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.

S.C.M. Paine, William S. Sims Professor, U.S. Naval War College, has spent eight of the last thirty years engaged in research and language study in Japan, Taiwan, China, Russia, and Australia. Funding has included two Fulbright Fellowships along with fellowships from Japan, Taiwan, and Australia. The Wars for Asia received the Leopold Prize and PROSE Award for European & World History and was longlisted for the Gelber Prize. Imperial Rivals received the Jelavich Prize.
The Japanese Empire

*Grand Strategy from the Meiji Restoration to the Pacific War*

S.C.M. Paine

*United States Naval War College*
To John P. LeDonne
scholar, mentor, teacher, and friend
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Map 1 Meiji Japan