

Political Strategies toward Ending the Sino-Japanese and Russo-Japanese Wars

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Introduction

The Sino-Japanese and Russo-Japanese Wars were both wars that Japan was able to end while still victorious. In that sense, they can be termed successful wars. However, in neither case did Japan necessarily have its eyes set at the outset on how specifically to end the war. Though these wars were fought against major powers, Japanese forces made spectacular advances and won a seemingly endless succession of victories in the initial phases of the wars. In that sense, Japan's experience in these wars had much in common with its wars during the Showa period, that is, the second Sino-Japanese War (the China Incident) and the Pacific War (the Greater East Asian War). In its wars during the Showa era, Japan could not uncover any clues as to how to end them. The course of the wars became stalemated or was reversed, and ultimately Japan was forced to face defeat. While the first Sino-Japanese and Russo-Japanese Wars were fought before the advent of the age of total war, why was Japan able to bring these two wars, which were fought during the Meiji period, to peace while still victorious, unlike the wars in the Showa period?

There are three trends in studies on the first Sino-Japanese and Russo-Japanese Wars. The first studies the wars from a military history perspective. Such research has been done from immediately after the wars ended up to the present day, beginning with officially published military histories compiled by the Army General Staff or the Imperial Japanese Navy General Staff.¹ After the end of World War II, helped by the progress in disclosure of diplomatic records, studies from a political and diplomatic history perspective were actively pursued, with research that looked into the causes of the opening of war becoming the mainstream in

¹ In addition to officially published war histories, typical examples of research before World War II include Takazo Numata, *Nichiro Rikusen Shinshi* (New History of Russo-Japanese Land Battles) (Hesho Shuppansha, 1924) and Toshio Tani, *Kimitsu Nichiro Senshi* (Secret Russo-Japanese War History), (Hara Shobo, 1966). Examples of postwar research include Shinobu Oe, *Nichiro Senso no Gunjishi-teki Kenkyu* (Military Historical Study on the Russo-Japanese War), (Iwanami Shoten, 1976); Saburo Toyama, *Nichiro Kaisenshi no Kenkyu – Senkiteki Kosatsu wo Chushin Toshite* (A Historical Study of Russo-Japanese Naval Battles – Focusing on the War Chronicle Review) (Education Publishing Center, 1985); Etsu Kuwata, ed., *Nisshin/Nichiro Senso* (The Sino-Japanese and Russo-Japanese Wars), Kindai Nihon Sensoshi Dai Ippen (Modern Japan War History Volume 1) (Dodai Economic Club, 1997); and Seiji Saito, *Nisshin Senso no Gunji Senryaku* (Military Strategies of the Sino-Japanese War) (Fuyo Shobo, 2003).

this area.² In studies on the Russo-Japanese War, the contemporary ideological climate was reflected as ideological disputes that were stirred up over whether the war was imperialistic or an effort to defend the motherland.³ In recent years, the primary issue is whether the opening of the war with Russia was inevitable or whether it could have been avoided, revolving around the arguments presented by Yukio Ito and Isao Chiba.⁴ Since the 1970s, studies on the Sino-Japanese and Russo-Japanese Wars as social history as well as economic history have also flourished.

This overview of studies on the Sino-Japanese and Russo-Japanese War indicates that studies on the termination of the wars are few compared to the many studies on the causes of the opening of the wars. The issue of war termination has not been addressed fully.⁵ This paper therefore reviews the political and military strategies aimed at ending the Sino-Japanese and Russo-Japanese Wars, analyzes their differences and common aspects, and then considers the

² Representative research includes Kiyoshi Tabohashi, *Nisshin Seneki Gaikoshi no Kenkyu* (A Study on Diplomatic History of the Sino-Japanese War) (Toko Shoin, 1951); Seizaburo Nobuo, *Nisshin Senso – Sono Seiji Gaiko-teki Kansatsu*, Zoho-ban (The Sino-Japanese War – Political and Diplomatic Observations – Augmented Edition) (Nansosha, 1970); Akira Nakatsuka, *Nisshin Senso no Kenkyu* (A Study on the Sino-Japanese War) (Aoki Shoten, 1968); Michio Fujimura, *Nisshin Senso – Higashi Ajia Kindaishi no Tenkanten* (The Sino-Japanese War – A Turning Point in the Modern History of East Asia) (Iwanami Shoten, 1973); Hidenao Takahashi, *Nisshin Senso e no Michi* (The Way to the Sino-Japanese War) (Tokyo Sogensha, 1995); Jun Tsunoda, *Manshu Mondai to Kokubo Hoshin – Meiji Koki ni okeru Kokubo Kankyo no Hendo* (The Manchurian Problem and the National Defense Policy – Changes in the National Defense Environment in the Second Half of the Meiji Period) (Hara Shobo, 1967); and Haruki Wada, *Nichiro Senso – Kigen to Kaisen* (The Russo-Japanese War – The Origin and the Opening of War) (Iwanami Shoten, 2009-2010). Many of these works of research focus on the opening phases of the wars.

³ Hiroshi Nakanishi and Sochi Naraoka, “Nihon ni okeru Nichiro Senso Kenkyu no Doko” (“Trends of Studies on the Russo-Japanese War in Japan”) in *Nichiro Senso Kenkyu no Shinshiten* (New Perspectives of Studies on the Russo-Japanese War), ed. Nichiro Senso Kenkyukai (Seibunsha, 2005), 411.

⁴ Yukio Ito, *Rikken Kokka to Nichiro Senso – Gaiko to Naisei 1898-1905* (The Constitutional State and the Russo-Japanese War – Diplomacy and Domestic Politics 1898-1905) (Bokutakusha, 2000); Isao Chiba, *Kyu Gaiko no Keisei – Nihon no Gaiko 1900-1919* (The Formation of Old Diplomacy: Japanese Diplomacy 1900-1919) (Keiso Shobo, 2008).

⁵ Prominent works of research on the end of the wars include the following, but most of them focus on diplomatic policies and negotiations, centering on the peace conferences, without full discussions from the perspective of political and military strategies: Akira Nakatsuka, “Shimonoseki Joyaku Ron” (“A Discussion on the Treaty of Shimonoseki”), *Nara Women’s University Bungakukai Annual Research Report*, no. 10 (1967); Yukio Hiyama, “Nisshin Senso ni okeru Gaiko Senryaku to Senso Shido” (“Diplomatic Strategy and Conduct of the War in the Sino-Japanese War”) in *Kindai Nihon Keisei Katei no Kenkyu* (A Study on the Formation Process of Modern Japan), ed. Committee for Publication of the Collection of Papers in Commemoration of the 60th Birthday of Dr. Shigetaka Fukuchi (Yuzankaku, 1978); Satoko Koketsu, “Nisshin Senso Shuketu ni muketa Nihon Gaiko to Kokusai Kankei – Kaisen kara ‘Sangoku Kansho’ Seiritsu ni Itaru Nihon to Igirisu” (“Japanese Diplomacy for Ending the Sino-Japanese War and International Relations – Japan and Britain from the Opening of the War through the Formation of ‘Tripartite Intervention’”) *Journal of Shigakukai*, vol. 120, no. 9 (September 2011); Masayoshi Matsumura, “Potsumasu Kowa Kaigi to Seodoa Ruzuberuto – Naze Kare wa Nihon ni Tsutaenakattanoka” (“The Portsmouth Peace Conference and Theodore Roosevelt – Why Did He Not Tell Japan?”), *Gaimusho Chosa Geppo* (Monthly Research Report of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs), FY2006, no. 2 (October 2005); Masayoshi Matsumura, “Mou Hitori no Potsumasu Kowa Zenken Iin – Takahira Kogoro Chubei Koshi” (“Another Plenipotentiary Delegate to the Portsmouth Conference – Japanese Minister to the U.S. Kogoro Takahira”), *Gaimusho Chosa Geppo* (Monthly Research Report of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs), FY2006, no. 1 (August 2006); Yoshihiko Hirono, “Serugei Uitte to Potsumasu Kowa Kaigi” (“Sergei Witte and the Portsmouth Peace Conference”), *Osaka Gakuini University International Studies*, vol. 20, no. 2 (December 2009).

issue of why Japan was able to achieve peace while still victorious.

1. Political and Military Strategy Up to the End of the Sino-Japanese War

(1) Clue to Peace and Consideration of Peace within the Japanese Government

The Sino-Japanese War began with the Naval Battle of Pungdo on July 25, 1894. On August 1, Japan and China, the latter which was under the Qing dynasty, declared war against each other. Japan advanced rapidly in the early stages of the war and took control of Pyongyang on September 16, and the Japanese Navy won the Naval Battle of the Yellow Sea on September 17. In just over a month since the opening of war, Japan thus won a succession of land and sea battles, gaining an edge in the course of war.

Under these circumstances, on October 8, Britain made an offer to mediate peace between the two countries. The British proposed that “the Japanese government should agree to the terms of peace whereby a group of other countries shall ensure the independence of Korea and China shall pay reparations to Japan.” The terms of peace offered by Britain called for the securing of Korea’s independence and the payment of war reparations by China.⁶ Foreign Minister Munemitsu Mutsu prepared three different peace proposals in consultation with Prime Minister Hirobumi Ito. Of the three, Proposal A demanded that China cede Lushun (Port Arthur) and Dalian to Japan, while Proposal B called for the cession of Taiwan. Later, Proposals A and B formed the basis of the Treaty of Shimonoseki.⁷ At this point in time, however, the political goals which were to be attained as conditions for ending the war had not been finalized. On October 23, the Japanese government therefore refused to accept the British proposal.⁸

Since then, the Japanese government continued to consider the peace plan, with Mutsu in charge, and in consultation with Ito. At the end of October, Japan determined its basic conditions for peace, which could be characterized as the first draft of a peace treaty. In addition to the British proposal for the complete independence of Korea and China’s payment of reparations for Japan’s war costs, its general outline included further conditions such as the cession of “the southern region of Mukden Province, including Lyushunkou and Dalian Bay” and “the whole island of Taiwan and the Penghu archipelago” as well as the conclusion of a commercial treaty similar to those China had concluded with the Western powers.⁹

On the battlefields, meanwhile, on October 24, the First Army, led by Aritomo Yamagata, won in a battle along the Yalu River, all but bringing the Korean Peninsula under Japanese control. The Second Army, newly formed and led by Iwao Oyama, who previously served as Minister of the Army, was transported by sea to Huayuankou in the central part of the Liaodong

⁶ Telegram from Foreign Minister Mutsu Addressed to Prime Minister Ito, dated October 8, 1894, “Report on the British Government’s Proposal for the Terms of Peace”, in *Nihon Gaiko Bunsho* (Documents on Japanese Foreign Policy) vol. 27, book II, ed. Ministry of Foreign Affairs (U.N. Association of Japan, 1953): 474-475 (Hereafter, abbreviated as follows: *Gaiko Bunsho*, vol. 27, II).

⁷ Munemitsu Mutsu, *Kenkenroku*, New Edition (Iwanami Shoten, 1983), 206-207.

⁸ Delivered personally by Foreign Minister Mutsu to the British Minister, dated October 23, 1894, “Reply of Refusal to the Mediation by the British Government,” *Gaiko Bunsho*, vol. 27, II, 485.

⁹ Tabohashi, *Nisshin Seneki Gaikoshi no Kenkyu*, 436.

Peninsula and started landing there. The basic conditions for peace thus were set out just as Japanese forces invaded deeper into China's territory and further advanced their operations.

On November 6, the United States sounded out Japan on peace mediation.¹⁰ After deliberations at the Cabinet and other meetings, Mutsu replied to U.S. Minister in Japan Edwin Dun that Japan would continue the war until China requested peace on its own, saying that while "Japan does not want to unnecessarily take advantage of a victory in the war beyond the extent of securing for Japan the legitimate outcome that should arise from the armed conflict," "that extent will not have been reached until the Chinese government requests peace directly to Japan."¹¹

(2) Progress in the Peace Issue and Limiting the Expansion of the War

Lushun fell on November 22. At the same time, the Chinese government made a proposal for peace through the U.S. ministers stationed in China and Japan. China proposed the endorsement of Korea's independence and payment of war reparations as the peace conditions, just as the British proposal had.¹² Subsequently, Tokujiro Nishi, Japanese Minister in Russia, informed the Japanese government that Russia and the other powers of the world harbored doubts about Japan's demand for the cession of territories.¹³ Under the circumstances, Mutsu thought that the present military situation was not sufficient to conclude a favorable peace treaty and another battle would be needed.¹⁴

On the other hand, Imperial General Headquarters proceeded with preparations for waging a decisive battle with the main force of the Chinese military in the Chihli plain around Beijing. In addition to Japanese troops already at the front, the mobilization of combat troops of the Japanese Imperial Guards Division had already been completed by October 8. Subsequently, by December 4, the mobilization of the Fourth Division's combat troops was completed.¹⁵ On November 29, an order was issued at last to the Combined Fleet to study possible landing points on the north coast of Bohai (Bohai Sea).¹⁶ This meant that preparations had begun for the landing of the forces for the decisive battle in the Chihli plain, and was an

¹⁰ Telegram from Japanese Minister to the United States Kuniro to Foreign Minister Mutsu, dated November 6, 1894, "Matter Concerning the U.S. Government's Expression of Its Willingness to Act as an Intermediary for the Friendship between Japan and China," *Gaiko Bunsho*, vol. 27, II, 489-490.

¹¹ Delivery by Foreign Minister Mutsu to the U.S. Minister to Japan, dated November 17, 1894, "Reply to the U.S. Offer of Mediation" and telegram from Foreign Minister Mutsu to Japanese Minister to the United States Kurino, dated November 17, 1894, "Information on Remarks upon Delivery of the Verbal Note on Japan's Reply to the U.S. Minister to Japan," *Gaiko Bunsho*, vol. 27, II, 501-503; Mutsu, *Kenkenroku*, 216-218.

¹² Mutsu, *Kenkenroku*, 219.

¹³ Telegram from Japanese Minister to Russia Nishi to Foreign Minister Mutsu, dated December 1, 1894, "Report on the Precarious Attitude of the Russian Government," *Gaiko Bunsho*, vol. 27, II, 510-512.

¹⁴ Saito, *Nisshin Senso no Gunji Senryaku* (Military Strategies of the Sino-Japanese War), 161.

¹⁵ General Staff Office, ed., *Meiji 27-28 Nen Nisshin Sensi*, Dai 6 Kan (History of the Sino-Japanese War, 1894-1895, vol. 6) (Tokyo Printing, 1907), 281.

¹⁶ Kaigun Gunrei-bu Senshi Hensan Iin Hen (War History Compilation Committee, Naval General Staff ed.) "Meiji 27-28 Nen Sei Shin Kaisen-shi" 2, Kan 16 (History of Naval Battles against China, 1894-1895, Book 2, vol. 16), ed. General Staff Office (materials in the possession of Military Archives, Center for Military History, National Institute for Defense Studies, Ministry of Defense).

indication that the war would be expanded. Even as the peace issue emerged, the expansion of the war was also thus being planned.

Just as these developments were occurring, Ito on December 4 raised an objection to the impending battle in the Chihli plain by submitting his statement of position, “Strategy to Attack Weihaiwei and Occupy Taiwan” to Imperial General Headquarters. The statement began by describing the planned battle in the Chihli plain with the words, “Though it may sound grand, it is easier said than done”, and pointed out that it would be a most difficult task to transport forces and supplies across Bohai during winter. It further stated that Japan had yet to gain complete command of the sea despite its victory in the Naval Battle of the Yellow Sea by saying that “while the enemy fleet does not seem to have the courage to dare to fight as it cowered at the defeat in the Yellow Sea, it has not yet totally lost its power;” and pointed out that it would not be an easy operation, saying that “if Japan wants to transport the large part of the Second Army to Shanhaiguan, needless to say it would require much support from the Navy.” Moreover, the statement expressed the anxiety that even if Japan won the planned battle of the Chihli plain, if the Chinese government resultantly fell apart and China plunged into a state of anarchy, intervention by Western powers could be invited and Japan would lose its counterpart with whom to conclude a peace treaty. The statement further said that “if Japan would like to accept China’s surrender, achieve peace between the two countries and thereby ensure the benefits of the victory of the war, Japan should carefully consider its interests and deal with the matter cautiously.” It then proposed that Japan capture Weihaiwei, annihilate the Beiyang (Northern) Fleet, and occupy Taiwan as a strategic move for the cession of territory.¹⁷

Around this time, Ito made other moves toward peace. On December 8, Yamagata was relieved and recalled. Yamagata immediately left the front and returned to Japan.¹⁸ Various sources suggest that this was engineered by Ito.¹⁹ On December 13, the First Army occupied Haicheng, the key strategic point in South Manchuria, and on December 14, Japan decided to carry out its Shandong Peninsula operation. This effectively postponed a wintertime battle on the Chihli plain, in accordance with Ito’s wish, and the way was paved for the capture of Weihaiwei. Japan’s diplomatic strategy also made headway. On December 26, the Japanese government designated Hiroshima as the location for a peace conference.²⁰

On January 9, 1895, the Shandong Peninsula campaign was launched. Meanwhile, on the Haicheng front, the Chinese began a counteroffensive on January 17. The counteroffensive continued until February 27, in a series of five waves. The Chinese side may also be described as having conducted its operations with peace apparently on its mind. Amid such military

¹⁷ “Strategy to Attack Weihaiwei and Occupy Taiwan,” Submitted by Prime Minister Ito, in *Hisho Ruisan*, vol. 1, the Sino-Japanese War, ed. Hirobumi Ito, (Hisho Ruisan Kankokai, 1933; Reprint, *Kimitsu Nisshin Senso*, The Secret Sino-Japanese War, Hara Shobo, 1966), 66-69.

¹⁸ Telegram from Lt. Col. Nakamura to the Imperial General Headquarters, dated December 9, 1894, *ibid.*, 84.

¹⁹ For example, Imperial Household Agency, ed., *Meiji Tenno-ki*, Dai 8 (Annals of Emperor Meiji, No. 8) (Yoshikawa Kobunkan, 1973), 601; Ito, ed., *Kimitsu Nisshin Senso*, 91-94.

²⁰ Verbal note from Vice Foreign Minister Hayashi to the U.S. Minister to Japan, dated December 26, 1894, “Notification of Japan’s Intention Concerning the Holding of a Peace Conference,” *Gaiko Bunsho*, vol. 27, II, 542-543.

developments, the Hiroshima peace conference was held on February 1, but it came to an abrupt end the following day over the issue of plenipotentiary powers. On February 12, China's Beiyang Fleet surrendered, and on February 17, Japanese forces completely occupied Weihaiwei and captured the Beiyang Fleet. Japan gained near complete command of the sea, and the Sino-Japanese War entered a new phase.

(3) Shimonoseki Peace Conference and Conclusion of the Peace Treaty

Diplomatic negotiations toward peace also proceeded. On February 16, the Japanese government presented its terms of peace to the Chinese government through U.S. Minister Dun. Aside from China's reparations for Japan's war expenses and the affirmation of Korea's full independence, these terms called for the cession of territory as a result of the war and an agreement on the conclusion of a treaty that would govern the future relationship between the two countries.²¹ Then on March 1, Japan designated Shimonoseki as the location for the peace conference.²² In Japan, meanwhile, a noteworthy appointment was made on March 7. Yamagata, who had been relieved as commander of the First Army at the end of 1894 and had returned to Japan, finally complied with Ito's repeated requests and assumed the post of the Minister of the Army. The appointment later proved to have crucial significance.

The peace conference started in Shimonoseki from March 20. However, on March 24, after the end of the third meeting, Li Hung Chang, China's plenipotentiary representative, was shot on his way back to his hotel by a Japanese assassin. This act of violence resulted in the rapid deterioration of Japan's reputation among the European powers, and Dun recommended a ceasefire.²³ This forced Japan to sign a ceasefire agreement as desired by China. The cabinet ministers and Imperial General Headquarters both opposed the ceasefire agreement, but Ito and Mutsu, with the backing of Yamagata, the new Minister of the Army, pushed it through and the agreement was signed on March 30.²⁴ Such was the influence of Yamagata as a heavyweight in the Army. In the meantime, on March 26, Japan occupied the Penghu archipelago, fully conscious that it might be ceded to Japan in a peace arrangement.

The peace conference was resumed subsequently, with both Japan and China presenting their respective peace proposals. From April 9 through April 13, when the negotiations on the terms of peace came to a climax, the Imperial Guards Division and the Fourth Division, the main forces assigned to fight the decisive battle on the Chihli plain, sortied from Ujina Port in

²¹ Verbal note to the U.S. Minister to Japan, dated February 16, 1895, "Clarification of Japan's Position on the Acceptance of Peace," *Gaiko Bunsho*, vol. 28, II, 269.

²² Tabohashi, *Nisshin Seneki Gaikoshi no Kenkyu*, 461.

²³ Telegram from Vice Foreign Minister Hayashi (in Shimonoseki) to Diplomatic Secretary Sato, dated March 25, 1895, "Request for Reports on the Opinions of the Ministers of Various Countries to Japan Concerning the Incident Involving Li Hung Chang," *Gaiko Bunsho*, vol. 28, II, 294.

²⁴ Written and edited by Ichiro Tokutomi, *Rikugun Taisho Kawakami Soroku* (Army General Soroku Kawakami) (Daiichi Koron Sha, 1942; Reprint, Ozorasha, 1988), 152; Shunpoko Tsuishokai ed., *Ito Hirobumi Den* (Life History of Hirobumi Ito), vol. 3 (Shunpoko Tsuishokai, 1940; Reprint, Hara Shobo, 1970), 168-170; Soho Tokutomi, ed., *Koshaku Yamagata Aritomo Den* (Life History of Duke Aritomo Yamagata) (Yamagata Aritomo Ko Kinen Jjigyokai, 1933; Reprint, Hara Shobo, 1969), 210-215.

Hiroshima.²⁵ This large convoy passed through the Kanmon Straits off Shimonoseki where the peace conference was in session.

In the meantime, Japan submitted its final proposal at the meeting on April 10, demanding a reply from China within four days. Li Hung Chang, China's plenipotentiary representative, who had recovered from his wounds and returned to the peace negotiations, immediately forwarded the final Japanese proposal to the Chinese government.²⁶ In a letter addressed to Li, dated April 11, Ito, Japan's plenipotentiary representative, explained the essential points of the Japanese proposal presented the previous day, and stressed to Li that it represented Japan's final concessions.²⁷ Upon receiving the letter, Li realized that it was a Japanese ultimatum, and once again reported its summary to his home government and asked for instructions. In his telegram which sought the home government's instructions, Li tacitly warned that the peace conference would be doomed to break down unless China were to give its full consent to the final Japanese proposal. On April 12, China's Ministry of Foreign Affairs instructed Li to negotiate a reduction in the war reparations and obtain as many territorial concessions as possible, and authorized Li, contingent upon the home government's instructions, to sign the peace treaty if there was no further room to compromise.²⁸

Acting on the instructions, Li sent a letter of reply to Ito to explain the key points of China's arguments and demanded another round of negotiations. Ito wrote back to Li, clarifying that the Japanese proposal of April 10 represented Japan's final concessions and that there was no room for further concessions.²⁹ Li reported Ito's reply to his home government, and on the morning of April 15 received the Chinese government's instructions to give consent to the final Japanese proposal with little amendment. Chinese advocates for continued fighting disappeared completely from the scene, fearing that in the event of a breakdown of the peace conference, the superior Japanese forces would swarm into Beijing. In that day's meeting, a draft peace treaty was worked out on the basis of the final Japanese proposal. The peace negotiations were effectively concluded on this day.³⁰ On April 17, the Treaty of Shimonoseki was signed, bringing the Sino-Japanese War to an end. It is clear from an examination of China's actions between April 9 and April 13 that the passage through the Kanmon Straits of the Japanese forces headed for the battle on the Chihli plain put great pressure on China.

The following three developments can be cited as the focal points leading to the end of the Sino-Japanese War. The first is the submission by Prime Minister Ito of his statement of position, "Strategy to Attack Weihaiwei and Occupy Taiwan," on December 4, 1894, to

²⁵ General Staff Office, ed., *Nisshin Senshi*, Dai 6 Kan (History of the Sino-Japanese War, vol. 6), 294.

²⁶ Tabohashi, *Nisshin Seneki Gaikoshi no Kenkyu*, 513-516.

²⁷ Letter from Japan's Plenipotentiary Delegate Ito to China's Plenipotentiary Delegate Li Hung Chang, dated April 11, 1895, "Explanation about Japan's Further Revised Proposal," *Gaiko Bunsho*, vol. 28, II, 357-358.

²⁸ Tabohashi, *Nisshin Seneki Gaikoshi no Kenkyu*, 523.

²⁹ Letter from Japan's Plenipotentiary Delegate Ito to China's Plenipotentiary Delegate Li Hung Chang, dated April 12, 1895, "Regarding Your Rebuttal against Japan's Further Revised Proposal," and Letter from Japan's Plenipotentiary Delegate Ito to China's Plenipotentiary Delegate Li Hung Chang, dated April 13, 1895, "Explicit Statement that Japan's Further Revised Proposal Is Definitely Final," *Gaiko Bunsho*, vol. 28, II, 358-362.

³⁰ Tabohashi, *Nisshin Seneki Gaikoshi no Kenkyu*, 524-525.

Imperial General Headquarters. Imperial General Headquarters adopted the statement, which had the effect of restricting the expansion of the war that would have occurred with the battle on the Chihli plain and the capture of Beijing. The second is the signing of the ceasefire agreement on March 30, 1895. With Yamagata's support, Ito and Mutsu promoted peace by holding the intervention by European powers in check. The final point is the passage of the Japanese forces assigned for the battle on the Chihli plain through the Kanmon Straits on April 9-13. It is no exaggeration to say that this action pressured Li Hung Chang, China's plenipotentiary representative, who had been procrastinating over the severe terms of peace imposed by Japan, into seeking the home government's instructions and deciding to sign the peace treaty.

2. Political and Military Strategy Up to the End of the Russo-Japanese War

(1) Consideration of Peace within the Japanese Government

The Russo-Japanese War began with Japan's night raids on Lushunkou (Port Arthur) on February 8, 1904. Two days later, on February 10, both Japan and Russia declared war against each other. On May 1, Japan won a resounding victory in the battle of the Yalu River and all but secured the major areas of the Korean Peninsula in just over two and a half months after the opening of war, keeping an edge in the battles against Russia on land and at sea. On the diplomatic front, Baron Kentaro Kaneko, who had been sent to the United States in March on a public relations campaign, and Kogoro Takahira, Japanese Minister in the United States, met with President Theodore Roosevelt on June 7. Japan thus launched its diplomatic activities in the United States in earnest. At the meeting, President Roosevelt voiced his intent to mediate peace between Japan and Russia when the opportunity presented itself.³¹

As early as July, the Japanese government began considering peace with Russia. Foreign Minister Jutaro Komura submitted an opinion brief on the terms of peace between Japan and Russia to Prime Minister Taro Katsura. In the brief, Komura, saying that "Japan, of course, is not fighting the war just for the sake of war," argued that "thus, since whether or not peace is achieved affects the weal and woe of the state to a degree that is only second to that of victory or defeat in the war, we must consider the matter very cautiously and carefully to determine a coherent government policy." After stating this, the brief listed the war's four major objectives and the terms of peace to be demanded of Russia, and sought to end the war by "assuming a peace conference after taking control of Lushun and winning the Battle of Liaoyang." Komura

³¹ "Dispatch of Barons Suematsu and Kaneko to Europe and the United States for Improving Public Opinion in Countries Concerned with the Russo-Japanese War, suppl. vol., (Baron Kaneko's Diary on Visit to the U.S.) December 1906," vol. 3, 257 (materials in the possession of Diplomatic Archives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs); Kentaro Kaneko, "Beikoku Daitouryou Kaiken Shimatsu" ("Circumstances of the Meeting with the U.S. President"), in *Nihon Gaiko Bunsho* (Documents on Japanese Foreign Policy), ed. Ministry of Foreign Affairs, vol. 37, vol. 38, suppl. vol., the Russo-Japanese War V (U.N. Association of Japan, 1960): 708-711 (Hereafter, abbreviated as follows: *Gaiko Bunsho*, The Russo-Japanese War V).

fully understood that “it would be difficult to end the life of the enemy nation in this war.”³²

In August, after consultations with his cabinet ministers, Katsura decided on the following overall principles for peace, which were based on the Komura brief.

Maintain the integrity of Manchuria and Korea and establish lasting peace in the Far East, thereby achieving the self-defense of the Empire and protection of Japan’s interests;

Expand the interests of Japan in Manchuria, Korea and the Russian Maritime Territory and further develop Japan’s national power;

Maintain superior influence in China and lay a sufficient foundation for dealing with the future of the Qing Empire; and

In accordance with determined policy, place Korea for all practical purposes within the purview of Japan’s sovereignty, establish the real power of protection, and include Manchuria in the purview of Japan’s interests to a limited degree.

Japan sought to expand its interests in Manchuria, Korea, and the Russian Maritime Territory because it expected difficulty in securing reparations for its war costs. Demands concerning China were driven by concerns over its ability to maintain its independence.³³

Next, a draft plan for the key terms of peace was decided upon in anticipation of the victory in the Battle of Liaoyang and the fall of Lushun. First, with respect to Korea, it was decided to have Russia recognize Japan’s right to freedom of action and to eradicate any potential cause of conflict in the future. Regarding Manchuria, the main conditions of peace were the withdrawal of Russian forces from Manchuria, the limiting of Russia’s use of the trans-Manchurian railroad for commercial purposes, and the transfer from Russia to Japan of the Harbin-Lushun railroad and the Russian concession in the Liaodong Peninsula. Other than the above, as far as circumstances would permit, Japan decided to demand war reparations for its spending for its war costs, the cession of Sakhalin, and fishing rights in the Maritime Territory.³⁴

In Europe, meanwhile, Sergei Y. Witte, the former Russian Finance Minister, who was in Berlin to sign a new trade treaty with Germany, asked for a private meeting with Tadasu Hayashi, the Japanese Minister to Britain. This convinced the Japanese government that “pro-peace groups” in Russia also wanted an early peace with Japan.³⁵ However, Russia’s

³² Manuscript planned for submission to the Prime Minister in July 1904, “Nichiro Kowa Joken ni Kansuru Komura Gaimu Daijin Iken” (“Foreign Minister Komura’s Opinion Concerning the Terms of Peace between Japan and Russia”) in *Nihon Gaiko Nenpyo Narabini Shuyo Bunsho* (Japanese Foreign Policy Chronology and Major Documents), vol. 1, ed. Ministry of Foreign Affairs, (Hara Shobo, 1965), 228-231.

³³ Written and edited by Soho Tokutomi, *Koshaku Katsura Taro Den*, Konkan (Life History of Duke Taro Katsura, vol. 2), (Ko-Katsura Koshaku Kinen Jigyokai, 1917; Reprint, Hara Shobo, 1967), 265-266.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 266-267.

³⁵ Telegram from Japanese Minister to Britain Hayashi to Foreign Minister Komura, dated July 26, 1904, “Matter Concerning Former Russian Finance Minister Witte’s Request for Private Meeting about Peace” and Telegram from Japanese Minister to Britain Hayashi to Foreign Minister Komura, dated August 6, 1904, “Matters Concerning the Cancellation of the Private Meeting due to Witte’s Return to Russia and Movements of Pro-Peace Groups in Russia,” *Gaiko Bunsho*, the Russo-Japanese War V, 114-117.

Army and Navy were absolutely determined to continue the war against Japan, as might be expected. Aleksei N. Kuropatkin, commander of the Russian Army in the Far East, adopted a strategy of retreating to the area near Harbin and then counterattacking pending the arrival of reinforcements.³⁶ Meanwhile, in the spring of 1904, the Russian Navy had already decided to send the Second Pacific Fleet, namely the Baltic Fleet, to the Far East.³⁷

(2) Fall of Lushun and Emergence of the Peace Issue

The Battle of the Yellow Sea broke out on August 10, and then the Naval Battle off Ulsan on August 14. The Japanese Combined Fleet won both battles, but failed to wipe out the Lushun and Vladivostok Fleets. On August 19, the Third Army began its first all-out offensive against Lushun, but it failed with heavy losses by August 24. The Battle of Liaoyang started from August 28, and the Japanese scored a victory by occupying the area, but failed again to annihilate Russia's main forces.

In the Battle of Shaho from October 10 through October 19, Japan won the battle but once again failed to completely destroy the main body of the Russian forces. Then, Japanese forces suffered enormous losses and were defeated in the second all-out offensive against Lushun that began on October 26 and lasted until October 31. In the meantime, the Baltic Fleet left the port of Libau for the Far East on October 15. The Japanese Army was forced to fight on two fronts, facing the main Russian forces in the Shaho area and trying to capture the stronghold of Lushun, while the Japanese Navy had to continue to blockade Lushun (Port Arthur). Japan faced a critical situation in which the arrival of the Baltic Fleet could cut off the maritime supply line to mainland China.

In such circumstances, in late November 1904, the General Headquarters of the Japanese Army in Manchuria considered the northward advance of its main forces. Partly because the required amount of ammunition had been resupplied after the Battle of Shaho, the Manchurian General Headquarters, led by the staff officers Toshitane Matsukawa and Shogo Iguchi, agreed that Japan would gain an advantage by going on an offensive. Plans were therefore made to expand the fighting in order to improve the military situation. However, General Gentaro Kodama, Chief of Staff in Manchuria, resourcefully suppressed those plans.³⁸

On November 26, the third all-out attack on Lushun began. On November 27, the 203 Meter Hill became the main objective, with the Japanese and Russian forces battling fiercely for control of the heights. On December 5, the 203 Meter Hill fell at last. This became a major turning point not only for the capture of Lushun but also for the entire course of the war, and also provided momentum for more active diplomacy. On December 14, the French Minister to

³⁶ John W. Steinberg, *All the Tsar's Men: Russia's General Staff and the Fate of the Empire, 1898-1914* (Washington, D. C.: Woodrow Wilson Center Press, 2010), 124; Bruce Menning, *Bayonets before Bullets: The Imperial Russian Army, 1861-1914* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1992), 171-172.

³⁷ Russia's Naval General Staff, ed., *Ro-Nichi Kaisen-shi 1904, 1905 Nen* (History of Russo-Japanese Naval Battles, 1904-1905), trans. Naval General Staff, (Naval General Staff, 1915; Reprint, Fuyo Shobo, 2004), vol. 2, 213 (Original Book, vol. 6, 4).

³⁸ For details, see Takazo Numata, *Nichiro Rikusen Shinshi* (New History of Russo-Japanese Land Battles) (Hesho Shuppansha, 1924; Reprint, Fuyo Shobo, 1980), 146-150, and Tani, *Kimitsu Nichiro Senshi* (Secret Russo-Japanese War History), 505-517.

Russia offered to lend his good offices in making peace between Japan and Russia. Although the Japanese government declined, this marked the first effort by a major Western country to mediate peace between the two countries.³⁹ After the turn of the year, on January 1, 1905, Lushun finally fell. On January 22, the so-called “Bloody Sunday” took place in the Russian capital of St. Petersburg.

Under these circumstances, Takahira met with President Roosevelt and successfully obtained his consent on the following points: 1. Korea shall remain in the Japanese sphere of influence; 2. Manchuria shall be returned to China by negating international neutralism; and 3. Japan shall accede to Russia’s lease of Lushun and other rights associated with it.⁴⁰ In February, Roosevelt advised the Russian government and Tsar Nicholas II to accept peace with Japan, but his advice was rejected.⁴¹ French Foreign Minister Theophile Delcasse also advanced a peace proposal to Japan, but the Japanese government declined to accept it.⁴² Japan wanted to wait for the result of the Battle of Mukden and to monitor the movements of the Baltic Fleet. Diplomatic negotiations toward peace thus were further intensified after the fall of Lushun, with the increased involvement of the Western powers.

In these circumstances, Komura resubmitted “the Opinion of the Foreign Minister on Terms of Peace between Japan and Russia” in early March 1905. This latest opinion differed from the opinion of July 1904 in that it presented only three major objectives of the war, instead of four, by deleting “the Empire’s Policy Relating to the Fate of the Future of China.” This probably reflected consideration for the United States, which hoped to play a role in mediating peace. The Komura opinion also showed a practical judgment to lower the priority of reparations for war costs from the top of the list to the seventh. On that basis, it sought “a peace conference after the major battle around Mukden.”⁴³ The Battle of Mukden began on February 22, and the Japanese Army won the battle by occupying Mukden on March 10, but it failed again to completely destroy Russia’s main forces.

³⁹ Ministry of Foreign Affairs, ed., *Komura Gaiko-shi* (History of Komura Diplomacy) (Shinbun Gekkansha, 1953; Reprint, Hara Shobo, 1966), 414-416.

⁴⁰ Telegram from Foreign Minister Komura to Japanese Minister to the United States Takahira, dated January 22, 1905, “Instructions for the Expression of the Imperial Government’s Intentions and Wishes Concerning Manchuria, Korea and Lushun,” Telegram from Japanese Minister to the United States Takahira to Foreign Minister Komura, dated January 24, 1905, “The Meeting with the U.S. President on the Manchuria, Korea and Lushun Issues following the Restoration of Peace,” *Gaiko Bunsho*, The Russo-Japanese War V, 215-219; Gist of Japanese Minister to the United States Takahira’s Proposals to the U.S. President, “The Japanese Government’s Intentions and Wishes Concerning Manchuria, Korea and Lushun following the Restoration of Peace,” in *Nihon Gaiko Nenpyo Narabini Shuyo Bunsho* (Japanese Foreign Policy Chronology and Major Documents), vol. 1, ed. Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 232-233.

⁴¹ Telegram from Japanese Minister to the United States Takahira to Foreign Minister Komura, dated February 17, 1905, “The U.S. President’s Statement on the Peace Issue,” and Telegram from Japanese Minister to the United States Takahira to Foreign Minister Komura, dated February 27, 1905, “The U.S. President’s Advice to the Russian Tsar for Consideration of the Ending of the War,” *Gaiko Bunsho*, The Russo-Japanese War V, 220-223.

⁴² Telegram from Foreign Minister Komura to Japanese Minister to France Motono, dated March 2, 1905, “Instructions from the Home Government Concerning the French Foreign Minister’s Willingness to Promote Peace,” *Ibid.*, 134-135.

⁴³ Submitted by Foreign Minister Komura in March 1905, “The Foreign Minister’s Opinion Concerning the Terms of Peace between Japan and Russia,” *Gaiko Bunsho* The Russo-Japanese War V, 69-72.

(3) Progress towards Prevention of the Expansion of the War and Peace

With the occupation of Mukden becoming a certainty, Imperial General Headquarters drafted the “Policy of Operations after March 11, 1905.” This policy essentially called for keeping the Manchurian Army stationed in Tieling in order to contain the enemy while seeking to occupy Vladivostok and Sakhalin. It was drafted because even the occupation of Harbin would not prove fatal to Russia, while the Manchurian Army would require quite a lot of ordnance and equipment for its occupation of Harbin and be subject to immense difficulties in marching and taking up quarters there.⁴⁴ This policy of operations represented a strategy to prevent an expansion of the war by keeping the possibility of an expedition deep inland in check and to end the war by occupying the coastal strongholds of Vladivostok and Sakhalin in collaboration with the Navy. On the part of Russia, meanwhile, Witte, the former finance minister, laid a report recommending peace with Japan before the Tsar, who overruled it.⁴⁵

On March 30, Imperial General Headquarters formulated the “Policy of Operations after March 1905,” and Yamagata reported it to the Emperor. The latest policy revoked the previous policy of operations and clearly set forth the advance to Harbin. At the same time, the policy contemplated an advance by Japanese forces in northern Korea and the occupation of Sakhalin, and also sought the capture of Vladivostok and the Kamchatka Peninsula.⁴⁶ The strategy clearly intended an expansion of the war.⁴⁷

Subsequently, Kodama, who came back to Tokyo temporarily, conferred with Gaishi Nagaoka, Vice Chief of the General Staff, who was arguing for prohibiting the northward advance of the Manchurian Army. They drafted plans to restrict, through political maneuvering, the expansion of the war under the new policy of operations. Then, the Genro (senior statesmen), Chief of the General Staff Yamagata, who was also a Genro, and key cabinet

⁴⁴ Ministry of the Army, ed., *Meiji Tenno Godenki Shiryo Meiji Gunji-shi* (Historical Materials for the Life History of Emperor Meiji, Meiji Military History) vol. 2 (Hara Shobo, 1966), 1481-1483; Numata, *Nichiro Rikusen Shinshi* (New History of Russo-Japanese Land Battles), 200.

⁴⁵ Sergei Witte, *Uitte Haku Kaiso-ki – Nichiro Senso to Roshia Kakumei* (Memories of Count Witte – The Russo-Japanese War and the Russian Revolution) vol. 1, trans. Hirokichi Ootake, (Nanboku Shoin, 1931; Reprint, Hara Shobo, 1972), 451-452; Ministry of Foreign Affairs ed., *Komura Gaiko-shi* (History of Komura Diplomacy), 430-432.

⁴⁶ Ministry of the Army ed., *Meiji Gunji-shi* (Meiji Military History) vol. 2, 1483-1485.

⁴⁷ Some people argue that this policy of operations did not represent the strategy for an expansion of the war because Yamagata, who was known to be cautious about the war expansion, reported this to the Emperor in private. Masayoshi Chonan, who wrote about the history of land battles between Japan and Russia in detail based on newly-found historical materials, argues that Yamagata, who was responsible for Japan’s military strategies as the Chief of the General Staff, had to counteract Russia’s intention to continue the war and thus reported this policy of operations to the Emperor in private. However, Chonan does not deny that this strategy itself was the strategy for an expansion of the war that called for the offensive against Russia. Masayoshi Chonan, *Shin Shiryo ni yoru Nichiro Senso Riku Senshi – Kutsugaesareru “Tsusetu”* (History of Land Battles in the Russo-Japanese War Based on New Historical Materials – “Widely Accepted Theory” Being Overturned) (Namiki Shobo, 2015), 621. This author agrees to the inference that Yamagata was opposed to the expansion of the war in the back of his mind. Yamagata, an experienced military man, apparently thought that if he had bluntly rejected the war expansion strategy, strongly backed by Staff members Matsukawa and Iguchi of the General Headquarters of the Manchurian Army, it could lead to the deterioration of morale on the battlefields, and instead decided to report the strategy to the Emperor in private without rejecting it out of hand. As discussed below, Yamagata played a certain role in the situations designed to suppress this war expansion strategy.

ministers considered the matter.⁴⁸

On April 8, a cabinet decision was made on “the Matter Concerning the Consistency of Military Operations and Diplomacy during the Russo-Japanese War.” Regarding the situation in Russia, the cabinet decision considered it likely that Russia would desire peace but viewed it still premature for Japan to hope for such at the present time. Furthermore it estimated that the Western powers wanted to see peace between Japan and Russia but that no country was yet willing to broker it. On that basis, the cabinet decision set out the policy of operations going forward as “Japan will hold onto the positions that the Japanese forces fought to occupy, and as long as circumstances permit, Japan will strive to occupy more superior positions than at present.” In other words, it was decided that Japan would basically adopt a defensive strategy, give up on the complete destruction of the Russian forces, and advantageously fight a limited war. In diplomacy, the new policy called for Japan to “take this opportunity to employ appropriate steps to seek and achieve Japan’s ultimate objectives in order to attain peace as promptly and satisfactorily as circumstances possibly permit.”⁴⁹ The “Policy of Operations after March 1905” that sought to expand the war was effectively negated. The new policy that was adopted thus called for the seeking of an early peace by the taking of appropriate diplomatic means (convincing the United States to broker peace) while fighting a limited war. At the same time, Japan would be prepared to fight a long, drawn-out war.⁵⁰

On April 11, Yamagata, Katsura, Minister of the Army Masatake Terauchi, Kodama, and Nagaoka assembled to discuss the instructions that should be given to the Manchurian Army. The meeting decided that 1) The Manchurian Army should occupy Harbin to maintain consistency with Japan’s political strategy; 2) The Japanese forces in northern Korea should advance as swiftly as possible to drive out the Russian forces within Korea; and 3) Japan should promptly occupy Sakhalin. While aborting the planned occupation of Vladivostok, operations were planned to attain the limited objectives of the complete occupation of Korea and the occupation of Sakhalin. In addition, the advance to Harbin was qualified by the condition to maintain “consistency with political strategy.”⁵¹

Then on April 13, the “Instructions of the Imperial General Headquarters Given to the Commander-in-Chief of the Manchurian Army” were approved. The thrust of the instructions was that for the Manchurian Army to continue its tasks, “it is imperative for the future military strategy to maintain as close a relationship as possible with the political strategy. Therefore,

⁴⁸ Shiro Yamamoto, ed., *Terauchi Masatake Nikki – 1900-1918* (Diaries of Masatake Terauchi – 1900-1918) (Dohosha, 1980), 316-318; Nagaoka Gaishi Bunsho Kenkyukai, ed., *Nagaoka Gaishi Kankei Bunsho* (Documents Related to Gaishi Nagaoka), *Kaikoroku Hen* (Memoir Volume) (Nagaoka Gaishi Kenshokai, 1989), 131.

⁴⁹ Cabinet Decision of April 8, 1905, “the Matter Concerning the Consistency of Military Operations and Diplomacy during the Russo-Japanese War,” in *Nihon Gaiko Nenpyo Narabini Shuyo Bunsho* (Japanese Foreign Policy Chronology and Major Documents), vol. 1, ed. Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 234-236.

⁵⁰ Yukio Ito, “Nichiro Senso to Meiji Tenno” (The Russo-Japanese War and Emperor Meiji), Nichiro Senso Kenkyukai ed., *Nichiro Senso Kenkyu no Shinshiten* (New Perspectives of Studies on the Russo-Japanese War), 29.

⁵¹ Yamamoto ed., *Terauchi Masatake Nikki* (Diaries of Masatake Terauchi), 318; Nagaoka Gaishi Bunsho Kenkyukai ed., *Nagaoka Gaishi Kenkei Bunsho* (Documents Related to Gaishi Nagaoka), *Kaikoroku Hen* (Memoir Volume), 133-134, 156.

the Manchurian Army's future actions must correspond to the diplomatic situation." Thus, diplomatic strategy acted to suppress the northward advance of the Manchurian Army, and Japan's overall strategy reverted to the pursuit of a limited war.⁵² Subsequently on April 21, the cabinet adopted "The Matter of the Planned Terms of Peace between Japan and Russia."⁵³

In the Naval Battle of the Sea of Japan, or the Battle of Tsushima, fought on May 27-28, the Combined Fleet smashed the Baltic Fleet in an overwhelming victory. This helped create the conditions for peace, and on June 9, President Roosevelt proposed the holding of a peace conference to both Japan and Russia. In the meantime, operations were successfully undertaken from July 2 through July 31 to capture Sakhalin, which attained one of the limited objectives required for peace. On August 10, the Portsmouth peace conference was convened. The conference was brought to the brink of failure due to disputes over reparations and the cession of Sakhalin, which had been occupied by the Japanese. With both sides making last-minute concessions, however, the Treaty of Portsmouth was signed on September 5, officially ending the Russo-Japanese War.

The following three developments can be cited as the focal points leading to the end of the Russo-Japanese War. The first is the constraints placed in late November 1904 on the northward advance by the main forces of the Manchurian Army. This effectively prevented the war from expanding deep into the continent, and concentrated Japanese offensive efforts on Lushun. Second, the cabinet adopted "the Matter Concerning the Consistency of Military Operations and Diplomacy during the Russo-Japanese War" on April 8, which enabled political strategy to suppress the military strategy to expand the war. Third, Japan's victory in the Naval Battle of the Sea of Japan on May 27-28 established the conditions for holding the peace conference.

3. The Sino-Japanese War and the Russo-Japanese War — Differences and Commonalities

The developments leading to the peace agreements in the Sino-Japanese War and the Russo-Japanese War were reviewed in the first two sections of this paper. The third section shall examine the characteristics derived from the differences and commonalities in the two wars.

Differences

It has been already pointed out that the Sino-Japanese War and the Russo-Japanese War markedly differed in scale, when measured by the size of mobilization, the war dead, and spending on the war, among others.⁵⁴ In this section, the author would like to point to two other major differences. The first difference has to do with the opposing country and the nature of the war. In the Sino-Japanese War, Japan and China battled over the Korean Peninsula as they

⁵² Ministry of the Army, ed., *Meiji Gunji-shi* (Meiji Military History), 1490-1491.

⁵³ Cabinet Decision of April 21, 1905, "The Matter of the Planned Terms of Peace between Japan and Russia," in *Nihon Gaiko Nenpyo Narabini Shuyo Bunsho* (Japanese Foreign Policy Chronology and Major Documents), vol. 1, ed. Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 236-237.

⁵⁴ Ryoichi Tobe, *Gyakusetu no Guntai* (The Paradoxical Military Force) (Chuokoronsha, 1998), 133-136.

fought for hegemony in East Asia. The Western powers strongly intervened in this Asian war, both at its opening and at its end. On the other hand, in the Russo-Japanese War, Japan waged war against one of the major European countries, although the theaters of war were limited to the Korean Peninsula and Manchuria. It was also a war fought within global frameworks, such as the Anglo-Japanese Alliance versus the Franco-Russian Alliance. This is why the Russo-Japanese War is sometimes referred to as “World War Zero.”⁵⁵

Second, Japan’s stance towards peace differed considerably between the two wars. In the Sino-Japanese War, Japan adopted a passive political strategy toward ending the war. More specifically, when the course of the war was favorable to Japan, as exemplified by the capture of Pyongyang and the victory in the Battle of the Yellow Sea, Britain and the United States proposed to mediate peace between Japan and China. The Japanese government initially refused to accept their offers to provide good offices for peace, but those offers acted as a catalyst and touched off Japan’s considering of the terms of peace. Actual movements toward peace were then set in motion upon the reception of China’s proposal for peace following the fall of Lushun. On the other hand, in the Russo-Japanese War, Japan autonomously initiated the consideration of the terms of peace when it secured the Korean Peninsula in the initial stage of the war and began invading Manchuria. Compared with its passive stance towards peace in the Sino-Japanese War, Japan took the lead in initiating its political strategy to end the Russo-Japanese War. It may be said that Japan benefited from its experience in the Sino-Japanese War.

Commonalities

Conversely, there were major aspects in common between the Sino-Japanese War and the Russo-Japanese War. The first important commonality is that in both wars, Japan fought a limited war by restricting the expansion of the war. The fact that Japan fought both wars by limiting its war objectives to the securing of certain areas in the Korean Peninsula and Manchuria was the major factor behind its success in both the Sino-Japanese and Russo-Japanese Wars. In particular, the Japanese government can be said to have handled the capture of Beijing, the capital of China, and the capture of Harbin, the strategic base of the Russian forces in the Far East, in a similar manner. Ultimately, Japan was able to end the wars by restricting their expansion and not going as far as the capture of these two cities.

What is noteworthy here is that despite the fact that supreme command over the Army and Navy was already an independent prerogative of the Emperor at the time, the government was able to take the initiative in adopting policies toward peace while keeping Imperial General Headquarters under its control. The prime ministers took part in meetings of the Imperial General Headquarters and effectively presented their own opinions about military strategies. It can be said that the government was able to maintain the primacy of political strategies in both of the two wars. One of the big reasons for this is that the prime ministers were either military men or well versed in military affairs. In those days in Japan, the distinction between

⁵⁵ “Introduction” in John W. Steinberg, et al. eds., *The Russo-Japanese War in Global Perspective: World War Zero* (Boston: Brill, 2005), xix; Steinberg, *All the Tsar’s Men*, 111.

politicians and military officers was not clearly made.⁵⁶ Ito, who was prime minister during the Sino-Japanese War, had gained military experience from his involvement in internal fighting in the Choshu Domain in the last days of the Edo period,⁵⁷ while Katsura, who was prime minister at the time of the Russo-Japanese War, was an Army General on active service.⁵⁸

Furthermore, there were important personal connections between the government and the Army. These include those between Ito and Yamagata in the Sino-Japanese War and those between Katsura and Kodama in the Russo-Japanese War. Those four men all hailed from the Choshu Domain and are believed to have had the same outlook, background, beliefs, and values that allowed them to fundamentally understand each other.⁵⁹ In particular, they probably learned of the close relationship between politics and war during their experiences of war during their teens or twenties, or more specifically, in the domestic conflict of the Genji period (the internal fighting of the Choshu Domain), the second punitive expedition against Choshu, and the Boshin Civil War and other conflicts aimed at overthrowing the Tokugawa Shogunate. This can be considered to be the origin of the idea of restricting the expansion of the war and finding a path to peace. On the other hand, older and outstanding statesmen hailing from the Satsuma Domain, such as Masayoshi Matsukata, Kiyotaka Kuroda, Judo Saigo, and Iwao Oyama, failed to actively work out political strategies toward ending the war.

Second, it was more important to take over strategic bases than to destroy the enemy. The operational plans were designed to annihilate the enemy, but as the Chinese forces and the Russian forces retreated after a certain amount of fighting, the Japanese forces were able to occupy strategically vital areas in the Korean Peninsula and Southern Manchuria without much trouble, thereby keeping the course of the wars in their favor. In particular, the takeover of Pyongyang proved to be the key to improving the military situation in favor of Japan, while the capture of Lushun proved to be the focal point for ending the war. In taking these strategic objectives, full use of the sea was made for the swift concentration of Army troops and replenishments.

Furthermore, the takeover, while peace negotiations were taking place, of the objectives physically isolated by the sea proved to be quite effective. Typical examples were the occupation of the Penghu archipelago in the Sino-Japanese War, and the occupation of Sakhalin in the Russo-Japanese War. There is no doubt that the takeover of these objectives played a significant role in affecting the negotiating of the terms of peace, such as the cession of territories, in the peace conferences.

The third commonality was that Japan had to dispatch its Army troops to the continent across the sea. The inevitable result there was that the outcome of sea battles and control of the sea played a highly significant role in the overseas expeditionary wars. Therefore, overwhelming victories won by the Navy ultimately led to the end of the wars. In other words,

⁵⁶ Shoichi Amemiya, *Kindai Nihon no Senso Shido* (Conduct of Wars of Modern Japan) (Yoshikawa Kobunkan, 1997), 31, 71; Tobe, *Gyakusetu no Guntai*, 159-164.

⁵⁷ Shunpoko Tsuishokai ed., *Ito Hirobumi Den* (Life History of Hirobumi Ito), vol. 1, 182-191.

⁵⁸ Yoshio Matsushita, *Nihon Gunbatsu no Kobo* (The Rise and Fall of Japanese military clique) (Fuyo Shobo, 1975), 202-203; Tani, *Kimitsu Nichiro Senshi* (Secret Russo-Japanese War History), 184.

⁵⁹ Tobe, *Gyakusetu no Guntai*, 163-165.

on the day preceding the surrender of the Beiyang Fleet following the capture of Weihaiwei, the Japanese government presented its terms of peace to the Chinese government and moved forward to the Shimonoseki peace conference. In the Russo-Japanese War, U.S. President Roosevelt proposed the peace conference between Japan and Russia immediately following the destruction of the Baltic Fleet in Japan's overwhelming victory in the Naval Battle of the Sea of Japan.

However, victories by the Navy and absolute command of the sea were not necessarily required at the opening of the war. As British maritime strategist Julian S. Corbett has argued, in wars where Army forces have to be sent to the continent, it is important to secure maritime transportation routes and supply lines through partial control of the sea.⁶⁰ In fact, the Naval Battle of the Sea of Japan can be seen as part of such an endeavor.

As seen above, the outcome of sea battles significantly influenced the military situation, as well as the ending of the wars, but there is very little evidence that top Navy leaders, such as Judo Saigo, Minister of the Navy in the Sino-Japanese War, and Gonbei Yamamoto, Minister of the Navy in the Russo-Japanese War, were actively involved in the formulation of political and military strategies for ending the wars. While the Navy played an important role in both the Sino-Japanese and Russo-Japanese Wars, they were wars led by the Army.

Conclusions

The political and military strategies aimed at ending the war differed somewhat between the Sino-Japanese War and the Russo-Japanese War, but there were also many points of commonality in important aspects of such strategies. Particularly important was the fact that Japan, in light of geopolitical factors, fought these limited wars through the medium of the sea. Corbett also argues that a limited war is possible only when limited objectives such as an island and a peninsula are isolated by the sea.⁶¹ In such a "maritime limited war," cooperation between the Army and the Navy, on the assumption that the seas will be utilized, was important in military operations. Cooperation between the Army and the Navy does not necessarily mean that the Army and the Navy fought side by side in the same location. It does, however, mean that Japan was able to succeed when the military efforts of the Army and the Navy could be concentrated on strategic objectives such as Lushun. From the perspective of the war as a whole, what was important was the consistency of the political and military strategies. When military strategies which would have expanded the war were contemplated, the political strategies were not unduly influenced by them, and appropriate steps were steadily taken toward ending the wars, while efforts to adopt military strategies which would have expanded the war were controlled.

By steadfastly adhering to fighting a "maritime limited war," Japan, whose national power was inferior to China and Russia, both of which were major powers, tactfully utilized military operations and created opportunities for conducting favorable diplomatic negotiations

⁶⁰ Julian S. Corbett, *Some Principles of Maritime Strategy* (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1911), 101-102, 172.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 54-55.

Attempts to expand the war were thwarted by the adept political and military strategies taken by political and military leaders. This was a major factor which enabled the wars to be ended in victory and in relatively short periods of time. In addition, it can be pointed out that the political and military leaders who executed the “maritime limited war” had many common characteristics and shared homogeneous foundations.