

Was Japan an Aggressor Nation?

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Under the terms of the US-Japan Security Treaty, American troops are stationed within Japan. Nobody calls this an American invasion of Japan. That is because it is based on a treaty agreed upon between two nations.

Our country is said to have invaded the Chinese mainland and the Korean peninsula in the prewar period, but surprisingly few people are aware that the Japanese army was also stationed in these countries on the basis of treaties. The advance of the Japanese army onto the Korean peninsula and Chinese mainland from the latter half of the 19th century on was not a unilateral advance without the understanding of those nations. The current Chinese government obstinately insists that there was a “Japanese invasion,” but Japan obtained its interests in the Chinese mainland legally under international law through the Sino-Japanese War, the Russo-Japanese War, and so on, and it placed its troops there based on treaties in order to protect those interests. There are those who say that Japan applied pressure and forced the Chinese to sign the treaty, thus invalidating it, but back then – and even now – there were no treaties signed without some amount of pressure.

The Japanese army was subjected to frequent acts of terrorism by Chiang Kai-shek’s Kuomintang (KMT). Large-scale attacks on and murders of Japanese citizens occurred many times. This would be like the Japanese Self-Defense Forces attacking the US troops stationed at the Yokota or Yokosuka military bases, committing acts of violence and murder against the American soldiers and their families – it would be unforgivable. Despite that, the Japanese government patiently tried to bring about peace, but at every turn they were betrayed by Chiang Kai-shek.

In fact, Chiang Kai-shek was being manipulated by Comintern. As a result of the Second United Front of 1936, large numbers of guerillas from the Communist Party of Comintern puppet Mao Zedong infiltrated the KMT. The objective of Comintern was to pit the Japanese army and the KMT against each other to exhaust them both and, in the end, to have Mao Zedong’s Communist Party control mainland China. Finally, our country could no longer put up with the repeated provocations of the KMT, and on August 15, 1937, the Konoe Fumimaro Cabinet declared that “now we must take determined measures to punish the violent and unreasonable actions of the Chinese army and encourage the Nanking Government to reconsider.” Our country was a victim, drawn into the Sino-Japanese War by Chiang Kai-shek.

The bombing of Zhang Zuolin’s train in 1928 was for a long time said to have been the work of the Kwantung Army, but in recent years, Soviet intelligence documents have been discovered that at the very least cast doubt on the Kwantung Army’s role. According to such books as *Mao: The Mao Zedong Nobody Knew* by Jung Chang (Kodansha) 「マオ（誰も知らなかった毛沢東）（ユン・チアン、講談社）」, *Ko Bunyu Looks Positively at the Greater East Asian War* by Ko Bunyu (WAC Co.) 「黄文雄の大東亜戦争肯定論（黄文雄、ワック出版）」, and *Refine Your Historical Power, Japan* edited by Sakurai Yoshiko (Bungei Shunju) 「日本よ、「歴史力」を磨け（櫻井よしこ編、文藝春秋）」, the theory that it was actually the work of Comintern has gained a great deal of prominence recently.

Similarly, the Marco Polo Bridge Incident on July 7, 1937, immediately prior to the start of the Sino-Japanese War, had been considered as a kind of proof of Japan’s invasion of China.

However, we now know that during the Tokyo War Trials, Liu Shaoqi of the Chinese Communist Party told Western reporters at a press conference, “The instigator of the Marco Polo Bridge Incident was the Chinese Communist Party, and the officer in charge was me.”

If you say that Japan was the aggressor nation, then I would like to ask what country among the great powers of that time was not an aggressor. That is not to say that because other countries were doing so it was all right for Japan to do so well, but rather that there is no reason to single out Japan as an aggressor nation.

Japan tried to develop Manchuria, the Korean Peninsula, and Taiwan in the same way it was developing the Japanese mainland. Among the major powers at that time, Japan was the only nation that tried to incorporate its colonies within the nation itself. In comparison to other countries, Japan’s colonial rule was very moderate. When Imperial Manchuria was established in January 1932, the population was thirty million. That population increased each year by more than 1 million people, reaching fifty million by the end of the war in 1945.

Why was there such a population explosion in Manchuria? It was because Manchuria was a prosperous and safe region. People would not be flocking to a place that was being invaded. The plains of Manchuria, where there was almost no industry other than agriculture, was reborn as a vital industrial nation in just fifteen years thanks to the Japanese government. On the Korean Peninsula as well, during the thirty-five years of Japanese rule the population roughly doubled from thirteen million to twenty-five million people. That is proof that Korea under Japanese rule was also prosperous and safe. In postwar Japan, people say that the Japanese army destroyed the peaceful existence in Manchuria and on the Korean Peninsula. But in fact, through the efforts of the Japanese government and Japanese army, the people in these areas were released from the oppression they had been subjected to up until then, and their standard of living markedly improved.

Our country built many schools in Manchuria, the Korean Peninsula, and Taiwan, and emphasized education for the native people. We left behind significant improvements to the infrastructure that affects everyday life – roads, power plants, water supply, etc. And we established Keijo Imperial University in Korea in 1924 as well as the Taipei Imperial University in 1928 in Taiwan.

Following the Meiji Restoration, the Japanese government established nine imperial universities. Keijo Imperial University was the sixth and Taipei Imperial University was the seventh to be built. The subsequent order was that Osaka Imperial University was eighth (1931) and Nagoya Imperial University was ninth (1939). The Japanese government actually built imperial universities in Korea and Taiwan even before Osaka and Nagoya.

The Japanese government also permitted the enrollment of Chinese and Japanese citizens into the Imperial Japanese Army Academy. At the Manila military tribunal following the war, there was a lieutenant general in the Japanese army named Hong Sa-ik, a native Korean who was sentenced to death. Hong graduated in the 26th class at the Army Academy, where he was a classmate of Lt. General Kuribayashi Tadamichi, who gained fame at Iwo Jima.

Hong was a person who rose to lieutenant general in the Imperial Japanese Army while retaining his Korean name. One class behind him at the academy was Col. Kim Suk-won, who served as a major in China at the time of the Sino-Japanese War. Leading a force of roughly 1,000 Japanese troops, he trampled the army from China, the former suzerain state that had been bullying Korea for hundreds of years. He was decorated by the emperor for his meritorious war service. Of course, he did not change his name. In China, Chiang Kai-shek also graduated from

the Imperial Japanese Army Academy and received training while attached to a regiment in Takada, in Niigata.

One year below Kim Suk-won at the academy was the man who would be Chiang's staff officer, He Yingqin. The last crown prince of the Yi dynasty, Crown Prince Yi Eun also attended the Army Academy, graduating in the 29th class. Crown Prince Yi Eun was brought to Japan as a sort of hostage at the age of ten. However, the Japanese government treated him respectfully as a member of the royal family, and after receiving his education at Gakushuin, he graduated from the Imperial Japanese Army Academy. In the army, he was promoted and served as a lieutenant general. Crown Prince Yi Eun was married to Japan's Princess Nashimotonomiya Masako. She was a woman of nobility who previously had been considered as a potential bride for the Showa Emperor. If the Japanese government had intended to smash the Yi dynasty, they surely would not have permitted the marriage of a woman of this stature to Crown Prince Yi Eun.

Incidentally, in 1930, the Imperial Household Agency built a new residence for the couple. It is now the Akasaka Prince Hotel Annex. Also, Prince Pujie, the younger brother of Puyi – the last emperor of the Qing Dynasty, who was also the emperor of Manchuria – was married to Lady Saga Hiro of the noble Saga house.

When you compare this with the countries that were considered to be major powers at the time, you realize that Japan's posture toward Manchuria, Korea, and Taiwan was completely different from the colonial rule of the major powers. England occupied India, but it did not provide education for the Indian people. Indians were not permitted to attend the British military academy. Of course, they would never have considered a marriage between a member of the British royal family and an Indian. This holds true for Holland, France, America, and other countries as well.

By contrast, from before the start of World War II, Japan had been calling for harmony between the five tribes, laying out a vision for the tribes – the Yamato (Japanese), Koreans, Chinese, Manchurians, and Mongols – to intermix and live peacefully together. At a time when racial discrimination was considered natural, this was a groundbreaking proposal. At the Paris Peace Conference at the end of World War I, when Japan urged that the abolition of racial discrimination be included in the treaty, England and America laughed it off. But if you look at the world today, it has become the kind of world that Japan was urging at the time.

Going back in time to 1901, in the aftermath of the Boxer Rebellion, the Qing Empire signed the Boxer Protocol in 1901 with eleven countries including Japan. As a result, our country gained the right to station troops in Qing China, and began by dispatching 2,600 troops there. Also, in 1915, following four months of negotiations with the government of Yuan Shikai, and incorporating China's points as well, agreement was reached on Japan's so-called 21 Demands toward China. Some people say that this was the start of Japan's invasion of China, but if you compare these demands to the general international norms of colonial administration by the great powers at the time, there was nothing terribly unusual about it. China too accepted the demands at one point and ratified them.

However, four years later, in 1919, when China was allowed to attend the Paris Peace Conference, it began complaining about the 21 Demands with America's backing. Even then, England and France supported Japan's position. Moreover, Japan never advanced its army without the agreement of Chiang Kai-shek's KMT.

The Japanese army in Beijing, which was stationed there from 1901, still comprised just 5,600 troops at the time of the Marco Polo Bridge Incident thirty-six years later. At that time, tens of thousands of KMT troops were spread out in the area surrounding Beijing, and even in

terms of appearances it was a far cry from being an invasion. As symbolized by Foreign Minister Shidehara Kijuro, our country's basic policy at the time was one of reconciliation with China, and that has not changed even today.

There are some who say that it was because Japan invaded the Chinese mainland and the Korean Peninsula that it ended up entering the war with the United States, where it lost three million people and met with defeat; it committed an irrevocable error. However, it has also been confirmed now that Japan was ensnared in a trap that was very carefully laid by the United States in order to draw Japan into a war.

In fact, America was also being manipulated by Comintern. There are official documents called the Venona Files, which are available on the National Security Agency (NSA) website. It is a massive set of documents, but in the May 2006 edition of "Monthly Just Arguments" 「月刊正論」, (then) Assistant Professor Fukui of Aoyama Gakuin University offered a summary introduction.

The Venona Files are a collection of transmissions between Comintern and agents in the United States, which the United States was monitoring for eight years, from 1940 to 1948. At the time, the Soviets were changing their codes after each message, so the United States could not decipher them. From 1943, right in the middle of the war with Japan, the United States began its decryption work. Surprisingly, it took thirty-seven years to finish the work; it was completed just before the start of the Reagan administration in 1980. However, since it was the middle of the Cold War, the Americans kept these documents classified.

In 1995, following the end of the Cold War, they were declassified and made open to the public. According to those files, there were three hundred Comintern spies working in the administration of Franklin D. Roosevelt, who took office in 1933. Among them, one who rose to the top was the number two official at the Treasury, Assistant Secretary Harry White. Harry White is said to have been the perpetrator who wrote the Hull note, America's final notice to Japan before the war began. Through President Roosevelt's good friend, Treasury Secretary Morgenthau, he was able to manipulate President Roosevelt and draw our country into a war with the United States.

At the time, Roosevelt was not aware of the terrible nature of communism. Through Harry White, he was on the receiving end of Comintern's maneuvering, and he was covertly offering strong support to Chiang Kai-shek, who was battling Japan at the time, sending the Flying Tigers squadron comprised of one hundred fighter planes. Starting one and a half months prior to the attack on Pearl Harbor, the United States began covert air attacks against Japan on the Chinese mainland.

Roosevelt had become president on his public pledge not to go to war, so in order to start a war between the United States and Japan it had to appear that Japan took the first shot. Japan was caught in Roosevelt's trap and carried out the attack on Pearl Harbor.

Could the war have been avoided? If Japan had accepted the conditions laid out by the United States in the Hull note, perhaps the war could have been temporarily avoided. But even if the war had been avoided temporarily, when you consider the survival of the fittest mentality that dominated international relations at the time, you can easily imagine that the United States would have issued a second and a third set of demands. As a result, those of us living today could very well have been living in a Japan that was a white nation's colony.

If you leave people alone, someday someone will create the conveniences of civilization, such as cars, washing machines, and computers. But in the history of mankind, the relationship between the rulers and the ruled is only determined by war. It is impossible for those who are

powerful to grant concessions on their own. Those who do not fight must resign themselves to being ruled by others.

After the Greater East Asia War, many countries in Asia and Africa were released from the control of white nations. A world of racial equality arrived and problems between nations were to be decided through discussion. That was a result of Japan's strength in fighting the Russo-Japanese War and Greater East Asia War. If Japan had not fought the Greater East War at that time, it may have taken another one hundred or two hundred years before we could have experienced the world of racial equality that we have today. In that sense, we must be grateful to our ancestors who fought for Japan and to the spirits of those who gave their precious lives for their country. It is thanks to them that we are able to enjoy the peaceful and plentiful lifestyle we have today.

On the other hand, there are those who call the Greater East Asia War "that stupid war." They probably believe that even without fighting a war we could have achieved today's peaceful and plentiful society. It is as if they think that all of our country's leaders at that time were stupid. We undertook a needless war and many Japanese citizens lost their lives. They seem to be saying that all those who perished actually died in vain.

However, when you look back at the history of mankind, you understand that nothing is as simple as that. Even today, once a decision is made about an international relationship it is extremely difficult to overturn that. Based on the US-Japan Security Treaty, America possesses bases even in Japan's capital region of Tokyo. Even if Japan said they wanted those bases back, they would not be easily returned. In terms of our relationship with Russia as well, the Northern Islands remain illegally occupied even after more than sixty years. And Takeshima remains under the effective control of South Korea.

The Tokyo Trials tried to push all the responsibility for the war onto Japan. And that mind control is still misleading the Japanese people sixty-three years after the war. The belief is that if the Japanese army becomes stronger, it will certainly go on a rampage and invade other countries, so we need to make it as difficult as possible for the Self-Defense Forces (SDF) to act. The SDF cannot even defend its own territory, it cannot practice collective self-defense, there are many limitations on its use of weapons, and the possession of offensive weaponry is forbidden. Compared to the militaries of other countries, the SDF is bound hand and foot and immobilized.

Unless our country is released from this mind control, it will never have a system for protecting itself through its own power. We have no choice but to be protected by America. If we are protected by America, then the Americanization of Japan will be accelerated. Japan's economy, its finances, its business practices, its employment system, its judicial system will all converge with the American system. Our country's traditional culture will be destroyed by the parade of reforms. Japan is undergoing a cultural revolution, is it not? But are the citizens of Japan living in greater ease now or twenty years ago? Is Japan becoming a better country?

I am not repudiating the US-Japan alliance. Good relations between Japan and the United States are essential to the stability of the Asian region. However, what is most desirable in the US-Japan relationship is something like a good relationship between parent and child, where they come to each other's aid when needed, as opposed to the kind of relationship where the child remains permanently dependant on the parent.

Creating a structure where we can protect our country ourselves allows us to preemptively prevent an attack on Japan, and at the same time serves to bolster our position in diplomatic negotiations. This is understood in many countries to be perfectly normal, but that concept has not gotten through to our citizens.

Even now, there are many people who think that our country's aggression caused unbearable suffering to the countries of Asia during the Greater East Asia War. But we need to realize that many Asian countries take a positive view of the Greater East Asia War. In Thailand, Burma, India, Singapore, and Indonesia, the Japan that fought the Greater East Asia War is held in high esteem. We also have to realize that while many of the people who had direct contact with the Japanese army viewed them positively, it is often those who never directly saw the Japanese military who are spreading rumors about the army's acts of brutality. Many foreigners have testified to the strict military discipline of the Japanese troops as compared to those of other countries. It is certainly a false accusation to say that our country was an aggressor nation.

Japan is a wonderful country that has a long history and exceptional traditions. We, as Japanese people, must take pride in our country's history. Unless they are influenced by some particular ideology, people will naturally love the hometown and the country where they were born. But in Japan's case, if you look assiduously at the historical facts, you will understand that what this country has done is wonderful. There is absolutely no need for lies and fabrications. If you look at individual events, there were probably some that would be called misdeeds. That is the same as saying that there is violence and murder occurring today even in advanced nations.

We must take back the glorious history of Japan. A nation that denies its own history is destined to pursue a path of decline.