

Doctoral dissertation summary
„British diplomacy and intelligence towards Japan 1939-1941”

Between the signing of the Molotov–Ribbentrop Pact (August 1939) and the Japanese attacks on Pearl Harbor and Malaya (December 1941), British Empire remained focused on the deadly conflict with Germany and Italy in Europe and Africa. The aim of London's actions in East Asia at that time was to prevent war with Tokyo. The subject of my research is the examination of the role of diplomacy and intelligence in shaping Britain's policy towards Japan between August 23, 1939 and December 7, 1941.

The issue of British-Japanese relations during World War II is already quite well researched, by i. a. A. Best and P. Lowe. However, little research has been devoted to examining the influence of diplomacy and intelligence on the decisions made by the British government regarding Tokyo, taking into account both the broader context of international relations and the London's perception of Japan's internal situation. This dissertation is based on governmental, diplomatic and intelligence documents, which provided an accurate picture of the shaping of the British Far Eastern Policy. These documents were obtained from The National Archives in London. During their analysis, detailed research questions were posed, i. a.: what were the British-Japanese relations like at the beginning of World War II? How did the German-Soviet rapprochement and the further course of the conflict affect the perception of Tokyo by British diplomacy? What degree of influence did the Foreign Office wield over the government's decisions? In the face of military involvement in other areas, how did British intelligence perceive Japan? In what ways did Britain's relations with other countries influence the Foreign Office and intelligence recommendations on Far Eastern policy? What was the significance of the attitudes of the Dominions in this regard? How was the internal situation in Japan perceived by the British diplomacy? How were Tokyo's intentions interpreted in London? Was the threat of an upcoming attack in the last months of 1941 correctly recognized?

Due to the nature of the research problem it was necessary to divide this dissertation into five chronologically structured chapters. The first chapter serves as an introduction to the subject of the work and presents an outline of British-Japanese relations before 1939. Subsequent chapters deal directly with the role of diplomacy and intelligence in shaping London's policy towards Tokyo. The second chapter focuses on the period from the signing of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact to the fall of France. During this time, efforts were made to reach

an agreement and stabilize relations with Japan. The third chapter describes the situation after the French surrender, when the Great Britain's position deteriorated significantly. Tokyo's attitude towards London then worsened, and the British government – contrary to the advice of the Foreign Office – decided to adopt a policy of limited concessions. Chapter four deals with the events following the Tripartite Pact. At that time, a more uncompromising approach towards Tokyo was adopted, in line with the recommendations of British diplomacy. However, London remained fearful of an attack from Japan, as well as of a potential agreement between the Tripartite Pact signatories and Moscow. According to the Foreign Office, the key factor in improving the position of the British Empire was to be the growing cooperation with the United States. The fifth chapter covers the period after the German attack on the USSR. Moscow then became an ally of the British, which significantly improved the latter's situation. At the same time, the Foreign Office and the government in London completely handed over the initiative to Washington on the issue of policy in East Asia. In the months leading up to the attack on Pearl Harbor and Malaya, the British noticed some signs of an impending crisis, but the scale of the aggression that eventually took place was not foreseen.

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