

---

## Japanese-German and Sino-German Military Cooperation in the 1930s

Tajima Nobuo

### Introduction

This report aims to clarify the nature of bilateral military cooperation between Japan and Germany, and between China and Germany, during the 1930s by examining the relations between these states.

In the 1930s, particularly after the establishment of Nazi Germany on January 30, 1933, there was no military alliance between Germany and the two East Asian states, Japan and China. On November 25, 1936, Japan and Germany concluded the Anti-Comintern Pact. However, unlike the Tripartite Pact signed on September 27, 1940, by Japan, Germany and Italy, this pact was merely ideological and could not be considered as a military alliance. Furthermore, although Nazi Germany and the Nationalist Government of China maintained extremely amicable diplomatic relations until June 1938, this was entirely different from a military alliance. It can be said that Germany had no military-strategic cooperation with either Japan or China.

However, focusing on cooperation in military technology and in the defense economy, as well as on arms exports and weapons production facilities, diverse forms of military cooperation were established and developed between Germany and both Japan and China.

This report will first explain why no military-strategic cooperation was established between Japan and Germany, and between China and Germany (I). It will then provide a brief overview of Germany's relations with East Asia in the 1930s, which formed the premise for Japanese-German and Sino-German military cooperation (II). Building on this, the report will first clarify the nature of the Japanese-German military cooperation (III) and Sino-German military cooperation (IV), on the basis of historical facts.

### 1. The Assessment of “Japan’s Inevitable Defeat”

Between July and August 1941, the Total War Research Institute of Japan, operating directly under the authority of the Prime Minister, conducted a tabletop exercise simulating a war between Japan, the United States and Britain. The exercise concluded that the outcome would be “Japan’s inevitable defeat.” The greatest factor in predicting “Japan’s inevitable defeat” was the judgment that Japan would be unable to secure the sea lanes connecting its vast occupied territories. It is surprising and admirable that such a sober judgement was made even in Japan during the Asia-Pacific War<sup>1</sup>. However, the German Ministry of War had already made a similar assessment in May 1936.

On May 12, 1936, Reich War Minister Werner von Blomberg, through Walther Scheller, Director of the Foreign Division of the Reich Ministry of War, ordered the service chiefs of the army, navy, and air force, together with Georg Thomas, Head of the Defense Economy and Armament Office of the Reich Ministry of War, to submit a report entitled “Japan as a Power Factor in the Far East.” In response to Blomberg’s request, on May 15, Thomas drafted a report entitled “Japan’s Defense Economic Situation.” After examining (1) the situation regarding raw materials and food, (2) the arms industry, (3) means of transportation, and (4) the financial conditions, he reached the following conclusion. “Japan is in a position to take proactive economic warfare measures only against China.”

---

<sup>1</sup> Although not an academic work, see Inose Naoki (2020), *Syowa 16 nen Natsu no Haisen* (Defeated in War in the Summer of 1941), New Edition, Tokyo: Chuokoron Shinsha, Inc.

On May 18, the German air force also examined relations with the Soviet Far Eastern Air Force (Workers' and Peasants' Red Army Air Force), considering (1) air combat capabilities; (2) the aviation industry and equipment; (3) education; (4) ground organization; and (5) the aviation network, and asserted the following: "The threat posed by the 'Soviet Far Eastern Air Force' is capable of pinning down Japan's air power. Moreover, Russia is in a position to transfer a large number of formations from its western regions to the Far East within a short time."

Subsequently, on May 19, the Navy also drafted a report. After a detailed analysis of (1) the securing of sea lanes for military and economic purposes and (2) the situation of raw materials, it assessed relations with Britain and the United States as follows: "If the two Anglo-Saxon states act jointly, then in the event of a protracted war, Japan would be driven to defeat by the near-total blockade of its economic sea lanes."

However, the most striking document was the German Army General Staff's detailed 15-page report. Karl Heinrich von Stülpnagel, Chief of Section III of the German Army General Staff, with approval of Chief of the General Staff Ludwig Beck, submitted the report to Blomberg on May 16. The report analyzed the following aspects in detail: (1) the Imperial Japanese Army in comparison with the Soviet Far Eastern Army; (2) the strategic outlook on the Imperial Japanese Army's combat situation on the Asian continent; (3) the foundation of Japan's war economy; (4) the state of Japan's domestic political affairs; and (5) the state of Japan's foreign policy. On this basis, it drew the following conclusion<sup>2</sup>.

"Even if a Japanese-Soviet war were to break out, it could by no means be considered to have a decisive impact on the Soviet Union's position in European power politics. In fact, such a war would probably draw Japan's European allies into a serious conflict with Britain and the United States."

The German Ministry of War presented this assessment of "Japan's inevitable defeat" in order to oppose the ongoing negotiations on the Anti-Comintern Pact between Japan and Germany. It is astonishing that the intelligence-gathering capability and judgment of the German Ministry of War, which, as early as 1936, was able to reach such a conclusion in just one week. Even without awaiting the outcome of the detailed tabletop exercise at the "Total War Research Institute," "Japan's inevitable defeat" was almost self-evident to military experts of the time. Based on this assessment, it was inconceivable for the German Wehrmacht to establish a military-strategic cooperation relationship with Japan or China in East Asia.

Four years later, on September 27, 1940, the Tripartite Pact was conducted between Japan, Germany, and Italy. However, this alliance was no more than a diplomatic tool<sup>3</sup> to deter the United States from entering the Sino-Japanese War and the European War. Furthermore, following Japan's surprise attack on Pearl Harbor on December 8, 1941, Japan and Germany formed a wartime alliance. The military agreement signed by Japan, Germany, and Italy on January 18, 1942, merely divided the world along

---

<sup>2</sup> „Vortrag betrifft: Japan als Machtfaktorim Fernen Osten“, 25. Mai 1935, Bundesarchiv-Militärarchiv, Freiburg, RW5/v. 315, Akte Stein. „Geheime Kommandosachen Japan“; Tajima Nobuo (1997), *Nachizumu Kyokuto Senryaku* (National Socialist Far East Strategy), Tokyo: Kodansha, pp. 112-115.

<sup>3</sup> For preliminary reference on the nature of the Tripartite Pact between Japan, Germany, and Italy, see Tajima Nobuo (2022), "Nihon no Sujiku Domei Seisaku to Taiso Seisaku. Hanso Bokyo kara Renso Yokyo e" (Japan's Axis Alliance Policy and Policy Toward the Soviet Union: From 'Anti-Soviet and Anti-Communism' to 'Pro-Soviet and Tolerant of Communism'), in: Japan Association of International Relations (ed.), *Kokusai Seiji* (International Politics), No. 206 (later included in Tajima Nobuo (2024), *Doitsu Gaiko to Higasi Ajia 1890-1945* (German Diplomacy and East Asia 1890-1945), Tokyo: Chikura Shobo).

the 70th meridian east (roughly near the mouth of the Indus River in Karachi), designating areas west of this line to Germany and Italy and areas east of it to Japan as a “sphere of operation.” None of these agreements envisaged any concrete military-strategic cooperation.

## 2. Germany and East Asia: Diplomatic Relations After the First World War

After the First World War, the Treaty of Versailles forced Germany to cede approximately ten percent of its territory and relinquish all of its colonies, including Qingdao. The treaty also restricted Germany’s military sovereignty, leading to its withdrawal from international politics in East Asia. Diplomatic relations between Japan, a victorious nation, and Germany, a defeated nation, were particularly frosty. Under these circumstances, it is noteworthy that Lieutenant Commander Wilhelm Canaris, who visited Japan in the summer of 1924 under orders from the German Navy, proposed the following pro-Japanese foreign policy:

“If the Imperial Japanese Navy were to be strengthened, the Entente powers, such as Britain and France, would be compelled to shift the focus of their foreign policy from Europe to the Far East. Once that happens, the Entente powers will likely agree to resolve European problems to secure their rear.”

However, given the international situation at the time, the realization of such a pro-Japanese course was highly unlikely. This is because, as Canaris himself clearly admitted, “From the Japanese perspective, what is lacking on the German side as a necessary condition for forming a community of shared interests with Germany is the ability to form alliances<sup>4</sup>.” Here, the term “ability to form alliances” can be understood as referring to the overall strategic capability, encompassing both military and diplomatic power. Thus, despite Canaris’s pro-Japanese stance, it may be said that apart from a certain degree of technical cooperation, the conditions for political and strategic cooperation between the Japanese and German navies did not exist within the international context of the 1920s.

In contrast, Germany maintained comparatively friendly relations with China in the aftermath of the First World War. Indeed, under the influence of the May Fourth Movement of 1919, China refused to sign the Treaty of Versailles, and the state of war between China and Germany continued. However, the Sino-German Treaty, concluded on May 20, 1921, which restored diplomatic relations, was the first treaty on equal terms that China concluded with a Western power (providing for the renunciation of rights and interests in China, the abolition of extraterritorial rights, and the recognition of tariff autonomy), and it fostered lasting pro-German sentiment among the Chinese people<sup>5</sup>. Against this backdrop, Sun Yat-sen of the Kuomintang, based in Guangdong, and his successor Chiang Kai-shek formed secret cooperative ties with Germany and the Soviet Union<sup>6</sup>. On April 12, 1927, the Kuomintang staged an anti-communist coup in Shanghai, cutting off relations with the Chinese Communist Party and the Soviet Union. Following the withdrawal of the Soviet military advisory group, the Nationalist Government of China accepted a military advisory group from Germany<sup>7</sup>.

---

<sup>4</sup> Bericht Canaris über seine Reise nach Japan 17. Mai - 10. Sept. 1924, 30. September 1924, in: Bundesarchiv-Militärarchiv, Freiburg, RM20/1635; Tajima Nobuo (1997) *Nachizumu Kyokuto Senryaku*, pp. 41-43.

<sup>5</sup> Borch an das AA, 22. Mai 1921, in: *Akten zur Deutschen Auswärtigen Politik*, Serie A-X, S.46-48.

<sup>6</sup> Tajima Nobuo (2024), *Doitsu Gaiko to Higasi Ajia 1890-1945*, pp. 233-266.

<sup>7</sup> Bernd Martin (Hrsg.) (1981) *Die deutsche Beraterschaft in China. Militär-Wirtschaft-Außenpolitik*, Düsseldorf:

Even in the 1930s, Germany's passive policy in East Asia remained unchanged. In February 1933, Nazi Germany, having just seized power, participated in the adoption of the Committee of Nineteen's draft recommendation to Japan, which incorporated the essence of the Lytton Report, at the League of Nations Assembly. Initially, the Hitler regime sided with those condemning Japan's invasion. In October 1933, the Hitler regime withdrew from the League of Nations, but this was part of a diplomatic tactic to secure political equality in Europe and not an attempt to emulate Japan's withdrawal from the League.

Because of its anti-Soviet policies, the Hitler regime was inevitably forced to end the secret German-Soviet military cooperation that the German Ministry of War had maintained during the 1920s. Thereafter, the German Ministry of War chose as its partner a country located further east than the Soviet Union, namely, China. On April 8, 1936, German Minister of Economics Hjalmar Schacht and the Chinese National Resources Commission (chaired by Weng Wenhao) concluded<sup>8</sup> the Sino-German Loan Treaty (also known as the HAPRO Treaty), pledging a dramatic strengthening of economic relations between the two nations. In October 1936, Walter von Reichenau, former commander-in-chief of the army group at the Ministry of War, visited China and was received by Chiang Kai-shek and other leaders of the Nationalist Government with honors equivalent to those accorded to a state guest. This visit marked a high point in Sino-German friendly relations<sup>9</sup>. On the ground in China, Reichenau declared the following on October 1, 1936<sup>10</sup>.

“Here in East Asia, we must decide whether to side with Japan or with China. The military advisory group, including Falkenhausen and others, must devote itself tirelessly to its mission. If a conflict should arise with Japan, it is only natural that they would go to war alongside the Chinese.”

This statement envisaged a Sino-German relationship that went beyond mere military and economic cooperation, taking on the character of a virtual military alliance<sup>11</sup>.

Meanwhile, behind the overwhelmingly pro-Chinese policy of Nazi Germany promoted by the German Ministry of War and the Ministry of Economics (under Hjalmar Schacht), a minority within the Third Reich, the “pro-Japanese faction,” began maneuvering. Since mid-September 1935, Canaris, Chief of Abwehr (Military Intelligence) in the Ministry of War, and Oshima Hiroshi, the Imperial Japanese Army's Military Attaché in Germany, had been exchanging views on a military pact between Japan and Germany, through the mediation of arms dealer Friedrich Hack. On November 15, they gathered at the residence of Joachim von Ribbentrop, the German Ambassador to Britain, where they reached a basic agreement on the pact between Japan and Germany<sup>12</sup>. Subsequently, in line with this

---

Droste.

<sup>8</sup> Kreditzusatzvertrag zu dem zwischen der chinesischen Regierung und Hans Klein abgeschlossenen Warenaustausch-Vertrag vom 23. August 1934, Berlin, 8. April 1936, in: *Akten zur Deutschen Auswärtigen Politik*, Serie C, Bd. V, Dok. Nr. 270, S. 382-383; “Sino-German Credit Loan Agreement, April 8, 1936”, in: Zhong Guo Di Er Lishi Dananguang (Second National Archives of China)(ed.), *Zhong De Waijiao Midang* (Sino-German Diplomatic Secret Archives), Guilin: Guangxi Normal University Press, pp. 329-330.

<sup>9</sup> For Reichenau's visit to China, see the following references. Walther Eckert (o. D.), *Die HAPRO in China*, Graz: Selbstverlag, S. 47-51; Ma Zhendu and Qi Rugao (1998), *Zhang Jieshi yu Xitele* (Chiang Kai-shek and Hitler), Taipei: Tung-Ta Publishing Company, p. 300.

<sup>10</sup> Fischer an Erdmannsdorff, 4. November 1936, in: Politisches Archiv des Auswärtigen Amts, „Projekt Klein“, 218/8034-148037.

<sup>11</sup> Regarding Germany's policy toward China, see Tajima Nobuo (2013), *Nachisu Doitsu to Chugoku Kokuminseifu* (Nazi Germany and the Nationalist Government of China 1933-1937), Tokyo: University of Tokyo Press.

<sup>12</sup> Nachlass Friedrich Hack, im Besitz Verfassers.

agreement, on November 25, 1936, the Hitler regime concluded the Anti-Comintern Pact with Japan, pressing ahead despite opposition from the pro-China mainstream within the German Ministry of War, including Blomberg, Reichenau, and Thomas<sup>13</sup>. Article 1 of the secret supplementary agreement to the Anti-Comintern Pact stated: “In the event that one of the signatories is attacked or threatened with attack by the Soviet Union without provocation, the other signatory shall not come to the aid of the Soviet Union” (summary). This article stipulated that, in the event of a direct, full-scale, conventional war between Japan and the Soviet Union, or between Germany and the Soviet Union, neither country would provide strategic assistance to the Soviet Union<sup>14</sup>.

Following the outbreak of the Marco Polo Bridge Incident on July 7, 1937, Germany found itself torn between China and Japan, ultimately adopting a policy of neutrality. On August 16, Hitler declared the basic policy: “The partnership with Japan will be maintained, but Germany must remain neutral in the Sino-Japanese war<sup>15</sup>.” On the other hand, on November 6, 1937, Hitler, for the first time, presented his invasion plan before the heads of the Army, Navy, Air Force, and Foreign Ministry, to simultaneously overthrow Czechoslovakia and Austria by military means<sup>16</sup>. To achieve this, it was necessary to check Britain and France and to conclude a military alliance among Japan, Germany, and Italy<sup>17</sup>. In the spring of 1938, Germany, without seeking any diplomatic return, repeatedly made concessions to Japan (recognition of “Manchukuo,” cessation of its arms exports to China, recall of its military advisory group in China, and recall of Oskar Trautmann, the ambassador to China)<sup>18</sup>.

Meanwhile, Japan was drawn into a protracted war in China. In the process, the Imperial Japanese Army in particular came into conflict with the Soviet Union, which supported the Nationalist Government of China, as well as with Britain, which held interests in China and also supported the Nationalist Government. Thus, beginning in the summer of 1938, negotiations between Japan, Germany, and Italy, the “First Tripartite Pact Negotiations” were initiated under the slogan of “anti-British and anti-French,” rather than “anti-Soviet.” The negotiations dragged on inconclusively, but by the spring of 1939, the Japanese side had become increasingly reluctant to conclude the Tripartite Pact because Germany insisted on designating the United States as a potential enemy. On March 5, 1939, German Foreign Minister Ribbentrop told Oshima Hiroshi, the Japanese ambassador stationed in Berlin, “What Germany and Italy expect from Japan under the Tripartite Pact, above all, is to contain the United States and ensure that it remains neutral. If this is accomplished, the United States will not become involved in Europe<sup>19</sup>.” On May 2, 1939, Japan conveyed the “Hiranuma Message” to Germany and Italy, effectively withdrawing from the Tripartite Pact negotiations<sup>20</sup>.

<sup>13</sup> For details, see Tajima Nobuo (1997), *Nachizumu Kyokuto Senryaku*, pp. 98-148.

<sup>14</sup> Gaimusho (Ministry of Foreign Affairs) (ed.) (1965), *Nihon Gaiko Nenpyo narabini Shuyo Bunsho* (Chronology and the Documents of Japanese Foreign Policy), pp. 352-354.

<sup>15</sup> Aufzeichnung Neurath, 17. August 1937, in: *Akten zur Deutschen Auswärtigen Politik*, Serie D, Bd. I, Dok. Nr. 478, S. 612.

<sup>16</sup> Aufzeichnung Hoßbach, 10. November 1937, in: *Akten zur Deutschen Auswärtigen Politik*, Serie D, Bd. I, Dok. Nr. 19, S.25-32.

<sup>17</sup> Ribbentrops Notiz für den Führer, 2. Januar 1938, in: *Akten zur Deutschen Auswärtigen Politik*, Serie D, Bd. I, Dok. Nr. 93, S. 132-137.

<sup>18</sup> Regarding the diplomatic significance of these concessions to Japan, see Tajima Nobuo (2017), “Sousetsu I. Doitsu Gaiko to Higashi Ajia 1890-1945” (General Remarks I. German Diplomacy and East Asia 1890-1945), in: Tajima Nobuo and Kudo Akira (ed.)(2017), *Doitsu to Higashi Ajia 1890-1945* (Germany and East Asia 1890-1945), Tokyo: University of Tokyo Press, pp. 73-74.

<sup>19</sup> “From Ambassador Oshima to Foreign Minister Arita, March 7, 1939”, in: Tsunoda Jun (ed.)(1964), *Gendaishi Shiryō* (Materials of Contemporary History of Japan), Vol. 10, Tokyo: Misuzu Shobo, pp. 224-225.

<sup>20</sup> Tsunoda Jun (ed.)(1964), *Gendaishi Shiryō*, pp. 262-264.

In response, on May 22, 1939, Germany concluded the German-Italian Pact of Steel without Japan. Although Germany had not yet abandoned the idea of a Japanese-German-Italian Tripartite Pact<sup>21</sup>, by late June it had shifted significantly toward improving relations with the Soviet Union. On August 22, 1939, Germany finally took the step of concluding the German-Soviet Non-Aggression Pact. In the end, Germany gained nothing from its indecisive concessions to Japan and instead lost its friendly ties with China. Meanwhile, in Japan, the Hiranuma Kiichiro Cabinet collapsed after issuing a statement describing “the situation in Europe as complex and bizarre.”

Against the backdrop of the German-Soviet Non-Aggression Pact, on September 1, 1939, Germany suddenly attacked Poland without a declaration of war, thus beginning the Second World War in Europe. Germany’s policy toward East Asia and its military cooperation relations entered an entirely new phase.

### **3. Japanese-German Military Cooperation in the 1930s**

#### **(1) Naval Military Technical Cooperation**

The German Navy, prohibited from possessing submarines under the Treaty of Versailles, provided technical cooperation to the Imperial Japanese Navy by transferring submarine technology. In 1920, under an agreement with the German Naval General Staff, the Imperial Japanese Navy succeeded in acquiring blueprints for cruiser-type submarines and mine-laying vessels from Krupp-Germania and other companies. The following year, in 1921, the Navy dispatched Matsukata Kojiro, the President of the Kawasaki Shipbuilding Company in Kobe, to Europe for negotiations. Matsukata also invited German engineers to Japan, leading Kawasaki Shipbuilding to begin constructing submarines based on German models. With the consent of Admiral Paul Behncke, then Chief of the Naval General Staff, the German Navy set up a “shipbuilding design office” in The Hague, the Netherlands. The fact that the Imperial Japanese Navy was one of this office’s principal clients is evident in the fact that Dr. Hans Techel, then regarded as one of the world’s foremost authorities on submarine design, later assumed direct responsibility for supervising submarine construction at Kawasaki Shipbuilding<sup>22</sup>. Furthermore, on June 19, 1923, Captain Werner Steffan of the Political Affairs Division of the German Naval General Staff proposed “an exchange of know-how” to the Imperial Japanese Navy. On the basis of this proposal, in the summer of 1924, Lieutenant Commander Canaris visited Japan. He inspected the progress of submarine construction at Kawasaki Shipbuilding in Kobe and then proceeded to Tokyo, where he met with senior Japanese naval officers, including Navy Minister Takarabe Takeshi and Vice Minister Abo Kiyokazu. He subsequently spent about two weeks in detailed discussions with technical experts regarding submarine, torpedo, and gunnery technologies<sup>23</sup>.

The expansion of technical cooperation between the two navies in the mid-1930s appears to have been prompted by Yamamoto Isoroku’s participation in the preliminary negotiations of the Second London Naval Disarmament Conference and his subsequent visit to Germany on his return journey. In Berlin, Yamamoto met Erich Raeder, then Chief of the Naval Command, and Admiral Paul Behncke, through the mediation of the arms dealer Friedrich Hack. Around the time of Yamamoto’s return in

---

<sup>21</sup> Запись беседы заместителя народного комиссара иностранных дел СССР В. П. Потемкина с послом Германии в СССР Ф. Шуленбургом. 1 июля 1939 г.

<sup>22</sup> „Der Kampf der Marine gegen Versailles 1919–1935“, bearb. von Kapitän z.S. Schüssler, in: *Der Prozeß gegen die Hauptkriegsverbrecher vor dem Internationalen Militärgerichtshof*, Bd. 34, S. 530-607.

<sup>23</sup> „Bericht Canaris, 30. September 1924“, in: Bundesarchiv-Militärarchiv, Freiburg, RM20/16.

February 1935, at the request of the German Navy, the Imperial Japanese Navy disclosed numerous secrets, ranging from the design of the aircraft carrier “Akagi” to the training methods, and permitted inspections by German engineers and flight officers. In return, the Imperial Japanese Navy demanded the introduction of technology for Heinkel dive bombers. At the end of January that year, German naval attaché to Japan, Paul Wenneker, was granted permission to visit “Akagi,” and in April, he was also allowed to observe the training of Akagi’s carrier-based aircraft at Kanoya in Kagoshima Prefecture. In September, a German technical mission departed for Japan and returned in December after thoroughly inspecting “Akagi”<sup>24</sup>. This transfer of aircraft carrier technology was the first major technology transfer from Japan to Germany.

On the basis of this information, Germany proceeded with the design and construction of the aircraft carrier “Graf Zeppelin.” The carrier was launched at Kiel in December 1938. At the launching ceremony, Japanese naval attaché to Germany Kojima Hideo received a direct expression of gratitude from Admiral Raeder, the Commander-in-Chief of the German Navy, for Japan’s cooperation in military technology.

## **(2) Japanese-German cooperation on army intelligence and covert operations**

Although the Anti-Comintern Pact between Japan and Germany declared cooperation between the intelligence authorities of the two states, it contained no provisions stipulating the specific details of such cooperation. Therefore, on May 11, 1937, Canaris, Chief of Abwehr (the Military Intelligence) in the German Ministry of War, and Oshima Hiroshi, the Japanese Military Attaché in Germany representing the Second (Intelligence) Section of the Imperial Japanese Army General Staff, who had been advancing the Anti-Comintern Pact negotiations, signed the “Supplementary Agreement on Japan–Germany Intelligence Exchange Concerning the Soviet Union” and the “Japan–Germany Supplementary Agreement on Anti-Soviet Covert Operations”<sup>25</sup>. The “Supplementary Agreement on Japan–Germany Intelligence Exchange Concerning the Soviet Union” consisted of five articles, stipulating provisions such as the exchange of information on the Soviet Union, mutual consultation through resident military attachés, and the sharing of experience in the field of intelligence. On the basis of this intelligence exchange agreement, the Japanese and German militaries exchanged a large volume of information. Particularly noteworthy was the intelligence that the Imperial Japanese Army provided to the German Ministry of War in connection with the defection, in June 1938, of Genrikh Lyushkov, a political officer of the Far Eastern Red Army. Through this military cooperation, the German Ministry of War was able to obtain intelligence on the Kirov assassination and on the security situation in the Soviet Union, including Ukraine, as well as a large volume of high-quality intelligence on the Soviet Red Army, particularly detailed intelligence on the Far Eastern Red Army<sup>26</sup>.

The “Japan–Germany Supplementary Agreement on Anti-Soviet Covert Operations” was concluded between Oshima and Canaris at the same time as the Supplementary Agreement on Intelligence Exchange. It stipulated that the Japanese and German militaries would cooperate in covert operations

---

<sup>24</sup> Aizawa Jun (2002), *Kaigun no Sentaku* (The Navy's Choice), Tokyo: Chuo Koronsha, pp. 69-72.

<sup>25</sup> “Taiso Joho Kokan oyobi Boryaku ni kansuru Nichi Doku Torikime” (Japan–Germany Military Arrangement on Intelligence Exchange and Covert Operations), The Japan Center for Asian Historical Records (JACAR) C14061021200.

<sup>26</sup> Scholl an Tippelskirch, 10. August 1938, in: Bundesarchiv-Militärarchiv, RH2/v.2939; Tajima Nobuo (2024), *Doitsu Gaiko to Higasi Ajia 1890-1945*, pp. 212-232.

against the Soviet Union in Southeast Europe, the Middle East (Turkey, Iran, Afghanistan), and East Asia. The agreement had the following provisions: Article 1 “Joint operations shall include the following activities: (a) Consolidation of all minority movements, (b) anti-communist propaganda, (c) Preparations for revolutionary actions, acts of ‘terrorism,’ and disruptive sabotage operations in the event of the outbreak of war.” Article 2 “The preparations to be conducted shall extend to the entire Soviet Union. For this purpose, three zones of interest shall be delineated. (a) The western border region of Europe, from Finland to Bulgaria, shall be designated as Germany’s primary zone of interest. (b) The southwestern border region (Turkey and Iran) shall be designated as a zone of mutual interest to both nations. (c) The eastern border region of Asia shall be designated as Japan’s primary zone of interest.” Article 3 “Joint operations shall be carried out from 1937 through 1941 on the basis of the attached Five-Year Plan.” The attached Five-Year Plan set forth the “Action Plan” for the Japanese and German signatories for the years 1937–1941 in “the zone of mutual interest,” including Turkey, the Caucasus, and Iran. The Plan specified a wide range of intelligence and covert warfare activities against the Soviet Union, such as “coordination with military authorities,” “anti-Soviet and pro-Japan/Pro-Germany propaganda,” “training of agents,” and “establishment of wireless communications.” It also included measures such as “construction of bases along the border,” “establishment of maritime communications in the Black Sea,” “identification of aircraft landing sites,” “detailed preparations for aerial bombardments on key military targets,” and “completion of war preparations<sup>27</sup>.”

---

<sup>27</sup> The previously cited “Japan–Germany Military Arrangement on Intelligence Exchange and Covert Operations.”

Boeicho Boeikenkyujo Toshokan Bunko Miyazaki 32

**Five Year Plan**

**Appendix**

	1937	1938	1939	1940	1941
<b>Turkey</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To establish and bribe with political leaders</li> <li>To establish contact with the Army</li> <li>To establish military sites on the border (camouflaging merchants)</li> <li>To start anti-Soviet propaganda</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To reinforce the activities of the previous year</li> <li>Pol. maneuver through the Bureau Ribb. to make Turkish Gov. stand on the side of anti-Soviet front</li> <li>To train invaders</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To reinforce the activities of the previous year</li> <li>To set up radio correspondence</li> <li>To research on the possibility of opening airport</li> <li>To start educate military cadre</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To reinforce the activities of the previous year</li> <li>Research and Preparation for air attack on major military objects</li> <li>To carry weapons in</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To reinforce the activities of the previous year</li> <li>To complete military preparations</li> <li>To build up Caucasian Army</li> </ol>
<b>Iran</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To research political and military situation</li> <li>To establish contact with the Army</li> <li>Maneuver through the Bureau Ribb. to reinforce economic relations between Iran and anti-Soviet powers</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To reinforce the activities of the previous year</li> <li>To build military sites on the border</li> <li>To train invaders</li> <li>To educate agents</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To reinforce the activities of the previous year</li> <li>To build up correspondence through steamers across the Caspian Sea</li> <li>To set up radio correspondence between Caucasus and Iran</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To reinforce the activities of the previous year</li> <li>Research and Preparation for air attack on major military objects</li> <li>To carry weapons in</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To reinforce the activities of the previous year</li> </ol>
<b>Caucasus</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To research political and military situation</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To reinforce the activities of the previous year</li> <li>To continue and reinforce research</li> <li>to start propaganda</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To reinforce the activities of the previous year</li> <li>To organize cells along the pipeline Baku, Grosnyj, Tkbuli, Batumi</li> <li>To build up connection between the Red Army and Caucasian guerrilla</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To reinforce the activities of the previous year</li> <li>Preparation for outbreak of general riot</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>same as the previous year</li> </ol>
<b>European Countries</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Political maneuver through the Bureau Ribbentrop toward neighbouring countries, esp. Bulgaria and Rumania</li> <li>To educate Caucasian Army</li> <li>Pay attention to eng. Ital. and polin. political maneuver</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To reinforce the activities of the previous year</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To reinforce the activities of the previous year</li> <li>To build sites (storehouses) in the East Mediterranean</li> <li>To start training cadre in order to build up Caucasian Army</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To reinforce the activities of the previous year</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>same as the previous year</li> </ol>
<b>Emigrants</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To support nationalist movements                             <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>support of the magazine "Caucasus"</li> <li>To publish in many languages</li> <li>Propaganda in Caucasus and others</li> </ol> </li> <li>Pay attention to "Promite" group</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To reinforce the activities of the previous year</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To reinforce the activities of the previous year</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>same as the previous year</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>same as the previous year</li> <li>To complete military preparations</li> </ol>

The above-mentioned “Supplementary Agreement on Japan–Germany Intelligence Exchange Concerning the Soviet Union” and the “Japan–Germany Supplementary Agreement on Anti-Soviet Covert Operations” were interdepartmental agreements between the intelligence and covert operations divisions of the Japanese and German militaries (Oshima Hiroshi, the Japanese military attaché in Germany, and Canaris, the Chief of Abwehr). Subsequently, the Japanese and German General Staffs agreed to formalize these as official agreements between the General Staffs. On October 7, 1938, in Berlin, Wilhelm Keitel, the Chief of the German Wehrmacht High Command, and Oshima Hiroshi, representing the Imperial Japanese Army, signed the “Japan–Germany Military Arrangement on Intelligence Exchange and Covert Operations Against the Soviet Union<sup>28</sup>.”

Such covert operations conducted by the intelligence authorities of the Japanese and German militaries were multifaceted. On January 31, 1939, Oshima Hiroshi met with Heinrich Himmler, the head of Germany’s secret police, and gave a detailed account of the Imperial Japanese Army’s anti-Soviet sabotage activities in Europe. According to Himmler’s memorandum of the meeting, Oshima, operating from a base in Falkensee near Berlin and in cooperation with Abwehr led by Canaris, conducted a variety of covert operations and sabotage activities in the eastern and southern border regions of the Soviet Union, including Poland, Ukraine, Romania, the Caucasus, and Afghanistan, ranging from the distribution of anti-Soviet leaflets, dispatch of terrorists, and plans for the assassination of Stalin<sup>29</sup>.

In the winter of 1938–39, Oshima Hiroshi and the Imperial Japanese Army’s secret service unit (Manaki Kikan) in Germany, led by Colonel Manaki Takanobu, planned the assassination of Stalin in cooperation with Abwehr, headed by Canaris, together with Haidar Bammate (an Afghan national), who was born in the Caucasus and was an exiled anti-Soviet activist<sup>30</sup>. However, the exiled White Russian terrorist group they hired was shot dead at the Caucasus border. Although Oshima denied involvement in the plot to assassinate Stalin during the Tokyo Trials, he later acknowledged the existence of the “Stalin Assassination Squad” in an interview with counterintelligence officials of the Defense Agency<sup>31</sup>.

The intelligence and covert operations plan involving cooperation between the Second Department of the General Staff Office of the Imperial Japanese Army and German Abwehr collapsed as a result of the German–Soviet Non-Aggression Pact of August 1939. Oshima Hiroshi and Manaki Takanobu also maintained cooperative ties with the Organisation of Ukrainian Nationalists (OUN). However, the anti-Soviet armed uprising that the OUN planned in Galicia to coincide with the German invasion of Poland (September 1) failed to gain Hitler’s consent and consequently collapsed. Oshima, Manaki, and German Abwehr had no choice but to let the uprising fail<sup>32</sup>.

---

<sup>28</sup>The previously cited “Japan–Germany Military Arrangement on Intelligence Exchange and Covert Operations.”

<sup>29</sup>Nürnberger Dokument 2195-PS, in: Internationaler Militärgerichtshof Nürnberg (1948), Bd. XXIX, S. 327-328. For further reference regarding the above, see Tajima Nobuo (2017), *Nihon Rikugun no Taiso Boryaku* (Anti-Soviet Sabotage Activities of the Imperial Japanese Army), Tokyo: Yoshikawa Kōbunkan.

<sup>30</sup>„Fragebogen Nr. 1604“, in: Politisches Archiv des Auswärtigen Amts, RZ 211/261174, „Turanismus“.

<sup>31</sup>“Bokyo ni kansuru Kaiso Choshu Roku 1936-1945“ (Recorded Recollections on Counterintelligence), Central Military Administration and Other, No. 95, Recollections of Oshima (Former Japanese Ambassador to Germany and Lieutenant General of the Imperial Japanese Army), 1959, held at the library of the National Institute for Defense Studies, Ministry of Defense.

<sup>32</sup>Höhne, Heinz (1976), *Canaris. Patriot im Zwielicht*, München: C. Bertelsmann, S. 338-403.

#### 4. Sino–German Military Cooperation in the 1930s

##### (1) German military advisory group in China

On April 12, 1927, Chiang Kai-shek, during the “Northern Expedition,” instigated the “Shanghai Coup,” thereby breaking with the Kuomintang’s established policy of “allying with the Soviets and accommodating communism.” As a result, relations between the Soviet Union and China cooled, and the Soviet military advisory group operating in Guangzhou, which included Vasily Konstantinovich Blyukher, was compelled to withdraw from China. To fill this leadership vacuum, Chiang Kai-shek invited German right-wing military officers to replace the Soviet advisory group. In October 1927, Max Bauer visited China and became a military advisor to Chiang Kai-shek. He then temporarily returned to Germany in the spring of 1928, where he made contact with German industry to arouse their interest in China. In the autumn of the same year, he led a delegation of nearly thirty military officers back to China, thereby laying the foundation for the German military advisory group in China.

Bauer himself contracted smallpox in Wuhan in April 1929 and died in Shanghai the following month. After his death, Hitler’s old friend Hermann Kriebel, who had also taken part in the Beer Hall Putsch in Munich (November 1923), temporarily served as his replacement. In February 1930, he was succeeded by Georg Wetzell, former Director of the Military Affairs Department in the German Ministry of War. Although Wetzell was dismayed by the backwardness of the Chinese military, which possessed neither tanks nor reliable maps, he remained active. During the 1930 Central Plains War (against Yan Xishan and Feng Yuxiang), he boarded Chiang Kai-shek’s train to present proposals, and in the “Third Encirclement Campaign” launched in June 1931, he provided tactical advice. When the “Shanghai Incident” broke out in January 1932, Wetzell went to the front lines and took part in the decision to deploy the 87th and 88th Divisions trained by the German military advisory group. Furthermore, when the Japanese military launched the Battle of Rehe in early 1933, Wetzell led the 7th Army, which he had trained himself, and advanced northward to take command of the Defense of the Great Wall<sup>33</sup>.

In April 1934, Hans von Seeckt succeeded him as “General Adviser to the Nanjing Military Commission.” Chiang Kai-shek even had a special “Office of the General Adviser” established in Nanjing for Seeckt. Moreover, Seeckt was granted the authority to issue various orders to the military and the government on behalf of Chiang Kai-shek, from the residence of the Chairman of the Nanjing Military Academy, while Chiang Kai-shek was away from Nanjing during campaigns such as the “Fifth Encirclement Campaign.” This step was truly unprecedented among foreign advisers who had previously served in China.

Following the forced military defeat of the Chinese Communist Party resulting in the “Long March” of October 1934, the focus of the German military advisory group gradually shifted to preparations for the war against Japan, in line with Chiang Kai-shek’s policy of “maintaining internal stability before resisting foreign aggression.”

On July 7, 1937, the Marco Polo Bridge Incident broke out near Beijing. Subsequently, the conflict between Japan and China escalated into a full-scale war, and on August 13 of the same year, the fighting spread to the international city of Shanghai. Here, Chiang Kai-shek deployed elite units such as the 87th, 88th Divisions and the National Salt Gabelle Brigade, which had been trained by

---

<sup>33</sup> Bernd Martin (Hrsg.)(1981) *Die deutsche Beraterschaft in China. Militär-Wirtschaft- Außenpolitik*, Düsseldorf: Droste.

Falkenhausen, and mounted a fierce resistance against the Japanese military through the use of tactics such as trenches and pillboxes. The fierce resistance exemplified by the siege of the “Sihang Warehouse” was clearly intended as an appeal to the international community through the foreign concessions. Thus, the battle in Shanghai took on the character of a “Japan-Germany War” (Matsumoto Shigeharu)<sup>34</sup>.

Afterward, on November 5, when the Japanese 10th Army landed near Hangzhou and the Shanghai Front collapsed, the Nationalist Army retreated to Nanjing. After the fall of Nanjing (in December 1937), Nationalist Government continued resistance while retreating to Hankou and later to Chongqing. In June 1938, Hitler and Foreign Minister Joachim von Ribbentrop ordered the recall of the German military advisory group in China and German ambassador to China, Oskar Trautmann, to Germany<sup>35</sup>. Falkenhausen stubbornly resisted this order and even considered acquiring Chinese citizenship. However, Ribbentrop responded by threatening to arrest Falkenhausen’s family in Germany, and Falkenhausen was thus compelled to comply with the order to return<sup>36</sup>.

Chiang Kai-shek held a grand farewell banquet to see off the German military advisory group. He was concerned that the group’s members might leak top secrets of the Chinese military to Japan, but this fear ultimately proved groundless. Falkenhausen and the other members maintained steadfast loyalty to the Nationalist Government of China, especially Chiang Kai-shek<sup>37</sup>.

## (2) Sino-German military and economic cooperation

When the anti-communist Hitler regime came to power on January 30, 1933, the German Ministry of War shifted its focus from the secret military cooperation that had until then been maintained with the Soviet Union to a country further east of Russia, namely China.

In line with this policy of the Ministry of War, arms dealer Hans Klein began clandestine activities in China in 1933. On July 20, 1933, an agreement was concluded in Guangzhou between Klein and the Southwest Executive Committee of the Nationalist Government (Chen Jitang, Li Zongren and others of the Guangdong clique) for the construction of an artillery factory<sup>38</sup>. In addition, on December 14 of the same year in Guangzhou, Klein’s agent Walter Eckert concluded a contract with Guangzhou’s Yonglong Company in accordance with the above-mentioned agreement, for the construction of an

---

<sup>34</sup> Matsumoto Shigeharu (1974), *Shanghai Jidai* (The Shanghai Era), Tokyo: Chuo Koronsha, p. 172.

<sup>35</sup> Ribbentrop an die Botschaft in Hankow, 13. Mai 1938, in: *Akten zur Deutschen Auswärtigen Politik*, Serie D, Bd. 1, Dok. Nr. 583, S. 699-700.

<sup>36</sup> Ribbentrop an die Botschaft in Hankow, 17. Mai 1938, in: *Akten zur Deutschen Auswärtigen Politik*, Serie D, Bd. 1, Dok. Nr. 584, S. 700.

<sup>37</sup> The following Japanese-language sources are available regarding the German military advisory group in China. Gerhard Krebs (1997), “Zaika Doitsu Gunji Komondan to Nitchu Senso” (German Military Advisory Group in China and the Sino-Japanese War), Gunji Shi Gakkai (ed.), *Nitchu Senso no Shoso* (Various Aspects of the Sino-Japanese War), Kinseisha; Bernd Martin, translated by Shindo Hiroyuki (2001), “Nitchu Senso Ki no Chugoku in okeru Doitsu Gunji Komondan” (German Military Advisory Group in China During the Sino-Japanese War), *Military History Studies Annual Report* No. 4; Hasegawa Hiroshi (2011), “Alexander von Falkenhausen to Chuka Minkoku Rikugun (Alexander von Falkenhausen and the Chinese Nationalist Army), in: Miyake Masaki (ed.), *Doitsu Gunji Shi to Senso* (German History and War), Tokyo: Sairyusha; Tajima Nobuo (2013), *Nachisu Doitu to Chugoku Kokumin Seifu* (Nazi Germany and the Nationalist China), Tokyo: University of Tokyo Press; Tajima Nobuo (2023), “Zaika Doitsu Gunji Komondan Cho Falkenhausen to Higasi Ajia” (Falkenhausen and East Asia), in: Kuwana Eiko (ed.), *Bunka Gaiko no Sekai* (The World of Cultural Diplomacy), Tokyo: Yamakawa Shuppansha.

<sup>38</sup> “Klein and the Agreement with the Guangdong and Guangxi Authorities on the Sino-German Exchange of Goods” (July 20, 1933), The Second Historical Archives of China (ed.) (1994), *Zhong De Waijiao Midang 1927-1947* (Sino-German Diplomatic Secret Archives), Guilin: Guangxi Normal University Press, 460-465.

ordnance factory at the mouth of the Pajiang River<sup>39</sup>. The ordnance factory was completed two years later, in 1935. Built on a site of 16,000 square meters and equipped with 340 machines and equipment, the factory commenced production in December 1935 under the official name “Guangdong Second Ordnance Factory” (commonly known as the “Pajiangkou Ordnance Factory”)<sup>40</sup>.

Furthermore, on August 23, 1934, Klein concluded a large-scale provisional agreement with Kong Xiangxi, the Minister of Finance of the Nanjing Nationalist Government, the main provisions of which concerned the construction of railways, steel mills, port facilities, explosives plants, and gas mask factories. This provisional agreement was characterized by the barter of German industrial products and industrial plants with agricultural and mining products produced in China. German engineers were responsible for the development of mining products, and Klein was tasked with securing a credit of 100 million Reichsmarks in Berlin for mining development and advance payments<sup>41</sup>.

Behind Klein’s activities in China lay the German Ministry of War’s high expectations for trade with China. For example, on April 16, 1934, Lieutenant General Kurt Liese, Chief of the Army Ordnance Office of the German Army General Staff, stated in a memorandum: “[China’s] interest in German weapons and manufacturing equipment is enormous, and naturally there are certain expectations from our weapons and manufacturing equipment.” “It is necessary to direct the attention of the Foreign Minister and the Minister of Economics specifically toward business in China, and it is desirable to provide unified support for German industry there<sup>42</sup>.”

Based on this thinking, on January 24, 1934, the German Ministry of War established in Berlin a semi-official limited-liability company, the *Handelsgesellschaft für industrielle Produkte*, with the arms dealer Hans Klein as its president. Georg Thomas, the Head of the Defense Economy and Armament Office, was appointed Chairman of the Board of Directors by the Ministry of War. Wilhelm Keppler, the Führer’s Special Economic Adviser, and Wilhelm Voss of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Trade Policy Bureau, also sat on the Board. From this point onward, HAPRO came to represent the interests of the German Ministry of War, aiming to monopolize Sino-German trade, including its contract with the Nanjing Government (the “Nanjing Project<sup>43</sup>”).

In the autumn of 1935, practical negotiations regarding the Nanjing Project began in earnest between Klein and Weng Wenhao, Chairman of the National Resources Commission of the Nationalist Government. On November 23, Chiang Kai-shek addressed a letter to Hitler, Schacht and Blomberg, expressing his intention to approve Klein’s Nanjing Project<sup>44</sup>.

On February 23, 1936, a delegation of the Chinese National Resources Commission, headed by Gu Zhen, arrived in Berlin, and met with Seeckt on the 24th, followed by meetings with Blomberg on the

<sup>39</sup> “Contract for the Construction of Various Arsenal Buildings at the Mouth of the Pajiang River” signed by Klein and Guangzhou’s Yonglong Construction Company” (December 14, 1933), *Zhong De Waijiao Midang*, pp. 466-468.

<sup>40</sup> Deng Yancun (1987), “Pijiang Bingong Chang Jianli Shimo (The Construction and Completion of the Pjiang Arsenal), in: *Nantian Suiyue* (Southern Chronicles) (Guangzhou Literary and Historical Materials, 37th Series), Guangzhou: Guangdong Renmin Chubanshe, pp. 161-167.

<sup>41</sup> “Contract for Implementation of Mutual Exchange between Chinese Agricultural Products and German Industrial Products” (August 23, 1934), in: *Zhong De Waijiao Midang*, pp. 324-326; Ausführungs-Vertrag über den Austausch von Rohstoffen und Landesprodukten Chinas gegen Industrie- und Sonstige Erzeugnisse Deutschlands, in: Walther Eckert, *Die HAPRO in China*, Graz: Selbstverlag, O. D., Anhang; Bernd Martin (Hrsg.) (1981), *Die deutsche Beraterschaft in China*, Dokument Nr. 15, S.410-411.

<sup>42</sup> Aufzeichnung Liese, 16. April 1934, in: Bundesarchiv-Militärarchiv Freiburg, WiF 5-383, Teil 2.

<sup>43</sup> Bericht und Anlage der Deutschen Revisions- und Treuhand-Aktiengesellschaft Berlin über die bei der „HAPRO“ vorgenommene Sonderprüfung vom 3. Dezember 1936, in: Bundesarchiv Lichterfelde, R121/5177.

<sup>44</sup> “Draft of Chiang Kai-shek’s Letter to Seeckt for Comprehensive Strengthening of Sino-German Cooperation” (November 23, 1935), in: *Zhong De Waijiao Midang*, p. 141.

25th, Hitler on the 27th, and Schacht on the 28th<sup>45</sup>. According to Gu Zhen's report, at the meeting on the 27th, Hitler stated to the delegation that he "hoped to exchange German industrial products for Chinese raw materials" and "wished to assist in China's industrial development"<sup>46</sup>.

On April 8, 1936, Schacht concluded the Sino-German (HAPRO) Treaty with the Chinese delegation visiting Germany. Its main provisions were as follows:

1. The Chinese Government agreed that the German Government would assume the material exchange contract concluded between the Chinese Government and Hans Klein on August 23, 1934.
2. The German Government would provide the Chinese Government with a commodity credit loan of 100 million Reichsmarks.
3. The Chinese Government could utilize this commodity credit loan, under the Material Exchange Agreement, for the import of German industrial products and other goods.

On April 14, 1936, Chiang Kai-shek sent a congratulatory telegram on the occasion of Hitler's upcoming birthday (April 20), declaring that "the economic cooperation between Germany and China has yielded significant results through the signing of the Sino-German Treaty," thereby expressing his satisfaction with its conclusion<sup>47</sup>. In response, on May 13, Hitler sent a telegram to Chiang Kai-shek, stating: "The barter trade between China and Germany brings immense benefits to the economic development of both nations. I wish to express my sincere gratitude for Your Excellency's special consideration<sup>48</sup>." This exchange of courtesies between Hitler and Chiang Kai-shek marked the pinnacle of the friendly relations between the two nations brought about by the Sino-German barter trade.

With the conclusion of the Sino-German Treaty, the German Ministry of War shifted the focus of its arms trade with China from private companies to the state-owned company HAPRO. In response to the Chinese Government's strong desire to purchase arms, on April 30, Minister of War Blomberg promised Chiang Kai-shek through Gu Zhen that "regarding all weapons requested by the Nationalist Government of China, the same latest models as those used by the German Wehrmacht would be supplied<sup>49</sup>." Furthermore, as already noted, on May 6, Blomberg issued a directive to all three branches of the German armed forces, ordering that "the supplies of materials which the Nationalist Government of China sought to purchase from the German munitions industry be incorporated into Germany's own munitions procurement program<sup>50</sup>." The expansion of the Chinese military was organically incorporated into the material procurement program of the German Ministry of War.

The elite Chinese army under the direct command of Chiang Kai-shek was established according to Seeckt's military concepts (creation of an elite force of 100,000 troops to be expanded to 300,000). The army was supplied with the latest weapons based on the same organizational structure as the

---

<sup>45</sup> Hans Meier-Welcker (1967), *Seeckt*, Frankfurt a. M.; Bernard & Graefe, S. 692.

<sup>46</sup> "Telegram From Gu Zhen to Weng Wenhao (February 27, 1936), in: *Zhong De Weijia Midang*, pp. 361-362.

<sup>47</sup> Chang Kai Shek an Hitler, 14. April 1936, in: Politisches Archiv des Auswärtigen Amts, „Projekt Klein“, 6680/H096416.

<sup>48</sup> "Telegram From Hitler to Chiang Kai-shek Regarding the Development of Sino-German Cooperation (May 13, 1936)," in: *Zhong De Waijiao Midang*, pp. 4-5.

<sup>49</sup> "Telegram From Gu Zhen et al. to Weng Wenhao (April 30, 1936), in: *Zhong De Waijiao Midang* p. 380.

<sup>50</sup> B. Nr. B Stat 1192/35 Gkods vom 15. Mai 1936, in: Bundesarchiv-Militärarchiv, Freiburg i. Br., RM11/2/v. Case3/2/48899.

German Wehrmacht, trained in the German style by the Wehrmacht (the military advisory group in China), guided by the German military strategic thought, and received various supplies from the German-made arms manufacturing facilities. In this way, the Chinese military was, in effect, accorded the status of a “brother army” by the German Ministry of War. The rearmament policy of the “Third Reich” and China’s military expansion policy thus became organically and closely interconnected.

When the Sino-Japanese War broke out on July 7, 1937, Kong Xiangxi, Premier of the Executive Yuan of the Nationalist Government of China, who was visiting Germany, met with Defense Minister Werner von Blomberg on August 10 and strongly pressed for the continuation of arms exports to China. In response, Blomberg pledged that “he would make every effort to continue shipments to China unless prohibited by the Führer (Hitler)<sup>51</sup>.” On August 16, Hitler himself ordered that arms exports to China be continued in a concealed manner<sup>52</sup>.

“We will maintain the alliance with Japan. However, in the present Sino-Japanese conflict, Germany must remain neutral. With regard to exports of materials under the treaty with China, they are to be continued, while concealing them externally as far as possible, provided that China makes payment in foreign exchange or through the supply of raw materials.”

Japan, naturally, expressed strong displeasure at Germany’s arms exports to China.

By 1938, as Nazi Germany’s expansionist policy in Europe deepened its confrontation with Britain and France, there arose a pressing need to strengthen military cooperation among Japan, Germany, and Italy. When Joachim von Ribbentrop assumed the post of German Foreign Minister on February 4 of the same year, Japanese Foreign Minister Hirota Koki met with Herbert von Dirksen, the German Ambassador to Tokyo, to explore the orientation of German East Asian policy under the new foreign minister and to convey Japan’s requests to Germany. Foremost among these requests was the issue of German arms exports to China. Hirota urged that Germany take “realistic measures” to “effectively halt” these exports<sup>53</sup>.

Between May and June 1938, the Hitler regime made a series of unilateral concessions to Japan: recognition of “Manchukuo,” the withdrawal of the German Military Advisory Group in China, and the recall of the German envoy in China, Trautmann, to Germany. As part of this, Hermann Göring, who held overall responsibility for arms exports to China, issued a directive on April 5, 1938, formally prohibiting such exports to China under political pressure from the pro-Japanese faction, including Hitler and Ribbentrop<sup>54</sup>. Göring later wrote a letter on May 7 to Oshima Hiroshi, the Japanese Military Attaché in Germany, lamenting that the ban on arms exports to China had cost “approximately one billion Reichsmarks in cash that year,” thereby depriving Germany of “the opportunity to import raw materials of vital importance for military expansion.” Göring appealed to Oshima, saying, “You will understand how difficult this situation is<sup>55</sup>.”

---

<sup>51</sup> Aktennotiz Thomas über die Besprechung mit Dr. Kung am 12. August 1937, in: Bundesarchiv-Militärarchiv, Freiburg i. Br., RW5/v. 315, „Akte Stein. Geheime Kommandosachen Japan“.

<sup>52</sup> Aufzeichnung Neurath, 17. August 1937, in: *Akten zur Deutschen Auswärtigen Politik*, Serie D, Bd. I, Dok. Nr. 478, S. 612.

<sup>53</sup> Dirksen an das AA, 5. Februar 1938, in: *Akten zur Deutschen Auswärtigen Politik*, Serie D, Bd. I, Dok. Nr. 565, S. 676-677.

<sup>54</sup> Schnellbrief Göring, 5. April 1938, in: Politisches Archiv des Auswärtigen Amtes, R901/106419.

<sup>55</sup> Göring an Oshima, 7. Mai 1938, in: Theodor Richard Emessen (1990), *Aus Görings Schreibtisch. Ein Dokumentenfund*, Berlin: Dietz, Dok. Nr. 35, S. 86-88.

**German Arms Exports to Major Countries (Unit: 1,000 RM)**

Country	1936	1937	1938
China	23748	82788	0
Soviet Union	3452	0	9570
Yugoslavia	1953	6141	11579
Bulgaria	4962	15785	23655
Romania	3	10986	9633
Hungary	5250	33780	31483
Portugal	2656	17233	5430
Greece	512	17195	9755
Turkey	2293	18690	11704
Japan	111	10865	5383
Brazil	574	793	101514
Others	5077	10643	25139
Total	50591	224899	244845

(Sources) Compiled from:

Jahresbericht der A.G.K 1937, Bundesarchiv (Lichterfelde) R901/106407

Jahresbericht der A.G.K 1939/1940, Bundesarchiv (Lichterfelde)/R901/106419

Thus, with both Japan and Germany withdrawing, their confrontation over the Chinese arms market was temporarily resolved.

## Conclusion

This report has clarified the realities of Japanese–German and Sino–German military cooperation in the 1930s on the basis of concrete historical evidence.

As early as 1936, the German Ministry of War had anticipated that if a future German-Soviet or Japanese-Soviet war were to occur, Germany, allied with Japan, would be drawn into war with the United States and Britain, and that if a war between Japan, the United States, and Britain broke out, Japan would be driven to defeat through the complete blockade of its sea lanes. In other words, from the perspective of the German Ministry of War, entering into an alliance with Japan was an extremely dangerous course for Germany. Even when engaging in military cooperation with Japan, Germany could not afford to enter into a strategic alliance.

However, this did not prevent the German Ministry of War from establishing military cooperation with the Japanese Army or Navy. In fact, during the 1920s, the German Navy provided the Imperial Japanese Navy with military technical cooperation in the field of submarines. In the 1930s, the Imperial Japanese Navy, in turn, provided the German Navy with military technical cooperation in the field of aircraft carriers. Following the conclusion of the Anti–Comintern Pact between Japan and Germany, the Japanese General Staff and the Abwehr of the German Ministry of War promoted military cooperation in the fields of intelligence and covert operations.

Meanwhile, Nazi Germany also pursued extensive military cooperation with the Republic of China, which was in sharp conflict with Japan in East Asian international relations during the 1930s. This cooperation included the activities of the German Military Advisory Group in China, collaboration in defense economics, and the export of weapons and armaments plants.

However, this multifaceted military cooperation between Nazi Germany and both Japan and China was not grounded in a unified national will. Even Hitler himself appeared to lack the will or inclination to direct and control the totality of Nazi Germany’s military cooperation with East Asia. Ultimately, such multifaceted military cooperation was decided in an ad hoc manner, reflecting the particular organizational (ministerial) interests at play at the time.