Abstract

This dissertation analyzes and compares Swedish–Japanese, Spanish–Japanese and Swiss–Japanese diplomatic relations during the Empire’s wartime period, from 1931 to 1945. It contrasts the experiences of the three neutrals with each other and embeds them in an IR framework for the analysis of neutrality during WWII. The dissertation argues that it is imperative to distinguish between great and small Power neutrals and to consider the different stages of Japan’s wartime period. Great Power neutrals tipped the war in one or the other direction by giving up their neutrality. Small Power neutrals like Spain, Sweden, and Switzerland, on the other hand, had no such influence. Their role in the Pacific was that of diplomatic service providers of last resort—not mediating but interfacing belligerents. Both sides of the war chose the neutrals that seemed the most reliable for their purposes. Sweden and Switzerland proved to be mostly impartial, whereas Francoist Spain first tilted toward supporting Japan beyond the scope of lawful neutral acts but then shifted its favors to the Allied Powers as the fortunes of war changed, withdrawing even its diplomatic support for Tokyo. In the end, only the Swiss and the Swedes remained to act as protecting Powers for Japan, which they fulfilled dutifully in return for the prospects of future trade relations with all belligerents.