

**The Fifth East Asian Conference on Slavic Eurasian Studies (ICCEES Asian Congress)**

**August 9, 2013**

**Osaka University of Economics and Law, Yao Campus (Oval), Osaka, Japan**

***Russian-Japanese Relations after the Russo-Japanese War in the Context of World Politics***

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### ***Russian-Japanese Relations after the Russo-Japanese War in the Context of World Politics***

The two years between the Portsmouth Treaty in 1905 and the political declaration signed by Russia and Japan in 1907 had great significance, not only to the future of bilateral relations between the two countries, but for the course of world politics. During those years, the foundation was laid for significant policy shifts among and between influential nations in East Asia. Furthermore, the post-treaty years saw major shifts in European diplomatic relations, as well as a transformation in America's relations with nations in Asian and Europe.

The Treaty of Portsmouth could not resolve all the diplomatic problems, and dissenting voices were heard in both Russia and Japan. Negotiations after Portsmouth continued, resulting in the 1907 political declaration signed by the two countries, which was aimed at solidifying the Treaty of Portsmouth's concessions and compromises, as well as silencing the critics. The final arrangements of the declaration were more comprehensive dealing with the problems of Manchuria, Mongolia, and Korea. As a consequence of this new set of negotiations post-Portsmouth, the stage was set for a new and positive direction in the relations between Russia and Japan, which can be characterized as the start of a cooperative alliance. However, much more apparent during those two years were the frictions between Russia and Japan, rather than the shoots of eventual cooperation and rapprochement.

It is argued here that the sharp transition from a relationship of military confrontation to that of cooperation was due to a set of political and economic factors which influenced the decisions of politicians and diplomats; the benefits of cooperation over hostility became clearly seen to both sides. This paper will focus specifically on the diplomatic side of the equation, and the discussion initially focuses not just on the two principal nations in the conflict, but also third party players, the most significant being America and Great Britain. Particularly important were the changes in Anglo-Japanese relations, and the rise of frictions between former allies from the Russo-Japanese War. In addition to this were the new arrangements coming out of the Anglo-Russian Convention of 1907 which settled issues of control in Persia, Afghanistan and Tibet and ended a long-standing struggle for power between Britain and Russia. The influence of these third party players was instrumental in changing the course and tone of relations between Russia and Japan. It is also remarkable that such a radical shift in world international affairs occurred within the span of only a few years. Though it is beyond the scope of a short paper to clarify in detail all the changes that

transformed the diplomatic positions of the major players on the international scene in East Asia, this paper attempts to provide an analysis of key aspects underlying these important changes, mainly in Anglo-Russo-Japanese relations.

To understand reasons for Russo-Japanese rapprochement we need to analyze the policies not only of Russia and Japan, but Britain, Germany, France, America, China, Korea and even the Ottoman Empire.

On March 31, 1905, Kaiser Wilhelm II of Germany visited Tangier, Morocco and conferred with representatives of the Sultan. The Kaiser declared he had come to support the sovereignty of the Sultan. The Sultan subsequently rejected a set of French-proposed governmental reforms and issued invitations to major world powers to a conference which would advise him on necessary reforms.

The **Algeciras Conference** of 1906 took place in Algeciras, Spain and lasted from January 16 to April 7. Germany had originally hoped that the Conference would isolate Great Britain however the first Moroccan Crisis worsened German relations with both France and the United Kingdom, and helped ensure the success of the new Anglo-French Entente Cordiale.

This Entente Cordiale was a series of agreements signed on 8 April 1904 between the Britain and France and it settled many long-standing issues. France recognized British control over Egypt, while Britain reciprocated regarding France in Morocco. The agreement put an end to the long rivalry between Britain and France, and as a consequence, France remained neutral during the Russo-Japanese War.

Attempt at a coalition without Russia. Britain considered a coalition with France, Italy and Spain to resist Germany but this coalition was weak and could not match German pressure. On 6 June 1905, Delcasse resigned and France agreed to attend the Algeciras Conference in Spain.

The Second Anglo-Japanese Alliance of August 1905 led to new diplomatic realignments. The July 1905, renegotiations allowed for Japanese support of British interests in India and British support for Japanese progress with the Korean protectorate. By November of that year, Korea was formally declared a Japanese protectorate, and in February 1906, genro ItMHiobumi was posted as the Resident General to Seoul.

Being an ally of Japan, Britain expected a Russian attack on India as revenge for the support of Japan. Japan promised to send her troops to India in case of a Russian attack. The second Anglo-Japanese Agreement had a strong anti-Russian undertone and, furthermore, changed the nature of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance from a defensive position to a more assertive stance.

The peace conference in Portsmouth lasted from 10 August to 5 September, and led to the signing of the Treaty of Portsmouth, ending the war. Japan did make some significant gains at Portsmouth:

- (1) Russia recognized her paramount interests in Korea.
- (2) Japan acquired territories and interests in southern Manchuria with the transfer of the lease of the Liaotung Peninsula together with the southern section of the Chinese Eastern Railway
- (3) Japan acquired the southern part of the island of Sakhalin.

#### The Question of Korean Sovereignty

The status of Korea was actually defined in London, not in Portsmouth, by the second Anglo-Japanese Agreement.

- **Japan possessing paramount political, military and economic interest in Korea, Great Britain recognizes the right of Japan to take such measures of guidance, control, and protection in Korea as she may deem proper and necessary to safeguard and advance those interest provided always that such measures are not contrary to the principle of equal opportunities for the commerce and industry of all nations.**

Russia did not have deep economic interests in Korea and it used the problem of the sovereignty of the Emperor of Korea as the pretext for a confrontation with Japan. In Portsmouth, Witte proposed an amendment regarding the respect for the sovereignty of the Emperor of Korea. Nevertheless, the Japanese side was able to prevent adoption in the text of the Treaty of wording which would require respect for the sovereignty of the Emperor of Korea; thus there was a failure to obtain a clear and unequivocal recognition of their protectorate status over Korea, because certain lines established by the allies could not be crossed. Japanese sovereignty of Korea was not rejected outright, but emerged as a kind of implied condition. Nevertheless, the door was slightly open for the possibility of renegotiation, not only for Russia, but other relevant parties.

A possible option for Russia after Portsmouth was to join an Anglo-French Alliance or form a coalition with Germany; thus the only possible combination was a Russian-French-German-American coalition. On July 24, 1905 the **Treaty of Björkö**, a secret mutual defense accord, was signed between Wilhelm II of the German Empire and Tsar Nicholas II of Russia.

**Art. I. If any European state attacks one of the two empires, the allied party engages to aid the other contracting party with all his military and naval forces.**

**Art. IV. When this treaty has become effective, Russia will undertake the necessary steps to inform France of it and to propose to the latter to adhere to it as an ally.**

The **Franco-Russian Alliance** was a military alliance between the French Third Republic and the Russian Empire and a cornerstone of Russian Policy. Despite the frustration of French policy (neutrality) in the Russo-Japanese War, the **Franco-Russian Alliance** remained as a basic element of Russian-European policy.

Furthermore, Britain proposed Russia to divide spheres of interest in Central Asia (Afghanistan, Persia and Tibet)

Ultimately Russia took the side of France in Morocco issue and stopped negotiations to realize the Treaty of Björkö. This, however, opened the way for detailed negotiations with Britain on Central Asia.

The Manchurian question

An important feature of the Treaty of Portsmouth was Japan's consent to the commercial activity in China, in particular Article IV wherein Japan promises not to impede the commercial activities of third parties in Manchuria or general measures common to all countries. In connection of Article IV it is important to point out that Japan didn't promise an "open door" or "equal opportunity" regime in Manchuria but only not to obstruct general measures. During negotiations in Portsmouth, Baron Komura expected difficulties in the implementation of an "open door" policy. The wording in the Portsmouth Treaty was significantly different from the second Anglo-Japanese Agreement that insured the principle of equal opportunity for the commerce of all nations in China. Thus in connection of Article IV it is important to point out that Japan didn't promise an "open door" policy or an "equal opportunity" regime in Manchuria, but only promised not to obstruct such general measures.

In the spring of 1906, Britain officially raised the issue of equal (economic/commercial) opportunity in China. The Manchurian territory was not open to British and American economic interests as quickly as expected. Merchants from those two countries had found certain obstacles to their intentions and criticized Japan for this.

In the summer of 1906 a cooling in the relationship between Britain and Japan was easily visible, but in Japan, the Anglo-Japanese Alliance was considered as the cornerstone of Japanese foreign policy, just as Russian diplomats considered the Russian-French Alliance.

The Japanese had the following options:

- 1) a Japanese Treaty with Ottoman Empire (and an Alliance with Britain)

2) a Treaty with Russia (and an Alliance with Britain)

3) to continue negotiations with Britain about an Anglo-Japanese Alliance (for example, mutual military assistance)

Immediately after the Russo-Japanese War, the Foreign Ministry took into consideration a Treaty with Ottoman Empire (and Alliance with Britain). Furthermore, they tried to solve some problems in Manchuria (such as tariffs); Japan proposed to start negotiations on the military aspects of the Second Anglo-Japanese Treaty and proposed to send 180,000 troops to India in case of a Russian invasion.

There was then a change of Russian policy towards Korea and a cessation of confrontation. The appointment of Isvolsky as the new Russian Minister for Foreign Affairs actually paved the way for concessions to Japan with regard to the appointment of the Consul-General.

In addition to this rising of level of frustration within the Anglo-Japanese alliance, there was a corresponding deterioration in Japanese-American relations, as well. America began an open quarrel on the question of the Japanese. In a report dated October 30, Bakhmetev wrote: "In the past report, I had the honor to draw your Excellency's considerable attention to the relations of Japan to the United States, and for these two weeks anti-American sentiment here has increased so much that in the newspapers there is almost no space for other issues ...and there are already cries for a 'boycott' of the Americans and even for war."

The summer 1906 was marked with the start of negotiations between Russia and Japan concerning Trade and Fishery agreements. Negotiations on fishery matters resulted in a lot of minor friction. However, The Japanese envoy Motono reminded Isvolsky that Count Witte in Portsmouth proposed to divide spheres of interest in Manchuria

Isvolsky took the initiative and persuaded the British correspondent Dillon from *The Daily Telegraph* to publish two articles. The first was about fishery problems. The second referred to the desirability of a Russo-Japanese rapprochement. Also in January 1907 the Russian government made a decision to withdraw troops from Manchuria ahead of the schedule which had been agreed upon in Portsmouth (in order to speed up negotiations with China).

In January 1907, Prime Minister Saionji in his speech to the Japanese parliament expressed satisfaction with the growth in strength and the solidity of their alliance with England. He also expressed satisfaction with the negotiations with Russia on various questions consequent to the Treaty of Portsmouth which were progressing between the two governments in a spirit of conciliation.

The reaction of the British press reaffirmed the fact that Britain gave support to the changes in relations to the two nations. ....An editorial in *The Times* said: “The chief object of the alliance (Anglo-Japanese Alliance – S.T.) is the maintenance of the peace of Asia and of the world, and that object may be most easily and most satisfactorily attained by the establishment of cordial understanding between each of allies and their Russian neighbour”.

In the beginning of February Isvolsky proposed to sign the convention:

- ▶ **Article 2. The two High Contracting Parties mutually engage, not only to respect their reciprocal situation such as is defined in the preceding article, but also to render mutually by all pacific means in their reach aid and assistance each to the other with view of the maintenance and legitimate exercise of the rights above cited.**

As a counter-proposal, the Japanese government proposed to limit the agreement to only Manchuria and divide spheres of interest in that region. Both Russian and Japanese proposals became the base for the Political Convention of 1907.

#### Conclusion

Resolution of problems between Britain and Russia left the Anglo-Japanese Alliance without a main target. At the same time, a shift in Russian policy to focus on European issues and changes in Russian policy with regard to the Korean issue made unclear common interests of allies. Hayashi Tadasu tried to reaffirm the weakening Anglo-Japanese alliance through Treaties with Russia.