

A Matter of Imperial Defence:
Arthur Balfour and the Anglo-Japanese Alliance,
1894-1923

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Abstract

This thesis investigates Arthur Balfour's policy towards Japan and the Anglo-Japanese alliance from 1894 to 1923. Although Balfour was involved in the Anglo-Japanese alliance from its signing to termination, no comprehensive analysis of his role in the alliance has been carried out. Utilising unpublished materials and academic books, this thesis reveals that Balfour's policy on the Anglo-Japanese alliance revolved around two vital principles, namely imperial defence and Anglo-American cooperation. From the viewpoint of imperial defence, Balfour emphasised the defence of India and Australasia more than that of China. He opposed the signing of the Anglo-Japanese alliance of 1902 because it was not useful in the defence of India. The Russo-Japanese War raised the concern of Indian security. Changing his lukewarm attitude, Balfour took the initiative in extending the alliance into India to employ Japanese troops for the defence of India. Moreover, as an advocate of Anglo-American cooperation, Balfour made every effort to maintain good Anglo-American-Japanese relations. However, imperial defence and Anglo-American cooperation began to clash within the alliance during the Great War. Although the Siberian intervention was useful Japanese military assistance in the defence of India, America, who was not interested in India, hesitated to support it due to her suspicion against Japan. After the war, the alliance was still instrumental in defending India and Australasia, but its existence damaged the relations with America. Balfour tried to achieve both imperial defence and Anglo-American cooperation by developing the alliance into an Anglo-American-Japanese trilateral agreement with a military clause to revive a bilateral defensive alliance. But America and Japan did not support Balfour's plan at the Washington Conference, and he had to accept the Four-Power Treaty without any military commitment.

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Introduction

I.

At the end of the nineteenth century Britain was paying a great deal of attention to the defence of her Empire. While she still possessed enough economic, military and naval might to safeguard her global interests, her growing rivalry with European powers such as Russia, France and Germany had spread from Europe into Africa and Asia. The rise of newcomers such as America and Japan complicated political alignments among the great powers. British statesmen had to consider how Britain should protect her interests across the world in this complex and uncertain situation. As one of their solutions, British global diplomacy fastened on the Anglo-Japanese Alliance, which was signed in 1902 and continued until 1923. British policymakers, both those who supported it and those who did not, discussed its management for more than twenty years.

Arthur Balfour played an important role in British policy on the Anglo-Japanese alliance. In 1921 he boasted that 'for 20 years I had been an advocate of close relations

between Great Britain and Japan'.¹ There is room for examining whether he was really a proponent of cordial Anglo-Japanese relations. However, it is clear that he was involved in British foreign policy towards Japan for about twenty years. He dealt with the signing of the alliance as a senior member of the Cabinet, and undertook its revision and renewal in 1905 as Prime Minister. He tackled the problem of Japanese naval and military assistance to Britain as Foreign Secretary during the Great War, and coped with the end of the alliance as head of the British delegation to the 1921-1922 Washington Conference. Only Balfour was involved in each of these significant turning points in the alliance as the pivot of British government. Therefore, he provides a unique prism through which to investigate how senior British politicians regarded the Anglo-Japanese alliance in its entirety.

Arthur Balfour (1848-1930), 1st Earl of Balfour from 1922, was born into a wealthy landowning family at Whittingehame House in Scotland. His father, James Balfour, died when he was seven years old and thereafter the 3rd Marquis of Salisbury, his maternal uncle and a prominent Conservative statesman, assumed his care. He was educated at Eton College and then at Cambridge University, where he studied philosophy and moral science.² Supported by Salisbury, he became a Conservative Member of Parliament in

¹ Balfour to Lloyd George, 19 Dec. 1921, CAB 30/6/W.D.C.87.

² Balfour wrote many books on philosophy in his life. For example, A.J. Balfour, The Foundations

1874. Soon after entering the House of Commons Balfour embarked upon a world tour, visiting Canada, America, New Zealand and Australia.³ Japan was not included in his travels, although he landed at Singapore and Ceylon on the way from Australia to Britain. This indicated that Balfour was not yet interested in Japan.

Balfour's involvement in British foreign policy began in 1878. Salisbury, who became Foreign Secretary at that year, appointed him Parliamentary Private Secretary. Balfour made his debut in European diplomacy at the Congress of Berlin, which aimed to resolve the Eastern Question caused by the Russo-Turkish War of 1877-1878.⁴ Accompanying Salisbury, Balfour had an opportunity to socialise with European statesmen, including the German Chancellor Prince Bismarck. As Balfour confessed later, this position brought him into 'close contact with public affairs, and with those by whom public affairs were then directed'.⁵

When Salisbury formed his first Cabinet in 1885, Balfour was supposed to

of Belief: Being Notes Introductory to the Study of Theology (London, 4th edn.1895); A.J. Balfour, Decadence: Henry Sidgwick Memorial Lecture (Cambridge, 1908); A.J. Balfour, Theism and Thought: A Study in Familiar Beliefs, Being the Second Course of Gifford Lectures Delivered at the University of Glasgow, 1922-23 (London, 1923).

³ M. Egremont, Balfour: A Life of Arthur James Balfour (London, 1980), p. 43.

⁴ For details of the Eastern Question, see R.W. Seton-Watson, Disraeli, Gladstone and the Eastern Question: A Study in Diplomacy and Party Politics (London, 1962); R. Millman, Britain and the Eastern Question, 1875-1878 (Oxford, 1979); M. Ković, Disraeli and the Eastern Question (Oxford, 2011). For different views, see J. Charmley, Splendid Isolation?: Britain, the Balance of Power and the Origins of the First World War (London, 1999); B. Grosvenor, 'Britain's "most isolationist Foreign Secretary": The Fifteenth Earl and the Eastern Crisis, 1876-1878' in G. Hicks, (ed.) Conservatism and British Foreign Policy, 1820-1920: The Derbys and their World (Farnham, 2011), pp. 129-168.

⁵ A.J. Balfour, Chapters of Autobiography (London, 1930), p. 103.

contribute to foreign policymaking. The Prime Minister also headed the Foreign Office and considered making Balfour Parliamentary Under-Secretary for Foreign Affairs. Indeed, Balfour was in favour of taking this post, informing Salisbury that 'I would do anything that most conduced to the smooth working of your arrangements'.⁶ However, in the end, Salisbury gave Conservative Member of Parliament Robert Bourke the under-secretaryship and Balfour served as President of the Local Government Board, with no seat in the Cabinet. Balfour finally joined the Cabinet during Salisbury's second administration from 1886-1892 and was consecutively appointed Secretary for Scotland, Chief Secretary for Ireland and First Lord of the Treasury. Although he was not involved in British diplomacy, he succeeded in strengthening his position in the Conservative party.

In 1895 Salisbury's third administration was established after the Conservatives cooperated with Liberal Imperialists who had seceded from the Liberal Party. Salisbury again also served as Foreign Secretary. Balfour returned to the post of First Lord of the Treasury and as Leader of the House of Commons, making him a leading figure in government without departmental responsibilities. However, unlike in Salisbury's second Cabinet, Balfour sometimes managed British foreign policy on behalf of his

⁶ Balfour to Salisbury, 15 Jun. 1885 in R.H. Williams, (ed.) Salisbury-Balfour Correspondence: Letters exchanged between the Third Marquess of Salisbury and his nephew Arthur James Balfour 1869-1892 (Cambridge, 1988), p. 121.

ailing uncle. During March, April and August 1898, when Salisbury was ill and recuperating in the south of France, Balfour became Acting Foreign Secretary and tackled many international problems such as the great powers' disputes over China and Anglo-German negotiations over the Portuguese colonies. Facing the heavy burden of the departmental work involved, Balfour complained that 'whenever Lord Salisbury left him [Balfour] in charge of the Foreign Office, he found himself dealing with a crisis'.⁷ This demonstrated that his influence in British diplomacy was strengthened even though he did not occupy a formal post at the Foreign Office.

Salisbury's diplomacy in the face of many international crises intensified British policymakers' dissatisfaction with him, raising Balfour as heir apparent. Indeed, St John Brodrick, the Parliamentary Under-Secretary for Foreign Affairs, hoped that Balfour would replace Salisbury and 'do some real big work for the Empire'.⁸ Although Balfour did not express his discontent publicly, he was not a loyal follower of Salisbury's diplomacy either. In particular, unlike Salisbury, Balfour believed that Britain needed a reliable ally to survive the growing rivalry between the world's great powers. Given his strong faith in Anglo-Saxon solidarity, it was not surprising that his first choice was America. Even though the new Foreign Secretary Lord Lansdowne

⁷ B.E.C. Dugdale, Arthur James Balfour vol 1 (London, 1936), p. 250.

⁸ Brodrick to Selborne, 16 Aug. 1898, Selborne MSS, MS. Selborne 2.

undertook negotiations with Japan, Balfour preferred an Anglo-German to an Anglo-Japanese alliance because he considered that, unlike the latter, the former would be useful in the defence of India. In the end, he accepted the Anglo-Japanese alliance, which was signed on 30 January 1902.

Balfour became Prime Minister in July 1902 and asked Lansdowne to stay on at the Foreign Office. Although he saw Lansdowne as 'better than competent', he continued to interfere in the making of foreign policy during his premiership.⁹ According to Austen Chamberlain, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, Lansdowne 'took no important step and sent no important despatch without first consulting' Balfour.¹⁰ Despite some disagreements, Balfour and Lansdowne coped with the defence of India, the Russo-Japanese War, the signing of the Anglo-French *Entente Cordiale* and the revision of the Anglo-Japanese alliance. In particular, despite being unwilling to renew the Anglo-Japanese alliance at first, Balfour changed his mind and took the initiative in its renewal and extension into India. Furthermore, he established the Committee of Imperial Defence (CID) in December 1902 to improve coordination between military and foreign policy. The establishment of the CID contributed to break the indifference

⁹ Egremont, Balfour, pp. 162-163.

¹⁰ A. Chamberlain, Down the Years (London, 1935), p. 209. See also S.H. Zebel, Balfour: A Political Biography (Cambridge, 1973), p. 105.

to defence matters.¹¹

Although it achieved many diplomatic successes, the Balfour administration suffered from internal division over tariff reform and collapsed in December 1905. After a serious electoral defeat in 1906, Balfour continued as Leader of the Opposition. However, it was unlikely that he and his party would soon return to power. Balfour relinquished the party's leadership after the constitutional crisis that reduced the power of the House of Lords in 1911. Even with such a setback in his political career, however, he was not willing to withdraw from British politics, seeing it as 'not the end of my interest in politics, or of my work for political causes'.¹² Indeed, he maintained his influence within the party, and many colleagues, including the new party leader Andrew Bonar Law, could not ignore him.¹³ He had no intention of becoming Prime Minister again, but expressed a desire to serve as Foreign Secretary if the Conservatives returned to power.¹⁴

The outbreak of the Great War brought him back to the centre of the British politics and diplomacy. Not only Herbert Asquith, the Prime Minister, but also King George V valued Balfour's expertise in politics, in particular in foreign and defence policy, and

¹¹ 'Mr. Balfour and Imperial Defence', The Times, Wednesday 13 Sep. 1905, p. 6.

¹² Balfour to Brodrick, 8 Nov. 1911, Balfour MSS, British Library, Additional Manuscripts (hereafter Add. MSS.) 49721.

¹³ For cool relations between Balfour and Bonar Law, see R. Blake, The Unknown Prime Minister: The Life and Times of Andrew Bonar Law 1858-1923 (London, 1955), pp. 91-93.

¹⁴ Lord Riddell, More Pages from My Diary 1908-1914 (London, 1934), pp. 101-102.

invited him to join the government as a member of the Prince of Wales's Committee for the administrative fund on 17 August 1914.¹⁵ Even though he had not yet entered the Cabinet, Balfour began to consider the possibility of deploying Japanese troops in Europe. When Asquith established a Coalition Government on 19 May 1915, Balfour was appointed First Lord of the Admiralty, the most important post among the Conservative statesmen. He had absolutely no desire to take on a heavy burden of ministerial work, but the Admiralty was an exception.¹⁶ As head of the Admiralty he faced many arduous tasks, including securing Japanese naval assistance for Britain.

By the autumn of 1916, the coalition government was facing intensifying dissatisfaction with Asquith's management of the war. The fierce struggle between Asquith and Lloyd George, then Secretary of State for War, led to the collapse of the government in December 1916.¹⁷ Balfour, who could have become 'a "neutral" Prime Minister', supported Lloyd George and served as his Foreign Secretary.¹⁸ As 'an ideal man for the Foreign Office', Balfour made every effort to maintain calm Anglo-American-Japanese relations.¹⁹ Realising the growing significance of Japan's

¹⁵ Asquith to Balfour, 17 Aug. 1914, Balfour MSS, Add. MSS. 49692.

¹⁶ Balfour to Asquith, 19 May 1915, Balfour MSS, Add. MSS. 49692.

¹⁷ For details of the political crisis of December 1916, see J. Turner, British Politics and the Great War: Coalition and Conflict 1915-1918 (New Haven, 1992), pp. 124-151.

¹⁸ Memo. by Bonar Law, 30 Dec. 1916, Bonar Law MSS BL/85/A/1; Blake, The Unknown Prime Minister, p.337.

¹⁹ D. Lloyd George, War Memoirs, vol.2 (London, 1933), p.1017.

naval and military assistance due to Britain's severe shortage of soldiers and munitions, he 'had more conversations with the Japanese on this subject than anyone else'.²⁰ To him, the Siberian intervention meant accepting Japanese military aid not in Europe but in Asia. Although Lloyd George often interfered in British diplomacy, Balfour maintained his influence over Britain's foreign policy regarding Japan and the Anglo-Japanese alliance.

Balfour had continued to occupy significant positions in the British government after the end of the Great War. He attended the Paris Peace Conference as one of the British delegates and took the initiative in resolving the Anglo-American-Japanese dispute over China. Although he resigned as Foreign Secretary after completing this work in Paris, he remained in the Cabinet as Lord President of the Council, which he saw as 'a lighter Office' without heavy administrative work.²¹ This post enabled him to direct much of his energy into important negotiations with other great powers. He became the British delegate to the League of Nations from 1920 to 1923 and joined the Washington Conference of 1921-1922 as Britain's chief representative to deal with the end of the Anglo-Japanese alliance. Granted a peerage after the Washington Conference, Balfour sometimes stood in at Foreign Office for the newly-appointed Foreign Secretary

²⁰ Notes of a Conversation held at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Paris, on November 30, 1917, at 4 P.M., FO 371/2955/229961.

²¹ Balfour to Stamfordham, 24 Oct. 1919, Balfour MSS GD 433/2/21.

George Curzon, who occasionally suffered from back pain.²²

Balfour continued his involvement in British diplomacy until just before his death. He did not occupy a Cabinet post after the formation of Bonar Law's administration of October 1922. However, Stanley Baldwin, the Conservative Prime Minister, invited him into the Cabinet, where he resumed his work as Lord President of the Council in March 1925. At the 1926 Imperial Conference Balfour played a significant role in creating the 'Balfour Definition', which defined relations between Britain and the Dominions as 'autonomous Communities within the British Empire'.²³ When the Conservatives lost the general election in May 1929, Balfour finally resigned from political life.²⁴ He died on 19 March 1930 at the age of 81.

Realising his importance, many scholars have studied Balfour and the Anglo-Japanese alliance from various viewpoints. Among them, Ian Nish's two books about the alliance are invaluable and are the most important in the historiography.²⁵ As his second book's title, *Alliance in Decline*, indicates, Nish establishes a framework for

²² J. Tomes, Balfour and Foreign Policy: The International Thoughts of a Conservative Statesman (Cambridge, 1997), p. 18.

²³ D. Judd, Balfour and the British Empire: A Study in Imperial Evolution, 1874-1932 (London, 1968), p. 335.

²⁴ While his premiership was just three years, Balfour held cabinet rank for twenty-seven years which was the longest in British history. See R. Mackay, Balfour: Intellectual Statesman (Oxford, 1985), p. 354; D. Leonard, A Century of Premiers: Salisbury to Blair (Basingstoke, 2005), pp. 23-24.

²⁵ I. Nish, The Anglo-Japanese Alliance: The Diplomacy of Two Island Empires, 1894-1907 (London, 1966); I. Nish, Alliance in Decline: A study in Anglo-Japanese relations 1908-23 (London, 1972).

the rise and fall of the Anglo-Japanese alliance. Indeed, he states that the alliance reached ‘its highest point’ in 1902-1905 due to the necessity of dealing with a common threat, namely Russia’s expansion in Asia.²⁶ After the Russo-Japanese War, however, this common interest was lost and new concerns such as Japan’s ambitions in China and America’s hostility to Japan gradually weakened the alliance. Nish concludes that the Anglo-Japanese alliance was an ‘alliance in decline’ after the 1911 revision, and was ‘really dead before its termination’.²⁷ His analysis is very convincing and many historians accept his framework.

However, Nish’s books contain three significant problems regarding Balfour’s role in the Anglo-Japanese alliance. First, Nish does not answer why Balfour changed his unenthusiastic attitude towards the alliance and took the initiative in its revision. Although he refers to Balfour’s initial unwillingness to revise the alliance before its expiration, Nish does not pay attention to the fact that Balfour suddenly came round to supporting its extension.²⁸ Balfour’s change of mind was important, because he could have declined the revision of the alliance even if the Foreign Secretary supported it. In fact, immediately before the outbreak of the Russo-Japanese War, Balfour did not approve Britain’s mediation between Russia and Japan, which Lansdowne favoured,

²⁶ Nish, The Anglo-Japanese Alliance, p. 377.

²⁷ Nish, Alliance in Decline, p. 392.

²⁸ Nish, The Anglo-Japanese Alliance, pp. 300-302.

pushing through his own opinion that strict neutrality was required. Given the necessity of Balfour's support for the revision, it is vital to clarify the reasons for his change of mind about the Anglo-Japanese alliance.

Second, Nish rarely mentions Balfour's role during the Great War. As Foreign Secretary, Balfour played a significant part in negotiations about Japan's military assistance and the Siberian intervention, which were linked to the Anglo-Japanese alliance. Contrary to his analysis of Japanese naval aid, however, Nish scarcely discusses Balfour and the British government's reaction to her military assistance. Moreover, even though he concisely outlines the Siberian intervention, he does not mention its effect on Balfour's policy towards the alliance beyond saying '[t]he alliance was not at stake'.²⁹ Japan did not send her troops to the European front and the Siberian intervention was finally carried out just before the end of the war. Therefore, it is reasonable that Nish concludes that Japan's contribution to the war was 'largely a naval one'.³⁰ But this does not mean that these issues were so minor that Balfour rarely considered them. His discussions of Japan's military help and the Siberian intervention demonstrated important aspects of the Anglo-Japanese alliance.

Third, there is still room for reconstructing the negotiations between Britain,

²⁹ Nish, Alliance in Decline, pp. 237-241.

³⁰ Ibid., p. 256.

America and Japan at the Washington Conference concerning the fate of the Anglo-Japanese alliance. When he explains Balfour's reaction to his American and Japanese counterparts, Nish uses only published materials and the autobiography of Kijuro Shidehara, who served as Japan's chief delegate at the conference.³¹ As a result, it is not clear what Balfour's considerations were during the conference. Yet, many unpublished documents, in particular Cabinet Papers in The National Archives, are now available. In addition, it is necessary to investigate whether the account in Shidehara's autobiography, written about thirty years after the conference, is correct.³² This reinvestigation will offer more details on Balfour's thinking about the final stage of the Anglo-Japanese alliance.

Other scholars' works on Anglo-Japanese relations do not throw light on these three questions. Peter Lowe has produced a detailed book about the alliance but his research is confined to the period from 1911 to 1915, at which point Balfour was out of power, so Lowe does not comment on his part in the alliance.³³ Antony Best deals with Anglo-Japanese relations after 1914, introducing the factors of intelligence into the debate. But, although he investigates the Siberian intervention and the Washington

³¹ Ibid., pp. 368-382.

³² The first edition of Shidehara's autobiography, whose title was *Gaikou Gojunen (Fifty Years Diplomacy)* was published in 1951.

³³ P. Lowe, Great Britain and Japan, 1911-1915: A Study of British Far Eastern Policy (London, 1969).

Conference, Balfour scarcely appears in his research.³⁴ Best's thesis on the history of the Anglo-Japanese alliance from 1902 to 1923 is based on the influence on the alliance of the Open Door principle in East Asia and pays little attention to Balfour.³⁵

Although many scholars have studied Anglo-Japanese relations during the Great War, they have not turned their full attention to Balfour's role in negotiations over Japan's naval and military assistance.³⁶ Timothy Saxon and Victor Rothwell tackle Japanese naval and military aid respectively.³⁷ Rothwell's analysis of British policy on Japan's military help is particularly detailed and points out that the discussion about Japanese military assistance is 'essential to an understanding of the Siberian intervention'.³⁸ However, neither Saxon nor Rothwell fully investigate Balfour's role. Their studies concentrate on either naval or military help, so it is not possible to compare the difference between Balfour's attitudes to Japan's naval and military assistance. In addition, although David Woodward investigates how British government dealt with the Siberian intervention, he makes only a few references to Balfour.³⁹

³⁴ A. Best, British Intelligence and the Japanese Challenge in Asia, 1914-1941 (Basingstoke, 2002).

³⁵ A. Best, 'The Anglo-Japanese alliance and international politics in Asia, 1902-1923' in A. Best, (ed.) The International History of East Asia, 1900-1968: Trade, ideology and the quest for order (Abingdon, 2010), pp. 21-34.

³⁶ For example, R.P. Dua, Anglo-Japanese Relations during the First World War (New Delhi, 1972).

³⁷ T. Saxon, 'Anglo-Japanese Naval Cooperation, 1914-1918' in Naval War College Review, LIII, 1, (2000), pp.62-92; V.H. Rothwell, 'The British Government and Japanese Military Assistance 1914-1918' in History, LVI, 186, (1971), pp.35-45.

³⁸ Ibid., p. 44.

³⁹ D.R. Woodward, 'The British Government and Japanese Intervention in Russia during World War I' in Journal of Modern History XLVI, 4, (1974), pp. 663-685.

Some scholars have investigated Balfour's role in the Anglo-Japanese alliance in contexts other than that of Anglo-Japanese relations. Thomas Otte examines Balfour's thoughts and policy regarding the alliance in the context of British foreign and strategic policy from 1894 to 1905.⁴⁰ His research is essential to understanding the global nature of Britain's so-called isolation and the continuity of British diplomacy at the turn of the century. Nevertheless, although he analyses Balfour's reluctance to sign the Anglo-Japanese alliance from the viewpoint of imperial defence, he does not mention Balfour's thoughts about the revision of the alliance in 1905.⁴¹

Keith Neilson has produced a detailed book on Britain's foreign policy towards Russia from 1894 to 1917.⁴² However, mention of the Anglo-Japanese alliance is brief and ends before the Siberian intervention.⁴³ His article on the Anglo-Japanese alliance is succinct and reveals Balfour's role in and thoughts about the signing of the alliance. But again there is no mention of Balfour's involvement in its revision, even though Neilson points out the importance of Japan's military commitment to the defence of India.⁴⁴

⁴⁰ T.G. Otte, The China Question: Great Power Rivalry and British Isolation, 1894-1905 (Oxford, 2007).

⁴¹ Ibid., pp. 300-302, 322-324.

⁴² K. Neilson, Britain and the Last Tsar: British Policy and Russia 1894-1917 (Oxford, 1995)

⁴³ Ibid., pp. 221-223, 261-264.

⁴⁴ K. Neilson, 'The Anglo-Japanese Alliance and British strategic foreign policy, 1902-1914' in P.P. O'Brien, (ed.) The Anglo-Japanese Alliance, 1902-1922 (London, 2004), pp. 48-63.

Erik Goldstein explores how Britain dealt with the alliance after the war in his research on the Washington Conference.⁴⁵ While he argues that Balfour was in favour of the renewal of the alliance ‘from a purely strategic point of view’, he insists that Balfour’s idea of a tripartite agreement must have been based on a Foreign Office memorandum which required the replacement of the Anglo-Japanese alliance with a mere declaration of policy.⁴⁶ If this was the case, Balfour changed his mind and was strongly influenced by the Foreign Office just before the conference. However, Goldstein does not investigate the reason for this important change.

Phillips Payson O’Brien also examines Britain’s policy toward the end of the Anglo-Japanese alliance.⁴⁷ He reveals that Balfour wanted to preserve the military clause to revive a bilateral defensive alliance in a new Anglo-American-Japanese tripartite agreement. Even so, he states that the Four-Power Treaty, which omitted military clauses and included France, was ‘extremely close to what the British delegation had hoped to achieve’. Although he argues that France’s participation in the treaty was the ‘one real concession’ which was aimed not at the United States but at

⁴⁵ E. Goldstein, ‘The Evolution of British Diplomatic Strategy for the Washington Conference’ in E. Goldstein and J. Maurer, (eds.) The Washington Conference, 1921-1922: Naval Rivalry, East Asian Stability and the Road to Pearl Harbor (London, 1994), pp. 4-34.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, pp.7, 26.

⁴⁷ P.P. O’Brien, ‘Britain and the end of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance’ in O’Brien, The Anglo-Japanese Alliance, 1902-1922, pp. 267-284.

France, he does not offer any evidence for this.⁴⁸ In addition, there is no reference to the elimination of the military clauses in the treaty.

On the other hand, there are many studies focusing on Balfour. He wrote a short autobiography, which only covers the period from 1848 to 1886 and his visit to America in 1917. Thus, it does not contain any reference to the Anglo-Japanese alliance.⁴⁹ Among many biographers, his niece Blanche Dugdale produced detailed biographies which contained his valuable remarks.⁵⁰ Moreover, Ruddock Mackay allowed a chapter for CID and imperial defence during the Balfour administration in his biography.⁵¹ In general, however, most of the biographies about Balfour pay little attention to his role in Britain's diplomacy towards Japan and the Anglo-Japanese alliance.⁵² Denis Judd's book meticulously surveys Balfour's policy on the defence of the British Empire, but although he refers to the Indian defence and Anglo-American cooperation, he seldom discusses the Anglo-Japanese alliance. As a result, it is difficult for readers to understand the connections between the alliance and the imperial defence.⁵³

⁴⁸ Ibid., p. 281.

⁴⁹ A.J. Balfour, Chapters of Autobiography (London, 1930).

⁵⁰ B.E.C. Dugdale, Arthur James Balfour (2 vols), (London, 1936).

⁵¹ R. Mackay, Balfour: Intellectual Statesman (Oxford, 1985).

⁵² K. Young, Arthur James Balfour: The Happy Life of the Politician, Prime Minister, Statesman and Philosopher 1848-1930 (London, 1963); S.H. Zebel, Balfour: A Political Biography (Cambridge, 1973); M. Egremont, Balfour: A Life of Arthur James Balfour (London, 1980); E.H.H. Green, Balfour (London, 2006); R.J.Q. Adams, Balfour: The Last Grandee (London, 2007).

⁵³ D. Judd, Balfour and the British Empire: A Study in Imperial Evolution, 1874-1932 (London, 1968).

Jason Tomes' detailed examination of Balfour's foreign policy is an exception.⁵⁴

Although his research on the Japanese aspect is not as detailed as that on Europe, he includes a chapter on the Far East in which he discusses Balfour's role in British diplomacy regarding Japan, China and the Pacific. In the conclusion of the chapter he points out that Balfour saw Britain's interests in China as 'relatively unimportant' and rated her role in the Far Eastern politics 'low on his list of strategic priorities'.⁵⁵ This is a significant point that many books regarding the Anglo-Japanese alliance tend to miss. It is important to investigate Balfour's policy towards Japan and the alliance in the global context beyond the Far East. Tomes deals with Balfour's policy on Japan and China from 1894 to 1905 in a chapter on the Franco-Russian challenge, on the Siberian intervention in the Russian Revolution chapter.⁵⁶ These indicate the global nature of Balfour's foreign policy, which was not restricted to the Far East.

However, Tomes does not fully address the three problems that Nish leaves unresolved in the historiography, the first being Balfour's change of attitude towards the Anglo-Japanese alliance. Like Nish, Tomes writes that Balfour did not support the signing of the alliance and opposed supporting Japan during the Russo-Japanese War.

⁵⁴ J. Tomes, Balfour and Foreign Policy: The International Thoughts of a Conservative Statesman (Cambridge, 1997).

⁵⁵ Ibid., pp. 257-258.

⁵⁶ Ibid., pp. 113-126, 220-227.

After January 1905, according to Tomes, Balfour changed his mind and wanted Japan in a strong position because Germany might prompt Russia to repeat the Triple Intervention of 1894. As a result, Balfour decided to strengthen Britain's ties with Japan by renewing the Anglo-Japanese alliance.⁵⁷ However, this argument is not convincing: there are no details of the Triple Intervention, of Germany's motivation and of the reason Balfour wanted to prevent such a Russo-German act.⁵⁸ Tomes offers no evidence for his argument.

Secondly, Tomes' analysis of Japan's assistance during the Great War falls short of understanding Balfour's role in this issue. He does not distinguish between naval and military aid and argues that Balfour did not 'share the widespread disgust at Japanese reluctance to assist the wider Allied war efforts'. The conclusion is that Balfour was not disappointed by Japan because his 'expectations are low'.⁵⁹ However, Tomes does not address Balfour's change of mind during the war. It is clear that Balfour changed his attitude towards Japan's assistance after being appointed Foreign Secretary in December 1916. Tomes refers to some documents that show that Balfour accepted Japan's unwillingness to send her troops to Europe in 1914 and 1915. But this does not prove

⁵⁷ Ibid., pp. 124-125.

⁵⁸ The relations between Russia and Germany during the Russo-Japanese War were more complicated than Tomes insisted. See J. Steinberg, 'Germany and the Russo-Japanese War' in American Historical Review LXXV, 7, (1970), pp. 1965-1986.

⁵⁹ Tomes, Balfour and Foreign Policy, p. 240.

that Balfour maintained his low expectations for Japan until the end of the war. Furthermore, Tomes analyses the Siberian intervention in his chapter ‘The Russian Revolution’ and makes no connection between Japanese military assistance and the Siberian intervention.

Thirdly, there is no reference to Balfour’s negotiations over the future of the Anglo-Japanese alliance with his American and Japanese counterparts at the Washington Conference. Tomes realises that Balfour was in favour of the renewal of the alliance after the Great War despite complaining about its signing in 1902.⁶⁰ Moreover, Tomes fully shows Balfour’s willingness to preserve a military clause in an Anglo-American-Japanese tripartite agreement just before the Washington Conference. Nevertheless, his analysis moves to Balfour’s speech at the final session, in which he declared the end of the alliance, not mentioning why and when Balfour had accepted its termination.⁶¹ Therefore, it still remains unclear about Balfour’s role in British diplomacy at the end of the Anglo-Japanese alliance.

In short, although Balfour was involved in the Anglo-Japanese alliance for its entire duration, no comprehensive analysis of his role in the alliance has been carried out. In particular, three questions remain unanswered: why Balfour’s lukewarm attitude

⁶⁰ Ibid., p. 243.

⁶¹ Ibid., pp. 253-255.

towards the Anglo-Japanese alliance changed and he took the initiative in revising it in 1905; how he dealt with Japan's assistance and the Siberian intervention during the Great War and how these issues influenced the alliance; and what he did at the Washington Conference and how he accepted the termination of the alliance. This is a significant gap in the historiography of Balfour and the Anglo-Japanese alliance.

This thesis aims to fill this gap and to offer new viewpoints on Balfour and the Anglo-Japanese alliance. The alliance was originally applied only to the Far East, and even after its revision in 1905 it covered the Far East and India at best. However, Balfour always considered the Japanese alliance in the context of Britain's global interests, in particular the imperial defence and Anglo-American cooperation. Therefore, his policy and thoughts on the alliance inevitably went beyond the Anglo-Japanese bilateral relationship over the Far East. Furthermore, he was the only British statesman who was involved in the alliance before, during and after the Great War. Detailed research into his role in the alliance will put it into the global perspective and provide a comprehensive understanding of the alliance that is not interrupted by the Great War.

In this research project the approach is fundamentally empirical. The pragmatic approach, based on examination of many records of political transactions, is the key to

revealing Balfour's perceptions of and policy towards the Anglo-Japanese alliance.⁶²

The examination of British private papers forms the main part of this research project.

The Balfour Papers at the British Library are an essential primary source. Official records, for example Foreign Office records and British Cabinet papers, are also vital to the project. Most of the official records are kept in The National Archives in London. In addition, Japanese diplomatic documents are examined because some of them record Balfour's comments, which do not appear in British documents. Japanese published sources, in particular the series *Nihon Gaikou Bunsho* (*Japanese Diplomatic Documents*) serve this purpose.

This thesis consists of an introduction, three chapters and a conclusion. The introduction deals with Balfour's attitude to imperial defence and Anglo-American cooperation. His policy on Japan and the Anglo-Japanese alliance revolved around these two principles from the 1890s to the 1920s. Therefore, it is necessary to investigate his thinking about them in this period before examining his policy regarding the alliance. The introduction addresses his constant involvement with the CID, which clearly represented his idea of and interest in imperial defence. This research reveals that Balfour not only played a crucial role in establishing the CID but also took the initiative

⁶² With regard to the importance of the pragmatic approach, see T.G. Otte, 'Diplomacy and Decision-making' in P. Finney, (ed.) *Palgrave Advance in International History* (Basingstoke, 2005), pp. 36-57.

in its discussion, preferring a flexible and advisory organisation that could effectively adapt to the changing international situation. With regard to Anglo-American cooperation, the introduction demonstrates that Balfour regarded America as the best possible alliance partner with which Britain could aim to share global naval supremacy. However, Balfour's desire for close collaboration with America always faced her isolationism.

Chapter 1 analyses the period from 1894 to 1905 and examines why Balfour's lukewarm attitude towards the Anglo-Japanese alliance changed when he took the lead in its first revision in 1905. As Prime Minister and First Lord of the Treasury, he presided over the signing and revision of the alliance. Not valuing Japan's increasing capability, Balfour preferred an Anglo-American alliance to a regional agreement with Japan which applied only to the Far East because such a limited arrangement was not useful in the imperial defence, and in particular in the defence of India. Even Japan's unexpected victories in the Russo-Japanese War did not change his mind. However, the Russo-Japanese War had an effect not only on the Far East but also on India and its adjacent region. This chapter reveals that Balfour came to support the revision of the alliance not because he was impressed by Japan's growing capability in the Far East but because he sought to take advantage of her military assistance in the defence of India.

Chapter 2 deals with the period from 1905 to 1918 and investigates how Balfour coped with Japan's assistance and the Siberian intervention during the Great War, and their impact on the Anglo-Japanese alliance. Although he was out of office from 1906 to 1915, he considered the 1911 revision of the Anglo-Japanese alliance from the viewpoint of imperial defence and Anglo-American cooperation. Balfour made every effort to maintain calm Anglo-American-Japanese relations in order to extract more Japanese naval aid during the Great War, although he had to abandon the idea of employing Japan's troops in Europe due to its adverse effect on imperial defence. Furthermore, while Balfour considered that the Siberian intervention was necessary for the defence of the British Empire, he had trouble securing America's consent to Japan's military campaign in Siberia. It became more difficult to maintain both imperial defence and Anglo-American cooperation within the Anglo-Japanese alliance

Chapter 3 addresses the period from 1919 to 1923, reconstructing Balfour's negotiations at the Washington Conference and revealing how he accepted the final termination of the Anglo-Japanese alliance. Balfour attended the Paris Peace Conference, where he tried to ease the tension between America and Japan without damaging Anglo-American relations. At the Imperial Conference he supported the renewal of the alliance from the viewpoint of the CID. This chapter demonstrates that

Balfour realised that Britain could not rely on cooperation with America for the defence of India and Australasia, although he avoided the deterioration of Anglo-American relations. He sought to develop the Japanese alliance into an Anglo-American-Japanese tripartite agreement to maintain Anglo-American cooperation, but also wanted to insert a military clause to revive the bilateral defensive alliance in the tripartite arrangement due to its usefulness to imperial defence. This was Balfour's attempt to combine imperial defence with Anglo-American cooperation in the alliance. However, he had to abandon this bid in the face of America and Japan's opposition, and had no choice but to approve the Four-Power Treaty at the Washington Conference.

The conclusion discusses the nature of Balfour's policy towards the Anglo-Japanese alliance and its meaning within British diplomacy.

II.

One of the principles of Balfour's foreign policy was imperial defence.⁶³ His continuous involvement in the Committee of Imperial Defence (CID) following its establishment in 1902 demonstrated his strong interest in the defence of the British Empire. The establishment of the committee was one of the significant achievements of

⁶³ For various factors of imperial defence, see G. Kennedy, (ed.) Imperial Defence: The old world order 1856-1956 (Abingdon, 2008).

his premiership and he was proud to be its founder. Addressing the House of Commons on 5 March 1903, he emphasised the novelty of the CID and explained the difference between it and previous committees.⁶⁴ The CID not only contributed to improving coordination between military and civilian authorities but also enabled Balfour to maintain his influence in British foreign policy. When he went out of office, the flexible and bipartisan structure of the CID secured Balfour's link to the policymaking process. As a result his engagement with the CID continued from the 1890s to the 1920s.

The Russian threat to the British Empire was a catalyst for the establishment of the CID. Its origin was the Colonial Defence Committee set up by the Disraeli administration in 1878, when many British policymakers estimated that war with Russia might be imminent due to Britain's support for Turkey during the Russo-Turkish War. The Admiralty, the War Office, the Treasury and the Colonial Office supplied officials to the Colonial Defence Committee to discuss the security of the British colonies from Russian naval attack.⁶⁵ This was an attempt to overcome the barriers between the various departments. However, the committee had little influence on British foreign and strategic policy due to the lack of any connection with the Cabinet.⁶⁶ In the end it

⁶⁴ Balfour, 5 Mar. 1903, Hansard: Series 4, House of Commons, vol. 118, cols. 1578-1586.

⁶⁵ N. Gibbs, The Origins of Imperial Defence (Oxford, 1955), p. 9.

⁶⁶ F. Johnson, Defence by Committee: The British Committee of Imperial Defence 1885-1959 (London, 1960), p.17.

ceased to exist in the following year as the war scare subsided and the next Liberal Prime Minister, William Gladstone, was not much interested in an inter-departmental organisation for the imperial defence.

The Colonial Defence Committee was resumed in 1885 when the Conservatives returned to power, led by Salisbury. The Russian threat once more provided the British government with a motive; Britain was concerned about being dragged into conflict with Russia because of the Penjdeh Incident in Afghanistan.⁶⁷ Realising that this crisis was too serious to leave to the Colonial Office alone, the Cabinet decided to gather representatives of not only that office but also the Admiralty, the War Office and the Treasury in order to bring together various bits of information and reports on the imperial defence. This joint committee was equipped with a secretary: George Clarke, who later became the first secretary of the CID, performed this duty from 1885 to 1892. The secretaryship gave Clarke access to many papers from these departments and enabled him to write memorandums for the Committee.⁶⁸ Unlike that of 1878, the Colonial Defence Committee of 1885 was given permanent status and served as 'a forum of discussion and a channel of communication and advice'.⁶⁹ However, like its

⁶⁷ For more on Penjdeh Incident, see K. Bourne, The Foreign Policy of Victorian England, 1830-1902 (Oxford, 1970), pp. 143-144; S. Mahajan, British Foreign Policy, 1874-1914: The role of India (London, 2002), pp. 75-78.

⁶⁸ G. Clarke, My Working Life (London, 1927), pp. 70-71.

⁶⁹ Johnson, Defence by Committee, p. 20.

predecessor, this committee failed to include Cabinet ministers and suffered from a lack of authority.

Coordination between naval and military services was another important issue to be tackled at the time. Joint Naval and Military Committee was established on 20 January 1891 to discuss coastal defence, about which both the Admiralty and the War Office were concerned. This committee, whose president was the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for War, consisted of naval and military service members and tackled inter-service problems. Although its aim was farsighted, the committee did not work as well as expected for two reasons: first, unlike the Colonial Defence Committee, it did not have a permanent secretary; and second, like the Colonial Defence Committee, Cabinet members did not attend it and rarely received its reports.⁷⁰

Balfour was apprehensive about the lack of coordination between the civil departments and military services over imperial defence in the increasingly challenging international environment. While he was out of office during the Gladstone and Rosebery administrations from 1892-1895, he thought deeply about a desirable organisation to resolve this security problem. In his understanding, neither Parliament nor the ministries could effectively manage imperial defence as 'the machinery of

⁷⁰ Ibid., pp. 31-32.

national defence ... has been allowed to rust in our armoury'.⁷¹ In 1893 Balfour exchanged letters with Charles Dilke, a Liberal Member of Parliament, and Henry Spenser Wilkinson, a writer and later an Oxford professor, who had co-authored *Imperial Defence*, which advocated drastic government reform and the establishment of a Ministry of Defence.⁷² While not always agreeing with them, Balfour was 'in favour of a Defence Committee of the Cabinet with expert advisers and permanent records carrying on the work from Government to Government'.⁷³ This showed his preference for a consulting committee over an executive organisation. Moreover, it was clear that he was paying attention to securing the continuity of the policy on imperial defence under a change of administration.

The formation of the Salisbury Cabinet in 1895 gave Balfour, who returned to government as First Lord of the Treasury, an opportunity to deal with the defence of the British Empire from within government. On 24 August 1895, he wrote a detailed memorandum on the establishment of the Defence Committee of the Cabinet. Fully realising the complex and interdepartmental nature of imperial defence, Balfour wanted the Defence Committee to consider 'all questions of importance connected with

⁷¹ Dugdale, Arthur James Balfour, vol I, pp. 213-214.

⁷² C. Dilke and S. Wilkinson, Imperial Defence (London, 1892).

⁷³ Balfour to Dilke, 1893 quoted in Young, Arthur James Balfour, p. 226.

Imperial Defence, which involve the co-operation of Army and Navy'.⁷⁴ He had not forgotten the failure of the preceding committees and proposed that the Secretary for War and the First Lord of the Admiralty should attend the Defence Committee as permanent members. Other cabinet colleagues, for example the Foreign Secretary and the Chancellor of the Exchequer, would attend depending on the issue. Following Balfour's proposal, Salisbury set up the Defence Committee and appointed the Duke of Devonshire, Lord President of the Council, as its chairman. The attendance of these powerful cabinet members, including Balfour himself, added to it the political authority that the previous committees had not had. Even so, Balfour emphasised that the Defence Committee could not 'intervene in the departmental work, either of the War Office or of the Admiralty'.⁷⁵ This meant that it remained an advisory organisation for the ministries, in accordance with Balfour's concept of 1893.

However, the Defence Committee of the Cabinet did not conform to Balfour's expectations, even though it lasted for seven years from 1895. The Treasury, which had a powerful influence on the Committee through the Chancellor of the Exchequer, turned the Committee's discussion towards financial disputes between the departments. No Cabinet minister could change this situation: Salisbury did not show any interest in the

⁷⁴ Memo. by Balfour, 24 Aug. 1895, CAB 37/40/64.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

Committee and Balfour could not pursue the matter owing to his heavy workload as Leader of the House of Commons. The difficulties of the Boer War of 1899-1902 revealed the inadequacy of Britain's strategic planning, and the Defence Committee could not escape the criticism that it had not utilised sufficient naval and military intelligence in preparation for the war.⁷⁶ The malfunction of the Defence Committee became clear and its reform was inevitable.

After being appointed Prime Minister in July 1902 Balfour decided to establish a new organisation to deal with the defence of the British Empire. In November 1902, Lord Selborne, First Lord of the Admiralty, and St John Brodrick, Secretary of State for War, jointly submitted a powerful memorandum to Balfour, asking for improvement of the Defence Committee. In this memorandum they insisted that the Committee had not tackled 'the most difficult and important problems of all', which were 'neither purely naval nor purely military, nor purely naval and military combined, but which may be described as naval, military, and political'.⁷⁷ This showed the complexity of imperial defence that Britain had to cope with. On receiving this memorandum Balfour abolished the defunct Defence Committee and, in December 1902, set up the Committee of Imperial Defence (CID) to improve coordination between foreign and military policy.

⁷⁶ Gibbs, The Origins of Imperial Defence, pp. 16-17.

⁷⁷ Dugdale, Arthur James Balfour, vol I, p. 367.

The structure of the CID was different from that of previous committees. The Duke of Devonshire continued to serve as chairman at first. However, Balfour replaced him in November 1903 and 'took a leading part' in its discussions.⁷⁸ He needed to collect a wide range of information to smooth the policy making and meet the requirements of the changed international situation. To do this, he invited to the CID not only civilians, namely the First Lord of the Admiralty and the Secretary of State for War, but also military personnel, for example the First Sea Lord and the Commander-in-Chief. In addition, the Director of Naval Intelligence and the Director General of Military Intelligence also attended the committee. Balfour treated these military advisors as equals with the senior politicians.⁷⁹

There were two essential elements to the CID: the Prime Minister's leadership and the elasticity of the organisation. In a long report on 4 December 1903 Balfour explained to the King these two aspects and the importance of the CID. With regard to the leadership, the Prime Minister possessed the power of 'selecting the person to be summoned to each meeting'.⁸⁰ The CID personnel depended on the Prime Minister's present interest in foreign and defence policy. Realising that the absence of the Prime

⁷⁸ Balfour to Arnold Forster, 20 Jan. 1905, Balfour MSS, Add. MSS. 49723.

⁷⁹ N. d'Ombrain, War Machinery and High Policy, Defence Administration in Peacetime Britain, 1902-1914 (Oxford, 1973), p. 117.

⁸⁰ Balfour to the King, 4 Dec. 1903, CAB 41/28/25.

Minister had led to the failure of the previous committees, Balfour emphasised the necessity of the Prime Minister's strong leadership. According to him, the CID should be 'an advisory body summoned by the Prime Minister of the day to aid him in the consideration of the wider problems of Imperial defence'.⁸¹ However, this contained the danger that the CID might not work if the Prime Minister himself was not much interested in diplomacy.

As for the elasticity, no member except the Prime Minister 'has a right to come' and there were no fixed personnel to the CID. This flexibility of membership enabled the CID to adapt to varying circumstances, preventing a particular department, for instance the Treasury, from gaining considerable influence over the organisation.⁸² Moreover, on some occasions it could 'include representatives of the Colonies'. Therefore, it was not limited to the government in London, but contained 'the potentiality of being an "Imperial Council" dealing with Imperial questions'.⁸³ Balfour's clear intention was that the CID should play a crucial role in improving coordination not only between foreign and military policy but also between Britain and her colonies.

During the Russo-Japanese War of 1904-1905, the structure of the CID underwent an important change with the addition of a permanent secretary. Lord Esher, who had

⁸¹ Memo. by Balfour, 29 Feb. 1904, CAB 37/69/33.

⁸² Judd, Balfour and the British Empire, pp. 40-41.

⁸³ Balfour to the King, 4 Dec. 1903, CAB 41/28/25.

close connections with the Royal family, took a strong interest in army reform and defence policy.⁸⁴ He became a chairman of the War Office Reconstitution Committee, and considered the reform of the War Office and the CID. Seeing the rapidly-developing scope of the work of the CID, he proposed the appointment of a “Permanent Secretary,” with a trained strategical mind, and ... who has given attention to the great historical and practical problem of Imperial [sic] Defence'.⁸⁵ Esher's aim was not only to increase the number of staff but also the creation of ‘a “permanent nucleus”’ in the CID. There was no guarantee that successive administrations, in particular Liberal ones, would maintain the CID.⁸⁶ Even if the next Prime Minister preserved it, he might not have a strong interest in diplomatic and military matters. To secure the continuity of Britain's foreign and defence policy Esher sought to install a permanent secretary, paid for by Parliament, to protect the existence of the CID from a change of government.⁸⁷

Balfour shared Esher's opinion and sanctioned the creation of the permanent secretariat. While Balfour admitted that discontinuity occurred in many fields at a change of government, he argued that ‘there is one point on which there ought to be no

⁸⁴ For details of Esher's career, see P. Fraser, Lord Esher: A Political Biography (London, 1973).

⁸⁵ Memo. by Esher, 20 Dec. 1903, Balfour MSS, Add. MSS. 49718.

⁸⁶ J. Gooch, The Plans of War: The General Staff and British Military Strategy c. 1900-1916 (London, 1974), pp. 50-51.

⁸⁷ Esher to Balfour, 30 Mar. 1904, Balfour MSS, Add. MSS. 49718.

discontinuity, and that is the military and naval policy of the Empire'.⁸⁸ Although the CID had employed a part-time clerk from the Foreign Office, this was not sufficient to record the CID's various meetings.⁸⁹ Balfour expected that 'the conclusions of the Defence Committee will be embodied not merely in resolutions, but in reasoned documents'.⁹⁰ In addition, its records would be handed over to successive governments to secure the continuity of British foreign and defence policy. Balfour fully understood that the CID should be equipped with a permanent secretariat.

Balfour's favourite candidate for CID secretary was George Clarke, the former secretary of Colonial Defence Committee.⁹¹ After resigning from that post, he had served as Governor of Victoria from 1901 to 1903. He had also become a member of the War Office Reconstitution Committee and formed a 'triumvirate' with Esher and John Fisher, the then Commander-in-Chief, Portsmouth.⁹² Balfour valued Clarke's ability and knowledge of foreign and defence policy. Although some Cabinet colleagues, for example St John Brodrick, then the Secretary of State for India, agreed to the necessity for a permanent staff, they objected to Clarke's appointment due to his constant

⁸⁸ Balfour, 5 Mar. 1903, Hansard: Series 4, House of Commons, vol. 118, cols. 1580-1581.

⁸⁹ J.F. Naylor, A Man and An Institution: Sir Maurice Hankey, the Cabinet Secretariat and the custody of Cabinet secrecy (Cambridge, 1984), p. 22.

⁹⁰ Balfour, 5 Mar. 1903, Hansard: Series 4, House of Commons, vol. 118, col. 1580.

⁹¹ On Clarke's career, see J. Gooch, 'Sir George Clarke's Career at the Committee of Imperial Defence, 1904-1907' in Historical Journal XVIII, 3, (1975), pp. 555-569.

⁹² For details of Fisher's career and naval policy, see N.A. Lambert, Sir John Fisher's Naval Revolution (Columbia, 1999).

connection with the press.⁹³ Balfour had to persuade these opponents by requiring Clarke to cut off his direct and indirect communication with the press.⁹⁴ Nevertheless, as Balfour had forecast, Clarke was not satisfied with carrying out ordinary paper work.⁹⁵ Soon he became a virtual member of the CID, playing a significant role in policymaking as ‘the Prime Minister’s permanent secretary for Imperial Defence’.⁹⁶

The Unionist Party had been in power for about ten years. It was inevitable that a protracted term under the same ruling party would make it unpopular by the end of its term of government. Balfour resigned as Prime Minister in December 1905 and the Unionist Party suffered a heavy loss of seats in the general election of January 1906. Balfour also handed over his position as Leader of the Opposition to Andrew Bonar Law in 1911. Even with such a setback in his political career, Balfour maintained his involvement in the policymaking process of British diplomacy. The CID enabled him to secure a link to the British Cabinet from outside government. As the founder of the CID, Balfour occupied ‘a very special position vis a vis the Gov[ernmen]t on questions concerning the Defence Committee’.⁹⁷

The CID’s permanent secretariat, which was not affected by the change of

⁹³ Brodrick to Balfour, 29 Feb. 1904, Balfour MSS, Add. MSS. 49721.

⁹⁴ Balfour to the King, 14 Apr. 1904, CAB 41/29/11.

⁹⁵ Balfour to Sandars, 26 Feb. 1904, Balfour MSS, Add. MSS. 49762.

⁹⁶ Fisher to Sandars, 10 Nov. 1903, Balfour MSS, Add. MSS. 49710.

⁹⁷ Sandars to Balfour, 11 Jan. 1912, Balfour MSS, Add. MSS. 49768.

government, mediated between Balfour and the British government. All three CID secretaries from 1906 to 1914, namely George Clarke, Charles Ottley and Maurice Hankey, maintained close relations with Balfour and were involved in the Anglo-Japanese alliance. It was Balfour who appointed Clarke as the first secretary of the CID in 1904. Sharing his interest in imperial defence, Clarke supported Balfour in extending the Japanese alliance into India to obtain Japan's military assistance in dealing with the Russian threat to India and its adjacent regions, including Afghanistan and Persia.⁹⁸ The defence of India was crucial to Clarke, who was concerned about whether the incoming administration, led by the Liberal Party's Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman, would pay serious attention to India.⁹⁹ Even after Balfour resigned as Prime Minister, Clarke sent him the contents of CID discussions and updated him on the Russian threat to India and Afghanistan.¹⁰⁰

The weakening of Russia after the Russo-Japanese War changed Clarke's perception of her threat. Russia was no longer able to maintain her naval forces in the Far East, so Britain did not have to be concerned about her as a menace to the Royal Navy and the Anglo-Japanese military cooperation would deter her aggression against India. Clarke

⁹⁸ Memo. by Clarke, Apr. 1905, CAB 17/54; Memo. by Clarke, 4 May 1905, Sydenham MSS, Add. MSS. 50836.

⁹⁹ Memo. by Clarke, ? Dec. 1905, Balfour MSS, Add. MSS. 49702.

¹⁰⁰ Clarke to Balfour, 20 May 1906, Balfour MSS, Add. MSS. 49702.

calculated that Russia was more likely to attack Manchuria than India, and thus, Britain could ‘render the Russian menace to India negligible’ at this point.¹⁰¹ Nevertheless, reckoning that Russia’s weakness, caused by the war, was only temporary, Clarke did not completely rule her out as a threat to India. In 1907 he was posted to Bombay as Governor, which ended his participation in the CID. Yet, he predicted to Balfour: ‘The question of India will in good years be the most difficult of all our many problems’.¹⁰²

Clarke’s successor was Charles Ottley, whom Balfour had invited to the CID. Ottley was originally a naval officer, but Selborne had recommended to Balfour that he be added to the staff of the CID in May 1904.¹⁰³ Cooperating with Clarke, Ottley also advocated the advantages of the renewal and extension of the Anglo-Japanese alliance.¹⁰⁴ Balfour valued Ottley’s work in the CID, praising him as ‘a very hard-worked official’.¹⁰⁵ Ottley did not forget that Afghanistan was key to the defence of India. After his appointment as CID secretary, therefore, he kept in contact with Balfour and often informed him of the latest news on Afghanistan.¹⁰⁶ ‘As the creator of the modernised C.I.D.’, Ottley observed, ‘he [Balfour] is the greatest living authority on

¹⁰¹ Note by Clarke, 15 Dec. 1906, Sydenham MSS, Add. MSS. 50836.

¹⁰² Clarke to Balfour, 23 Jul. 1907, Balfour MSS, Add. MSS. 49702.

¹⁰³ Selborne to Balfour, 17 May 1904, Balfour MSS, Add. MSS. 49707; Selborne to Sandars, 19 May 1904, Balfour MSS, Add. MSS. 49707; For more on Ottley’s career, see d’Ombrain, War Machinery and High Policy, pp. 187-196.

¹⁰⁴ Memo. by Ottley, 10 Apr. 1905, CAB 17/67.

¹⁰⁵ Balfour to Ottley, 8 Jan. 1908, Balfour MSS, Add. MSS. 49859.

¹⁰⁶ Ottley to Sandars, 4 May 1908, Balfour MSS, Add. MSS. 49765.

its functions'. In January 1912, even after Balfour had resigned as Leader of the Opposition, Ottley asked him to write a memorandum on the CID and 'the broad problem of Imperial Defence'.¹⁰⁷ While Balfour declined in order to avoid giving the pledge upon these important issues, he agreed to discuss them with Ottley.¹⁰⁸ Balfour's reputation for foreign and defence policy was still strong.

The last CID secretary in the period before the Great War was Maurice Hankey. Before replacing Ottley in 1912, he had been a naval officer and was on the staff of the CID.¹⁰⁹ Unlike Clarke and Ottley, he was not familiar with Balfour, but revealed his talent to Balfour during a review of the home defence in 1913. Although Balfour was absent from some meetings, Hankey kept him informed of the discussion in the CID, sending him all the necessary documents.¹¹⁰ Balfour acknowledged Hankey's ability and wished that 'Hankey had confined himself to Defence Committee work, which he does excellently, and did not mix himself up with higher politics of which, naturally, he knows but little'.¹¹¹ As Balfour hoped, Hankey served as CID secretary for about 26 years. Balfour would maintain close cooperation with him even during and after the Great War; more importantly, both Balfour and Hankey would attend the Washington

¹⁰⁷ Ottley to Esher, 6 Jan. 1912, Balfour MSS, Add. MSS. 49719.

¹⁰⁸ Balfour to Esher, 9 Jan. 1912, Balfour MSS, Add. MSS. 49719.

¹⁰⁹ For details of Hankey's career, see d'Ombrain, War Machinery and High Policy, pp. 196-202.

¹¹⁰ Hankey to Balfour, 21 Jan. 1913, Balfour MSS, Add. MSS. 49703.

¹¹¹ Balfour to Bonar Law, 28 Mar. 1914, Balfour MSS, Add. MSS. 49693.

Conference from 1921 to 1922 and play a significant role in deciding the future of the Anglo-Japanese alliance.

Apart from the secretaries, Balfour also had connections with the statesmen attending the CID after 1906. It was forecast that Campbell-Bannerman, who seemed hostile to the CID, would not accept its chairmanship.¹¹² On the other hand, many Liberal Imperialists, in particular Herbert Asquith, Sir Edward Grey and Richard Burdon Haldane, were in favour of the CID and shared Balfour's keen interest in imperial defence.¹¹³ It was imperative that these statesmen occupied the major Cabinet posts in order to prevent Campbell-Bannerman from letting the CID 'die of inertia'.¹¹⁴ To Balfour's relief, Asquith served as Chancellor of the Exchequer, Grey as Foreign Secretary and Haldane as Secretary of State for War in the Campbell-Bannerman administration. All of them were supposed to attend the CID regularly, so Balfour often exchanged opinions with them and tried to influence their policy.

Among the Liberal Imperialists Haldane cooperated very closely with Balfour. Even before Balfour resigned from his post as Prime Minister, Haldane made contact with him through Esher and Clarke. Balfour explained his military policy to Haldane and

¹¹² Esher to Balfour, 13 Oct. 1905, Balfour MSS, Add. MSS. 49719.

¹¹³ For more on Liberal Imperialists, see T.G. Otte, 'Problems of Continuity: The 1906 General Election and Foreign Policy' in Journal of Liberal History LIV, (2007), pp. 8-9.

¹¹⁴ Esher to Sandars, 7 Oct. 1905, Balfour MSS, Add. MSS. 49719.

indicated ‘the direction in which he had wished to move’. Clarke predicted that Haldane would not only stop the intervention of Liberals who were against the CID but would also work as Balfour wished.¹¹⁵ Haldane also sought to make progress with army reform, taking advantage of Balfour’s authority regarding military policy by showing the latter’s approval of his reform.¹¹⁶ When Asquith succeeded Campbell-Bannerman as Prime Minister in 1908, Grey and Haldane remained in office during his administration. Asquith sometimes invited Balfour to attend the CID, appreciating how Balfour’s ‘expert knowledge and judgement have proved to be of great value’.¹¹⁷ Therefore, Balfour was able to remain involved in the CID even as a member of the Opposition.

Balfour had one more important link to a statesman inside the CID: Lord Esher. He became a permanent member of the CID as a courtier of the Royal Household immediately before Balfour’s resignation as Prime Minister. The public reason for Esher taking part in the CID was his involvement in the reform of the army and the War Office during the Balfour administration. However, there was also a secret reason: Esher revealed that he always remembered that Balfour ‘put me on to the C[ommitt]tee to

¹¹⁵ Clarke to Esher, 10 Dec. 1905, Esher MSS, ESHR 10/37; P. Fraser, Lord Esher: A Political Biography (London, 1973), p. 180.

¹¹⁶ Haldane to Kitchener, 8 Jul. 1909, Balfour MSS, Add. MSS. 49724; Haldane to Balfour, 15 Jul. 1909, Balfour MSS, Add. MSS. 49724.

¹¹⁷ Asquith, 19 May 1914, Hansard: Series 5, House of Commons, vol. 62, col. 1766.

“hold the fort” for you [Balfour].¹¹⁸ It was not surprising that Esher kept in contact with Balfour and discussed many of the problems presented in the CID. Some Cabinet ministers, for example Haldane, allowed Esher to do this.¹¹⁹ More importantly, as America’s suspicion of Japan gradually grew after 1906, Esher advocated the need for the CID to consider the possibility of a US-Japanese war and Britain’s policy on such a war.¹²⁰ Balfour supported Esher’s proposal and impressed on him the importance of Anglo-Saxon solidarity.¹²¹ Although Balfour could not return to power, Esher acted on his behalf in the CID.

On occasion Balfour himself attended the CID, despite being a member of the Opposition. After 1906 he tackled the home defence, which was ‘a part of the greater problem of Imperial Defence’.¹²² He had already examined it in November 1903, when the main potential threat to the British Isles was France. Britain had to consider the possibility that when she sent reinforcements to India to fight Russia, France might attack the British Isles, which would be left with weak defences due to the shortage of manpower. Balfour concluded that France’s serious invasion of these islands was impossible as long as Britain maintained her naval supremacy in the Channel and kept

¹¹⁸ Esher to Balfour, 31 Dec. 1909, Balfour MSS, Add. MSS. 49719.

¹¹⁹ Esher to Balfour, 9 Jan. 1907, Balfour MSS, Add. MSS. 49719; R. Williams, Defending the Empire: The Conservative Party and British Defence Policy, 1899-1915 (New Haven, 1991), p. 105.

¹²⁰ Memo. by Esher, 21 Jan. 1910, CAB 4/3/112B.

¹²¹ Balfour to Esher, 4 Feb. 1910, Balfour MSS, Add. MSS. 49719.

¹²² Memo. by Army Council, 4 Oct. 1910, CAB 3/2/48A.

70,000 soldiers at home.¹²³ However, the Russo-Japanese War changed not only the international situation in the Far East but also the balance of power in Europe. The weakening of Russia enabled Germany to free herself from the wedge of the Franco-Russian Dual Alliance and apply a more aggressive foreign policy. Realising this profound change, army experts such as Lord Roberts advocated the need to revise the home defence policy and asked Balfour to cooperate in putting pressure on the government.¹²⁴

Balfour did not hesitate to review home defence matters in the face of changing circumstances. He replied to Roberts that 'no conclusions upon a subject of such vital national interest could ever be considered final, and that, if new circumstances had arisen, it would be the height of folly to rest contented with conclusions, however cautiously arrived at, which related to a bygone condition of affairs'.¹²⁵ Balfour took the initiative in the discussion of the home defence in a newly established CID Sub-Committee. On 29 May 1908 he submitted a detailed memorandum to the Sub-Committee. In the first place, he admitted that Germany had replaced France as the main threat to the British Isles since the Russo-Japanese War. Although Britain had already reached *Entente Cordiale* with France in 1904, Balfour insisted that the CID

¹²³ Memo. by Balfour, 11 Nov. 1903, CAB 3/1/18A.

¹²⁴ Williams, Defending the Empire, p. 145.

¹²⁵ Balfour to Clarke, 20 Jul. 1907, CAB 3/2/42A.

should not suppose that ‘the safety of the country could depend upon some paper instrument or a mere *entente*, however *cordiale* it might be’.¹²⁶ Given the growing German naval forces, the present German threat was more acute than that of France before 1905. However, Balfour concluded that a German invasion of Britain was still impossible at this point.

The Sub-Committee approved Balfour’s memorandum on the home defence. Esher wrote: ‘Not a question was put to him [Balfour], and no higher tribute could be paid to him. Asquith, Grey, Haldane, Crewe, Lloyd George. All were equally dumbfounded’.¹²⁷

The Sub-Committee also referred to the necessity of guaranteeing 70,000 men, even though Britain might engage in ‘a war on the frontier of India which required 100,000 regular troops to be sent from the United Kingdom during the first year’.¹²⁸ In 1907 Britain and Russia concluded the Anglo-Russian convention and their rivalry over India and Central Asia was mitigated. However, the CID continued to ponder the defence of India in the event of a war. Balfour also took part in the CID again in 1913 and signed a detailed memorandum in cooperation with Esher and Liberal statesmen, calculating ‘the

¹²⁶ Memo. by Balfour, 29 May 1908, CAB 3/2/43A.

¹²⁷ Esher’s journals, 29 May 1908 in M.V. Brett, (ed.) Journals and Letters of Reginald Viscount Esher, Vol. 2, 1903-1910, (London, 1934), p. 318.

¹²⁸ ‘Report of a Sub-Committee appointed by the Prime Minister to reconsider the question of Oversea Attack’, 22 Oct. 1908, CAB 3/2/44A.

event of the despatch of an Expeditionary Force oversea' on 15 April 1914.¹²⁹ About four months later Britain entered the Great War and had to send her expeditionary forces to the European continent. Given his continuous involvement in the CID from 1906 to 1914, it was not surprising that Balfour was invited to attend it just after the outbreak of the Great War.

When the Great War broke out in the summer of 1914, Balfour was officially no more than a Conservative elder statesman. After resigning as leader of the Unionist Party he did not occupy any major office. However, the Liberal government needed Balfour's expertise in foreign and defence policy. Prime Minister Asquith urged Balfour to attend the CID because he wanted to secure Balfour's experience and advice in the national interest.¹³⁰ Balfour accepted Asquith's request and became a member of the CID on 7 October. Although he had already privately contributed to the government, his acceptance of the CID membership marked the resumption of his official involvement in policy-making.

In November 1914, the CID developed into a smaller but more responsible organisation, the War Council, which decided on war plans and national strategy. Balfour was the only Opposition participant. His attendance at the War Council enabled

¹²⁹ "Attack on the British Isles from Oversea", 15 Apr. 1914, CAB 3/2/62A.

¹³⁰ D. Lloyd George, War Memoirs, vol.1 (London, 1933), p.171

him to be involved in Britain's policymaking despite the fact that he did not have a Cabinet post. However, he became uneasy about his position due to 'an accidental growth' of the War Council. As the founder of the CID he argued that it had originally had 'no Executive power whatever', while the War Council could directly decide war plans and national strategy. Balfour considered that his presence on the War Council put him 'in a position so delicate and difficult' that he was reluctant to continue providing his services. Nevertheless, he did not withdraw from his involvement in the War Council because of his belief. He wrote: 'I am too old to fight, and this is all I can do for the general cause. I do not like to shelter myself behind objections which seem rather parliamentary than national'.¹³¹

As Balfour feared, the War Council did not work well. Its nucleus was the same as that of the CID: the Prime Minister was its chairman, and the First Lord of the Admiralty, the Secretary of State for War and the chief servicemen of the Navy and the Army were members. But the number of its members continuously grew and more than ten Cabinet ministers often attended its meetings. This expansion stiffened the organisation, making it more difficult to make a decision swiftly.¹³² The former CID

¹³¹ Balfour to Lansdowne, 9 Jan. 1915, Balfour MSS, Add. MSS. 49836.

¹³² J. Turner, 'Cabinets, Committees and Secretariats: the Higher Direction of War' in K. Burk, (ed.) War and the State: The Transformation of British Government, 1914-1919 (London, 1982), pp. 58-59.

secretary George Clarke pointed out its inefficiency: ‘A fluctuating Committee of eleven or twelve members, largely preoccupied with other work, for the most part unaccustomed to study naval and military questions, and depending ultimately on the acquiescence of the whole Cabinet, is necessarily incapable of directing the greatest of wars’¹³³ Asquith was disaffected with the performance of the War Council and kept it in abeyance after the formation of his coalition government in May 1915.

The CID did not work well even after Lloyd George replaced Asquith as the Prime Minister in December 1916. Lloyd George, who wanted to strengthen the Prime Minister’s power to command the war, set up the small War Cabinet, ignoring the CID. Although Balfour was excluded from the original membership of the War Cabinet, he was given the right to attend it ‘whenever he thought fit’, and often exercised this privilege.¹³⁴ Moreover, Lloyd George realised ‘the advisability of strengthening the Secretariat’ of the War Cabinet and decided to utilise the CID’s secretary, appointing Hankey as Cabinet Secretary.¹³⁵ Hankey’s attendance in the War Cabinet contributed to securing the continuity of British foreign and defence policy after the change of government. While the CID did not meet until the end of the war, its secretariat achieved one of its main purposes in the War Cabinet.

¹³³ Clarke, My Working Life, p. 322.

¹³⁴ Dugdale, Arthur James Balfour, vol II, p. 241.

¹³⁵ War Cabinet 1, 9 Dec. 1916, CAB 23/1; Naylor, A Man and An Institution, p. 35.

The CID resumed its defence planning on 29 June 1920. Although he was not the Prime Minister, Balfour served as its chairman. Originally, he had insisted that the Prime Minister ‘ought to be chairman of any Committee considering big questions of naval and military policy’.¹³⁶ But Lloyd George asked Balfour to take the chair of the standing sub-committee regarding the naval problem in the Far East.¹³⁷ As Prime Minister, Lloyd George had to deal with many domestic problems. Moreover, he was not much interested in foreign and defence matters in Asia. He prioritised financial and welfare issues and sometimes failed to attend conferences about diplomatic and strategic policy.¹³⁸ Thus, he decided to leave the CID to ‘the most suitable Chairman’.¹³⁹ Being chairman of this small committee served Balfour’s purpose well. Although he was in favour of a return to the pre-war organisation, Balfour commented that the CID had become ‘too big’ just before the war.¹⁴⁰ Small *ad-hoc* committees, by contrast, allowed the CID to regain its original flexibility when dealing with problems of imperial defence. Indeed, the standing sub-committee was soon regarded as the *de facto* CID, and its minutes were treated as those of the whole CID until July 1923.¹⁴¹ Balfour thus became *de facto* chairman of the CID and presided over discussions on

¹³⁶ Minutes of 133rd Meeting, 29 Jun. 1920, CAB 2/3/133.

¹³⁷ Memo. by Hankey, 27 Apr. 1921, CAB 34/1/1.

¹³⁸ Notes of 8th Meeting of Imperial Conference, 28 Jun. 1921, CAB 32/2/1.

¹³⁹ Lloyd George to Long, 14 Dec. 1920, Long MSS, Add. MSS. 62425.

¹⁴⁰ Minutes of 133rd Meeting, 29 Jun. 1920, CAB 2/3/133.

¹⁴¹ See CAB 2/3/136-175.

British naval policy in the Far East.

Balfour's attendance in the CID continued until he retired from the politics. During Stanley Baldwin's Conservative administration from 1924 to 1929, Balfour often participated in CID meetings. His interest in India's security had not waned and he expressed concern about Soviet Russia's infiltration into Afghanistan, reiterating that 'the integrity of Afghanistan was vital to the defence of India'.¹⁴² Moreover, he defended the CID even though a trend to create a single ministry that would deal with defence matters had grown since the Great War. In June 1926 he addressed the House of Lords:

... The Committee of Imperial Defence does that work which no Minister of Defence could do. It can do the work, and is doing the work, of coordinating the civil resources of the country as well as what I call the military resources. ... It is an institution which never, from its character, can become rigid. It is an institution which can never become bureaucratic. It is capable, as no other institution can be, of covering the whole ground by its Committees, dealing with questions the most disparate and the most complicated, and belonging to the most different spheres of activity. ... Co-ordination is being given us, may more and more be given us, by the Committee of Imperial Defence. ...¹⁴³

This address presented the features of the CID that Balfour valued: coordination, flexibility and political leadership. He had maintained his preference for the CID as an

¹⁴² Minutes of 215th Meeting, 22 Jul. 1926, CAB 2/4/215.

¹⁴³ Balfour, 16 Jun. 1926, Hansard: Series 5, House of Lords, vol. 64, col. 437.

advisory body over an executive Ministry of Defence for more than thirty years.

Immediately before the general election of 1929, Baldwin wanted Balfour to continue his membership of the CID, which ‘is your [Balfour’s] own child and would indeed feel an orphan without you’.¹⁴⁴ However, the Conservatives’ defeat in the election and the decline of Balfour’s health ended his appearance in the CID, marking the formal end of his political career.

III.

Another principle that Balfour held throughout the whole of his political life was Anglo-American cooperation. The concept of Anglo-Saxon solidarity which was brought by the English colonists was not a new phenomenon in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century.¹⁴⁵ However, the Anglo-American relationship had experienced so many crises that engendered mutual enmity and mistrust since America’s independence.¹⁴⁶ It was not until the last years of the nineteenth century that

¹⁴⁴ Baldwin to Balfour, 25 May 1929, Balfour MSS, Add. MSS. 49694.

¹⁴⁵ For the background of the Anglo-Saxon solidarity, see S. Anderson, Race and Rapprochement: Anglo-Saxonism and Anglo-American relations, 1895-1904 (London, 1981) pp. 26-61.

¹⁴⁶ I. Adams, Brothers across the Ocean: British Foreign Policy and the Origins of the Anglo-American ‘Special Relationship’ 1900-1905 (London, 2005), pp. 10-11.

Anglo-American rapprochement was over the horizon.¹⁴⁷ Although Balfour was one of the British statesmen who took the initiative in improving the bilateral relations, it was not easy to pinpoint when he started to entertain the idea of close collaboration with America. According to his memory, he was already convinced of the existence of the Anglo-Saxon solidarity ‘before I entered Parliament and was a student, and not an actor, in the sphere of politics’.¹⁴⁸ He chose America and the English-speaking world as the destination of his first trip outside Europe on beginning his long political career. Given the fact that most of the British statesmen had not gone to America, this highlighted Balfour’s foresightedness over the importance of the Anglo-American relations.

The Venezuelan crisis of 1895 publicly revealed Balfour’s strong faith in Anglo-American cooperation for the first time. Immediately after the Salisbury administration took office in July 1895, Britain had to tackle a dispute with America which originated in a boundary problem between British Guiana and Venezuela. Fearing an infringement of the Monroe Doctrine, America sided with Venezuela and required Britain to accept arbitration on 20 July 1895.¹⁴⁹ Salisbury refused America’s demand

¹⁴⁷ For more on Anglo-American rapprochement, see C. Campbell, Anglo-American Understanding, 1898-1903 (Baltimore, 1957); A.E. Campbell, Great Britain and the United States 1895-1903 (London, 1960); B. Perkins, The Great Rapprochement: England and the United States, 1895-1914 (New York, 1969).

¹⁴⁸ Balfour to Choate, 1 Jun. 1905, Balfour MSS, Add. MSS. 49742.

¹⁴⁹ Campbell, Great Britain and the United States 1895-1903, pp. 11-12.

due to his doubts about America's intentions and capability.¹⁵⁰ America's reaction was fierce, threatening war to force Britain to agree to arbitration and to defend the principles of the Monroe Doctrine. As one of the influential statesmen in Salisbury's Cabinet, Balfour had to deal with these strained relations with America.

Unlike Salisbury, Balfour was a proponent of close Anglo-American collaboration. According to him, Britain and America shared not only their race but also many cultural connections. In November 1895, before the Venezuelan crisis intensified, he emphasised the importance of Anglo-Saxon solidarity:

a deeper consciousness has begun to penetrate the convictions of the whole of the Anglo-Saxon race, whether subjects of the Queen or not, that they are all of one stock, that they speak one language, that they own one literature, that they live under institutions having a common origin, and that their mission throughout the world should be the same.¹⁵¹

Not even the Venezuelan crisis shook his belief in the essential harmony between Britain and America. He worked to ease Anglo-American tensions in the Cabinet.¹⁵² In addition, he was willing to express his belief in public:

¹⁵⁰ Salisbury to Pauncefote, ? Nov. 1895, CAB 37/40/63; P. Gibb, 'Unmasterly Inactivity? Sir Julian Pauncefote, Lord Salisbury, and the Venezuela Boundary Dispute' in Diplomacy & Statecraft XVI, 1, (2005), pp. 31-34.

¹⁵¹ 'Mr. Balfour in Glasgow', The Times, Friday 15 Nov. 1895, p. 6.

¹⁵² Memo. by Balfour, 7 Feb. 1896, Balfour MSS, Add. MSS. 49690.

[T]he idea of war with the United States of America carries with it something of the unnatural horror of a civil war. ... [W]ar with the United States appears to have an additional horror of its own born of the fact that those whom we should be fighting are our own flesh and blood, speaking our own language, sharing our own civilization. ... We may be taxed with being idealists and dreamers in this matter. I look forward with confidence to the time when our ideals will have become real and our dreams will be embodied in actual political fact. It cannot but be that those whose national roots go down into the same past as our own, who share our language; our literature, our laws, our religion – everything that makes a nation great – and who share in substance our institutions – it cannot but be that the time will come, the time must come, when someone, some statesman of authority, more fortunate even than President Monroe, will lay down the doctrine that between the English-speaking peoples war is impossible. ...¹⁵³

This speech was praised by the Republican Senator Henry Cabot Lodge, who maintained a diplomatic channel with Balfour. Yet, as Lodge insisted, America linked the Venezuelan controversy to the legitimacy of the Monroe Doctrine whose principles were regarded as vital to her security.¹⁵⁴ There was little possibility that America would withdraw her demand for arbitration.

In the end, Salisbury agreed to arbitration over the boundary dispute and Britain succeeded in avoiding an Anglo-American war. Given the deterioration of Anglo-German relations over South Africa, Britain could not afford to quarrel with America. She concluded an arbitration agreement with Venezuela in September 1896, the verdict of which in October 1899, was that British Guiana should possess most of

¹⁵³ 'Mr. Balfour on Foreign Affairs', The Times, Thursday 16 Jan. 1896, p. 10.

¹⁵⁴ Lodge to Balfour, 1 Feb. 1896, Balfour MSS, Add. MSS. 49742.

the disputed territories. Balfour was satisfied with this result and later insisted that 'had the negotiations on the subject [the Venezuelan crisis] taken a different turn, the history of the world would have been changed'. He feared that, regardless of its military result, a war between Britain and America would revive America's old animosity against Britain, which was based on the American War of Independence.¹⁵⁵ This would make Anglo-American cooperation impossible, and so he could not allow a hard-line attitude towards America that might escalate into war.

The Spanish-American War of 1898 marked a moment of Anglo-American rapprochement. Just before the outbreak of the war, many European powers sided with Spain and tried to mediate to prevent war, but Britain maintained strict neutrality regarding the conflict between America and Spain. Balfour played an important role in Britain's neutrality. In April 1898, Salisbury was in southern France recuperating from illness, and Balfour was acting as Foreign Secretary.¹⁵⁶ When he heard of the European powers' proposal to mediate, he considered that they were trying 'to give the United States a lecture on international morality'. While emphasising the importance of peace, Balfour was doubtful about Britain making 'a judgement adverse to the U.S.'. ¹⁵⁷ His

¹⁵⁵ Balfour to Strachey, 22 Jul. 1898, Balfour MSS, Add. MSS. 49797.

¹⁵⁶ J.A.S. Grenville, Lord Salisbury and Foreign Policy: The Close of the Nineteenth Century (London, 1970), pp. 201-203.

¹⁵⁷ Balfour to Chamberlain, 16 Apr. 1898, Balfour MSS, Add. MSS. 49773.

decision to maintain Britain's neutrality towards the Anglo-Spanish War was virtually tacit support for America. However, he did not think he should hide his sympathy for America, admitting that the Americans did not dislike an announcement favouring close ties with America because 'they were rather coarse fibred'.¹⁵⁸

Britain's favourable neutrality during the Spanish-American War was rewarded in the Boer War, which broke out in October 1899. Britain's unexpectedly difficult fight revealed the inefficiency of the British army and attracted severe criticism from many European powers. America, however, remained neutral during the war. She was not wholly in favour of Britain, as the American public and many Congressmen supported the Boers. However, John Hay, Secretary of State, and Theodore Roosevelt, the Vice President, who both embraced Anglo-Saxon solidarity, led America into adopting a neutral, but *de facto* pro-British stance.¹⁵⁹ Balfour reckoned that America's favourable attitude towards Britain was 'eminently satisfactory' and showed 'the sharpest and brightest contrast' to that of continental Europe.¹⁶⁰ Two wars outside Europe at the end of the nineteenth century – the Spanish-American and the Boer Wars – improved Anglo-American governmental relations and assisted in laying the foundations of the

¹⁵⁸ Alice Balfour's diary, 21 May 1898, Balfour MSS, GD 433/2/224.

¹⁵⁹ W.N. Tilchin, 'The United States and the Boer War' in K. Wilson, (ed.) The International Impact of the Boer War (Chesham, 2001), pp. 108-109.

¹⁶⁰ Balfour to Holls, 13 Nov. 1899, Balfour MSS, Add. MSS. 49853.

‘special relationship’ of the twentieth century. This was also a sign of the expansion of great power politics from Europe to the entire globe. Realising this new state of affairs, Balfour emphasised the growing importance of Britain in global diplomacy beyond Europe:

It is alleged that London is not a convenient centre for European diplomacy. It is, I venture to think, at least as convenient as Vienna or Verona; and now that America is ... becoming part of the European system, London is far more central than it used to be.¹⁶¹

Faced with the intensification of rivalry among the great powers all over the world, close Anglo-American cooperation became increasingly valuable to Balfour. In particular, the Far East was the most competitive theatre at the turn of the century, and collaboration with America there was a matter for urgent consideration. Although Balfour did not completely agree with Alfred Thayer Mahan, an American naval officer and strategist, the concept of ‘Sea Power’ was compatible with Balfour’s idea of Anglo-American cooperation.¹⁶² ‘England and America – both Sea Powers –’, Balfour stated, ‘may find themselves in the Far East engaged in a contest, as allies, with Russia

¹⁶¹ Balfour to Mowatt, 26 Jul. 1900, Balfour MSS, Add. MSS. 49853.

¹⁶² A.T. Mahan, The Influence of Sea Power upon History 1660-1783 (London, 1965 edn.). For the definition of ‘Sea Power’, see P.M. Kennedy, The Rise and Fall of British Naval Mastery (London, 1976), pp. 1-9. Mahan supported the idea of an Anglo-American naval alliance. See A.J. Marder, The Anatomy of British Sea Power: A History of British Naval Policy in the Pre-Dreadnought Era, 1880-1905 (London, 1964), p. 254.

– a Land Power'.¹⁶³ In the Far East, Britain and America agreed to adhere to the Open Door principle.¹⁶⁴ Hay had already sent Open Door notes to European powers and Japan in September 1899, requiring them to issue a formal declaration that they would preserve the territorial integrity of China and guarantee free access to treaty ports in China. In a letter to Mahan of 20 December 1899, therefore, Balfour concluded:

It becomes more and more obvious – to me at least, as it is I think to you – that our interests, both in the narrow and in the wide use of that term, are identical. We have not only the same ideas of progress, freedom, civilisation, religion, morality, but we have the same interests in peace and in the ‘open door’. – The latter we may conceivably have to fight for, ...¹⁶⁵

Britain and America shared not only various cultural factors but also an interest in maintaining the Open Door in the Far East.

It was not surprising that Balfour regarded America as the best potential alliance partner in the Far East. On 12 December 1900 he wrote to Henry White, the American Chargé d’Affaires in London. Describing himself as ‘a most earnest advocate of a harmonious cooperation between the two great Anglo-Saxon States’, Balfour insisted that:

¹⁶³ Balfour to Goschen, 15 Dec. 1899, Balfour MSS, Add. MSS. 49706.

¹⁶⁴ A.E. Campbell, ‘Great Britain and the United States in the Far East, 1895-1903’ in Historical Journal I, 2, (1958), pp. 154-175.

¹⁶⁵ Balfour to Mahan, 20 Dec. 1899, Balfour MSS, Add. MSS. 49742.

the fact that its laws, its language, its literature, and its religion, to say nothing of its constitution are essentially the same as those of English speaking peoples elsewhere, ought surely to produce a fundamental harmony, – a permanent sympathy – compared to which all merely political alliances with other States should prove to be the evanescent result of temporary diplomatic convenience.¹⁶⁶

This should be considered in the context of Balfour's search for an alliance with Germany or Japan in the Far East at the time. Britain failed to secure a political arrangement with America regarding China due to her isolationism and instead concluded the Anglo-German agreement over the Yangtze Valley, which Japan later joined in October 1900. However, to Balfour's mind, such an agreement was only a temporary arrangement of convenience, while cooperation with America would be a permanent collaboration. It was clear that he still preferred Anglo-American cooperation to an alliance with other powers, including Japan.

The Panama Canal question accelerated the Anglo-American rapprochement. America wanted to build an isthmian canal across Central America to bring together her eastern and western parts. However, the 1850 Clayton-Bulwer Treaty between Britain and America prohibited them from building and controlling the isthmian canal

¹⁶⁶ Balfour to White, 12 Dec. 1900, Balfour MSS, Add. MSS. 49742.

unilaterally. America keenly wanted this treaty nullified and launched negotiations with Britain after the Spanish-American War.¹⁶⁷ Although unhappy at such demands, Britain sought a compromise with America. In the end, the Hay-Pauncefote Treaty, signed on 18 November 1901, gave America the exclusive right to build the Panama Canal and abrogated the Clayton-Bulwer Treaty. Balfour was not dissatisfied with the result:

It is indeed a matter of great satisfaction to me to think that this long and anxious controversy over the Inter oceanic Canal has found a solution which ought to be satisfactory to all the parties concerned. That the new Treaty will lead to the construction of a work of world-wide advantage is no small thing. It is an even greater thing that it should have been agreed to under circumstances which will diminish any petty jealousies or misunderstandings which may hinder the development of that affection and mutual understanding which ought to bind together all English-speaking peoples.¹⁶⁸

The above looked like Balfour's usual praise for Anglo-Saxon solidarity; however, Balfour understood the strategic implications of the Hay-Pauncefote Treaty. Once America built the Panama Canal, 'with England at Suez and the US at Panama we should hold the world in a pretty strong grip'.¹⁶⁹ The Suez and Panama Canals were essential strategic points. Balfour's rhetoric about Anglo-American cooperation was

¹⁶⁷ For more on the negotiations between Britain and America, see J.A.S. Grenville, 'Great Britain and the Isthmian Canal, 1898-1901' in The American Historical Review LXI, 1, (1955), pp. 48-69.

¹⁶⁸ Balfour to Holls, 31 Dec. 1901, Balfour MSS, Add. MSS. 49854.

¹⁶⁹ Tomes, Balfour and Foreign Policy, p. 183.

based on an assumption of Anglo-American global naval supremacy.

Anglo-American cooperation, however, was confined to the western hemisphere and did not extend to the Far East. In obtaining the Philippines as a result of the Spanish-American War, America had already expanded from the western hemisphere and secured a strongpoint in the Far East.¹⁷⁰ Furthermore, America's interest in the Far East was identical to that of Britain, namely maintaining the Open Door principle. This indicated that both Britain and America had a common interest in preserving China's territorial integrity against encroachment by other powers, in particular Russia, upon China. However, most Americans were not ready to accept a binding agreement with foreign powers, including Britain. Realising that Anglo-Saxon solidarity was not strong enough to overcome America's isolationism, Balfour nevertheless continued to seek close Anglo-American ties during his premiership.

Balfour's faith in Anglo-American cooperation remained strong after the Anglo-Japanese alliance was signed in January 1902. The Russo-Japanese War provided him with an opportunity to consider an alliance with America. Immediately after the outbreak of the war, he discussed the course of the war and the future of the Far East

¹⁷⁰ For American foreign policy towards the Far East in the 1890s, see W. LaFeber, The New Empire: An Interpretation of American Expansion 1860-1898 (Ithaca, 1963), pp. 300-325; A. Iriye, From Nationalism to Internationalism: US Foreign Policy to 1914 (London, 1977), pp. 115-150; W. LaFeber, The New Cambridge History of American Foreign Relations, Volume 2: The American Search for Opportunity, 1865-1913 (Cambridge, 2013), pp.83-96, 111-114, 129-131.

with Foreign Secretary Lansdowne. Balfour forecast that Russia would beat Japan due to her overwhelming manpower, and as a result, Russia's position in the Far East would be consolidated and she would annex Manchuria, the northern part of China. This would violate the Open Door principle and exclude foreign commerce from Manchuria. Balfour's favoured measure for tackling this situation was not the Anglo-Japanese alliance but an alliance with America. On 11 February 1904, he wrote that '[i]f the Americans would so far violate their traditions as to make any suggestion of an alliance for the purpose of preserving by arms, if necessary, the integrity of China, it would open a new era in the history of the world'. However, he pointed out that Britain should not propose such an alliance to America but induce her to make the first move because 'if we start it, the Senate are sure to upset the scheme'.¹⁷¹ Balfour realised that the Senate would oppose a binding political arrangement with Britain that required America's commitment to the international order. His understanding soon proved to be correct.

While Balfour was serving as Prime Minister, the need to defend Canada became more acute. With the rise of America's power, according to a War Office memorandum, the Canadian defence was 'the most difficult military problem of Imperial defence – a problem far more difficult of solution than that of the protection of India, although war

¹⁷¹ Balfour to Lansdowne, 11 Feb. 1904, Balfour MSS, Add. MSS. 49728.

in North America is less likely than war in Central Asia'. In addition, the defence of the Canadian frontier was 'a naval as well as a military question', so Britain also had to consider this matter from the naval point of view.¹⁷² As Lord Selborne, First Lord of the Admiralty noted, Britain no longer maintained the two-power standard which required her to possess the ships of the two next greatest naval powers, 'if the United States were to use all their resources to develop their naval strength'.¹⁷³ A war with America over Canada was not practical and Britain had to placate America in order to avoid it.

Balfour took the initiative in improving Anglo-American relations. Bearing in mind a 'hypothetical War' with America, he argued that the Britain should examine the defence of Canada 'whatever view we may take of the probability, or, (as I should prefer to put it,) the improbability of war'.¹⁷⁴ In fact, he decided to make some concessions to America to maintain her cooperation. Although Canada was disaffected by the result, Britain sided with America in the 1903 Alaskan boundary dispute between Canada and America.¹⁷⁵ The CID supported the transfer of the Halifax and Esquimalt garrisons to Canada, reducing Britain's military presence in the western hemisphere.¹⁷⁶ Balfour did

¹⁷² Memo. by the General Staff, 13 Dec. 1904, CAB 5/1/15C.

¹⁷³ Memo. by Selborne, 4 Sep. 1901, CAB 37/58/81

¹⁷⁴ Balfour to Selborne, 1 Jan. 1905, Balfour MSS, Add. MSS. 49708.

¹⁷⁵ For more on British policy towards the Alaskan boundary dispute of 1903, see Adams, Brothers across the Ocean, pp. 107-122.

¹⁷⁶ Minutes of 61st Meeting, 9 Dec. 1904, CAB 2/1/61; Perkins, The Great Rapprochement, pp. 156-158.

not complain that Britain would have to rely on Anglo-American cooperation for the defence of Canada.¹⁷⁷ This was not incompatible with his assumption of sharing global naval supremacy with America.

This attitude towards America did not change even after Balfour left office after 1905. Despite his strong faith in Anglo-Saxon solidarity, he neither ruled out the possibility of an Anglo-American war nor ignored its potentially disastrous effect on the imperial defence. When he attended a CID meeting in 1908, he added the worst hypothesis to his memorandum on home defence. As long as Germany acted alone, Britain would not have to worry about this threat. But if America attacked Canada, the situation would change completely. Balfour insisted that:

though the difficulties between them [the United States] and Canada have been, and are still, diminishing, I suppose that we must admit the possibility of some deplorable accident bringing us into collision with the United States, and of our having therefore to send every available man at once across the Atlantic, in face of a fleet which will probably be only second to our own in strength.¹⁷⁸

Balfour thought that an Anglo-American war would offer the chance Germany was waiting for, as she would not hesitate to take advantage of Britain's problem. Britain could not simultaneously protect Canada from an American attack and herself from a

¹⁷⁷ Tomes, Balfour and Foreign Policy, pp. 185-186.

¹⁷⁸ Memo. by Balfour, 29 May 1908, CAB 3/2/43A.

German raid. Therefore, Balfour concluded that war with America would be more formidable to home defence than war with any other power such as Germany or France. The fact that she could not afford to wage war with America would have influenced Balfour's decision when he considered British policy in the case of a war between America and Japan.

On the other hand, Balfour promoted Anglo-American cooperation. An Anglo-American arbitration treaty offered an opportunity to improve relations with America. On 5 August 1910, President William Taft explained to James Bryce, British Ambassador to the United States, that America and Britain should conclude a universal arbitration treaty to show a good example to the rest of the world.¹⁷⁹ This treaty would bind 'each nation not to go to war with the other about any question without first having offered to settle the question by arbitration'.¹⁸⁰ American elites seemed to regard the arbitration treaty as the realisation of Anglo-Saxon solidarity. Sceptical about continental European powers, they pushed the arbitration treaty forward as 'a method of settling without the intervention of foreigners disputes between two peoples of the same origin, with the same traditions, the same language, the same law'.¹⁸¹ As America had

¹⁷⁹ Bryce to Grey, 9 Aug. 1910, G.P. Gooch and H. Temperley, (eds.) British Documents on the Origins of the War, 1898-1914 (London, 1926-38) (hereinafter cited as BD) Vol.8, No.447.

¹⁸⁰ Grey to MacDonald, 26 Sep. 1910, BD Vol.8, No.405.

¹⁸¹ Mitchell Innes to Grey, 18 Nov. 1910, BD Vol.8, No.448.

seldom responded favourably to the idea of Anglo-Saxon solidarity in the past, British policymakers found this change of mind on the part of the American ruling class remarkable.

As a proponent of closer Anglo-American cooperation Balfour did not hesitate to show his support for the arbitration treaty. He insisted that with such a universal arbitration treaty ‘the very fact that this seems the natural culmination of a natural progress is the greatest proof that all I have said with regard to the impossibility of dividing the destinies of the great nations is absolutely true and based upon literal fact’.¹⁸² His strong belief in Anglo-Saxon solidarity was not affected by America’s previous rejection of collaboration with Britain. On 18 March 1911, he wrote:

I am, and always have been, a Pan-Anglican; - that is I have always held that the English-speaking peoples have traditions, interests, and ideals which should unite them in common sentiments, and, in not inconceivable eventualities, in common action. I am the very last man living who would desire to offend the susceptibilities of the U.S.A.¹⁸³

Although he was Leader of the Opposition, he recommended that the Liberal government should accept the arbitration treaty and contributed to creating bi-partisan support for it. However, the Senate’s fierce opposition emasculated the Anglo-American

¹⁸² W.M. Short, (ed.) Arthur James Balfour as Philosopher and Thinker (London, 1912), p. 295.

¹⁸³ Balfour to Kerr, 18 Mar. 1911, Balfour MSS, Add. MSS. 49797.

arbitration treaty and in the end Taft had no choice but to withdraw it.¹⁸⁴ As Balfour had rightly understood during his premiership, the Senate was the main obstacle to closer Anglo-American cooperation.

After the outbreak of the Great War in 1914, Balfour desired America to enter the conflict to ensure victory. Although relations between America and Germany had deteriorated due to Germany's submarine campaign, America still hesitated to make the decision to revoke neutrality and take the Allies' side. Britain had succeeded in intercepting a telegram dated 19 January 1917 from Arthur Zimmermann, German Foreign Minister, to the German Ambassador in Mexico, in which Germany proposed to Mexico an alliance against America and recommended that Japan join them. This was clear evidence of Germany's hostility to America, but Balfour had to be careful in dealing with it because it would deepen American suspicions about Japan's intentions. Even before the date of this telegram, Cecil Spring-Rice, the British Ambassador to the United States, had reported rumours that Japan might form a hostile alliance with Mexico in the United States.¹⁸⁵ Balfour enquired of Sutemi Chinda, the Japanese Ambassador at London, about the telegram and confirmed that Japan had no intention of making an alliance with Mexico. Then he handed the telegram over to Walter Hines

¹⁸⁴ Perkins, The Great Rapprochement, pp. 253-254.

¹⁸⁵ C. Spring-Rice to Balfour, 22 Dec. 1916 and 11 Jan. 1917, Balfour MSS, Add. MSS. 49740.

Page, the American Ambassador to Britain.¹⁸⁶ The ‘Zimmermann telegram’ affair caused fury among American politicians and in public opinion. America declared war on Germany on 6 April.

Once America had entered the war, Balfour realised the necessity for improving Anglo-American relations and close coordination of their war planning. Britain was unpopular with the American public even in 1917, and Page suggested that this was because ‘official people on both sides steadfastly refused to visit one another and become acquainted’.¹⁸⁷ Therefore the British Cabinet considered it important that ‘someone of the highest status in this country, who was known to the American people, and who would have the *entrée* to all circles’ should go to Washington.¹⁸⁸ With his aristocratic background and status as a former Prime Minister, Balfour was suitable for this duty and led the British delegation to America. He arrived on 20 April and was warmly received by the American public, as well as by many statesmen. Seeing President Woodrow Wilson the next day, Balfour launched several discussions on British and American policy on the war. Spring-Rice praised Balfour’s mission as ‘a most unqualified success’ and insisted that it had ‘created an entirely new atmosphere in

¹⁸⁶ Young, Balfour, p.378.

¹⁸⁷ Page to Polk, 3 May 1917 quoted in B. Hendrick, The Life and Letters of Walter H. Page (London, 1924), p.253.

¹⁸⁸ War Cabinet 113, 4 Apr. 1917, CAB 23/2.

Anglo-American relations'.¹⁸⁹ He played a crucial role in promoting Anglo-American cooperation during the war.

Anglo-American cooperation was essential not only for winning the war but also for maintaining post-war international order. Balfour had realised this fact and published his views in a pamphlet entitled 'The Freedom of the Seas' in 1916. He advocated that various legal settlements, for instance arbitration, should be encouraged to preserve future international order. 'Behind law', however, 'there must be power', because 'all the precautions are mere scraps of paper unless they can be enforced'. Balfour insisted that 'the potential use of sea-power' by Britain and America could guarantee their enforcement. Both nations were 'the two branches of the English-speaking peoples', which, he concluded, should organise their own naval power in the interests of their common ideal.¹⁹⁰ The pamphlet expressed Balfour's balanced attitude to power and ideals. His emphasis on Anglo-American cooperation was based not only on cultural bonds, such as race, custom and language, but also on strategic calculations of Britain's and America's power. In addition, his emphasis on naval collaboration with America was reminiscent of his preference for Anglo-American global naval supremacy before the war.

¹⁸⁹ Spring-Rice to Cecil, 14 Jun. 1917, Balfour MSS, Add. MSS. 49738.

¹⁹⁰ A.J. Balfour, The Freedom of the Seas (London, 1916), pp. 8-10.

After being appointed Foreign Secretary in December 1916, Balfour became deeply involved in discussions about the League of Nations. Sir Walter Phillimore, a prominent jurist and the chairman of the Phillimore Committee, submitted a draft Convention to Balfour on 20 March 1918.¹⁹¹ Balfour wanted to reach ‘some amicable mutual arrangement’ with America before consulting with other Allied powers.¹⁹² He considered that the Phillimore report should be the basis of this arrangement and despatched it to President Woodrow Wilson. However Wilson’s reaction was lukewarm. In his Fourteen Points of 8 January 1918 he advocated the necessity of establishing an association of nations to maintain international peace and order after the Great War. However, he took a sceptical view of Anglo-American cooperation to hammer out the details of the League of Nations before the Peace Conference.¹⁹³ In the end Britain had to face the creation of the League of Nations at the Paris Peace Conference without any common understanding with America. This was an ill omen for Balfour, who attached importance to America’s participation in this international peace machinery.

At the Paris Peace Conference Balfour was busy with negotiations over other peace

¹⁹¹ For more on Phillimore Committee, see G. W. Egerton, Great Britain and the Creation of the League of Nations: Strategy, Politics, and International Organization, 1914-1919 (Chapel Hill, 1978), pp. 65-69.

¹⁹² War Cabinet 481, 2 Oct. 1918, CAB 23/8.

¹⁹³ G.W. Egerton, ‘Ideology, Diplomacy and International Organisation: Wilsonism and the League of the Nations in Anglo-American Relations, 1918-1920’ in B.J.C. McKercher, (ed.) Anglo-American Relations in the 1920s: The Struggle for Supremacy (Basingstoke, 1991) p. 27.

settlements, but made every effort towards the establishment of the League of Nations.

In February 1919, he insisted that the League of Nations ‘would work if administered by Americans and English – not otherwise’.¹⁹⁴ When the lack of funds for its organisation became serious, Balfour asked Austen Chamberlain, Chancellor of the Exchequer, to assist financially, even if America and France would not pay.¹⁹⁵ Although Chamberlain, who was strongly dissatisfied with America’s uncooperative attitude towards the League, finally decided to contribute 24,000 pounds, he revealed his displeasure to Balfour, saying that ‘the President should not leave his offspring on our doorstep!’¹⁹⁶

America’s participation in the League of Nations was not clear even after the Paris Peace Conference. Although the President had proposed the establishment of the League, not all the senators supported it. In particular the Republicans, for example Henry Lodge and Philander Knox, had reservations about America’s participation in the League. But Wilson showed no intention of reaching a compromise with his opponents. British policymakers, including Balfour, paid much attention to the growing hostility between the President and the Senate, many realising that this row would inevitably affect the future of the League of Nations. On 4 November 1919, Balfour agreed with

¹⁹⁴ Betty Balfour to Frances Balfour, 28 Feb. 1919, Balfour MSS, Add. MSS. 49831.

¹⁹⁵ Balfour to Austen Chamberlain, 13 May 1919, Balfour MSS, Add. MSS. 49751.

¹⁹⁶ Austen Chamberlain to Balfour, 16 May 1919, Balfour MSS, Add. MSS. 49751.

Hankey and Philip Kerr, Lloyd George's secretary, that the League would not work unless America became a member.¹⁹⁷

Balfour did not hesitate to express Britain's concern publicly. On 11 November 1919 he delivered an address at a League of Nations rally. Keeping America's debate in mind, he warned that if the reservation was granted to one power it would be impossible for other powers to resist the temptation to obtain the same reservation. In that case the prospects of the League's success would be 'dark indeed'. His address concluded:

I ventured to say to any friends of mine in any country who are considering their responsibility at this great moment of the world's history that they ought clearly to understand that, unless they are prepared to bear an equal share in an equal task, they are threatening with ultimate dissolution the whole of that new system which all of us, in common with the great nations, most sincerely desire to see work effectively.¹⁹⁸

There was no doubt that 'any friends' meant American politicians, and 'that new system' referred to the League of Nations. Balfour required America not only to preach the ideal of peace to the world but also to accept responsibility for maintaining international order.

However, Balfour's warning did not have the effect he had hoped for. Wilson did not

¹⁹⁷ Hurst to Hardinge, 5 Nov. 1919, Lloyd George MSS, F/12/2/3(c); Egerton, Great Britain and the Creation of the League of Nations, p. 187.

¹⁹⁸ 'World Peace', The Times, Wednesday 12 Nov. 1919, p. 20.

acknowledge the reservation proposed by the Republicans, and the Republicans did not authorise the passage of the treaty without reservation. In the end the Senate rejected the ratification of the Treaty of Versailles and America decided not to enter the League of Nations. Contrary to Balfour's scheme, the League of Nations was established without America's participation. Like the arbitration treaty of 1911, the Senate had once again hindered America's close collaboration with Britain.

Even after America rejected membership of the League of Nations, Balfour's desire for Anglo-American cooperation did not change at all. Although he anticipated that America would not take part in the League for the time being, he did not give up on promoting sympathy between Britain and America. '[I]n addition to the direct and indirect effects of a common language, a common literature, common laws, and institutions springing from a common source', Balfour wrote in April 1923, Britain and America had 'deep lying identities of character which no political or military conflicts, nor any differences of external conditions, nor any admixture of alien blood, have been able to destroy'. While he did not forget the difficulty in achieving close cooperation with America, he admitted that an 'English-speaking patriotism' always prescribed his action.¹⁹⁹ This demonstrated that Anglo-American cooperation still remained the main

¹⁹⁹ Memo. by Balfour, 3 Apr. 1923, Balfour MSS, Add. MSS. 49959.

factor to decide his foreign policy.

Balfour's strong interest in Anglo-American cooperation continued until the end of his life. He was not optimistic about the unity of 'the English-speaking world'. Facing America's unwillingness to collaborate with Britain, he said to his niece, Blanche Dugdale, 'I don't know that the Americans are faithful to the ideal.'²⁰⁰ However, as 'a life-long and very ardent advocate of a full and friendly understanding between the two English-speaking peoples', Balfour did not abandon hope of close Anglo-American relations.²⁰¹ In January 1929 he wrote to Winston Churchill, Chancellor of the Exchequer: 'Friendly co-operation with America has always taken the first place in my scale of international values. But it is not easy to attain, and it is not always best attained by too obviously striving for it'.²⁰² This summed up Balfour's consistent attitude towards Anglo-American cooperation throughout his political life. As a result, the Anglo-American relations formed a significant backdrop to Balfour's policy towards Japan and the Anglo-Japanese alliance.

²⁰⁰ Dugdale, Arthur James Balfour, vol II, p. 401.

²⁰¹ Balfour to Borden, mid Jan. 1929, Balfour MSS, Add. MSS. 49749.

²⁰² Balfour to Churchill, 1 Jan. 1929, Balfour MSS GD 433/2/19.

1

Emergence of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance, 1894-1905

I.

When Balfour was appointed First Lord of the Treasury by Salisbury in July 1895, circumstances in the Far East had become more volatile than ever. Japan's victory in the Sino-Japanese War of 1894 had revealed China's weakness, causing Europe to scramble for Chinese concessions.²⁰³ Among the great powers Russia was most active in expanding her sphere of influence in the Far East. Although Japan had obtained Formosa, the Pescadores and the Liaotung peninsula from China as the result of winning the war, Russia, in cooperation with France and Germany, forced her to return the Liaotung peninsula.²⁰⁴ After this three-power intervention Russia began to construct a railway in Manchuria in return for a large financial loan to China. In addition, Korea requested her support against Japan. Seeking an ice-free port, Russia did not hesitate to

²⁰³ For details of the Sino-Japanese War, see S.C.M. Paine, The Sino-Japanese War of 1894-1895: Perceptions, Power and Primacy (Cambridge, 2003).

²⁰⁴ S.C.M. Paine, 'The triple intervention and the termination of the First Sino-Japanese War' in B.A. Elleman and S.C.M. Paine, (eds.) Naval Coalition Warfare: From the Napoleonic War to Operation Iraqi Freedom (Abingdon, 2008), pp. 75-85.

take this opportunity to consolidate her position in Korea. Japan, which was concerned by Russia's move, tried to find a way to check it. Britain had to deal with this unstable situation in the Far East.

Although Japan was gradually acquiring importance in international politics, Balfour had no particular interest in this country. Some members of the British elite recognised Japan's potential power and considered her role in British diplomacy. For example, George Curzon travelled to the Far East and published a book entitled *Problems of the Far East* in 1894 in which, even before knowing the result of the Sino-Japanese War, he argued that Japan could become 'the Britain of the Far East' and urged Britain to strengthen her ties with Japan.²⁰⁵ But Balfour scolded Curzon for becoming 'a mere student of effete civilisation' and studying 'their [oriental civilisations'] decaying splendour' on his tour to the Far East.²⁰⁶ Balfour had not been to the Far East since his visit to Singapore on the way to Britain from Australia in 1875. Unlike Curzon, Balfour never did land in China, Korea and Japan in his whole life. As this demonstrated, Balfour regarded Asian countries as declining powers and paid little attention to Japan.

²⁰⁵ G. Curzon, Problems of the Far East: Japan-Korea-China (London, 1894), p. 392. For details of relations between Curzon and Japan, see I. Nish, 'Lord Curzon (1859-1925) and Japan' in H. Cortazzi, (ed.) Britain and Japan Biographical Portraits Volume V (Kent, 2005), pp. 96-106.

²⁰⁶ Balfour to Curzon, 2 Jan.1893, Balfour MSS Add. 49732.

Balfour shared this negative attitude towards Japan with Salisbury. Regarding Japan as ‘the mushroom civilization’, Salisbury cast doubt on the sustainability of her rapid growth.²⁰⁷ Even though Japan had showed her growing power in the Sino-Japanese War, he did not recognise the value of an anti-Russian alignment with Japan. ‘My impression is that’, Salisbury told Sir Ernest Satow, the British Minister to Japan, ‘our strategic or military interest in Japan can easily be overestimated’. Salisbury did not believe that Japan was capable of preventing Russia’s expansion and expected that she would rather ‘join with Russia in & perhaps with France in cutting up China than to exchange platonic assurances of affection with us’.²⁰⁸ His distrust of Japan’s ability was so deep that the idea of cooperating with her against Russia seemed impractical.²⁰⁹

Salisbury favoured engaging with Russia via a direct arrangement. Given her confrontations with Russia in the Near East, Central Asia and India, it was not wise for Britain to create a new front with Russia in the Far East. In a public speech on 9 November 1895, he stated that ‘in Asia there is room for us all’.²¹⁰ Balfour followed the basic line of Salisbury’s policy; on 3 February 1896, he intentionally repeated Salisbury’s phrase: ‘[S]urely Asia and Africa are large enough for all of us’. In addition,

²⁰⁷ Minutes by Salisbury on Sanderson’s memo of 14 Sep. 1889, Sanderson MSS, FO 800/1.

²⁰⁸ Salisbury to Satow, 3 Oct. 1895, Satow MSS, PRO 30/33/5/2.

²⁰⁹ T.G. Otte, The China Question: Great Power Rivalry and British Isolation, 1894-1905 (Oxford, 2007), pp. 83-84.

²¹⁰ ‘The Guildhall Banquet’, The Times, Monday 11 Nov. 1895, p. 6.

he revealed that he would tolerate Russia's bid to establish an ice-free port in Korea, noting that British commerce and enterprise would benefit from 'a commercial outlet for Russia in the Pacific Ocean'.²¹¹ This was confirmation of Salisbury's preference for a *modus vivendi* with Russia over the Far East. Like Salisbury, Balfour did not see an alignment with Japan as a practical choice in the Far East.

Rivalry amongst the great powers in China caused a serious crisis at the end of 1897. In November 1897 Germany seized the port of Kiaochow, taking advantage of the murder of two German Christian missionaries on Shantung peninsula.²¹² The establishment of a German foothold in northern China sparked a countermove on the part of Russia. In December Russia sent a squadron to Port Arthur on the pretext of its over-wintering there, revealing her intention to capture the lease of Port Arthur and Talienshan. Japan was offended by Russia's bid to obtain Chinese territories which she herself had been forced to return to China by the three-power intervention after the Sino-Japanese War. Russia's move threw cold water on Britain's desire to reach a friendly arrangement with her over the Far East. Britain needed to review her policy towards Russia, and the British Cabinet was divided about how to respond to this crisis.

The main division was between Salisbury and the Colonial Secretary, Joseph

²¹¹ 'Mr. Balfour at Bristol', The Times, Tuesday 4 Feb. 1896, p. 7.

²¹² T.G. Otte, 'Great Britain, Germany and the Far Eastern Crisis of 1897-8' in English Historical Review CX, 439, (1995), pp. 1157-1159.

Chamberlain. Salisbury favoured a policy of ‘intelligent inaction’, namely avoiding hasty action and seeing the international process through.²¹³ The Foreign Secretary did not take countermeasures against the German move to avoid intensifying the ‘scramble for China’.²¹⁴ Moreover, he continued to try to reach an understanding between Britain and Russia by suggesting a joint Anglo-Russian loan to China.²¹⁵ On the other hand, Chamberlain preferred to ‘go on without, which means against, her [Russia]’.²¹⁶ Pessimistic about Britain’s supremacy over Russia, he warned that Britain could not afford to try to deter Russia alone and sought a reliable ally. He saw Japan as a potentially useful partner in the Far East. Furthermore, Chamberlain suggested to Balfour that he should approach the United States and Germany to protect China’s Open Door. If Russia refused the principle of the Open Door, Chamberlain would not hesitate to use force to expel her fleet from Port Arthur.²¹⁷

Balfour faced a dilemma, caught between Salisbury and Chamberlain’s policies. With his strong interest in foreign and defence policy, he understood Britain’s weaknesses and realised the need for an ally, which made him incline towards

²¹³ T.G. Otte, ‘A Question of Leadership: Lord Salisbury, the Unionist Cabinet and Foreign Policy Making, 1895-1900’ in Contemporary British History XIV, 4, (2000), pp. 8-9.

²¹⁴ Minutes by Salisbury, n.d. [24 Nov. 1897], FO 17/1330 quoted in Otte, The China Question, pp. 92-93.

²¹⁵ Salisbury to MacDonald, 31 Dec. 1897, CAB 37/46/29.

²¹⁶ Salisbury to Balfour, 6 Jan. 1898, Balfour MSS, GD 433/2/39.

²¹⁷ Chamberlain to Balfour, 3 Feb. 1898, Balfour MSS, Add. MSS. 49773.

Chamberlain. However, he saw Salisbury not only as an uncle but also as a political patron. Many people regarded Balfour as Salisbury's heir and the next Prime Minister, so he was keen not to risk his political future by disobeying his uncle. As a result, he sought a compromise that would satisfy both Salisbury and Chamberlain.

His solution to this crisis was that Britain should combine 'the policy of a friendly understanding with Russia with that of a defensive arrangement with the U.S.'. Germany's and Russia's leasing of Chinese ports would urge China to open more ports and encourage free trade. This would be beneficial to British trade, so Balfour did not oppose their acquisitions from the economic viewpoint. This was the confirmation of his above-mentioned address of 3 February 1896. At the same time it was necessary for Britain to maintain China's territorial integrity. Balfour proposed to enquire of America whether she would join in a treaty to 'prevent the littoral of China being ceded piece-meal to other Powers'.²¹⁸ His Anglo-American bilateral treaty was compatible with Chamberlain's suggestion of Anglo-American-German cooperation in China. Nevertheless, unlike Chamberlain, Balfour did not refer to an anti-Russian alignment with Japan at all, continuing to leave Japan out of his calculations.

However, it was not easy to carry out this policy. Russia intended to secure the lease

²¹⁸ Balfour to Goschen, 26 Feb. 1898, Balfour MSS, Add. MSS. 49706.

of Port Arthur and Talienshan ‘at any cost’.²¹⁹ Her hard-line attitude made it unlikely that an arrangement over the Far East could be reached with Britain. On the other hand, Britain sounded America out about the possibility of her cooperation ‘in opposing any action by foreign Powers which would tend to restrict the opening of China to the commerce of all nations’.²²⁰ But President William McKinley’s reaction was lukewarm. Although in favour of the Open Door policy, he did not want America to interfere in the Far East.²²¹ Given the impending Spanish-American War, it was natural for America to follow her traditional policy of isolationism. Balfour’s scheme for Anglo-American cooperation ended in failure.

The alternative policy was to seek a naval base in China that would check both Russian and German expansion. At the end of February 1898 China proposed that Britain should lease the small port of Wei-hai-Wei on the Shantung peninsula as compensation for the German and Russian occupations.²²² Although Japan had occupied Wei-hai-Wei since the end of the Sino-Japanese War, it was forecast that she would withdraw from the port when she obtained the full amount of war indemnity

²¹⁹ O’Conor to Salisbury, 19 Feb. 1898, BD Vol.1, No.18.

²²⁰ Balfour to Pauncefote, 7 Mar. 1898, FO 5/2364; Otte, The China Question, pp. 110-115.

²²¹ Pauncefote to Salisbury, 16 Mar. 1898, FO 5/2365.

²²² MacDonald to Salisbury, 25 Feb. 1898, BD Vol.1, No.25. For more on Wei-hai-Wei, see T.G.Otte, “‘Wee-ah-wee’?: Britain at Weihaiwei, 1898-1930” in G. Kennedy, (ed.) British Naval Strategy East of Suez 1900-2000: Influences and actions (Abingdon, 2005), pp. 4-34.

imposed by the Shimonoseki Treaty.²²³ China's offer of this northern port aimed to prevent Britain from occupying places in the Yangtze Valley and to use Britain as a counterbalance to Russia and Germany.²²⁴ Considering the German and Russian occupations in China, Balfour argued that their influence on the Chinese government would 'be so increased to the detriment of [Britain] that it seems desirable for us to make some countermove'.²²⁵ British policy-makers gradually attracted their attention to the acquisition of Wei-hai-Wei.

The lease of Wei-hai-Wei affected British policy towards Japan. The Cabinet gathered on 14 March 1898, but could not make any decisions on Wei-hai-Wei due to Salisbury's absence.²²⁶ After this meeting, Curzon, then Parliamentary Under-Secretary for Foreign Affairs, advanced the pro-Wei-hai-Wei argument, emphasising the necessity of the port for the purpose of strengthening Britain's presence in North China. In addition, Britain's firm attitude towards Russia and Germany, Curzon advocated, would give 'a continued lien upon the confidence and, when required, upon the alliance of Japan'.²²⁷ Sharing Curzon's sense of crisis, Francis Bertie, the Chief of the Far Eastern Department of the Foreign Office, advised British statesmen to get a foothold in

²²³ Balfour to Satow, 7 Mar. 1898, FO 46/501.

²²⁴ E.Z. Sun, 'The Lease of Wei-hai-Wei' in Pacific Historical Review xix, 3, (1950), pp. 280-282.

²²⁵ Balfour to MacDonald, 7 Mar. 1898, FO 17/1338.

²²⁶ Balfour to the Queen, 18 Mar. 1898, CAB 41/24/32.

²²⁷ Memo. by Curzon, 14 Mar. 1898 Curzon MSS, MSS. Eur. F. 112/368.

northern China to provide ‘some counterpoise to the preponderance of Russian and German influence at Peking’, otherwise Germany would cooperate with Russia and France to put pressure on Japan and exclude British trade from North and South China.²²⁸ Curzon and Bertie valued Japan’s ability and expected that the acquisition of Wei-hai-Wei would lead to further cooperation with Japan.

Balfour also understood the importance of the wider impact of Wei-hai-Wei on British diplomacy. The lease of this port presented him with many important considerations, which he listed as follows:

What will be the effect of the new policy [the lease of Wei-hai-Wei] on Germany? Will it provoke a Triple Alliance against us in the Far East? Could we resist the power of such a combination (a) without Japan (b) with Japan? Could the contest be confined to the Far East? or would it mean a general war? ... What will be the cost and what the military value of Weihiwei to us?²²⁹

This indicated where Balfour’s attention lay in the policymaking process. It was significant that he eventually considered the possibility of Britain’s cooperation with Japan to deal with the triple combination of anti-British European continental powers. Japan had emerged as an option for tackling Russian and German ambition in Balfour’s mind. Furthermore, he was concerned that a quarrel with the three European powers

²²⁸ Memo. by Bertie, 14 Mar. 1898, BD Vol.1, No. 24.

²²⁹ Memo. by Balfour, 14 Mar. 1898, Balfour MSS, Add. MSS. 49746.

might go beyond the Far East and result in a global war. Given Britain's confrontations with the Franco-Russian alliance in Africa, India and Central Asia, his concern was not without grounds. Clearly Balfour pondered over Far Eastern politics in the context of the global balance of power.

However, although he saw cooperation with Japan as an option for British foreign policy, Balfour was not as keen on this idea as Curzon and Bertie. First, he wanted to know whether Japan would support Britain's lease of Wei-hai-Wei.²³⁰ But while both Prime Minister Marquis Itō and Foreign Minister Baron Nishi confirmed Japan's evacuation of Wei-hai-Wei, they only mentioned that their government would not object to 'its possession by a Power disposed to assist in maintaining the independence of China'.²³¹ This vague answer and Japan's silence on Russia's demand for Chinese ports aroused Balfour's suspicion about a Russo-Japanese collusion. Japan might, he noted, have already obtained 'some undertaking as to Port Arthur not being used as a fortified place in return for acquiescence of Russian occupation of Wei-hai-wei'.²³² Thus he instructed Bertie to find out whether the Japanese government would be 'in hearty sympathy with our policy'.²³³ Indeed, Japan was ready to improve relations with Russia

²³⁰ Balfour to Satow, 15 Mar. 1898, FO 46/501.

²³¹ Satow to Salisbury, 15 Mar. 1898, FO 46/496; Satow to Salisbury, 17 Mar. 1898, FO 46/502.

²³² Balfour to Satow, 22 Mar. 1898, FO 46/501.

²³³ Balfour to Bertie, 23 Mar. 1898, FO 46/501.

and would reach the Nishi-Rosen agreement over Korea in April 1898.²³⁴ Balfour's doubt about Japan's credibility was not necessarily off the mark, and the idea of an anti-Russian political arrangement with Japan was far from realistic.

In the end the British Cabinet decided to accept the lease of Wei-hai-Wei at Salisbury's suggestion on 25 March.²³⁵ Irrespective of the Tokyo government's neutrality, Japan's military and naval authorities at Wei-hai-Wei cooperated with their British counterparts due to their suspicion of Russia.²³⁶ Thanks to this *ad hoc* collaboration, Britain succeeded in transferring the port from Japan smoothly on 24 May. Her acquisition of Wei-hai-Wei defused the political crisis in China, restoring the equilibrium among the European powers there for the time being.

However, Balfour was not completely satisfied with this result. Although he had not publicly opposed Salisbury's decision to use Wei-hai-Wei, he considered that Britain would need 'too large a military force for its defence' and that even if it were fortified it would provide 'no counterpoise to Port Arthur'.²³⁷ Balfour concluded that Britain was compelled to secure such a useless port because 'possession of Port Arthur by Russia

²³⁴ S. Kim, 'Russo-Japanese Rivalry Over Korean Buffer at the Beginning of the 20th Century and its Implications' in *Diplomacy & Statecraft* XVI, 4, (2005), pp. 624-625.

²³⁵ Balfour to the Queen, 26 Mar. 1898, CAB 41/24/34.

²³⁶ Nish, *The Anglo-Japanese Alliance*, pp. 61-62.

²³⁷ Balfour to MacDonald, 19 Mar. 1898, FO 17/1338; Balfour to MacDonald, 30 Mar. 1898, FO 17/1338.

seriously disturbs the balance of Power in Gulf of Pechili'.²³⁸ To him, Salisbury's diplomacy was passive and did not manage Far Eastern problems well.²³⁹ Balfour confessed to George Joachim Goschen, First Lord of the Admiralty, his concern that Britain might 'fall between two stools' in the event of a Russian countermove in response to the British lease of Wei-hai-Wei.²⁴⁰ Acting for Salisbury during his illness, Balfour quietly sought an alternative foreign policy in late March and April 1898.

Balfour reverted to the idea of an anti-Russian alliance with other great powers. Russia desired not only to occupy Port Arthur and Talienwan but also to construct a railway connecting these two ports with the railway in Siberia. Britain's policy in China was 'to open China to the commerce of the world'. As long as other powers maintained the Open Door principle, it would be impossible for Britain to oppose their acquisition of Chinese ports or their construction of railways in China. However, Balfour worried that Russian expansion in northern China, and particularly in Manchuria, would change the *status quo* in the Far East:

For good or for evil, the social, political, and economic state of this region [Manchuria] must inevitably be revolutionized when it is traversed by a railway under Russian management, connecting ports on the Pacific under Russian

²³⁸ Balfour to Satow, 31 Mar. 1898, FO 46/501.

²³⁹ Alice Balfour's diary, 11 Aug 1898, Balfour MSS, GD 433/2/224.

²⁴⁰ Balfour to Goschen, 23 Mar. 1898, Balfour MSS, Add. MSS. 49706.

control with the commercial and military system of the Russian Empire.²⁴¹

Given Peking's proximity to Port Arthur, which was suitable for a naval base, Russia's occupation of the port would increase her influence over the Chinese government and stimulate the partition of China. Balfour therefore decided to step up his effort to find a reliable ally with which to deter Russia's encroachment on Chinese territory.

Balfour did not see Japan as a powerful candidate for such an alliance; instead, his first choice was Germany. He sanctioned Chamberlain's informal negotiations with Germany over a bilateral alliance at the end of March 1898.²⁴² Chamberlain was strongly concerned with Britain's antagonism against Russia and France over China and West Africa respectively.²⁴³ It was not surprising that Chamberlain deemed an alliance with Germany the best measure for checking both France and Russia simultaneously. It would be beneficial for Balfour to support Chamberlain's talks with Germany. He shared Chamberlain's desire for cooperation with an ally with which to overcome the intensifying rivalry between Britain and other great powers. As he understood it, Germany had no choice but to side with Britain in the case of Britain's confrontation

²⁴¹ Balfour to O'Conor, 31 Mar. 1898, CAB 37/46/30.

²⁴² Otte, 'Great Britain, Germany and the Far Eastern Crisis of 1897-8', pp. 1175-1176; Tomes, Balfour and foreign policy, p. 116. Many other biographies about Balfour argued that he did not act in alignment with Chamberlain. See Dugdale, Balfour vol. I, p. 194; Young, Arthur James Balfour, p. 182; Zebel, Balfour, pp. 95-96; Egremont, Balfour, pp. 138-139.

²⁴³ Memo. by Chamberlain, 17 Mar. 1898, CAB 37/46/27.

with France and Russia because if Britain were defeated Germany would be their next victim.²⁴⁴ Moreover, pushing Chamberlain to the forefront of the negotiation would hedge the risk of earning Salisbury's displeasure.²⁴⁵ This precaution would pay off later.

Although cautious, Balfour smoothed the way for Chamberlain's alliance talks with Germany. He met Paul Count von Hatzfeldt, the German ambassador to Britain, immediately after Chamberlain began to negotiate with Hatzfeldt about an alliance on 29 March 1898. Chamberlain proposed to Hatzfeldt that an Anglo-German alliance should 'be of a defensive character based upon a mutual understanding as to policy in China & elsewhere'.²⁴⁶ Balfour tried to give a lead to realise Chamberlain's proposal. Despite an informal suggestion, Balfour advocated that an agreement between Britain and Germany over China 'should bind the two governments not to press for railway concessions in the areas in which one of them had special interests'.²⁴⁷ Under the pretext of the railway question, the aim of this suggestion was that Britain and Germany would recognise one another's spheres of influence in China. This demonstrated Balfour's active role in seeking an alliance with Germany.²⁴⁸

²⁴⁴ Balfour to Salisbury, 14 Apr. 1898, Balfour MSS, Add. MSS. 49691.

²⁴⁵ Otte, The China Question, pp. 141-142.

²⁴⁶ Memo. by Chamberlain, 29 Mar. 1898, Chamberlain MSS, JC 7/2/2A/3.

²⁴⁷ Sanderson to Lascelles, 29 Mar. 1898, FO 64/1437 quoted in Otte, The China Question, p. 144.

²⁴⁸ Otte, The China Question, pp. 144-145.

Germany's reaction, however, was unenthusiastic. Hatzfeldt expressed the difficulty of reaching an alliance between Britain and Germany at a meeting with Balfour on 5 April. Germany was concerned that the House of Commons might reject the ratification of the Anglo-German alliance even if the British government were to bring it to a conclusion. In addition, neither British nor German public opinion favoured the alliance. Hatzfeldt finally cancelled further discussions with Chamberlain and this series of talks over an Anglo-German alliance was relegated to 'a curious episode, of which no record will be found at the F.O.'.²⁴⁹

The stagnation of negotiations on an Anglo-German alliance did not raise expectations of cooperation with Japan. Balfour adhered to Britain and Germany's mutual recognition of their spheres of influence. Railways in China could still provide a breakthrough in improving Anglo-German relations.²⁵⁰ Balfour pondered Germany's desire to prevent Britain from building a railway from Chefoo, a port in Shantung. Although it was unlikely that Britain would undertake such a construction, he tried to take advantage of this German view. On 9 April 1898 he proposed to Sir Thomas Sanderson, Permanent Under-Secretary for Foreign Affairs, that this question should be

²⁴⁹ Balfour to Salisbury, 14 Apr. 1898, Balfour MSS, Add. MSS. 49691.

²⁵⁰ T.G. Otte, "'The Baghdad railway of the Far East' The Tientsin-Yangtze railway and Anglo-German relations, 1898-1911" in T.G. Otte and K. Neilson, (eds.) Railways and International Politics: Paths of Empire, 1848-1945 (Abingdon, 2006), pp. 115-117.

dealt with ‘under the general arrangements ... governing railway concessions in the German and English areas of interest’.²⁵¹ Acknowledging Germany’s special interests along the whole of Shantung’s coast line was acceptable because Britain would not seek any other lease in this region. It would also enable Britain to utilise Germany to check Russia in northern China.

Balfour’s main emphasis regarding any Anglo-German agreement was reciprocity. It seemed to him ‘rather absurd’ that Britain should pledge to recognise special German interests in Shantung without Germany declaring that she would not violate the Yangtze Valley. While he realised that Germany had no intention of obtaining any new ports there, he concluded that an arrangement between the two countries ‘ought to be reciprocal’.²⁵² As he saw it, the political arrangement with other great powers should serve two purposes simultaneously, namely stopping Russian expansion in northern China and safeguarding Britain’s position in the Yangtze Valley. This would apply to Britain’s cooperation not only with Germany but also with any other nation, including Japan.

Balfour realised that it would not be easy to secure reciprocity in negotiations with Germany. Despite being a strong supporter of the lease of Wei-hai-Wei, Curzon argued

²⁵¹ Balfour to Sanderson, 9 Apr. 1898, Balfour MSS, Add. MSS. 49739.

²⁵² Balfour to Sanderson, 10 Apr. 1898, Balfour MSS, Add. MSS. 49739.

that Britain should come to ‘some definite understanding as to fiscal, industrial and commercial policy in China with Germany’.²⁵³ Balfour’s reply to Curzon expressed his cool-headed perception of the difficulty of achieving a reciprocal agreement with Germany:

I do not see my way quite clearly about our arrangements with Germany in Shantung. It requires careful steering, because, on the one hand, it seems very desirable to mark out spheres in which we shall not interfere with each other’s concessions, and yet very difficult to do this without either going [sic] them too big a sphere or ourselves too small a one.²⁵⁴

Balfour tried to continue negotiations with Hatzfeldt, persisting along the lines of an Anglo-German rapprochement through the delimitation of their spheres of influence in China, with little prospect of success.

In the end, Balfour gave up his attempt at an Anglo-German alliance for two reasons. First, Germany’s negative attitude to his proposal had not changed. On 13 April Hatzfeldt stated that the German government objected to reciprocal assurances respecting spheres of interest in China.²⁵⁵ Second, Salisbury had recuperated at Beaulieu in southern France and was to return to Britain on 1 May. As Bertie recollected

²⁵³ Curzon to Balfour, 6 Apr. 1898, Balfour MSS, Add. MSS. 49732.

²⁵⁴ Balfour to Curzon, 14 Apr. 1898, Balfour MSS, Add. MSS. 49732.

²⁵⁵ Sanderson to Balfour, 13 Apr. 1898, Balfour MSS, Add. MSS. 49739.

later, Salisbury regarded Balfour's attitude towards Germany as too positive, and was 'rather jealous of the nephew in his management of the Foreign Office during the uncle's absence'.²⁵⁶ Balfour had to end his unofficial negotiations with Germany to avoid jeopardising his relationship with Salisbury. The best way of doing this was to lay the blame on Chamberlain. Informing Salisbury of the discussions with Hatzfeldt, Balfour criticised Chamberlain for being 'very impulsive' and said that he 'went far in the expression of his own personal leaning towards a German alliance'.²⁵⁷ Thanks to this manoeuvre, he succeeded in maintaining his position in the British Cabinet and deflecting Salisbury's wariness to Chamberlain.

Even after Salisbury resumed his duties and the secret Anglo-German negotiations had failed, Balfour continued to seek a policy that would stabilise the situation in the Far East. A dispute over a railway in China flared up between Britain and Russia in June 1898. A British bank and a British company announced a plan to extend the railway from Peking to Newchwang, a city in the Peninsula of Liaotung, to increase their commercial interests in northern China. Russia strongly objected to this project, which she regarded as a violation of her position in Manchuria. As the tension between Britain

²⁵⁶ Bertie to Grey, 12 Jan. 1912, Grey MSS, FO 800/176. For a negative view on Balfour's management of Foreign Office, see J.A.S. Grenville, Lord Salisbury and Foreign Policy: The Close of the Nineteenth Century (London, 1964), pp. 149-150.

²⁵⁷ Balfour to Salisbury, 14 Apr. 1898, Balfour MSS, Add. MSS. 49691.

and Russia was increased, Salisbury became unwell again and had to leave London to recuperate in the south of France. In August 1898 Balfour once more deputised for Salisbury at the Foreign Office and grappled with the Anglo-Russian quarrel.

This time Balfour's choice was not an anti-Russian collaboration with other great powers including Japan but a direct arrangement with Russia, as advocated by Salisbury. On 12 August, Balfour began to discuss this problem with the Russian Chargé d'Affaires Pavel Mikhailovich Lessar, who implied that Britain should approve Russia's special interest in railways and mines in Manchuria in return for Russia's recognition of Britain's interests in Yangtze.²⁵⁸ Balfour reacted quickly, in a lengthy memorandum to the Cabinet discussing Britain's policy towards Russia. On careful analysis Balfour concluded that Lessar's proposal was most favourable to Britain. Although she would have to give up Manchuria, there was no doubt that the Yangtze Valley was more valuable. To begin with, not believing in the immense expected commercial benefit of the Newchwang railway, Balfour considered that 'it was a mistake to have gone in for the Newchwang extension line'.²⁵⁹ The Anglo-Russian reciprocal agreement, he stated, would bring 'a sphere of interest much larger than we could easily demand in cold

²⁵⁸ Balfour to Scott, 12 Aug. 1898, FO 65/1551.

²⁵⁹ Alice Balfour's diary, 11 Aug. 1898, Balfour MSS, GD 433/2/224.

blood'.²⁶⁰

By contrast, anti-Russian cooperation with Japan did not appeal to Balfour. In a detailed memorandum he expressed concern about the strategic side-effects of the Newchwang railway line. If it were to be connected with the Manchuria Railway in the future, Russia would gain land access to Peking, 'which is Russia's great advantage, and which no Power except, perhaps, Japan and us in combination, can wrest from her'.²⁶¹ This comment revealed that an Anglo-Japanese collaboration against Russia was a possible policy option in Balfour's mind. But it was still hypothetical: Balfour did not specify the meaning of 'Japan and us in combination'. In addition, even though cooperation with Japan would enable Britain to check Russia's expansion in the north of China, it would not strengthen Britain's position in the Yangtze Valley. It was fatal that Japan did not have any sphere of influence in China which could have been used as a bargaining chip for Britain. Therefore, Balfour decided to pursue the Anglo-Russian rapprochement, hoping 'to drive them [Russia] into making a distinct offer of spheres of interest (so far as concessions go) – i.e. Manchuria v. basin of Yangtse'.²⁶²

After discussion in the Cabinet, Balfour made every effort to reach an

²⁶⁰ Memo. by Balfour, 13 Jul. [sic] 1898, CAB 37/47/62. The date of this memorandum must be 13 Aug. 1898. See Otte, The China Question, p. 166.

²⁶¹ Memo. by Balfour, 13 Jul. [sic] 1898, CAB 37/47/62.

²⁶² Balfour to Salisbury, 30 Aug. 1898, Balfour MSS, Add. MSS. 49691.

Anglo-Russian arrangement over their spheres of influence in China. Although he stepped down from the diplomatic stage at the beginning of September on Salisbury's return, his policy on Russia was passed to Salisbury. Britain suffered from Russia's slow diplomacy, but eventually the Scott-Muravev agreement was signed in April 1899.²⁶³ Its contents were weaker and vaguer than Lessar's and Balfour's proposals; even so, Salisbury praised this agreement between Britain and Russia for 'preventing the possibility of collision between the two Governments'.²⁶⁴ The conclusion of this agreement brought a temporary stop of the great powers' scramble for concessions in China initiated by the Sino-Japanese War. However, the Anglo-Russian agreement did not completely resolve the volatility of the situation in China, and Britain would soon face another crisis.

II.

The Boxer Uprising in 1900 plunged China into chaos once again.²⁶⁵ Salisbury's reaction was slow, although their militiamen finally laid siege to foreign legations in

²⁶³ For details of the negotiation between Britain and Russia, see Otte, China Question, pp. 165-175; Neilson, Britain and the Last Tsar, pp. 197-204.

²⁶⁴ Salisbury, 1 May 1899, Hansard: Series 4, House of Lords, vol. 70, col. 927.

²⁶⁵ For the background of Boxer Uprising, see L.K. Young, British Policy in China, 1895-1902 (London, 1970), pp. 100-108.

Peking in June 1900. He regarded the so-called Boxers as ‘a mere mob’ due to the fact that ‘the Austrian legation which is the weakest’ succeeded in repelling their attack.²⁶⁶ Moreover, he did not consider that a firm and active stance was necessarily suitable on Britain’s part. As he realised, the danger of the north of China, which the Boxers mainly affected, was ‘the most urgent’.²⁶⁷ But this did not mean that Britain’s vital interest, namely the Yangtze Valley, was threatened. Britain’s intervention might cause other powers to scramble for concessions again and end in the partition of China.²⁶⁸ Aware of Britain’s limited military and financial resources due to the Boer War in South Africa, Salisbury wanted to ‘keep as much as possible in the background’ and tried to maintain the *status quo* in China.²⁶⁹

Balfour did not share Salisbury’s policy of non-intervention. Although serving just below the Prime Minister in the Cabinet, he had not emerged into the political spotlight since the outbreak of the Boxer Uprising. However, this did not mean that he was kept in the dark about the British policymaking process. As in the case of Wei-hai-Wei, he sought an alternative policy behind the scenes in order to maintain good relations with Salisbury. With Goschen’s support, Balfour approved the proposal of St. John Brodrick,

²⁶⁶ Salisbury to the Queen, 16 Jun. 1900, Salisbury MSS MSS, 3M/A/84/114.

²⁶⁷ Salisbury to Bertie, 18 Jun. 1900, Bertie MSS, Add. MSS. 63014.

²⁶⁸ Satow diary (on conversation with Bertie), 31 May 1900, Satow MSS, PRO 30/33/16/3.

²⁶⁹ Salisbury to MacDonald, 25 May 1900, FO 17/1419.

Parliamentary Under-Secretary for Foreign Affairs, to send international reinforcements to China. Furthermore, he agreed that Brodrick should ‘go & try to frighten L[or]d S[alisbury] before Cabinet’. In return, Brodrick reported his discussion of this proposal with Salisbury to Balfour and Goschen. They were dissatisfied with Salisbury’s hesitation about despatching forces to Peking, saying ‘either L[or]d S[alisbury] must be upset wh[ich] none of us will do, or nothing will be done’.²⁷⁰ Balfour was ‘in despair at his [Salisbury’s] apathy’ and continued to try to persuade him, via Brodrick, to take more active steps in response to the Boxer Uprising.²⁷¹

Balfour also reviewed the situation in the Far East and turned his attention to British interests further north, in Manchuria. He admitted that ‘the grip of Russia upon Manchuria will become closer and stronger’ in post-Boxer China. Britain could not ‘prevent this consummation, and if it is to be prevented at all, it must be by China herself, and perhaps Japan’. Even so, it was not wise for Britain to abandon all her interests in the north of China and withdraw to the Yangtze Valley to avoid conflict with Russia, as such impatient action would weaken her position in China and make the Yangtze region more vulnerable. However, he did not completely rule out the possibility of surrendering all British interests in northern China ‘in the last resort and as part of an

²⁷⁰ Brodrick to Curzon, 22 Jun. 1900, Curzon MSS, MSS. Eur. F. 111/10A.

²⁷¹ Brodrick to Curzon, 6 Jul. 1900, Curzon MSS, MSS. Eur. F. 111/10B.

otherwise advantageous bargain'.²⁷² This highlighted two important points. First, Balfour realised the limits of British power in China and considered that not only China but also Japan might be capable of stopping Russian expansion in Manchuria. Second, he calculated that if necessary, British interests in the north of China could be utilised as a bargaining chip. Balfour had no intention of abandoning them easily, but saw their value not as absolute but as relative to other British interests all over the world.

While he valued Japan's power against Russia, Balfour did not seek cooperation with Japan in northern China. His favoured option was Anglo-German collaboration to preserve the *status quo* in the Yangtze Valley. Despite his failure to reach a binding political agreement with Germany in 1898, he had not lost hope of an alliance with Germany. After rescuing the besieged foreign legations in August 1900, Germany approached Britain about signing an Anglo-German agreement over China, and particularly the Yangtze region, which vaguely promised to maintain the Open Door principle and China's territorial integrity.²⁷³ Salisbury was away in France; in his place an informal Cabinet committee established by Lord George Hamilton, Secretary of State for India, emerged to deal with Germany's proposal. Balfour, who did not attend the committee, approved Hamilton's policy of close cooperation with Germany in the vague

²⁷² Balfour to Chamberlain, 10 Aug. 1900, Balfour MSS, Add. MSS. 49773.

²⁷³ Lascelles to Salisbury, 24 Aug. 1900, FO 64/1494.

and implicit manner.²⁷⁴ In spite of Salisbury's reluctance, the majority of the Cabinet supported Hamilton and forced the Prime Minister to conclude the Anglo-German agreement over the Yangtze region on 16 October 1900.²⁷⁵ Japan joined it on 29 October, expecting it to be useful in stopping Russian expansion.²⁷⁶

The conclusion of the Anglo-German agreement over China of 16 October 1900 demonstrated the erosion of Salisbury's authority in the Cabinet. Many Cabinet members, including Balfour, no longer accepted his diplomacy. Given his frequent absence from London due to illness, it was not satisfactory for Salisbury to serve as both Prime Minister and Foreign Secretary concurrently. With Aretas Akers-Douglas, the Chief Whip, and Balfour's private secretary Jack Sandars, Balfour decided to persuade Salisbury to give up the Foreign Office voluntarily. Balfour then had to consider who should take over the Foreign Office. Joseph Chamberlain was not a suitable choice because the growth of his influence would cause a rift in the Unionist Cabinet and the doubt of other European powers. The best arrangement, Balfour told Akers-Douglas, was 'an arrangement which left Lord Salisbury Prime Minister, and put

²⁷⁴ Balfour to Lady Elcho, 29 Aug. and 6 Sep. 1900, Balfour MSS, Add. MSS. 49835.

²⁷⁵ T.G. Otte, "'Heaven knows where we shall finally drift': Lord Salisbury, the Cabinet, Isolation, and the Boxer Rebellion' in G. Kennedy and K. Neilson, (eds.) Incidents and International Relations: People, Power, and Personalities (Westport, 2002), pp. 31-37.

²⁷⁶ Nish, The Anglo-Japanese Alliance, pp. 107-109.

the conduct of Foreign Office details into the hands of Lord Lansdowne'.²⁷⁷ In the end, Salisbury had no choice but to tell Akers-Douglas that he would nominate Lansdowne as his successor.²⁷⁸ Lansdowne's appointment in November 1900 achieved two purposes: it accelerated a transition from Salisbury's policy to a more active one and prevented Chamberlain from rising in the Cabinet, both of which were desirable to Balfour.

The rivalry in China between the great powers soon tested the value of the Anglo-German agreement of October 1900. Ernest Morrison, a correspondent for *The Times*, revealed a secret Russo-Chinese arrangement over the southern part of Manchuria on 3 January 1901 which was a ploy on Russia's part in order to gain control of the railways in northern China and make Manchuria her virtual protectorate.²⁷⁹ In fact, the arrangement had not yet been ratified and its terms were temporary, but Morrison's article shocked the world and caused the so-called 'Manchurian crisis'.²⁸⁰ Britain's reaction was relatively slow at first. Lansdowne, in favour of cooperation with Germany, approached her about how to deal with 'the Russian landgrabbing'.²⁸¹

²⁷⁷ Balfour to Akers-Douglas, 18 Oct. 1900, Balfour MSS, Add. MSS. 49772.

²⁷⁸ Sandars to Balfour, 21 Oct. 1900, Balfour MSS, Add. MSS. 49760.

²⁷⁹ 'Russia and China', *The Times*, Thursday 3 Jan. 1901, p. 3.

²⁸⁰ For the final form of the arrangement, see B.A. Romanov, *Russia in Manchuria (1892-1906)* (Ann Arbor, 1952), pp. 209-212.

²⁸¹ Lansdowne to Lascelles, 17 Jan. 1901, Lascelles MSS, FO 800/10 quoted in Otte, *The China Question*, p. 236.

Balfour did not hesitate to push the Anglo-German combination forward. Chamberlain and the Duke of Devonshire, Lord President of the Council, had some conversations with Hermann Baron von Eckardstein, First Secretary at the German Embassy in London, and told him that Britain would eventually join the German-led Triple Alliance in January 1901.²⁸² According to William Tyrrell, Sanderson's private secretary, the result of these talks was kept from Salisbury 'as he was opposed to the policy of alliances, but A.J.B[alfour] & Lansdowne were privy to the deal'.²⁸³ As usual, Balfour promoted a different policy to Salisbury's behind the scenes.

Backed by Balfour, Lansdowne continued to pursue further cooperation with Germany rather than Japan, whose anxiety about Russia's behaviour in China was so strong that she tried to offer China material support, namely naval assistance, to prevent Russia's further acquisition of territory in Manchuria.²⁸⁴ Lansdowne could not agree to Tokyo's stance, regarding it as the 'much longer step'. The basis of his policy was the Anglo-German October agreement. Britain would only take such specific measures if Russia or any other powers acted 'inconsistently with the principles of that agreement'; and even in such a case, Lansdowne observed, Britain should 'carry her [Germany] with

²⁸² Otte, *The China Question*, pp. 237-238.

²⁸³ Tyrrell to Asquith, 16 Sep. 1922, Asquith MSS, MS Asquith 34.

²⁸⁴ MacDonald to Lansdowne, 15 Feb, 1901, FO 46/542.

us'.²⁸⁵ Lansdowne tried to remain sufficiently distant from Japan's more energetic policy against Russia in order not to be dragged into a Russo-Japanese conflict. It was clear that the attention of Lansdowne and Balfour was on Germany more than Japan.

However, Germany's reaction was not warm enough to meet Balfour's expectation. On 6 March 1901 Richard von Mühlberg, the German Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs, told Shinichiro Kurino, the Japanese Minister at Berlin, that Germany would maintain 'benevolent neutrality' in a crisis over Manchuria. Furthermore, on 15 March Chancellor Bernhard von Bülow delivered a speech about the Anglo-German agreement of October 1900 in the Reichstag. He declared that this agreement applied only to commercial problems and 'was in no sense concerned with Manchuria'. His conclusion was that '[T]here were no German interests of importance in Manchuria, and the fate of that province was a matter of absolute indifference to Germany'.²⁸⁶ Germany had no intention of acting with Britain in the case of a Russo-Japanese confrontation over Manchuria. Bülow's statement destroyed the value of the Anglo-German October agreement and spoiled Lansdowne's scheme for a common Anglo-German policy on Manchuria. Indeed, he regretted that Germany seemed to have 'put an end to any idea which might have been entertained as to the possibility of England and Germany

²⁸⁵ Lansdowne to Salisbury, 16 Feb. 1901, FO 17/1500.

²⁸⁶ "Extract from Speech by Count von Bülow in the Reichstag", 15 Mar. 1901, BD Vol.2, No.32.

combining for the purpose of ‘keeping a ring’ for Russia and Japan’.²⁸⁷

Britain now had to reconsider her policy on the Manchurian crisis. One option was to encourage China to resist concluding an agreement with Russia over Manchuria in cooperation with Japan. Backed by Britain and Japan, the Chinese government refused Russia’s demands.²⁸⁸ Although she did not give up her desire for a Russo-Chinese agreement easily, Russia realised the ‘failure to rush the Manchurian Agreement through’ by mid-April.²⁸⁹ In the end, she had to declare an end to her attempt to reach a political arrangement with China, promising reconciliation with other great powers. Britain had succeeded in defusing the Manchurian crisis and maintaining the *status quo* in China.

Even after resolving the Manchurian crisis, Britain continued to seek an alternative policy on the Far East. Many British policymakers expected Russia to resume her encroachment of China sooner or later. As Sanderson admitted, a good understanding with Russia ‘would be much the best plan if it could be managed’.²⁹⁰ But, given the strained Anglo-Russian relations, it was not easy to secure an agreement with Russia.²⁹¹ Therefore even though the Anglo-German October agreement had lost its validity, Germany was still a strong candidate for cooperation for the purpose of maintaining the

²⁸⁷ Lansdowne to Lascelles, 18 Mar. 1901, CAB 37/57/36.

²⁸⁸ Satow to Lansdowne, 17 Mar. 1901, FO 17/1484; Lansdowne to MacDonald and Satow, 20 Mar. 1901, FO 17/1482.

²⁸⁹ Sanderson to Satow, 12 Apr. 1901, Satow MSS, PRO 30/33/7/1.

²⁹⁰ Sanderson to Satow, 12 Apr. 1901, BD Vol.2, No.73.

²⁹¹ Neilson, Britain and the Last Tsar, pp. 217-222.

status quo in the Far East. However, German diplomacy was awkward: while Eckardstein, taking advantage of Hatzfeldt's illness, tried to reach an Anglo-German-Japanese alliance whose purpose was to observe the Open Door principle, Kaiser William II wanted Britain to join the Triple Alliance of Germany, Austria and Italy in Europe. Suspicious of Germany's behaviour, Salisbury cast doubt on the idea of close cooperation with this German-led alliance.²⁹² In the end negotiations between Britain and Germany over an alliance failed to produce any concrete results.

As the possibility of a German alliance faded from view, another option emerged more clearly: an alliance with Japan. Bertie insisted on the naval and financial advantages of Anglo-Japanese cooperation.²⁹³ On 20 June 1901 he advocated a reciprocal Anglo-Japanese agreement to assist in resisting foreign powers in Korea and the Yangtze region.²⁹⁴ Bertie's memorandum of 22 July 1901 emphasised that naval cooperation with Japan could maintain the *status quo* in the Far East without increasing the budgetary burden.²⁹⁵ Given the financial constraints caused by the Boer War, an Anglo-Japanese alliance appealed to many British policymakers.²⁹⁶

²⁹² Memo. by Salisbury, 29 May 1901, CAB 37/57/52.

²⁹³ For details of the role of Bertie, see Nish, The Anglo-Japanese Alliance, pp. 153-157.

²⁹⁴ Memo. by Bertie, 20 Jun. 1901, FO 46/547.

²⁹⁵ Memo. by Bertie, 22 Jul. 1901, FO 46/547.

²⁹⁶ Otte, The China Question, pp. 283-288; K. Neilson, 'The Anglo-Japanese Alliance and British

The Earl of Selborne, First Lord of the Admiralty, was another proponent of an Anglo-Japanese alliance. On 4 September 1901 he saw the Channel and the Mediterranean Sea as the likely main battle stages in a war with Britain's arch-rival, France and Russia. By combining the Japanese navy with her own Britain could secure superiority over the Franco-Russian naval strength even without employing new battleships in the Far East. This would smooth the concentration of the Royal Navy in 'the heart of the Empire', namely European waters.²⁹⁷ Selborne highlighted the aspect of imperial defence and expanded the horizons of the discussion of the Anglo-Japanese alliance beyond the Far East.

Balfour also put an Anglo-Japanese alliance in the context of imperial defence. He was concerned about the burden of defending the British Empire all over the world. Although equipped with 'enormous strength, both effective and latent', Britain could utilise her power only 'if we can concentrate'.²⁹⁸ Balfour supported Selborne's argument for the concentration of Britain's naval power in Europe. However, he realised that the naval factor was not sufficient for the defence of the British Empire, arguing that the navy formed 'only a part – though perhaps the most important part of our

strategic foreign policy, 1902-1914' in P.P. O'Brien, (ed.) The Anglo-Japanese Alliance, 1902-1922 (London, 2004), pp. 50-51.

²⁹⁷ Memo. by Selborne, 4 Sep. 1901, CAB 37/58/81; Z.S. Steiner, 'Great Britain and the Creation of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance' in The Journal of Modern History XXXI, 1, (1959), pp. 29-31.

²⁹⁸ Hamilton to Curzon, 4 Jul. 1901, Hamilton MSS, MSS. Eur. C. 126/3.

Imperial policy – military, financial and diplomatic, which ... gives me at the present moment the greatest anxiety'.²⁹⁹ As Selborne had pointed out, Britain 'could not afford to see our Chinese trade disappear, or to see Hong Kong and Singapore fall, particularly not at a moment when a military struggle with Russia might be in progress on the confines of India'.³⁰⁰ This highlighted that a war with Russia would involve not only naval warfare in Europe but also war on land along the borders of India with Persia and Afghanistan. Britain had to direct her attention to the linkage between India and the Far East in the case of an Anglo-Russian struggle.

Many British politicians warned Balfour of India's vulnerability to Russia and he shared their misgivings. Given Britain's predicament in the Boer War, the Indian Secretary George Hamilton informed Balfour that Russia would 'take advantage of our entanglement in South Africa' and would do anything to squeeze Britain in Persia and Afghanistan.³⁰¹ Both countries were vital to the defence of India, and particularly Chahbar near the Persian Gulf, 'the best port along the coast as a maritime base'.³⁰² Financially weak, the Persian government was lured to receive a Russian loan in October 1901. It would be 'most unfavourable both to British and to Indian interests' for

²⁹⁹ Balfour to Selborne, 25 Oct. 1901, Selborne MSS, MS. Selborne 26.

³⁰⁰ Memo. by Selborne, 4 Sep. 1901, CAB 37/58/81.

³⁰¹ Hamilton to Balfour, 2 Dec. 1899, Balfour MSS, Add. MSS. 49778.

³⁰² Sykes to Salisbury, 29 Jun. 1900, CAB 37/53/67.

Russia's money to strengthen her influence on Persia. Britain desired to 'debar Russia from establishing a military or naval station, or from acquiring for her trade a privileged position' in the Persian Gulf.³⁰³

Curzon, now Viceroy of India, also emphasised the importance of India. Pointing out that British rule there was becoming increasingly difficult, Curzon reported to Balfour that 'as long as we rule India, we are the greatest power in the world. If we lose it, we shall drop straight away to a 3rd rate Power'.³⁰⁴ Balfour took the same pessimistic view of Britain's power. According to Hamilton's letter to Curzon, Balfour had told Hamilton that Britain was 'for all practical purposes at the present moment only a third-rate power; and we are a third-rate power with interests which are conflicting with and crossing those of the great powers of Europe.'³⁰⁵ Balfour realised that Britain had to adopt more active diplomacy to deal with this unfavourable international situation and saw an alliance with another great power as imperative. The problem was deciding which power to make this alliance with.

Japan finally emerged in the view of British policymakers as a powerful candidate for an alliance with Britain, and the idea of an Anglo-Japanese alliance was specified further in October 1901. After meeting Tadasu Hayashi, the Japanese Minister in

³⁰³ Memo by Lansdowne, 22 Oct. 1901, CAB 37/58/101.

³⁰⁴ Curzon to Balfour, 31 Mar. 1901, Balfour MSS, Add. MSS. 49732.

³⁰⁵ Hamilton to Curzon, 4 Jul. 1901, Curzon MSS, MSS Eur. F. 111/149.

London, Lansdowne prepared a rough draft of an agreement with Japan and asked Salisbury for his approval.³⁰⁶ Salisbury agreed with Lansdowne's draft in general and it was circulated to the Cabinet on 5 November 1901.³⁰⁷ It stated that Britain should be neutral in 'any war between Japan and one other Power', and that she would be bound to help Japan if 'the war involved two Powers against Japan'.³⁰⁸ This draft was not incompatible with Salisbury's favoured limited agreement with Japan, which was confined to the defence of the coast of North China and Korea for the purpose of maintaining the *status quo* in the Far East.³⁰⁹ The majority of the Cabinet, including Salisbury, supported Lansdowne's proposal of a regional arrangement with Japan.

In this context, and somewhat unusually, Balfour expressed strong opposition to both Salisbury and Lansdowne, criticising them for making 'the perhaps rather hasty decision' on a Japanese alliance. Concerned with the requirements of imperial defence, he was dissatisfied with the limited nature of the proposed Japanese alliance and favoured a fully-fledged alliance with Germany. In a detailed memorandum of 12 December 1901 he insisted that Britain needed an ally because 'a traditional policy of isolation' was no longer successful. There were two candidates: the German-led Triple

³⁰⁶ Memo. by Lansdowne, 25 Oct. 1901, FO 46/547.

³⁰⁷ Minutes by Salisbury on Lansdowne's memo. of 25 Oct. 1901, FO 46/547.

³⁰⁸ Salisbury to the King, 5 Nov. 1901, CAB 41/26/23.

³⁰⁹ Otte, *The China Question*, p. 243.

Alliance or a Japanese alliance. If Britain reached an alliance with Japan, ‘we may find ourselves fighting for our existence in every part of the Globe against Russia and France, because France has joined forces with her ally over some obscure Russian-Japanese quarrel in Corea’. But, even in an Anglo-German alliance Britain would face the Franco-Russian combination all over the world, not only in the Far East but also in ‘the Channel, the Mediterranean, the frontier of India, and our great lines of commercial communication’. Balfour doubted whether Japan would be a useful partner in such a conflict.

Balfour’s strategic calculation was coolheaded. There was a hierarchy of British interests. ‘Our interests there [in the Eastern seas], including our interest in preserving Japan’, he observed, ‘are of course important, but they are not vital’. A Japanese alliance might drag Britain into a war with Russia and France over a matter in the Far East that was ‘indifferent to us’. On the other hand, to maintain the balance of power in Europe, Britain should protect Germany, Austria and Italy from ‘the hammer of Russia and the anvil of France’. Therefore, Balfour argued, fighting for the Central European powers was equal to ‘fighting for our own interests, and for those of civilisation, to an extent which cannot be alleged with regard to Japan’. His conclusion was that the British interests that a Japanese alliance would be intended to safeguard were less important

than those that a German alliance would protect.

Balfour paid special attention to India. Its frontier was the ‘weakest spot in the empire’ and Britain would have to allocate vast military resources to protect it in a war with Russia. Thus a ‘quarrel with Russia anywhere, or about anything, means the invasion of India’. Balfour warned that if Britain had no allies, France would join Russia and Britain’s position in India would become more perilous. Restricted to the Far East, however, an Anglo-Japanese alliance would be totally useless in the defence of India, while Britain could expect the German-led Triple Alliance to support the fight for India against Russia efficiently. Moreover, cooperation with the Triple Alliance would probably deter France from ‘throwing in her lot with Russia’ due to her fear of a war with Germany. Unlike the limited cooperation proposed with Japan in the Far East, entering the German camp all over the world would bring valuable assistance to India’s defence that was vital to the British Empire.

Apart from these strategic calculations there were some sentimental considerations at play between Britain and the powers of the Triple Alliance. While the leaders of the Triple Alliance were not necessarily reliable and British and German public opinion was sometimes hostile each other, Balfour argued that ‘none of us think that the Japanese are more to be relied upon than European governments’. This sentimental opposition was

too minor to justify abandoning the idea of an Anglo-German alliance. Taking a wide range of imperial problems beyond the Far East into consideration, Balfour concluded that ‘the dangers are less and the gains are greater from joining the triple alliance than would follow from pursuing a similar course with regard to Japan’.³¹⁰ Balfour’s long memorandum demonstrated that his preference for an Anglo-German alliance remained strong even though other Cabinet members, including Lansdowne, had abandoned the idea of such a full-scale alliance.³¹¹ In addition, his strong interest in imperial defence, in particular the defence of India, enabled him to consider an Anglo-Japanese alliance from the global perspective. What Balfour desired was not a limited agreement for the purpose of maintaining the Far East but a comprehensive alliance that would protect the British Empire all over the world. To him, an Anglo-Japanese alliance was the former and was not acceptable.

Lansdowne defended the scheme of an Anglo-Japanese alliance. He saw the value of a Japanese alliance as lying in the limited regional nature that Balfour criticised. Thanks to its narrow application to the area of entanglement, an Anglo-Japanese alliance would have fewer ‘chances of the “casus foederis” arising’ than an Anglo-German alliance. Moreover, Britain should consider ‘whether we should allow Japan to be wiped out by

³¹⁰ Balfour to Lansdowne, 12 Dec. 1901, Balfour MSS, Add. MSS. 49727.

³¹¹ Memo. by Lansdowne, 22 Nov. 1901, BD Vol.2, No. 92.

France and Russia' in a war in the Far East. If the answer was no, Lansdowne observed,

'may we not as well tell her so beforehand and get what we can out of the bargain'.³¹²

Like Salisbury, Lansdowne preferred a limited agreement with Japan to a fully-fledged

alliance with Germany. Although short and not specific, his argument contained a

fundamental difference to Balfour's on the significant question of whether Britain

should protect Japan in a war with Russia. This question would reappear with the

impending Russo-Japanese war.

Balfour's hope of an Anglo-German alliance ended on 19 December 1901 when

Lansdowne discussed cooperation between Britain and Germany with Count Metternich,

the new German Ambassador in London. Reiterating the history of negotiations

between Britain and Germany, Lansdowne argued that Britain could not accept

Germany's proposal that she join the Triple Alliance. Instead, he suggested to

Metternich 'an understanding with regard to the policy which they might pursue in

reference to particular questions or in particular parts of the world in which they were

alike interested'. Metternich rejected this limited and flexible agreement, stating that the

German government favoured 'a case of "the whole or none"'.³¹³ There was no

compromise between Britain and Germany and this interview marked the end of

³¹² Lansdowne to Balfour, 12 Dec. 1901, Balfour MSS, Add. MSS. 49727.

³¹³ Lansdowne to Lascelles, 19 Dec. 1901, CAB 37/59/141.

negotiations over an Anglo-German alliance.

Balfour had no choice but to accept an Anglo-Japanese alliance. The Cabinet discussion of 19 December 1901 revealed that there was no consensus about such an alliance; many ministers still desired that ‘the Japanese engagements should extend to India and Siam’.³¹⁴ Sir Michael Hicks Beach, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, was sceptical about the merits of an Anglo-Japanese alliance outweighing its financial cost, mentioning that ‘Balfour, who would have to defend it in the H[ouse] of C[ommons], and Chamberlain are inclined to the same opinion’.³¹⁵ However, Balfour avoided expressing his strong opposition to an alliance with Japan. He probably realised that an Anglo-German alliance was no longer practicable and tried to maintain good relations with Salisbury, who did not completely reject the idea of an Anglo-Japanese alliance itself, although he pointed out its many dangers and the necessity for further negotiations.³¹⁶ Thus the problem was not whether Britain should conclude an alliance with Japan but what the draft treaty should contain. On receiving a memorandum from Salisbury, Lansdowne accelerated the pace of negotiations for an Anglo-Japanese alliance.³¹⁷ He hammered out the details of the draft treaty, intending to ‘meet the

³¹⁴ Salisbury to the King, 19 Dec. 1901, CAB 41/26/28.

³¹⁵ Hicks Beach to Lansdowne, 2 Jan. 1902, Lansdowne MSS, FO 800/134.

³¹⁶ Memo. by Salisbury, 7 Jan. 1902, CAB 37/60/3; T.G. Otte, ‘Lord Salisbury (1830-1903)’ in H. Cortazzi, (ed.) Britain and Japan Biographical Portraits Volume VIII (Kent, 2013), pp. 66-68.

³¹⁷ For more on the negotiations with Japan, see Nish, The Anglo-Japanese Alliance, pp. 185-228.

Japanese desire for the special recognition of their interests in Corea, without at the same time giving too one sided an appearance to the article'.³¹⁸ Although it was defensive and applied only to the Far East, Balfour finally agreed on the draft of the Anglo-Japanese alliance of 21 January 1902.³¹⁹

On 30 January the Anglo-Japanese Alliance was signed in London.³²⁰ As Leader of the House of Commons, Balfour had to defend it regardless of his own view of it. On 13 February, he addressed in the Parliament:

I do not at all pretend that it [the Anglo-Japanese Agreement] is one of the ordinary, everyday diplomatic transactions between Power and Power. But the reasons for it seem to me to lie not in the secret archives of this or any other Foreign Office, but upon the broad facts and the large necessities of our interests and our policy in the Far East.³²¹

However, Balfour did not abandon his favour with the Anglo-German cooperation. 'It seems to me so clear that', Balfour told Selborne on 5 April 1902, 'her [Germany's] interests and ours are identical'. Therefore, he believed that Britain would not have to 'fear from Germany in the immediate future at all events'.³²² In addition, he did not

³¹⁸ Memo. by Lansdowne, 21 Jan. 1902, FO 46/563.

³¹⁹ Minutes by Balfour on Lansdowne's memo. of 21 Jan. 1902, FO 46/563.

³²⁰ For the final text, see "Anglo-Japanese Agreement, January 30, 1902", BD Vol.2, No.125; Nish, The Anglo-Japanese Alliance, pp. 216-217.

³²¹ Balfour, 13 Feb. 1902, Hansard: Series 4, House of Commons, vol. 102, col. 1294.

³²² Balfour to Selborne, 5 Apr. 1902, Selborne MSS, MS. Selborne 30.

lose sight of the significance of the imperial defence, repeating that Japan would not aid Britain in India under the Anglo-Japanese alliance.³²³ His concern would prove to be correct when he faced the dangers of the Russo-Japanese War as Prime Minister.

III.

As widely predicted, Balfour succeeded Salisbury as Prime Minister on 11 July 1902. In that role he established the Committee of Imperial Defence (CID) in December 1902 to improve coordination between foreign and military policy. While Balfour attended CID meetings as its chairman, the bulk of the CID's attention was dedicated to the defence of India. During Balfour's premiership eighty-two meetings were held, over half of which (forty-three) were devoted to the defence of India.³²⁴ This was not surprising to Balfour, who regarded India as the 'brightest jewel in the Imperial crown', and argued that if India were successfully invaded, 'the moral loss would be incalculable, the material loss would be important'.³²⁵ Thus on the subject of imperial defence he concluded that 'the chief military problem which this country has to face is that of Indian, rather than Home,

³²³ Minutes by Balfour on Selborne's letter of 30 Jul. 1902, Selborne MSS, MS. Selborne 30.

³²⁴ d'Ombrain, War Machinery and High Policy, p. 62.

³²⁵ Balfour to Kitchener, 3 Dec. 1903, Balfour MSS, Add. MSS. 49726.

Defence'.³²⁶ Since the Anglo-Japanese alliance applied only to the Far East, Britain was left to protect India unaided. In respect of the role of the British army, therefore, Balfour insisted that:

our Regular Army does not exist principally for the defence of Great Britain, but almost entirely (1) for the defence of India, (2) the retention of South Africa, (3) conceivably (but only barely conceivably) for the defence of Canada, and (4) for the purpose of small expeditions against the Naval Stations and Colonies of other Powers.³²⁷

Of these four purposes the defence of India was without doubt the most formidable, and here the Anglo-Japanese alliance proved to be of limited value.

The main threat to India's security was still Russia, and the rapid development of technology at the turn of the century made this threat more formidable. The advent of the railway realised Russia's ambition to connect Moscow with India. It was forecast that the completion of the Orenburg-Tashkent Railway in around 1905 would strengthen Russia's military position in Asia.³²⁸ The more troops Russia could transport to the border of India, the more difficult it would be for the government of India to deal with the Russian threat alone. The British government would have to send reinforcements,

³²⁶ Memo. by Balfour, 30 Nov. 1903, CAB 6/1/34.

³²⁷ Balfour to Kitchener, 3 Dec. 1903, Balfour MSS, Add. MSS. 49726.

³²⁸ Memo. by Nicholson, 30 Dec. 1902, CAB 6/1/3. For the background of Russian railways in Asia, see W.C. Fuller, Strategy and Power in Russia 1600-1914 (New York, 1992), pp. 362-393.

but first it was necessary to know how many soldiers the Indian government would need in the event of a war with Russia. ‘The number of troops required by India’, Balfour remarked, ‘is the central element in the whole problem of Imperial Defence’.³²⁹ Britain had to calculate not only the number of troops but also the amount of finance necessary to despatch reinforcements to India, whose defence would throw ‘the greatest strain upon the Mother Country’. Balfour therefore thought that ‘the military relations of the two Governments, especially in the matter of finance, may have to be very carefully considered’.³³⁰

Coordination and cooperation between London and Delhi was not easy. Each government complained about the other. Curzon had served as Viceroy of India since January 1899 and was frustrated at Britain’s cold attitude to India’s manpower and financial contribution to the British Empire.³³¹ Balfour looked at the relationship between Britain and India from the opposite point of view. His impression was that ‘India pays nothing for the Navy, without which Indian reinforcements could not be sent, and but little for an Army which exists chiefly on her behalf’.³³² It was difficult to bridge this perception gap and divergences between the two arose easily and often,

³²⁹ Balfour to Hamilton, 11 Sep. 1903, Balfour MSS, Add. MSS. 49778.

³³⁰ Balfour to Kitchener, 3 Dec. 1903, Balfour MSS, Add. MSS. 49726.

³³¹ Curzon to Balfour, 16 Jul. 1902, Balfour MSS, Add. MSS. 49732; For Curzon’s dissatisfaction with politicians in London, see D. Dilks, Curzon in India (2 vols. London, 1969, 1970), 2. Frustration.

³³² Balfour to Kitchener, 3 Dec. 1903, Balfour MSS, Add. MSS. 49726.

making British foreign and military policy towards India more difficult.³³³

Defending India from the Russian threat was a problem that went beyond the geographical limits of India itself. The focal points were Afghanistan and Persia because these two neighbouring countries would form the front line against a possible Russian advance to India. They were often called the ‘North West Frontier of India’, and many British policy-makers deemed them a ‘bogey’.³³⁴ This phenomenon was not new: Afghanistan and Persia had been the stage for the Great Game between Britain and Russia since the early nineteenth century, but the development of the railway had turned the international situation in Russia’s favour because she could now deploy her abundant manpower in Central Asia. Britain could not escape this adverse change. Balfour had to undertake a review of British policy towards Afghanistan and Persia in order to tackle the growing Russian threat in these countries.

Balfour advocated a drastic change of British policy regarding Afghanistan. Originally he had been ‘a good deal disquieted about Afghanistan’ and was not satisfied with the British position there.³³⁵ ‘The “Alpha and Omega” of our policy for the last thirty years’, Lord George Hamilton stated, ‘has been to try and secure the cooperation

³³³ Balfour to Curzon, 31 Jan. 1903, Balfour MSS, Add. MSS. 49732.

³³⁴ Fisher to Sandars, 7 Nov. 1903, Balfour MSS, Add. MSS. 49710.

³³⁵ Balfour to Curzon, 12 Dec. 1902, Balfour MSS, Add. MSS. 49732.

of the Afghans in the event of a collision with Russia'.³³⁶ Britain had been giving money, arms and advice to the Amir, the ruler of Afghanistan, to retain Afghanistan as a buffer state against Russia. But Balfour criticised this traditional policy as 'utterly unsatisfactory'.³³⁷ Abdul Rahman Khan, the late Amir, had obtained guns and subsidies from Britain and had succeeded in consolidating his own regime and army. However, he did not accept Britain's advice easily and resisted her activities in Afghanistan. As a result, contrary to Britain's objective, Afghanistan had become neither friendly nor dependent. On 16 December 1902 Balfour remarked:

Nor, so far as I can see, do we possess any means of exercising the smallest influence over Afghanistan except by refusing subsidies which are apparently not desired: by stopping the import of arms with which the country is already gorged, and which may, in any case, be got in from the West almost as easily as from the East, or by threatening war.³³⁸

The invasion of Afghanistan would not be easy. The Amir's army was already equipped with modern rifles, and Britain would have to expend many lives and much money to defeat it.

Balfour's solution was that Britain should abandon her traditional policy peacefully

³³⁶ Hamilton to Curzon, 27 Nov. 1902, Curzon MSS MSS, Eur. F111/161.

³³⁷ Balfour to the King, 9 Dec. 1902, CAB 41/27/37.

³³⁸ Memo. by Balfour, 16 Dec. 1902, CAB 6/1/5.

and make a ‘direct arrangement with Russia, to maintain the *status quo*’.³³⁹ When Habibullah Khan, the son of Abdul Rahman Khan, had succeeded the Amir in October 1901, Afghanistan was not united and many tribes would not obey him. Balfour believed that such a state was ‘ill-fitted to act as an effective dyke against Russian expansion’ because Russia could easily obtain support from anti-Amir tribes. Against the background of Russia’s unlimited troops, Balfour concluded on 30 April 1903:

Afghanistan is not merely, perhaps not chiefly, valuable to us as a “Buffer State” – a State prepared to take the first brunt of aggression. It is also valuable because, in its present condition, and so long as it possesses few roads, and no railways, it will be impossible for Russia to make effective use of her great numerical superiority at any point immediately vital to the Empire.³⁴⁰

If Russia could break through Afghanistan easily, modernising and strengthening it with military and financial assistance would be harmful rather than useful. It was better that Afghanistan remained a wasteland, preventing Russia from taking advantage of it as a forward base from which to attack India. Balfour proposed ending Britain’s commitment to Afghanistan. Balfour calculated that if the Amir had to face the Russian threat alone, he would become ‘more malleable’ and would ask Britain to help him,

³³⁹ Ibid.

³⁴⁰ Memo. by Balfour, 30 Apr. 1903, CAB 6/1/12.

making their common defence against Russia easier.³⁴¹

On the other hand, the possibility of a direct agreement with Russia over Afghanistan had been gradually emerging since December 1902. A war against Russia was out of the question; Britain was suffering from a budget deficit due to the Boer War and naval shipbuilding and could not endure the enormous cost of such a war.³⁴² A diplomatic solution was not only desirable but also necessary for Britain from the financial point of view. Russia was showing a positive attitude to a peaceful arrangement with Britain over Central Asia. Count Aleksandr Benckendorff, Russian Minister to Denmark and ambassador-designate to Britain, had unofficial talks about Afghanistan with Sir Charles Scott, British ambassador to Russia.³⁴³ Furthermore, the Russian Foreign Office published a statement that Russia had no intention of confronting Britain.³⁴⁴ This attitude on Russia's part gave Lansdowne the optimistic view that Britain could conclude an acceptable agreement with her over Afghanistan.³⁴⁵ Supporting negotiations with Russia, Balfour reported to the King that 'some modus vivendi ... would diminish this perpetual friction between the two Powers [Britain and

³⁴¹ Memo. by Balfour, 16 Dec. 1902, CAB 6/1/5.

³⁴² Selborne to Curzon, 4 Jan. 1903, Curzon MSS MSS, Eur. F111/229.

³⁴³ Scott to Lansdowne, 25 Dec. 1902, Lansdowne MSS, FO 800/140; M. Soroka, Britain, Russia and the Road to the First World War: The Fateful Embassy of Count Aleksandr Benckendorff (1903-16) (Farnham, 2011), p. 60.

³⁴⁴ Scott to Lansdowne, 20 Dec. 1902, FO 65/1643; Scott to Lansdowne, 20 Dec. 1902, Lansdowne MSS, FO 800/140.

³⁴⁵ Lansdowne to Scott, 29 Dec. 1902, Lansdowne MSS, FO 800/140.

Russia] in Central Asia'.³⁴⁶ Lansdowne's optimism continued, and in April 1903 he informed Balfour: 'I don't despair of finding a reasonable solution of the Russo-Afghan difficulty, and perhaps of other tiresome questions which concern Russia & us'.³⁴⁷

In relation to Afghanistan, British policy towards Tibet was essential to Balfour. Yet in discussion about Tibet there was a clear division of opinion on the Russian threat between the British Cabinet and the Government of India. Early in 1903 Russia tried to send her consul to the Tibetan capital, Lhasa. Curzon worried that Russia wanted to expand her sphere of influence in Tibet and suggested forestalling her advance by despatching a similar mission with an expeditionary force. Curzon did not hesitate to take the military option because he found it hard to believe in the possibility of a peaceful settlement with Russia over India and its adjacent regions. Russia could break any agreement 'precisely when she chooses', so Curzon argued that Britain should not rely on a direct agreement with her.³⁴⁸ Although Balfour agreed that it would be highly inexpedient to 'permit the Russians to obtain a commanding or exclusive position at Lassa', he refused Curzon's request, fearing that irritating Russia unnecessarily over Tibet would ruin the possibility of an agreement with her over Central Asia. In the end he instructed Lansdowne to inform Russia that 'if the Russians sent an agent to Lhasa,

³⁴⁶ Balfour to the King, 19 Feb. 1903, CAB 41/28/2.

³⁴⁷ Lansdowne to Balfour, 12 Apr. 1903, Balfour MSS, Add. MSS. 49728.

³⁴⁸ Curzon to Hamilton, 8 Jan. 1903, Curzon MSS MSS Eur F111/162.

we should assuredly send one too', in which case it would be necessary for the British agent to be 'accompanied by a large armed escort'.³⁴⁹

Given Tibet's geographical location between India and China, it was impossible to avoid considering the influence of British policy regarding Tibet on the international situation in the Far East. Balfour calculated that it was not necessary for Britain to expand her territory in the Far East and that she should concentrate on strengthening her existing domains and maintaining the *status quo* in the region. In addition, Tibet was under the suzerainty of the Chinese Empire, so Britain securing a sphere of influence in Tibet through military means would be against the principle of British diplomacy towards China, namely the Open Door. On 28 October 1903, Balfour told St. John Brodrick, Hamilton's successor as Secretary of State for India:

I strongly deprecate permanent entanglements in Tibet, partly because I think we have as much on our hands as we can look after, partly because if we "Manchurianize" [i.e. establish a de facto protectorate] what is technically a part of the Chinese Empire, we may greatly weaken our diplomacy in the Far East.³⁵⁰

At that time Manchuria was the stage for a confrontation between Russia and Japan. Balfour already had misgivings that the Russo-Japanese negotiations would fail and the

³⁴⁹ Balfour to the King, 19 Feb. 1903, CAB 41/28/2.

³⁵⁰ Balfour to Brodrick, 28 Oct. 1903, Balfour MSS, Add. MSS. 49720.

confrontation between the two would spiral out of control. If a Russo-Japanese war broke out, ‘any complications in Tibet, even on the small scale suggested by the Viceroy, might prove exceedingly embarrassing’, because even such a quarrel could easily drag Britain into outright war against Russia.³⁵¹ For these reasons ‘the “forward” policy of the Indian Government’ towards Tibet was not acceptable from the viewpoint of the Far Eastern politics.³⁵²

The fundamental principle of Balfour’s policy towards Persia was quite simple: ‘until Russia moves we remain still; as soon as Russia moves in the north we move in the south’.³⁵³ The purpose of this principle was ‘the maintenance of the *status quo*; and, in case of the *status quo* being disturbed, to prevent any other Power establishing its supremacy in the Persian Gulf, or in Southern Persia’. Russia’s historic aim was ‘access to the sea as extensive and as free as possible – on the east, China; on the west, Persia; to the Mediterranean from the Black Sea’.³⁵⁴ Yet Russia’s relentless attempt to achieve this goal was resisted by many great powers: in Turkey, Britain and Germany blocked a Russian bid to dominate the Turkish Straits, and in China, the Anglo-Japanese alliance checked her southward advance. Persia was the only remaining possibility, and it was

³⁵¹ Ibid.

³⁵² Balfour to the King, 27 May 1903, CAB 41/28/9.

³⁵³ Balfour to Lansdowne, 6 Sep. 1902, CAB 6/1/38(i); With regard to British policy towards Persia before twentieth century, see J.B. Kelly, Britain and the Persian Gulf, 1795-1880 (London, 1968).

³⁵⁴ Memo. by Robertson, 4 Oct. 1902, CAB 6/1/38(iii).

likely that Russia would direct her spearhead there. Britain could not abandon her own right and position of ascendancy ‘not only of the Persian Gulf, but of the Southern provinces of Persia, and those provinces which border on our Indian Empire’.³⁵⁵ Thus Balfour authorised Lansdowne to issue the following statement in the House of Lords on 5 May 1903, showing Britain’s intention not to surrender to Russian pressure in Persia by stating the principle of her policy in Parliament:

I say it without hesitation – we should regard the establishment of a naval base, or of a fortified port, in the Persian Gulf by any other Power as a very grave menace to British interests, and we should certainly resist it with all the means at our disposal.³⁵⁶

However, Balfour was concerned that even if the principle itself was simple, ‘the application of the principle is not so simple’.³⁵⁷ With regard to the countermove in southern Persia, if Britain were satisfied with occupying the ports on the Persian Gulf, this could be easily achieved with a small British fleet. But if she also wanted to advance inland, she would have to consider awkward questions: how many troops would she need, and where would she find them? Therefore not only civilian departments such as the Foreign Office but also the Admiralty and the War Office

³⁵⁵ Cranborne, 22 Jan. 1902, House of Commons, CAB 4/2/71B.

³⁵⁶ Lansdowne, 5 May 1903, Hansard: Series 4, House of Lords, vol. 121, col. 1348.

³⁵⁷ Balfour to Lansdowne, 6 Sep. 1902, CAB 6/1/38(i).

attended an interdepartmental conference to discuss the many questions relating to Persia.³⁵⁸ Although he did not rule out utilising the Army and the Navy, Balfour advocated that ‘even the smallest *appearance* of military activity on our part, whether by way of massing ships or otherwise, should follow, not precede, any threatening language or movement on the part of Russia’. The reason Balfour was passive was that he believed that ‘at all events, there would be no question of a war with Russia’.³⁵⁹

However, British policymakers considered the possibility of a war with Russia in October and November 1902, repeating the argument that Balfour had presented just before the signing of the Anglo-Japanese alliance. ‘War with Russia’, Assistant Quartermaster-General Lt. General E.A. Altham stated, ‘would almost certainly involve also war with France’. The Anglo-Japanese alliance was limited to the Far East and Britain could not expect to obtain Japanese support in a war with Russia over Persia. Therefore, she had to face the question of whether she could ‘fight single-handed against the [Franco-Russian] Dual Alliance?’ Against the background of her limited military resources, Altham concluded that a war against Russia and France would plunge Britain into ‘a period of humiliating disasters, from which recovery will be most difficult’. Yet from the viewpoint of the Indian defence, Britain could not let Russia

³⁵⁸ Memo. by Battenberg, Armstrong, Sanderson, Godley, Lee-Warner, Nicholson and Altham, n.d. [19 Nov. 1902], CAB 6/1/38(v).

³⁵⁹ Balfour to Lansdowne, 6 Sep. 1902, CAB 6/1/38(i).

absorb Persia. The only remaining option was to conclude a ‘mutual understanding between Germany and Great Britain as to Asia Minor and Persia’ to checkmate Russia without risking a war.³⁶⁰ Major-General W.G. Nicholson, the Director of Military Intelligence, supported an agreement with Germany.³⁶¹ In the end, however, this proposal was abandoned due to the negative opinions of Field Marshal Sir Frederick Roberts and Brodrick, the Secretary of State for War.³⁶²

Seistan, on the border with Afghanistan, occupied a special position in Southern Persia. It provided a route into India without crossing through Afghanistan, so Britain had to prevent Russia from utilising it as a base for her operations against India. Thus, although the Government of India saw building a railway from India to Seistan as essential to the expansion of British trade, Balfour opposed a railway from the military point of view.³⁶³ Once the railway was completed, if Russia succeeded in capturing Seistan, she could use it to connect Northern Persia to India and concentrate many more troops to invade India. This was the worst-case scenario, but Balfour could not ignore the possibility of disaster. As in Afghanistan, he favoured ‘an agreement with Russia’ to

³⁶⁰ Altham to Nicholson, 14 Oct. 1902, CAB 6/1/38(iii).

³⁶¹ Nicholson to Roberts, 16 Oct. 1902, CAB 6/1/38(iii).

³⁶² Roberts to Brodrick, 24 Oct. 1902, CAB 6/1/38(iii); Memo. by Brodrick, 4 Nov. 1902, CAB 6/1/38(iii).

³⁶³ Memo. by Curzon and Kitchener, 7 Aug. 1903, CAB 6/1/30.

defer all railway-building in Seistan.³⁶⁴ In sum, his main purpose was ‘the maintenance of the *status quo* in Seistan’ from the point of view of Indian defence.³⁶⁵ Curzon and Field Marshal Viscount Kitchener of Khartoum, Commander-in-Chief of India, accepted Balfour’s opposition but left an ominous prediction in their memorandum: ‘Matters move so rapidly in the East, that in a few years from now we might find that our present opinion was out of date’.³⁶⁶

This prediction proved true, but the trigger for the rapid change was not India but the Far East. The confrontation between Japan and Russia over Korea and Manchuria had gradually been intensifying since April 1903.³⁶⁷ The growing rivalry between Japan and Russia presented both opportunities and risks for Britain. Japan sought a so-called ‘Manchuria-Korea exchange’ deal with Russia, with Japan taking Korea and Russia obtaining Manchuria.³⁶⁸ Britain feared that Japan and Russia were trying to create a sphere of influence for one another in Korea and Manchuria, which was not compatible with the Anglo-Japanese alliance because the independence and territorial integrity of China and Korea would be violated. Thus, although Britain did not clearly oppose the

³⁶⁴ Memo. by Balfour, 20 May 1903, CAB 6/1/21.

³⁶⁵ Minutes of 15th Meeting, 27 May 1903, CAB 2/1/15.

³⁶⁶ Memo. by Curzon and Kitchener, 7 Aug. 1903, CAB 6/1/30.

³⁶⁷ D. Schimmelpenninck van der Oye, Toward the Rising Sun: Russian Ideologies of Empire and the Path to War with Japan (DeKalb, 2001), pp. 187-195.

³⁶⁸ MacDonald to Lansdowne, 2 Jul. 1903, FO 46/566; MacDonald to Lansdowne, 30 Jun. 1903, Lansdowne MSS, FO 800/134.

Russo-Japanese negotiations, she warned Japan that negotiations with Russia ‘should not be conducted in a manner which might suggest that the Anglo-Japanese Agreement had been in any way impaired’.³⁶⁹ In August 1903 Japan proposed a Manchuria-Korea exchange deal to Russia, only to be rebuffed by her.³⁷⁰ As the negotiations reached deadlock and the confrontation grew, the possibility of an unsound Russo-Japanese agreement retreated. Instead, however, the possibility of the outbreak of a Russo-Japanese war loomed. Britain had to consider her policy regarding Russia and Japan, taking into account a possible war in the Far East.

Meanwhile the issue of Chilean warships tested Britain’s attitude towards Russia and Japan in October 1903. Chile had placed an order for two battleships with British yards, but had then had to sell them on the market. Britain wanted Japan to obtain them, so Lansdowne proposed guaranteeing a loan to facilitate this with the aim of strengthening the Japanese and to “‘clinch’ their friendship to us’. Moreover, Lansdowne expected that Britain’s support for Japan might encourage Russia to soften her attitude, and bring about ‘a frank understanding between us as to Manchuria, Thibet, Afghanistan, Persia &c’.³⁷¹ At first Balfour supported the idea of cooperating with

³⁶⁹ Lansdowne to Hayashi, 16 Jul. 1903, FO 46/572; Memo. by Lansdowne, 13 Jul. 1903, CAB 37/65/43.

³⁷⁰ I. Nish, The Origins of the Russo-Japanese War (London, 1985), pp. 183-187.

³⁷¹ Lansdowne to Balfour, 23 Oct. 1903, Balfour MSS, Add. MSS. 49728.

Japan to change Russia's attitude towards Britain.³⁷² Lansdowne showed his sympathy for Japan and the connection between Far Eastern politics and the Indian defence. The Russian threat to the British Empire was directed at not only the Far East but also India, and thus, Britain's policy towards Russia in the Far East inevitably affected the defence of India. British policymakers could not ignore this essential connection and had to consider a Russo-Japanese conflict from a perspective beyond Far Eastern politics.

However, Japan's slow and wavering reaction forced Britain to make another choice. Although the Earl of Selborne was constantly urging the Japanese government to buy the Chilean battleships, her offer was no higher than Russia's. If Russia obtained the warships, 'the balance of naval power in the Far East will be seriously modified'. Fearing a change in Russia's favour, Balfour discussed whether Britain should buy them instead, even though this would increase the budget deficit.³⁷³ Receiving support from the King and realising that the 'Japanese regard Russian purchase without alarm', Balfour decided to make an offer to the Chilean government on 30 November 1903 and bought the battleships for Britain.³⁷⁴ Nevertheless, Japan then proposed to purchase them from Britain on 17 December 1903. Lansdowne rejected her offer because Russia

³⁷² Balfour to Selborne, 30 Oct. 1903, Selborne MSS, MS. Selborne 34.

³⁷³ Balfour to the King, 27 Nov. 1903, CAB 41/28/23.

³⁷⁴ Correspondence between Balfour and the King, 28 Nov. 1903, Balfour MSS, Add. MSS. 49683; Balfour to the King, 30 Nov. 1903, CAB 41/28/24.

would deem the transfer of the warships from Britain to Japan as ‘a distinct declaration of hostility’.³⁷⁵ Balfour’s view of Japan was harsh. He criticised her reaction and claimed that ‘dilatoriness is hardly a sufficient explanation of a course of inaction which, as far as I can see, makes their position, either as negotiators or as combatants, almost hopeless, unless they secure an ally’.³⁷⁶ Unlike Lansdowne, Balfour showed neither support nor sympathy for Japan. On 22 December 1903, he told Lansdowne that:

We must, I take it, be most careful not to give any advice to the Japs to which, in case of war, they might point and say “you must help us, for it was through following your lead that we find ourselves in this mess”!³⁷⁷

A war in the Far East appeared inevitable now. British politicians had been discussing such a scenario and its possible ramifications since the summer of 1903. On 27 August 1903 Sir Ernest Satow, the Minister to China, warned that Russia was likely to win the war, and would ‘become the dominant Power in this part of the world, and will swallow up at that all of northern China’. He found this outcome unacceptable because ‘if Russia is victorious over Japan then, though we shall not have lost a ship or a man, we shall be powerless in the Far East’.³⁷⁸ Satow was known for his anti-Russian

³⁷⁵ Lansdowne to Balfour, 17 Dec. 1903, Balfour MSS, Add. MSS. 49728.

³⁷⁶ Balfour to Selborne and Arnold Forster, 21 Dec. 1903, Balfour MSS, Add. MSS. 49707.

³⁷⁷ Balfour to Lansdowne, 22 Dec. 1903, Balfour MSS, Add. MSS. 49728.

³⁷⁸ Satow to Lansdowne, 27 Aug. 1903, Lansdowne MSS, FO 800/120.

tendency, but not all British policy-makers agreed with his opinion.³⁷⁹ There was a consensus in the British government that Russia would win the war, so which country would be victorious was not the main topic of discussion. Rather British policy-makers focused on the danger that a Russo-Japanese conflict in the Far East might turn into a war between the Anglo-Japanese alliance and the Franco-Russian Dual Alliance. On 11 December 1903, Balfour warned the King that:

a war between Russia and Japan might draw us in: and that if we were drawn in France might find it difficult to keep out in the face of her treaty obligations. It was impossible to contemplate anything at once so horrible and so absurd as a general war brought on by Russia's impracticable attitude in Manchuria.³⁸⁰

A general war with France and Russia would not be restricted to the Far East: it might expand to India, Africa and Europe. But as Austen Chamberlain, Chancellor of the Exchequer, noted, it would be impossible for Britain to 'finance a great war, except at an absolutely ruinous cost' in the present financial conditions.³⁸¹ Britain needed to arrest any escalation of such a war by all means.

Balfour dealt actively with this dangerous situation. He asked the intelligence

³⁷⁹ T.G. Otte, “‘Not proficient in table-thumping’: Sir Ernest Satow at Peking, 1900-1906” in Diplomacy & Statecraft XIII, 2, (2002), p. 181.

³⁸⁰ Balfour to the King, 11 Dec. 1903, CAB 41/28/26.

³⁸¹ Memo. by Austen Chamberlain, 7 Dec. 1903, CAB 37/67/84.

departments of the Navy and Army for a rough estimate of the expected naval and military operations in the event of a Russo-Japanese war breaking out.³⁸² However, he had already analysed the power relations between Japan and Russia and his estimate of Japan's naval and military capacity was gloomy. He could not 'for the life of me see how, unaided by some other naval power, the Japanese are to land any effective force in Corea or Manchuria'. Balfour had no choice but to conclude that 'both diplomatically and strategically they [the Japanese] are in a very helpless position'.³⁸³ Neither did he consider Russia's naval power in the Far East sufficient for her to attack Japan itself directly, but he remarked that with her abundant soldiers Russia could easily overrun Korea, which Japan had always regarded as 'a "vital interest"'.³⁸⁴

At the same time, the British Cabinet discussed how Britain should tackle a Russo-Japanese conflict in the Far East to avoid a disastrous war with France and Russia.³⁸⁵ This discussion clearly revealed a division in the Cabinet. Selborne and Austen Chamberlain sent a letter to Lansdowne, and the debate began on 21 December 1903. Selborne was 'very anxious about the Far East' and insisted that Britain could not 'afford to see Japan smashed by Russia'. As an early advocate of the Anglo-Japanese

³⁸² Balfour to Selborne and Arnold Forster, 21 Dec. 1903, Balfour MSS, Add. MSS. 49707.

³⁸³ Balfour to Lansdowne, 22 Dec. 1903, Balfour MSS, Add. MSS. 49728.

³⁸⁴ Balfour to Selborne and Arnold Forster, 21 Dec. 1903, Balfour MSS, Add. MSS. 49707.

³⁸⁵ Otte, China Question, pp. 312-318; Neilson, Britain and the Last Tsar, pp. 238-243.

alliance, Selborne could not endure the idea that Japan's defeat would also wreck his policy. Moreover, he was worried that 'our intervention might also entail that of France, and we and France might be driven into war, an appalling calamity!!' Selborne's solution was to cooperate with France in applying joint pressure on Russia to prevent the outbreak of a war. Japan favoured this diplomatic option. By acknowledging Japan's 'special and exclusive interest in Corea and ... her treaty rights in Manchuria', Britain would prepare to prevent the destruction of Japan, and France would not support Russia in resisting 'so reasonable a proposal'. Selborne concluded that this Anglo-French combination would deter Russia and 'surely there will not be war'.³⁸⁶

Austen Chamberlain was more robust, and pondered the Far Eastern situation from a global perspective. He regarded a Russo-Japanese war as 'the moment for securing whatever we require as a guarantee for our future security in Seistan and in the Persian Gulf, and generally for settling all outstanding questions with Persia'. This perception was based on his fear that if Russia beat Japan and was free of the dispute in the Far East, her inclination to negotiate a settlement of outstanding questions with Britain would evaporate. Thus Chamberlain insisted that Britain should take advantage of Russia's preoccupation and embarrassments to strengthen her position against Russia.

³⁸⁶ Selborne to Lansdowne, 21 Dec. 1903, Balfour MSS, Add. MSS. 49728.

He suggested that the British policy elites should ‘take a leaf out of the notebook of German diplomacy, and for once play a selfish but national game’.³⁸⁷

Lansdowne was inclined to support Selborne rather than Chamberlain, but his policy was to put Anglo-French-American pressure on both Russia and Japan to avoid the outbreak of a war. Like Selborne, Lansdowne considered that Britain should not ‘allow Japan to be invaded’, and must ‘leave no stone unturned’ in preventing a Russo-Japanese war. Lansdowne preferred more neutral mediation to that of Selborne and expected that America might take the initiative in this. First, Britain, France and perhaps America should persuade Russia to draw up an agreement over Manchuria which Japan could accept. Then they would ‘tell the Japanese distinctly that they must be content with the best bargain they can get as to Korea’.³⁸⁸ Unlike Selborne, Lansdowne did not hesitate to urge Japan to moderate her demands. But he was more sympathetic to Japan than Chamberlain and was trying to save her from possible ruin by preventing war.

Balfour was not convinced by Lansdowne’s argument and sided with Chamberlain’s neo-Bismarckian diplomacy.³⁸⁹ He was sceptical about the likelihood of Japan being invaded and devastated by Russia. According to his calculations, Russia’s naval forces

³⁸⁷ Austen Chamberlain to Lansdowne, 21 Dec. 1903, Balfour MSS, Add. MSS. 49728.

³⁸⁸ Lansdowne to Balfour, 22 Dec. 1903, Balfour MSS, Add. MSS. 49728.

³⁸⁹ Otte, China Question, p. 313.

in the Far East would be superior to those of Japan, so she would be able to prevent Japanese troops landing in Korea. Yet Russia would not be strong enough to invade Japan directly. Balfour envisaged that a Russo-Japanese war ‘would not “smash” Japan in the sense of wiping it out as a military Power’. If Japan were not crushed under any circumstances, Britain ‘should let her work out her own salvation in her own way’. To Balfour, Lansdowne’s mediation plan would force Japan to moderate her demands, offend the sentiments of the Japanese people and create antagonism against Britain.³⁹⁰ He concluded that Britain should not mediate a conflict between Japan and Russia which would be likely to result in stalemate.

The stalemate would benefit Britain. Balfour predicted that Russia would occupy the Korean Peninsula, but that this new territory would be ‘a new and very heavy burden upon Russian finance’. While Britain cared little for Korea, Japan saw it as a vital interest and would therefore try to recover it by any means, so Russia would have to concentrate her army and navy in the Far East for a long time. This would weaken the Russian military threat to other regions, in particular India. British mediation would not only hinder these favourable conditions but also strengthen Russia’s position against Japan in the Far East. Balfour observed that Britain should not interfere in a

³⁹⁰ Memo. by Balfour, 22 Dec. 1903, CAB 37/67/92.

Russo-Japanese conflict; this would be possible because the Anglo-Japanese alliance only required Britain ‘to “keep the ring”’ in a war against just one belligerent. Although Balfour detested ‘all war, and on general principles would always try to stop it’, a Russo-Japanese war was exceptional. ‘Both “before, during and after” its outbreak’, he stated, ‘it is likely to do wonders in making Russia amenable to sweet reason’.³⁹¹ There was no reason to prevent such an advantageous war, so Britain should stay her hand.

Balfour’s policy towards a Far Eastern war was based on his serious consideration of Russia as a threat to the British Empire not only in the Far East but also in India and Central Asia. In his draft memorandum of 21 December 1903 he often referred to Central Asia and India, even when discussing Far Eastern politics, clearly demonstrating that he considered Britain’s policy on a Russo-Japanese conflict in a global and imperial rather than a regional context. He was pessimistic about reaching a permanent agreement with Russia over Central Asia and the Far East. Yet, however momentary, temporary arrangements would be better than nothing, because ‘they smooth things for the time being’. Furthermore, Balfour realised the difficulty of negotiating with Russia over Asia. The purpose of British policy in Asia was not to gain new territory but to make her existing possessions secure. However, Russia was aiming at ‘pressing forward

³⁹¹ Balfour to Selborne, 23 Dec. 1903, Balfour MSS, Add. MSS. 49707.

Eastward and Southward', and Balfour feared that Russian politicians believed that 'if she could secure a position of strategical superiority along our Indian frontier we should be so much afraid of her in Asia as to be her very humble servant in Europe'. The difference in the two countries' objectives made bargaining difficult. Britain could not react to Russia's encroachment of China, Persia and Afghanistan by expanding her own territory. An aggressive and expansive policy would add to Russia's strength but weaken Britain's strategic position. Even with this gloomy forecast, Balfour did not abandon hope for a temporary agreement with Russia. However, he expressed the reservation that if Russia broke 'certain well-defined principles (e.g. the integrity of Afghanistan)', Britain should regard such behaviour as a *casus belli*. According to Balfour, these were 'the only principles governing our relations in Asia which are likely to be permanently observed'. As he indicated, it would not be easy to formulate these principles.³⁹² But at least, the integrity of Afghanistan, which was vital to the defence of India, was the basis of his policy towards Russia in Asia, including the Far East.

Balfour's policy faced fierce opposition from his ministerial colleagues. Although Selborne agreed that Britain should not force Japan to abate her demands, he insisted that Balfour's argument had 'a fatal flaw'. Selborne's counter-memorandum of 24

³⁹² Memo. by Balfour, 21 Dec. 1903, Balfour MSS, Add. MSS. 49728.

December 1903 revealed that the problem was not whether Japan was invaded directly but whether the Japanese navy would survive a war with Russia. If war broke out, Russia would occupy Korea and fortify the port of Masampho in southern Korea. Japan would resist this by all means possible, including fleet action, because Russia's control of Korea would be 'a question of life and death' for Japan. Russia could defeat Japan's navy with reinforcements of warships from the Mediterranean and cause 'the disappearance of the Japanese battle fleet'. Britain could not accept this possibility which 'would inevitably entail increased naval expenditure on our part', so Selborne concluded that Britain could not allow Japan to be crushed at sea.³⁹³

Lansdowne also opposed Balfour's policy, expatiating Selborne's argument. The Foreign Secretary's estimate of Japan's naval power was more favourable than Selborne's; he argued that Japan would be able to send her expeditionary forces to Korea and occupy Masampho for some time. However, by the autumn of 1904 Russia would dominate the situation and 'might impose terms on Japan which would wipe the latter out as a military power, and obliterate her fleet', which could render Japan 'an almost negligible factor in Far Eastern politics', and this disadvantage would outweigh any advantages accrued from Russia's possible entanglement in the Far East.

³⁹³ Selborne to Lansdowne, 24 December 1903, CAB 37/67/94.

Lansdowne summed up the three risks involved in a Russo-Japanese war:

1. The possibility that our ally may be crushed.
2. The possibility that we ourselves may become implicated, not on account of our Treaty engagement to Japan, but because the British public will not sit still while the crushing is being done.
3. The aggravation of our present financial difficulties, already grave enough.³⁹⁴

For these reasons, Lansdowne wanted Britain to play the role of mediator to avert a Russo-Japanese war. He advocated a multilateral arrangement with all the powers that had interests in Manchuria, to maintain the *status quo*.

Lansdowne's proposal was countered by Austen Chamberlain. The Chancellor expressed doubt about the utility of such a mediation based on the same logic as Balfour's. If, as Lansdowne observed, Japan possessed naval predominance at the present moment and Russia would dominate the situation a year later, Japan should fight at once before she lost her favourable position. Chamberlain summarised Japan's feeling: 'Now is her time to secure herself'. Under the circumstances, Britain's unsought-for intervention would incur 'a great responsibility, and probably great distrust and ill-will on the part of the Japanese people'. Chamberlain was also loath to accept Lansdowne's multilateral arrangements because he did not want Britain to 'take any

³⁹⁴ Lansdowne to Balfour, 24 Dec. 1903, CAB 37/67/93.

responsibility towards Japan for its due observance'.³⁹⁵ Chamberlain did not put forward a policy of his own, but his opposition to Lansdowne resulted in support for Balfour.

Lansdowne and Selborne's opposition could not shake Balfour's confidence. On 26 December 1903 he replied to Lansdowne that Russia could not invade Japan, that Japan would not 'be crushed' and that British public opinion would not require the government to go to war.³⁹⁶ In his answer to Selborne he pointed out a fundamental flaw in the Anglo-Japanese alliance: if it required Britain to enter a war to support Japan at any time, it would be 'absurdly one-sided'. Under the term of the alliance, Japan was not obliged to help Britain to 'prevent Amsterdam falling into the hands of the French, or Holland falling into the hands of the Germans'. More importantly, Japan would not 'involve herself in any quarrel we might have over the north-west frontier of India'. This was a repetition of his strong opposition to an alliance with Japan in December 1901. Furthermore, Balfour reminded Selborne that 'though Russia's resources in men are unlimited, her resources in money are not'; the expenditure of her financial resources in the Far East would render her impotent everywhere else. With regard to Russia's naval power, even if Japan were defeated in a naval battle and her battle fleet

³⁹⁵ Memo. by Austen Chamberlain, 25 Dec. 1903, CAB 37/67/96.

³⁹⁶ Balfour to Lansdowne, 26 Dec. 1903, Balfour MSS, Add. MSS. 49728.

was lost, ‘Russia could not come out of it unscathed’. Balfour believed that a Russo-Japanese war ‘would render Russia innocuous for some little time to come’, so Britain should not prevent the war through unnecessary mediation.³⁹⁷

Balfour’s letter to the King of 28 December 1903 also demonstrated that his views were unchanged. He stressed that Britain was ‘under no treaty obligations to fight unless France joins Russia against Japan’ and that France would ‘not join Russia unless we first join Japan’. Britain would enter a war only if Russia was about to crush Japan, but this contingency was ‘exceedingly improbable’. A war between Japan and Russia in which Britain did not intervene, would not be ‘an unmixed curse’ because it would weaken Russia’s financial and military capabilities. As a result, Balfour remarked, Russia ‘would be much easier to deal with, both in Asia and in Europe, than she is at present’. On the other hand, British mediation would hurt the feelings of the Japanese people and lead them to regard the British as ‘false friends who were really backing up Russia’. This would diminish the value of the Anglo-Japanese alliance, and Britain ‘should lose Japan in trying to save it’.³⁹⁸

Balfour concluded the discussions with a lengthy memorandum on 29 December. He declared that under the Anglo-Japanese alliance, Britain did not assume moral

³⁹⁷ Balfour to Selborne, 29 Dec. 1903, Balfour MSS, Add. MSS. 49707.

³⁹⁸ Balfour to the King, 28 Dec. 1903, Balfour MSS, Add. MSS. 49683.

obligations that exceeded her legal ones. Therefore every demand made of Britain beyond the latter 'should be considered solely in the light of British interests, present and future'. If Japan were 'crushed' and reduced to 'a position of military impotence', this would be contrary to British interests. Balfour, however, insisted that the chance of such a situation was '*none*'. Although Russia could overrun Korea, Japan would not be directly invaded. Britain should consider whether 'Russia, as a world Power, would be stronger all along the vast line of her frontier, from the Baltic to Vladivostock, if she added Corea to her dominions'. Balfour believed that the occupation of Korea would drain Russia of her financial resources, invite Japan's bid to retake Korea, and force Russia to concentrate her army and navy in the Far East to prepare for Japan's retribution. On the other hand, British intervention would bring France into the Russian camp, and a Russo-Japanese war would become 'a world-wide war'. Balfour worried that only Germany would benefit from such an unexampled calamity.

As stated above, Balfour did not limit his analysis to the Far East. This was because Russia's threat to the British Empire was not only in the Far East but also in Europe and India. He argued that Britain should fear Russia chiefly as '(a) the ally of France; (b) the invader of India; (c) the dominating influence in Persia; and (d) the possible disturber of European peace'. Even if she won a war in the Far East, Russia would be not stronger

but weaker from these four perspectives. As a result, a Franco-Russian combination against Britain would not operate well in Europe and India. Furthermore, Balfour expected that Russia's 'whole diplomacy, from the Black Sea to the Oxus, might be weakened into something distantly resembling sweet reasonableness'. Resting on 'a cool calculation of national interests', Balfour concluded that Britain should maintain strict neutrality and allow Japan to fight the war alone.³⁹⁹ He did not modify his strategic calculations and kept to the same argument and policy from the beginning to the end of the discussion.

Lansdowne and Selborne were not yet convinced by Balfour's argument. Both of them had gloomier expectations of a war between Russia and Japan. Although Lansdowne agreed that Russia's occupation of Korea would not strengthen her position against Britain all over the world, he had more misgivings than Balfour did about 'a serious defeat of Japan by Russia'. That defeat would deprive Japan of 'her position as a naval Power in Far Eastern waters and of her value as an ally'.⁴⁰⁰ Thus, he desired to avert a Russo-Japanese war. Selborne was also concerned about the destruction of Japan's naval power in the war, the consequence of which would be 'a disturbance of the present balance of naval power wholly to our disadvantage'. Furthermore, Selborne

³⁹⁹ Memo. by Balfour, 29 Dec. 1903, CAB 37/67/97.

⁴⁰⁰ Lansdowne to Balfour, 29 Dec. 1903, Balfour MSS, Add. MSS. 49728.

predicted that a decisive defeat would cause Japan to abandon the idea of revenge against Russia and try to seek a peaceful agreement with her for the purpose of ‘enjoying her friendship & patronage’.⁴⁰¹ Selborne insisted that Britain should prevent the war by mediation. However, Balfour obtained the King’s assent and pushed his own opinion through as official British policy.⁴⁰²

Once the discussion ended, Balfour immediately put his policy into practice. As Lansdowne noted, Japan had been so concerned about her lack of financial resources that she had asked Britain for financial assistance just before the outbreak of the war.⁴⁰³ But Balfour had rejected this request because guaranteeing a war loan to Japan was ‘as near as possible an “act of war”’ against Russia. Moreover, if Britain were dragged into the war, she would have to use ‘every shilling of credit’ for herself.⁴⁰⁴ As representative of the Treasury, Austen Chamberlain shared Balfour’s strong opposition to a financial loan to Japan and the Japanese government had to seek a private loan without the guarantee of the British government. Not only attempting to maintain neutrality but also taking the worst case scenario into consideration, Balfour could not offer financial assistance to her ally.

⁴⁰¹ Selborne to Balfour, 31 Dec. 1903, Balfour MSS, Add. MSS. 49707.

⁴⁰² Knollys to Balfour, 30 Dec. 1903, Balfour MSS, Add. MSS. 49683.

⁴⁰³ Lansdowne to Balfour, 29 Dec. 1903, Balfour MSS, Add. MSS. 49728.

⁴⁰⁴ Balfour to Lansdowne, 31 Dec. 1903, Balfour MSS, Add. MSS. 49728.

The CID was a crucial institution for the implementation of Balfour's policy. On 4 January 1904 Balfour convened a meeting of the CID to discuss British action in a conflict between Japan and Russia in the Far East. The Prime Minister had received military intelligence reports from the War Office. Assistant Quartermaster-General Lt. General E.A. Altham agreed that Britain could maintain neutrality during a Russo-Japanese war, but emphasised the importance of preparatory measures in case of her becoming involved in the war. His proposed measures covered a wide range of points including transportation routes and supplies, but the main concern was sending reinforcements to India to defend her from the Russian threat.⁴⁰⁵ General Sir Henry Brackenbury, the Director General of Ordnance, took the same line, advocating the despatch of a small British force from South Africa to Singapore or Hong Kong.⁴⁰⁶ On receiving this military intelligence, Balfour concluded that Britain 'could take no action at the present moment in the direction of a threat to Russia or a guarantee to Japan'. However, he did not approve all the preparatory measures suggested by the War Office and refused to send British troops to the Far East.⁴⁰⁷ After a long and controversial discussion, Britain decided to adopt strict neutrality in the event of a Russo-Japanese conflict.

⁴⁰⁵ Altham to Nicholson, 31 Dec. 1903, CAB 4/13B.

⁴⁰⁶ Brackenbury to Arnold Forster, 31 Dec. 1903, CAB 4/13B.

⁴⁰⁷ Minutes of 29th Meeting, 4 Jan. 1904, CAB 2/1/29.

IV.

Following the outbreak of the Russo-Japanese War on 8 February 1904, Balfour's concern about the defence of India remained strong. He predicted that the outcome of the war would be advantageous in terms of the defence of India. However, this did not mean that Britain did not have to consider India during the war. Receiving information from Meshed in north-eastern Persia that Russia was saving munitions for her troops on 2 March 1904, Balfour stressed the need for careful preparation for any possible war with Russia.⁴⁰⁸ As his telegram to Lord Roberts showed, Balfour regarded India as 'the weakest spot in our Imperial armour'.⁴⁰⁹ Even if Russia fought in the Far East, she might take advantage of the threat to India to extract diplomatic concessions from Britain.⁴¹⁰ Thus Lord Roberts was asked to consider measures to 'meet possible demonstrations on her [Russia's] part towards India in the near future, as an outcome of the present conditions in the Far East'.⁴¹¹ British policymakers had to observe the progress of the war in the Far East relating to the situation in India.

⁴⁰⁸ Minutes of 32nd Meeting, 2 Mar. 1904, CAB 2/1/32.

⁴⁰⁹ Balfour to Roberts, 8 Apr. 1904, Balfour MSS, Add. MSS. 49725.

⁴¹⁰ Brodrick to Curzon, 25 Mar. 1904, Curzon MSS, MSS Eur. F111/163.

⁴¹¹ Memo. by Roberts, 9 Jun. 1904, CAB 6/2/54D.

The front line in the defence of India was still the north-western frontier. Balfour's doubts as to the value of Afghanistan as a buffer state did not change with the outbreak of the Russo-Japanese War. On 24 March 1904, he emphasised the need to consider Britain's strategic policy if 'the Afghans were to join the Russians'.⁴¹² In accordance with traditional policy Britain should continue to subsidise the present Amir to strengthen his army to fight Russia. But Balfour's opinion was 'quite the other way'. He insisted that:

Afghanistan is invaluable to us as a defence against Russia, not because the Afghans are a warlike and independent people, who could be counted upon to give us effectual aid against the invader, but because Afghanistan, as it now is, presents most formidable obstacles to an attack on the Indian frontier, by reason of the absence of roads, railways, food-stuffs, and transport animals, in addition to the natural defences presented by the conformation of the country.⁴¹³

If Afghanistan became formidable, the Amir would take advantage of the threat to throw in his lot with Russia in order to extract further subsidies from Britain. However, if Afghanistan were still weak, faced with the threat of war with Russia, he would have no choice but to cooperate with Britain. Therefore, Balfour concluded, Britain should 'give up the hope of turning Afghanistan into a powerful *ally*', and avoid 'the fear that she

⁴¹² Minutes of 36th Meeting, 24 Mar. 1904, CAB 2/1/36.

⁴¹³ Memo. by Balfour, 23 Jul. 1904, CAB 6/2/62D.

may prove a powerful *enemy*'.⁴¹⁴

Colonel George Clarke, the secretary to the CID, supported Balfour's idea. Clarke paid more attention to the Afghan tribesmen than to the Amir. In contrast to earlier periods, many tribesmen could now obtain large quantities of arms and ammunition. These powerful tribesmen rendered Afghanistan 'far more difficult to invade either by Russia or by ourselves than formerly, the nature of the country being admirably adapted to guerilla [sic] warfare'. Even though Britain supported the Amir and had trained his army, these measures would not be useful for suppressing tribesmen. More importantly, Clarke argued that Japan's unexpected victories in the Russo-Japanese War might encourage the Afghans to incline toward independence and defy both Russia and Britain. Thus strengthening Afghanistan would be not only useless but also dangerous. The conclusion Clarke reached was to leave the Afghans alone. He foresaw that even if the Afghan tribesmen became strong, they would be beaten by Russia and would beg Britain for her assistance in the long run.⁴¹⁵

As Clarke pointed out, the influence of the unexpected Japanese victories on Afghanistan was significant. Many Afghans were strongly interested in the war, and most were pro-Japanese. Both Muslims and Hindus hoped for Japan's success and were

⁴¹⁴ Ibid.

⁴¹⁵ Memo. by Clarke, 6 Aug. 1904, Balfour MSS, Add. MSS. 49700.

excited by her victories.⁴¹⁶ The Amir was no exception; encouraged by Japan's victories over Russia, he believed that 'the Afghans could be made as efficient as the Japanese'.⁴¹⁷ He regarded Japan as a model for modernised Afghanistan, so he studied her history and emphasised the importance of education. Furthermore, he saw the Russo-Japanese War as a war between East and West. He offered the analogy that 'civilization was like the sun, which rises in the East and sets in the West', and concluded that '[t]he time has now come ... for the second rising of civilization in the East to take place, and Japan is an example of this'.⁴¹⁸

Balfour and other politicians, however, did not share the Afghans' enthusiasm. In October 1904, Curzon submitted his own review of British policy towards Afghanistan to the Cabinet. In his memorandum he stated that the 'example of Japan, to which the Amir is in the habit of alluding, presents no analogy whatever to the condition of Afghanistan'. Balfour agreed with Curzon's negative view of the Amir and Afghanistan. Balfour described the Amir as being in a 'state of "swollen head," which makes him compare Afghanistan to Japan'. The Amir's attitude aggravated the difficulties of Britain's traditional policy of turning Afghanistan into a buffer state. Balfour insisted that 'it seems doubly dangerous to sharpen for him [the Amir] a weapon which may

⁴¹⁶ Roberts to Balfour, 28 Jun. 1904, Balfour MSS, Add. MSS. 49725.

⁴¹⁷ Minutes of 52nd Meeting, 3 Aug. 1904, CAB 2/1/52.

⁴¹⁸ Reports by Dobbs, 23 Aug. 1904, CAB 6/2/70D.

make him aggressive towards Russia, and which in an emergency [sic] may possibly be turned against ourselves'. Therefore, the Afghans' increasing confidence as a result of the Russo-Japanese War strengthened Balfour's idea of a policy of non-intervention towards Afghanistan. He concluded that:

If Afghanistan is to be, under all temptation, a faithful ally, the stronger she could be made the better for us. But her fidelity is doubtful; and her inalienable value to us lies, not in the efficiency of her army, but in her difficult passes and barren ranges.⁴¹⁹

However, as Kitchener had indicated, the Amir seemed inspired with the idea 'that he, like the Japanese, would be capable of not only withstanding but of defeating Russia'.⁴²⁰ It was clear that Britain's control over Afghanistan was further decreasing and that Afghanistan's action would change the international situation regarding the defence of India.

The Amir and the tribes in Afghanistan also mattered from the viewpoint of cooperation between Britain and India. Their attitude was a serious factor in Britain's strategic scheme for the defence of India. Balfour realised that Britain's dealings with

⁴¹⁹ Memo. by Balfour, 12 Oct. 1904, CAB 37/72/125.

⁴²⁰ Memo. by Kitchener, 7 Oct. 1904, CAB 37/72/122.

them was 'largely a question of Indian diplomacy'.⁴²¹ British diplomacy towards Afghanistan should be conducted by the Indian government and carried out with its full consent. Thus it was vital for London to secure the cooperation of Delhi. Balfour was dissatisfied that the government of India had 'largely failed both with the tribes and the Amir'. In the summer of 1904 Curzon was supposed to return to Britain and attend the CID, and Balfour hoped that a discussion with him would ameliorate the coordination of Britain and India over Afghanistan.⁴²²

However, it was Tibet that prevented smooth Anglo-Indian cooperation. Although Balfour and other Cabinet colleagues were opposed to an expedition to Tibet, Major Francis Younghusband started to advance there under Curzon's orders in the summer of 1903.⁴²³ Younghusband finally entered Lhasa and made an agreement with Tibet in August 1904, but had caused some armed conflicts with Tibetans during his military campaign.⁴²⁴ This adventurous expedition provoked anger and anxiety among British policymakers in London; Brodrick, the Secretary of State for India, reminded Younghusband that even though Curzon desired the permanent occupation of Tibet, the

⁴²¹ Balfour to Roberts, 8 Apr. 1904, Balfour MSS, Add. MSS. 49725.

⁴²² Balfour to Selborne, 6 Apr. 1904, Balfour MSS, Add. MSS. 49707.

⁴²³ W. Palace, The British Empire and Tibet, 1900-1922 (Abingdon, 2005), pp.5-6.

⁴²⁴ Younghusband described these conflicts as 'terrible and ghastly', but he blamed Tibetans for their unfriendly attitude. See F. Younghusband, India and Tibet: A history of the relations which have subsisted between the two countries from the time of Warren Hastings to 1910; With a particular account of the mission to Lhasa of 1904 (London, 1910), pp. 178-179.

British Cabinet ‘had no intention of remaining there permanently or of keeping a force there during this winter at any serious military risk’.⁴²⁵ Balfour, unusually, showed his anger at Younghusband’s disobedience, stating that Younghusband had driven Britain into ‘a most abominable mess’. His fury led him to remark aggressively: ‘Younghusband will have to be publicly repudiated!’⁴²⁶

This controversy demonstrated that Balfour was considering Tibet from the standpoint of India. There were two reasons for his objection to the ‘forward’ policy, namely Younghusband’s expedition to Tibet. Firstly, it was inexpedient to add to the military burden of the government of India. This concern was acute because the completion of the Russian railways to Afghanistan was greatly increasing the Indian government’s military responsibilities. Secondly, Tibet was technically part of the Chinese Empire and its occupation would contradict the British pledge to maintain the integrity of China. Moreover, Balfour was concerned that the contradiction between the home government and local officers on the spot would damage the credibility of British diplomacy. According to him, Russia had lost her credibility because her government’s conciliatory promises were often broken by the aggressive policies of her local officers. Younghusband’s expedition to Tibet was precisely ‘copying the least creditable methods

⁴²⁵ Brodrick to Salisbury, 15 Sep. 1904, Balfour MSS, Add. MSS. 49757.

⁴²⁶ Balfour to Alice Balfour, 4 Oct. 1904, Balfour MSS, Add. MSS. 49757.

of Russian diplomacy'.⁴²⁷ Balfour still hoped to make a direct arrangement with Russia in Central Asia, but it was ironic that the adoption of Russian methods should damage Britain's credibility, creating difficulties in making such an arrangement.

Balfour specified British policy regarding Persia, including Seistan, in the Russo-Japanese War. Although Britain had decided to maintain strict neutrality, her policymakers discussed defending India against the Russian threat, concentrating on the north-west frontier of India. The vital problem was that while Russia could strike at Britain through Afghanistan at any time, Britain could 'hit back at her nowhere'.⁴²⁸ Admiral Sir Walter Kerr, First Naval Lord, summed up how Russia was 'very unassailable to a sea power with a small army' owing to her geographical position.⁴²⁹ Selborne did not accept this and suggested to Balfour that 'the whole Russian coastline should be subjected to a microscopic examination'.⁴³⁰ Selborne did not confine this suggestion to Persia but included '[e]very possible point of access to Russia by Baltic, by Black Sea, by Persian Gulf, by Pacific, by India, by China'.⁴³¹ Balfour's reply also had a global perspective. He agreed to examine 'the Russian Frontier from the Baltic to Vladivostock', and found that the Persian Gulf appeared to be the easiest point of attack.

⁴²⁷ Balfour to Knollys, 6 Oct. 1904, Balfour MSS, Add. MSS. 49684.

⁴²⁸ Selborne to Kerr, 1 Apr. 1904, Balfour MSS, Add. MSS. 49707.

⁴²⁹ Kerr to Selborne, 2 Apr. 1904, Balfour MSS, Add. MSS. 49707.

⁴³⁰ Selborne to Balfour, 5 Apr. 1904, Balfour MSS, Add. MSS. 49707.

⁴³¹ Selborne to Kerr, 1 Apr. 1904, Balfour MSS, Add. MSS. 49707.

However, he doubted the practicability of attacking Russia. He saw Russia's real weakness as financial, and did not believe that 'Russia is vulnerable in any mortal spot except her Exchequer'. He preferred to wait for the Russo-Japanese War to weaken Russia's finances seriously.⁴³²

However, if Russia tried to dominate Persia, Britain would have to check her. From 'the point of view of Imperial Defence', Balfour stated Britain's reasons for preventing Russia from taking control of Persia:

- (a.) That Russia would then be able, in time of peace, and at leisure, to establish secondary bases for an advance on India through Kandahar or through Baluchistan.
- (b.) That she would be in a convenient position to stir up local discontent in Baluchistan.
- (c.) That she might arrange the Persian railway system so as to acquire a third line in addition to the two already constructed, or in process of construction, connecting *her* European with *our* Indian possessions.
- (d.) That she might create a naval base on the Persian coast which would threaten our sea communication with Bombay and Kurrachee.⁴³³

Balfour realised that Russia would not try to invade Persia directly, fearing that a disturbance of the *status quo* would involve world-wide war with Britain. What worried him was that she might increase her political influence in Persia through trade and

⁴³² Balfour to Selborne, 6 Apr. 1904, Balfour MSS, Add. MSS. 49707.

⁴³³ Memo. by Balfour, 22 Apr. 1904, CAB 6/1/46.

eventually Russianise that country. Britain should take peaceful rather than military measures to counteract Russia's infiltration of Persia. Balfour advocated the use of 'the ordinary weapons of international diplomacy' and support for the Persian monarchy in resisting Russia.⁴³⁴

In connection with Seistan, Balfour paid special attention to Chabar, a port in southern Persia. Seistan was important because it could provide Russia with a suitable base from which to attack India. Balfour considered 'the military occupation of Seistan by Russia a *casus belli*', and tried to limit her influence in that province. However, this was not sufficient for the defence of India. Russia was actively building railways to connect her European region with Persia via Seistan. It was predicted that these would extend as far as the Indian Ocean. The railway network in Persia might enable Russia not only to deploy a large number of troops near the Indian border but also to menace British sea communications with India. Chabar, which could easily be fortified, was the most suitable port for the termination of the Russian railways. Therefore, Britain's occupation of Chabar had the potential to put a stop to the whole Russian railway scheme. Balfour concluded that the main purpose of occupying Chabar was to 'prevent the would-be invader from making in time of peace preparation which in time of war

⁴³⁴ Ibid.

would render invasion relatively easy'.⁴³⁵ He saw the occupation of Chabar as permissible because its occupation and defence would not entail enormous financial cost.

Even after the Russo-Japanese War broke out, Balfour did not change his mind about Indian security. He still wanted a non-intervention policy towards Afghanistan and a direct arrangement with Russia over Central Asia. There was no place for the Anglo-Japanese alliance in Balfour's policy on the defence of India and its adjacent region. However, the Russo-Japanese War had an impact not only on the Far East but also on India. In addition, Anglo-Russian relations could not escape the effect of the war although Britain maintained strict neutrality. Soon Balfour would face the change of international situation surrounding the Indian defence and have no choice but to review his policy towards the defence of India and the Anglo-Japanese alliance.

Despite Britain's strict neutrality during the Russo-Japanese War, relations between Britain and Russia gradually deteriorated. In the summer of 1904 the Russian volunteer fleet posed a dangerous threat to the security of British ships. This fleet consisted of private merchant ships, but the Russian government converted them into warships.⁴³⁶

The volunteer fleet's status was 'in the highest degree ambiguous', and if Britain was to

⁴³⁵ Ibid.

⁴³⁶ K. Neilson, "A Dangerous Game of American Poker": Britain and the Russo-Japanese War' in Journal of Strategic Studies XII, 1, (1989), pp. 69-70.

avoid all-out war with Russia, Balfour had to consider how to deal with it.⁴³⁷ Warning that Russia was ‘under the delusion that a conciliatory attitude is a weak attitude’, Balfour insisted that Britain’s tougher stance would ‘conduce to peace rather than to war’.⁴³⁸ He made a strong speech in the House of Commons to inform Russia of Britain’s intolerance of any Russian seizure of British merchant vessels.⁴³⁹ However, he was careful to make the speech ‘without being in any way offensive to the Russian Government’.⁴⁴⁰

The Dogger Bank incident required Balfour to walk this fine line further. On its way to the Far East the Russian Baltic Fleet sank several British trawlers off the Dogger Bank on 21 October 1904.⁴⁴¹ This fuelled public anger in Britain, and Anglo-Russian relations became highly volatile.⁴⁴² Balfour’s attitude to this crisis was the same as his attitude to the Russian volunteer fleet. While he presented a strong stance on Russia, he tempered it to avoid driving the crisis into an uncontrollable confrontation with her.⁴⁴³ He knew that the British navy was strong enough to beat the Baltic Fleet, but did not want to ‘bring the country [Britain] perilously near to overt hostilities’. Thus, in his

⁴³⁷ Balfour to the King, 19 Jul. 1904, CAB 41/29/26.

⁴³⁸ Balfour to the King, 11 Aug. 1904, CAB 41/29/31.

⁴³⁹ Balfour, 11 Aug. 1904, Hansard: Series 4, House of Commons, vol. 140, cols. 271-277.

⁴⁴⁰ Balfour to Lansdowne, 25 Aug. 1904, Balfour MSS, Add. MSS. 49728.

⁴⁴¹ Nish, The Anglo-Japanese Alliance, pp. 289-290.

⁴⁴² T.G. Otte, ‘The fragmenting of the old world order: Britain, the Great Powers, and the war’ in R. Kowner, (ed.) The Impact of the Russo-Japanese War (Abingdon, 2007), pp. 97-98.

⁴⁴³ Balfour to Selborne, 24 Oct. 1904, Selborne MSS MS. Selborne 39; Neilson, Britain and the Last Tsar, pp. 255-256.

public address at Southampton on 28 October 1904, he paid the closest attention to his

words to prevent Russia from interpreting the address as a declaration of war.⁴⁴⁴

Although Russia promised to punish the guilty officers on 2 November, Balfour

considered that ‘the prospects were gloomy’ and continued to discuss measures for

dealing with her.⁴⁴⁵ The CID discussed various possibilities and decided to shadow the

Baltic Fleet, although it warned that this ‘might provoke the catastrophe it was intended

to avoid’.⁴⁴⁶

Among the many potential clash points with Russia, Balfour directed his attention to

the Persian Gulf, which, he remarked, ‘is now one of the sensitive spots on the world’s

surface, and we ought to be careful not to get involved, unconsciously, in some

far-reaching embroilment’.⁴⁴⁷ Russia’s occupation of ports in the Persian Gulf ‘would

inevitably involve Great Britain in increased naval expenditure, and would undoubtedly

have a considerable political effect by increasing Russian prestige’.⁴⁴⁸ He cited

Lansdowne’s House of Lords speech of 5 May 1903 once more, and demonstrated that

Britain’s will to defend the Persian Gulf was unshaken. If the Russian Baltic Fleet

occupied any ports in the Persian Gulf, Britain would withdraw her ambassador from St.

⁴⁴⁴ Memo. by Balfour, 26 Oct. 1904, Balfour MSS, Add. MSS. 49698.

⁴⁴⁵ Balfour to the King, 2 Nov. 1904, CAB 41/29/34.

⁴⁴⁶ Minutes of 56th Meeting, 12 Nov. 1904, CAB 2/1/56.

⁴⁴⁷ Balfour to Lansdowne, 6 Dec. 1904, Balfour MSS, Add. MSS. 49729.

⁴⁴⁸ Minutes of 57th Meeting, 16 Nov. 1904, CAB 2/1/57.

Petersburg and concentrate her superior naval force at Bombay to deal with the occupation. In his report to the King on 19 November 1904, Balfour hoped that Russia had no intention of entering the Persian Gulf, but underscored that it was 'necessary to be prepared for the worst, should the worst unhappily come about'.⁴⁴⁹

During the discussion about the Persian Gulf, Chabar came up again. Although Chabar lay outside the Persian Gulf, Balfour regarded Russia's potential occupation of it as 'a direct menace to Baluchistan, Karachi, and Bombay'. From the viewpoint of the defence of India, this could not be permitted. Seeing the potential occupation of Chabar by the Russian Baltic Fleet as 'an unfriendly act', Balfour decided to adopt the same measures as he would apply in the Persian Gulf.⁴⁵⁰ This led to another decision: if the Russian fleet did not try to enter Chabar or the Persian Gulf, Britain would not disturb it on its way to the Far East. Balfour understood that this transaction might hurt Japan's feelings, but supposed that it would not be 'a technical breach of neutrality'.⁴⁵¹ Moreover, it was more important for him to protect British interests in Persia and India. As he had with the Russian volunteer fleet in the Dogger Bank crisis, Balfour took a tough stance towards Russia to protect Britain's national interests, mixed with caution in order to avoid inviting a showdown. The deterioration in Anglo-Russian relations made

⁴⁴⁹ Balfour to the King, 19 Nov. 1904, CAB 41/29/38.

⁴⁵⁰ Minutes of 61st Meeting, 9 Dec. 1904, CAB 2/1/61.

⁴⁵¹ Balfour to Selborne and Lansdowne, 1 Feb. 1905, Balfour MSS, Add. MSS. 49729.

a direct arrangement with Russia over Central Asia more difficult at that time.

As the discussion in the CID and the Cabinet before the Russo-Japanese War showed, one of the essential questions about the defence of India was the number of British reinforcements that should be sent to India in the event of war with Russia. Although the Cabinet estimated this at 100,000 before the war, the changed international situation as a result of the war made it necessary to revise this. Balfour realised that the number should be decided not only from the military but also from the financial and political points of view. Even if Britain needed to send more troops to defend the British Empire, her financial resources were not inexhaustible. The dilemma he faced was that ‘a battalion *more* would be an extravagance, and a battalion *less* would be a danger’. Furthermore, the increased military cost and drastic reform of the army might outrage the public and evoke ‘a violent anti-military reaction’.⁴⁵² The problem of the number of reinforcements for India demonstrated the difficulty of imperial defence in changing circumstances.

The more strongly the Russian threat was perceived, the more soldiers were required for India. On 8 January 1904, Curzon told the British Cabinet that the government of India would need 107,000 soldiers in the event of war with Russia. This number was

⁴⁵² Memo. by Balfour, 22 Jun. 1904, CAB 4/1/26B.

nearly equal to that calculated in London, but Britain had to bear in mind that the Russian railway system might be extended further into Central Asia. The extension of her railway to Termez, a city on the border of Afghanistan, was 'a natural corollary to the Orenburg-Tashkent line' and would enable Russia to carry out a more rapid advance to Kabul.⁴⁵³ The government of India shared this concern. As a result, on 27 July Kitchener estimated that the total number of British reinforcements should be 135,614.⁴⁵⁴

The Dogger Bank incident of October 1904 raised the danger of an Anglo-Russian conflict and emphasised the necessity of the up-to-date preparation of reinforcements for India. Balfour again faced a dilemma between military requirements and the burden of their supply. He received a statement from the Indian government that 158,000 men would be required for the country's defence. While he realised the inadequacy of guaranteeing more than 100,000 reinforcements, he did not rule out the chance to 'give all possible military assistance consistent with Imperial policy if the need should arise'.⁴⁵⁵ With the scrutiny of the General Staff, Balfour understood that 143,000 men would be needed to defend India.⁴⁵⁶ The remaining problem to resolve was how Britain

⁴⁵³ Memo. by Grierson, 16 Jun. 1904, CAB 6/2/59D.

⁴⁵⁴ 'Demands for Reinforcements by the Government of India', 20 Feb. 1905, CAB 6/2/74D.

⁴⁵⁵ Minutes of 57th Meeting, 16 Nov. 1904, CAB 2/1/57; Minutes of 58th Meeting, 22 Nov. 1904, CAB 2/1/58.

⁴⁵⁶ Memo. by Balfour, 24 Feb. 1905, CAB 37/77/87.

would prepare such reinforcements with its limited budget. The key to this difficult task was the Anglo-Japanese alliance.

V

Contrary to Balfour's forecast, Japan won a number of victories on land and at sea.⁴⁵⁷

By January 1905 it appeared unlikely that Russia would conquer the Korean Peninsula, and Britain had to review her policy on the Russo-Japanese War and adjust to the change in international circumstances. This unexpected result raised Japan's reputation as a great power all over the world. In particular, British policymakers were impressed with the efficiency of the Japanese army, not only because Japan had defeated Russia, whose army was numerically superior, but also because Britain had lost confidence in her own army's efficiency due to the hard fighting in the Boer War. The British government sent many military observers to the Far East to obtain first-hand knowledge about Japan's troops on the battlefield.⁴⁵⁸ Lord Esher, who was a courtier and took part

⁴⁵⁷ For a general account of Russo-Japanese War, see R. Connaughton, The War of the Rising Sun and Tumbling Bear: A Military History of the Russo-Japanese War, 1904-5 (London, 1988); J. Steinberg et. al., (eds.) The Russo-Japanese War in Global Perspective: World War Zero (Leiden, 2005), Chapters 6-14.

⁴⁵⁸ P. Porter, Military Orientalism: Eastern War Through Western Eyes (London, 2009), pp. 85-109; P.A. Towle, 'British Estimates of Japanese Military Power, 1900-1914' in P. Towle, (ed.) Estimating Foreign Military Power (London, 1982), pp. 124-128.

in the War Office committee, praised Japan's effective fighting and preparation for the war and concluded that 'the Oriental Renaissance, led by Japan' should not be ignored when Britain pondered the future of the world.⁴⁵⁹ Even Lord Roberts thought that Britain could learn from Japan.⁴⁶⁰

Leo Amery, then a South Africa-based journalist and later a Unionist politician, advocated that Britain should take a further step. His experience in South Africa had made him a fierce critic of the British army. He was in constant touch with the CID through Clarke, and became acquainted with Balfour.⁴⁶¹ Amery's plan was aggressive in the extreme; he proposed that with Sweden's assistance Britain should attack Russia to rescue Finland, which lay within a stone's throw of European Russia, in particular St. Petersburg. The main merit of Amery's scheme was that 'it strikes at the very heart of Russia, and, as long as a hostile army is at the gates of St. Petersburg, India will be safe'. His argument revealed how the global nature of the British Empire connected international affairs in Scandinavia with those in India. However, Amery's distrust of the British army's efficiency forced him to acknowledge that Sweden's help would be essential in carrying out this adventurous policy. In contrast to the British army, he admired the Japanese army and lamented that 'if we had anything like the national

⁴⁵⁹ "National Strategy" by Esher, 27 Mar. 1904, Balfour MSS, Add. MSS. 49718.

⁴⁶⁰ Roberts to Balfour, 5 Nov. 1904, Balfour MSS, Add. MSS. 49725.

⁴⁶¹ Brodrick to Balfour, 29 Feb. 1904, Balfour MSS, Add. MSS. 49721.

organization of the Japanese we could do it easily'.⁴⁶²

Balfour's reply was negative. Amery's approach would clearly violate the strict neutrality that he wished to preserve. Balfour thought that while Britain could not guarantee support, she should not encourage the Finns to fight Russian rule. Even if Britain succeeded in expelling the Russians from Finland, she would have another problem, namely whether Sweden and Finland could endure Russia's pressure and maintain their possession for themselves after the war. Balfour forecast that Scandinavia would ask Britain for a guarantee of peace there, but would Britain 'be prepared to give a permanent guarantee of this character?' Britain had achieved a consensus on the necessity of the independence of Holland, so her guarantee to Holland had been effective. However, Finland was remote and touched 'no obvious or direct British interest', so it would be difficult to convince the British people of the need for a guarantee for Scandinavia.⁴⁶³ Neither Russia's military disaster nor Japan's remarkable efficiency allowed Balfour to side with Japan.

Japan's growing reputation as a great power strengthened some British politicians' conviction of the value of the Anglo-Japanese alliance. The alliance was to expire in 1907, but they began to think that it should be renewed before the end of the Balfour

⁴⁶² Amery to Clarke, 27 Oct. 1904, Balfour MSS, Add. MSS. 49775; J. Barnes and D. Nicholson, (eds.) The Leo Amery Diaries, Volume I: 1896-1929 (London, 1980), p. 50.

⁴⁶³ Balfour to Amery, 3 Nov. 1904, Balfour MSS, Add. MSS. 49775.

administration. On 13 January 1905, Earl Percy, the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, proposed that Britain should ‘offer now to renew for another period of 5 years the Anglo-J[apanese]. Alliance’.⁴⁶⁴ Despite the fact that his speciality was Middle Eastern affairs, Percy could wield strong influence over the policymaking process due to his good relations with Balfour.⁴⁶⁵ The Conservatives and Liberal Unionists had been in power since 1895 and their popularity was gradually waning. Percy doubted that Balfour could maintain his administration after 1905, and it was uncertain whether a successive Liberal government could renew the Japanese alliance.⁴⁶⁶ In fact, there was a press campaign in Europe stating that Britain was waiting for the expiration of the alliance due to her preference for an Anglo-Russian Entente. Percy wanted to ‘put a stop to such a campaign by taking time by the forelock and binding ourselves for another five years’.⁴⁶⁷ Lansdowne approved his suggestion, stating that Britain should offer such an extension now to ‘show the Japanese that our affection is unabated’.⁴⁶⁸ Emphasising the value of an ally in the Far East, Lansdowne

⁴⁶⁴ Percy to Balfour, 13 Jan. 1905, Balfour MSS, Add. MSS. 49747. Professor Friedberg stated that Conservative Member of Parliament Claude Lowther’s speech on the Anglo-Japanese alliance of 29 March 1905 triggered a debate about its revision among the British policymakers. However, in fact, Percy already started the discussion on the alliance in January 1905. See A. Friedberg, The Weary Titan: Britain and the Experience of Relative Decline, 1895-1905 (Princeton, Paperback reissue 2010), pp. 266-267.

⁴⁶⁵ Z.S. Steiner, The Foreign Office and Foreign Policy, 1898-1914 (Cambridge, 1969), pp. 59-60.

⁴⁶⁶ T.G. Otte, ‘Problems of Continuity: The 1906 General Election and Foreign Policy’ in Journal of Liberal History LIV, (2007), pp. 9-10.

⁴⁶⁷ Percy to Balfour, 13 Jan. 1905, Balfour MSS, Add. MSS. 49747.

⁴⁶⁸ Lansdowne to Balfour, 16 Jan. 1905, Balfour MSS, Add. MSS. 49729.

deemed the simple renewal of the Anglo-Japanese alliance essential to Britain.

However, Balfour was not willing to renew the alliance. Originally he had been opposed to its conclusion because it was restricted to the Far East and did not apply to the security of India.⁴⁶⁹ Even though Japan had become strong and had consolidated her position in the Far East, the simple renewal of the alliance would not resolve this shortcoming.⁴⁷⁰ Balfour also realised that he might not win the next general election and did not trust a succeeding Liberal government to maintain the alliance. Even so, he insisted that renewal of the alliance before the expiry date might be a violation of the liberty to revise the engagements at quinquennial intervals.⁴⁷¹ Moreover, he did not expect the Russo-Japanese War to end soon. Even if the war continued beyond the term of the alliance and the then British government did not want to renew it, Balfour pointed out, it would not expire automatically, at least during the war.⁴⁷² All these considerations made him view simple renewal of the Japanese alliance with disfavour.

A revision, by contrast, was worth considering. Balfour thought that if Britain made an agreement with America that absorbed the Anglo-Japanese alliance, such a revision

⁴⁶⁹ Balfour to Lansdowne, 12 Dec. 1901, Balfour MSS, Add. MSS. 49727.

⁴⁷⁰ Dr. Tomes argued that Balfour wanted to see Japan in a strong position after the war because Germany might prompt Russia to repeat the Triple Intervention. However, there is no evidence that Balfour assumed such a favourable attitude towards Japan. See Tomes, Balfour and Foreign Policy, p. 124.

⁴⁷¹ Balfour to Percy, 15 Jan. 1905, Balfour MSS, Add. MSS. 49747.

⁴⁷² Balfour to Spring-Rice, 17 Jan. 1905, Balfour MSS, Add. MSS. 49729.

would be legitimate even before the expiry date. This highlighted that Balfour realised the value of an Anglo-American-Japanese agreement. Importantly, however, the backbone of his scheme was a direct arrangement with America.⁴⁷³ His belief in Anglo-American cooperation had not changed since the conclusion of the Anglo-Japanese alliance. Britain's relationship with America 'should be based on that foundation of mutual comprehension, affection, and esteem which form stronger links than the most formal treaties'. This had been Balfour's 'most fondly cherished hope' throughout all his political life.⁴⁷⁴ He considered that both Britain and America shared the same interest in securing the integrity of China.⁴⁷⁵ Thus in theory it was not impossible for Britain to make an agreement with America over the maintenance of the *status quo* in the Far East.

However, Balfour was never optimistic about cooperation with America. The difficulties, mainly caused by the Americans, were immense. Although he did not believe in the notion of the "Yellow Peril", he worried that some aggressive powers might dominate an important portion of China in the future. Anglo-American cooperation seemed to him the best way to prepare for such a perilous situation. However, he remarked that:

⁴⁷³ Balfour to Percy, 15 Jan. 1905, Balfour MSS, Add. MSS. 49747.

⁴⁷⁴ Balfour to Carnegie, 30 Jan. 1903, Balfour MSS, Add. MSS. 49742.

⁴⁷⁵ Balfour to Spring-Rice, 17 Jan. 1905, Balfour MSS, Add. MSS. 49729.

If America and ourselves were to enter into a Treaty, binding us jointly to resist such aggression, it would never, I believe, be attempted. Together, we are too strong for any combination of Powers to fight us. I believe there would be no difficulty on this side of the Atlantic in the way of such a Treaty. The difficulty, I imagine, would be rather with the United States, whose traditions and whose constitution conspire to make such arrangements hard to conclude.⁴⁷⁶

In the end, as Balfour had predicted, a direct arrangement with America was no longer mooted. Even after the Anglo-Japanese alliance was signed, Balfour continued to believe that America would be the best partner for cooperation in the Far East. Although the Americans were unwilling to make a binding agreement with Britain, his belief in Anglo-American cooperation remained strong. It was crucial that Balfour referred to an Anglo-American-Japanese tripartite arrangement, although the Anglo-Japanese alliance did not collide with Anglo-American cooperation. Before the Russo-Japanese War ended, Balfour had already considered that an Anglo-American-Japanese agreement would be a desirable future development of the Anglo-Japanese alliance. However, he remained sceptical about the Anglo-Japanese alliance even when Japan proved her power and efficiency during the Russo-Japanese War. If it could not be modified into an Anglo-American-Japanese agreement, he would not prevent the coming expiration of

⁴⁷⁶ Ibid.

the alliance.

Balfour did not share the opinion that Britain should renew the Anglo-Japanese alliance to show her support for Japan. He had tried to maintain strict neutrality in the Russo-Japanese War and had taken care not to side with one belligerent unilaterally. His cautiousness was evident when Percy proposed that Britain should honour Japan.⁴⁷⁷ Balfour refused to give the Garter to the Japanese Emperor during the war because Britain could not give it to the equivalent person in Russia, the Czar, who already had it.⁴⁷⁸ Balfour even deemed the peace feeler an unnecessary intervention. While he showed some sympathy for the Archbishop of Canterbury's desire to end the war quickly, he stated that British peacemaking would be 'not only useless, but worse than useless, unless, and until, the combatants are willing to take advantage of it'.⁴⁷⁹ He did not necessarily think that the war should be brought to a conclusion at once. If it continued, Russia would exhaust her military and financial resources and, correspondingly, her threat to India would be eased. From the viewpoint of imperial defence, the continuation of the war would bring the result that Balfour had desired just before the outbreak of the war. Thus he concluded that:

⁴⁷⁷ Percy to Balfour, 13 Jan. 1905, Balfour MSS, Add. MSS. 49747; A. Best, 'A Royal Alliance: Court Diplomacy and Anglo-Japanese Relations, 1900-41' in STICERD Discussion Papers, 512, (2006), p. 20.

⁴⁷⁸ Balfour to Percy, 15 Jan. 1905, Balfour MSS, Add. MSS. 49747.

⁴⁷⁹ Balfour to Archbishop of Canterbury, 12 Jan. 1905, Balfour MSS, Add. MSS. 49747.

I am, on broad [sic] moral grounds, very anxious that we should do everything we can to put an end to the war. But I have to admit that, from a narrowly national point of view the balance of advantage, I suspect, is on the side of continued hostilities.⁴⁸⁰

It was the Indian defence problem that now changed Balfour's half-heartedness towards the Anglo-Japanese alliance. The turbulent stage was Afghanistan and the main character was the Amir. Britain had negotiated with Afghanistan over the British subsidy since December 1904.⁴⁸¹ In Balfour's view the subsidy had been granted not to the Afghan dynasty but personally to Abdul Rahman Khan, the late Amir, and therefore, Habibullah Khan, the present Amir, did not have an automatic right to it. Britain could withdraw the subsidy altogether from the successor, or if it continued, it should be subject to new conditions.⁴⁸² Having doubts about the buffer state policy, Balfour tried to reduce Britain's financial assistance to the Amir, who however, was keen to receive the same subsidy that his father had received. His attitude was much stronger than Britain expected, and the negotiations reached a deadlock in February 1905.

Japan's victories in the Russo-Japanese War made the Amir a hard-liner.⁴⁸³ He

⁴⁸⁰ Balfour to Lansdowne, 24 Jan. 1905, Balfour MSS, Add. MSS. 49729.

⁴⁸¹ C.M. Wyatt, Afghanistan and the Defence of Empire: Diplomacy and Strategy during the Great Game (London, 2011), pp. 114-139.

⁴⁸² Balfour to Brodrick, 17 Dec. 1903, Balfour MSS, Add. MSS. 49720.

⁴⁸³ P. Towle, 'The Russo-Japanese War and the Defence of India' in Military Affairs, XLIV, (1980),

regarded Japan's victories against Russia as Asian victories against Europe. He felt himself 'a free man', and was not inclined to obey either Russia or Britain.⁴⁸⁴ Balfour attended a Cabinet meeting on Afghanistan on 15 February 1905 and reported to the King that he had 'seldom taken part in discussions more anxious or more prolonged'. He harshly judged that the Russian defeats at the hands of the Japanese had encouraged the Amir to develop 'the idea in his ill balanced brain that he can go and do likewise'.⁴⁸⁵ Curzon repeated that Britain should not make compromises with the Amir and stressed that he would yield to Britain's undaunted stance in the end.⁴⁸⁶ Yet the British Cabinet feared the rupturing of negotiations because the Amir's strong attitude raised two fresh concerns. The first was Russia's 'permeation' of Afghanistan. By placating the Amir with a soft approach, embattled Russia might take advantage of the discord between Britain and Afghanistan and within a few years 'would have the ground thoroughly prepared for a friendly understanding with Afghanistan in case of a war between Russia and England'.⁴⁸⁷

The second and more serious concern was the possibility of an Anglo-Afghan war. With his modernised army and strong confidence, the Amir might not hesitate to fight

p. 112.

⁴⁸⁴ Memo. by Brodrick, 13 Feb. 1905, CAB 37/74/29.

⁴⁸⁵ Balfour to the King, 16 Feb. 1905, CAB 41/30/3.

⁴⁸⁶ Memo. by Curzon, 2 Mar. 1905, Balfour MSS, Add. MSS. 49721.

⁴⁸⁷ Note by Godley, 14 Feb. 1905, CAB 37/74/29.

Britain to strengthen his position. On the other hand, Clarke prophesied that Russia would ‘hardly embark on fresh adventures of an unprofitable character for several years’ after the Russo-Japanese War.⁴⁸⁸ But, on 11 February 1905, he worried that there was ‘far greater danger of a war with Afghanistan than with Russia’. Given ‘an inflated sense of his power’, the Amir had the intention and ability to launch an attack on the Indian frontier. Britain could not tolerate conflict with Afghanistan because ‘[w]e cannot conquer Afghanistan; we can gain nothing by war; we may assume that such a war would exactly suit the Russian game’.⁴⁸⁹ Britain was not ready to go to war with Afghanistan.⁴⁹⁰ In conclusion, the British Cabinet had to accept that ‘a war with Afghanistan would be a calamity both to India and the British Empire’.⁴⁹¹

Britain finally approved the Amir’s requirement and a new treaty with Afghanistan was concluded in March 1905. However, this revealed many problems with imperial defence. Curzon was not satisfied with the Cabinet’s policy and indicated his resignation from the Viceroyalty; relations between London and Delhi were at their nadir. Moreover, Afghanistan’s standing in the defence of India had changed with the Russo-Japanese War. Neither Britain’s traditional buffer-state policy nor Balfour’s

⁴⁸⁸ Clarke to Balfour, 23 Jul. 1904, Balfour MSS, Add. MSS. 49700.

⁴⁸⁹ Clarke to Balfour, 11 Feb. 1905, Balfour MSS, Add. MSS. 49701.

⁴⁹⁰ Memo. by Brodrick, 13 Feb. 1905, CAB 37/74/29.

⁴⁹¹ Memo. by Brodrick, 21 Mar. 1905, CAB 37/75/49.

non-intervention saw Afghanistan as an independent power in international politics where Indian defence was concerned. In fact, however, Afghanistan could become a formidable enemy. Balfour and the British policy elites had to review the premise of British policy towards Afghanistan. Balfour's alternative policy, namely a direct arrangement with Russia over Central Asia, was no longer practicable due to worsening relations between the two countries after the Dogger Bank incident.

Even in early 1905, Balfour saw the Russian threat to India and its adjacent areas as a serious matter. Clarke acknowledged that 'a serious Russian attempt to invade India is out of the question at present'. However, Russia's fears about her position in Central Asia would be aggravated by her defeat in the Far East, so he warned Balfour that Russia might carry out 'an attack on the Afghans' to re-establish her damaged prestige.⁴⁹² Clarke repeated his concern in a memorandum of 20 March 1905. As Balfour had already mentioned, Russia's occupation of Herat or Afghan Turkestan, the northern region of Afghanistan, was not improbable at that time.⁴⁹³ Balfour pondered whether, even if it might not be advantageous to her, Russia wished to establish a fortified naval base in the Persian Gulf. He would not tolerate such a bid, which would

⁴⁹² "Notes of a conversation with Colonel C. Yate", 15 Feb. 1905, Balfour MSS, Add. MSS. 49701; D. Steeds, 'The Second Anglo-Japanese Alliance and the Russo-Japanese War' in STICERD Discussion Papers, 432, (2002), p. 24.

⁴⁹³ Memo. by Clarke, 20 Mar. 1905, CAB 17/53.

inevitably throw a new burden upon the British navy in the region.⁴⁹⁴ Furthermore, he had to decide on Britain's policy regarding the defence of India, considering not only the discussion in London but also opinion in Delhi. At a CID meeting on 22 March 1905, he said: '[t]he Government of India appeared to desire a forward policy, and to believe that the recent disasters in the Far East would have the effect of directing Russian activities towards Persia and Afghanistan'.⁴⁹⁵ Britain needed a different policy which would adjust to the new international situation caused by the Russo-Japanese War in order to defend India and its north-west frontier from Russia.

Balfour's answer was to extend the scope of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance to include India and to utilise the Japanese army in the defence of India. The main reason he had opposed the alliance was its one-sidedness; it gave Japan many advantages, for example British backing in the Far East, which the former saw as the most important region in Asia, but Britain gained no advantages from the alliance in her vital territory in Asia, namely India. In a report to the King on 23 March 1905, Balfour explained how the Japanese alliance could be made impartial:

One suggestion well worth weighing was to turn the alliance into one offensive and defensive in favour of the status quo in the Far East. The effect of this would

⁴⁹⁴ Balfour to Mozley, 13 Jan. 1905, Balfour MSS, Add. MSS. 49747.

⁴⁹⁵ Minutes of 67th Meeting, 22 Mar. 1905, CAB 2/1/67.

be to oblige us to aid Japan if Russia attempted, after the peace, to encroach upon Japanese rights; and Japan would be equally bound to assist us in defending the position of Afghanistan and India. These are but rough ideas, which, even if acceptable in principle to the contracting parties, will require the most careful thrashing out in detail.⁴⁹⁶

An extension of the alliance would thus resolve the shortcomings that Balfour could not accept. Moreover, if Britain could use Japanese troops, whose efficiency was praised in Britain, for the defence of India, she would not have to bear the huge financial burden of preparing massive reinforcements.

Balfour's idea was backed by two members of the CID in April 1905. George Clarke took the same line as Balfour. A simple renewal of the Japanese alliance would suit Japan because it would enable her to cooperate with Britain against a combination of two or more powers in the Far East after the Russo-Japanese War. But he did not believe that 'a mere renewal would be of any real advantage to us'. Even though her defeat in the Far East had inflicted great hardship on Russia, the British public would not feel secure about the safety of India. Moreover, criticism of the British army's efficiency was likely to continue both within and outside the government. Thus, Clarke concluded that 'any arrangement under which a portion of the Japanese Army might be rendered

⁴⁹⁶ Balfour to the King, 23 Mar. 1905, CAB 41/30/11. Professor Nish cited this document, but he did not analyse why Balfour changed his negative attitude towards the Anglo-Japanese alliance. See Nish, The Anglo-Japanese Alliance, pp. 300-302

available to reinforce us on the Indian frontier would be a direct gain'. However, it was clear that extension of the scope of the alliance was essential to carry out this scheme. Clarke applied his idea not only to India but also to Hong Kong, the Straits Settlements and Ceylon. In order to protect these 'British possessions in Asia', he proposed that the Royal Navy should cooperate with the Japanese navy, and Japan should offer 'a contingent not exceeding 100,000 combatants'.⁴⁹⁷

The other backer was Captain Charles Ottley, Director of Naval Intelligence. It was important that Ottley also considered Russia a serious naval and military menace to Britain even after the Russo-Japanese War. Ottley was concerned that Russia would rebuild her fleet against Japan in the Far East after the war, but she would be unlikely to be able to do so if she always had to fight Britain and Japan together. Turning the Anglo-Japanese alliance into an offensive and defensive alliance would deter 'Russian naval recuperation', and Britain would be freed from 'the perpetual menace which the expansion of the Russian fleet has constituted'. On the other hand, if Russia's expansion in the Far East was stopped, she would direct her spearhead at India. Japan had 'a large and thoroughly efficient field army' whose despatch from Japan to India was safer, faster and cheaper than sending British forces from Britain. Extension of the scope of

⁴⁹⁷ Memo. by Clarke, Apr. 1905, CAB 17/54.

the alliance would enable Britain to utilise Japan's army to defend India and its north-west frontier from the Russian threat.⁴⁹⁸

On 12 April 1905, the CID informally discussed the extension of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance on behalf of the Cabinet. Balfour took the initiative in the discussion.⁴⁹⁹ Although the CID members agreed to transform the alliance into an offensive and defensive one, it was emphasised that 'the provisions should be so framed as neither to constitute a menace, in reality or in appearance, to the position and interests of friendly Powers, such as France and the United States, nor to be regarded as an Anglo-Japanese Alliance against Europe'. The CID also approved the extension of the scope of the alliance, adding one condition:

If, however, we bind ourselves to place the services of our navy at the disposal of Japan in such an eventuality, we should naturally expect her to make a reciprocal promise as regards her army, which should be made available for the defence of India against external aggression.⁵⁰⁰

Finally, the CID confirmed that the alliance should be operative 'in the case of Persia, China, and Afghanistan only when they were acting in alliance with either of the Contracting Parties', fearing that these 'semi-barbarous Governments' might recklessly

⁴⁹⁸ Memo. by Ottley, 10 Apr. 1905, CAB 17/67.

⁴⁹⁹ Memo. by Ottley, 9 May 1905, CAB 17/67.

⁵⁰⁰ Minutes of 70th CID Meeting, 12 Apr. 1905, CAB 2/1.

provoke Russia to declare war against them.⁵⁰¹ This clause clearly showed how Balfour and other colleagues were keeping the Amir's growing confidence in his power and increasing rivalry with Britain and Russia in mind.

Clarke further embodied the extension of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance. On 4 May 1905, he stated the objects of a new alliance: one was the defence of the whole of Japan and all British possessions in Asia north of the Equator; another was the maintenance of the territorial status quo and the Open Door principle in China. Like Ottley, Clarke sought to prevent Russia's naval revival in the Far East by means of the Anglo-Japanese naval combination. In return for naval protection for Japan, he insisted that 'she should undertake to supply (say) 150,000 troops for the defence of our Indian frontier'. It was no coincidence that Clarke's proposal agreed with the number of British reinforcements needed for India in the event of a war with Russia. This large Japanese army would deter the Russians from attacking the Indian frontier. As a result, Clarke considered, '[w]e also should be able to cease from interference in Afghan affairs, which would be a great advantage'.⁵⁰² The intended result of the extension of the Japanese alliance was the same as that of Balfour's non-intervention policy towards Afghanistan.

Although Britain steadily specified the scheme of an extended Anglo-Japanese

⁵⁰¹ Ibid.

⁵⁰² Memo. by Clarke, 4 May 1905, Sydenham MSS, Add. MSS. 50836.

Alliance, Japan did not share her view of it. Appreciating the value of the alliance, Japan hoped to renew it, but India was not one of her vital interests and the expansion of the alliance into India would be an unnecessary burden on her. Consequently, the Japanese government supported a simple renewal of the alliance, opposing the extension of its scope beyond its present limits.⁵⁰³ Balfour was surprised at this, probably because he knew that Taro Katsura, the Japanese Prime Minister, had informally declared his wish that the alliance might be given ‘a larger and wider scope’.⁵⁰⁴ But Balfour strongly remarked that, even if the extended alliance was advantageous to Britain, ‘it was not our business to sue for it in forma pauperis’. It was decided that ‘the matter should, for the moment, be allowed to sleep’ until Japan accepted the extension.⁵⁰⁵ To Balfour, the Anglo-Japanese alliance was only one measure in the defence of the British Empire. He could not accept the possibility that its revision would damage the reputation of the British Empire and weaken her position vis-à-vis Japan.

Negotiations over the future of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance stagnated temporarily, but Britain did not compromise. While Japan stuck to a simple renewal, discussion of an extension continued in the Balfour administration. On 16 May 1905, Balfour informed

⁵⁰³ Lansdowne to MacDonald, 19 Apr. 1905, FO 46/673.

⁵⁰⁴ MacDonald to Lansdowne, 15 Feb. 1905, FO 46/673; Minutes by Lansdowne on MacDonald’s letter of 15 Feb. 1905, FO 46/673. This letter reached Britain on 23 March, and was circulated to the Cabinet on 6 April.

⁵⁰⁵ Balfour to the King, 3 May 1905, CAB 41/30/16.

the King of the Cabinet's conclusion:

They [the Japanese] are becoming impatient for a renewal: we on the other hand, though firmly adhering to the policy of renewal, see some difficulty in renewing at a period so far anterior to the natural expiry of the existing treaty. If the treaty was to be extended in scope, this would supply a sufficient reason for immediate action. If, on the other hand, the Japanese Government desire an extension in time, without any alteration of substance, there seem to be strong reasons against immediate action and few reasons in its favour.

This repeated Balfour's negative earlier view of the simple renewal of the alliance before its expiry date. Lansdowne, who was originally in favour of the simple renewal, was instructed to communicate this Cabinet conclusion to the Japanese government.⁵⁰⁶ Moreover, he demonstrated Britain's need for Japan's military assistance in the defence of India due to the danger that Russia 'would almost certainly turn her attention to other parts of the Asiatic continent, with the result that Great Britain would be more seriously threatened than at present upon the Indian frontier and at other points'.⁵⁰⁷ In the end Japan accepted this scheme, and both powers agreed to renew and enlarge the Anglo-Japanese alliance.⁵⁰⁸

After the Cabinet approved the extension of the alliance, Balfour undertook to work

⁵⁰⁶ Balfour to the King, 16 May 1905, CAB 41/30/18.

⁵⁰⁷ Lansdowne to MacDonald, 17 May 1905, FO 46/673.

⁵⁰⁸ MacDonald to Lansdowne, 25 May 1905, FO 46/673.

out the details of its provisions. The most important problem for him was the defence of India. There was no doubt that the enlarged Japanese alliance would apply to India, but it was not clear to what extent it would cover regions adjoining India. Afghanistan should be included. Balfour was concerned that Russia would strengthen her influence in Afghan Turkestan by taking advantage of Afghan misgovernment, and Britain could not prevent Russia from infiltrating that country. ‘It is’, Balfour remarked, ‘one of the weaknesses of the position which has to be recognised, but which, so far as I can see, cannot be remedied’.⁵⁰⁹ Then he revealed that Seistan and Eastern Persia were ‘as vital, or almost as vital, to the security of India as Afghanistan itself’.⁵¹⁰ He concluded that these areas also should be incorporated in the revised alliance.

Balfour preferred to use vague phrasing in the extended Anglo-Japanese Alliance in order to include as many of India’s adjacent regions as possible. After Japan accepted the principle of an expanded alliance, its provisions became the focus of negotiations between Britain and Japan. Gathering what Balfour desired, Clarke was reluctant to ‘define the military obligations of Japan as limited by “India”’.⁵¹¹ Balfour applied himself to rewriting the wording of a draft treaty. At first, the draft preamble specified that the extended alliance should be applied to ‘Eastern Asia’ and ‘India’. Balfour

⁵⁰⁹ Balfour to Vambery, 23 May 1905, Balfour MSS, Add. MSS. 49747.

⁵¹⁰ Memo. by Balfour, 27 May 1905, CAB 37/77/98.

⁵¹¹ Notes by Clarke on draft Anglo-Japanese Treaty of 26 May 1905, CAB 17/67.

wanted to change this to ‘Eastern & Southern Asia’ to include territories next to India, notably Afghanistan and Seistan.⁵¹² However, he was not satisfied with this and pondered whether Britain should enumerate the regions to be incorporated into the alliance, namely ‘Afghanistan, the strip of Persian territory adjoining Afghanistan and Beluchistan, or, if the last be too large, then Seistan alone and possibly, Tibet’. From a strategic point of view, he described these areas as ‘the non-Indian territories which are necessary for the defence of India’.⁵¹³ In the end, the provisions of the revised alliance did not enumerate them, but Balfour always linked these areas beyond India to the extension of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance.

The revision of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance shed fresh light on another factor, namely America.⁵¹⁴ Japan required Britain to acknowledge her preponderating influence in Korea in return for extending the alliance to India. Balfour did not oppose this and considered that Britain would have no objection even if Japan tried to annex Korea.⁵¹⁵ However, Japan might assert her strong authority and violate other powers’ existing rights in Korea. Balfour feared that the Anglo-Japanese Alliance, now an

⁵¹² Minutes by Balfour on Draft Agreement of 31 May 1905, FO 46/673

⁵¹³ Balfour to Lansdowne, 30 Jun. 1905, Balfour MSS, Add. MSS. 49729.

⁵¹⁴ For the British foreign policy towards America during the Russo-Japanese War, see B.J.C. McKercher, ‘Diplomatic Equipoise: The Lansdowne Foreign Office, The Russo-Japanese War of 1904-1905, and the Global Balance of Power’ in Canadian Journal of History, XXIV, (1989), pp. 299-339.

⁵¹⁵ Balfour to Lansdowne, 23 Aug. 1905, Balfour MSS, Add. MSS. 49729.

offensive and defensive one, would drag Britain into ‘a conflict with some third Power – say the U.S.A. – due to the desire of the latter to defend rights which it had already secured by treaty with Korea’.⁵¹⁶ Originally Balfour had keenly supported the idea of Anglo-American cooperation in the Far East, so it would be disastrous for him that Britain was obliged by the Anglo-Japanese alliance to fight America in support of Japan.

Balfour rapidly had to find a way of avoiding such a calamity. He decided that Britain would not accept ‘a treaty obligation to assist Japan in any quarrel arising out of existing treaty arrangements between Korea and other countries’.⁵¹⁷ He emphasised that the main concern was not Japan’s violation of other powers’ rights in Korea but Britain’s responsibility for siding with Japan in any conflict caused by such violation. To avoid the latter, he could tolerate the former. Thus he reminded Lansdowne that:

the cabinet was not proposed to insist on the explicit declaration by Japan that she would not violate established treaty rights, provided we got the explicit assurance that in any case we were not to be dragged into any quarrel which those rights might occasion.⁵¹⁸

The Japanese government soon stated that Japan would respect existing rights in Korea,

⁵¹⁶ Balfour to the King, 11 Jul. 1905, CAB 41/30/27.

⁵¹⁷ Balfour to the King, 19 Jul. 1905, CAB 41/30/28.

⁵¹⁸ Balfour to Lansdowne, 19 Jul. 1905, FO 46/673.

but kept complete silence on whether Britain would always be obliged to support Japan in ‘the imaginary case of a war arising from a violation of the established Treaty rights of other Powers in Korea by Japan’.⁵¹⁹ Finally, although Britain confirmed that she took no responsibility for assisting Japan in such a war, no formal declaration was issued on this point.⁵²⁰

Balfour did not forget to keep America informed on the extended Anglo-Japanese Alliance. President Theodore Roosevelt had conveyed to the British government that Japan should be permitted to retain Port Arthur and paramount influence in Korea after the Russo-Japanese War.⁵²¹ Knowing Roosevelt’s view, Balfour and Lansdowne assumed that the new alliance would be in accordance with American policy towards the Far East, and the American policymakers’ response matched their expectations.⁵²² Lansdowne discussed Korea with Senator Henry Lodge and Francis Loomis, Assistant Secretary of State, day after day in Britain, and both asserted that ‘the United States’ government saw no objection to the establishment of Japanese control in Corea’.⁵²³ Roosevelt also showed Sir Mortimer Durand, the British ambassador in Washington, the

⁵¹⁹ Lansdowne to MacDonald, 8 Aug. 1905, FO 46/673.

⁵²⁰ Lansdowne to Hayashi, 9 Aug. 1905, FO 46/673.

⁵²¹ For the relations between Roosevelt and the Russo-Japanese War, see Tal Tovy and Sharon Halevi, ‘America’s first cold war: the emergence of a new rivalry’ in Kowner, (ed.) The Impact of the Russo-Japanese War, pp. 138-140.

⁵²² Lansdowne to Durand, 29 Jul. 1905, FO 46/673; Lansdowne to Balfour, 27 Jul. 1905, FO 46/673.

⁵²³ Lansdowne to Durand, 31 Jul. 1905, FO 46/673.

Taft-Katsura Agreement on 4 August 1905. This agreement recognised Japan's preponderant position in Korea and America's in the Philippines, Japan and America having already agreed to mutual understanding regarding the Far East.⁵²⁴ Thus, although temporarily, Britain did not have to worry about a US-Japanese conflict over Korea.

After tough negotiations the new Anglo-Japanese Alliance was signed on 12 August 1905. It was renewed and remained in force for ten years from the date of its signature. It was now an offensive and defensive alliance and its scope was extended to India. By recognising Japan's paramount position in Korea and promising naval cooperation in the Far East, Britain obtained Japanese military assistance in the defence of India. It was true that some problems remained. For example, coordination between British and Japanese military officers had to be discussed further. The possibility of being dragged into a conflict between Japan and America was not completely removed, although Korea as a cause was ruled out for a while. Compared to 1902 when Balfour had become Prime Minister, however, Britain's position in international politics had improved. In particular, as Balfour had wished, the new alliance was useful in the defence of India.

⁵²⁴ With regard to Taft-Katsura Agreement, see S. Kim, American Diplomacy and Strategy toward Korea and Northeast Asia, 1882-1950 and After: Perception of Polarity and US Commitment to a Periphery (New York, 2009), pp. 50-56.

Balfour was satisfied with this result. Publication of the revised Anglo-Japanese Alliance was delayed due to peace negotiations between Russia and Japan at Portsmouth, America.⁵²⁵ Before its publication, Balfour summed up his estimate of it:

This Treaty differs from the old Treaty in being for 10 years instead of for 5. This, however, is a detail. The really important changes are that it is a defensive alliance, not against any two Powers, but against any single Power, which attacks either us or Japan in the East: so that Japan can depend upon our Fleet for defending Korea, etc, and we can depend upon her Army to aid us on the north-west frontier if the security of India is imperilled in that quarter.⁵²⁶

This clearly highlighted that Balfour's emphasis was not on the renewal but on the extension of the alliance. It was Balfour that decided a line of British policy towards the revision of the Anglo-Japanese alliance. British defence planners, such as Clarke and Ottley, played an important role in hammering out the details of the revised alliance. However, the significant point was that, before Clarke and Ottley tackled this matter, senior British policy-makers, for example Lansdowne and Percy, advocated the immediate and simple renewal of the Japanese alliance. Thus, the extension of the alliance to India was not an established line from the start. Balfour's strong and consistent opposition to the simple renewal paved the way for putting the

⁵²⁵ For details of the Russo-Japanese peace negotiations at Portsmouth, see R.A. Esthus, Double Eagle and Rising Sun: The Russians and Japanese at Portsmouth in 1905 (Durham, 1988).

⁵²⁶ Balfour to Cooper, 11 Sep. 1905, Balfour MSS, Add. MSS. 49747.

Anglo-Japanese alliance on the global stage beyond the Far East. While the threat against Britain and Japan was not mentioned in the new alliance, the Russians would realise that it was aimed at them. Balfour freely admitted this, insisting that Russia was 'the main danger in the Far East to Japan, in the Middle East to us'.⁵²⁷ Combined with Russia's defeat in the Far East, the alliance improved Britain's position vis-à-vis Russia all over the world. Although forecasting that Russia would need to make an agreement with Britain, Sir Charles Hardinge, the British ambassador to Russia, insisted that Britain did not have to discuss this immediately, thanks to the Anglo-Japanese alliance.⁵²⁸ Balfour resigned from the post of Prime Minister in December 1905, but the extended alliance was one of his important achievements, and one that was to last for nearly another two decades.

VI

Balfour was closely involved in the framing of foreign policy from 1894 to 1905. Britain had to deal with volatility in the Far East, and particularly Russia's expansion into northern China and Korea after the Sino-Japanese War of 1894-1895. Concerned

⁵²⁷ Memo. by Balfour, 27 May 1905, CAB 37/77/98.

⁵²⁸ Hardinge to Clarke, 16 Nov. 1905, CAB 17/60.

about the weakening of Britain's international position, Balfour keenly realised the necessity of alliance with foreign powers while he sought a direct arrangement with Russia. His favoured candidate was America, whose traditional isolationism, however, crushed the idea of an Anglo-American alliance. Paying little attention to Japan's growing power, Balfour tried to establish an Anglo-German alliance and an understanding with Russia in which each recognised the other's sphere of influence in China.

However, Balfour had to consider the option of cooperation with Japan. Neither the Scott-Muravev agreement nor the Anglo-German Yangtze agreement could check Russia's bid to expand her influence in China. Although many British policymakers supported a limited Anglo-Japanese alliance, Balfour adhered to the idea of a global Anglo-German alliance. His consideration was based on the defence of the whole of the British Empire. He did not reckon that British interests in the Far East deserved to be protected by fighting a war with the Franco-Russian alliance. Moreover, a regional agreement with Japan that applied only to the Far East would not be useful in defending the Indian frontier from Russian invasion. In the end, Balfour accepted the Anglo-Japanese alliance, but he was not convinced of its utility from the viewpoint of imperial defence.

Balfour's policy towards the Russo-Japanese War was always framed in the context of imperial defence. Balfour mainly discussed in the CID the defence of India and adjacent regions as Britain's most important problem. His basic policy for these regions was non-intervention and a direct arrangement with Russia. Despite the strong opposition of some Cabinet members, Balfour decided to maintain strict neutrality during the war. He calculated that the war in the Far East would drain Russia's military and financial power, and weaken her threat to India. Although the Russo-Japanese War took place in the Far East, Balfour dealt with it in relation to the defence of India.

Balfour's main concern was the Indian defence even after the Russo-Japanese War broke out. However, Japan's unexpected victory made his policy more difficult. In particular, the Afghans' increased confidence in their own power and efficiency made them defiant against both Britain and Russia. Direct agreement with Russia was almost impossible due to the deterioration of Anglo-Russian relations during the war. Not even the Russian defeat in the Far East afforded Balfour any relief: he worried that Russia, whose expansion had halted in the Far East, would now turn her spearhead towards India. The Russian threat to India was still serious, and Britain needed another policy to deal with this problem.

The solution was to extend the Anglo-Japanese Alliance, which had been limited to

the Far East, to cover India and adjoining regions in order to secure the Japanese military assistance in the defence of India. Discarding his previous negative attitude to the alliance, Balfour took the initiative of extending its scope after Anglo-Afghan relations reached their nadir. The process of its extension created a serious possibility that Britain would find herself fighting a war against America over Korea. Balfour made every effort to avoid such a situation, attaching paramount importance to the cooperation with America, and succeeded in making the Anglo-Japanese alliance useful in the defence of British Empire without damaging Anglo-American relations. Henceforth, however, he would have to tackle the coexistence of imperial defence with Anglo-American cooperation in the Anglo-Japanese Alliance.

Testing of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance, 1905-1918

I

Immediately on assuming power, the Liberal Campbell-Bannerman administration that succeeded Balfour's government in December 1905 began to discuss the nature of military assistance in the Anglo-Japanese alliance. The main reason that Balfour had taken the initiative in renewing the alliance was to obtain the help of Japanese troops in the defence of India.⁵²⁹ However, the General Staff's attitude to Japan's military help was lukewarm. In November 1905, when Balfour was still Prime Minister, they had opposed the despatch of Japanese troops to India in the event of war against Russia alone for two reasons: it would be impossible to employ a large number of Japanese soldiers, for example 150,000 men, on the north-west frontier of India due to supply and transportation difficulties; and using Japanese help would be interpreted as 'a clear proof of our national decadence' which might damage Britain's prestige in Asia. Instead,

⁵²⁹ For a negative view on Balfour's intention, see K.M. Wilson, 'The Anglo-Japanese Alliance of August 1905 and the Defending of India: A Case of the Worst Scenario' in Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History XXI, 2, (1993), p. 354.

the General Staff proposed that Japan should fight Russia in the Far East in order to divert Russia's resources and attention from India. However, if Russia engaged in a war against Britain in cooperation with other powers, the value of Japanese military assistance in India would increase, because Russia and other powers could prevent Britain from sending her own reinforcements to India. In that case, the General Staff admitted, it seemed desirable for Britain to accept Japanese troops in India.⁵³⁰ Further consideration of Japan's military aid was needed by statesmen and servicemen.

The Liberal Cabinet discussed Japan's military assistance in the CID, referring to the General Staff's memorandum. On 1 February 1906, Campbell-Bannerman agreed that Britain should not ask Japan to send forces to India, but the CID decided to wait for the view of the Government of India because John Morley, Secretary of State for India, advocated the need to understand it.⁵³¹ Viceroy Lord Minto replied that the Government of India did not 'at present consider it would be advisable to employ Japanese troops in or through India', although he did not completely oppose using the Japanese army, adding: 'We are not, however, prepared to say this might never be advisable'. However, Morley insisted that the Government of India agreed with the General Staff. While the General Staff considered the case of war against Russia both alone and with other

⁵³⁰ Memo. by the General Staff, 4 Nov. 1905, CAB 4/1/68B.

⁵³¹ Minutes of 83rd Meeting, 1 Feb. 1906, CAB 2/2/83.

powers, Liberal statesmen did not pay attention to the difference between the two. In the end, on 15 February the CID concluded that 'Japan should not be asked to send troops to India to co-operate with us in a campaign on the north-west frontier'.⁵³² This conclusion reflected that London had to take into account Delhi's attitude to Japanese military aid. Later Balfour would face the same problem during the Great War.

However, not all the members of the CID shared this negative view about the possibility of Japanese military assistance. A conference between British and Japanese military representatives was to be held in London in May 1907 to discuss the details of mutual military assistance. On 25 April, just before the conference, the CID once more discussed Japan's military help in India. Campbell-Bannerman was absent from the meeting and Sir Edward Grey, the Foreign Secretary, served as Chairman. Lord Haldane, Secretary of State for War, was in favour of Japanese aid and critical of the fact that 'the authorities in India had been premature in rejecting the idea that Japanese troops should be employed in India'.⁵³³ Clarke had originally understood that an invasion of India by Russia would be checked by the 'fear of being involved in war in Manchuria and in Afghanistan at the same time'.⁵³⁴ Citing Kitchener's positive opinion, however, he proposed the employment of Japanese troops in southern Persia to attack the flank of a

⁵³² Minutes of 84th Meeting, 15 Feb. 1906, CAB 2/2/84.

⁵³³ Minutes of 97th Meeting, 25 Apr. 1907, CAB 2/2/97.

⁵³⁴ Note by Clarke, 15 Dec. 1906, Sydenham MSS, Add. MSS. 50836.

potential Russian advance against India. While predicting objections from the Government of India, Grey admitted that ‘the door should be kept open for their employment in Persia’. Therefore, the CID concluded that the possibility of utilising the Japanese army in India and Persia should be discussed at the coming military conference.⁵³⁵ Although the British military representatives at the conference did not adopt this proposal, some British policymakers who shared Balfour’s interest in imperial defence still sought to employ Japan’s troops in India.

Anglo-Russian relations over India and Central Asia began to improve after the Russo-Japanese War. Russia, suffering from war losses and internal turmoil, sought good relations with Britain. Considering her weakness, Clarke advocated an Anglo-Russian treaty ‘binding both parties to respect the integrity of Afghanistan’ which would supplement the Anglo-Japanese alliance.⁵³⁶ Tough negotiations between Britain and Russia produced the Anglo-Russian Convention of 31 August 1907.⁵³⁷ Although the Convention did not completely remove the rivalry between Britain and Russia over Central Asia, it temporarily improved Anglo-Russian relations.⁵³⁸

⁵³⁵ Minutes of 97th Meeting, 25 Apr. 1907, CAB 2/2/97.

⁵³⁶ Note by Clarke, 15 Dec. 1906, Sydenham MSS, Add. MSS. 50836.

⁵³⁷ For more on the negotiations, see Neilson, Britain and the Last Tsar, pp. 267-288.

⁵³⁸ On the limit of the Anglo-Russian Convention, see K. Neilson, “Incidents” and Foreign Policy: A Case Study’ in Diplomacy & Statecraft IX,1, (1998), pp. 53-88; J. Siegel, Endgame: Britain, Russia and the Final Struggle for Central Asia (London, 2002); K. Neilson, “Control the Whirlwind”: Sir Edward Grey as Foreign Secretary, 1906-16’ in T.G. Otte, (ed.) The Makers of British Foreign Policy: From Pitt to Thatcher (Basingstoke, 2002), pp. 136-137.

Even after resigning from the premiership, Balfour maintained a strong interest in the defence of India. Russia's defeat in the Russo-Japanese War had made her less of a threat to India, but Balfour did not drop his guard, pointing out that the defence of India was as significant as home defence in the House of Commons: Britain had to 'maintain an Army adequate for home defence, which need not be on a very large scale, and an Army adequate for the defence of the north-west frontier of India'.⁵³⁹ Even though Balfour extended the Anglo-Japanese alliance into India, he warned that it was dangerous to assume that Britain could rely on 'an unlimited supply of men from Japan'.⁵⁴⁰ Britain should therefore keep reinforcements in India against the possibility of war. India's importance had not changed since the end of the Russo-Japanese War. Balfour wrote to Esher: 'India ought not to treat with us as if we were an allied, but foreign, Power. We are engaged in a common work; and we are the predominant partner'.⁵⁴¹ In his mind, India was not foreign and her status was higher than that of a foreign ally such as Japan.

The Anglo-Russian Convention of 1907 did not shake Balfour's belief in the necessity of reinforcements for India at once. In 1908, David Lloyd George, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, wished to reduce military expenditure in order to increase

⁵³⁹ Balfour, 9 May 1906, Hansard: Series 4, House of Commons, vol. 156, col. 1410.

⁵⁴⁰ Balfour to the King, 9 Jun. 1905, CAB 41/30/22.

⁵⁴¹ Balfour to Esher, 6 Oct. 1906, Balfour MSS, Add. MSS. 49719.

the welfare budget. The improvement of Anglo-Russian relations was an opportunity to realise his disarmament programme. Objecting to Lloyd George's reduction of army personnel, Esher argued that the British army was 'maintained for the purpose of re-inforcing British troops in India and Egypt, and for relieving troops wherever they are quartered abroad'.⁵⁴² On 25 May 1908, Balfour agreed with Esher, emphasising 'the fundamental obligation of keeping adequate reinforcements for India, which are just as necessary now as they ever were'.⁵⁴³ He did not deny the utility of the Anglo-Russian Convention. However, in a comment on the Anglo-French *Entente Cordiale*, he could not approve of Britain being dependent on a paper agreement for her security.⁵⁴⁴

Another significant problem to consider was British policy on a war between America and Japan under the Anglo-Japanese alliance. During his premiership Balfour was concerned that Britain's alliance with Japan might drag her into a US-Japanese conflict in the Far East and oblige her to offer the latter naval or military assistance against America. The Anglo-Japanese alliance would not take effect unless 'the territorial rights of her ally [Japan] were threatened in Asia'. This meant that Britain was bound to intervene in a war caused by aggressive American action against Japan's rights

⁵⁴² Esher to Lloyd George, 22 May 1908 in Brett, (ed.) Journals and Letters of Reginald Viscount Esher, Vol.2, 1903-1910, pp. 313-314.

⁵⁴³ Balfour to Esher, 25 May 1908, Balfour MSS, Add. MSS. 49719.

⁵⁴⁴ Memo. by Balfour, 29 May 1908, CAB 3/2/43A.

in the Far East. While the possibility that America would behave in such a way was small, the General Staff proposed that the CID should consider Britain's policy in the case of such a contingency before the 1907 conference of British and Japanese military representatives, where Japan might raise this question.⁵⁴⁵ However, the Foreign Office opposed this proposal; if America learnt of any discussion about British policy regarding a US-Japanese war, Anglo-American relations would be seriously damaged. They concluded that Britain would not have to risk her friendship with America by discussing such an improbable eventuality.⁵⁴⁶ Although the Liberal Cabinet approved this objection, it was impossible to postpone addressing this problem indefinitely due to the deterioration of the US-Japanese relations.

Since the Russo-Japanese War, Japanese emigration to America had gradually increased the two countries' mutual suspicion. In December 1906 California's local policy to keep Japanese students out of ordinary schools developed into a diplomatic issue between America and Japan.⁵⁴⁷ President Roosevelt, who managed the racial problem carefully, approached the British government for support. As the Dominions, for example Canada, Australia and New Zealand, were also experiencing Japanese

⁵⁴⁵ Memo. by the General Staff, 14 Mar. 1907, CAB 4/3/101B.

⁵⁴⁶ Note by the Foreign Office, 21 Mar. 1907, CAB 4/3/101B.

⁵⁴⁷ R. Daniels, The Politics of Prejudice: The Anti-Japanese Movement in California and the Struggle for Japanese Exclusion, (London, 1977), pp. 31-45.

immigration, he assumed that it would be possible to persuade Britain to join America's stance. His effort was aimed not only at Liberal statesmen but also at Balfour. On 5 March 1908 Roosevelt wrote to Balfour that Britain and America shared the same interest in preventing Asian immigration to Australia and North America.⁵⁴⁸ Contrary to the period from 1895 to 1905, America tried to persuade Britain to act with her to protect their common interests.

However, Balfour did not see the Japanese immigration problem as serious. While affirming Anglo-American cooperation based on Anglo-Saxon solidarity, he did not think the race had much influence on relations between Japan and America or the Dominions. The notion of the Yellow Peril did not worry him: 'The idea of Japan heading an Eastern crusade on Western civilisation seems to me altogether chimerical'. Strategic calculation supported his opinion. Even if Japan undertook such an adventurous project, she was never likely to have 'a Navy sufficient to meet the Fleets of the Christian world, who could therefore always cut her off from free communication with the mainland of Asia'.⁵⁴⁹ Balfour's answer to the racial issue was to leave it alone. When Clarke pointed out Australia's problematic treatment of Japanese immigrants as an inferior race, Balfour was not willing to force her to abolish such discrimination and

⁵⁴⁸ Roosevelt to Balfour, 5 Mar. 1908, Balfour MSS, Add. MSS. 49687.

⁵⁴⁹ Balfour to Spring-Rice, 17 Jan. 1905, Balfour MSS, Add. MSS. 49729.

concluded that it would be best to ignore the matter ‘in the hope that … it may not arise in an acute form’.⁵⁵⁰ Faced with the danger of ‘a violent outbreak of racialism’, however, Balfour had to address the racial issue after the Russo-Japanese War.⁵⁵¹

A sensational book to which Balfour and other British policymakers paid attention reflected the atmosphere of the US-Japanese rivalry. The American General Homer Lea had written a book entitled *The Valor of Ignorance*, arguing that owing to racial difficulties America and Japan would inevitably enter into a war before the expiration of the Anglo-Japanese alliance.⁵⁵² This book became popular in America and was translated into Japanese. Its influence was not confined to America and Japan: both Esher and Lord Roberts read it and sent it to Balfour.⁵⁵³ Shrewdly grasping the importance of the racial problem, Esher presented Britain’s dilemma:

while we are bound on the one hand by [Anglo-Japanese] Treaty to Japan, and by the probable sympathy of the people of this country with the view that the Japanese have established a moral right to be treated upon an equality with European races, we are hampered on the other hand by the prejudices of our Colonial fellow-countrymen in Australia and Canada against men of colour. There is very great likelihood that, in the event of war brought on by the insistence of the Japanese that they should be accorded equality of treatment with Europeans in regard to settlements in countries other than their own, the sympathies of the majority of the English people would be on the side of the

⁵⁵⁰ Memo. by Balfour, 31 May 1905, CAB 37/77/98.

⁵⁵¹ Kerr to Balfour, 3 May 1909, Balfour MSS, Add. MSS. 49797.

⁵⁵² Homer Lea, *The Valor of Ignorance* (New York, 1909).

⁵⁵³ Balfour to Esher, 23 Dec. 1909, Balfour MSS, Add. MSS. 49835.

Japanese, while the sympathies of at least two of our great dominions would be on the side of the United States.⁵⁵⁴

Realising the moral power of racial equality, Esher feared that the immigration problem might cause a rift between Britain and America or the Dominions. He insisted that the CID should examine the renewal of the Anglo-Japanese alliance in relation to the strategic problems raised by Homer Lea's book.⁵⁵⁵

Balfour was not concerned about the British dilemma that Esher outlined. In his mind, Japan's requirement for equal treatment would never overwhelm Anglo-Saxon solidarity. Regardless of the Anglo-Japanese alliance, he observed, it would be impossible for Britain to join Japan's war against the United States in order to obtain emigration privileges into North America. Moreover, his cool-headed strategic calculation reckoned that Homer Lea's book exaggerated Japan's chance of victory:

It would, in my opinion, be folly for the Japanese to provoke a war which, however great their initial success, could only end in the richer and bigger country building a fleet superior to their own: and long before that position of superiority was reached the whole position of an island Power like Japan would be imperilled by the possibility of a coalition between the U.S.A. and some other European nation which has, or might have, ships in the Far East.⁵⁵⁶

⁵⁵⁴ Memo. by Esher, 21 Jan. 1910, CAB 4/3/112B.

⁵⁵⁵ For more on the impact of the Japanese immigration issue on the Anglo-Japanese Alliance, see P. Lowe, 'The British Empire and the Anglo-Japanese Alliance 1911-1915' in History LIV, 181, (1969), pp. 212-225.

⁵⁵⁶ Balfour to Esher, 4 Feb. 1910, Balfour MSS, Add. MSS. 49719.

Balfour's solution to the immigration issue was practical. He argued that, as long as Japan had 'reasonable space for emigration in Asia', there was no reason for her to go to war with America.⁵⁵⁷ As with the renewal of the Anglo-Japanese alliance in 1905, Balfour never imagined that Britain would support Japan in a war against America due to the alliance, which did not affect the importance of Anglo-American cooperation. On the other hand, he could accept the flux of Japanese immigration into Asia if they did not enter America or the Dominions. He was prepared to tolerate Japan's expansion at the expense of Asia to maintain calm Anglo-American-Japanese relations.

The international situation in the Far East complicated Anglo-American-Japanese trilateral relations further and Britain had to take balanced action regarding America and Japan. On 18 December 1909, America suggested the internationalisation of the railways from Manchuria to Japan. Japan turned this proposal down and chose to cooperate with Russia. This enhanced Russo-Japanese rapprochement after the war, leading to the conclusion of a Russo-Japanese agreement confirming their interests in Manchuria on 4 July 1910.⁵⁵⁸ Britain remained a spectator and did not show any sympathy with America. Grey regretted that America's 'ill-timed proposals' had drawn

⁵⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁵⁸ I. Nish, 'Great Britain, Japan and North-East Asia, 1905-1911' in F.H. Hinsley, (ed.) British Foreign Policy under Sir Edward Grey (Cambridge, 1977), pp. 363-365.

Russia and Japan closer together, making ‘the task of preserving the open door increasingly difficult’.⁵⁵⁹ On the other hand, America was dissatisfied with Britain’s neutral attitude. Realising her irritation, James Bryce, the British Ambassador at Washington, proposed that Britain should ‘soothe American susceptibilities in Far Eastern matters’.⁵⁶⁰ An Anglo-American arbitration treaty proposed by President William Taft offered an opportunity to mend relations with America.⁵⁶¹

As a proponent of close Anglo-American cooperation, Balfour keenly supported this Anglo-American arbitration treaty. Although serving as Leader of the Opposition, Balfour did not jeopardise Anglo-American cooperation by opposing the ruling Liberal Party’s policy. He addressed to the House of Commons on 16 March 1911:

... I cannot see why it [the arbitration treaty] could not be carried out between this country and America. ... I hope we may take the obiter dicta ... of President Taft ... that they represent the general feeling in the United States that the time has come when those two great countries should, whatever other countries may do, at all events recognise that, so far as they are concerned, peace is the greatest of their interests, and that the time has come when they may at least be bound in some mutual obligations by treaty to refer all questions that can possibly produce anything so horrible as war between them to some arbitration tribunal. ...⁵⁶²

⁵⁵⁹ Grey to Bryce, 22 Sep. 1910, FO 371/920/32420.

⁵⁶⁰ Bryce to Grey, 24 Aug. 1910, FO 371/920/32420.

⁵⁶¹ J.P. Campbell, ‘Taft, Roosevelt, and the Arbitration Treaties of 1911’ in Journal of American History, LIII, 2, (1966), pp. 279-298.

⁵⁶² Balfour, 16 Mar. 1911, Hansard: Series 5, House of Commons, vol. 22, cols. 2501-2502.

The Anglo-American arbitration treaty obtained unanimous support in Britain.

However, there was a risk that the arbitration treaty would conflict with the Anglo-Japanese alliance, which was to expire in August 1915. If it was terminated, Britain would have to reinforce her fleet in the Pacific to maintain her naval supremacy in the Far East.⁵⁶³ Given the financial burden entailed in this and Japan's potential as a threat, the renewal of the Anglo-Japanese alliance was advantageous to Britain. The Asquith administration thus wanted to make the Anglo-Japanese alliance consistent with the Anglo-American arbitration treaty. Grey was in favour of this and answered that 'in order to obviate any difficulties connected with the Japanese Alliance they [the United States] should propose a similar Arbitration Treaty to Japan'.⁵⁶⁴ America took a long time to propose such an arbitration treaty, but Britain decided to wait for it. Taking advantage of the stagnation in negotiations, Japan suggested to Britain that they discuss the revision and renewal of the alliance in March 1911.⁵⁶⁵ Accepting Japan's suggestion, the British Cabinet agreed to renew the alliance for ten years from the date of modification and to revise it to make it compatible with the arbitration treaty.⁵⁶⁶

The transformation of international politics after the Russo-Japanese War forced

⁵⁶³ Minutes of 102nd Meeting, 29 Jun. 1909, CAB 2/2/102.

⁵⁶⁴ Grey to MacDonald, 16 Jan. 1911, BD Vol.8, No.406.

⁵⁶⁵ MacDonald to Grey, 17 Mar. 1911, BD Vol.8, No.410; Lowe, Great Britain and Japan 1911-1915, pp. 36-37.

⁵⁶⁶ Grey to MacDonald, 29 Mar. 1911, BD Vol.8, No.415.

Britain to reconsider the clauses of the Anglo-Japanese alliance relating to Japan's military assistance. The Anglo-Russian Convention of 1907 improved Anglo-Russian relations over Central Asia and reduced the Russian threat to India. The Liberal government decided not to ask for Japan's military help, so Grey considered Article IV of the alliance, which stated that Japan would provide military aid for India, no longer necessary. Moreover, Japan's annexation of Korea in 1910 invalidated the clauses in the alliance relating to Korea. It was forecast that Japan would require acknowledgement of her special interests in, not Korea, but Manchuria in return for her military assistance for India. Grey therefore insisted that the revised alliance should not retain Article IV.⁵⁶⁷ The India Office approved the omission of Article IV, and the revised alliance did not refer to India in its articles.⁵⁶⁸ Grey did not completely abandon the possibility of accepting Japanese military help in India, pointing out that 'we could discuss it with Japan under Article I'.⁵⁶⁹ But, it was clear that the 1911 revision marked the end of Balfour's scheme to enlist Japanese military assistance for India.

Instead, the defence of the Dominions, in particular Australia and New Zealand, attracted the attention of British policymakers. Even during the Russo-Japanese War, Balfour had wondered about the effect of the Japan's growing power on Australia. His

⁵⁶⁷ Minutes by Grey on India Office's telegram of 17 May 1911, FO 371/1140/18951.

⁵⁶⁸ India Office to Foreign Office, 17 May 1911, FO 371/1140/18951.

⁵⁶⁹ Minutes by Grey on Foreign Office's telegram of 12 Apr. 1911, FO 371/1140.

interest was in whether it would strengthen ‘the desire for Imperial Unity’.⁵⁷⁰ After the war, as Balfour thought, Australia was more concerned about the possibility of an invasion by Japan. Given the increase in their population and wealth, it was reasonable to ask the Dominions to contribute resources to the defence of the British Empire to alleviate London’s burden. Balfour deemed that the CID was a suitable organisation to coordinate Britain’s and Dominion’s policy on various imperial defence problems. In 1909 he suggested to Esher ‘a permanent representation on the C[ommittee of] Imperial Defence, of the Dominion, for Imperial defence questions’.⁵⁷¹ This was the realisation of his early idea that the CID would develop into an Imperial Council, dealing with imperial questions and strengthening the unity of the British Empire.

Balfour’s idea was realised by the Liberal government just before the renewal and revision of the Anglo-Japanese alliance. On 26 May 1911, the CID held a special meeting with representatives from Australia, New Zealand, Canada, South Africa and Newfoundland to review their defence policies and British foreign policy.⁵⁷² However, the British policymakers had already decided to renew and revise the Anglo-Japanese alliance and had no intention of changing this. Even before the meeting, Grey wanted to

⁵⁷⁰ Balfour to Northcote, 20 Oct. 1904, Balfour MSS, Add. MSS. 49697.

⁵⁷¹ Esher to Balfour, 9 Jun. 1909, Balfour MSS, Add. MSS. 49719.

⁵⁷² R.J. Gowen, ‘British Legerdemain at the 1911 Imperial Conference: The Dominions, Defence Planning, and the Renewal of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance’ in Journal of Modern History LII, 3, (1980), pp. 385-413.

impress upon the Dominion representatives ‘the serious effect that the denunciation of the [Anglo-Japanese] Treaty would have on their strategic position’.⁵⁷³ He reiterated to them at the meeting that ‘in the interests of strategy, in the interests of naval expenditure, and in the interests of stability, it is essential that the Japanese Alliance should be extended’.⁵⁷⁴ Although concerned about Japanese immigration, the Dominions accepted the renewal and revision of the alliance.⁵⁷⁵ Therefore, the Asquith administration easily secured an agreement on the Anglo-Japanese alliance between Britain and the Dominions. At least, however, London no longer ignored the Dominions and had to take their opinions on the Anglo-Japanese alliance into account.

After negotiations between Britain and Japan, the renewed and revised Anglo-Japanese alliance was signed on 13 July 1911. Article IV of the revised alliance was the most important clause:

Should either High Contracting Party conclude a treaty of general arbitration with a third Power, it is agreed that nothing in this Agreement shall entail upon such Contracting Party an obligation to go to war with the Power with whom such treaty of arbitration is in force.⁵⁷⁶

⁵⁷³ Minutes of 108th Meeting, 26 Jan. 1911, CAB 2/2/108.

⁵⁷⁴ Minutes of 111th Meeting, 26 May 1911, CAB 2/2/111.

⁵⁷⁵ A. Hotta-Lister, ‘The Anglo-Japanese Alliance of 1911’ in STICERD Discussion Papers, 432, (2002), pp. 38-39.

⁵⁷⁶ With regard to the full text of the Alliance, see “Agreement between the United Kingdom and Japan”, 13 Jul 1911, BD Vol.8, No.436; Nish, Alliance in Decline, pp. 66-68.

Although there was no reference to America, this clause was clearly aimed at avoiding Britain having to support Japan in a war against America. Balfour realised this point, reflecting that ‘some provision had been introduced which precluded the possibility of war with the U.S.A. being one of the possible consequences of our [Anglo-Japanese] Alliance’.⁵⁷⁷ From the viewpoint of Anglo-Saxon solidarity, Balfour did not oppose it in Parliament. This revision demonstrated his strong interest in maintaining Anglo-American cooperation, to which the Anglo-Japanese alliance was subject. However, the arbitration treaty eventually lapsed, following a confrontation between President Taft and the Senate. In September 1914, Britain concluded so-called Peace Commissions Treaty with America which was regarded as equivalent to the general arbitration treaty.⁵⁷⁸ Article IV then finally became effective. This episode indicated the difficulty in securing America’s commitment to the international scheme.

India was only referred to in the preamble to the revised alliance and there was no concrete clause about military assistance from Japan. But this did not mean that Britain no longer related India’s security to Japanese military support. Balfour’s interest in the defence of India remained strong after the revision of the alliance. In 1913, referring to

⁵⁷⁷ Balfour to Hardinge, 5 Nov. 1919, Balfour MSS GD 433/2/15.

⁵⁷⁸ “Treaty between the United States and Great Britain for the Advancement of General Peace”, United States Government Printing Office, (ed.) Papers Relating to the Foreign Relations of the United States (Washington, 1928-) (hereinafter cited as FRUS), Foreign Relations 1914, pp. 304-307; Nish, Alliance in Decline, pp. 110-113.

a scenario in which India would be threatened due to a change in the Anglo-Russian Convention, Balfour considered the necessity of military assistance for India.⁵⁷⁹ It was not the collapse of the Anglo-Russian Convention but the outbreak of the Great War that once more raised the matter of the utility of Japanese military assistance for India. Balfour would tackle this problem and assume a crucial role in the British government during the war.

II

After the Great War broke out in the summer of 1914, Japan entered the war on the British side as part of the Anglo-Japanese alliance. Although she was Britain's ally, Japan's entry into the war was controversial. Britain thought Japan's cooperation strategically essential to tackle the German naval squadron and an individual German raider in the Far East.⁵⁸⁰ Thus immediately before the outbreak of the war, she asked Japan to support Hong Kong or Wei-hai-Wei if they were attacked by Germany.⁵⁸¹ On the other hand, Britain was suspicious of Japan's intentions and feared that she might take advantage of the war to expand her sphere of influence in the Far East. The British

⁵⁷⁹ "Report by Eleanor Cole of a conversation between A.J.B and Lord Esher, 30th Oct. 1913", Balfour MSS, Add. MSS. 49836.

⁵⁸⁰ Lowe, Great Britain and Japan 1911-1915, p.181.

⁵⁸¹ Grey to Greene, 3 August 1914, BD Vol.11, no. 549.

Cabinet concluded that ‘the general interests involved in the Anglo-Japanese Alliance warranted and required common action but that the operations should be limited in area to the coasts of China and the China Seas and westward’.⁵⁸² The Foreign Secretary, Sir Edward Grey, conveyed this judgement to Sir W. Conyngham Greene, the British ambassador in Tokyo, explaining that this restriction was ‘important to prevent unfounded misapprehension abroad’.⁵⁸³

Japan, however, did not agree to these geographical limits to her operations. She declared war on Germany on 23 August, vaguely stating that she would ‘take such measures as may be necessary for the protection of the general interests contemplated in the Agreement of Alliance’.⁵⁸⁴ Immediately following her declaration of war Japan launched naval and military operations against the Germans in the Far East. The Japanese navy occupied German-held islands lying north of the Equator in the Pacific in October, and Japanese cruisers commenced operations against the German Far Eastern Squadron, escorting Allied troop carriers and commercial ships. The Japanese army captured Tsingtao and the bay of Kiaochow, which had been under German control. This campaign was a concerted British and Japanese operation due to Britain’s doubts

⁵⁸² Asquith to the King, 11 Aug. 1914, CAB 41/35/27.

⁵⁸³ Grey to Greene, 11 Aug. 1914, FO 371/2016/37900.

⁵⁸⁴ Gaimushou Tyousabu Daiikka (First Investigation Division in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan), (ed.) Sekaitaisenkankei Nihon Gaikou Bunsho (Japanese Diplomatic Documents Related to the World War) (Tokyo, 1998), no.270; I. Nish, ‘Japan’ in K. Wilson, (ed.) Decisions for War 1914 (London, 1995), pp. 219-220.

about Japan's intentions and China's request to watch Japan's movements.⁵⁸⁵ Although there were some disagreements between the British and Japanese armies, they succeeded in eliminating the German base in the Far East. In contrast to the stalemate in Europe, Japan's naval and military action brought the Allied Powers a quick victory in the Far East.

At first Britain tried to restrict the Japanese naval and military campaigns in the Far East, but she soon came to keenly recognise the need for Japan's assistance in Europe. Britain requested that Japan send her cruisers to the Mediterranean to tackle German cruisers on 2 September.⁵⁸⁶ However, Japan's response was lukewarm. She was displeased that Britain now required her to dispatch her fleet as far abroad as Europe, although having attempted to restrict the sphere of her operations at the outbreak of the war. When Katsunosuke Inoue, Japan's Ambassador to Britain, pointed this out, Grey replied that the British restriction 'only applied to the area of the Pacific, and the Mediterranean is another question'. Inoue criticised Britain's contradictory attitude and refused her request, giving the reason that the main purpose of the Japanese navy was to 'defend Japan from a foreign enemy' which did not include an expedition to regions far

⁵⁸⁵ Nish, Alliance in Decline, p.134.

⁵⁸⁶ Grey to Greene, 2 Sep. 1914, FO 371/2019/45088.

from Japan.⁵⁸⁷

As with Japan's naval assistance, although Britain attempted to limit the sphere of Japanese military operations at the outbreak of the war, expectations of her military aid soon emerged. Balfour did not have a position in the Cabinet, but as a member of the CID he considered the possibility that Japan would send an expeditionary force to the European Continent. In October 1914, he received a letter from the French philosopher Henri Bergson. He and Bergson were old acquaintances, both having delivered the Gifford Lecture at Glasgow and Edinburgh in 1913 and 1914. However, Bergson's letter related not to philosophy but to politico-military matters. Bergson introduced Albert Kahn, the French banker, and wanted to talk with Balfour about Japanese military assistance. Kahn had been Bergson's pupil and had a wide range of personal connections in the political and business worlds. He advocated the utilisation of Japanese troops in Europe to stop the German offensive and wanted to inform influential British statesmen of this idea. He had asked his mentor Bergson for an introduction and finally reached Balfour.⁵⁸⁸

On receiving Bergson's letter Balfour sent it to Sir Arthur Nicolson, the Permanent

⁵⁸⁷ Kato to Motono, 7 Sep. 1914, Gaimushou (The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan), (ed.) Nihon Gaikou Bunsho Taishou Jidai (Japanese Diplomatic Documents Taishou Period, 1912-1925) (Tokyo, 1963-86) (hereinafter cited as NGB/T), 3-III, pp.634-635.

⁵⁸⁸ Bergson to Balfour, 13 Oct. 1914, Balfour MSS, Add. MSS. 49748.

Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs. He did not express his own opinion on the matter because he did not have ‘sufficient knowledge of the relevant considerations’. However, he was concerned about the political and diplomatic effect of this assistance, quoting its potential effect on public opinion in Europe, North America and Australasia.⁵⁸⁹ He correctly realised the influence of Japan’s military aid beyond the military aspect. Nicolson’s reply was negative. Although he sent Bergson’s letter to Grey, he insisted that the Foreign Office had already seriously considered the question of Japan’s help, and the Japanese government was unwilling to take an active and direct part in military operations in Europe.⁵⁹⁰

In December 1914, Balfour met Bergson and Kahn in Scotland and discussed the matter of Japanese military assistance with them. Kahn gave Balfour a great deal of information about Russia’s weakness and advocated inducing Japan to send her army to the European theatre of war. However, Balfour, having already abandoned the idea of utilising Japanese troops on the western front, insisted that the eastern front was more suitable. He was impressed by Kahn’s account of Russian resources. According to Kahn, the Russians did not have sufficient ‘small arms or equipment for more than three million men, while their machinery for adding to their supplies seems insignificant’.

⁵⁸⁹ Balfour to Nicolson, 15 Oct. 1914, Balfour MSS, Add. MSS. 49748.

⁵⁹⁰ Nicolson to Balfour, 17 Oct. 1914, Balfour MSS, Add. MSS. 49748.

Balfour confessed, ‘if this story is true, or anything like the truth, their utility as Allies is less than I had hoped’.⁵⁹¹ Therefore the addition of a Japanese expeditionary force to the Russian army would be exceedingly welcome for the purpose of bolstering the Allies’ military strength.⁵⁹² Balfour gave Kahn a letter of introduction to the Foreign Office and suggested that Nicolson and Grey meet Kahn on this matter.

Kahn was interviewed by Nicolson and Lord Haldane, who was temporarily replacing Grey, in London at the end of December 1914. Nicolson and Haldane also enquired of Count Benckendorff, the Russian Ambassador to Britain, whether the Russian government would accept Japanese troops on the eastern front to ‘relieve the German pressure in the west’.⁵⁹³ But Grey had already decided that the ‘matter must drop for the present’.⁵⁹⁴ He declined a French proposal that Britain, France and Russia jointly appeal to Japan to despatch troops to Europe.⁵⁹⁵ At first Balfour thought that Kahn’s idea was worth the consideration of the Foreign Office, but his view of the utility of Japan’s assistance soon became pessimistic. In a letter to Sir John Fisher, First Sea Lord, on 12 January 1915 Balfour wrote:

⁵⁹¹ Balfour to Nicolson, 21 Dec. 1914, Balfour MSS, Add. MSS. 49748.

⁵⁹² On Anglo-Russian military cooperation during the war, see K. Neilson, Strategy and Supply: The Anglo-Russian Alliance, 1914-17 (London, 1984).

⁵⁹³ Nicolson to Haldane, 28 Dec. 1914, FO 371/2019/87184.

⁵⁹⁴ Grey to Greene, 9 Dec. 1914, FO 371/2019/81205; Grey to Greene, 15 Dec. 1914, FO 371/2019/82755.

⁵⁹⁵ Grey to Bertie, 31 Dec. 1914, Grey MSS, FO 800/163.

I think it very unlikely that the Japanese would, under any circumstances, circumnavigate the Globe in order to fight in Flanders, and if they fight in Russia, this will only indirectly help us, if it helps us at all, to occupy what your correspondent calls the German and Belgian Coast between Kiel and Dunkirk.⁵⁹⁶

Expectations of deploying Japanese troops in Europe faded. Balfour and the Foreign Office did not return to this subject for some time. Yet the idea of using Japanese forces had not been completely discarded; it would emerge again when the circumstances of the war worsened.

Serving as a member of the CID and War Council, Balfour gradually came to work in close cooperation with David Lloyd George, Chancellor of the Exchequer and his former political enemy, to tackle the munitions shortage. Although Lloyd George had been strongly against the Boer War, he praised Balfour's 'war experience' and 'high intellectual gifts'.⁵⁹⁷ Balfour and Lloyd George required Asquith to set up a committee to address the lack of munitions. But it was not until the end of March 1915 that Asquith decided to establish the Committee for mobilising industry to increase the output of war equipment. Balfour complained that the Committee 'ought to have been appointed seven months ago; and, if it had been, the Allies would be in a much more secure position than they are at the present moment'.⁵⁹⁸ However, he thought that the 'delay

⁵⁹⁶ Balfour to Fisher, 12 Jan. 1915, Balfour MSS, Add. MSS. 49712.

⁵⁹⁷ Lloyd George, War Memoirs, vol.1, pp.171-172.

⁵⁹⁸ Balfour to Bonar Law, 3 Apr. 1915, Balfour MSS, Add. MSS. 49693.

has been deplorable and fraught with peril: - but better late than never'.⁵⁹⁹

While the Committee for mobilising industry began to work, the Liberal administration split over the Dardanelles campaign.⁶⁰⁰ To deal with this political crisis, Asquith decided to form a coalition government and appointed Balfour as First Lord of the Admiralty. In the Admiralty Balfour was involved in utilising Japanese naval assistance, which became more desirable due to the urgent necessity for protecting Allied commerce and transportation from German U-boats. The Admiralty began to require that Japanese destroyers was involved in the Mediterranean, insisting that 'the presence of a flotilla of Japanese destroyers in those waters [Mediterranean] would be of the greatest value, in view of the present demand for Allied vessels of this type'.⁶⁰¹ On receiving the Admiralty's request Grey instructed Greene to ask Japan to send her flotilla to European waters on 4 February 1916.⁶⁰² However, before Japan's answer became clear, the German commerce-raider 'Moewe' would appear in the Indian Ocean.⁶⁰³ To deal with this new menace Britain had to change her original request. She desired Japan first to send a cruiser squadron to the Indian Ocean to protect the transport routes between Aden and Australia and second, to deliver four destroyers to assist in

⁵⁹⁹ Balfour to Lady Wemyss, 4 Apr. 1915, Balfour MSS, Add. MSS. 49836.

⁶⁰⁰ For details of the Dardanelles campaign, see R.R. James, Gallipoli (London, 1965); M. Hickey, Gallipoli (London, 1995); T. Travers, Gallipoli 1915 (Stroud, 2001).

⁶⁰¹ Admiralty to Foreign Office, 1 Feb. 1916, FO 371/2690/20396.

⁶⁰² Grey to Greene, 4 Feb. 1916, FO 371/2690/26545.

⁶⁰³ Minute by Drummond, 13 Dec. 1916, FO 371/2690/255358.

patrolling the Malacca Strait.⁶⁰⁴ Although initially hesitant, at the end of March Japan eventually arranged to send a flotilla and some cruisers to operate in Singapore and the Indian Ocean.⁶⁰⁵

Although Balfour played a part in the Admiralty's attempt to extract naval vessels from Japan, he was not always convinced of the value of Japan's assistance at that time. In January 1916 he agreed about the utility of Japanese destroyers escorting Allied vessels with valuable cargoes in the Mediterranean.⁶⁰⁶ He also realised that a flotilla of Japanese destroyers in the Indian Ocean would be valuable to protect the trade route from German attack.⁶⁰⁷ However, when the Admiralty examined the purchase of the Japanese battle-cruisers to support the Royal Navy, Balfour showed his cautious attitude. He did not agree that Britain needed to buy Japanese battle-cruisers because Britain's naval strength was not seriously diminished. On 10 June 1916, he concluded that Britain should not negotiate with Japan on the matter.⁶⁰⁸ Balfour regarded Japanese naval assistance as simply a question of adding auxiliary ships such as destroyers. It was not necessary for Britain to obtain Japan's capital ships, such as battle-cruisers, unless the British navy's vulnerability became obvious.

⁶⁰⁴ Admiralty to Foreign Office, 8 Feb. 1916, FO 371/2690/24943.

⁶⁰⁵ Grey to Greene, 29 Mar. 1916, FO 371/2690/61248.

⁶⁰⁶ Minutes by Balfour on Wemyss' telegram of 27 Jan. 1916, ADM 116/1702.

⁶⁰⁷ Minutes by Balfour on Foreign Office's telegram of 18 Feb. 1916, ADM 116/1702.

⁶⁰⁸ Balfour to Bonar Law, 10 Jun. 1916, Balfour MSS, Add. MSS. 49693.

Balfour's duty was not restricted to the Admiralty. He joined the War Committee, which became the nucleus of the coalition government, and was directly involved in war planning. Here he realised that the shortage of munitions was greater than ever. In early 1915 the shortage had been confined to shells and rifles. About two years later, although the coalition government had been set up, the war situation had deteriorated rather than improved. Balfour had to tackle a deficit not only of shells and rifles but also of all kinds of munitions and resources. In December 1916, he wrote in a memorandum:

The fundamental difficulty of the present situation is that we do not possess – and are not likely to possess the instruments of modern warfare in sufficient quantity for ourselves, still less for ourselves and our Allies. There is a shortage of everything – Men, Money, Munitions, Steel, Ships of War, Merchant Ships, Aeroplanes, Foodstuffs. ... Take, for instance, the first of the war needs which I enumerated above – the need for men. We appointed a Man-power Board, which has done most valuable work; but as far as I can see – I may be quite wrong – the question which they consciously or unconsciously put to themselves is not; “How can be best use men for the war” but “How can we find most men for the army?”⁶⁰⁹

The Asquith administration, however, was in turmoil again when Balfour warned it of the serious danger of the shortage with the above memorandum. Growing confrontation within the Cabinet forced Asquith to resign as Prime Minister on 5 December. Lloyd George established a new coalition government with Balfour serving as Foreign

⁶⁰⁹ Memo. by Balfour, 5 Dec. 1916, Balfour MSS, Add. MSS. 49715.

Secretary.

On becoming Foreign Secretary, Balfour had to review the whole of British foreign policy towards Asia during the war. Japan's so-called 'Twenty-one Demands' caused a political crisis in the Far East while Britain was engaged in the war in Europe.⁶¹⁰ These twenty one Japanese requirements had been presented to China on 18 January 1915.⁶¹¹ Japan was trying to consolidate her position in Shantung, which she had occupied immediately after the Anglo-Japanese joint military campaign against Germany. However, Britain deemed some of these demands, which were referred to as Group V, 'the final touches to a Japanese protectorate over China'.⁶¹² Faced with China's resistance and Britain's objection, Japan omitted Group V and presented the rest of the demands to China with a final ultimatum. In the end China accepted them. This crisis strengthened Britain's doubts about Japan's diplomacy and the value of the Anglo-Japanese alliance.

Japan's encroachment of southern China strained Anglo-Japanese relations further. Taking advantage of civil war in China, Japan strengthened her influence in Yunnan

⁶¹⁰ R.J. Gowen, 'Great Britain and the Twenty-One Demands of 1915: Cooperation versus Effacement' in Journal of Modern History XXXXIII, (1971), pp. 76-106.

⁶¹¹ For the list of original twenty one demands, see Lowe, Great Britain and Japan 1911-1915, pp. 258-262.

⁶¹² Minutes by Alston on Jordan's telegram of 18 Feb. 1915, FO 371/2322/19478.

province and Tibet in 1916.⁶¹³ Her presence in these regions, which were adjacent to India, caused the Government of India serious concern.⁶¹⁴ London could not overlook this Far Eastern situation, although the war in Europe had reached a stalemate. However, it was Germany that benefited from the discord between Britain and Japan. Britain had to both check Japan's expansion in the Far East and maintain harmony among the Allied powers.

On 13 February 1917, Balfour wrote to Greene that British policy regarding Japan was 'one of forced acquiescence – not to obstruct, and yet not to offer any concession gratuitously'. Although cooperating with Japan over financial help for China, Britain was quietly resisting her bid to expand her influence in the Yangtze Valley and the Chinese provinces bordering India and Tibet. But given 'the present condition of British political and financial helplessness in the Far East', it was doubtful that Britain could maintain the *status quo* in that region. Moreover, she might have to request Japan's naval and military help in the future. Balfour emphasised that Britain would always have to pay the price for Japan's aid 'at the expense of British interests in China' and should not sacrifice her interests in India. For him this was 'a cardinal point in British

⁶¹³ P. Lowe, 'Great Britain, Japan and the Fall of Yuan Shih-K'ai, 1915-1916' in Historical Journal XIII, 4, (1970), pp. 706-720.

⁶¹⁴ A. Best, British Intelligence and the Japanese Challenge in Asia, 1914-1941 (Basingstoke, 2002), pp. 26-27.

policy' and there could be 'no compromise'.⁶¹⁵

This telegram showed three important elements of Balfour's foreign policy regarding Japan. First, he clearly recognised Britain's difficult position in Asia. Britain had to focus on the war in Europe and could not afford to appropriate any resources for use in Asia. Therefore, her policy towards Japan had to be passive. Balfour had no intention of allowing British interests to be violated, but he could not openly resist Japan's advance to China to avoid disarray among the Allied powers and conflict in Asia. Second, he recognised the possibility that Britain would be forced to request more naval and military assistance from Japan. He considered that British interests in China could be used as the price for such Japanese aid. He did not want to renounce British interests unnecessarily, but regarded those in China as potential bargaining chips. Finally, realising a close strategic linkage between China and India, Balfour prioritised Britain's interests in India over those in China. Even if Britain had to make concessions to Japan, he advocated that she should not even indicate that she might regard her interests in India as possible concessions. This argument which was the same as that before 1905 highlighted his determination to protect British interests in India absolutely. His attitude towards India was totally different to that towards China.

⁶¹⁵ Balfour to Greene, 13 Feb. 1917, FO 371/2693/263898.

All the above-mentioned elements illustrated how Balfour's policy regarding Japan during the war kept in mind not only the Far East but also India. The war situation in Europe was not improving, and Britain was suffering severely from a lack of manpower, warships and other munitions. Until he became Foreign Secretary Balfour had not believed in Britain's imperative need of Japan's naval and military aid. However, the difficult circumstances of the war forced him to acknowledge that she had to ask for Japanese help in Europe. At this point, Japan's naval and military assistance became involved in Europe, India and the Far East. As the newly-appointed Foreign Secretary, Balfour had to tackle this global problem.

III

When Balfour became Foreign Secretary in December 1916, the circumstances of the war had worsened. In particular, German U-boats had stepped up their attack on Allied transportation routes and Britain had suffered a substantial loss of commodities. For instance, from January to August 1916, the average monthly loss to U-boat action was 56,000 tons; and from September to December 1916, that number surged to 121,000

tons.⁶¹⁶ Although Japan's fleet had already assisted Britain in the Far East and the Indian Ocean, Balfour decided to request more naval aid. On 18 December, the Admiralty expressed its hope that Japan would send two light cruisers to the Cape of Good Hope 'in order to operate against raiders in the South Atlantic or Indian Ocean', and also asked for a flotilla of Japanese destroyers to be deployed in the Mediterranean for the purpose of 'attacking submarines and protecting trade in the central part of the Mediterranean'.⁶¹⁷ Balfour approved this request and instructed Greene to convey it to the Japanese government, simultaneously pointing out to the Admiralty the impossibility of examining all mail on Japanese ships at sea for evidence of German plots. In order to secure Japan's full naval cooperation, Britain had to avoid such a measure which would seriously offend Japanese public opinion.⁶¹⁸

The Japanese government needed some justification for the further naval assistance to convince the Imperial Diet and public opinion. Although there was a change of cabinet in Japan in October 1916, the new cabinet followed the previous policy regarding the provision of naval help. On 27 January 1917, Ichiro Motono, Japan's Foreign Minister, wired Sutemi Chinda, Japanese Ambassador to Britain, that the Japanese government wanted 'convincing evidence' in order to send a fleet to Europe

⁶¹⁶ Marder, From the Dreadnought to Scapa Flow, Vol III, p. 270.

⁶¹⁷ Admiralty to Foreign Office, 18 Dec. 1916, FO 371/2690/256472.

⁶¹⁸ Balfour to Greene, 9 Jan. 1917, FO 371/2690/256472.

because the ‘ex-Japanese Cabinet limited the sphere of naval operation and decided not to dispatch her navy to the Mediterranean’. For Motono, ‘convincing evidence’ meant a British guarantee of Japanese rights to the Pacific Islands north of the Equator and Shantung province at the future Peace Conference.⁶¹⁹ When Motono informed Greene of Japan’s acceptance of Britain’s request, he also mentioned Japan’s desire for the Pacific Islands and Shantung.⁶²⁰ Motono did not state that this was a condition of further aid, but Chinda was more straightforward. He met Balfour on 2 February and said that if Britain did not accept Japan’s request, ‘the dispatching of the Japanese fleet would reach a dead end’.⁶²¹

Balfour and the Foreign Office considered it reasonable to assure Japan of her rights in Shantung and the Pacific Islands in return for her naval assistance. However, he realised that the Colonial Office should be consulted on this matter.⁶²² Walter Long, Secretary of State for the Colonies, had emphasised the necessity of obtaining the concurrence of the Dominions, and the War Cabinet followed his suggestion on 1 February. Although Australia and New Zealand might be reluctant to accept such assurance, Long considered that they would finally assent to the guaranteeing of Japan’s

⁶¹⁹ An additional remark by Foreign Ministry in the telegram from Motono to Chinda, 20 Mar. 1917, NGB/T, 6-III, pp.105-106.

⁶²⁰ Greene to Balfour, 2 Feb. 1917, FO 371/2950/27203.

⁶²¹ An additional remark by Foreign Ministry in the telegram from Motono to Chinda, 20 Mar. 1917, NGB/T, 6-III, pp.105-106.

⁶²² Minutes by Balfour and Hardinge on Greene’s telegram of 27 Jan. 1917, FO 371/2950/22137.

rights in Shantung and the Pacific Islands if Britain stressed that Japan would have to consent to Britain's rights to the Pacific Islands south of the Equator.⁶²³ Balfour agreed to Long's proposal and quickly communicated with the Dominions about the disposal of the Pacific Islands and Shantung.⁶²⁴ Australia and New Zealand eventually accepted Japan's conditions for her naval assistance.⁶²⁵

America's possible entry into the war accelerated Britain's decision to approve Japan's demands. America did not want Japan's sphere of influence in the Far East to increase and was sure to oppose a guarantee of Japanese rights in the Pacific Islands and Shantung. Therefore, Britain had to agree to Japan's request before America entered the war to avoid 'the possible difficulties that might be created with the United States'.⁶²⁶

On 14 February 1917, immediately after obtaining the assent from Australia and New Zealand, Balfour officially stated that Britain would guarantee Japan's rights in the Pacific Islands and Shantung at the coming peace conference.⁶²⁷ Japan received Britain's answer and accepted the condition that Britain would keep the Pacific Islands south of the Equator.⁶²⁸ As a result, Britain concluded a secret agreement with Japan

⁶²³ War Cabinet 51, 1 Feb. 1917, CAB 23/1.

⁶²⁴ Balfour to Greene, 5 Feb. 1917, FO 371/2950/27203.

⁶²⁵ Governor of New Zealand to Long, 6 Feb. 1917, FO 371/2950/30566; Governor of Australia to Long, 10 Feb. 1917, FO 371/2950/34026.

⁶²⁶ War Cabinet 63, 12 Feb. 1917, CAB 23/1.

⁶²⁷ Balfour to Greene, 14 Feb. 1917, FO 371/2950/36133.

⁶²⁸ Motono to Greene, 21 Feb. 1917, NGB/T, 6-III, pp.678-679.

over this territory in the Far East.

This highlighted how the Japanese naval assistance issue was so complicated that it could not be confined to Anglo-Japanese bilateral relations. Although Balfour considered Japan's conditions permissible, he had to persuade Australia and New Zealand to accept them. Moreover, fear of opposition from America forced Balfour to reach an agreement with Japan quickly. Japan's help might damage relations between Britain and the Dominions or America. Balfour prevented such disharmony. The performance of the Japanese cruisers was satisfactory. They sought the German raider 'Wolf' on its way to the Mediterranean and arrived at Malta on 13 April, at once beginning to escort Allied merchant vessels and troop transports to reduce the threat of German submarines.⁶²⁹ Balfour's management of this issue was successful during the war. However, Britain's secret guarantee of Japan's territorial rights would cast a shadow on Anglo-American-Japanese relations after the war.

After America entered the war in April 1917, Balfour led a British delegation to America to discuss British and American war policy. During his stay in America, Balfour found 'a profoundly gloomy view of Japanese policy' at the US State Department and had to 'combat suspicions which seemed to me, on the evidence,

⁶²⁹ Y. Hirama, 'Japanese naval assistance and its effect on Australian-Japanese relations' in O'Brien, (ed.) The Anglo-Japanese Alliance, 1902-1922, pp. 140-158; T. Saxon, 'Anglo-Japanese Naval Cooperation, 1914-1918' in Naval War College Review, LIII, 1, (2000), pp. 62-92.

somewhat excessive'.⁶³⁰ At that time, America sought to increase the number of capital ships, and the construction of additional destroyers was impossible. Balfour had to persuade the American authorities to abandon their naval building programme because Britain needed more American destroyers to tackle the German submarines, but he made no progress because 'fear of Japan is so great, both in the Navy Department and elsewhere'.⁶³¹ Colonel Edward M. House, President Wilson's chief advisor, suggested that America might accept Britain's request if the latter could guarantee her assistance with capital ships 'in the case of any attack upon the United States by a third party'.⁶³² He indicated that this guarantee might be developed into a mutually defensive naval alliance between Britain and America.⁶³³ It was obvious that the United States feared Japan most, so 'the proposed guarantee or the Alliance would raise the whole question of our relations with Japan'.⁶³⁴

Balfour considered that an Anglo-American defensive alliance was desirable and would have the immense advantage of extracting destroyers from America. However, he foresaw that such an agreement between Britain and America 'might produce a very

⁶³⁰ Balfour to Milner, 19 Jan. 1918, Balfour MSS, FO 800/203.

⁶³¹ Spring-Rice to Cecil, 14 May 1917, CAB 23/2.

⁶³² War Cabinet 142, 22 May. 1917, CAB 23/2.

⁶³³ D. French, 'The Empire and the USA in British strategy in the spring of 1917' in K. Neilson and G. Kennedy, (eds.) Far Flung Lines: Studies in Imperial Defence in Honour of Donald Mackenzie Schurman (London, 1996), p. 97.

⁶³⁴ War Cabinet 142, 22 May. 1917, CAB 23/2.

unpleasant feeling in Tokyo'. As long as the alliances were defensive there was no incompatibility between an Anglo-American alliance and the Anglo-Japanese one. But Japan would regard the conclusion of an alliance with America as 'the beginning of the end of an [Anglo-Japanese] Alliance which has already lasted twenty years'. The best and only solution to avoid such circumstances was 'to try to associate Japan from the beginning with the new arrangement'.⁶³⁵ On returning to Britain, he suggested a formula at a meeting of the Cabinet on 19 June:

That, in view of the diversion of Government shipbuilding in the naval yards of the United States of America from the construction of capital ships to that of vessels suitable for anti-submarine warfare, the Governments of the United States of America, Great Britain, France, Italy, Russia and Japan engage singly and severally to assist each other against any maritime attack for a period of four years after the conclusion of the present war.⁶³⁶

This formula included six powers to show the unity of the Allied Powers, but its central point was the triumvirate of Britain, America and Japan. According to Balfour, this agreement 'would have the triple effect of allaying Japanese fears, of engaging Japanese support, and of advertising the Treaty as a protection against Germany'.⁶³⁷ This was the crystallisation of his effort to keep Anglo-American-Japanese relations calm during the war. It was important that Balfour had no intention of weakening the Anglo-Japanese

⁶³⁵ Memo. by Balfour, 22 Jun. 1917, CAB 23/3.

⁶³⁶ Note by Hankey, 19 Jun. 1917, CAB 23/3.

⁶³⁷ Memo. by Balfour, 22 Jun. 1917, CAB 23/3.

alliance; his scheme of the tripartite naval agreement was rather the development of the alliance.

Although the British Cabinet authorised Balfour to negotiate with America about his scheme, President Wilson did not welcome it.⁶³⁸ His formula was ‘a violent departure from United States practice’.⁶³⁹ Even if Wilson himself agreed with Balfour’s plan, the US Senate would fiercely oppose a binding treaty with foreign powers. Thus Wilson rejected the scheme for an Anglo-American alliance, saying vaguely that ‘the United States will proceed as energetically as possible to build destroyers’.⁶⁴⁰ It was the death blow to Balfour’s bid to forge a multinational naval agreement including Britain, America and Japan. This failure showed the difficulty of securing American commitment in international security problems. However, Balfour did not completely abandon his idea of an Anglo-American-Japanese naval agreement: it would appear again after the war.

Balfour successfully secured further naval assistance from Japan in February and made an effort to improve relations with America in May 1917. Britain’s prospects still did not improve as he had hoped. America was not yet ready for war, and could not offer the destroyers that Britain desperately needed at once. Furthermore, the German

⁶³⁸ K. Burk, Britain, America and the SineWS of War, 1914-1918 (Boston, 1985), p. 104.

⁶³⁹ Spring-Rice to Cecil, 14 May 1917, CAB 23/2.

⁶⁴⁰ Wiseman to Drummond, 18 Jul. 1917, Balfour MSS, FO 800/209.

submarine attacks on Allied shipping intensified, causing heavy damage to British commerce and transportation. The monthly loss of tonnage through U-boat offensives in January 1917 was 109,954, more than doubling in February and March 1917 to 256,394 and 283,647 respectively.⁶⁴¹ In the end Britain had to ask Japan to despatch more vessels to deal with this German threat. On 23 March, the Admiralty required three kinds of further naval help from Japan, namely: '(a) four cruisers or battleships to protect transports between Colombo and Australia, (b) for ships to be sent to the vicinity of Hong Kong, (c) for squadron to be sent to the coast of Queensland'.⁶⁴² Moreover, Britain urged Japan to send twelve more destroyers to European waters on 30 April.⁶⁴³ These urgent requests for Japan's naval aid demonstrated how the threat of German raiders and submarines was more serious than Britain had expected.

However, Japan was beginning to think that Britain's requests were becoming endless. The Japanese Admiralty insisted that Japan had already provided the Allied Powers with new destroyers. The Japanese government refused Britain's request because her Imperial Diet would oppose the dispatch of her navy to Europe, leaving her own waters vulnerable to German raiders.⁶⁴⁴ In response Britain modified her request at

⁶⁴¹ Marder, From the Dreadnought to Scapa Flow, Vol IV, p. 102.

⁶⁴² Admiralty to Greene (through Foreign Office), 23 Mar. 1917, FO 371/2950/62299.

⁶⁴³ Jellicoe to Cecil, 30 Apr. 1917, FO 371/2950/88517.

⁶⁴⁴ Greene to Foreign Office, 7 May 1917, FO 371/2950/92872.

once and asked Japan to send four destroyers to the Mediterranean.⁶⁴⁵ Japan finally agreed and officially announced this on 24 May.⁶⁴⁶ However, she added that her navy could not afford to dispatch any further vessels to Europe.⁶⁴⁷ There was now little room left for further compromise between Britain and Japan on naval assistance.

In the summer of 1917 Balfour again made a diplomatic effort to improve relations between America and Japan. Following the success of his US mission, Japan had also decided to send a special delegation to America led by Kikujiro Ishii, the former Foreign Minister. Just before his arrival on 13 August 1917, the US State Department unofficially asked Spring-Rice Britain's opinion of Japan's wartime cooperation with the Allies.⁶⁴⁸ Balfour desperately wanted to smooth US-Japanese relations and to extract more assistance from Japan. To solve the dilemma, he agreed with Sir Walter Langley, the Assistant Under-Secretary responsible for Far Eastern affairs at the Foreign Office, that '[w]e need only touch lightly on what they [the Japanese] have left undone but sufficiently to support our suggestion that the U.S. Gov[ermen]t. should direct their efforts to extracting tonnage'.⁶⁴⁹ Therefore his reply praised Japan's contribution to the

⁶⁴⁵ Foreign Office to Greene, 12 May 1917, FO 371/2950/95352.

⁶⁴⁶ Chinda to Cecil, 21 May 1917, FO 371/2950/102591.

⁶⁴⁷ Motono to Greene, 25 May 1917, NGB/T, 6-III, pp.115-116.

⁶⁴⁸ Spring-Rice to Foreign Office, 2 Aug. 1917, FO 371/2954/153795.

⁶⁴⁹ Minute by Langley on draft telegram to Spring-Rice of 11 Aug. 1917, FO 371/2954/153795. Professor Nish mistakenly cited this sentence as Balfour's word. See Nish, Alliance in Decline, pp. 222-223.

Allies' war effort, citing her vessels despatched to the Mediterranean and army equipment provided to Russia. On the other hand, he added the suggestion at the end that America should induce Japan to supply more mercantile tonnage.⁶⁵⁰ This answer, favourable to Japan and dishonest to America, was useful in overcoming the mutual suspicions between America and Japan. During his mission, Ishii succeeded in forging the Ishii-Lansing agreement with America, improving US-Japanese relations.⁶⁵¹ Balfour played a role in preparing for this achievement.

A confrontation between Britain and Japan over further naval assistance finally occurred in the autumn of 1917. In September, the Admiralty warned that a new German battle-cruiser would threaten Britain's naval superiority in the North Sea and proposed that utilising Japanese battle-cruisers was the 'only way of meeting this danger'.⁶⁵² Thus Britain asked Japan to sell her two Japanese battle-cruisers, but Japan declined this request on 5 October. Foreign Minister Motono cited three reasons for Japan's refusal: first, Japan had only four battle-cruisers and could not afford to sell two of them to Britain; second, Japan's Imperial Diet and public were so proud of the battle-cruisers that they would not agree to sell them to Britain; and third, Japan was

⁶⁵⁰ Balfour to Spring-Rice, 11 Aug. 1917, FO 371/2954/153795.

⁶⁵¹ Barclay to Balfour, 6 Nov. 1917, FO 371/2954/212857. For details of the Ishii-Lansing agreement, see F.R. Dickinson, War and National Reinvention: Japan in the Great War, 1914-1919 (Cambridge, 1999), pp. 222-223; R.W. Curry, Woodrow Wilson and Far Eastern Policy, 1913-1921 (New York, 1968), pp. 177-184.

⁶⁵² Admiralty to Foreign Office, 6 Sep. 1917, FO 371/2955/182535.

planning to add two more battle-cruisers to her existing four and it was impossible for her to cancel this program.⁶⁵³ Japan's reluctance to part with any of her battle-cruisers was so strong that there was little possibility that she would accept Britain's request.

However, Balfour did not abandon his effort to obtain Japanese battle-cruisers. He modified his request and asked Japan to lend Britain two battle-cruisers manned and commanded by Japanese sailors. Moreover, he suggested that Japanese battle-cruisers should be attached to the British Grand Fleet in the North Sea. He considered that this new proposal 'might be more agreeable' to Japan, and was disappointed when Chinda delivered the Japanese government's refusal on 14 November.⁶⁵⁴ At this meeting Balfour insisted that Japan had taken the side of the Allies under the Anglo-Japanese alliance and had improved relations with America with the Ishii-Lansing agreement. According to him, the only naval threat that Japan had to fear was the German fleet, so Japan no longer had to 'bottle up her fleet' in Eastern waters.⁶⁵⁵ However, Chinda merely repeated in response that Japan's population was strongly opposed. Balfour 'did not pretend to be satisfied either with the course pursued by his [Chinda's] Government or by the arguments with which that course was justified', stating that 'the Japanese people thought that Japan would not cooperate with Britain at all beyond the scope of

⁶⁵³ Greene to Foreign Office, 5 Oct. 1917, FO 371/2955/196674.

⁶⁵⁴ Balfour to Greene, 18 Oct. 1917, FO 371/2955/201838.

⁶⁵⁵ Memo. by Balfour, 15 Nov. 1917, FO 371/2955/217082.

the Anglo-Japanese alliance'.⁶⁵⁶ He had no choice but to give up hope of additional naval aid from Japan.

The British need for Japanese naval assistance diminished after 1918 as the threat from German submarines eased and subsequently the loss of merchant tonnage decreased. The average monthly loss to U-boats from January to April 1918 was about 200,000 tons. This number never surpassed 200,000 from May onwards and decreased to 136,864 tons in September 1918.⁶⁵⁷ Although Japan had not accepted any additional requests from Britain since October 1917, her naval operation in the Mediterranean and the Indian Ocean continued until the end of the war. Her mission was mainly to provide a convoy for Allied merchantmen, but her effectiveness was highly appreciated by British flag officers on the spot.⁶⁵⁸ Balfour repeatedly expressed his gratitude for Japan's assistance and did not hesitate to point out its importance to statesmen of other Allied Powers.⁶⁵⁹ However, this did not mean that he was satisfied with Japan's aid and attitudes towards Britain. In a letter to Viscount Milner, Minister without Portfolio, of 19 January 1918, he confessed that Japan's assistance was not 'all that we had a right to

⁶⁵⁶ Ibid; Chinda to Motono, 14 Nov. 1917, NGB/T, 6-III, p.158.

⁶⁵⁷ Marder, From the Dreadnought to Scapa Flow, Vol V, p. 78.

⁶⁵⁸ Nish, Alliance in Decline, p. 254; P.G. Halpern, A Naval History of World War I (London, 1994), p. 393.

⁶⁵⁹ Memo. by French Embassy, 1 Dec. 1917, FO 371/2955/229961.

expect' and that her refusal to sell or lend her battle-cruisers was 'quite unjustifiable'.⁶⁶⁰

Balfour did not make his dissatisfaction with Japan's naval assistance public in order to maintain the unity of the Allied Powers, but as he carried out the many negotiations with Japan for her naval help, his discontent at her attitude grew.

IV

By December of 1916, the war in Europe was locked in stalemates on both the Western and the Eastern fronts. Moreover, Britain had failed to occupy Baghdad and was rebuilding her army in Mesopotamia. These failures caused not only a shortage of manpower but also a political crisis in Britain. Following Asquith's fall and the formation of Lloyd George's new coalition government, Foreign Secretary Balfour had to consider how to persuade Japan, a potential source of fresh manpower among the Allied powers, to provide military assistance.

The Eastern front was the first area for the potential deployment of Japanese troops. Balfour discussed the question of Japan's military assistance with Colonel Charles à

⁶⁶⁰ Balfour to Milner, 19 Jan. 1918, Balfour MSS, FO 800/203. While Professor Nish stated that Balfour was disappointed at Japan's attitude, he did not cite this document. See Nish, Alliance in Decline, p. 227. Moreover, Dr. Tomes argued that Balfour did not suffer disappointment because his expectations were low. But he did not show any evidence. See Tomes, Balfour and Foreign Policy, p. 240.

Court Repington, the military correspondent of *The Times*, on 23 January 1917.⁶⁶¹

Repington considered that 'the failure to use the magnificent army of a warlike Ally with 77 million people was an incredible error', and that 'we really could not afford to forget Japan any longer'.⁶⁶² He had already talked about this with General Saburo Inagaki, the Japanese military attaché in London, and had been told 'that Japan could spare ten divisions, and that they could arrive on the Galician front in two months'.⁶⁶³ Balfour gave Repington a mandate to consult Konstantin Nabokov, the Russian Chargé d'Affaires to Britain, to find out whether Russia would accept Japanese military help. He also agreed with Repington that this negotiation should be carried out unofficially.

Repington launched several discussions with the Russians about the possibility of Japan's military assistance. First, he spoke with Nabokov on 24 January 1917. Although Nabokov appreciated the idea of Japan's help, he stressed 'that Russia did not lack for men and that her real need was for guns and rifles'. Thus he considered that assistance in the form of cash and war materials would be best for his country. As the price for her military aid, he mentioned giving Japan the northern part of Sakhalin, whose southern part Russia had ceded to her at the conclusion of the Treaty of Portsmouth. Russian

⁶⁶¹ For details of Repington's career, see A.J.A. Morris, (ed.) The Letters of Lieutenant-Colonel Charles à Court Repington CMG Military Correspondent of The Times 1903-1918 (Stroud, 1999), pp. 1-45.

⁶⁶² Note by Repington on the conversation with Nabokoff and Dessino, 27 Jan. 1917, Balfour MSS, FO 800/210.

⁶⁶³ C. à Court Repington, The First World War, 1914-1918, vol. I (London, 1920), p.432.

merchants had no commercial interest in Sakhalin because it was too far from Moscow.⁶⁶⁴

Next, Repington held a meeting with General Konstantin Dessino, the Russian military liaison officer, on 27 January. Unlike Nabokov, Dessino frankly admitted that Russia was suffering from a serious shortage of manpower and needed a large number of trained men. He consented to Repington's suggestion that 'Russia might be well advised to take a quarter of a million trained Japanese if she could get them, and that it was of enormous importance to us on naval and financial grounds to finish the war as soon as we could'.⁶⁶⁵ Dessino also agreed with Repington that Russia could give Japan the northern part of Sakhalin as compensation for her military aid. Repington thought that the private talks had progressed well and implied to Balfour that official negotiations could now begin.⁶⁶⁶ However, Balfour did not share Repington's optimism, warning that although the Japanese had recently shown themselves obliging in the matters of both armaments and ships, 'whether they would lend a quarter of a million men ... is quite another question'.⁶⁶⁷ Balfour was more cautious than Repington and

⁶⁶⁴ Note by Repington on the conversation with Nabokoff, 24 Jan. 1917, Balfour MSS, FO 800/210; V.H. Rothwell, 'The British Government and Japanese Military Assistance 1914-1918' in History LVI, 186, (1971), pp. 40-41.

⁶⁶⁵ Note by Repington on the conversation with Nabokoff and Dessino, 27 Jan. 1917, Balfour MSS, FO 800/210.

⁶⁶⁶ Repington to Balfour, 7 Feb. 1917, Balfour MSS, FO 800/210.

⁶⁶⁷ Balfour to Repington, 9 Feb. 1917, Balfour MSS, FO 800/210.

realised that despatching troops to foreign countries was more difficult than supplying vessels or munitions to other powers.

Balfour's concern was justified. On 25 February, Repington had another conversation with Inagaki about Japan's military help. Inagaki told him that Japan was anxious about Russia's position in Eastern Asia and needed assurances before she could give her assistance. Repington had already suggested north Sakhalin as the concession, but this was not attractive to Japan. Inagaki proposed two alternative forms of compensation: Japan to control the Russian railway to Harbin, the major city in Manchuria, and the dismantling of the port and Russian naval base in Vladivostok, the most important city in eastern Siberia.⁶⁶⁸ These concessions were much bigger than Balfour had expected. On 1 March, Balfour wrote to Repington that Russia could not accept such a price and that Britain should give up 'attempting to act in any way the part of the honest broker'.⁶⁶⁹ He realised that continuing negotiations on this matter would end in the deterioration of Russo-Japanese relations and damage the unity of the Allies. Thus it would be wise to abandon his attempt to mediate between Russia and Japan. Repington agreed with 'the wisdom of the policy' and the issue was finally dropped.⁶⁷⁰

This fiasco of Balfour's mediation reflected the difficulty of accepting Japan's

⁶⁶⁸ Note by Repington on the conversation with Inagaki, 25 Feb. 1917, Balfour MSS, FO 800/210.

⁶⁶⁹ Balfour to Repington, 1 Mar. 1917, Balfour MSS, FO 800/210.

⁶⁷⁰ Repington to Balfour, 6 Mar. 1917, Balfour MSS, FO 800/210.

military assistance in Europe. Balfour criticised Japan's demand as being 'on so colossal a scale' that even to mention it to Russia would 'do much more harm than good'.⁶⁷¹ As Repington pointed out, that price was Inagaki's individual opinion and the Japanese government might suggest a more modest one.⁶⁷² However, these demands impressed Japan's ambition to expand her influence in Siberia on Balfour. Furthermore, unlike in the case of Japan's naval aid, he had to consider the intentions of the country accommodating Japan's soldiers. Although Japan joined the Allies, not all the Allied powers were willing to accept the deployment of Japanese troops due to their suspicion of Japan. This discord within the Allied powers made it more difficult to use Japanese military assistance.

However, Balfour did not completely give up on the idea of utilising Japan's army in Europe. In April 1917 the United States entered the war, but the mobilisation of her army was slower than he had expected. He complained that the American government did not 'realise the scale of preparation required for the conduct of the war'.⁶⁷³ America herself began to consider the possibility of accepting Japan's military help until she could complete her preparations for war. Therefore, even with America's entry into the war, the shortage of manpower was not resolved and the value of Japanese troops

⁶⁷¹ Balfour to Repington, 1 Mar. 1917, Balfour MSS, FO 800/210.

⁶⁷² Repington to Balfour, 6 Mar. 1917, Balfour MSS, FO 800/210.

⁶⁷³ War Cabinet 164, 15 Jun. 1917, CAB 23/3.

remained high. On 16 June 1917, Spring-Rice reported that America had enquired about any British objections to, and possible compensation for, Japan's military aid.⁶⁷⁴ Although expressing anxiety about the concession that Japan would require, Balfour replied that Britain should welcome 'active military cooperation with Japan'. Yet, even if Japanese troops were despatched to Europe, he was not considering deploying them on the Western and Balkan fronts because of the shortage of troopships. He thus concluded that the Allies should accept the Japanese forces on the Eastern front.⁶⁷⁵ The failure of mediation between Russia and Japan forced him to entertain some apprehensions about Japan's high price, but he still recognised the value of her military assistance.

Among the Allied Powers it was France that most keenly demanded Japan's military aid. In France there was a mistaken impression that, although the Japanese government was willing to send troops to the Western front, the British government opposed such help.⁶⁷⁶ On 25 September, Paul Cambon, French Ambassador to London, requested British support in deploying Japanese troops in Russia or Salonica.⁶⁷⁷ Even before receiving France's suggestion, Balfour and the Foreign Office had once more begun to

⁶⁷⁴ Spring-Rice to Balfour, 16 Jun. 1917, FO 371/2954/120436.

⁶⁷⁵ Balfour to Spring-Rice, 20 Jun. 1917, FO 371/2954/120436.

⁶⁷⁶ Bertie to Foreign Office, 9 Sep. 1917, FO 371/2955/175984.

⁶⁷⁷ Cambon to Balfour, 25 Sep. 1917, FO 371/2955/186492.

investigate the possibility of utilizing the Japanese army in Europe. If Japanese troops were to be dispatched to Russia, the Trans-Siberian Railway was the most suitable means of transportation. However, the condition of this railway was poor following the chaos caused by the February Revolution. '[U]ntil a drastic re-organization of the Trans-Siberian Railway is effected', it was therefore impracticable to send a large number of Japanese troops to the Eastern front.⁶⁷⁸ Moreover, there was no prospect of the Russian government agreeing to pay high compensation for Japan's military aid. The possibility of dispatching Japanese forces to Salonica was even smaller than sending them to Russia. Salonica was so distant from Japan that it appeared to 'offer insuperable difficulties in the way of transport'.⁶⁷⁹ Balfour had to find another theatre of operation for the Japanese troops.

On receiving France's suggestion on 25 September 1917, he instructed the Foreign Office to consider the possibility of utilising Japanese troops in Mesopotamia. Already, on 24 September, he had discussed with Milner and Curzon, then Lord President of the Council, 'the proposed invitation to Japan to send a small Force to co-operate with us in Mesopotamia'.⁶⁸⁰ The senior Foreign Office officials paid little attention to this idea at

⁶⁷⁸ War Office to Foreign Office, 11 Sep. 1917, FO 371/2955/177532.

⁶⁷⁹ Minute by Lyons on the draft memorandum of 6 Oct. 1917, FO 371/2955/186492.

⁶⁸⁰ Balfour to Curzon, 25 Sep. 1917, Balfour MSS, FO 800/199.

first.⁶⁸¹ But Balfour realised its importance and insisted that they ‘should also deal with the most promising theatre of operation – Mesopotamia’.⁶⁸² In terms of transport and accessibility, the Persian Gulf was the most advantageous location for the deployment of Japanese troops. Although Britain had succeeded in occupying Baghdad in March 1917, a Turkish counterattack was strongly expected. Britain feared that Turkey’s recapture would severely damage British prestige in the Far East, and judged that using Japanese forces in Mesopotamia would be less injurious to the loss of Baghdad.⁶⁸³ As a result, Mesopotamia emerged as the best region for the deployment of the Japanese army.

On 11 October, Balfour established a committee to discuss Japan’s military assistance with the French authorities. He, Curzon and General Smuts, the South African representative on the Imperial War Cabinet, were the British representatives. Their French counterparts were Paul Painlevé, who had become the new Prime Minister, and Henry Franklin-Bouillon, Minister of State. The committee’s conclusions followed the Foreign Office memorandum of 6 October.⁶⁸⁴ The Western front and Salonica were ruled out due to lack of tonnage. Even if the British campaign in Palestine front were

⁶⁸¹ Minute by Lyons on the draft memorandum of 6 Oct. 1917, FO 371/2955/186492.

⁶⁸² Minute by Balfour on the draft memorandum of 6 Oct. 1917, FO 371/2955/186492.

⁶⁸³ Memo. by Foreign Office, 6 Oct. 1917, FO 371/2955/186492.

⁶⁸⁴ War Cabinet 250, 16 Oct. 1917, CAB 23/4.

successful, the fact that the Allied Powers relied on Japanese troops to capture Jerusalem would ‘shock European public opinion’. Nobody would be satisfied with Japan’s assistance in Palestine. The Eastern front seemed to be a possibility, but Russia’s domestic turmoil made it difficult for her to accept a large number of Japanese troops. Balfour argued that the employment of Japanese troops in Russia under such conditions was out of the question.⁶⁸⁵ Therefore, although the British army appeared to be sufficient for the defence of Baghdad, the committee confirmed that Mesopotamia was the only practical field in which Japanese troops could be deployed.⁶⁸⁶

However, the question of Mesopotamia was not confined to the Foreign Office: the India Office and the Government of India were also important in this matter. The British campaign in Mesopotamia of 1916-1917 was run by India because Mesopotamia was regarded as part of India’s security sphere. Given the nature of the imperial defence problem, the effect upon India of receiving Japan’s military aid in Mesopotamia was not discussed by this committee ‘in view of the presence of the French representatives’.⁶⁸⁷ Even before establishing the committee, the idea of deploying Japanese troops in

⁶⁸⁵ Balfour to Painlevé, 11 Oct. 1917, FO 371/3086/198198.

⁶⁸⁶ War Cabinet 250, 16 Oct. 1917, CAB 23/4. Dr. Rothwell insisted that Balfour had abandoned his idea of employing Japanese troops in Mesopotamia by the middle of October. However, he and other Cabinet colleagues still continued discussing a possibility of accepting Japan’s military assistance there. See Rothwell, ‘The British Government and Japanese Military Assistance 1914-1918’, pp. 42-43.

⁶⁸⁷ War Cabinet 250, 16 Oct. 1917, CAB 23/4.

Mesopotamia had been severely criticised by Edwin Montagu, Secretary of State for India from 17 July 1917. The War Cabinet had considered the possibility of utilising Chinese troops in Aden in September, but Montagu had strongly opposed using not only Chinese but also Japanese forces there. He emphasised Aden's geographical closeness to India and feared a bad influence on Britain's reputation in India if Japanese troops were deployed. Bearing in mind the rise of Pan-Asianism, he was also concerned that Japan would increasingly pursue 'the policy of "Asia for the Asiatics"' if she joined the military campaign in Mesopotamia. 'We must not', he concluded, 'risk it being said in Asia that the British cannot do without the assistance of the Chinese or the Japanese'.⁶⁸⁸

Balfour took the view that there was no Foreign Office objection to accepting Japan's military assistance in Mesopotamia, but he could not ignore India's opinion. After reading Montagu's fierce argument against using Japanese troops, Balfour recommended that Curzon and Milner ask Montagu's opinion from the Indian point of view.⁶⁸⁹

The India Office did not absolutely oppose the employment of Japanese troops in Mesopotamia until the middle of November 1917. When Balfour reported the committee's discussion about this subject with the French authorities on 16 October,

⁶⁸⁸ Montagu to Hankey, 20 Sep. 1917 quoted in J. Fisher, "Backing the wrong horse": Japan in British Middle Eastern Policy 1914-18" in Journal of Strategic Studies XXI, 2, (1998), p. 65.

⁶⁸⁹ Balfour to Curzon, 25 Sep. 1917, Balfour MSS, FO 800/199.

Montagu admitted that ‘if there were urgent military reasons for such intervention, political arguments should not count against them’.⁶⁹⁰ John Shuckburgh, head of the Political and Secret Department at the India Office, was also concerned about deploying Japanese troops in Mesopotamia and shared many of Montagu’s political objections to such a deployment. Even so, although he required the British government to give the India Office an opportunity to express its own opinion, he concluded that ‘these [political] objections may no doubt have to give way to military necessities’.⁶⁹¹ As Montagu and Shuckburgh showed, the plan to accept Japan’s military assistance in Mesopotamia was not popular at the India Office. Yet it was widely believed that Turco-German forces would soon advance to Baghdad to oust Britain from Turkish territory in Asia. The India Office could not rule out the possibility of taking advantage of Japan’s military help to face the Central Powers’ threat to Mesopotamia.

The Government of India, however, had stronger objections to accepting Japan’s forces in Mesopotamia. Japan’s increased exports to India and aggressive espionage activities there stiffened Delhi’s attitude towards Japan during the war.⁶⁹² When the India Office consulted the Government of India on Japan’s military aid, its reply was

⁶⁹⁰ War Cabinet 250, 16 Oct. 1917, CAB 23/4.

⁶⁹¹ Shuckburgh to Gregory, 13 Nov. 1917, FO 371/2955/217151.

⁶⁹² R.J. Popplewell, Intelligence and Imperial Defence: British Intelligence and the Defence of the Indian Empire 1904-1924 (London, 1995), pp. 280-281.

unfavourable. The political reasons for its opposition ranged widely from, for example, the probability of the establishment of a Japanese military base in India and the employment of Japanese troops prejudicing Britain's strategic position in Mesopotamia. Moreover, its objections were based on not only political but also military grounds. It considered that maintenance of the expeditionary force would become difficult if the Japanese army were attached to the British army in India 'owing to differences in equipment, armament, supplies &c'. In addition, the recent success of British campaigns in Palestine and the Euphrates valley had strengthened her position in Mesopotamia, allaying fears of an Ottoman offensive. Citing all these considerations, the Government of India clearly opposed deploying Japanese troops in Mesopotamia.⁶⁹³

The Government of India's negative view of military assistance from Japan in Mesopotamia hardened the India Office against it. On 13 December 1917, Shuckburgh agreed with Delhi's opposition and concluded that '[w]e shall have gained little by the elimination of Germany from Mesopotamia and the Gulf if Japan is to step promptly into her shoes'.⁶⁹⁴ Lord Islington, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for India, entirely concurred with Shuckburgh and had 'no reason to doubt that Mr. Montagu

⁶⁹³ Memo. by Government of India, 21 Nov. 1917, CAB 25/48.

⁶⁹⁴ Memo. by Shuckburgh, 13 Dec. 1917, CAB 25/48.

would be in agreement with the views' expressed by Shuckburgh.⁶⁹⁵ The Government of India and the India Office reached a common opinion and there was little possibility that they would endorse the plan to use Japanese troops in Mesopotamia.

India's objections poured cold water on Balfour's expectations of Japan's military help in Mesopotamia. Unofficially he enquired about Chinda's view of using the Japanese army 'either in Russia or some other theatre of war' at the meeting on 14 November 1917. Chinda's answer was negative, citing a shortage of tonnage, Russia's reluctance to accept Japanese forces and the Japanese public's opposition to despatching her troops abroad. Significantly, Chinda mentioned that Japan could not send her soldiers not only to Vladivostok but also to Mesopotamia. On receiving Chinda's answer, Balfour had to conclude that the prospect of obtaining Japanese military aid was slight.⁶⁹⁶ Internal opposition on the part of the India Office and Government of India had destroyed his hope of utilising Japanese troops in Mesopotamia. Forcing official negotiations with Japan in the face of India's opposition was not an option. This reflected that Japanese military assistance might conflict with India's security. Even though Japanese aid would be helpful to Britain, Balfour could not sacrifice imperial interests.

⁶⁹⁵ Minute by Islington on Shuckburgh's memo. of 13 Dec. 1917, 18 Dec. 1917, CAB 25/48.

⁶⁹⁶ Memo. by Balfour, 15 Nov. 1917, FO 371/2955/217082.

On 30 November, Balfour attended an inter-allied conference in Paris, and held some talks about Japan's military help with his American, French and Italian counterparts. Stéphen Pichon, the French Foreign Minister, was keen for Japan to send her troops to Europe and insisted that the Anglo-Japanese alliance obliged Japan to cooperate with Allied Powers in Europe. However, Balfour disagreed with this interpretation of the alliance. This indicates that, while he was dissatisfied with Japan's unwillingness to supply naval assistance beyond the scope of the alliance, he realised that Japan was not obliged to provide aid to Europe under the alliance. Although he consented to invite a Japanese delegation to the conference the next day, he did not expect the Allied Powers to be able to obtain Japan's troops in Europe.⁶⁹⁷ As Balfour foresaw, Keishirou Matsui, the Japanese Ambassador to France, insisted that it would be impossible for Japan to despatch her troops to Europe, citing 'difficulties of principle, difficulties due to the lack of sufficient national enthusiasm, and, above all, material difficulties, and especially that of transport'.⁶⁹⁸ The failure to employ Japanese soldiers in Mesopotamia made Balfour pessimistic about the prospect of obtaining further military support from Japan.

Even so, Balfour had not yet abandoned his hope of using Japanese troops.

⁶⁹⁷ Notes of a Conversation held at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Paris, on November 30, 1917, at 4 P.M., FO 371/2955/229961.

⁶⁹⁸ Memo. by Hankey, 3 Dec. 1917, CAB 28/3 I.C. 35(a).

Immediately after the inter-allied conference, he proposed to Lord Hardinge, now reinstalled as Permanent Under-Secretary at the Foreign Office, that 'before pressing the Japanese we must clear on our minds as to place where we want troops and the tonnage which is to carry them'.⁶⁹⁹ He later specified:

- (1) I think it extremely doubtful whether the Japs will give military assistance outside the Far East.
- (2) In certain circumstances, however, we might have to press them again on the off chance of their yielding.
- (3) But before doing so, we must make up our minds in the subjects mentioned in my minute.
- (4) Only so could we have any possible chance of success and
- (5) Investigation may show that even if per impossible the Japs were willing, their operation would be contrary to our interests political and naval (tonnage).⁷⁰⁰

This minute clearly shows that, although Balfour had given up on the possibility of deploying Japanese forces in Europe, he still considered it possible that Britain would have to ask Japan for her military help. Before such an occasion arose, Britain would have to decide on a new theatre of operations for Japanese troops and the method by which to transport them. Moreover, even if Japan consented to provide assistance, her military campaign might be incompatible with the political interests of Britain or the

⁶⁹⁹ Minute by Balfour on the inter-allied conference procès-verbal of 1 Dec. 1917, FO 371/2955/229961.

⁷⁰⁰ Minute by Balfour on Macleay's one of 11 Dec. 1917, FO 371/2955/229961. This key document is given here for the first time in scholarly literature.

Allied Powers. Balfour was obviously keeping Mesopotamia in mind. It was true that Japan had not agreed to despatch her army to Mesopotamia. But had she been willing to do so, her military presence there would certainly be inimical to the interests of India, the central and most important part of the British Empire. Balfour desired to avoid a similar situation.

At this time the circumstances of the war changed dramatically. Russia was thrown into revolutionary turmoil after the Bolshevik coup on 7 November 1917. The Allied Powers feared that she would soon leave the war and Germany would advance eastward. The United States was concerned about the expansion of Germany's influence in China and was considering a joint policy with Japan to exclude Germany from East Asia and maintain China's integrity.⁷⁰¹ Knowing of this American fear, Balfour considered that the 'Americans ought in this event to co-operate with Japan in Siberia'.⁷⁰² He related this idea to Japan's military assistance and added it to his above-mentioned minute:

6. I believe that if the Americans landed troops at Vladivostock the Japanese would insist on co-operating!⁷⁰³

Therefore, Vladivostock in Siberia emerged as an area where the presence of Japanese troops would be acceptable. Unlike the European theatre of war, transport would not be

⁷⁰¹ Spring-Rice to Foreign Office, 3 Dec. 1917, FO 371/2954/230722.

⁷⁰² Minute by Balfour on the Spring-Rice's telegram of 3 Dec. 1917, FO 371/2954/230722.

⁷⁰³ Minute by Balfour on Macleay's one of 11 Dec. 1917, FO 371/2955/229961.

a serious problem here given the short distances involved. However, America's attitude to Japan would be a complicating factor. Balfour and the Foreign Office began to discuss the possibility of accepting the Japanese army in Siberia.

V

Although he considered the possibility of Japanese military assistance in Siberia, Balfour's attitude was cautious at first. At the inter-allied conference in Paris on 3 December 1917, France's Marshal Foch proposed that Japan occupy Vladivostok and the Trans-Siberian Railway to prevent German expansion into Asia. Balfour was not enthusiastic about this suggestion, however, from either a military or a political point of view. Although Foch's plan would require a large number of troops, it was not clear whether Japan was willing to provide them. Moreover, there were 'the elements in Russia that were still on the side of the Allies'. Given the uncertainty of any military intervention, Balfour wished to help them to resist Germany rather than to attack Russia.⁷⁰⁴ Foch's proposal was reminiscent of Japan's price for her military assistance in Balfour's attempt to mediate between Russia and Japan from January to March 1917.

⁷⁰⁴ "Notes of a Conversation Held at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Paris, on December 3, 1917, at 11 a.m.", 3 Dec. 1917, CAB 28/3/I.C.-35(b).

As the failure of the mediation highlighted, it was obvious that Russia could not accept such Japan's military actions. Balfour did not want both the Bolsheviks and the anti-Bolsheviks to turn against the Allied powers.

Balfour explained his policy regarding Bolshevik Russia in a detailed memorandum on 9 December 1917. His first priority was to prevent Russia from being driven into the hands of Germany. Russia's collaboration would give Germany the opportunity to use various Russian resources and improve her strategic position due to the weakened Eastern front. Military intervention in Russia might provide her with a motive for welcoming Germany. Although he regarded the Bolsheviks as 'dangerous dreamers' and their political system as 'crazy', Balfour thus opposed deeming them avowed enemies and proposed to avoid an open breach with Bolshevik Russia for as long as possible. He preferred the flexibility of this policy, insisting that '[i]f this be drifting, then I am a drifter by deliberate policy'. It was significant that he argued that a Russo-German combination would affect both the immediate conduct of the war and their relations with Britain after the war.⁷⁰⁵ He was already bearing post-war international politics in mind.

The War Cabinet followed Balfour's line. Lloyd George praised his memorandum as

⁷⁰⁵ Memo. by Balfour, 9 Dec. 1917, CAB 23/4.

‘one of Mr. Balfour’s most notable State documents’.⁷⁰⁶ Ministers agreed that Britain was not concerned with the Bolsheviks or other political parties in Russia except in so far as they continued fighting against the Central Powers. Britain’s main purpose was to keep Russia in the war and on the side of the Allies. If this could not be secured, she should ensure that ‘Russia was as helpful to us and as harmful to the enemy as possible’.⁷⁰⁷ The War Cabinet tried to maintain Britain’s peaceful attitude towards the Bolsheviks and to avoid provoking them.

Such policy, however, came to nothing as the situation in Russia deteriorated at the beginning of 1918. The Bolsheviks’ influence rapidly expanded into Siberia, plunging Vladivostok into chaos. The War Cabinet decided to send the cruiser *Suffolk* there to protect a large accumulation of Allied stores. Yet this did not seem to be enough, so the War Cabinet considered whether Britain should despatch military forces to Siberia.⁷⁰⁸ British statesmen examined the possibility of Japan carrying out an armed intervention in Siberia alone. Lord Robert Cecil, the Blockade Minister, warned that Japan’s single-handed intervention would offend Russia and make it more difficult to secure Britain’s control of the Trans-Siberian Railway.⁷⁰⁹

⁷⁰⁶ D. Lloyd George, War Memoirs, vol.5 (London, 1933), p.2573.

⁷⁰⁷ War Cabinet 295, 10 Dec. 1917, CAB 23/4.

⁷⁰⁸ War Cabinet 308, 31 Dec. 1917, CAB 23/4.

⁷⁰⁹ War Cabinet 316, 7 Jan. 1918, CAB 23/5.

In this situation Britain decided to establish an interdepartmental Russian Committee consisting of members of the Foreign and War Offices, to review the necessity of military intervention. On 16 January 1918, the committee produced a favourable report on armed intervention in Siberia. It argued that, once the Bolsheviks gained ascendancy over Siberia, it would be impossible for the Allies to check Germany's penetration of Siberia. Moreover, the Allied powers needed to control the Trans-Siberian Railway in order to be able to supply anti-Bolshevik Cossacks in southern Russia. Japan could send a large force to Siberia and secure control of the Trans-Siberian Railway on her own. The committee therefore insisted that Britain should persuade her to send a force to Siberia and occupy the whole railway from Vladivostok to European Russia immediately. To obtain America's approval for Japan's intervention, the committee also advocated that Britain should point out to America that Japan's involvement in Siberia would reduce 'their activities in the south of China and on the Pacific Coast'.⁷¹⁰ The committee's conclusion was almost the same as Foch's proposal of December 1917, but added the necessity in persuading America to accept military intervention in Siberia.

Balfour, however, did not agree with the committee's report, commenting that its

⁷¹⁰ "Note by the Russia Committee on the Question of the Trans-Siberian Railway", 16 Jan. 1918, CAB 21/45.

suggestion was ‘startling’.⁷¹¹ He pointed out that Japan’s territorial ambitions would make staying in Eastern Siberia attractive with a view to consolidating her position on the Asian mainland. America would oppose Japan’s activities in Siberia because of her strong suspicion of Japanese policy on the Far East. The Russians, who had not forgotten their defeat in the Russo-Japanese War, would be furious about Japan’s armed intervention on their territory.⁷¹² Given these difficulties, he doubted the practicability of the committee’s Siberian intervention scheme.

While consultation with the Allied powers about Siberia progressed, Balfour was still undecided about its merits. After the Russian Revolution, from the Allies’ viewpoint, Germany’s influence appeared to steadily increase in Bolshevik Russia. Balfour realised that ‘Germanized Russia’ would provide Germany with valuable munitions during the war and would become ‘a peril to the world’ after the war. The Siberian intervention was ‘the only way of averting these consequences’. In a telegram to the British ambassadors to America, France and Italy on 26 January 1918, he speculated that the Allied powers might give Japan a mandate to carry out an armed intervention in Siberia and occupy the Trans-Siberian Railway.⁷¹³ Emphasising America’s approval of the

⁷¹¹ Balfour to Milner, 19 Jan. 1918, Balfour MSS, FO 800/203.

⁷¹² Memo. by Balfour, 19 Jan. 1918, CAB 21/45.

⁷¹³ Tel. Balfour to Bertie (Paris), Rodd (Rome) and Barclay (Washington), 26 Jan. 1918, Balfour MSS, Add. MSS. 49699.

intervention, he sent a separate telegram to Colonel House on 30 January. In Britain's present difficult situation, Balfour considered it 'of real importance to do all we can to encourage active Japanese participation'. To allay America's concerns about Japan's ambitions in the Far East, he stressed that the Siberian intervention would drive Japan into open conflict with Germany and 'lessen Japanese pressure in other directions'.⁷¹⁴

On many occasions, however, Balfour showed a lack of enthusiasm for Japan's intervention in Siberia. He was reluctant to quarrel with the Bolsheviks. '[S]o long as they refuse to make a separate peace', Balfour pondered, 'we look at them with a certain measure of favour'.⁷¹⁵ He was not hostile to the Bolshevik regime itself; his stance was flexible and practical. As long as the Bolsheviks opposed or embarrassed Germany, 'their cause is our cause'. Regardless of ideology, anyone in Russia who seemed likely to offer resistance to Britain's enemies or aid to her friends deserved her support.⁷¹⁶ In Siberia, the anti-Bolshevik General Gregorii Semenov had increased his troops and consolidated his position.⁷¹⁷ Although Balfour realised that Semenov's success depended on luck, he considered that if Semenov were to obtain enough power to resist not only the Bolsheviks but also Germany, 'it may become less necessary to press

⁷¹⁴ Tel. Drummond to Wiseman, 30 Jan. 1918, Balfour MSS, Add. MSS. 49687.

⁷¹⁵ *Ibid.*

⁷¹⁶ Balfour to Lockhart, 21 Feb. 1918, Balfour MSS, Add. MSS. 49741.

⁷¹⁷ R.H. Ullman, *Anglo-Soviet Relations, 1917-1921*, 3vols (Princeton, 1961-72), Vol. I, pp. 98-100.

Japanese for assistance'.⁷¹⁸ Moreover, on 1 February, House expressed his view that President Wilson would not approve the Siberian intervention.⁷¹⁹ Balfour therefore suggested that Britain and America should defer their decision on Japan's military action in Siberia until the result of Semenov's movements became obvious.⁷²⁰

However, the rapid changes in the Russian situation did not allow Balfour to postpone his decision any longer. It became clear that Semenov could at best control a small fraction of the Trans-Siberian Railway.⁷²¹ The anti-Bolshevik Cossacks lacked vigour and were defeated by the Bolsheviks. Balfour had to admit that Britain's efforts in Russia were 'no more than a series of rear-guard actions' which could not check but only delay the enemy's advance. Britain needed to implement not only indirect action such as financial assistance for the anti-Bolshevik forces but also direct action to break the difficult situation in Russia. Balfour's answer was 'an incursion by Japanese troops, acting on an Allied mandate, which should penetrate as far as the Ural Mountains'.⁷²² Although he had finally accepted the necessity of Japan's military intervention in Siberia, America still considered Japan the worst possible agent of the Allies in

⁷¹⁸ Tel. Balfour to Bertie (Paris), Rodd (Rome) and Barclay (Washington), 4 Feb. 1918, Balfour MSS, Add. MSS. 49699.

⁷¹⁹ Wiseman to Drummond, 1 Feb. 1918, Balfour MSS, Add. MSS. 49687.

⁷²⁰ Balfour to Wiseman, 2 Feb. 1918, Balfour MSS, Add. MSS. 49699.

⁷²¹ Balfour to Wiseman, 8 Feb. 1918, Balfour MSS, Add. MSS. 49687.

⁷²² Memo. by Balfour, 14 Feb. 1918, Balfour MSS, Add. MSS. 49699.

Russia.⁷²³ Moreover, Balfour forecast that if necessary, Japan would not hesitate to occupy Eastern Siberia regardless of the Allied powers' mandate. Yet it was doubtful whether she would agree to advance to the Ural Mountains due to the cost and serious military risk.⁷²⁴ It was essential for Balfour to persuade President Wilson to assent to Japan's military action in Siberia and to understand Japan's intentions regarding the intervention.

Balfour now took the initiative in realising the scheme for a major Japanese intervention in Siberia. On 23 February 1918, he met the Japanese ambassador and proposed that Japan should control 'the whole of the Siberian Railway as far as the Urals' to prevent Germany using the railway and munitions in Siberia. Although the Japanese ambassador understood the need to seize Vladivostok, in the absence of instructions from his government, he did not commit himself on the matter. Balfour explained Britain's dilemma to the War Cabinet. Japan's public was suspicious of the Allies' intention, remembering that Britain had tried to curtail Japan's military activities in Asia early in the war. Balfour insisted that Japan might not want to cooperate with the Allied detachments because her population would regard such cooperation as restrictive. On the other hand, President Wilson could not agree to Japan's single-handed

⁷²³ War Cabinet 350, 20 Feb. 1918, CAB 23/5.

⁷²⁴ Memo. by Balfour, 14 Feb. 1918, Balfour MSS, Add. MSS. 49699.

intervention in Siberia.⁷²⁵ Balfour saw persuading the President as the most important task and decided not to approach Japan again until he had obtained clarity on America's view.⁷²⁶ To his mind, cooperation with America took precedence over coordination with Japan.

Balfour addressed his efforts at gaining Wilson's approval for the Siberian intervention. He took advantage of Motono's declaration of 23 February 1918, which was interpreted by the Allies to mean that Japan was ready to carry out an armed intervention in Siberia.⁷²⁷ As Balfour had forecast, Japan could undertake military action in Siberia even without the assent of the Allied powers. If the Allies could not stop her intervention, it would be wise to give her their mandate. Without a mandate, Balfour insisted, it was obvious that they could not 'control materially her policy in Siberia either now or in the future'.⁷²⁸ Secretary of State Lansing, who shared Balfour's opinion, urged President Wilson to accept Japan's intervention. On 1 March, the President drafted a note saying that, although America would not join the intervention, she did not object to Japan being asked to send her troops to Siberia.⁷²⁹ Receiving this

⁷²⁵ War Cabinet 353, 25 Feb. 1918, CAB 23/5.

⁷²⁶ War Cabinet 354, 26 Feb. 1918, CAB 23/5.

⁷²⁷ G.F. Kennan, Soviet-American Relations, 1917-1920: The Decision to Intervene (Princeton, 1958), pp. 90-91.

⁷²⁸ Balfour to Wiseman, 28 Feb. 1918, Balfour MSS, Add. MSS. 49741.

⁷²⁹ FRUS, The Lansing Papers 1914-1920, vol. II, p. 355; Wiseman to Drummond, 4 Mar. 1918, Balfour MSS, Add. MSS. 49741.

note, Balfour turned his attention to Japan.⁷³⁰

However, President Wilson's mind was not yet made up. Unlike Lansing, House still had strong doubts about the value of an armed intervention in Siberia. He feared that approval of Japan's action would damage America's moral position and suggested reviewing American policy on this matter.⁷³¹ House's moral argument appealed to Wilson, who withdrew his support for the Siberian intervention.⁷³² Indeed, he wrote a new note expressing his opposition to it on 5 March 1918.⁷³³ America's objection to the intervention forced Britain to pay particular attention to 'a possibility of a rift on a matter of cardinal policy between ourselves and the United States of America'. Moreover, the Cabinet gradually lost enthusiasm for Japan's advance to the Urals. All they wanted Japan to do was to protect the munitions at Vladivostok, so they advocated that Britain should not ask Japan to march beyond Eastern Siberia, thereby also reducing the risk of provoking Russian resistance.⁷³⁴ America's objections and the Cabinet's reluctance blighted the prospect of a large-scale intervention.

Despite facing such pressure, Balfour did not give up on a major Japanese intervention in Siberia. To his mind, it was too early to assume that America would not

⁷³⁰ War Cabinet 358, 4 Mar. 1918, CAB 23/5.

⁷³¹ Wiseman to Drummond, 4 Mar. 1918, Balfour MSS, Add. MSS. 49687.

⁷³² R.W. Curry, Woodrow Wilson and Far Eastern Policy, 1913-1921 (New York, 1968), pp. 222-223.

⁷³³ Wiseman to Drummond, 5 Mar. 1918, Balfour MSS, Add. MSS. 49741.

⁷³⁴ War Cabinet 363, 11 Mar. 1918, CAB 23/5.

support Japan's armed intervention or that Japan would refuse to go to the Urals. The reason he did not change his stance was the signing of the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk on 3 March, which made peace between Russia and Germany. Until its conclusion, he had hoped that Bolshevik Russia might resist Germany. But her surrender to Germany made it more important to prevent the valuable munitions in Siberia from falling into German hands. Balfour concluded that the only way of achieving this was 'Japanese intervention on a considerable scale'.⁷³⁵ William Wiseman, a British intelligence officer in the United States, backed his opinion and encouraged the War Cabinet not to abandon hope of another change in American policy on the Siberian intervention.⁷³⁶

Brest-Litovsk introduced another important factor into discussions about the Siberian intervention: imperial defence, and in particular, the defence of India.⁷³⁷ Since the Russian Revolution, the situation in the Caucasus and Persia had been 'absolutely chaotic' and 'unintelligible'.⁷³⁸ The Russo-German peace treaty had also complicated the fragile situation in Central Asia. Balfour realised that Rumania could not fight alone and was likely to make peace with Germany. As a result, Germany could take advantage

⁷³⁵ Balfour to Wiseman, 6 Mar. 1918, Balfour MSS, Add. MSS. 49687.

⁷³⁶ War Cabinet 364, 12 Mar. 1918, CAB 23/5.

⁷³⁷ K. Neilson, 'For diplomatic, economic, strategic and telegraphic reasons: British imperial defence, the Middle East and India, 1914-1918' in Neilson and Kennedy, (eds.) Far Flung Lines, pp. 110-111.

⁷³⁸ Cecil to Balfour, 8 Jan. 1918, Balfour MSS, Add. MSS. 49738; J.A. White, The Siberian Intervention (Princeton, 1950), pp. 219-220.

of the railway facilities to Odessa and gain ‘access first to Batoum, then to Baku, and finally, by the Caspian, to North-West Persia’.⁷³⁹ Curzon was explicit about the German threat to the border area with India:

Should the Japanese not enter Siberia and should German influence or German forces establish themselves there, there might arise a new Central Asian problem, as the danger thus created began to permeate southwards and to threaten Turkestan and the regions bordering the Indian Empire on the North.⁷⁴⁰

Brest-Litovsk thus lent yet greater urgency to the military intervention in Siberia.

Against this background the War Cabinet discussed the matter again on 21 March 1918. It was agreed that Japan’s intervention would not be of any real use unless it extended west far enough to prevent Germany from exploiting the considerable resources in Western Siberia. This meant that the War Cabinet shared Balfour’s idea of a large-scale Japanese intervention. Furthermore, the Cabinet realised that, if Germany established her influence in Western Siberia, this would stymie Britain’s ‘efforts to prevent a German advance eastward through Persia’. General Sir Henry Wilson, Chief of the Imperial General Staff, insisted that German control of Siberia would expand her power to Turkestan and imperil Britain’s position in India entirely, so Britain had to pull

⁷³⁹ Memo. by Balfour, 7 Mar. 1918, Balfour MSS, Add. MSS. 49699.

⁷⁴⁰ Memo. by Curzon, 13 Mar. 1918, Balfour MSS, Add. MSS. 49734.

‘Siberia out of the wreck, in order to save India’. Therefore, Japan’s intervention was essential to winning the war and defending India. This left the question of America’s opposition to the intervention. The War Cabinet agreed to renew the effort to persuade President Wilson of the necessity of the intervention, and instructed Balfour to take action along these lines.⁷⁴¹

On 5 April 1918, Henry Wilson reiterated that the intervention was necessary, arguing that Britain’s success in Persia would be ‘largely dependent upon Japanese intervention in Siberia’ which could restore order in Transcaspia and prevent Germany from penetrating Afghanistan.⁷⁴² Receiving Henry Wilson’s note, Lord Robert Cecil produced a draft telegram to President Wilson, which Balfour approved. It argued that Japan’s intervention would not only protect considerable supplies in Siberia but also stop the German plot ‘to become masters of the Caucasian districts’ in order to ‘stir up trouble for us in India’.⁷⁴³ In the end, Balfour modified this draft and sent it to Lord Reading, the new British ambassador at Washington, on 19 April, but its essential tone was not changed. It stated that Turco-German forces would try to advance into Persia,

⁷⁴¹ War Cabinet 369, 21 Mar. 1918, CAB 23/5; V.H. Rothwell, British War Aims and Peace Diplomacy, 1914-1918 (Oxford, 1971), p. 186.

⁷⁴² Note by Wilson, 5 Apr. 1918, CAB 21/45.

⁷⁴³ Memo. by Cecil, ? [13-14] Apr. 1918, CAB 21/45; Balfour to Hankey, ? [13-14] Apr. 1918, CAB 21/45.

Turkestan and Afghanistan with the intention of destabilising India.⁷⁴⁴ For Balfour the defence of India was another important reason to realise a major Japanese intervention in Siberia.

However, the logic of imperial defence did not appeal to President Wilson. Even Cecil admitted doubt about the power of the reference to India to influence American opinion.⁷⁴⁵ The President expressed his reservation frankly, arguing that the American people might think that Japan's intervention in Siberia was intended 'to secure the British position in India rather than as an effective factor in the present fighting in Europe'.⁷⁴⁶ America had no interest in India and it had been unwise to emphasise the German danger there. Balfour accepted that America's indifference to Indian security complicated matters.⁷⁴⁷ This highlighted the difficulty of combining imperial defence with Anglo-American cooperation. Britain could not defend India only by maintaining good relations with America. Although Balfour was sure that France, Italy and Britain were in favour of Japan's military intervention in Siberia, America remained reluctant to agree to it, and without her approval Britain could not begin negotiations with Japan.⁷⁴⁸

⁷⁴⁴ Balfour to Reading, 19 Apr. 1918, Balfour MSS, Add. MSS. 49741.

⁷⁴⁵ War Cabinet 391, 15 Apr. 1918, CAB 23/6.

⁷⁴⁶ "Comments on Foreign Office Cable No. 2303 to Lord Reading, April 19th", Balfour MSS, Add. MSS. 49741.

⁷⁴⁷ Minutes by Balfour on "Comments on Foreign Office Cable No. 2303 to Lord Reading, April 19th", Balfour MSS, Add. MSS. 49741.

⁷⁴⁸ War Cabinet 400, 26 Apr. 1918, CAB 23/6.

Balfour needed to find another means of persuading Wilson to accept the Siberian intervention.

The trump card that Balfour hoped for was an invitation from Bolshevik Russia to Japan to intervene in Siberia. Robert Bruce-Lockhart, British Consul-General in Moscow, proposed this idea and tried to extract a request for Japan's military intervention from Leon Trotsky, People's Commissar for Foreign Affairs. At first Balfour was unsure of the practicability of Lockhart's plan, but he gradually came around to the view that 'the ideal arrangement would be for the Bolsheviks to request Japanese, American and Allied assistance against German aggression'.⁷⁴⁹ If the Russians sought an Allied military intervention, America would have no reason for objecting to it. In addition, with Russia's agreement, Allied troops could easily traverse Siberia. In the end, Balfour authorised Lockhart to open negotiations with Trotsky. His expectation of Trotsky's invitation to Japan to intervene grew, and on 23 April 1918 Balfour told House that the 'situation is entirely altered by apparent willingness of Trotsky to invite allied assistance against German aggression'.⁷⁵⁰

Despite Balfour's expectations, the initiative failed. As Russia's relations with Germany improved, Trotsky lost his enthusiasm for cooperating with the Allied powers.

⁷⁴⁹ Balfour to Wiseman, 3 Apr. 1918, Balfour MSS, Add. MSS. 49687; Kennan, Soviet-American Relations, 1917-1920, p. 346.

⁷⁵⁰ Balfour to Reading, 23 Apr. 1918, Balfour MSS, Add. MSS. 49741.

He raised various conditions in return for inviting Japan to intervene, including Allied assistance in rebuilding Russia's fleet.⁷⁵¹ This change moved an agreement beyond the realm of practical politics. Moreover, apart from Britain, the Allied powers did not necessarily share the idea of a Bolshevik invitation to Japan to intervene in Siberia. In particular, America and France's lukewarm reception of Lockhart's negotiations hindered progress.⁷⁵² As a result, Lockhart changed his own opinion by the middle of May 1918 and came to insist that even without an invitation from Bolshevik Russia, the Allies should carry out the military intervention in Siberia.⁷⁵³ Balfour meanwhile continued his efforts to persuade President Wilson to accept the idea.

The last resort was the suggestion of an armed intervention with the Czech-Slovak Legion, deserters from the Hapsburg army, now stranded in Siberia.⁷⁵⁴ Tired of fruitless negotiations with President Wilson, Lloyd George argued that Britain should carry out the intervention, using the legion as the nucleus of the Allied forces in Siberia. Balfour was more cautious, but thought that if Britain commenced such an operation Japan would immediately wish to join it. Under such circumstances, Balfour forecast that

⁷⁵¹ War Cabinet 395, 19 Apr. 1918, CAB 23/6.

⁷⁵² C. Hosoya, Shiberia Shuppei no Shiteki Kenkyuu (Historical Studies of Siberian Intervention) (Tokyo, 2005), pp. 125-127.

⁷⁵³ Note by Cecil, 22 May 1918, CAB 21/45.

⁷⁵⁴ For more on the Czech-Slovak Legion, see White, The Siberian Intervention, pp. 236-255; M. Kettle, Russia and the Allies 1917-1920, 3 vols. (London, 1981-1992), Vol II, pp. 52-76.

America would cooperate sooner or later.⁷⁵⁵ The Czech-Slovak forces could thus become the catalyst for the linkage of America and Japan in the Allied intervention.

There were many obstacles to be overcome before the plan could be implemented. First of all, France opposed it because she was keen to utilise the Czech-Slovak legion on the Western front. Then, America remained hostile to military activities in Siberia and her attitude ‘paralyse[s] us for ever in the case of Japanese intervention’.⁷⁵⁶ Without America’s assent, Balfour argued, military intervention in Siberia would divide the Allies and the American public. He feared that such a situation would alienate President Wilson and throw cold water on America’s willingness to cooperate with the Allied powers.⁷⁵⁷ Moreover, Japan was annoyed with the delay in the negotiations and suspected that Britain was not in earnest.⁷⁵⁸ The interests of the Allied powers were in conflict and it was of paramount importance to maintain their unity.

Balfour tried to clarify Britain’s intention:

We had made our policy perfectly plain; we had stated that we did not propose to interfere in Russian internal affairs; our object was directed entirely against the Germans. To this end we had always worked with the *de facto* Government in Russia: we had worked first with the Czar while he was in power; we had worked next with the Socialists under Kerensky; then we had worked with the

⁷⁵⁵ War Cabinet 413, 17 May 1918, CAB 23/6.

⁷⁵⁶ War Cabinet 420, 29 May 1918, CAB 23/6.

⁷⁵⁷ Memo. by Balfour, 29 May 1918, CAB 21/45.

⁷⁵⁸ Note by Cecil, 29 May 1918, CAB 21/45.

Bolsheviks, and we would be prepared to work with whatever successors there might be to the Bolsheviks. ...⁷⁵⁹

Balfour's pragmatic attitude to Bolshevik Russia had thus not changed at all. The purpose of the intervention in Siberia was not to overthrow the Bolshevik regime but to check Germany's advance into the East. Ideology did not come into it.

The Allied Supreme War Council of 1-3 June 1918 was vital to break the deadlock over the Siberian intervention. Britain reached agreement with France and Italy over the Czech-Slovak forces and the three countries agreed to ask Japan to carry out military action in Siberia on the condition that she promised to respect the territorial integrity of Russia, not interfere in Russia's internal politics and advance as far west as possible for the purpose of countering the Germans.⁷⁶⁰ These conditions were compatible with Balfour's desire for a major Japanese military intervention. Finally, the Supreme War Council seemed to be useful in persuading Wilson to accept military intervention in Siberia. British policy elites expected that if the Supreme War Council strongly insisted on the necessity of the intervention from the military point of view, the President might agree to military activity in Siberia.⁷⁶¹

Following the Supreme War Council, Balfour increased his efforts to make the

⁷⁵⁹ War Cabinet 420, 29 May 1918, CAB 23/6.

⁷⁶⁰ War Cabinet 426, 5 Jun. 1918, CAB 23/6.

⁷⁶¹ War Cabinet 427, 6 Jun. 1918, CAB 23/6.

Allied intervention possible. While Japan had no objection to the Allies' first two conditions, she expressed disapproval of the third. Tokyo thought it impossible to 'engage to extend westward the sphere of their military activities beyond the limits of Eastern Siberia'.⁷⁶² Balfour was disappointed at Japan's negative attitude and tried to impress on her 'the extreme perils of German penetration through European Russia and Western Siberia'.⁷⁶³ At that time his hope was that 'the time is very near when we may count upon assistance from the Japanese army'. If Japan confined her action to Eastern Siberia, it would 'not be what we want'. Balfour believed that the German influence could not be checked effectively unless Japan intervened militarily as far as the Urals. It was true that Japan did not cooperate with the Allies 'to the full extent which we might under certain circumstances hope for', as Balfour argued in the Imperial War Cabinet of 20 June, but she would do so in 'a manner which will prove extremely important in redressing the balance of the war'.⁷⁶⁴ He was not completely satisfied with Japan's attitude towards the contribution of the war, but still valued her military assistance and realised the necessity of her major armed intervention in Siberia.

The Imperial War Cabinet also underscored the imperial defence factor in a large scale Siberian intervention. Curzon regarded India as 'the core and centre of the British

⁷⁶² Memo. by Japanese Embassy, 24 Jun. 1918, CAB 21/45.

⁷⁶³ Memo. by Balfour, ? [24-26] Jun. 1918, CAB 21/45.

⁷⁶⁴ Imperial War Cabinet, 20 Jun. 1918, CAB 23/43.

Power in the Eastern world' and emphasised the need to defend it from Germany.⁷⁶⁵

There were two lines along which Germany would advance towards India: 'a northern line through the Black Sea, the Caucasus, the Caspian and Turkestan, to the borders of Chinese Turkestan; and the southern through Palestine, Mesopotamia, and through Persia and Afghanistan against India'. According to Curzon, Britain's measures to stop the German and Turkish advances were confined to the southern line, for example via cooperation with the Arabs in Palestine and Mesopotamia. As a matter of 'immediate urgency' Japan's military intervention should expand to Central Asia to forestall Germany on the northern line.⁷⁶⁶ Since the argument of imperial defence was not useful in persuading America, British policymakers refrained from publicly articulating the link between the defence of India and intervention in Siberia. However, they remained aware of it.

America's attitude had been gradually changing since the Supreme War Council meetings. Wilson still opposed Japan's military intervention, but realised the necessity of creating a new Eastern front.⁷⁶⁷ However, the Czech-Slovak forces had a strong influence on American policy. Not only Balfour but also Clemenceau and Marshal Foch

⁷⁶⁵ Imperial War Cabinet, 25 Jun. 1918, CAB 23/43.

⁷⁶⁶ Imperial War Cabinet 20, 25 Jun. 1918, CAB 23/41.

⁷⁶⁷ War Cabinet 427, 6 Jun. 1918, CAB 23/6; D. French, The Strategy of the Lloyd George Coalition 1916-1918 (Oxford, 1995), pp. 241-242.

urged the President to approve the military intervention ‘on the grounds of the duty of the Allies to rescue the Czechs’.⁷⁶⁸ House, who had originally opposed the Siberian intervention, acknowledged that America could no longer reject the Allies’ request for the intervention and began to develop a policy which would be acceptable to President Wilson.⁷⁶⁹ Moreover, American public opinion generally supported the saving of the Czech-Slovak troops and became ‘far more favourable to Japanese intervention than three months ago’.⁷⁷⁰ Wilson could not ignore these internal and external pressures.

An action that Wilson could approve was despatching a Relief Commission to Siberia. Its main task was to deliver food and other supplies to Russian people and Czech-Slovak soldiers. But the President was inclined to agree that the commission should be escorted by an armed guard of Japanese and other Allied troops.⁷⁷¹ This was a virtual military intervention under the guise of economic cooperation. The Imperial War Cabinet supported this plan and asked the Supreme War Council to urge the President to accept it.⁷⁷² Wilson finally assented to the Siberian intervention on 6 July 1918, but he did not accept the extension of Japan’s military intervention to the Urals, as Balfour had desired. The intervention would be to rescue the Czech-Slovak forces and

⁷⁶⁸ Imperial War Cabinet 21, 27 Jun. 1918, CAB 23/41.

⁷⁶⁹ Wiseman to Drummond, 14 Jun. 1918, Balfour MSS, Add. MSS. 49741.

⁷⁷⁰ Wiseman to Drummond, 30 Jun. 1918, Balfour MSS, Add. MSS. 49741.

⁷⁷¹ Imperial War Cabinet 21, 27 Jun. 1918, CAB 23/41.

⁷⁷² Imperial War Cabinet 22, 28 Jun. 1918, CAB 23/41.

not to advance into western Siberia. Hoping that the Allied troops in Siberia would be reinforced, Balfour expressed ‘great satisfaction’ at the President’s approval.⁷⁷³ He had finally succeeded in removing the biggest obstacle to the Siberian intervention, managing the Anglo-American discrepancy over the Japanese military campaign.

The Siberian intervention, however, did not produce any of the results that Balfour had anticipated. Japan also had some disagreements with the Allied powers over the scale and purpose of the military intervention, but declared the despatch of her troops to Siberia on 2 August 1918.⁷⁷⁴ Japanese forces landed on Vladivostok on 12 August, but just three months later the Central Powers collapsed and the war was suddenly over. While other Allies withdrew their forces immediately after the war, Japan tried to maintain her own troops in Siberia. As a result, the other powers, in particular America, grew suspicious of Japan’s policy in the Far East. But this was the new situation after the war. At least, the Siberian intervention lost its character of the Japanese military aid for the Allies. When the war ended, Balfour’s involvement with Japan’s assistance was also over.

VI

⁷⁷³ Balfour to Reading, 22 Jul. 1918, Balfour MSS, Add. MSS. 49699.

⁷⁷⁴ P.E. Dunscomb, Japan’s Siberian Intervention, 1918-1922: “A Great Disobedience Against the People” (Plymouth, 2011), pp. 63-66.

The Anglo-Japanese alliance was revised in 1911 to adapt to the significant international changes after the Russo-Japanese War. The Anglo-Russian Convention of 1907 improved Britain's relations with Russia and reduced the necessity of Japan's military assistance for India's security. With Japan's growing power and immigration issues, US-Japanese relations deteriorated and the Dominions' suspicion of Japan increased. Against this background in consultation with the Dominions, the Liberal government deleted references to India and stipulated the coexistence with the Anglo-American arbitration treaty. Balfour supported this revision from the side of the opposition, as he wanted to remove the possibility of being dragged into a US-Japanese war. The coordination with the Dominions over the alliance was beneficial from the imperial point of view. The revision of 1911 succeeded in both maintaining the Anglo-American solidarity and contributing to the defence of British Empire.

The Great War brought back the importance of Japan's assistance. Balfour, who returned to the British Government during the war, had little expectation of Japan's contribution to the war effort at first. However, the difficult circumstances forced him to review his opinion of Japan's naval and military help. On becoming Foreign Secretary, he opened negotiations with the Japanese government, considering not only Japan's

intentions but also Anglo-American cooperation and imperial defence.

To secure Japanese naval help, Balfour had to ensure that Anglo-American-Japanese relations remained cordial. Although he regarded guaranteeing Japan's rights in Shantung and the Pacific Islands as a permissible concession in exchange for her naval aid, he kept this secret to avoid alienating America, which was hostile to Japan's expansion in the Far East. The multilateral naval arrangement including Britain, America and Japan was his attempt to allay mutual suspicion between America and Japan in order to extract more naval assistance from both powers. He saw the tripartite naval agreement as a development of the Anglo-Japanese alliance to make it compatible with the Anglo-American cooperation.

With regard to the Japanese military assistance, imperial defence mattered. The shortage of the Allied tonnage and Russia's reluctance to accept Japanese soldiers made Mesopotamia the best theatre for Japan's military aid. However, the India Office and Government of India opposed employing Japanese troops in Mesopotamia because of the growing Japanese influence in India. Balfour had no intention of making a concession to Japan over India, so he had to give up the idea of her military help in Mesopotamia. Japan's military assistance under the Anglo-Japanese alliance, which Balfour had valued, was no longer necessarily consistent with imperial defence.

The Siberian intervention, which Balfour envisioned as Japanese military aid in Asia, was linked to both Anglo-American cooperation and imperial defence. Balfour supported a major Japanese intervention from Vladivostock to the Ural Mountains in order to prevent Germany from not only exploiting resources in Siberia but also advancing to India. However, it was impossible for him to carry out an armed intervention without America's assent. Given America's suspicion of Japan, such military action might drive a wedge between Britain and America. More importantly, discussion of a Siberian intervention demonstrated that America did not always favour the defence of the British Empire. In the end, taking advantage of a pretext of relieving Czech-Slovak forces, Britain, America and Japan agreed to carry out the Allied military intervention in Siberia. Balfour was satisfied with this result, but he would face growing difficulty in coping with both Anglo-American cooperation and imperial defence within the scheme of the Anglo-Japanese alliance immediately after the abrupt end of the war.

3

Managing the Termination of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance, 1918-1923

I

As soon as the Great War ended, the Allied powers had to settle various problems caused by the conflict and to discuss the post-war international order. Balfour attended the Paris Peace Conference of 1919 as one of the British representatives.⁷⁷⁵ The main battlefield of the war had been Europe, so it was logical that the Allied powers should focus on the new international order in Europe. The Anglo-Japanese alliance itself was not directly discussed at the conference, but the non-European world was nonetheless significant. Balfour had to tackle three issues at the conference: the Sino-Japanese confrontation over Shantung, the League of Nations' mandatory rule of the Pacific Islands and the Middle East, and the racial equality clause in the Covenant of the

⁷⁷⁵ On the evaluation for Balfour's performance at the Paris Peace Conference, see A. Sharp, 'Holding up the Flag of Britain ... with Sustained Vigour and Brilliance or "Sowing the seeds of European Disaster"? Lloyd George and Balfour at the Paris Peace Conference' in M. Dockrill and J. Fisher, (eds.) The Paris Peace Conference, 1919: Peace without Victory? (Basingstoke, 2001), pp. 35-50.

League of Nations. These questions were all connected not only to Anglo-Japanese relations but also to Anglo-American cooperation and imperial defence.

Balfour was at the forefront of the discussion of the Shantung question at the Paris Peace Conference. The principal partners in this dispute were Japan and China because the origin of the problem was Japan's so-called 'Twenty-one Demands' of 1915. However, Britain's involvement complicated the question and she could not feign indifference. She had made a secret agreement with Japan in February 1917, guaranteeing Japanese rights in Shantung after the war in return for Japan's naval assistance. As Foreign Secretary at the time, Balfour had negotiated with Japanese diplomats about this secret arrangement. Prime Minister Lloyd George was more interested in European than in Asian affairs, and Balfour clearly had more knowledge about this question than he did. Thus, it was no surprise that Lloyd George wanted Balfour to 'take the lead' in discussing Japan's demands regarding Shantung with Japan's representatives at the Conference.⁷⁷⁶ Indeed, the American President, Woodrow Wilson, and the French Prime Minister, Georges Clemenceau, agreed with Lloyd George that Balfour should deal with this issue on their behalf.⁷⁷⁷ They expected him to find a peaceful solution to this Far Eastern question.

⁷⁷⁶ Hankey to Balfour, 21 Apr. 1919, Lothian MSS GD 40/17/74.

⁷⁷⁷ Lloyd George to Balfour, 26 Apr. 1919, Balfour MSS, Add. MSS. 49692.

Like other British statesmen and diplomats, Balfour did not think highly of the Twenty-one Demands. Some of them were not acceptable to China, but Japan forced her to agree to them with a final ultimatum. After the war Balfour acknowledged that Japan 'had certainly behaved badly to China over the 1915 Treaties'.⁷⁷⁸ He concluded that he 'had nothing to say in defence of the Treaty of 1915'.⁷⁷⁹ It was difficult for him to approve Japan's claims based on the Twenty-one Demands.

Furthermore, Balfour could not ignore America's hostility to the Twenty-one Demands. In March 1915, Woodrow Wilson had criticised the Group V 'desiderata' as going too far and constituting 'a serious limitation upon China's independence of action, and a very definite preference of Japan before other nations'.⁷⁸⁰ The Americans found Group V inconsistent with their preference for the Open Door policy and China's territorial integrity, which formed the basis of their foreign policy regarding China, and American statesmen would not tolerate Japan's demands. Balfour realised that 'American, as well as Chinese, sentiment was peculiarly sensitive' to the Twenty-one Demands.⁷⁸¹ If Britain sided with Japan carelessly, the Shantung question might drive a wedge into Anglo-American relations. Balfour, who valued Anglo-American

⁷⁷⁸ Balfour to Curzon, 20 Sep. 1919, Balfour MSS, Add. MSS. 49734.

⁷⁷⁹ Balfour to Curzon, 8 May 1919, Balfour MSS, Add. MSS. 49750.

⁷⁸⁰ President Wilson to the Secretary of State, 24 Mar. 1915, FRUS, The Lansing Papers 1914-1920, vol. II, p.411; M.L. Dockrill and J.D. Goold, Peace without Promise: Britain and the Peace Conferences, 1919-1923 (Hamden, 1981), pp. 67-68.

⁷⁸¹ Balfour to Curzon, 20 Sep. 1919, Balfour MSS, Add. MSS. 49734.

cooperation, had to avoid such a rupture.

Even so, however, Balfour could not have opposed Japan's demands over Shantung easily. In February 1917 Britain had secretly pledged to support Japanese rights in Shantung and the Pacific Islands in order to obtain Japan's naval assistance. As Foreign Secretary, Balfour had taken the initiative in forging the secret agreement and securing Australia and New Zealand's consent to it. Although it was concluded before America entered the war, he had revealed the agreement to Wilson and 'talked with him quite frankly about any and every question in which I supposed our two countries were interested' during his visit to America in April 1917.⁷⁸² Colonel House, Wilson's close aide, affirmed that Balfour had discussed the secret agreement with Wilson and himself.⁷⁸³ While Balfour had only asked for America's *ex post facto* approval, he had tried to remove obstacles to keeping Britain's promise after the war. Thus, when Wilson stated that he had known nothing of the secret treaty until the Paris Peace Conference, Balfour found his denial 'utterly unintelligible to me'.⁷⁸⁴

Balfour's negative attitude towards China was also important. Although he attacked the Twenty-one Demands, he was not sympathetic to China and was dissatisfied with her behaviour both during and after the war. China insisted that as an Allied Power she

⁷⁸² Balfour to Curzon, 14 Oct. 1919. Balfour MSS, Add. MSS. 49734.

⁷⁸³ House to Balfour, 22 Jun. 1922, Balfour MSS, Add. MSS. 49704.

⁷⁸⁴ Balfour to Curzon, 14 Oct. 1919. Balfour MSS, Add. MSS. 49734.

was entitled to claim the surrender of all the rights that Germany had obtained in Shantung. But Balfour considered that China had made no contribution to the Allied war efforts:

I, on the other hand, am more moved by contempt for the Chinese over the way in which they left Japan to fight Germany for Shantung, and then were not content to get Shantung back without fighting for it, but tried to maintain that it was theirs as the legitimate spoils of a war in which they had not lost a man or spent a shilling.⁷⁸⁵

Balfour sometimes complained that Japan's naval and military assistance had not been sufficient during the war, but her contribution had been far greater than China's. Balfour repeated that China 'had not spent a shilling or lost a life either in defending her own interests or in supporting ours'.⁷⁸⁶ Britain could accept that China had lost nothing due to her neutrality, but she was not responsible for supporting China's effort to obtain something after the war.

There was another factor to consider: Japan had made several arrangements with China over railways in Shantung on 24 September 1918 as a result of which China had ceded certain privileges in Shantung to Japan in return for a loan to build railways in

⁷⁸⁵ Balfour to Curzon, 20 Sep. 1919, Balfour MSS, Add. MSS. 49734.

⁷⁸⁶ Balfour to Curzon, 14 Oct. 1919. Balfour MSS, Add. MSS. 49734.

that province.⁷⁸⁷ The British Foreign Office did not ignore these deals in the aftermath of the Twenty-one Demands of 1915. Ronald Macleay, a clerk in the Far Eastern Department, considered that these agreements seemed to ‘weaken seriously the Chinese case for restoration’.⁷⁸⁸ Balfour agreed with Macleay’s view and concluded that ‘whatever might be said of the Treaty of 1915, the Treaty of 1918 between China and Japan was a voluntary transaction between sovereign States, and a transaction which gave important pecuniary benefits to China’.⁷⁸⁹ Thus Balfour could not support China wholeheartedly on the Sino-Japanese controversy over Shantung.

Balfour took all of these complexities into account and pursued a compromise that all of the actors involved could accept. He began to discuss the matter with Wilson, who was inclined to favour China’s claims, on 15 April 1919. Balfour pointed out that Japan would not withdraw her demands because Japanese public opinion deemed them a matter of national honour and reminded Wilson that the Allied powers ‘were bound by our pledges to support them [the Japanese]’.⁷⁹⁰ On the other hand, when he spoke with the Japanese representatives on 27 April, he succeeded in extracting a pledge that Japan wanted to retain only economic rights in Shantung and intended to restore Chinese

⁷⁸⁷ Goto to Chang, 24 Sep. 1918, FO 608/211/2178; Chang to Goto, 24 Sep. 1918, FO 608/211/2178.

⁷⁸⁸ Minutes by Macleay on Goto’s telegram of 24 Sep. 1918, 17 Feb. 1919, FO 608/211/2178.

⁷⁸⁹ Balfour to Curzon, 8 May 1919, Balfour MSS, Add. MSS. 49750.

⁷⁹⁰ Drummond to Kerr, 15 Apr. 1919, Lothian MSS GD 40/17/55.

sovereignty in the leased territories.⁷⁹¹ This became the basis of a compromise. Balfour designed a permanent arrangement on Shantung between Japan and China, the essence of which was as follows:

after German rights have been ceded to Japan, Japan will hand back to China the whole of the leased territory [Tsingtao] in complete sovereignty; that the only rights which Japan will retain are the economic rights enumerated in my Memorandum; and that Japan proposes to take every precaution to prevent undue discrimination in matters of railway rates, or port and harbour dues, and other cognate matters between nation and nation; in fact, that the policy of the open door should be fully carried out in the spirit as in the letter.⁷⁹²

It was important that this arrangement combined Japan's pledge with the Open Door policy, harmonising the solution to the Shantung dispute with common Anglo-American interests in the Far East. This was Balfour's effort to maintain calm Anglo-American-Japanese relations. His remaining task was to secure the assent of the other nations.

Their reactions were varied. Wilson made it clear that he could not accept any settlement based on 'the wrongful Twenty-one Demands'.⁷⁹³ Yet he approved the substance of Balfour's permanent arrangement.⁷⁹⁴ The Japanese delegates also accepted

⁷⁹¹ Memo. by Balfour, 27 Apr. 1919, Balfour MSS, Add. MSS. 49751.

⁷⁹² Balfour to Makino, 28 Apr. 1919, Balfour MSS, Add. MSS. 49751.

⁷⁹³ Wilson to Balfour, 30 Apr. 1919, Balfour MSS, Add. MSS. 49751.

⁷⁹⁴ R.H. Fifield, Woodrow Wilson and the Far East: The Diplomacy of the Shantung Question (New

it, and Balfour expected that ‘the whole negotiation may be regarded as happily concluded’.⁷⁹⁵ However, China was disappointed that Japan had secured economic rights in Shantung and required information about all the discussions of the Council of Three.⁷⁹⁶ On 4 May 1919, a political demonstration against Japan’s privileges in Shantung took place in China in the so-called May Fourth Movement. This domestic turmoil paralysed the Chinese government’s decision-making process. Receiving no instructions, the Chinese delegation finally opposed Balfour’s compromise and refused to sign the Treaty of Versailles.⁷⁹⁷ Balfour was dissatisfied with this, remarking that the Chinese delegation did ‘not seem to deserve much sympathy’.⁷⁹⁸ In the end, the final settlement of the Shantung question was postponed to the Washington Conference of 1921. Balfour had at least succeeded in making a compromise between Britain, America and Japan over the Shantung question, preventing their relations from deteriorating further.

The Paris Peace Conference, which set up the League of Nations, is generally thought to have ushered in ‘New Diplomacy’. Although he advocated the establishment

York, 1952), pp. 277-281.

⁷⁹⁵ Balfour to Makino, 30 Apr. 1919, Balfour MSS, Add. MSS. 49751.

⁷⁹⁶ Sze to Balfour, 1 May 1919, Balfour MSS, Add. MSS. 49750.

⁷⁹⁷ S.G. Craft, ‘Seed of Revolution: The Shandong Question in Chinese History’ in G.C. Kennedy and K. Neilson, (eds.) Incidents and International Relations: People, Power, and Personalities (Westport, 2002), pp. 52-53.

⁷⁹⁸ Balfour to Curzon, 8 May 1919, Balfour MSS, Add. MSS. 49750.

of a supra-national organisation to maintain post-war international order during the war, Balfour was widely regarded as a master of ‘Old Diplomacy’.⁷⁹⁹ In fact, as ‘the last person to deride what is commonly called “The Old Diplomacy”’, he later insisted:

The Old Diplomacy has for many generations done much in the cause of peace, and those who see in it merely a costly method of embittering international relations and snatching national advantages, completely misread the lessons of history.⁸⁰⁰

On the other hand, Balfour also served as the British delegate in the League of Nations. He saw no contradiction in the fact that a supporter of Old Diplomacy was involved in a symbol of New Diplomacy. He considered that ‘the League is really a most important instrument of diplomacy from the British point of view’.⁸⁰¹ He was not an enthusiast but a pragmatist regarding the League of Nations.

In Balfour’s pragmatic view of the League of Nations, its mandate system was a significant tool for resolving territorial rearrangements after the war in favour of British national interests, in particular regarding imperial defence. The mandate in the Middle East demonstrated Balfour’s strategic calculation about imperial defence. Originally

⁷⁹⁹ For details of Old Diplomacy, see T.G. Otte, ‘Old Diplomacy: Reflections on the Foreign Office before 1914’ in G. Johnson, (ed.) The Foreign Office and British Diplomacy in the Twentieth Century (Abingdon, 2005), pp. 31-52.

⁸⁰⁰ Notes of 19th Meeting of Imperial Conference, 8 Jul. 1921, CAB 32/2.

⁸⁰¹ *Ibid.*

Balfour had considered that ex-German and ex-Turkish territories should be governed not by Britain but by an international ‘condominium’, namely the joint rule of these territories by some Allied powers or international organisations. Although he admitted that such a condominium was a bad form of government and a hazardous experiment, he argued that no powers could utilise internationalised territories as a naval or military base for another war. Moreover, Britain could avoid the other powers’ criticism and hostility by surrendering her direct rule of these territories. He also saw the advantages of an international condominium from the point of view of the defence of India. During the Great War he had had to abandon the idea of securing Japanese military assistance in Mesopotamia due to opposition from the India Office and the Government of India. As this example showed, he could not separate the Middle East from India, bearing cultural and geographical proximity in mind. The Middle East mandates were of value regarding India:

Even though the establishment of an Arab kingdom in the Hejaz, of an autonomous Arab protected State in Mesopotamia, and of an internationalised Jewish “home” in Palestine will not increase the territories under the British flag, they will certainly give increased protection to British interests, both in Egypt and India. They will constitute “buffer States,” of all the greater value to us because they have been created not for our security but for the advantage of their inhabitants.⁸⁰²

⁸⁰² Memo. by Balfour, 2 May 1918, Balfour MSS, Add. MSS. 49699.

Balfour's 'buffer state' scheme was in line with that of the Government of India. On 7 July 1919, Hamilton Grant, Foreign Secretary to the Government of India, expressed to Balfour the importance of 'a Moslem barrier astride the Middle East to bar the path of the next European Power that attempts to move against us in this direction'.⁸⁰³ The mandates in the Middle East were clear evidence that Balfour tried to utilise the League of Nations as a practicable instrument of British diplomacy to defend its Empire.

The mandate system in the Far East was more complex. Japan was concerned that her right to the Pacific Islands north of the equator should be guaranteed at the Paris Peace Conference. As in the case of Shantung, Britain had made a secret arrangement with Japan on this matter during the war, with Balfour taking initiative in its negotiation. He had promised to guarantee Japan's rights to these islands after the war in return for her naval assistance, and therefore did not oppose her possession of the Pacific Islands. However, fearing the expansion of Japan's influence in the Pacific, President Wilson advocated that these islands 'ought to be neutralised and worked in the common interests of humanity by some small nation acting under the control of the League of Nations'.⁸⁰⁴ Australia and New Zealand were also cautious about Japan's ambitions and

⁸⁰³ Grant to Balfour, 7 Jul. 1919, Balfour MSS, Add. MSS. 49749.

⁸⁰⁴ Derby to Balfour, 22 Dec. 1918, Balfour MSS, Add. MSS. 49744.

aligned themselves with the American scheme.⁸⁰⁵ Although not necessarily sharing the President's view, Britain could not ignore her anxiety and that of the British Dominions. It was necessary to devise a comprehensive solution for these conflicting actors.

The League's mandates served this purpose. While the Pacific Islands were under the authority of the League, Japan could maintain her preponderant position over them. Furthermore, the fortification of mandated territory was prohibited, so the islands could fulfil the role of 'a demilitarized buffer zone' between Japan and Australasia.⁸⁰⁶ Japan accepted this compromise in February 1919 the Pacific Islands became a C-class League of Nations mandate.⁸⁰⁷ By introducing the mandate system in the Pacific, Britain succeeded in maintaining Anglo-American cooperation and strengthening the imperial defence simultaneously.

A significant immigration issue, namely Japan's racial equality proposal, produced another difficult problem at the Paris Peace Conference. According to Nobuaki Makino, Japan's acting chief plenipotentiary at the Peace Conference, the anti-Japanese immigration policy of America and the British Dominions was an important unresolved

⁸⁰⁵ H.D. Hall, 'The British Commonwealth and the founding of the League Mandate System' in K. Bourne and D.C. Watt, (eds.) Studies in International History: Essays Presented to W. Norton Medlicott, Stevenson Professor of International History in the University of London (London, 1967), pp. 364-367.

⁸⁰⁶ Wm.R. Louis, 'Australia and the German Colonies in the Pacific, 1914-1919' in Journal of Modern History XXXVIII, 4, (1966), p. 421.

⁸⁰⁷ A. Sharp, The Versailles Settlement: Peacemaking After the First World War, 1919-1923 (Basingstoke, 2nd edn. 2008), p. 174.

problem of Japanese diplomacy.⁸⁰⁸ Regarding Wilson's Fourteen Points as an opportunity, the Japanese public requested the abolition of racial discrimination at the Peace Conference.⁸⁰⁹ Thus, on the establishment of the League of Nations, Japan's delegates made every effort to secure guarantees against 'the disadvantages to Japan which would arise as aforesaid out of racial prejudice'.⁸¹⁰ Their solution was to include a clause in the Covenant of the League of Nations assuring racial equality and fair treatment, which would not only consolidate Japan's position in the League but also invalidate the anti-Japanese immigration policy under the name of the League.

Balfour correctly understood the link between the proposal of racial equality and the immigration issue. When Colonel House consulted him about Japan's proposed clause, Balfour indicated that it might have 'the defect of indicating a sympathy on the part of the League of Nations with the principle of equal and unrestricted Immigration law'. It was obvious that America and the British Dominions could not tolerate increased Japanese immigration. As a result, Balfour concluded that:

the insertion of any of the formulae [the racial equality clause] into the document establishing the League of Nations would have the triple disadvantage of exciting

⁸⁰⁸ N. Shimazu, Japan, Race and Equality: The Racial Equality Proposal of 1919 (London, 1998), p. 84.

⁸⁰⁹ P.G. Lauren, Power and Prejudice: The Politics and Diplomacy of Racial Discrimination (Oxford, 2nd edn. 1996), pp. 86-88.

⁸¹⁰ Foreign Office to Colonial Office, 13 Jan. 1919, CO 532/139/2719.

hopes in the Japanese public which could not be fulfilled; of exciting fears among the English-speaking population in new countries lest they should be fulfilled; and burdening the League of Nations with a perpetual controversy incapable of satisfactory solution.⁸¹¹

Like the case of the mandate rule in the Pacific, Balfour valued the maintenance of stable Anglo-American-Japanese relations. The racial equality clause might create discord between Anglo-American nations and Japan at the stage of the League, which Balfour deemed a useful instrument of post-war world order. He could not tolerate the risk of such discord.

On the other hand, Balfour realised Japan's difficult position regarding immigration. Given her rapidly increasing population, he found it understandable that many Japanese people wanted to emigrate. The problem, as he saw it, was that 'every outlet, whether in Asia, America or Australia', was blocked by Japan's allies. Balfour's solution was to give Japan a reasonable space for her immigration.⁸¹² During the war he had already agreed with Sir Edward Grey's view that if the Allies wanted to keep Japan out of the United States and the British Dominions, it would not be possible to forbid her to expand in China.⁸¹³ Reiterating this opinion after the war, Balfour stated that if Japanese emigrants were not allowed to enter any country with a white population it

⁸¹¹ Memo. by Balfour, 10 Feb. 1919, Balfour MSS, Add. MSS. 49751.

⁸¹² *Ibid.*

⁸¹³ Balfour to Lansing, 18 May 1917, FRUS, The Lansing Papers 1914-1920, vol. II, p. 22.

was unreasonable to prohibit them from going to China, where there was ‘a yellow race’.⁸¹⁴ While he could not support the inclusion of a racial equality clause in the Covenant of League of Nations, he was ready to approve Japanese emigration to China in an attempt to harmonise the interests of the British Empire, America and Japan at China’s expense.

On 13 February 1919, Makino proposed Japan’s racial equality clause to the League of Nations Commission. Given the Dominions’ opposition, Britain was not in favour of Japan’s proposal and the negotiations reached a deadlock. To break this impasse and alleviate Britain’s suspicion, Makino removed the word ‘race’ and submitted the revised proposal to the Commission on 11 April. Although a majority of the Commission supported the revised clause, President Wilson, the Chair of the Commission, rejected it on the grounds of lack of unanimous approval.⁸¹⁵ Anglo-American opposition blocked Japan’s bid to insert the racial equality clause.

Following this failure, Japan sought a political deal with Britain. The Japanese delegation found a linkage between the racial equality issue and the Shantung question as negotiations on both continued simultaneously. On 26 April, Makino visited Balfour,

⁸¹⁴ Cabinet 43 (21), 30 May 1921, CAB 23/25.

⁸¹⁵ Shimazu, Japan, Race and Equality, pp. 29-31; For details of Wilson’s policy towards the racial equality clause, see K. Allerfeldt, ‘Wilsonian Pragmatism? Woodrow Wilson, Japanese Immigration, and the Paris Peace Conference’ in Diplomacy & Statecraft XV, 3, (2004), pp. 545-572.

who had assumed an important role in settling the Shantung problem, and insisted that Japan's position would be very serious if she was to receive 'one check in Shantung and another check as regards the League of Nations'. Realising the difficulty of overturning Anglo-American objections to the racial equality clause, Japan had decided at least to secure a favourable result on Shantung. Makino therefore suggested to Balfour that if Japan obtained a satisfactory arrangement over Shantung, she would drop the racial equality clause.⁸¹⁶ Racial equality was an idealistic issue, but Japan's diplomacy did not lose pragmatism.

It was not surprising that Balfour was in favour of Japan's proposal. Given the perceived harmful influence of the racial equality clause on America, the Dominions and the League of Nations, he could not support it at all. But he was open to tolerating some of Japan's claims to Shantung. He made every effort to persuade President Wilson to accept Japan's deal, pointing out that the present Japanese government intended to adopt 'a more liberal policy'.⁸¹⁷ His efforts were fruitful: at the plenary session of 28 April Makino dropped the racial equality clause, and on 30 April Wilson agreed to Balfour's compromise on Shantung, which favoured Japan's request. Although the rejection of the racial equality clause disappointed the Japanese public and increased

⁸¹⁶ "Notes of a Meeting Held at President Wilson's Residence, in the Place des Etats-Unis, on Monday, April 28, 1919, at 11 a.m.", FRUS, Paris Peace Conference, Vol. 5, p. 317.

⁸¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 318.

their dissatisfaction with the West after the war, Balfour had at least succeeded in managing the racial issue in a way that prevented Japan losing face at the Paris Peace Conference.⁸¹⁸

II

Balfour left Paris on 11 September 1919 after completing his work at the Peace Conference. Although he no longer took on heavy administrative work and was anxious to relinquish the Foreign Secretaryship to Curzon in October, this did not mark the end of his political career.⁸¹⁹ Lloyd George and Bonar Law wanted Balfour to remain in the Cabinet, and he accepted the position of Lord President of the Council because it seemed to him to be ‘the compromise of a lighter Office’.⁸²⁰ Thus removed from the daily grind of Whitehall routine, Balfour nevertheless played a significant role in discussions of the future of the Anglo-Japanese alliance.

On 7 October 1919 Sir Beilby Alston, Charge d’Affaires in Tokyo, triggered a fresh discussion of the Japanese alliance by arguing against its renewal. Alston advocated that ‘the chief raison d’etre of the Alliance’ had ceased to exist because the Russian and

⁸¹⁸ M. MacMillan, Peacemakers: The Paris Conference of 1919 and Its Attempt to End War, (London, 2001), pp. 329-330.

⁸¹⁹ Balfour to Curzon, 16 Oct. 1919, Balfour MSS, Add. MSS. 49734.

⁸²⁰ Balfour to Stamfordham, 24 Oct. 1919, Balfour MSS GD 433/2/21.

German threats in the Far East had disappeared after the war. Rather, Alston argued, cooperation with America was far more important than any arrangement with Japan.⁸²¹

In addition, the alliance was not compatible with the League of Nations. The preamble to the 1911 alliance stipulated the defence of Britain and Japan's 'territorial rights' and 'special interests' in Eastern Asia and India.⁸²² But Article 10 of the Covenant of the League of Nations stated that the members of the League would 'undertake to respect and preserve as against external aggression the territorial integrity and existing Political independence of all Members of the League'.⁸²³ Britain's obligation to support Japan's special interests in China under the alliance was clearly inconsistent with the duty of a League member under Article 10.⁸²⁴ Alston therefore concluded that, supervised by the League, the alliance should be modified into 'a union, embracing the United States, Japan, and Great Britain, pledged to rehabilitate China and to assure the peaceful development of this part of the world'. If the League project failed, Britain should pursue an Anglo-American understanding on China. Even if Britain failed to secure such an arrangement with America, Alston, while acknowledging Britain's difficult

⁸²¹ Alston to Tilley, 7 Oct. 1919, FO 371/3816/150925.

⁸²² "Agreement between the United Kingdom and Japan", 13 Jul 1911, BD Vol.8, No.436; Nish, Alliance in Decline, pp. 66-68.

⁸²³ For the full text of the League of Nations Covenant, see Sharp, The Versailles Settlement, pp. 68-80.

⁸²⁴ Memo. by Wingfield, 5 Sep. 1919, FO 371/3816/150925.

position in the Far East, did not propose to renew the Anglo-Japanese alliance.⁸²⁵ His view was similar to that of Sir Connyngham Greene, the British ambassador at Tokyo, in August 1917, whose negative attitude towards the Japanese alliance was typical of diplomats on the spot.⁸²⁶

The reaction to Alston's opinion demonstrated London's concern about the termination of the Anglo-Japanese alliance. Lord Hardinge, the Permanent Under-Secretary, observed that Britain should ensure 'a friendly Japan' owing to Britain's naval weakness in the Pacific region.⁸²⁷ For this reason, he concluded, alliance with Japan was 'as essential to us as to Japan'.⁸²⁸ Curzon pointed out two problems to which more attention should be paid: 'the danger that if we leave Japan alone she will quickly drop into the arms of Russia & Germany', and 'the extreme difficulty of a practical Anglo-American Agreement'.⁸²⁹ In December 1919, when he made this comment, there was controversy over America's participation in the League of Nations and the Foreign Office decided to postpone discussion of the Anglo-Japanese alliance and await the further development of the League.⁸³⁰ While Curzon and Hardinge did

⁸²⁵ Alston to Tilley, 7 Oct. 1919, FO 371/3816/150925.

⁸²⁶ Greene to Langley, 30 Aug. 1917, FO 371/3816/150925.

⁸²⁷ Minutes by Hardinge on Alston's telegram of 7 Oct. 1919, FO 371/3816/150925; For more on Hardinge as the Permanent Under-Secretary, see K. Neilson and T.G. Otte, (eds.) The Permanent Under-Secretary for Foreign Affairs, 1854-1946 (Abingdon, 2009), pp. 153-160.

⁸²⁸ Minutes by Hardinge on Alston's telegram of 15 Dec. 1919, FO 371/3820/177937.

⁸²⁹ Minutes by Curzon on Alston's telegram of 7 Oct. 1919, 8 Dec. 1919, FO 371/3816/150925.

⁸³⁰ Tilley to Alston, 11 Dec. 1919, FO 371/3816/150925. For the detail of Foreign Office discussion,

not necessarily trust Japan's policy in the Far East, they feared adverse effects from the abrogation of the alliance, namely a Russo-German-Japanese combination, thus emphasising Britain's vulnerable naval position in the region. America's unwillingness to take part in the League reminded them of the strong roots of her traditional isolationism and cast doubt on the advisability of relying on cooperation with her as an alternative to the Anglo-Japanese alliance. Britain could not avoid considering such difficulties regarding the end of the alliance.

The fear that Japan would seek to create an alliance with Russia and Germany was not new. Even during the war, Britain had been sensitive to the possibility of her collaboration with Germany. In January 1918, Shinpei Goto, then Japanese Minister for the Interior, described Britain as 'a "spent power"' and said that Japan had been mistaken in entering the war on Britain's side. Greene regarded Goto as pro-German and reported his remarks to Balfour instantly.⁸³¹ While not believing that Goto's words represented Japan's official opinion, Balfour responded that 'it gives one furiously to think'.⁸³² Furthermore, in May 1918 Terauchi Masatake, the then Japanese Prime Minister, indicated that if necessary Japan would form an alliance with Germany to

see K. Neilson, "'Unbroken Thread': Japan, Maritime Power and British Imperial Defence, 1920-1932" in Kennedy, British Naval Strategy East of Suez 1900-2000, pp. 64-67.

⁸³¹ Greene to Balfour, 11 Jan. 1918, FO 371/3234/7896.

⁸³² Balfour to Milner, 19 Jan. 1918, Balfour MSS, FO 800/203.

avoid total isolation after the war. Knowing this, Greene warned Balfour that Japan wanted to be '*in utrumque parati* after the war' given her doubts about an Allied victory.⁸³³ These careless remarks by Japanese politicians increased Britain's suspicion about Japan's inclination to cooperate with Germany.

After the war, this concern remained at the Foreign Office. Given the fear of Russia's revival under Germany's influence, Curzon pondered whether Britain should provide 'a counter-acting influence by continuing the Japanese alliance with such modifications as may be required in order to comply with the spirit of the Covenant of the League of Nations'.⁸³⁴ Adding to this view, C.H. Bentinck, a clerk in the Far Eastern department, argued that although Japan was ideologically incompatible with Bolshevik Russia and had fought the war with Germany, if she became isolated, she might seek 'an alliance with a Russo-German combination to counterbalance an Anglo-Saxon co-operation'. He also mentioned that even though such a tripartite alliance appeared unlikely at that time, 'the possibility which was referred to in 1918 by the late Count Terauchi, then Prime Minister, must not be lost sight of'.⁸³⁵ The experiences of the war remained in the minds of Foreign Office officials and justified their concern about Japan collaborating with Russia and Germany.

⁸³³ Greene to Balfour, 24 May 1918, FO 371/3234/122429.

⁸³⁴ Memo. by Montgomery, 21 Jan. 1920, FO 371/3816/166706.

⁸³⁵ Memo. by Bentinck, 28 Feb. 1920, FO 371/5358/F199.

A Russo-German-Japanese combination would threaten not only the Far East but also India. Even during the war, Britain had been annoyed at Japan's policy towards India, for instance by her economic expansion into India and her harbouring of Indian seditionists. As Curzon wrote, a hostile or suspicious Japan alone might be 'a great nuisance' in India.⁸³⁶ Furthermore, when Britain was engaged in a war against Afghanistan in 1919 it had become clear that Bolshevism had already influenced Amanullah Khan, the new Amir and son of Habibullah Khan.⁸³⁷ Given the strong Bolshevik influence in neighbouring Turkestan and Central Asia, Sir Charles Eliot, the British Ambassador to Japan, worried that 'a deliberate attack on India from those regions can hardly be regarded as impossible in the future'.⁸³⁸ An alliance with Japan and Germany might encourage Russia to take a more aggressive stance against India.

However, even if the Anglo-Japanese alliance were renewed, the clauses concerning India would have to be amended. The 1911 revision had deleted the article that imposed on Japan the obligation to offer military assistance to India, but some references to India in the preamble still allowed the possibility of applying the alliance to India's security. As the Government of India had shown during the war, it was not willing to accept Japanese troops in India because of its strong doubts about Japan's motives. Hardinge,

⁸³⁶ Minutes by Curzon on Bentinck's memo of 28 Feb. 1920, 8 Mar. 1920, FO 371/5358/F199.

⁸³⁷ Grant to Balfour, 7 Jul. 1919, Balfour MSS, Add. MSS. 49749.

⁸³⁸ Eliot to Curzon, 17 Jun. 1920, FO 371/5360/F1559.

who had served as Viceroy of India during the war, recognised the unpopularity of the alliance in India and lamented that '[i]f we are to educate the Colonies on the value of the Japanese Alliance we have a tough job before us particularly in India'.⁸³⁹ The Foreign Office understood India's opposition to the alliance and proposed to the India Office that Britain should eliminate any reference to India from a renewed agreement with Japan.⁸⁴⁰ On 5 May 1920, both the India Office and the Government of India agreed that renewing the alliance in some form was desirable and that all specific reference to India should be omitted.⁸⁴¹ From the viewpoint of India's defence, Japan was already not an ally but a potential enemy. It was essential to prevent her from becoming an actual threat. The alliance itself was thus an instrument for the containment of Japan's influence in South-East Asia.

There was consensus in the Foreign Office that Anglo-American cooperation was more important to Britain than an agreement with Japan. The question was whether Britain could rely on America's constant support. Keen supporters of Anglo-American cooperation tended to have faith in the common cultural bond between the two countries. In a long memorandum, Bentinck wrote that '[t]he English-speaking communities

⁸³⁹ Minutes by Hardinge on Foreign Office's memo. of 28 Feb. 1920, FO 371/3816/177312.

⁸⁴⁰ Memo. by Montgomery, 21 Jan. 1920, FO 371/3816/166706.

⁸⁴¹ India Office to Foreign Office, 5 May 1920, FO 371/5358/F751.

naturally tend to draw together'.⁸⁴² On 1 August 1920 Alston, now British minister in Peking, insisted that 'an Anglo-Saxon fleet' should protect common Anglo-American interests in China and the Pacific.⁸⁴³ On the other hand, Sir Eyre Crowe, Assistant Under-Secretary, was sceptical about this cultural argument, commenting that Bentinck's insistence was 'poetry!'⁸⁴⁴ As for Alston's argument, while conceding the importance of making efforts in that direction, Crowe noted that he wished he could share 'Sir B. Alston's robust faith in American "cooperation" in China or elsewhere'.⁸⁴⁵

These internal divisions persisted in the Foreign Office and its officials failed to relieve Curzon's concern about the difficulty of Anglo-American cooperation.⁸⁴⁶

Curzon was influenced by telegrams from Tokyo and Washington supporting the Anglo-Japanese alliance. In addition, although no longer officially involved in foreign policy-making, Balfour was associated with some of the discussions about the alliance.

When Hardinge asked Curzon whether he should obtain Cabinet approval to draft

⁸⁴² Memo. by Bentinck, 28 Feb. 1920, FO 371/5358/F199.

⁸⁴³ Memo. by Alston, 1 Aug. 1920, FO 371/5360/F1742.

⁸⁴⁴ Minutes by Crowe on Bentinck's memo of 28 Feb. 1920, FO 371/5358/F199.

⁸⁴⁵ Minutes by Crowe on Alston's memo of 1 Aug. 1920, 9 Aug. 1920, FO 371/5360/F1742.

⁸⁴⁶ C.J. Lowe and M.L. Dockrill, The Mirage of Power Vol. II: British Foreign Policy 1914-22 (London, 1972), p. 299. Professor Goldstein insisted that the Foreign Office 'advised maintaining the Anglo-Japanese Alliance while attempting good relations with the United States'. However, the Anglo-Japanese Alliance Committee of the Foreign Office recommended Curzon to drop the alliance and make 'a Tripartite *Entente* between the United States, Japan and Great Britain' in January 1921. See E. Goldstein, 'The Evolution of British Diplomatic Strategy for the Washington Conference' in E. Goldstein and J. Maurer, (eds.) The Washington Conference, 1921-1922: Naval Rivalry, East Asian Stability and the Road to Pearl Harbor (London, 1994), p. 7; 'Report of Anglo-Japanese Alliance Committee', n.d., FO 371/6672/F1169.

telegrams to Eliot, Curzon replied that it would be sufficient ‘if Mr. Balfour approves’.⁸⁴⁷ Hardinge therefore sent Balfour a file of telegrams between London, Tokyo and Washington, and asked him to check the draft for a telegram to Eliot.⁸⁴⁸ Balfour read all the papers and approved the draft with minor revision, which Curzon and Hardinge accepted.⁸⁴⁹ This episode demonstrated that Balfour still had influence in the Foreign Office even after resigning as Foreign Secretary. More importantly, he had already received significant information about the renewal of the Anglo-Japanese alliance before the Cabinet began to discuss it.

On 3 December 1920, Sir Auckland Geddes, British ambassador to America, urged that there should be ‘no break’ between Britain and Japan. While he understood the importance of securing co-operation with America, he concluded that ‘it would be a high, and I believe unnecessary, price to pay to purchase it at the cost of Japanese enmity’.⁸⁵⁰ Geddes was not a keen supporter of the Anglo-Japanese alliance, but his emphasis on the difficulty of guaranteeing constant American help took the same line as Curzon’s doubts about America and increased the value of the Japanese alliance.

Eliot also supported renewing the Anglo-Japanese alliance and was concerned about

⁸⁴⁷ Minutes by Curzon on Geddes’ telegram of 30 Apr. 1920, 29 May 1920, FO 371/5359/F829.

⁸⁴⁸ Hardinge to Balfour, 31 May 1920, FO 371/5359/F829.

⁸⁴⁹ Lascelles to Hardinge, 1 Jun. 1920, FO 371/5359/F829; Minutes by Curzon and Hardinge on Balfour’s letter of 1 Jun. 1920, FO 371/5359/F829.

⁸⁵⁰ Geddes to Curzon, 3 Dec. 1920, FO 371/5361/F3202.

the following possibility:

In a few years, if her [Japan's] naval and military programme is executed and no internal trouble occurs, she will be very strong, and if we do not make her our Ally she will be decidedly hostile. I anticipate grave difficulties in India and our other Asiatic possessions in near future, and we cannot count on American sympathy there. I do not think that we can afford to risk enmity of Japan.⁸⁵¹

Eliot's analysis recalled the crucial fact that a hostile Japan would be a threat not only to the Far East but also to India.⁸⁵² The proponents of Anglo-American cooperation tended to focus on China, where America had political and financial interests. But it was essential to consider whether Britain could rely on America's support for the defence of India, where the latter did not have any interests. Originally, America had not been in favour of British rule in India due to American hostility toward the concept of empire. It was not surprising that Curzon, a former Viceroy of India who was sceptical about America's commitment, concurred with Eliot's assessment regarding India. Curzon decided to circulate the despatches of Geddes and Eliot to the Cabinet, adding a comment that they were 'of considerable importance'.⁸⁵³

The argument over the renewal of the alliance moved from the Foreign Office to the

⁸⁵¹ Eliot to Curzon, 12 Dec. 1920, FO 371/5361/F3205.

⁸⁵² I. Klein, 'Whitehall, Washington, and the Anglo-Japanese Alliance, 1919-1921' in Pacific Historical Review XLI, (1972), pp. 470-471.

⁸⁵³ Cabinet 43 (21), 30 May 1921, CAB 23/25.

Cabinet in 1921. After some delay due to Curzon's ill health, the ministers discussed the matter on 30 May. Curzon took the initiative in the debate and summarised the advantages and disadvantages of a renewal. With the current disappearance of the Russian and German threats to Britain in the Far East, it did not seem to be necessary to renew the alliance. The deterioration of Anglo-American relations and the alienation of China made its renewal more difficult. On the other hand, if Russia and Germany recovered in the Far East, the alliance would be useful as a counterbalance. Furthermore, Britain could utilise the alliance to check Japan's ambitious foreign policy in Asia. Finally, Japan wanted to renew it. In sum, given the difficulties of making an agreement with America, Curzon was inclined to favour renewing the alliance. Nevertheless, he did not forget to point out that a renewed alliance should be compatible with the Covenant of the League of Nations and should be for a shorter term this time, for example four or five years.⁸⁵⁴

Edwin Montagu added the Indian viewpoint to Curzon's argument. The Secretary of State for India criticised Japan's secret connection with Indian seditionists, arguing that the references to India in the Anglo-Japanese alliance gave Japan 'an excuse for penetration in India'. On the other hand, supported by Austen Chamberlain, then Lord

⁸⁵⁴ Ibid.

Privy Seal, Montagu insisted that Japan would become openly hostile to Britain and join a Russo-German combination if the alliance were terminated.⁸⁵⁵ Britain had to achieve two purposes simultaneously: keep Japan's threat to India potential and curb Japanese intervention in India. Montagu's solution was for the Anglo-Japanese alliance to be renewed without any reference to India. Although he ruled out the possibility of utilising Japanese assistance for the defence of India, he agreed with Curzon on the necessity of renewing the alliance for India's security.

Curzon faced some opposition among his colleagues. Winston Churchill, then the Secretary of State for the Colonies, emphasised the Dominions' suspicion of the Anglo-Japanese alliance. Canada opposed its renewal and Australia and New Zealand feared the rapid growth of Japan's naval power in the Pacific region. Churchill wanted to hold a conference to alleviate the Dominions' concerns about British policy towards Japan. Furthermore, he insisted that the Japanese alliance might lead America to increase the size of her navy against those of both Britain and Japan, causing a naval armaments race in Asia. Lord Lee of Fareham, the First Lord of the Admiralty, backed Churchill, agreeing that America might 'not only build [ships] against Japan, but also against Great Britain and Japan combined'.⁸⁵⁶ Given the recent rise in America's power,

⁸⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁵⁶ Ibid.

Lord Lee's analysis was not unfounded; the Cabinet could not ignore this naval problem.

Balfour pursued a compromise between his pro- and anti-renewal colleagues. He was in favour of renewing the alliance and praised Curzon's arguments as 'very convincing'. But realising that Britain had to deal with the Dominions' concerns, he also agreed to a conference to discuss Pacific affairs. Balfour emphasised that if the alliance were renewed, Britain would have to correct America's misconception that Britain would side with Japan in a war against America. He aimed at 'combining Lord Curzon's and Mr Churchill's proposals' and this was how he tried to bring about a consensus in the Cabinet on the renewal of the alliance. Lloyd George followed Balfour's line, supporting the renewal and arranging the Pacific conference.⁸⁵⁷

After prolonged discussion, the Cabinet reached several conclusions. Firstly, Britain would ask America to summon a Pacific conference to discuss the future of the Anglo-Japanese alliance and assess the position of the Dominions. Before the conference Britain should inform Japan and other powers that Britain had 'no intention of dropping the Alliance'. Secondly, the alliance should be renewed for less than ten years and be consistent with the Covenant of the League of Nations. Special attention

⁸⁵⁷ Ibid.

was to be paid to ‘American susceptibilities’, and Britain was to enter into close communication with her and China about the renewal of the alliance.⁸⁵⁸ This was ‘the Churchill-Curzon compromise’.⁸⁵⁹ It was Balfour who proposed this solution to the Cabinet, whose decision became the basis of British policy on the alliance.

Before the Imperial Conference, which was scheduled for June 1921, there was one further factor to be considered: the establishment of a naval base in Singapore. As Lord Lee argued in the Cabinet, the post-war naval situation in the Pacific was too important to be ignored. Balfour and his Cabinet colleagues took a gloomy view of Britain’s naval position there. After the war only three naval powers, Britain, America and Japan, could affect the international order in the Pacific region. However, Britain’s relative position rapidly declined.⁸⁶⁰ On 26 February 1921, Churchill warned Balfour that Britain was ‘in danger of sinking to the position not only of second but of third naval power in a few years’ time’.⁸⁶¹ Balfour shared Churchill’s concerns and feared that such a decline would ‘get us into great trouble politically, and seriously damage our reputation at home, and our influence with the Dominions’. Owing to financial stringency, however, it was not practicable for Britain to compete with the other two countries. Balfour thus

⁸⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁵⁹ Nish, Alliance in Decline, p.330.

⁸⁶⁰ J. Neidpath, The Singapore Naval Base and the Defence of Britain’s Eastern Empire, 1919-1941, (Oxford, 1981), pp. 19-33.

⁸⁶¹ Churchill to Balfour, 26 Feb. 1921, Balfour MSS GD 433/2/1; P.P. O’Brien, British and American Naval Power: Politics and Policy, 1900-1936 (Westport, 1998), pp. 153-155.

concluded:

I do not, of course, mean that we are either to plan or to publish a ship-building programme of a kind which will inevitably suggest an eternal competition in armaments with the U.S.A.; but there is something between this and a continued acquiescence in a policy which would put us in the third place among Naval Powers.⁸⁶²

Balfour's solution was to establish a naval base in Singapore. Although the Foreign Office and the Admiralty had already realised the necessity of a naval base there, this was 'a Cabinet question' and could not be settled by them alone.⁸⁶³ In practice, this meant that the Committee of Imperial Defence (CID) had to deal with the issue.⁸⁶⁴ After a hiatus in its activities during the war, the CID had resumed its activity on 29 June 1920. As its *de facto* chairman, Balfour took the initiative in the discussion of British policy regarding a naval base in the East.

On receiving memoranda from the Admiralty and War Office in May 1921, Balfour began to discuss the merits of Hong Kong and Singapore as naval bases. Given its geographic proximity to Japan, Balfour insisted, it would be impossible for Britain to

⁸⁶² Balfour to Bonar Law, 3 Mar. 1921, Balfour MSS GD 433/2/1.

⁸⁶³ Minutes by Clive on Alston's telegram of 25 Nov. 1919, 2 Jan. 1920, FO 371/3816/166706.

⁸⁶⁴ W.D. McIntyre, The Rise and Fall of the Singapore Naval Base, 1919-1942 (London, 1979), pp. 23-25.

protect Hong Kong against a sudden Japanese attack.⁸⁶⁵ On the other hand, Singapore was ‘the gateway from the Indian Ocean to the Far East’, making it an ideal place for the initial concentration of British naval forces. Singapore thus occupied ‘to the British Empire in the East a corresponding position to Gibraltar in the West’.⁸⁶⁶ Singapore’s strategic significance was not confined to the Pacific region. Indeed, Balfour confessed that he had always regarded Singapore as ‘belonging rather to the Indian Ocean than to the Pacific’.⁸⁶⁷ This meant that India should be consulted on the question of the proposed naval base.

Balfour carried out further detailed analysis of Singapore’s potential as a naval base in the sub-committee of the CID in June 1921. After the war, for the security of British interests in the Pacific, Britain could no longer rely on the Anglo-Japanese alliance, which ‘could be terminated at far shorter notice than the period necessary for providing adequate defences’. A naval base in Singapore, which was ‘the keystone of Imperial defence in the East’, would offer reinsurance for the anticipated demise of the alliance.⁸⁶⁸ Even if the alliance continued, it would also be necessary for Britain to build an oil store for the refuelling and operation of her fleets in the Far East. Whether

⁸⁶⁵ Memo. by Balfour, 3 May 1921, CAB 34/1/2.

⁸⁶⁶ Memo. by the Oversea Defence Committee, 7 Jun. 1921, CAB 5/4/143C.

⁸⁶⁷ ‘Memorandum of a Conversation Held at Mr Hughes’ Private House’, 8 Dec. 1921, CAB 30/27/14.

⁸⁶⁸ Minutes of 140th Meeting, 10 Jun. 1921, CAB 2/3/140.

the alliance was renewed or not, a Singapore naval base should be constructed from a strategic point of view. In addition, Britain had to show her intention of maintaining naval supremacy in order to secure the consent of the Dominions, in particular Australia and New Zealand. A naval base in Singapore would be proof of her firm commitment to these countries. These imperial considerations made a first-class naval base at Singapore imperative.

However, Balfour could not ignore Britain's financial problems. Under the conditions of post-war austerity, it would be difficult to spend money on building a large naval base in Asia. Any decision to do so would create 'a storm of protest' in public. Balfour and the sub-committee therefore requested that the Dominions bore 'their fair share of the burden of Imperial defence'.⁸⁶⁹ In this manner the sub-committee set out a line of policy on a Singapore naval base for the forthcoming Imperial Conference.

Balfour's final conclusion on Singapore was:

- (a) His Majesty's Government fully recognise that the basis of any system of Imperial defence against attack from over the sea, whether upon the United Kingdom Australasia or elsewhere, must be, as it has always been, the maintenance of our sea power;
- (b) The most pressing question in this connection at the present time is that of the measures to be taken for the protection of Empire interests in the Pacific;
- (c) His Majesty's Government are advised that for this purpose it is essential that

⁸⁶⁹ Ibid.

Singapore should be available as a base of concentration, repair, and supply for the British fleet; and they are accordingly prepared to take the lead in developing that port as a naval base;

(d) Owing to existing financial conditions it will not be practicable to incur a large expenditure for this purpose in the immediate future; but it is the intention of His Majesty's Government to develop the port as funds become available, and the greater the assistance that can be rendered by the oversea Governments in this connection the quicker will the necessary programme be completed.⁸⁷⁰

Balfour thus combined strategic, imperial and financial considerations. No reference to Japan in this conclusion meant that the Singapore naval base was a case of forward planning to deal with the Pacific without any Japan's help. He also emphasised the usefulness of the contribution of the Dominions and India to the establishment of the base. This indicated that Balfour realised that they could affect Britain's commitment to Asia.

There was no guarantee that the Dominions and India would accept Britain's request. In particular, India was strongly dissatisfied with Britain's demand for a greater contribution towards the defence of the British Empire; she had originally had to take care of her own army to protect her long land frontiers and deal with internal disorder.⁸⁷¹ After the war, India's army had assumed the additional responsibility of enforcing the

⁸⁷⁰ Note by Wilson, 13 Jun. 1921, CAB 34/1/12.

⁸⁷¹ Memo. by Admiralty, ? Feb. 1921, CAB 5/4/131C.

terms of the Peace Treaty.⁸⁷² Furthermore, in the post-war world India faced ‘the greater vulnerability of the Empire on land in the Middle East’ and the threat of a Russo-German combination against India and Afghanistan.⁸⁷³ Nevertheless, Britain was trying to extract more human and financial resources from her. Criticising London’s attitude, Montagu insisted:

[i]n short, we must definitely get out of our heads the vague idea too often entertained, that India is an inexhaustible reservoir from which men and money can be drawn towards the support of Imperial resources or in pursuance of Imperial strategy.⁸⁷⁴

Although the construction of a naval base in Singapore was linked to India’s defence, India, the most important source of finance for imperial defence, was unlikely to be willing to offer assistance for this project.

The last item for discussion by the sub-committee was the renewal of the Anglo-Japanese alliance in connection with the establishment of a naval base in Singapore. This was scarcely surprising. The CID after all had ‘considered the last renewal of the Alliance which took place in 1911’.⁸⁷⁵ If the alliance were terminated in 1921 as scheduled, a naval base at Singapore would become ‘a matter of urgency’.

⁸⁷² Memo. by General Staff, ? Feb. 1921, CAB 5/4/133C.

⁸⁷³ “Handbook dealing with the Military Aspect of Imperial Defence”, May 1921, CAB 5/4/142C.

⁸⁷⁴ Memo. by Montagu, 24 Dec. 1920, CAB 6/4/118D.

⁸⁷⁵ Tyrrell to Crowe, 8 Feb. 1921, FO 371/6672/F1057.

Given Britain's financial constraints, however, it was not possible to complete the development of the Singapore base quickly. Therefore, unless some reliable understanding with America on a common defence in the Pacific was reached, Britain would have, 'from a strategic point of view, everything to lose and nothing to gain by the determination, at the present time, of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance'.⁸⁷⁶ The renewal of the alliance would render the possibility of war with Japan more remote and give Britain the necessary time to complete the construction of the Singapore naval base. On 17 June 1921, the committee approved this pro-alliance policy and Balfour followed this line in discussions at the Imperial Conference.⁸⁷⁷

The Imperial Conference, attended by the Dominion Prime Ministers and Representatives of India and the British Cabinet, began on 20 June 1921. After the opening speeches the conference entered into a general review of British foreign policy and a detailed discussion of the fate of the Anglo-Japanese alliance. Curzon opened by reiterating the opinion put forward at the Cabinet meeting of 30 May.⁸⁷⁸ Balfour, who supported Curzon's argument and conclusions, attended the Imperial Conference 'on behalf of the League of Nations and the Committee of Imperial Defence'.⁸⁷⁹ As

⁸⁷⁶ "Strategic Situation in the event of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance being determined", 15 Jun. 1921, CAB 34/1/16.

⁸⁷⁷ Minutes of 142nd Meeting, 17 Jun. 1921, CAB 2/3/142.

⁸⁷⁸ Wm. R. Louis, British Strategy in the Far East, 1919-1939 (Oxford, 1971), pp. 60-61.

⁸⁷⁹ Notes of 8th Meeting of the Imperial Conference, 28 Jun. 1921, CAB 32/2/E8.

chairman of the sub-committee of the CID, moreover, he emphasised Britain's diminished naval position in the Pacific:

America is steadily putting ships in the Pacific, I understand, and although I am not in the least way conceiving a war with America as a possibility, yet if you look at the thing from a purely strategic point of view, and omit politics and sentiment and look at it with an open mind, undoubtedly it is a fact that if we had not Japan on our side we should be second or third Power in the Pacific after a considerable number of years.⁸⁸⁰

As Britain could not build up her fleet immediately, 'so long as our relatively unprepared condition lasts, it is, from a strategic point of view, of very great importance that the Japanese Alliance should be maintained'. He believed that an alliance was neither a permanent safeguard nor an adequate substitute for material force. In addition, as a keen supporter of Anglo-American cooperation, Balfour regarded confronting America in the Pacific region as unrealistic. Nevertheless, reiterating the advantages Curzon had listed, he concluded that a renewal of the alliance with Japan was 'a most desirable object' from a strategic point of view.

Balfour also advocated linking the renewal of the alliance with the naval base at Singapore. Britain needed a place to refit and refuel if she was to operate her fleet in the

⁸⁸⁰ Ibid.

Pacific. He concluded that:

one of the most pressing needs for Imperial defence is that Singapore should be made into a place where the British Fleet can concentrate for the defence of the Empire, of our interests in the East, our interests in India, our interests in Australia, our interests in New Zealand, our interests in the smaller Possessions there, and that for that purpose it is absolutely necessary to undertake works at Singapore.⁸⁸¹

This conclusion demonstrated that Balfour considered Singapore useful for the protection of British interests, not only in Australasia but also in India, from the viewpoint of imperial defence. However, it would take some years to complete the construction of a Singapore base, and until then Britain was 'at a relative disadvantage undoubtedly in the Pacific'. Terminating the Anglo-Japanese alliance would create 'two evil consequences at least': Britain would no longer be able to count on Japanese assistance, and nor would she be able to control Japan's policy in the Far East; in the worst case, Japan would change from 'a faithful friend into a very formidable enemy'.⁸⁸² Given her unpreparedness to meet any contingency in Asia, Britain could not afford to lose the alliance.

Balfour then dealt with the alliance question as the British representative of the

⁸⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸⁸² Ibid.; E. Goldstein, 'The Evolution of British Diplomatic Strategy for the Washington Conference' in Goldstein and Maurer (eds.), The Washington Conference, 1921-1922, pp. 7-8.

League of Nations. He suggested that the Anglo-Japanese alliance be made more compatible with the League of Nations. He considered not only the modification of the alliance but also amendments to the Covenant. Newly independent Czecho-Slovakia was deeply concerned about her security and sought an alliance with other countries such as Romania. As a result, she requested that the League of Nations should approve the combination of two or more countries if their purpose was defensive and peaceful. Balfour forecast that Czecho-Slovakia's proposal would be accepted and could be applied to the Japanese alliance. Although the alliance was a combination of two powers, if its purpose and contents were defensive, it could survive under the auspices of the League. Balfour considered that it would not be difficult to revise the alliance so that it harmonised with the Covenant.

Balfour also argued that the Anglo-Japanese alliance could coexist with Anglo-American cooperation under the League of Nations. Citing that the Covenant regarded the Monroe Doctrine as peaceful in Article 21, Balfour insisted that '[t]he Anglo-Japanese Alliance, especially if America would join, would be the Monroe Doctrine applied to the Pacific'.⁸⁸³ This indicated that Balfour thought of an Anglo-American-Japanese agreement, which would be compatible with the Covenant. It

⁸⁸³ Notes of 8th Meeting of the Imperial Conference, 28 Jun. 1921, CAB 32/2/E8.

was significant that Balfour did not regard such a tripartite arrangement as the end of the alliance. Rather, he deemed America's accession to it a desirable development of the alliance. Whether the alliance was bilateral or tripartite, Balfour concluded that Britain should renew it.

India understood the necessity of renewing of the alliance. Edwin Montagu, Secretary of State for India, emphasised Russia's military threat to India and naval threat in the Pacific. He argued that 'it looks as if the anxieties which Bolshevik Russia presents are becoming almost identical with those which Czarist Russia presented'.⁸⁸⁴ By tackling the Russian threat and the possibility of its reinforcement through an alliance with Germany, the Anglo-Japanese alliance could be 'the future salvation of the East'.⁸⁸⁵ With regard to Singapore, Montagu agreed with Balfour that its development was 'of great interest not only to Australia and to New Zealand but also to India'.⁸⁸⁶ This was because he was alarmed by the vulnerability of India on the Pacific coast.⁸⁸⁷ Although there was still discord over India's contribution to the construction of the proposed naval base, Britain and India both appreciated the value of the base and of the Japanese alliance. In the end the Indian representatives, the Maharao of Cutch and

⁸⁸⁴ Notes of 6th Meeting of the Imperial Conference, 24 Jun. 1921, CAB 32/2/E6.

⁸⁸⁵ Curzon to Geddes, 29 Jun. 1921, CAB 32/6/E23.

⁸⁸⁶ Notes of 26th Meeting of the Imperial Conference, 19 Jul. 1921, CAB 32/2/E26.

⁸⁸⁷ Notes of 27th Meeting of the Imperial Conference, 22 Jul. 1921, CAB 32/2/E27.

Srinivasa-Sastri, approved the continuance of the alliance on condition that reference to India would be omitted in its preamble.⁸⁸⁸

Reactions from the Dominions were divided. At the meeting of 29 June 1921, Arthur Meighen, Prime Minister of Canada, strongly opposed the renewal of the alliance.⁸⁸⁹

His main concern was to preserve good relations with America, and he insisted that no matter what form the renewed alliance took America would not approve a bilateral combination of Britain and Japan. If the alliance was renewed without America, Anglo-American relations would deteriorate and Canada would suffer in consequence.

In addition, emphasising the importance of China, Meighen considered that Japan's policy towards China violated her territorial integrity and the Open Door principle.

Renewing the alliance would be interpreted to mean that Britain supported Japan's aggression in Asia. Given the opposition of America and China, he concluded, Britain

should not renew the alliance. Although Curzon presented a counterargument, Meighen

did not yield. Even Chamberlain's concern that an isolated Japan might cooperate with a Russo-German combination did not appeal to him. Meighen's stance was the same as

that of the anti-renewal officials at the Foreign Office. However, in reply to Balfour,

⁸⁸⁸ Notes of 11th Meeting of the Imperial Conference, 30 Jun. 1921, CAB 32/2/E11; Notes of 12th Meeting of the Imperial Conference, 1 Jul. 1921, CAB 32/2/E12.

⁸⁸⁹ For the background of Canada's opposition, see M.G. Fry, 'The North Atlantic Triangle and the Abrogation of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance' in *Journal of Modern History*, XXXIX, 1, (1967), pp. 50-55.

Meighen admitted that he could accept a tripartite arrangement between Britain, America and Japan.⁸⁹⁰

By contrast, Australia and New Zealand favoured renewing the Anglo-Japanese alliance.⁸⁹¹ The circumstances of Australasia were different to those of Canada. Australia needed to strengthen her security in the face of America and Japan's naval expansion. Although William Hughes, Australia's Prime Minister, was 'as resolute a champion of the Union of English-speaking people as any man', he was sceptical about America's permanent commitment to the Pacific. Unless America offered the assurance of security, he argued, Australia had to control Japan as an ally and prevent her from turning into actual threat to Britain for the sake of maintaining peace in the region. William Massey, Prime Minister of New Zealand, doubted America's reliability and sided with Hughes: '[w]e are part of the British Empire and we look to the British Empire to protect us'. Unlike Canada, the danger of a Russo-German-Japanese collaboration was real for New Zealand. Massey admitted that Japan was 'our loyal Ally', citing her naval assistance in the Pacific during the war. He saw the speedy renewal of the Anglo-Japanese alliance as suiting not only New Zealand but also the

⁸⁹⁰ Notes of 9th Meeting of the Imperial Conference, 29 Jun. 1921, CAB 32/2/E9.

⁸⁹¹ Although Professor Nish explained Canada's opposition to the Anglo-Japanese alliance in detail, his reference to Australasia's support for its renewal is rather concise. See Nish, Alliance in Decline, pp. 333-335.

British Empire as a whole.⁸⁹² Hughes and Massey shared Curzon's pessimistic view of America's involvement in international politics.

Balfour shared these security concerns about Australasia. During discussion of the naval problem in that region, Balfour asked Lord Beatty, First Sea Lord:

May I ask if you would develop the possibility of maritime operations between Japan and America in the Pacific? It is relevant because Mr. Hughes has indicated to us that, after all, Australia must look after her safety, and if we cannot help her America can. She must turn to America; she would have to do it.⁸⁹³

Balfour put this question plainly: 'if Great Britain could not, or would not, do her work in the Pacific, the nations who were afraid of Japan in the Pacific would have to turn to America'. But he doubted that America could be substituted for 'the British Empire with Singapore and Hong Kong'. Given the vast distances between the Far East and American islands such as Hawaii, Beatty agreed that America was 'a Power which can put up a defence far less easily than we can'. This meant that if Australia and New Zealand relied on America, they could not be confident of their security. Balfour considered this 'a very vital point'.⁸⁹⁴ Anglo-American cooperation was a significant principle of his diplomatic and defence policy, but if America did not have enough

⁸⁹² Notes of 10th Meeting of the Imperial Conference, 29 Jun. 1921, CAB 32/2/E10.

⁸⁹³ Notes of 14th Meeting of the Imperial Conference, 4 Jul. 1921, CAB 32/2/E14.

⁸⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

power to protect part of the British Empire, Britain would have to undertake its defence by herself, even under conditions of severe financial difficulty. Balfour realised that the maintenance of good relations with America alone was not sufficient for the defence of the British Empire.

Following the Imperial Conference, Lloyd George held a Cabinet meeting on 30 June 1921. Curzon summarised the discussions at the conference, citing Canada's opposition to and Australasia's support for the renewal of the Anglo-Japanese alliance. However, he saw Geddes' recent telegrams from Washington as more important. Geddes had modified his favourable view of the alliance and now advocated 'a tripartite agreement between Britain, Japan and United States' in light of America's strong opposition to the alliance.⁸⁹⁵ Curzon therefore suggested that Britain should confirm America and Japan's views on the renewal of the alliance. Lloyd George accepted this suggestion and raised three fundamental points: first, Britain could not quarrel with America; second, it was essential not to insult Japan; third, China had to be carried with Britain.⁸⁹⁶ This underlined Britain's difficult position in Asia. It was not clear that any policy could achieve all these objectives. The Cabinet therefore agreed that the decision should be postponed until they knew the opinions of Japan and America.

⁸⁹⁵ Geddes to Curzon, 6 Jun. 1921, FO 371/6673/F2110; Geddes to Curzon, 24 Jun. 1921, FO 371/6674/F2300.

⁸⁹⁶ Cabinet 56 (21), 30 Jun. 1921, CAB 23/26.

After this the main focus of the discussion at the Imperial Conference moved to a Pacific conference which Britain, Japan, America and China would attend to discuss the post-war international order in the Pacific with other powers interested in the region. The fate of the alliance was to be examined at this conference, which made it convenient for Britain to confirm Japan and America's views on the renewal of the alliance. With the agreement of the Dominions and India, there was no objection to holding such a conference.

The division within the British Empire was exposed by one important question: what Britain should do if the Pacific conference did not produce results. 'Should the Conference fail to arrive at any new agreement', Curzon proposed, 'the existing [Anglo-Japanese] agreement as adapted to meet the requirements of the Covenant of the League goes on'. India, Australia and New Zealand agreed. In particular, Hughes was in favour of making 'a plain, straightforward declaration of our intention to renew' at the conference. On the other hand, Canada and South Africa opposed this. Meighen and Jan Christiaan Smuts, the representative for South Africa, feared that such a policy would restrict the flexibility of the British diplomacy. While Curzon bluntly defended his idea as 'a truism', Balfour tried to persuade Meighen and Smuts.⁸⁹⁷ Balfour proposed that

⁸⁹⁷ Notes of 13th Meeting of the Imperial Conference, 1 Jul. 1921, CAB 32/2/E13.

the alliance would ‘renew in some shape’ in the case of the failure of the conference, but Smuts did not withdraw his opposition.⁸⁹⁸ Even when Lloyd George stated that the Anglo-Japanese alliance ‘ought to be our policy’ if the Pacific conference failed, Meighen and Smuts strongly retaliated.⁸⁹⁹ This demonstrated the lack of consensus on the renewal of the alliance at the Imperial Conference.⁹⁰⁰ Balfour was more flexible than Curzon, but fundamentally they shared the same inclination to renew the alliance.

All was not well for Britain, however. Two international conferences were to be held that would affect the alliance and the politics of the Pacific region: a Pacific conference and a Disarmament conference. Having more interests in the Pacific than in disarmament, Britain hoped that the Pacific conference would be convened in London. Balfour assumed that Britain would be able to wield her influence in the creation of a new post-war international order by hosting at least one of the two international conferences.⁹⁰¹ America and Japan, however, blocked her attempt to hold the Pacific conference in London. On 14 July 1921 the American President, Warren G. Harding, indicated that he thought that both the Pacific and the Disarmament conference should

⁸⁹⁸ Notes of 12th Meeting of the Imperial Conference, 1 Jul. 1921, CAB 32/2/E12.

⁸⁹⁹ Notes of 13th Meeting of the Imperial Conference, 1 Jul. 1921, CAB 32/2/E13.

⁹⁰⁰ M.G. Fry, ‘The Pacific Dominions and the Washington Conference, 1921-1922’ in Goldstein and Maurer (eds.), The Washington Conference, 1921-1922, pp. 64-65.

⁹⁰¹ Notes of 21st Meeting of the Imperial Conference, 11 Jul. 1921, CAB 32/2/E21.

be held in Washington.⁹⁰² It was a blow to Britain when Japan accepted the American proposal that Washington should call the Pacific conference.⁹⁰³ In the end Britain had no choice but to accept that just one conference concerning both disarmament and problems in the Pacific would be held in Washington in November. ‘As long as we were acting in concert with Japan’, Lloyd George lamented, ‘I think we were in a position to insist upon the arrangements that best suited us’. However, Britain was now ‘in the position of trying quite alone to upset something which has been agreed to by every Power except ourselves’.⁹⁰⁴ This circumstance indicated some features of the relations between Britain, America and Japan after the war. Britain could no longer push her opinion through if America and Japan collaborated against her. America refusing to cooperate with Britain was not new, but Japan now showed more of a tendency to prioritise America over Britain. These features would arise again at the coming Washington conference and Balfour, as chief British delegate, would have to face them.

III

After agreeing to hold the conference in Washington, Britain had to choose the members

⁹⁰² Curzon to Geddes, 14 Jul. 1921, CAB 32/6/E43.

⁹⁰³ Memo. by Crowe, 25 Jul. 1921, CAB 32/6/E47.

⁹⁰⁴ Notes of 29th Meeting of the Imperial Conference, 26 Jul. 1921, CAB 32/2/E29.

of her delegation. It was essential that the chief of the delegation should be a political heavyweight. At first, therefore, it was proposed that Lloyd George himself should assume this role. However, it was not certain that he would be able to go to Washington because of his bad health and heavy domestic load. On 27 September 1921 Lloyd George chose Balfour as the chief British representative at the conference.⁹⁰⁵ Given his high rank and expertise in diplomacy and defence policy, many senior policymakers regarded Balfour as an excellent choice. Although he was in Geneva with the British delegation to the League of Nations at the time, he wrote that ‘if there is an important reason for my going I am ready to go’.⁹⁰⁶

Maurice Hankey, secretary to the CID, was the other most important member of the British delegation. On 15 August 1921 the British Cabinet asked the CID for advice concerning their preparation for the conference.⁹⁰⁷ It was natural that Hankey should join the delegation. To Balfour, who played an essential role as Chairman of the CID, Hankey’s ‘extraordinary ability’ was irreplaceable. As in the CID, Balfour cooperated closely with Hankey and did ‘an amazing amount of preparatory work’.⁹⁰⁸ Hankey’s assistance was essential for Balfour to tackle the future of the Anglo-Japanese alliance.

⁹⁰⁵ Curzon to Balfour, 27 Sep. 1921, Balfour MSS, Add. MSS. 49734.

⁹⁰⁶ Balfour to Curzon, 28 Sep. 1921, Balfour MSS, Add. MSS. 49734.

⁹⁰⁷ Cabinet 67 (21), 15 Aug. 1921, CAB 23/26.

⁹⁰⁸ G. Riddell, Lord Riddell’s Intimate Diary of the Peace Conference and After, 1918-1923 (London, 1933), pp. 338-339.

The CID did not begin to prepare for the conference until October 1921 because Balfour, as its chairman, was still busy in Geneva at the League of Nations. On 5 October the CID received two memoranda on disarmament from the Army and the Navy listing the many difficulties that the British Empire faced. The Army insisted that Britain's armed forces were 'no more than barely sufficient' to fulfil their obligations.⁹⁰⁹ Although it did not state this clearly, the Army wanted to avoid an arms limitation, but the Navy accepted some disarmament to reduce expenditure. Whilst it approved parity with America, the Navy advocated that both Britain and America should have 'a margin over Japan of 3 to 2'. As for the Singapore naval base, this was to be 'a purely defensive measure, of vital importance to India as well as to Australasia', a line that Balfour had developed earlier.⁹¹⁰

In response the CID drafted a memorandum in preparation for the Washington conference on 24 October 1921. It followed the proposals of the Army and Navy and defined Britain's aim at the conference as seeking 'to achieve the largest possible reduction in expenditure on armaments', subject to two fundamental considerations. The first was to safeguard the vital interests of the British Empire, which especially concerned the CID; the second was to avoid the untoward influence of 'any

⁹⁰⁹ Memo. by the General Staff, 5 Oct. 1921, CAB 4/7/276B.

⁹¹⁰ Memo. by the Naval Staff, 5 Oct. 1921, CAB 4/7/277B.

miscalculation of national or political elements concerned' such as America's refusal to ratify the Paris peace treaty.⁹¹¹ Although the second consideration was a political matter outside its purview, the CID pointed it out and required the British delegation's attention. This indicated that the CID was cautious about America's commitment to disarmament.⁹¹²

The matter of the Anglo-Japanese alliance at the Washington conference was left to the Foreign Office. On 20 October 1921 Victor Wellesley produced a detailed memorandum on the political situation in the Pacific and the Far East. In it he developed the notion of a tripartite agreement between Britain, America and Japan to replace the Japanese alliance. He emphasised the impossibility of preserving the military clauses of the alliance in such an arrangement. According to Wellesley, America would not subscribe to 'anything in the nature of an alliance'. Considering the difficulty of securing the ratification of the United States Senate, he concluded that it would be better for the new agreement to take a loose-form requiring no formal ratification.⁹¹³

On 22 October 1921, the Foreign Office prepared another memorandum on the

⁹¹¹ "The Washington Conference on Limitation of Armaments", 24 Oct. 1921, CAB 4/7/280B.

⁹¹² Goldstein, 'The Evolution of British Diplomatic Strategy for Washington Conference' in Goldstein and Maurer (eds.), The Washington Conference, 1921-1922, p. 24.

⁹¹³ Memo. by Wellesley, 20 Oct. 1921, R. Butler and J.P.T. Bury, (eds.) Documents on British Foreign Policy, 1919-1939, First Series, (London, 1966) (hereinafter cited as DBFP), Vol. XIV, No. 404.

Anglo-Japanese alliance ‘for the information and guidance’ of the British delegation to the Washington conference. This memorandum also investigated the possibility of a tripartite agreement. It came to the same conclusion as Wellesley: it would be necessary to eliminate ‘military commitments such as are contained in articles 2 and 5 of the Anglo-Japanese Agreement’ from the new arrangement, otherwise America would never become party to the agreement. The memorandum emphasised that:

[s]tripped of military clauses, the Anglo-Japanese Agreement loses its character as an alliance and becomes merely a declaration of policy of a nature similar to that of the Takahira-Root or Ishii-Lansing Agreements. A formula for an agreement on a tripartite basis must necessarily be confined to general principles of policy and therefore be of a somewhat anodyne nature.⁹¹⁴

However, Curzon expressed his concern about the exclusion of military clauses and insisted that ‘we shall certainly be left worse off than before’. Although Japan’s military obligation was now obsolete, the Anglo-Japanese alliance allowed Britain a steady influence on Japanese diplomacy. Curzon was not at all sure that the merits of the alliance would be compensated by ‘a temporary conquest of the *beaux yeux* of America’. ⁹¹⁵ It was clear that he had not changed his negative view of the practicability

⁹¹⁴ “Foreign Office Memorandum respecting a Tripartite Agreement”, 22 Oct. 1921, DBFP XIV, No. 405.

⁹¹⁵ Minutes by Curzon on Foreign Office’s memorandum of 22 Oct. 1921, 23 Oct. 1921, DBFP XIV, No. 405.

of Anglo-American cooperation and his favourable attitude towards the alliance. Curzon and the Foreign Office officials were still divided even just before the Washington conference.

Balfour examined the CID and Foreign Office memoranda as he sailed to Washington. He had returned to London from Geneva in October 1921 with little time to complete his preparations for the conference. But his experience in the CID, the British Cabinet and the Imperial Conference compensated for this to some extent. The Lloyd George administration had not given Balfour specific instructions, and as a result he enjoyed great flexibility which he did not hesitate to take advantage of.⁹¹⁶ He left London on 2 November and arrived at Washington via Quebec in Canada on 10 November. Fighting seasickness, he had devoted the whole of the transatlantic voyage to a close study of many Cabinet documents and diplomatic dispatches regarding the Anglo-Japanese alliance.⁹¹⁷

During the voyage, Balfour gave consideration to the future of the Anglo-Japanese alliance. He thought that Britain should conclude two international treaties: a tripartite Anglo-American-Japanese treaty in defence of the territorial *status quo* in the Pacific, and a multinational treaty dealing with the many problems related to China. The former

⁹¹⁶ Nish, Alliance in Decline, p.363.

⁹¹⁷ Balfour to Lloyd George, 11 Nov. 1921, CAB 30/5/W.D.C.13.

would replace the existing Anglo-Japanese alliance, and Balfour drafted the outlines of such an arrangement:

With the object of maintaining the general peace in the regions of Eastern Asia and of protecting the existing territorial rights of the high contracting parties in the Islands of the Pacific Ocean and the territories bordering thereon: -It is agreed:

I.

That each of the high contracting parties shall respect such rights themselves, and shall consult fully and frankly with each other as to the best means of protecting them whenever in the opinion of any of them they are imperilled by the action of another Power.

II.

If any two of the high contracting parties desire to bind themselves and assist each other in defending these rights by force of arms against the attacks by outside Powers, they shall be at liberty to do so, provided that

- (a) their military undertakings shall be strictly defensive in character; and
- (b) shall be fully and frankly communicated to the other party to this treaty.

III.

This treaty shall supersede any treaty of earlier date dealing with the defence of territorial rights in the regions to which this treaty refers.⁹¹⁸

Balfour specified the purposes of the trilateral agreement as follows:

Note – The object of this scheme is

- (a) to enable the Americans to be parties to a tripartite arrangement without committing themselves to military operations.
- (b) to bring the Anglo-Japanese alliance in its original form to an end without hurting the feelings of our ally.

⁹¹⁸ Memo. by Balfour, Nov. 1921, Balfour MSS, Add. MSS. 49749.

- (c) to leave it open to us to renew a defensive alliance with Japan if she should again be threatened by Germany or Russia.
- (d) to frame a treaty which will reassure our Australasian dominions.
- (e) to make it impossible for American critics to suggest that our treaty with Japan would prevent us siding with them in the case of a rupture or threat of rupture.⁹¹⁹

The draft underlined the extent to which Balfour had shifted his stance on the renewal of the existing alliance. Although he accepted the idea of a tripartite agreement to maintain good relations with America, he did not simply adopt the Foreign Office's proposal. Balfour wanted to introduce a clause (II, above), relating to military affairs. As item (c) showed, this clause meant that if necessary Britain could revive a bilateral alliance with Japan. Item (e) specified that condition (b) of clause II aimed to avoid the problem that the Anglo-Japanese alliance had faced with the deterioration of US-Japanese relations after the Russo-Japanese War. The insertion of clause II was an attempt to preserve the core of the Anglo-Japanese alliance in a new tripartite treaty.

Item (d) justified Balfour's scheme from the viewpoint of imperial defence. As item (b) underlined, Balfour agreed to terminate the 'original form' of the Japanese alliance, but he had no intention of abandoning it altogether.⁹²⁰

On his arrival in Washington, Balfour sent Lloyd George the draft agreement. Although he had modified some of the wording of clause II and items (b) and (e), the

⁹¹⁹ Ibid.

⁹²⁰ Lowe and Dockrill, The Mirage of Power Vol. II, p. 302.

draft remained unchanged in substance. He attached a detailed explanation of the objectives of his draft to his telegram to Lloyd George. First, he realised that ‘adherence to the Alliance in its present form’ was unpopular in America and that this would make it extremely difficult to conclude a satisfactory arrangement on arms limitation. However, Japan was ‘an ally who has loyally stood by his engagements and rendered us valuable support in the late war’, and Britain should therefore not alienate her. Balfour also argued that although the threats of Russia and Germany had disappeared for the time being, it would not be prudent to assume that this peaceful situation would continue forever. Finally, Britain had to give the utmost weight to the desire of Australia and New Zealand to maintain the Anglo-Japanese alliance ‘in some shape or form’.⁹²¹ Balfour’s draft was the fruit of much labour to meet all these contradictory considerations. Although it was often judged that Canada’s opinion against the alliance was critical, Balfour did not underestimate Australasia’s hope of renewing it.⁹²² His trilateral arrangement was different to that of the Foreign Office, which was equal to a declaration or general principles of policy.

However, whether America and Japan would share Balfour’s idea of the tripartite

⁹²¹ Balfour to Lloyd George, 11 Nov. 1921, CAB 30/5/W.D.C.13.

⁹²² For the argument emphasising Canada’s role, see J. B. Brebner, ‘Canada, The Anglo-Japanese Alliance and the Washington Conference’ in Political Science Quarterly L, 1, (1935), pp. 45-46; G. A. Johnson and D.A. Lenarcic, ‘The Decade of Transition: The North Atlantic Triangle during the 1920s’ in B.J.C. McKercher and L. Aronsen, (eds.) The North Atlantic Triangle in a Changing World: Anglo-American-Canadian Relations, 1902-1956, (Toronto, 1996), p. 94.

agreement was another matter. Before the conference opened Balfour met Charles Evans Hughes, the United States Secretary of State, on 11 November 1921 to learn America's opinion. Balfour handed Hughes a copy of his draft, which, he explained, was 'unofficial and merely the result of his personal cogitations in the intervals of seasickness on the voyage'.⁹²³ Balfour described the advantages and disadvantages of the Anglo-Japanese alliance as follows:

- a. American sentiment
disadvantage – *con.*
- b. Japanese sense of dignity –
Control of Japanese action –
Sense of Security of Dominions
*pro*⁹²⁴

This indicated concisely that Anglo-American cooperation and imperial defence were not compatible under the present alliance. The aim of Balfour's tripartite arrangement was that both factors would stand together. Yet, Balfour's balanced argument did not impress Hughes, who received Balfour's draft but only commented that the use of the word 'treaty' would cause great difficulty because the United States was not in favour of

⁹²³ "Mr. Balfour's interview with Mr. Hughes on Friday, November 11th 1921", 11 Nov. 1921, CAB 30/27/S.W.1.

⁹²⁴ "Memorandum, in Outline Form, by the Secretary of State of a Conversation with Mr. Balfour, of the British Delegation, November 11, 1921", FRUS, Foreign Relations, 1922, Vol. I, p. 1.

discussing treaties with foreign countries. Although Balfour at once altered this to ‘arrangement’, it was clear that Hughes was not inclined to cooperate with Balfour. Hughes also expressed ‘considerable disquietude’ at Balfour’s request to show the draft to the Japanese delegation. Furthermore, with regard to the procedure of the conference, Hughes refused to tell Balfour about the statement that he would deliver on the opening day.⁹²⁵ Unlike Britain, America was not willing to hold a detailed preliminary discussion with Britain in order not to affect the result of the conference.

Hughes’ speech at the opening of the Washington Conference on 12 November 1921 surprised Balfour. His main point was the ratios of Britain, America and Japan’s capital ships. He advocated that the ratio of the ships of America: Britain: Japan should be 5: 5: 3.⁹²⁶ After the session Balfour discussed this with the British delegation. Given that the Navy had insisted before the Conference that Britain should accept parity with America with a margin over Japan of 3 to 2, the American proposal was not unacceptable.⁹²⁷ Receiving Lord Beatty’s concurrence with the 5: 5: 3 ratio, Balfour decided to give ‘a warm welcome in principle to American proposals’.⁹²⁸ He was able to deal with America’s sudden proposal appropriately, but Hughes’ speech on the limitation of naval

⁹²⁵ ‘Mr. Balfour’s interview with Mr. Hughes on Friday, November 11th 1921’, 11 Nov. 1921, CAB 30/27/S.W.1.

⁹²⁶ ‘Conference on the Limitation of Armament also Questions regarding the Far East and the Pacific’, 12 Nov. 1921, CAB 30/3.

⁹²⁷ Memo. by the Naval Staff, 5 Oct. 1921, CAB 4/7/277B.

⁹²⁸ Balfour to Curzon, 14 Nov. 1921, CAB 30/5/W.D.C.6.

armaments ‘somewhat overshadowed’ the question of the Pacific, namely the future of the Anglo-Japanese alliance.⁹²⁹

Balfour launched a preliminary discussion of the Anglo-Japanese alliance with the Japanese representative immediately after the opening meeting.⁹³⁰ Prince Iesato Tokugawa, the principal Japanese delegate, paid a visit to Balfour at 4 p.m. on 12 November 1921. In the course of the conversation, Balfour began to talk about the alliance. Given Hughes’ reluctance to share the draft tripartite agreement, Balfour could not ‘communicate or refer to the draft Tripartite Agreement’. Instead, he suggested that ‘it might be desirable, in present circumstances, to substitute a Tripartite Agreement while retaining the power to renew the Anglo-Japanese Alliance if circumstances should render this necessary’.⁹³¹ Prince Tokugawa agreed. Although there was no concrete discussion between them, Balfour thought that he could inform Japan of the general line of his draft and concluded that ‘[t]he results, though not definite, are not unsatisfactory’.⁹³² While America’s uncooperative attitude restricted his negotiations with Japan, Balfour still tried to keep the military clause to revive the bilateral alliance in the tripartite agreement.

⁹²⁹ Balfour to Lloyd George, 14 Nov. 1921, CAB 30/5/W.D.C.14.

⁹³⁰ For more on Japan’s attitude towards the Anglo-Japanese alliance and the Washington Conference, see S. Asada, ‘Japan’s “Special Interests” and the Washington Conference’ in American Historical Review LXVII, 1, (1961), pp. 62-70.

⁹³¹ ‘Mr. Balfour’s interview with Prince Tokugawa on 12th 1921’, 12 Nov. 1921, CAB 30/27/S.W.2.

⁹³² Balfour to Lloyd George, 14 Nov. 1921, CAB 30/5/W.D.C.14.

Not showing the draft of the tripartite agreement to Japan, however, later caused Japan to suspect Anglo-American collusion. During the visit to the State Department, Sadao Saburi, the Counsellor of the Japanese Embassy, knew that Britain had shown her draft to America. Kijuro Shidehara, who served as the Japanese Ambassador in Washington, decided to confirm Britain's intentions. He was sick in bed, so he ordered Saburi to see Balfour on his behalf. According to Shidehara's account, although Balfour told Saburi that he had already talked about the trilateral arrangement and sent the draft to Prince Tokugawa, it was revealed that Hankey happened to have forgotten to despatch the draft to the Japanese delegate.⁹³³ In fact, as mentioned above, Balfour and Hankey had not delivered the draft to Prince Tokugawa intentionally because they realised that America did not want to notify the Japanese of the draft. Moreover, it was not Balfour but Hankey who had had a conversation with Saburi. Balfour authorised Hankey to respond to Saburi and gave him general directions as to the discussion with Saburi, but did not meet Saburi himself.⁹³⁴

In his conversation with Saburi on 18 November 1921 Hankey repeated Balfour's idea of a tripartite agreement. First, Saburi read Shidehara's statement on Japan's attitude to the effect that, while Japan desired the renewal of the alliance, she was also

⁹³³ K. Shidehara, Gaikou Gojunen (Fifty Years Diplomacy) (Tokyo, 2007), pp. 62-64. Professor Nish's description was based on Shidehara's account. See Nish, Alliance in Decline, p. 371.

⁹³⁴ "Conversation between Sir M. Hankey and M. Saburi", 18 Nov. 1921, CAB 30/27/S.W.3.

ready to accept its extension to an Anglo-American-Japanese tripartite agreement.

Hankey replied '[i]n accordance with the general instructions' that Balfour had given him. Although Britain regarded the Japanese alliance as 'an historic fact of great importance', its original grounds had been lost with the removal of Russia and Germany from the Far East. The replacement of the alliance with the trilateral arrangement was desirable, but it was impossible to assume that Russia and Germany would not reappear in some form as Pacific powers. Thus, Hankey concluded, it seemed worth considering whether the tripartite agreement ought to include 'some formula which would retain the power of re-constituting the Alliance in case the old circumstances should recur'.⁹³⁵

Saburi was satisfied with this. The next step was a meeting between Balfour and Shidehara, who was charged with political and diplomatic business at the Washington conference.⁹³⁶

Shidehara, however, had not recovered from his illness and Balfour could not meet him. Eventually, on 23 November 1921, Tomosaburo Kato, Minister for the Navy, who led on arms limitation, called on Balfour to discuss the alliance. Recalling the circumstances in which it had been concluded and indicating its advantages, Balfour

⁹³⁵ Ibid.

⁹³⁶ Although being appointed as the principal Japanese delegate, Prince Tokugawa was just 'a figurehead' with responsibility of attending the ceremony; 'Conversation between Sir M. Hankey and M. Saburi', 18 Nov. 1921, CAB 30/27/S.W.3.

frankly stated that:

The collapse of Russia and the disappearance of Germany from the Pacific had altered the conditions to meet which the Alliance had been formed. I pointed out, however, that no one could venture to say that these conditions would never recur, and my own view therefore was that we should retain the power, within the terms of a tripartite arrangement, to renew the Alliance if and when circumstances should demand, subject, in the event of such renewal, to full communication of its terms to the United States of America, and to the provisions of article 18 of the Covenant of the League of Nations.⁹³⁷

Then Balfour finally handed his draft agreement to the Japanese delegate, emphasising that it was personal and confidential. Balfour thought that Kato seemed satisfied with the draft, and Prince Tokugawa later expressed his satisfaction to Hankey.⁹³⁸

Although Kato and Tokugawa shared Balfour's view, Shidehara's reaction was different. On receiving Balfour's draft, Shidehara realised that it was, 'in short, an Anglo-American-Japanese military alliance' and feared that America would never accept such an alliance.⁹³⁹ In fact, though Hughes had already obtained Balfour's draft, America did not respond to it at all. According to Shidehara, the Japanese government had told him that if the participating nations at the Washington conference wanted to amend some clauses of the Anglo-Japanese alliance or change its form, he could

⁹³⁷ Balfour to Lloyd George, 24 Nov. 1921, CAB 30/5/W.D.C.47.

⁹³⁸ Ibid.

⁹³⁹ Shidehara, Gaikou Gojunen, p. 64.

approve this. In addition, even if they wanted to abrogate the alliance this would not be disadvantageous to Japan.⁹⁴⁰ Therefore, Shidehara decided to revise Balfour's draft to enable America to accept it. Shidehara's revised draft suggested 'a consultative pact', which stipulated that countries of that agreement would consult each other in the event of serious crises. Shidehara expected that America, which abhorred a binding alliance, would accept such a loose arrangement.⁹⁴¹ Saburi later told Hankey that he attached more importance 'to the agreement being tripartite, than to what it actually contained'.⁹⁴² For Shidehara, cooperation with America was more important than the existence of the Anglo-Japanese alliance.

Shidehara's draft was delivered to Balfour on 26 November 1921. Balfour corrected some of its words because 'it was first shown to me informally'.⁹⁴³ As a result, the draft ran as follows:

I.

In regard to the territorial rights of the High Contracting Parties in the Pacific Ocean and the Far East, it is agreed that if these are threatened by the aggressive action of any third Power, the High Contracting Parties shall communicate with one another fully and frankly, in order to arrive at an understanding as to the most

⁹⁴⁰ Ibid.; I.H. Nish, 'Japan and the Ending of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance' in K. Bourne and D.C. Watt, (eds.) Studies in International History, pp. 380-381.

⁹⁴¹ Shidehara, Gaikou Gojunen, pp. 64-65.

⁹⁴² "Note of a Conversation between Mr. Balfour and M. Saburi, 26th November, 1921", 26 Nov. 1921, CAB 30/27/S.W.5.

⁹⁴³ Balfour to Lloyd George, 28 Nov. 1921, CAB 30/5/W.D.C.38.

efficient measures to be taken, jointly or separately, to meet the exigencies of the particular situation.

II.

The High Contracting Parties further engage to respect these rights as between themselves and if there should develop between any two of them, controversies on any matter in the aforementioned regions which are likely to affect the relations of harmonious accord now happily subsisting between them, they agree to invite the Other Contracting Party to a joint conference, to which the whole subject matter will be referred for consideration and adjustment.

III.

The present Agreement shall supersede the Agreement of Alliance hitherto in force between Japan and Great Britain.⁹⁴⁴

Shidehara's draft, with Balfour's corrections, was then brought to Hughes on that same day. Shidehara wrote in his autobiography that Balfour praised his draft and withdrew his own. Then Balfour asked Saburi to hand Shidehara's draft to Hughes as 'a proposal which Balfour approved'.⁹⁴⁵ However, according to Hankey's notes, just before the meeting with Hughes, Saburi asked Balfour if he could show Hughes a copy of Shidehara's draft with Balfour's corrections. Balfour gave his permission on the understanding that Saburi would explain to Hughes that Balfour 'had only had the draft before him a very short time and that these were only some rough suggestions'. After

⁹⁴⁴ "Baron Shidehara's Tentative Draft on An Outline of A Tripartite Arrangement among Japan, The British Empire and The United States of America. As Amended by Mr. Balfour", CAB 30/27/S.W.6.

⁹⁴⁵ Shidehara, Gaikou Gojunen, p. 65; Professor Nish followed Shidehara's account. See Nish, Alliance in Decline, pp. 372-373.

sending Shidehara's draft to Hughes, Saburi called on Hankey at 5.30 p.m. and confirmed that he had carefully explained to Hughes 'the circumstances in which Mr. Balfour had made these corrections'.⁹⁴⁶ This episode demonstrated that, unlike Shidehara's account, Balfour was cautious about Shidehara's plan and did not support it fully; at least, it was unlikely that Balfour had decided to withdraw his draft at once after checking Shidehara's. At this stage, it became clear that Balfour favoured the tripartite agreement with the military clause more than Shidehara. This was the collapse of Balfour's assumption that Japan wanted to retain the alliance and accept Balfour's tripartite agreement draft.

The important factor was America's reaction. Senator Henry Lodge and Elihu Root, former United States Secretary of State, visited Balfour on 26 November 1921. They discussed the question of the alliance with him at length. Balfour 'took advantage of this opportunity' to hand them a copy of Shidehara's revised draft.⁹⁴⁷ Lodge and Root were so satisfied with it that they preferred it to their own draft, which they showed to Balfour.⁹⁴⁸ Moreover, Hughes also called on Balfour and had a long conversation with him on 28 November. With regard to the Japanese alliance, Hughes, 'like Senator Lodge

⁹⁴⁶ "Note of a Conversation between Mr. Balfour and M. Saburi, 26th November, 1921", 26 Nov. 1921, CAB 30/27/S.W.5.

⁹⁴⁷ Balfour to Lloyd George, 29 Nov. 1921, CAB 30/5/W.D.C.62.

⁹⁴⁸ "Note of a Conversation between Mr. Balfour and Senator Lodge and Mr. Root on Saturday, November 26th at 5 p.m.", CAB 30/27/S.W.6.

and Mr. Root', expressed his satisfaction with Shidehara's draft. Indeed, Hughes was 'particularly anxious' to replace the Anglo-Japanese alliance with Shidehara's tripartite arrangement 'at the earliest possible moment'⁹⁴⁹ Unlike Balfour, the American politicians had no hesitation in accepting Shidehara's idea. Balfour was now the only delegate attempting to retain the military clause in the tripartite agreement.

Following his conversation with American politicians, Balfour wrote to Curzon on this matter. He explained that Shidehara's draft omitted 'all reference to articles in my draft providing for possible renewal of the alliance', and added '[t]his we regard as very satisfactory'.⁹⁵⁰ It was not clear what made Balfour give up the idea of reviving the Anglo-Japanese alliance. He may have realised that as long as America and Japan agreed to leave out the military clauses, Britain could no longer push her opinion through alone. Furthermore, Shidehara's consultative pact was compatible with the nature of the tripartite agreement which the Foreign Office had proposed just before the Washington conference.⁹⁵¹ It was not surprising that Balfour, who was a practical statesman, advocated accepting Shidehara's draft as the second best option.

America's approval of Shidehara's draft was not unconditional, however. At the

⁹⁴⁹ "Note of a Conversation between Mr. Balfour and Mr. Hughes on Monday, 28th November, 1921 At 3.0 p.m.", 28 Nov. 1921, CAB 30/27/S.W.7.

⁹⁵⁰ Balfour to Curzon, 28 Nov. 1921, CAB 30/5/W.D.C.38.

⁹⁵¹ "Foreign Office Memorandum respecting a Tripartite Agreement", 22 Oct. 1921, DBFP XIV, No. 405.

meeting with Balfour, Hughes insisted that the tripartite agreement should include France. Hughes frankly admitted that some people in the United States were hostile to Britain and the Senate could not ignore this anti-British feeling in the public. It would be easier for the Senate to ratify a four-power agreement including France than any arrangement confined to the British Empire and Japan. Although he understood Japan's concern about 'any further dilution of the tripartite arrangement', Hughes was optimistic that she would agree with this extension if the choice of the new member was confined to France.⁹⁵²

Balfour was not in favour of extending the tripartite agreement to France for two reasons. First, he worried that, if France joined it, the Netherlands and Italy might also demand accession. Hughes replied that the four-power treaty could be confined to powers that were both concerned about the limitation of naval armaments and had territory in the Pacific. The Netherlands was not subject to the naval disarmament and Italy had no territory in the Pacific. Therefore, Hughes concluded, their exclusion from the quadruple arrangement could be justified. But Balfour was not convinced by Hughes argument.⁹⁵³ Second, Balfour also assumed that Japan's opposition to including France was stronger than Hughes expected. After submitting Shidehara's draft to Hughes,

⁹⁵² "Note of a Conversation between Mr. Balfour and Mr. Hughes on Monday, 28th November, 1921 At 3.0 p.m.", 28 Nov. 1921, CAB 30/27/S.W.7.

⁹⁵³ Balfour to Lloyd George, 29 Nov. 1921, CAB 30/5/W.D.C.62.

Saburi met Hankey and told him privately that Japan was anxious ‘to avoid the association of other Powers’ in the trilateral arrangement.⁹⁵⁴ As a result, Balfour believed that the Japanese delegation would regard France joining as an excessive and unacceptable dilution of the agreement.⁹⁵⁵

However, it was impossible for Balfour to resist the extension of the tripartite agreement. Britain could not confront America on securing the trilateral arrangement. As Balfour had forecast, Italy required membership of the tripartite agreement, if France joined it. Replying to Marquis Visconti Venosta, Secretary-General to the Italian delegation, Hankey described Britain’s dilemma between the Anglo-Japanese alliance and cooperation with America:

I recalled that we and Japan were quite satisfied with our alliance. But it was not popular in America and in our intense desire to be friends with America, with whom we had ties of language and common origin, and in the interests of the great issues at stake in this Conference, we had come to the conclusion that if necessary we must extend the arrangement.⁹⁵⁶

Noting the informal nature of Hankey’s conversation with Venosta, Balfour reported it to the Cabinet. Not concealing his dissatisfaction with the admission of France and Italy,

⁹⁵⁴ “Note of a Conversation between Mr. Balfour and M. Saburi, 26th November, 1921”, 26 Nov. 1921, CAB 30/27/S.W.5.

⁹⁵⁵ Balfour to Lloyd George, 29 Nov. 1921, CAB 30/5/W.D.C.62.

⁹⁵⁶ “Italy and the Proposed Pacific Agreement”, 4 Dec. 1921, CAB 30/27/S.W.12.

Balfour argued that ‘the more powers are included the less satisfactory a substitute to alliance will any arrangement become’.⁹⁵⁷ The British Cabinet agreed that the inclusion of Italy would so dilute the tripartite arrangement as to make it unsatisfactory to Japan, but concluded that although it would diminish the value of the trilateral agreement, admitting France was ‘tolerable’ to secure ‘the adhesion of America’.⁹⁵⁸ This highlighted how Britain’s acknowledgement of France’s membership was a concession to America.⁹⁵⁹

In addition, it was important that, contrary to Balfour’s concern, Japan accepted this extension of the tripartite agreement to France. Balfour was worried about Japan’s view of France’s participation and sent Hankey to sound out Saburi.⁹⁶⁰ Following the conversation with Japanese delegation, Balfour had the impression that their reaction to the American proposal of the four-power treaty was ‘very favourable’.⁹⁶¹ His judgment was correct. On 2 December he met Hughes and Kato to discuss naval disarmament and the fate of the Anglo-Japanese alliance. At the meeting Hughes asked Kato whether Japan would approve the quadruple agreement. Although Kato was without official

⁹⁵⁷ Balfour to Curzon, 5 Dec. 1921, CAB 30/5/W.D.C.43.

⁹⁵⁸ Curzon to Balfour, 7 Dec. 1921, CAB 30/5/W.D.C.50.

⁹⁵⁹ Professor O’Brien argued that Britain’s concession was not aimed at the United States. Instead, she made this concession to France in order to ‘assuage French pride’. However, he did not show any evidence. See P.P. O’Brien, ‘Britain and the end of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance’ in P.P. O’Brien, (ed.) The Anglo-Japanese Alliance, 1902-1922 (London, 2004), p. 281.

⁹⁶⁰ Balfour to Lloyd George, 29 Nov. 1921, CAB 30/5/W.D.C.62.

⁹⁶¹ Balfour to Lloyd George, 2 Dec. 1921, CAB 30/5/W.D.C.71.

instructions, he replied that the Japanese delegation in Washington accepted France's participation in the tripartite agreement.⁹⁶² In the end, the Japanese government agreed to the extension of the tripartite arrangement.⁹⁶³ Balfour again faced US-Japanese collaboration in opposition to his idea. He no longer used Japan's dissatisfaction for the purpose of opposing the quadruple arrangement

After Japan acceded to the now quadruple agreement, Balfour began discussing its terms with the delegations of America, Japan and France. Hughes had prepared a draft of its clauses founded on Shidehara's draft of the tripartite arrangement, to which Balfour made some corrections. Of its four clauses, he paid most attention to article IV, which stipulated that upon conclusion of the new agreement the 1911 Anglo-Japanese alliance 'shall terminate'.⁹⁶⁴ He regarded it as 'ingenious' and considered that it placed on the Senate the 'onus of approving this new arrangement' if they wanted to terminate the alliance.⁹⁶⁵ The important question was what would happen if the Senate did not approve the four-power treaty. Given the fact that it had refused to ratify the Treaty of Versailles just two years earlier, this eventuality was not out of the question. Balfour's answer was that if the Senate rejected the quadruple agreement, 'the Anglo-Japanese

⁹⁶² Balfour to Curzon, 3 Dec. 1921, CAB 30/5/W.D.C.37.

⁹⁶³ Balfour to Curzon, 7 Dec. 1921, CAB 30/5/W.D.C.52.

⁹⁶⁴ Balfour to Lloyd George, 9 Dec. 1921, CAB 30/6/W.D.C.96.

⁹⁶⁵ Balfour to Curzon, 7 Dec. 1921, CAB 30/5/W.D.C.52.

Treaty would continue'.⁹⁶⁶ Balfour still considered that there was a possibility of renewing the Anglo-Japanese alliance if America overturned the result of the Washington Conference. He retained his favourable attitude to the renewal of the alliance even to the end of the negotiations.

The fourth plenary session of the conference, held on 10 December 1921, was the final stage of discussions on the four-power treaty. Hughes served as chairman at this session and Senator Lodge presented the clauses of the quadruple agreement. Neither Britain, America, Japan nor France raised any objections. As the British representative, Balfour made a speech about British policy on the four-power treaty and the Anglo-Japanese alliance. He began by referring to clause IV and insisting that the Anglo-Japanese alliance would be terminated with the ratification of the quadruple agreement. He then pointed out the unpopularity of the alliance in America. As one of 'the original framers of the treaty between Japan and Great Britain', he was surprised at the change in American opinion, which had originally been favourable to the alliance. Given the disappearance of the Russian and German threats, it was no longer possible to justify it in its original form. It was not 'a treaty that had to be renewed'.⁹⁶⁷

Balfour nonetheless emphasised the fact that the alliance had lasted for nearly

⁹⁶⁶ "Eleventh Conference of British Empire Delegation", 7 Dec. 1921, CAB 30/1A/B.E.D.58.

⁹⁶⁷ "The fourth plenary session of the Conference", 10 Dec. 1921, CAB 30/3.

twenty years and survived two major wars:

When two nations have been united in that fiery ordeal, they cannot at the end of it take off their hats one to the other and politely part as two strangers part who travel together for a few hours in a railway train. Something more, something closer, unites them than the mere words of the treaty, ...⁹⁶⁸

Britain now faced a dilemma: retention of the alliance would cause misunderstandings with America, but dropping it would do the same with Japan. The only possible solution was that 'we should annul, merge, destroy, as it were, this ancient and outworn and unnecessary agreement, and to replace it by something new, something effective, which should embrace all the Powers concerned in the vast area of the Pacific'.⁹⁶⁹ This was a balanced argument that took both America and Japan into consideration. Balfour concluded his speech by expressing his satisfaction at the four-power treaty replacing the alliance.

In fact, Balfour was never enthusiastic about the four-power treaty. Even after the session, Italy did not abandon her hope of joining the quadruple agreement. On 27 December 1921, Signor Schanzer, a member of the Italian delegation, visited Balfour and insisted that Italy should be included despite the fact that she had no territory in the

⁹⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁹⁶⁹ Ibid.

Pacific. Balfour gave a negative reply:

I replied generally in the sense suggested observing also that the four power treaty was not treaty between four principal allied and associated powers as such, but merely between four of them which happened to have territorial possessions in the Pacific. I said confidentially that I had regretted decision to include France, but that France was in much the same position as the other three, being both a great naval power and having territorial possessions.⁹⁷⁰

To Balfour's mind the four-power treaty was not an alliance but a general declaration of policy. His negative attitude towards France's participation had not changed. Already the inclusion of France weakened the quadruple arrangement as a substitute for the Anglo-Japanese alliance and it was thus impossible for him to approve the inclusion of yet further powers.

Balfour resisted America's bid to dilute the four-power treaty further. Originally Hughes had insisted that the quadruple agreement was confined to powers that were both concerned about the limitation of naval armaments and had territory in the Pacific. This justified the exclusion of Italy and the Netherlands from the quadruple arrangement. However, when he visited Balfour on 3 January 1922, he withdrew this objection and suggested to Balfour that Italy should join the four-power treaty. Reminding Hughes

⁹⁷⁰ Balfour to Lloyd George, 31 Dec. 1921. CAB 30/6/W.D.C.115.

that the original form of the quadruple agreement was tripartite, Balfour insisted that:

it was with great reluctance that I had seen France included in it, although that country, unlike Italy, had large insular interests in the Pacific Ocean. Every new Power added to the signatories of the Treaty decreased its value from the Japanese point of view, and increased the difficulty of practically working it. Three powers could arrange difficult controversies more quickly than four; four Powers could arrange difficult controversies more quickly than five; and evidently if Italy were included we could not stop there.⁹⁷¹

This was the reminiscent of his argument that 'the more powers are included the less satisfactory a substitute to alliance will any arrangement become' before the fourth plenary session.⁹⁷² Although defending the four-power treaty from further dilution, Balfour still preferred the effectiveness of the tripartite agreement.

On 6 February 1922, the Washington Conference disbanded following some other achievements, for example the Naval Disarmament Treaty and the Nine-Power Treaty on China. The last remaining problem was the ratification of the four-power treaty. Although cautious about the changeable mood of the Senate, Balfour had the impression that it would pass the four-power treaty.⁹⁷³ Indeed, the Senate approved the ratification more smoothly than expected. Unexpectedly, it took more than a year for France to

⁹⁷¹ "Memorandum of a Conversation between Mr. Balfour and Mr. Hughes on Tuesday afternoon, January 3rd, 1922, at 2.30 p.m." 4 Jan. 1922, CAB 30/27/S.W.29.

⁹⁷² Balfour to Curzon, 5 Dec. 1921, CAB 30/5/W.D.C.43.

⁹⁷³ Balfour to Carnegie, 17 Feb. 1922, Balfour MSS, Add. MSS. 49742.

ratify it because she was dissatisfied with the naval disarmament.⁹⁷⁴ Eventually the four-power treaty came into effect on 17 August 1923. This day also represented the official termination of the Anglo-Japanese alliance.

IV

Balfour took part in three conferences after the Great War and played an important role in the termination of the Anglo-Japanese alliance. At the Paris Peace Conference, he dealt with three significant issues relating to Japan. The Shantung question required him to manage Anglo-American-Japanese relations. He tried to utilise the League of Nations' mandates system in the Middle East and the Pacific for the defence of India and the Dominions. The racial equality clause threatened relations between Japan and America and the Dominions, so Balfour made every effort to get Japan to withdraw it without compromising her honour. This demonstrated that he tackled these matters from the viewpoint of not only Anglo-Japanese relations but also Anglo-American cooperation and imperial defence.

At the 1921 Imperial Conference in London Balfour had to tackle the issue of the

⁹⁷⁴ Nish, Alliance in Decline, pp. 385-386.

Anglo-Japanese alliance. Its future was so important that it had already been discussed before the conference opened. Balfour, who was informed by Curzon and Hardinge about the discussion in the Foreign Office, served as Chairman of the CID and investigated Britain's need for a naval base in Singapore, which was a form of reinsurance in the event of the collapse of the alliance. Irrespective of the existence of the alliance, Balfour saw the Singapore base as essential to the defence of British interests in India and Australasia. The renewal of the alliance would prevent Japan's outright hostility against Britain and buy time to construct the Singapore naval base under financial stringency. In addition, as British delegate to the League of Nations, Balfour considered that it would not be difficult to adapt the alliance to the League's Covenant. Arguing that America's accession to the alliance was desirable, Balfour concluded that Britain should renew the alliance in some shape.

Finally, at the Washington Conference Balfour advocated an Anglo-American-Japanese tripartite agreement without precluding the renewal of a bilateral defensive alliance. To maintain favourable relations with America, she should be included in the Anglo-Japanese alliance. On the other hand, the military clause should be preserved to avert Japan's public hostility and defend the Dominions. This was Balfour's attempt to preserve the core of the alliance in a new trilateral agreement

to achieve both Anglo-American cooperation and imperial defence simultaneously. In this, however, he did not succeed. Although unenthusiastic about the quadruple arrangement he had no choice but to accept it because neither America nor Japan wanted to see the Japanese alliance renewed. Even before the Washington Conference, the Foreign Office had suggested to Balfour that he accept a tripartite arrangement without military clauses. Therefore, the four-power treaty was acceptable to Balfour and not unexpected. However, it was not what he had aimed for and the Anglo-Japanese alliance, which he had tried to preserve in some form, disappeared completely.

Conclusion

The period from 1894 to 1923 saw unprecedented changes in international politics.

Three significant wars began within this thirty-year period: the Sino-Japanese War of 1894-1895, the Russo-Japanese War of 1904-1905 and the Great War of 1914-1918. Not only the Far East but also the rest of the world was influenced by the fundamental changes caused by these wars. The existing international order became unstable and finally collapsed without a new order to take its place. As a global empire, Britain was affected more seriously by instability in different parts of the world than any other power. Faced with intensifying rivalry among the great powers, many British policy-makers sought a suitable ally for the defence of the British Empire. After considering various candidates, Britain signed an alliance with Japan in 1902. The Anglo-Japanese alliance was an essential element of British foreign policy until its termination in 1923.

Arthur Balfour played a crucial role in British policy regarding the Anglo-Japanese alliance. He dealt with the signing of the alliance as First Lord of the Treasury and Leader of the House of Commons, and as Prime Minister at the time of the

Russo-Japanese War, he carried out its revision and renewal in 1905. He tackled the problem of Japanese naval and military assistance to Britain and the Siberian intervention as Foreign Secretary during the Great War, and coped with the end of the alliance as head of the British delegation to the Washington Conference. He was the only British statesman involved in all of these three important turning points in the alliance.

However, although Balfour played a significant role in the Anglo-Japanese alliance from its signing to termination, there are three gaps in the historiography of Balfour and the alliance. The first gap is related to Balfour and the Anglo-Japanese alliance of 1905; while he was not willing to support its conclusion, it is not clear why he changed his lukewarm attitude and took the initiative in revising it in 1905. The second gap, relating to Balfour and the Great War, is that there are no details of Balfour's thinking and policy regarding Japan's assistance and the Siberian intervention which had an influence on the alliance. The third gap is on Balfour and the Washington Conference; it is necessary to reinvestigate how he negotiated with his counterparts of other powers and why he accepted the termination of the alliance at the Washington Conference. Each chapter of this thesis intends to fill these three gaps one after another by analysing private papers, official documents, academic books and articles relating to Balfour and the

Anglo-Japanese alliance.

Balfour's policy on the Anglo-Japanese alliance revolved around two vital principles, namely imperial defence and Anglo-American cooperation. First of all, it was necessary to investigate his attitude towards the alliance in the context of imperial defence which was not restricted into the Far East. As a founder of the CID, Balfour had a strong interest in defending the whole of the British Empire. To him, British interests in the Far East were not vital to the Empire and their value was relative to other British interests around the globe. This did not mean that he was lukewarm about defending Britain's interests in China. Indeed, facing Russia's increasing pressure he approved the lease of Wei-hai-Wei and opposed withdrawing from northern China.⁹⁷⁵ But Balfour was also ready to use British interests in China as a bargaining chip in negotiations with other great powers, including Japan. During the Great War, he considered that Britain should not hesitate to offer her interests in China as the price for further Japanese naval and military assistance.⁹⁷⁶ Although the Anglo-Japanese alliance was originally a regional agreement that applied only to the Far East, Balfour did not judge its value only on its usefulness in defending British interests in the Far East.

The defence of India and Australasia was much more important to Balfour. India

⁹⁷⁵ Balfour to Chamberlain, 10 Aug. 1900, Balfour MSS, Add. MSS. 49773.

⁹⁷⁶ Balfour to Greene, 13 Feb. 1917, FO 371/2693/263898.

was the pivot of the British Empire, and unlike China, it was impossible for him to employ Britain's interests in India as a bargaining chip. He emphasised the need to defend India from all actual and potential threats. Unless the Anglo-Japanese alliance was useful in the defence of India, Balfour could not support it, even though it would protect Britain's interests in the Far East. Therefore, he was in favour of an Anglo-German alliance, which he thought could deter Russia from invading India.⁹⁷⁷ After the Japanese alliance was signed, he remained sceptical about its value. Indeed, not being shaken by the opposition within the Cabinet, he decided to maintain strict neutrality in the Russo-Japanese War even though Japan might be defeated by Russia. This was because he expected that Russia's attention and resources would be fixed to the Far East during and after the war, and as a result her threat to India would be weakening.⁹⁷⁸ This reflected that the defence of India was given priority over the defence of Britain's interests in the Far East in Balfour's mind.

The change of Balfour's lukewarm attitude towards the Anglo-Japanese alliance should be considered in the context of the defence of India. It was Foreign Secretary Lansdowne that proposed to strengthen the relations with Japan by renewing the

⁹⁷⁷ Balfour to Lansdowne, 12 Dec. 1901, Balfour MSS, Add. MSS. 49727.

⁹⁷⁸ Memo. by Balfour, 29 Dec. 1903, CAB 37/67/97.

alliance after Japan's unexpected victory over Russia.⁹⁷⁹ On the contrary, although Japan's position would become strong in the Far East, Balfour did not support the simple renewal of the alliance.⁹⁸⁰ The reason why he took the initiative in revising the alliance was the necessity for dealing with the deterioration of Anglo-Afghan relations caused by the defeat of Russia. The value of Japanese military assistance for the Indian frontier increased under this situation, so Balfour was enthusiastic about the extension of the Anglo-Japanese alliance into India.⁹⁸¹ Therefore, it is difficult to accept Jason Tomes' argument that Balfour wanted to renew the alliance to strengthen Japan's position and counter Germany's attempt to intervene in the Far East after the Russo-Japanese War.⁹⁸² Balfour came to regard Japan as the more significant factor not because she won the war against Russia but because the Anglo-Japanese alliance became useful for the defence of India. The careful consideration of Balfour and imperial defence has filled the first gap on Balfour and the Anglo-Japanese alliance of 1905.

However, the military cooperation with Japan was never easy to carry out. The defence of Australia and New Zealand became important with the rise of Japan's power

⁹⁷⁹ Lansdowne to Balfour, 16 Jan. 1905, Balfour MSS, Add. MSS. 49729.

⁹⁸⁰ Balfour to the King, 16 May 1905, CAB 41/30/18.

⁹⁸¹ Balfour to the King, 23 Mar. 1905, CAB 41/30/11.

⁹⁸² J. Tomes, Balfour and Foreign Policy: The International Thoughts of a Conservative Statesman (Cambridge, 1997), pp. 124-125.

in Asia after the Russo-Japanese War. Moreover, the Government of India raised doubts about the utility of the Japanese military help. Balfour realised that London no longer ignored their opinions on Japan when it discussed its own policy towards the Anglo-Japanese alliance. As her naval and military assistance was increasingly valuable to the Allies, Japan became too crucial to be ignored in Balfour's policy during the Great War. Just before asking Japan to dispatch more naval vessels to Europe in 1917, he consulted the governments of Australia and New Zealand and secured their consent to guarantee Japan the right to Shantung and the Pacific Islands.⁹⁸³ With regard to Japanese military assistance, although Balfour considered it desirable for Britain to use Japanese troops on the Mesopotamia front in the Great War, he had to abandon this idea due to the strong opposition of the India Office and the Government of India, which were wary of Japan's growing influence on India.⁹⁸⁴ The detailed research on Balfour and Japanese assistance during the Great War not only helped to fill the part of second gap regarding Balfour and the Great War but also shed the light on a paradox that previous historians have missed: Balfour came to support the Anglo-Japanese alliance because its military aid would contribute to the imperial defence. But the very existence of the British Empire made it difficult to strengthen the military collaboration between

⁹⁸³ Balfour to Greene, 5 Feb. 1917, FO 371/2950/27203.

⁹⁸⁴ Memo. by Government of India, 21 Nov. 1917, CAB 25/48; Memo. by Shuckburgh, 13 Dec. 1917, CAB 25/48.

Britain and Japan.

Another significant principle was Britain's cooperation with America. Balfour was a staunch advocate of Anglo-Saxon solidarity backed by Anglo-American global naval supremacy. When he realised the need for an ally, therefore, he preferred an alliance with America to one with any of the other powers, including Japan.⁹⁸⁵ Although his attempted close collaboration with America failed due to her isolationism, he did not give up hope of extracting America from her commitment to maintaining international order. He welcomed America's proposal of an arbitration treaty with Britain in 1911, seeing it a sign of her active role in international politics.⁹⁸⁶ The League of Nations was a useful tool for Balfour to achieve Anglo-American cooperation for the purpose of keeping the Versailles settlement.⁹⁸⁷ America's isolationism was so strong that her accession to these schemes was not realised, but this demonstrated his unchangeable preference for the close Anglo-American cooperation.

Balfour's pursuit of the Anglo-American cooperation had influenced on his policy towards the Anglo-Japanese alliance since its signing. The idea of America joining the alliance was not strange to Balfour. Opposing the simple renewal of the Japanese

⁹⁸⁵ Balfour to Goschen, 26 Feb. 1898, Balfour MSS, Add. MSS. 49706.

⁹⁸⁶ Balfour, 16 Mar. 1911, Hansard: Series 5, House of Commons, vol. 22, cols. 2501-2502.

⁹⁸⁷ Memo. by Balfour, 24 May 1916, CAB 37/148/28; 'World Peace', The Times, Wednesday 12 Nov. 1919, p. 20.

alliance during the Russo-Japanese War, he argued that it was desirable that the Anglo-Japanese alliance became part of an Anglo-American agreement.⁹⁸⁸ Even after realising the value of the extended alliance, he did not abandon his hope for a trilateral arrangement. His proposal of an Anglo-American-Japanese naval agreement in 1917 was his attempt to combine the Anglo-Japanese alliance with his favoured Anglo-American defensive alliance.⁹⁸⁹ He saw such a trilateral agreement as a logical development of the Anglo-Japanese alliance.

Balfour, therefore, could not tolerate the possibility that the Anglo-Japanese alliance would wreck Anglo-American cooperation. The first revision of the Anglo-Japanese alliance in 1905 created the potential scenario in which Britain would fight America in support of Japan. Deteriorating US-Japanese relations after the Russo-Japanese War deepened concern that Britain might be dragged into a US-Japanese conflict. Although he did not believe that Japan would wage war against America over racial issues such as Japanese immigration, Balfour supported the second revision of the alliance in 1911 to ensure that Britain would never have to side with Japan in a US-Japanese war.⁹⁹⁰ While both America and Japan had joined the Allies, Balfour made every effort to maintain good relations between them. One of his main achievements at the Paris Peace

⁹⁸⁸ Balfour to Percy, 15 Jan. 1905, Balfour MSS, Add. MSS. 49747.

⁹⁸⁹ Memo. by Balfour, 22 Jun. 1917, CAB 23/3.

⁹⁹⁰ Balfour to Esher, 4 Feb. 1910, Balfour MSS, Add. MSS. 49719.

Conference was his mediation in the Anglo-American-Japanese complication over China. The growing rivalry between America and Japan required him to manage the Anglo-Japanese alliance with extreme caution.

The problem was that these two principles began to clash within the Anglo-Japanese alliance. This was appearing in the Siberian intervention, so unlike Ian Nish's insistence, the alliance was at stake in the discussion of the Siberian intervention.⁹⁹¹ Regarding the Allied intervention in Siberia as the Japanese military help, Balfour attempted to deploy Japanese troops from Eastern Siberia to the Ural Mountains. The aim of this major military campaign was not only to prevent Bolshevik Russia from taking control of Siberia but also to address the Russo-German threat to India and its adjacent regions. Balfour realised the need for America's assent to Japan joining the Allied intervention, otherwise America's suspicion of Japan would increase and Anglo-American relations would be damaged.⁹⁹² However, her indifference to the defence of India made it difficult to persuade America to accept Japan's advancement into Central Asia. While Balfour managed to secure American approval and succeeded in carrying out the Allied intervention in Siberia, this demonstrated how military collaboration with Japan, which was useful in the security for British imperial interests, threatened the relations between

⁹⁹¹ I. Nish, Alliance in Decline: A study in Anglo-Japanese relations 1908-23 (London, 1972), pp. 237-241.

⁹⁹² Memo. by Balfour, 29 May 1918, CAB 21/45.

Britain and America. This survey on the Siberian intervention has completely filled the second gap on Balfour and the Great War, revealing the difficulty in coexisting both imperial defence and Anglo-American cooperation within the Anglo-Japanese alliance.

After the Great War this dilemma became clearer and Balfour had to tackle it. As Balfour realised, Japan became a significant actor which could affect the post-war international order in the Pacific. Being suspicious about Japan's behaviour during the war and fearing the growing rivalry between America and Japan, many British foreign officials and diplomats insisted that there was no longer any necessity for renewing the Anglo-Japanese alliance. Instead, they favoured Anglo-American cooperation in the Far East. Although this was not contradictory to Balfour's Anglo-Saxon solidarity, it would not be sufficient to defend Britain's other interests around the globe, in particular India and Australasia. If the alliance were terminated, Japan might join the Russo-German collaboration and engage in hostile action against Britain.⁹⁹³ On the other hand, Balfour concluded that Britain could not rely on America for assistance in defending the Empire.⁹⁹⁴ The Singapore naval base was essential to protect India and the Dominions unilaterally, but Britain needed to maintain the *status quo* in the Pacific until its

⁹⁹³ Cabinet 43 (21), 30 May 1921, CAB 23/25.

⁹⁹⁴ Notes of 14th Meeting of the Imperial Conference, 4 Jul. 1921, CAB 32/2/E14.

completion because she could not afford to deal with the contingency.⁹⁹⁵ Balfour considered that the Anglo-Japanese alliance would serve to prevent outright hostility from Japan and keep the international situation in Asia calm. While it might damage Anglo-American cooperation, the Anglo-Japanese alliance was still useful for imperial defence. Balfour had to pursue a compromise between these contradicting factors.

Balfour's solution was to preserve the core of the Anglo-Japanese alliance in the new form of a political arrangement. Contrary to arguments advanced by Erik Goldstein, Balfour did not approve the Foreign Office's proposal that the alliance should be replaced with a declaration of general policy between Britain, America and Japan.⁹⁹⁶ Instead, he prepared his own draft of an Anglo-American-Japanese tripartite agreement, with a military clause, at the Washington Conference.⁹⁹⁷ There was a fundamental difference between Foreign Office's proposal and Balfour's draft. The Foreign Office had no intention to preserving the alliance. On the other hand, Balfour tried to keep the possibility of reviving the bilateral alliance, maintaining cooperation with America by incorporating her in the alliance. This trilateral arrangement was not different from his favourite development of the Anglo-Japanese alliance before and during the Great War.

⁹⁹⁵ Notes of 8th Meeting of the Imperial Conference, 28 Jun. 1921, CAB 32/2/E8.

⁹⁹⁶ E. Goldstein, 'The Evolution of British Diplomatic Strategy for the Washington Conference' in E. Goldstein and J. Maurer, (eds.) The Washington Conference, 1921-1922: Naval Rivalry, East Asian Stability and the Road to Pearl Harbor (London, 1994), p. 26.

⁹⁹⁷ Memo. by Balfour, Nov. 1921, Balfour MSS, Add. MSS. 49749.

However, Balfour's idea was not realised due to both American and Japanese opposition. Contrary to Balfour's calculation, Japan did not support his idea, proposing the removal of any military clauses from the trilateral arrangement.⁹⁹⁸ It was clear that Japan concluded that the cooperation with America took precedence over the maintenance of the Anglo-Japanese alliance. Approving of Japan's draft, America insisted the inclusion of France in the tripartite agreement.⁹⁹⁹ Although Balfour was not enthusiastic about America's requirement, the British government accepted France joining the arrangement in order to avoid the collision with America. As a result, Balfour's Anglo-American-Japanese agreement with the possibility in reviving the Anglo-Japanese alliance was replaced with four-power treaty among Britain, America, Japan and France without any military clauses. The nature of this quadruple arrangement was the same as that of the Foreign Office's declaration of general policy. Given the fact that Balfour was a chief British delegation, however, the four-power treaty was not, as Phillips Payson O'Brien has argued, 'extremely close to what the British delegation had hoped to achieve'.¹⁰⁰⁰ Balfour had no choice but to accept the

⁹⁹⁸ "Baron Shidehara's Tentative Draft on An Outline of A Tripartite Arrangement among Japan, The British Empire and The United States of America. As Amended by Mr. Balfour", CAB 30/27/S.W.6.

⁹⁹⁹ "Note of a Conversation between Mr. Balfour and Mr. Hughes on Monday, 28th November, 1921 At 3.0 p.m.", 28 Nov. 1921, CAB 30/27/S.W.7.

¹⁰⁰⁰ P.P. O'Brien, 'Britain and the end of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance' in P.P. O'Brien, (ed.) The Anglo-Japanese Alliance, 1902-1922 (London, 2004), p. 281.

four-power treaty, realising that Britain could no longer push through her opinion if America and Japan collaborated against her. In the end, the Anglo-Japanese alliance, which Balfour had tried to preserve in some shape, was completely terminated in 1923. The third gap on Balfour and the Washington Conference has finally been filled by reinvestigating private and official papers.

It is ironic that Balfour, who had initially opposed signing the Anglo-Japanese alliance, made every effort to retain it at its last stage. Just before his death, he said to his niece Blanche Dugdale, ‘When I look back, I think that my opinions have hardly ever changed at all about anything’.¹⁰⁰¹ But this was not applied to his policy towards the Anglo-Japanese alliance. He had not been ‘an advocate of close relations between Great Britain and Japan’ for the whole period of the Anglo-Japanese alliance.¹⁰⁰² During the Russo-Japanese War he was not sympathised with Japan, rejecting Britain’s support for her. Balfour’s negative opinion towards the alliance clearly turned into positive one just before its 1905 revision. His policy on the alliance was enough flexible to adjust to unstable international environment from 1894.

On the other hand, the principles of his policy regarding the Anglo-Japanese alliance had not changed since the end of the nineteenth century. He always saw its usefulness

¹⁰⁰¹ Dugdale, Arthur James Balfour, vol I, p. 317.

¹⁰⁰² Balfour to Lloyd George, 19 Dec. 1921, CAB 30/6/W.D.C.87.

on the basis of its links to the imperial defence and Anglo-American cooperation. His policy did not always fit rise and fall of the Anglo-Japanese alliance. Unlike Lansdowne, Balfour did not support the signing and renewing of the rising Anglo-Japanese alliance. Unlike the Foreign Office officials and diplomats, Balfour hesitated to accept the complete termination of the declining Anglo-Japanese alliance. This may appear strange from the viewpoint of the Far Eastern politics. Moreover, with the benefit of hindsight such a view might be confirmed. In the end, Balfour failed to achieve his alternative policy, for example an Anglo-American or Anglo-German alliance instead of the Anglo-Japanese alliance of 1902 and an Anglo-American-Japanese tripartite agreement with a military clause for reviving a defensive alliance, which was different from the four-power treaty without any military commitment of 1923. However, his policy on the Anglo-Japanese alliance was logical from the viewpoint of imperial defence and Anglo-American cooperation, which were valued by the statesman who had assumed responsibility for the survival of the global empire under the changing international circumstances from 1894 to 1923.

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