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The Russo-Japanese War: Origins and Implications

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Abstract

The 1904-1905 Russo-Japanese War was the first major conflict of the twentieth century and a turning point in the balance of power in East Asia. In the short term, Russia's defeat helped precipitate the 1905 Russian Revolution and the 1917 October Revolution. More broadly, the aftermath of the war informed Japan's imperial ambitions in Manchuria—the early stages of World War II in Asia during the 1930s—and continuing Russo-Japanese enmity over Sakhalin Island and the Kuril Island chain. Studying this historical conflict in terms of international relations provides valuable insights into the nature of the conflict and how the past continues to shape modern geopolitics. As a case study, the war offers important lessons in the difficulties of sustained power projection and the exigencies involved in adaptable war planning. Equally important, Russia and Japan's intractable imperial ambitions coupled with their failures to credibly communicate resolve serve as a cautionary tale on the consequences of inept diplomacy.

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and attempting to destroy the Russian fleet at Port Arthur. The Origins of the Russo-Japanese War. London: Longman, 1985. Pleshakov, Constantine. The Russo-Japanese War of 1904-1905 involved the clash of Imperial Russia and the rising (but capable) Japanese in the Far East. Although the war's origins are diverse and complicated, the conflict primarily involved a clash in ambitions over both Manchuria and the Korean peninsula. By the end of the war, the Russo-Japanese conflict resulted in the mobilization of several million troops, as well as a tremendous deployment of weapons, ships, and supplies. What were some of the implications and long-term effects of an Asian nation defeating a much larger, and respected country such as Russia? What effect did the outcome of the Russo-Japanese War have in regard to the world at large? Finally, and perhaps most importantly, were the effects positive or negative?