

**S. C. M Paine. *The Japanese Empire: Grand Strategy from the Meiji Restoration to the Pacific War*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press. 2017. 220pp. Pb.: £15.00. E-book: £12.48. ISBN 978-1107676169.**

One of the difficulties of writing about history lies in finding a unifying thread with which to weave a series of events into a coherent picture. Without this, the author would be providing merely a loose timeline of events. *The Japanese Empire: Grand Strategy from the Meiji Restoration to the Pacific War* is a recent book from S. C. M. Paine, Professor of history and grand strategy at the US Naval War College. In it, Paine chooses grand strategy as the unifying thread to chronicle Japan's 'meteoric rise ending in a shattering fall encompassing all of Asia and destroying imperial Japan' (p. 1).

This is a story of Japan's miraculous rise as a superpower enabled by a specific vision of grand strategy, which gradually receded from sight as the illogic of war escalation took hold of the country. Paine defines grand strategy as follow:

Grand strategy, in distinction to military (or operational-level) strategy, integrates all relevant elements of national power. It extends far beyond military power to encompass economic influence, co-ordination with allies, intelligence gathering and analysis, propaganda, institution building, international law, etc. (pp. 7-8)

In 187 pages of text, Paine accomplishes much without sacrificing a nuanced analysis of the tumultuous epoch. By viewing history through the lens of grand strategy, she offers readers a unique vantage point which brings into focus Japan's inner and outer dynamics (quest for a Japanese empire, interservice rivalries, etc.); centrifugal and centripetal geopolitical forces (coming to grips with the industrial revolution, shifting the balance of power in Asia, etc.); and efforts to protect its nascent power in a preestablished international system. Thus, she presents not only a coherent, but also a compelling narrative, of how the Japanese went from the ascendant Meiji Restoration to suffering the devastation of the atom bombs dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

Paine demonstrates that grand strategy is an expression of a nation's understanding of itself in relation to other powers and amidst geographic realities. It is conceived in the interplay of external conditions and inner coherence. It demonstrates a nation's ability to take account of its possessions, both tangible and intangible, recognize its more permanent features, approximate its strengths and weaknesses, and transfigure these into action directed toward a single purpose. Some of Japan's more enduring features, Paine argues, are its geography, resource scarcity and relation to the sea (pp. 104-106). These facts demanded that Japan's grand strategy be shaped around maritime power. Paine contends that Japan's success during the first Sino-Japanese and Russo-

Japanese wars largely resulted from its accumulation of the trappings of maritime power. During the second set of wars its naval capacity eroded, first gradually, then suddenly. Consequently, Japan's rise and decline coincided with its grand strategic alignment with, and rejection of, its predisposition as a maritime power. Therefore, this story is also about Japan's struggle to see itself as a maritime power as opposed to a continental empire. Paine's grand strategic history also chronicles Japan's parallel search for a coherent national identity.

One of the joys of reading Paine's works is the structure and symmetry that she imbues in her writing. This book is no exception: 'It is a story told in five parts: two wars, a transition period, and two more wars' (p. 11). The same internal structure is also maintained throughout each chapter: each begins with an explication of underlying and proximate causes, followed by an analysis of the strategic content of the war and finishing with the geopolitical and historical implications. This helps the author highlight the complications of identifying the often ambiguous causes of war. Proximate causes, which we often mistake for the sole reason for wars, tend to be the final materialization of deeper and more drawn-out underlying causes. Regarding the content of the wars, she demonstrates the imperative to calibrate grand strategy to the strategic, operational and tactical levels—and the perils of failing to do so. Finally, Paine explains the geopolitical and historical import of the wars on the national and international levels. Thus readers know what to expect in each chapter, but this in no way dulls Paine's ability to convey the significance or excitement of the events. Rather, she skilfully distils them while guiding readers through a tumultuous period of Japanese history.

Another structural feat is Paine's ability to maintain a balance in her discussion of the national, regional and international levels and to demonstrate how internal dynamics within one can impact the other two. For example, the international dialectic between the outgoing continental world order and the incoming maritime world order played out on the national level in the interservice struggle between the Japanese Army and Navy. Ultimately, these outcomes then translated into the strategic bifurcation of the regional conflicts during the second Sino-Japanese and Pacific wars.

Furthermore, the book also reminds us that institutions matter, and that 'to change domestic institutions is to change a way of life' (p. 6). Three examples stand out. It was the Prussian General Staff system which sowed the seeds of Japan's destruction, by its congenital shifting of the balance of power from civil to military organs (p. 58). And the reliance on the Meiji Generation's great personalities, to the detriment of institutional strength, permitted the corrosion of social order after the Russo-Japanese war (p. 75). Finally, the lack of joint institutions led to mutual noncompliance between the army and navy and undermined joint operations during the latter wars (p. 90).

Paine readily employs both Clausewitzian and Corbettian terminology, such as 'culminating point of victory', 'fleet in being' and 'command of the sea'. Accordingly, this book will be instructive for students of military strategy, as they will find in it the opportunity to shore up their theoretic knowledge with historical arguments. But it will also speak to a broader audience beyond the specialist crowd. Paine's history is clear and structured enough to serve as a general primer for those unfamiliar with modern Japanese history but will also offer new detail and analysis for those already working on the subject.

**Francis Miyata**  
**King's College London, UK**