



Keio Business School

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March on Mt. Hakkoda

— Decision making during crisis management —

On the early morning of January 20, 1902, two years before the outbreak of the Russo-Japanese War, a total of 38 people wearing military gear, 37 soldiers from the 31st Hirosaki Regiment and a newspaper reporter, set out on a 10-day, 224-km marching exercise on a snowy mountain path. 10

Even after the conclusion of the Sino-Japanese War in 1895, Russia was continuing to advance into Manchuria and the Liaodong peninsula. For the time being, Manchuria was considered a likely place for a clash between the Japanese and Russian military, but it was also possible that the Japanese archipelago would become a battleground in the future. If the Russian military decided to attack the Japanese archipelago, it might first use a fleet to blockade the Tsugaru Channel and then land in Aomori Prefecture or some other beach in the Tohoku Region. The main mission of the Army's 8th Division in Hirosaki City, Aomori Prefecture, including that of its 31st Hirosaki Regiment and 5th Aomori Regiment, was to solidly defend the northern tip of Honshu should such a threat arise. 15 20

The planned march through the snow was significant for several reasons. If the Russian military decided to land, it was not likely to do so at a spot near a Japanese military base. Most likely, the landing would take place near Hachinohe on the Pacific Ocean side or near Ajigasawa on the Japan Sea side, away from Hirosaki and Aomori. If that were to happen, the Japanese military would have to move its forces from Hirosaki and Aomori toward the enemy's landing place to counterattack. The route for this operation would ordinarily be a railroad or road along the coastline, but the enemy's fleet might use artillery bombardment to destroy these infrastructures. Taking the superior power of the Russian military into consideration, it seemed quite plausible that Japanese forces would have to march 25 30

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