

The London School of Economics and Political Science

**Enclave Empires:
Britain, France and the Treaty-Port
System in Japan, 1858-1868**

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A thesis submitted to the Department of International History of the
London School of Economics for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

London, September 2016

Declaration

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Abstract

This thesis will present a comparative and internationally contextualised history of Anglo-French relations in Japan between 1858 and 1868. It will introduce the concept of ‘enclave empires’ to describe the conduits for Western informal imperialism that were created in Japan by the imposition of the treaty-port system in 1858. It will aim to address longstanding gaps in the historiography by assessing that system as a multinational construct that depended upon the cooperation and collaboration of each treaty power operating within it. At the same time, it will show how the management of the Japanese treaty-port system was increasingly dominated by the British Empire and the French Second Empire, the two most powerful Western trading nations in Japan during the 1860s. It will examine how global contexts impacted upon British and French foreign policymaking during this period, and how this catalysed an increasingly bitter Anglo-French struggle for control over the ‘enclave empires’ in Japan. It will also seek to broaden the scope of the historiography beyond the sphere of diplomatic relations by considering the perspectives of prominent non-diplomatic British and French actors whenever relevant. Finally, it will address significant historiographical oversights in the use of relevant primary source material through the critical appraisal of contemporary private paper collections. By adopting this four-pronged methodological approach, this thesis will demonstrate that Anglo-French relations fundamentally defined the process of creating and developing informal ‘enclave empires’ in Japan in the decade between the conclusion of the ‘unequal treaties’ in 1858 and the Meiji Restoration in 1868.

Acknowledgements

This study was inspired by the wonderfully engaging lectures and seminars that my supervisor Antony Best delivered on the knotty subject of East Asia in the age of imperialism as part of my Master's programme at the London School of Economics and Political Science. I had long been fascinated by the events leading up to the Meiji Restoration, but it is doubtful that this thesis would ever have been conceived without Dr Best's incisive and accessible appraisal of what is a highly complex period of Japanese history. After inspiring me to embark upon this study, I could not have wished for a more supportive and patient mentor to supervise it. My heartfelt thanks therefore go to Dr Best for ensuring that this work always remained on track, and for improving every page of it with his insightful comments and suggestions.

This project would not have been possible without the generous support of the London School of Economics, the British Association for Japanese Studies, and, above all, the Great Britain Sasakawa Foundation, which saw fit to award me one of their first Japanese Studies Postgraduate Studentships at a time of acute financial difficulty. I would also like to thank the Great Britain Sasakawa Foundation and the Japan Foundation Endowment Committee for furnishing me with the funds necessary to embark upon a lengthy and highly productive research trip to Japan in the summer of 2014. I am further indebted to the Suntory and Toyota International Centre for Economics and Related Disciplines and the Department of International History at the London School of Economics for helping to make my regular research excursions to Paris possible. I am truly grateful to each of these esteemed organisations, and I hope that this thesis will justify a little of the faith they put in me.

My interest in all things Japanese dates back to my stint as an Assistant Language Teacher on the JET Programme, and I will be forever grateful to those who organise and administer the programme for giving me the opportunity to uncover that hidden passion. I would also like to thank all those who made my four years in Japan so unforgettable, especially the friendly and welcoming people of Tokushima and Nagano prefectures. Since then I have had the great fortune to encounter several esteemed Japanese scholars, many of whom were kind enough to offer help and advice during the course of this study. Special thanks go to Naraoka Sōchi, Kumamoto Fumio, Oyama Mizuho, Morita Tomoko, Dōsako Shingo, Nakatake Kanami, and all the helpful staff at the Yokohama Archives of History, Yokohama City Chūō Library, Hagi Museum, the Nagasaki Museum of History

and Culture, and the Kagoshima Prefectural Centre for Historical Material. I am equally grateful to the dedicated staff at the archival repositories and libraries I visited in the UK and France, as well as to Jardine, Matheson & Co. for allowing me to consult and publish extracts from the Parkes Papers held in the Bodleian Library at the University of Oxford.

There can be few better places to study history than at the LSE, where some of the best scholars in the world are on hand to offer friendly advice and constructive criticism. During my time at the School I was fortunate to receive guidance and support from Professor David Stevenson, Professor Piers Ludlow, Professor Janet Hunter, Professor Alan Sked, Dr Paul Keenan, and Dr Angela Romano, and I want to thank them all for helping to improve this thesis in their own way. I am also deeply grateful to Dr Dayna Barnes and Dr Robert Barnes for their words of wisdom on funding a PhD, without which it is doubtful that this study would ever have seen the light of day. Further thanks go to Professor Thomas Otte and Dr Andrew Cobbing for their meticulous appraisal of the thesis, as well as to my fellow historical journeymen Cees Heere, Jin Li Lim, Oliver Elliott, Yamamoto Takahiro, and Suzuki Yu for sharing the ride – we got there in the end!

It is friends and family who invariably shoulder the greatest burden of supporting doctoral candidates on the winding path to completion, and those closest to me were no different. I could not have finished this study without the steadfast support of Bridget Phillipson MP, who went out of her way to accommodate my erratic research and writing schedule while working in her Westminster office. Thanks also to Justin Gelzhiser for helping me to see the big picture and realise my full potential, and to Stephen Armstrong for being there when pub-related light relief was in order. Last but not least, Dr Svetozar Rajak has been a superb mentor and an even better friend over the years, and I will always remember our lengthy historical discussions over a whiskey with great fondness.

Above all, I want to thank my family for all their love and support since I embarked upon this endeavour. My sister Laura was always on hand to offer encouragement and reassurance, while my brother Stuart imparted the sound advice and expert knowledge befitting a scholar of his calibre. My enduring love and thanks go to my parents Vicky and Matt for always pushing me to do better, not least by painstakingly reading and critically appraising every draft of this thesis. I owe my interest in history in the first place to my grandparents Jack, Frankie, Bill, and Rebecca, whose first-hand accounts of wartime Britain, Ireland, Iceland, India, and Burma inspired pride and fascination in equal measure. Sadly, only Granny Rebecca saw this project started and finished, but the others

will remain forever in my thoughts. My final and deepest thanks go to my loving and long-suffering wife Xin, who had the misfortune to meet me during the first week of this project and has patiently endured all the trials and tribulations that have arisen thereafter. Despite them all she never stopped believing in me, which is why I dedicate this thesis to her.

For Xin

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INTRODUCTION

On 8 February 1861, the British Prime Minister Lord Palmerston wrote a private note to Lord John Russell, his Foreign Secretary, outlining Britain's relations with France at the time:

The real truth of the relations of England to France is that the whole drift of our policy is to prevent France from realizing her bust scheme of extensions and aggression in a great number of quarters, and of course our success in doing so must necessarily be the cause of perpetual displeasure to her Government and people. But we fulfil our duty as long as we can succeed by negotiation and management so as to avoid rupture and open collisions by restraining France by the shackles of diplomatic trammels.¹

Although Palmerston wrote these comments in the context of a French military intervention in Syria, they neatly summarise the state of Anglo-French relations throughout the mid-Victorian period. The relationship between the British Empire and the French Second Empire (1852-1870) – two titans of the mid-nineteenth century international order – was critical to almost every international crisis that broke out in Europe during this era. As the Westphalian system of diplomacy and trade spread across the globe, their relationship also influenced many important events that took place outside the Old Continent. In a world where rapid improvements in communication and technology were bringing the furthest-flung reaches of the planet into the Western sphere of influence, this is hardly surprising. If one accepts that the nineteenth century brought about the 'transformation of the world' into a transnational, transcontinental, and transcultural system, then it is fair to say that Britain and France played a significant part in that process.²

¹ The National Archives, London, Russell Papers, PRO30/22/21/105, Palmerston to Russell, 8 February 1861.

² See Jürgen Osterhammel, *The Transformation of the World: A Global History of the Nineteenth Century*, (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2014), especially pp.xv-xxii.

Palmerston's comments in 1861 illustrate the extent to which the British government felt threatened by France during the 1860s. These two historic rivals had never had an easy relationship, of course, and Palmerston was old enough to remember the Napoleonic Wars that tore Europe apart. The inauguration of the French Second Empire in 1852 by Napoléon III, nephew of Napoléon Bonaparte, was therefore always likely to spark concern across the Channel. At the same time, many in the British political establishment, including Palmerston himself, were initially enthusiastic about the creation of a new constitutional monarchy on the continent. Their hopes were raised further by the joint Anglo-French intervention against Russia in the Crimean War (1853-1856), which cemented a liberal entente between the two great powers to combat autocratic aggression. The war was to prove a high watermark in Anglo-French relations during the mid-nineteenth century, however, as Napoléon III's ambitions to revise the treaty settlement imposed upon France at the Congress of Vienna in 1815, his support for nationalist movements across the European continent, and his increasingly interventionist foreign policy outside of Europe began to provoke alarm in Britain.

Many historians have explored the political relationship between Britain and France during the mid-nineteenth century, but few have focused on its impact in East Asia. Even fewer have considered how the tensions that came to define this relationship shaped events in Japan during the final decade of the late Edo, or *bakumatsu*, period (1853-1868). This is a serious oversight, since Anglo-French relations were integral to the way in which a pernicious form of Western informal imperialism known as the 'treaty-port system' was foisted upon the government of the Tokugawa shogunate, or *bakufu*, by the notoriously 'unequal' commercial treaties of 1858. I believe that a comprehensive analysis of this system cannot be truly complete without understanding the perspectives of the two most influential Western powers that operated within it. This thesis will therefore consider how the global rivalry that developed between the British and French empires during the 1860s impacted upon their commercial and diplomatic policies in Japan. It will analyse the decisions of the diplomats who interpreted those policies on the spot, and chart their struggle for dominance over the group of international trading enclaves, or treaty ports, that sprung up in Japan after the 'unequal treaties' were signed. Most importantly, it will introduce the concept of 'enclave empires' to describe how Japan's treaty ports became conduits for Western informal imperialism in the decade following the imposition of the treaty-port system in 1858. It will show how the international character of these 'enclave empires' prevented any one treaty power from exerting exclusive control over the process

of ‘modernising’ Japan, despite Britain’s preponderant commercial and military presence in the country and wider region. Finally, it will argue that this constriction of traditional great-power imperial rivalries to an international system of commercial treaties defined British and French policy in Japan during the mid-nineteenth century.

Britain and France in Japan: A stagnant orthodoxy

In order to fulfil the objectives laid out above, it is first necessary to establish whether a gap exists in the historiography of the Japanese treaty-port system. As a time of great political upheaval in Japan, the decade between the imposition of the ‘unequal treaties’ in 1858 and the Meiji Restoration in 1868 has been studied extensively by Japanese and Western historians alike. It is important to acknowledge and appraise these histories to determine whether the role of Anglo-French relations in Japan has been overlooked or misunderstood. The following historiographical review will therefore examine the existing contributions to this field chronologically in the first instance. Where possible, it will then seek to organise them thematically within their own historical context. The aim is to assess the discourse not only as a series of individual historical accounts, but also as a collective narrative of developing historical trends. By charting the evolution of the historiography in this way, any gaps in the current orthodoxy will become apparent.

Lived History: The Influence of Memoirs

Memoirs are often among the first historical sources to be published, in many cases years or even decades before classified archives are opened or private papers are released. For those who have lived through important historical events, they offer the first (if not the only) chance in their lifetime to learn about the policies and opinions of prominent protagonists in their own words. They can therefore have a powerful effect on shaping perceptions of history, and as such have an important role to play in understanding the historiography of this topic. Despite its relative insignificance to the general thrust of mid-nineteenth century international relations, the opening of Japan to Western trade was an event of interest to many in Europe and the United States. The unique situation by which Japan had been isolated from the world for over two centuries, not to mention the opportunities it offered for trade, inspired a natural curiosity about the country within Western society. With reliable information on Japan so sparse at the time, a popular memoir could influence public perceptions for some time to come.

Most of the British memoirs that appeared in the decades immediately after the opening of Japan were uncontroversial by the standards of the time. The first was published in 1860 by Laurence Oliphant, who was present during the negotiations for the first commercial treaty between Britain and Japan in 1858. Oliphant criticised the subservient attitude of other Western countries in past relations with China and Japan, believing that this had encouraged a sense of racial superiority within these ‘semi-civilized’ empires which had contributed to Britain’s political problems in the region.³ Since foreigners in Japan were still suffering from the stigmatism that originated from the submissive behaviour of the Dutch during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, Oliphant advised British diplomats to adopt a policy of ‘combined firmness and forbearance’.⁴ In other words, it was imperative that the Japanese government be sternly educated on the strength and power of the British Empire from the outset of commercial relations if the mistakes of China were to be avoided. This memoir is a revealing insight into British attitudes and policies towards Japan during the mid-nineteenth century. Since the opening of the country had been achieved with what seemed like relative ease in comparison to the much more problematic situation in China, hopes were high that Japan would willingly re-enter the international world of commerce. To the British politicians, merchants, and businessmen interested in expanding Britain’s global trade, Oliphant’s account confirmed that new markets and opportunities had been opened in another formerly inaccessible part of the world.

Oliphant only spent two weeks of a three-year expedition to East Asia in Japan, so his observations, though interesting, were hardly representative of day-to-day life in the Japanese treaty ports. The first memoir to focus entirely on Japanese affairs was published by Sir Rutherford Alcock, Britain’s first diplomatic representative to Japan, in 1863.⁵ A characteristically verbose account of the first three years of Anglo-Japanese relations, these two-volume memoirs are less a recollection of long-passed events and more a lengthy justification for the policy Alcock had pursued in post. They charted the deterioration of British relations with the Japanese authorities after the ports were opened and described the ever-worsening security situation he had been forced to operate within.

³ Laurence Oliphant, *Narrative of the Earl of Elgin’s Mission to China and Japan in the Years 1857, ’58, ’59*, (New York: Harper & Publishers, 1860).

⁴ *Ibid.*, p.466.

⁵ Sir Rutherford Alcock, *The Capital of the Tycoon: A Narrative of Three Years’ Residence in Japan*, 2 vols., (London: Longman, Green, Longman, Roberts and Green, 1863).

Alcock also showed a growing awareness of how the presence of foreign powers in Japan had provoked a constitutional crisis that threatened to erupt into civil war. Essentially, he used his memoirs to make the case for something to be done to stabilise the situation before foreign trade with Japan suffered irrevocable damage. His successor Sir Harry Parkes did not publish a similar volume, but a biographical account of his life was published in 1894 by Stanley Lane-Poole and Frederick Dickins.⁶ Commissioned by Parkes's family to portray him and his work in Japan in a positive light, it is to be treated with appropriate caution by the historian.⁷

In general, these early memoirs did little more than reinforce the accepted view of the Victorian age that Japan had joined the community of 'civilized' nations by entering the British-led system of international trade. Since they echoed mainstream attitudes on the 'liberalism' of free trade and Britain's justifiable right to impose it on unenlightened nations, they can hardly be considered controversial. In the early part of the twentieth century, however, two well-known British diplomatic figures published more illuminating accounts of mid-nineteenth century Japan. The first was by Algernon Bertrand Mitford, a respected member of the British aristocracy and former student interpreter at the British Legation in Edo during the 1860s.⁸ Mitford's two-volume memoirs revealed interesting details about the strained relationship that developed between the British and French diplomatic representatives at the Japanese treaty ports, but he was careful not to stray into controversial topics that may have offended his political friends in the British and Japanese establishments. As later research into his private papers revealed, this was probably because Mitford's initial opinion of the Japanese was much more negative than his later memoirs suggested.⁹

⁶ Stanley Lane-Poole and Frederick Victor Dickins, *The life of Sir Harry Parkes: K.C.B., G.C.M.G., sometime Her Majesty's minister to China and Japan*, 2 Vols., (London: Macmillan, 1894). A similar account was published on Alcock's life and times in 1900; see Alexander Michie, *The Englishman in China during the Victorian Era as Demonstrated in the Career of Sir Rutherford Alcock KCB DCL, Many Years Consul and Minister in China*, 2 Vols., (Edinburgh and London: William Blackwood & Sons, 1900).

⁷ See Gordon Daniels, *Sir Harry Parkes: British Representative in Japan, 1865-83*, (Richmond: Japan Library, 1996), p.vii.

⁸ Algernon Bertrand Freeman-Mitford, Baron Redesdale, *Memories*, 2 Vols., (London: Hutchinson, 1915-6).

⁹ Hugh Cortazzi, ed., *Mitford's Japan: the Memoirs and Recollections, 1866-1906, of Algernon Bertram Mitford, the first Lord Redesdale*, (London: Athlone, 1985).

In contrast to Mitford's sanitised account, the memoir published by Sir Ernest Mason Satow in 1921 was much more candid.¹⁰ Over the course of his long life Satow had become well known for his exploits as a diplomat and linguist in Japan, so an account of his early days as a student interpreter in Edo would have attracted interest across the whole spectrum of British society (especially as it appeared at a time when Britain's future relationship with Japan was under intense scrutiny).¹¹ Satow's memoirs detailed the close links he had cultivated during the 1860s with the alliance of Japanese feudal chiefs, or *daimyō*, that ousted the Tokugawa shogunate in 1868. They also revealed for the first time that he had published a series of anonymous articles in the *Japan Times* in 1866 calling for revision of the treaties so that the *daimyō* could share in the profits of Western trade. Critically, Satow had also suggested that the shogun should 'descend to his proper position as a great territorial noble, and that a combination of daimiōs under the headship of the Mikado [the Japanese emperor] should take his place as the ruling power'.¹² These provocative articles had been translated into Japanese and circulated across the country in a pamphlet entitled *Eikoku sakuron* (British policy), which both the *bakufu* and the *daimyō* believed at the time reflected the views of the British legation. Although Satow claimed to have had nothing to do with this, he confessed in his memoirs that the pamphlet had provoked suspicion about British intentions in Edo until the collapse of the Tokugawa regime in 1868.¹³ Controversially, he also alleged that Sir Harry Parkes, the British diplomatic representative in Japan at the time of the Meiji Restoration, had contributed to the downfall of the last Tokugawa shogun 'as far as lay in his power'.¹⁴

Satow was the last prominent figure to record a lived history of *bakumatsu* Japan. A year after his death in 1929, a contemporary journal of Townsend Harris, the first American minister to Japan, was published in the United States. Unfortunately, Harris stopped keeping his journal in mid-1858, so this book revealed nothing new about the years after the ports opened to Western trade.¹⁵ Sadly, none of the French diplomatic actors who

¹⁰ Sir Ernest Mason Satow, *A Diplomat in Japan*, (London: Seeley, Service and Co., 1921).

¹¹ He was caricatured by *Vanity Fair* in 1903; see Ian Ruxton, ed., *The Diaries of Sir Ernest Satow, British Minister in Tokyo (1895-1900): A Diplomat Returns to Japan*, (Morrisville, NC: Lulu Press, 2010), p.v.

¹² Satow, op.cit., p.159.

¹³ Ibid., pp.159-60.

¹⁴ Ibid., p.300.

¹⁵ Mario Emilio Cosenza, ed., *The Complete Journal of Townsend Harris: First American Consul and Minister to Japan*, (Rutland, VT & Tokyo: Charles E. Tuttle Company, 1930).

served in Japan during this critical period wrote a memoir either, even though one of the most prominent, Léon Roches, did write an extensive account of the thirty-two years he spent living in North Africa before he arrived in Japan.¹⁶ The fact that Roches made no mention in these two-volume memoirs of his tenure as the French minister plenipotentiary in Edo at least tells us something about how he viewed his time there. The absence of first-hand accounts from other treaty-power protagonists guaranteed that Satow had the final word among the Western ‘men of Meiji’. In the decades that followed his death, his memoirs formed the basis of an Anglo-centric historiographical orthodoxy that emphasised British leadership of the Japanese treaty-port system. In the absence of dissenting voices, a narrative that no other Western maritime trading power ever contested Britain’s status as the first among equals in Japan was allowed to flourish unchallenged.

Memoirs can be both a blessing and a curse to the historian. Individualistic by definition, they are usually written to justify actions, to cement a reputation, or to emphasize a role in important events. As they are often published long after the events that they describe have passed, they can often be unreliable historical records. The memoirs described above display many of these flaws, and all focus exclusively on British diplomatic relations. Though lived history can certainly supplement our understanding of the treaty-port system in Japan in a way that official government correspondence cannot, the existing first-hand accounts of *bakumatsu* Japan are clearly insufficient to construct a reliable narrative of Anglo-French relations during this period.

Evaluating the Empire: Post-War Revisions

The Second World War marked a watershed for historians of Western imperialism. Although Britain and France had emerged from the war victorious, their colonial empires soon began to crumble in the face of nationalist resistance. In the context of this changing world, a revolution in historical thought took place as historians began to consider the Western ‘civilising mission’ and the ‘liberal’ imposition of free trade as specific forms of imperialism. Perhaps the most significant example of this was the work of historians John Gallagher and Ronald Robinson, whose 1953 article ‘The Imperialism of Free Trade’¹⁷ debunked the traditional argument that ‘mid-Victorian ‘indifference’ and late-Victorian

¹⁶ See Léon Roches, *Trente-deux ans à travers l’Islam*, 2 Vols., (Paris: 1884-5).

¹⁷ John Gallagher and Ronald Robinson, ‘The Imperialism of Free Trade’, *The Economic History Review*, 2nd Series, Vol. VI, No. 1 (1953), pp.1-15

'enthusiasm' for empire were directly related to the rise and decline in free-trade beliefs'.¹⁸ Instead, they argued that British policy throughout the Victorian age consistently followed the principle of extending control informally if possible and only formally if necessary. In other words, the creation of informal economic spheres of influence under the auspices of free trade was always preferable to the establishment of formal colonies, as long as informal methods secured British interests. The mid-Victorians were not therefore as indifferent to empire as earlier historians had believed, nor were the late-Victorians more enthusiastic supporters of it. Instead, 'British governments worked to establish and maintain British paramountcy by whatever means best suited the circumstances of their diverse regions of interest'.¹⁹ The conventional view that British imperial expansion peaked at the end of the nineteenth century, when Britain's 'formal' empire of dominion reached its full extent, was therefore incorrect. Instead, Robinson and Gallagher considered the decisive stage in the history of British imperial expansion to be the mid-Victorian age, when the imposition of free trade treaties on weaker states created an extensive 'informal' economic empire to supplement Britain's 'formal' colonial one.

Gallagher and Robinson's encapsulation of empire provoked a re-examination of Britain's imperial history outside the confines of its formal colonies. Within this context, the study of Britain's role in East Asia gained an entirely new significance for historians of empire. One of the most influential works to be published as a result was John K. Fairbank's seminal study of the Chinese treaty-port system, *Trade and Diplomacy on the China Coast: The Opening of the Treaty Ports, 1842-1854*.²⁰ Published in two volumes in 1953 and reissued several times as a single volume thereafter, this book was the first by a Western historian to examine the imposition of the 'unequal treaties' from a Chinese perspective. Fairbank drew upon his deep understanding of Chinese thought and tradition to demonstrate how the treaty-port system had supplanted China's ancient tributary system as the means by which foreigners were incorporated into the universal Chinese state. He argued that the treaty ports were akin to the ports assigned for tributary trade in ancient China, that consular jurisdiction harked back to the medieval custom of Arab visitors taking responsibility for their countrymen, that the 'most-favoured nation' clause

¹⁸ Ibid., p.2.

¹⁹ Ibid., p.12.

²⁰ John K. Fairbank, *Trade and Diplomacy on the China Coast: The Opening of the Treaty Ports, 1842-1854*, 2 Vols., (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1953).

was rooted in the emperor's benevolence towards all barbarians, and that the treaty tariff resembled the oppressive taxes on production and trade levied by China's ruling Qing dynasty. In short, the treaties were as much a product of Chinese traditions as they were those of the West, regardless of the fact that tribute signified Chinese superiority and the treaties foreign domination. Fairbank believed that the dual origin of the treaty-port system created a Sino-Western synarchy in China – 'a joint Chinese and Western administration of the modern centers of Chinese life and trade in the treaty ports'.²¹ Once the final treaty settlement was imposed in China at the end of the Opium Wars in 1858, the treaty powers led by Britain sought to prolong the Qing dynasty's rule over the Chinese interior as long as possible while they used their special commercial and religious privileges to exploit the country. As a result, the treaty-port system gradually became 'a basic component of the power structure of the Chinese state'.²² This depiction of the Chinese treaty-port system as a powerful imperialising force continues to resonate to this day, and its links to the concept of 'enclave empires' presented in this study are undeniable. Fairbank's characterisation of the 'unequal treaties' as an amalgamation of both the Chinese and Western diplomatic traditions also helps to explain Japan's hostility towards the treaty-port system during the nineteenth century.

Another pioneering study of this critical period in Chinese history was Gerald S. Graham's *The China Station: War and Diplomacy, 1830-1860*, which was published in 1978.²³ This work aimed to build upon the work of W. C. Costin, whose landmark 1937 study, *Great Britain and China, 1833-1860*, is still considered to be one of the definitive diplomatic histories of the Opium Wars.²⁴ Unlike Costin, who primarily relied upon official dispatches to and from the Foreign Office, Graham focused on the role that the Royal Navy played in ending China's long isolation from the international system of trade. Conscious of the inextricable links between naval strategy, diplomacy, and politics, Graham intertwined official correspondence from the Admiralty, Colonial Office, and Foreign Office alongside the private papers of prominent political and naval figures such as Lord Palmerston, the Earl of Ellenborough, and the Earl of Auckland. Where possible, he also cited private letterbooks from Jardine, Matheson, and Company, one of the richest and most powerful British trading houses in nineteenth-century China, and other first-

²¹ *Ibid.*, (One-volume edition, 1964), p.462.

²² *Ibid.*, p.467. The influential conclusion to this book can be found on pp.462-8.

²³ Gerald S. Graham, *The China Station: War and Diplomacy, 1830-1860*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1978).

²⁴ W. C. Costin, *Great Britain and China, 1833-1860*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1937).

hand accounts from the navigators, surveyors and captains who made such a telling contribution to the Royal Navy's success in China. This enabled Graham to give equal prominence to the naval commanders, missionaries, diplomats, scholars, and administrators who built the Chinese treaty-port system during the nineteenth century. Critically, he also argued that there was no such thing as British colonial policy in China, and that the only reason why the British gradually strengthened their foothold there was simply to safeguard trade and promote it. In other words, it was the demand for equal treatment that primarily underpinned British policy towards the Qing dynasty, since commercial and diplomatic equality was essential for the maintenance and expansion of trade. Whether this meant the creation of a permanent trading base such as Hong Kong or a series of free ports open to Britain's rivals was a matter for the Foreign Office, but it was the Royal Navy's responsibility to implement such decisions by force if necessary. In this sense, the navy 'acted as the cutting edge of British diplomacy' in the China seas, as indeed it did in many other parts of the world.²⁵

This was a critically important point. Put simply, the survival of the treaty-port system depended upon British naval superiority in the China seas. As Graham has pointed out, British diplomatic officials on the spot had a clear appreciation of the need to deploy British naval forces to protect the Chinese treaty ports, and often did so in the face of protests from the regional commander-in-chief. As some of these officials later found themselves in prominent diplomatic positions in Japan, it is fair to assume that their education in the China school of 'gunboat diplomacy' shaped their future attitudes towards the Japanese as well. According to Graham, British naval hegemony in China was also freely admitted by the other treaty powers. This point helps to explain how Britain established and maintained leadership of the Chinese treaty-port system during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Without a doubt, the general deference of the other treaty powers to British sea power ensured that the rules of this imperial game were always skewed in Britain's favour. On the other hand, Graham was clear that the security of the British position in China depended upon a constant balance of power with the other treaty powers – France and Russia especially. Regardless of the relative strength of the Royal Navy at any given moment, China policy could never be entirely isolated from Europe because it might affect a delicate equilibrium of forces on the other side of the world. As one of the first histories to stress the importance of the global context in

²⁵ Ibid., p.408.

shaping treaty-power relations in China, the long-term influence of Graham's work cannot be overstated. Certainly, this thesis seeks to learn lessons from the methodology he adopted when considering Anglo-French relations in treaty-port Japan.²⁶

While Fairbank and Graham's work focused exclusively on the Chinese treaty-port system, the post-war era also saw the publication of several equally important assessments of its Japanese equivalent. In the immediate aftermath of Japan's devastating defeat in the Second World War, many Japanese and Western historians were keen to understand how the country had so rapidly evolved from self-imposed exclusion into a militarist empire. Focus soon returned to Japan's initial interactions with the West, especially the enforced opening of the country through the imposition of the 'unequal treaties' in 1858 and the collapse of the Tokugawa shogunate ten years later. As the centenary of the Meiji Restoration approached, several new histories were published that re-examined the complex relationships between the treaty powers, the *bakufu*, and its domestic opponents during this critical decade. This trend was pioneered by the prolific historian W. G. Beasley in his 1951 history of Britain's interactions with Japan in the lead-up to the first commercial treaty of 1858.²⁷ Beasley argued that the British attitude towards Japan prior to the imposition of the treaty-port system was at best one of mild indifference, characterised by occasional opportunist attempts to establish a trading relationship.²⁸ He also challenged the traditional view that it was American diplomacy alone that brought about the opening of Japan, arguing instead that it was misplaced fear of an impending British attack that compelled the *bakufu* to relax its policy of seclusion.²⁹ In other words, the mere presence of a British naval squadron in Chinese waters had frightened the Japanese into agreeing to similar trading conditions to those already existing in China, even though there was no evidence that Britain had any deliberate political or territorial designs upon Japan at the time. In Beasley's view, British imperialism during the mid-nineteenth century was 'less a matter of intentions than of unpremeditated results, of a gradual and often unwilling assumption of political authority as the only way of providing the law and order in which trade might flourish'.³⁰

²⁶ Much of this section is drawn from the epilogue of *ibid.*, pp.407-21.

²⁷ William G. Beasley, *Great Britain and the Opening of Japan, 1834-1868*, (London: Luzac & Co., 1951).

²⁸ *Ibid.*, pp.196-7.

²⁹ See G. B. Samson, 'Reviews: Great Britain and the Opening of Japan, 1834-1858', *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*, Vol. 16, Issue 2 (1954), p. 409.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p.203.

In addition to his work with official British sources, Beasley was one of the first Western historians to produce a reliable English-language account of the Japanese viewpoint during the *bakumatsu* era. His ground-breaking *Select Documents on Japanese Foreign Policy*, published in 1955, supplemented a compilation of translated Japanese documents from the 1850s-60s with an excellent summary of *bakufu* policy as it struggled to react to the arrival of the West.³¹ For the first time, any scholar who was not fluent in archaic Japanese had invaluable access to *bakufu* sources.³² This work not only provided readers with an entirely different perspective to the Anglo-centric, English-language discourse, but also clarified some of the logic behind *bakufu* decision-making, which had previously been dismissed as incoherent and reactionary. Beasley went on to produce two more studies on the same topic: one a general history of modern Japan,³³ the other a work entirely dedicated to the Meiji Restoration.³⁴ The latter explained in greater detail the social structure of Tokugawa Japan and its fundamental inadaptability with the treaty-port system. Beasley argued that the Meiji Restoration was to at least some degree a domestic revolution, albeit one catalysed specifically by a form of Western imperialism that disgraced an already unstable regime by imposing ‘unequal treaties’ upon it.³⁵ Beasley had not only identified an example of Western informal imperialism at work, but also demonstrated its revolutionary effect on domestic Japanese politics. This book therefore represented an important stepping-stone towards understanding this period of Japanese history far beyond the narrow focus of the contemporary nineteenth-century accounts.

Further progress was soon to be made. Although some Japanese scholars continued to assert into the 1960s that Britain had directly supported the 1868 uprising against the shogunate, British historians began to question this interpretation as more British

³¹ William G. Beasley, *Select Documents on Japanese Foreign Policy, 1853-1868*, (London: Oxford University Press, 1955).

³² Beasley’s book was soon followed by an influential English survey of the entire historical development of Japanese thought and philosophy. See Ryūsaku Tsunoda, Donald Keene, William Theodore de Bary, eds., *Sources of Japanese Tradition*, (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 1958).

³³ William G. Beasley, *The Modern History of Japan*, (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1963).

³⁴ William G. Beasley, *The Meiji Restoration*, (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1972).

³⁵ *Ibid.*, pp.405-24.

diplomatic correspondence became available.³⁶ In 1968, Gordon Daniels published an influential article that drew extensively from official British government documentation to assert that British support for the anti-Tokugawa forces had been exaggerated.³⁷ Critically, Daniels had also studied the Hammond Papers, which contained private correspondence from Sir Harry Parkes to Edmund Hammond, the British Permanent Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs throughout the 1860s. Daniels used these documents to show that too much emphasis had been placed on Satow and Mitford's unequivocal support for the anti-*bakufu* alliance, and that official British policy had actually been much more cautious.³⁸ He argued that Parkes had not expected the *bakufu* to collapse, and that, far from plotting its downfall, he had only abandoned it in February 1868 once the result of the conflict was clear and London had granted him permission to do so.³⁹

This short article paved the way for Grace Fox's *Britain and Japan*, a lengthy examination of Britain's mid-nineteenth century relationship with Japan.⁴⁰ Fox brought together the post-war explorations of early Anglo-Japanese relations into one exhaustive work that covered the entire spectrum of bilateral societal interaction. A lasting testament to early Anglo-Japanese relations, Fox's compartmentalised analysis purposefully separated the role of the diplomatic actors from that of their economic, scientific and religious counterparts. This approach attracted some criticism from commentators, who argued that it created a doubtful portrayal of a foreign community in Japan where only diplomats seriously considered the future relationship between the two countries.⁴¹ As Fox had only limited access to private papers, her analysis of British diplomatic relations with Japan was also overly reliant on official sources. Nonetheless, this was the most comprehensive work on Anglo-Japanese relations so far, and it is a testament to that achievement that Fox's book is still commonly referenced by scholars today.

³⁶ For example, see Ishii Takashi, *Zōtei Meiji Ishin no Kokusaiteki Kankyō* (The Meiji Restoration in its International Perspective, enlarged edition), (Tokyo: Yoshikawa Kōbunkan, 1966).

³⁷ Gordon Daniels, 'The British Role in the Meiji Restoration – A Re-Interpretive Note', *Modern Asian Studies*, Vol. II, No. 4 (1968), pp.291-313.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p.291.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, p.313.

⁴⁰ Grace Fox, *Britain and Japan, 1858-1883* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1969)

⁴¹ See Roger Dingman, 'Review: Britain and Japan, 1858-1883 by Grace Fox', *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies*, Vol. 31 (1971), p.302.

Franco-Japanese histories in English developed over a similar, but much slower, historiographical trajectory to that of their Anglo-Japanese counterparts. In 1954, John Cady published one of the first English-language studies of French imperialism in East Asia during the mid-nineteenth century. Rather than focus exclusively on diplomatic policymaking on the spot, this work demonstrated how domestic politics in Europe also influenced French policy in the Far East. In stark contrast to the economic impulses at the heart of the British imperial project, Cady explained how religion and culture were the driving factors behind French imperial expansion into the extra-European periphery. This cultural brand of imperialism was particularly prominent during the Second Empire, when foreign policymaking was shaped by Emperor Napoléon III's desire to promote French cultural exceptionalism overseas, his sensitivity to the interests of the Catholic lobby in Paris, and his willingness to intervene to protect French missionaries in the Far East. Cady also explored the rivalries and jealousies that inevitably developed between Britain and France whenever their contrasting imperial philosophies clashed in China, but he paid little attention to the equivalent situation that arose in Japan.⁴²

During the early post-war period, the pioneering Japanese scholars Otsuka Takematsu and Ishii Takashi drew upon contemporary Japanese sources to argue that France, like Britain, had implemented a definitive imperialistic strategy towards *bakumatsu* Japan.⁴³ The first English-language study dedicated exclusively to French policy was not published until 1971, when a monograph by Meron Medzini made some effort to draw comparisons between French and British policy during the early days of the treaty-port system.⁴⁴ Medzini argued that France initially followed Britain's lead until the arrival in 1864 of the flamboyant French minister Léon Roches, whose unique '*politique personelle*' created opportunities for France to compete with Britain for political and economic influence.⁴⁵ Medzini also agreed with Otsuka and Ishii that the French

⁴² John F. Cady, *The Roots of French Imperialism in Eastern Asia*, (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1954). See also John B. Wolf, 'Review of John F. Cady: 'The Roots of French Imperialism in Eastern Asia'', *The Journal of Asian Studies*, Vol. 14, No. 3 (May 1955), p.425; and Virginia Thompson, 'Review: The Roots of French Imperialism in Eastern Asia by John F. Cady', *Far Eastern Survey*, Vol. 25, No. 7 (July 1956), p.112.

⁴³ Richard Sims, *French Policy Towards the Bakufu and Meiji Japan, 1854-95*, (Richmond: Japan Library, 1998), p.2. See also Ishii, *op.cit.*; and Otsuka Takematsu, *Bakumatsu Gaikōshi no Kankyō* (Studies in *bakumatsu* Diplomatic History), (Tokyo: Hōbunkan, 1952).

⁴⁴ Meron Medzini, *French Policy in Japan During the Closing Years of the Tokugawa Regime*, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Asian Center, 1971).

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 175-82.

government had a predetermined imperialist plan to usurp British leadership of the Japanese treaty-port system. As the first study to make this argument to a Western audience, Medzini's work was an important step forward for the discourse. However, it was later criticised by the historian Richard Sims for accepting too readily the view of French policy advanced by the Japanese scholars, whom Sims believed harboured preconceived ideas about Western imperialism based on their limited access to French diplomatic records.⁴⁶

The historiography of the early post-war period produced some very important revisions to traditional interpretations of Western imperialism. Critically, the British benefaction of free trade during the mid-Victorian period was reclassified as informal economic imperialism. In this context, historians started the important process of reassessing Britain's early interactions with Japan, particularly regarding the role that Britain played in the lead up to the Meiji Restoration. Others dedicated themselves to understanding the Japanese reaction to the coming of the West, in turn expanding and rebalancing the English-language discourse on this topic. A few even began to look at the policies of other treaty powers in Japan, including those of France. Unfortunately, many of the studies that were published during this era contained a fundamental methodological flaw that was first identified by Roger Dingman in a 1971 review of Fox's *Britain and Japan*:

Fox employs a rather narrow, traditional diplomatic analytical technique. Her central assumption, never clearly stated, is that Anglo-Japanese relations developed on a bilateral axis. Yet much of the interest in these years lies in the interplay between those relations and the crystallizing East Asian international political order. Fox seems curiously unaware of the impact of broad developments – Anglo-French rivalry for influence in both China and Japan, continuing concern at Russian expansion in Maritime Provinces and Central Asia, and growing American commercial and naval strength – on the Anglo-Japanese relationship.⁴⁷

Dingman's point can be equally applied to many of the post-war histories of early Western relations with Japan. By tending to focus on only one aspect of a wider story, these histories failed to establish the broader external contexts to the internal developments that they described. Yet since global events would have impacted

⁴⁶ See Sims., op.cit., p.2.

⁴⁷ Dingman, op.cit., pp.300-1.

significantly upon Western policymaking in Japan at the time, many of the conclusions drawn by the bilateral histories of the post-war period now seem unsatisfactory.

Expanding Horizons? The Modern Discourse

In the thirty years since Gallagher and Robinson first posited their theory on the ‘imperialism of free trade’, successive generations of historians have developed the concepts of ‘formal’ and ‘informal’ empire into what the British historian John Darwin called a ‘powerful and seductive’ model of Victorian imperialism.⁴⁸ In an influential article published in 1997, Darwin explained how this model rested upon five basic propositions: that informal empire was the favoured means of mid-Victorian expansion due to its convenience and cost-effectiveness; that ‘informality’ was typically abandoned for direct intervention or annexation only when ‘national’ (rather than private) interests were at stake; that the political consequences of socio-economic change at the extra-European periphery often provoked such intervention; that deciding the scale of intervention, including the switch from informal to formal empire, was normally the prerogative of the ‘official mind’; and finally, that the overall pattern of formal expansion was heavily influenced by the importance attached to British supremacy on the Indian sub-continent.⁴⁹ In Darwin’s view, this model implied that Britain’s formal empire-building after 1880 was a defensive reaction to the growing influence of other imperial powers and the threat that they posed to existing British zones of influence. In other words, historians of the Gallagher and Robinson school viewed the mid-Victorian age of informal ‘peripheral’ empire as the height of British imperial expansion, and the growth of formal empire during the latter part of the nineteenth century as symptomatic of Britain’s relative decline as a great power.⁵⁰

The most rigorous challenge to this doctrine came from P. G. Cain and A. J. Hopkins, who published a monumental two-volume study on British imperialism in 1993 that fundamentally questioned the parameters of the discourse set by Gallagher and Robinson forty years earlier.⁵¹ Cain and Hopkins disputed the idea that the root of British

⁴⁸ John Darwin, ‘Imperialism and the Victorians: The Dynamics of Territorial Expansion’, *The English Historical Review*, Vol. 112, No. 447 (June 1997), p.614.

⁴⁹ See *ibid.*, p.615. The footnotes on this page also list the principal historical works from this school of thought.

⁵⁰ *Idem.*

⁵¹ P. J. Cain and A. J. Hopkins, *British Imperialism, Volume 1: Innovation and Expansion, 1688-1914*; & *British Imperialism, Volume 2: Crisis and Deconstruction, 1914-1990*,

imperialism could be found at the extra-European periphery. They acknowledged the part played by sub-imperialists and indigenous societies on the frontier, but rejected the argument that local crises on the periphery were attributable to locality and personality alone. In their view, the peripheral thesis was overly focused on the symptoms of late-Victorian intervention and annexation rather than their root cause.⁵² Cain and Hopkins attributed this instead to the growing success of a British economic and financial policy they termed ‘gentlemanly capitalism’: the innovative but enduring growth over a three-hundred-year period of a finance and service sector compatible both with aristocratic power in the eighteenth century and a new gentlemanly order in the nineteenth.⁵³ In this conceptualisation of British imperialism, the years after 1850 were marked as the point when City of London financiers rose to prominence and pursued Britain’s economic expansion across the globe. For these ‘gentlemanly capitalists’, free trade and sound money were concepts that transcended policy to become moral virtues synonymous with the liberal progress of civilization.⁵⁴ Far from ‘the gloomy epilogue to the mid-Victorian age of confidence’, therefore, Cain and Hopkins believed that late-Victorian imperialism was actually ‘the vehicle of a commercial and financial expansion which continued far into the twentieth century’.⁵⁵

Although Japan rarely featured in the Cain and Hopkins analysis, their interpretation of British imperialism suggested that the imposition of the Japanese treaty-port system in the mid-nineteenth century was only the beginning of a period of concerted British economic expansion into East Asia that peaked much later in the century. If accurate, this would explain why attempts by East Asian states to revise the ‘unequal treaties’ during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were so fiercely resisted by British stakeholders. Nonetheless, the Cain and Hopkins model of ‘gentlemanly capitalism’ provoked intense debate among a new generation of Japanese economic historians who were unconvinced by its Eurocentric approach. Perhaps the most prominent dissenter was Shigeru Akita, who argued in 1999 that Cain and Hopkins had overlooked the importance of Japanese-led intra-Asian trade during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

(London: Longman, 1993). An amalgamated second edition was published by Longman in 2001 under the title of *British Imperialism, 1688-2000*.

⁵² P. J. Cain and A. J. Hopkins, *British Imperialism, 1688-2000*, (London: Longman, 2001), pp.26-9.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, p.646.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p.651.

⁵⁵ Darwin, *op.cit.*, p.616.

Their conception of ‘gentlemanly capitalism’ in East Asia had therefore critically underestimated the role of imperial Japan and exaggerated the influence of Britain in East Asian economic affairs.⁵⁶ Akita made a convincing case for incorporating more Japanese perspectives into the study of British imperial history, even if his analysis was primarily focused on events after the First World War. To date, few Japanese economic historians have challenged the Cain and Hopkins model when applied to early Anglo-Japanese interactions.

Over the last two decades, the debate on British imperialism has fundamentally shifted beyond the traditional-revisionist dichotomy of Gallagher and Robinson and Cain and Hopkins. This process started in 1997, when John Darwin published an influential article on ‘Imperialism and the Victorians’ that challenged aspects of both hypotheses.⁵⁷ Darwin began by questioning the evidential basis for Robinson and Gallagher’s emphasis on the coherence and ubiquitous influence of the ‘official mind’ as one of the primary drivers behind British imperial expansion. He then raised doubts about whether ‘gentlemanly capitalism’ was as politically pre-eminent as Cain and Hopkins alleged, and highlighted their own uncertainty about how far British intervention was driven by domestic decision-makers, ‘mega-merchants’ on the spot, pressure groups appealing to the national interest, or the sub-imperialism of British proconsuls. By reverting to the first principles of Gallagher and Robinson’s theory on the imperialism of free trade, Darwin argued that British policy was not at all guided by straightforward criteria as to where and when formal or informal modes of expansion were required. On the contrary, British imperial expansion was experimental, opportunistic, incoherent, and often the result of the inability of the ‘official mind’ to exert consistent influence. Darwin introduced the concept of the ‘bridgehead’ as the ‘transmission shaft of imperialism’ – the hinge or ‘interface’ between the metropole and a local periphery.⁵⁸ Whether this was a commercial, settler, missionary or proconsular presence – or a combination of all four – the circumstances and the performance of the ‘bridgehead’ determined whether British influence on the periphery was transformed into formal and informal empire. In sum, it was the ‘bridgehead’ that best explained the haphazard growth of the Victorian empire,

⁵⁶ Shigeru Akita, ‘British informal empire in East Asia, 1880-1939: a Japanese perspective’, in Raymond E. Dumett, ed., *Gentlemanly Capitalism and British Imperialism: The New Debate on Empire*, (New York, NY: Longman, 1999), pp.141-56.

⁵⁷ See Darwin, *op.cit.*, pp.614-42.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p.627.

rather than the ‘official mind’ as Gallagher and Robinson believed, or the economic imperatives that Cain and Hopkins stressed.⁵⁹

Darwin’s ‘bridgehead’ theory was highly applicable to the way in which British imperialism extended into East Asia. It suggested that the British refusal to annex China during the nineteenth century was not, as previous historians had argued, evidence that the ‘official mind’ regarded informal influence within a decaying oriental empire as sufficient to safeguard British economic interests there. Darwin also refuted the idea that the essentially financial nature of those economic interests dictated a strenuous effort to hold the Chinese state together as a fair field for multinational financial enterprise. Instead, he argued that the relatively underdeveloped nature of British private interests in China maximised official freedom of action and safeguarded narrowly diplomatic priorities. Unlike in Africa, British entrepreneurs in China proved incapable of building a local business empire and exerting influence in London – both of which were critical to the success of the ‘bridgehead’ in securing intervention from the metropole. The obscurities of Chinese commercial practice and the difficulty of penetrating the China market also made British traders reliant upon Foreign Office support to exercise their treaty rights. The ‘bridgeheads’ of occupation in China were therefore weaker and more dependent upon diplomatic, financial or military aid from home than elsewhere on the periphery. The result was a treaty-port society dominated by the consulates and the commercial hierarchies of the major trading houses and banks, where the restraining authority of the British consul and that of the inherently cautious ‘official mind’ in London was much stronger than those parts of the periphery later annexed by the British state. According to Darwin, the policy-makers of Whitehall were principally concerned about ‘whether the strength of the local ‘bridgehead’ and the force of its domestic lobby outweighed the diplomatic hazards of a forward policy’.⁶⁰ In China (and one must assume in Japan as well given the limited extent of British intervention there), whatever pressure was exerted by local British interests on the ‘official mind’ was clearly insufficient to offset the powerful diplomatic, financial, and military objections to the imposition of formal empire.⁶¹

Darwin’s article catalysed a new phase in the historiography of British imperialism in which historians attempted to move beyond the concepts of informal and formal empire.

⁵⁹ See *ibid.*, pp.614-27.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p.640.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, pp.630-4; & pp.639-40.

In a contribution to Raymond E. Dumett's 1999 edited collection on *Gentlemanly Capitalism and British Imperialism*, Cain and Hopkins distinguished between two forms of power in the international system of both formal and informal empires: 'structural power' and 'relational power'.⁶² 'Structural power' referred to the way in which a dominant state shaped the framework of international relations and specified the 'rules of the game' needed to uphold it by establishing control over credit, production, security, and knowledge, belief and ideas. Fundamentally, 'structural power' was a manifestation of the core values and policy priorities of the British liberal state, which included free trade, low taxation, and sound money. By contrast, 'relational power' concerned the negotiations, pressures, and conflicts that determined the outcome of contests within this framework. By defining imperialism as a particular form of power in international relations rather than as an expression of a purely constitutional arrangement, Cain and Hopkins opened up a spectrum of possibilities ranging from informal influence to formal control.⁶³

By 2001, the debate had shifted towards understanding the relationship between British imperialism and the history of globalisation. Once again, Cain and Hopkins led the way by arguing in the final chapter of the second edition of *British Imperialism, 1688-2000* that the process of imperial expansion was effectively a phase in the history of globalisation. They divided European history into three broad and overlapping stages: a phase of proto-globalisation between 1648 and 1850, followed by the era of modern globalisation from 1850 to 1950, and then by post-colonial globalisations from 1950 to the present.⁶⁴ These ideas were developed further in *Gentlemanly Capitalism, Imperialism and Global History*, a landmark edited collection published in 2002 that attempted to understand the evolution of globalisation and the origins of today's capitalist world-economy.⁶⁵ Broadly speaking, its contributors agreed with Cain and Hopkins that British imperialism acted as a uniquely powerful globalising force during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries because it forged transnational economic linkages such as the exchange of goods, people, money, technology, and information. In this historical

⁶² P. J. Cain and A. G. Hopkins, 'Afterword: The theory and practice of British imperialism', in Dumett, op.cit., pp.196-220.

⁶³ See *ibid.*, p.204-205.

⁶⁴ Cain and Hopkins, *British Imperialism, 1688-2000*, op.cit., p.662.

⁶⁵ Shigeru Akita, ed., *Gentlemanly Capitalism, Imperialism and Global History*, (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002).

context, editor Shigeru Akita argued that it was now possible to view British imperial history as a bridge to global history.⁶⁶

This view was echoed by John Darwin, whose article on globalism and imperialism was one of the most influential to appear in the Akita collection. By considering British power in a global context, Darwin was able to demonstrate how the world economy and global geopolitics constrained British imperial expansion between 1830 and 1960. This was particularly the case during the mid-Victorian era, when the presence of numerous strong or resilient states in Europe, Asia, the Americas, and southern Africa acted as a check on Britain's spheres of influence. The mid-Victorian resort to informal empire was therefore as much an admission of Britain's relative weakness and unwillingness to challenge local hegemony as it was a matter of imperial convenience. Indeed, even Lord Palmerston, the architect and arbiter of 'gunboat diplomacy', was less dogmatically committed to unilateral intervention during this period than his reputation suggested – not least because of the ferocious criticism he frequently attracted from domestic political opponents for pursuing aggressive policies in the Near East and China. Darwin thus disputed the view advanced by Gallagher and Robinson that the years between 1830 and 1870 represented the height of British imperial power. Instead, he agreed with Cain and Hopkins that British imperial expansion did not peak until after globalism set in during the late nineteenth century, when British control over an international economy of integrated regions and open markets reached its fullest extent. By the 1930s, however, the global reach of Britain's 'formal' empire of rule and 'informal' empire of trade made both acutely vulnerable to political instability worldwide. It was this geopolitical insecurity that precipitated a period of crisis and eventual decline in British imperial power in the lead up to the Second World War. The rise and fall of the British Empire could therefore be explained by three 'long swings' of the world economy: the approach (1830s-70s), formation (1880s-1920s), and crisis (1930s-40s).⁶⁷

The efforts by Akita, Darwin et al. to explain the links between imperialism and globalism inspired several other historians to consider the British Empire from a global, transnational perspective. One important example of this new phase in the historiography

⁶⁶ See Shigeru Akita, 'Introduction: from Imperial History to Global History', in *ibid.*, pp.1-16.

⁶⁷ John Darwin, 'Globalism and Imperialism: The Global Context of British Power, 1830-1960', in Akita, Shigeru, ed., *Gentlemanly Capitalism, Imperialism and Global History*, (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), pp.43-64.

was the British historian Niall Ferguson's *Empire: How Britain Made the Modern World*. In this controversial 2003 work, Ferguson argued that British imperialism acted as a positive modernising force compared to other imperial models because it catalysed the spread of liberal capitalism and parliamentary democracy across the globe.⁶⁸ John Darwin challenged this idea of British imperial exceptionalism by examining the rise and fall of different empires through the ages in his 2007 book, *After Tamerlane: The Global History of Empire since 1405*.⁶⁹ Darwin's most recent study, *Unfinished Empire: The Global Expansion of Britain*, published in 2012, built upon his earlier article in *Gentlemanly Capitalism, Imperialism and Global History* by exploring the global history of the British Empire in much greater detail.⁷⁰ This time, Darwin argued that Britain's overseas empires had begun to split into four distinct divisions, or 'sub-empires', by the end of the eighteenth century. The first consisted of the traditional self-governing colonies of North America, the Caribbean, and Australasia over which London had almost no control. The second included the Indian possessions that made Britain a great Asian power as well as a European one. The third was the ragbag collection of fortresses like Gibraltar, tropical colonies such as Ceylon, maritime bridgeheads in East and West Africa, decaying old colonies in the British West Indies, and booming trade entrepôts like Singapore and Hong Kong. The fourth was the informal or 'invisible' empire exemplified by the British business empires in Argentina and Uruguay, Britain's temporary occupation of Egypt, and the treaty-port system in China.⁷¹ There is little to dispute in Darwin's assessment that these informal colonies were often more valuable than the formal variety, that British power was exerted informally because the cost and effect of formal rule seemed unnecessary, or because such rule would have been too hard to impose. However, this thesis will take issue with his assertion that informal empire was 'a compromise that depended on the cooperation of locals and the absence of rivals'.⁷² It will demonstrate that, in Japan's 'enclave empires' at least, local resistance and treaty-power rivalry were often close bedfellows.

⁶⁸ See Niall Ferguson, *Empire: How Britain Made the Modern World*, (London: Allen Lane, 2003).

⁶⁹ John Darwin, *After Tamerlane: The Global History of Empire since 1405*, (London: Penguin, 2007).

⁷⁰ John Darwin, *Unfinished Empire: The Global Expansion of Britain*, (London: Allen Lane, 2012).

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, pp.390-2.

⁷² *Ibid.*, p.392.

By far the most comprehensive global history of the nineteenth century to emerge in recent years was Jürgen Osterhammel's *The Transformation of the World: A Global History of the Nineteenth Century*.⁷³ First published in German in 2009 and later translated into English in 2014, this monumental study adopted a multifaceted thematic approach to explain how technology, science, politics, economics, and other complex forces catalysed global change during the 'long nineteenth century'. By moving beyond the traditional Eurocentric and chronological accounts of the era, Osterhammel was able to frame imperialism as part of the much wider transformational process that helped to create the world in which we live today. In terms of what it teaches us about the transnational, transcontinental, and transcultural impact of nineteenth-century imperialism in all its guises, Osterhammel's *magnum opus* remains the definitive global history of that tumultuous era.

Compared to the rich historiography that now exists on British imperialism in the mid-Victorian era, far fewer Anglophone historians have explored its French equivalent in anywhere near as much detail. Fortunately, this discrepancy has been addressed in recent years by the publication of several Francophone studies on the Second Empire, a period when Anglo-French imperial rivalry reached new and dangerous heights. One of the most useful of these was Jean Baillou's colossal two-volume study of the French diplomatic service from the *ancien régime* to 1870, which included a very detailed section on the mechanics of foreign policy under Napoléon III.⁷⁴ The most prominent and comprehensive study to appear since these two volumes were published in 1984 was undoubtedly Pierre Milza's 2004 biography of Emperor Napoléon III.⁷⁵ Meticulously researched and eloquently written, this sympathetic but honest appraisal of the emperor's life and times is still considered by many to be the definitive account. Despite this, Napoléon III was the subject of another monumental biography published by Éric Anceau in 2008 to mark the bicentennial of his birth.⁷⁶ Anceau's *Napoléon III: un Saint-Simon à cheval* was a brave attempt to understand this highly enigmatic figure, but it failed to advance the discourse any further than the parameters set by Milza four years earlier.

⁷³ Jürgen Osterhammel, *The Transformation of the World: A Global History of the Nineteenth Century*, (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2014).

⁷⁴ Jean Baillou, ed., *Les affaires étrangères et le corps diplomatique français, Tome I: de l'ancien régime au Second Empire; & Tome II: 1870-1980*, (Paris: Éditions du centre national de la recherche scientifique, 1984).

⁷⁵ Pierre Milza, *Napoléon III*, (Paris: Perrin, 2004).

⁷⁶ Éric Anceau, *Napoléon III: un Saint-Simon à cheval*, (Paris: Éditions Tallandier, 2008).

The same could be said for much of the recent Francophone historiography of the French Second Empire. Despite the huge amount of new material that has been dedicated to studying the emperor and his regime over the last few decades, it remains difficult for historians to square the liberal objectives of the emperor's interventionist 'principle of nationalities' foreign policy with his autocratic domestic programme. Milza's *Napoléon III: l'homme, le politique*, an edited collection also published to coincide with the 2008 bicentennial, contains a good overview of the debates on these matters, as well as a comprehensive bibliography of works published on the Second Empire since 1950.⁷⁷ Unfortunately, aside from Bernard Brizay's *Le sac de palais d'Été*, which focuses exclusively on the Anglo-French naval expeditions to China between 1858 and 1860, very few contemporary French-language histories examine the Second Empire's East Asia policy.⁷⁸ New Francophone studies of French policy in Japan during this era are even more elusive.

Although many recent studies have put British imperialism into its international context, comparative histories of the British and French Empires in either English or French are rather thin on the ground. In 1996, Robert Tombs made the important point that, in stark contrast to the economic factors that motivated Britain's mid-Victorian expansion, the emperor's expansionist foreign policy was partly designed to restore French prestige and silence his critics at home.⁷⁹ However, as this point was made in a general survey of French history between 1814 and 1914, Tombs did not really have the space to dwell on Napoléon III's policies for very long. Since then, many English-language histories of the Second Empire have focused on the motives and methods of the French imperial project under Napoléon III rather than on their global impact. In this context, Roger Price's 2001 work on *French Second Empire: An Anatomy of Political Power* is one of the most useful.⁸⁰ Many British and American historians of this period have also followed in the footsteps of their French counterparts by producing biographical portrayals of Napoléon

⁷⁷ See Pierre Milza, ed., *Napoléon III: l'homme, le politique*, (Paris: Napoléon III éditions, 2008), pp.481-90. For an even more comprehensive bibliography see <http://www.napoleontrois.fr/dotclear/index.php?pages/Bibliographie> (accessed 28 September 2016).

⁷⁸ Brizay, Bernard, *Le sac du palais d'été: l'expédition Anglo-Française de Chine en 1860 (troisième guerre de l'opium)*, (Monaco: Éditions du Rocher, 2003).

⁷⁹ Robert Tombs, *France, 1814-1914*, (London: Longman, 1996), p.210.

⁸⁰ Roger Price, *The French Second Empire: An Anatomy of Political Power*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001).

III.⁸¹ Unfortunately, while these works have injected some important French perspectives into the study of the mid-nineteenth century international order, they have very rarely examined how Napoléon III's erratic foreign policy impacted upon events in East Asia, let alone in Japan.

The last three decades have at least seen the addition of new biographical studies concerning British personalities in Japan. The former British Ambassador to Japan, Hugh Cortazzi, pioneered this trend in 1984 when he drew upon the private correspondence of the first British Legation doctor in Edo, William Willis, to publish the first new perspective on Sir Harry Parkes for decades.⁸² Willis's letters alleged that Parkes had been a 'pestilently active' taskmaster whose experiences in China had left him with little regard for Asian authorities. Despite this, Cortazzi argued that such an attitude was generally understandable given the provocation and difficulties that Parkes experienced in Japan, and stressed that Willis ultimately had great respect for his superior.⁸³ In 1985, Cortazzi restored another important Meiji figure to public prominence by publishing an edited collection of the memoirs and correspondence of Algernon Mitford, whose private material was brought into the public eye for the first time.⁸⁴ Nine years later, Cortazzi wrote a useful summary of Sir Harry Parkes in a collection of Anglo-Japanese biographical portraits.⁸⁵ After making explicit reference to the bitter personal rivalry that had existed between Parkes and Roches, Cortazzi wondered (without drawing upon any definitive evidence) if their poor relationship might have made Parkes more inclined to support the Restoration movement.⁸⁶ A second volume in this biographical series included interesting articles on Sir Rutherford Alcock and Lawrence Oliphant.⁸⁷

⁸¹ See: William E. Echard, *Napoleon III and the Concert of Europe*, (Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 1983), James F. McMillan, *Napoleon III*, (London: Longman, 1991), Roger Price, *Napoleon III and the Second Empire*, (London: Routledge, 1997).

⁸² Hugh Cortazzi, 'The Pestilently Active Minister: Doctor Willis's Comments on Sir Harry Parkes', *Monumenta Nipponica*, Vol. 39, No. 2 (Summer, 1984), pp.147-161.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, pp.160-1.

⁸⁴ Hugh Cortazzi, ed., *Mitford's Japan: the Memoirs and Recollections, 1866-1906, of Algernon Bertram Mitford, the first Lord Redesdale*, (London: Athlone, 1985).

⁸⁵ Hugh Cortazzi, 'Sir Harry Parkes, 1828-1885', in Ian Nish, ed., *Britain and Japan: Biographical Portraits, Volume I*, (Folkestone: Japan Library, 1994), pp.1-19.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, p.6 and p.12.

⁸⁷ Hugh Cortazzi, 'Sir Rutherford Alcock, 1809-1897', pp.1-20, and Carmen Blacker, 'Laurence Oliphant and Japan, 1858-88', pp.35-47, in Ian Nish, ed., *Britain and Japan: Biographical Portraits, Volume II*, (Richmond: Japan Library, 1997).

The trend for biographical histories culminated in 1996 with a book by Gordon Daniels dedicated entirely to the life of Sir Harry Parkes.⁸⁸ Here was an opportunity to build upon the arguments that Daniels had advanced back in 1968, and to establish a clearer picture of Parkes's relationship with the *bakufu*, their opponents, and his influential subordinates Satow and Mitford. Unfortunately, this book did not go far beyond the official British diplomatic record by incorporating the Parkes Papers held in Cambridge University Library. Its conclusions were therefore little different to those drawn by earlier Anglo-Japanese histories. This disappointing work symbolised the limited analytical approach that has sometimes been applied to examinations of Britain's presence in *bakumatsu* Japan. Although these studies have added flavour to the discourse, they have not taken sufficient account of broader historiographical currents on British imperialism or considered how global contexts impacted upon British foreign policy in Japan.

Some progress has however been made on interpretations of the French role, albeit along a similar trajectory to the revisionist British studies of the post-war years. Jean-Pierre Lehmann was the first to take the old orthodoxy to task in a 1980 article for *Modern Asian Studies* that reassessed the personality and policy of Léon Roches.⁸⁹ Lehmann was fiercely critical of Meron Medzini's earlier assertion that Roches was an imperialist agent of Napoléon III, which he believed was based on Medzini's overreliance on Japanese source material and failure to make full use of French documentary evidence.⁹⁰ Lehmann suggested that it was the Japanese who had instigated bilateral initiatives with France, rather than the other way round. He also argued that, while Roches had enjoyed some admirable successes in Japan, his personality and background had blinded him to the realities of the changing situation and evolving threat from the *bakufu*'s enemies.⁹¹

Lehmann had highlighted a critical gap in the historiography of this period, but it was almost another twenty years until a full survey of nineteenth-century Franco-Japanese relations appeared. Richard Sims's *French Policy Towards the Bakufu and Meiji Japan, 1854-95*, published in 1998, finally rebalanced the Anglo-centric bias of the historiography by examining French policy in similar detail to the older studies by Fox et

⁸⁸ Gordon Daniels, *Sir Harry Parkes: British Representative in Japan, 1865-83*, (Richmond: Japan Library, 1996).

⁸⁹ Jean-Pierre Lehmann, 'Léon Roches – Diplomat Extraordinary in the Bakumatsu Era: An Assessment of his Personality and Policy', *Modern Asian Studies*, Vol. XIV. No. 2, (1980), pp.237-307.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.* p.273.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, pp.304-6.

al. on Britain.⁹² This important work drew upon French diplomatic documents to demonstrate the recurring negativity that defined French relations with Japan during the mid-Victorian period. In this context, Sims definitively dismissed the idea that France was interested in trade or spreading Christianity in Japan, and stressed instead that the principal positive motivation, if there was one at all, was a desire to increase French prestige in Asia.⁹³ He also suggested that a general lack of imagination in Paris ensured that France missed a huge opportunity to build influence in Japan after the short-lived Roches period.⁹⁴ The comparative approach that Sims adopted finally started the process of assessing the Japanese treaty-port system as an international phenomenon. By contrast, Christian Polak's 2002 French-language work, *Soie et lumières: l'âge d'or des échanges franco-japonais, des origines aux années 1950*, was primarily based on traditional English-language histories and added little new information.⁹⁵

English-language histories on Tokugawa Japan have also undergone an important evolution of late as historians have started to consider the events of the 1850s and 1860s from the perspective of the *bakufu* itself. This process began with a 1979 article in *Monumenta Nipponica* in which Marc Ericson highlighted Edo's attempts to place itself within the framework of international affairs. Far from being averse to foreign relations, Ericson asserted that the shogunate had been an active promoter of Japan's position in the international community because it had sent many diplomatic missions and students to the West.⁹⁶ Ericson's article was followed one year later by Conrad Totman's *The Collapse of the Tokugawa Bakufu, 1862-1868*, an influential re-examination of how and why the *bakufu* fell from power.⁹⁷ Totman chose to ignore both the diplomatic manoeuvres of the treaty powers and the machinations of the anti-*bakufu* forces to focus instead on the ruinous policies pursued by the Tokugawa government. His detailed analysis of the inner workings of the governing regime provided the specialist historian

⁹² Richard Sims, *French Policy Towards the Bakufu and Meiji Japan, 1854-95*, (Richmond: Japan Library, 1998).

⁹³ *Ibid.*, p.296.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, pp.302-3.

⁹⁵ Christian Polak, *Soie et lumières: l'âge d'or des échanges franco-japonais, des origines aux années 1950*, (Tokyo: Ashetto Fujin Gahōsha, 2002).

⁹⁶ Mark D. Ericson, 'The Bakufu Looks Abroad: The 1865 Mission to France', *Monumenta Nipponica*, Vol. 34, No. 4 (Winter 1979), pp.383-407.

⁹⁷ Conrad D. Totman, *The Collapse of the Tokugawa Bakufu, 1862-1868*, (Honolulu, HI: University of Hawaii Press, 1980).

with an important new perspective, even if the vast material he cited from the Japanese sources prevented a more precise and effective analysis of Edo's weaknesses.

This challenge was soon embraced by several high-profile historians in a new volume of *The Cambridge History of Japan* published in 1989.⁹⁸ Dedicated exclusively to the nineteenth century and later condensed into an edited collection,⁹⁹ this excellent volume expanded upon Totman's analysis of Tokugawa society to include the political crises it had experienced prior to the arrival of the West. It also explored the roots of the philosophical malaise that was corroding *bakufu* authority long before Western gunboats entered Edo Bay by charting the development of Tokugawa culture and thought during the early nineteenth century. Editor Marius Jansen's article on the Meiji Restoration was particularly influential, as it highlighted the long-term structural weaknesses that underpinned the Tokugawa state, echoed Totman's point that anti-feudal opposition had long existed within the ruling Tokugawa elite, and stressed the importance of Japanese perceptions of the foreign threat on Edo's panicked reaction to the challenge of the West.¹⁰⁰

Another significant historiographical development in recent decades has been the appearance of several accounts of the life and times of the merchants, missionaries, and other members of Western society who lived and died at the treaty ports. This trend began with the publication in 1992 of *Japan Through American Eyes: The Journal of Francis Hall, Kanagawa and Yokohama, 1859-1866*, edited and annotated by F. G. Notehelfer.¹⁰¹ An American reporter and entrepreneur with the U.S. trading house Walsh, Hall & Company, Hall's eyewitness account has been described by historian Kevin Murphy as 'an important step toward a more complete understanding of the first cultural encounter between Japan and America'.¹⁰² It certainly marked an important progression in the

⁹⁸ Marius B. Jansen, ed., *The Cambridge History of Japan, Volume 5: The Nineteenth Century*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989).

⁹⁹ Marius B. Jansen, ed., *The Emergence of Meiji Japan*, (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 1995).

¹⁰⁰ Marius B. Jansen, 'The Meiji Restoration', in *ibid.*, pp.144-202.

¹⁰¹ F. G. Notehelfer, ed., *Japan Through American Eyes: The Journal of Francis Hall, Kanagawa and Yokohama, 1859-1866*, (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1992).

¹⁰² Kevin Murphy, 'Review: Japan Through American Eyes: The Journal of Francis Hall, Kanagawa and Yokohama, 1859-1866', *Modern Asian Studies*, Vol. 30, No. 3 (1996), pp.721-25.

historiography of treaty-port life, which had hitherto been overly focused on diplomatic studies of officials relations between Japan and the treaty-power representatives.

Two years later, J. E. Hoare published a much more comprehensive effort on the same topic. *Japan's Treaty Ports and Foreign Settlements: The Uninvited Guests, 1858-1899* drew upon an exhaustive collection of government papers, private letters and journals, early treaty-port newspapers, and contemporary periodicals to explore every facet of treaty-port society over the forty years of their existence.¹⁰³ It included an examination of day-to-day life for the resident merchant class, an analysis of the legal system introduced by the extraterritoriality clauses in the treaties, a detailed account of how municipal affairs were managed at the ports, and a lively survey of the foreign and Japanese-language treaty-port press. Hoare's vivid depiction of treaty-port society introduced a diverse cast of 'lofty consuls, sometimes idealistic foreigners employed by the Meiji government (*oyatoi*), single-minded missionaries and, early in the experience, foreign troops'.¹⁰⁴ He also related the Japanese treaty-port system to its Chinese counterpart, making some interesting conclusions on the similarities and differences between the two in terms of their economic, political, and social impact on each country.

In the two decades since Hoare first considered how different societal groups shaped Japan's treaty ports, other historians have explored this topic in much greater detail. Thanks to works such as Andrew Cobbing's *The Japanese Discovery of Modern Britain: Early Travel Encounters in the Far West*,¹⁰⁵ Kevin Murphy's *The American Merchant Experience in Nineteenth-Century Japan*,¹⁰⁶ and Peter Ennals's *Opening a Window to the West: The Foreign Concession at Kobe, Japan, 1868-1899*,¹⁰⁷ our understanding of treaty-port society in Japan has expanded far beyond the confines of official diplomatic history. Recent histories of the Chinese treaty-port system have followed a similar trajectory, thanks especially to the prolific Robert A. Bickers, whose recent publications

¹⁰³ J. E. Hoare, *Japan's Treaty Ports and Foreign Settlements: The Uninvited Guests, 1858-1899*, (Folkestone: Japan Library, 1994).

¹⁰⁴ Ardath W. Burks, 'Review: Japan's Treaty Ports and Foreign Settlements: The Uninvited Guests, 1858-1899', *The Journal of Japanese Studies*, Vol. 22, No. 2 (Summer 1996), pp.445-6.

¹⁰⁵ Andrew Cobbing, *The Japanese Discovery of Victorian Britain: Early Travel Encounters in the Far West*, (Folkestone: Japan Library, 1998).

¹⁰⁶ Kevin Murphy, *The American Merchant Experience in Nineteenth-Century Japan*, (London: RoutledgeCurzon, 2002).

¹⁰⁷ Peter Ennals, *Opening a Window to the West: The Foreign Concession at Kobe, Japan, 1868-1899*, (Toronto: Toronto University Press, 2014).

include *Britain in China: Community, Culture and Colonialism*,¹⁰⁸ *Empire Made Me: An Englishman Adrift in Shanghai*,¹⁰⁹ and *The Scramble for China: Foreign Devils in the Qing Empire, 1800-1914*.¹¹⁰ In 1998, Jack L. Hammersmith's *Spoilsmen in a "Flowery Fairyland": The Development of the U.S. Legation in Japan, 1859-1906*, finally brought the historiography on American diplomacy in treaty-port Japan up to speed with earlier studies on Britain and France.¹¹¹ Yet despite these laudable efforts, the role played by the French, Dutch, German, Italian, and other non-American or British actors who also populated the Japanese and Chinese treaty ports continues to be neglected. Given the international nature of the East Asian treaty-port system, this is an unacceptable oversight.

There have also been some notable efforts in recent years to understand the treaty-port system from a global history perspective. One excellent example of this was Turan Kayaoglu's *Legal Imperialism: Sovereignty and Extraterritoriality in Japan, the Ottoman Empire, and China*, published in 2010.¹¹² Kayaoglu characterised extraterritoriality as a form of British 'legal imperialism' that was imposed upon three very different Eastern empires with three very different legal traditions. The bulk of his book focused on how each regime reacted to the imposition of extraterritoriality, and how they attempted to overturn it during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Kayaoglu then contemporised his findings with an interesting examination of how American 'legal imperialism' still exists today. His ideas were developed further by Par Kristoffer Cassel in his exceptional 2012 work, *Grounds of Judgement: Extraterritoriality and Imperial Power in Nineteenth-Century China and Japan*.¹¹³ Cassel combined recent findings on Qing history on the nature of ethnicity and law with the history of the treaty-port system to demonstrate the fundamental difference between the form of extraterritoriality imposed upon China and Japan. He argued that the transition into the treaty-port era was relatively seamless in China because a Qing institution for the adjudication of Manchu-Chinese

¹⁰⁸ Robert A. Bickers, *Britain in China: Community, Culture and Colonialism*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999).

¹⁰⁹ Robert A. Bickers, *Empire Made Me: An Englishman Adrift in Shanghai*, (London: Penguin, 2004).

¹¹⁰ Robert A. Bickers, *The Scramble for China: Foreign Devils in the Qing Empire, 1800-1914*, (London: Allen Lane, 2011).

¹¹¹ Jack L. Hammersmith, *Spoilsmen in a "Flowery Fairyland": The Development of the U.S. Legation in Japan, 1859-1906*, (Kent, OH: The Kent State University Press, 1998).

¹¹² Turan Kayaoglu, *Legal Imperialism: Sovereignty and Extraterritoriality in Japan, the Ottoman Empire, and China*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010).

¹¹³ Par Kristoffer Cassel, *Grounds of Judgement: Extraterritoriality and Imperial Power in Nineteenth-Century China and Japan*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012).

disputes served as a model for the extraterritorial arrangements introduced by the treaties. By contrast, Japanese authorities fiercely resisted all attempts to integrate consular and mixed courts into the indigenous legal order, ensuring that consular jurisdiction remained an alien concept for as long as the treaty-port system existed. Far from a ready-made product to be imposed uniformly across the extra-European world, therefore, Cassel believed that extraterritoriality was adaptable to local precedents, local understandings of power, and local institutions – a theory that fitted neatly with broader historiographical trends on the hybrid nature of informal empire. Like Kayaoglu before him, Cassel had demonstrated the benefits of adopting a comparative, global approach to the study of Japan’s unique encounter with Western imperialism.

Perhaps the most outstanding global history of pre-Meiji Japan to date was Michael Auslin’s *Negotiating with Imperialism: The Unequal Treaties and the Culture of Japanese Diplomacy*, published in 2004.¹¹⁴ Here, at last, was a study of Tokugawa policy that understood the impact and importance of Western ‘relational power’ and how it revolutionised Japan. Auslin identified a distinctive Tokugawa diplomatic culture based on three interlinked boundaries – one ideological, one intellectual and one physical – which protected the shogunate from foreign threats and domestic interference.¹¹⁵ During the 1850s and 1860s, Edo’s strategy of negotiation with the West led to the gradual breakdown of these boundaries and ultimately to a transformation of Japan’s diplomatic culture. This in turn provoked sweeping societal change and a fundamental reappraisal of Japan’s relationship with the rest of the world.¹¹⁶ Critically, Auslin placed these events within their international context by stressing how Western policy in China influenced Edo’s strategy of negotiation and Western attitudes towards Japan. He also depicted the treaty-port system as an imperialist conceit by which each nation could project power over Japan individually or by sharing power collectively. Most importantly, the incremental destruction of the boundaries erected by the *bakufu* led the Japanese to understand the British-led imperialist world order, the irresistible force of the global free trade economy, and the insignificant part Japan played in all of it.

By fusing new perspectives on Western imperialism with the study of Japanese domestic policy, Auslin succeeded in broadening the discourse on Japan’s entry into the modern

¹¹⁴ Michael R. Auslin, *Negotiating with Imperialism: The Unequal Treaties and the Culture of Japanese Diplomacy*, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004).

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p.201-2.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p.2-3.

world. Ironically, this refreshing approach has exposed further gaps in the historical narrative. By definition, Auslin's analysis focused on the evolution in Japan's diplomatic culture response to the imposition of the treaty-port system, rather than on the interplay between the Japanese treaty powers. Furthermore, although he made some attempt to take international contexts into account, this was generally only when events elsewhere in East Asia directly impacted upon Japanese affairs. Yet the East Asian region was rarely a foreign policy priority for the principal treaty powers, as other historical works covered in this section made clear. To date, however, no historian has fully considered whether extra-Asian contexts shaped the Japanese treaty-port system in the way that regional ones did. As this overview of existing literature on the Japanese treaty-port system has shown, this is one of several gaps in the historiography that still need to be addressed.

Enclave Empires: A new synthesis

By charting the evolution of the English and French-language historiography on the East Asian treaty-port system, we now have a clearer picture of the great strides that historians have made over the last seventy years towards understanding this unique form of informal imperialism. Successive generations of historians have advanced increasingly sophisticated theories on the global impact of empire, both formal and informal, while others have focused on the myriad ways in which these forces shaped extra-European societies during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Narrower studies of individual treaty powers, of treaty-port society, and of specific aspects of the 'unequal treaties' have also enriched our understanding of the East Asian treaty-port system. More recently, historiographical trends suggest a growing desire to explore informal empire in East Asia from a comparative, transnational, and transcultural perspective. This thesis will attempt to build upon the progress that these studies have made in seeking to understand the Japanese treaty-port system within its global context. It will take account of recent trends in imperial and global history to demonstrate how the political, economic, and diplomatic relationship between the two most powerful Western imperial formations of their day – the British Empire and the French Second Empire – shaped events in Japan from the opening of treaty relations in 1858 until the Meiji Restoration in 1868. It will also address the overreliance on official diplomatic correspondence in much of the existing historiography of this period, and consider the extent to which British and French personalities who operated in Japan beyond the diplomatic sphere influenced Anglo-

French relations there. Above all, it will argue that the treaty-port system created distinctive informal ‘enclave empires’ in Japan that Britain, France, and the other treaty powers fought to control and influence. The main body of the thesis will explore how this treaty-power rivalry unfolded during the first decade of treaty relations with Japan so that the concept of ‘enclave empires’ can be fully defined in the conclusion.

Four factors will underpin this study’s methodological approach: the international *context*; the *comparative* approach; the *cast* of characters; and the *corpus* of documents. The international *context* is perhaps the most critical to broadening the scope of the historiography beyond the current orthodoxy. Though the ‘opening’ of Japan to the West has attracted intensive interest from successive generations of historians, few have framed the establishment of the treaty-port system in Japan within the wider regional and global contexts.¹¹⁷ This study will endeavour to remedy this oversight by considering where Japan fitted into the spectrum of British and French foreign policy priorities during the mid-nineteenth century. In the first chapter, it will explore the origins of the Chinese treaty-port system to demonstrate the inextricable link between the ‘enclave empires’ that were created in Japan and their precursors in China. Thereafter, it will emphasise the continued importance of events in China and East Asia in determining the way in which British and French policy was made in Japan. It will also identify the wider global contexts that played a critical role in shaping treaty-power dynamics in Japan during the 1860s. This will include analysis of how major geopolitical crises in Europe impacted upon British and French policy in East Asia, and how the American Civil War knocked the United States out of the race to become the leading treaty power in Japan. By considering the wider international *context* in this way, this thesis will explain how the increasingly bitter struggle between Britain and France for control over Japan’s ‘enclave empires’ was eventually won.

The *comparative* approach is another means by which this thesis will seek to present new and fresh perspectives. It is fair to say that much of the current Anglophone and Francophone historiography of the Japanese treaty-port system is focused on bilateral diplomatic relations between Japan and one external treaty power. This thesis will argue that this methodological approach is unsatisfactory given the international character of the Japanese treaty-port system. It will therefore reassess that system as a multinational

¹¹⁷ This trait is as apparent in newer texts as it is in older ones. See, for example: Fox, *op.cit.*; Medzini, *op.cit.*; Sims, *op.cit.*; and Auslin, *op.cit.*

construct that depended upon the cooperation and collaboration of each treaty power that operated within it. In the first chapter, it will show that the original five treaty powers each played a different role in negotiating the first ‘unequal treaties’ with Japan. It will then chart the evolution of treaty-power rivalry in Japan following the opening of trade in 1859. We will see how the early years of treaty-port relations were characterised by an Anglo-American struggle for control over the process of implementing the ‘unequal treaties’, before the American challenge was eventually eclipsed by seismic local, regional, and global events. Thereafter, attention will focus on the personal enmity that developed between the British and French diplomatic representatives as they fought to implement contradictory programmes for the modernisation of Japan in the lead up to the Meiji Restoration in 1868. The viewpoints of other treaty-power representatives will be acknowledged as far as possible, but generally only when relevant to Anglo-French relations. Unfortunately, it is simply not possible within the confines of this study to consider the perspectives of all the treaty powers that operated in Japan during the 1860s. However, this thesis will also argue that we can only truly understand how traditional great-power imperial rivalries developed within the small collection of informal ‘enclave empires’ that spanned East Asia by adopting such a comprehensive *comparative* approach.

The detailed historiographical overview that prefaced this section demonstrated that many histories of this period have focused exclusively on the decisions of diplomatic actors. This thesis will consider whether incorporating the viewpoints of the much broader *cast* of characters who populated the Japanese treaty ports is also necessary to understand how British and French policy developed in *bakumatsu* Japan. As mentioned previously, as well as the diplomatic representatives and their staffs, the treaty ports hosted a diverse international community of missionaries, merchants, military personnel, naval servicemen, journalists, and financiers, to name but a few. This thesis will try to determine what impact, if any, this rich tapestry of mid-Victorian society had on shaping the direction of treaty-power relations in Japan. It will not attempt to present a thematic analysis of each of these societal groups, but simply seek to incorporate individual perspectives wherever possible and whenever relevant to the narrative. In so doing, it will highlight how certain influential members of the non-diplomatic *cast* of characters contributed directly to the Anglo-French struggle for dominance over the ‘enclave empires’ in Japan.

Finally, it is also important to incorporate a wider *corpus* of documentary evidence into the study of this period than has hitherto been the case. Unfortunately, many historians have only dipped into the vast repository of British private paper archives that are now available for study, even though mid-Victorian political and diplomatic figures frequently supplemented their official dispatches with private letters. To remedy this oversight, this thesis will not only examine the private correspondence between British officials in Japan and those in the Foreign Office, but also delve into the private papers of prominent ministers who served in other departments of the British government. Where possible, it will additionally cite personal letters from the non-governmental figures who also contributed to British policymaking at the time. Official publications and dispatches from the Foreign Office and the Admiralty, many of which are contained in the National Archives at Kew, will still be consulted where necessary, but this thesis will not rely upon them in the first instance. On the other hand, as it has been more difficult to locate similar private paper collections in the French archives, French documentary evidence will still be drawn primarily from the Japan-related ‘Correspondence Politique’, ‘Correspondence Commerciale et Consulaire’, and ‘Mémoires et Documents’ sections of the Archives Diplomatiques at La Courneuve in Paris. These will be supplemented where relevant with private letters from Archives de la Société des Missions Étrangères de Paris.

On final note is necessary on sources. The primary issue under scrutiny in this thesis is how the international relationship between Britain and France influenced the imposition and development of ‘enclave empires’ in Japan between 1858 and 1868. It will therefore focus on Anglo-French relations *in* Japan, not Anglo-French relations *with* Japan. For this reason, Japanese sources have not been consulted. Furthermore, as this thesis will only consider the viewpoints of the other treaty powers when relevant to Anglo-French relations, most primary source material relating to their policies in Japan is drawn from the British and French archives. Nonetheless, I am confident that the *corpus* of documentary evidence analysed in this thesis will shed new light on how British and French foreign policy was made during the mid-nineteenth century, wherever in the world these two great empires clashed.

CHAPTER 1

Terra Incognita: The Treaty-Port System Comes to Japan, 1858

On 31 March 1854, U.S. Navy Commodore Matthew C. Perry signed the first ever treaty between the United States of America and Japan. After hundreds of years of self-imposed seclusion from the West, Perry was confident that the convention he had negotiated would finally begin the transformation of this mysterious island empire into a ‘modern’ state.¹¹⁸ Four years after the conclusion of his Convention of Kanagawa, five Western maritime trading nations, including the United States, formally entered into commercial relations with Japan. The agreements signed between these powers and the government of the Tokugawa shogunate, or *bakufu*, in 1858 were so unbalanced in terms of the special commercial, legal, and political privileges they granted to the former that they have been termed ‘unequal treaties’. In effect, they imposed a pernicious form of informal empire known as the treaty-port system upon the Japanese state. This system was to play a critical role in shaping Western policy in Japan for the remainder of the nineteenth century.

Japan was not the only East Asian nation that was forced to accept the treaty-port system during the mid-nineteenth century. In fact, it had been operating in the region for the best part of two decades by the time it finally reached there, having first been imposed upon China by the British Empire following victory in the Opium War (1840-1842). The first ‘unequal treaties’ were therefore originally used to bypass the sovereignty of the Qing dynasty, China’s imperial rulers since 1644, rather than that of the feudal military government that had ruled Japan since 1600. Given this wider regional context, it is simply not possible to understand the forces that created ‘enclave empires’ in Japan without first exploring their origins in China. What follows, therefore, is a brief overview of how and why the ‘unequal treaties’ were first imposed upon China, a detailed account of their introduction to Japan, and an analysis of the similarities and differences between the Chinese and Japanese treaty-port systems.

¹¹⁸ See W. G. Beasley, ‘The Foreign Threat and the Opening of the Ports’, in Marius B. Jansen, ed., *The Cambridge History of Japan, Volume 5: The Nineteenth Century*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), p.270.

The treaty-port system in China

The Opium War was the culmination of decades of increasingly strained relations between the British Empire and the Qing dynasty, the two preponderant imperial powers of East and West, resulting from the aggressive expansion of British naval and economic power into East Asia during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. The gradual but increasingly forceful British encroachment into the Qing dynasty's sphere of influence brought two distinctly different and fundamentally incompatible systems of international relations into direct contact for the first time: Europe's Westphalian system of state sovereignty and China's Sinocentric system of imperial tribute. Difficulties inevitably arose out of this clash of worldviews, most prominently over the proliferation of international trade into Qing territory. On the one hand, British merchants wanted access to China's huge and potentially lucrative markets to satisfy the growing British demand for Chinese tea, porcelain, and silk. On the other, the Qing government was suspicious of foreign intercourse and saw little need for a vast, largely self-sufficient empire to trade with the outside world.

By 1760, the Qing had established a highly restrictive regulatory framework known as the Canton system to oversee trade with the West. Under this system, all Western commercial transactions were conducted at the southern port city of Canton, where foreigners were only permitted to trade with a small group of licensed Chinese 'Hong' merchants. Europeans were also subject to the jurisdiction of the Qing penal code, which lacked an independent judiciary and used forms of capital punishment that were considered barbaric in the West, such as public strangulation, beheading, and slow slicing. The Canton system was successful in maintaining control over foreign trade in China, but the British merchant community put increasing pressure on the British government to send an embassy to the Qing emperor to negotiate better trading privileges. The fact that the Qing would only accept silver bullion as payment for Chinese goods was particularly problematic, as it created a growing trade deficit for British merchants. They began to exchange Indian opium for silver to compensate for this deficit during the 1770s, but the increasing popularity of opium in China and the haemorrhaging of silver from the country exacerbated tensions between Qing officials and foreign traders.

At the beginning of the nineteenth century, the British government made a series of overtures to the Qing emperor requesting the opening of official diplomatic relations and a relaxation of the restrictions on trade. His refusal to consider any of these requests

constituted a serious threat to Britain's prestige as a global naval power. Matters came to a head in 1838, when the Daoguang Emperor issued a decree suppressing the opium trade in China. When the Qing authorities demanded the surrender of foreign opium the following year, the merchant community at Canton initially refused. This led to the immediate suspension of all trade and a blockade of the factories where the foreign merchants lived and worked. Eventually, Charles Elliot, the Chief Superintendent of British Trade in China, agreed to hand over more than 20,000 chests of opium to the Qing authorities. Crucially, the fact that Elliot was a representative of the British Crown meant that the British opium merchants in China could demand financial compensation from their government in London. Forced into an official response, the British government dispatched an imposing naval fleet to seek satisfaction for the insult and reparation for the financial losses incurred. Over the following three years, the Royal Navy engaged in various bombardments and blockades up and down the Chinese seaboard, before the Qing dynasty eventually sued for peace in the summer of 1842.¹¹⁹

The Opium War has traditionally been portrayed by post-war historians as a clash between ancient and modern civilizations. This interpretation is most prominently associated with the renowned China historian John K. Fairbank, who depicted the Qing dynasty as a moribund power and the Chinese system of international relations as anachronistic in comparison to its more sophisticated British counterpart.¹²⁰ More recently, post-revisionists such as James Hevia have criticised this assessment for underestimating the complexity of the Chinese tributary system, which granted each emperor the 'Mandate of Heaven' to rule the world as a living god. As all other countries were considered inferior in this system of diplomatic practice, their rulers had to pay tribute to the 'Son of Heaven'. According to Hevia, it was impossible for the Qing emperor to accept Western diplomatic conventions and practices because they automatically assumed equivalence in status between sovereigns. This made it inevitable that Britain would have to fight a war to destroy the Chinese tributary system if it wanted to establish regional supremacy in East Asia. Hevia therefore framed the Opium War as an ideological conflict, putting forward a theory of imperial rivalry that depicted the

¹¹⁹ This account of the First Opium War draws heavily from Jonathan D. Spence, *The Search for Modern China*, (New York, NY: W. W. Norton & Co.), pp.117-28 & pp.147-58.

¹²⁰ See John K. Fairbank, 'The Creation of the Treaty System', in Fairbank, John K., ed., *The Cambridge History of China, Volume 10: Late Ch'ing, 1800-1911, Part 1*, (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1978), pp.213-263.

British and Chinese systems of international relations as fundamentally incompatible due to their inherently coercive characteristics.¹²¹

It is certainly tempting to perceive an underlying impulse for imperial aggrandisement in the fundamental changes that Britain introduced to Chinese society after the Opium War. On 29 August 1842, Britain forced the Qing emperor to sign the first ‘unequal treaty’, the Treaty of Nanking [Nanjing]. This consigned the Canton system to history by opening five cities on the Chinese seaboard where British merchants could reside and trade freely. It established a low fixed tariff on imports and exports, granted Britain the right to open consulates in the new ports, and ceded Hong Kong to Britain in perpetuity. The Qing dynasty lost further rights in the supplementary Treaty of the Bogue signed the following year, which granted British subjects within the new ports extraterritorial protection from Chinese laws, as well as giving Britain ‘most favoured nation’ status. Other Western powers with significant trading interests in China wasted no time in securing similar trading rights. In 1844, the United States negotiated a more extensive agreement known as the Treaty of Wanghia [Wangxia]. The French Treaty of Whampoa [Huangpu], signed later the same year, replicated the terms of the American pact but also made France the official protector of Catholics in China by forcing the Qing emperor to rescind longstanding edicts against Catholic missionaries and grant full toleration to the practice of Catholicism. Critically, the ‘most favoured nation’ clause in the Treaty of Tianjin meant that the additional rights conferred by these treaties automatically applied to Britain as well. Collectively, these treaties formed the ‘treaty-port system’: a mechanism of international trade and informal empire that persisted in China for a century.¹²²

There can be no disputing the imperialist characteristics of the ‘unequal treaties’, to say nothing of the manner in which they were imposed. Yet there has been no evidence that they were part of a pre-meditated British plot to establish imperial supremacy over China. If any ideology played a role in the creation of the treaty-port system, it was free trade, not imperial rivalry as Hevia suggested. By the time of the Opium War, support was growing in Britain for the liberalisation of economic policy at home and the removal of barriers to commerce abroad. Prominent political proponents of this liberal doctrine such

¹²¹ James L. Hevia, *Cherishing Men from Afar: Qing Guest Ritual and the Macartney Embassy of 1793*, (Durham: Duke University Press, 1995). For a more detailed overview of this debate, see Scott Gilfillan, ‘Extraterritoriality and the British Consular Court System in Japan’, *Journal on European History of Law*, Vol.6, No.1 (2015), pp.59-60.

¹²² Spence, op.cit., pp.158-61.

as Lord Palmerston, who was Foreign Secretary in Lord Melbourne's Whig government at the time, believed that such measures would facilitate the global capitalist operations of Britain's newly industrialised economy across its empire and beyond. By contrast, they saw the national market protection and monopolism characterised by the Canton system in China as 'the expression of an unacceptable civilisation deficit'.¹²³ For Palmerston, the confiscation and destruction of British opium by the Qing authorities in 1839 was final confirmation that the Chinese system of commerce was fundamentally incompatible with the principle of free trade. As David Brown has pointed out, in backing an aggressive policy against China, Palmerston's primary motive was to protect this principle, whether it related to trade in opium or anything else.¹²⁴ Certainly, the belligerent measures that the 'gunboat diplomat' advocated in China were quintessential examples of what the historians Gallagher and Robinson termed the 'imperialism of free trade'.¹²⁵ Nonetheless, it is important to stress that Palmerston and his acolytes did not see these measures at the time as part of an inevitable showdown between the British and Chinese empires, but as the necessary means to protect, maintain, and, if possible, extend free trade in China in line with their liberal inclinations.

The international nature of the treaty-port system also raises difficult questions about Hevia's theory of imperial rivalry. If the Opium War was really all about British imperial aggrandisement, then why were France and the United States able to share equally in the spoils of victory – especially when Britain alone had made the sacrifices necessary to force the Qing to abandon the Canton system? The most obvious explanation is that the ideology of free trade, by definition, advocated equal treatment for all and the absence of commercial monopolies. Yet Britain's ideological commitment to the dissemination of free trade only partly explains why other trading nations were allowed to establish a commercial foothold in China. Regional geopolitics were also critically important, for the Opium War took place at a time when several Western maritime powers were already well established in China and had developed considerable trade interests there. In other words, even had Britain wanted to incorporate China into its formal empire it would have probably been impossible by the 1840s. China was too large and coherent a political unit,

¹²³ Jürgen Osterhammel, *The Transformation of the World: A Global History of the Nineteenth Century*, (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2014), pp.455.

¹²⁴ David Brown, *Palmerston: A Biography*, (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2012), pp.401-2.

¹²⁵ See John Gallagher and Ronald Robinson, 'The Imperialism of Free Trade', *Economic History Review*, 2nd Series, Vol. VI, No. 1, (1953), pp.1-15.

too distant from the source of British naval power, and, most importantly, too lucrative a commercial prospect for other Western nations for Britain to be allowed a free rein.

It is also worth remembering that formal empire was also a notoriously expensive pursuit. By comparison, free trade was a much cheaper and more efficient means for accessing new and profitable markets, especially given the relative superiority of Britain's maritime trading network compared to those of its commercial rivals. Put simply, the treaty-port system was not only the means by which Britain introduced free trade to China, but also the method by which it overcame the geopolitical challenge posed by other Western nations in the region. By allowing these countries to join an international system of commercial treaties, Britain gave each one a stake in its success and a vested interest in its defence. It also bound them into a unitary framework of diplomatic relations that reduced the ability of the Qing authorities to play one foreign power off against another, even though Britain retained the power and influence to shape the rules of this framework to suit its own interests. In short, the treaty-port system guaranteed the long-term protection of free trade in China *and* the preservation of British commercial superiority there.

Of course, the treaty-port system was beneficial to the other Western trading nations that operated within it as well. It not only enabled them to establish a secure commercial base at minimal cost and sacrifice, but also provided them with a platform to propagate their own religious and social values in China for the foreseeable future. Indeed, the United States and France took great pains to ensure that their respective treaties with the Qing dynasty guaranteed religious freedom and tolerance for their missionaries in the treaty ports. In addition, the treaty-port system helped to shift the balance of power in East Asia to a more equitable position. Compared to the Royal Navy, there were far fewer American and French gunboats stationed in Chinese waters. Yet the 'unequal treaties' significantly reduced this resource gap by giving the United States and France equal diplomatic status in China and an equal say in the management of the treaty ports. In theory at least, the treaty-port system boosted their diplomatic prestige in East Asia far beyond what their military means would otherwise warrant.

Despite its obvious improvements compared to the Canton system, the new arrangement was not as commercially successful as expected. The continued hostility of the Chinese population towards foreigners and sustained Qing resistance to the opium trade continued to cause problems, while a lower than anticipated demand for Western products also

hampered commercial growth. The British government gradually realised that revision of the treaties was the only way to secure wider access to Chinese markets and the legalisation of the opium trade. In 1854, therefore, the British Foreign Secretary Lord Clarendon applied Britain's 'most favoured nation' clause to the 1844 American treaty (which contained a provision for treaty negotiation after twelve years). Under this dubious premise, Clarendon instructed the British authorities in China to request immediate treaty revision with the Qing government.¹²⁶ All British attempts at renegotiation over the next two years failed, however, as Qing officials proved adept at manipulating the legal framework of the treaty-port system, first by declaring it too early to revise the American or French treaties and then by rejecting Britain's right to negotiate a new treaty at all.¹²⁷ Unfortunately for the Chinese, Lord Palmerston, who became Prime Minister in 1855, refused to accept the status quo. In September 1856, he sent a dispatch to the French government proposing a joint naval expedition to demonstrate their determination to renegotiate the treaties with the Qing emperor.¹²⁸

Discussions over this expedition were already underway when news arrived from Canton in early December that forced Palmerston's hand. According to Harry Parkes, the British consul in Canton, Qing officials had boarded and illegally searched a Chinese ship, the *Arrow*, which was ostensibly under British protection. When the incident became public knowledge in early 1857, Palmerston argued in Parliament that a vigorous response was necessary to secure British interests in the region and protect free trade. A majority of the House of Commons disagreed, however, and Palmerston's government was defeated on a censure motion on 3 March 1857 over its support for the bombardment of Canton. At the general election that followed, Palmerston fought a populist campaign focused on a commitment to defend Britain's commercial rights and the security of its nationals abroad. This helped win him a comprehensive victory over the demoralised Tories in April, giving his government a clear mandate to seek reparations from China for the *Arrow* affair and immediate treaty revision. Palmerston appointed one of his supporters, the Earl of Elgin, as ambassador-extraordinary to China, and entrusted him with

¹²⁶ Spence, op.cit., p.179.

¹²⁷ J. Y. Wong, *Deadly Dreams: Opium, Imperialism, and the Arrow War (1856-1860) in China*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), p.264-6.

¹²⁸ Ibid., p.266.

plenipotentiary powers, a significant military force, and instructions to negotiate treaty revision with the Qing emperor or his representatives at Beijing.¹²⁹

The *Arrow* affair hardly merited such a vigorous response, not least because, as Palmerston's opponents pointed out during the parliamentary debates, the aggressive reaction of the British authorities in Canton had been legally, morally, and politically questionable.¹³⁰ Yet Palmerston was willing to stake his political career on this issue anyway because the *Arrow* affair provided the pretext, however weak, for the dispatch of a naval expedition that he had considered necessary long before overt hostilities erupted at Canton. The key factor shaping this policy was the treaty-port system, which risked collapse if the staunch opposition of the Qing emperor to treaty renegotiation continued. A unilateral expedition would be morally indefensible, however, as it would suggest that Britain desired to monopolise the China trade.¹³¹ It would also be questionable from a legal standpoint, since Britain's treaty with China contained no clause for revision. Palmerston's proposal was thus an example of treaty-port diplomacy at work: collective diplomacy to compel the Chinese government to negotiate better commercial terms in lieu of expensive and morally ambiguous unilateral measures. The cooperation of either or both the French or the American governments in this undertaking was critical, because only their treaties included clauses for revision in 1856. This was therefore an attempt to bring the collective moral and material force of the treaty powers to bear on the Qing emperor as far as possible *without* recourse to overt military action. If the emperor continued to refuse to negotiate, however, coercive measures could then be justified as being in the interest of all.

Unfortunately for Palmerston, the *Arrow* affair had made the U.S. government suspicious about British motives. Washington therefore rejected Palmerston's proposal in April 1857 on the basis that it wanted to avoid war with China.¹³² By contrast, the French government was very supportive of the British plan and appointed Baron Jean-Baptiste Louis Gros to act as joint commander of the Anglo-French force with Elgin. Although French

¹²⁹ Brown, *op.cit.*, pp.396-403.

¹³⁰ W. G. Beasley, *Great Britain and the Opening of Japan, 1834-1858*, (London: Luzac & Co., 1951), p.165.

¹³¹ Stephen Platt, *Autumn in the Heavenly Kingdom: China, the West, and the Epic Story of the Taiping Civil War*, (London: Atlantic Books, 2012), p.26.

¹³² For more on the negotiations between the British and American governments, see J. Y. Wong, *Deadly Dreams: Opium, Imperialism, and the Arrow War (1856-1860) in China*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), pp.273-5.

participation was partly motivated by a desire to secure reparation for the brutal execution of a French missionary, Father Auguste Chapdelaine, in February 1856, this was by no means the most important factor in Napoléon III's decision to take part.¹³³ Indeed, the French government had tolerated the death of missionaries in China and Korea many times before without dispatching a military force to the region.¹³⁴ In fact, just as Palmerston had used the *Arrow* affair to whip up public support for his China policy, the Chapdelaine incident was merely a pretext to justify French participation in an expedition that had many potential benefits for France. After all, Britain would make the greatest military commitment, but France would secure equal commercial advantages, monetary indemnities for any military losses, and guaranteed recompense for the execution of its missionary. Collective action was also the most effective means by which the French government could secure a better commercial treaty with China, as the diplomatic equivalency provided by the treaty-port system would give Gros far greater influence over the joint negotiations than if he was acting alone. The emperor also wanted to reassure the French community in China, which was worried about threats to trade and security at the treaty ports, that it would be protected.¹³⁵

The decision to ally militarily with Britain in China reveals much about how Napoléon III viewed the treaty-port system and France's role within it. For the proud emperor, participation in the joint expedition was first and foremost a matter of national prestige. As a treaty power, France theoretically enjoyed equal political status to Britain in China. Given the relatively insignificant French military and economic presence in the country, however, it is hard to envisage that the Qing emperor perceived France as a country of equal standing to Britain. If Napoléon III was to fulfil his ambition to re-establish France as a European great power, he could not afford to remain aloof during a crisis that threatened French national and economic interests, however limited. Nor could he allow Elgin free rein to dictate treaty renegotiation to London's exclusive advantage.¹³⁶ As Pierre Milza has pointed out, the main reason why Napoléon III dispatched naval forces

¹³³ Ibid., pp.266-72 gives a detailed overview of the Chapdelaine affair.

¹³⁴ See Richard Sims, *French Policy Towards the Bakufu and Meiji Japan, 1854-95*, (Richmond: Japan Library, 1998), p. 7.

¹³⁵ Pierre Milza, *Napoléon III*, (Paris: Perrin, 2004), p.634.

¹³⁶ Éric Anceau, *Napoléon III: un Saint-Simon à cheval*, (Paris: Éditions Tallandier, 2008), p.387-8.

to China was therefore to ensure that ‘the British were not left as the sole masters of the game’.¹³⁷

In the end, the joint expedition proved a great success. In December 1857, the Anglo-French fleet blockaded and seized the port of Canton, before proceeding the following spring to the mouth of the Peiho River near the port city of Tianjin. When the allied forces anchored at Tianjin and threatened to advance towards Beijing, the Qing emperor finally capitulated. The British Treaty of Tientsin [Tianjin], signed on 26 June 1858, was comprehensive. It secured residence rights for a British minister in Beijing, opened ten new treaty ports, guaranteed free navigation of the Yangtze River, freedom of travel within the Chinese interior with valid passports, protection for the open preaching of Christianity, and pecuniary indemnities for the British government and its merchants.¹³⁸ The French treaty was almost identical but for the inclusion of separate articles securing redress for the execution of Father Chapdelaine.¹³⁹ The American minister, who had hoped to profit from acting as a neutral mediator between the conflicting parties, was presumably satisfied with a treaty that guaranteed his country the same commercial advantages as Britain and France.¹⁴⁰ The Russian plenipotentiary Evfimii Putiatin achieved even greater success, using intrigue and subversion to secure a treaty that, in addition to the same commercial privileges granted to the others, ceded huge swathes of Siberia to Russia.¹⁴¹

For the second time in just over a decade, a British-led military conflict had facilitated the imposition and extension of significant and lasting commercial, political, and societal change in China. By creating a group of international trading enclaves within Qing territory but free from its interference and shielded from its laws, the 1858 treaty settlement effectively bypassed the sovereignty of the Qing emperor in the Chinese ports still under his direct control.¹⁴² Clearly the treaty-port system was not a mechanism by which one imperial power sought to annex Qing territory and subject it to formal colonial rule, but a more sophisticated form of informal imperialism that created ‘enclave empires’

¹³⁷ Milza, *op.cit.*, p.634.

¹³⁸ Spence, *op.cit.*, p.179-81.

¹³⁹ Bernard Brizay, *Le sac du palais d'été: l'expédition Anglo-Française de Chine en 1860 (troisième guerre de l'opium)*, (Monaco: Éditions du Rocher, 2003), p.56.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p.52.

¹⁴¹ Wong, *op.cit.*, p.280.

¹⁴² Many internal rebellions were also raging within China at this time, including that of the Taiping, who occupied several ports on the Yangtze delta and other parts of central and southern China. For more on the Taiping Rebellion, see Platt, *op.cit.*

at the new treaty ports – conduits through which free trade, the principles of so-called international law, the diplomatic ideology of Enlightenment Europe, and Western legal, political, and religious institutions were introduced into an Eastern empire whose deep resistance to foreign intercourse could no longer be tolerated by the imperial powers of the West. Critically, the international character of these ‘enclave empires’ prevented any one treaty power from carving out individual colonies on the China coast. Instead, the treaty powers were each compelled to compete for commercial and political supremacy from within China’s existing borders. This confinement of traditional imperial rivalries to an international system of commercial treaties had seismic consequences for Western relations in East Asia for the rest of the nineteenth century.

This was certainly the case in Japan, where a similar group of ‘enclave empires’ was created just a few weeks after the Treaty of Tianjin was signed. At first glance, this seems surprising. Why did the Tokugawa *bakufu* willingly accept a similar treaty settlement to that forced upon the Qing dynasty in military defeat? Were there any differences between the ‘unequal treaties’ signed by Japan in 1858 and those imposed upon the Qing earlier the same year? Did the treaty powers fight for control over the Japanese treaty-port system or accept British predominance there unconditionally? How did regional and global contexts impact upon the development of ‘enclave empires’ in Japan, and how did they affect treaty-power policy there? What role did diplomatic officials play in shaping these ‘enclave empires’, and what contribution, if any, did other members of treaty-port society make to this process? To begin to answer these important questions, it is first necessary to examine why the treaty-port system was introduced to Japan in the first place.

Japan ‘opens’ to the West

Many historical studies of the modern history of Japan start with the entry of Commodore Matthew C. Perry’s squadron of four ‘black ships’ into Edo Bay on 2 July 1853. This narrative usually credits Perry’s 1854 Convention of Kanagawa as putting a definitive end to the centuries-old policy of self-imposed national ‘seclusion’ known as *sakoku*, or ‘closed country’. Unfortunately, the neat conceptualisation of Japan as an empire hermetically sealed off from the rest of the world before the arrival of Perry is neither accurate nor helpful to understanding the transformation brought about by the introduction of the treaty-port system to Japan in 1858. It suggests, as Marius Jansen put

it, that ‘there were no foreigners and no foreign policy in Tokugawa Japan’.¹⁴³ In fact, as with the Qing dynasty, the Tokugawa shogunate pursued a distinct foreign policy during the Edo period (1603-1868), albeit one focused on Asia rather than the West. Although the ideology of Japanese exceptionalism precluded the *bakufu* from ever joining the Chinese system of imperial tribute, Japan still maintained a commercial, cultural, and spiritual discourse with both China and Korea throughout this period.

By contrast, Tokugawa efforts to restrict trade with European countries during the seventeenth century and therefore ‘close’ the country were mainly the result of hostility towards the diffusion of Christianity across Japan. This hostility was rooted in deeply entrenched suspicions about the role of foreign missionaries in Japan that pre-dated the establishment of the Tokugawa shogunate in 1600. Suspicions were so heightened by 1614 that the first Tokugawa shogun, Ieyasu, decided to expel all missionaries from Japan, seeing their presence as a threat to his ambition of unifying the country. There was widespread persecution of native Christians during the rule of his grandson and successor Iemitsu, who also introduced restrictive edicts preventing interaction with European Christians such as barring Japanese from travelling overseas on pain of death and highly restrictive measures on foreign trade. Thereafter, the only remaining European traders in Japan were the Dutch, who were forced to reside on the isolated man-made island of Dejima in Nagasaki for over two hundred years, shielded from the wider Japanese community.¹⁴⁴

From the perspective of Western observers in the nineteenth century, Japan was closed to civilisation.¹⁴⁵ A foreign policy that restricted all external contact with the West in order to suppress the internal diffusion of a foreign religion did not conform to the ‘law of nations’ that dictated international convention and diplomatic practice in Europe and the United States. As a result, both contemporary and more recent comparisons between Japan’s system of seclusion and the Westphalian system of international relations have tended to overstate its ‘isolation’ before 1853. When considered in its proper historical and regional context, it becomes clear that Tokugawa foreign policy, although restrictive and xenophobic, was by no means ‘backward’. The suppression of foreign intercourse and native Christians was instead deliberately designed to maintain Tokugawa control

¹⁴³ Marius B. Jansen, *The Making of Modern Japan*, (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2002), p.64.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, pp.63-91.

¹⁴⁵ Beasley, *Great Britain*, op.cit., p.89.

over Japan's feudatory domains, or *han*. Indeed, the inherent meaning of the shogun's full title, *sei taishōgun* (barbarian-subduing generalissimo), made *sakoku* synonymous with Tokugawa power.¹⁴⁶ Perry did not therefore 'open' Japan to civilisation in 1853, for it was already civilised in its own way. Instead, he began the process of imposing an entirely alien system of international relations that was devised to facilitate Western trade with Japan, rather than to preserve *bakufu* power in the country.

Although the Perry Convention conferred international prestige on the United States as the first Western country to open relations with a notoriously secluded empire, this 'tentative pact' only granted limited access to coaling stations and ports of refuge.¹⁴⁷ These concessions were important for the American trading vessels making the Pacific crossing to China from the western United States, but of little significance to British merchants in China. Indeed, the indifference of British merchants and officials alike towards Japan explains why it was an American naval commander rather than a British one who made the first attempt to open relations with Edo. Despite the British government's commitment to the global extension of free trade, victory in the Opium War had not led to many calls in Britain for the extension of the treaty-port system to Japan. The prevailing belief among British merchants was that, compared to China's potentially vast markets for Western merchandise, the opportunities for trade in Japan were negligible. For their part, British officials in China feared that forcing another 'uncivilised' East Asian government to open to trade would incur great expense and lead to many of the same difficulties over local laws, customs, and commercial practices that they had encountered with the Qing.¹⁴⁸

With little real understanding of conditions within Japan, the Foreign Office finally approved secret plans for a Japanese commercial treaty in 1845. These plans, which were drafted by Sir John Davis, the British Superintendent of Trade at Hong Kong, drew heavily from his experiences in China on issues such as religious toleration, opium smuggling, and diplomatic representation. However, they were indefinitely postponed because Davis was unable to assemble the imposing naval force that he believed was

¹⁴⁶ Jansen, *op.cit.*, pp.91-5.

¹⁴⁷ Michael R. Auslin, *Negotiating with Imperialism: The Unequal Treaties and the Culture of Japanese Diplomacy*, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004), p.18. The full text of the Perry Convention can be found in: William G. Beasley, *Select Documents on Japanese Foreign Policy, 1853-1868*, (London: Oxford University Press, 1955), pp.119-22.

¹⁴⁸ See Beasley, *Great Britain*, *op.cit.*, chapter III, pp.55-86.

necessary to guarantee success. In any case, the British government remained indifferent towards Japan even after the U.S. government announced plans to dispatch an expedition there in 1852. Rather than challenging the Americans, the then British Foreign Secretary, Lord Malmesbury, was content to wait and see if Perry was successful before taking any further action. By the time that Lord Clarendon entered the Foreign Office in 1853, attention had shifted back to China, where the importance of securing treaty revision was becoming increasingly acute. Clarendon was therefore also happy to let the Americans take the lead in Japan if it made their cooperation in China more likely. He eventually issued new instructions regarding a future Japanese commercial treaty in February 1854 at the instigation of the then Superintendent of Trade Sir John Bowring. However, the outbreak of the Taiping Rebellion (1850-1864) in China and the Crimean War (1853-1856) with Russia diverted Bowring's attention and resources, and once again British plans for a commercial treaty with Japan were postponed.¹⁴⁹

In the end, the first Anglo-Japanese agreement of the nineteenth century was negotiated by Rear-Admiral Sir James Stirling, Commander-in-Chief of the East Indies and China Station, who arrived in Japan in September 1854 under the dubious pretext of seeking a Russian naval squadron thought to be sheltering in the area. The Stirling Convention, signed on 14 October 1854, opened two Japanese ports to British ships in need of repair and resupply, and granted 'most favoured nation' status for any future openings of ports. Yet as it omitted any mention of trade, the convention was heavily criticised by both Bowring and the British merchant community in China. Stirling found little support for his convention in the Foreign Office or the Board of Trade either, as both would have also preferred a commercial treaty. Tired by Stirling's unhelpful meddling in diplomatic affairs, Clarendon informed the Admiralty in early 1856 that all further negotiations over opening Japan to trade would be conducted by Bowring. His plans were deferred again after fresh hostilities erupted in Canton towards the end of the year, and eventually postponed until after the resolution of the new war with China. The Sepoy Mutiny in India during the summer of 1857 subsumed British interests in East Asia altogether, as Lord Elgin's expeditionary force, en route to China, was redirected to relieve the beleaguered British governor in Calcutta. Again, commercial and foreign policy priorities in China and the British Empire had delayed a British expedition to Japan.¹⁵⁰

¹⁴⁹ For more, see *ibid.*, chapter IV, pp.87-112.

¹⁵⁰ This account draws heavily from Beasley, *Great Britain*, *op.cit.*; in particular chapters V & VI, pp.113-67.

The French government's indifference towards Japan during this period was perhaps even more pronounced, even though the French Catholic Church, upon whose support Napoléon III in part relied, was by this time actively advocating for the establishment of treaty relations with Edo. The Church had long resented the Tokugawa policy of seclusion and deep hostility to Christianity, which had proved so successful that no French missionary had penetrated the country since 1625. French missionaries from the influential *Société des Missions Étrangères de Paris*, formed in 1663, had focused instead on other parts of East Asia. By the early nineteenth century, they had proliferated across Annam, China, Siam, and Vietnam, an achievement that was recognised by the Pope when he acknowledged France's primacy in East Asian missionary operations in 1839. However, Japan remained stubbornly inaccessible until 1844, when Admiral Cécille, commander of the large French naval squadron sent to East Asia in the aftermath of the Opium War, brought a priest from the *Missions Étrangères* to the Ryūkyū Islands (which vaguely acknowledged both Chinese and Japanese suzerainty). Cécille, who viewed missionary activities in East Asia as a means to advance French interests in the region, also intervened twice in nearby Vietnam in 1845 and 1847 to demand the release of imprisoned missionaries and freedom of worship for Catholics.¹⁵¹

The inauguration of Napoléon III as emperor in 1852 led to a sea change in French official attitudes towards the Catholic Church. For the first time, the French government began to justify an increasingly interventionist and expansionist foreign policy in East Asia on the need to defend and protect the French missionary presence in the region. The emperor's notoriously pious wife Eugénie, who often exhorted her husband to punish regimes in Asia that executed missionaries, provided a useful smokescreen in this respect. She was particularly animated by the continued persecution of Catholic missionaries in Vietnam, which Cécille's armed interventions of the 1840s had failed to prevent. Matters came to a head when the Vietnamese court refused to respond to an official protest from Paris over the execution of Catholics in 1856. In June 1857, the emperor decided to use the opportunity provided by the Anglo-French expedition to China to force Vietnam to surrender one of its ports to France.¹⁵² In November 1857, instructions were issued to

¹⁵¹ Sims, *op.cit.*, p.6; and Meron Medzini, *French Policy in Japan during the Closing Years of the Tokugawa Regime*, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1971), pp.5-7.

¹⁵² Unlike the Royal Navy, the French Navy still lacked a foothold in the Pacific and was at the time operating out of the old Portuguese territory of Macao. See Medzini, *op.cit.*, p.4.

Admiral Rigault de Genouilly, the commander of the French naval division in East Asia, to attack the south of Vietnam once operations in China had concluded.¹⁵³ These naval forays demonstrated Napoléon III's wider ambition to re-establish France as a global power that could compete on an equal footing with Britain. In his view, the persecution of Catholics justified the application of aggressive measures in parts of East Asia either not yet dominated by Britain, such as Vietnam, or where cooperation with Britain was necessary to further French interests, such as China. However, this pretext could never be applied in Japan due to the total absence of French missionaries there.¹⁵⁴

In general, the French government also had very little interest in establishing a trading relationship with Japan during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Unlike successive British governments, the French state had never been ideologically committed to the global extension of free trade, nor did this agenda particularly motivate French manufacturers. A French equivalent of the British East India Company had been founded as early as 1664, but this had made no use of its China trade monopoly whatsoever. The monopoly passed in 1719 to the *Compagnie des Indes*, which enjoyed greater, but still limited, commercial success until the right to trade opened up to private merchants during the French Revolution (1789-1799). By the first half of the nineteenth century, three or four French ships on average were visiting Canton each year. This was a significant increase from past numbers, but still meagre in comparison to the volume of British merchant shipping in China. When Napoléon III came to power he did at least institute economic reforms to promote international trade, but these took some time to bear fruit. In addition, most French merchants shared the view of their British counterparts that Japan offered limited commercial potential. In short, there was very little appetite within Second Empire France for opening Japan to commerce, except from perhaps the Ministry of Agriculture, Commerce and Public Works and a few isolated individuals.¹⁵⁵

Although increasingly interested in the commercial potential of the Ryūkyūs, French naval commanders in East Asia were also less adventurous when it came to opening Japan itself. Prior to the Perry Expedition, the only attempt to show the French flag at a Japanese port occurred in 1846, when Admiral Cécille visited Nagasaki on his own initiative following his failed attempt to open the Ryūkyū Islands to trade. Unsurprisingly, he was

¹⁵³ Spencer C. Tucker, *Vietnam*, (Lexington, KY: University Press of Kentucky, 1999), pp.27-9.

¹⁵⁴ Sims, *op.cit.*, pp.8-14.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p.7.

treated with ‘customary incivility’ and left after two days.¹⁵⁶ In contrast to Royal Navy commanders like Stirling, the signing of the Perry Convention did little to motivate French naval interest in Japan either. During a visit to Nagasaki in May 1855, Captain Tardy de Montravel was offered an identical convention to that signed by Stirling the year before, but he rejected it on the grounds that he lacked the necessary authority. As Richard Sims has pointed out, though Montravel was probably aware of the reception that both the Stirling and Perry conventions had received in Europe, his decision still displayed a lack of enterprise and interest in attempting to negotiate something better.¹⁵⁷ On the other hand, Montravel may have been content to leave diplomacy to the diplomats because he knew that the French Foreign Ministry had already issued orders to Alphonse de Bourboulon, the French minister plenipotentiary in China, to negotiate a commercial treaty with the Japanese.

Even these instructions, which were issued by the Quai d’Orsay (the building that housed the French Foreign Ministry) in March 1854, did not really indicate a change in French attitudes towards Japan. After all, they were only drawn up after Lord Clarendon had deliberately shared his orders to Bowring of February 1854 with the French Minister of Foreign Affairs, Édouard Drouyn de Lhuys. Drouyn was therefore merely following the British lead when he dispatched similar instructions to Bourboulon a month later, although they differed slightly from Clarendon’s by asking Bourboulon to do all he could to secure permission for French missionaries to preach openly in Japan.¹⁵⁸ When the mistaken news arrived in the summer of 1854 that Perry had agreed a commercial treaty with the *bakufu*, Clarendon asked the British Ambassador to France, Lord Cowley, to speak with Drouyn about the possibility of sending a joint mission to negotiate a similar agreement. As well as guaranteeing success, Clarendon believed that this would ‘afford an additional proof of the strict union and friendship which subsist between the Governments of England and France, and of their readiness to cooperate with each other for the attainment of any object of common interest’.¹⁵⁹

¹⁵⁶ Beasley, *Great Britain*, op.cit., p. 69.

¹⁵⁷ Sims, op.cit., p.13.

¹⁵⁸ This was a nod to the *Missions Étrangères*, which had sent another three missionaries to the Ryūkyūs in 1855.

¹⁵⁹ A copy of this letter, dated 5 June 1854, is enclosed in a dispatch from Drouyn de Lhuys to Count Alexandre Walewski, the then French ambassador in London. See Archives Diplomatiques, Paris (AD), CPJ59/1, Drouyn de Lhuys to Walewski, No. 121, 1 June 1854. Clarendon’s letter contradicts Meron Medzini’s assertion that it was France

Despite Clarendon's hopes that Anglo-French cooperation over treaty revision in China would extend to Japan, Bourboulon rejected the idea of negotiating a treaty in concert with his British colleague. A strong advocate of 'gunboat diplomacy', he was concerned that joint action would highlight France's relative naval weakness, cause confusion over precedence, and associate France with Britain in the minds of the suspicious Japanese. He was also deeply preoccupied with efforts to secure treaty revision in China, and there were no French ships available to convey him to Japan anyway. Convinced that concerted action was unbecoming of France's status, he secured assurances from the Quai d'Orsay that 'mutual support' did not mean simultaneous action. The outbreak of the Crimean War hindered Bourboulon's ability to plan an independent expedition in any case, just as it did for Bowring. Meanwhile, news arrived in Paris that Perry and Stirling had failed to secure any worthwhile commercial privileges from the Japanese despite the significant naval forces at their backs. Given all this uncertainty, the Foreign Ministry refused to make any new arrangements for a commercial treaty with Japan until the British government made its future intentions clear.¹⁶⁰

The British and French indifference towards the opening of commercial relations with Japan was not shared by the other Western maritime powers. Unlike in China, where Britain's commercial and geopolitical rivals often followed in the Royal Navy's wake, the American, Dutch, and Russian plenipotentiaries who sailed to Japan during the early to mid-1850s found themselves free to negotiate with the *bakufu* on their own terms. Despite this, they stuck assiduously to the treaty pattern established by the British in China by negotiating a series of intermediate pacts that introduced elements of the treaty-port system without yet granting rights of free trade or foreign residence. The exception was the 1855 Russo-Japanese Treaty of Amity, or Treaty of Shimoda, which was negotiated by the Russian Vice-Admiral Evfimii Putiatin. Like Stirling, Putiatin had sufficient naval strength at his disposal to conduct a little 'gunboat diplomacy' of his own. As the only Western power to share a disputed border with Japan, Russia also had a unique territorial interest to resolve with the Japanese government. The treaty that Putiatin concluded therefore established the border between Russia and Japan as lying between the Kuril Islands of Etorofu and Urup. It also explicitly accorded mutual extraterritoriality

that first requested joint negotiations with Britain in Japan; in fact, the proposal was entirely Clarendon's initiative. See Medzini, *op.cit.*, p.11.

¹⁶⁰ Sims, *op.cit.*, pp.15-7.

rights and the right for Russian citizens to engage in barter trade at the ports of Shimoda and Hakodate.¹⁶¹

Unlike Putiatin, Jan Hendrik Donker Curtius, the Dutch *Opperhoofden* (chief factor) at Dejima in Nagasaki, had no naval forces to call upon. Instead, he raised the spectre of British imperialism to frighten the Japanese to the negotiating table. In 1856, when a visit by Bowring appeared imminent, he warned *bakufu* officials that, after China, Japan would be the next target for British imperial expansion unless the seclusion policy was relaxed. To avoid this outcome and demonstrate Japan's willingness to cooperate with the West, he pressed the *bakufu* to negotiate a new commercial agreement with Holland before the British arrived. Reports of the fresh hostilities at Canton in early 1857 added to the sense of urgency among *bakufu* officials, as did the reappearance of Putiatin at Nagasaki in September. Fearful that the Russian would demand an entirely new commercial treaty, officials at Nagasaki signed a supplementary treaty with Donker Curtius on 16 October that relaxed limitations and controls over trade at Nagasaki. The 1857 Dutch Supplementary Treaty and the similar agreement made with Putiatin a week later represented the maximum that the *bakufu* was willing to concede. Unfortunately, as these treaties did not grant rights of free trade or residence, they were unlikely to placate the mercantilist aspirations of the Western trading powers for very long.¹⁶²

In the end, the application of some novel 'gunboat diplomacy' by an American diplomat eventually broke down Japan's barriers to free trade. Townsend Harris was appointed American consul to the port of Shimoda under the (disputed) terms of the Perry Convention. He arrived in Japan during the summer of 1856 with orders from Washington to negotiate a full commercial agreement. As the first Western diplomat to reside within a short journey of the shogun's capital at Edo for hundreds of years, Harris had a unique opportunity to dictate the terms of Japan's new treaty relationship with the West, thereby solidifying his country's influential position in Japan and assuring his own legacy for posterity. Time was of the essence, however, since success depended upon the absence of other plenipotentiaries, especially Bowring. Harris knew that his British colleague intended to visit Edo to negotiate a treaty as soon as possible, having met him in Hong Kong en route to his new post. The pair had continued to correspond after Harris reached Japan, so he probably had a decent idea of what Bowring planned for his own negotiations

¹⁶¹ Auslin, *op.cit.*, p.26-7.

¹⁶² Beasley, *Select Documents*, *op.cit.*, pp.27-30 & pp.128-30.

with the Japanese.¹⁶³ Not long afterwards, however, Bowring was relieved of the responsibility of negotiating with the Japanese government due to the arrival of Lord Elgin's expedition in China. Nonetheless, Harris knew that there was only a small window of opportunity in which to convince the *bakufu* to sign a commercial treaty before the inevitable arrival of a British plenipotentiary.¹⁶⁴

Fortunately for the U.S. government, Harris understood how treaty-port diplomacy in East Asia worked. After all, he had already negotiated a new trade agreement between the United States and Siam on his way to Japan in May 1856, albeit one that mirrored the terms of a commercial treaty that Bowring had already negotiated for Britain a year earlier. The strategically located kingdom of Siam had assumed greater regional importance for the British following their annexation of large parts of Burma at the end of the Second Anglo-Burmese War in 1853. It was not long afterwards that the Foreign Office deemed the commercial pact made between Britain and the Siamese king in 1826 as insufficient to protect British interests.¹⁶⁵ The instructions that Clarendon sent in 1854 therefore required Bowring to negotiate a new treaty with Siam as well as to find a convenient time to open commercial relations with Japan (and CochinChina).¹⁶⁶ Clearly, Bowring considered the former to be the priority, for he postponed his plans to go to Japan in favour of travelling to Bangkok to negotiate the eponymous Bowring Treaty. Signed on 18 April 1855, it replicated the treaty-port structure in China in many respects by opening all domestic ports to British merchants, permitting free trade throughout the kingdom, granting the right of permanent residence in Bangkok (within a stated limit), and placing British subjects under consular jurisdiction. In addition, Britain assumed de-facto control over shipping and the import-export trade. Just over a year later, after much tiresome negotiation, Harris concluded a commercial agreement between the United States and Siam on very similar terms.¹⁶⁷ This exhausting and bitter experience left the American convinced that 'the proper way to negotiate with the Siamese is to send two or three men-of-war'.¹⁶⁸

¹⁶³ Beasley, *Great Britain*, op.cit., p.179.

¹⁶⁴ Beasley, *Select Documents*, op.cit., p.164.

¹⁶⁵ Auslin, op.cit., p.23.

¹⁶⁶ Beasley, *Great Britain*, op.cit., p.97.

¹⁶⁷ Auslin, op.cit., p.23.

¹⁶⁸ Quoted in Walter LaFeber, *The Clash: A History of U.S.-Japan Relations*, (New York, NY: W. W. Norton & Co., 1997), p.19.

He viewed the Japanese in much the same way, writing in his journal that ‘no negotiations could be carried on with [the Japanese] unless the plenipotentiary was backed by a fleet, and offered them cannon balls for arguments’.¹⁶⁹ With that option unavailable, Harris decided to threaten the Japanese with British and French gunboats instead. In a December 1857 meeting with the chief *bakufu* negotiator, he suggested that Britain might seek to occupy Japan’s northern island of Yezo as part of its ongoing imperial rivalry with Russia. He then warned that Britain would declare war on Japan if it refused to open its doors, and stressed the likelihood that Britain would insist upon the free trade of opium at Japanese ports. Having deliberately depicted both Britain and France as imperial aggressors who had designs on Formosa and Korea respectively. By contrast, he portrayed the United States as a friendly power, uninterested in imperial aggrandisement in East Asia and willing explicitly to prohibit the opium trade in its commercial treaty with Japan. It was in Japan’s best interests, he argued, to set a precedent in its treaty relations with the West by negotiating such an agreement with the United States. If it did so, he promised he would be able to reduce the number of British and French ships that would visit the country from fifty to two or three!¹⁷⁰ These warnings stoked deep-rooted fears among the Japanese that British imperialist expansion threatened its future sovereignty. Although the *bakufu* negotiators were deeply reluctant to concede any further commercial privileges, they finally agreed a draft commercial treaty with Harris in February 1858. On the cusp of a great diplomatic success, Harris soon grew frustrated by Edo’s continued indecision over whether to sign his treaty. Meanwhile, events in China threatened to undermine all his hard work.

Harris had greatly exaggerated the prospect of a British imperial conquest of Yezo, but he was right to warn that Britain and France intended to base negotiations in Japan on the terms of their revised treaties with the Qing dynasty. The instructions issued to Lord Elgin prior to his departure from England in April 1857 demonstrated the extent to which British objectives in China continued to shape policy towards Japan. Elgin was instructed to proceed to Edo only once treaty revision in China was complete, and then to negotiate a commercial treaty there on terms ‘at least as favourable’ as those obtained in China (although the use of military force was proscribed).¹⁷¹ The orders issued by the French government to Baron Gros in May 1867 mirrored Elgin’s in almost every respect, and he

¹⁶⁹ Quoted in Jansen, *op.cit.*, p.183.

¹⁷⁰ Beasley, *Select Documents*, *op.cit.*, Document 19, pp.159-65.

¹⁷¹ Quoted in Beasley, *Great Britain*, *op.cit.*, p.169-70.

was even provided with a copy of the British envoy's instructions for reference. Gros was explicitly instructed to liaise with Elgin before proceeding to Japan, to act in concert with him to negotiate a treaty there, and to use the Chinese treaties as a guide for what both the British and the French governments expected them to achieve.¹⁷²

Interestingly, Gros was not instructed to demand the right for French missionaries to proselytise within Japan. The section relating to missionaries in Gros's instructions was crossed out because, as a note in the margin explained, it would be dangerous to raise the question. According to Richard Sims, the decision not to raise this issue was the direct result of a recommendation by an anti-clerical French merchant named Charles Deprat who had lived in Nagasaki for four years. It was clearly made without any consultation with the *Missions Étrangères*, which demonstrated the limited extent to which the French government was willing to prioritise religious affairs in Japan.¹⁷³ Given that British and French desires for a commercial treaty with the Japanese were in all other respects identical, the Quai d'Orsay probably accepted that pressing religious issues would not only upset the Japanese but also risk a rift with the British. The Americans obviously did not consider this much of a priority either, since Harris's draft treaty made no mention of missionaries and only included provision for the free exercise of religion and erection of places of worship.¹⁷⁴

As previously mentioned, the progress of the Anglo-French expedition in China was critical to Harris's chances of securing his own commercial treaty with Japan first. Unless he could convince the Japanese to sign a treaty before Elgin and Gros arrived on their shores, it was highly likely that the revised treaties with the Qing dynasty, which demanded extensive access to the Chinese interior and the legalisation of the opium trade, would form the basis for British and French negotiations in Japan. The departure of the allied force to the mouth of the Peiho River in April 1858 signalled that his time was beginning to run out. When news arrived three months later that treaty revision had been concluded at Tianjin, Harris frantically informed the *bakufu* negotiators of the punitive terms imposed upon the Qing dynasty and urged them to sign the draft treaty at once.¹⁷⁵ This last-minute warning about the consequences of further prevarication proved

¹⁷² AD, CPJ59/1, Walewski to Gros, 16 May 1856.

¹⁷³ Sims, *op.cit.*, pp.10-11.

¹⁷⁴ See Article VIII of the Harris Treaty in Beasley, *Select Documents*, *op.cit.*, p.187.

¹⁷⁵ Beasley, *Great Britain*, *op.cit.*, pp.179-183.

sufficient. On 29 July 1858, Edo finally gave way and signed the Treaty of Amity and Commerce between the United States and Japan.¹⁷⁶

Despite stressing the anti-imperial credentials of the United States during his negotiations with the *bakufu*, the Harris Treaty bore almost all the hallmarks of the ‘unequal treaties’ in China. It opened the ports of Hakodate, Nagasaki, and Kanagawa to American trade and residence from 4 July 1859, with Niigata or another port on the Japan Sea to follow on 1 January 1860 and Hyōgo from January 1863. Foreigners were also granted residence in Edo from 1 January 1862 and in Osaka from 1 January 1863. It granted the United States diplomatic and consular representation in Edo and the open ports, as well as freedom of travel throughout Japan to the highest ranking diplomatic representative. It also included extraterritorial protection under consular jurisdiction, freedom of worship for American citizens, and included a clause for treaty revision after 4 July 1872. Significantly, the treaty expressly prohibited the importation of opium, as Harris had promised.¹⁷⁷

Lord Elgin reached Edo in the middle of August, where he found Putiatin and Curtius already waiting. Just as Harris had anticipated, it soon became apparent that the British envoy would accept the American treaty as a *fait accompli*. Elgin, who had travelled aboard a solitary ship rather than at the head of a substantial fleet, was eager to return to China as soon as possible. He was also reluctant to enter into tedious negotiations with the Japanese when a commercial treaty already existed that, though neither as detailed nor as generous as the Treaty of Tianjin, provided an adequate foundation for future commercial relations. Following a short period of negotiation, during which the Dutch and Russian plenipotentiaries also concluded agreements on 18 and 19 August respectively, the Anglo-Japanese Treaty of Amity and Commerce was signed on 26 August 1858. The British agreement mirrored the Harris Treaty in almost every respect, except that it placed the responsibility for preventing opium smuggling firmly in the hands of the Japanese authorities. Elgin also made sure to include the ‘most favoured nation’ clause that Harris had so inexplicably omitted from the American treaty.¹⁷⁸

Baron Gros was absent from these negotiations, despite his orders to act in concert with Elgin in Japan. Whilst the latter had decided to sail for Edo Bay almost immediately after

¹⁷⁶ Platt, *op.cit.* p.37.

¹⁷⁷ Beasley, *Select Documents*, *op.cit.*, Document 28, pp.183-89.

¹⁷⁸ Beasley, *Great Britain*, *op.cit.*, p.184-91.

the conclusion of treaty revision in China, Admiral de Genouilly was adamant that his mission to punish Vietnam for the persecution of Catholics should take precedence over Gros's diplomatic excursion to Japan. The admiral duly took a squadron of 14 ships and 3,000 men to the Indo-China coast, leaving Gros marooned in China with a paltry force of three vessels. Instead of travelling with Elgin, therefore, who Gros thought was only going to Japan to make a preliminary reconnaissance, the French envoy chose to remain in China until his British colleague returned. He was still waiting on 1 September, when de Genouilly launched a successful invasion of the Vietnamese city of Tourane in the first phase of France's conquest of Indo-China.¹⁷⁹ Elgin returned to China the following day with a treaty in hand, leaving Gros to proceed with his meagre force to Japan alone. His reception was noticeably cooler than that afforded to Elgin, which Gros blamed on his miserable fleet and the lack of any lavish gifts to present to the shogun.¹⁸⁰ Nonetheless, after five relatively straightforward negotiating sessions, Gros concluded the Treaty of Amity and Commerce between France and Japan on 9 October. Although it largely mirrored the other treaties, Gros was unable to secure a reduction in wine duty from the luxury tariff of 35 per cent to a more amenable 20 per cent. This compared unfavourably with Elgin's success in reducing duties on cotton and woollen fabrics to 5 per cent. On religion, the Japanese would not budge from the provisions made in the Harris Treaty and refused to consider any rights of propagation whatsoever. Whether the Frenchman could have secured better concessions had he negotiated in concert with his British colleague is a matter for debate, but in any case Gros departed Japan pleased with his work.¹⁸¹

The 'unequal treaties': a template for all Asia

At a stroke, the five Ansei Treaties (named after their Japanese era name) signed by the *bakufu* in the summer and autumn of 1858 had conceded the same sovereign rights to Western states that the Qing dynasty had fought for almost two decades to retain. Japan's system of seclusion, which was every bit as incompatible with the principles and protocols of Western treaty diplomacy as China's system of imperial tribute, had finally collapsed. It is telling that this did not happen until the long-term future of British trade had been secured in China, even though the Foreign Office first issued instructions for a

¹⁷⁹ Tucker, *op.cit.*, p.29.

¹⁸⁰ Medzini, *op.cit.*, p17.

¹⁸¹ Sims, *op.cit.*, pp.17-20.

commercial treaty with Japan as early as 1845. Despite the British government's commitment to extend free trade across East Asia, it clearly did not consider trade relations with this notoriously secluded empire as a priority after the Opium War. There was little enthusiasm for such a project among British officials in China either, who were conscious of the difficulty and expense of attempting to open a country that many believed lacked commercial potential.

The protection of British interests in China continued to demand attention and resources in the years after the Opium War, as British officials grappled with Qing intransigence, the outbreak of the Taiping Rebellion, and a growing rivalry with Russia in East Asia. Given these more pressing matters, it was enough for Lord Clarendon to reinforce Britain's commitment to the extension of free trade in East Asia by instructing Bowring to open commercial relations with Japan, Siam and Cochinchina whenever convenient. In this context, the Foreign Secretary viewed the dispatch of the Perry Expedition to Japan as a welcome experiment to profit from at a later date. Though his 'wait and see' approach allowed the United States and other Western powers to take the lead in opening relations with Japan, British officials in China carefully monitored the outcome of these negotiations to ensure that their rivals were seeking nothing more than the extension of the China treaty pattern to Japan. With the exception of Putiatin's 1855 agreement, which also included clauses relating to the delineation of the Russo-Japanese border, the series of pacts agreed between 1854 and 1857 followed this pattern closely. Before Bowring had a chance to improve upon them, however, the outbreak of a new war in China ensured that a commercial treaty with Japan remained low on the list of priorities until treaty revision with the Qing dynasty was settled.

France was even less interested in opening relations with Japan during this period. Trade with Japan was of limited interest either to French merchants or to the French government, while most French naval commanders were more concerned with pursuing military glory in other parts of East Asia than engaging in painstaking negotiations with the stubborn Japanese. The Quai d'Orsay's passive attitude was reflected by the fact that it only issued instructions for a commercial treaty with Japan upon Clarendon's recommendation, and by its willingness to conduct negotiations in Japan in concert with Britain until Bourboulon demanded the freedom to act alone. Drouyn's terms for a treaty with Japan also matched Clarendon's in almost every respect, and even his attempt to secure the right for French missionaries to proselytise freely in Japan was later abandoned in the name of political expediency. For Napoléon III, the persecution of Catholics

elsewhere in East Asia remained a higher priority throughout the 1850s than extending their right to spread the faith in Japan.

If the French government had no religious, commercial, or strategic interest in Japan then why did the Quai d'Orsay desire a commercial treaty with Japan at all? This decision was shaped in large part by the importance that Napoléon III placed on France's status as a European great power. The restoration of French prestige in Europe had consumed successive French regimes since Napoléon Bonaparte's humiliating defeat at Waterloo in 1815, but for obvious reasons it was particularly important to his nephew. The advent of the Second Empire therefore accelerated a militant approach towards East Asia that had already resulted in the dispatch of significant naval forces to the region during the 1840s.¹⁸² By associating France with the British expedition to China and dispatching a large naval fleet to Vietnam thereafter, the emperor was sending a message that he would not allow the British a free rein in East Asia. The negotiation of a commercial treaty with Japan was an extension of this policy, as the instructions issued to Gros in 1857 made clear:

The Emperor's government has been for a long time convinced that France cannot continue to remain in the rear of those nations who have already been looking to assure for their trade access to a rich and populous country and that the moment has come to put itself in this respect on an equal footing with the Powers who have already gone ahead on this path'.¹⁸³

French motives in Japan and across East Asia were therefore significantly different to those of Britain. It was not commercial or ideological impulses relating to free trade that led France to play a leading role in the extension of the East Asian treaty-port system in China and Japan, but Napoléon III's desire for the treaty powers – Britain in particular – to respect France as a great power of the first rank. As the leader of a nation that had long considered itself to be the champion of European culture and civilisation, the emperor also felt a responsibility to demonstrate to uninitiated East Asian nations the difference between Anglo-American mercantilism and the cultural, economic, and moral values of the French Enlightenment.¹⁸⁴ These pretensions of a 'civilising mission' were of no great

¹⁸² Tucker, *op.cit.*, pp.27-8.

¹⁸³ Quoted in Sims, *op.cit.*, p.14.

¹⁸⁴ See Sims, *op.cit.*, pp.21-2; and Alain Gouttman, 'La politique étrangère de Napoléon III: entre idéalisme et naïveté', in Milza, Pierre, ed., *Napoléon III: l'homme, le politique*, (Paris: Napoléon III éditions, 2008), p.389.

concern to the British government, as long as French activity did not hinder the extension of free trade or undermine Britain's dominant position in the region.

While Britain and France focused on treaty revision in China, other Western powers took the lead in attempting to establish trade relations with Japan. Despite several efforts to negotiate a commercial treaty, however, the United States, Russia, and the Netherlands only managed to secure limited trading privileges between 1854 and 1857. Indeed, it was no coincidence that the *bakufu* only agreed to drop its seclusion policy once and for all when the theoretical threat posed by the Anglo-French fleet became a reality in late July 1858. Fundamentally, the *bakufu* signed the first 'unequal treaty' with Harris when it did because the highly punitive terms imposed upon the Qing dynasty by Britain and France demonstrated the futility of military resistance to their demands for trade.¹⁸⁵ British and French foreign and commercial policy priorities in China therefore delayed Japan's entry into the treaty-port system until the summer of 1858, sixteen years after its imposition in China. There was no reason to expect that these priorities, which included threats to the China trade, geopolitical and commercial rivalries in East Asia, crises in Europe, and upheaval in the British and French empires, would not continue to take precedence over Japanese affairs in the years to come.

Regional and global contexts not only played a pivotal role in determining when the treaty-port system was established in Japan, but also shaped how the treaty powers interacted with each other within it. Whilst British leadership was often a *fait accompli* in China and other parts of East Asia, the near absence of British gunboats in Japanese waters during the early to mid-1850s sparked competition between the other Western powers to be the first to negotiate a commercial treaty with Japan. At the same time, the process of dealing with the notoriously cunning *bakufu* officials fostered a sense of collaboration between the Western plenipotentiaries. After all, as in China, they were all dealing with a hostile government that considered them equally 'barbarous'. Moreover, the successive negotiations carried out by Perry, Putiatin, Stirling, Curtius, and Harris created the perception of concerted action even when none existed, putting the *bakufu* under huge pressure to agree to new treaty precedents. Collaboration and competition therefore defined treaty-power relations in Japan from the very beginning, as they had done in China. This duality was neither dictated by nor dependent upon the hegemonic presence of Britain alone, but part of the dynamic of Western informal imperialism in

¹⁸⁵ Beasley, *Great Britain*, op.cit., p.202.

East Asia. It was therefore likely to continue to dominate interactions between the Japanese treaty powers after the ports opened to trade.

If treaty-power relations in Japan imitated those in China, what can be said of treaty-port diplomacy? In their initial forays into Japanese waters, Commodore Perry and Vice Admiral Putiatin followed the same model of ‘gunboat diplomacy’ adopted by Western diplomats and naval commanders across East Asia during the mid-nineteenth century. As in China, there was no question of negotiating with the Japanese government on terms of diplomatic equivalence, as was commonplace in Europe. It was instead a question of compelling the *bakufu* to accept the terms demanded for a commercial treaty, if possible by peaceable means but if necessary by the threat of military force. This demonstrated how deeply the diplomatic practices of the Chinese treaty-port system had seeped into the collective consciousness of all Western diplomats in East Asia – even those who were self-confessed opponents of Western empire-building like Harris. ‘Gunboat diplomacy’ was therefore clearly not an exclusive feature of British and French diplomatic practice, but a fundamental characteristic of Western treaty-making during the mid-nineteenth century.

There one crucial difference between the coercive techniques applied in China and Japan was that the latter’s relative geopolitical insignificance meant military action was rarely an immediate possibility. This fact reduced the potency of a threat that was already contingent on whether the Japanese really believed that foreign governments were willing to resort to force of arms in the first place. Thus, whilst Commodore Perry and Vice Admiral Putiatin used naval strength to secure concessions in the traditional way, Curtius and Harris were forced to adopt a ‘carrot and stick’ approach. Their efforts to persuade the Japanese to make commercial concessions while simultaneously threatening them with theoretical British gunboats worked well at the time because they knew for certain that the British were on their way. But after the conclusion of the commercial treaties in 1858 and the completion of treaty revision in China, the Anglo-French fleet departed from East Asia. Even Britain and France only retained a limited naval force in the region, and their fleets were often stationed in more strategically important ports elsewhere in China and Southeast Asia. Like Harris, the first British and French representatives in Japan – both ‘China hands’ schooled in traditional ‘gunboat diplomacy’ – would have to adapt their diplomatic methods to these isolated conditions after the treaties came into force.

Events in China were clearly critically important to the timing and the tenor in which Japan was opened to commerce, but in what way did Chinese contexts shape the structure of the treaty-port system established in Japan? For example, did Japan's 'unequal treaties' mirror those imposed upon its near neighbour the same year? The historian Michael Auslin did not think so. He argued that the commercial treaty Siam negotiated with Britain in 1855 provided a more appropriate model for Japan's treaties because it was the product of negotiation and not imposed after a humiliating military defeat. By choosing negotiation over military resistance, Auslin believed that Japan was able to avoid the punitive treaty settlement imposed upon China and 'determine the treaty structure itself'.¹⁸⁶

This analysis suggests a sense of Japanese autonomy that simply did not exist. Of course, it was true that Japan's 'unequal treaties' were less punitive than those signed by China in 1858. From the perspective of the Chinese, Siamese, or Japanese governments, there was certainly a significant psychological difference between the imposition of a 'treaty of defeat' on a beaten nation and a 'negotiated treaty' in which the threat of force, but not force itself, was used.¹⁸⁷ Yet Harris's 'negotiated treaty' was undeniably still the product of 'gunboat diplomacy' of the traditional imperialist type, albeit in modified form. The extent to which the *bakufu* could really use negotiation as a strategy to determine the treaty structure in any significant way is therefore highly debateable, and this is clear enough from the fact that the Foreign Office expressly ordered Elgin to negotiate the same commercial privileges in Japan as those that were imposed upon the Qing. In the end, Elgin accepted Harris's treaty as a model not because the Japanese had haggled better terms from the American, but because Harris had been careful to ensure his treaty replicated the minimum requirements Britain desired from treaty revision in China. As far as the prohibition of opium was concerned, Elgin's distaste for the belligerent policy Britain had pursued in China and desire not to replicate it in Japan probably determined his decision to accept this clause more than anything else.¹⁸⁸ In any case, and even though he was pressed for time, Elgin still made sure to bring Harris's treaty in line with his orders by introducing a 'most favoured nation' clause, lowering tariffs on cotton and woollen products, and clarifying the clause for treaty revision.¹⁸⁹

¹⁸⁶ Auslin, *op.cit.*, p.24.

¹⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, p.21.

¹⁸⁸ Platt, *op.cit.*, pp.36-8.

¹⁸⁹ Beasley, *Great Britain*, *op.cit.*, pp.190-1.

Having witnessed its near neighbour succumb to British gunboats, it was quite logical for the *bakufu* to agree to negotiate with Western powers instead of attempting to resist them militarily. But this had little bearing on the underlying structure of the ‘unequal treaties’ that Japan signed in 1858, or the extent to which Japan surrendered its sovereignty to Western imperial powers by doing so. In fact, all of the ‘negotiated treaties’ signed by Siam in 1855 and Japan in 1858 included provisions that opened domestic ports to foreign commerce, removed state monopolies over trade, introduced a fixed tariff on imports and exports, accepted the introduction of extraterritoriality, and granted rights of foreign residence and travel. Hence, even when Western powers negotiated with East Asian countries instead of bombarding them, they still expected and required acceptance of many of the principles and precedents of the treaty framework imposed in China after the Opium War. Auslin’s assertion that ‘China was less a model for Japan’s treaties with the West than another Asian nation’,¹⁹⁰ is therefore misleading in the context of why the treaty-port system was originally created in East Asia, what it actually stood for, and what was expected of the nations who entered into it, whether willingly, grudgingly, or indeed under duress.

Conclusions

The introduction of the treaty-port system to Japan was not an isolated event. Fundamentally, it was defined by developments elsewhere in East Asia, especially the involvement of Britain and France in China. As in China, the Ansei Treaties created a whole new group of ‘enclave empires’ in East Asia, within which the same dynamics of collaboration and competition that existed in the Chinese treaty ports were established in Japan. As in China, the political economy created by the treaty-port system would lead to a similar influx of Western commercial and cultural practices that would fundamentally change the political and societal fabric of Japan after the ports opened in 1859. And as in China, Western governments were convinced that a ‘semi-civilised’ Asian nation like Japan would benefit from the introduction of the Western system of international relations and free trade.

¹⁹⁰ Auslin, *op.cit.*, p.22.

This was not a uniquely British view, but a predominant attitude among all of those who sought to end Japan's self-enforced seclusion.¹⁹¹ Indeed, the Western plenipotentiaries who visited Japan before the treaties were signed were so accustomed to the China treaty-pattern and the application of 'gunboat diplomacy' that the introduction of political and economic control by way of 'unequal treaties' had already become almost a 'habit of mind'.¹⁹² For them, Japan's centuries-old system of seclusion, like China's system of imperial tribute, was a relic of a bygone age and a symptom of civilisational decay. Whether the *bakufu* liked it or not, it would have to accept the imposition of the same set of 'unequal treaties' that had wreaked havoc in China, with equally catastrophic consequences.

¹⁹¹ Beasley, *Select Documents*, Document 19, 'Statement by Townsend Harris', 12 December 1857', p.160.

¹⁹² Beasley, 'The Foreign Threat', op.cit., p.203.

CHAPTER 2

Contention and Coercion: The Opening of Japan, 1859

For a brief moment in 1858, Japan was the centre of Western attention in East Asia. In stark contrast to their negotiations in China, the talks that Lord Elgin and Baron Gros conducted during their short stay in Japan were productive and cordial. Within weeks of their arrival, five new commercial treaties had been concluded to the apparent satisfaction of all parties. The British and French fleets soon departed again for Chinese waters, where more pressing matters awaited, leaving the *bakufu* to begin preparations for the opening of trade in July the following year. Both Elgin and Gros interpreted the cordiality with which they had been treated by the Japanese and the relative ease with which the treaties had been concluded as positive indicators of a fruitful commercial relationship with Japan. It was impossible for them to foresee just how much attitudes within the country would change over the year to come.

Although of monumental importance to Japan, the conclusion of the Ansei Treaties was a minor event for the British and French governments. In the lead-up to the opening of Japan to trade, attention in London and Paris was primarily focused upon events in Italy, where a war between France and Austria had broken out over the political future of the peninsula. In addition, the British government was still heavily preoccupied with managing the aftermath of the 1857 rebellion in India. At the same time, any hopes that the revised treaties with the Qing dynasty would bring stability to the Chinese treaty-port system were soon dashed by a surprising turn of events at Tianjin. While a new political crisis in China unfolded, the British and French representatives in Japan were left to enforce the Ansei Treaties without much in the way of material or moral support from home. With resistance to the treaty-port system seemingly bearing fruit elsewhere in East Asia, their task was to prove more difficult than anyone could have envisaged a year earlier.

Preparations

The news of Lord Elgin's successful treaty negotiations with Japan reached London in November 1858, where it was received with satisfaction by the Foreign Office. British merchants were equally pleased and, contrary to Foreign Office expectations, began to fit out ships for trade with Japan well before the exchange of treaty ratifications.¹⁹³ Indeed, commercial transactions between British firms in Shanghai and Japanese merchants in Nagasaki started not long after Elgin left Japan in the summer of 1858, even though British officials in China were concerned about a repeat of the smuggling and lawlessness that had accompanied the opening of the Chinese treaty ports in 1842. They could do nothing to stop British merchants from establishing themselves at Nagasaki and Hakodate, however, since the 'most favoured nation' clause in the Stirling Convention guaranteed Britain the same limited trading rights at these ports as those granted to Russia and Holland in 1857.¹⁹⁴ In any case, the fact that British merchants were keen to get a head start on their commercial rivals at Japan's new treaty ports demonstrated their confidence in its potential for trade.

The press also welcomed the opening of commercial relations with Japan. In September 1858, *The North China Herald* celebrated the 'extraordinary advance' that Elgin's treaty represented from what it called, with a thick slice of sarcasm, the 'truly magnificent Convention' signed by Admiral Stirling in 1854.¹⁹⁵ *The Times* was even more positive, praising Elgin in November for bringing a 'political revolution' to a 'hitherto jealously exclusive empire'.¹⁹⁶ Several highly positive accounts of Japan were also published in the Chinese and British press by some of those who had accompanied Elgin to Edo in 1858. These eyewitness reports probably contributed to the British sense of optimism about the country by depicting it as a modern-day Eden with a heavenly climate, bountiful land, and captivating scenery. An editorial in *The Times* on 10 November expressed doubt that Japan was quite as innocent as all that, as well as concern that the importance of the Japanese trade had been similarly overstated. Although the terms of Elgin's treaty were most satisfactory, there was a risk that British merchants would undermine the nascent

¹⁹³ W. G. Beasley, *Great Britain and the Opening of Japan, 1834-1858*, (London: Luzac & Co, 1951), p.192.

¹⁹⁴ Grace Fox, *Britain and Japan, 1858-1883*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1969), pp.48-53.

¹⁹⁵ *The North China Herald*, 4 September 1858.

¹⁹⁶ 'Lord Elgin in Japan', *The Times*, 2 November 1858.

Japan trade through ‘inconsiderate expectations and unreasonable consignments’.¹⁹⁷ The newspaper therefore stressed the need to place Britain’s new diplomatic and consular establishments in Japan ‘in the hands of soberminded, energetic men, armed with full powers to repress the licentiousness of evil-disposed Europeans’.¹⁹⁸

The editor of *The Times* was presumably satisfied by the appointment of Rutherford Alcock as the first British consul-general to Japan on 21 December 1858. Alcock was a classic example of the mid-nineteenth century ‘man on the spot’ diplomatist. Born in 1807 and aged fifty when he arrived in Japan, he had started his career as a surgeon before entering the British consular service in China in 1844 after a bout of rheumatic fever limited the use of his hands. He had served as consul in Amoy, Foochow, Shanghai, and Canton prior to his appointment in Japan, and was therefore well-versed in the tenets of treaty-port diplomacy. Although he hated the opium trade and was critical of the way in which the treaties had been foisted upon the Qing dynasty, he believed that commercial agreements once signed must be fulfilled. To that end, he was at times willing to risk his own career by advocating coercive measures in response to China’s calculated resistance to treaty stipulations. In 1848, for example, when a local Qing official refused to punish a crowd of Chinese sailors who had attacked three British missionaries near Shanghai, Alcock threatened to withhold customs duties from British ships and use the presence of a British sloop-of-war to blockade 1,400 Chinese grain junks from sailing north. The threat succeeded: the rioters were punished and the Qing official removed from office. On that occasion, the Foreign Office approved of Alcock’s conduct even though he had not consulted the British plenipotentiary in Hong Kong.¹⁹⁹ Yet such approval was always very much dependent upon whether such measures achieved success. As Alcock’s biographer put it, the Foreign Office approach was often: ‘Do it at your peril, leaving us to applaud or repudiate according to the event.’²⁰⁰

¹⁹⁷ *The Times*, 10 November 1858.

¹⁹⁸ *Idem*.

¹⁹⁹ R. K. Douglas, ‘Alcock, Sir (John) Rutherford (1809–1897)’, rev. J. A. G. Roberts, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), online edn., Jan 2008 [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/293>, accessed 18 February 2016]; and Alexander Michie, *The Englishman in China during the Victorian Era as Demonstrated in the Career of Sir Rutherford Alcock KCB DCL, Many Years Consul and Minister in China*, (Edinburgh and London: William Blackwood & Sons, 1900), Vol. I, pp.129-35.

²⁰⁰ Michie, *op.cit.*, p.134.

Alcock's conviction about the necessity of taking a firm line with East Asian governments also applied to Japan. When Sir John Bowring first received orders to revise Admiral Stirling's convention and negotiate a commercial treaty there, Alcock hoped that the British plenipotentiary would bring a squadron large enough to insist upon a full commercial treaty on the Siam model, 'and if necessary knock Yeddo about their ears'.²⁰¹ Yet though he sometimes sailed close to the wind in his dealings with the Qing, Alcock never pushed matters too far. During his stint in China, he had also displayed courage, independence, decisiveness, and 'set the standard for consular activity'.²⁰² His strong ethical principles, disdain for the unscrupulous and unruly behaviour of British merchant adventurers, and, above all, philosophy of 'firmness and determination combined with patience and persistence' in dealing with Eastern officials also made him a natural choice to lead the new consular mission to Japan.²⁰³ As the then Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs explained to the House of Commons in February 1859, the Foreign Office had considered it advisable to appoint Alcock to this position because he was respected and well known for his successful efforts to promote trade in East Asia.²⁰⁴

Despite enjoying the confidence of the Foreign Office, Alcock's voluminous correspondence often bore the tone of a man who was tired of life in East Asia and believed that his hard work and long service deserved greater recognition and a posting closer to home.²⁰⁵ He therefore bitterly regretted his appointment to Japan, especially in the capacity of consul-general rather than that of diplomatic agent as the treaty stipulated. In a private letter to Edmund Hammond, the Permanent Under-Secretary for Foreign Affairs, Alcock complained in February 1859 that this arrangement would put his country in an inferior position, since East Asian governments were often deeply sensitive to differences in rank and title between foreign representatives. On top of what he saw as a banishment to 'the most outlying region in the world', he interpreted the withholding of a diplomatic title at the end of a long term of consular service in China as a direct snub.

²⁰¹ Cambridge University Library (CUL), Parkes Papers, MS Parkes 1/A17a, Alcock to Parkes, 23 April 1856.

²⁰² Douglas, *op.cit.* See also Fox, *op.cit.*, p.57.

²⁰³ Hugh Cortazzi, 'Sir Rutherford Alcock, 1809-1897', in Ian Nish, ed., *Britain and Japan: Biographical Portraits, Volume II*, (Richmond: Japan Library, 1997), pp.1-2.

²⁰⁴ *Hansard*, Series 3, House of Commons (HC), 25 February 1859, Vol. 152, cc.859-69.

²⁰⁵ In 1857, for example, Alcock unsuccessfully petitioned Lord Clarendon via Hammond for the Companionship of the Bath, on the basis that it would raise his prestige and influence in China. See The National Archives (TNA), Hammond Papers, FO391/1, Alcock to Hammond, 17 & 21 January 1857.

As was the wont of someone who often resorted to melodrama in private correspondence, Alcock fatalistically resigned himself to either ‘die in these regions where so many have gone before me...or be expended, as naval stores are expended’.²⁰⁶ He nonetheless accepted the position and agreed to take up residence in Edo at the head of a small British consular mission to the shogun’s capital.²⁰⁷

Although events in China continued to take precedence, British interest in Japan was clearly rising as the date set for the opening of the ports approached. The same could hardly be said of France, despite the fact that the new French commercial treaty with Japan had been welcomed with ‘lively satisfaction’ by Napoléon III.²⁰⁸ In stark contrast to the excited reaction of the British merchant community to the opening of a new market, their French counterparts showed very little interest in Japan even after the French commercial treaty had been ratified.²⁰⁹ Moreover, while the American, British, and Chinese English-language newspapers, discussed the new commercial treaties at length between the summers of 1858 and 1859, the official organ of the French government, *Le Moniteur Universel*, only published one sober article on Baron Gros’s negotiations during the same period.²¹⁰ Another indicator of French apathy was the Quai d’Orsay’s decision to dispatch only one consular representative to Japan, which contrasted unfavourably with the Foreign Office view that consular establishments staffed by British subjects were necessary at all three new treaty ports.²¹¹ The fact that Gustave Duchesne de Bellecourt was not appointed consul-general until 8 June 1859 – a little over two months before the ports were due to open to French trade – further demonstrated a lack of urgency with regard to Japanese matters.²¹²

Born in 1817, Bellecourt was almost ten years Alcock’s junior. After stints in Copenhagen and Frankfurt, he had gained some knowledge of East Asia when he was appointed secretary to the French legation to China in April 1857. Although clearly less

²⁰⁶ TNA, Hammond Papers, FO391/1, Alcock to Hammond, 22 February 1859.

²⁰⁷ For more information on how this mission was organised, see Fox, *op.cit.*, p.54.

²⁰⁸ Quoted in Richard Sims, *French Policy Towards the Bakufu and Meiji Japan, 1854-95*, (Richmond: Japan Library, 1998), p.20.

²⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, p.12.

²¹⁰ *Le Moniteur Universel*, 1 January 1859.

²¹¹ The new French consul-general appointed three consular agents to Yokohama, Nagasaki, and Hakodate after his arrival in Japan, none of whom were French. See Meron Medzini, *French Policy in Japan During the Closing Years of the Tokugawa Regime*, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University, 1971), p.22.

²¹² *Ibid.*, p.20.

experienced than his British counterpart, his opinion on Japanese matters was valued by Count Alexandre Walewski, the then French Minister of Foreign Affairs, who understood little about Japan.²¹³ Before drafting Bellecourt's new instructions, Walewski asked Quai d'Orsay officials to clarify the commercial arrangements at the new ports and queried the extent to which the French government should accommodate the wishes of Catholic missionaries. Walewski understood that it was important to cooperate with the *Société des Missions Étrangères de Paris*, whose missionaries were the only Frenchmen with a decent working knowledge of Japanese. At the same time, he was equally aware that the *bakufu* was deeply hostile to the presence of missionaries in any shape or form, let alone as paid officials of a foreign government. He was therefore worried that it would be difficult for any French missionary 'to change his ecclesiastic costume for that of a linguist'.²¹⁴ These concerns were not unfounded, as Eugène-Emmanuel Mermet de Cachon, who interpreted for Baron Gros during the treaty negotiations, had already written privately that he believed the conclusion of the commercial treaties heralded the beginning of 'complete religious freedom for Japanese and foreigners'.²¹⁵

Caught between two conflicting impulses, Walewski settled on a messy compromise. He made it explicitly clear to Bellecourt that he was not to demand any religious freedoms beyond those already stipulated in the treaty. Conversely, he stressed that France would not abandon its right to protect missionaries from threats or direct harm. Bellecourt was to watch out for any attempts by missionaries to carry out religious propagation within the Japanese interior and take measures when necessary to moderate their religious zeal. Above all, he was to seek advice from home if anything happened that might imperil the lives of missionaries or result in a rupture with Edo.²¹⁶ Conscious of how much Walewski wanted to avoid complications in Japan over this issue, Bellecourt sought assurances from the Hong Kong mission of the *Missions Étrangères* after he arrived in Shanghai during the summer of 1859. He was promised that the society would only cater for the needs of foreign Catholics within the boundaries set by the treaty. Reassured, Bellecourt appointed one of the society's missionaries as his new interpreter.²¹⁷

²¹³ See Archives Diplomatiques (AD), CPJ59/1, Bellecourt to Walewski, 14 May 1859.

²¹⁴ AD, CPJ59/1, 'Special instructions relative to the establishment of consular agents in Japan's different ports', May 1859.

²¹⁵ Archives de la Société des Missions Étrangères de Paris, Paris (MEP), Japon/568, Mermet to Rousseille, 29 August 1858, pp.1168-79.

²¹⁶ AD, CPJ59/1, Walewski to Bellecourt, No. 1, 8 June 1859.

²¹⁷ AD, CPJ59/1, Bellecourt to Walewski, No. 1, 1 August 1859.

Religious matters aside, Bellecourt was simply instructed to ensure the full implementation of the treaties and to remain entirely aloof from political affairs.²¹⁸ By contrast, the instructions issued by the Foreign Office in March 1859 empowered Rutherford Alcock to shape Britain's early political relations with Japan. The then British Foreign Secretary, the Conservative Lord Malmesbury, was clear that he did not expect everything to go smoothly at first, but he hoped that the new consul-general's experience in China would stand him in good stead when it came to implementing the terms of the new treaty. Given the increasing concern within the Foreign Office about Russian activities in East Asia, Alcock was also asked to obtain intelligence on Russian operations on the Amur River, and to dissuade the *bakufu* from ceding any territory to the Russians. At the same time, Malmesbury warned Alcock not to commit Britain to the defence of Japanese territory, as neither the government nor the public had any appetite for further entanglements in East Asia. In addition, Alcock was instructed to adopt a patient and inoffensive approach with the Japanese, to make allowances for their 'ignorance and timidity', to maintain friendly relations with the other foreign agents, and to avoid competing with them for influence at the shogun's court. Malmesbury made it explicitly clear that Britain's interests in Japan were purely commercial, that the British government did not 'aim at paramount influence in the councils of Japan', and that the Foreign Office had 'no intention of interfering with the social institutions of that country'.²¹⁹

Malmesbury was clearly confident enough in Alcock's judgment and ability to entrust him with much more latitude and responsibility than Walewski was prepared to grant Bellecourt. The wider remit of Alcock's instructions also indicated that the Foreign Office considered Japan of some strategic and commercial importance, albeit to a much lesser degree than China. By contrast, the Quai d'Orsay was interested in little more than securing the same commercial privileges in Japan enjoyed by other foreign nations. Walewski therefore saw no reason to entrust Bellecourt with any greater political responsibility than that customarily assigned to a consul-general anywhere else in the world. In effect, Bellecourt's instructions constituted little more than a 'combination of naïve assumptions and limited aims'.²²⁰ Although Alcock and Bellecourt were of equal consular rank on paper, this was belied in reality by the scope and tone of their instructions, the differences in their age and relative experience in East Asia, and the

²¹⁸ AD, CPJ59/1, Walewski to Bellecourt, No. 1, 8 June 1859.

²¹⁹ TNA, FO46/2, Malmesbury to Alcock, No. 1, 1 March 1859.

²²⁰ Sims, *op.cit.*, p.25.

disparity between the resources allocated to their respective consular establishments in Japan. Moreover, even though Malmesbury had warned the new British consul-general not to compete with foreign representatives for influence in Japan, it was unlikely that that a man of Alcock's experience and background would be content to play second fiddle to the French, Dutch, and American representatives. The nature of treaty-port diplomacy and the fact of British naval and commercial superiority within the East Asia treaty-port system made it almost inevitable that Alcock would attempt to establish a leading role for himself in Japan regardless of his official rank. Bellecourt, on the other hand, appeared to have little choice but to follow the Englishman's lead.

First encounters

All five of the Ansei Treaties stipulated that the three Japanese ports of Kanagawa, Nagasaki, and Hakodate would be opened for commercial purposes to nationals of Britain, France, the United States, Holland, and Russia by the summer of 1859.²²¹ Given the admiration that the Western plenipotentiaries had expressed for the Japanese during the treaty negotiations the previous year, there seemed little reason for any of the new men in Edo to anticipate much difficulty in opening the new ports by the agreed date.²²² Little did they know that the conclusion of the treaties the previous summer had precipitated a political crisis in Japan that would define relations between the *bakufu* and the treaty powers for the next decade.

This upheaval was rooted in aspects of Japanese politics relating to the structure of the Tokugawa state, which had changed little since Tokugawa Ieyasu established the shogunate in 1603 following victory in the Battle of Sekigahara three years earlier. That battle had ended a complex struggle for power between competing feudal lords, or *daimyō*, and led to a significant redistribution of feudal fiefs across Japan, with much of the land belonging to those lords who had opposed Ieyasu (the *tozama* [outer] *daimyō*)

²²¹ The British treaty is quoted in full in Fox, *op.cit.*, Appendix I, pp.555-65; the American in W. G. Beasley, ed., *Select Documents on Japanese Foreign Policy, 1853-1868*, (London: Oxford University Press, 1955), pp.183-9; and the French in: Henri Cordier, 'Le Premier Traité de la France avec le Japon', *T'oung Pao*, Second Series, Vol. 13, No. 2 (1912), pp.278-90.

²²² See Walter LaFeber, *The Clash: A History of U.S.-Japan Relations*, (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 1997), p.20; Beasley, *Great Britain*, *op.cit.*, p.189; and Sims, *op.cit.*, p.20.

added to Tokugawa territory or awarded to its vassals (the *fudai* [hereditary] *daimyō*). Tokugawa dominance fostered a ‘hereditary resentment’ in many of the *tozama* domains, such as the great western *han* of Satsuma and Chōshū, which remained largely independent of the authority of central Tokugawa government throughout the Edo period (1603-1868).²²³ Their potential for rebellion against the *bakufu* was constrained, however, by an obligatory system of alternate residence known as *sankin-kōtai*, which was instituted in 1635 for *tozama* lords and extended to all *daimyō* in 1642. This obliged the *daimyō* to reside in Edo during alternate twelve-month periods, while the *daimyō*’s family and some officials had to live permanently at the lord’s mansion in Edo. In addition, while the quasi-independent *han* were not taxed directly, they had to contribute to the defence of the country and the preservation of the military and political structure of feudal power in Japan known as the *bakuhan* system.²²⁴

The policy of seclusion instituted to protect Japan from the perceived dangers of Western trade and religion during the seventeenth century became a fundamental part of this elaborate system of security. It was the patriotic duty of all Japanese officials, including the *daimyō*, to uphold this ancestral law in order to preserve the country from corruption and defeat.²²⁵ This remained a simple enough task when there was only a narrow gap in naval and military technology between Japan and the West. However, it became increasingly difficult as the newly industrialised Western maritime powers encroached ever further into East Asia during the first half of the nineteenth century – a period when many *daimyō* domains were increasingly beset by financial and political pressures. Despite this, the shogunate became more resolute in its determination to restrict intercourse with foreigners, culminating in the 1825 edict instructing the *daimyō* to expel any ships that attempted to enter Japanese waters from foreign countries with which Japan maintained no trade relations. In the same year, Aizawa Seishisai, a nationalist writer from the Mito school of ‘national learning’ (*kokugaku*), which blended Confucian and nativist scholarship to assert the superiority of Japan’s imperial institution over that of China, wrote the *Shinron* (New Thesis). This pamphlet linked two important philosophies for the first time: *sonnō* (‘revere the emperor’) and *jōi* (‘expel the barbarians’). The former rejected the influence of Chinese ideas on Japanese society by depicting Japan as the true

²²³ Marius B. Jansen, *The Making of Modern Japan*, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002), p.50.

²²⁴ Chushichi Tsuzuki, *The Pursuit of Power in Modern Japan, 1825-1995*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), pp.19-21.

²²⁵ Beasley, *Select Documents*, op.cit., p.3.

‘Middle Kingdom’ and advocating a return to an idealised past when Japanese imperial rule had been synonymous with political stability. The latter urged much-needed economic and administrative reform in order to facilitate the manufacture of the arms and ships necessary to protect Japan’s ‘Divine Realm’ from the polluting presence of foreigners.²²⁶

Shinron was not an attack on the political authority of the *bakufu* per se, but it explicitly linked the shogun’s legitimacy to his ability to enforce expulsion and thereby justify his full title of *sei taishōgun*, or ‘barbarian-subduing generalissimo’. According to this line of thought, failure to expel the barbarians amounted to a failure to show due reverence to the emperor in Kyoto. These ideas proved influential, and in 1842 the *daimyō* of Mito established an academy to foster practical Western learning under a charter which explicitly linked two phrases that would later become a rallying call for Japanese anti-foreign fanatics: *sonnō-jōi* (‘revere the emperor, expel the barbarians’).²²⁷ By the 1850s, the leaders of the expulsion, or *jōi*, movement had accepted that Japan’s technological inferiority rendered interaction with foreign countries inevitable. Nonetheless, they were increasingly convinced that war, or at least the risk of it, was necessary to protect the independence of Japan from Western powers. As a result, they objected to the conclusion of any commercial treaties until significant domestic military reform had taken place so that Japan would be able to resist Western demands more effectively. Even if delay meant war, they reasoned that defeat was a lesser risk than the certainty of the corruption that the introduction of Western trade and religion would bring about.²²⁸

On the other side of this debate was the *kaikoku* (‘open the country’) party, closely connected to the *Rangakusha* (Dutch scholars) who had been studying the West since the lifting of the ban on the import of Western books in 1720. Adherents to this school of thought were also cognisant of the threat posed to Japan’s independence by Western encroachment and the importance of protecting the nation from pernicious foreign influences. However, the greater knowledge of world conditions gained from their studies made them starkly aware of the extent of Japan’s weakness and its total inability to resist the West militarily. Like the *jōi* party, they agreed upon the need to improve national defences in order to ‘expel the barbarian’, insomuch as that meant asserting Japan’s

²²⁶ Beasley, *Select Documents*, op.cit., pp.9-10 & p.36; Jansen, op.cit., p.203-4 & p.280; and Tsuzuki, op.cit., p.25 & pp.33-5.

²²⁷ Jansen, op.cit., p.280.

²²⁸ Beasley, *Select Documents*, op.cit., pp.15-7.

independence of action. Yet *kaikoku* supporters believed war with the West should be avoided at all costs, while some even saw the opening of ports as desirable as it would expedite the adoption of the Western military techniques that Japan needed to protect itself. Most saw trade with the West as only a temporary expedient while Japan carried out the economic and military modernisation necessary to regain its full independence.²²⁹

The Perry Expedition brought these competing arguments to a head in 1853. It also sparked an immediate crisis within the *bakufu*'s ruling council, or *rōjū*, as it wrestled to find a suitable response to the American's demands for a commercial treaty.²³⁰ Desperate to establish a national consensus, *rōjū* leader Abe Masahiro took the unprecedented step of circulating copies of Perry's ultimatum to all *daimyō* in Japan, calling upon *fudai* and *tozama* alike to submit their views. Though well-intentioned, this move fundamentally weakened the *bakufu*'s ability to conduct foreign affairs by giving 'de-facto legitimisation to the idea of a civic realm'.²³¹ Invited to comment and criticise Edo's policy, the responses submitted by the *daimyō* also illustrated the breadth of division within Japan. Of the sixty-one replies received, nineteen advocated the opening of ports to trade, nineteen urged the rejection of Perry's demands, fourteen stressed the need to avoid war, seven advocated the adoption of temporary measures of accommodation, and two agreed to obey whatever the *bakufu* decided.²³²

These divisions only became more entrenched in the years that followed, culminating in the refusal of the Emperor Kōmei, a staunch advocate of *jōi* in its strictest form, to sanction the Harris Treaty in 1858. This assertion of imperial power was the result of dedicated lobbying by powerful anti-foreign lords in Kyoto such as Tokugawa Nariaki of Mito. It represented a significant blow to *bakufu* prestige and led conservatives in Edo to call for the appointment of a *tairō*, or Regent, a position only filled during times of crisis. As Marius Jansen put it, 'consultation as a tactic had failed, and the *bakufu* now shifted to dictatorial commandism'.²³³ Ii Naosuke, the head of one of Japan's leading *fudai* families, was appointed *tairō* on 4 June 1858. His first act was to settle a succession

²²⁹ Ibid., pp. 5-6 & p.17.

²³⁰ The *rōjū* consisted of four or five senior officials who controlled the administration of the government and relations between the *bakufu*, the *daimyō*, and the imperial court at Kyoto.

²³¹ Michael R. Auslin, *Negotiating with Imperialism: The Unequal Treaties and the Culture of Japanese Diplomacy*, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004), p.36.

²³² Tsuzuki, op.cit., p.39.

²³³ Jansen, op.cit., p.285.

dispute over a replacement for the ailing shogun Iesada in favour of his own candidate. This upset the 'reforming lords' of western Japan who wanted a greater say in the political future of the country and a rapprochement between the *bakufu* and the imperial court (a philosophy that became known as the *kōbu-gattai* ['Court-Bakufu unity'] movement). They had favoured the selection of Hitotsubashi (Tokugawa) Keiki, the son of Nariaki and a young man of excellent ability. Ii however suspected a Mito plot to control the *bakufu* and nominated Iemochi from the traditional house of Wakayama (Kii) instead. He then turned his attention to foreign affairs.

Conscious of events in China and anxious to avoid a similarly disastrous war with the West, Ii instructed his negotiators to sign the Ansei Treaties without waiting for imperial sanction from Kyoto. Naturally, the *jōi* group attacked this decision as contradictory to everything it stood for, but the fact that Ii's only motive for opening the ports was political necessity also dismayed the *kaikoku* party. Ii was actually deeply prejudiced against the 'contamination' of traditional Japanese society through the adoption of Western ideas and techniques, and this made him determined to limit the freedom of foreigners at the new ports as much as possible. Above all, Ii stood for conservatism and the right of the *bakufu* to determine policy independently of either the court in Kyoto or the great feudal lords. His determination to restore strong central leadership in national affairs led to the 'Ansei Purge' of the powerful lords who had lobbied in Kyoto, as well as of the court nobles, officials, scholars, and increasingly politicised lower-ranking samurai class who had supported them. His opposition to opening Japan to further trade and deeper foreign relations also led to a clash with other *rōjū* and maritime defence officials who supported the military reform and trade liberalisation favoured by the lords of Mito and Satsuma. Ii quickly secured control over the *rōjū* by forcing its former head to resign and filling the council with his supporters. He then abolished the position of maritime defence official and replaced it with the post of foreign magistrate, breaking the influence of the maritime defence officials who had negotiated the commercial treaties in 1858.

Ii's dictatorial methods had a number of important political consequences. They confirmed the proponents of *jōi* as an opposition party and brought them into closer alliance with *sonnō* adherents due to their shared belief in the supremacy of the emperor as the ultimate arbiter of foreign relations and political power. The *bakufu*, by contrast, was determined to restrict Western trade to parts of Japan under its direct control, both to maintain its prerogative to dictate foreign policy and prevent the enrichment of its most powerful hereditary enemies. Despite his disdain for foreign intercourse, Ii's decision to

open the ports completed the association between elements of the *kaikoku* movement and the *sabaku* ('support the *bakufu*') party. A delineation of Japanese politics into three separate groups therefore took place. On the one extreme was the *bakufu* regime in Edo, now committed to a *kaikoku* policy of sorts. In the middle was the *kōbu-gattai* party consisting largely of great *tozama* lords, which still supported the structure of the *bakufu* but wanted political reform within it and greater influence over policymaking. On the other extreme were the court nobles and lower-ranked samurai at the imperial court in Kyoto, whose fanatical *sonnō-jōi* policy called for the complete abrogation of the commercial treaties and total expulsion of foreigners. This polarisation of political forces was to prove disastrous for Japan's foreign relations. While the emperor was eventually pressured by Ii into giving his reluctant approval to the Ansei Treaties in February 1859, this was granted upon condition that the *bakufu* committed to overthrowing them as soon as it had achieved parity with the West in military strength. Thus, by the date set for the opening of the ports, the *bakufu* was publicly committed to the repudiation of the same commercial agreements it had promised Western treaty-powers to implement in full.²³⁴

This volatile political climate provided the backdrop to Japan's entry into the treaty-port system. The new British consul-general was, of course, entirely unaware of the political machinations that had taken place within Japan before his arrival in Nagasaki in early June 1859, a month before the official opening of trade. It was there that Alcock received a warning that the Japanese government had decided to construct a settlement at Yokohama, a small village just south of the official post town of Kanagawa designated by the treaties, on a reclaimed island that was only accessible via two guarded exits. After his arrival in Edo on 26 June 1858, Alcock, whose long experience in China made him decidedly wary about trusting 'oriental' peoples to honour treaty agreements, immediately understood that the *bakufu* was attempting to isolate foreigners at Kanagawa in the same way in which the Dutch traders had been penned into Dejima for centuries.²³⁵

Alcock's instincts were correct. Although Ii Naosuke had been forced to accept the necessity of signing the commercial treaties, he wanted to control the presence of foreigners within Japan. Yokohama was therefore to become a second Dejima, where foreigners could be absorbed and quarantined from the Japanese population. Efforts made

²³⁴ Auslin, *op.cit.*, pp.45-7; Beasley, *Select Documents*, *op.cit.*, pp.37-47; Jansen, *op.cit.*, pp.282-6; and Tsuzuki, *op.cit.*, pp.42-4.

²³⁵ House of Commons Parliamentary Papers (HCPP), 1860, Vol. LXIX.297, [2648], pp.10-1, Alcock to Malmesbury, No. 4, 13 July 1859.

by Townsend Harris to oppose the construction of this settlement in the six months prior to the opening of trade had proved fruitless.²³⁶ When Alcock arrived in Edo, therefore, he was presented with Yokohama as a *fait accompli*. In the end, Alcock and Harris secured a site for their respective consulates at the stipulated location for the treaty port in Kanagawa. Despite this, even the British government admitted there was little to prevent British merchants, who had ignored a British consular notification asking them not to occupy buildings on the site, from continuing to operate at Yokohama for the foreseeable future.²³⁷ The *bakufu* had won the first battle in its new war against the treaties.

Although Alcock successfully exchanged the ratified copies of Britain's commercial treaty with the shogunate on 11 July, many further obstacles to trade were raised in the weeks after the ports opened. The *bakufu* restricted direct dealing between Japanese merchants and foreigners over the most popular export products, including silk, and obstructed the conclusion of commercial contracts between the two. It also decided to issue new coinage in order to pre-empt an expected run on Japanese gold as a result of the stipulation in the treaties granting foreign merchants the right to demand the 'weight for weight' exchange of Japanese currency. The new currency raised the price of Japanese goods by 200 per cent overnight, resulting almost immediately in the suspension of all commercial transactions at the new ports. There was uproar amongst consuls and merchants alike until Edo backed down and withdrew the new currency.²³⁸ Even so, *bakufu* officials continued to deal with the foreigners in an uncooperative and duplicitous manner. Within a few weeks, Alcock was convinced that a power struggle had taken place in Edo in the year since the treaties were first signed. Unfortunately, it now seemed like the victorious party was determined to do all it could to resist their implementation.²³⁹

To compound matters, reports arrived from China at the end of July that Qing forces had successfully repulsed an Anglo-French fleet at the Taku forts near Tianjin. This joint naval force had been attempting to force a way up the River Peiho so that the newly appointed British and French ministers could exchange ratified copies of the Tianjin treaties with the Qing emperor in Beijing. Unfortunately, the British commander of this

²³⁶ Auslin, *op.cit.*, pp.49-53.

²³⁷ HCPP, 1860, Vol. LXIX.297, [2648], pp.24-5, Alcock to Malmesbury, No. 8, 14 July 1859; and p.26, Russell to Alcock, No. 9, 7 October 1859.

²³⁸ HCPP, 1860, Vol. LXIX.297, [2648], pp.14-5, Alcock to Malmesbury, No. 5, 13 July 1859; and Fox, *op.cit.*, p.68-71.

²³⁹ HCPP, 1860, Vol. LXIX.297, [2648], pp.26-7, Alcock to Malmesbury, No. 11, 28 July 1859.

fleet, Rear-Admiral Sir James Hope, drastically underestimated the defences that guarded the entrance to the Peiho, which had been significantly strengthened since they were easily overcome by Elgin and Gros the previous year. When Hope attempted to break through the river barriers on the morning of 25 June 1859, a devastatingly accurate barrage from the forts tore his ships apart.²⁴⁰ French losses were minimal by comparison, as Admiral de Genouilly had prioritised operations in Vietnam instead of allocating a large squadron for what was supposed to be a diplomatic mission.²⁴¹ Nonetheless, this unmitigated, humiliating military disaster shattered the sense of invincibility that had characterised British naval action in China up to that point.²⁴² It also undid in one day all the work done by Elgin and Gros over eighteen months in China.²⁴³ In effect, it rendered the Tianjin treaties dead letters less than a week before Japan was due to open its doors to foreign trade. Within a few weeks of this news arriving in Japan, Alcock had sensed a hardening of Japanese attitudes towards the treaties. Just as events in China had frightened the *bakufu* into signing them in the first place, the debacle at the Peiho appeared to have emboldened Edo to attempt to repudiate them.²⁴⁴

When Bellecourt arrived in Shanghai on 31 July 1859, he found a city in a state of tumult.²⁴⁵ Inspired by the victory at the Peiho, the indigenous population was agitating against foreigners. As a result, French residents of the city refused to allow the departure of the only French warship stationed to protect their safety and property. Eager to reach Japan as soon as possible, Bellecourt considered sailing in a commercial vessel until Cachon warned him that this would seriously damage French prestige in Japan. After all, no Japanese mandarin would dare set foot on a commercial ship to receive a political officer, and the *bakufu* might even interpret such a request as a deliberate slight.²⁴⁶ Bellecourt had no choice, therefore, but to remain in Shanghai until calm had been restored, although he was kept informed of Japanese affairs by the British consul, who

²⁴⁰ A printed copy of Hope's full report of the incident can be found in: *The Nautical Magazine and Naval Chronicle, for 1859: a journal of papers on subjects connected with maritime affairs*, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013), pp.536-42.

²⁴¹ Brizay, *op.cit.*, p.60.

²⁴² Stephen Platt, *Autumn in the Heavenly Kingdom: China, the West, and the Epic Story of the Taiping Civil War*, (London: Atlantic Books, 2012), p.49.

²⁴³ Bernard Brizay, *Le sac du palais d'été: l'expédition Anglo-Française de Chine en 1860 (troisième guerre de l'opium)*, (Monaco: Éditions du Rocher, 2003), p.64.

²⁴⁴ See AD, CPJ59/1, Bellecourt to Walewski, No. 3, 22 August 1859.

²⁴⁵ AD, CPJ59/1, Bellecourt to Walewski, No. 1, 1 August 1859.

²⁴⁶ AD, CPJ59/1, Bellecourt to Walewski, No. 2, 11 August 1859.

maintained a regular correspondence with Alcock.²⁴⁷ By the time the Frenchman finally arrived in Edo on 6 September, Alcock and Harris had been struggling to enforce the treaties for over two months. In his first meetings with Japanese officials, Bellecourt immediately found that his lack of plenipotentiary powers put him at a disadvantage compared to his British and American colleagues.²⁴⁸ Though the ratified French treaties were exchanged with satisfactory pomp and ceremony at the end of September, Bellecourt quickly sensed that the feudatory princes were strongly opposed to commercial relations. Typically, he believed that such hostility would only be overcome by adopting a firm attitude, by acting with the other foreign representatives, and, above all, by maintaining at least a semblance of naval strength in Japanese waters at all times.²⁴⁹

Bellecourt was undoubtedly following his colleagues' lead by advocating this forceful approach. Over the summer, Alcock and Harris had become increasingly frustrated not only with the impediments to trade at the ports but also their own treatment at Edo, where they were held as virtual prisoners and often subjected to abuse and attack when they went out. Alcock was sensitive to the fact the Foreign Office would not welcome a new complication in East Asia, but he could not change the habit of a lifetime. Believing that the *bakufu* needed a suitably 'energetic demonstration' that its open disregard of the treaties would not be tolerated forever, he submitted a strongly worded protest to the foreign magistrates in early August.²⁵⁰ This had little impact, however, and attacks on foreigners at the ports and the capital continued throughout the autumn, culminating in one on Alcock himself in early November.²⁵¹ Even Harris, who had remained more disposed towards the Japanese than his British colleague, was not immune to this treatment. During an audience with the shogun in early November, he was treated with such incivility by *bakufu* officials that he later submitted a vociferous letter of protest and demanded an apology, again to little effect.²⁵²

By contrast, when a Russian officer and sailor were murdered by anti-foreign fanatics at Yokohama in August, Edo reacted very differently. Instead of the dilatory and evasive

²⁴⁷ AD, CPJ59/1, Bellecourt to Walewski, No. 3, 22 August 1859.

²⁴⁸ AD, CPJ59/1, Bellecourt to Walewski, No. 4, 10 September 1859.

²⁴⁹ AD, CPJ59/1, Bellecourt to Walewski, No. 5, 16 September 1859; and Sims, *op.cit.*, p.25.

²⁵⁰ HCPP, 1860, Vol. LXIX.297, [2648], pp.31-3, Alcock to Malmesbury, No. 13, 11 August 1859.

²⁵¹ AD, CPJ59/1, Bellecourt to Walewski, No. 14, 8 November 1859.

²⁵² AD, CPJ59/1, Bellecourt to Walewski, No. 15, 9 November 1859; and No 17, 22 November 1859.

approach it had adopted with Alcock, Harris, and Bellecourt, the *bakufu* immediately accepted Russian demands for a public apology, the dismissal of the Kanagawa governor, and the execution of those responsible. The reason for this seemed clear enough to the men on the spot: unlike any of the other treaty powers, Russia had dispatched a significant naval fleet to Japan to exchange treaty ratifications.²⁵³ The Russian naval commander was therefore granted meetings with the *rōjū* without difficulty, while the other foreign representatives struggled even to secure an audience with the foreign magistrates. To Bellecourt, this indicated that Russian military prestige ‘had a more imposing effect on the Japanese than the mercantile preoccupations of England and the U.S.’²⁵⁴ It certainly seemed no coincidence that the landing of three hundred Russian marines to guard their naval commander at Edo brought about an improvement in the behaviour of the Japanese government, even if the size of the Russian force made Alcock deeply apprehensive about Russia’s ambitions in northern Japan.²⁵⁵ The return of *bakufu* obfuscation and anti-foreign violence after the departure of the Russian fleet reinforced Bellecourt’s conviction that a permanent naval force was necessary to protect foreigners in Japan.²⁵⁶

By this point, Alcock knew enough about Japan’s oligarchic system of government to realise how difficult it would be to implement the treaties in full.²⁵⁷ Yet he also blamed the poor state of commerce on certain members of the British merchant community, whose unruly behavior at the treaty ports was frequently used by the *bakufu* to justify further infractions of the treaties.²⁵⁸ Nonetheless, the commercial situation had deteriorated to such an extent by the beginning of December that Alcock considered ‘all Treaties recently concluded with Japan [to be] virtually annulled’.²⁵⁹ This sentiment was shared by Bellecourt, who declared in similarly dramatic fashion that ‘the Treaties no longer exist’.²⁶⁰ Tired of sending notes and making indirect representations, Alcock demanded a direct audience with the foreign magistrates in order to discuss how to resolve

²⁵³ AD, CPJ59/1, Bellecourt to Walewski, No. 8, 1 October 1859.

²⁵⁴ AD, CPJ59/1, Bellecourt to Walewski, No. 9, 3 October 1859.

²⁵⁵ HCPP, 1860, Vol. LXIX.297, [2648], pp.57-8, Alcock to Russell, No. 23, 8 September 1859.

²⁵⁶ AD, CPJ59/1, Bellecourt to Walewski, No. 14, 8 November 1859.

²⁵⁷ HCPP, 1860, Vol. LXIX.297, [2648], pp.59-62, Alcock to Russell, No. 28, 20 September 1859.

²⁵⁸ AD, CPJ59/1, Bellecourt to Walewski, No. 19 (moved to C.P. but numbered as Correspondence Commerciale, Yédo document), 25 November 1859.

²⁵⁹ HCPP, 1860, Vol. LXIX.297, [2648], pp.89-90, Alcock to Russell, No. 41, 6 December 1859.

²⁶⁰ AD, CPJ59/1, Bellecourt to Walewski, No. 19, 10 December 1859.

the myriad problems over trade. His French and American colleagues, who did not require much encouragement, readily accepted an invitation to follow suit.²⁶¹

Over the course of a four-hour interview with the foreign magistrates on 7 December 1859, it gradually became clear to Alcock that the *bakufu* had absolutely no interest in improving relations with the treaty powers. This was the final straw for the proud British diplomat, who was now certain that Edo's unwillingness to execute the treaties was attributable to 'a sinister influence derived from the knowledge of events in China'.²⁶² Alcock was confident that preparations would already be underway in Europe for the dispatch of another Anglo-French naval expedition to punish the Qing dynasty for the outrage at the Peiho. He therefore left the foreign magistrates in no doubt about what the arrival of a substantial joint fleet in Chinese waters would mean for Japan if the treaties were not respected. 'I said in our last interview that there were two ways of settling affairs between nations,' he wrote to the magistrates a few days later, 'the one was reason, with Treaties and Diplomatic Agents for the instruments; the other war, where the instruments are fleets and armies'.²⁶³

After struggling against *bakufu* efforts to negate the terms of the commercial treaties for six months, Alcock had clearly run out of patience. For a man of his background and experience, it was hardly surprising that he returned to the tried and tested coercive tactics that had served him so well in China. Unlike in China, however, there were no British gunboats in Edo Bay to back up his threats, so Alcock was forced to resort instead to a sort of 'phantom gunboat diplomacy' in the hope that theoretical threats alone would change Japanese attitudes. Following his acrimonious meeting with the shogun in November, Harris also shared Alcock's opinion that the time had come to point out to the *bakufu* what was at stake. In fact, the American went even further than his British colleague by threatening the *bakufu* with what it feared more than any Western gunboat: the loss of the right to conduct foreign affairs. 'You have wiped out the Treaties,' he thundered during his own meeting with the foreign magistrates, 'prepare for war, because since we now understand the pernicious influence of the Daimios, it is to them that we will demand redress for the violation of the Treaties'.²⁶⁴ He also threatened to sever all

²⁶¹ AD, CPJ59/1, Bellecourt to Walewski, No. 21, 3 December 1859.

²⁶² HCPP, 1860, Vol. LXIX.297, [2648], pp.92-3, Alcock to Russell, No. 42, 10 December 1859.

²⁶³ *Idem.*, enclosure 1.

²⁶⁴ Quoted in AD, CPJ59/1, Bellecourt to Walewski, No. 21 (bis), 13 December 1859.

relations with Edo if the situation did not improve within five days, and warned the magistrates that if the *bakufu* could not protect the treaty powers they would instead demand new treaties from the Mikado²⁶⁵ himself, who appeared to be ‘the true emperor’.²⁶⁶

The bellicosity of the British and American representatives put Bellecourt in a bind. On the one hand, he agreed that only the fear of concerted and forceful action would compel the *bakufu* to implement the treaties. On the other, he was acutely aware that the Quai d’Orsay did not want him to interfere in political affairs, and that it would certainly not approve of him threatening military action. Before his own meeting with the foreign magistrates, therefore, Bellecourt resolved to chart a course between these two contradictory imperatives. ‘I shall be prudent,’ he assured Walewski, ‘but I cannot separate myself entirely from my colleagues, because, it must be said, no distinction of nationality is made in Japan.’²⁶⁷ In the end, Bellecourt reiterated the arguments made by his British and American colleagues, but was careful not to threaten the Japanese so directly. In response, he received solemn assurances that the situation would improve, although he felt no more confident than his colleagues that these promises would be kept. After making their feelings abundantly clear, however, all they could do was wait and see what effect their communal action would have.²⁶⁸

The entente under strain

Whilst it seemed to the foreign representatives as if matters in Japan had reached a critical point by the end of 1859, neither the Foreign Office nor the Quai d’Orsay viewed their travails as a matter of great concern. Instead, they were more concerned about the aftermath of the inconclusive war that France and Austria had fought on the Italian peninsula during the summer of 1859. This conflict had been engineered from the outset by Napoléon III to further his foreign policy objectives, which included the dismantlement of the 1815 peace settlement, the restoration of France’s natural frontiers on the Alps and the Rhine, and the pacification of Europe through its reconstruction on

²⁶⁵ Mikado is an archaic term for the Japanese emperor; ditto Tycoon for shogun.

²⁶⁶ Quoted in AD, CPJ59/1, Bellecourt to Walewski, No. 21 (bis), 13 December 1859.

²⁶⁷ AD, CPJ59/1, Bellecourt to Walewski, No. 19, 10 December 1859. Quoted in Sims, *op.cit.*, p.26.

²⁶⁸ AD, CPJ59/1, Bellecourt to Walewski, No. 28, 20 December 1859.

the basis of nationalities assembled in loose (con)-federal structures too weak to challenge French supremacy. Following the Anglo-French victory over Russia in the Crimean War (1853-1856), Napoléon III believed that military intervention to liberate the northern Italian possessions that the Austrian Empire had acquired at the Congress of Vienna in 1815 would continue the process of restoring France as the pre-eminent power in Europe.²⁶⁹

The uncertain outcome of the Franco-Austrian War, which had commenced in April with a string of French victories before coming to a halt on 8 July 1859 with the surprise conclusion of the Villafranca armistice, demonstrated the inherent risks of such an adventurous foreign policy. Napoléon III's Italian adventure not only failed to achieve its principal objective of ejecting the Habsburg Monarchy from the Veneto, but also unleashed an uncontrollable nationalist fervour among the Italian population, diminished the power of the Pope, left the future of Nice and Savoy unclear, and almost provoked a wider European conflict. Most importantly, it shook the foundations of the loose Anglo-French entente that had been established during the Crimean War by reawakening longstanding suspicions in London that Napoléon III aspired to emulate his famous uncle and become 'the master of Europe'.²⁷⁰ It certainly worried the Prime Minister Lord Palmerston, who had returned at the head of a stable and unified Liberal Government in July 1859 following a brief period of Conservative rule. Although initially sceptical that Napoléon III would contemplate a direct conflict with Britain, by the autumn Palmerston was convinced that the emperor's efforts to strengthen his navy meant that his 'formerly declared intention of avenging Waterloo has only lain dormant and has not died away'.²⁷¹

Relations between Britain and France were therefore already at a low ebb when news of the Peiho debacle arrived in Europe in mid-September 1859. Napoléon III was outraged. The death of French marines, however few, on Chinese soil was an insult and loss of prestige that could not be endured, especially given the embarrassing circumstances under which they had been deployed. The war with Austria had been fought in part to restore French military prestige and pre-eminence in Europe, yet the pitifully small French force that had taken part in the operation at the Peiho had exposed the disparity in British and

²⁶⁹ Roger Price, *The French Second Empire: An Anatomy of Political Power*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), pp.406-8.

²⁷⁰ University of Southampton Library, Palmerston Papers, GC/RU/508, Russell to Palmerston, 18 July 1859.

²⁷¹ TNA, Russell Papers, PRO30/22/20/49, Palmerston to Russell, 4 November 1859.

French naval strength in China. Despite this embarrassment, Count Walewski saw an opportunity to advance French interests in East Asia. The Foreign Minister recommended immediately that France demand both the payment of a large monetary indemnity and the cession of Chinese territory for use as a French naval base. The emperor equivocated between seizing this tempting opportunity to secure a Hong Kong-style base for the French Navy and holding back from doing anything that might risk a rupture with Britain in China. In the end, he decided that it was impossible to restore pride and to protect French commercial, strategic, and religious interests at the Chinese treaty ports unless his military forces were placed on an equal footing with the British there. The Foreign Office was therefore informed that the French government intended to dispatch a significant naval fleet to China to seek reparation for the loss of French life, if necessary by occupying Qing territory.²⁷²

In London, the British political establishment was deeply concerned about the long-term geopolitical consequences of the Peiho debacle. The treaty-port system across East Asia largely depended upon the security provided by British gunboats, and Admiral Hope's defeat risked undermining commercial confidence in the ability of the Royal Navy to protect British trade and deter attacks on foreigners at China's treaty ports. The former Foreign Secretary Lord Clarendon warned his old friend and colleague Edmund Hammond, who continued to serve as Permanent Under-Secretary at the Foreign Office, that 'the disgrace of being beaten by the barbarians' also constituted a dangerous loss of prestige that would fuel anti-British feeling in India.²⁷³ The British Cabinet was also struggling to understand how its hitherto invincible naval forces had suffered such a devastating reverse. While many believed that Hope had overestimated British naval strength and mismanaged the operation, Hammond and Palmerston suspected foul play by Russia. After all, the Russian Foreign Minister, Alexander Gorchakov, had recently informed the British ambassador in St Petersburg that the Qing dynasty considered all foreign treaties abrogated except for the one with Russia, which had already been ratified.²⁷⁴ When Palmerston then received intelligence that a group of Russian officers had been dispatched to China the previous winter, he became convinced that the Russians had not only constructed the Peiho batteries but also manned them during the action!²⁷⁵

²⁷² Brizay, *op.cit.*, pp.73-84.

²⁷³ TNA, Hammond Papers, FO391/3, Clarendon to Hammond, 12 September 1859.

²⁷⁴ TNA, Cowley Papers, FO519/188, Hammond to Cowley, 13 September 1859.

²⁷⁵ TNA, Hammond Papers, FO391/7, Palmerston to Hammond, 20 September 1859.

There was also dissension within the Cabinet as to whether or not the conduct of the Chinese at the Peiho actually constituted a breach of the unratified Treaty of Tientsin. This was a decision that would have potentially lasting political consequences for Palmerston's Liberal Government. After all, the imposition of the treaty-port system in China had been justified by the champions of liberal progress on the Qing dynasty's refusal to accept the principles of so-called 'international law'.²⁷⁶ To sanction a new war against the Qing on the basis of a *casus belli* that also breached these principles was therefore a significant political risk. Even so, Palmerston was adamant that the government had a patriotic duty to 'resent this outrage in some way or other'.²⁷⁷

Before any definitive decision had been made, news filtered in from Paris that the French were determined to go to war with China regardless of what Britain decided. This left the Cabinet with little choice but to dispatch a military expedition to China as well. The maintenance of national prestige and honour alone was enough for those who were already in favour of taking active measures against the Qing, such as Palmerston and his Foreign Secretary Lord John Russell. Under the circumstances, Hammond also thought it much better for Britain to maintain the lead in China rather than cede it to the French, and he hoped that joint action between Britain and France would help 'to soften much of the asperity which has lately prevailed in the relations between the two countries'.²⁷⁸ At the same time, the French clamour for war was a source of concern for Palmerston, who worried that Napoléon III had ulterior motives in dispatching such a large naval force to Chinese waters. After all, France was already engaged in a pre-colonial war in Vietnam, and had only very recently suspended a conflict with Austria in Italy that also seemed motivated by territorial aggrandisement. Whichever way the Prime Minister looked at it, the scale of the French force was certain to hamper British efforts to control the process of treaty ratification and threaten Britain's preponderant role in Chinese affairs.²⁷⁹

Decisive measures were therefore required to ensure that British interests were not subsumed to French ones. First, despite the significant and unnecessary expense this would incur, Russell thought it 'absolutely essential' that there was parity – if not British

²⁷⁶ See Scott Gilfillan, 'Extraterritoriality and the British Consular Court System in Japan', *Journal on European History of Law*, Vol.6, No.1 (2015), pp.58-61.

²⁷⁷ TNA, Hammond Papers, FO391/7, Palmerston to Hammond, 12 September 1859.

²⁷⁸ TNA, Cowley Papers, FO519/188, Hammond to Cowley, 17 September 1859.

²⁷⁹ See TNA, Russell Papers, PRO30/22/20/28, Palmerston to Russell, 12 September 1859.

superiority – between the two expeditionary forces.²⁸⁰ Second, any spoils from the campaign had to be shared equally. Third, it was critical that a genuine attempt was made to secure treaty ratification and the Qing emperor's acceptance of the Tianjin treaties before hostilities commenced. Thus, although Napoléon III wanted to declare war on China immediately, Palmerston insisted upon presenting Beijing with an ultimatum in the hope that this would avert the trouble and expense of a lengthy military expedition.²⁸¹ These conditions did little to alter the enormous size of the combined British and French fleet that departed for China towards the end of 1859, which consisted of 41 men-of-war and 143 transports carrying a huge arsenal of field artillery, cavalry horses, tens of thousands of British, French and Indian troops, and thousands more support personnel.²⁸² In the end, the 10,000 British troops and 4,000 colonial troops from India significantly outnumbered the 8,000 Frenchmen.²⁸³ In April 1860, Lord Elgin and Baron Gros were again appointed to head the diplomatic mission and instructed to ratify the treaty at Tianjin, force the emperor to apologise for the attack at the Taku forts, and secure the payment of a large indemnity for the costs of the war.²⁸⁴

For the first time since the establishment of the treaty-port system in China, a treaty power other than Britain had committed to taking independent military action against the Qing dynasty. The French decision to intervene aggressively in China severely hampered Britain's independence of action, forcing London to commit to a war of questionable legality, efficacy, and expense. It is clear, then, that rivalry in China was beginning to play a significant role in shaping Anglo-French relations. It drew the attention of the British and French governments throughout the latter half of 1859 and well into 1860, even though important matters of war and peace in Europe were still being settled. The China crisis also led to important changes in British and French policy towards the treaty-port system in other parts of East Asia. The disaster at the Peiho demonstrated that forcing an East Asian government to negotiate a commercial treaty did not automatically mean that its stipulations would be respected or implemented. The Western diplomats at the Peiho had faced a dilemma over how to compel the Qing emperor to abide by the commercial treaties. For them, the choice seemed a binary one: submission or resistance. In the end, Hope's defeat had not only damaged the myth of British military supremacy

²⁸⁰ TNA, Russell Papers, PRO30/22/31/36, Russell to Sidney Herbert, 11 October 1859.

²⁸¹ TNA, Russell Papers, PRO30/22/20/47, Palmerston to Russell, 29 October 1859.

²⁸² Platt, *op.cit.*, p.87.

²⁸³ Brizay, *op.cit.*, p.86.

²⁸⁴ Platt, *op.cit.*, p.97.

in East Asia but also forced the British and French governments to incur enormous costs in order to avenge it.²⁸⁵ This contradicted the whole purpose of the treaty-port system, which was designed to secure Western trading nations the profits of a formal empire without its expense.

There was no doubt that the China trade was worth fighting for, but that did not mean that the British and French governments automatically approved of the coercive measures adopted by their representatives at the Peiho. It was a tactic that was unlikely to win approval from home very often unless great commercial or political interests were at stake. That was unlikely ever to be the case in Japan, where the very limited expectations of the Foreign Office were evident from Hammond's reaction to the arrival of Alcock's first dispatches from Edo in the autumn of 1859. Although these letters were filled with complaints about the difficulties that had arisen since the ports had first opened, Hammond was so happy with the incremental progress that had been made in Japan that he asked Lord Wodehouse, the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, to write to Alcock to express the government's 'most handsome and unqualified approval of all that he has done'.²⁸⁶ Hammond also recommended that Alcock be promoted into the diplomatic service on a raised salary, in part to put him on an equitable footing in Japan with Harris but also to recognise his good service to the government. On 8 December 1859, Russell informed Alcock officially that the Queen had appointed him Envoy Extraordinary and Minister Plenipotentiary in Japan.²⁸⁷ By contrast, Walewski did not respond to Bellecourt's first dispatches until the end of December, when the consul-general was simply told that the Quai d'Orsay was sympathetic to his predicament but that it was to some extent inevitable. Bellecourt was also informed of the new China expedition, which Walewski hoped would demonstrate the strong desire of the British and French governments to implement the treaties made with East Asian states.²⁸⁸

Hammond remained positive about the situation in Japan even after more dispatches arrived from Alcock in November. He advised Wodehouse to not be disheartened about Japanese affairs, since 'things were going on there unnaturally smoothly, and it was not

²⁸⁵ There were rumours in 1860 that it was costing Britain a million pounds sterling a month to maintain its expeditionary force in China. See *ibid.*, p. 103.

²⁸⁶ Bodleian Library, Oxford (BLO), Kimberley Papers, MS. Eng. c. 4003, Hammond to Wodehouse, 7 November 1859.

²⁸⁷ HCPP, 1860, Vol. LXIX.297, [2648], p.58, Russell to Alcock, No. 25, 8 December 1859.

²⁸⁸ AD, CPJ59/1, Walewski to Bellecourt, No. 3, 26 December 1859.

to be expected that difficulties should not arise'.²⁸⁹ This relaxed attitude began to change after Alcock's dispatch detailing the explicit threats he had issued to the *bakufu* at his meeting with the foreign magistrates on 7 December 1859 finally arrived in London the following February. In a testy response, Lord Russell informed Alcock that he had overstepped the mark by threatening the Japanese with war. He was to soothe differences instead of making peremptory demands, and to bear in mind that the Japanese were probably justified in resenting the conduct of certain Europeans at the ports.²⁹⁰ Thanks to the more cautious tone he had adopted with the Japanese, Bellecourt avoided a similar reprimand. Instead, the Quai d'Orsay empowered him to deal with political problems in Japan by promoting him to the diplomatic rank of chargé d'affaires.²⁹¹ Édouard Thouvenel, the new French Minister for Foreign Affairs, also wrote to the Navy Minister to ask for French warships to call into Japanese ports whenever possible, and for the British and French admirals in Chinese waters to dispatch a ship alternately to Japan to ensure a permanent naval presence there.²⁹² Like Alcock, Bellecourt was also warned not to exceed the strict limits of his remit.²⁹³ Clearly, both Russell and Thouvenel wanted to avoid another war in East Asia at all costs, and the slap on the wrist that the former issued to Alcock revealed much about how the disaster on the *Peiho* had altered attitudes on the use of 'gunboat diplomacy':

If the grievances are not redressed and war is not made, the character of the British Government is in some degree impaired; if war is made to enforce the observance of a Commercial Treaty, we run the risk of engaging in protracted hostilities, and of earning a reputation for quarrelling with every nation in the East.²⁹⁴

²⁸⁹ BLO, Kimberley Papers, MS. Eng. c. 4003, Hammond to Wodehouse, 12 November 1859.

²⁹⁰ HCPP, 1860, Vol. LXIX.297, [2648], p.98, Russell to Alcock, No. 44, 28 February 1859.

²⁹¹ AD, CPJ59/2, Thouvenel to Bellecourt, No. 1, 25 February 1860.

²⁹² AD, CPJ59/2, Thouvenel to Hamelin, 20 February 1860.

²⁹³ AD, CPJ59/2, Thouvenel to Cowley, 6 March 1860; & Thouvenel to Bellecourt, No. 3, 10 March 1860.

²⁹⁴ HCPP, 1860, Vol. LXIX.297, [2648], p.98, Russell to Alcock, No. 44, 28 February 1860.

Conclusions

1859 was a year in which the reckless French military intervention on the Italian peninsula rekindled British fears about Napoléon III's foreign policy ambitions. It was also a year of crisis in China, where an unexpected and embarrassing naval disaster demonstrated the pitfalls of 'gunboat diplomacy'. These seismic political and military developments began to put a strain on the cooperative relationship established between Britain and France during the Crimean War. They also dominated the attention of the Foreign Office and the Quai d'Orsay for months, relegating Japan to the bottom of the list of priorities. Such indifference can also be explained by the difficulties in communicating with this distant outpost, given that dispatches to and from Japan took the best part of three months to reach their destination. The British and French representatives there were therefore left alone to implement the commercial treaties in the face of determined *bakufu* resistance. Events in China, where military resistance to the treaty-port system appeared to have paid dividends, only encouraged Edo to do all it could to subvert the treaties.

After six months of intractable difficulties over trade, murderous attacks on foreigners, and prison-like conditions in Edo, the foreign representatives decided to threaten the *bakufu* with war. This was a gamble, but one they were willing to take given the volatile political situation that confronted them. As the first to issue an overt threat, Alcock took the biggest risk. Though he had not yet received official confirmation about how London planned to respond to the Peiho debacle, he was certain that the British government would dispatch another significant naval force. He thus had no qualms about threatening Edo with gunboats bound for Beijing, despite his government's instructions to be patient. Unfortunately, this plan backfired. The Foreign Office did not expect Japan to be successfully opened to trade overnight, and many of Alcock's complaints were discounted as the inevitable teething problems faced by a country long closed to foreign intercourse. Requests for greater naval support from time to time were understandable, but Alcock was not to risk a repeat of the Peiho debacle in Japan. Though Bellecourt avoided a similar rebuke from Walewski, who seemed happy to let the British to take the lead in Japan, it was also made clear to him that the application of 'gunboat diplomacy' would not be tolerated. Despite obvious indications that creating new 'enclave empires' was going to be as problematic in Japan as it had been in China, Alcock and Bellecourt would have to find a new way to compel the *bakufu* to embrace the 'unequal treaties'.

CHAPTER 3

United in Adversity: The Challenge to Collective Diplomacy, 1860-1861

By early 1860, it was becoming increasingly clear to the beleaguered foreign representatives in Japan that the *bakufu* was determined to resist the imposition of the treaty-port system in any way possible. Edo's deliberate attempts to roll back the treaties had forced Alcock to discard the gradualist approach preferred by the Foreign Office in favour of the coercive tactics he had often employed to good effect in China. Unfortunately for the British minister, the swift repudiation of this policy in London undermined the potency of a threat that was already rather hollow given the absence of British gunboats in Japanese waters. The words of caution dispatched to Bellecourt from the Quai d'Orsay made it clear that the French government was equally unwilling to commit significant naval resources to defend the Japanese treaty-port system. With 'gunboat diplomacy' out of the question, the treaty-power representatives had to find a different way to compel the *bakufu* to take their threats seriously.

While they grappled with this quandary in 1860, the security situation at the treaty ports continued to deteriorate. This inevitably created tensions between the British, French, and American representatives over the best way to respond to the *bakufu* challenge. Personal ambitions also contributed to an atmosphere of mistrust between the men on the spot, whose competing visions for the future disguised an underlying struggle for control over the nascent 'enclave empires' in Japan. Matters came to a head at the beginning of 1861, when an explosive dispute erupted between Alcock and Harris that threatened to rip apart the system of collective diplomacy which underpinned treaty-power relations in Japan. Meanwhile, the uneasy partnership that had been forged between Britain and France during the Crimean War was finally beginning to fragment over issues of trade and geopolitics. With London and Paris at loggerheads over European affairs and distracted by their joint military operations in China, the isolated and increasingly terrorised British and French representatives in Edo were forced to unite to prevent the total collapse of the Japanese treaty-port system.

Tensions in Europe

After a year in which events in Europe and China had put Anglo-French relations under considerable strain, Britain and France entered 1860 as increasingly uneasy international partners. This was despite efforts by Lord Palmerston to reduce tensions by authorising the Radical Member of Parliament Richard Cobden, a long-standing opponent of Palmerstonian politics, to open discussions with Paris over a commercial treaty in October 1859. It was Cobden himself who had originally suggested such an initiative in the belief that a free-trade agreement would reduce arms spending and improve diplomatic relations. At the time, Cobden was concerned that Palmerston was recklessly stoking a war scare with France by investing heavily in armaments while publicly professing his friendly feelings towards the emperor. He had a point, for Palmerston had deliberately accentuated Anglo-French rivalry upon his return to office in 1859 in order to justify high levels of defence expenditure at a time when his Chancellor, William Gladstone, was advocating more austere economic policies. British fears about the emperor's redevelopment of a French naval base at Cherbourg were real, however, and the arms race it stimulated was primarily motivated by the mutual desire of both Palmerston and Napoléon III to retain independence of action on the international stage after the unpredictable events of 1859.²⁹⁵

Unhappily for Cobden, the treaty that he concluded with his French colleague Michel Chevalier in January 1860 did little to improve Anglo-French relations in the short term. It was attacked by protectionists in Britain and manufacturers in France as a political arrangement to smooth tensions following the war in Italy. It was also criticised by the British political class as 'unsound in principle, doubtful as a political measure, ill contrived as a commercial arrangement and quite indefensible as regards its fiscal consequences'.²⁹⁶ The Liberal statesman Earl Grey and former Conservative Prime Minister Lord Derby were so opposed that they actually discussed preventing Parliament from approving it, only to decide at the last minute that the potential consequences for British trade were too great.²⁹⁷ In July, Cobden wrote to the Foreign Secretary Lord

²⁹⁵ David Brown, *Palmerston: A Biography*, (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2012), pp.445.

²⁹⁶ Quoted in Wellesley, F. A., ed., *The Paris Embassy during the Second Empire: selections from the papers of Henry Richard Charles Wellesley, 1st Earl Cowley, Ambassador at Paris, 1852-1867*, (London: Thornton Butterworth, 1928), pp.195-6.

²⁹⁷ Durham University Library, Durham, Grey Papers, GRE/B82/12/77-78, Derby to Grey, 12 & 13 March 1860.

Russell to complain bitterly about the way the British public had been poisoned against the treaty by ‘professional monomaniacs’ in the press, ‘who find it easier and more profitable to blow a lighted fire than to light a new one’.²⁹⁸ His continued opposition to what he saw as the Liberal Government’s unnecessary and politically ruinous defence expenditure failed to convince Russell, however, who accused Cobden of wishing to see Britain ‘unarmed’ and placed ‘at the mercy of France’.²⁹⁹ In fact, Palmerston’s determination to address any potential French threat to British naval superiority fitted into his foreign policy of ‘pragmatic checks and balances’.³⁰⁰ While a commercial agreement would undoubtedly provide a useful counterweight to increasing Anglo-French tensions over foreign policy disputes, it did not in any way dissuade the Prime Minister from preparing for a possible armed conflict. In other words, the Cobden-Chevalier Treaty of 1860 did not provide enough tangible assurances of mutual good faith to bring about an immediate reduction in Anglo-French tensions, even if it may have helped to avert a war over the long term.³⁰¹

These tensions reached new heights after Napoléon III announced publicly on 1 March 1860 that he intended to annex Nice and Savoy. He justified this move as necessary to protect France’s border, when it was in reality the direct result of his failure to convince the European concert to convene a congress to settle the political future of Italy.³⁰² According to Lord Clarendon, it provoked immediate irritation and mistrust in the emperor across the continent, ‘setting all the Powers of Europe a-thinking how and when they shall be able to coalesce against him’.³⁰³ Palmerston and Russell were particularly aggrieved by the fact that the emperor had declared so many times that the war with Austria was not motivated by territorial ambitions. As firm supporters of the Italian cause, neither were prepared to allow such an overt threat to Italian independence to pass

²⁹⁸ The National Archives, London (TNA), Russell Papers, PRO30/22/14A/66, Cobden to Russell, 2 July 1860.

²⁹⁹ Quoted in TNA, Russell Papers, PRO30/22/14A/76, Cobden to Russell, 2 August 1860.

³⁰⁰ Brown, *op.cit.*, p.448.

³⁰¹ *Ibid.*, pp.446-8.

³⁰² William E. Echard, *Napoleon III and the Concert of Europe*, (Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 1983), pp.116-22; and Pierre Milza, *Napoléon III*, (Paris: Perrin, 2004), pp.430-4.

³⁰³ Quoted in Wellesley, *op.cit.*, p.198.

unchallenged.³⁰⁴ At the end of March, therefore, Russell delivered a highly charged speech in Parliament in which he suggested that Britain and other European powers might have to work together to prevent France from annexing further territory in the future.³⁰⁵ During a private meeting with the French ambassador in London soon afterwards, Palmerston stated bluntly that Britain was prepared to fight a war with France ‘fearlessly either with others or singly if forced upon us’.³⁰⁶

Despite these strong words, Napoléon III pressed ahead with the annexation of Nice and Savoy on 14 June 1860, finally regaining the ‘natural’ French border with the Alps that his uncle had lost in 1813.³⁰⁷ This provocative move reinforced concern in London that French territorial ambitions extended to other parts of the European continent and even beyond.³⁰⁸ For decades, Britain’s foreign policy priority had been the maintenance of the concert of Europe and the protection of the treaties that created it. Whilst Napoléon III believed that the great powers had a responsibility to revise those treaties in response to emerging nation-state formations, his annexation of Nice and Savoy was interpreted by many in London as an attempt to strike down the 1815 settlement in an act of pure adventurism.³⁰⁹ It was a decision that finally convinced large sections of British society that Napoléon III was determined to redraw the map of Europe. Even so, Palmerston decided not to intervene to protect the political status quo. Put simply, the Prime Minister was unwilling to risk a war with a country that he still considered to be the leading power in Europe. His anti-French rhetoric during this period was therefore mostly for show, a ‘rather feminine’ and ‘invariably personal’ policy that Clarendon disparaged as attributable to Palmerston’s rage ‘at finding that Louis Napoleon is a more artful dodger than himself’.³¹⁰

As David Brown has pointed out, Palmerston’s French policy during 1859 and 1860 was a cautious mix of *ideal-* and *realpolitik*.³¹¹ Although potentially popular at home, a

³⁰⁴ TNA, Russell Papers, PRO30/22/21/14, Palmerston to Russell, 26 February 1860, makes it hard to credit Lord Malmesbury’s later assertion that the Prime Minister had been aware of the emperor’s plan since 1858. See Brown, *op.cit.*, p.448.

³⁰⁵ *Hansard*, Series 3, House of Commons (HC), 23 March 1860, Vol. 157, cc.1174-1177.

³⁰⁶ TNA, Russell Papers, PRO30/22/21/23, Palmerston to Russell, 27 March 1860.

³⁰⁷ Pierre Milza, *Napoléon III*, (Paris: Perrin, 2004), p.434.

³⁰⁸ See TNA, Russell Papers, PRO30/22/21/16, Palmerston to Russell, 15 March 1860; and TNA, Cowley Papers, FO519/189, Hammond to Cowley, 3 April 1860.

³⁰⁹ Echard, *op.cit.*, p.123.

³¹⁰ Quoted in Wellesley, *op.cit.*, p.206.

³¹¹ Brown, *op.cit.*, p.449.

conflict with France in 1860 might easily have led to the collapse of the emperor's ostensibly liberal constitutional government, removing from power a known quantity with whom Palmerston had a longstanding personal relationship. That would likely upset the balance of power in Europe in favour of the autocracies and risk the inauguration of a new regime in Paris that was less inclined to work with Britain to contain them. Above all a pragmatist in foreign policy, Palmerston's apprehension about Britain's ebbing world power and influence compelled the 'gunboat diplomat' to choose his battles more selectively during the 1860s.³¹² As far as he was concerned, the preservation of peaceful relations with France was still the best guarantor of the international relevance and influence of both countries and it was therefore in Britain's interests to try to keep on good terms with France as long as possible.³¹³ At the same time, the emperor's actions in 1860 definitely instilled a sense of wariness and doubt that coloured British attitudes towards France throughout the following decade, even when mutual interest compelled the two countries to work together in far-flung parts of the world such as Japan.

Despite the tensions over European affairs, there was little immediate evidence in 1860 of any divergence in Anglo-French policy towards the Japanese treaty-port system. Both governments paid little attention to the warnings issued by Alcock and Bellecourt about the incendiary political situation in Edo during the first six months of treaty relations. As previously mentioned, the urgency of these warnings was also lessened by the fact that dispatches from Japan took between two to three months to reach Europe. In London at least, attention was more focused on stopping unscrupulous British merchants from manipulating the Japanese currency. Such opportunistic behaviour seemed to offer a more obvious explanation for the stoppage of trade that Alcock and Bellecourt had reported at the end of 1859. It also revived unpleasant memories of the early days of treaty relations with the Qing dynasty, when unruly British traders in Canton had provoked constant ruptures with the local authorities and intractable difficulties between London and Beijing. Anxious to avoid a repeat in Japan, the Permanent Under-Secretary for Foreign Affairs Edmund Hammond took the unusual step of writing publicly to the East India and China Association (EICA) to ask its members to put a stop to this behaviour. In response, the association secretary expressed regret about what had taken place and pledged to urge

³¹² For a comprehensive overview of Palmerston's foreign policy during this era, see *ibid.*, pp.444-50.

³¹³ See TNA, Russell Papers, PRO30/22/21/26, Palmerston to Russell, 1 April 1860.

those in Japan not to conduct themselves in a manner that might lead to disputes or violence.³¹⁴

Hammond also received several private letters from prominent representatives of the China and Japan trade, who were angry that certain unscrupulous individuals had discredited the entire mercantile community in Japan.³¹⁵ One of these was Hugh Hamilton Lindsay, the son of a former director of the East India Company and director of the China-based British trading firm Lindsay & Co.³¹⁶ A few days after the EICA publicly disavowed the currency speculators, Lindsay wrote privately to Hammond to suggest that the time had come for Alcock to make full use of the power and authority at his disposal to deport British subjects who proved themselves unworthy of consular protection. As for the currency difficulty, it could be resolved immediately if the *bakufu* matched the exchange rate of gold and silver in Japan to international rates.³¹⁷ Lindsay's advice proved highly influential. A few days after his letter was received, the Foreign Office issued new instructions to Alcock urging him to issue rules and regulations to uphold peace and order at the treaty ports, and to inform the *bakufu* that it could stop currency speculation at any time by harmonising the value of gold and silver with the international market.³¹⁸ The unmistakable similarities between these orders and Lindsay's recommendations demonstrated the extent to which prominent merchants influenced Britain's Japan policy at the time. Yet their optimistic belief that the problems at the ports could be resolved through better consular regulation and the public condemnation of dishonest traders was painfully naïve. Meanwhile, Alcock's dire warnings about the incendiary political situation in Japan were ignored.

As no French merchants had been involved in currency speculation, the Quai d'Orsay was naturally less concerned about the controversy than the Foreign Office. Nonetheless, the Foreign Minister Édouard Thouvenel informed the British ambassador in Paris, Lord

³¹⁴ See House of Commons Parliamentary Papers (HCPP), 1860, Vol. LXIX.405, [2617], pp.10-1, Hammond to Saintsbury, No. 2, 1 February 1860; & Saintsbury to Hammond, No. 3, 16 February 1860.

³¹⁵ TNA, FO46/9, Elmslie to Hammond, 13 February 1860; & Lindsay to Hammond, 6 March 1860.

³¹⁶ For more on Lindsay, see Robert Bickers, 'The Challenger: Hugh Hamilton Lindsay and the Rise of British Asia, 1832-1865', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, Vol.22, December 2012, pp.141-69.

³¹⁷ TNA, ADM1/5745, Lindsay to Hammond, 21 February 1860.

³¹⁸ HCPP, 1860, Vol. LXIX.297, [2648], p.88, Russell to Alcock, No. 40, 25 February 1860.

Cowley, that the French Navy would gladly cooperate in the suppression of foreign disorder in Japan.³¹⁹ The need to offer the Japanese treaty ports greater protection was accepted by both ministries, even if they remained unconvinced that the situation in Japan was quite as serious as Alcock and Bellecourt made out. In any case, Hammond had already asked for British warships to call more frequently on the Japanese treaty ports following the arrival of Alcock's earliest dispatches at the end of 1859.³²⁰ Just a few weeks later, however, the Permanent Under-Secretary had received a dispatch from Admiral Hope informing him that a British vessel had been stationed almost permanently in Japan since the opening of trade. This appeared to suggest that further naval reinforcements were unnecessary, especially as Hope also asserted that the constant presence of foreign warships in Japan was more likely to exacerbate tensions than alleviate them.³²¹

By contrast, Alcock remained convinced that long periods without a foreign warship in Japanese waters simply emboldened the *bakufu* to violate the treaties.³²² He and Bellecourt both agreed that the presence of Western gunboats had a great moral effect on the regime in Edo, and that the treaty-power representatives needed greater protection from their respective naval forces.³²³ The growing insecurity at the treaty ports was evidenced by a spate of assassinations during the first two months of 1860, including that of two Dutch captains in Yokohama and a Japanese linguist outside the British legation in Edo. Alcock reacted by asking Hope to allocate a British man-of-war to the Japan station on a permanent basis, but this request received short shrift from the admiral, who replied that every vessel at his disposal was required for the operations in China planned for the summer. Hope remained deeply sceptical about the need to divert his forces to Edo. He pointed out to the Admiralty that all the anti-foreign attacks to date had been committed when foreign warships were moored in Japanese ports, and that many of them had not been politically motivated.³²⁴ In any case, Hope's operational priority was the

³¹⁹ Archives Diplomatiques, Paris (AD), CPJ59/2, Cowley to Thouvenel, 28 February 1860.

³²⁰ Bodleian Library, Oxford (BLO), Kimberley Papers, MS. Eng. c. 4003, Hammond to Wodehouse, 7 November 1859.

³²¹ TNA, ADM125/115, Hope to Paget, No. 151, 30 September 1859.

³²² TNA, ADM1/5735, Alcock to Hope, 4 February 1860, enclosed in Hope to Paget, No. 88, 8 March 1860.

³²³ AD, CPJ59/2, Bellecourt to Walewski, No. 27, 30 January 1860.

³²⁴ TNA, ADM1/5735, Alcock to Hope, 4 February 1860 and Hope to Alcock, 8 March 1860, enclosures 1 & 2 in Hope to Paget, No. 88, 8 March 1860. See also Grace Fox, *Britain and Japan, 1858-1883*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1969), pp.78-9.

protection and maintenance of British trade in China, which was still being regularly threatened by the intransigence of the Qing government and frequent attacks by anti-Qing rebels such as the Taiping in central and southern China. By the beginning of 1860, he was also heavily preoccupied with preparations for the arrival of the Anglo-French naval fleet dispatched to exact revenge for the Peiho disaster. Moreover, the fact that he had managed to secure access to coaling stations near Nagasaki (albeit with some difficulty³²⁵) seemed to contradict Alcock's view that the *bakufu* would 'far too gladly see us encounter defeat in China, to entertain for a moment any proposition to place in our hands additional means of success'.³²⁶

Whilst Hope remained unconvinced that Japan warranted greater attention, opinion in the Foreign Office became more sympathetic to Alcock's point of view after his early 1860 dispatches on the perilous situation in Edo arrived in London. On 25 April 1860, just two months after Russell had reprimanded Alcock for his bellicose attitude towards the *bakufu*, the Foreign Secretary asked the Admiralty to send a naval force to protect the British community in Japan. Convinced that the isolated Alcock also required some moral and material support, he requested a squadron of sufficient size to demonstrate to the authorities in Edo that continued disregard of treaty stipulations might involve serious consequences. It seemed that Russell now appreciated that the insecurity in the Japanese treaty ports stemmed from something more complex than the dishonesty of a few British merchants. That said, he was not prepared to jeopardise the joint expedition in China unless absolutely necessary. He therefore amended Hammond's draft letter to the Admiralty to make it clear that the squadron should only be sent to Japan if Hope felt that he could spare the ships from China.³²⁷ In Paris, the arrival of reports from Bellecourt that the foreign representatives were unable to venture out of their Edo legations without risking insult and injury convinced Thouvenel to ask the French Navy to visit Japan more frequently as well.³²⁸

³²⁵ See Centre for Buckinghamshire Studies, Aylesbury (CBS), Somerset Papers, D-RA/A/2A/26/7/1-2 & 3, Hope to Somerset, 14 April 1860.

³²⁶ BLO, Kimberley Papers, MS. Eng. c. 4001, Alcock to Wodehouse, 11 January 1860.

³²⁷ TNA, ADM1/5745, Russell to Admiralty, 25 April 1860.

³²⁸ AD, CPJ59/2, Thouvenel to Hamelin, 14 May 1860. Bellecourt described two daylight attacks against Harris during January alone; see AD, CPJ59/2, Bellecourt to Walewski, No. 34 (moved to C.P. but numbered as Correspondence Commerciale, Yédo document), 2 January 1860; & Bellecourt to Walewski, No. 25, 27 January 1860.

The change in attitudes at the Foreign Office was probably the result of the political pressure that was heaped on Lord Russell after Alcock's early dispatches were published in Parliament during the spring of 1860. Given the government's recent failure to bring stability to the Chinese treaty-port system, Alcock's accounts of a similarly unstable situation in Japan provoked righteous anger on the opposition benches. Conservative MPs launched scathing attacks on the government for its inability to control the unscrupulous conduct of British merchants at the Japanese treaty ports, and for its failure to take Alcock's warnings about the perilous political situation in Japan more seriously.³²⁹ On 4 May, Russell was forced to come to the despatch box to reassure the House that warships would be sent to Japan as soon as they could be spared from China, and that British subjects would then be afforded all necessary protection. He stressed the optimistic tone of the more recent dispatches that had arrived from Edo, as well as the inevitability of encountering problems while attempting to open a new country to foreign trade.³³⁰ Russell's response was a straightforward and factual confirmation in public of what he believed in private: that the difficulties in Japan were not altogether unsurprising given the circumstances, nor intractable in the long term.

Much like those in charge of foreign affairs back in London and Paris, Admiral Hope was also convinced that the situation in Japan was not as bad as Alcock made out. The sporadic anti-foreign attacks at the Japanese treaty ports probably seemed tame to him compared with the volatile situation at Canton, where the foreign community was regularly besieged by the hostile local Chinese population, or Shanghai, where the Taiping rebels launched another offensive in August 1860. Nonetheless, Hope assured the Admiralty in July that he would send an imposing force to Japan as soon as his hands were free in China, but he also made it clear that he thought 'temper and patience' alone would 'tide through the difficulties'.³³¹ Despite the arrival of another letter from Alcock later that month describing the virtual imprisonment of foreign representatives in their legations and the systematic isolation and restrictions on all foreigners at the ports, it appeared that the British minister's increasingly shrill complaints about the lack of protection in Japan would continue to fall on deaf ears.³³²

³²⁹ *Hansard*, Series 3, HC, 4 May 1860, Vol. 158, cc.673-8.

³³⁰ *Ibid.*, cc.686-8.

³³¹ CBS, Somerset Papers, D-RA/A/2A/26/14/1-3, Hope to Somerset, 12 July 1860.

³³² TNA, FO46/8, Alcock to Russell, No. 40, 11 July 1860; and Fox, *op.cit.*, pp.79-80.

Tensions in Japan

The relative indifference in London and Paris to the plight of the British and French representatives in Japan stemmed from a failure to appreciate that the domestic upheaval taking place there threatened every foreigner in the country. Compared to the revolutionary convulsions ripping apart the Qing dynasty, it is easy to understand why Alcock and Bellecourt's warnings were not taken seriously, especially since the men on the spot themselves barely grasped the extent to which the opening of trade had catalysed political and economic instability within Japan. The equal exchange of coin during the first year of trade had resulted in financial catastrophe for the *bakufu*, destroying its bullion monopoly and draining Japan of its gold. Attempts to stem the flow by debasing the value of gold and silver led to astronomical commodity price rises that hit the lower-ranking samurai the hardest, since they were reliant upon fixed rice stipends that did not keep pace with rising consumer prices. This was exacerbated by the trade deficit created by Western demand for Japanese products, which also raised fears within the *bakufu* about potential shortages in Edo's domestic market. In April 1860, the disruption caused by foreign trade led the *bakufu* to restrict the direct sale of five primary goods, including raw silk, which led to predictable complaints from foreign merchants. The climate of fear that these crises created also led to the hoarding of rice and further taxes on an already over-burdened peasantry. It was thus no surprise that anti-foreign attitudes within all sections of Japanese society were hardening by the first anniversary of the opening of trade, while resentment continued to grow among those who blamed the *bakufu* for the catastrophic effects brought about by the commercial treaties.³³³

These economic difficulties partly explained the sustained attempts by the *bakufu* to restrict trade in every way possible short of openly breaching the treaties. Yet of even greater influence was the ongoing political crisis within Japan, which was evidenced by the assassination of the *tairō* Ii Naosuke at the gates of Edo Castle on 24 March 1860. The attack was carried out by a group of radical anti-foreign samurai from the Mito domain who were enraged at Ii's decision to sign the commercial treaties without imperial sanction and by the exile of their lord Tokugawa Nariaki, a figurehead of the *jōi*

³³³ Michael R. Auslin, *Negotiating with Imperialism: The Unequal Treaties and the Culture of Japanese Diplomacy*, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004), pp.65-8; and W. G. Beasley, ed., *Select Documents on Japanese Foreign Policy, 1853-1868*, (London: Oxford University Press, 1955), pp.48-51.

movement, during the ‘Ansei Purge’. The removal of the dictatorial *tairō* from power seriously weakened the *bakufu*’s ability to make domestic and foreign policy, as the *rōjū* were faced with the extremely difficult challenge of countering the growing clamour in Kyoto for the complete abrogation of the treaties while simultaneously satisfying the strident calls from the treaty-power representatives for their full implementation. In an attempt to unite the country, they sought to re-engage with the *kōbu-gattai* movement by proposing a marriage between the emperor’s sister and the new shogun. Sensing an opportunity to further advance the restoration of imperial power over policymaking, influential figures in Kyoto urged the emperor to refuse permission for the marriage unless Edo formally pledged to expel the foreigners. The virulently anti-foreign Emperor Kōmei readily agreed.

This decision put the *rōjū* in a bind. To accede to the emperor’s demand would risk a disastrous war with the West. On the other hand, the *bakufu* shared Kyoto’s desire to restrict any further extension of foreign trade across Japan, albeit for different reasons. As previously mentioned, the Ansei Treaties stipulated that new treaty ports were to be established at Niigata on 1 January 1860 and Hyōgo on 1 January 1863, while the cities of Edo and Osaka were also due to open to foreign residence on 1 January 1862 and 1863 respectively. Many *bakufu* officials had long been concerned about opening Hyōgo and Osaka due to their proximity to the newly politicised imperial capital at Kyoto. They also feared that opening Osaka to foreigners would enable the powerful merchants and *daimyō* operating in the city to monopolise international exchange and thus corner domestic trade. Rather than agree to the emperor’s impossible demand for the immediate expulsion of foreigners, therefore, the *rōjū* instead promised to seek to postpone the opening of the remaining ports and cities mandated by the treaties for a period of up to ten years. As Michael Auslin has demonstrated, this proposal was entirely consistent with Ii Naosuke’s policy of undermining the treaty settlement first negotiated with Harris.³³⁴ It was certainly enough to overcome Kyoto’s objections to the marriage proposal, which was agreed in October 1860. As a result, the *bakufu* became more committed than ever to the abolition of the commercial treaties.³³⁵

Alcock and Bellecourt had very little understanding of these internal political machinations and their impact upon *bakufu* policy. This is hardly surprising given their

³³⁴ Auslin, *op.cit.*, p.65.

³³⁵ *Ibid.*, pp.61-5; and Beasley, *op.cit.*, pp.47-54.

quasi-imprisonment in Edo, where the only information they received came from *bakufu* officials whose aim was to delay the implementation of treaty stipulations. These officials consistently portrayed all other parties in Japan as deeply hostile to foreigners and Edo alike, but it was obvious after Ii's assassination that a dangerous factional struggle was underway at the top of the *bakufu*. This realisation provoked a deep sense of foreboding at the foreign legations that a civil war was a very real prospect. More worryingly, it appeared that most of the anti-foreign attacks since the opening of trade had been premeditated attempts by Mito to embroil the *bakufu* in a collision with the treaty powers. Notwithstanding the very real danger that they might be attacked by anti-foreign fanatics at any moment, Alcock and Bellecourt continued to suspect that the *bakufu* was also exploiting the situation to strengthen the barriers to trade.³³⁶ Since Alcock had no faith in Hope to furnish his superiors with an accurate account of Japanese affairs, he took the risky step of writing directly to the First Lord of the Admiralty to explain the political significance of Ii's death and his fears that Mito would order a general massacre of foreigners. Alcock claimed to be reluctant to weaken Britain's military position in China or to burden the Admiralty with the protection of all foreigners in Japan, but he made no attempt to disguise his feelings of isolation and neglect in the face of such intractable difficulties and threats.³³⁷

Whilst Bellecourt and Alcock were alive to the growing threat that internecine strife posed to every foreigner in Japan, there was much the two still did not understand about the political crisis that was gripping the country. In fact, the situation was considerably worse than they envisaged, since they had no idea at this point that the *bakufu* had already agreed to expel all foreigners within a decade. What was becoming clear was that Edo's ability to enforce the treaties across Japan was much weaker than anyone could have imagined when they were first signed. Even so, it is important to stress that it was still in the interests of all the treaty powers that the shogun remained in power. As Richard Sims has pointed out, though the foreign representatives understood very quickly after their arrival in Japan that the relationship between the shogun and the emperor was a complex one, the *bakufu* was the only legitimate authority in Japan that had a legal obligation to the treaty powers.³³⁸ This explains why Alcock and Bellecourt had little choice but to

³³⁶ AD, CPJ59/2, Bellecourt to Thouvenel, No. 33, 29 March 1860; and TNA, FO46/7, Alcock to Russell, No. 24, 26 April 1860.

³³⁷ CBS, Somerset Papers, D-RA/A/2A/90, Alcock to Somerset, 4 May 1860.

³³⁸ Richard Sims, *French Policy Towards the Bakufu and Meiji Japan, 1854-95*, (Richmond: Japan Library, 1998), pp.31-2.

consider Edo's request to postpone the opening of the remaining ports and cities when the proposal was put to them during the summer of 1860.

The senior councillors on the *rōjū* made a deliberate decision to negotiate the postponement in two stages: first, by eliciting the support of the American representative Townsend Harris; then, by submitting a formal request to Alcock. This was a smart move, as Harris was still more sympathetic than his British and French colleagues to the *bakufu*'s claims that better commercial relations were impossible until internal resistance to the treaties had been overcome. Understandably reluctant to see the treaty settlement he had brokered torn apart, Harris agreed in May 1860 to voluntarily limit the export of three of the five goods that had been restricted by the Japanese government the previous month. In anticipation of a formal request from the *bakufu* for postponement, he also wrote to Washington at the beginning of August to request discretionary permission to close Edo to trade if the British and French representatives agreed to do the same. This emboldened the senior councillors to broach the indefinite postponement of opening any new ports and cities in their meeting with Alcock at the British legation. His response lacked the menace that had characterised his audience with the ministers of foreign affairs six months earlier. Alcock explained how the economic and political difficulties since the opening of trade could be overcome by ending government interference, expanding trade, and letting prices find their natural level.³³⁹ He also made it clear that it was impossible for Japan to return to isolation, though he did not reject the request for postponement out of hand.³⁴⁰ Instead, he promised to consult with the other representatives before referring home for guidance.³⁴¹

There were several reasons why Alcock did not reject the postponement proposal outright less than a year after he had threatened war if the *bakufu* did not implement the treaties in full. The first, of course, was that an aggressive response would probably have incurred the wrath of the Foreign Office again. Secondly, Alcock's experience of the daily dangers he faced in Edo inclined him to agree with the *bakufu* that it was too early to consider opening the capital to foreign residence. Thirdly, Alcock's personal relations with the individual *bakufu* officials had improved markedly since Ii's demise, to the extent that he was increasingly confident of establishing relationships of trust similar to those he had

³³⁹ Auslin, *op.cit.*, p.70.

³⁴⁰ TNA, FO391/1, Alcock to Hammond, 1 September 1860.

³⁴¹ Auslin, *op.cit.*, pp.68-70.

cultivated in China.³⁴² When some of these officials came to him with a proposal to overcome internal opposition to trade, therefore, Alcock was at least willing to grant them the benefit of the doubt. Fourth, postponement offered Alcock a perfect opportunity to replicate the diplomatic triumph secured by Harris earlier in the year, when the first Japanese embassy to the West had arrived in the United States to exchange treaty ratifications in Washington.³⁴³ He therefore made postponement contingent on the visit of a Japanese embassy to Europe to plead its case. However, by far the most significant reason why the British minister did not immediately reject postponement was that he was in daily anticipation of a news from China, where he expected a swift and decisive Anglo-French victory. Alcock was certain that the crushing success of the joint expedition would demonstrate the futility of attempting to resist the ‘unequal treaties’ more effectively than anything he could do or say in Edo. He therefore expected all *bakufu* restrictions on trade to crumble as soon as Qing resistance had been decisively overcome, rendering the issue of postponement a moot point.³⁴⁴

Bellecourt only received word of the postponement proposals when Harris informed him of them in mid-September. Already irritated by his discovery from a *bakufu* source that Alcock had been attempting to organise a Japanese embassy to Europe without consulting him, Bellecourt’s immediate reaction was one of anger and suspicion.³⁴⁵ In his opinion, the only reason why the *bakufu* desired postponement was because it had failed to anticipate that most foreign merchants wanted to take up residence in the capital as soon as possible. While these merchants would certainly face grave difficulties and dangers in Edo, Bellecourt argued that ceding to the *bakufu* demands would only reduce Western influence in Japan still further. He therefore promised Thouvenel that he would do all he could to see the treaties honoured.³⁴⁶ For the first time, Bellecourt’s opinion on a matter of political importance had differed substantially from that of Alcock, even though he shared his British colleague’s confidence that a visit to Edo by the Anglo-French fleet in China would go some way to resolving the difficulties they faced. By the end of the year,

³⁴² BLO, Kimberley Papers, MS. Eng. c. 4001, Alcock to Wodehouse, 15 July 1860.

³⁴³ Auslin, *op.cit.*, p.70.

³⁴⁴ BLO, Kimberley Papers, MS. Eng. c. 4001, Alcock to Wodehouse, 15 July 1860.

³⁴⁵ See Meron Medzini, *French Policy in Japan During the Closing Years of the Tokugawa Regime*, (Cambridge, MA: East Asian Research Center, Harvard University, 1971), pp.24-5.

³⁴⁶ AD, CPJ59/2, Bellecourt to Thouvenel, No. 46, 17 September 1860.

the French chargé was also increasingly convinced that Alcock was more interested in advancing British commercial interests in Japan than in maintaining a common front.³⁴⁷

Prior to the summer of 1860, a consensus had existed amongst the Western treaty powers (with the notable exception of Russia) concerning the necessity of concerted action in Japan. By mid-1860, however, cracks were beginning to appear in this loose alliance, as Alcock and Bellecourt began to disagree on policy and Harris began to commit himself more overtly to the *bakufu* cause. The American's support was useful to the regime in Edo, but not enough on its own to postpone the opening of the remaining ports and cities. The legal framework of the treaty-port system dictated that this would require the agreement of all the men on the spot, not least Alcock. After all, if the representative of the most powerful treaty power in East Asia recommended postponement to his home government, then his French and Dutch colleagues would have little choice but to do the same. When a Prussian mission arrived in September to negotiate a new commercial treaty with Japan, Edo sensed an opportunity to bring the British minister on side. After first refusing to negotiate with the Prussian envoy, *bakufu* ministers met privately with Alcock to offer him a *quid pro quo*: a commercial treaty with Prussia in exchange for consent to defer the opening of the remaining ports and cities.³⁴⁸ Unfortunately, the progress of events in China had made Alcock less inclined to consider postponement than he had been in the summer.

The operation at the Peiho had started well, with the allied forces capturing the Taku forts with ease in mid-August and proceeding to Tianjin by the end of the month. It quickly became apparent, however, that the two Qing commissioners who were dispatched to negotiate a peace settlement were not actually plenipotentiaries of the emperor. On 7 September 1860, therefore, Lord Elgin and Baron Gros made the fateful decision to press onwards to the gates of Beijing and ratify the treaties there. Less than two weeks later, a British negotiating party operating under the protection of a white flag was taken hostage en route to the imperial capital. This provoked a rapid military response from Elgin. Two days after the hostages were taken, a small allied force launched a decisive assault on at the city of Tungchow (Tongzhou), just outside the imperial capital. The devastating display of modern firepower that followed obliterated the imperial army defending Beijing and threw the Qing government into disarray, leaving the path to the imperial

³⁴⁷ Medzini, *op.cit.*, p.25-8.

³⁴⁸ BLO, Kimberley Papers, MS. Eng. c. 4001, Alcock to Wodehouse, 18 October 1860.

capital clear. On 5 October, an advance detachment of British infantry and French cavalry entered the celebrated Summer Palace on the outskirts of Beijing. Finding it empty, military discipline quickly broke down and the palace was ruthlessly plundered. When fifteen of the twenty-six British hostages captured by the Qing were found dead, a clamour for revenge erupted among the allied ranks. With many calling for the sacking of the city and the slaughter of every mandarin in it, Elgin felt he had little choice but to order the destruction of the Summer Palace as the only way to punish the Qing dynasty instead of the Chinese people. Ignoring the protests of Gros, on 18 October 1860 Elgin watched on as the British army methodically burned the priceless eight-hundred-acre palace complex to the ground. The Qing emperor immediately capitulated and ratified the treaties at the end of the month. After years of intense resistance, overwhelming military force had finally compelled him to accept the treaty-port system once and for all.³⁴⁹

A more cautionary message to the Japanese about the consequences of violating treaty stipulations was hardly possible, yet the significant delay in news arriving from China ensured the outcome of the expedition remained unclear to Alcock throughout the autumn. The unexpected complications that Elgin encountered en route to Beijing were also problematic, as the longer the British fleet was tied up in China, the longer Alcock would have to wait an imposing flotilla to visit Japan. He was therefore reluctant to discuss Edo's proposal over the Prussian treaty until he was sure that the treaties had been ratified in Beijing. He was also not the only one who expected events in China to influence attitudes in Japan. After receiving news that Elgin was preparing to withdraw the British armed forces from Peking in early November, Hope finally dispatched a squadron of three warships to join the British man-of-war already stationed in Japanese waters at the beginning of December.³⁵⁰ The admiral was confident that this respectable squadron would do some good in Edo and that the China campaign had already achieved the desired effect.³⁵¹ Hope's sentiments were echoed by Captain John Hay, who commanded the paddle frigate *HMS Odin* on the East Indies and China Station. Like Hope, Hay was certain that the peace recently concluded with the Chinese government would improve relations between Britain and Japan.³⁵²

³⁴⁹ Stephen Platt, *Autumn in the Heavenly Kingdom: China, the West, and the Epic Story of the Taiping Civil War*, (London: Atlantic Books, 2012), pp.96-110 & 149-50.

³⁵⁰ CBS, Somerset Papers, D-RA/A/2A/26/32/1-2 & 33/1-2, Hope to Somerset, 19 November & 3 December 1860.

³⁵¹ CBS, Somerset Papers, D-RA/A/2A/26/35/1-2, Hope to Somerset, 26 December 1860.

³⁵² CBS, Somerset Papers, D-RA/A/2A/ 22/2, Hay to Somerset, 18 November 1860.

Like Admiral Hope, the commander of the French naval forces in China, Vice-Admiral Léonard Charner, often had other priorities in East Asia than Japan. This was particularly true at the end of 1860, when French attempts to secure a colonial foothold in Vietnam were on the verge of total collapse. The 1858 invasion and occupation of the Vietnamese city of Tourane by Admiral de Genouilly had proved disastrous, with heat, disease, and a lack of supplies forcing the French to withdraw from the city. Genouilly had then turned his attention southwards to the fishing village of Saigon, which offered a more promising deep-water port. The village was occupied following a brief struggle on 17 February 1859, but this attack attracted fierce criticism back in France and Genouilly was replaced later that year. His replacement Admiral Page was instructed not to seek territorial concessions in Vietnam but simply to secure a treaty that guaranteed religious liberty and permitted French consuls to be stationed at Vietnamese ports. Before he could carry out these instructions, however, his squadron was ordered to China to form part of the joint operations at the Peiho. The small French garrison left behind in Saigon was immediately besieged by a Vietnamese force and cut off from all contact with the outside world between March 1860 and January 1861. Charner's priority after the completion of the China campaign was therefore to send reinforcements to this garrison, which was successfully relieved in February 1861.³⁵³ This explains why only two French warships were dispatched to Japan at the end of the Chinese operations, and why their commander left Edo less than a day after he met with the *rōjū* on 27 December.³⁵⁴

The British and French squadrons that steamed into Edo Bay in December 1860 may have been smaller than Alcock and Bellecourt had hoped, but they were still confident that this display of naval power would have a beneficial effect. Harris, on the other hand, poured scorn on the suggestion that the presence of foreign naval forces alone would change Japanese attitudes towards the treaties, as well as the idea that the outcome of the expedition in China would serve as an example to the *bakufu*. He continued to urge his sceptical colleagues to be patient with Edo and assured them that the return of the Japanese embassy from Washington would do much to improve relations.³⁵⁵ What the American minister did not mention, of course, was that the reason why the arrival of British and French warships had so little impact in Edo was that he had been providing

³⁵³ Spencer C. Tucker, *Vietnam*, (Lexington, KY: University Press of Kentucky, 1999), p.29.

³⁵⁴ Medzini, *op.cit.*, p.26-7.

³⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p.27.

advising the *bakufu* throughout the autumn on how to overcome the opposition of his colleagues to postponement. After its failure to convince Alcock to agree to the *quid pro quo* agreement in October, the *bakufu* had been faced with the difficult prospect of agreeing to another commercial treaty with Prussia on the same terms as the Ansei Treaties. Fortunately for the *rōjū*, a direct intervention by Harris helped to avert this damaging outcome. At a private meeting on 24 November, Harris advised the senior councillors that, if they wanted to secure postponement, they should omit Osaka and Hyōgo from the proposed Prussian treaty altogether. This suggestion, which was made without prior consultation with the other treaty-power representatives, allowed the *bakufu* to maintain the façade that it was committed to extending trade with the West while simultaneously restricting all foreigners to the existing treaty ports. In other words, Edo could present the new treaty to the imperial court in Kyoto as an unwelcome but strictly temporary deviation from the overarching strategy of expelling the foreigners.³⁵⁶ The agreement signed between Japan and Prussia on 24 January 1861 therefore fundamentally altered the treaty settlement that Harris had worked hard to establish in 1858. Whether he realised it or not, he was now helping the *bakufu* maintain its boundaries with the West.³⁵⁷

On 1 January 1861, Alcock penned a lengthy assessment of the political situation in Japan. Entirely ignorant of the intrigues of his American colleague, the British minister believed that it was his own dogged representations to Edo that had finally convinced the *bakufu* to agree to the Prussian treaty. As far as postponement was concerned, he was convinced that allowing free ingress of foreigners to the shogun's capital would result in a disastrous general massacre, but that any delay to the opening of the other ports would greatly damage trade. Despite the *bakufu*'s intense desire to secure postponement, Alcock remained optimistic that perseverance would eventually overcome all resistance to their opening. The formerly bellicose British minister was also now certain that 'gunboat diplomacy' would be 'a far more costly game here than in China and more uncertain in its final results, so far as ultimate commerce is concerned'.³⁵⁸ After a period of relative calm, things seemed to be progressing as well as could be expected. Little did Alcock know that the biggest crisis in Japan's short history of treaty relations was about to break out.

³⁵⁶ Beasley, *op.cit.*, p. 196 & pp.204-8.

³⁵⁷ Auslin, *op.cit.*, p.71.

³⁵⁸ TNA, FO391/1, Alcock to Hammond, 1 January 1860.

A community divided

In the early hours of New Year's Day 1861, a *bakufu* messenger reported to Townsend Harris that a group of disenfranchised Mito samurai was planning to massacre every foreigner in Yokohama and Edo. Declaring itself unable to guarantee their safety anywhere else, the *bakufu* requested all the foreign representatives to withdraw to the protection of Edo Castle. Alcock and Bellecourt were initially sceptical about this latest threat, given that it had surfaced at precisely the time when Edo was pursuing more restrictive measures to circumscribe foreign influence in Japan. Sensing a trap, Bellecourt warned Alcock about the dangers of allowing the *bakufu* to sequester the diplomatic corps in Edo.³⁵⁹ Alcock agreed wholeheartedly. After all, it was not the first time that the *bakufu* had attempted to gather all the representatives in one spot, and he did not put it past Edo to simulate a popular uprising in order to strengthen the case for postponement.³⁶⁰ Whatever its source, the rumours were deeply unwelcome. If the threat was real, then a war between Japan and the treaty powers was guaranteed. If not, this was a blow to Alcock and Bellecourt's hopes that the presence of foreign warships in Japanese waters would change attitudes in the capital.

Either way, Alcock was not prepared to take any chances. He immediately requested the temporary detachment of two British warships – one at Yokohama and one at Edo – until the rumours had died down.³⁶¹ Unfortunately, the commander of the British squadron in port was unwilling to delay his departure for Hong Kong any longer than necessary. Much to Alcock's annoyance, he steamed out of Edo Bay on 8 January.³⁶² A week after the squadron's departure, Hendrik Heusken, the Dutch secretary at the American legation, was assassinated.³⁶³ This shocking event finally convinced Alcock that the inability, or unwillingness, of the *bakufu* to protect foreigners at the treaty ports was inextricably linked to the political machinations taking place within Japan's complex system of

³⁵⁹ AD, CPJ59/3, Bellecourt to Thouvenel, No. 63, 3 January 1861.

³⁶⁰ HCPP, 1861, Vol. LXIX.361, [2829], pp.1-3, Alcock to Russell, No. 1, 1 January 1861; and TNA, FO391/1, Alcock to Hammond, 1 January 1860.

³⁶¹ HCPP, 1861, Vol. LXIX.361, [2829], pp.3-4, Alcock to Jones, 1 January 1861, enclosure 1 in Alcock to Russell, No. 1, 1 January 1861.

³⁶² HCPP, 1861, Vol. LXIX.361, [2829], p.4, Jones to Alcock, 3 January 1861 and p.5, Alcock to Jones, 4 January 1861, enclosures 1 & 2 in Alcock to Russell, No. 2, 4 January 1861; and BLO, Kimberley Papers, MS. Eng. c. 4001, Alcock to Wodehouse, 8 January 1861.

³⁶³ For a complete account of the incident, see Reinier H. Hesselink, 'The Assassination of Henry Heusken', *Monumenta Nipponica*, Vol. 49, No. 3 (Autumn, 1994), pp.331-51.

government. ‘Our chief danger lies with the fact that the ostensible Government is an *Imperium in Imperio*,’ he wrote to Hammond on 26 January, ‘there are Daimios within the Council who follow out their own views, while the Ministers are set up to play propriety and profess nothing but good will.’³⁶⁴ On top of dealing with the duplicity of the *bakufu* administration itself, the representatives also had to contend with internecine feuds between the *daimyō*, some of whom were prepared to sacrifice foreigners as part of a strategy to damage the regime in Edo. The British minister was no longer very optimistic about the future of trade with Japan. Indeed, given the disproportionate cost in self-respect, national prestige, and armaments that upholding the treaties was likely to incur, he was beginning to regret the fact that Britain and Japan had ever entered into commercial relations in the first place. He warned Hammond that the government would soon have to decide whether to force another Asiatic regime to respect treaty obligations, or to abandon any attempt to maintain diplomatic and commercial relations with Japan for the foreseeable future.³⁶⁵

It was difficult to see how Alcock could compel the *bakufu* to respect the treaties, but the British minister was not willing to throw in the diplomatic towel just yet. With the very survival of the treaty-port system at stake and no British naval forces to protect it, Alcock had little choice but to put his faith in the power of collective diplomacy. Gathering his four colleagues together at the British legation on 19 January, the British minister argued that the only way to put an end to the intimidation without risking war was for them to withdraw temporarily to the safety of Yokohama, where foreign troops could protect the whole community until Edo promised to implement the treaties. This proposal secured the strong support of Bellecourt, who was pleased that his British colleague was finally taking a tougher line with the *bakufu*, as well as the Dutch consul-general J. K. de Wit.³⁶⁶ The Prussian envoy Count Eulenburg stated that if he were in the same position as his colleagues he would also withdraw from the capital, but that he could not do so without risking an indefinite delay to the signing of the Prussian commercial treaty. Nonetheless, he pledged to inform the *bakufu* officially that he entirely supported their decision to withdraw their legations to Yokohama.³⁶⁷

³⁶⁴ TNA, FO391/1, Alcock to Hammond, 26 January 1861.

³⁶⁵ *Idem*.

³⁶⁶ Donker Curtius, the last *Opperhoofden* at Dejima, left Japan in 1860. De Wit took up his post in February the same year.

³⁶⁷ HCPP, 1861, Vol. LXIX.361, [2829], pp.14-30, enclosure 1 in Alcock to Russell, No. 7, 31 January 1861.

The only diplomatic representative who rejected Alcock's proposal was Harris, who blamed Heusken's death on his own carelessness for leaving the legation at night. Convinced that the representatives would never be allowed to return to Edo and that any attempt to occupy Yokohama with foreign troops risked war, Harris declared that he would remain in the Japanese capital alone. The conference was therefore adjourned without the unanimous verdict in favour of withdrawal that Alcock had hoped for.³⁶⁸ Two days later, the representatives met again to finalise their plans. After waiting for over an hour for Harris to appear, the others proceeded without him. Frustrated, Alcock argued that the separation of Harris from his colleagues was likely to compromise their joint action and encourage the *bakufu* to continue resisting the pressure they were trying to exert upon it.³⁶⁹ The French and Dutch agents agreed that Harris's isolation in the capital would reduce the impact of their withdrawal policy, but having already come to the conclusion that their position in Edo was now untenable, they resolved to press ahead regardless. Each pledged to prepare an official letter of protest to the Japanese government to be delivered simultaneously upon their arrival at Yokohama.³⁷⁰

In his private correspondence to Hammond, Alcock revealed the full extent of his anger at Harris, whose obsequiousness and opportunism he attributed to the personal vanity and misplaced pride that was so typical of American diplomats in the Far East:

Unfortunately, Mr. Harris had the usual premier game in the East to play – peace at any price – well knowing that others would fight the battle – *and pay the cost*. The one triumph of his diplomatic career was to have opened Japan to commerce, and he has always plumed himself on his influence with the Japanese. Assure delusion on his part...for he has received more slights and injuries than have ever been offered to me.³⁷¹

Whatever Harris's personal flaws, Alcock had critically underestimated his American colleague, whose Damascene conversion from vociferous critic to staunch defender of the *bakufu* took everyone by surprise. Even after Alcock and Bellecourt withdrew their

³⁶⁸ See HCPP, 1861, Vol. LXIX.361, [2829], pp.42-4, Harris to Alcock, 12 February 1861, enclosure 1 in Alcock to Russell, No. 9, 19 February 1861.

³⁶⁹ Quoted from p.26 of HCPP, 1861, Vol. LXIX.361, [2829], pp.14-30, enclosure 1 in Alcock to Russell, No. 7, 31 January 1861.

³⁷⁰ *Idem*.

³⁷¹ TNA, FO391/1, Alcock to Hammond, 26 January 1861.

respective legations to Yokohama on 27 January, they remained incredulous that Harris would rather isolate himself in Edo than unite with them to oppose *bakufu* duplicity. However, just as the American had warned, the *bakufu* was initially relieved that it no longer had responsibility for the safety and security of the representatives in Edo. This outcome has led the historian Grace Fox to denigrate Alcock's withdrawal policy as a 'foolish act'.³⁷² In retrospect, this simplistic assessment did not fully take into account what Alcock was trying to achieve by quitting the capital, and why Harris deliberately chose to remain there alone. It appeared to ignore the fact that the American's motives were not purely political but also personal, driven by a desire to thwart what he saw as a barefaced attempt by the British minister to establish himself as the most influential diplomatic representative in Japan – a role that Harris still jealously coveted for himself.

In fact, Harris's status as the 'dean of the diplomatic representatives in Japan' had been under threat ever since the arrival of his seasoned British colleague in 1859.³⁷³ Although their early relationship had been cordial and constructive, Alcock had been dependent at the time upon the American's help and experience to build political contacts with the *bakufu*. Indeed, it was so obvious to Bellecourt that Alcock was 'cultivating' Harris to gain greater knowledge about the political situation in Japan that he mentioned explicitly it in a dispatch to Thouvenel at the end of 1860.³⁷⁴ What Bellecourt did not realise was that the British minister was only following Harris's lead while he formulated his own view of political affairs in Japan. As soon as Alcock began to suspect that there was more to the *bakufu*'s resistance to the treaties than met the eye, his relationship with Harris began to deteriorate. By the beginning of 1861, he was also much less reliant on the American for political intelligence than a year before. Meanwhile, Harris continued to believe that he enjoyed a 'special relationship' with the *bakufu*, making him resistant to any course of action that might threaten his perceived influence in Edo. After Heusken's death, Harris realised that his colleagues were no longer willing to follow his lead or agree with his policy. This left him with a choice between following Alcock out of Edo or deliberately undermining his diplomatic strategy. Stung that Alcock had supplanted him as the 'doyen of the diplomatic corps', Harris plumped for the latter.³⁷⁵

³⁷² Fox, op.cit., p.84.

³⁷³ As described by Michael Auslin with regard to Harris's position in Edo in 1860; see Auslin, op.cit., p.68.

³⁷⁴ Medzini, op.cit., pp.27-8.

³⁷⁵ As described by Bellecourt in AD, CPJ59/3, Bellecourt to Thouvenel, No. 68, 30 January 1861.

So bitter was Harris towards Alcock after this affair that he engineered an unedifying public spat in the weeks after the British minister's withdrawal from Edo. The dispute began innocuously enough on 22 January when Alcock sent Harris a summary of the two conferences and asked him to verify what had been discussed.³⁷⁶ The response that Harris returned two weeks later was deliberately obnoxious. After reiterating his arguments against withdrawal from Edo, he suggested that his colleagues had retired to Yokohama out of fear for their personal safety. He vociferously defended the *bakufu* and its commitment to the treaties, rejected the premise that the government of a semi-civilised country like Japan could be held accountable for assassinations carried out by individuals, and declared that the withdrawal of his colleagues would provoke another war in East Asia. 'I would sooner see all the Treaties with this country torn up,' he thundered in conclusion, 'and Japan return to its old state of isolation, than witness the horrors of war inflicted on this peaceful people and happy land.'³⁷⁷

As he was drafting this explosive letter, Harris would have been fully aware that few among the British merchant community welcomed the arrival of Alcock and his temporary British legation to Yokohama. It was no secret that the British minister blamed many of the difficulties with trade at the treaty ports on the opportunistic and unruly conduct of what he described disdainfully in private as the 'lawless class of filibusters, under the guise of merchants, Europe disgorges on our coasts'.³⁷⁸ It was also common knowledge that Alcock was embroiled in a very public controversy over his decision in January 1861 to deport a British merchant named Michael Moss for injuring a Japanese police officer during an altercation on a Kanagawa street the previous November.³⁷⁹ With tensions in Yokohama at boiling point, there can be little doubt that Harris's hysterical letter was deliberately calculated to inflict maximum reputational damage upon Alcock at a moment when his judgement and competence were already under severe scrutiny.

³⁷⁶ HCPP, 1861, Vol. LXIX.361, [2829], p.31, Alcock to Harris, 22 January 1861, enclosure 2 in Alcock to Russell, No. 7, 31 January 1861.

³⁷⁷ HCPP, 1861, Vol. LXIX.361, [2829], pp.42-4, Harris to Alcock, 12 February 1861, enclosure 1 in Alcock to Russell, No. 9, 19 February 1861.

³⁷⁸ TNA, FO391/1, Alcock to Hammond, 1 January 1860.

³⁷⁹ For an in-depth analysis of the Moss incident and its implications for the Japanese treaty-port system, see Scott Gilfillan, 'Extraterritoriality and the British Consular Court System in Japan', *Journal on European History of Law*, Vol.6, No.1 (2015), pp.56-67. All official documents relating to the incident are compiled in TNA, FO46/30, and Moss also published his own account to engender public sympathy for his treatment; see Michael Moss, *Seizure by the Japanese of Mr. Moss, and his Treatment by the Consul-General*, (London: William Ridgway, 1863).

Indeed, according to *The North China Herald*, there were so many copies of Harris's letter in circulation 'that any scruples we may have entertained at publishing... a private letter, are overcome by the belief that the writer seeks to give it publicity'.³⁸⁰

Alcock was naturally infuriated by Harris's suggestion that he had fled Edo to avoid assassination. Acutely aware that his reputation was at stake, he penned an extensive riposte that methodically dismantled Harris's argument over sixty-four pages of foolscap. He began by accusing Harris of a deliberate attempt to mislead those not fully cognisant of the political situation in Japan by claiming that the foreign representatives had lived in Edo in safety for nineteen months. After all, had Harris forgotten an incident in late 1859 when he had been assaulted outside his legation and in fear of his own life? Alcock then chastised the American for misrepresenting his colleagues by claiming that they left Edo out of fear for their personal safety when this decision was actually motivated by a desire to withdraw 'from a false and derogatory position as Diplomatic Agents – one rendered untenable with due regard to the interests and dignity of their respective nations'.³⁸¹ He also pointed out that Harris was the only foreign representative who had ever directly threatened to use war to restore the Mikado to supremacy. Thus, if anyone had changed their views on the *bakufu*'s commitment to the treaties, it was the American.³⁸² Alcock's letter did not end war of words, however, with Harris returning fire in a second note a few days later in which he strenuously rejected the 'absurd charge' that he had threatened the *bakufu* with war.³⁸³ In the end, Alcock decided to put a stop to further 'endless and pointless' discussion by ceasing any further communication at the end of February.³⁸⁴

The foreign community in Japan was rapt by this 'ministerial sparring', as *The New York Times* correspondent put it.³⁸⁵ Given the hostility towards Alcock at Yokohama, it was hardly surprising that most merchants took the side of his American rival. By contrast, Bellecourt backed his British colleague to the hilt. At the centre of the ugly dispute, he explained to Thouvenel, was Harris's bitterness at his inability to convince his colleagues to support his optimistic view of the *bakufu*. This was clearly evidenced by the

³⁸⁰ *The North China Herald*, 16 March 1861.

³⁸¹ HCPP, 1861, Vol. LXIX.361, [2829], pp.42-4, Alcock to Harris, 16 February 1861, enclosure 2 in Alcock to Russell, No. 9, 31 January 1861.

³⁸² *Idem*.

³⁸³ HCPP, 1861, Vol. LXIX.361, [2829], pp.54-6, Harris to Alcock, 23 February 1861, enclosure 6 in Alcock to Russell, No. 9, 31 January 1861.

³⁸⁴ HCPP, 1861, Vol. LXIX.361, [2829], p.56, Alcock to Harris, 24 February 1861, enclosure 7 in Alcock to Russell, No. 9, 31 January 1861.

³⁸⁵ *The New York Times*, 'Interesting from Japan', 12 May 1861.

American's refusal to sign Alcock's official report of the first conference simply because it omitted a remark made by the Prussian envoy concerning his so-called 'special relationship' with the Japanese government.³⁸⁶ Like Alcock, Bellecourt resented Harris for insinuating that the other representatives had only withdrawn from Edo out of fear for their safety. Although Bellecourt was anxious to avoid getting directly involved in what was a regrettable quarrel between the two most experienced diplomats in Japan, he made it clear that his decision to follow Alcock out of the capital was entirely justified by the untenable position of the foreign representatives there.³⁸⁷

After a period when Bellecourt had started to question Alcock's commitment to implementing the treaties, the Harris incident brought the two representatives closer together. With no French warships in Edo Bay, Alcock took great care to see that Bellecourt departed the capital with due pomp and ceremony by allowing his colleague to accompany him to Yokohama on board *HMS Encounter*. Alcock also allocated Bellecourt four rooms in his hotel to ensure that the temporary British and French legations were of equal size and standing, and that both were well protected by a detachment of British troops surrounding the building.³⁸⁸ After playing second fiddle to his American colleague for so long, the removal of Harris from the diplomatic scene elevated Bellecourt to the status of one of the two most influential foreign representatives in Japan. The French minister revelled in his new role over the following month, as he and Alcock held a series of meetings with an envoy of the *bakufu* to discuss the conditions under which they would agree to return to Edo. By threatening to invoke the clause in the treaty allowing the right of travel into the interior of the country, they extracted a formal invitation from the shogun for their return, the promise of greater safety for the legations, an arrangement for a public reception upon their arrival, and a series of other guarantees relating to trade and the treaties.³⁸⁹ On 2 March 1861, just five weeks after their departure, Alcock and Bellecourt steamed triumphantly back across Edo Bay. With the sound of a royal salute from the *bakufu*'s batteries ringing in their ears, they hoisted the British and

³⁸⁶ AD, CPJ59/3, Bellecourt to Thouvenel, No. 68, 30 January 1861.

³⁸⁷ See HCPP, 1861, Vol. LXIX.361, [2829], pp.52-3, Bellecourt to Alcock, 15 February 1861, enclosure 4 in Alcock to Russell, No. 9, 31 January 1861; and AD, CPJ59/3, Bellecourt to Thouvenel, No. 76, 10 March 1861.

³⁸⁸ AD, CPJ59/3, Bellecourt to Thouvenel, No. 67, 27 January 1861.

³⁸⁹ Fox, *op.cit.*, pp.84-5.

French flags over their respective legations once more.³⁹⁰ Alcock could not hide his delight that his American rival had been proved such a ‘bad prophet’ by predicting that he would never return to the city without ‘a fleet and an army – bloodshed and rapine’.³⁹¹ However, only time would tell whether his confidence that ‘a check has been given to the “fight at any price” people’ was well-founded or dangerously misplaced.³⁹²

Conclusions

January 1861 was an important date in the early history of treaty-port diplomacy in Japan. This was the moment when the collaborative system of diplomacy that had steadfastly opposed *bakufu* efforts to subvert the ‘unequal treaties’ since Japan opened to trade began to crumble. Without a doubt, Harris’s decision to enter into splendid isolation in Edo torpedoed any chance of bringing the collective diplomatic pressure of the treaty powers to bear upon the *bakufu*. So desperate was the American to preserve his diplomatic legacy that he was willing to recklessly discard the diplomatic principles that underpinned the treaties he had helped to negotiate. By doing so, he unwittingly played into the hands of the *bakufu*, which had been attempting to divide the treaty powers ever since the ports first opened to trade. Little did Harris realise that the postponement policy, like Ii’s policy of belligerence before it, was not an innocent attempt to overcome internal opposition to Western trade but a smokescreen created by the *bakufu* to destroy the Ansei Treaties. Thanks to the American, the *bakufu* had at last succeeded in putting ‘barbarian’ against ‘barbarian’, throwing the entire future of Japan’s ‘enclave empires’ into doubt.

At the heart of the acrimonious row between Harris and Alcock was an intensely personal battle for leadership of the Japanese treaty-port system. When disaster struck Edo in early 1861, opinions had diverged significantly over how best to enforce the treaties. With ‘gunboat diplomacy’ out of the question and the Anglo-French campaign in China failing to deter anti-foreign aggression, Alcock had challenged his colleagues to put their faith in the power of British-led collective diplomacy. For a brief moment, Harris’s refusal to follow the other representatives to Yokohama threatened to undermine this policy.

³⁹⁰ HCPP, 1861, Vol. LXIX.361, [2829], pp.71-80, Alcock to Russell, No. 12, 1 March 1861, and 6 enclosures; pp.81-2, Alcock to Russell, No. 13, 2 March 1860. See also Fox, *op.cit.*, pp.84-5.

³⁹¹ BLO, Kimberley Papers, MS. Eng. c. 4001, Alcock to Wodehouse, 20 March 1861.

³⁹² *Idem.*

However, by the time of his triumphant return to Edo, Alcock was confident that he had finally developed an effective diplomatic strategy to deal with *bakufu* intransigence. Forced into a choice between his British and American colleagues, Bellecourt acted in the best interests of his country. By siding with the British minister, he also managed to increase his influence in Japan without the need for more warships or soldiers. In stark contrast to the increasingly fractious Anglo-French relationship elsewhere in the world, Alcock and Bellecourt had managed to unite in adversity in pursuit of a common goal. Their diplomatic strategy may have cost them the support of an experienced colleague, but this seemed a price worth paying for improved safety and security at the ports, not to mention more control over the future development of the 'enclave empires' in Japan. As Alcock and Bellecourt settled back into their Edo legations, now protected with detachments of British and French soldiers, it seemed like their calculated gamble had paid off handsomely. They were wrong.

CHAPTER 4

Compromise and Concession: Alcock, Bellecourt and the London Protocol, 1861-1862

Neither Rutherford Alcock nor Duchesne de Bellecourt appreciated the danger that they faced upon their return to Edo. Indeed, their confidence that the withdrawal policy had fundamentally altered the *bakufu*'s attitude towards the treaties was reinforced by the friendly manner in which they were welcomed back to the Japanese capital by the *bakufu*.³⁹³ In fact, far from moving towards an acceptance of the Ansei Treaties, Edo was determined to demonstrate to its domestic opponents that it was making progress towards their complete abrogation. The illusion that the withdrawal policy had fundamentally stabilised Japan's foreign relations was shattered by a shocking incident during the summer of 1861 that forced Alcock and Bellecourt to accept the need for a fundamental reassessment of Anglo-French policy in Japan.

The lengthy delay in dispatches from East Asia reaching Europe ensured that the British and French governments were at least two months behind events in Japan. Attention in London and Paris was therefore still focused on the outcome of the joint expedition to Beijing at the beginning of 1861, accounts of which had been trickling in since the previous summer. The demolition of the Summer Palace by the Anglo-French expeditionary force in October 1860 proved highly controversial, and the political fallout from this notorious example of Western 'gunboat diplomacy' would have lasting repercussions. Nonetheless, it did little to curtail Napoléon III's adventurous foreign policy, the dogged pursuit of which continued to irritate London until the outbreak of the American Civil War brought Anglo-French relations back from the brink. With so many international crises to contend with during 1861 and 1862, events in Japan were once again relegated to the bottom of the list of British and French foreign policy priorities. This continued indifference was to prove critical to *bakufu* efforts to dismantle the treaty-port system once and for all.

³⁹³ See The National Archives, London (TNA), Hammond Papers, FO391/1, Alcock to Hammond, 19 March 1861.

The price of civilisation

Arriving just in time for Christmas 1861, the news of the destruction of the Summer Palace put Palmerston in a festive mood (if not a very Christian one). He wrote immediately to Lord Russell to express his delight that the palace had been burnt to the ground and satisfaction that Elgin had doubled the value of the indemnity that the Qing emperor was to pay for the privilege.³⁹⁴ Above all, the Prime Minister was relieved to see the increasingly unpopular and hideously costly war brought to an end.³⁹⁵ Unfortunately, his attempts to convince Queen Victoria that the treaty would never have been signed had the Summer Palace not been razed did little to disguise the fact that its destruction was a public relations disaster. Aside from *The Times* newspaper, which suggested that Lord Elgin had been too *easy* on the Chinese,³⁹⁶ the rest of the English press largely lamented the destructive conclusion to the war.³⁹⁷ The reaction of the government's critics in Parliament was also decidedly hostile, with one member of the House of Lords condemning it as 'an act of vandalism' akin to the burning of the library at Alexandria or the sacking of Rome.³⁹⁸

The reaction in France, where press freedom was strictly controlled and public criticism of the government heavily suppressed, was less overtly critical but still predominantly negative. In general, the public showed little interest in the outcome of this far-flung military expedition, the necessity of which had never really been explained. The much lower loss of French life compared with recent conflicts in the Crimea and Italy also reinforced the impression that this had not been a high-risk operation. The glory of victory had also been tarnished by the wanton looting of the Summer Palace, and rumours abounded within the corridors of power in Paris that the commander of the French land

³⁹⁴ TNA, Russell Papers, PRO30/22/21, Palmerston to Russell, 25 December 1860.

³⁹⁵ Sidney Herbert, the Secretary of State for War, had written to Russell the previous November suggesting orders be sent to the French 'to bring away their troops from China before we all become bankrupt'. In April 1861, he wrote to the Foreign Secretary again to point out that: 'It is clear the China operation prolonged in order to get the indemnity is costing us more than the indemnity itself.' See TNA, Russell Papers, PRO30/22/25/64, Herbert to Russell, 20 November 1860 & PRO30/22/25/65, Herbert to Russell, 7 April 1861.

³⁹⁶ This was not a surprise, as *The Times* correspondent Thomas Bowlby had been one of those tortured to death in Beijing.

³⁹⁷ Stephen Platt, *Autumn in the Heavenly Kingdom: China, the West, and the Epic Story of the Taiping Civil War*, (London: Atlantic Books, 2012), pp.164-7.

³⁹⁸ See *Hansard*, Series 3, House of Lords, 14 February 1861, Vol. 161, cc.366-93.

forces had pillaged his way to Beijing for personal enrichment.³⁹⁹ Opponents of the Second Empire also used the sacking of the Summer Palace to attack the behaviour of the French army and, by association, the foreign policy of the French government. The most effective critique was issued by the author Victor Hugo on 25 November 1861, who noted the hypocrisy of justifying the destruction of a modern wonder of the world on commercial progress and the ‘civilising mission’.⁴⁰⁰ As far as Napoléon III was concerned, however, the French expeditionary force had not only secured a glorious victory for France but also exacted suitable revenge upon the Qing dynasty for the Peiho debacle in 1859. Nevertheless, it is unlikely that the ransacking of the Summer Palace was exactly what the emperor had in mind when he spoke of making sure France was heard and respected everywhere in the world.⁴⁰¹ There was also no hiding from the fact that the constant presence of watchful British diplomats and military commanders had thwarted any chance of annexing Chinese territory. Despite the huge economic, political, cultural, and human cost of taking part in the expedition, France had failed to improve significantly its commercial and political position in the Chinese treaty-port system.

Although both the British and French governments fully supported the destruction of the Summer Palace as a necessity, this shocking conclusion to a brutally one-sided campaign left them open to accusations that they were more interested in conquering China than defending free trade there. Ironically, this was exactly what Lord Palmerston had hoped to avoid by acting in concert with France in the first place. The campaign had also signally failed to strengthen Anglo-French relations in East Asia, and it added weight to the feeling in London that combined military operations with France in distant foreign outposts were best avoided altogether. Though a narrow strategic success in the sense that it finally achieved treaty ratification, the final act of the Opium Wars cast a long shadow over British and French relations with China for the remainder of the nineteenth century and beyond. It was therefore no surprise that the British government was keen to avoid any further risky foreign entanglements with France in the immediate aftermath of this campaign. In fact, 1861 marked the beginning of a period in which Palmerston began to

³⁹⁹ See TNA, Cowley Papers, FO519/188, Hammond to Cowley, 29 December 1860.

⁴⁰⁰ Quoted in Brizay, Bernard, *Le sac du palais d'été: l'expédition Anglo-Française de Chine en 1860 (troisième guerre de l'opium)*, (Monaco: Éditions du Rocher, 2003), p.521, where Victor Hugo's letter is annexed in full on pp.520-22.

⁴⁰¹ William E. Echard, *Napoleon III and the Concert of Europe*, (Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 1983), p.131.

robustly oppose Napoléon III's energetic foreign policy rather than simply distancing his government from it.

In the end, it was not the outcome of the China expedition that confirmed Palmerston's worst fears about the emperor's expansionist ambitions, but French attempts in early 1861 to extend the mandate of an all-French expeditionary force that had been dispatched to Syria the previous summer to protect Roman Catholic Maronites in Lebanon. Palmerston, famously described by his early biographer Philip Guedalla as 'the last candle of the eighteenth century',⁴⁰² had never forgotten Napoléon Bonaparte's plan to hobble British influence in the Middle East by dismembering the Ottoman Empire and turning the Mediterranean into a 'French lake'.⁴⁰³ Convinced that Napoléon III was once again following in his uncle's footsteps, the Prime Minister believed that Syria would become a French province unless Britain took a decided stand.⁴⁰⁴ At a great power conference in Paris on 19 February 1861, therefore, the British ambassador Lord Cowley was instructed to refuse the French request for an indefinite occupation. Napoléon III was disgusted at the lack of trust in France displayed by Britain and the other European powers at this conference, but he had little choice but to withdraw his troops from Syria in June 1861.⁴⁰⁵

Palmerston's fears over French ambitions in Syria were well founded, as 'Napoleon III certainly dreamt of a second Algeria in the Lebanon'.⁴⁰⁶ Undeterred by the controversial outcome to the China expedition, the emperor remained committed to restoring France to the first rank of great powers, even when this created geopolitical headaches in parts of the world within Britain's sphere of influence. However, the Syria intervention hardened Palmerston's resolve to use the diplomatic mechanisms of the European concert to restrain the emperor's grandiose ambitions and contain French aggrandisement wherever in the world it raised its head.⁴⁰⁷ At the same time, he had no intention of provoking a war with France, which was at least 'a known quantity' compared to the emerging nation-

⁴⁰² Philip Guedalla, *Palmerston*, (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1937), p.405.

⁴⁰³ E. de Marcère, *Une ambassade à Constantinople: la politique orientale de la Révolution française*, 2 Vols., (Paris: Librairie Félix Alcan, 1927), p.357.

⁴⁰⁴ TNA, Russell Papers, PRO30/22/21/103, Palmerston to Russell, 31 January 1861.

⁴⁰⁵ Simon Chesterman, *Just War or Just Peace?: Humanitarian Intervention and International Law*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), p.32-3; and Echard, op.cit., pp.129-40.

⁴⁰⁶ Davide Rodogno, 'Intervention in Ottoman Lebanon and Syria in 1860-1861', in Brendan Simms & D. J. B. Trim, *Humanitarian Intervention: A History*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), p.180.

⁴⁰⁷ TNA, Russell Papers, PRO30/22/21/105, Palmerston to Russell, 8 February 1861.

state formations that were beginning to challenge the traditional status quo in Europe and the Americas.⁴⁰⁸ Indeed, Palmerston was acutely aware that the outbreak of the American Civil War in April 1861 posed a much greater potential threat to British commercial and colonial interests than any French grandstanding in the Near or Far East.⁴⁰⁹ In a changing world, Napoléon III's Second Empire remained the closest approximation to an ally that Britain had.

Japan was a prime example of the way in which the Foreign Office and the Quai d'Orsay worked together even when Anglo-French relations were under strain in other parts of the world. The most obvious reason for this was that there was as yet no evidence of any French grand design that might challenge Britain's preponderant position there. This was evidenced by the pains that the French government took to avoid sending any policy recommendations to Edo without prior reference to London. Hence, even though Bellecourt had made it quite clear that he opposed any alteration to the treaties, Thouvenel's immediate reaction upon learning of the *bakufu*'s postponement proposal in early January 1861 was to enquire how the Foreign Office intended to respond.⁴¹⁰ As the British government was still dealing with the fallout from the China campaign and loath to risk further complications in East Asia, Thouvenel was informed that budgetary considerations made insisting upon the opening of the new ports difficult. As it seemed likely that both London and Washington were inclined to accept postponement, Thouvenel informed Bellecourt that it would be unwise for France to adopt a contrary position.⁴¹¹

With attention in London focused almost exclusively on Syrian affairs in February, Japan barely warranted a mention in the corridors of power in Whitehall until Alcock's dispatches relating to the assassination of Heusken and the collective withdrawal from Edo arrived in late March. These 'very disagreeable' reports made Palmerston very concerned that Britain would again be forced to 'inflict some severe retribution' on an East Asian government.⁴¹² Before any decision was taken about how best to respond, the Duke of Somerset, the then First Lord of the Admiralty, received a letter from Admiral Hope explaining that he had already answered Alcock's request for greater naval support

⁴⁰⁸ David Brown, *Palmerston: A Biography*, (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2012), p.448.

⁴⁰⁹ TNA, Russell Papers, PRO30/22/21/39, Palmerston to Russell, 30 December 1860.

⁴¹⁰ Archives Diplomatiques, Paris (AD), CPJ59/3, Thouvenel to Flahaut, 3 January 1861.

⁴¹¹ AD, CPJ59/3, Thouvenel to Bellecourt, No. 1, 26 January 1861.

⁴¹² TNA, Russell Papers, PRO30/22/21/113, Palmerston to Russell, 31 March 1861.

by detaching a British gunship to Edo with discretionary orders to remain there as long as necessary.⁴¹³ Even so, Somerset suggested to Russell that it might be preferable if Alcock did not return to the capital, since Yokohama offered a much better anchorage and could be easily defended from any sudden attack. Russell was less knowledgeable about Japan's treaty ports than Somerset, but he was still unprepared to surrender Britain's right to station a diplomatic representative in Edo even if Alcock chose not to exercise it.⁴¹⁴ He therefore approved the withdrawal policy on the condition that Alcock upheld all the rights conferred by the treaty. He also gave his strongest indication yet that he was willing to consider postponement by asking Alcock specifically whether or not he thought it desirable to insist upon the full implementation of the treaties.⁴¹⁵ By the end of April, news had arrived of Alcock's triumphant return to Edo, which was soon followed by further letters from Hope reporting the British minister's improved relations with the *bakufu* thereafter.⁴¹⁶ These 'highly satisfactory' reports led Russell to hope that 'no further difficulties will intervene to impede the development of trade with Japan'.⁴¹⁷ Unfortunately, this optimism was to prove disastrously misplaced.

Relations reassessed

Back in Japan, the *bakufu* was desperately attempting to secure Alcock and Bellecourt's support for the dispatch of a Japanese embassy to Europe to plead the case for postponement. In fact, it was this imperative that motivated Edo to make strenuous efforts to cultivate better relations with the two representatives during the spring of 1861, rather than the success of the withdrawal policy as Alcock believed. In the end, they both decided that an embassy might educate the Japanese about the economic and military strength of Britain and France compared to the United States, thereby detaching the *bakufu* from its dependence upon Harris and deterring (or at least deferring) anti-foreign violence in Japan. Once the *bakufu* had received assurances that an embassy would not be refused, it *bakufu* submitted an official request to all the treaty-power representatives

⁴¹³ TNA, Russell Papers, PRO30/22/24/28, Somerset to Russell, 3 April 1861.

⁴¹⁴ TNA, FO46/11, Somerset Note, 4 April 1861.

⁴¹⁵ House of Commons Parliamentary Papers (HCPP), 1861, Vol. LXIX.361, [2829], pp.11-2, Russell to Alcock, No. 5, 8 April 1861 & No. 6, 10 April 1861.

⁴¹⁶ Centre for Buckinghamshire Studies, Aylesbury (CBS), Somerset Papers, D-RA/A/2A/27/3/1, Hope to Somerset, 6 April 1861; and 4/4-6, Hope to Somerset, 18 & 24 May 1861.

⁴¹⁷ HCPP, 1861, Vol. LXIX.361, [2829], p.86, Russell to Alcock, No. 16, 26 April 1861.

in May for a seven-year postponement to the opening of the two remaining ports and cities.⁴¹⁸ Alcock, who had spent much of the spring of 1861 in Hong Kong dealing with a legal challenge from Michael Moss relating to his deportation from Japan, did not receive this news until he arrived in Nagasaki at the end of May. He reasoned that it would be better to return to Edo over land rather than by ship, since it was more important than ever to gain an insight into the true state of the country now that a *bakufu* mission was heading to Europe to argue that there were ‘insuperable obstacles’ to the opening of more ports to trade.⁴¹⁹ The trip proved an eye-opener, as the strict limits that were placed on Alcock’s freedom of movement, as well as the strenuous efforts that were made to prevent him entering the imperial capital of Kyoto, illustrated both the limits of *bakufu* power and the antagonistic rivalry that still existed between the Mikado and the Tycoon.⁴²⁰ Alcock therefore returned to Edo at the beginning of July with a clearer understanding as to why the *bakufu* was so keen to prevent further extension of Western trade to Osaka and Hyōgo – two commercially prosperous ports where shogunate influence was already distinctly limited. He also felt a greater appreciation of the significance of the emperor’s refusal to ratify the treaties in terms of the future of Western relations with Japan.⁴²¹

Like Alcock, Bellecourt was also no longer content to rely upon *bakufu* ministers for political information. In the British minister’s absence, therefore, he had been secretly building a network of native informants to help him compile a detailed list of the *daimyō*, their revenues, and their position within the Japanese government. This intelligence seemed to confirm on paper what Alcock had observed in person: that the shogun’s legitimacy as supreme sovereign of Japan was questionable at best; and that there was more to *daimyō* resistance to the treaties than met the eye. ‘It is very difficult for us to know who are our friends and who are our enemies in this mosaic of almost independent principalities that make up the Empire of Japan,’ Bellecourt explained to Thouvenel in April, ‘One therefore wonders again if the Western powers would not have more certainty

⁴¹⁸ Idem. See also Michael R. Auslin, *Negotiating with Imperialism: The Unequal Treaties and the Culture of Japanese Diplomacy*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2004), p.89; and Richard Sims, *French Policy Towards the Bakufu and Meiji Japan, 1854-95*, (Richmond: Japan Library, 1998), p.29.

⁴¹⁹ TNA, Hammond Papers, FO391/1, Alcock to Hammond, 27 May 1861.

⁴²⁰ Sir Rutherford Alcock, *The Capital of the Tycoon: A Record of Three Years’ Residence in Japan*, 2 Vols., (London: Longman, Green, Longman, Roberts & Green, 1863), Vol. II, p.104.

⁴²¹ Grace Fox, *Britain and Japan, 1858-1883*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1969), p.85.

in their relations with this Empire by concluding separate treaties with the great feudatory princes rather than with the current government, which seems not...worthy of the beneficial laws of its title.’⁴²² After two years of grasping in the dark, the British and French representatives were finally beginning to build a clearer picture of how the introduction of foreign trade had catalysed an domestic political crisis in Japan. Another indication of this were the disturbing rumours that Bellecourt received in April that a political revolution was underway in Kyoto.⁴²³ Yet by the time Alcock returned to Edo on 4 July there had not been any attacks on foreigners in the city for over six months – a reduction in anti-foreign violence that seemed to justify Anglo-French confidence that better relations with the *bakufu* equated to greater security for foreigners. Unfortunately, appearances could be deceiving.

At around midnight on 5 July 1861, the British legation at Tōzenji temple was attacked by a band of Mito samurai. Alcock was fortunate to escape with his life, but his newly-arrived Secretary of Legation, Laurence Oliphant, and the British consul in Nagasaki, George Morrison, were seriously wounded. Outraged once more by the *bakufu*’s inability to protect the legation and convinced of ‘the impossibility of our relations being maintained on their present footing’, it was nevertheless difficult to see what Alcock could really do to respond.⁴²⁴ The failure of his Japanese guard to deter the attack undermined the entire premise of his withdrawal policy, which had been predicated on a belief that the *bakufu* was unwilling, rather than unable, to put an end to anti-foreign violence. It was now crystal clear that Edo was simply incapable of preventing attacks on foreigners – an argument, of course, that the *rōjū* had been making for some time as a justification for postponement. The *bakufu* ministers wasted no time in hammering home this point at a meeting with Alcock in mid-July by blaming the attack on the domestic instability brought about by Western trade, abdicating all responsibility for it, and warning that there was no way to prevent further terrorism unless all foreigners – ministers and merchants alike – were effectively imprisoned within their homes.⁴²⁵

⁴²² AD, CPJ59/3, Bellecourt to Thouvenel, No. 82, 18 April 1861. See also No. 85, 20 May 1861.

⁴²³ AD, CPJ59/3, Bellecourt to Thouvenel, No. 82, 18 April 1861.

⁴²⁴ HCPP, 1862, Vol. LXIV.1, [2929], p.3, Alcock to Russell, No. 1, 6 July 1861.

⁴²⁵ HCPP, 1862, Vol. LXIV.1, [2929], pp.14-17, ‘Summary of conference between Alcock and Ministers of Foreign Affairs’, 20 July 1861, enclosure 1 in Alcock to Russell, No. 4, 25 July 1861.

Alcock's private correspondence to Hammond reveals the extent to which this committed 'gunboat diplomat' was forced to adapt to the constrained circumstances of his current position. If the *bakufu* was too weak or indifferent to prevent the anti-foreign *daimyō* from provoking a rupture with the treaty powers, then there was little point in the representatives making matters worse by uselessly sacrificing their lives and those of other foreigners too. At the same time, he was loath to withdraw from Japan altogether, since that would force the British government to commit to a military response. Instead he needed to buy time for the Foreign Office to formulate a response, which meant preventing any further attacks on foreigners in the interim. 'The undertaking is not easy under any circumstances,' Alcock explained, 'and will prove impracticable if the Admiral fails in his part.'⁴²⁶ It was indeed Admiral Hope, not the *bakufu* ministers, whom Alcock primarily blamed for the attack. In a highly unusual step, he wrote privately to Russell to complain bitterly about the impossibility of Britain maintaining its position in Japan unless the admiral, who 'up to this time...seems to have been utterly absorbed in China, and resolutely to have refused any thought or care for Japan', afforded the Japanese treaty ports greater protection than had hitherto been the case.⁴²⁷

Alcock was aware that this was an unpalatable problem to present to the Foreign Office. Nonetheless, it was a problem that he felt Hope's refusal to heed his consistent warnings about the insecurity of foreign life in Japan had alone created. Naturally, Hope strongly refuted the 'violent onslaught' that Alcock had made against him at the Foreign Office as 'the shabbiest proceeding which ever has come under my notice'.⁴²⁸ He too excused the Japanese government from responsibility, however, instead blaming Alcock's carelessness and refusal to permit the *bakufu* to organise the defence of the British legation as it saw fit. Nonetheless, when the admiral finally arrived on Japanese shores in August he avoided any direct rift with Alcock in the belief it would be inappropriate to the time and circumstances. He also accompanied the British minister to two critical meetings with the *bakufu* foreign magistrates on 14 and 15 August. For once, they were not accompanied by a retinue of *bakufu* censors and subordinates, which meant they could speak freely about the political problems that the *bakufu* faced. For the first time, they confessed the supremacy of the emperor over the shogun, before reiterating their claim that the only way to placate their enemies and overcome domestic obstacles to foreign

⁴²⁶ TNA, Hammond Papers, FO391/1, Alcock to Hammond, 9 July 1861.

⁴²⁷ TNA, Russell Papers, PRO30/22/50, Alcock to Russell, 9 July 1861.

⁴²⁸ CBS, Somerset Papers, D-RA/A/2A/27/13/1-2, Hope to Somerset, 29 August 1861.

trade was by postponing the opening of any new ports for seven years. In addition, they requested British assistance in pressuring a Russian squadron to leave the island of Tsushima, where it was rumoured the Russians were building permanent establishments.⁴²⁹ Such candour convinced Hope that ‘matters are by no means in such a desperate state as will probably be represented’.⁴³⁰

Like Hope, Alcock was pleased that he had finally established confidential relations with two influential members of the *rōjū*. Unsurprisingly, however, he viewed the general political situation very differently to the British admiral. In a confidential dispatch to the Foreign Office, he reiterated his view that relations between Japan and the treaty powers had reached crisis point, and that a false step by the representatives could easily provoke civil war or a war against the treaty powers.⁴³¹ He also told Hammond that the time had come to decide whether the *bakufu* was fighting for its existence or colluding with the enemies of trade. On the whole, Alcock believed the former to be the case, which meant that there was a certain identity of interests between the treaty powers and Edo in ensuring the safety of foreigners in Japan. Unfortunately, in Alcock’s opinion the only options now open to the British government were to drift on in a state of passive resignation, beat a retreat while still possible, or enforce every treaty stipulation even at the risk of a potentially disastrous war. Having concluded that none of these options were satisfactory, he saw little choice but to accept postponement under three conditions: greater security at the open ports; the absence of overt obstructions to trade; and an indemnity for those injured during the legation attack.⁴³²

Why, when Alcock finally had Admiral Hope by his side and British warships in Edo Bay, did the British minister decide that conditional postponement was the only way to preserve the treaty-port system in Japan? According to Michael Auslin, Alcock was willing to abet the *bakufu*’s efforts to limit trade because he recognised that ‘Japan occupied in British thinking a crucial position as a stable buffer state close to Britain’s major territorial interests’, which made it ‘antithetical to British strategy directly or

⁴²⁹ Tsushima, which lies in the middle of the Korea Strait, was of particular strategic interest at the time given its proximity to the Asian continent and the fact that Britain was banned by the terms of their treaties with China from establishing any naval stations between the Amur River and Korea. It was therefore in Britain’s interests to keep the island neutral; see Auslin, *op.cit.*, pp.80-1.

⁴³⁰ CBS, Somerset Papers, D-RA/A/2A/27/13/1-2, Hope to Somerset, 29 August 1861.

⁴³¹ TNA, FO46/13, Alcock to Russell, ‘Confidential’, 16 August 1861.

⁴³² TNA, Hammond Papers, FO391/1, Alcock to Hammond, 19 August 1861.

indirectly to destabilize Japan or to use the military to extend trading rights'.⁴³³ While it is possible that Alcock believed this to be the case, nothing in his official or private correspondence suggests that the British government attached such immense geostrategic importance to Japan at this time. On the contrary, Alcock frequently apologised to his Whitehall correspondents for writing lengthy dispatches on Japan when he knew they would be more focused on other European and global affairs.⁴³⁴ That is not to say that Japan was of no geostrategic or commercial importance to Britain at all – it certainly was important that British traders and warships maintained access to the country's natural resources and to its relatively prosperous and rapidly growing trade. Yet this was hardly evidence that Japan occupied a 'crucial position' in British geopolitical thinking, and even the genuine threat that the Russian presence in Tsushima posed to British commercial and strategic interests across the wider region – not least to Britain's lucrative China trade – does not alone explain why Alcock opted to support postponement at this time.⁴³⁵

Unfortunately, Auslin's assessment over-exaggerates both the importance of Japan to British policymakers in London, whose interests in the country were predominantly economic, and the freedom of action of Western diplomats on the spot, whose relative independence in no way equated to omnipotence over policymaking. Even though the political situation in Japan appeared more critical to Alcock than ever, all the evidence he had received from home since taking up his position indicated that there were no circumstances short of a general massacre of foreigners under which the British

⁴³³ Auslin, *op.cit.*, p.76.

⁴³⁴ See for example TNA, Hammond Papers, FO391/1, Alcock to Hammond, 19 August 1861, when Alcock apologised for sending so many dispatches 'amidst the din and pressure of European politics'. Many similar instances can be found in all the relevant archives referenced in this study.

⁴³⁵ British suspicions that Russia had colonialist designs on the island of Yezo (now Hokkaido) had been building since the Russian acquisition of vast tracts of lands from the Qing dynasty during the Second Opium War. The *bakufu*'s request for assistance in driving the Russians off Tsushima was therefore one that Alcock welcomed. Indeed, he even went so far as to suggest a joint naval operation with France to check Russian expansion in the Sea of Japan, whereby a British force would occupy Tsushima and a French one the Japanese possessions on the Korean coast. See Kenneth Bourne and D. Cameron Watt, eds., *British Documents on Foreign Affairs – Reports and Papers from the Foreign Office Confidential Print, Part 1: From the Mid-Nineteenth Century to the First World War*, Series E – Asia, 1860-1914: Ian Nish, ed., 'Volume 1: Japan and North-East Asia, 1860-1878', (Frederick, MD: University Publications of America, 1989) (BDF/A/E, Vol. 1), Documents 6-10, pp.13-35; especially Document 10, pp.29-34, Alcock to Russell, 'Confidential', 2 August 1861. See also Auslin, *op.cit.*, pp.77-82 for a full account of British concerns about Russian activities near Japan at this time.

government would support a war with Japan, particularly after the domestic criticism the China campaign attracted. The preservation of the Japanese treaty-port system was simply not important enough to justify a full-scale conflict with a country whose commercial potential, not to mention geopolitical significance, was minute. Furthermore, it is highly improbable that Admiral Hope would have ever supported an aggressive response to the postponement proposal. Nothing he had done or said indicated that he considered the situation in Japan to be anywhere near as serious as Alcock did, or that he would ever sanction aggressive measures there unless forced to do so, which Alcock did not have the power to do.

Another factor that is often overlooked when considering Alcock's *volte-face* was his determination to protect his legacy. Ever since his appointment to Japan, Alcock's letters bore the tone of a man who soon expected to retire to Europe after many years of labour in the Far East. In his final letter to Lord Wodehouse, who was replaced as Parliamentary Under-Secretary for Foreign Affairs by Austen Henry Layard in August 1861, Alcock was looking forward to finally escaping from his 'frightful place of exile', having left his successor a good inheritance by opening the ports, establishing trade, and arranging the visit of a Japanese mission to Europe.⁴³⁶ Following the attack on the legation, however, the British minister was less upbeat. Fearing that 'a long career of success in the East may have its nemesis', Alcock advised Russell to avoid 'violent efforts to remove covert restrictions...be content with maintaining a political position in Yedo...and keep the *doors open* at the Ports' until it became more politic to expand trade.⁴³⁷ For the remainder of what he hoped would be the closing chapter in his Eastern career, he resolved to place Britain's relations with Japan 'on a better and more hopeful if not more solid basis, than they have ever yet been'.⁴³⁸ It is clear, therefore, that Alcock's decision to support postponement was at least in part motivated by a desire to ensure his seventeen-year career in East Asia did not end with the destruction of the treaties he had been sent to Japan to protect.

Finally, although Auslin may well have had a point when he argued that Alcock 'saw that the bakufu's boundaries were crucial to the entire structure of the Japanese state',⁴³⁹ it is

⁴³⁶ Bodleian Library, Oxford (BLO), Kimberley Papers, MS. Eng. c. 4003, Hammond to Wodehouse, 18 May 1861.

⁴³⁷ TNA, Russell Papers, PRO30/22/50, Alcock to Russell, 20 August 1861.

⁴³⁸ TNA, Hammond Papers, FO391/1, Alcock to Hammond, 19 August 1861.

⁴³⁹ See Auslin, *op.cit.*, p.77.

important to stress that the British minister had little choice *but* to recommend a concession he had staunchly opposed in the past. After all, it was now demonstrably clear that his diplomatic efforts to compel the *bakufu* to implement the treaties had completely failed. His primary motive following the attack on the legation was therefore simpler than Auslin's complex assessment would suggest: to buy enough time for the Foreign Office to determine how best to proceed. His reluctant decision to support conditional postponement was essentially a pragmatic response to his restricted circumstances and limited power. It was better to maintain the status quo, unsatisfactory as it was, and strengthen the *bakufu* in its struggle against the enemies of foreign trade than to risk civil war by insisting upon immediate implementation of the treaties.

As ever, this meant securing the support of the other treaty-power representatives in Edo, which he attempted to gain by dispatching a note to his American, Dutch, and French colleagues asking for their views on the state of affairs and their recommendations for the future.⁴⁴⁰ Their responses differed markedly. Bellecourt, promoted to minister plenipotentiary in June 1861, believed that agreeing to a 'dangerous postponement' of seven years would only encourage those hostile to foreign relations to demand further concessions in the future.⁴⁴¹ The intelligence he had gathered on the *daimyō* and their position within the Japanese state only added to his doubts that the *bakufu* would ever be able to enforce the treaties in parts of Japan not under its direct control.⁴⁴² Yet with the bulk of the French fleet in East Asia diverted to Vietnam once more,⁴⁴³ Bellecourt was acutely aware of the weakness of his position. He was also in favour of the treaty-power representatives deciding how best to bolster Edo's position together.⁴⁴⁴ Unfortunately, though Harris claimed he was willing to cooperate with his colleagues in order to improve relations with the *bakufu*, he refused outright to take part in a general conference to discuss the matter. The Dutch consul J. K. de Wit, while sympathetic to the plight of the

⁴⁴⁰ HCPP, 1862, Vol. LXIV.1, [2929], pp.17-8, Alcock to Bellecourt, Harris, and De Wit, 23 July 1861, enclosure 2 in Alcock to Russell, No. 4, 25 July 1861.

⁴⁴¹ AD, CPJ59/4, Bellecourt to Thouvenel, No. 90, 12 July 1861.

⁴⁴² BDFE, Vol. 1, Documents 15 & 16, pp.47-9, Bellecourt to Alcock, 4 August 1861. The list of *daimyō* and their holdings can be found in Documents 27 & 28, pp.63-7.

⁴⁴³ See CBS, Somerset Papers, D-RA/A/2A/27/8/1, Hope to Somerset, 8 June 1861 for discussion on the transfer of the French fleet to Saigon.

⁴⁴⁴ Medzini, Meron, *French Policy in Japan During the Closing Years of the Tokugawa Regime*, (Cambridge, MA: East Asian Research Center, Harvard University, 1971), pp.31-2.

bakufu, decided to remain at Yokohama until his government decided how to proceed.⁴⁴⁵ The failure to re-establish collective diplomacy prior to Hope's departure from Japan in late September left Alcock and Bellecourt with little option but to spend the winter of 1861 flitting between Edo and Yokohama in the hope of avoiding another crisis before instructions on the postponement question arrived from home. It was during this period that Alcock, fed up with the 'want of trustworthy and direct means of information through officers of our own', recruited the fifteen-year-old Alexander von Siebold as a supernumerary interpreter.⁴⁴⁶ Despite his tender years, Siebold was uniquely qualified for this position due to the fluency in Japanese he had acquired through living in Nagasaki with his father, the famous German Japanologist Phillip von Siebold, since Japan first opened to trade. In a letter to Hammond justifying the additional expense, Alcock expressed confidence that Siebold was worth 'all the other interpreters put together sent out from Europe'.⁴⁴⁷ It was to prove a most prescient assertion.

A problem deferred

While the future of the treaty-port system in Japan hung in the balance, the British and French governments were deeply preoccupied with the progress of the American Civil War. Despite Palmerston's determination to remain aloof from the civil strife that was tearing the United States apart, he began to take an increasingly pro-Southern line following the string of Confederate military successes in the early part of the war. In expectation of a permanent schism between the two warring parties, the British government recognised the Confederacy as a belligerent in May 1861. This incendiary move provoked increasingly bellicose statements from Washington that raised fears in London of an imminent attack on Britain's Canadian possessions.⁴⁴⁸ The Northern blockade of the Southern ports, announced in July 1861, also directly impacted the British and French textile industry, which depended upon Southern cotton. This mutual economic

⁴⁴⁵ BDFA/E, Vol. 1, Document 12, pp.35-44, Alcock to Russell, 'Confidential', 16 August 1861. For some reason, perhaps to avoid embarrassment, the differing opinions of Bellecourt, Harris, and de Wit were omitted from the copy of this dispatch published in the Parliamentary Papers; see HCPP, 1862, Vol. LXIV.1, [2929], pp.26-33, Alcock to Russell, No. 9, 16 August 1861.

⁴⁴⁶ TNA, Hammond Papers, FO391/1, Alcock to Hammond, 2 November 1861.

⁴⁴⁷ TNA, Hammond Papers, FO391/1, Alcock to Hammond, 13 December 1861.

⁴⁴⁸ See TNA, Russell Papers, PRO30/22/21/128, Palmerston to Russell, 9 July 1861; & PRO30/22/21/141, Palmerston to Russell, 7 September 1861.

interest brought the British and French governments closer together again, with Lord Lyons, the British ambassador in Washington, adamant that the preservation of peace depended on Anglo-French unity.⁴⁴⁹ The British and French governments agreed to adopt a joint approach to American affairs, but in mid-October Palmerston rejected Anglo-French mediation in the conflict on the basis that want of cotton alone would not justify interference in what was essentially a domestic dispute. Unlike France, Britain had a merchant marine and colonial possessions bordering the United States to protect.⁴⁵⁰

Palmerston was soon faced with a diplomatic crisis that threatened to drag Britain into the war regardless. On 7 November 1861, two Confederate envoys charged with soliciting the support of Europe for the Southern cause boarded the *Trent*, a British passenger ship bound for England. The next day officers of the Union vessel *San Jacinto*, acting without orders from Washington, stopped and boarded the *Trent* in the Bahama Straits and arrested the two envoys. The news of this insult to the British flag reached Europe at the end of the month. With war between Britain and the Union looking increasingly likely, the French government had to decide whether it would actively intervene. In the end, Thouvenel decided to send a strongly-worded note in support of the British position that the boarding of the *Trent* breached international law. This note played a critical role in Washington's decision in December to release the two envoys and acknowledge that the *San Jacinto* had acted without authorisation. While it was certainly not in France's strategic interests to incite a war between Britain and the United States, the British reaction to Thouvenel's seemingly decisive intervention was universally positive. After years of increasing tension and mistrust, Anglo-French relations were finally on the mend.⁴⁵¹

The peaceful resolution of the *Trent* Affair owed much to a shared desire in London and Paris to avoid a potentially disastrous entanglement in the American Civil War at a time when British and French forces were already committed to a military intervention in Mexico. During a six-year civil war between liberal and conservative parties for control of the Mexican state that made events in Japan seem tame, both antagonists had become deeply indebted to creditors in Britain, France, and Spain. The final straw for the three

⁴⁴⁹ Brian Jenkins, *Lord Lyons: A Diplomat in an Age of Nationalism and War*, (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2014), p.173

⁴⁵⁰ TNA, Russell Papers, PRO30/22/14B, Palmerston to Russell, 18 October 1861.

⁴⁵¹ Lynn M. Case and Warren F. Spencer, *The United States and France: Civil War Diplomacy*, (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1970), pp.190-241. See also Brown, *op.cit.*, pp.452-3.

European governments was the suspension of foreign debt payments for a period of two years by liberal leader Benito Juárez following his election as president in July 1861. On 31 October 1861, a tripartite convention was signed in London that led to the dispatch of a British, French, and Spanish expeditionary force to Mexico to compel the government to honour its debts.⁴⁵²

As in China, Palmerston sanctioned the Mexican intervention to ensure that France did not have free rein in a part of the world where Britain also had substantial economic interests. Napoléon III, as usual, had more substantial ambitions in mind, having been convinced by Mexican conservatives who escaped to Paris that there would be popular support for the restoration of a monarchy under a European prince. Like Palmerston, Napoléon III was a firm believer in the superiority of constitutional monarchy over republicanism. The idea of a Catholic monarchy in Mexico that would counter the threat posed by North-American Protestantism seemed a good way to placate the Catholic lobby in France, which was still angry at the outcome of events in Italy. Furthermore, with the United States crippled by war and unable to enforce the 'Monroe Doctrine', this seemed a perfect opportunity for France to install a friendly regime on the American continent, thereby bypassing the Union blockade that was causing so much damage to the French cotton industry.⁴⁵³ In mid-October 1861, therefore, the emperor informed the French ambassador in London that he preferred the restoration of monarchy in Mexico to keep the country out of American hands and open it to European commerce and influence.⁴⁵⁴ Russell, who was sceptical about the veracity of the statements of the Mexican refugees in Paris, doubted that the Americans would accept a monarchy in Mexico under any circumstances. By contrast, Palmerston was willing to roll the dice to see whether it was possible to facilitate the creation of a constitutional monarchy in a continent dominated by dysfunctional republics by offering Britain's moral support should the arrival of the joint expedition spark a spontaneous popular uprising against the republican government.⁴⁵⁵

Alcock's reports of the attack on the British legation in Japan reached the Foreign Office in early October 1861, while preparations for a possible war with the United States and

⁴⁵² Pierre Milza, *Napoléon III*, (Paris: Perrin, 2004), pp.636-8.

⁴⁵³ *Ibid.*, pp.639-42.

⁴⁵⁴ Echard, *op.cit.*, p.140.

⁴⁵⁵ TNA, Hammond Papers, FO391/7, Hammond Memorandum, 7 October 1861, with notes from Palmerston dated 12 & 20 October and Russell dated 21 October 1861.

an armed intervention in Mexico were in full swing. They came as a shock to Russell, who had thought that all matters of contention over the treaties in Japan had been resolved. Given his ignorance of the political situation there, one can understand why Russell decided to await the return of Oliphant, whom Alcock had sent back to England, to hear a full account of the assault on the British legation before sending out fresh instructions.⁴⁵⁶ In the interim, Thouvenel was informed that the Foreign Office would not permit Alcock to cede anything to the Japanese without satisfactory equivalents, an approach that was immediately replicated in Paris.⁴⁵⁷ On 28 October, Oliphant arrived with Alcock's recommendations on the postponement question. Russell's first reaction was to send the British minister's complaints about Hope's negligence to the Duke of Somerset. The First Lord, who resented the critical tone of Russell's letter, replied to say that he considered Hope's conduct to have been exemplary throughout, especially his prudent refusal to engage in a war of words with Alcock following the attack.⁴⁵⁸ His letter provoked a stinging riposte from the Foreign Secretary:

Poor Mr Alcock writes in fear of assassination and asks for ships – Adml. Hope (who has forty under his command) returns him an answer that if ships are to be kept in Japan till assassination ceases to be a practice they will never come away! This may be a good joke, but I do not wonder that Mr Alcock did not see the fun of it.⁴⁵⁹

Russell's anger was understandable. Like Alcock, he believed that the attack on the legation could have been avoided had Hope paid more attention to Japanese affairs. Instead, he was now faced with another diplomatic crisis in East Asia at precisely the time when other events demanded his full attention. Against this background, Russell decided at the end of November to approve Alcock's recommendation for postponement, as long as it was accompanied with certain concessions. He also granted Alcock considerable leeway as to how to implement these conditions, stressing only that there were to be no concessions without equivalents, that he was to maintain and if possible enlarge trade, and that he should discuss his instructions with the other treaty-power representatives

⁴⁵⁶ HCPP, 1862, Vol. LXIV.1, [2929], p.25, Russell to Alcock, No. 7, 11 October 1861.

⁴⁵⁷ AD, CPJ59/4, Thouvenel to Bellecourt, No. 9, 10 October 1861.

⁴⁵⁸ TNA, Russell Papers, PRO30/22/14C, Somerset to Russell, 9 November 1861.

⁴⁵⁹ TNA, Russell Papers, PRO30/22/31/56, Russell to Somerset, 12 November 1861; the same letter can also be found in CBS, Somerset Papers, D-RA/A/2A/50/25.

first.⁴⁶⁰ As soon as these orders had been executed, Alcock was then to proceed home on leave.⁴⁶¹ Unsurprisingly, Thouvenel reserved judgement on the postponement question until he learned of London's decision. On 28 November, less than twenty-four hours after news of the *Trent* Affair arrived on his desk, Thouvenel informed Bellecourt that he would not oppose postponement either.⁴⁶² With war between Britain and the United States now a real possibility, and difficulties mounting in Europe over Italy, the papacy, and Austrian activities in Herzegovina,⁴⁶³ Thouvenel had more important preoccupations than Japan. Like Russell, he was content to leave it up to the men on the spot to find a way out of their predicament.

Alcock did not receive Russell's instructions until 12 February 1862. Two days later, he sent a confidential memo to his Dutch and French colleagues informing them that he had been instructed neither to restrict nor to curtail trade. Alcock interpreted these instructions as strictly as possible. As it was 'well-nigh impossible' to abandon Hyōgo and Osaka, he felt he could only support a delay in the opening of Edo and Niigata.⁴⁶⁴ Even this would require the *bakufu* to offer redress for the legation attack, to agree to the opening of Tsushima and a port on the Korean coast, and to secure public recognition of the treaties by the emperor or the anti-foreign *daimyō*. He also speculated as to whether the entire matter might be better settled by the other treaty powers taking a lesson out of Russia's book and acting with 'firmness and determination' in dealing with the *bakufu*, although he acknowledged that no diplomatic agent could take such a decision without authority from home.⁴⁶⁵ Alcock's harsh attitude differed markedly from his resolution the previous year to recommend postponement for all the ports, especially since Russell's instructions made no mention of separating Hyōgo and Osaka from Edo and Niigata. In fact, they specifically granted Alcock the permission to defer the opening of all four ports and cities.⁴⁶⁶ His new proposals pleased Bellecourt and de Wit, both of whom believed that it

⁴⁶⁰ HCPP, 1862, Vol. LXIV.1, [2929], p.72-3, Russell to Alcock, No. 13, 23 November 1861.

⁴⁶¹ HCPP, 1862, Vol. LXIV.1, [2929], p.72, Russell to Alcock, No. 12, 11 November 1861.

⁴⁶² See Sims, *op.cit.*, p.28.

⁴⁶³ Case, *op.cit.*, p.195.

⁴⁶⁴ See Beasley, W. G., ed., *Select Documents on Japanese Foreign Policy, 1853-1868*, (London: Oxford University Press, 1955), Document 36, pp.211-6.

⁴⁶⁵ *Idem.*

⁴⁶⁶ See *ibid.*, footnote 2, p.212.

was impossible to delay the opening of Hyōgo and Osaka.⁴⁶⁷ Bellecourt was also delighted at the return of a semblance of unity in Edo, even if Harris remained isolated in Edo ‘like a badger in a hole’.⁴⁶⁸ At the end of February, the Frenchman informed Thouvenel that neither he nor Alcock had any faith in the *bakufu*’s promises, and that he considered it necessary for the representatives to ‘use *quite firm* language, one could even say *quite emphatic*, to make a serious impression on the enemies of foreigners’.⁴⁶⁹

Given that Alcock and his colleagues were so determined to concede as little as possible to the *bakufu* in February, it seems surprising that the British minister was prepared to agree to an unconditional five-year postponement to the opening all four ports and cities just a few weeks later. In his official correspondence, Alcock justified this change of heart on information that he acquired from the *rōjū* Kuze Hirochika during two confidential interviews on 12 and 16 March 1862. According to Alcock’s official dispatch of 17 March, he had become convinced during these meetings that opening Hyōgo and Osaka would precipitate immediate civil war, and that it would be impossible to secure the proposed equivalents for the deferral of Edo and Niigata either. Alcock also claimed to have been struck by how quickly the *bakufu* agreed to pay a large indemnity for the wounds inflicted upon Oliphant during the legation attack, and by the fact that Edo had offered to send its most senior interpreter to assist the *bakufu* embassy in Europe. Although it was not certain that a postponement of five years would improve the situation, there was simply no other way to enforce the treaties except by force. In any case, as he had been unable to execute Russell’s instructions to the letter, Alcock had suspended negotiations and started preparations to return home on leave.⁴⁷⁰

Though the reasons Alcock gave in his official correspondence for backing full postponement were plausible enough, they do not tell the full story as to why he changed his mind so quickly. It is true that the *bakufu* had already put him in a conciliatory mood before the meetings with Kuze by punishing some of those responsible for the Tōzenji attack and allocating a commanding site for a new British legation in the capital. Yet this took place before he had even received Russell’s initial instructions in February, let alone

⁴⁶⁷ See *ibid.*, p.556; and enclosures to TNA, FO46/21, Alcock to Russell, No. 23, 17 March 1862 & AD, CPJ59/5, Bellecourt to Thouvenel, No. 140, 26 February 1862.

⁴⁶⁸ TNA, Hammond Papers, FO391/1, Alcock to Hammond, 27 September 1861.

⁴⁶⁹ AD, CPJ59/5, Bellecourt to Thouvenel, No 140, 26 February 1862.

⁴⁷⁰ HCPP, 1863, Vol. LXXIV.423, [3079], pp.15-6, Alcock to Russell, No. 15, 17 March 1862.

met with the *rōjū* the following month.⁴⁷¹ The suggestion by William Beasley and Grace Fox that these developments had any significant influence over his decision is therefore questionable.⁴⁷² In order to understand what really led to Alcock's change of heart it is necessary to delve into his private correspondence with Hammond, which reveals how two developments within the space of a week shattered the British minister's confidence in his ability to avoid major concessions on the postponement issue.

Shortly after Alcock had dispatched his confidential memorandum of 14 February to his Dutch and French colleagues, he had received news that a group of Mito samurai had attempted to assassinate Andō Nobumasa, a *rōjū* with whom Alcock had established a close relationship, outside the Sakashita gate of Edo Castle. Alcock realised immediately that the loss of this highly influential figure, who was heavily wounded in the 13 February attack, was likely to paralyse the *bakufu* and make it less disposed to compromise over postponement. During the same week, Alcock also discovered that Admiral Hope was withdrawing all British ships from Japan, in addition to the marines who had been guarding the legation in Edo since the previous summer, in preparation for the outbreak of war between Britain and the United States. The fact that Japan was not shielded from the impact that the *Trent* Affair had on the deployment of Royal Navy forces worldwide apparently came as a shock to the British minister, who criticised Hope's decision to leave Edo unprotected as 'sheer madness' in a letter to Hammond on 19 February.⁴⁷³

The removal of all British forces from Edo meant that, within a week of receiving Russell's instructions, Alcock had not only lost his most sympathetic ear on the *rōjū* council but also his ability to negotiate with the *bakufu* from a position of strength. Moreover, the continued lack of unity between the treaty-power representatives in Edo only compounded what was already a weak negotiating position, leaving the British minister resigned to the near impossibility of leveraging better terms for postponement. Thus, while Alcock's official account of his meetings with Kuze justified his recommendation for an unconditional deferral on the weakness of the *bakufu* and the risk of provoking civil war, he was clearly powerless to demand anything better. Alcock's

⁴⁷¹ Alcock first mentioned plans for construction of the new British legation in September 1861; see TNA, Hammond Papers, FO391/1, Alcock to Hammond, 21 September 1861. He was first informed by the *bakufu* of the execution of three of the Tōzenji attackers on 24 January 1862, weeks before Russell's orders arrived; see HCPP, 1863, Vol. LXXIV.423, [3079], p.4, Alcock to Russell, No. 5, 11 February 1862.

⁴⁷² See Beasley, *op.cit.*, pp.56-7; and Fox, *op.cit.*, pp.92-3.

⁴⁷³ TNA, Hammond Papers, FO391/1, Alcock to Hammond, 19 February 1862.

dispatch was therefore not only an admission of his personal failure to compel the *bakufu* to uphold its treaty obligations, but of the failure of collective diplomacy to protect the future of the Japanese treaty-port system. This is evidenced by the fact that Alcock's capitulation in turn forced Bellecourt to acknowledge during his own meeting with the *rōjū* that the postponement question would have to be resolved in Europe, even though he continued to insist to Thouvenel that the *bakufu* should at least provide proof of its good faith before the Quai d'Orsay acceded to deferral.⁴⁷⁴ Unfortunately for the French minister, the departure of Alcock and the chief *bakufu* interpreter Moriyama Takichiro for Europe on 23 March 1862 reduced his role to that of detached observer.

Back in Europe, the British and French governments were much more concerned with the progress of the military expedition to Mexico than the impending arrival of the Japanese embassy. Following the Spanish occupation of Veracruz in late December 1861, the emperor decided to dispatch further troops to Mexico at the beginning of 1862. Palmerston was unconcerned by this development, which he interpreted as a fair response to the Spanish manoeuvres. While he stopped short of ordering British marines to facilitate regime change in Mexico, the Prime Minister was also increasingly convinced by the merits of the emperor's monarchy scheme, which he told Russell in mid-January would be a 'great blessing' that would prevent whichever side prevailed in the American Civil War from absorbing Mexico into its territory.⁴⁷⁵ Everything appeared to be proceeding to plan until 19 February, when Napoléon III publicly disavowed the French admiral who had negotiated the Convention of La Soledad, an agreement that recognised the Mexican Republican government and reinforced the principle of non-intervention in Mexican domestic affairs. Furious at being used as cover for a French invasion, Britain and Spain withdrew their troops in April. Unshackled from the constraints of the tripartite convention, France declared war on Mexico on 20 April 1862.⁴⁷⁶

Under these circumstances, the arrival of the Japanese embassy in Europe at the beginning of April was an unwelcome distraction, particularly as there was some confusion over which country it would visit first. After the withdrawal of Queen Victoria from official duties to mourn the death of Prince Albert at the end of 1861, the British government was keen to delay the reception of the ambassadors as long as possible.⁴⁷⁷ When it finally

⁴⁷⁴ AD, CPJ59/5, Bellecourt to Thouvenel, No. 147, 22 March 1862.

⁴⁷⁵ *Idem*.

⁴⁷⁶ Milza, *op.cit.*, pp.638-9.

⁴⁷⁷ AD, CPJ59/5, Thouvenel to Flahaut, 29 March 1862.

became clear that the embassy would initially come to France, Thouvenel sought the views of the Foreign Office with regard to the issue of postponement.⁴⁷⁸ He was informed that Hammond doubted whether the ambassadors had sufficient authority to treat on the matter, and that Russell in any case preferred to await the return of Alcock before entering into formal negotiations.⁴⁷⁹ As a result, when Thouvenel received the ambassadors in late April he merely echoed Bellecourt's stance in Japan by highlighting his dissatisfaction at the state of affairs at the treaty ports and stressing the French government's determination not to agree to any concessions without equivalents.⁴⁸⁰

Once it became obvious to the Japanese that definitive resolutions on postponement could only be made across the Channel, the embassy decamped to London to await Alcock's arrival. The British minister reached Europe in late May, ahead of his dispatches conveying his recommendations on postponement. For that reason, Thouvenel did not learn of Alcock's new policy position until the two men met in Paris on 27 May. After this meeting and a conference with the emperor the following day, Alcock informed Hammond by letter that a 'perfect understanding' had been established with the French government, which had agreed to support his recommendations on postponement if Russell adopted them as well.⁴⁸¹ This represented a significant change of heart for Thouvenel, whose understanding of the situation in Japan had hitherto been exclusively shaped by Bellecourt's dispatches. These were no substitute for a face-to-face meeting with the experienced British minister, however, who had little difficulty in convincing Thouvenel that anything other than postponement would risk another far-flung military entanglement of questionable utility.⁴⁸²

Even so, it was telling how quickly Thouvenel discarded the views of his own representative in favour of those advanced by Alcock. Despite the concerns Bellecourt had consistently raised about postponement, the Foreign Minister clearly had no intention of opposing the British on an issue of such minor importance. Thouvenel's decision reinforced Alcock's confidence that the British government would also choose concession over contest, especially, as he explained to Hammond, 'considering how small our commercial interests [in Japan] really are, and how averse the country will be to any

⁴⁷⁸ AD, CPJ59/5, Thouvenel to Flahaut, 10 April 1862.

⁴⁷⁹ AD, CPJ59/5, Flahaut to Thouvenel, 19 April 1862.

⁴⁸⁰ AD, CPJ59/5, Thouvenel to Bellecourt, No. 3, 26 April 1862.

⁴⁸¹ TNA, Hammond Papers, FO391/1, Alcock to Hammond, 29 May 1862.

⁴⁸² See AD, CPJ59/5, Thouvenel to Flahaut, No. 58, 27 May 1862.

policy provoking collision'.⁴⁸³ So it proved. Within a week of his return to England he had negotiated a formal agreement with the Japanese known as the London Protocol. This agreement, signed on 6 June 1862, ceded the *bakufu* a five-year deferral to the opening of the two ports and cities (until 1 January 1868) in exchange for full implementation of the remaining clauses of the treaty and the removal of all obstacles to trade in the existing treaty ports.⁴⁸⁴ Against all the odds, the *bakufu* had pulled off a stunning diplomatic victory.

Conclusions

A far cry from the policy of 'no concessions without equivalents' that Russell had outlined the previous autumn, the London Protocol, which was swiftly followed by similar agreements between the Japanese embassy and France, Holland, Prussia and Russia, has been accurately described as a face-saving measure to maintain British prestige in East Asia by avoidin an embarrassing withdrawal from Japan.⁴⁸⁵ It was also compelling evidence, as argued by Michael Auslin, of the lengths that Britain and France were prepared to go to avoid further military entanglements in East Asia after the heavy criticism that followed the Chinese campaign.⁴⁸⁶ That said, there can be little doubt that the primary factor in the decision to agree to postponement was the outbreak of two separate but interrelated crises in North America. The American Civil War and the Mexican intervention were of much greater importance to the wider economic and geopolitical interests of Britain and France than the minor issue of trade with Japan. As a result, when Alcock, whose influence over Anglo-French policy towards Japan far exceeded that of his French colleague, explained that the treaty powers faced an unpalatable choice between forcing the issue or buying time in the hope that matters would improve, Russell and Thouvenel immediately opted for the latter course.

Given the circumstances in which the London Protocol was negotiated, Michael Auslin was right to temper his description of this agreement as 'the highpoint of Tokugawa diplomacy' with the caveat that the Japanese also benefitted from 'international

⁴⁸³ TNA, Hammond Papers, FO391/1, Alcock to Hammond, 22 May 1862.

⁴⁸⁴ Beasley, *op.cit.*, Document 37, pp.216-7.

⁴⁸⁵ See Fox, *op.cit.*, pp.95-6, and Sims, *op.cit.*, p.30.

⁴⁸⁶ Auslin, *op.cit.*, pp.86-7.

conditions beyond their control'.⁴⁸⁷ In 1861 and 1862, these 'international conditions' were shaped by the messy consequences of British and French military interventions in China, Syria, and Mexico, as well as the global impact of the American Civil War. Unless these international contexts are considered, it is impossible to understand why Britain and France were willing to make treaty concessions to the Japanese less than two years after their combined forces went to war to enforce similar commercial rights in China. Although it was becoming increasingly clear that the imposition of the 'unequal treaties' would be no more straightforward in Japan than it had been in China, neither Britain nor France could risk another military intervention in East Asia when their hands were tied elsewhere. Instead, they hoped that Alcock was right when he argued that postponement offered a third way between war and withdrawal. Unfortunately, the ink was hardly dry on the London Protocol before two incidents took place in Japan that completely undermined the premise that postponement would bring stability to the treaty-port system.

⁴⁸⁷ *Idem.*

CHAPTER 5

The Expulsion Conundrum: Bellecourt, Neale and the Richardson Affair, 1862-1863

By the time Rutherford Alcock departed Japan in March 1862, he had indisputably established himself as the leading Western diplomat in Edo. His absence on leave for almost two years was therefore significant, as it left a leadership vacuum in the Japanese capital. The time when Townsend Harris would have sought to reassert his former position had long since passed, with the U.S. minister himself leaving Japan in May 1862. Harris's departure, in addition to the increasingly devastating civil war that was raging back in his homeland, accelerated the transformation of the United States from one of the most influential of the Japanese treaty powers to one of the more peripheral. With Harris and Alcock gone, Duchesne de Bellecourt and J. K. de Wit became the two most experienced men on the spot in terms of time served. Even so, Britain's preponderant economic and military position in East Asia guaranteed that Alcock's inexperienced successor would retain great influence over how the 'enclave empires' in Japan were managed in his absence. This naturally led to tensions with the more seasoned Bellecourt over the direction of policy, which, as ever, was left very much to their discretion.

The man appointed to succeed Alcock was Lieutenant-Colonel Edward St John Neale, the British Secretary of Legation in Beijing. Like Alcock, Neale was a veteran of the Carlist War in Spain (1833-1839) who had entered the British consular service after serving in that conflict. He was described by the famous Japanophile and diplomat Ernest Satow, who arrived in Japan as a student interpreter to the British legation at Edo in September 1862, as 'an old warrior who... , gossip said, regarded Sir. R Alcock, formerly attached to the Marine Brigade of Portugal in the quality of surgeon, with no friendly feelings'.⁴⁸⁸ According to Satow, Neale also 'did not understand the circumstances amongst which he was thrown' when he became chargé d'affaires in Edo during the

⁴⁸⁸ Sir Ernest Mason Satow, *A Diplomat in Japan*, (London: Seeley, Service and Co., 1921), p.29.

summer of 1862.⁴⁸⁹ Though Neale had first joined the British consular service back in the 1830s, he did not reach East Asia until his appointment to Beijing in 1860. Compared to Alcock, therefore, he was much less experienced in dealing with Asiatic regimes like the *bakufu*. Unfortunately, Neale had more to contend with during his short tenure than anyone could have expected. After all, by the time he left Japan at the end of 1863, the very foundations of the treaty-port system were beginning to crumble.

The Richardson Affair

It was not long after Neale's arrival that his naïveté became clear. After the attack on the British legation in mid-1861, Alcock had withdrawn to the safety of Yokohama again, only returning to Edo when necessary to discuss important matters with the *rōjū*. Neale dismissed the rationale behind that decision, and brought the legation back to the capital in June in the expectation that a guard of thirty British marines and more than five hundred *bakufu* samurai would prove sufficient to keep him safe. He was wrong. On the night of 26 June 1862 (the lunar anniversary of the first attack), two British sentries guarding Neale's quarters were fatally wounded by a disgruntled member of the guard assigned by the *bakufu* to protect the legation.⁴⁹⁰ The return of anti-foreign violence in Edo after a one-year respite was a significant blow to Alcock's efforts of avoiding a direct rupture between Britain and Japan. Moreover, unlike the attack the previous year, the perpetrator was not affiliated to any *daimyō* but with the *bakufu* itself. In the aftermath, Neale demanded that Edo investigate the incident and punish those responsible. When no response was forthcoming, he had little choice but to withdraw to Yokohama and await instructions from London.⁴⁹¹ In the meantime, Admiral Hope, who was critical of Neale's decision to return to Edo in the first place, recommended to the Admiralty that his fleet should support Neale's demands for redress.⁴⁹² If that failed he would open communications with the Mikado at Kyoto, blockade Japan's southern ports, and destroy Edo's forts until the *bakufu* relented.⁴⁹³

⁴⁸⁹ Ibid., p.30.

⁴⁹⁰ House of Commons Parliamentary Papers (HCPP), 1863, Vol. LXXIV.423, [3079], pp.30-2, Neale to Russell, No. 29, 3 July 1862.

⁴⁹¹ Ibid., p.52, Neale to Russell, No. 37, 1 August 1862.

⁴⁹² Centre for Buckinghamshire Studies, Aylesbury (CBS), Somerset Papers, D-RA/A/2A/28/20, Hope to Somerset, 7 August 1862.

⁴⁹³ Fox, op.cit., p.97.

To be fair to Neale, it was becoming increasingly difficult for even the most experienced treaty-power representatives to understand the complexity of the political upheaval taking place within Japan. Alcock's decision to support postponement had been predicated on assurances he had received from Andō Nobumasa and Kuze Hirochika, the two most influential members of the *rōjū*, that it was the only way for the *bakufu* to overcome the difficulties brought about by the introduction of Western trade. Within a few months, however, both of these men had been replaced. The reasons for this were not immediately clear to Bellecourt, who had received a series of contradictory reports during the summer relating to the political machinations taking place in Kyoto. In mid-June, he heard rumours that *tozama* lords led by Shimazu Hisamitsu, father of the Satsuma *daimyō* and effective head of the Satsuma domain, had entered the imperial city to seek the emperor's sanction for the removal of the shogun and a return to seclusion. Bellecourt was then informed a few weeks later that a court noble was coming to Edo to discuss expulsion with the *rōjū*, only to receive intelligence in August from the missionary Mermet de Cachon, who was living in Hakodate, that the *daimyō* were increasingly opposed to the *bakufu* and more open to relations with foreigners than previously thought. Unsure how to interpret these conflicting accounts, it was at least clear to Bellecourt that the power of the Mikado was reviving.⁴⁹⁴

What Bellecourt did not yet fully understand, and the reason why the reports from Kyoto were so contradictory, was that there were two political forces in the city competing for influence over the imperial court: the *kōbu-gattai* reforming lords; and the *sonnō-jōi* extremists. The former had been pardoned by Andō and Kuze for their support for Hitotsubashi Keiki in the 1858 shogunal succession dispute, but they were still denied access to the shogun's councils. They had therefore secured the dispatch of an imperial envoy to Edo to oversee the appointment of reformist leaders to influential positions within the *bakufu*. It was the pressure of these developments that led to the resignations of Andō and Kuze, both of whom were closely associated with Ii Naosuke and had sought to maintain *bakufu* control over national policy. Despite some resistance by the *fudai* and other *bakufu* officials, the presence of Shimazu and the large retinue of Satsuma retainers who accompanied the imperial envoy to Edo in July ensured that a triumvirate of reformist leaders, one of whom was Keiki himself, were installed at the top of the *bakufu*

⁴⁹⁴ Sims, op.cit., pp34-5. See also Archives Diplomatiques, Paris (AD), CPJ59/6, No. 163, 19 June 1862; No. 165, 22 June 1862; No. 173, 4 July 1862; & No.182, 10 August 1862.

by the end of the summer 1862.⁴⁹⁵ After securing his objective, Shimazu and his escort departed for Kyoto in mid-September. It was at this point that Japan's internal and external crises finally collided.

On 14 September 1862, a British merchant named Charles Lennox Richardson went riding with three companions along the *tōkaidō*, the main road between Edo and Kanagawa, where they soon encountered Shimazu's entourage en route to Kyoto. At the small village of Namamugi, half way between Kanagawa and Kawasaki and well within the treaty boundary, they were suddenly attacked by several of the Satsuma retainers. Richardson was hacked to death, while two other men were severely wounded. Mrs Borrodaile, the only woman in the party, narrowly escaped unscathed and rode back to Kanagawa to raise the alarm. Against Neale's orders, Captain Vyse, the British consul in Kanagawa, led the *chargé's* mounted escort out of Yokohama to search for Richardson's body. Bellecourt, by contrast, immediately led his own mounted guard out of the port to help retrieve the murdered man. Neale was incensed by Vyse's act of insubordination, but he had little time to react before the arrival later in the evening of Rear-Admiral Augustus Kuper, Hope's successor as Commander-in-Chief of the East Indies and China Station.⁴⁹⁶ Kuper's presence spurred demands from an outraged merchant community that the commanders of all foreign vessels in port land forces to surround and seize Shimazu and his retainers, who were known to be staying less than two miles from Yokohama. Despite intense pressure from these merchants, and indeed Vyse, Neale rejected their demands as premature and tantamount to an unjustifiable act of war.⁴⁹⁷

In a dispatch to Thouvenel written the day after the incident, Bellecourt claimed to have offered his wholehearted support to his British colleague during the pandemonium. According to this report, Bellecourt's response to the entreaties of the foreign community was to state that the foreign powers had no rights to demand anything from Satsuma, that it was the duty of the *bakufu* to prevent such attacks, and that, as with previous acts of anti-foreign violence, it was for the governments in Europe to decide how best to respond.

⁴⁹⁵ Beasley, *op.cit.*, p.60.

⁴⁹⁶ To the last Admiral Hope was prepared to give the *bakufu* the benefit of the doubt, writing in October after hearing of the outrage that he would 'grieve very much if we were drawn into any measures of coercion against the Japanese, as I am very partial to them'. See CBS, Somerset Papers, D-RA/A/2A/28/24/2, Hope to Somerset, 18 October 1862.

⁴⁹⁷ HCPP, 1863, Vol. LXXIV.423, [3079], pp.80-1, Neale to Russell, No. 43, 16 September 1862. For more on the Richardson Affair, see Mitsuru Hashimoto and Betsey Scheiner, 'Collision at Namamugi', *Representations*, No. 18 (Spring, 1987), pp.69-90.

This support, Bellecourt asserted, was offered despite his personal view that Neale's initial response to Richardson's murder was both indecisive and insensitive to the heightened feelings of the merchant community, not to mention his irritation at the resentful demeanour that Neale had adopted towards him since the incident.⁴⁹⁸ Despite these minor annoyances, Bellecourt's dispatch gave the impression that he had fully supported Neale's view that it would be dangerous to pursue the vengeful course demanded by the merchants. Yet a private letter that Neale wrote to Lord Russell on 16 September painted a very different picture of Bellecourt's attitude in the immediate aftermath of the murder. In this note, Neale solicited Russell's sympathy for the pressure that he had had to endure while resisting a course of action that both the mercantile community *and* his French colleague had attempted to force upon him. The French minister's 'predilections to propose acts of retaliations and defiance towards the Japanese Authorities,' Neale alleged, 'has caused me much embarrassment and anxiety to oppose'.⁴⁹⁹ The letter is clear evidence – never highlighted before in any history of this period – that Bellecourt deliberately enflamed the passions of the bloodthirsty mob that assembled in Yokohama on the night of Richardson's murder to pressure Neale to take military action against Satsuma.

Although careful to disguise his actions from the Quai d'Orsay, the tone and content of Bellecourt's dispatches since arriving in Japan explains why he did so. The French minister had never been convinced that Alcock's policy of appeasement towards the *bakufu* was the best way to enforce the treaties, and had frequently advocated a more punitive approach to Edo's efforts to shirk its obligations. As long as Alcock had remained in Japan, however, he had little choice but to defer to his more experienced and influential colleague. With the latter's departure in spring 1862, the French minister automatically assumed the unofficial title of 'doyen of the diplomatic corps'. While this status granted him a degree of respect and deference among the foreign merchant community,⁵⁰⁰ as far as the *bakufu* and the other treaty-power representatives were concerned, Bellecourt's experience still counted for less than the power and influence that Neale wielded. Regardless of his longevity of service, the simple fact was that Bellecourt's authority in Edo remained constrained by the limited naval support he was

⁴⁹⁸ AD, CPJ59/7, Bellecourt to Thouvenel, No. 189, 15 September 1862.

⁴⁹⁹ The National Archives, London (TNA), Russell Papers, PRO30/22/50, Neale to Russell, 16 September 1861.

⁵⁰⁰ See AD, CPJ59/7, Bellecourt to Thouvenel, No. 189, 15 September 1862.

afforded in comparison to his British colleague, the ‘sluggish’ growth of French commerce since the ports opened, and the fact that there were still hardly any French merchants in Japan.⁵⁰¹

By contrast, Britain controlled two-thirds of Japan’s import and export trade at the time of the Richardson Affair, despite all the obstructions to trade that the *bakufu* had raised at the treaty ports. Thus, whether Bellecourt liked it or not, Neale automatically became the most influential treaty-power representative in Edo as soon as he set foot in Japan. With the chargé unwilling to defer to Bellecourt’s assessment about the best way to compel the *bakufu* to honour its treaty obligations, it would appear that the French minister instead seized the opportunity provided by Richardson’s murder to stoke the flames of an already incendiary situation in the hope of provoking the robust response he had long advocated. If Neale’s account is accurate, Bellecourt deliberately encouraged a retaliatory attack that Satow believed would have resulted in the slaughter of the foreign community and the dispatch of another joint naval expedition at the cost of many European and Japanese lives.⁵⁰² While it is fruitless to speculate as to whether or not events would have unfolded this way, Bellecourt’s actions indicated a degree of recklessness that ill-befitted a man in his position, especially as he was prepared to undermine his colleague at a time of acute crisis in order to promote his own policy. One thing at least was certain: the Anglo-French partnership that had held Japan’s treaty-port system together since 1859 was under unprecedented strain.

Neale’s refusal to send out his escort to retrieve Richardson’s body and his rejection of the measures advocated by the merchant community made him deeply unpopular in Yokohama. This was accurately reflected in a witness statement by a local merchant that accused Neale of letting ‘the wounded shift for themselves, and the dead remain where he was, rather than make a move towards recovering both’.⁵⁰³ This criticism was unfair, for the very same merchant had also overheard Neale say that it was ‘perfect madness, or words to that effect, to send a handful of men against five or six thousand armed men

⁵⁰¹ Sims, *op.cit.*, p.220. In March 1860, there were only four Frenchmen in Yokohama out of a total population of 120 Europeans; by the end of 1862, the number was still only eight. For more on the growth, or lack of it, in French commerce during the years immediately following the opening of the ports see *ibid.*, pp.219-21.

⁵⁰² Satow, *op.cit.*, p.54.

⁵⁰³ The British Library, London (BL), Layard Papers, Add MS 39107, f. 296, ‘Statement by William McDonald’, 26 September 1862.

thirsting for blood'.⁵⁰⁴ From the outset, it was clear that the *chargé* was determined not to make a bad situation worse, and he did well to stand firm in the face of extreme pressure. His policy of 'extreme caution' at least found some support in the pages of *The North China Herald*,⁵⁰⁵ while in Satow's opinion Neale displayed 'the cool bearing which might be expected from a man who had seen actual service in the field'.⁵⁰⁶

Despite his inexperience in Japan, Neale had managed to keep his head while all around were losing theirs. Nonetheless, there were several reasons why relations between Britain and Japan were now in crisis. First, the Richardson Affair destroyed any residual hope that the London Protocol would make any difference to the *bakufu*'s ability to implement the treaties at the open treaty ports. Second, aside from the brutal murder of a British subject in broad daylight, Richardson and his party had been attacked within the limits permitted for the free and unimpeded movement of foreigners. This represented a direct challenge to the treaty structure that the protocol had been designed to preserve. Third, Neale was incensed that the foreign magistrates had only contacted him on the day of Richardson's murder to request that British subjects did not travel on the *tōkaidō*, not only because this request arrived too late for him to notify the British community in time but also because it proved that they had been powerless to prevent Shimazu's retinue from leaving Edo despite the danger.⁵⁰⁷ Finally, the fact that the attack was perpetrated by one of the most powerful *daimyō* in Japan also raised difficult questions as to who should be held responsible. The *Japan Herald* was in no doubt that the *bakufu* was primarily accountable, but it had also received rumours that the *rōjū* had requested help from the treaty powers in curbing the influence of the anti-foreign *daimyō*. If these were true, then surely redress should be demanded from Satsuma as well.⁵⁰⁸

This argument bore striking resemblance to that made by Neale in a private letter to Lord Russell. Although Neale believed a display of naval force and the seizure of *bakufu* steamers would be sufficient to secure an indemnity without provoking war, he also suggested that punishing Satsuma would help the beleaguered regime in Edo to recover its poise.⁵⁰⁹ Determined to play things by the book, however, Neale was happy to leave it

⁵⁰⁴ *Idem.*

⁵⁰⁵ *The North China Herald*, 11 October 1862.

⁵⁰⁶ Satow, *op.cit.*, p.54.

⁵⁰⁷ See enclosures 1-3 in HCPP, 1863, Vol. LXXIV.423, [3079], pp.73-6, Neale to Russell, No. 41, 15 September 1862.

⁵⁰⁸ *Japan Herald*, 27 September 1862.

⁵⁰⁹ TNA, Russell Papers, PRO30/22/50, Neale to Russell, 16 September 1862.

to the Foreign Office to decide how best to respond, not least because he had not yet received London's response to the second attack on the British legation. He therefore informed Russell that he would pursue a defensive policy in his relations with the *bakufu* until he received further instructions.⁵¹⁰ This decision left Bellecourt with little choice but to await London's verdict too, since he had no right to demand a different course of action. The pace of events duly slowed, as news of Richardson's murder took two months to reach London.⁵¹¹ As a result, both Neale and Bellecourt spent the winter of 1862-3 holding the fort in Yokohama. During this period, the British chargé held several meetings with panicked *bakufu* representatives desperate to mollify British anger but powerless to arrest and punish the Satsuma men who had carried out the murder. By the end of October, Neale was convinced that the *bakufu* was unable to take punitive action against Satsuma, and that the members of the *rōjū* were doing their best under difficult conditions.⁵¹² It remained to be seen whether the British government took a similar view.

London reacts

The Foreign Office did not receive Neale's report concerning the second attack on the British legation until mid-September 1862. It arrived after a difficult summer in which Palmerston's government had been forced to defend accusations from across the Atlantic that, by allowing the dispatch of an ironclad warship built on Merseyside to the Southern states, Britain had breached its neutrality in the American Civil War.⁵¹³ This issue complicated the ongoing dilemma within Palmerston's Cabinet as to whether Britain should offer to mediate between the two contesting parties in an attempt to end a war that was severely damaging the British cotton industry.⁵¹⁴ Meanwhile in Mexico, the humiliating military defeat inflicted on Napoléon III's expeditionary forces at Puebla on 5 May 1862 demonstrated just how difficult it would be to establish a puppet monarchy there. It also convinced Palmerston, who had been confident that the emperor would succeed in establishing some central authority in Mexico, that it would be impossible to

⁵¹⁰ *Idem.*

⁵¹¹ According to the Parliamentary Papers, which contradict Auslin's assertion that Neale's dispatches arrived in London in October; see Auslin, *op.cit.*, p.92.

⁵¹² *Ibid.*, pp.92-3; and Fox, *op.cit.*, p.99.

⁵¹³ Brown, *op.cit.*, pp.453-4.

⁵¹⁴ See for example TNA, Russell Papers, PRO30/22/25/25, Granville to Russell, 29 September 1862.

pacify such a hostile population. Indeed, the Prime Minister now believed that the emperor would have to pull his forces out sooner rather than later.⁵¹⁵ An even more pressing matter for London at this time was the growing instability in the Balkans following Christian uprisings against Turkish rule in Herzegovina the previous year. British efforts to resolve this issue peacefully during a conference of great power ambassadors in Constantinople in August and September 1862 were hampered by the French representative's insistence upon what Palmerston called 'inadmissible conditions', but which were actually evidence that Napoléon III still hoped to convince Austria to evacuate the Veneto in exchange for new possessions in the East.⁵¹⁶ 'The French really are the most difficult people to have anything to do with,' Palmerston wrote angrily to Russell at the end of August, '[they] seem to think that they are entitled to be the dictators of the whole world'.⁵¹⁷

In fact, the emperor was struggling to even dictate to his own government. In mid-October 1862, a full-blown crisis erupted in Paris over the emperor's policy in Italy. After the unification of the peninsula in March 1861, Napoléon III had been left with a dilemma over the Pope's continued occupation of Rome in the face of demands from Italian nationalists to surrender the city. Constrained by the need to placate his Catholic supporters and his pious wife, he was unable to evacuate the French garrison that guarded the city without a guarantee from the Italian nationalists that the Pope would not be attacked. By contrast, his Foreign Minister Thouvenel favoured the immediate withdrawal of the French troops and disassociated himself from the emperor's proposal for the European concert to guarantee the Pope's sovereignty over the Eternal City. Matters came to a head following a failed attempt by the nationalists to march into Rome at the end of August 1862, when the Italian government again demanded the evacuation of the French forces.⁵¹⁸ The emperor's reaction was to dismiss Thouvenel and replace him with Édouard Drouyn de Lhuys, a decision that paralysed Paris for days as other so-called *Italianissimes* in the French government threatened to resign in protest.⁵¹⁹ A compromise was eventually brokered and talks soon resumed in Turin to strike a bargain

⁵¹⁵ TNA, Russell Papers, PRO30/22/22/21, Palmerston to Russell, 18 June 1862 & PRO30/22/22/28, Palmerston to Russell, 13 August 1862.

⁵¹⁶ Echard, *op.cit.*, pp.144-5.

⁵¹⁷ TNA, Russell Papers, PRO30/22/22/31, Palmerston to Russell, 29 August 1862.

⁵¹⁸ Echard, *op.cit.*, pp.146-50.

⁵¹⁹ For an exhaustive list see Echard, *op.cit.*, p.150.

between the Kingdom of Italy and the papacy.⁵²⁰ As far as relations with Britain were concerned, the new Foreign Minister Drouyn de Lhuys made it clear that, aside from the Roman question, his political views mirrored those of the British government in every respect, especially in the Near East.⁵²¹

With political turmoil engulfing Europe and the Americas, the news of the second attack on the British legation in Japan was received with irritation. ‘If the Japanese were in England I think we would make them commit the happy despatch,’ Hammond wrote half-jokingly to his Parliamentary colleague Henry Layard after reading Neale’s report.⁵²² By this point, the Permanent Under-Secretary was sick of the sight of the Japanese ambassadors and had no desire to re-enter negotiations with them over yet another infraction to the treaties, a feeling he believed was shared by the other courts of Europe.⁵²³ It was also clear to Hammond that this latest assault was not as serious as the first, even if it was an unpleasant indication that the *bakufu* guards could no longer be depended upon. The demands issued by the Foreign Office were therefore limited to a £10,000 indemnity for the families of the murdered marines and increased security at the legation.⁵²⁴ That attitude changed when reports of Richardson’s murder arrived at the end of November, especially after *The Times* published a full account of the incident alongside an eyewitness report that attacked Neale for his conduct.⁵²⁵ Russell dismissed this criticism and instead commended Neale for the ‘judgement and forbearance’ he had displayed in resisting the retaliatory measures demanded by the merchants.⁵²⁶

As usual, it was the newly knighted Sir Rutherford Alcock who shaped Whitehall’s response to the Richardson Affair.⁵²⁷ He first heard of the incident while in the process of drafting a memorandum for the Foreign Office in response to the second legation

⁵²⁰ Milza, op.cit., pp.610-1.

⁵²¹ Idem.

⁵²² BL, Layard Papers, Add MS 38951, Hammond to Layard, 23 September 1862.

⁵²³ Idem.

⁵²⁴ HCPP, 1863, Vol. LXXIV.423, [3079], pp.49-51, Russell to Neale, No. 34, 22 September 1862.

⁵²⁵ ‘The Murder of Mr. Richardson in Japan’ & ‘To the Editor of the Times’, *The Times*, 28 November 1862.

⁵²⁶ HCPP, 1863, Vol. LXXIV.423, [3079], p.95, Russell to Neale, No. 50, 9 December 1862.

⁵²⁷ Alcock was appointed Knight Commander of the Most Honourable Order of the Bath (K.C.B.) on 20 June 1862; see *The London Gazette*, No. 22636, 20 June 1862, p.3151.

attack.⁵²⁸ The deliberate assassination of a British merchant by one of the most powerful *daimyō* in Japan, coming as it did so soon after the attack on the legation by one of the *bakufu*'s own men, confirmed that Alcock's appeasement strategy had utterly failed to change attitudes in Edo towards the treaties. On the contrary, the British minister now believed that the London Protocol had either emboldened those who sought to oppose the treaties, or forced the *bakufu*'s opponents to institute a campaign of bloodshed and violence in order to make peaceful relations with the treaty powers impossible. Either way, he considered all the concessions in the protocol to be null and void.⁵²⁹ However, Alcock found it ironic that Hope was now advocating coercive measures when it was the admiral's refusal to station British vessels at the treaty ports that had contributed to the parlous state of affairs there in the first place. He nonetheless rejected Hope's recommendation that Britain alone should attempt to coerce the *bakufu*, which he believed would endanger every legation at Edo and provoke the destruction of the treaty ports. The admiral, Alcock argued, had been misled by his experiences of fighting the Chinese, who were already a conquered people. By contrast, the Japanese would fight fiercely for their independence. 'Add to this another fact,' Alcock wrote in a passage of his memorandum that Russell highlighted, 'that the other Treaty Powers, if not acting in concert, would inevitably neutralize our best efforts'.⁵³⁰ This outcome was all the more likely given rumours that Robert H. Pruyn, who replaced Harris as U.S. minister to Japan in April 1862, would follow in the footsteps of his obstinate predecessor by remaining in Edo as long as he remained untouched by anti-foreign violence. 'Whichever way our efforts may tend, therefore,' Alcock declared, 'some *concerted action with other Treaty Powers is essential*.'⁵³¹

The importance of this point should not be underestimated. Alcock understood better than anyone in London how treaty-port diplomacy worked. Having tried and failed over a three-year period to build a consensus between the diplomatic representatives in Edo, he knew that coercive measures against either the *bakufu* or the *daimyō* would be ineffective without the support of all the treaty powers. Alcock agreed that Richardson's murder

⁵²⁸ Alcock's first reaction had been to seek a meeting with Hammond and Russell in order to develop a new Japan policy, but this letter arrived after Neale's orders had already gone out; see TNA, Hammond Papers, FO391/1, Alcock to Hammond, 3 October 1862.

⁵²⁹ TNA, FO46/25, Alcock to Russell, 29 November 1862.

⁵³⁰ 'Memorandum on Admiral Hope's despatch to the Admiralty in reference to Japanese affairs', enclosure to *ibid*.

⁵³¹ *Idem*. The emphasis is Alcock's.

demanded redress, for without it no foreigner's life was safe in Japan. Even so, his recommendation for punitive military action against Satsuma was made on the proviso that it would be taken with the consent of the other treaty powers and, if possible, in concert with them. At the very least, their cooperation was necessary to ensure the protection of the treaty ports and to check any hostile movement against the legations in Edo. Above all, and regardless of whatever measures the government decided to take, Alcock was certain that the status quo was no longer tenable. With Britain's treaty relations with Japan resting on 'quicksand', nothing short of the formal ratification of treaties by the 'only titular or recognized sovereign of Japan – the *Mikado*' and 'the abolition of the Tycoon's monopoly of the foreign trade' through the opening of the remaining ports would ensure the survival of the treaty-port system in Japan.⁵³² In addition, some of the major *daimyō* ports should be opened 'with their declared concurrence'.⁵³³ With these few strokes of his pen, the British minister swept away a fundamental tenet of the 'unequal treaties': the principle that the Tokugawa shogun was the supreme temporal sovereign of Japan. This memorandum was the first official acknowledgement within the Foreign Office that the *bakufu*'s totalitarian control over Japan's foreign policy, which it had jealously guarded from the *daimyō* and the Mikado for centuries, was beginning to crumble.

As previously mentioned, Alcock's views were hugely influential in London by this time. However, the possibility that war with Japan would result from the reparations to be demanded in response to Richardson's death led Queen Victoria to insist upon hearing the opinion of the entire Cabinet.⁵³⁴ In a note to Russell dated 5 September, the Duke of Somerset argued that the government should punish Satsuma rather than the *bakufu* and thereby avoid disruptions to trade with Japan. This mirrored the view put forward by Alcock, although Somerset made no mention of the British minister's recommendation to take concerted action with the other treaty powers or his wider arguments about the future of the treaty-port system. Palmerston nonetheless agreed that Somerset's strategy, with its underlying premise that the central government in Japan was too weak to punish Satsuma itself, was the best way to avoid further atrocities. For his part, the Chancellor

⁵³² *Idem.*

⁵³³ *Idem.*

⁵³⁴ Fox, *op.cit.*, p.102.

William Gladstone argued that a short and limited operation was necessary to avoid accusations of hostility against either the Japanese state or the nation as a whole.⁵³⁵

All three ministers seemed to have been heavily influenced by the opinion of Brigadier-General Charles Staveley, the Commander of British Troops in China and Hong Kong, who thought that it would be easy to punish Satsuma without provoking a wider war with the *bakufu*.⁵³⁶ Neale was therefore instructed at the end of December to demand a formal apology and an indemnity of £100,000 from the *bakufu*, and to treat directly with Satsuma to secure a £25,000 indemnity and the trial and execution of Richardson's murderers. In both cases he was authorised to call upon Admiral Kuper to adopt measures of reprisal or blockade should either party refuse the demands. As far as cooperation with the other treaty powers was concerned, Neale was simply told to communicate his orders to his colleagues and to work with Kuper and the other naval commanders to guarantee the safety of foreigners during any coercive operations.⁵³⁷ These instructions represented the very minimum that Alcock had recommended in his November memorandum. While Russell's dispatch formally acknowledged a distinction between the *bakufu* and the *daimyō* for the first time, it still did not mention the need to secure imperial ratification of the treaties or to remove the *bakufu*'s monopoly on trade. It was also clear that there would be no China-style joint military expedition by the treaty powers to demonstrate to the anti-foreign *daimyō* that resistance to the 'unequal treaties' was futile. Instead, any coercive action against Satsuma would be strictly limited and carried out by British forces alone, even though Alcock had warned that this would achieve little in isolation.

The British government was not entirely insensitive to the importance of collective action, however, as it also asked the Quai d'Orsay if the French Navy could dispatch reinforcements in tandem with those being sent to Japan by the Admiralty. Drouyn readily agreed to this request, which he immediately forwarded to Justin de Chasseloup-Laubat, the Minister of the Navy, two days before Neale's instructions were sent out.⁵³⁸ The response he received was equally positive, as Chasseloup-Laubat also thought that the appearance of the French flag in Edo would demonstrate the solidarity of interests that

⁵³⁵ See TNA, Russell Papers, PRO30/22/24/59, Somerset to Russell, 5 December 1862; notes thereafter by P. (Palmerston) and W.G. (Gladstone); and enclosed extract of a letter from Staveley.

⁵³⁶ *Idem*, enclosed extract of a letter from Staveley.

⁵³⁷ HCPP, 1864, Vol. LXVI.175, [3242], pp.1-2, Russell to Neale, No. 1, 24 December 1862.

⁵³⁸ AD, CPJ59/7, Drouyn to Chasseloup-Laubat, 22 December 1862.

existed between the treaty powers. Even so, he only instructed the new commander of the French naval forces in China, Admiral Benjamin Jaurès, to detach a solitary vessel from his division to accompany the British squadron. Moreover, Drouyn informed Bellecourt that this was the only measure the French government would take in response to the growing political crisis in Japan.⁵³⁹ Despite Alcock's belief that the situation in Japan had become untenable, the British and French governments still believed that it was possible to deter further infractions to the treaties by simply reinforcing their naval presence at the ports. At a time when other international crises still dominated the international agenda, neither was prepared to commit the time and resources necessary to institute the fundamental change that Alcock now considered essential.

The threat of expulsion

On the other side of the world, tensions between Kyoto and Edo had reached boiling point. When Shimazu left Edo in September 1862, he had been confident that his successful installation of the *kōbu-gattai* lords to important positions within the *bakufu* would bring about the reform that the *tozama daimyō* desired. Unfortunately, his absence from Kyoto had allowed *jōi* extremists to increase their strength at the imperial court, as he discovered when he arrived back in the city. Not long afterwards, his involvement in the Richardson Affair compelled him to abandon the city again to begin preparations for the possibility of British reprisals against his own capital at Kagoshima. This allowed the fanatically anti-foreign retainers of the Chōshū, Satsuma, and Tosa domains, the so-called 'men of high purpose', or *shishi*, who remained in Kyoto to secure the dispatch of another envoy to Edo to demand the immediate expulsion of foreigners.

By this time this envoy arrived in December, Hitotsubashi Keiki and his colleague Matsudaira Keiei had already secured an agreement for the shogun to visit Kyoto the following spring. They had also relaxed the *sankin-kōtai* regulations of alternate residence that had so effectively restricted the freedom of the *tozama*. As the streets of Edo emptied of *daimyō* and their retainers, it seemed as if the very foundations of *bakufu* power were beginning to drain away. In this atmosphere, Keiki and Keiei began to discuss the resignation of the shogun as the only possible way to avoid embroiling Japan in a

⁵³⁹ AD, CPJ59/8, Chasseloup-Laubat to Drouyn, 13 January 1863; & Drouyn to Bellecourt, 2 February 1863.

ruinous war with the treaty powers. Ironically, the arrival of Kyoto's envoy provided some respite, as his instructions had been tempered at the last minute to give the *bakufu* discretion over the method and timing of expulsion. With sufficient breathing space to seek a compromise, the *bakufu* formally assented to the policy of expulsion on 24 January 1863, albeit in typically vague terms. Yet when Keiki arrived in Kyoto to prepare for the shogun's visit it rapidly became clear that conciliation was impossible. On 29 March, Keiki and his colleagues were forced to make a commitment to the imperial court that the *bakufu* would begin to effect expulsion within twenty days of the shogun's return to Edo. Under further pressure, the date was fixed for 25 June 1863.⁵⁴⁰

Threatened in the latter part of 1862 by persistent threats of an impending attack on Yokohama by anti-foreign fanatics, Bellecourt and Neale were aware of the growing antagonism between Edo and Kyoto, even if they did not fully understand the myriad forces that were inspiring it. Matters became clearer at the end of January 1863, when *bakufu* officials met separately with both men to inform them that the shogun was going to Kyoto – an event unprecedented in 230 years of Tokugawa rule – to dissuade the emperor from insisting upon the immediate closure of Yokohama. For Bellecourt, this was confirmation that the constitutional struggle he had long anticipated between the temporal and spiritual emperors of Japan had finally begun. Reports from the French missionary Mermet de Cachon that the *bakufu* was stockpiling munitions in preparation for the outbreak of war with the treaty powers were no less troubling.⁵⁴¹ The plot thickened at Neale's meeting with the *bakufu* representatives on 28 January, when he was asked whether or not Britain would come to the shogun's aid should he fail to convince the emperor to postpone expulsion. The British chargé, aware that his government would never approve of intervention in a civil war, instead suggested to Russell that the Royal Navy dispatch an imposing British naval force to Hyōgo or Osaka so that direct negotiations to secure the emperor's public sanction for the treaties could begin.⁵⁴²

A few days later, the construction site for the new British legation in Edo was burnt down by a group of Chōshū *shishi*. This added to the febrile atmosphere of impending crisis at Yokohama, leading Neale to request immediate naval reinforcements from Admiral

⁵⁴⁰ Beasley, *op.cit.*, pp.60-6; for Keiki's declaration see Document 41, p.234.

⁵⁴¹ AD, CPJ59/8, Bellecourt to Drouyn, No. 217, 29 January 1863.

⁵⁴² Fox, *op.cit.*, p.105.

Kuper.⁵⁴³ Despite this, Neale remained sanguine about his relations with the *bakufu*, having misinterpreted the closure of the *tokaidō* to *daimyō* traffic in January as evidence of Edo's determination to protect foreigners. In fact, this was primarily motivated by the need to avert a further clash between the treaty powers and the lords evacuating the capital after the relaxation of *sankin-kōtai*.⁵⁴⁴ Neale was largely sympathetic to the *bakufu*'s plight, as he realised that it was caught between balancing the demands of the treaty powers on one side with those of the anti-foreign faction on the other. Although he feared that Edo was beginning to succumb to the latter, the continued growth in British trade at the ports led him to declare in February that Britain's relations with Japan presented 'no serious cause for discouragement'.⁵⁴⁵ His confidence was bolstered by the arrival of the end of March of Admiral Kuper at the head of a squadron of British gunboats, with Admiral Jaurès not far behind.⁵⁴⁶

By this point, Neale had received London's instructions regarding the Richardson Affair, He interpreted these orders as cautiously as possible in the hope of avoiding the disastrous consequences of taking coercive measures against the *bakufu*. After all, as he explained to Russell, the foreign community had most to lose from such an outcome, and it would destroy the shogun's chances of defeating the anti-foreign clique at Kyoto. Instead, 'the hardest blows' should be directed against Satsuma so as to strengthen Edo's hand in its struggle against the fanatical party in Kyoto, and the *bakufu* should be given every possible chance to comply with Britain's demands for an apology and an indemnity.⁵⁴⁷ That said, when he presented these demands to the *bakufu*, he did not flinch from pointing out the dire consequences that would follow should it fail to respond positively within the twenty-day time limit he set.⁵⁴⁸ Despite such fiery rhetoric, it soon became obvious that Neale's bark was worse than his bite.

⁵⁴³ HCPP, 1864, Vol. LXVI.175, [3242], p.22, Neale to Kuper, 2 February 1863, enclosure 1 in Neale to Russell, No. 13, 3 February 1863.

⁵⁴⁴ Auslin, *op.cit.*, pp.93-4.

⁵⁴⁵ HCPP, 1864, Vol. LXVI.175, [3242], pp.24-5, Neale to Russell, No. 16, 10 February 1863.

⁵⁴⁶ Medzini, Meron, *French Policy in Japan During the Closing Years of the Tokugawa Regime*, (Cambridge, MA: East Asian Research Center, Harvard University, 1971), p.41.

⁵⁴⁷ HCPP, 1864, Vol. LXVI.175, [3242], pp.36-7, Neale to Russell, No. 25, 29 March 1863.

⁵⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, pp.40-4, Neale to Japanese Ministers of Foreign Affairs, 6 April 1863, enclosure 1 to Neale to Russell, No. 28, 14 April 1863.

The departure of the shogun for Kyoto at the end of March had been deliberately timed to pre-empt the presentation of London's demands by creating a power vacuum in Edo. Simultaneously, the arrival of accurate reports that the shogun had finally agreed to expulsion left Neale with little choice but to extend his deadline on 24 April by another fifteen days.⁵⁴⁹ Neither Kuper nor Neale had any clue as to what the answer from Edo would be, but the growing evidence of preparations for war was a source of great anxiety.⁵⁵⁰ Kuper had also received troubling reports that Satsuma and other powerful *daimyō* were secretly accumulating large stockpiles of weapons and ammunition from the Americans, but he was more concerned about what would happen in Yokohama if Neale failed to induce the *bakufu* to comply with Britain's demands. 'I think that Her Majesty's Government have very much underrated the strength of the Japanese as a nation', he warned the Duke of Somerset, 'should the matter now in hand unfortunately result in hostilities, I fear that I should be able to make but very little impression with the force at my disposal.'⁵⁵¹

Neale and Kuper's warning about the dangers of embroiling Britain in the revolutionary crisis that was engulfing Japan echoed the arguments made by Alcock before Russell's instructions went out. Like Alcock, these men had spent enough time on the spot to know that any attempt to punish the *bakufu* for the crimes of the anti-foreign *daimyō* when it was already under extreme pressure to expel foreigners would probably unite the entire country against the 'barbarian invasion' and result in a general massacre at the treaty ports. Moreover, the fact that the U.S. minister Robert Pruyn still appeared to be working at cross purposes to his colleagues only increased the likelihood that unilateral British military action against Edo would be interpreted as an attempt to conquer Japan.⁵⁵² In order to avoid this outcome, and in the absence of any prospect of concerted military action by all the treaty powers, it was therefore imperative that the *daimyō* directly responsible for Richardson's murder was seen to bear the brunt of Britain's wrath. Despite

⁵⁴⁹ Ibid., pp.52-3, Neale to Russell, No. 34, 30 April 1863.

⁵⁵⁰ CBS, Somerset Papers, D-RA/A/2A/32/3/1-2, Kuper to Somerset, 30 April 1863.

⁵⁵¹ Idem.

⁵⁵² Pruyn had not only agreed to mediate between the *bakufu* and Neale to convince the latter to postpone his ultimatum, but was also rumoured to have a large and profitable share in the American arms deals with the *daimyō* that Kuper had mentioned in his letter to Somerset. See idem. and Auslin, op.cit., p.96. For a more comprehensive overview of Pruyn's tenure in Japan, see Jack L. Hammersmith, *Spoilsmen in a "Flowery Fairyland": The Development of the U.S. Legation in Japan, 1859-1906*, (Kent, OH: The Kent State University Press, 1998), pp.26-52.

the *bakufu*'s myriad deficiencies, it was also critical that it was supported as far as possible in its existential struggle against *sonnō-jōi* fanatics.

Bellecourt and Jaurès entirely concurred with this strategy at a crisis summit with their British counterparts in early May. Whatever differences of opinion had existed between the British and French representatives in the immediate aftermath of Richardson's death had been dissipated by mid-April, when Bellecourt received orders from Paris directing him to work 'in perfect accord' with the policy pursued by the British government.⁵⁵³ Aware that the squadron at Kuper's disposal was insufficient to guarantee the safety of Yokohama against attack, Bellecourt believed, perhaps the first time since his arrival in Japan, that the presence of a significant French naval force in Edo Bay granted him real influence. As a result, he and Jaurès hoped to preserve peace by convincing Neale and Kuper to entrust the punishment of Satsuma to the *bakufu* and relax their ultimatum for military action. They were forced to abandon that plan, however, when they received definitive proof that the shogun had promised the emperor to expel foreigners. Instead, they agreed with Neale and Kuper to offer Edo the support of their combined naval forces to help quell anti-foreign resistance to the treaties – a proposal that bore striking similarities to the solution that the *bakufu* representatives had suggested to Neale at the end of January.⁵⁵⁴ This offer was made during two lengthy meetings with the *bakufu* envoys on 4 and 5 May, during which Neale agreed to extend his ultimatum until the shogun's return.⁵⁵⁵ At a further meeting on 25 May, however, it was rejected on the basis that the *bakufu* could not accept foreign aid at such a sensitive time. After a series of further delays that forced Neale to reveal his knowledge of the expulsion order, Edo eventually promised to begin payment of the indemnity on 18 June.⁵⁵⁶

The *bakufu*'s decision to reject the offer of Anglo-French aid should not detract from the fact that neither the Foreign Office nor the Quai d'Orsay had authorised such an initiative, which far exceeded even the most liberal interpretation of Neale and Bellecourt's instructions. This attempt at 'gunboat diplomacy', albeit a nuanced version of it, constituted a significant risk for both the British and French representatives, but perhaps more so for the latter given his government's reluctance to interfere in Japanese politics

⁵⁵³ HCPP, 1864, Vol. LXVI.175, [3242], p.50, Neale to Russell, No. 31, 14 April 1863.

⁵⁵⁴ AD, CPJ59/8, Bellecourt to Drouyn, No. 243, 3 May 1863; see also Sims, *op.cit.*, pp.36-7

⁵⁵⁵ HCPP, 1864, Vol. LXVI.175, [3242], pp.55-6, Neale to Russell, No. 36, 11 May 1863; and enclosures.

⁵⁵⁶ Satow, *op.cit.*, pp.74-7; and Fox, *op.cit.*, pp.110-1.

or to commit significant naval resources to the country. It also indicated the unity of purpose that Japan's political crisis had instilled in Neale and Bellecourt, not to mention the lengths that they were willing to go to avert war. The fact that they unsuccessfully attempted to convince their American and Dutch colleagues to offer military assistance to the *bakufu* as well demonstrated their commitment to the principles of collective diplomacy that were so important to the effective functioning of the treaty-port system.⁵⁵⁷ Whether their superiors in London and Paris would see it that way was another matter, but neither Neale nor Bellecourt were prepared to risk the consequences of inaction by waiting months to find out.

It is impossible to know exactly what form of military intervention Neale and Bellecourt had in mind, since their proposal was never accepted by the *bakufu*. Some historians believe that it would have involved the dispatch of a joint naval force to support operations against Edo's domestic opponents in Kyoto and the Inland Sea.⁵⁵⁸ As Bellecourt admitted to Drouyn, such an expedition would have certainly required further British and French reinforcements from China, and it is worth considering whether it was ever a realistic prospect. It is possible that the British and French representatives only offered the *bakufu* a way out of its predicament in order to test whether it was genuinely committed to fighting the anti-foreign party or secretly in league with it. A dispatch penned by Bellecourt after his meeting with Neale in early May adds weight to this theory, for it asserted that there were now only two ways to safeguard the rights and dignity of the treaty powers: either to reject further delay by the *bakufu* and enter into immediate hostilities with all Japan; or to compel Edo 'to *state its position clearly on the foreign question* by offering it immediate and complete support against the opponents, whoever they may be, who are inducing it to break its commitments'.⁵⁵⁹ If the *bakufu* really wished to maintain peace with the outside world, Bellecourt argued, then it would surely prove as much by accepting this offer. Even if it did not, the underlying principle behind the proposal for military aid was that it would be better for the treaty powers, or Britain and France at the very least, to oppose anti-foreign extremism collectively than to leave it up to the British to tackle alone.

⁵⁵⁷ Medzini, *op.cit.*, p.43.

⁵⁵⁸ Sims., *op.cit.*, p.37.

⁵⁵⁹ My emphasis. Quoted in *ibid.*, p.36 from AD, CPJ59/8, Bellecourt to Drouyn, No. 243, 3 May 1863.

Unfortunately for Bellecourt, Drouyn did not agree that the situation in Japan warranted any change to the instructions he had issued at the beginning of the year.⁵⁶⁰ He already had more than enough in his plate with events in Europe, where a rebellion against Russian rule had erupted in Poland, and the United States, where the civil war continued to rage. As for the Mexico campaign, it was increasingly turning into a quagmire that was causing the French government ‘much embarrassment’ and ‘enormous expense’.⁵⁶¹ There were also more pressing issues for the Quai d’Orsay in East Asia, such as the administration and protection of the provinces France now controlled in Cochinchina,⁵⁶² and security at Shanghai, where civil unrest continued to disrupt trade and threaten the safety of the foreign merchant community. Drouyn was therefore apoplectic to learn of Bellecourt’s determination to intervene in Japan’s domestic affairs, not to mention Admiral Jaurès’s decision to land 300 French troops in Yokohama and request a further battalion of reinforcements from Cochinchina thereafter. In a strongly worded letter, he completely rejected the principle of collective diplomacy that Bellecourt’s proposal represented. He repeated that the French government had only recommended the dispatch of one warship to Japan to demonstrate moral solidarity with Britain and the other treaty powers. Whatever Britain’s difficulties in Japan, Drouyn could not think of ‘a single reason that could justify an undertaking where the sacrifices... would so heavily outweigh any hypothetical advantages’, especially ‘when matters of such capital importance already dominate our attention and drive our policy’.⁵⁶³ Drouyn also attached a letter from William Seward, the U.S. Secretary of State, to Pruyne that lamented Britain’s use of coercion in its attempt to secure the indemnity.⁵⁶⁴ With Franco-American relations already highly complicated, Drouyn wanted to disassociate the French government entirely from what he saw as a policy of naked aggression.⁵⁶⁵

Neale and Bellecourt’s proposal was nothing of the sort. If anything, it was the direct opposite: an attempt to support the recognised government of Japan against those whom the British and French representatives believed were trying to destroy it. It was therefore a credit to the Foreign Office’s understanding of Japanese affairs, compared to the State

⁵⁶⁰ AD, CPJ59/9, Drouyn to Bellecourt, No. 1, 9 June 1863.

⁵⁶¹ TNA, Russell Papers, PRO30/22/22/44, Palmerston to Russell, 2 March 1863.

⁵⁶² Vietnam had finally capitulated to the French expeditionary force in the summer of 1862.

⁵⁶³ AD, CPJ59/9, Drouyn to Bellecourt, No. 3, 18 July 1863.

⁵⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, enclosure 1, Seward to Pruyne, 29 June 1863.

⁵⁶⁵ Medzini, *op.cit.*, pp.44-5; and Sims, *op.cit.*, p.38.

Department in the United States and the Foreign Ministry in France at least, that Russell explicitly approved of Neale's policy of supporting the *bakufu* against the *daimyō* as 'entirely in conformity with the views of H.M.G.'.⁵⁶⁶ Yet since the offer of British and French military aid was rejected by Edo, why did this not precipitate an immediate outbreak of hostilities between Britain and Japan? The reason is simple: at the very same meeting when the *bakufu* officials had declined military assistance, they had also pledged to pay the Richardson indemnity and offered assurances that the shogun would return to Kyoto to induce the emperor to accept the treaties.⁵⁶⁷ The whole point of offering the use of British and French naval forces in the first place had been to call the *bakufu*'s bluff on expulsion to pressure it into accepting Britain's demands for compensation for the Richardson Affair. Edo's rejection of that offer in exchange for acceptance of both the treaties and the indemnity therefore meant that Neale and Bellecourt had achieved their objective without having to follow through with their promise. Their calculated gamble appeared to have successfully paid off.

Unfortunately, the political crisis that threatened to engulf the treaty powers in an internecine civil war was still far from over. The *bakufu* officials in Edo who pledged to pay the indemnity did so to avert an imminent clash with Britain. Naturally, such a policy was anathema to the *sonnō-jōi* fanatics in Kyoto, who expected expulsion to commence as promised on 25 June. To make matters worse, such was the division among the *kōbu-gattai* lords in Kyoto over how to deal with the emperor's demand for expulsion that there was no possibility of their taking decisive action to crush the anti-foreign party. Confusion reigned in Edo as a result, as some officials advocated refusal of the indemnity and initiation of immediate negotiations over expulsion, and others the direct opposite. In the opinion of the *rōjū* Ogasawara Nagamichi, who had been sent by Keiki from Kyoto to negotiate with Neale, the only option now open to the *bakufu* was to pay the indemnity as a preliminary to a negotiated settlement with the treaty powers over expulsion. After his arrival in Edo in late May, Ogasawara successfully convinced Neale to extend his deadline to 18 June, and conceded for the first time Britain's right to demand recompense from Satsuma for Richardson's murder. No sooner had he done so than orders arrived from Keiki, en route to Edo with the expulsion edict, not to pay the indemnity. Neale was notified of this news a few hours before the time fixed for payment of the first instalment of the indemnity. Outraged, he finally refused further negotiations unless full payment

⁵⁶⁶ TNA, FO46/31, 'Russell Note', 27 September 1863.

⁵⁶⁷ AD, CPJ59/8, Bellecourt to Drouyn, No. 247, 27 May 1863.

was made. On 20 June, he instructed Kuper to make preparations for coercive measures. According to Satow, the admiral ‘did not know what to do’ and had ‘never seen a gun fired in action’, which if true helps to explain why he had always been so keen to avoid military action.⁵⁶⁸ Even so, war between Britain and Japan seemed imminent.⁵⁶⁹

In a last-ditch attempt to avert hostilities by playing ‘barbarian’ off against ‘barbarian’, Ogasawara came to Yokohama on 23 June in the hope of convincing Bellecourt and Jaurès to intercede with the British on the *bakufu*’s behalf. Given that this request was made in conjunction with the presentation of the expulsion edict, it was hardly a surprise that the Frenchmen refused such a course. In any case, as Sims has accurately pointed out, Bellecourt was increasingly aware of the dangers of allowing the *bakufu* to separate him from his colleagues, as it had managed to do with Harris.⁵⁷⁰ Out of options, Ogasawara sent news to Neale during the early hours of 24 June that the Richardson indemnity, and indeed that requested by the British government for the second attack on the British legation, would be paid in full later that day. Once the first instalment of the payment was delivered to Neale early the same morning, Kuper was immediately relieved of the task of undertaking coercive operations.⁵⁷¹ The threat of imminent war had been averted, but the foreign representatives still had to respond to the expulsion edict. It was a telling indictment of just how little appetite Ogasawara had for this policy that he counselled the representatives to reply to it in the strongest possible terms so as to produce a ‘profound impression’ on the minds of the most recalcitrant in Edo and Kyoto.⁵⁷² At the same time, he was careful not to mention the fact that *bakufu* officials at the imperial capital had played an integral role in the decision to pursue expulsion in the first place, or that they had nominated June 25 as the date at which it was to commence.

Despite the efforts of officials in Edo to convince Neale and Bellecourt of their determination to convince the Mikado to sanction the treaties, Ogasawara’s advice understandably provoked suspicion in Yokohama about the *bakufu*’s true motives. Neale for one now harboured fears that the shogun’s pledge to return to Kyoto to secure imperial sanction for the treaties was simply another delaying tactic to buy time for expulsion

⁵⁶⁸ Satow, *op.cit.*, p.79.

⁵⁶⁹ Beasley, *op.cit.*, pp.65-8.

⁵⁷⁰ AD, CPJ59/9, Bellecourt to Drouyn, No. 262, 30 June 1863. See also Sims, *op.cit.*, pp.39-40.

⁵⁷¹ Satow, *op.cit.*, p.80.

⁵⁷² AD, CPJ59/ 9, Bellecourt to Drouyn, No. 260, 24 June 1863.

preparations to be completed.⁵⁷³ Bellecourt could not decide whether the edict meant that the *bakufu* had now definitively decided to restrict the treaties or was simply defending itself against the actions of powerful *daimyō* seeking to diminish its power.⁵⁷⁴ Either way, the expulsion edict focused the minds of the treaty-power representatives, bringing them together on the morning of 24 June. With a unity that had not been apparent since the first year of treaty relations, the representatives of Britain, France, Holland, the United States, Prussia, and Portugal each issued a statement that day condemning the expulsion edict as tantamount to a declaration of war.⁵⁷⁵ After years of attempting to divide the treaty powers as a means to subvert the ‘unequal treaties’, in its desperation the *bakufu*, or at least those within it who prioritised avoiding conflict with the treaty powers over domestic stability, had finally united the fractious diplomatic community. This revival of collective diplomacy would have significant consequences for the Japanese treaty-port system over the coming year, when the treaty powers would be forced to confront the challenges of anti-foreign extremism head-on.

The bombardment of Kagoshima

Ogasawara’s payment of the Richardson indemnity largely settled the most pressing dispute between Britain and the *bakufu*, and the day set for expulsion came and went without any significant incident in Yokohama. As long as no forceful attempt was made to enforce expulsion, Neale and Bellecourt were confident that an attitude of ‘defensive expectancy’, together with the combined resources of the naval forces at their disposal, would prove sufficient to protect Yokohama for the foreseeable future.⁵⁷⁶ Little did they know, however, that the Chōshū domain, by this point completely under the control of the *sonnō-jōi* zealots, had already decided to interpret the expulsion edict literally.⁵⁷⁷ On 25 June 1863, two of its European-made vessels duly opened fire on an American merchant ship as it attempted to pass through the Straits of Shimonoseki (an important

⁵⁷³ Fox, *op.cit.*, p.113.

⁵⁷⁴ AD, CPJ59/9, Bellecourt to Drouyn, No. 260, 24 June 1863.

⁵⁷⁵ *Idem.*, which includes enclosures of the statements by all the diplomatic representatives. Ogasawara’s letter and Neale’s reply can also be found as enclosures to HCPP, 1864, Vol. LXVI.175, [3242], pp.73-5, Neale to Russell, No.49, 24 June 1863. In the absence of any Russian presence in Yokohama, Ogasawara’s letter was sent to the Russian consulate in Hakodate.

⁵⁷⁶ HCPP, 1864, Vol. LXVI.175, [3242], pp.73-4, Neale to Russell, No.49, 24 June 1863.

⁵⁷⁷ Auslin, *op.cit.*, p.100.

point of access to the Inland Sea for merchant vessels travelling from Shanghai to Yokohama). This attack was followed by further engagements with French and Dutch vessels over the coming days that provoked successful reprisal operations by the American and French navies in mid-July, although it was not long before Chōshū rebuilt their dismantled batteries and sealed the straits off the Western shipping once more.⁵⁷⁸

The closure of the straits naturally caused consternation in Yokohama, where the new-found unity of the treaty-power representatives was apparent from the unanimous declaration made by Neale, Bellecourt, de Wit, and Pruyn on 25 July to invite their naval commanders to take concerted measures to re-open them.⁵⁷⁹ Initially, this declaration appeared to indicate that the treaty powers were finally resolved to take a decisive stand against the *jōi* fanatics. In fact, it was made in an atmosphere of total confusion in Yokohama, where Neale and his colleagues felt ‘utterly unable’ to penetrate the *bakufu*’s motives.⁵⁸⁰ After all, only a few weeks earlier, Edo officials had assured the British and French diplomatic and naval representatives that the expulsion edict was to be considered ‘null and void’, that commerce would continue at the treaty ports, and that the *bakufu* would appreciate the help of British and French naval forces to transport shogunate troops to Osaka as part of an expedition to urge the emperor to accept the treaties.⁵⁸¹ Whether such declarations were sincere or part of some ‘mysterious plan’ remained unclear to Bellecourt.⁵⁸² Admiral Kuper for one believed that, since the *bakufu* had acknowledged that it was ‘not in a position to go to war with us’, ‘the national force of Japan has been reduced to little or nothing’.⁵⁸³

Faith in the Japanese government’s ability to uphold its pledges to the treaty powers was shaken further by Edo’s confession that it was not only powerless to stop Chōshū from closing the straits, but that it would be impossible to punish the domain if it had acted under direct orders from Kyoto. This placed full responsibility for the actions of the rebellious *daimyō* at the imperial court – a dangerous assertion given the growing doubts in Yokohama over the legitimacy of the shogun and the fact that the *bakufu*, through

⁵⁷⁸ *Idem.*

⁵⁷⁹ HCPP, 1864, Vol. LXVI.175, [3242], pp.88-9, ‘Agreement’, 25 July 1863, enclosure 3 in Neale to Russell, No. 61, 29 July 1863. Descriptions of the attack on foreign shipping at Shimonoseki and the American and French response can be found in enclosures 2 & 3.

⁵⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, p.84.

⁵⁸¹ AD, CPJ59/9, Bellecourt to Drouyn, No. 263, 3 July 1863.

⁵⁸² *Idem.*

⁵⁸³ CBS, Somerset Papers, D-RA/A/2A/32/4/1-2, Kuper to Somerset, 13 July 1863.

Hitotsubashi Keiki, had played a critical role in drafting and delivering the expulsion edict.⁵⁸⁴ Bellecourt was now convinced that the *bakufu* was playing a ‘double game’ to delay a crisis with the foreign powers as long as possible to give the anti-foreign *daimyō* the time to prepare acts of violence that Edo could then support or disavow depending upon the outcome.⁵⁸⁵ It was in this atmosphere of uncertainty and suspicion that the foreign representatives issued their proposal for a joint expedition, only to receive assurances from the *bakufu* days later that it was capable of punishing the *daimyō* after all.⁵⁸⁶ In such uncertainty, many of the treaty-power representatives were reluctant to follow through on their declaration without instructions from home. As a result, the ever-cautious Neale decided in the end not to press for the launch of a joint naval expedition as long as trade and the treaty ports remained unmolested.⁵⁸⁷

Neale was not so equivocal about the still unresolved issue of Britain’s demands for reparation from Satsuma. In mid-July, he instructed Admiral Kuper to ready his squadron to sail to Kagoshima. In the hope of discovering the ‘real sentiments and intentions of this Chief and other powerful daimios of this Empire’, Neale insisted that he and his legation accompany the flotilla of seven warships that arrived at Kagoshima on 12 August.⁵⁸⁸ Three days later, after abortive negotiations with four Satsuma envoys, military action commenced when the Kagoshima batteries opened fire. The outcome of the bombardment that followed has been well documented by Satow, who witnessed it with the rest of the British legation. Hampered by poor weather conditions, the British suffered heavy losses in the face of fierce resistance from the Satsuma batteries. By the end of the day, tens of British sailors were dead, including the captain and commanders of Kuper’s flagship, and fifty wounded. The city of Kagoshima lay in flames, however, its batteries mostly destroyed.⁵⁸⁹

Despite this awesome demonstration of British naval power, Neale and Kuper had failed to secure an indemnity for Richardson’s family and the trial and execution of the men responsible for his murder. In his published account of these operations, Satow criticised

⁵⁸⁴ Beasley, *op.cit.*, p.70.

⁵⁸⁵ AD, CPJ59/9, Bellecourt to Drouyn, No. 272, 23 July 1863; quoted in Sims, *op.cit.*, p.40.

⁵⁸⁶ See enclosure 4, p.89 in HCPP, 1864, Vol. LXVI.175, [3242], pp.83-4, Neale to Russell, No. 61, 29 July 1863.

⁵⁸⁷ *Idem.*

⁵⁸⁸ HCPP, 1864, Vol. LXVI.175, [3242], pp.81-3, Neale to Russell, No. 57, 13 July 1863; and enclosures.

⁵⁸⁹ See Satow, *op.cit.*, pp.84-94 for a complete account.

the decision to withdraw the British force the next day instead of maintaining the bombardment until every Satsuma gun had been silenced. In his view, the departure of the fleet to the sound of gunfire allowed the Satsuma men to claim with some legitimacy that they had forced the British into ignominious retreat. Satow also attacked Neale for interfering too much in the conduct of the operations and for later asserting that the fire which destroyed Kagoshima had been accidental. In his private diary, Satow was also highly critical of Kuper for allowing himself to be pushed around by Neale, who had ordered the admiral to seize and burn the steamers. Satow believed that Kuper would never have fired a shot unless first fired upon, and that he had only engaged in the bombardment in the first place under extreme pressure from his captain and commander. To cap it all, Kuper had also refused Neale's request to land men to take some guns as trophies of victory. 'Everyone says [Kuper] is a very brave and cool man in action', Satow observed wryly in his diary, 'otherwise I should say he was just the opposite.'⁵⁹⁰

Clearly sensing that he was likely to come in for some criticism for burning down Kagoshima, Kuper wrote privately to Somerset at the end of August to defend his actions. Having been forced to respond to the attack upon the British flag in appalling weather conditions, he had considered it advisable at the time to make the castigation as severe as possible. He therefore felt confident that the destruction of Satsuma's arsenal and steamers was 'a severe blow' that would make other *daimyō* think twice about attacking a Royal Navy vessel again.⁵⁹¹ Kuper was now also certain that diplomacy was failing to prevent the Japanese from implementing expulsion, which he suspected the *bakufu* had been 'steadily and stealthily working [for] ever since the hasty treaty was made with them'.⁵⁹² He believed that the time had come for all the treaty powers to unite to disarm Japan or abandon the country altogether, and that small expeditionary forces such as that sent to punish Satsuma were no longer effective.

Kuper's letter laid bare the truth that now confronted the treaty powers. Anti-foreign fanaticism in Japan could not be overcome by isolated acts of 'gunboat diplomacy' by individual Western nations. In fact, despite Neale's attempts to justify the bombardment of Kagoshima as suitable recompense for Richardson's murder,⁵⁹³ the attack on Satsuma,

⁵⁹⁰ TNA, Satow Papers, PRO30/33/15/1, pp.184-5, 13 September 1863.

⁵⁹¹ CBS, Somerset Papers, D-RA/A/2A/32/6/1-4, Kuper to Somerset, 26 August 1863.

⁵⁹² *Idem*.

⁵⁹³ HCPP, 1864, Vol. LXVI.175, [3242], pp.90-1, Neale to Russell, No. 63, 26 August 1863.

like the failure of American and French gunboats to re-open the Straits of Shimonoseki, merely emboldened the Chōshū-led *sonnō-jōi* party in Kyoto. In September, it attempted to seize absolute control over the imperial court and restore the emperor to his ancient position as supreme sovereign. Although this plot was thwarted by the intervention of Shimazu and other *kōbu-gattai* lords, *sonnō-jōi* extremism continued to persist in the renegade domain. The purge of Chōshū leaders from Kyoto by Shimazu, with the tacit support of the emperor and his senior courtiers, did little to change attitudes in the imperial city towards expulsion in any case, and by the autumn of 1863 the pressure on the *bakufu* to begin carrying it out was building again.⁵⁹⁴ This led to a request, presented to the American and Dutch representatives on 26 October 1863, to open discussions over the closure of Yokohama. Understandably, this proposal was immediately rejected by all four foreign representatives.⁵⁹⁵

The request to close Yokohama showed yet again that the *bakufu* was determined to escape its treaty obligations. After all, it came just weeks after Neale had addressed a ‘friendly warning’ to the *rōjū* regarding the government’s ‘ominous and alarming silence’ at a time when it was increasingly clear that *bakufu* and *daimyō* alike were making military preparations to forcibly expel foreigners.⁵⁹⁶ Although Kuper expected to have ample warning of any direct attack on Yokohama, he was certain that the request to close the port would inevitably lead to further restrictions on trade. Unfortunately, as Kuper explained to Somerset, the British could no longer count upon their French colleagues to respond proactively to this latest threat to trade, as he had received intelligence that ‘the French authorities here have positive instructions from Paris to avoid a war with Japan to the utmost’.⁵⁹⁷ Kuper’s source was accurate, for Bellecourt felt so constrained after receiving Drouyn’s reprimand of 18 July that he not only refused to discuss the closure of Yokohama with the *rōjū* but also informed them that changes to the treaties could only be made in Europe. The *bakufu* therefore began immediate preparations to send another embassy to the West for that purpose.⁵⁹⁸ Bellecourt also protested vigorously against

⁵⁹⁴ Beasley, *op.cit.*, pp.70-1.

⁵⁹⁵ Auslin, *op.cit.*, p.105. See also HCPP, 1864, Vol. LXVI.175, [3242], pp.112-4, No. 72, Neale to Russell, 31 October 1863; and enclosures.

⁵⁹⁶ HCPP, 1864, Vol. LXVI.175, [3242], pp.107-8, Neale to Japanese Ministers for Foreign Affairs in Neale to Russell, No. 67, 1 October 1863.

⁵⁹⁷ CBS, Somerset Papers, D-RA/A/2A/32/8/1-2, Kuper to Somerset, 31 October 1863. Neale also noted the marked change in the attitude of the French naval and diplomatic representatives; see Sims, p.309, footnote 55.

⁵⁹⁸ Sims, *op.cit.*, p.40.

Drouyn's assessment of his policy, even though he accepted that he had overstepped the mark at the Quai d'Orsay. It was to little avail, however, as the French minister soon learned that he was to be replaced in Japan by Léon Roches, the then consul-general at Tunis.⁵⁹⁹

Without the energetic support of his French colleague it was never likely that Neale, whose caution and conservatism always stood in stark contrast to his self-reliant and independently-minded predecessor, would alter the defensive policy he had pursued since the settlement of the Richardson indemnity. The surprise withdrawal of the expulsion edict by the *bakufu* in mid-November gave the British chargé hope that Edo had prevailed over its enemies in Kyoto and induced them to adopt a more conciliatory policy towards foreign relations.⁶⁰⁰ This welcome development was followed swiftly by an even more unexpected event: the opening of direct negotiations, under the good offices of the *bakufu*, with two envoys of the Prince of Satsuma. After three days of intensive talks, the envoys promised to pay the £25,000 indemnity for Richardson's murder and to punish those responsible for his death.⁶⁰¹ When Neale finally received this indemnity in mid-December, he wrote to Russell in supreme satisfaction at what he termed the 'final accomplishment of his instructions', which he attributed to 'patience and perseverance', the 'uninterrupted presence of a powerful British squadron', and 'the hard blows struck at Kagosima'.⁶⁰² Kuper agreed that Satsuma's desire to make peace on any terms so as to avoid another visit by the British fleet to Kagoshima was significant, though he cautioned that Britain's position in Japan was not what it should be and that there were many more difficulties to encounter before it could be improved.⁶⁰³

There can be little doubt that both Neale and Kuper remained wary about the future of the Japanese treaty-port system. Yet the positive sheen that they put on their assessments of the situation at the end of 1863 created a false sense of optimism in London that the chastisement of Satsuma had definitively silenced anti-foreign sentiments in Japan. This was evident in the dispatch Russell addressed to Neale on 11 January 1864, in which he

⁵⁹⁹ Medzini, *op.cit.*, p.47 and footnote 33, p.198. Bellecourt had in any case asked for a transfer on health grounds in the latter part of 1862. See AD, CPJ59/7, Drouyn to Bellecourt, No. 8, 26 December 1862.

⁶⁰⁰ HCPP, 1864, Vol. LXVI.175, [3242], pp.115-6, Neale to Russell, No. 74, 16 November 1863; and enclosures.

⁶⁰¹ *Ibid.*, pp.116-7, Neale to Russell, No. 75, 17 November 1863; and enclosures.

⁶⁰² HCPP, 1864, Vol. LXVI.297, [3303], pp.1-2, Neale to Russell, No. 1, 17 December 1863.

⁶⁰³ CBS, Somerset Papers, D-RA/A/2A/32/9/1-2, 17 December 1863.

stated his satisfaction at ‘the termination of the pressing difficulties with Japan’ and expectation that commercial relations would now continue ‘without giving occasion for future collision’.⁶⁰⁴ In reality, the struggle for political supremacy in Japan was far from over. Of course, Neale and Kuper could not possibly have known that Shimazu had always opposed expulsion of the type advocated by the *sonnō-jōi* party as certain to lead to war with the treaty powers.⁶⁰⁵ Thus, while they hoped that the opening of negotiations with Satsuma’s agents at the end of 1863 was evidence that anti-foreign extremism had been definitively defeated, the actual situation was more complex.

The bombardment had certainly demonstrated to Satsuma’s retainers the ‘irresistible superiority’ of British power and the futility of attempting to resist it.⁶⁰⁶ But what Neale and Kuper had failed to realise was that Shimazu had long desired trade with the foreign powers to strengthen his power and influence within Japan’s political system – an ambition that had always been thwarted by the *bakufu*’s monopoly on foreign trade. The apparent change in Satsuma’s demeanour was therefore not quite as significant as it may have first appeared, and it certainly had little effect on the determination of the fanatical party now holed up in Chōshū to implement full expulsion. However, it would be unfair to denigrate Neale and Kuper for failing to understand the intricacies of Japan’s internal strife at this time, or their understandable desire to draw the British government’s attention away from Kagoshima to the fact that the Richardson indemnity had been secured without disrupting what continued to be a very prosperous trade at the treaty ports. Yet their positive reports at the end of 1863, coupled with encouraging trade returns, greatly lessened the effect in Europe of their earlier warnings that commercial relations with Japan were deeply unstable. Thus, while it may have been clear to the men on the spot that the ‘unequal treaties’ stood on very shaky constitutional ground, there was little sign of any great concern in London and Paris that the treaty-port system was under imminent threat.

⁶⁰⁴ HCPP, 1864, Vol. LXVI.175, [3242], p.117, Russell to Neale, No. 76, 11 January 1864.

⁶⁰⁵ See Beasley, *op.cit.*, p.66.

⁶⁰⁶ HCPP, 1864, Vol. LXVI.297, [3303], p.4, Neale to Russell, No. 3, 30 December 1863.

Conclusions

In retrospect, 1863 marked an important watershed in the history of treaty-power relations with the Tokugawa *bakufu*. Contrary to Michael Auslin's assertion that the Richardson Affair had 'very little effect on treaty relations per se' and that 'there was no evidence that British officials considered this an extraordinary crisis or that treaty relations were threatened',⁶⁰⁷ this incident and its aftermath opened the eyes of the men on the spot to Edo's powerlessness to punish renegade *daimyō* and its inability to control the imperial court in Kyoto. It was also becoming increasingly obvious that the regime with which the 'unequal treaties' had been made was itself complicit in efforts to restrict and eventually expunge those commercial agreements. By the close of 1863, this had created a deep sense of foreboding in Yokohama about the future of the Japanese treaty-port system. Quite rightly, the British and French naval and diplomatic authorities suspected that the only thing preventing its total collapse was the continued presence of their naval forces in Edo Bay. Yet while Anglo-French naval cooperation was sufficient to deter any immediate attempt at expulsion, it would never be enough to defeat the ideology behind anti-foreign fanaticism. For this reason, and to test the *bakufu*'s commitment to the treaties, the shogun was offered British and French military aid to fight his enemies. When this offer was declined, the men on the spot tried unsuccessfully to convince the other treaty powers to unite against the anti-foreign *daimyō* instead.

Unfortunately for Bellecourt, he soon discovered that Drouyn was unwilling to countenance coercive operations in Japan of any kind. Given the substantial French military commitments elsewhere in the world at the time, this was understandable. Meanwhile, the British Cabinet was hopeful that the bombardment of Kagoshima would alone prove sufficient to deter further anti-foreign attacks. With Bellecourt hobbled and Neale unwilling to act on his own initiative, the idea of a joint naval expedition against Chōshū was quietly dropped. As the end of their tenure in Japan approached, it was hardly surprising that Neale accentuated his achievements or that Bellecourt lost the will to keep challenging *bakufu* attempts to restrict the treaties. By working together, they had at least averted a general massacre at the treaty ports and kept the 'enclave empires' in Japan going. By rekindling collective diplomacy in the Japanese treaty-port system, they had also bequeathed their successors a means to defeat *sonnō-jōi* extremism once and for all.

⁶⁰⁷ Auslin, op.cit., p.97-8.

CHAPTER 6

Expedient Alliance: Alcock, Roches and the Shimonoseki Expedition, 1864

The years preceding 1864 saw Anglo-French relations with Japan reach a crisis point. After much provocation, the Richardson Affair had finally convinced the British government that it was no longer willing to tolerate infringements of the ‘unequal treaties’ commercial treaty or allow attacks on British nationals at the treaty ports to go unpunished. Unfortunately, it was clear to Neale and Bellecourt by the time they left Japan that the independent military action that Britain had taken against Satsuma in 1863 in retaliation for Richardson’s murder had not only failed to put an end to anti-foreign extremism but also exposed grave doubts about the *bakufu*’s commitment to the treaties. Despite this, both the Foreign Office and the Quai d’Orsay were confident that the British naval engagement at Kagoshima had finally brought commercial stability to the Japanese treaty-port system.

As he neared the end of his period of home leave in London, Sir Rutherford Alcock observed the unstable situation in Japan with growing alarm. With commerce imperilled and the treaty-powers disjointed, he realised a fundamental change in policy was necessary if the treaty-port system was to survive. The time had come to put the diplomatic framework that underpinned that system to the test: if Britain alone could not coerce the *bakufu* to recognise its treaty obligations, then a political and military alliance of all the treaty powers would have to do so instead. That meant convincing the new French minister to Japan, Léon Roches, and the other foreign representatives to defer to British leadership of the Japanese treaty-port system. This had been no easy task during Alcock’s previous stint in Edo, and there was little indication that it would be any easier this time around. It also meant managing the expectations of the British and French governments, both of which had no desire to be dragged into another messy war in the Far East. Above all, it meant finding a way to suppress anti-foreign fanaticism in Japan without sparking a disastrous civil war that could envelop the increasingly prosperous ‘enclave empires’ at the treaty ports. In short, it would be no easy task.

The case for military action

As a detached observer to the tumultuous events that had unfolded in Japan during his lengthy period of home leave, Alcock was forced to rely upon delayed diplomatic dispatches to interpret a complex and evolving situation. On 28 October 1863, the Foreign Office received Neale's report of the expedition to Kagoshima, which included a recommendation that one thousand marines be assigned to Japan to seize and destroy any future defences erected by the *daimyō*.⁶⁰⁸ A few days later, Alcock submitted a memorandum to the Foreign Secretary Lord Russell in support of this proposal, which he argued should form the basis for a fundamental reassessment of Britain's Japan policy. It was more obvious than ever that the *daimyō* were supporting expulsion because they viewed relations with the West as a threat to their feudal hegemony and resented the shogun's monopoly on trade. The indecisive outcome of the Kagoshima expedition demonstrated that the only way to end instability in Japan was for a large military force to inflict a decisive defeat on this anti-foreign party and its *sonnō-jōi* philosophy.⁶⁰⁹ In private, Alcock also recommended using the same military force to coerce the *bakufu* into relinquishing its exclusive trading privileges and sharing them with the *daimyō*. Not for the first time, he argued that this would be the most effective way to bring about a gradual transformation of Japan's feudal system of government into one more open to Western commerce. Above all, it was clear that any further attempts to defeat the anti-foreign faction with an inadequate force like that at Kagoshima would lead to protracted war and the ruin of Japan. 'Everything depends upon what we do in the next six months,' he explained to Hammond, 'upon our putting forth in the very outset all the strength that will be required...to crush...the more violent faction of the Mikado's anti-foreign party'.⁶¹⁰

Unfortunately for Alcock, the Prime Minister Lord Palmerston was not convinced that such measures were necessary. Unaware that anti-foreign dissent was spreading, he was hoping that the punishment of Satsuma alone would be enough to silence any further calls for expulsion. Palmerston therefore recommended that Alcock be told to wait and see if this became clear, and to continue enforcing the treaties in the interim.⁶¹¹ As Alcock prepared to return to Japan at the end of December 1863, his fears continued to grow that

⁶⁰⁸ The National Archives, London (TNA), FO46/36, Neale to Russell, No. 126, 26 August 1863.

⁶⁰⁹ TNA, FO46/37, Alcock to Russell, 'Memorandum on Japanese Affairs', 5 November 1863.

⁶¹⁰ TNA, FO46/37, Alcock to Hammond, 14 November 1863. Alcock's emphasis.

⁶¹¹ TNA, Russell Papers, PRO30/22/22, Palmerston to Russell, 8 November 1863.

the military action at Kagoshima had not calmed the political situation. News from Japan reported that the *bakufu* had been directly implicated in the severe curtailment of the silk trade at the treaty ports, while it had yet to explain its role in the Satsuma affair or to reply to Britain's demands for reparation. Meanwhile, attacks against foreigners continued unabated. Indeed, the assassination of the French officer and commander of the French legation guard Lieutenant Henri Camus while riding in the outskirts of Yokohama on 13 October was stark evidence that no one was safe from *jōi* fanaticism.⁶¹²

As ever, there were more pressing matters for the British and French governments to contend with than Japan. In November 1863, a dispute broke out between Denmark, Austria and Prussia over the constitutional future of the two duchies of Schleswig and Holstein. Consumed by the notorious complexities of the Schleswig-Holstein question, which Palmerston once described as 'more intricate than any Sphinx's Riddle, and more difficult to unravel than any Gordian Knot', Lord Russell had no interest in reassessing Japan policy.⁶¹³ He therefore dismissed many of Alcock's policy recommendations and instead instructed the British minister simply to investigate the political and commercial situation upon his return. Russell at least agreed to dispatch the requested infantry regiment, but its use was to be strictly proscribed to the defence of Yokohama. If Kuper agreed, Alcock could land marines, destroy batteries and spike guns if they had been erected specifically to block foreign merchant shipping, but he had to prove the batteries had committed hostile acts before he doing so.⁶¹⁴ What Russell did not realise was that, by issuing vague instructions and allocating infantry troops to Japan, he had provided Alcock with the tools necessary to implement his coercive strategy.

Before his departure for Japan in late-December 1863, Alcock was instructed to visit the Quai d'Orsay to discuss Anglo-French relations in Japan with Droyn de Lhuys.⁶¹⁵ During this meeting, however, the French Foreign Minister showed scant interest in discussing Japanese matters, other than to inform Alcock that he agreed with Russell's instructions and that France would continue to cooperate with Britain in Japan. To Alcock's surprise,

⁶¹² TNA, FO46/36, Neale to Russell, Nos. 151, 152 & 155, 14 October 1863 (all received 14 December). For more on the Camus assassination, see Medzini, Meron, *French Policy in Japan During the Closing Years of the Tokugawa Regime*, (Cambridge, MA: East Asian Research Center, Harvard University, 1971), p.48.

⁶¹³ TNA, Russell Papers, PRO30/22/21/29, Palmerston to Russell, 5 April 1860.

⁶¹⁴ TNA, FO262/54, Russell to Alcock, No. 1, 17 December 1863 & No. 2, 19 December 1863.

⁶¹⁵ House of Commons Parliamentary Papers (HCPP), 1865, Volume LVII.543, [3428], p.2, Russell to Alcock, No. 3, 19 December 1863.

Drouyn was much more interested in complaining about Britain's decision not to support Napoléon III's calls for a European congress to be held to settle a number of outstanding issues on the continent.⁶¹⁶ This proposal, which was put to the courts of Europe on 4 November 1863, was the emperor's attempt to reset French relations with the other great powers following damaging political crises in Italy and Poland. Much to his disgust, the British government opposed it from the outset as unworkable and likely to exacerbate European tensions rather than improve them. By the time Alcock met Drouyn in December, therefore, the emperor had abandoned all pretence at adhering to the Anglo-French entente while seeking to revise the 1815 treaties.⁶¹⁷ Although this did little to change French policy towards Japan per se, Drouyn made it clear to Alcock that French commitments in Mexico and Cochinchina made it unlikely that any further troops or ships would be assigned to the defence of the Japanese treaty ports. The British minister was unconcerned by this news, as he believed that the two or three French ships already in Japan, in addition to the company of the French 3rd Battalion Africa Corps that had recently been stationed in Yokohama, would provide sufficient support.⁶¹⁸ What mattered was that the French government would continue to let Britain take the lead in Japan.

Not long after Alcock had left Europe, the Foreign Office received reports from Neale that the *bakufu* had withdrawn the expulsion edicts and Satsuma had agreed to pay an indemnity for the Richardson Affair.⁶¹⁹ Russell was delighted that his cautious policy appeared to be bearing fruit, and he hoped that there would be no further clashes involving British forces in Japan.⁶²⁰ He also chose to ignore Neale's warning that the *bakufu* still had the power to block trade at will, and that the constant instability in Japan was still damaging commercial operations.⁶²¹ In October 1863, Neale had also received worrying reports that *bakufu* officials were tacitly or even directly sanctioning the imposition of a system of terror on Japanese merchants in Edo in order to extort a large share of their silk and cotton profits (the value of which had risen astronomically).⁶²² Moreover, even

⁶¹⁶ TNA, Russell Papers, PRO30/22/50, Alcock to Russell, Paris, 19 December 1863; and Hammond Papers, FO391/1, Alcock to Hammond, 23 December 1863.

⁶¹⁷ William E. Echard, *Napoleon III and the Concert of Europe*, (Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 1983), pp.193-204.

⁶¹⁸ TNA, Hammond Papers, FO391/1, Alcock to Hammond, 23 December 1863.

⁶¹⁹ TNA, FO46/36, Neale to Russell, Nos. 173 & 175, 16 November 1863; and 17 November 1863, No. 176 (all received 9 January 1864).

⁶²⁰ TNA, FO46/42, No. 4, Russell to Neale, 11 January 1864.

⁶²¹ TNA, FO46/36, No. 151, Neale to Russell, 14 October 1863.

⁶²² TNA, FO46/36, No.193, Neale to Russell, 31 December 1863; and encl.: Winchester to Neale, 24 December 1863, p.137.

though Neale had made it emphatically clear that any attempt to close Yokohama would fail, the *bakufu* had announced in December that it was dispatching yet another mission to Europe in the hope of negotiating this concession.⁶²³

Yet Neale remained optimistic, especially after the regiment of British marines arrived from Hong Kong as requested. He believed that its presence alone would deter any further threats to the foreign settlement.⁶²⁴ Despite the obstacles to commerce erected by the *bakufu*, trade was ‘steadily flourishing’ at the treaty ports, and it was doubtful that either Edo or the *daimyō* would commit hostile acts while the Japanese ambassadors negotiated in Europe. While the closure of the Shimonoseki Straits by Chōshū was an irritant, it was not in Neale’s view that detrimental to British commerce. Preliminary preparations for war by one or all of the treaty powers may be necessary, but he recommended a cautious, expectant, and defensive policy, at least as long as trade continued to grow at its current rate.⁶²⁵ The commercial reports clearly indicated that Neale was right – imports and exports had both increased exponentially – yet a growing trade did not necessarily equate to a stable trade.⁶²⁶ Unfortunately, his optimism again gave Russell the mistaken impression that the chastisement of Satsuma had silenced anti-foreign fanaticism in Japan once and for all.

When Alcock arrived in Yokohama on 2 March 1864, he found a dispatch waiting for him from Lord Russell.⁶²⁷ It informed the British minister in the strongest terms that he had no authority to direct British naval and military commanders to undertake military operations in Japan.⁶²⁸ Stung by rumours in London that Neale had directly interfered with the military action at Kagoshima,⁶²⁹ Russell was determined to prevent Alcock from similarly exceeding his remit, especially after he had so fervently supported aggressive measures before leaving London. Yet just as Alcock had feared, the situation in Japan was looking very grave. According to recent reports, the shogun and all two hundred and

⁶²³ HCPP, 1865, Volume LVII.543, [3428], pp.4-7, Neale to Russell, Nos. 6 & 7, 31 December 1863 & 16 January 1864.

⁶²⁴ Ibid., [3428], p.8, Neale to Russell, No. 11, 30 January 1864.

⁶²⁵ Ibid., p.12, Neale to Russell, No. 15, 1 March 1864.

⁶²⁶ See HCPP, 1864, Vol. LXVI.175, [3242], pp.101-2, Neale to Russell, No. 65, 11 September 1863.

⁶²⁷ HCPP, 1865, Volume LVII.543, [3428], p.13, Alcock to Russell, No. 18, 15 March 1864.

⁶²⁸ Ibid., p.2, Russell to Alcock, No. 4, 24 December 1864.

⁶²⁹ See Ernest Mason Satow, *A Diplomat in Japan*, (London: Seeley, Service and Co., 1921), p.89.

sixty *daimyō* had gathered in Kyoto to decide if Japan should implement expulsion, and Alcock doubted that the moderate *daimyō* would have the strength to impose peace on those who favoured war. On the other hand, he had also received promising news that the military action at Kagoshima had achieved some positive results after all. According to intelligence provided by secret Satsuma agents in Nagasaki and Yokohama, the bombardment had served as a salutary and welcome lesson that expulsion was impossible. Apparently, the formerly antagonistic *daimyō* and his followers were now keen to embrace extended commerce with the treaty powers. This sign that the judicious application of military force could quell *jōi* fanaticism and strengthen the forces of moderation was exactly what Alcock was looking for. Yet with rumours suggesting that Yokohama could come under attack within a month, Alcock was still grateful that he could call upon the newly-arrived detachment of marines to mount a defence.⁶³⁰

It was at this point that Alcock definitively expunged his former policy of compromise and concession. In an official dispatch to Russell, he recapitulated the arguments he had made prior to his departure from London the previous winter. Edo's decision to send a second mission to Europe was final confirmation that the *bakufu* had no intention of implementing the treaties, especially as conciliatory measures such as the London Protocol had only encouraged demands for further concessions. With the emperor in Kyoto openly calling for expulsion, the shogun no longer capable, or willing, to guarantee the protection of foreigners or their assets, and treaty stipulations in open abeyance, the situation was now critical. Regardless of what the *daimyō* decided in Kyoto, nothing would remove the threat of an imminent attack on the foreign settlements. Alcock knew that Yokohama was especially vulnerable, and that it would be quickly overwhelmed if subjected to a concerted assault. All-out war between Japan and the West would then become unavoidable. To avoid that outcome, it was imperative for the treaty powers to strike the first blow.⁶³¹

Although determined to take decisive action, Alcock was aware that he needed indisputable evidence that *jōi* forces were ready to attack if he was to avoid censure in London and convince the other treaty powers to support his policy.⁶³² He did not have to

⁶³⁰ TNA, Russell Papers, PRO30/22/50, Alcock to Russell, 17 March 1864.

⁶³¹ HCPP, 1865, Volume LVII.543, [3428], pp.13-6, Alcock to Russell, No. 20, 31 March 1864.

⁶³² TNA, FO46/44, No. 20, Alcock to Russell, 14 April 1864; and Hammond Papers, FO391/1, Alcock to Hammond, 14 April 1864.

wait long. By the end of April, he received reliable intelligence that the emperor and the shogun had decided to expel foreigners from Yokohama and that an imperial decree had been issued to prepare for war without delay.⁶³³ There were now only two choices open to the treaty powers: attack Chōshū, the most aggressive anti-foreign *daimyō*, and thereby silence calls for expulsion for good; or adopt a passive and expectant policy until the *jōi* forces attacked, accepting the consequent war that would certainly follow. For Alcock, the choice was simple. With the support of the other treaty powers Chōshū could easily be crushed, leaving the emperor and shogun too scared to contemplate any further hostile alliance.⁶³⁴

On 1 May, Alcock informed Russell that the time had come to put Anglo-Japanese relations on a 'more secure and less derogatory footing'.⁶³⁵ He reminded the Foreign Secretary that Neale had been instructed in November 1863 not to permit any further exclusion of commercial intercourse, while his own instructions required him to ensure the treaties were respected. The Kyoto conference gave ample evidence that these requirements were not being fulfilled. Furthermore, Alcock had proof that neither the emperor nor the shogun had disavowed Chōshū's aggression, which meant he had the right to destroy Chōshū's batteries. Most importantly, Alcock had a responsibility to protect Britain's trade in Japan. The political crisis that had enveloped Japan had been damaging the silk trade in Yokohama for many months, while reports from the British consul in Nagasaki confirmed that the blockade at Shimonoseki had also had a ruinous effect on trade at that port.⁶³⁶

Alcock clearly felt confident that his independent policy was justified. None of the other problems he had encountered upon reassuming his duties – Chōshū's wanton aggression, the exclusion of foreigners from Edo, the unrelenting attacks on foreigners – were critical enough to warrant risking Russell's ire.⁶³⁷ He had therefore bided his time, and waited for a suitably watertight justification that could be used to make his case officially and openly. The categorical pledge by both Mikado and Tycoon to expel foreigners was more

⁶³³ For a full analysis of the negotiations in Kyoto, see William G. Beasley, *Select Documents on Japanese Foreign Policy, 1853-1868*, (London: Oxford University Press, 1955), pp.263-73.

⁶³⁴ TNA, Hammond Papers, FO391/1, Alcock to Hammond, 26 April 1864.

⁶³⁵ TNA, FO46/44, No. 26, Alcock to Russell, 1 May 1864.

⁶³⁶ TNA, FO46/44, No. 27, Alcock to Russell, 6 May 1864.

⁶³⁷ Alcock practically admitted as much in his dispatch of 14 April. See TNA, FO46/44, No. 20, Alcock to Russell, 14 April 1864.

than enough, while the case for an immediate military response was further validated by the curtailment of trade and the indefensibility of Yokohama. Yet Alcock was well aware of the political consequences that would entail should he take unilateral measures. After all, the Kagoshima bombardment, like the burning of the Summer Palace in Beijing before it, had provoked intense criticism in Parliament of the government's entire Japan policy.⁶³⁸ Alcock followed these debates closely and understood better than most the difficulties that the government faced from opposition MPs who were clamouring for the retrenchment of Palmerston's free trade ideology.⁶³⁹ The independent coercion of Chōshū in such a febrile political climate would have been extremely risky. However, if military action were to be taken collectively with the other treaty powers, it would be difficult for Palmerston's detractors to decry the return of 'gunboat diplomacy' in the defence of free trade.⁶⁴⁰ Although this alliance would take time to assemble, Alcock was confident that his long experience and powerful influence within the diplomatic community would secure the necessary support. Unfortunately, his longstanding colleague and fellow advocate of aggressive measures, Duchesne de Bellecourt, was soon to be replaced by an unknown quantity, Léon Roches. Alcock would now have to convince the newly arrived French minister that it was in his interests, and that of France, to support a coercive military expedition against the renegade Chōshū domain.

Alliance in Japan

Léon Roches received his nomination to replace Bellecourt as French minister plenipotentiary in Japan in October 1863.⁶⁴¹ Following Bellecourt's removal for his aggressive response to the 1863 expulsion edict, Roches could be in little doubt that the Quai d'Orsay desired a more cautious Japan policy that would not jeopardise French interests in more strategically important regions.⁶⁴² Given Roches's flamboyant character

⁶³⁸ *Hansard*, Series 3, House of Commons, 9 February 1864, vol. 173, cc.335-424.

⁶³⁹ Alcock wrote privately to Layard to praise him for an article in *The Times* that defended Britain's action at Kagoshima. See the British Library, London (BL), Layard Papers, Add MS 39109, f. 316, Alcock to Layard, April 27 1864.

⁶⁴⁰ Auslin termed this policy of limited engagement the 'Alcock Doctrine'. See Michael Auslin, *Negotiating with Imperialism, The Unequal Treaties and the Culture of Japanese Diplomacy*, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004), p.111-2.

⁶⁴¹ Archives Diplomatiques, Paris (AD), CPJ59/10, Drouyn to Roches, 8 October 1863.

⁶⁴² Drouyn highlighted the 'capital importance' of other parts of the globe in his reprimand to Bellecourt; quoted in Sims, op.cit., p.38.

and colourful background, it seems strange that this ‘handsome swashbuckler’ was selected for the task.⁶⁴³ According to Jean-Pierre Lehmann, Drouyn appointed Roches primarily because he wanted a minister who, unlike Bellecourt, would not be easily led by the British into unnecessary commitments in Japan. Roches seemed to fit the bill: he had the experience and the confidence to act independently and to consider wider French geopolitical interests when making policy.⁶⁴⁴

Soon after Roches assumed his duties on 27 April 1864, he asked Bellecourt to delay his departure so that the new minister could get a clear idea of why the *bakufu* had refused his request for an introductory audience with the shogun. A meeting was eventually agreed after fifteen days of arduous negotiation, during which time the *bakufu* ministers had stopped just short of intimidation in their attempts to force Roches to retract his demand.⁶⁴⁵ After this inauspicious start, Roches realised he had entered a hornet’s nest. He quickly became sympathetic to Alcock’s point of view, especially as the *sonnō jōi* rhetoric reminded him of the anti-foreign sentiment he had encountered during his time serving the French consular service in northern Africa. It was also clear to Roches that the embassy to Europe was nothing more than another attempt by the *bakufu* to temporise until Japan was ready to implement expulsion. With the foreign community surrounded by obvious preparations for that purpose, Roches agreed with Alcock that something had to be done. On the other hand, he did not believe that France should have to do it. In a dispatch to Drouyn, he questioned whether the value of French interests in Japan really justified the military expense of a naval expedition. There was another solution: France could obtain the same advantages if Britain, who had far more to lose, did all the work.⁶⁴⁶

Within days of his arrival, Roches had already demonstrated an understanding of how to exploit the diplomatic framework of the Japanese treaty-port system. Unlike the clumsy attack on Satsuma the previous year, the successful chastisement of Chōshū was highly likely to benefit all the treaty powers. It was therefore in Roches’s interest to support Alcock’s proposal, which would secure maximum advantages for France at a minimal

⁶⁴³ Algernon Mitford’s assessment of Roches; Hugh Cortazzi, ed., *Mitford’s Japan: The Memoirs and Recollections, 1866-1906, of Algernon Bertram Mitford, the first Lord Redesdale*, (London: Athlone, 1985), p.22.

⁶⁴⁴ Jean-Pierre Lehmann, ‘Léon Roches – Diplomat Extraordinary in the Bakumatsu Era: An Assessment of his Personality and Policy’, *Modern Asian Studies*, Vol. XIV, No. 2 (1980), p.273.

⁶⁴⁵ AD, CPJ59/11, Roches to Drouyn, No. 1, 11 May 1864.

⁶⁴⁶ AD, CPJ59/11, Roches to Drouyn, No. 2, 17 May 1864.

cost. With this in mind, Roches began to think of a way to support a British expedition without having to commit any military forces to it. Unfortunately, he had little time to formulate a coherent plan before events took over. On 12 May 1864, Alcock addressed identical letters to the American, French, and Dutch representatives setting out the policy he intended to adopt. The British minister was keen to make the most of the military force he had at his disposal and launch the expedition without delay. A few days later, therefore, all four men met at Alcock's residence to discuss his proposal. Alcock assured his colleagues that he was prepared to take overall responsibility for the deployment of military forces (a detail he conveniently omitted in his letters to Russell), and that the moral support of the other treaty powers would alone suffice. Though they did not have to commit military resources to the expedition if they did not feel comfortable doing so, their unanimous support was at least required if the expedition was to succeed. Before Roches had a chance to respond, the American and Dutch ministers enthusiastically committed to the expedition. Confronted by the unanimous support of his colleagues, Roches suddenly became evasive. When pressed for a commitment, he made the following remarks, which he later deleted from his draft dispatch to Drouyn:

I remarked that the lack of special instructions from my government and my inexperience in Japanese affairs imposed a reserve on me that would necessarily influence my decision. However, pressed by my colleagues, I declared that I believed myself authorised exclusively to give my moral support to measures aimed at bringing about the faithful execution of the treaties by the Japanese government.⁶⁴⁷

By omitting these sections in his official correspondence, Roches portrayed himself to the Quai d'Orsay as unflappable and guarded in the face of intense pressure when he had actually buckled under it. By orchestrating proceedings so that the American and Dutch representatives presented Roches with a *fait accompli*, Alcock had conjured the prospect of a magnificent allied flotilla steaming out of Edo Bay without a French flag in sight. This was too much for the patriotic Frenchman, whose 'natural inclination towards bold measures' trumped the risk of incurring Drouyn's wrath.⁶⁴⁸ Pressed to make a definitive decision on the spot, Roches attempted to play for time by revealing the limits of his instructions. By doing so, however, he severely limited his freedom of action, as it would

⁶⁴⁷ AD, CPJ59/11, Roches to Drouyn, No. 3, 19 May 1864.

⁶⁴⁸ Richard Sims, *French Policy Towards the Bakufu and Meiji Japan, 1854-95*, (Richmond: Japan Library, 1998), p.44.

be very difficult to withhold French moral support for joint action now that his colleagues knew he had the power to grant it. After this baptism of fire, Roches hoped at least to delay his colleagues long enough to see if the *rōjū* was willing to make any concessions over Yokohama.⁶⁴⁹

When Roches finally met with the *rōjū* in late May, it was immediately clear that further negotiation with the *bakufu* would no longer be possible. He was curtly informed that Japan had never wanted relations with foreigners because the people hated them. Now that foreign trade had devastated the Japanese economy, the only remedy was the closure of Yokohama. Roches was also warned that if this request was not respected, the *bakufu* would be unable to protect foreigners.⁶⁵⁰ This gross violation of diplomatic protocol finally convinced Roches that the *bakufu* was determined to force the foreign powers out of Yokohama. As soon as he returned to Yokohama, therefore, he agreed to sign a joint protocol with his three colleagues that formalised the resolution for communal action. At the end of May, a *note identique* was also drafted to communicate this joint commitment to the *bakufu* officially.⁶⁵¹ Roches took great pains to justify this decision to Drouyn. The circumstances were grave and a pledge of moral support did not contravene his instructions. The allied expedition would bring equal advantages to each power without a French military commitment.⁶⁵² He did not mention the pressure that Alcock had exerted on him from the moment he set foot in Yokohama, which had left him with little room for manoeuvre. The fact that Bellecourt delayed his departure until 28 May, just after Roches had signed the protocol, suggests that the departing French minister also played a role in ensuring Roches sanctioned Alcock's plan.⁶⁵³ Whether he did or not, one thing was clear: Roches, who had often been master of his own destiny during his diplomatic career, had staked his reputation on another man's gamble.⁶⁵⁴

With his coalition secured, Alcock began to look to the defence of Yokohama, which would be extremely vulnerable if and when the expeditionary force departed for the Shimonoseki Straits. He immediately sent for further military reinforcements from Hong

⁶⁴⁹ AD, CPJ59/11, Roches to Drouyn, No. 3, 19 May 1864.

⁶⁵⁰ AD, CPJ59/11, Roches to Drouyn, No. 4, 25 May 1864.

⁶⁵¹ See enclosures 1 & 2 in HCPP, 1865, Volume LVII.543, [3428], pp.50-4 Alcock to Russell, No. 44, 25 May 1864.

⁶⁵² AD, CPJ59/11, Roches to Drouyn, No. 4, 25 May 1864.

⁶⁵³ AD, CPJ59/11, Roches to Drouyn, No. 5, 30 May 1864.

⁶⁵⁴ See Lehmann, *op.cit.*, pp.281-3.

Kong and compelled the *bakufu* to erect barracks in preparation for its arrival.⁶⁵⁵ Although Edo asked for the expedition to be postponed to allow the *bakufu* time to punish Chōshū itself, Alcock was no longer listening.⁶⁵⁶ Instead, he informed Russell about the contents of the *note identique* and declared his intent to take military action unless this final act of diplomacy brought immediate concessions from the *bakufu*.⁶⁵⁷ Seemingly ready to accept the consequences that would come from disregarding Russell's orders, on 26 May Alcock wrote to his immediate superior at the Foreign Office, the Permanent Under-Secretary Edmund Hammond, to justify the case for military action. Since the *daimyō* had forsaken diplomacy, he declared, it was time for a trial of strength. Although the French could not commit to any military operations and the Americans had no ships, Alcock believed that the British naval force would alone be sufficient to silence Chōshū's guns. Anticipating censure, he remained defiant:

We are slowly, but surely, drifting – not exactly into a war – but something very unlike peace, and a conflict more or less partial... In this state of mind and political morality, there is but one style of argument that can avail.⁶⁵⁸

This was the last private letter that Alcock sent to Hammond, a regular correspondent, for almost three months. Between 25 May and 23 August 1864, he also only penned one official dispatch to the Foreign Office.⁶⁵⁹ Similarly, the dispatch that Roches sent to Drouyn on 3 July 1864 would also be his last until 17 August.⁶⁶⁰ Very few historians have remarked upon these anomalies, and even fewer have discussed the similarities between them.⁶⁶¹ Having crossed the Rubicon by disregarding their respective orders, it is a likely indication that the two men had jointly agreed to no longer communicate with their home governments. They would instead present the military expedition to the Foreign Office and the Quai d'Orsay as a *fait accompli* before either had time to formulate a response. For the first time since the negotiation of the Ansei Treaties in 1858, collective diplomacy backed by naval strength had returned to Japan.

⁶⁵⁵ HCPP, 1865, Volume LVII.543, [3428], p.43, Alcock to Russell, No. 35, 14 May 1864.

⁶⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, pp.45-9, Alcock to Russell, No. 43, 21 May 1864.

⁶⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, pp.49-50, Alcock to Russell, No. 44, 25 May 1864.

⁶⁵⁸ TNA, Hammond Papers, FO391/1, Alcock to Hammond, 26 May 1864.

⁶⁵⁹ See HCPP, 1865, Volume LVII.543, [3428], p.57, Alcock to Russell, No. 51, 27 June 1864.

⁶⁶⁰ AD, CPJ59/11, Roches to Drouyn, No. 7, 3 July 1864.

⁶⁶¹ Sims at least mentioned the gap in Roches's dispatches. See Sims, *op.cit.*, p.45.

Alliance in Europe

Back in Europe, the British and French governments were still deeply preoccupied with the Schleswig-Holstein question. On 1 February 1864, war finally broke out between Denmark and the Germanic powers over control of the duchies. At the time, Napoléon III, who was still furious at the British government for killing off his congress proposal the previous year, adopted a policy of ‘studied abstention’.⁶⁶² Ironically, the emperor’s fit of pique allowed Drouyn to block several efforts between December 1863 and March 1864 to submit the Danish dispute to a European conference. Although Britain was pledged to support the London Protocol of 1852, which affirmed that Schleswig and Holstein were part of the Danish federation, Palmerston and Russell watched helplessly as the Prussian and Austrian forces stormed up the Danish mainland during the summer of 1864. It was not long before Denmark capitulated, and the Treaty of Vienna, signed on 30 October 1864, formally ceded the two duchies to the joint administration of Austria and Prussia.⁶⁶³

Unsurprisingly, neither Russell nor Drouyn saw any need to devote attention to Japan for much of this period, and it was only when Alcock informed the Foreign Office of the undesirable prospect of a second Japanese embassy to Europe that their focus returned to Japanese affairs. The *bakufu* was well aware that this mission to obtain the closure of Yokohama was doomed to fail, but it hoped that such failure would demonstrate the futility of expulsion to the anti-foreign party. In addition, Edo wanted to use the embassy as cover for the purchase of arms and ships from Europe.⁶⁶⁴ As usual, when Drouyn heard news that the embassy’s first port of call would be Paris, he immediately sought the opinion of the Foreign Office. Russell replied that the envoys would not be welcomed in Britain, that Yokohama would never be closed, and that concerted foreign opposition to the Yokohama proposal would strengthen the shogun’s hand against the *jōi* fundamentalists. Drouyn immediately agreed to adopt the same policy, and also promised not to sell the ambassadors any military hardware.⁶⁶⁵

⁶⁶² Echard, *op.cit.*, p.204.

⁶⁶³ *Ibid.*, pp.204-10.

⁶⁶⁴ TNA, FO46/43, Alcock to Russell, 21 February 1864; and Hammond Papers, FO391/1, Alcock to Hammond, 21 February 1864.

⁶⁶⁵ HCPP, 1865, Volume LVII.543, [3428], p.7, Cowley to Russell, No. 8, 20 March 1864; p.7, Russell to Cowley, No. 9, 23 March 1864; p.11, Russell to Cowley, No. 13, 20 April 1864; and p.11, Cowley to Russell, No. 14, 22 April 1864.

As expected, the embassy made little progress in Paris. In fact, all that the six conferences held in Paris between 7 May and 10 June achieved was an indemnity for the murder of Lieutenant Camus, and a bilateral agreement known as the Paris Convention that, among other things, committed the French Navy to help the *bakufu* force open the Shimonoseki Straits within three months of the ambassadors' return.⁶⁶⁶ Liberated from his usual reliance on out-dated official dispatches, Drouyn was able to bluff and bludgeon the inexperienced Japanese into these concessions.⁶⁶⁷ Meanwhile in London, Russell continued to reject any 'fruitless' discussion of further concessions.⁶⁶⁸ By mid-June, this had produced the desired effect and the ambassadors announced their preparations to return home.⁶⁶⁹ Their mission had completely failed to buy Edo time. In fact, the joint military measures that they had agreed with the French government rendered the *bakufu* even more vulnerable to *jōi* attack.⁶⁷⁰ From an Anglo-French perspective, however, both parties were satisfied that their refusal to consider the Yokohama proposal would send an effective message to Edo. Like Alcock and Roches in Japan, Russell and Drouyn had coordinated their policy when expedient and in the interest of both countries. Unfortunately, this cooperative strategy was based on a mistaken belief that forthrightness alone would deter the anti-foreign fanatics.⁶⁷¹ The foreign ministers still did not fully understand the *jōi* philosophy, nor the fact that the humbling of Satsuma in 1863 had completely failed to discourage it.

Anglo-French confidence that this latest bilateral effort would finally establish security for all the treaty powers in Yokohama proved short-lived. On 13 July, Russell received dispatches from Alcock containing reports of the *bakufu*'s determination to expel foreigners, his subsequent justification for military action, and his application for military reinforcements from Hong Kong. These reports caused such concern that the Parliamentary Under-Secretary for Foreign Affairs Henry Layard queried whether the

⁶⁶⁶ See AD, CPJ59/11, Drouyn to Chasseloup-Laubat, 1 June 1864; and Drouyn to Randon (War Minister), 2 June 1864. The convention can be found enclosed in HCPP, 1865, Volume LVII.543, [3428], pp.25-7, Cowley to Russell, No. 31, 26 June 1864.

⁶⁶⁷ Sims, *op.cit.*, p.42.

⁶⁶⁸ HCPP, 1865, Volume LVII.543, [3428], p.24, Russell to Cowley, No. 29, 18 June 1864.

⁶⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, p.21, Cowley to Russell, No. 25, 16 June 1864; and pp.22-3, Japanese Envoys to Russell, No. 26, received 17 June 1864.

⁶⁷⁰ Sims, *op.cit.*, p.41.

⁶⁷¹ Grace Fox, *Britain and Japan, 1858-1883*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1969), pp.126-7.

government should abandon Japan altogether as a field for trade.⁶⁷² Misunderstanding the limited nature of Alcock's proposed scheme, Lord Palmerston considered 'a permanent occupation of a military position in [the Inland Sea]...out of the question'.⁶⁷³ Russell was far from convinced that such measures were necessary either, but he was unsure as to how strongly to respond. In the end, he sent Alcock two dispatches, both dated 26 July. The first acknowledged the worsening political situation in Japan but refused to accept that the outcome of events in Kyoto constituted an imminent threat to trade. Rather than any invasion of the interior or establishment of forts and garrisons, Alcock was to put in place measures to bolster the security of Yokohama and establish an understanding with the other treaty powers.⁶⁷⁴ The Foreign Secretary's second letter was more explicit. He 'positively enjoined' Alcock not to undertake military operations in the interior of Japan, and pointed out that the Order in Council issued earlier that year, which prevented British shipping from entering the Straits of Shimonoseki, was all that was necessary to prevent further incidents in the straits.⁶⁷⁵

The French translation of Russell's instructions were shared with the Quai d'Orsay. They contained the interesting observation, later deleted, that Britain's prudent reserve vindicated French policy in East Asia and demonstrated the wisdom of the manner in which Drouyn had conducted his meetings with the Japanese ambassadors.⁶⁷⁶ After explaining the gulf in opinion between Neale and Alcock's interpretations of the situation in Japan to the Navy Minister Chasseloup-Laubat, Drouyn advised Admiral Jaurès to act with extreme reserve in Japan and to ascertain what degree of solidarity could be established between the treaty powers.⁶⁷⁷ Drouyn still believed that the Paris Convention was sufficient to deter further aggression from Chōshū and, like Russell, preferred prudence to Alcock's risky and potentially expensive gambit.

No sooner had Russell sent off his cautionary instructions than further dispatches arrived in London containing the *note identique*. To say that Hammond was unimpressed with Alcock's private letter of 26 May would be an understatement. 'It would be a good thing

⁶⁷² TNA, Russell Papers, PRO30/22/28, Layard to Russell, 20 July 1864.

⁶⁷³ TNA, FO46/69, 'Memorandum from Lord Palmerston', 22 July 1864.

⁶⁷⁴ HCPP, 1865, Volume LVII.543, [3428], p.44, Russell to Alcock, No. 40, 26 July 1864.

⁶⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, p.45, Russell to Alcock, No. 41, 26 July 1864.

⁶⁷⁶ The British documents can be found at the end of AD, CPJ59/11, followed by an 'Analyse de la correspondance échangée (en avril de juin 1864) entre la Légation Britannique de Yeddo et le Foreign Office'.

⁶⁷⁷ AD, CPJ59/11, Drouyn to Chasseloup-Laubat, 5 August 1864.

if he would only allow us to drift into war,' he fulminated to Russell on 3 August, 'but on the contrary he sets sail and steam for that object.'⁶⁷⁸ Although furious at Alcock's determination to throw caution to the wind, Hammond knew it was already too late to stop the expedition. He therefore advised the Foreign Secretary that, if such a collision was inevitable, it would at least present an opportunity to denounce the 1862 London Protocol and open direct communication with the Mikado through Satsuma or another *daimyō* favourable to foreigners.⁶⁷⁹ A few days after Russell received this confidential advice, he took the drastic step of officially recalling Alcock from his post. In a terse dispatch, the Foreign Secretary flatly rejected the idea that an attempt to drive foreigners out of Japan was imminent. There was nothing in the recent dispatches to justify such a claim, while Satsuma's friendlier demeanour of late also suggested all was well. Russell went on to question why free passage of the Inland Sea was even necessary for foreign trade while Osaka remained closed and the emperor locked in seclusion at Kyoto.⁶⁸⁰

Hammond was out of London on holiday at the time this dispatch went out, but the decision to recall Alcock and disavow his policy bore all the hallmarks of a Permanent Under-Secretary who demanded absolute loyalty from his subordinates and had 'no further use for a man who failed him'.⁶⁸¹ While there is no definitive proof that Hammond ordered the recall, it is hard to believe that this increasingly powerful and dictatorial figure did not have some say in the decision. After all, by this time he was personally superintending the work of four political departments within the Foreign Office, including the one responsible for China, Japan and Siam. Given his notoriously ferocious temper, it is highly unlikely that Hammond would have tolerated such flagrant insubordination from a diplomat in Alcock's position, as his angry note to Russell on 3 August appeared to suggest.⁶⁸²

Further evidence that Hammond had reached the end of his tether with the belligerent British minister can be found in a testy private letter he penned to Alcock two days after the recall order went out. As Keith Neilson and T. G. Otte have pointed out, Hammond

⁶⁷⁸ TNA, Russell Papers, PRO30/22/28, Hammond to Russell, 3 August 1864.

⁶⁷⁹ *Idem.*

⁶⁸⁰ HCPP, 1865, Volume LVII.543, [3428], p.45, Russell to Alcock, No. 45, 8 August 1864.

⁶⁸¹ Quoted in Keith Neilson and T.G. Otte, *The Permanent Under-Secretary for Foreign Affairs, 1854-1946*, (London: Routledge, 2009), p.13.

⁶⁸² For a comprehensive overview of Hammond's career in the Foreign Office, see *ibid.*, Chapter 1 'Edmund Hammond (1854-1873)', pp.5-31.

often used private correspondence with the senior heads of mission abroad to elaborate on instructions or information contained in the official dispatches.⁶⁸³ On this occasion, he wanted to give Alcock an uncensored dressing down over his decision to launch a punitive expedition without special instruction from home. The British minister was warned in no uncertain terms that the government, Parliament, and country were very strongly opposed to attempts to coerce a country to trade. Even if such measures were successful, they were immoral and likely to result in a protracted and costly war. Hammond did not doubt that the merchant community and the other treaty-power representatives would approve of Alcock's plan, but he believed that it had exposed Britain's entire military force to attack and jeopardised a lucrative trade.⁶⁸⁴ The difficulties in Japan were normal for any country new to international commerce, and Alcock was assured that things would have been very difficult had there been a telegraph to Japan. Unfortunately, there was now nothing to be done but await the results of the expedition and hope for the best.⁶⁸⁵

Hammond's strongly-worded reprimand illustrated first-hand how much attitudes in Whitehall had changed in the two decades since 'gunboat diplomacy' was first used in the Far East. It also demonstrated the extent to which the Permanent Under-Secretary, rather than the Foreign Secretary, controlled the levers of British foreign policy in East Asia by the mid-1860s. Given the questionable legacy of previous British military interventions in the region, Hammond was clearly determined to avoid another costly conflict on the far side of the world – particularly one that had been launched without his express authority. Though he confessed a few weeks later to feeling sorry for Alcock, the Permanent Under-Secretary remained convinced that the recall was necessary.⁶⁸⁶ For the 'autocrat of the Foreign Office',⁶⁸⁷ such unsanctioned adventurism was simply intolerable.

In Paris, Drouyn was 'somewhat disconcerted' to read Roches had lent his moral support to Alcock's plan.⁶⁸⁸ He approved of Roches's restraint in the face of pressure from the other representatives, but warned that any repressive action would incur a grave

⁶⁸³ Ibid., p.15.

⁶⁸⁴ The description is generous, since British imports and exports to Japan constituted less than 1% of Britain's global trade during the 1860s. See Fox, *op.cit.*, p.368.

⁶⁸⁵ TNA, Hammond Papers, FO391/1, Hammond to Alcock, 10 August 1864.

⁶⁸⁶ BL, Layard Papers, Add MS 38952, Hammond to Layard, 27 August 1864.

⁶⁸⁷ The posthumous epithet assigned to Hammond by Lord Newton, quoted in Neilson, *op.cit.*, p.11.

⁶⁸⁸ Sims, *op.cit.*, p.44.

responsibility. Roches should therefore disregard any resolutions made by his colleagues and only act if the French mission was directly threatened. Like Russell, Drouyn had completely misread the actual situation in Japan. He still believed that the representatives could develop commercial relations with friendly Japanese ministers and continued to hope that the Paris Convention would bring about a change in attitude. In other words, it was better to be cautious than adopt a policy that would ‘make war to prevent war’.⁶⁸⁹ Drouyn also agreed with Alcock’s recall, and warned Russell that the most recent reports indicated the expedition’s departure was imminent.⁶⁹⁰ He then took the extraordinary step of sending a telegram to inform Roches of the news and that ‘the British government persists with us in a pacifistic policy’.⁶⁹¹

Put simply, Drouyn and Russell were not prepared to consider the fundamental reassessment of Japan policy that Alcock and Roches believed was in order. Instead, mutual disapproval of the expedition had actually brought the two ministers closer together. On 18 August, therefore, both addressed new dispatches to their respective representatives. To Alcock, Russell stated that the French government was already satisfied with the punishments it had inflicted upon Chōshū. The *bakufu* clearly intended to chastise Chōshū itself and was constructing barracks to station British troops. In any case, there was no need for hostility because the Japanese would be deterred by the augmentation of Britain’s forces.⁶⁹² To Roches, Drouyn explained that both he and Russell were completely opposed to Alcock’s plan, and that the British could not understand why Alcock had ignored his precise instructions.⁶⁹³ Distracted by Europe and disinterested in Japan, Russell and Drouyn did not understand how Japan’s domestic tumult imminently threatened Yokohama. Ignoring the men on the spot, they devised their own, defensive strategy for Japan. When it became clear Alcock’s policy imperilled it, they took immediate, and in Russell’s case, drastic action to thwart it. In the end, it was too little, too late.

⁶⁸⁹ AD, CPJ59/12, Drouyn to Roches, 10 August 1864.

⁶⁹⁰ HCPP, 1865, Volume LVII.543, [3428], p.54, Cowley to Russell, No. 46, 12 August 1864.

⁶⁹¹ AD, CPJ59/12, Drouyn to Roches, (Telegram), 15 August 1864. Since there was no telegraph along the China seaboard at this point, it would have been carried across the Indian Ocean by ship and delivered to Japan via the traditional mail packet.

⁶⁹² HCPP, 1865, Volume LVII.543, [3428], p.56, Russell to Alcock, No. 49, 18 August 1864.

⁶⁹³ AD, CPJ59/12, Drouyn to Roches, 18 August 1864.

The final hurdle

Alcock knew that there was only a small window of opportunity for the expedition to take place before London and Paris had time to respond, but he could do nothing until the *bakufu* replied to the *note identique*. As he waited, a dispute erupted between Roches and Jaurès that threatened to derail everything. The day after the protocol was signed, Roches received word from Commander de Franclieu, the French naval commander in Yokohama, that the company of the French 3rd Battalion Africa Corps stationed in the port was to be sent back to France on 11 June. Roches bluntly told Franclieu to ignore this order, as it would significantly nullify the moral force of the joint protocol he had signed only a day earlier. The inexperienced Franclieu was easily intimidated and accordingly suspended the redeployment, even though his commanding officer, Jaurès, was awaiting the arrival of the company in Shanghai.⁶⁹⁴ When Jaurès found out he was incensed that Roches had dared to intervene in troop movements, and irately reported the incident to Chasseloup-Laubat. In the admiral's opinion, nothing had changed in Japan to warrant the continued presence of the company. To make matters worse, Roches appeared to have abandoned the policy of abstention and pacification that he and Bellecourt had advocated during the Satsuma crisis. Instead, Roches was backing a British plan that would drag France helplessly into war. Jaurès had no idea why Roches was supporting this bellicose course, but he thought he knew what Alcock was up to. The British minister, he alleged, had been disappointed upon his return to Japan to find that the Kagoshima engagement had not secured Britain more influence with the Japanese. This latest scheme was designed to put that right.⁶⁹⁵ Jaurès decided to head to Japan at once to bring back the troops in person and discover what the diplomats were playing at.⁶⁹⁶

As previously mentioned, Roches sent no dispatches during this period, so the reports Jaurès made to Chasseloup-Laubat are the only reliable accounts of what happened after the admiral arrived in Japan. By 26 June, Jaurès had already ensured the company of the 3rd Battalion had been removed from Japan. However, he did not accompany them to Shanghai and remained in Japan to take stock. Perplexed as to why Alcock thought it necessary to station 15,000 troops in Yokohama, Jaurès pressed Roches for further

⁶⁹⁴ AD, CPJ59/11, Roches to Drouyn, No 6, 1 June 1864, appendix 1, Franclieu to Roches, 31 May 1864; appendix 2, Roches to Franclieu, 31 May 1864; appendix 3, Franclieu to Roches, 1 June 1864.

⁶⁹⁵ Jaurès to Chasseloup-Laubat, 15 June 1864; enclosure to AD, CPJ59/12, Chasseloup-Laubat to Drouyn, 26 August 1864.

⁶⁹⁶ AD, CPJ59/12, Chasseloup-Laubat to Drouyn, 26 August 1864.

information. Roches replied that Alcock intended to request French support in the event of any military action, but he assured the admiral that he would do nothing without fresh instructions from home.⁶⁹⁷ This was far from the truth. Roches knew that Jaurès had exerted significant influence on French policy in Japan during Bellecourt's tenure. His unannounced arrival while the foreign representatives anxiously awaited the reply to their *note identique* posed a clear danger to French participation in the entire scheme. To prevent further interference at this critical juncture, Roches kept Jaurès in the dark about his plans. Without clear information on what exactly the British were planning, Jaurès resorted to conjecture that, ironically, echoed Roches's original reasoning. If there was to be some form of military collaboration, it might be preferable for France to support Alcock. After all, it would not be hard in Japan, 'the easiest region in the world to hold down', and France could secure great influence without the deployment of large forces.⁶⁹⁸

It was only after the *bakufu* replied to the *note identique* on 30 June that Jaurès finally realised an offensive expedition was imminent.⁶⁹⁹ This was not the type of bilateral cooperation that he had in mind. Roches, still unwilling to be completely honest, thought British military action would be 'useful'. Jaurès strongly disagreed – this plan would lead to a general war. The Japanese should instead be given time to adapt to international trade and relations. In any case, as his instructions strictly proscribed the offensive use of French forces, the French Navy would remain in Yokohama to defend the settlement if the expedition went ahead.⁷⁰⁰ It was at this point that Roches decided to commit French forces to the expedition without the admiral's permission, which he achieved by ensuring that the joint memorandum issued in response to the *bakufu*'s unacceptable reply to the *note identique* contained an official determination to attack Chōshū's batteries unless the *bakufu* guaranteed trade security within twenty days.⁷⁰¹ Jaurès was stunned. Now that Roches and the other diplomats had made this official, he would have to submit to a policy that he clearly did not support. To refuse an official declaration by the four treaty powers would have brought disaster upon the French mission in Japan, jeopardized the security of the entire foreign community, and completely compromised French honour. Jaurès

⁶⁹⁷ AD, CPJ59/12, Chasseloup-Laubat to Drouyn, 16 September 1864.

⁶⁹⁸ *Idem*.

⁶⁹⁹ Japanese Ministers for Foreign Affairs to Alcock, 30 June 1864; enclosure 5 in HCPP, 1865, Volume LVII.543, [3428], p.67, Admiralty to Hammond, 19 October 1864.

⁷⁰⁰ AD, CPJ59/12, Chasseloup-Laubat to Drouyn, 13 October 1864, appendix 1, Jaurès to Chasseloup-Laubat, 9 July 1864.

⁷⁰¹ 'Memorandum', 22 July 1864; enclosure 3 in HCPP, 1865, Volume LVII.543, [3428], pp.62-6, Admiralty to Hammond, No. 55, 19 October 1864.

could only reassure Chasseloup-Laubat that the action would be limited to the rebel domain and that under no circumstances would he declare war on Japan.⁷⁰² Roches, meanwhile, had surmounted the dangerous obstacle posed by the admiral's unwanted presence, but taken a huge risk in the process. He had hidden his desire to commit French forces to the expedition with a supply of half-truths to keep Jaurès in the dark. Having misled both Jaurès and Drouyn, he was now on seriously thin ice.

Despite his fury at being duped, Jaurès received short shrift from Roches, who justified his policy to the admiral in an unrepentant letter dated 20 July. It was all very well for Paris to instruct its agents to maintain treaties and keep the French flag flying high, but the duplicitous Japanese made it exceptionally difficult to adhere strictly to such orders. The *bakufu* had done nothing while treaty rights were violated and foreign shipping was fired upon. No diplomatic agent could remain immune to such provocation. Moreover, when the other treaty powers decided to take military action in the interest of all foreign nationals, he could not alone turn a blind eye. In any case, he had acted within the strict limits of his orders until the *bakufu* had made it clear that the foreign settlements were under imminent threat.⁷⁰³ This letter was as much a justification to the French government as it was to Jaurès. Roches knew he had exceeded his remit and risked the wrath of his superiors, but he was still convinced he was right. Whether Drouyn or Jaurès approved or not, the *tricolore* would be flown at Shimonoseki.

After the joint memorandum was issued, Alcock decided to break his silence with London. As it was clear that the *bakufu* was unwilling, or unable, to guarantee commercial security in Yokohama, there was no other option but to take action against the *jōi* movement. Britain possessed the military power to do so independently but the bombardment of Kagoshima in 1863 demonstrated that such a course risked censure from home, criticism from the other powers, and an escalation in violence within Japan. For that reason, the four-party alliance he had secured was all-important, as the *bakufu*, emperor, and *daimyō* would not dare oppose an allied attack against Chōshū. It was also an act of cunning political calculation that would prevent the accusatory point-scoring that had become the norm amongst the Western powers in East Asia. His coercive alliance

⁷⁰² AD, CPJ59/12, Chasseloup-Laubat to Drouyn, 13 October 1864, appendix 2, Jaurès to Chasseloup-Laubat, 20 July 1864; and appendix 3, Jaurès to Chasseloup-Laubat, 25 July 1864.

⁷⁰³ AD, CPJ59/12, Chasseloup-Laubat to Drouyn, 13 October 1864, appendix 3, Roches to Jaurès 20 July 1864.

was not only designed to remedy Britain's commercial difficulties in Japan, but also to transform the geopolitics of the region and finally put a stop to the 'invidious action of the United States – ever ready in the East to embarrass us with an ostentatious display of neutrality, while blaming all action as unnecessarily aggressive'.⁷⁰⁴ It was a risky policy, but if successful it would greatly increase British influence in Japan and beyond.

Once the allied naval commanders had signed an agreement on 12 August to act in conformity with the memorandum,⁷⁰⁵ Alcock wrote to Hammond to make it clear that there would be no turning back.⁷⁰⁶ At this point Roches also sent another masterpiece of misinformation to the Quai d'Orsay. In a dispatch dated 17 August, he completely glossed over his lengthy dispute with Jaurès and dismissed the admiral's deep reservations about the expedition as based on an out-dated assessment of the situation. He also claimed to have pressed his colleagues to consult the shogun about the expedition, and that a *bakufu* minister had confessed to him privately that the attack on Chōshū was indispensable (even though the Jaurès reports made clear that he was already committed to military action long before these discussions took place⁷⁰⁷). Roches also argued that it was necessary for France to take an active part in the expedition to stop Britain establishing a commercial monopoly in Japan. Since the Kagoshima affair, Satsuma had tried to attract foreign trade by developing intimate relations with Alcock. For France to maintain neutrality when Britain was already fully committed would have left the British free to engage in similar relations with a new *daimyō*, or even take possession of the Inland Sea. For this reason, Roches had insisted upon the insertion of a clause in the memorandum that guaranteed no treaty power could acquire territory after the expedition.⁷⁰⁸

The sudden return of the Japanese embassy from Europe at the end of August threw preparations into turmoil, as the Paris Convention threatened everything that Alcock and Roches had been working for.⁷⁰⁹ The requirement for the *bakufu* to force open the straits with French support was a direct contravention of the emperor's orders. It would be disastrous for Edo to agree to such a measure, while the unity that Alcock had strived so

⁷⁰⁴ TNA, Russell Papers, PRO30/22/50, Alcock to Russell, 26 July 1864.

⁷⁰⁵ 'Minute of a Meeting held on board Her Majesty's ship *Euryalus* by the Commanding Officers of the Naval Forces at Yokohama', 12 August 1864; enclosure 9 in HCPP, 1865, Volume LVII.543, [3428], p.79, Alcock to Russell, No. 57, 23 August 1864.

⁷⁰⁶ TNA, Hammond Papers, FO391/1, Alcock to Hammond, 13 August 1864.

⁷⁰⁷ Sims, *op.cit.*, p.45.

⁷⁰⁸ AD, CPJ59/12, Roches to Drouyn, No. 8, 17 August 1864.

⁷⁰⁹ Alcock to Kuper, 20 August 1864; enclosure 13 in HCPP, 1865, Volume LVII.543, [3428], p.82, Alcock to Russell, 23 August 1864.

hard to achieve would be destroyed if the convention were ratified, since France would be compelled to act independently.⁷¹⁰ Worst of all, any further delay to the expedition would risk the arrival of orders from Europe forbidding it.⁷¹¹ Fortunately, as the *bakufu* understood that ratifying the convention would lead to immediate civil war, it was duly annulled on 25 August.⁷¹² Never one to miss a political opportunity, Roches portrayed the *bakufu*'s rejection of the convention as an insult against the French government, giving further justification for the allied squadron 'to prove to Japan that one cannot insult the flags of Christian nations with impunity'.⁷¹³ The representatives swiftly issued a new memorandum calling for the allied naval commanders to force open the straits.⁷¹⁴ With the expedition confirmed, Alcock finally provided Russell with a full account of the past two months.⁷¹⁵ Like Roches, he argued that the gap in dispatches was caused by the great uncertainty in Japanese affairs, which had made it difficult to explain the situation. He hardly needed to mention that military action was now a *fait accompli*. On 28 and 29 August 1864 the die was cast, as the allied squadron of seventeen ships and 400 men steamed out of Yokohama.⁷¹⁶ The survival of the treaty-port system depended upon its success; so too the careers of Alcock and Roches.

Vindication

After the arrival of a succession of reports from Japan, Russell and Drouyn finally realised what their respective ministers had been up to. In late August and early September, Chasseloup-Laubat received the first confused reports from Jaurès about Roches's activities. Perturbed by this apparent change in diplomatic policy, he immediately sought clarification from the Quai d'Orsday.⁷¹⁷ Stunned, Drouyn made it bluntly clear to the

⁷¹⁰ HCPP, 1865, Volume LVII.543, [3428], pp.85-9, Alcock to Russell, No. 58, 25 August 1864.

⁷¹¹ Sims, *op.cit.*, p.45.

⁷¹² Japanese Ministers for Foreign Affairs to Alcock, 25 August 1864; enclosure 17 in HCPP, 1865, Volume LVII.543, [3428], p.84, Alcock to Russell, No. 57, 23 August 1864.

⁷¹³ AD, CPJ59/12, Roches to Drouyn, No. 9, 26 August 1864.

⁷¹⁴ 'Memorandum', 25 August 1864; enclosure 18 in HCPP, 1865, Volume LVII.543, [3428], pp.84-5, Alcock to Russell, No. 57, 23 August 1864.

⁷¹⁵ HCPP, 1865, Volume LVII.543, [3428], pp.67-8, Alcock to Russell, No. 57, 23 August 1864; and pp.85-9, Alcock to Russell, No. 58, 25 August 1864.

⁷¹⁶ TNA, FO46/45, Alcock to Hammond, 25 August 1864; and Alcock to Russell, 7 September 1864.

⁷¹⁷ AD, CPJ59/12, Chasseloup-Laubat to Drouyn, 26 August 1864 & 16 September 1864.

Navy Minister that his cautious Japan policy had not altered one iota.⁷¹⁸ Riled at Roches' duplicity, Drouyn furiously castigated his minister in an official dispatched dated 1 October:

I do not admit, sir, that distance authorizes agents, as you seem to believe, to thus depart from the line of conduct which has been formally prescribed and, in reiterating my previous directions, I must remind you that you cannot depart from their strict observation without incurring the gravest responsibility.⁷¹⁹

Two weeks later, Chasseloup-Laubat forwarded further reports from Jaurès showing how the admiral had obeyed his orders, unlike Roches, whom he accused of causing the French Navy great embarrassment.⁷²⁰ At last, Drouyn had conclusive proof that Roches had personally committed France to military action.

In London, Russell had heard nothing from Alcock since 27 June.⁷²¹ In late September, the Admiralty forwarded Hammond a packet received from Kuper. The admiral had been assigned by Alcock to deliver two Chōshū samurai to their domain in a last-ditch attempt to avert hostilities.⁷²² Hammond was perturbed by this news, and became even more concerned when French sources reported an attack on Kuper's ships in the straits. Although he knew it was too late to avert the storm brewing in Japan, he continued to condemn Alcock's conduct. To send ships to force open the straits was entirely unwarranted, and if violence erupted as a result there would be justifiable outcry in Britain, 'for there can never have been a more wanton and unnecessary act of aggression'.⁷²³ Layard was also very anxious about Japan. He feared that Alcock would blunder his way into 'a serious mess', while the prudent French and Dutch ministers had 'very artfully left our ships to fight this battle'.⁷²⁴ Alcock's recall could not come too soon. Officials in the Foreign Office might have been aghast at what was afoot, but one man in the British government was beginning to take a more nuanced view of events. The more that Lord Palmerston understood about Alcock's policy the more he liked it. The

⁷¹⁸ AD, CPJ59/12, Drouyn to Chasseloup-Laubat, 20 September 1864.

⁷¹⁹ AD, CPJ59/12, Drouyn to Roches, 1 October 1864.

⁷²⁰ AD, CPJ59/12, Chasseloup-Laubat to Drouyn, 13 October 1864.

⁷²¹ HCPP, 1865, Volume LVII.543, [3428], p.57, Alcock to Russell, No. 51, 27 June 1864.

⁷²² HCPP, 1865, Volume LVII.543, [3428], p.58, Admiralty to Hammond, No. 53, 28 September 1864.

⁷²³ BL, Layard Papers, Add MS 38952, Hammond to Layard, 3 October 1864.

⁷²⁴ BL, Layard Papers, Add MS 38959, Layard to Hammond, 10 October 1864.

Prime Minister certainly thought it wise of Alcock to act in concert with the other powers, and he agreed with the British minister's assessment that joint military action against the 'contumacious Daimio' was the only way to remedy the commercial problems in Japan.⁷²⁵ The author of Britain's policy of 'gunboat diplomacy' in East Asia was starting to admire the boldness of Alcock's policy, not least its clever reliance upon the treaty-port system. Whatever the eventual outcome, Alcock had guaranteed that the allies would stand or fall together. This was an important geopolitical success.

More news arrived from Kuper in mid-October, including copies of the 22 June memorandum and Alcock's orders to prepare for action.⁷²⁶ On 18 October, Admiral Grey, who was standing in for the Duke of Somerset at the Admiralty, wrote a panicked note warning Russell that the paucity of Britain's fleet in Japan would undoubtedly expose Yokohama should the expedition go ahead. Even if successful, there would be significant loss and damage to the ships, and if open warfare broke out in Japan it would be six months before sufficient reinforcements could arrive.⁷²⁷ Palmerston was unmoved by this worst-case scenario. Believing that the combined allied force would prove too much for a single *daimyō*, he still thought it probable that the expedition would be a success.⁷²⁸ When Alcock's explanatory dispatches of late August finally arrived on 26 October the Prime Minister was further encouraged. Alcock had shown great ability in negotiating with the other powers and organizing his military forces. The successful chastisement of Chōshū, regardless of any losses suffered by the squadron, could not fail to have considerable and important effects. Alcock's justification for his policy was also entirely reasonable, so the Prime Minister was increasingly convinced the decision to recall Alcock had been too hasty. After all, there was 'some truth in the maxim that a vigorous thrust is a good parry'.⁷²⁹

Back in Japan, Alcock and Roches were anxiously awaiting the outcome of the expedition. In the interim, Alcock received reports of the harsh criticism that his policy in Japan had attracted in Parliament.⁷³⁰ His response to his critics pulled no punches:

⁷²⁵ TNA, Russell Papers, PRO30/22/15C, Palmerston to Russell, 5 October 1864.

⁷²⁶ HCPP, 1865, Volume LVII.543, [3428], p.60, Admiralty to Hammond, Nos. 54 & 55, 18 & 19 October 1864.

⁷²⁷ TNA, Russell Papers, PRO30/22/50, Grey to Russell, 18 October 1864.

⁷²⁸ TNA, Russell Papers, PRO30/22/23, Palmerston to Russell, 20 October 1864.

⁷²⁹ TNA, Russell Papers, PRO30/22/15C, Palmerston to Russell, 26 October 1864.

⁷³⁰ See *Hansard*, Series 3, House of Lords, 1 July 1864, Vol. 176, cc.573-612. For more on the views of Lord Derby and Earl Grey regarding this debate, see Durham University

They see the deplorable evils, complications and wars which spring from our Eastern relations; but they cannot see from what causes these spring... We have forced ourselves – we and all Western nations, upon these rulers, and by force alone can we maintain ourselves, so long as the hostility of the will of these enemies to all intercourse with foreign nations continue.⁷³¹

In the end, Alcock was entirely vindicated. The expedition to force open the Straits of Shimonoseki was a resounding success. As was often the case during joint naval operations in East Asia, the allied squadron was dominated by British gunboats. Of the seventeen ships that made up the flotilla, eight were from the Royal Navy, four were Dutch, three were French, and the Americans had only two, one of which a chartered steamer. The squadron went into action at ten minutes past four on 5 September 1864. Within an hour, the principal batteries that lined the southern and northern coasts of the Strait had been silenced by a relentless pounding from the squadron, which had split into two smaller battlegroups. The following day, a land assault captured the remaining Chōshū guns and destroyed its batteries with relative ease and few losses. Within forty-eight hours, the most vociferously anti-foreign *daimyō* in Japan had been brought to his knees.⁷³²

Alcock and Roches triumphantly heralded the vindication of their policy, which brought about an immediate improvement in relations with Edo.⁷³³ The sudden news of Alcock's recall quickly tempered the celebrations, however, even though it was not much of a surprise to the British minister. Even so, he was deeply disappointed that his twenty years of service had not proved him worthy of his government's trust. He understood why the announcement of hostilities had provoked nervousness in London, where the pacifists in Parliament were politically strong. Though he appreciated that the British public was averse to such hostilities in far-flung regions, he had been sent out to avert a war. He had done so by way of a policy he had explicitly discussed in London with the Cabinet, which had then put the necessary military reinforcements at his disposal. As a result, Britain's position in Japan had never been so good: civil war had been averted; the fanatics were

Library, Durham, Grey Papers, GRE/B82/12/99-100 Derby to Grey, 12 June 1864; and GRE/B82/12/101 Derby to Grey, 17 June 1864.

⁷³¹ TNA, Hammond Papers, FO391/1, Alcock to Hammond, 12 September 1864.

⁷³² For a full narrative of the expedition see Satow, *op.cit.*, pp.102-33.

⁷³³ HCPP, 1865, Volume LVII.543, [3428], p.111-22, Alcock to Russell, Nos. 66 & 67, both 28 September 1864; and AD, CPJ59/12, Roches to Drouyn, No. 12, 23 September 1864.

discouraged; and war against the treaty powers had been made almost impossible. Most importantly, commercial security had been established.⁷³⁴ Alcock's breathtakingly defiant response demonstrated that he had no intention of being hung out to dry in the name of political expediency. The unanimous support of the Japanese community had given him encouragement, but there was a serious risk that his recall would threaten all the progress that had been made. As Roches explained to Drouyn, if the Japanese learned that Alcock was being punished for insubordination, it would give fresh encouragement to the anti-foreign party and dash any hopes that the emperor would finally ratify the treaties.⁷³⁵

London first received news of the victory via a telegram from Kuper stating that the Japanese had received 'a good licking'.⁷³⁶ Although naturally relieved by the mission's success, Hammond continued to question its necessity. He also feared that victory would not soothe the angry passions of the House of Commons, where the government's political opponents would continue to portray the expedition as an unacceptable attack upon a defenceless nation.⁷³⁷ Hammond refused to change his opinion even after Alcock reported news that Chōshū had launched an attempted *coup d'état* in Kyoto, which the British minister believed further justified his decision to take pre-emptive military action before Japan's civil war could threaten Yokohama.⁷³⁸ 'The existence of civil war in Japan is the strongest condemnation of the precipitancy of Alcock's measures,' Hammond wrote to Layard, 'The utter failure of government in the country would probably have fallen to pieces of itself, and we should have reaped the benefit, without the risk and violence...of active interference.'⁷³⁹

Although Alcock had few allies in the Foreign Office, he did benefit from the clear difference of opinion in the Cabinet. Alcock's policy had been discussed at the highest levels of government during his period of home leave, and he evidently believed that military reinforcements had been allocated to enable him to implement it. Throughout 1864, Palmerston had also proved unwaveringly willing to give the British minister the benefit of the doubt. Few histories have explored this issue in much detail, but it is important to consider why, if the Prime Minister wanted Alcock's plan to play out,

⁷³⁴ TNA, Hammond Papers, FO391/1, Alcock to Hammond, 25 October 1864.

⁷³⁵ AD, CPJ59/12, Roches to Drouyn, 31 October 1864.

⁷³⁶ BL, Layard Papers, Add MS 38959, Layard to Hammond, 5 November 1864.

⁷³⁷ BL, Layard Papers, Add MS 38952, Hammond to Layard, 5 November 1864.

⁷³⁸ TNA, FO46/45, Alcock to Russell, 7 September 1864.

⁷³⁹ BL, Layard Papers, Add MS 38952, Hammond to Layard, 10 November 1864.

Russell and Hammond did not. There are a few probable reasons. First, the Foreign Office would naturally have been unhappy at its agent taking matters into his own hands, even though Alcock had been proved right, as this would only encourage others to do so any time a difficult contingency arose. Second, Russell and Hammond had to deal with the political consequences of military action, whilst Alcock was unconstrained by such concerns. Russell and Hammond had a responsibility, first and foremost, to protect their department. Alcock's independent actions made this difficult, but the recall of this renegade official safeguarded the Foreign Office against criticism should the expedition have proved unsuccessful. This was certainly why Alcock believed that he had been recalled. Finally, it seems likely that Alcock's fundamental belief in the necessity of coercive military action to enforce free trade was simply political anathema to Russell. After the costly mistakes of the past, in particular the *Arrow* War in China, caution was his watchword. International support for Alcock's plan only partially masked the fact that, once again, obstacles to free trade in East Asia had been overcome by gunboats rather than diplomacy.

Back in Japan, there was little left for Alcock to do but ready his departure. He was delayed by another anti-foreigner attack in November, this time the murder of two British officers who had been sightseeing in Kamakura.⁷⁴⁰ Far from a sign that anti-foreigner violence had returned, however, the incident served only to validate the success of Alcock's policy. The culprits were swiftly caught, tried, and executed by the *bakufu* authorities – the first time any samurai had been punished for acts of violence against foreigners.⁷⁴¹ Alcock was delighted with this 'last triumph'.⁷⁴² As he began his journey back to London, the influx of his dispatches to the Foreign Office forced Russell to beat a qualified retreat. Alcock was informed his recall had been issued to discourage the interruption of trade through acts of hostility in the belief that the terms of the treaties were being observed. Since his dispatches had proved that trade had been almost entirely curtailed by the *bakufu*, Russell could now see how it had been astute to punish Chōshū.⁷⁴³ In fact, the Foreign Secretary clumsily tried to convince Alcock that he had not been

⁷⁴⁰ TNA, Hammond Papers, FO391/1, Alcock to Hammond, 30 November 1864.

⁷⁴¹ TNA, Hammond Papers, FO391/1, Alcock to Hammond, 17 December 1864.

⁷⁴² TNA, Hammond Papers, FO391/1, Alcock to Hammond, 14 January 1865.

⁷⁴³ HCPP, 1865, Volume LVII.543, [3428], pp127-8, Russell to Alcock, No. 71, 2 December 1864.

recalled at all.⁷⁴⁴ Instead, he had simply been called home to explain the situation to the government more completely. Naturally, that order was never meant to imply the removal of him from his post!⁷⁴⁵

In Paris, confusion reigned over how to respond to the success at Shimonoseki. After his dressing down of Roches of 1 October, Drouyn remained tight-lipped for over a month, unsure of what orders to issue. Once again, he waited to see what Britain would do first. In the wake of the unexpected military success he enquired whether Alcock's prescriptive orders would be changed.⁷⁴⁶ The British ambassador Lord Cowley replied that Alcock's orders were unchanged, but since the joint mission had already taken place there was no choice but to be conciliatory.⁷⁴⁷ Still Drouyn waited, until he received news that Alcock had received Queen Victoria's approbation.⁷⁴⁸ Finally reassured, on 10 December Drouyn informed Roches that he now understood the motives behind the expedition. The French minister was told to maintain the cooperative relationship that he had established with the British minister, but he was also warned to maintain a pacific attitude in Japan.⁷⁴⁹

The message was clear enough: despite the success of the allied expedition, Roches would not receive any commendation.⁷⁵⁰ It is easy to see why. Alcock had at least some support within the British Cabinet, who knew that military action was a possibility even if some disapproved of it. Alcock had consistently advocated his policy even before he departed London and could also legitimately point out that he was acting under instructions to require the *bakufu* and *daimyō* to observe the treaties. Roches, on the other hand, had been secretive about his deliberate decision to exceed the strict remit of his orders. He had caused embarrassment to Drouyn, and also misled an influential French naval commander. Regardless of Roches' patriotic motivations, Drouyn did not believe that these transgressions warranted approbation. Nonetheless, it is unlikely that Roches was much perturbed by his reprimand. He had obtained a much more important reward than

⁷⁴⁴ This was presumably in response to Alcock's determination to quit the service upon his return, although this could have been a ploy to secure better terms for any future position after it became clear that all was forgiven. See TNA, Hammond Papers, FO391/1, Alcock to Hammond, 25 January 1865.

⁷⁴⁵ HCPP, 1865, Volume LVII.543, [3428], pp.155-6, Russell to Alcock, No. 89, 31 January 1864.

⁷⁴⁶ AD, CPJ59/12, Drouyn to Tour d'Auvergne, 21 November 1864.

⁷⁴⁷ AD, CPJ59/12, Tour d'Auvergne to Drouyn, 24 November 1864.

⁷⁴⁸ HCPP, 1865, Volume LVII.543, [3428], p.128, Russell to Cowley, No. 73, 3 December 1864.

⁷⁴⁹ AD, CPJ59/12, Drouyn to Roches, 10 December 1864.

⁷⁵⁰ Sims, *op.cit.*, p.46.

praise from Paris: independence of action. During Bellecourt's tenure, Jaurès had often accompanied the diplomat to political conferences and played a significant role in negotiations with the *bakufu* ministers. Not long after the allied squadron returned from Shimonoseki, however, the admiral was told his presence was no longer needed. From this point on, Roches alone would take the lead on political matters.

Alcock was philosophical when he learned of his approbation. It had all been so unnecessary. Sooner or later people would have to learn that when Britain imposed treaties upon Eastern nations by force they had to be maintained by force. Moderation and conciliation were all well and good, but without strength and resolve war was inevitable. It had happened three times already in China, and would have happened in Japan had he not arrived in time to avert it.⁷⁵¹ After the dust had settled on the whole affair, Palmerston gave his final assessment:

These Japanese events show how difficult it is to give with good effect positive and rational instructions to agents on distant stations and how necessary it is to expose a large amount of confidence in their judgement and discretion.⁷⁵²

Russell stubbornly refused to accept this lecture, and irritably scrawled a riposte at the bottom of the letter: 'The opinion of the Cabinet was that the instructions, as I originally drew them, gave *too much* discretion to Sir R. Alcock.'⁷⁵³ With the Prime Minister and his Foreign Secretary so consistently at odds, it is little wonder Alcock took matters into his own hands. The man on the spot had been proved right all along.

Conclusions

After years of stalled trade and confusion, duplicitous double-dealing by the *bakufu*, and anti-foreign outrage by *jōi* fanatics, 1864 marked the point when the treaty powers finally took the initiative in their relations with the Tokugawa *bakufu*. Leading this transformation was Sir Rutherford Alcock, whose two years away from Japan had brought clarity and perspective. He finally understood that Western nations were locked in an interminable battle with the *jōi* party that would ultimately come down to survival

⁷⁵¹ TNA, Hammond Papers, FO391/1, Alcock to Hammond, 25 January 1865.

⁷⁵² TNA, Hammond Papers, FO391/7, Palmerston to Hammond, 29 January 1865.

⁷⁵³ Idem. My emphasis.

of the fittest. Unwilling to be at the helm when expulsion took place, Alcock formulated a simple policy to extinguish this existential threat forever: provoke instability in the anti-foreign camp to bring stability to the treaty ports. The difficulties of Kagoshima also taught him that Britain could no longer act alone, and that it was time for other treaty powers to accept responsibility for the security of the Japan trade. With a steely resolve, he united them under his leadership.

The newly-arrived Léon Roches supported Alcock's plan even though he was aware that the French government had no interest in active measures there. Roches was no fool – he understood that it was an expedient time to form an alliance with his British colleague. With a strong partnership established between the two men, Anglo-French policy in Japan was more strongly unified than at any time since the early days of treaty relations. Even so, it remained a decidedly unequal partnership. Given preponderant Britain's military power in the region and Alcock's long-established role as doyen of the diplomatic community in Japan, Roches was forced into the unfamiliar position of following the leader. His susceptibility to self-aggrandizement led him to flout his authority and mislead his government and colleague. This ensured there would be no approbation for Roches, but it was a small price to pay for future independence of action.

The formation of an Anglo-French alliance in Japan produced a diametrically opposed one in Europe. Neither Russell nor Drouyn understood enough about Japan to appreciate Alcock's plan. Politically sensitive to any suggestion of 'gunboat diplomacy' and preoccupied with another war in Europe, their disapproval would have scuppered the expedition had Japan not been so far away. It was fortunate in the end that their clumsy attempts to intervene did not have more serious repercussions. Paradoxically, the resounding success of the allied expedition in Shimonoseki was also the climax of Anglo-French cooperation in Japan. Given no time to bask in the glory of his victory, the departure of Alcock left a gaping hole in Yokohama's diplomatic community. Liberated by the removal of his more experienced colleague and free from the influence of the French admiral, Roches saw an opportunity to ensure he would never again have to defer to British policy. The consequences for the Japanese treaty-port system proved seismic.

CHAPTER 7

New Beginnings: Roches, Winchester and the New Anglo-French Relationship, 1865

Over his five-and-a-half-year tenure as minister plenipotentiary in Japan, Sir Rutherford Alcock proved an astute survivor within the complex and often baffling atmosphere of crisis and political intrigue that typified the *bakumatsu* era. By outwitting the stubborn Townsend Harris, outlasting the hamstrung Duchesne de Bellecourt, and outmanoeuvring the inexperienced Léon Roches, Alcock was able to establish himself as the undisputed leader of the diplomatic corps at the Japanese treaty ports. He was therefore in a prime position by the summer of 1864 to assert British dominance over Japan's flourishing 'enclave empires', to unite the treaty powers against anti-foreign fanaticism, and to vanquish the prospect of forcible expulsion once and for all. Alcock's foresighted decision to foster a network of Japanese interpreters during the early days of treaty relations was also beginning to pay off, as talented men such as Alexander von Siebold and Ernest Satow were becoming increasingly aware of how the imposition of the 'unequal treaties' had catalysed domestic unrest within Japan.

Unfortunately, Russell's decision to recall Alcock in the immediate aftermath of the Shimonoseki expedition removed the man best placed to shield the treaty-port system from the political crisis that was enveloping the country. This decision was therefore ill-judged and poorly timed, albeit unsurprising given the ferocious criticism that Palmerston's ministry had endured in the wake of other costly naval expeditions in East Asia. Alcock's removal created a leadership vacuum in Yokohama just when his colleagues had finally accepted that collective diplomacy was the best guarantor of future stability and commercial prosperity for all. It thus created the conditions for a return to the division and disunity that had characterised treaty-power relations for so long, and which Alcock had worked so hard to overcome. The departure of the last diplomat on the spot when Japan first opened its doors to Western trade in 1859 also marked the end of an era for Anglo-French relations. With the defeat of anti-foreign fanaticism eliminating the need to cooperate on political or economic matters as closely as Alcock and Bellecourt

once did, there was nothing to stop Roches from attempting to establish France as the most politically influential and commercially dominant treaty power in Japan.

The Roches doctrine

Prior to his departure from Yokohama, Alcock attempted to initiate what Grace Fox has termed a ‘new order’ in Western treaty relations with Japan.⁷⁵⁴ Following Chōshū’s defeat at Shimonoseki, the treaty-power representatives now had conclusive evidence of the *bakufu*’s duplicity over the expulsion order, its attempts to stop trade as a preliminary to the execution of that order, and its inability to uphold the treaties in the face of opposition from the emperor and *daimyō*. This evidence was presented to *bakufu* officials at a series of conferences during the latter part of 1864, when Alcock and his colleagues warned that they would enter direct negotiations with the *daimyō* and the imperial court in Kyoto unless Edo renounced its ambition to close Yokohama, secured imperial sanction for the treaties, and revoked the expulsion edict. Alcock also made it clear that the allied warships would remain in the Straits of Shimonoseki until Edo took responsibility for the actions of its so-called vassal, either by paying an indemnity for the Chōshū campaign or opening the port of Shimonoseki itself to Western trade.⁷⁵⁵

By offering the *bakufu* a choice between paying an indemnity or opening a new port in a *daimyō* domain, Alcock was testing Edo’s commitment to ending any further opposition to foreign commerce in Japan. After all, if the *bakufu* was genuinely in favour of expanding trade across the country, then it would surely choose to open a new port in the territory of a defeated enemy rather than to cover the costs of inflicting that defeat. Alcock also believed that the chastisement of Satsuma and Chōshū ought to have strengthened the shogun to such a degree that he could now re-assert his authority over the imperial court and compel the emperor to ratify the treaties.⁷⁵⁶ He therefore hoped to secure imperial sanction for the treaties before he left Japan, thereby bequeathing a fine legacy to his successor. Unfortunately, the British minister was hampered by the lack of clear

⁷⁵⁴ Grace Fox, *Britain and Japan, 1858-1883*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1969), p.141.

⁷⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, pp.141-2. See also House of Commons Parliamentary Papers (HCPP), 1865, Vol. LVII.543, [3428], pp.119-26, Alcock to Russell, Nos. 67 & 68, 28 September 1864; especially enclosure to No. 67.

⁷⁵⁶ Sir Ernest Mason Satow, *A Diplomat in Japan*, (London: Seeley, Service and Co., 1921), p.132.

instructions as to what form of compensation the Foreign Office preferred. In the end, he had to settle for a convention, signed on 22 October 1864, that still permitted the *bakufu* to choose between paying an indemnity of three million Mexican dollars in quarterly instalments or opening Shimonoseki or another port in the Inland Sea to Western trade.⁷⁵⁷

Roches did not even wait until Alcock's departure before beginning to undermine his legacy. He agreed with his British colleague that ratification of the treaties by the Mikado was necessary to safeguard foreign interests and prevent the *sonnō-jōi* party from justifying acts of anti-foreign aggression in the emperor's name. Yet it did not take long before he started to question the methods by which Alcock was attempting to achieve this goal.⁷⁵⁸ This was evident from the very beginning of the negotiations that took place between the diplomatic corps and the *bakufu* once the Chōshū campaign had ended. At the first conference in late September, Roches dropped strong hints that he did not think direct negotiation between the treaty powers and Kyoto was the best way to secure imperial ratification of the treaties. Now that Edo had been strengthened by Chōshū's defeat, he believed that the *bakufu* should be allowed to negotiate with Kyoto without external interference.⁷⁵⁹

Despite this intervention, Roches was initially supportive of Alcock's decision to offer the *bakufu* a choice between an indemnity and opening a new port.⁷⁶⁰ In mid-October, however, there was a decided shift in the Frenchman's attitude towards the *bakufu*. On 15 October 1864, Roches explained to Drouyn how, in addition to the exceptionally friendly welcome afforded to the representatives during their stay in Edo, the *rōjū* had demonstrated their full commitment to the treaties by pledging to send an ambassador to Kyoto to secure imperial ratification. It had also taken responsibility for the actions of Chōshū, whose territory would now be 'imperialised'. Roches was flattered by the private assurances he had received from the *rōjū* of their 'consideration and trust' in him. He felt

⁷⁵⁷ HCPP, 1865, Vol. LVII.543, [3428], p.138, 'Convention', enclosure 1 to p.137, Alcock to Russell, No. 80, 28 October 1864.

⁷⁵⁸ Not long after the convention was signed, Roches sent the Foreign Ministry an extensive overview of foreign policy in Japan between 1858 and 1864 in which he explained the reasons why imperial ratification had become a necessity. See Archives Diplomatiques, Paris (AD), MDJ/1, 'Coup d'oeil sur la politique étrangère au Japon de 1858 à 1864', 28 October 1864. The document was shared with Alcock; see The National Archives, London (TNA), FO46/47, Alcock to Russell, No. 89, 14 November 1864.

⁷⁵⁹ See p.124 of the transcript of this conference, enclosed in HCPP, 1865, Vol. LVII.543, [3428], pp.119-22, Alcock to Russell, No. 67, 28 September 1864.

⁷⁶⁰ HCPP, 1865, Vol. LVII.543, [3428], pp.129-31, Alcock to Russell, No. 74, 15 October 1864; and enclosures.

similarly proud that France had been treated equally by the *bakufu* throughout the Shimonoseki crisis despite the material superiority of the British forces in Japan and Alcock's long period of service in the country. Most important of all, the promise that restrictions on trade in Yokohama would be lifted had led to the immediate release of thousands of balls of silk in the days following the conference. 'Short of events that cannot be rationally predicted, peace is assured with Japan,' Roches declared confidently.⁷⁶¹

The historian Richard Sims has identified this dispatch as an important turning-point that provided 'the first definite sign of the emergence of a special relationship between Japan and France', or more accurately, between the *bakufu* and Léon Roches.⁷⁶² As Sims has also pointed out, this relationship has received much attention over the years from historians, although research was hampered by the fact that Roches was 'by far the most irregular correspondent and the most secretive' of all the French representatives sent to Japan during the nineteenth century.⁷⁶³ It is therefore difficult to identify why Roches decided to enter into such a relationship at this time. Taken in isolation, the private overtures that the *rōjū* made to him seem little more than yet another attempt by the *bakufu* to play 'barbarian' against 'barbarian', a tried and tested but not very sophisticated tactic. Nonetheless, in the months that followed this conference Roches began to agitate for payment of the indemnity over the opening of a new port, in direct contradiction to the course recommended by Alcock.

There are several possible explanations for this, the simplest of which is that Roches still had complete faith in the *bakufu*'s ability to execute the treaties, especially after Yokohama was re-opened to silk exports. He was probably swayed in this respect by the guarantees made to him by the *rōjū* in early October about future access to silkworm eggs. As Meron Medzini has pointed out, with the domestic silk industry in France in dire straits, it was important for the French minister to secure a steady supply of Japanese

⁷⁶¹ AD, CPJ59/12, Roches to Drouyn, No. 14, 15 October 1865.

⁷⁶² Richard Sims, *French Policy Towards the Bakufu and Meiji Japan, 1854-95*, (Richmond: Japan Library, 1998), p.48. By contrast, Mark Ericson argued that this dispatch was merely evidence that the *bakufu* had changed its attitude towards relations with all the treaty powers; see Mark D. Ericson, *The Tokugawa Bakufu and Léon Roches*, (Honolulu, HI: University of Hawaii [Ph.D. Thesis], 1978), pp.18-9.

⁷⁶³ *Ibid.*, p.310, footnote 2; where a detailed bibliography of historical research on Roches's career in Japan can also be found.

silkworms with as little competition or interference as possible.⁷⁶⁴ Moreover, it is clear from the dispatch Roches that sent to Drouyn after the signing of the 22 October convention that he did not think that the opening of Shimonoseki was in the best interests of France. The port was not ideally suited to Western trade, while the cost and risk was unlikely to be counterbalanced by future commercial revenues. In an indication of what direction his thoughts were now turning, Roches also stressed that he intended to pursue ‘an essentially pacific policy’ by building friendly relations with the *bakufu* and avoiding any course that might antagonise the Japanese population against it, such as pushing for the immediate opening of Osaka and Hyōgo.⁷⁶⁵

It seems that this dispatch, written just after news of Alcock’s recall arrived in Yokohama, was Roches’s attempt to pre-empt the French government’s judgement on his own role in the Shimonoseki campaign by offering assurances that he was still fully committed to working peacefully with the recognised government of Japan. It is hardly surprising, therefore, that Roches became increasingly wedded to this policy after the arrival of Drouyn’s stern reprimand of 1 October. Even after Drouyn learned of the successful outcome of the Shimonoseki campaign and the transformation it had brought about in relations with Edo, he made it clear to Roches that he had no intention of altering the conservative policy he and his predecessor had advocated in Japan. Whilst Drouyn congratulated Roches for ensuring that the military action against Chōshū had remained localised, he also stressed the importance of avoiding any break in relations with the *bakufu*.⁷⁶⁶

Given these orders, it was not difficult for Roches to convince Drouyn that an indemnity was preferable to the opening of Shimonoseki. It was also opposed by the Navy Minister Justin de Chasseloup-Laubat, who had learned of the British proposal in early January 1865. He warned Drouyn that, while the British could afford the expense and resources necessary to protect a new port at the entrance to the Straits of Shimonoseki, France certainly could not. It would therefore be unwise to allow the British free rein to land

⁷⁶⁴ Meron Medzini, *French Policy in Japan During the Closing Years of the Tokugawa Regime*, (Cambridge, MA: East Asian Research Center, Harvard University, 1971), p.83. For a much more detailed overview of the links between the silkworm crisis in Europe and Tokugawa Japan, see Junko Thérèse Takeda, ‘Global Insects: Silkworms, Sericulture, and Statecraft in Napoleonic France and Tokugawa Japan’, *French History*, Vol. 28, No. 2 (2014), pp.207-225.

⁷⁶⁵ AD, CPJ59/12, Roches to Drouyn, No. 15, 31 October 1864.

⁷⁶⁶ AD, CPJ59/12, Drouyn to Roches, No. 8, 10 December 1864.

troops and erect military forts at a location considered to be ‘the strongest military position in Japan’.⁷⁶⁷ Drouyn took this advice on board, and immediately informed Roches that he did not consider opening Shimonoseki to be either in France’s political or commercial interest. What mattered, he wrote on 10 January, was not that Chōshū had expressed a desire to trade with the treaty powers, but that it was no longer able to block access to the Inland Sea. All that was necessary was to work together with the other powers to secure an indemnity and for Roches to ensure that France received compensation for the damage that the Chōshū forces had inflicted upon the French trading vessel that had been attempting to pass through the Straits during the summer of 1863.⁷⁶⁸

The French government’s consistent conservatism with regard to Japanese affairs helps to explain why Drouyn gave Roches the green light to block Alcock’s scheme. The simple fact was that France had more to gain in the short term by accepting a cash indemnity than in opening a new treaty port in a domain that was still, after all, overtly hostile to Edo. Whilst the outcome of the Shimonoseki expedition had convinced Alcock of the need to fundamentally re-examine Britain’s treaty relationship with Japan,⁷⁶⁹ the Quai d’Orsay interpreted the proposal to open a new port in the Chōshū domain as nothing more than an attempt to strengthen Britain’s position within the treaty-port system. Drouyn was thus happy to support Roches’s view that the shogunate was entitled to the support of the treaty powers as the course most likely to maintain the status quo, and thereby deny the British further commercial and political influence. At the same time, this did not mean that Drouyn expressly sanctioned the policy that the French minister embarked upon following the Shimonoseki campaign. There is no evidence in the dispatches sent from the Quai d’Orsay that Roches was ever directed to establish a ‘special relationship’ with the *bakufu*, or that the French government wished to deviate from the inherently risk-averse, non-interventionist policy it had pursued since Japan opened to trade.⁷⁷⁰

In fact, this initiative was independently devised and implemented by Roches himself, when he decided to interpret his instructions to maintain peaceful relations with the

⁷⁶⁷ AD, MDJ/3, Chasseloup-Laubat to Drouyn, 10 January 1865.

⁷⁶⁸ AD, CPJ59, Volume 13, 1865, Drouyn to Roches, No. 1, 10 January 1865.

⁷⁶⁹ W. G. Beasley, ed., *Select Documents on Japanese Foreign Policy, 1853-1868*, (London: Oxford University Press, 1955), pp.77-8.

⁷⁷⁰ See Sims, *op.cit.*, p.60, who dismissed Medzini’s argument that Drouyn adopted a ‘new line’ towards Japan during the visit of the Japanese mission to Paris in 1864 (see Medzini, *op.cit.*, pp.58-69).

bakufu far more liberally than the Quai d'Orsay had ever envisaged. There has been much historiographical focus as to why Roches pursued this course, with many historians arguing that he had realised by this stage that the merchants he represented in Japan could not possibly compete with their British counterparts. Roches therefore hoped to circumvent Britain's commercial advantage in Japan by cultivating closer political ties with Edo at a time when the *bakufu* was desperate for foreign assistance in the struggle against its domestic opponents.⁷⁷¹ Other historians have highlighted a penchant for independent and energetic action that Roches himself regularly characterised as his '*politique personelle*'. He first developed this diplomatic approach during the 1830s, when his flamboyant personality helped him to become the close confidante of a powerful Algerian amir named Abd al-Qadir.⁷⁷²

According to Jean-Pierre Lehmann, these formative years in Algeria revealed that Roches was not a 'conventional person', so his later policy in Japan should be viewed in the context of his 'charismatic personal attraction'.⁷⁷³ Spontaneity bordering on recklessness and a total commitment to the course of action he decided upon were other important personality traits, while his stints in Algeria and later as a diplomat in Morocco and Tunisia also revealed a 'strong sense of a *mission civilisatrice*' and his 'ready admiration for and belief in "great leaders" as a rapid solution for complex political problems'.⁷⁷⁴ Lehmann has further argued that, during his eight-year tenure as consul general to Tunis (1855-1863), Roches completely absorbed himself in Tunisian political affairs in order to influence the direction of progress and reform, all the while protecting French interests and maintaining the esteem and affection of Tunisia's rulers.⁷⁷⁵ These were the roots of the policy that Roches pursued after his arrival in Japan, and they clearly motivated him to begin establishing close personal relationships with influential *bakufu* officials towards the end of 1864.

⁷⁷¹ See W. G. Beasley, *Japan Encounters the Barbarian: Japanese Travellers in America and Europe*, (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1995), p.89; Fox, op.cit., pp.155-6; and Medzini, op.cit., p.78.

⁷⁷² See Ericson, op.cit., p.330; Medzini, op.cit., p.180; and Sims, op.cit., p.65. Roches was equally fascinated by the last shogun Tokugawa Yoshinobu, and wrote a study of him after he left Japan.

⁷⁷³ Jean-Pierre Lehmann, 'Léon Roches – Diplomat Extraordinary in the Bakumatsu Era: An Assessment of his Personality and Policy', *Modern Asian Studies*, Vol. XIV, No. 2 (1980), p.277.

⁷⁷⁴ Ibid., p.276.

⁷⁷⁵ Ibid. p.283.

The fact that Roches only began to develop his '*politique personnelle*' in Japan once Alcock's departure had been confirmed is also important. Indeed, the foundations of what became his 'special relationship' with the *bakufu* did not become evident until the British minister was long gone. The point is one that many previous histories of this period have overlooked, but it is nonetheless of critical importance to understanding why Roches was initially so successful at implementing his policy. The dynamics of treaty-port diplomacy meant that the departure of the undisputed leader of the diplomatic corps created a vacuum in Japan that Roches was more than happy to fill. This was in many ways understandable, for Alcock and Roches were of the same generation (the former being only four months older) and had both entered their country's diplomatic service during the mid-1840s. They were therefore not only of equal diplomatic rank but also equally experienced. To a man of Roches's patriotic and vainglorious disposition, for whom personal and national aggrandisement were concordant diplomatic objectives, it was only natural to seek to fill the void created by Alcock's departure.

Yet while it is true that Roches was always 'imbued with a strong sense of the *mission civilisatrice*', it is also the case that he made no attempt to put this policy into action until after Alcock's recall.⁷⁷⁶ To be clear, this is not to dispute Lehmann's assertion that the origins of Roches's close relationship with the *bakufu* can be traced to the private meeting that was requested by Takemoto Masao, the newly appointed minister for foreign affairs, in mid-August 1864. At this critical meeting, Masao revealed that the *bakufu* was willing to tacitly approve of the Shimonoseki campaign if Roches could guarantee that it would not result in any British territorial acquisitions.⁷⁷⁷ It is rather to stress the point made by Sims that, despite his misgivings over Alcock's plan to secure imperial ratification of the treaties, Roches continued to work hand in glove with his British colleague until his recall became common knowledge in mid-October 1864. It was only at this moment, when Roches knew that Alcock would soon no longer be around to challenge him, that he began to respond actively to the *bakufu*'s overtures. The reasons for this are obvious. Although the Frenchman's respect and admiration for Alcock remained undiminished until the very end of his tenure,⁷⁷⁸ it is unlikely that a man of Roches's background and personality was ever comfortable with the diplomatic dynamic he encountered upon arrival in Yokohama.

⁷⁷⁶ Lehmann, *op.cit.*, p.306.

⁷⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, p.287; see also AD, CPJ59/12, Roches to Drouyn, No. 8, 17 August 1864.

⁷⁷⁸ Roches paid tribute to his departing colleague at length in AD, CPJ59/12, Roches to Drouyn, No. 14, 15 October 1864 and No. 22, 26 December 1864.

After incurring Drouyn's wrath for associating himself with the military expedition against Chōshū, Roches seized the opportunity provided by Alcock's sudden recall to make sure he would never again have to defer to the other representatives on matters of policy. With no immediate replacement for Alcock forthcoming due to the abruptness of his removal, Roches was afforded a crucial window to stake his own claim for leadership of the Japanese treaty-port system and to readdress the commercial imbalance between Britain and France in Japan.

He did not let it go to waste. By early 1865, Roches had successfully negotiated a series of agreements to supply the *bakufu* with the military equipment and techniques necessary to confront the *daimyō*, who were growing increasingly powerful through their illicit arms trade with unscrupulous American, British, and Dutch merchants. These included contracts to supply French engineers, machinery, and instructors for the construction of a naval dockyard at Yokosuka and orders for French guns and cannon to assist the *bakufu* in dealing forcefully with Chōshū, a policy that Roches strongly encouraged. Others included the establishment of a French school at Yokohama and moves to remedy Japan's chaotic monetary system by founding a modern mint on the French model.⁷⁷⁹ The role of the French missionary Mermet de Cachon, whom Roches had encountered in Hong Kong while en route to Japan and immediately employed as his interpreter, was critical in this process. He was a friend of Kurimoto Joun, a *bakufu* official in Yokohama who had previously taught Cachon Japanese during his ill-fated tenure in Hakodate.⁷⁸⁰ Cachon facilitated a number of meetings during the autumn of 1864 between Roches and other senior *bakufu* officials, including two *rōjū*, who were strongly averse to making any concessions to the *daimyō* and open to the idea of strengthening the *bakufu*'s authority with French aid.⁷⁸¹

⁷⁷⁹ Beasley, *Select Documents*, op.cit., p.78; Ericson, op.cit., pp.17-27; and Lehmann, op.cit., pp.290-2.

⁷⁸⁰ Cachon endured a difficult time in Hakodate prior to his departure in mid-1863, including two assassination attempts in response to his attempts to propagate Christianity (see Archives de la Société des Missions Étrangères de Paris, Paris (MEP), J/569, Mermet to Libois, 25 February 1861). He had also run into trouble with his colleagues in the *Missions Étrangères*, one of whom criticised him for being too 'impulsive and impressionable' (J/569, Monicou to Libois, 23 April 1862) and another who described him as 'impossible to get on with' (J/569, Furet to M. le Supérieur, 20 November 1862). None of this mattered to Roches, who found Cachon's linguistic skills to be of such critical importance that he urged Drouyn to appoint him officially to the French mission in Japan; see AD, CPJ59/12, Roches to Drouyn, No. 15, 31 October 1864.

⁷⁸¹ Medzini, op.cit., pp.86-7.

In many of the transactions negotiated over the following months, the *bakufu* was directed to make use of the services of Paul Fleury-Hérard, Roches's attorney and banker in Paris, who was described by Kurimoto as a 'high official' even though he had no direct connection to the French government. It is possible that Roches wanted a private banker to broker these arrangements out of a sincere desire to provide the *bakufu* with honest representation in Paris, or perhaps to ensure deniability should the French government be accused of attempting to monopolise the Japan trade. There was also suspicion at the time, never proven, that Roches was profiting from the deals that he had helped to broker.⁷⁸² Either way, Roches wilful misrepresentation of the banker's status during negotiations with the *bakufu* said much about his *modus operandi*. Further evidence of this was his decision not to inform Drouyn about his discussions in Edo until mid-January, *after* the *bakufu* had officially requested French assistance in the construction of the Yokosuka dockyard and ordered a supply of French arms.⁷⁸³ He was thus able to present Paris with a *fait accompli*, making it much more likely that his contracts would be approved, not least because he made no mention of the means by which he had encouraged the *bakufu* to finance them. Drouyn and Chassloup-Laubat did not disappoint. As far as they were concerned there was nothing in the treaties that prevented France from entering into the proposed agreements, and Drouyn knew that Fleury-Hérard had the necessary funds to pay for them.⁷⁸⁴ Both deals were duly approved in March 1865.⁷⁸⁵

Whether Roches's arrangements are sufficient evidence that a 'special relationship' already existed between him and the *bakufu* by 1865 has also been the subject of historical debate. For example, Lehmann has argued that Roches's support for the *bakufu* at this time was not exceptional because all the treaty-power representatives were committed to helping Edo to honour its treaty obligations after the Shimonoseki campaign.⁷⁸⁶ While technically accurate, this argument overlooks the fact that Roches was the only diplomat in Yokohama to deliberately set himself apart from his colleagues in the months that followed Shimonoseki. In this sense Roches's support for the *bakufu* was exceptional, for his '*politique personnelle*' undermined Alcock's diplomatic coalition in a uniquely damaging way. Similarly, Mark Ericson has asserted that the commercial agreements that Roches negotiated during late 1864 and early 1865 were of 'questionable' significance

⁷⁸² Ericson, *op.cit.*, p.57.

⁷⁸³ AD, CPJ59/13, Roches to Drouyn, No. 25, 16 January 1865.

⁷⁸⁴ See Drouyn's comment at the top of *idem.*, dated 15 March.

⁷⁸⁵ AD, CPJ59/13, Drouyn to Roches, No.3, 18 March 1865.

⁷⁸⁶ Lehmann, *op.cit.*, pp.285-6.

since they did not differ substantially from those made with other treaty powers during the same period. These agreements included longstanding orders for three warships from the United States, the purchase of shipyard machinery by a *bakufu* mission to Holland in late 1864, and the request relayed by Alcock to London late in the same year for the supply of British military instructors.⁷⁸⁷ However, while it is certainly true that the American and Dutch representatives were happy to facilitate bilateral arms deals with Edo both before and after Shimonoseki, the contracts that they entered into were fundamentally different to those that Roches brokered because they were permissible under the treaties whilst his were not. Naturally, there was nothing in the treaties to prevent an individual treaty power from entering into a commercial contract to supply the Japanese government with any product it desired, as long as that contract did not contravene the principle of free trade or impinge upon the rights of other powers to unfettered access to Japan's treaty ports. Whilst the arms contracts with the United States and Holland were limited to what the *bakufu* could afford to pay in cash or by credit, Edo offered to finance the construction of the Yokosuka shipyard through the direct shipment of silk to France. This was tantamount to the creation of a monopoly on the silk trade and therefore entirely contrary to both the letter and the spirit of the treaties.

Despite this, Roches had no qualms about accepting the *bakufu*'s offer, other than to advise the *rōjū* to deal with private merchants rather than operate on a government-to-government basis and to exchange silk for dollars with those merchants directly and privately.⁷⁸⁸ As this arrangement still involved bypassing the open market, it seems inaccurate to describe the agreements Roches negotiated with the *bakufu* over this period as insignificant, especially as they were negotiated without the prior knowledge of the French government. In short, while it may have been true that Roches's 'special relationship' with the *bakufu* had not yet reached full fruition by the beginning of 1865, its foundations were already in place. In a very short space of time, the French minister had initiated a new diplomatic relationship with Edo that would have significant political repercussions during the remainder of his tenure in Japan. Without the express sanction of his conservatively-minded government, he had also demonstrated a willingness to take unprecedented measures to advance French commercial interests in Japan regardless of whether they undermined the treaties or damaged his relationship with the other representatives. With Alcock no longer around to keep his ambition in check, Roches was

⁷⁸⁷ Ericson, *op.cit.*, pp.27-9.

⁷⁸⁸ As Ericson himself points out; see *ibid.*, p.26.

eyeing a bigger prize: control of Japan's lucrative import and export trade, and the power and glory that came with it.

The Winchester doctrine

Unfortunately for the British government, their man in Japan did not get wind of Roches's activities in time to stop him. To be fair to Charles Winchester, the British chargé d'affaires in Alcock's absence, he had been instructed to hold the fort in Yokohama until a successor for the British minister arrived, and he did not hesitate to take action to thwart Roches as soon as he heard about what the Frenchman was up to. Winchester's suspicions were first raised in the early part of 1865, when he became increasingly anxious about the French, Dutch, American, Prussian, and Swiss representatives travelling to Edo to liaise with *bakufu* officials while he languished in port. Of particular concern was a visit of 'some days' to the capital by Roches in mid-February to discuss 'private affairs' with the Japanese government.⁷⁸⁹ Roches's agreement regarding the Yokosuka arsenal had already been confirmed the previous month, but it was only after this February meeting that rumours of it reached Winchester. According to the reports he received, the *bakufu* had agreed to pay for French arms and machinery by consigning all the available silkworms and eggs to France, and as much silk as necessary to cover the contracts. These troubling reports convinced Winchester that the policy of staying away from Edo was no longer tenable, and he informed Edmund Hammond privately that he intended to travel to the capital himself to investigate the matter 'cautiously and prudently' with the Dutch agent, Dirk de Graeff von Polsbroek.⁷⁹⁰

Upon their arrival, the two men demanded clarification as to whether or not the *bakufu* had entered into a monopoly trading agreement with France, to which the *rōjū* replied that no such arrangement was in place but that it reserved the right to use produce to pay for foreign goods in the future. The *rōjū* forewarned Roches about the complaints submitted by his colleagues, however, which led him to seek a face-to-face meeting with Winchester at the end of February. During this meeting, Roches explicitly denied that any monopoly arrangement existed or that he would ever deviate from common action in commercial matters. It was on this occasion that he first mentioned his '*politique*

⁷⁸⁹ TNA, FO46/53, Winchester to Hammond, 28 February 1865.

⁷⁹⁰ *Idem.*

personnelle’, which he assured Winchester was merely designed to increase his personal influence with the *bakufu* rather than to pursue any commercial schemes.⁷⁹¹

Roches was obviously concerned about how these rumours would be received in Europe, for he wrote to Drouyn immediately to argue that the French-led construction of a naval arsenal at Yokosuka would be no different to the military contracts the *bakufu* had entered into with the other treaty powers.⁷⁹² Under pressure from his British colleague, Roches was compelled to confirm in writing what he had assured Winchester in person: that France had no plans to monopolise the silk trade.⁷⁹³ Despite this, Winchester continued to raise his concerns over the weeks that followed about this issue and the ‘known proclivity’ of the *bakufu* to seek to maintain its monopoly on foreign trade in any way possible.⁷⁹⁴ To make matters worse, in April he reported to Hammond that ‘the anxiety of the French for the money – the whole money and nothing but the money’ was making it extremely difficult for the other representatives to ensure that the *bakufu*’s decision to pay the Shimonoseki indemnity in lieu of opening a new port would not result in additional duties on foreign commerce.⁷⁹⁵ In the event, Roches’s insistence upon immediate payment scuppered Winchester’s hopes of reducing the indemnity in exchange for commercial concessions such as a reduction in tariffs or the opening of Hyōgo. Winchester was well aware that it was not in French interests to see Osaka opened, but as *chargé d’affaires* he could do nothing more than refer the matter back to London.⁷⁹⁶

Despite his difference with Roches over the Shimonoseki convention, Winchester did not believe that the French minister was responsible for the schemes emanating from the French legation in Yokohama. ‘M. Roches is himself an amiable and honourable gentleman,’ he explained to Hammond at the end of April, ‘but he is so entirely in the hands of the intriguing priest that trust is out of the question.’⁷⁹⁷ In Winchester’s opinion, it was Cachon who was encouraging Roches to defer the unnecessary expense of opening of another port until France had cornered the silk trade, while the activities of Bellecourt’s

⁷⁹¹ TNA, FO46/53, Winchester to Russell, No. 30, 9 March 1865; and enclosures. The same meeting is discussed briefly in a postscript to Winchester’s private letter to Hammond of 28 February.

⁷⁹² AD, CPJ59/13, Roches to Drouyn, No. 30, 28 February 1865.

⁷⁹³ See enclosure 2 in TNA, FO46/53, Winchester to Russell, No. 38, 16 March 1865.

⁷⁹⁴ For example, see Winchester’s confidential memorandum to Russell enclosed in TNA, FO46/53, Winchester to Russell, 13 March 1865.

⁷⁹⁵ TNA, FO46/54, Winchester to Hammond, 18 April 1865.

⁷⁹⁶ *Idem.* See also Fox, *op.cit.*, p.157.

⁷⁹⁷ TNA, FO46/54, Winchester to Hammond, 27 April 1865.

former translator, the Dutchman Franz Blekman, were also highly questionable.⁷⁹⁸ In the same letter, Winchester enclosed testimony procured by Satow from a member of the Japanese embassy to Paris in 1864. This source confirmed that the French had been contemplating such a project for some time, even though the other treaty powers were likely to oppose it. Winchester also reported the troubling disappearance of a private letter that he had sent on board a French frigate at the end of February warning the British consul at Nagasaki to keep an eye out for French movements of silkworm eggs. The mysterious interception of a recent edition of the *Moniteur des Soies* addressed to the British legation in Yokohama, which contained a report on the creation of a new French imperial factory in China for the purpose of developing French commerce in the Far East, caused further concern.⁷⁹⁹

In an official dispatch sent in early May, Winchester shared further intelligence from the *London and China Express* on the factory scheme. By all accounts, this appeared to confirm Napoléon III's ambition to recreate his domestic economic policy in the Far East by establishing a commercial organisation similar to the defunct East India Company. Although Winchester expected such a factory to fail miserably in China, where government officials never involved themselves in trade, he feared for its extension to Japan. His concerns were based on the proclivity of the *bakufu* and *daimyō* for monopolising trade for their exclusive benefit, the fact that only one fifth of the silk from China and Japan that was manufactured in France was actually shipped there directly (the remainder being sold in London with the additional cost of brokerage, commission, and cost of carriage), and the evidence that French officials in Japan feared that the opening of new ports would only further augment the cost of trade with Japan without increasing France's share of it. The advantages of a French monopoly on the silk trade under these circumstances were obvious.⁸⁰⁰

⁷⁹⁸ Blekman accompanied the 1864 mission to Paris, where he negotiated a series of questionable arms deals for the embassy. Although he was not re-employed by Roches upon his return to Japan, he continued to pose as a French official thereafter to advance his business schemes. After defrauding the *bakufu* of a commission paid for brokering the order of a French warship that was later cancelled, Blekman was arrested by the Dutch authorities in July 1865 and eventually deported to Holland. The *bakufu* never recovered its money or received any compensation from either France or Holland. See Ericson, *op.cit.*, pp.60-3.

⁷⁹⁹ TNA, FO46/54, Winchester to Hammond, 27 April 1865.

⁸⁰⁰ TNA, FO46/54, Winchester to Russell, No. 79, 8 May 1865.

It is not exactly clear if Roches and Cachon intended to monopolise the entire Japanese silk trade, but given that the *bakufu* estimated the cost of the Yokosuka arsenal at 2.4m Mexican dollars over four years it is safe to assume that they would have cornered a very significant portion of it had their scheme succeeded.⁸⁰¹ In the end, Roches and the *bakufu* were forced to abandon the scheme quietly after rumours of it provoked outrage in the merchant community in Yokohama and an official complaint about from Winchester.⁸⁰² However, the construction of a new French residence, barracks, and stores in Yokohama, the establishment of Cachon's French school, and the arrival of guns and cannon accompanied by French military instructors over the next few months seemed to point to the continuing growth in French influence at Edo.⁸⁰³

As he prepared to hand over command of the British mission in Japan towards the end of June, Winchester drafted a memorandum for his successor Sir Harry Parkes that explained the policy of each of the treaty powers and their representatives in Japan. Whilst he praised the 'fairness and open dealing' of the Dutch and acknowledged the 'peaceable and legitimate' interests of the United States, he warned that Napoléon III's free-trade policy had led to a marked change in French activities in both China and Japan. Despite the theoretical commitment to the open market that this policy represented, Winchester believed that Roches, like many of his countrymen, could not separate the pursuit of French economic interests from the promotion of political influence. Hence, the silk monopoly scheme, the intrigues of Cachon, the opposition to the opening of new ports and new legation buildings at Edo, and above all 'a specious support of the Tycoon's interest as opposed to that of the Daimios'. Although Winchester held Roches in a high esteem, it was impossible for him to 'sympathize with his consuming passion to override everything by his *politique personelle*'.⁸⁰⁴

The mounting evidence of French intrigue and skulduggery was certainly troubling Winchester, but he confessed there was little he could do but continue to watch Roches closely to ensure he did not lead the *bakufu* any further down the garden path. He also implied that British policy was partly at fault for affording Roches an outlet for his

⁸⁰¹ Ericson, op.cit., p.27.

⁸⁰² Ibid., p.34.

⁸⁰³ TNA, FO46/55, Winchester to Russell, No. 96, 7 June 1865. See also Fox, op.cit., p.156.

⁸⁰⁴ 'Notes on the Political Relations and views of the different Foreign Powers having Treaties with Japan', 23 June 1865; enclosed in TNA, FO46/55, Winchester to Russell, No.108, 23 June 1865.

ambitions. Unlike in Turkey, British representatives in Japan were not empowered to provide the *bakufu* authorities with a supply of the military and civil experts to help modernise the country. This apparent unwillingness to provide expertise and training had perpetuated ‘a feeling of disquietude and distrust’ against the British that Winchester believed could be countered if London granted its representatives special powers to command the services of officers qualified to instruct the Japanese in ‘arts peaceful and military’.⁸⁰⁵

The implication was clear: British policy in Japan was beginning to drift; allowing opportunists like Roches to stoke longstanding fears in Edo of an impending British imperial conquest in order to cultivate closer political links and lucrative commercial ties with the *bakufu*. That said, the British chargé was not averse to a little scheming of his own. At the end of April, he learned that agents of Chōshū had approached the British consul in Nagasaki to propose the dispatch of a mission to Britain to negotiate a commercial treaty and open Shimonoseki to trade. Winchester immediately saw an opportunity by which to leverage the *bakufu* into opening Osaka and Hyōgo – the only other commercial concession that would satisfy the *daimyō*. After assuring Hammond that he would be careful to exercise ‘caution and prudence’, Winchester promised to try to convince the *bakufu* not to risk a civil war by refusing to open the ports on the basis of ‘short-sighted foreign advice’.⁸⁰⁶

Charles Winchester had done the best he could to restrain Roches during his short tenure as chargé d’affaires in Edo, but his influence was distinctly limited by his diplomatic rank and stature. The fact that he was often compelled to refer to London on matters of policy also significantly hampered his ability to exploit the increasingly accurate intelligence he was being fed by talented translators at the British legation such as Ernest Satow and Alexander von Siebold. Given the extent to which Roches had successfully exploited the opportunity afforded by Alcock’s departure, the task of re-asserting British leadership over the Japanese treaty-port system that awaited Winchester’s successor would require a man of unique ability and character. The Foreign Office had the perfect choice in mind.

⁸⁰⁵ *Idem*.

⁸⁰⁶ TNA, FO46/54, Winchester to Hammond, 27 April 1865; and enclosed letter from Gower to Winchester, 17 April 1865.

The Russell doctrine

On 27 March 1865, Sir Harry Parkes was appointed to succeed Alcock as British minister to Japan.⁸⁰⁷ At the time, he was universally regarded by his compatriots as the outstanding British diplomat in East Asia. His fame owed much to the prominent role he had played in the *Arrow* War in China, particularly his capture, imprisonment, and torture by the Qing authorities while Chinese secretary to Lord Elgin during the march to Beijing in 1860. He was rewarded for his services on that occasion with a knighthood in 1862 at the tender age of thirty-four, and Elgin himself described him as ‘one of the most remarkable men I have ever met; for energy, courage, and ability combined, I do not know where I could find his match; and this... makes him *the* man of the situation’.⁸⁰⁸ These exceptional qualities had been well known to the British government for some time, as Parkes had been involved in British diplomacy in China in some shape or form since the outbreak of the First Opium War in 1842.⁸⁰⁹ His long experience of defending Britain’s commercial interests within the Chinese treaty-port system certainly made him ideally qualified to succeed Alcock in Japan, and Palmerston considered him a ‘decidedly... able man’.⁸¹⁰ His reputation for being no ‘trifler with Easterns’⁸¹¹ was also likely to please the British merchant community and diplomatic corps. According to Satow, Parkes came to Yokohama ‘invested with the prestige of a man who had looked death in the face with no ordinary heroism, and in the eyes of all European residents in the far east held a higher position than any officer of the crown in these countries’.⁸¹² Russell’s appointment of this iconic diplomat was therefore widely welcomed by all who shared a vested interest in the expansion of British commerce in Japan.

If Parkes was so eminently qualified for the role of British minister in Japan, then why did Russell take so long after Alcock’s departure to appoint him to the position? The delay

⁸⁰⁷ See TNA, Russell Papers, PRO30/22/101, Russell to Parkes, 27 March 1865.

⁸⁰⁸ Quoted in Hugh Cortazzi, ‘The Pestilently Active Minister: Dr Willis’s Comments on Sir Harry Parkes’, *Monumenta Nipponica*, Vol. 39, No. 2 (Summer, 1984), p.148.

⁸⁰⁹ For more on Parkes’s career, see Stanley Lane-Poole and Frederick Victor Dickins, *The life of Sir Harry Parkes: K.C.B., G.C.M.G., sometime Her Majesty’s minister to China and Japan*, 2 Vols., (London: Macmillan, 1894); and Gordon Daniels, *Sir Harry Parkes: British Representative in Japan, 1865-83*, (Richmond: Japan Library, 1996).

⁸¹⁰ TNA, Russell Papers, PRO30/22/23/19, Palmerston to Russell, 19 March 1865.

⁸¹¹ As described by Dr William Willis, Medical Officer at the British Legation since 1862, in a letter to his brother on 27 April 1865. ‘This is the sort of man we want,’ Willis also wrote, ‘as your peace-loving politician had better never come to Japan.’ Quoted in Cortazzi, *op.cit.*, p.150.

⁸¹² Satow, *op.cit.*, p.141.

related to the Foreign Secretary's determination to get a handle on Japanese affairs following his embarrassing climb-down over the Shimonoseki expedition the previous year. This meant waiting until he had consulted Alcock face to face before making any further decisions. As a result, in January 1865 Russell asked Lord Cowley, the British ambassador in Paris, to inform Drouyn that he would make no recommendation on the Shimonoseki indemnity until after the British minister's return.⁸¹³ As this took a considerable amount of time, it was already March before Alcock was finally able to explain himself in person. Palmerston, for one, was convinced afterwards that Alcock had shown 'by argument and facts that he was right in his views and policy', although he reassured Russell that 'we could not help being swayed in our course by the feeling and opinions, however erroneous they have proved, of Parliament and the public in this country'.⁸¹⁴ In the end, despite expressing many times a desire never to return to the Far East, Alcock was 'rewarded' for his service in Japan with the position of British minister to China.⁸¹⁵ The fact that Queen Victoria herself felt compelled to express concern about this appointment indicated just how controversial Alcock's policy in Japan had been back home. Ironically, Russell was forced to defend his return to East Asia by informing the Queen that neither Palmerston nor the Cabinet had raised any fears about it. He also reassured her that Parkes had been selected as the new minister in Japan, 'a position it may be remembered far more critical than the present position of Your Majesty's Representative in China'.⁸¹⁶ Although Russell later deleted this sentence from the final draft of his letter, it would appear that he shared many of the Queen's doubts about Alcock.

Further evidence of a lack of full confidence in Alcock's policy was apparent in Whitehall's response to a memorandum he had drafted upon his return to London regarding matters still pending in Japan at the time of his departure. In this document, Alcock argued that the defeat of the expulsion movement effected by the Shimonoseki expedition would not alone guarantee stability in Japan. 'To complete the work and ally

⁸¹³ HCPP, 1866, Vol. LXXVI.427, [3615], p.1, Russell to Cowley, No. 2, 12 January 1865.

⁸¹⁴ TNA, Russell Papers, PRO30/22/15D, Palmerston to Russell, 4 March 1865.

⁸¹⁵ A position Alcock was very reluctant to accept on grounds of health and low salary until Russell promised to convey him to Peking on the public purse. See TNA, Hammond Papers, FO391/1, Alcock to Hammond, 7 March 1865; Russell Papers, PRO30/22/101, Russell to Alcock, 15 March 1865; PRO30/22/50/26, Alcock to Russell, 15 March 1865; & PRO30/22/15D, Palmerston to Russell, 17 March 1865.

⁸¹⁶ TNA, Russell Papers, PRO30/22/15D, Russell to Queen Victoria, 20 March 1865.

the hostile spirit,' he wrote, 'the Daimios must also be *conciliated* and invited freely to *share in the advantages of foreign trade*'.⁸¹⁷ While the shogun's authority should be supported up to a point, the cessation of Edo's monopoly on trade was now the priority. In order to press the *bakufu* into adopting a more liberal policy and to make it understand that survival depended upon acting in good faith with the treaty powers, it was crucial that the four-power alliance he had brokered the previous summer remained in place. He therefore recommended the 'formal neutralization of the Japanese territory' by the governments of the four powers concerned.⁸¹⁸ Once this had been achieved, the treaty powers could concentrate on more practical measures such as the return of the representatives to Edo, improved security measures at the ports, and, above all, the opening of Osaka and Hyōgo to trade. In short, Alcock had produced a manifesto for the creation of an entirely new treaty-port system, whereby a formal alliance of treaty powers would take full and equal responsibility not only for the protection of the ports and trade but for reconciling the *bakufu*, Mikado, and *daimyō* on the subject of foreign relations.

This went far beyond what the British government had envisaged for what was still a relatively insignificant commercial market in global terms. It was a telling indication of how wary Hammond and Russell were about Alcock's recommendations that, aside from addressing matters of pressing urgency such as the Shimonoseki indemnity, they did not make any concrete decision about the contents of his memorandum until mid-July.⁸¹⁹ The delay was partly the result of the need to establish whether the United States shared France and Holland's preference for the indemnity rather than the opening of a new port.⁸²⁰ Yet Russell was also loath to risk further complications in Japan by implementing a fundamental change of policy without concrete evidence that it was necessary. As a result, the instructions sent out to Parkes at the beginning of April 1865 were deliberately vague. The new British minister was simply told to exploit the political and commercial advantages secured by Alcock the previous year, to cultivate cordial relations with the other treaty powers, and to pursue a firm but conciliatory policy towards the shogun and the emperor.⁸²¹ Russell at least approved of Alcock's request for British military

⁸¹⁷ TNA, FO46/53, Alcock to Foreign Office, 'Memorandum on Japan and matters still pending' & 'Memorandum on Treasury letter of 21 February 1865', 20 March 1865. Alcock's emphasis.

⁸¹⁸ *Idem*.

⁸¹⁹ Hammond's analysis of the memo and Russell's reply thereafter can be found at the bottom of the document dated 15 and 18 July respectively; see *idem*, ff.389-90.

⁸²⁰ HCPP, 1866, Vol. LXXVI.427, [3615], p.8, Russell to Bruce, No. 7, 30 March 1865.

⁸²¹ HCPP, 1866, Vol. LXXVI.427, [3615], pp.8-9, Russell to Parkes, No. 8, 8 April 1865.

instructors to train troops in Japan, but even this measure was resisted by Earl de Grey, the Secretary of State for War, who argued that ‘by training these troops by European methods we may be only teaching them how to fight against ourselves’.⁸²²

At the end of April, the first rumours of French designs on the silk trade began to trickle into the Foreign Office. Russell’s initial reaction was sceptical. ‘It seems a cock and bull story’, he wrote succinctly on the cover of Winchester’s private letter of 28 February, which was then forwarded to Cowley.⁸²³ Yet concerns that Japan had become the latest target for Napoléon III’s expansionist ambitions began to build in the Foreign Office as more of Winchester’s reports reached London over the coming months. Perhaps most worrying was a ‘mischievous’ article on Roches’s activities by the *Japan Commercial News* that Winchester had convinced the editor to suppress. The article began with a warning that the French occupation of Acapulco, the presence of a fleet of forty vessels in the Pacific region, and Napoléon III’s apparent designs on the mineral wealth of Formosa (Taiwan) demonstrated that France was acquiring supremacy in every part of the world. For this reason, the policy of the French representative in Japan was a matter of concern, particularly his rumoured silk monopoly scheme, which was nothing more than an attempt to advance French trade at the expense of the other treaty powers. ‘It behooves our chargé d’affaires to keep a sharp look out and prevent France from interfering with British interests’, the article concluded, ‘Mon. Roches is a clever man and quite equal to any diplomacy required from him by his Government.’⁸²⁴

The fact that Roches’s activities were causing such consternation among the British merchant community was bad enough, but the arrival in July of Winchester’s private letter regarding the disappearance of his letter to Nagasaki and the interception of his copy of the *Moniteur des Soies* was the final straw. Under Russell’s orders, Hammond forwarded this letter privately to Cowley ‘to speak to Drouyn’.⁸²⁵ Hammond’s view of the French as ‘shocking...clumsy rascals’ could only have been reinforced by the arrival the following week of Winchester’s dispatch on the creation of the French factory in China,

⁸²² The British Library, London (BL), Ripon Papers, Add MS 43512, De Grey to Russell, 24 March 1865.

⁸²³ TNA, FO46/53, Winchester to Hammond, 28 February 1865.

⁸²⁴ See TNA, FO46/53, Winchester to Hammond(?), 13 March 1865, ff.329-30. The article was not exactly accurate, for although the French forces occupied Acapulco in June 1864, they were forced to abandon it on 14 December the same year as their forces in Mexico became increasingly stretched.

⁸²⁵ TNA, FO46/54, Winchester to Hammond, 27 April 1865.

and his concerns about what this meant for British trade in Japan.⁸²⁶ Despite this increasing evidence of French duplicity, Russell was still determined to keep Paris onside on the indemnity question. After all, the Foreign Secretary knew that without French support there was little chance of securing the opening of Hyōgo and Osaka and the ratification of the treaties by the Mikado.

By early July, the British government was engaged in negotiations with the other three treaty powers regarding the *bakufu*'s decision to opt for the indemnity but to delay payment of all but the first instalment. In response to Winchester's fears that this would be akin to 'the hanging of a millstone for five or six years around the neck of our own trade', Russell took on board his suggestion that the powers should exploit the interval between the first and second payment to secure commercial advantages.⁸²⁷ He therefore proposed that two-thirds of the indemnity should be waived in lieu of the opening of Hyōgo and Osaka, imperial ratification, and the reduction of import duties to five per cent. If the *bakufu* did not agree, Britain would revert to a demand for full payment of the indemnity in 1866, and if this did not bring about the desired concessions it would then rescind the London Protocol of 1862 and require the opening of the ports in January 1866.⁸²⁸ 'It is but just,' Russell wrote to Winchester towards the end of July, 'that the great Daimios should partake of the benefits of a commerce which is so beneficial to Japan and so profitable to the Tycoon.'⁸²⁹ In the space of a few months, Russell's opinion on Japan had shifted substantially towards Alcock's point of view.

That these decisions were taken after the arrival of Winchester's private letters concerning Roches's activities was no coincidence. The confirmation that Roches and Edo were plotting to undermine the treaties was clear evidence of bad faith on the part of the *bakufu*, just a few months after it had pledged to honour the treaties in full. On the other hand, news that Chōshū had requested permission to open Shimonoseki to Western trade confirmed Alcock's assertion in 1864 that there was 'a party of great weight and influence in the country which desires to commence a new era for Japan, in alliance with European

⁸²⁶ TNA, FO519/192, Hammond to Cowley, 10 July 1865.

⁸²⁷ See HCPP, 1866, Vol. LXXVI.427, [3615], pp.14-15, Winchester to Russell, No. 16, 12 April 1865 (received 16 June).

⁸²⁸ Ibid., pp.20-1, Russell to Bruce, Cowley, and Milbanke, No. 24, 12 July 1865.

⁸²⁹ Ibid., pp.29-30, Russell to Winchester, No. 31, 24 July 1865.

power, an era of extended commerce and unrestricted intercourse'.⁸³⁰ Although talk of any alliance with the *daimyō* was more than Hammond ever considered, he too had suspected for some time that they objected to foreign trade because they did not share in its benefits.⁸³¹ After the success of the Shimonoseki expedition, these measures initially no longer seemed necessary. Unfortunately, the intelligence arriving from Japan by the summer of 1865 appeared to suggest that the *bakufu* was retrenching into protectionism, just as Alcock had feared when he left Japan. This news spurred Hammond to finally take a detailed look at the former British minister's March memorandum. After reading it over a dozen times, however, he was still at a loss as to how to deal with the political considerations it involved, in particular regarding the position of the *daimyō* in Japan's system of government.⁸³² Russell agreed that Alcock's recommendations went too far and believed that his instruction to Winchester would contribute to the opening of Hyōgo.⁸³³

Unfortunately, Russell's powers of persuasion were not sufficient to convince Drouyn to support his policy. Just two days after he officially recognised the *daimyō*'s right to share in Japan's trade, Russell found himself writing to Winchester again to inform the British chargé that the French government still preferred full payment of the indemnity to any commercial concessions, and that the matter would now have to be settled by the representatives in Japan.⁸³⁴ The official explanation given for French opposition to Russell's proposal was the risk of provoking a war with Japan should the *bakufu* refuse to open Osaka or Hyōgo.⁸³⁵ In fact, Drouyn understood by this point that France had little to gain from insisting upon the immediate opening of the ports or from encouraging the *bakufu* to abolish its commercial monopoly. This would not only entrench further Britain's economic dominance over the Japan trade but also risk jeopardising the agreements approved back in March to help strengthen the *bakufu*. Indeed, by the time that Russell put forward his proposal Roches's request for an augmentation of French military forces in Japan to help train the shogun's army was under consideration at Paris, while the French engineer selected by the shogunate to oversee the construction of the

⁸³⁰ As reported by Alcock after a meeting with secret agents of Satsuma in Nagasaki en route to Yokohama in March 1864; see TNA, Hammond Papers, FO391/1, Alcock to Hammond, 17 March 1864.

⁸³¹ See TNA, Russell Papers, PRO30/22/28, Hammond to Russell, 3 August 1864.

⁸³² See ff.389-90 in TNA, FO46/53, Alcock to Foreign Office, 'Memorandum on Japan and matters still pending', 20 March 1865.

⁸³³ *Idem.*

⁸³⁴ TNA, FO46/53, Russell to Winchester, No. 91, 26 July 1865.

⁸³⁵ See enclosure to *idem.*, Drouyn to De la Tour d'Auvergne, 22 July 1865.

Yokosuka dockyard had already arrived to discuss the project with Chasseloup-Laubat.⁸³⁶ Thanks to Roches, Drouyn was also under the impression that payment of the indemnity was in the *bakufu*'s best interests.

It is also important to stress that attention in Paris at this time was primarily focused on how the conclusion of the American Civil War in May 1865 affected the ongoing Mexico campaign, in particular after Washington began to arm the Mexican rebels and issue threatening demands for France to evacuate its expeditionary force.⁸³⁷ The perilous state of Franco-American relations coupled with the growing fear of Prussian aggrandisement after the Second Schleswig War meant that Paris had nothing to gain from aggravating Britain over such an insignificant matter as Japan. As a result, Drouyn was reluctant to press the issue of the indemnity too forcefully with London, which explained why he suggested referring Russell's proposal back to the representatives rather than rejecting it outright. With Russell equally unwilling to risk a rift with Paris over such a trifling matter, it was left to the men on the spot just as Drouyn had suggested.⁸³⁸

The need to secure imperial ratification and the opening of the new ports was a matter upon which Russell and his two principal subordinates at the Foreign Office all agreed. Although it had been impossible to establish a common policy on the issue of the indemnity with the other treaty powers, they all had confidence that a man of Parkes's experience would secure the support of his colleagues and wring these concessions from the *bakufu*. In August 1865, however, Hammond and Layard became convinced that Parkes should be instructed to proceed to Osaka at once, regardless of whether the other representatives agreed with Russell's proposal on the indemnity or not. The trigger for this change in approach was a meeting that Layard held on 28 July with three Satsuma officers who had secretly travelled to Britain to buy steamers and develop foreign trade in their domain.⁸³⁹ They were introduced by Lawrence Oliphant, the former Japanese Secretary of Legation, who was now a Member of Parliament. Oliphant believed that it was now clear that the *daimyō* would never be satisfied until the *bakufu* abolished its

⁸³⁶ AD, CPJ59/13, Drouyn to Roches, Nos. 4 & 5, 7 June 1865 & 26 July 1865. Both plans were eventually approved; see Hugh Cortazzi, 'Japanese Envoys in Britain, 1862-72', in Ian Nish, ed., *Japanese Envoys in Britain, 1862-1964*, (Folkestone: Global Oriental, 2007), pp.13-4.

⁸³⁷ Éric Anceau, *Napoléon III: un Saint-Simon à cheval*, (Paris: Éditions Tallandier, 2008), pp.430-1.

⁸³⁸ TNA, FO46/53, Russell to Winchester, No. 91, 26 July 1865.

⁸³⁹ See Cortazzi, *op.cit.*, pp.14-5.

monopoly on foreign trade. Although he acknowledged that it would be impossible to fulfil Satsuma's desire to enter into direct relations with Britain or to open his ports without Edo's express consent, he suggested instructing Parkes to make the *bakufu* understand that it was in its interests to open ports in *daimyō* territory and not to block any attempt by them to do so.⁸⁴⁰

Contrary to Hugh Cortazzi's assertion that the Satsuma men 'did not receive a very sympathetic hearing' at the Foreign Office, Layard reported the details of this meeting to Hammond at once.⁸⁴¹ These 'very intelligent men', he wrote, were 'very anxious that we should communicate direct with the Mikado, who, they say, has clear power to bind the whole of Japan by treaties... Satsuma is very anxious to trade and would open to Loochoo [Ryūkyū] Islands at once if the Tycoon would not interfere'.⁸⁴² This intelligence directly contradicted Edo's assertion since the ports first opened in 1859 that it was unable to fulfil its treaty obligations due to the hostility of the Japanese people to the presence of foreigners in Japan. Hammond welcomed this confirmation of what he had long suspected, and agreed with the Satsuma men 'that we should try to get at the Mikado through Osaka... which will be the Shanghai of Japan'.⁸⁴³ However, although now certain that Parkes should sail immediately to Osaka should the *bakufu* fail to pay the indemnity on time, Hammond thought it still best to wait and see how the discussions in Japan regarding the indemnity developed.⁸⁴⁴

In mid-August, Hammond met with the Satsuma agents himself. In addition to further intelligence he had received regarding Chōshū's overtures to the British in Nagasaki,⁸⁴⁵ he believed that the Foreign Office now had enough proof of the *bakufu*'s duplicity to effect the fundamental realignment in Britain's treaty relationship with Japan that he had long considered necessary. Hammond believed that 'a great opportunity had opened', 'but the way we must turn it to amount is by acting with the Daimios or the Mikado, and setting aside, I do not mean displacing, the Tycoon'.⁸⁴⁶ While negotiating separate arrangements with the *daimyō* would lead to civil war, Hammond believed that

⁸⁴⁰ BL, Layard Papers, Add MS 39116, f.182, Oliphant to Layard, 28 July 1865.

⁸⁴¹ Cortazzi, *op.cit.*, p.15.

⁸⁴² BL, Layard Papers, Add MS 38959, Layard to Hammond, 31 July 1865.

⁸⁴³ BL, Layard Papers, Add MS 38953, Hammond to Layard, 1 August 1865.

⁸⁴⁴ *Idem.*

⁸⁴⁵ See for example, TNA, Hammond Papers, FO391/1, Alcock to Hammond, 19 July 1865.

⁸⁴⁶ BL, Layard Papers, Add MS 38953, Hammond to Layard, 15 August 1865.

the great lords ‘would probably be content with the substantial benefits of trade at their several Ports under the sanction of a general treaty with the Mikado’.⁸⁴⁷ He was confident that Holland and the United States would be supportive of this policy, but he worried that if the French got wind of it too far in advance they would ‘manipulate it for the purposes of intrigue and French glorification’.⁸⁴⁸ For that reason, he recommended not informing the other treaty-power governments of Britain’s change in policy until after Parkes’s orders had gone out.

While Hammond was careful not to advocate a change of regime per se, his patience with the *bakufu* had clearly run out. Moreover, the growing evidence of French intriguing in Edo was an indication that Alcock’s four-power alliance was beginning to splinter. Hammond therefore believed that it was better for Parkes to act independently and without delay rather than give Roches any more time to corner the Japan trade. Russell was not willing to endorse this policy, however, and instead advised Layard to give Parkes a ‘wide discretion’ over how to proceed on the basis of the Satsuma intelligence.⁸⁴⁹ He also suggested asking Alcock to return to Yokohama to confer with Parkes about the situation, an idea that was strongly opposed by Hammond and Layard as likely to undermine Parkes.⁸⁵⁰ Hammond tried to convince Russell that Parkes was perfectly capable of handling the situation if furnished with instructions along the lines he had set out. However, the arrival of news that the *bakufu* had launched a pecuniary expedition against Chōshū and decided to send yet another mission to Europe reinforced the Foreign Secretary’s impression that there was little point in recommending concrete measures in a country where ‘tomorrow may ascertain the wisest policy of yesterday’.⁸⁵¹

With so many confusing and contradictory reports flooding into the Foreign Office, Layard’s views on what should be done lay somewhere between those of Hammond and

⁸⁴⁷ *Idem.*

⁸⁴⁸ *Idem.*

⁸⁴⁹ See note signed ‘R’ at the bottom of BL, Layard Papers, Add MS 38991, f.138, Layard to Russell [no date]. Russell was responding to Layard’s enquiry as to whether or not he should draft instructions for Parkes based on Hammond’s letter, so it was clearly written around mid-August.

⁸⁵⁰ See Russell’s note attached to BL, Layard Papers, Add MS 38959, Layard to Hammond, 12 August 1865; the response from Hammond in Add MS 38953, Hammond to Layard, 12 August 1865; and Layard’s opinion in Add MS 38959, Layard to Hammond, 14 August 1865.

⁸⁵¹ Quoted from BL, Layard Papers, Add MS 38991, f.138, Layard to Russell, [no date]. See also Add MS 38953, Hammond to Layard, 12 August 1865; Add MS 38959, Layard to Hammond, 15 August 1865; and Add MS 38991, f.229, Layard to Russell, [no date].

Russell. While the Parliamentary Under-Secretary appreciated that much would have to be left to Parkes's discretion, he also believed that the best way to open Japan to trade was to use the *daimyō* to gain access to the Mikado.⁸⁵² Despite this, Russell remained 'much against overdoing instructions to Parkes', and stressed to Layard that Britain's treaties had been made with the shogun – 'that we, France, the United States and Holland have all held his to be the authority for making treaties – even Satsuma has said so'.⁸⁵³ Moreover, the Foreign Secretary was not about to risk a rift with Paris over the Shimonoseki indemnity without great care, as he had already informed Drouyn about his proposal and promised to do nothing more about it until hearing back from Japan.⁸⁵⁴ Layard did not receive these instructions until he had already put together a draft for Parkes in line with Hammond's policy. When he belatedly received Russell's orders, Layard made one last attempt to change the Foreign Secretary's mind by asking for clarification as to whether Parkes was to proceed to Osaka immediately if the *bakufu* refused to consider the indemnity proposal, and whether he was to act independently if unable to secure the support of his colleagues, as was likely in the case of France.⁸⁵⁵

Russell's reply was unequivocal: nothing further was to be done until Parkes reported back from Japan. Britain was bound to wait until the indemnity proposal had been discussed in Yokohama, and would only consider acting independently of the Shimonoseki convention if there was disagreement among the representatives. If the *bakufu* refused to pay, all agreements to postpone the opening of the ports would become automatically null and void in any case. Moreover, Drouyn believed that the *bakufu* could easily afford to pay up, and Russell found it suspicious to say the least that Edo was attempting to purchase ships and cannon from the treaty powers while simultaneously pleading poverty. On the issue of cooperation with France, he also left no room for doubt: 'It is a point no less of policy than of good faith to act as far as we can in conjunction with the French. If we cast them off they may *arm, drill and instruct* the Japanese to act against us. We must be very cautious.'⁸⁵⁶

⁸⁵² TNA, Russell Papers, PRO30/22/28, Layard to Russell, 17 August 1865.

⁸⁵³ BL, Layard Papers, Add MS 38991, f.139, Russell to Layard, [no date]. Contrary to the estimated date of 'c. 28 March 1865' that accompanies this note, it can only have been written after Layard's request for recommendations on Parkes's instructions because it is referred to explicitly in Add MS 38991, f.379, Layard to Russell, 18 August 1865.

⁸⁵⁴ BL, Layard Papers, Add MS 38991, f.139, Russell to Layard, [no date].

⁸⁵⁵ BL, Layard Papers, Add MS 38991, f.379, Layard to Russell, 18 August 1865.

⁸⁵⁶ BL, Layard Papers, Add MS 38991, f.397, Russell to Layard, 19 August 1865.

The section of Layard's draft instructing Parkes to insist upon the immediate opening of Osaka and Hyōgo, to proceed at once to Osaka with a significant fleet should the *bakufu* refuse, and to encourage the *daimyō* to take measures to induce the Mikado to ratify the treaties was therefore omitted from Parkes's final instructions. Instead, he was simply asked to cooperate with the other representatives to ascertain the real state of affairs with regard to whether or not the extension of trade would threaten the shogun's government. Furthermore, although Russell retained a paragraph relating to the contradictory declarations made by the Japanese as to whether or not the treaties were binding on the *daimyō* unless ratified by the Mikado, he deliberately inserted a sentence making it clear that Satsuma had 'fully asserted the Treaty making power to reside in the Tycoon'.⁸⁵⁷ Forced to admit defeat, Hammond accepted Russell's decision while maintaining that his policy was the only viable long-term route to stability in Japan.⁸⁵⁸

Although the instructions issued to Parkes were not quite as radical as Hammond desired, they still clearly constituted a significant shift in British attitudes towards Japan by officially calling into question the status of the emperor and the right of the shogun to conduct foreign affairs for the first time. Few, if any, historians of this period have highlighted the intensive debate between Russell, Layard, and Hammond over this policy during the summer of 1865. This is a mistake, as their discussions demonstrated unequivocally that Britain's shift in Japan policy in the aftermath of the Shimonoseki expedition was set not by the personalities on the spot but by the British government.⁸⁵⁹ The contrast with Roches's very personal initiation of a new French policy in Japan could not be more stark.

After receiving his instructions in October 1865, Parkes wasted no time in putting Russell's proposal on the indemnity to the other representatives. Roches was initially opposed, but he soon realised that there was no changing Parkes's mind and that confirmation of the treaties by the emperor might work in the *bakufu*'s favour in any case. On 30 October, the four representatives issued a declaration in favour of the proposal and agreed to put it to the *bakufu*. As the shogun and most of the *rōjū* were no longer in Edo,

⁸⁵⁷ HCPP, 1866, Vol. LXXVI.427, [3615], pp.36-7, No. 38, Russell to Parkes, 23 August 1865. Layard's original draft is enclosed in BL, Layard Papers, Add MS 39116, f.491.

⁸⁵⁸ BL, Layard Papers, Add MS 38953, Hammond to Layard, 1 September 1865.

⁸⁵⁹ To take one example, Grace Fox, who did not read either the Hammond or the Layard Papers, attributed the change in policy in the Foreign Office to Lord Clarendon in early 1866, by which time she believed Parkes had independently developed his own policy. See Fox, *op.cit.*, pp.172-79.

having departed for Osaka in the summer to prepare for a punitive expedition against Chōshū, Parkes was able to justify what London had spent so long agonising over.⁸⁶⁰ At the beginning of November, he arrived in Osaka at the head of a commanding squadron to open negotiations with the *rōjū*.

Denied the tactical advantage of using the distance between Kyoto and Edo to justify its delaying tactics and contradictory promises, the *rōjū* quickly acceded to all of Parkes's demands. Anti-*bakufu* agitators at the imperial court at Kyoto initially refused to comply, however, and demanded the resignation of the *rōjū* responsible for the concessions. This provoked consternation in Osaka, leading the shogun to offer his resignation and Parkes to issue a strongly-worded rebuke. With the British minister's patience running out, the imperial court was pressed into endorsing the treaties on 22 November 1865, although Kyoto continued to withhold approval for the opening of the new ports. It was at this point that Roches, who had remained aloof during the negotiations, intervened to broker a compromise. By drafting a note for the *rōjū* that convinced Parkes to accept imperial ratification of the treaties, tariff revision, and full payment of the indemnity in exchange for the continued closure of the ports until the date set by the London Protocol, Roches was able to postpone a crisis that threatened to engulf the *bakufu* and with it his entire policy.⁸⁶¹

Roches was careful to make no mention of his decisive role in delaying the opening of Osaka and Hyōgo to Paris, drawing Drouyn's attention instead to the discreet relations he believed Parkes was cultivating with Satsuma and Chōshū. Despite his irritation over what he saw as Parkes's jealousy regarding his own close relationship with the *bakufu*, Roches soon found himself working closely with his British colleague to thwart the *bakufu*'s efforts to renege on the promises it had made in Osaka. With its treasury increasingly depleted, the *bakufu* soon renewed its request to postpone payment of the indemnity almost as soon as the representatives returned to Yokohama.⁸⁶² Parkes used this request as leverage to secure a series of commercial concessions from the *bakufu* over the following months, culminating on 25 June 1866 with the signing of a convention that

⁸⁶⁰ This was the second such expedition announced by the *bakufu* in as many years. See Beasley, *Select Documents*, op.cit., pp.85-6; Fox, op.cit., pp.151-2; and Marius Jansen, *The Making of Modern Japan*, (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2002), pp.304-6.

⁸⁶¹ Beasley, *Select Documents*, op.cit., pp.80-3.

⁸⁶² Medzini, op.cit., pp.98-100; and Sims, op.cit., pp.49-50.

not only reduced the tariff on many exports and imports to five per cent but also removed many of the restrictions that Edo had introduced since 1859. The most important of these was the abandonment of the shogunate's monopoly on trade and the centuries-old system of *sakoku*, or 'closed country'. These were replaced with formal guarantees of the freedom of all Japanese merchants, *daimyō*, and *daimyō* retainers to trade and associate with foreigners at the ports without government interference, the right to employ foreign shipping in trade with the open ports, and the provision of passports for Japanese to travel abroad for study, trade, or as employees on board foreign ships.⁸⁶³ Within the space of less than a year, Parkes had secured almost all of the commercial concessions he had been empowered to seek, a stunning success that owed much to his refusal to take no for an answer from either the *bakufu* or his conniving French colleague. That he achieved this without abandoning the system of collective diplomacy bequeathed to him by Alcock was all the more remarkable.

Conclusions

Aside from the end of the American Civil War and some difficulties in the Near East, there were few domestic or foreign crises for the British government to contend with during 1865.⁸⁶⁴ As a result, for once the Foreign Office could concentrate on how best to protect British commercial interests in Japan, a country that appeared to be sliding inexorably towards civil war. The alarm in Whitehall at the unauthorised dispatch of Alcock's joint naval expedition against Chōshū, launched on the basis of a policy that neither Russell nor his subordinates fully understood, forced the Foreign Secretary and his advisors to confront the challenges facing the Japanese treaty-port system. Despite the expedition's apparent success, Alcock's hopes of using the defeat of anti-foreign extremism as a platform to negotiate a more stable relationship between the treaty powers and Japan, and indeed the treaty powers themselves, was swiftly dashed by his ignominious recall. Denied the fruits of his own victory, Alcock was forced to vacate the scene before he could create the conditions necessary to institute the fundamental change he believed was necessary.

⁸⁶³ Fox, *op.cit.*, pp.182-5. The full text of the Tariff Convention can be found in HCPP, 1867, Vol. LXXIV.379, [3758], pp.1-6, Parkes to Clarendon, No. 1, 27 June 1866.

⁸⁶⁴ See Paul Scherer, *Lord John Russell: A Biography*, (Selinsgrove, PA: Susquehanna University Press; London: Associated University Presses, 1999), p.323.

The vacuum of leadership that ensued was quickly filled by Roches, whose attempt to establish a 'special relationship' with the *bakufu* owed much to his personality and background as well as a desire to restore his reputation in Paris after the criticism he had received for associating himself with Alcock's policy. To that end, the chastened French minister immediately set about dismantling his British colleague's legacy by building political connections in Edo with a view to narrowing the commercial gap between Britain and France. On top of his nefarious schemes to monopolise the Japan trade, Roches's willingness to mislead his contacts within the *bakufu*, to misinform his diplomatic colleagues in Yokohama, and, above all, to deceive his own superiors back in Paris further demonstrated the *modus operandi* of a diplomat for whom the ends always justified the means. For Roches, the chance to secure personal and national glory by supplanting British influence over Japan's 'enclave empires' was too good to pass over.

Standing in his path was Charles Winchester, a very capable agent who was hampered by the limitations of his powers and the absence of definitive instructions from home. Given these disadvantages, Winchester did well to make full use of the growing intelligence network at his disposal in order to scupper Roches's silk monopoly scheme. The overtures to Winchester made by agents of Chōshū, coupled with the testimony received first-hand from Satsuma representatives in London, convinced Layard and Hammond that the best way to maintain Britain's dominant commercial and political position in Japan was to bypass the *bakufu* altogether and open direct relations with the emperor. Russell's decision to overrule his subordinates on such a substantive issue said much about his cautious style of diplomacy.

In years gone by, the interventionist measures put forward in Alcock's March 1865 memorandum might have found a more sympathetic ear in Lord Palmerston, who may well have compelled his reluctant Foreign Secretary into approving a policy that had much in common with his preferred method of diplomacy. By the summer of 1865, however, Palmerston's health was in rapid decline due to a bladder infection that would eventually lead to his death in October. Although this did not prevent him from winning an increased majority at a general election in July, it did lead to his gradual retreat from public life thereafter.⁸⁶⁵ As the octogenarian Prime Minister's vitality ebbed away so too did the dynamism that had characterised his foreign policy for decades, and Russell's

⁸⁶⁵ David Brown, *Palmerston: A Biography*, (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2012), p.476.

inherent aversion for decisive measures – not only in Japan but in foreign policy in general – came increasingly to the fore. The drift in policy that permeated through the Foreign Office as a result was felt by Winchester as far away as Japan, and it was palpably evident in Russell's decision to reject Hammond and Layard's recommendations in the summer of 1865 despite mounting evidence that the *bakufu* was colluding with the French to evade the treaties and maintain its monopoly on trade, particularly in silk.

In fact, the troubling news from Japan only made Russell more determined to avoid direct intervention in Japanese domestic affairs, which he feared would risk a costly war that the French were well placed to exploit. The last thing the Foreign Secretary wanted at this time was to encourage Napoléon III's ambitions in East Asia, especially while there still remained a possibility of using collective diplomacy to press the *bakufu* into granting the commercial concessions that Britain desired. It was a prudent policy, for Russell was not to know that Paris had no grand designs for Japan beyond the fulfilment of what Drouyn believed were legitimate commercial contracts to assist the *bakufu* in the process of modernisation. It was precisely because Britain already had significant commercial interests at stake that Russell was so unwilling to provoke a rift with the French unless absolutely necessary. In the end, his reluctance to intervene independently in Japan's constitutional crisis was rewarded, as Parkes was able to secure almost everything Britain wanted without the need to resort to unilateral measures.

Conversely, the fact that Japan was of such limited interest to Drouyn meant he paid little attention to the complex political developments taking place in the country, making it easy for Roches to convince his superior that it was in the *bakufu*'s best interests to pay the indemnity and to enter into hugely expensive commercial schemes. This juxtaposition between policymaking by government and policymaking by personality is important, as historians have often framed the policy differences that developed between Parkes and Roches during the final years of the Tokugawa shogunate as primarily the result of a clash of personalities. As this chapter has revealed, although Parkes certainly had the character to challenge his French colleague on matters of policy, his actions were always consistent with the instructions he received from home. By contrast, Roches would continue to act entirely on his own volition for the remainder of his tenure in Japan, with disastrous consequences for both himself and the *bakufu*.

CHAPTER 8

False Friends: Léon Roches and Sir Harry Parkes, 1866

During the twilight years of the Tokugawa shogunate, the British and French representatives in Japan faced the difficult challenge of safeguarding their respective national interests while the regime that signed the ‘unequal treaties’ battled for its very survival. As ever, it was impossible to separate the domestic political and social upheaval that would eventually consume the *bakufu* from its treaty relationship with the Western powers, which had reached a definitive crossroads with the abolition of Edo’s monopoly on trade in the Tariff Convention of 25 June 1866. Following this success, Sir Harry Parkes hoped to guide the *bakufu* towards the creation of a more equitable treaty-port system that allowed the *daimyō* to share in the profits of foreign commerce. This policy brought him into direct conflict with Léon Roches, who became increasingly committed to protecting his political and commercial investments with Edo above all else. Given their unique personalities and thirst for leadership, it was not long before the uneasy accord between these two men gave way to rivalry and rancour, as each worked to thwart the other’s attempts to implement two very different visions for the liberalisation of Japan’s restrictive system of commerce.

Despite the differences that developed between Parkes and Roches during this period, it was clear to both that Japan’s constitutional crisis had reached a critical phase. This was of little concern to their respective governments, however, which were as usual preoccupied with more pressing developments elsewhere. For France, a distant crisis in the Far East paled into significance compared to the challenge posed by Prussian expansionism in Europe, the ongoing Roman question, and the faltering campaign in Mexico, all of which led Napoléon III to question the viability of his entire interventionist foreign policy. Meanwhile in London, a change in political administrations led to a significant shift in British foreign policy priorities. The slow disintegration of the once close relationship between Britain and France in Japan therefore went largely unnoticed at home, leaving Parkes and Roches alone to battle for control over the treaty-port system and the power to shape the burgeoning ‘enclave empires’ contained within it.

Turbulent times

Lord Russell's decision not to abandon collective diplomacy in exchange for direct relations with the Mikado was one of his last as Foreign Secretary. Following Lord Palmerston's death on 18 October 1865, he accepted an invitation from Queen Victoria to form a new government later that month. The new Prime Minister, who was no spring chicken himself at the age of seventy-four, faced a daunting task in holding together the loose coalition of Whigs, Peelites, and Radicals that Palmerston had so skilfully assembled over the past six years, especially since the Liberal Party's victory at the general election earlier that year was widely considered 'more a personal victory for Palmerston than for Liberalism'.⁸⁶⁶ The need to placate these disparate parties reduced Russell's scope for substantial alterations to Palmerston's Cabinet, making his most notable appointment that of Lord Clarendon as his successor at the Foreign Office. Having already served as Foreign Secretary during the 1850s, Clarendon was a safe pair of hands whose appointment was welcomed by Hammond as 'merely a change of friends'.⁸⁶⁷

The feeling of continuity was apparent in Clarendon's Japan policy. Contrary to the assertions of Grace Fox, who has placed much emphasis on Clarendon's role in developing a policy of neutrality towards Japan's domestic conflict, the new Foreign Secretary simply distilled Russell's cautious position into a definitive set of instructions for Parkes in the event of civil war.⁸⁶⁸ Admittedly, the impetus for this move was Clarendon's decision to reverse his predecessor's position and meet with Satsuma's agents in late March 1866, a meeting that convinced him that such a conflict was an imminent prospect. Even so, Clarendon's initial response was as cautious as that of Russell the previous year. Parkes was warned not to express an opinion for or against any contesting party or to seek any political influence in Japan, but simply to focus on developing commerce within the country. He was specifically precluded from negotiating separate trading arrangements with the *daimyō*, but free to encourage them to work with the *bakufu* and the emperor to put an end to Japan's restrictive system of commerce.

⁸⁶⁶ Paul Scherer, *Lord John Russell: A Biography*, (Selinsgrove, PA: Susquehanna University Press; London: Associated University Presses, 1999), p.323.

⁸⁶⁷ L.P. Add MS 38953, Hammond to Layard, 25 October 1865.

⁸⁶⁸ See Grace Fox, *Britain and Japan, 1858-1883*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1969), pp.175-6.

Above all, Clarendon stressed that the British government's policy in the event of civil war was to remain neutral while requiring all sides to strictly observe the treaties.⁸⁶⁹

As usual, this official dispatch revealed little about what Clarendon actually discussed with the Satsuma men in March. Much more revealing was a private synopsis of the meeting sent to the Foreign Secretary by Lawrence Oliphant, who had acted as the middle man between the Satsuma party and the Foreign Office. This note, which was later forwarded to Parkes, alleged that all the principal *daimyō* were now hopeful that the treaty powers would ask the emperor to convoke an assembly of the great lords at Kyoto, where each would be invited to sign the treaties. Between this assembly and the exchange of ratifications with the foreign representatives, a delay of at least three months was necessary to allow for 'deliberations' to take place regarding new arrangements on the conduct of foreign affairs. Unless such arrangements were made, Oliphant had been assured that the *daimyō* would embroil Japan in civil war whenever another port was opened under exclusive *bakufu* control.⁸⁷⁰ This intelligence corroborated information Hammond had received privately from Parkes just a few days earlier that Satsuma was opposed to the opening of Hyōgo on the basis that the *bakufu* would gain control of all trade in the Inland Sea. It also supported the British minister's theory that Edo was attempting to defer payment of the Shimonoseki indemnity in order to conserve resources ahead of an armed struggle with the *daimyō* and reactionaries at the imperial court.⁸⁷¹

With this fresh intelligence in hand, Hammond wrote a candid private letter to Parkes. Though it would 'never do' for foreigners to take an 'active or ostensible part' in promoting a discussion between the *bakufu*, *daimyō*, and emperor, he explained, Parkes could perhaps make 'incidental remarks' in conversations with the *rōjū* to demonstrate that 'a way of escape is open to them from the difficulties of their position... which cannot be removed by perseverance in the narrow and selfish policy which they have hitherto pursued'.⁸⁷² If the *bakufu* continued to deny there was any desire among the *daimyō* for reform, Parkes was authorised to state that he possessed categorical intelligence to the

⁸⁶⁹ TNA, FO262/105, Clarendon to Parkes, 9 April 1865. This dispatch was shared with the French government and can be found in Archives Diplomatiques, Paris (AD), CPJ59/14, ff.102-4.

⁸⁷⁰ Cambridge University Library, Cambridge (CUL), Parkes Papers, MSParkes33/16, Oliphant to Clarendon, 25 March 1866.

⁸⁷¹ The National Archives, London (TNA), FO46/65, Parkes to Hammond, 17 January 1866 (received 16 March).

⁸⁷² CUL, Parkes Papers, MSParkes1/H4, Hammond to Parkes, 26 April 1866.

contrary, but he was to be very careful about making ‘too zealous an interference with the internal movements of the Japanese Government’.⁸⁷³ He was also warned not to give Edo any clue as to the source of this intelligence for fear of endangering the Satsuma men, who had travelled overseas illegally and were already under close scrutiny from *bakufu* officials in London.

While Hammond clearly accepted that the commercial and political situation in Japan could be improved if the *bakufu* agreed to share the fruits of trade, neither he nor Clarendon were prepared to ask the emperor to convoke a conference of the great *daimyō*. As far as Hammond was concerned, there were no guarantees that such overt interference in Japan’s domestic affairs would benefit British trade. In fact, it was more likely to have the opposite effect, as any changes to the structure of the Japanese state resulting from foreign intervention would be unacceptable to its people. Such caution was to prove prescient, for what no one in London knew at the time was that secret discussions were already underway in Osaka to negotiate Satsuma’s abandonment of the policy of *kōbu-gattai* in favour of a formal alliance with Chōshū to overthrow the Tokugawa shogunate.⁸⁷⁴ This would be much easier to achieve were the treaty powers to compel the shogun to attend a meeting of all the *daimyō* at Kyoto, where he could be stripped of his powers once and for all. By eschewing the advice of the Satsuma delegation, therefore, Clarendon and Hammond insulated the British government against accusations of complicity in any attempted coup.

The fact that Satsuma even considered asking the Foreign Office to intervene with the Mikado on its behalf indicated how little the Japanese understood about Britain’s foreign policy priorities. Even before Palmerston’s untimely demise, the ‘gunboat minister’ had become increasingly reluctant to enforce the policy of liberal interventionism that had characterised his years as Foreign Secretary. His successor as Prime Minister was even less likely to advocate such active measures, given that it was Russell who had borne the brunt of criticism as Foreign Secretary for interfering in the internal affairs of other countries – a foreign policy disparaged by Lord Derby during the Schleswig-Holstein debacle as ‘meddle and muddle’.⁸⁷⁵ As a matter of principle, therefore, it was extremely

⁸⁷³ *Idem*.

⁸⁷⁴ W. G. Beasley, ed., *Select Documents on Japanese Foreign Policy, 1853-1868*, (London: Oxford University Press, 1955), pp.85-6.

⁸⁷⁵ *Hansard*, Series 3, House of Lords, 4 February 1864, Vol. 173, c.28.

unlikely that Russell would ever have agreed to direct intervention in Japan of the type requested by Satsuma.

As ever, there were also more pressing issues for the Prime Minister to contend with than Japan. By the spring of 1866, his ministry was already beginning to falter over the passage of a new Reform Bill, which Russell had made the signature issue of his administration despite strong opposition from conservative members of his Cabinet such as the Duke of Somerset.⁸⁷⁶ After narrowly surviving weeks of rancorous parliamentary debate in April, the Bill was eventually defeated on 19 June by a Conservative motion. After concerted efforts to find a solution to the impasse failed, Russell and his government resigned just over a week later, bringing an end to seven years of uninterrupted Liberal rule. If British intervention in Japan's impending civil struggle was already highly unlikely before the change of ministries, the return of a traditionally protectionist and isolationist Conservative administration led by Lord Derby rendered it virtually impossible.⁸⁷⁷

While the British were preoccupied with domestic affairs during the first half of 1866, the French were focused on the deteriorating situation in Mexico. The military campaign there had gone from bad to worse in the two years since Napoléon III had installed the Habsburg prince Ferdinand Maximilian as emperor in 1864, with the French forces struggling to overcome the resistance of the comparatively small but intensely patriotic republican guerrilla forces. Maximilian had also proved himself an unpopular monarch, and his announcement in December 1865 that he could no longer afford to defray the costs of the French expeditionary force provided Napoléon III with the pretext he needed to announce the withdrawal of French troops at the beginning of 1866. At a time of increasing concern about the Prussian menace in Europe, the emperor could no longer risk antagonising a U.S. government that stood ready to reinforce the 'Monroe Doctrine' after the American Civil War had ended in May 1865. He attempted to disguise this admission of French weakness by claiming that the situation in Mexico was improving, but this was belied by the string of damaging defeats suffered by the imperial forces over the months that followed. With the Mexican Empire on the verge of total collapse, the monumental failure of the emperor's Mexican adventure was clear for all to see.⁸⁷⁸

⁸⁷⁶ CUL, Parkes Papers, MSParkes1/H3, Hammond to Parkes, 26 March 1866.

⁸⁷⁷ Scherer, *op.cit.*, pp.325-8.

⁸⁷⁸ Éric Anceau, *Napoléon III: un Saint-Simon à cheval*, (Paris: Éditions Tallandier, 2008), pp.430-1; and Pierre Milza, *Napoléon III*, (Paris: Perrin, 2004), pp.645-7.

Unsurprisingly, the French government had little time to consider the situation in Japan during the early part of 1866, other than to approve of Roches's role in securing imperial ratification of the treaties in Osaka.⁸⁷⁹ In early April, however, Drouyn was forced to turn his attention to Japanese affairs when Lord Cowley complained that Roches was encouraging the *bakufu* to believe that the treaty powers would agree to forego any further payments of the Shimonoseki indemnity if Edo agreed to turn Yokohama into a free port. According to Cowley, Roches had justified this move to Parkes on the basis that Drouyn himself had first mooted the idea of a free port during the visit of the Japanese embassy to Paris in 1864. In a testy dispatch, the Foreign Minister pointed out to Roches that circumstances had changed significantly since 1864, particularly in terms of the obstacles to foreign trade at the treaty ports. He also enclosed a translated summary of Parkes's arguments against the free port proposal in order to make his disapproval crystal clear.⁸⁸⁰

This intervention demonstrated Drouyn's unwillingness to antagonise the British over Japanese matters. Yet this did not prevent him from acting to protect French interests whenever he considered it necessary to do so. One example of this was his reaction to Clarendon's instruction that Parkes should encourage the *daimyō* to work with the *bakufu* to institute a less restrictive system of trade. Since the foreign representatives were only empowered to conduct relations with *bakufu* officials, Drouyn was worried that it would be difficult for Parkes to fulfil this part of his orders without undermining the government at Edo.⁸⁸¹ His concern turned into alarm when two dispatches arrived from Roches complaining that Parkes's pro-*daimyō* tendencies threatened both the authority of the *bakufu* and the maintenance of a collective policy of neutrality in Japan's domestic conflict – a struggle he portrayed as an attempt by those who had murdered foreigners and opened fire on Western shipping to challenge the shogun's legitimacy.⁸⁸² Drouyn considered this assessment of the political situation as entirely fair, and he thought it equally important that Britain and France were in complete agreement over Japan policy.⁸⁸³ Fortunately, his concerns that Parkes was encouraging the *daimyō* to subvert

⁸⁷⁹ AD, CPJ59/14, Drouyn to Roches, No.1, 24 February 1866.

⁸⁸⁰ AD, CPJ59/14, Drouyn to Roches, No. 2, 24 April 1866; and enclosures.

⁸⁸¹ AD, CPJ59/14, Drouyn to Cowley, 26 April 1866. Clarendon's dispatch has been filed earlier in this volume in line with its date of dispatch (9 April). It can be found on ff.102-4.

⁸⁸² AD, CPJ59/14, Roches to Drouyn, No. 56, 28 February 1866 (received 30 April); & No. 57, 15 March 1866 (received 7 May).

⁸⁸³ See annotations at the top of AD, CPJ59/14, Roches to Drouyn, No. 57, 15 March 1866.

Edo's authority were dispelled by Hammond, who assured the French ambassador in London that the British minister had been specifically instructed to act in concert with Roches.⁸⁸⁴ Hammond was equally confident that Parkes would act prudently vis-à-vis Japan's political crisis, for the British minister had only recently expressed the view that 'far more may be effected through the Tycoon than through the Daimios', whom he believed were incapable of putting aside their own jealousies in the national interest.⁸⁸⁵

Reassured, Drouyn focused on organising the dispatch of a French *mission militaire* to instruct the shogun's army. Desperate to strengthen its military forces, the *bakufu* had been unwilling to wait for London's answer to its request in early 1865 for British military instructors. The British government had finally sanctioned a mission later that year, but by the time Parkes learned of this decision the head of a new *bakufu* delegation to Europe, Shibata Takenata,⁸⁸⁶ had already been authorised to accept a similar French offer. The British minister was not unduly concerned, however, as the shogun's military bureau had also requested permission to send a group of young men to study military science in Britain. Parkes had no objection to such an initiative, as he believed that the only way the shogun could maintain his supremacy was by increasing his military strength.⁸⁸⁷ To that end, he also hoped to establish a small camp of instruction in Japan before the arrival of the French officers from Europe, but he was unable to make much headway before the *bakufu* submitted a formal application to Roches for a military mission consisting of over thirty artillery, cavalry, and infantry instructors.⁸⁸⁸ It was formally sanctioned by Marshal Randon, the Minister of War, in May 1866, albeit with half the number of instructors requested by the *bakufu*.⁸⁸⁹

Roches was fortunate that this military mission was approved before the outbreak of a fresh crisis in Europe that would consume Drouyn's attention for the remainder of his

⁸⁸⁴ AD, CPJ59/14, Drouyn to Tour d'Auvergne, 8 May 1866; & De La Tour d'Auvergne to Drouyn, 21 May 1866.

⁸⁸⁵ TNA, FO46/67, Parkes to Hammond, 28 February 1866 (received 16 May).

⁸⁸⁶ Shibata was appointed to head the new mission in May 1865. Its purpose was to confirm the arrangements provisionally agreed in Edo for French support in constructing Yokosuka and training the shogun's army.

⁸⁸⁷ TNA, FO46/65, Parkes to Hammond, 17 January 1866.

⁸⁸⁸ AD, CPJ59/14, Roches to Drouyn, No. 55, 15 February 1866.

⁸⁸⁹ AD, CPJ59/14, Drouyn to Roches, No. 3, 19 May 1866. See also Mark D. Ericson, *The Tokugawa Bakufu and Léon Roches*, (Honolulu, HI: University of Hawaii [Ph.D. Thesis], 1978), pp.155-9; Meron Medzini, *French Policy in Japan During the Closing Years of the Tokugawa Regime*, (Cambridge, MA: East Asian Research Center, Harvard University, 1971), pp.127-9.

tenure as Foreign Minister. The war that erupted between Prussia and Austria on 14 June 1866 could not have been better timed for the Prussian leader Otto von Bismarck: the French were still engaged in Mexico and in no state to launch an opportunistic attack on the Rhine; the Russians were indebted to Prussia for the support that Bismarck had offered during the Polish uprising of 1863; and the British were focused on the threat that Napoléon III's expansionist schemes posed to their international interests. For his part, the French emperor hoped that the war might also bring benefits for France. Yet he realised too late that French neutrality should come at a price, waiting until just days before the outbreak of fighting before attempting to secure last-minute guarantees from both sides. Though the British often assumed that the emperor favoured active measures, on this occasion he had hoped to frighten Austria to the negotiating table in order to secure concessions on Italy without the need for war. Once it became clear that a conflict was inevitable, he then anticipated a long and protracted one that would enable him to pressure both sides into revising the 1815 treaty settlement. This policy seriously underestimated the military capabilities of Prussia, whose decisive defeat of the Austrian forces at the Battle of Sadowa on 3 July 1866 plunged the Second Empire into crisis.⁸⁹⁰

It was obvious to many in France that the emperor's failure to intervene in the conflict had allowed Prussia to establish a position of dominance that seriously threatened French interests. In response to growing public pressure, the emperor ordered Drouyn to demand the restoration of the 1814 frontier as the price for French acceptance of Prussian aggrandisement. Naturally, Bismarck had no intention of ceding any German territory to France, and when rumours of his refusal reached Paris, Napoléon III attempted to deflect the blame by sacrificing his Foreign Minister. Yet the damage was already done. After the capitulation of the Austrians and the dissolution of the German Confederation at the end of August, the emperor was forced to accept Prussia's victory without any of the territorial concessions he had sought.⁸⁹¹ This disastrous outcome was compounded by the looming problem of the evacuation of French troops from Rome, which was scheduled to take place by mid-December 1866.⁸⁹² Since the Italians had regained the Veneto without the need for French help, Napoléon III was now in the peculiar position of being the only sovereign in Europe standing in the way of Italian unification. Having failed to anticipate

⁸⁹⁰ Milza, *op.cit.*, pp.648-51; and William E. Echard, *Napoleon III and the Concert of Europe*, (Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 1983), pp.210-7 & pp.236-42.

⁸⁹¹ Milza, *op.cit.*, pp.651-2.

⁸⁹² Echard, *op.cit.*, pp.209-10.

the rise of a powerful new adversary on his north-eastern border, his continued commitment to papal sovereignty now risked antagonising France's south-eastern neighbour as well. Meanwhile, his puppet regime in Mexico was hurtling towards collapse as advancing republican forces closed in on Mexico City during the autumn of 1866. With the Second Empire besieged on all sides by the burgeoning nationalisms the emperor had helped to unleash, the last thing on French minds was East Asia, least of all Japan.

Warning signs

While the emperor and his new Foreign Minister, Lionel de Moustier, grappled with these converging crises in Paris, Roches was free to pursue his '*politique personelle*' with impunity. Indeed, by the summer of 1866 his influence with the *bakufu* was such that it was beginning to drive a wedge between the French minister and his British colleague. The problem was not simply one of personalities, although this was certainly a significant factor according to the renowned British diplomatist Algernon Bertram Mitford,⁸⁹³ who wrote in his memoirs that 'Parkes and Roches hated each other and were as jealous as a couple of women'.⁸⁹⁴ It was also that Roches's increasingly partisan support for the *bakufu* began to undermine Parkes's efforts to encourage the shogunate to open up Japan's system of commerce. These tensions only began to emerge after the conclusion of the Tariff Convention, for Roches had supported the tariff negotiations in the hope that an agreement would improve Parkes's attitude towards the *bakufu*.⁸⁹⁵ Yet the policy he pursued behind the scenes both before and after the convention was signed demonstrated that his primary goal in seeking to 'liberalise' Japan's system of trade was to find a new means by which to corner the Japanese market for France.

Roches could take some satisfaction from the fact that French trade with Japan had improved significantly since his arrival in 1864, but Britain still controlled over two-thirds of the Yokohama trade by the end of the following year. He therefore remained determined to use his political connections in Edo to increase the amount of silk shipped

⁸⁹³ Mitford joined the staff at the British Legation in Yokohama as second secretary in October 1866.

⁸⁹⁴ Hugh Cortazzi, ed., *Mitford's Japan: The Memoirs and Recollections, 1866-1906, of Algernon Bertram Mitford, the first Lord Redesdale*, (London: Athlone, 1985), p.22.

⁸⁹⁵ Richard Sims, *French Policy Towards the Bakufu and Meiji Japan, 1854-95*, (Richmond: Japan Library, 1998), p.50.

directly to France even after the abandonment of his silk monopoly scheme in early 1865. When commercial restrictions on silkworm eggs were finally lifted in the middle of that year, Roches spotted another opportunity to create an exclusive French trading relationship with the *bakufu* – this time in a way that would not breach the treaties. His latest scheme involved the establishment of a commercial company consisting of two trading associations: one of French merchants in Paris; the other of an equivalent number of Japanese merchants in Yokohama. Together they would enter into commercial relations, outside of official channels, by exchanging information about their respective markets and pooling their capital. This would enable merchants of both countries to turn a profit from the Japanese market and provide the *bakufu* with the means to strengthen its control over trade in the open ports. The fact that France was already the primary destination for Japanese silk made it easy to convince influential officials in Edo to approve this scheme, especially as the *bakufu* was already so reliant on French support for the shipyard project. Fleury-Hérard was duly appointed to help organise the project in Paris and to send someone with knowledge of French companies to Japan, while Shibata was instructed to liaise with the French banker to make all necessary arrangements.⁸⁹⁶

The import-export company proposal was the latest example of Roches's determination to address the continuing trade imbalance between Britain and France in Japan by whatever means possible. He knew that the *bakufu* would gladly support a scheme that would not only increase its share in the profits of foreign trade but also deny them to the *daimyō*. The main challenge was to convince Drouyn to rubberstamp a scheme that contradicted the Quai d'Orsay's traditionally conservative policy in Japan. To complicate matters, he also had to consider the opinion of Armand Béhic, the Minister of Commerce, Agriculture and Public Works, as the company would need the support of both ministries to access credit from official sources in Paris. Roches therefore sent a carefully crafted dispatch to Drouyn that appealed to the sensibilities of both ministers, not least by creating the impression that it was the *rōjū* who had approached him with the proposal when it was actually the other way round.⁸⁹⁷ He also highlighted the *bakufu*'s decision to accept an invitation to participate in the Paris Exposition in 1867, the agreements it had already entered into for the construction of the Yokosuka shipyard and a new mint, and

⁸⁹⁶ Ericson, op.cit., pp.86-9; and Medzini, op.cit., pp.110-4.

⁸⁹⁷ The Japanese sources consulted by Ericson confirm that it was the French minister who first suggested the idea to the *bakufu*; see Ericson, op.cit., pp.87-8 & p.117, footnote 5.

its stated ambition to improve the country's agriculture and industry as evidence of a desire to modernise the country.⁸⁹⁸ The establishment of an import-export company was consistent with this ambition, which Roches believed was being held back by inexperience, a lack of credit, and the mistrust of the native people – all problems that could be addressed by the creation of a powerful foreign company to work with a similar association of approved Japanese merchants. In short, this was an unmissable opportunity to corner the Japanese export trade, especially in silk, as well as to boost French imports to Japan. 'If such a project is feasible,' Roches added with typical panache, 'Japan would be for us what China is for England...a French market.'⁸⁹⁹

The most important passages of this dispatch were those where Roches argued that the company would not impede free trade because it would facilitate commercial transactions between merchants rather than between governments. These passages were all underlined by Drouyn, and were probably instrumental in securing the French government's approval for the scheme in December. Béhic was particularly enthusiastic about the project, so much so that he introduced Fleury-Hérard to several major financiers in Paris over the months that followed. The proposal was eventually taken up by the Société Générale, a financial corporation established in 1864 to promote the development of French industry and commerce through the creation of joint-stock companies. It duly established a committee of company officials, export merchants, prominent bankers, and members of the Paris Chamber of Commerce to consider the way forward.⁹⁰⁰ In May 1866, this committee reported back to the Board of Directors at the Société Générale that Paul-Jacques Coulet, a deputy manager of the Messageries Impériales and nephew of Béhic, was being dispatched to Japan to investigate the commercial conditions in the country. Critically, Coulet was also authorised 'to negotiate with the Japanese Government an agreement guaranteeing the important profits of commerce'.⁹⁰¹

There was no mention of any negotiating priorities in Coulet's official letter of authorisation, however, which simply stated the committee's ambition to develop

⁸⁹⁸ The *bakufu* initially rejected invitations to send a delegation to the Paris Exposition, but were belatedly stirred into organising an official presence for the occasion when it transpired that Satsuma had already agreed to send their own party. See Andrew Cobbing, *The Japanese Discovery of Victorian Britain: Early Travel Encounters in the Far West*, (Folkestone: Japan Library, 1998), p.20.

⁸⁹⁹ AD, CCY/4, Roches to Drouyn, 17 October 1865.

⁹⁰⁰ A complete list of the founding members of the administration committee of the import-export company can be found in CUL, Parkes Papers, MSParkes33/18.

⁹⁰¹ Quoted in Ericson, op.cit. p.92.

commercial relations with Japan through the establishment of a *Compagnie Française d'Exportation et d'Importation* backed by 60 million Francs of capital. The letter further authorised Coulet to negotiate in the committee's name, but he was instructed to refer all treaties and matters of importance back to Paris. Coulet was also furnished with two letters of introduction for Roches – one from Béhic and one from Fleury-Hérard – which revealed much about their contrasting expectations for the company. According to Béhic's letter, Coulet had been sent to Japan to explore opportunities to develop new markets for French industry and commerce. By contrast, Fleury-Hérard's letter stated explicitly that Coulet was coming to Japan not only to broker commercial agreements with Japanese merchants, but also 'to negotiate certain special items with the local government'.⁹⁰² It would appear, therefore, that the founders of the import-export company hoped to monopolise certain aspects of the Japan trade under the noses of the British. Given Béhic's family connection to Coulet and his role in bringing the committee together in the first place, it also seems likely that the Minister of Commerce had at least some inkling of what Roches, Fleury-Hérard, and his associates were up to.

Although Parkes was entirely unaware of these developments, he grew increasingly concerned during the Tariff Convention negotiations that the French were determined 'to leave no stone unturned that will extend their position' in Japan.⁹⁰³ In April 1866 – well before any word of the import-export scheme could have reached Japan – he already sensed a 'disposition on the part of our French friends to monopolize arrangements that might minister to their influence'.⁹⁰⁴ At the same time, Parkes was confident that he was making progress in his own relations with Japan's ruling classes, which improved significantly after he successfully asserted the right to receive visits from representatives of the *daimyō* at the British legation. It was not long before he received delegates from Satsuma *han*, who invited him to visit their capital at Kagoshima at his earliest convenience. Given the shogun's prolonged absence from Edo, Parkes was now convinced that a power struggle was underway in Kyoto, and that significant constitutional changes, such as the centralisation of power through the creation of a chamber of *daimyō*, were a real possibility. Although he was sceptical that the *daimyō* could ever unite in the national interest in this way, he was determined to find out more about their intentions. He therefore insisted upon visiting Satsuma's Edo residence in

⁹⁰² Quoted in *ibid.*, p.94; see pp.90-4 for a complete analysis of these letters.

⁹⁰³ TNA, FO46/68, Parkes to Hammond, 28 April 1866.

⁹⁰⁴ *Idem.*

mid-May despite stiff opposition from the *rōjū*, before resolving to visit Kagoshima as soon as the convention negotiations were complete.⁹⁰⁵

The fact that Parkes was keen to build bridges with the *daimyo* did not make him insensitive to the dangers of offering them any encouragement in their struggle with the *bakufu*. The arrival of Hammond's letter detailing Satsuma's request for the treaty powers to intervene in Kyoto therefore caused him considerable alarm. He advised Hammond to take the views of the Satsuma agents in London with a grain of salt, for they did not speak for all the great lords. He also rejected the premise that imperial ratification of the treaties meant that the treaty powers now had direct access to the Mikado, and doubted that an appeal to the emperor by the foreign representatives would have any significant effect. Such problems were better worked out by the *daimyō* themselves, he argued, and it was intensely dangerous to give the great lords the impression that the treaties were somehow invalid without their approval. Parkes was now even more determined to meet with as many of the *daimyō* as possible, not only to discover whether they were genuinely committed to observing the treaties but also to explain to them personally that Britain had no intention of interfering in Japan's system of government.⁹⁰⁶

Far from favouring the *daimyō* as Roches alleged, therefore, Parkes remained mistrustful about their intentions during the first half of 1866. In fact, he became increasingly convinced as the year wore on that a large proportion of the *daimyō* desired a say in the confirmation of the treaties because they were deeply opposed to the opening of Hyōgo and Osaka.⁹⁰⁷ There was therefore little need for him to adjust his approach towards the *bakufu* upon receiving Clarendon's instructions on the neutrality policy, or even after the arrival of Hammond's private note urging him to press Edo to relinquish control over foreign trade. After all, by the time these instructions arrived Parkes was just days away from concluding the Tariff Convention, which he hoped would prove that the *bakufu* had finally abandoned its commercial monopoly. Parkes had not only received repeated assurances on this point from the *rōjū* during the negotiations, but also learned that agents of Satsuma were now free to come and go in Yokohama as they pleased. In his opinion,

⁹⁰⁵ TNA, FO46/68, Parkes to Hammond, 16 May 1866.

⁹⁰⁶ TNA, FO46/68, Parkes to Hammond, 29 May 1866; and enclosed memorandum.

⁹⁰⁷ TNA, FO46/68, Parkes to Hammond, 14 June 1866.

the complete opening of Japan to foreign intercourse was only a matter of time, regardless of how willingly the *bakufu* implemented the convention in the months to come.⁹⁰⁸

Despite Parkes's efforts to distance himself from the Satsuma plot, the perception continued to grow within Japan that the British legation had adopted a pro-*daimyō* policy. This was thanks in large part to a series of articles on British policy that appeared in *The Japan Times* between March and May 1866. These articles, which were published anonymously by Satow without Parkes's knowledge, were later translated into Japanese and distributed across the country. They argued that direct relations between the treaty powers and the Mikado was the best means to facilitate trade with all of Japan's domains, and that the constitution of the Japanese government should be remodelled into a confederation of *daimyō*.⁹⁰⁹ The similarity to the proposals put forward by the Satsuma agents in London was no coincidence, for Satow had assiduously cultivated close relations with influential samurai from Satsuma, Chōshū, and other *daimyō* domains since the bombardments of Kagoshima and Shimonoseki. Many of these samurai believed passionately that the shogun was nothing more than the emperor's principal vassal and that he should not be regarded by foreigners as the sovereign of Japan. Although Satow was probably unaware at this stage that Satsuma and Chōshū had already entered into a formal alliance to overthrow the Tokugawa, he felt motivated to write these articles out of his self-confessed hatred for 'despotic institutions'.⁹¹⁰ The mistake made by the Japanese at the time and successive generations of Japanese historians ever since was to associate Satow's views inextricably with those of Parkes.⁹¹¹ In reality, the British minister had absolutely no intention of defying the wishes of his government by interfering directly in Japan's constitutional crisis in the way that his subordinate desired.

As Fox has correctly stated, the influence of these articles upon the policies of both the *bakufu* and the *daimyō* should not be underestimated.⁹¹² They provoked such suspicion in Edo that Roches was asked at the end of July to follow Parkes to Nagasaki to counter any impression of Western sympathy for the *daimyō* cause, an invitation which the French

⁹⁰⁸ TNA, Hammond Papers, FO391/14, Parkes to Hammond, 27 June 1866.

⁹⁰⁹ Sir Ernest Mason Satow, *A Diplomat in Japan*, (London: Seeley, Service and Co., 1921), pp.159-60. Satow's articles can be found in *The Japan Times*, 16 March 1866 & 19 May 1866 and are reprinted in Fox, op.cit., pp.566-75.

⁹¹⁰ Satow, op.cit., p.157.

⁹¹¹ See Sims, op.cit., p.58.

⁹¹² Fox, op.cit., p.180.

minister eagerly accepted.⁹¹³ By this time, however, Parkes was already well on his way to Kagoshima, having intercepted a letter from Hammond at Nagasaki detailing Roches's complaint about his so-called *pro-daimyō* tendencies. 'He has never found in me an advocate of the opening of Daimio ports,' Parkes replied indignantly, 'If report speaks truth Roches has a more direct interest than his colleagues in the maintenance of the Tycoon's supremacy, as a considerable amount of machinery and materiel for an arsenal was contracted for by Shibata when in France and the advances of money obtained from the Tycoon do not yet cover the shipments made upon these contracts.'⁹¹⁴ Though increasingly angry and distrustful of his meddling French colleague, Parkes remained focused on uncovering the real cause of Satsuma's continued opposition to the opening of Osaka. With the outbreak of hostilities between Chōshū and the *bakufu* seemingly imminent, he also hoped to convince the Prince of Satsuma to intervene to prevent all-out civil war.⁹¹⁵

The plot thickens

Parkes's visit to Kagoshima in late July proved much more revealing than first anticipated. Following a series of private conversations with Satsuma officials, he discovered that the emperor had only agreed to ratify the treaties after receiving guarantees from the shogun that no more ports would be opened. He also learned that the *bakufu* was striving to prevent an assembly of the *daimyo*, who were only opposed to the opening of Osaka out of fear that the shogun would deny them the commercial advantages they currently enjoyed in the city. After Parkes had digested this startling intelligence, he urged the Satsuma ministers to pursue amicable negotiations with a view to bringing about the constitutional reforms they desired. He was reassured that the *daimyō* were not seeking a change not to seek a change of dynasty but merely a change in system that would give them a voice in the management of Japan's national affairs and legislation.⁹¹⁶

⁹¹³ AD, CPJ59/14, Roches to Drouyn, No. 69, 27 August 1866. See also Sims, *op.cit.*, p.51.

⁹¹⁴ TNA, Hammond Papers, FO391/14, Parkes to Hammond, 19 July 1866.

⁹¹⁵ *Ibid.* Parkes was unaware that fighting had already commenced on 7 June, when the *bakufu* bombarded the Chōshū-held island of Ōshima. For a detailed overview of Edo's disastrous campaign against Chōshū during the summer of 1866, see Conrad Totman, *The Collapse of the Tokugawa Bakufu, 1862-1868*, (Honolulu, HI: University Press of Hawaii, 1980), pp.227-66.

⁹¹⁶ TNA, FO46/69, Parkes to Hammond, 2 August 1866.

Though Parkes had no way of knowing whether this was true, he gleaned enough intelligence from private conversations with other *daimyō* during the voyage back to Yokohama to substantiate a charge of bad faith against the *bakufu*. Time and time again, Parkes was told that imperial ratification had been conditional on the omission of Hyōgo and Osaka from the treaties, and that the *bakufu* had issued explicit instructions that these ports would never be opened. Equally troubling were the reports he received from the *daimyō* that Roches was advising Edo to use military force to suppress their calls for constitutional reform. This policy was causing considerable apprehension throughout the *han*, even amongst *daimyō* who supported the *bakufu*. Roches revealed his true intentions to Parkes during an impromptu meeting in the Straits of Shimonoseki, when he asked the British minister to join him in offering to mediate Chōshū's surrender to the shogun – an invitation that Parkes felt compelled to decline.⁹¹⁷ As the British minister explained to Hammond upon his return to Yokohama, Roches's support for the *bakufu* was now overt:

He sent for Satsuma's Agents when at Nagasaki and read them a long lecture on the necessity of obedience to the Tycoon, told them that France was a friend of the latter, and was going to send him out *two ironclads*. To me, M. Roches denied that his Government had any intention of the kind and said that he had mentioned it to Satsuma's Agents by way of jest only. I doubt, however, whether such jests are entirely judicious.⁹¹⁸

Parkes assured Hammond that his own arrangements with the *daimyō* remained strictly neutral. While he understood why they wanted a say in government, he had encouraged a cautious approach towards constitutional change that preserved national unity. He had also tried to convince those he met on his travels of the *bakufu*'s increasingly liberal inclinations, as evidenced by the recently concluded Tariff Convention. Above all, Parkes had repeatedly stressed 'the indisputable necessity of a strict observance of Treaties' to preserve peace in Japan.⁹¹⁹

Despite the mounting evidence that the *bakufu* had no intention of sharing in the profits of trade, it is clear that Parkes strongly discouraged the *daimyō* from taking matters into their own hands. The British government wanted a stable and prosperous trade in Japan, and it was difficult to see how a civil war would result in better commercial conditions

⁹¹⁷ Sims, *op.cit.*, p.51.

⁹¹⁸ TNA, Hammond Papers, FO391/14, Parkes to Hammond, 14 August 1866.

⁹¹⁹ *Idem*.

than those which currently existed. He was certainly pleased that the *daimyō* were keen to trade with the treaty powers, but this did not change the fact that the treaties had been concluded with the *bakufu* and that it retained responsibility for the conduct of foreign relations. After all, international law dictated that the administration in Edo remained the legitimate treaty-making authority in Japan until the foreign representatives were informed otherwise. To Parkes, it was also ‘the only power in the State which is able to preserve general order, and secure the faithful observance of our Treaties’.⁹²⁰ After all the years that Parkes and his predecessors had spent coaxing Edo to ease restrictions on trade, the British minister was not about to risk everything by encouraging an unpredictable group of self-interested feudal lords to launch an armed attempt to overthrow the *bakufu*.

One thing that did change after Parkes returned to Yokohama was his attitude towards Roches. The British minister found it troubling enough that the Frenchman had lectured Satsuma about disloyalty, but he was appalled that a fellow diplomat had taken the dangerous step of encouraging Edo to resist demands for constitutional reform. The final straw was the publication of an official *bakufu* notification stating that France had agreed to help construct a shipyard and arsenal at Yokosuka.⁹²¹ Parkes did not know whether the French government was aware of this initiative, but the arrival of a French naval engineer to oversee construction suggested official approval. Fleury-Hérard’s recent appointment as ‘Japanese Consul’ in Paris was further evidence that the project had been discussed back in France. The prospect of Japanese money being spent in the French interest filled the British minister with foreboding, as did the likelihood that Edo would find it difficult to meet its obligations to French suppliers. Parkes was particularly concerned about the knock-on effect this would have on trade, for Yokohama was already rife with rumours that the *bakufu* was interfering with the supply of silk to the open market to cover its costs. On more than one occasion, Roches had assured Parkes that the orders from France were worth less than two million Francs. ‘Yet when I mentioned to him that I had information of the transmission of a million of Dollars, or upwards of three times the amount he stated,’ Parkes wrote to Hammond, ‘he could not meet it with an unequivocal denial.’⁹²² The British minister’s decision to confront his French colleague was a watershed moment: Roches was now aware that Parkes was watching his every move.

⁹²⁰ TNA, FO46/69, Parkes to Clarendon, No. 123, 24 July 1866; quoted in Sims, *op.cit.*, p.58.

⁹²¹ Ericson, *op.cit.*, p.141.

⁹²² TNA, Hammond Papers, FO391/14, 2 September 1866.

In fact, Parkes did not yet know the half of what his colleague was up to. For Roches, the ‘liberalisation’ of Japan’s system of trade simply meant the extension of the *bakufu*’s commercial monopoly to include Osaka, the country’s largest and most prosperous domestic market. Yet time was running out for the shogun to re-assert control over his internal opponents before they mounted a successful challenge to his supremacy. As Parkes suspected, the *bakufu* was also finding it increasingly difficult to finance the military development necessary to establish a centralised Tokugawa state, which even conservatives in Edo now believed was necessary for the shogunate to survive. Roches was equally aware of this problem, so he set about developing a new way to ensure Edo received the financial aid and material support necessary to subjugate the *daimyō* once and for all. The plan centred on the proposed import-export company, which had yet to get off the ground due to the *bakufu*’s failure to organise Edo merchants into an official trading association. Rather than using the company to establish Tokugawa control over foreign trade as originally planned, Roches and Oguri Tadamasa, his principal contact in the *kanjō-bugyōsho* (the *bakufu* finance bureau), hatched the idea of using it as a vehicle to borrow money from France. If successful, Edo would finally have enough funds to strengthen the Tokugawa armed forces and put the *daimyō* to the sword.

Roches was aware that raising such a loan would require lengthy negotiations with Couillet, who arrived in Yokohama in May 1866. Before these could get underway, however, the French minister was compelled to follow Parkes to Nagasaki. In the end, this journey to the south helped Roches to gain the support of influential figures within the *bakufu* for the idea of raising a foreign loan. After reading the riot act to the Satsuma representatives in Nagasaki, Roches’s first port of call was Kokura in northern Kyūshū, where Ogasawara Nagamichi was preparing a contingent of *bakufu* forces for the war against Chōshū. During a confidential meeting with this *rōjū*, Roches advised cutting off Chōshū’s supply route to Nagasaki by launching an invasion across the Straits of Shimonoseki. When Ogasawara pointed out that this would require more warships and cannon, Roches replied that secret negotiations were taking place in Edo regarding a method of company financing between Japan and the West. Before discussions could go any further, Parkes scuppered the idea of launching an invasion from the Straits on the basis that it would disrupt foreign trade.⁹²³

⁹²³ Beasley, op.cit., p.86.

Following their joint visit to Shimonoseki, the two ministers went their separate ways. This provided Roches with an opportunity to meet with another one of the *rōjū* at Hyōgo, where he repeated his promise to help Edo purchase steamers and weapons using a company which, if established, ‘would enable Japan to trade without money’.⁹²⁴ This news soon reached Osaka, where a lack of funds was making it increasingly difficult for Hitotsubashi Keiki to pursue the campaign against Chōshū. Some *bakufu* officials warned that it would be catastrophic to get into debt with the treaty powers, but Keiki was convinced that borrowing from foreigners was the only way the *bakufu* could possibly finance the war.⁹²⁵ With many senior members of the *bakufu* now in favour of the foreign loan scheme, Roches returned to Yokohama to supervise negotiations between Coulet and Oguri. In mid-September 1866, he informed Ogasawara that a loan had been agreed, but cautioned that the *bakufu* still had much work to do to modernise its armed forces. ‘I have the desire to develop these matters,’ Roches explained, ‘combining your country’s intention with that of mine, the army and navy can be developed within three years and the *han* will humbly submit to the government.’⁹²⁶

A week after this letter was sent, Oguri wrote to John Robertson, the local agent of the Oriental Bank in Yokohama, requesting a loan of six million dollars. Robertson promised to recommend this application to the home offices of the Oriental Bank Corporation and the Société Générale, on the condition that Edo agreed to secure the loan with one million dollars of copper from northern Japan. The *bakufu* readily agreed to offer this security, and over the months that followed placed orders with Coulet for arms and military supplies totalling 720,000 Mexican dollars (of which Coulet was advanced \$M200,000). In addition to a further order from the *rōjū* in early October for two warships from France, Coulet and Roches facilitated the purchase of \$M100,000 worth of rice from French merchants in Saigon to address shortages in Edo caused by *daimyō* who had withheld rice shipments.⁹²⁷ To pay for the rice and the money advanced to Coulet, the *bakufu* deposited three hundred tonnes of copper with the Oriental Bank towards the end of 1866, an amount that covered less than 30 per cent of what was owed on both accounts.⁹²⁸

⁹²⁴ Ericson, op.cit., p.96.

⁹²⁵ For a full analysis of these events, see *ibid.*, pp.94-7.

⁹²⁶ Quoted in *ibid.*, pp.98-9. According to Ericson, the letter was sent on the fifth day of the eighth month of Keiō, which corresponds to the Western date of 13 September 1866.

⁹²⁷ See AD, CPJ59/14, Roches to Drouyn, No. 73, 12 October 1866; & CCY/4, Roches to Drouyn, 14 October 1866 respectively.

⁹²⁸ Ericson, op.cit., pp.101-3; and Medzini, op.cit., p.116.

By the time Couillet departed Japan in early 1867, the *bakufu* had abandoned all pretence of paying for the arms and military materiel it required through a trading association of ‘independent’ Japanese merchants. Instead, the orders would be financed through a huge loan that would be repaid through the export of Japanese produce over a period of many years. While this would still enable the Société Générale to promote the development of French commerce and industry in Japan, the success of the entire project was now contingent on raising the sixty million Francs necessary to capitalise the *Compagnie Française d’Exportation et d’Importation* in Paris. Both the Société Générale and the (British-based) Oriental Bank Corporation would also have to underwrite a large loan to a regime whose status was by no means secure within a country on the cusp of civil war. These were hardly ideal conditions for investment, even for an organisation such as the Société Générale that specialised in underwriting loans to foreign governments. Aside from presenting Couillet’s negotiations to the Quai d’Orsay as positively as possible, there was little that Roches could do except put his faith in Couillet and Fleury-Hérard to secure the investment necessary to get the project off the ground.⁹²⁹

A more immediate concern for Roches was the need to ensure his pugnacious British colleague did not get wind of the foreign loan scheme before it came to fruition. Since Parkes was already deeply concerned about the impact of Roches’s pro-*bakufu* policy upon Japan’s export trade, he was hardly likely to approve of Edo using copper to pay for commercial orders. It was also very doubtful that the French government would sanction this direct interference in Japanese politics either given that the Quai d’Orsay and the Foreign Office had agreed upon the neutrality policy. Roches therefore revealed very little about his recent activities in the dispatches he sent to Paris during the latter part of 1866, making no mention of the negotiations about the loan that took place at Kokura and Hyōgo during his trip to southern Japan. Instead, he claimed these visits were primarily motivated by his desire to broker peace between the *bakufu* and Chōshū. Perhaps anticipating what Parkes might say to London and angry at the British minister’s interference at Shimonoseki, Roches attempted to discredit his colleague by depicting him as a jealous agitator whose reckless courting of the *daimyō* risked plunging Japan into civil war. ‘I have constantly strived up to this point to alleviate all causes of conflict between my colleague and the Japanese government,’ he told Drouyn, ‘I will not cease

⁹²⁹ AD, CCY/4, Roches to Drouyn, 14 October 1866.

from persevering in this approach but, I repeat, his entirely unpredictable character causes me concern.⁹³⁰

Roches also did his best to maintain the illusion that it was business as usual in Japan, even though the *bakufu*'s increasingly disastrous campaign against Chōshū was clearly weakening its grip on power. When rumours of the sudden death of the shogun reached Yokohama in mid-September, for example, he appeared delighted about the widely-anticipated prospect of Keiki – a man of great 'energy and intelligence' – becoming the new shogun.⁹³¹ It was in this context that Roches finally informed the Quai d'Orsay about Edo's request for a foreign loan, but only to reinforce his argument that Keiki's expected elevation would herald an immediate improvement in *bakufu* administration. Once again, Roches made no allusion to his own role in encouraging Edo to apply for the loan, and instead alleged that the request came directly from the *kanjō-bugyō*.⁹³² A few weeks later, he wrote a commercial dispatch concerning the 'considerable orders' that Coulet had negotiated with the Japanese government for the import-export company. According to this report, Coulet had made such a good impression on the Japanese that they had introduced him to associates of the greatest bankers and merchants of Edo and Osaka.⁹³³ As Ericson has pointed out, there is not a shred of evidence in either the French or Japanese sources that Coulet ever met with such men, which was inconceivable given Edo's expectations for the company at the time. Once again, Roches was painting a false picture of what he and his associates were up to.⁹³⁴

The dispatches described above do not support Meron Medzini's assertion that, because the French government had sanctioned the establishment of the import-export company, Roches 'did not have much to fear or conceal' from the Quai d'Orsay.⁹³⁵ While it is true that Drouyn and Béhic approved the scheme at the end of 1865, they clearly did so under the impression that the company would develop French industrial and commercial relations with Japan without contravening the principles of free trade. Clearly, the exclusive contracts that Roches and Coulet negotiated the following year did not adhere to these principles. The fact that Roches virtually stopped communicating with the Quai d'Orsay on matters of commercial policy once the negotiations with Coulet were

⁹³⁰ AD, CPJ59/14, Roches to Drouyn, No. 69, 27 August 1866.

⁹³¹ AD, CPJ59/14, Roches to Drouyn, No. 71, 28 September 1866.

⁹³² *Idem*; and enclosures.

⁹³³ AD, CCY/4, Roches to Drouyn, 14 October 1866.

⁹³⁴ Ericson, *op.cit.*, p.104.

⁹³⁵ Medzini, *op.cit.*, p.116.

complete suggested deliberate deception on his part. In other words, Roches did everything he could to conceal the real purpose of the import-export company: to establish French control over the Japanese treaty-port system by supplying the *bakufu* with the resources it needed to crush the *daimyō* once and for all.

In contrast to his French colleague, Parkes was apprehensive as to whether the rumoured death of the shogun would provide an opportunity to heal existing divisions or ‘throw the country into a blaze’.⁹³⁶ Whatever happened he was anxious for foreigners not to interfere, and therefore relieved that even Roches appeared convinced that the *bakufu* no longer had ‘the ball at their feet’.⁹³⁷ Parkes initially suspected that this change of heart had much to do with the fact that Roches no longer had the material means at his disposal to support the *bakufu*. Much to the French minister’s irritation, Admiral Pierre-Gustave Roze, the French naval commander in East Asia, had withdrawn every French warship from Japan in preparation for a punitive naval expedition against Korea, where some Catholic missionaries had been executed.⁹³⁸ Yet after Parkes had spent two weeks in Edo during the latter part of September, he began to share his French colleague’s optimism that Keiki might agree to the constitutional reform that the *daimyō* desired.⁹³⁹ In late October, Parkes was further buoyed by news that the hostilities against Chōshū had been suspended, and by reports that an assembly of the *daimyō* was due to convene at either Kyoto or Osaka. He dared to hope that these discussions, which were to determine many important constitutional affairs, would enable the *bakufu* and the more liberal *daimyō* to unite against those opposed to reform.⁹⁴⁰

In addition to keeping a close eye on proceedings at Kyoto during the latter part of 1866, Parkes continued to monitor what was going on at French legation. In mid-October, he was delighted to learn of the sudden departure of Mermet de Cachon, who was widely believed to be the primary supporter of Roches’s pro-*bakufu* policy. Parkes was not sure what had prompted Cachon’s decision to leave Japan, but he hoped that the troublesome missionary would stay away.⁹⁴¹ The British minister’s high spirits were short-lived, as he

⁹³⁶ CUL, Parkes Papers, MSParkes2/W20, Parkes to Winchester, 12 September 1866

⁹³⁷ TNA, Hammond Papers, FO391/14, Parkes to Hammond, 12 September 1866.

⁹³⁸ *Idem*.

⁹³⁹ TNA, Hammond Papers, FO391/14, Parkes to Hammond, 29 September & 17 October 1866.

⁹⁴⁰ TNA, Hammond Papers, FO391/14, Parkes to Hammond, 31 October 1866; and CUL, Parkes Papers, MSParkes2/W22, Parkes to Winchester, 31 October 1866.

⁹⁴¹ TNA, Hammond Papers, FO391/14, Parkes to Hammond, 17 October 1866.

soon discovered to his fury that a French military mission was on its way to Japan.⁹⁴² Despite Roches's appeals for haste, it had taken Fleury-Hérard and the French government six months to negotiate the travel expenses and salaries of the military instructors, who finally departed for Japan on 19 November 1866.⁹⁴³ The delay was significant, as it meant that Parkes found out about the mission just as he was beginning to hope that Roches had realised the folly of his '*politique personnelle*'. Instead, here was fresh evidence of the Frenchman's preponderant influence in Edo. It was this revelation that spurred Parkes to transfer the British legation back to the capital in November with a view to cultivating better relations with the *bakufu* and keeping a closer eye on his energetic French colleague. In just two months, Parkes organised a British naval mission to Japan, procured English instructors to teach at Cachon's language school, and dispatched a group of young *bakufu* scholars to study at the University College in London.⁹⁴⁴ During this period, Parkes and his Dutch colleague Dirk de Graeff von Polsbroek also discovered that Edo was using copper to pay for commercial orders from France, an arrangement that they objected to the strongest possible terms.⁹⁴⁵

His burgeoning rivalry with Roches aside, Parkes was cautiously optimistic about the future as 1866 came to a close. He was particularly encouraged by the friendly attitude of *bakufu* officials in Edo and their willingness to accept his help and advice, including his suggestions for the reconstruction of Yokohama after a devastating fire at the port. At last, it seemed that the shogunate had accepted the presence of foreigners in Japan.⁹⁴⁶ Yet Parkes was acutely aware that everything still depended upon the unpredictable outcome of the negotiations at Kyoto, where Keiki faced the unenviable task of reconciling the *bakufu*'s natural proclivity for absolutism with the *daimyō*'s desire to throw off their subservience to Edo.⁹⁴⁷ What Parkes really needed was reliable and up-to-date political intelligence, so he dispatched Satow to Nagasaki, Kagoshima, Uwajima, and Hyōgo at the end of December to gather information.⁹⁴⁸ Satow quickly discovered that negotiations

⁹⁴² See Cortazzi, *op.cit.*, pp.22-3.

⁹⁴³ Ericson, *op.cit.*, pp159-60.

⁹⁴⁴ See TNA, Hammond Papers, FO391/14, Parkes to Hammond, 17 November 1866 & 1 December 1866.

⁹⁴⁵ Although it seemed to Parkes that the *bakufu* was bartering for French goods outside of the open market, which was a breach of the treaties, Edo was actually consigning copper to the Oriental Bank in order to raise enough capital to cover its financial obligations. None of this copper ever made it to France. See Ericson, *op.cit.*, p.103.

⁹⁴⁶ TNA, Hammond Papers, FO391/14, Parkes to Hammond 31 December 1866.

⁹⁴⁷ *Idem.*

⁹⁴⁸ Fox, *op.cit.*, p.191.

had collapsed due to the refusal of many *daimyō* to attend the assembly, but that Keiki had assumed the title of shogun nonetheless. Both contesting parties were apparently now in favour of the opening of the new ports, while Satsuma and Chōshū had reached an understanding to unite against the shogun for defence purposes. Finally, the *daimyō* remained deeply mistrustful of Roches, whom they believed had hatched a plan to burnish Keiki's prestige by presenting him with a letter of credence from Napoléon III recognising the new shogun as the undisputed sovereign of Japan.⁹⁴⁹

By the time Satow returned to Yokohama with this news in January 1867, Parkes had already received an invitation from Keiki for all the foreign representatives to visit him in Osaka. After consulting with Satow, Parkes realised that accepting this invitation unconditionally would do much to serve the interests of the new regime without securing anything in return. Unlike his more enthusiastic colleagues, the British minister had no intention of allowing himself to become a pawn in Japan's political game. Before agreeing to meet with Keiki, therefore, Parkes wanted the new shogun to guarantee that the new ports would be opened. The news that Keiki had lost the support of Satsuma also convinced Parkes that the political status quo was no longer tenable, so he resolved to withhold his own letter of credence from the new shogun if the diplomatic corps did decamp to Osaka. 'I cannot avoid the feeling that the titles of His Imperial and Royal Majesty are too high for the Tycoon,' he explained to Hammond, 'and that it is incorrect to speak (as these letters and our Treaties do) of Japan as the "*dominions*" of the Tycoon. It appears to me that I can give a good and sufficient reason in the death of the late Tycoon and the absence of a formal announcement of the death by his successor, for not delivering the letters I now hold.'⁹⁵⁰ Following the apparent failure of the *daimyō* assembly to resolve Japan's internal conflict, Parkes refused to accept that the inauguration of a new shogun meant business as usual as far as his relations with the *bakufu* were concerned. From now on, the British minister was determined that all future audiences with the shogun would conform to Westphalian standards of diplomatic practice.

Roches also believed that the time had come for change, albeit of a different kind to that which Parkes had in mind. The French minister had long urged the *bakufu* to modernise Japan's system of government and reform its laws and institutions, but it was only after Keiki's investiture as shogun and the suspension of the Chōshū campaign that this advice

⁹⁴⁹ Satow, *op.cit.*, pp.167-184.

⁹⁵⁰ TNA, Hammond Papers, FO391/14, Parkes to Hammond, 16 January 1866.

found a genuinely sympathetic ear. In October 1866, therefore, Keiki made it explicitly clear to Roches that he intended to initiate the type of political reform that the Frenchman had recommended ever since his arrival in Japan.⁹⁵¹ Yet as Ericson has pointed out, it was Roches who began to develop concrete proposals for reform over the months that followed, not Keiki as he later alleged.⁹⁵² By the end of December, Roches had put together a radical programme of reform that would transform the Tokugawa regime into a more efficient and powerful centralised authority while curtailing the feudal power of the *tozama daimyō* forever.⁹⁵³ All that was necessary now was for the shogun to grant his approval in person. The invitation for all the foreign representatives to visit Osaka was not just an attempt to bolster Keiki's prestige, therefore, but also a smokescreen to disguise the real reason why Roches and the shogun were meeting in private. Little did the French minister know that his hopes of directing Japan's transformation into a modern state were about to be dashed by his 'pestilently active' British colleague.⁹⁵⁴

Conclusions

If 1866 was a year of great political upheaval in Japan, the same can certainly be said of Europe. More than any other country on the Old Continent, the French Second Empire was engulfed in a near perpetual state of crisis that year, as Napoléon III fought to contain the burgeoning forces of nationalism that he had unleashed in Italy, Mexico, and Prussia while simultaneously attempting to introduce political reform at home. The rise of Prussian militarism also caused great anxiety in London, as the treaties that had maintained an uneasy peace in Europe since the end of the Napoleonic Wars began to unravel at an increasingly alarming rate. There was also significant political change in Britain itself, as seven years of Liberal rule ended with the departure of first Palmerston and then Russell – Queen Victoria's 'two dreadful old men'⁹⁵⁵ – from the political scene. They were replaced by a Conservative ministry that was ideologically hostile to the doctrine of liberal interventionism as a means to protect free trade across the globe. Far

⁹⁵¹ AD, CPJ59/14, Roches to Drouyn, No. 74, 31 October 1866, enclosure 1.

⁹⁵² Ericson, *op.cit.*, pp.241-2.

⁹⁵³ For an overview of these reforms, see Sims, *op.cit.*, pp.53-5.

⁹⁵⁴ As described in Hugh Cortazzi, 'The Pestilently Active Minister: Dr Willis's Comments on Sir Harry Parkes', *Monumenta Nipponica*, Vol. 39, No. 2 (Summer, 1984), pp.147-61.

⁹⁵⁵ Frank Hardie, *The Political Influence of Queen Victoria, 1861-1901*, (London: Frank Cass & Co., 1963), p.126.

more important to Lord Derby and his fellow Tories was the need to tackle the defining domestic issue of the age: extending the political franchise.

In comparison to these pressing domestic and foreign policy matters, Japan was very low on the list of priorities for either the British or the French government in 1866. Indeed, so complex was the political crisis that was unfolding in Japan during these twilight years of the Tokugawa shogunate that very few observers in Europe had a clear understanding of what was really going on there. The lack of interest and the dearth of knowledge about Japanese affairs in both Paris and London afforded Parkes and Roches a wide discretion over policymaking, a responsibility that the British minister wielded with much greater restraint than his French colleague. While Parkes was always careful to operate within the boundaries set by Hammond in his efforts to encourage both the *bakufu* and the *daimyō* to respect the treaties, Roches initiated a deeply partisan and opportunistic attempt to bypass the treaties altogether. It did not take long before these two abrasive characters were embroiled in an existential struggle for control over the ‘enclave empires’ in Japan – a struggle that mirrored the contrasting philosophies of their respective countries towards the global expansion of industry, commerce, and empire.

CHAPTER 9

Competing Visions: Parkes, Roches and the Collapse of the Tokugawa Shogunate, 1867

Although none of the treaty-power representatives knew it, 1867 was to mark the final year of the Tokugawa shogunate. Until this point, Roches had successfully managed to conceal his plan to restore the Tokugawa house to a position of absolute power by subverting the treaties. Ironically, this policy was proving increasingly counterproductive, as his commercial schemes were bleeding the shogunate's coffers dry and making Edo less inclined to adopt the liberal policies recommended by Parkes. His subversion of the treaties as a means to supplant British hegemony over the 'enclave empires' in Japan was certainly bold, but his personal line was predicated on the continued indifference of the French government to his activities, the long-term survival of the *bakufu*, and the ignorance of Parkes – all factors that were entirely out of his control.

Slowly but surely, it was beginning to dawn on Parkes that there was more to Roches's '*politique personnelle*' than met the eye. By the beginning of 1867, he was on the verge of discovering that Roches's schemes were not simply acts of diplomatic grandstanding and one-upmanship, but direct threats to British dominance over the Japan trade, and indeed to the very idea of the treaty-port system itself. With all signs indicating that the long-expected military struggle between the *bakufu* and its well-prepared opponents was imminent, Parkes would have to act fast to thwart his French rival. With the British and French governments fixated by the inexorable rise of Prussia in Europe, the British minister took matters decisively into his own hands.

A decisive intervention

In early 1867, a series of developments finally convinced the British minister to take direct measures to stop his French colleague from undermining Britain's commercial and

political position in Japan. The first was the postponement of the proposed visit of the representatives to Osaka in early February on the grounds that the Mikado had fallen ill with smallpox, which Parkes suspected was actually caused by his insistence upon making the visit conditional on a guarantee that the new ports would be opened at the time stipulated in the treaties. In addition to fresh rumours that the *bakufu* would soon renew hostilities with Chōshū, Parkes feared that the inauguration of a new shogun would do nothing to change Edo's policy. Worse, he believed that Roches was continuing to undermine his efforts to ensure that the new regime would respect the treaties.⁹⁵⁶

The growing tensions between the two ministers over this issue were laid bare in a letter Roches sent to Parkes on 4 February 1867, in which Roches declared himself 'deeply pained' that the British minister appeared to doubt his willingness to demand guarantees from the new shogun in advance of the joint visit to Osaka. 'Was it not thus understood between us that we would only travel to Osaka after having received official notification of the opening of Hiogo at the time fixed by the treaties?' the Frenchman asked, 'Why then return to this condition that I accepted without hesitation, if not to express doubts about my intentions?'⁹⁵⁷ It is highly doubtful that this letter allayed any of the British minister's deep-rooted suspicions about his French colleague, even though it was soon confirmed that the Mikado had in fact been gravely ill and had passed away on 30 January. In fact, with a French war against Korea looking increasingly likely following the humiliating withdrawal of Admiral Roze's punitive expedition to the peninsula at the end of 1866, it appeared that even certain *bakufu* officials were beginning to question the value of Roches's assistance. After all, Parkes explained to Hammond, if the French government decided to go to war in Korea there was little doubt that they could make Japan as a base of their operations, 'and the Japanese would probably find that they have been at the expense of constructing magazines for the use of their allies'.⁹⁵⁸

The idea that the French would attempt to make Yokosuka a base for their navy in East Asia was troubling, but it was the publication of an article in *The Japan Times* on 14 February 1867 that really awakened Parkes to the threat that Roches's policy posed to British interests. The article not only revealed the extent of Coulet's commercial dealings during his stay in Japan but also publicly accused Roches of breaching the treaties by helping him to conduct trade in Edo, which was not an open port, and negotiating

⁹⁵⁶ TNA, Hammond Papers, FO391/14, Parkes to Hammond, 1 February 1867.

⁹⁵⁷ *Idem.*

⁹⁵⁸ *Idem.*

exclusive contracts for the supply of French arms and materiel for the shogun's new army. As a direct result of these contracts, the newspaper alleged, the *bakufu* had already forbidden Japanese merchants to purchase certain items from private merchants on the grounds that it intended to procure everything it required through the French government at vastly overinflated prices. The article also cited recent reports from *The Economist* concerning the registration in Paris of a trading association aimed at developing trade in Asia by 'making loans to states, contracting for great public or private enterprises and undertaking other financial operations', before suggesting that Coulet was a director of this new company and preparing for the establishment of a branch in Japan. It further claimed that the *bakufu* was paying for the purchases it had negotiated with Coulet in copper. There was little reason to doubt that silk would be next, and if allowed to continue, it was only a matter of time before Roches established a French monopoly on the Japan trade, an arrangement that historical precedent suggested would lead to the complete extinction of all British trade with Japan.⁹⁵⁹

This was certainly not the first time that the Yokohama press had attacked Roches for his commercial practices. As the article itself made clear, the same paper had strongly opposed the announcement of the Yokosuka project in September 1866 on the basis that it would lead to the establishment of a gigantic French monopoly. Indeed, so notorious were Roches's activities in Yokohama at this point that he was regularly satirised in the *Japan Punch* as managing director of the 'Governmental-Mercantile Unlimited Liability Company of Benten' (Benten was the street on which the French legation was located).⁹⁶⁰ However, on this occasion the newspaper appealed directly to Parkes to lodge a protest with the British government against Roches. Given that Parkes wrote two highly significant letters to London on the same day that this article was published, it seems that

⁹⁵⁹ *The Japan Times*, 14 February 1867. The article does not appear in the collection of English-language newspapers from Japan at the Yokohama Archives of History, but can be found in AD, MDJ/3, Cowley to Moustier, 18 April 1867.

⁹⁶⁰ See, for example, the July 1866 edition of the *Japan Punch*, which makes it clear that Benten & Co. was not, as Medzini seemed to believe (Medzini, op.cit., p.147), a real company but the satirical creation of Charles Wirgman, the British editor of the magazine. Prior to his departure from Japan, Cachon was often singled out by Wirgman as the architect of the French commercial schemes, most obviously in the June 1866 edition. Attention soon turned to Roches, who appeared in the January 1867 edition leading away an allegorical depiction of commerce while merchants of other treaty powers wept in the background. For a detailed summary of Wirgman's critique of French policy during this period, see Todd S. Munson, *The Periodical Press in Treaty-Port Japan: Conflicting Reports from Yokohama, 1861-1870*, (Leiden: Global Press, 2013), pp.114-8.

this appeal succeeded. The first letter, predictably enough, was addressed to Hammond and concerned the imminent departure of Keiki's younger brother, Tokugawa Akitake, to Paris, where he was due to attend the Paris Exposition and receive a French education.⁹⁶¹ Accompanying the young prince was Mukōyama Ichiri, the *bakufu*'s newly appointed envoy to France, and it was to this individual that Parkes drew Hammond's attention:

Some endeavor will probably be made by Mukoyama...to raise a loan through Fleury Herard the banker and Japanese Consul General, who would probably seek to engage English Capitalists in the operation. I trust however that no one will take part in it, for the money this raised would pass into French pockets, and the security is probably questionable. Any money that the Tycoon could raise in this way would only be spent on military preparations, and I am afraid commerce would be taxed in order to enable him to meet such obligations.⁹⁶²

It is surely no coincidence that Parkes first mentioned the *bakufu*'s desire to raise a foreign loan on the same day that details regarding the creation of a French trading association in Paris for the purpose of 'making loans to states' appeared in the local press. What Parkes did not reveal to Hammond, however, was that he had already taken measures to deny the *bakufu* access to British credit by writing privately to Charles J. F. Stuart, Chief Manager of the Oriental Bank Corporation in London that very same day. Stuart's reply, dated 10 June 1867, is worth quoting in full:

I duly received your letter of Feb 14 for which I beg to thank you most sincerely.

The advice you so kindly gave me has been carefully followed and the financial operation referred to has been left entirely to our friends across the Channel. Whether they will be able to make anything of it I do not know, but there are indications that the money will be required shortly, considerable stocks of arms, clothing &c. having been contracted for.

⁹⁶¹ As mentioned in Chapter 8, although this was ostensibly a demonstration of the special favour that Roches enjoyed with the new shogun, this unofficial embassy was also a response to the dispatch of a Satsuma mission to Paris to exhibit products from their own domain at the Exposition. See Hugh Cortazzi, 'Japanese Envoys in Britain, 1862-72', in Nish, Ian, ed., *Japanese Envoys in Britain, 1862-1964*, (Folkestone: Global Oriental, 2007), p.15; and Andrew Cobbing, *The Japanese Discovery of Victorian Britain: Early Travel Encounters in the Far West*, (Folkestone: Japan Library, 1998), p.20.

⁹⁶² TNA, Hammond Papers, FO391/14, Parkes to Hammond 14 February 1867.

You will I am sure acquit me of seeking to dive into the *arcantum* of Japanese politics, if I say that should the time arise when you consider the Government of Japan and the interests under your charge would be benefited by a loan, we shall be equally ready to take your advice then as have been now – and you are too good a diplomatist not to know that the power of raising money is not a bad card to have in one’s hand.⁹⁶³

The discovery of this critical letter proves for the first time that Parkes intervened personally to thwart the *bakufu*’s attempts to raise a financial loan in London. Furthermore, it suggests that those who previously argued that such a loan was probably an impossibility from the outset given the unstable economic conditions in Europe at the time were not necessarily correct.⁹⁶⁴ In fact, Stuart made it quite clear that the Oriental Bank would consider a loan to the Japanese government if and when Parkes believed one was necessary.

If taken in isolation, it would be tempting to argue that this letter proved that Parkes had abandoned Britain’s policy of neutrality of Japan in favour of the *daimyō*, as Mark Ericson and many Japanese historians have argued.⁹⁶⁵ But the fact that Parkes made it explicitly clear to Hammond, on the very same day that he wrote to Stuart, that he feared the foreign loan would both enrich the French while taxing commerce at the ports demonstrated that his primary concern remained the maintenance of a stable and free trade. In any case, at the time that these letters were sent Parkes had yet to meet the new shogun, and his determination to receive assurances from Keiki regarding the opening of the new ports and cities before doing so demonstrated his continued recognition of the *bakufu* at the legitimate government of Japan. Indeed, when Parkes heard from Mitford at Hyōgo that Satsuma was eager for Britain to enter into formal treaty relations with the Mikado, he dismissed the idea on the basis that the treaties made with the shogun and ratified by the emperor were constitutionally legitimate. In addition to the support and advice he was providing to the *bakufu* on matters of political and social reform at Edo, Parkes continued to hope for a peaceful resolution to Japan’s domestic crisis.⁹⁶⁶ Thus,

⁹⁶³ This letter can be found at the bottom of a note from John Robertson, the local agent for the Oriental Bank at Yokohama, in CUL, Parkes Papers, MSParkes14/R2, Robertson to Parkes, 19 June 1867.

⁹⁶⁴ See Sims, *op.cit.*, p.314, footnote 52.

⁹⁶⁵ See Ericson, *op.cit.*, p.10; and footnote 8 on p.16, where he writes ‘No Japanese scholar believes that Parkes and the British were neutral in the Restoration’.

⁹⁶⁶ Fox, *op.cit.*, pp.194-7.

while it is true that Parkes wished to prevent the *bakufu* from stifling free trade, he clearly had no intention of abandoning his neutrality policy at this time.

What this letter does prove beyond doubt was that Parkes was not only fully aware of Roches's schemes for the monopolisation of the Japan trade but also determined to thwart them by whatever means possible. Yet Parkes understood that he could not simply accuse a fellow diplomat of deliberately conspiring against British interests without concrete evidence, not least one from a country that shared close relations with Britain. Thus, instead of relying upon the speculations of the local press alone, from this point onwards Parkes ensured he was fully informed of Roches's activities, both in Japan and back in Europe. In the latter respect, Parkes had a useful stroke of luck. Alexander von Siebold, the young interpreter at the British legation recruited by Alcock back in 1861, was eligible for home leave following the death of his famous father Philip in Munich in October 1866, and had been trying for some months to return to Europe in the service of the *bakufu* in order to offset some of the expense of the voyage.⁹⁶⁷ In early January 1867, he was asked by Shibata, who was now back in Japan, if he would mind accompanying Tokugawa Akitake on his trip to Europe. Although this was to be an unofficial mission, Shibata was concerned that Roches would oppose the presence of a British officer on a mission ostensibly sent to Paris. However, Siebold knew that the French legation had no one else available who spoke Japanese, and he asked Parkes if he could put in a good word with Roches to ensure he approved of the arrangement.⁹⁶⁸ The British minister, never one to look a gift horse in the mouth, swiftly secured Roches's acquiescence.⁹⁶⁹ Whether Roches was aware of the extent to which Parkes relied upon Siebold is impossible to say, but it was an indication of how limited the French minister's resources were following Cachon's departure that he allowed such an experienced British informant to accompany Akitake and his suite to Paris.

Having solved the problem of monitoring the activities of Mukōyama and his associates in Europe, Parkes turned his attention to the prospective visit of the representatives to Osaka. By this point, Mitford had convinced the British minister that both the *bakufu* and the *daimyō* sincerely desired the foreign representatives to come to the city. However, Parkes was still determined to refuse an audience with Keiki unless the *rōjū* confirmed

⁹⁶⁷ See CUL, Parkes Papers, MSParkes1/S15, Siebold to Parkes, 8 December 1866.

⁹⁶⁸ CUL, Parkes Papers, MSParkes1/S16, Siebold to Parkes, 8 January 1867.

⁹⁶⁹ TNA, Hammond Papers, FO391/14, Parkes to Hammond, 18 January, 1 February & 14 February 1867.

that it would conform with Western court etiquette, and guaranteed that the opening of the new ports would be discussed.⁹⁷⁰ He hoped to use the time set aside for mourning the death of the emperor to secure these guarantees, but he was thrown off by Roches's unexpected announcement at the end of February that he was proceeding to Osaka alone before the imminent departure of Admiral Roze left him with no warships at his disposal.⁹⁷¹ Two weeks later, Parkes received a private note from Roches explaining that he was postponing his stay at Osaka in order to come to a practical understanding with the *bakufu* in respect to the French military mission and the Yokosuka arsenal. Naturally, Parkes was suspicious as to whether this was the only reason why Roches was visiting the city on his own, especially after Roze returned to Yokohama with news that a private meeting between the shogun and the French minister had been scheduled to take place the day after his flagship left Osaka. This flagrant departure from the concerted policy agreed by the representatives provoked Parkes to submit a lengthy complaint about Roches's policy to his superior at the Foreign Office:

I shall not be surprised to hear that he has taken this step, for he... is not partial to concerted movements, partly because he has in some degree to take a secondary part in these when the British Minister is present, and the naval force by which he is usually attended is general inferior to our own, and also because he does not care to support very warmly the Commercial Policy of England, which scarcely agrees with that of France, or at all events with M. Roches' "politique personnelle". He prefers to minister to the military aspirations or vanities of the Japanese rather than to their commercial prosperity and his heart therefore is not in the opening of Osaka or other Ports but in becoming the military mentor of the Tycoon and advising a system of rule based upon military strength rather than in the advancement of the Commercial classes.⁹⁷²

Parkes did not for a minute believe that Roches had prolonged his stay in Osaka to discuss the arsenal or the military mission. Instead, he warned Hammond that Roches was attempting to coax the new shogun into allying with France in a war against Korea, which he feared Keiki would find an attractive prospect in more ways than one. After all, Korea

⁹⁷⁰ See pencil note at the bottom of CUL, Parkes Papers, MSParkes14/R7, Roches to Parkes, 26 February [?]. For further analysis of Mitford's discussions in Hyōgo, see Fox, *op.cit.* p.197; and M.P. MS Add.8669, *1867: Part I*, 1 March 1867.

⁹⁷¹ TNA, Hammond Papers, FO391/14, Parkes to Hammond, 1 March 1867.

⁹⁷² TNA, Hammond Papers, FO391/14, Parkes to Hammond, 16 March 1867.

was considered a ‘natural enemy’ by the Japanese, and the prospect of pecuniary indemnities and guarantees of French support against the *daimyō* in return for fighting the Koreans would be enticing. Parkes pointed out that it was only a month since a *bakufu* official had asked him if Britain would cooperate with the French to obtain redress from Korea, and the *rōjū* seemed increasingly desperate to know when the British naval instructors would arrive. He also had it ‘on good authority’ that the *bakufu* had contracted with the Société Générale for the supply of vessels of war to the extent of one million dollars. The increased activity of Roze in Japan and the rumoured departure of the French director of the Yokosuka project to Korea all added to the impression that another naval expedition was imminent. Parkes did not dispute that it would be a clever move by the French to use the Japanese to make up for their own lack of manpower in the region, but he was concerned about the impact of such an expedition on the Japan trade.⁹⁷³

This letter was just as noteworthy as that sent by Parkes to Stuart the previous month, since it revealed the full extent of Roches’s ‘*politique personnelle*’ to the British government for the first time (albeit in semi-official form). It was written not simply out of anger at the French minister’s violation of the principle of collective diplomacy at Osaka, but also because Parkes had seemingly acquired a much clearer idea of what Roches’s schemes actually entailed. The evidence for this can be found in the form of some rough notes that the British minister scribbled on the back of a short letter from his French colleague dated 26 February. These notes, which lie buried in the Parkes Papers at Cambridge University Library, are enclosed with an envelope entitled ‘Oriental Bank – proposed loan; Expenses of French mission – Europe; French Commissions – Coulet and Roches’. They outline each of Roches’s projects as follows:

- Société Générale: £5,000,000, Béhic, French merchants can make...but cannot debark - consign to trustworthy agents.
- Equipment for 10,000 men: *complete* - infantry, 400 cavalry, artillery - but not guns, about 2,800,000 Fcs. = £700,000.
- Ironclads: Two, and a gunboat...option of about 200,000 each but not determined on.

⁹⁷³ Idem.

- Yokosuka: Contract for \$600,000 pr. annum, five years to construct everything.
- Military instruction: idea to form corps of 500 for drill, towards that everything should be under the *orders*.
- No information of Govt. bonds to be paid to Fleury Herard. Paper money payable to Herard.⁹⁷⁴

Although these notes are not dated, their appearance on the back of a letter dated 26 February suggests that they were penned at around the same time, as does the fact that Parkes first mentioned the Société Générale to Hammond in his correspondence of 16 March 1867. Their discovery is deeply significant, for they demonstrate for the first time just how much information Parkes had gathered on Roches's activities by this stage.

No sooner had Parkes dispatched his attack on Roches's policy to Hammond than he received word from the French minister that he had obtained all the 'solutions' he desired in his meetings with the *bakufu* ministers at Osaka, and had pressed them to approve of Parkes's conditions for agreeing to a formal audience with the shogun.⁹⁷⁵ Roches made no further mention of his two meetings with the shogun until after his return to Yokohama, when he assured Parkes that Keiki wished to improve relations with foreign powers by opening Hyōgo and a port on the Western coast but was averse to opening Edo and Osaka.⁹⁷⁶ After receiving these assurances, Parkes suddenly sensed that he might have overstepped the mark in his recent criticism of his colleague. In mid-April, he assured Hammond that, though his opinion differed with Roches on some points, 'there is no rupture of the 'Entente Cordiale'.'⁹⁷⁷ Little did Parkes know what Roches had really been up to in Osaka, where he not only presented his radical proposals for constitutional reform of the *bakufu* but also made a point of contrasting his benevolent policy with the divisive strategy adopted by his British colleague. He even accused Parkes of conspiring with the southern *han* to dismantle the Tokugawa regime so that Britain could seize Japanese territory like it had done in Hong Kong. Korea was also discussed, albeit not in

⁹⁷⁴ See CUL, Parkes Papers, MSParkes14/R7, Roches to Parkes, 26 February [?]. The list is not exhaustive, as not all the notes are legible or relevant.

⁹⁷⁵ TNA, Hammond Papers, FO391/14, Parkes to Hammond, 17 March 1867; and enclosed letter from Roches to Parkes, March 1867.

⁹⁷⁶ TNA, Hammond Papers, FO391/14, Parkes to Hammond, 30 March 1867.

⁹⁷⁷ TNA, Hammond Papers, FO391/14, Parkes to Hammond, 14 April 1867.

the way Parkes had imagined, as Roches actually encouraged the Japanese to mediate in the missionary dispute.⁹⁷⁸

In the end, it proved more important to Keiki to conciliate the tenacious British minister than to attempt to implement Roches's plans for the re-establishment of *bakufu* authority, which were not only unrealistic but 'altogether too sweeping to be acceptable to the shogun'.⁹⁷⁹ A few days after his arrival in Osaka on 18 April 1867, therefore, Parkes was able to secure permission from the *rōjū* to notify British subjects officially that the ports and cities would be opened on schedule on 1 January 1868.⁹⁸⁰ Much to Parkes's delight, his two meetings with the new shogun at the end of April conformed perfectly to Western diplomatic standards. Even so, and despite the fact that Parkes thought Keiki was 'the most superior Japanese I have yet met', these meetings did nothing to change Parkes's opinion that his letters of credence overstated the shogun's true position, and he was the only foreign representative not to present his credentials to the new shogun at Osaka.⁹⁸¹ Parkes also had no illusions that Keiki, talented as he was, faced a difficult task in reconciling the *daimyō* to his regime. Whether the new shogun was prepared to give them a consultative voice in affairs was not clear, but it was obvious that some concessions were necessary if he was to establish a government that controlled all parts of the country. To that end, Parkes hoped that the announcement of a fresh assembly of the *daimyō* at Kyoto in early May would help bring about the constitutional reform that Japan so desperately required.⁹⁸²

Unfortunately, there was no hiding from the fact that the *bakufu* was beset by pecuniary difficulties, much of which Parkes blamed on the French for the expenditure they had instigated. On this point, he again drew Hammond's attention to Keiki's desire to raise a foreign loan. 'I discourage the idea,' he explained, 'as one which is calculated to add to their embarrassments, and as so little is known of their Government and revenues in

⁹⁷⁸ See AD, CPJ59/15, Roches to Moustier, Nos. 80 & 81, 1 March & 19 April 1867 for the way in which Roches presented these discussions to his government. For a detailed analysis of what actually took place, see Ericson, *op.cit.*, pp.243-251.

⁹⁷⁹ Beasley, *op.cit.*, p.87.

⁹⁸⁰ See Fox, *op.cit.* pp.198-9. See also CUL, Parkes Papers, MSParkes2/F8, Parkes to Flowers, 11 May 1867.

⁹⁸¹ TNA, Hammond Papers, FO391/14, Parkes to Hammond, 6 May 1867.

⁹⁸² What the British minister did not know was that Keiki had been forced to call this assembly by the imperial court (under direction by influential agents of Satsuma) in order to discuss the opening of Hyōgo, even though the shogun had already promised the representatives to adhere strictly to the treaties; see Beasley, *op.cit.*, pp.87-8 & pp.308-11.

Europe, I doubt very much whether any proposals for a loan would be favourably received in the money market.⁹⁸³ His confidence was understandable.

The penny drops

While these events unfolded on the other side of the world, Hammond was growing increasingly irritated by reports about French activities in East Asia. In October 1866, he received word from Alcock in Beijing that the French chargé d'affaires, Henri de Bellonnet, was apparently 'talking very big, and very foolishly' about a French occupation of Korea.⁹⁸⁴ In November, dispatches arrived from Parkes concerning French involvement in the construction of the Yokosuka shipyard and the curtailment of the silk trade at Edo.⁹⁸⁵ Hammond learned soon afterwards that, contrary to Parkes's belief, the French government was strongly opposed to Roze's punitive expedition to Korea.⁹⁸⁶ Yet the arrival in March 1867 of another dispatch from Alcock enclosing Bellonnet's accusation that the Qing government had been complicit in the Korean massacre of the Catholic missionaries caused further disquiet in London.⁹⁸⁷ Hammond asked Cowley to show Alcock's dispatch confidentially to Moustier to warn him about the risk of sparking another Chinese war.⁹⁸⁸ Once again, the Quai d'Orsay disavowed the actions of its agents in Korea and condemned their meddling in China.⁹⁸⁹

Unfortunately for Moustier, British complaints regarding the behaviour of the French authorities in East Asia continued thick and fast. On 10 April 1867, Hammond informed Parkes that Oliphant had a question scheduled in the House of Commons that night concerning Roches's commercial dealings in Japan. Although Oliphant was eventually convinced by Lord Stanley, the new Conservative Foreign Secretary, to table a different question, the arrival a few days later of the 14 February 1867 edition of *The Japan Times* compelled Stanley to seek clarification from the Quai d'Orsay.⁹⁹⁰ On 18 April, Cowley

⁹⁸³ TNA, Hammond Papers, FO391/14, Parkes to Hammond, 6 May 1867.

⁹⁸⁴ TNA, FO519/192, Hammond to Cowley, 9 October 1866.

⁹⁸⁵ CUL, Parkes Papers, MSParkes1/H11, Hammond to Parkes, 9 November 1866.

⁹⁸⁶ CUL, Parkes Papers, MSParkes1/H14, Hammond to Parkes, 24 December 1866.

⁹⁸⁷ TNA, FO17/452, Alcock to Stanley, No. 60, 13 December 1867.

⁹⁸⁸ See cover to *idem*.

⁹⁸⁹ CUL, Parkes Papers, MSParkes1/H20, Hammond to Parkes, 10 April 1867.

⁹⁹⁰ See *Hansard*, Series 3, House of Commons, 4 April 1867, Vol. 186, c.1107 for the question that Oliphant asked in the end, which concerned arrangements for European troops at Yokohama. The date is inconsistent with that given by Hammond in his letter

wrote confidentially to Moustier to raise concerns about the article, which attributed to Roches ‘a course of proceeding of which it is certain the Imperial Government would not approve’ and the Japanese government with entering into an arrangement with a French subject that was ‘incompatible with their general treaty arrangements with other Powers’.⁹⁹¹

Before Cowley received any response, the Quai d’Orsay received a note from Cachon on 9 May alleging that Japan was paralysed by the prospect of an imminent crisis and that the *daimyō* no longer recognised the shogun’s authority.⁹⁹² This note echoed the sentiments of a letter that Cachon had also published in *La France* newspaper just a few days earlier.⁹⁹³ The timing of both was significant, as they corroborated the British interpretation of Japan’s domestic crisis at precisely the moment when doubts were growing in the Quai d’Orsay over Roches’s overtly pro-*bakufu* policy.⁹⁹⁴ To make matters worse, Parkes’s private exposition of Roches’s ‘*politique personelle*’ landed on Hammond’s desk the day after Cachon’s note was received in Paris. After reading it carefully, Hammond was persuaded that the conniving French minister was ‘probably acting to make capital in more than one sense for himself’.⁹⁹⁵ Once again, this intelligence was forwarded to Cowley alongside further dispatches from Alcock regarding the unsatisfactory conduct of the French authorities at Shanghai.⁹⁹⁶ Despite this deluge of complaints from the Far East, however, Hammond did not appear to expect an immediate response from Paris. After all, the reckless policies of French diplomatic agents in East

to Parkes. The letter from Stanley to Cowley of 15 April can be found in TNA, FO27/1652.

⁹⁹¹ AD, MDJ/3, Cowley to Moustier, 18 April 1867; and enclosures.

⁹⁹² Cachon’s note can be found in AD, MDJ/1. Given his former position in Japan, his attack on the *bakufu* seems curious on first glance, especially as he had been looking forward to overseeing the education of Akitake following the arrival of the young prince on 11 April 1867. According to Siebold, Mukōyama rejected Cachon’s appointment because of his affiliation with the missionary movement. In response, the jilted Cachon suddenly turned against the *bakufu*. For more, see TNA, FO46/85, Siebold to Hammond, 18 April 1867; Medzini, *op.cit.*, p.146 and p.222, footnote 11; and Sims, *op.cit.*, p.315, footnote 58.

⁹⁹³ See Medzini, *op.cit.*, p.146.

⁹⁹⁴ See the anonymous Quai d’Orsay memorandum prepared for Moustier in AD, MDJ/1, May 1867.

⁹⁹⁵ TNA, Hammond Papers, FO391/14, Hammond to Parkes, 10 May 1867. Although rumours of this nature were rife at the time, they have never been proved; see Sims, *op.cit.*, p.68.

⁹⁹⁶ TNA, FO519/193, Hammond to Cowley, 16 May 1867.

Asia were the least of Moustier's concerns at a time when the Second Empire was deeply mired in crisis over relations with Prussia.

The collapse of talks over a Franco-Prussian entente in early 1867 had done nothing to stop Napoléon III from seeking to secure the territorial concessions he believed France deserved as a reward for remaining neutral in Prussia's war with Austria the previous year. After the war, Bismarck had given the emperor the impression that he would not stand in the way if France decided to purchase Luxembourg from Holland. On 1 April 1867, however, Bismarck publicly announced his opposition to the acquisition of this former territory of the German Confederation, even though the emperor had already negotiated a treaty of cession with the Dutch king. Humiliated, Napoléon III seemed to have little choice but to go to war to save his honour, but the unprepared state of the French army and the continued absence of its best units in Mexico (the last of which only departed on 11 March 1867) persuaded him not to resort to force until the military situation improved. Instead, the emperor accepted a compromise proposed by the British and the Dutch at a conference in London in May, whereby Luxembourg remained the property of Holland but the Prussians agreed to evacuate their garrison from its fortress, which was dismantled.⁹⁹⁷ It was a close run thing, since Hammond believed as late as 7 May – four days before the compromise was agreed – that the Prussians were on the verge of mobilisation.⁹⁹⁸ No sooner was Luxembourg safely neutralised than news from Mexico announced that Maximilian, who had refused to abdicate despite the withdrawal of French military support, had been captured by Liberal troops and sentenced to death.⁹⁹⁹ This chaotic and bloody outcome to the Mexican intervention was a fitting symbol of Napoléon III's catastrophic foreign policy.

Given his reliance on British support to avert a potentially disastrous war with Prussia, the last thing that Moustier wanted was to provoke a rift with the British government over the unsanctioned conduct of rogue diplomats overseas. It is therefore easy to imagine the consternation that the steady flow of British grievances concerning the independent action of French agents in East Asia caused within the Quai d'Orsay. On 18 May 1867, Moustier wrote a dispatch to Roches to make it quite clear that the French government disapproved

⁹⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, pp.652-3.

⁹⁹⁸ TNA, FO519/193, Hammond to Cowley, 7 May 1867.

⁹⁹⁹ TNA, FO519/193, Hammond to Cowley, 29 May 1867. Despite pleas from the courts of Europe to save the Habsburg prince, Juárez refused to commute the sentence and Maximilian was executed by firing squad on 19 June 1867.

of the nakedly partisan policy that he had pursued in Japan, which the Foreign Minister feared would embarrass France should the *daimyō* in the end triumph over the *bakufu*. Although Moustier acknowledged the zeal with which Roches had procured commercial advantages for France, he was warned not to compromise those advantages by ‘marked meddling in internal affairs’. ‘I need hardly point out to you,’ Moustier concluded, ‘how important it is to pursue our interests in a way that does not provide our rivals with the slightest pretext to make an accusation.’¹⁰⁰⁰

A few days later, Moustier assured Cowley that he had written ‘very strongly’ to Roches in consequence of the British ambassador’s letter and the comments from Lord Stanley contained therein.¹⁰⁰¹ The fact that Moustier was so candid with London about this matter supports Richard Sims’s view that the Quai d’Orsay was vulnerable to British pressure on matters of Japan policy.¹⁰⁰² At the same time, Sims too easily dismisses the argument put forward by the Japanese historians Ishii Takashi and Otsuka Takematsu that the worsening of France’s position in Europe after the Austro-Prussian War and the Mexican expedition also contributed to Moustier’s eagerness not to offend Britain over a country that, despite all of Roches’s efforts, remained of very minor importance to France and the Second Empire.¹⁰⁰³ According to Sims, this argument wrongly implied ‘that there was a greater sense of impending international crisis than actually existed’.¹⁰⁰⁴ As the following observations made by Hammond to Parkes on 10 April 1867 demonstrate, however, this assessment is flawed:

The most serious point however is that between Prussia and France respecting Luxembourg, and there seems no means by which the latter can escape from the intolerable position in which she is placed...The irritation at Paris and in the French army, who long to measure swords with Prussia, is described as extreme... I see nothing for it but war.¹⁰⁰⁵

If Hammond believed that war between Prussia and France was imminent at this time, then it is fair to assume that the other foreign ministries of Europe felt the same. Indeed, as mentioned above, the likelihood of a conflict breaking out at any moment cast a shadow

¹⁰⁰⁰ AD, CPJ59/15, Moustier to Roches, 18 May 1867.

¹⁰⁰¹ TNA, FO27/1661, Cowley to Stanley, No. 333, 23 May 1867.

¹⁰⁰² Sims, *op.cit.*, pp.64-5.

¹⁰⁰³ *Ibid.*, p.316, footnote 62.

¹⁰⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, p.64.

¹⁰⁰⁵ CUL, Parkes Papers, MSParkes1/H20, Hammond to Parkes, 10 April 1867.

over the negotiations at London right up to the minute that the crisis was resolved. Even then, Hammond did not hide from the fact that it was a ‘narrow escape’, and that war was only averted by Prussian fears and French unpreparedness.¹⁰⁰⁶ Thus, there clearly was an impending atmosphere of crisis in France when Moustier repudiated Roches’s policy in his dispatch of 18 May, and it was highly likely that the Foreign Minister considered the need to keep on good terms with London when he issued this strong rebuke. It is therefore difficult to agree with Richard Sims that Moustier’s dispatch was ‘cautionary rather than censorious’, especially given Roches’s defensive and pained reaction upon receiving it.¹⁰⁰⁷

The poisonous atmosphere in Paris during this period increased the already significant challenges facing Couillet and Fleury-Hérard with regard to raising a foreign loan for the *bakufu* and establishing the import-export company.¹⁰⁰⁸ Following the collapse of the London-based wholesale discount bank, Overend, Guerney and Co. in May 1866, economic conditions in Europe were already dire by the time that Couillet arrived back in France in early 1867.¹⁰⁰⁹ The shadow of a potential war with Prussia and the disastrous conclusion to the Mexican campaign made investors even more averse to risky ventures in far-flung foreign destinations like Japan thereafter, especially when this involved backing a regime that the French government itself seemed increasingly reluctant to acknowledge as the country’s only legitimate governing authority. This became painfully evident in April, when the Quai d’Orsay conspicuously declined to respond to Mukōyama’s vociferous protests that Satsuma’s agent in Paris, the French aristocrat Charles, comte de Montblanc, had been allowed to erect a separate pavilion at the Paris Exhibition on the tenuous pretext that the *daimyō* of Satsuma was King of the Ryūkyū Islands.

¹⁰⁰⁶ CUL, Parkes Papers, MSParkes1/H23, Parkes to Hammond, 27 May 1867.

¹⁰⁰⁷ See Sims, *op.cit.*, p.68; and AD, CPJ59/15, Roches to Moustier, No. 89, 13 July 1867.

¹⁰⁰⁸ Even before the Luxembourg Crisis, the general feeling in Paris was described by one British official in January as ‘very bad about the Emperor and his versatile policy at home and abroad’. See TNA, FO519/193, Hammond to Cowley, 25 January 1867.

¹⁰⁰⁹ The run on the banks that followed during the ‘Panic of 1866’ brought down Dent & Co, one of China’s wealthiest British merchant firms, and led to the collapse of the French investment bank Crédit Mobilier in 1867. In November 1866, Hammond warned Parkes that the refusal of City institutions to accept bills of exchange from Dent would have ‘disastrous consequences for China and Japan’. See CUL, Parkes Papers, MSParkes1/H10, Hammond to Parkes, 9 November 1867.

Coupled with Moustier's disavowal of Roches's policy (of which at least some of Béhic's financial associates were surely aware), the reaction in London to the *Japan Times* articles, the anti-Tokugawa propaganda campaign led by Montblanc and Cachon in the Paris press, and the legal restrictions that prevented the Société Générale from issuing more secure long-term bonds, it hardly seems surprising that a public bond subscription for the import-export company failed miserably. Between 15 and 20 July 1867, only 1400 of the 40,000 shares initially offered were taken up, and the company was abandoned on 3 August due to a lack of public support.¹⁰¹⁰ In the weeks that followed, Coulet and Fleury-Hérard broke the disappointing news to Roches in a series of letters that revealed the full extent of Montblanc and Cachon's intriguing in Paris.¹⁰¹¹ Nonetheless, Coulet remained optimistic that a core group of investors would still be able to raise the necessary capital for the company – a solution he believed preferable to the failed public subscription model in any case. 'Like me, sir, you will regret these delays', Coulet wrote to Roches on 9 August, 'but it was *force majeure*.'¹⁰¹²

It is possible that when Coulet cited *force majeure* he was simply referring to the inherent risk of attempting to float shares for a foreign investment at a time of great instability. After all, this was the reason cited by Ericson and Sims for the failure of the company, and it is certainly true that Coulet attributed the lack of subscriber interest to the difficulties that always arose in France when organising distant and long-term financial affairs.¹⁰¹³ That said, he also stated explicitly in his 9 August letter to Roches that 'you already know that at this moment there can be no question of a foreign loan', which would suggest that there was more to the failure of the company than simply the unfavourable political and economic conditions at the time. Fortunately, the discovery of a series of letters that Parkes received in 1867 from John Robertson, agent for the Oriental Bank in Yokohama, can shed new light on what Coulet really meant. Indeed, these letters prove for the first time that it was the Oriental Bank's refusal to offer the *bakufu* a foreign loan

¹⁰¹⁰ See Ericson, *op.cit.*, pp.106-7; and Sims, *op.cit.*, pp.63-4 & p.315, footnote 58. The full details of the subscription can be found in a document written in Siebold's hand that was sent to Parkes, probably when the former visited London in August 1867. See CUL, Parkes Papers, MSParkes33/18.

¹⁰¹¹ The letters are enclosed in TNA, FO46/82, Parkes to Hammond, 14 November 1867. They include two from Coulet dated 9 & 18 August and one from Fleury-Hérard dated 10 August.

¹⁰¹² *Ibid.*, Coulet to Roches, 9 August 1867.

¹⁰¹³ See Ericson, *op.cit.*, p.107; and Sims, *op.cit.*, p.64.

that led to the collapse of the import-export company, rather than the other way around as Ericson and Sims asserted.¹⁰¹⁴

The first of these letters, which can be found in Parkes's private papers, was an extract of a note from the directors of the Oriental Bank in London informing Robertson that any loan was contingent upon Edo offering Japanese commodities as security. The bank was prepared to open a current account to facilitate future monetary advances to the *bakufu*, but even this was conditional upon Edo providing securities in the form of government duties and taxes. The *bakufu* would also have to declare the Oriental Bank as its official banker before the directors would authorise such an account.¹⁰¹⁵ Dated 17 April 1867, this note was probably the bank's official response to the application for a five-million-dollar loan made by the *bakufu* the previous year. Robertson had only agreed to forward this application to London under the understanding that the money would be secured against one million dollars' worth of Japanese copper. The response he received indicated that Stuart and his colleagues were already deeply sceptical about lending to the *bakufu* even before the arrival in London of Parkes's private note of 14 February 1867. The British minister's warning about lending unsecured money to the Tokugawa representatives in Paris was undoubtedly the final straw, however, as Stuart notified Robinson soon afterwards that there was no prospect of such a loan without cast-iron guarantees from Japan in the form of copper and silk. When Robertson received this news in June, he wrote immediately to Parkes:

Our people don't seem to fancy the loan...Mr Stuart in his private note says that he had received your letter but *your* point was just *his* – i.e. *the wrong man* – “I am awfully afraid of getting hold of the wrong man and then being told he had no authority to do what he did...Such is the state of credit in England at present that even were the Japanese Government quite good and undoubted and were they to offer 25% I doubt if they would float a loan”.¹⁰¹⁶

The failure of the foreign loan scheme was therefore already a *fait accompli* by the time the public bond subscription for the import-export company opened in July 1867. In fact,

¹⁰¹⁴ This was in any case a curious argument given that Coulet's letter makes it quite clear that Roches was aware of the impossibility of raising a foreign loan before he found out about the collapse of the company. See Ericson, *op.cit.*, p.108; and Sims, *op.cit.*, p.62.

¹⁰¹⁵ CUL, Parkes Papers, MSParkes14/R1, 'Extract from Head Office letter of 17 April 1867'.

¹⁰¹⁶ CUL, Parkes Papers, MSParkes14/R2, Robertson to Parkes, 19 June 1867.

even before Parkes's critical intervention, the Oriental Bank had been unwilling to offer the *bakufu* significant credit unless it provided substantial security. After it, any prospect of a foreign loan vanished entirely. As a result, the *bakufu* was unable to pay for the contracts it negotiated with Coulet and the import-export company was doomed to failure. Given the stormy economic climate at the time, no sensible investor was prepared to back a company whose principal client appeared to lack both the funds and the legitimacy necessary to honour its commercial commitments.

The collapse of the import-export company left the Tokugawa representatives in Paris in dire financial straits. Ten days after its abandonment in early August, Mukōyama wrote to Siebold requesting his help to arrange for Akitake's visit to England. By this point, Siebold had embedded himself in Paris so successfully that Coulet had no idea he was feeding everything he saw and heard back to Hammond and Parkes.¹⁰¹⁷ When the young interpreter arrived back in Paris, he discovered the Japanese desperately short of money and increasingly estranged from their French hosts. He soon learned that Akitake and Mukōyama had only brought a small amount of credit to Europe because Coulet had promised them unlimited funds upon arrival. However, the failure of the import-export company had left Coulet, Fleury-Hérard, and the other committee members exposed to the tune of four million Francs for the goods that had already been shipped from France. Coulet did his best to put a positive spin on the situation in his correspondence with Roches, but there was no disguising the fact that contracts worth one million Francs had been countermanded by the end of August. These financial difficulties left the committee in a significantly less generous mood towards the Japanese than they had been before.

Despite all the personal favour that Napoléon III had showered on Akitake since his arrival in France, the Japanese were so angered by the overbearing attitude of their hosts and disillusioned by the way in which they had been led into penury that they were considering leaving Europe without visiting Britain at all. Sensing an opportunity to further drive a wedge between Mukōyama and the French, Siebold travelled to London to meet with Stuart in order to discuss the matter of an emergency loan to cover the expenses of Akitake's visit.¹⁰¹⁸ When Stuart asked how the prince could be so short of money and why Fleury-Hérard had refused any further liability for bills drawn by Oguri

¹⁰¹⁷ See, for example, Coulet's complimentary description of Siebold at the end of his letter to Roches on 18 August 1867, enclosed in TNA, FO46/82, Parkes to Hammond, 14 November 1867.

¹⁰¹⁸ CUL, Parkes Papers, MSParkes14/S1, Siebold to Parkes, 25 August 1867.

at the Oriental Bank, Siebold explained that the Japanese had been abandoned by Coulet following, as Stuart put it, ‘the failure of some proposed company and other schemes’. ‘I have no doubt that the failure of the European loan was at the root of the difficulty,’ Stuart reported to Robertson upon hearing this sorry tale, ‘then the Frenchman tried to repair this by establishing a “Company of Importation and Exportation”, which would have pledged the contracts to us – but they could not establish it so collapse is the result.’¹⁰¹⁹ In the end, Stuart agreed to an immediate advance of five thousand pounds and a promise of a further loan for the same amount if required. As the man who had denied the delegation access to foreign credit in the first place, it was the least that he could do!

Although Siebold, like Stuart, had not heard of the import-export company until August, he suspected that Parkes had at least some prior knowledge of this ‘bubble scheme’. ‘You know possibly that this society was to be organized with a capital of 12,000,000 Francs and that Coulet their agent in Japan had through the French Minister got contracts for 7,000,000 Francs,’ he wrote to the British minister on 25 August, ‘It was the fancy of M Roches to get thereby the whole trade of Japan into French hands – these 7,000,000 should have be [sic.] repaid by the Japanese Government in produce which would have exhausted the export market to no small amount.’¹⁰²⁰ The collapse of the company had caused consternation in Paris, Siebold reported, including the seizure of *La France*, an anti-official newspaper, after it openly criticised the French government for repeating the same mistakes in Japan as it did in Mexico by associating with the scheme. Yet Siebold believed that the Quai d’Orsay’s refusal to discuss the affair with Fleury-Hérard proved that the government neither knew nor cared about the company. He also dismissed rumours that Roches himself had a personal interest at stake, instead considering it simply ‘a matter of national jealousy for him to cut out the English in Japan’. Whoever was behind the debacle, Siebold was confident that his personal efforts to rescue the Japanese from financial difficulty had turned them against the French for good. He hoped that Mukōyama’s imminent return to Japan would finally open Edo’s eyes to the full extent of French deceit.¹⁰²¹

¹⁰¹⁹ Stuart’s letter to Robertson, dated 26 August 1867, was again forwarded by the latter to Parkes. It can be found in CUL, Parkes Papers, MSParkes14/R4, Robertson to Parkes, 26 October 1867.

¹⁰²⁰ CUL, Parkes Papers, MSParkes14/S1, Siebold to Parkes, 25 August 1867.

¹⁰²¹ Idem. Siebold shared all this information with Hammond as well, and continued to keep the Permanent Under-Secretary updated on every development in Paris throughout the autumn of 1867. These letters can be found in TNA, FO46/68.

Sensation diplomacy

It is difficult to know for sure whether Parkes knew about the import-export company scheme before he received Siebold and Stuart's intelligence from Europe. The fact that he made no mention of it in his private notes on Roches and Couillet's commercial engagements with the *bakufu* implies at the very least a reluctance to believe newspaper tittle-tattle without concrete evidence. He also responded cautiously to the news of Oliphant's proposed question in the House of Commons, explaining to Hammond in June that he had not written officially on the subject because he had no information about Roches's role in the commercial transactions the question referred to. 'A French merchant, M Couillet, has I believe made such a contract [for the supply of clothing to the shogun's troops],' he wrote, 'but I do not see what exception we can take to this, so long as our own trade is not interfered with.'¹⁰²² He added that the Chamber of Commerce of Yokohama, which had launched an enquiry into the newspaper reports concerning Roches's activities, had 'failed to ascertain anything that compromised him in any degree'. 'He has I believe urged the Japanese Government to undertake a heavy and unwise expenditure in the construction of Docks and in the purchase of military equipments,' Parkes went on, 'but he has not been personally concerned in these purchases'.¹⁰²³

This letter, which appears to contradict Sims's assertion that Parkes had a hand in Oliphant's decision to table the question, struck a decidedly less hostile tone towards Roches than that which the British minister sent to Hammond a few months earlier.¹⁰²⁴ Perhaps he was feeling more optimistic about his own relations with Edo after his trip to Osaka, or confident that his personal intervention over the foreign loan would deny Roches the fruits of his endeavours. Whatever the reason, Parkes's claim to have no knowledge of Roches's activities seems very unlikely given what his own private notes reveal. The most likely explanation for his reluctance to forward this information to the Foreign Office officially was that he had yet not obtained irrefutable proof of what Roches and his associates were up to. The arrival of Stuart and Siebold's letters at the end of October 1867 was therefore highly significant, as they contained concrete evidence at last that the French could not be trusted to handle Edo's money.

¹⁰²² TNA, Hammond Papers, FO391/14, Parkes to Hammond, 14 June 1867.

¹⁰²³ *Idem*.

¹⁰²⁴ See Sims, *op.cit.*, p.63.

Once they had digested this intelligence, Parkes and Robertson decided that the best course of action was to inform the *bakufu* of ‘the real position of their Prince and the risk he runs of being seized for debt in Europe’.¹⁰²⁵ In Robertson’s view, the sooner Oguri understood that Coulet was no longer willing or able to supply Akitake with the funds he needed the better, since the *kanjō-bugyōsho* still appeared to be handing over money to Coulet’s friends in Japan – money that Stuart’s letter suggested was being appropriated for other purposes. On 21 October, therefore, a letter signed by Robertson but written in Parkes’s hand was dispatched to Oguri informing him that Akitake had been unable to access credit in France, that he had applied successfully for temporary assistance from the Oriental Bank in London, but that Akitake’s credit as well as that of the *bakufu* now rested upon Edo’s willingness to accept liability for the sum already advanced. To make it clear who now controlled the *bakufu*’s purse strings, the *kanjō-bugyō* was also advised to ‘consult on the subject with the British Minister Sir Harry Parkes’.¹⁰²⁶ A *bakufu* official arrived in Yokohama to accept liability for the money a few days later, where he confessed to Robertson that no one in Edo knew anything of the failure of Akitake’s guardians to raise the necessary funds in Paris. ‘I told him all I knew was that they had sent to London to us *direct*,’ Robertson reported to Parkes, ‘and if money had been at their disposal in France there would have been no need of any application to us’.¹⁰²⁷ One can only imagine the shock and anger in Edo when those who trusted Roches to revive the *bakufu*’s fortunes discovered how much they had been duped.

Even before this earthshattering news, there was growing evidence that Roches had less influence over his government than he was willing to admit. He had been severely weakened by the arrival of Moustier’s stern reprimand during the summer of 1867, even though he strongly contested the criticism it contained of his policy and the allegations of official trading made against him by the Japan press. Nonetheless, his request for permission to go on extended leave at the end of the year to spend more time with his family suggested an air of resignation.¹⁰²⁸ Roches’s mood cannot have been much improved when news of Cachon’s letter in *La France* arrived in late July, which even Parkes believed went too far in asserting that the *daimyō* were just as entitled to the title of shogun as the head of the Tokugawa house. Its appearance naturally caused great

¹⁰²⁵ CUL, Parkes Papers, MSParkes14/R3, Robertson to Parkes, 21 October 1867.

¹⁰²⁶ Ibid., encl., Robertson to Oguri, 21 October 1867.

¹⁰²⁷ CUL, Parkes Papers, MSParkes14/R4, Robertson to Parkes, 26 October 1867.

¹⁰²⁸ AD, CPJ59/15, Roches to Moustier, No. 89, 13 July 1867.

consternation in Edo, where *bakufu* officials had previously spoken of Cachon ‘as the best informed foreigner as to the language and institutions of the country’.¹⁰²⁹ According to Parkes, it also completely undermined Roches’s unfounded claim that the shogun was Japan’s legal and supreme sovereign rather than the Mikado.¹⁰³⁰ In August, Roches received another dispatch from Moustier detailing allegations of impropriety in relation to a commercial company in Tunis, where he previously served as consul general.¹⁰³¹ The increasingly beleaguered French minister now insisted on returning to France at the end of the year to defend his honour.¹⁰³²

As the summer wore on, Roches’s problems continued to mount. Through most of August and September he was preoccupied with the arrest of a community of Japanese Christians from Urakami village, near Nagasaki, who had been encouraged by French Roman Catholic missionaries to declare their faith openly in expectation of an imminent relaxation of Japan’s laws against the practice of Christianity. His attempts to free these prisoners without antagonising either the *bakufu* or the missionaries were not entirely successful, although he at least prevented the shogun’s enemies from exploiting the situation. At a meeting with Keiki in Osaka in mid-August, he acknowledged the Japanese position that the proselytization of Christianity breached the treaties, despite the outrage this inevitably provoked among the French missionary community. No sooner had he done so than word arrived that Montblanc was bringing a party of retired French officers and soldiers to Japan to help Satsuma establish its own navy. Roches immediately assured Keiki that neither Montblanc nor his companions had any connection to the French government, but their appearance strengthened the growing impression in Japan that his influence in Paris was weaker than he claimed.¹⁰³³ The arrival in the early autumn of Coulet and Fleury-Hérard’s letters regarding the collapse of the import-export company and the failure of the foreign loan further undermined Keiki’s trust in his French ally. As Sims has accurately pointed out, there can be little other explanation for the fact that

¹⁰²⁹ The irony was not lost on Parkes when the *bakufu* dispatched an official to Europe to refute Cachon’s arguments. See TNA, Hammond Papers, FO391/14, Parkes to Hammond 27 July 1867.

¹⁰³⁰ *Idem*.

¹⁰³¹ Medzini, *op.cit.*, p.149.

¹⁰³² AD, CPJ59/15, Roches to Moustier, 10 August 1867.

¹⁰³³ Medzini, *op.cit.*, pp.152-60.

Roches was caught completely off guard when Keiki suddenly resigned as shogun and restored political authority to the emperor in November.¹⁰³⁴

Keiki's decision to abdicate came only a few months after he had finally secured imperial sanction for the opening of Hyōgo and a pardon for Chōshū in a form approved by the *daimyō*. The issue of this joint decree on 26 June 1867 represented a setback for the anti-*bakufu* party, which feared the opening of Hyōgo would make the *bakufu* unassailable. It proved a Pyrrhic victory for Keiki, however, as his highhanded insistence on issuing a joint declaration alienated the remainder of the *kōbu-gattai* lords. The *daimyō* of Tosa therefore began to formulate plans for the peaceful establishment of a federation of great *daimyō* along the lines that Parkes had long recommended. Meanwhile, Satsuma and Chōshū began active preparations for war and the transfer of troops to Kyoto. In late October, Tosa submitted a memorial to the *rōjū* urging the shogun to relinquish his political authority and support the establishment of a new imperial government. This radical document included proposals for a new constitution, the creation a bicameral council in Kyoto composed of an upper house of *daimyō* and a lower house of vassals and commoners, the building of an imperial army and navy, and the institution of a pro-foreign policy. The alternative was war, as the anti-*bakufu* faction at the imperial court had already contrived to issue an imperial decree authorising military action against the *bakufu*. It was the knowledge of this decree and a desperation to preserve some semblance of Tokugawa influence in the new government that compelled Keiki to surrender his administrative authority to the emperor on 8 November 1867, a decision that was readily accepted by the court. Lacking the authority to follow the court's orders to protect and defend the country until all the *daimyō* were assembled at Kyoto the following January, Keiki resigned his position as shogun on 19 November 1867.¹⁰³⁵

With his policy facing total defeat, Roches attempted to present Keiki's resignation to the French government as a 'progressive improvement in the political situation of the Tycoon'.¹⁰³⁶ Unsurprisingly, this rose-tinted assessment was not shared by Moustier, who made a number of sceptical annotations on the margins of the dispatch containing the news.¹⁰³⁷ Indeed, the more that Roches argued that the shogun's surrender of supreme

¹⁰³⁴ Sims, *op.cit.*, p.70.

¹⁰³⁵ Beasley, *op.cit.*, pp.88-90; Fox, *op.cit.*, p.202 & pp.208-9; and Marius B. Jansen, *The Making of Modern Japan*, (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2002), pp.310-2.

¹⁰³⁶ AD, CPJ59/15, Roches to Moustier, No. 98, 28 November 1867.

¹⁰³⁷ *Idem*. See also Sims, *op.cit.*, p.70 and p.317, footnote 80.

power was an enlightened decision, the less convincing his argument became. To be fair, Parkes was also optimistic at the time that Keiki's abdication meant there was 'a fair chance of the unworkable Government of Japan being replaced by an intelligible system'.¹⁰³⁸ Of course, one of the reasons why the British minister was so upbeat was that his gamble of withholding his letters of credence from the shogun had paid off handsomely. In late November, therefore, Parkes finally requested fresh credentials from the Foreign Office, this time addressed to the true sovereign of Japan: the Mikado.¹⁰³⁹

In hindsight, this decision seems obvious, as the shogun's power was clearly on the wane from the moment that Parkes arrived in Japan. Yet it is important to stress that none of the other treaty-power representatives took this bold step or dared to question the shogun's authority so openly with their own governments. It would also be inaccurate to assume that the British government was on the verge of changing tack on this issue by late 1867. Indeed, just two days before Parkes wrote to Hammond to inform him that the shogun had restored political authority to the emperor, the British Foreign Secretary Lord Stanley penned a letter to Queen Victoria advising her to accept an audience with Akitake on the basis that he was the brother of the shogun, 'who is in fact, though not in name, a sovereign'.¹⁰⁴⁰ Aside from demonstrating just how little Stanley really understood about the situation in Japan, this letter illustrated the common consensus within the chancelleries of Europe and the United States.¹⁰⁴¹ While it is true that the Foreign Office placed much faith in Parkes, it was still a brave decision to go against the grain so resolutely.

Given the risks, it was little wonder that Parkes praised Keiki for a decision that entirely vindicated his own policy. The British minister was now hopeful that civil war might be avoided through the implementation of the Tosa plan for reform, which Satow had by this point acquired and translated.¹⁰⁴² What he did not realise, however, was that this memorial

¹⁰³⁸ TNA, Hammond Papers, FO391/14, Parkes to Hammond, 28 November 1867.

¹⁰³⁹ TNA, FO46/82, Parkes to Stanley, No. 197, 28 November 1867.

¹⁰⁴⁰ Liverpool Record Office, Liverpool (LRO), Derby Papers, 920/CDer/15/13/2/6, Stanley to Queen Victoria, No. 34, 26 Nov 1867.

¹⁰⁴¹ The Foreign Secretary was not alone in his ignorance, as the Admiralty had raised concerns with him in October that Britain might be 'hustled into a war with Japan' if strong instructions were not sent out to deter Vice-Admiral Henry Keppel (Commander-in-Chief of the China Station) from having a 'go' at the Japanese. It seems unlikely that such orders were ever necessary. See LRO, Derby Papers, 920/CDer/15/12/3/12, Henry Lennox to Stanley, No. 65, 26 October 1867.

¹⁰⁴² TNA, Hammond Papers, FO391/14, Parkes to Hammond, 28 November 1867.

did not accurately reflect the ambitions of the anti-*bakufu* faction of middle-ranking samurai within Satsuma and Chōshū, who were concerned that the size of the Tokugawa land, revenues, and property would still allow Keiki to dominate any *daimyō* council. For these agitators, nothing short of the full surrender of the Tokugawa territories to the imperial court and a plea from Keiki for a pardon for his ‘crimes’ would be sufficient. As troops from the two domains began to pour into Kyoto, the revolutionary objectives of the Sat-Chō alliance finally became clear.¹⁰⁴³

These seismic political changes naturally dominated Parkes’s attention during the latter part of 1867, especially as he and his colleagues were anxious to see if the opening of Osaka and Hyōgo on 1 January 1868 would go ahead as planned. He still found the time to stick the knife into his shattered French colleague, however, whose recall from Japan had been rumoured since the beginning of October 1867.¹⁰⁴⁴ Parkes made his move in mid-November, shortly after he had received a private letter Hammond in which the Permanent Under-Secretary deplored the exploitative treatment of Akitake in Paris and expressed his ‘thorough contempt and disregard for all the by-play and scheming of the French and other foreigners’.¹⁰⁴⁵ Hammond’s note was well-timed, as it arrived just after Roches had inexplicably shown Parkes the correspondence that Coulet and Fleury-Hérard had sent from Paris regarding the failure of the import-export company and the foreign loan scheme.¹⁰⁴⁶ Parkes immediately forwarded this intelligence to Hammond in a private letter that revealed much about his own role in the collapse of both schemes:

You will find I think the justice of your remarks in your note of Sep 9 relative to the French education of the Tycoon’s brother attested by the enclosed letters which Roches allowed me to read. They show also what a peculiar position a French minister may hold with a French financier or commercial speculators. The company which he and Coulet had endeavoured to form has proved an utter

¹⁰⁴³ Jansen, *op.cit.*, p.311 and Fox, *op.cit.*, p.209.

¹⁰⁴⁴ TNA, Hammond Papers, FO391/14, Parkes to Hammond, 1 October 1867.

¹⁰⁴⁵ CUL, Parkes Papers, MSParkes1/H29, Hammond to Parkes, 9 September 1867.

¹⁰⁴⁶ Sims was probably right that Roches showed these letters to Parkes to prove that Montblanc’s military mission to Satsuma did not have the backing of the French government, as Parkes wrote the following private note to Flowers at the end of November: ‘Your account as to Montblanc and party having French FO passports is perfectly correct as Roches has admitted the same to me, but he presumes it to have been a mistake in the Passport Bureau, and he read me a Despatch to his Govt. pointing out the error and complaining of the way in which it compromised him.’ See CUL, Parkes Papers, MSParkes2/F15, 27 November 1867; and Sims, *op.cit.*, p.314, footnote 51.

failure from their not being able to get their shares taken. Their stock in trade would have been contracts with the Japanese Govt. and finance operations, in the way of loans on their account, but I have had something to do with checking these operations. Most of the contracts the Japanese Govt. thought of making have been abandoned as also the idea of raising a loan and the proposed company therefore found themselves without a field for their enterprise. I should of course not allow such a company to obtain any exclusive privileges.¹⁰⁴⁷

Both Ericson and Sims have speculated about the steps that Parkes took to frustrate Roches's schemes.¹⁰⁴⁸ While the assumptions they made were largely accurate, there is now no room for doubt: it was Parkes who instructed the Oriental Bank not to approve of a loan to the *bakufu*; and Parkes who told the Foreign Office that it was not in Britain's interests to offer Edo financial support. He therefore played *the* paramount role in thwarting Roches's plan to re-establish Tokugawa supremacy, the failure of which destroyed the Frenchman's credibility and influence in Japan forever. This is not to query the accuracy of Mitford's description that such influence was 'built upon foundations as unstable as the shifting sand'.¹⁰⁴⁹ Given the inherent weakness of the *bakufu* by this stage, Roches was perhaps always doomed to failure. Yet it was Parkes who guaranteed that failure by denying the *bakufu* access to credit; his warning letter that crystallised Stuart's reservations about lending to Edo into a firm refusal. Indeed, the fact that the Oriental Bank was ready and willing to offer a loan whenever Parkes recommended one proved that it was not the financial instability of the period that did for Roches, but his failure to win the battle to control Edo's purse strings. The situation was summed up best by Robertson:

It seems to me to be very clear that the Frenchmen mean to trade on *our name* – with *our money*. *Our name and our money belong to ourselves* – and our interests are *English*. The Japanese Govt. can – to my thinking – find *no credit except ours*.¹⁰⁵⁰

¹⁰⁴⁷ TNA, FO46/82, Parkes to Hammond, 14 November 1867.

¹⁰⁴⁸ See Ericson, *op.cit.*, p.109; and Sims, *op.cit.*, p.63.

¹⁰⁴⁹ Quoted in Cortazzi, *op.cit.*, p.78.

¹⁰⁵⁰ CUL, Parkes Papers, MSParkes14/R6, Robertson to Parkes, Wednesday evening (although it would appear from the context that it was written soon after Parkes read Couillet and Fleury-Hérard's letters). Robertson's emphasis.

Parkes could not have put it better himself. He now had the Japanese right where he wanted them: in his pocket. Even better, the utter failure of Roches's policy had, according to Mitford, 'destroyed the last particle of prestige that he had once had with his colleagues, who now had no better course left to them than to follow the lead of Sir Harry Parkes'.¹⁰⁵¹ For the tenacious British minister, victory was total; the 'enclave empires' in Japan now his to control.

Conclusions

While there were already signs in late 1866 that Parkes was no longer willing to allow Roches to pursue his '*politique personnelle*' with impunity, the beginning of 1867 marked the point when a clear schism began to emerge between the two men over their differing assessments of Japan's domestic political crisis, their contrasting visions for a modern Japan, and above all their divergent approaches to diplomacy. Despite these differences, Parkes never deviated from his instructions during the final year of the Tokugawa shogunate. Although keen to encourage the contesting parties in Japan to put aside their differences and institute Western-style constitutional reform, his consistent adherence to the neutrality policy throughout 1867 definitively puts to rest any suggestion that he somehow favoured the *daimyō* prior to the Meiji Restoration. His decision to withhold his letters of credence from the shogun should therefore not be interpreted as support for the *daimyō* cause, but rather as evidence of a pragmatic approach to diplomacy that was based on sound intelligence and an improved understanding of the realities of Japan's system of government.

By contrast, Roches could hardly have been more partisan. Despite strict instructions from Paris not to interfere, he launched a determined but fatally flawed attempt to influence the outcome of Japan's domestic dispute in Edo's favour. With the French government fixated on other global events, Roches had free rein to implement a brazen economic strategy to re-establish Tokugawa hegemony and monopolise the Japan trade for France. Unfortunately for the French minister, Parkes had no intention of allowing this pernicious attempt to circumvent British leadership of the treaty-port system to succeed. Once he discovered that Roches's commercial schemes required British finance to get off the ground, he took immediate measures to ensure that the Oriental Bank denied

¹⁰⁵¹ Quoted in Cortazzi, *op.cit.*, p.92.

the *bakufu* access to foreign credit. His direct intervention precipitated the collapse of Roches's '*politique personnelle*', hastened the Frenchman's disgrace, and shielded the 'enclave empires' in Japan from the creeping threat of French colonisation.

EPILOGUE

The Meiji Restoration and Beyond, 1868

On 3 January 1868, the imperial court in Kyoto proclaimed the abolition of the Tokugawa shogunate and the restoration of imperial rule. Earlier that day, troops from Chōshū, Satsuma, Tosa, and other anti-*bakufu* domains had supplanted the Tokugawa guards at the gates of the imperial palace, forcing Keiki and his supporters to withdraw to the safety of Osaka castle. It was there that the former shogun informed Roches and Parkes a few days later that a *coup d'état* had taken place in Kyoto before the *daimyō* could assemble, leaving the new Meiji Emperor under the control of the Satsuma coalition. The outbreak of fighting between the two factions on 27 January was met with dismay by Parkes, whose private notes revealed that he doubted the intentions of the agitators in Kyoto even at this late stage:

We have lost by this quarrel all the guarantees we possess for the execution of the Treaty. [There is] no notice yet from this new party, but *aggression* [was] *only inspired by Daimios!* [They] cannot be regarded as a regular government but as *enemies*, failing notice...Who more able to protect foreigners than the Tycoon? Can there be more safety with Daimios? Conclusions: not to trust to promises of new party; not to change the diplomatic situation.¹⁰⁵²

Despite this resolution, the swift defeat of Keiki's more numerous but poorly equipped forces on the outskirts of Kyoto left the foreign representatives with little choice but to leave Osaka out of fear for their safety at the end of January. A few days after taking refuge in Hyōgo, however, a regiment of samurai from the Bizen domain opened fire on the diplomatic representatives while they inspected the site for the new foreign settlement. Although a general massacre was averted by the ignorance of the Bizen men in the use of their new Western rifles, it was clear that the Tokugawa could no longer protect foreigners from the significant number of *sonnō-jōi* adherents that remained among the *daimyō*. Spurred into swift and united action by this realisation, the foreign representatives threatened to take retaliatory measures against the whole of Japan unless full reparation

¹⁰⁵² Cambridge University Library, Cambridge, MS Parkes 33/20, 'Situation actuelle': notes in Parkes's hand concerning the relationship between foreign powers and domestic political factions in Japan, [no date]. The emphasis is by Parkes.

from Bizen was immediately forthcoming. In the interim, they empowered their military commanders to secure the port of Hyōgo and seize all Japanese steamers in the harbour.

Just when it seemed that the treaty powers would be pulled into Japan's civil war after all, envoys from Kyoto arrived with an urgent message for the foreign representatives. On 8 February 1868, they were informed that the emperor had assumed control of all of Japan's domestic and foreign affairs, which meant that the Mikado's title could be substituted for that of the shogun in the treaties. After receiving assurances about the safety of foreigners and promises of reparations for the Bizen affair, the ministers agreed to release the steamers they had seized and withdraw their troops from Hyōgo. To the dismay of the *sonnō-jōi* party, whose adherents had hoped that the overthrow of the shogunate would finally lead to the expulsion of foreigners from Japan, on the same day the new Meiji government also issued a public proclamation in favour of an 'open door' policy towards foreigners and the treaties as part of an overarching strategy of enriching the country and strengthening its military (*fukoku-kyōhei*).¹⁰⁵³ The Meiji Restoration, or perhaps more accurately 'revolution', was rapidly taking shape.

The imperial proclamation was the last nail in the coffin of Roches's '*politique personelle*', which he had continued to pursue even after Keiki withdrew from Kyoto by urging the former shogun to resist the Satsuma coalition.¹⁰⁵⁴ After the meeting of 8 February, however, Roches's unbending loyalty to the Tokugawa cause became a source of acute embarrassment to both the man himself and the government he represented. According to Mitford, he cut a pathetic and uncomfortable figure,¹⁰⁵⁵ while Satow declared that he had 'so far committed himself with the *Baku-fu* that he found it impossible to remain one day longer in Japan after its overthrow'.¹⁰⁵⁶ In fact, it was Moustier who decided in mid-February to replace Roches with Ange-George Maxime Outrey, previously consul-general to Alexandria. Although Moustier was careful to avoid accusations of censure by emphasizing Roches's previously stated desire to leave Japan, the fact that Roches was awarded the permanent title of minister plenipotentiary but not

¹⁰⁵³ Grace Fox, *Britain and Japan, 1858-1883*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1969), pp.217-223.

¹⁰⁵⁴ Archives Diplomatiques, Paris (AD), CPJ59/16, Roches to Moustier, No. 100, 10 January 1868. See also Richard Sims, *French Policy Towards the Bakufu and Meiji Japan, 1854-95*, (Richmond: Japan Library, 1998), op.cit., p.70.

¹⁰⁵⁵ Hugh Cortazzi, ed., *Mitford's Japan: the Memoirs and Recollections, 1866-1906, of Algernon Bertram Mitford, the first Lord Redesdale*, (London: Athlone, 1985), p.92

¹⁰⁵⁶ Sir Ernest Mason Satow, *A Diplomat in Japan*, (London: Seeley, Service and Co., 1921), p.197.

appointed to another position confirmed that his time in the French diplomatic service was at an end.¹⁰⁵⁷ By contrast, Parkes revelled in his status as doyen of the diplomatic corps in the months following the Restoration. Thanks in large part to the close links that Satow and Mitford had established with the chief architects of the Kyoto coup, relations with the new government started off very positively. After an initial meeting with the Mikado alongside his diplomatic colleagues at the end of March, on 22 May 1868 the British minister became the first to present his credentials officially to the young emperor during an historic ceremony at Osaka that marked the beginning of a new era of Anglo-Japanese relations.¹⁰⁵⁸

Outrey arrived in Japan a few weeks after Parkes's diplomatic triumph, when he inherited a difficult legacy from his predecessor. His first task was to negotiate with Kyoto for the payment of all the merchandise contracted for by the *bakufu* with Couillet and the Société Générale.¹⁰⁵⁹ Although all the treaty-power representatives had agreed to abide by a policy of strict neutrality in Japan's ongoing civil war, Outrey also had to field unwelcome appeals for mediation from the pro-Tokugawa *daimyō* in northern Japan who continued to defy Kyoto's authority even after Keiki surrendered Edo to the new regime in May.¹⁰⁶⁰ Worse was to come in October, when some restless members of the French military mission to Edo absconded from Yokohama to help the remnants of the Tokugawa forces capture the island of Ezo (Hokkaido). Much to Outrey's embarrassment and indignation, the leader of these officers, Captain Jules Brunet, assisted in the creation of the short-lived Republic of Ezo, which he hoped would both introduce democracy to Japan and reassert French influence in the country. Like Outrey, the French government wanted nothing to do with this latest scheme, for the predictable reason that it did not want to risk incurring the wrath of the British. In the end, Brunet's actions did little to change the outcome of Japan's civil war, which was definitively ended by the recapture of Ezo by imperial forces in June 1869. Unlike his predecessor, Outrey pursued a much more cautious policy during his three-year tenure in Japan and was at pains to remain on

¹⁰⁵⁷ AD, CPJ59/16, Moustier to Roches, No. 2, 18 February 1868.

¹⁰⁵⁸ Fox, *op.cit.*, pp.227-35. See also John Breen, 'The Rituals of Anglo-Japanese Diplomacy: Imperial Audiences in Early Meiji Japan', in Gordon Daniels and Chūshichi Tsuzuki, eds., *The History of Anglo-Japanese Relations, Volume 5: The Social and Cultural Perspectives*, (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), pp.60-76.

¹⁰⁵⁹ This was eventually paid off in full with a loan from the Oriental Bank, no doubt secured on Parkes's recommendation.

¹⁰⁶⁰ Sims, *op.cit.*, pp.76-8

good terms with Parkes throughout. The Quai d'Orsay, it seemed, had also had enough of adventurous diplomacy in the Far East.¹⁰⁶¹

Although the Brunet affair took place after Roches's departure from Japan, it provided a fitting footnote to his Japanese career. The independent, interventionist approach that he adopted during his four-year tenure reflected in many respects the ambitious but reckless foreign policy pursued by the French emperor himself during the 1860s. Like Roches, Napoléon III discovered too late that France no longer had the military strength nor the political influence to shape the modern world in its own image. Indeed, it was only when the under-prepared and overconfident French army was crushed by Prussia's modernised and disciplined forces in 1870 that the full extent of the emperor's failure to react to the global emergence of the nation state finally became clear. After the collapse of the Second Empire, the Third Republic was more focused on developing its colonial interests elsewhere in the world than in exploring commercial opportunities in Japan, where British influence remained paramount. As a result, for the remainder of the nineteenth century and beyond, French policy in Japan never again replicated the bold, though fatally flawed, characteristics of Roches's '*politique personelle*'.

By contrast, Britain continued to expand its influence within the Japanese treaty-port system in the two decades after the Meiji Restoration, even if Japan remained low on Britain's list of priorities for most of that period. Unlike the rapid turnover of French representatives in Japan (eight between 1868 and 1883), Parkes remained British minister for eighteen years, during which time his position as leader of the treaty-port system was never again under serious threat. Although he was free to shape Japan's process of modernisation as he saw fit, as time wore on his irascible diplomatic style and refusal to agree to treaty revision inevitably began to aggravate a Meiji government that was keen to free itself from British constraints. Yet though Parkes may not have always been popular with the Japanese during his long tenure in Tokyo, the support and guidance he offered while the country underwent a period of rapid modernisation undoubtedly proved invaluable. Although certainly a man of his time, his paternalistic policy was less nakedly manipulative than that pursued by Roches, which even the French government summarised as 'the exploitation of Japan by privileged French speculators'.¹⁰⁶²

¹⁰⁶¹ For a full analysis of the Brunet affair, see *ibid.*, pp.78-82

¹⁰⁶² AD, MDJ/3, April 1869; quoted in Sims, *op.cit.*, p.81.

By the time Parkes left Japan in 1883, British foreign policy was dominated by the Conservative mantra of ‘splendid isolation’ – a defensive reaction to the rise of Prussian and Russian expansionism in Europe and Asia that must have seemed ironic to a man who had spent most of his career forcing China and Japan to open to the West. Coupled with this cautious policy, Britain was initially slow to see the potential benefits of ‘equal’ commercial relations with the rising power in the East. Japanese requests for treaty revision were therefore resisted in London until the conclusion of the Anglo-Japanese Treaty of Commerce and Navigation on 16 July 1894, which finally heralded the end of the Japanese treaty-port system when it came into force in 1899. Although this spurred the British government into seeking a new strategic partnership with Japan as a buffer against an expansionist Russia, it did little to change London’s view that British commercial, political, and strategic interests in East Asia were well served by the surviving treaty ports in China. The Chinese treaty-port system therefore endured until the invading Japanese finally swept it away in 1943, while Hong Kong remained under British control right up to 1997. Today, many of East Asia’s former treaty ports have been transformed into thriving hubs for international commerce and industry – the era of ‘enclave empires’ at last eclipsed, if never truly forgotten.

CONCLUSION

From the moment that the Ansei Treaties were signed in 1858 until the collapse of the Tokugawa shogunate a decade later, the relationship between Britain and France defined the Japanese treaty-port system. This thesis has demonstrated that it is impossible to understand how this system worked without considering Anglo-French relations in Japan, in the wider East Asian region, in Europe, and elsewhere in the world. By default, the global power and influence of the British and French empires ensured their status as the two leading Western nations to enter into treaty relations with the *bakufu*. The policies adopted in London and Paris for the imposition and implementation of the ‘unequal treaties’ were therefore central to the way in which Western ‘enclave empires’ developed in Japan over the ten years covered by this study. At the same time, it is important to stress that Japan was rarely, if ever, a foreign policy priority for either power between 1858 and 1868. Though rarely highlighted by the historiography, the overwhelming focus of the Foreign Office and the Quai d’Orsay on international developments elsewhere proved critical to the way in which events unfolded in Japan during this period. The relative unimportance of Japanese affairs to successive foreign ministers in London and Paris also perpetuated a general ignorance of Japan’s complex system of government, not to mention the difficulties that arose out of its gradual transition from absolute seclusion into the East Asian maritime trading network.

The introduction to this thesis identified four factors overlooked by the historiography of this period: the international *context*; the *comparative* approach; the *corpus* of documents; and the *cast* of characters. In the final reckoning, each has proved crucial to understanding the historical events described in this study. Let us begin with the *cast* of characters. At the outset of this thesis, I pointed out that many histories of the opening of Japan to Western trade were exclusively focused on the decisions taken by diplomatic representatives and their superiors back in Europe. By contrast, there was much less information about how the other members of Western society who populated the treaty ports influenced the development of Anglo-French policy during the *bakumatsu* era. By exploring the contributions made by the most influential of these non-diplomatic actors, this thesis has demonstrated that there certainly were times when personalities outside the diplomatic sphere had a critical role to play.

Relations between diplomatic representatives and regional naval commanders were especially important, as the fractious relationship between Sir Rutherford Alcock and Rear-Admiral Sir James Hope demonstrated. Alcock was a staunch subscriber to the Palmerstonian view of the Royal Navy as the ‘armed wing’ of British diplomacy in East Asia, but the use of this tactic was always dependent upon the cooperation of the Commander-in-Chief on the China Station at the time. Unfortunately for Alcock, he quickly discovered that Admiral Hope rarely shared his belief that ‘gunboat diplomacy’ was as necessary in Japan as it was in China. The several occasions when Hope refused to dispatch naval reinforcements to Japanese waters thus forced Alcock into making concessions to the *bakufu* he would not have otherwise considered. They also compelled him to work more closely with his colleagues to find a diplomatic solution to their difficulties with Edo until such options were exhausted. Yet in the end it was the arrival of Rear-Admiral Augustus Kuper that proved pivotal to the success of Alcock’s attempts to confront the anti-foreign movement. Put simply, the naval victory at Shimonoseki and the important advantages it secured for the treaty powers would not have been possible without the British admiral’s acquiescence. The same was true of his French colleague Admiral Benjamin Jaurès, which is why Léon Roches concealed his decision to commit French forces to the expedition until the French admiral had no choice but to support it. In short, British and French naval commanders played a very influential role in the implementation of Anglo-French policy in Japan during the 1850s and 1860s, especially given the limited strategic importance of the country throughout this period. The fact that they often had more pressing matters to deal with elsewhere in East Asia explains why the delay or curtailment of visits by their forces to Japanese waters rarely provoked complaints from the Foreign Office or the Quai d’Orsay, even if they had important consequences for the diplomatic representatives on the spot.

In contrast to the influence wielded by naval commanders, British and French missionaries in Japan did not have much say over Anglo-French policy during the 1860s – with one notable exception. After a far from stellar career in the *Société des Missions Étrangères de Paris*, the appointment of Mermet de Cachon as interpreter to the French legation was a significant factor in the development of Roches’s pro-*bakufu* policy. An astute political intriguer with close connections to Edo, his influence over Roches was widely known within the treaty-port community and a matter of great concern for the British diplomatic representatives. Ironically, Cachon’s attack on the *bakufu* in 1867 contributed to Roches’s eventual downfall, while the commercial agreements he helped

to broker eventually proved financially ruinous for Edo. His overall impact upon French policy cannot therefore be described as very positive, even if he was by far the most interesting missionary in Japan at the time. Aside from Cachon, the French missionary presence in Japan created few problems until 1867, when old tensions over the preaching of Christianity began to bubble to the surface again. Given how quickly French diplomats and naval commanders had exploited the murder of Catholic missionaries in Vietnam and Korea during this era, the *bakufu* was fortunate that none were ever martyred in Japan.

For the British, missionary activity was rarely a matter of official concern prior to the Meiji Restoration, although religion did become an issue for Sir Harry Parkes thereafter. It was rather Cachon's activities as interpreter and political intriguer at the shogun's court that caused the most headaches at the British legation. Knowledge was power in a country as mysterious and perplexing as *bakumatsu* Japan, so Cachon's linguistic abilities and close connections to the regime in Edo posed a direct threat to British interests. It was little surprise that Parkes welcomed his sudden departure in 1866, therefore, as it left Roches bereft of reliable political intelligence at a critical time in his battle for supremacy with his British colleague.¹⁰⁶³ Yet even before Cachon departed the scene, an increasingly well-connected network of talented British interpreters had already started to tip the balance of the intelligence war in Parkes's favour. While Roches was often reliant upon partisan sources within the *bakufu* for information about Japan's unfolding political crisis, Parkes was far better informed about what was really going on thanks to the close connections that Ernest Satow and Algernon Mitford cultivated with influential middle-ranking samurai from Satsuma and Chōshū. Without this intelligence, it would have been much more difficult for Parkes to counteract Roches's policy and protect British interests during the final years of the shogunate.

Much credit is therefore due to the British interpreters who operated in Japan during this period, as well as to the Foreign Office for dispatching such exceptional linguists to the country in the first place. Of course, it took some time for these young interpreters to gain proficiency in Japanese, so Alcock had little option in the early days of treaty relations but to employ local translators just as Duchesne de Bellecourt did. The assassination of a native Japanese linguist at the gates of the British legation in early 1860 highlighted the flaws in this approach, yet Alcock turned the problem to his advantage by recruiting

¹⁰⁶³ According to the Japan Directory for 1867, the only other interpreter at the French legation in Edo was the Dutch interpreter Alphonse J. Van Der Voo. See *The China Directory, 1867*, Hong Kong, China.

young Alexander von Siebold as a supernumerary interpreter in late 1861. Siebold proved a highly reliable intelligence asset who imbedded himself with the 1867 Akitake delegation to Paris so successfully that the French government had no idea he was feeding vital information about Roches's activities to Parkes and the Foreign Office right under its nose. While Satow and Mitford have justifiably received plaudits from historians for their achievements in Japan, it is only fair that Siebold shares some of the credit for establishing British intelligence supremacy there, as does Alcock for having the foresight to recruit him in the first place. This thesis has therefore rehabilitated Siebold to his rightful place as one of the most influential of the British and French interpreters who worked in Japan during the *bakumatsu* period. It has also demonstrated that the British system of appointing student interpreters to the Japan consular service produced much more reliable informants than the Quai d'Orsay's ad-hoc approach of employing whatever linguist came recommended by their man on the spot. The fact that the first wave of British student interpreters arrived in Edo alongside Alcock in 1859 but no such position existed within the French consular service until 1868 says much about the resources each government was prepared to dedicate to Japanese affairs.¹⁰⁶⁴

The foreign merchant community in East Asia was another important driver of Anglo-French policy in Japan. This is hardly surprising, for it was commercial interests that the British and French governments were ostensibly defending at the treaty ports. Even so, the relationship between the merchant class and their diplomatic representatives varied enormously. Alcock had a particularly torrid time attempting to restrain his countrymen during the early years of trade relations, when the treaty ports were populated with the hardest adventurers. Their disgraceful manipulation of the currency exchange also strengthened the impression in London that it was the unruly conduct of foreigners, rather than the determination of the *bakufu* to revert to seclusion, that posed the biggest threat to the treaties. This attitude was reinforced by the hysterical reaction in Yokohama to the murder of Charles Richardson, which could easily have led to a general massacre if Colonel Neale had not resisted merchant demands for an armed response. Unlike his predecessors, Parkes enjoyed a reasonably good relationship with the merchant community, especially after he thwarted Roches's monopoly schemes and secured significant commercial concessions from Edo. French merchants in Japan were

¹⁰⁶⁴ The Japan Directory for 1868 lists Leon van de Polder as the first student interpreter at the French consulate in Yokohama. See *The Chronicle & Directory for China, Japan & The Philippines, 1868*, Hong Kong, China.

significantly less influential than those of their British counterparts, for the obvious reason that there were far fewer of them. Yet with so few compatriots around to defend his actions, Roches was frequently exposed to attack and ridicule in the Anglophone treaty-port press. In the end, one such attack contributed to the French government's decision to disavow his entire policy.

Although still in its infancy during the 1860s, the British banking sector was a very important constituency of treaty-port society. As Parkes's private correspondence with John Robertson demonstrated, the Oriental Bank trusted to the British minister's judgement on matters of financial policy in Japan. This was a huge boon for Parkes in his battle with Roches for control over the treaty-port system. No matter how much the French minister ingratiated himself with the *bakufu*, he could not change the fact that Parkes and his friends at the Oriental Bank controlled Edo's purse strings. As a result, the moment that the *bakufu* became dependent on foreign money to honour its commercial contracts with France, his schemes collapsed. The imbalance in financial power in East Asia was probably one of the reasons why the French Ministry of Commerce promoted the creation of trading factories in East Asia during the 1860s. Yet these plans never came to fruition, leaving British financiers unchallenged as the modernisation of Japan took shape following the Meiji Restoration.

While naval commanders, missionaries, interpreters, merchants, and bankers all made important contributions to the development of 'enclave empires' in Japan, it was the British and French diplomatic representatives who wielded the most influence over policymaking at the treaty ports. Japan's extreme isolation, coupled with the relative ignorance of Japanese affairs in London and Paris, meant that these men on the spot were granted more independence by the Foreign Office and the Quai d'Orsay than was normally the case. Indeed, it could be argued that every representative who served in Japan during this time developed their own '*politique personnelle*' to cope with the challenge of implementing the treaties. Some, like Neale, were determined to follow their orders as closely as possible regardless of political realities on the ground. Others, like Parkes, Alcock, and Bellecourt, tried to adhere to the spirit of their instructions when circumstances made it impossible to abide by their letter. This was what Roches also attempted to do when he first arrived in Japan, before the departure of Alcock spurred him to take matters into his own hands. Although this gamble ultimately failed to pay off, it is important to stress that 'man on the spot' diplomatists were accustomed to taking such risks. Time and expediency often forced them to take decisions without reference

home or a clear understanding of what the consequences might be, and the line between success and failure was usually very thin. This was an era of tightrope diplomacy, when foreign agents had to balance their personal views as to the best course of action against the wishes of the government they represented. The fact that Alcock and Roches were both punished for pursuing an independent line demonstrated that, regardless of how far away agents were stationed from home, there were still limits to their freedom of action. Thus, while diplomats in Japan certainly enjoyed more room for manoeuvre than their peers in Europe, it is clear that the parameters of on-the-spot diplomacy were still set by officials in the Foreign Office and the Quai d'Orsay.

In this context, the history of the first decade of treaty relations with Japan offers some useful insights into the mechanics of British and French foreign policy during the mid-nineteenth century. Previous histories of this period have often focused on the decisions taken by the British Foreign Secretary of the day, but this thesis has proved that it was really Edmund Hammond, the Permanent Under-Secretary for Foreign Affairs between 1854 and 1873, who controlled Britain's Japan policy during the 1860s. As Mitford pointed out in his memoirs, Hammond 'was the Foreign Office; he kept all the strings in his own hands...his colossal industry and retentive memory enabled him to direct, single-handed the whole current work of the department'.¹⁰⁶⁵ Naturally, that work included Japan, which meant that it was often the Permanent Under-Secretary who decided how to respond to developments in Edo, and his privately-communicated policy recommendations that formed the basis of official instructions dispatched to the men on the spot. This was as much the case during the Liberal ministries led by Lords Palmerston and Russell as it was for the minority Conservative administration that came to power in 1866.

Hammond's omnipotence at the Foreign Office during the 1860s helps to explain why British foreign policy in Japan remained remarkably consistent throughout this period, even though the Tories were far more hostile to the ideology of free trade than their Liberal predecessors. Indeed, the only time a Foreign Secretary directly overruled Hammond over Japan policy was during the summer of 1865, when Russell vetoed his proposal for Parkes to open trade negotiations with the Mikado independently of the other treaty powers. Even so, Hammond continued to exert significant influence through his

¹⁰⁶⁵ Algernon Bertrand Freeman-Mitford, Baron Redesdale, *Memories*, Vol. 1, (London: Hutchinson, 1915), p.110-1.

regular private correspondence with Parkes, where he discussed the need for Western-style constitutional reform in Japan much more overtly than was possible in the official dispatches.

These private letters reveal much about what Hammond expected from a senior diplomat in Japan. Although willing to grant experienced ‘China hands’ like Alcock and Parkes a certain degree of latitude in their efforts to make the treaty ports a safer and more prosperous place, he was always very clear that direct interference in Japan’s internal affairs would not be tolerated without express sanction from home and unless absolutely necessary to protect British life and property. Parkes respected these boundaries by favouring intelligence-based diplomacy to naval grandstanding – an approach that secured British commercial supremacy in Japan without the need to fire a single shot. Alcock, by contrast, felt in 1864 that he had no other choice but to resort to ‘gunboat diplomacy’, even if such a course risked incurring Hammond’s wrath. Sure enough, he suffered the ignominy of an official recall that not only tarnished the greatest triumph of his diplomatic career but also fractured the fragile alliance he had brokered with the other treaty-power representatives. Clearly, British diplomats overseas crossed the Permanent Under-Secretary at their peril. Certainly, any historiographical assertion that Alcock and Parkes acted with complete autonomy in Japan is inaccurate. In fact, like in most parts of the world where the Foreign Office had interests at stake, Hammond’s shadowy hand was always guiding the actions of the British representatives in Edo. For too long, the Permanent Under-Secretary’s role in the creation of ‘enclave empires’ in Japan has been obscured by an historiography that is overly focused on decision-making by the men on the spot. As the person ultimately responsible for the way in which British foreign policy was made in Japan between 1858 and 1868, Edmund Hammond can now be recognised as one of the most influential of the diverse *cast* of characters covered by this study.

While Hammond always kept a close eye on the activities of his agents in Japan, French diplomats in Edo were largely left to their own devices, with typically unpredictable consequences. The Quai d’Orsay must therefore bear some responsibility for the long-term damage done to French interests by appointing a reckless buccaneer like Roches to the position of minister plenipotentiary, and for allowing him to pursue his ambitious ‘*politique personnelle*’ in Japan without sufficient oversight. Even before Roches’s appointment, however, there was very little evidence of a coherent diplomatic strategy for Japan at the Quai d’Orsay, where successive foreign ministers were either too disinterested or too ignorant of Japanese affairs to challenge London or Washington on

matters of policy. Their indifference was entirely symptomatic of the general malaise that afflicted French foreign policymaking during the Second Empire, an era when the work of the Quai d'Orsay was frequently undermined by Napoléon III's megalomaniacal approach to international diplomacy. The emperor, who wielded absolute authority over France's foreign relations for most of his reign, generally preferred personal diplomacy to official channels of communication. Whether this meant conducting secret negotiations with other heads of state or instructing one of his close confidantes to act as an intermediary at the courts of Europe, such an approach inevitably diminished the role and influence of the Foreign Minister. Unsurprisingly, the emperor's penchant for political intrigue also hampered the Quai d'Orsay's attempts to formulate a coherent response to the most pressing matters of the day, as did his indecisiveness when international crises flared up across the European continent. Add to that his confused attempts to convince the sovereigns of Europe to revise the 1815 Vienna treaty settlement whilst simultaneously supporting nationalist movements within their borders, and it is little wonder that contemporary observers considered the Second Empire to be one of the darkest periods in the history of the French diplomatic service.¹⁰⁶⁶

The fact that the foreign affairs portfolio changed hands at least nine times during the eighteen years of the Second Empire – more times than any other great power in Europe – gives some indication of the chaos that Napoléon III's personal diplomacy unleashed within the Quai d'Orsay.¹⁰⁶⁷ Yet apart from Lionel de Moustier, who resigned on health grounds in December 1868, the three other foreign ministers who served during the period covered by this study all left the government due to fundamental differences with the emperor over European matters. Since Japan was rarely, if ever, a French foreign policy priority during the 1860s, it seems unlikely that the dysfunctional relationship between the emperor and Alexandre Walewski, Édouard Thouvenel, and Édouard Drouyn de Lhuys really had much impact upon the Quai d'Orsay's approach to Japanese affairs. Instead of focusing exclusively on the men at the top, therefore, it is also useful to consider why no one further down the chain of command at the ministry was monitoring the activities of their agents in Edo as carefully as Hammond was in London.

¹⁰⁶⁶ See Jean Baillou, ed., *Les affaires étrangères et le corps diplomatique français, Tome I: de l'ancien régime au Second Empire*, (Paris: Éditions du centre national de la recherche scientifique, 1984), p.687.

¹⁰⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, p.701.

One possible explanation was that the Principal Private Secretary in the French Foreign Ministry wielded far less influence over foreign affairs than his British counterpart. As the head of a politically impartial civil service department, the Permanent Under-Secretary was expected to supervise foreign policy development and delivery in concert with the Foreign Secretary. By contrast, the *chef du cabinet* at the Quai d'Orsay was merely a middle-ranking bureaucrat who was responsible for little more than the effective organisation of the ministry. This was not a role for highly capable, experienced and independently-minded officials in the Hammond mould, but for ambitious careerists with a strong track record of following orders from above. Their first loyalty was to the Foreign Minister they served rather than to the Quai d'Orsay itself, which explains why there were no fewer than eight during the eighteen years of the Second Empire. Far from the pinnacle of a diplomatic career, therefore, the position of *chef du cabinet* was viewed as a springboard to better things – specifically to a plum posting at a French legation overseas.¹⁰⁶⁸ With so much churn within the ministry and so little influence over policymaking, it is hard to imagine that these bureaucratic placeholders understood Japanese affairs any better than their superiors.

There was much greater permanence in the lower echelons of the Quai d'Orsay, where changes in administrative personnel were few and far between. However, the fact that the number of agents employed in the political bureau only increased from twenty in 1855 to twenty-four in 1868 was hardly very conducive to effective policymaking either, since their workload increased significantly over this period. Much of that work was routine in any case, for substantive foreign policy matters were always dealt with by the emperor and his ministers alone. Policymaking was further hampered by the Quai d'Orsay's outdated organisational structure, which remained much the same at the end of the Second Empire as it had been during previous regimes. This had a direct impact upon the management of Japanese affairs, for whilst the political business of the Foreign Office had been streamlined into five separate geographical departments by 1865, the Quai d'Orsay still only had three by the time the Second Empire collapsed. Though Japan was assigned to the American Department in both ministries, the French division covered a far wider geographical area than its British equivalent, making it much less likely that Japanese affairs would be as closely monitored in Paris as they were in London.¹⁰⁶⁹

¹⁰⁶⁸ Ibid., pp.713-5

¹⁰⁶⁹ For a complete list of the British arrangement, see Keith Neilson and T.G. Otte, *The Permanent Under-Secretary for Foreign Affairs, 1854-1946*, (London: Routledge, 2009),

Although Thouvenel and Walewski had both called for a complete administrative overhaul of the Quai d'Orsay during the early 1850s, any attempt at reform in the years that followed was scuppered by the shortage of talented staff and the pressures of dealing with the emperor's double diplomacy. Indeed, so little had changed by 1869 that the last Foreign Minister of the Second Empire, the Duke of Gramont, described the bureaucratic framework at the Quai d'Orsay as 'little short of detestable', particularly in terms of how it scrutinised the work of overseas agents.¹⁰⁷⁰ The failure of successive foreign ministers to get a grip on this problem resulted in a diplomatic service that was struggling to adapt to the modern world, as the recruitment processes for entry into the French diplomatic service demonstrated.

Unlike in Britain, where an open entrance exam had been introduced during the 1850s to ensure that appointments to the Foreign Office were made on merit, political patronage remained the only way to enter the Quai d'Orsay in Napoléon III's France. Most diplomatic postings were therefore reserved for members of the aristocracy regardless of ability, experience or suitability for the position. Even a man of Léon Roches's unique talents owed his career in the service to a personal endorsement that the Governor of Algeria, Thomas Bugeaud, issued on his behalf to the Foreign Minister François Guizot in 1845. Personal connections aside, it is unlikely that such an irregular request would ever have been granted had Roches not come from an old bourgeoisie family that played a prominent role in the French Revolution.¹⁰⁷¹ Twenty years later, this well-connected political insider was posted to Japan despite having no experience of the country or its people. Given the dysfunction within the Quai d'Orsay's chaotically-organised political bureau, the overwhelming workload that its officials were dealing with by this time, and above all the apathy of those who controlled French foreign policy towards events in Japan, it is little wonder that Roches was largely left to his own devices there for so long.

In sum, the opaque way in which French foreign policy was made during the reign of Napoléon III could not have been more different from the professionalised and politically-neutral approach adopted by the British Foreign Office. Indeed, it remains unclear who, if anyone, was directly responsible for managing France's Japan policy during this period,

footnote 40, p.268. A summary of the French arrangement can be found in Baillou, op.cit., pp.716-7.

¹⁰⁷⁰ Ibid., p.716.

¹⁰⁷¹ See Jean-Pierre Lehmann, 'Léon Roches – Diplomat Extraordinary in the Bakumatsu Era: An Assessment of his Personality and Policy', *Modern Asian Studies*, Vol. XIV. No. 2, (1980), p.275 & pp.279-81.

which may explain why the Quai d'Orsay was so reactive to events and amenable to interventions by the other treaty powers. Unlike Hammond's carefully crafted private correspondence to Alcock and Parkes, the official dispatches from Paris rarely gave the impression that anyone at the ministry really understood what it was that Duchesne de Bellecourt and Léon Roches were attempting to achieve in Japan. The overwhelming impression was instead one of ignorance and indifference, at least until something happened that might antagonise the other treaty powers or entangle France in a country that the emperor neither understood nor cared about. For better or worse, therefore, the most important drivers of French policy in Japan between 1858 and 1868 were the men on the spot. That both Bellecourt and Roches left the country under a cloud was as much the fault of their disinterested superiors at the Quai d'Orsay as it was their own vaulting ambition.¹⁰⁷²

In the introduction to this thesis, I hypothesized that that the *corpus* of documentary evidence analysed by previous historians was insufficient to understand accurately how British and French foreign policy was made during the mid-nineteenth century, not only in Japan but all over the world. This thesis has demonstrated that, as far as British foreign policymaking is concerned at least, the importance of private and semi-official correspondence was absolutely critical to this process. Private letters were exchanged on a regular basis between members of the British Cabinet, high-ranking officials in the Foreign Office, the Admiralty and other government departments, and of course Queen Victoria herself. As previously discussed, the Permanent Under-Secretary for Foreign Affairs Edmund Hammond also maintained a regular correspondence with both permanent British ministers to Japan during their tenures, as well as with all the major players in government at the time. Similarly, British naval commanders in East Asia often supplemented their official dispatches with private notes to the First Lord of the Admiralty. These letters were highly valued by the British government, as Palmerston explained to Russell in February 1865:

It is inconvenient to place on record without necessity speculative opinions as to further events in which we do not mean to take a part; but if it is in any case

¹⁰⁷² For a comprehensive overview of French foreign policy during the Second Empire, including a detailed bibliography, see *ibid.*, pp.687-785.

desirable to give a diplomatic agent a guide as to our views and his language that can be done in a private letter.¹⁰⁷³

Similarly, Hammond testified to a Foreign Office inquiry in January 1868 that ‘a sort of friendship grows up from private correspondence...I feel that there is a great benefit that derives from the general harmony which prevails’.¹⁰⁷⁴ Private letters helped the British government to understand what was really going on in far-flung consular stations. Unlike official dispatches, they enabled isolated diplomats like Alcock and Parkes to explain the realities of the situation that confronted them without fear of publication in Parliament or the national press. Critically, they allowed the British government to make policy recommendations without putting them on the official record, ensuring plausible deniability if anything went wrong. One simply cannot understand British policy in Japan during the 1860s without considering the private correspondence of those involved.

Although it has been much more difficult to locate similar papers in Quai d’Orsay archives, this does not necessarily mean that the French system worked any differently. Indeed, private paper collections of certain prominent Second Empire politicians do exist, such as those of Édouard Thouvenel, Foreign Minister between 1860 and 1862, which can be found in both the Archives Nationales and the Archives Diplomatiques in Paris. The latter collection contains some letters from Léon Roches during his stint as consul at Tripoli during the early 1850s, but nothing from his time in Japan. Other private paper collections held at the Archives Diplomatiques include those of Hippolyte Desprez, director of the political bureau at the Quai d’Orsay from 1866, and other prominent bureaucrats at the ministry, but none of these contain correspondence with anyone in Japan either. Unfortunately, Thouvenel’s successor Édouard Drouyn de Lhuys destroyed all his private papers, so we will never know what discussions he might have had with his agents overseas.¹⁰⁷⁵ The three ‘Mémoires et Documents’ folders contained in the official Japan correspondence to the Foreign Ministry do contain some private letters, albeit few from the men on the spot. The most likely explanation as to why no one at the Quai d’Orsay appeared to maintain a regular private correspondence with French diplomatic representatives in Japan was that events there were simply not very important

¹⁰⁷³ The National Archives, London, Russell Papers, PRO30/22/15D, 15 February 1865.

¹⁰⁷⁴ Cambridge University Library, Cambridge, Parkes Papers, MSParkes26/4, ‘Statement respecting Foreign Office Agencies’, 24 January 1868.

¹⁰⁷⁵ See Warren F. Spencer, ‘French Archives and Special Collections’, in *Proceedings and Papers of the Georgia Association of Historians*, Vol. 3 (1982), p.45.

to the French government. As mentioned earlier, such indifference played into Roches's hands, as it enabled him to pursue his personal policy with little scrutiny from home. Thus, while much can be gleaned about British policy in Japan from the substantial *corpus* of private papers contained in the British archives, the lack of a similar collection in France also tells us a lot about the Second Empire's foreign policy priorities at the time.

It is clear from the historical analysis contained within this thesis that the relationship between Britain and France is central to understanding the treaty-port system in Japan. It seems strange, therefore, that so few historians have adopted a *comparative* approach to this period of history. This thesis has remedied this gap in the historiography by demonstrating how Anglo-French relations influenced the development of the Japanese treaty-port system between 1858 and 1868. It has shown how the close-knit relationship between the British and French diplomatic representatives during the early years of treaty relations metamorphosed into a bitter struggle between their successors for control over the 'modernisation' of Japan. By comparing and contrasting the respective policies of the British and French governments over the same timeframe, this study has also shown how France was willing to defer to Britain on matters of Japan policy on almost every occasion.

The international *context* is probably the most overlooked factor in historical studies of *bakumatsu* Japan, the vast majority of which make only passing reference to events elsewhere in East Asia and the world. At times, historians have even dismissed the importance of contextual factors outright. For example, Richard Sims explicitly discounted the outcomes of the Austro-Prussian War and the Mexican expedition as having any impact on French policy at the time when the Quai d'Orsay received complaints from the British government about Roches's activities in Japan.¹⁰⁷⁶ In fact, there can be little doubt that the outbreak of international crises elsewhere significantly influenced treaty-power policy in Japan. Regional events often had a direct impact, such as the Anglo-French expeditions in China between 1858 and 1860 and the French colonial conquest of Cochinchina between 1858 and 1862. On other occasions, the defence of global interests frequently required the diversion of vital naval resources from Japan, as evidenced by Hope's withdrawal of all his warships and marines in the aftermath of the *Trent* Affair in 1862. In general, the American Civil War had a major impact on the

¹⁰⁷⁶ See Sims, Richard, *French Policy Towards the Bakufu and Meiji Japan, 1854-95*, (Richmond: Japan Library, 1998), pp.64-5.

policies that Britain, France, and, of course, the United States pursued in Japan during the 1860s. Indeed, this devastating conflict explains why this study is specifically focused on Anglo-French relations, for the war forced the Americans to play second fiddle in Japan while Britain and France scrambled for control over the ‘enclave empires’ there. In short, when crisis hit elsewhere, Japanese interests were always sacrificed.

International contexts are central to the findings of this thesis because they demonstrate how Japan was almost always at the bottom of the list of foreign policy priorities in London and Paris. This was especially true of the French government, which had little interest in the Japanese treaty-port system beyond ensuring that France was afforded the same commercial rights and privileges as other treaty powers. This was because Napoléon III was much more focused throughout the period in question on advancing his foreign policy objectives in other parts of the world, including in China, Vietnam, Syria, Mexico, and Italy. By contrast, Japan was never considered an area of strategic interest to the emperor, despite Parkes’s fears that Roches’s interventionist policy was synonymous with that of the Quai d’Orsay. Although this was a fair assumption for Parkes to make given the emperor’s track record, these fears were rarely shared in the Foreign Office – not least because the Quai d’Orsay was very quick to disavow Roches’s policy and had always consulted London on substantive decisions over Japan policy.

While the British government was certainly more engaged in Japanese affairs than its French counterpart, there were very few times during the 1860s when events in Japan were a matter of great concern in London either. During the early years of treaty relations, the Foreign Office was mostly content to allow the men on the spot to direct Britain’s Japan policy. Since expectations for a profitable trade in Japan were very low from the outset, Alcock’s increasingly panicked reports about the deteriorating situation there were frequently dismissed. The vociferous criticism directed at Palmerston’s ministry following the destruction of the Summer Palace in Beijing also made the Foreign Office reluctant to endorse the aggressive solutions that Alcock recommended. It was also much more concerned with the slow but steady disintegration of the 1815 treaty settlement in Europe and Napoléon III’s apparent desire to reconquer Europe. On the rare occasion when attention in Whitehall did turn away from events in Europe, the Near East, or the Americas, it was usually to China.

When the assassination of Richardson in 1862 finally convinced the British government that British trade in Japan was under threat, Alcock’s recommendations for a complete

reassessment of Britain's treaty relationship with the *bakufu* largely went unheeded in the Cabinet, which did not understand the complexities of the political upheaval that the 'unequal treaties' had sparked in Japan. This compelled Alcock to take matters into his own hands, and it was only after he did so that Russell, Layard, and Hammond took a long, hard look at Britain's Japan policy. Even after the formulation of Russell's neutrality policy in 1865, however, it was not long before attention in London shifted back to European affairs and the rise of Prussian militarism, while the more insular Conservative ministry that entered government in 1866 was even less interested in Japan than its predecessor. Thus, by taking the international *context* into account, it becomes clear that British policy towards Japan during the 1860s, like that of France, was primarily reactive. In the grand scheme of things, Japan was simply not that important.

By shedding light on how the treaty-port system created 'enclave empires' in Japan, this thesis has opened new and exciting opportunities for further study. It has demonstrated that the survival of these 'enclave empires' was fundamentally dependent upon the cooperation and collaboration of all the treaty powers. It has shown that the principle of collective diplomacy and defence that underpinned the 'unequal treaties' meant that no individual treaty power, no matter how strong, could ever formally annex these 'enclave empires'. In short, it has proved that treaty-power relations with Japan were defined in large part by relations between the treaty powers themselves. Thus, even though this study has necessarily focused on Anglo-French relations, an historical analysis that also incorporates the policies of all the treaty powers in Japan at the time, especially the United States, Holland, Russia, and Prussia, is clearly long overdue. Naturally, such research would be enhanced by incorporating Japanese perspectives as well so that we can better understand the dynamic between the treaty powers, the government at Edo, and the anti-Tokugawa movement. With the one hundred and fiftieth anniversary of the Meiji Restoration fast approaching, there is still much to learn about how the arrival of the West influenced this seminal event in Japanese history.

What is already clear, however, is that the 'unequal treaties' transformed Japan beyond all recognition. This thesis is the first to identify the cause of that transformation as the creation and development of informal 'enclave empires' within Japan under the guise of treaty ports. The basic characteristics of these 'enclave empires' were the same wherever they emerged in East Asia. They were multilateral constructs underpinned by the cooperation and collective military and diplomatic strength of the Western powers that operated within them. They acted as international entrepôts in which every facet of

Western society, from culture to politics, religion to jurisprudence, was introduced and imposed upon countries where such ideas and practices had previously been rejected and resisted. Finally, as this thesis has so clearly demonstrated, they created the pretence of an egalitarian system of free trade that was in reality controlled by the only Western country powerful enough to fix the rules of the game in its favour. Just like in China and Siam, the 'enclave empires' in Japan guaranteed Britain's status as first among equals in the East Asian treaty-port system.

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