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STRATEGIC DISHARMONY:
JAPAN, MANCHURIA, AND FOREIGN POLICY

by

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A RESEARCH REPORT SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY
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ABSTRACT

TITLE: Strategic Disharmony: Japan, Manchuria, and Foreign Policy

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On September 18, 1931, Japanese army officers instigated an incident in Manchuria at the town of Mukden. This incident led to Japan's takeover of Manchuria, war with China, and, ultimately, war between the United States and Japan. The story of why and how Japan initiated war with the most populous nation in the world, and then the world's greatest industrial power is replete with contradictions. Japanese foreign policy was formulated through struggles between the civil government and the military establishment. The related national security strategy was developed through struggles between the army and the navy. Once involved in Manchuria, Japan attempted to build a new and allied nation. They set up a puppet government, renamed the state Manchukuo, and then conducted a decade-long counterinsurgency campaign designed to consolidate their control of the new acquisition. Again, internal Japanese struggles, this time between their civil authorities and the military leadership, ensured their failure to develop sufficient popular support to mold and hold Manchukuo.

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Colonel David G. Lucas (M.S., Chapman University) has been interested in counterinsurgency and revolutionary warfare since his service in Vietnam in 1966. His paper on Mao Tse-tung's theories, "People's War: A Model for Insurgency," written during his attendance at Air Command and Staff College, was adopted as a reading for the curriculum of Squadron Officer School. Colonel Lucas is a career security police officer. He has held several command positions, and served at MAJCOM-level and on the Air Staff. Colonel Lucas is a graduate of the Air War College, class of 1995.

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INTRODUCTION

Japan, in the 1920s, was faced with a critical decision. The government could follow the tendencies of the political parties and government leadership and opt for a policy of international cooperation, or march to the drums of the military and stick to its traditional aggressive policy. In fact, the military made the decision, and the government followed their advance along a road that led to war with China, and finally, fatally, with the United States.¹

Although the Sino-Japanese War, and the Pacific war against the United States are grander in their extent and impact, this paper is concerned with the Japanese and their actions in Manchuria. Why and how they came to conquer that land was crucial to all that came after. And, although they were overwhelmingly superior in military power, the control of Manchuria took nearly a decade to achieve. The bifurcation of Japanese strategy, between the military and civil authorities, was just as apparent in the counterinsurgency campaigns of Manchuria as it was in the development of national defense strategy for the nation as a whole.

It has been suggested that the most basic question to be addressed in reviewing any war or military action is to investigate what the conflict is about. Pointedly, Philip Crowl directs the strategist's inquiry toward

identifying the "specific national interests and policy objectives" that will be served by the military action.²

This paper applies Crowl's question to the Mukden Incident, Japan's subsequent creation of the state of Manchukuo, and the decade-long counter-insurgency campaign that ensued. The military action at Mukden will be briefly reviewed and then analyzed in several important respects. To understand the events surrounding the military confrontation at Mukden in 1931, one must first review the development of the modern Japanese state, and the way Japan involved itself on the Asian mainland and in the international community. Then, one can begin to comprehend the truly unique situation Japan faced with its civil-military relations and the development of a new approach to national defense strategy. Thus, by explaining how the two segments of Japan's government viewed national interests and objectives differently, one can better understand the occurrence of the Mukden Incident and the subsequent takeover of Manchuria.

THE MUKDEN INCIDENT

Late in the evening of September 18, 1931, a small explosion slightly damaged a section of track where the South Manchuria Railway passed through the walled city of Mukden in Manchuria. This explosion, and an alleged attack on the occupying troops of the Japanese Kwantung Army, were used as the rationale for what soon led to Japan's occupation of all of Manchuria.

The Kwantung Army was first formed as an expeditionary force to counter the Russian army in Manchuria. The pride of the Imperial Army, it was a division-sized force of approximately 10,000 troops. They had the best equipment and training available, and were charged with protecting Japanese lives and property in Manchuria. That property included the South Manchuria Railroad.³

That evening, 18 September, troops patrolling the tracks supposedly heard the explosion and were fired on by Chinese soldiers while investigating the damage (a 31-inch gap in the rail). The Japanese soldiers were quickly reinforced to a strength of approximately 500 and mounted an attack, supported by artillery, on the Chinese barracks, routing about 10,000 Chinese soldiers. During the next three days, the Kwantung Army overcame and disarmed Chinese troops in the cities and towns along the entire route of the South Manchuria Railroad. This action, according to army reports, was taken as a measure of "self-defense."⁴

In September of 1932, the League of Nations responded to Chinese requests for investigation with a Commission of Enquiry, headed by Lord Lytton (the Lytton Commission). At that time, lacking definitive proof of any premeditation by the Japanese or the Chinese, the Lytton Report merely restated the Japanese claims without commenting on their veracity. However, the report went on to cite the swiftness of the Japanese response,

the unlikely actuality of damage to the rails,⁵ and observed that the response by Japanese troops "could not be regarded as acts of legitimate self-defense."⁶

At the end of World War Two, during the Tokyo war crimes trials, the Mukden Incident was found to have been "a complete fabrication of the Japanese army—or, rather, certain members of the army, notably the 'young officer' clique of the Kwantung Army."⁷ Aside from actual testimony of those involved, several facts highlighted the army's preparation for responding to the "incident." For example, Kwantung Army planners had completely detailed their intended actions to seize Manchuria for "self-defense" should any "incident" occur, and the plans had been approved by the operations division of the general staff in Tokyo. This planning action was taken in accordance with the principal of *dokudan-senko* (ruling from below) which gave a field army complete freedom in the area of operational planning.⁸ Additionally, the two artillery pieces which supported the Japanese assault on the Chinese barracks had been shipped from Japan and positioned the week before.⁹

JAPAN EMERGES

The genesis of Japan's evolution to a modern state took place when Commodore Perry arrived in his "black ships" in 1853.¹⁰ The sudden opening of Japan to the world led a new group of Japanese leaders to begin the rapid modernization of their nation. This period is known as the "Meiji Restoration," and the date of its beginning was 1868. Taking Germany for

their major example, Japan began industrial development, universal education, and the development of a modern military.¹¹

Japan's "modern" government took shape over the next thirty years. The authors of the United States Strategic Bombing Surveys summarized the final evolution of that government by remarking that it "provided no means for civilian control of the military," and that the Japanese military tended to "make their own foreign policy in accordance with their own aims, capabilities and requirements."¹² This division of responsibility was not an accident.

By contrast, the Meiji government worked at developing an apolitical attitude in the military. The 1878 "Admonition to Soldiers" warned the military against questioning imperial policy, expressing private opinions, and criticizing the government's regulations. Also in that year, the government unfortunately formulated the "independent right of military command (IRMC)". This concept divided national security into political and military spheres and made the General Staff headquarters independent of the civilian political leadership, under the direct command of the emperor. The IRMC was intended to lead the military to focus exclusively on military affairs. Four years later, in 1882, the "Rescript to Soldiers and Sailors," required military professionals to adopt an apolitical attitude, made involvement in politics a criminal offense, and forbid military personnel from running for office or voting.¹³

The problem of an autonomous military participating in politics stemmed from the promulgation of the Constitution of the Empire of Japan of 1889. The government was divided into two entirely separate entities. The Diet was constituted of two houses whose members were either elected or appointed by the emperor. The cabinet, the predominate entity, had the executive power. All ministers of the cabinet were appointed by the emperor. The constitution did not make the cabinet responsible to the elected parliament. It was reasoned that to make the cabinet responsible to the Diet would deny the principle that the emperor ruled Japan. Additionally, Articles 11 and 12 of the constitution specified that the emperor had supreme command of the Army and Navy. This, argued the military, provided the service ministers the right of direct access to the emperor, the same right as had the Prime Minister.

To further clarify, or complicate, the issue, there were two other problems. First, the Imperial Ordinance of 1898 required the Ministers of the Army and Navy to be active duty generals and admirals. Since the formation of a cabinet required that these positions be filled, the services had effective veto power over formation, or continuation, of a cabinet and its policies.¹⁴ The second problem had to do with how the military defined politics. They narrowly defined politics (*seiji*) as limited to conflicts between regional or private interests in society. National affairs (*kokujii*), on the other hand, had to do with national security and the attainment of national

interests. Therefore, "(B)ecause national defense issues were not related to political affairs but to *kokuji*, the military could override political parties in matters relating to national defense issues."¹⁵ Thus, Japan's modern government developed with a military dominance in international and security policy areas that was unusual in other countries.

Indeed, as Japan entered the world stage at the start of the twentieth century, its foreign policy rested on a true dichotomy. The military decision making group was authoritarian, anti-democratic, and believed the security of the state lay in an aggressive foreign policy. The other group represented a pro-democratic philosophy and desired international cooperation.¹⁶ The more powerful of the two contenders was the aggressive military.

The Korean Peninsula became a starting point for Japanese expansion. As early as the 1880s, Japan's leaders had concluded that Korea was a "dagger at the heart of Japan," and no other country could be allowed to control the peninsula.¹⁷

Throughout its expansionist period, Japan's acquisitions came by way of conflict. After declaring war on China in 1894, victory brought possession of Formosa and reparations of sufficient size that Japan could enlarge both its army and navy.¹⁸ During the Boxer Rebellion of 1900, Russia sent an army into Manchuria and threatened Japan's position in Korea. This led to the conclusion of an alliance with Great Britain in 1902.

Japanese dominance in the Russo-Japanese war of 1904 was validated with the Treaty of Portsmouth in 1905. Here, Japan acquired southern Sakhalin and the Russian interests in Southern Manchuria which included the South Manchuria Railway.¹⁹ This rail network was seen by the Japanese as integral to their future expansion. It was semi-state owned, and controlled an extensive network of extractive industries including coal, mineral ores, and forests. It carried the bulk of Japan's economic programs in Manchuria.²⁰ The Japanese began the serious development of southern Manchuria and sent troops, the Kwantung Army, to protect their personnel and property from the bandits and warlords of the area. These new possessions on the mainland served as a buffer, and gave Japan further protection from the Russians in northern Manchuria and Mongolia.

Japan formally annexed Korea in 1910, and when World War I broke out in 1914, declared war on Germany in accordance with the alliance with Great Britain. Seizing the German leaseholds in China, Japan went on to take Germany's island colonies in the Pacific (the Palaus, Marianas, Carolines, and Marshalls). This expansion of the Empire gave Japan the status of a new world power.²¹

Following the end of World War I, Russia annexed Mongolia. This action alarmed the Kwantung Army planners who saw Manchuria as a prosperous source of raw materials, an outlet for the overpopulated main islands, and a buffer against the Soviet Union. Beyond those rational and

economic evaluations, the Kwantung Army saw Manchuria and Mongolia as a "holy land, consecrated by the sacrifice of 100,000 brothers who shed their blood" to capture the land for Japan.²² By 1931, the year of the Mukden Incident, the Kwantung Army was protecting a vast economic network, 200,000 Japanese, and 1,000,000 Koreans.²³

World War I was a turning point for Japan. An empire had been developed and recognized by the other world powers and now Japan became involved in international politics.

As Japan's strength and territorial acquisitions increased following World War I, the balance of power teetered between two main political parties. The *Minseito* (Peoples' Politics Party) was dominant. This party was pro-democratic and sought to advance Japan's development through international cooperation. They were opposed by the *Seiyakai* Party (Political Friends Association) who favored a more aggressive foreign policy. A majority of the young military officers supported the *Seiyakai* Party. Under *Minseito* dominance, Japan joined the League of Nations, returned some of the seized Chinese territory, began to reduce the size of the army, and sent representatives to a conference in Washington which was aimed at limiting naval warships.²⁴

In the Washington Naval Treaty of February 1922, which set limits on battleships and aircraft carriers but not cruisers and submarines, Japan agreed to a limiting ratio on capital ships of 5:5:3 between the United States,

Great Britain, and Japan. The Japanese military analysts had testified to the government that a minimum of 70 percent of Anglo-American totals should be negotiated. They believed anything less would place the Japanese home islands at the mercy of the American Navy.²⁵

Although the military was overruled in the interest of international cooperation, they found an acceptable, if chafing, alternative by building up the cruiser complement of the Japanese Navy. This began an arms race in heavy cruisers, an area not covered by the treaty.²⁶ Finally, in 1930, the London Naval Treaty renewed the previous limitations and extended the 60 percent ratio to auxiliary vessels (cruisers, destroyers and submarines) as well. The government outmaneuvered the Navy General Staff and signed the agreement over strenuous objections.

The Navy's position was that under all conceivable scenarios, from the perspective of the United States, Japan should receive a 70 percent ratio unless the United States envisioned war with the Japanese empire and therefore wanted to limit Japan's ability to respond effectively.²⁷ The Navy General Staff was so enraged that every naval officer who had supported the treaty was cashiered. Even segments of the public were alarmed and a "patriotic youth" shot Premier Yuko Hamaguchi in an attempted assassination. The relationships between the military and the civil authorities were degrading, and Japan had economic and international problems as well.

The Great Depression of the early 1930s was creating tremendous difficulties for Japan both at home and in its economic endeavors in Manchuria.²⁸ Many Japanese leaders placed their confidence in being able to tap the natural resources of Manchuria and bring Japan through the economically difficult times. However, as the military was uncomfortably aware, Manchuria was becoming more and more vulnerable.²⁹ The territory was bordered on the north by the revolutionary Soviets and the violently anti-Communist Kwantung Army was watching Soviet moves with some alarm. On the south was revolutionary, and now strongly nationalist, China.³⁰

A series of events now further complicated issues relating to Manchuria. In 1928, the Chinese began to boycott Japanese goods.³¹ Efforts to improve relations with China led, by 1930, to Japan allowing the Kuomintang flag to fly over Chinese communities in Manchuria. Chinese assertiveness grew bolder in early 1931. Chang Hsueh-liang, the Manchurian warlord, requested financial assistance from the Kuomintang government in Nanking so he could begin construction of railroads in Manchuria. This would directly compete with the South Manchurian Railroad and threaten Japan's "life-line" in Manchuria. By March, the Kuomintang had opened bureaus in all Manchurian cities. In April, the Chinese government formally announced it would reclaim all former Chinese territories and rights, including concessions, railroads and other properties.³²

In July, a Japanese captain named Nakamura was killed by troops of Chang Hsueh-liang. By late summer, the Japanese media were inciting the population with stories about the "Nakamura butchery," the tightening Chinese boycotts, and the violent anti-Korean riots in Manchuria.³³ The bonfire was built, it just needed a spark.

THE MOVE TOWARD WAR

As Japan involved itself in international affairs, its perspective on national defense changed. Remarkably, just like the division of effort and aims in the government, the military also had two views.

Following Japan's victory over Russia in 1905, the Pacific threat of the Russian fleet was eliminated. The Imperial Navy then focused its attention on the American Navy which it saw as the primary threat. However, influenced by the army and the situation in Manchuria, in 1907 the government issued an Imperial Defense Policy which declared Russia to be the principal potential enemy. Despite this, the navy continued to focus on the Americans.

The United States was enforcing an "Open Door" policy in China, and, since 1898, had occupied Hawaii, the Philippines, Guam and Wake, coming ever closer to what Japan considered home waters. In 1908, when the U. S. Navy battleships of the "Great White Fleet" visited Japan, the Imperial Navy became riveted on the United States as their contender for hegemony in

Asian waters.³⁴ While the navy planned to fight the Americans in the Pacific, the army remained focused on the Soviets and Chinese on the continent.

Despite their focus on different opponents, military leaders of both services drew the same lessons from World War I. Japan's wars of the past had been of short duration and war materials could be obtained from allies or from neutral nations. The European war was a new evolution. There might be no neutrals from whom to purchase weapons and materials, and future war might be protracted. They saw that war in the future would take more than guns; indeed, it would take the entire nation's resources.³⁵ And, in the case of Japan, a nation lacking in both industrial capacity and natural resources, the leadership saw a problem of immense proportions: a nation that could not supply its own needs in war was vulnerable.

Given that the navy and the army agreed on the necessity of obtaining access to natural resources, with their differing perspectives, they independently developed their strategies in different directions. The navy forecast a Pacific war with the United States and wanted to obtain the resources of the East Indies, Indochina, and Malaya to the south.³⁶ The army saw Manchuria as containing the necessary resources for supporting the requirements of "total war." The army acted first, in "self-defense," at Mukden.

The September 1918 Mukden Incident marked a turning point for Japan as the nation followed the military's lead in foreign policy.

Government was unable to develop and impose consistent foreign policy because of the unique division of responsibility present in its own structure.³⁷ As Akira Iriye pointedly remarks, "what stands out is the Kwantung Army's victory, not only over the Chinese army but also over the hesitant national leadership."³⁸

The Japanese military saw itself surrounded by enemies and barren of the resources necessary for conducting "total war." Given their responsibilities, as they defined them, they acted, and Japan set out on the road to war. The first task was to consolidate the new Manchurian acquisition.

From the actions at Mukden in 1931, until the attack on Pearl Harbor in 1941, Japan insinuated itself ever more deeply into China. Following anti-Japanese riots in Shanghai in 1932, Japanese troops attacked the city and defeated the Chinese there. That same year, Japan sponsored an "independence" movement in Manchuria, and on 1 March 1932 the "free" state of "Manchukuo" was proclaimed, with the former Manchu Emperor of China, Pu Yi, as the chief executive of the puppet government.³⁹ Although outwardly the new government was Chinese, in actuality all Chinese administrators had Japanese "advisors" who made the decisions. In 1934, Pu Yi was enthroned as the Emperor of Manchukuo in Changchun.⁴⁰

As the Japanese aggressively moved against the northern elements of the Nationalist Chinese Army, an incident occurred at the Marco Polo Bridge

on the outskirts of Peking which soon developed into large-scale war. Also known as the Lukouchiao Incident, it began when a Japanese unit on night maneuvers was engaged by Chinese forces on 7 July 1937.⁴¹ By August, the Japanese had penetrated the traditional barrier of the Great Wall north of Peking by breaking through the Nankou Pass. Occupying Peking on 8 August, and Nanking in December, the Japanese moved northwest to take Inner Mongolia. The Federation of Mongolia was then established and allied with Manchukuo under a Federal Committee with a Japanese "Supreme Advisor."⁴² Within a year the Japanese controlled China's major seaports and had penetrated west to Hankow. The Nationalist Government evacuated to Chungking.⁴³

In Manchukuo, in 1932, the Japanese faced a variety of problems centered on the population and on the two major organized resistance groups, the Kuomintang Nationalists and the Communists.

THE WAR IN MANCHUKUO

Manchukuo was equivalent in size to Germany and France combined, with a total population, in 1930, of about 30 million people. These people came from a multitude of origins and, although Chinese and Manchus were by far the majority, represented perhaps 30 ethnic groups including Russians, Koreans, Mongols, and numerous Western peoples.⁴⁴ Lacking industrialization, transportation, and communications networks, the population was mostly agrarian.

The interests of the small farmers were, by-and-large, centered on survival. Although the land was fertile, the climate of Manchukuo is harsh, with long, bitter winters. These farmers had little interest in the international ramifications of what was happening to their country. But, the Japanese military occupation did increase the traditional hatred of the Chinese toward the Japanese. Further complicating Japan's problems in building a new nation, was the local history of oppression under which the peasants had lived. Corruption of Chinese officials and distrust of government was ingrained. This was because "(t)raditionally, the Chinese considered that the object in becoming an official was to gain wealth."⁴⁵ Additionally, the farmers were continually abused by local war lords and their armies, high taxes, and occasional appropriation of their crops and property. Japan also faced two organized resistance groups and many bands of bandits.

Following the Japanese takeover of Manchuria in 1931, the well organized Imperial Army quickly defeated the armed formations of the Nationalist Army and the Communists. Chong-Sik Lee, citing Japanese Imperial Army documents, points out that the Kwantung Army, between the Spring of 1932 and the end of 1933, reported they had engaged more than 336,000 enemy troops. By the Summer of 1933, the insurgent, anti-Japanese forces had declined to the point that they were estimated to number approximately 70,000.⁴⁶ But, in defeating the armies of the Kuomintang and

the Communists, the Japanese were left with large numbers of, what they termed, "bandits." Unable to match the combat capabilities of the Japanese Army, the bandits turned to the tactics of guerrilla warfare. Now, the Japanese turned to counterinsurgency.

Although Japan had little experience in countering guerrilla warfare, the concepts were certainly not new. The British Army, the most experienced at colonial warfare, had produced the beginnings of a common doctrine for counterinsurgency as early as 1896 when C. E. Callwell authored Small Wars: Their Principles and Practise. Aside from aggressive action against armed units, the British focused on separating the population from the insurgents through resettlement.

In the 1890s, the British called it "reconcentration," and they would gather a population in guarded locations to deny guerrilla groups access to food and support. The Spanish also used this system in 1895 against Cuban insurgents, and the French tried it in some of their colonies. From 1900 to 1902, the British not only gathered Boer women and children in "concentration camps," but went on to systematically destroy the Boer farms, crops, and livestock. The U. S. Army used essentially similar resettlement tactics in the Philippines in 1900.⁴⁷

Another counterinsurgency tactic was to try to contain insurgents. The British made lavish use of strong points, blockhouses, and barbed wire to restrict Boer mobility. The same type of systematic approach was employed

with great success by Chiang Kai-shek and the Kuomintang Nationalist Army in the early 1930s. In trying to wipe out the Communist base areas in southern China, Chiang developed an intricate network of over 3,000 blockhouses surrounding the Communists. By 1934, in his fifth Encirclement and Extermination Campaign, success was achieved and the Communists had to surrender their base areas, setting out on what they eventually called the Long March to north China.⁴⁸

The tactic of employing indigenous personnel in military and constabulary units was another frequent device in colonial wars and insurgencies. In Russia, "divide and rule" was a traditional Tsarist strategy.⁴⁹

What was missing in many of the early counterinsurgency campaigns, and in the doctrine, was the idea of political and socio-economic measures. If the population was opposed to the incumbent regime, there were reasons. Without changes to the social and economic structure, insurgency could be suppressed but not wiped out.

Although the Japanese had long experience with the region, and had studied it intensely, they never developed a coherent counterinsurgency strategy. Instead, regional commanders employed a variety of approaches. Beginning in 1934, with the successful defeat of organized resistance by large military formations, the Japanese began to see an increased effort by the Communists to take control of the guerrilla movement in Manchukuo. In

February of that year the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party had directed a takeover of the anti-Japanese movement. The Communists quickly infiltrated the numerous groups and were soon leading the guerrilla movement throughout the entire area.

Chong-Sik Lee describes the Japanese strategy of counterinsurgency as "special techniques." The techniques used were basically in five separate categories, or mission areas: (1) paramilitary special operations, (2) separation of the population from the insurgents, (3) administrative reform and "purification" of the towns and villages, (4) reconstruction and rejuvenation of the towns and villages, and (5) propaganda and pacification.⁵⁰ These five categories are descriptive in nature, but do suggest the types of goals and tactics employed by the regional authorities. They were not sequential steps in a comprehensive program, and regular army counter-guerrilla sweeps and operations continued throughout the 1930s. For example, when guerrilla depredations increased the Japanese would employ a tactic called *sanko seisaku*, and aggressively sweep through an area to wipe out the guerrillas and remove the population providing their support. The Chinese called them "Three-All Campaigns," meaning "kill all, burn all, destroy all."⁵¹

As described above, paramilitary special operations in Manchuria employed indigenous peoples in the struggle against the insurgents, bandits, and Communists. It was a long-standing tactic in counterinsurgency

operations, and was made necessary because there were never enough Japanese soldiers to control all of the captured territory.⁵² Just as Hitler later made use of "quislings" in Norway, France, and other occupied territories, Japan used local collaborators to rule its new land and, often, to fight its battles.⁵³ Organized by the Japanese gendarmerie, the main purposes of the groups formed for special operations included:

- gathering intelligence information and performing counterintelligence functions,
- eliminating guerrillas and assassinating Communist leaders,
- infiltrating communists cells, and
- employing propaganda to further the unity of the Japanese and the local population.

The Japanese found Korean immigrants to be particularly useful in this role. They had suffered greatly under harsh Chinese authorities and from ethnic hatred. The success of these types of operations was exemplified by activities in Chientao Province. During a period of twenty months from the Fall of 1934 to the Summer of 1936, the Chientao Cooperation and Assistance Society convinced more than 2,200 insurgents to surrender, and arrested over 3,200 bandits.⁵⁴

The surrender of insurgents and bandits was particularly useful to the Kwantung Army. Inducement to surrender included promises of good

treatment, and often rewards. The promises were kept to insure the submission operations would remain successful. Often, the surrendered bandits could be persuaded to take an active role in combating their former comrades, planning, or even leading, counter-guerrilla raids and ambushes.⁵⁵

Another benefit of using indigenous groups was the dissension they created within the communist ranks. Because of their infiltration into the guerrillas, the Communists began to treat their own membership with suspicion. Communist purges were carried out to eliminate "antirevolutionary elements" throughout the period of 1934 to 1936. Communist uncertainty over membership loyalty became so prevalent that the Party decided to eliminate most Koreans from participation. Combined with Communist antirevolutionary actions such as arresting or murdering those Koreans under suspicion, these activities led to a wholesale reduction in party strength and effectiveness.⁵⁶

The puppet organizations could, however, be a mixed blessing. Although local personnel, particularly those who had been former guerrillas or bandits, often had great familiarity with the terrain and guerrilla tactics, they were usually poorly armed and trained. Indeed, sometimes the insurgents considered the puppet forces to be good "soft targets," and a reliable source of arms and ammunition.⁵⁷

Communist guerrilla groups worked assiduously to convince the population that they, and not the Japanese or Manchukuo authorities, were

the protectors of the people. Recognizing this, the Japanese began early to try and sever the close relationship between the guerrillas and the population. In 1933, eight Korean villages were established as defended villages in an experimental program by the Kwantung Army. The villages were fortified and garrisoned with troops. The following year, the program was implemented throughout Manchukuo. By the end of 1937, there were 10,629 protected hamlets, sheltering 5,500,000 people.⁵⁸

The idea behind this program was consistent with historical counterinsurgency tactics. By concentrating the farmers in fortified villages, they could more easily be watched and controlled, and they could be defended from the depredations of the guerrillas. It also denied the insurgents their source of food, shelter, recruits and the opportunity to build relationships with the population. In the harsh Manchukuo climate, this was particularly effective since it was nearly impossible to survive without shelter in the winter.

There were several critical problems with Japanese implementation of the defended village program. The first was the pitilessness of the Japanese implementers. Scattered farmers were frequently given little or no notice that they would be forced to move. Timing the move was at the convenience of the Army not the growing season, and so there were occasions when the farmers would be relocated at sowing season or just before harvest. Frequently, the farmers would be removed from their established homes, the

homes burned, and they would then be taken to an unfinished village. Imperial Army reports detailed thousands of starving families living in caves or completely inadequate shelters. Actions of this type caused great resentment, and probably aided the Communists in their propaganda campaigns. Chong-Sik Lee cites a Japanese provincial official as reporting that "(w)e are not afraid of Communist propaganda; but are worried because the material for propaganda can be found in the farmers' lives."⁵⁹

Another problem with the program was in providing protection to the villages if they were attacked by guerrillas. Initially, the Japanese would garrison 30 to 40 men in the fortified village. A troop unit of this size could be expected to be sufficient against most marauding bandits, at least until reinforcing units arrived.⁶⁰ However, as the program expanded the manpower requirements became unmanageable. Therefore, the Army adopted a regional approach. Troops and police units were centrally located and responded as required. Of course, this approach had its own difficulties. The hamlets were widely scattered, often in difficult terrain, and response was dependent on good communications and highways or roads.

Since an adequate road network did not exist in Manchukuo, the Japanese worked continuously at improving the system. They built 625 miles of new highways and restored or improved another 375 miles of existing roadways.⁶¹ In some ways, this was helpful to the peasants by providing access to markets and also by allowing faster response of defensive

forces. On the negative side, most of the roads were built with conscript labor. The Kwantung Army required that every Chinese male between the ages of 16 and 60, provide 4 months of labor each year. If a family contained three or more males, the family had to provide a laborer for a year.⁶²

An additional problem with removal of farmers from their homes had to do with the later use of the home. Sometimes, the villages were not burned. Instead, they were turned over to new Japanese settlers.⁶³

Administrative reform in Manchukuo was a necessity. Officials and former members of the civil government either had allegiance to the Nationalist Chinese, a local warlord, or the Communists. The difficulty for the Kwantung Army was in finding competent, reliable Chinese who would collaborate with them. But, they had to act to replace the former administrators and to invigorate the economy. In this way, they could improve the welfare of the population and attempt to gain support. Of course, every Chinese official had a Japanese "advisor" who made the actual decisions.⁶⁴

Great efforts were made by the authorities in charge of these programs, but they faced severe constraints. In the first place, the Chinese traditionally distrusted officials and government. Another problem was that guerrillas would make great demands on any Chinese official they could contact. If the official complied with the guerrillas, the Japanese Army would apprehend them as a bandit sympathizer. If they did not comply, the

guerrillas would kill them. Intelligent Chinese preferred to avoid collaboration, even with the potential gains it might bring them.⁶⁵ Also, the Army counterinsurgency operations were disruptive to the lives of the people, and the way in which the resettlement campaign was implemented was a major negative factor.

"Purification" measures had to do with security operations. A significant element was the total registration of the population. Residency certificates were issued to each person, and families were required to inform the authorities before traveling or if they had guests. Frequent use of road blocks, searches of homes, and checks of documents limited the ability of insurgents to insert themselves into the villages.

As the population was increasingly insulated from the guerrillas, new restrictions were instituted on the transportation of strategically important products. Food supplies and clothing, which could be diverted to the insurgents, were particularly important. Self-defense units were also organized for the defended villages. However, because of the distrust of the Army, they were seldom issued modern weapons or trained to an effective level. Instead, they were usually employed to help man police check points.⁶⁶

A final tactic, and one of the most important in population control, was the implementation of the *pao-chia* system. Carried out in different provinces, with varying degrees of severity, *pao-chia* was an ancient method of population control, used in China since the eleventh century. The basic

unit of the system was the household. Households were organized in units of ten, called a *chia*, and each unit had a leader appointed by the authorities. These units were further collectively organized into a larger group known as a *pao*, which consisted of ten *chia*.⁶⁷ The entire system was based on the theory of collective responsibility. Members of each organizational unit were held responsible for the behavior of the other members of the group. In some areas, the Japanese called the units "shooting squads," and if offenses were committed by a unit member, the entire unit was shot.⁶⁸

Although the Japanese officials were aware that they needed to improve the living conditions of the peasants, their resources were limited. Just as was true in Japan regarding national objectives and international relations, the civil authorities had differing goals from those of the military. And, despite the mass starvation and epidemics being suffered by the population, the Kwantung Army continued to focus on operations against the guerrillas.⁶⁹

Civil authorities used every possible means of raising money to fund the operation of Manchukuo's civil government. After all, Manchukuo was supposed to be of benefit to Japan and supportive of itself, not a drain on Japan's very limited resources.⁷⁰ One method used was the encouragement and domination of the opium trade. In fact, in 1932, Manchukuo offered a 30-million Yen bond issue in Japan that was totally secured by the profits of

their monopoly in the opium market. The army often paid laborers with opium.

The Manchukuo government also held the monopoly on prostitution. Poor Japanese peasants and farmers would sell their daughters on three to five year contracts. During this period, 70,000 Japanese girls worked in government owned and managed brothels in Manchukuo.⁷¹

Another economic problem was related to the efficient operation of the South Manchurian Railway. Attacks and acts of sabotage by Chinese guerrillas were damaging to the lifeline of the Manchukuo economy. In June of 1933, the Railway Bureau published a study called "Thoughts for the Protection of Communication Lines." This document, in concert with the defended villages program, called for relocating the fortified towns along the railway lines and eventually mobilized large numbers of organized villagers to protect railroad property.⁷² The people were required to collect information on threats, protect the railroad lines, and to repair any damages.

The Japanese and Manchukuo authorities responsible for countering Communist and anti-Japanese propaganda faced an enormous task. They had to neutralize the inherent ethnic hatred of the Chinese, compete with Communist propagandists, mitigate the disastrous consequences of the Army's counterinsurgency campaigns, and somehow try to win the peasants' support. Although numerous propaganda teams were formed, the authorities reported that their conventional methods such as "lectures, distribution of

bills and posters, movies, and medical treatment not only did not produce adequate results, but frequently produced countereffects."⁷³ In effect, this was blamed on lackluster performance by the propaganda teams and a failure to address the actual living conditions of the people. Some of the Japanese advisory personnel knew what was required for success in their operations, but they were never to have the resources needed if they were to actually have an impact on the peasants.

Another problem for the Japanese propagandists was the difficulty of convincing the population that the Japanese were legitimately concerned for their welfare and desired their support and solidarity. The military operations of the army, and the forced relocations of the population were certainly antithetical to the civil authorities efforts. But other actions and programs were also detrimental.

To the Japanese, guarding prisoners was considered to be nearly as dishonorable as being a captive oneself. Many soldiers of marginal quality, drunks, troublemakers, and even the insane, were assigned to these duties. Their treatment of prisoners did little to help in the campaign to develop support among the population.⁷⁴

Although the Kwantung Army went to great extremes to maintain secrecy, their program of biological and chemical warfare experimentation was another strike against them when it came to rousing support. From 1932 until the end of the World War, animal and human subjects were

experimented on. When shortages of political prisoners developed, captured members of guerrilla bands were used as "laboratory experimental fodder." Sheldon Harris cites reports indicating that more than 3,000 people were killed in biological experiments at just one of the camps under control of the euphemistically named Water Purification Bureau.⁷⁵

CONCLUSIONS

Developing from a feudal to a modern nation in half a century, Japan entered the world's stage as an aggressive, confident, expansionist power. However, national direction was fragmented and, at times, in conflict within the Japanese government itself. Accordingly, once the campaign to absorb Manchuria began, civil and military authorities continued to have disparate, even conflicting goals. Given this fact, an effective counterinsurgency and nation building campaign proved impossible. In attempting to build the new, allied nation of Manchukuo, the Kwantung Army had two requirements. First, in the military realm, they had to defeat the opposing organized armed forces. Second, as a task for the civil authorities, they had to develop the support of the indigenous population.

The military mission was accomplished expeditiously. The well organized and effective army quickly defeated both the Chinese Nationalists and the Communist guerrillas. Certainly, the Japanese had some powerful advantages aside from the disciplined army. The guerrillas had no sanctuaries or base areas to which they could retreat in safety and rest, train

and rearm. Additionally, the extremely harsh climate in winter made living in the countryside a desperate gamble for the guerrillas. Once the fortified village program had progressed, the insurgents found just survival to be a challenge. Although there was an occasional resurgence of activity, the Kwantung Army effectively controlled Manchukuo. However, the methods they employed were detrimental to the second task, that of building a supportive populace for the future.

Civilian officials, in charge of developing political support for the concept of a Manchukuo aligned with Japan, were unable to overcome the antipathy generated by the army's operations and policies. Although the Manchurians had no history of a benevolent and caring government to harken back to, Japan failed to offer an appealing alternative. Thus, the Manchukuo regime, for all the efforts and resources Japan poured into it, proved incapable of building a truly new and loyal nation.

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