

Chapter 7

The Anglo-Japanese Alliance

—Komura's Memorandum Settles the Dispute over an Alliance Partner—

A Blank Space on the World Map

Japan's relations with Britain date back 300 years.

The very first British to come to Japan was William Adams, a navigator of the Dutch vessel *De Liefde*, who was washed ashore on Kyūshū Island in 1600. Adams was a veteran sailor who, in the reign of Queen Elizabeth I, had distinguished himself as a captain of the British navy against the Spanish Armada. Tokugawa Ieyasu heavily favored Adams and treated him as a domain lord, granting him a domain and subjects.

Hearing that Adams had been treated well in Japan, Britain dispatched King James I's envoy to Edo and opened a trading house in Hirado, Kyūshū, in 1613. The British trading house, however, lost the competition with the Dutch in Nagasaki and was closed down in 1624. When the British officials left Hirado, they entrusted the building, storehouse, and pier to the care of the Hirado-*han* and pleaded for permission to trade under the same conditions when the trading house reopened. Thus, Britain was not exactly expelled from trade with Japan unlike Spain or Portugal, which were suspected of expansionism by means of Catholic missionary works.

In any event, Britain in those days was much more interested in the Qing market, which was incomparably larger than the Japanese one. Britain neglected its trade with Japan until the nineteenth century.

Meanwhile, the great British explorer, Captain James Cook, had explored the entire Pacific basin between 1768 and 1770, including Australia and New Zealand. It was during his preparations to explore the last destination, the North Pacific, that he was killed by natives in Hawaii. Because his successor, Charles Clark, also died of sickness shortly thereafter, the North Pacific ended up being unexplored. For these reasons, the region north of the Japanese archipelago became a blank space in the world map of the time.

King Louis XVI of France, who had been watching Captain Cook's exploration closely with a sense of rivalry, ordered naval officer Jean

François de Galaup, comte de La Pérouse, to explore the Sea of Japan in 1783. As a result of this expedition, Sōya Strait (宗谷海峡) between Sakhalin and Hokkaidō became known internationally as La Pérouse Strait. However, it wasn't until Mamiya Rinzō's 1808–09 expedition that Sakhalin was finally determined to be an actual island.

Two Great Powers Dividing the World

The Far East around the time Japan opened its doors was a bipolar world centered around Russia which expanded its sphere of influence from the north and Britain from the south.

Watanabe Kazan (渡辺崋山, 1793–1841), an enlightened thinker, statesman, and painter toward the end of the Tokugawa shogunate, had been anxious about Japan's future in the world, having studied Western sciences from his younger days. In one of his written works, Watanabe pointed out that, while Japan persisted with national isolation, Russia and Britain might resort to force to open Japan's doors and, in due course, attempt to seize its territory. He stressed that the “resourceful British are good at naval warfare, while Russians under the benevolent government are excellent land fighters.”

Hashimoto Sanai (橋本左内, 1834–59), the genius philosopher who met a premature death by execution during the Ansei Purge (安政の大獄, 1858–59) carried out by Ii Naosuke (井伊直弼) toward the end of the Tokugawa shogunate, judged that two master spirits, i.e. Britain and Russia, could not exist together and insisted that Japan should collaborate with Russia. In a pair of China-style antitheses, Hashimoto analyzed, “It will be most likely that either Britain or Russia will dominate the world. While Britons are fierce and greedy, Russians are calm but mighty and tough, and it will be Russians who will be more trusted in the end.”

Due to the stylistic constraints of classical Chinese with which Hashimoto had to comply when fitting the characters of the Britain and the Russians into a pair of antitheses, the accuracy of the descriptions leaves much to be desired. Nevertheless, they must have been based on information obtained from the Netherlands and, moreover, they might have been generally accepted ideas in the world in those days.

It was after Britain and Russia became the two major victors of the Napoleonic Wars that these two grew into great powers and divided the world into two. The situation was quite analogous to the emergence of the U.S.-U.S.S.R. bipolar world after the Allied Forces annihilated Germany and Japan in World War II. Comparing the fierceness of Admiral Horatio Nelson, who completely destroyed the French-Spanish armada off the Cape of Trafalgar, with the depth of General Mikhail Kutuzov, who prevented the invincible Napoleonic army from winning a decisive victory at the Battle of Borodino, and comparing the British capture of former French and Dutch colonies after the war compared with Russia's attempt to restore the legitimacy of European monarchs by forming the Holy Alliance in the Congress of Vienna, it might have been only natural for continental countries, especially for such a British rival as the Netherlands, to side with Russia.

It was the Opium War that first gave Japanese political activists in the twilight of the Tokugawa shogunate a sense of crisis about the future of Japan. After this devastating war for Qing, these activists began to worry about when Britain would reach out for Japan and whether Japan could really resist a British offensive. Thus, the greatest threat for Japan at that time was Britain and, therefore, it was only natural for the Japanese to place their high hopes on Russia, Britain's archrival. In fact, Qing never lost its faith in Russia until the very end—which cost it not only the vast Siberian territory but also Manchuria. Qing took the risk of losing its own country by trusting Russia.

As I pointed out in Chapter 5, the Tokugawa government came very close to being lured by Russia's smooth talk when Commodore Perry and Admiral Putyatin visited Japan one after another in 1853. Despite political upheaval, Japan was able to steer through the age of imperialism, with gaping, unfathomable pitfalls everywhere, by relying on its own strength and judgment.

When the Tokugawa government was on its death bed, France was very active in offering its help and some in the shogunate argued that it should accept the French offer. But Katsu Kaishū (勝海舟), the shogunate's chief negotiator at that time, adamantly rejected this argument. Britain also offered assistance to the Imperial Court in rivalry with France, but Saigō

Takamori (西郷隆盛), commander of Satsuma-*han* troops in Kyoto, declined the offer without hesitation, saying it would be dishonorable to ask for foreigners' help to promote Japan's reform, because reform should be carried out by the hands of the Japanese. And it was these two, Katsu and Saigō, who helped accomplish the Meiji Restoration by agreeing on a peaceful surrender of Edo. Had it not been for these two, Japan could have been an arena of British-French strife, like India.

According to Katsu's memoir, Russia offered a loan to Katsu, who was obliged to financially support numerous former vassals of the shogunate after its fall. This must be partly because Hokkaido at that time was still under the control of the shogunate. Katsu reminisces:

I say nobody else had a harder time during the transition from the old regime to the new. At the time of the Meiji Restoration, I had to take care of as many as 150,000 former vassals of the shogunate with limited funds of a mere ¥500,000. It was a tall order because, after all, they had to be fed. When Russia offered me a loan, however, I turned it down immediately. Had I offered Hokkaido as collateral, Russia would have gladly lent me ¥5 million or so. If I had embezzled ¥1 million out of it, I could have had an easy retirement. Oh, don't take me seriously, I am not that vicious.

In contrast to Li Hongzhang, who had been easily bribed by Russia, Katsu declined Russia's offer for help without hesitation. It was the samurai spiritual tradition behind Katsu's behavior that saved Japan from Russia's ambition.

Even though Japan was forced to accept unequal treaties with the Western powers, it had somehow managed to ride out the turbulent transition from shogunate to Meiji government without interferences from foreign powers.

Gashin Shōtan

After this brief contact with Japan, Western powers in the late nineteenth century began to concentrate on areas other than East Asia, including the division of the Ottoman Empire, the division of Africa, and the conquest of

Central Asia, allowing Japan to devote energy to its modernization without being bothered too much by international relations. Meanwhile, Qing's military might became a serious threat to Japan at one point as a result of Qing's own modernization, taking advantage of Western powers' temporary absence from the Far East. But Japan was able to overcome this threat on its own through the First Sino-Japanese War.

Entering the twentieth century, with the completion of Russia's Trans-Siberian Railway just around the corner, however, Japan was finally forced to make a choice either to side with Britain or Russia, the two greatest powers in the world.

It was around the time of the Boxer Rebellion that the idea of an Anglo-Japanese alliance began to take concrete form.

An alliance with Britain vis-à-vis Russia's eastbound advance had, of course, already existed as a theoretical possibility even before the Rebellion. For instance, Mutsu Munemitsu wrote the following editorial for the magazine *Sekai no Nippon* (世界之日本), published after the Triple Intervention:

Many people have high hopes for the Anglo-Japanese Alliance. But Britain is not a Don Quixote that would empathize with other countries' woes. If the alliance requires Britain to guarantee Japan's security, Britain needs to be compensated for its own security. Is Japan capable of helping the British Empire defend its extremely long line of defense? Britain does not believe that Japan as an ally is capable of fighting wars in the Asian continent and dispatching its fleet further away than Singapore. If Britain had only referred to Japan as its ally during the Triple Intervention, the Itō Cabinet might have made a historic decision to commit Japan's fate to an alliance with Britain. Because Britain did not mention such an alliance, however, we had no other choice but to accept the Triple Intervention. . . .

This quote clearly shows that Mutsu had understood the truth that an alliance would not be formed unless both sides found it beneficial.

In any event, Mutsu's judgment was accurate. At the time of the Triple Intervention, Japanese naval power was so pathetic that the only battleship Japan owned was the battered *Zhenyuan* (鎮遠) that it had captured from Qing. It was after Japan became one of the leading naval nations in the world, procuring battleships one after another during the *Gashin Shōtan* (persevering through hardship for the sake of revenge) period, that Britain decided to form an alliance with Japan. At the first renewal of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance in 1905, which made it a complete offensive and defensive alliance, Japan committed itself to the defense of India, far west of Singapore.

According to the journalist Sakazaki Sakan (坂崎斌), the true reason behind Itō Hirobumi's proposal to greatly expand the Japanese navy and army at the ninth session of the Imperial Diet (1895–96) was his support for Mutsu, who argued that Britain would not agree to conclude the Anglo-Japanese Alliance unless Japan was powerful and influential enough to meet British expectations.

Arms expansion during the period of the *Gashin Shōtan* ideology following the Triple Intervention was truly remarkable. While the wartime naval budget for 1895 was ¥13 million, it was tripled to ¥38 million in the 1896 peacetime budget, and further doubled to ¥76 million in 1897.

Of course, the Japanese government had to resort to a massive tax increase. According to Japanese elders who have lived through the hundred years since the Meiji Restoration, the hardest time for them in terms of day-to-day living was during and immediately after World War II, while life during the *Gashin Shōtan* period and the Russo-Japanese War had been just as tough.

Besides, the Japanese government devoted almost 90 percent of the ¥360 million war redemptions from Qing to the military buildup. One way to look at it is that the margin that Qing had failed to spend for the war with Japan was spent by the Japanese government to prepare for its war with Russia, which resulted in preventing Russia from taking Manchuria from Qing.

Germany Acts as an Unintended Go-Between

During the March-April period in 1901, acting German ambassador to London, Hermann von Eckardstein, frequently visited Japanese minister

Hayashi Tadasu (林 董). The German diplomat hinted at the possibility of forming a triple alliance among Japan, Britain, and Germany, and he assured Hayashi that some in the British cabinet also supported this scheme.

The true intention behind Eckardstein's suggestion is unknown even today. When Eckardstein brought the same suggestion to Britain, its foreign minister at the time, Henry Charles Keith Petty-FitzMaurice, 5th Marquess of Lansdowne, inquired of the German ambassador to London whether the idea was truly Eckardstein's personal opinion as he had claimed it to be or an attempt carried out by a secret order of the German government to sound out of the British.

Whatever Eckardstein's true intention might have been, his actions acted as a go-between to promote the prompt signing of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance. When Foreign Minister Katō Takaaki received the report from Hayashi, Katō asked for an opinion from Komura Jutarō, who was the Japanese minister to Qing at that time. In response, Komura strongly supported Eckardstein's proposal, saying this alliance would "bring an immense benefit to Japan." Hearing this, Foreign Minister Katō issued an instruction to Hayashi, stating, "Although the Japanese government currently cannot express its official position on this issue, I hereby grant Minister Hayashi the authority to explore the intention of the British government on this matter at his own personal initiative." Following this instruction, Hayashi discussed the possibility of an Anglo-Japanese Alliance with the British foreign minister. Although no concrete progress was made during this initial contact, this was possibly the first occasion at which Japan's attitude toward the alliance was conveyed to the British side.

A few months later, in July 1901, Sir Claude MacDonald, British minister to Japan who was on leave in London, visited Hayashi to share the following view:

Recently, I had a chance to talk with top authorities of the British government (Edward VII and Prime Minister Robert Cecil, 3rd Marquess of Salisbury) and both agreed that an alliance had to be made between Britain and Japan in order to cope with future

problems in the Far East.¹ Both held the view that, when a partner of the alliance went to war with a third country, the other partner had to remain neutral. Each partner had to cooperate with the other, however, when one of them was engaged in war with more than two enemy countries.

MacDonald visited Hayashi once again on the following day to tell him that the British government had every intention of forming an alliance with Japan, although launching the alliance might take some time because it was against the traditional policy of Britain. Meanwhile, MacDonald told Hayashi emphatically that the Japanese government should never conclude a bilateral cooperation arrangement with Russia.²

Finally toward the end of July, British Foreign Minister 5th Marquess of Lansdowne declared to Japanese Minister Hayashi that it was high time for the two countries to seriously consider forming a bilateral alliance, revealing British intentions quite explicitly.

Japanese Soldiers Are the Best by Far

Prior to his assignment to the ministership in Japan, Claude MacDonald had been stationed in Beijing as British minister during the Boxer Rebellion. It appears that one of the driving forces behind the Anglo-Japanese Alliance was MacDonald's trust in the Japanese military that he had developed while in Beijing.

When the Qing government declared war on the Western powers in June 1901, rebels besieged foreign missions. It was indeed the calm and level-headed conduct of MacDonald and Lieutenant Colonel Shiba Gorō of the Japanese Imperial Army that saved the lives of foreign residents.

At that time, no Western power stationed its regular forces in Beijing, forcing its foreign mission to rely on volunteer forces for protection which were composed of foreign residents and Chinese Christians oppressed by the Boxers.

¹ *Nippon Gaiko Bunsho* (Documents of Japanese Foreign Policy, Volume 34), pp.19–20. Quoted in Tsunoda Jun. 1967. *Manshū Mondai to Kokubō Hōshin* (Manchurian Issue and National Defense Policy), Hara Shobō, Tokyo, p. 82. Text in Japanese was translated to English by the author.

² *Ibid.*

One of the British volunteers, B. Simpson, had the following to say in praise of Lieutenant Colonel Shiba:

Although the Japanese embassy could muster only a few dozen volunteers to defend the wall of the imperial palace, which easily took 500 soldiers to defend, they were endowed with an excellent commander. This small man somehow found the way to bring order to the chaos. He organized his volunteer forces and reinforced the defense of the front line of the battle. He did everything he could and should. I have already become an ardent admirer of this man and it won't be too long before I willingly enslave myself to this man. For reasons unknown even to me, I was unable to distance myself from the Japanese military post. . . .

About the same man, Lancelot Jayle, a clerk at the British legation, testified that:

Japanese soldiers are no doubt the most superior warriors, and Lieutenant Colonel Shiba is regarded as the most excellent officer of all. The courage and audacity of the Japanese soldiers are simply amazing. British sailors may be the distant number two. Japanese soldiers are the best by far.

At the international conference convened when the Eight-Nation Alliance forces arrived in Beijing, British Minister MacDonald announced that half of the success in the defense of the Legation Quarter was attributable to the distinctly courageous Japanese officers and soldiers, which was a fair assessment.

Words of Appreciation from the British Navy

Subsequently, MacDonald was appointed to British Minister to Japan. It is not hard to imagine that, in the course of briefings on the situation in East Asia during his temporary stay in Britain, he persuasively stressed to British leaders how trustworthy the Japanese and the Japanese officers and soldiers were.

There were other sources of British trust in the Japanese. When Russia occupied Lüshun in 1898, it became necessary for Britain to open a military base along the Bohai Bay to counter Russia. During the question and answer period in the British Senate on May 17, Prime Minister Robert Cecil, 3rd Marquess of Salisbury, stressed the need to demonstrate Britain's firm determination that Russia not be given a free hand in Lüshun lest the Chinese should become desperate, allowing foreign powers to annex their territory at will.

While this explanation was self-contradictory in the face of Britain's own annexation of others' territories, it must have sounded reasonable enough to British people in those days. The British sphere of interest in China was originally centered around the Yangze River basin starting from Shanghai; Britain, therefore, did not have great stakes in Bohai Bay. If Britain gave Russia a free hand in the area around the capital city Beijing, however, Qing Chinese might fall into a state of defeatism that could eventually lead to the fall of their own country. Since Britain did not possess the military or political means to block Russia's control of Lüshun, the only thing it could do was to establish its own military base on the opposite shore of the Bohai Bay as a counterbalance.

It should be recalled that Weihaiwai (威海衛) had been occupied by Japan as collateral for Qing's war redemption. Thus, the first thing the British government did was to inquire whether the Japanese government had any objection to Britain's lease of Weihaiwai after the Japanese troops withdrew. The Japanese Minister to Britain Katō Takaaki recommended to the head office in Tokyo that the Japanese government should actively support the British lease of Weihaiwai in order to promote Anglo-Japanese cooperation—thus the Japanese government responded to the British government that it had no objection. As a result, Britain was able to obtain the Qing government's agreement to lease Weihaiwai under the same conditions as Russia's lease of Lüshun.

When British troops arrived in Weihaiwai, they found the barracks in order and in pristine condition with a lot of equipment still intact. The commander-in-chief of the British fleet requested the British minister to Japan to officially express his gratitude to the Japanese military for its

consideration, which benefited his troops greatly.

An obsession with cleanliness and tidiness and the custom to clean up a place before leaving is uniquely Japanese. Even today, Korean tourists marvel how “sickeningly clean” Japanese towns are. Although the reason for this cultural trait is uncertain, it might be attributable to the sanitary needs during hot and humid summers. This pragmatic need has been sophisticated by Japanese perfectionism, typically manifested in the tea ceremony, and become embedded in all layers of Japanese life as civic society matured during the 300 years of the Tokugawa shogunate.

Korean Peninsula Decides Japan’s Fate

On September 21, 1901, Komura was appointed to foreign minister, and he granted Minister Hayashi in London the authority to negotiate with the British side on October 8, signifying the beginning of formal negotiations on the Anglo-Japanese Alliance.

In a nutshell, what Japan sought through the negotiations was to block the Korean Peninsula from falling into the hands of an enemy force. Japan’s security had always been threatened whenever the southern part of the Korean Peninsula had fallen into the hands of an adversary. The threat from the superpower on the Asian continent reached the southern shore of the Korean Peninsula when Tang troops ruined the Baekje Kingdom (百濟) in the seventh century and when the Mongols conquered the Kingdom of Goryeo (高麗) in the thirteenth century. In its long history, Japan had reinforced the defense of its mainland only for these two occasions, constructing fortifications on Kyushu Island. Furthermore, it was when the communist army threatened Busan on the southern tip of the peninsula during the Korean War that the National Police Reserve (警察予備隊), predecessor of today’s Self-Defense Force, was established—even after Japan had abandoned all of its armed forces as a result of its defeat in World War II.

Japan’s need to secure the Korean Peninsula by its own hand created two other needs. One was to put the peninsula under Japan’s control, beyond the simple neutralization of the peninsula. Whenever Russia, especially, spoke of the neutralization of a territory, it only meant that Russia wished the territory to remain neutral until Russia itself was prepared to take it. Even if

the neutralization was guaranteed by other Western powers, including Britain and the United States, none of them would be capable of dispatching their armies to maintain the neutrality should Russia militarily advance to Korea against the agreement. That scenario would be a rerun of the inaction of the Western powers vis-à-vis Russia's forceful occupation of northern Manchuria despite John Hay's Open Door Notes and the British/German declarations on the open-door policy for China.

Also, although it is rude to the Korean people today to mention this, it was generally believed in those days that the Korean people lacked the capability to govern themselves. Even as recently as after World War II, it was seriously discussed whether Korea should be put under UN trusteeship until it gained self-governing capability. It was, therefore, international common sense at the height of the age of imperialism in the early twentieth century to doubt the self-governing capability of the Korean people.

That being the case, mere "neutrality" would make the future of Korea highly uncertain—and thus Japan felt compelled to claim its special rights on the peninsula to Western powers. This policy of Japan on Korea remained consistent and culminated in the annexation of the peninsula in 1910.

Japan's second, more proactive need was to block Russia's control of Manchuria. During the negotiations on the Anglo-Japanese Alliance, the Japanese side insisted that, while the Japanese interest in Manchuria was only indirect, it was imperative to protect Manchuria's territorial integrity and keep its doors open lest Russia should monopolize Manchuria, which would be a prelude to Russia's advance to Korea. Given Russia's ambition in those days, which I have repeatedly discussed in previous chapters, this apprehension on the part of Japan appears to be only natural.

As far as territorial integrity and the open-door policy of Manchuria were concerned, Japan's interest matched perfectly with that of Britain from the beginning. When it came to the recognition of Japan's special right in Korea, however, the British side was hesitant to include such a clause in the treaty, although it had agreed with the Japanese argument in substance from the early stages of the negotiations. Because the British side had agreed with Japan's position in substance, however, it made a compromise in the wording of the treaty to satisfy the Japanese side.

The End of Splendid Isolation

British interest in the Far East in those days was concentrated in the area of the Yangtze River basin, and Britain did not have a major interest in Manchuria or the Korean Peninsula. Above all, British interest was in the conclusion of a military alliance itself, i.e., a guarantee that the alliance partner would participate immediately in a war that Britain started with two or more enemy countries. This could be more clearly understood when “two . . . enemy countries” is replaced with Russia and France, Britain’s rival countries in those days.

The table below shows the naval balance in the Far East among major powers as of April 1901.

Table 1: Naval Power in the Far East in April 1901 by Country

	Number of Battleships	Number of Armored Cruisers	Number of Cruisers	Number of Destroyers	Total Tonnage
Japan	5	4	10	13	200,000
Britain	4	2	11	7	170,000
Russia	5	6	2	6	120,000
France	1	1	6	8	80,000

* Translated from the table on p. 88 of Tsunoda (1967)

Previously, British sea power had single-handedly overwhelmed the combined naval power of all the other countries anywhere in the world; this had provided the foundation for the *Pax Britannica* in the nineteenth century. Subsequently, the naval armaments race among nations intensified. Russia preferentially deployed its newly built, prime ships to the Far East after the Triple Intervention. As a result, by January 1901 British naval force in the region was surpassed by the sum of Russian and French naval powers, both in number of ships as well as total tonnage.

Thus, while Britain could handle either Russia or France separately, it would need Japan’s assistance if it had to engage the two countries at once. If, moreover, an entente were formed between Japan and Russia ahead of the

Anglo-Japanese Alliance, Britain would be powerless in the Far East. And this was the largest worry for Britain throughout this period. In this sense, it may be justified to say that Itō's approach to Russia for the bilateral entente in 1901 (as we will see shortly) contributed to the early conclusion of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance by making Britain anxious about the possible Russo-Japanese alliance.

When the draft treaty of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance was discussed at the British cabinet meeting, Michael Hicks Beach, Chancellor of the Exchequer, astutely observed that "if any benefit could be gained from this treaty, it would go to the Japanese navy and, in case of unexpected development, it could reduce the burden imposed on our own navy."³ This statement should be understood in the above context.

After the majority of the cabinet approved the draft treaty of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance in November, Prime Minister Robert Cecil, 3rd Marquess of Salisbury, reported the result to the king and added, "this will be the end of the isolation."⁴ Thus ended the Splendid Isolation that had characterized British diplomacy in the nineteenth century. Military expansion through the period of *Gashin Shōtan* made Japan powerful enough to be a player in international politics.

Whether to Side with the Anglo-Saxon or the Slav

At this point, the last hurdle for the conclusion of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance was the domestic situation in Japan—i.e., how Japan could break away from the notion of cooperation with Russia, about which Britain had repeatedly expressed its concern during the treaty negotiations with Japan.

Advocates of cooperation with Russia included such elder statesmen as Itō Hirobumi and Inoue Kaoru (井上馨), as well as Kurino Shinichirō (栗野慎一郎), Japanese Minister to Russia. The pro-British camp included Katsura Tarō and Komura Jutarō, among others.

According to Katsura,

³ Hicks Beach to Lansdowne, January 2, 1902, p. 59, G. W. Monger. *The End of Isolation-British Foreign Policy 1900-1907*. London, Nelson, 1963. Quoted in Tsunoda (1967), p. 99.

⁴ Salisbury to the King, August 16, 1901, p. 160, Ian H. Nish. *The Anglo-Japanese Alliance-The Diplomacy of Two Island Empires 1894-1907*. Athone Press, London, 1966. Quoted in Tsunoda (1967), p. 89.

The pro-Russian argument was based on the assessment that it would be impossible to fight against Russia. This assessment was quite understandable considering Japan's bitter experiences since the Meiji Restoration. But the peace with Russia would be short-lived because Russia would most certainly advance to Korea after conquering Manchuria—in which case it would be inevitable that Japan confront Russia. Not doing so meant that Japan would have to submit meekly to Russia's will.

In contrast, Britain already had territories all over the world and there was no need for it to come to Japan to conquer another one. Therefore, Katsura argued, it would be better for Japan to team up with Britain.

Itō and Inoue, however, never dropped their idea of cooperating with Russia. When Itō visited the United States to receive an honorary doctorate from Yale University in the fall of 1901, Inoue enthusiastically encouraged Itō to visit Russia on his way home, a proposal with which Itō concurred. The purpose of Itō's visit to Russia, as envisioned by Itō and Inoue, was to reach a settlement on the Korean issue with the Russians. Itō and Inoue belonged to the generation that had vivid memories of the weakling Japan utterly powerless in the face of Western powers' fleets. As such, as Katsura pointed out above, they felt quite uncomfortable with the argument advocated by the younger generation, including Komura, for a war with such a formidable foe as Russia.

Itō was briefed by Japanese Minister to Britain Hayashi Tadasu on the progress of the negotiations for the Anglo-Japanese treaty in Paris on his way to Russia. Nevertheless, Itō sent a telegram to Tokyo requesting the postponement of the final decision on the treaty until after he exchanged views with the Russian side.

By that time, however, negotiations on the Anglo-Japanese Alliance had reached such a stage, both in Tokyo and London, that, according to Katsura and others, they could not be terminated “without damaging the honor and dignity of Japan.” Although Itō was informed of this situation, he persisted in exploring the possibility of cooperating with Russia and met Sergei Witte and Foreign Minister Vladimir Lamsdorff in St. Petersburg in early

December.

Because Russia had taken the position that its decision on whether to occupy Manchuria depended solely on its own will and that it had absolutely no intention of bartering its free hand in Manchuria for Japan's control of Korea, however, this negotiation with Russia was doomed from the very beginning.

In short, Britain succeeded in forming the Anglo-Japanese Alliance by approving Japan's control of the Korean peninsula, while Russia had to take the path of confronting Japan because of its own ambition to control the peninsula.

Komura Memorandum

On December 7, 1901, in the midst of that critical time when negotiations on the Anglo-Japanese Alliance were in the last stretch and yet Itō was still negotiating on the possibility of cooperating with Russia, a conference among elder statesmen was convened in Hayama near Tokyo. The so-called Komura Memorandum submitted to this conference is a historical document that exhaustively narrates Komura's diplomatic strategy. The gist of this document is as follows.

First, on the situation in the Far East, Komura deliberated on the view he had cherished since his days as Japanese minister to Russia, saying, "Even though a day may come when the Russians are made to temporarily withdraw, it is beyond doubt that Manchuria will be de facto occupied by Russia sooner or later because Russia has been steadily expanding its control of Manchuria and it has already established the right to station troops in Manchuria to protect the railway." Komura continued to discuss the futility of the scheme to barter Manchuria for Korea with Russia as advocated by Itō, Inoue, and Kurino, analyzing that, "if Manchuria is conquered by Russia, Korea will not be able to defend itself." Subsequent history as well as Russia's internal documents have clearly proven that Komura's assessment was accurate.

Stressing the need to ask for Britain's cooperation to forcefully control Russia, Komura compared the merits and demerits of concluding the Russo-Japanese entente and those of the Anglo-Japanese alliance as follows:

- (1) While British objectives in the Far East are to maintain the status quo and protect the country's trading interests, Russia has a territorial ambition. Any peace with Russia will inevitably be short-lived, but peace with Britain will be longer-lasting.
- (2) The economic value of Siberia, if any, will be realized only in long-term, incomparable with the immense benefit Japan could gain from trade with the British Empire, which has colonies all over the world.
- (3) It will be far easier to team up with British naval power to counter Russia than it would be to team up with Russia to face British sea power.
- (4) While cooperation with Russia will hurt Chinese feelings, teaming up with Britain benefits the expansion of Japan's interests in China.
- (5) Japan can expect financial benefits from an alliance with Britain.⁵

This is an exhaustive as well as realistic analysis, showing how bright a man Komura really was. His judgment was far more accurate than Itō's at that time, and this was indeed the argument that put a period to the debate on whether to side with the Anglo-Saxon or the Slav— a debate that had haunted Japan since the last days of the Tokugawa shogunate.

Although Itō's telegram, which arrived on December 8, still requested postponement of the final decision on the conclusion of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance, Katsura and Komura proceeded as previously planned, ignoring Itō's request. On December 10, imperial sanction was granted on the Komura Memorandum, clearing the last hurdle before the signing of the treaty.

The first Anglo-Japanese Alliance was signed in London on January 30, 1902, and its contents were publicized on February 12.

It was Komura's penetrating assessment of the international situation as well as his iron will that enabled him to accomplish his initial goal and lead the Anglo-Japanese Alliance this far despite the opposition of elder statesmen.

⁵ *Nippon Gaiko Bunsho* (Documents of Japanese Foreign Policy, Volume 34), pp. 66–69. Quoted in Tsunoda (1967), pp. 128–130.