

War Correspondents: A Western Look into the Russo-Japanese War

The Russo-Japanese War took place from 1904-1905 and was the first modern war of its century. The war was fought over influence over Manchuria and Korea, both countries were backed by foreign powers and showcased new technological advancements in weaponry. The war left Japan as a power in the East and shocked the world since Russia, a great European empire, was defeated. War correspondents from over the world came to relay the events of the Russo-Japanese War which gives a unique biased Western insight into how the Western world viewed their ally Japan as well as their rival Russia. In my paper I am going to be looking at how did the western world war correspondents, being America and England, view the two fighting powers during the Russo-Japanese War.

This war is notable because it was a modern encounter between two countries, one of which, Japan, a little more than 50 years before was closed off to the world in terms of trade and diplomacy. The advancement of Japan and then their own expansion against Russia, a powerful European empire, was hugely significant in building Japanese confidence to start colonising some of Asia. The foreign powers sent in war correspondents and military observers to witness how the war would play out. Japan's defeat of Russia changed the diplomatic sphere of the east and helped bring Japan onto a more equal stage with the rest of the world powers. This war shaped the viewpoint of the western countries on Japan and Russia going into World War I which helped shape the Treaty of Versailles as well as the 20th century view of Japan and Russia. This war also changed how countries would wage war as there was great casualties from the war and the populations of Japan and Russia were unhappy with the amount of losses

sustained compared to the results of the war. Yet this was the new cost of a modern war and left the Japanese with an almost pyrrhic victory.¹

The war correspondents gave a narrative history that was definitely biased but gives a good English viewpoint on the war. This western viewpoint from the war correspondents shows the superiority of the English world as well as the racism targeted at Japan, their ally. I will be using the *Chicago Tribune*, the *Washington Post*, and the *New York Times* newspapers to gain the western viewpoint as biased as it was during the war.² This war takes place after the Crimean War which was also fought against Russia by western powers which would create a distaste for Russia that should carry over into this war. I am going to look for Crimean War correspondence to verify that there was a bias against Russia in the correspondence. The British government wrote a complete history of the Russo-Japanese War that shows their version of the events of the war which I will be using to compare against the Japanese Kobe Chronicle diaries of the war.³ These two sources show the comparison of the Japanese viewpoint of the events as they happened and the British view after the war ended. Those sources are the bulk of my primary source material as I will be finding more events to study throughout the war to gain a more complete perspective of how the war was actually fought and how the western war correspondents changed the history. The newspapers especially will be important as the newspapers provide the clear western view as well as a date to track correspondence that can be

¹ Frank Jacob, *The Russo-Japanese War and its Shaping of the Twentieth Century*, (New York, NY: Routledge, 2018), 1-2.

² *Chicago Tribune*, Chicago, IL, 1904-1905. *New York Times*, New York, NY, 1904-1905. *Washington Post*, Washington, D.C., 1904-1905. I have not gathered all my articles from these newspapers.

³ The Great Britain Section of the Committee of Imperial Defense, *Official History of the Russo-Japanese War*, (2nd ed. London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1908.)

A Diary of the Russo-Japanese War, *Kobe Chronicle*, (The Kobe Chronicle Office, Kobe, Japan, 1904-1905.)

referenced with the British history as well as the translated Kobe Chronicle to clearly show the bias of the western news.

A new book by Frank Jacob came out this year and describes the accounts of the war and its importance on the global stage.⁴ Mary Mander wrote a book about war correspondents and I am going to be using the Russo-Japanese War part of the book so to gain a secondary look at the war correspondents so my literature is accurate.⁵ I also have two articles from Raluca Cozma and Gavin Mortimer that are about war correspondents in the civil war which I am using for a look at how war journalism has changed and as a reference for how biases appear in war correspondence.⁶ I will also be looking at war correspondents from World War II and the Vietnam War as background to the history of war correspondents as that field intersects with my subject of the Russo-Japanese War. To find the background of the western views of Russia and Japan I will be using a book by Martin Malia as well as a book by Ian Littlewood.⁷ So far the scholarship has been very limited after the Russo-Japanese War because of the advent of World War I and World War II that followed it.⁸ There more scholarship after the centennial and a furthering of the field.

⁴ Frank Jacob, *The Russo-Japanese War and its Shaping of the Twentieth Century*, (New York, NY: Routledge, 2018.)

⁵ Mander, Mary S. *Pen and Sword: American War Correspondents, 1898-1975*. (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2010.)

⁶ Raluca Cozma, "Were the Murrow Boys Warmongers?" *Journalism Studies* 16, no.3 ((2014): 1–16.)

Gavin Mortimer, "Writers on the Run." *Civil War Times* 52, no. 1 ((2014): 58–64. Quest.)

⁷ Martin Malia, *Russia Under Western Eyes: From the Bronze Horseman to the Lenin Mausoleum*. (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard Univ. Press, 2000.)

Ian Littlewood, *The Idea of Japan: Western Images, Western Myths*.(Chicago, IL: Ivan R. Dee, 1996) I am looking for more sources on the western viewpoints.

⁸ Jacob, 3.

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"I hereby declare upon my word of honor that I have neither given nor received unauthorized help on this work."