

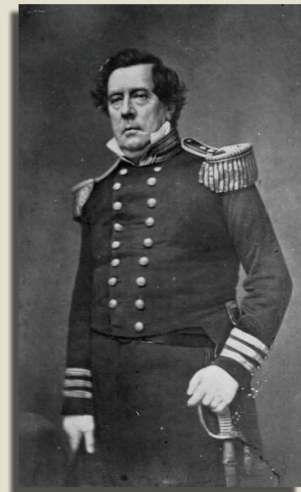
CAUSES OF THE WAR - 戦争の原因

The war between Russia and Japan was a fight for disputed territory. Its immediate cause arose out of the failure of the two nations to agree on who controlled Korea and Manchuria. While Russia was slowly advancing her borders across Asia toward the Pacific, Japan was taking measures believed necessary for her self-preservation. A mighty clash was soon to follow.

この戦争は、領土をめぐるロシアと日本の間の戦いであった。直接的には、朝鮮半島と満州の支配をめぐる合意できなかったことが原因である。ロシアが太平洋に向かってゆっくりとしかし確実に南下を続けるなか、日本は自国を守るために必要と信じた方針を実行に移していった。やがて両国は激しく衝突することになる。

OPENING OF JAPAN - 日本開国

While the war would not officially begin until 1904, its undercurrents began much earlier in history. Fearing the influence of foreigners, especially Christians, the Shogunate rulers of Japan closed the country in 1639, permitting no foreigners to enter and no citizens to leave. This continued until 1853 when United States Commodore Matthew Perry with four warships steamed into Tokyo Bay, forcing the country to open its doors to the outside world. Japan was not at ease in having an outside influence exerting its control over Japan's authority.



*United States Commodore Matthew Perry.
Courtesy of William Itoh.*



The European nations, which established spheres of influence in China, sought to prevent Japan from doing the same.

RUSSIA EXPANDS ACROSS ASIA INTO MANCHURIA

満州へ向けて拡大するロシア

At about the same time Perry came to Japan, Russia was completing its eastward expansion to the shores of the Pacific, first establishing a port on the Amur River in 1850 and then occupying Sakhalin Island, just northwest of Japan. An important Russian goal was to have a Pacific warm water port as most Russian ports were often ice-bound for three months of the year. The Tsar's forces also eyed expansion into Korea and China's Manchuria province. Korea's strategic value lay in its positioning, just 120 miles across the Tsushima Strait from Japan. A Russian occupation of Korea, Japan feared, would put it next in line for Russian conquest.

JAPAN MODERNIZES - 近代化する日本

Japan remained wary of the European nations and had only to look at China to see what might happen in the future. Large in land mass and population, China was no match for the military forces of Europe, who dominated China with treaty ports and commercial spheres of influence. Japan was determined not to suffer the same fate. Within decades of Perry's visit, Japan transformed itself into a modern industrialized nation capable of resisting European colonial aspirations. Japan restored the emperor Meiji, rapidly developed a massive industrial capability, and built a well-equipped modern military force.



Russia and Japan face each other across the Sea of Japan. Courtesy of C. B. Doleac.