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THE KOKURYŪKAI (BLACK DRAGON SOCIETY) AND THE RISE OF NATIONALISM, PAN-ASIANISM, AND MILITARISM IN JAPAN, 1901–1925

Sven Saaler

Sophia University
E-mail saaler@sophia.ac.jp

*In the conduct of prewar Japanese foreign relations, political associations (*seiji kessha*) – we might also call them pressure groups – exerted considerable political influence, particularly on Japan's relations with China and other Asian nations. One of the best known of these political associations is the Kokuryūkai (the "Amur Society," also known as the "Black Dragon Society"), which was founded in 1901 and, in 1946, was banned as an ultranationalist association by the American occupation authorities. The Kokuryūkai was also identified as the center of an expansionist conspiracy to steer Japan towards war with the Western powers.*

In the absence of detailed studies of the Kokuryūkai, this article aims to clarify the organization's political views and activities and to demonstrate its influence on Japanese foreign relations and involvement in East Asia in the early twentieth century. Drawing on primary sources such as the association's publications and its leaders' memoranda and letters, I show that the Kokuryūkai engaged in intensive networking activities and the accumulation of social capital involving not only Japanese but also Chinese and Korean politicians and diplomats. Nevertheless, I conclude that the association's influence on the origins of the Asia-Pacific War should not be overstated, since its activities reached a climax in the late 1910s and effectively ended with the death of founder Uchida Ryōhei in 1937.

Keywords: Japan; foreign policy; Kokuryūkai; expansionism; militarism; total war; national mobilization; Pan-Asianism

INTRODUCTION

In January 1946, the Supreme Commander of the Allied Powers (SCAP) in Japan issued a list of "certain political parties, associations, societies and other organizations" that were to be

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dissolved on the basis of the "Undesirable Organizations" directive.[1] Among the twenty-seven organizations[2] listed was the Kokuryūkai 黒龍会, translated as the "Black Dragon Society" and identified as a political association (*seiji kessha* 政治結社 or *seisha* 政社[3]) founded in 1901.[4] In late 1946, a document entitled "The Brocade Banner: The Story of Japanese Nationalism," issued by the Civil Intelligence Section of SCAP, identified the Kokuryūkai as the cradle of the Japanese nationalist movement and a central organization in its later development.[5]

In pre- and postwar journalism and scholarship, Western commentators generally agree that the Kokuryūkai had a decisive influence in Japanese politics before 1945 and in particular played a key role in maneuvering Japan into war against the United States and Britain. The identification of the association as a potential threat to Western influence in Asia goes back to the early 1920s.[6] However, hysteria over the influence of the Kokuryūkai reached a climax in the United States and Britain during the later years of World War II. Although some might dismiss such scaremongering as war propaganda, this sort of polemic did much to influence the direction of later research on the Kokuryūkai. A typical wartime article on such organizations appeared in the *Milwaukee Sentinel* in January 1942; over two-and-a-half pages, the newspaper grabbed readers' attention with the headline "Japan's Black Dragons – Our Truly Hellish Arch-Enemy" and rumors about the society's objectives including a plot "to kill (Charlie) Chaplin."[7]

The article was accompanied by a large illustration: a highly unflattering image of an evil-looking elderly Japanese with a dragon looped around his neck like a scarf. The miserable-looking old man shown in the newspaper was meant to represent Tōyama Mitsuru 頭山満 (1855–1944), a prominent leader of Japan's nationalist movement, who was, however, only loosely connected to the Kokuryūkai, as I show below. The founder and lifelong leader of the Kokuryūkai, Uchida Ryōhei 内田良平 (1873–1937), died several years before the outbreak of war with the United States. By 1942, the much older Tōyama had come to be regarded by the Allies as the central figure uniting all Japanese nationalist associations, including the Kokuryūkai. So powerful was he considered by Western commentators that the *Milwaukee Sentinel* placed a photograph of the Emperor next to

1 SCAP 1990, p. 125 and appendix 4.

2 A total of 94 organizations were added to the list through later SCAP directives; *ibid.*, p. 125. In 1936, around 750 ultra-nationalist societies were active in Japan. Cf. Storry 1957.

3 The term *seiji kessha* or *seisha* was used in a broad sense in Meiji Japan to describe all political associations and parties, in particular reflecting the use of the term in the 1880 "Law on Regulating Assemblies" (*shūkai jōrei* 集会条例). In the late Meiji and Taishō periods, it was used to differentiate small political associations from the large political parties (*seitō* 政党) which operated on a national basis and contested seats in the National Diet.

4 "Black Dragon" is the literal translation of the two Chinese characters that signify the name of the Amur River on the Russian–Chinese border (Heilongjiang 黑龍江 in Chinese). Thus, the association has also been called the Amur Society. Both names are apposite – the Black Dragon was the symbol of the organization and figured on its publications; the Amur River formed the central geopolitical axis of the association's expansionist program and is closely linked to the history of the society in terms of its activities.

5 GHQ/SCAP, 1946. GHQ/SCAP Records Box no. 8364, Sheet No. ESS(H)-01570 to 01574): Civil Intelligence Section, Special Report: "The Brocade Banner. The Story of Japanese Nationalism" (Sep. 1946), p. 1.

6 For example, the *New York Times* wrote on 29 October 1921: "We know only to [sic] well that the Genro [elder statesmen] and the military party in Japan hanker after aspiring sentimentalism and that the Black Dragon Society set no limits to their pan-Asian ambitions." (p. 14).

7 Gollomb 1942, pp. 13–15.

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Figure 1. Article on the Kokuryūkai in the *Milwaukee Sentinel*, Jan. 1942.

Japan's Black Dragons— Our Truly Hellish Arch-Enemy

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By JOSEPH GOLLOMB,
Author of "Armies of Spies."

ON THE MORNING that Japan struck at America a snarling Tokio mob milled about the United States Embassy there. The only unimpassioned figures in that mob were exactly a score of men, strategically spaced throughout the gathering.

Every one of the twenty wore a voluminous overcoat and a broad-brimmed hat that hid all of the face except the beard, black, long and curling.

Japanese as a rule do not wear beards as black, long and curling as these, yet every one of the twenty was a Japanese. Moreover, the beards were obviously false, yet just as obviously they were not worn for disguise.

Many a member of the mob glanced at these impassive figures but no one did so for more than an instant. For even children in Japan know that it is not wise to stare at a member of the Black Dragon Society, as the mob knew these to be by token of the oversized coats and hats and the glistening black beards of dyed silk.

For over fifty years the Black Dragon Society has held Japan in a grip of such terror that not even the so-called "Son of Heaven," the Emperor, is immune to it.

In fact, the Black Dragons openly boast they are above the Emperor and can at any time overrule his edicts. It has ruled by virtue of the kind of men admitted to the Society, their single-minded fanaticism and their deadly efficiency as assassins. For over fifty years the Black Dragon Society has made Japanese history, and every chapter of it was written in the blood of men, women and children of other lands.

The head of the Society is a slight, neatly built man ninety-two years old, Mitsuru Toyama. His small seamed face has the color of ivory yellowed with age, his eyes are hard as agates, his thin sensitive lips look as if any moment they would snag on the sharp and gleaming canines that show when he smiles, or when he utters a characteristic snarl that lasts but an instant.

His short and silky-looking white beard used to be black and curling.

He sleeps only four hours out of the twenty-four, eats as sparingly as a saint in religious ecstasy, and spends half his waking hours before a small gold shrine in his little wooden house outside of Tokio.

The rest of the time he devotes to interviews with members of the Society, never with more than one at a time, except at the weekly meeting in Osaka of the Black Dragon Society's council. One hundred and forty-four chiefs, never more or less, attend these council meetings. Every one at the meeting is swathed in a great black silk kimono with a round white disk on the back. Not a face is visible, for it is the will of Mitsuru Toyama that the members of the Society shall be as little known to each other as possible and that all the reins of control shall pass through his yellow, bony hands.

On their part the members of the Society, most of them young officers of the army and the navy, feel little fraternity toward each other, but a complete fanaticism for their chief. He incarnates for them the Japan of their dreams, dominating the world; and for that dream they are as eager to die as most people are eager to remain alive.

It was not until 1904 that the Black Dragon Society got its name and won its first fame. A band of frenzied fanatics united on a program to push the Russians back over the Amur River that borders Manchuria on the north. Rendered in Japanese, the Amur River is "Kokuryuko," or Black Dragon River.

The Japanese people did not want war but this band of fanatics plotted and prodded, lied and inflamed public opinion, and dragooned those in power to vote for it until tension exploded into the Russo-Japanese War. Japan won the war and territory, the Black Dragons won the awe of the Japanese, and its chief plotted further conquests for Japan.

His only program was conquest by war. But a people as a whole cannot live by war alone and many an elder statesman rose to power by feeling, as the vast majority of the Japanese people did, a desire to live in peace with the other people of the world.

Prime Minister of Japan, Hara, was one of these spokesmen for peace. At a conference in Washington the leading naval powers of the world met and agreed to limit the race for bigger and ever costlier navies.

Prime Minister Hara signed the Washington Naval Treaty that limited the growth of Japan's navy, along with other navies. He returned to Japan and a state banquet was tendered to him. One of the guests leaned over to him and whispered something. Hara stared at the little man who dared suggest that the Prime Minister publicly repudiate all that he had striven at Washington to achieve in the way [illegible] peace.

The little man with the ivory face and the [illegible] of beard returned Hara's look of anger appare[illegible] with resignation. But on each side of the [illegible] man a young Japanese officer watched his f[illegible] saw the slight movement of those agate eyes, [illegible] rose as if to leave.

Simultaneously they approached Hara, [illegible] from each side as if to bid a courtly good[illegible] Simultaneously the two took out the knives t[illegible] wore as part of their formal costumes. One [illegible] the young men plunged his knife into Hara's b[illegible] the other slit his throat. The strokes executed [illegible] expertly as a surgeon's wielding of his scalpel.

In the uproar over the assassination a h[illegible] dred hands clawed at the killers. Then the t[illegible] young men turned their knives on themselves [illegible] committed suicide as deftly as they had kil[illegible]

The Black Dragon So[illegible] was serving public notice t[illegible] the Washington Treaty was [illegible] obstacle to the "divine missi[illegible] of Japan to grow great. Har[illegible]

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Tōyama and, in the caption, described the Emperor as a "puppet of the Black Dragons."[8] In the same vein, the article characterized the Kokuryūkai as a "strange secret society headed by the sinister, cynical and wholly inhuman old man of ninety-two [Tōyama] who boasts that he is stronger than the Emperor."[9] When Tōyama died in 1944, the *New York Times* called him "one of world's most evil men."[10] It was hardly surprising that the now famous 1945 propaganda movie *Know Your Enemy: Japan* also refers to the Kokuryūkai,[11] describing it as a "strictly Japanese invention" and a "secret gangster organization," referring to its connections with organized crime in Japan.[12] Tōyama also appears in this movie, introduced as the "unofficial Emperor" of Japan and a "sinister" and "dreaded master murderer," a reference to his involvement in a series of assassinations carried out by rightists in the 1930s.

The ban placed on the Kokuryūkai by SCAP following the war was accompanied by continuing treatment of the association in the media as a central actor in prewar Japan. On 13 September 1945 the London *Times* reported:

> The River Amur (Black Dragon River) Society, sometimes called the Black Dragon Society, was originally founded to encourage the extension of the Japanese frontier to the River Amur, in Manchuria. It became identified with chauvinist activities, particularly those of the "Young Officer" class; and drew large funds in blackmail from industrialists as the price of immunity from assassination. From time to time efforts, all unavailing, have been made by Japanese statesmen of liberal outlook to secure its suppression. It has always succeeded in "going to ground" when its existence seemed threatened, only to emerge with unabated influence when expansionist policies were once more in the ascendant.[13]

Although subsequent research has emphasized that the Kokuryūkai's influence in the process of steering Japan towards war "often has been greatly exaggerated,"[14] the image of the association created by wartime media – that of a well-run and powerful organization spearheading a national conspiracy to lead Japan into war – remains an influential one. Historical dictionaries, for example, regularly characterize the Kokuryūkai as a nationalist (*kokkashugi* 国家主義) or right-wing expansionist (*uyoku shinryakushugi* 右翼侵略主義) organization, but it is also frequently linked to Pan-Asianism. The *Great Dictionary of Japanese History* (*Kokushi Daijiten* 国史大辞典) describes the Kokuryūkai as "an influential nationalist organization that advocated and spread Greater Asianism (*Dai-Ajiashugi* 大アジ

8 *Ibid.*, p. 13.

9 *Ibid.*

10 Anonymous 1944. Not all prewar Western references to Tōyama were critical. For example, in 1932, the *Glasgow Herald* called him the "'Robin Hood' of Japan." (*Glasgow Herald*, 20 May 1932).

11 The complete movie is accessible on various websites with links to YouTube: http://www.youtube.com/results?search_query=know+your+enemy+japan. (The Kokuryūkai is dealt with at 33:40.) The movie is discussed in detail in Dower 1986.

12 See also Siniawer 2008.

13 *The Times*, 13 September 1945, p. 4.

14 Storry 1957, p. 13.

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ア主義)" – a somewhat oxymoronic characterization given the transnational character of Pan-Asianism and Greater Asianism.[15] In his classic study of "Japanese Fascism," Eizawa Kōji 栄沢幸二 identifies the founder of the Kokuryūkai, Uchida Ryōhei, as the "*originator* of fascism in Japan."[16] Despite this characterization, Eizawa argues that, because he died in 1937, Uchida had no impact on developments during the decisive years leading up to the outbreak of war with the West.

As I argue here, the influence of the Kokuryūkai on Japan's advance to war was much less dramatic than some of the commentators quoted above suggest. To a large extent, the depiction of the society in the Western media was a result of the war fever that gripped the Allies in 1942/43. It was also influenced by the self-dramatization of the society in its own publications.[17] These reservations aside, scholars have so far failed to define the precise role that the Kokuryūkai played in Japanese politics during the 1910s and 1920s and in their subsequent development. Few detailed studies of the association exist;[18] in English, there is almost nothing on the subject.[19] Even recent studies of Japanese nationalism, such as Walter Skya's *Japan's Holy War*,[20] merely allude to the Kokuryūkai as an expansionist society,[21] and fail to explore its activities in detail or consider its significance for the political trajectory of modern Japan.

In this article I set out to remedy this situation by re-examining the activities of the Kokuryūkai and assessing its impact on politics and political decision-making in prewar Japan. The main task I have set myself is to analyze the methods adopted by the association to influence Japanese politics. How did it exert pressure on the political decision-making process and how did it influence public discourse on a number of issues? Through both quantitative and qualitative analyses of the Kokuryūkai's publications and other primary sources, I identify central figures in the association's network and their main areas of interest in the political discussions and debates of the 1910s and 1920s.

15 See further Saaler and Szpilman 2011.

16 Eizawa 1981, p. 47 (emphasis added).

17 Kokuryūkai 1931, 1934, 1966.

18 The work of Han Sang Il (Han 1984) and Hatsuse Ryūhei's study of Uchida (Hatsuse 1980) are notable exceptions. Furthermore, a number of publications (Okakura 1996; Unno 1984; Oka 1989; Clarke 2011) address what was probably the last active involvement of the Kokuryūkai in Japanese politics – the association's campaign against Italy's invasion of Abyssinia (Second Italo-Ethiopian War, 1935–1936). In recent years, Chae Soo-do has published a number of articles on the activities of the early Kokuryūkai, particularly its activities in Korea (e.g. Chae 2004). Omoso (2005) gives valuable insights into the Kokuryūkai's activities following the death of Uchida in 1937, with a particular focus on the connections between Japan and the Islamic world. In 2013/14, Tōyama Mitsuru made a "comeback" in mainstream publishing when manga writer Kobayashi Yoshinori chose him as one of the main characters in his regular contributions to the monthly journal *Sapio*, titled "Treatise on Greater Asia" (Daitōa-ron 大東亜論). The series was recently published in book form (Kobayashi 2014). Finally, there are a number of studies authored by descendants of Uchida Ryōhei or other Kokuryūkai members. Most of these publications are of questionable reliability. For example, in the 1980s descendants of Uchida and Tōyama published a collection of articles by and reminiscences of Uchida to mark the fiftieth anniversary of his death (Hotta 1987). Interestingly, this work, a special number of the journal *Kōa Minpō* 興亜民報, featured a black dragon on its cover.

19 Some valuable information on the Kokuryūkai is included in Norman 1944 and Jansen 1954.

20 Skya 2009.

21 *Ibid.*, p. 249.

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I argue that the Kokuryūkai had all the characteristics of a political *pressure group* – although at the time of its founding in 1901 it was thought of as a research association. The Kokuryūkai's activities became increasingly politicized following the Russo-Japanese War of 1904/05, a development that reached a climax around the time of World War I. While this article does not deal with the Kokuryūkai's activities in the 1930s, I show that the association reached a peak of power and influence in the late 1910s and early 1920s, a reality that has been largely ignored by previous studies. During this crucial period of modern Japanese history – often characterized as the period of "Taishō Democracy," and defined here in terms of the formation of party cabinets amid the strengthening intellectual currents of liberalism and parliamentarianism – the Kokuryūkai emerged as a leading actor opposing these new ideological and political trends. Although preoccupied with issues of foreign policy and Pan-Asianism up until World War I, following the war the Kokuryūkai began to focus on domestic politics and, in tandem with the Japanese Imperial Army, helped pave the way for the growth of militarism and totalitarianism in the 1930s – although by that time the association was practically defunct.[22]

THE FOUNDATION OF THE KOKURYŪKAI, ITS MEMBERSHIP, AND OBJECTIVES

The Kokuryūkai was founded in February 1901 in Kanda, Tōkyō, in the presence of 59 men.[23] Within a few months membership expanded to more than 300, by the late 1910s it had reached a total of around 1,000. In the first ten years of the association's existence, most of the Kokuryūkai's members came from Kyūshū. Among these, men from Fukuoka formed the majority, followed by those from Saga and Kumamoto. But unlike the Gen'yōsha 玄洋社, another political society (*seiji kessha*) founded in Fukuoka in 1881, which is often regarded as the parent organization of the Kokuryūkai, the Kokuryūkai would eventually recruit members from all over Japan.[24]

Most of the association's members were also members of other societies such as the Gen'yōsha or Konoe Atsumaro's 近衛篤麿 Tōa Dōbunkai 東亜同文会 (East Asia Common Cultural Association), which included around twenty of the Kokuryūkai's founding members.[25] The leader of the Gen'yōsha, Tōyama Mitsuru, joined the Kokuryūkai as a

22 After some years of inactivity in the late 1920s, in 1931 Uchida founded a new organization, the Dai-Nihon Seisantō 大日本生産党 (Greater Japan Production Party). However, this ultranationalist and fascist party wielded little influence before Uchida's death in 1937. Contemporary right-wing groups in Japan include a Dai-Nihon Seisantō, which sees itself as a direct descendant of Uchida's party and claims Uchida as its founder (*tōso* 党祖, cf. http://seisantou.jp/) and the Kuretake-kai 呉竹会, which advocates the worship of Tōyama (http://www.kuretakekai.jp). Other groups venerating Uchida and Tōyama were founded in postwar Japan, but are now defunct. One of them was the Nihon Kōa Kyōkai 日本興亜協会 (Japanese Association to Raise Asia), which published the above-mentioned journal *Kōa Minpō* for an unknown period in the 1980s. On contemporary right-wing groups in Japan, see Smith 2013.

23 The main events in the Kokuryūkai's history are easily accessible in the official histories of the association, published at intervals to mark its founding anniversary. In this study, I have mostly drawn on Kokuryūkai 1931, and, for information on the society's pan-Asian interests and activities, the encyclopedic Kokuryūkai 1966.

24 Han 1984, p. 93.

25 On Konoe (1863–1904) and his association, see Jansen 1980; Reynolds 1989; Zachmann 2009; Zachmann 2011.

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Figure 2. Uchida Ryōhei, founder of the Kokuryūkai, in the early 1930s (source: Uchida 1934).

supporting, but not as a regular member, as did other important members of this society. Even well-known mainstream party politicians such as Inukai Tsuyoshi 犬養毅 (1855–1932), who would become prime minister in the early 1930s and was regarded by many as a symbol of "Taishō Democracy," supported the Kokuryūkai, because he shared its pan-Asian sentiments.[26] Among its members also was the group of so-called "continental adventurers" *(tairiku rōnin* 大陸浪人) – men who in their youth had traveled to Korea and China to assist revolutionary movements in those countries or to spy for the Japanese military and, to that purpose, had founded the association Ten'yūkyō 天佑侠 (Heavenly Blessed Heroes) in 1894.[27] Uchida, the leader of the Kokuryūkai, was one of

26 On the Kokuryūkai's Pan-Asianism, see the next section.

27 See Kiyofuji 1981; Hatsuse 1980, p. 70; Jansen 1954. On the Kokuryūkai's activities in Korea see Chae 2004 and Moon 2013.

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those "adventurers."[28] His "adventures" would continue when he went to the Russian stronghold Vladivostok in 1895 and opened a judo school in the city – evidently as a cover for reconnaissance activities in Eastern Siberia and the Russian Far East on behalf of the Japanese Imperial Army.[29] In 1897, he crossed Siberia and travelled to Moscow and St. Petersburg in what was probably a reconnaissance mission. His experiences and observations were later published by the society as books and maps.[30] The founding members of the Kokuryūkai included also Nakae Chōmin 中江兆民 (1847–1901) and Ōi Kentarō 大井憲太郎 (1843–1922), prominent figures in the Movement for Freedom and Peoples' Rights (*jiyū minken undō* 自由民権運動) in the 1870s and 1880s, and their membership in Uchida's society testifies to the close relationship between this early "liberal" movement and advocates of expansionism.

In contrast to the Gen'yōsha, which was predominantly concerned with domestic politics,[31] the Kokuryūkai initially tended to focus on foreign policy, aiming to inform and influence public opinion and policymakers and basing its stance on research conducted on Japan's neighbors. This focus on foreign relations was expressed in the association's founding manifesto[32] as well as in its very name (cf. footnote 4) and has to be recognized as the main characteristic of the Kokuryūkai.

A quantitative analysis of the Kokuryūkai's regular publications between 1901 and 1921[33] (see Table 1) shows a geographical shift in the organization's interests, from Siberia and Korea in the 1900s to China in the 1910s, with a renewed focus on Siberia in 1917—1919 as the result of the so-called Siberian Intervention – the Allied intervention in the Russian civil war, with Japanese troops remaining in Siberia until 1922.[34] As a result of the annexation of Korea in 1910, the "Korea problem" was considered settled for most Kokuryūkai members – although some had opposed and protested against the one-sided way in which Korea was annexed to Japan. These members had favored a more equal "union" (*gappō* 合邦) of the two nations, following Tarui Tōkichi's 樽井藤吉 (1850–1922) treatise *Daitō Gappō-ron* 大東合邦論 (Union of the Great East) from the 1880s.[35] Most Kokuryūkai members eventually acknowledged the annexation of Korea to Japan as the realization of a long-desired pan-Asian goal and expressed their acknowledgement with the construction of the "Monument for the Commemoration of the Japanese-Korean Union" (*Nikkan Gappō Kinen-tō* 日韓合邦記念塔)[36] in Tokyo in 1930. However, by choosing Tarui's term *gappō* for this monument rather than the official

28 Hatsuse 1980, pp. 41–43.

29 *Ibid.*, p. 44.

30 *Ibid.*, pp. 44–46.

31 In its inauguration guidelines, the Gen'yōsha defines three major objectives: reverence for the imperial house, love of the fatherland, and protecting the rights of the people. See Takizawa 1976, p. 80; Joos 2011.

32 For an English translation see Saaler 2011a.

33 Most of the Kokuryūkai journals are available in a facsimile edition (Uchida Ryōhei Monjo Kenkyūkai 1992). All quotations in this article refer to the original publications.

34 On the Siberian Intervention, see White 1950; Hara 1989; Dunscomb 2011.

35 See Chae 2004, p. 156; on Tarui, see Kim 2011.

36 Kokuryūkai 1934.

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Table 1. Number of articles referring to particular regions/countries in Kokuryūkai journals.

Publication	Russia	Siberia	Manchuria/Mongolia	China	Korea	Taiwan	Sakhalin	South Seas	Other	Asia General
Kokuryū (1901–08)	15	19	16	8	35	0	1	3	5	0
Ajia Jiron (1917–21)	3	10	9	43	6	0	0	4	20	7

Source: Author's database. See author's website: http://www.japanesehistory.de/kokuryukai/.

term for the annexation of Korea (*heigō* 併合), the society continued to keep a distance from official government discourse.

After the 1919 uprising against Japanese rule in Korea (the so-called March 1 movement, or *San ichi undō* 三一運動, Kr. *Samil Undong*), Kokuryūkai members had criticized the government for not doing enough to bring about "true Japanese-Korean unity." To promote this goal, in 1921 they founded an offspring organization known as the "Dōkōkai" 同光会 (Same Light Association) with the stated objective of "bringing about equality between Koreans," but remained committed to strengthening Japanese colonial rule in Korea and did not consider Korean independence a viable option.[37] Uchida at times went so far as to claim the necessity of "domestic self-governance" (*jichi* 自治) for Koreans, but the Dōkōkai never won much support in Korea, and also retained little influence in Japan.

In addition to the Korean peninsula, the Kokuryūkai gave much attention to Siberia and the Russian Far East. In 1917 and 1918, the association lobbied for a strong and "independent," i.e. exclusively Japanese, intervention in Siberia (*jishu shuppei* 自主出兵) in order to gain territorial control – whether direct or indirect – over Eastern Siberia as far as Lake Baikal. This interest in Siberia and the Russian Far East was not new, but had its roots in the early twentieth century. In its 1901 foundation statement, the association had described Russia as Japan's most dangerous enemy and referred to Russia's Far Eastern possessions as territories Japan should claim for its own colonial empire. In 1904, the Kokuryūkai had proposed a plan to occupy Sakhalin and Kamchatka during the Russo-Japanese War,[38] and now, once again, it promoted similar plans, with the support of a part of the Japanese academia – the so-called "Nine doctors of the Siberian intervention" (*Shiberia shuppei kyū hakushi* シベリア出兵九博士) under the leadership of Professor Tomizu Hirondo 戸水寛人 (1861–1935) of Tokyo Imperial University, also known as "Doctor Baikal" for his calls for Japan to annex all Russian territory as far as Lake Baikal.[39]

Following World War I, another distinct shift in the Kokuryūkai's focus can be discerned, this time from foreign policy to domestic issues. The association began to play a leading role in agitation against Taishō Democracy and the "new thought" (*shin shisō* 新思想) coming with it, i.e. parliamentarianism and liberalism, but also against socialism and communism, all of which were considered "dangerous thought" (*kiken shisō* 危険思想) by the Kokuryūkai and like-minded nationalists. This subject will be discussed in detail below. Before that, I will look at the ways in which the association attempted to achieve its objectives.

THE KOKURYŪKAI'S SOCIAL CAPITAL

Kokuryūkai members rarely occupied public office or government positions. Uchida and his compatriots prided themselves on being independent, impartial, and selfless activists

37 *Ibid.*; Saaler 2011b.

38 Uchida Ryōhei Monjo Kenkyūkai 1994, vol. 2, pp. 178–246. Many of the Kokuryūkai's publications are accessible in full text in the "Digital Library from the Meiji Era" on the Japanese National Diet Library's website (http://kindai.ndl.go.jp/index.html).

39 On Tomizu see Marshall 1977. The main publication of the "Nine Doctors" was Ōtani 1918.

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outside the "corrupt and dirty world of politics." Only occasionally did Uchida accept official positions. For several years after 1906, for example, he worked for the Resident-General in Korea (*Kankoku tōkan* 韓国統監) and organized the support of the pro-Japanese society Ilchinhoe (Jp. Isshinkai 一進會, literally Restoration Society).[40] In 1912, he served briefly as foreign affairs advisor to the "Provisory President of the Chinese Republic," Sun Yat-Sen 孫中山 (a.k.a. Son Bun 孫文, 1866–1925), following the inauguration of the Republic.[41] During the Russo-Japanese War, members of the Kokuryūkai temporarily worked as translators and spies for the Imperial Army. Kokuryūkai members accepted these positions to finance their activities, as they were frequently in need of cash and had to compete for political funds.[42]

The main tactic used by the Kokuryūkai to exert influence on foreign policy and government decision-making was the accumulation of social capital and the creation of an extensive personal network among politicians, businessmen, and leading military figures. As head of the Kokuryūkai, Uchida Ryōhei often paid personal visits to politicians and sought to influence their decisions – at times by the use of brute force.[43] The table of contents of the eleven-volume "Papers Relating to Uchida Ryōhei" (*Uchida Ryōhei kankei monjo* 内田良平関係文書) reveals some of the central personalities in Uchida's social network.[44] The work contains letters from influential politicians, military officers, and diplomats. Particularly numerous are letters and telegrams involving fellow nationalist activists such as Sugiyama Shigemaru 杉山茂丸 (1864–1935), Kikuchi Chūsaburō 菊池中三郎 (1855–1821), Kita Ikki 北一輝 (1883–1937), and also pro-Japanese Korean politicians.

Perhaps more significant than his letters and visits to politicians were Uchida's frequent memoranda, which – solicited or not – he sent to cabinet members and influential politicians, diplomats, bureaucrats and businessmen, particularly during the Taishō period (1912–1926). While only seventeen of Uchida's memoranda (and other short pamphlets) from the Meiji period (1868–1912) are extant, we know of at least 140 from the – relatively short – Taishō period and a further 62 from 1926 to Uchida's death in 1937.[45] In 1915, for example, in response to a request from Kōno Hironaka 河野広中 (1849–1923), Minister for Agriculture, Uchida Ryōhei wrote a memorandum on foreign policy options titled "Views on China Policy" (*Tai-shi seisaku iken* 対支政策意見), which was widely read in political circles.[46] Uchida also published numerous magazine articles in the Kokuryūkai's official journals (*kikanshi* 機関紙, see below) as well as in other magazines such as the high-profile *Taiyō* 太陽 (The Sun), *Dai-Kokumin* 大国民 (Great Nation), *Chūō Kōron* 中央公論 (Central Tribune), *Shin Nippon* 新日本 (New Japan), *Shina* 支那 (China), *Budō* 武道 (Budo), *Kaiten Jihō* 回天時報 (Kaiten News), and *Shōwa Seinen* 昭和青年 (Shōwa Youth).[47]

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40 See Duus 1995, chs. 5–6; Chae 2004, p. 148; Moon 2013, ch. 7; Jansen 1954.

41 See Uchida Ryōhei Monjo Kenkyūkai 1994, vol. 1, p. 346; Eizawa 1981, p. 50.

42 For the fundraising practices of another political activist, Kita Ikki, see Szpilman 2002.

43 See Norman 1944, pp. 270–72; also, in general, Siniawer 2008.

44 Uchida Ryōhei Monjo Kenkyūkai 1994, vol. 1.

45 *Ibid.*, pp. 39–42.

46 Uchida Ryōhei Monjo Kenkyūkai 1994, vol. 4, pp. 124–41.

47 Uchida Ryōhei Monjo Kenkyūkai 1994, vol. 1, pp. 26–29.

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The Kokuryūkai's social network was not limited to Japan. Uchida was at the center of a pan-Asian network of revolutionary leaders who were striving for the independence of their countries from imperialist domination or rule and sought support in Japan. While the Japanese government enforced a policy of expelling such activists from Japan, for the sake of maintaining good relations with European countries and also China, members of national independence movements from Asia found shelter at the private homes of Tōyama and Uchida. While this brought the Kokuryūkai into conflict with the authorities, it boosted its prestige as an independent association with a reputation for being an uncompromising critic of the government and having firm pan-Asian credentials. Among the activists supported by the Kokuryūkai were Sun Yat-sen,[48] the Indian nationalist leader Ras Behari Bose (1886–1945),[49] Emilio Aguinaldo (1869–1964) from the Philippines,[50] and pro-Japanese Koreans such as Lee Yong-gu, the leader of the Ilchinhoe.[51]

The most important connection for the Kokuryūkai and for Uchida was the military, particularly the Imperial Army. There were three significant dimensions to this relationship. First, Kokuryūkai members had experience of living in countries where the Japanese armed forces were increasingly involved – Korea, Manchuria, and Siberia – and could serve as informants, guides, and translators. The Kokuryūkai also maintained the only Russian language school in Japan in the 1900s and provided the army with a stock of Russia specialists. In addition, it had already published useful maps and guidebooks on Siberia and Manchuria, such as the "Guide to Conquering Russia" (*Sei-Ro Annai* 征露案内) in 1904[52] – publications which, again, became an important source of income for the Kokuryūkai. Second, the expansionist policies advocated by the Kokuryūkai were highly compatible with the aims of the military to legitimize Japanese rule on the Asian continent and thereby establish Japan as a "continental state" (*tairiku kokka* 大陸国家). Third, the Kokuryūkai and the military tended to be in agreement on domestic politics and plans to prepare Japan for a future war. I will deal with this highly important subject in a separate section below.

The Kokuryūkai's connections with business circles were also of great importance in promoting its aims and ideology. Political activity, of course, has always required large amounts of money. Throughout his life, Uchida received funding from business circles in support of his activities. His uncle, Hiraoka Kōtarō 平岡浩太郎 (1851–1906), diverted revenue from his coal-mining business to finance Uchida and the Kokuryūkai. The society also received funds from other large businesses, sometimes in the form of direct subsidies, as in the case of pharmaceutical concern Hoshi Seiyaku 星製薬,[53] sometimes as fees for advertisements placed in its journals (see next chapter). Many of the Kokuryūkai's publications, especially the *Ajia Jiron* (Asian Review 亜細亜持論) and the English-language *Asian Review*, featured advertisements for Japan's major industrial enterprises, such as the South

48 Jansen 1954.

49 On Bose's relation to the Kokuryūkai see Nakajima 2005.

50 Jansen 1954.

51 Moon 2004, ch. 7.

52 Uchida Ryōhei Monjo Kenkyūkai 1994, vol. 2, pp. 84–120.

53 Hatsuse 1980, p. 280.

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Manchuria Railway (Minami Manshū Tetsudō Kabushiki Kaisha 南満鉄株式会社) and the Oriental Development Co. (Tōyō Takushoku Kabushiki Kaisha 東洋拓殖株式会社), major shipping companies (Ōsaka Shōsen Kaisha 大阪商船会社; Nippon Yūsen Kaisha 日本郵船会社; Tōyō Kisen Kaisha 東洋汽船会社), trading companies (Suzuki Shōten 鈴木商店; Sankyō Kabushiki Kaisha 三共株式会社; Furukawa Gōmei Kaisha 古川合名会社; Ōsaka Mitsukoshi 大阪三越; Ōkura Yōkō 大倉洋行; Mitsui Yōkō 三井洋行), banks (The Yokohama Specie Bank Ltd. 横浜正金銀行; The Mitsubishi Bank Ltd. 三菱銀行; The Mitsui Bank Ltd. 三井銀行; The Bank of Taiwan Ltd. 台湾銀行), and manufacturers of all kinds (from Asahi Pencil 朝日鉛筆 to Mikimoto Cultured Pearls 御木本真珠). The English-language *Asian Review* carried appeals by Japanese businessmen seeking "co-operation with American capitalists."[54] The broad range of companies advertising in the Kokuryūkai's publications, and thus supporting the association financially, indicates that its activities and views enjoyed a significant degree of legitimacy in Japanese society and were not considered particularly "extremist" during the 1910s.

THE KOKURYŪKAI'S PROPAGANDA MACHINE

In addition to personal connections and contacts maintained through letters, telegrams, and memoranda, Kokuryūkai members also aimed to influence public opinion through the publication of journals, books, and other information outlets; through public lectures and political rallies; and by establishing ancillary societies that fostered cooperation with other groups in Japan's nationalist movement.

Between 1901 and 1921 the Kokuryūkai published six regular journals, albeit with some interruptions. The first to appear, titled simply *Kaihō* 会報 (Bulletin), was banned (*hakkō teishi* 発行停止) by the government after only two issues due to its "threatening (*fuon* 不穏) views" regarding Japanese expansion on the Asian continent[55] – views which contradicted the government's policy of "cooperation" with the Western powers, particularly as far as Japanese ambitions on the continent were concerned. This publication was resumed as *Kokuryū* 黒龍 shortly afterwards, only to be discontinued due to financial problems in 1903.

For a short while in 1908, the Kokuryūkai published the *Tōa Geppō* 東亜月報 (East Asian Monthly). In order to propagate the association's agenda in China, Korea, and elsewhere in East Asia, this journal was published in classical Chinese (*kanbun* 漢文). This tactic reflected the pan-Asian ambitions of the Kokuryūkai and the intent to strengthen relations with other pan-Asian groups in Asia, but also in Japan, such as Konoe Atsumaro's Tōa Dōbunkai.[56] However, *Tōa Geppō*'s "publication manifesto" reveals as well a strong sense of superiority towards China, a stance which would grow in importance in pan-Asian discourse in the years to come. The first issue declared that its goal was "to

54 For an example, see *The Asian Review* 1:2 (March 1920) (see also author's website: http://www.japanesehistory.de/kokuryukai/).

55 Kokuryūkai 1931, p. 11. Also banned was a book authored by Uchida and titled *Roshia Bōkoku-ron* 露西亜亡国論 (The Collapse of Russia).

56 In the 1900s Uchida Ryōhei wrote a series of articles for the journal *Shina* (China), published by Konoe's East Asia Common Culture Association (Tōa Dōbun-kai), one of the largest and longest-lasting pan-Asian associations. On the Tōa Dōbun-kai see Reynolds 1989; Zachmann 2009, 2011.

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inform the Chinese (*Shinajin* 支那人) about the state of the [Japanese] Empire in the larger framework of East Asia and about the international situation"[57] – reflecting the underlying assumption that China and Chinese leaders lacked sufficient knowledge to deal with world affairs on their own and were in need of Japanese assistance. Other articles described China as a "battlefield in [a struggle between] Eastern and Western powers,"[58] implicitly negating China's ability to act independently and refusing to recognize China as an independent country with its own sense of agency and identity. It is evident from the changes in the tone of *Tōa Geppō* that, despite the continuing emphasis on Asian unity and a repetition of the slogan "same culture – same race," the Japanese claim to leadership in Asia (*Ajia meishu-ron* 亜細亜盟主論) became stronger in these years.

The *Ajia Jiron*, which was published between 1917 and 1921, is the most revealing publication for the study of the Kokuryūkai as it documents in great detail the association's activities during its most active period. Unlike its early publications, which had the prime objective of reporting more or less objectively the results of the Kokuryūkai's research on East Asian matters,[59] *Ajia Jiron* had a strongly political character,[60] reflecting the growing political activism of the Kokuryūkai. It contained political memoranda, strongly worded editorials, and policy proposals, some of which we will look at in detail later.

To inform the world about the Kokuryūkai's and Japan's objectives, the Kokuryūkai also published an English-language journal from 1920 to 1921. Titled *The Asian Review*, it claimed (wrongly, as it happened[61]) to be "The Only English Monthly in Japan on Politics, Economy, Art, etc., of Asia, Managed and Edited by Japanese." With its strong focus on Asian affairs, this journal was a tool for propagating Japanese Pan-Asianism in English-speaking countries; but it was also directed at readers in Europe and the United States in particular with the hope of furthering Western "understanding" of Japanese foreign policy objectives. As the editor put it: "We have to explain our foreign policy, which is based upon the will of the people, to the world."[62] The journal can be seen as standing in a tradition of public and semi-public publications that aimed at improving Japan's image to a worldwide audience.[63]

It is difficult to estimate the circulation of the Kokuryūkai's various magazines and, therefore, to judge how influential they actually were. In the first place, as official publications of the Kokuryūkai, these journals were distributed to the membership of the association, which, as we have seen, numbered around 1,000 by the end of the 1910s. Some scholars have argued that the members constituted the core of the readership.[64]

57 *Tōa Geppō* 1 (April 1908), pp. 1–12.

58 *Tōa Geppō* 5 (Sep. 1908), p. 1.

59 Matsuzawa 1978, pp. 23–57.

60 Arima 1978.

61 For example, *The Japan Magazine* was published in the 1910s and 1920s.

62 Uchida Ryōhei Monjo Kenkyūkai 1994, vol. 5, p. 168.

63 See Valliant 1974 on the issue of "Selling Japan" abroad; also O'Connor 2010; on the impact of *The Asian Review* in the United States, see *ibid.*, pp. 58–61, 144–48; Gallicchio 2000, pp. 58–61, 144–48.

64 Matsuzawa 1978, p. 24.

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Figure 3. Cover of *Ajia Jiron*, 1917.

However, it seems certain that the journals also reached influential individuals through the personal networks of Kokuryūkai members. By way of comparison, we should keep in mind the circulation of other magazines at the time: at the beginning of the twentieth century, even "popular" magazines such as *Taiyō* 太陽 (The Sun) or *Kokumin no tomo* 国民の友 (The People's Friend), only had circulations of 2,000–2,500 and 500, respectively.[65] But they probably had many more readers, as each copy was passed on to friends and colleagues. Only from the late 1910s did the general circulation of Japanese journals and magazines begin to increase significantly.[66]

Besides their propagandizing effects on its readership, the journals' significance has to be seen in the deepening and widening of the association's social network among the

65 Suzuki 2001, p. 38.

66 The first Japanese journal to reach a circulation of over one million copies was the journal *Kingu* (King); see Satō 2002.

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political and academic elites. While the articles in the society's early journals, *Kokuryū* and *Tōa Geppō*, were mostly written by Kokuryūkai members, the contributions to *Ajia Jiron* were written to a conspicuous degree by non-members – freelance writers and independent scholars as well as established academics, who, through their contributions to Kokuryūkai publications, were integrated into the association's informal social network. The writers listed in Table 2 were the main contributors to the journal *Kokuryū* (Kokuryūkai members are in capitals).

As we can see, almost all these writers were members of the Kokuryūkai. However, in the case of *Ajia Jiron*, published between 1917 and 1921 (see Table 3), members were the minority of writers. They were replaced by a number of well-known and prolific authors with a high profile in Japanese society, academia, and politics (Kokuryūkai members are again in capitals). Among the writers with fewer than a dozen contributions, we further find a large number of well-known journalists, academics, and mainstream politicians who were regular contributors to both *Ajia Jiron* and the English-language *Asian Review*. These included journalists Shiga Shigetaka 志賀重孝 (1863–1927) and Ōba Kakō 大庭柯公 1872–1924 [?]); international law experts Takebe Tongo 建部遯吾 (1871–1945), Matsunami Ni'ichirō 松波仁一郎 (1868–1945) and Terao Tōru 寺尾亨 (1859–1925, all members of the "Seven Doctors" of 1903 and the "Nine Doctors" of 1918); diplomat Horiuchi Kanjō 堀内干城; and politicians Hamaguchi Osachi 浜口雄幸 (1870–1931), Nagai Ryūtarō 永井柳太郎 (1881–1941), and Nagashima Ryūji 長島隆二 (1878–1940). Many of these contributors were requested by the Kokuryūkai to write a piece for the first issue of *Ajia Jiron*. Their acceptance did not necessarily mean that they fully endorsed the association's aims and methods, but with their contributions they helped the Kokuryūkai to foster its prestige and improve its social standing.

After the Kokuryūkai's regular publishing activities came to an end in 1921, the association relied on other methods of influencing political decision-makers and public opinion. As we have seen, Uchida Ryōhei began producing a growing number of memoranda during the Taishō period. Further, public lectures (*kōenkai* 講演会) and political rallies (*taikai* 大会) were held with increasing frequency in the 1910s in order to exert influence on key political questions. One of the first rallies held under the auspices of the Kokuryūkai was the "People's Rally on China Policy" (Tai-Shi Kokumin Taikai 対支国民大会) held on 7 July 1913 in Tokyo's Hibiya Park. Some 30,000 people reportedly attended. On this occasion, Kokuryūkai members as well as several university professors made speeches about the situation in China, which had been in revolutionary turmoil since late 1911. All the speakers were highly critical of the government's indecisive stance on China. In particular, they called on the government to support the Nanjing provisional government under Sun Yat-Sen, with whom Kokuryūkai members had been in close contact for more than a decade.[67] Four years later, the Kokuryūkai co-organized a rally with the objective to push the government towards a full-fledged military intervention in Siberia. The "Rally for the Promotion of a Self-defense Intervention in East Asia" (*Tōa jiei shuppei kisei taikai* 東亜自衛出兵期成大会) was held on 30 July 1918 in conjunction with thirteen other political organizations.[68]

67 In fact, the Kokuryūkai had supported Sun Yat-sen's insurgencies since 1898 with money and weapons. See Jansen 1954.

68 Kokuryūkai 1931, p. 30.

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Table 2. Authors of articles published in Kokuryū.

Name	No. of articles	Background
UCHIDA RYŌHEI	25	Founder and head of Kokuryūkai.
TAKEDA HANSHI 武田範之	22	Member of Ten'yūkyō, founding member of Kokuryūkai; supporter of Japanese annexation of Korea.
YOSHIKURA ŌSEI 吉倉汪聖	20	Journalist, member of Ten'yūkyo, founding member of Kokuryūkai.
FURUKAWA SATOMI 古川里美	15	Founding member of Kokuryūkai.
Iwakura Zenkichi 岩倉善喜	14	Biography unknown.
KUZUU SHŪSUKE 葛生修亮	14	Member of Ten'yūkyō, founding member of Kokuryūkai.

Source: Author's database. See author's website: http://www.japanesehistory.de/kokuryukai/.

Table 3. Authors of articles published in *Ajia Jiron*.

Name	No. of articles	Background
UCHIDA RYŌHEI	29	Founder and head of Kokuryūkai.
Nagase Hōsuke 長瀬鳳輔	28	Graduate of Tokyo University of Foreign Studies and The Johns Hopkins University, and a Martin Luther University Halle-Wittenberg Ph.D., Nagase was professor at the Army Military College, at Waseda University and president of Kokushikan High School (1919–1926). Author of many books on Central Asia, Turkey, and the Balkans, and on French history, including a seven-volume biography of Napoleon (see also section 6). Translator of Lothrop Stoddard's *The Rising Tide of Color against White World-Supremacy* into Japanese. Member of Rōsō-kai 老壮会 and other nationalist organizations.
Nagasaki Takeshi 長崎武	24	India expert; journalist; producer of a movie on medieval imperial loyalist Kusunoki Masashige 楠正成 (1926).
Sakamaki Tei'ichirō 酒巻貞一郎	22	China expert; author of "The Partition of China" (*Shina bunkatsu-ron* 支那分割論, 1913); professor at the Naval War College.
KUZUU KEI'U 葛生桂雨	21	Poet; mostly contributed poems.
Satō Kōjirō 佐藤鋼次郎	18	Retired army lieutenant-general; author of many works on the concept of "Total War" in the late 1910s (see section 6 for details).
Nishimoto Shōzō 西本省三	16	Graduate of the Tōa Dōbun Shoin 東亜同文書院 academy in Shanghai; interpreter during the Russo-Japanese War; journalist; founder of the journal *Shanghai*.
Mitsukawa Kametarō 満川亀太郎	15	Founder of pan-Asianist societies Rōsōkai and Yūzonsha 猶存社 the editor at the monthly *Nippon*, freelance writer, and subsequently a professor at Takushoku University 拓殖大学.
Tomoyama Saburō 友山三郎	14	Biography unknown.
Ogawa Unpei 小川運平	14	Interpreter for the Imperial Army during the Boxer Expedition (1900); participant in the Kokumin Dōmeikai 国民同盟会 (1902).
KUZUU YOSHIHISA 葛生能久	13	Founding member of the Kokuryūkai and later head of the Dai Nippon Seisantō; close comrade-in-arms of Uchida and editor of many Kokuryūkai publications.

Source: Author's database. See author's website: http://www.japanesehistory.de/kokuryukai/.

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In 1919, the Kokuryūkai organized a "Rally to Promote the Abolition of Racial Discrimination" (*Jinshuteki sabetsu teppai kisei taikai* 人種的差別撤廃期成大会, 5 February 1919), aimed at pressuring the government to further pursue the question of inserting a racial non-discrimination clause in the charter of the League of Nations.[69] Even though only 300 people attended, the rally had a powerful impact on domestic politics thanks to the participation of influential figures such as politician Sugita Teiichi 杉田定一 (1851–1929).[70] In order to exert influence on the Japanese strategy at the ongoing Paris Peace Conference, a further event, the "Rally to discuss the peace treaty question" (*Kōwa mondai taikai* 講和問題大会) was held on 4 May 1919 with some 1,000 participants;[71] this was followed by a "Rally to discuss questions of foreign policy" (*Gaikō monseki taikai* 外交問責大会) staged in August.[72] In 1924, the United States government's Immigration Act, which restricted further immigration from Japan and other Asian countries, triggered a resurgence of the Kokuryūkai's activism. On 2 June 1924, 370 supporters gathered for the "People's rally to discuss the America question" (*Taibei mondai kokumin taikai* 対米問題国民大会). They included several Diet members.[73] One month later, another rally, the "People's rally to consider the America problem" (*Taibei kinen kokumin taikai* 対米記念国民大会), was held with more than 20,000 participants.[74] This was followed from 7–11 August 1924 by a "Lecture series on our America policy" (*Taibei kokusaku daikōenkai* 対米国策大講演会), where fifteen politicians, senior academics, and political activists presented their views on Japan's foreign policy and the "America problem."

All these activities indicate that, under the stimuli of the revolutionary turmoil in China and Russia, as well as the "anti-Japanese immigration legislation" passed in 1924 in the United States, the activities of the Kokuryūkai had received a considerable boost. However, according to Kokuryūkai sources, Uchida did not consider that the association was making its (and his own) views heard with sufficient force.[75] As a result, the association actively sought to broaden its activities and win new supporters by supporting or helping found a number of new political associations, most of which worked closely with it to organize the rallies discussed above (with some being founded for this purpose alone). Already in 1901, the Kokuryūkai had played a central role in bringing about the formation of the "Anti-Russian Society," the Tai-Ro Dōshikai 対露同士会, and, in 1908, Uchida Ryōhei together with Tōyama Mitsuru, Terao Tōru, and others had founded the Rōninkai 浪人会, a political association which remained active throughout the Taishō period. Other organizations with similar objectives to the Kokuryūkai would be formed by the society or its members in the years to come, such as the Dōkōkai (see above). It is generally assumed by historians that these nationalist, ultranationalist, or proto-fascist societies were

69 On the "racial equality proposal" see Shimazu 1998.

70 An English version of Sugita's speech during the rally and related documents are included in Saaler 2011c; cf. also Kokuryūkai 1931, p. 32.

71 *Ibid.*

72 *Ibid.*, p. 33.

73 *Ibid.*, pp. 46–47; see Uchida Ryōhei Monjo Kenkyūkai 1994, vol. 7, p. 58 for a list of participants.

74 Kokuryūkai 1931, p. 47.

75 Takizawa 1976, p. 289.

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Figure 4. Political rally organized by the Kokuryūkai (Source: Kuzuu Yoshihisa: *Tōa Senkaku Shishi Kiden*, vol. 3. Tokyo: Kokuryūkai Shuppanbu, 1936).

芝公園の對國際聯盟國民大會（一三三頁參照）

其　二　來賓滿洲國軍政部總長張景惠の答辭

characteristic of Japanese politics during the 1930s, but it should be noted here that dozens of such groups, under the auspices of the Kokuryūkai, had already come into being in the 1910s and 1920s, as a primary and direct reaction against "Taishō Democracy" and the government's advocacy of a "cooperative foreign policy" (*kyōchō gaikō* 強調外交).

THE KOKURYŪKAI'S PAN-ASIANISM

Historians have credited Uchida Ryōhei and the Kokuryūkai with a central place in the development of Japanese Pan-Asianism, and dictionary entries generally characterize the society as a pan-Asian, nationalist, and/or expansionist political association. Here it is important to distinguish between Pan-Asianism as an ideology and Pan-Asianism as a movement.[76] Political activists from Kyūshū, members of associations such as the Gen'yōsha and the Kokuryūkai, lobbied for cooperation with the leaders of anti-imperialistic, anti-Western nationalist independence movements in various Asian

76 A large number of studies on Pan-Asianism have been published in recent years. While this section has to remain limited to the Pan-Asianism of the Kokuryūkai, in general see Yamamuro 2001; Saaler and Koschmann 2007; Hotta 2007; Aydin 2007; Matsuura 2010; Esenbel 2010; Saaler and Szpilman 2011; Gates 2011; Matsuura 2013. Excellent books also have been published on the role of Pan-Asianism in the Middle East such as McMeekin 2011.

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countries.[77] However, this activism did not always lead to a strong intellectual commitment to particular positions on Asian regionalism. In terms of ideology, the Kokuryūkai did not come up with original proposals; rather it relied on the work of others – for example, the writings of Tarui Tōkichi, an early pan-Asianist. Uchida Ryōhei himself concedes in his writings that it was only after reading Tarui's "Treatise on the Great Eastern Union" (*Daitō Gappō-ron*) that he began thinking about Asia as a region.[78]

While the Kokuryūkai's publications confront us with a mass of information in the form of detailed reports on the situation on the continent, there is a marked absence of theoretical writings on questions related to Asian regionalism or Asianism, on what constituted "Asia" in the first place, or on the future of the region as a whole. Interestingly, there is also no evidence for the use of the term "Pan-Asianism" (or "Asianism" or "Greater Asianism") in the Kokuryūkai's publications before 1917. Thus, although the association's activism throughout Asia can be considered as an expression of early regionalism in modern Japan, it was left to others to channel this activism into concrete policy proposals and a well-defined theoretical framework. In Japan, one of the first usages of the term "Greater Asianism" (*Dai Ajiashugi* 大アジア主義) was made in a book published in 1916 by Kodera Kenkichi 小寺謙吉 (1877–1949), a Diet member and international law expert.[79] It was only after the appearance of Kodera's book that the expression was used by the Kokuryūkai, in the first issue of *Ajia Jiron*, dated July 1917:

> The Japanese Empire, as the last [independent] representative of Asia (. . .), has to establish a comprehensive foreign policy vis-à-vis the world, implant *the idea of Greater Asianism, the great achievement of the foundation of our country*, in the minds of the people, and bring about a comprehensive solution to the East Asia problem based on this [Asian]ism.[80]

A similar statement was included in a pamphlet on the "Revitalization of the Kokuryūkai" published the same month.[81] Several articles on Asianism appeared in the association's journals[82] throughout 1917 and 1918.[83] By this time, however, it had become clear that the Kokuryūkai's version of Pan-Asianism and Asian regionalism was not to be regarded as an end in itself, but rather as an instrument to legitimize Japanese territorial ambitions. While early forms of Pan-Asianism embodied a strong idealism – as seen in the writings of Tarui Tōkichi or the activities of a group called the Kōa-kai 興亜会[84] and Miyazaki Tōten

77 On the Kokuryūkai's activities in China see Chō 1997.

78 The Kokuryūkai frequently referred their support for the annexation of Korea – or "uniting" Korea with Japan – to Tarui's classic work on the subject, *Daitō Gappō-ron*, for example in a one-page pamphlet titled "Outline of the Argument for Union" in 1909. See Uchida Ryōhei Monjo Kenkyūkai 1994, vol. 3, p. 77.

79 Kodera 1916; on Kodera and the influence of his book see Saaler 2007.

80 *Ajia Jiron*, vol. 1, no. 1, p. 1. Emphasis added.

81 Uchida Ryōhei Monjo Kenkyūkai 1994, vol. 4, p. 299.

82 A wave of pan-Asian writings was also evident around this time in other journals such as *Tōhō Jiron* (Eastern Review), *Nihon oyobi Nihonjin* 日本及日本人 (Japan and the Japanese) and *Taiyō* (The Sun). Cf. Saaler 2007.

83 Yoshimura 1917; Editorial 1918a; Editorial 1918b; Korehashi 1921.

84 Kuroki 2007.

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宮崎滔天 (1871–1922)[85] – idealistic notions of racial equality and solidarity increasingly gave way to *Realpolitik* considerations of Japanese leadership and hegemony after the turn of the century.[86]

In his influential introduction and commentary on an early collection of sources relating to Asianism, Takeuchi Yoshimi 竹内好 describes Pan-Asianism as "a loose set of ideas, a current in ideological discourse, but not a coherent ideology in itself."[87] I have argued elsewhere that this judgement may be valid as regards the Pan-Asianism of the Meiji era (1868–1912), but by the time of World War I, Pan-Asianism had developed into a coherent ideology that was well defined in terms of its basic principles, content, and objectives.[88] The above-mentioned book by Diet member Kodera Kenkichi is the most obvious example of this trend. However, Takeuchi is probably right in asserting that the most important role of prewar Japanese Pan-Asianism lay in providing the basis for legitimizing Japan's overseas expansion and that it had a strong tendency to be "affirmative of the means of expansionism." In the early Meiji period, Japan was not yet strong enough to expand onto the Asian continent and dominate the East Asian region. However, when it ascended to the position of a regional superpower due to the weakening influence of the European powers in East Asia during World War I, pan-Asian notions were increasingly used to legitimize Japanese expansionism. It therefore became obvious that while Pan-Asianism, as in the case of other pan-movements, had the potential to serve as an ideological basis for regional integration, it eventually fell victim to schemes of territorial expansion, succumbing to the temptation of nationalist-imperialist policies. While pan-ideologies were originally devised as alternatives to nationalist approaches, most ended up being instrumentalized in the service of a particular nation state claiming regional leadership.[89] The links between Pan-Asianism and the Japanese claim to regional leadership are no exception. The idea of regional cooperation was replaced by the notion of national domination of the region by a "Greater Japanism" (*Dai Nihonshugi* 大日本主義). The notorious "Greater East Asian Co-prosperity Sphere" of the 1940s was the logical consequence of this development.

THE KOKURYŪKAI AND THE MILITARY

As we have seen, following the end of World War I the Kokuyrūkai's journals were publishing fewer articles on Asia and Japan's foreign relations, while focusing increasingly on domestic issues. Above all, there was now a strong focus on military-related issues such as the question of disarmament, the subject of an intense international debate following the end of the war and the discussions surrounding the founding of the League of Nations.[90]

85 Szpilman 2011.

86 Kuroki 2007.

87 Takeuchi 1963.

88 Cf. Saaler 2007. A number of recent publications have attempted to come up with a periodization of the history of Pan-Asianism or a classification of pan-Asian writings (Hotta 2007; Matsuura 2010). Due to space restrictions, I cannot discuss these attempts here.

89 Snyder 1984.

90 See Burkman 2008.

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The question of how to prepare a nation for a possible future "total war" (*sōryokusen* 総力戦) occupied military planners all over the world. Japan – and the Kokuryūkai – were no exceptions to this trend.[91] In the last years of the Great War, the society's publications intensively discussed the subjects of "total war" and "national mobilization." For many Kokuryūkai members, a future "national mobilization" was at risk of being undermined by the activities of advocates of "new thought" – not only socialism and communism, but also Western ideas of liberalism and individualism. Thus, these "new" and "alien" ideologies were strongly criticized in Kokuryūkai publications – for example, in an aggressive editorial titled "Doing Away with Foolish Scholarly Views" (Shisōkai no gūron o haisu 思想界の愚論を排す) in the first 1919 issue of *Ajia Jiron*. The Kokuryūkai also engaged in direct campaigns against advocates of liberalism and democracy. In *Ajia Jiron*, for example, the association branded the daily *Ōsaka Asahi Shinbun* as a traitor to the nation (*hikokumin* 非国民). It also started a campaign to protect what it regarded as Japan's distinctive form of national polity, the *kokutai* 国体. The Rōninkai, an offshoot of the Kokuryūkai, stood at the forefront of the early *Kokutai Yōgo Undō* 国体擁護運動, the Movement to Protect the Kokutai, or National Body.[92]

The activities of the Kokuryūkai and related societies such as the Rōninkai were not limited to media campaigns and the organization of rallies, but also included physical attacks on their enemies. For example, in 1919 "Kokuryūkai thugs dragged (…) the president of the Ōsaka Asahi through the streets of Ōsaka, after which they tied him to a lamppost and hung a placard around his neck proclaiming 'heavenly punishment'."[93] In 1925, Uchida Ryōhei was involved in a plot to assassinate Prime Minister Katō Takaaki 加藤高明,[94] a leading figure of Taishō Democracy and the architect of a universal suffrage bill which the Kokuryūkai had strongly opposed.

In its fight against the "dangerous ideas," the Kokuryūkai closely cooperated with the Japanese military, particularly the Imperial Japanese Army. As we have seen above, the society had already established strong links to the military in the 1900s. Some of its members had cooperated with the army in the Sino-Japanese and Russo-Japanese wars.[95] Since 1904, the Kokuryūkai had been receiving financial support from both the Army Ministry and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. When, due to a shortage of funds, the Kokuryūkai was unable to publish a series of books and maps on Asian geography (mainly Russia, Siberia, and Manchuria), both these ministries stepped in to help the association with an advance payment for 800 copies.[96] The Army Ministry had recognized two Kokuryūkai publications in particular, "Guide to Conquering Russia" (*Sei-Ro Annai*) and "Recent Map of Korea and Manchuria" (*Mankan Shinzu* 満韓新図), as highly useful materials.[97] During the Siberian

91 On the issue of total war in modern Japan, see Yamanouchi, Koschmann and Narita 1998; Kobayashi 2004 and Barnhart 1987.

92 Uchida Ryōhei Monjo Kenkyūkai 1994, vol. 5, pp. 43–56; vol. 8, pp. 11–25, 56; See also *Ajia Jiron* 2:11 (November 1918), pp. 35–42 and elsewhere in this journal for further material advocating the protection of the superior Japanese *kokutai*.

93 Szpilman 1993, p. 22.

94 Uchida Ryōhei Monjo Kenkyūkai 1994, vol. 8, pp. 104ff.

95 Kokuryūkai 1931, p. 14; Han 1984, pp. 127–29.

96 Hatsuse 1980, p. 81.

97 *Ibid.*, p. 83.

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Intervention, the Kokuryūkai again cooperated closely with the Army General Staff, gathering intelligence and providing interpreters.[98]

Members of the imperial military forces on active duty by law were not allowed to join political associations and parties in modern Japan. This regulation did not apply to retired military men, however. Some retired officers contributed articles to the Kokuryūkai's periodicals and took up military-related issues with increasing frequency during and after World War I. Lieutenant-General Satō Kōjirō (1862–1927) stands out among the contributors to the society's journals around the time of World War I. When Satō was put on the reserve list in 1918 he turned to writing, publishing a number of books on a future "total war" and the necessity for national – i.e., total – mobilization. Satō's book *Kokuminteki sensō to kokka sōdōin* (National War and State Mobilization 国民的戦争と国家総動員)[99] received a good deal of attention and gave him a reputation as a strong advocate of "national mobilization," a reputation he confirmed in subsequent publications.[100] He also insisted that a war with the United States was inevitable – for example, in his book *Nichibei moshi tatakawaba*,[101] originally published in English in 1920 under the title *If Japan and America Fight*.[102]

In a 1918 article published in *Ajia Jiron* Satō called for "the necessity for the absolute unity" of the Japanese nation as a means of preparing for a future war, and strongly criticized the idea of civilian control of the military.[103] Like other writers, Satō was a believer in the superiority of the German military, notwithstanding the fact that Germany had been defeated in World War I. Satō attributed Germany's defeat to national disunity and treason on the part of some of the country's politicians, above all the Social Democrats and the Communists – a view which also led him to argue strongly (in another article) against the influx of thought and ideologies that he characterized as "truly dangerous for the army."[104] His views indicate that, from an early time, Satō accepted the so-called stab-in-the-back legend, which blamed "weak politicians" in the German government for the defeat in World War I, in a situation where the army had "not been defeated on the battlefield."[105] Juxtaposing strong German leadership in the Great War with the weakness of military command in democratic states, Satō wrote:

> Britain's poor performance throughout the war was simply due to the fact that its Supreme Command was distracted by international diplomacy and had fallen into disunity. The British Supreme Command proved to be no different from the Supreme Command of France, which became agitated over every little problem

98 *Ibid.*, p. 245.

99 Satō 1918b.

100 Satō and Utsunomiya 1920; Satō 1922.

101 Satō 1921.

102 Sato 1920b.

103 Satō 1918a; Satō 1920a.

104 Satō 1919a.

105 On the "stab-in-the-back legend" in Germany, see the classic work Petzold 1963; the more recent discussions in Sammet 2003; Watson 2008.

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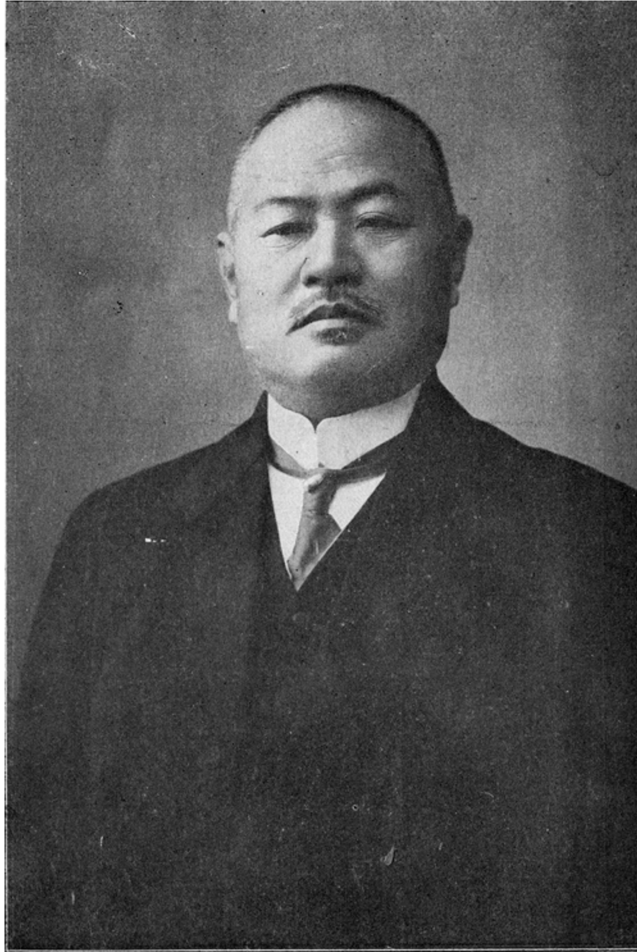
Figure 5. Satō Kōjirō (Source: Sato 1921).



> and frequently found itself at the mercy of council discussions. Unlike these countries, the German Supreme Command had only a few members who had been drawn from the Kaiser's inner circle, and no one else was allowed to participate in the general staff meetings held at military headquarters. (...) It is clear from the above that Germany was in every respect superior (...). No enemy crossed her borders while she fought a number of other countries alone for five long years – and this was because the nation was well organized and united.[106]

In 1919, Satō contributed another article to *Ajia Jiron* opposing proposals aimed at abolishing conscription and disbanding the Army General Staff (*sanbō honbu* 参謀本部) – both notions which had gained traction in Japan after Great Britain had discontinued

106 Satō 1918a, pp. 32–33.

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conscription, introduced there during the war, and he declared this a step towards global disarmament. In this article, Satō emphasized that conscription was not merely about maintaining military strength: "The conscription system benefited the country in two ways: first, by making good citizens (*ryōmin* 良民) realize their responsibilities for national defense. (...) Secondly, the state needs the conscription system as a part of the education of its citizenry."[107] The idea that conscription was a cornerstone of Japan's national education system and a means of instilling national consciousness were themes frequently stressed in contemporary discussions of the "National Mobilization System." Satō argued that even though Great Britain and the United States had abandoned conscription after the war, Japan was in no position to discontinue it because its economic and material resources were no match for those of Great Britain and the United States and it lacked the industrial base to compete with the Anglo-Saxon powers.[108]

Another issue that stirred Satō's interest, and which has already been touched on, was the relationship between politics and the military (*seigun kankei* 政軍関係) and the question of civilian control over the military. Prime Minister Hara Takashi 原敬 (1918–1921), famous as the first "commoner" prime minister in a cabinet made up almost exclusively of party politicians, strongly advocated civilian control. In response, the military insisted on the "independence of the Supreme Command" (*tōsui-ken no dokuritsu* 統帥権の独立), asserting the prerogative of the military to act independently under the auspices of the Emperor, whose military prerogatives were defined in articles 11 and 12 of the 1889 Constitution of the Japanese Empire.[109] In an article entitled "We Can't Fight a Battle with Mr. Hara (Politicians are Disrupting the Supreme Military Command)" published in *Ajia Jiron* in 1920, Satō criticized Hara for causing "disruption in the Supreme Command," calling him an "amateur" dabbling in military affairs. "As the Germans say," Satō continued, "military strategy is an art, and anyone untrained in this art has no right to interfere. No matter how smart Mr. Hara may be, allowing him to meddle in the affairs of the Supreme Command can only cause harm, as he is not trained in the art of war."[110] In the same piece, Satō went on to criticize the Advisory Council on Foreign Relations (Gaikō chōsa-kai 外交調査会), which was then debating the Siberian Intervention:[111]

> As for the Research Council on Foreign Affairs, politicians overstepped the boundaries proper to the Supreme Command and usurped the prerogatives of the Commander of the Troops in Siberia. (...) (Politicians) ended up doing a half-baked job and taking control of the activities of soldiers on the front lines at their personal pleasure. It is by no means an exaggeration to point out that the politicians' interference in the Supreme Command produced utterly useless results.[112]

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107 Satō 1919b, pp. 27.

108 *Ibid.*, in the same vein see also Satō 1920a; Hishinuma 1918.

109 On civil–military relations in modern Japan, see Nagai 1993; Amemiya 1997.

110 Satō 1920a, pp. 16–17.

111 *Ibid.* For details on the Gaikō Chōsa-kai, see Dickinson 1999, pp. 168; 198–99; 208–11.

112 Satō 1920a, p. 18.

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While the Japanese government had reached an agreement with the United States that each country would send 7,000 troops to Vladivostok to protect the evacuation from Siberia of the so-called Czech Legion made up of former Czech prisoners-of-war,[113] the General Staff independently increased the strength of the Japanese contingent to more than 70,000 troops – at one point, around half the divisions in the Imperial Army were stationed in Siberia and Northern Manchuria[114] – and expanded the area of engagement to include large parts of Eastern Siberia, from Vladivostok to Lake Baikal. However, due to stiff resistance from partisan fighters, the Japanese army failed to achieve control over these vast territories. In response, Satō blamed the nation's civilian leaders for obstructing the military's efforts. He was convinced that their interference in the independence of the Supreme Command had undermined military leadership and had caused the difficulties the army met in Siberia.

Similar arguments also appeared in articles written for *Ajia Jiron* by civilians, both Kokuryūkai members and others. One such polemicist was Nagase Hōsuke (1865–1926), a prolific writer whose name has already been mentioned. Nagase arrogantly claimed to be "superior to any of the so-called 'new thinkers' in Japan in terms of understanding 'new ideas,' as I have spent ten years in Europe completing my studies."[115] He harshly criticized the influx of "new thought" – democratic thought, liberalism, socialism, and communism – into Japan. He claimed that the introduction of "new thought" to Japan was "dangerous, because the Japanese lacked an awareness of themselves as a nation" and therefore "accepted uncritically any idea imported from Europe or the United States"; the Japanese showed a "fondness for useless old-fashioned things" and, further, "lacked ethical judgment," hardly able to distinguish between right and wrong, and good and evil.[116] Nagase expressed an astonishing degree of contempt for the average Japanese, concluding that an uncritical acceptance of these new ideologies would be dangerous and destructive to Japanese society and would undermine efforts to achieve national unity in wartime.[117]

While Satō and Nagase were independent writers, using *Ajia Jiron* as one of many vehicles to publish their articles (and earn a living), a number of Kokuryūkai members also expressed strong interest in military matters. Uchida Ryōhei was an outstanding example of such interest himself and, as the head of the association, it was surely under his direction that the focus of *Ajia Jiron* shifted towards military-related issues. Uchida had sent a memo to Foreign Minister Uchida Yasuya 内田康哉 (1865–1936, no relation to Ryōhei) at the end of 1918 entitled "Reform or Ruin: An Appeal for an Overhaul of the Military," which drew on the lessons of the Siberian Intervention to demand reform of Japan's military establishment.[118] As in many of his writings, Uchida used alarmist expressions such as the "ruined country" (*bōkoku* 亡国) or "A warning of a national crisis,"[119] with the aim of –

113 For details, see Hara 1989, ch. 15.

114 Fujimoto 1973, p. 19.

115 Nagase 1920, p. 16.

116 *Ibid.*

117 *Ibid.*

118 Uchida 1918.

119 Uchida Ryōhei Monjo Kenkyūkai 1994, vol. 8, p. 64; Editorial 1918c.

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preemptively – dismissing any alternatives to his proposals. What he had in mind, in concrete terms, was a strengthening of the military, boosting the independence of the Supreme Command, and a fusion of general and military education with the objective of fostering unity between the military and the Japanese people. In 1920, Uchida published a proposal for the reform of the conscription system in *Ajia Jiron* – again calling specifically for the integration of military and general education:

> National schools will only function properly by maintaining contact between the military and the world outside the military. In other words, if a citizen is not a graduate of a military or national school, he will be unable to advance to a higher educational level, nor will it be possible for him to succeed in business. (. . .) Thus, in order to fulfill their mission as preparatory schools for the national education system, middle schools should give their students sufficient time for military drill practice as well as instructing them in the discipline of the samurai spirit, while providing a regular education centered on common knowledge.[120]

During and after World War I, there was an international consensus that, more than anything else, German militarism was responsible for the outbreak of the war.[121] In *Ajia Jiron*, this assumption was questioned, and "militarism" was reinterpreted, in a strongly positive light, as a basic requirement for national mobilization in the future. The most straightforward attempt in this direction in Kokuryūkai publications was arguably an article titled "Advocating Good Militarism" (Yoki gunkokushugi no teishō 善き軍国主義の提唱), in which journalist Chikushi Jirō 筑紫次郎 argued that Japan had to "discover the virtues of militarism by recognizing the advantages that come with it."[122] Emphasizing the similarities between militarism and nationalism, Chikushi claimed that "Japan today surely has much it could learn from a positive understanding of militarism, especially in terms of national thought and education." He further urged that "we should inject a good militarism (*yoki gunkokushugi* 良き軍国主義) into our national thought (*kokumin shisō* 国民思想) and incorporate military education into national education, while at the same time assimilating national thought with military thought (*gunjin no shisō* 軍人の思想), never forgetting that public education operates in parallel with military education." Chikushi further insisted on the elimination of what he called "anti-militarist extremists," which he identified in particular in the ranks of "so-called scholars and active socialists"[123] who were undermining national unity, and on the organization of national mobilization. Chikushi expressed his sympathy for the strong anti-academic, anti-socialist and anti-communist stance held by right-wing political associations. He reserved special criticism for those he called "new scholars" who, he charged, "ignore the Japanese family system and upset the social order

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120 Uchida 1920, pp. 21–22.

121 In Japan liberal advocates of democracy such as Yoshino Sakuzō 吉野作造 made this point and strongly criticized "German militarism," see Yoshino 1916; see also Sugimura 1921; Kodera 1916.

122 Chikushi 1920, p. 48.

123 *Ibid.*

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as a result of their excessive individualism, and end up leading the public astray with their anti-state language and behavior."[124] In a similar vein, another journalist writing in *Ajia Jiron*, Nagasaki Takeshi, emphasized that militarism was crucial for national survival, affirming that Germany was in fact saved – and not destroyed – because of its strong militarism:

> Some in our Empire, above all the new scholars, criticize Germany strongly and condemn German militarism. (...) However, Germany is not a country in ruins (*bōkoku*), and its militarism is not in danger. [Rather], the fact that Germany and the German nation still exist is the result of German militarism.[125]

In expressing these views, Chikushi and Nagasaki were influenced by similar controversies in Germany about the meaning of "total war." Chikushi's advocacy of the "necessity of militarism" rather than its rejection can be interpreted as an early sign of anti-Anglo-Saxon self-affirmation by Japan's elite.

In world opinion, World War I had been fought "to make the world 'safe for democracy'"[126] and to "destroy militarism," as one of the leading exponents of the liberalism of the Taishō period, Ozaki Yukio 尾崎行雄 (1858–1954), put it.[127] Chikushi, Nagasaki and many other contributors to *Ajia Jiron* disagreed. They turned to Japan's wartime enemy, Germany, in order to reaffirm the Japanese national identity and the Japanese polity, the *kokutai*. Japan had based its constitution and military system on German models in the 1880s and 1890s. Despite the collapse of imperial Germany in World War I, and reacting out of fear of the spread of liberal-democratic thought in Japan as a consequence of the Great War, they, and a host of other like-minded commentators, sought to reaffirm the validity of the "German model" for postwar Japan as well.

CONCLUSION

While the Kokuryūkai began life as an association dealing with foreign policy, it became increasingly involved in the discussion of domestic issues during World War I. Above all, it took the lead in the movement against the new – and supposedly "dangerous" – ideologies of liberalism, democracy and socialism. The revolutions in Russia (1917) and Germany (1919) surely contributed to the shift of the Kokuryūkai's attention to domestic issues, because these events demonstrated how easily the fate of imperial *ancien régimes* could be sealed by revolutionary turmoil. Closely related to this, the association advocated the establishment of a system of "national mobilization" in order to prepare for a future "total war." These were discussions with broad implications for Japan's military establishment, but also for the overall relationship of the military to politics and society.

124 *Ibid.*

125 Nagasaki 1920, pp. 38–39.

126 Dickinson 1999, p. 3.

127 *Ibid.*, p. 196.

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Some historians argue that Uchida Ryōhei and his associates "were not leading figures in the development of [Japanese] fascism," because they were "*traditional* right-wingers."[128] While Uchida was able to exert influence on the old elites, he and the Kokuryūkai failed to play any role in shaping the totalitarian and fascist tendencies of the 1930s. However, as this article shows, the association played a significant role in paving the way to the destruction of Taishō Democracy. The Kokuryūkai, which was founded as an association focused on foreign policy, transformed itself into a radical anti-democratic and anti-parliamentarian group during the late 1910s and early 1920s and attacked advocates of Taishō Democracy, condemning them as a "threat to our national polity" and "dangerous traitors."[129] The society characterized parliamentarianism as "a threat to the existing political system and the authority of the Emperor"[130] and openly demanded the "abolition of parliamentary government."[131]

The Kokuryūkai's growing interest in military affairs and the strengthening of its cooperation with military circles was another major change that the society underwent in the 1910s. In 1924, the "Prospectus for the Expansion of the Kokuryūkai" (*Kokuryūkai kakuchō shuisho* 黒龍会拡張趣意書[132] explicitly stated that "we anticipate receiving the imperial military mandate, strengthening our martial spirit, reaping the fruit of universal conscription, and fulfilling the duty of national defense," words clearly advocating a closer alignment with the military. In the same vein, the "rehabilitation" of "good militarism" and military values led to the inclusion of the military sector in the anti-democratic camp in the latter's campaign against the liberal newspapers of the day. Those newspapers that claimed that cabinets dominated by the oligarchy and the military, such as the cabinet under Terauchi Masatake 寺内正毅 (1916–1918), represented "the triumph of militarism in Japan"[133] were targeted by the Kokuryūkai and its allies, who of course understood the term "militarism" in quite a different sense.

The Kokuryūkai's growing concern with military matters, combined with its continuing cooperation with the military, reflected Japanese society's shift towards a military-dominated authoritarian political and social system, a structure which materialized in the 1930s. The Kokuryūkai was not the only factor contributing to this trend. Richard Smethurst,[134] for example, has demonstrated how the Imperial Reservists' Organization (IRO) worked hard to spread militarist thought in the countryside. The activities of the Kokuryūkai and the IRO represent threads of continuity in Japanese politics and society from the 1920s, which are usually seen as a relatively liberal and democratic period in modern Japanese history, to the 1930s, often characterized with the terms "militarism," "military dictatorship" or even "fascism." The Kokuryūkai itself, however, proved unable to cope with the exigencies of mass society, and became practically defunct by the early

128 Hatsuse 1980, p. 272 (emphasis added).

129 Uchida Ryōhei Monjo Kenkyūkai 1994, vol. 5, pp. 43–56; see also *Ajia Jiron* 2:11 (November 1918), pp. 35–42.

130 Uchida Ryōhei Monjo Kenkyūkai 1994, vol. 9, pp. 19–21.

131 Editorial 1918c.

132 Uchida Ryōhei Monjo Kenkyūkai 1994, vol. 7, pp. 20–32.

133 Dickinson 1999, p. 158.

134 Smethurst 1974.

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1930s. Efforts to revive the association's activities through cooperation with a new mass religious movement, the Ōmotokyō 大本教,[135] or via the founding of the Great Japan Production Party (Dai Nihon Seisantō) in 1931, were largely without effect.

The development of the Kokuryūkai in the 1910s and 1920s adds to our understanding of the significance of the Great War in Japanese history, a significance which has not received sufficient attention from historians. The association's transformation during the war paralleled the radicalization of post-World War I German politics. From this perspective, the interpretation of the Great War as "the great seminal catastrophe of this century"[136] might also be applicable in the case of modern Japan.

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