

The Japanese Empire

The Japanese experience of war from the late nineteenth century to the mid-twentieth 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 (1894–95) 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 explain 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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*Grand Strategy from the Meiji Restoration
to the Pacific War*

S.C.M. Paine

United States Naval War College



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To John P. LeDonne
scholar, mentor, teacher, and friend

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Acknowledgments

This book relies on the research for my previous monographs, *Imperial Rivals: China, Russia, and Their Disputed Frontier 1858–1924*, *The First Sino-Japanese War of 1894–1895*, and *The Wars for Asia 1911 to 1949*, and book series coedited with Bruce A. Elleman on naval topics: blockades, naval coalitions, peripheral operations, and commerce raiding. The present volume turns my previous research inside out to focus on Japan, rather than on China or Russia, and, in so doing, to focus on the security problems faced by a maritime rather than a continental power. The lessons are relevant to the United States, which, like Japan back in the day, is prone to intervening abroad. Like Japan, its maritime location provides relative sanctuary, insulating it from problems elsewhere, so that intervention is often a matter of choice, not of necessity. Yet the choices matter. Some, as the Japanese discovered, are irrevocable.

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Map 1 Meiji Japan