

On the Periphery of the Russo-Japanese War Part I

Ian Nish (STICERD, London School of Economics and Political Science):

China and the Russo-Japanese War

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John Chapman (Scottish Centre of War Studies, University of Glasgow):

British Naval Estimation of Japan and Russia, 1894-1905

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Discussion Paper
No. IS/04/475
April 2004

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Preface

2004 marks the centenary of the outbreak of war between Russia and Japan, a significant event in the history of both countries. A symposium was held in the Michio Morishima Room at STICERD on 16 March 2004 and attracted a large specialist audience.

Since many conferences are being held around the world to reassess this event, we chose to entitle our symposium 'On the Periphery of the Russo-Japanese War'. That is, we concentrated on countries like China and Britain whose interests were closely tied up with the war, though they were not themselves belligerents.

The following papers were presented:

Ian Nish (London School of Economics and Political Science): *China and the Russo-Japanese War*

John Chapman (formerly of the University of Sussex): *Britain's Naval Estimation of Japan and Russia, 1894-1905*

David Steeds (formerly of the University of Wales, Aberystwyth): *Japan at War: The Diary of a British Observer, 1904*

Sebastian Dobson (Librarian, the Japan Society, London): *Lt.-General Sir Ian Hamilton and his Scrapbook*

The first two appear in this pamphlet; the last two will appear shortly in Part II. The Centre is grateful to the authors for allowing us to reproduce their papers.

The symposium was held in association with the Japan Society, London.

The Centre issued an earlier pamphlet on this theme of the Russo-Japanese War with papers by Stewart Lone and Philip Towle (STICERD International Studies, IS/98/351).

April 2004

Abstracts

Chapman: Major defects in British naval intelligence were the absence of an effective central department, an inferior network of naval attachés in major capitals prior to 1902 and the lack of secure direct cable communications with Northeast Asia. The performance of the Naval Intelligence Department was changed for the better by the efforts of Lord Selborne as First Lord of the Admiralty (1900-5). Selborne's promotion of Britain's alliance with Japan was conditional on a close working relationship with the administration of Theodore Roosevelt.

Nish: There was considerable uncertainty and indecision about whether China would take part in the Russo-Japanese war. Finally under considerable outside pressure she declared strict neutrality. Since the civil administration in her Three Eastern Provinces (Manchuria) was in Chinese hands, she inevitably had a role in the war; and her people suffered much.

The Portsmouth treaties that ended the war could only be implemented with China's agreement. Foreign Minister Komura had to conclude new treaties with China at the Peking Conference on 22 December 1905.

Keywords: Japan, China, Russia, Manchuria, Britain; Admiralty, Fisher, Selborne, Balfour, Uchida, Komura, Yuna Shikai; Great Northern Telegraphs, Naval Intelligence, Portsmouth Conference, Peking Conference.

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CHINA AND THE RUSSO JAPANESE WAR

Ian Nish

The Russo-Japanese war of 1904-5 was fought initially in Korea and later on Chinese soil in Manchuria. China was in a sense the main victim of the war. Manchuria, the so-called Three Eastern Provinces, was the heartland of the Ching dynasty and intensive Chinese colonization had taken place there from 1902 onwards.¹ But Russian armies had been in occupation of key points in the territory since 1900 and controlled its railway. Japan was in 1903 poised to challenge Russia's preeminent position. As war approached, two issues arose: what attitude the Chinese would take to the possibility of Japanese sending armies to Manchuria; and what military part China herself wanted to play in any war? These and the role she took in any peace settlement in east Asia are the points I shall try to address in this paper.

China at the Brink of War

A major observer of the Chinese scene, Sir Robert Hart, the Director-general of the Chinese Imperial Maritime Customs Service, wrote in his letter of 20 December 1903:

'I don't know what China will do: some advise going with Japan -others with Russia - and others standing still.'²

He thought that there was still some doubt about China's attitude as late as the New Year. Hart was aware that there was not much that China could offer to either side. Certainly not financially: she could not give loans. Nor militarily: the Chinese army was large but was still being modernized through Japanese advisers.

Hart's observations were to some extent supported by Uchida Yasuya, the Japanese minister in Beijing (1901-6). His writings are one of the best sources on Japan's reactions to Chinese indecision in this crisis. One of his prime concerns was whether there was a secret treaty of alliance against Japan which was rumoured to exist between China and Russia. This alliance was thought to have been concluded in 1896 by A.I. Pavlov, the Russian *chargé d'affaires*, and Dmitri D. Pokotilov to last for 15 years, allegedly by extensive use of bribery. Worried by persistent rumours that it was still in force, Uchida was afraid that the Chinese leaders were in Russia's pocket in this

emergency and thought that Russia was urging China to fulfil her obligation to help in the war. Uchida spent much effort uncovering evidence that it existed and speculating what practical effect it would have if war came.³

Although Li Hung-chang, the Chinese statesman closest to Russia, had died in 1901, his successors seemed to have joined in many negotiations giving the Russians improved access to the south of Manchuria and only stood up to the Russians under Great Power pressure. The Chinese felt that they were not strong enough to resist Russian demands unless they had the clear support of other powers. Russia had entered into a treaty in 1902 undertaking to withdraw her troops in three tranches but the Chinese had been let down by the Russians when their armies did not pull out as promised in the second tranche. Instead they covered up their default by imposing fresh conditions. Their representatives in Peking, G.A. Planson who was *chargé d'affaires* (November 1902-May 1903) and Paul Mikhaelovich Lessar, when he returned from sick leave in Russia, were under instructions to insist on new conditions being met prior to the evacuation of their troops. Agreeable men and competent officials, they had the effect by their stance of freezing the situation in Manchuria and exciting Japan's suspicions even more.⁴

But Hart's intelligence suggested that things were moving in Japan's direction at the Chinese court.

'Russian doings at Moukden and the views of some leading officials appear to have decided the Court to throw in its lot with Japan in the Manchurian question. Yuan Shih Kai and Chang Chih Tung had special audiences on 2nd and 3rd [November], and I think that settled the matter: on 4th Wang Wen-shao (Russian) was put out of the [Tsungli] Yamen and Na Tung (Japanese) put into it: this is thought significant and amounts to a pro-Japanese demonstration. Thus the Russians must either climb down now or fight, according to all appearances.⁵

Minister Uchida's diary extracts show that he was regularly meeting the new Chinese team in the Waiwupu. Towards the end of the year, Yuan Shikai, the powerful governor of Tianjin, seems to have got to grips with the fluid situation.⁶

Uchida's report for 1903 stated that the Waiwupu leaders put out feelers, when war seemed inevitable, that they might contribute troops to the Japanese. Japan was, of

course, using the argument that she was mounting a campaign to rid Manchuria of the Russian troops; and that was also China's objective. So China's offer made good sense. Simultaneously Yuan Shikai said to one of his former Japanese military advisers, Lt Colonel Aoki Nobuzumi, that he was anxious to help. But China would, he said, defer to the wishes of the Japanese army, adding that he was 'anxious to build a strategy of [military] cooperation between China and Japan but, if Japan wanted China to stay neutral, that would be observed and he would tell the central government accordingly.'⁷

In order to consider these unofficial offers, there was a series of summit meetings in Tokyo around the end of the year. The negotiations with Russia had by this time failed and critical assessments about Japan's war capacity had to be addressed. These were initiated by Ito Hirobumi who was not confident of Japan's ability to beat Russia on her own and argued in favour of bringing the Chinese into the fighting. Detailed study of these proposals terminated with the cabinet memorandum of 30 December. This considered two options: would China join Japan or stay neutral? They did not take into account the third possibility which Hart had considered, namely that China might throw in her lot with Russia. The conclusion reached was that it was not impossible that China would try to join in. But, from Japan's standpoint, China's participation was not necessary and not desired by the army leaders because of complications. Speaking more generally, China's involvement also carried the political danger that it would give rise to further worldwide talk of the Yellow Peril. There was the additional more technical consideration that China's participation in operations alongside Japan might activate the secret Franco-Russian alliance and bring France into the war on Russia's side. That was to be avoided at all costs.⁸

Quite independently, global powers were worried lest China become a belligerent in that Russia might respond by calling on France to intervene alongside her. This would create a worldwide crisis. John Hay, the US secretary of state took the initiative (as he had earlier done in 1899) in discouraging China. It was of course of even greater relevance to Britain in the sense that France's involvement in the war might also draw Britain in under the terms of the Anglo-Japanese alliance. The British minister in Beijing, Sir Ernest Satow, consulted his government and was told to persuade China to stay neutral. Britain which was by no means confident of Japanese military victory wanted to

avoid finding herself dragged into any war because of European antagonisms and genuinely feared the possibility of French cooperation with the Russians. The diplomatic body in Beijing was of one mind on this issue.⁹

So there was a clear international consensus that China's participation was to be discouraged and that she was to be urged to maintain 'strict neutrality'. On Japan's side, Minister Uchida was accordingly given instructions on 6 January 1904 to advise the Chinese leadership to stay out of the hostilities, 'if it comes to a collision between Japan and Russia'. Simultaneously Satow duly passed on London's views. On the whole, the Chinese seemed content to accept this advice. But there was still uncertainty and unpredictability. *The Times' War in the Far East* states

'The case of China, momentarily in the background, may, however, at any moment come to the front, and no one who watches the trend of events in the Far East can view without misgiving the gradual and disquieting approach of a Chinese army towards the probable theatre of impending hostilities and the arrival of the Chinese Peiyang squadron at Chifu'.¹⁰

Even the Japanese had to admit: 'In case China joins of her own volition in spite of our advice, we can't be responsible.' They were still not convinced that China had finally decided and had to prepare for the contingency that she might change her mind as the fortunes of the war changed.

The wide-ranging consideration which the Japanese cabinet gave to its policy at this time - which was equivalent to advance discussion of war aims - extended to two other areas : Korea and Fukien province. So far as Korea was concerned, there was no attempt to discuss the issue of war with the Koreans as there had been with the Chinese. So far as Fukien was concerned, Japan's interest was in the security of Taiwan, then her only colony, and the worry that some European state would use the crisis to move in. The latter was identified in the long-term as a Japanese sphere of influence.¹¹

War Years

The formal declarations of China's neutrality were made on 12/13 February. There were of course anomalies in China's neutrality declaration in that she wanted it to apply to the whole of the Middle Kingdom in order to demonstrate that her sovereignty applied in

Manchuria even though she did not exercise effective control there. The main notice stated:

'local authorities have been instructed to keep order in their districts and to extend protection to the commercial and Christian populations. Mukden and Hsinking being the sites of the Imperial Mausolea and Palaces the Governor-general has been given instructions to guard them with the greatest vigilance... Chinese troops stationed in these provinces shall not attack the troops of the belligerent countries nor shall the latter be allowed to attack the former.'

But Russia and Japan already had garrisons of sorts in Manchuria so the neutrality rules had to be modified in their application to that territory.

'In Manchuria there are localities still in occupation by foreign troops and beyond the reach of the power of China, where the enforcement of the rules of neutrality will, it is feared, be impossible. The Three Eastern Provinces as well as the rights pertaining thereto may gain victory and shall not be occupied by either of the Powers now at war.'¹²

China also issued separate notices to both countries, appealing to them not to violate her territory in Manchuria. But Japan responded that, so far as neutrality was concerned, her armies had to have freedom of action in Manchuria. This generated an air of resignation that China was doomed to suffer if war came. Hart summed up the position realistically : 'Both Russia and Japan desire expansion - at China's cost'.¹³

There is some evidence in Japanese sources that China's leaders were evidently prepared to go beyond strict neutrality and intended to follow a policy of 'benevolent neutrality' towards Japan. Prince Ching in his discussions with Minister Uchida seems to have spoken of 'secret assistance' being given to Japan.¹⁴

As soon as the war began early in February, the Chinese government came up against not only these legal but also practical problems surrounding neutrality. Russia and Japan presented her with lists of contraband items. China accordingly had to prohibit the movement of rice and other foodstuffs from her treaty ports to Manchuria and Korea. Neutrality also required belligerent vessels to leave her territorial waters or be interned. But China was too weak to enforce this order and both Japan and Russia took advantage of this.

Neutral commercial powers like European countries also applied pressure to ensure

that their trade would continue uninterruptedly at the treaty ports. Hart who was one of the Chinese government officials most affected by trade recorded that he found it hard to deal with the various neutral countries who wanted their trade (often in arms) 'at, and through, the treaty ports to go on with the belligerents as usual.' In a circular note of January 1905 Russia complained of China violating neutrality in favour of Japan. But *The Times* summed up its conclusion by saying that China was blameless 'within the limits of her impotence to prevent infractions of neutrality by the belligerents.'¹⁵

Although the Chinese government declared neutrality, there is evidence of individual Chinese cooperating with both the Japanese and the Russians in the war zones. Evidence on this issue is naturally patchy. The memoirs of foreign observers of the war on both sides reprinted in the Global Oriental series are one source of such information. In the operations around Port Arthur, Ashmead Bartlett writes of Chinese spying for the Russians about the exact location of General Nogi's headquarters during the siege; but the problem was that General A.M. Stoessel who was the commander-in-chief of the garrison, did not know whether to believe the intelligence he received from such quarters or not. It is probable that private, non-government Chinese were also working with the Russians on a strictly monetary basis, say in the role of interpreter. On the other hand, several authors write that there was covert Chinese military cooperation with Japan throughout the war. Certainly the *hunchuzes* (bandits) provided a useful service for the Japanese by cutting Russian field telegraph lines. The Japanese made much use of Chinese coolies (what would later be described as labour battalions), for example in digging trenches or carrying sacks of coal for Japan's temporary military railway tracks (*gunyo tetsudo*).¹⁶

It was one thing to declare neutrality but quite another to forecast the outcome of the war. In China's eyes, the Russian army had a high reputation; and it was therefore unwise to alienate the Russian military. Initially there was a sort of phoney land war. Japan was ready for hostilities; but thawing roads in Korea were so impassable that it was the end of April before she crossed the Yalu river and began campaigning in Manchuria. On the other hand, the Russian minister defended his country by telling China that Russia had been taken unawares and 'was neither prepared nor preparing.' With this in mind, some Chinese speculated that Russia would win in the end when their preparations took effect. Hart wrote:

'Chinese [opinion] is divided : some are sure the Russians must win eventually and trim accordingly - others are believers in Japan, but among them an ugly feature is developing for they begin to gloat over and express the conviction that the next step will be for Japan to rid China of every foreigner!' ¹⁷

Some Chinese were still inclined to the view that with reinforcements Russia would prevail, but the majority were impressed with the skill shown by the Japanese armies. Naturally China's indecisive approach altered with the changing fortunes of the land war; and that meant that China became less favourable to Russia, the longer the war went on. The battle of Liaoyang in September 1904 seems to have been the decisive turning-point in Chinese thinking. Thereafter the Chinese lost confidence in the Russians as they went into retreat.

One has to bear in mind that there was a whole apparatus of Chinese government administration operating in Manchuria where fighting was taking place. The two armies were operating in regions where Chinese viceroys, governors, mayors, magistrates, army and police were responsible for jurisdiction. Inevitably there were conflicts of authority. A typical clash of interests took place at Nyuchuang which, with the port of Yinkow, was the hub of Manchuria's bean trade. It had been a topic of strategic disagreement on the Russian side since one party including the commander-in-chief, General Kuropatkin, favoured its early evacuation. During the occupation China had initially chosen a Russian national as her Customs Inspector in order to avoid antagonizing the Russian army but, as it withdrew, substituted a neutral American. Nyuchuang was occupied without a fight by the Japanese in July, the first major town to be captured in the war. The Chinese authorities then selected a Japanese national from its customs staff. But this did not satisfy the Kuantung army who insisted on having their own man appointed. It also refused initially to allow the new Chinese Taotai into the city. The Japanese were genuinely surprised that the Chinese did not hail them as deliverers and seemed to regret the departure of the Russians. ¹⁸

The Foreign Ministry always vigilant that the military was behaving high-handedly felt impelled to intervene. It sent over Yoshizawa Kenkichi who had had five years' experience of dealing with the Chinese to hold a watching brief. He was still a young man of 31 at this stage but later became an important figure in foreign policy-making. He went over in the second half of September 1904 and returned to Japan early in the

new year. During his three months' stay he had to work out acceptable arrangements between the army, the Chinese and the foreign merchant community.¹⁹

Both armies lived off the land. This was especially true for the Japanese when the siege of Port Arthur took so much longer than had been expected and food and other supplies became very scarce. Both armies lived in tents for the most part - what General Ian Hamilton described as 'sleeping *a la belle etoile*'. But he described himself as one of very few of the tens of thousands of Russians and Japanese who had a roof over his head for most of the time and was grateful for the facilities which the Japanese offered him. He uses various expressions to describe his accommodation: 'not a bad little house', 'a hut', 'this hovel'.²⁰ The Japanese had to requisition Chinese homes for living accommodation for their generals who were content to be billeted in unpretentious places. They had to rely on quite modest Chinese buildings for headquarters, hospitals etc. By contrast, the Russians were to some extent able to use railway rolling stock for accommodation for their top brass. Japan requisitioned cargo boats, carts and bullock-wagons for transport, but Russia seems to have had less of a supply problem because of the railway. Railways, Customs and Telegraphs became the preserve of the occupier. For postal services both sides appear to have used the Chinese system, though not exclusively. In the war situation things inevitably went wrong. Villages, houses and property were set on fire from time to time. On occasion crops (say of *kiaoliang*) were destroyed for strategic purposes. Evidence of this is given in the compensation claims that China presented at the end of the war.

How did the Chinese regard these two sets of intruders? The attitude of the Manchurian Chinese is hard to assess. They had not raised a finger in 1894 to defend themselves and their land against the Japanese. One factor affecting them in 1904 was that they had known the Russians as occupiers for a few years. They were inclined to look at the newcomers with suspicion. Because the Japanese and Russians were rather reserved in their statements on this problem and perhaps reluctant to report about it, one has to rely much on the evidence in the writings of the foreign correspondents in the Global Oriental series. Ian Hamilton asked a Chinese Post Commandant on whom he was billeted what he thought about the Russian troops, clearly expecting some condemnation of them. The reply was that 'they were kind men who paid for what they took,' adding that 'they were wanting in humanity'.²¹ Maurice Baring suggests that one

reason why it appeared that Russians were liked was that Chinese contractors were able to extract payments well over the market rate.

Individually Chinese received much cruel treatment. Many of them sought work on the periphery of the war, serving as informants and spies or operating as black marketeers. If they were caught, they were liable to be ruthlessly punished. Maurice Baring tells the story of a Chinese who had committed some crime in the war zone. He was given the choice of punishment by the local Chinese magistrate or a Cossack. He said he would prefer neither; but he eventually chose the Cossack.²² It was a cruel society; and the Russian might seem to be less of a disciplinarian than the local Chinese official. Neither the Russians nor the Japanese had more than a smattering of Chinese; and military law tended to be very arbitrary. Hence punishment often caused offence. So far as 'coolies' were concerned, it tended to be the men of Shantung who were recruited for labouring jobs as they were to be later for the western front in 1917. It would require much work in the Chinese, Russian and Japanese archives to discover how widespread the use of Chinese workers was. If it was widespread, it suggests that the number of those engaged in the war was greater than has previously been recognized.²³

The Portsmouth and Peking Treaties

It was a relief to all concerned that a conference to negotiate the ending of hostilities was held from 10 August in Portsmouth, New Hampshire. It led to the signing of the Portsmouth treaty and its protocols on 5 September. After being duly ratified in October, ratifications were exchanged in Washington in November. China which felt she was entitled to a voice in the future of Manchuria had considered asking to be represented at Portsmouth but eventually decided against it - perhaps wisely.

The Portsmouth treaty could only take effect when the various aspects of land and railway rights conferred on the two parties were confirmed by China. Japan had all along realized that it would be necessary to negotiate with China if she won the war and Minister Uchida had spent a prolonged period in Tokyo (20/12/04 -18/1/05) preparing the way for Japan's postwar plan (*jikyoku shori hosaku*).²⁴ The result was the Peking Conference of November-December which became an essential part of the peace settlement but tends to be overlooked by historians. The Portsmouth treaty had emerged as the result of bitter negotiations and was unquestionably important; but the

subsequent Peking treaties which established Japan's new rights were equally essential for the future.

Japan's chief delegate, Komura Jutarō, returned from the US unwell and with a heavy heart. He knew that the Portsmouth treaty which he had negotiated was a profound disappointment to the Japanese people who felt that their wartime sacrifices had not been recognized or rewarded. The newspapers reported that on his return to Tokyo, there were no street decorations in evidence in marked contrast to the displays which had earlier greeted the generals and admirals on their return from the front.²⁵

When he took up the reins of office at the Foreign Ministry, Komura gave priority to the urgent task of negotiating some of the clauses of the Portsmouth treaty with China, the sovereign power. His prime aim was to deal with south and central Manchuria by securing China's agreement to the transfer from Russia of the Liaotung peninsula and the agreed section of the Russian railway. But equally important was his secondary aim in Russian-occupied Manchuria. Like the Open Door powers United States and Britain, Japan wanted the opening of ports in the river systems of northern Manchuria as this seemed to be the surest way of preventing Russia from establishing a sphere of interest there. Russia had in the past opposed such measures and had not permitted the presence in her sphere of influence of consuls from the other powers. But Witte after a lot of argument and persuasion at Portsmouth had withdrawn his objections to this; and it was now Komura's ambition to obtain the confirmation of China. He regarded this latter objective as so important that, much to the surprise of everyone, he decided to go in person to Beijing and to set off for the Chinese capital within a month of his return from the United States.

Under pressure from an excited public opinion, the Chinese delegates were not in an easy position. At the Peking Conference which opened on 17 November China was represented by Prince Ching, the weak head of the Waiwupu, and Na-tung, a pro-Japanese member. But their most powerful plenipotentiary was Yuan Shikai, the viceroy of Tianjin. One difference which observers noted was the increased confidence which the Chinese delegates displayed, compared to previous occasions. Hart commented 'The pluck of Japan in facing Russia has electrified China.' Japan's performance in the war had encouraged the growth of Chinese nationalism.²⁶

Understandably Japan did not welcome being the target of China's nationalist aspirations. Negotiations did not proceed well. Yuan as chief delegate put forward a substantial demand for compensation for damage to Chinese property during the war. China had all along foreseen that she would have to bear the brunt of rehabilitating the provinces of Manchuria. She entered into negotiations wanting money for reconstruction; but Japan which had received no indemnity and was in a grim financial state and in no mood to help. The Chinese delegates had also received many petitions calling on them to use the opportunity to revoke all the 'concessions' which had hitherto been made over Manchuria. This seemed reasonable enough since the Japanese negotiators boasted that they had liberated Chinese territory by their own blood and treasure and made provision for the removal of military forces from vast tracts of Chinese territory.²⁷ Since the transfer of the Russian concession to Japan was her primary demand, it can be understood how prickly discussion became. If the Chinese did not succeed in eliminating these concessions, they were at least determined to ensure that Japan did not fall heir to the privileges which Russia had accumulated over the years. The Japanese did not appreciate these arguments and felt that the Chinese were showing unreasonable obstructiveness and ingratitude. The presence of the Japanese armies in strength not too distant from the Chinese capital was probably one factor in achieving a breakthrough in the talks. Eventually by a combination of patience and threats, Komura and his team managed to obtain China's general approval of the terms on offer.

Komura deliberately avoided discussion with China on how much remained of the unexpired Russian lease of the Liaotung peninsula. Russia's lease of 1898 had been for 25 years and was due to expire in 1923. Japan, deprived of a financial indemnity, could hardly contemplate building a new railway network if only 17 years of the lease were left. But for Japan to have raised the matter would inevitably have caused controversy with the Chinese. Komura considered it was better to leave it to be discussed closer to the date when the lease would run out. The Chinese themselves do not seem to have raised the issue.

Komura was under pressure from a large cohort of Japanese newspaper correspondents in the Chinese capital. Jiji Shimpō, hearing of the opposition Komura

was facing from the Chinese, called on him to break off negotiations. Instead he proceeded to sign. He told the British minister that he had not got all he wanted but had secured the two main points: the transfer of the agreed section of the railway and the Liaotung peninsula as well as the opening of 16 places to trade, including Harbin.²⁸

The Manchurian treaties (as they are called in Japan) consisted of a main treaty (3 articles), a Supplementary Agreement (12 articles) and an important secret note (sometimes called a Protocol) consisting of 14 items. They were signed on 22 December 1905. Regarding the Kwantung Leased Territory, China undertook to transfer the territory and all rights connected with it and the southern branch of the Russian-controlled Chinese Eastern Railway between Port Arthur and Changchun with its branches and coal-mines to Japan. China agreed to conform to the original Sino-Russian Agreement. She would have restored to her all portions of Manchuria occupied or under control of Japanese and Russian troops. Under the Supplement Japan secured China's agreement to the opening of 16 ports in Manchuria to foreign trade and residence. Though this looked like an enlightened Open Door experiment, it turned out that the Japanese military in occupation in Manchuria were as little inclined as the Russians to welcome foreign traders for the time being. They wanted monopoly privileges since they had come off second best in the peace settlement. The Protocol allowed Japan to assist the Chinese in building the Changchung-Kirin and Mukden-Sinmintin lines. Japan received a concession to improve the military railway between Antung and Mukden and to operate it for 15 years. But the Chinese promised not to build a line to compete with the South Manchurian Railway, the network the Japanese were about to establish. Ratification in Japan took place within two months on 29 January 1906. Both parties exchanged ratifications in Peking and the treaties were published on 31 January. Meanwhile the Russians were satisfactorily re-negotiating their position in northern Manchuria.²⁹

It rested with the former belligerents to build up their commercial empires in the new situation. As the armies came to be evacuated, trade was restored. The Chinese merchants on the spot were able to hold their own with their new rivals. One observer who toured Manchuria in 1908 wrote

'It is evident that the Japanese have captured none of the Chinese trade in

Manchuria; Chinese are not to be beaten on their own ground..... A factor that the Japanese will have to surmount is the undoubted want of goodwill of the Chinese, amounting often to intense ill-will. China herself has exchanged the non-commercial Muskovite for a nation rapidly rising in the industrial world. But the Chinaman does not love him for this.³⁰

Without the Peking Conference, the situation created by the negotiations at Portsmouth would not have been legitimate. Japan need not have taken the trouble to negotiate directly with China over what she had taken by military means. But it is all to the credit of Komura that he decided to take the hazardous course of negotiating with the Chinese in their new mood of nationalism. He clearly wanted to legitimize Japan's long-term ambitions in the region.

The Peking Conference has its echoes throughout the first half of the twentieth century. It was at the heart of the Twenty-one Demands crisis of 1915 where the length of the lease of Port Arthur was at issue; it recurred in the run-up to the Manchurian crisis where Japan condemned China for breaking her guarantee not to compete in railway building. On the other hand it was possible for Japan and Russia to patch up agreements over the division of Manchuria in 1907, 1910 and 1912. So at least stability was at last re-established in the area.

Endnotes

It would not have been possible to complete this essay without access to the recently published Collection of Global Oriental reprints on the Russo-Japanese war: Vols 2 and 3, Ian Hamilton, *A Staff officer's Scrap-book during the Russo-Japanese War*, Vol. 4, Maurice Baring, *With the Russians in Manchuria*; Vol. 5, *The Times, The War in the Far East*; Vol.6, Ellis Ashmead-Bartlett, *Port Arthur*; Vol. 7, E.S. Politovsky, *From Libau to Tsushima*; Vol. 8, V. Semenoff, *Battle of Tsushima* and A.A. Ignatyev, *A Subaltern in Old Russia*.

¹ H.G.W. Woodhead (ed.), *The China Year Book, 1921-2*, Tientsin: Tientsin Press, 1921, p. 603ff.

- ² Fairbank, Bruner and Matheson (eds), *The I.G. in Peking: Letters of Robert Hart, Chinese Maritime Customs, 1868-1907*, 2 vv., Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap, 1975, Vol. II, doc. 1308, 20 Dec. 1903. S.F Wright, *Hart and the Chinese Customs*, Belfast: Mullan, 1950.
- ³ *Uchida Yasuya*, Tokyo: Kajima, 1969, pp. 63-107. Another source on the Japanese side is Kajima Morinosuke, *The Diplomacy of Japan*, 3 vv., Tokyo: Kajima, 1978, vol. II, 'The Anglo-Japanese Alliance and the Russo-Japanese War'. Hart, II, doc. 1322, 27 March 1904.
- ⁴ Lessar had served as Political Agent for Asiatic Affairs in London and charge d'affaires there, 1900-1. He returned to his post as minister to China, 1901-5, from leave in Russia a sick man and died at his post in 1905.
- ⁵ Hart, II, doc. 1301, letter of 8 Nov. 1903. Wang Wen-shao who had cooperated with Li Hung-chang's pro-Russian policy after 1896 was removed on 4 November from foreign affairs, while Na-t'ung was made president of the new Board of Foreign Affairs (Waiwupu).
- ⁶ *Uchida Yasuya*, pp. 92-3.
- ⁷ Dennis and Peggy Warner, *The Tide at Sunrise*, Sydney: Angus & Robertson, 1975, pp. 171-2.
- ⁸ *Nihon gaiko narabini shuyo bunsho*, 2 vols, Tokyo: Gaimusho, 1955, I, 217-19 [Hereafter 'NGNB'].
- ⁹ Papers of Sir Ernest Satow, (British) National Archives, Kew. Hart, II, doc. 1302, 15 Nov. 1903 : 'A new question here is,...If China goes with Japan, will their treaty require France to side with Russia?'
- ¹⁰ *The Times* (London), *The War in the Far East*, London : John Murray, 1905, p. 100
- ¹¹ NGNB, I, 219
- ¹² *Nihon gaiko bunsho*, Nichiro Senso series, vol. I, no. 706 [Hereafter 'NGB']
- ¹³ Hart, II, doc. 1311, 10 Jan. 1904.
- ¹⁴ *NGB*, Nichiro senso series, I, no. 685.
- ¹⁵ Hart, II, doc. 1326, 8 May 1904. Times, *The War in the Far East*, p. 469.
- ¹⁶ Warners, pp. 449-50. See also Barbara Brooks, *Japan's Imperial Diplomacy*, Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2000
- ¹⁷ Hart, II, doc. 1330, 6 June 1904
- ¹⁸ *Japan Weekly Times*, 14 Nov. 1903. Hart, II, doc. 1341, 3 Aug. 1904. On conditions in wartime Nyuchuang, see Charles Drage, *Taikoo*, London: Constable, 1970, pp.126-

35.

¹⁹ Yoshizawa Kenkichi, *Gaiko 60-nen*, Tokyo: Jiyu Ajia, 1958, pp. 25-7.

²⁰ (Sir) Ian Hamilton, *A Staff Officer's Scrap-book during the Russo-Japanese War*, 2 vols, London : Edward Arnold, 1905-7, II, pp.6, 36, 38

²¹ Hamilton, II, 80

²² Maurice Baring, *With the Russians in Manchuria*, London: Methuen, 1905, pp. 50-1. A.A. Ignatyev, *A Subaltern in Old Russia*, London : Hutchinson, 1944. The latter volume is partly reproduced in Volume VIII of Global Oriental's Collection on the Russo-Japanese War, 1904-5.

²³ *The Imperial War Museum Book of the Western Front*, London: Pan, 2001.

²⁴ *Uchida Yasuya*, pp. 107-9. A good account of these two conferences is to be found in J.A. White, *The Diplomacy of the Russo-Japanese War*, Princeton: University Press, 1964, ch. 18.

²⁵ *Komura gaikoshi*, 2 vols, Tokyo: Gaimusho, 1953, II, 216-20. Okazaki Hisahiko, *Komura Jutaro to sono jidai*, Tokyo: PHP, 1998, ch. 12: 'Komura had no intention of giving in to Russia in spite of Roosevelt's persuasion.'

²⁶ Hart, II, doc. 1319, 28 Feb. 1904.

²⁷ *Uchida Yasuya*, pp. 107-9. *Komura gaikoshi*, II, 221-44.

²⁸ Satow papers. On Komura in Peking, see Drage, *Taikoo*, p. 137.

²⁹ *Komura gaikoshi*, II, 244-51. For Russian talks with China, NGB M39/I, pp. 328-51.

³⁰ A. Gorton Angier, *The Far East Revisited*, in Global Oriental Collection, vol. I, pp. 166-7.

British Naval Estimation of Japan and Russia, 1894-1905

ABBREVIATIONS

BLO	Bodleian Library, Oxford
CID	Committee of Imperial Defence
BL	British Library
CinC	Commander-in-Chief
DGMI	Director-general of Military Intelligence
DNI	Director of Naval Intelligence
GST	Gaiko Shiryokan, Tokyo
LCW	Library of Congress, Washington
NAW	National Archives, Washington
NAK	National Archives, Kew
NID	Naval Intelligence Department
RNMP	Royal Naval Museum, Portsmouth

British Naval Estimation of Japan and Russia, 1894-1905

John W M Chapman

'... a rough estimate, so far as this is possible, of the Naval and Military operations that would immediately follow on the outbreak of hostilities might prove a most valuable guide to our own diplomacy.' - A.J. Balfour to Lord Selborne, 21 December 1903. ¹

Introduction

At the outbreak of the Russo-Japanese War, the US naval attaché in London, Commander Stockton, filed a current estimate of the condition of the British Navy:

1. The outbreak of war between Russia and Japan finds this country in an advanced state of preparation beyond its actual peace needs. This preparation has been going on since I have been here on duty, and although the increase of forces in China has not been so great as the increase of the forces in the Mediterranean, the Channel Fleet and in the Home Fleet, these three large forces are always available for the reinforcement of the forces in China, and also for any European complication.
2. I consider the British Navy now in first class condition and in better shape than it has been within my recollection. This remark applies to both personnel and material.....²

Stockton's view is amplified by a subsequent report that 'it is now recognized in Great Britain at least that a preparedness for war is the condition of absolute efficiency absolutely requisite in a great Naval or Military department , and in this state all other conditions must be subservient'.³

Cabinet Perceptions

These contemporary assessments accurately reflect the change in the position of the Admiralty in British policymaking which can be traced to the replacement of Goschen

as 1st Lord of the Admiralty by Lord Selborne in October 1900 in the middle of the South African War. Linked to this change is the decision apparently taken by Selborne as a direct result of his encounter with Admiral Sir John Fisher at Malta in April 1901 to accept Fisher's interpretation of naval organization and his evident rejection of the criticisms and objections to Fisher's thinking on the part of his Cabinet colleagues and members of his Board of Admiralty. Selborne had explained his change of heart in relation to matters of personnel to Goschen in December 1902:

At any rate my mind was made up as to the principles a year ago & my main object in getting Fisher to the Admiralty was to bring there a man whom I knew would sympathize with my views and had exactly the qualities required to give effect to them.⁴

Selborne's father-in-law, Lord Salisbury, appears to have been prejudiced against admirals in his later years, partly because, as foreign secretary until October 1900 as well as prime minister, he thought admirals incapable of keeping secrets and trusted the War Office much more for military intelligence purposes in relation to the expenditure of the Secret Service vote.⁵ Salisbury was also sceptical about Selborne's proposals for the alliance with Japan, suggesting that such a move should not be undertaken until the outcome of the war in South Africa was settled, but Arthur Balfour, as 1st Lord of the Treasury in the Commons, had responded more positively in October 1901 to Selborne's proposal put to the Cabinet a month before, which 'seems to put your case with the utmost lucidity' and financially was not 'immoderate':

It forms, however, only a part – though perhaps the most important part – of our Imperial policy – military, financial and diplomatic – which I frankly admit gives me at the present moment the greatest anxiety.⁶

By April 1902, when it had become clearer that he would become prime minister in succession to uncle Salisbury, Balfour promised to discuss naval subjects with Selborne whenever he chose, although he found it 'extremely difficult to believe that we have, as you seem to suppose, much to fear from Germany, in the immediate future at all events.'⁷ After becoming prime minister in June 1902, Balfour received copies of the papers drawn up by the Winchester House Conference at the end of July from Selborne, who wanted them examined and ratified, preferably by a cabinet committee of Balfour's choice. Initially, Balfour wanted to delegate the task to the 'Defence Council' presided over by the Duke of Devonshire. The Duke, however, seems not to have understood what was wanted of him and his council and said at the end of September 1902 to Selborne that he 'never understood that you wanted my authority to make the proposed reply to the Japanese'. Balfour when discussing the terms of the reply had indicated that, while agreeing with the general tenour of the reply, he took exception to the suggestion in the War Office account that some British troops were being considered for any allied operations in Manchuria when 'the Japanese do not suggest aiding us in India'. The inertia of the Duke, however, was interpreted by Balfour as conduct he regarded as 'superfluously vicious' and this was echoed by St. John Brodrick, the secretary for war, as 'quite intolerable'. In the end, Balfour had to step in, convert it into the Committee for Imperial Defence (CID) and in November 1902 determined that if the alliance were to be activated in future, the Committee would have the right to go for fresh advice direct to the Directors of Military and Naval Intelligence (who had drawn up the agreements under the broad guidance of the Foreign Office in the first place) without first consulting their heads of department.⁸

In all his discussions as prime minister until May 1905, Balfour understood Selborne's

argument that, should Japan's position be seriously undermined in its conflict with Russia, Britain 'could not permit Japan to be crushed'. However, as the crisis between the two countries unfolded, Balfour viewed 'with a little misgiving the superior strength which Russia appears to possess in those seas' and after consultation with Lansdowne recommended an augmentation of British forces on the China Station.⁹ This position was implemented by Selborne and Battenberg with changes to the standing orders of all the naval stations east of Suez and with the appointment of Vice-Admiral Noel as putative commander of a combined Eastern Fleet in November 1903.¹⁰ As the situation in the Far East became increasingly grave, however, Balfour as chairman of the CID returned to the service intelligence chiefs to provide it with forecasts 'with regard to the probable course of hostilities, should they break out, between Russia and Japan, in the early Spring.'¹¹ Selborne had already been in touch with Lansdowne and had suggested joint intervention with the French and Americans to persuade the Russians to meet the Japanese demand for pre-eminence in Korea, but Balfour correctly pointed out to Selborne that the Japanese had already refused any joint intervention in favour of bilateral negotiations.¹² Balfour conceded that the Russians could not hope to settle the dispute by invading Japan, but he thought they could easily occupy Korea and he was worried that the Japanese were hoping to obtain British support to prevent this. Balfour had just been involved with the perceived failure of the Japanese side to purchase two Chilean warships building in British yards, regarded their inaction as 'dilatoriness', and Britain had had to intervene to prevent their purchase by Russia, with the result that Balfour considered this made the Japanese position 'either as negotiators or as combatants, almost hopeless, unless they secure an ally'.¹³

Balfour considered that it was best to leave the Japanese to work out their own

solution and for them to ask for any British mediation: 'there is nothing either in the letter or the spirit of our Treaty which requires us to share in a contest, with which we are not immediately concerned'. He followed up with more detailed observations on 29 December 1903:

If we interpret the Japanese Alliance as one requiring us to help Japan whenever she gets to loggerheads with Russia, it is absurdly one-sided. Japan certainly would not help us to prevent Amsterdam falling into the hands of the French, or Holland falling into the hands of Germany. Nor would she involve herself in any quarrel we might have over the north-west frontier of India.

Balfour appears to have been convinced that the Russian naval forces were superior to those of Japan, but was nevertheless convinced that Russia would not remain unscathed even if Japan came off worse in naval operations and concluded:

It must be remembered that though Russia's resources in men are unlimited, her resources in money are not, and that, if she chooses to squander both her naval and her financial strength in this extreme corner of the world, she is rendering herself impotent elsewhere.¹⁴

Selborne passed Balfour's letter on to Kerr, who promised a reply once he had conferred with Battenberg. Kerr replied on 30 December 1903 that any answer to a query about Japan's chances against Russia 'must necessarily only be one of surmise'. However, both men agreed that odds were presently in favour of Japan, but that this could change if one side or the other could bring reinforcements to the front line and concluded that 'if both receive reinforcements Russia would preponderate'.¹⁵

Global Economic Dimensions

Balfour felt much more at home with the economics of world affairs and was equally

aware, like Lansdowne, that Japan was a poor country short of the funds required to pursue its ambitious domestic agenda of modernization. The British victory in South Africa ensured that the bulk of the world's gold supply would be in British hands, but the Japanese leadership recognized that it was extremely important at all times to emphasize that Japan's external demands coincided with those of Britain and the USA in terms of the maintenance of the 'Open Door' in China. Selborne, too, appears to have relied heavily on the advice of City opinion through his cousin, Lord Radstock, and took the fundamental line that under no circumstances must Britain get into serious disputes with the USA. The difficulty such disputes would create for the defence of Canada in particular and the theoretical possibility of the US making common cause with Germany impelled Selborne into acceptance of the need to scale down the British naval presence in the Caribbean, the western Pacific and the eastern Atlantic, an analysis which fitted in well with the notions of Fisher, who had been C-in-C in North America during the Spanish-American conflict and championed the notion of concentrating the fleet in European waters and abandoning the policy of a presence in all distant waters. Fisher sought to promote closer relations with the US Navy and encouraged interchanges with many of its officers to obtain technical and managerial information on the practices being developed by them. Fisher was certainly in contact with Stockton while C-in-C at Portsmouth, and Harry White in the US Embassy in London was someone with a direct connection with President Theodore Roosevelt. Roosevelt in turn had a close personal relationship with Cecil Spring-Rice, the 1st Secretary of the British Embassy at St.Petersburg, and issued instructions for contact to be maintained with Spring-Rice by US diplomats 'without reserve'.¹⁶ When making estimates of Russia and Japan during the Russo-Japanese War, therefore, it is important to be aware of the fact that Roosevelt was shown and approved in advance the text of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance and

played an important role in promoting a joint Anglo-American loan to Japan after it was clear that the Japanese forces would play an effective role in restraining Russian expansion in China.¹⁷

Roosevelt in 1905 stated that he had been consulted by both the Japanese and the British and was of the view that it was entirely reasonable for the Japanese to assert their right to a sphere of influence in Korea, as much presumably as it had been for the US to assert its position against Spain in 1898.¹⁸ Roosevelt, in an apparently trenchant criticism of Britain, was adamant that establishing a strong US Navy would ensure that there would be no future Japanese threat to the United States, and asserted that 'if the menace comes I believe we could be saved only by our own efforts and not by an alliance with any one else.'¹⁹

The Admirals Pronounce

The professional sailors, mainly those on the Admirals' List, supplied a considerable range of advice to the 1st Lord of the Admiralty and his Cabinet colleagues, though it has to be remembered that Selborne had personal friends in the Navy, such as Hedworth Lambton, who were able to express views on professional issues that did not rest on rank or position. Selborne also had a middle-ranking officer as a personal secretary. Initially until 1902, this was Captain Fawkes, subsequently replaced by Captain Hugh Tyrwhitt, who was recommended by Fisher and continued under Lord Cawdor after Selborne resigned to become Governor-General of South Africa. Then the members of the Board of Admiralty, the composition and duties of whose members were revised in 1895, provided the principal advice and decisions. The civilian Secretary and his assistants provided the administrative back-up and the 1st Lord often consulted former holders of the office, particularly Goschen and Spencer,

as well as other prominent individuals, such as Lord Brassey.

Internally, the 1st Lord was able to appoint and consult with the commanders-in-chief on the individual naval stations at home and abroad, as well as with the directors of departments within the Admiralty. An energetic 1st Lord, like Selborne, however, was always able to consult directly with individual specialists, though generally he would consult the member of his Board with the relevant oversight.²⁰ The principal professional adviser was the Senior Naval (or 1st Sea) Lord, a role occupied by Lord Walter Kerr from 1899 to 1904 and by Sir John Fisher from October 1904. Kerr's view of Russia and Japan was not unlike that of President Roosevelt. When invited to comment on Selborne's cabinet paper of September 1901 recommending the alliance with Japan, Kerr claimed to welcome any reasonable move that would provide relief for a fleet that was feeling the heat of international competition from other industrially developed countries at a time when the war in South Africa was generating increasingly heavy financial burdens. However, Kerr in practice showed a degree of reluctance to place any great faith in the word of an Oriental country: his resolve varied between a position of urging that Britain rely on its own resources to deal with Russia in the Far East and one of seeking to withdraw as much naval firepower as possible from the Far East despite the terms of the additional secret naval protocol accompanying the alliance with Japan.

Kerr based his own professional activity on the support of individual admirals with whom he was comfortable and which he represented as 'the Admiralty point of view': former directors of naval intelligence, such as L. A. Beaumont and Cyprian Bridge and prominent flag officers such as Domville and Noel. Hedworth Lambton had in 1898, however, 'generally criticised the whole of the Flag List, coming to the

conclusion that there were not many able men on it'.²¹ This situation stemmed in large part from the fact that the Royal Navy had not had to engage in any serious combat for a whole century and as an organization was rather complacent. In war with Russia, the alliance with France and Turkey had made it possible to land forces on the Crimean Peninsula without excessive difficulty.²²

The contemporaneous C-in-C in the East Indies & China Station, Admiral Sir James Stirling, had been censured in December 1855 when the Admiralty recorded 'their disappointment at the Russian ships in the Gulph of Tartary having been allowed to escape the vigilance of his Squadron'.²³ In the case of Japan, Stirling's successors, Hope and Kuper, took the lead in suppressing the resistance of the Satsuma and Chôshû forces in 1862-64, when both Lord Walter Kerr and Reginald Custance had been present, and the experience impressed on both daimyô the wisdom of learning about the requisite technology that had subordinated the Pacific to its demands.²⁴

Problems of Communication

What comes across very clearly in these accounts is the slowness of contacts both across the Indian and Pacific Oceans and between the Far East and London. What greatly reduced the problem was the opening up of more rapid communications in the second half of the 19th century by competing land telegraph lines and submarine cables. The first was promoted by the Russian government in conjunction with the Danish-owned Great Northern Co., which purchased a monopoly of Japan's international cable links by laying a submarine cable to Nagasaki. The second was developed by the Eastern Extension Co. which controlled cable and telegraph links as far as Shanghai to service the British business enterprises which dominated the China trade. North of Shanghai, however, the land telegraph linked the two systems

under cartel arrangements which effectively froze out third parties and countries such as Japan. Nominally, these lines were under the control of the central Chinese government, but as it was mainly anxious about British and French activities, it looked from 1861 primarily to the Russians for protection and ceded land and commercial concessions in return.

The telegraph lines to Beijing and Nagasaki were vital tools in the hands of the Russian Army and Navy, as they linked St.Petersburg with the Russian military agents in China and with the Russian Pacific Squadron anchorage in winter at Nagasaki, as well as the diplomatic and consular networks in China and Japan. Especially following the construction of the Trans-Siberian and Chinese Eastern railway networks with funds raised mainly in Paris and Berlin after 1890, the Russian government developed the shortest, fastest and most direct communication between Europe and the Far East. Essentially, it was the superior Russian communications facilities which enabled their armed forces to outwit the War Office and the Admiralty in the 1890s and we now know that the Russians were able to lean on the Great Northern to inform them about the activities of other countries. The Japanese made heavy use of the route through Russia for communication with their diplomatic and consular posts not just in Europe, but also in America even after the conquest of Formosa in 1895 enabled them to begin to shake free from the Great Northern stranglehold via Amoy and Shanghai. However, an Eastern-Great Northern cartel in China yielded not just copies of Great Northern traffic to Russian agencies, but also provided insights into shared Eastern traffic as well.

The War Office, accustomed to the tricks the Russians resorted to, partly as a result of the close harmony of the DGMI in London with the Intelligence Bureau at Simla,

produced numerous detailed intelligence reports about Russian activities in the Balkans, Central Asia and then in the Far East. The Admiralty, by contrast, was aware of the wider strategic naval problems affecting Russia in the Baltic and Black Seas and discounted Russian naval activity in the Far East. The result was that the Naval Intelligence Department (NID), for which a need was felt only from the 1880s, proved woefully inadequate between 1894 and 1900 in estimating the significance of Russia and Japan. On the eve of the Triple Intervention, for example, Admiral Beaumont (DNI) produced a comparative table of British, French and Russian naval capabilities in the Pacific, but informed Lord Spencer that he had no means of judging why the Russians had left Nagasaki for Chifu and were actively reinforcing their Pacific squadron.²⁵ Perceptions on the spot about the scale of the Japanese successes against China led to concern about the Japanese threat to Beijing dominating thinking and the Admiralty was compelled to dissuade Admiral Fremantle, the C-in-C in China, from trying to seize the Pescadores to counteract the Japanese advance to Formosa. The legation in Tokyo pointed to evidence from observing Japanese policy that 'the incidents of the present war have conclusively shewn that the organization and efficiency of her Secret Service are perfect...'²⁶ The fact, however, was that the Japanese Navy, which owed its operational successes mainly to torpedo-boats and British-supplied quick-firing guns, had no warships larger than 5,000 tons and was awaiting delivery of its first battleships from British yards in 1896 before it could begin to defend itself against the Russian, French or even German fleets.

The scene for Russo-Japanese conflict was triggered by the German seizure of Kiaochow in November 1897 and directly by the Russian lease of Port Arthur in March 1898, which sparked the British acquisition of Wei-hai-wei (occupied by Japan

since 1895) and Kowloon. British naval units which had been sharing the harbour at Chifu with other fleets until then had maintained communication with London via land lines to Shanghai and Hong Kong but the Admiralty would have preferred a secure link directly with the new 'port of assembly' at Wei-hai-wei. Initially, however, a direct proposal was submitted via the London office of Great Northern to link Wei-hai-wei with Port Arthur and Kiaochow to Shanghai, but this was rejected by Beaumont as the 'least desirable' solution. In April 1898, Eastern proposed a submarine cable link with Wei-hai-wei via the Saddle Islands to Shanghai, saying that the cable was available in store at Singapore in return for the capital cost and an annual subsidy. Beaumont also rejected this by saying that he did not see why the Admiralty would accept such a costly arrangement just to suit the convenience of the company. A German proposal followed in January 1899 along similar lines, but this provoked the response that 'a joint cable even with Germany is inadmissible', particularly as Wei-hai-wei had to be regarded as 'an advanced post in a hostile country'.²⁷

This characterization was amply reinforced, initially by the internal upheavals in China, but especially by the serious international crisis over Fashoda in the autumn of 1898 during which an indication was received that the Russians would support their French allies.²⁸ Admiral Seymour at Wei-hai-wei responded that he was concentrating his forces there and at Hong Kong, but in view of the threat to British trade routes by both French and Russian forces there was a debate about the best location for a single concentration of available units. Seymour laid out the options and requested Admiralty advice, but intelligence available in London suggested that the Russian forces were scattered and two French ships had left Indochina.²⁹ Within the China Station, ships' commanders heard from Captain Jellicoe, Seymour's chief-of-staff, of the exchange and appear to have urged concentration in the south

at Hong Kong because British trade there needed most protection.³⁰

However, the 1898 crisis also demonstrated unwillingness on the part of Beaumont to undertake any steps prior to the outbreak of any conflict. These included not liaising with the press, not giving any special protection to valuable cargoes taking routes open to hostile attack or making arrangements with the cable companies. In this last case, Beaumont insisted that this was 'anticipating the arrangements which are proposed in the Report of the Committee on Telegraph Communications, & besides that the assent of the Admty to the course proposed would be acquiescing in their assumption that war is to be prepared for'. However, Beaumont's view was overridden by Richards, who agreed to take up the Eastern Extension company's offer to place its cable ships at the disposal of C-in-Cs 'in the event of war breaking out and cable communication being temporarily severed'.³¹ The official Admiralty line, in contrast to the War Office, saw no need for cutting enemy cables automatically unless there were good operational reasons for doing so. In May 1898, however, the US naval command in the Philippines had cut the cable from Manila to Hong Kong with the intention of cutting the islands off from Spain so that US actions forced other countries to rethink their policies in the event of war at sea.³²

The record shows that Admiral Fisher, the C-in-C on the North America Station, had been actively concerned during the Fashoda Crisis to prevent the consular cipher from falling into French hands and to exercise control over French and British cable ships operating on his Station.³³ Admiral Seymour, Fisher's best friend in the Service, complained between July and December 1898 about the unreliability of the overland cable between Wei-hai-wei and Shanghai during the China and Fashoda Crises. Following his transfer to the Mediterranean in 1899, Fisher found that the cable to

Odessa via Constantinople was controlled by Eastern Extension and initiated arrangements with the company to have access to those of the 2,500 cables daily passing over it through Syra in the Aegean that were to be regarded as 'suspicious' to be sent covertly to him at Malta. When the concession on the Odessa-Constantinople leg came due for renewal in 1903, the Admiralty successfully pressed during 1902 for the Turkish government to rebuff alternative proposals for it to be purchased by Russian or Great Northern interests.³⁴

Although Army and Navy initially demanded Wei-hai-wei be made a defended port and wanted Salisbury to encourage the Treasury to take a fresh look at the establishment of a submarine cable, the Boxer Uprising intervened in the summer of 1900. An approach to the Chinese bureau of telegraphs, however, got nowhere and fresh approaches were suggested by the companies to lay an inexpensive cable to Wei-hai-wei from the Taku bridgehead which had been held by international naval units. This arrangement replaced the difficult links between the radio installed in the Taku north-west fort and HMS Arethusa lying offshore to relay important signals by ship to Wei-hai-wei. The compromise put forward by the companies under which the Great Northern cable-layer at Shanghai would link Wei-hai-wei with Chifu, Taku and Shanghai attracted the support of the Treasury, which had just completed the successful laying of the submarine cable to Capetown in February 1900. But it also chimed in with the notion of international co-operation to restore order in Beijing and to re-erect the rail and telegraph links from Beijing to the coast.³⁵ Admiral Custance sought unavailingly to stipulate that this could only be a temporary peacetime solution but valueless in time of war. Lord Walter Kerr concluded that 'the most disagreeable feature in the present arrangement is that it has been brought about by Russia barring the way'.³⁶ Consequently, the British side continued to have access

to intercepts of French and Russian traffic in the Near East while in the Far East Great Northern could intercept Japanese and British traffic. Nevertheless, these experiences brought the processes of gathering intelligence and providing counter-intelligence through the contemporary communications systems within the Navy into much closer line with those in the British and Indian armies.

The Issue of Security

The key figures in naval developments were Fisher and Seymour. Fisher refined these processes even further between 1900 and 1902 in the Mediterranean through the harnessing of both cable and wireless to a modern system of command and control where the fleet acquired an apparatus of operational intelligence-gathering and assessment which was no longer dependent on consular and diplomatic support. Strategy in the Mediterranean effectively came to depend on naval ambushes and surprise attacks on Russian naval movements into the Aegean Sea in the first instance because the War Office refused to contemplate a landing on the Gallipoli peninsula before Selborne became 1st Lord of the Admiralty. Strategy in the Pacific rested on Selborne's convictions that nothing must interfere with good relations between Britain and the USA and that an accord must be reached with Japan to bring the Russian juggernaut to a stop. But the fundamental ideas behind the last accord derive in very large measure from the correspondence exchanged between Seymour and Selborne from November 1900 to August 1901, especially the notion that Russia could be contained by an alliance with Japan in which Britain would act silently holding the ring as a benevolent neutral and in which Japan could not effectively complicate Britain's objective of holding the balance of power in Europe.³⁷

The framework of the strategy could not be created without the active support of

Lansdowne, who first reported to Selborne on 7 March 1901 apropos the unsatisfactory triangle of Britain, Germany and Japan touted by Eckardstein at the Kaiser's behest: 'I think it just possible that the Japs may take the bit between their teeth.'³⁸ The strategy, however, could also not be implemented without the support of the War Office and the most important bridge between Seymour and Selborne on the one hand and between Selborne and the War Office on the other was Fisher, though with a great deal of unseen support by the King and the Prince of Wales. Seymour's advice of 24 March 1901 was received by Selborne at exactly the moment of Selborne's confrontation with Fisher at Malta after which Selborne came to the conclusion that he must have Fisher at the Admiralty with his 'genius for organization' to carry through the radical reform of the Navy for which Selborne has received scant historical recognition.

Ardagh (DGMI at the War Office) had served with Fisher in 1899 at the 1st Hague Conference and was aware through Altham of Grenfell's support for Fisher's ideas about countering Russian influence in the Mediterranean. His longstanding loathing of Russian 'adventurism' matched Fisher's apprehension about the corrupt and devious methods of the Russians, although he remained sceptical about Fisher's scenarios of Russian and French surprise attack. Army intelligence officers in general took a dim view of the unscrupulousness of Russian Army officers, such as the view that

The one thing that impressed me most in China was the wholesale dishonesty of all ranks of Russian officers. They have no scruples, and consider everything fair in love, war, and everything else; judging by their greed for money it should be an extremely easy matter to purchase any information required concerning Russian military and naval secrets.

No one who has not read the history of the manner in which Russia has absorbed so much of Central and Eastern Asia in the latter half of the nineteenth century can possibly appreciate the wiles and cunning treachery of the Russian diplomatists and their secret service agents.

His conclusion was that 'it is a matter of general knowledge, as to be hardly worth mention, that in Russia the Cabinet Noir inspection of correspondence is carried out to an extent unequalled in any other country'.³⁹

Foreign Office experience in dealing with Russia during the war with Japan amply reaffirmed that the Okhrana would stop at nothing to obtain whatever evidence it could by break-ins and bribery in neutral diplomatic missions at St.Petersburg or in consular premises throughout Russia which would yield copies of codebooks or reports to throw light on Japanese operations and policy following the withdrawal of the Japanese mission to Stockholm in February 1904. Sir Thomas Sanderson, permanent under-secretary of state until 1906, was aware of the loss of the best British diplomatic cipher (Cypher L) in February 1899 through the negligence of a Chancery clerk at St.Petersburg, though a recent search of the Russian Foreign Ministry Archive (AVPRI) indicates that the cipher employed by Sanderson for secret service activities in November 1901 had been decrypted. Ambassador Hardinge subsequently provided detailed accounts of Russian covert activity against the British, US and Swedish missions and sought permission from Sanderson to have his own personal cipher for especially secret communications. However, Sanderson took the view that no cipher was unbreakable but that the only way to preserve secrecy was to exchange letters by courier.⁴⁰ The Japanese in 1902 had come to the same conclusion and Minister Kurino at St. Petersburg had sought to enlist the Army and Navy in a combined courier service and both diplomatic services sought to vary their laboriously constructed cipher books through additive and subtraction methods.

The very first demand put to the British side at Yokosuka in May 1902 was a request by Admiral Yamamoto to Admiral Bridge for access to the all-British cable network in order to avoid reliance on Great Northern. He also sought access to lengths of cable and cable-layers to establish direct links between the Navy in Tokyo and fleet headquarters in southern Korea after the outbreak of war. Both requests involved the co-operation of Eastern, but in both cases it was impossible as a neutral to avoid all contact in China with the cartel arrangements with Great Northern and the trans-Pacific route via Manila did not come into operation before 1905. Proposals also included co-operation in constructing an allied naval cipher and the Admiralty did produce an inter-allied cipher which, however, does not appear to have come into operation until 1914 and was not an instant success because the Japanese had had no practice in using it. The Army insisted on retaining its own ciphers and operating these on the all-British system to link its attachés and liaison personnel. In 1907, however, the War Office warned the Japanese about wartime bribery of Eastern employees and the loss of one cipher, but appear not to have mentioned the activity of a Russian agent at Hong Kong named Komarov who revealed after the war 'that someone in our fleet at Hong Kong had been in his pay and that he had, through this person, obtained many original telegrams which dealt with the war in Manchuria'.⁴¹

Fisher as Controller of the Navy had replaced the Army & Navy Cypher with the Boats Signal Book in 1895. While in the Mediterranean, he was apprised by the Foreign Office that traffic between London and Malta was being routed via French lines and immediately ordered a re-routing to avoid French interception. In 1901, he learned from a journalist of the sale of the Consular Cypher K by a vice-consul and pressed for its replacement by Cypher M. He pressed the Foreign Office for the

transfer of a consul in Crete reported to be on friendly terms with a Russian lady and subsequently arranged for the opening of the mail of the Russian consul at Valletta, who was found to have worked as a naval constructor and to be a potentially valuable observer of the Mediterranean Fleet. In view of the harassment of British consulates at Marseilles and Toulon and at Odessa and Sevastopol, manned by consuls with specialist knowledge of naval matters, Fisher devised an arrangement for these officials to leave their missions and travel to Barcelona or Bucharest to dispatch warnings of impending mobilization and war to Gibraltar and Malta in order to escape the interdiction of their messages by French and Russian secret police. The services of his informant at Syra were extended from the Admiralty to the War Office by Selborne via Lansdowne in late 1900 and intercepted Russian traffic there and at Aden was relayed to British and Indian Army agencies. Similar arrangements were put in place in South-East Asia and China through the initiative of the head of the China Force, General Creagh, in 1902. The fleet intelligence officer at Hong Kong, Captain Molloy, who was located on land in 1904 – like Gibraltar and Malta previously – visited Tokyo in late 1903 and exchanged information with a Japanese Navy liaison officer appointed to Hong Kong from 1902. Close contact was maintained with Army intelligence bureaux at Hong Kong and Tientsin and these officers in turn reported on contacts with British consuls in China and also passed on the results of these observations and of their own travels in Russian-controlled areas mainly via the British military attaché at Beijing. Secret liaison was also established with the Indian Army through the good offices of Sir William Nicholson (DGMI) after discussions with General Fukushima in London in July 1902 and liaison with General Kitchener resulted in the appointment of a Japanese Army liaison officer to the Indian Army Intelligence Bureau at Simla in November 1903.⁴² This was strengthened still further with the exchange of secret intelligence about Russia by Major Alfred

Wingate, a subsequent head of military intelligence at Simla, with Japanese Army secret agents in North China. Both the Japanese Army and Naval Staffs recruited British journalists and businessmen as agents in Asia and Europe, particularly in connection with the departure of the Baltic Fleet for the Far East in October 1904 and these detailed contacts can be pursued in surviving Japanese archival sources.⁴³

Modernizing the NID

Admiral Seymour had pointed out to Selborne in March 1901 that 'it sometimes seems to me as if in England the action of Russia in the "Far East" is not appreciated'. Selborne had subsequently to warn Lord Brassey not to attribute information about France and Russia to the Admiralty:

The numbers of the French Fleet are public property, but the Russian numbers reach us through more confidential sources.⁴⁴

When Fisher joined Selborne at the Admiralty, however, his review of personnel pointed to the problems of the NID and generated the view, expressed by Selborne to his new DNI, Prince Louis of Battenberg, that too few officers served more than one tour of duty in the department and that it was desirable in future to bring back suitable officers for multiple tours. He also recommended that there should be an effort to increase the numbers of officers with foreign language fluency and drew a parallel with the special payments to Indian Army officers. Selborne indicated that he had already discussed these points with Custance, Battenberg's predecessor as DNI from 1899 to 1902. Battenberg had served as Custance's deputy between 1899 and 1901 and he had been critical of Custance's handling of fleet distribution and war planning because Custance had kept it in his head and committed none of it to paper,

something that made life difficult for a deputy especially if a crisis arose. Custance himself had subsequently admitted to Selborne that war planning was not a strong point of Admiralty organization but Battenberg had later – after he had fallen out with Fisher - argued that Custance had made substantial progress in making the NID more efficient.⁴⁵

When Custance moved from China to the Admiralty in 1899, nevertheless, one of the least satisfactory aspects of naval intelligence lay in the system of naval attachés. Only two naval attaché posts existed for the whole world and officers moved from capital to capital in Europe for a few weeks or months at a time, a major contrast with their military counterparts who had occupied residential posts in major centres since the 1860s and these included Tokyo from the time of the Sino-Japanese War. The situation for peripatetic naval attachés had become almost untenable by 1898 with the need to dispatch Captain Paget, then at St.Petersburg, to observe the situation in the Caribbean during the Spanish-American War. Further pressure came in the autumn with the outbreak of crises in China and the confrontation with France and Russia after Fashoda, which meant the need to keep attachés in Paris and St.Petersburg and avoid the unsatisfactory situation where military attachés were called by their heads of mission to double up for absent naval colleagues. The growth of the US Navy and the expansion of their steel mills and shipyards and the ongoing problems in the Far East were met by Custance with the appointment of a third naval attaché to cover America and Asia, Captain C.L. Ottley, who spent only a short time in Washington before moving to Tokyo for over a year.

Ottley was an extremely conscientious observer who insisted on seeing formations and installations for himself, but found that he was hampered by the extreme

secretiveness of the Japanese naval authorities and by language difficulties, which could be overcome in part by permission to employ an interpreter. Few of Ottley's personal papers appear to have survived, but it is clear that as a result of his hard work the confidential books on the Japanese Navy were all updated and Custance clearly understood from his observations that the Japanese fleet was in a virtual state of mobilization during the Boxer Uprising.⁴⁶ Minister Satow had strongly supported the extension of Ottley's stay to a full year, but when he exchanged posts with Sir Claude MacDonald at the end of 1900, Ottley remained only a few more weeks before his transfer to St. Petersburg.⁴⁷ Ottley's stay in Russia was also a tour where he submitted detailed typed reports illustrated by photographs and provided highly reliable evidence based on his personal visits to yards on the Baltic and Black Seas, which provided a unique basis for a comparative estimate of the Japanese and Russian navies. Ottley was directly consulted by Selborne in the autumn of 1901 as part of the calculations essential for the naval budget when the Admiralty was under strong pressure from the Treasury to reduce costs in South Africa.⁴⁸

During his visit to the Black Sea in October 1901, Ottley met the Grand Duke Alexander Mikhailovich at Yalta and recorded his assessment that he did not think much of the capabilities of the Black Sea Fleet and cast doubt on the speedy achievement of a more modern force desired by the Grand Duke. Ottley pointed to the poor record of Russian shipyards, which could not complete battleship construction under five years, and the lack of available additional capacity in the near future. His intelligent analysis also paid dividends in terms of an accurate calculation of the personnel employed in the Russian Navy and of the real size of its budget, which, according to Sir Thomas Sanderson, had been ascertained by 'a very ingenious process'. Through the purchase of information by the Embassy from

Secret Service funds and verified by consultations with the foreign naval attaché corps at St. Petersburg, it was learned that, following the announcement of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance, an emergency meeting had been held under the chairmanship of the Grand Duke Alexander Mikhailovich which decided to build an additional four battleships and two armoured cruisers as soon as possible and to increase the annual naval construction budget from £3.6 to £5 millions. As this meant the high likelihood of the Russians ordering warships abroad, the need to obtain the assistance of the consular service to monitor shipyards in Europe and America meant closer co-operation between the Admiralty and the Foreign Office.⁴⁹ It was this surveillance which helped detect the chances of Japan purchasing the two Chilean and two Argentinian cruisers in Britain and Italy and simultaneously of preventing these being acquired by Russia and more adversely affecting the naval balance of power in the Far East on the eve of war. It is clear that the timing of the Japanese Navy's opening attack on Port Arthur was largely determined by the timing of the safe delivery of the Argentinian ships with British crews under Japanese naval officers.⁵⁰

Initially, local co-ordination of policies in the Far East was a responsibility placed on the British Legation in Tokyo and on Admiral Bridge, the C-in-C in China. MacDonald had been apprised of the early stages of negotiation of the alliance while on leave in London, but no detailed information reached Bridge until after it was completed and correspondence between Selborne and Bridge on the subject does not figure before February 1902. Seymour, his predecessor, visited Fisher at Malta in early January 1902 but no account of their exchanges appears to have survived, although Fisher was aware of Ottley's observations in 1900 and was in contact with Windham and Scott, ship commanders who had been transferred to China from the Mediterranean,

much to Fisher's disgust. Fisher was probably better briefed than Bridge and was the one admiral who made a real effort to demonstrate active co-operation at his meetings with Admiral Ijûin at Malta in May 1902.⁵¹ Bridge claimed to admire the Japanese, but said he would rather have lived with any Caucasians, including the Russians, rather than the Japanese, if he had to make a choice. His visits to Japan in May and November 1902, April 1903 and April 1904 were sporadic because of the enormous geographical area of his responsibilities and both he and MacDonald strongly pressed for the appointment of a resident naval attaché in Japan.

Captain Ernest Troubridge, currently the fifth naval attaché in Europe, was appointed to Tokyo but did not arrive until the end of May 1902. Bridge wanted to talk to Troubridge before he arrived and showed similar tendencies to impose his position on Troubridge's successor, Captain Pakenham, on his way through Hong Kong in March 1904.⁵² Both certainly maintained a regular correspondence with Bridge and Noel, but their reports had to be relayed via the legation and the Foreign Office first and Captain Pakenham was under clear instructions from Battenberg that his first duty was to the NID, with the result that Captain Hutcheson was evidently sent to Japan in 1904 by Admiral Noel to represent the China Station staff. Troubridge was aware of the Japanese Navy's preference for British benevolent neutrality and recommended to Battenberg that, if Britain became embroiled, a Japanese admiral ought to be the allied C-in-C. Bridge, however, kept thinking in terms of a joint war if at all, because his perception – like Balfour's – was of Russian superiority on paper and this perception had been reinforced in August 1903 when he had visited Port Arthur and was treated to affable discussions with the Russian commanders. Selborne, Kerr and Battenberg, however, rejected Bridge's perceptions and laid out their plans for the reinforcement of the China Station with battleships from the

Mediterranean and Battenberg's scheme for a combined Eastern Fleet to be commanded by Noel in the event of any wider conflict. When reporting to Selborne the successful opening Japanese blows, Bridge claimed that these came as no surprise to him and his staff – a reaction not unlike that of the Kaiser to the Japanese Minister in Berlin after the victory at Tsushima in May 1905.⁵³

The scale of the Russian reinforcement by the Baltic Fleet equally posed a Russian superiority on paper which was complicated by the development of the Morocco Crisis in Europe and produced a sharp response from Fisher, now 1st Sea Lord, in wishing to side immediately with France and in trying to persuade Lansdowne and Balfour to sanction a pre-emptive strike on German bases. This course of action was rejected by Balfour, though the Kaiser complained to President Roosevelt of the British threat, and Captain Ottley, now DNI, pointed out to Fisher the delicate contradiction of his desire to support the French in Europe, but to punish them in the Far East for giving shelter in Indochinese waters to the Baltic Fleet, which proceeded to intercept and sink two British merchant ships in Chinese waters. Nevertheless, Fisher stuck by his strategic principle of concentration in Europe and actually ordered four battleships on the China Station to leave for home three weeks before the culminating clash, informing the Japanese side of this step only after the decisive victory at Tsushima.

The overwhelming nature of this battle was what convinced the Russians of the need to seek peace. The British side had been strongly in favour of a negotiated peace since the Japanese capture of Port Arthur in January 1905 and had taken the step of recalling Spring-Rice from St.Petersburg and dispatching him to Washington to persuade President Roosevelt to step in as mediator. Roosevelt welcomed the move,

but found it exceedingly difficult to persuade both sides of the desirability of ending the conflict sooner rather than later and it was not until he received more formal approaches from both sides that the New Hampshire venue was proposed. It is difficult to discern any ulterior motive on the part of Fisher in withdrawing British battleships before the climax of the war, but table-top exercises in the Admiralty had undoubtedly pointed to Russian superiority.⁵⁴ But what the war had demonstrated, among many other things, was the heavy Russian reliance on German logistic support for the transfer of the Baltic Fleet to the Far East and the tag placed by Balfour on German conduct: 'the Germans are behaving abominably, and we must do what we can to prevent them squeezing any illegitimate advantage out of the situation they have endeavoured to create'.⁵⁵ The perception of the Admiralty at this stage of the war between Russia and Japan amply reinforced the view in the War Office (since the Japanese victory at Mukden the previous month) that the time had come to revise its prescription of May 1903 for 'the Secret Service in the Event of a European War' in favour of a formula identifying Germany as the principal threat to British national security in the future.⁵⁶

Retrospect

Although Selborne and Fisher trumpeted the Japanese accomplishment of the 'Trafalgar of the East', the Japanese side was well aware that this accomplishment was by no means a wholly unalloyed cause for rejoicing in other capitals.⁵⁷ Minister Takahira had secretly provided the US president with unpublished information about the scale of Japanese successes and reported on the wide scale of favourable response from the press and public opinion.⁵⁸ President Roosevelt had certainly anticipated the possibility of victory swelling Japanese heads and subsequently privately observed to Spring-Rice:

I wish to see our navy constantly built up and each ship at the highest point of efficiency as a fighting unit. If we follow this course we shall have no trouble with the Japanese or any one else. But if we bluster; if we behave badly to other nations; if we show that we regard the Japanese as an inferior and alien race, and try to treat them as we have treated the Chinese; and if at the same time we fail to keep our navy at the highest point of efficiency and size – then we shall invite disaster.⁵⁹

With the opening of the peace negotiations, the numerous press correspondents who had found Japanese censorship controls very irksome even by comparison with those imposed by the British Army in South Africa left the Far East en masse and Japan ceased to be an area of much significant interest to the media until the interwar era. The hostile public reaction in Japan to the news that no indemnity could be expected from Russia received little coverage, though it caused delays for ships of the China Squadron sent to participate in the victory review at Yokohama and President Roosevelt 'was very much concerned lest my little Japanese friends, the statesmen over here, would have to kill themselves when they got back to Japan'.⁶⁰ It was inevitable, however, that the lucrative orders made in Britain by the Japanese Navy from the 1890s almost dried up after 1902 and the contacts which had been generated became increasingly platonic after the signature of the third Anglo-Japanese Alliance as signs of the pre-eminence of the Anglo-American relationship asserted themselves. Admiral Ottley, who had become secretary of the CID with Fisher's support, wrote to Fisher on his 70th birthday and spoke of the most recent meeting of his Committee and of his discussion with prime minister Asquith:

It has been a very interesting meeting, and a most valuable discussion was elicited regarding the renewal of the Anglo-Jap Alliance.

I believe the happiest thing would be to bring about a tripartite agreement – Britain, America, Japan– and I believe that arrangement would be welcomed

with acclamation – if it could be worked.⁶¹

The US Senate, of course, decided otherwise and a foretaste of these setbacks, which were much less satisfactorily settled at the Washington Conference in 1922, can be found in the history of the Russian treatment of neutral merchant ships during the war with Japan: not only did the German government refuse to adopt a common stance with Britain on the rules of belligerent search, but orders were issued by the US Solicitor-General that overtures from Britain to elicit a common stance on neutral and belligerent rights in war should be consciously evaded 'inasmuch as whatever view might be expressed might become a source of embarrassment to the United States Government in the future'.⁶² Such points of common interest in relation to Russia began to develop into what were actually matters of common concern as a result of the increasingly arbitrary way in which US and British merchant ships came to be treated by Japanese naval units in the end phase of the war which involved absolute Japanese superiority at sea.⁶³

There were numerous incidents involving US-Japanese friction after 1898, most of which tended to be swept under the carpet, but indicated nevertheless that there were numerous groups in the USA which were hostile to or suspicious of Japanese policies and intentions. Japanese migration to Hawaii and California excited increasing alarm, for example, but in the Pacific there were concerns on the US side about Japanese interest in islands such as Midway, Guam and Wake and on the Japanese side about US claims in the Marcus Islands. However, perhaps the most troublesome issue lay in the Philippines where the US Army in particular regularly expressed anxieties about foreign support for the Filipino independence movement and its resistance to the US occupation after 1898. Sharp differences of opinion were already evident from early on in the case of German naval support for Spain and

German acquisition of the various island groups in the Central Pacific, but the US Army issued a report alleging covert Japanese support for the rebels in the form of arms supplies and citing captured rebel documents as evidence to sustain this.

As British firms had formed the most significant element in the foreign trade of the Philippines, there were similar sorts of claim (akin to US allegations about trading with the enemy in Cuba, Vietnam and China in the second half of the 20th century). Units from the British China Squadron were seconded to the Philippines to protect British lives and interests after 1898 and every effort was made to reassure the US authorities to the contrary, but some British ship commanders, such as Hedworth Lambton, found the US naval command co-operative and affable but reported much less favourably about the army commanders and their methods of suppressing the rebellion. As covert US measures to assist the Filipino rebels prior to May 1898 had actually been significantly aided by British business interests at Hong Kong and Britain had acted as protecting power for the US during the war with Spain, any such complaints about Britain were bound to be discounted much more than those about Germany and Japan. The Admiralty had recognised that it was virtually inevitable that the USA would sweep Spain aside, even though reservations had privately been expressed about US conduct. In the South African War, where the roles of belligerent and neutral had been reversed, it is significant that, apart from Portugal, the only country whose consular cables were not subjected to censorship was the USA. Despite statements of support expressed both to Britain and Japan, Roosevelt's comments on 'fat-witted' British diplomats in Washington and the on-going disputes over Venezuela and the operation of the joint naval surveillance in the Bering Sea, as well as the continuing secret reports from New York about Russian secret support for Fenian organizations there still left plenty of room for suspicions and doubts. But

there is no doubt that feelings of negativity in Anglo-American relations can be identified as developing on issues of major significance for the future, such as the rules of neutrality and belligerency, in the course of the Russo-Japanese War and that the continued existence of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance until 1922 provided a great deal of the fuel for this negativity. But it can be demonstrated that negative feelings diminished considerably at times when relations between Britain and Japan cooled or became fraught with differences of opinion, as over the issue of alleged Japanese support for the Indian independence movement and its links with Germany prior to the US entry into World War I. Anglo-American relations were and are still, nevertheless, even after 1922, subject to negative tendencies: but arguably the ideal envisaged by Ottley in 1911 has been a fact of international life since the end of World War II.

Endnotes

¹ Appreciation is expressed to the British Academy, London and the *Nihon Shinkôkai*, Tokyo for funding research in Tokyo and Washington DC.

² Stockton to CIO/USN Report No.24 of 10.2.1904: National Archives, Washington (NAW): Record Group 45, NA London Letters, 1888-1914, Vol.23, pp.692-3.

³ Stockton Report No.40 of 24.2.1904: *ibid.*, pp.715-20.

⁴ Selborne to Goschen, 24.12.1902 on 'the New Scheme': MS Selborne, Vol.32, ff.179-182, (BLO). Fisher's many biographers and admirers tend to emphasize his powers of persuasion and little recognition appears to have been accorded to Selborne's role in developing naval reforms: see the author's 'Admiral Sir John Fisher and Japan, 1895-1905,' in: Sir Hugh Cortazzi, ed.: *Britain & Japan*, Vol.V, *Biographical Portraits*. Richmond: Japan Library, 2004 forthcoming.

⁵ National Archive, Kew (NAK): HD3/111. This view was echoed by Lord Lansdowne,

who had been secretary for war until he replaced Salisbury as foreign secretary.

⁶ Balfour to Selborne, 25.10.1901: MS Selborne, Vol.26, f.4, BLO.

⁷ Balfour to Selborne, 5.4.1902: *ibid.*, Vol.30, ff.5-6. Both Admirals Richards and Beaumont had drawn attention to German maritime ambitions and Custance, commanding HMS *Barfleur*, who had been sent to Kiaochow by Seymour soon after its occupation in November 1897, shared apprehensions about a German threat on the horizon. Selborne himself took the initiative for the establishment of new naval bases on the coasts of the North Sea from precisely this date.

⁸ Selborne correspondence with Balfour, Devonshire and Brodrick: *ibid.*, Vol.30, ff.162-3, 122-7 & 43-50. This is relevant to the evolution of the CID and the reasons why service intelligence chiefs were members of it. By contrast, however, the DNI was never a member of the Board of Admiralty, though Fisher proposed to Selborne in the spring of 1902 that he ought to be. It also demonstrates that Balfour's relationship with his cabinet was very much more directive than Salisbury's.

⁹ Balfour to Selborne, 30.10.1903: *ibid.*, Vol.34, ff.41-42.

¹⁰ Battenberg had drawn up arrangements for the C-in-Cs in the East Indies, Pacific and Australian Stations to be subordinated, if required, to the C-in-C in China and showed that the combined Anglo-Japanese forces would be considerably stronger than the combined French and Russian forces in the Pacific. NAK: ADM1/7255. Noel appears mainly to have been Kerr's choice, along with Curzon-Howe as his deputy, but the nominees were distinctly reluctant to serve. Noel objected strongly to standing orders which would have required him to fly his flag in the armoured cruiser HMS *Leviathan*, instead of with the battleship squadron, which was to have been led by Curzon-Howe. Noel protested strongly to both Selborne and Kerr: in his talk with Selborne, Noel stated that neither he nor the majority of the admirals on the Flag List wished Fisher promoted to 1st Sea Lord when Kerr retired in October 1904. Kerr was taken aback by Noel's 'somewhat excited state' on 10.11.1903, could not see the policy which led to the decision and 'talked considerable nonsense'. Kerr decided, however, to give way as he did not want Noel 'to nurse a grievance'. 'Noel,' he observed, 'is dreadfully old-fashioned in his ideas and obstinate as a mule.' Selborne had noticed this tendency at least as early as September 1902, when Noel had been in command of reserves, but had apparently felt that Noel had been treated very

roughly by Fisher as 2nd Sea Lord. MS Selborne, Vol.35, ff.196-7, BLO.

¹¹ Balfour to Selborne and Arnold-Forster, 21.12.1903: *ibid.*, Vol.34, ff.47-52.

¹² Foreign Minister Komura in Tel.No.33 of 12 July 1903 to Minister Hayashi had referred to plans to negotiate a mutual recognition of Japanese interests in Korea and Russian interests in Manchuria and reiterated that the 'project of the Imperial government does not in their opinion lend itself to joint or parallel action'. The Tsar's appointment of Admiral Alexeiev as his viceroy in the Far East without the knowledge of the Foreign, Finance or War Ministers, however, spelled the increased likelihood of no such compromise being conceded. Gaikô Shiryôkan, Tokyo (GST), 'Ôden, 6-12.1903'.

¹³ Balfour to Selborne, 21.12.1903: MS Selborne, Vol.34, ff.47-52, BLO. GST, File 5.1.8.3, 'Chile, Argentina' provides detailed information about the purchase of Chilean and Argentinan warships in Britain and Italy in 1903-4. Early advice about their availability on the market came from Prince Louis of Battenberg, the Director of Naval Intelligence (DNI) at the Admiralty. The purchase made relations between Selborne and Chancellor Ritchie tetchy.

¹⁴ Balfour to Selborne, 29.12.1903: MS Selborne, Vol.34, ff.53-4, BLO; Balfour-Lansdowne exchanges in Balfour Papers, Add.MSS 49728, British Library (BL).

¹⁵ Kerr and Battenberg had a lengthy discussion with Lansdowne on 22.12.03 about the issues of neutrality, but especially on the issue of supplying coal to Russian warships, though as in all such issues, it was referred to the opinion of the law officers. MS Selborne, Vol.35, ff.247-50 & 263-4, BLO.

¹⁶ Roosevelt to George Meyer, US ambassador-elect to Russia, 6.2.1905: Roosevelt Papers, Library of Congress, Washington (LCW).

¹⁷ Roosevelt to Spring-Rice, 1.11.1905: *ibid.* Some interesting exchanges took place between Minister Kurino and Spring-Rice when *chargé d'affaires* in St.Petersburg in October 1903. Kurino tried to argue that Britain and the USA could not stand idly by as spectators but Spring-Rice normally made the stock reply that Britain was bound by strict neutrality under the alliance, though the US with its extensive commercial interests 'may come to help Japan with ships and money'. However, he reported two

days later that Spring-Rice came to see him in something of a hurry to mention information he had obtained which seemed to point to the Russians being in no mind to compromise on the Manchurian issue on financial grounds. To Kurino's surprise, Spring-Rice reversed his normal position by suggesting that Britain and the USA 'may take part in war' and Kurino concluded: 'according to my estimation his whole object seems to lie in the prevention of Russo-Japanese agreement.' Kurino Tel.No.126 of 16.10. and No.130 of 18.10.1903: GST, 'Ôden 1903'. Roosevelt claimed that he had unilaterally informed European diplomats that he was not prepared to put up with any repeat of the Triple Intervention of 1895, while on 7 May 1904, Takahashi Korekiyo reported that British and US financiers had signed a provisional contract for a joint loan to Japan. Minister Hayashi in Tel.No.159 of 11.5.1904 reported: 'Takahashi learned that when Schiff, senior partner of Kuhn Loeb & Co. had the audience with King Edward a few days ago, His Majesty expressed his great satisfaction on America's taking part in our loan'. GST, 'Meiji 36-nen zai-Eikôshi Raiden, 1-6 tsuki'.

¹⁸ Although the 1st Sea Lord, Sir Frederick Richards, had condemned 'the iniquitous manner in which the war was brought about by the United States', he appears to have been unaware of support for the US in Hong Kong by British businessmen to engage in a conspiracy with the Filipino rebels against Spanish rule there. Subsequently, the US army fell out with the rebels (who wanted independence) and condemned the Japanese for promoting Filipino resistance to the US occupation. Evidence was found of correspondence with the Japanese Army for the supply of weapons to the rebels via no less a person than Colonel Fukushima but any intrigue was later denied by the *Gaimushô*.

¹⁹ Roosevelt to Spring-Rice, 16.6.1905: Roosevelt Papers, LCW.

²⁰ The Admiralty was governed by Orders in Council of 1872 and 1882 and the table of business was revised by Goschen on 4.7.1895: NAK: ADM1/7255.

²¹ Lambton added: 'Noel he did not consider clever'. Diary of George King-Hall for January 1898: Royal Navy Museum, Portsmouth (RNMP).

²² Sir Edward Seymour, the C-in-C in China from 1898 to 1901, had served as a midshipman and witnessed the landing of the 'Thin Red Line': his private diary and correspondence survive for this period in the National Library of Scotland, Edinburgh

(NLS).

²³ NAK: ADM196/37, p.1282. Stirling, following the instructions of the Earl of Clarendon, in 1854 was the individual who effectively opened up Japan to renewed relations with the West, when Commodore Perry (whose treaty with the Shogunate had been rescinded) has been given all the historical credit: see Stirling's dispatch of 26.10.1854 at: ADM1/5629.

²⁴ The most recent account of naval operations against Japan can be found in Sir Hugh Cortazzi, ed., *British Envoys in Japan, 1859-1972*. Folkestone: Global Oriental, 2004, Appendices I & II. The author is grateful to Lieutenant-Colonel James Stirling, H.M.'s Lieutenant for Stirling & Falkirk, for access to the family muniments which contain an account of the service in Japan on board HMS *Euryalus* of his great-great-uncle, Midshipman H.T. Gartside-Tipping.

²⁵ Beaumont to Spencer, 15.4.1895: NAK: ADM1/7253. This position was adopted despite the information provided by the Foreign Office from the embassy at St.Petersburg: ADM1/7260.

²⁶ *Ibid.* and ADM1/7248.

²⁷ ADM1/7386A.

²⁸ A warning telegram to this effect was issued by Admiral Richards at the end of October 1898 and C-in-Cs urged to consider the demands of war with both France and Russia: ADM1/7389B.

²⁹ Seymour Tel.No.146 of 31.10.1898; Richards Tel.No.183 of 2.11.1898: *ibid.*

³⁰ King-Hall Diaries, entry for 1.11.1898: RNMP. Custance on HMS *Barfleur* was in charge of forces in the south.

³¹ Beaumont minute of 29.10.98: Richards to Eastern Extension, 31.10.98. Beaumont was against guarding ships 'so as to avoid premature disclosure of Admty intentions'. NAK: ADM1/7389B.

³² It appears that British warships sent from Hong Kong had lifted the end of the

cable in order to re-establish communications with Hong Kong with the knowledge of Admiral Dewey. See the report of the Dudley Committee established in October 1898 at which the Navy representative was Captain Heath (Assistant DNI) and the Army representative General Ardagh (DGMI). The Admiralty wrote on 29.4.1899 arguing that it did not believe the enemy was likely to cut British cables in wartime: WO32/6361.

³³ ADM1/7389B. Subsequently, Fisher discussed the Fashoda Crisis with Prince Louis of Battenberg, who had been intelligence officer at the time for the Channel Fleet, a post that transferred to all the combined fleets in wartime.

³⁴ Heath (ADNI) report of 19.6.1902: ADM1/7598.

³⁵ When the Boxer uprising occurred in June 1900, Admiral Seymour took most of his sailors and marines from the fleet at Taku to try to reach Beijing in response to a call from MacDonald, leaving the situation in the hands of his deputy, Admiral Bruce. Bruce's telegrams to London from Taku took approximately eight days and he was forced to rely on access to the Russian telegraph at Port Arthur. Seymour, to his credit, admitted that his expedition would not have survived had it not been for the presence of 3,000 Russian troops at Tientsin. ADM116/114.

³⁶ Kerr minute of 28.7.1900: ADM1/7386.

³⁷ MS Selborne, Vol.19, ff.93-119: BLO.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, Vol.26, ff.95-6.

³⁹ 'Intelligence Methods in Peace Time,' unregistered memorandum of 27.7.1909 in the files of MI5: NAK: KV1/4.

⁴⁰ Cecil Spring-Rice, the British *chargé* at St.Petersburg, nevertheless, was so suspicious of Russian secret police methods that he warned Hardinge in March 1906 of the likelihood that missions outside Russia without a regular messenger service, such as Brussels and Bucharest, offered opportunities for interception. HD3/133.

⁴¹ Lecture of March 1909 by Colonel J.A.L. Haldane, head of the Asiatic Section (MO3): WO106/6150.

⁴² A 'Major Higashi' was gazetted as the Japanese Army's officer 'to reside in India' early in 1904, but was carefully not provided with any diplomatic credentials as he was in fact Captain Azuma. The Indian Army was not told his real name, partly presumably in order not to alert the Russian consular officials who continued to serve in India during the Russo-Japanese War. He was followed by a succession of resident officers at Simla until the outbreak of World War II. The Indian Army, in turn, was represented by separate officers sent to Japan as language officers under the scheme based on the practice in the Indian Army of special pay for officers who learned difficult languages. Sir Ian Hamilton was the first foreign military officer to arrive in Japan, having been recommended to Minister Hayashi by the British Army C-in-C, Field-Marshal Roberts, but came – somewhat mysteriously – to be the chief attaché of the Indian Army. This was probably due to the support of the C-in-C in India, Lord Kitchener, whose chief-of-staff Hamilton had been in the final phase of the Boer War. But it also appears that General Fukushima had fallen severely ill while in India and probably owed his life to British medical help and it was said – perhaps uncharitably – that Hamilton took the opportunity to exploit this situation to his advantage when he was alone in Tokyo living under the roof of Minister MacDonald, like Hamilton a former Highland regimental commander.

⁴³ See in particular GST, Files 5.2.7.3: 'Mitteisha' and 5.2.2.13, (1-5): 'Dadaneru kaikyô tsûka mondai', together with the survey by Inaba Chiharu, 'Military Co-operation under the first Anglo-Japanese Alliance, 1902-1905' in: P.P. O'Brien, ed., *The Anglo-Japanese Alliance, 1902-1922*. London: RoutledgeCurzon, 2004, pp.64-81.

⁴⁴ Kerr to Selborne, 4.10.1901: MS Selborne, Vol.27, ff.190-1: BLO.

⁴⁵ Battenberg to Thursfield, 26.10.1909: Thursfield Papers, News International Archive, London.

⁴⁶ NAK: ADM1/7261.

⁴⁷ MacDonald (Tokyo) to Sanderson, 26.11.1901 reported that with Ottley's departure he was unable to answer any of the queries about the Japanese Navy put to him by the visiting Admiral Bridge (C-in-C, China) and had to consult his friend, the US naval attaché. NAK: FO83/2096. Satow supported Ottley's request for an

extension of his stay in order to overcome his experience of the extreme secretiveness of his Japanese hosts. Despite the suggestion that Satow disliked him, as Dr. Nigel Brailey has argued, it did not affect Ottley's career which progressed to DNI in 1905, appointment as British naval expert at The Hague in 1907 and Secretary of the CID prior to 1914 while Satow retired to the obscurity of Devon.

⁴⁸ Ottley to Selborne, 16.9., 3 & 21.10.1901: MS Selborne, Vol.29, ff.196-209: BLO.

⁴⁹ Sanderson to Selborne, secret letter of 24.4.1902: *ibid.*, Vol.33, ff.233-6.

⁵⁰ GST, File 5.1.8.4. See also Bridge Papers, National Maritime Museum, Greenwich (NMM).

⁵¹ See the author's contribution to O'Brien ed., *op.cit.*, pp.88-9.

⁵² See the author's article on Pakenham in: Sir Hugh Cortazzi, ed., *op.cit.* forthcoming.

⁵³ The Kaiser claimed to have made a bet with his senior naval advisers that the Japanese would win at sea. See Inoue (Berlin) Tel.No.231 of 30.5.1905: GST, File 5.2.2.15-3.

⁵⁴ The Chinese were reported to be hoping for a stand-off, while President Roosevelt recognized in a letter to Spring-Rice of 13.5.1905 that 'the Russian fleet is materially somewhat stronger than the Japanese' but argued that his 'own belief is that the Japanese superiority in morale and training will more than offset this': LCW. The Chief Intelligence Officer of the US Navy, however, wrote to Lieutenant McCully, the naval observer attached to the Russian Navy, on 22.4.1905: 'I must say that I have some confidence in Rojestvensky and his fleet....' NAW: RG38: ONI: 'Letters from Naval Attachés, Vol.6, pp.315-7.

⁵⁵ Balfour to Fisher, 26.4.1905: Fisher Papers, FISR1/4, f.154, Churchill College, Cambridge (CCC).

⁵⁶ See the author's 'Russia, Germany & Anglo-Japanese Intelligence Collaboration, 1898-1906,' in: L. & M. Erickson, eds., *Essays in Honour of John Erickson*. London: Weidenfeld/Orion, 2005 forthcoming.

⁵⁷ See Makino (Vienna) Tel.No.153 of 31.5.1905 noted comment that even Britain and the USA felt the Japanese victory might be 'too great' and that 'Japan may become too independent for the friendship of others'. GST, File 5.2.2.15-3. Minister Hayashi (London) Tel.No.403 of 5.12.1904 reported hearing from an old acquaintance in the USA who reported that 'he was greatly surprised when the President at a private interview expressed to him his strong aversion to Japanese' and that 'what he really wishes is to see the two powers entirely exhausted as a result of the war': File 5.1.8.4.

⁵⁸ Komura (Tokyo) Tel.No.160 of 29.5.1905 to Washington: Takahira Tel.Nos.106 & 109 of 1.6.1905: *ibid.*

⁵⁹ Roosevelt to Spring-Rice, 16.6.1905: LCW.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, Roosevelt to Spring-Rice, 1.11.1905.

⁶¹ Ottley to Fisher, 26.1.1911: Fisher Papers, FISR1/10, f.515: CCC.

⁶² Memorandum accompanying papers gathered in response to a letter from Ambassador Durand to W.L. Loomis of the State Department of 14.4.1905 requesting US opinion of Article 50 of the US Navy War Code. Loomis responded that this code had long since been revoked, but Durand appears to have left for home on leave before the end of the month. NAW: RG59, M-50, Roll 142.

⁶³ See Files 5.2.3.12 (1-2) & 5.2.3.22-24: GST.