

Russo-Japanese Rapprochement during the First World War: World System Factors

Baryshev, Eduard
九州大学大学院比較社会文化学府

<https://doi.org/10.15017/4494614>

出版情報：比較社会文化研究. 17, pp.93-100, 2005-03-15. 九州大学大学院比較社会文化研究科
バージョン：
権利関係：



Russo-Japanese Rapprochement during the First World War : World System Factors

Baryshev Eduard

Preface

Russo-Japanese rapprochement during the First World War is considered to be one of the most amazing events in the history of Russo-Japanese relations. It was engraved in the Russo-Japanese Convention of 1916, which de facto meant the conclusion of an offensive-defensive alliance between the two countries. This alliance, probably the most short-lived in history, formally existed until the end of 1917, when Bolsheviks officially denounced all treaties and obligations of the Tsar government.

A number of scholars have investigated the problems of Russo-Japanese relations during the First World War¹, but the Russo-Japanese Rapprochement as a phenomenon has received little academic attention. It can be argued that in historiography there is a tendency to overlook the true essence of the Russo-Japanese rapprochement that took place during the First World War. Though diplomatic background of the rapprochement has been described in detail, the character of the alliance has not clearly understood. The geopolitical, civilizational, social background of the rapprochement has been omitted from their considerations. As a result, Russo-Japanese relations during this period appear as historically isolated phenomena, illuminating neither the history of Russo-Japanese relations, nor the national history of Russia or Japan.

In this brief article, the author, by viewing Russo-Japanese rapprochement through the lens of the system theory attempts to overcome the above limitations and to interweave Russo-Japanese rapprochement into the

canvas of world history.

1. Britain as the core element of world order

By the beginning of the 20th century Great Britain with its numerous colonies comprised a core of international order. It was the typical sea empire whose colonies were scattered all over the world. Hong-Kong and Malaya, Canada and South Africa, Gibraltar and Suez, Australia and India - all these territories were united under the British flag. Their dependence on the "mother country" differed case by case, but all of them in international politics comprised the bastion of "perfidious Albion". The British Empire at the opening of the First World War, held sway over a population of 460 million people - roughly a quarter of the world's population - and covered nearly 30 million square kilometres, roughly one-fourth of the total land-surface of the globe. More importantly, Great Britain, an area which comprised only 300 thousand square kilometres, possessed colonies 110 times its size. About 390 million subjects of the British crown were inhabitants of her colonial empire. At that time it was described as "the empire on which sun never sets"².

Great Britain became the first state in the world to create such a great empire of world scale and world character. It became "the biggest Venice in the world built on the ocean as a canal". The echo of the national hymn "Rule, Britannia!" was heard in all parts of the world. The spread of English all over the world as a common language also demonstrated the strength and the might of the British Empire. About 125 million

¹ As typical examples of this body of research, we could look to the monographs written by Matsumoto Tadao ("*Kinsei Nihon gaikou-shi kenkyuu*", Hakuhou-dou, 1942), Peter Berton ("*The Secret Russo-Japanese Alliance of 1916*", Columbia University, Ph. D., 1956), S. S. Grigortsevich ("*Dalnevostochnaya politika imperialisticheskikh derzhav v 1906-1917 gg*", Tomsk, 1965), and Yoshimura Michio ("*Nihon to Rosia - Nitiro sengo kara Rosia kakumei made*", Hara-shobou, 1968).

² Howard Robinson, *The Development of the British Empire*, Second Edition, The Riverside Press, Cambridge - Massachusetts, 1922, p.433, Appendix, pp. I-VI.

people of the world spoke English as native speakers. For 550 million people it was an official language. In this sense English was an important conduit of British influence on the globe³.

With the spread of communication networks Great Britain found itself at the centre of the world. All telegraphic cables came to London, all information from all corners of the world gathered in London. The telegraphic agency Reuter, "The Times" became the mouthpiece of "civilization". For a long time London was the most important intersection, where the West and East hemispheres of the Earth met together⁴.

World hegemony of the British Empire was based on its economic might. It was the Industrial Revolution that made Great Britain the first world power in a strict sense, putting it in the centre of international order. The fruits of the Industrial Revolution, which began at the last quarter of the 18th century, became clear at the first half of the 19th century. The new forces of steam power and machine production improved competitiveness of English goods on the world markets. Britain managed to shoot far ahead in the development and use of machine techniques, and became a giant among the trading nations. A vast empire, created by the end of the 18th century, provided all necessary resources and played the role of natural market.

The period between the Congress of Vienna of 1815 and the Franco-Prussian War of 1870 saw the gap between Britain and other powers deepen remarkably. Following the defeat of Napoleon, Britain transformed into the biggest financial and the sole industrialized power of the world. Until the beginning of the 20th century Britain remained the great trading centre of the world. London continued to be the prime and flourishing centre of international financial and economic development. The British Empire as a "workshop of the world" was the core of world economy⁵.

The development of Britain as an industrialized nation was considered to relate directly to its geographical position and its status as sea power. The latter cast

a great light on the world strategy of Britain.

2. Britain's world strategy

The rapid economic development and the spread of influence of the British Empire were due to its special geographical position. The fact that it was England, a typical island-nation, that stood at the top of the processes of modernization was not coincidence. This was the reflection of regularity. It was its island-nation character that contributed a lot to the formation of the British Empire as itself. With reformed Christianity⁶ this geographic position contributed to the process of redirecting national energy from internal life to international. The world ocean was not a barrier, dividing England from the continent, but a convenient way of strengthening these relations. Thanks to steps made by English monarchs since the middle of the 15th century, England in a short time transformed into a strong sea power.

The characteristic features of political strategy of Great Britain appeared by the beginning of 18th century, when the British colonial overseas Empire came into existence. This special geographical position of England was a guarantee of its national security, serving from ancient times as a natural shield. With the conquest of Scotland (1707) and Ireland (1801) England had no potential enemy on the British Isles. Similarly, the conquest of England from the sea was theoretical notion only. That is, by the end of the 18th century Great Britain had almost decided her security problem and this was not real, but an imaginary one⁷.

The British "island" vision contributed also to the realization of the special role and mission of Britain in the world : that is, to realize her national interests. It presented to British a chance to take a wait-and-see attitude to the European continent. By the beginning of the 18th century only continental France could make a challenge to Britain, because of her vast overseas empire and high level of economic development. It was this competition with France that comprised the main

³ Rudolf Kjellén, *Die Großmächte der Gegenwart*, Leipzig-Berlin, 1914, pp.85-89.

⁴ *Atlas of British overseas expansion*, edited by A. N. Porter, London, Routledge, 1991, pp. 118-137, 144-152.

⁵ Stephen King-Hill, *The Empire : Yesterday and To-day*, Oxford University Press, 1937, pp.21-22.

⁶ See about the role of the new values in process of formation of the modern society in : Edward Hallet Carr, *The new society*, Macmillan Press, 1957, pp.19-39.

⁷ About England as a Sea Power see in : Halford Mackinder, *Democratic Ideals and Reality : A study in the politics of reconstruction*, London, Constable, 1919, pp.71-75 ; Rudolf Kjellén, *Op. cit.*, pp.86, 90-92.

content of England' foreign policy from the end of the 17th century until 1815, when Napoleonic France was finally defeated. Naturally, world strategy of Britain was influenced in a great degree by this struggle with France. In order to win in a struggle against France, Britain needed a reliable counterbalance in Europe⁸. The principle of "balance of power" was born under the influence of such geopolitical conditions.

From the middle of the 18th century Britain began to take an active part in the continental politics on the principle of "the balance of power", a principle of political expediency. The main aim of British policy from this time was to not allow a strong continental block to emerge. All endeavours of the British government were made to pursue this strategic aim⁹. This strategy, a variable of her marine status, had also, in its turn, to contribute a lot to the maintenance of the Empire. However, with an intensification of international economic relations and the rise of the role of Britain in the world the object of this strategy had to be changed. In the 17-18th centuries Great Britain kept a sharp eye on the balance of power in Europe, but at the middle of the 19th century her politicians had turned their focus from Europe to the all-Eurasian continent. Distinct lines of this continental strategy of Britain were engraved in the work of Halford Mackinder (1867-1947) "The geographical pivot of history", which was published in 1904¹⁰.

After the defeat of Napoleon's France, Britain skillfully used the international situation, that is, the complete absence of potential competitors, and during the next twenty to thirty years expanded her influence in the world. From the 1850-60s Britain's efforts were directed to maintenance of the status quo in world politics. Until the beginning of the 20th century Britain perceived as her main potential enemy the Russian Empire, which showed at that time a stable and steady growth. Expanding of Russian influence was perceived as the greatest challenge to Britain. The Crimean (1854-1856) and Russo-Japanese (1904-1905) wars,

provoked by Britain, were typical examples of this policy of "encircling" of Russia.

The most important task of British policies was to stop Russian advancement in a southward direction. Russia, which has an outlet to the "warm seas", was a nightmare for British politicians. In order to accomplish her policy of encircling, Britain decided to close her relations with Islamic Turkey and Japan. From the 1870-80s Japan began to play the role of an important British foothold on the Far East. Through the conclusion of Alliance with Japan (1902) Britain tried to restrain Russian policies in the Far East¹¹.

The British policy of "encircling" of Russia was rather successful. By 1905-07 the Russian threat was eliminated. With the end of the Russo-Japanese war the aim of British policy was fulfilled : the advancement of Russia to the "warm seas" was stopped. Russian influence in world politics was damaged severely. The Russo-Japanese War, rising from this Russo-British confrontation, changed the status quo in the Far East. Transition of Liaotung peninsula with Port Arthur and the southern part of the East Chinese railroads to the hands of Japanese meant the withdrawal of Russia from the Pacific as an active actor in international politics.

Nonetheless, the temporary elimination of this ominous competitor did not ease the work of British diplomats. During fifty years of single-minded policy of encirclement of Russia new competitors appeared and strengthened. The struggle with Russia, demanding different resources, diverted this attention of Britain from potential competitors like Germany, and led to strengthening of some allies like Japan.

Germany, cherishing a dream of sea power, demonstrated rapid economic development, and Britain began to regard it as a great threat for British national interests and her world order. If Russia, a mere continental and less than highly industrialized power, was only a potential military enemy for the British Empire, Germany with her strong industry and fleet was considered to be an enemy in economic sphere too. After the Russo-

⁸ Rudolf Kjellén, *Op. cit.*, pp.86-87.

⁹ *Ibid*, p.120.

¹⁰ Halford J. Mackinder, *The Scope and Methods of Geography and The Geographical Pivot of History*, with an introduction of E. W. Gilbert, The Royal Geographical Society, London, 1969, pp. 30-44.

¹¹ Analysis of British strategy and the ways of realization is given in the following work of Russian geopolitical theorist Vandam (1867-1933) : Вандам А.Е. Наше положение, Величайшее из искусств: Обзор современного положения в свете высшей стратегии // Вандам А.Е. Геополитика и геостратегия. Жуковский – Москва : Кучково поле, 2002. С. 88-89, 106-154, 157-186.

Japanese war, weakening Germany became the main purpose of British diplomacy. All efforts of British strategists were directed to the policy of encircling Prussian state which was showing extreme resolution to fight for the spread of "Lebensraum". The Russo - British rapprochement of 1907 also has to be considered in this strategic framework.

British policy, based on the principle of "divide et impera" was rather effective on a European scale, but on the world stage it met with crucial problems. Eventually, this one-dimensional policy was to shake this same basis of international order Pax Britannica.

3. Systemic problems of Pax Britannica and its crisis

The period including about a century between the Napoleonic Wars and the First World War was characterized by domination of the British Empire on the world scene and her overseas expansionism. In historiography to this period of British imperialism the term "Pax Britannica" (Latin for "Peace for Britain", modelled after "Pax Romana") has been referred. Pax Britannica as the first world order came to existence at the middle of the 19th century. All countries and all nations of the world were under the influence of this order and had to play on the world scene on rules promoted by the locomotive of the world, the British Empire. The term "Pax Britannica" means that it was Britain and its colonial empire that were the crucial element of world system structure and it was the British Empire that represented at this time, in present day words, "the international society"¹².

The world character of Pax Britannica was concealed in that of the modern industrial capitalistic economy. This capitalism was a product of "new society" that was born in northwest Europe in the 17th century. This society, appearing from the process of Reformation, shifted its attention from an internal spiritual world to an external material world. In the place of "closed" traditional society reproducing its patterns of social life, "open" modern society, pursuing evolution and develop-

ment, emerged. The capitalistic economy also developed as such an "open system", based on gradually and constantly expanding balance. From the beginning, it lacked the self-sufficiency, stability and autonomy that were characteristic features of traditional society. Britain, as a cradle of modern civilization and the representative of "the first world", might be called the most leading power of "first echelon nations"¹³.

The British Empire became the core of the world system because she was the locomotive of industrial development of that epoch. The same character of modern capitalistic development pushed Britain to take measures to strengthen relations with its colonies and spread her sphere of interest in the world. That is, development of the capitalistic economy itself led to the necessity of strengthening of control under colonies, and the latter contributed to an increase in the dependence of "the mother country" on these areas¹⁴. This relation was considered to be the main engine of colonialism and imperialism.

The international order called Pax Britannica could not be imagined without the liberal ideology that formed a necessary fundament for it. By the middle of the 19th century liberalism, born as a social movement of the middle class, had changed its character. From mere internal political class ideology it transformed into the core of diplomatic strategy of the British Empire which defended the existing status quo. If in the 17th century it was only an instrument of political struggle of the new class of bourgeoisie, in the 19th century it became the ideology of the bourgeoisie as a ruling class of British society, an ideology which was aimed at the enhancing of its position on internal and, more importantly, international scale. In a word, the problem of liberalism as ideology concealed in that point that the British government, praising social evolution through "the struggle for existence", used it for maintenance of status-quo in world politics. This generated a double standard of international order and its unfairness, because such an egoistic attitude completely contradicted with the principle of "free competition", also promoted by Britain. Almost coinciding with "Social Darwinism", liberalism,

¹² About characteristic features of Pax Britannica see in : Albert H. Imlah, *Economic elements in the Pax Britannica : Studies in British Foreign Trade in the Nineteenth Century*, New York, 1969, pp.1-20.

¹³ See about this at the next article : Eduard Baryshev, Mechanics of world politics : The System Theory Viewpoint, "Social and Cultural Studies", Kyushu University, No.16 (2004), pp.154-155 (in Japanese).

¹⁴ Rudolf Kjellén, *Op. cit.*, pp.101-102, 116-117.

on the one hand, justified the existing status quo, but, on the other hand, opened a way for legitimization of aggressive policies¹⁵.

The phenomenon called “New imperialism”, was also closely connected with the above-mentioned. It was not a mere product of imperialistic ambitions of the “new-developed countries” but was a sub-product of the international system “Pax Britannica”. The First World War became the first bitter fruit of “free competition” that broke out between Britain and Germany¹⁶.

The First World War opened a period of long-termed agony of the world system, Pax Britannica, and its transition to the new world order, Pax Americana. The ceaseless struggle for the maintenance of the balance of power exhausted the economic power of Britain. Scattered all over the earth the British Empire became a very vulnerable organism that could not compete with the newest candidate for world hegemony, the USA. New civilization, developed on the North-American continent had one important merit that Britain did not. It was characterized by a high level of internal self-sufficiency and autonomy. That is why America could allow herself to exercise a more flexible policy on the scene of international politics¹⁷.

4. Japan in the world system :

Russo-Japanese War and its geopolitical meaning

Japan occupied and continues to occupy the unique, that is, dualistic position in the world system. If Britain developed as a clear Sea Power and Russia as one of Land, Japan had been a Power combining these two different characteristics¹⁸.

Japan, similarly to England, has been an island - nation. This peculiar geographical position of Japan, on the one hand, has served as a natural guarantee of security, and, on the other, has contributed greatly to economic development of the country. In this sense, the

historical fame of Japan was similar to that of Britain. However, the character of this development was different. As it was mentioned above, Britain chose the path of external development, tracing the evolution of “the open society”. On the contrary, Japan preferred the path of internal, not external development. Japan did not experience the Reformation which redirected the energy of a Man from internal to external life. The first response of Japan to the push of Western civilization was closure. This reaction was regular and natural for a “closed society”. During the period of Meiji, Japan carried out only limited modernization that could not contribute to the process of formation of a modern nation. The policy of isolation, carried out by the Japanese government, restrained “the natural” capitalistic development and conserved its traditional character of social structure.

A clash with the pressure of industrialized capitalistic countries made Japan enter the process of modernization. The latter also - as in Russia - took in Japan the shape of forced process, carried out “from above”. In this sense, Japan was also a “second echelon nation”, in contradistinction to Britain, France and Holland¹⁹. A high level of development of traditional society allowed Japan the power to maintain its original basis of civilization and gave her the power to concentrate all resources for struggle in international society, existing in according with “the law of jungles”. Japan had to accept the rules of “international community” and to get down to the spread of her sphere of interest. After the Restoration Japan joined the race for colonies.

The unique position of the Japanese archipelago, stretched along the east coast of the Eurasian continent, attracted the attention of Sea Powers. Britain and the USA did not fail to use this important strategic base in their policies. Japan had to play the role of outpost of “civilized” world against the Continent. Britain supported Japan’s pretensions to become a colonial power, compressing an atmosphere of “Russian threat”. Japan

¹⁵ H. W. Koch, Social Darwinism as a Factor in the ‘New Imperialism’, *The Origins of the First World War : Great Power Rivalry and German War Aims*, Second edition, Macmillan Publishers, 1984, pp.321-322, 324-330 ; Мочкин А.Н. Парадоксы неоконсерватизма (Россия и Германия в конце XIX - начале XX века). М., 1999. С.81.

¹⁶ Булгаков С.Н. Труды по социологии и теологии. Т.2. Статьи и работы разных лет (1902-1942). М.: Наука, 1997. С.150.

¹⁷ See about self-sufficiency and autonomy of social system in : Eduard Baryshev, *Mechanics of world politics*, pp.150-153.

¹⁸ Author use the terms “Sea Power” and “Land Power” in wide geopolitical sense, emphasizing not features of geopolitical position, but patterns of historico-geopolitical development. See about antagonism of the Land and the Sea in : Дугин А. Основы геополитики. Геополитическое будущее России. Мыслить пространством. Изд.4-е. М.: Артегя-центр, 2000. С.15-19.

¹⁹ See about modernization in a “second echelon nations” in : Eduard Baryshev, *Mechanics of world politics*, pp.155-157.

had to become a weapon of British world strategy. Aggression of Japan in 1893-94 and a war with Russia, which began from a perfidious attack of Russian squadron off the coast of Chemulpo, were, in some degree, the manifestation of this pro-British orientation²⁰.

In short, by the middle of the 19th century Japan had completely entered the sphere of influence of Sea Powers. This meant that the process of creation of a world system had come to an end: waves of modernization sprang from Western Europe and the American continent, meeting in the eastern extremity of Eurasia. Japan seemed to be included in the Anglo-Saxon camp, a priori in an antagonistic state with the stronghold of the Continent, Russia. However, the Russo-Japanese War exerted a great influence on the geopolitical position of Japan in the world system and prepared a basis for future rapprochement with Russia.

The Russo-Japanese war finished successfully for Japan. Transition of Liaotung peninsula with Port Arthur and the southern part of the East Chinese railroads to the hands of Japanese meant that Japan acquired a base for the spread of influence on the Continent. The greatest change of geopolitical situation was in the fact that Russian and Japanese spheres of interests came in contact. Japan, acquiring new territories on the Continent, became de facto a Russian neighbour. From a clear Sea Power, Japan transformed into a nation, which had some features of a Land Power. Strategic interests of Russia as continental Power, the Core Power, demanded improvement of relations with Japan as new geopolitical formation. Russia needed a reliable partner, who could defend it from overseas pressure of Sea Powers. Russia needed a reliable buffer state on her borders. The strategic importance of Manchuria for economic and demographical development of Japan also required the necessity of regulation of relations with Russia.

In historiography of Russo-Japanese relations, Russo-Japanese rapprochement during the First World War is described as an extension of the process which began after the Portsmouth peace treaty. That is, it was usually described as a by-product of Anglo-Russian rapprochement. As for the first stage of Russo-Japanese rapprochement, which became clear after the end of the

Russo-Japanese War, this, without doubt, was nothing other than one of the links of Britain's strategy. It is well known that the conclusion of the First Russo-Japanese Convention of 1907 was accompanied by the conclusion of the Anglo-Russian Agreement. It is clear that Britain needed Russian power for the realization of the policy of encirclement of Germany. Britain tried with all her might to redirect Russia from southern "warm seas" to the Balkans in order to clash with Germany and in this way "to kill two birds with one stone".

However, attentive consideration shows that Russo-Japanese relations of this period were characterized by their own logic of development. The Second Russo-Japanese Convention of 1910, which was concluded as a reaction to Anglo-American policy of "open doors" in China, already demonstrated the gap emerging between Anglo-Japanese Alliance and Russo-Japanese Entente.

5. Crisis of Pax Britannica and Russo-Japanese rapprochement

Gradual weakening of British influence in the Far East, one of the signs of the decline of Pax Britannica, was the main geopolitical factor that exerted a great impact on the development of Russo-Japanese relations. Britain gradually gave way for the USA, which actively tried to expand its sphere of interest in China. As a crucial point in rearrangement of international relations in East Asia and the western part of the Pacific we can consider 1911. In this year, the USA managed to enhance its influence in China, using social disturbance caused by the Chinese Revolution. The same year Britain concluded the Arbitration treaty with the USA and revised its relations with Japan. The above-mentioned changes meant that Britain refused to support Japan in her policies in the Far East and preferred the course of alignment with the USA, which was closer to Britain in a civilizational sense. Interestingly, Japan was not considered to oppose these policies of Britain and dared to revise the Anglo-Japanese alliance²¹.

The First World War was met and greeted in Japan as the beginning of the "Decline of the West". To the Japanese the Great War was perceived as revealing the

²⁰ Вандам Е.А. Наше положение. С. 83-86.

²¹ Гальперин А. Англо-японский союз, 1902-1921 годы. М.: ОГИЗ, 1947. С.285-304.

problems and defects of Western civilization. It signified not merely a crisis in relations between the Great Powers, but was perceived as being a by-product of the international system itself and its fundamental principles of liberalism, which elevated “social Darwinism” and imperialism to prominence as concepts in the practice of international relations. Against the background of German military success, the renunciation of *laissez-faire* and introduction of the conscription system by England was considered as a symptom of the decline of the British Empire. The First World War was heralded in Japan as a transitional period, which would eventually result in the collapse of the entire world system.

This crisis of international order had a huge influence on the position of Japan in the world system. The First World War afforded Japan an opportunity to execute its special “civilizational mission”, starting with an attempt to establish its foreign policy on a more independent fundament. This resulted in discussions about revision of the Anglo-Japanese alliance, which for a long time had been the axis of Japanese diplomacy.

The World War revealed a serious contradiction between the position of Japan as an independent actor and her strong orientation to Great Britain on the international arena. Japan at the first time felt the danger of isolation in the post-war world. “The claws” of the Sea Powers, Britain and the USA, could in a moment snap shut on Japan. In any minute the traditional policy of encirclement could be applied toward Japan.

The crisis of the West, with the British Empire as its core element, pushed Japan into the arms of Russia. Rapprochement with Russia as a “second echelon nation” meant for Japan an opportunity to weaken her dependence on Great Britain, the classic example of a “first echelon nation”. In other words, rapprochement with Russia could be seen an instrument for securing Japan an independent position in world politics.

With “the decline of the West”, the dynamic economic and demographic development of Russia together with elements of traditional structure, not yet corrupted by modernism, such as monarchy, deep religiousness etc. testified that Russia was a “young nation” which had a long and glorious future ahead of it. Moreover, Russo-

Japanese rapprochement was considered to be a reasonable combination, because it could open the way for a Triple Japanese-Russo-German Eurasian alliance in the case of conclusion of a separate peace treaty between Russia and Germany, securing Japan from isolation in the post-war world²².

On the other hand, Russo-Japanese rapprochement, which began on the initiative of Britain, opened new perspectives for Russia. Friendly relations with Japan concealed an opportunity to obtain an outlet to the “warm sea” without additional victims and expenses. That is, it meant the possibility to transform it into a weapon, which could be used against her main strategic opponent, the Anglo-Saxon world. During the First World War an arrangement of relations with Japan was realized under the slogan of enhancing bonds of friendship inside Entente and its allies, but the active support of the rapprochement by different social groups, including so called Germanophiles, bear witness that it had a complex character. As it is known, immediately after the October Revolution and Intervention, Russia and Japan normalized their relations. This fact also gives evidence that Russo-Japanese rapprochement was the reflection of deep geopolitical, strategic interests²³.

Moreover, the rapprochement concealed for Russia an opportunity to realize her civilizational mission in the post-war future. The crisis of Pax Britannica and the British Empire was perceived in Russia as the decline of Western civilization. It was considered that in the next epoch Russia would realize her mission, through the building of an original Russian civilization. The centre of international activity was shifting from the Atlantic to Pacific and it was believed that Japan would also play a big and important role in the future. Modernized and industrialized Japan could serve as good and valuable help for Russian economic development in future. Siberia, showing rapid growth, needed investment and capital. After the elimination of German influence it was necessary to find a reliable partner for cultivation and exploitation of its inexhaustible natural resources. Partnership with Japan was considered to be more equal than one with Britain and the USA. Certainly, Russia was not going to limit her relations with the Anglo-

²² See about “the decline of the West” and Russo-Japanese rapprochement in : Theory of Civilizations as a Background of Russo-Japanese Rapprochement during the First World War, *Slavic Studies*, No. 52 (2005) (in Japanese), (in print).

²³ As for Russian strategy towards Japan, the author is going to treat this topic in the next article.

Saxon world, but strategically it was more effective to keep a balance in these relations, and Japan should become an important partner in post-war world. Japan became by halves continental power and Russian neighbour and this promised a successful cooperation between two countries.

Conclusion

Russo-Japanese rapprochement was considered to be a phenomenon related to the rearrangement of the world system which appeared in the long-termed and painful process of transition from Pax Britannica to Pax Americana order. The signs of weakening of Pax Britannica can be found already in the second half of the 19th century, but the first symptoms of decline became apparent at the beginning of the 20th century. The weakening of the role of Britain in international politics was revealed in the most distinct way in the East Asia and Pacific region. In these areas the economic power of the British Empire, the fundamental basis of the world economy of that time, gradually gave her place to her "younger sister", America. After the Russo-Japanese war, when the Russian threat for British national interests was eliminated and on the first plan the contradiction with Germany emerged, Britain, preferring rapprochement with the USA, got down to revision of her relations with Japan. The latter was not opposed to this development since she was trying at this time to establish herself as an independent actor in international politics. These geopolitical interests pushed Japan into rapprochement with traditional, continental Russia, which had always been the main strategic, geopolitical opponent of Anglo-Saxon countries, the embodiment of the industrial world. Acquisition of the sphere of interest on the Eurasian continent transformed the Japanese Empire into a semi-continental subject of world politics that led to the necessity of closer relations with Russia.

The First World War resulted *de facto* in the collapse of Pax Britannica that granted to Japan a favourable moment for the realization of her national ambitions. Rapprochement with Russia, proceeding in the framework of Entente, that is, an alliance, promoted by Britain, included, on the other hand, the elements of opposition both against the bearer of the old world system, Britain, and the future hypothetical hegemon of

the world, the USA. That is, Russo-Japanese rapprochement was considered to be both the manifestation of the collapse of the world order, Pax Britannica, and the first preparation for the new world order, Pax Americana, whose contours broke out in the whirl of the Great War. Metaphorically speaking, Japan's ambitions rushed into the space formed between old and new international order. It was a throw for national independence and international hegemony, which cannot be separated from the character of the misbalanced, unstable and vicious system called Pax Britannica.