1 Between a colonial clash and World War Zero

The impact of the Russo-Japanese War in a global perspective

Rotem Kowner

On the morning of February 6, 1904, Japan severed its diplomatic relations with Russia. The same day, the Japanese Combined Fleet under the command of Admiral Tōgō Heihachirō set sail for the shores of Korea. Off the port city of Chemulpo, in the vicinity of the capital Seoul, the force split into two. Most of the warships made for Port Arthur while a small naval force under Rear Admiral Uryū Sotokichi remained to protect the landing of the army on Korean soil. On the night of February 8, ten Japanese destroyers attacked Russian warships anchored in the harbor of Port Arthur but did not inflict much damage. The following morning the Japanese forces of the First Army took control of the Korean capital while Uryū’s naval force demanded of the Russian naval detachment in Chemulpo that it leave the port. The Russians obeyed, but, following a short offshore engagement, they returned to the port and scuttled the cruiser Variag and the gunship Koreets rather than hand them over to the enemy. These seemingly trivial episodes were but the prologue to a colossal struggle. The next day Japan declared war, whereupon a 19-month war began officially.1

From a broad historical perspective, the Russo-Japanese War was the long-anticipated flashpoint of the enmity between two expanding powers. On the western boundaries of Asia the Russian Empire had been advancing relentlessly southeastward for centuries, while on the eastern fringe of this continent the Japanese Empire had been spreading westward for three short decades. The difference in the extent of their imperialist expansion, however, did not diminish the magnitude of the conflict, and additional dissimilarities only made its resolution by diplomatic means ever less feasible. In fact, apart from their imperialist aspirations, their recent modernization, and their technologically advanced armies, there was little similarity between the two states. They differed in the size of their territory, population, and economy, as well as in their racial composition, language, and religion. Eventually, the encounter between them took place in the killing fields of Manchuria and Korea, areas both sides were eager to control. It was not their first or their last confrontation, but certainly it has exerted the greatest impact on both.2
Historiographically, views on the significance of the Russo-Japanese War have undergone tremendous fluctuations since its outbreak and throughout the subsequent century, shifting from sensation to amnesia and recently revived recollection. Present readers might be surprised to discover that the Russo-Japanese War was not an unknown event at the time of its occurrence. On the contrary, for such a peripheral conflict, it generated enormous reverberations. It was an astounding war, and millions around the globe kept abreast of the news of the surprising victories of “little” Japan over the “mighty” Russian Empire.

In the following years many prominent figures who shaped the history of the twentieth century referred to the Russo-Japanese War and remembered acutely the sensation it created. Adolf Hitler, for example, was one of those who took the war seriously, so much so that it might have contributed to his early evolving Weltanschauung. Serving his sentence in Landsberg prison two decades after the Russo-Japanese War and writing his fateful manifesto *Mein Kampf*, Hitler’s memory of it was still vivid. In 1904 the future Führer was 15 years old, and the war found him “much more mature and also more attentive” than during the Boer War, in which he also took, he confessed, great interest. He at once sided with the Japanese, and considered the Russian fiasco “a defeat of the Austrian Slavic nationalities.”

Hitler, of course, was not alone in understanding the importance of that event. Many others, particularly in Asia, regarded the war as a formative event in their political upbringing. During the hostilities India’s future leader of independence, Mohandas Gandhi, for example, grasped from remote South Africa that “the people of the East seem to be waking up from their lethargy.” Similarly, Sukarno, Indonesia’s first president after its independence, appraised Japan’s victory in retrospect and viewed it as one of the major events affecting “the development of Indonesian nationalism.”

Less than a decade after its conclusion, however, the war was hardly mentioned again, and after another three decades its claim to fame had vanished completely. Overshadowed by two global conflicts, and suffering from the demise of both regimes that took part in it, the Russo-Japanese War was virtually forgotten in the second half of the twentieth century. It was more or less destined for such a fate, as from an early stage this titanic struggle was customarily labeled merely one more clash in a series of colonial wars that afflicted the world throughout the nineteenth century.

No wonder, therefore, that most history books dealing with the modern age make no more than a brief mention of it, and even today some fundamental issues of the war, such as the decision-making on both sides during the war, and the military campaign, still await a comprehensive examination that takes into account all sources available.

A typical example of the prevalent disregard for the war can be found in Barbara Tuchman’s book *The Proud Tower* (1966), in which she sought
to provide a portrait of “the world” in the three decades before World War I. In her preface this influential historian admitted that she adopted a very selective view in attempting to describe the image of the world during that critical period. Tuchman had no hesitation in stating that it might have been possible to include a chapter on the Russo-Japanese War, as well as a plausible chapter on the Boer War, Chekhov, or the everyday shopkeeper. But no, she chose to deal with what she believed were the main issues. Her writing is decidedly Eurocentric, and almost inevitably Tuchman ends by focusing on the Anglo-Saxon world, and then in descending order on Western Europe and tsarist Russia, while devoting only a few lines to the Russo-Japanese War—a critical juncture along the road to World War I.8

Among Western historians Tuchman is obviously not an exception. In fact, her tendency to look at the world through European spectacles and to ignore events outside the sphere of Europe and North America is rather the rule. Still, the blame for this historiographic amnesia about the Russo-Japanese War should not be attributed to Western myopia alone. Much of it was due to the proximity of the war to an even more important event, at least from a European point of view. There is no doubt that World War I (1914–18) was an event on a different scale. It changed the face of Europe and of the entire world, and created not only a new international system but also a different way of perceiving the modern era. Apart from the shadow cast by this subsequent colossal event, the Russo-Japanese War was forgotten simply because it happened “out there” at the distant edge of Asia, in remote and sparsely populated areas. The Japanese and Russians who fought it were considered the “Other,” obscure and anonymous troops, and their losses did not affect the hearts and minds of the public in the West. The military campaign was conducted amidst a local population that barely recorded its history, and the relatively few journalists who went to cover the fighting were kept under tight control and strict censorship. Their reports were also not immortalized by many visual mementos, since photographing equipment was heavy and the battle arena too distant, motion pictures had only just emerged, and live television broadcasts were still many decades in the future.

No less important, the two opponents themselves played an active role in diminishing the importance of their conflict. In Russia, soon to be transformed into the Soviet Union, the defeat emerged as just one more event in a long despicable series of fiascos associated with the “old” regime. With the Bolsheviks’ rise to power 12 years after the conclusion of the Portsmouth Peace Treaty, the defeat against Japan was turned into a war of the tsar and not of the people who fought to overthrow him.9 In Japan, by contrast, the victories of the war became an invaluable asset in the brief military legacy of the imperial forces. Nevertheless, at the time of its surrender to the Allies in 1945 Japan too began a process of suppression and denial of its imperial past, in a manner somewhat recalling what had happened to its Russian
arch-rival several decades earlier. With such tortuous legacies, it would have been most unlikely for the memory of the war not to fade from national consciousness on both sides.

In the last few years the war has been widely commemorated and has received much more attention than in previous decades. Benefiting from the emergence of national consciousness in Japan since the 1980s and the collapse of the Soviet Union in the early 1990s, it became again a valid topic for research and reflection. With the hindsight of a century it is possible to examine the war from an appropriate historiographic distance. By now all available documents related to the conflict have been declassified and analyzed, its heroes have all died, and the sensationalism that enveloped the battles is long gone. Today more than ever, it becomes clear that the war was not only of great importance at the time it occurred, but that it had an important impact on the entire history of the twentieth century.

A recent edited volume, *The Russo-Japanese War in Global Perspective: World War Zero*, seems to reflect the greater role that the war is given in current historiography. The editors of this volume contend that the modern era of global conflict began with the Russo-Japanese War rather than in 1914. In their brief introduction, they suggest that the war deserves this designation since it was fought between two powers, a European and an Asian, and was sponsored by a third party money market.\(^\text{10}\) While the title *World War Zero* admittedly sounds appealing, the Russo-Japanese War was not a global conflict. Not only did it involve directly only two adversaries, but for both of them it was far from a total war in the form they would experience in the following world wars. From Russia’s perspective, in fact, the clash with Japan was not a total war even in the sense of the Napoleonic Wars. During most of the campaign only a small segment of the Russian military machine was involved, and Russian casualties in Manchuria were far lower than those even in the Crimean War.\(^\text{11}\) No less important, no other power assisted either of the belligerents, and even their closest allies—Britain on Japan’s side and France on Russia’s side—did their utmost to avoid taking any active part in the conflict. Finally, the war did not witness the introduction of any revolutionary weapon, certainly not on the scale of the airplane, tank, or submarine, as was the case in World War I. All in all, it seems to resemble much more the Crimean War or even the American Civil War than any global conflict of the scale the world would experience twice within a 35-year period later on.

If the Russo-Japanese War carried any global significance it lay not in its origins in the actual warfare, in the diplomatic alliances, or in financial support obtained during the war, but in its repercussions. Although these were associated directly with the decline of Russia and the rise of Japan, they had a wide-ranging effect on numerous nations, regions, and spheres. Furthermore, these repercussions did not involve only immeasurable sentiments, such as fear, joy, or envy, but touched upon the economies and military organizations of every power in the early twentieth century, and its
balance of power with others. Through this, the war affected the stability of Europe, Russia in particular, the equilibrium between the United States and Japan, and the territorial status quo in northeast Asia.

**Implications for Europe: deterioration of the power balance**

The Russo-Japanese War did not cause any instant or visible upheaval in Europe but its ultimate impact on this continent was devastating. It did not lead immediately to a substantial rise in military expenditure; nor did it start an arms race. It did not prompt any new radical attitude either, and even some of the political processes associated with it had begun to crystallize before the war broke out. More than anything, its impact in Europe was linked with Russia’s debacle in the battlefields of Manchuria and the consequent instability at home in the wake of the 1905 revolution. The status of Russia had in turn tangible, arguably even radical, repercussions on the power balance in Europe. Its impact was initially of a psychological nature and took shape in part during the war and in part after it, leading to a new balance, or rather imbalance, of power. The new political arrangement that emerged in Europe during 1904–5 was one of the precipitants, if not the main one, of the deterioration that led to the outbreak of the Great War less than a decade later.

Russia was not reduced to a marginal power following its final defeats in Mukden and Tsushima during the first half of 1905, but it unquestionably...
became second-rate in its image, its military capabilities, and its actual ability to influence others. The collapse of this mighty power undermined the political and military equilibrium that had endured in Europe since the Napoleonic era. While Russia lost its former military status, Germany had just completed a ten-year period of military build-up and during the war emerged as Europe’s supreme military and industrial power. The German rise was not a new phenomenon, but the Russian defeat suddenly highlighted the continental hegemony of Germany. The ascent of Germany had begun more than four decades earlier, and even before the war other European powers perceived it as jeopardizing the stability of the continent. However, the exposure of Russia’s military weakness, its naval losses, financial burden, and internal instability swung the already uneven military balance in Europe still more to Germany’s favor. In the subsequent decade the fluctuating balance between these two powers determined the fate of the continent. During 1904–14 this fragile equilibrium was in large measure, as David Herrmann convincingly argues, “the story of Russia’s prostration, its subsequent recovery, and the effects of this development upon the strategic situation.”

Much of the road to the Great War was therefore associated with changing perceptions of this military balance by the German leadership. But, despite its economic and military hegemony, pre-war Germany was isolated and lacked a large empire overseas. The war in Manchuria provided Germany with a unique opportunity to reverse its prolonged failing diplomacy, which had begun to deteriorate since its last successful diplomatic collaboration in 1895 (the “Three Power Intervention” with France and Russia), aimed not by chance against Japan. Due to the sudden change of military power in 1905, Germany was able to pose a threat of war against its western neighbor France. The reluctance to give up the geopolitical advantages gained during the war, together with the desire to disrupt the recent Anglo-French Entente of 1904, was the underlying motive for the kaiser’s landing in Tangiers in March 1905 and contesting French attempts to turn the area into its protectorate. Five months later the flamboyant kaiser turned to Germany’s eastern neighbor Russia, in another attempt to disrupt the position of France, this time by driving a wedge between Franco-Russian ties. He ventured into an abortive exercise in personal diplomacy too by signing a treaty with Tsar Nicholas II at Björkö, Finland, believing the latter could be wooed at a time of debacle abroad and crisis at home (see Map 2, p. 10). The kaiser was momentarily right, perhaps, but German leaders underestimated the forces in Russia that prevented it from abandoning France and entering into alliance with Germany. Hence, in a short time the treaty seemed “little more than a curious episode in Russian diplomacy.”

German prospects for a successful offensive on its western border were probably better in 1905 than nine years later on the eve of World War I. Concluding that Russia could not help France, German strategists were planning during the Russo-Japanese War an offensive (“preventive war”) against
France. Their scheme did not materialize since the ambitious kaiser was still unready for the undertaking. He probably did not realize the full array of consequences of the war and revolution for Russia, but nonetheless he orchestrated the plans, albeit without sufficient coordination. Although the remote conflict in Manchuria exposed the weaknesses characterizing German governmental structure, German planners did update their drafts and completed the notorious Schlieffen Plan in December 1905. Their French counterparts did not remain idle, revising simultaneously their own Plan XV and completing it in 1906. Hesitating to go to war, the kaiser nonetheless appointed Helmut von Moltke on January 1, 1906 as his new Chief of Staff, replacing the 72-year-old Alfred von Schlieffen, believing the latter was too old to lead the troops effectively should an armed conflict break out.

The desire of Germany, and to a lesser extent of Austro-Hungary, to maintain its continental hegemony acquired during 1904–5 was one of the cardinal causes of the outbreak of World War I. These two nations perceived the Russo-Japanese War as a window of opportunity in which they could exploit their momentary hegemony. Germany in particular, argues Matthew Seligmann (Chapter 7, this volume), was painfully aware that its relative power was diminishing during the decade that followed the war and that this window was rapidly closing. The sense that the period of grace was about to end became acute in 1914 and turned into one of the most decisive undercurrents, at least on the German and Austrian side, of the war against Russia and France in 1914. This sentiment can be plainly discerned, for example, in Moltke’s view, expressed at a meeting with his Austrian counterpart Franz Conrad von Hötzendorf on May 12, 1914: “To wait any longer means a diminishing of our chances; as far as manpower is concerned we cannot enter into a competition with Russia.” Eight days later, recalled the German Foreign Minister Gottlieb von Jagow, Moltke lectured him that “there was no alternative to waging a preventive war in order to defeat the enemy as long as we could still more or less pass the test.”

As for Russia, the impact of the war with Japan was both concrete and psychological. It was not the only cause of the Russian Revolution in 1905, but it served as its main catalyst. The link between the war outside Russia and the events occurring within its territory is unquestionable. The constraints of a large and unexpected colonial war, far from home and costly in both human lives and material, aggravated social divisions, damaged agrarian economy, led to financial crisis, and enhanced political opposition to the autocratic regime. While the upheavals in Russia prevented the political system from acting with full force against Japan, the war outside Russia made it difficult to respond harshly to the revolution within. Witnessing the weakness of the autocratic regime for the first time, the public were powerfully affected by the Russian defeat and their trust in the tsar never fully recovered.
As Jonathan Frankel notes (Chapter 4, this volume), the most apparent outcome of the war was Nicholas’s readiness to set up a legislative council called the Duma, and to grant the people a constitution. The first Duma was received in the palace of the tsar in 1906, but from the very start it struggled to obtain political and civil rights, and to implement plans that were not included among the concessions the tsar granted at the end of 1905. The battle for a less autocratic rule during the war did not prevent the formal dissolution of the first Duma within ten weeks, but this institution continued to function up to 1917. The inability of Nicholas to cope simultaneously with a foreign enemy and an internal rebellion, as evident in the Russo-Japanese War, was to recur with even greater intensity after 1914, and to lead to his downfall three years later.22

Except for Russia and Germany, Britain seemed to be affected the most by the war. During the military campaign in Manchuria and in the following years, Britain improved its geopolitical position, consolidating alliances with France and Russia, its two arch-rivals during the previous decades. Of the two, the rapprochement with France had the greatest significance. Only a few years earlier Britain had been uncertain about the identity of its allies in Europe.23 In April 1904, however, Britain rendered its final verdict when, together with France, it renewed their Entente Cordiale, according to which France agreed to British control over Egypt in return for recognition of French hegemony in Morocco. To many the Entente was a surprising turnaround, since only four years earlier Britain had still manifested a desire for an alliance with Germany against France and Russia. Very few could have foreseen then that within seven years Britain would make an alliance with both, and regard Germany as its most menacing rival.24

The sudden outbreak of the Russo-Japanese War accelerated the Anglo-French rapprochement as both were bound by specific clauses of their respective alliances with the two combatants: the Anglo-Japanese and the Franco-Russian alliances. Threatened by a direct conflict against each other, the two settled their differences within two months and concluded their Entente, which lingered in some way throughout the twentieth century.25 Historians tend to disagree as to the extent to which this Anglo-French alliance was originally intended to isolate Germany, since there was nothing in the agreement that could be construed as an anti-German measure. Nonetheless, many in Britain and France expressed relief at the fact that German foreign policy could no longer count on the tension between the two states. Thereafter, Britain abandoned its long “splendid isolation” and became fully involved in the worsening continental quagmire, leading to its fateful participation in the European conflict of 1914, side by side with its new allies.26

The British alliance with Japan since 1902 and the successful exploits of the Imperial Japanese Navy during the war enabled the Royal Navy to concentrate its warships in the Atlantic and the Mediterranean. Enhanced by its new alliance with France, Britain regained its naval hegemony, and forced
Italy, with its long and vulnerable coastline, to join its side. Through its improved ties with France, Britain was destined to enhance its contacts with Russia as well. Completing its containment in 1905, as Thomas Otte (Chapter 6, this volume) illustrates, it was ready now to signal its willingness to appease its arch-rival hitherto. Russia could not respond appropriately during the conflict with Japan, but once defeated and no longer the menace to Britain it was earlier, it shifted its policy toward its arch-rival after the conclusion of the war. Retiring from an almost century-long wide-ranging border conflict with Britain across Asia (whimsically entitled “the Great Game”), Russia now turned its focus back to Europe, the Balkans in particular. As the Russo-Japanese War ended, Britain, or at least a few of its leading figures, was convinced that in the event of a continental war in Europe, it must send troops to support its new ally France. This decision to intervene in European conflict was not modified until August 2, 1914.

Eventually, the sudden rise of Germany, at least in relative terms, the rapprochement between Britain and France, and its own defeat in Manchuria drove Russia after the war into the arms of Britain, its arch-rival during most of the nineteenth century. In 1907, two years after the war ended, a new de facto balance between the European powers came into existence, and remained in force until the outbreak of World War I. Thenceforward, they were divided into two blocs: a diplomatic alliance of Great Britain, France, and Russia on the one hand, and a central defensive alliance of Germany, Austria-Hungary, Italy, and Romania on the other. The road to an all-European war was not irreversible, but on the diplomatic front no change occurred in the power relationships over the next several years, and no new alignment was formed to divert Europe from a major conflict.

The impact of the war on Europe was also felt strongly in the Balkans, where the diminished status of St Petersburg contributed further to the destabilization of the region. Russia’s weakness exposed in northeast Asia caused Austria-Hungary to seek rapprochement initially, and on October 15, 1904 the two nations signed a secret protocol to maintain the status quo in southeast Europe. Austria-Hungary’s growing sense of confidence during the war was one of the causes of the deterioration of its diplomatic relations with Italy, leading soon to a virtual war scare and to unresolved suspicions and mutual armament during the following decade. Although weakened, Russia resumed its active meddling in the Balkans after the war even more intensively than before. Although Russia had earlier expressed its consent, an Austrian move to annex Bosnia and Herzegovina in 1908 without notifying St Petersburg resulted in a six-month crisis with Russia. An armed clash was averted through boycotts, threats, and reparations, but the successful annexation left Austria-Hungary and its ally Germany in a greater mutual commitment and with a sense of vindication. Thereafter, the conflict with Russia exacerbated, culminating in the outbreak of World War I. Russia’s diminished power was manifested again in 1912, when it was unable to prevent the Balkan League from declaring war on the Ottoman Empire.
Map 2 Europe, 1904–15.

Key

Conflicts: I Italo–Turkish War (1911–12); II First Balkan War (1912–13); III Second Balkan War (1913).

Treaties: A Anglo-French Entente (Entente Cordiale) (1904); B Treaty of Björkō (1905); C Anglo-Russian Entente (1907); D Anglo-French Naval Agreement (1912).

Events:
1. The Dogger Bank incident (1904)
2. St Petersburg—Revolution of 1905
3. Tangier—Landing of the German emperor and the First Moroccan Crisis (1905)
4. Lodz Uprising (1905)
5. Treaty of Björkō (1905)
6. St Petersburg—The First Duma (1906)
7. Algeciras Conference (1906)
8. Hague Peace Conference (1907)
9. Annexation of Bosnia and Herzegovina (1908)
10. Agadir—The Second Moroccan Crisis (1908)
11. Istanbul—Constitutional Revolution (1908)
12. Tripoli—Annexation of Tripolitania (1911)
13. London Peace Conference (1913)
14. Sarajevo—Assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand (1914)

Note: The borders in the Balkans are pertinent to the period between the peace treaties signed in August–September 1913 and August 1914.
Similarly, its secondary role in the Triple Entente did not prompt its allies, Britain and France, to lend support to its position in this turbulent region during the entire period until the Great War.31

The echoes of the Russo-Japanese War were felt even on the western periphery of the Russian Empire—Scandinavia and Poland in particular—and they gave rise to uprisings and demands for greater freedom. For Sweden, Russia’s defeat merely heralded a relief from the neighborly menace,32 but for the semi-independent duchy of Finland the revolution of 1905 stirred a national awakening together with attempts at radical activities against Russia, to the extent of collaboration with Japanese agents.33 After several years of tightened Russian control over Finland, the demonstrations and general strikes that swept the country during 1905 led in November that year to the restoration of the status quo ante until 1899, and to the reinstatement of the rights of the local parliament. Divided between Russia, Germany, and Austria-Hungary, Poland too displayed a burst of hope for independence during the revolution. Finnish and Polish hopes during the revolution of 1905 should not be a surprise. It was, Hugh Seton-Watson argued:

as much a revolution of non-Russians against Russification as it was a revolution of workers, peasants, and radical intellectuals against autocracy. The two revolts were of course connected: the social revolution was in fact most bitter in non-Russian regions, with Polish workers, Latvian peasants, and Gregorian peasants as protagonists.34

While Poles swept the streets with anti-Russian riots, Josef Pilsudski and Roman Dmowski, leaders of two movements for the unification of Poland, ventured to Japan and examined ways of cooperation with the Japanese.35 Their eventual moderation paid off. Less than a year after the war, 36 Polish delegates were elected to the first Duma. Signs of greater freedom were apparent also in the field of education, and in the coming years the idea of Polish unity under the protection of the Russian Empire grew stronger. However, as a result of Russian counteraction all these achievements were gradually lost, and Poland’s movement for independence, like Finland’s, was forced to wait until 1918 before its vision became a reality, at the cost of much bloodshed.

A dress rehearsal for the Great War: military aspects

The disturbance of the balance of power in Europe during the Russo-Japanese War was not only in the diplomatic realm but also in the military sphere. In many ways this confrontation between two large and modern armies served as virtually the last general dress rehearsal for the colossal military spectacle that was to take place in Europe a decade later. In a speech in the British House of Commons in 1901, a young Member of
Parliament named Winston Churchill foresaw with a fine degree of accuracy that “Democracy is more vengeful than governments” and that the wars of nations “will be more terrible than the wars of kings.”

Churchill was right about the outcome but not about the sources of this phenomenon. Relative to the number of participants, the Russo-Japanese War proved a terrible slaughter. Yet compared with subsequent wars of the twentieth century, such as the two world wars, and even the Korean and Vietnam Wars, the death toll was rather low. The number of dead was only 1 percent of the loss of life suffered in World War I, and about 7 percent of the loss in the Korean War. The lower figures of casualties in the Russo-Japanese War were not so much due to the character of the regimes involved but to the weapons available and the reluctance of both belligerents to utilize all national resources to win the war. In addition, both kept their engagements far away from civilians, and were ready to reach a compromise in the early stages of attrition.

This unwillingness to keep on fighting was due mainly to the fact that neither side fought on its own territory, and that each had much to lose at home. Furthermore, the conflict did not approach the totality of the wars or the ideological struggles, nor was it motivated by abysmal hatred and dehumanization, all of which would characterize many subsequent conflicts of the twentieth century. Paradoxically, this conflict might have been one of the last “gallant” wars, as well as one of the first “humane” ones—a conflict in which both sides maintained rather strictly the traditional rules of decency but also provided reasonable treatment to the wounded and prisoners of war according to the humane and unprecedented standards that began to be instituted at the end of the nineteenth century. The Russo-Japanese War, therefore, may provide some hints not only as to the means to prevent escalation, but also, as Peter Berton shows (Chapter 5, this volume), as to ways for a rapid rapprochement between belligerent nations.

Despite its remote location, the war attracted the attention of the world’s principal armies and navies, and military observers dispatched to Manchuria recorded their conclusions in thick tomes. They witnessed a number of large-scale battles, notably the battle of Mukden in which about half a million soldiers participated—the largest number in military history until then. As Yigal Sheffy points out (Chapter 16, this volume), the Russo-Japanese War was overwhelming proof for those still in doubt as to the importance of firepower as the dominant factor in military combat. Skilled observers, and an unprecedented number of them were in this campaign, did not have to wait for the fighting in 1916 around the trenches of Verdun. In the battlefields of Manchuria they could see the deadly and decisive effect of the use of intensive artillery in general, and the machine-gun in particular, as a result of which the tactical range in front of the defense lines became impenetrable. These observers’ reports notwithstanding, the strategic planners of all the major European armies did not absorb this insight. They overlooked the growing superiority of defense in a war.
that lacked a revolutionary offensive weapon, miscalculating (on the German side) that the coming war in Europe would be “over by Christmas.” Oddly enough, the successes the Imperial Japanese Army gained at terrible cost served to preserve existing beliefs and prevailing doctrines regarding the supremacy of offense over defense. The reluctance or inability of the European armies to emulate the tactical or strategic lessons of the war, in face of the dramatic increase in firepower in warfare, led to the horrendous slaughter a decade later.

The naval arena witnessed some dramatic improvements in weaponry and tactics after the war, but paradoxically the lessons of the war itself hardly contributed to the radical transformation of naval warfare that took place in the next two global conflicts, nor did it undermine substantially the contemporary balance of power among the major fleets. The war presented a long-awaited opportunity to test new weapons systems, and naval observers of all major navies, as Cord Eberspaecher shows (Chapter 18, this volume), followed closely the engagements between the Imperial Russian Navy (the world’s third largest fleet) and the Imperial Japanese Navy (the world’s sixth largest). The battle of Tsushima, which concluded the naval campaign, was the most important naval engagement since Trafalgar, and has remained ever since the last decisive battle between two major surface fleets. The sinking of a considerable part of the Imperial Russian Navy placed the British Royal Navy, the biggest fleet in the world, in an even stronger position than it had been throughout the previous two decades, and allowed it, and Britain as a whole, to concentrate on the German naval threat. Burdened by budgetary constraints, the Royal Navy accelerated the construction of a new and revolutionary class of battleship—the Dreadnought. The idea to launch such an all big-gun capital ship, which ultimately was armed with ten big guns of the same caliber, instead of the four big guns in the standard battleship until then, arose before the war, but the lessons of its naval battles, notably the battle of the Yellow Sea and the battle of Tsushima, provided the final affirmation for this novel concept. After the completion of the Dreadnought in 1906 more than 100 battleships of earlier classes were rendered obsolete and a new global naval arms race commenced, reflecting this time more exactly, as Phillips O’Brien noted, a nation’s economic and technological capabilities.

The war also demonstrated some significant improvement in military logistics as both sides conducted the campaign for a long period and far from their home bases. While Japan efficiently sustained its troops on the continent, its logistic achievements did not match those of Russia, which supplied the needs of a large army at a distance of nearly 10,000 kilometers (about 6,200 miles) from its capital, using only a single railway track. Another complex and unprecedented operation from a logistic perspective was the voyage of the Russian Baltic Fleet to East Asia, which involved enormous difficulties of refueling along the 33,000 kilometers (about 17,800 nautical miles) covered by this armada from its departure point to the place
of its defeat. The logistic capabilities demonstrated by both sides served as a catalyst for further improvements and new fuels that fully materialized in both world wars.

The rise of new rivalry across the Pacific

Geographically remote from the two belligerents, the United States exploited the war as another step in its steady rise to global supremacy. While acting as a mediator in the peace process concluding the war, it changed from a sympathetic supporter of Tokyo at the outbreak of the war to a worried onlooker at Japan’s emergence as a regional power at the end of the conflict. The following decades were marked by mutual suspicion and American attempts to check Japan’s continental ambition and naval hegemony in the Pacific. As such, the war signaled the beginning of a struggle for control of the Pacific Ocean, culminating 37 years later in the Pacific War.

The 19-month period of the Russo-Japanese War was characterized by international awareness of the increasing political importance of the United States. In the 15 years since 1890 its population had grown tremendously, making it the second most populated power after Russia. By the turn of the century it was a leading economic power, but it still lacked the foresight and experience to use its economic achievements for geopolitical means and exert decisive international influence. Throughout the war the United States, under the dynamic presidency of Theodore Roosevelt, maintained its neutrality although it subtly changed its attitude to the Japanese. As the latter did not lose a single battle throughout 1904, Roosevelt's hopes of seeing both belligerents exhausted soon faded. By the end of that year he was concerned by the prospects of a Japanese victory and its consequences for East Asia, wondering whether the Japanese did not lump all Westerners, together with the Russians, as “white devils inferior to themselves . . . and seek to benefit from our various national jealousies, and beat us in turn.” This concern notwithstanding, Roosevelt played the role of host and mediator at the Peace Conference that brought the war to its conclusion. During the negotiations at Portsmouth, New Hampshire, he demanded that Japan conduct an “Open Door” policy in Manchuria, and return the area to Chinese sovereignty. Unwilling to enter into conflict with Japan, the United States signed an agreement with that country in July 1905, in which it recognized Japanese control over Korea in return for a similar recognition by Japan of American control over the Philippines.

At the outbreak of the war, many influential Americans, as Joseph Henning demonstrates (Chapter 10, this volume), held positive attitudes to Japan and regarded it as the underdog, and certainly more civilized than Russia. Some of them even tended to perceive the Japanese as semi-whites despite being non-Christian. As Japan gained the upper hand, however, a growing number of Americans, including Roosevelt, became aware of the dangers it constituted for the American presence in East Asia, the Philippines
in particular; in the following years, even at home anti-Japanese sentiments outpaced the work of Japan’s friends in the United States. Many more Americans, notably those residing along the west coast, likewise considered the war another sign of the “Yellow Peril” and became opposed to further Asian immigration to the United States.

The initial goodwill on both sides of the Pacific before and during the clash in Manchuria turned into slow diplomatic deterioration, and the first signs of a new conflict surfaced as early as in 1905. Both were rising powers that saw clearly for the first time the threat each posed to the other’s interests and aspirations to control the ocean expanse and access to the markets of East Asia. This new outlook had some military implications, and consequently in 1907 the Americans updated their “Orange Plan” to protect the waters of the Pacific Ocean against the Japanese menace, fearing Tokyo might take over American outposts in the Philippines and Hawaii, and might even blockade the Panama Canal (completed in 1914). American apprehension of Japan, slightly premature but not too unrealistic, tightened the restrictions on Japanese immigration to the United States, and was the first step toward a suspicious and much more hostile policy on Japan in the 1920s. Hence, the Russo-Japanese War marks the beginning of relationships which Tal Tovy and Sharon Halevi justly term (Chapter 9, this volume) “a cold war” between the United States and Japan, ending in full military confrontation in December 1941.

The impact on East Asia

Japan’s victory and Russia’s defeat in the war had vital and lasting repercussions for Asia in general and its northeastern region in particular. The war marked the onset of Japan’s firm grip on the continent and the takeoff point in its imperialist expansion. Only after the war was Japan regarded by others, and more especially by its own leaders, as being on an equal footing with all other imperialist forces involved in East Asian affairs, and only then did it become, at least from a military perspective, the strongest nation in the region (see Chapter 2, this volume). Russia, on the other hand, lost its colonial momentum in East Asia and returned to intervene in the local affairs of the region only in the 1930s. Additionally, the war had a bearing on the stability of the imperial regime in China as well as a decisive and long-term impact on Korean sovereignty.

The victory over Russia did not diminish Japanese military requirements, since the takeover of territories on the mainland created massive defense needs. Still, Japan and Russia, as Peter Berton illustrates (Chapter 5, this volume), were quick to overcome their previous animosity, and, following a series of four agreements (1907–16), were able to maintain a peace until the demise of the tsarist regime (see Map 3, p. 17). Nonetheless, two years after the war Japan drafted a national security plan that defined Russia, France, and, for the first time, the United States, as possible foes.
All maintained diplomatic relations with Japan, but they also had interests in East Asia and in the Pacific Ocean not necessarily congruent with Japan’s national security. At home, Japanese society for the next 40 years viewed the war as firm evidence of its invincibility. With the removal of the supposedly existential threat against the nation, and with overwhelming proof of its successful modernization, Japanese intellectuals turned to deal with questions of national identity. The war thus intensified the ongoing debate with regard to two dialectical views on culture, “Japanese” and “Western,” and laid the foundations for the bitter struggle Japan waged against the West from the early 1930s until its surrender in 1945.

In China, the war accelerated widespread political activities resulting six years later in the revolution of 1911 and the elimination of the Qing dynasty after 267 years. Already in 1905, as Harold Z. Schiffrin notes (Chapter 11, this volume), an infrastructure for a constitutional monarchy had been laid, and at the same time the first modern political movement was founded. Sensing its power undermined, after the war the Chinese government began to introduce several reforms, among them the establishment of elected assemblies and a campaign to eradicate the smoking of opium. During the war the Chinese public had expressed some solidarity with the Japanese, regarding them as brothers in a racial struggle, and, soon after, thousands of young Chinese flocked to Japan to study at its universities. They found it to be an appropriate role model for a successful modernization process that China could emulate. Within three years, however, this sentiment changed into deep suspicion toward the Japanese, who not only showed disrespect for the Chinese, but were also determined to snatch Manchuria from their hands. In this sense, the Russo-Japanese War, rather than its predecessor—the Sino-Japanese War of 1894–5—marks the onset of the great divide between these two East Asian giants.

The development of Manchuria, today a major industrial region with a population exceeding 100 million, is closely related to the consequences of the Russo-Japanese War. Its control of southern Manchuria made Japan regard this region as an entity separate from China, thereby placing the two nations on a collision course culminating in a Japanese takeover of the entire region in 1931. Japanese encroachment on Chinese soil began during the first Sino-Japanese War, a decade before the war against Russia, but at the end of that conflict the Three-power Intervention had forced Japan to give up its hold in Manchuria. In 1905, however, no power could take away Japan’s coveted prize. The Japanese presence in southern Manchuria led to increased frictions with the Chinese authorities there, but also to a desire to become involved in the internal affairs of China itself. Japanese aspirations came to light a decade later with the notorious “Twenty-one Demands,” which Japan submitted to the president of the new Chinese republic, and which eventually materialized beyond anything imaginable during the conquest of China starting in 1937. Such a move against China
Map 3 Asia, 1904–19.

**Key**

*Treaties:* A Katsura-Taft Agreement (1905); B Portsmouth Peace Treaty (1905); C Anglo-Japanese Alliance (1905, 1911); D Protectorate Agreement (1905); E Treaty of Peking (1906) (Japan–China); F Anglo-Chinese Alliance (1906); G Franco-Japanese Agreement (1907); H Russo-Japanese Agreements (1907, 1910, 1912, 1916); I Takahira-Root Agreement (1908); J Treaty of Annexation (1910); K Treaty of Kyakhta (1915) (Russia, China, and Mongolia); L Lansing-Ishii Pact (1917).

*Events:*

1. Lhasa—British opening of Tibetan trade (1904)
2. Kabul—British request for concessions (1904)
3. Laotian revolt (1904–6)
4. Tokyo—Hibiya riots (1905)
5. Tehran—Constitutional Revolution (1906)
6. Jakarta (Batavia)—Establishment of the first nationalist movement (1908)
7. Harbin—Assassination of Itō Hirobumi (1909)
8. Seoul—Korean annexation (1910)
10. Ulan Bator—Mongolian independence (1911)
11. Thailand—Military coup (1912)
12. Lhasa—Tibetan independence (1912)
13. Tsingtao—Japanese coup (1914)
14. Beijing—Twenty-one Demands (1915)
15. Amritsar massacre (1919)
16. Seoul—March 1st Movement (1919)
was impossible at the end of the nineteenth century, but in the wake of the war with Russia, and even more after the Chinese Revolution of 1911, it no longer seemed far-fetched.

The greatest impact of the war on a single nation was undoubtedly on Korea. This backward and politically weak kingdom at the time was rapidly losing its sovereignty, until it was finally annexed by Japan in 1910. After the war the Japanese felt confident enough to seize control of almost all aspects of life in Korea, and began to dispatch settlers without international protest. They correctly concluded that no power could prevent them from annexing Korea, and in the course of less than five years they did not hesitate to realize their ambition ruthlessly. From a Korean viewpoint, the end of the Russo-Japanese War marked the beginning of prolonged suppression and an orchestrated attempt to destroy their national identity—a period that ended only with the fall of Japan in 1945. As Guy Podoler and Michael Robinson point out (Chapter 12, this volume), the annexation of Korea has left its deep scars on the nation’s psyche until today. The fracture of the Korean society and national identity during 35 years of Japanese rule made possible the territorial division of Korea, no less than the political division between American and Soviet forces, which respectively installed a capitalist regime in the south and a communist regime in the north. This political division characterizes the two states of the Korean peninsula to the present day. Not only does the great hostility between them endanger peace in the area, but both states still bear a grudge against Japan for its occupation. Furthermore, North Korea has never established diplomatic relations with Japan and continues to seek compensation for the suffering endured by its people during the colonial era.

The war also served as a catalyst for the foundation and activities of many radical movements and organizations all over East Asia. Spanning a political and ideological spectrum from socialists to nationalists, anarchists, and even communists, these movements were a source of fermentation for many dramatic developments that characterized Asia from a political perspective in the following decades. The war, Yitzhak Shichor suggests (Chapter 13, this volume), contributed to the radicalization of moderate socialist movements in the area, to the de-legitimization of parliamentary democracy, and to an emphasis on the national aspect. Extremist movements sprang up during the war in China and Japan, but also in countries that were under colonial rule, such as Vietnam and the Philippines. In the ensuing years they worked for the independence of their countries, albeit with no marked success at that time.

**Echoes of the war in western Asia and the colonial world**

In colonial terms, the Russo-Japanese War signaled the final stage of the “Age of Imperialism,” heralding Japan’s 40-year colonial rule in Asia. The
most significant and concrete spoil of the war was Korea, but it served as a spur for the takeover of all Manchuria 26 years later. Japan and the United States mutually enhanced their colonial hold by signing two agreements in 1905 and 1908, which consolidated their control over Korea and the Philippines, respectively. Further to the west, Russia and Britain reached an agreement in August 1907 on Tibet and Persia, making the former a buffer state and dividing the latter into two spheres of influence.43

In spite of these developments, the main impact of the war on the colonial world was psychological rather than territorial. Colonial subjects across the world—from Southeast Asia and the Indian subcontinent to the Middle East—were all thrilled by the war. When Sun Yat-sen, a revolutionary who several years later became the first provisional president of the Republic of China, was voyaging down the Suez Canal during the war, a local man approached him and asked if he was Japanese. “The joy of this Arab, as the son of a great Asian race,” Sun noted, “was unbounded.”44 Sun’s keen observation was made at the zenith of a symbolic turning point in the history of the colonial world: a non-European power employing modern technology could defeat a European power. From that time on, the victory was associated with a drive for more active and conscious nationalist movements in colonial Asia. This first significant rupture of the long-standing conceptions of superior “West” and inferior “East” created a new mindset, in which Japan served as a role model. With such a mindset nationalist and revolutionary ideas could thrive in the hope of future realization. During the war new sectors of the colonial population, Asian in particular, began to share their distress over the foreign rule and manifest a desire for a national self-definition. More radical segments of this population viewed the victory of Japan, a developing Asian country, over a major European power as a symbol, and as a portent for their own prospects of breaking free of colonial rule and taking the course of modernization on the Japanese model.

Apart from joy at the Russian defeat, national movements across the Arab world, much of it still under the rule of the Ottoman Empire, saw the war as a sign that they too could win soon their independence.45 Further to the east, a revolution erupted in Iran that put into power, for the first time, a constitutional government. This political upheaval one year after the war was much affected by the weakening of Russia, but was also inspired by the knowledge that the victor was an Asian power with a constitution, whereas the vanquished was the only European power without a constitution.46 Two years later another revolution broke out, this time at the heart of the Ottoman Empire itself. There too Japan served as a model of a country that had succeeded in adopting modern technology without losing its national identity. All in all, the war instilled belief in the Young Turks that they had the strength to cope with Western imperialism and encouraged them to rebel in 1908. Ultimately, however, the clash in Manchuria
and the resulting political constellation in Europe were indirectly associated with Istanbul’s decision in the aftermath of the Balkan wars to accept the overtures of Germany. The two nations signed, on August 2, 1914, a formal treaty of alliance, leading to immediate general mobilization, a declaration of war in October, and the entire collapse of the empire four years later.

The same year, young upper-class Javanese students in the Dutch East Indies established the first nationalist movement, the Budi Utomo, devoted to the promotion of Javanese culture. Throughout Muslim Southeast Asia, Michael Laffan finds (Chapter 14, this volume), Japan emerged after the war as “the light of Asia.” Suddenly it materialized as a savior from Dutch colonialism, but it also featured as one of several lodestars, including the Ottoman Empire, for accomplishing a “hybrid modernity.” In India too “the reverberations of that victory,” as the British Viceroy Lord Curzon became aware, “have gone like a thunderclap through the whispering galleries of the East.” Long subjugated under British colonialism, India experienced an unmistakable psychological impact from the Japanese triumph, argues T.R. Sareen (Chapter 15, this volume), which stirred up a wave of excitement and gave rise to the emergence of a new group of more radical leaders.

Only six years after the American takeover and the consequent suppression of the Filipino uprising against the new rulers, the war reignited hopes for independence in the Philippines. American authorities were aware of the potential Japanese threat to the stability of their rule on the archipelago but in reality their fears were ungrounded, at least at this stage. The new political status of Japan after the war in northeast Asia led its leaders to prefer a settlement with the United States rather than further encouraging the nationalist aspirations of their southern neighbors. In the aftermath of colonial understanding with the United States, Japanese officials limited their contacts with Filipino nationalist leaders. Although impressed by the Japanese victory, disappointment with Tokyo’s new policy led Filipino nationalists to cooperate pragmatically with the Americans in an effort to win greater rights.

In retrospect, however, the psychological effect and the political repercussions of the Japanese victory on movements for independence in the colonial world were rather limited, notably in comparison with the repercussions of the war in other regions discussed here. The colonial powers were determined to maintain their control, whereas most of the local movements were still at the incubation stage of formulating their policy vis-à-vis colonial rule. The ultimate proof that this impact of the war was minor is the fact that no colonial rule collapsed in the following three decades. Hence, although some nationalist movements grew stronger and more determined, it was only Japan’s move against the West in December 1941 that brought about the final demise of Western colonialism, even if it resurged momentarily with Japan’s surrender four years later.
Conclusion: the question of causality and the impact of the war

While the lack of public interest in the Russo-Japanese War, as discussed earlier, seems somewhat understandable, one may still wonder why historians have overlooked such a wide array of seemingly important repercussions. After all, they virtually affected every major nation involved in the chronicles of the early twentieth century. Could it be that the cause-and-effect relations between the fighting in remote Manchuria and subsequent events elsewhere were simply weak and indirect? Or could it be that historians encounter difficulty identifying such relations?

The question of causality is one of the fundamental issues in the study of history. In his classic study *What is History?* Edward H. Carr asserts that historical inquiry is the inquiry of reasons. Historians indeed attribute extreme importance to causes and effects, and implicitly deal with the relations between one event or action and another in almost every one of their works. Causality is also the underlying motif of this book: the effect of the Russo-Japanese War on subsequent events throughout the world. Still, historical causality is often a precarious issue. It is a simple task to link an event to another immediate occurrence and argue for causal relations, but it is increasingly harder and less evident as the occurrence becomes more remote.

When dealing with causality, historians show preference for the study of the origins of a single event over its outcomes and impact. The preference is associated perhaps with the propensity historians have to view their discipline as a science, that is, a field governed by rules that might be applied for future use. The study of the origins of wars, as such, can be used for preventing them, whereas the study of the impact of wars seems more like an intellectual exercise. Moreover, the study of causes culminates in a single event, whereas the study of the outcomes of a single event expands and multiplies into countless events as the retrospective becomes broader and more distant. For this reason, we find a large number of studies, and even full discourses (“historical debates”), regarding the origins of wars but much less concerning the impact those wars have had.

It is reasonable to assume that the effect of the Russo-Japanese War on the outbreak of World War I in 1914 did not resemble its effect on the much later outbreak of the Pacific War in 1941. Similarly, its effect on the annexation of Korea in 1910 was obviously much more crucial than the impact it had on the ongoing and wide-ranging events in China that culminated in the revolution of 1911. Nonetheless, causal relations involve more than that. While all contributors to this volume assume that the Russo-Japanese War had a substantial impact on their respective field of inquiry, to them the term *impact* does not necessarily mean the same. This implicit meaning is important. Do they all take it that the war was a preliminary condition, a precipitant, an accelerator, or only a trigger for the occurrence
of a given subsequent event? Do they imply that the war was a sufficient condition or an imperative condition for this event to occur? Do they believe the war was the only cause, the crucial cause, or merely one out of many causes of this event?

Most of the contributors have overlooked these semantic differences. They have done so not only because the study of history barely provides the methodological means to identify the sort of causal relations that exist between two consequent events (thus we often prefer the term “influence” to “impact”), but also because they have all dealt with a vast array of events and could not examine in detail the type of impact each of them had. Despite this methodological constraint and space limitation, their studies, separately and together, invariably suggest that the Russo-Japanese War, although not a global conflict in itself, had extremely broad and consequential repercussions. With a century’s hindsight, one may even argue that the global impact of the Russo-Japanese War was far more important than the effect of any colonial war, and probably any other conflict, that took place between the Napoleonic wars and the outbreak of World War I.

Notes

1 Many publications on the war and the military campaign were written in the first decade after the war by various reporters, military observers, and general staffs. Notable among them are multi-volume official histories published by Austria-Hungary, 1910–14; France, 1910–14; Germany, 1910–11, 1911–12; Great Britain, 1906–10, 1910–20; Japan, 1906, 1912; and Russia, 1910–13, 1912–18. Although we still anticipate an authoritative overview of the military campaign, which will take into account archival materials and documents of both belligerents as well as their observers, in recent decades there have been a number of publications that survey all or certain aspects of the land and naval warfare, such as Connaughton, 1988; Jukes, 2003; Levitsky, 2003; Menning, 1992; Öe, 1988; Shinobu and Nakayama, 1972; Tani, 1966; Warner and Warner, 1974; and Zolotarev and Kozlov, 1990.

2 Relatively speaking, there has been much written on the origins of the war and Russo-Japanese conflict in general, notably Duus, 1995; Lensen, 1959, 1982; Malozemoff, 1958; Nish, 1985; Romanov, 1952; and Stephan, 1994.

3 Hitler, 1939: 205.

4 In an article published on October 28, 1905, in Gandhi, 1961, V: 115; see also Gandhi, 1960, IV: 466–7. Similarly, Jawaharlal Nehru, the first prime minister of India after its independence, who was 15 years old at the outbreak of the war, recalled how the war assisted Indians to free themselves from their feeling of inferiority. In Nehru, 1934–5: 455, 514.


6 David Thomson, for example, labeled the Russo-Japanese War the “fifth major colonial dispute.” In Thomson, 1966: 518.

7 For additional examples, see Shillony and Kowner, 2007.

8 “In choice of subjects the criterion I used was that they must be truly representative of the period in question and have exerted their major influence on civilization before 1914, not after.” In Tuchman, 1966: xv.

9 On the war in Russian historical memory, see Oleinikov, 2005: 505, 517.
10 Steinberg et al., 2005: xix–xxi.

11 Toward the end of the war, Russia mobilized to Manchuria most of its regulars from Europe, the Caucasus, and Central Asia, but refrained from mobilizing most of its reserves, ending with about 500,000 of them in Manchuria out of more than three million. See, for example, Bushnell, 2005, 342–3, 346. The Russian death toll in the Crimean War was at least five times greater than in the Russo-Japanese War, amounting to about 256,000 dead. In Arnold, 2002: 39.

12 Two European nations witnessed a substantial shift in their military expenditures during the war or immediately after it: Russian expenditure declined sharply whereas German expenditure rose. In Stevenson, 1996: 2–8.


14 On the post-war negative image of the Russian national character in general and the capabilities of the Russian army in particular among the British, German, and Austro-Hungarian military authorities, see Herrmann, 1996: 93–5.


16 See Kennedy, 1988: 325.

17 On the German plans for a preventive war in 1905, see Moritz, 1974.

18 On the German overlapping and outdated government structure, see Steinberg, 1970.

19 The German operational war plan against France (known as the Schlieffen Plan) was designed soon after of the Russo-Japanese War and affected by its outcome. This daring but purely military plan was finalized by General Alfred von Schlieffen, the German Chief of Staff, and formed the basis for the German attack in 1914 with regular annual revision. Following the Russian defeat, Schlieffen argued that, in the coming war, the decisive theater would be in western Europe, and that the relatively weak armies of Russia could be held by defensive operations during the first weeks. On the Schlieffen Plan, see Buchholz, 1993; and Zuber, 2002; and on its repercussions in 1905, see Mombauer, 2001: 72–80. On the decision to replace Schlieffen, see Ritter, 1958: 111. On the French Plan XV, see Herrmann, 1996; Luntinen, 1984; and Tannenbaum, 1984.

20 Fischer, 1975, 164–7; Geiss, 1967, docs 3, 4, cited in Ferguson, 1999: 100. In another memorandum regarding Russia’s future potential written in 1914, Moltke estimated that the Russian army would be fully fitted from 1917 onwards, concluding: “There cannot be any more serious doubt about the fact that a future war will be about the existence of the German people.” Cited in Mombauer, 2001: 176. For a similar conclusion regarding Moltke’s view of “war now or never,” see Mombauer, 2001: 288.


23 Even in late 1901, slightly before Britain concluded its alliance with Japan, Arthur Balfour, a supporter of an alliance with Germany and soon Britain’s prime minister, argued that “the Japanese Treaty, if it ends in war, bring us into collision with the same opponents as a German alliance, but with a much weaker partner.” In Balfour Papers, Add. Mss 49727, Balfour to Lansdowne, December 12, 1901. Cited in Charmley, 1999: 301.

24 For example, Kennedy, 1981: 118–39.


26 For example, Andrew, 1968; Charmley, 1999; Monger, 1963; and Rolo, 1969.


28 Ferguson, 1999: 56–81.
Ignoring the complex motives and strong fears of Germany in Britain in 1908–14, several historians have argued simplistically that Britain’s decision to join the war in August 1914 was spurred by fears of Russia becoming too strong an empire in case of victory over Germany and the repercussions of such a scenario for the British Empire. In a similar manner, an attitude of “appeasing the strong” can be observed in 1903–4. If we accept this line of argument, the Russo-Japanese War did little to alleviate these fears, but it did help Britain to appease Russia. Furthermore, Germany accordingly did not pose the greatest threat to Britain either in 1904 or in 1914, although this does not necessarily mean that during the Russo-Japanese War German threats did not grow substantially. See, for example, Ferguson, 1999: 54–5; and Wilson, 1985.

See Behnen, 1985: 100.

On Russian diplomatic weakness after the war and on Russian policy in the Balkans, see Anderson and Hershey, 1918; McDonald, 1992, 2005.


On Finnish political status during and after the war, see Hodgson, 1960. On Finnish revolutionary activities during the war and collaboration with Japan, see Copeland, 1973; Fält, 1976, 1979, 1988; Kujala, 1980; and Zilliacus, 1912.

On Polish attempts to collaborate with Japan during the war, see Bandō, 1995; Fountain, 1980; Inaba, 1992; and Lerski, 1959.

See James, 1974, I: 82.

For the figures on the casualties, see Kowner, 2006: 80–1.

On the humane aspects of the military campaign, see, for example, Kowner, 2000a; and Towle, 1975.


See, for example, Trani, 1969: 36.


On the British takeover of Lhasa during the war, see Stewart, 2007.


On the public interest in the war in Egypt, see Bieganiec, 2007; and Marks, 2005.

Whereas the general public and military personnel throughout the Ottoman Empire were enthusiastic about the Japanese triumph, the official reaction was ambivalent, partly because of the Sultan’s fears that Japan’s victory might be interpreted as a victory of a constitutional state over an autocracy. On the reactions to the Japanese victory in the Ottoman Empire, see Akmese, 2005: 30–1, 72–8.

On the reactions to the war in the Dutch East Indies, see also Rodell, 2005.

Quoted in Passin, 1982: 14.

On the impact of the war in India, see also Dua, 1966; Dutta, 1969; and Marks, 2005.

On the relations of the Philippines with Japan and the United States before and after the war, see Yu-Jose, 1992. Rodell (2005) argues that nationalist movements in the Philippines and Vietnam were the only ones in Southeast Asia at a sufficiently advanced stage to be significantly affected by the war. See Rodell, 2005: 635–52.

On the difficulty associating the war with the revolt in Laos in 1904–6, the abortive military coup in Thailand in 1912, or the nationalist undertaking in Burma, see Rodell, 2005: 644, 631–3.
52 Carr, 1961.

53 See, for example, the historical debate in Germany on the origins of World War I (e.g. Mombauer, 2002), as well as the origins of German behavior in modern times (“der deutsche Sonderweg”) and the writings in the early 1960s in Japan on the origins of the Pacific War (e.g. Taiheiyō sensō e no michi: kaisen gaikō shi [The Road to the Pacific War: A Diplomatic History of the Origins of the War]).

54 In his Enquiries Concerning Human Understanding, David Hume defines causes in imperative terms. That is, if one object does not exist, the subsequent object cannot exist either. In Hume, 1777 [1975]: 76.