Great Powers and the Sino-Japanese War 1894–1895[1]

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The battle for influence in Korea between China and Japan culminated in Japan's declaration of war on 1 August 1894. At the beginning of the conflict, Tokyo was not in a particularly favourable position internationally. Great Britain, which had the greatest interests in China, supported Beijing. Russia, which also had extensive interests there, in no way welcomed Japan taking the place of a weak China in Korea.[2] As such, after conflict broke out, the Russian envoy in Beijing, Count Cassini, unsuccessfully attempted to get Britain to put joint pressure on Tokyo.[3] International public opinion was also mostly sympathetic to the "Middle Kingdom", which was having to face Japanese aggression. Britain's envoy in Beijing, Sir Nicholas O'Conor, stated in a report to Foreign Minister Kimberley in London that, *"China in taking defensive measures to protect her national interests will have the sympathy of all nations"*.[4] Japan's policy was perceived as a clear breach of international law.[5]

The conviction that Japan would be unable to overcome China's greater numbers in terms of human and material resources was still very strong, and as such the Western press were at one in predicting China's victory.[6] Statements made by a number of experts who had worked in the Far East for some time helped contribute to this conviction. Briton William T. Lang, for example, was an inspector in China's navy and held the rank of Chinese Vice-Admiral, and in an interview for Reuters news agency

1 This study is one of the outcomes of the grant *The Political and Economic Interests of Great Britain and Germany in China, 1894–1914*, awarded by the Grant Agency of the Czech Republic (13–12431S).

2 W. L. LANGER, *The Diplomacy of Imperialism 1890–1902*, New York 1951, p. 173; P. H. CLYDE, *The Far East: A History of the Impact of the West on Eastern Asia*, New York 1949, p. 253.

3 The National Archives, London-Kew (hereinafter referred to as TNA), Foreign Office (hereinafter referred to as FO) 17 China/1196. Political and other departments. General Correspondence before 1906. Diplomatic despatches. O'Conor to Kimberley, No. 273, confidential. Peking, August 10, 1894. Ibidem, O'Conor to Kimberley, No. 274, confidential, Peking, August 10, 1894.

4 Ibidem, O'Conor to Kimberley, No. 242. Peking, August 1, 1894.

5 Ibidem, O'Conor to Kimberley, No. 244. Peking, August 2, 1894.

6 *Japan Has Declared the War*, in: The New York Times, August 8, 1894, p. 5; *China's Defeat Impossible*, in: The New York Times, August 13, 1894; Moskovskiye vedomosti, No. 203, July 27/ /August 8, 1894. p. 2.

he predicted Japan's defeat, because he said that, *"the Chinese navy was well-drilled, the ships were fit, the artilery was at least adequate and the coastal forts were strong. Weihaiwei was* [...] *impregnable."* Although he acknowledged that it would primarily depend on how the Chinese forces were managed, he was convinced that, *"in the end there is no doubt that Japan must be utterly crushed"*.[7] The Chief Constructor of the British Navy at the time, and a designer of a number of Japanese warships, Sir Edward J. Reed,[8] in an interview for the Pall Mall Gazette, declared that the Japanese would be weakened because they did not have enough armoured ships.[9]

The course of the conflict, however, was soon to overturn the idea of a Chinese victory. In any case, those who knew how prepared the war's participants were for it did not predict Beijing's success. The main problem on the Chinese side was the fact that the "Middle Kingdom" did not have a national army organised along modern lines. The army of the "Son of Heaven" was made up of over a million men, but with a mixture of different forces. It was basically made up of four components. The first was the so-called Banner Armies divided up on an ethnic basis (Manchu, Mongol, Hui/Muslim, Han/Chinese), the second was the so-called Green Standard Army in which Chinese served and which was deployed across the whole Empire, the third was units of hired mercenaries, basically an heir to the previous Ever Victorious Army made up of foreigners and engaged to quell the Taiping Rebellion, and finally the fourth component was made up of units with modern arms and trained by foreign instructors. A major problem was the fact that the *"Chinese military reforms had only partially succeeeded, that armaments and training remained inferior, and that widerspread opium abuse had fatally undermined the Chinese army"*.[10] The mercenaries and units with modern arms approximately represented a mere 10 % of China's armed forces, with the remaining forces entirely unusable for modern warfare due to their equipment and training regimes. Furthermore, the central government essentially did not inspect regional units in distant provinces. The Viceroys in individual provinces tried to keep their armed forces there to enforce their position and objectives, and in the south of the country, the conflict with Japan was perceived as a distant matter which did not affect the interests of prominent local leaders. Li Hongzhang, Viceroy of Zhili province and the most influential Chinese politician of the era, built up what could be termed a personal so-called Huai Army, which was one of the best prepared armies and was in charge of the so-called Beiyang Army during the war, involving roughly three fifths of troops in north China. During the course of the war with France in 1884–1885, Li did not comply with the appeals of the viceroys of the southern prov-

7 The North-China Herald, September 9, 1894; D. TWITCHET — J. K. FAIRBANK (Eds.), *The Cambridge History of China: Late Ching, 1800–1911*, Vol. 11, Part 2, Cambridge 2008, p. 269.

8 Sir Edward James Reed (1830–1906), Liberal politician, naval architect and railway entrepreneur. He was Chief Constructor of the Royal Navy from 1863–1870, and a Member of Parliament from 1874–1906. After leaving the role of Chief Constructor, he designed warships for Brazil, Chile, Japan and Germany.

9 *The Navies of Japan and China: A Talk with Sir Edward J. Reed, K.C.B., M.P.*, in: The Pall Mall Gazette, August 1, 1894, pp. 1–2.

10 S. LONE, *Japan's First Modern War: Army and Society in the Conflict with China 1894–95*, Houndmills / London / New York 1994, p. 25.

inces for help, and they responded in kind during the war with Japan, such that only forces dislocated in the north of China got involved in the conflict.

Furthermore, the Chinese Navy did not have a unified command, this being made up of four squadrons working separately,[11] of which only the Beiyang Squadron had relatively modern vessels available to it, its base located in the marine garrison of Weihaiwei and under the command of Li Hongzhang.

Although both "northern" components, the Beiyang Army and Beiyang Squadron, represented the best of the imperial armed forces, there were basic shortcomings which expressed themselves to a large extent before the war and during its course, these including corruption, theft, insufficient weapons and equipment, poor organisation and the low morale of their men and officers. The Navy had not received any new vessels since 1888, and in this regard it is often noted that a large portion of the funds originally designated for the fleet were spent on renovating palaces and gardens as part of preparations for celebrating the 60th birthday of the powerful Empress Dowager Cixi. Just for the renovation of the Summer Palace, which cost 12–14 million taels, 11 million taels were transferred from funds for the fleet. It would apparently have been possible to build 6–7 new warships for that sum.[12] Nevertheless, the British considered the Beiyang Squadron to be of very high quality. Commander of the British Navy in Chinese waters (Royal Navy's China Station), Admiral Sir Edward Freemantle visited China's commander, Admiral Ding Ruchang on board his ship and watched the manoeuvres of the Chinese squadron, which he termed 'precise', describing its weaponry as of high quality.[13] It would seem, however, that the admiralty did not share his opinion.[14] Britain's Military Intelligence service supplied the government with objective and fairly detailed information on the state of the Chinese and Japanese armed forces, and predicted Japan's victory.[15] In his assessment of Japan's army, the Director of the Military Intelligence service quoted an unnamed military expert[16] who had visited Japan and who wrote of them: *"I came to Japan to see some miserable parody of a third rate European soldier; instead I find an army in every sense of the word — admirably organized, splendidly equipped, thoroughly drilled, and, strangest thing of all in an Oriental people, cheaply and honestly administered"*.[17]

It was impossible to overlook the fatal shortcomings of the Chinese. Transport had been neglected, with railway construction in Manchuria held up, and in contrast

11 These were the Northern (Beiyang), Southern (Nanyang), Fujian and Canton Squadrons.

12 S. C. M. PAINE, *The Sino-Japanese War of 1894–1895: Perceptions, Power and Primacy*, Cambridge 2006, p. 190. For the latest on Cixi cf. M. JUST, *Kaiserin Witwe Cixi*, Berlin 1997; C. JUNG, *Empress Dowager Cixi: The Concubine Who Launched Modern China*, New York 2013.

13 TNA, FO 17 China/1212. Various diplomatic. Admiralty (MacGregor) to Secretary of State, Foreign Affairs. London, July 4, 1894. Amongst other things, MacGregor gave information on Freemantle's letter of May 25, 1895, in which the Admiral writes of his visit.

14 Ibidem. Admiralty (Admiral Bridge) to Lord Rosebery. London, July 16, 1894.

15 Ibidem. Director of Military Intelligence (Intelligence Division) to Kimberley, confidential. London, July 16, 1894.

16 According to Stewart Lone, this was Lieutenant Colonel E. G. Barrow. LONE, p. 28.

17 TNA, FO 17 China/1212. Various diplomatic. Director of Military Intelligence (Intelligence Division) to Kimberley, confidential. London, July 16, 1894.

to its opponent, China's army did not have engineering units, transport and supply units, or even a medical service. It had essentially kept an archaic model where troops acquired necessary supplies from the land on which they were located without even paying for them. Cases of looting and rape by Chinese soldiers were by no means isolated over the course of China's military operations in Korea.

A major problem for China was how to finance the war, with the institutions which were meant to secure this not working well. At the beginning of the conflict, Li Hongzhang borrowed funds from customs revenue in Shanghai and Ningbo, with the government subsequently setting up a war fund into which it deposited 30 % of funds meant for paying state officials, and in the end going for the traditional solution of borrowing from abroad. Beijing financed the war with the help of two loans from British Hong Kong and Shanghai Banking Corporation to a total value of £ 4,635,000.[18] In contrast, Japan used a modern public financing system to pay for the war, and when it resorted to loans these were not from the international market, but rather internal loans.

The Chinese army's readiness was a major problem. By 1892, the Inspector-General of China's Imperial Maritime Custom Service, Sir Robert Hart, had already stated that the Chinese army was little different from that which was in operation 300 years previously, and was *"merely an armed undisciplined horde"*.[19] Just a few days before the outbreak of war, a commentator on the influential French journal, *Journal des débats*, remarked that Chinese soldiers were affected by a *"spirit of banditry"*, while Japanese troops had *"good discipline"*.[20] In 1894, Lord Curzon criticised the training and equipment of China's army, and after their first defeats even stated that, *"the Chinese army, under Chinese officers* [...] *is an undisciplined rabble of tramps"*.[21]

It remains a question whether and to what extent the course of war was affected by the fact that Japan had broken China's telegraphic code shortly before the war in June 1894, deciphering Li Hongzhang's correspondence. This information is relatively new and interesting, if somewhat problematic as it is given by only one researcher.[22] The author of this study has been unable to come across this fact in any other historical papers or sources.

Japan's army gave a completely different impression,[23] and was based on general conscription, which had been implemented in 1873. The founders of its modern army first based it upon the French model with a number of French military missions sent

18 Hong Kong and Shanghai Banking Corporation and China. Final Agreement for the Chinese Imperial Government seven per cent silver loan of 1894. J. V. A. Mac MURRAY, *Treaties and Agreements with and Concerning China, 1894–1914: Manchu Period (1894–1911)*, Vol. 1, New York 1921, pp. 11–14. Hong Kong and Shanghai Banking Corporation and China. Final Agreement for the Chinese Imperial Government six per cent Sterling loan of 1895. Ibidem, pp. 15–18.

19 PAINE, p. 147.

20 *La Guerre entre la Chine et le Japon*, in: Journal des débats politiques et litéraires ("Journal des débats"), July 28, 1894, p. 1.

21 LANGER, p. 174.

22 PAINE, p. 194.

23 For more on the Japanese National Army, specifically the navy cf. LONE, pp. 17–24.

to the country over time.[24] Eventually, Japan came to favour a German, or Prussian, model. This had a lot to do with Prussian officer, Klemens Wilhelm Jakob Meckel, who worked for the Japanese government from 1885 to 1888. Japan's army took on much of Prussian military doctrines, organisation and its system of command, while its structure and equipment corresponded to modern requirements. Japanese officers often studied in Europe where they learnt about modern tactics and strategies. Japan's navy was also modern, and its make-up and organisation was mainly in accordance with the British model. Most Japanese warships were built in British shipyards.

At the beginning of the war, Japan mobilised 100,000 soldiers. Two armies were designated for attack with a total of five divisions, and two additional divisions in reserve.[25] At the beginning of military operations, Chinese troops in Korea were moved from various directions north to Pyongyang, today's capital of North Korea. The First Japanese Army's task under the command of Yamagata Aritomo was to undertake operations in Korea and subsequently attack Chinese Manchuria from the north. The Second Army, commanded by Japan's then War Minister, General Ōyama Iwao,[26] was to attack Manchuria from the south, take over the Port Arthur naval base (Lüshunkou), then join the Yamagata forces, and following a transfer to the province of Shandong, to capture China's key marine garrison, Weihaiwei.

Control of the maritime connections from the Japanese islands to the continent along which reinforcements and military supplies were transported to Korea and on to Manchuria was of key importance to Japan. Even before war broke out, a much-discussed question was which of the anticipated participants in the conflict had greatest chance of success.[27] Despite the frequently noted advantages of the Beiyang Army and Beiyang Squadron, after just six weeks Japan's overwhelming dominance on land and sea was clear to see. Japan had more than 450 ships available to it for transport to the continent. China had hardly a tenth of that number for transporting troops. On the other hand, Japanese ships sailing to Korea, or to Manchuria, were subject to major risk as the Chinese war fleet had a larger number of boats and Japan had no vessels which were comparable to China's *Dingyuan* and *Zhenyuan* battleships.

The first major conflict between China and Japan occurred before the official declaration of war, on 28 July 1894 at Sônghwan, about 15 km from Asan, where Chinese troops were landing. Defeat contributed to the undermining of Chinese morale, ex-

24 The First French Mission operated in Japan at the end of the Tokugawa shogunate, with the next in 1872–1880 and 1884.

25 The First Army included the Third Division (located in Nagoya) and Fifth Division (Hiroshima). The Second Army comprised the First Division (Tokyo), Second Division (Sendai) and Sixth Division (Kumamoto). The Fourth Division (Osaka) was in reserve, with the Imperial Guards division meant to invade Formosa.

26 Japan's commanders are given with the ranks and titles they held during the war. Many authors incorrectly provide them with higher ranks and titles which they acquired later. Ōyama, for example, often referred to as Field Marshal, didn't become one until 1898, subsequently becoming a Prince in 1907.

27 *The Peiyang Squadron,* The North-China Herald, June 29, 1894; *The Japanese Navy,* The Pall Mall Gazette, July 26, 1894; *La guerre entre la Chine et le Japon*, Journal des débats, July 28, 1894; *Summary of News*, in: Japan Weekly Mail, June 23, 1894.

pressed in two key conflicts in mid-September 1894. The first case was the ground Battle of Pyongyang on 15–16 September 1894 in which the Chinese army suffered a massive defeat despite their more advantageous position — with 2,000 dead and 4,000 injured, while Japan lost just 102 men with 433 injured. Foreign reporters referred to the desperate situation in the Chinese army,[28] which retreated to the Yalu border river, finally withdrawing behind it[29] and losing a large part of their modern weapons during the retreat. After this defeat, all China's shortcomings expressed themselves to their full extent. Chinese troops showed cowardice in front of the enemy many times, leaving their positions, and losing their weapons and equipment. During their retreat, they repeatedly committed brutal acts of violence on the Koreans, burnt down villages, and *"the whole line of retreat was a scene of desolation"*.[30] Western observers were aghast at China's practices, with the Chinese torturing prisoners and executing them because they had no food for them; the mutilation and murder of prisoners was common. In contrast, Japan endeavoured to demonstrate how civilised it was, with some Chinese prisoners even being taken to Japan and treated in the same manner as their own injured soldiers.[31]

Just a day after the defeat at Pyongyang, on 17 September 1894, the largest naval battle of the whole war took place at the mouth of the Yalu River. Viceroy Li Hongzhang ordered the Beiyang Fleet, which was escorting soldiers to Dadong at the mouth of the Yalu, not to undertake offensive action against the Japanese, and not to sail to the Korea Bay past the imaginary line between the mouth of the Yalu and the Chinese garrison of Weihaiwei on the shore of Shandong.[32] This measure, however, did not prevent a clash. Since a number of authors in a somewhat exaggerated fashion describe the battle at the mouth of the Yalu as the largest naval conflict since the Battle of Trafalgar in 1805, it is surprising how information on the number of ships taking part and also to some extent on the course of the battle differs.[33] Around

28 Moskovskiye vedomosti, No. 263, September 25 / October 7, 1894, p. 3; Novoe vremya, No. 6690, October 25, 1894, pp. 1–2.

29 TNA, FO 17 China/1198. Diplomatic despatches. O'Conor to Kimberley, No. 354 and 358, Chefoo September 30 or October 1, 1894. The British envoy reported that the Chinese army had retreated behind the Yalu River, and stated that after the defeat in Pyongyang it was impossible to get reliable information from the Chinese.

30 *The War in the East*, in: The Times, October 3, 1894.

31 PAINE, p. 175.

32 S. KUO, *Chinese Reaction to Foreign Encroachment with Special Reference to the First Sino-Japanese War and Its Immediate Aftermath*, Ph.D. Thesis, New York 1953, p. 67

33 Briton William F. Tyler and American Philo N. McGiffin, who served on Chinese battleships, say that ten Chinese ships faced twenty Japanese. W. F. TYLER, *Pulling Strings in China*, London 1929, p. 50; L. McGIFFIN, *Yankee on the Yalu: Philo Norton McGiffin: American Captain in the Chinese Navy*, New York, p. 188. Hosea Ballou Morse writes in his monumental work that the Japanese had 12 battleships, and the Chinese 16. H. B. MORSE, *The International Relations of the Chinese Empire: The Period of Subjection, 1894–1911*, Vol. 3, London 1918, p. 34. Expert on the history of the Chinese Navy, John Rawlinson, states that both sides had 12 vessels. J. L. RAWLINSON, *China's Struggle for Naval Development, 1839–1895*, Cambridge 1967, p. 174. Sarah Paine says that 10 major ships took part in the battle on both sides. PAINE, p. 180.

noon on 17 September 1894, Japan's Combined Fleet commanded by its First Commander, Admiral Itō Sukeyuki came across the Beiyang Squadron headed by Admiral Ding Ruchang mid-way on the path between the mouth of the Yalu and Port Arthur. At 12:45, the battle began, and it ended at 5:00 pm when both sides had used up all their munitions. China's advantage was in its two battleships armed with heavy guns, while the Japanese navy worked more quickly and was better organised. Although Japan's flagship, *Macushima*, was badly damaged and Japan did not have the equivalent of China's battleships, the final outcome was catastrophic for China — 600 of their sailors died while Japan suffered 239 deaths. Admiral Ding was injured, along with his German advisor, von Hanneken, one Chinese cruiser was sunk and another three ran aground.[34] Japan captured a total of five steamships owned by China Merchants which were transporting soldiers.[35] *"Today, Japan is the true master in Korea, and its ships control the Yellow Sea,"*[36] stated a contemporary commentator. Just a few days later, British envoy in Beijing, O'Conor, could only drily note that, *"the Gulf of Pechili is practically open to the Japanese, whose warships now pass unchallenged backwards and forwards"*.[37]

Both defeats had far-reaching consequences for the Qing dynasty regime. Modernised Japan's supremacy was clearly shown, leading to it replacing China as the regional power in the Far East. In the West, a reversal in the perception of Japan took place, its victory being commented on widely in the cities of the world. *"For Europeans and Americans, Japan has achieved intellectual supremacy in Asia with just one act,"*[38] wrote Berlin's liberal National Zeitung. A French paper fully captured the historical significance of the Japanese victory: *"Who would have thought that in just a quarter of a century a power in the Far East, and a relatively small power at that, could adopt the tactics of waging large-scale war so fast and put it into practice?* [...] *Here, today, a new era of history begins, and you can say that you have been witness to it."*[39] Japanese success did not just receive appreciation, but also aroused concern, especially from Russia. *"The war which broke out between China and Japan* [...] *is not significant just for East Asia, but also for Europe, and especially for Russia whose Asian territories border Korea and China and close to the dominion of Japan,"*[40] said a commentator for the paper Russkie vedomosti of the situation.

34 China lost the *Jingyuan* armoured cruiser, the *Chiyuan* protected cruiser and the *Chaoyong* and *Yangwei* cruisers.

35 TNA, FO 17 China/1197. Diplomatic despatches. O'Conor to Kimberley, No. 338. Chefoo, September 19, 1894. The British envoy submitted a detailed report on the course of the battle at the mouth of the Yalu and expressed his fear the Japanese would land and continue to Mukden (Shenyang) or directly to Beijing. For details on the battle, also see TNA, FO 17 China/1198. Diplomatic despatches. Consul Henry B. Bristow to O'Conor, No. 73. Tientsin, September 26, 1894.

36 *Die Bedeutung der Kämpfe bei Pjöng-jang und am Yalu-Fluss*, in: Neue Preussische Zeitung, September 27, 1894, evening edition, p. 1.

37 TNA, FO 17 China/1198. Diplomatic despatches. O'Conor to Kimberley, No. 359. Chefoo, October 2, 1894.

38 *China in Vergangenheit und Gegenwart*, in: National Zeitung, morning edition, October 7, 1894, p. 1.

39 *La Bataille de Ya-lu*, in: Le journal des débats, September 21, 1894, morning edition, p. 1.

40 Russkie vedomosti, September 24, 1894, p. 3.

For China it was as if the catastrophic course of the war did not affect Beijing a lot to begin with. The Imperial Court was mostly involved in preparations for the 60th birthday of Empress Dowager Cixi, which fell on 29 November 1895. In a letter of 17 September 1894, Sir Robert Hart stated that the Beijing Court was ignoring the war and focusing on the mentioned preparations.[41] But the situation was soon to change. In northern China — especially in Manchuria, the ports of Shandong and in east Henan — alarm began to spread, and agents of the Gelaohui (Elder Brothers Society) secret society began a significant campaign aiming to overthrow Manchu Qing Dynasty.[42] Expressions of xenophobia linked to attacks on foreigners multiplied in number.[43] Fears grew of how undisciplined Chinese soldiers would act when retreating following defeats.[44] Before the end of September, there was a steep rise in anti-foreigner sentiment in central China, which the British consul in Hankou reported on along with Gelaohui activities.[45]

In this situation, it was no longer possible to conceal the true state of affairs or spread the usual misinformation, although even after the battle at Yalu, Li Hongzhang gave a report to Zongli Yamen[46] stating that the Chinese Navy had defeated a stronger fleet of "dwarfs".[47] It was this influential Viceroy who was to become the scapegoat. Li was held liable by numerous enemies for the outbreak of war and its damaging course. Attacks on his family and supporters multiplied, and his brother-in-law and nephew were accused of misappropriation of public funds. An Imperial Decree was issued on 17 September removing his two highest awards from him.[48] If it had been any other dignitary, he would likely have been executed. But the dynasty needed Li Hongzhang and as such he remained in office and he kept all his titles. Empress Dowager Cixi realised that only the armed forces under his command could stop any Japanese advance to Beijing. In the end, the planned celebrations of the Empress's birthday were cancelled because of the war, although, as the British envoy noted, *"the language used in this Decree seems to show that the supremacy of the Dowager Empress is asserting itself in face of the present grave political crisis"*.[49]

From the beginning of the conflict, Great Britain maintained strict neutrality and attempted not to worsen its relations with either of the warring parties. As such, after

41 MORSE, p. 34.

42 TNA, FO 17 China/1198. Diplomatic despatches. O'Conor to Kimberley, No. 359. Chefoo, October 2, 1894.

43 Ibidem.

44 TNA, FO 17 China/1198. Diplomatic despatches. Consul T. L. Bullock to O'Conor, No. 44. Newchwang, September 25, 1894.

45 TNA, FO 17 China/1198. Diplomatic despatches. Consul Pelham Warren to O'Conor, No. 21. Hankow, September 28. 1894.

46 Zongli Yamen — the Chinese government body in charge of foreign affairs, or mediating communication between the Imperial Court and foreign envoys in Beijing. It was founded in 1861 by Prince Gong. It was abolished in 1901 and replaced by a standard Foreign Ministry.

47 Even in official documents, the Japanese were termed "dwarfs". PAINE, p. 183.

48 MORSE, p. 35; PAINE, p. 185.

49 TNA, FO 17 China/1198. Diplomatic despatches. O'Conor to Kimberley, No. 368. Chefoo, October 3, 1894.

the *Kowshing* Incident both foreign ministers — Kimberley and Mucu — endeavoured to calm the situation down, and soon promised to pay Japan appropriate compensation. A major problem for Britain was securing Shanghai's neutrality. Minister Mutsu gave a guarantee at the start of the war that the military operation would not affect the city without giving any conditions therein.[50] The port was a major centre of British trade, but on the other hand there was also a large Chinese arsenal in the city and there were soon complaints from Japan that Shanghai was used by China as a base for military operations and it supplied them with munitions. If this practice was to continue, Japan issued a declaration *"that unless Her Majesty's Government took steps to prevent this, they would not consider themselves bound by the undertaking formerly given to respect Shanghai"*.[51] In the end, they demanded that guarantees regarding the neutralisation of Shanghai were also provided by China. Since China later took defensive measures at approaches to Shanghai, there was a threat that Japanese forces would act here too.[52] As such, the admiralty began to boost the Royal Navy's China Station, and its commander, Admiral Freemantle, received the order to undertake preventive measures in case Japan should break its promise to maintain Shanghai's neutrality.[53]

As a result of its international isolation, during the crisis in the Far East, Great Britain had to tread carefully; as such its Liberal government endeavoured to maintain tolerable relations not just with Tokyo, but also with St Petersburg. In the case of Russia, this was not an easy task. Although Foreign Minister Kimberley had assured his Russian colleague Giers that Britain would not resort to any one-sided intervention and would exchange information with Russia,[54] relations between the British envoy in Beijing, Sir Nicolas O'Conor, and his Russian counterpart, Count Arthur Pavlovich Cassini, were not friendly, as the British diplomat legitimately suspected that Cassini was undertaking activities counter to British interests. Things went so far that O'Conor was instructed not to "fully" co-operate with his Russian colleague. In terms of its relations with Russia, British policy in China was in a complicated situation. Britain assumed that if there was a danger the Chinese capital could be captured by Japan, then Russia would have to intervene and could become a dominant influence in Beijing. Furthermore, there were rumours at the time that Russia had already concluded a secret agreement with Japan which would give Japan free hand in Korea while allowing Russia to promote its interests in northern China. Another

50 T. G. OTTE, *The China Question: Great Power Rivalry and British Isolation 1894–1905*, Oxford / New York 2007, p. 38. TNA, FO 228 China/1162. Consulates and Legation China: General Correspondence, series 1. From Shanghai 1894. Consul-General Hannen to O'Conor. Shanghai, July 24, 1894.

51 TNA, FO 17 China/1207. Consuls. Consul-General Nicholas J. Hannen to O'Conor, No. 69. Shanghai, August 23, 1894.

52 The Chinese government promised that if conflict were to break out it would not block access to Shanghai, but already during the first days of war there were reports that Chinese authorities were considering blocking the river. TNA, FO 228 China/1161General Correspondence. To and from Shanghai 1894. O'Conor to Consul-General Hannen. Peking, June 25, 1894; O'Conor to Consul-General Hannen. Peking, August 4, 1894.

53 OTTE, p. 38.

54 TNA, FO 65 Russia/1474. Kimberley to Lascelles, No. 38. London, August 2, 1894.

threat to British interests was the possibility that Japan's operations would result in the fall of the whole of northern China into such chaos that the Great Powers would be forced to intervene militarily and Britain would have no option but to take part in the joint action.

The British government's careful approach was not generally accepted. Sir Robert Hart, for example, angrily criticised London's approach: *"If England will not act (and by act I mean order the British Admiral to stop the Japanese from landing by force) [China] will accept Russia's hand!* [...] *I don't admire England's China Policy a bit — it has been of a lukewarm kind and valued, or undervalued, accordingly. If China goes to Russia — the fate of East is changed!"*[55] Hart wasn't content just making statements like this, also urging Foreign Minister Kimberley to make some kind of intervention to prevent the Japanese advancing to Beijing. London did not perceive the whole situation in such a what might be termed simplified way; Prime Minister Rosebery and the head of the Foreign Office were aware of the risk that pressure could force Tokyo into rapprochement with Russia. Furthermore, public opinion was no longer in favour of this step, with a conviction that Britain's interests did not collide with Japan's prevalent.[56]

The war's course forced Britain to act. Following victory at Pyongyang, Japan completed its occupation of Korea by 30 September, with the second phase of their campaign to take place in Manchuria, in Chinese territory. On Wednesday 3 October 1894, Prime Minister Rosebery called a meeting of the government to discuss the crisis in the Far East. The Prime Minister explained to his colleagues: *"We are to tell France, Germany & Russia that we are apprehensive as to the position and safety of Europeans in China if the present disorder gets at all worse, and ask what means they propose to take. We ourselves in the meanwhile are sending such naval reinforcements as may be necessary."*[57] The result of the discussion was Britain's enquiry to France, Germany, Russia, the USA and Italy of 6 October 1894 as to whether the governments of those countries were prepared to intervene along with Britain in China, and contribute to restoring peace. Britain proposed the Great Powers give a guarantee of Korea's independence and war reparations for Japan as a basis for negotiations with Tokyo.[58] Only diplomatic means were considered as the tool for achieving the objectives.[59] Only Italy responded positively; the response of the other states was less than positive. The United States rejected the proposal with the explanation that the war was not endangering their interests, and as such they intended to continue to maintain strict neutrality towards both states in the conflict. Neither did France express much willingness to get involved in joint action with Britain, and Germany considered the action to be premature and was anyway intending to act only in line with its ally, Rus-

55 Hart to Campbell, 30. 9. 1894. J. K. FAIRBANK et al. (Eds.), *The I. G. in Peking: Letters of Robert Hart, Chinese Maritime Customs, 1867–1907*, Vol. 2, Cambridge 1975, No. 946.

56 The Times, September 24, 1894.

57 A. HAWKINS — J. POWELL, *The Journal of John Wodehouse, First Earl of Kimberley for 1862–1902*, Cambridge 1997. Record from October 4, 1894, p. 428.

58 P. JOSEPH, *Foreign Diplomacy in China, 1894–1900: A Study in Political and Economic Relations with China*, London 1928, p. 73. For more on the British appeal, also see L. K. YOUNG, *British Policy in China, 1895–1902*, Oxford 1970, p. 16; LANGER, p. 174; OTTE, pp. 42–43.

59 OTTE, p. 42.

sia. For Germany, upon receiving Britain's appeal,[60] Marschall von Bieberstein, State Secretary in the Foreign Office, questioned British ambassador, Sir Edward Malet, as to whether the intervention would involve just a diplomatic note or whether other actions were anticipated.[61] In any case, the Germans too did not express any interest in the co-operation proposed by Britain.[62] In this situation, Russia's position was of key importance. Britain was quite justifiably convinced that if St Petersburg were to take part, then the others would also join in the end. Her Majesty's ambassador in Russia, Sir Frank Lascelles was as such instructed to try to make Russia participate in the action under the conditions contained in the proposal of 6 October. Although Russian Foreign Minister Giers expressed his personal sympathy towards the proposal, he informed the ambassador that without the Emperor's decision he could not undertake anything. But the seriously ill ruler could no longer engage with the problem and died on 1 November 1894. Shortly before, on 24 October, Lascelles was informed that Russia would not take part in the proposed joint action.[63] Giers health was also poor, and the minister died on 21 January 1895. Because it was not possible to make decisions on important issues, for a certain period Russia's foreign policy was paralysed, a situation which was extremely unfortunate, because the Japanese advance continued.

The second phase of Japan's campaign took place in Manchuria, and its objective was to conquer the garrisons of Port Arthur and Weihaiwei, the two most important bases which controlled sea access to north China. The Chinese command's idea that the border river of Yalu could stop or at least slow down Japan's advance was shown to be completely unrealistic. Japan built a floating bridge across it, and on 24 October they crossed the river without resistance. The following day, they arrived at their enemy's forward position at Jiulianzheng, which the Chinese then hastily deserted.[64] Japan's First Army subsequently split up — the Fifth Division under the command of General Nozu Michisura headed for Mukden, while the Third Division under General Kacura Tarō continued to pursue the escaping Chinese and headed for the Liaodong Peninsula. At the same time, Marshall Ōyama's Second Army landed on the south of

60 J. LEPSUS — A. MENDELSSOHN BARTHOLDY — F. THIMME (Eds.), *Die Große Politik der Europäischen Kabinette 1871–1914: Sammlung der diplomatischen Akten des Auswärtigen Amtes* (hereinafter referred to as *GP*)*: Der nahe und ferne Osten*, Bd. 9, Berlin 1923. Nr. 2214, Der englische Botschafter Sir Edward Malet an den Staatssekretär des Auswärtigen Amtes Freiherr von Marschall. Nr. 2215. Berlin, den 7. Oktober 1894, p. 243.

61 Ibidem, Nr. 2216, Aufzeichnung des Staatsekretärs des Auswärtigen Amtes Freiherr Marschall von Bieberstein. Berlin, den 9. Oktober 1894.

62 Ibidem, Nr. 2217. Der Staatssekretär des Auswärtigen Amtes Freiherr Marschall von Bieberstein an den Gesandten in Peking Freiherr Schenck zu Schweinsberg, Berlin, den 14. Oktober 1894.

63 TNA, FO 65 Russia/1473. Lascelles to Kimberley, No. 222, confidential. St Petersburg, October 21, 1894.

64 According to the Russian envoy in Beijing, Count Cassini, demoralisation on the Chinese side soon reached such a level that if Japan had decided to advance to Beijing, they would not have come across any major resistance. British ambassador Lascelles in St Petersburg provided information on Cassini's report. TNA 65 Russia/1473. Lascelles to Kimberley, No. 228, confidential. St Petersburg, October 22, 1894.

the Liaodong Peninsula and began a siege of Port Arthur. The garrison was under the command of General Wei Jucheng, who had the Chinese army's best troops available to him.

The question remains of to what extent the plan of Japan's army commanders to take Beijing and overthrow Qing dynasty was a realistic one. The soldiers thought that the First Army was to continue in operations in Manchuria after the conquest of Port Arthur and subsequently open up a route to the Chinese capital, while Weihaiwei was the target of the Second Army. Furthermore, the Third Army was prepared in Hiroshima and was to land in Dagu, take the garrison there and free up the route to Beijing along the Baihe River.[65] Politicians in Tokyo, especially diplomats at the Foreign Ministry, thoroughly evaluated the possible consequences of this extreme solution. There were afraid that any attempt to implement this plan would necessarily lead to the Great Powers intervening, something Japan would be unable to stand up to, and as such they recommended limiting the objectives of the war. The fact these fears were well-founded was shown during negotiations on the peace agreement, with the Great Powers forcing Tokyo to give up some of their war gains.

In the meantime, however, the plan of Japan's military command was coming to fruition. The Second Army was gradually occupying important points on the Liaodong Peninsula — on 6 November the well-fortified town of Jinzhou was taken, and a day later their soldiers occupied the major port of Dalian, and all with minimum deployment and losses. Foreign observers could not understand why the Beiyang Fleet, which in early November 1894 had sailed to Port Arthur, had received the order to leave the garrison and port and return to Weihaiwei, so that they could not be involved in its defence. On their return, China suffered a fatal loss — the battleship *Zhenyuan* was damaged, ran ashore and could not be used for the rest of the war. *"With the loss of Zhenyuan, her greatest battleship, China becomes practically powerless on the sea,"*[66] stated a commentator of The New York Times. The observers there (and later researchers) expressed amazement that China did not use its relatively modern warships to undermine Japan's maritime communications. Japanese civilian vessels managed to transport thousands of soldiers to the continent without being threatened by China's warships.

In this war, a very peculiar one in military terms, Chinese commanders did not take advantage of other opportunities either, and nor did they act in a manner comprehensible to Western observers. They deserted Jiulianzheng and Andong without a fight, they burnt down and cleared the fortified town of Fenghuangcheng, and the Japanese took Dalian, with the best port on the Liaodong Peninsula, without one shot being fired. In most cases, the Chinese commanders also left a large amount of weapons and supplies in the towns.

In terms of this trend, the fall of the Port Arthur garrison represents a certain first peak. The garrison had been built for 16 years as part of attempts at modernisation and was of key importance for China's position in the Yellow Sea, containing the only docks in northern China in which battleships could be repaired. The Chinese commanders were clearly unable to manage the situation in the garrison, because

65 Today, this river is known as Hai.

66 *China's Best Ship Lost*, in: New York Times, November 23, 1894, p. 1.

the soldiers began to plunder and destroy the equipment even before the Japanese attack began on 20 November 1894.[67] Only cowardice can really explain the action of the Chinese commanders, who boarded two small steamships at the port and simply left their soldiers to it. Although it could have been assumed that before seizing the garrison it would be necessary to lay siege to it for some time, the whole matter lasted just until the next day, Wednesday 21 November 1894 when Japan's general attack began and also ended. The capture of this major garrison took a mere 19 hours. As was standard, weapons, ammunition and supplies remained on site and the garrison and docks were not damaged.[68] This time, the Japanese troops' attempt at being "civilised warriors" failed, and they massacred 2,000 prisoners and civilians during the capture,[69] with murders taking place over several days. London's The Times was the first to refer to this on 26 November 1894. Probably the most extensive testimony to the murders was given by James Creelman in his articles as correspondent for the magazine New York World, describing an apocalypse in Port Arthur thus: *"The Japanese troops entered Port Arthur on Nov. 21 and massacred practically the entire population in cool blood* [...] *the defenseless and unarmed inhabitants were butchered in their houses and their bodies were unspeakably mutilated. There were an unrestrained reign of murder which continued for three days. The whole town was plundered with apalling atrocities* [...] *It was the first stain upon the Japanese civilization. The Japanese in this instance relapsed into barbarism."*[70] The Japanese command attempted to explain the rampage by saying the soldiers had become outraged after finding the remains of tortured and executed captured Japanese soldiers. It would take almost a month before Japan's Foreign Ministry expressed its regret and promised to investigate the events.

The conflict's unexpected and very fast course of development led to tension and nervousness both in Beijing and in European cities. After the first catastrophic defeat, China's Emperor Guangxu wanted to take personal control of leading the war, but his advisor talked him out of that idea. Prince Gong returned to his role, which had been removed ten years ago, allegedly because of his responsibility for the defeat in the war against France, although in fact at the hands of Empress Dowager Cixi, who saw him as a dangerous rival. In December he became president of the Grand Council, the sovereign's highest advisory body. On the other hand, Li Hongzhang became the scapegoat for the second time, and this time he again managed to avoid the worst. Just a day after the fall of Port Arthur, all his titles, honours and offices were taken from him, although his enemies did not manage to get rid of him completely. Li was effectively able to defend himself by making allegations. He submitted an extensive memorandum to the throne in which he said that for years he had been prevented

67 PAINE, p. 208.

68 For a detailed report on the capture of Port Arthur, see TNA, FO 17 China/1251. Francis R. Pelly (Porpoise) to Viceadmiral Sir. E. R. Fremantle. Chefoo November 22, 1894. The Japanese allowed Admiral Freemantle to visit Port Arthur four days after its capture. Cf. ibidem, Admiralty (Evan MacGregor) to the Undersecretary of State, Foreign Office. London, January 11, 1895. Attached Fremantle Report, November 27, 1894. Visit to Port Arthur after its Capture. No. 5211/6090.

69 For more on the massacre in Port Arthur cf. MORSE, pp. 37–38; PAINE, pp. 210–214.

70 J. CREELMAN, *A Japanese Masacre*, in: New York World, December 12, 1894, p. 1.

in his endeavours to develop the construction of railways, the building of a modern navy with a central command, and improve coastal defences, etc. The British press in China came out in strong favour of the Viceroy. A commentator for the North-China Herald was probably most cogent: *"The ablest man of the Empire asking to be punished for doing his best and asking whom? Practically a set of sterilised drones* (this is how he referred to the group of court eunuchs attached to Cixi), *who for years have been doing their worst to thwart his policy and oppose his measures."*[71]

In Beijing, they realised they needed to begin to find a path to a peace treaty, and during November 1894 the Chinese undertook two attempts in this regard. First of all, they called on the envoys of Great Britain, France, Germany, Russia and the USA to use their influence to promote an end to the conflict. The caution and mutual suspicion of the powers, however, meant the call had no effect. When Japan agreed to the United States legation in Beijing mediating between the warring countries, however, China went back to its original suggestion, and on 22 November proposed that the recognition of Korea's full independence and compensation for Japan be the basis for negotiations. Already at the beginning of October 1894, Britain advised China to send its protégé, the special commissioner for the Chinese Maritime Customs, German Gustav Detring, to Japan to negotiate the terms and conditions for a peace agreement.[72] He was accompanied by Alexander Michie, a special correspondent for London's The Times. Detring arrived in Hiroshima on 26 November, and was meant to give Li Hongzhang's letter to Japanese Prime Minister, Itō Hirobumi, and ascertain what conditions Japan might have for peace. Because Detring did not have official authorisation, the Japanese statesman refused to negotiate, not even meeting him at all, and the German was forced to return to China.

Besides Great Britain and Russia, which had been the main interested parties in China for many years, the dramatic course of events in the Far East also aroused the attention of Germany in particular. Its ambitious emperor, Wilhelm II, expressed great interest in the matter, and he tried to influence Berlin's foreign policy numerous times, although without sufficient knowledge of the problem. The ruler sent Chancellor Hohenlohe a telegram on 11 November 1894 in which he expressed his fear that there could be an agreement between Great Britain and Russia which would have negative consequences for German interests. The emperor claimed that Britain could take possession of Shanghai and other important sites on the Chinese coast. This could start a process which would involve other states who would acquire footholds, and Germany would need to be involved too. He recommended Germany strive to get Formosa (Taiwan). This was an inadvisable suggestion, as the island was unsuitable as a base for a number of reasons,[73] and furthermore the acquisition of Formosa was one of Japan's objectives of the war. As evidence for his claim about Britain's plans, the emperor said that the group around Admiral Freemantle had been strengthened

71 *Responsibility*, in: The North-China Herald, December 28, 1894.

72 TNA, FO 17 China/1203. Diplomatic drafts. No. 160, Kimberley to O'Conor. London, October 9, 1894. I. H. NISH, *The Anglo-Japanese Alliance*, London 1966, p. 5.

73 Experts warned of the unfavourable natural conditions, the local population's unfriendliness to foreigners, the island's fairly large size and the inherent costs in building an administration at such a distance from China's main centres.

and British troops from India were being transported to the Far East. He proposed concluding an agreement with Japan as soon as possible.[74]

It appears that neither Chancellor Hohenlohe nor Head of the Foreign Office, Marschall von Bieberstein, shared the emperor's fears. The very day Marschall received information on Wilhelm II's telegram, he wrote in response to the Chancellor: *"Of all the powers, England has the most pressing interest in keeping China in its present status as a buffer state* [...] *in my opinion, it is very unlikely that any action would give the signal to divide the Chinese Empire."*[75] Furthermore, he noted that there was no evidence troops were being transported from India. On the other hand, the head of Germany's legation in Beijing did not exclude the possibility that Germany would have to seek a foothold in the country: *"If the Sino-Japanese conflict should lead to other great powers receiving territorial gains at the expense of China, it would be desirable for Germany to also take the opportunity to acquire a foothold for their major trading interests in East Asia."*[76]

The series of Chinese defeats continued after the fall of Port Arthur. The Chinese command divided their forces into three groupings in Manchuria. The first was to defend access to Mukden, and they unsuccessfully attempted to stop the Japanese in mid-December. The second group used the port of Niuzhuang and the fortified town of Haicheng as a base. The third army operated in the south at Gaiping. On Thursday 13 December 1894, Haicheng fell and contact was made between Japan's First and Second armies. On 19 December, Japan attacked and defeated the retreating Chinese forces at Ganwangzhai. During the first days of 1895, the Second Japanese Army began their advance to the fortified strategically important city of Gaiping, which fell on 10 January 1895. After the fall of Gaiping, China proposed a ceasefire to Japan, but Japan rejected this because they believed that further military successes would secure them a better position in negotiating the peace.

There were important personnel changes on both sides at this time. Li Hongzhang was replaced in the important office of Viceroy of the province of Zhili, which he had held for a quarter of a century, by Liu Kunyi, the Viceroy of the provinces of Anhui, Jiangsu and Jiangsi at the time. Liu was also named Commander of the Chinese armies in northern China on 28 December 1894. The change on the Japanese side was indisputably surprising. Prime Minister Itō removed the father of the modern Japanese army, Yamagata Aritomo, from his command role in China.[77] This was allegedly due to the General's health, but in fact the main reason was that Yamagata was calling for an advance to Beijing, which political leaders were greatly afraid of. Japanese capture of the Chinese capital could have caused the fall of the Qing Dynasty, resulting in chaos and the intervention of the Great Powers. This would have meant a very unfavourable situation for Japan, which would have had to negotiate with the Great Powers instead

74 *GP*, Bd. 9. Nr. 2219, Der Reichskanzler von Hohenlohe, z. Z. in Straßburg, an den Staatssekretär Freiherr von Hohenlohe. Straßburg, den 17. November 1894, pp. 245–246.

75 Ibidem, Nr. 2220. Der Staatssekretär des Auswärtigen Amtes Feiherr von Marschall an den Reichskanzler Fürsten von Hohenlohe. Nr. 6. Berlin, den 17. November 1894, pp. 246–247.

76 Ibidem, Nr. 2221. Der Gesandte in Peking Freiherr Schenck zu Schweisberg an den Reichskanzler Fürst von Hohenlohe. Peking, den 23. November 1894, p. 234.

77 Yamagata was named Inspector-General of the Japanese army. For more on his dismissal, cf. LONE, p. 40.

of a defeated China. We shouldn't forget personal reasons either — Yamagata had been Itō's great political rival for many years. Itō then established that the main priority of Japan's operations was to capture Weihaiwei, something the navy welcomed as until then they had been lagging behind the army in terms of war successes.

Japan's approach aroused ever greater fears in Beijing, and as such almost a month after the collapse of Detring's mission, China made a second attempt at beginning peace negotiations. A special Imperial Edict of 21 December 1894 named the former envoy in the USA, Spain and Peru, Zhang Yinhuan and Shao Youlian, once chargé d'affaires in St Petersburg and the Governor of Formosa as the Chinese representatives for the negotiations. Their departure was delayed for three weeks because they had to wait for the arrival of the former American Secretary of State, John Watson Foster, who was to be the mission's advisor on the Chinese government's special request. Although there was no doubt the fate of the dynasty was at stake, China, as in their first attempt, continued to play the oriental game of "saving face" and did not send a representative at the highest level to negotiate, as Japan was expecting. If they had done that, they would have recognised each other as equals, and they wanted to avoid this. On 21 January 1895, the North-China Herald wrote that both delegates were *"iddling in Shanghai* [...] *unfurnished with proper credentials"*. It was as if China was unaware of the seriousness of the situation; two days after the departure the official government The Peking Gazette wrote of the Japanese as *"dwarf bandits"*. The Chinese delegates arrived in Hiroshima on 13 January 1895 and their mission was very brief — when Prime Minister Itō saw that they didn't have authorisation to make the necessary decision, he cancelled negotiations on 2 February and just two days after the Chinese delegates arrived, they left again. This situation has been presented numerous times as Japan successfully attempting to humiliate China,[78] but the essence of the problem is elsewhere — the collapse of the attempt was caused by China consistently trying to negotiate with Japan from the position of a superior nation, although no doubt Japan's endeavours to gain time for further military successes and thus better conditions for negotiations also played a role.

It is indisputable that Japan used the over six weeks which passed until the next Chinese peace mission arrived in Japan very effectively. Their primary objective was to eliminate Chinese naval forces in the Yellow Sea for the long-term, and as such they decided to capture the Chinese garrison of Weihaiwei. In the second half of January, Japan's Second and part of the Sixth Division under the command of General Ōyama were transported to Shandong for this purpose. The Japanese forces sailed from Dalian on 19–22 January, and had landed in Shandong by 23 January, where they began to advance to Weihaiwei in two columns. If the garrison had been adequately defended, it would no doubt have represented a very difficult obstacle for the attackers. It had three kinds of fortifications, and high quality guns. The port was defended with floating barriers (booms) and minefields. Furthermore, the weather was very cold and it was snowing heavily. Unfortunately, the Chinese armed forces were not even able to exploit the advantages it had under these circumstances. Japan's main attack began on 30 January 1895, with the Japanese soon capturing key defensive positions, arriving in Weihaiwei on 2 February 1895, and managing to remove the floating barriers

78 J. W. FOSTER, *Diplomatic Memoirs*, Vol. 2, Boston 1909, p. 112; JOSEPH, p. 77.

on 4 February so their torpedo boats could arrive in the port. On Thursday 7 February, the army and navy undertook a combined attack, and on 12 February 1895, Weihaiwei fell. Admiral Ding Ruchang and other commanders committed suicide.[79]

While a substantial section of China's leaders clearly still didn't understand the importance or causes of the tragic events, prisoners of their misconceptions, in Europe the capitulation of Weihaiwei appeared to be clear proof that China had lost its status in the Far East to Japan. Since Japan had not yet given information on the terms under which it was willing to negotiate for peace, there were fears about how far Japan was planning to go. There was even speculation that Japan was thinking of establishing a protectorate to rule China,[80] and this led to further diplomatic activities. In terms of persuading Japan to begin negotiations, the positions of Great Britain and Russia were of key importance.

At a meeting of Russia's ministerial council on 20 January 1895, it was decided that in regard to action in Japan, an understanding had to be reached with Britain and other powers.[81] Shortly afterwards, on 29 January 1895, the head of the Asian Department of the Russian Foreign Ministry, Count Pjotr Alekseyevich Kapnist met with the British ambassador in St Petersburg, Sir Frank Lascelles, informing the British diplomat that Khitrovo, the Russian envoy in Tokyo, had received the order to cooperate with the British envoy in Japan, Le Poer Trench in order to conclude peace. On 3 February 1895, Britain, France and Russia asked Japan to inform China of its terms and conditions for peace.

Britain's willingness to get involved in finding peace in the Far East depended on what Japan wanted to achieve in China. Britain's favour moving away from China and towards Japan was at that time so marked that London was unwilling to provide Beijing with greater support, and further wanted to steer clear of threatening or putting pressure on Tokyo. Before the fall of Weihaiwei, however, there had been fears amongst British politicians that Japan would attempt to put China under extraordinary pressure regardless of the possible consequences.[82]

For Britain's Foreign Minister, the Earl of Kimberley, the primary issue was cooperation with Russia, even if he did not disregard the possibility of co-ordinating action with other powers. At the time, he was disturbed by the inactivity of Russian politicians after the death of Alexander III and Giers, as well as the manoeuvring and wait-and-see attitude of Germany. After a certain period he considered Britain and Russia could jointly support conditions for a truce, which the new Chinese negotiator would submit to Japan. In any case, Beijing's Zongli Yamen was asking for this directly. The problem was that St Petersburg was refusing to put pressure on Japan.[83] Russian diplomacy renewed its activities after Prince Aleksey Borisovich Lobanov-Rostovsky took on the role of Foreign Minister on 11 March 1895.[84] The new minister instructed the ambassador in London, de Staal, to continue consultations

79 For more on Admiral Ding Ruchang and his fate cf. MORSE, p. 41; PAINE, pp. 228–230.
80 JOSEPH, p. 79.
81 OTTE, p. 49.
82 TNA, FO 65 Russia/1494. Lascelles to Kimberley, No. 11. St. Petersburg, February 2, 1894.
83 Ibidem, Lascelles to Kimberley, No. 18. St. Petersburg, February 23, 1894.
84 For more on Lobanov's stance cf. LANGER, p. 180.

with Britain.[85] In contrast to British politicians, Lobanov did not fear the creation of a Japanese protectorate in China,[86] and he told the German chargé d'affaires, von Tschirschky, that Russia would remain neutral even were Japan to attempt to acquire territorial gains in China.

It was at this time that London received O'Conor's surprising assessment report from Beijing.[87] The envoy said that governing circles in China were *"seriously frightened by the general disorganization of the military system,"* and stated that under current conditions essentially no reforms were possible in China. He nevertheless recommended continuing the policy of support for Beijing. This was very difficult to apply, because British politicians were extremely sceptical of China's future outlook. *"China is rotten to the core, as regards its governing class, but the Chinese are an industrious race, who may have the future,"*[88] stated the otherwise reserved Kimberley at the end of January 1895. To Britain, China's proposal appeared to be an expression of helplessness and an inability to assess the situation realistically. Li Hongzhang had offered O'Conor an alliance with China and proposed that Great Britain lead negotiations with Japan for them, for which China would de facto give up its sovereignty for a limited period, handing over to Britain the administration of the country, control of the army, navy, railway construction, mineral extraction, etc.[89] The envoy ignored the proposal because he know that China had made a similar proposal to the Russian and French envoys in Beijing. Following the Japanese occupation of Weihaiwei, The Times warned the Japanese government not to place too great demands on China: *"Count Ito knows that Japan must reckon with the continued existence of China, and that it can never be for her real interest either to disorganize China over-much or to inflict wounds which time and patience cannot heal. He knows, further, that were he to take a less moderate view, he would run serious risk of collision with European Powers who also have to think of the relations to be maintained in the future between themselves and China."*[90] *"So long as Japan uses her success with moderation we have no cause of quarrel with her,"*[91] another commentator said the next day of the essence of the problem. Japan attempted to dispel Britain's fears. On 8 March, they issued a declaration in which they stated that they did not want better conditions in China than other countries had, and that they were not asking for territorial cessation, but merely war reparations.[92] Although a few days later there were reports in the British press that Japan was planning to annex the Liaodong Peninsula,[93] Japan worked very hard to persuade Britain that they were

85 A. MEYENDORFF (Ed.), *Correspondance diplomatique du Baron de Staal, 1884–1900*, T. 2, Paris 1929. Lobanov à Staal, Russie et Angleterre. Japon et Chine, confidentielle, 2/15. 3. 1895, p. 264.

86 JOSEPH, pp. 83–84.

87 TNA, FO 17 China/1232. Diplomatic despatches. O'Conor to Kimberley, No. 6, confidential. Peking January 7, 1895.

88 OTTE, p. 53.

89 Ibidem, pp. 53–54.

90 The Times, February 21, 1895.

91 The Pall Mall Gazette, February 22, 1895.

92 The Times, March 9, 1894.

93 The Times, March 15, 1895.

not planning to damage British trading interests in China, nor declare a protectorate there. It appears that they were for the most part successful in this regard. This is confirmed, for example, by an editorial in the St James Gazette from mid-March 1895, which presented Japan as an appropriate counterbalance to Russia.[94] There was one fact which was beyond any doubt — if Japan left the Chinese market open, this would mean British traders would have the greatest benefits. As such, Japan hoped that Britain would remain neutral.

The question remains as to whether and to what extent Tokyo was expecting Russia to intervene, having until then supported Japan's demands. During February 1895, Russian envoy in Tokyo Khitrovo met Japan's Foreign Minister Mutsu a number of times, who repeatedly assured the Russian diplomat that Japan was not intending to disturb European interests in China. Nevertheless, the Japanese were nervous, and as Khitrovo noted to St Petersburg, *"Japan is very worried by rumours of an agreement between Russia and England. Mutsu continued to repeat his assurance in regard to Korea: he says that Japan has no intention of continuing the war to such a point that it could cause the break-up of China or the fall of the dynasty, and that Japan will take careful account of the interests of other powers."*[95]

There is, however, compelling evidence that Japan had anticipated the intervention of the Great Powers long before it was on the cards. Count Hayashi, former Japanese deputy Foreign Minister says in his memoirs, for example: *"Both the Premier, Count Ito, and the Foreign Minister, M. Mutsu, anticipated such action of Russia, France and Germany, but they were quite unable to anticipate what direction intervention would take, nor could they guess to what extent it would be carried."*[96]

So far in the crisis, Germany had acted in an essentially non-committal manner, although the Berlin government had never lost sight of the possibility it could take advantage of the situation to acquire a base in the Far East. This restraint was on the one hand a result of the fact that Germany had no interests in China comparable to those of Britain or Russia, and on the other that it did not have an adequate navy for promoting its political ideas in such a distant region.[97]

After negotiations with Foreign Minister Kimberley on 6 February 1895, German ambassador in London, Count Paul von Hatzfeldt, came to the conclusion the British urgently want German participation in negotiations of the powers on the situation in the Far East, and London was not a priori against possible German gains.[98] Just two days later, Hatzfeldt told Berlin he was of the opinion that Great Britain, France and Russia could not come to a firm agreement regarding their approach in China, and as such it would be good for Germany to bide its time: *"If we wait longer, there's a good*

94 St James Gazette, March 18, 1895.

95 MEYENDORFF, Hitrovo à Staal. Télégramme secret du Maître de la Cour Hitrovo. Tokio 3/15. 2. 1895 (copie), p. 260.

96 A. M. POOLEY (Ed.), *The Secret Memoirs of Count Tadasu Hayashi*, New York / London 1915, Reprint 2002, pp. 79–80.

97 In the mid-1890s, Germany was still in fifth position in the notional ranking of naval powers, even behind allied Italy.

98 *GP*, Bd. 9, Nr. 2223. Der Botschafter in London Graf Hatzfeldt an das Auswärtige Amt, Tel. Nr. 31, ganz geheim. London, den 6. Februar 1895, pp. 250–251.

chance those three won't agree and we can put our weight behind the country whose proposal suits us best, whether that be Russia or England."[99] Berlin was gradually moving to a more active policy. On 6 March 1895, Head of the Foreign Office Marschall instructed Envoy Gutschmidt in Tokyo to advise Japan to give China modest demands.[100] Proof of Germany's determination not to miss an opportunity and try to get the most out of the situation is the extensive memorandum sent by Chancellor Hohenlohe to Emperor Wilhelm II, by chance on the day another Chinese peace delegation arrived in Shimonoseki, Japan, headed by Li Hongzhang.[101] According to the Chancellor, Germany had so far maintained a strictly neutral position, although Great Britain and China had been repeatedly called to take part in an intervention in favour of Beiying. Germany's position should change; although it could be the first to give the signal to divide up China, it should acquire footholds on the Chinese coast. According to the Chancellor, Britain and Russia had agreed on joint support of the full independence of Korea. Germany should take account of the fact that the situation was exceptionally serious, Chinese forces were unable to defend their capital, and according to Gutschmidt, the envoy in Tokyo, Japan was able to wage war until the winter of 1895/1896.

For Beijing, the situation was undoubtedly extremely serious, because China was still seeking to begin peace negotiations. Nevertheless, they once again unsuccessfully attempted a ruse which was to "save face". They proposed that negotiations take place in Chinese territory in Port Arthur or Tianjin, in order to give the impression that the Japanese were coming as supplicants. Japan had blocked both previous attempts because they wanted a true representative figure at the head of the Chinese delegation — either Prince Gong or Marquis Li Hongzhang. This time, they finally chose Liho, who apparently had to pay a large bribe,[102] in order to get to Beijing on 21 February 1895, where he was seen by the Emperor a number of times, and finally named head of the Chinese delegation for negotiating peace with Japan.

On Tuesday 19 March 1895, Li Hongzhang sailed to the port of Shimonoseki accompanied by approximately a hundred people. For Japan, his main adversary was Prince Itō Hirobumi, as it had been in Tianjin during negotiations on the Korean Convention of 1885. Right at the beginning of negotiations, the Viceroy proposed concluding a truce and treaty of alliance directed against the West. Japan had no intention of doing anything like that; its troops were advancing to Beijing on the continent and preparations for landing at Formosa were in their final phase.[103] As such, it submitted unacceptable conditions to China for calling a truce. They demanded the surrender of the garrison in Dagu, which defended access to Beijing, the port of Tianjin, which was the residence of the Viceroy of the province of Zhili, and the port of Shan-

99 Ibidem, Nr. 2224. Der Botschafter in London Graf Hatzfeldt an den Vortragenden Rat im Auswärtigen Amt von Holstein. London, den 8. Februar 1895, p. 252.

100 Ibidem, Nr. 2226. Der Staatsekretär des Auswärtigen Amtes Freiherr von Marschall an den Gesandten in Tokio Freiherrn Gutschmidt. Berlin, den 6. März 1895, p. 253.

101 Ibidem, Nr. 2227. Der Reichskanzler Fürst von Hohenlohe an Kaiser Wilhelm II. Berlin, den 19. März, 1894, pp. 253–258.

102 PAINE, p. 258.

103 On 23 March 1895, Japan landed at Pescadores (Penghu Islands), and two days later at Formosa.

haiguan. Furthermore, they demanded control of the Shanhaiguan–Tianjin railway line and a financial contribution for the Japanese occupation. *"As Li read this memorandum to himself, his face changed color and he appeared stunned. Over and over, he muttered that the terms were so severe,"* said then Japanese Foreign Minister Mutsu of the Viceroy's reaction.[104] Accepting these conditions would mean that Japan could occupy Beijing at any time and force any kind of peace upon China. Furthermore, it should be noted that they had not yet occupied any of the places mentioned. Li rejected these conditions, and so the war continued. It was chance which helped nevertheless to move negotiations forward. On Tuesday 24 March 1894, Kojama Tojotarō tried to assassinate Li Hongzhang, shooting the seventy-two-year-old in the face. The shamed Japanese did everything they could to relieve the negative impression the terrorist act had caused.[105] Emperor Mutsuhito declared an unconditional three-week ceasefire on 27 March. Japan had no objections to the Viceroy's adoptive son, Li Jingfang, assisting the injured Viceroy in negotiations, as he received sufficient authority from Beijing by telegram.

But Japan's expression of goodwill ended when they submitted the terms for peace to the Chinese authorised representatives on 1 April 1895.[106] Japan's demands were given in fourteen points, of which the most important were recognition of Korea's full independence, the cessation of Formosa and territory in Manchuria between the Yalu and Liao rivers including Port Arthur and Dalian, the payment of war reparations to the amount of 300 million Kuping taels, the conclusion of a new naval and trade treaty, a clause on Japan's most favoured nation status, the opening of a further seven ports *"for trade, accommodation and the industrial enterprise of Japanese subjects"*, the extension of sailing rights within China, and other extensive economic benefits. The evacuation of the garrison of Weihaiwei was to take place after the final war reparations payment. China had four days to consider these conditions, a very short time considering their severity. Li Hongzhang ensured that the Great Powers were informed of what the conditions were, and hoped that they would help. In the end, Japan itself published the conditions to prevent Li's manoeuvres. China's response to Japan's proposal contained objections to practically all points, and Japan rejected it on 6 April. At an informal meeting on 8 April, Itō made it very clear to the Viceroy who had the upper hand — the ceasefire came to an end and the Japanese troops continued in their advance on Beijing. Li was very reluctant to make a decision and *"desperately wished to avoid bearing responsibility for making the response himself. Indeed, he had pleaded for instructions from the Peking government in an exchange of telegrams several days earlier, hoping to be spared the onus of the decision regarding the Chinese reply to Japan's proposal. The instruction from Peking, however, had as usual been vague and irrelevant, and Li found himself between its own government and us."*[107]

104 M. MUTSU, *Kenkenryoku: A Diplomatic Record of the Sino-Japanese War, 1894–95*, Princeton 1982, p. 169.

105 Emperor Mutsuhito-Meiji expressed his apologies to China, send his personal doctor to Li, and many apologies were printed in the press. Li apparently received 10,000 letters of apology in one week. PAINE, pp. 262–263.

106 For the full wording of Japan's conditions to China, see JOSEPH, pp. 102–103.

107 MUTSU, p. 191.

On Tuesday 9 April 1895, the Chinese delegation submitted its counterproposal. This stated that China and Japan were jointly to recognise Korea's independence and guarantee its neutrality, with only Peskadores (Penghu Islands) and a small area within the Manchurian province of Fengtian to be ceded, war reparations were to be reduced to a third, i.e. to 100 million Kuping taels, and regarding customs duties, Japan was to have the same conditions as Western states, China and Japan were to provide 'most favoured nation' status to each other in trade, and Japanese troops were to be evacuated following its ratification, except in Weihaiwei, which the Japanese were to leave following payment of the war reparations.

Japan's demands led logically to the Great Powers activating their diplomatic channels. Russian Foreign Minister Lobanov declared that the Japanese conditions were more severe that could have been expected and the Russian Ambassador in London, de Staal, came to the conclusion that Britain would support Beijing because it could not allow Japanese control of China.[108] Russia was unwilling to accept the idea that Japan would get Port Arthur and gain a base on the Liaodong Peninsula, which would mean Beijing was permanently under threat. In the end, Lobanov declared openly that Russia had decided *"to prevent the proposed acquisition* (of Liaodong Peninsula — A. S.), *which would render illusory the independence of Corea."*[109] When Lobanov asked Lascelles whether Britain would join the international intervention in favour of China, the British ambassador suggested it was unlikely.[110] Although Britain's position was of great importance for any eventual intervention against the against Japan's excessive demands, Foreign Minister Kimberley was very careful and managed to avoid giving a clear and definitive opinion for some time. This fact was the result of a number of factors. Britain did not want to worsen their relations with Japan, which it had begun to perceive as a possible partner to holding back Russian pressure in the Far East. Furthermore, most of Britain's interests had been concentrated within the Yangzi river basin, and in treaty ports on the Chinese coast, especially in Shanghai, and not in the north of the country. A no less important factor was a division of opinion within the British government and the strong position of opponents of intervention.[111] Prime Minister Rosebery found himself squeezed from two different directions. On the one hand, he didn't want to allow a deterioration in relations with Russia, and on the other hand he was not prepared to improve relations with St Petersburg at the cost of collision with Japan.[112] In the end, on 8 April 1895, the British government decided that, *"British interests in East Asia are not threatened so much by Japan's peace terms that it would justify intervention which, it can be assumed, would have to be done by force"*.[113] Sometimes, this decision is ascribed to the volatility and

108 MEYENDORFF, Staal à Lobanov, confidentiel, 22. 3/3. 4. 1895, pp. 265–266.

109 TNA, FO 65 Russia/1494. Lascelles to Kimberley, Tel. No. 36. St Petersburg, April 8, 1895.

110 Ibidem. Lascelles to Kimberley, No. 35. St Petersburg, April 5, 1895.

111 *GP*, Bd. 9, Nr. 2236. Der Botschafter in London Graf von Hatzfeldt an das Auswärtige Amt. Telegramm Nr. 73. London, den 6. April 1895, p. 266.

112 On Rosebery's stance cf. YOUNG, pp. 18–19.

113 *GP*, Bd. 9, Nr. 2239. Der Botschafter in London Graf von Hatzfeldt an das Auswärtige Amt. Telegramm Nr. 74. London, den 8. April 1895, s 266. TNA, FO 17 China/1242. Diplomatic drafts. Kimberley to O'Conor. London, April 8, 1895.

indecision of British politicians, but this does not correspond to the facts. There is no doubt that Britain's main interest in China was always trade. This was, in essence, not threatened by Japan's terms, so Britain saw no reason for intervention. Britain and Russia, like the other powers, had always followed its own objectives in China, and had no shared interests. As such it was difficult to find a reason for co-operation. On the other hand, even Britain's opponents recognised the correctness of British policy. *"To be fair, we must accept that British policy has been prudent and correct. Britain has been following without duplicity the line of negotiations which, it seems, have impacted upon their interests and public opinion.* [...] *That Britain is isolated from the other powers, it has forgone all the benefits it could have had from the current situation,"*[114] wrote Russian ambassador in London, de Staal, to Minister Lobanov. In St Petersburg, however, Britain's decision caused substantial disillusionment. Foreign Minister Lobanov warned that London's stance could provide support to Japan, which would persist in its demands, including territorial gains on the Liaodong coast, which could lead to war.[115]

To a certain extent, Germany's stance took an opposing course; by the end of March 1895, Germany had given a clear signal to St Petersburg that German interests in the Far East did not conflict with Russia's interests,[116] which won a positive response from Foreign Minister Lobanov.[117] Germany was very shortly informed of the most significant of Japan's terms of 1 April 1895, as just a day later envoy, Viscount Aoki, visited the Foreign Office, and during a discussion stated to advisor von Mühlberg: *"Japan is going to demand part of south Manchuria. In particular the Liaotung Peninsula along with Port Arthur. This should become a kind of Gibraltar in the Gulf of Pechili. Without the occupation of this land, Korea's independence will exist only on paper. With regard to the Chinese dynasty we don't think on Mukden."*[118] Berlin was also well-informed of Britain's position and the opinions of members of the British cabinet. *"The Minister* [Kimberley — authors] *has personally told me he is of the opinion that the cession of Port Arthur would in its consequences equate to a Japanese protectorate over China,"*[119] ambassador Hatzfeldt communicated to Berlin. Germany's decision to support the Russian proposal was evidently made before France announced it would join Russia's allies in terms of 'recommending' to Japan that it moderate its demands.[120] It is sometimes said that the

114 MEYENDORFF, Staal à Lobanov, L'Angleterre et le conflit sino-japonais. Londres, le 3/15 mai 1895, p. 273.

115 TNA, FO 65 Russia/1490. Lascelles to Kimberley, No. 91. St Petersburg, April 10, 1895.

116 *GP*, Bd. 9, Nr. 2228. Der Staatssekretär des Auswärtigen Amtes Freiherr von Marschall an den Geschäftsträger in Petersburg von Tschirschky. Nr. 34. Berlin, den 23. März 1895, pp. 258–259.

117 Ibidem, Nr. 2229. Der Geschäftsträger in Petersburg von Tschirschky an das Auswärtige Amt. Telegramm Nr. 60. St. Petersburg, den 25. März 1895, p. 259.

118 Ibidem, Nr. 2231. Aufzeichnung des Vortragenden Rats im Auswärtigen Amt von Mühlberg. Berlin, den 2. April 1895, p. 260.

119 Ibidem, Nr. 2234. Der Botschafter in London Graf von Hatzfeldt an das Auswärtige Amt. Telegramm No. 70. London, den 4. April 1895.

120 Ibidem. Nr. 2242. Der Botschafter in London Graf von Hatzfeldt an das Auswärtige Amt. Telegramm No. 85. London, den 13. April 1895. Hatzfeldt gives a report on a discussion in which French ambassador in London, Baron de Coucel, informed him of his government's decision of 12 April 1895 to support Lobanov's demand that Japan moderate its demands.

decision was affected by Max von Brandt's memorandum of 8 April 1895 in which this diplomat and renowned expert on the situation in the Far East recommended co-operating with Russia as he considered it advantageous both for the Far East and in regard to the opportunity to improve Russian and German relations within Europe. Brandt also met with Wilhelm II on 9 April 1895, where he presented the situation in a manner which the Emperor would "understand". He warned against the "yellow peril", terming Russia a barrier against the "Mongol world", and expressing his support for Russia's plan to build the final section of the Trans-Siberian Railway across Manchuria.[121] The question remains, however, to what extent the memorandum, or Brandt's discussion with the Emperor affected the German government's final decision. The truth is that just one day after Brandt's memorandum, the British ambassador in Berlin, Malet, informed Foreign Minister Kimberley that in a discussion with him, the head of Germany's Foreign Office, Marschall, had described Japan's conditions as *"too severe"* and had stated that, *"the accession of Port Arthur and the Liaotung Peninsula would guarantee Japan full control of the Gulf of Pechili and access to Beijing,"* and had expressed the conclusion that acceptance of Japan's terms would in the end lead to Japan controlling all China's coastal provinces.[122]

On Wednesday 10 April 1895, Li and Itō met for the first time at an official meeting since the assassination attempt. The Japanese Prime Minister submitted a modified version of the peace proposals to the Chinese representative which he termed final. Tokyo refused to guarantee Korea's neutrality and demanded China recognise its independence, reduced some of its territorial claims, demanded the Liaodong Peninsula as well as Formosa and the Penghu Islands, reduced the war reparations to 200 million Kuping taels, the number of ports which were to be opened were reduced, and the terms for paying the war reparations were made less strict. The Japanese refused to provide China with Most Favoured Nation status, to accept the Chinese ideas on evacuation, nor to be subject to international arbitration in future disputes.

It is somewhat surprising that a number of Japanese politicians naively believed that Tokyo need not fear Russian resistance to Japan's demands. Viscount Aoki, Japan's envoy in Berlin, for example, informed British diplomat Gosselin on 9 April 1895 that: *"Japan had nothing to fear from Russian opposition; That if the Russian Government sent 90.000 (men) to the Amour, the province could never properly support them and that Japan had only to close the Straits of Corea, and the whole Russian force would die of starvation."* [123]

Japan tried in its own way to get the Great Powers on its side and against China. Its demands regarding Korea corresponded to those it promised to Great Britain and Russia. In terms of the trading terms demanded, Britain would gain the most from them, at least to begin with. Japan also intended to prevent intervention by ensuring negotiations took place quickly so there was no delay from the Chinese side. Itō referred to the actual situation — 60 transportation ships with soldiers were anchored in Hiroshima and waiting until the truce period was over. On 13 April, the Chinese

121 For more on von Brant's role, see JOSEPH, pp. 112–113.

122 TNA, FO 64 Germany/1350. Malet to Kimberley, No. 85, confidential. Berlin. April 9, 1895.

123 Ibidem, Gosselin to Kimberley, No. 86, very confidential. Berlin, April 9, 1895.

delegation was informed that the Japanese demands were no longer a subject for discussion following their modification. The final negotiations between the representatives took place on 15 April, during which Itō accepted some minor concessions. The peace treaty was signed in Shimonoseki on 17 April 1895.[124]

Although the Qing court provided no information on the treaty, its contents could not be kept secret. Once it was out, calls came from throughout the whole of China that the Emperor not accept it. Objections to the huge war reparations were expressed, which would allow Japan to acquire more arms, and many of the objections were to the cessation of territory to Japan. It would appear that the Manchu elite, even under these tragic circumstances, did not comprehend, or want to comprehend, what had actually happened. From a formal perspective, the conflict ended with the exchange of the ratified wordings of the treaty in Zhifu (today Yantai) on 8 May 1895. It was significant that as if by chance a total of 16 foreign warships had just anchored in this Chinese port.[125]

Already during the course of the war, commentators on renowned papers, especially in Russia and France, expressed their conviction that Russia would not allow Japan to acquire any territorial gains from China. Russian diplomats took many opportunities to make this clear to Japan.[126] Russia responded almost immediately to the treaty concluded in Shimonoseki. On 19 April 1895, Foreign Minister Lobanov called on Great Britain to join Russia, France and Germany to jointly put pressure on Japan to return the Liaodong Peninsula to China. The Prince was likely intending to initiate a joint naval campaign to isolate Japanese forces on the continent. Aware of the possible consequences, Foreign Minister Kimberley rejected the idea of British participation, although he knew that this stance could lead to a significant deterioration in relations with Russia and China and possibly other states too. Lobanov and the ambassador in London, de Staal, tried to find a compromise solution. They proposed that Britain be involved in the diplomatic intervention only, and that they would not take part in any further measures taken. The British Foreign Office also rejected this suggestion, and St Petersburg thus decided to undertake collective action without Britain's participation.

On Tuesday 23 April 1895, the Russian, French and German[127] envoys in Tokyo submitted three identical diplomatic notes in which their governments gave Japan the "friendly advice" that they return the Liaodong Peninsula along with Port Arthur to China,[128] because in their opinion, *"the possession of the Peninsula of Liaotung, claimed*

124 Treaty of Peace between China and Japan. Shimonoseki, April 17, 1895. W. W. ROCKHILL (Ed.), *Treaties and Conventions with and Concerning China and Korea, 1894–1904 together with Various State Papers and Documents Affecting Foreign Interests* (further only *Treaties and Conventions*), Washington 1904, No. 2, pp. 15–16; Mac MURRAY, pp. 18–25.

125 Besides nine Russian ships, two British and German ships also anchored here, with one ship each from the USA, Italy and France. FOSTER, p. 151.

126 MUTSU, pp. 225–227.

127 For an explanation of why Germany was involved see TNA, FO 64 Germany/1350, Malet to Kimberley. Berlin, May 5, 1895.

128 *GP*, Bd. 9, Nr. 2251. Der Gesandte in Tokio Freiherr von Gutschmidt an das Auswärtige Amt. Telegramm No. 31. Tokio, den 23. April 1895. Envoy Gutschmidt says that the note was re-

by Japan, would be constant menace to the capital of China, would at the same time render illusory the independence of Korea, and would henceforth be a perpetual obstacle to the peace of the Far East."[129] Kimberley continued to maintain a careful stance, which was seen in relation to the initiative of Lascelles, the ambassador in St Petersburg. After a meeting with Lobanov, he "privately" suggested to the Foreign Office that Great Britain recommend Japan give up Liaodong, because *"war with Russia would be inevitable if they persist in their demands"*.[130] The British minister, however, rejected this. When Kimberley met the new Japanese envoy in London, Katō Takaaki, he declared that Great Britain had no reason to take away from Japan the *"reasonable fruit of her victories, although they have much preferred no disturbance in status quo"*.[131] In this situation, Great Britain's stance was of key importance for Japan. When Katō was received in Britain's Foreign Minister, he ascertained only that Kimberley was intending to maintain strict neutrality. Under such circumstances, Japan had no option but to give in. As such, at a meeting of the Imperial Council on 29 April 1895, it was decided to follow the recommendation of the three powers, and on 4 May 1895 Tokyo expressed its consent to the return of the Liaodong Peninsula to China. A treaty to that effect was signed on 8 November 1895 in Beijing,[132] and by the end of 1895, Japan had withdrawn from the peninsula. Previously to this, in October 1895, Japanese forces ended their occupation of Taiwan.

In conclusion, the question of what consequences the war had for both participants, and for the Great Powers concerned with the Far East, should be posed. Japan, as winners, took up China's former position as the key regional power, earned international respect, and the period when it had to conclude unequal treaties with Western states came to an end. *"I think that the Sino-Japanese War is the greatest event. Since the beginning of our history,"*[133] declared Prime Minister Itō Hirobumi. On the other hand, the intervention of the three European powers and the return of Liaodong clearly demonstrated that Tokyo could not yet consider a confrontation with any of the large players on the global political stage. Information on the intervention became known in Japan at the very beginning of May 1895. The fact that Japan had had some of the fruits of its victory removed from it aroused great shock in the country. Dozens of people committed ritual suicide, the press was strictly controlled and there was general dissatisfaction. There was agreement in political circles and amongst the public that Japan must be better prepared in future from a military perspective in order to successfully fight for its 'place in the sun'. There were calls for much of the large

ceived by Deputy Foreign Minister Hayashi because the head of the Foreign Ministry, Mutsu, was ill. Some authors incorrectly state that Hayashi was the new Foreign Minister.

129 LANGER, p. 186.

130 TNA, FO 65 Russia/1494. Lascelles to Kimberley, No. 47. St Petersburg, April 24, 1895.

131 M. KAJIMA (Ed.), *The Diplomacy of Japan, 1884–1922*, Vol. 1, Tokyo 1976. Katō to Mutsu, 24. 4. 1895, p. 342.

132 Convention between Japan and China for the Retrocession by Japan to China of the Southern Portion of the Province of Feng-tien. Peking 8. 11. 18945. *Treaties and Conventions*, No. 4, pp. 26–27. For its return, China was bound to pay Japan another 30 million Kuping taels war reparations. In total, the war reparations thus brought in 230 million taels.

133 PAINE, p. 296.

war reparations from China[134] should be used to build up the navy, which ultimately led Japan to victory in its war with Russia ten years later. The idea prevailed that Japan's national interests could best be secured with its military force. *"It is certain that the situation in Asia will grow worse in the future* [...] *and we must make preparations for another war within next ten years,"*[135] stated Yamagata Aritomo on 12 April 1895.

To a certain extent, China was unable to draw the consequences of its defeat, and it did not trigger any kind of system changes. This is likely because the war did not affect most of China's territory and the European powers de facto did not permit Japan to capture Beijing or overturn the Qing Dynasty, which, despite further shocks, remained in power until 1911. On the other hand, the conflict's catastrophic course for China aroused the fears of the educated Chinese in particular, who realised the superiority of Western technology, and the fact that their civilisation was not the only one in existence. The psychological impact of the defeat meant the end of illusory ideas of China's position in the world, as the *"proud Middle Kingdom had been defeated by the people looked upon not only as inferior but also, by reason of their westernization, as traitors to the Confucian family of nations. In naval, in military and in political affairs, the Manchu government was revealed as inefficient and corrupt. To a few thoughtful Chinese it already appeared that the dynasty had lost the Mandate of Heaven. Now with Japan's victory the old Confucian theory of international relations, which China had maintained for centuries, was destroyed and replaced by Western concepts of treaties and international law."*[136]

The war's economic consequences for China, which were truly catastrophic, were of key importance. Before the war, although somewhat surprisingly, China had had only a small amount of foreign debt. This grew during the course of the conflict to £7 million, but Japan's war reparations and the elimination of war damage caused a growth in debt, which now approached an astronomic sum of £50 million. As such, it is no surprise that in this context, Inspector-General of the Imperial Maritime Custom Service, Sir Robert Hart, came to the conclusion that as a result of the war China had lost its financial autonomy and it represented the beginning of the end for the discredited dynasty. Only large foreign loans allowed China to meet its obligations towards Japan arising from the peace treaty, and in this context the powers started a "financial battle for Beijing", which resulted in the further growth of China's dependence. The fatal weakening of the "Middle Kingdom" allowed the battles in the years to come between the Great Powers and other states over concessions and spheres of influence, and led to the outbreak of the so-called Boxer (Yihetuan) uprising and the further weakening of the Qing regime.

Of the powers which were involved in the so-called Triple Intervention, France was essentially understood as second to its Russian ally, although shortly after the war it also put pressure on China. Although Germany was considering strengthening its position in China mainly through the acquisition naval bases, its weaknesses compared to the main interested parties meant it waited for a more opportune situation

134 The war reparations of 230 million Kuping taels which China was to pay Japan roughly corresponded to a sum of 510 million Japanese yens (approx. £52 million), which was more than six times the Japanese government's annual income.

135 PAINE, p. 367.

136 CLYDE, p. 256.

for realising its objectives, which was meant soon to arrive. The most important party by far of the three was Russia, which during the war had had quite a non-committal stance, but which by staging the Triple Intervention gave clear notice that there were borders it would not tolerate being breached. Its further policy in the Far East was unequivocally linked to completion of the construction of the Trans-Siberian Railway; *"for Russia, the Sino-Japanese War came too soon: the Trans-Siberian was not completed and Russian plans were as yet immature."*[137] Furthermore, long before the end of the Sino-Japanese War and the Triple Intervention, discussions had taken place in St Petersburg on the fact that the final section of the railway should be laid through Manchuria, i.e. across Chinese territory, which related to Russia's attempt to gain prevailing influence in this area.

The course and outcome of the war was of fundamental significance for the further development of Great Britain's policy in the Far East. Although a number of critics perceived Britain's policy regarding the conflict as somewhat unstable and inconsistent, it is true that Britain was able to successfully manoeuvre so it did not make enemies of either China or Japan. Beijing's Zongli Yamen did not come to dislike Britain, and neither was there a clear disaffection for Britain in Tokyo. London's stance did undoubtedly, however, lead to a deterioration in its relations with Russia. O'Conor, the envoy in Beijing, expressed the opinion that it was not necessary for Britain to assist Russia in gaining a warm-water port and came to the conclusion that in future Russia would attempt to secure a protectorate in Manchuria, or even annex it, and that as such conflict between Russia and Japan was unavoidable.[138] *"Serious people in Japan have more respect for us than for other Powers, and I hope we may reap the reward of not joining in what I think is an ill-timed protest,"*[139] wrote Secretary to the British legation in Tokyo, Sir Gerard Lowther to Foreign Minister Kimberley. Although the British government's stance led to a major cooling in its relations with Russia, on the other hand Great Britain had created the opportunity to co-operate more closely with Japan in future, although the path to concluding the treaty of alliance between London and Tokyo in 1902 still required the overcoming of a number of hurdles.

GREAT POWERS AND THE SINO-JAPANESE WAR 1894–1895

ABSTRACT

The objective of this study is to present and analyse the course and consequences of the Sino-Japanese War of 1894–1895 and its relation to the Great Powers' policies in the Far East. The general dispositions of both participants is assessed, as is Japan's successful start after the outbreak of the war, the causes of China's military catastrophes (Pyongyang, Port Arthur, Weihaiwei) and the fact that the Manchu elite had totally failed to comprehend the severity of the situation, thus endangering the basis of the Qing Dynasty regime. Of the Great Powers with concerns in the Far East, the most importance were the stances of Russia and Great Britain, while Germany's position took a somewhat careful course. The path to concluding peace was very complex not just as a result of obstructions from both parties to the conflict, but also due to the hesitant approach of the Great Powers, Great Britain in particular. By signing the peace treaty in Shimonoseki, Japan, on 17 April 1895, China accepted Ja-

137 Ibidem, p. 259.

138 TNA, FO 17/1235. Diplomatic despatches. O'Conor to Bertie, private. Peking, July 23, 1895.

139 KAJIMA, pp. 293–294.

pan's punitive terms which were somewhat lessened through the so-called Triple Intervention of Russia, France and Germany, which resulted in China being returned the Liaodong Peninsula. The course and outcome of the war had exceptionally serious consequences for the overall situation in the Far East. Japan, the new main regional power, acquired massive funds which it was able to use for arming itself and preparing for further war. A weakened China was unable to withstand increasing pressures from the Great Powers and other countries, and these countries soon began endeavours to lease parts of China's territory, receive concessions for railway construction and mineral mining, and restrict its spheres of influence.

KEYWORDS
Situation in China and Japan on the Eve of War; Course of Conflict; Causes of Japanese Victory; Response of Chinese Elite; Development of Great Powers' Stances; Shimonoseki Peace; Consequences of the Conflict for Developments in the Far East

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