

## CHAPTER 10

---

# The Soviet Military Leadership's Perceptions of Japan and Germany during World War II

HANADA Tomoyuki

### Introduction

This paper analyzes the Soviet military leadership's (the Soviet Council of People's Commissars and the General Staff of the Red Army) perceptions of Japan and Germany during World War II. In particular, the author focuses on the Soviet perceptions of the two Axis powers to shed light on the differences in their purpose of war and postwar conception.<sup>1</sup>

During World War II, with the Japanese-Soviet Neutrality Pact concluded in April 1941 as a strategic framework, Japan and the Soviet Union had an official diplomatic negotiation route between the Allied and Axis powers. This is starkly different from the 1930s when Japan-Soviet relations were characterized by war and peace, with tensions in the Soviet-Manchurian border areas significantly increasing due to the Manchurian Incident and the subsequent foundation of Manchukuo. In those times, large-scale regional conflicts occurred that peaked in 1939 with the Nomonhan Incident, and both countries sought to divide the spheres of influence after the outbreak of World War II as seen in Japanese-Soviet diplomatic coordination and in the "Japan-Germany-Italy-Soviet Quadruple Entente Concept" set forth by the second KONOE Fumimaro Cabinet. Additionally, in the latter half of World War II, Japan and the Soviet Union were sometimes expected to play the role of mutual intermediary countries in the German-Soviet peace negotiations and the Japanese-US peace negotiations (including the agreements at the war's termination), respectively. However, the former negotiations raised concerns that releasing Soviet troops from the Eastern Front would increase the threat to Japan in the Far East, while the latter raised concerns that releasing Japanese troops from the Pacific Front would increase

---

<sup>1</sup> This article is a revised version of "The Soviet Military Leadership's Perceptions of Japan during World War II," *Security & Strategy*, Vol. 1 (January 2021). Some parts have been updated.

the threat from the Far East to the Soviet Union. Therefore, neither was realized. Until the Soviet Union's entry into the war against Japan on August 9, 1945, Japan-Soviet relations remained superficially stable. Although the military and diplomatic expectations of the two sides greatly differed, it can be said that a great power relationship was established on the basis of mutual non-interference in the Far East. As such, for an accurate understanding of Japan's Pacific War and of the Soviet Union's Great Patriotic War (German-Soviet War), it is important to analyze what kind of perceptions Japan and the Soviet Union formed of each other during wartime.

On the other hand, German-Soviet relations during World War II at times functioned as a favorable partnership based on the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact, and both countries divided the spheres of influence in Eastern and Western Europe. Although Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union were ideologically at odds with each other, they achieved territorial expansion as challenging countries against the existing international order. This was also attributed to the Soviet Union's expulsion from the League of Nations. But after the decisive confrontation between the leaders of both countries in November 1940, Adolf Hitler secretly ordered the Wehrmacht (the German Army in World War II, 1935-1945) to carry out "Operation Barbarossa," which led to the outbreak of the Eastern Front on June 22, 1941.

Historical research findings so far on Japan's perceptions of the Soviet Union have mainly focused on: political and diplomatic views towards the Soviet Union of TERAUCHI Masatake, GOTO Shinpei, KUHARA Fusanosuke, MATSUOKA Yosuke, and YONAI Mitsumasa, who are known as pro-Soviet politicians in the Japanese government; the activities of the Japanese Communist Party and Comintern (Communist International) that aimed for the social spread of communism in Japan; and military intelligence related to the espionage activities of Japanese officers mainly from the Army General Staff, the Navy General Staff, the various special service agencies, and the military attaché system attached to

embassies.<sup>2</sup> In particular, with regard to the Japanese military's perceptions of the Soviet Union, the Japanese Army recognized the Soviet Union as its greatest potential adversary, and carried out anti-Soviet and anti-communist espionage activities all over the world. In addition to gathering and analyzing information on the Soviet Union from the Army General Staff Division 2 Section 5 (Russia Section), the Navy General Staff Division 3 Section 7 (Russia Section, with Section 6 being in charge until October 1932), the Kwantung Army General Staff Office Section 2, and the Harbin Special Service Agency (reorganized into the Kwantung Army Intelligence Office after 1940), the actual situation of anti-Soviet and anti-communist strategy was elucidated from the military attaché system in Eastern European and Middle Eastern regions surrounding the Soviet Union (Poland, Hungary, Latvia, Romania, Finland, Sweden, Turkey, Iran, Afghanistan).<sup>3</sup>

On the other hand, the Soviet Union's perceptions of Japan have not been sufficiently analyzed due to the restrictions on the use of official documents and historical materials in the Soviet era. Historical research on this topic is currently underway following the declassification of historical archives after the collapse of the Soviet Union. Particularly with respect to the Soviet military leadership's perceptions of Japan, the possibility of research activities at the Archives has dramatically increased, although there were delays in declassifying official documents and historical materials. In addition, although new research findings,

---

<sup>2</sup> For more information on recent research findings regarding Japan's perceptions of the Soviet Union, see ASADA Masafumi, *Nichiro Kindaishi: Senso to Heiwa no Hyakunen* [The Modern History of Japan and Russia: A Hundred Years of War and Peace], Kodansha Modern Books Series, 2018; IOKIBE Makoto, SHIMOTOMAI Nobuo, A.V. Torkunov, and D.V. Strel'tsov, eds., *Nichiro Kankeishi: Parallel History heno Chosen* [The History of Japanese-Russian Relations: Challenging Parallel Histories], University of Tokyo Press, 2015; TOMITA Takeshi, *Senkanki no Nisso Kankei 1917-1937* [The Japanese-Soviet Relations During the Interbellum 1917-1937], Iwanami Shoten, 2010; WADA Haruki and TOMITA Takeshi, translated and eds., *Siryoshu: Comintern to Nihon Kyosanto* [Collected Materials: Comintern and the Japanese Communist Party], Iwanami Shoten, 2014.

<sup>3</sup> For books by the involved parties, see NISHIHARA Yukio, *Zenkiroku Harbin Tokumukikan* [All Records of the Harbin Special Service Agency], Mainichi Shimbun Publishing, 1980; HAYASHI Saburo, *Kwantung Army to Kyokuto Russia Gun* [The Kwantung Army and the Russian Army in the Far East], Fuyo Shobo, 1974. For recent research findings, see KOTANI Ken, *Nihon Gun no Intelligence* [The Japanese Military Intelligence: Why Was Intelligence Not Utilized?], Kodansha Métier Selections, 2004; TAJIMA Nobuo, *Nihon Rikugun no Taiso Boryaku* [The Japanese Army's Anti-Soviet Strategy: Japanese and German Anti-Comintern Pact and Eurasian Policy], Yoshikawa Kobunkan, 2017. For more information regarding the Japanese pre-war military attaché system, see TACHIKAWA Kyoichi, "Japanese Pre-War Military Attaché System," *NIDS Journal of Defense and Security*, Vol. 16 (December 2015), pp. 147-185.

memoirs, and collections of official documents and historical materials have been published in Russia and the Western countries, it is a rather large problem that these are not sufficiently analyzed in Japan.

From that point of view, the purpose of this paper is to verify the reality of the Soviet military leadership's perceptions of Japan and Germany based on official Russian documents, which were often understood as Stalin's dictatorial ideology (and prejudice), by shedding light on the Soviet military leadership's perceptions of Japan and Germany during World War II. In addition to clarifying the Soviet military leadership's views towards both countries, this paper will also attempt to compare the Soviet military leadership's perceptions of Japan with the perceptions of Nazi Germany, which too was an Axis power during World War II. The author hopes that this research will not only deepen the general understanding of the Soviet Union's war leadership towards Japan and Germany, but that it will also provide a historical perspective for analyzing modern Russia's perceptions of Japan and Germany.

In this research, the term "war leadership" is defined as "the Soviet military leadership, with Stalin at the top, over military and diplomatic strategy and over operations at the military headquarters in the Far East." In conjunction with this, with regards to the name of the Soviet Army, the "Red Army" (official name: "Workers' and Peasants' Red Army") was renamed the "Soviet Army" in February 1946 after World War II. However, in this paper, "Soviet Army" is sometimes used to mean the Soviet military, and therefore, "Red Army" and "Soviet Army" are both used. Additionally, in connection with the reforms to the Red Army's organization in the latter half of the 1930s, the rank names of senior commanders in the military leadership became easily confused with those of unit commanders, and the author has unified them into new rank names.

## **1. Comparison with Perceptions of Japan and Germany:**

### ***Purpose of the War***

For the Soviet military leadership, the war with Japan was a battle against militarism and imperialism. However, when looked at from the point of view of the purpose of the war, its nature was ideologically different from that of the

Wehrmacht, also one of the Axis powers. With regards to Hitler's war plans, Timothy D. Snyder points out that within the Wehrmacht, there were "four plans" when the German-Soviet War broke out in June 1941: (1) destroy the Soviet Union in weeks with a Blitzkrieg victory; (2) starve 30 million people (Eastern and Central Europe) by a "Hunger Plan" in months; (3) turn Poland and the occupied eastern regions into German colonies (Germanization) based on the Master Plan for the East; and (4) eliminate European Jews by embarking on a "final solution" after the war.<sup>4</sup> These war plans were not just aimed at achieving normal military victories and strategic goals, but also at exterminating the Slavs, who were the main ethnic group in the Soviet Union and in Eastern and Central Europe, and had overtones of racial and annihilation war to expand and develop the "Lebensraum," or "living space" of the German people.

The link between Hitler's racism and the purpose of the war was clearly written in the "Hossbach Memorandum," in which Hitler himself lays out his war plans, emphasizing that: "The aim of German policy was to make secure and to preserve the racial community [Volksmasse] and to enlarge it. It was therefore a question of space." The memorandum states that "Germany's future was therefore wholly conditional upon the solving of the need for space."<sup>5</sup> Afterwards, the idea of a German-Soviet War as a racial war is said to have influenced the Wehrmacht's war plans even before the German-Soviet Nonaggression Pact was concluded on August 23, 1939. Führer Directive No. 21, for "Operation Barbarossa," was issued on December 18, 1940, stating that early occupation of the capital of Moscow was not important, with the aim being to strengthen the Army Group Center and carry out an annihilation siege war. After that, he ordered a north-south transversal to carry out an annihilation siege war in the Baltic States and

---

<sup>4</sup> Timothy Snyder, *Bloodlands: Europe between Hitler and Stalin*, Basic Books, 2010, p. 187.

<sup>5</sup> "Hossbach Memorandum," <<https://avalon.law.yale.edu/imt/hossbach.asp>>.

Ukraine.<sup>6</sup> However, in these battle plans, the leaders of the Ministry of Defense assumed that the Soviet Union's regime would collapse internally in the face of a Blitzkrieg victory, embodying a shared, disdainful view of a Soviet Union that would face a variety of problems such as excessive burdens on its active troops and logistics difficulties. For these reasons, although Germany captured 330,000 prisoners of war in the Battle of Białystok–Minsk, the Army Group Center's first siege, it allowed many Soviet soldiers to escape eastward and has been criticized as a strategically "empty victory."<sup>7</sup>

The Soviet military leadership's perception of Germany was based on battles with fascists, militarists, and imperialists, reflecting Hitler's racist ideology. The Soviet Union held out the purpose of the war as a total war of annihilation for the survival of the nation, and gave absolute priority to achieving triumph via operational plans and mobilization of troops and supplies. This can be gleaned from Stalin's radio speech broadcast on July 3, 1941, in which he denounced Nazi Germany as a "bloodthirsty aggressor" for breaking the German-Soviet Nonaggression Pact and initiating a war against the Soviet Union, then expressing a strong sense of crisis saying: "The issue is one of life and death for the Soviet government, of life and death for the peoples of the U.S.S.R.; the issue is whether the peoples of the Soviet Union shall be free or fall into slavery. The Soviet peoples must realize this and abandon all complacency; they must mobilize themselves and reorganize all their work on a new, war-time footing."<sup>8</sup> He loudly proclaimed: "The war with fascist Germany cannot be considered an ordinary war. It is not only a war between two armies, it is also a great war of the entire Soviet peoples against the German-fascist armies. The aim of this Great Patriotic

---

<sup>6</sup> With regards to the purpose of the Wehrmacht's German-Soviet War, the "Program School," which explains Hitler's conquest plans and political decisions as the main rationale, became mainstream in the field of modern German historical research. Its argument is based on the fact that, at Berchtesgaden on July 31, 1940, Hitler told the Wehrmacht leaders that he intended to wage war against the Soviet Union and that meetings with Commissar for Foreign Affairs Molotov broke down in November 1940. On the other hand, recent research findings have focused on the existence of the anti-Soviet "Marcks Plan" and "Rosberg Plan" battle plans, which were created behind the scenes at the Wehrmacht. OHKI Tsuyoshi, *Dokusosen* [The German-Soviet War: The Terrible War of Annihilation], Iwanami Shinsho, 2019, pp. 20-28.

<sup>7</sup> OHKI Tsuyoshi, *Doitsu Gunjishi* [German Military History: Image and Reality], Sakuhinsha, 2016, p. 257.

<sup>8</sup> СТАЛИН: ПРО ЕТ CONTRA. РХГА/Пальмира. 2017. С. 174.

War against the fascist oppressors is not only to eliminate the danger hanging over our country, but also to aid all the European peoples groaning under the yoke of German fascism,” evoking wartime patriotism by comparing it to the “War for the Fatherland” between the Russian Imperial Army and the French Continental Army during the Napoleonic Wars.<sup>9</sup> Relatedly, the Soviet government decided to dissolve Comintern in June 1943 in order to strengthen lines of international cooperation with the United Kingdom and the United States, and in September 1943, announced a policy of reconciliation with the Russian Orthodox Church and approving a revival of the Church’s patriarchate system, which can be thought of as making spiritual ties in order to prevail against the Wehrmacht.

What is interesting here is the differences with the Soviet military leadership’s purpose for the war against Japan. Although not well known within Japan, by definition, the Soviet Union’s entry into the war against Japan is not included in the Great Patriotic War, which refers to the battles from the Wehrmacht’s military advance via Operation Barbarossa on June 22, 1941, until Germany’s unconditional surrender on May 8, 1945. Additionally, the idea of racial and annihilation war, as seen in the German-Soviet War, is not found in official documents and historical materials around the purpose of the war against Japan. Therefore, it can be said that during World War II there was an ideological difference in the Soviet military leadership’s purpose for war with Japan and for war with Germany even though commonality can be found between the militarism and imperialism of the two Axis powers.

The Soviet military leadership’s perceptions of Japan during World War II can be analyzed from the Soviet Union’s diplomatic negotiation process with the United Kingdom and the United States in regard to Soviet entry into the war against Japan. After the attack on Pearl Harbor on December 8, 1941, British Foreign Secretary Robert Anthony Eden asked Stalin on December 20 about the possibility of the Soviet Union entering into the war against Japan, and at the time, Stalin carefully answered: “If the Soviet Union declares war on Japan, then the Soviet Union will have to wage a truly serious war on land, on air, and on sea. This is completely different from Belgium and Greece declaring war on Japan.

---

<sup>9</sup> Там же. С. 175.

The government of the Soviet Union will have to carefully calculate possibilities and powers. At present, the Soviet Union is not yet ready to engage in war with Japan.”<sup>10</sup> Additionally, when Franklin Delano Roosevelt asked the Soviet military leadership for permission to use air force bases in the Far East, Stalin refused, citing the Soviet-Japanese Neutrality Pact and the intensification of the German-Soviet War. And while the Soviet Union replied that “We must resolutely wage war with our main enemy, Hitler’s Empire,” it emphasized that the anti-Japanese front in the Pacific war and the anti-Japanese war on mainland China were part of the joint front in the war against the Axis powers.<sup>11</sup>

Stalin’s clear expression of intent regarding entry into the war against Japan was allegedly a statement to United States Secretary of State Cordell Hull at the Third Moscow Conference of Foreign Ministers in 1943. What is noteworthy when considering perceptions of Japan is the content of Stalin’s speech at the November 6, 1944 celebrations for the 27th Anniversary of the October Revolution. At this time, Stalin publicly denounced Japan as an “aggressor state” while showing a sense of caution, saying: “One cannot regard as an accident such distasteful facts as the Pearl Harbor ‘incident,’ the loss of the Philippines and other Pacific Islands, the loss of Hong Kong and Singapore, when Japan, as the aggressor state, proved to be better prepared for war than Great Britain and the United States of America, which pursued a policy of peace. . . . Accordingly it is not to be denied that in the future, the peace-loving nations may once more find themselves caught off their guard by aggression unless, of course, they work out special measures right now which can avert it.”<sup>12</sup> This tone was also seen in the April 5, 1945 denunciation of the Soviet-Japanese Neutrality Pact, with Commissar for Foreign Affairs Molotov explaining that Operation Barbarossa and the attack on Pearl Harbor had not occurred when the pact was originally concluded: “Since that time, the situation has been basically altered. Germany has attacked the USSR, and Japan, the ally of Germany, is aiding the latter in its war against the USSR. Furthermore, Japan

---

<sup>10</sup> YOKOTE Shinji, “Stalin no Nihon Ninshiki 1945 [Stalin’s Perception of Japan 1945],” *Hougaku Ronshu*, Vol. 75, No. 5 (May 2002), p. 14.

<sup>11</sup> Boris Slavinsky, *Nisso Senso heno Michi* [USSR-Japan: On the Way to War, A Diplomatic History of 1937-1945], translated by KATOH Yukihiro, Kyodo News, 1999, p. 322.

<sup>12</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, ed., *Senji Nisso Koushoshi* [History of Japanese-Soviet Wartime Negotiations], Vol. 2, Yumani Shobo, 2006, pp. 894-895.

is waging war with the USA and Great Britain, which are the allies of the Soviet Union. In these circumstances the neutrality pact between the USSR and Japan has lost its sense, and the prolongation of that pact has become impossible."<sup>13</sup>

As described above, when analyzing the Soviet military leadership's perception of Japan from the perspective of the purpose of the war, although the war with Japan ideologically differs from the Wehrmacht's racial and annihilation war, it can still be seen, through the hard line taken towards Japan before World War II, that the Soviet military's leadership recognized the Japanese threat. Additionally, even when taking into account the purpose of the war, which was to fight militarism and imperialism, it can be seen that Stalin envisioned the Soviet Union's future participation in the war against Japan.

## **2. Comparison with Perceptions of Japan and Germany:**

### ***Postwar Conception***

Another important point to consider when comparing the Soviet military leadership's perceptions of Japan during World War II to perceptions of Germany concerns the German and Japanese postwar conceptions. This is an important theme that attracts attention not only in regard to the termination of World War II, but also in terms of the origin of the US-Soviet Cold War and the Asian Cold War, and there is a variety of previous research.<sup>14</sup> In this paper, the focus will be on the postwar conception before the end of World War II.

As for the Soviet military leadership's perceptions of Germany around the postwar conception, there was a great deal of turmoil between the Soviet Union's expansion into Eastern and Central Europe and the postwar security ideas for Europe as a whole, starting with the postwar problem of occupying Germany. In particular, the Soviet military leadership, which had fought a racial and annihilation war with the Wehrmacht, strongly demanded that Germany be weakened after the war by dividing and occupying it in order to prevent the

---

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., p. 903.

<sup>14</sup> For more information on Japan's postwar plans for the United States and the Soviet Union, see SHIMOTOMAI Nobuo, *Asia Reisen Shi* [The History of the Cold War in Asia], Chuko Shinsho, 2004; HASEGAWA Tsuyoshi, *Racing the Enemy: Stalin, Truman, and the Surrender of Japan*, Harvard University Press, 2005; Susan Butler, *Roosevelt and Stalin: Portrait of a Partnership*, Knopf, 2015.

revival of German militarism and imperialism, and strongly insisted on forcing Germany to acknowledge the result of the war through unconditional surrender to the Allies. Roosevelt also shared this idea of Germany accepting defeat, as he attributed the rise of the Nazi regime to the failure to instill a sense of defeat in Germany after World War I. For this reason, the three great powers of Britain, the United States, and the Soviet Union, declared at the Yalta Conference in February 1945: “It is our inflexible purpose to destroy German militarism and Nazism and to ensure that Germany will never again be able to disturb the peace of the world. We are determined to disarm and disband all German armed forces; break up for all time the German General Staff that has repeatedly contrived the resurgence of German militarism.”<sup>15</sup>

On the other hand, British Prime Minister Winston Churchill assented to the Yalta agreement. But, in view of his overarching goal of reconstructing the British Empire, traditional anti-Soviet sentiment, and postwar security conception of Europe as a whole, Churchill was very wary of the Soviet Union expanding into Eastern and Central Europe, and supported reconstructing postwar Germany in order to form a strong anti-Soviet nation on the European continent. This was closely related to Britain’s support for Free French and the Soviet Union’s support for the Lublin Committee (Polish Committee of National Liberation). As such, the historical background of the formation of perceptions towards Germany can be seen by examining the postwar conception. In particular, as the end of World War II approached, Churchill showed an awareness of the threats of the Soviet Union’s military presence and of Communist ideology in continental Europe. In considering the Russians as “a chaotic, semi-Asian group on the other side of the wall of European civilization,” it is believed that he attempted to make diplomatic needs for European cooperation and integration for postwar reconstruction compatible with military needs based on the idea of a balance of power.<sup>16</sup>

Amidst these circumstances, in a speech at the 1944 celebrations for the

---

<sup>15</sup> Arthur Conte, *Yalta Kaidan: Sekai no Bunkatsu* [Dividing the World at the Yalta Conference: A Record of the Eight Days that Determined the Postwar System], translated by YAMAGUCHI Toshiaki, Nigensha, 2009, p. 410.

<sup>16</sup> HOSOYA Yuichi, “Winston Churchill ni okeru Ohshu Togo no Rinen [Winston Churchill and the Idea of European Integration],” *The Hokkaido Law Review*, Vol. 52, No. 2 (May 2001), p. 77.

Anniversary of the October Revolution, Stalin expressed strong caution about the reconstruction of postwar Germany, saying that: "After her defeat, Germany will, of course, be disarmed, both in the economic and political sense. It would, however, be naïve to think that she will not attempt to restore her might and launch new aggression. It is common knowledge that the German leaders are already now preparing for a new war. History shows that a short period—some 20 or 30 years—is enough for Germany to recover from defeat and re-establish her might."<sup>17</sup> On top of that, in order to prevent a new invasion from Germany, or to prevent the development of a major war should an invasion occur, Stalin agreed to the establishment of a special institution for peacekeeping and security and to the establishment of a leadership organization for the institution. With regards to the establishment of this special institution for peacekeeping and security, Stalin supported Roosevelt's postwar conception of a four-country system that included the three great powers of the United Kingdom, the United States, and the Soviet Union, as well as the Chinese Nationalist government, and it has been shown that, at the Dumbarton Oaks Conference in September 1944, Stalin was willing to draft the United Nations charter despite confronting the British and American representatives over the veto power of the Security Council's permanent members.<sup>18</sup>

Also noteworthy as a recent research finding is that Stalin insisted on expanding the Soviet Union into Eastern and Central Europe for the unity of the Slavic peoples. When Stalin met with the delegation from Czechoslovakia at the end of March 1945, he emphatically described his postwar conception for Europe: "We are the new Slavophile-Leninists, Slavophile-Bolsheviks, communists who stand for the unity and alliance of the Slavic peoples. We consider that irrespective of political and social differences, irrespective of social and ethnic differences, all Slavs must ally with one another against the common enemy—the Germans." Additionally, after mentioning that the Slavs were the greatest victims of the two

---

<sup>17</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, ed., *Senji Nisso Koushoshi*, Vol. 2, p. 893.

<sup>18</sup> It has been pointed out that Stalin initially expected financial cooperation and the assistance of the International Monetary Fund for postwar reconstruction of the Soviet Union. His relationship of trust with Roosevelt is said to have paved the way for tolerating ideological competition between socialist and capitalist economies. Susan Butler, *My Dear Mr. Stalin: The Complete Correspondence between Franklin D. Roosevelt and Joseph V. Stalin*, Yale University Press, 2005, pp. 254-255.

world wars, he named the Russians, Ukrainians, Belorussians (now Belarussians), Serbs, Czechs, Slovaks, and Polish, arguing that: “We will be merciless towards the Germans but our allies will treat them with kid gloves. Thus we Slavs must be prepared for the Germans to rise again against us.”<sup>19</sup> In this way, Stalin revealed that he was wary of Germany as a common enemy even after the war, and at the same time questioned whether the United Kingdom and the United States would conform to the Soviet Union’s hard line against Germany. Stalin’s claims can be understood as distrust of both the United Kingdom and of the United States, but they can also be read as a great cause for establishing the legitimacy of control for the Soviet Union’s expansion into Eastern and Central Europe.

As described above, the Soviet military leadership’s perceptions of Germany around the postwar conception had two aspects of forcing postwar Germany to acknowledge defeat and to prevent the revival of German militarism and imperialism, countering Germany’s reconstruction in the postwar European security conception. It goes without saying that, after Roosevelt’s death on April 12, 1945, these two aspects became apparent in the great power relations between the Soviet Union and both the United Kingdom and the United States, becoming the greatest issue in postwar European security.

Then, what about the Soviet military leadership’s perceptions of Japan around the postwar conception? This question cannot be analyzed without examining the acquisition of rights and interests in the Soviet Union’s postwar East Asia, which was guaranteed by the secret agreement at the Yalta Conference. From the perspective of preventing the revival of Japanese militarism and imperialism, it emphasized: (1) maintaining the status quo in the Mongolian People’s Republic; (2) the return of Sakhalin and all adjacent islands as a restoration of the rights of the old Russian Empire which were infringed upon by Japan’s “rebellious attack” in 1904; (3) internationalization of the Dalian commercial port and protection of Soviet rights and interests at the port; (4) restoration of leasing rights at Lüshun Port as a base for the Soviet Navy; (5) a joint operation by the Chinese Eastern Railway and the South Manchurian Railway via establishment

---

<sup>19</sup> Jeffrey Roberts, *Stalin’s Wars: From World War to Cold War, 1939-1953*, Yale University Press, 2006, p. 234.

of a Sino-Soviet joint venture; (6) retention of the full interests of the Chinese Nationalist government in Manchuria; and (7) handing over the Kuril Islands to the Soviet Union. Stalin particularly emphasized (2) and (7) in his September 2, 1945 speech commemorating victory over Japan, pointing out that "The southern part of Sakhalin and the Kuril Islands revert to the Soviet Union and henceforth will serve not as a barrier between the Soviet Union and the ocean and as a base for Japanese attack upon our Far East, but as a direct means of communication between the Soviet Union and the ocean and as a base for the defense of our country against Japanese aggression," after mentioning Japan's "predatory acts" such as the Russo-Japanese War, the Siberian intervention, the Changkufeng Incident (Battle of Lake Khasan), and the Nomonhan Incident, as well as the Soviet Union's participation in the war against Japan as a retaliatory act.<sup>20</sup> It is very interesting that, at this time, Stalin strategically positioned South Sakhalin and the Kuril Islands territory as an exit to the Pacific Ocean.

Additionally, Stalin said to Roosevelt during the discussion on the secret agreement at the Yalta Conference: "The war against Germany clearly threatened the Soviet Union's survival, but the Russian people may not easily understand why the Soviet Union will be at war with Japan when there has been no major conflict with Japan to date. However, if the above conditions are met, then the Russian people will understand that participation in the war against Japan is in the national interests."<sup>21</sup> It can be seen that the Soviet Union's entry into the war against Japan was positioned as a military and diplomatic strategy for securing rights and interests in postwar East Asia while aiming to prevent the revival of Japanese militarism and imperialism and being aware of the differences with the war against Germany.

On the other hand, in common with perceptions of Germany in the postwar conception, the Soviet military leadership showed a strong sense of caution about reconstructing postwar Japan, and was particularly concerned about the revival of Japanese nationalism. Stalin made this clear on July 7, 1945, in a meeting with T. V. Soong, President of the Executive Yuan of the Chinese Nationalist

---

<sup>20</sup> СТАЛИН: ПРО ЕТ КОНТРА. С. 254.

<sup>21</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, ed., *Senji Nisso Koushoshi*, Vol. 2, pp. 1068-1069.

government, stating: “Japan will not be ruined even if one accepts unconditional surrender, like Germany. Both of these nations are very strong. After Versailles, all thought Germany would not raise. 15-20 years, she recovered. Same would happen with Japan even if she is put on her knees.”<sup>22</sup> Additionally, after talking of the incomplete connections between the Trans-Siberian Railway and the infrastructure at Vladivostok, Sovetskaya Gavan, Petropavlovsk, and De-Kastri, which were major Far East ports for the Soviet military, Stalin said at the meeting that: “To complete the Soviet defense system in the Far East, we must construct a railroad that crosses Siberia north of Lake Baikal. This requires 40 years. As such, we need an alliance with the Chinese Nationalist government. During the period, the Soviet Union will secure rights and interests in Manchuria, but, when the deadline expires, the Soviet Union will waive its rights and interests in Manchuria.”<sup>23</sup>

As described above, while keeping in mind the goal of securing its rights and interests in postwar East Asia, the Soviet military leadership’s perceptions of Japan around the postwar conception had two aspects of: preventing the revival of Japanese militarism and imperialism; and cautiousness about the postwar reconstruction of Japan. In order to deal with these two aspects, Stalin achieved great effects by positioning possession of the South Sakhalin and the Kuril Islands territories as a strategic means and by concluding an alliance with the Chinese Nationalist government (the Sino-Soviet Treaty of Friendship, Alliance and Mutual Assistance was concluded on August 14, 1945), both of which became the Soviet Union’s strategic foundation in postwar East Asia.<sup>24</sup> Although this perception of the Japanese threat can be regarded as an extension of the hard line towards Japan that existed before World War II, the Soviet military leadership also hid its strategic intentions by informing the Chinese Nationalist government of the strength of the Japanese nation, fueling anxiety to get the Chinese Nationalist government to allow the Soviet Union to secure its rights and interests in postwar

---

<sup>22</sup> ASADA Masafumi, *Nichiro Kindaishi*, p. 414.

<sup>23</sup> Русско-Китайские Отношения в XX веке: материалы и документы. Памятники исторической мысли, 2000. Т. 4-2, С. 89.

<sup>24</sup> For a record of the meetings between Stalin and T. V. Soong, as well as the entire Sino-Soviet Treaty of Friendship, Alliance and Mutual Assistance, see TERAYAMA Kyosuke, *Stalin to Mongol 1931-1946* [Stalin and Mongolia, 1931-1946], Misuzu Shobo, 2017, pp. 431-438.

East Asia.

## **Conclusion**

The Soviet military leadership's perceptions of Japan around the purpose of war indicated the Soviet Union continued to take a hard line since the Manchurian Incident, and, although it was not recognized as a racial and annihilation war like the German-Soviet War, it was assumed that the Soviet Union would enter the war against Japan for the purpose of fighting militarism and imperialism. In addition, the Soviet military leadership's perceptions of Japan around the postwar conception kept in mind the idea of securing the Soviet Union's rights and interests in postwar East Asia, as agreed upon in the secret agreement at the Yalta Conference, while still having two aspects of preventing the revival of militarism and imperialism and of being wary of Japan's postwar reconstruction. Stalin's positioning of the possession of the South Sakhalin and the Kuril Islands territories as a strategic means is very suggestive when considering the contemporary Northern Territories issue and the security of both Japan and Russia.