

JCC: Russo- Japanese War: Japan

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NOVEMBER 16-19, 2017 | MONTRÉAL, QC



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Welcome to the Japanese Imperial Military Staff!

Congratulations on being bestowed the great honour of serving Japan and more importantly, the Heavenly Emperor. It has been 45 years since the beginning of reformation occurred, drastically altering the country. Previous generations have laid the foundation for a successful country that has immense potential to emerge as a great power. The duty lies with you to carry on the work they started, restoring Japan to a status that is on equal footing with the rest of the great powers. The challenges you'll have to endure will prove to be complex, intriguing, unpredictable, and inspiring. Economic, educational, cultural, military, and technological progress must be sustained at the high level that is currently present. Doing so will no doubt increase the prowess of the Japanese empire. How you deal with them will say just as much about you as it does about the committee. It is my firm belief that you will be able to come together to overcome the challenges of this time period. Remember, you are a servant to the emperor, and only the combination of unity and harmony will accomplish the will of the emperor.

Hello delegates, my name is Gordon Barad and I will be your chair for this committee, and Laura Schulz will be your vice chair. I am a Canadian-American third year student at McGill University, majoring in history and minoring in international relations, and am originally from New York state. This will be my fourth SSUNS conference, and I am very excited about it because of this particular committee! I am a big fan of Sci-fi, reading, and soccer.

I want everyone to enjoy themselves in this committee, but I also want people to take away an understanding of this time period. I myself have been doing model UN since ninth grade and have continued throughout university. I understand what it's like being a high school delegate, and understand what the likelihood is for everyone to do research. However, I do hope you take some time to do external research on the time period and geographical context in which this committee takes place. In my experience as a chair and delegate, I find that the greater number of well informed delegates within the committee, the greater the quality of the debate. When delegates take time to research, they end up finding a point of view or theme that they feel passionate about, and that's something I hope you all bring with you to Montreal; a sense of attachment and interest to this committee. I find that MUN is a very rewarding experience that teaches me a lot about people in the past and present and even more so about myself, and that is my goal for you; to bring you a rewarding experience and a weekend full of fun and excitement.

A reminder to all delegates that you are enacting characters in the midst of the early 20th century, situated in a completely different culture. Some of the topics and language you find in research and committee might come off as strange and odd, and



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hence, might put you off. I ask that you all be mindful of the environment we are attempting to recreate, and as such, adapt with the best of your abilities to the settings designated, and understand the mindset of the people back then.

Best regards,

Chair Gordon Barad, Vice Chair Laura Schulz



Introduction

The military conflict between Japan and Russia went on from February 8, 1904 until September 5, 1905. After Japan defeated Russia, a peace conference was held in Maine, with President Theodore Roosevelt as a mediator. The resulting Treaty of Portsmouth formally ended the war. The Russo-Japanese War is a crucial moment in history, for two reasons. First, it set the stage for many more conflicts to follow; secondly, Japan was the first Asian power to defeat a European power in modern times. With WW1 breaking out less than a decade after the Russo-Japanese War, the conflict is often overlooked or tends to be looked at as a simple bilateral engagement between Japanese and Russian military forces. However, it is controversial whether this is actually the case. Wasn't the Russo-Japanese War more than just a regional conflict? Could it in fact be a precursor to WW1 – a first demonstration of the newly developed capacity of industrialized powers, to wage war and interfere in conflict on the international stage? To answer this question, it is necessary to look at the root causes of the conflict. Furthermore, it is crucial to have a basic understanding of Japanese structure, culture, and history.

Meiji Restoration

Prior to the Meiji Restoration, Japan was under the reign of a military government (shogunate), politically divided into competing domains and ruled by the most powerful warlord, the shogun. The Meiji Restoration, a political revolution in 1868, toppled over the Tokugawa shogunate and brought about the end of the Edo (Tokugawa) period. The revolutionaries then preceded to overturn power into the hands of the emperor Meiji. The most significant change associated with the Meiji Restoration, was the “subsequent era of



major political, economic, and social change.”¹ The era was coined by a movement of modernization and Westernization and became known as the Meiji period. The Meiji leaders hired foreign consultants, to reshape Japan more like a Western imperialist power. They deemed assimilation necessary, to consolidate their power and to be respected as a sovereign, by the international community.

Period of Reforms

Politics: The Restoration centralized political power. Japan became a constitutional monarchy with a democratically elected parliament. The country not only underwent internal changes, but also completely turned around its international image. A movement towards an open foreign policy began and by the 1920s, Japan was no longer pursuing an isolationist policy, but was an active member of the international community.

Society: The Japanese society was for centuries socially divided into strict hierarchical classes. With the Meiji seizing control in 1871, came the reformation of Japan’s societal structure: feudalism was abolished, the samurai lost their privileges as a separate class, and a new elite formed itself. Hierarchical class structure as known was completely abolished, and the Meiji government declared all Japanese people to be equal citizens. The new elite was composed of members of the business class, an entirely new social class, created by modernization and industrialization. As Japan modernized, it also westernized to a certain extent, which induced a search for a new identity. Japan was no longer traditional, but neither was it really western.

¹ The Editors of Encyclopædia Britannica. "Meiji Restoration." Encyclopædia Britannica. Accessed May 23, 2017. <https://www.britannica.com/event/Meiji-Restoration>.



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Military: The Meiji Restoration led to a modernization and expansion of the Japanese army and navy. In 1872, not long after gaining control, the Meiji introduced conscription and with it universal military service. As with other reforms, the changes in Japan's military structure were influenced by Western systems, mainly the Prussian model.

Education: The new government required all children to attend elementary school, to ensure a minimum level of education for all citizens. The universal military service too, opened doors for education. Controlling education allowed the government to influence what the next generation would learn and believe, and hence, ensured loyalty to the emperor and the government. As part of the process of modernization, the Japanese began studying abroad. There was a new interest in learning about other cultures and social customs, especially from the West.

Cultural Reform: Westernization also entailed changes in culture and customs. The Japanese officials and elite for example, started to dress in western attire, as opposed to traditional garments. Along with western clothing came new foods and buildings, influenced by western architecture. The role of women also changed during the Meiji Period. In western culture, women were active participants in public life and this increasingly transitioned into Japanese culture.

Industrial Revolution: A big part of modernization was the Industrial Revolution during the Meiji Period. Compared to many European and American countries, Japan lagged behind and had much catching up to do. The government established mines and factories, which facilitated the change from manufacturing to mass production. One of its main priorities was expanding in heavy industry, namely shipbuilding. With increasing modernization, Japan also developed its infrastructure and communication. Railroads and



telegraph lines were installed and technology such as trains, cars, and agriculture machineries became increasingly accessible.

Money and Resource Shortage: As part of the reforms, the government created a standard currency (the yen), a system of national banks, and increased taxation - the latter measure was necessary because the government needed to generate more revenue, to pay for all the social and political programs. The bigger problem, however, was a shortage of natural resources. To gain resources, Japan resorted to imperialism, which would eventually lead to several conflicts, namely the first Sino-Japanese war and the Russo-Japanese War.

Japanese Imperialism

The First Sino-Japanese War (1894-1895)

The First Sino-Japanese war was formally declared on August 1, 1894. It was fought between the Empire of Japan and the Qing Empire and signified the first of many conflicts between Asian nations in modern times. It was also Japan's first overseas war after a period of isolation. The War can be seen as a reaction to Japan's imperialist behavior. At the beginning, the main objective of the war was to gain influence over Korea, but that developed into territorial quarrels and the "first stage of Japanese imperial expansion."² China had always been one of Korea's main trade partners and was certain of its loyalty. However, during the Meiji Period Japan was in need of natural resources, precisely coal and iron, and became increasingly interested in Korea. In 1875, Japan would go as far as forcing Korea to open itself for foreign trade, and to declare

² W.G. Beasley, *Japanese imperialism: 1894-1945*. Oxford: Clarendon, 1991, 55.



independence from China.³ Within Korea, Japan now had the image of a modernist power, while China was perceived as more traditional and conservative. A pro-Japanese reform movement started to spread and in 1884, the group attempted to overthrow the Korean government. Both the Chinese and Japanese had troops within China and while trying to prevent the putsch, the Chinese military killed several Japanese soldiers. Japan and China, now on the brink of war, made an agreement forcing Japan to withdraw its troops. While this temporarily averted the danger of war, tensions quickly began to rise again, especially once China sent troops back into Korea. In August, war broke out and within just nine months, Japan's modernized and better-equipped forces inflicted a devastating defeat on the Chinese forces. By March, Japan was in control of the Shandong province and Manchuria, as well as the sea area approaching Beijing. The Qing government sued for peace and on 17 April 1895, the two belligerents signed the Treaty of Shimonoseki.

The Treaty of Shimonoseki

The Treaty of Shimonoseki is the formal agreement between China and Japan that ended the first Sino-Japanese War. Japan's expansionist demands expressed in the accord, frequently lead to a comparison of Japanese and Western imperialism. In the original version of the treaty, China was forced to recognize Korean independence and cede control over the island of Taiwan, the Pescadores and the Liaodong Peninsula in Manchuria. Furthermore, China agreed to pay a large indemnity to Japan and grant them certain trading privileges.⁴

³ The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica. "Sino-Japanese War." Encyclopaedia Britannica.

⁴ Beasley, 57.



In Russia, these developments were observed with caution and the threat of a new imperialist power was unsettling. Russia protested the Shimonoseki terms and was joined by Germany and France, as all three countries perceived Japanese occupation of Liaodong as a potential threat to China. This became known as the Triple Intervention and resulted in a slight modification of the Treaty of Shimonoseki.⁵ While they had to give up some claims, Japan kept Taiwan, which became its first colony.

The Triple Intervention

Existing treaties and European imperialism had implications for the peace negotiations. If Japan would demand territory on the Asian mainland (e.g. Korea), it would provoke European intervention and Russia would feel inclined, to demand territory herself. A cession of Taiwan furthermore, was likely to be opposed by Britain and France. After China and Japan both signed the Treaty of Shimonoseki, it needed to be further ratified by each country, before it could come into force. Once the terms of the treaty became known to the international community, there was strong opposition regarding Japan's claims over the Liaodong peninsula. On April 23, 1895, a delegation of representatives of Germany, Russia, and France visited Tokyo, and urged Japan in the name of their respective government, to relinquish possession of the Liaodong Peninsula. The main argument was that Japanese possession of said peninsula, would endanger peace in the East Asian region. It would threaten the security of Beijing, the Chinese capital, and would "render Korea's independence purely nominal."⁶ After considering

⁵ Ibid., 59.

⁶ "4. Towards peace: Start of peace negotiations - Treaty of Shimonoseki and Triple Intervention." The Sino-Japanese War of 1894-1895: as seen in prints and archives.



their options, which included seeking support from Britain and America, Japan agreed to change the terms of the treaty and abandon their claims over the Liaodong Peninsula. Over the course of the next 4 years, China would go on to lease territory out to all three powers involved in the Triple Intervention.

Aftermath of the Sino-Japanese War & Tensions Between Japan and Russia

The Shimonoseki Treaty and Japanese expansionism started what would be decade long tensions between Japan and Russia. The Japanese victory over China, undermined the treaty port system as the Chinese defeat, exposed the country's weaknesses. This resulted in the build up of two fronts: one side was persisting in keeping China united and the other, was arguing for its dismemberment. Furthermore, imperialist nations established their spheres of influences and tried to increase their power, especially over Korea. Japanese ambition to establish a protectorate, faced an unfavorable climate and quickly conflicted with Russia's objectives. The international community frowned upon Japanese imperialism and "Russia had begun to intervene on its own behalf,"⁷ trying to gain control over Korean politics. With both countries competing over a say in Korean politics, it became clear that not much could be done until there was a formal agreement between the two. In 1896 said agreement was formulated; it forced Japan to "renounce any desire for exclusive interest"⁸ and envisioned the setup of a joint protectorate between Russia and Japan. It proposed the establishment of a Korean government accepted by both parties, as well as military presence of both, and if necessary joint military action.

⁷ Beasley, 71.

⁸ Ibid., 72.



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Russia exploited the weakness of the Qing Empire and acquired part of the Liaodong Peninsula in 1898 - the territory was formally leased from the Qing government. A new accord addressing the disputes over Korea was necessary after that. The Nishi-Rosen Agreement was signed on April 25, 1898 between the Empire of Japan and the Empire of Russia. After Russia gained support from Germany and France, the Triple Intervention would henceforth try to protect Chinese unity. Japan though, gained a powerful enemy in Russia and challenging it, would require support from Britain and America.

At this point, China was too weak to resist territorial demands and its collapse became a real possibility. The policy adopted in the years 1895 to 1900 was essentially a compromise. It was a give or take and each country that had a say in it, followed its own selfish policies, trying to either acquire control over certain territories or gain advantages in trade. For Japan, the price of this compromise, as well as British and American support, was accepting the Open Door policy. This policy was based on the assumption that one could not “prevent the exploitation of monopoly investment rights within established spheres of influence”⁹ and that existing treaties had to be reinforced, to protect trade equality. On the Subject of Korea, Japan and Russia signed the Yamagata-Lobanov protocol in 1896. It publicly affirmed Korean independence but also contained secret clauses, providing for equal amounts of troops by both sides to be garrisoned on the peninsula.¹⁰ Soon afterwards, the nature of Russian presence in Korea diminished with Russia’s attention focused on Manchuria. Eventually, by 1900, Russia had withdrawn her advisors from Korea and confirmed Korea as part of Japan’s sphere of

⁹ Beasley, 70.

¹⁰ Tsusuki, 133.



influence and special interest. Thus indicative of the possibility of positive negotiations between the two powers.

Developments since the Sino-Japanese war

The Triple Intervention brought Japan to its knees, which left it with a deep desire to bolster its bargaining position with the great imperial powers in the Far East. The result was an intense rearmament program in 1895 that dictated the doubling of the army and a modernized navy. Six battleships and six modern cruisers were ordered and delivered by 1900.¹¹ At the beginning of the twentieth century, Japan had successfully matched the regional fleets of any imperial power in the Far East. The navy's own characteristics were separate from the army, in the sense that it had inherited British traditions and as such, contained a sense of elitism and aristocracy in the officer ranks. The unique characteristics of the navy translated into higher levels of education, compared to army officers of similar ranks, as well as a significant amount of volunteers amongst the servicemen. A much higher rate than the army, which was very reliant on conscription.

1902 Outlook and Conditions

Resources: Japan's main focus laid on its steel resources. In 1902, there were three steel plants, the Kamaisha, Sumimoto and Yawata steel mill, the latter of them was only instituted a year ago.¹² However, Japan was quickly expanding its steel production and several other plants were in planning. Much of the technology came from German designs, the iron ore was imported from China and local coal was acceptable.

¹¹ Ibid., 133.

¹² Tsuzuki, 141/142.



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Trade: The Japanese market had made significant strides in becoming the main trading partner of Korea. In 1902, roughly 60 percent of Korean imports came from Japan and 80 percent of their exports went to Japan. At this point in time, Japan still was a leading exporter in textiles. They saturated the regional market and then dumped most of the excess product into Korea and China. However, the textile industry was declining and clearly past its peak. While it used to be a major contributor to a number of manufactured products, its contributions were now down to about 30-40 percent. Only four years ago, Japan's top import was rice,¹³ which indicated that the level of population growth had exceeded sustainable growth. The situation would only worsen in the future, with the population jumping from 35 million, in 1872 to 43 million, in 1898.¹⁴ Many of the excess population, specifically farming peasants, were recruited into the industry to sustain the incredible rates of industrialization. Despite the rapid population growth, economic progress was stable. Between 1889-1902, Japan's growth rate was at 2.8 percent, which outpaced Russia's 2.5 percent. Russia had a higher industrial growth rate, but that could have been attributed to Japan's lack of previous economic presence in this sector.¹⁵

Militarization of Japan: In previous decades, militarization was the byproduct of adopting military institutions and infrastructure similar to France's and Russia's. This had the advantage of creating a well-structured system that exhibited organized training of troops, higher expertise in war staffs, and military academies that produced highly qualified officers and military cadres. Japan's military infrastructure boasted a systematic organization of military departments and sophisticated logistics and support networks. In

¹³ Ibid., 142.

¹⁴ Ibid., 147.

¹⁵ Zielinski, 88.



‘La République Armée de France’ and ‘La Grande Armée de Napoléon,’ fervent nationalism had been present since the early nineteenth century and directly translated into the Japanese model. As von Clausewitz noted, vigor (“elan”) was just as important to constituting an army as the rifles, training, and officers.

Simultaneously to military restructuring, Japan introduced conscription and built up a reserve army. The timing was perfect, as it coincided with a rise in nationalism and the public interest was focused on catching up with the predominate powers. Conscription fostered a sense of attachment to the army amongst the public, as many now had family members that were part of it. The army also had the advantage of uniting men from different backgrounds behind shared ideals.

In its race to catch up with other nations, Japan used every given opportunity to showcase its military prowess to the international community. Increasingly strong rhetoric was employed to glorify Japan and its military ascendancy. A manifestation of this is the Kokuryukai (Black Dragon Society), a paramilitary, ultranationalist, right-wing organization founded in 1901.¹⁶ Many organizations with similar ideals were present in twentieth century Japan – some more symbolic than others. While these organizations were to a certain extent beneficial for the Japanese policymakers, their strong ideals and unyielding attitude could prove to be challenging.

International Relations: In July, 1894 Japan and Britain signed the Anglo-Japanese Treaty of Commerce and Navigation. The treaty was a milestone, as it marked the end of the unequal treaties, a series of treaties signed between Western Powers and

¹⁶ Beasley, 80.



Japan and/or China. The longstanding tradition of a positive Anglo-Japanese relation, stemming from the period of imperial diplomacy, built the foundation for said treaty.¹⁷ An Anglo-Japanese alliance proved to be beneficial for both parties. Britain and Japan respected each other's spheres of influence in the Far East and shared their concerns over the Tsarist expansion across mainland Asia. Britain was worried about the Russian imperial forces making their way across central Asia and inching closer to India; Japan was concerned about the Korean inroads and a potential aggrandizement of Manchuria. Russia's track record showed a seemingly unstoppable wave of expansions, and its actions in the Far East raised concerns amongst the Japanese policy makers. Russia validated these fears when she failed to follow through with her promise, to withdraw the troops stationed in Manchuria. Even though tensions between Japan and Russia started to rise, it did not yet seem as if conflict was unavoidable. It was still entirely within the realm of possibilities that the two empires would come to an agreement.

One should not forget about the other powers operating in that region. British imperial activity had been decreasing and the empire was not anymore meddling in as many global theatres as before. British interest in the Chinese territories diminished, after fifty years of governance. Also their recent entanglement in Southern Africa demonstrated them how dangerously extended their Empire had become.

For East Asia this means one less aggressive faction involved politically. With considerable economic activity already and a strong political presence. Britain feels content to hold onto what is theirs in this region. France, is still consolidating their gains in Indochina after that acquisition over 15 years ago. While at the same time steadily

¹⁷ Ibid., 34.



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furthering their presence in deep southern China. The nation is a considerable economic power and is still in the midst of using Imperial prowess to glorify the state as compensation for their loss in the Franco Russian War. Germany is next to Russia the most aggressive western imperial power in the region. Due to a fairly recent unification the state was rather late to the global colonization forum. As a result, they are desperate to squeeze out any more territory they can lay their hands on. Also the Kaiser has expressed his desire to replicate Britain in holding a large expansive empire with colonies across many oceans and a large fleet to bring recognition to the German empire. They now have territory encompassing a few cities in China, notably Qingdao, and in the Southern Pacific.

The wobbly Qing dynasty in terms of support it gives to. Is less hostile to the Russian delegation comparably to British and Japanese officials. Simply due to humiliation at the hands of these states. While as Russia is the most aggressive imperial power making daring inroads into the Chinese countryside, it is still seen as a less a threat existentially to the Chinese state than Japan. Who as seen as the main rival and with whom they were in a race to modernize first before being decisively shown their place.

Strategy: throughout the entire existence of Japan Korea has always been viewed with great fear as the gateway to Japan. Over the last seven years the consolidation of Korea has been done with great desire and efficiency. Their gradual enclosure of the 'kingdom' is similar in style to what China suffered in the past fifty years. Economic contracts have been recently made that provide large scale banking and financing for the



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Korean government as well as infrastructure contracts awarded to Japan. Which further guarantee the necessity of a presence on the peninsula (Beasley 73-75) Anybody historically coming close to it or used it has always automatically become categorized as an existential threat to Japan. Russia making inroads into Korea with unparalleled aggression by a foreign power in china serves as valid qualifier for these grounds. Thus in combination with Japans expansionist view the realm of Japan is seen to include Korea. Russia's seemingly endless desire for expansion is ample evidence of the threat faced here. How would the Japanese military serve to protect the realm and also dismantle Russian operations. Focus on other potential enemies and zones of combat for Japan. Analyze the the combat abilities of powers in the immediate vicinity. This will help in deciding potential allies and enemies. And how to be these potential enemies. Dont forget to analyze and formulate land contingencies and naval contingencies for several battlegrounds

The other geographical area of interest for the empire of Japan is in the straits of Taiwan. With the acquisition of the island of 'Formosa' otherwise known as Taiwan as a consequence of the 1894-5 Sino Japanese war, Japan now holds a noticable presence in the Taiwan straits region. Which encompasses the Senakaku islands, bordering mainland china regions of Fukien aka Fujien. Japanese economic interests are still strong in Taiwan and there is now a desire to prove that the expensive 'pacification campaign on the island' was worth something. There is a lobby for increased economic activities on the island and nearby China. However there is the caveat that promoting more Japanese imperial activity in Fukien would be more disappointing for Britain and less likely for an amicable treaty to be struck. Britain is altogether happy for Japan to concentrate their



expansion of 'spheres of influence' in the Korean Manchurian theatre. Not to mention the benefit of higher diplomatic relations with Britain mean more favorable trading access to the empire that covers every corner of the globe. The diplomatic and financial ammunition of Britain is also equitable to the wealth to be made from such trading access. Japanese businessmen are willing to put aside Fukien in the short run but will continue to lobby for long run promotion of activities in this part of China. Fukien is seen as the natural next corner for Japanese expansion alongside north Korea/ Manchuria (at this point south Korea is firmly in Japan's sphere of influence, less so the north). But costs and benefits must be weighed for entering into a stronger relationship with Britain. Currently you are in the midst of diplomatic negotiations with Britain.

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