

[Chairman's Summary Statement]

The Strategy of the Axis Powers in the Pacific War

Tadashi Kagatani

The "International Forum on War History" has been held every year since 2002 by the National Institute for Defense Studies (NIDS), for the purpose of comparative study between two or more countries. This year's forum is the ninth such event.

From 2007, with the Pacific War as the main theme, we have been focusing on national strategies or the "Conduct of War" in the Pacific War, such as the "New Perspectives on the War in the Pacific: Grand Strategies, Military Governments and POWs" (2007), "The Japan Strategies of the Allies during the Road to Pearl Harbor" (2008), and "Strategy in the Pacific War" (2009), rather than focusing on conventional operations and battles.

The theme established for this year's forum was the "Strategy of the Axis Powers in the Pacific War - Germany".

We hope that this will provide good opportunity to consider anew the strategy of Germany, Italy and even the Soviet Union, the last the strategy of which has hardly been discussed in Japan, especially since much of the discussion in the past regarding the Pacific War has been on the strategy of the Allies, such as the U.S., England and China.

Furthermore, while the political aspects of Japan's alliance with Germany has been the subject of many symposiums, workshops and other academic meetings, the "Conduct of War" or grand strategic aspects of that relationship have rarely been the subject of such events.

We centered on Germany because it was certainly the central country of World War II, being a leading combatant on the battlefields of Europe, and because it was fighting in the European war from before the start of the Pacific War, and because Japan was greatly influenced by Germany when charging into the Pacific War.

In this regard, we hoped to clarify how World War II and the Tripartite Pact specifically influenced Japan and its policy decisions.

A total of eleven historians gave presentations from their respective nations' viewpoints and thereby provided deeper insight on how the Axis powers and the Soviet Union were going to fight, or actually fought in World War II. Among our presenters were four historians from overseas (Dr. Creveld unfortunately could not participate), including a historian from Italy, which was another member of the Tripartite Pact, and a historian from Russia, which was a member of the

"phantom alliance" between the four countries. Also featured were seven Japanese historians, including a number from the Military History Department of the National Institute for Defense Studies,

The outline of this year's forum was as follows.

First, was the "Keynote Address" by Dr. Masaki Miyake (Professor Emeritus Meiji University), titled "The Tripartite Pact and the Idea of a Eurasian Continental Bloc". In his speech, Dr. Miyake noted that the factors which caused confusion in Japanese diplomacy during the period from the conclusion of the Russo-German Non-Aggression Pact to the outbreak of the Russo-German War were the simultaneous existence of two diplomatic policy orientations in Germany, i.e., the pro-British, anti-Soviet policy orientation of Hitler, and the pro-Soviet, anti-British policy orientation of Joachim von Ribbentrop. The signing of the Non-Aggression Pact between Germany and the Soviet Union was an achievement of Ribbentrop's policy orientation, and the outbreak of the Russo-German War was the result of Hitler's policy orientation. Ribbentrop's influence on policy hit its peak when the Russo-German Treaty of Friendship was concluded in September 1939, and the holding of talks in Berlin in November 1940, which was the final opportunity for improved relations between Germany and the Soviet Union, were a result of Ribbentrop's policy orientation. However, Hitler absolutely refused to accept the conditions which Stalin stipulated in his reply as necessary for the Soviet Union to join the alliance with Japan, Germany and Italy, and decided instead to start operations against the Soviet Union (Operation Barbarossa). Ribbentrop, who was attached to the idea of a Eurasian Continental Bloc among Japan, Soviet Union, Germany and Italy, was powerless against the decision of Hitler to start a war against the Soviet Union. Foreign Minister Matsuoka, who could not see through the duality of the German diplomacy and the shift from Ribbentrop's to Hitler's policy orientation during this period, concluded the Soviet-Japanese Neutrality Pact in Moscow in April 1941. The locus of Japanese diplomacy, which was tossed between the pro-British and anti-Soviet policy orientation of Hitler, and the pro-Soviet, anti-British policy orientation of Ribbentrop, was clarified by Dr. Miyake's speech.

In Session 1, two historians and a commentator gave presentations and made comments on the "German War and Japan".

First, Dr. Gerhard Hirschfeld gave a presentation titled "Hitler's War Aims". In his presentation, he examined the process by which the political leaders of Germany strived to implement excessive colonial policies throughout all of Europe, particularly in the east, and the

results of the "New Order" concept which was necessary and a fundamental part of the war objectives of Germany. During his speech, Dr. Hirschfeld pointed out that the war objectives of Germany must be differentiated between the recovery of the humiliating results of World War I, that is, the short term target of a radical revision of the Versailles Treaty, and the conquest of Europe, particularly Hitler's radical intentions in the east. Although there were confrontations over the method of realizing the plans to repudiate the Treaty of Versailles and rebuild the German empire in central Europe, the political elite of Germany were in agreement over the objectives themselves. On the other hand, the ambitions of Hitler towards *Lebensraum*, or "living space," in Eastern Europe were full of delusions of grandeur, imperialistic plans and simplistic but cruel racism. A clear concept and the human resources required for their realization was lacking, however. Furthermore, since the attitude of Hitler was ambiguous, indifferent and indecisive, and there was also no political concept or unified government organization regarding the future of Europe, complete and comprehensive public programs were not determined for the "New Order".

As a result, although there were many plans; none of them were new or logical, and were no more than immature ideas based on the principle of colonialism. The economic policies of Germany for the occupied territories can therefore be summarized in two words: "expropriation" and "confiscation". Dr. Hirschfeld concluded that the intrinsic nature of Germany's occupation policies in Eastern Europe was as follows. While countless new organizations were created and competed against each other, including the organizations of Heinrich Himmler, which took advantage of a vacuum in governing mechanisms, this increased the radicalization of each. As a result, the occupation policy ended with the utmost expropriation and exploitation possible of the economy and human resources, and was characterized by unrestricted barbarity, disorder and recklessness.

Next, Dr. Nobuo Tajima gave a presentation titled "The Japanese Perspective on Germany's War". Dr. Tajima pointed out the issue of Japan's lack of understanding of the nature of the Russo-German War, based on an analysis of how the Japanese government and military authorities evaluated the comprehensive national power of Germany, such as the military strength and domestic governing ability after the German defeat at Stalingrad in early 1943, in their formulation of Japanese policy. Hitler, who was fighting the Russo-German War, which was regarded as a war of ideological and racial destruction, had no room to consider the "idea of a Eurasian Continental Bloc without Italy" which was presented by Japan. On the other hand, as Dr. Tajima also pointed out, since Japan could not understand that the Russo-German War was a war of worldviews (*Weltanschauungen*) labeled as a so-called "war of destruction" (*Vernichtungskrieg*), Japan fumbled around exploring ways to realize peace between Germany

and the Soviet Union, even though Germany continued to be indifferent in its reaction towards such efforts during the war. Furthermore, Japan's fantasy towards Stalin, which believed that the Soviet Union would not participate in the war at an early stage, and the process in which Japan was betrayed by the Soviet Union's participation in the war and had to face surrender to the Allies, was described in his presentation.

Professor Junichiro Shoji, Deputy Director, Military History Department, NIDS, commented on these two presentations as follows. First, regarding Dr. Hirschfeld's presentation, Mr. Shoji noted that, although Germany and Japan shared similar aspects as nations trying to break the status quo, the racial ideology which existed in Germany did not exist in Japan. Japan therefore could not understand that the nature of the Russo-German War was a *Vernichtungskrieg*, or war of annihilation, in which the survival of Nazi Germany's racial ideology was at stake. He also referred to the fact that while Japan's leadership intended to support many of the nationalists in Asia; Germany had no equivalent ideology to Japan's pan-Asianistic "Asia for the Asians," and pointed out that Nazism was criticized in Japan during the 1930s for being, among others, too narrow and limited in its nationalistic thought, and that many Japanese of that period stressed the difference with Japan's contemporary ideology, which was said to have transcended and overcome this issue.

Next, Mr. Shoji commented on Dr. Tajima's presentation, and noted that Japan's perception of Germany was characterized by the opposites of "excessive trust" and "distrust." The background for Japan's excessive trust or belief in Germany lay in its "Draft Proposal for Hastening the End of the War against the United States, Great Britain, the Netherlands and Chiang," which was the guideline for war termination adopted immediately before the Pacific War, and in which a Germany victorious throughout Europe was the overriding premise for Japan to terminate the Pacific War successfully. In other words, Japan's victory in the Pacific War became conditional upon the success of others (Germany), and thus Japan had no choice but to believe that Germany would be victorious in Europe. On the other hand, Japan came to "distrust" Germany because of the signing of the Russo-German Non Aggression Pact and the start of the Russo-German War, both of which came as unannounced surprises to Japan, and, as a more general underlying cause, various racial factors. This distrust of Germany was in existence from before the Pacific War, and continued through that conflict as well. In September 1943, the Operations Guidance Section of the Army General Staff foresaw the defeat of Germany and envisioned a breaking of relations with Germany as a means of avoiding war with the Soviet Union, instead of seeking to broker a Russo-German peace, which had been the Army's previous preference, noting that "an outbreak of war with the Soviet Union is to be avoided as much as

possible during the ongoing war. For this purpose, we foresee that circumstances may leave Japan with no alternative but to sacrifice its ties with Germany and Italy." Prof. Shoji thus commented that Japan's perception of the Soviet Union, which was optimistic to the point of being a "fantasy," was in contrast to its perception of Germany, which was full of contradictions.

Professor Shoji then raised two questions. First, he asked Dr. Hirschfeld whether realistic strategic considerations had greater influence rather than racist ideologies over Hitler's policies towards Japan, or if the opposite were true. In response, Dr. Hirschfeld remarked that Hitler was both a racist and a realist, and swayed between the two when formulating policy. Prof. Shoji then asked Dr. Tajima why Japan came to trust Germany to such an excessive degree. Dr. Tajima explained that pro-German sentiments in the Japanese Army were very strong, due to the fact that the Japanese Army had, since its establishment, modeled itself after the German Army, and that Meckel's legacy had been passed on through the years. Dr. Tajima added, however, that a comparison of German-Chinese and German-Japanese relations in the twentieth century shows that German-Chinese relations were overwhelmingly stronger than the relations between the Germans and Japanese.

Session 2 focused on the "The Tripartite Pact and the Soviet Reaction", and featured four presentations, followed by remarks from two commentators.

First, Dr. Jost Dülffer gave a presentation titled "German Strategy and the Tripartite Pact during the Second World War". Dr. Dülffer gave an extensive and comprehensive presentation on the Tripartite Pact from the viewpoint of diplomacy and military strategy, and focused on Germany but also mixed in the relationships with Japan, Italy, the Soviet Union, China, England and France, and the unfolding of wars and military conflicts which spread across many parts of the world, targeting the period from the conclusion of the Anti-Comintern Pact to the end of the Second World War. In his presentation, Dr. Dülffer noted that the Tripartite Pact resulted in no common planning, sharing of strategy or other military benefits between Germany and Japan, although it did result in some economical cooperation, albeit on a limited scale, and some influence in cultural matters. He concluded that the Tripartite Pact was characterized by "separation" rather than "cooperation", because both Japan and Germany did not provide information in advance of their respective military plans and proceeded to execute their war efforts independently of each other.

Next, Dr. Nicola Labanca gave a presentation titled "Ideology, Politics and Armaments in Italian Strategy of the Tripartite Pact". Dr. Labanca studied the Italian Supreme Command's daily war diary and examined the military aspect of the Tripartite Pact from the viewpoint of

Italian strategy and the relationship between Italy and Japan. He found that the Italians, and particularly the Italian Navy, had expectations for Japan as a counterweight to the Royal Navy, and in the area of supplies and logistics. Japan, however, only contributed indirectly in terms of military support, and although the Supreme Command expected Japan to be a source of supply of strategic resources (for example, rubber), Japan never took it into consideration. He concluded that the differences in the functioning of the Tripartite alliance and the Allies as military alliances were great, and that the Tripartite Pact ended up being more of a political, rather than military, alliance for Italy.

Dr. Kiyoshi Aizawa, Chief of the Second Research Office, Military History Department, NIDS, gave a presentation titled "Japan and the Tripartite Pact". Dr. Aizawa spoke about the Japanese Army and Navy, and in particular about changes in the stance of the latter, from the time when the strengthening of the Anti-Comintern Pact became an issue through the conclusion of the Tripartite Pact. In his report, he pointed out that the Imperial Japanese Navy was traditionally in favor of cooperation with the Anglo-Americans and had favored a "Southward Expansion" strategy. According to Dr. Aizawa, the Navy opposed the movement in Japan from the summer of 1938 until the signing of the Russo-German Non-Aggression Pact on August 23, 1939 to strengthen the Anti-Comintern Pact into a full alliance, because the Navy felt those efforts were based on the "Northward Expansion" orientation favored by the Army. On the other hand, the Navy subsequently agreed to the signing of the Tripartite Alliance treaty on September 27, 1940, because, unlike the earlier, 1938-39 proposal, the 1940 Alliance was conceived as a steppingstone to a four-way alliance (which would include the Soviet Union, and which was ultimately not realized).

Finally, Dr. Molodiakov gave a presentation titled "The Tripartite Pact and the Soviet Union". Dr. Molodiakov discussed, mainly from the Soviet viewpoint, the possibilities for a political and military partnership between the Soviet Union and the three Axis powers, or for a Eurasian Continental Bloc consisting of a four nation alliance (the Axis nations plus the Soviet Union). In his presentation, he mentioned that there was a possibility of political cooperation and partnerships between Japan, Germany, Italy and the Soviet Union, and even an alliance among the four countries, which was realized to some extent. In particular, he pointed out that the possibility of an arrangement for political cooperation or even an alliance among the four countries existed immediately after the Nomonhan Incident; and that Hitler ruined any possibility that the concept of a four nation alliance had of being realized. Thus, the Russo-German War became unavoidable due to Hitler's opposition to the additional conditions which Stalin demanded in response to Ribbentrop's draft proposal of a four country alliance treaty, and, as a result, any

remaining possibility of an alliance between the four countries disappeared.

Dr. Kyoichi Tachikawa, Joint Research Coordinator, NIDS and Senior Research Fellow, Military History Department, NIDS, and Lt. Colonel Tomoyuki Wada, Fellow, Military History Department, NIDS, then made comments regarding the four presentations outlined above. First, Dr. Tachikawa noted that the Tripartite Pact which was concluded on September 27, 1940, was intended to be a diplomatic means for keeping the United States out of the war which had started in Europe and was threatening to start in Southeast Asia, and was not an alliance for the purposes of actually fighting a war. He also noted that the concept of a "Quadrupartite Entente," which would include the Soviet Union, was also a means to deter the U.S., and that the Tripartite Pact failed to fulfill its originally intended function and ultimately turned into a failed treaty because of the military actions of Germany and Japan themselves, namely, Operation Barbarossa and the Pearl Harbor operation. He also noted, however, that the Tripartite Pact continued even after the outbreak of war between Japan and the U.S., and the alliance was enhanced by the conclusion of a "No-Separate Peace Agreement (which included a no-separate peace clause and others)" on December 11, 1941, and the "Tripartite Military Agreement" on January 18, 1942.

Next, Lt. Colonel Wada in his comments compared the features of the Tripartite Pact with the characteristics of the alliance relationships among the Allies, particularly the U.S. and England. First, he mentioned that while the U.S. and England confirmed the strategy of giving Europe top priority in the Arcadia Conference held in Washington from December 1941 to January 1942, the Axis powers concluded the Tripartite Military Agreement in January 1942, which divided the areas of operational responsibility along a line at seventy degrees east longitude, and assigned the European area as the areas of operations for Germany and Italy, and gave the Pacific Ocean area to Japan as its operational area of responsibility. In other words, the Axis powers never adopted a strategy which focused or gave priority to either front, Europe or the Pacific. Second, the Anglo-Americans executed their operations in mutual cooperation on both the European and Pacific Ocean fronts, while there was no area of operations where the three Axis powers cooperated in their operations, and even in the only areas where common or coordinated operations were contemplated, i.e. against the Soviet Union and in the Indian Ocean, the three countries never fought in cooperation or made a coordinated military effort.

Dr. Tachikawa and Lt. Colonel Wada then raised the following questions. The first was why the Tripartite Pact did not advance beyond a political alliance and become a military alliance. Dr. Dülffer answered that while the purpose of the Tripartite Pact was to prevent the U.S. from entering the war, its conclusion had the opposite effect and only increased the wariness of the U.S.

Dr. Dülffer added that the Tripartite Pact was no more than a political alliance, and that it was a failure as an alliance.

The next question raised concerned the reasons why the Tripartite Pact was continued and enhanced even after the outbreak of war between Japan and the U.S. Dr. Aizawa explained that the fact that Japan, Germany and Italy concluded an agreement which included a no-separate-peace clause after the conclusion of the Tripartite Pact proves how weak the Tripartite Pact itself was, and also commented that the Tripartite Pact had the extremely strong political overtone of deterring the U.S. from entering a war against any of the Axis powers.

The question was also raised of whether a "Quadrupartite Entente" which included the Soviet Union would have been effective in deterring the United States. Dr. Molodiakov pointed out that while the victorious side of a war between Germany, Japan and Italy versus England and the United States could not be predicted, a war against Germany, Japan, Italy and the Soviet Union would probably have been determined to be unwinnable by the British and Americans. He therefore felt that a Quadrupartite Entente would probably have deterred the U.S. from entering the war.

Finally, the question was asked of why Italy came to occupy a subordinate position in the Tripartite Pact. Dr. Labanca explained that Italy was economically and militarily inferior in strength, and it was not possible for it to be equal with the other countries. He also pointed out that Italy could not synchronize its policies with either Germany or Japan, because the focus of Italy's strategy was on the Mediterranean.

In his "Concluding Presentation," Dr. Ryoichi Tobe spoke about "Japanese Alliance Policy in the 20th Century". His presentation focused on the three stages in any alliance, i.e. the signing, maintenance and operation, and abandonment, in the lives of Japan's alliance policies, in particular examining the Anglo-Japanese Alliance, the Japan-Manchukuo Alliance, the Tripartite Pact, and the Japan-U.S. Alliance.

First, he clarified that the Anglo-Japanese Alliance, the Japan-Manchukuo Alliance, and the Japan-U.S. Alliance were concluded as counterbalances to actual threats, while the Tripartite Pact was concluded to counterbalance a future threat. He also pointed out that while there were similarities in the four alliances in terms of their roles as counterbalances to threats, Japan's alliances with the British, Manchukuo and the U.S. dealt with the threat from Russia or the U.S.S.R., while the Tripartite Pact was unique among Japan's alliances in that it saw the United States as the threat, and, as can be seen in the concept of the four-nation coalition treaty between Japan, Germany, Italy and the Soviet Union, tried instead to include the Soviet Union in the

alliance.

Dr. Tobe next made a few comments on the maintenance and management of alliances. He noted that one of the reasons for the relative longevity of the Anglo-Japanese and Japan-U.S. Alliances was or is their ability to adapt to or accommodate requirements and interests which did not exist or which were not major issues of concern when the alliances were initially created. In other words, in both cases, unique personal networks were created when such new requirements and interests emerged within the alliance relationship, which supported the alliance even when the original purpose of the alliance became diluted and decreased in importance. No such personal network was created, however, in the case of the Tripartite Pact, not only because the relationships under the Tripartite Pact did not have enough time to mature, but also because Germany, one of Japan's partners in the Tripartite Pact, was not interested in creating such networks.

Finally, regarding the termination of alliances, Dr. Tobe pointed out that while in many cases, alliances are terminated because the partner country or government ceased to exist, Japan never intended to terminate the Anglo-Japanese Alliance. He also pointed out that there was no evidence that Japan ever seriously examined the possibility of terminating the Tripartite Pact, and that it was only after the defeat of Germany and the disappearance of the Hitler regime that Japan took action towards peace with the Allies. Finally, Dr. Tobe noted that the Japanese were extremely "faithful," almost to an excessive degree, towards their alliance relationship in the case of the Tripartite Pact, and that this seems to be a characteristic in the Japanese perception of alliances in general, both past and present.

We hope that the presentations and discussions made during this Forum will prove to be an important first step for the Military History Department of the National Institute for Defense Studies (NIDS) as it pursues its mid-term research goal of studying the Pacific War at the grand strategic level, which we believe will be an essential step in expanding and advancing research on the Pacific War. Such research has heretofore often been based on perspectives which focus heavily on the Japanese side only, or on Japan's relations with its adversaries, namely, the United States, Great Britain, the Netherlands and China, and we believe that historical research which includes broader and more varied perspectives than what has usually been the practice to date will lead to a greater and broader understanding of the Pacific War. It is not often that we are able to listen to the perspectives of historians from nations such as the former Axis powers, Germany and Italy, or the Soviet Union, and we were privileged with the opportunity to listen to the views of historians from those nations, which we feel has contributed in no minor way to a "resurrection" of a more broader and complete view of the Pacific War.

The Military History Department of the National Institute for Defense Studies will continue to study the history of the Pacific War by identifying new historical materials, both in Japan and from overseas, exchanging views and research results with historians, and by performing objective analyses as it strives to create a three-dimensional understanding of the Pacific War and Japan's military past.