

# **The Impact of the Sino-Japanese War (1894–5) on Russian Foreign Policy<sup>1)</sup>**

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On the surface, Sino-Japanese War (1894–5) appears to be a struggle between China and Japan for control over Korea. In reality, the overarching conflict was not between Japan and China, but between Japan and Russia. Korea and Manchuria became the battlefield while the Korean and Chinese governments became the main casualties. Moreover, the war had three key consequences which were felt far beyond the original belligerents. 1) The war would be the first act of a protracted struggle between Japan and Russia to establish spheres of influence in the Far East, a struggle which would continue unabated from the Russo-Japanese War (1904–5) until it culminated in a general Asian war in the 1930s. 2) Similarly, the realignment in the Far Eastern balance of power at China's expense caused by the Sino-Japanese War also lasted until the end of World War II. 3) Finally, with this war, Korea became and has remained a key international security concern.

The Sino-Japanese War has been a neglected war, almost completely overshadowed by the Russo-Japanese War of 1904–5. In fact, the Russo-Japanese War did not change the balance of power in the Far East so much as it confirmed the result of the Sino-Japanese War: Japan remained the dominant Asian power. While the first war had made China a subject of international derision, the second war would make Russia the laughing stock of Europe. Given the prevailing prejudices of the times, Russia would earn the ignominious distinction of becoming the first European power in modern times to suffer defeat at the hands of an Asian power.

Since the Sino-Japanese War has been relatively unstudied, particularly in terms of Russia, before addressing the central concerns of this paper, there will be some general characterizations first about the Far Eastern situation and second, about the causes of the war.

## **Background concerning the Sino-Japanese War**

On the eve of the war, it was well-known in Europe that daunting internal problems beset China. At mid-century a long period of rebellions had almost toppled the ruling Ch'ing Dynasty; there had been an on-going devolution of central control from Peking to the provinces; poverty remained endemic; and despite the promising signs at the beginning of the so-called T'ung-chih Restoration (1862–74), the dynasty had proven unable to adapt Confucian traditions to the new industrial world dawning on China in the form of foreign demands for commerce on Western terms.<sup>2)</sup> Although

there was a general awareness of these issues, Europeans did not question that China remained the dominant power in the Far East. Meanwhile, the few Europeans who were aware of Japan's extensive political reforms of the 1880s generally reacted very positively, but still without a sense that Japan was on the verge of supplanting China's international status. Therefore, Europeans were as shocked by the results of the Sino-Japanese War as were the Chinese. The Japanese victory was so rapid and so complete that the Chinese could not claim a single victory to their credit.

The situation in Korea had been unraveling for a number of years. In 1876, Japan had tried to subject Korea to the kind of trading regime imposed by the West on China; it compelled Korea to sign a treaty opening Korean ports to trade. China objected to such intrusions on its tributary and so began a two-decade-long struggle between China and Japan for political influence over Korea. The struggle proved highly destabilizing for the Korean government which disintegrated into competing factions and for the royal family which split between the ex-regent (father of the ruling king) versus the queen and her relatives.<sup>3)</sup> The ex-regent, the Taewongun, had tried to have his daughter-in-law, Queen Min murdered in 1883. In response, the Chinese kidnapped him and held him in China until 1885. For their part, the Japanese seized the Korean royal palace two days before the war began and were involved in the murder of Queen Min six months after the conclusion of the war in 1895. In 1896, the widowed king would take up residence in the Russian legation for his own safety.<sup>4)</sup> Behind all this was the struggle between China, which wanted to restore traditional tributary ties with Korea and in a sense freeze Korea in time, and Japan, which wanted to introduce political reforms in Korea, to modernize it, and, like the Europeans elsewhere in Asia, reap the economic benefits.

Hostilities began on July 25, 1894 with the Japanese sinking of the *Kowshing*, a British-owned ship being used to transport Chinese reinforcements to Korea. Three days later, the Japanese defeated the Chinese at the Battle of Asan (July 28–9) on the Korean coast. On August 1, Japan and China simultaneously declared war.<sup>5)</sup> Key Japanese victories followed on September 15–6 at P'yongyang and a naval battle of the Yellow Sea on September 17. At this time, the international press no longer considered a Chinese victory to be a foregone conclusion. On October 9, Japan drove the Chinese out of Korea. Other Japanese victories followed on Chinese territory on October 25, at Hu-shan on the Yalu River and on November 6, at Chin-chou-ch'eng along the Liao-tung Peninsula approaches to Port Arthur. The most important Japanese victory of the war occurred with the rapid occupation of the modern fortifications at Port Arthur on November 21. After this, Chinese military capabilities lost all credibility and the way to Peking lay open.

Japanese victories continued in Manchuria on December 6, at Fu-chou further up the Liao-tung Peninsula; December 13, at Hai-ch'eng; and January 10, 1895 at Kai-p'ing. On February 2, in a pincer movement on Peking, Japan took the port city of Wei-hai-wei. With Port Arthur and Wei-hai-wei Japan controlled both shores of the entry to the Gulf of Pei-chih-li. Simultaneously, Japanese troops started to move

south out of Manchuria. On March 6, they took Ying-k'ou, located at the mouth of the Liao River. Then on March 20, 1895, peace negotiations began at Shimonoseki, Japan, where a peace treaty would be signed on April 17.<sup>6)</sup>

Overnight the perceived balance of power in the Far East had reversed itself. Through the end of World War II, Japan and not China would be the dominant regional power. Since the Russian empire shared a long boundary with China and its Sakhalin Island was adjacent to Japan, the Russian government pondered the results of the war very carefully. The second most directly affected European power was Britain, which also evaluated the significance of the war. In both cases the war led to a redirection of foreign policy. In the case of Russia, it led to a fateful shift of Russian economic resources to focus on the development of Manchuria. In the case of Britain, the increasing financial burdens entailed in maintaining its own empire combined with the general perception of Japanese strength led Britain to enter into its only long-term alliance with any power between 1815 and 1914, an alliance with Japan signed in 1902.<sup>7)</sup> Both of these changes then fed into the Russo-Japanese War.

### **The Causes of the Sino-Japanese War**

Conventionally, the Sino-Japanese War has been portrayed as a conflict primarily between China and Japan, while the triangular relationship including Russia has been neglected. Most authors do make passing references to Japanese concerns about the construction of the Trans-Siberian Railway begun in 1891; some point to the degenerating political situation in Korea, a land beset by even more internal problems than China; a few even mention the issue of Anglo-Japanese treaty revision which would put Japan on an equal legal footing with the European powers. But no one connects these three items in order to explain the outbreak of the Sino-Japanese War.<sup>8)</sup> In fact, they were inextricably linked.

Many members of the Japanese government believed that Korea represented the cornerstone of Japanese national security. Some envisioned it as the focus for future Japanese colonization — an outlet for Japan's population surplus. Others saw economic ties with Korea as essential to Japan's internal economic development. Regardless of this variation of opinion, in Japan there was overwhelming agreement that foreign domination of Korea would pose a direct threat to Japan's national security and therefore had to be forestalled at all costs.

It has been generally recognized that China's growing interference in Korean politics — a belated attempt to reinvigorate Korea's flagging tributary relationship with China — precipitated Japanese counter-measures, which then culminated in war. Missing from this analysis has been a crucial link. Japan considered Chinese actions threatening not because Japan feared Chinese dominance of Korea — at the time China could not keep its own house in order let alone that of Korea. Rather, the danger lay in the European power that would ultimately supplant China and thereby pose a life-threatening national security threat to Japan. The Japanese government had no illusions over which European power this would be . . . it would be Russia.

To the Japanese government, the special imperial rescript of 1891 announcing the Russian government's intention to build a Trans-Siberian Railway amounted to a foreign policy manifesto on the order of the Monroe Doctrine. Just as the American government had attempted to exclude other powers from the Americas, so, it seemed to the Japanese, the Russians intended to keep Japan off the Asian mainland. In fact, this was a perfectly correct assessment of Russian intentions, as was made clear after the war by the Triple Intervention when Russia joined with Germany and France to prevent Japanese occupation of the strategic Liao-tung Peninsula and its ports of Dalian and Port Arthur.<sup>9)</sup>

The architect of the railway, Minister of Finance Count Sergei Iul'evich Witte, confirmed this interpretation. At a meeting of Russian ministers held on April 11, 1895, Witte suggested "that the war launched by Japan is the consequence of the construction of the Siberian Railway begun by us. All the European powers, and likewise even Japan, apparently, recognize that the partition of China will take place in the not distant future, and [they] see in the Siberian railway a significant improvement of our chances in the event of such a partition. The hostile actions of Japan are directed mainly against us."<sup>10)</sup>

With the special imperial rescript of 1891 on the Trans-Siberian Railway, the Russian government had, in effect, indicated its intent to dominate Northeastern Asia. Given Russia's history of enforcing exclusionary zones along its borders and then expanding those borders outward,<sup>11)</sup> Japan could foresee that if it took no action, it would soon be excluded from Manchuria and Korea — the two areas on the mainland considered most vital to its security. Once the general time-table for the completion of the Trans-Siberian railway became known, Japan then had a deadline by which to resolve the Korea problem. It had to do so before Russia could send troops by rail to the Far East and thereby alter the balance of power in Asia. At the end of the war, a front-page article in the newspaper, *Moskovskie vedomosti* alluded to this: "[O]ne of the reasons for this haste by the Japanese was the incomplete construction of the Great Siberian railway. It is absolutely clear that with its construction our interests on the Pacific Ocean will be protected not only by more or less significant land and sea forces, but likewise by the full power of the Russian people."<sup>12)</sup> The implication was that the railway posed an important security threat to Japan.

At the same time, Japan had been working on some very delicate treaty negotiations with Britain. Like China, the European powers had subjected Japan to a number of asymmetrical treaties granting Europeans various privileges. The Europeans had justified this legal inequality on the grounds that China and Japan lacked the appropriate legal and political institutions necessary for full legal reciprocity. The quest for equal legal status became an important motive behind Japan's Meiji-era reforms. In 1880 Japan promulgated a revised penal code and code of criminal procedure; in 1885 it established a cabinet system of government; in 1887 it instituted a Westernized system of civil service examinations; in 1888 it established a Privy Council; in 1889 it adopted a constitution; and in 1890 it convened its first Diet.<sup>13)</sup> Because of these re-

forms, Britain recognized that Japan would soon fulfill the conditions required for the full legal reciprocity which Europeans accorded one another, and the two countries began negotiations that would end British extraterritoriality in Japan once Japan's new civil law code came into effect in 1899. This treaty set the precedent for similar treaties with the other powers which were signed between 1894 and 1897.<sup>14)</sup>

Until the precedent-setting negotiations with Britain were completed, Japan could ill-afford any foreign adventures which might threaten its quest for legal equality. Once these negotiations were completed in July of 1894, however, Japan had a short window of opportunity to settle matters in Korea before completion of the Trans-Siberian Railway, when Korea might be irretrievably lost to a power far more threatening than the imploding Ch'ing Dynasty. Within the month the war had begun.

The Russians were among the first to realize that Japan's victory over China marked a pivotal event in Asian history. The importance that they attached to this became evident after the war with the rapid redirection of Russian government funds to Manchuria in order to build railway lines which would make Russia owner of by far the largest concessions in China. The amount of funds involved were massive. Their magnitude demonstrated the seriousness of Russia's post-war reappraisal of the Far Eastern situation.

Russian press reports made during the war clearly document the rapid evolution of Russian perceptions of the Far Eastern situation. Week by week, Russian attitudes changed, initially, about the probable outcome of the war, then about the relative power of belligerents, and later about the security ramifications for the Russian empire. Before the outbreak of hostilities on July 25, 1894, the newspaper coverage of the brewing hostilities over Korea was very scanty. With the rapid succession of Japanese victories, however, the Russian press took note, and both article frequency and length increased.

Simultaneously, the focus of these articles changed rapidly from a presumption of Chinese victory to an abrupt about-face recognition of Japan's suddenly obvious power. After the death of Alexander III on November 1, 1894, newspaper coverage understandably focused on the funeral preparations for the deceased monarch and the ascension to the throne of his son. By this time, the Russian press had already taken for granted the defeat of China — the Japanese victories which continued after the death of Alexander were no longer unexpected events. Therefore, there was a long hiatus in Russian newspaper coverage of the war which lasted until the peace treaty negotiations once more brought the matter to the fore.

These changes in Russian perceptions followed three general stages. First, there was a reversal in estimations of the relative power of China and Japan. Japan supplanted China as the internationally recognized dominant power of the Far East. Second, this was followed by a recognition that the balance of power in the Far East had changed. Finally, the Russians concluded that Japanese ascendancy in the Far East would pose a growing security threat to Russia's easternmost possessions. Each of these three stages will be discussed in turn.

## Reversal in the Perceptions of China relative to Japan

At the beginning of the Sino-Japanese War, Russian views favored China over Japan. *The Journal de St-Petersbourg*, a French-language paper published by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs,<sup>15)</sup> regarded Japanese foreign policy as a consequence of political instability within the Diet: “[I]n Japan they have resorted to the usual remedy of a weak government — they have started a foreign war.”<sup>16)</sup> Although the same article noted that the Japanese army, in contrast to the Chinese army, had been organized on the European model, it emphasized the overwhelming potential numerical superiority of Chinese troops.<sup>17)</sup> Another article extolled: “Firmness and persistence are special qualities of the Chinese race and justify its superior role in the history of humanity.”<sup>18)</sup> Although Chinese political weakness was recognized, the same editorialist ventured: “We believe in how important its military and economic resources will soon be: agriculture, industry, commerce, armies, naval forces.”<sup>19)</sup> Various articles emphasized that the war would be a long one.<sup>20)</sup> The one newspaper which early on ventured that Japanese military forces were superior to those of China did so in the most tentative way — an indication of how widely accepted the presumption of Chinese military superiority was.<sup>21)</sup>

One of the earliest newspapers to devote serious articles to Japan was the St. Petersburg daily, *Novoe vremia*, one of the best-known conservative newspapers.<sup>22)</sup> It shared the prevailing assumptions that Japan was just another backward Asian country: It italicized the sentence: “*The Japanese cannot regenerate themselves, although sometimes they strive for this.*” The same article was even more negative about the Chinese: “*The Chinese never will never regenerate themselves and they do not want this.*”<sup>23)</sup> Despite such prejudices, in an article published on August 6, 1894, less than two weeks after the start of the war, *Novoe vremia* provided a detailed comparison of the Chinese and Japanese navies. It concluded that the Japanese navy was superior.<sup>24)</sup>

Less than a month after the onset of hostilities, *Journal de St-Petersbourg* reported that Japan had become the master of the seas due the “inertia of the Chinese navy.”<sup>25)</sup> By the end of August, it would no longer be devoting long or positive feature stories to China but to Japan.<sup>26)</sup> The Japanese naval administration can bear perfectly the comparison with a European navy, equally well in what concerns the vessels as in the officers and in the equipment. . . . the army of the *mikado* is the only military force in the Far East set up according to European methods.”<sup>27)</sup> By the first of September, the *Journal de St-Petersbourg* was waxing:<sup>28)</sup>

All the world knows about the efforts made by Japan to assimilate the progress of our European societies; but what is less well known is that our civilization has been grafted onto a very remarkable indigenous civilization, having numerous traits in common with ours, all of it being much more ancient. Only this can explain the rapidity with which the Japanese have put themselves on a par with western civilization and the astonishing progress without historical precedent, which have characterized this transformation.

By the end of the year, the Moscow newspaper, *Russkie vedomosti*, captured the new prevailing stereotypes concerning the belligerents: Korea was described as being

weak, little-cultured and peaceful; China was credited for being enormous but poorly united, largely immobile, and conservative; whereas Japan was enterprising and energetic, with a rapidly developing culture, with proud pretensions, and with great forces on the land and sea.<sup>29)</sup> This represented a 180-degree change from the perceptions about the relative strength of China and Japan prevailing at the start of the war.

### **Change in the Balance of Power**

Within two weeks of the outbreak of the war, *Novoe vremia* was among the first newspapers to point out that the war would undoubtedly change the status quo in the Far East.<sup>30)</sup> Two weeks later it expanded on this theme by summarizing the press accounts of the other interested European powers.<sup>31)</sup> Implicitly, it recognized that the Sino-Japanese War had international implications. Other Russian newspapers would pick up this theme later on. For instance, two months after the outbreak of hostilities, *Moskovskie vedomosti* recognized that the international situation in the Far East had changed as a result of the on-going war: “Japan has acquired that status of an important eastern power for which she had been striving. Russia will have to change her attitude of quiet waiting to another one not lacking in anxiety.”<sup>32)</sup> The article went on to speculate on the possible fall of the Ch’ing Dynasty.<sup>33)</sup>

With two key Chinese defeats, similar observations became general throughout the press. The Chinese defeat at P’yongyang (September 15–16, 1894) followed a day later by its naval defeat in the Yellow Sea<sup>34)</sup> (September 17, 1894) dazzled the press. No one had suspected such a rapid turn of events. *S.-Peterburgskie vedomosti* credited Japan with “a brilliant victory.”<sup>35)</sup> Within the month, the Japanese would expel the Chinese from Korea (October 9, 1894) and start taking the strategic land and naval approaches to Peking. In early October, the Moscow newspaper, *Russkie vedomosti* observed: “The war which has flared up between China and Japan, indisputably is important not only for the Asiatic East, but also for Europe, and in particular for Russia, whose Asiatic possessions border on Korea and China and are located not far distant from the possessions of Japan.”<sup>36)</sup> After the battle at the Yellow Sea, it was recognized that Japan controlled the sea.<sup>37)</sup> Thereafter *Moskovskie vedomosti* treated an ultimate Japanese victory as a foregone conclusion: “Our readers who were familiar with the condition of the Chinese and Japanese military forces before the war, undoubtedly are not surprised by the victories of the sons of ‘the Empire of the Rising Sun,’ and should have expected them. . . . there is no doubt that a new strong military power has appeared in the east.”<sup>38)</sup>

China’s miserable performance had shattered the pre-war illusion of its military power. The Imperial Academy of Science’s *S.-Peterburgskie vedomosti*<sup>39)</sup> was one of the only newspapers to publish articles consistently critical of the Chinese military. In August it quoted *The Times* of London as printing that “. . . China does not have one, not simply outstanding, but even just able general.”<sup>40)</sup> That same month *S.-Peterburgskie vedomosti* noted that the Chinese military did not provide any organized medical care.<sup>41)</sup> With such a prominent victory, the rest of the Russian press finally followed

suit with a stream of articles concerning the endemic problems in the Chinese army and navy.<sup>42)</sup> These problems included a lack of training and discipline; cowardice pervading all ranks; and rampant insubordination, desertion, and corruption. Time and time again, Chinese officers and troops fled their posts. Time and time again Chinese forces allowed quantities of valuable military supplies to fall into Japanese hands instead of destroying them before retreating.<sup>43)</sup> The Chinese military proved itself incompetent in the field against combatants and dangerous to non-combatants whom it preyed upon. According to *Moskovskie vedomosti*, “The people fear Chinese soldiers much more than the invasion by the Japanese.”<sup>44)</sup> Not only did Chinese defeats destroy China’s image in the eyes of the Europeans, but the Chinese governments lies minimizing their magnitude undermined any vestiges of credibility.<sup>45)</sup>

The mortal blow to Chinese military prestige came with Japan’s rapid capture of the modern defenses at Dalien and Port Arthur (Nov. 21, 1894). These fortifications should have been very difficult to dislodge since they were well-situated, up-to-date, and amply supplied with modern equipment. Yet Chinese officials fled, Chinese troops fought poorly, and once again the Chinese did not manage to destroy the fortifications or munitions before the Japanese took them.<sup>46)</sup> China’s reputation for military incompetence was cemented. With the fall of Port Arthur: “The path to Peking is now open for the Japanese.”<sup>47)</sup>

Prior to the war, China had been treated as venerable civilization albeit a power past its prime. After the war, this former respect turned into derision.<sup>48)</sup> According to the *Journal de St-Pétersbourg*:<sup>49)</sup>

Since the beginning of this war, the Chinese have provided a lamentable spectacle. No one suspected such weakness [or] an equally complete want of foresight . . . Japan vanquisher of China! . . . It is remarkable — and this alone is sufficient to prove the complete absence of any Chinese resistance — that this war, which has been going on for four months, has only caused the Japanese armies insignificant losses, scarcely one thousand men killed, as many in Korea as at sea and during the advance on Port Arthur! . . . China has no military organization whatsoever. . . . The Japanese, in contrast, have resolutely begun a war European style.

By early January, Japanese military achievements had received recognition throughout the European press. The Japanese army had been given credit for mastering the Chinese despite the difficult terrain in Korea and Manchuria.<sup>50)</sup> In short, there was a general recognition that the military balance of power in the Far East had changed.

### **Growing Russian Security Concerns**

As the Russians began to appreciate Japan’s strength, they soon began to fear that Japan might pose a security threat to Russian interests. Specifically they feared that Japan would seek to establish its hegemony in the Far East.<sup>51)</sup> Two weeks after the opening of hostilities, *S.-Peterburgskie vedomosti* suggested that Korea had provided Japan with the pretext to demonstrate to the world the success of its recent domestic reforms, to show off its modern military, and to seek hegemony in the Far East.<sup>52)</sup> Initial Russian admiration for Japanese military prowess would soon degenerate into

anti-Japanese diatribes.<sup>53)</sup> Growing anti-Japanese sentiments would be one of the consequences of the Sino-Japanese War. In the ensuing years, they would develop into fears of an impending “yellow peril” and would become widespread, a decade later, during the Russo-Japanese War.

*Moskovskie vedomosti* was among the first newspapers to advance a more sinister interpretation of Japanese motives. It attributed the rapidity of Japan’s military successes to Japanese plans made three years previously to take Korea: “Such speed was only possible because everything had been prepared beforehand.”<sup>54)</sup> Within the week it changed this time frame from three years to “from time immemorial the Japanese have harbored pretensions to Korea. . . . Their goal consists in the seizure of power in Korea.”<sup>55)</sup> It went on to highlight the hypocrisy of Japanese actions, by juxtaposing Japan’s forcible interference in Korean affairs to Japan’s jealous protection of its own internal affairs from European interference.<sup>56)</sup>

*Novoe vremia* in an article entitled, “The Yellow War and Its Consequences,” warned: “[W]e look, with true alarm, at the emergence of a new world power thirty hours by sea from Vladivostok.” The article continued:<sup>57)</sup>

[O]f course the strengthening of Japan at the expense of China scares us and makes us carefully consider our own military forces in the Amur region, the way it was before the emergence there of a new world power in the form of a Japan triumphant on land and sea. Military glory and success in battle are too capable of intoxicating even old states, and because of this ability to intoxicate to the point of losing all prudence, one should fear a young state which has only just stepped out in the role of an enlightener, and in part, perhaps, of a liberator of the numerous kindred yellow tribes of the East.

The article expressed concerns of an incipient pan-mongolism. It concluded: “[T]he yellows are fighting; the whites must keep a sharp look out!”

*Russkie vedomosti* published one of the clearest descriptions of the brewing conflict between Russian and Japanese aspirations:<sup>58)</sup>

Korea, Manchuria and part of China — all of this must be the historical sphere of influence of the Japanese, who, by their geographic location and ethnographic make-up have a greater right to these areas than any other people, and even more so than a newly arrived people alien to East Asia, such as all the European peoples. Of these peoples — the Russians appear, from the point of view of the Japanese chauvinists, to have the fewest rights of all to the domination of East Asia; meanwhile the possessions of Russia have approached Korea itself; a Russian port has sprung up on the shores of the Sea of Japan; and the Siberian Railway, which is under construction, demonstrates the aspirations of Russia to link this great region more firmly to the central state and to strengthen Russian influence and trade in the Sino-Japanese region. But such aspirations run counter to the ideas and plans of the Japanese, and therefore — dream Japanese politicians — the Empire of the Rising Sun must take measures, while it is not too late, in order to guarantee its predominance in the closest parts of the east Asiatic continent and to strengthen its situation vis-a-vis Russia. As soon this is successful, it will not be — so they think — particularly difficult to appear more decisive even against the aggressive aspirations of Russia, even take from her the Ussuri region and throw her out of eastern Siberia. Asia should belong to the peoples of Asia and the natural eastern border of Russia is the Ural Mountains.

The Russians feared that should the Japanese establish themselves in either Korea or Manchuria, the next objective would be to expel the Russians from eastern Siberia. In fact, during the 1920s and 1930s, this idea did cross Japanese minds on more than one occasion, first during the Russian Civil War and then again in the late 1930s.

In early 1895, security concerns were widespread in the Russian press. Articles began appearing which demanded that Japan be prevented from securing territory on the Asian mainland.<sup>59)</sup> Others went further. Prince Esper Esperevich Ukhtomskii's ideas about the east had been shaped several years before the Sino-Japanese War; at that time, he had accompanied then-tsarevich Nicholas on a tour of the Far East when a Japanese national had wounded Nicholas in an assassination attempt made in Japan.<sup>60)</sup> Ukhtomskii devoted a long article in *Moskovskie vedomosti* to the impending Japanese (and continuing British) threat to Russian interests in the Far East.<sup>61)</sup>

To resolve these new security concerns, there were soon calls for the acquisition of an ice-free port in the Far East. At that time the port of Vladivostok froze over for about four months each winter, limiting its military usefulness. *Russkie vedomosti* boldly stated: "It is not necessary even to mention the necessity of such a port, it is obvious in and of itself. . . ."<sup>62)</sup> The article went on to recommend that such an ice-free port become the terminus for the Trans-Siberian Railway. The solution to Russia's security concerns would be territorial expansion. This did not take place in the manner suggested by this article, but, as the Japanese had foreseen, the Trans-Siberian Railway did indeed have security ramifications aimed directly at them. An article written in the same newspaper less than a week later was closer to the mark when it recommended that the Trans-Siberian Railway be run directly across Manchuria, which was exactly what ended up happening.<sup>63)</sup>

By the closing months of the war, the Russian press had reached the conclusion that Japan now posed a serious security threat to Russia and that expansion of Russia's Far Eastern railway system had become a necessary preemptive measure. Once the terms of the Treaty of Shimonoseki, such as the Japanese occupation of the strategic Liaotung Peninsula, became known, such security concerns received front-page coverage.

In late April and early May, *Moskovskie vedomosti* featured a series of long articles entitled, "Complications in the Far East," by an anonymous author who went by the title: "not a diplomat." These articles detailed the strategic implications of Japan's victory and provided summaries of contemporary British, French, German, and American press accounts.<sup>64)</sup> One French newspaper cited pointed out that the war had changed the balance of power in the Far East.<sup>65)</sup> "The truth is that Japan will demand as the prize for its victories some economic advantages which will give it a certain monopoly."<sup>66)</sup> One formerly pro-Japanese French columnist reported: "Evidently, from the European point of view, this development of Japan, a people which was considered a negligible quantity and which shows itself invading, cannot but give rise to some anxieties or at least some reflections. If Europe wants to protect its position in the world, it must desire to act with a certain unity vis-a-vis the peoples reputed to be barbarian and to form a kind of syndicate."<sup>67)</sup> The general conclusion of such articles

was that Russia must redouble efforts to colonize Russian Far Eastern territories and to speed up the completion of the Trans-Siberian Railway.<sup>68)</sup> Simultaneously, it must shore up its Far Eastern defenses.

### **Consequences of the War**

The consequences of the first Sino-Japanese war for China are well known. This is probably the most studied aspect of the war in English-language books on the subject. China's rapid defeat discredited the Ch'ing Dynasty both at home and abroad. Like the Russians, the Chinese had deep-rooted prejudices about other Asians. They reserved special prejudices for the Japanese, whom they considered an upstart people, who had better turn their minds back to the Chinese classics rather than wreak havoc on the Asian mainland. To get a sense of the prevailing prejudices, the Chinese, in official communications, routinely referred to the Japanese as *wako* (倭寇) or midget pirates. To the Chinese, the ruling Manchu Dynasty appeared derelict in its duty as guardians of Han China. To foreigners, China seemed ripe for the taking and the so-called scramble for concessions immediately ensued. In 1897 Germany took the port of Ch'ing-tao while Russia took Port Arthur and Dalian. In 1898 Britain took Weihai-wei and the New Territories, while France took Kuang-chow Bay. The political situation in China was coming unglued.

In the case of Japan, it had tasted the first fruits of modernization with the realization of phase one of its unfolding ambitions in Asia. Its newspapers were euphoric at the conclusion of the war but quickly soured with the success of the Triple Intervention. This left a deep-seated Japanese bitterness directed at Russia. Such anger would be vented a decade later at Russia's expense, when Japan defeated Russia and secured not only the Liao-tung Peninsula but also the southernmost section of Russia's extensive and costly railway concessions in Manchuria.

Similarly, on the Russian side, the Sino-Japanese War led to a rapid acceleration of Russian colonization and development schemes for Manchuria. The anonymous author of the series, "Complications in the Far East" had concluded quite prophetically as it turned out: "[O]ne must be concerned that the Japanese will strengthen their armaments by that billion francs which they will receive in the form of war indemnity, in order to take vengeance on us in the future for our interference in the Sino-Japanese quarrel."<sup>69)</sup> That was indeed what happened. Japan used its war indemnity from China to fund a major armaments program. Russian attempts to shore up its Far Eastern defenses would inspire Japanese counter-measures, leading to an arms race<sup>70)</sup> in the Far East which would culminate in the Russo-Japanese War.

For China, the primary victim along with Korea, the war had set in motion a most detrimental cascade of events ultimately precipitating action and reaction which culminated in the Sino-Japanese War of 1937–45. In 1895, the same prescient anonymous author also predicted that Japan would eventually try to invade Europe. "If [we] do not stop Japan now, then this invasion must be expected not in 1895 but in 1945."<sup>71)</sup> Even if he did not peg the location of the invasion (Japan would take over

most of Asia not Europe), he was not so far off on the timing. For all of these reasons, the neglected Sino-Japanese War of 1894–5 was portentous indeed.

#### Notes

- 1) Before the Russian Revolution of 1917, Russia used the Julian calendar which lagged twelve days behind the Gregorian calendar used in the West. In this article, all dates are given according to the Gregorian calendar now in use. For those Russian newspapers which dated their articles according to both calendars, I have included only the Gregorian date in the citation. For those newspapers which listed only the Julian date, I have cited that date followed by the Gregorian date in parentheses.
- 2) Mary Clabaugh Wright, *The Last Stand of Chinese Conservatism: The T'ung-chih Restoration, 1862–1874* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1957), 9–10.
- 3) W. G. Beasley, *The Rise of Modern Japan*, 2nd ed (NY: St. Martin's Press, 1995), 144–5.
- 4) Hilary Conroy, *The Japanese Seizure of Korea: 1868–1910: A Study of Realism and Idealism in International Relations* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1960), 101–4, 186, 267–8.
- 5) Zenone Volpicelli (pseud. Vladimir), *The China-Japan War, Compiled from Japanese, Chinese, and Foreign Sources* (Kansas City, MO: Franklin Hudson Publishing, 1905), 232–44, 81, 245–7.
- 6) Mutsu Munemitsu, *Kenkenroku: A Diplomatic Record of the Sino-Japanese War, 1894–95*, ed. and trans. Gordon Mark Berger (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1982), 124, 289–93.
- 7) John P. LeDonne, *The Russian Empire and the World 1700–1914: The Geopolitics of Expansion and Containment* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 337.
- 8) Even such eminent scholars as those listed below do not make the connection: W. G. Beasley, *The Rise of Modern Japan*, 146–8; Payson J. Treat, “The Cause of the Sino-Japanese War,” *The Pacific Historical Review*, vol. 8, no. 2 (June 1939): 149–57; Payson J. Treat, *Diplomatic Relations between the United States and Japan 1853–1895*, vol. 2 (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1932), 451; Conroy; Hugh Borton, *Japan's Modern Century* (New York: Ronald Press, 1955), 203–6. Akira Iriye, “Japan's drive to great-power status,” in *The Cambridge History of Japan*, ed. Marius B. Jansen, vol. 5 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 753–65.
- 9) During the war a variety of newspaper articles argued that Russia would not permit any foreign power to occupy Korea and that Russia would not tolerate Japan in Port Arthur. See: “Iaponsko-Kitaiskaia voina i Rossiia,” *Moskovskie vedomosti*, no. 203, July 27, 1894 (Aug. 8, 1894), p. 2; “Po povodu sobytii v Koree,” *Novoe vremiia*, no. 6609, Aug. 5, 1894, p. 2; “Koreiskii vopros i Rossiia,” *Moskovskie vedomosti*, no. 209, Aug. 2, 1894 (Aug. 14, 1894), p. 3; “Voina v Koree” *S.-Peterburgskie vedomosti*, no. 272, Oct. 18, 1894, p. 1; “Nyneshniaia politicheskaia minuta,” *Novoe vremiia*, no. 6863, Ap. 21, 1895, p. 1.
- 10) “Pervye shagi russkogo imperializma na Dal'nem Vostoke (1888–1903 gg.),” *Krasnyi arkhiv* 52 (1932): 80.
- 11) S. C. M. Paine, *Imperial Rivals: China, Russia, and Their Disputed Frontier* (Armonk, NY: M. E. Sharpe, Inc., 1996), *passim*.
- 12) “Velikaia Sibirskaia doroga,” *Moskovskie vedomosti*, no. 104, Ap. 17, 1895 (Ap. 29, 1895), pp. 1–2.
- 13) W. G. Beasley, *The Rise of Modern Japan*, 98; W. G. Beasley, *The Modern History of Japan*, 2nd ed (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1974), 129–38; W. G. Beasley, “Meiji Political Institutions” in *The Cambridge History of Japan*, vol. 5, 650; Edwin O. Reischauer, *Japan Past and Present* (Tokyo: Charles E. Tuttle Co., 1952), 281–2.
- 14) W. G. Beasley, *The Rise of Modern Japan*, 143; Roy Hidemichi Akagi, *Japan's Foreign Relations 1542–1936: A Short History* (Tokyo: The Hokuseido Press, 1936), 111–2.
- 15) Louise McReynolds, *The News under Russia's Old Regime: The Development of a Mass-Circulation Press* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991), 21.
- 16) “Iaponsko-kitaiskaia voina i Rossiia,” *Moskovskie vedomosti*, no. 203, July 27, 1894 (Aug. 8,

- 1894), p. 2.
- 17) "Iaponsko-Kitaiskaia voina i Rossiia," *Moskovskie vedomosti*, no. 203, July 27, 1894 (Aug. 8, 1894), p. 2. For a similar view see, "Kitai i Iaponiia. Voina Iaponii s Kitaem," *Moskovskie vedomosti*, no. 203, July 27, 1894 (Aug. 8, 1894), p. 4.
  - 18) "Chine et Japon," *Journal de St-Petersbourg*, no. 198, Aug. 8, 1894, p. 2.
  - 19) "Chine et Japon," *Journal de St-Petersbourg*, no. 198, Aug. 8, 1894, p. 2. For another generally positive article about Chinese military potential, see "Po povodu sobytii v Koree," *Novoe vremiia*, no. 6606, Aug. 2, 1894, p. 1.
  - 20) "Iaponiia i Kitai. Voina mezhdru Iaponiei i Kitaem", *Moskovskie vedomosti*, no. 204, July 28, 1894 (Aug. 9, 1894), p. 4; "Iaponiia i Kitai. Izvestiia o khode voennykh deistvii," *Moskovskie vedomosti*, no. 206, July 30, 1894 (Aug. 11, 1894), p. 4; "Rossiia i voina v Koree" *S.-Peterburgskie vedomosti*, no. 273, Oct. 19, 1894, p. 1.
  - 21) "Aziatskie soperniki," *S.-Peterburgskie vedomosti*, no. 191, July 29, 1894, p. 1.
  - 22) For this and other characterizations of the Russian press, see McReynolds, 25.
  - 23) "Po povodu sobytii v Koree," *Novoe vremiia*, no. 6609, Aug. 5, 1894, p. 2. Italics from the original.
  - 24) "Voennye floty Kitaia i Iaponii," *Novoe vremiia*, no. 6610, Aug. 6, 1894, p. 1.
  - 25) "Chine et Japon," *Journal de St-Petersbourg*, no. 207, Aug. 17, 1894, p. 2.
  - 26) "Chine et Japon," *Journal de St-Petersbourg*, no. 210, Aug. 21, 1894, p. 3; "Chine et Japon," *Journal de St-Petersbourg*, no. 212, Aug. 23, 1894, p. 2; "Chine et Japon," *Journal de St-Petersbourg*, no. 220, Sep. 1, 1894, p. 2; "Chine et Japon," *Journal de St-Petersbourg*, no. 292, Nov. 13, 1894, p. 2; "Chine et Japon," *Journal de St-Petersbourg*, no. 340, Jan. 1, 1895, p. 2. For positive coverage of Japan in other newspapers, see A. Molchanov, "Koreia i Iaponiia," *Novoe vremiia*, no. 6653, Sep. 18, 1894, p. 1.
  - 27) "Chine et Japon," *Journal de St-Petersbourg*, no. 212, Aug. 23, 1894, p. 2. For other articles praising Japanese military achievements, see "Iaponsko-kitaiskaia voina," *Russkie vedomosti*, no. 271, Oct. 1, 1894 (Oct. 13, 1894), p. 3.
  - 28) "Chine et Japon," *Journal de St-Petersbourg*, no. 220, Sep. 1, 1894, p. 2.
  - 29) D. A., "Iaponsko-kitaiskaia voina, Koreia i russkie interesy na dal'nem Vostoke," *Russkie vedomosti*, no. 264, Sep. 24, 1894 (Oct. 6, 1894), p. 3.
  - 30) "Vneshnie izvestiia. Noveishii Gordiev uzal," *Novoe vremiia*, no. 6610, Aug. 6, 1894, p. 1.
  - 31) "Voina v Koree," *Novoe vremiia*, no. 6627, Aug. 23, 1894, p. 1. See also A. Molchanov, "Koreia i Iaponiia," *Novoe vremiia*, no. 6653, Sep. 18, 1894, p. 1.
  - 32) "Iaponiia i Kitai. Porazhenie Kitaitsev", *Moskovskie vedomosti*, no. 248, Sep. 10, 1894 (Sept. 22, 1894), p. 4.
  - 33) "Iaponiia i Kitai. Porazhenie Kitaitsev", *Moskovskie vedomosti*, no. 248, Sep. 10, 1894 (Sept. 22, 1894), p. 4.
  - 34) The Battle of the Yalu River in the Russian press.
  - 35) "Voina v Koree," *S.-Peterburgskie vedomosti*, no. 244, Sep. 20, 1894, p. 1.
  - 36) D. A., "Iaponsko-kitaiskaia voina, Koreia i russkie interesy na dal'nem Vostoke," *Russkie vedomosti*, no. 264, Sep. 24, 1894 (Oct. 6, 1894), p. 3. This was the first article in a nine-article series explaining the historical background to the Sino-Japanese War. The series was later reprinted with a three month lag in *Vladivostok*. See no. 49, Dec. 4, 1894 (Dec. 16, 1894), p. 11 for the first article in the series.
  - 37) "Iaponiia i Kitai. Iaponsko kitaiskaia voina", *Moskovskie vedomosti*, no. 257, Sep. 19, 1894 (Oct. 1, 1894), p. 3.
  - 38) "Kitaisko-iaponskaia voina," *Moskovskie vedomosti*, no. 265, Sep. 27, 1894 (Oct. 9, 1894), p. 2.
  - 39) McReynolds, 19.
  - 40) "Koreiskaia voina," *S.-Peterburgskie vedomosti*, no. 206, Aug. 13, 1894, p. 1.
  - 41) "Koreiskaia voina" *S.-Peterburgskie vedomosti*, no. 217, Aug. 24, 1894, p. 1.
  - 42) "Koreia," *Moskovskie vedomosti*, no. 258, Sep. 20, 1894 (Oct. 2, 1894), p. 3; "Bezporiadki v Kitaiskoi armii," *Moskovskie vedomosti*, no. 263, Sep. 25, 1894 (Oct. 7, 1894), p. 3; "Oboronitel'nye sredstva Kitaia" *Novoe vremiia*, no. 6690, Oct. 25, 1894, pp. 1–2.

- 43) “Kitai. Voina s Iaponiei,” *Moskovskie vedomosti*, no. 303, Nov. 4, 1894 (Nov. 16, 1894), 3; “Kitai. Voina s Iaponiei,” *Moskovskie vedomosti*, no. 304, Nov. 5, 1894 (Nov. 17, 1894), 4; “Kitai. Voina s Iaponiei,” *Moskovskie vedomosti*, no. 305, Nov. 6, 1894 (Nov. 18, 1894), 5; “Chine et Japon,” *Journal de St-Pétersbourg*, no. 289, Nov. 10, 1894, p. 3.
- 44) “Kitai. Voina s Iaponiei,” *Moskovskie vedomosti*, no. 303, Nov. 4, 1894 (Nov. 16, 1894), 3.
- 45) “Chine et Japon,” *Journal de St-Pétersbourg*, no. 218, Aug. 30 1894, p. 3; “Kitaisko-iaponskaia voina,” *Moskovskie vedomosti*, no. 265, Sep. 27, 1894 (Oct. 9, 1894), p. 2. For other examples of Chinese attempts to downplay the magnitude of their military predicament, see “Iaponsko-kitaiskaia voina,” *Russkie vedomosti*, no. 283, Oct. 13, 1894 (Oct. 25, 1894), p. 3.
- 46) “Kitai. Voina s Iaponiei,” *Moskovskie vedomosti*, no. 304, Nov. 5, 1894 (Nov. 17, 1894), 4; “Kitai. Voina s Iaponiei,” *Moskovskie vedomosti*, no. 305, Nov. 6, 1894 (Nov. 18, 1894), 5; “Kitai. Vziatie Port-Artura,” *Moskovskie vedomosti*, no. 320, Nov. 21, 1894 (Dec. 3, 1894), 4.
- 47) “Kitai. Vziatie Port-Artura,” *Moskovskie vedomosti*, no. 318, Nov. 19, 1894 (Dec. 1, 1894), 5.
- 48) For examples of the new negative attitudes toward the Chinese, see: “Kitai. Voina s Iaponiei,” *Moskovskie vedomosti*, no. 59, Mar. 1, 1895 (Mar. 13, 1895), p. 4; “Kitai. Budushchnost’,” *Moskovskie vedomosti*, no. 88, Mar. 30, 1895 (Ap. 11, 1895), p. 5; “Anglo-Iaponskie vidy na Kitai.” *Moskovskie vedomosti*, no. 349, Dec. 20, 1894 (Jan. 1, 1895), p. 2.
- 49) “Chine et Japon,” *Journal de St-Pétersbourg*, no. 345, Jan. 6, 1895, p. 2.
- 50) Quoting an article which first appeared in *Le Temps*. “Chine et Japon,” *Journal de St-Pétersbourg*, no. 345, Jan. 6, 1895, p. 2.
- 51) “Otpor Azii” *S.-Peterburgskie vedomosti*, no. 95, Ap. 23, 1895, p. 1; “Vysadka Iapontsev bliz nashei granitsy,” *Novoe vremiia*, no. 6688, Oct. 23, 1894, p. 2.
- 52) “Angliia v koreiskoi voine,” *S.-Peterburgskie vedomosti*, no. 201, Aug. 8, 1894, p. 1.
- 53) “Kitai i Iaponiia. Voina Kitai s Iaponiei,” *Moskovskie vedomosti*, no. 66, Mar. 8, 1895 (Mar. 20, 1895), p. 4.
- 54) “Koreia. Iaponsko-kitaiskaia voina,” *Moskovskie vedomosti*, no. 228, Aug. 21, 1894 (Sept. 2, 1894), pp. 3–4.
- 55) “Iaponiia i Kitai. Kitaisko-iaponskaia voina,” *Moskovskie vedomosti*, no. 233, Aug. 26, 1894 (Sept. 7, 1894), p. 3.
- 56) “Iaponiia i Kitai. Kitaisko-iaponskaia voina,” *Moskovskie vedomosti*, no. 233, Aug. 26, 1894 (Sept. 7, 1894), p. 3.
- 57) “Zheltaia voina i ie posledstviia,” *Novoe vremiia*, no. 6672, Oct. 7, 1894, p. 2.
- 58) D. A., “Iaponsko-kitaiskaia voina, Koreia i russkie interesy na dal’nem Vostoke,” *Russkie vedomosti*, no. 264, Sep. 24, 1894 (Oct. 6, 1894), p. 3. Other articles also recognized the growing conflict between Russian and Japanese aspirations in the Far East. See “Iaponsko-kitaiskaia voina,” *Russkie vedomosti*, no. 275, Oct. 5, 1894 (Oct. 17, 1894), p. 3.
- 59) “Kitai. Soobshchenie of namereniakh derzhav,” *Moskovskie vedomosti*, no. 31, Jan. 31, 1895 (Feb. 12, 1895), p. 3; “Mirovoi progress is Iapontsy,” *Moskovskie vedomosti*, no. 114, Ap. 27, 1895 (May 9, 1895), p. 2; “Voina v Koree,” *S.-Peterburgskie vedomosti*, no. 272, Oct. 18, 1894.
- 60) Paine, 202, n. 62.
- 61) “Anglo-Iaponskie vidy na Kitai.” *Moskovskie vedomosti*, no. 349, Dec. 20, 1894 (Jan. 1, 1895), p. 2.
- 62) “Nezamerzaiushchii port na Dal’nem Vostoke,” *Novoe vremiia*, no. 6847, Ap. 3, 1895, p. 2. For other articles pointing to the need for an ice-free port in the Far East, see “Iaponsko-kitaiskaia voina,” *Russkie vedomosti*, no. 275, Oct. 5, 1894 (Oct. 17, 1894), p. 3.
- 63) “Eshche o nezamerzaiushchem porte na Dal’nego Vostoka,” *Novoe vremiia*, no. 6852, Ap. 8, 1895, p. 1.
- 64) Ne diplomat, “Oslozhneniia na Dal’nem Vostoke,” *Moskovskie vedomosti*, nos. 100–113, Ap. 13–26, 1895 (Ap. 25–May 8, 1895), pp. 2 or 3.
- 65) Ne diplomat, “Oslozhneniia na Dal’nem Vostoke,” *Moskovskie vedomosti*, no. 103, Ap. 16, 1895 (Ap. 28, 1895), p. 2.
- 66) Quoting a letter from Berlin originally printed in *Journal de Genève* “Chine et Japon,” *Journal de St-Pétersbourg*, no. 93, April 20, 1895, p. 2.

- 67) M. Paul Leroy-Beaulieu, originally published in *l'Economiste français*, "Chine et Japon," *Journal de St-Pétersbourg*, no. 110, May 8, 1895, p. 2.
- 68) "Kak uskorit' postroiku Sibirskoi dorogi," *Moskovskie vedomosti*, no. 104, Ap. 17, 1895 (Ap. 29, 1895), p. 2; Ne diplomat, "Oslozhneniia na Dal'nem Vostoke," *Moskovskie vedomosti*, no. 110, Ap. 23, 1895 (May 5, 1895), p. 3; "Kolonizatsiia nashogo Vostoka," *S.-Peterburgskie vedomosti*, no. 277, Oct. 23, 1894, p. 1; "V vidu sibirskoi kolonizatsii," *S.-Peterburgskie vedomosti*, no. 108, May 6, 1895, p. 1.
- 69) Ne diplomat, "Oslozhneniia na Dal'nem Vostoke," *Moskovskie vedomosti*, no. 110, Ap. 23, 1895 (May 5, 1895), p. 3.
- 70) "Velikaia Sibirskaia doroga," *Moskovskie vedomosti*, no. 104, Ap. 17, 1895 (Ap. 29, 1895), p. 1.
- 71) Ne diplomat, "Oslozhneniia na Dal'nem Vostoke," *Moskovskie vedomosti*, no. 100, Ap. 13, 1895 (Ap. 25, 1895), p. 3.