

The Other Side of the Map: Russia's Great War and Revolution from a Northeast Asian Point of View

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During the Soviet era, Soviet historians tended to play down the importance of World War I. The reason was straightforward: according to the tenets of Soviet ideology, the towering event of the war years was the October Revolution, and to devote too much attention to anything else, including the war itself, risked diminishing the Bolsheviks' achievement. Now, however, a century removed from both the war and the revolution and a quarter-century since the fall of the USSR, a large-scale scholarly project is under way to make sense of these events in a new light. This collection of essays is just one of numerous volumes planned for the Russia's Great War and Revolution series, but while most of the others highlight discrete moments or themes related to the war and revolutionary period, usually drawn from a range of locales and provinces, ours takes a different tack.¹ We focus on a single geographical region and, for most historians who study the era, an unusual one at that—the

¹ For the volumes published so far, see Murray Frame, Boris Kolonitskii, Steven G. Marks, and Melissa K. Stockdale, eds., *Russian Culture in War and Revolution, 1914–22*, Book 1: *Popular Culture, the Arts, and Institutions* (Bloomington, IN: Slavica, 2014); Murray Frame, Boris Kolonitskii, Steven G. Marks, and Melissa K. Stockdale, eds., *Russian Culture in War and Revolution, 1914–22*, Book 2: *Political Culture, Identities, Mentalities, and Memory* (Bloomington, IN: Slavica, 2014); Eric Lohr, Vera Tolz, Alexander Semyonov, and Mark von Hagen, eds., *The Empire and Nationalism at War* (Bloomington, IN: Slavica, 2014); Sarah Badcock, Liudmila G. Novikova, and Aaron B. Retish, eds., *Russia's Home Front in War and Revolution, 1914–22*, Book 1: *Russia's Revolution in Regional Perspective* (Bloomington, IN: Slavica, 2015); Adele Lindenmeyr, Christopher Read, and Peter Waldron, eds., *Russia's Home Front in War and Revolution, 1914–22*, Book 2: *The Experience of War and Revolution* (Bloomington, IN: Slavica, 2016); Christopher Read, Peter Waldron, and Adele Lindenmeyr, eds., *Russia's Home Front in War and Revolution, 1914–22*, Book 3: *National Disintegration* (Bloomington, IN: Slavica, 2018); and Christopher Read, Peter Waldron, and Adele Lindenmeyr, eds., *Russia's Home Front in War and Revolution, 1914–22*, Book 4: *Reintegration: The Struggle for the State* (Bloomington, IN: Slavica, 2018).

Russian Far East and the interconnected worlds of broader Northeast Asia, a large area that includes far eastern Russia, Mongolia, northeast China (often referred to in the West as Manchuria), Korea, and Japan.²

Why the Far East?

Most general narratives of the Russian experience of the Great War and of the Russian Revolution either treat this region tangentially or ignore it altogether, considering it little more than a distant backdrop to the major events of the day. And indeed, there is some justification for this view. After all, the great battles of Russia's World War I unfolded on the European side of the country, in Eastern Prussia and Poland, the Carpathians, and the eastern edges of Anatolia, while the Russian Revolution began in the country's capital, Petrograd (formerly St. Petersburg), located on the Gulf of Finland, far closer to London, Paris, and Berlin, than to the hilly coasts of the Russian Pacific. If you approach the war and revolution solely through a European lens as most historians still do, then the European side is indeed the only side of the story you need.

Taking a global view, the one implied by the use of the term *World War*, however, this long-running habit of seeing the Russian Far East and Northeast Asia as somehow detached or at best minimally affected by the fighting and turmoil in Europe is a regrettable oversight. In fact, just the opposite was true. Northeast Asia proved a critical arena for sorting out the great geopolitical and ideological contests of the war and revolutionary period. Russia's complicated relationship with the peoples and states of the broader Far East and Pacific unfolded here as well as some of the earliest international effects

² Definitions of the Russian Far East (*Russkii Dal'nii Vostok*, *Dal'nii Vostok Rossii*) and the relationship between the region and the rest of eastern Russia have varied over the years. Here we use the term to refer to the lands that fell within the administrative region of the Governor-Generalship of the Amur (*Priamurskoe General-Gubernatorstvo*) as of the early 20th century, namely: the oblasts of the Amur, the Maritime Region, Kamchatka, and Sakhalin. (The region was also briefly subsumed into the ill-fated Viceroyalty of the Far East between 1903 and 1905.) The only general history of the region in English is John Stephan, *The Russian Far East* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1994). On the origins of the Amur General-Governorship and its influence on the emergence of the Far East as a territory perceived to be distinct from the rest of Siberia, see A. V. Remnev, *Rossiiia Dal'nego Vostoka: Imperskaia geografiia vlasti XIX–nachala XX vekov* (Omsk: Izdatel'stvo Omskogo gosudarstvennogo universiteta, 2004), 31–32, 267–316. On the evolution of the toponym "Manchuria," see Mark Elliott, "The Limits of Tartary: Manchuria in Imperial and National Geographies," *Journal of Asian Studies* 59, 3 (2000): 603–46. For background on the term *Northeast Asia*, see the discussion in Li Narangoa and Robert Cribb, *Historical Atlas of Northeast Asia, 1590–2010* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2014), 2–3.

of Bolshevik power. Between the mid-19th and the mid-20th centuries, “a cataclysmic struggle [unfolded] for the control of Northeast Asia.”³ The first half of the 1900s, in particular, was a time of “nested wars [throughout the region], set off by fears and ambitions against a backdrop of lethal national dilemmas.”⁴ The wrenching years of World War I and the Russian Revolution mark a critical passage in this history. The goal of our expressly region-centered volume is to bring these issues into greater view, highlighting Russia’s contribution.

Indeed, our volume builds on a rich historiography focused on the regional dimensions of war and revolution in the Russian context that has grown considerably since 1991. During Soviet times, it was rare for World War I and the revolution to be studied together as part of a single continuous period, and both of the seemingly separate events had their predictable analytical divides. Historians in the USSR approached the war in terms of bulky categories such as “the front,” “the rear,” or “the village” (when they wrote about the war at all), while studying the revolution almost exclusively through the prism of “Red Petrograd,” taking the capital, in effect, as the measure for the whole country.⁵ Spared the formal censorship imposed on Soviet scholars, the approaches of Western history works were more diverse, but they, too, tended to repeat conventions. Thus for years, Norman Stone’s *The Eastern Front*, published first in the mid-1970s, was the only significant English-language study of the Russian experience of the Great War, and it was not until the late 1980s, with the appearance of pioneering research by historians such as Donald Raleigh and Orlando Figes, that Western specialists began focusing on the revolution in the provinces.⁶

³ Eva-Maria Stolberg, “Japanese Strategic and Political Involvement in Siberia and the Russian Far East, 1917–1922,” in *Imperial Japan and National Identities in Asia, 1895–1945*, ed. Li Narangoa and R. B. Cribb (London: RoutledgeCurzon, 2003), 43.

⁴ S. C. M. Paine, *The Wars for Asia, 1911–1949* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 9.

⁵ Liudmila Novikova, “The Russian Revolution from a Provincial Perspective,” *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History* 16, 4 (2015): 770.

⁶ Norman Stone, *The Eastern Front, 1914–1917* (London: Hodder and Staughton, 1975); Orlando Figes, *Peasant Russia, Civil War: The Volga Countryside in Revolution, 1917–1921* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989); Donald J. Raleigh, *Revolution on the Volga: 1917 in Saratov* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1986). For two influential English-language works that emphasized regional perspectives prior to the 1980s, see Oliver H. Radkey, *The Unknown Civil War in Russia: A Study of the Green Movement in the Tambov Region, 1920–1921* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1976); and Peter Kenez, *Civil War in South Russia, 1918–19: The Defeat of the Whites* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1977). One of the few historians before the late Perestroika period to examine the organic connection between the Great War and 1917 was Allan

The historiographical terrain today, however, is strikingly different. Following the fall of the USSR, it became much easier to rethink the once seemingly sacrosanct distinctiveness of 1917 and return the revolutionary year to the larger flow of the period, both with regards to the Great War that came before and the Civil War that followed. Hence the situation in the field today where we see a general readiness to fold together the years of the Great War, revolution, and Civil War, taking the whole 1914–21 period as a single piece alternatively described as a “continuum of crisis” or, more evocatively, as a 20th-century version of “the Time of Troubles” (*smuta*), echoing the first *smuta* of war, revolt, and state dissolution that undid the Rurikid dynasty some three centuries earlier.⁷ In this new scenario, 1917 remains important but is no longer the critical lynchpin it was seen to be during the Soviet era. A similar shift in thinking has occurred with regard to the Russian fronts of the Great War, which have been fully rehabilitated as historical subjects, especially by historians outside Russia but increasingly within Russia as well, and also in relation to the place of regional diversity in the narrative of the revolution, which now, if anything, has become dominant enough to represent one of the normative positions of the field.⁸

K. Wildman, whose two-volume history of the tsarist army during 1917 endures as a classic in the field. See his *The End of the Russian Imperial Army*, 1: *The Old Army and the Soldiers’ Revolt, March–April 1917*; and 2: *The Road to Soviet Power and Peace* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1980–87).

⁷ For two influential works that have helped introduce these views, see Peter Holquist, *Making War, Forging Revolution: Russia’s Continuum of Crisis, 1914–1921* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002); and V. P. Buldakov, *Krasnaia smuta: Privoda i posledstviia revoliutsionnogo nasiliia* (Moscow: ROSSPEN, 1997). The term *smuta* in reference to the revolution and Civil War was first coined during the period itself. See the memoirs of White general Anton Denikin, *Ocherki russkoi smuty*, 5 vols. (Paris-Berlin: Slovo/Mednyi vsadnik, 1921–25). The pathbreaking book for Japanese scholars is Wada Haruki, *Rekishii toshte no shakaishugi* [Socialism as history] (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1992), while important recent contributions include Ikeda Yoshiro, *Daiichiji sekaitaisen to teikoku no issan* [The First World War and the legacy of empire] (Tokyo: Yamakawa Shuppansha, 2014); and Matsudo Kiyohiro et al., eds., *Roshiakakumei to Soren no seiki* [The Russian Revolution and the Soviet century], 5 vols. (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 2017).

⁸ For reflections on the importance of regional perspectives for understanding the revolution and Civil War, see Sarah Badcock, Liudmila G. Novikova, and Aaron B. Retish, “Introduction: A Kaleidoscope of Revolutions,” in Badcock, Novikova, and Retish, *Russia’s Home Front in War and Revolution, 1914–1922*, Book 1: *Russia’s Revolution in Regional Perspective*, 1–15. On the recent uptick in research on Russia’s Great War by both Russian and Western specialists, see Kees Boterbloem, “Chto delat’? World War I in Russian Historiography after Communism,” *The Journal of Slavic Military Studies* 25, 3 (2012): 393–408; and David Schimmelpenninck van der Oye, “Getting to Know the Unknown War,” *Russian Review* 75, 4 (2016): 683–89.

Finally, a key turn in recent scholarship that relates to our volume is a new interest in the borderland dynamics that shaped the war and revolutionary years. A number of factors have influenced this development: the trend towards de-centering the study of the war and revolution discussed above; the “imperial turn” in Russian historical writing since 1991 that has reinvigorated the study of the non-Russian peripheries of the state; and a rising focus on transnational history across the historical discipline in general that has pushed specialists to pay closer attention to histories of “movement and interpenetration” across and around national and imperial borders.⁹ The result for the historiography of the war and revolutionary period has been a mini-boom of studies that adopt an expressly borderland point of view. As these new works underscore, the critical ground zeros of Russia’s Great War were the contested spaces of Eastern Europe and the Caucasus. It is here that we first see the interconnected disasters of mass violence, social dislocation, and institutional collapse that usher in the broader patterns of the period. Consequently, to understand the age it is precisely these “complex frontiers” and their mutual interaction that have to be explored, both from internal as well as external perspectives.¹⁰

At the same time, not everything that is valuable is new. While our volume draws on the innovative recent trends we have just mentioned, we also build from a longstanding specialized literature on the Far East that already offers a rich tableau of the period. Indeed, the essential outlines of the Great

⁹ For discussions of the “transnational turn” in general, see “AHR Conversation: On Transnational History,” *American Historical Review* 111, 5 (2006): 1441–664, here 1442. See also Michael David-Fox, “The Implications of Transnationalism,” *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History* 12, 4 (2011): 885–904; and Patricia Clavin, “Defining Transnationalism,” *Contemporary European History* 14, 4 (2005): 421–39.

¹⁰ For suggestive new scholarship in this vein, see Alfred J. Rieber, *The Struggle for the Eurasian Borderlands: From the Rise of Early Modern Empires to the End of the First World War* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014); Joshua Sanborn, *Imperial Apocalypse: The Great War and the Destruction of the Russian Empire* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014); Omer Bartov and Eric D. Weitz, eds., *Shatterzone of Empires: Coexistence and Violence in the German, Habsburg, Russian, and Ottoman Borderlands* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2013); Michael Reynolds, *Shattering Empires: The Clash and Collapse of the Russian and Ottoman Empires, 1908–1918* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011); and Aviel Roshwald, *Ethnic Nationalism and the Fall of Empires: Central Europe, the Middle East, and Russia, 1914–1923* (New York: Routledge, 2000). We take the concept of “complex frontiers” from Alfred J. Rieber. See the discussion of the term in his response to a recent forum devoted to his work: “Struggle Over the Borderlands,” *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History* 16, 4 (2015): 951–59, especially 952–54.

War in the region,¹¹ the political and social dislocations of 1917,¹² and the contest between Whites, Reds, and occupying foreign armies¹³ are generally well established even if they are usually left out of broader narratives. What we propose to do here is thus to add to the old with the new, enhancing what we already know with new historiographical positions and novel sources and perspectives. The Russian Far East and broader Northeast Asia are obviously *not* the main stages of the drama of Russia's Great War and Revolution. But if we approach the region with a fresh sensibility, we see that it represents a revealing echo to the imperial "shatter zones" we know better from the European side of the country. Here, too, we find a borderland world characterized by dense inter-imperial rivalry and diplomacy, transnational flows, and political and social upheaval. If we have chosen to highlight the regional dynamic with its own volume in the RGWR series, it is precisely because we believe there is much to gain from inserting this particular "complex frontier" into the wider picture of the period.

¹¹ D. B. Pavlov, *Russko-iaponskie otnosheniia v gody Pervoi mirovoi voiny* (Moscow: Politicheskaia entsiklopediia, 2014); Xu Guoqi, *China and the Great War: China's Pursuit of a New National Identity and Internationalization* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005); and Frederick Dickinson, *War and National Reinvention: Japan in the Great War, 1914–1919* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999).

¹² For an expert guide to the voluminous relevant literature as of the early 2000s, see Jonathan D. Smele, ed., *The Russian Revolution and Civil War: An Annotated Bibliography* (London: Continuum, 2003).

¹³ For a selection of important works within a vast literature, see James William Morley, *The Japanese Thrust Into Siberia* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1954); Hosoya Chihiro, *Shiberia shuppei no shiteki kenkyu* [Historical research on the Siberian Intervention] (Tokyo: Yuhikaku, 1955); George F. Kennan, *Soviet-American Relations, 1917–1920, 2: The Decision to Intervene* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1958); Canfield F. Smith, *Vladivostok under Red and White Rule: Revolution and Counterrevolution in the Russian Far East, 1920–1922* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1975); Iu. I. Korablev and V. I. Shishkin, eds., *Iz istorii interventsii i grazhdanskoi voiny v Sibiri i na Dal'нем Vostoke 1917–1922* (Novosibirsk: Nauka, 1985); Teruyuki Hara, *Shiberia shuppei: Kakumei to kanshō, 1917–1922* [The Siberian Expedition: Revolution and intervention, 1917–1922] (Tokyo: Chikuma shobō, 1989); Norman Pereira, *White Siberia: The Politics of Civil War* (Montreal: McGill-Queens University Press, 1996); and Jonathan D. Smele, *Civil War in Siberia: The Anti-Bolshevik Government of Admiral Kolchak, 1918–1920* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997). See also the recent survey of the period, including events in far eastern Russia, featured in Jonathan D. Smele, *The Russian Civil Wars, 1916–1926: Ten Years That Shook the World* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016).

A Region Connected Yet Apart

On 23 August 1914, Japan declared war on Germany, effectively introducing the Great War to Northeast Asia. In contrast to the situation at the start of the war with Russia some ten years earlier, as well as the Second World War that would follow, this particular Japanese declaration of war did not come as much of a surprise. Indeed, the staff of the German embassy in Tokyo had begun packing up even before the Japanese foreign ministry delivered the news. As early as 6 August, the day after declaring war on Germany, the British, already allied with Japan through the Anglo-Japanese Alliance of 1902, appealed to Tokyo for help in protecting their ships in Asia from possible German attack, and on 15 August the Japanese made good on London's request by serving the Germans with an ultimatum. Berlin stonewalled, preferring not to answer, but the message was clear: Tokyo's sympathies lay decidedly with the Entente powers, making it likely that the country would soon take things one step further and formally join the war on the alliance's side.

Indeed, earlier still, on 4 August, just days after war was declared in Europe, the Japanese informed the Russian military attaché in Tokyo that they were prepared to offer Russia "comprehensive assistance" in its coming fight with the Central Powers. Though more than a little ironic given that Russia and Japan had been at each other's throats only a decade earlier, this offer was not completely out of step. In the years following the Russo-Japanese War, the former enemies worked hard to mend their relations, by, among other things, signing secret agreements to work out their respective spheres of influence in Manchuria and Mongolia.¹⁴ Yet the Japanese gesture in this instance was not just a matter of continuing to try to get along with Russia. As the tsarist ambassador in Tokyo cabled to St. Petersburg on 7 August, "Japan is keen to fight (*rvetsia v boi*) and burns with desire to join the European war in order to finally establish its global importance as a great power."¹⁵

The thick rapprochement that followed between Japan and Russia during the war years lies at the heart of this volume, for it not only created the special dynamic that shaped Northeast Asia during this critical period; it also led to official Japan's disgust with the Bolsheviks whose overthrow of the Provisional Government in October 1917 effectively knocked Russia out of the war and set the stage for what became a fateful intervention by the Entente powers and their allies to support the anti-Bolshevik cause during the ensuing civil

¹⁴ Ia. A. Shulatov, *Na puti k sotrudnichestvu: Rossiisko-iaponskie otnosheniia v 1905–1914 gg.* (Moscow: IV RAN, 2008); and Peter Berton, *Russo-Japanese Relations, 1905–1917: From Enemies to Allies* (New York: Routledge, 2012).

¹⁵ Cited in Pavlov, *Russko-iaponskie otnosheniia v gody Pervoi mirovoi voiny*, 16.

war. Of all the foreign states that sent troops to Russia then, the Japanese contingent was by far the largest—some 70,000 men at the height of the intervention, all of them concentrated in the Transbaikal and the Russian Far East—a fact that allowed Tokyo to establish itself as the preeminent foreign player in the region until the country's final withdrawal from Vladivostok in late 1922. At the same time, while the Japanese were clearly the dominant power in the area, they were never alone. The civil war that churned around them across the immense borderland between Lake Baikal and the Pacific was just as multinational and international as it was on other edges of the collapsing Russian state, involving multiple peoples of the former empire—Russians in the first instance, but also Buryats, Tungus, Nivkh, and other native groups—as well as foreigners such as Chinese, Koreans, Mongols, Canadians, and Americans.

Japanese aid, first to the tsarist state and then to the Provisional Government that replaced it after the February Revolution, was undeniably significant. Hundreds of thousands of Russian soldiers went to war against the Central Powers bearing Japanese-made rifles. Foreign aid, in particular in the form of American, British, and Japanese diplomatic backing, military advisors, troops, food, and military materiel, also played a role in supporting Siberian Whites during the Civil War. By and large, the Americans and particularly the British favored the Western Siberia-based government of Admiral Aleksandr Kolchak, the nominal Supreme Commander of the anti-Bolshevik opposition, while the Japanese supported rival White authorities in the Transbaikal and the Far East, most of whom were quite openly *anti-Kolchak*. Given the divided terrain affecting foreign aid, it is difficult to generalize about its overall effectiveness. The levels and quality of assistance simply varied too much, shifting between time and place, and quite often even materiel that was successfully loaded in Far Eastern entrepôts for distribution farther down the Trans-Siberian line never made it to the people it was supposed to help.

Still, even allowing for the fact that foreign support entering the country through Northeast Asia was indeed considerable, it would be an exaggeration to suggest that developments or influences from the eastern frontier altered the outcome of either the Great War or the revolution. Asian factors were important but not decisive. What is undeniable, however, is that the region's embroilment in these events had profound effects on the region itself. Japan's failed intervention in Siberia in 1918–22, for example, served as an obvious prelude to a new spike of Japanese involvement on the Asian mainland in the 1930s, while the new Soviet state's reaction to foreign intervention in the Far East during the Civil War was to throw itself into supporting the establishment of communist parties throughout the region. One such party took power in Mongolia in 1921 and went on to rule the country for the following 70 years. Two other Soviet-inspired communist parties—the Communist Party of China

in the PRC and the Workers' Party of Korea in North Korea—remain in power today, roughly a hundred years after their founding.

Which brings us back to this centennial volume with its emphasis on the growing transnational importance of Northeast Asia in the 20th century and the crucial role of Russian events in shaping that history. As we noted earlier, there is still much to explore about the dynamics of war and revolution here, but one thing seems clear: it is really no longer possible to dismiss the Russian Far East and the broader region around it as an unimportant sideshow to the great events of the period. All the pressures and passions of the times reverberated here, proving the powerful interconnectedness of Eurasian space. At the same time, however, incorporating the Russian Far East more fully into the broader accountings of the age requires taking stock of regional specificities, three of which seem especially worth underscoring.

First, the chronology of events in Northeast Asia is distinct both in regards to key turning points in the war-and-revolutionary story as well as their wider implications. Whereas most older accounts of the Russian Revolution and Civil War take the story up to 1920, the year when major military engagements came to an end in European Russia and much of Siberia, or at the outside, to early 1921, which saw the inauguration of the New Economic Policy at the Communist Party's Tenth Party Congress in Petrograd and the beginning of a shift towards postwar recovery, when it comes to the Far East, neither of these concluding dates works especially well. In fact, the more appropriate end point is the fall of 1922 when the major White stronghold of Vladivostok fell to Red forces and Moscow completed the reabsorption of its own "buffer state," the Far Eastern Republic (*Dal'nevostochnaia respublika*, or DVR), whose creation in the spring of 1920 had allowed the Bolsheviks to avoid a direct confrontation with the Japanese, while still supporting the DVR's partisan war against White forces in the region. Ironically, as foreign and domestic pressure mounted against Tokyo's position in the Far East, the creation of the DVR also worked to Japan's benefit since it allowed them to save face by negotiating their withdrawal with the DVR government rather than with the despised Bolsheviks, who had not yet been recognized by any major states.

Indeed, long after the Civil War began to wane in the west, it continued waxing in the east. In February 1921, White general Baron Roman von Ungern-Sternberg took the Mongolian capital Urga with plans to transform the town into the base for a sweeping offensive against Red-controlled Siberia. Japanese and Red forces clashed in intense battles in the Maritime Oblast as late as the spring of 1922, and Tokyo kept its troops in the region for another six months after that. Meanwhile White partisans were still mounting raids on Soviet Yakutia as late as early 1923, and Japanese troops continued

to occupy Northern Sakhalin until 1925.¹⁶ In other words, turning our gaze from the western side of the empire to the Far East means stretching out the conventional timeline for the revolution, while at the same time thinking in new ways about how the revolution was contested, including why the war between the Reds and the Whites lasted far longer some five thousand miles from Moscow than it did closer in.

A second distinctive feature of the Russian Far East is that the region's experience of World War I differed in meaningful ways from that of European Russia or even that of the rest of Asian Russia "beyond the Urals." Though spared the massive destruction of the war zones, like other regions of the so-called "rear" (*tyl*) or "home front," the Far East endured many of the pressures and dislocations of wartime life, including large outflows of fighting-age men from villages and Cossack farms, an influx of refugees and POWs, shortages of labor and everyday goods, surging food prices, increased activity—and frustration—on the part of civil society, and rising social tensions, in particular in the cities, which swelled markedly during the war years.¹⁷ Yet the region also saw growth in certain respects, perhaps most notably in infrastructure, as the country's Pacific hinterland found itself transformed into a critical staging ground for the fight in Europe.

Vladivostok, the region's largest port, which had grown rapidly in the decade before the war, grew more still during the war years as docks and warehouses expanded and ever mounting tons of foreign goods flowed in. The regional road network, extremely slight prior to 1914, grew markedly as well, as did the rail system, reflecting the country's growing reliance on the Trans-Siberian as a vital artery supplying goods and war materiel to the European side of the country. By far the most imposing physical symbol of the wartime infrastructure boom was the massive Tsarevich Aleksei Bridge (Alekseevskii most), the final link required to complete the full run of the Trans-Siberian on

¹⁶ For more on the quixotic attack led by White general Anatolii Pepeliaev, see Leonid Iuzefovich, *Zimniaia doroga: General A. P. Pepeliaev i anarkhist I. Ia. Strod v Iakutii* (Moscow: AST, 2016).

¹⁷ L. I. Galliamova, "Dal'nii Vostok Rossii v gody Pervoi mirovoi voiny: Ekonomicheskie i sotsial'nye aspekty," in *Pervaia mirovaia voina i rossiiskaia provintsia: Materialy mezhdunarodnoi nauchnoi konferentsii, Orel, 29 apreliia 2014 g.* (Orel: Orlik, 2014), 113–32, available on-line at <http://istorja.ru/authors/voencomuezd.html/great-war/dalний-vostok-rossii-v-godyi-pervoy-mirovoy-voynyi-ekonomicheskii-i-sotsialnye-aspektyi-r25/> (accessed 8 August 2017). See also T. I. Ikonnikova, "Dal'nevostochnyi tyl Rossii v gody pervoi mirovoi voiny, 1914–1918 gg." (Doctoral diss., Khabarovskii gosudarstvennyi pedagogicheskii universitet, 1999).

Russian territory.¹⁸ Construction of the massive mile-and-a-half span across the Amur River near Khabarovsk had begun before the war, but the intensity of the conflict made finishing the project all the more urgent, forcing the government to invest enormous sums and make use of every possible source of labor, including large numbers of convicts and foreign workers, mostly Chinese, sometimes forced to work round-the-clock in rotating ten-hour shifts. By the time the bridge opened in the fall of 1916, it was clear proof of the Far East's vital importance for the national economy, a fact that had seemed obvious enough to bullish supporters before the conflict but which became more obvious still as the war ground on.¹⁹

The impact of the Great War on far eastern Russia was thus complicated. Despite the region's great remove from the fronts, many of the burdens of the war were regular features of everyday life. At the same time, so too was opportunity. The result was the seemingly paradoxical profile of dynamism and hardship, tension and potential that characterized the region during the war years. The same ambiguity runs through the final distinction to underscore about the war and revolutionary period: the rising internationalization and even outright blurring of national boundaries that characterized regional life at the time. The Far East had long served as a Russian gateway to the wider horizons of Northeast Asia and the Pacific, but the war and revolutionary decade intensified this reality, generating or reenergizing links and collaborations between Russians and others, while also invariably adding to confusion, anxiety, and mutual grievances as well. Indeed the history of the region during the period was so marked by multinational complexities and transborder circulations that it cannot be studied satisfactorily from the van-

¹⁸ The Trans-Siberian had reached the Pacific earlier with the opening of the Chinese Eastern Railway (CER) in 1903, but the route of the CER ran through Chinese territory. For a recent short summary of the history of the CER, see Sören Urbansky, *Kolonialer Wettstreit: Russland, China, Japan und die Ostchinesische Eisenbahn* (Frankfurt am Main: Campus, 2008). A detailed Japanese study of the CER is Asada Masafumi, *Chutō tetsudō keieishi: Roshia to "Manchuria"* [An administrative history of the Chinese Eastern Railway: Russia and "Manchuria"] (Nagoya: Nagoya University Press, 2012). For an analysis based mainly on unpublished Russian materials, see David Wolff, *To the Harbin Station: The Liberal Alternative in Russian Manchuria, 1898–1914* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1999).

¹⁹ Though modified, the structure remains in operation today and is known as the Khabarovsk Bridge. For photos showing the stages of construction, see <http://www.trans-sib.ru/Museum/photo1.htm> (accessed 8 August 2017). On the use of convict and Chinese labor in the building of the Amur Railway, see Chia Yin Hsu, "A Tale of Two Railroads: 'Yellow Labor,' Agrarian Colonization, and the Making of Russianness at the Far Eastern Frontier, 1890s–1910s," *Ab Imperio*, no. 3 (2006): 217–53, especially 244–51.

tage of any single state, ethnic group, or political player. Only a transnational, borderland view will do.

One of the particularities of this frontier zone was its profile as a land of migrants and foreigners. On the eve of World War I, indigenous groups composed only a tiny fraction of the population: Tungus along the western reaches of the Amur, for example, Nivkh on Sakhalin Island. By far the greater share of the region's residents were outsiders, most of them relatively recent or even extremely recent transplants: Russian and Ukrainian peasant colonists from European Russia or other parts of Siberia, including Old Believers and "sectarians" of various sorts; Jewish shopkeepers and professionals; members of the region's Cossack hosts; Polish exiles; convicts of diverse ethnicities; Baltic German officials; Korean farmers; and Chinese sojourners and petty traders, most of whom spent short periods on the Russian side working on the railway or in the region's various gold fields and coal mines before returning to Chinese territory and then coming back again. Meanwhile the great cities of the Russian Far East and Russian-controlled Manchuria, Vladivostok and Harbin, were cosmopolitan outposts, home to various Europeans, Americans, Japanese, and, of course, Russians and Chinese as well as numerous foreign consulates and trade missions.

The onset of the Great War and later the revolution changed but did not diminish this diverse and mobile tableau. Peasant colonization largely ground to a halt after 1914, but levels of incoming migrant workers (mostly Chinese) ticked upwards, and new types of wartime arrivals appeared: POWs from the armies of the Central Powers; successive waves of refugees from war-torn Russia and Siberia; decommissioned, deserting, or retreating soldiers from the imperial and White armies; returning revolutionary exiles; and last but not least, foreign troops, including the large Japanese force mentioned earlier, 53,000 Czechs, 12,000 Poles, 9,000 Americans, 5,000 Chinese, 4,000 Serbs, 4,000 Rumanians, 4,000 Canadians, 2,000 Italians, 1,600 British, and 700 Frenchmen.²⁰

Prior to the war, border regimes in the region had been firming up, in step with general trends towards border reinforcement in other parts of the globe, but the instability ushered in by revolution and ensuing state collapse, first in China with the overthrow of the Qing in 1910–11 and then in Russia, inevitably interrupted this dynamic. Formerly Chinese-ruled Outer Mongolia became quasi-independent. Manchuria, the Transbaikal, and the Far East fell under de facto control of foreign troops and homegrown warlords such as the Cossack atamans Grigorii Semenov, based in Chita, Ivan Kalmykov, centered

²⁰ Troop numbers from Stephan, *The Russian Far East*, 132.

first in Grodekovo and then at Khabarovsk, and the Chinese general Zhang Zuolin at Mukden.

Amid the chaos and statelessness of the moment, maintaining borders became all but impossible. In fact, to some actors in the region, it was more useful to blithely ignore borders than to build them up—Ungern-Sternberg's actions in Mongolia are one example.²¹ Not surprisingly, therefore, transborder movements of all sorts proliferated: of individuals, goods, animals, diseases, and ideas, including political ideas that argued for rewriting the borders of the region altogether, Bolshevik-style internationalism being one of them, but there were many other projects besides, some of them blatantly restorationist. Indeed, this was a protean juncture, a time of limbo and possibilities, the kind of in-between moment when everything might be rewritten or nothing at all.

Our Essays

In the essays that follow, we engage these diverse issues, underscoring the complicated political ecology of the Far East during the war and revolutionary years by highlighting themes of international relations as well as transnational collaboration, migration, intervention, and transfer.

Trade was obviously a critical aspect of this picture, and of all the varieties of commerce that coursed through the region surely the best known is the Russo-Japanese arms trade through which Tokyo shipped huge volumes of weaponry to Russia during World War I to support the Russian war in Europe. As Dmitrii Pavlov shows in his richly detailed chapter, Japan sold over 800,000 rifles to the Russian side between 1914 and 1917, representing some 10 percent of all the guns used by the Russians in the fight, first against their foreign foes during the Great War and then, ironically, against each other in the civil war that followed. The Japanese also provided the Russians with field artillery as well as food, clothing, and footwear in ever growing quantities. Indeed, by the time the Bolshevik Revolution erupted in October 1917, tens of thousands of tons of American and Japanese war materiel were flowing steadily through Vladivostok and Harbin en route to the European fronts. In the chaos that followed October, huge amounts of this production became stranded, piling up in train cars and dock-side warehouses. Russia's war of attrition with the Central Powers thus faltered and gave way well before its robust trade arrangement with imperial Japan.

Pavlov also examines a broad range of high-level contacts among Russian and Japanese military men, corporate entities, and diplomats, including en-

²¹ On Baron Ungern's activities as a man of the borderlands, see Willard Sunderland, *The Baron's Cloak: A History of the Russian Empire in War and Revolution* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2014), especially chapter 9.

voys from the two country's royal families dispatched from their respective courts to help engineer bilateral understanding. With over a hundred citations from previously unavailable Russian military and diplomatic files, his article is exactly the sort of in-depth, archive-driven research on international relations that would have been all but impossible to publish during Soviet times. Similarly impressive is Yaroslav Shulatov's contribution, which details the operations of the Russian Imperial Navy in Asian waters and builds on his unparalleled knowledge of the broader Russo-Japanese military and political rapprochement that grew up between the end of the Russo-Japanese War and World War I.

Clifford Foust examines a US-Russian initiative to relieve the transportation bottleneck in the Far East by importing American-made locomotives and freight cars, exposing another aspect of the international transfer that characterized the times. Foust's particular focus is the brilliant but irascible leader of the US Russian Railway Service Corps, the American engineer-administrator John Frank Stevens, who, like the rest of the American political and military contingent in the Far East in those years, found himself caught between shifting directives from home and continuing confusion on the ground. By the end, Foust argues, Stevens exhausted himself for almost five years in Northeast Asia doing what he could to shore up the Russian Whites through US "railway diplomacy" (railway imperialism?), while also trying to check the growing influence of the Japanese. (Ironically, his work overseeing the building of the Panama Canal, which he completed a few years before coming to Russia, seems to have gone more easily.)

On the Japanese side, the chapters by Saito Seiji, Ono Keishi, and Tomita Takeshi cover similar ground, focusing on various aspects of interstate relations and the experience of individual foreigners caught up in the Far Eastern theater. Saito explores Tokyo's fateful shift from the role of a cautious Russian ally between 1914 and 1917 to the riskier stance of actively rejecting Bolshevik power by sending troops to occupy parts of the Russian Far East in the aftermath of the Brest-Litovsk peace of early 1918. Ono provides an in-depth analysis of Japanese finances during the war and Siberian Expedition (*Shiberia shuppei*). And Tomita examines the imperialist projects of the military commanders Araki Sadao and his elder and superior Tanaka Giichi, both established "Russia hands" who emerged as influential advocates of the Siberian deployment, the former in Tokyo, the latter in the field.

Each of these authors draws on Japanese-language sources that are all but unknown to Russia specialists, while also advancing useful arguments. Saito reveals that Tokyo's decision to commit troops to the Far East was conditioned by more than Russian considerations alone—domestic political concerns as well as strategic goals vis-à-vis China and the United States were also critical.

Ono's work shows that the Japanese took a similar fiscal approach to both the Great War and the Siberian Expedition, spending monies on both conflicts from the same continuing account, though, importantly, as he makes clear, the Great War proved a net boon for the Japanese economy, while the Siberian Intervention ultimately mushroomed into an enormous expense. Finally, Tomita's focus on Araki and Tanaka reveals the profound influence of the so-called "Russian school" on the imperial army's policies in Siberia, while at the same time underscoring important differences of age and experience between the two men that reinforced divergent perspectives regarding the best way forward. (For example, the older Tanaka frowned on supporting Semenov, whom he saw as a clear liability for Japan's reputation, while the younger Araki supported a bolder stance, viewing the ataman as a useful tool for the Japanese to expand their influence in the Transbaikal.)

Two other Japanese contributors, Takao Chizuko and Yokote Shinji, focus on the movement of ideologies between Russia and Japan during the war and revolutionary years. Takao's fascinating essay charts how Russian antisemitism came to Japan during this period through channels opened up by the Siberian Intervention. Of particular importance were the army translators serving in the Russian Far East and, especially their de facto translator-in-chief, Higuchi Tsuyanosuke, who trained numerous antisemitic Russia experts during the war years and both translated and defended the antisemitic *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*. To Japan's credit, prominent intellectuals such as Tokyo University Professor Yoshino Sakuzo denounced the *Protocols* and rejected antisemitism as "an astonishingly bigoted reactionary ideology," but Takao's conclusion nonetheless suggests that the Japanese wartime experience in Siberia did indeed produce cultural transfer, in this case, a highly prejudicial one. Though virtually devoid of Jews, Japan by the 1920s became home to a coterie of outspoken antisemites whose Judeophobia was cultivated during the intervention and their service to the pro-White, anti-Bolshevik cause.

Yokote's contribution, meanwhile, underscores that antisemitism was not the only "ism" transmitted through the Russian-Japanese encounter. In fact, exposure to Russia could produce quite different, even unexpected reactions, such as was the case with the ultranationalist writer Okawa Shumei, a militarist ideologue who would eventually be indicted after World War II as the "Japanese Goebbels." As Yokote shows, Okawa's early writings reveal him as an opponent of his country's Siberian *démarche* and a supporter of Bolshevism, largely because he saw Bolshevik thought as fundamentally anticolonial and anti-Western. (For Okawa, anti-Western in the first instance meant anti-American and especially anti-British.) Given his pro-Indian and pro-Muslim sympathies, Okawa also identified with the Bolsheviks as spokesmen for

the liberation of the Muslim peoples of the old tsarist empire and, by extension, as leaders within a would-be anticolonial avant-garde that could serve his own vision of pan-Asian unity. Though Okawa had no personal link to Russia, he operated within ideological currents that tied his pan-Asian Japanese nationalism to aspects of Bolshevik ideology, and in that sense he is representative of a range of early 20th-century Russian and Japanese intellectuals who were shaped by the entanglements between the two countries.²²

Benjamin Isitt's essay on the Canadian Expeditionary Force (Siberia) is more proof of the international dimensions of the Civil War in the Far East, reminding us that Japan and the United States were not the only foreign states with armies on the ground in the region. Poles, Serbs, Rumanians, Chinese, French, and Italians operated there, too, as well as some 4,000 Canadians. Of all of these smaller players, however, the Canadian force may be the least known. As Isitt shows, the Canadian presence in Vladivostok and surrounding Maritime Province turned out to be both brief (most of the Canadian "tourists" deployed to the Russian Far East found themselves shipped home again within seven months) and ineffective, both as a result of the small size of the deployment and the muddled aims of the high command. Consequently, the whole episode tended to be downplayed after the troops got home, overlooked by veterans' groups on the one hand and hushed up by the government on the other.

Still, as Isitt suggests, for all the insignificance of the Canadians' impact on the larger course of the Russian Revolution, their short-lived presence in Vladivostok nonetheless offers an instructive reminder of the international dynamics that were an inescapable feature of the conflict in the Far East. First among these were the formal alliances and both formal and informal imperial interrelationships that transformed the Great War from a European into a global conflict and then went on in short order to have a similar extrapolating effect on the Russian Civil War, quickly turning it from an intra-Russian feud into a multisided international contest continuous with the Great War yet defined by its own far-flung geopolitics. Indeed, Canada's involvement in the Civil War, as Isitt shows, had little to do with Russia or even World War I and much more to do with the global positioning of the period. Ottawa made the decision to intervene largely out of loyalty to the British Empire and its own ambition to prove itself as an actor on the world stage.

Hayashi Tadayuki focuses on another set of foreign participants in the Siberian war—the much-chronicled Czech Legion, though unlike most historians who have studied the Legion, his chapter examines the little explored

²² For a fascinating history of intellectual entanglements around the concept of anarchism, see Sho Konishi, *Anarchist Modernity: Cooperatism and Japanese-Russian Intellectual Relations in Modern Japan* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2013).

Japanese-Czech relationship through a close reading of Japanese materials. As Hayashi makes clear, the Japanese justified their intervention in Siberia in part on the need to support the Legion in its fight against the Bolsheviks, but otherwise the two would-be anti-Bolshevik partners had little in common and viewed each other with mutual suspicion. A major point of contention was how each group positioned itself vis-à-vis the entities between them, notably the various Russians and diverse foreign armies in the Far East, but also the Koreans and the Chinese whose views turn out to have been a critical part of the mix. Formed to fight against the Habsburgs, the Legion seems to have been sympathetic to Korean and Chinese nationalist claims against the Japanese. Korean and Chinese nationalists in turn aspired to emulate the Legion—one of the Korean nationalist slogans of the day was “Learn from the Czechs!” Not surprisingly, none of this did much to help Czech-Japanese relations, which came to the brink of hostilities during the “Orlik” armored train incident in the summer of 1920.

The chapters by David Wolff and Igor Saveliev continue with themes that underscore the importance of Chinese actors and events in the Russian context. Saveliev’s article makes an important contribution by offering a detailed analysis of the impact of Chinese labor on the Russian war effort, first during the years of the Great War and then continuing into the years of the revolution. This theme is understudied, even in comparison with the relatively forgotten history of Chinese workers in France and England, though their numbers in Russia, not surprisingly given the pressing demand for wartime labor, were also considerable.

Wolff, on the other hand, analyzes the Trans-Amur (Zaamur’*e*) side of things, literally the other side of the river, focusing on the complex politics of Harbin during the war and revolutionary period. As he argues, the first true foreign intervention against Bolshevik power occurred not in Siberia or European Russia but here, in the head city of Russian Manchuria, in December 1917, when Chinese republican forces preempted the Japanese and suppressed a Bolshevik takeover of the Chinese Eastern Railway led by Martem’ian Riutin, the head of the local Soviet of Soldiers and Workers. This putsch was both anti-Bolshevik and anticolonial, but its success was short-lived. With Chinese authorities hostile to any Russian armed presence in Manchuria, hopes for a Russian-led attack against Soviet Russia by a Harbin-based army soon fell away, and by 1920, the would-be leader of the local anti-Bolshevik opposition, the CER General Manager and father figure of Russian Manchuria, Dmitrii Khorvat, found himself forced into retirement. Focusing on the complex politics of Harbin during the war and revolutionary period, Wolff presents the city as a critical site for understanding the internationalization of the revolution.

Finally, the chapters by Nakami Tatsuo and Willard Sunderland shift the focus from Manchuria and the Russian Far East to the Mongolian lands, which, though differing in a number of particulars, were nonetheless rocked by the same convulsions that unsettled the rest of the Sino-Russian frontier during the 1910s and early 1920s. Both essays highlight individuals, in Nakami's case, the Inner Mongolian nomad turned military leader Babujab, who aligned himself with the movement to create a sprawling "Greater Mongolia" in the first decade after the overthrow of the Qing in 1911, and in Sunderland's, another military leader with large-scale political ambitions—the Baltic German aristocrat and anti-Bolshevik commander Baron von Ungern-Sternberg (Ungern, for short), who briefly ruled over Outer Mongolia as a kind of imported warlord in 1921 and dreamed of transforming the country into a base for creating a new pan-Mongolian union as well as recreating the fallen Qing and Romanov empires. Babujab and Ungern could not have been more opposite in their origins, yet they were both borderland actors whose lives resonated with the volatile cross-cultural and transnational politics of their postimperial borderland milieu. Rather than separate stories, the Chinese, Russian, and Mongolian revolutions all flow and churn together here, each shaping the next in the process.

Conclusion

Though not decisive in determining the outcomes of either World War I or the Bolshevik Revolution, Northeast Asia was nonetheless a zone of immense importance during the war and revolutionary periods, not least because the region provided the theater for Japan's and China's main experience of these momentous events, and this experience, in turn, would go on to have far-reaching consequences. As Ono's analysis of military expenditures makes clear, for Japan, the rising power of East Asia at the time, World War I itself was a relatively minor affair. The country's investments in its Siberian-Manchurian intervention, by contrast, were enormous, and so too were the global repercussions of Russia's revolutionary breakdown and the broader upheaval of state collapse and foreign intervention in the wider Far Eastern region.

Fewer than 20 individuals (all men) attended the founding conference of the Chinese Communist Party in the summer of 1920, shortly after an agent of the Bolshevik-led Third Communist International (better known as the Comintern) came to China offering funds, encouragement, and know-how for creating a party organization. Indeed, the first gathering of the party was so meager it was held on a small boat on South Lake (Nanhu) near Jiaxing, not far from Shanghai. Today the lineal descendant of that tiny nucleus of dedicated cadres has grown into an organization of almost 90 million members (more

than a quarter of whom are women), a behemoth that runs the increasingly rich and powerful success that is China today.

The hand of the Russian Revolution in the making of Communist China is impossible to ignore, but our somewhat eclectic volume of essays does not attempt to address all the aspects of this relationship, not even the most important ones. Instead, the essays we offer track the events and processes that connected Russia with lands and peoples throughout Northeast Asia, intersecting with other work in the RGWR series that takes a similarly broad approach to making sense of the ramifications of Russian developments. As so much of the work in this volume suggests, events in the Russian Empire during the war and revolutionary period set off dramatic and far-reaching changes across the Northeast Asian region. Russia's hunger for wartime materiel, for example, drove a need for Japanese goods and loans, while its need for labor created a hunger for Chinese workers. Russian ideas, including noxious ideologies such as antisemitism, made their way into Japanese nationalist thought, while the roughly simultaneous dissolutions of the Qing and Romanov states opened spaces for new political imagining in indeterminate interimperial spaces between Russia and China, such as the Mongol lands and parts of Manchuria.

Actions undertaken by Russia's neighbors in the Far East for their part were no less momentous in their consequences, both for Russia/the USSR and for the wider world. Japan's Siberian Intervention, for example, was not just another major Japanese commitment to foreign war—we can see in retrospect that it also represented the shape of things to come. The remainder of the 20th century would soon emerge as an age of similarly large-scale interventions, led most obviously by Japan's massive further intrusions into East and Southeast Asia and the Pacific in the 1930s and early 1940s, followed during the Cold War years by sizeable American and Soviet interventions in diverse places across the globe, including, of course, in Asia (most notably, Korea, Vietnam, and Afghanistan).²³ Indeed, Japan's Siberian Expedition—and the broader anti-Bolshevik Allied intervention that accompanied it—set a special precedent because it was far from a minor military affair. With over 150,000 troops, advisors, and support personnel from ten foreign states fighting in Siberia, Manchuria, and Mongolia, the Far Eastern drama dwarfed Russia's other Civil War fronts as an episode in international history.

For Japan, whose experience during the period is so ably interpreted in the chapters that follow, much of what took place during these years offered critical lessons about the practices of total war, anticolonial nationalism, and xenophobia that (regrettably) did not go unnoticed. Instead, quite the opposite occurred. The experiences of the intervention were studied and repurposed

²³ Odd Arne Westad, *The Global Cold War: Third World Interventions and the Making of Our Times* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

to launch a new Japanese drive for empire less than a decade after the country's Siberian withdrawal. The so-called Mukden Incident, the pretext for Japan's invasion of northeastern China, occurred in September 1931. In Siberia in 1918–20, the Japanese had failed to find a Russian client who could assure Tokyo's interests east of Lake Baikal. In contrast, in 1931–32 the Japanese takeover would put Pu Yi, the Manchu dynastic heir, on the throne until 1945, although this too would soon deteriorate into both tragedy and farce.

For China, the lessons of the December 1917 intervention by invitation at Harbin and of the 4 May 1919 protests against the Versailles Treaty would lead to a decade of rights recovery throughout China. In Northern China, international concessions were reclaimed from Russia, Germany, and Great Britain. But only in 1953 with Stalin's death would Manchuria, up for grabs for more than half a century, come to rest firmly in the Chinese orbit. The Bolshevik's anticolonial message and Leninist methods gave the Chinese Communist Party the edge, even against the Russians themselves. The roots of this advantage lie in the period covered here.

Comparativists will also find food for thought in these essays. If a century ago a rising Japan was unable to comprehend the limits and risks of expanding spheres of influence, despite the mixed record of war and intervention between 1914 and 1922, can we hope for a rising China today to act more wisely? In 1929, John Stevens, one of the great engineers of the 20th century and the hero of Clifford Foust's article in this volume, reminisced about his service in Russia and Manchuria:

I am not giving this on any official authority whatever—but as I was in charge for 4 years, I may be supposed to know what I was there for. And I am free to say—however egotistical it may sound that after matching wits for four long years—secretly of course—I prevented the Japanese from taking the Chinese Eastern Railway... The Japanese had 70,000 and the United States—for a brief period less than 10,000 soldiers in the country, but every plot of the former was foiled and the railway remained intact.²⁴

As the People's Republic of China pursues its grand Belt and Road plan of infrastructure development in many bordering countries, should we not assume that such clandestine transborder battles are going on in Burma, Hong Kong, Kazakhstan, and Pakistan, where billions of dollars have been invested? Relatively low investment rates in Russia are also an important indicator of both financial and political intent. Would a North Korean decision

²⁴ Hoover Archives, John Frank Stevens Papers, Box 1, Chapter 2, Draft, 6.

to join the Belt and Road initiative be a step towards regional equilibrium or the opposite? No one can really say, but our history provides cautionary tales aplenty. Stevens' crowing was quickly reduced to dust, when the Japanese forced the sale of the CER to its puppet client Manchukuo in 1935 at a fire-sale price. But the tables turned again in 1945 with Russian engineers back in the locomotive driver's seat, but again, not for long. Northeast Asia continues, then as now, to be riven by national, ethnic, and systemic borders, a region at once rich in opportunity and ripe for destructive crisis.

The impact of Northeast Asia on the Russian experience of World War I and of the Russian Revolution and Civil War on the wider experience of Northeast Asia are thus critical issues of modern history. Russian specialists to date, however, have studied them too little and largely left them outside their broader narratives of the period, creating an overly geographically western tilt to the traditional war-and-revolution story. In this volume, our essays purposefully offer a view from the other side of the map. In doing this, our aim is not to critique the western focus or to diminish its importance but rather to enhance the overall picture. The tsarist world was a vast Eurasian universe whose existential crisis and ultimate collapse in war, revolution, and civil war ricocheted across all of its interconnecting parts, affecting its neighbors on all sides. Within this vast tableau, the empire's complex connections to the Northeast Asian theater deserve as much attention as any other. It is our pleasure to be able to offer these innovative essays as a set of new perspectives on the fascinating entangled histories of the region.