

23 The United States, Japan and the Pacific Ocean

On 29 July 1905, just before the start of the Russo-Japanese peace negotiations, American Secretary of War William H. Taft and Japanese Prime Minister Katsura Taro signed a secret memorandum in Japan in which Washington recognised Japanese control over Korea and Tokyo that of the United States over the Philippines (an easier target of a Japanese attack than Hawaii). In doing so, Washington conveniently forgot that the Treaty of Peace, Amity, Commerce, and Navigation that it had concluded with Korea in 1882 held the mutual obligation to mediate and 'bring about an amicable arrangement' should 'other Powers deal unjustly or oppressively' with the other treaty partner.¹ London also gave Tokyo a free hand. Sacrificing Korea had been on the mind of British politicians at least since 1901, when Ashmead-Bartlett had suggested in the House of Commons that to prevent an alliance between Russia and Japan, Great Britain could 'offer Japan a protectorate over Korea'.² In the adjusted Anglo-Japanese Alliance, concluded in August 1905, this became a reality. There was no longer any mention, as there had been in 1902, of respecting Korea's independence. Article III spoke of Japan 'possessing paramount political, military and economic interests in Corea' and of Great Britain recognising the right of Japan 'to take such measures of guidance, control and protection of Corea as she may deem proper and necessary to safeguard and advance those interests'. Tokyo did not wait long to act. On 17 November 1905, in yet another Japanese-Korean Agreement, also known as the Eulsa Treaty or Japanese-Korean Protectorate Treaty, the Korean government had to confirm Japanese indirect rule. The following month Japan instituted the position of a Resident-General in Korea and appointed Ito Hirobumi. In retrospect, the Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs would argue that Japan's decision to establish a protectorate over Korea had been inspired by 'grave concern' over the situation in Korea, 'which proved to be fruitful sources of difficulty in the Extreme East, involving Japan in serious complications' (Lawton 1912: 1093). The protectorate only added to the anti-Japanese feelings. Resistance was brutally suppressed (McKenzie n.d.: 185-90). In London

1 United States-Korea Treaty of Peace, Amity, Commerce, and Navigation of 1882, Art. I.

2 Ashmead-Bartlett in House of Commons 2-4-1901 (hansard.millbanksystems.com/commons/1901/apr/02/china-crisis-russia-and-manchuria).

Figure 35 Garden party at the Japanese Residency-General (picture taken between 1906 and 1909; the third person from the left is Ito Hirobumi)



Source: Putnam Weale 1908

Grey, anxious not to jeopardise Great Britain's special relationship with Japan, turned a blind eye to what was happening in Korea (Cockburn 2012). The Houses of Parliament also remained silent.

In August 1905 McLeavy Brown left Korea. Ambassador Allen soon followed. He was recalled at the request of Japan. Shortly after their departure, Japan dismantled Korea's foreign relations. Five days after the signing of the Eulsa Treaty, Tokyo announced that Japan had taken charge of Korea's foreign policy and that it would see to it that the treaties with and the 'legitimate commercial and industrial interests' of other countries in Korea would be respected.³ The foreign legations in Seoul were closed or downgraded to Consulates General. All matters regarding Korea had to be taken up with the Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

In 1907 Japan would tighten its hold over Korea still further. In July Emperor Kojong was forced to abdicate. His fault had been that he had sent a delegation to the Second Hague Peace Conference to call the attention of

3 Circular note Japanese Government 22-11-1905, quoted by Earl Stanhope in House of Lords 27-3-1911 (hansard.millbanksystems.com/lords/1911/mar/27/british-interests-in-japan-and-korea).

the world to Japan's aggression in Korea. Japan reacted with a vengeance. Tokyo demanded that the Emperor personally sign the Protectorate Treaty of November 1905, that he should appoint a regent, and that he should travel to Tokyo to apologise in person to the Japanese Emperor. On 19 July 1907 Kojong abdicated in favour of the Crown Prince. Five days later, in a yet another treaty and ostensibly to promote 'a speedy development' of the country and the welfare of its people, Korea had to promise not to take any domestic measure without Japanese approval.⁴

Japan's role in the Pacific

Japan's performance in the war with Russia had made a deep impression in the Asian colonies and foreign settlements, where the foreign community had to come to terms with the fact that Japan, already hailed as a nation which had closed the gap with the West, became a source of inspiration for nationalist movements. In China, where pictures of the war decorated the walls of houses, contemporaries noted a sudden upsurge of patriotism, which earlier had been absent. A 'new nationalism', as Putnam Weale (1908: 579) put it, had made its appearance, with 'cries of "China for the Chinese" resounding all over the Empire'. It 'spread like a wildfire through the length and breadth of the land' (Lawton 1912: 570, 1368). Elsewhere, an 'awakening of the East', as it was generally called, could be observed. In the Netherlands Indies colour pictures depicting the Japanese victory could be seen in houses, even in remote villages in Java, while within a few years Indonesian nationalist leaders came to tease the Dutch with their Japanophobia, or 'Japanitis' as the press chose to dub this (Thijs 1965: 17-8; Van Dijk 2007: 84). In Indochina pictures were seized hailing the Japanese victory as the beginning of Asia's revenge on Europe (Lorin 1906: 370). From India a Japanese journal was informed that after the fall of Port Arthur Indians had shared the Japanese 'joy and pride to not a small degree, and the city of Calcutta and many other towns and villages were gay with illumination' (Lawton 1912: 806). In Singapore Japan was praised as 'the first successful champion of the Asiatic race to have arisen since the Tartar invasion of Russia, at any rate since, in the eighteenth and nineteenth century, Holland, Russia, France and Great Britain had conquered and controlled all that in

4 Preamble Japan-Korea Treaty of 24-7-1907 (Lawton 1912: 1062).

Asia was worth having, except Japan'.⁵ The United States was also a target. In 1905 and 1906 Chinese anger over the American Chinese Exclusion Act found its expression in a boycott of American products.

Disquieted by the enthusiasm with which the Japanese victory was received, Europeans in Europe and its colonies, alarmed as the latter in particular tended to be by any sign of unrest among the population, began to speculate about Japan's active role in stirring up anti-colonial sentiments. In Paris rumours circulated about plans for an invasion of Indochina drafted by the Japanese general Kodama Gentaro, Chief of Staff of the Japanese army (Lorin 1906: 370). The British journalist Lawton (1912: 808) was sure that Japan had become 'one of the principal centres from which anarchy in India' was directed. He also noted that the Japanese victory had 'exercised a widespread influence for evil throughout the country'. Also in the United States 'many', a Japanese scholar living there noted, believed that Japan lusted after India (Goto 2002: 12).

In New Zealand, Australia and the United States Japan came to figure even more prominently as the potential enemy. An unnerving thought was that Japan had destroyed the Russian fleet, but that this had not stopped the country from aiming to build one of the strongest navies in the world. This, Putnam Weale (1908: 487, 490) wrote, caused 'acute uneasiness to the serious student of Far Eastern politics'. Either Japan aimed, after the Anglo-Japanese Alliance had expired, to prevent a repeat of 1895 when it had been forced out of Manchuria, or was it arming itself in preparation of a confrontation over supremacy in the Pacific. Among those who joined in was no less a person than Rear Admiral A.D. Fanshawe, Commander of the Australian naval station, who shortly after the defeat of the Baltic fleet warned of war with Japan (Hiery 1995: 15).

In Australia and New Zealand the news of the adjustment of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance, and the decision of London to withdraw its battleships to Europe, was greeted with 'a sentiment almost akin to alarm' (Lawton 1912: 422). It was not understood why Great Britain would abandon the Pacific Ocean to the Japanese. This step was not only presented as a threat to the existence of Australia and New Zealand, but also as disastrous for the British prestige in Asia. In New Zealand Prime Minister Joseph Ward in 1909 went as far as to hint that New Zealand might leave the British Empire if London asked it to join in a war Great Britain would have to fight together with Japan (Hiery 1995: 14).

5 Dutch Consul General in Calcutta to Van Tets van Goudriaan 21-1-1907 (ARA FO A-dos. Box 450).

Strengthening the home defences became imperative, all the more so because soon it was deemed unlikely that the Anglo-Japanese Alliance would be renewed in 1915. In Australia plans were developed to expand the fleet and by early 1910, at the request of Australia and New Zealand at the end of 1909, the famous Field Marshal Horatio Herbert Kitchener, 'Hero of Khartoum', visited the dominions to advise on their defences; that is how to repulse a Japanese attack. Compulsory military training was introduced in New Zealand in 1909. In the same year a conscription bill was introduced in Australia, which was passed into law two years later.

The matter gained additional urgency during the British Naval Scare of March 1909 when, in and outside the British Parliament, a heated debate took place about how many battleships Great Britain needed to maintain superiority over the German navy and what the financial implications were. The opposition even submitted a motion (which was defeated) in the House of Commons that the number of warships the government intended to build would not 'sufficiently secure the safety of the Empire' in the near future.⁶ The reaction in the Dominions was quick. New Zealand and Australia each promised to finance the building of a dreadnought, aptly named the *New Zealand* and the *Australia*, both laid down in June 1910. A year later the launching of the *New Zealand* presented Ward with another opportunity to deplore the loss of British command of the Pacific, which, he said, was 'so vital' to New Zealand (Lawton 1912: 421). Australia, which had its own navy, kept the battle cruiser under its own administration. The British First Sea Lord, John Fisher, had decided that the HMAS *Australia* should become the nucleus of an Australian fleet capable of taking on 'the Yankees, Japs, and Chinese, as occasion required out there'.⁷ The *Australia* would join in the operation against German colonies and German raiders in the Pacific in the first months of World War One. New Zealand, which had no navy, presented the *New Zealand* to the British navy. HMS *New Zealand* would visit New Zealand, where its arrival caused a patriotic outburst, but was ultimately deployed for British defence interests and would see battle in the North Sea.

In Germany reactions to the new Anglo-Japanese Treaty were different from those in 1902. In 1906 Satow in Beijing would venture that the new German ambassador in Tokyo had as his 'chief duty ... to weaken the

6 Lee in House of Commons 29-3-1909 (hansard.millbanksystems.com/commons/1909/mar/29/vote-of-censure).

7 Fisher to Esher 13-9-1909 (Navy 2009: 1).

Anglo-Japanese Alliance'.⁸ Strengthening the British fleet in European waters challenged Tirpitz' premise that sometime in the future Great Britain could be defeated, or at least seriously weakened, in an all-out sea battle in Europe because the British navy could not bring into action its complete fleet in European waters, as some warships were needed elsewhere in the world (Nuhn 2002: 232). Newspapers rekindled the fear of the yellow peril and accused Great Britain of taking a stand hostile to Europe; an opinion also voiced outside Germany. Reflecting this mood, Wilhelm II hinted at a confrontation of the West with Japan in the Pacific. In his infamous interview published in the *Daily Telegraph* of 28 October 1908, almost universally seen as a political blunder, he asserted that the German navy plans were not directed against Great Britain. Germany needed its warships to protect its commerce and its 'manifold interests in even the most distant seas'. Pointing at 'the accomplished rise of Japan' and the 'possible national awakening of China', Wilhelm II suggested that the day might well come – and perhaps was even near – that the European powers would have to defend their interests in the Pacific. When they would be 'on the same side in the great debates of the future', the British would be 'glad' that Germany had a strong fleet. On another occasion, Wilhelm II went as far as to speculate about a Japanese fleet entering European waters (Putnam Weale 1908: 498).

In the United States politicians and others had reason to worry as well. Washington might have mediated peace between Japan and Russia and have recognised Japan's position in Korea, but American-Japanese relations were soon to deteriorate, with bellicose language used on both sides. The seeds of tension were already there: the Hawaiian annexation and the persistent anti-Japanese sentiments in the United States which evoked strong patriotic reactions in Japan. The 'equal right' treaty that the United States and Japan had concluded in 1894 had allowed for unrestricted immigration of Japanese to the United States. Though their numbers remained small, the arrival of cheap Japanese labour led, in particular in California, to anti-Japanese outbursts. The proposal in early 1905 for the actual exclusion of Asian children from white primary schools in San Francisco and its implementation in December 1906, attacks on Japanese in that city in the wake of the earthquake of April 1906, and later instances of undisguised discrimination and violence against Japanese triggered anti-American demonstrations and calls for war in Japan. In February 1907 Tokyo, in return for a commitment

8 Satow to Grey 8-2-1906 (PRO FO 800 44).

by Washington to put an end to discrimination against the Japanese in California, promised to halt labour migration to the United States.⁹

A transformation of Korea and South Manchuria, exactly those regions in the Far East where American mercantile interests were greatest, into Japanese economic satellites formed a new source of tension. Taiwan had already shown what might be expected of regions that came under Japanese control. Import tariffs had been instituted and within years British companies in Taiwan had been forced to leave, unable to compete with Japanese imports (Colquhoun 1902: 355, 374). Tokyo repeated this policy in Korea and South Manchuria. It earned Japan the accusation of violating the Open Door principle, and American protest in early 1906, when Secretary of State Elihu Root expressed the fear that returning sovereignty over the Japanese part of Manchuria to China might have little real substance (Lawton 1912: 1160).

In the background loomed the fact that America was losing the Manchurian market for cotton and piece goods, which the Americans had almost monopolised before 1904, to Japan (Lawton 1912: 1180, 1184, 1261). Shrewd competition was one reason for this, but what was highlighted was that Japan delayed the normalisation of international trade and tried to promote Japanese trade via Dalian at the expense of American trade via Yingkou. Rates for goods transported by rail from Dalian into Manchuria along the main line were lower than those partly sent along the Yingkou branch line of the South Manchuria Railway. For some time after the Russo-Japanese War there was also no Chinese customs office in Dalian, while in Yingkou a customs station did levy duties on the mainly non-Japanese imports in that port. Yet another much contested reality was that, initially, non-Japanese merchants were not allowed to settle in Shenyang and other cities in Japanese-conquered Manchuria (*ibid.*: 1158-61). Another point at issue was the expropriation of land along the South Manchuria Railway line over which Japan then claimed jurisdiction, and the Fushun and Yentai coal mines, which Japan had 'inherited' from Russia and was further developing. For similar reasons, there were growing reservations among the British, at home and abroad, about the treaty with Japan, or as a British Member of Parliament observed: the Anglo-Japanese Alliance was 'not so popular among British residents in the Far East'.¹⁰

9 Labour migration to Hawaii was restricted. In March 1907 the American government banned migration of Japanese labourers from Hawaii and the Philippines to the continent.

10 Stanhope in House of Lords 8-11-1909 (hansard.millbanksystems.com/lords/1909/nov/08/railway-enterprise-in-china).

American and British indignation was the greater because initially it had been assumed that, with Japan's statements in favour of an Open Door in China, the southern portion of Manchuria would be wide open to investments and trade after the Russian retreat. As a British Member of Parliament expressed it, the Japanese victory over Russia had 'awakened fresh interest in China as a field for British capital and enterprise'.¹¹ Manchuria, moreover, had become a region of great economic expectations. A contemporary Japanese industrialist, expecting far greater opportunities for Japanese commerce in Manchuria than in Korea, spoke highly of the purchasing power of the Manchurians. It was 'almost boundless'. Lawton agreed: Manchuria was 'one of the richest of underdeveloped territories in the world' and had become 'the scene of one of the keenest commercial struggles that has been witnessed at any time in any part of the world' (Lawton 1912: 1180, 1109-11).

Illustrative of the frustration over the Japanese trade policy was the change in assessment of the way foreign investors were treated in Korea by Millard, an American. In 1906 he could still write that American economic activities profited from the Japanese occupation of Korea, and that the Japanese authorities were more lenient towards American and British interests than to those of France and Germany (Millard 1906: 95). Three years later he had come to the conclusion that Japan was turning Korea 'as she has already done with Formosa, into a Japanese commercial and industrial closed preserve' (*ibid.*: 162). A similar opinion was expressed by British the author Putnam Weale (1908: 518), who noted that Korea and Manchuria were becoming 'a closed market'. In the same vein, Lawton also concluded that in Manchuria the Japanese had 'acquired a stronger hold ... than the Russians ... prior to the war, when British traders were loud in their complaints against the discriminating policy of the Administration' (Lawton 1912: 1112).

When the deadline of March 1907 for the evacuation of foreign troops from Manchuria, which had been agreed upon in Portsmouth, approached, the Japanese army withdrew from Yingkou and other Manchurian cities (as did the Russian units in the north). A sense of formal economic normality returned. The Japanese opened Dalian again to non-Japanese foreign trade on 1 September 1906 and in June 1907 China and Japan concluded a provisional customs agreement for Guandong. This did not put an end to criticism abroad. The American State Department complained about the preferential treatment of Japanese companies by the Dalian port authorities

11 Steward in House of Commons 15-6-1910 (hansard.millbanksystems.com/commons/1910/jun/15/consolidated-fund-no-2-bill).

and the problems foreign merchants (and the American Consul General) encountered in finding accommodation and office space; with practically all houses vacated by the Russians, being claimed by the Japanese military, only a few of which, according to the Americans, were actually occupied (Lawton 1912: 1158).

American-Japanese relation

On the global level, the question of mastery in the Pacific and the possibility of an American-Japanese confrontation emerged. The United States turning to the Pacific and China was at the same time the starting point – at first in the background – of a struggle with Japan for hegemony of the Pacific. The ‘threatening question of Asiatic immigration’ and the ‘awakening of the East’, both appearing more frightful than they were in reality, made people in the United States like Mahan (1911: 20, 28) expect a confrontation in the Pacific in which the West European nations (he did not include Russia) would eventually join in with the United States to defend their colonies. In the British Pacific Dominions a similar scenario was sketched. Xenophobic Australians and New Zealanders harboured the view, as did white settlers in Hawaii and their American supporters, that an unrestricted immigration of Japanese would hand over their colony to Japan. Or, as British Foreign Secretary Grey, told Japanese ambassador Kato Takaati in 1911, their Prime Ministers feared that ‘a pacific invasion of their territory by the Japanese ... would displace their own population’ (Hotta-Lister 2002: 13).

Some twenty years earlier, fortifications had been erected in the United States to defend the east coast against a European power; now the west coast became a cause for concern. Japan had become the potential invader, the enemy who might strike there and in Hawaii and the Philippines. This prospect in 1905 made Roosevelt order an investigation into ‘the coast defences of the United States and the insular possessions’ (Dorrance 1995: 147–8). The following year the National Coast Defence Board, also known as the Taft Board (after its Chairman), presented its recommendations for the fortifications to be constructed in ports in the United States, Hawaii and the Philippines, and in the Panama Canal Zone. Consequently, the defence of the American Pacific coast was improved, while in the Philippines fortifications were built on Corregidor Island and elsewhere in Manila Bay. In Hawaii, where American military experts and others considered the presence of a large Japanese population an additional complication, special attention went to the defence of Pearl Harbor and nearby Honolulu (ibid.: 152).

Soon there would be predictions of war, the first war scare hitting the United States in 1906-07. People called for the stationing of the American fleet in the Pacific to defend the country's west coast. The adjusted Anglo-Japanese Alliance and the launching in October 1906 of HMS *Dreadnought* added to the worries. How Great Britain would react if the United States and Japan should engage in war was 'keenly discussed not only by Americans in their country but also between Americans and Englishmen in all parts of the world' (Lawton 1912: 368). The Philippines was considered especially vulnerable, being within easier reach of a Japanese than an American fleet. Roosevelt now seemed to regret its acquisition. The islands were America's 'heel of Achilles ... the only thing that made the Japanese situation dangerous'. His conclusion was that the United States had better get rid of them (Bootsma 1986: 16). The Philippines, for which the Americans had fought a costly war, was hardly an economic success story, having made for calls for an American retreat at least since 1903 (Miller 1982: 261). Hawaii was different. It became an integral part of the defence of the American west coast. When, in 1908, a decision had to be taken about the home base of the American Pacific fleet, Hawaii and not the Philippines was selected.

In a demonstration of naval strength, Roosevelt ordered sixteen American battleships to sail from the Atlantic to the Pacific Ocean in July 1907. Two other battleships would join them there. The move, presented as an exercise, only added to speculations of war. Without informing London, New Zealand and Australia invited the fleet to call at its ports (Hiery 1995: 15). In New Zealand Ward used the visit of the 'Great White Fleet' to allude to the coming struggle for supremacy between 'white men' and 'Orientals' in the Pacific and to an American fleet fighting 'shoulder to shoulder with the Old World' (Lawton 1912: 374). Local newspapers took up the visit to speculate about a union of Great Britain and the United States to prevent Japan from gaining control of the Pacific, occasioning a similar discussion in the American press (*ibid.*: 374-5). The 'Great White Fleet' also got a warm welcome when it called in at Yokohama in October 1908. School children sang the American national anthem, the Emperor received the officers in audience and a garden party and a ball were hosted by, respectively, Admiral Togo Heihachiro, responsible for the defeat of the Baltic fleet, and Prime Minister Katsura Taro.

About a month after the warships had left Japan, the United States and Japan concluded the Root-Takahira Agreement; considered by some to be a direct result of the show of force of the fleet's voyage. The new agreement, a repeat of the Taft-Katsura Taro accord, was laid down in a letter of 30 November 1908 from the Japanese ambassador in Washington, Takahira Kogoro, to

Root, accepted on the same day. Tokyo and Washington, 'uninfluenced by any aggressive tendencies', agreed to maintain the status quo in the Pacific Ocean and to 'respect the territorial possessions belonging to each other in the said region'. They also promised – as almost every agreement regarding the Far East in those years did – to respect the Open Door principle and the integrity of China.¹² The agreement did not accomplish much. It did not make a great impression in China, where the press dismissed it as 'somewhat meaningless' and lacking in sincerity (Putnam Weale 1908: 606). In the United States Japanese economic policy in Manchuria and Korea remained a source of displeasure, while the Agreement also did not abate suspicion about Japan's aggressive intentions in the Pacific. Lawton (1912: 1350-1) even wrote about 'the ever-present fear' in the United States 'that Japan is about to attack her in the Pacific'.

For Japan the Root-Takahira Agreement was one of a series in which it gained formal recognition of its position in Asia. On 10 June 1907 a Franco-Japanese Treaty had already been signed in Paris. Equally, it vowed to 'respect the independence and integrity of China' and spoke about 'the equal treatment in that country for the commerce and subjects or citizens of all nations'. Further, it was acknowledged that France and Japan had 'a specific interest to have the order and pacific state of things preserved, especially in the regions of the Chinese Empire adjacent to the territories where they have the rights of sovereignty, protection, or occupation'. To maintain the territorial rights of France and Japan on the Asian continent, Tokyo and Paris further pledged to 'support each other for assuring the peace and security in those regions' (*ibid.*: 1150). A month after the Franco-Japanese Treaty came a Russo-Japanese one. Signed on 30 (17) July 1907, it was mainly about hammering out the respective positions of Russia and Japan in Manchuria and Korea. The two promised to 'respect the actual territorial integrity' of each other and to recognise the rights Russia and Japan had obtained in their 'treaties, conventions, and contracts' with China and in the Portsmouth Treaty (*ibid.*: 1150-1). A secret convention was added in which Russia and Japan promised not to aim at railway and telegraph concessions in the portion of Manchuria that fell within the sphere of influence of the other. Russia, 'recognising the relations of political solidarity between Japan and Korea', vowed 'not to interfere with nor to place any obstacles in the way of the further development of these relations'. Japan, in return, recognised 'the special interest of Russia in Outer Mongolia', a region which after Russia had lost part of Manchuria came to feature more prominently in Russian plans in north Asia; and where

12 Root-Takahira Agreement 30-11-1908, point 2, 3.

contemporaries speculated Russia might seek compensation should Japan seek further expansion in Manchuria (Putnam Weale 1908: 274-5).¹³

Still, irritants remained. One was the Japanese demand that the Songhua River, a tributary of the Amur, flowing to Harbin, should be open to merchantmen of all nations. Russia countered that in the 1858 Treaty of Aigun Russia and China had agreed that the river would remain closed to foreign vessels, except Russian ones. Pressured by both sides, China first, in 1909, allowed merchantmen of other nations to sail the river. Subsequently, after protests by St Petersburg, on 9 August 1910 China had to conclude an agreement with Russia, reconfirming the stipulation of the Treaty of Aigun; a solution not accepted by Japan and the United States. What Russia and Japan wanted to reserve for themselves became clearer in 1912 during negotiations over an international loan to China. St Petersburg claimed 'special rights and interests' in 'northern Manchuria, Mongolia, and western China', and Tokyo in South Manchuria and 'the eastern portion of Inner Mongolia adjacent to South Manchuria' (Young 1979: 178).

The only power no treaty was concluded with was Germany. Germany had made its position clear in the Anglo-German Agreement of October 1900 in which it had pledged to maintain the territorial integrity of China and free trade (Lawton 1912: 1151).

Russia and Japan guarding their spheres of influence

Around 1910 the question of how to react to the way Russia in the north of Manchuria and Japan in the south tried to gain economic dominance had become an important international issue. Even war could not be ruled out as the impression was that Russia and Japan were arming themselves for a new confrontation to decide on the fate of Manchuria and, beyond this, on their spheres of influence in Mongolia to the west; a conflict, contemporaries speculated, that might decide the fate of China – the spectre of dismemberment of the Chinese Empire had re-emerged – and worse, could draw in other powers. In the words of American Secretary of State Philander C. Knox, a new Russo-Japanese war would be a 'great conflict of world-wide consequences, a conflict which would of a certainty secure to the victor domination over the whole of Manchuria, and in all probability, preponderating influence throughout the length and breadth of the Chinese Empire'.¹⁴

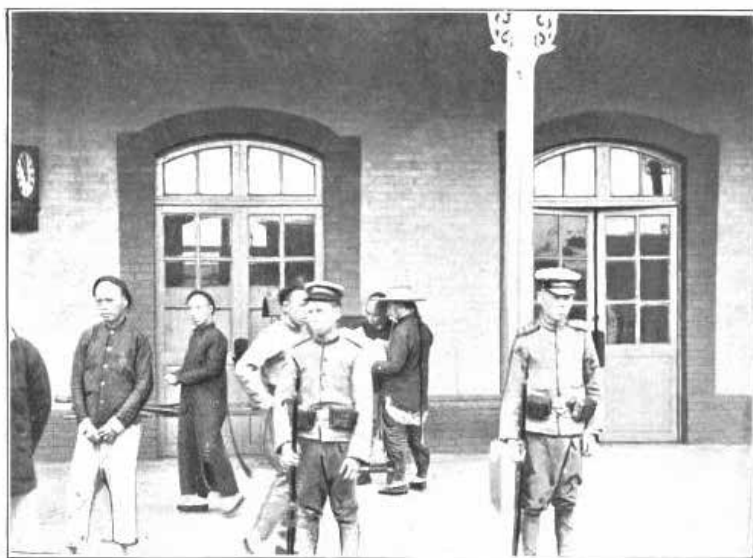
¹³ Secret Convention of 17/30 July 1907 Art. II and III (Price 1933: 107-8).

¹⁴ Knox cited in Lawton (1912: 1324).

Figure 36 Page from Gascoyne-Cecil's Changing China



TRAVELLING IN CHINA—OLD STYLE



A RAILWAY STATION—NEW STYLE

Source: Gascoyne-Cecil 1911

The protectionist policy of Russia and Japan put the British government in an awkward position, reluctant as it was to give its treaty partners offence. It made London, in the words of Lawton (1912: 1347), the object of 'much hostile criticism from Englishmen who are intimately acquainted with the existing situation'. As in the case of Persia, the government was blamed for its faint-heartedness. Lawton (1912: 1332, 1343) wrote of a 'British policy of surrender', inspired, he suggested, by the fear that an armed conflict over China would turn into 'a world conflagration' and possibly the partition of China. Others looked at the growing tension in Europe and accused London of making the British position in China subservient to Germany's threats in Europe.¹⁵ The topic had also come up during the discussion of the Anglo-Russian Convention. The point in question had been why, in contrast to the Entente Cordiale, which had been global in nature, its scope had been confined to Central Asia and had not included the Near and Far East, where British and Russian interests were also at variance. In response to such criticism, Grey had explained that the government's considerations had been strategic and not commercial. A few months later he too had to admit the Anglo-Russian Convention had been confined to Central Asia in order not to give offence to other powers.¹⁶ The British position also earned criticism from the United States, by now presenting itself as the champion of the Open Door in China.

As so often, railway concessions became the foci of conflict. Japan and Russia were set to maintain their railway monopolies in Manchuria, at times using threatening language to keep China in line. In 1907 Japan opposed an extension of the Chinese Northern Railways running parallel to the South Manchuria Railway from Hsinmin, the terminus of a rail line from Yingkou, northward to Faku (Fakumen) on the banks of the Liao River (perhaps later to be extended to the frontier with Russia). Tokyo evoked one of the secret protocols attached to the Sino-Japanese Treaty of December 1905 in which the Chinese government had promised not to build a railway line 'prejudicial' to the South Manchuria Railway (which proponents of the proposed line stressed it would not). To strengthen its hand even more, Tokyo also referred to the clause in the April 1902 Russo-Chinese Convention with regard to Manchuria, according to which Russian consent was

15 Grey in House of Commons 17-2-1908 (hansard.millbanksystems.com/commons/1908/feb/17/the-anglo-russian-convention).

16 Grey in House of Commons 17-2-1908, 27-7-1908 (hansard.millbanksystems.com/commons/1908/feb/17/the-anglo-russian-convention, hansard.millbanksystems.com/commons/1908/jul/27/class-ii).

needed for a Chinese railway in South Manchuria. In an effort to forestall a Japanese protest and gain diplomatic backing from London, Beijing had awarded the contract to construct the line to a British firm. London did not react as hoped. Referring to the secret protocol, it pointed out that it was for those who wanted to build the line to demonstrate that the interests of the South Manchuria Railway were not hurt.

Beijing demanded, as it had every right to according to the South Manchuria Railway agreement of July 1898, that the branch line between Tashihchiao and Yingkou (built with the express purpose of making the construction of the main line possible) be demolished (Asakawa 1909).¹⁷ Amidst criticism abroad about Japan's mining policy and China contesting Japan's claim to part of the Fushun concession and other mines, Japan and China, in the name of 'the desire to consolidate the relations of amity and good neighbourhood' between the two countries, concluded the Manchurian Agreement of 4 September 1909. China promised that, before proceeding with its plans for the railway line, it would 'arrange previously with the Government of Japan'.¹⁸ Mining was included in the new understanding. The Japanese government was given the right to work mines in Fushun and Yantai (the tax paid upon the coals produced would 'be arranged upon the basis of the lowest tariff for coals won in any other places of China'), while mines along the South Manchuria Railway (and the line between Antung (Andong) and Shenyang constructed by Japan during the Russo-Japanese War) would be exploited by Sino-Japanese joint ventures.¹⁹ In return, Tokyo recognised Chinese sovereignty in Jiandao (Kando, Gando, Yanbian, Chientao), a region in southeast Manchuria with a large Korean population. Earlier, its status had been disputed between China and Korea, when in 1907 Japanese troops invaded Jiandao to put down Korean resistance. Tokyo did so in a separate agreement – the Korean Boundary Agreement or the Jiandao Agreement – which was concluded on the same day 'to secure for Chinese and Korean inhabitants in the frontier regions the blessings of permanent peace and tranquility', and, of course, was an expression of 'cordial friendship and good neighbourhood'.²⁰ But

17 A counter-proposal by Japan to construct a railway connecting Fakumen with the South Manchuria Railway line, found no favour in the eyes of the foreign commercial community in Yingkou.

18 Agreement concerning mines and railways in Manchuria, Preamble, Art. I (Manchuria 1921: 129).

19 Agreement concerning mines and railways in Manchuria, Preamble, Art. III and IV (Manchuria 1921: 129).

20 Agreement relating to the Chientao region, Preamble (Manchuria 1921: 135).

there was a catch. China undertook to connect the Jilin (Kirin)-Changchun Railway with the Korean railway system.

In the United States the Manchurian Agreement created a furore about American industry being excluded from mining activities in the area controlled by the South Manchuria Railway. Washington, however, did not want to bring the matter in northeast China to a head. In October 1909 Charles Richard Crane, appointed ambassador to China only a few months earlier, was even forced by Secretary of State Knox to resign before he could take up his post. Crane had been too frank in his denunciation of the Japanese policy in Manchuria. The following month the State Department came with a statement that assurances had been received from Japan and China that they did not aim at a mining monopoly and that, consequently, the United States did not object to the Manchurian Agreement (*New York Times* 16-11-1909).

With Japan being given specific privileges in the south, Russia could not be denied the same in the north. There, the status of Harbin and the other cities along the railway that Russia wanted to administer was a source of international irritation. The matter evolved after the American consul in Harbin, Frederick D. Fisher, on his arrival in the city in January 1907 had refused to ask for Russian permission to take on his job. He was only prepared to deal with the Chinese government. Fisher also supported a protest by the head of the local Chinese administration against the Russian effort to establish independent municipalities in its railway zone; for Russia this was, in turn, a reason to protest in Washington. A pattern developed: France sided with Russia, Japan did the same, while Great Britain made some noises, but did not press on (in this case Germany also protested the Russian policy). The commotion would eventually cause Russia to sign an agreement with China, on 10 May (27 April) 1909, to clarify the status of the tracts of land the Russian railroad ran through. They did so, the preamble noted, because differences in interpretation had arisen between the two governments over the 1896 Chinese Eastern Railway Convention. In the new agreement Chinese sovereign rights were recognised as 'a matter of fundamental principle'.²¹ Regulating the establishment of municipal bodies in 'commercial centres of a certain importance' it was stipulated that the property and land directly required for the running of the railway would still be managed by the Chinese Eastern Railway Company, as would land and

21 Preliminary agreement between Russia and China in regard to municipal administration in the Chinese Eastern Railway Zone, Art. I (Manchuria 1921: 155).

buildings not handed over to the municipalities 'by mutual arrangement'.²² It was a feeble compromise. At first Washington protested, but in the end, and on the advice of Rockhill, now ambassador in St Petersburg, it consented (Lawton 1912: 1311).

In spite of such concessions, the new Taft administration, in office since March, was to follow an assertive China policy. The focus was on railways and the loans China needed to build them. In December 1909 Taft, in a message to Congress stressed the importance of American banks having a share in loans granted to China (Young 1979: 171-2). The immediate cause was provided by reports about a new Anglo-French-German consortium set up for the construction of railways in China and backed by their respective governments. Washington wanted to join. Or, as the unfortunate Crane disclosed in a speech when he was appointed ambassador to China, in 'a perfectly legitimate and friendly way', Knox had 'determined' that the United States should have its share in the development of China (Lawton 1912: 1319-20). Knox himself explained in an interview in *The New York Times* (7-1-1910) that it was 'of the greatest importance that the United States should participate' in the railway scheme. This would provide the American government with the opportunity as 'an interested party to exercise an influence equal to that of any of the other three powers'.

In the name of fair trade, Knox even suggested a 'complete commercial neutralization of Manchuria'.²³ Manchurian railways should be taken 'out of the eastern politics' and be placed 'under an economic and impartial administration by vesting in China the ownership of its railroads'.²⁴ In notes to Tokyo and St Petersburg Knox suggested that Japan and Russia should sell their shares in the railways in Manchuria to China. A loan to the Chinese government raised by an international group of financiers, citizens of 'all countries interested', should make the deal possible. Convinced that his suggestion would become reality, and Manchuria would cease to be a major source of international tension, Knox tried to sell his idea as aiming at the restoration of 'unimpaired Chinese sovereignty, the commercial and industrial development of the Manchurian provinces' and 'as a large contribution to the peace of the world by converting the provinces of Manchuria into an immense commercial neutral zone'.²⁵

22 Preliminary agreement between Russia and China in regard to municipal administration in the Chinese Eastern Railway Zone, Art. VI, XVI (Manchuria 1921: 155-6).

23 Interview with Knox in *The New York Times* 7-1-1910.

24 Ibid.

25 Ibid.

The neutralisation proposal was bound to fail. Russia and Japan were not prepared to let go what they had gained or had succeeded to cling on to after so many sacrifices, financially as well in terms of lives. Or, as the Japanese newspaper *Jiji Shinpo* wrote, the United States wanted to 'rob Japan of her single prize of war' (Lawton 1912: 1329).

The neutralisation proposal ran tandem with plans by American financiers and a British firm to build a rival railway between Aigun (Aihui) in north Manchuria, on the border with Siberia, and Jinzhou. In return for a loan to China they gained the necessary approval in January 1910. The railway would cross with the Chinese Eastern Railway in Qiqihar (Tsitsihar), but at no point would it come closer to the South Manchuria Railway than some 150 miles. Still, it was politically sensitive. Like the Yingkou-Faku line, it was a test of how far Tokyo's influence reached. Touching upon its political implications, the Chinese Viceroy of Manchuria said that the line implied a check on further expansion of Japanese influence westwards (*ibid.*: 1346). The plan had the full support of Taft and was presented as being part and parcel of the internationalisation deal suggested by Knox.

Russia and Japan, invited to participate in the building of the new line, both used strong language to dissuade China from proceeding. Japan referred to the 1905 secret protocols. It informed China that the proposed railway 'vitally' affected Japan's interests in Manchuria and that if China did not discuss the matter beforehand with Japan it would 'not be hard to estimate the seriousness of the trouble that may be caused in the relationship of the two countries'.²⁶ Russia left no doubt that it considered the matter of 'extreme importance' and it also threatened 'trouble' in Sino-Russian relations.²⁷ Besides pointing at the 1899 agreement with Great Britain, which allowed only Russia or China to build a railway north of the Chinese Wall, St Petersburg called attention to the economic and political consequences. The proposed railway would link up with the Chinese Eastern Railway and might well hurt the Russian railways in eastern Mongolia and northern Manchuria.²⁸ And, as the new line and the existing South Manchuria Railway reached up to the Russian frontier with China, it could well be used to transport enemy troops to Siberia and Vladivostok. France joined in, advising China not to undertake anything that might 'occasion

26 Japanese ambassador to Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Wai Wu Pu) 31-1-1910 (Lawton 1912: 1352).

27 Russian ambassador to Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2-2-1910 (Lawton 1912: 1352).

28 Russian ambassador to Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs 4-3-1910, Memorandum transmitted to the Chinese Government by the Russian ambassador (Lawton 1912: 1365, 1354).

complications or difficulties' and would complicate the relations between the powers in the Far East.²⁹

In presenting his idea, Knox had tried to convince the Russians that his neutralisation plan formed an international guarantee that the Manchurian railroads indeed would not be used for military purposes and that, when realised, Russia could stop worrying about a Japanese thrust into Siberia (Lawton 1912: 1316). Russia was not impressed. The Aigun-Jinzhou railway would, as was communicated to the Chinese government, 'result in serious injury both to the Russian frontier defences and to her commercial interests'.³⁰ Consequently, Washington was told that Russia had no intention at all of participating in the construction of the line. It was a clear veto.³¹ As the Russian ambassador in Beijing informed the Chinese government, Washington was 'conscious of having made a mistake' and had put an end to the negotiations about a loan to finance the railway.³²

Knox' proposal put the British government in a delicate if not embarrassing position, having to choose between Russia and Japan and the United States. London, Lawton (1912: 1567) would conclude two years later, in view of the situation that was developing in Europe, needed the friendship of Tokyo and St Petersburg too much. The British government did not support the neutralisation plan. It also refused to provide diplomatic backing to the Aigun-Jinzhou railway. To justify this position, Grey referred to the 1899 agreement with Russia about Great Britain not seeking railway concessions north of the Great Wall and to the Anglo-Russian Convention. His government could hardly be asked to promote a railway 'constructed by foreigners with money lent by foreigners, which ... is going to have a considerable influence on Russia's strategical position'.³³ China should first consult Russia and Japan.

29 French ambassador to Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs 18-2-1910 (Lawton 1912: 1354).

30 Russian ambassador to Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs 4-3-1910 (Lawton 1912: 1356).

31 Russia came with a counter-proposal: a Trans-Mongolia Line connecting the Beijing-Shenyang railway via Zhangjiakou (Kalgan) northwest of Beijing to Ulan Bator (Urga) in northwest Mongolia and from there to Kiakhta (Kyakhta, Kiakta) on the Russian border; roughly following the trading route officially recognised in the Convention of Beijing of 1860. For strategic reasons the suggestion was rejected by China. France sided with Russia and endorsed the plans for an alternative line.

32 Russian ambassador to Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs 4-2-1910 (Lawton 1912: 1353).

33 Grey in House of Commons 15-6-1910 (hansard.millbanksystems.com/commons/1910/jun/15/consolidated-fund-no-2-bill).

The British stand caused 'considerable hostile comment in America'.³⁴ In Great Britain the British position was also not well-understood by everybody. It earned the government the accusation that it was 'the cat's paw of Japan in regard to Manchuria and Mongolia'.³⁵ There was also criticism in British business circles and their supporters who saw in a new non-Japanese railway line in Manchuria not only a new opportunity for British industry, but also a means to open up 'a vast territory ... for British enterprise and British capital'.³⁶ The resentment was the greater because in the Yangtze Valley, which in British minds was 'British', commercial activities by other foreigners were on the increase, and – even more sensitive – these foreigners also aimed at the construction of railways there, all activities which were interpreted as a blow to British prestige and British might.

The neutralisation plan brought Russia and Japan closer together. On 4 July (21 June) 1910 they signed a new Russo-Japanese Convention, superseding the 1907 convention.³⁷ Vowing 'to lend each other their friendly cooperation with a view to the improvement of their respective lines of railroad in Manchuria', they agreed not to engage in competition which would be to the detriment of their railway companies.³⁸ St Petersburg and Tokyo also came out in support of the status quo in Manchuria and of the treaties concluded so far with respect to that region. Should that status quo be threatened, they would consult with each other to decide on an appropriate course of action. As the earlier convention, the new one had a secret treaty, which spoke of 'common action or mutual support' to safeguard their interests in Manchuria.³⁹ In it Russia and Japan also reconfirmed the 'boundaries of their specific spheres of influence in Manchuria', which they had agreed upon in 1907, giving the other a free hand to defend their interests there.⁴⁰ Both countries promised to 'refrain from all political activity' in the sphere

34 Arbuthnot in House of Commons 15-6-1910 (hansard.millbanksystems.com/commons/1910/jun/15/consolidated-fund-no-2-bill).

35 Stanhope in House of Lords 27-4-1910 (hansard.millbanksystems.com/lords/1910/apr/27/the-anglo-russian-convention).

36 Arbuthnot in House of Commons 15-6-1910 (hansard.millbanksystems.com/commons/1910/jun/15/consolidated-fund-no-2-bill).

37 Just prior to the new agreement press speculation had it that Great Britain would also be a partner in this new treaty (Arbuthnot in House of Commons 15-6-1910, hansard.millbanksystems.com/commons/1910/jun/15/consolidated-fund-no-2-bill).

38 Russo-Japanese convention in regard to Manchuria, Art. I (Manchuria 1921: 141).

39 Secret treaty between Russia and Japan Art. V (Manchuria 1921: 142).

40 Secret treaty between Russia and Japan Art. I (Manchuria 1921: 142).

of the other and not to seek 'privileges and concessions ... that might be injurious to the special interests' of the other there.⁴¹

Japan and Russia consolidate their position in China

On 29 August 1910 Japan finally announced that it had annexed Korea. From a joint Japanese-Korean declaration it becomes clear that one of the reasons to do so was the broadly based resistance against Japan, which had culminated in the assassination of Ito Hirobumi in the Manchurian city of Harbin in October 1909. Ito Hirobumi (who a few months earlier had resigned as Resident-General in Korea and had taken up the new position of Chairman of the Japanese Senate) had travelled to Harbin to discuss Russo-Japanese relations in northeast China. The declaration spoke of the Korean government not being able to maintain public order and of 'a spirit of suspicion and misgiving' all over Korea (Lawton 1912: 1090-1). In yet another statement the Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs, besides stressing the good intentions Japan had in developing Korea, also mentioned 'unrest and disquietude ... throughout the whole peninsula' (ibid. 1093). The annexation meant that treaties that Korea had concluded in the past ceased to be operative and would be replaced by Japanese ones. One of the implications was that an end had come to the extraterritorial status foreigners had enjoyed in Korea; and which Japan itself had successfully annulled in the 1890s. Existing tariffs would remain in force for a period of ten years. Suddenly, in British public opinion, British trade with Korea counted. Commercial circles in Great Britain feared that, ten years hence, Japan would do as it pleased, which could result in a terrible blow to British trade with Korea.⁴²

Tokyo proceeded to incorporate Chosen, as it had renamed Korea (Seoul became Keijo), but only after it had made certain that the British government would not object. In Great Britain there was some grumbling about the ease with which London had assented without gaining anything worth in return, especially not with regard to future British trade with Korea. In reply, Grey pointed at the Japanese assurance of the ten-year period and the fact that existing British land and mining rights in Korea would be

41 Secret treaty between Russia and Japan Art. IV (Manchuria 1921: 142).

42 Lord Avebury and Earl of Stanhope in House of Lords 27-3-1911 (hansard.millbanksystems.com/lords/1911/mar/27/british-interests-in-japan-and-korea).

respected.⁴³ In the Dominions, British compliance also did not go down well. In Australia the 'public's fear of an imminent Japanese invasion escalated into hysteria' (Hiery 1995: 15).

The Chinese revolution of 1911, and the subsequent Proclamation of the Republic of China on 1 January 1912, almost immediately caused a new source of conflict between St Petersburg and Tokyo, and in the wider world people once again speculated about a dismemberment of China and about Russia and Japan seizing upon the instability of China to act and gain additional influence.⁴⁴ One area of concern was Mongolia. Following the installation of a new Chinese Viceroy in March 1910, efforts were stepped up to exercise direct rule and a programme of Sinification, similar to what Beijing had done in Tibet – and for the same reasons –, was started. Colonisation by Chinese farmers was promoted. The reaction was almost instantaneous. Mongolians rose in rebellion and turned to St Petersburg for help. Russia, in turn, informed China and the new Mongolian government that, for political and commercial reasons, it could do without trouble across its Siberian border. At the end of November 1911 the Chinese Viceroy had to take refuge in the Russian consulate. On 1 December 1911 Outer Mongolia proclaimed independence. The Chinese Viceroy and the Chinese army were forced to leave; their departure being made possible by Russian military escorts. Briefly, Dorjiev made his appearance, travelling to Ulan Bator (Urga), the Mongolian capital, to broker a Tibetan-Mongolian Treaty, signed in January 1913. In it both countries recognised each other's independence.

Russia showed itself prepared to mediate; using the occasion to press for a railway from Siberia into Outer Mongolia to Kyakhta (Kiakhta) and Ulan Bator and from there to Zhangjiakou. What it wanted was a Tibet-like solution, bringing Mongolia well and truly within the Russian sphere of influence and keeping China intact, without causing too much international uproar and complications. On 3 November (21 October) 1912 a Russo-Mongolian Treaty was concluded in Ulan Bator. Under the agreement, also known as the Urga Treaty, after the old name of the Mongolian capital, Russia only acknowledged the 'autonomous régime' established, a terminology not well understood in Mongolia and China, where the conclusion was drawn that Russia had recognised Mongolia's independence (Williams 1916: 806). The

43 Grey in House of Commons (hansard.millbanksystems.com/commons/1911/may/23/corea-british-interests).

44 Great Britain also would use the occasion and dispatched the Pianma Expedition to enforce its claim along the frontier between Burma and Yunnan in December 1910 (McGrath 2003).

treaty also underscored the rights of Mongolia to have an army of its own and to refuse entrance to Chinese soldiers and settlers.⁴⁵

At the same time, there was no doubt that Mongolia should not enter into arrangements with China or other nations without consulting Russia first. As the treaty had been made 'in view of the necessity of defining exactly the system regulating trade between Russia and Mongolia', much attention went to Russian prerogatives in this field.⁴⁶ A protocol annexed to the treaty gave Russia the right to station consuls in Mongolia wherever it deemed necessary, and it also allowed for the establishment of Russian enclaves in Mongolia; 'factories' controlled by Russians and set aside for 'various branches of industry and the residence of Russian subjects'.⁴⁷ It also gave Russian citizens freedom of movement and of trade and industry in Mongolia, it exempted them from customs duties (in this respect, it was explicitly stated that the stipulation was not in force for Russo-Chinese undertakings) and gave them the right to lease vacant land. *The New York Times* (19-1-1913) concluded that Mongolia had been taken from the young Republic of China and placed under Russian 'protection', and that commercially Mongolia had become 'part of the Russian Empire'.

The Russian position was confirmed in the treaty that Russia and China concluded on 5 November (23 October) 1913. Russia recognised China's suzerainty over Outer Mongolia. China acknowledged Outer Mongolia's autonomy and promised not to interfere in 'questions of a commercial and industrial nature'.⁴⁸ Explicitly it was stated that China would not send troops into Outer Mongolia or continue with its colonisation programme. Russia promised to refrain from stationing troops in Mongolia, but made an exception for consular guards. Japan also made its overtures, afraid as Tokyo was that an independent Outer Mongolia would absorb Inner Mongolia, a region to which Japan itself looked for its trade. Events necessitated a new demarcation of spheres of influence. In the Russo-Japanese Secret Convention of 8 July (25 June) 1912, Inner Mongolia was divided in an eastern and western part, the former falling within the Japanese sphere of influence, the latter in that of Russia.⁴⁹

45 Agreements in regard to relations between Russia and autonomous Mongolia 3 November 1912, Preamble (Outer Mongolia 1921: 17).

46 Ibid.

47 Protocol annexed to the Russo-Mongolian Agreement of the 21st October (3rd November), 1912, Art. 9 (Outer Mongolia 1921: 20).

48 Declaration, and accompanying Exchange of Notes, in regard to Outer Mongolia, November 5, 1913, Art. III (Outer Mongolia 1921: 26).

49 Russo-Japanese Secret Convention of 25 June (8 July) 1912, Art. II (Price 1933: 117).

In commercial circles in the United States there seems to have been a feeling of relief that Russia took control of Mongolia and not Japan, the Americans now arguing that the Russians had put up no obstacles to their trade in Manchuria while the Japanese had (*New York Times* 19-1-1913). In Great Britain Grey, in an initial reaction to the 1912 Russo-Mongolian Treaty, only stated in the House of Commons that it was 'intended to confirm the right and privileges for Russian subjects which existed under previous treaties of many years' standing, and generally to secure the status, practically amounting to autonomy, which was the normal condition of Outer Mongolia'.⁵⁰

In wider society litanies could be heard about British impotence, now increasingly linked with the observation that fear of Germany in Europe made Great Britain dependent on its allies Russia and Japan. Accepting Russia's position in Mongolia was one of the reasons for such voices, but Great Britain's policy in Persia and with regard to Korea and Manchuria were even stronger grounds.

Japan and the Pacific

On 13 July 1911, 'in view of the important changes which have taken place', the Anglo-Japanese Alliance was adjusted for a third time; as in August 1905, years before it would transpire.⁵¹ Changing international circumstances had made the previous treaty obsolete. The Anglo-Russian Convention had removed much of the British worries about India's frontiers. Hence, an explicit mention of a special British concern regarding 'the security of the Indian frontier' was no longer needed. The preamble now simply spoke of the 'consolidation and maintenance of the general peace in the regions of Eastern Asia and India' and of the special interests Japan and Great Britain had there. In the new, revised Alliance treaty the formula about Chinese territorial integrity and the adherence to an Open Door were maintained, as was the 'one enemy' article.⁵² Dropped was any direct reference to Korea, now Japanese territory.

⁵⁰ Grey in House of Commons 21-11-1912 (hansard.millbanksystems.com/commons/1912/nov/21/rucco-mongolian-agreement).

⁵¹ Anglo-Japanese Treaty, 13-7-1911, Preamble.

⁵² In August 1914 Japan would refer to the treaty when it declared war on Germany on the 13th after Great Britain had pointed out that the operations of German warships in the East threatened its interests there.

When negotiations had been started on the initiative of Japan, a renewal in 1915 was not a foregone conclusion. Support for the Alliance was waning in Great Britain, and in 1908 the Committee of Imperial Defence (established in 1902) had begun in earnest to discuss what measures must be taken when the treaty expired (Navy 2009: 1). The prime reason advanced for not renewing the Alliance was that it might oblige Great Britain to side with Japan if, for whatever reason, it should come to war between Japan and the United States (Hotta-Lister 2002: 5-6). Such reservations appear to have been especially pungent in New Zealand and Australia. A specific hurdle in Anglo-Japanese relations had also come up. In early 1909 Tokyo had indicated that Japan wanted to do away with the last reminder of Japan's subordinate position on the world stage, which had survived the revision of the unequal treaties in the 1890s; that is the obligation to consult other nations before it could adjust its import duties. In Great Britain, the first of the countries with which negotiations were started, the prospect of higher Japanese tariffs evoked strong sentiments in business circles. The Japanese demands were said to be prohibitive and would mean the end of British export to Japan. Much misery, especially in Lancashire and Yorkshire (both producers of textiles and ever-present when Britons predicted economic disasters), was predicted to be the result (Hotta-Lister 1999: 5-6).

To soften up British public opinion, Tokyo made a number of tariff concessions in the commercial treaty concluded with Great Britain, the Anglo-Japanese Tariff Treaty of April 1911, at times referred to as the new Anglo-Japanese Commercial Treaty. One of the obstacles to extending the Anglo-Japanese Alliance had been removed. The other was tackled in the Alliance treaty itself. New was article IV in which it was stipulated that the obligation to join in a war did not apply when a treaty of general arbitration existed between Japan or Great Britain and the country the other was at war with. It was all about the United States, where, in 1910, Taft had suggested that London enter into such an arbitration treaty. London would have preferred to mention the United States by name in the Alliance treaty, but Tokyo insisted on a more indistinct text (Hotta-Lister 2002: 6). Significantly, the new clause made the press in Japan wonder what the country gained from the Anglo-Japanese Alliance (Lawton 1912: 10).

Also new was that while negotiating with Japan, London consulted its Pacific Dominions. The support they gave not only pleased the government of Great Britain but also that of Japan (Hotta-Lister 2002: 8-9). As a newspaper in New Zealand, the *Grey River Argus*, wrote, it gave the Alliance 'new authority and moral force'.⁵³ Yet, when discussing the Alliance in the House

53 *Grey River Argus* 17-7-1911 (paperspast.natlib.govt.nz/cgi-bin/paperspast?a=d&d=GRA19110717).

of Commons, Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs Thomas McKinnon Wood dodged the question about whether, during war, Japan could ask for the assistance of the Australian navy.⁵⁴ On the British side, India was no longer the main consideration. Misgivings about Japan's intentions in the Pacific had crept in not only in its Pacific colonies, but also in London. As a formal ally, Japan would refrain from acts of aggression against the British Empire, and the British navy was well aware that it would be no match for the Japanese fleet in the Pacific (Navy 2009: 2). Without Japan as a treaty partner it was less certain how Japan would act. Or, as the British Foreign Office formulated it, without the Anglo-Japanese Alliance 'Japan would be left with free hands without restraint ... and her fleet might array against us in the Pacific or allied with that of some other Power' (Hotta-Lister 2002: 9).

54 McKinnon Wood in House of Commons 27-7-1911 (hansard.millbanksystems.com/1911/jul/27/anglo-japanese-treaty).