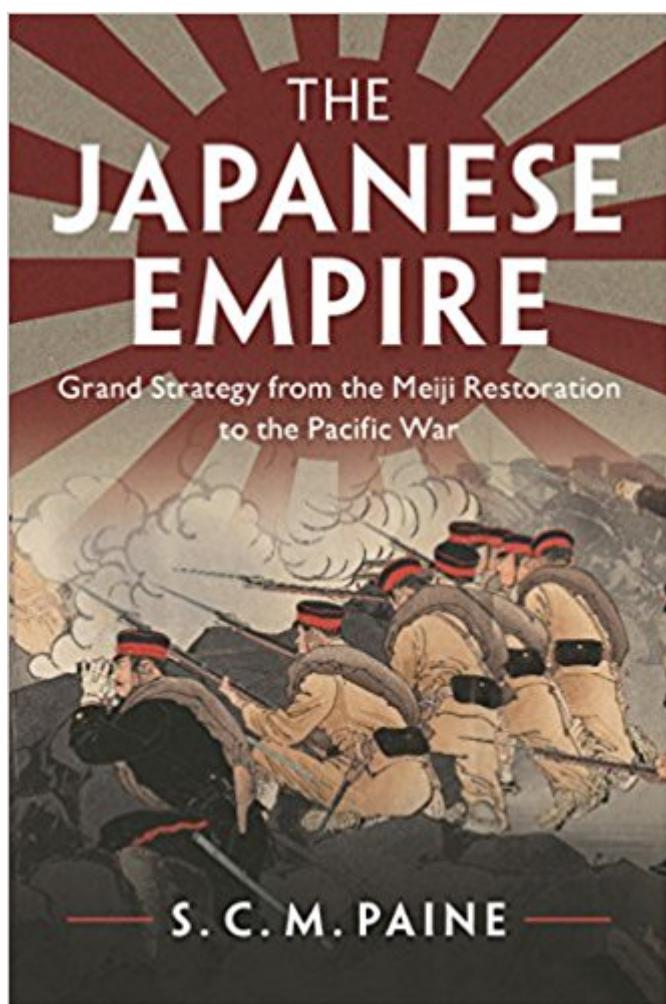


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The Japanese Empire: Grand Strategy From The Meiji Restoration To The Pacific War



Synopsis

The Japanese experience of war from the late-nineteenth to the mid-twentieth century presents a stunning example of the meteoric rise and shattering fall of a great power. As Japan modernized and became the one non-European great power, its leaders concluded that an empire on the Asian mainland required the containment of Russia. Japan won the First Sino-Japanese War (1894-5) and the Russo-Japanese War (1904-5) but became overextended in the Second Sino-Japanese War (1931-45), which escalated, with profound consequences, into World War II. A combination of incomplete institution building, an increasingly lethal international environment, a skewed balance between civil and military authority, and a misunderstanding of geopolitics explains these divergent outcomes. This analytical survey examines themes including the development of Japanese institutions, diversity of opinion within the government, domestic politics, Japanese foreign policy and China's anti-Japanese responses. It is an essential guide for those interested in history, politics and international relations.

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Customer Reviews

Advance praise: 'In clear and vibrant prose, Paine leads the reader through a tumultuous century and a half of Japanese history, focusing on the way Japan's leaders positioned their country in the world, from the Meiji period, through the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and into the period of stunning growth after WWII. A vital contribution not just to the history of Japan, but to the study of global geopolitics and grand strategy.' Tonio Andrade, Emory University, Georgia

Advance praise: 'Professor Paine has produced a comprehensive, very readable book that examines Japan's

precipitous decline into a century of militarism from the 1860s to 1945. Her sophisticated and nuanced scholarship would serve as an excellent companion to a standard historical textbook. Students would profit from reading assignments in Paine's book that correspond to historical periods. Paine's excellent summaries of Japanese sources are clear, concise, and eminently understandable. Her arguments are carefully reasoned and abundantly annotated. In short, Paine's slim book should be required reading for any scholar of modern Japanese history.' Louis G. Perez, Illinois State University Advance praise: 'After a series of wars drawing upon a maritime strategy of limited intervention in regional affairs, the Japanese shift towards a strategy of unrestrained continental expansion across the confines of East Asia led the country to international political isolation, military overextension, and Imperial implosion. This book will offer an ideal introduction to the strategic challenges and military history of one of East Asia's most crucial actors to students of East Asian security, strategy, and international history alike.' Alessio Patalano, King's College London

Charting the rise and fall of Japan, the model developing country of the nineteenth century, the overthrow of the traditional Asian balance of power, and enduring animosities, this is an essential guide for those interested in Asian and world history, comparative politics, international relations, security studies and Asian politics today.

There is no doubt Paine knows his stuff and it makes for an easy digestible read. It is very introductory to the period in history. Good for starting research.

Economically, Japan is unarguably one of the world's great powers. For about 50 years, between 1895 and 1945, it was also considered great from a military standpoint. After witnessing China's national humiliation via economic colonization by the great powers of the West earlier in the 19th century, a group of visionary Japanese concluded that their nation should meet the challenge of the industrialized Western world on Japan's own terms, and be recognized itself by the West as a Great Power. This is the story of Japan's pursuit of that aspiration, which had a promising start but ultimately ended in national catastrophe. The book briefly describes what is known as the Meiji Restoration, wherein those leaders were largely successful in guiding Japan through its complete transformation from a feudal, inward-looking society into an industrialized state with many modern civil institutions and a modern military. Japan miraculously accomplished in a single generation what had taken its Western mentors centuries to achieve. After

completing this preparatory phase, during which Japan was careful to avoid conflict or entanglement, Japan embarked on a series of wars, aiming to acquire an empire of its own (just like the other great powers of the day), and to demonstrate to the other great powers that the political order in the East had changed, with Japan and not China now the true power in Asia. Through luck and prudent planning, Japan achieved much of this when it won the First Sino-Japanese War of 1894-95, gaining territory and the recognition of the West that it sought, even though (as the story shows) it would be more accurate to say that China lost than to say that Japan won. 10 years later, although planning and diplomacy were still in evidence, luck in the form of a cooperative Russia was even more of a factor in the Russo-Japanese War. Although Japan was again victorious, it was by a razor-thin margin and it fought virtually to national exhaustion, fortunately unrecognized by Russia. Japan itself did not acknowledge how fortunate it had been or take the lesson to heart. After these two wars, Japan entered a transition period wherein it ceased to view itself as a maritime power and began to view its aspirations in continental terms. During this time, the Meiji generation leaders began to drop from the scene via deaths and numerous assassinations, and Japanese government ultimately ended up returning to its militaristic roots (similar to the era of the shoguns). The Meiji leaders, although extremely talented and foresighted, ran government using their personal talents and relationships, and neither institutionalized their roles nor established the enduring civil mechanisms needed to sustain what they had started. By the time of the Second Sino-Japanese War (1931-41), the government, dominated by the army, had become accustomed to ignoring financial and diplomatic considerations in its policy-making, and a blind belief that sheer willpower could overcome any hurdle was substituted for good planning and judgement. Their perception of Japan as a continental rather than a maritime power began to prevail, the appetite for territorial conquest became voracious, and by WWII, the nation's overextension became fatal, ending in catastrophe. This is a great book for anyone coming to the subject for the first time; it is readable and well-annotated, and the writing is clear and concise. Anyone that has already read Dr. Paine's other books might want to pass on this one, since a large portion of it essentially summarizes content from her other books (The Wars for Asia, The Sino-Japanese War of 1894-95, and Imperial Rivals: China, Russia, and Their Disputed Frontier), as the author freely admits in the Acknowledgements and footnotes. I have read all of those books and found them excellent, but if the author had assumed that the reader was familiar with that content and had omitted it from this book, it would have made for a very slim volume. For this reason only, I gave it four stars instead of five"there is not a lot of new research here. Perhaps this book was intended to serve as a single-volume textbook to be

used in a specific course; if so, that would have been good to know.

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