

The Rise and Fall of a 'Great Power':  
Japan and Russia in 1895-1945

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The main task of this paper is to examine the role of so-called "Russian factor" in the rise and fall of Japan as a '*great power*'.

The relations with Russia (Russian Empire and the Soviet Union) were one of the main external factors, constantly influencing Japan's transformation in various aspects during the first half of XX century. The challenge to Russia became the moving force of militarization and social mobilization in front of the enemy in 1895-1905. A victorious Russo-Japanese war made Japan in fact a '*great power*' with colonies on the continent, and predetermined the rise of political influence of military circles, which finally became a sort of time bomb leading the empire to collapse in 1945. We will also examine the cooperation with Russia after 1906 as the most effective instrument for further expansion on the continent; the 'Siberian intervention' after 1917 as the first bell, alarming the limits of expansion; the harsh geopolitical rivalry during the 1930-s and "strange neutrality" between the USSR and Japan during WWII, with the Soviet-Japanese war in August 1945, as the final factor, which brought Japan to surrender.