

# The Impact of Industrial Revolutions: China's Rise and the Decline of Japan

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In recent times Japan has sought to project its presence both regionally and in the international arena in a more robust manner. This has been brought about in part by the Asia-Pacific (A-P) incrementally increasing in importance to actors other than those already 'established.' The most established—those with a strong military presence in the region have been the United States of America (US) and Japan. This has meant the US and Japan have had no reason to perceive a threat to their presence. To wit, the end of the Cold War (1948-1989) essentially removed Russia as a pivotal actor in the region, and although Russia retains a presence in the region it is fair to argue the 'new arrivals' of China and India are of most concern to Japan. China, however, remains the prime threat to Japan in the region. This article will deal with and establish the interconnections of how Japan came to rise as a regional superpower; and how China is now moving along a similar trajectory. The trajectory to which this article will adhere to is the impact of domestic Industrial Revolutions—which are characterised by 'rapid industrial growth' and the 'concentration of industry in large establishments'—and is a situation which generates domestic prosperity which in turn fuels an intent and then execution of extramural expansion, through the utility of military might. This will be accomplished by viewing Japan's 'First' Industrial Revolution—through the broader prism of what an industrial revolution 'comprises' per se—the British Industrial Revolution, the 'Second' Japanese Industrial Revolution and the historic proficiencies these events have brought will be juxtaposed against China in more contemporary times.

### Japan's First Industrial Revolution: Japan and a Strong Military

With the advent of US' naval intrusion into Japan in 1853—near the end of the Tokugawa period (1603 – 1867)—Japan was forced into becoming part of an economic 'free market' which several European nation-states, Russia and the United States had devised and set up.[1] This happened, in large part, from 1872 onwards through a series of treaties—such as the 1858 Harris Treaty—and with the ever-present threat of 'implied force' in particular from the US.[2] From this enforced and prescribed position, Japan would enter into trade with the West during the Meiji era (1869 –1911). Due to the positive fiscal and national impacts their Industrial Revolution would bring about, particularly the post-1889 era, Japan would commence a period of rapid industrialisation and modernisation promoted under the banner of *fukoku kyohei*, (rich nation, strong military).[3] Eighteen eighty-nine marked Japan's rapid military expansion through Southeast Asia and part of Oceania was in broad-terms, the outcome of Japan's First Industrial Revolution, which ended with the unconditional surrender of the Japanese to Allied forces in 1945.

Japan's military, during the abovementioned era would expand extramural to its borders, and a significant step would be the (first) Sino-Japanese War (1894 -1895) against Qing China (1644-1911), which Japan would win unconditionally. This victory would establish Japan as an 'emerging world power' winning Formosa/Taiwan through the *Treaty of Shimonosiki* (1895) and the next foray into regional ambitions would be the Japan-Russo War (1904–1905), in which Japan was victorious. Winning the Japan-Russo War would have two outcomes: Russia would have to abandon its Far East Asian expansionist policies; and it would mark the first decisive defeat of a European power by an Asian power. Due to the pursuit of, and successes against Russia, numerous incursions into China and in particular, Japan's invasion and colonisation of the Korean Peninsula under the auspices that it was once ruled by Japan and of Koreans being unable to 'pull themselves out of the Dark Ages,'[4] are all examples of Japan's regional superpower status. The cataclysmic march of Japanese Imperial Forces through Southeast Asia

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and part of Oceania 1941-1943 is emblematic of a strong nation-state which has gone through an Industrial Revolution and the regional 'imperialism,' or the 'projection of political power across large spaces to include other states.' [5] Notwithstanding, Japan through its First Industrial Revolution has shown the impact such an event has on a nation-state and a region. To fully comprehend the enormity of an industrial revolution, however, it is the revolution of approximately one hundred years prior that offers the best example of the enormity of change that happens: the British Industrial Revolution. By examining, albeit briefly, the cathartic changes Britain's Industrial Revolution caused will allow for a deeper understanding of Japan as it undergoes its Second Industrial Revolution—and in more recent times China.

## The British Industrial Revolution: Britain and a Strong Military

As Britain progressed through its Industrial Revolution (*circa*-1750–1914), consecutive British governments realised that central to being able to continue with progress a strong littoral or 'green water' navy to protect the home-island, and a robust ocean-going or 'blue water' navy to protect the Empire's interests were required. The success of undertaking the first strategy was voiced by France's Napoleon Bonaparte who complained of a 'wooden wall' (*circa*-1810) surrounding Britain which in effect prevented his forces from invading the island. [6] At Britain's peak 1876-1914, their dominions would stretch from the West Indies to the strategically important Mediterranean possessions of Gibraltar, Malta and Cyprus, which in turn protected British interests in Egypt, Sudan, Uganda, Kenya and Somaliland. This was made possible because of the large ocean going navy which Britain commanded. Across the Persian Gulf were Aden and the Gulf States which were important in guarding the route to India via the Suez Canal and the final point in the strategic chain, was Ceylon. [7] Furthermore, the British thoroughly understood their home-island—and their Empire—depended on maintaining *and* sustaining a naval force. This was in part, achieved through the astute collection of home-state; and suzerain-state taxes. These taxes, which are defined as a compulsory contribution to the support of government, [8] had been in place long before the beginning of the British Industrial Revolution and moreover, had remained crucial to the building and then maintenance of military power. The dedication that had built up over time to this tenet is reflected in a straightforward statistic: 'between the twelfth and nineteenth centuries 70 to 90 percent of England's financial resources were dedicated to the acquisition and use of the instruments of military force.' [9]

The British Empire with its robust and powerful navy with its attendant structures of nationalism and the corresponding *mission civilisatrice* [10] that had been embarked upon would create railway infrastructures in the Empire, and in the domestic sphere the building of canal systems to aid factory output, public schooling, the intervention of government into public welfare such as the building of public hospitals would also contribute to a greater societal wellbeing within Britain. Britain would harness these elements, and in the process become a major and successful global actor. Hence, a clinical geo-strategic analysis of Britain's strengths were the loyalty and discipline of patriots, and reward for those that did Britain's bidding—the Raj in India being only one example. Further underpinning British supremacy was the British would not hesitate to use direct force or threat-of-force measures to regain a controlled and/or threatened territory. A strong navy therefore, became an inherent part of Britain's power-base as it allowed for home-island protection; the rule of other territories and their attendant sea-lanes; and the free-trade which brought continuing economic- and social-capital to its burgeoning middle-classes. The aforementioned offshoots are only several aspects that would allow Britain to exponentially prosper; and become a global superpower for over a century and a half. When the British Industrial Revolution was undertaken the process allowed for further exponential power gains to be made and they benefited the British population overall. It is with this in mind that Japan's Second Industrial Revolution can now be addressed.

## Japan's Second Industrial Revolution: Japan and a Strong Military Redux

After the perils of World War Two (WWII) and Japan's near-total destruction by Allied forces, [11] a rebuilding program was put into place through the various tenets of the Supreme Command Allied Forces. By the mid-1970s Japan was once again a developed-nation and within this newfound state-of-affairs Japan's regional and global geo-political ambition would again become manifest. Japan's Second Industrial Revolution was centred on science and technology and driven by inputs from the Ministry for International Trade and Industry. High-tech research-based inventions with the appropriate industrial and mechanisation assets that befits industries—of which the invention of

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the transistor and the design and implementation of high-speed rail are only two successful examples once again thrust Japan onto the world stage. True to what had gone before, Japan established a flourishing middle-class; re-invigorated its position on the global geo-political stage; rebuilt its military forces; and began to spread its influence through free trade and currency markets. The introduction and continued expansion of the automobile industry, the offshoot of high employment rates and 'lifetime employment' by industries and civil services produced a highly-educated, productive population.[12] The end result was a wealthier population with a dynamic free market economy producing enormous positive fiscal and societal repercussions *circa*-1950–1995.

As prosperity grew, Japan once again moved toward a robust military presence in the A-P region which, it can be argued, has shifted from a complete WWII near-total dependence on a US back-up presence to an incrementally independent presence in the Twenty-first century and Japan, although banned from having an offensive military—through *Article 9* of the Japanese Constitution—understands that a powerful military is, and remains an essential element of security. The current Abe administration recognizing the issues-at-hand however, has expeditiously reinvigorated an ocean-going 'blue water' navy and has increased its regional military presence. Japan has recently launched, what is historically considered a 'capital,' or 'premier ship':[13] an Izumo-class helicopter-carrier, the *Kaga*. The *Kaga* conveys two signals to the region and the world: Japan's Prime Minister Abe remains true to the 'nationalist platform'[14] upon which he was elected; and holds the symbolic significance of being the largest warship built by Japan since WWII. In concert with an increased militarised presence in the region, Japan has also been lobbying for an increased international role cum influence as it vies for a permanent seat on the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) Permanent Five (P5)—with the last effort at mollifying UNSC opinion as recent as March, 2015. To be certain, Japan is claiming the political move under the auspices of its 'wealth of experience,' 'history of nation-building,' and 'understands' the stature that is accorded to a permanent Security Council position role in the UNSC. The aforementioned have been followed by a change to *Article 9* of the Japanese Constitution,[15] in which Japanese military forces are now able to be (legally) deployed to 'defend' Japan on foreign soil; and the biggest ever increase in their military budget is also part of its more assertive defence policy.

All of the abovementioned factors are brought about by a population experiencing an industrial revolution and from this historical precept a nation-state undergoing this phenomenon, historically demands it exert a greater influence regionally and internationally. The usual way in which this is achieved is through military and/or political preponderance. Japan, through its Second Industrial Revolution is keeping true to these historical tenets. Notwithstanding, China is currently experiencing an industrial revolution and we now turn to this phenomenon.

## China's Industrial Revolution: China and a Strong Military

China, during and following the Deng Xiaoping era (1978-1992), has moved toward a repositioning of its status in both the regional and international arenas. With the introduction of the 'reform and opening' method of governance—with major changes occurring *circa*-1980-1987 – resulted in a government-driven fiscal creativity and flexibility that positively transformed the living standards of a great majority of its people.[16] Consecutive Chinese governments have remained on this pathway and it can be argued, began in earnest with China's Industrial Revolution of the mid-1990s. Within this exemplar China has continually undergone industrialisation and mechanisation processes which has resulted in a continuous growth cycle. China's enormous growth is able to be observed in the following: the implementation of a high-speed rail network on both a domestic and international basis, a space program, numerous military build-up agendas including anti-satellite missile and stealth-fighter programs, and the sheer volume of people that have moved into the middle-classes—expected to be three hundred and forty million people by 2016.

The outcome of this surge in industrial productivity, increased governance, a more robust tax-collection and overt nationalism and the concomitant confidence it brings, has resulted in a nascent expansion by the Chinese government to territories extramural to China's domestic borders. Perhaps the most explicit example of this newfound confidence is the increasing military presence around the disputed Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands in the East China Sea; and the building of an airstrip on Mischief Reef in the South China Sea. Notwithstanding, the issue here remains China is embarking upon the expansive corollaries that an industrial revolution delivers, and as with the historic proof—conveyed by the British and Americans—a strong ocean-going navy is a core component of preponderance.

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China, due to its domestic Industrial Revolution has embarked upon and incrementally built up its naval assets. The launch of its first aircraft carrier—a refitted Soviet craft—on sea-trials in August 2011, signalled China's territorial ambitions and in keeping with those that have gone before and due to its 'rising status' believes it must safeguard its increasing globalised national interests.' Furthermore, China has also built up a substantial submarine fleet incorporating 'midget' submarines which are capable of operating in the shallow waters of the East China and South China Seas and these will be used to protect its 'green water' areas.

China has also incorporated science and technology in its mix of progress, dedicating assets such as the 'Leading Group on Science, Technology and Education' program which was established in 1998.[17] Concomitant with this, and as Britain and the US has done in preceding years, the Chinese government has also set about establishing social changes in order to stabilise their domestic economy. Increasing business and private property rights and interventions into the domestic stock market,[18] are only two examples of the Chinese government attending to needs of their middle-classes. With the advent of China's continued growth and the 'economic miracle' that it has become in the early twenty-first century, and whilst there are a myriad of factors that may elevate or retard the growth rate, the solid issue within the economics remains China is witnessing a burgeoning middle class—as per the Japanese in the 1970s, the British 1750-1914, and the US in their post-WWII era. These are the overt signs of a successful industrial revolution taking place and with the event will come a heightened sense of nationalism, patriotism, and a desire to undertake expansionary economic and military policies. China, like those that have gone before, will not be stopped.

## Conclusion

Japan's renewed assertiveness and the Abe government's determination to militarily re-engage the world, due to the Japanese Diet (parliament) recently passing the necessary changes to *Article 9* is nevertheless a sign Japan is keen to repudiate a rising China. However, as with previous industrial revolutions, including the two Japan has experienced, and the one that China is now undergoing the end results are significant and historically, writ large. A nation-state that is in the midst of a revolution of this type will and must expand extramural to its borders; and reclaim what it perceives has been denied its rightful possessions cum resources over previous decades. China therefore, will continue to make claims on territories extramural to its seaborne borders—regardless of the objections of Japan and the US.

Hence, the current actions of the Japanese government have created a dyad: the launching of the *Kaga* reflects a panic in the Japanese government and population, and a clambering for rejoinders that are obviously posited in a previous regional and global era in which it was all-powerful in the A-P region. The reality of the situation-at-hand is that the industrial revolution that China is undergoing is commensurate with Japan's post-WWII situation, with the addendum that Chinas' will be far greater in comparison; and the therefore the impact on the region will be much more momentous. Japan must deal with the reality and stand-alone fact that the desires of 340 million people will become an enormous part of the A-P regions geo-strategic dynamics, and that it has lost the post-WWII potency Okinawa offered by being a proxy US military outpost; the US may not come to its aid should there be a Japan-China military collision; and the launching of a capital ship at this time is an overt offensive signal which is unable to be backed-up by intrinsic force.

The Japanese government stands at a crossroads. Abe's actions have already ignited tensions within the A-P region. In the near-future Japan will have to accept that unless it de-escalates tensions through meaningful and critical dialogue it will be faced with a fractious neighbour which will demand acknowledgement and/or recompense for past ills—this is the nature of powerful nation-state's that have been through an industrial revolution as per the US, Britain, France and numerous other nation-states—and China will increase its demands as its 'industrial revolution' unfolds.

## Notes

[1] For a more comprehensive account of the Tokugawa period and the threat of European and US machinations, see: Milton Meyer. *Japan A Concise History*. Boston: Littlefield Publishers, 1993, 124-129.

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[2] *Japan A Concise History*, 124.

[3] Jeff Kingston. *Japan in transformation 1952 – 2000*. Harlow: Longman, 2001, 10.

[4] David Day. *Conquest. A New History of the Modern World*. Sydney: HarperCollins Publishers, 2005, 196-197.

[5] Robin Butlin. *Geographies of Empire. European empires and colonies, 1880 – 1960*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009, 6.

[6] Philippe-Paul De Ségur. *Defeat. Napoleon's Russian Campaign*. Translated by David Townsend. New York: New York Review of Books, 1986, xxiv.

[7][7] Martin Kitchen. *The British Empire and Commonwealth. A short history*. London: Simon Fraser University, 1994, 49.

[8] *The Oxford English Dictionary*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Vol. XVII. Prepared by J. A. Simpson and E.S.C. Weiner. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989, 677.

[9] David Held. *Democracy and the Global Order. From the Modern State to Cosmopolitan Governance*. Cambridge: Polity Press, 1995, 53.

[10] *Mission Civilisatrice*, or the 'mission of civilising' native conquered/subjugated populations is based on the conceit of Europeans Anglo-North Americans, their definition of 'progress,' and their sense of social- and cultural-superiority. Respectable godliness and the imposition of English and French ideas and ideals on 'untamed savages' was at the heart of the mission, as was it being a 'white man's burden.' See: Norrie MacQueen. *Colonialism*. Harlow: Pearson Longman, 2007, 37-40.

[11] Understanding how completely Japan had been destroyed is summed up, 'it was estimated that the Allied assault on shipping and the campaign against the home islands [had] destroyed ... four-fifths of all ships, one-third of all industrial machine tools, and almost a quarter of all rolling stock and motor vehicles.' ... Japan's air force—not only its aircraft but its skilled pilots as well—had virtually ceased to exist. Its merchant marine lay at the bottom of the ocean. Almost all of the country's major cities had been fire bombed, and millions of the emperor's loyal subjects were homeless. The defeated imperial army was scattered throughout Asia and the islands of the Pacific Ocean, its millions of surviving soldiers starving, wounded, sick, and demoralized. See: John Dower. *Embracing Defeat. Japan in the Wake of World War II*. New York: WW Norton and Co, 1999, 45-46. And reinforcing the abovementioned, '60 of Japan's 66 cities [had been] destroyed.' See: Robert Pape. *Bombing To Win. Air Power and Coercion in War*. New York: Cornell University Press, 1996, 59.

[12] *Japan in transformation 1952 – 2000*, 176 – 177.

[13] The 'capital ship' replaced the galley as Europe's premier warship and its origins lie in the fifteenth century. See: Geoffrey Parker. 'Ships of the Line.' *The Cambridge History of Warfare*. Edited by Geoffrey Parker. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005, 120.

[14] 'Nationalism' is defined by Kupchan as a 'nationalist grouping that is defined in civic terms, [people who] share a participation in a circumscribed political community, common political values, a sense of belonging to a state in which they reside, and usually, a common language.' See: Charles Kupchan 'Nationalism Resurgent.' *Nationalism and Nationalities in the New Europe*. Edited by Charles Kupchan. London: Cornell University Press, 1995, 4.

[15] This constitutional change effectively allows Japanese Defense Forces personnel to engage in offense- rather than defence-driven actions.

[16] Martin Jacques. *When China Rules the World. The End of the Western World Order and the Birth of a New*

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*Global Order*. London: Penguin Books, 2012, 277-279.

[17] V. P. Kharbandha. 'Organisation and Structure of Science and Technology in China.' *Science and Technology in China. Implications and Lessons for India*. Edited by Maharajakrishna Rasgotra. New Dehli: Sage Publications India, 2013, 17.

[18] Peter Ryan. 'Chinese government intervention needed to stop global market rout: analyst.' *ABC News*. 25 Aug, 2015.

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**Strobe Driver** completed a PhD in War Studies in 2010 and since then has been writing on War, Conflict, Terrorism and Asia-Pacific Security. During 2018 he was awarded a year-long Taiwan, ROC, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Fellowship to write an independent analysis of Taiwan – China relations with a focus on when and whether a conflict would break out. The analysis is entitled 'Asia-Pacific and Cross-Strait Machinations: Challenges for Taiwan in the Nascent Phase of Pax-Sino.' All other writings by Strobe can be found on his blog.