The Russian ‘Diplomatic Revolution’ and Japan’s Annexation of Korea(1905-1910)

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Introduction

Russia’s ‘diplomatic revolution’ was the result of the search for a new policy to overcome the international and domestic difficulties which Russia faced in the aftermath of its defeat in the Russo-Japanese War. Moreover, this revolution marked a turning point in the history of the Tsarist government’s foreign policy, which suddenly went from expansion to compromise and reconciliation. This new diplomatic course which emerged in the aftermath of the war, with the new Foreign Minister A.P. Izvolskii at the forefront, was based on pragmatism. The two most prominent achievements of Izvolskii’s diplomatic tenure, the Anglo-Russia Convention of 1907 and the Russo-Japanese agreements of 1907 and 1910, were made possible by Russia’s abandonment of its foreign policy based on political tradition and ideology in favor of one governed by pragmatism. Such agreements were designed to put relations with England and Japan, which had long been considered to be enemies of Russia, on a more amicable footing.

This diplomatic revolution had its origins in the belief that in the long term, the establishment of a peaceful international environment was the only way for Russia to overcome the domestic chaos created by the

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nation’s defeat at the hands of Japan and by the 1st Russian revolution, and to complete the political reforms it had undertaken. As a result, Russia undertook a complete overhaul of its previous toward the world policy, which in accordance with its policy of compromise and reconciliation, involved its acquiescence of the need to allow its former enemies England and Japan to establish their own spheres of influence alongside Russia’s in the Middle East and East Asia. Russia’s diplomatic revolution can be identified as one of the main factors which led to the Triple Entente of 1907 between Russia, France, and England and subsequently to the Russo-Japanese Agreements in East Asia. This diplomatic revolution thus resulted in the establishment of stable borders in both the east and west, as well as to the formation of a peace system in both Europe and East Asia. However, this Russian diplomatic revolution also resulted in bringing about the increased isolation of Germany in Europe, due to the above-mentioned England-centered Triple Entente between Russia, France, and England; while in East Asia, Russia’s desire to acquire Japan’s recognition of its preponderant rights in Mongolia led it to turn a blind eye to the Japanese annexation of Korea. Consequently, this Russian diplomatic revolution borne out of the ashes of the Russo-Japanese War became one of the sparks which led to the eventual eruption of WWI and the Japanese occupation of Korea.

As mentioned above, the Russian diplomatic policy which was set after the Russo-Japanese War was in many ways just as important as the policy prior to the war. However, little research has been conducted by Korean scholars on Russian diplomacy of this period. For the following reasons the majority of the studies conducted on Russian foreign policy in Korea have focused on Russia’s East Asian policy and Russo-Korean relations prior to the Russo-Japanese War: First, this period saw the invigoration of Russia’s East Asian policy in the aftermath of the commencement of the construction of the Trans-Siberian railroad in 1891, and it also marked the peak of Russo-Korean interactions as exemplified by Kojong’s flight to the Russian Legation in 1896; Second, in accordance with the discontinuity approach to history, Korean scholars have tended to
perceive the Russian foreign policy towards the Korean peninsula, which began to pick up steam at the end of the 19th century, as having come to a halt with its defeat at the hands of Japan in 1905. However, when we consider that Russia was a Eurasian nation whose foreign policy during the imperial era was global in its scope, the employment of an approach which analyzes Russian foreign policy at the individual region level, such as in Europe, the Near East, Middle East or in East Asia, without giving due consideration to its overall policy may not represent a sound methodology. At the very minimum, Russia was both a European and Asian state, and its East Asian policy was closely connected to its policy towards the European continent within the wider framework of its world strategy. As such, there is a need to reassess the common perception that Russian interests shifted from East Asia to Europe in the aftermath of the Russo-Japanese War.

This study attempts to analyze the process through which Russia’s East Asian policy was established by linking it with its European policy and the domestic events which unfolded after the Russo-Japanese War. To do so, the following tasks are undertaken:

First, the background and development of Izvolskii’s diplomatic revolution shall be traced. In other words, an analysis will be conducted of the factors which led to Russia’s decision to engage in amicable relations with its traditional enemy England, and its opponent in the Russo-Japanese War Japan.

Second, an effort will be made to delve into the process through which Russia, which had already agreed to the 1st Russo-Japanese Agreement in 1907, reached the decision to sign a second agreement with Tokyo in 1910 that involved turning a blind eye to the latter’s annexation of Korea. As such, an attempt will be made to analyze the international and domestic factors which led Russia, which had heretofore strongly supported the notion of Korean independence, and this even after the war, to in essence abandon Korea to Japan. Based on this analysis, an effort is then made to
ascertain how Russia’s new pragmatism-based diplomacy resulted in creating independent Russian and Japanese spheres of influence in East Asia.

The scope of this research is limited to the period spanning from the immediate aftermath of the Russo-Japanese War in 1905 until the 2nd Russo-Japanese agreement was reached in 1910, an agreement that involved Russia’s turning a blind eye to Japan’s annexation of Korea. What’s more the period under study has been divided into two sub-periods, namely, the period before the 1st Russo-Japanese Agreement in 1907, and the period after. The first of these sub-periods was one which witnessed the materialization of Russia’s diplomatic revolution in the form of the Anglo-Russia Convention and the 1st Russo-Japanese Agreement of 1907. The latter period under study was one in which in accordance with the direction of its diplomatic revolution, Russia attempted to employ means other than the old military advance its national interests in East Asia.

**Russia Diplomatic Revolution and the 1st Russo-Japanese Agreement**

The new international order that took shape in the aftermath of the Russo-Japanese War forced Russia to reevaluate and reform its world policy. Such a denouement was in large part the result of the changes in great power relations that occurred following the conclusion of the Treaty of Portsmouth in 1905. While Russia no longer represented a threat to Japan, the U.S. or England, Japan was rapidly emerging as an imminent menace for Washington and London alike. What’s more, the Anglo-Japanese Alliance, which had been designed as a counterweight to Russian power, lost its raison d’être, and Japan suddenly found itself in a situation where it could no longer expect the automatic support of the U.S. Consequently, the competitive framework which had pitted Russia against
Japan, the U.S. and England was altered into one in which Japan found itself squaring off against the U.S. and England as part of the new order that was emerging in East Asia.

Another factor which contributed to the changes in Russia’s East Asia policy was the growing mutual suspicion as to whether the parties to the Portsmouth Treaty could be expected to abide by its tenets. In this regards, there emerged within Japanese society a militarist faction who believed that the Russo-Japanese War had been brought to a conclusion too early and that the conflict should have dragged on until all Russian influence had been removed from East Asia; conversely, certain Russian policymakers actively began to clamor for Russia to exact revenge upon Japan. In short, as the Portsmouth Treaty was not one that had been imposed by the victor on the loser, but rather one that had been brokered by a third party, namely the U.S., both states had serious complaints about this treaty. Thus, the Japanese militarists and the Russian “revenge”(삽입) faction, both of which clamored for a resumption of hostilities, continued to hold much sway within their respective nations. The Japanese increased its defense budget, as well as in the number of its troops in Korea and Southern Manchuria, and this resulted in constant worries for the Russian government with regards to Japanese intentions. This led to Russian government fears at the end of 1905 and early 1906 that another Russo-Japanese war was imminent, with these fears being especially heightened in February 1906.¹

Given the fact that Russia did not possess the military wherewithal at that point to counter any Japanese hostility, it was forced to search for other short-term policies to protect itself from Japanese aggression. The existence of two differing perceptions of the actual situation resulted in two distinct groups engaging in a struggle to influence the course which these alternative policies should take. The first group, which sought to bring about a rapprochement with Japan, promoted the establishment of an agreement with Tokyo to establish two separate spheres of influence in China, one Russian and the other Japanese. Moreover, they also pushed for these spheres of influence to eventually result in a full-fledged alliance
between Japan and Russia aimed at offsetting the threat to Russian security occasioned by the U.S. and England. The other group called for a tripartite anti-Japanese alliance to be formed between Russia, the U.S. and England, and for these three parties to essentially divide East Asia amongst themselves.

However, before Russia could take part in any renewed hostilities with Japan, it had to first secure its western borders, as any war of revenge against Tokyo would entail Russia having to redeploy its troops stationed in the west to the eastern front. As such, Russia had to remove the German threat on its western border. The situation in which two factions emerged within Russia regarding the approach that should be taken in East Asia was replicated in the west when it came to the stance that should be taken vis-à-vis Germany. In this instance, there emerged a faction which advocated a rapprochement with Germany in order to offset any possibility of a German invasion, and another which sought to reach a concord with England that would minimize the chances of any German aggression. These two factions jostled with one another for influence. In short, for Russia, a country located between Europe and Asia, any potential conflict in East Asia was intrinsically related to the resolution of the situation on its western borders.

The most vocal advocate of a rapprochement with Japan was the former Finance Minister Sergei Witte. Witte, the main Russian delegate to the negotiations that led to the signing of the Treaty of Portsmouth, at some point during these talks asked the Russian government to use this opportunity to pursue an alliance with Japan, but his proposal was vetoed. However, Izvolskii began to exhibit a certain degree of interest in pursuing an alliance with Japan soon after his appointment as the new foreign minister, which in time led him to adopt the concept of such an alliance as the core of his diplomatic strategy. The slogan for Izvolskii’s diplomatic strategy was, Put Asia on the backburner while looking towards Europe, and remove all scars left behind by Lamsdorf in East Asia, such as the conflicts with Japan and England. The first major step taken by Izvolskii following his appointment as foreign minister was to
concurrently initiate negotiations with England and Japan as part of his above-mentioned diplomatic strategy.  

As we can see from above, one of the main reasons why Witte, Izvolskii, and several other members of the government supported this rapprochement with Japan was their fear that a revolution could break out if Russia once again succumbed to Japan on the battlefield. Meanwhile, another faction within the government backed by England and the U.S., which advocated the need for Russia to score a ‘little victory’ in the Far East, perceived Russia’s victory in a war with Japan as the means of putting an end to revolutionary activity in Russia. Witte claimed that these calls for a war of revenge were mostly emanating from the military and certain segments of the government, and were being spread by newspapers such as Novoe vremya which harped on the merits of such a war on a seemingly daily basis. As such, Witte claimed, it was only natural that the Tsar and his inner circle, as well as the National Security Committee led by Grand Duke Nicholas Nicholaevich would come out in support of such a policy. Witte was of the mindset that under such circumstances public opinion would increasingly support a war of revenge against Japan. As such, the link between a possible war of revenge and the occurrence of another revolution became the theoretical foundation of these two opposing faction’s arguments.

The conclusion of the Russo-Japanese War did not result in any changes in Russia’s East Asian policy that might reflect a move away from the perception of Japan as a rival rather than a partner. Another group which came out in support of a war of revenge against Japan was one which consisted of members of the Bourgeois class who had lost their economic interests in East Asia as a result of Russia’s defeat in the Russo-Japanese War. These individuals demanded that the government close down all free trade ports and prohibit any form of the non-tariff trade which was prevalent in East Asia at that time, while also asking for measures to be taken to offset the growing economic influence of Japan in the Far East markets. Moreover, these people claimed that the establishment of such free trade ports in essence represented a
monumental blunder for Russia as it would bestow excessive rights upon Japan, which in turn could lead to a resumption of hostilities in the very near future.

This kind of anti-Japanese sentiment appears to have been the main impetus behind the Russian press’ increasing demands for the formation of a Russian-American-English alliance to offset the perceived threat from Japan. The Russian military during this period expected to be able to rely on the unconditional support of the U.S. and Germany. German support for Russia in a war against Japan and its offer of a Russian-German-American alliance structure designed to counter Japanese power was intended to focus Russia’s attention on the Far East and away from the Near East and Middle East. For its part, the U.S. promised support for Russia in a second war with Japan was premised on Russia’s agreement to allow the U.S. to share in some of the rights in Manchuria from the development of railroads and other projects, as well as to allow U.S. interests to take root in the Amur and Bering Straits areas. Therefore, Russia’s East Asian policy immediately after the Russo-Japanese War began to vacillate between these two extreme positions, namely those advocating a war of revenge with Japan and those favoring rapprochement. It was amidst such circumstances that Izvolskii emerged as the person who would steer Russian policy away from the pursuit of a war of revenge with Japan and towards rapprochement with Tokyo.

Izvolskii’s appointment as foreign minister came during the same period in which the state Duma was formed. The Duma, installed as a response to the Russian revolution of 1905, represented the first step in the transformation of the ruling system from an absolute to a constitutional monarchy. The Tsarist government faced the daunting task of reforming the political apparatus in order to cope with the political freedom, although limited, which the people now enjoyed as a result of the formation of the Duma. This overwhelming task of reforming the ruling system while securing the Tsarist structure was laid at the feet of Pyotr Stolypin the Chairman of the Council of Ministers. For his part, Izvolskii was entrusted with the task of establishing the stable foreign
policy environment needed to bring Stolypin’s domestic reform efforts to fruition. Izvolskii, unlike Lamsdorf who possessed a mindset that was based on a more feudalistic 19th century approach to the world, was a politician who possessed world-view that was in keeping with the emerging new international situation. The more liberal-minded Izvolskii, who advocated the advent of a constitutional monarchy, was cognizant of the fact that in order for Russian foreign policy to be successful, reforms would have to be carried out domestically in an omni-directional manner. Moreover, his pragmatic approach to foreign policy bestowed upon him the ability to obtain the support of the legislative branch, the media, and political leaders for his policies. Nevertheless, like many of his contemporaries who lived during this transition period, he was unable to completely break away from the traditional mode of thinking. Izvolskii possessed a traditional Russian bureaucratic mindset that was combined with the new perception of the world that was emerging amongst European politicians at the beginning of the 20th century. He was born into a family that belonged to the fallen aristocracy on March 3, 1856, and the traditional bureaucratic education he received, as well as the fact that he entered the foreign ministry in 1875 at a time when capitalist development was rapidly expanding in Russia, and that he spent the next 30 years overseas as part of various Russian diplomatic missions, help to explain why he possessed such a dualistic mindset. While his diplomatic career had gotten off to a promising start, he later experienced many ups and downs. Izvolskii, who began his career under the influential Russian ambassador to Turkey Aleksei Lobanov-Rostovskii, was dispatched to Washington one month after at the age of 26 being named 1st secretary to the Russian embassy in Romania. He was subsequently appointed as ambassador to Serbia and mentioned as a possible replacement for Foreign Minister Mikhail Muraviev following the latter’s demise in 1900. Izvolskii’s first foray into the East Asian question came in 1899 with his appointment as ambassador to Japan, where he subsequently proceeded to carry out policies to promote regional stability. Perceiving firsthand the rise of the
military in Japan and the process which led to the formation of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance in 1902, Izvolskii became convinced that in order for Russia to maintain its influence in Manchuria, it would have to abandon Korea to Japan. However, his pleas for Russian rapprochement with Japan were discarded out of hand by the Tsar’s inner circle and the Russian military who were convinced that Russia had to display its strong will and power in East Asia. Izvolskii was consequently recalled to St-Petersburg in 1902.6

Izvolskii’s experiences in Japan would have a great influence on the approach he would adopt towards the island nation following his appointment as foreign minister in the aftermath of the Russo-Japanese War. During his tenure as Russian ambassador to Japan, Izvolskii had constantly tried to persuade the Japanese government that given their special geopolitical situation as neighbors in the Far East, the two nations should establish a joint front based on amicable relations in order to forestall the encroachment of western powers in East Asia rather than pursue a relationship based on mistrust and conflict.7

Izvolskii first instructed his subordinates within the foreign ministry to delve into the feasibility of seeking a new agreement with Japan in May 1906. Negotiations were begun in June of that same year following the Japanese side’s positive response to the Russian overtures, with a member of the Duma, Malevskii-Malevich, and the Japanese ambassador to Russia Motono Ichiro selected to lead the talks. Izvolskii suddenly found himself having to convince the Russian government of the need to pursue separate agreements with England and Japan. To convince the highly skeptical Russian military of the need to seek rapprochement with Japan, Izvolskii claimed that in order to mitigate the threat emanating from the Anglo-Japanese alliance, Russia would have to 1) seek out an agreement with England and 2) subsequently establish cordial relations with Japan.8

Before the above-mentioned negotiations even got underway, articles began to appear in Russian newspapers which harped on the need to establish separate spheres of interest in the Pacific region and to engage in an exchange of opinions with Japan on this issue. This stance was further
expounded on in a series of articles written by D. Yanchevetskii which appeared in the Russian dailies *St-Petersburg vedomosti* and *Russia*. In these articles, Yanchevetskii presented the situation as such: Russia had not lost everything in East Asia, all that was needed was to wait until its enemy Japan and the U.S. experienced the inevitable drop in their power that would occur as a result of their growing rivalry. As part of this wait-and-see policy, he claimed, Russia should pursue amicable relations with Japan.\(^9\)

However, the faction opposed to any rapprochement with Japan came out firmly against the notion of the creation of separate Japanese and Russian spheres of interest in China, which represented the main tenet of these efforts to improve relations with Japan. A representative example of the arguments advanced by this faction can be found in an editorial run in the Russian newspaper *Rech* which argued that, “if our East Asian policy up to this point has been based on competition with England and the U.S., the time has now come to forge alliances with our former enemies.” The newspaper went on to claim that as this proposed cooperation between the U.S. and Russia was to serve as a counter to the growing Japanese power, the two countries should continue to jointly push for the adoption of an open door policy in China.\(^10\) In short, this open door policy and the creation of separate spheres of interest in China became the main themes adopted by the faction advocating rapprochement with the U.S. and the one pursuing closer ties with Japan respectively.

Another serious obstacle to the creation of closer ties with Japan which emerged alongside the pro-American faction was the exorbitant demands made by the Japanese government during the negotiations that began in June 1906; demands which went well beyond what had been agreed upon at Portsmouth. During these talks Japan demanded that Russia grant it free navigation rights along the Heilong and Sungari Rivers, special rights to transport Japanese product through Siberia, and exclusive fishing rights in the Russian Far East. These led the talks between Russia and Japan to reach an impasse in November 1906. Shortly after this, S.A. Kotlyalevskii, who was the political commentator for the Russian magazine *Russksaya*
Myls, advocated that Russia break off relations with Japan altogether.

The above-mentioned impasse in Russo-Japanese negotiations resulted in strengthening the hand of the faction opposed to any rapprochement with Tokyo. From the conflicts between Russian policymakers reaching a crescendo in November 1906. On November 20, a special commission was convened to discuss the Japanese demands for navigation rights in the Sungari River area. This commission was faced with two options, either grant the Japanese demand, or prepare for the advent of a second war with Japan. Izvolskii was one of those who came out in favor of making concessions to the Japanese, claiming that there existed a strong militarist faction within Japan, and that a disastrous outcome would befall Russia if this group was not appeased. Therefore, Russia should find ways to negotiate an acceptable settlement to these issues before it was forced to do so from a much weakened position. The Russian military refused to accept Izvolskii’s approach, claiming that a Russian show of force was necessary in East Asia to convince Japan that it was not going to accept their demands. In the end, the commission adopted the following stance, which in great part reflected the notions advocated by Izvolskii. The commission decided that Russia should adopt alternative measures to coax Japan into revoking their demands for navigation rights in the Sungari River area. Moreover, although this issue might not come to the kind of denouement which Russia hoped for, all efforts should be made to avoid worsening relations with Japan. However, those opposed to any rapprochement with Japan refused to abandon the fight. What’s more, the Russian military, which advocated the taking of a hard-line stance towards Japan, saw their position strengthened by the news of Japan’s continued military buildup.

On November 26, 1906 a Russian National Security Committee meeting was convened during which time a report surfaced that Japan was engaged in making the preparations needed to launch a new war with Russia, and that the Japanese military had been expanded to the level where it could now simultaneously occupy Manchuria, attack Vladivostok, and occupy the southern regions of the Heilong River. This situation and
the gradual increase in Japanese troop levels in Korea and southern Manchuria made it so that if Russia did indeed attempt to exhibit a show of force in East Asia, such an occurrence could serve as the excuse Japan needed to initiate the resumption of hostilities. Anticipating the coming of a second war with Japan, Unterverger, the Viceroy of Priamur called for the large-scale dispatch of Russian troops to East Asia.\(^{13}\)

The Russian media was also divided into two camps over this issue; with one more liberal group advocating the need to make concessions to Japan, while more ultra-nationalist newspapers came out strongly against any appeasement of Japan. Those newspapers in favor of the pro-Japanese stance advocated by Izvolskii claimed that concessions should be made to Japan, as long as these could guarantee the forging of amicable relations with Tokyo. This perception was based on the belief that such concessions were necessary, because the Japanese military build up now made it impossible for Russia to expect to be able to prevail in any war of revenge with Tokyo. The ultra-nationalist faction on the other hand, claimed that the Russian government should adopt a more hard-line approach towards Japan that involved not giving in to any Japanese demands. This kind of perception was premised on the belief that not only had Japanese national strength been severely tapped by the Russo-Japanese War, but that Russia could also expect to forge anti-Japanese alliances. For its part, the Moskovskie vedomosti stressed that this kind of revenge war could serve to break the revolutionary movement in Russia.\(^{14}\)

Meanwhile Rech adopted a middle-of-the-road approach to this issue. While it supported Izvolskii’s policy and proclaimed itself not fundamentally opposed to the idea of making concessions to Japan to reach an agreement, it did not perceive these negotiations as the basis for a lasting peace with Japan, but rather as a strategic choice on the part of Russia to gain the time needed to forge the alliances needed to defeat Japan. The paper identified not only the U.S., but England and China, as the countries with which Russia should seek to forge an alliance. Rech’s P.N. Milyukov was not the only liberal intellectual to advocate such a strategy, as such a perception was also shared by other leading liberal
voices such as Count Trubetskoi of the *Mokovskii edzenedel’nik* and A.M Volkonskii of the *Novoe bremya*.  

For his part, Izvolskii regarded this faction calling for the eventual establishment of anti-Japanese alliances as being more dangerous than the one which was openly opposed to his plan to forge closer ties with Japan. Izvolskii was of the mindset that if this anti-Japanese alliance stance gained currency within Russian political circles he would find himself hard-pressed to go against this current; and that it was very likely that this kind of anti-Japanese alliance would in the end wind up in a war of revenge with Japan. At the end of 1906, Izvolskii began to attack the notions put forward by this faction head on, and officially announced that Russia would immediately remove its troops from northern Manchuria. This step, which had been agreed to by Stolypin the Chairman of the Council of Ministers after a long-drawn out meeting, simultaneously sought to achieve three separate objectives: 1) To establish the conditions needed to break the impasse in Russo-Japanese negotiations; 2) to preempt any attempt by the pro-war faction; 3) to facilitate the rapprochement with China favored by those who desired to establish a grand anti-Japanese alliance.  

Although this step did not decisively remove all conflicts within Russia regarding the course of the nation’s East Asian policy, or eradicate the level of hostility between Russia and Japan, it nevertheless forestalled the complete rupture of bilateral relations and provided the basis on which Izvolskii’s future negotiations with Tokyo were conducted.

Izvolskii began to concentrate his efforts on the successful conclusion of negotiations with Japan and on the securing of an agreement with Tokyo at the beginning of 1907 as the likelihood of a war eased. This reduction in tensions had its origins not only in the fact that the Russian military’s opposition to rapprochement with Japan had by then begun to recede, but also in the government’s promise to Russian capitalists that all free ports in the Far East would be closed and that a railway would be built through the Amur region.

The last remaining obstacle which stood in the way of Izvolskii being
able to secure an agreement with Japan was to persuade the members of the National Defense Committee, who had been the most vehemently opposed to any rapprochement with Japan, of the benefits of such a concord. These individuals regarded the agreement reached at Portsmouth as being nothing more than a temporary one, and as such, believed that if Russia did not maintain at least 200,000 of its troops in East Asia, half of Siberia, including Vladivostok, would be lost to the Japanese, with Russian power eventually completely removed from the Pacific region. This group presented petitions to the Tsar in which they spelled out the reasons why such an approach was necessary, and openly engaged in heated debates with Izvolskii over this issue. Consequently, Izvolskii was forced to appear before the committee on four different occasions in January-February 1907. On these occasions, Izvolskii was bestowed with the daunting task of having to convince the committee members that their aggressive actions and open pursuit of a war of revenge with Japan could not secure the desired outcome under the prevailing circumstances. Izvolskii’s implorations had the effect of dividing the committee into two camps over the issue of dispatching additional troops to East Asia. Moreover, the committee decided to indefinitely postpone decision regarding on options. Furthermore, during a special meeting called on January 13, 1907 to discuss commercial trade with Japan, the issue of free trade ports and the construction of a railway in the Amur region were settled in a positive manner.17

Meanwhile, because of British and French intervention, whose intention it now was to assure Russian support in the formation of an anti-German front, negotiations between Russia and Japan began to show signs of once again being reconvened. England perceived the completion of a Russo-Japanese agreement as a necessary precondition to the improvement of its relations with Russia. This active British role in fostering a Russo-Japanese agreement greatly facilitated the negotiations between itself and Russia. In February 1907, England reached an agreement to divide Persia into separate spheres of influence, one British and the other Russian. The British foreign minister informed Izvolskii
during talks between the two nations on how to improve relations, that it had advised its ally Japan to rapidly conclude an agreement with Russia.\textsuperscript{18} For its part, France adopted the position of not providing Japan with any loans until Tokyo had reached an agreement with the Russian side. This French stance led to Izvolskii’s boasts in February 1907 that an agreement with Japan was close at hand.\textsuperscript{19} By March 1907, Russia and Japan had agreed on most of the details of a potential agreement, with the exception of how to deal with the stickiest issue of them all, that of the Chinese Eastern Railway. Two possible solutions emerged to this problem, the first being that each nation would control the railway in the areas that fell within their respective spheres of influence, while the second involved the complete neutralization of the entire railway. While the Russian camp was clearly in favor of the latter option, Japan adamantly promoted the first one. The debate over this issue would drag on for another four months; however, in the end Japan’s suggestion prevailed. Moreover, the improvement in Anglo-Russian relations which occurred during this period resulted in removing the final obstacle to the conclusion of a Russo-Japanese agreement.\textsuperscript{20}

On July 15 (28), 1907 a Russo-Japanese trade and fisheries agreement was concluded; thereafter, on the 17\textsuperscript{th} (30) the two sides inked a basic political agreement. This basic political agreement contained both open and secret provisions. Thus, while the official agreement stipulated that both parties agreed to maintain the status quo in Manchuria, a secret addendum was added which read that while Russia would gain control over northern Manchuria and Outer Mongolia, Japan would establish its own zone of control in southern Manchuria and the Korean peninsula. Izvolskii, who proclaimed himself very pleased with the contents of this agreement, told A.S. Suvorin during an interview on August 17 that, “This agreement will assure that Japan will keep its hands off of our affairs for at least the next ten years. Such an agreement will help to secure our rearguard, as we concentrate on the ever-worsening situation in Europe.”\textsuperscript{21}
The 2nd Russo-Japanese Agreement and Japan’s Annexation of Korea

The growing interest and demands for changes in Russia’s East Asian policy which began to emerge at the end of the 19th century made it such that the contents of the above-mentioned agreement between Japan and Russia was bound to face several ups and downs in terms of their implementation. Case in point, this first Russo-Japanese agreement reached in 1907 proved to be unsatisfactory to the hardliners within Russia who advocated a war of revenge on Japan. The growing expansion of Japanese military power and their perceived desire to project this power in the Vladivostok area, were identified by these hardliners as the reason why Russia should take military measures of its own to counter Japan’s usage of southern Manchuria and Korea as its base of operations for the launching of such an attack. For their part, Russian ultranationalist newspapers claimed that the possibility that the Russian Far East might fall under the control of Japan necessitated a reopening of hostilities in order to restore Russia’s dominance in this area.

Alexander Guchkov and Pavel Milyukov, two members of the Octoberist Party whom had supported Izvolskii’s position, expressed their own concern with the expansion of Japanese power during a speech before the Duma on February 27, 1908. While Guchkov pronounced himself opposed to the notion of a war of revenge, he nevertheless highlighted the importance of solidifying Russia’s defenses in the Russian Far East. Moreover, he argued that although the international political situation was slowly turning to Russia’s advantage, Russia could not expect to be able to make use of these circumstances to regain the territory which had been lost to Japan. Thus, the government should make clear the extent to which Russian interests in the area were protected. Meanwhile, Milyukov, who also supported the agreement with Japan, questioned the logic of separating Manchuria into distinct spheres of influence. Should such a situation come to pass, he argued, southern
Manchuria would find itself in the same situation as Korea now found itself in, with the area eventually falling under the effective control of the Japanese. However, Milyukov went on, Russia’s position in northern Manchuria was not as solid as Japan’s in the south, and as such, the secret agreement to divide Manchuria into separate spheres of influence was one that was impractical on the ground because of Japan’s colonial policy. Thus, Milyukov asserted that Russia should develop a new diplomatic framework that made use of England and the U.S., both of which were actively involved in the Far East, to counter Japan’s expansionist policies. In short, the prevailing sentiment within Russian political circles at that time that the first agreement with Japan had been too advantageous to Japan resulted in increased calls for diplomatic measures rather than military ones being used to contain Japanese ambitions.

Japan, while strictly assuring that Russia abided by its side of the fisheries agreement, soon proceeded to violate the agreement itself by intruding into Russian waters and engaging in fishing activities. The Japanese also detained Russian fishing boats in the southern reaches of the Sakhalin area. Such aggressive actions on the part of Japan began during the negotiations over the status of the Kuanchents (寬城子) railway station, one of the stops along the Chinese Eastern Railway, held in 1907. Using the excuse that the agreement between the two countries had been unclear regarding the status of the stations along this route, Japan demanded that Russia cede control over this station to Tokyo. Japan’s objective was that of securing its control over this strategic station which lay along the border between the two countries’ spheres of influence by offering to pay 500,000 rubles to Russia. What’s more, Japan was able during these negotiations to secure the right for its navy to patrol the Russian coastlines on the grounds that such a move was needed to protect its nationals’ fishing boats. The Russian press angrily claimed that this move was tantamount to Russia ceding its naval rights in its own territorial waters to Japan, and that this would provide Japan with the opportunity to initiate warfare at any point of their choosing.

This series of events which came to light after the conclusion of the
first Russo-Japanese agreement resulted in strong skepticism within Russia about the likelihood of this agreement actually being implemented.

In March 1908, the issue of increasing Russia’s coastal defenses was officially discussed during a meeting of the Council of Ministers. Moreover, discussions regarding the construction of the Amur Railroad began to be raised in the Duma during this period as well. While Izvolskii made his displeasure with this plan to construct the Amur Railroad known by remaining silent throughout the entire session, the proposal was nevertheless passed by the Duma in 1908. The positions taken over this issue can be summarized in the stances adopted by Georgi Lvov and Vladimir Purishkevich. Lvov, who possessed a more progressive mindset, argued that the construction of this railway would take much needed money away from the European front and the Russian interior, and that as such it should not be built. On the other hand, Purishkevich, who was somewhat of an ultra-nationalist, stressed that the construction of this railway would become an important implement with which to assure Russia’s influence in East Asia. This was followed by an impassionate plea to the Duma members to pass this resolution in a unanimous fashion.

The decision to go ahead with the construction of this railroad in essence signified the defeat of the camp advocating rapprochement with the Japanese in the battle to influence the direction of Russia’s East Asia policy. The former Governor General of Priamur, Damian Subbotich pointed out that under the current circumstances in which Russia’s forging of an alliance with Japan was vital to its future, such discussions over the construction of the Amur Railroad gave the distinctive impression that Russia was either preparing for a second war with Japan, or intended to become the dominant power in the Pacific. In his memoirs, Witte noted that the passing of the resolution to pursue the construction of the Amur Railroad in both the Duma and the Council of Ministers was trumpeted as a sign of the imminent war of revenge with Japan. However, the core of this debate over the construction of the Amur Railroad did not involve a discussion of the merits and weaknesses of Russia’s expansionist policies.
but rather pertained to what kind of means should be used to obstruct Japan’s own territorial ambitions.\textsuperscript{29}

As faith in the first Russo-Japanese agreement decreased, an increasing number of voices began to call for a change in Russia’s East Asia policy. This resulted in the widespread belief amongst the Russian population that Russia stood to gain more from the forging of an anti-Japan coalition that from rapprochement with Tokyo. The possibility of such an anti-Japan coalition became more concrete following the U.S. overtures to Russia to this effect in the aftermath of the worsening of U.S.-Japan ties at the end of 1907. The possibility of such a front was further increased by the American Secretary of War’s William H. Taft’s visit to Russia in November 1907. As Russian and American politicians had only met on the rarest of occasions in the past, Taft’s visit to Russia can be seen as having been a noteworthy event whose purpose can be identified as a diplomatic show of force towards Japan. Rumors began to spread that the U.S. and Russia would soon conclude an agreement over the division of interests in East Asia in accordance with China’s open door policy. The newspaper \textit{Russia} claimed that while Taft’s visit would not affect Russia’s foreign policy in any way, this visit had resulted in creating the impression that an alternative policy capable of responding to Japanese expansionism was in fact in the works.\textsuperscript{30} On the other hand, \textit{Novoe vremya}, published an article in which they claimed that, “The responsibility for assuring that Russo-Japanese relations develop in an amicable manner and that a revenge mindset does not take root in Russia is now entirely Japan’s.”\textsuperscript{31}

These political changes in the international environment led Russia to begin to seriously pursue the possibility of an anti-Japan alliance between itself and the U.S. at the beginning of 1908. An official from the finance ministry M. Rutkovskii was selected to travel to the U.S. to investigate the following matters: 1) why the U.S. position towards Russia and Japan had changed so drastically in the aftermath of the Russo-Japanese War; 2) what was the potential for public support for a war with Japan; 3) the possibility of restoring amicable relations between the U.S. and Russia.
Rustovskii, who stayed in the U.S. from March to August of that year, submitted a report in which he observed that the worsening of U.S.-Japan ties since 1907 had provided Russia with a golden opportunity to improve its own relations with the U.S. As a result, the main focus of the debate between the opposing Russian factions, which until the first half of 1908 had been centered around whether Russia should pursue a rapprochement with Japan, suddenly became that of doing away with the Russo-Japanese agreement of 1907, the formation of an anti-Japan coalition based on an alliance with the U.S., and how to respond to Japanese expansionism.32

In the spring and summer of 1909, calls for the forging of an alliance against Japan reached their peak in Russia. In the aftermath of the Russo-Japanese War, Russia found itself faced with two choices: the maintenance of its current policy in East Asia by forging alliances with China and the U.S.; or the pursuit of a negotiated agreement with Japan that would see the establishment of separate spheres of influence in Manchuria. In the end, Russia, in keeping with the line advocated by Izvolskii, opted for the latter policy. However, there emerged a general perception within Russia proper that these negotiations between the two powers had solely been advantageous to Japan. As such, the belief that Russia had wasted its opportunity to forge an alliance with China and now found itself the target of Japanese expansionism became widespread amongst the Russian population. In this regards, the belief that the first Russo-Japanese agreement represented a diplomatic failure for Russia became widely accepted. Count Trubetskoi argued in the Moskovskii edzenedel’nik that the most urgent task for Russian diplomacy was that of seeking a concord with the U.S., whose interest in China was increasing on a yearly basis. Meanwhile, the Novoe vremya stressed that the fact that Russia had not actively pursued the forging of a tripartite alliance (consisting of itself, the U.S., and China) against Japan was incomprehensible. It further argued that Russia would have gained more from signing a trade and political agreement with America than what it secured from the similar agreement it had signed with Japan. In the end, the paper argued, Russia’s interests in East Asia would best be
safeguarded by forging a tripartite alliance with the U.S. and England.\textsuperscript{33} The anti-Japanese stance adopted by Russian factions and the press was based on a wide mix of interests. In the case of the ultra-nationalists, their main objective remained that of waging a war of revenge on Japan. This faction favored the forging of an alliance between Russia and the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Moreover, as once Russia proved victorious in this war of revenge it could seize a significant prize as a spoil of war, namely China, this group made no mention of an alliance with the U.S. In short, this group’s slogan was that of, “the forging of an alliance with the countries of Europe to curtail the yellow peril.”\textsuperscript{34} Meanwhile, the Kadet Party’s opposition to Japan was in large based on its desire to protect Russian entrepreneurs’ interests in East Asia. This group’s objective was to strengthen Russia’s position in the Chinese market in order to gain the upper hand in its competition with Japan. As such, the Kadet Party perceived the forging of an alliance with China as the best means of obtaining their objectives. This faction based its desire to secure an alliance with China on the following: 1) from a geographical standpoint, Russia was in a much better situation than any other country to turn Manchuria into a market for its commodities; 2) in order to secure Russian entrepreneurs’ position in the gigantic Chinese market, government assistance was essential. In other words, the Chinese market was one that was too big to be ignored. Kadet argued that support from the Russian government, as well as from the U.S., England, and France, was essential to the Russian bourgeois’ ability to compete with Japan in China.

Meanwhile, moderate right-wing factions, who pursued the same objectives as the Kadet Party, called for the forging of not only an alliance with the U.S. and China, but with Japan as well. This group believed that while Russian agreements with China and the U.S. would serve to restrain Japan, they would also serve as a guarantee in case the Russo-Japanese agreement should unravel. Moreover, Russia could take on the part of mediator should the U.S. and Japan come to blows. Therefore, should Russia remain neutral in terms of the emerging rivalry between the U.S.
and Japan, it would allow it to later on to, based on the prevailing circumstances, choose the side that was most advantageous to its own interests. Thus, this group attempted to maximize Russian interests by preserving a certain latitude in terms of its freedom of action. As a result, in the summer of 1909 the hottest debate within Russian policymaking circles, as it pertained to Russian interests in East Asia, revolved around the issue of alliances with China and the U.S.

The issue of rapprochement with China began to pick up speed following the two countries reaching of an agreement on the establishment of joint control over the areas in which the Chinese Eastern Railway ran reached on April 27, 1909, or shortly after the resolution of the Bosnian crisis. This agreement was perceived as a very effective way of restraining Japanese expansionism by strengthening the Russian foothold in the Chinese market. Moreover, this agreement also provided Russia with an opportunity to reassess its overall railroad policy in China. Be that as it may, two different viewpoints emerged over this agreement with China. The first position, which was advocated by those who favored a rapprochement with China as a means of checking Japanese power, called for Russia to sell their stake in the Chinese Eastern Railway back to the Chinese and concentrate on securing the rights to build the Kyakhta-Urga-Peking Railroad which would allow Russia to export is good directly to inland China. What’s more, this stance was also supported by the Russian merchants operating in Eastern Siberia who belonged to the Vladivostok Stock Exchange Commission. The second viewpoint, which was supported by Russian entrepreneurs operating out of Moscow and belonging to the Moscow Trade Commission, claimed that Russian rapprochement with China would in reality weaken its position in East Asia. This group claimed that should Russia in fact sell its rights to the Chinese Eastern Railway, there was a very real possibility that the railroad would end up in American or even Japanese hands. In addition, they argued, if Russia did in fact go ahead with its plans to build a new railway in northeastern China this would result in actually strengthening, from an economic standpoint, outside powers attempts to gain a foothold in
Chinese markets rather than facilitating Russia’s own access to these markets. These two positions were front and center during a special meeting convened to discuss Russia’s railroad policy. In the end, the suggestion that Russia construct the Kyakhta-Urga-Peking Railroad was shelved by the special commission on the grounds that such a move would in fact damage Russia’s interests in the region. The commission however decided to dispatch Kokotsov to Manchuria with the mandate of preparing the data needed to gauge the overall status of Russian railway policy. With this in mind, Kokotsov headed for East Asia in September 1909.

Russia’s railway policy in China caused relations with the U.S., England, and Japan, all of whom were worried about a potential marked increase in Russian influence in China, to take a turn for the worst. However, the U.S. was also well aware of the fact that this rising Russian influence could be used as a counter to Japan’s own ambitions. In the summer of 1909, an American special envoy to Russia reported back to his superiors in the State Department that there was now a real possibility of establishing an entente between Russia and the U.S., and that Russian public opinion of America had taken a definite turn for the better. In response to this report, the U.S. dispatched William Rockhill as the new ambassador to Russia and entrusted him with the task of initiating negotiations with the Russians about a possible agreement. On November 12, 1909 Izvolskii briefed his government on the progress of his negotiations with Rockhill. Izvolskii claimed that Rockhill had attempted on several occasions to persuade him of the obvious reasons why Russia should secure an entente with the American side namely, to maintain China’s independence and preserve the open door policy in Manchuria designed to counter Japanese expansionism. At the beginning of November, Rockhill submitted a more concrete set of proposals to Izvolskii. The main contents of this proposal revolved around the formation of an international syndicate led by American capital, and the establishment of Manchuria as a neutral trade zone through its purchase of the Manchurian Railway. Rockhill argued that the largest advantage of
this proposed agreement was that it would put a decisive end to Japan’s ambitions for control of Manchuria at the international level. Moreover, from a trade standpoint, the establishment of such neutralized trade networks in Manchuria could eventually be complemented with military agreements.\(^{38}\) In short, the U.S. proposal not only called for an agreement to counter Japanese expansionism in China, but also for the formation of a military alliance against Japan.

Izvolskii adopted a very careful approach towards Rockhill’s overtures. For the most part, this hesitancy was based on his skepticism regarding Japan’s willingness to sell its share in the Manchurian Railway to this proposed consortium. In addition, Japan, keenly aware of the growing improvement in Russo-American ties, began to take steps to assure that an agreement between the two sides was not reached. During the period in which Rockhill was engaging his Russian counterpart in negotiations, Japan began its own overtures to Russia by proposing to Kokotsov, who was by then in Manchuria, that Japan and Russia sign their own agreement that would call for the creation of two spheres of influence in China, one Japanese and one Russian. With this in mind, Japan dispatched Ito Hirobumi, who had been a supporter of Japanese rapprochement with Russia even before the outbreak of the Russo-Japanese War, to engage in negotiations with Kokotsov. However, Ito was assassinated in Harbin by An Chungkŭn before any such talks could take place. Having gotten wind of Rockhill’s proposal, the Japanese ambassador to Russia Motono Ichiro hurried to present Izvolskii with the Japanese proposal that Ito had been unable to deliver, a proposal which called for the forging of an alliance between Russia and Japan. Although Izvolskii agreed with the basic notion of upgrading relations with Japan to the alliance level, he introduced the following caveats: 1) Russia could never accept the Japanese annexation of Korea and 2) as the forging of such an alliance with Japan would in all likelihood result in a worsening of Chinese sentiment towards Russia, China should also be included in any negotiations between the two countries. Izvolskii’s demands were designed to maintain existing relations with China, and to restrain
Japanese expansionism on the Chinese Mainland by simultaneously pursuing Russo-Chinese and Russo-Japanese agreements. As such, Izvolskii found himself at a crossroads with regards to the future of Russia’s East Asia policy: He could pursue a policy of aligning with the western powers in order to establish Manchuria as a neutral zone designed to counter Japanese expansionism, or forge an alliance with Japan, which could in turn, be used to stop the U.S. and the European powers from gaining a foothold in Manchuria. Of course, Russia could also seek to establish a common front with the Chinese designed to counter Japan. However, Izvolskii was certain that the last option would lead to a new Russo-Japanese War in East Asia that would involve its military having to once again meet its foe on the battlefield. Moreover, Russia could not expect any support from the western powers in the case of such a war with Japan. Therefore, Izvolskii was of the mindset that the expansion of negotiations with Japan represented the best option for Russia at this juncture. The Tsar, while agreeing with Izvolskii, added the condition that Russia would nevertheless have to establish measures to counter the expansion of Japanese influence in China.

On November 28, 1909 a special meeting was convened to discuss the proposals put forward by Rockhill and Motono. Koktsov’s report which he filed upon his return from East Asia was also a hot button issue during this meeting. During this meeting both Kokotsov and Izvolskii came out in favor of closer ties with Japan while rejecting Rockhill’s proposal. Izvolskii based his decision on the following logic: while Russia could expect a certain frost in relations with the U.S. if it indeed refused to go along with Rockhill’s proposal, there was very little likelihood that Washington would go to war with Russia over this issue or dispatch troops to Harbin. Japan, however, was another story altogether. For his part, Kokotsov, who had been so surprised by the sorry state of Russian defenses in the Far East, also felt that under the circumstances, rapprochement with Japan was the only option for Russia. With the exception of the defense ministry, all of those participating in this meeting, while supporting Izvolskii’s plan that Russia go along with Japan’s China
policy, called for: 1) assurances that the Chinese Eastern Railway would come under the control of Russia; 2) a reconfirmation of the decision to abolish free trade ports in the Russian Far East; 3) the strengthening of Russian defenses in Vladivostok; and 4) avoiding of any conflict with Japan. As a result, this meeting provided Izvolskii with the support he needed for his position that in terms of Russia’s interests in East Asia were concerned, it was more important to cooperate with Japan than the U.S.  

However, the strong push for closer ties with the U.S. within Russian political circles at that time resulted in delaying the implementation of Izvolskii’s policy line. The U.S. was eager to prevent the forging of an alliance between Russia and Japan that would result in their carving up the East Asian market between them. On December 27, 1909 Secretary of State Philander Chase Knox sent out a diplomatic note to his Russian and Japanese counterparts which contained the same proposal as the one which Rockhill had presented to Izvolskii a month earlier; namely, that all of the railways which had already been built in Manchuria, or were going to be built, should either be brought under international control, put under the direct control of the Chinese government, or be placed in the hands of an international syndicate. While Rockhill and Knox’s proposals were in essence one and the same, the former had contained a certain air of secrecy about it while the latter represented an open proposal. As a result, the debate between the supporters and opponents of the American proposal soon found its way into the media.  

Those members of the press which supported the constitutional monarchy system demanded that the Russian government accept the U.S. proposal. Rech argued that the actions of individuals such as Evgenii Alexeev, Alexander Bezobrazov, and Aleksei Abaza proved that secret diplomacy was still prevalent within the Russian government. Furthermore, they argued that those involved in such secret diplomacy had in effect fallen into the clutches of Germany. Based on the following reasons, Rech called for the Russian government to accept the American proposal: 1) the American proposal was advantageous to Russia and
would cause greater damage to a Japan that was aggressively seeking to expand its influence in Manchuria; 2) as Japan could hardly be expected to accept the U.S. proposal, Russia’s acceptance of the U.S. overture would result in placing great pressure on Japan in terms of its China policy; 3) the neutralization of Manchuria would in fact create a buffer which would serve to restrain Japanese expansionism; and 4) As the competition for concessions in Manchuria between other European powers which have adopted an anti-Japanese line would be eased by Russia’s acceptance of the U.S. proposal, this would create conditions favorable to Russia’s establishment of stronger defenses in the Russian Far East.42

Meanwhile, the Moskovskie vedomosti, which exhibited ultra-nationalist tendencies and had supported a rapprochement with the U.S. as a precursor to the launching of a war of revenge on Japan, adopted a more negative stance towards Knox’s proposal. In an article published on December 31, 1909, the paper argued that under the current situation in which the spoils of war had already gone to Japan, Knox’s proposal would only result in causing further damage to Russia’s interests in Manchuria. Moreover, the paper argued that the U.S. also had a hidden agenda at stake, namely, making sure that Russia and Japan did not once again engage in military hostilities with one another. In the end, this proposal would not only result in Russia being obliged to establish closer ties with Japan, but in having to accept the latter’s annexation of Korea. As such, Russia should not under any circumstances abandon the Chinese Eastern Railway and furthermore, should not hesitate to annex northern Manchuria. This kind of assertion is important in that it reflects how the thinking of the Tsar’s inner circle and the military changed as the notion of a war of revenge on Japan lost support in the debate over which course Russian policy should take in East Asia43.

Moderate-conservative papers such as Golos moskovy and Novoe vremya also called for the American proposal to be refused. Their refusal was based on the logic that as so much work and effort had already gone into the securing of Russian interests in Manchuria these should, and
could not, be abandoned at any cost. In an article published in the *Golos moskovy* on December 31, 1909, the paper claimed that this American proposal would result in creating new problems for Russia in the Russian Far East at a time when Russia should be focused on preserving the balance of power for which they had paid an inordinately high price to obtain during the Portsmouth Treaty.⁴⁴

On December 30, 1909 a special meeting was convened to discuss the manner in which Russia should respond to the U.S. proposal for the neutralization of Manchurian railways. During this meeting, Izvolskii and Kokotsov came out firmly against the U.S. proposal. Soon after the Chairman of the Council of Ministers Stolypin’s consent for Izvolskii’s position was made public, news broke on January 8, 1910 that Russia had turned down the American proposal. This news was met with great opposition by liberal newspapers who were advocating a rapprochement with the U.S. On January 9, 1910 *Rech* claimed that the Russian government’s refusal to accept the U.S. proposal only ignored the underlying problem and did not resolve it in any way.⁴⁵ Therefore, the issue of which partner Russia should choose in implementing its East Asia policy, the U.S. or Japan, remained a topic of great debate. Those who supported a constitutional monarchy system, who were the main advocates of the forging of an anti-Japan coalition consisting of Russia, the U.S., and China, perceived the U.S. proposal, which they saw as the U.S. way of forcing Russia to choose between regarding Japan as a friend or an enemy while forging closer ties with China, as being in line with their own mindset. This group’s refusal to accept the links with Japan in East Asia that would unavoidably be created should the latter’s annexation of Korea be allowed to proceed, was based on the following factors: 1) while Russia was focused on maintaining the status quo in East Asia, Japan was actively seeking to expand its influence in the area; 2) the establishment of separate Japanese and Russian spheres of influence in China and the conflicts which this would cause with the U.S., European powers, and China was a very dangerous undertaking; 3) the conclusion of a basic agreement with the U.S. and the European powers was in fact
the optimal method of securing Russia’s defenses in East Asia; and 4) as Russia was the key to the success of the anti-Japan alliance which was taking shape amongst the Caucasian nations, should it choose to join this alliance, it could expect to actually expand its interests in East Asia rather than having to cede any of them.46

The ultra-nationalists were in unison with the liberals in their calls for the forging of an anti-Japan alliance, but their reason for doing so was different in two regards: 1) they viewed this war of revenge as not only representing a means of carrying out Russian expansionism, but also of strengthening the Tsarist system as a whole; 2) in general, while this group perceived a war with Japan as desirable, they were also of the mindset that Russia would be better off securing the support of Germany for this conflict rather than that of the U.S. or other European powers, and that as such, a military alliance should be signed with Germany at once. This group claimed that Germany had provided support for Russia during the Russo-Japanese War by dispatching troops to the Near East in order to preserve the status quo, despite the fact that no alliance structure was in place between the two nations. Thus, should such a formal agreement be reached with Germany, Russia could rest assured that Berlin would protect its rearguard in the case of the outbreak of a second Russo-Japanese War.47

For its part, the moderate faction in Russia argued that the key to this issue was not that of a choice between potential allies and clear-cut enemies, but rather the fact that Russia now found itself faced with an imminent threat and would soon face another if it did not resolve this problem adequately. This imminent danger which they identified was that of another war with Japan. Moreover, the rising revolutionary tide in not only East Asia, but in Europe as well, made it such that Russia should at all costs avoid the outbreak of such a war. N. Shteinfeld’d argued in a piece entitled ‘The Russian Question in Manchuria’ that it was obvious that Russia would once again come out on the losing end should a second conflagration with Japan break out; and that furthermore, should such a situation come to pass, a second Russian revolution could be expected. He
went on to stress that although the weakness of China made it necessary for Russia and Japan to jointly consolidate their interests in China, no such measures had been taken to bring this about. Furthermore, he claimed that the time had come for Russia to stop making concessions to China, and to seek out an alliance with Japan that would allow it to bring a great deal of pressure to bear on the Chinese government. What’s more, he argued, Russia should give serious consideration to the establishment of Russian and Japanese spheres of influence in Manchuria and Mongolia. In addition, I. Dobrovskii published a booklet entitled ‘Knox’s Proposal Regarding the Establishment of Neutralized Trade in Manchuria and Russia’s Response.’ In this booklet, Dobrovskii argued that the neutralization of Manchuria would in essence result in removing all Russian influence from that area. Moreover, he went on to claim that when China recovered her strength, the two nations would inevitably find themselves on a collision course with one another. Thus, Russian and Japanese interests in China were in essence one and the same. Under the current political situation there was a need for Russia to strengthen its relationship with Japan; moreover, once negotiations between the two countries got underway, Russia would have to assure that it secured exclusive rights in Mongolia.

These debates over the issue of the neutralization of Manchuria between the various Russian political factions reached their peak during the first half of 1910. During this period, the opposing factions faced off against one another over the issue of rapprochement with Japan on three different occasions. The first such case occurred on January 23-24, 1910 when a special meeting was convened to reassess Russia’s East Asian policy; a meeting which was attended by leading entrepreneurs, scholars, and politicians alike. The representatives from the moderate faction stressed that under the current circumstances, the U.S. fleet could not be expected to play the role of deterring Japanese expansionism, and that because of its weakness, China could also not be counted on to serve as a counter to Japanese power in East Asia. As such, they argued, as Russia could not by any means accept Knox’s proposal, the only option which is
open to it was to seek out a rapprochement with Japan. Meanwhile, the constitutional monarchists and liberals, who opposed any notion of a rapprochement with Japan, argued that as it would be impossible for Russia to emerge victorious in a war with Japan without a potent fleet, Russia should focus on forging an alliance with the main naval powers of the day, namely the U.S. and England, in order to mount an effective threat to Japan. These factions adhered to the position that although Russia did not support the U.S. calls for the neutralization of Manchuria, rapprochement with the U.S. and the securing of large-scale capital from America would prove to be crucial to any Russian efforts to curtail Japanese influence in East Asia. This kind of pro-American stance picked up more steam as a result of a speech which Milyukov made before the Duma on March 2, 1910. During this speech, Milyukov argued that Russian diplomacy was now at a crossroads: Russia could either select to pursue a rapprochement with Japan which would involved the creation of separate spheres of influence in China, or attempt to forge closer ties with the U.S., which supported the open door policy in China. The selection of the former option would result in putting Russia in unchartered waters and lead to difficulties at the international level. As it was obvious that no matter what choice Russia selects the current circumstances made it so that the tide would eventually turn in the U.S. favor, Russia could find itself hard-pressed to secure its interests should it in effect select the former option. The ‘current circumstances’ which were here being referred to was the growing power of the U.S. in the Pacific, a power which was anticipated to be greatly expanded as a result of the opening of the Panama canal. Moreover, if the nationalist movement proved victorious, China could be expected to reemerge as a strong power. What’s more, there was a very real possibility of growing tensions in the Anglo-Japanese alliance. All in all, Milyukov stressed, the situation pointed to a strong possibility that existing international treaties would be abrogated. Milyukov concluded that the above-mentioned circumstances made it so that Russian attempts to join hands with Japan against China would represent a wrong turn of the dice. He argued that Russia should
therefore be aware that cooperation with Japan would eventually put it at a disadvantage.51

The third such instance was a meeting of the Far East Committee convened in 1910 under the auspices of the Russian Institute of East Asian Studies. During this meeting, K.I. Drudzinin argued that he had pleaded with the Russian government since 1905 to speed up the construction of railways in East Asia and launch a war of revenge against Japan. However, he claimed that he was treated as nothing more than the offspring of the likes of Abaza and Bezobrazov, and told repeatedly that unlike them, he did not have the Tsar’s ear.52 Drudzinin also stressed that as the ultimate goal was the waging of a war against Japan, there was no logical reason for Russia to break off its ties with the U.S. The continuation of ties with Washington would allow Russia to do the following: 1) move the crux of its defenses to the Zabaikal area where the railway networks were slated to soon be completed; 2) forge an anti-Japanese alliance with the U.S. and England; 3) strengthen its relations with Germany and Austria by scaling back its activities in the Near East, thus securing its rearguard in Europe; and 4) as Russia would eventually have to be engaged in a war with a Japan that had by then overcome the economic difficulties occasioned by the Russo-Japanese War, and China, whose war capacity was perceived as being on the rise, such a conflict should be launched in a preemptive manner before these two countries attacked the Priamur area.53 Drudzinin’s opinions can be perceived as representing a clear example of the evolution of the Tsar’s inner circle and of the military, both of whom became increasingly pro-German in the aftermath of the battles of Mukden and Tsushima, in terms of their policy, which went from the simple advocating of a war of revenge against Japan to a more concrete East Asian policy. However, most of the participants in this meeting came out against Drudzinin’s proposal on the grounds that it was too unrealistic. M.P Federov, who presided over this meeting, came to the conclusion that while the strengthening of Russia’s ties with the U.S., England, France and China was very desirable, rapprochement with Germany could very well result in Russia becoming the pawn of Berlin.54
In addition, the fact that both Tokyo and St-Petersburg responded negatively to the U.S. proposal proved that the Tsarist government had already set its mind to establishing closer ties with Japan to counter U.S. influence. During the first half of 1910, the pro-government *Novoe vremya* began to publish articles demanding the conclusion of a treaty between Russia, Japan, England and China designed to counter the U.S. efforts to secure their own railroad concessions in Manchuria. Moreover, articles also began to appear during the same period which called on Russia to clarify its China policy, aggressively respond to U.S. attempts to pit it against Japan, and resolve all outstanding issues with Japan pertaining to Korea, a country in which few Russian interests were at stake, in order to avoid the forging of an anti-Russian alliance between Tokyo and Washington. As a result, in 1909 the Tsarist government reached the decision that it would abandon attempts to bring about the rapprochement with China designed to secure Russia’s interests as a third party in case a war broke out between Japan and the U.S., and pursue the establishment of separate spheres of influence in East Asia by strengthening relations with Japan.  

The U.S., which suddenly found itself in a less than envious position as a result of the simultaneous refusal of its proposal by both Russia and Japan, opted for a new course of action that involved securing railroad concessions directly from the Chinese government. In particular, the U.S. planned construction of a Aihun-Tsitsihar-Qingzhou railway was perceived as a potential challenge to the existing Chinese Eastern Railway. As the main focus of the Russian government at the beginning of 1910 became that of impeding this new U.S. plan, Russo-American relations naturally took a turn for the worse. On February 9, 1910 a special meeting was convened to discuss this new U.S. approach. During this meeting, the decision was made to try to obstruct the Chinese government’s attempts to grant the concessions for the proposed Aihun Railway to the U.S. Moreover, the Russian side would pressure the Chinese government to instead grant it the concession rights for a proposed Peking- Kalgan-Urga- Kyakhta railroad.
However, the policy adopted by the Chinese government was one of playing off the imperial powers against one another in order to advance its own interests. As part of this strategy, the Chinese decided to alleviate some of the pressure that was being placed on it by the Japanese and Russians by accepting the U.S. proposal. In a secret communication forwarded to Stolypin on February 20, 1910, Izvolskii claimed that the time had come for Russia to abandon its appeasement policy towards China in favor of a more confrontational approach. On March 1 of that same year, the Russian foreign ministry tabled a report entitled, ‘The Chinese Violation of Russian Treaty Rights’ that became the backbone of the new policy towards China. On the very next day, Izvolskii submitted a report to the Council of Ministers in which he laid out the fact that Russia’s policy towards China would now change from the existing appeasement policy, to one that was based on a more aggressive stance that would ensure that China abide by the concessions it had already made to Russia in Manchuria and neighboring Mongolia. To assure the success of this new policy, Izvolskii argued that it would be necessary to secure the support of Japan. In other words, it was in Russia’s best interests to establish close ties with Tokyo.

The ongoing changes in China were the impetus which led Izvolskii, who perceived the situation as having reached a critical point, to begin negotiations with Motono over a new Russo-Japanese agreement on the international front, while on the domestic front attempting to persuade the powers that be in Russia to alter the course of the nation’s East Asia policy. For their part, the Japanese side consistently demanded that Russia accept the annexation of Korea, while calling for the signing of a bilateral military alliance to defend the territory which both sides had already seized in East Asia. Should Russia agree to these terms, the Japanese side would in return recognize the preponderance of Russian interests in Mongolia. However, as the Russian side felt that the open acceptance of the Japanese annexation of Korea and the reaching of a military alliance with Japan might not be in Russia’s best interests, they countered with an offer that involved in essence the acceptance of the status quo ante. These
differing perceptions resulted in delaying the signing of a 2nd Russo-Japanese agreement for an additional two months. The Russian government instructed its ambassador in Japan Malevskii-Malevich to attempt to persuade influential Japanese politicians of the need for Japan to accept the Russian proposal. The reasoning behind this assertion went as follows: as Russia could not officially accept the annexation of Korea by Japan without harming its image in the international community, this issue could result in bogging down negotiations between the two countries endlessly. On May 6, 1910 Malevskii-Malevich sent a telegram to the Russian government in which he stated that the Japanese government had decided to proceed with the annexation of Korea nonetheless, and that this act would proceed very shortly. In the end, Russia decided to accept the Japanese conditions laid out above during a meeting of the Council of Ministers held a few days later.58 Later on the logic behind this decision was made public by Count Trubetskoi: Japan was then augmenting its military power in both Korea and Manchuria in preparation for their much desired war with Russia; and as such, Russia, which was ill-prepared for such an eventuality, had no choice but to acquiesce to Japan’s demands.59

As a result, a 2nd Russo-Japanese agreement was concluded on July 21, 1910 (August 4). The contents of this agreement exhibit certain unique diplomatic characteristics, in that, as Japan officially abandoned its demands for a formal alliance with Russia, all the agreement essentially stipulated was the continuation of the status quo which had held since 1907. Meanwhile, from the standpoint of Russia, this 2nd agreement can be seen as having involved a great deal of concessions to Japan. In the secret codicils of this agreement, in which the main tenets of this agreement were enumerated, a provision can be found that claimed that both parties would agree to in the future not oppose any side’s efforts to establish their special interests within their respective spheres of influence. In essence, this provision cleared the way for the Japanese annexation of Korea. In addition, Russia agreed to join forces with Japan in the case of an eventuality in which an outside power attempted to encroach on their
established rights within their respective spheres of influence. In exchange for these concessions, Japan agreed to recognize Russia’s preponderant rights in Mongolia.\(^{60}\) Therefore, this 2\(^{nd}\) agreement for Russia in essence boiled down to a swapping of Korea for Mongolia. Russia, which had despite its loss in the Russo-Japanese War continued to attempt to block Japanese expansionism into the Asian Mainland by supporting Korea’s independence, suddenly decided to abandon its last bastion in East Asia in exchange for securing the rights to Mongolia. However, this swap of Mongolia for Korea in essence marked the end of the Tsarist government’s policy of refusing to accept any form Japanese expansionism into East Asia, a policy which had been the backbone of Russia’s East Asia policy since its inception. Thus, the center of cooperation and conflict between the two countries, which had previously been situated in the Korean Straits, suddenly moved inland to the East Asian continent. In other words, the Russo-Japanese relationship in East Asia during the imperial era was transformed from being based on a sea-based competition to a new era of cooperation in Manchuria as a result of the 2\(^{nd}\) Russo-Japanese agreement.

**Conclusion**

The most significant influence of the Russo-Japanese War on Russian foreign policy was that of making it impossible for the Tsarist government to carry out an independent foreign policy any longer. The forging of various alliances amongst the imperial powers resulted in the Russian sphere of influence in East Asia being limited to Mongolia and Manchuria. While the diplomatic revolution based on pragmatism brought about by the newly appointed foreign minister Izvolskii made it possible for Russia to secure both its eastern and western borders, the Achilles heel of this diplomatic revolution was that Russia found herself having to abandon Korea and Germany in order to forge better ties with England and Japan.

The most important task for Russian diplomacy in the aftermath of the
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Russo-Japanese War was that of establishing a system that could guarantee the peace for a certain period of time. In this regards, while Stolypin believed that such a system should be able to assure the peace for at least 20-25 years, Izvolskii was of the mindset that 10 years would be sufficient. In order to achieve this task, Russia agreed to refrain from engaging in any aggressive behavior in Europe, do away with its hostile relationship with Japan in the Far East, and cooperate with the Austro-Hungarian Empire in the Balkans. The main crux of Russian diplomacy had long been that of forging closer ties with France based on an equal partnership, and maintaining an equal distance from England and Germany. However, France’s conclusion of an alliance with its former enemy England forced Russia to bring about changes to its overall policy that involved the forging of a new relationship with France and England. Izvolskii had become well aware during his tenure as ambassador to England of the role that London could play in helping Russia to resolve its problems in the Near East and Far East. However, the conservative forces in Russia were keenly against any kind of Russo-British rapprochement because they felt that such a denouement would speed up the pace of reforms in Russia and increase the calls for a constitutional monarchy, something which they opposed outright. These conservative forces argued that under these circumstances in which revolutionary fervor was rapidly gaining ground, Russia would be better off seeking closer ties with other monarchies such as Germany and the Austro-Hungarian Empire.

In the end, Izvolskii, with the support of Stolypin and Kokotsov, was able to emerge victorious in his confrontation with the pro-German forces and those which advocated a war of revenge against Japan, and by signing Russo-British and Russo-Japanese agreements in 1907, bring about a revolutionary change in the direction of Russian foreign policy. Izvolskii’s diplomatic revolution represented the first instance in Russian diplomatic history of negotiations being carried out at the global level. The main concepts of this diplomatic revolution were the establishment of separate spheres of influence and the exchange of concessions and territory
amongst imperial powers, two notions which first emerged at the end of the 19th century. Thus, Russia’s previous policy of pursuing the expansion of its influence in every sphere was suddenly altered. To this end, Izvolskii adhered to two basic notions. In terms of negotiations, he adopted a more pragmatic approach than what had been the case in the past when political tradition and ideological considerations were the main foundation on which such negotiations were carried out. Therefore, recognizing Russia’s weakened economic and military power in East Asia, Izvolskii acquiesced to the establishment of separate spheres of influence in the region as a means of preserving the interests which Russia had already secured rather than pursuing a more aggressive approach.

As Russia’s negotiations with Japan were also based on the logic of preserving the interests which it already possessed in the aftermath of the Russo-Japanese War, Izvolskii firmly objected to Japanese demands which he perceived would alter the agreement that had been reached at Portsmouth. Nevertheless, in order to maintain amicable relations with Japan, he was forced to make concessions in the economic sphere. Moreover, Izvolskii made clever use of the fact that the government in Tokyo was from a military and financial standpoint indebted to France and England to conclude an agreement with England before commencing any such negotiations with Japan. In addition, Izvolskii also played the U.S. card as a means of increasing his leverage in negotiations with Japan. As such, Izvolskii’s diplomatic revolution, which was based on the forging of a tripartite alliance and the holding of negotiations with Japan, contributed much to the establishment of an internal and external environment favorable to a massive overhaul of the Russian political system. Because of his establishment of amicable relations with Russia’s traditional enemy England and his successful securing of an alliance with Japan in East Asia, Izvolskii has come to be regarded as the architect of the reform of Russian diplomacy, and as the person who set the stage for the upgrading of Russo-Japanese and Russo-British ties to the alliance level in 1914.

However, Izvolskii’s foreign policy after the Russo-Japanese War
cannot be said to have been based on Russia’s long-term prospects as by focusing on the relations between the imperial powers at that time his diplomacy eventually resulted in limiting the range of Russia’s activities. This in turn resulted in limiting Russia’s freedom to act and worsening Russo-German ties. This situation meant that the structure which made it possible for Germany to launch a war at any time was strengthened, and made it impossible for Russia to stay out of WWI. Therefore, although Izvolskii’s diplomatic revolution established the basis for the establishment of a more stable Russian foreign policy, its role in the outbreak of WWI and the eventual annexation of Korea by Japan should not be overlooked.

Notes:

1 РГИА. Ф. 1276. Оп. 2. Д. 471. Л. 10-11.
2 Витте С.Ю. Воспоминания. Т. 1. С.183.
4 Там же.
6 Там же. С.338-340.
9 The articles written by Yanchevetskii were published together as a book in 1908. Янчевецкий Д. Гроза с Востока, Ревель. 1908. С.1,58,218.
10 Речь, 21 сентября 1906 г.
11 Русская мысль, 1907.№ 1, С. 205.
12 Россий ский государственный военно-исторический архив(이하 РГВИА로 약함) Ф. 830. Д.72. Л.70-75.
13 РГВИА. Ф.830. Д.99. Л.3-5.
14 Московские ведомости, 10 декабря 1906 г.
16 Российский государственный исторический архив (РГИА). Ф. 1276. Оп. 2. Д.485. Л. 1.
17 Новое время, 16 апреля 1907 г.
19 Зайончковский А.М. Подготовка мировой войны в международном отношении. Л., 1926. С. 137-138.
20 Романов Б.А. Россия в Маньчжурии (1892-1906) Очерки по истории внешней политики самодержавия в эпоху империализма. Л., С. 555-561.
21 Суворин А.С. Дневник. М.-Пг., 1923. С. 376.
22 РГАВМФ. Ф.418. Оп.2. Д.292. Л.1-2. Секретное письмо Приамурского генерал-губернатора И.М. Дикову 24 марта 1908.
23 Московские ведомости, 13 сентября 1907 г.
25 Новое время. 29 декабря 1907 г.
26 Новое время. 20 марта 1908 г.
27 РГИА. Ф. 1276. Оп. 4. Д.630. Л.336-340.
28 Слово. 20 марта 1908 г.
29 Романов Б.А. Россия в Маньчжурии (1892-1906) Очерки по истории внешней политики самодержавия в эпоху империализма. Л., С. 561-568.
30 Россия. 20 ноября 1907 г.
31 Новое время. 7 и 21 ноября 1907 г.
33 Московский еженедельник, 1909, № 37, С. 14.
34 Новое время, 8 и 10 января 1909 г.
35 Новое время, 14 июня 1909 г.
36 РГИА. Ф. 1276. Оп. 5. Д. 605. Л. 1.
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37 РГИА. Ф. 1276. Оп. 5. Д. 610. Л. 63-65.
38 Романов Б.А. Россия в Маньчжурии(1892-1906) Очерки по истории внешней политики самодержавия в эпоху империализма. Л., С. 566-567.
39 РГИА. Ф. 1276. Оп. 5. Д. 610. Л. 1-5. The Tsar responded to Izvolskii’s report in the following manner, “It has become clear to me what the best option for Russia is. It is to establish close cooperative relations with Japan.”
40 Аварин В. Империализм в Маньчжурии. Т. 1-2. М.-Л., 1931-1934. С. 123.
41 Бестужев И.В. Борьба в России по вопросам внешней политики 1906-1910. М. 1961. С.367
42 Речь. 3 и! 6 января 1910 г.
43 Московские ведомости. 31 декабря 1909 г.; 8 января 1910 г.
44 Голос Москвы. 12 января 1910 г.
45 Речь. 9 января 1910 г.
47 Земщина. 8 марта и 16 апреля 1910 г.
48 Штейнфельд Н. Русское дело в Маньчжурии с в. до наших дней . Харбин. 1910. С. 158, 161, 166.
49 Добровский И. Предложение статс-секретаря Нокса о торговое в Маньчжурии и русское контрпротив. СПб., 1910. С. 3, 13-14.
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52 Дружинин К.И. Наша современная политико-стратегия на Дальнем Востоке. СПб. 1910. С.14-16
53 Дружинин К.И. Наша современная политико-стратегия на Дальнем Востоке. СПб. 1910. С.17-20, 57-63, 66-68.
54 Там же.
56 РГИА. Ф.1276. Оп. 5. Д. 610. Л. 77-88.
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59 Русская мысль. 1910. № 11. С. 173.
60 Гримм Э.Д. Сборник договоров и других документов по истории международных отношений на Дальнем Востоке. М., 1927. С. 176-177.