

JTMUN 2024

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# Russo-Japanese War: World War Zero

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# Equity Disclaimers

Throughout this committee, delegates will be engaging in complex debates and discussions covering a wide array of topics. As UTMUN seeks to provide an enriching educational experience that facilitates understanding of the implications of real-world issues, the content of our committees may involve sensitive or controversial subject matter for the purposes of academia and accuracy. We ask that delegates be respectful, professional, tactful, and diplomatic when engaging with all committee content, representing their assigned country's or character's position in an equitable manner, communicating with staff and other delegates, and responding to opposing viewpoints.

**This Background Guide and Russo-Japanese War: Russia presents topics that may be distressing to some Delegates, including but not limited to the following: graphic details around military conflict and strategy, domestic unrest and state suppression of said dissent, discussions around repercussions and acts of imperialism and colonialism.**

As this is a war committee, please refrain from including depictions of gore, exploitation of prisoners of war or Indigenous communities, excessive violence, inhumane treatment of anyone, etc. in committee speeches, private directives, public directives, notes, conversations, etc. UTMUN recognizes the sensitivity associated with many of our topics, and we encourage you to be aware of and set healthy boundaries that work for you. This may include: refraining from reading certain parts of the background guide, preparing yourself before reading this background guide, doing some self-care or seeking support after reading the background guide, or anything that can help make you feel more comfortable. We ask that all Delegates remain considerate of the boundaries that other Delegates set.

UTMUN expects that all discussions amongst delegates will remain productive and respectful of one another. If you have any equity concerns or need assistance in setting boundaries or navigating sensitive subject matter or have any questions at all, please do not hesitate to reach out to me or our Chief Equity Officer, Harvi Karatha, at [equity@utmun.org](mailto:equity@utmun.org). We want you to feel safe and comfortable at UTMUN!

If you wish to switch committees after having read the content warnings for this committee, please do the following:

a) Fill out the [UTMUN 2024 Committee Switch Request Form](#).

If you have any equity concerns, equity-based questions, or delegate conflicts, please do any of the following:

1. Email [equity@utmun.org](mailto:equity@utmun.org) to reach Harvi Karatha, email [deputy.equity@utmun.org](mailto:deputy.equity@utmun.org) to reach Iva Zivaljevic, or reach out to me at [rjwar@utmun.org](mailto:rjwar@utmun.org).
2. Fill out the Anonymous (if preferred) UTMUN Equity Contact Form: <https://forms.gle/XEH3DCTwX3JzzSnr6>.
3. Notify/Ask any staff member to connect you to Harvi Karatha or Iva Zivaljevic.

# Model United Nations at U of T Code of Conduct

The below code of conduct applies to all attendees of UTMUN 2024 for the entire duration of the conference, and any conference-related activities (including but not limited to committee sessions, conference socials, committee breaks, and the opening and closing ceremonies).

1. Harassment and bullying in any form will not be tolerated, the nature of which includes, but is not limited to, discrimination on the basis of race, national origin, ethnicity, colour, religion, sex, age, mental and physical disabilities, socioeconomic status, sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression,
  - a. Harassment and bullying include, but are not limited to, insulting and/or degrading language or remarks; threats and intimidation; and intentional (direct or indirect) discrimination and/or marginalization of a group and/or individual;
    - i. The above prohibition on harassment, bullying, and inappropriate behaviour extends to any and all behaviour as well as written and verbal communication during the conference, including notes, conversation both during and outside committees, and general demeanour at all conference events;
    - ii. UTMUN reserves the right to determine what constitutes bullying and/or inappropriate behaviour toward any individual and/or group;
  - b. Attendees must not engage in any behaviour that constitutes physical violence or the threat of violence against any groups and/or individuals, including sexual violence and harassment, such as, but not limited to,
    - i. Unwelcome suggestive or indecent comments about one's appearance;
    - ii. Nonconsensual sexual contact and/or behaviour between any individuals and/or groups of individuals;
    - iii. Sexual contact or behaviour between delegates and staff members is strictly forbidden;
2. UTMUN expects all attendees to conduct themselves in a professional and respectful manner at all times during the conference. Specific expectations, include, but are not limited to,
  - a. Attendees must, if able, contribute to the general provision of an inclusive conference and refrain from acting in a manner that restricts other attendees' capacity to learn and thrive in an intellectually stimulating environment;
  - b. Attendees must adhere to the dress code, which is Western business attire;
    - i. Exceptions may be made on a case-by-case basis depending on the attendees' ability to adhere to the previous sub-clause;
    - ii. Attendees are encouraged to contact Chief Equity Officer, Harvi Karatha, at [equity@utmun.org](mailto:equity@utmun.org) with questions or concerns about the dress code or conference accessibility;

- c. Attendees must refrain from the use of cultural appropriation to represent their character and/or country, including the use of cultural dress, false accent, and any behaviour that perpetuates a national or personal stereotype;
- d. Delegates must not use music, audio recordings, graphics, or any other media at any time unless approved and requested to be shared by the Dais and/or the Chief Equity Officer, Harvi Karatha at [equity@utmun.org](mailto:equity@utmun.org);
- e. Attendees must abide by instructions and/or orders given by conference staff, members;
  - i. Attendees are exempt from this above sub-clause only if the instructions and/or orders given are unreasonable or inappropriate;

3. Delegates, staff, and all other conference participants are expected to abide by Ontario and Canadian laws and Toronto by-laws, as well as rules and regulations specific to the University of Toronto. This includes, but is not limited to,

- a. Attendees, regardless of their age, are strictly prohibited from being under the influence and/or engaging in the consumption of illicit substances, such as alcohol or illicit substances for the duration of the conference;
- b. Attendees are prohibited from smoking (cigarettes or e-cigarettes, including vapes) on University of Toronto property;
- c. Attendees must refrain from engaging in vandalism and the intentional and/or reckless destruction of any public or private property, including conference spaces, venues, furniture, resources, equipment, and university buildings;
  - i. Neither UTMUN nor any representatives of UTMUN is responsible for damage inflicted by attendees to property on or off University of Toronto campus;
  - ii. Individuals will be held responsible for any damages.

4. The Secretariat reserves the right to impose restrictions on delegates and/or attendees for not adhering to/violating any of the above stipulations. Disciplinary measures include, but are not limited to,

- a. Suspension from committee, in its entirety or for a specific period of time;
- b. Removal from the conference and/or conference venue(s);
- c. Disqualification from awards;
- d. Disqualification from participation in future conference-related events.

5. UTMUN reserves the right to the final interpretation of this document.

For further clarification on UTMUN's policies regarding equity or conduct, please see this [form](#). For any questions/concerns, or any equity violations that any attendee(s) would like to raise, please contact UTMUN's Chief Equity Officer, Harvi Karatha, at [equity@utmun.org](mailto:equity@utmun.org) or fill out this anonymous Equity Contact Form: <https://forms.gle/Psc5Luxp22T3c9Zz8>.

## Letter from the Director:

*Greetings from the Far East!*

My name is Je Ho Cho, and I will be your Director for the Russo-Japanese War Joint Crisis this year at UTMUN 2024! A little bit about me: I'm a fourth-year International Relations and Peace, Conflict, and Justice Studies double major at UofT. I've been doing Model United Nations since high school, travelled overseas for conferences, and have participated in UofT's MUN circuit for the last three years—including UTMUN 2022 where I was a part of the Ireland 2024 Crisis Committee as a Moderator. Outside of MUN, I practise Kendo, a Japanese martial art, and enjoy making my own coffee and coming up with new recipes in my spare time.

Beyond introducing myself, I would like to warmly welcome you to Northeast Asia in 1904. The stage is set for a clash between the Japanese and Russian Empires. Colonial aspirations, strategic military manoeuvres, and deft international diplomacy will all be featured in this simulation. I've specifically designed this committee to appeal to the delegates that hunger for their strategic visions to have rippling outward consequences, and for the delegates that enjoy the risk taking thrill that comes with tiptoeing the line between total domestic collapse and ultimate victory. While the two rooms will grapple with each other on the battlefield, it also is critical to understand the global scale of the conflict and its implications. Overseas interests in Europe and the USA will be watching the developments of the committee keenly, and it will be in the best interests for both sides to solicit positive international opinion of your nation. If any of this sounds appealing to you, you've found yourself in the right place.

For those who prefer working behind the scenes—plotting the downfall of your fellow countrymen for your own gain—look no further than this simulation. Internal political dynamics to unset your rivals and advance your own personal agenda will also be a feature of this committee. Work to gain the favour of your monarch, sully the good reputation of those that stand against your strategic and political agenda, and build internal blocs to share this newfound political capital. But be warned, a defeat on the battlefield and the boardroom could spell doom for your personal ambitions.

Being a student of history and of global geopolitics, I designed this committee to maximise the accuracy of the simulation without railroading your actions to a certain conclusion. If you ever have any questions or concerns about any of the committee content listed below, please feel free to reach out to me either before or during the conference.

*Yours truly,*

Je Ho Cho  
Director of the Russo-Japanese War  
rjwar@utmun.org



## Introduction:

The events of the Russo-Japanese War began in February 1904 at the start of hostilities between the Empire of Japan and the Russian Empire. Without any formal declaration of war, Japan launched a surprise attack on the Russian naval base at Port Arthur, a Russian concession on the Liaodong Peninsula in present-day Manchuria. Caught off-guard, the Russian Pacific Squadron and the Far East garrison face off against a coordinated invasion of Japanese forces. The two powers, having been unable to come to terms over disagreement concerning spheres of influence in Manchuria and Korea, are now plunged into conflict. The war will be a test of Meiji-era Japan's military capabilities against an imperial European power—will the modernization and militarization efforts of Japan be able to overcome the Russian colossus? Or will the Russian giant crush the upstart Japan's colonial ambitions?

The Russian Empire of the early 20th century is an imperial behemoth, its influence stretching from the Pacific anchorages of Port Arthur to the frigid waters of the White Sea. Its imperial ambitions stretch beyond its borders: competition in Central Asia, China, and in Anatolia have nearly brought it to blows with other European imperial powers. But the Russia as seen on cartographers' charts bears a stark difference from the Russia on the ground. One of the last absolute monarchies in Europe, the Tsarist model of government under the rule of Nicholas II has come under increasing pressure at home from a growing population of educated intelligentsia and working class citizens brought on through the country's sluggish industrialization. A new rival has also emerged in East Asia—the Empire of Japan. This new contender to the race for influence in Qing China has Russian strategic planners concerned about the outbreak of a war over the Russian holdings in Manchuria, although they predict that victory is still assured if the Japanese ignite a conflict.

In the region known as Manchuria, Russian troops already occupy a significant portion of the strategically valuable territory, and are the owners of the coveted Liaodong Peninsula that was forcibly snatched away from the Japanese after the threat of multi-power military intervention. They also control the Chinese Eastern Railway, the strategic rail artery that sustains the entire Russian presence in the region. Russia must defend these critical objectives in the event of war if they are to thwart any Japanese delusions of a victory in the Far East. Russia's forces number far greater than Japan's: but the advantage of surprise and the sheer distance of East Asia from European Russia may give a few months for the Japanese military to deal a knockout blow on land and sea if the Russian military is not cautious. On the other hand, Japan's military logistics could easily be severed if the Russian fleet moored in Port Arthur were to decisively defeat the Japanese on sea: shortening the length of a potentially costly war.

A decisive victory against the Japanese would unite the Russian people under the banner of the Tsar: a defeat against the Empire of the Rising Sun would deal a severe blow to Russian prestige internationally and at home. The Tsar's loyal ministers must manage matters at home while guiding the nation to victory in the Far East, for a defeat against Japan could very well embolden radical revolutionaries at home and ignite a flame of domestic discontent.

## Definitions:

### FRONT ROOM

The “Front Room” of a Crisis Committee is where debate, discussion over directives, and face-to-face interaction with other delegates takes place: the standard area where Model United Nations happens. Public directives are tabled, discussed, and voted upon in the Front Room.

### BACK ROOM

The “Back Room” of a Crisis Committee is where delegates can influence the committee in real-time through political actions, military commands, and espionage amongst other creative means to create a favourable situation in the Front Room.

### DIRECTIVES

Directives serve as the primary way that delegates can conduct actions in a Crisis Committee: the standard MUN equivalent would be a resolution or working paper. There are two types of directives: public and private. **Public directives** are essentially resolutions or working papers that are debated and voted on in the front room—they represent the actions taken by the committee as a whole. **Private directives** are notes sent to the Back Room and are private actions taken by your own character that do not require the approval of other members of the committee.

### IMPERIALISM

Imperialism, as defined by the Encyclopedia Britannica, is a state policy or practice of direct territorial acquisition through political, economic, military, or other subtle means.<sup>1</sup> Imperial rule was often accompanied by practices of colonialism in exploitative, settler, surrogate, or internal arrangements. Imperial policy, and its supporters, oftentimes justified the dominion over other peoples and their territories with maligned rhetoric of cultural or civilizational superiority.

### NEW IMPERIALISM

During the mid-to-late 19th and 20th centuries, New Imperialism was a historical period where the states in Europe, America, and Japan sought to greatly expand their imperial holdings to overseas territories in Africa and Asia.<sup>2</sup> Prominent events during this period include the Berlin Conference that saw Europeans establish a set of agreements concerning expansion in Africa, the Opium Wars and the American-led Open Door Policy in China, and the Russo-Japanese War.

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<sup>1</sup>“Imperialism | Definition, History, Examples, & Facts | Britannica,” November 6, 2023, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/imperialism>.

<sup>2</sup>“New Imperialism | Definition, History, & Causes | Britannica,” December 12, 2023, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/New-Imperialism>

## SPHERES OF INFLUENCE

Spheres of influence are claims made by states over exclusive or predominant territorial control, oftentimes of territory beyond what is formally owned by said state.<sup>3</sup> These spheres are usually outlined and utilised in the context of alliance structures, overseas economic interests, or military significance, and may or may not receive recognition from other states.

## MANCHURIA

Manchuria is a region of northeastern China, encompassing the modern-day Chinese provinces of Heilongjiang, Jilin, and Liaoning but also has historically included areas within Inner Mongolia and the Russian Far East.<sup>4</sup> At the time of this committee, the border between Qing China and the Russian Empire was demarcated at the Amur River, but Russian influence freely seeped into the region through railroad links and extraterritorial arrangements in key areas such as Port Arthur and Dalny (present-day Dairen). Russian troops also occupy most of present-day Manchuria following the events of the Boxer Rebellion.

## PORT ARTHUR

At the time of this committee, Port Arthur—today a part of the Chinese city of Dairen—is a strategic military base located on the Liaodong Peninsula in Manchuria.<sup>5</sup> In the First Sino-Japanese War between Japan and China, it was captured by forces of the Empire of Japan but was eventually returned to China after the threat of the Three-Power Intervention. Leased for 25 years to the Russian Empire from the Qing Dynasty after the Pavlov Agreement in 1898, the naval base serves as Russia's first naval installation outside of Europe that does not freeze over during the winter, making it a valuable military asset for Russian force projection in East Asia.

## TRANS-SIBERIAN RAILWAY

The Trans-Siberian Railway is a railroad that connects European Russia to its Siberian territories. It begins in Moscow and crosses over the breadth of the Eurasian continent, making its way through Manchuria through the Chinese Eastern Railway where it reaches Vladivostok and Port Arthur.<sup>6</sup> At the time of the committee, there is a gap in the railway on Lake Baikal that must be crossed either by ferry or by sled in the wintertime. The railway serves as the main logistics and reinforcement route for the Russian military: in its current state it only possesses a single line of track and therefore it cannot run trains in both directions, making two-way transport difficult.

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<sup>3</sup>“Sphere of Influence | Definition, History, & Facts | Britannica,” <https://www.britannica.com/topic/sphere-of-influence>.

<sup>4</sup>“Manchuria | Historical Region, Chinese Empire & Soviet Union | Britannica,” <https://www.britannica.com/place/Manchuria>

<sup>5</sup> V. S. Semenov, *Siberia: Its Conquest and Development*, (Baltimore: Helicon Press, 1963), 342.

<sup>6</sup> Ian Nish, “2. Komura, The British Alliance And The Russo-Japanese War,” in *Rethinking the Russo-Japanese War, 1904-5* (Brill, 2008), 22–31, [https://brill.com/display/book/9789004213326/Bej.9781905246199.i-348\\_003.xml](https://brill.com/display/book/9789004213326/Bej.9781905246199.i-348_003.xml).

## History:

### Aftermath of the Second Opium War (1858-1860)

After being defeated by a combined force of British and French troops, the Qing Dynasty was forced to open additional treaty ports and legations in cities across China. With the threat of an additional front opening with the Russian Empire, the Qing Dynasty signed the following treaties with Russia. The Treaty of Aigun, signed in 1858 between the Russian Empire and the Qing Dynasty that ruled China, set the Amur River as the natural border between the two states.<sup>7</sup> The Peking Convention: signed in 1860 between the participants of the Second Opium War (France and the UK) as well as Russia and the US, ceded the Manchurian coast to Russia as well. After these treaties, Imperial Russia would establish the city of Vladivostok in 1860. Japan would look upon the dismemberment of Qing China with great alarm, and reformers would use the example of China as a warning for what may happen if Japanese sovereignty was ever compromised by the West.<sup>8</sup>

### Tsushima Incident (1861)

A diplomatic incident between the Russian Empire and Tokugawa Shogunate that saw a Russian attempt to establish a permanent naval position on Tsushima Island off of the coast of the Japanese Home Islands. The Russians were eventually dissuaded from doing this as a result of British intervention, but this would only be the first attempt to claim a warm-water mooring for the Russian Navy in the region.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> "Russian-Chinese Treaty of Aigun Concluded," Presidential Library of Russia, <https://www.prlib.ru/en/history/619270>.

<sup>8</sup> John Brobst, "Russian Warm Water Ports," *Naval War College Review* 47, no. 3 (1994): 125–26.

<sup>9</sup> Viktor Shmagin, "They Fear Us, yet Cling to Us: Russian Negotiations with Tsushima Domain Officials during the 1861 Tsushima Incident," *The International History Review* 39, no. 3 (May 27, 2017): 521–45, <https://doi.org/10.1080/07075332.2016.1218905>.

## Meiji Restoration (1868)

Emerging as a result of perceived Shogunate ineffectiveness at expelling foreign influence from Japan (re: Commodore Matthew Perry), the Meiji Restoration was a period of the 19th century after the end of the Tokugawa Shogunate where Japan embarked on a series of European-styled modernization reforms in government, society, military, and manufacturing. Spearheaded by the Choshu and Satsuma domains in the feudal period, it emphasised a political consolidation of the territories previously ruled by regional daimyo lords now nominally under the new Emperor Meiji (but actually under a new oligarchy of advisors known as the Genro). The Restoration and ensuing period of reform during the Meiji period would lead to a new nationalism and translate itself into enhanced colonial activity abroad.<sup>10</sup> Japanese industrial production boomed as foreign experts were brought in to modernise the economy and update the military to the standards and systems of the Prussian military: the most effective European army at the time. Naval cooperation and training between the British would also result in the birth of the modern Japanese Navy.<sup>11</sup>

## Treaty of Ganghwa Island (1876)

Signed between the Empire of Japan and the Kingdom of Joseon, this “unequal treaty” essentially resembled the same European colonial treaties that were forced upon Qing China and the earlier Japanese Tokugawa Shogunate. Granting extraterritorial rights to Japanese citizens, opening ports up to Japanese trade, and resulted in increased Japanese influence on Korea. The treaty also attempted to remove Qing suzerainty over Korea, but this would not be achieved in practice until the end of the First Sino-Japanese War. The treaty was the result of a skirmish that arose after an attempted Japanese show of force near Ganghwa Island, owned by the Joseon Dynasty of Korea. Korean naval forts fired on the Japanese naval vessel and it subsequently sent a landing party of soldiers that killed several Koreans. Debates raged within the Japanese government on how to resolve this incident, including sending a punitive expedition to Korea and waging war against it: ultimately the government chose to negotiate and sign the treaty instead.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> “Meiji Restoration | Summary, Effects, Social Changes, Significance, End, & Facts | Britannica,” December 4, 2023, <https://www.britannica.com/event/Meiji-Restoration>.

<sup>11</sup> John Curtis Perry, “Great Britain and the Emergence of Japan as a Naval Power,” *Monumenta Nipponica* 21, no. 3/4 (1966): 305–21, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2383375>.

<sup>12</sup> Hans Lengerer, “The Kanghwa Affair and Treaty: A Contribution to the Pre-History of the Chinese-Japanese War 1894–95,” *Warship International* 57, no. 2 (2020): 110–31.

## Construction of the Trans-Siberian Railway Begins (1881)

Under the oversight of the recently inaugurated Tsar Nicholas II, construction of the Trans-Siberian Railway began in 1881.<sup>13</sup> The goal of this railway was to facilitate increased connections between the developed European half of Russia and its more remote Eastern possessions in Asia, namely in Siberia. It would span the length of the Eurasian continent, only interrupted by Lake Baikal (which would be crossed by ferry or sled in the winter). The world's longest railway, the Trans-Siberian would enable Russia to exert its influence over the vast steppe and Siberian wastelands, as well as deploy troops and allow for logistical routes to its Asian borderlands.

## Franco-Russian Alliance (1894)

Following an agreement made after a visit from a French naval squadron in 1891, the Russian Empire signed and ratified a mutual defence treaty with the Third French Republic. Prior to the ratification of this treaty, Franco-Russian economic ties had been solidified and provided the basis for an influx of French capital into Russia—the Tsarist government would rely heavily on this economic assistance from France. Mutual distrust of the growing powerhouse that was Germany and its alliances with Italy and Austria-Hungary prompted both nations to adopt this agreement. The agreement stipulated that if one country was attacked by Germany, the other country would come to their aid militarily.<sup>14</sup>

## First Sino-Japanese War (1894)

In response to a Chinese military intervention in Korea sent to suppress a religious peasant revolt called the Donghak, the Empire of Japan sent a military expedition to expel the Chinese and support the pro-modernization side against the Korean government. In the following war, Japan would defeat Qing China, capture Beijing and the Liaodong Peninsula, and expel Chinese troops from Korea. China's defeat exposed the weakness of the Qing Dynasty and sparked internal unrest that would eventually lead to the Boxer Rebellion. Japan's victory established it as a major regional power and led to its informal control over Korea as it formally severed its previous relationship with China.<sup>15</sup> Russia would also begin to look upon Japan with suspicion, as their ambitions in the East could come under threat of this new regional power.

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<sup>13</sup> "Trans-Siberian Railroad | History, Map, Geography, & Facts | Britannica," December 7, 2023, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Trans-Siberian-Railroad>.

<sup>14</sup> William L. Langer, "The Franco-Russian Alliance (1890-1894)," *The Slavonic Review* 3, no. 9 (1925): 554–75.

<sup>15</sup> Marius B. Jansen et al., "The Historiography of the Sino-Japanese War," *The International History Review* 1, no. 2 (1979): 191–227.

## The Treaty of Shimonoseki and the Three-Power Intervention (1895)

The Treaty of Shimonoseki would end the First Sino-Japanese War in 1895, with Qing China ceding Taiwan, the Pescadores Islands, and the Liaodong Peninsula to Japan as well as agreeing to end their suzerainty over Korea. Despite this signing, Japan would later be forced to return the Liaodong Peninsula to China in the Three-Power Intervention made up of Germany, Russia, and France. The European powers feared an influential Japan in the East that might threaten to sever China from their spheres of influence: Russia in particular felt the most direct threat to its Far East territory. The threat of military action by these three powers was enough for Japan to accede to their terms, but they would remain bitter about the affair.<sup>16</sup>

## Chinese Eastern Railway, the Li-Lobanov Treaty (1896) and the Pavlov Agreement (1898)

A secret unequal treaty signed between the Qing and Russian governments, the Li-Lobanov Treaty signed in 1896 allowed for the Tsarist-owned Russo-Chinese Bank to hold rights over construction of a railroad in Manchuria, extraterritorial rights, and access to Chinese ports in exchange for Russian loans. In 1898, Russia began construction concessions from China in the form of permission to build a link of the Trans-Siberian railway through Qing-owned Manchuria to link Vladivostok with Chita: this was called the Chinese Eastern Railway. In doing so, they also negotiated a 25-year lease on the Liaodong Peninsula and Port Arthur through the Pavlov Agreement in 1898, extending the Chinese Eastern Railway down into the warm-water port city. This severely angered the Japanese, as the Russians were a part of the Three-Power Intervention that had stripped the Liaodong Peninsula away from Japan and now they were the owner of what Japan saw as their rightful conquest. At last, the Russian Empire had obtained possession of a warm water port that could house a permanent naval presence in the Russian Far East.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Ian Nish and Harry Hearder, "The First Russo-Japanese Confrontation (1894-97)," in *The Origins of the Russo-Japanese War* (Routledge, 1985), 21-34.

<sup>17</sup> Ian Nish and Harry Hearder, "The Far Eastern Crisis (1897-98)," in *The Origins of the Russo-Japanese War* (Routledge, 1985), 36-48.

## Yamagata-Lobanov Agreement (1896) and Nishi-Rosen Agreement (1898)

The Yamagata-Lobanov Agreement (1896) and Nishi-Rosen Agreement (1898) were two agreements between Japan and Russia about the status of Korea and Manchuria. Initially, both sides agreed to maintain Korean sovereignty as a buffer state through a joint-protectorate arrangement, modernise Korea's economy, ensure Russia's interests in Manchuria, and allow for troops to be stationed in or sent into Korea. Important to note was that Japan was unaware of the Li-Lobanov Treaty allowing for Russian encroachment into Manchuria and Liaodong when they made the original agreement. The second agreement, signed after the Russian lease on the Liaodong Peninsula, both nations agreed to refrain from interfering in domestic Korean politics, Russia also pledged not to obstruct Japanese investment in the commercial and economic development of Korea, and Japan would recognize Russian control over the Liaodong.<sup>18</sup>

## Boxer Rebellion and the Russian Invasion of Manchuria (1900)

An anti-foreigner rebellion fueled by anti-foreign and anti-Christian sentiments among a group known as the "Boxers" broke out in 1900. They opposed the increasing influence and presence of foreign powers and Christian missionaries in China, and attacked foreigners and the legations in treaty port cities. During this period, Russian Admiral Alekseyev signed an agreement with the Governor-General of Mukden Tseng Chi: allowing for Russian troops to protect the foreign-built railways located in Manchuria. The rebellion was ultimately suppressed by a coalition of eight foreign powers, known as the Eight-Nation Alliance, including Japan, Russia, the United States, and European countries. This resulted in China signing the Boxer Protocol in 1901 which imposed heavy reparations on China and further diminished its sovereignty.<sup>19</sup>

During the negotiation of the Boxer Protocol, Russian "railway guards" were inserted into the region on the pretence of protecting the railway concessions in Manchuria, but were merely the first of a large military incursion into the territory. The Russian forces captured the whole of Manchuria from Qing and Boxer forces, occupying Mukden and exercising effective control of the entire region while utilising local collaborators. While the Boxer forces were defeated and scattered, Russian troops faced challenges demobilising due to the rise of banditry and general disorganisation of the forces: thus remaining in large numbers as garrison forces in Manchuria.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>18</sup>Ian Nish and Harry Header, "The Far Eastern Crisis (1897-98)," in *The Origins of the Russo-Japanese War* (Routledge, 1985), 36-4

<sup>19</sup>"Boxer Rebellion | Significance, Combatants, & Facts | Britannica," December 26, 2023, <https://www.britannica.com/event/Boxer-Rebellion>

<sup>20</sup>Ian Nish and Harry Header, "Manchuria under Boxers and Russians (1900-1901)," in *The Origins of the Russo-Japanese War* (Routledge, 1985), 83-93



## Man-Kan kokan and Further Russo-Japanese Negotiations (1901)

Under the leadership of then-Prime Minister Ito Hirobumi, Japan would begin to send diplomatic overtures to Russia over the question of Manchuria and Korea. Adopting a policy of Man-Kan kokan that would limit Russian spheres of influence in East Asia solely to Manchuria and Japanese influence to Korea alone, the Japanese delegation was rebuffed by the Russian Foreign Minister Vladimir Lamsdorf—negotiations would then break down. Ito, whose Seiyukai party advocated for a peaceful solution to this issue, was asked to step down by the Emperor and replaced with the anti-Russian Katsura Taro.<sup>21</sup>

## Anglo-Japanese Alliance (1902)

The Anglo-Japanese Alliance (1902) was a military alliance signed between the Empire of Japan and the British Empire that obligated either side to declare neutrality if involved in a conflict with another power over the status of China and Korea. It also stipulated that either country should come to the other's assistance if multiple foreign powers were on the opposing side of the conflict, and prevented any separate peace agreements. The alliance would allow Japan freedom of movement and the guarantee that the British would come to their aid if another multi-power intervention was threatened against Japanese interests in the East.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Ian Nish and Harry Hearder, "Japan Resists over Manchuria (October 1900—June 1901)," in *The Origins of the Russo-Japanese War* (Routledge, 1985), 95-108.

<sup>22</sup> "Anglo-Japanese Alliance | Russo-Japanese War, Imperialism & Diplomacy | Britannica," accessed December 28, 2023, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Anglo-Japanese-Alliance>.

## Incomplete Russian Exit from Manchuria (1902-1903)

Following the negotiation of the Boxer Protocol, pressure from other imperialist powers and the strain of financing the continued Russian occupation of Manchuria brought Russia and Qing China to sign an evacuation agreement in 1902. The Manchurian Convention, as the agreement was called, stipulated that Russia would gradually withdraw its troops from Manchuria in six month increments: given that no disturbances occurred and that China barred any other foreign power from filling the void left by the Russians. Despite initial adherence to the agreement, a mixture of confusion on the ground, apathy from Russian officials in executing the withdrawal, and imposition of additional demands sent to the Qing government led to delays and evacuation in only some select Manchurian provinces.

The end result of these delays were the retention of Russian troops in Manchuria: a state of affairs that roused deep suspicions within the Japanese government.<sup>23</sup>

## Final Negotiations and the Lead-Up to War (1903-1904)

With tensions building over the stagnant progress over the Russian evacuation in Manchuria, negotiations between Russia and Japan were reopened in 1903. Japan presented terms that resembled its previous positions: mutual recognition of a Russian sphere in Manchuria and a Japanese sphere in Korea alongside stipulations of consultation before military intervention in either areas. The Japanese offer also sought to guarantee the “equal opportunity for the commerce and industry” of both powers in both areas. Russia sought to adhere to the 1900 policy that rejected Man-Kan kokan and saw Manchuria as a bilateral issue between Qing China and Russia. It also sought to undermine the Japanese in Korea, suggesting a buffer zone be established on the Korean 39th parallel.<sup>24</sup>

The Japanese insistence that Russia’s military evacuation of Manchuria be completed was deemed a deal breaker in the eyes of the Tsarist ministers. Despite Japanese acquiescence to a neutral buffer zone on either side of the Yalu River, negotiations stalled as the Russian government delayed in responding. Japanese officials, meanwhile, began to receive concerning reports of Russian commercial logging interests penetrating past the Yalu River and into Korea: of which contained logging camps with military fortifications constructed into them. With the Russian rejection of the proposals in December of 1903, the Japanese military began drawing up plans and preparing for war with Russia.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> Ian Nish and Harry Hearder, “Russo-Chinese Convention and Its Aftermath (1902-3),” in *The Origins of the Russo-Japanese War* (Routledge, 1985), 138-150.

<sup>24</sup> Ian Nish and Harry Hearder, “Diplomatic Inactivity (September—November 1903),” in *The Origins of the Russo-Japanese War* (Routledge, 1985)..

<sup>25</sup> Ian Nish and Harry Hearder, “Final Negotiations — Climax and beyond (1903-4),” in *The Origins of the Russo-Japanese War* (Routledge, 1985).

## State of Affairs:

### The Attack on Port Arthur

The Russian reaction to the attack on Port Arthur, in many respects, was one of surprise and unpreparedness. Not only were the Russian forces ill-prepared as a result of the lack of a declaration of war from Japan, but they were also caught during the night as the Japanese ships attacked Port Arthur under cover of darkness. The damage done to the docked vessels in port was significant, but not irreparable. Two battleships of the Russian Pacific Fleet were damaged, and one cruiser was also hit by torpedoes.

Port Arthur as a naval anchorage also has several notable disadvantages, such as a low water level at low tide that forces the Russian ships to dock outside of the harbour entrance and leaves them vulnerable to attack. Should anything happen to block the narrow exit passageway of the harbour, it would effectively turn Port Arthur into an enclosed lake...

At the same time, a Japanese naval attack group also attacked a Russian grouping of ships docked in the Korean port of Chemulpo (modern-day Incheon). Having successfully destroyed the Russian ships, the Japanese have proceeded to commence troop landing operations into Korea, with the goal of moving into Manchuria.

### Russian Military Assets and Readiness in Asia

Russia's military assets in Asia are not negligible, but are certainly under-strength in comparison to the full brunt of the oncoming Japanese forces. Russia has around 40,000 troops stationed in Port Arthur, Vladivostok, and Harbin. It also has around 20,000 troops stationed on the Chinese Eastern Railway as guards. Additional troops from Russia's European and Siberian corps can be sent through the Trans-Siberian Railway, but will take precious time. Russia's naval presence in the Far East is significant, but has suffered in terms of morale and operability following the surprise attack on Port Arthur. The Russian Pacific Fleet currently consists of 7 battleships, 6 cruisers, 25 destroyers and some other small vessels.

## Domestic Political and Economic Situation

The Russian Empire of the early 20th century rests upon the edifice of one of Europe's only remaining absolute monarchies. Despite the economic growth and gradual industrialization of the country, the vast majority of Russian citizens remain as impoverished agricultural peasants and newly-inaugurated factory labourers in cities as a result of the government's attempts to spur industry. On top of economic struggles for a large part of the Russian population, demands for popular political representation in government have steadily been on the rise as leftist movements grow in the urban centres of Russia. For the past several years, strikes and other labour disruptions have been commonplace as workers have demanded increased workplace benefits and protections.

Student radicals and opposition parties to the Tsar have begun to sprout up as well. The scale of opposition ranges from constitutional liberals to Marxists. Amongst these opposition parties are groups of leftist revolutionaries that seek to overthrow the existing monarchy, but there are more moderate factions that are willing to compromise with the Tsarist cabinet in establishing popular representation while maintaining the Tsar as the head of state.

## Topics for Russia:

### Control over Territorial Objectives, Naval Supremacy, and Limited Resources

The primary goal for the delegates in the Russian committee of this simulation will be to repel the initial surprise attack on Port Arthur and the incoming Japanese invasion into Russian-held Manchuria. It is clear to all planners that Port Arthur is the primary objective of the Empire of Japan, but opinions are divided on the specifics of how to protect this critical logistics and naval base from falling into their hands. With the limited number of armies positioned in the region, Russia could throw its entire effort into shielding the Liaodong Peninsula from landward attacks coming from Korea. It could also risk going on the offensive to crush any Japanese attempts to land troops in Korea in the first place: although doing so would violate prior conventions on Korean neutrality and leave them at risk of angering the other imperial powers that have interests in East Asia: Britain, Germany, and France to name a few.

Beyond any action on land, the naval war is also of critical importance. The Pacific Fleet remains trapped in Port Arthur following the surprise attack. To remain in mooring inside the range of the shore artillery would be the safest option, but effectively allows the Japanese to transport troops and supplies to Manchuria without any resistance. To sally forth could risk complete destruction, but the Japanese fleet is almost equal in numbers to the Russian Pacific Fleet and a decisive victory on sea could cripple the entire Japanese war effort.

What should be made clear is that a drawn-out war with Japan could be favourable. Despite the half-century of modernization, Japan is still dwarfed by the Russian Empire in terms of total military strength and population. If a knockout blow is not accomplished within the first months of war, reinforcements from Moscow and the arrival of the Baltic fleet may tip the scales against Japan and allow for an unstoppable counteroffensive.

## Domestic Unrest

Russia is a land of many contrasts. Unlike the rest of its European neighbours, Russia's path to industrialization was delayed and remains on a sluggish pace towards parity with other imperial powers. Despite this situation, a growing working class and educated urban elite in the cities have begun to display rumblings of discontent about the absolutist rule of the Tsar and the state of living in the country.

Tsar Nicholas II is adamant to not pass any reforms, much less offer his subjects any semblance of parliamentary democracy, but the Russian people may not be able to withstand the influence of liberal, and perhaps even radical ideologies for much longer. It will be the task of the committee to deal with this growing unrest: either through stamping it out forcibly, winning a quick victorious war against Japan that regains public support, or convincing Tsar Nicholas to concede to reforms.

## International Diplomacy

The war against Japan is not being fought behind closed doors—the rest of the world is watching closely. One of Russia's main goals for the conflict with the Empire of Japan is to defend its interests in the East and crush any imperial ambitions of its eastern rival. Russian delegates will have to campaign in the public relations realm as well: the supply of Finances and industrial equipment depends on it. One important thing to note is that the British, allied to Japan since 1902, may hinder any efforts for the Baltic Fleet to enter the Eastern Theatre. Efforts must be made to either mend relations with the British (that have remained relatively frosty since the end of the Great Game in Central Asia), or to undermine the dual alliance structure that holds Britain and Japan together. Russia can also seek to leverage its French alliance as well.

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