outright the emerging US preponderance over Japan and Washington-imposed restrictions on Japanese trade with the PRC. As such, Zhou underlined that the PRC “reserved its right to demand reparations from Japan and would refuse to recognize the treaty.”³⁰⁸⁵ Hence, the PRC was decidedly unsatisfied with the Treaty of Peace with Japan. At the time of signature, with open warfare between the PRC and US raging in Korea, this reflected the explicit geopolitical design of the US. Yet the future economic trajectory of the PRC was, in 1951, an unknown factor, both in Washington and Beijing. Nevertheless, the PRC’s dissatisfaction with the status quo established by the Settlement of 1951 had become a feature of the PRC’s foreign policy. As late as July 2022, the spokesperson for the Chinese Foreign Ministry publicly dubbed the Settlement of 1951 “illegal and invalid” and emphasized that “the Chinese Government will never recognize it.”³⁰⁸⁶ Willingly or not, the Settlement of 1951, given the blatant Soviet, Chinese, and Korean dissatisfaction with the established status quo, left a gaping hole of legitimacy hovering over East Asia.

It would be mistaken, however, to classify systemic dissatisfaction with the regional status quo as endemic. Japan, as the subject of the Treaty of Peace, and the United States as the Treaty’s main architect, could express differing, more positive degrees of satisfaction with the Settlement of 1951. The postwar Japan that emerged under the watchful eye of the SCAP was one that was solidly in line with liberal democracy and exhibited a strong pacifist tinge, principles all incorporated in the 1947 ‘Peace Constitution’. Indeed, the values that formed the anchor of the new Japanese state reflected the hopes of those segments of Japanese society in the 1920s that, as noted, hoped to steer Taishō democracy into closer alignment with both Western democratic ideals and therefore deepen cooperation with the Western Powers. With the ascendancy of the Imperial

³⁰⁸³ Price, John, “Cold War Relic: The 1951 San Francisco Peace Treaty and the Politics of Memory”, *Asian Perspectives*, Vol. 25, No. 3 (2001), pg. 36.

³⁰⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 36-37.

³⁰⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, pg. 37.

³⁰⁸⁶ <https://www.globaltimes.cn/page/202207/1269856.shtml>, accessed 18 June 2024.

Military, however, such ideals were cast aside and Japan began its uncontrollable drift towards the Second World War. Indeed, as the military control over political power in Japan, so did the concept of central authority erode, illustrated most poignantly by the Kwantung Army's effective hijacking of Japanese foreign policy as of 1931. Nobody really understood who was in charge of the Imperial Military branches, save for the fact that both Chiefs of Staff were nominally answerable to the Emperor.³⁰⁸⁷ This inherent ambiguity within the Japanese power structure continued to define all civilian wartime cabinets, with a nominal Government remaining, yet with its power not concentrated within one institution or individual.³⁰⁸⁸ The victorious Allies arrived on the Japanese Home Islands with the intent of extinguishing what they viewed as a dictatorship as authoritative as the one they were dismantling in Germany and "the idea that it could have been the absence of strong leadership which had brought Japan to attack the Western Allies appears not to have occurred to anyone."³⁰⁸⁹

As outlined in General Order No. 1, all facets of governance were assumed by the SCAP as of August 1945. The function of the Japanese Government was to obey MacArthur's instructions. The inherent Allied and regional concern of stamping out Japanese militarism led to the disbanding of the Japanese Imperial Armed Forces, the removal of militarists from positions of power and influence, as well as prohibiting Japan from undertaking any responsibility for its own security through the 'Peace Constitution' of 1947. Yet in the eyes of those elements of Japanese society that had, during the Taishō era, advocated for the construction of a strong liberal democratic system and close cooperation with the Western Powers, or had conversely become wartime associates of YOHANSEN, the decisions of the SCAP were palatable, if not outright desirable, outcomes. The military that had led Japan into a cataclysm was no more and would not rise again as a political faction. The Settlement of 1951, while obliging Japan to forsake both the concept and fruits of Empire, also paved the way for Japan's willful forsaking of one of the chief traits of the Westphalian State, namely responsibility for its own foreign policy and security. In both these questions, while restoring sovereignty to Japan through the Settlement of 1951, it in practice served to anchor its foreign policy and security impotence. Prime Minister Yoshida, upon assuming office in 1948, "made the notable political discovery that Japan need not exert itself for national security in the traditional sense, since the US was ready to take care of it. It was subsequently realized that all other activities by which a state is externally known and recognized could similarly be carried out by US proxy."³⁰⁹⁰ This was the concrete culmination of all the aspirations of the liberal elements of Taishō democracy, with Japan becoming totally dependent on the US for both diplomacy and defence. Post-Settlement of 1951 Japan could therefore, combined with its designation as an industrial base to meet US security needs, focus exclusively on economic questions. Japan's subsequent emphasis on its own economic priorities was very much to the satisfaction of both the liberal segments of Japanese society that emerged from the Pacific War and also explained why the *zaibatsu* greeted the US occupation with the toasting of champagne glasses. Given the scope of disaster Japanese society faced in August 1945, the status quo furnished by the Settlement of 1951 was a satisfactory one indeed.

³⁰⁸⁷ Van Wolferen, Karel, *The Enigma of Japanese Power*, New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1989, pg. 39.

³⁰⁸⁸ Shillony, Ben-Ami, *Politics in Culture in Wartime Japan*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981, pp. 29-30.

³⁰⁸⁹ Van Wolferen, *The Enigma of Japanese Power*, pg. 40.

³⁰⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, pg. 41.

The United States, as the grand architect of the Treaty of Peace with Japan, was obviously satisfied with the gains of the San Francisco Treaty. Following the changes in strategic thinking and perceived urgency of the Communist threat hanging over Asia, the United States had drastically changed its appraisal of the situation. As noted, the main goal was to ensure that Japan would be integrated into the international community as a bulwark of US security strategy in East Asia. The ‘Peace Constitution’ offered some reassurance against the revival of Japanese militarism, however, by 1951, the pressing situation in Korea, was a threat in the minds of US policy makers that could spread to other Asian nations. The question of the reemergence of some sort of renewed Japanese military had been discussed, both in Washington and amongst members of the British Commonwealth, but Japan’s value, it was decided, lay elsewhere. As such, from the US point of view, the Settlement of 1951 had an exclusive Japan-centric focus and, due to this narrow field of view, the United States “did not then regard the San Francisco Treaty as a step toward a larger regional system”.³⁰⁹¹ It neatly accomplished the objective of integrating Japan into the international community, decidedly embedded with Western values, and obliged it to abandon all gains of its newly defunct Empire and implicitly recognize the independence of the Republics of Korea and China. Nothing more was intended to be broached in San Francisco, nor was it. The system of bilateral alliances that followed the signature of the Treaty, first and foremost with Japan on the very same day, therefore do not have a direct link with the actual Settlement of 1951. Such arrangements might have been a logical offshoot of the US strategy in the region following the termination of the Korean War—with Washington forming bilateral security alliances with the Republic of Korea in 1953 and the Republic of China in 1954—but have no direct connection with the Treaty of Peace with Japan. While the Settlement of 1951 might have paved the way for the signature of such treaties, open questions arising from the long years of the Second Sino-Japanese War and Pacific War, such as territorial claims and reparations, were left as open matters. As illustrated through Dulles’s unorthodox approach to treaty negotiation—namely an extended bilateral negotiation process with all prospective signatories as opposed to a dedicated conference with the maximum number of participants—reflected the US desire to focus on the main task of Japan and willingly leave all remaining questions miring in deliberate ambiguity.

The Settlement of 1951 accomplished this goal in its entirety, despite the lingering questions that Washington was cognizant would remain unanswered in its wake. Indeed, this might have been the Settlement of 1951’s general intention. Washington was well aware that the treaty it had sponsored left significant regional states in legal limbo as explicitly stated in Article 26: “Japan will be prepared to conclude with any State which signed or adhered to the United Nations Declaration of January 1, 1942, and which is at war with Japan, or with any State which previously formed a part of the territory of a State named in Article 23, which is not a signatory of the present Treaty, a bilateral Treaty of Peace on the same or substantially the same terms as are provided for in the present Treaty, but this obligation on the part of Japan will expire three years after the first coming into force of the present Treaty. Should Japan make a peace settlement or war claims settlement with any State granting that State greater advantages than those provided by the present Treaty, those same advantages shall be extended to the parties to the present Treaty.”³⁰⁹² The three year window for the new sovereign Japan to conclude additional peace treaties proved to be insufficient, most probably due to Cold War realities following the Korean War Armistice, leaving

³⁰⁹¹ Buszynski, “The San Francisco System: Contemporary Meaning and Challenges” pg. 324.

³⁰⁹² *Treaty of Peace with Japan, Signed at San Francisco, on 8 September 1945*, <https://treaties.un.org/doc/Publication/UNTS/Volume%20136/volume-136-I-1832-English.pdf>

Japan technically at war with the Soviet Union and in legal limbo with its neighbours. Only in 1952 was a Treaty of Peace signed with the Republic of China, formally ending the Second Sino-Japanese War, and diplomatic relations were established with the Republic of Korea in 1965, both an indirect consequence of the inherent desired ambiguity of the Settlement of 1951. Yet an obscure regional status quo was Washington's desired outcome in San Francisco and, here, it achieved its goal with unambiguous success.

In conclusion, given the obvious cleavage between inclusion (Japan, United States, Western Allies) and exclusion (USSR, PRC, RoC, RoK, DPRK) that emerged following the Settlement of 1951, no criteria of satisfaction with the status quo can said to be uniformly applicable.

10.3.5. The Settlement of 1951: Pacific Self-Images

The collapse of the Japanese Empire brought with it colossal transformations in the perception of self-images of each East Asian nation. The failure of the 'Yalta System' and any real rapprochement between the Soviet Union and US in East Asia resulted in latent conflicts breaking out into open warfare, in China in 1945 and Korea in 1950, that would splinter and alter the self-image of each of the nations affected.

The most transformative of these processes, perhaps unsurprisingly, took place in Japan. The divisions that characterised Japanese society following the Settlement of 1919, entrenched during the years of 'Taishō democracy', have been chronicled, as have the tensions between fractions of the Japanese Military and nationalists that led to the 'Crisis of 1936'. The dismay which some elements of Japanese society viewed the country's course towards final defeat has also been underlined. Yet the advent of the US Occupation of Japan held as its overarching objective, as laid out in Article 10 of the Potsdam Proclamation, the removal of "all obstacles to the revival and strengthening of democratic tendencies among the Japanese people."³⁰⁹³ In the minds of the SCAP, this clause was equivalent to the eradication of Japanese militarism and, as such, formed the base for an ambitious reform agenda that would ultimately transform Japan and, consequently, the way it viewed itself and the outside world. The US 'Initial Post-Surrender Policy' laid out the ultimate objectives of the Occupation, namely: "(a.) to ensure that Japan will not again become a menace to the United States or to the peace and security of the world; (b.) to bring about the eventual establishment of a peaceful and responsible government which will respect the rights of other states and will support the objectives of the United States as reflected in the ideals and principles of the Charter of the United Nations. The United States desires that this government should conform as closely as many be to the principles of democratic self-government but it is not the responsibility of the Allied Powers to impose upon Japan any form of government not supported by the freely expressed will of the people."³⁰⁹⁴ Hence, in order to transform the wartime government that had led Japan to disaster, as Secretary of State Dean Acheson then stated, the goal needed to be nothing less than changing the existing economic and social system to eliminate altogether Japan's ability *and* desire to wage war. Hence the SCAP's main occupation mission was to realize the "demilitarization and democratization" of Japan, with the US "[setting] about doing what no other occupation force had done before: remaking the political, social,

³⁰⁹³ *Potsdam Proclamation* of 26 July 1945, <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1945Berlinv02/d1382>

³⁰⁹⁴ Dower, *Embracing Defeat*, pp. 76-77.

cultural, an economic fabric of a defeated nation, and in the process changing the very way of thinking of its populace.”³⁰⁹⁵

Almost immediately upon their arrival, the US Occupation Forces ordered the cancelling of the Peace Preservation Law of 1925 that had led to the arrest of thousands of political dissidents, allowing for free political expression. Japanese prisons were emptied and even members of the Japanese Communist Party were once again granted their freedom. This was accompanied by the disbanding of the Home Ministry and Japanese Secret Police. Further steps followed: following the new Prime Minister Kijūrō’s 11 October 1945 meeting with Supreme Allied Commander MacArthur, the Japanese Government was ordered to extend the electoral franchise to women, promote labour unionization, liberalize the education system as well as “democratize the economy by revising ‘monopolistic industrial controls’ and in general eliminate all despotic vestiges in society.”³⁰⁹⁶ This specific set of instructions handed out by the SCAP to the Japanese Government marked the beginning of the democratization process of Japanese society envisioned by the US occupiers. On 15 December 1945, the Government-sponsored state Shinto religion was abolished, and a Trade Union Law was established by the Diet on 22 December 1945. Soon after, the Japanese Government was purged of military officials, removing them from public office. The reforms that were espoused in the initial meeting between Prime Minister Kijūrō and General MacArthur took on an even more tangible and immutable form with the adoption of the ‘Peace Constitution’ of 1947 that ascribed ultimate sovereignty to the Japanese people, anchoring a broad range of human rights, along with the explicit renunciation of warfare as a tool of statecraft.

The Japanese elites that had accepted the Empire’s surrender were shocked, as their primary goal had been to “return the state and society to the *status quo ante* of the late 1920s, before the militarists took over.”³⁰⁹⁷ Even conservative postwar Prime Minister Yoshida lambasted US attempts to entrench a broad democratic base within an inherently traditional society. Yet the depth of the Japanese defeat had led to the onset of the postwar condition of exhaustion (*‘kyodatsu’*/虚脱) to which the bulk of the Japanese populous succumbed after years of war. Unemployment, malnutrition, homelessness, and inflation were rampant. Indeed, the influential conservative publishing house Kōdansha found the rampant food insecurity that characterized the initial postwar years as the topic most relevant to its readers, publishing such articles as “How to Eat Acorns” and “Let’s Catch Grasshoppers”.³⁰⁹⁸ The desperate state of postwar Japan is also adeptly portrayed in the 1949 movie *Stray Dogs* by Kurosawa Akira (1910-1998). The high degree of *kyodatsu* that defined postwar Japan, combined with the material and economic assistance that the Japanese depended on for survival, contributed to a change in attitudes amongst the Japanese populous to the US occupiers, embodied first and foremost, in an affinity to Supreme Allied Commander MacArthur. Indeed, as noted in the General’s personal memoirs, “Japanese at all levels of society embraced the new supreme commander with an ardour hitherto reserved for the Emperor, and commonly treated the GHQ with the deference they had until recently accorded their own military leaders.”³⁰⁹⁹ Peace and democracy had, under the watchful gaze of the SCAP, penetrated into the fabric of Japanese society, so much so that when film-director Kobayashi

³⁰⁹⁵ Ibid., pp. 77-78.

³⁰⁹⁶ Ibid., pg. 81.

³⁰⁹⁷ Ibid., pg. 86.

³⁰⁹⁸ Ibid., pg. 94.

³⁰⁹⁹ Ibid., pg. 227.

Misaki (1916-1996) was repatriated to the Home Islands following his detention by the US military in Okinawa, he was simply flabbergasted by the Japan that greeted him upon his return: “Japan had become extremely democratic. Everyone was moving in that direction. Everyone was racing off in the direction of a democratic kind of humanist freedom and unionist activity.”³¹⁰⁰ While the process was years in the making, with the conservative elements able to guide most of the changes, the direction imposed by the SCAP towards the adoption of liberal-democratic and pacifist principles was beyond the ability of any Japanese Government to fundamentally alter. From the ruins of the Japanese Empire, postwar Japan had been handed down, and largely accustomed itself to out of its own volition, a novel self-image in line with its once erstwhile enemies. However, as noted, the pacific self-image that emerged in postwar Japan was not one that was specifically directed against any of its neighbours, but rather manifested itself in the abrogation of the martial duties implicitly inherent in Westphalian statehood. Japan’s new self-image, while democratic and pacifist, did not eliminate the country’s preference towards isolationism and a newfound hope that, in its new postwar constellation, “the world with all its political complexities would leave their country alone.”³¹⁰¹

The initial post-Japanese surrender period left China in a state of civil war. Despite the US efforts at mediation to form a coalition government between the Kuomintang and the CCP, the two fractions remained locked in armed conflict from 1945-1949. Both sides believed that they represented the true expression of the will of the Chinese people and rightful government over the Chinese Republic. During the Chinese Civil War, both fractions attempted to mobilize the Chinese populous under its respective control, directing them towards achieving the party-directed goals, making the methodology of the CCP and the Soviet-organized Kuomintang similar in their scope.³¹⁰² Both sides imposed their ideological slant over their controlled territories, yet it was the CCP with the foundation of the PRC on 2 October 1949 that claimed victory, forcing the Kuomintang to their exile on Taiwan. Shortly before founding the PRC, the CCP convened a “Political Consultative Conference of the Chinese People” from 18-21 September 1949 where the basic organizational structure of the new People’s Republic would be founded. Along with a new national flag and proclaiming Beijing as the official capital of China, a ‘Common Programme’—that would serve as the de facto constitution of the PRC—was adopted that proclaimed the People’s Republic of China to be “a people’s democracy under a people’s dictatorship, led by the working class and based upon the alliance of workers and presents, rallying to it all the democratic classes and nationalities of China.”³¹⁰³ The Common Programme underlined the complete centralization of power and laid the groundwork for the official establishment of a socialist economy that reflected Mao’s ideas on provisionally permitting some forms of private enterprise along with ideas on agrarian reform.³¹⁰⁴ Hence, by the signing of the Settlement of 1951, China had emerged with a new self-image as a Maoist People’s Republic. Foreign policy was stated to focus on the preservation of Chinese independence and underlined that treaties concluded by the Nationalists would be revised (although that was decidedly not the case with the Sino-Soviet Pact of 1950) through equal relations. The new People’s Republic underlined, however, that it only intended to

³¹⁰⁰ Ibid., pg. 225.

³¹⁰¹ Van Wolferen, *The Enigma of Japanese Power*, pg. 6.

³¹⁰² Strauss, Julia, *State Formation in China and Taiwan: Bureaucracy, Campaign, and Performance*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019, pg. 22.

³¹⁰³ Chassin, Lionel Max. *The Communist Conquest of China; a History of the Civil War, 1945-1949*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1965, pg. 239.

³¹⁰⁴ Ibid., pg. 242.

establish diplomatic relations with those governments that “repudiated the Kuomintang regime and adopted a friendly attitude toward the People’s Republic.”³¹⁰⁵ The new China would therefore only conduct international relations on the basis of mutual diplomatic recognition.

No pacific self-image could be said to have emerged with the foundation of the PRC. With the Kuomintang from Taiwan still claiming nominal legitimacy over the Qing Dynasty’s now defunct borders, a state of latent conflict existed. As noted, the US held every expectation that the PRC would, in the first few years after its victory, subdue the remnants of the Kuomintang under its now central authority. Military conflicts with rival states were not sought after but, at the same time, not explicitly excluded from the realm of possibility. Indeed, the thirty-year treaty signed between Mao and Stalin in February 1950 was explicitly directed against preventing and/or countering any type of Japanese aggression that might infringe upon the sovereignty of both states, as stipulated in Article 1 of the Treaty.³¹⁰⁶ Indeed, the Treaty further pledged Sino-Soviet consultations on an eventual Peace Treaty with Japan, a possibility that the Settlement of 1951 overtly ruled out. Developments in the Taiwan Straits directly following the Settlement of 1951—for example, the PLA’s bombing of the island of Jinmen in September 1954—triggered a military crisis between the PRC and the Republic of China/the United States, highlighting the lingering tensions that remained between the Civil War rivals that would characterize the decades ahead. Furthermore, the ongoing Korean War precluded any chance of stabilizing a bilateral relationship between Beijing and Washington that would define the regional landscape after an armistice had been signed. Given the existence of an internal enemy leftover from the struggle on the mainland with the Kuomintang, the perceived threat to the PRC’s independence from a resurgent Japan, now allied directly with a government in Washington that refused to contemplate the recognition of the PRC and with whom its Volunteer Army was embroiled in combat on the Korean Peninsula, no pacific self-image can be said to have been in existence in the PRC after the Settlement of 1951.

The Korean Peninsula found itself in a similar situation following the Settlement of 1951. As noted, the US arrived to accept the surrender of Japanese forces south of the 38th Parallel and were unprepared for their role in organizing a functional government, whether under an international trusteeship or unilaterally. General Hodge, having much combat but little political and administrative experience, had, a full nine months after his arrival in September 1945, received no instructions for what he should accomplish with his presence in Korea.³¹⁰⁷ This initial period of confusion led to the adoption of ad hoc policies, with the US originally relying on Japanese colonial officials leading to Korean outrage. With bilateral relations between the US and USSR beginning to fray, US concerns regarding possible Communist infiltration south of the 38th Parallel took precedence. Anti-Communist rhetoric and fluency in English became the chief criteria to merit consideration for governance, with Hodge inviting strongman Syngman Rhee from the United States in October 1945.³¹⁰⁸ While Rhee was designed to form a coalition government with the wartime Korean government-in-exile based in Chongqing, it never became a reality. The absence of trade between Korea’s northern and southern provinces, and the departure of Japanese capital, technology, and management, resulted in economic hardship that increased societal

³¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

³¹⁰⁶ Elleman, *International Rivalry and Secret Diplomacy in East Asia*, pg. 244.

³¹⁰⁷ Cha, Victor & Pacheco Pardo, Ramon, *Korea: A New History of South and North*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 2023, pg. 38.

³¹⁰⁸ Ibid., pp. 40-41.

protest, which the US occupation authorities permitted to be suppressed as necessary, a policy exemplified during the Jeju Uprising of 1948-1949 when the newly established Republic of Korea military killed 30,000 people in its counterinsurgency campaign.³¹⁰⁹ By the June 1949 end of the official US Occupation of the newly established Republic of Korea, the US left the onus on the United Nations to administer the elections and establish a weak and authoritarian South Korean Government.

As noted, the Soviets arrived better prepared to set up a separate administration north of the 38th Parallel. Moscow, having established a Government in North Korea, provided Pyongyang economic assistance and technical expertise that allowed the DPRK to make “reasonable strides in development after the end of the Japanese occupation. Land reform and the state-based distribution system had given the majority peasant population sustenance in material terms...Soviet support had made the state and military stronger, relative to the South.”³¹¹⁰ Yet like his countrymen in Seoul, Kim Il Sung viewed his Government as constituting the sole legitimate representative of the Korean people. This claim was put to the test in June 1950 with the DPRK’s invasion of the Republic of Korea. Following the Korean Armistice, the potential of a resumption of armed conflict never strayed far below the political horizon, as Seoul and Pyongyang became embroiled in the “politics of competitive delegitimization”, with each Korea starting “from an identical cultural and historical baseline [and] began pursuing separate paths in a parallel state-building and legitimacy-seeking process underwritten by the two competing superpowers. This was the beginning of a legitimacy *cum* identity challenge that a divided Korea would have to cope with for years.”³¹¹¹ As with the PRC, for example, the Republic of Korea rejected diplomatic relations with any nation that cultivated a bilateral relationship with the DPRK. Indeed, the Republic of Korea’s draconian National Security Law, making “any mention of engagement with the North...treasonous, and ground for torture and imprisonment.”³¹¹² Obviously, under such circumstances, the signing of the Settlement of 1951 could not be said, when considering the cases of the two Korean states, to reflect the conditions of having cultivated a pacific self-image.

A final note on pacific self-images following the Settlement of 1951 belongs to the two superpowers of the US and the USSR. As noted, the Treaty of San Francisco was one that had as its main goal not to furnish a comprehensive solution to postwar realities but to ensure that Japan would enter the international community as a nominally sovereign nation anchored within the US sphere of influence. Locked in the conflict and competition of the Cold War, no pacific self-images could obviously be reflected in the policies of Washington and Moscow both during and after the Settlement of 1951.

10.3.6. The Settlement of 1951: Compatible Social Orders

The Settlement of 1951 held a similar fate for the condition of compatible social orders as it did for pacific self-images. By the time of the signature of the Treaty of San Francisco, the Cold War was in full swing with the split between Capitalist and Communist ideologies forming the

³¹⁰⁹ Merrill, John, “The Cheju-Do Rebellion”, *Journal of Korean Studies*, 2 (1980), pp. 139-197.

³¹¹⁰ Cha & Pacheco, *Korea*, pg. 46.

³¹¹¹ Kim, Samuel, “North Korean Informal Politics” in Dittmer, Lowell; Fukio Haruhiro & Lee, Peter (eds.), *Informal Politics in East Asia*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000, pg. 237.

³¹¹² Cha, *Korea*, pg. 190.

major motor of global tension with each block operating within the international system seeking to expand or rebuff its rival. Hence, the social orders that had taken root in East Asia at the time of the Settlement of 1951 were inherently contradictory and engaged in combat in the mountains of the Korean Peninsula.

Both China and Korea had their respective incarnations found independent states based, as noted when considering pacific self-images, on unique ideology heavily slanted to one end of the contemporary political spectrum. The ‘Common Programme’ of September 1949 laid the foundation for a state based on Maoist principles. The convocation of the Chinese People’s Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC), responsible for the ‘Programme’s’ drafting, was attended by 1,200 delegates committed to adapting Marxist doctrine based on the “creative adaption” of Mao’s article “*On the New Democracy*” that argued that, as China was still colonial and semi-feudal, its “principal enemies were imperialist and semi-feudal forces” which required all remaining classes to unite under the “leadership of the proletariat”.³¹¹³ Under the guidance of the working class, common efforts would be made to fight against the domestic forces of imperialism, namely the landlords, bureaucratic capitalists, and Kuomintang reactionaries. Class labels were subsequently assigned to the PRC’s new citizens and constituted lifelong and hereditary designations.³¹¹⁴ Class categories were assigned in light of the needs of the immediate postwar context of the foundation of the PRC and “aimed at cleaning out remaining armed groups and gangs and reestablishing public order in the first few years of its rule.”³¹¹⁵ Mass campaigns were conducted to build popular support for politically important common causes, such as the “Resist the United States and Aid Korea” effort of 1950 following the outbreak of the Korean War, followed quickly by a second mass campaign that focused on rooting out ‘counterrevolutionaries’. This second campaign was said to have resulted in between 800,000 and ten million executions.³¹¹⁶ The third mass campaign, coinciding with the Settlement of 1951 and known as the “three antis” of anti-corruption, anti-waste, and anti-bureaucracy, focused on purging undesirable elements from the CCP itself. Hence, the social order that the end of the Chinese Civil War had established over the vast majority of China was undisputably Maoist in nature and authoritarian in its methods of governance.

A similar destiny, regarding social orders, also began to crystalize in Korea north of the 38th Parallel. In the DPRK, the autumn of 1947 witnessed the drafting of a North Korean Constitution that “symbolized a significant turning point in North Korean nation building.”³¹¹⁷ The document, sent to Moscow for revision and final approval, was adapted to foster the ‘people’s democratic revolution’ and while, as a Stalinist document, it held no special relevance for the daily life of Koreans above the 38th Parallel, it did anchor the territory with a decidedly Communist social order that would eventually mutate into the DPRK’s own brand of Marxist-Leninist ideology unveiled in Kim Il Sung’s speech “On Eliminating Dogmatism and Formalism and Establishing Juche in Ideological Work”. The Constitution also clearly painted the authority of the DPRK as the only legitimate representative of the Korean people, even going so far as to bequeath the status

³¹¹³ Teufel Dreyer, June, *China’s Political System: Modernization and Tradition*, New York: Routledge, 2024, pg. 78.

³¹¹⁴ Ibid., pg. 80.

³¹¹⁵ Wang Juan & Kim Jung Eun, “Categorizing People in the New States: A Comparative Study of Communist China and North Korea”, *Journal of East Asian Studies* (2023), pg.189.

³¹¹⁶ Ibid., pg. 81.

³¹¹⁷ Lankov, *From Stalin to Kim Il Sung*, pg. 42.

of the national capital to Seoul—a situation that was to last until 1972.³¹¹⁸ Soviet advisors helped the DPRK authorities launch land reform, resulting in the classification of ‘class enemies’ defined via the size of land holdings and the wartime record of the individual concerned.³¹¹⁹ This was followed by the nationalization of industries, transport, and banks in August 1946, along with the confiscation of any assets belonging to ‘class enemies’. While the broad strokes of the basic social order had been established by the official foundation of the DPRK in 1949, the further deepening of its contours was interrupted by the Korean War and, subsequently, the anchoring of Kim Il Sung as the undisputed leader of the postwar DPRK. Hence, a new and unique social order reigned over the DPRK as the Settlement of 1951 became a political reality.

South of the 38th Parallel, the social order that emerged before the Settlement of 1951 was heavily defined by the confusion that characterized the US occupation of the area. As noted, with anti-communism forming the sole bearing to guide US policy, the American Military put down any social movement that was deemed suspicious as well as denying “all demands for a representative national government run by the Korean themselves.”³¹²⁰ Anti-communism became the state-ideology and Washington turned a blind eye to the authoritarian methods used by President Rhee to maintain control over the Republic. Perpetuating a “sense of danger and emergency in civil society”, the heavy hand of the South Korean military regarding all things political “led the emergence of strong government...[acquiring] extraordinary power over national resources, and thus the ability to take developmental initiatives.”³¹²¹ The advent of the Korean War not only spurred the evolution of such tendencies but also provoked a deep sense of ‘otherness’, if not outright animosity, between Koreans divided between North and South. The social order that emerged following the Settlement of 1951 was also based on Korean nationalism, one that was fostered due to the inclusion of South Korea in the US system of alliances that soon followed the Treaty of San Francisco. Here, despite the growing economic links between the Republic of Korea and Japan, Korean nationalism “found a real and symbolic enemy in Japan. Anti-Japanese sentiment...encompassed all social actions and transcended class interests.”³¹²² Hence, the social order that emerged in the Republic of Korea was one supposedly in line with fundamental US values, at least on paper with its American-inspired Constitution, however whose actual governance was defined by anti-Communist Korean nationalism, with a strong anti-Japanese tinge, combined with authoritarian methods.

The Republic of China likewise proceeded to adopt a Constitution on 25 December 1946 that remained in effect for areas under Kuomintang control. Its ability to shape the social order of the Republic of China was negligible. With the situation in China turning against the Nationalists, the Kuomintang ratified the ‘Temporary Provision against the Communist Rebellion’ in May 1948, establishing martial law over territory controlled by Nationalist China and seriously curtailed political and civil freedoms. These provisions would be in effect until the end of single-party rule by the Kuomintang in 1991. The situation for the Nationalists had been in slow decline with, since 1948, the Kuomintang having taken the decision to relocate both assets and institutions to Taiwan.

³¹¹⁸ Ibid., pg. 45.

³¹¹⁹ Wang & Kim, “Categorizing People in the New States”, pg. 190.

³¹²⁰ Kim Kyong Ju, The Development of Modern South Korea: State Formation, Capitalist Development and National Identity, New York: Routledge, 2006, pg. 67.

³¹²¹ Ibid., pg. 68.

³¹²² Ibid., pg. 69.

Responding to an emerging crisis, the Standing Committee of the Central Executive Committee of the Kuomintang, the party's most important structure, established a Supreme Policy Council to coordinate the Nationalist Government's activities. Chiang Kai-shek was named Chairman of this new body and was able to therefore circumvent the nominal authority of the President of the Republic, Li Zongren (1890-1969). Under such circumstances the remnants of the internationally recognized Nationalist Government retreated to Taiwan on 7 December 1949 and established Taipei as the 'temporary capital of China'. This left what remained of Nationalist China, by the Settlement of 1951, in possession of a nominal Constitution that established a parliamentary "democratic Republic of the people, by the people, and for the people" which had been largely overridden by martial law in preparation for a campaign to retake the mainland that never came. Hence, the extensive powers given to President Chiang Kai-shek through the adoption of emergency measures turned the Republic of China into a de facto authoritarian presidential system as the 'Temporary Provision' explicitly laid out: "In the Period of Communist Rebellion, for the sake of avoiding the emergent political crisis, and addressing the mammoth economic change, the President is empowered to adopt emergency measures... The President's power will not be limited by the regular procedures of Articles 39 and 43 of the Constitution."³¹²³

The United States was decidedly displeased with the retreat of the Nationalists to Taiwan and the seemingly politically chaotic situation that reigned over what was left of its territory. The Republic of China, now confined to Taiwan after the CCP's 1949 victory, had been largely written off politically and militarily by US policy makers. Secretary of State Acheson was said to harbour "utter contempt" for Chiang and viewed the Kuomintang as both "deceitful and incompetent."³¹²⁴ As noted, the US did not foresee a role for the remnants of the Kuomintang in Washington's emerging defence strategy in East Asia, with George Kennan advising a policy that would "liquidate as rapidly as possible our unsound commitments in China and to recover, vis-à-vis that country, a position of detachment and freedom of action."³¹²⁵ The factional rifts within the Kuomintang did not assist in forwarding its cause in Washington, thereby placing strain on bilateral relations.³¹²⁶ Only the advent of the Korean War changed the US strategic assessment of the military and economic value of the Republic of China and thereby saved it from extinction through the dispatching of the US Seventh Fleet to the Taiwan Straits. In the end, it was stark geopolitical calculation that tied the leftovers of the Republic of China to the United States strategy as an unsinkable aircraft carrier and not out of any consideration of or conviction in the desirability of its by now authoritarian social order.

The incompatibility of the social orders of the US and the USSR, namely liberal democracy and Stalinism, have been noted through the steady collapse of the 'Yalta System' following the surrender of the Japanese Empire. This fundamental cleavage between social orders obviously created a cleft between the postwar nations that emerged after the end of the Pacific War. Hence, no compatible social orders between the nations of East Asia could say to have existed between the regional nations, recognized and un-recognized, through the Settlement of 1951.

³¹²³ Feldman, Harvey (ed.), Constitutional Reform and Future of the Republic of China: Taiwan in the Modern World, New York: M.E. Sharpe, 1991, pp. 3-7.

³¹²⁴ Cha, Powerplay, pg. 67.

³¹²⁵ Ibid.

³¹²⁶ Tucker, Nancy, Patterns in the Dust: Chinese-American Relations and the Recognition Controversy, 1949-1950, New York: Columbia University Press, 1983, pg. 68.

10.3.7. The Settlement of 1951: Existence of an Interested Hegemon

As in the case of the First World War, the United States remained the only Great Power to emerge in September 1945 completely unscathed from fighting on its own territory, shielded as it was by the Pacific Ocean from both the former battlefields and new political challenges. Amongst the victorious Allies, the Soviet Union and China had been severely damaged, both economically and socially, by the extensive campaigns that had cut through their territories, incurring tens of millions of military and civilian casualties. While these had proven essential sacrifices towards Allied victory, the price was staggering. With peace having returned to the USSR, China was further wrecked by four more years of ideologically driven civil war. Japan lay in ruins and, by 1951, its possession of any military had been deemed unconstitutional. Korea had been spared from becoming the theatre of any major campaigns during the Pacific War, yet the failure to organize a united international trusteeship led to the outbreak of a fratricidal war in 1950. As such, the fledgling militaries of the DPRK and Republic of Korea, while wrestling over the Korean Peninsula, could not seriously make a claim to a sense of regional hegemony. Hence, the United States entered the postwar age as a literal military and economic superpower, ushering in the age of unipolarity.

The United States, following the Second World War, was the sole nation that had become substantially richer in the wake of its hostilities, with Washington possessing USD 20 billion of the world's gold reserves, estimated at war's end to total USD 33 billion.³¹²⁷ More than half of the globe's manufacturing production took place in the US, it owned half of the world's shipping and one-third of the world's export. In the post-Pacific War years, the world was a US economic oyster. Such economic preponderance was highlighted by Mao while contemplating Chinese intervention in the Korean War, noting that the US annual output of steel in 1949 had reached 87.72 million tonnes, more than 144 times than that of China over the same period.³¹²⁸ Unsurprisingly, the economic dominance of the US extended to the military realm. By the end of the Pacific War, the United States Military comprised a total of 12.5 million service personnel, with 7.5 million serving overseas.³¹²⁹ While, by 1950, this enormous number had been reduced to a total of 592,000 active army personnel, the strength of the US forces lay within the modernity of its arsenals. The disbalance between the firepower of the US Military and potential adversaries prevalent in 1950 was evident in the debates between the CCP Politburo members on its decision to intervene in Korea. While the People's Liberation Army was numerically larger, it was still using either weapons it had captured from the Kuomintang or the Imperial Japanese Army. In 1950, one PLA corps "had 189 artillery pieces, barely more than one tenth of those possessed by a similar American unit (1428), and even fewer than half those of an American division (476)."³¹³⁰ Added to this were the 1,200 major warships of the US Navy that outnumbered and outgunned all other standing post-Pacific War navies with "no other significant maritime forces existing."³¹³¹ Combined with 1,000 ultra-long range B29 bombers that had reduced most Japanese cities to ashes and its possession of the atomic bomb, the United States could project its power to any point

³¹²⁷ Kennedy, *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers*, pg. 357.

³¹²⁸ Hao & Zhai, "China's Decision to Enter the Korean War", pg. 105.

³¹²⁹ Kennedy, *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers*, pg. 357.

³¹³⁰ Hao & Zhai, "China's Decision to Enter the Korean War", pg. 105.

³¹³¹ Kennedy, *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers*, pg. 385.

accessible from the sea in East Asia. Such military and technological preponderance does not necessitate further analysis through a comparative table.

Yet the United States, in the initial postwar years, had a particular conception of its hegemony, especially when applied to East Asia. While initial postwar US strategic priorities lay in securing its position in Europe, as the arrival of the US occupation in Korea illustrated, there was no overall strategic conception as to how to deal with East Asia. As late as 1948, Kennan wrote to Secretary of State Marshall that “today, as far as I can learn, [the US is] operating without an overall strategic concept for the entire western Pacific area” and therefore decided to design one.³¹³² In Kennan’s opinion, the balance of power between the existing Great Power centres—the US, USSR, Great Britain, Germany, and Japan—could only be secured through shades of MacKinder’s ‘heartland’ theory, by ensuring that no one become established as a hegemon over the Eurasian landmass. In order to prevent this Anglo-Saxon nightmare of a Eurasian hegemon emerging, holding a strategic stake on the Asian landmass was not necessary at all, a vision expounded upon by Kennan in an October 1948 speech: “You do not need to hold land positions on the Eurasian land mass to protect our national security. If that is true, you can theoretically content yourself with permitting most of these land areas to be in the hands of people who are hostile to ourselves as long as you exercise that power of inhibiting the assembling and launching of amphibious forces from many Asian ports.”³¹³³ Added to this was, as noted by Kennan’s list of postwar centres of power, a dismissive attitude to China and its potential to emerge, even in the event of a Communist victory, as a distinct threat to the United States: “I would hazard the statement that nowhere in Asia outside of [the Soviet Union] would it be possible to develop a centre of power which could really threaten the security of this country.”³¹³⁴ While China, in Kennan’s opinion, did possess enormous territory and manpower, its lack of resources would not permit the development of “modern industry” and the accumulation of capital and, therefore, he did not consider that “China can be used itself as a major factor to threaten the United States of America.”³¹³⁵ This assessment of actual and potential Chinese power, regardless of the outcome of the Civil War, negated any need for the US to strive for outright dominance on the Asian mainland. Such an approach became a major factor in excluding both the Republics of China and Korea from the US strategic defence concept in East Asia as reflected in NSC 48 of December 1949. Unlike Western Europe, where Washington had to fill in the security vacuum against the USSR left by the German defeat, the United States did not view it in its overall strategic interest to implement a policy of total regional hegemony in East Asia.

The mantle of unipolarity is nevertheless an exercise that inherently came with prescribed limits. Despite its amazing array of military resources, the United States—at least in 1950—realised that it could not engage strategically in all areas of the globe. Fear of overextension had begun to set in. This was evidenced in a memo from the Director of the Pentagon’s Mutual Defence Assistance Programme to Secretary of State Acheson underlining that “We have reached the point where the United States, because of limited resources, can no longer simultaneously pursue all of its objectives in all parts of the world and must realistically face the fact that certain objectives, even though they may be extremely valuable and important ones, may have to be abandoned if

³¹³² Cha, *Powerplay*, pg. 45.

³¹³³ Kennan, George, “United States Foreign Policy”, 11 October 1948, Speech at Naval War College, pg. 23.

³¹³⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 18-19.

³¹³⁵ *Ibid.*, pg. 20.

others of greater value and importance are to be attained.”³¹³⁶ This would also explain the US initial feeling of ambivalence towards the PRC’s eventual absorption of Taiwan and unwillingness to increase commitments to the Republic of Korea and French Indochina. There were, of course, elements of the US policy making circles that vehemently argued against the lack of US commitment and strategic planning in Asia, an area where the US had played its greatest role in securing victory in the Second World War. First and foremost was General MacArthur who not only lobbied Republicans in Congress to send US 75 million in military assistance to Chiang Kai-shek but described Taiwan as East Asia’s “unsinkable aircraft carrier” and openly mocked Washington’s “threadbare argument by those who advocate appeasement and defeatism in the Pacific that if we defend Formosa, we alienate Continental Asia.”³¹³⁷ Yet such firm arguments did not carry the day in Washington.

Even after the onset of the Korean War, the strategy of the United States reflected a deep sense of caution and unwillingness to extend commitments and resources on continental Asia. Even after the masterful victory of General MacArthur at Inchon, who emulated the strategy of General Wolfe at the Plains of Abraham in 1759, Washington remained extremely apprehensive in pursuing the war north of the de facto administrative frontier of the 38th Parallel. Instinctively, MacArthur, realising that war without a concept of final victory is usually a futile, wasteful, and deadly pursuit, devised a strategy of chasing DPRK forces towards the Yalu River and, following the intervention of the Chinese Volunteers, taking the war directly to the PRC, informing the 33rd President personally that “victory is a strong magnet in the East, and the Koreans want their freedom. When Syngman Rhee’s government is reestablished in Seoul, the UN-sponsored elections can be held within two-months...The North Koreans will also vote for a non-communist government when they are sure of no [Soviet] or Communist intervention...Korea can become a strong influence in stabilizing the non-communist movement in the East.”³¹³⁸ This view was contradicted by Kennan who argued that US intervention, under the auspices of the UN, was essentially limited “solely for the purpose of restoring the Republic of Korea to its status prior to the invasion from the north and of reestablishing the peace broken by that aggression.”³¹³⁹

Faced with the reality of the Chinese intervention, and British concern with the effect on the US ability to deter Soviet intensions in Europe in case of an expanded war in East Asia, the Truman Administration opted to pursue the elusive objective of a ‘limited war’ over Korea. While granting permission to UN forces to cross the 38th Parallel, no escalation of the war outside the Peninsula would be contemplated. General Marshall, based on established political priorities, underlined to President Truman that, with NATO forces about to be launched in Western Europe, no actions in the Pacific could be undertaken that could somehow underline existing European commitments.³¹⁴⁰ Therefore, in a radio Address to the Nation on 11 April 1951, President Truman, outlined his concept of a limited war. The 33rd President openly stated that “the attack on Korea was part of a greater plan for conquering all of Asia”, yet the conflict begot questions such as “whether the Communist plan of conquest can be stopped without a general war”, with the

³¹³⁶ Cha, *Powerplay*, pg. 53.

³¹³⁷ Christensen, Thomas, *Worse than a Monolith: Alliance Politics and Problems of Coercive Diplomacy in Asia*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011, pg. 89.

³¹³⁸ Truman, *Two Years of Hope*, pg. 351.

³¹³⁹ Christensen, *Worse than a Monolith*, pg. 65.

³¹⁴⁰ Truman, *Two Years and Hope*, pg. 419.

President furnishing the following answer to his audience: “the best chance of stopping it without a general war is to meet the attack in Korea and defeat it there.”³¹⁴¹ Hence, while strong on anti-Communist rhetoric, it limited actual US intentions in Korea to nothing more than the immediate defeat of its adversaries. Yet it also exhibited uncertainty on how much strength would be necessary to accomplish this goal without the US unwittingly provoking a general escalation, leading to the introduction of “strategic ambivalence in Asia.”³¹⁴²

The Korean War, while provoking major changes to the implementation of US strategic doctrine towards East Asia, entrenched, rather than dispelled, the sense of regional strategic drift. Consequently, instead of opting for a system of collective security, as the United States had recently imposed on Western Europe, US hegemony in East Asia would instead be guaranteed through the creation of a set of bilateral alliances, also known as the ‘hub and spokes’ approach to security in East Asia. The US therefore used its regional hegemony to construct “a set of tightly held and exclusive, one-to-one bilateral partnerships with the countries in the region.”³¹⁴³ This unique expression of regional hegemony not only reflected Washington’s determination to remain disengaged from Continental Asia as part of its overall strategy to contain the Communist bloc, but, equally as important, the US decision ensured that support of its newfound allies in East Asia—Japan and the Republics of Korea and China—would not provide the spark for a general war that Truman had informed the American people in April 1951 he was so ardently trying to avert. Eschewing the concept of an RSO that Washington implemented in Europe, the US, as the “central ‘hub’ power among the disparate ‘spokes’ as allies, the United States made itself the indispensable power to all in Asia.”³¹⁴⁴ Consequently, regarding East Asia, the United States displayed no interest in acting as an interested hegemon in fostering regional security cooperation and willfully abandoned any claims to such a role.

10.3.8. The Settlement of 1951: Existence of a Constitutional Order

Over the ruins of the failed League of Nations, the victorious Allies had, through a series of wartime declarations, announced their collective intentions to make a second attempt at creating a supranational organization to prevent humanity from, once again, falling into world war. Already in August 1941, before the United States had officially entered the Second World War, President Roosevelt and Prime Minister Churchill underlined common principles for international cooperation to maintain postwar peace and security. Such high-minded notions included implementing territorial adjustments according “to the wishes of the people concerned”; the right to self-determination of all people; global economic cooperation and advancement of social welfare; elimination of trade barriers; and disarmament of aggressor nations after the war.³¹⁴⁵ As such, the groundwork for a postwar Constitutional Order had been laid. This was followed up with the 1 January 1942 signing of the ‘Declaration by United Nations’ where the 26 Allies fighting against the Axis pledged their respective support to the principles of the Atlantic Charter. Already in 1942, the exact scope of the proposed international organization was unclear. While the overall

³¹⁴¹ Presidential Speech “*Report to the American People on Korea*”, 11 April 1951 <https://millercenter.org/the-presidency/presidential-speeches/april-11-1951-report-american-people-korea>

³¹⁴² Cha, *Powerplay*, pg. 63.

³¹⁴³ *Ibid.*, pg. 3.

³¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, pg. 4.

³¹⁴⁵ *Joint Statement by President Roosevelt and Prime Minister Churchill*, Newfoundland, 14 August 1941, <https://avalon.law.yale.edu/wwii/at10.asp>

guidance of the organization would be under the direction of the ‘Four Policemen’, with some officials in the State Department, with the support of Churchill, advocating the creation of five regional representatives as well as a UN ‘Authority’ consisting of all member states.³¹⁴⁶ Yet the Wilsonian instincts of many State Department advisors kicked in and they persisted in insisting on a global organization, universalist in scope, rather than a body based on regional representation. A particular vocal advocate of the latter approach was the economist Leo Pasvolsky (1893-1953) who, as an advisor to Secretary of State Hull, managed to steer the 33rd President in the direction of global government. In August 1943, Pasvolsky drafted a tentative Charter that ignored any regionalist elements and included the creation of a Security Council, the General Assembly, and UN Secretariat.³¹⁴⁷

This draft was taken to the 1943 inter-Allied Moscow Conference, and provided the base for the US, USSR, Great Britain, and China to adopt the ‘Joint Four-Nation Declaration’ where, in point 4, they “recognize the necessity of establishing at the earliest practicable date a general international organization, based on the principle of sovereign equality of all peace-loving States, and open to membership by all such States, large and small for the maintenance of international peace and security.”³¹⁴⁸ While not present in Moscow, China’s participation in the organization was assured in Cairo with Chiang Kai-shek expressing Chongqing’s support. The Secretary of State and Pasvolsky met with Roosevelt in February 1944 and convinced Roosevelt to modify the Draft Charter and to place authority over security matters in the eleven-member Security Council—and not in the ‘four policemen’ as the President had originally envisioned—while according the General Assembly all non-security questions.³¹⁴⁹ Based on the agreement on point 4 of the Moscow Declaration, Delegations from the US, USSR, Great Britain, and China met between August and October 1944 at Dumbarton Oaks outside Washington DC where the principles of the organization were laid out, including fleshing out its structure and functioning, based largely on Pasvolsky’s drafts. France, at the expense of US insistence on Brazilian membership, was given a fifth permanent membership on the Security Council, despite Moscow’s active opposition. The Dumbarton Oaks Conference “settled all but two issues regarding the organization of the United Nations—the voting procedure in the Security Council and the Soviet pressure for the admission of all sixteen of the Soviet Republics to the General Assembly.”³¹⁵⁰

Such questions were resolved at the Yalta Conference, where the United Nations became a pillar of the envisioned ‘Yalta System’ that would purportedly support the advent of a coming peaceful world. Soviet commitment towards the United Nations was secured due to a clandestine understanding of a veto formula that granted veto power to Permanent Members of the Security Council, allowing such nations to effectively block any decisions against the perceived national interest.³¹⁵¹ As a trade-off, the USSR agreed to join the United Nations as a single entity. As such, the Yalta Conference Protocol ordered the convening of a “Conference of the United Nations to

³¹⁴⁶ Schlesinger, Stephen, *Act of Creation: The Founding of the United Nations*, Cambridge: Westview Press, 2003, pg. 39.

³¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, pg. 44.

³¹⁴⁸ *Joint Four-Nation Declaration*, Moscow, October 1943, <https://avalon.law.yale.edu/wwii/moscow.asp>

³¹⁴⁹ Schlesinger, *Act of Creation: The Founding of the United Nations*, pg. 46.

³¹⁵⁰ Bohlen, C.E., *Witness to History. 1929-1969*, New York: W.W., Norton & Co, 1973, pg. 159.

³¹⁵¹ Couzigou, Irène (October 2015). “Yalta Conference (1945)”, *Max Planck Encyclopedia of Public International Law*: Rn. 13, <https://opil-ouplaw-com.uaccess.univie.ac.at/display/10.1093/law:epil/9780199231690/law-9780199231690-e449>

be held on 25 April 1945, or soon thereafter, at San Francisco...to prepare a Charter for a General International Organization for the maintenance of international peace and security” based on the proposals reached at Dumbarton Oaks.”³¹⁵² A San Francisco Conference was organized as per the Yalta decree. Fifty nations met for the United Nations Conference on International Organization. Indeed, the Republic of China, seen as the inaugural victim of Axis aggression, was the first to sign the Charter in the Veterans Memorial Hall. Much fanfare accompanied this event. President Truman closed the conference on 26 June 1945 with a speech that declared “The Charter of the United Nations which you have just signed is a solid structure upon which we can build a better world. History will honour you for it...With this Charter the world can begin to look forward to the time when all worthy human beings may be permitted to live decently as free people.”³¹⁵³ The successor global Constitutional Order to the League of Nations was now set to define the postwar geopolitical landscape.

The United Nations as a Constitutional Order, even less than the League of Nations that preceded it, only partially met the necessary criteria as defined in the analytical framework. While perhaps envisioned in the mind of President Roosevelt at Yalta, no stable peace emerged in the postwar years between the five Permanent Members of the Security Council. The erosion of trust between Moscow and Washington, in both East Asia and Europe, obviously excluded this possibility. Furthermore, while the United States had exhibited a strong interest in establishing a new international organization with a global scope, the discussions leading up to the signature of the UN Charter were based on compromise with the Soviet Union and, therefore, could not be said to constitute an expression of unilateral US power and volition. The United States could not impose its will unilaterally, as the discussions on the final lists of Security Council and General Assembly membership illustrated. While very much reflecting core Western values, it could not be said to constitute an outright reflection of them. As such, the United Nations could not be said to have been an instrument that diffused the power of the United States or any other member of the Security Council. The United Nations Organization did, however, meet the established criterion of creating an institutional framework for the maintenance of international peace and security, as reflected in Article 1 of the UN Charter. By the terms of the Charter, Article 2.3, member states agreed to “settle their international disputes by peaceful means in such a manner that international peace and security, and justice, are not endangered.”³¹⁵⁴ Should this not suffice, the Security Council and the General Assembly “were empowered to take appropriate steps with a view to facilitating agreement between the parties or the states directly concerned in a threatening dispute or situation.”³¹⁵⁵ In the event of a breach of peace or an act of aggression, the Security Council was therefore permitted to undertake the necessary action to restore international peace and security, including the use of armed force. In this extreme case, however, the UN Charter (Article 43.3) required that such enforcement actions be agreed to by all Permanent Members of the Security Council.

³¹⁵² Clemens, *Yalta*, pp. 301-302.

³¹⁵³ Truman, Harry, *Address in San Francisco at the Closing Session of the United Nations Conference*, 26 June 1945, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/address-san-francisco-the-closing-session-the-united-nations-conference>.

³¹⁵⁴ <https://www.un.org/en/about-us/un-charter/full-text>, accessed on 22 June 2024.

³¹⁵⁵ Goodrich, Leland, “The United Nations and the Korean War: A Case Study”, *Proceedings of the Academy of Political Science*, Vol. 25, No. 2, United Nations: Success or Failure? (Jan., 1953), pg. 222.

The Great Power cooperation that failed on the ground in East Asia and Europe also failed within the institutional setup of the proposed Constitutional Order of the Settlement of 1951. The “development of basic and unbridgeable differences between the Western Powers and the Soviet Union [meant that] the special arrangement provided for in Article 43 was never concluded and the Security Council was consequently never in the position where it could order military measures in case of a breach of the peace.”³¹⁵⁶ The failure of the new Constitutional Order was evident following the outbreak of the Korean War in June 1950. The United Nations had, through the General Assembly, established a UN military mission in 1949 to observe the situation and violations of the administrative boundary line of the 38th Parallel. President Truman was especially keen on bringing the alleged DPRK attack to the Security Council, both out of ideological and practical reasons. The Soviet Union had walked out of its Security Council seat in January 1950 in protest of the Council’s failure to eject the Republic of China as a Permanent Member. With the absence of its adversary, the United States was able to mobilize the United Nations to pass a draft resolution both condemning and pledging to take action against the DPRK’s aggression against the international order. Yet “it quickly became clear that efforts of the Council to secure a cession of hostilities and the withdrawal of North Korean forces would be fruitless.”³¹⁵⁷ Military enforcement methods would have to be contemplated. On 27 June 1950, the Security Council recommended that its members accord military assistance to the Republic of Korea to restore international peace and security. With the Soviet Union returning to the Security Council in August 1950, the United Nations was unable to identify the responsibility of the UN Unified Command that would direct the campaign sanctioned by the Security Council. In practical terms, therefore, General MacArthur assumed command of the multinational UN force that was dispatched to Korea. The Constitutional Order of the UN had been effectively transformed into an enforcement mechanism to be used at US discretion.

The Korean case therefore points to the absence of a functional Constitutional Order, despite the complexity of the bureaucratic structures and institutions that had been constructed to maintain international peace and security. While it could be argued that the US insistence on coordinating a multilateral response to a breach of the international order was natural, it was only able to activate the collective mechanism as foreseen in Article 43 due to the absence of the Soviet Union, allowing the US to pass resolutions at will. In conclusion, while the basis for a Constitutional Order had been set up following the surrender of the Japanese Empire, the United Nations did not fill the necessary criteria. At the time of writing, as at the end of the Korean War, international affairs could view the United Nations as “a supplementary guarantee of security and not as the principal guarantee.”³¹⁵⁸

10.3.9. Conclusion: The ‘Legacy System of 1951’

Unlike the Settlement of 1919, characterized by Wilsonian idealism and plagued by its inherent deficiencies, the Settlement of 1951 was not one imbued with quixotic notions but remained squarely Realist in both its conception and implementation. The inability to establish any modicum of Great Power cooperation as envisioned by the Allied leaders under the ‘Yalta System’ resulted in the rapid polarization of the international system into two opposing camps

³¹⁵⁶ Ibid., pg. 223.

³¹⁵⁷ Ibid., pg. 225.

³¹⁵⁸ Ibid., pg. 235.

under the respective leadership of the US and the USSR. While postwar events in Europe served as the main catalyst for the emergence of this cleavage, a climate of inherent distrust and mutual suspicion soon permeated East Asia, as evidenced by the inability of the Great Powers to establish an international trusteeship over Korea. The changing geopolitical situation in postwar East Asia was therefore the key determinate in shaping the final contours of the Settlement of 1951 and the legacy system it created.

The United States, in the six years that passed since the surrender of the Japanese Empire, had jettisoned the idea of reaching a comprehensive peace, involving all of Tokyo's former enemies. In its stead, the United States willingly opted to pursue a Treaty of Peace with Japan that would satisfy Washington's own strategic interests, first and foremost the strengthening of its containment policy aimed at countering any perceived threat emanating from the Asian mainland against its interests in the western Pacific. Japan was therefore once again accorded sovereignty and a place in the international community as a firmly anchored ally of the United States. This was done with the full knowledge of US policy makers who knew such a Treaty of Peace would be signed at the displeasure of their main rival, the USSR, and would imply the explicit exclusion of the newly victorious PRC, as well as the problematic Republic of China, and would dispense with any Korean representation. As such, the Settlement of 1951 and, the 'San Francisco System' it brought into existence, had really no intention of addressing the plethora of questions that plagued East Asia in the wake of the collapse of the Japanese Empire. While defining and strengthening the US line of defence in East Asia, the Treaty was meant to be deliberately ambiguous regarding any other issue. As noted, this was apparent in its very wording. The Settlement of 1951, unlike its 1919 predecessor, was decidedly bilateral in scope, consciously ignoring any vestiges of multilateral cooperation. The *raison d'être* of the Settlement of 1951, as a response to Cold War realities, inevitably affected both the desire and the ability to form an RSO in East Asia after the calamity of nearly twenty years of constant warfare. After having applied this dissertation's identified criteria to the 'critical juncture' of the Second World War, the results can be summarized in the following table:

Table 17: Assessment of the Conditions for RSO Formation Present Following the Settlement of 1951

<i>Antecedent Condition</i>	<i>Geo-political Necessity</i>	<i>Policy of Reciprocal Restraint</i>	<i>Satisfaction with Status Quo/'Legacy System'</i>	<i>Pacific Self-Image</i>	<i>Compatible Social Orders</i>	<i>Existence of an Interested Hegemon</i>	<i>Existence of a Constitutional Order</i>
<i>Settlement of 1951</i>	YES	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO

The Settlement of 1951, seen in its totality, only met the necessary condition of geopolitical necessity. The final defeat of Imperial Japan was both total and all-encompassing, marking a dawn of the atomic age where a society had to make the stark choice between total surrender or total obliteration. As seen in previous 'critical junctures', the defeat of a foe had formed a key element in starting the necessary process towards the establishment of a stable peace, and potentially, the formation of an RSO. The unconditional surrender of the Japanese Empire, however, automatically

deprived Tokyo of any ability to make a unilateral concession, as Japanese leaders were, as of August 1945, in no position to negotiate. This stark reality deprived Japanese policy makers of the opportunity to engage in actions that could be interpreted as a 'unilateral accommodation' as, following the issuance of General Order No. 1 on 22 August 1945, all executive authority passed into the hands of the SCAP. Given the lack of any gesture of 'unilateral accommodation', combined with Japan's unconditional surrender, it likewise was impossible to engage in a process of reciprocal restraint. All future direction of every facet of the Japanese state lay explicitly with the SCAP, with the Japanese Government solely in the position to carry out the instructions as received. All such policies required explicit US permission.

Yet more significant was the lack of implementation of policies of reciprocal restraint outside the context of defeated Japan. As noted, the base of the 'Yalta System' rested on the wartime understanding that, despite their obvious ideological differences, the Allies would shape the postwar world through cooperation rather than competition. Indeed, policies of reciprocal restraint were supposed to form an inherent element of the postbellum status quo. The inability of the Allied Powers to successfully engage in policies of reciprocal restraint in Europe, always the primary focus of the 'Big Three' Powers, soon translated into the impotence of the US and the USSR to adopt compromised-based policies towards the major political questions that straddled postwar East Asia. Instead of an international trusteeship over Korea, as promised at Cairo, the Peninsula was subject to an ad hoc administrative division that resulted in the formation of two separate and ideologically distinct republics. Instead of international cooperation designed to guide Korea to independence and re-entrance into the community of nations as a united republic, bilateral instrests ensured that postwar Korea would re-enter the global stage as two nations claiming the right to supremacy over the whole that ultimately led to the outbreak of the Cold War's first hot conflict. The Settlement of 1951 did little to address this issue, let alone act as a catalyst for launching any policies of reciprocal restraint, given Korea's total absence from the Treaty of Peace with Japan.

The challenge of postwar China, as a possible object of reciprocal restraint policy, was equally as ambiguous. The Second United Front collapsed into a continuation of the Chinese Civil War. No policies of reciprocal restraint were adopted amongst the Great Powers to coordinate an international reaction, let alone a settlement, to the escalation of the immediate postwar situation in China. Once again, bilateral interests reigned supreme. The USSR fulfilled its necessary obligations, agreed at Yalta, of securing relations with Nationalist China and, through the signature of the Sino-Soviet Friendship Treaty of August 1945, first and foremost secured the Soviet Union the rights and privileges formally enjoyed by the Russian Empire as well as ensuring Chinese recognition of the former Qing province of Outer Mongolia as an independent, pro-Soviet state. In the same manner, the US continued its bilateral policy towards China, characterised by Washington's traditional guardianship of the Open Door Policy. General Marshall's mission to establish a truce and form a united government in China, possessing the inherent support of both the Kuomintang and the CCP, could be seen as attempting to establish some sort of inter-Chinese policy of restraint, however it ended in abject failure. The situation in China, from 1947 onwards, degraded into an extended fratricidal conflict, without open intervention of the US and USSR who opted to counter each other through their respective proxies. The 1949 victory of the CCP and the foundation of the People's Republic, even though not overdramatized by some in Washington, was not sufficient for the US to engage in any overtures to the new power in Beijing. Indeed, the advent

of the Sino-Soviet Pact of 1950 decidedly excluded any such possibility. Faced by such stark developments, the US elected to abandon both the PRC and Republic of China to their respective fates until the advent of the Korean War awakened Washington out of its complacency. Yet, this too, was not enough for the US to contemplate engaging either Chinese incarnation, both recognized and unrecognized, in any meaningful process regarding the final settlement with Japan. Like Korea, China was chosen to be ignored. Hence, no policies of reciprocal restraint influenced the Settlement of 1951.

As noted, satisfaction with the status quo established by the Settlement of 1951 was mixed between the states of East Asia. As the Treaty of Peace with Japan was very much a product of US imagination and concrete implementation, Washington can be said to be satisfied with the peace settlement it had created. At the same time, the defeated nation of Japan that had no other viable alternative but to submit to the will of its enemies, could find solace in, if not outright satisfaction with, the Settlement of 1951. The establishment of a Japan based along the lines of a Western liberal democracy fulfilled the desire of liberal elements of Japanese society that had been able to, during the Taishō era, prevent the domination of domestic politics by the Imperial Military. Not only did the reforms of the SCAP do away with the Armed Forces completely, but the adoption of the 'Peace Constitution' of 1947 liberated Japan from the responsibility of fulfilling one of the main traits of a Westphalian state, namely the provision of its own security. This allowed Japan to place first priority on economic recovery and growth, opening up the world's largest market of the US to Japanese products.³¹⁵⁹ Hence, seen from the vantage point of the Yoshida Cabinet, both the Treaty of Peace and the accompanying bilateral Security Pact with the US seemed a small price to pay to reap such benefits. Indeed, at the 1951 San Francisco Conference, Prime Minister Yoshida noted that "The Peace Treaty before the Conference contains no punitive or retaliatory clauses; nor does it impose upon Japan any permanent restrictions or disabilities. It will restore the Japanese people to full sovereignty, equality, and freedom, and reinstate us as a free and equal member in the community of nations. It is not a treaty of vengeance, but an instrument of reconciliation. The Japanese Delegation gladly accepts this fair and generous treaty."³¹⁶⁰

The same sense of satisfaction that reverberated in Tokyo following the Settlement of 1951 was not felt in the other nations of East Asia. As noted, both China and Korea were excluded from any participation in the San Francisco Conference and were not invited to sign the Treaty. Not only were the respective representatives of China and Korea deprived of bringing any claims or queries resulting from the extended occupation of their territory by Imperial Japanese forces to bear in a multilateral setting, as was promised during the Allied wartime conferences, but settling any pending economic or territorial issues was explicitly excluded from the Settlement of 1951. In short, they were left for a more opportune time, whenever that might be. The state of war that ended between Japan and its former enemies with the Settlement of 1951 remained an open question regarding China and Korea. Japan would, in turn, conclude a peace agreement with the Republic of China through the Treaty of Taipei in April 1952. While the Treaty of Taipei did contain a reference to the Settlement of 1951, namely confirming once again Japan's renunciation of any claims to territory under Taipei's control, it was seen as a separate, bilateral agreement and, as such, not part of any larger settlement. Only in 1978, with the signing of the Treaty of Peace

³¹⁵⁹ Jansen, *The Making of Modern Japan*, pg. 703.

³¹⁶⁰ *Statement of the Prime Minister of Japan, S. Yoshida, at the Conference in San Francisco, 1951*, <https://www.mofa.go.jp/region/europe/russia/territory/edition92/period4.html>.

and Friendship between Japan and the People's Republic of China did the state of war between the PRC and Japan finally come to an end, six years after Tokyo officially recognized the PRC as the official government in China with a claim to Taiwan. Diplomatic relations between Japan and the Republic of Korea were established through the Treaty of Basic Relations of 1965, the culmination of a negotiation process ongoing since 1951. While there was legally no peace to conclude, as Korea was a Japanese colony until August 1945, the treaty did officially nullify all agreements between Korea and Japan before 1910 and laid the foundation for the settlement of Japanese reparations to the Republic of Korea. Japan, at the time of writing, has still not concluded an agreement on the establishment of diplomatic relations with the DPRK. Hence, the legacy system of 1951 pushed the resolution of bilateral questions stemming from the 'critical juncture' of the Second World War into the realm of bilateral diplomacy, actively keeping them from the arena of multilateralism. As such, no satisfaction of the status quo can be said to be universally present in the Settlement of 1951, a fact that has defined its subsequent legacy system. With the absence of this additional criteria, no stable peace can be said to have been furnished by the Settlement of 1951.

The Settlement of 1951 also did not fulfill the criteria of pacific self-images. Given the fact that the Treaty of Peace with Japan only ended the state of war between Tokyo and the signatories of the agreement, this is unsurprising. With open warfare raging through Korea at the time of the Settlement of 1951's signature, engaging Chinese, Korean and US forces, pacific self-images were decidedly illusionary. Indeed, the Settlement of 1951 was a reaction to the inability of the initial postwar years to foster any meaningful regional anchoring of pacific self-images in the wake of the failure of the 'Yalta System'. The splintering of East Asia into rudimentary ideological alignments remained a decided reality that would mark the subsequent development of the region in the years to come. The fact that actual and possible war remained very much present in the contours of the Settlement of 1951 was accentuated by the lack of compatible social orders. The victory of the CCP in the Chinese Civil War, and the US dissatisfaction of having cast Washington's lot in with the losing side, played a factor in isolating the PRC from taking part in the Settlement of 1951. Given its Maoist ideology, seen as attractive for many peoples in Southeast Asia undergoing the process of decolonization, the US chose a staunch policy of non-recognition. Such sentiments were only amplified following Beijing's open geopolitical alignment with Moscow through the 1950 Sino-Soviet Pact. Soviet occupation of Korea north of the 38th Parallel had resulted in a pro-Soviet Korean Government being installed, which ideologically was in line with Stalinism. As a response to these perceived challenges, the US needed to tolerate the nominally liberal-democratic, but decidedly authoritarian governments that established themselves in Seoul and Taipei. While the Settlement of 1951 firmly anchored the course of postwar Japan along the path of liberal democracy, it left very little commonality regarding social orders across the region. Indeed, the exclusivity of the number of countries invited to sign the Settlement of 1951 did more to augment regional tensions than to alleviate them. As such, the Settlement of 1951 did not meet the necessary criteria of pacific self-images and compatible social orders as defined by the analytical framework.

The Settlement of 1951 was, however, marked by the presence of a hegemon, namely the United States. This hegemon, however, displayed no interest in sponsoring a multilateral settlement following the Japanese defeat and likewise no inclination to construct an RSO. The objective of the Treaty of San Francisco was to integrate Japan as a bulwark of US defence strategy to contain Communist pretensions in East Asia. While Secretary of State Dean Acheson eschewed

any overt US responsibility for the security of Korea and Taiwan, he underlined in his 12 January 1950 Press Club speech that “the defeat and disarmament of Japan have placed upon the United States the necessity of assuming the military defence of Japan so long as that is required, both in the interest of the security of the entire Pacific area and in the interests of Japan’s security.”³¹⁶¹ As such, Washington inaugurated its bilateral alliance with Japan on the same day as the signing of the Settlement of 1951 with the adoption of the US-Japanese Security Treaty. As already noted, this entailed near total US control of two of the most important aspects of Japanese Westphalian statehood: national security and foreign policy. This is exemplified by the US policy of restraining Japan from engaging in commerce with the PRC. Soon after the Settlement of 1951, Prime Minister Yoshida was compelled to sign a letter, written by Dulles himself, guaranteeing that Japan possessed “no intention to conclude a bilateral treaty with the Communist regime in China”, exemplifying Washington’s total control over fundamental Japanese policies.³¹⁶²

Similar bilateral alliances were established in East Asia in quick succession following the Settlement of 1951 and the end of the Korean War. In 1953, the United States signed a Mutual Defence Treaty with the Republic of Korea. At the same time, Washington was seriously concerned that South Korean President Rhee, who had ardently attempted to undermine armistice negotiations, would draw the US into a general war given Rhee’s commitment to achieving Korean unification by force. Such concerns were expressed by President Eisenhower who underlined that “[Rhee] wants to get his country unified, but we cannot permit him to start a war to do it. The consequences would be too awful. But he is a stubborn little fellow, and I don’t know whether we’ll be able to hold him in line indefinitely.”³¹⁶³ The 34th President’s apprehension was even more remarkable, knowing that the US had placed all South Korean forces under US command. In discussions between Seoul and Washington regarding the Defence Pact, the US clearly explained that any commitment would be based on assurance that South Korea would refrain from agitation along the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ) established following the end of hostilities. Consequently, by signing a Defence Pact with Seoul, the United States gained control over any foreseeable mechanism South Korea could use to embroil Washington in a general war. This included control over Seoul’s actions regarding the armistice; control of Seoul’s ‘march north agenda’; operational control over the South Korean Military for as long as deemed necessary; control over South Korean policies towards the PRC; as well as control over President Rhee’s contemplation of any military action, however small.³¹⁶⁴

A similar set-up was also employed during the 1954 Mutual Defence Treaty between the US and the Republic of China. The bilateral treaty, as explained by Dulles to President Eisenhower, “covers an attack directed against Formosa and the Pescadores. The [diplomatic] note will in substance recognize that the Chinese will not use force from either Formosa, the Pescadores or the offshore islands without our agreement and will not transfer military equipment and the like from Formosa to the offshore islands without our agreement. This has been a difficult negotiation but the result, I believe, stakes out unqualifiedly our interest in Formosa and the Pescadores and does so on a basis which will not enable the Chinese Nationalists to involve us in a war with Communist

³¹⁶¹ *Speech on the Far East*, Secretary of State Acheson, National Press Club, 12 January 1950.

³¹⁶² Cha, *Powerplay*, pg. 151.

³¹⁶³ *Ibid.*, pg. 106.

³¹⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, pg. 110.

China.”³¹⁶⁵ Without explicit US consent, therefore, Chiang Kai-shek would not be able to implement any of his plans to return to the US mainland. Furthermore, the sizeable US military and economic assistance that Washington accorded Taipei allowed the US complete control of the Nationalist Chinese economy. As such, the Mutual Defence Treaty committed the US to come to the assistance of the Republic of China in case of intervention by the PRC, however, it effectively prohibited Taipei from undertaking any aggressive moves towards the Chinese mainland.

Hence, the legacy system of the Settlement of 1951 entrenched the bilateral base of the Treaty of Peace with Japan across East Asia. The US was able to maintain its hegemony over the Pacific in a manner which, as defined by its policy makers, did not require the use of substantial resources on Continental Asia. The ‘hub and spokes’ system created a bilateral system of alliances that allowed the US to decidedly counter any incursion that could be launched from the Asian mainland. There was a fleeting moment when US policies did consider the establishment of a collective security arrangement in East Asia as part of its containment strategy against the Communist Bloc. On 3 August 1954, US Secretary of State, John Foster Dulles, stated that Washington was considering the creation of a collective security agreement in Northeast Asia that might bare the name of the Northeast Asian Treaty Organization (NEATO).³¹⁶⁶ The prospective members were the US, Japan, South Korea and Taiwan. Given the lack of the criteria for stable peace and the founding of an RSO as expounded above, it is not surprising that the proposed RSO gained no traction. The Japanese Government leaned on the ‘Peace Constitution’ to refuse any membership, while the Koreans underlined that they “considered the Japanese as much their enemy as the Communists”.³¹⁶⁷ The idea was pursued no further. The idea did, however, provoke the ire of the PRC and stoked regional tensions, with Zhou Enlai declaring in August 1954 that “recently, the United States and traitor Chiang Kai-shek negotiated in Taipei and Washington to create a joint Defence Pact. At the same time, the United States, the aggressor, is trying to create a ‘Northeast Asian Treaty Organization’...if any foreign aggressors dare to hinder the Chinese people from liberating Taiwan, if they dare to infringe upon our sovereignty and violate our territory integrity...they must take all the grave consequences of such acts of aggression upon themselves.”³¹⁶⁸ As a result, however, the United States opted to categorically dispense with any further flirtation with multilateralism or the creation of an RSO in East Asia, as it had fostered in Europe with NATO. Its contemporary interests and geopolitical priorities actively excluded such a possibility.

Lastly, the Settlement of 1951 did not meet the criteria of furnishing the region with a reliable Constitutional Order. While the United Nations was intended to replace the defunct League of Nations in both scope of membership and effectiveness, the core assumption as to its usefulness was inherently linked with postwar cooperation between the Great Powers as envisioned at Dumbarton Oaks, Yalta, and San Francisco. This did not pan out in the postwar geopolitical reality and, while the initial tension between the US and the USSR focused initially on Europe, it did eventually permeate into East Asia and also came to define the strategic landscape

³¹⁶⁵ Ibid., pg. 85.

³¹⁶⁶ Matsumoto Haruka, “The First Taiwan Crisis and China’s ‘Border’ Dispute Around Taiwan”, *Eurasia Border Review*, 3 (Special Issue): 84, 2012, pg. 84.

³¹⁶⁷ “SEATO and NEATO”, *Taiwan Review*, 01 Sept. 1954.

https://taiwantoday.tw/news_amp.php?unit=4&post=6549, accessed 23 June 2024.

³¹⁶⁸ Matsumoto, “The First Taiwan Crisis”, pg. 84-85.

and prime focus of foreign policy. East Asia had the unenviable distinction of being the first region where open warfare erupted between regional states over an issue that had, during the Allied wartime conference, been given a rudimentary guide towards solution. Indeed, it was the outbreak of the Korean War that underlined the shortcomings of the newly formed successor organization of the League of Nations. The efforts of the UN per se did little to stem the advance of the DPRK troops in their push south. The result of the resorting to the UN's enforcement mechanism, as foreseen in Article 43 of the UN Charter, was only possible due to the Soviet Union having willingly vacated its Security Council seat months before. The ambiguity of Article 43's wording practically left it to the US to assume the command of the UN forces involved, resulting in the non-member states of the PRC and DPRK eventually battling blue helmets in the mountains of Korea. As applied to East Asia, like the League of Nations provisions that preceded them, the structures of the UN were not able to deal with any de-escalation of the Korean conflict in its initial phase, only to act as a proxy of the United States until the 1953 Armistice. Furthermore, the work of the UN would be hindered by the non-membership of the PRC, a situation that would endure until 1972, as well as the exclusion of both Korean republics. Like the League of Nations before it, the UN in East Asia was plagued with significant areas where its nominal authority simply did not extend. The Settlement of 1951 did little to alter this situation given its exclusive bilateral focus. As such, no Constitutional Order, as per the definition in the analytical framework, can be considered to have been in existence following the Settlement of 1951.

In conclusion, the Settlement of 1951 distinguished itself in the diplomatic history of East Asia as the sole treaty that proposed a bilateral solution instead of the all-compassing one envisioned by the Allied leaders in the heat of wartime discussions. Its scope was designed to be limited to meeting US strategic ends and entrenching a specific form of postwar status quo to counter any aggressive intentions stemming from the Asian continent. The Settlement of 1951 remains the basic agreement that defines international relations into the first quarter of the 21st century. The Settlement sought to defer basic question arising from the collapse of the Japanese Empire into an undetermined date in the future. In this regard it can be regarded as remarkable successful as key regional questions, regarding territory and reparations from the Japanese, remain unresolved. After the Soviet Delegation walked away in protest from the San Francisco Conference, Japan and the USSR remained technically at war as no peace treaty was ever signed, neither during the Soviet era nor with its post-1991 Russian successor state. By excluding Continental Asia from the negotiations and signing of the Settlement of 1951, the US transformed the USSR, China, and Korea from the actual victors of the Second World War into virtual losers of the peace, deprived as they were of both voice and representation. This was a conscious decision implemented over the course of several years. The linkages that the 'hubs and spokes' system, at the heart of the Settlement of 1951, remain intact, and along with them the dividing line that the legacy system willfully entrenched through East Asia. Save for the ephemeral consideration of the collective security arrangement through NEATO, no attempts have yet been made to transform the Settlement of 1951 into a multilateral affair. The issues that were willingly kicked down the proverbial road in 1951, therefore, continue to define and impact the trajectory of the regional and international system.

Chapter 11 – Conclusion

11.1. Introduction

Writing the history of his native Florence, diplomat and philosopher Niccolò Machiavelli perceptively underlined in the 1520s that “wars begin at the will of anyone, but they do not end at anyone’s will.”³¹⁶⁹ War, as defined in the analytical framework, is the catalyst of systemic change and key factor in the redistribution of power among states. Armies are met and their immediate fate is decided on the battlefield. Yet the consequences of any given war are in no way limited to the clash of arms between belligerent parties. They directly influence the strengthening or decline of a state, legitimacy of a government or even undermine the perceived validity of an entire system. Hence, although writing from the far away context of Renaissance Italy, the words of Machiavelli could also be applied to the systemic trajectory of East Asia as chronicled by this dissertation. Each of the ‘critical junctures’ examined marked instances of systemic change whose transformational influence extended far beyond the scope of the peace agreement signed between the belligerents, each locking in a given trajectory that would thrust history in a particular, and sometimes unexpected, direction. Looking back at the Settlement of 1895, while some at Shimonoseki might have foreseen the collapse of the Qing Dynasty and the fall of an independent Korea, few would have ventured that the Treaty would mark the first step towards the dissolution of the Japanese Empire.

The focus of “systemic change”, as defined by Gilpin, “is the rise and decline of the dominant states or Empires that govern the particular system”, while highlighting that the notion of “systems change...involves a significant transformation of the character of the international system itself.”³¹⁷⁰ The six ‘critical junctures’ analyzed wrought momentous changes to East Asia in an incredibly compact historical period that witnessed both ‘systems’ and ‘systemic change’. They brought with them neither stable peace nor the necessary conditions for RSO creation. In the span of less than a century, the remaining vestiges of the traditional regional cosmology, and the order that it had promoted, vanished, taking with it an Empire whose unique form of governance had characterized the region for millennia. New, alien forms of statehood were introduced; different Empires rose and the old fell, with each ‘critical juncture’ creating legacy systems where the criteria for establishing stable peace and the formation of an RSO would shift but nevertheless remain elusive.

11.2. Collective Assessment of Selected ‘Critical Junctures’

This dissertation has posed the research question as to “why there are no RSOs in East Asia”. This chapter, therefore, furnishes a preliminary answer to this question in light of the findings that have been gleaned through the analysis of each ‘critical juncture’ and their respective antecedent conditions. Attempting to track the systemic evolution of East Asia from its traditional form of the pre-Westphalian age to the establishment of the contemporary regional system, this dissertation has focused on the pre-modern international society, the Settlements of 1895, 1905, 1919, and 1951 and their respective ability to determine whether their tenets fostered the

³¹⁶⁹ Machiavelli, Niccolò, *Florentine Histories*, Book 3, Chapter 7, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988, pg. 113.

³¹⁷⁰ Gilpin, *War and Change in World Politics*, pp. 41-42.

establishment of stable peace, thereby creating the necessary conditions under which an RSO could be formed. Unlike other regions of the international system, these ‘critical junctures’ represent moments of both ‘systems’ and ‘systemic change’, where policy makers have been accorded the unique opportunity to construct the postbellum status quo, thereby gauging the possibilities of cooperation with former foes as well as other regional powers. Gilpin underlined the rarity with which such instances of ‘systems change’ occur, citing examples such as “the rise and decline of the Greek city-state system, the decline of the medieval European state system, and the emergence of the modern European nation state system”, with Gilpin noting that few studies focused on “earlier systems or non-Western systems”.³¹⁷¹ Indeed, such examples underline a paucity of historical cases of ‘systems change’ in the field of international relations. This is evidently not the case for East Asia. This dissertation, therefore, contends that the absence of RSOs in East Asia can be explained due to the rare combination of factors directly resulting from ‘systems’ and ‘systemic change’ as highlighted in the lack of conditions that would stimulate RSO formation. Stable peace would be fleeting in East Asia, with the underlying suspicion engendered by maintaining the overall balance of power defining the regional order. This unique regional situation accounts both for the ongoing lack of contemporary RSOs but also, in an almost contradictory fashion, highlights historical instances where the region served as a trailblazer of multilateral cooperation, providing insights into the overall goals and the inherent value of international cooperation.

Consequently, viewing all the selected ‘critical junctures’ in Table 18 below, an assessment can be distilled regarding their effect on the furnishing of stable peace and conditionality for the formation of RSOs in East Asia throughout the process of its systemic evolution, from the pre-modern international society to its contemporary incarnation as forged by the Settlement of 1951:

Table 18: Assessment of the Conditions for RSO Formation Present following all ‘Critical Junctures’

‘Critical Juncture’	<i>Geo-political Necessity</i>	<i>Policy of Reciprocal Restraint</i>	<i>Satisfaction with Status Quo/‘Legacy System’</i>	<i>Pacific Self-Image</i>	<i>Compatible Social Orders</i>	<i>Existence of an Interested Hegemon</i>	<i>Existence of a Constitutional Order</i>
Pre-modern International Society	YES	NO	CANNOT BE DETERMINED	NO	YES	YES	CANNOT BE DETERMINED
Settlement of 1895	YES	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO
Settlement of 1901	YES	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	CANNOT BE DETERMINED
Settlement of 1905	YES	YES	YES	NO	NO	NO	CANNOT BE DETERMINED
Settlement of 1919	NO	YES	YES	NO	NO	NO	NO
Settlement of 1951	YES	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO

³¹⁷¹ Ibid., pp. 41-44.

As underlined in the analytical framework, for an RSO to emerge the criteria of stable peace are required to be present that will enable the formation of a RSO between states willing to centralize and disseminate one of the most important functions of the Westphalian state, its security. The result of the analysis for the six identified 'critical junctures', as illustrated in Table 18, shows unequivocally that not even one fulfilled all necessary conditions to allow for the emergence of stable peace and thereby initiate the formation of an RSO. Hence, at moments when the regional systemic mould was recast and conditions of peace were discussed, the foundation of stable peace was not a priority of contemporary policy makers. The legacy system that the identified settlements created in the wake of their respective 'critical juncture', for the most part, did not establish the conditions whereby a lasting peace, necessary for any degree of multilateralism, could take hold and become the defining element of both bilateral and regional relations. Shadowing the words of Machiavelli, each 'critical juncture' marked the end of a particular war yet did not impose any finality on the geopolitical processes each had unleashed. The 'critical junctures' of East Asia marked another step in the overall trajectory of the system but did not at any moment provide a comprehensive attempt to establish both stable peace and an RSO. The legacy system of each 'critical juncture' therefore was not completely dispelled with the onset of another moment of regional systemic transformation, rather it became part of a sentient feature of a new regional reality. This is a heritage of the process of 'systems' and 'systemic change' and can account for much of East Asia's regional idiosyncrasy.

Unlike in Europe following the First and Second World Wars, there was never a collective effort to consciously construct a regional institutional order in East Asia. Yet almost paradoxically as a direct result, the region while not coming close to forming an RSO, led the way in constructing instances of stable peace and the first examples, however fleeting, of successful multilateralism. In East Asia, therefore, the wars of the past have continued to shape the contours of the contemporary system, contending both with the rare nature of 'systems' and 'systemic change' that resulted therefrom. Indeed, the presence of both these factors in accounting for the absence of RSOs marks a regional idiosyncrasy that adds an additional variable with which scholars choosing to focus on the self-evident nature of international organizations in Europe do not have to contend. Analyzing the six 'critical junctures' expounded in Table 18, this chapter will reassess the institutional theory, illustrating *why* none of the conditions necessary for the emergence of an RSO were present in East Asia within the temporal boundary conditions of this dissertation.

This indeed marks an anomaly. The 'critical junctures' of the European continent were obviously distinct from those that transformed East Asia. However, the Second World War did mark a common 'critical juncture' that straddled both regions. In Western Europe, applying the same criteria for the formation of an RSO to the post-World War II legacy system, a very different picture is gleaned. The same criterion of geopolitical necessity confronted Europe after the German surrender in May 1945. The almost instantaneous failure of the 'Yalta System' to result in any meaningful cooperation resulted in the splitting of the European continent into US- and Soviet-dominated spheres respectively. Policies of reciprocal restraint between the two absolute victors, the US and the USSR, to whom geopolitical necessity did not apply, could not be generated. Yet amongst the two distinct blocs that emerged, the application of the necessary criteria of stable peace and RSO formation yields a different outcome. Geopolitical necessity forced the Western European Allies, most notably the UK and France, to turn to the United States to ensure their security against their former Soviet allies and keep the vanquished German people down. As a

result, “European pressure for a durable American security tie was connected to the problem of postwar Germany.”³¹⁷² The focus of subsequent negotiations between the vulnerable Western European states and their US occupiers saw them both engaging in policies of reciprocal restraint to “use American power—to make it predictable, to establish ongoing commitments—for [their] own national purposes.”³¹⁷³ This resulted in an overall compromise on the future of postwar Europe, what has been described as a “glimmering bargain [where] the Europeans would agree to the rehabilitation of Western Germany in exchange for an American security treaty.”³¹⁷⁴ As such, the trajectory of European history following its version of the Second World War ‘critical juncture’ allowed for the conditions of stable peace to emerge.

As this consensus to forge a formal, treaty-based agreement met with approval on both sides of the Atlantic, the criterion of satisfaction of the status quo could said to be fulfilled. This compromise was based on the notion that military force, while constituting the base of any agreement, would be used to defend its member states against a commonly perceived foe and not, as it was per the status quo antebellum, against each other in Europe. Hence, pacific self-images could be said to be in existence as a cornerstone of post-1945 Western Europe. Furthermore, compatible social orders straddled the newly occupied territories of Western Europe, each committed to the continuation of their respective versions of liberal democracy. The compatibility of their social orders was directly reflected in the realm of criminal arrest and trial: “a ‘fair trial’ is the culmination of centuries of constitutional struggle in many Western countries... What happens when large numbers of citizens of one country are stationed for long periods on the soil of other countries?”³¹⁷⁵ Through an executive agreement between members states of the aforementioned bargain, each member of a foreign military on foreign soil would be, in case of need, tried by local authorities, thereby eschewing any form of extra-legal protection. Due to compatible social orders, there was simply no need to insist on extra-legality as “each country believed that its system of justice was fair”.³¹⁷⁶

This hodgepodge of economically wrecked, yet ostensibly democratic European states, both recognized and actively courted the interest of the sole nation to remain economically unscathed from the inferno of the Second World War, namely the United States. The Western European states actively sought US involvement in what remained of the European continent, “worried more about American abandonment than domination.”³¹⁷⁷ US policy makers were initially lukewarm about a long-term entrenchment of US military power in Western Europe. The June 1948 so-called “Vanderberg Resolution” (Senate Resolution 239 of the Eightieth Congress), however, marked the Senate’s affirmation to forward Washington’s national security through an institutionalist, rather than bilateral approach. As Point 2 of the Resolution underlined, the “progressive development of regional and other collective arrangements for individual and collective self-defence” could be part of US foreign policy.³¹⁷⁸ Such aims would have as a goal,

³¹⁷² Ikenberry, *After Victory*, pg. 193.

³¹⁷³ Ibid., pp. 192-193.

³¹⁷⁴ Ibid., pg. 194.

³¹⁷⁵ Deutsch, *Political Community and the North Atlantic Area*, pp. 127-128.

³¹⁷⁶ Ibid., pg. 128.

³¹⁷⁷ Ikenberry, *After Victory*, pg. 198.

³¹⁷⁸ Staff of the Committee and the Department of State (ed.). *A Decade of American Foreign Policy*, Basic Documents 1941-1949. Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1950. 1381 p. (81st Congress Senate Document N°123). pg. 197.

as stipulated in Point 3 , “the association of the United States, by constitutional process, with such regional and other collective arrangements as are based on continuous and effective self-help and mutual aid”.³¹⁷⁹ This paved the legal way for the United States to implement an interested hegemony over its Western European sphere of influence and allowed for negotiations on what would become the North Atlantic Treaty on 4 April 1949. The result was the formation of a Constitutional Order that spanned the North Atlantic through the formation of NATO. This organization has undergone its own trajectory of development since its 1949 founding, yet it never deviated far from its originally stated purpose as “Western postwar order organized around liberal democratic policies and institutions...centered around the United States and reflected American-styled political mechanisms and organizing principles.”³¹⁸⁰ The relatively loose order that was formed by its original 12 members evolved into a Constitutional Order that successfully navigated German unification and the end of the Cold War to encompass, as of 2024, 32 states. NATO became a key tool of US Administrations to “create regional institutional frameworks that would extend America’s influence...and enlarge democracy and open markets”, extending the boundaries of its Constitutional Order ever further.³¹⁸¹

The trajectory of East Asia represents a decidedly different direction, one where the echoes of previous ‘critical junctures’ continued to impact its systemic development beyond the Settlement of 1951. Unlike Europe, where scholars such as Ikenberry, maintain that an “institutional bargain between the leading and secondary states was part of each of the major [European] settlements [of 1815, 1919, and 1945]”³¹⁸², this dissertation argues that the exact opposite situation governed state action throughout the six East Asian ‘critical junctures’. Based on the respective antecedent conditions, while some displayed what could be deemed novel methods of multilateralism, no institutional bargain was contemplated in each settlement that graced the East Asian systemic context. Simply put, no state viewed the institutionalization of regional international relations as either desirable or necessary. This chapter will therefore further expound the reasons behind this phenomenon based on the results of the above table, and then conclude with the examination of the implications that emerge from the theoretical and empirical analysis, not only concerning the future of possible RSO formation in East Asia, but also on the fate of the global system itself.

11.3. The Classification of East Asian ‘critical junctures’

11.3.1. Introduction

This dissertation began with the application of the analytical framework’s criteria to the pre-modern international society. As the “original ‘critical juncture’”, it provided the base state whose constructivist framework governed the conduct of regional international relations for millennia. The Westphalian system, and Western understanding of statehood and international relations, eventually replaced the traditional system. This rare moment of ‘systems change’, however, was not the result of one ‘critical juncture’ but was the result of a prolonged process of flux and change that eventually saw Western international relations concepts usurping those

³¹⁷⁹ Ibid.

³¹⁸⁰ Ikenberry, *After Victory*, pp. 202-203.

³¹⁸¹ Ibid., pg. 235.

³¹⁸² Ikenberry, *After Victory*, pg. 257.

dominant in an area that, from the European point of view, was geographically marginal and culturally distinct. Hence, the ‘critical junctures’ in East Asia took on, as illustrated in Table 18, a more layered historical explanatory function, reflecting both the fundamental ‘systems change’ of the underpinning cognitive shift that the region experienced, as well as the ‘systemic change’ inaugurated by each major historical event. They can, therefore, be grouped into the following categories, each mirroring the regional penetration of the Westphalian system and how it affected each subsequent ‘critical juncture’:

- i. The ‘the original system’: The Pre-Modern International Society;
- ii. The anchoring ‘critical junctures’: the Settlements of 1895 and 1901;
- iii. Attempts at furnishing stable peace: the Settlements of 1905 and 1919;
- iv. The unilateral system: the Settlement of 1951.

Having classified the above ‘critical junctures’, their assessment as per Table 18 will now be analysed in detail.

11.3.2. The Shadow of the Pre-Modern East Asian International Society

A reflection of East Asia before the momentous ‘systems change’ and an heir to a unique cosmology, the pre-modern international society served as the base of the East Asian systemic version of a Hobbesian ‘State of Nature’ of regional relations in East Asia from which all further ‘critical junctures’ would proceed. Its slow but steady dissolution marked the last known historical instance of a ‘systems change’ in international relations, a phenomenon that would unsurprisingly determine the trajectory of East Asia’s subsequent ‘critical junctures’ and influence both the ability, as well as overall desirability, of forming an RSO.

In the pre-modern East Asian international society, the condition of *geopolitical necessity* reigned, yet its base was more a reflection of cultural factors and social norms rather than the exclusive exercise of raw power. This is not to say that the base root of power as a determinant factor in an inherently anarchical system was absent. As illustrated by the military and economic power of Imperial China, it was not. The use of military force never disappeared below the policy horizon. War, while occurring and very much a tool of ‘empirecraft’, remained a rarity within pre-modern systemic realities. While the Tributary System required the adherence to strict forms of protocol and symbolism, each member of the pre-modern East Asian international society, simultaneously maintaining bilateral relationships of differing levels of intensity with the Imperial centre, remained the nucleus of its own ‘universe’, as the Japanese example poignantly underlined, one that revolved around *geopolitical necessity*.

The dominant power position that Imperial China held did not, however, translate into the development of *policies of reciprocal restraint*. Prevailing diplomatic protocol foresaw a tradition of non-interference in neighbouring realms and political authority did not seem to solely hinge upon the implicit recognition of the political investiture of Imperial China, as the Japanese experience in the pre-modern international society exemplifies. While pre-modern East Asian kingdoms received concrete benefits for adhering to the tenets of the Tributary System, the ensuing interactions did not engender any policy of reciprocal restraint that would hinder war, as the rare cases of the use of military force underlines. Likewise, no policies of reciprocal restraint emerged

amongst systemic actors even during the rare periods, such as Muromachi Japan, when East Asian kingdoms assented to political investiture from the Imperial centre.

As diplomatic relations reflected the primacy of cultural factors, *satisfaction with the status quo*, as a concept, could not be definitely determined. War within the pre-modern international society occurred on select occasions, with the Imjin War in the closing years of the 16th century coming closest to meeting the analytical framework's criteria of a single power (Japan) seeking to usurp the existing system and the regional hegemon (Ming China) stepping in to defend it. The pre-modern East Asian international society therefore existed because it always had done so, and no man of sound intellect would propose an alternative because simply none could be considered fathomable. The advent of the Imjin War also illustrates that the criterion of *pacific self-images* was likewise absent from the pre-modern East Asian international society. While adhering to the formal rules and protocol that defined contemporary systemic realities, each member did not hesitate to, in moments where the Imperial centre exhibited weakness, attempt to expand its own power at the expense of the other. Vietnam independence, and the forceful expulsion of Imperial forces, resulted from the collapse of the Tang Dynasty; while the Korean Koryo Dynasty sought unsuccessfully to expand its power over the Liaodong Peninsula upon the fall of its Yuan Dynasty neighbours. Hence, behind the seemingly serene façade of ritual and protocol, the use of military force within the pre-modern East Asian international society remained a viable means of policy implementation.

This finding is all the more striking given the high degree of *compatible social orders* that penetrated all members of the pre-modern East Asian international society. The emergence of a unified Japan, Korea, and Vietnam were all characterized by high level of adaptation and adoption of Chinese culture and societal norms by the respective political elites. Such cultural affiliation was not a result of imposition, but rather an independent choice of the kingdoms concerned. The Japanese example under the isolationist-minded Tokugawa Shogunate, having outright rejected any notion of Imperial Chinese political supremacy, continued to cultivate and promote Sinic culture and the social orders that sprang therefrom. Hence, while theoretically linking all members of the pre-modern East Asian international society through deeply held cultural bonds, underlining the fulfillment of the criterion for compatible social orders, they alone remained unable to furnish the necessary conditions for the formation of a theoretical RSO within the regional system.

The condition of *an interested hegemon* was present within the pre-modern East Asian international society. The Tributary System could be considered as an expression of Imperial China's interest in projecting regional hegemony. Hierarchical by design, the system reflected the Imperial cosmology's vision of a terrestrial political order centred around the Son of Heaven. Consequently, such relations were reserved for those societies that shared compatible social orders with Imperial China as opposed to the nomadic tribes to the north and west. It was, however, a concept of an interested hegemony that does not easily correspond to any modern conceptual understanding. Its rituals and protocols reflected the inherent inequality between kingdoms. The system contained a degree of inherent flexibility, as the example of Japan's involvement illustrates, that did not hinge on active participation of all qualifying members. While economic and political privileges were accorded to its adherents, refusing to be swayed by such benefits did not necessarily provoke a harsh reaction from the Imperial Centre. Such logic, therefore, was a manifestation of Imperial China's interested regional hegemony.

The question of the *existence of a Constitutional Order* as a prevalent criterion within the pre-modern East Asian international society is difficult to determine. While, at a cursory glance, the Tributary System does seem to contain many facets of an accepted Constitutional Order, upon further inspection, this cannot be ascertained with any degree of certainty. The concept of a Constitutional Order presupposes the formal equality between its member states. As the notion of inequality between kingdoms defined the underpinning cosmology of international relations, the presence of a constitutional order cannot be determined, despite the existence of the elaborate rituals and protocols inherent in the Tributary System. Furthermore, a Constitutional Order implies one that seeks to diffuse power of the hegemon within the supposed safe haven of international institutionalism. Such a phenomenon, however, cannot be said to be reflected in a political order, however stable, that had been established well prior to the emergence of such ideas as a possible policy option in international relations. While reflecting an idiosyncratic expression of international relations, the fundamental differences, both temporal and philosophical, between the tenets of a modern Constitutional Order and the pre-modern East Asian international society render it impossible to definitely determine the presence of this final criterion.

In conclusion, the legacy system that resulted from the pre-modern international society established a uniform foundation for the conduct of intercultural relations, retaining an inherent flexibility while maintaining a functioning international society, despite the challenges of countless historical events and the passage of time. The legacy system of the pre-modern East Asian international society, as illustrated in Table 18, only established one of the necessary criterion for stable peace, with the policy of reciprocal restraint absent and satisfaction with the status quo left unable to be determined. Likewise, no conditions necessary for allowing the formation of an RSO were found to be present. The uniformity of compatible social orders and a set of diplomatic ritual and protocol, reflecting the preferences of an interested hegemon were found to be present, however, this did not translate into the generation of pacific self-images. Consequently, war remained a very much fathomable and acceptable tool of international relations that could be used in case of need. The existence of a Constitutional Order could likewise not be determined. Hence, neither conditions of stable peace nor those leading to the formation of an RSO were found within the pre-modern East Asian international society.

All systems and societies, sooner or later, are destined for collapse. In this regard, pre-modern East Asia was also idiosyncratic. Unlike the ‘critical junctures’ to follow, the end of the pre-modern international society did not occur as a culmination of any systemic war. It was rather a protracted affair, with the first cracks in the regional order appearing through the Qing’s defeat in the Opium Wars and increased European incursions, sparking the ‘systems change’ that would shatter the order that hitherto reigned over the region and provided the base conditions from which all further ‘critical junctures’ would emerge.

11.3.3. Anchoring East Asia into the International System: The Settlements of 1895 and 1901

With the advent of the Settlement of 1895, however, these small cracks had given way to substantial breaches in the pre-modern international society that, for all intents and purposes, had rendered it defunct outside the minds of Qing officialdom. The ‘systems change’ of which Gilpin spoke now came into full effect.

The peace that resulted from the Treaty of Shimonoseki was one that was defined by the condition of *geopolitical necessity*. The military defeat of Qing forces against the modernized Japanese army left Imperial China with very little option other than to submit to complete capitulation, lest the continued existence of the Dynasty be placed in jeopardy. Due to this geopolitical necessity, the former hegemon of the pre-modern East Asian international society was transformed into the object of the new regional system as introduced by the Settlement of 1895. There was no event in recent Chinese history to assist in understanding this calamity. Chinese tradition “looked back to sages for guidance, not forward into the future for the harbingers of the world yet to come...[China] was not prepared to grasp the unprecedented because they came from an educational system stressing precedent above all else. What were the classics but the collection of relevant precedents? Anything beyond their scope was considered unimportant if perceived at all.”³¹⁸³ As such, one aspect that the shadow of the pre-modern international society cast over the region’s future ‘critical junctures’ was the staunch refusal of the Qing elites to entirely part with the traditional ways, both in terms of social orders and regional hegemony. Imperial China had been relegated to an object of the regional system: the compatible social orders that had characterized the region were now, with the severing of the tributary relationship between the Qing and Korea, recognized as defunct. While any ability for China to lay claim to regional hegemony after 1895 lay in ruins, Beijing’s interest in being recognized as such continued to haunt the minds of the Qing elite. This inability to mentally part with the past and adapt to contemporary systemic realities after the Settlement of 1895 would inevitably have consequences both for the ultimate destiny of Imperial China and the future system its final collapse would define.

Following such a stark reconfiguration of the regional power constellation, it is perhaps unsurprising that the pursuit of *policies of reciprocal restraint* failed to follow the signature of the Treaty of Shimonoseki. While the new Japanese Empire sought to entrench itself as the region’s premier power, the glimmering shadow of past glories would haunt the Qing and impeded contemporary gain. While some post-Shimonoseki cooperation in the military and administrative field did emerge, with Chinese students arriving in Japan, this was not sufficient to qualify as a policy of reciprocal restraint. While elements of Chinese society began to openly demand reform, the focus was on the military and in no way contemplated a full abandonment of China’s traditional cosmology. China, even in defeat, insisted on maintaining the dignity and validity of its social orders. The traditional diplomatic robes distinguishing a high-ranking Qing official, as donned by Li Hongzhang during the painful negotiations at Shimonoseki, exemplified Imperial China’s act of defiance towards Westphalian realities, especially when contrasted against the crisp white Western shirts, black blazers, and bowties as worn by the victorious Japanese Delegation in strict emulation of the fashions of Europe.

This ‘critical juncture’ also reflected the absence of any *satisfaction with the status quo*, both on the side of the victors and on the vanquished. The victors were, through the Triple Intervention, deprived of their most prized concession in the Treaty of Shimonoseki, namely the Liaodong Peninsula that would have accorded Imperial Japan a bona fide presence on the Asian mainland. While also reflecting the geopolitical necessity of the Japanese Empire to bend to the will of European powers, Japan’s forced retrocession of the territory marked a humiliating and painful decision that did not engender any satisfaction with the post-1895 legacy system. Despite the physical and psychological blow of the Qing’s defeat against a grouping of unknown islands

³¹⁸³ Paine, *The Sino-Japanese War of 1894-1895*, pg. 127.

that had been a marginal part of Beijing's contemporary world view, no serious adaption of policy to novel systemic realities was contemplated. When the possibility of reform did rear its head, such as during the Hundred Days Reform of 1898, it was severely quelled by the conservative Court of the Empress Dowager, stifling any meaningful reforms. The Qing Court remained staunchly wedded to the old system and its cosmology of international relations. With the sole criterion of geopolitical necessity present in the Settlement of 1895, it was ascertained that the Treaty of Shimonoseki was unable to furnish stable peace between the wartime adversaries.

Given the lack of policies of reciprocal restraints and deep dissatisfaction with the tenets of the 1895 peace treaty, the criteria for the eventual formation of an RSO became equally elusive. Contradicting geopolitical ambitions harboured by both Beijing and Tokyo, combined with the Russian Empire's proven willingness—through the Triple Intervention—to use force to achieve its political ambitions in East Asia, no *pacific self-images* took hold amongst policy makers in the wake of the Treaty of Shimonoseki. The prospect of the use of military force remained in the sharp focus of regional states, one ready to be pursued in case of need. The *compatible social orders* that had straddled both China and Japan during the pre-modern East Asian international society had undergone rapid change since the onset of the antecedent conditions of the Settlement of 1895. Meiji Japan had elected to undergo a westernization of both its public administration and its military, willfully breaking the cultural links that had bound it, even during times of isolation, with Imperial China. While having undertaken a token degree of military modernization, the Qing's defeat, as noted, saw Imperial China, despite voices calling for the contrary, seeking to maintain its traditional cosmology. Hence, the Treaty of Shimonoseki neither fostered nor met the criterion of compatible social orders.

The Settlement of 1895 additionally did not furnish the necessary conditions for the *emergence of an interested hegemon*. Any serious claim the Qing could lay, outside the purely rhetorical, to East Asian hegemony could not be taken seriously. The Treaty of Shimonoseki sought to anchor the Empire of Japan as the formal hegemon of East Asia. The advent of the Triple Intervention, and the geopolitical necessity of Tokyo to begrudgingly succumb to the combined will of St. Petersburg, Berlin, and Paris, tangibly prescribed limits on Japanese power following its fêted victory. However, interested Japanese policy makers might have been to crown the nation with regional hegemony, the European Powers did not permit this dream to come into fruition. Nor did the European Powers, while able to impose policy on Japan, possess the desire or military ability to establish a hegemony over East Asia. While having united in opposition to the totality of Japan's territorial claims, none of the individual Great Powers could, on their own, establish hegemony in East Asia. Hence, the Settlement of 1895, while augmenting the status and power of Japan at the expense of Imperial China, did not entrench a hegemon as part of its legacy system. Regarding the *existence of a Constitutional Order*, the scope of the Treaty of Shimonoseki was focused on recalibrating the bilateral relationship between Tokyo and Beijing, both politically and territorially. The negotiators at Shimonoseki did not envisage a wider scope of action than the points laid out in the treaty and Japanese diplomatic strategy, emulating the West, did not fathom anything close to a Constitutional Order as, put simply, it lay beyond the intellectual limits of contemporary statecraft. In conclusion, the Settlement of 1895 smashed the remnants of the 'old order' but did very little towards crafting the new.

The Settlement of 1901 closely emulated the example set by the Settlement of 1895. The scope of the military defeat of the Qing against the combined might of the Missionary Coalition left the Imperial Chinese court, as six years earlier at Shimonoseki, with no other option save for capitulation. Hence, the condition of *geopolitical necessity* formed the bedrock of the peace treaty that would follow. In 1901, however, China was not merely subject to the dictation of peace terms by Japan, yet rather by the total weight of the Foreign Powers. The Qing's admirable insistence on maintaining its traditional notions of international relations, and unwillingness to adapt to the systemic realities that now characterized the region, resulted in China, the former hegemon of East Asia, being anchored as an object of the new Westphalian system. The presence of the condition of geopolitical necessity, however, not only obliged Imperial China to accept a humiliating peace to stave off political extinction but anchored the Qing as a second-class member of the East Asian region, now uniquely defined through the concepts and practice of Westphalian diplomacy. The punitive nature of the Boxer Protocol excluded the emergence of any *policies of reciprocal restraint*. The terms of the Settlement of 1901 did not envisage any degree of cooperation with a debilitated China. There was no managed decline of a steady weakening Qing Empire, only the continuation of the Western policy to extract maximum concessions. While the US insistence on an Open Door policy superficially saved the Qing from an outright international partition, the hegemonic aspirations of Foreign Powers in regards to China very much coloured their respective foreign policy. As such, the Open Door policy did not qualify as a policy of reciprocal restraint. Nor did any other policies of reciprocal restraint emerge from the signing of the Boxer Protocol.

Unlike the Japanese Empire that entered and was begrudgingly accepted into the pantheon of contemporary regional powers, China was locked into a role of subservience and exclusion. Consequently, there was no *satisfaction of the status quo* regarding the niche that had been carved out for Imperial China in the Settlement of 1901. Nor did the Boxer Protocol engender satisfaction amongst the individual members of the victorious coalition. Both the Russian Empire and Japan held negative opinions of the peace that prevailed, allowing their mutual rivalry over Manchuria and Korea to intensify. The United States, now by 1901 a full-fledged member of the East Asian region, saw its attempts at structuring some mechanism of meaningful cooperation amongst the Powers over China being rebuffed, leaving policy makers in Washington with having to suffice with a nominal commitment to not explicitly carve up the Qing. Coupled with Washington's opposition, as exhibited during the Boxer Protocol negotiations, to saddling the Qing with a hefty indemnity, the final treaty did not mark a satisfactory expression of the ideal US post-intervention status quo. Hence, as with the Settlement of 1895, the conditions for the emergence of stable peace were not present in the legacy system of 1901.

While the Boxer Protocol nominally sought to place geopolitical competition between the Great Powers over the Qing in check, the legacy system of the Settlement of 1901 did not engender the criteria of *pacific self-images*. After the signing of the Boxer Protocol, all members of the East Asian region viewed the use of military power as a viable tool in the pursuit of foreign policy, most poignantly illustrated by the continued tensions between St. Petersburg and Tokyo and their respective ambitions in Imperial China and Korea. The self-images that resulted did not help spawn peace between neighbours. The Japanese Empire continued to view itself as on the road to recognition as the regional hegemon over East Asia, a coveted position not currently recognized outside Tokyo despite the substantial assistance the Empire had accorded to the Coalition. While its military contributions assisted in cementing an alliance with Great Britain in 1902, the legacy

system of 1901 did not damper any of Tokyo's regional and global ambitions. The legacy system bequeathed by the Settlement of 1901 held dire consequences for the vanquished party, Imperial China. Unlike the Japanese Empire that was begrudgingly accepted as a contemporary regional power, China was locked into a role of subservience and exclusion. With the Settlement of 1901, China was fully brought into the Westphalian global system and shackled with a series of indemnities and forced dismantlement not only of the Qing's sovereignty but also traditional Chinese institutions, such as the examination system. It is under such circumstances that China secured its full entry into the Westphalian system as its object, with any vestiges of its former status as an interested hegemon confined to the past. Following the collapse of the Qing, China became the first East Asian nation to inaugurate a republican government. Yet this new system of governance, based on foreign principles, "failed to reestablish effective and stable systems of political rule."³¹⁸⁴ Hence, not only did the former hegemon need to, following the Settlement of 1901, grapple with political and economic obligations to foreign powers, it was faced with the challenge of reconstructing in haste social orders and self-images that had been crafted over centuries. The change that the legacy system provoked in the respective self-images in post-1901 East Asia further deepened the divide of social orders that became evident post-1895. With the legitimacy of the Qing Dynasty as well as the contemporary Chinese social order now, following the Boxer Protocol, being openly questioned, its polarization from a Japan that had 'exited Asia' was placed in sharp relief. Adding to this heterogeneity, the Korean reform process instigated by Emperor Kojong was still a work in process in a nascent Empire very much the target of expansionist foreign policies. Consequently, the legacy system of 1901, while marking a further entrenchment of Westphalian statehood in East Asia, did not foster the criterion of *compatible social orders*.

The Boxer Protocol was more of a settlement that defined China's place within post-1901 East Asia. The treaty did not explicitly seek to create an overarching regional political order. While attempting to accommodate the interests of all members of the Missionary Coalition, at the expense of the Chinese Empire, it did not reflect the will of any one of its members. As such, it did not enable the *existence of an interested hegemon*. Nor did the Boxer Protocol attempt to establish an overall order in East Asia, as defined in the understanding of a Constitutional Order. A basic guide for intervention in China was loosely considered but it did not stray far from this base. As diplomatic protocol would, in 1901, not fathom the consideration, let alone the implementation, of the criteria inherent in the *existence of a Constitutional Order*, its presence could not be determined in the legacy system of 1901. As such, the Boxer Protocol, beyond failing to establish stable peace, likewise did not foster the necessary criteria for the formation of an RSO.

The Settlements of 1895 and 1901 were born of geopolitical necessity and provided no path towards the fostering of stable peace or any pathway to promote a regional multilateralist approach, however basic these tenets might have been at the turn of the 20th century. The Settlement of 1901 was designed as a mechanism to coordinate Foreign Power competition over the Qing and solidify China's status as a defeated object of the international system. During the initial phase of the penetration of the global system in East Asia, the positioning of Japan, as an ascending subject seeking to define the contours of the new system, and China, as an unstable and perennially weak object of the interests of the regional system, would set the trajectory of future 'critical junctures'.

³¹⁸⁴ Vogel, *China and Japan*, pg. 203.

11.3.4. Attempts at Furnishing a Stable Peace: The Settlement of 1905

With the defeat of the Qing in 1895 and 1901 marking the definitive end of the pre-modern international society, a power vacuum had arisen in East Asia. This is reflective of the deep transformational process involved in a 'systems change'. The attempt to fill this geopolitical void by regional powers seeking to establish their own regional hegemony is one that was very much in line with the Western moeurs at the dawn of the 20th Century. Indeed, such a Weltanschauung had permeated Japan at a much earlier stage through its encounters with the Western Powers. As Ishiwara Kanji, during his trial at the post-World War Two International Military Tribunal, organized by the victorious Allies, underlined to a dumfounded US prosecutor: "Haven't you ever heard of Perry? Don't you know anything about our country's history?...Tokugawa Japan believed in isolation; it didn't want to have anything to do with other countries, and had its doors locked tightly. Then along came Perry from your country in his black ships to open those doors; he aimed his big guns at Japan and warned, 'if you don't deal with us, look out for these; open your doors, and negotiate with other countries too.' And so for its own defence it took your own country as its teacher and set about learning how to be aggressive. You might say we became your disciples. Why don't you subpoena Perry from the other world and try *him* as a war criminal?"³¹⁸⁵ Emulating the Western Powers it sought to eventually usurp, the path of a hegemonic empire was the route chosen to secure Japan's security in a changing world, finding expression in Yamagata Aritomo's policies aimed at safeguarding Japanese sovereignty through the establishment of a 'line of advantage' in East Asia whose success depended on Japanese preponderance in Korea. Such ambitions began to conflict with the aspirations of the Russian Empire that, with the pending completion of the Trans-Siberian railway, was able to project power from the European continent onto the frontiers of East Asia and beyond.

The Russo-Japanese War that ensued was very much a conflict that sought to establish hegemony over the vestiges of what had been the pre-modern international society. While posterity would remember 'World War Zero' as the first industrial war in the history of mankind, the analysis of the Settlement of 1905 revealed that its legacy system marked the sole instance where all three conditions to establish stable peace had been fully met. The condition of *geopolitical necessity* defined the Settlement of 1905, yet it was a distinct expression of this criterion when compared to the legacy systems of 1895 and 1901. The Russo-Japanese War was a contest between two would-be hegemonies who, in the negotiations over Korea in the run-up to the Japanese surprise attack against the Russian fleet at Port Arthur, were not able to jointly manage their respective political ambitions. The resulting military contest, however, did not result in an overwhelming victory of the Japanese Empire, but rather a stalemate in the trenches of Manchuria, with both Empires only able to pursue the war at enormous cost to their respective capitals. Hence, the geopolitical necessity that was found to exist in the Settlement of 1905 was of a much different character than in the Settlements of 1895 and 1901. In previous settlements, the scope of the Qing's loss in both contests made it difficult to pursue the necessary condition of a gesture of 'unilateral accommodation' as the Qing Court simply possessed very little that their adversaries could not simply take. The geopolitical necessity present in the Settlement of 1905 was therefore distinct. Both the Russian and Japanese armies, at the time of the negotiations in Portsmouth, were battered but both undefeated on the battlefield, as His Majesty Nicholas II astutely underlined. With no

³¹⁸⁵ Paine, *The Wars for Asia*, pp. 284-285.

clear victor, but the continuing war a threat to the stability of both Empires, the possibility of pursuing a painful, but necessary, policy of ‘unilateral accommodation’ was opened. Soberly viewing the situation in East Asia, the decision in St. Petersburg was therefore made to pursue a gesture of ‘unilateral accommodation’, officially bowing out of Korea and southern Manchuria. This was recognized as a concession by the Japanese negotiators and, much to the chagrin of the Government in Tokyo, they opted to not press for a financial indemnity. Hence, the condition of geopolitical necessity not only obliged both sides to sign a peace treaty, but begin to likewise engage, already at the table in Portsmouth, in a mutual process of concession making.

The Treaty of Portsmouth differed from the Treaty of Shimonoseki and the Boxer Protocol in so far as it prescribed a roadmap to *policies of reciprocal restraint*, the second condition necessary for the establishment of a stable peace. The main document signed in New Hampshire underlined the general political parameters of a settlement, the details of what final contours these agreements would ultimately assume was left to future negotiation between Japanese and Russian Delegations. The modalities of Russia’s withdrawal from Korea and Manchuria were fine-tuned and the Japanese Empire was accorded lucrative fishing rights in Russian territory. Through these policies of reciprocal restraint, as prescribed by the analytical framework, mutual trust began to appear in bilateral relations between St. Petersburg and Tokyo. Through the terms of the Treaty of Portsmouth, the ensuing agreements that resulted between the Russian and Japanese Empires allowed for the appearance of the criterion of *satisfaction with the status quo*. Such satisfaction was illustrated in the Secret Convention of 1907 and 1910 where the Foreign Ministers Motono and Izvolsky negotiated a de facto modus operandi to accommodate the interests of both Empires in an area of key strategic concern. From the fighting in the trenches of Manchuria to a political understanding to manage geopolitical competition on what both Empires views as their status quo ante bellum strategic interests imbued a sense of mutual understanding and trust that gradually began to dispel the immediate danger of a resumption of military conflict. This newfound confidence in bilateral relations culminated in the clandestine Alliance between the Russian and Japanese Empires of 1916 whose terms could only have implied the United States as its target. This marked quite a rapid improvement from the industrial slaughter in the trenches of Manchuria of eleven years earlier. It likewise signified a remarkable turn of events that served as evidence of the high degree of peace, and implied trust, that had broken out between the two Empires. This unprecedented step was made possible through the Settlement of 1905’s ability to furnish the three necessary conditions for the establishment of stable peace.

Despite the satisfaction with which both St. Petersburg and Tokyo regarded their newly established understanding in East Asia, clear limits to the bilateral relationship between the former foes remained. The spectre of military conflagration—a possibility pushed by the Treaty of Portsmouth further behind the decision-making horizon—never completely fell below it. Despite reaching a satisfactory modus vivendi in East Asia, the use of military force remained an option amongst the regional states. While successfully avoiding this extreme possibility, the use of warfare to impose geopolitical interests remained a viable option. Resorting to military force remained even more of a present possibility beyond the confines of the bilateral Russo-Japanese relationship, where military might served as the primary tool of statecraft, as Russian and Japanese intervention in China and Korea exemplified. Hence, despite the breaking out of stable peace between the Russian and Japanese Empires, no *pacific self-images* were cultivated by the Settlement of 1905. Likewise, the legacy system was not characterized by *compatible social orders*

that straddled the states of East Asia. While both St. Petersburg and Tokyo were home to imperialistic monarchies, commonalities other than having a supreme monarch, were few and far between. Both Korea and China were undergoing periods of serious internal tension and eroding control over their respective domestic territories.

The Treaty of Portsmouth and the series of agreements that resulted from its signature, was an exercise to stem the emergence of a single hegemon over East Asia. Policies geared towards hegemony resulted in the bloodshed of the Russo-Japanese War. In their stead, therefore, secret agreements between the Russian and Japanese Empires were signed aimed at supplanting the mantle of outright hegemony with an acceptable status quo, as witnessed through the signature of the clandestine treaties of 1907, 1910, and 1912. Such agreements were coupled by public treaties between major regional powers, such as the Root-Takahara agreement that aimed at finding a *modus vivendi* between the maritime and continental aspirations of the United States and the Japanese Empire. The core motivation of such diplomatic manoeuvring lay in the eschewing of any claims to outright hegemony through a recognition of the contemporary geopolitical status quo. Consequently, the criterion of *the existence of an interested hegemon* was not present in the Settlement of 1905. As with prior 'critical junctures', the Treaty of Portsmouth ended a regional war with systemic implications for all of East Asia; it did not explicitly attempt to establish a recognized order amongst regional states. Furthermore, as with previous legacy systems, the principles espoused in *the existence of a Constitutional Order* did not form part of contemporary diplomacy and, as such, its presence following the Settlement of 1905 could not be determined.

11.3.5. A Multilateral Solution: The Settlement of 1919

The legacy system of 1905 was shattered not by any regional event, but rather by a faraway war whose breaking out had nothing to do with East Asia. Nevertheless, the aftermath of the First World War would prove just as transformative in systemic terms to East Asia as it would be to the Old Continent. The Settlement of 1919, as noted, is unique given the total lack of *geopolitical necessity* that its main peace treaty, the Treaty of Versailles, begot. The First World War was, in military terms, a mostly European affair with East Asia having nothing to do with the surrender of the Central Powers. Therefore, in the Halls of Versailles, the Japanese and Chinese Delegations both attended the Peace Conference on the winning side. In line with established diplomatic practice, peace negotiations were held to extract concessions from the loser, hence both Tokyo, and to a lesser extent Beijing, sought to reap the rewards from aligning itself with the victors. Regarding East Asia, no political circumstances existed whereby the condition of geopolitical necessity could apply. The absence of the fundamental condition of geopolitical necessity therefore coloured the emergence of the legacy system of 1919. Due to the position of all East Asian Delegations as technical victors, compromise failed to be first and foremost on the agenda. Japan had distinguished itself by pursuing a foreign policy designed to maximize geopolitical gains brought about by the unexpected outbreak of hostilities in Europe. While the German Pacific Islands were successfully absorbed into the Empire, this marked a gain of secondary importance. Japanese focus, both during the First World War and thereafter, focused on improving its standing in China, as illustrated through its 1915 Twenty-One Demands and insistence on inheriting the German concession in Shandong. One of the main struggles of the First World War in East Asia was to restrain Japan's unbridled regional ambition. While Western pressure forced Tokyo to retract its most egregious demands, sufficient concern had been stoked regarding Japan's ultimate

ambitions in postwar East Asia. Japanese bilateral agreements forced President Wilson, fully sympathetic to China's request to have Shandong returned to Chinese sovereignty, to relent to Tokyo's demands, causing the Chinese Delegation to refuse to sign the Treaty of Versailles. Yet as a victor of the Great War, the Japanese Delegation in Paris saw no need to compromise, given the total lack of geopolitical necessity.

The Settlement of 1919, seen exclusively within the confines of the Treaty of Versailles, was a marginal agreement that per se did very little in establishing a comprehensive order in East Asia. This task was supposed to have been accomplished by the creation of the League of Nations. Indeed, unlike the Treaty of Versailles whose focus lay squarely on defining the terms of Germany's defeat, the remit of the League did not contain any geographic limitations, only those imposed by the number of its signatories. This would manifest itself as a problematic element in postbellum East Asia. While China joined the League through the Allied peace treaty with Austria-Hungary, the inability of President Wilson to secure US ratification of the Treaty of Versailles created a significant vacuum of the League's authority over East Asia. This marked the first instance of what would become a common feature of the East Asian systemic landscape, namely the phenomenon of 'systemic vacuums' where the contemporary system held no sway given the voluntary or involuntary exclusion of major regional actors. 'Systemic vacuums' would play a major role in defining the legacy systems of the Settlements of 1919 and 1951. Given the innate rivalry that had emerged between Tokyo and Washington over hegemony in the Pacific, the substantial 'systemic vacuum' presented by the US rejection of the Treaty of Versailles required a remedy. Building on the experience of constructing an acceptable status quo through the legacy system of the Settlement of 1905, decision makers on both sides of the Pacific began turning their attention to *policies of reciprocal restraint*. This was seen as particularly urgent in Washington since Japanese foreign policy during the First World War had given rise to serious concern in Washington over the nature of Tokyo's regional ambitions, both in China and beyond. The nascent League was therefore in no legal position to facilitate any solution in the event of an incident involving Japan and US interests in East Asia. While bilateral attempts, such as the Lansing-Ishii Agreement, were signed in the hope of sidelining this growing US-Japanese rivalry, inherent suspicions remained on both sides of the Pacific, especially after US and Japanese attempts to pursue a common objective in the Russian Far East failed miserably.

It was through the foresight of President Harding that a policy of reciprocal restraint managed to be established in East Asia that replaced the systemic void left by the Treaty of Versailles. In doing so, it became an integral part of the Settlement of 1919. Here, East Asia embarked on an unexpected attempt at fostering a multilateral order. While falling well short of a Constitutional Order, the Washington Conference marked the first instance in diplomatic history where victorious powers came together out of their own free will to establish a multilateral framework to ensure peace and stability in East Asia. While the League provisions on conflict prevention would still remain in force where its legal provisions were valid, more tangible security agreements were furnished by the 'Washington Conference'. In doing so, in its first years, it became the first workable system of multilateral security to be established in East Asia since the end of the pre-modern international system. The Five Power Treaty, also known as the Washington Naval Treaty, marked the first disarmament agreement that established a naval ratio designed to deflect the unwanted possibility of an arms race in the Pacific. The Naval Treaty extended from the military into the purely political: the Four Power Treaty recognized the postwar status quo

amongst the victorious Allied powers in the Pacific and pledged joint discussions should a crisis arise; while the Nine Power Treaty, signed by the Chinese Delegation, furnished a legal basis for the respect of Chinese territorial integrity and sovereignty while pledging cooperation between the signatories should any conflicts regarding China emerge.

The 'Washington System' implemented a set of policies of reciprocal restraint that would achieve what the negotiations at Paris could not, namely construct a multilateral security system in East Asia with an initial overt *satisfaction with the status quo*. The negotiations surrounding the treaties that comprised the 'Washington System' were the result of sometimes painful compromise, as illustrated by the contradictory positions within the Japanese Delegation regarding the individual treaties. As the Washington Conference was held amongst victors, all compromises made during the negotiations were, by definition, voluntary in nature. The differences amongst the members of the Japanese Delegation as to the scope of Japan's concessions via treaty negotiations highlighted the challenges in imposing voluntary, painful limitations on security issues. The 'Washington System' allowed for, through this initial satisfaction with the status quo, baseline security cooperation in the Pacific. Yet as the criteria of geopolitical necessity was absent, even the multilateral system established by the legacy system of 1919 failed to enshrine stable peace over East Asia.

The adherence to the Washington Treaties, however, eroded over time. No enforcement mechanisms were embedded in the respective agreements to oversee and ensure compliance. As a result, they remained exclusively multilateral in scope, based on the political will of the signatories themselves to fulfill them. The absence of *pacific self-images* that characterized the legacy system of 1919 played a critical role in its ultimate demise. Despite minimizing the possibility of conflict through the establishment of the world's first voluntary disarmament agreement, its scope did not penetrate deep enough to eliminate the use of military means as a tool of statecraft. As the Japanese Military consolidated its grip over policy making, the inherent distrust exhibited by a fraction of the Japanese negotiators at Washington began to gradually shape Tokyo's attitude to the treaties. Accordingly, both US and Japanese policy makers began to prepare for military action. Pacific self-images also failed to take hold in the Chinese Republic, in the grips of the domestic turmoil of a civil war, and in the nascent USSR, a state that had been explicitly excluded from the Washington Conference. The plethora of postwar self-images reflected the equally diverse social orders that now characterized the region. The Settlement of 1919 and the inherent internationalism that characterized the Treaty of Versailles and the subsequent watered-down version of the Washington Conference, left Japan as the sole Empire standing amongst the ruins of the Romanov, Habsburg, Hohenzollern, and Qing Dynasties. Despite the fanfare that accompanied Tokyo's adoption of its internationalist-inspired 'New Diplomacy', the Japanese Empire remained, in contemporary Zeitgeist, a hangover of a bygone era. China, embroiled in its lengthy civil war, could not produce a unified social order under a central administration. The Soviet Union emerged from the destruction of the Russian Empire and offered its own novel version of social order through the violent imposition of unbridled Bolshevism, bent on fermenting a worker's revolution worldwide. Consequently, the criterion of *contemporary social orders* was lacking from the Settlement of 1919.

Through the self-imposed restraints on armaments (as of 1923) no East Asian nation could lay a claim to military hegemony over the region. While both Japan and the United States

continued to pursue mutually exclusive policies in China through their respective interpretation of the Nine Power Treaty, reflecting the vision of what regional hegemony would look like, neither nation was positioned to fully implement such goals. As such, the Settlement of 1919 did not meet the criterion of the *existence of an interested hegemon*. Given the lack of enforcement mechanisms inherent in the 'Washington System's' treaties, they remained exclusively multilateral in scope. As such, despite Harding's intention to do otherwise, the 'Washington System' did not meet the criteria for the *existence of a Constitutional Order*. As President Harding himself frankly commented at the conclusion of the Washington Conference, it "was a deal that all countries thought best for themselves."³¹⁸⁶ No geopolitical necessity motivated their decisions as all attendees counted themselves as victors of the First World War. Hence, as soon as the political will necessary to uphold the system was seriously questioned, while not falling apart completely, its ability to achieve its original purpose was compromised. The possibility of such an eventuality occurring surfaced during the Japanese Delegation's deliberations on accepting the restrictions of the Washington Naval Treaty. The domestic conditions of 'Taishō democracy' led to the erosion of central power in the Japanese state, a staple of the social order of the Meiji era. Henceforth, Japan would be plagued, albeit in a very different manner than China, by a weak state, unable to clearly define policy directives. These inherent chaotic circumstances were used by the Imperial Military to usurp political power and direct foreign policy into unknown and often spontaneous directions. This would play a major role in the practical undoing of the multilateral orders of the League of Nations and 'Washington System' that emerged from the Settlement of 1919. While providing an advanced base of multilateral cooperation in East Asia, its failure to address the shortcomings inherent in the absence of the condition of geopolitical necessity blocked any evolution towards the formation of an RSO and, in the end, contributed to its ultimate collapse.

While the Settlement of 1919 was characterized by the first functional multilateral framework for the maintenance of regional security, it was also characterized by its major default, namely the phenomenon of 'systemic vacuums'. The lack of the existence of the criteria for stable peace and RSO formation also hindered its long-term success. Nevertheless, from the very outset, the scope of the Treaty of Versailles and the 'Washington System' was limited. Some East Asian states were simply not signatories. The absence of US participation in the League of Nations created such a blatant omission that President Harding sought to remedy the situation with the establishment of the 'Washington System'. This might have closed a glaring void left by the Treaty of Versailles, but it did little to remedy the situation left by the collapse of the Russian Empire and the power vacuum that ripped open over its territories and sphere of influence in East Asia. The Japanese intervention in the post-1917 chaos that engulfed the Russian Far East not only further confirmed Tokyo's hegemonic regional aspirations to its wartime Allies, but its ending as an unpopular fiasco in the eyes of the Japanese populous provided the necessary domestic impetus to pursue postwar internationalism. At the same time, it did little to remedy the situation in the territories of the former Russian Empire in East Asia. As Bolshevik control emerged over former Tsarist East Asia, the question of its recognition became a sensitive topic, so much so that the Bolsheviks created the first 'fake state' of the 'Far Eastern Republic' to engage the outside world without demanding recognition. While the 'Far Eastern Republic' managed to negotiate the Japanese withdrawal, it failed in securing international recognition of itself or the regime of its Bolshevik masters. Consequently, the 'Washington System' would operate without the

³¹⁸⁶ Dingman, Roger, *Power in the Pacific: The Origins of Naval Arms Limitation, 1914-1922*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1976, pg. 271.

participation of what would become the Soviet Union. While its isolation meant little in practical terms of the Washington Naval Treaty, its absence from the Nine Power Treaty on the territorial integrity and sovereignty of China would create the precedent of leaving an important East Asian actor completely outside what was, in its initial years, a functional multilateral arrangement on regional security. As such, the Settlement of 1919 was the first to willingly leave out major regional actors to forward a particular vision of regional peace. It was not to be the last, as pacific self-images failed to proliferate in the legacy system of 1919, the consequences of this decision would be more immediately felt.

11.3.6. Parallel Systems: The Legacy System of the Settlement of 1919

The vacuums that were created by the Settlement of 1919 would never be fully closed. This was the result of the legacy system's inability to furnish the criteria for stable peace and the formation of an RSO. The non-recognition of the Soviet Union and the weakness of the Chinese state led to significant actors being either completely absent from the contemporary system, or unable to fulfil the functions inherent in the concept of a Westphalian state. This was especially the case for the Chinese Republic that had struggled with central authority since the final collapse of the Qing in 1911. The 'Washington System', through the Nine Power Treaty, marked an attempt by the Foreign Powers to lock in international cooperation over China while contributing to the stabilization of the Republic's fragile domestic situation. The USSR, not a signatory of the 'Washington System' and not recognized by other East Asian states, began to pursue its own foreign policy towards China. The policies of reciprocal restraint that were meant to foster stable peace did not extend, therefore, to the entire region. The non-inclusion of the Soviet Union in the contemporary East Asian system allowed Moscow to attempt to construct an 'anti-Washington' system based on anti-imperialist values. While this adventure would ultimately flicker out in failure, the USSR's support to the Chinese Nationalists played an essential role in providing the organizational and logistic support necessary to launch the Northern Expedition that managed to accord the Chinese Republic some degree of unified political authority. While the Soviet Union would establish relations with East Asian states in the 1920s, it would never fully be integrated into the 'Washington System' as the US would only choose to recognize Bolshevik authority following President Roosevelt's 1933 election victory. Despite the desire of the United States to construct a fully comprehensive security system with the signatories of the Washington treaties, major actors remained outside the multilateralist architecture completely. Far from constituting an exception, this state of affairs would become a salient feature of East Asia's systemic reality.

With China reemerging as a nation state with some ability to exercise authority over its territory—an eventuality that was ardently hoped for but not entirely envisioned at the Washington Conference—the Imperial Army decided to assert Japanese control over what it viewed as its key sphere of influence, Manchuria. Once again, while East Asia did not figure as a priority for those constructing the League of Nations in Paris, the region ironically became the first testing ground for the effectiveness of its newly installed global government. The Chinese decision to activate its appeal to the League of Nations on 21 September 1931 under Article 11 to investigate the Mukden Incident and to "take immediate steps to prevent the further redevelopment of a situation endangering the peace of nations" marked the first such overture to a supranational body in diplomatic history. The initial litmus test of the supposed Constitutional Order of the Settlement of 1919 would fall therefore in East Asia and not elsewhere. The League of Nations responded

with the means they were able to deploy, namely the dispatching of a fact-finding commission to analyse the situation and present a report to the General Assembly. The Lytton Commission, as the first international fact-finding commission in history, while performing its tasks in accordance with the mandate it had received, could not assist in brokering a solution over Japanese actions in Manchuria. While presenting a diplomatically balanced report to the League, the Lytton Commission could not validate Japanese claims that it was acting in self-defence. The Constitutional Order that Wilson so ardently worked to attain did not pass its first geopolitical test in Manchuria and suffered a blow to its image and prestige when the Japanese Empire, a founding member of the League of Nations and Permanent Member of its Council, unceremoniously left the organization. The multilateralism of the 'Washington System' and its policies of reciprocal restraint also failed in providing a brokered solution to Japan's actions in Manchuria, with none of the Nine Power Treaty's signatories activating its articles. Concerned states were instead confined to taking bilateral actions, such as the US decision to adopt the Stimson Doctrine, as the only effective policy course. Both the Settlement of 1919's policy of reciprocal restraint and proposed Constitutional Order failed miserably in East Asia in the face of determined unilateral action.

With the Japanese walkout from the League of Nations, another 'systemic vacuum' appeared in the East Asian geopolitical landscape. Japanese foreign policy pursued objectives that, like the Soviet Union before it, aimed at the construction of an alternative systemic order to the one that Tokyo had signed up to in Paris and Washington. Japan proceeded to fully negate, one by one, the policies of reciprocal restraint inherent in the 'Washington System', with its denunciation of the Second London Treaty in 1936 and rendering of the Five Power Treaty, the industrial era's first disarmament treaty, for all intents and purposes null and void. The obsolescence of the reciprocal restraint policies as proposed by the 'Washington System' would be on full display after the outbreak of the Second Sino-Japanese War, when the signatories of the Nine Power Treaty, a full sixteen years after its signature, activated its provisions and convened the Brussels Conference in 1937 to negotiate a multilateral solution. Yet with Japan refusing to attend, the event became a showcase of vapid diplomatic futility that did more to stoke tensions than provide a negotiated exit from an escalating war. The utter pointlessness of the 1937 Brussels Conference, coupled with the promising efforts of National Socialist Germany to broker a diplomatic solution between Nanjing and Tokyo, served as strong indicators that the legacy system of the Settlement of 1919, even concerning the partial fulfillment of the conditions of stable peace that it was able to furnish, had completely broken down. With the entrance of the Japanese Empire into the Tripartite Pact, underlining its position as a "revolutionary foreign power" seeking to revise the existing system, no further multilateral efforts were undertaken to deflect both the Japanese Empire and the United States from preparing for war. Japan's defeat against the Soviet armies in Outer Mongolia in 1939, combined with Germany's rapid victories against its Allied foes, convinced the Japanese military that the contemporary geopolitical constellation favoured a southern strike against Western interests that would ultimately lead to the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbour and the end of the 1919 legacy system in East Asia.

11.3.7. Unilaterally Locking in the Past: The Settlement of 1951

What became the Settlement of 1951 was, in essence, an ad hoc solution to meet unexpected geopolitical conditions that set in after the onset of the Cold War. The Allied wartime conferences, save for Cairo, treated East Asia as very much a secondary matter. Like in 1919,

Europe very much formed the main bone of contention. East Asian issues were handled in the corridors of Moscow, Teheran, and Yalta, with the focus of the Potsdam conference securing Japan's unconditional surrender and not the necessary detailed planning of what steps the Allies should take following the fall of the Japanese Empire. Akin to the multilateral system of cooperation that was initiated through the 'Washington System', the Allied leaders, once again driven by the visions of an American President, would supposedly secure cooperation following the Pacific War through the common custodianship of security matters in the hands of the 'Four Policemen' that would shepherd the international community through any potential crisis. In such a way, like with the 1922 Washington treaties, this general will to cooperate, ostensibly shared by all Allied Powers, would furnish the necessary policies of reciprocal restraint to ward off conflict and any possibility of a Third World War. To further entrench such noble tendencies in the postwar international system, a successor organization to the failed League of Nations, was created in San Francisco in a second attempt to safeguard regional and global security through the promise of a Constitutional Order by the name of the United Nations. Whether the Settlement could provide the necessary criteria for stable peace and the formation of an RSO, however, is another question.

The Settlement of 1951 was, as in 1895 and 1901, born out of pure *geopolitical necessity*. The Japanese Empire simply had no alternative but to finally accept the dictates of the Potsdam Proclamation in order to save off physical and cultural annihilation, either through US technology or the importation of Bolshevism the prospect of Soviet occupation would entail. The unconditional Japanese surrender provided the foundation for the Settlement of 1951, thereby meeting the criterion of absolute geopolitical necessity. The complete vanquishing of the adversary, however, eliminated the possibility of direct *policies of reciprocal restraint* with the defeated party. Put simply, the position of Japan in August 1945 did not allow any opportunity for the Japanese Government to accord the victor an act of 'unilateral accommodation'. Any policies of reciprocal restraint would, therefore, be required to be made exclusively amongst the Allied victors. Indeed, this was the vision of President Roosevelt at the Yalta Conference. This rosy vision of the future, however, was not meant to be. Following the April 1945 death of its main cheerleader, President Roosevelt, the cooperative spirit that should have constituted the cornerstone of the 'Yalta System' displayed serious cracks. Instead, postwar East Asia, not subject to the same minutiae of planning as the European Continent, was left to be handled in an almost ad hoc fashion. The operational division line of the 38th Parallel, designated in General Order No. 1 as nothing more than a coordination mechanism for US and Soviet forces to accept the surrender of the Imperial Military, ended up serving as the basis for the division of the Korean Peninsula into two ideologically opposed states. This was not the original plan, but rather a spontaneous reaction to geopolitical developments as they occurred. The unified voice of China, which had been founded at Cairo and championed by President Roosevelt, was lost once again with the collapse of the United Second Front and resumption of the Chinese Civil War. While there was overt interference in US attempts to broker an end to the fighting and install a coalition government, there was no coordinated international effort in line with the fabled 'Yalta System' designed to deal with exactly such issues. Policies of reciprocal restraint, designed to accommodate rather than antagonize the interests of the victorious powers were absent from the immediate postwar aftermath. This culminated in the Treaty of San Francisco that explicitly excluded East Asian states from both its negotiations and final signature. Consequently, the Settlement of 1951 did not foster the criterion of policies of reciprocal restraint.

The inability of the ‘Yalta System’ to generate any policies of reciprocal restraint in East Asia, most notably in China and Korea, augmented immediate postwar tensions. These became subsequently embedded in the Treaty of San Francisco. The United States, as the architect of the final Peace Treaty with Japan, was obviously satisfied as its terms were designed to reflect the priorities laid out in Washington’s national security strategy. As the vanquished party, Japan also was satisfied with the final peace treaty its occupation Government was obliged to sign. Despite losing the totality of its Empire, Japan took solace in its new status as a Pacific appendage of the United States as the most favourable outcome to safeguard its remaining industrial interests. Beyond this new formal understanding between victor and vanquished, however, satisfaction with the treaty that supposedly formally ended the Second World War in Asia was not to be found. The USSR voiced its irritation with the agreement, opting instead to withhold its signature. Moscow’s dissatisfaction was ostensibly derived from the document’s refusal to accord formal Soviet sovereignty over the southern Kurile Islands. Such disgruntlement was also shared by the PRC and DPRK who were formally excluded from the negotiation process and final signature of the agreement as the US refused to accord both states recognition. With the Treaty of San Francisco creating a dichotomy between the states of East Asia, the Settlement of 1951 did not establish the criterion of *satisfaction with the status quo*. Likewise, the failure of the Settlement of 1951 to generate policies of reciprocal restraint and furnish satisfaction with the status quo signified that stable peace within the East Asian region was not established.

The differing views on the legitimacy of the Treaty of San Francisco did not mark the only point of divergence within the East Asian region. The geopolitical trajectory of the initial postwar period in the wake of the failure of the stillborn ‘Yalta System’ ensured that a plethora of social orders would become entrenched throughout East Asia. By the signature of the Treaty of San Francisco, Marxist-Leninist-inspired social orders not only existed in the USSR but were established in the PRC and the DPRK. Both newly established governments in Beijing and Pyongyang also laid explicit claim to represent the only legitimate social order of their respective state that had been divided by civil war. In the Republic of China and Korea, authoritarian social orders were established that, faced by perceived Communist aggression, assumed a central function in US strategy for the Pacific. The United States remained the centre of ideological opposition to Communist ideology and chief promotor of Washington’s interpretation of democracy and personal liberty. As such, similarities amongst the social orders of East Asia were few and far between. The Settlement of 1951 could therefore not be said to fulfill the criterion of *compatible social orders*.

Already at Yalta, the political differences between the USSR and its Western Allies on key points of the postwar order in Eastern Europe seemed unsurmountable. The level of trust between the victorious Allies was so high that Prime Minister Winston Churchill—never known to shy away from starting another war—ordered British military planners to examine ‘Operation UNTHINKABLE’, namely a military operation to “impose upon [the Soviet Union] the will of the United States and British Empire” in order to get “a square deal for Poland”, with a scheduled start of hostilities on 1 July 1945.³¹⁸⁷ Under such friendly circumstances, it is not hard to understand why the ‘Yalta System’ fizzled so quickly into oblivion. This mutual distrust also permeated into East Asia. The scant agreements regarding East Asia that were committed to writing, such as the

³¹⁸⁷ Reynolds, David, *From World War to Cold War: Churchill, Roosevelt, and the International History of the 1940s*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006, pg. 250.

Cairo Declaration's commitment to an international trusteeship over Korea to guide it to independence, never proceeded past the initial planning phase. While interallied institutions were set up to, in theory, deal with occupied Korea and even Japan, they found themselves quickly relegated into irrelevance and usurped by new regional realities. Beyond the geopolitical necessity of Japan's surrender, there was very little that the former wartime Allies could agree upon and translate into concrete policy. Behind the tension, however, lay willingness to revert to the use of military means to enforce foreign policy objectives. Such intentions were placed in sharp relief with the 1950 outbreak of the Korean War, where both the US, under the guise of a UN mandate, and the PRC intervened to protect their perceived geopolitical interests. With war raging in the mountains of Korea at the time of the Treaty of San Francisco's signature, the criterion of *pacific self-images* could obviously not be applied to the Settlement of 1951.

The inability of the 'Yalta System' to result in any tangible policies of reciprocal restraint led to an open struggle between would-be ideological contenders, led by the US and the USSR, to establish hegemony over the remains of the Japanese Asian Empire. The Treaty of San Francisco was a US reaction to its inability to establish its own version of hegemony over the totality of East Asia. The 'loss of China' with the founding of the PRC and the decision of Washington strategists, first and foremost George Kennan, that the US could retain its security interests in East Asia without having to mimic the substantial level of its economic and physical commitment in Western Europe, reshaped the US view on a unilateral strategy towards East Asia in the absence of any Great Power cooperation. Hence, rather than deepen US hegemonic commitment on the Asian mainland, it was sufficient to retain strong potential to defend and deflect any possible regional security challenges. Following the conclusion of the 1950 Sino-Soviet alliance and the sudden outbreak of the Korean War, while underlining the need to strengthen US defensive power in East Asia to concretely repulse Communist forces and deter them from engaging in similar geopolitical adventures, the US elected to strengthen its hegemonic power at the bilateral level, focusing on the unilateral imposition of its hegemonic power, and deliberately electing not to bother couching this fact behind the façade of an all-encompassing regional hegemony. Consequently, the criterion of the *existence of an interested hegemon* did not become a feature of the Settlement of 1951.

In analyzing the apparent logic behind institutional bargains that shaped US choices in Western Europe, Ikenberry explained the emergence of a Constitutional Order as "the leading state [agreeing] to restrain its own potential for domination and abandonment in exchange for greater compliance by subordinate states. Both sides [hegemon and weaker states] are better off with a Constitutional Order than in an order based on the constant threat of the indiscriminate and arbitrary exercise of power."³¹⁸⁸ Whether or not such logic in actuality applied to the post-1945 situation in Europe lies beyond the scope of this dissertation, however the historical evidence presented in the above 'critical junctures' points to the exact opposite rationale being the case in Washington's decision to establish the Settlement of 1951. The US did not seek to restrain its power but project it, both to ensure that its security commitments did not embroil Washington into an unwanted war with a Continental Asian power, and to ensure maximum deterrence against Cold War enemies. Constitutional Orders and the cumbersome institutions that accompany them were simply not necessary to achieve US goals. The Settlement of 1951 was not designed to be an inclusive settlement, but rather an exclusionary one, aimed at intimidating and isolating identified foes, with no intention of initiating cooperation through a Constitutional Order. While

³¹⁸⁸ Ikenberry, *After Victory*, pg. 258.

diplomatically recognizing the USSR, the US had no qualms of anchoring Japan into its regional defensive system against any possible Communist incursions. Refusing to recognize either the PRC or DPRK dispensed US policy makers from including potentially difficult issues in the Treaty of Peace with Japan and allowed the US to shape the postwar trajectory in areas where Washington chose to excerpt its military hegemony in an unmolested fashion. The Settlement of 1951 was an expression of US unilateral power and will. While the states it chose to involve in its 'hubs and spokes' system were granted the security of relying on the might of US power in case of any incursion, the price of such a guarantee was the complete ceding of their respective states' military and foreign policy power. As such, the Settlement of 1951 was not meant to provide a panacea for the magnitude of issues that East Asia faced in the wake of the collapse of the Japanese Empire. Rather it consciously kicked such questions down the proverbial road for a more opportune time that, in reality, never came. As such, the criteria inherent in the *existence of a Constitutional Order* were not present in the Settlement of 1951.

The 'San Francisco System' that governs contemporary relations in East Asia therefore continues to bear Washington's strategic choice of promoting isolation, or selective inclusion through bilateral ties, and the willing geopolitical omissions that stemmed therefrom. The Settlement of 1951 locked in the strategic choices of the Truman Administration attempting to defend its strategic position in East Asia that has, due to the unexpected trajectory of history, projected itself in an unaltered format into the 21st century.

11.4. The Absence of Institutional Bargains and the Modern Systems

The Settlement of 1951 is not unique when compared with its preceding 'critical junctures'. The systemic history of East Asia illustrates a story of locking in political trajectories that would have consequences far beyond the conclusion of the immediate conflict in question. In the first set of 'critical junctures', the Settlements of 1895 and 1901, the role of China as an object of the new, global international system East Asia now adhered to became firmly entrenched. While it is debatable as to what extent the Qing could have avoided this fate given the reality of the Dynasty's military and administrative strength at the end of the 19th century, the decision of the Qing Court to hold fast to the traditional cosmology of the pre-modern international society played a large role in determining the Qing Empire's ultimate fate of objectification by the contemporary actors of the Westphalian system. This 'locking in' of China's second-class status through the Treaty of Shimonoseki and the Boxer Protocol did much more than vindicate Japan's choice of swift modernization/Westernization that characterized the Meiji era, but stripped the traditional hegemon of the region, China, of its power to shape not only its own destiny but its place within the regional system. Hence, the Settlement of 1895 and 1901 locked China in as an important but marginal actor in the East Asian system. Indeed, China would, in the 'critical junctures' that followed, never fully be expunged from this role these Settlements prescribed. Only in 1972, with the US decision to recognize the PRC, and the permanent UN Security Council seat that came with it, could China finally stake a claim to regain some of the regional systemic 'actorness' that it had lost with the Settlement of 1895 and 1901. Hence, the first set of 'critical junctures' pre-defined the roles and the entry points of the East Asian states of Japan, China, and Korea in the international system.

This locking in of roles was pregnant with consequences that shaped future ‘critical junctures’. Geopolitical necessity forced the Qing Dynasty to accept the harsh peace terms laid out in the Treaty of Shimonoseki and Boxer Protocol, but its terms were such that excluded any possibility of the Qing making a gesture of ‘unilateral accommodation’, essential to embark upon a policy of reciprocal restraint. The harshness of both these treaties deprived the Qing of any opportunity to adopt policies geared towards stable peace as the burden of defeat foisted upon Imperial China was such that it had no other way forward save the begrudging fulfilment of the treaties’ terms. Instead of adhering to its traditional role as centre of the civilized world, China constituted the first major vacuum in the East Asian system, first as a weak state in the Settlements of 1895, 1901, and 1919, and subsequently, following the CCP’s 1949 victory, as an isolated state, deprived of recognition by most of the other East Asian states during the Settlement of 1951. This ‘Chinese vacuum’ furnished the opportunity for the Russian and Japanese Empires to cooperate, despite their recent bloody conflict, in achieving their postwar political and economic goals. Indeed, both Tokyo and St. Petersburg “demonstrated an impressive pace of evolution in their relationship by signing a series of political agreements in 1907, 1910, 1912, and 1916...[joining] forces to divide Northeast Asia between themselves, as well as to prevent competition by third parties, primarily the United States.”³¹⁸⁹ Viewed over the *longue durée* of regional systemic history, this degree of cooperation is the closest the region has come to what could be described as a political bargain based on mutual accommodation.

From the fall of the Russian Empire in 1917 emerged another void in the regional system. The chaos unleashed by the Bolshevik Revolution and the subsequent creation of the Soviet Union created an unrecognized power, unable to partake in the regional system. The absence of the USSR from both the League of Nations (joining only in 1934 after the Japanese withdrawal) as well as the ‘Washington System’ added another layer of deficiency to the construction of regional multilateral cooperation. Indeed, the efforts of the Soviet Union in China were largely in part to create an alternative to the modicum of regional cooperation and understanding that had been established. President Roosevelt’s decision to recognize the USSR in 1933 and Washington’s alliance of convenience with Moscow following the German declaration of war against the US in December 1941 established a rudimentary base of understanding. It was one that was brittle at best and aimed at achieving a specific goal rather than promoting regional cooperation. The true nature of this ‘alliance’ promptly revealed itself in the rapid unravelling of the ‘Yalta System’, mostly fueled by Democratic idealistic dreaming rather than the consideration of political realities and the nature of the USSR itself. The second-class status within, or outright absence of East Asian states from, the regional systems created by the respective ‘critical junctures’ analyzed played a major role not only in fermenting regional geopolitical tensions but hindering the emergence of stable peace and the creation of the necessary conditions to create an RSO. This heritage of the decisions of the Anglo-Saxon leaders in 1945 still marks the contemporary geopolitical landscape, both in East Asia and beyond.

Yet it was not merely the existence of ‘systemic vacuums’ but the entire gamut of the consequences wrought by the trajectories determined through East Asia’s ‘critical junctures’ that played a major role in determining why the region remains devoid of RSOs. Although the legacy system of the Settlement of 1951 constitutes the most contemporary example, creating the contours

³¹⁸⁹ Shulatov, Yaroslav, “The Key Rivalry: Russo-Japanese Relations and International Order in Northeast Asia, 1895-1945” in Agalia et al., *Competing Imperialism in Northeast Asia*, pg. 126.

that govern the regional system at the time of writing, the unique geopolitical constellations, characterized by the consequences of the adoption of alien forms of statehood and the conscious inability of the system to meaningfully incorporate all East Asian nations, obliged states to behave in a different manner than in other parts of the international system where such conditions were not present. This was especially relevant for the actions of the most important member of the regional system in the Settlement of 1951, namely the United States. Examining the regional political realities in 1950, the prospect of seeking to diffuse power through the establishment of an RSO became decidedly unattractive, and therefore unnecessary, to use as a tool to ‘diffuse’ (i.e. augment) US power. Indeed, with the failure of the ‘Yalta System’ and the onset of the Cold War turning hot in Korea, the use of an RSO as a vehicle to promote regional security through the prism of forwarding the hegemon’s interests was seen as a direct threat to Washington’s hegemonic strategy. In this way, contemporary East Asia reflects the antithesis of the Western European experience of 1945. The idea of binding institutions in a Constitutional Order was deliberately ignored in the Settlement of 1951. What the Settlement of 1945 in Europe solved, in terms of establishing the ground rules of an international order and an RSO, the Settlement of 1951 in East Asia willfully ignored. It is this inheritance that continues to mark contemporary interstate regional realities.

Describing the rationale behind Washington’s decision to create a Constitutional Order over a ruined Europe in 1945, Ikenberry notes that “the United States was able to use its unusual and momentary advantage to tilt the system in the direction it desired.”³¹⁹⁰ This logic was also apparent in Washington’s policy towards the Settlement of 1951 pursuing a narrow agenda of containment and exclusion based on US strategic needs and perceived limitations. As the United States paved the way for the inclusion of Japan—and eventually the Republic of Korea and the Republic of China—into the privileged sphere of liberal hegemony, it deliberately left most parts of Continental East Asia excluded. As the institutions the United States constructed in Western Europe “have not simply persisted for fifty years...[and] have actually become more deeply rooted in the wider structures of politics and society of the countries that participated in the order”³¹⁹¹, so have the cleavages that were created in East Asia by the Settlement of 1951 become more obvious. While the PRC and the Russian Federation have witnessed some degree of integration into the liberal economic/financial order through membership in the World Trade Organization (WTO), in 2001 and 2012, and the Bretton Woods institutions, in 1980 and 1992, the region is no closer to the establishment of stable peace and the formation of an RSO as it was at the San Francisco Conference in 1951. No Helsinki Agreement, recognizing the post-Yalta European territorial status quo in 1975, would be signed for East Asia. The territorial disputes between regional states and claims for war reparations that resulted from the fall of the Japanese Empire remain as relevant at the time of writing as they were during Dulles’s ‘negotiations’ on the Treaty of Peace with Japan.

While the US-sponsored Constitutional Order in Europe—likewise an expression of Washington’s claim to hegemony—has ensured that, through time, “more people and more of their activities are connected to the institutions and operations of the American postwar order”³¹⁹², the opposite case can be said to be increasingly becoming the reality of contemporary East Asia. The US-dictated postwar European order provided a Constitutional Order that, while still based on the

³¹⁹⁰ Ikenberry, *After Victory*, pg. 253.

³¹⁹¹ Ibid.

³¹⁹² Ibid.

basic principle of containing its former Bolshevik partners, provided the base for stable peace to break out and, consequently, the creation of an RSO. The Settlement of 1951 produced the opposite effect, locking in selected states deemed necessary to promote the defence of US regional interests—first and foremost Japan and then belatedly the Republic of Korea and Republic of China as accidental latecomers—through bilateral agreements securing the US total control over foreign and military policy. Save for a brief and unsuccessful flirtation with the stillborn idea of a ‘Northeast Asian Treaty Organization’, no serious thought was given to the establishment of an RSO in East Asia. As the Constitutional Order in US-occupied Europe intensified cooperation amongst former enemies, so did the Settlement of 1951 legitimize the regional divide that US policy makers created at the commencement of the Cold War. As long as the conditionality of the Settlement of 1951—a distillation of the ‘critical junctures’ of 1895, 1901, 1905, and 1919—remains in place, no RSOs in East Asia can be expected to be created. Bluntly put, the conditions for their emergence are simply not there, both out of historical legacy and contemporary regional geopolitical realities.

11.5. The Possible Systemic Future of East Asia

Given the weight of the totality of East Asian history, the question of the formation of an RSO is extremely unlikely. The divides that have characterised each and every legacy system that has graced East Asia since the introduction of Westphalian international relations in the 19th Century remain solidly embedded in the Settlement of 1951. The inability of the regional system in East Asia to collectively address these divides while rebuilding itself in the wake of each systemic war is instructive. The existing deficiencies of the prevailing legacy system, in the wake of what could be deemed the ‘critical juncture’ of 2022 have become more amplified in an increasingly hostile atmosphere of geopolitical competition. While its main focus, as in the ‘critical junctures’ of the First and Second World War, lies in Europe, its repercussions have reverberated into East Asia, highlighting the shortcomings of the contemporary legacy system and intensifying competition between the US, PRC, and the Russian Federation. East Asia, systemically speaking, remains decidedly locked in 20th century realities. Indeed, the previous century has not come to an end as its geopolitical legacy system continues to define the region. The concept of an RSO, therefore, does not seem to lend itself to the contemporary realities of East Asia. Any serious attempt to overcome the deficiencies purposefully built into the Settlement of 1951 could not seriously be attempted to be remedied without serious geopolitical concessions, for which the necessary criteria are simply non-existent.

The reasons for investigating this anomaly have taken on a new urgency. The advent of the commencement of the Russian Special Military Operation (SMO) against Ukraine on 24 February 2022 marks the end of the post-Cold War era and the dawning of the ‘post-post-Cold War’ era as a new ‘critical juncture’ that could be seen as a serious blow to the Settlement of 1951. At the time of writing, it remains unclear what ultimate contours this ‘critical juncture’ will assume and the scope of geopolitical and systemic change that will accompany it. As with the First World War, the Russian SMO against Ukraine is, militarily speaking, a purely Western affair. The prospects of an outbreak of systemic war, either in East Asia or elsewhere, consequently remains a distinct possibility. The time for restraint and compromise seems to have, once again, passed the region by, setting the stage for renewed conflict. Consequently, while it is certainly feasible that an extra-regional alliance, such as AUKUS, might seek to expand its area of activity to include East Asia,

with the possible increased involvement of Japan, such efforts would be decidedly the result of attempts to augment unilateral US power. The idea of an RSO being formed in the short- to medium-term is, bluntly put, a non-starter.

For the region to look towards solutions a different mechanism must therefore be considered. The situation faced by East Asia following the onset of the ‘critical juncture’ of 2022 is not unlike that of the region in the wake of the Settlement of 1919. A systemic vacuum reigns over the East Asian region, with no institutions tasked with the mandate to address security issues, save for an overarching, yet politically irrelevant, United Nations. Furthermore, as in the years following the Treaty of Versailles, the system remains dominated by geopolitical competition between two main actors, now the PRC and the United States. The US Department of Defence, in its 2022 *National Security Strategy*, declared that “The PRC is the only competitor with both the intent to reshape the international order and, increasingly the economic, diplomatic, military, and technological power to do it.”³¹⁹³ Another East Asian nation, the Russian Federation, was equally described in menacing terms as an “acute threat”. Following the 10 July 2024 NATO Summit in Washington, for the first time, the Alliance issued a statement directly accusing the PRC of challenging the existing global order, noting in its final communiqué that “the People’s Republic of China’s stated ambitions and coercive policies continue to challenge our interests, security, and values. The deepening strategic partnership between Russia and the PRC and their mutually reinforcing attempts to undercut and reshape the rules-based international order, are a cause for profound concern.”³¹⁹⁴ Such accusations were duly responded to by Chinese Foreign Ministry Spokesman Lin Jian who underlined that “[NATO’s] clumsy stunts have sounded the alarm for many in the world and remind people what risks and challenges NATO, as a vestige of the Cold War and a product of bloc confrontation and bloc politics, will bring to world peace and stability.”³¹⁹⁵ As in 1919, overt dissatisfaction with the systemic status quo encourages, rather than abates, geopolitical competition, a state that could lead to the outbreak of conflict, be it voluntary or involuntary. Hence, equipped with the assistance of historical analysis, what can be done to stem the march towards the next systemic war?

A possible solution lies in the analysis of East Asia’s ‘critical junctures’. Faced with a similar level of geopolitical tension and lack of foreign policy transparency that threatened to plunge the Pacific into a new round of disarmament and instability, President Harding took the unprecedented decision to convene the 1922 Washington Conference. This vivid example of tangible multilateralism resulted in the example of the ‘Washington System’, showcasing how East Asian states were able to manage security questions in an inherently unstable political context. It was in East Asia where the first disarmament regime (the Washington Naval Treaty), recognition of the contemporary territorial status quo in the Pacific (the Four Power Treaty), and commitment to non-interference and support of the territorial integrity of the Republic of China (the Nine Power Treaty) were signed. As noted, this was accomplished without the condition of geopolitical necessity and marked agreements that states not only thought were in their respective interests but

³¹⁹³ White House, *National Security Strategy*, Washington, October 2022, pg. 23. <https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/Biden-Harris-Administrations-National-Security-Strategy-10.2022.pdf>.

³¹⁹⁴ https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_227678.htm, accessed 13 July 2024.

³¹⁹⁵ Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Lin Jian’s Regular Press Conference on 12 July 2024, http://us.china-embassy.gov.cn/eng/lcbt/wjbfyrbt/202407/t20240712_11453150.htm#:~:text=China%20will%20stick%20to%20the,sovereignty%2C%20security%20and%20development%20interests, accessed 13 July 2024.

could make a decisive contribution to regional peace and stability. The case of the ‘Washington System’ is particularly revealing in that it explicitly sought to seek security-building measures in a context where its framers, the Harding Administration, acknowledged that the establishment of an interested hegemon and formation of a Constitutional Order were unrealistic. Electing to operate within these inherent limitations to cooperation, the ‘Washington System’ provides an illustrative example of functional cooperation that could arise from an institutional vacuum. This situation was both face by policymakers in the immediate aftermath of the Treaty of Versailles and is now confronting those dealing with contemporary systemic realities.

As such, the agreements of the ‘Washington System’ were inherently designed *not* to establish stable peace, but to coordinate and manage geopolitical rivalries. This sober approach to international relations could furnish a valuable example to current policy makers. The scope of the Washington Conference undertaken by the Harding Administration was daunting, yet its successive treaties did provide the semblance of stability in East Asia for a short period of time. The inherent deficiencies, first and foremost the lack of any enforcement mechanisms, that led to its ultimate spiral into redundancy in the 1930s reflected more the political moeurs of the initial post-Versailles world and the political preferences of the United States whose Senate, in 1920, had officially rejected Wilson’s coveted internationalism and the Treaty of Versailles. The case of a purely multilateral approach, based on the lessons of the Washington Conference, is also justified through the analysis of the above ‘critical junctures’. The East Asian region has been largely defined by relations determined on the sole basis of balance of power. Addressing any security issues in East Asia will have to face this reality as it shows no sign of abating. The case, therefore, is to be made that political competition should somehow be managed, as in Washington in 1922, rather than being left exposed to an RSO embedded in an increasingly unstable international system.

While multilateralist institutions have percolated into the East Asian landscape, none seek to remedy the deficiencies of the Settlement of 1951. One of the more prevalent examples is the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC), founded in 1989, that includes the US, PRC, Japan, the Russian Federation, and Republic of Korea. However, as its name entails, this multilateralism has been mainly focused on economic questions, limiting its security cooperation to counterterrorism issues, having founded a Counter-Terrorism Task Force in 2003 and a Counter-Terrorism Working Group in 2013.³¹⁹⁶ APEC added to an existing wider regional framework, such as the Association of South Asian Nations (ASEAN) and the Pacific Economic Cooperation Council (PECC). Such multilateral cooperation has even expanded to multilateral forums involving the PRC, Japan, and the Republic of Korea—such as ASEAN+3 and the PRC-Japan-Republic of Korea Trilateral Summit—adding “new dimensions to an emerging regionalism.”³¹⁹⁷ While economic cooperation, as the creation of the above regional organizations attests to, can be discussed, political and security cooperation, due to the legacy systems of the analyzed ‘critical junctures’, remain decidedly absent from the agenda. Remedying the inbuilt confrontation that characterized the Settlement of 1951 automatically remains out of reach. To accomplish this formidable task, regional policy makers will have to look elsewhere as current multilateral approaches delve in the superficial without tackling any underlying issues that stoke balance of power competition.

³¹⁹⁶ <https://www.apec.org/topics/counter-terrorism>, accessed 13 July 2024.

³¹⁹⁷ Hara, “The San Francisco System and its Legacies”, pg. 65.

Scholars seeking to address the lingering regional tensions that have been locked into lasting contemporary realities by the Settlement of 1951 underline “the necessity for a multilateral approach that goes beyond the framework of the current disputant states as a key to better understanding and conceptualizing approaches to the future resolution of these problems.”³¹⁹⁸ This multilateralist approach is indeed a broad field encompassing many different possible avenues. The analysis of the East Asian legacy systems that arose out of each ‘critical juncture’ shows that the criteria for the formation of a RSO never existed in East Asia and—given the degree of current political rivalry and the open dysfunctionality of the Settlement of 1951—it would be an impossibility to simply will them into existence from the pages of academia. The way to a much more humble and temperate approach to confronting the realities to a system defined by balance of power is, however, to be found as a part of East Asia’s systemic heritage. This can be understood as a ‘pure’ multilateralist vision, as President Harding established with the ‘Washington System’. Its treaties were the result of sometimes painful compromise between rivals on a unilateral basis in order to dampen political competition. No overarching bureaucratic structures were constructed, as in the Treaty of Versailles, to oversee the implementation of the treaties as no degree of institutional oversight was seen as politically viable. While this undoubtably played a role in the ultimate demise of the treaties with the onset of the Second World War, the history of the Cold War illustrates that cooperation on concrete security matters can take place in the absence of any RSO. The Strategic Arms Limitations Talks (SALT) Treaties that resulted from two rounds of bilateral conferences between the US and the USSR lasting from 1969 to 1979, established reciprocal restraints on some of the central elements of their respective nuclear arsenals. The resulting SALT I Interim Agreement froze the current number of intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs) at their contemporary levels, while the Treaty on the Limitation of Anti-Ballistic Missile Systems stemmed competition in the field of ostensibly defensive systems.³¹⁹⁹ The missing elements of compliance that plagued the Washington treaties were remedied through the establishment of concrete verification measures. De-escalation was illustrated, as in Washington in 1922, to be possible without the intrusion of multilateral organizations.

A fresh look at multilateral efforts at the individual state level to address security issues in East Asia would be timely. As the stability of the regional system established by the Settlement of 1951 begins to tangibly erode, the inherent balance of power, upon which the system was designed, begins to manifest itself once more. The intrinsic logic of containment, upon which the 1950 ‘Acheson Line’ was drawn, is slowly emerging as the front line of geopolitical competition between the two would-be hegemonies of East Asia. At the same time, no treaty systems on security issues that dotted bilateral relations between the Cold War superpowers of the US and USSR were ever extended to the PRC, despite having first successfully tested its nuclear arsenal in October 1964 at Lop Nur. As the Washington Conference placed special emphasis on the successful negotiation of a naval disarmament treaty, so could policy makers consider using this framework to address armament issues in East Asia, especially since the DPRK unofficially acquired nuclear weapons in October 2006. While any successor to the Washington Conference could start with its focus on East Asia, it is evident that discussions would soon encompass Eurasia given both technological and political realities and the simple fact that the Settlement of 1951 has bequeathed

³¹⁹⁸ Ibid., pp. 51-52.

³¹⁹⁹ Kurosawa Mitsuru, “Arms Control and Disarmament Treaties” in Kurtz, Lester (ed.), The Encyclopedia of Violence, Peace & Conflict, Amsterdam: Elsevier, 2008, pp.110-112.

no format where such issues could realistically be discussed. The political impetus for such a bold move, however, would have to originate in one of the capitals of the major powers: Washington, Beijing, or Moscow. As the example of the Settlement of 1905 illustrates, practical, interest-based compromise lowers geopolitical tension and dissolves rivalry. While the Washington Conference did not emulate the success of the Treaty of Portsmouth in this regard, it did provide a worthy example of how great power rivalry can be addressed. Focusing on addressing tangible security concerns between capitals, there is therefore little necessity to bargain away power behind the façade of RSOs and their constant stream of vapid statements and contradictory actions.

Such a ‘neo-Washington Conference’ approach could therefore act as a catalyst to stabilize the current rickety international and regional system. While not yet reaching the levels of open conflict witnessed in 1950, recent pronouncements augur the casting of the regional geopolitical conditions back to its frequent episodes of rivalry and confrontation: between Qing China, seeking to maintain its traditional system, and the Foreign Powers; between the Russian and Japanese Empire seeking regional hegemony; between the United States and Japan over leadership in the Pacific; between the ‘Washington System’ signatories and the Soviet attempt to establish an ‘anti-Washington system’; between Japan’s Greater East Asian Co-prosperity Sphere and the second version of the Anglo-Saxon international order; and, finally, between the United States and the Soviet Union following the collapse of the ‘Yalta System’. Confrontation and rivalry have always formed a prominent feature of the East Asian regional system since the introduction of Westphalian statehood. Only one ‘critical juncture’, namely that of the Russo-Japanese War, resulted in the establishment of stable peace between the Russian and Japanese Empire. The rapid transformation of relations between St. Petersburg and Tokyo from adversary to ally illustrates the transformative power of the adoption of focused negotiations on key issues with the willingness to compromise against the background of stable peace. Such a development, however, proved to be a rare phenomenon only repeated in the willing compromise of the Washington Conference. Barring these albeit significant examples, no instances of security cooperation can be gleaned from the examined ‘critical junctures’. The lack of interest in cooperating seriously on security questions has, as the analysis of the above ‘critical junctures’ highlights, constituted a main feature of regional international relations since 1894. Without a serious ‘neo-Washington Conference’ approach, this trend shows little sign of abating as contemporary pressure mounts against the legacy system of 1951.

A further argument in favour of considering a ‘neo-Washington Conference’ is the complete absence of any criteria for the formation of an RSO appearing as part of any of the legacy systems established by East Asia’s ‘critical junctures’. The pacific self-images and compatible social orders that defined East Asia since the collapse of the pre-modern international society have not been recreated in any legacy system. The gap between the respective social orders between East Asian regional states remains large and, even in the individual states themselves, they are undergoing significant change. The exact degree of the desirability and utility of Western concepts such as IOs and RSOs might be subject to radical new interpretation. Not only has the Settlement of 1951 provided the base for a rebirth of regional rivalry that could culminate in systemic war, but the internal changes in the concept of statehood might play a transformational role as well. What constitutes the bedrock of the Westphalian system, the concept of the nation state, is beginning to erode in the cradle of the very culture that begot it. The composition of the nation states of the West are no longer those which formed the grand European institutional bargains of

1945. As Emmanuel Todd expounded, this new reality is based on the erosion of three fundamental traits of Westphalian statehood: cultural, economic and class. As to the first two, Todd wrote that “the concept of the nation state presupposes that the various strata of a territory’s population belong to a common culture, with a political system that can be indifferent, oligarchic, authoritarian or totalitarian. To be applicable, it also requires that the territory in question enjoys a maximum degree of economic autonomy; this autonomy does not, of course, exclude commercial exchanges, but these must, in the medium or long term, be more or less balanced. A systemic deficit rends the concept of nation state obsolete, since the territorial entity in question can only survive by collecting a tribute or set remuneration. This criterion alone allows us to assert...that France, the United Kingdom, and the United States...are no longer completely nation states.”³²⁰⁰ Combined with such ongoing trends is the destruction of the Western middle classes that traditionally formed “the centre of gravity” of the nation state as it was “thanks to a concrete urban hierarchy, populated by an educated and differentiated middle class, that the State, the nation’s nervous system, could emerge.”³²⁰¹ The erosion of the criteria that qualify Western polities as nation states, as well as the values they are perceived to espouse, will not only eventually alter their continued viability, but also their relative power position within the international order. The ability of Western states to export their social order and bind other states institutionally under its tenets cannot be compared to the position the US enjoyed in its ‘unipolar moment’ in 1945. A change in the social orders and practice of statehood would inevitably hinder the willingness and the ability of Western states, first and foremost the US, to imitate a grand institutional bargain as per 1945, especially should they find themselves on the losing side of the condition of geopolitical necessity following a systemic war. Hence, any meaningful cooperation on security matters between states could only be implemented through a ‘neo-Washington Conference’, with laser focus on state-to-state agreements aiming at containing, not overcoming, great power rivalry.

What ideas will form the cornerstone of the legacy system of the next Settlement in East Asia are still in the making. Whether it will be established on the Westphalian tradition or find itself injected with the dormant ideas inherent in the base concepts of the pre-modern international society, as underlined by the writings of Zhao Tingyang, whose works consider how terms and practices that come out of Chinese antiquity can remedy perceived shortcomings in the contemporary world order, remains an object of abject speculation.³²⁰² Yet, as Wang underlined in his study of the use of power in the Song and Ming Dynasties, it is most likely to be based just as much on the use of force as defined by the tenets of cultural realism, as much as it could be couched in the aura of the myth of traditional Confucian pacifism. Throughout Imperial Chinese history, “the structure of power, not cultural preferences, was critical to understanding Chinese strategic choices”³²⁰³ and evidence suggests that this tendency will remain very much intact in the duration and, more importantly, aftermath of the contemporary ‘critical juncture’. The lack of the necessary criteria for the formation of the RSO continue to be absent from current systemic realities and the prospect of their appearance is unlikely at best.

The question of RSOs, however, goes deeper than the criteria of their formation but raises reservations concerning their continuing metaphysical necessity as a vehicle to address security

³²⁰⁰ Todd, Emmanuel, *La Défaite de l’Occident*, Paris: Gallimard, 2024, pp. 27-28.

³²⁰¹ Ibid., pg. 28.

³²⁰² Westad, “New Forward”, pg. xvii.

³²⁰³ Wang, *Hegemony and War*, pg. 182.

challenges in a changing international system. Given the global scope of the ‘critical juncture’ of 2022, any attempts at collective security will be required to jettison the dichotomy of pursuing different approaches to institutional bargains, as the US did in Europe and East Asia respectively after the end of the Second World War. Instead, diplomatic focus should exclusively rest upon the sole consideration of the question of security between and amongst states; any agreements that might stem therefrom would ideally necessitate the involvement of Eurasia as a whole as an agreement exclusively between states. A ‘neo-Washington Conference’ approach could mark a step towards realizing this necessary discussion and, in doing so, remedy the shortcomings of the Settlement of 1951 that has frozen the regional systemic reality of a bygone era. As with states and Empires, each of the ‘critical junctures’ studied in the dissertation locked in regional systemic contours until the subsequent systemic event, using the terminology of Gilpin, reshuffled the deck and dealt the cards anew. This destiny of each regional or international system is tacitly accepted by Ikenberry who, viewing the future through a very much Anglo-Saxon prism, notes that “in terms of American hegemony...short of a major war or global economic collapse, it is very difficult to envisage the type of historical earthquake needed to replace the existing order.”³²⁰⁴ History instructs that all power is fleeting and the erosion of the legacy system of the Settlement of 1951 brings Ikenberry’s sober caveat closer to fruition. The systemic history of East Asia, however, despite the absence of institutionalist cooperation, does provide a road map to manage geopolitical rivalry should the sufficient wisdom and political will be found. Yet forecasting can sometimes be the *faux ami* of the scholar because, as C.S. Lewis (1898-1963) wrote, “we keep on assuming that we know the play. We do not know the play. We do not even know if we are in Act I or Act V...The Author knows.”³²⁰⁵ The audience, as usual, must be silent and observe.

³²⁰⁴ Ikenberry, *After Victory*, pg. 254.

³²⁰⁵ Lewis, C.S., *The World’s Last Night and Other Essays*, New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1952, pg. 105.

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Abstract auf Deutsch: Der Mangel an regionalen Sicherheitsorganisationen in Ostasien, 1894-1951

Ziel dieser Dissertation ist es, eine Erklärung dafür zu liefern, warum in Ostasien trotz seiner hohen wirtschaftlichen Bedeutung und des Ausmaßes der gegenwärtigen politischen Herausforderungen keine regionalen Sicherheitsorganisationen (RSOs) gegründet wurden. Hierzu wurde ein eklektischer theoretischer Ansatz gewählt, der die Bereiche Politikwissenschaft und Geschichte als Hauptdisziplinärfelder vereint. Basierend auf einer ausführlichen Durchsicht der Literatur wird argumentiert, daß keine RSO geründet werden kann, ohne daß zuvor ein stabiler Frieden zwischen ihren Mitgliedern hergestellt wurde. Sieben Kriterien wurden als unabdingbar für die Entstehung einer RSO identifiziert. Die Analyse konzentriert sich auf die wichtigsten Friedensverträge, die auf systemische Kriege in Ostasien folgten und deren „Legacy-Systeme“ die diplomatische Geschichte der Region geprägt haben. Diese Dissertation füllt nicht nur die Lücke in der aktuellen Literatur darüber, warum RSOs nicht gebildet werden, sondern kann durch die Darstellung der systemischen Veränderungen und Neukalibrierungen, die Ostasien zwischen 1894 und 1951 kennzeichneten, auch als Resource sowohl für Forscher als auch für politische Entscheidungsträger dienen den Mangel an RSOs zu verstehen, der derzeit Ostasien des 21. Jahrhunderts kennzeichnet, und mögliche politische Ansätze zu formulieren, um dieses anhaltende Vakuum anzugehen.