

Japanese imperialism

During the Meiji period, the new Japanese government also modernized foreign policy, an important step in making Japan a full member of the international community. The traditional East Asia worldview was based not on an international society of national units but on cultural distinctions and tributary relationships. Monks, scholars, and artists, rather than professional diplomatic envoys, had generally served as the conveyors of foreign policy. Foreign relations were related more to the sovereign's desires than to the public interest.

When the Tokugawa seclusion (the *sakoku* policy) was forcibly breached in 1853–54 by Commodore Matthew C. Perry of the United States Navy, Japan found that geography no longer ensured security—the country was defenseless against military pressures and economic exploitation by the Western powers. For Japan to emerge from the feudal period, it had to avoid the colonial fate of other Asian countries by establishing genuine national independence and equality.

After the Black Ships, Perry's naval squadron, had compelled Japan to enter into relations with the Western world, the first foreign policy debate was over whether Japan should embark on an extensive modernization to cope with the threat of the "eastward advance of Western power," which had already violated the independence of China, or expel the "barbarians" under the parole *sonno joi* and return to seclusion. Opening the country caused an upheaval that in the end caused the demise of the Tokugawa bakufu, but the Shoguns of the period were too weak to pose a serious opposition. The opening of Japan accelerated a revolution that was just waiting to happen.

Beginning with the Meiji Restoration of 1868, which established a new, centralized regime, Japan set out to "gather wisdom from all over the world" and embarked on an ambitious program of military, social, political, and economic reforms that transformed it within a generation into a modern nation-state and major world power. The Meiji oligarchy was aware of Western progress, and "learning missions" were sent abroad to absorb as much of it as possible. The Iwakura mission, the most important one, was led by Iwakura Tomomi, Kido Takayoshi and Okubo Toshimichi, contained forty-eight members in total and spent two years (1871–73) touring the United States and Europe, studying every aspect of modern nations, such as government institutions, courts, prison systems, schools, the import-export business, factories, shipyards, glass plants, mines, and other enterprises. Upon returning, mission members called for domestic reforms that would help Japan catch up with the West.

The revision of unequal treaties, forced on Japan in the 1850s and 60s, became a top priority. The Meiji leaders also sketched a new vision for a modernized Japan's leadership role in Asia, but they realized that this role required that Japan develop its national strength, cultivate nationalism among the population, and carefully craft policies toward potential enemies. No longer could Westerners be seen as "barbarians," for example. In time, Japan formed a corps of professional diplomats.

Military buildup

Modern Japan's foreign policy was shaped at the outset by its need to reconcile its Asian identity with its desire for status and security in an international order dominated by the West. The principal foreign policy goals of the Meiji period (1868–1912) were to protect the integrity and independence of the nation against Western domination and to win equality of status with the leading nations of the West by reversing the unequal treaties. Because fear of Western military power was the chief concern of the Meiji leaders, their highest priority was building up the basic requirements for national defense, under the slogan "wealth and arms" (*fukoku kyohei*). They saw that a modern military establishment required national conscription drawing manpower from an adequately educated population, a trained officer corps, a sophisticated chain of command, and strategy and tactics adapted to contemporary conditions. Finally, it required modern arms together with the factories to make them, sufficient wealth to purchase them, and a transportation system to deliver them. An important objective of the military buildup was to gain the respect of the Western powers and achieve equal status for Japan in the international community. Inequality of status was symbolized by the treaties imposed on Japan when the country was first opened to foreign intercourse. The treaties were objectionable to

the Japanese not only because they imposed low fixed tariffs on foreign imports and thus handicapped domestic industries, but also because their provisions gave a virtual monopoly of external trade to foreigners and granted extraterritorial status to foreign nationals in Japan, exempting them from Japanese jurisdiction and placing Japan in the inferior category of uncivilized nations. Many of the social and institutional reforms of the Meiji period were designed to remove the stigma of backwardness and inferiority represented by the "unequal treaties," and a major task of Meiji diplomacy was to press for early treaty revision.

Overseas expansion

Once created, the Meiji military machine was used to extend Japanese power overseas, for many leaders believed that national security depended on expansion and not merely a strong defense. Within thirty years, the country's military forces had fought and defeated imperial China in the First Sino-Japanese War (1894–95), winning possession of Taiwan and China's recognition of Korea's independence. Ten years later, in the Russo-Japanese War (1904–5), Japan defeated tsarist Russia and won possession of southern Sakhalin as well as a position of paramount influence in Korea and southern Manchuria. By this time, Japan had been able to negotiate revisions of the unequal treaties with the Western powers and had in 1902 formed an alliance with the world's leading power, Britain.

In 1879, Japan formally annexed the Ryukyuan kingdom, which had been under the influence of the Shimazu clan of Satsuma since 1609. The Korean Peninsula, a strategically located feature critical to the defense of the Japanese archipelago, greatly occupied Japan's attention in the nineteenth century. Earlier tension over Korea had been settled temporarily through the Treaty of Kanghwa in 1876, which opened Korean ports to Japan, and through the Tianjin Convention in 1885, which provided for the removal from Korea of both Chinese and Japanese troops sent to support contending factions in the Korean court. In effect, the convention had made Korea a co-protectorate of Beijing and Tokyo at a time when Russian, British, and United States interests in the peninsula also were on the increase. A crisis was precipitated in 1894 when a leading pro-Japanese Korean political figure was assassinated in Shanghai with Chinese complicity. Prowar elements in Japan called for a punitive expedition, which the cabinet resisted. With assistance from several Japanese nationalistic societies, the illegal Tonghak (Eastern Learning) nationalistic religious movement in Korea staged a peasant rebellion that was crushed by Chinese troops. Japan responded with force and quickly defeated China in the First Sino-Japanese War (1894–95). After nine months of fighting, a cease-fire was called and peace talks were held.

The victor's demands were such that a Japanese protectorate over China seemed in the offing, but an assassination attempt on Li Hongzhang, China's envoy to the peace talks, embarrassed Japan, which then quickly agreed to an armistice. The Treaty of Shimonoseki accomplished several things: recognition of Korean independence; cessation of Korean tribute to China; a 200 million tael (Chinese ounces of silver, the equivalent in 1895 of US\$150 million) indemnity to Korea from China; cession of Taiwan, the Penghu Islands, and the Liaodong Peninsula to Japan; and opening of Chang Jiang (Yangtze River) ports to Japanese trade. It also assured Japanese rights to engage in industrial enterprises in China.

Having their own imperialist designs on China and fearing China's impending disintegration, Russia, Germany, and France jointly objected to Japanese control of Liaodong. Threatened with a tripartite naval maneuver in Korean waters, Japan decided to give back Liaodong in return for a larger indemnity from China. Russia moved to fill the void by securing from China a twenty-five-year lease of Dalian (Dairen in Japanese, also known as Port Arthur) and rights to the South Manchurian Railway Company, a semiofficial Japanese company, to construct a railroad. Russia also wanted to lease more Manchurian territory, and, although Japan was loath to confront Russia over this issue, it did move to use Korea as a bargaining point: Japan would recognize Russian leaseholds in southern Manchuria if Russia would leave Korean affairs to Japan. The Russians only agreed not to impede the work of Japanese advisers in Korea, but Japan was able to use diplomatic initiatives to keep Russia from leasing Korean territory in 1899. At the same time, Japan was able to wrest a concession from China that the coastal areas of Fujian Province, across the strait from Taiwan, were within Japan's sphere of influence and could not be leased to other powers. In 1900, Japanese forces participated in suppressing the Boxer Rebellion, exacting still more indemnity from China.

Japan then succeeded in attracting a Western ally to its cause. Japan and Britain, both of whom wanted to keep Russia out of Manchuria, signed the Treaty of Alliance in 1902, which was in effect until in 1921

when the two signed the Four Power Treaty on Insular Possessions, which took effect in 1923. The British recognized Japanese interests in Korea and assured Japan they would remain neutral in case of a Russo-Japanese war but would become more actively involved if another power (probably an allusion to France) entered the war as a Russian ally. In the face of this joint threat, Russia became more conciliatory toward Japan and agreed to withdraw its troops from Manchuria in 1903. The new balance of power in Korea favored Japan and allowed Britain to concentrate its interests elsewhere in Asia. Hence, Tokyo moved to gain influence over Korean banks, opened its own financial institutions in Korea, and began constructing railroads and obstructing Russian and French undertakings on the peninsula.

When Russia failed to withdraw its troops from Manchuria by an appointed date, Japan issued a protest. Russia replied that it would agree to a partition of Korea at the thirty-ninth parallel, with a Japanese sphere to the south and a neutral zone to the north. But Manchuria was to be outside Japan's sphere, and Russia would not guarantee the evacuation of its troops. Despite the urging of caution by most genro, Japan's hardliners issued an ultimatum to Russia, which showed no signs of further compromise. The Russo-Japanese War broke out in February 1904 with Japanese surprise attacks on Russian warships at Dalian and Chemulpo (in Korea, now called Incheon). Despite tremendous loss of life on both sides, the Japanese won a series of land battles and then decisively defeated Russia's Baltic Sea Fleet (renamed the Second Pacific Squadron) at the Battle of Tsushima in May 1905. At an American-mediated peace conference in Portsmouth, New Hampshire.

In the Treaty of Portsmouth Russia acknowledged Japan's paramount interests in Korea and agreed to avoid "military measures" in Manchuria and Korea. Both sides agreed to evacuate Manchuria, except for the Guandong Territory (a leasehold on the Liaodong Peninsula) and restore the occupied areas to China. Russia transferred its lease on Dalian and adjacent territories and railroads to Japan, ceded the southern half of Sakhalin to Japan, and granted Japan fishing rights in the Sea of Okhotsk and the Bering Sea. Japanese nationalism intensified after the Russo-Japanese War, and a new phase of continental expansion began after 1905. Politically and economically, Korea became a protectorate of Japan and in 1910 was formally annexed as a part of the empire (cf. Korea under Japanese rule). By means of the South Manchurian Railway, Japanese entrepreneurs vigorously exploited Manchuria. By 1907 Russia had entered into a treaty arrangement with Japan whereby both sides recognized the other's sphere of influence in Manchuria.