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H. P. WILLMOTT

Empires in the Balance

JAPANESE AND ALLIED PACIFIC STRATEGIES
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Direct European involvement in the Pacific dates from the first quarter of the sixteenth century when Europe, for centuries the victim of destructive invasions from Asia and Arabia, entered upon an expansionist phase that was largely dictated by increasing demographic pressures and growing strain on resources. But the immediate impetus to what was the European discovery and penetration of the East was the desire to secure the lucrative Arab monopoly in the spice trade. Pepper from throughout southern Asia, cinnamon from Ceylon, cloves from Tidore and Ternate, nutmeg and mace from Amboina were the major spices sought as condiments and preservatives, while luxury items such as Chinese silk, Arabian perfumes, Persian carpets, and Indian precious stones were similarly prized. It fell to the Portuguese to lead the way to the East when their new oceanic sailing ships worked their way southwards down both coasts of Africa before Vasco da Gama reached Calicut in India via the Cape of Good Hope in 1498.

Portugal's era of dominance of the trade with the East was to be short-lived. Scattered bases around Africa, South America, and India weakened rather than strengthened her and left her vulnerable to stronger, more vigorous opponents, while she had little success in establishing a presence east of Malacca, secured in 1511. Canton was visited for the first time in 1514 but it was not until 1557 that the Macao concession was secured. Native resistance in the Spice Islands proved too strong to be overcome. For a brief period Portugal enjoyed a very lucrative and privileged position in the spice trade, but this was shattered by the Dutch between 1601 and 1667.

The Dutch, in their war of liberation against Spain, carried their struggle to Spain's colonies. The Spaniards, having passed into the Pacific via the Straits of Magellan for the first time in 1520, had colonized Cebu and Luzon, and established a settlement at Manila in 1571. Spanish colonies survived Dutch depredations, but Portugal, united with Spain in the person of Philip II after 1580, could not withstand Dutch assaults. Beginning with the Battle of the Sunda Strait in 1601, the Dutch virtually destroyed Portuguese power in the Far East by 1667. The Dutch thereafter embarked upon a policy of annexation and colonization. Over the next 250 years they charted the islands of the Indies and subjugated them, in the process encountering fierce opposition from nature, the local inhabitants, and two other European powers.

The most important opposition came from Britain and France, but in fact the position of Dutch possessions in the Far East was to be barely affected by these two powers, each individually much more powerful than the Dutch. The two powers tended to cancel one another out, and in any case the British and Dutch, united in religious propinquity and their dislike and fear of France, were normally allies. The Anglo-French clash of interest was mainly centered in North America. Their territorial interests in the East, which were subordinate to their trading interests, were mainly

directed towards the Indian subcontinent, and their struggle there was resolved in Britain's favor in the course of the Seven Years War (1756-63). For much of the period Britain was so powerful at sea that she could have taken what she wanted, but she sought to preserve the Netherlands as a barrier against French expansion and thus was indisposed to strip the Dutch of their possessions. Indeed, during the French Revolution and Napoleonic Wars, when the Dutch were overrun and forced into reluctant alliance with France, Britain took most Dutch possessions into "protective custody." By the terms of the Convention of London (1814) the British returned most of these possessions to the Netherlands, though they kept the Cape of Good Hope, Ceylon, and certain other minor possessions.

What Britain wanted in the East was a port through which her China trade could be channeled. Penang, secured in 1786, seemed a suitable port, but in 1819 Sir T. Stamford Raffles, British lieutenant governor of Java between 1811 and 1816, founded a settlement on the island of Singapore just off the coast of Johore. His action provoked a severe dispute with the Dutch, who had harbored ambitions of securing and consolidating possessions on both sides of the Strait of Malacca. There was no clear line of demarcation between overlapping British and Dutch settlements in the area, but in 1824 the dispute was settled by drawing a line through the straits: the Dutch abandoned their settlements in Malacca, the British theirs in western and northern Sumatra. This arrangement's effect was to break the Dutch grip on the trade routes to the Indies and to prevent Dutch domination of the Malayan peninsula. There British influence immediately became overwhelming. Thai incursions into northern Malayan vassal states that Bangkok always had regarded as within its sphere of influence resulted in an 1826 treaty through which the British assumed a position of great influence; thereafter the Thais were slowly but remorselessly excluded from the area. During the same year Britain obtained Arakan, Assam, and Tenasserim as a result of her first war with Burma, thereby securing India's eastern border. By the middle of the century, the British controlled lower Burma, though not until 1886 did they control the whole of Burma.

Thus, by the middle of the nineteenth century many areas or the Far East had been brought under European control of influence, but in a sense Europeans still had to reach their final destination—China. Trading contacts with the fabled Middle Kingdom had been established for three centuries, but European penetration of the most important of the eastern civilizations was far from complete. Indeed, contact remained minimal. But by the first half of the century a more ruthless attitude towards China had been evinced by the Europeans—most notably by the British in the Opium War of 1839-42—and this boded only ill for China.

By about 1850 the European powers stood poised on the brink of a second phase of expansion that was to prove infinitely more dynamic than their activities of the previous 350 years. Before 1850 the Spanish, Dutch,

and British had established substantial colonial empires, the Portuguese and French lesser ones, yet except in India, their penetration of the Asian mainland had not been very great. This situation was to change dramatically under the impact of the Industrial Revolution. Though major colonizing efforts were not to be in the Far East, the growing economic and military power of European states allowed them to play an increasingly active and permanent role in the area. Concurrently, the European attitude towards imperialism underwent considerable change. In the first half of the century imperialism was decidedly unpopular; it seemed discredited, though states with colonies showed no real inclination to give them up. But France, Portugal, and Spain lost the greater part of their empires in the first quarter of the century without any apparent ill effects, and economists everywhere were well aware that after the New World secured its independence its trade with Europe had not lessened but greatly increased. It was the conservative Disraeli, not the liberal Gladstone, who denounced Britain's colonies as millstones around her neck, adding that in the very near future they would become independent in any case. But European attitudes were undergoing fundamental reevaluation, and a combination of factors led to a massive imperialist upsurge in the latter part of the century. The result was that virtually the whole of the Far East, with one vitally important exception, came under the control of nonindigenous forces.

Traditionally the flag had followed trade, but any attempt to interpret European activities in the Far East in the second half of the nineteenth century simply in terms of economic determinism is inadequate. Many factors were at work in the expansion of imperialism, a process that was not confined to the seaborne powers of western Europe but included the United States and czarist Russia. The desire to secure new markets for goods and capital and the need for raw materials *were* factors in late nineteenth-century imperialist expansion, but so were considerations of prestige and even national security. Religious and moral considerations, however muddled, were also present in many instances. For example, the French intervention in Indo-China was prompted by many factors, although the influence of the Catholic lobby with Napoleon III was perhaps the critical factor. Likewise, the American sense of mission, the fulfillment of a manifest destiny, and upholding the standards of decency and (white) civilization, were not mere devices; they were genuine, if wrong-headed, beliefs. They had been largely instrumental in bringing about the Spanish-American War of 1898, a conflict that resulted in the emergence of the United States as a major Pacific power. Some of those who claimed moral and Christian values as the basis of their actions knew that some of their professions were fraudulent, but the desire to promote Christianity and to bring order and civilization (as understood by white men) to backward areas

were factors in the expansionist activities of various powers. The overall effect of this expansion, however, was to cause profound repercussions on the societies and politics of the Orient, and not in the way that the imperialists anticipated.

Imperialist expansion in the Far East was concentrated on three main areas. First, Russian overland expansion resulted in the annexation of Amur and Maritime provinces from China between 1858 and 1860. Further advances were made between 1854 and 1895 south of the Aral Sea and Lake Balkhash, but these had to be set against contraction of other interests. In 1867 the Russians sold Alaska to the United States and abandoned all their settlements on the American mainland. The Russians appreciated that they had overreached themselves and limited their objectives.

Second, the Pacific islands, now accurately located and charted, were gradually but systematically added to various empires, with Britain the main beneficiary. With Australia and New Zealand already secure as major areas of white colonization and both granted full internal self-rule in the 1850s, Britain was often under considerable pressure from Australasia to secure various island groups in the Southwest Pacific. To the island of Hong Kong, taken in 1842, and northern Borneo, formally secured in 1888, were added Fiji (1874), the Cook Islands (1888), and the Gilbert and Ellice islands (1886-92). Moreover, to these and other islands taken by Britain, an agreement with France established a joint Anglo-French dominion over the New Hebrides in 1887. The French, naturally, were active on their own account. They took Tahiti and the Society Islands in 1842 and New Caledonia, much to the chagrin of the British who were forestalled by a matter of hours, in 1853. In addition France acquired the Marquesas.

Britain's concern in the Southwest Pacific was to prevent the arrival of potential rivals in islands near Australia and New Zealand. Britain's initial suspicions were of France, but later there was fear of Germany, and, indeed, one of the features of the "scramble for the Pacific" was the late arrival on the scene of Germany and the United States. Germany in 1885 secured various islands off New Guinea, and the following year secured the division of New Guinea itself among the British, Dutch, and themselves. In 1885 she acquired the Marshalls and three years later Nauru. But her main chance came in 1898-99 when she bought the remnants of Spain's colonial empire—the Marianas and Carolines—after the latter's defeat in the war of 1898. In that year the last of the unclaimed island chains, the Hawaiian Islands, was secured by the Americans, to go alongside their gains of the Philippines and Guam. By the turn of the century every island in the southern and central Pacific was under some form of European or American control.

The third area of imperialist expansion was on the Asian mainland

between Vladivostok, founded in 1860, and the Thai-Malay border, and the offshore island group that made up the Japanese Empire. The main area of European and American interest and involvement was the ramshackle and decaying Chinese Empire which, despite its backwardness, presented a vast market for cheap manufactured goods and capital investment.

China, like Japan, for centuries chose to isolate herself from the outside world. Unavoidable contacts and trade were as circumscribed and tightly controlled as possible by a China that refused to treat with foreigners on a basis of equality. Used only to dealing with vassal states on the basis of tribute, China regarded dealings with foreign states as transactions between superior and inferior. Unfortunately for her, Europeans were not prepared to accept the position of inferiority thus conferred upon them, and they had the means to enforce their views.

It was Britain that forced China to open her doors to the outside world when, as a result of the Treaty of Nanking in 1842, she secured the island of Hong Kong, an indemnity (reversing the traditional Chinese role in the matter of cash transactions), the promise of full and equal diplomatic recognition, the abolition of import controls and the fixing of a low tariff rate, and the opening of five Chinese ports to British goods. The next year the British extracted the "most favored nation" clause whereby any concession granted by China to a third party automatically applied to Britain. The breach thus made in China's exclusiveness was widened in July 1844 when she was forced to conclude treaties with France and the United States, the latter agreement being the first of many that granted extraterritorial jurisdiction for foreign nationals.

China's problem was that the imperialists were not prepared to let matters rest at that point. They saw their gains not as ends in themselves but as the starting points for more concessions, and their chance to exploit the situation came as a result of a series of xenophobic incidents on the part of the Chinese. A joint Anglo-French intervention during the Arrow War resulted in easy victory for the two European powers, but when China tried to renege on the subsequent peace terms in 1859, their response was the capture of Peking and the destruction of the Summer Palace. The lesson of the futility of evasion, procrastination, and resistance was temporarily learned by China. Japan, watching the proceedings with interest, learned the lesson on a more permanent basis.

Two immediate consequences flowed from the war of 1857-60. First, full diplomatic recognition was accorded to foreign powers, and their nationals were given the undisputed right to reside in Peking. The loss of prestige these measures entailed for the imperial Chinese system was severe, and cannot be understated. Second, the paradox arose from the fact that while the successful penetration of China had depended on the weak-

ness of the imperial system, the occidental powers, having recognized and been recognized by the Manchus, then had a vested interest in maintaining the regime: its continued existence was the guarantee of their rights and privileges.

In the 1860s there was much cooperation between China and the Western powers—the suppression of the T'ai ping Rebellion (1851-64) is an obvious example—but over a period of time a gradual disillusionment set in on both sides. The foreigners urged China to reform and modernize, but they came to doubt her capabilities and intentions. They suspected that China was intent only on a self-strengthening program whereby she intended to secure merely the means by which she could destroy the privileged European position in the country. Periodic demonstrations and rebellions that imperiled foreigners only substantiated these fears. China, on the other hand, was dismayed at the slow progress and painful consequences of change that seemingly only accelerated the fragmentation of society and did nothing to preserve her territorial integrity. As the nineteenth century drew to a close it seemed to China that the imperialists were gathering ever closer and that their intentions were ever more malign. Lands to the south and southwest that traditionally had been under her suzerainty were secured by Britain and France with relatively little difficulty, and China was forced to acquiesce in the loss of her vassal states, notwithstanding her initial attempts to encourage their resistance.

For all her alternation between modernization and procrastination, China at the turn of the century seemed on the brink of partition and destruction. As a result of her defeat in the war of 1894-95 there was a "scramble for China" among the imperialists. France secured a sphere of influence between Canton and Indo-China. Russia over northern Manchuria, Britain in the Yangtze valley. All the powers, even little Denmark, joined the rush to secure concessions and ports—all the powers, that is, except the United States. In 1899 and again in 1900 the Americans reaffirmed their commitment to the "Open Door" policy that gave all powers equal access to a sovereign China, and asked the other powers to reconfirm their earlier declarations to this effect. At the time all the powers were closing ranks to put down a rebellion against them stirred up by the imperial court, but though Russia was decidedly equivocal on the matter, the powers in the end admitted to a form of words that could be taken to mean recognition of China's integrity. Only after the Boxer Rebellion was suppressed did the rivalries of the powers resurface, and it was this division of interest and the sheer size of China, rather than Chinese resistance or American pronouncements, that saved China from dismemberment. Nevertheless, the beginnings of a conscious American moral commitment to China had been made, though by no stretch of the imagination was this

commitment to the Open Door entirely altruistic. As the world's foremost manufacturing power, the United States had everything to gain from the policy and much to lose by the dismemberment of China.

The other area of imperialist interest in eastern Asia was Japan, but her response to the threat posed by Western powers was to be very different from that of China—after initial resistance had proved unavailing. Probably the most obvious reason for this was the example of China herself.

Though the Portuguese had reached Japan early in the sixteenth century, from 1598 Japan had deliberately adopted a policy of excluding herself from the outside world, mainly to insulate herself from the prospect of social upheaval that threatened to result from the aggressive proselytizing efforts of Catholic missionaries.* Thereafter, her only contacts were with China and the self-effacing Dutch, who were allowed to trade through Nagasaki. Over the centuries the Dutch became highly regarded for the scientific knowledge they could impart and as a source of intelligence about the outside world. By the nineteenth century the Dutch were giving Japan fair warning about the power of the major European states. It is no exaggeration to state that while very few Japanese ever questioned the wisdom or desirability of maintaining their self-imposed isolation, even before the arrival of the imperialist powers there was, among the ruling elite, a vague and undefined awareness of Japan's material inferiority to the outside world. There was grudging respect for the European achievement and the knowledge, from Dutch sources, of the dangerous temper of European powers when crossed.

Nevertheless, the 1844 warning that Japan would be well advised to treat with foreign powers was ignored. American attempts in 1846 and 1849 to break down Japanese isolation were rebuffed, but failure only made the Americans more determined. The great circle route between California and China brought American ships close to Japan's dangerous and inhospitable shores. Japan's exclusiveness, given America's need for coaling stations, was intolerable. In November 1852, therefore, the United States dispatched a squadron, including two steamers, from the Atlantic coast to Japan under Commodore Matthew Perry. Perry was granted extraordinary powers of discretion to force Japan to open her ports to American ships. The western European powers, distracted by other events, made no move, but the Russians, anxious not to be left out of any developments, sent a squadron to Japan from European waters in January 1853.

*The exclusion decrees were not systematically implemented until 1633, the same year that Galileo was forced to recant his alleged promotion of Copernican theories. These two acts had similar effects for Japan and Catholic southern Europe, since both tended to be excluded from the explosion of scientific knowledge and material advance that took place elsewhere from the middle of the seventeenth century onwards.

Perry and the Americans have been either credited or blamed for forcing Japan to open her doors to the West in the 1850s, but in fact it was a combination of American and Russian pressure, plus the knowledge that the British and French would appear sooner rather than later, that forced the Japanese to yield to American demands. American and Russian naval demonstrations in 1853 and 1854 convinced the Japanese, who heavily depended on a flourishing coastal trade, that resistance to the sea powers would be futile. On Perry's second visit in 1854 Japan was prepared to bow to the inevitable, and an American-Japanese treaty was signed at Yokohama. This allowed the Americans use of two small ports, Kōkodate and Shimoda, and guaranteed good treatment of shipwrecked mariners. In reality the Americans did not obtain very much, but they made the all-important breach in Japan's isolation. The British and Russians promptly began to widen that breach, the Russians and Japanese dividing the Kuriles between them.

Despite the treaties forced upon Japan in 1854 and 1855, the imperialists' encroachments over the next thirteen years were not so great as might have been expected. European distractions elsewhere and America's Civil War shielded Japan from the full rigor of contact with the West. Yet even the effect of limited contact was profound, since it undermined a weakening political system. The shōgunate was government by powerful clan interests, the very name *shōgun* deriving from the title, "Great Resister of Barbarian Incursions." Failure to resist such incursions thus struck at the very credibility of the system, and a general uprising followed the 1858 decisions to open virtually all of Japan's ports to foreign trade and to fix very low tariffs on imports. While the shōgunate rode out that particular storm, its power had been effectively and fatefully compromised, and in 1867 it was overthrown by a combination of new clans from western Japan and emergent merchant interests in the major ports. After the shōgun's overthrow the emperor was plucked from the obscurity of an ornamental role and vested with the full prerogatives of a sovereign ruler.

The keynotes of Japanese policy in the post-1868 period were peace abroad and reconstruction at home. The Japanese sought to absorb Western techniques in order to escape European domination, but they were active diplomatically; caution did not imply passivity. Despite her relative backwardness, Japan asserted her claims over the Ryukyus in 1871 and the Bonins in 1873, with no opposition from foreign powers. Indeed, Britain and the United States waived their claims to the Bonins in Japan's favor. But Japan had other, more substantial, strategic interests. She wanted to secure Korea and Formosa, Korea for obvious reasons since the peninsula was the bridge between her and the mainland, Formosa because it lay across the route from the south from where the European powers had to

come. Securing either or both was beyond her abilities, but in 1876, after her warships had bombarded the Kanghwa forts, Japan wrung from China acknowledgement that Korea was an independent state. This political neutralization of a Chinese vassal was the first step in the process of its being absorbed by Japan herself. Thus within twenty-five years of her first major contact with the imperialists, Japan had joined in their pastime of using force to extract concessions from an increasingly moribund China.

Such was the process by which various powers secured colonial territories and spheres of influence in the Pacific and Far East by 1900. It must be remembered, however, that even in areas where Europeans had been for centuries, there remained regions beyond their control. It was not until 1913, for example, that the Dutch, after a forty-year war, finally took Achin in northern Sumatra, scene of first contact between sixteenth-century Europeans and the Far East. Likewise, the small island of Bali was not secured until 1906. Many areas, often sheltering primitive peoples, proved beyond the reach of authority, in some cases until very recent times. But what made these developments so important were two major considerations. First, there was the effect that these events had upon the indigenous societies; and second, there was the effect that these same events had upon the imperialists themselves.

The coming of the imperialists had a profoundly disruptive effect, ranging from venereal disease to social revolution, on all indigenous societies. After initial opposition, resistance to the superior organization and firepower of the newcomers collapsed. With very few exceptions societies in the Far East came under European domination or control, and only Japan proved capable of dealing with the problems posed by white supremacy. While the rest of Asia entered the world economy in a primary-producing straitjacket, Japan, despite the crippling terms of trade imposed on her, emerged as a manufacturing nation. Indeed, she showed a remarkable ability to adjust to the dictates of the political and social order in which she found herself. Nothing is more illustrative of Japan's adaptability than her trade figures. In the last quarter of the century her trade rose by 700 percent, but whereas in 1875 about 50 percent of her imports had been finished goods compared to 5 percent of her exports, by 1900 finished goods had fallen to 20 percent, while industrial raw materials accounted for one-half her imports. What was equally significant was that her rate of growth showed no signs of slackening. She still had a very long way to go before she began to draw level with the more powerful industrial states, but the basis of a strong economy was, seemingly, being laid.

The imperialists were naturally affected, both internally and externally, by the development of empire and interest in the Orient. The most important effect of occidental domination of the East was bringing into a rapidly growing world economy the wealth and diversity of the Far East. Such a

gain, however, had to be balanced against the ever-growing commitment of political and psychological prestige to the maintenance of their interests. Moreover, to this there had to be added the problems posed by the dynamism of imperial expansion. These empires had been carved out in an area of relative primitiveness, but they had to be sustained in a polycentric world. Power was much more diverse. By the end of the nineteenth century even the most constant feature of world power over the last 230 years, British naval supremacy, was severely threatened. Britain's naval supremacy could no longer be guaranteed by her industrial power. New countries and modern industry were being built at a rate certain to relegate the Royal Navy to a position of primus inter pares within a very few years of the start of the century. Though at the time this fact was largely unappreciated, the whole of the imperialist position in the Far East was very similar to the situation of the Royal Navy vis-à-vis other parties. The very technology that had brought the imperialists to the Far East and later prompted them to establish themselves in the area on a permanent basis was certain to produce the circumstances that undermined their authority. The interplay of political, economic, and military factors in a world being shrunken by modern means of communication was certain to make the position of the imperialist possessions of the Far East ever more sensitive and vulnerable to developments elsewhere and to indigenous pressures created by native emulation of Western technique.

For the moment, however, the potential instability of the imperialists' position in the Far East went largely unappreciated. But what was realized, at least in some of the colonial administrations, was the moral imperative of acting on behalf of the subjected people brought under imperial control. While the immense strategic and economic value and importance of colonial possessions were clearly evident, the notion of "civilizing missions" imposed an obligation that went beyond the establishment of order. Lugard, in Nigeria, set down the principle that the only justification for one people to take control of the destiny of another was the enrichment and benefit of both. This concept was not a mere device, a meaningless concept to which lip service alone was paid. There was, moreover, a growing awareness among colonial administrators that the subjected people, their cultures, values, and institutions did have positive roles to play in shaping the future. This was a significant development from the earlier, easy assumption that the institutions of white rule could command the future and that there was no place for local factors in progress.

Notions of obligation and service, however, involved crippling inconsistencies. The most obvious of them was the fact that colonial administration tended to be cocooned, the ruling elements isolating themselves from the subject people and imparting their concepts with a paternalism that was ingratiating and often insulting because it was so often heavily imbued with

racial overtones. Much of the good that moral and political enlightenment should have achieved was undone by this insensitivity. Moral endorsement in a metropolitan homeland did not quite make up for being treated as less than equal in a colony.

But this aspect of service and obligation, though important in its own right, was in fact part of a wider political development that in time was certain to bring about an impossible dilemma for all colonial authorities. In the course of the nineteenth century the process of democratization accelerated throughout Europe. Even in the less advanced countries of Europe, traditional rights and privileges of the old order were eroded. Increasing numbers of people became involved in the political process, while government itself was extended and took an increasingly active part not just in normal administration but in the regulation of many aspects of social existence. Subordinate colonial governments could not help but reflect the changing images of their home governments: the gradual democratization of Europe had to be paralleled, even in a modified form, by changes in the colonies. But while such changes could be expected to deal with many problems, they were certain to generate new complications and demands with which they could not deal. The more truly democratic colonial institutions became, the less they would be able to deal with local popular expectations of a specifically nationalist nature. Changes brought about by the extension of democracy and practice of government in the long term had to lead to the rise of nationalist demands for independence.

A British administrator might abstractly dwell on the vague notion that one day his charges might become independent, but he saw no good reason to expedite the process. Indeed, with the possible exception of the Americans with respect to the Philippines, none of the colonialists really came to grips with this problem. The French never even tried to do so, though the Dutch, in the Indies, did try to tackle at least certain aspects of the problem. In the course of the nineteenth century increasing numbers of Dutchmen became uncomfortably aware that much of their national prosperity stemmed from their exploitation and the wretchedness of the Indies. Under constant prodding from the Protestant churches and the Liberal party, in the latter part of the century the Dutch committed themselves to the enlightened, if unrealistic, "ethical policy." This envisaged a program of large-scale investment in the Indies to improve the lot of the masses and to create a new native elite that had assimilated Western culture and technique. The policy envisaged this elite bringing the Indies into a working partnership with the Netherlands, something on the lines of the dominions within the British Empire but more strongly bound together. The Dutch, for the most part, thought in terms of cooperation and partnership. Van Deventer, the one-time leader of the Liberals, was very much the exception

in realizing that the ethical policy could well break rather than strengthen the links between the Indies and the Netherlands.

The most crippling inconsistency involved in the application of morality, however, lay in the clash between political and economic liberalism. When set against the often disastrous consequences of economic liberalism, political enlightenment lost much of its force. However much the notions of service and obligation might be pursued by administrators, *laissez-faire* doctrines and the belief that material progress itself was to everyone's ultimate advantage tended to reduce the impact of liberal attitudes. In all the colonies, moreover, plantation and settler interests took precedence over local wishes, and no imperial government was prepared to see the development of local manufactures that might prove inimical to domestic interests. The deliberate ruination of the Indian cotton industry during the nineteenth century in defense of Lancashire was an outstanding example of this phenomenon, yet this subordination of local to home interests was not unique to Britain and India. All the colonies were tapped for their wealth. For Britain India yielded coffee, jute, and tea. Malaya was the world's largest exporter of rubber and tin. Malaya, and various Pacific islands, and the Dutch East Indies, provided an impressive array of base ores, while Australia and New Zealand developed into Britain's dairy and also provided wool and meat for the mother country. Burma proved perhaps the richest of Britain's possessions. Her jungles yielded teak in abundance, and under British direction the ailing rice industry was revived to the extent that Burma emerged as the world's third largest exporter of the staple food of most Asians. Beans, coffee, grain, maize, millet, oilseed, sugar, and tea were among the major cash crops cultivated by British plantations; jute, rubber, and tobacco were scarcely less important. Amber, lead, rubies, silver, tin, tungsten, wolfram, and, most important of all, oil, were the major extractive industries whose success depended upon the sweated labor of a dispossessed and wretchedly abused population. France was even more rapacious in Indo-China. Salt, opium, and alcohol were monopolies of a state that imposed crippling per capita taxation rather than taxing on the basis of income, resources, or output. Forced labor, though supposedly illegal, was murderously enforced, and French plantation interests were encouraged by dispossessing and clearing the local population. In earlier times the Dutch in the Indies had been no less exploitive. The old "culture system" in Java had obliged the population to devote a part of the arable land to cultivating government-directed cash crops, yet even in a more enlightened time the Dutch finance and settler interests remained very powerful. In fact finance and settler interests were beginning to become rivals not merely in the Indies but in all the various empires. Everywhere local economies were being increasingly dominated by carrels and holding

companies, with small-scale and individual enterprises being squeezed out of existence by major institutions.

The latent force of local feeling and the generally exploitive nature of European rule in the colonies and China were largely unrealized in the homelands. What was apparent in the homelands were the realities of better food, exotic goods, and splendidly clad native troops. These were not merely the benefits and manifestations of white rule in the Orient but the seeming security and guarantees of the permanence of the European position in Asia. At a very small cost to themselves in lives, money, and equipment, the Europeans secured huge colonial resources and spheres of influence, recognizing only the interests of other Europeans as restraints on their own acquisitiveness. Over the whole of eastern Asia and Oceania white power was dominant. Large forces were generally not deployed in the area because they were not normally necessary. The Indian subcontinent, for example, contained about 300,000,000 souls at the turn of the century, but in 1914 the area was garrisoned by 75,000 British troops and 125,000 sepoy. The colonies and spheres of influence were held more by prestige and the myth of white supremacy than by force of arms, though the Europeans showed on several occasions that they were willing and able to use force to maintain themselves. There was always the certainty of available force "over the horizon."

There was no immediate credible challenge to the European position from the indigenous population of the Far East. Chinese nationalism and xenophobia were forces to be reckoned with, but the relative ease with which the Boxer Rebellion was suppressed suggested a lack of stamina in the undisciplined and unorganized emotional reaction. The new forces of nationalism, channeled by the aping of European methodology, were not serious challenges by the turn of the century. The sole challenge to the imperialists' position would arise only if the Europeans exhausted themselves in fighting protracted wars with one another. Very few observers at the coronation of Edward VII in 1902 could have even guessed at the possibility that, within four decades, the whole European position in the Far East would be undermined to an extent that the empires were past recall, weakened in one world war, subverted by internal resistance thereafter, and defeated in a second conflict by the new power of the Far East—Japan, the one country that had managed to escape the shackles of white domination. Such was to prove the reality, but for the moment myths sufficed.

CHAPTER 1

The Emergence of Japan

ON 18 JANUARY 1915 Hoiki Eki, the Japanese ambassador in Peking, presented to the president of the Republic of China, Yuan Shih-K'ai, a letter from the imperial government in Tokyo. Given the nature of diplomatic exchanges between states such an incident need not have attracted any undue attention, though the presentation of a note directly to a head of state is often an indication that the matter in hand is somewhat unusual. This note indeed was exceptional. It contained a series of Japanese requirements that, if accepted, would have effectively resulted in the total subjugation of China to the will of Japan. The note contained what were to become internationally infamous as the Twenty-one Demands.

For obvious political and strategic reasons, the island empire of Japan had always been deeply concerned with the affairs of the Asian mainland. Japan harbored hopes of aggrandizement on the continent. As early as the sixteenth century Hideyoshi Toyotomi had expounded the notion that Asia should be subjected to Japanese rule by the progressive conquest of first Korea and then China. This was a theme returned to in the mid-nineteenth century by the nationalist poet Shoin Yoshida. In neither instance, however, was anything forthcoming from what were, superficially, such extravagant notions of conquest. In neither era did Japan have the means to embark upon such plans, but that such ideas could be argued seriously was an indication of the view that Japan held regarding her own position and her