

Russian Historiography of the Russo-Japanese War, 1904-1905: Main Periods, Ideas and Trends

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The paper is devoted to the Russian historiography of the Russo-Japanese war, 1904-1905 with special attention to the post-Communist period, i.e., books, articles and historical sources publications, which appeared in 1991-2004. When speaking about Russian historiography I mean not only writings by Russian/Soviet historians and even not only published in Russia/USSR. I shall try to observe also those written by foreign authors (including Japanese, of course), and published in Russian translation in Russia as well as research works, diaries and memoirs by Russian emigrants (very often-participants of the war) which were printed in various West-European capitals. Some works by modern Russian historians, published in foreign languages (rather few, however), will be taken into account too.

Typologically the above historiography includes not only individual or collective monographs, articles and collections of archival documents published by professional historians, but also memoirs, diaries of the participants and contemporaries of the war, their official and personal correspondences, etc. According to my calculations the Russian historiography of the Russo-Japanese war totally includes around 800 items. That is the object of my present study. Chronologically all this aggregate easily divides into 3 main periods: 1905-1917, 1917-1990 and 1991-till present.

During the tsarist period (1905-1917) the official Russian historiography of the war was created with the aim to find the causes of the Russian defeat; voluminous studies of the war prepared and published by special bodies of the General Staff of the land forces and the General Naval Staff introduced a great amount of facts, yet half-interpreted and ill-brought to system; military history of the war was the main object of the research. The war itself was regarded as a result of Russo-Japanese geopolitical clash in the Far East. After 1917 the traditions of the pre-October historiography were continued by Russian military historians-emigrants.

Soviet historiography (1917-1991) was based on the “only genuine scientific” Marxist-Leninist interpretation of mankind history and developed quite separately

from the world historiography. Soviet scholars paid special attention to origins of the war, its character, as well as to the history of the class struggle in 1904-1905 inside Russia in connection with the war. Main achievements were made in the history of the Russo-Japanese diplomatic rivalry in 1930-1940s when Stalinist spy-hunting was under way, a number of publications, devoted to the history of Japanese espionage in Russia, appeared. The war itself was regarded as imperialist and colonial from both sides and the Russian defeat ultimately caused by the “rottenness of autocratic regime” was considered inevitable.

Nowadays though general works on the history of the Russo-Japanese war do not appear, Russian historiography becomes part of world historiography again and represents all the broadness of estimations of that war. Modern Russian scholars are mainly interested in publication of archival documents classified in Soviet period; secret and still ill-investigated sides of the war (Russian and Japanese intelligence and counterintelligence in Russia, Japan, West-European countries and in the field of war, general history of various Russian secret services, operations, etc.) as well as the personal history genre works are most popular.

In Russia is not forgotten that 2004 is a centennial anniversary of the Russo-Japanese war. Since then (and if time permits) I would also like to inform my readers about how this war is elucidated in the Russian mass media today, and the reaction to its anniversary of the present Russian scientific and military establishment.

The Russo-Japanese War, International Relations and British Strategic Foreign Policy

Keith Neilson

The Russo-Japanese War was arguably the most important international event leading to the First World War. While the significance of the Russo-Japanese War for its two participants has been widely acknowledged, the effect of the conflict on international relations generally has not been recognized.

At the beginning of the twentieth century, there was a rough balance of power between the two opposing blocs -- the Franco-Russian Alliance and the Triple

Alliance of Germany, Italy and Austria-Hungary. There was, however, a growing concern that Germany's burgeoning power would soon destroy this uneasy equipoise. Britain's position was difficult. In Europe, she faced an economic and naval challenge from Germany, while the Empire was threatened by the French in Africa and Russia in India and China. The Boer War revealed Britain's military weakness.

Britain's response was to seek to diminish her problems by negotiation and agreement. Attempts to come to terms with Germany and Russia in the period from 1898 to 1903 failed because the former's asking price was too high and the latter was determined to exploit Britain's weakness for its own ends. Britain had better luck elsewhere. In 1902, the Anglo-Japanese Alliance provided some relief against Russia, and, in 1904, the Anglo-French *Entente* brought an end to the colonial quarrels between the two countries.

The Russo-Japanese War tested all these measures. Britain moved carefully throughout the conflict to maintain its own neutrality. Germany attempted to take advantage of the war in the Far East both to threaten France while her Russian ally was preoccupied and to break the Anglo-French *Entente*. The result was the First Moroccan Crisis, which strengthened the bond between Paris and London and estranged Berlin and St. Petersburg.

Russia's defeat in the Far East had wide-ranging repercussions. Japan was now a regional Great Power. A weakened Russia was now willing to sign the Anglo-Russian Convention in 1907. But the European balance of power was destroyed, and Germany began to pursue a dangerous and reckless foreign policy that was to culminate in the outbreak of the First World War in 1914.

The Russo-Japanese War and Japanese Diplomacy

ITO Yukio

Ryotaro Shiba, Japanese famous historical novelist, compared Japanese foreign policy with Russian one before the Russo-Japanese war in his book, *Sakano Ueno Kumo* (Tokyo: Bungei Shunju 1969). He criticized the Russian policy as, "It is no room to justify the Russian attitude, which intended to corner Japan into death."

The Shiba's opinion is not original. We can read such idea in some memoirs;

Taro Katsura's (Prime Minister and Army General 1901-1905) autobiography, which was written from 1902 to the end of war, *Koshaku Katsura Taro Den* (1917) and *Komura Gaikoshi* (1966), which was edited by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs based on *Koshaku Komura Jutaro Den* (1922). In addition, Jyun Kakuta's academic research, *Manshu Mondai To Kokubo Hoshin* (Tokyo: Hara Shobo 1967) discussed the Russo-Japanese war in the same line.

After the late 1990s there appeared some scholars to reexamine the Russo-Japanese decision-making process to the war. Yukio Ito's *Rikken Kokka To Nichiro Senso: Gaiko To Naisei, 1898-1905* (Tokyo: Bokutakusha 2000) was a mile stone to reestablish an academic consensus; Russia did not intend to wage a war against Japan.

In this paper, I would like to reexamine the Japanese decision-making process before the war. As a result I can lead three theories; Firstly the Russo-Japanese war could have been evaded and secondly the former prime minister, Hirobumi Ito and the Japanese Meiji Emperor were opposed to the war because they judged that the Russo-Japanese war would devastate both powers. Their opinion was realistic and persuasive, but the war finally broke out. Thirdly by examining the Russian situation and ideas of the decision makers, we can lead a historical inference; If a compromise between Russia and Japan had been concluded by February 1904, the war would not have broken out until the First World War.

(Translated by KOTANI Ken)

The Russo-Japanese War and the Imperial German Navy: Perception, Lessons Learned and Dilemmas Revealed

Berthold Sander-Nagashima

The Russo-Japanese War caught the Imperial German Navy (IGN) right in the middle of its ambitious program to build a fleet strong enough to finally challenge British predominance at sea by means of a decisive encounter of main battle fleets. At the same time the IGN made contingency plans for wars with the Dual Alliance (France and Russia) (Operationsplan I), the British (Operationsplan II) and the USA (Operationsplan III). In that context the Germans were keenly

interested in learning technical as well as operational and tactical lessons from the war in order to use them for the improvement of the construction and tactics of their ships. In addition, new and modern weapons like mines and torpedoes were used here on a large scale for the first time which also contributed to high German naval interest.

The Germans therefore were quick to dispatch observers to the theatre and gathered surprising insights not only into technical aspects of the war at sea between Russia and Japan. Analysis of the operations conducted together with the findings reported by the German observers on both sides resulted in a change of perception of both opponents. The findings about the operational aspects were seen by the German naval analysts mainly from a Mahanist perspective and therefore with an emphasis on the role of the battleship. However the significant effects on cruiser warfare were noted as well. Later the latter proved to be of much more importance than the battle fleet lessons since cruiser- and u-boat warfare, quite unwanted by the Germans, became their main instrument of naval warfare in the World War I.

An important side effect came in the wake of the war scare that resulted from the “Dogger Bank” or “Hull Incident” in October 1904. Suddenly a possible war with the British appeared to draw near. In the resulting flurry it soon became clear that the IGNaval lacked a viable concept for a war with the British, their main opponent. Instead there were competing ideas about this both within the navy and at the decision making level of the Reich. Thus both the organisational and planning deficiencies of the IGNaval and the Reich were revealed in the World War I.

The Impact of the Russo-Japanese Naval Battles upon the U. S. Navy

TAKAHASHI Fumio

It is the purpose of this paper to attempt to clarify the impact of the Russo-Japanese naval battles upon the planning concept of the first War Plan Orange of 1906. On the one hand most of the impacts of the Russo-Japanese naval battles upon the U. S. Navy did accelerate the U. S. Navy's prearranged plans, on the other hand U. S. Navy firstly produced the first War Plan Orange of 1906 in

peace time only one year after the conclusion of the Russo-Japanese war. In light of this lack of interval, some impacts of those battles must have been seen in the first War Plan Orange.

On clarifying the impact of those battles on the first War Plan Orange, it is also needed to clarify the other factors that contributed to the completion of the first War Plan Orange. In light of that the first War Plan Orange was hurriedly prepared, there must have been some model plans for the first War Plan Orange. As these models, this paper takes up the prototype of Imperial German naval war plan against the U. S. A., the Operation Plan III and the touchstone of the U. S. Naval war plan against Germany of the War Plan Black. For the former plan was familiar to the U. S. Naval planner and the latter was tested in the Caribbean Naval Exercise at the time of Venezuela crisis of 1902- 1903. This paper also takes up the impact of Mahan's geopolitical strategic thinking upon the first War Plan Orange. For the U. S. Naval officers had taken to heart Mahan's teaching.

Consequently, we can see that the Russo-Japanese naval battles influenced on the two model plans and Mahan's geopolitical strategic thinking, which did relate to the first War Plan Orange. The U. S. Naval planners must have formed the substances of the first War Plan Orange by applying the offensive concept of crossing the Atlantic in the prototype of the Operation Plan III to the Pacific, by analogizing the geopolitical strategic feature of the West Pacific to that of the Caribbean, and by incorporating the lessons learned from the Russo-Japanese naval battles to the first War Plan Orange. In this scenario, the U. S. Naval planners envisioned to destroy the Japanese Fleet in a decisive battle by the Combined Fleet of the Atlantic Fleet and the Asiatic Fleet in order not to repeat the same failure as the Russian Navy did.

Technical Innovation by the Imperial Japanese Army in the Russo-Japanese War

YOKOYAMA Hisayuki

When the French Revolution followed by the Napoleonic Wars and the Industrial Revolution occur, and as a result, various technological innovation was going on in Europe, Japan established modern armed forces and fought the War

against Russia. These revolutions changed the national and social systems and gave a great impact on the military affairs. In practice, the military technical innovation such as the rapid-fire, long- ranged and automatic artillery, smokeless gunpowder, in addition, the development of communication and progress of railway network continued for more than half a century after the two revolutions. And the spectrum of wars and the concept of operations had changed dramatically. Such an innovation of firearms during the Russo-Japanese war is now called “Revolution in Military Affairs (RMA)”. Japan introduced the harvest of RMA quickly and arranged the structure of nation state rapidly.

The Russo-Japanese War, broke out in such a period of technical innovation, required the Imperial Japanese Army to practice the military technical innovation learning from western industrialized countries, since Russia was a member of the West. In other words, the Russo- Japanese War poses us a challenge how we should apply the military strategy, weapon system, war leadership, military technology and weapon production to the change of the nature of war and the war situation of the revolution age.

Before and during the Russo-Japanese War, it was required that the Imperial Japanese Army innovatively improved technological strength and weapon production ability in order to maintain weapons to compete with the Russian armaments. As a matter of fact, in the beginning of the War, Japanese weapons were inferior to Russian ones at quality because it was in the technological innovation period of artilleries. We can see that the qualitative gap between the two armies was revealed in the war.

Therefore we focus on Japanese Army’s technological strength and weapon production ability. Firstly, it can be surveid that a concept of “Independence of Weapon” (domestic production of weapon) was the technological strategy of Japanese army since the birth of the Imperial Japanese Army. Secondly, we watch how Japanese army had overcome its disadvantage by the specific examples of the artilleries. Thirdly, we confirm that there were pitfalls in Japanese Army’s technological strategy, for that purpose, Japanese army barely made a victory in the war. Lastly, we try to evaluate the ability of Japanese Army in the period of RMA from technical war perspective.

Lessons of the Russo-Japanese War: The French Army's Case

TACHIKAWA Kyoichi

The Russo-Japanese War of 1904-05 was engaged by the regular armies of two modern nations, which were equipped with newly developed armaments. This type of matching had not been seen for over three decades after the termination of the French-Prussian War of 1870-71. The evolution of military organization and technology in this period was so rapid and enormous that people were interested in any transformation of war, particularly in terms of equipment. That is why advanced countries, including France, vied with each other to send their military missions to observe the war. For the French Army which was working hard at self-reconstruction in order to revenge the German, the Russo-Japanese War was well worth examining, especially because one of the adversaries was its ally, Russia and the other was Japan whose army learned German tactics of ground battle.

To begin with, this paper examines the French observers' viewpoints, next the lessons of the war and their influence on the French Army, finally the problems concerning lessons of a war and their employment.

This paper is largely based on the documents preserved by the Service historique de l'armée de terre (SHAT), the French Army. Among them, the written inquiries to the military missions by the general staff, the reports and collections (including maps, photos, drawings) from the observers, and the series of "Enseignements de la Guerre russo-japonaise" (Lessons of the Russo-Japanese War) edited by the general staff, based on the observers' reports are mainly used.

The Russo-Japanese War and its Impact on the Polish-Japanese Relations in the First Half of the Twentieth Century

Ewa Pałasz-Rutkowska

The Russo-Japanese War and its effects undoubtedly influenced on the international situation and directly affected Poland and Polish-Japanese relations, in the short as well as long run.

In the short run – that is, during the war itself – Poland, which since the third partition in 1795 did not exist as an independent state, aimed at the weakening of Russia, a dangerous rival for centuries, and as the main occupant of the larger part of divided Polish territory a primary enemy at the time. The various political forces in Poland (e.g. Polish Socialist Party, National League) sought to exploit it for their own ends, establishing direct contacts with representatives of the Japanese government, including the army. J. Pilsudski, the PSP main leader believed that the fact Russia had been involved in the Far Eastern war gave a chance for a successful armed insurrection and for independence for Poland. R. Dmowski from the NL proposed a sabotage on the Trans-Siberian Railway and a co-operation in the form of surrender by Poles in the Russian Army in Manchuria, what would generate serious problems for the Russian Army and its command. Two politicians went to Japan in 1904 to discuss details of the co-operation.

At the same time, Poles exhibited much greater interest in Japan as a country which, was modernized in less than 40 years since her opening to the world, had the courage to launch a war against mighty imperial Russia. This interest was reflected in numerous (for the era) Polish publications about Japan, including direct translations of Japanese literature (Okakura Kakuzo, Nitobe Inazo, Tokutomi Roka), translations of works by Westerners who had visited Japan (W. Depping, H. Dumolard, R. Kipling, G. Weulerse) and works by Poles (W. Sieroszewski, B. Prus, A. Czechowski, W. Studnicki), including books and articles in the press.

When examining the influence of the war on Polish-Japanese relations in the longer run (the 1920s and 1930s), it is evident that these relations continued to be dominated by the two countries' fears for their mutual opponent, Russia – Soviet Union. Poland, which regained its independence after the World War I, sought to solidify its statehood and strengthen its position on the international arena and Japan constituted a good counterweight for the mainly difficult relations between Poland and its eastern neighbor. Japan as a young world power needed accurate information about its most dangerous neighbor. Therefore, nearly all of Japanese diplomatic representatives in Warsaw in the inter-war period were specialists on Russia. But Polish-Japanese relations were dominated by military co-operation, including co-operation between intelligence services. Polish cryptologists, whom the Japanese considered to be outstanding (particularly in deciphering Russian codes), passed on their knowledge to Japanese officers in Tokyo as well as in Poland in

various training centers. This co-operation continued unofficially even during the World War II, when Poland and Japan officially belonged to opposite sides.

The Rising Sun and the Turkish Crescent: The Memory of the Russo-Japanese War in the Twentieth Century

Selcuk Esenbel

This paper focuses on the beginning of Japanese-Turkish relations and the impact of the Russo-Japanese War. Japanese-Turkish relations began as informal contacts during the nineteenth century between numerous distinguished visitors from Japan and their Ottoman Turkish counterparts. The Ottoman Sultan Abdulhamid II was especially interested in developing relations with Japan, the Rising Star of the East according to public opinion at the time, as a counter weight against Romanov Russia. Turkish elites saw Japan as a model of modernity that could inspire Ottoman modernizing efforts. Japanese intellectuals, particularly Asianists and military figures, saw the Turkish interest as a factor for collaboration against the Western imperial powers. The complex nature of nineteenth century international relations due to Western imperialism and the treaty system hampered the formation of diplomatic relations between Japan and Ottoman Turkey. However, the Ottoman authorities pursued an unofficial twilight diplomacy with Japan that enabled the Japanese to gather information on Russian interests on the occasion of the Russo-Japanese War even though the Istanbul government did not officially choose to support Japan during the war.

The Russo-Japanese War and Korea's Nationalist Movements

Lee Sung-Hwan

For modern Korea, the Russo-Japanese War was a major event which determined the fate of the nation, even though Korea was not a direct participant in the war. Regardless of this significance of the Russo-Japanese War, Korean

researchers have not subjected the war to intense scrutiny. Korea's perception of the Russo-Japanese War, movements within Korea which were triggered by the war, and the subsequent events which took place in Korea are major issues, however, when one considers that both Japan and Russia's objective in the war was to secure the Korean Peninsula for themselves.

Upon the outbreak of the Russo-Japanese War, many proposals regarding political reform emerged in Korea. Their primary objective was to transform the absolute monarchy into a constitutional monarchy, and to create a modern nation state. Such proposals had emerged repeatedly in the past, only to fail each time. They surfaced again during the Russo-Japanese War because the reformers wished to use the war as an opportunity for reforming Korea. Broadly speaking, the reforms had two objectives. One was to effect domestic reforms, led by the Constitutional Reform Association, and the other was to maintain Korea's independence through the formation of a triple alliance among Japan, China and Korea.

The Constitutional Reform Association's proposals for reform sought the adoption of a constitution similar to Japan's Meiji Constitution. This bold concept centered on a fifty-five point program for reform which aimed at the creation of a modern state regime, and covered the entire range of national government. Especially noteworthy is its stipulation that "Many Japanese shall be hired when foreigners are to be hired as advisors, engineers and in other roles as these reforms are realized, or when it is necessary to create a mutually beneficial relationship." This indicates a recognition that Japan has a role to play in Korea's political modernization had been recognized, and that cooperation or an even closer relationship with Japan was envisioned.

The concept of a triple alliance emerged from the perceptions that Japan had brought about Korea's independence through the Sino-Japanese War of 1894-95, that Japan was a civilized country from which Korea should learn, and that modernized Japan had a responsibility as an Asian country to defend Asia from the Western powers. It was thus stressed that "the Russo-Japanese War is being fought for Korea's independence and peace in Asia. The Japan-Korea Protocol should be signed and Korea should cooperate in Japan's war effort," and that "the three countries should divide and occupy Manchuria after the war (with the eastern portion to be occupied by Japan, the south by Korea, and the west by China), Russian expansion should be blocked, and peace in Asia preserved."

Both efforts ultimately failed. However, it is important to note that an optimistic view of Japan, based on racial and cultural homogeneity and a mutual fear of Russia, formed the background which enabled those movements to emerge during, or because of, the Russo-Japanese War. In other words, Korea attempted to modernize politically and attain independence internationally by using the opportunity created by Japan's efforts to expand its influence through the war. This is the basic perspective of the Russo-Japanese War held by Koreans at the time.

With the benefit of hindsight, the Russo-Japanese War was the last opportunity for Koreans to create a modern nation state. That opportunity, however, became lost in the optimism felt towards Japan, which itself was based upon ethnicity. The result was the self-induced closing of the window of opportunity for the creation of a modern nation state.

(Translated by SHINDO Hiroyuki)