

Arms Production Problems and Arms Export Companies in Pre-War Japan: The Roles of Taihei Kumiai and Shouwa Tsuushou

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This paper involves studies of the Japanese history of arms production problems from the 1920s to the 1940s. Presenting and analysing documents, we consider the purposes for the establishment and expected roles of two arms export companies, Taihei Kumiai and Shouwa Tsuushou, which were placed under the especially strong control of the Japanese Army. Focusing on Shouwa Tsuushou, we verify that the Japanese Army developed policies for arms export and arms support centring on China and Thailand, while international momentum toward disarmament was heightened. In this verification, we clarify the arms production problems of the Japanese Army. We also note that not only Japan but also Western countries advanced in arms export, including Russia, the United Kingdom, France and the United States, were extremely proactive in arms export despite the emphasis on disarmament. Thus, the arms production problems intended to nurture domestic munitions industries and advance military alliances with partner countries through arms export and import. Arms export and import secured multi-tiered economic, diplomatic and military advantages. Therefore, arms production problems could be described as “peacetime war,” and the proliferation of arms through arms production problems was clearly part of the preparation for World War II.