

Global Conflicts Since 1900

Mr. Fette

2024-2025

Overview:

Global Conflicts Since 1900 is a full year course that examines the various wars, revolutions, genocides, and freedom movements of the 20th and 21st centuries. This class will guide students through the 20th and 21st centuries to highlight the conflicts that have shaped the modern world. These events will be examined from a global perspective with importance placed on the causes and effects, interdependence, and modern consequences of various conflicts. Students will use primary and secondary sources along with other mediums to gain a well-rounded comprehension and understanding of the origins, events, and consequences of these conflicts.

Summer Assignment

Instructions:

Attached to this document are two secondary sources that cover some background information that is prerequisite for this course. Students are to read these sources complete the following:

- take notes on paper on the important information such as people mentioned, events occurring, and causes and effects (**at least one note per article page**)

After reading and taking notes, create a timeline on paper dating from 1848-1900. Fill in this timeline with at least 10 events that you can identify from these two sources. You may use the attached template or make your own but it must be on paper.

Your notes and timeline will be due the first day of class.

Enjoy your summer!!

-Mr. Fette

Name _____ Date _____

Timeline: _____

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Date

Event and Description



The Franco-Prussian War 150 years on: A conflict that shaped the modern state

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The 19 July marks the 150th anniversary of the outbreak of the Franco-Prussian War. Whilst the conflict is now largely forgotten in Britain, the 1870 war had a massive impact. Not only did it overturn geo-political norms in Europe, but it also led to the rapid development of the modern state, including in areas seemingly removed from military and foreign affairs like education and public health policy. This linkage between military conflict and wider societal factors also went on to shape subsequent thinking about war generally.

In his seminal work, *The Franco-Prussian War: The German Invasion of France, 1870–1871*, published in 1961, historian Sir Michael Howard revitalised military history scholarship. He looked beyond campaigns and battles to see instead how the societies of the belligerent states shaped the armies fighting on their behalf, and in many ways determined the outcomes of those conflicts.

Populist disruptors and the path to conflict

Looking back at the pre-war 1870 landscape, there are parallels that can be drawn today, including notably the role of populist disruptors in triggering international conflict. Emperor Napoleon III of France and Prussia's Otto von Bismarck were both products of the 1848 revolutions and master media manipulators who exploited the power of nationalism. Napoleon did so first, sweeping to power in the December 1848 presidential elections on the promise of 'making France great again', as it had



UK GENERAL ELECTION 2024: KING'S EXPERT ANALYSIS AND INSIGHTS

been under his uncle, the first Napoleon. Four years later, just before his original term should have expired, he made himself emperor, and quickly reasserted French prestige by launching a succession of wars, including against Russia in the Crimea (1853-56).

Napoleon III's wars had unintended outcomes. One of these was that they turned Russia from being a bastion of the international order into a revisionist power. This in turn gave space to Bismarck to wreck what remained of the European system in a way that was definitely not to France's advantage. Austria was the main victim initially in the shake-up that followed, losing its position in Italy following military defeat at the hands of France in 1859, and more spectacularly forfeiting its prime role in Germany to Prussia after defeat in 1866.

This set the scene for the 1870 Franco-Prussian war. France, determined to thwart Prussia's further rise, sought to block the candidacy of a Prussian prince to the Spanish throne in what looked like a good, old-fashioned, dynastic succession crisis. What made things different from earlier centuries was the weight of public opinion, in an age of universal male suffrage. Policy makers in Berlin and Paris sought to exploit the rising tide of nationalism on both sides of the Rhine, and this increased the risk of an explosion. That explosion came on 19 July.

A rapid French rout

Experts at the time expected the French to win. They overlooked serious weaknesses on the French side, which Sir Michael Howard's analysis shows extended far beyond the narrow military field, to wider political and societal disadvantages. These were reflected above all in the French conscription system, inherited in its essentials from the first Napoleon. This imposed upon the male population an obligation to serve, but in practice, only a small fraction was ever called up, who then served for seven years and often more. In consequence, the French army lacked the ability to 'scale-up' by calling on a mass of reservists.

The Prussian army, in contrast, drew upon the entire male population, producing a substantial body of trained reservists upon mobilisation. Prussian military planning, conducted by the famed General Staff headed by Helmuth von Moltke, made best use of the resulting numerical advantage, not least through the clever exploitation of railways.

Many military observers nonetheless preferred the French system, which produced an essentially professional force that was far better-suited to the near-continuous overseas deployments that Napoleon III's global ambitions demanded. Most damaging of all, despite its elitist pretensions, the French army was socially rather

low-status. This was because the rich were allowed to pay for replacements to serve instead of their sons, should they be unlucky enough to be called up. No such facility existed in Prussia, with the result that its army more fairly approximated the nation-in-arms.

The consequence in 1870 was a French rout. General Philip Sheridan, American Civil War veteran, observed the Franco-German conflict at first hand, and his summary of the reasons for the outcome can hardly be bettered:

“ *The earlier advantages gained by the Germans may be ascribed to the strikingly prompt mobilization of their armies, one of the most noticeable features of their perfect military system, devised by almost autocratic power; their later successes were greatly aided by the blunders of the French, whose stupendous errors materially shortened the war, though even if prolonged it could, in my opinion, have had ultimately no other termination.*

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The French never recovered from the swift Prussian mobilisation, which included the direction of vast forces by rail towards and then across the frontier before the other side could adequately respond. Political reasons on the French side precluded the option of trading space for time, with the result that successive French armies were pushed forward into a series of encirclements and defeats. The most famous of these, the Battle of Sedan (1-2 September), cost Napoleon III his throne.

Sedan became something of a symbolic, foundational moment in the creation of the new German Empire that soon followed. Indeed, *Sedantag* (or 'Sedan Day'), became an unofficial holiday for the new nation state. This conveniently overlooked the far lengthier, messier and bloodier post-Sedan phase of the War, that ended only with the ceasefire at the end of January 1871. Features of this second phase included the German siege of Paris, efforts by French irregulars known as *Francs-tireurs* to disrupt Moltke's supply lines, and a brutal counter-insurgency campaign to stop them. Yet, as Sheridan noted, this form of resistance on the French side could only delay, not prevent, the final outcome.

A war that shaped the modern state

Geo-politically the outcome of the Franco-Prussian War was massive. It led directly to the creation of the German Empire, Continental Europe's most powerful state with Berlin replacing Paris as the focal point of global politics.

In the military domain, several lessons were learned. The first was the advantage of a system of conscription that was genuinely universal, for men, and that produced a large pool of reservists. The second was the importance of fast mobilisation, and planning to insure that the vast forces now available arrived at the right point, at the right time. The stress on swift mobilisation that was baked into war plans not only in Germany, but in other states too, made it far more likely that a future international crisis would trigger a war. This would prove to be the case in July 1914.

A third was the devastating impact of modern weapons, like the French *Chassepot* breach-loading rifle, and the Prussian steel breach-loading field guns. These weapons made frontal assaults by large densely-packed formations of infantry and heavy cavalry ill-advised. Battlefield tactics needed to adapt accordingly, with much more emphasis on smaller formations, flanking movements, and the use of cover. These tactics in turn required more initiative from junior and non-commissioned officers, and also ordinary soldiers.

The implication of this last point in particular extended well beyond the narrowly military domain. Instead, it had implications for wider policy, notably in areas concerned with education and public health. Policy makers recognised that the efficiency of armies was intimately bound up with the educational ability not only of a small elite, but of the entire population. France in particular drew the lesson from 1870 that Prussia won because of its better school system, and acted accordingly, passing the so-called Jules Ferry Laws in the 1880s instituting free, mandatory and secular education for children. Meanwhile, on the other side of the Rhine, the newly-minted German Empire was putting in place the world's first government-mandated welfare system.

It is fitting to conclude this short piece by referring again to Sir Michael Howard's work on the Franco-Prussian War. This conflict in particular lent itself to a comparative study of the societal differences between the two belligerents, France and Germany. These differences not only largely determined the military outcome, but also informed how the two sides learned the lessons of the war subsequently. This process, as already noted, hastened state building in Europe and beyond; and, as a later legacy, it helped shape the modern discipline of military history itself.

In this story



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THE RUSSO-JAPANESE WAR

Primary Causes of Japanese Success

Vice Admiral Yoji Koda, Japan Maritime Self-Defense Force

The year 2005 is the sixtieth anniversary of the end of the Second World War. It also marks the hundredth anniversary of the end of the Russo-Japanese War. For Japan, and for Western powers as well, that war, fought in the Far East in 1904 and 1905, has significance in many respects.

Japan joined the international community in the mid-nineteenth century. That period of history is known as “the age of imperialism” and was characterized by the dominance of Western nations on the world scene. The Japanese, however, because of their eagerness to learn, capacity to adapt, discipline, and frugality, caught up with the West much more quickly than was expected.

As Japan expanded its contacts with foreign nations, however, many problems with those countries emerged. Japanese leaders, though they had little experience in handling diplomatic issues, dealt with these issues in ways that in most cases proved advantageous to Japan. Through the successful settlement of such issues, they raised the nation’s stature in the international community. In the process, the Japanese government developed appropriate strategies for coping with diplomatic problems and showed excellent leadership, firmness, and coordination skills in the execution of those strategies. They also showed a sense of balance in estimating situations. Of all the episodes that vitally affected Japan in that era, the Russo-Japanese War (like the Sino-Japanese War of 1894–95) most changed the future of the nation. This article will examine Japanese strategy and policy as well as leadership in the Russo-Japanese War. Japan’s success in the Russo-Japanese War (in implicit contrast to its failure in World War II thirty-five years later) shows that its leaders at the turn of the twentieth century did a much better job than their successors with respect to management of

public opinion, goals, alliances, risk assessment, intelligence, sabotage, interservice cooperation, and negotiated war termination.

THE EAST ASIAN SITUATION IN THE MID-NINETEENTH CENTURY: THE JAPANESE PERCEPTION

In 1639, Japan closed itself to all Western powers except the Netherlands. In 1854, following the visit of U.S. warships under Commodore Matthew Calbraith Perry in 1853, Japan reopened its doors to the United States, the United Kingdom, and Russia. The following year, France was included by the Treaty of Amity. Of these Western powers, Britain and Russia had the strongest impact on the national security policy of the Japanese government, which had just assumed power after the 250-year Tokugawa shogunate. Japanese leaders judged that the British intended to include Japan within their sphere of influence (see map 1).

Similarly, the Japanese leaders were in general unfavorable to Russian policy in the Far East. Russia, defeated in the Crimean War in 1856 by the United Kingdom and France, had lost an opportunity to expand into the Balkan states. In addition, and in spite of the Russian victory in the Russo-Turkish war, the chancellor of unified Prussia, Otto von Bismarck, had wisely and effectively stopped the southward momentum of Russia toward the Balkans, by the 1878 Treaty of Berlin. As a result, Russia turned its foreign policy from southward to eastward, accelerating the speed of its expansion to the east. This switch inevitably generated friction with the British in Asia. The first incident was conflict between Great Britain and Russia in Afghanistan, which ended in political compromise. The compromise practically stopped the momentum of Russia's southern expansion, forcing even greater Russian emphasis on expansion toward the Far East.

Here, a review of the chronology of Russian eastward expansion is necessary. In 1847, Russia established a governor general for eastern Siberia, whose office at Petropavlovsk acted as headquarters for eastern and southern movement in the Far East. The Russians expanded their influence to the mouth of the Amur River, where they established a principal base, Nikolayevsk, substantially increasing their power in the region. But this expansion generated friction with China. The territorial dispute was settled by the treaties of Aigun (1858) and Beijing (1860). Reconciliation meant, however, the end of further expansion toward China.

At this point, Russia was forced to change its focus to the coastal areas of the Sea of Japan and the Korean Peninsula. The Russians reached the best natural harbor in the area, Vladivostok, in 1860. At about this time Russia tried to force the Japanese off Karafuto (Sakhalin Island). This was accomplished, but at the expense of another territorial dispute. Russia finally acquired Sakhalin Island in exchange for the cession of the Chi-Shima Retto (Kuril Islands) to Japan in 1875.

MAP 1



Furthermore, to Japanese eyes Russia appeared to be trying to annex Hokkaido (the second-largest main island of Japan, only thirty nautical miles south of Sakhalin), by regularly sending Russian ships and people there. The reason was that many ports on Hokkaido did not freeze in winter; that would have made the island an acquisition of immense importance. Russia also noted the strategic importance of the Tsushima Islands, which lie between Japan and the Korean Peninsula. In 1861, only a year after the seizure of Vladivostok, four Russian ships were sent to Tsushima, and a landing force occupied a small port on the island. However, the then-helpless Tokugawa shogunate

government asked for help from the British, who sent two warships from the East India Fleet. This Russian expansion attempt was thus frustrated.

In 1884, Russia established at Khabarovsk a governor general for the Amur region, to be responsible for the development of Far Eastern Russia. A new shipping route was opened between Odessa, on the Black Sea, and Vladivostok the following year. More importantly, in 1891 construction of the Trans-Siberian Railroad commenced and the East Asian Squadron was reinforced. These developments triggered serious “Northern concern,” as it was known, among Japanese leadership of both the Tokugawa shogunate and the succeeding Meiji government.¹ This pattern of Russian southward expansion in the Far East was

perceived by a majority of ordinary Japanese as aggression. A cornerstone-laying ceremony for the Trans-Siberian Railroad at Vladivostok in 1891 made a particularly strong impression.

THE SINO-JAPANESE WAR AND TRIPLE INTERVENTION

The widespread and strong sense of a Russian threat produced in the minds of the Japanese a conviction that it was necessary to establish buffer zones between Japan and Russia. Japan saw the Korean Peninsula and southern Manchuria as potential buffers and therefore made it a policy to prevent these areas from being possessed by Russia. In the early 1890s, however, Japanese leaders estimated that it would be difficult for Russia to seize and permanently occupy them until the completion of the Trans-Siberian Railroad, probably more than ten years in the future.

The Japanese in the 1890s saw China, which under the Qing dynasty had long been a teacher as well as historical rival, as, like Russia, a potential threat.² In fact, the Japanese saw Qing as capable of attempting to annex Korea, which made the threat urgent. In light of domestic chaos that had existed in Korea since 1884, Japan decided to forestall Qing intervention. In 1894 and 1895 Japan fought the Sino-Japanese War with the goal of thwarting the expansion of Qing into the Korean Peninsula, by way of establishing a buffer zone there. This objective was partially realized by an advantageous settlement at the end of the war. For Russia, however, the outcome of the Sino-Japanese War was an opportunity to strengthen its “proceed east and south” policy, which had once been stopped by its treaties of 1858 and 1860 with China. For the major world powers, the war served to expose the incompetence of the Qing military.

The peace treaty concluded at the Japanese western port city of Shimonoseki in March 1895 that ended the Sino-Japanese War contained the following major points (see map 2):

- Qing recognized the right of self-determination of Korea.
- Qing ceded the Liaotung Peninsula, Taiwan (Formosa), and the Pescadores Islands to Japan.
- Qing paid war reparations to Japan (200 million *tael/liang*).³
- Qing gave Japan most-favored-nation status.
- Qing opened several ports and gave Japan free navigation rights along the Yangtze River.

Russia, for which Japan's presence in China and Korea, especially in the Liaotung Peninsula, had become an obstacle to expansion, concentrated its efforts on expelling Japanese forces from China and Korea. Russia perceived Japan as a potential, and maybe the most dangerous, challenger to its interests in China. To

MAP 2



this end, Russia—along with France (a partner in the Franco-Russian entente) and Germany (which wanted to turn Russian eyes away from Europe)—cunningly reacted with superficial anger to the reconciliation between Qing and Japan. In April 1895, immediately after the conclusion of the Shimonoseki Treaty, all three nations declared that Japanese possession of the Liaotung Peninsula represented an obstacle to peace and stability in the Far East, and “recommended” that Japan relinquish its rights there.

A SOUND DECISION BY THE JAPANESE GOVERNMENT

The government of Japan, headed by Prime Minister Hirobumi Ito, considered the following three options in response to the pressure being applied by Russia, France, and Germany:

1. Declare war against these three nations
2. Request a conference of the major powers
3. Accept the “recommendation” and return control of the Liaotung Peninsula to Qing.

Option one proved impracticable. Japan was too weak to declare war against these major world powers. Option three was considered too humiliating. The Ito cabinet therefore attempted to implement option two, with some behind-the-scenes diplomacy, but it quickly realized the hopelessness of the attempt. When Ito saw the real situation, he was quick enough to switch his strategy. The Japanese government reluctantly decided to abandon the Liaotung Peninsula, which had been obtained at the cost of a large number of Japanese soldiers’ lives, and return it to Qing. The decision was conveyed to these three nations on 5 May 1895, and the Meiji emperor officially announced the decision directly to the Japanese people.⁴ This willful intervention by Russia, France, and Germany

fueled resentment, particularly against Russia, which had obviously been, in Japanese eyes, the principal perpetrator of the Triple Intervention.

It was in this episode that the Japanese experienced for the first time since the opening of their country the reality of the international power game. The Japanese people, whose nation had joined the Western-governed international club only twenty-five years before, now saw the cold reality of international relations—that the weak were the victims of the strong. Both the Japanese people and their government believed that the concessions gained through the treaty of 1895 were lawful in light of current international custom and, further, had been bought with the blood of Japanese soldiers. But these gains were now negated and finally lost due to what seemed an absurd intervention of three nations. Moreover, the Japanese people were angered that their country was so weak that it had no choice but to accept the actions of the great powers. This quickly encompassed the nation. It did not take long for a strong hatred of Russia and a desire for revenge to grow in most Japanese minds.

There was a positive side to this incident. The Japanese leaders learned the lesson that well-balanced national power was the most important condition of survival in the international community, where the law of the jungle largely prevailed. In order to cope with the seemingly helpless situation in which Japan now found itself, the government started a vigorous nationwide campaign, known as *Ga-Shin-Sho-Tan*—“Submit to any hardships to achieve revenge,” or, “Accept the humiliation now; revenge will come later.”⁵ The campaign united the Japanese people.

Meanwhile, the Japanese government decided to build up national power, especially military, in the quickest possible manner. The Diet accepted an ambitious force buildup plan in its first session after the intervention. The size of the Imperial Army was to be increased from seven divisions to thirteen. The Imperial Navy program (purchases from foreign countries, mainly Britain and the United States) called for 104 new ships, including four battleships and eleven armored cruisers, to be completed between 1896 and 1905.

THE SITUATION IN CHINA

The Western powers fully took advantage of postwar chaos in China (see map 3).

- In 1896, Russia gained the right to build the “East Qing Railway” through Manchuria, a shorter route than the Trans-Siberian Railway.
- In 1897, Germany sent warships and troops to occupy Tsingtao, in response to the murder of three German missionaries on the Shantung Peninsula.
- In 1898, Germany forced Qing to grant a lease to Tsingtao.

MAP 3



- Immediately after the signing of the German lease, Russia sent a fleet to Port Arthur and Talien to intimidate the Qing government into a lease of the former, at the tip of the Liaotung Peninsula. This maneuver was successful; Russia gained the port and extended to it a branch line of the East Qing Railway. Thus the Liaotung Peninsula, which was one of the major objectives of the Triple Intervention and had been a main concern as well, fell into the hands of Russia, a ringleader of the intervention.
- In the same year, Britain concluded a lease on Weihaiwei, on the Shantung Peninsula.
- In 1899, France signed a lease for Kwangchowwan.

The growing Chinese nationalism against outrageous activities by Western great powers was transformed into a campaign to expel them. The campaign expanded rapidly within the country in 1899, and in 1900 the violence against foreigners escalated into a severe incident, the Boxer Rebellion.

In order to ensure the security of Beijing, eight nations, including Britain, the United States, France, Russia, and Japan, sent troops to the city, which they barely secured by the end of 1900. As a part of this military campaign, Russia sent a large force to Manchuria; however, the force remained in the area even

after the cessation of hostilities in Beijing. In spite of opposition by the Qing government, which was backed up in this regard by Japan and Britain, Manchuria was for all intents and purposes occupied by Russia in that year. Russia also proposed that Japan would agree to neutralize the Korean Peninsula, but the Japanese government refused the proposal. It was felt that neutralization of the peninsula would eventually lead to an unwilling ratification of Russian control of Manchuria.

THE ANGLO-JAPANESE TREATY

If the Korean Peninsula fell into their hands, the Russians, who already maintained a large force in Manchuria, would gain substantial freedom of action in the Far East. Additionally, the security of Japan would be weakened; the independence of Japan itself could be seriously jeopardized. The Japanese government's options for favorably resolving this difficult situation were to expel Russia from Manchuria by military means or forestall a Russian invasion into the Korean Peninsula through a diplomatic treaty or an agreement with Russia.

The initial assessment by the government was that the first option was practically impossible, because the military power of Japan at that time was still too small to counter the Russian force in Manchuria. Therefore, and somewhat surprisingly, given Japan's hostility toward Russia, the Japanese leaders started thinking of ways to implement the second option. The idea was that Japan would accept Russian seizure of Manchuria if Russia accepted Japanese control over Korea. Heated debates arose within the government, and no conclusion was reached.

A Unique Decision-Making Body: The Genro

In order to clarify the decision-making process of the government of Japan in the Meiji era, a unique Japanese mechanism or entity widely referred to as the *Genro* must be mentioned.

Genro is an informal, collective term embracing several of the most influential and experienced politicians and military leaders of the Meiji era. There are minor disagreements today as to which particular individuals it comprised. But four people—ex-prime minister Hirobumi Ito, ex-financial minister Kaoru Inoue, hero of the Meiji Restoration War and Army general Aritomo Yamagata, and ex-prime minister Masayoshi Matsukata—are generally considered to have been the most influential *Genro* members at the time. The *Genro* served as special advisers to the Meiji emperor. Many fundamental issues of the nation were brought to them. They discussed issues, identified the underlying problems, and developed strategies and policies for dealing with them. They also assisted in the implementation of those strategies, by coordinating not only within the government but also between the government and the military. The group also acted as

a go-between for the government and the economic community. The advantage of the Genro was that its members had no official portfolios, as it was not an official organ. Thus, the Genro could act collectively as honest brokers, free from “noisy and willful” external influences and so in a position to provide ideal “classroom answers.” Their well thought out recommendations often helped the government make sound “real world” decisions about the vital issues of the day.

The Genro input to the decision-making process immediately before the Russo-Japanese War included advising Prime Minister Taro Katsura on reasoned approaches to many crucial decisions. The most important point was that although Japan’s Western-style constitutional monarchy was tempered to this extent by a traditional Japanese approach to problem solving, the final decision was made by the prime minister—and once the prime minister had decided, the Genro did not take any further action unless he asked it to do so. Otherwise, what it had to do, and actually did, was keep complete silence. This custom prevented the emergence of two different national policies on single issues. Thus, the mechanism of the Genro guaranteed the credibility of the government in the international community as well as before the Japanese people.

Approaches to the Russian Issue

With regard to policy toward Russia, there were two schools of thought in the Japanese government. The first was a pro-Russia school, backed by Ito when he was the prime minister, and two major Genro, Inoue and Matsukata. They strongly supported the second, diplomatic option mentioned above—accepting the status quo in Manchuria in return for preeminent Japanese influence in Korea; Ito started an effort toward a possible Russo-Japanese treaty in 1901. However, the Russian government would accept only economic Japanese activities on the Korean Peninsula, not political influence. This hard-line Russian position proved fatal to this approach. Ito’s idea was shown to be impracticable, gradually lost support, then finally collapsed. In June 1901 Ito turned over power to Taro Katsura, becoming an “uncrowned giant.”

The second school of thought was a pro-Anglo/Germany faction, supported by Genro Yamagata and Katsura (prime minister as of June 1901), as well as Foreign Minister Jutarō Komura (appointed in September 1901). These men opposed the idea of a Russo-Japanese treaty. They felt that if Japan were to secure its sovereignty and interest in China, confrontation with Russia might be unavoidable. They acknowledged that Japan, acting alone, could not stop Russia, let alone defeat it, but argued that it could handle Russia if supported by Western countries that shared its interests in the region. The Japanese leadership started thinking about the possibility of an alliance with nations whose policies were counter to Russian expansion in the Far East—that is, Britain and Germany. The

new Katsura cabinet began negotiations with the two nations. However, it found Germany reluctant to support the idea, due to its complicated ties with Russia, and quickly modified the plan to a single Anglo-Japanese alliance. Foreign Minister Komura eagerly explained to his colleagues the advantages of alliance with the British and the disadvantages of alliance with Russia, and in December 1901 he convinced the cabinet to seek an alliance with the United Kingdom. The treaty was concluded in February 1902.⁶

The Japanese Sense of the Russian Threat

As previously stated, Japanese suspicion of Russia was a result of the Triple Intervention of 1895 and was reinforced by the Russian occupation of Manchuria after the Boxer Rebellion. In addition to this, a buildup of the Russian East Asian Squadron at Port Arthur and a naval exercise in the Yellow Sea in May 1903 were perceived as a menace. Russian troops stayed in Manchuria beyond an October 1903 deadline that had been agreed between Qing and Russia in April 1902. Far from withdrawing, Russia reinforced its force in Manchuria that month with troops from European Russia. At the same time, Japanese intelligence sources in Europe reported that additional Russian naval forces, including a battleship, two armored cruisers, seven destroyers, and four torpedo boats, had left European waters for the Far East and had reached the Mediterranean by December 1903. In January 1904, a substantial increase in Trans-Siberian Railroad traffic was reported.⁷

Unlike the Japanese military and political leaders before the Second World War, the government of this period emphasized intelligence and conducted well-organized collection activities. The Japanese legation in London played a key role in this effort; London, which was in those days the center of the world in many respects, was flooded with an almost infinite variety of information from everywhere. As for regional intelligence, the government conducted ambitious collection activities in Beijing. Japan was able to obtain from such sources a vast amount of invaluable intelligence, which had a strong influence on its decision making.⁸ Specifically, it was intelligence reports that in 1903 persuaded the Japanese government that Russian war preparation was in the final phase and that the breakout of war was imminent.

THE JAPANESE NAVAL BUILDUP

Immediately after the Triple Intervention in 1895, the Diet approved a new ten-year naval buildup program for the period from 1896 to 1905. Because the goal was a fleet of six battleships and six armored cruisers, this plan was widely known as the “six-six fleet program” in Japan. The last ship was the *Mikasa*, which was to be Admiral Heihachiro Togo’s flagship at the Battle of Tsushima. Eventually, Japan started the war with this six-six fleet.