

# The Adriatic Question and Japan

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## 要 約

論文では、1919年のパリ講和会議における「アドリア海問題」に関する日本の見解や対策を検討する。この問題は、1915年のロンドン秘密条約の締結に関連しており、かつてはハプスブルグ帝国に属していたアドリア海の東海岸に対するイタリアと新たに形成されたユーゴスラビア王国との間の領土紛争の将来に影響を及ぼした。論文では、日本外交資料の分析を通して、講和会議におけるイタリア代表団との日本関係やアドリア海問題の背景についても解説する。

**キーワード:** アドリア海問題、イタリア、ユーゴスラビア、日本、第一次世界大戦、パリ講和会議 (1919-1920)

## I. Introduction

World War I was the first global conflict; it directly or indirectly touched almost every nation on the face of the earth. The fighting took place on land, in the air, and at sea. Most importantly, the conflict fundamentally reshaped the European and international political order and determined some of the major historical currents that followed it and, thus, shaped the second half of the twentieth century.

The war ended with the defeat of the Central Powers, which, on one hand, marked the end of a historical period in diplomatic relations worshipping military might and secretive diplomacy. On the other, however, it inaugurated the beginning of a new area in modern international politics based on new values such as collective security, public diplomacy, and the right of nations to self-determination. As the war ended, the essence of modern international relations, as we know them today, began to germinate.

The military collapse of the Central Powers also went hand-in-hand with the disappearance of three vast and centuries-old land empires: Ottoman, Habsburg, and Romanov. However, it was mostly in East-Central Europe and the territories of the defeated Habsburg and Ottoman Empire that the effects of the lost war and implosion of imperial structures were felt most immediately. For centuries, European history had been a history of empires. On the eve of the Great War, much of the inhabited world was divided into European empires or economically dependent territories, and there was little to suggest the age of empires was

about to end.<sup>1</sup> Nevertheless, they collapsed, resulting in an unprecedented recalibration of the balance of power in Europe, followed by one of the most extensive remakes of the European political map in modern history. Newly born states emerged on the ruins of the defunct empires and delimiting new from the old states became an important question that was at the center of the peace negotiations during the Paris Peace Conference in 1919.

Among the major nations that took part in the war and in post-war peace negotiations, Japan represented, besides the US, the only non-European power with significant economic, strategic, and military weight, to influence the outcome of the war. As we cross the centenary of this conflict, we cannot ignore the rekindled interest of scholars about Japan's role in the Great War.<sup>2</sup> Research on Japanese diplomacy during World War I showcases a significant period in its diplomatic history; it suggests a proactive and constructive Japan's international role during the 1920s, which merits to be further studied and analyzed.

However, despite heightened interest among scholars over the past years, Japan's place in the historiography of the First World War remains marginal, and there is still much to explore, especially regarding its diplomatic role and interactions with other delegations at the Paris Peace Conference. In major narratives, Japanese delegates are often depicted as cryptic. It seems like very few people had a clear grasp of their thinking. Additionally, because Japan was not an active participant in the European war theatres and, for the better part of the war, mostly observed from afar, media and the public often questioned the legitimacy behind its elevated great power status. Such views tend to be based on the selective recollections about Japanese diplomats who seemed passive and intervened in the peace discussions selectively and only when their national interests were at stake. Indeed, the centerpiece of the Japanese diplomatic agenda at the peace conference was the urgency to secure and consolidate the international recognition for its alleged special rights in China. The Racial Equality Proposal was another key issue that Japanese delegates defended arduously. This, however, is only part of a much larger story, and as I have argued elsewhere, Japan's war contribution and involvement with the European peace settlements was much more diverse and cannot be limited to a few selected issues.<sup>3</sup>

In the present paper, I will explore Japan's views about the Adriatic Question at the Paris Peace Conference. The Adriatic Question was a territorial dispute between Italy and the newly formed Yugoslav state that threatened to collapse the peace talks. The roots of the dispute lay in the secret Treaty of London, signed during the war (26 April 1915), and in growing nationalism, especially Italian irredentism and Yugoslavism, which ultimately led to the creation of the first Yugoslav state. The question became a major barrier to the conclusion of the final peace agreement at the Paris Peace Conference and, as such, also influenced Japan.

The article is structured in two parts. First, I present a historical and political context of the London Treaty, the Yugoslav unification issue, and how they led to the complications with the Adriatic Question. Then, in the second part, based on the analysis of diplomatic sources, I describe Japan's viewing and thinking about the Italian diplomatic maneuvering at the peace

talks and the territorial dispute between Italy and the new Yugoslav state.

## **II. Yugoslav unification issue at the end of World War I**

With the collapse of Austria-Hungary, as many central European nations began forming new independent states, territorial issues and border fixing took the centerstage of diplomatic talks. Old borders and divisions ran mostly along the former provincial and administrative divisions of Austria-Hungary, and since border areas tended to be ethnically and nationally mixed, the end of the war was followed by an aggravated situation and sporadic confrontations on these intersections. Consequently, border issues and dilemmas quickly multiplied and were ultimately addressed during the negotiations at the Paris Peace Conference.

The Yugoslav unification problem was magnified by a lack of clearly defined territorial boundaries and formed one of the most controversial issues in the proceedings of the peace conference. Despite the diplomatic efforts of the Serbian government and the South Slav exiles around European capitals to promote the Yugoslav cause, there was little international support for a new state in the Balkans. Compared to other nations, like the Czechs for example, who enjoyed ample support, the Yugoslavs had also to compete with big power territorial claims based on secret treaty arrangements about the Balkans.<sup>4</sup>

In addition, very little was known about Yugoslav aspirations, and although Serbia was an ally, Slovenes and Croats fought on the Austro-Hungarian side. Furthermore, by the end of 1917, the Allies, with the recently joined United States, were still counting on the preservation of the Dual Monarchy. For example, attempts to seek separate peace with the Habsburg Monarchy and thus detach it from Germany intensified after the October Revolution in Russia. Moreover, President Wilson, in his Fourteen Points speech in January 1918, promised the numerous national groups of the Monarchy, including the South Slavs (or Yugoslavs) autonomy but not independence.<sup>5</sup>

Other big powers were also reluctant. France, for example, never considered the creation of a unified South Slav state as an objective of the Great War. Officially acquainted with the project through the Serbian war aims, the French government remained silent on the issue, as it involved both the dissolution of the Dual Monarchy and, following the Treaty of London, an open conflict with Italy. In neither case did French diplomacy try to maneuver a shift in the balance of power in Europe, especially as a support to the unification wishes of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes.<sup>6</sup>

The major threat to Yugoslav unification was, however, Italy, which fought against any attempt to establish a new rival state in the Balkans. From the Italian perspective, a Slavic state in the eastern shore of the Adriatic would pose a substantial challenge to its territorial appetites over a collapsing Habsburg Empire. At the early stages of Yugoslav state building, especially after the armistice with Austria-Hungary, the most urgent task was to prevent Italy

from occupying all the territories promised to it under the London Treaty. However, as soon as the war ended, Italy demanded the full resolution of territorial promises made in the secret pact of 1915 and began occupying the promised territory until their troops were stopped at Vrhnika, just 20 kilometers before the Slovene capital city of Ljubljana.<sup>7</sup>

### **The London Treaty and the onset of the Adriatic Question**

Secret agreements and backdoor diplomacy were important factors that influenced the territorial decisions of the Allied Powers before and during the peace conference. Among the most contested secret agreements that almost ruined the peace talks was without doubt the Treaty of London, signed on April 26, 1915. By signing the treaty, the Entente Powers secured Italy's entry into the war on their side, by promising her large parts of Habsburg South Slav territories. The secret pact, however, also became the starting point of a painful territorial dispute between Italy and the new Yugoslav state. Furthermore, the quarrel over who will control the deep-water port of Rijeka (Fiume) was closely linked with the problem of Italy's new frontiers after the war.

The Bolsheviks' revelation in early 1918 of the terms of the Treaty of London aggravated the already bad relations between the South Slavs and Italy. Based on the text of the treaty, Britain, France, and the Tsarist Russia promised Italy large parts of Dalmatian Coast, Istria, Trieste, Goriška, the Julian Alps, a naval base at Valona in Albania, and other territories. The situation in 1918, however, was completely different from when Italy entered war. The parties to the secret pact assumed that the Habsburg monarchy would survive the war, although with significant territorial losses. However, peoples from these territories were never consulted nor aware of the deal. Even Serbs, although allies, were not informed about the agreement. Eventually, the public disclosure of the treaty terms galvanized the South Slavs within the monarchy, who began to quickly organize in order to seize power and mount a defense against the Italian threat.<sup>8</sup>

In October 1918, the Austro-Hungarian Empire began to disintegrate. New countries emerged on its territory: Czechoslovakia, Austria, Hungary, Poland, and the State of Slovenes, Croats, and Serbs. On 29 October, the newly established State of Slovenes, Croats, and Serbs had only existed for a month and, in political terms, constituted a confederal republic. The new state had its own territory but was without borders. At the beginning of November, Austria-Hungary signed the armistice, and the Italian army marched into this new state to occupy the line agreed by the Treaty of London.<sup>9</sup> Due to the Italian threat, the newly established state eventually sought integration with Serbia and morphed into a monarchy which was created three weeks after the armistice with Germany. At that point, only Serbia was strong enough to provide military support around which the South Slav people could organize and sustain outside pressure. Serbian government convened the Slovene and Croatian envoys in Belgrade on 1 December and proclaimed the formation of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes, adopting the name of Yugoslavia a decade later.<sup>10</sup>

Besides being a powerful catalyst for Yugoslav unification, the London Treaty also represented the starting point of the Adriatic Question. This question concerned the future of the territories along the eastern coast of the Adriatic Sea, which formerly belonged to the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Basically, the agreement entitled Italy with supremacy in the Adriatic. It also addressed Italy's historical preoccupation with national security over the Alps and on the east Adriatic coast. Italy has been traditionally convinced that her safety was inseparable with her absolute control over the Adriatic basin, and most importantly, Italian plans seriously limited the efforts to form a unified Yugoslav state in the Balkans. When Italian forces moved in to occupy territories in Croatia and Slovenia at the end of the war, the loss of key South Slav territories seriously hampered the unity and legitimacy of any South Slav political union in becoming.<sup>11</sup>

#### **Big Four and the Adriatic question**

From the early days of the Paris Peace Conference, the Adriatic Question developed into a complex international issue, mostly because American President Wilson insisted on every nation's right to self-determination. Wilson believed that the London Treaty was a private agreement between Italy, France, and England. The document was, both in the manner of its execution and in its terms, fundamentally in opposition to the very principles for which the United States decided to enter the war. Since United States was not bound by it, it argued against the Italian rationalizations of presumable South Slav threats to their security. The United States said that Italy's security would be sufficiently guaranteed by the proposed League of Nations, and there was no need for additional territorial aggrandizements. In consequence, new borders with Yugoslavia were supposed to follow strict national delineations.<sup>12</sup>

Through the conference, President Wilson held to the view that the dissolution of Austria-Hungary invalidated the Treaty of London. He was convinced that the Yugoslav western border should run along the Soča (Isonzo) River. When Italy objected and emphasized that the port of Trieste was an Italian city, Wilson replied, that "a city is not determined by the number of its inhabitants, but by the territory it belongs to."<sup>13</sup> He further added that although the city of New York has a large Italian community, that does not make it Italian and indirectly suggested that Trieste should be part of the Yugoslav territory.

Wilson's assurances, however, did not convince Italian delegates in Versailles. Italians were determined to push the old border with Austria-Hungary even further up to one hundred kilometers east into what is today Slovenia and Croatia.<sup>14</sup> They demanded unconditional fulfillment of Allied promises and requested the conference to delineate her new eastern border in accordance with the London Treaty. Italian delegates believed themselves to be justified in increasing their demands even beyond the terms of the London Treaty. While pressing for the execution of the agreement, the Italian delegation also insisted that Rijeka (Fiume) should be given to Italy. Fiume was one of the key Austro-Hungarian ports in

the Adriatic. As the historian MacMillan points out: "The population, as was so typical in central Europe, was mixed, with a small number of Hungarians, a prosperous Italian middle class and a largely Croat working class. In Fiume itself, Italians were in a slight majority, but, if its suburbs of Sušak were added in, the Croats were."<sup>15</sup>

There was a practical reason for Italy's attachment to Fiume. It was crucial for the commercial prosperity of Trieste, another important port city in the Northern Adriatic. By diverting all trade, from Fiume and other smaller ports, Trieste would become the most important port in the area.<sup>16</sup> Other territories of strategic and economic value, which were not included in the London Treaty, were also part of the newly raised Italian demands. Italian delegates argued that Italy's contribution in the war deserved additional compensation, and as it was mentioned before, they even evoked Italy's special historical and cultural rights in the Adriatic basin.<sup>17</sup>

The Yugoslav delegation, on the other hand, proposed a delineation that would respect the old Austrian-Italian border without substantial changes. They presented their proposal in front of the Council of Ten on February 18, 1919, and asked for jurisdiction over the town of Gorica, Trieste, and the Dalmatian coastline, where South Slavs traditionally represented the ethnic majority. Ante Trumbić, one of the Yugoslav representatives, insisted that their demands are fair, based on justice and adhering to the principle of self-determination completely legitimate. They sided with the American President Wilson and denounced the Treaty of London as inapplicable.<sup>18</sup>

American antagonism to Italy's demands put considerable pressure on France and Britain as well. Both were obliged to respect their treaty obligations, as specified in the London agreement. France, especially, was in an awkward position. Within its anti-German post-war vision of Europe, she needed a solid alliance with Italy. At the same time, however, France later began supporting the establishment of the Yugoslav state and saw in it an effective counterbalance to Italian ambitions in the Balkans. Both France and Italy competed for control over the Mediterranean waters, and before the war, they even clashed over Tunisia and Morocco. The collapse of Austria-Hungary reignited the rivalry also for influence over the center of Europe. In the end, France was torn between befriending Yugoslavia and keeping a stable relationship with Italy.<sup>19</sup> As a consequence, during the peace talks, the French diplomacy constantly labored to balance its diplomatic posture between diverging interests and looking for a suitable compromise.<sup>20</sup>

Among the Europeans, the Italians were on best terms with the British. From a geopolitical point of view, Britain preferred strong states. They were not fond of separatist political movements that threatened the core political structure of Europe. For instance, the prevailing belief in the foreign office was that Austria-Hungary, as an effective counterbalance to Russia's influence in Central-Eastern Europe, should be left intact. Viewed from this perspective, the London Treaty represented a political necessity. Italy had to join the war effort on the Allied side. However, in order to do that, she had to promise her large parts of

the Adriatic, despite the fact that most of the promised territories were predominantly Yugoslav. The majority of British experts, who learned about the pact with Italy, did not concur with the proposed offer and generally supported Yugoslav political aspirations.<sup>21</sup>

The official British position changed in the summer of 1918, when the foreign office began to see the Yugoslav struggle for national emancipation with more sympathy. For example, when in October 1818, Italy singlehandedly went ahead with the occupation of Austro-Hungarian territories and attacked former Habsburg naval installations in the Adriatic, British authorities felt apprehensive. They even considered the possibility of handing over the entire Austro-Hungarian navy to the Yugoslav side.<sup>22</sup>

Additionally, when Italy scaled up her territorial demands and challenged the Yugoslav jurisdiction over Rijeka (Fiume), British experts remained composed and offered an economic analysis of the issue. They compared the economic background of Rijeka with the port of Trieste and concluded that Rijeka would be at high risk of losing considerable trade to Trieste, especially under Italian control. However, this sounded odd, as Rijeka was a fast growing and expanding port since the 1870s and had the potential of becoming the main port in the Adriatic. Austrians were not fond of this idea and prioritized naval trade through Trieste. British experts presumed that Italy would probably take a similar course of action. Furthermore, British military observers were convinced that Italy would limit port access to Yugoslavs. In consequence, they proposed that both cities should receive the status of free ports and be supervised by the League of Nations.<sup>23</sup>

### III. Japan and the Adriatic Question

Japan began preparing for the peace conference in mid-1917. The Japanese government established a special advisory council on foreign relations, which was an intra-governmental body for the coordination of foreign policy decision-making during the peace talks.<sup>24</sup> Soon after the advisory council was set in place, a sixty-five-member diplomatic delegation was handpicked and included the most respected and the best diplomats the country had at its disposal. The delegation was led by one of the last oligarchs, a former prime minister and close friend of the late Meiji Emperor, Duke Saionji Kinmochi. Saionji was educated in France and, during his studies in Sorbonne, was a classmate of Georges Clemenceau.<sup>25</sup>

At the peace conference, the Japanese delegation operated under very specific and strict instructions from Tokyo. The centerpiece of its agenda included the goals to secure international recognition of Japan's special status in China, to obtain control over German colonies in the Pacific and later, the incorporation of the racial equality clause into the Covenant of the League of Nations. US-led plans for setting up an international system of collective security and remodeling international politics according to President Wilson's fourteen points was of limited interest to Japan.<sup>26</sup>

Based on guidelines from Tokyo not to interfere with matters unrelated to its negotiation

agenda, the delegation kept a low profile.<sup>27</sup> Unrelated matters included mostly issues concerning European affairs and the future order of Europe. However, from the records of the advisory council, we learn that Japan was well informed about Italian diplomatic plans.<sup>28</sup> Furthermore, diplomatic records show that during the peace conference, Japan followed the situation concerning the Adriatic quite actively,<sup>29</sup> especially the issue of Rijeka (Fiume).<sup>30</sup> For example, these documents describe the movements of the Italian delegation and the response of Italian media to the developments in Paris.

### **The Foreign Policy Advisory Committee on the Adriatic Situation**

From the diplomatic records, we can learn that the Japanese delegation in Paris actively followed the developments in the Adriatic crisis and was especially focused on the statements of the American delegation. The main reason was probably the American antagonism to Japanese interests in China. President Wilson and the media often made analogies between the Italian and Japanese demands at the peace table.<sup>31</sup>

The advisory committee debated the situation in the Italian delegation at the end of April 1919.<sup>32</sup> From the records of the committee meetings, we can sense some preoccupation about the effects of the Italian boycott of the conference for the Japanese position and demands at the conference. More precisely, we learn that the Japanese representative, Makino Nobuaki, met with the Italian delegates and attempted to discuss the Italian situation on April 21, 1919. He met with the Italian president, Orlando, and inquired about the Italian support to the Japanese demands at the peace talks. After the meeting, Makino wrote a report where he described that Orlando was not clear about his position; however, he was extremely vocal regarding his views about the Adriatic question. Orlando harshly criticized the American attitude and dictation of President Wilson. He also asked Japanese support in their territorial demands for the annexation of the Southern Alps, Istria, and Dalmatia. On this occasion, Orlando also informed Makino that the Italian delegation would boycott the negotiations and leave Paris.<sup>33</sup> Judging from the events that followed, it seems that the Japanese delegates were the first to be informed about Italian plans.

Following the meeting, Makino was convinced that the territorial questions among Italy and the Yugoslavs would be difficult to solve behind the negotiation table. For Japan, Italy was a key diplomatic partner, and according to Makino, their announced departure from Paris would pose a serious drawback for the peace talks. Most importantly, it would have a serious impact on securing Japanese demands at the conference.<sup>34</sup>

Furthermore, from the reports of Makino, we can see that Japanese delegates lobbied both sides, the American and the Italian side, and they had a thorough overview of the general situation and atmosphere during the conference. When meeting the American delegation, Japanese representatives wanted to know how the Americans would react to the Italian threats, and how will this affect the Japanese positions at the conference. For example, on April 25, just a few days after meeting President Wilson, Makino wrote about Wilson not



being cooperative and answering to his question reluctantly. Wilson repeated to Makino that in his view, the Italian demands were baseless; thus, he would not recognize the validity of the London pact from 1915 nor any other secret pact. He emphasized that Italy was acting irresponsibly and was threatening the security and stability in the Adriatic basin. Makino also commented how Wilson did not spare his words towards the Japanese predicament. According to him, Wilson was convinced that Japan was doing in China something similar as Italy in the Adriatic. He reiterated that under no circumstance would he allow the Japanese interests in China to be recognized. For Wilson, national interests were of secondary importance, and they were supposed to be subdued to the international efforts for peace and a new world order.<sup>35</sup>

In Tokyo, the advisory committee reacted to the reports from Paris with poise. The former premier, Tsuyoshi Inukai, was pragmatic and unalarmed. According to him, the Italian-American row was instrumental at keeping the international public attention away from the Japanese plans and was also helping to solidify their negotiation stance vis-à-vis the US. He took a pragmatic stance. Other committee members agreed with Inukai's assessment and similarly emphasized the saliency of the Italian question for the realization of Japanese demands at the Paris Peace Conference. The departure of the Italian delegation from Paris was assessed as not necessarily a bad turn for them. They all agreed that Japan would not yield and that without the recognition of all the demands, they would not authorize the signing of the peace treaty.<sup>36</sup> To the surprise of all, including the members of the American delegation, President Wilson gave in to the Japanese demands on April 30, 1919.<sup>37</sup>

### **Japan's Delegation Report on the Adriatic Question**

Besides the discussions on the situation in the Italian delegation by the advisory committee in Tokyo, we also have a report on the Adriatic Question that was compiled by the Japanese delegation in Paris.<sup>38</sup> The report describes the background of the Italian-Yugoslav dispute during the conference in depth. A major part of the document is dedicated to the description of the Italian position and their territorial demands. The Yugoslav position is described poorly, and the conclusion shows that Japan analyzed the Adriatic situation from the perspective of key major powers like the US, UK, Italy, and France.

The report starts with the description of the Italian departure from the peace conference and offers an assessment of the impact of the Adriatic crisis for the strategic post-war regional order in Southeast Europe. The text emphasizes that the Adriatic and Shantung question form the central questions of the peace conference and that they attract a lot of international attention. The report continues with the description of the political background of the territorial question between Italy and the newly established Yugoslav state. The report also attempts to predict some of the possible consequences and repercussions of the issue.<sup>39</sup>

Furthermore, the report offers a general assessment of the situation and an insight into the Japanese perception of Italian demands. According to the text, Italy saw an opportunity to

prevail in the Adriatic basin, and Italy's accession to the allied powers was well calculated and well timed. When the UK, France, and Russia granted Italy's demands in the form of the London Treaty, Italy shaded its neutrality and joined the war, and based on that, it assumes that the London Treaty should be regarded as a key element for the correct understanding of the developments and the situation in the Adriatic and the Balkans. The report also emphasizes the importance of the historical background, especially the constant power struggle in the Adriatic between Italy and the Hapsburg monarchy.<sup>40</sup> From the report's language, we can assume that Japanese officials saw a permanent security dilemma in the Adriatic question that was supposed to reach the epilogue with the defeat of the Hapsburg monarchy. However, when after the war, the Austro-Hungarian empire collapsed, Italy was faced with a new security dilemma, as on the ashes of the Habsburg monarchy, several new states emerged, among them also the first Yugoslav state, which defended the principle of national border and was against the London Treaty agreement.

The Japanese report describes that Italy avoided dialogue with the representatives of the new Yugoslav state, mostly because the South Slav nations fought on the enemy side, which lost the war, and because of that, they had no voice in the post-war settlement. The report mentions that Italy was very vocal regarding the Italian minority in Trieste, Istria, and Dalmatia, and stressing their right to be united with mainland Italy. The report continues with the analysis of the port of Rijeka (Fiume), estimating that it hosted approx. 25,000 Italians, 15,000 Yugoslavs, and 10,000 members of various nationalities. The text describes Rijeka as one of the richest port cities in the Adriatic and explains that between 1869 and 1913, the load of cargo traversing the city increased from 130,000 tons to 4,000,000 tons per year. It also states that Rijeka was the central port for the various nations living on the Balkans, and given its strategic location and excellent infrastructure, it was important for both Italy and South Slavs.<sup>41</sup>

At the conclusion, the report describes attitudes and stances of France, UK, and US in regard to the situation in the Adriatic. The author of the text is of the opinion that the major powers were not supportive of the Italian demands in the region. France and UK thought about the future regional order differently than Italy. The disintegration of the Austro-Hungarian empire strengthened the Italian territorial appetites, and if it were to pursue its interests, the stability of the region would be endangered. The author suggests that after consolidating its own position, Italy would probably attempt to disrupt the political integration and state building of South Slavs, and further advance its influence towards North Africa. According to the report analysis, UK and France's influence over Italy was limited by the obligations set by the London Treaty. The text stresses that by concluding the secret agreement with Italy, they allowed for the spread and consolidation of Italian influence over the south of the Adriatic basin, which would inevitably impact France. This disruption of the balance of power in the Adriatic eventually pushed France towards a more supportive relationship with the new Yugoslav state. Additionally, according to the report, it was clear

that Italy was attempting to overtake the greater part of the Austro-Hungarian Navy in Pula, and as a counterreaction, France protested and demanded that every action on the Adriatic coast should be first and most agreed among the allies. More precisely, France supported the principle of shared control over the Adriatic ports, according to which, UK would control Kotor; US, the port of Split; and Italy, the port of Pula.<sup>42</sup>

Additionally, the report mentions that the US was supportive of the Yugoslav positions, and that it would eventually affect the implementation of the secret agreements. The US did not recognize the London Treaty and denied all territorial extensions by Italy after the war, and since Italy was not backing down, the report hints on the possibility of further escalation of the Adriatic problem. The text also describes how Italian arguments did not influence President Wilson's convictions, who defended the principle of national self-determination and, in the Italian demands, saw only remains of the old diplomacy that led to World War I.<sup>43</sup>

The report ends with the strategic assessment of Rijeka (Fiume), which, according to the authors' views, was the central port for the Slavic nations in Central and Southeast Europe. Here, we can sense a hint of criticism against Italy, which is described as being imprudent, because it is creating unnecessary tensions in the relations among the states in the region, which could eventually lead to new and unnecessary military conflicts. As a solution, the report suggests that the London Treaty should be amended and Rijeka be handed over to the Yugoslav state.<sup>44</sup> This final part points to a sober and balanced viewing of the Adriatic entanglement, and based on this, we could say that even though realism and political opportunism pushed Japan towards Italy, Japanese delegates nevertheless seem to have retained an independent and balanced view of the political and security situation in the Adriatic.

#### **IV. Conclusion**

Japan was not directly involved in the border solution between the Yugoslav Kingdom and Italy. The Adriatic controversy, including other issues like the status of Rijeka (Fiume), was after all resolved bilaterally between the two concerned states with the Treaty of Rapallo in November 1920. This, however, does not diminish the value of Japanese observations and reports on the matter. Since the Adriatic controversy was often compared to the Japanese demands over China, Japan was an interested party in the matter. Furthermore, the sources analyzed in this paper show that during the peace conference, Japanese delegates followed the situation in the Adriatic actively, especially the issue of Rijeka (Fiume). In these sources, we find descriptions of the Italian diplomatic maneuvering; also, a lot of attention is dedicated to the statements of the American President Wilson and the general public mood in Italy.

Furthermore, in Tokyo, the foreign policy advisory committee was concerned with the situation in the Italian delegation, and from the records of the committee, we can distil some preoccupation about the possible impact of the Italian boycott on the peace conference on

Japanese diplomatic strategy. The records show also that Makino Nobuaki, the Japanese ambassador, met with the Italian delegates. He met with Orlando, the Italian president at the time and reported back describing how Orlando requested Japanese support for the Italian territorial demands for the annexation of the Southern Alps, Istria, and Dalmatia. It is also clear that Orlando also informed Makino that the Italian delegation was considering to boycott the negotiations and leave Paris.

Sources and reports from Japanese diplomats presented here point to their close relationship with the Italian delegation. However, we should not assume that Japan didn't have its own independent views regarding issues like the Adriatic Question. We can sense this in the special report on the Adriatic Question that was analyzed in the present paper. For example, when describing the international status of Rijeka (Fiume), the report clearly states that for the sake of regional stability and peace, Rijeka should be attributed to the new Yugoslav state and not Italy. Finally, based on the analyzed sources, I would conclude that Japanese policymakers held a rather realistic and pragmatic view of the European affairs after the war, including the rising tensions in the Adriatic basin. They approached the emerging new European and international order according to their own interests in Asia. Also, they perceived the Italian-Yugoslav quarrel from the perspective of a changing balance of power in Central and Southeastern Europe, which was based on a mix of security and strategic issues springing from a historically based Italian-Hapsburg antagonism.

#### Notes

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## The Adriatic Question and Japan

Boštjan BERTALANIČ

### Abstract

The present paper explores Japan's views regarding the Adriatic Question during the Paris Peace Conference in 1919. The question was linked to the conclusion of the secret Treaty of London from 1915, which determined the future of the territorial dispute between Italy and the newly formed Yugoslav Kingdom over the eastern coast of the Adriatic Sea that formerly belonged to the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Based on the analysis of Japanese diplomatic sources, the paper sheds light on Japanese relations with the Italian delegation in Paris and perceptions about the Adriatic controversy.

**Keywords** : Adriatic Question, Italy, Yugoslavia, Japan, World War I, Paris Peace Conference (1919-1920)