

Chapter 11

Turning Point in World History

—Miraculous Victory at the Battle of Tsushima—

Ammunitions Running Low

The Japanese army's advance stalled after the battle of Liaoyang in September 1904. This was attributable, above anything else, to a shortage of ammunitions. It was night raids with bayonets, which required no shelling of the enemy, that had determined the outcomes of the aforementioned battles of Gongzhangling and Manjū Yama. The Japanese army in Manchuria, in contrast, was unsure of its capability in daytime battle on the plain. In fact, it had been unable to do anything to chase after the massive Russian force that was withdrawing.

While sparse ammunition reserves had always been criticized as a traditional shortcoming of Japan's national defense, the situation was essentially the fate of a poor nation that had overextended itself to expand its armaments.

During the Cold War, Japan had already graduated from the status of a poor country, but its military budget had been confined to within 1 percent of its gross national product (GNP) despite the Soviet threat. When asked by the finance ministry if they wished for more fighters or more ammunitions, the Self-Defense Forces (SDF) had to choose the former because, if the Soviet Union was to attack Japan with, say, one hundred jet fighters, the SDF needed enough fighters to counter the attack. To begin with, this question is about as absurd as asking your child in college if he/she wants tuition money or bus fare. Now that the child is in college, you should have been prepared to provide both, and it is nonsense to make your child choose between the two.

It is another story when you have financial restrictions, however. And when you have to choose between fighters and ammunitions, you must choose fighters because they take a long time to develop and manufacture, whereas ammunitions and missiles could somehow be manufactured in case of emergency, given Japan's industrial capabilities. When an emergency does occur, however, everything is needed at once and, thus, ammunitions might

not be given the top priority. Repeat this process several times and you will have a highly distorted military.

After the conclusion of the First Sino-Japanese War, Japan expanded its army by adding six army divisions, two cavalry brigades, and two artillery brigades. It is not hard to imagine that attention was not given to ammunitions under such a hasty expansion in which priority had been given to quick fulfillment of personnel and equipment requirements. Consequently, the short supply of ammunitions became a common headache for all the troops in the Imperial Japanese Army.

At first, the Russian side was puzzled by why the Japanese troops did not pursue the withdrawing Russian troops on many occasions, missing the best opportunity to deal a serious blow to their enemy. Because the objective circumstances were such that it was obviously wisest for the Japanese to attack the Russians before their reinforcements arrived, the Russians were expecting that the Japanese would and should attack at any moment. The Japanese troops, however, would not move. At last, the Russians realized that the Japanese had been suffering from a shortage of ammunitions, making them decide to counterattack before the Japanese side received enough ammunition supplies. The Russians intended to defeat the Japanese troops and rush immediately to Lüshun to relieve its defenders.

By the end of September, 220,000 Russian troops had advanced south. This formidable force was met by 150,000 Japanese troops. Since defensive operations had never been the Japanese army's strong point, it adopted what was known as an offensive defense—that is, to baffle the attacking troops at the outset of a battle by first taking the offensive.

After several days of fierce battle, in which no side came out of a clear victory, the Russian side finally gave up on the offensive and started to withdraw. This presented the Japanese side with the golden opportunity to chase after the Russians, but the shortage of ammunitions prevented the Japanese from grabbing this chance. Instead, both sides dug solid trenches within a few hundred meters of the opponent for a few dozen kilometers along the battlefield, and faced off against each other. This was the Battle of Shaho (沙河の会戦), and it became a forerunner of the later-day trench

warfare on the western front during World War I.

In January 1905, the Russian side once again planned an offensive and started assembling troops toward the western end of the battlefield, facing the left wing of the Japanese troops. Although the Japanese side correctly judged the Russian intention and dispatched a division of its own to the direction of the enemy's advance, it immediately had to face an uphill battle against the enemy's massive force. Seeing this, the Japanese commanders dispatched additional three divisions from the central force, resulting in a death-defying battle in a snowstorm between 100,000 Russians and 50,000 Japanese soldiers. The battle, which was later to be known as the Battle of Sandepu (Heikoutai) (黒溝台会戦), lasted for three days and nights, causing 10,000 casualties on each side.

If the Russian central force had taken the offensive during this three-day battle, the Japanese leftwing battlefield would have been inevitably destroyed because further reinforcements were impossible. Nevertheless, Russia's central force under the command of Aleksei Kuropatkin, commander-in-chief of the Russian land forces in Manchuria, did not move. It was later found out that the Russian offensive had been an arbitrary decision on the part of Oskar Grippenberg, commanding general of the Russian Second Manturian Army, against opposition from Kuropatkin, who, instead of moving his forces to aid Grippenberg, decided to see how good Grippenberg could be on his own. After this abortive offensive, Grippenberg slammed his letter of resignation down on Kuropatkin's desk and returned to Harbin.

The Third Army to the Rescue

Meanwhile, Lüshun fell into Japanese hands. The day after the triumphal entry into the city on January 13, 1905, 70,000 soldiers of the Third Army under the command of Nogi Maresuke (乃木希典) started marching northward. One month later, they reached Liaoyang. After completing preparations for a further advance, they departed for Mukden on February 28, where they took part in the Battle of Mukden. Even so, some units of the Third Army were unable to arrive in Mukden in time for the battle, indicating how the Third Army had barely made it to the scene.

A war is bound to be full of wisdom after the event on both sides. In the

case of the Russo-Japanese War, the Russian side must have had many regrets—many should-haves and shouldn't-haves. If the Lüshun squadron had to be annihilated anyway, why shouldn't it have been deployed more aggressively at the outset of the war, which could have considerably disturbed the Japanese transport of troops. They could have easily defended the Lüshun fortress for one or two more months, which would have made the arrival of Nogi's 70,000 troops of the Third Army too late for the Battle of Mukden even though it would have been a tall order to keep it until the Battle of Tsushima in May 1905. History shows that Nogi's army actually played such an important role in the Battle of Mukden that it influenced the course of the entire war.

“Battle of Sekigahara” in the Russo-Japanese War

The domestic situation in Russia became increasingly restless after the fall of Lüshun. It would no longer allow the Russian military the luxury of losing a few battles before concentrating one million soldiers in Harbin and crushing the enemy for good.

In early February, some ten days after the futile offensive in Sandepu (Heikoutai), which coincided with the Bloody Sunday incident in Saint Petersburg, the Russian government sent a wire to Kuropatkin, stating, “Situations both within and outside the country require a major victory of our troops at the earliest possible occasion.”

Both of the warring sides agreed, independently, that it would be an opportune moment to launch a major operation before the Shaho River would have thawed and would have turned the battlefield into a sea of mud. The Russian side decided on the offensive at the war council on February 19, and the command to attack was issued on February 21. The Japanese side issued the command to attack on February 20 and decided to start the battle by launching a containing action at the eastern flank of the Russian troops on February 27.

It was a grand battle extending over 100 kilometers between 250,000 Japanese soldiers—all of the Japanese Army that could have been mustered—with 990 canons versus 320,000 Russian soldiers with 1,200 canons. At the outset of the offensive, Japanese commander-in-chief Ōyama

Iwao declared to his men that this battle would be the Battle of Sekigahara¹ in the Russo-Japanese War. At the same time, though, Ōyama did not fail to remind his men that any waste of ammunitions had to be avoided. The Japanese troops used 120,000 shots in the Battle of Liaoyang, 100,000 in the Battle of Shaho, and 300,000 in the Battle of Mukden. Even though they tried to conserve ammunitions as much as possible, the stock was about to run out toward the end of the war.

The containment action to Russia's eastern flank proved to be effective. While Kuropatkin at first had plotted an attack on the western flank of the Japanese troops, expanding on the tactic he had employed in Sandepu (Heikoutai), the Japanese attack on Russia's eastern flank forced him to modify his plan, which unintentionally made it easier for the Japanese troops to advance north from the western flank, thus affecting the outcome of the battle as a whole.

A chain of bitter experiences inflicted by Kuroki Tamemoto's First Army plus the Japanese feint operation which made the advance of one division of Nogi's Third Army from the Yalu River deliberately conspicuous must have given an impression to the Russian field commanders that Nogi's army would attack from the eastern flank.

On the contrary, though, Nogi's army was positioned on the western-most end of the battlefield with the mission of besieging Russian troops from the western end. Nogi as an army general was more of a man of integrity than ingenuity, and he could inspire his subordinates to sacrifice their lives to accomplish his mission. As such, he seemed to be more suited for open battles. Besides, Nogi himself always dashed forward ahead of his troops, looking for an honorable death; his men had no other choice than to follow closely after him.

Thus, a competition of enclosure was fought between Nogi's army, which was constantly advancing north, and the Russian troops, which continued to move north in order to avoid being besieged by the opponent from the northwest. In the end, Nogi's army managed to win this competition by a slim margin, allowing it to occupy, ahead of the Russians, the position north

¹ The Battle of Sekigahara (関ヶ原の戦い), popularly known as the Battle for the Sundered Realm (天下分け目の戦い), was a decisive battle on October 21, 1600, which cleared the path to the Shogunate for Tokugawa Ieyasu. Sekigahara is widely considered to be the unofficial beginning of the Tokugawa bakufu, the last shogunate to control Japan.

of the city of Mukden that could then threaten the Mukden-Changchun railway. And this made Kuropatkin obsessed with the fear of his troops' retreat being cut off by the enemy, constituting one of the key factors behind his final decision to withdraw.

The Battle of Mukden began on March 1 along the entire battlefield. Fierce seesaw battles lasted for six days and nights with no clear winner. The Japanese battle capability had long peaked, and it began to go downhill. Had the Russians hung on for one or two more days, it could have been a draw match like the earlier Battle of Shaho.

It seems universally true, be it a battle or an athletic competition, that when the going is toughest for you, so it is for your opponent. Whoever can hang on longer wins. At the risk of oversimplification, this seems to summarize the seven days at the Battle of Mukden. As I have repeatedly pointed out, the Japanese side could not afford to lose any of the battles, while the Russian side could spare a battle or two because the longer the war became the stronger the chain of reinforcements would be for the Russians.

On March 8, Kuroki's First Army sent a wire to General Headquarters, saying, "The enemy is about to retreat and we intend to pursue the enemy forces." General Headquarters immediately issued the command to chase after the retreating enemy.

On March 9, in a blistering sand storm characteristic of the Manchurian plain, fierce battle was fought between the advancing Japanese forces and Russian troops, which struck back in an attempt to secure their retreat. On March 10, Russian troops withdrew from Mukden.

Corpses of Two Sides Stain the Manchurian Plain with Blood

Japanese casualties during the Battle of Mukden totaled 70,000, while those on the Russian side reached 60,000 plus 30,000 MIAs (of which 20,000 were prisoners of war). The Manchurian plain was stained with their blood. One of the most popular war songs among the Japanese—*Sen-yū* (戦友, Brother in Arms)—was composed after this battle.

Immediately after the end of World War II, I saw a war veteran in white robes getting on a train. He was wearing an artificial leg with a charity donation box hung around his neck. In those days, the entire nation was

impoverished: nobody could afford to help anybody. The other passengers on the train looked away from the invalid soldier. When he started playing *Sen-yū* on his worn-out harmonica, however, tears flowed from the eyes of his fellow passengers and, silently, a few coins were dropped into his charity box. This song, thus, had the power to open up people's hearts, albeit slightly, which had been tightly shut since the defeat in the war. I was fifteen years old when I witnessed this scene.

Baltic Fleet

When the Russian troops started withdrawing from Mukden to the north, the Japanese troops had no energy left to chase and destroy them. Nevertheless, it was the Japanese side that won the battle, because Japan now controlled the city of Mukden, the center of Russia's Manchurian occupation.

Blamed for the defeat at the Battle of Mukden, Kuropatkin was relieved of his post as commander-in-chief of the Russian land forces in Manchuria and demoted to the position of commander of the First Manchurian Army. Kuropatkin was succeeded by Nikolay Linevich, who previously commanded the First Manchurian Army.

Despite this defeat, the will to continue the war never waned in mainland Russia, as reflected in the decision made at a war council attended by the Czar only two days after the defeat. During this council, held on March 12, the navy minister expressed his high hopes for the Baltic Fleet, while the minister of war announced that he was ready to dispatch additional 60 infantry divisions. As a matter of fact, there was no reason for Russia to surrender at that point. Even if the imminent naval showdown had ended in a draw, still the Russian navy would have been able to disturb maritime traffic in the Sea of Japan and the Korea Strait as long as some vessels of the Baltic Fleet could manage to reach Vladivostok. Most of all, if an additional 60 infantry divisions could be dispatched to the Far East, there would have been nothing, objectively speaking, to prevent Russia from winning the war on the continent. When this reinforcement actually arrived, the Japanese side would have no choice but to abandon Mukden and Liaoyang and construct a line of defense on the mountainous areas in the south through the Liaodong peninsula to weather massive attacks by the Russians. The

only thing the Japanese side could hope for in this case was a deterioration in Russia's political and economic conditions that would make it impossible for Russia to sustain and supply its massive force of one million in the Far East indefinitely.

Thus, the Second Pacific Fleet, popularly known as the Baltic Fleet, became the focus of attention. It had long been the Czar's intention to make an all-navy effort to dispatch a grand fleet to the Far East. Accordingly, the Baltic Fleet was organized on May 2, 1904, and Vice Admiral Zinovy Rozhdestvensky was appointed as its commander.

It took half a year for this fleet to set sail for the Far East in October 1904. The fitting of battleships was behind schedule because Russia had been inactive in sea battles for quite a long time. The fleet also had to wait for the completion of four new vessels that had been constructed in anticipation of the Russo-Japanese War. Moreover, the fleet had to train reserve officers and newly drafted sailors for the imminent battle, another reason for the delay in departure.

Even with an earlier departure, however, the fleet would not have arrived in the Far East in time to affect the outcome of the Battle of Lüshun and, if the fleet opted to go directly to Vladivostok, its port would have been frozen over for the entire month of February. Thus, the fleet was best advised to arrive in Vladivostok no sooner than March—necessitating the fleet to depart in October.

The magnificent fleet composed of seven battleships, four heavy cruisers, nine destroyers, and six special mission vessels sailed out of the Libau naval port on October 15, 1904. It would be a great voyage covering 18,000 nautical miles. Most of the ports on the way were within the sphere of influence of Britain, Japan's partner in the Anglo-Japanese Alliance that controlled the Seven Seas. To make the situation even worse, the fleet mistook a British fishing boat off Dogger Bank in the North Sea for a Japanese torpedo boat believing it had come all that way to ambush the fleet, and sunk it, killing three fishermen. The incident invited harsh criticism from the British public.

Although the only ports where the fleet could make a port call were those of French colonies, France remained highly cautious. Because the primary objective of France was to maintain the alliance with Russia in preparation for its imminent revenge on Germany, France would jeopardize its grand

strategy of containing Germany if it turned against Britain by servicing the Russian fleet too generously. That was why each time the British government warned France, it complied with the neutrality requirements.

On the Baltic Fleet's route to the Far East, France had two fine natural harbors en route to the Far East: Diego Suarez in Madagascar and Cam Ranh Bay in Vietnam. Due to strict warnings from Britain, however, France could not offer the Baltic Fleet anchorage for the sake of obtaining coal supplies or opportunities for personnel to rest. Under a contract with a German coal supplier, the fleet received delivery of coal while sailing. But because the British government restricted the supply of high-quality Cardiff coal, the Russian fleet had to rely on inferior German coal.

It is not hard to imagine that the seven-month voyage through the tropical weather without rest and recuperation had gravely affected the morale of the Russian sailors, who were not familiar with such heat. The Russians also had the disadvantage of not having the chance to scrape off barnacles from ship bottoms or to refit and repair hulls; in contrast, the Combined Fleet of the Imperial Japanese Navy had repeated refittings and training since the fall of Lüshun.

Nevertheless, at the time of its departure from Vietnam's offing after a rendezvous with Rear Admiral Nebogatov's Third Pacific Squadron, the Baltic Fleet was a magnificent force, boasting eight battleships against the four of the intercepting fleet under Tōgō. Although a mixed bag of old and new vessels, the four major battleships of the First Pacific Squadron were fresh from the dockyard and newer in concept and design than the Japanese flagship *Mikasa*.

In contrast, the Japanese side, even though it was inferior to the Baltic Fleet in terms of number of battleships, had lined up a greater number of destroyers and torpedo boats with shorter cruising range, taking advantage of its position as the interceptor.

Tsushima Strait or Tsugaru Strait

The greatest issue for both Japanese and Russian operation commands was to decide which strait the Baltic Fleet should sail through to reach Vladivostok. There are three routes to enter the Sea of Japan from the Pacific Ocean: Korea Strait (comprised of the western channel and the

eastern channel, the “Tsushima Strait”), Tsugaru Strait, or La Perouse Strait. There were other options, too, including a refitting stop at Kamchatka, capturing the Bonin Islands, or capturing some German colonies in the South Pacific in hopes of German tacit approval. In retrospect, after the destruction of the Baltic Fleet, it has been argued that any one of these options would have been better than what the fleet actually chose to do.

Meanwhile, the Japanese combined fleet was standing by in Chinhae Bay along the Korea Strait. But it was also ready to sail promptly toward the Tsugaru Strait when it was judged that the Baltic Fleet was taking the northern route.

In fact, the Japanese fleet was on the verge of deciding to head north on May 25, two days before the Battle of Tsushima, since it had not had the faintest sign of the enemy’s arrival. The Japanese fleet tentatively remained in the bay, discouraged by foul weather, when it received a telegraph at a little before 5:00 a.m. on May 27 from the armed merchantman *Shinano Maru*, which had been searching for the enemy. The telegraph said, “I have spotted enemy vessels.” A second telegraph followed with the information that the “enemy’s course is east-northeast and it appears to be heading for the eastern channel of the Korea Strait [Tsushima Strait].” This was the first occasion in history that telegraphic communication played a role in a sea battle.

Prior to that, the Russian war council had assumed that the Japanese navy was divided into three and was ready and waiting along the Korea, Tsugaru, and La Perouse Straits. Therefore, the Russians were convinced that they could beat the Japanese fleet by having the entire Baltic Fleet sail through the Korea Strait, which is the shortest of the three routes. Russian records show that never in their imagination did the Russians expect to confront the entire Japanese fleet at the Tsushima Strait.

“You Can Lose Half of the Vessels to Beat the Enemy”

Thus, the two fleets met to the west of Okinoshima Island at 1:30 p.m. on May 27. There was only a seven nautical-mile difference between the points of encounter estimated by Tōgō and Rozhdestvensky independently.

At this point, the Z-flag was hoisted on Tōgō’s flagship *Mikasa*, conveying the message of: “The empire’s fate depends on the result of this battle. Let

every man do his utmost duty.”

The Battle of Tsushima became well-known for the “cross the T” tactic employed by Tōgō. Two fleets, each in a single column, were approaching each other, when the Japanese fleet suddenly made a 180-degree turn, causing it to sail in the same direction as the Russian fleet. Then the Japanese fleet made another 90-degree turn at the head of the Russian fleet, blocking its direction.

Since both fleets were approaching one another at combat speed, if the Japanese fleet had sailed straight ahead, the encounter would have been a short one in which both sides could shoot only a few rounds before they passed each other. From the beginning, the only objective of the Japanese fleet had been to destroy the entire enemy fleet. If it allowed a substantial number of Russian vessels to reach Vladivostok, traffic on the Sea of Japan and the Korea Strait would have been obstructed, disturbing Japanese supplies to the Asian continent. Meanwhile, the Russian army in Manchuria would have grown stronger day by day as reinforcements continued to come from European Russia, making the situation unilaterally disadvantageous for Japan.

The Japanese side was prepared to lose all of its warships in order to accomplish its objective. Navy minister Yamamoto Gonbei once explained to Tōgō that two new battleships were about to be completed in a British dockyard, that construction of a super-10,000-ton warship would be started in a Japanese dockyard. Yamamoto encouraged Tōgō by saying, “You can lose half of the vessels to beat the enemy.”

The Tōgō Turn

With that kind of backup, one can take bold action. When the distance to the enemy narrowed to 8,000 meters, Tōgō ordered his fleet to make a 180-degree turn. Thirty minutes later, all of Tōgō’s vessels commenced firing at the enemy when they started sailing in the same direction parallel to the enemy fleet, at a distance of 6,000 meters.

It was, they say, a long thirty minutes. While this move made *Mikasa* temporarily vulnerable to enemy fires, causing some damage to the flagship, it certainly caused disarray within the enemy’s formation. Within two

minutes of the start of firing at 2:10 p.m., the battleship *Oslabia* at the head of the Russian fleet received some twenty shells, which caused a fire to break out. As a result of about 30 minutes of exchanging fire, the *Oslabia* was sunk, the battleships *Kaniaz Suwvarov* and *Imperator Alexander III* were incapacitated, dropping out of line, and the battleships *Borodino* and *Orel* were seriously damaged. Rozhestvensky on board the *Kaniaz Suwvarov* lost consciousness when a fragment of a shell that had smashed the ship's bridge hit him in the head.

Russian vessels that survived the initial carnage reorganized the formation and headed for Vladivostok. Although, to its dismay, the Japanese fleet temporarily lost sight of the enemy vessels, it spotted some funnel smoke in the west a little before sunset. Japanese military history describes this spotting as the grace of Heaven. Approaching that smoke, the Japanese fleet resumed its fierce firing at the Russian vessels to block their advance. The catastrophic detonation of their magazines sunk the *Borodino* and the *Imperator Alexander III* within a few minutes, while the remaining four vessels fled in different directions.

Tōgō decided to advance the Combined Japanese Fleet northward during the night so that it could intercept enemy vessels heading for Vladivostok at dawn.

In the night, Japanese destroyers and torpedo boats launched death-defying attacks on enemy vessels. Although those small vessels would be easy prey to enemy fire during the daytime, under the cover of darkness they could get close to enemy ships and launch torpedo attacks. In his detailed report on the battle, Tōgō recorded that, "According to a Russian prisoner that I interviewed after the battle, the fierceness of the torpedo attacks that night was almost beyond description. . . ." Historian Tanaka Hiromi, in his treatise compiled in *Kindai Nippon Sensō-shi* (Military History of Modern Japan), attributes Tōgō's victory not so much to his famous Tōgō Turn but more to the systematic coordination of roles among different sizes of ships. The night raid by torpedo boats not only sank the battleships *Navarin* and *Sissoi Veliki* and the cruisers *Admiral Nakhimov* and *Vladimir Monomakh* but also seriously damaged most of the remaining vessels, which barely survived and fled to the north.

The next day, when the Japanese fleet was waiting in the morning sun for

the enemy to appear near Takeshima Island (竹島), the five remaining vessels of the Baltic Fleet under the command of Rear Admiral Nebogatov, who had replaced the incapacitated Rozhestvensky, appeared on the scene. Surrounded by twenty-six Japanese warships, Nebogatov surrendered after making the following plea to his younger officers:

Although it would be a heroic act to fight these twenty-six Japanese vessels for the honor of Russia, it is obvious that we will be annihilated if we do so without giving any damage to the enemy. I am an old man and I do not hesitate to sacrifice my life, but you are young, and it is you who will one day retrieve the honor and glory of the Russian Navy. The lives of the two thousand four hundred men in these ships are more important than mine. It is me alone that should be blamed for the surrender.

It was reported that an indescribable mixture of sorrow and anger filled those five Russian ships.

Unbelievably One-Sided Victory

To sum up the Battle of Tsushima, 19 out of 38 Russian warships that attempted to sail through Tsushima Strait were sunk, including six battleships. And five ships, including two battleships, were captured. Only a solitary armed merchantman, two destroyers, and a transport ship managed to reach Vladivostok. In contrast, the damage on the Japanese side was limited to three torpedo boats. On the Russian side, 4,524 sailors were killed and 6,168 Russian officers and sailors, including commanders-in-chief, were taken prisoner. On the Japanese side, 116 sailors died and some 570 were wounded.

This was an unbelievably one-sided victory. It was a perfect victory unprecedented in the world history of naval battles.

In his battle report, Tōgō analyzed the causes of this one-sided victory as follows:

There was no noticeable difference in force strength between us, and I

can testify that enemy officers and sailors also tried their utmost best for the honor of Russia. Our miraculous victory is owed to nothing else than the august powers of the Emperor.

The notion of “the august powers of the Emperor” had been advocated by Itō Hirobumi as the spiritual pillar of the Japanese constitution when he drafted the Meiji Constitution; it was meant to take the place of references to Christianity in Western constitutions. The reference to “the august powers of the Emperor,” therefore, should be interpreted as nothing more than the equivalent to Westerners attributing their success to the grace of God. It was also an expression of Japanese modesty, stressing the factor of good fortune in one’s success.

To be sure, it was fortunate, for instance, that the foul weather and dense fog of preceding days had cleared on the day of the decisive battle. But if the Baltic Fleet had won the battle instead, the good weather could have been interpreted as a good fortune for the Russians.

The strategy that the Russian side took was criticized *ex post facto* from various angles. But it is the Russian defeat that generates this analysis. If the Baltic Fleet had won the battle, its decision to sail through the Tsushima Strait would have been appreciated as the shortest and the most efficient route. In terms of number of main guns, moreover, the Russian side had twenty-six 12-inch guns, the most powerful weapon on board, against sixteen owned by the Japanese fleet. In terms of 10-inch guns, it was one against fifteen in Russia’s favor. Therefore, it would not be surprising at all if the Russian side did not expect to be beaten so thoroughly in a long-range cannonade.

But the fact remains that the Russian fleet was indeed thoroughly defeated in the long-range artillery duel, beaten in the short-range cannonade by the Japanese fleet’s 8-inch guns, and finished off by torpedo boats, which the Russian side did not even include in its fleet.

Because the two fleets fired at each other, sailing in parallel in the same direction after the Tōgō Turn, it would have been only natural for both sides to receive damage of a similar extent. The overwhelming gap in the damage incurred between the two sides, therefore, can only be attributed to a difference in marksmanship.

One factor behind this difference in marksmanship was the legendary intensive target practice undertaken in Chinhae Bay while the Japanese were waiting for the arrival of the Baltic Fleet. During this period, Admiral Tōgō reversed his meal schedule from breakfast at 8:00 a.m. /supper at 5 p.m. to breakfast at 5:00 a.m./supper at 8:00 p.m. so as not to miss the target practice by his men. As the result of this training, the marksmanship of each vessel of the Combined Fleet of the Imperial Japanese Navy was greatly improved.

Established theory in those days held that the on-target rate during a sea battle would not exceed 2–3 percent. A Russian expert who studied the damage on the battleship *Orel* after the war estimated that the Japanese on-target rate had exceeded 12 percent. Accuracy that is five times greater than average could only have been attained by repeated practice. In any event, one thing that can be said about the Japanese gunnery without any doubt is that it had the ability to fire exceedingly rapidly.

Japanese gunners—including those in today’s Self-Defense Forces—are renowned as some of the world’s finest in terms of both speed and accuracy. This may relate to cultural traditions emphasizing elimination of any wasted movement, as seen in *chanoyu* (tea ceremony), which have already been elevated to the realm of art. When shopping even today, for instance, the acts of making a purchase, getting the correct change, and having the item properly wrapped would take several times longer in Moscow than in Tokyo. It is easily imagined that the same thing can be said about the execution of the procedure of aiming, loading, and discharging a gun.

Perhaps, the standard of the Japanese people in these actions is arguably the highest in the world. That is why it is still believed that American generals, German officers, and Japanese noncommissioned officers will make the strongest army in the world.

If you can halve the time to discharge a gun, you can double the number of hits. Moreover, if the enemy becomes tied up with extinguishing fire started by the hits, it would be the same as discharging guns ten times faster than the enemy in terms of impact.

Moreover, the Japanese side had more advantages in the realm of science and technology during the Russo-Japanese War, because Shimose Powder (known overseas as Shimose Melinite) had far greater explosive power than

other powders. Also, the shells used by the Japanese Navy were equipped with blasting fuses (Ijūin fuses) that were much more sensitive than the mainstream shells of the time which were manufactured to penetrate armor. When a Japanese shell hit targets, it exploded and blew away everything around it. Russians like to give nicknames to anything, and this horrendous shell was nicknamed the “grand sweeper.” It is not hard to imagine how these shells, exploding one after another, had greatly impaired the capability of Russian vessels to engage in combat.

Seen from these angles, the Japanese victory in the Battle of Tsushima should be attributed more to the high cultural and educational standards of the Japanese people in those days, particularly the tradition of perfectionism that had permeated every social stratum in Japan, than to any particular strategy or tactic.

This national character of the Japanese survived the defeat in World War II and subsequent occupation by the Allied Forces in which a number of traditional values were lost. And it became the engine of miraculous postwar economic reconstruction and growth. This postwar economic success, despite the apparent absence of outstanding leadership or an excellent national strategy, owed a lot to the average capabilities of ordinary Japanese people, which must have towered above the rest of the world.

“Legitimate Successor of the Anglo-Saxon”

Japan’s victory at the Battle of Tsushima changed the world in many senses. It inspired wonder and admiration in the entire world.

Britons were overjoyed by the victory of their ally as if it were their own accomplishment. The year 1905 happened to be the 100th anniversary of the great victory at the Battle of Trafalgar, in which the British navy under the command of Admiral Horatio Nelson had sunk or captured eighteen ships of the French-Spanish allied fleet without losing any of its own. Victimizing almost half of the enemy’s fleet was in itself an amazing accomplishment, and yet it was still no match to Admiral Tōgō’s one-sided victory. The British government expressed its jubilation over “the victory of a British ally” that “could even have exceeded the victory at Trafalgar.”

Across the Atlantic, the American response was stupendous, reflecting

Americans' natural love of a success story. President Theodore Roosevelt himself admitted that he had been hooked to the news of the battle all day long and, that, "I was too excited to attend to any official duty, as if I had become a Japanese myself, and spent the entire day talking about the sea battle with visitors." When Kaneko Kentarō, Prime Minister Itō's special envoy, entered a restaurant in Washington, D.C., other patrons rushed to him to shake hands and raised their glasses in congratulation for Japan's victory, while the band played *Kimigayo*, Japan's national anthem.

The Washington Times, characterizing Japan's victory as a triumph of civilization, freedom, and progress, editorialized as follows:

It has been predicted by some that the Slav and the Anglo-Saxon will have a decisive clash within the 20th century, and it appears that this prediction has been at least partially realized today. This is so because the Japanese is a legitimate successor of the Anglo-Saxon.

World Historic Significance of the Battle of Tsushima

It is true that the 20th century was the period of struggle for world hegemony, between Britain and Russia in the beginning and between the United States and the Soviet Union in the latter half. Except for the tragic 20-year interval in which Japan antagonized the Anglo-Saxon world, Japan had the fortune of being on the Anglo-Saxon side for twenty years during the Anglo-Japanese Alliance and another fifty years as a partner of the U.S.-Japan alliance.

And the arrival of that tragic interval, too, had been predicted at an early stage. *The New York Sun* expressed its uneasiness about the rise of Japan only three days after the Battle of Tsushima as follows:

Japan has won a great victory. If Japan continues to grow stronger and more powerful, using this great victory as a springboard, it may not be too far in the future that Britain, which currently boasts the world's strongest naval power, will be pushed away and overtaken by Japan. And when that happens, what will become of the United States?

It is often after such major incidents that one can glimpse the long-term

historical perspective of the world. The above two commentaries seem to have hinted at the future shape of Japan as well as at options it had in the one hundred years of the 20th century.

At the same time, the Battle of Tsushima became one of the geneses of the Russian Revolution, which profoundly affected world trends throughout the 20th century.

In Russia, every time the news of a defeat was reported, sorrow and anger spread throughout the country. Illiterate peasants encircled those who could read newspapers, asking for the details of the defeat, which made them all cry.

A Russian newspaper argued, “It was because Russia had rejected progress and westernization that it lost 500,000 soldiers and billions of rubles.” Another newspaper editorialized, “Russia has been stupid enough to close its eyes and let the world’s progress pass it by. We had been marching toward the depth of devastation, blindfolded, but this defeat had the effect of stripping off the blindfold.” As these commentaries represented, expectations for revolution became all the more rampant.

An antiwar demonstration that had erupted in Saint Petersburg spread to all over Russia. The June 6 issue of the *New York Times* reported, “Domestic situations in Russia have become increasingly tumultuous and the will to continue the war seems to have waned. There is a danger of revolution in Russia today.”

By this time, Poland was in a state of rebellion, where on June 19 socialists marching with the red flag clashed with the Cossack cavalry, killing and injuring 2,000 persons. The crew of the Russian battleship *Potemkin* rose up against its officers in the Black Sea port of Odessa; a factor behind the uprising was the alleged financial assistance to insurgents provided by Lieutenant Colonel Akashi Motojirō.

Inspiring Nonwhite Peoples

Perhaps even more significant in terms of world history than the impact of the Battle of Tsushima on the future of the Anglo-Saxon/Slav strife or on the socialist revolution that shook up the entire 20th century was its impact on the thinking of nonwhite peoples around the world.

Jawaharlal Nehru wrote in his autobiography:

Japanese victories stirred up my enthusiasm and I waited eagerly for the papers for fresh news daily. Nationalistic ideas filled my mind. I mused of Indian freedom and Asiatic freedom from the thralldom of Europe. I dreamt of brave deeds, of how, sword in hand, I would fight for India and help in freeing her.

In May 1905, when I was fifteen, my family set out to journey to England and arrived in London late in that month. Reaching London by train from Dover, I was elated to read in the newspapers of the victory of Japan, an Asiatic power, over Russia in the naval battle in the Strait of Tsushima.²

In letters to his daughter Indira compiled in *Glimpses of World History* (1936), Nehru wrote of this excitement over Japan's victory, that it was shared, he said, by boys, girls, and adults all over Asia. A major European power was beaten. Just as Asia had crushed Europe several times in the past, it could do so again today, Nehru predicted, and noted that there were calls of nationalism from around the entire Asian continent to restore an "Asia for Asians."

Sun Yat-sen (孫文) also remarked that Westerners stopped looking down on Asians after Japan's victory, which not only allowed Japan to enjoy the privilege of a first-class nation but also helped raise the international status of other Asian peoples as well. Indian nationalist of the early 20th century Lajpat Rai stated, "Japan defended the honor of Asians and proved that Asians, if provided with equal opportunities, were not inferior at all in any aspect."

Commonly behind the Persian Constitutional Revolution of 1906, radicalization of the Indian National Congress in 1907, the Young Turk Revolution in 1908, and the Xinhai Revolution (辛亥革命) in China in 1911 was the psychological impact of Japan's victory in the Russo-Japanese War. Although the victory fell short of shaking up colonial empires, which were at their apex at that time, it powerfully stimulated the nationalism of all of the Asian peoples from Egypt to Vietnam.

² Jawaharlal Nehru, *An Autobiography: With Musings on Recent Events in India* (Bombay: Allied Publishing, 1962), pp.16–17.

Japan's victory even gave hope to Afro-Americans in the United States to resist suppression. Archibald Grimke, American lawyer, intellectual, journalist, diplomat and community leader in the 19th and early 20th century, contributed the following biblical exhortation to *New York Age*:

Go . . . ye little brown men, conquering and to conquer.
Sheath not your terrible sword, lay not aside yet your bloody scourge.
Ye shall overthrow . . . Ye have thrown Russia down,
ye are destined to throw down others than Russia in their pride,
in their lust for power,
To bring down to the dust the mighty of the earth.³

It is, however, equally undeniable that Japan's victory had also stirred up wariness of Japan among Western powers. Behind the discrimination against the Japanese residents in the United States, which later became a controversial issue between Japan and the United States, was, also, this wariness of Japan—that is to say, the “yellow peril” argument.

It can be said, thus, that Japan's miraculous victory at the Battle of Tsushima had accelerated the speed of historic turnabout everywhere in the world.

³ Quoted from Reginald Kearney. *African American Views of the Japanese: Solidarity or Seditious?* (Albany: State University of New York Press. 1998) pp.20–21