

Translator's Explanatory Note: This is a Chinese historian's analysis of the lessons that should be derived from the First Sino-Japanese War (1894-1895). It argues that (1) China's decline and misery in the late 19th and early 20th centuries were largely caused by China's failure to rely decisively on military solutions to China's national security problems; (2) China up to the 1890s held legitimate "suzerainty rights" over Korea, unfortunately squandered by a naïve Qing government averse to direct military confrontation against Japan at a time when it harbored territorial ambition for Korea; and (3) China should now do what Japan did in the late 19th century: massively build up its military and not fear resorting to military means to guarantee China's national security.

National Defense Through Peace Vs. Rise Through Military Means---A Comparative Study Of Chinese And Japanese National Security Strategies During The First Sino-Japanese War (1894-1895)

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It has been one hundred and ten years since the First Sino-Japanese War ended. But we still continue to commemorate the war and memorialize the dead. It has been one hundred and ten years since the start of the study, arguments, and reflection on the war, with countless volumes of monographs, books, and articles devoted to this subject. But we still continue to study, argue and reflect about it. As long as the world continues to change and evolve, history will never stop being worthwhile to be re-evaluated. In the one hundred and ten years since the war, our world has witnessed tremendous changes. Even in the last ten years, since the centennial of the war, the international environment of the world and East Asia has had remarkable changes. The rise of China will most fundamentally change the patterns of the world and East Asia. Once again, East Asia is encountering another critical moment when the balance of power among major nations in the region is changing drastically. And once again, Korea has become the focal point during this fundamental shift of power balance. Inevitably, this situation reminds us of the war over one hundred and ten years ago, the war that was waged by China and Japan over the issue of Korea.

A nation lost a war and was forced to give away its territories, pay indemnity, or even to be occupied. But this is not just because of the loss of a war. In essence, it is the defeat of the security strategy the nation had adopted before the war started, the security strategy that was supposed to meet the need for the nation's basic survival.

After the 1870s, crises along China's frontiers became more and more serious. In 1864, when an anti-Qing armed uprising took place in Xinjiang, Czarist Russia took advantage of the situation and invaded Xinjiang. In 1874, Japan invaded Taiwan in the name of settling the Ryuku residents issue. The Qing government accepted the mediation brokered by Britain, but the U.S. and France took side with the Japanese. As a result, the Qing court was forced to sign with Japan the "Special Treaty on Taiwan Affairs," which obligated China to pay Japan an indemnity of five hundred thousand taels of silver and recognize Ryuku as part of Japanese territory. This incident would have a far-reaching impact on the Sino-Japanese relationship because it revealed to the Japanese government that the Qing government was averse to war and favorable to peace. In 1876, China and Britain signed the "Agreement of Yantai" to settle the Margary Incident. In 1890 and 1893, the Qing court signed, with Britain, the "Tibet-India Treaty" and the "Tibet-India Treaty Amendment," respectively. In this series of historical incidents, the Qing government

demonstrated a policy tendency that could only be characterized as avoiding confrontations with the powers in order to preserve peace.

During this period, after confronting the powers in several wars, the Qing government lost its resolve and courage to directly confront them. After the suppression of the Taiping Rebellion, the Qing court hoped to preserve peace at any cost in order to win some time for promoting industry and creating a self-strengthening movement. After the 1874 Japanese invasion of Taiwan, Li Hongzhang, the de facto prime minister of China, brought out the governing principle of “openly promoting peace, secretly preparing for war.” He believed that before China was militarily strong enough, “we must seek peace as the most important task.” As the leader of the Self-Strengthening Movement, Li Hongzhang implemented such a policy, which was undoubtedly the official foreign policy of the Qing government.

In comparison, after the Meiji Restoration, the Japanese carried out a policy of “Arming the Nation,” with the objective of overseas expansion, placing military development at the top of their agendas, further pushing for the general goal of a national “rise through military means” targeted directly at invading the Asia mainland.

Japan had had a long tradition of favoring the military, and its invasion plan in the Asian mainland also had its long history. Soon after he roughly unified Japan, Toyotomi Hideyoshi (1536-1598) launched two invasions against Korea, in 1592 and 1597 respectively.

Fukuzawa Yukichi, an important thinker during the Meiji era who was renowned for his efforts to modernize Japan, started, from very early on, to promote the idea that “war is the right and means to strengthen an independent nation.” He advocated for Japan’s “devotion to armed preparation, an expansion of the nation’s power, and an active role in thinking far ahead.” Fukuzawa elaborated that “if China really could not become self-reliant and should fall into the hands of foreigners, we the Japanese would have no reason to stand idle and do nothing. Our only solution would be to rise up and take over China.”

In early 1869, Kido Takayoshi, an important figure in the inner circle of the Meiji government, in order to shift domestic discontent, vigorously called for a “struggle to take Korea” so that “the Imperial state’s grand strategy could be formulated,” which in the meantime could also become “a great opportunity to expand the glory of our Imperial State.”

In November 1878, Japan set up its General Staff, which was directly responsible to the Emperor, with the specific charge of preparing for wars. After the establishment of the General Staff, it immediately embarked on a mission that put China as Japan’s primary imaginary nemesis. In the Fall of 1879, the General Staff sent more than ten generals and colonels to China to investigate China’s military system, war readiness and topography, to prepare for a war with China later. In 1887, the director of the Second Bureau of the General Staff, after a long, secret investigation inside China, drafted the famous “General Plan for a Military Expedition into the Qing State.” This document is an important piece of historical evidence that shows the military’s thinking during the Meiji period. It also demonstrates that even seven or eight years before the First Sino-Japanese War, Japan had already formulated secret and detailed plans for a large scale invasion of China. In 1887, Japan’s Commerce and Agriculture Minister Tani Tateki, after returning from a recent trip to Europe, sent a memorandum to the Japanese emperor in which he elaborated on what Japan’s national strategy should be in the near future, i.e., “(Japan should) abandon all the past policies and principles, be free from any thinking of dependency on others, be diligent on domestic affairs, and strengthen our military, so that we can plan for our nation’s security, receive

respect and trust abroad, increase our nation's glory and never stain our nation's good name. If so, we can increase our people's confidence, unify the nation for self-defense, and wait for trouble to come in Europe, which is bound to happen. Even though turmoil in Europe will be far away from us, it will inevitably affect Japan nevertheless, because such a big turmoil in Europe will undoubtedly shake various countries in the East. Therefore, as far as Europe is concerned, although we will not be directly involved, we can take advantage of such a European turmoil, and become the master of the East in one big leap." "When that time comes, if we have twenty powerful warships and one hundred thousand elite troops, we can conquer East Asia, with a strong and powerful show of force to the Western powers. By that time, should war break out between Britain and Russia, Russia will come to Japan for an alliance to fight Britain; conversely, Britain could come to us for an alliance to defeat Russia. Should war break out between China and France, our nation's relationship with Britain and Russia will be the same as described above... Therefore, our nation can obviously take advantage of such an opportunity and achieve the critical role in the East, so that the Western powers will have to respect and fear us. Our nation can use the same method to become an equal to other European powers." History has proved that Tani Tateki's ideas would have profound impact, as "they were realized in real developments in a stunningly accurate fashion in the early 20th century and in the World War I years between 1914 and 1918." Tani Tateki's elaborations as contained in this paragraph can be viewed as an epitome of Japan's national security and development strategy during this period of time.

In sum, after the 1870s, China faced a threatening security environment along its borders and a corrupt and weak domestic condition. As a result, China dreamed of "self-strengthening" through industry. Consequently, China carried out a grand strategy of "national defense through peace." In the meantime in Japan, due to its traditional worship of the military way of life, its heritage of aggression, and the robust promotion and stimulation of economic and military development during the Meiji Restoration, a clearly defined grand strategy of "Rise through Military Means" was formulated. The objectives of the two countries' grand strategies cannot be called vague, but whether these objectives are rational and practical was highly questionable. Furthermore, in the two cases, the degrees to which the specific steps to implement these strategies were clearly spelled out, clearly defined and resolutely emphasized were vastly different, which would be key to deciding whether these objectives could be achieved.

The Korean Peninsula sticks out into the ocean from the mainland, sandwiched between China and Japan, with similarly close relationships with both China and Japan. It is the only area in the eastern portion of the Euro-Asian landmass that is not any big country's territory. It is also geographically close to the fertile plains in China's Northeast and Chihli [Zhidi] province. It is truly a bridge connecting the mainland and the ocean. This has made the Korean Peninsula the most coveted place to have for any force that comes from the ocean and harbors ambition for the Asian landmass. In a way, the Korean Peninsula is the dividing line between land power and sea power. As a result, the confrontation between China and Japan in fundamental national interests, or to be precise, national security interests, manifests itself in the two countries' conflict over the Korea issue. How to treat the Korea issue, in essence, reflects the different orientations of the two countries' national security strategies.

After the 1880s, international situations in East Asia became increasingly complicated. Britain and Russia had reached a stalemate in their competition for power and influence in the Far East. France had an inadequate strength to further penetrate northward after the Sino-Franco war. In light of the ongoing tense stalemate in Europe between France and Germany, France showed a relatively cautious stance in the Far East, in comparison with Britain and Russia. The United States had not yet obtained any foothold in the Far East, therefore it had been more or less active

in supporting Japan's efforts to revise treaties with various Western powers, and hoped to open up doors to the Far East through Japan. In 1885, Britain took Korea's Juwen Island, effectively checking Russia's efforts to move southward.

The occupation of Juwen Island by the British demonstrates the tense relationship among various powers in the Far East. Imperialist countries were willing to maintain the status quo when they were not ready for carving up spheres of influence. The Korean Peninsula at this time became a power vacuum during this standoff among various powers. Under this circumstance, the powers were willing to recognize Korea's tributary relationship with China, hoping to control Korea through controlling China. Britain even encouraged China to annex Korea. In terms of international law, the tributary relationship Korea had with China was recognized as legal—the legality of which was more pronounced than a colonial relationship. But the Qing government at the time failed to give sufficient importance to Korea, and was only satisfied with the traditional relationship with Korea defined as tributary in nature. The Qing government was further afraid of getting involved with confrontations with the Western powers. This situation led to Korea becoming a complete power vacuum, providing Japan an opportunity to strike. After Japan figured out the possible fallouts, it boldly expanded its influence into Korea, playing off Korea and China against each other in their tributary relationship, in a hope to ultimately control Korea by first encouraging the Koreans to become independent.

In 1866, nine French missionary priests were executed in Korea. The French minister sent a note to China's foreign minister hinting that China should annex Korea. But the French never received any reply from the Chinese.

In the subsequent expeditions to Korea by the powers, the Qing government not once invoked China's suzerainty right over Korea. By that time, China had not learned lessons on Taiwan. China's ministers were afraid of bearing any responsibility. In May 1871, American ships, carrying the American minister to China, Frederick Ferdinand Low, and his staff, reached the Korean island Jianghua. An American survey ship was shelled by the Koreans. In the subsequent exchange of documents was a copy of an official memo from the king of Korea to Beijing requesting the suzerainty, China, to help him solve the problem.

In 1875, a Japanese warship rushed into a Korean territorial river without permission and was met with a justified defensive round of shelling from the Koreans. The Japanese believed this was an excellent opportunity for them to implement their plan to conquer Korea. To avoid China's interference, Japan decided to first send Mori Arinori as special envoy to China for discussion of this affair, with the objective of finding out China's attitude on this. Prince YiXin told Mori Arinori that although Korea was China's tributary state, it had full right to enact all of its policies on politics and religion and that China never cared to intervene. After knowing China would certainly stay out of it, just as it did in the 1873 affair, Japan on February 26 1876 imposed a treaty upon the hapless Koreans, a treaty that went so far as to state that Korea was an "independent state, with equal rights as Japan enjoys."

The Japanese historian Ariga Nagao says that "the 1876 treaty was the first open announcement of Japan's policy toward Korea." The American historian Henry Morse also comments that this treaty was in essence Japan's first step towards expansion on the mainland.

By this time, Li Hongzhang had sensed Japan's ulterior motive towards Korea. But his policy towards this affair was "to use foreigners to stop foreigners." In 1879 Li advised a senior Korean official that "the current policy seems to be to use venom to cure venom. The only solution to stop Japan's conspiracy is to sign treaties with various Western powers."

Yet before 1882, China had decisive advantages inside and outside of Korea. Internationally, the tense standoff between Britain and Russia forced the two countries to see a strengthened relationship between China and Korea. Inside Korea, the rulers had always been reliant on China to give support to the regime; and the Koreans were even more anti-Japanese in their popular sentiment. Japan's insatiable exploitation of Korea even led to a military mutiny.

However, Li Hongzhang's "To use foreigners to stop foreigners" tactic had the opposite effect during the specific operations.

In early 1882, Robert W. Shufeldt hoped to reach a treaty with Korea via Li Hongzhang. Li, in turn, hoped to use this American-Korean treaty to check Japan's influence inside Korea. Li Hongzhang requested that a clause in the proposed treaty be added, which would state that Korea is part of Chinese territory. The Americans rejected his request, but both sides agreed to mention such proposed clause in other official correspondence. As a result, the American-Korean treaty not only failed to check Japanese influence in Korea, but also in essence recognized the legality of the 1876 Korea-Japan Friendship Treaty, which is to say that China recognized Japan's insistence that Korea have the same equal rights that Japan enjoyed, which was proposed by Japan six years before. Morse believes that the Shufeldt's Treaty of Peace, Amity, Commerce and Navigation became a step to bring down the Chinese empire.

After the signing of the American-Korean treaty, Korea went on to sign treaties in the subsequent years with Britain, Germany, Italy, Russia and France. After the 1882 mutiny, Japan gained the right to station troops in Seoul. The year 1882 was the turning point in the Sino-Japanese struggle to grab influence in Korea. Since then, Korea gradually moved away from China, placed in the tumultuous sea of conspiracy, with a status of isolation, not of independence.

Starting from 1882, China became more active in the affairs of Korea. In September 1882, Li Hongzhang issued several trade regulations related to Korea. In these regulations, Korea was regarded as a tributary state of China. In 1884, Li sent his trusted envoy, General Yuan Shikai, to Seoul in an effort to strengthen control over Korea. But it was too late. By that time, only China and Japan were left in Korea to play significant roles, and Japan had already made up its mind to keep Korea under its sole control. Thus, China and Japan walked into an inevitable and irreversible showdown.

Japan had always regarded Korea as an unavoidable path to overseas expansion. Since the Meiji Restoration, the advocacy for conquering Korea had gained momentum. A spokesman for such advocacy was one of the key figures of the Meiji Restoration, Kido Takayoshi. He believed that "the events in Korea are the places where our imperial state establishes our national polity and promotes our domestic policies. My humble opinion is that if we would like to see glory in the East, we should start with Korea." This advocacy for conquering Korea also caused controversy inside Japan. The opposition argued that Japan was still in a state of transition, with feeble financial strength, unstable international status, which would make Japan unable to wage a war. They also pointed out that among all the powers, Russia was the one to avoid any confrontation with first, because Russia's intention to drive southward had been known worldwide; that, therefore, a conflict between Japan and Korea would give Russia an opportunity to take advantage of; that Britain was also a strong power, from whom Japan had borrowed a lot of money; and that if Japan could not pay back the debt to Britain because of the war in Korea, then Britain would surely use this as an excuse to interfere with Japan's internal affairs, thus making Japan another India. This argument inside Japan went on for ten years. Finally the Emperor stepped in to decide. "The Emperor was for peace, thus postponing the war for twenty years."

Since Japan forced Korea to sign the 1876 treaty, Japan stepped up its efforts to penetrate Korea's political, economic and military affairs. On economic grounds, Japan increased its exploitation of Korea, with large imports of agricultural products from Korea and large exports of manufactured goods to Korea. Before the treaty was signed, the annual trade volume between Korea and Japan was \$123,717 (Mexican dollars) in 1875; after the treaty, it skyrocketed to \$3,627,394 (Mexican dollars) in 1881, with a trade deficit of \$62,080 (Mexican dollars). Within a short time of six years, trade volume increased 30 times. Large amounts of Korean grains were shipped to Japan, causing a food shortage in Korea. Several years after, Ito Hirobumi, when referring to the bilateral trade during this period, stated, "Japan's dealings with Korea were motivated by economics. That is to say, our policy does not require to have any legal right over Korea, but only to use Korea as a supply base to support Japan's increasingly growing population and to offset the shortage of Japan's rice production. In addition, we also want to use Korea as the closest and most convenient place for the Japanese to find job opportunities." On military ground, Japan encouraged the Korean government to emulate Japan in modernizing its military system, and provided free weapons equipment to the Koreans to build up a new armed force. In 1881, with Japanese support, the Koreans established a "Special Skills Army," which would play an important role in a mutiny and a coup years later that were both engineered by the Japanese from behind. On cultural grounds, in the pretext of helping Korea modernize its culture, Japan suggested that the Korean government send two classes of students to be selected from the aristocrats to Japan to study. The goal was to train pro-Japan elements in Korea and to organize a pro-Japan political party. In 1884, the pro-Japanese party staged a coup, which was instigated by the Japanese. On diplomatic grounds, Japan strived to weaken Korea's tributary relationship with China by letting Korea sign treaties with various countries.

In comparing China and Japan's policies towards Korea, we can see the huge differences in the awareness and implementations of national security strategies between the two countries. Japan's policies toward Korea were clearly defined, goal-oriented, and resolutely implemented. As such, step by step, Japan put Korea under its control. In contrast, although the Qing government had a clearly defined strategic objective of defending China through peace, Li Hongzhang lacked a clear, overall understanding of the security condition along China's borders, thus rendering him unable to formulate a clear strategy for China's security along its borders and unable to timely realize the importance of Korea in China's national security. This led to a series of mistakes made by China with regards to the affairs in Korea. If Li Hongzhang were able to see through the ulterior motives of the imperialists, the tense relationships among the Western powers such as Britain and Russia, and if he could develop an overall strategy on the Sino-Russian dispute over Yili, the Sino-British dispute over Tibet, the British-Burmese war, the Sino-Franco war, and other crises, and follow that overall strategy to take actions without stopping, China would have been awarded a better solution than what actually transpired in history.

War and peace is a contradiction that both opposes and unites each other. The objective of a just war is to defend peace, and peace must be supported by military force. The history of the First Sino-Japanese war has proven that defending China through peace requires not only strong military support, but also a clearly understood bottom line and resolve with which to use such a military force. Only when we do this can we deter our enemy from waging wars. History has also told us that a nation's rise through military means may bring temporary victories, but a blind worship of military development will ultimately end in self-destruction.

As time went by day by day, the Sino-Japanese relationship became tenser over the Korean issue, gradually leading the two countries to war. War means death, instability, and devastation. This

was the important issue to be taken into consideration by two countries which were both trying to rise as modern nations.

Once strategic objectives are set, one must take unambiguous steps to reach the goals. Yet the Qing government became indecisive in making a choice between defense through military means and defense through peace, which led to the double mistakes in war preparation and diplomacy. This was the fundamental reason for China's defeat.

After the intensification of Sino-Japanese relations, the primary objective of the Qing government was to seek a peaceful settlement and to avoid war. The major argument for such a strategy was that the fledgling "Self-Strengthening Movement" had not yet been completed. The immediate rationale was that the year 1894 was the 60th birthday of Empress Dowager. The Qing government tried to achieve a peaceful settlement through three approaches.

The first approach was a voluntary withdrawal of troops. This was the main consideration of the doves within the Qing court. In 1894, the Qing government, at the request of the Koreans, sent troops to Korea to help the Korean government pacify the country. The Chinese government notified the Japanese government, according to the 1885 Tianjin Convention Special Clauses. When the Chinese troops entered Korea, the rebels in Korea had already signed a truce with the Korean government. As a result, the Qing troops did not engage in any battles. They simply stayed in the barracks in Yashan. In the meantime, Japan set up a military command headquarters on June 5, dispatched 4,000 troops into Korea, and seized the key points near Seoul. The Japanese navy had eight warships near the Korean coastline. Clearly, Japan was preparing for a major showdown.

Yet the calm situation in Seoul, and the fact that the Qing troops stayed put in the barracks, made the Japanese ambassador Otari Keisuke feel embarrassed. According to the account of Sugimura Fukashi, the acting Japanese minister to Seoul, "the overall situation in Seoul is very calm, which does not require many garrison troops. Not only this, even the first 4000 naval troops who had entered Korea earlier have caused big stir, making the Korean government uncomfortable, with shocks and complaints coming from the diplomatic corps of various nations. This development forced Minister Otari Keisuke to slightly change his original idea."

Large troop deployments by the Japanese in Korea made the Koreans nervous. The Korean King cautiously confided to General Yuan Shikai that "if the Celestial troops (of the Qing) withdraw from Korea, the dwarf troops (of Japan) will automatically withdraw." Yet General Yuan only saw the cowardly side of the King and failed to sense the good opportunity the King's feebleness had given to China.

When Japan was in an embarrassing situation in which they felt they had sent over to Korea many troops for no valid reason, thus putting Japan in a diplomatic dilemma, China could have won the upper hand on the diplomatic front at this point if China had voluntarily withdrawn its troops from Korea, or withdrawn the troops at the request of the Koreans. This would have rendered invalid Japan's plan to seek an excuse to fight with the Qing troops. If that happened, under the specific international circumstance, Japanese troops would not have had any reasons to continue staying in Korea, let alone to attack Chinese territory without any obvious grounds.

To change this diplomatic dilemma, the Japanese government decided to let Otari Keisuke talk with General Yuan Shikai about a plan of mutual withdrawal from Korea. This, in fact, was a deceptive ploy, aimed at dragging the Qing troops in Korea to stay in Korea for a foreseeable period of time, so that the Japanese could continue to have excuses to stay in Korea and then seek

the opportunity to battle with the Qing troops. Yet Li Hongzhang and Yuan Shikai were bamboozled by Japan's deception, dreaming of a mutual withdrawal that was expected to give China advantages over the Korean problem, while in reality, China was dragged into a confrontation with Japan.

Li Hongzhang was very optimistic about the peace talk with Japan, without any due alertness of Japan's aggressive ambitions. He not only stopped reinforcements from moving into Korea, but also ordered Ye Zhichao to "get ready and set a date to return to China." However, Japan promptly stopped the negotiation and refused to withdraw its troops. Under this circumstance, Li Hongzhang was forced to use international pressure to force Japan to an agreement.

Secondly, China begged Russia for intervention. Although Russia had territorial ambitions over Korea, the timing was not ripe yet for Russia to take action in the Far East. Russia's Siberian Railway was still under construction and its troop strength in the Far East was inadequate. Russia's minister to Tokyo believed that "Obviously the British were waiting for their opportunity; the moment Russia takes side with China, the British might well stand with Japan on this issue." After careful consideration, Russia decided "not to get involved in the Korean reforms, because behind the Chinese proposal, there is a hidden desire to get us involved in the Korean imbroglio and get help from us."

Thirdly, China begged Britain for intervention. Although Britain was very interested in the Far East situation, it paid more attention to Japan's role in dealing with Russia. While Li Hongzhang was seeking British intervention, the British were separately talking with the Japanese on treaty revisions. At the time, the British government was willing to reach a settlement with Japan, and hoped to use Japan to deal with Russia. In the meantime, Japan was afraid that the British might ally with the Chinese to make it impossible for Japan to realize its plan to invade China and Korea. On July 13 1894, Matsu Munemitsu issued to China a harshly worded "Second Note to Sever Diplomatic Relation," one day after he learned that the British would sign the new treaty with Japan.

The British Minister to China, Sir Nicholas Roderick O'Connor, played an interesting role in his mediation between China and Japan. On the one hand, he wanted China to make concessions to satisfy Japan's desires; on the other hand, he was worried about the subsequent chaos in Korea, thus giving Russia an opportunity to intervene. So O'Connor had the idea of a joint-protection of Korea by China and Japan. This latter idea led to the British proposal for a divided rule of Korea with a demarcation line in the middle. But China's de facto foreign ministry was unwilling to yield to the Japanese, which upset O'Connor. He angrily pointed out to a Chinese official in the court that, "if this is the case and your court is not willing to negotiate, my efforts have gone wasted."

When Li Hongzhang was still intoxicated with mediation by the powers, the Japanese naval attack on the Chinese fleet in the Toyoshima sea area had started. The Qing government was then forced to defend the nation's peace through military forces.

"Diplomacy has bitterly deceived China. Because of blind trust in mediation, the Chinese did not send troops into Korea, and were taken advantage of by the Japanese," thus opined Sir Robert Hart, who was intimately familiar with the inside stories of the mediation efforts by the powers during the First Sino-Japanese war. From the very beginning, the Qing government's use of military forces was in a disadvantageous position.

As early as June 18, General Yuan Shikai urged Li Hongzhang to take immediate actions to get ready for war, "it seems that we should deploy southern and northern fleets to come here immediately just in case, followed by gradual reinforcement of land troops." In the meantime, Ye Zhizhao sent urgent cables from Korea, "the Japanese are densely deploying troops in the Seoul-Inchon area, please instruct as to how we should respond." At the time, Li Hongzhang was still hoping for mediation by the powers. As a result, Li did not pay sufficient attention to Yuan and Ye's urgent messages from Korea, and only sent three war ships to Inchon to beef up the morale."

On June 25, one month before the outbreak of the naval battle at the Toyoshima, the Chinese Emperor Guangxu ordered Li Hongzhang to take actions for war preparation, "at present the Japanese have sent many troops to Korea, and the situation is urgent. A decision has been made that you are thus authorized to reverse the situation. In light of the current emergency situation, you, Li Hongzhang, a person familiar with Japan and Korea, carries grave responsibility. You are instructed to come up with proper responses to the situation and report to the Court at once." Yet Li Hongzhang was reluctant to respond to the Emperor's urging for a responsive strategy. On the contrary, to beef up his blind optimism, Li cabled back several times that "Russia and its emissary to Japan are telling the Japanese to jointly preserve peace in the East;" that "Russian Czar cabled the Japanese to demand a withdrawal from Korea, and if Japan refuses, Russia has other means," etc. Precisely because of Li's unwarranted trust in the words of the Russian Charge de Affairs Alexander Ivanovich Pavloff, that "(he) has requested that the Russian government send troops to repel the Japanese from Korea," Li stopped the reinforced Chinese naval ships from sailing out to the battle area, thus causing the naval defeat at the Toyoshima battle.

There have been many analyses on the lax war readiness of the Qing government before the First Sino-Japanese War. Therefore there is no need to repeat those analyses here.

Let us now take a look at Japan's war preparations. From 1883, Japan's military spending had been drastically increasing. By 1890, military spending accounted for 30% of the total government budget. In 1892, 34 million yen out of a total budget of 84 million yen went to military spending. Japan's naval budget was even more alarming. Compared with 1881, Japan's army budget increased by 40% in 1887, but the naval budget increased by 200% during the same period. From 1885, Japan embarked on a ten year plan of military buildup. In 1887, Japan's General Staff drafted the "Plan to Invade the Qing Nation," which contemplated attacks in Beijing, occupations in the Yangtze River area, annexation of the Eastern Liaoning Peninsula, Taiwan, the Pescadores, etc, and in the meantime divided other parts of China into small countries such as Northeast, North China, Jiangnan, Qing Hai and Tibet, Mongolia, Gansu and Zunghar, which would be all under the control of Japan. This plan also stipulates that "during a period of five years, we should get ready," and that the Imperial Army set up a "Committee to Prepare Logistics for Expedition Force" in April 1893. The deputy chairman of the General Staff, Kawakami Misaoroku disguised himself as a tourist to organize an espionage network and conduct field surveys all over the place. By 1894, all that Japan needed was a pretext to wage war.

To conclude, efforts aiming at a national defense through peace ultimately failed to avert the inevitable war that the Qing government had tried strenuously to avoid. The consequence of these efforts was inadequacy in war preparation, which gave the Japanese advantages at the beginning of the war. The Japanese, on the contrary, were confident that they would win. On the surface, they expressed gratitude to the mediation efforts by various countries, while in reality they paid no attention to any country's mediation and decided to settle the issue through decisive military confrontations. We can also say that China's indecisiveness in formulating security strategy not only failed to avoid war but actually helped facilitate the advent of the war. To be precise, the Qing government did not absolutely want to have a peaceful settlement. But facing a strong

enemy, in order to preserve peace, we must muster sufficient military forces to deter enemy from ever waging a war on us. Otherwise, we would pay a stiff price and sacrifice our country's interests and the nation's dignity. The Qing government not only refused to send reinforcement troops to Korea as a part of war preparations, but also refused to give up its rights and status in Korea during the mediation by the powers. This is tantamount to the dilemma of "no war, no peace," which of course led to the double defeats in both military and diplomacy. Historical facts have proven that, without sufficient military force and the resolute determination to use such force, it will be impossible to seek a national defense through peace and to preserve our nation's territorial integrity. On matters related to our nation's life-and-death security strategy, we must have clear and overall considerations, using peace and war alternatively, differently, and adroitly. Only by doing so can we safeguard our maximum national interests, and gain maximum peace.

[Notes are omitted during translation]

<http://www.cc.org.cn/newcc/browwenzhang.php?articleid=3924>