Chapter IV

JAPAN'S ENTRY INTO THE WAR
INTERNATIONAL NEGOTIATIONS

The outbreak of war in Europe came at a time when the annexation of Korea by Japan and the revised Anglo-Japanese alliance in 1911 had greatly strengthened the position of Japan, economically and politically, in the region of Far East and internationally. The Chinese Revolution of 1911 had made the situation in the region precarious. In addition, Japan's alliances with Russia and France had created a situation in which the conflagration in Europe was bound to have its repercussions in the Far East.

Ever since the Sino-Japanese (1894-95) war, the Far East had become a political nerve centre of Asia. Anything that tipped the balance of power of Europe often reacted, directly or indirectly, upon the position of the Powers in the Far East. The Anglo-Japanese alliance (1902) and the Russo-Japanese War (1904-05) illustrate that point.

Moreover, the European Powers such as Russia, Britain, Germany, and France had in the Far East not only economic and commercial interests which counted for little or much according to their respective strength, but also territorial possessions which were inevitable pawns in international conflicts.

In addition to the above, Japan with her unceasing territorial ambitions in the region, after the Sino-Japanese war and the first Anglo-Japanese alliance, often was a force operating the balance of power in the region. Her numerous agreements with
the United States illustrate this. Thus, not only were there
intimate inter-relations between the Far East and Europe (and
America) but Japan had become the determining Power whether the
Far East should or should not be involved in European hostilities.

Japan entered the war of 1914 on 23 August. On 1 August
England had sounded Japan through her ambassador in Tokyo that she
was likely (1) to intervene in the European hostilities on the side
of France and Russia. (2) Apparently, Britain while sounding Tokyo,
had the Anglo-Japanese alliance (1911) in view. Two days later,
the British Foreign Secretary explicitly asked the ambassador at
Tokyo to warn the Japanese Government that Britain would rely on
that Government for protection of British interests in the Far
East, in case hostilities spread to the area either through an
attack on Hong Kong or Wei-hai-wei. (3)

One might be tempted to infer from the tenor of the Foreign
Office communications to the British ambassador at Tokyo that
Britain might not have been anxious to invoke the Anglo-Japanese
alliance in case Germany did not violate British interests in the
Far East. (4) But the scale of Anglo-German preparations, since
the decade before the actual war broke out in 1914, and the
intensity of hostilities between the two Powers did not warrant

1. In fact, it was more than 'likely'; rather England was
   committed. She was committed to the Triple Entente.
2. Sir Edward Grey to Sir C. Greene (Tokyo), 1 August 1914.
   British Documents on the Origins of the War, 1898-1914
   Ibid., no. 549, p. 298.
   1931), p. 175.
the expectation of a limited war, restricted to Europe.

Secondly, Britain had signed a convention with Russia in 1907, and in view of her commitments to the Triple Entente, Russia, instead of Japan, could have been warned to look after British interests in the region, in case of the extension of war to the Far East. In other words, a united action by Britain and Russia could avert any tragedy, and together they could better maintain peace in Asia.

Unless, therefore, Britain now shared Lord Curzon's indifference to the Anglo-Russian Agreement and agreed with the Curzonian prophecy that "an agreement with Russia to be an hallucination" (5) there was nothing to support Britain's preference for Tokyo as against Russia, which was equally a Far Eastern Power, to meet Britain's (or the Entente's) needs in the Far East, in case of extension of a war in Europe. Already, Japan's war on Russia (1904-05) had been regarded in Britain as an audacious act. And Japan's intentions to expand on the mainland of Asia were too well-known to be overlooked, not to mention the aversion of the dominions like Australia and New Zealand to the renewal and revision of the Anglo-Japanese alliance in 1911.

The only plausible reason for Britain's attitude seemed to be her preference for a non-European ally. But incidentally, it would also mean looking with approbation (if not conniving at) the Japanese designs in Asia and the Pacific waters. This was all the more convincing in view of the German assurance (6) to the United


States that:

1. Germany does not seek war with Japan.

2. If Japan, on account of the treaty with England, asks that Germany do nothing against English colonies, warships, or commerce in East, Germany will assent in return for a corresponding promise from England.

3. England and Germany to agree reciprocally that either all warships of both in the East leave eastern waters or remain inactive as against the other, if remaining there.

4. Japan, England and Germany to agree that none of these three shall attack warships, colonies, territory, or commerce of any of the others in the East.

This assurance was also notified to the German ambassador in Tokyo and the American ambassador at the same capital. (7) Apparently, the German mind, in so far as the Far East was concerned, was well-known in London and in Tokyo before the latter declared war against Germany on the side of her ally and London could have visualized before she sounded Tokyo about the possibility of an extension of war in the Far East.

Conversely, aware of Japan's record, Britain might have desired to sound Tokyo to know if she was thinking in terms of joining the war at any stage, without being directly involved or attacked or provoked. In any case, one thing is clear that Britain's sound of Japan was no mere feeler, nor the rejection of German proposals a very creditable act on the part of Tokyo.

Moreover, assistance to Belgium, which had drawn Britain into the war, was a European compulsion; but for sounding Tokyo, there was no such compulsion, unless an all-out war was aimed at. Besides, had Japan reacted to the German assurances otherwise than

7. Ibid.
she did, the war could have been limited to Europe (and to Africa at the furthest). (8)

Possibly, Britain might have thought that the English colonies, especially Australia and New Zealand, in the East were not as yet in a position to offer formidable assistance to the mother country's action against Germany. Or may be, due to the increasing Australian desire to have a say in matters concerning defence of its own waters, London did not wish to depend on the said (English) territories lest it was construed as yielding to the demand "to transform the (defence) of the Empire into a poly-centric structure". (9)

More than the above arguments, it seems Britain had recognized, notwithstanding the Anglo-Japanese alliance, that Japan was the only non-European Power on her side to assist her in the Far East in particular and in the general conflagration, without being a European rival. But, perhaps, Britain did not visualize that by inviting Japan, she would not only be tacitly approving Japan's actions but would also be a party to her likely future imperialistic expansion. (10)

One thing, however, needs clarification: how did Britain come to the conclusion prior to 1 August, when she approached Japan (and in view of the German assurance of 13 August), that


   Also Frank Fox, Problems of the Pacific (Boston, 1913), p. 11 passim.

10. Arnold Wolfers, Britain and France between Two Wars (New York, 1940), p. 3.
the war would extend to the Far East? Germany did not have even a full naval squadron in the Far Eastern waters (11) not to mention her inadequate ground forces in the region, (12) compared to Britain's military might extending from India to further Southeast in Australia and New Zealand with sound bases in Singapore and Hong Kong, apart from her European allies, Russia in the North and the French forces in as comparatively concentrated (French) colonies in the East (with stronger French-cultural and ideological roots). Moreover, the Triple Alliance, on the eve of the war had been described by a Russian statesman as "a federation of a power, a weakness and a dubious quantity". (13) Thus, the Entente Powers being well-placed, Germany could hardly be expected to take the offensive in the Far East.

Notwithstanding Britain's fear about the growing tide of nationalism in the colonies and her preference for an Asian ally to a European partner in view of the old European rivalries in the east, she cannot escape the responsibility for transforming an essentially a European conflagration into a world war by "sounding" Japan for assistance against Germany.

11. There were four German cruiser ships - Scharnhorst, Gneisenau, Nurnberg and Emden in East Asian waters under Admiral Count Spee when the hostilities began. See Walther Hubatsch, Germany and the Central Powers in the World War 1914-1918 (Lawrence Kansas, 1963), p. 43.

12. The French armoured cruisers Montcalm and Duplex, the Russian light cruisers Askold and Zemchug were already in the Far Eastern waters later on the outbreak of war put under the British commands thus augmenting the British predominance. Winston S. Churchill, The World Crisis 1911-1914 (London, 1923), p. 292. In themselves, the said cruisers were more than a match to the German ships in the same region.

Thus the extension of war in the Far East was not a mere "repercussion of a primarily European conflict", (14) nor Japan's entry automatic. (15) It was Britain's determination to win the war against Germany by surrounding her from all sides. It was a part of her global strategy. It was to safeguard against possible ill-effects in case any other Power sided with Germany at a later stage. Above all, it was to prevent Japan from going astray. (16)

On the other hand, the war in Europe might not have extended to the Far East, had Japan stood for peace and centred her designs of expansion or consolidation on the Asian continent after the annexation of Korea. But it was not so. More than two-and-a-half centuries after Hideyoshi, her lust for glory continued unabated. And with the seizure of Korea, she had hardly reached the point of saturation in her plans of expansion.

Reporting the proceedings of the Japanese parliament, the American ambassador informed the American Secretary of State that the Japanese Government did not feel contented by her gains since

16. There was a definite propaganda of a pro-German but a small section in the Japanese army which wished Germany victory in Europe (Hudson, n. 16). Kaiser William II also thought the growing power of Japan was to the advantage of Germany and he continued to doubt the wisdom of Japanese statesmen, whom he admired, if by siding with England they (the statesmen) acted rightly. Apparently, the kaiser had expected not only German-Japanese goodwill at the behest of Anglo-Japanese alliance but also wished Japanese neutrality in a predominantly Anglo-German War. A bold hope! See Ex-Kaiser William II, My Memoirs, 1878-1918 (London, 1922), p. 77.

Germany had made a final bid to befriend Japan on 13 August.
the Russo-Japanese War. She still cherished the idea of strengthening herself at the expense of Chinese territories (17) such as Mongolia, Kiaochow, South Manchuria and Fukien. (18)

In order to pursue her ambition, Japan, seizing the opportunity provided by the hostilities in Europe, was reported to have approached London with an offer to join the hostilities. (19) Sir Edward Grey, while acknowledging the offer with thanks, advised Tokyo that England would avoid, if she could, "drawing Japan into any trouble". (20) Then, according to Chang-fu Chang: (21)

Japan based upon the ostensible necessity of removing all causes of disturbance to the peace of the Far East and of safeguarding the general interests contemplated by the agreement of alliance between Japan and Great Britain, sent an ultimatum to the Imperial German Government and made the terms impossible for it to accept ... that (it) should withdraw immediately from the Japanese and Chinese waters German men-of-war and armed vessels of all kinds and to disarm at once those which could not be so withdrawn, and deliver, on a date not later than September 15, 1914, to the Imperial Japanese authorities without condition

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19. According to the British ambassador in Tokyo, it was on 3 August 1914. Sir C. Greene to Sir Edward Grey, 3 August 1914, Br. Docs., vol. 11, no. 571, p. 305; also no. 637, pp. 327-8. But the evidence of Paul S. Reinsch, the American Minister to China from 1913 to 1917 put the date as the second week of August 1914.


or compensation, the entire leased territory of Kiaochow, with a view to its eventual restoration to China. (22)

To satisfy some of the Japanese conditions in the interest of harmony, good relations and peace in the area, Germany directly approached China to open discussion with a view to retroceding Kiaochow immediately. (23) But both London and Tokyo opposed this move; the former opposed the transfer, lest Kiaochow was returned to Germany after the war. (24) Japan also refused to recognize any such transfer and even warned China against such a possibility. Because of this opposition China dared take no official action. It is relevant to quote here John V.A. MacMurray, the American Charge d' Affaires in China's telegram from Peking to the State Department in Washington:

I learn that the German Charge d' Affaires has been discussing ... the possibility of immediately retroceding Kiaochow directly to the Chinese Government. I also learn that the Chinese Government has now been warned [by Japan] to discontinue such pourparlers. (25)

Thus Japan forced her entry in the war in 1914. Tatsuii Takeuchi also agrees when he says that the initiative for the Japanese entry into the war was taken by that Government. (25)

Tatsuii Takeuchi, in his War and Diplomacy in the Japanese Empire states it was during the closing days of July 1914 that

22. It seems Tokyo had invoked the good offices of the United States to declare "The United States regards Japanese promise to restore Kiaochow to China as satisfactory". Foreign Relations, n. 6, p. 173.

23. Ibid., pp. 172-3.

24. Ibid., p. 173.

25. Ibid., p. 172.

numerous exchanges of view were made between Tokyo and London regarding the steps to be taken by Japan under the stipulations of the Anglo-Japanese alliance "should Great Britain be drawn into the war". (27) On 1 August 1914, Sir Edward Grey, the British Foreign Secretary, informed Tokyo through the British ambassador the gist of the former's conversation with the Japanese ambassador at London that:

the situation in Europe was very grave. We have not yet decided what our action should be, but under certain conditions (i.e. in order to enforce Belgium's neutrality) we might find it necessary to intervene. If, however, we did intervene, it would be on the side of France and Russia. (28)

Grey, it appears, did not want to say explicitly that the Anglo-Japanese alliance should be operative in the event of Britain being drawn into a general war in Europe. Yet, he made sufficiently plain that Japan should keep herself in readiness and enter the war at the slightest signal on the British side (keeping in view, not any specific terms, but the alliance in general). That is, Japan should join the war on the British side, not by virtue of the alliance, but in terms of the Anglo-Japanese friendship based on the alliance, because no clause in the Alliance entitled Britain to invoke the assistance of the Japanese. (29)

It must be in view of the absence of legal binding on Japan to side with Britain in the war and an otherwise German hope of better relation with Japan (30) that Berlin wished Japan observed

27. Ibid.


30. See footnote 16.
neutrality in the European conflict. On 1 August 1914, the German Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs observed in a telegram to his country's ambassador at Tokyo hoping "the Japanese Government will be able to draw the appropriate conclusions for Japan from a correct estimate (of the international situation)...." (31) Two days later on 3 August 1914, the German ambassador at Tokyo reported to the Foreign Office in Berlin an estimate of his conversation with the Japanese Foreign Minister. He wrote, Japan's attitude towards a European war would be to remain neutral as long as possible, but "Japan's ultimate decision depended on England".

Should England lay claim to Japan's assurance in eastern Asia or in India, then she (Japan) would have to take part. (The Japanese Foreign Minister) did not believe that collisions on the open sea would cause Japan's entrance into the war, but this might easily happen in case of a German attack on British territory, Hong Kong, for instance. Should the war be confined to Europe, however, then Japan would presumably remain neutral.

The ambassador added, "apparently Russia is persistently striving to pacify Japan by means of concessions". (32) Since Germany had no intention to provoke a war in the Far East, she was justified in expecting Japan's neutrality.

How then did the war extend to the Far East? The Tokyo Government was watching the conflict in Europe very keenly and closely. For instance, on 2 August 1914, the Japanese Premier Okuma explained to the Emperor the Austro-Serbian conflict. On the following day, Foreign Minister Komei Kato sent a detailed report to the Emperor on the European situation based upon the reports


32. Ibid., p. 552.
received from Japanese ambassadors in European capitals. (33) On the afternoon of 3 August, Japan sensed the imminence of Britain's declaration of war (in Europe). On the same day, the British ambassador in Tokyo sent a hurried message to the Japanese cabinet in session about the possibility of Japan being "called upon to take appropriate measures under the terms of the alliance". This was confirmed later by the British ambassador personally on 5 August and on 7 August made a formal request for the Japanese assistance in destroying German men-of-war in Chinese waters. (34)

The above account from the Japanese sources corroborated with the British Documents on the origin of the war. Thus the initiative came from Britain, and the Government of that country may take the responsibility of extending the European war to the Far East.

Of course, the German fortified post at Tsingtau in the Chinese province of Shantung was one of the most formidable fortifications in the world. Britain could not afford, once the war was declared in Europe, to leave the Germans in possession of a naval base from which the immense commerce of the Entente Powers in the Far East could be successfully raided. As she would have her hands full in Europe, Britain naturally wished to rely on her ally, Japan, which was conveniently situated to attend to her (Britain's) need in the Far East.

Moreover, Britain seemed to have taken care to point out to Japan that the neutrality and integrity of China as stipulated in Article 15 of the Anglo-Japanese alliance must be maintained. But this act of restraint was more for impressing the American

34. Ibid., pp. 168-9.
capital, (35) than due to any consideration for the independence and integrity of China, which the United States had since 1899 been consistently insisting, while Japan, sometime alone, sometime in conjunction with other powers, been consistently ignoring, which Britain was not unaware of.

The Assurance, on behalf of Sir Edward Grey made by the British Charge d'Affaires in Washington to the American Secretary of State that:

the action of Japan will not extend to the Pacific Ocean beyond the China Seas, except in so far as it may be necessary to protect Japanese shipping lines in the Pacific, nor beyond Asiatic waters westward of China Seas, nor to any foreign territory except territory in German occupation on the continent of eastern Asia, (36)

does not hold water. Firstly, it was merely to satisfy Washington that its interests would remain undisturbed in view of the fact the United States had never thought the Anglo-Japanese collaboration with favour. (in fact, she had been considering it a challenge to her policy of "Open Door" and the integrity of China). (37)

Secondly, Britain had admitted her invitation to Japan "to attack German territories on eastern Asia"; the invitation may have been under the sole consideration of the British needs in the Far East, yet once the Government of the Land of the Rising Sun had been given a lever, would it restrain herself in any circumstances? The answer was in the negative.

Nonetheless, Japan, along with Britain, must also share the responsibility for war in the Far East on account of her own ambition

36. Ibid.
on the Asiatic continent especially on the Chinese territories. The sources also reveal that on 2 August 1914, the Austro-Hungarian ambassador, quoting the Imperial Ambassador of Japan, reported from Berlin:

> Japan, in the absence of Chinese opposition (which was the most interested party), and once Russia were deeply involved in the war, could, even without any doubt, take both Manchuria and Mongolia. The case, as it existed two years ago, that China and Japan together were to drive Russia out of Mongolia, would no longer come into consideration. Should England also be drawn into war, Japan could also take the Yangtse Valley on her own terms! (38)

Although the inclusion of Yangtse Valley in the above list looks fantastic, the other places were well within the Japanese programme of expansion.

Notwithstanding the German assurances (39) John V.A. MacMurray, the American Charge d'Affaires in China, reported in a telegram on 13 August 1914, that:

> Japan is seeking the opportunity to co-operate with Great Britain against Tsingtau ... apparently with a view to making available a pretext for further independent action, the Japanese in Manchuria have been creating daily provocative incidents....

The telegram added:

> In consequence of (the) intolerable attitude of Japan (China is convinced) that it is the intention of (the Government of Japan) on the basis of some fictitious grievance to occupy South Manchuria and Fukien as well Kiaochow.... (40)

So much so, at about the same time, the Naval Attache of the American Embassy in Tokyo, on the basis of his intelligence report informed Washington in a telegram:

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38. *German Documents*, n. 31, p. 491.
40. *Foreign Relations*, n. 6, p. 169.
... The Japanese Fleet mobilizing. There is a strong feeling against Germany. War may be declared. (41)

There was another factor also which made inevitable a Japanese declaration of war against Germany: the Russian mobilization of the army and the navy and Austria-Hungary's countermeasures, war between Germany and Russia, even on 1 August 1914, looked particularly inevitable. (42) The German ambassador in Tokyo, however, could not anticipate any disturbance immediately in the status quo. (43)

In this situation, it seems that not only the German Ambassador was under-estimating Japan's allegiance to the Entente Powers (44) but his illusions were shared by many (in fact generally) (45) in Berlin. General von Moltke, Chief of the General Staff of the Army, on 2 August 1914, thought Germany could take advantage of Russian engagement in Europe and invite Japan "to satisfy all her aspirations [with German assistance] in the Far East, preferably by military action against Russia". "We (the Germans) can promise Japan anything she [Japan] desires

41. Ibid., p. 168.

42. Von Jagow, German Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs to the German Ambassador in Tokyo, 1 August 1914. German Documents, n. 31, p. 435.

43. Ibid., p. 558.

44. Besides the Anglo-Japanese alliances, the latter was also aligned individually with the other Entente Powers, viz., Russia and France.

45. See Ex-Kaiser William II, n. 16.
from us in this direction". (46)

Japan tried to dispel German illusions. Komei Kato, the Japanese Foreign Minister, told the German ambassador Count Rex on 2 August 1914, that

he regards relations with Russia as very friendly and does not reckon on any deterioration.... (47)

On 4 August 1914, Kato spoke to the Russian Ambassador Malovski:

Japan will not declare her neutrality but will wait to see what attitude Great Britain will adopt in the present crisis. (48)

On 5 August, Kato stated in Parliament that Japan had some old scores to pay off to Germany on account of the latter's hostility at the time of the Treaty of Shimonoseki (1895), viz.,

The Three Powers' intervention (49) and also of Kaiser William II's

46. German Documents, n. 31, p. 495.

Berlin seemed to have gone to the extent to instruct her "East Asiatic Squadron to cease hostile acts against England (in the Far East) in case Japan remains neutral".


That means the Germans were not against the proposal to neutralize the Pacific.

47. German Documents, n. 31, p. 558.


49. Before the German occupation of the Kiaochau Bay, France, Britain, Russia, and Japan had territorial concessions either in China or in the Far East. After the Sino-Japanese war when China's utter weakness and helplessness had been exhibited not only Germany desired to take advantage of it but also was unusually anxious to deter Japan after the treaty of Shimonoseki. In fact, here was the anxiety to be on equal footing (in grabbing territories) with rest of the Powers. But her unusual activity which resulted in "Dreilund" and the occupation of Tsingtau, Japan seemed never to forgive her.
campaign against the "yellow peril". (50) She would be glad to profit by the occasion to take territory away from Germany. Winston S. Churchill also observed in his memoirs the sudden change in the Japanese attitude towards Germany. In any case, he also maintained:

that the Japanese nation had not forgotten the circumstances and influences under which they (Japan) had been forced, at the end of the Chinese War (1895) to quit Port Arthur. They now showed themselves resolved to extirpate all German authority and interests in the Far East. (51)

On the evening of 15 August 1914, the Japanese Foreign Office handed a Note to the German ambassador at Tokyo which read as follows:

Considering it highly important and necessary, in the present situation, to take measures to remove all causes of disturbance to the peace of the Far East and to safeguard the general interests contemplated by the Agreement of Alliance between Japan and Great Britain, in order to secure a firm and enduring peace in Eastern Asia, the establishment of which is the aim of the said Agreement, the Imperial Japanese Government sincerely believe it their duty to give advice to the Imperial German Government to carry out the following two propositions:-

1. To withdraw immediately from the Japanese and Chinese waters German men-of-war and armed vessels of all kinds, and to disarm at once those which cannot be so withdrawn.

2. To deliver on a date not later than September 15, 1914, to the Imperial Japanese Authorities, without condition or compensation, the entire leased territory of Kiaochau with a view to eventual restoration of the same to China.

50. The German Kaiser had been so much led by the (Christian) faith that in the name of religion, there are many a references, he had encouraged the Russian Czar against Japan and the "yellow peril" in the Far East.

51. Churchill, n. 12, p. 292,
The Imperial Japanese Government announce at the same time, that in the event of their not receiving by noon August 23, 1914, the answer of the Imperial German Government signifying an unconditional acceptance of the advice offered by the Imperial Japanese Government, they will be compelled to take such action as they may deem necessary to meet the situation. (52)

On 19 August 1914, Count Okuma, the Japanese Premier, gave out a statement in Tokyo as follows:

Japan's object is to eliminate from continental China the root of German influence....

Japan's warlike operations will not, therefore, extend beyond the limits necessary for the attainment of that object and for the defence of her own legitimate interests. (53)

This statement was amplified by an official statement issued by the Japanese Foreign Office which gave more fully the reasons for Japan's action in demanding from Germany the surrender of the leased territory. It said, inter alia:

The history of the seizure of the place (Kiaochow) by Germany and her conduct preceding and including her intervention, in conjunction with Russia and France, after the Chino-Japanese war show that it is absolutely necessary to eliminate such possession completely if Japan is to restore immediate and complete peace in the Far East in accordance with the terms of the Anglo-Japanese alliance. If Japan is to look far enough into the future and adopt measures to insure an abiding peace in Eastern Asia she must realize that a strong military base in the hands of a hostile militant power right in the heart of the country cannot in itself fail to be a menacing factor.... (54)

52. The Japan Year Book, 1918, pp. 757-8.

The word "advice" used in the first and the last paragraph of the Note is ironical.


53. The Times (London), 21 August 1914.


Thus, Japan had invoked the Anglo-Japanese alliance to eliminate the militant power of Germany from Eastern Asia when Britain and Germany were at war in Europe. The language of the ultimatum indicated that Japan was taking the contemplated action solely upon her own responsibility. The German silence over the ultimatum, having decided not to make any reply, was enough for Japan to declare war on her on expiry of the ultimatum, on 23 August 1914 (and against Austria, the German ally, four days later). (55)

Since Japan had taken upon herself to declare war against Germany, and on the side of her ally, Britain, and did not bother much about legality, it seems she was confident she would more than compensate herself in the region.

LEGAL INTERPRETATION OF THE ANGLO-JAPANESE TREATY OF 1911: HOW FAR JAPAN WAS BOUND TO ENTER THE WAR?

The Japanese Government had followed the situation in Europe very closely, and as soon as it became apparent that Great Britain

55. On 27 August 1914, the Austro-Hungarian ambassador at Tokyo delivered a Note to the Japanese Foreign Office that he had been instructed from home to demand a passport and leave Japan. The passport was at once handed to the (Austro-Hungarian) ambassador (by Japan) and at the same time the (Japanese) Government instructed its ambassador at Vienna to demand passport and retire to Italy. The Japan Year Book, 1915, p. 757.

It is not understood what prompted the Japanese Foreign Office in asking its ambassador at Vienna to retire to Italy when the latter was herself a part of the (Austro-Hungarian-German) Alliance. It cannot be merely due to nearness. Possibly Japan, as Britain's ally, might have hoped the ultimate Italian defection from the Alliance
might be involved in the conflict, the two allies had communicated
with each other under the terms of the Anglo-Japanese alliance.

Since the revised Anglo-Japanese alliance (1911) is frequently
cited as the basis for the British and Japanese actions (providing
Britain with a *casus belli* to invite Japan and the latter with a
shield to enable her entry in the war on 23 August 1914, against
Germany on the side of her ally, Britain) it is necessary to examine
first the relevant provisions of the Alliance. Article I of the
alliance laid down: (56)

> Whenever, in the opinion of either Great Britain or
Japan, any of the rights and interests \(\text{in the}
regions of Eastern Asia and of India}\(\ldots\) are in
jeopardy, the two Governments will communicate with
one another fully and frankly, and will consider in
common the measures which should be taken to safe­
guard those menaced rights and interests.

And Article II read:

> If by reason of unprovoked attack or aggressive
action, \(\text{whenever arising, on the part of any Power}
or Powers, either High Contracting Party should be
involved in war in defence of its territorial rights
or special interests \(\text{in the regions of Eastern}
Asia and of India}\(\ldots\), the other High Contracting
Party will at once come to the assistance of its
ally, and will conduct the war in common, and make
peace in mutual agreement with it.

On 1 August, 1914, Sir Edward Grey wrote to the British
ambassador in Tokyo: (57)

> I told the Japanese ambassador \(\text{in London}\) today
that the situation in Europe was very grave. We
have not yet decided what our action should be,
but under certain conditions we might find it
necessary to intervene, if, however, we did
intervene, \(\ldots\) I \(\ldots\) did not see that we were

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56. John V.A. MacMurray, *Treaties with and Concerning China*
    (New York, 1921), vol. 1, p. 901.

likely to have to apply under our \[\text{Anglo-Japanese}\] alliance, or that the interests dealt with by the alliance would be involved.

On 2 August 1914, Sir C. Greene, British Ambassador in Tokyo, wrote home: (58)

Japanese vernacular papers are now discussing the possibility of Japan being invited to support her ally in defence of her interests in the Far East. The view generally taken seems to be that Japan will gladly accept responsibility.

However, before the communication of 1 August was sent to Tokyo, the British Foreign Office, according to the evidence now available, was considering a plan, originated from M. Serge Sazonov, the Russian Minister for Foreign Affairs, 1910-16, for an Anglo-Japanese-Russian triple guarantee in regard to the respective Asiatic possessions. The Plan had enjoyed the support of Sir Arthur Nicolson, Permanent Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs in London, 1910-16. This, the latter argued, would go a long way towards dissipating "those apprehensions which unfortunately do exist here \[\text{in London}\] in regard to Russian designs". (59) The plan had an added benefit, according to Nicolson, of bringing Japan into some tripartite agreement which would help smoothen the atmosphere in the Far East. (60) (It needs to be reiterated, notwithstanding the Anglo-Japanese Alliance and very friendly relations between the parties, Britain could not help entertaining misgiving about Japanese designs in Asia). Moreover, the

58. Ibid., p. 279.
59. Russia was also desirous to remove Britain's fear of her aggression towards India. Br. Docs., vol. 11, pp. xi-xii.
Plan, (61) it was maintained, would bring Anglo-Russian relations and the Anglo-Japanese alliance per se to a better pattern by clearing the Russo-Japanese somewhat anomalous position vis-a-vis the Anglo-Japanese alliance in the Far East. (62) But Sir Edward Grey vetoed the arguments and the Plan. (63)

Nonetheless, Britain was confident the "Japanese could cripple German commerce in the Far East and could wrest Kiau-chou from Germany". This was one of the arguments with which Sir George Buchanan, British Ambassador to St. Petersburg, 1910-18, also tried to convince Sir Edward Grey to give the green signal to the afore-said Samonov Plan, and thus induce Japan to associate itself with the Triple Entente diplomatically and strategically. The only snag that Sir Buchanan could think of was the possibility of Japan asking compensation for her services, and for this, he even hinted at Wei-hai-wei. (64)

From the above, it seems Britain was in no mood to request definite Japanese collaboration. But neither did she rule out the probability of its becoming necessary later on. The situation was complicated. An Anglo-German war in Europe was inevitable. The alliance could become operative only if "any of the rights and interests - in the region of Eastern Asia and of India - are in jeopardy" (Article I), or "by reason of unprovoked attack or aggressive action" (Article II).

61. This was reiterated on 9 August 1914 by Count Alexander Benckendorff, Russian Ambassador at London, 1903-17. Ibid., p. 822.
63. Ibid., p. 822.
64. Ibid., p. 821.
The Anglo-Japanese treaty of 1911 was only an improvement of the similar treaty concluded in 1902. Articles II, III and V of the treaty of 1902 may be, for the sake of convenience, reiterated:

If either Great Britain or Japan, in the defence of their respective interests ... should become involved in war with another power, the other High Contracting Party will maintain a strict neutrality and use its efforts to prevent other Powers from joining in hostilities against its ally. (Article II)

If, in the above event, any other Power or Powers should join in hostilities against that ally, the other High Contracting Party will come to its assistance, and will conduct the war in common, and make peace in mutual agreement with it. (Article III)

Whenever, in the opinion of either Great Britain or Japan, (their interests) are in jeopardy, the two Governments will communicate with one another fully and frankly. (Article V).

Article V of the treaty of 1902 was similar to the Article I of the treaty of 1911. Similarly, Articles II and III of the former were identical with Article II of the last Anglo-Japanese treaty.

In this connexion, it is interesting to recall what Sir W. Harcourt said in the House of Commons during the debate on the first Anglo-Japanese Treaty on 13 February 1902. He held if any member of the contracting party was at war, may be with China, with Russia, France, or Germany, and the hostile power was not actually joined by a third Power, that the other contracting party could be neutral. (65) Applying the same argument in case of the Anglo-German war in Europe in 1914, Japan was at liberty to remain neutral.


Another authority also laid greater emphasis on the Treaty of 1902 than on the last of its series. He believed that the Alliance of 1902 was merely renewed in 1905 and 1911. And Japan declared war against Germany in compliance with the original treaty of 1902. (66)

In addition to this, Article II of the Treaty of 1911 was a copy of the similar treaty concluded in 1905. Forwarding a copy of the latter to Sir C. Hardinge, the British ambassador at St. Petersburg, for communicating the contents of the Agreement to the Russian Government, the British Foreign Office, on 6 September 1905 explained the implications of Article II. It said:

I call your special attention to the wording of Article II, which lays down distinctly that it is only in the case of an unprovoked attack made on one of the Contracting Parties by another Power or Powers, and when that party is defending its territorial rights and special interests from aggressive action that the other party is bound to come to its assistance. (67) (emphasis added)

Again, taking a cue from the words spoken on the nature and character of the Treaty of 1905, of which the Treaty of 1911 was almost a copy, it may be said, by the nature and the contents of the terms, the Alliance of 1911 was defensive in character. Sir Charles Dilke said the following in the House of Commons on 2 August 1905, in so far as the Treaty related to Asia. (68)

The lines of any understanding which had been come to must evidently concern the preservation of the status quo in Asia. But the notion that we needed a military alliance with a foreign power for the defence of the Indian frontiers was one that ought to be repudiated at once. Any alliance in support of the status quo in

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66. F. Hadland Davis on "Japan and the Great War", The Indian Review, June 1916, p. 397.
68. Ibid., p. 476.
Asia against possible disturbance in any quarter must have the effect of a virtual guarantee to the position of certain Powers who are no parties to that alliance. Any guarantee of status quo must be a virtual guarantee of the occupation of Kiaochow by Germany as of Tonking by France. Therefore, an understanding or alliance for the maintenance of the status quo in Asia must tend to the preservation of permanent peace in that part of the world.

This is corroborated by Chang-fu Chang. (69)

Thus, in the absence of legal sanction, (70) Grey cleverly sounded Japan to invoke the alliance and yet keep his Government free from commitment in order to escape condemnation later that he extended the European conflict in the Far East. In any case, this was the time of a more direct testing of the Anglo-Japanese alliance. The alliance was as much the cornerstone of the Japanese foreign policy as of the British in Asia.

The question was whether the exact terms of the treaty required the entry of Japan into the war as the ally of England. It may be said that Japan did not come into the war because of any diplomatic engagement. But the decision of the Japanese Government, as contained in the ultimatum to Germany on 15 August 1914, inter alia, said: (71)

Considering it highly important and necessary in the present situation to take measures to remove all causes of disturbance to the peace in the Far East and to safeguard the general interests contemplated by the arrangement of alliance between Japan and Great Britain....

(Emphasis added)

69. Chang, n. 4, p. 154 passim.
71. Foreign Relations, n. 6, p. 170.
That means that the Japanese action was based on the Anglo-Japanese alliance, among other things. The memorandum conveyed on behalf of Sir Edward Grey, by the British Charge d'Affaires (Barclay) in Washington to the American Secretary of State on 15 August 1914, used the same words. It said: (72)

The Government of Great Britain and Japan having been in communication with each other are of opinion that it is necessary for each to take action to protect the general interests in the Far East contemplated by the Anglo-Japanese alliance.... (emphasis added).

Thus by the end of the first fortnight of August 1914 both Britain and Japan clearly invoked the provisions of the alliance, although the agreement did not provide for any offensive action. Both the Powers could take action in concert only if attacked in the Far East. There was no provision for offensive action even if Britain had been involved in war in Europe. Clearly, it was a case of stretching the meaning of the agreement in order to take concerted action against the Central Powers headed by Germany.

As late as on 20 July 1914, Japan Times, a semi-official newspaper, concluded in an editorial by saying that Japan was on the best of terms with the three great Powers, namely, Austria-Hungary, Germany and Russia, and had no interests whatever in Serbia. It added, in the event of war, the Japanese Imperial Government would naturally remain strictly neutral. Yet, less than a month later, she declared war on Germany. (73)

In this connexion, it is necessary to refer to the text of the Imperial Rescript proclaiming war against Germany, issued at

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72. Ibid., p. 171.

5 p.m. on 23 August 1914. It read:

We, by the Grace of Heaven, Emperor of Japan, seated on the Throne occupied by the same Dynasty from time immemorial, do hereby make the following proclamation to all Our legal and brave subjects.

We hereby declare war against Germany and we command Our Army and Navy to carry on hostilities against the Empire with all their strength, and we also command all Our competent Authorities to make every effort, in pursuance of their respective duties, to attain the national aim, by all the means within the limits of the laws of nations.

Since the outbreak of the present war in Europe, the calamitous effects of which we view with grave concern, We, on Our part, have entertained hopes of preserving the peace of the Far East by the maintenance of strict neutrality. But the action of Germany has at length compelled Great Britain, Our Ally, to open hostilities against that country, and Germany is, at Kiaochou, its leased territory in China busy with warlike preparations, while its armed vessels cruising the seas of Eastern Asia are threatening Our commerce and that of Our Ally. The peace of the Far East is thus in jeopardy. Accordingly, Our Government and that of His Britannic Majesty, after a full and frank communication with each other, agreed to take such measures as may be necessary for the protection of the general interests contemplated in the Agreement of Alliance, and We, on Our part, being desirous to attain that object by peaceful means, commanded our Government to offer with sincerity an advice to the Imperial German Government. By the last day appointed for the purpose, however, Our Government failed to receive an answer accepting that advice.

It is with profound regret that We, in spite of Our ardent devotion to the cause of peace, are thus compelled to declare war, especially at this early period of Our reign and while We are still in mourning for Our lamented Mother.

It is Our earnest wish that, by the loyalty and valour of Our faithful subjects, peace may soon be restored and the glory of the Empire be enhanced. (74)

On 27 August 1914, the Imperial Japanese naval authorities announced the establishment from that date of a blockade of the

whole of the littoral of the leased territory of Kiaochau, allowing, however, a period of twenty-four hours within which vessels of Allied or neutral states might leave the blockaded area. (75)

In order to supplement the purport of the above Rescript and the announcement of the naval blockade, it is desirable to refer to the speech delivered in the Japanese Diet on 3 September 1914, by Baron Kato, the Japanese Foreign Minister, who stated forcefully and concisely the reasons that caused Japan to become a belligerent in the war. Reviewing the events of the preceding month, and the situation in Europe, he said: (76)

Early in August the British Government asked the Imperial Government for assistance under the terms of Anglo-Japanese Alliance. German man-of-war and armed vessels were prowling around the seas of Eastern Asia, menacing our commerce and that of Our Ally, while Kiaochau was carrying out operations apparently for the purpose of constituting a base for warlike operations in Eastern Asia. Grave anxiety was thus felt for the maintenance of peace in the Far East. As all are aware, the agreement and alliance between Japan and Great Britain has for its objects the consolidation and maintenance of general peace in Eastern Asia, and the maintenance of the independence and integrity of China, as well as the principle of equal opportunities for commerce and industry for all nations in that country, and the maintenance and defence respectively of territorial rights and special interests of the contracting parties in Eastern Asia. Therefore, inasmuch as we were asked by our Ally for assistance at a time when commerce in Eastern Asia, which Japan and Great Britain regard alike as one of their special interests, is subjected to a constant menace, Japan, who regard that Alliance as a guiding principle of her foreign policy, could not but comply with the request to do her part.

On 19 October 1916, Japan acceded to the Declaration of London (originally between Britain, France and Russia) of


76. The Times, 6 September 1914.
5 September 1914, engaging not to conclude Peace separately during the war. (77) This was preceded by a Declaration of Renunciation on 14 July 1915, by Japan of her Rights under the capitulations in the French zone of the Empire of Morocco. It exhibited a close understanding between Japan and the Entente Powers. (78)

However, between 1 and 14 August, apparently the two Powers had not decided to invoke the terms of the alliance. But the Japanese Government was not loath to miss the opportunity provided by Sir Edward Grey's despatch of 1 August. On 3 August, the Japanese Foreign Minister Kato replied to Britain with a fervour: (79)

His Majesty's Government may count upon Japan at once coming to assistance of her ally with all her strength, if called on to do so, leaving it entirely to His Majesty's Government to formulate the reason for, and nature of, the assistance required.

On the same day, the British Foreign Office seemed to have changed its mind. Acting on the opinion given by Sir William Tyrrell, Principal Private Secretary to British Foreign Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, Sir Edward Grey telegraphed to the British ambassador at Tokyo: (80)

At present moment, when war with Germany is a possibility, it might be well for you to warn Japanese Government that, if hostilities spread to Far East, and an attack on Hongkong or Wei-Hai were to take place, we should rely on their (Japanese) support.

It is necessary to point out here that apparently the British Government in view of the lacunae in the terms of the Alliance was hesitant to take the onus of spreading the war to the Far East or to invoke unhesitatingly the Alliance. For the telegram provided "if hostilities spread in Far East, and an attack on Hongkong or Wei-hai-wei were to take place...." In the absence of any offensive action by Germany, Britain, strictly in accordance with the terms of the alliance, had no locus standi to seek Japanese assistance. At best, the telegram should have only served to warn the Government at Tokyo of any impending German action on account of the defensive nature of the alliance.

In any case, till 4 August 1914, Japan, though vigilant, does not seem to have entertained any immediate possibility of entering the war. Her Foreign Office on the same day issued a statement after studying the European situation. It read: (31)

The Imperial Government cannot help entertaining much anxiety with regard to political and economic situation brought about by the latest developments of European politics. Needless to say, the Imperial Government sincerely desires that the present trouble (in Europe) should find the earliest possible solution and that peace be quickly restored. In case the present war should continue, the Imperial Government wishes to have it not extending to the countries not yet involved (Japan was one of them), and that this country may maintain an attitude of strictly neutrality.

It is necessary that the closest attention be paid to the future developments of the situation. In the event of Great Britain becoming involved in war and the terms of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance being affected, Japan may take necessary measures for discharging her obligations under the treaty. It is impossible at present to say whether such an event will occur and the Imperial Government

sincerely trusts indeed that this contingency may never occur; but this Government is paying the most careful attention to the situation.

But the Japanese Government went a step further. It laid the telegram before an extraordinary meeting of the Cabinet. Not only its reply was one of positive consent but, in fact, tended to exhibit the Japanese eagerness to intervene in the primarily Anglo-German conflict. Foreign Minister Kato added in his reply to London. (82)

In the hypothetical cases, such as a capture of a British merchant ship or a case involving, perhaps, a question of Chinese or Russian territorial waters, the Imperial Government would wish to have the opportunity of considering it and consulting with His Majesty's Government before taking definite action.

On what principle was the Japanese reply based? In the absence of international law, systematizing all the values and relations of sovereign states, before 1919, there was no law under which Japan's action can legitimately be examined. (83) In any case, in the absence of any ideological conflict or clash of interests exclusively between Japan and Germany, the former was showing aggressive tendencies either to consciously pursue political ends or under British pressure or both. Whatever the leading factor(s) may be, the Government of Japan succeeded, even before embarking upon war, in convincing the public that it would be quite


83. Even now in the contemporary period, manifest inconsistencies between legitimate violence and a reign of law, between sovereignty and subjection to law, between neutrality and membership in jural community, between rules of municipal law and rules of international law have been by no means ironed out.

consistent with the interest of the nation to enter the war and that Japan's entry into the war would not frustrate the essentials and the important ends of the Japanese life. The public, therefore, gave the Government whole-hearted co-operation. Thus the political objectives of the Government and the individual loyalty of the (Japanese) subjects due also to racial homogeneity, had been going hand-in-hand in Japan. Convinced of the internal strength, Japan could dare be ahead of the British intentions, as contained in the telegram, in volunteering to invoke the terms of the alliance, even in the absence of such provisions, to satisfy her aspirations. Consequently, the inclusion of such hypothetical phrases as "a capture of British merchant ship" and "a question of Chinese or Russian territorial waters", was nothing but a cloak. Unless the war had extended to the Far East, it was not legitimate on the part of Japan to raise these issues. Hence Japan, it may be said, used her friendship, as envisaged in the alliance, as a cloak for offensive action and aggression.

Even as it was true, Japan would declare war on Germany at the first opportunity, she wished the British to ask for Japan's aid; and this the British Government was at first by no means anxious to do. In fact, the latter had conveyed to the United States' ambassador in London on 11 August 1914,

that Japan finds herself unable to refrain from war with Germany.... Japan assures Britain that she is anxious to respect both the neutrality and the integrity of China. The Anglo-Japanese alliance binds both parties to it to respect her integrity. (84)

84. Foreign Relations, n. 6, pp. 167-8.
The words "the ... alliance binds both parties ..." might have been added to allay the American apprehension over the Anglo-Japanese alliance and, under its garb, the extension of hostilities in the Far East. (85) In any case, the sentence makes abundantly clear the British Government's tacit approval of the Japanese intentions.

On 11 August 1914, John V.A. MacMurray, the American Charge d'Affaires in China, telegraphed home:

Japanese Charge d'Affaires reliably quoted as saying that his Government would welcome an opportunity to participate in taking Kiaochow and that an expedition for that purpose is available immediately. (86)

Later on 13 August, he had added that Japan would resort to action against Germany, in fact in pursuance of her mission in the Chinese territories of south Manchuria, Fukien as well as Kiaochau, even "on the basis of some fictitious grievance". (87)

The only plausible reason why the British Government was issuing "guarded" notes to Japan or was restraining, if at all, the latter seems due to be the fact, as is admitted by Grey in his memoirs, the Anglo-Japanese alliance had been a matter of anxiety in Washington and a source of embarrassment in Anglo-American friendship. After the Anglo-German declaration of war in Europe, if once Japan was given a free hand as Britain's ally, the war would not only extend to the Far East, but might even engulf the Pacific Ocean due to its being within Japan's natural sphere of operations. This would have had a disastrous effect on

85. See Viscount Grey of Fallodon, Twenty Five Years (New York, 1925), vol. 2, p. 100.
86. Foreign Relations, n. 6, p. 166.
87. Ibid., p. 169.
the Anglo-American relations to the extent of making American public opinion antagonistic towards Britain. And British dared not risk offending the United States at a time of headlong collision with Germany. (88)

Besides, it would have been unthinkable for Britain to disregard her interests in, the feelings and public opinion of, British Dominions in the region. When Australia and New Zealand, for instance, were ready to make sacrifices with equal patriotism, an unlimited Japanese action was repugnant to Australia and New Zealand. Therefore, while Britain would welcome Japan's help, she had to advise her that her action must be limited. Even the "acquisition of German territory must not extend beyond certain bounds". Thus, Grey regards the British Notes to Japan "not only politics", but essential for the British interests and for her Allies (other than Japan). (89)

Although the German position in the Far East and the Pacific and her transactions since the beginning, were viewed with misgivings, and now Britain and Germany were at war, as a world Power, Britain would not venture to substitute even Japan for Germany in the Far East, whatever the extent of the Anglo-Japanese friendship since 1902. Japan had already been a balancing factor, thus entering the European equilibrium. Britain could not be expected to be a leader in increasing the number of states pursuing the balance-of-world-Power policies, especially by incorporating a non-European state like Japan. Grey in restraining Japan was, therefore, prepared to perform an act not altogether "agreeable nor

88. Grey, n. 85, p. 103.
89. Ibid., p. 104.
At the same time, the hidden pressure of the London Government on its counterpart in Tokyo cannot be denied. Sir Edward Grey in thanking the Japanese Government for its offer, as contained in the above referred telegram, told the latter's ambassador in London: (91)

How much I had been impressed by the way in which Japan, during the Russo-Japanese (1905) war, demanded nothing of us under our alliance with her except what was strictly in accord with the Treaty of Alliance, ... and now we in turn should avoid, if we could, drawing Japan into any trouble.

on 7 August 1914, the British ambassador in Tokyo called on the Japanese Foreign Office and formally requested the Japanese assistance in destroying German men-of-war in Chinese waters. The British memorandum read: (92)

As some time will be needed in order that our ships of war may find and destroy German ships in Chinese waters, it is most important that the Japanese fleet should, if possible, hunt out and destroy the armed German merchant cruisers who are now attacking our commerce. If the Imperial Government would be good enough to employ some of their men of war thus, it would be of greatest advantage to His Majesty's Government. This, of course, means an act of war against Germany, but this is, in our opinion, unavoidable.

The British memorandum had considerably met the Japanese requirement inasmuch as the former had enjoined the latter for assistance. Thereupon, the Japanese Foreign Minister Kato in consultation with the Japanese Premier Marquis Okuma drew up a memorandum saying

90. Ibid.
(a) Japan should enter the war,
(b) the scope of the military and naval operations should be confined to the destruction of German war vessels in Chinese waters, and
(c) negotiations should be entered with the British Government concerning the grounds upon which Japan should join the war. (93)

It is important to note that the Cabinet colleagues had agreed with Kato, though the general conditions in view of the diplomatic developments in Europe and her negotiations with the British Government, were not such as to impose upon Japan the duty to join the war under treaty obligations, it was the proper course to take as a voluntary expression of friendship towards Great Britain under the alliance. (94) In other words, Tokyo well understood that the alliance did not make incumbent upon her to join the Anglo-German war in Europe, yet she would assist her ally in view of long friendship. Thus, whatever may have been Japan's other motives in joining the hostilities, she was perfectly clear about the extent of treaty obligations.

It is a different matter that Kato welcomed the British memorandum of 7 August as an opportunity to destroy the German influence from Eastern Asia and to enhance the international position of Japan. (95)

Some members of the Japanese Cabinet, on the other hand, also expressed apprehension that Japan's attack upon Tsingtau might result in violation of Chinese neutrality, while a few even suggested that a peaceful way out be found (to satisfy Japanese

94. Ibid.
95. Ibid., p. 170.
aspirations on the Chinese land) without resorting to arms against Germany. (The last element, though in a minority, was by no means unimportant). It is not, for instance, without significance that the 35th session of the Diet (December 1914), summoned to approve the Government's motion for an increase in Army Division, was dissolved after 9 days' sitting, owing to the rejection of the project by the Opposition. (96) However, after a late-night Cabinet sitting, the majority decided to join the war.

Can it be said that Japan's entry into the war against Germany and on the side of Britain was a measure of precaution? This does not seem so. The aggressive tendencies of Japan (in China and Korea) have been referred to earlier. Secondly, in view of the German desire for peace in the Far East, in any case no aggressive action on Hong Kong or Wei-hai wei been contemplated, (97) the Japanese action was hardly necessary and was not quite legitimate. Thirdly, since the German naval squadron in east Asia was hardly capable of doing harm to either the Japanese or British interests in the region, and as yet the disturbances of a character as to necessitate the Japanese action had not arisen, the declaration of war on Germany by Japan could not be taken as a measure to protect the lives and property belonging to the subjects of the Treaty Powers. Thus, the Japanese action was a further indication of aggressive or self-seeking tendencies, not without the implied approval of Great Britain.

96. The Japan Year Book, 1918, p. 650.
In conclusion, it may be said that though Japan had her own reasons for entering the war, Japanese intervention did not take place without full consultation with, and consent of, Great Britain — in accordance with Article I of the Treaty of 1911 which provided for "mutual communication fully and frankly". And the Governments of Great Britain and Japan were of the opinion that it was necessary to protect their respective interests in the Far East, and both regarded the German territory in Far East as a menace to the peace of the Orient. (98) The word 'Orient' is significant. It seems the only consideration with Great Britain in restraining Japan was that she did not wish Japan to enter the European arena and make herself eligible for war benefits as a full-fledged ally.

JAPAN'S DECISION TO ENTER THE WAR

The decision of the Japanese Government to enter the war on the side of the Entente Power was based upon the general spirit of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance and seek revenge upon Germany for her part in the Dreihund after the Treaty of Shimonoseki (1895). The decision of the Japanese Cabinet was supported by the Genro, Prince Aritomo Yamagata, Prince Iwao Oyama, Marquis Masayoshi Matsukata. (99)

Having decided to enter the war and the precise means of carrying out the policy, Kato, the Japanese Foreign Minister, went

98. F. Hadland Davis on "Japan and the Great War", The Indian Review, June 1916, p. 398.

ahead in asking the British Government to lay down clearly that entry into the war was "as embodied in the Anglo-Japanese alliance", and not to restrict Japan's activities to mere destruction of German war vessels in Chinese waters. (100)

The British attitude in this regard was significant. The British ambassador, Sir C. Greene, called on the Japanese Foreign Office on 9 August 1914 and requested Japan to postpone her declaration of war and urged that her activities should be confined to the protection of Britain's overseas trade. At the same time, the British Foreign Secretary stated to Japanese ambassador Inouye in London that the Japanese declaration of war would be certain to cause disturbances in the entire Far East and great injury to British trade, and consequently requested Japan to withhold any warlike operations until the British Cabinet reached a decision on the basis of information furnished by her minister in Peking and the Commander of the British Fleet in Chinese waters. (101)

The British ambassador Greene, in Tokyo, was instructed to deliver to Kato an even more explicit message. He was instructed to inform the Japanese government that

since the declaration of war by Japan will create the impression that the war is being extended to the Chinese mainland and will cause anxiety in China, Great Britain asks Japan to limit its activities to the protection of commerce on the sea and asks that a declaration of war be postponed until further consideration by the British Cabinet. (102)

Kato thereupon telegraphed to London assuring that Japanese entry into the war would in no way threaten the British trade, and

100. Komei Kato, pp. 87-88.
101. Ibid., p. 88.
102. Ibid.
that she entertained no territorial ambition. He also made clear that Japan's entry into the war was a cabinet decision which could not be changed save under gravest circumstances. He emphasized that popular demand for taking revenge for the three Power intervention had been so persistent that further delay would lead to a serious political situation in Japanese domestic politics. (103)

In her communication on 11 August, Britain formally requested Japan to reconsider the question of taking warlike measures under the Anglo-Japanese Alliance. (104) Kato went a step further and informed the former that Japanese public opinion supported an immediate declaration of war on Germany. (105) (In fact, Premier Okuma had invited pressmen to his official residence on the afternoon of 10 August 1914 and requested them to exercise moderation in their views). (106) After three days' deliberations, the Japanese Cabinet decided on 14 August 1914 to pursue the policy already agreed upon on 8 August to join war against Germany. The British Government also agreed to the Japanese declaration of war on Germany. (107)

In consenting to the Japanese declaration of war, the British Government made an important proposal to Tokyo; it sought to restrain Japan from operating beyond Chinese waters. Naturally, Foreign Minister Kato took a serious exception to such a proposal.

103. Ibid., pp. 88-90.
104. Ibid., p. 90. Also Tokyo Asahi, 13 August 1914.
106. Tokyo Asahi, 11 August 1914.
on the ground that it would be incompatible with her execution of war, that Japanese war vessels should be free to pursue German men of war wherever they might be found, and further that her trading vessels should be protected anywhere in the Pacific. Though, in its communication of 14 August, the British Government expressed its consent to the elimination of such declaration, it did not withdraw its original stand of restraining Japan. The British object was to preclude Japanese occupation of German possessions in the South Sea Islands and her intervention in the West Coast regions of the continent. (108)

No early reply to the latest Japanese counter proposal was forthcoming from London. So, on 19 August, Kato instructed the Japanese ambassador in London to dispose of the matter unilaterally by presenting copy of a speech delivered by Prime Minister Marquis Okuma before a conference of prominent businessmen on the evening of 13 August, in which he denied any territorial ambition on the part of Japan and declared that her warlike operations were strictly limited to the necessities of her own self-defence. (109) But in the same speech, Premier Okuma had not minced words when he said:

Japan's object is to eliminate from the continent of China the root of the German influence, which forms a constant menace to peace of the Far East and thus to secure the aim of the Anglo-Japanese alliance with Great Britain.... (110)

On the other hand, the British Government, without consulting the Japanese Government, issued a statement through the Press Bureau,

109. Ibid., p. 95.
110. Japan Weekly Mail, 14 August 1914 Supplement; The Times, 21 August 1914.
on the evening of 17 August to the effect that the British Government understood that the Japanese sphere of warlike operations did not extend excepting the protection of Japanese trade route in the Pacific beyond Chinese waters. The statement read:

The Government of Great Britain and Japan, having been in communication with each other, are of opinion that it is necessary for each to take action to protect the general interest in the Far East contemplated by the Anglo-Japanese alliance, keeping especially in view the independence and integrity of China, and provided for in that Agreement.

It is understood that the action of Japan will not extend to the Pacific Ocean beyond the China Seas except in so far as it may be necessary to protect Japanese shipping lines in the Pacific, nor beyond Asiatic waters westward of the China seas, nor to any foreign territory except territory in German occupation on the continent of Eastern Asia. (111)

The London Times expressed satisfaction with the above declaration, and said:

Australia, reassured by the Japanese, may be safely left to assist in the disposal of the German possessions in the Southern Pacific. (112)

The New York Times, however, believed that the Japanese entry into the war was not called for under the stipulations of the alliance, and expressed appreciation as to the future developments in China. It declared:

Japan's assurances to our Government that American interest in the Pacific will be in no way threatened by her hostile dealing with Germany are, to be sure, accepted in good faith, of course. These are reinforced by the British statement that Japan will now confine her warlike

111. The Times, 18 August 1914. Also Japan Weekly Mail, 22 August 1914.

112. The Times, 18 August 1914. It further proves that Britain was unwilling to give free hand to Japan for variety of reasons.
operations in the China Seas. But there is a general belief that it is the policy of Japan to assert and maintain for herself supremacy and control in the Asiatic waters of the Pacific with a view, probably, to the ultimate exclusion of the influence of Western nations. (113)
(emphasis added)

In any case, the London statement, delimiting the Japanese sphere of warlike operations in the event of a declaration of war on Germany under the alliance, was embarrassing to Tokyo and the Foreign Minister Kato, on 22 August 1914, conveyed to the British ambassador that to Japan, the British statement was merely a unilateral interpretation, not binding upon the Japanese Government. (114)

The Japanese opposition to the unilateral statement from London had the desired effect. The British reply, received in Tokyo on 14 August, conveyed the former's consent to the Japanese declaration of war without any mention of the declaration delimiting Japan's warlike operations. Nonetheless, while negotiations with London concerning delimitation of warlike operations were in progress, Japan went ahead with her preparations to join the Entente Powers. In the presence of the Emperor on 16 August 1914, Gozen Kaigi (115) decided to dispatch an ultimatum to Germany.

Japan's keenness to enter the war can be measured from the fact that the ultimatum to Germany, in order to ensure its delivery in Berlin, was dispatched, through thirteen sources. At 6.30 p.m.

115. It was a conference of the Emperor's highest advisers. In addition to the members of the Cabinet, those present by special invitation were genro Yamagata, Oysa, Mutsukata, and General Hasegawa, Chief of Army General Staff, and Admiral Shimamura, Chief of Naval General Staff.
on 15 August the Foreign Minister Count Kato informed the British ambassador of the decision. It was followed by a separate explanation to representatives of Russia, France, the United States, and China. At 7.00 p.m. Vice-Minister Matsui called on the German ambassador and handed him the ultimatum. At the same time, it was transmitted to Berlin through the Japanese Charge d'Affaires there, Japanese ambassadors to England, Russia, Italy and ministers to Holland, Switzerland, Sweden.

It must be pointed out that the Japanese action was not beyond the comprehension of the German authorities. As far back as in January 1914, the British Embassy in Berlin had submitted a report to London saying that the Germans regard Japanese diplomatic activities in the Far East nothing short of intrigues. The latter were working against the German (and the British) colonial interests. The only consideration which weighed with the Germans, and due to which they refrained from provoking conflagration in the Far East, was the Anglo-Japanese alliance. (116)

The vernacular press in Japan, however, received the news of the declaration of war with approbation. (117)

The extension of hostilities in the Far East, in any case, was an important phase of war of 1914. Whether it was determined by Britain or by Japan, or both, Japan made no hesitation to be in the forefront to take the onus of involving the Far East, and her attitude was rapidly becoming defined.


117. For comments upon the ultimatum, see Japan Weekly Mail, 22 August 1914,
There is no doubt, Japan acted in haste. Probably, the reason was, following the declaration of war by Britain against Germany, on 4 August, the German government made no announcement of its intentions with regard to the leased territory of Kiaochau. Japan, therefore, had no clue to the course Germany was going to follow in the Far East. A factor which complicated the situation was that the German diplomats in Peking and Tokyo were cut off from communication with their government in Berlin and consequently were without instructions.

Despite lack of instructions, the German authorities in Kiaochau were considering measures to safeguard their interests which the Japanese alleged as making preparations for hostilities. Japan also took no cognizance of the German assurances which were confirmed by the American ambassador in Berlin in a telegram to his Secretary of State in Washington and his contemporary in Tokyo on 13 August. (118)

Japan interpreted every move in her favour in order to justify her entry in the war. Japan regarded the time that elapsed between the handing in of the Note to Germany, demanding the unconditional surrender of Kiaochau on 15 August, and issuing the Imperial Rescript on 23 August, as sufficient to justify her entry in the war. But what was the guarantee that Japan would rest-contented with the "acquisition" of Kiaochau? Her record in and in regard to China was too well-known to be reiterated here.

Besides, Sir Edward Grey had, as early as 11 August, declared: "... Japan finds herself unable to refrain from war with Germany." (119) Nonetheless, Japan continued to insist that her

118. Foreign Relations, n. 6, p. 169.
119. Ibid., p. 167.
entry in the war was in accordance with the provisions of the Anglo-
Japanese Treaty of 1911 and Britain cannot go back that she, as
early as 1 August, requested Japan's assistance. (120) It is much
later and after the war was over that Sir Edward Grey clarified
the position in his memoirs saying that

... (Japan's help would be welcome, but that
her action must be limited and her prospective
acquisition of German territory must not extend
beyond certain bounds....) (121)

If there was any idea at that time with the British Foreign
Office to limit Japanese action upon entering the war, it was
merely to satisfy the United States' policy of safeguarding the
Chinese integrity, to allay her apprehension in regard to the
possibility of extension of Japanese activities in the Pacific,
and to protect the British Dominions in Asia from being
unnecessarily enveloped in war thus hampering British trade. In
reality, it was the last aspect which bothered Great Britain the
most.

Moreover, the language of the ultimatum to Germany tends to
indicate that Japan had taken the action therein contemplated
solely by her own responsibility. This was confirmed some time
late by Baron Kato, who definitely stated before the Imperial Diet
that the Japanese Government had acted independently in dispatching
the ultimatum. (122) Then, what is the difference between "acting
in accordance with the terms of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance" and
acting "independently in dispatching the ultimatum?"

122. Foreign Relations, n. 6, p. 207.
But for this difference, Japan would have declared war on 15 August. The time that elapsed was due to the differences between London and Tokyo over the ultimate disposal of Kiaochau. Baron Kato made the following speech on 8 December 1914. He said inter alia:

Whether Kiaochau will be restored to China or not is a question for the future; today is not the time to make a definite declaration.

However, he denied the existence of any agreement with any foreign nation (including Britain) by which Japan was bound to retrocede that territory (Kiaochau) to China. (123)

About the disposition of Tsingtau (Kiaochau) Baron Kato had said the following in an interview to a representative of the Jiji Shimpo, the translation of which appeared in the Japan Advertiser on 19 November 1914. He said:

Whether we establish a military rule or a civil rule, we must at an early date open that port (Tsingtau - Kiaochau) to free commerce. But we must keep that place until the war in Europe is over.

Before the war was over, he foresaw:

In the peace conference which will be held after the war, China may not be invited to participate, because she is not a belligerent nation. (124)

Reiterating the adherence of Japan to the preservation of the territorial integrity of China, Japan's Minister for Foreign Affairs made an important observation that the Japanese desire had been to strengthen Japan's foothold in Manchuria and Mongolia. (125) It was this which angered the Chinese. They held

123. Ibid.
124. Ibid., p. 203.
125. Ibid.
Britain equally responsible for the Japanese action in the province of Shantung. They also complained "that in Europe Britain has done her utmost to maintain international law — her war in Europe against Germany was, as said openly, to maintain the neutrality of Belgium, — but in China, the Peking Gazette said on 5 October 1914, "she has leagued herself together with Japan to break the neutrality of China". They further complained, "wherever the Japanese troops passed, they have always murdered innocent (Chinese) people and outraged (Chinese) women and girls". (126)