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An Ottoman Staff Officer in the Russo-Japanese War (1904-1905): General Pertev Bey's Impressions and Evaluations

Doruk Akyüz

Introduction

The Russo-Japanese War of 1904-1905 is considered special by some historians due to its unique features. From a military point of view, it was considered the first modern war due to the mass use of modern weapons and seen by many as a rehearsal of the First World War with no lessons learned. From a political point of view, it is seen as the final stage of worldwide confirmation of the regional power status of Japan, beginning with its victory against China in The Sino-Japanese War of 1894-5, the inauguration of Japanese expansionism over Asia and the attendant strategic rivalry with the USA which would lead to the circumstances of 1941. Another unique aspect of this war was the role of foreign military observers. Military observers and war correspondents from all over the world rushed to the battlefields of Manchuria. While the Russo-Japanese War was not the first military struggle to see foreign observers, it served as a milestone in the actual professionalization of military observation.

Almost every detail of the war was noted down and some countries even sent a number of specialist officers from specific branches to observe the actions of the respective Japanese branch (like sanitary services).¹ Observers returned back to their countries with detailed reports and some of them

¹ David Jones, "Military Observers, Eurocentrism and World War Zero", D. Wolf, S. Marks, B. Menning, D. Oye, J. Steinberg, Y. Shinji ed., *The Russo-Japanese War in Global Perspective: World War Zero*, vol. II (Boston: Brill, 2007), pp. 143-149.

collected their observations and memoirs into books. Their observations had a serious role in the post-war development of military doctrine and war planning. In addition to this, as most of the observers were influenced by the elements of the Japanese culture of militarism (the romanticized Japanese version of Prussian militarism), they returned as sympathizers of the Japanese military ideology and cultural practices and influenced (or tried to influence) the opinion of their public and army decision-makers towards emulation.

The Ottomans also followed this trend and sent Colonel (later general) Pertev (Demirhan) Bey as military observer with the Japanese Army. As the sole Ottoman officer on the battlefield, he had to observe the operation of all the military branches that he could (naturally naval actions were absent in his report), though he only witnessed the operations of the Third Japanese Army to which he was attached. As there was no diplomatic connection between Japan and the Ottoman Empire, he also bore the task of a civilian diplomat and contacted with many decision-makers in Japan (most of them were generals), including the Emperor Meiji. He returned to Istanbul with a medal that was bestowed upon him by Emperor Meiji himself,² a detailed report (addressed to Sultan Abdülhamid II), maps of the war, and nearly 600 photographs that were taken by himself.³ In 1911, he compiled his observations with evaluations of Japanese society into a book (mainly addressed to staff officers) under the name *Material and Moral Lessons Taken from the Russo-Japanese War and the Reasons of the Japanese Victory (Rus-Japon Harbi'nden Alman Maddi ve Manevi Dersler ve Japonların Esbab-ı Muzafferiyeti)*.⁴

His experience in Japan seriously influenced Pertev Bey, who returned to Istanbul from the war very pro-Japanese. His post-war writings have a strong Japanese orientation. This intellectual stamp can also be seen in his decisions as a military officer. In many ways we could ascribe this to a general trend of Japanophilia that followed the Russo-Japanese war. However, Pertev

² He was decorated again by the Japanese Army in 1907. (Cumhurbaşkanlığı Osmanlı Arşivi (COA), BEO, 3105/232864)

³ Unfortunately, those pictures were lost during their transportation from Yıldız Palace to the General Staff Headquarters after the dethronement of Abdülhamid II. (COA, BEO, 3876/290666)

⁴ Two different transcriptions can be found today. One of them belongs to me and the other version was prepared by Ali Merthan Dünder. I used my version in this article. See S. Pertev Demirhan, *Rus-Japon Harbi'nden Alman Maddi ve Manevi Dersler ve Japonların Başarılarının Sebepleri* (Ankara: Gece Kitaplığı, 2016) for Dr. Dünder's version.

Bey never gave up his pro-Japanese attitude, even after Japanophilia trend diminished, and Japanese militarism began to be considered as a marginal ideology, after the First World War. The second edition of his book, *The Essential Power of Japanese (Japonların Asil Kuvveti)* which was published in 1942 (the first edition was published in 1937), can be considered as the zenith of his pro-Japanese attitude and he had a similar image of Japan, to those about Germany held by the pro-Germans of the era. In those days, the extensity of Japanophilia in Turkey was far from the Russo-Japanese War years and many Turkish intellectuals no longer had the same sympathy for Japan because of Japanese expansionism and their atrocities in China.

The Russo-Japanese War

The Russo-Japanese War can be considered as a colonial war between two powers who aimed to expand their sphere of influence over the same territory: Korea and Northern China. For Japan, the presence of Russia in China and Korea was a matter of national security as well as an obstacle to their colonial aims in mainland Asia. For Russia, Korea and Northern China were very crucial for its maritime trade. Russia did not have a warm-water port on its Pacific coast. The seizure of Port Arthur from China in 1898 solved this problem, unlike Vladivostok which was ice-bound at least half the year, Port Arthur was open to maritime traffic for the whole year.⁵ However, this event started the countdown of war between the two nations.

The Japanese obtained an enormous victory against China in 1895. The outcome was highly unexpected by the great powers and the Japanese territorial gains were considered excessive. France, Germany, and Russia intervened and forced Japan to give up many of the wartime acquisitions, including Port Arthur. Japan had no choice but to give in to the ultimatum. Lacking any great power ally, the Japanese decision-makers opted to be realists and decided to accept this outcome with patience, as part of their signal that they would operate along the established rules of major power politics. However, three years later the Russians occupied Port Arthur and

officially leased it from the Chinese for 25 years. This development was totally unacceptable for the Japanese since they were waiting for the opportunity to seize Port Arthur again themselves, and Russia was the primary instigator of the three powers intervention of 1895.⁶

Hostilities between two nations rapidly culminated after that year and Japan started to prepare for war (The Russian empire did not make similar preparations, though the development of the Trans-Siberian railway was pursued for both strategic and financial reasons). Russian expansionism against China in the wake of the Boxer Rebellion of 1900 also raised anxiety among the other powers. This led to the Anglo-Japanese alliance of 1902, as part of Britain's policy of finding regional allies to help guard its imperial interests. The alliance provided the Japanese with a guarantee that they would not find themselves isolated against a new Tripartite Intervention as in 1895. This time it is Russia that was the isolated state. The progress towards completion of the Trans-Siberian railway, with the potential of upgraded power projection by Russia into Far East Asia, was the triggering factor for the Japanese decision to risk war.⁷

The Japanese attack came in February 1904. Japanese torpedo boats entered Port Arthur and launched a largely unsuccessful torpedo attack on the Russian Pacific Fleet, three hours before the official declaration of war reached St. Petersburg.⁸ Unlike the unlucky pre-emptive strike, the Japanese were very successful in the war in general and won almost every battle both on sea and land. The result was a decisive Japanese victory. The war was concluded via the mediation of USA President Theodore Roosevelt (by request of Japan), and the sides made peace in Portsmouth.⁹ With this victory, Japan not only satisfied its colonial ambitions, frustrated in 1895, but also gained enormous prestige and the status of a major power.

6 Robert B. Edgerton, *Warriors of Rising Sun* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1997), pp. 97-99, Meirion and Susie Harries, p. 67.

7 Meirion and Susie Harries, pp. 74-81.

8 Edgerton, p. 99.

9 Meirion and Susie Harries, p. 92.

5 Meirion and Susie Harries, *Soldiers of the Sun: The Rise and Fall of the Imperial Japanese Army* (New York: Random House, 1991), pp. 46, 67.

Life of Pertev Bey, his Trip to Japan and Manchuria and his Writings

Pertev Bey was born in Istanbul in 1871, as the son of an Ottoman general, Mustafa Pasha. Mustafa Pasha was the adjutant of the *Serasker* (supreme commander of the army) Gazi Osman Pasha (hero of the Battle of Plevna of the 1877-1878 Russo-Ottoman War). Gazi Osman Pasha himself put Pertev Bey in the Istanbul *Kuleli* Military High School in 1883. There he met with General Colmar von der Goltz, who had recently arrived in the Ottoman Empire and taken over the organization and conduct of the training of staff corps officers, and who had a strong influence over the later Ottoman Army. Among his pupils, Pertev Bey would become the closest person to Goltz Pasha in time. In addition to being his protégé, he would become the de facto adjutant of Goltz Pasha. Naturally, this relationship played a crucial role in Pertev Bey's career.¹⁰

He graduated from the military academy in 1892 and was sent to Germany in 1894. Goltz Pasha joined him in Germany in 1895 and Pertev Bey served under the command of Goltz Pasha and General Gottlieb von Haeseler. In addition to his German-style education in Istanbul, he totally internalized the German military system in the years of his service in the Imperial German Army, to a degree where we could call him a product of the Prussian military école. He returned back to Istanbul in 1898 as one of the most promising officers of the Ottoman Army, with the rank of major.¹¹

He already held the rank of colonel and was serving as a military history instructor in the military academy when he was appointed the military attaché to the Japanese Army in 1904. At first, despite the serious interest of the Ottomans in the Russo-Japanese War, the Palace did not intend to send an observer to the battlefield. Pertev Bey seriously desired this duty and used his connection with Goltz Pasha to achieve it. He requested Goltz Pasha suggest to the palace to send an observer to the battlefield and to recommend him as the candidate. This happened, and via the recommendation of Goltz, Ottoman decision-makers decided to send Pertev Bey to the Japanese side. They also decided to send a military observer to the Russian side as well.¹²

The palace planned to dispatch both observers at the same time for sake of Abdülhamid's balance of power policy; however, unlike the Japanese, the Russians did not even respond to the Ottoman request.

As a result of this, Pertev Bey was kept waiting until Abdülhamid was sure that the Russians were ignoring the Ottoman request. He gave his permission to dispatch Pertev Bey to Japan on 1 August 1904; six weeks later, Goltz Pasha's letter had reached the palace. Pertev Bey left the country on August 11th. First, he went to Egypt with an Ottoman steamer, and from there he went to Japan with a German steamer. He reached Yokohama on September 25th. He spent nearly twenty days in Japan before going to the battlefield. Most of the time was spent on diplomatic meetings. He reached Dalny, a port town near Port Arthur on 14 October. Two days later he arrived at the battlefield and started his main mission.¹³

When he reached the battlefield, the war was in its ninth month, and the Siege of Port Arthur in its third. He missed a number of battles but was taken to battlefield tours and informed in detail about the significant clashes around Port Arthur. A positive aspect of this delay was that the stressful period of isolation for the foreign observers and correspondents by the Japanese side had passed (it was still going on at the Russian side). Foreign observers on both sides were not allowed to observe every battle and had to be content with period of enforced isolation as a method of preventing spying, or in order to hide a military fiasco. This policy by the combatants was frustrating for foreign observers and war correspondents, leading many, especially those deployed with the Russian army, to decide to leave their missions during the war. The Japanese had abandoned this attitude when Pertev Pasha arrived at the battlefield, and he freely joined every operation.¹⁴

He was usually attached to the divisional headquarters when the Japanese were conducting an operation, observed the action with binoculars, and took notes while sitting in comfort. He was promoted to general in 1905 while he was still in Manchuria. He was injured by a Russian shell while riding his

10 Doruk Akyüz, *Bir Osmanlı Kurmayının Gözünden Rus-Japon Harbi: Miralay Pertev Bey'in Gözlemleri* (Istanbul: Dergâh Yayınları, 2017), pp. 53-54.

11 Akyüz, 54.

12 Pertev Demirhan, *Generalfeldmarschall Colmar Freiherr von der Goltz: das Lebensbild eines grossen Sol-*

daten Aus meinen persönlichen Erinnerungen (Göttingen: Göttinger Verlagsanstalt, 1960), p. 70. Hasan Enver Pasha, the grandfather of the famous poet Nazım Hikmet, was selected to be sent to the Russian side.

13 Akyüz, pp. 79-84.

14 Akyüz, pp. 84-85.

horse on 16th of June. His wounds were slight, but enough to put him out of service for a while. After the war was concluded, he went to Germany first and gave a detailed report to Goltz and Haeseler (he also wrote twenty letters to Goltz from the battlefield) and then he went to Istanbul.¹⁵

Pertev Bey occupied the post of the Second Deputy of the Commander in Chief in the First Balkan War and he prepared the war plan. Failure in the First Balkan War had seriously crippled his reputation, leading to his marginalization from active military. In the First World War, he did not command troops in the field, except for a short time in the Eastern Front in the second half of 1917, and mostly remained in Izmir and Istanbul. He was sent to Austria as a military attaché at the end of 1917 and remained there until the end of the war. He also did not join the Independence War of 1919-1923, occupying instead the post of the Inspectorship of the Military Schools in Istanbul. He retired in 1931 and afterwards served as a member of the parliament for three terms. He died in 1964.¹⁶

Through his lifetime, he wrote twelve books (two of them German) and numerous articles both in German and Turkish. He planned to publish his memoirs in eighteen volumes, but only the first volume was published. This volume only comprised his journey to Japan and Manchuria and finishes with his landing on the battlefield.

Approaching the Russo-Japanese War

Pertev Bey approached the Russo-Japanese War like many non-Western intellectuals and the Young Turks in general. He took this war personally and considered it as a struggle between the East and West. He regarded the Japanese victory against a European major power as a victory of the East against the whole West, a sign of the end of Western Imperialism and the awakening of the parts of the world that had been victims of European imperial expansion. In terms of domestic politics, just like the other antagonists of Abdülhamid's autocratic rule, he considered the Japanese victory as proof of the superiority of a constitutional regime over an autocratic monarchy, and an indicator of

the obsolescence of monarchical absolutism as a political system. According to Pertev Bey, the Japanese had started a new era with their victory:

I think the Japanese ended the era which was started by Mehmed the Conqueror's conquest of Istanbul and inaugurated a new era in world history by defeating the biggest empire of Asia and Europe. The passage of time and the future will prove that the 14th Hijri (Islamic) century (1882 to 1979), which now we are living, will be the "Century of Asia" and the world will witness many more amazing events from the perspective of the awakening Asian nations.¹⁷

For him, Japan had perfectly inspired the people who were living in the outdated autocratic regimes to demand and obtain modern constitutional government like in Japan, as well as the people who were living in colonial rule to revolt against their conquerors. He evaluated the unrests in India and Egypt against British rule, and the Persian and Ottoman constitutional revolutions, as the outcome of the inspiration created by the Japanese victory: "The Japanese victory seriously inspired awakening in China, excitement in Persia, ebullitions in India and Egypt, and of course the rise of our own freedom and constitutionalism."¹⁸

Pertev Bey linked up the necessity of constitutional regime with military power via the 'Nation in Arms' concept which was expounded by his mentor Colmar von der Goltz and a product of Prussian militarism. He argued that the Japanese constituted a perfect example of the concept of the nation in arms with their renewed regime and excellent education system, which imbued their youth with the *bushido* code. For him, *samurais* were excellent warriors, but the old *shogunate* regime had limited the military service only to the *samurai* class. With the Meiji Restoration, military service was extended to the whole nation, and the warrior virtues of the *samurais* became integrated via universal education to the youth, a process that would turn them into excellent potential soldiers. He regarded the declaration of the constitution

¹⁷ Doruk Akyüz, *Bir Osmanlı Kurmayının Gözünden Rus-Japon Harbi: Miralay Pertev Bey'in Gözlemleri* (Istanbul: Dergâh Yayınları, 2017), p. 235.

¹⁸ Akyüz, p. 235. Later, he also considered the declaration of the Turkish Republic in 1923 as part of this era. (Pertev Demirhan, *Japonların Asıl Kuvveti: Japonya Niçin ve Nasıl Yükseldi?* (Istanbul: Cumhuriyet Matbaası, 1942), p. 58)

¹⁵ Akyüz, pp. 85.

¹⁶ Akyüz, pp. 56-57.

in the Ottoman Empire as a nation-wide unifying factor in the same vein as the Meiji Restoration, which led to the dissolution of the *samurai* clans and the unification of the whole country as a single state (the constitution in Japan was declared twenty-one years after that, in 1889). He believed that with the new constitutional regime, the non-Muslim citizens of the Ottoman Empire would happily volunteer to take part into the military service. He stated "The extension of military service to Muslim, Christian, (and) all citizens, today, is a sign that the Ottomans will form a tremendous nation in arms again. This nation in arms will be formed by education and training in peacetime and will be the basis of a powerful Ottoman Army in military campaigns."

As he mentioned, the only missing piece on the way to this goal was an education system infused by a militarist culture like the one in Japan.¹⁹

Taking the Russo-Japanese War as a Personal Matter

As Pertev Bey regarded the Russo-Japanese War as a struggle between the East and West, he stated that Westerners supported Russia (while the Muslims as "Easterners" supported Japan) and estimated that Japan would lose because they considered the Japanese as inferiors like the other Asian nations in stating "(the Japanese) astounded many European states which regarded them as being in the position of a baby and toy"²⁰ and "...(u)nlike the Europeans who supposed the Japanese as not battle-worthy, (but) toy-like (little) people, the whole nation is raised with military doctrines for centuries."²¹

Pertev Bey's views may not be accurate, but they do resemble the ideas of the Young Turks and in general, the other Ottoman intellectuals' views on the war.²² On the other hand, Pertev Bey was correct that most Westerners thought that Japan would lose the struggle when the war had started. However, he was wrong about the source of this viewpoint. Western people did not guess wrong about the outcome because of their racist approach as Pertev Bey had

stated, (although that does not necessarily deny their racism) but simply because they regarded Russia too big for Japan to handle. In particular, the European military professionals considered the Japanese Army much more modern and superior than the Russian, but not powerful enough to overcome the vast resources of Russia and its endless manpower. Interestingly, similar ideas about size had led most western observers to expect a Chinese victory in the 1894-1895 war. That perspective indicates a bias towards quantity existing in European military opinion of the era, rather than racism. In addition to the above reasons, the Russian railway construction had aroused a worldwide fear just before the inauguration of the war.²³ The Trans-Siberian Railway was about to be completed and one of the founding fathers of geopolitics, Halford Mackinder (1861-1947) stated that when the railway line would be completed, Russia would be able use its vast resources and easily transport its troops between Europe and the Far East, and that with this capability, it would be the Mongolian Empire of the 20th century.²⁴ This, of course, was one of the factors that led to the Japanese decision to go to war at this point of time, rather than later.

In his writings, Pertev Bey ignores all of the above factors, and focuses on just ideational factors tied to military effectiveness and ambition between Russia and Japan, factors in which Japan was noticeably superior. However, even Japanese generals were not sure about victory before the war and shared similar concerns with their European counterparts. Field Marshal Oyama, the Commander in Chief of the Japanese forces in Manchuria, considered that they had an equal chance with the Russians if Russia would get caught off-guard with a surprise attack, and as in the case of his European counterparts, Russian railway construction, funded by French capital, was the greatest fear of the Japanese.²⁵ As Mackinder stressed, the Japanese considered that Russia would be invincible when they completed the Trans-Siberian Railway, and the estimated date of its completion largely determined the timing of the Japanese attack. When the Japanese declared war on Russia, 99% of the

19 Akyüz, pp. 231-232, Renée Worringer, *Ottomans Imagining Japan: East, Middle East, and non-Western Modernity at the Turn of the Twentieth Century* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), pp. 161-162.

20 Akyüz, p. 160.

21 Akyüz, p. 214.

22 Worringer, pp. 133-134.

23 Edgerton), pp. 101, 103.

24 Halford Mackinder, "The Geographical Pivot of History", *The Geographical Journal*, Vol. 23, No. 4, April 1904, pp. 434-436.

25 Edgerton, pp. 98.

railway line was completed.²⁶ It is no coincidence that Mackinder's article, *The Geographical Pivot of History*, in which he stressed the threat posed by the Russian railway construction, was published just one month after the Japanese declaration of war. Nobody in Japan was as optimistic as Pertev Bey, and none expected a great victory before the war.

The general fear of Russian industrial growth led many Europeans to not support Russia, in the same way that many in the Muslim world embraced the cause of Japan. Furthermore, those who had a racial approach, for example German Kaiser Wilhelm II, mainly considered the Japanese Empire as the 'Yellow Peril' which was emerging as a serious rival and threat to the Western powers, rather than the land of inferior people.²⁷ Biased, orientalist approaches to Japan were very common in the Western world at that time; however, when it comes to comparing Japan with Russia, even the people who had negative feelings towards Japan regarded the Japanese as a more modern, therefore more superior, nation than the Russians, even before the war.

Japan as a Model of Modernization

For the Ottomans, as was the case with many other states and polities in the Middle East and Asia, the main question of modernization was attaining a military and state apparatus that could resist the threat of European imperialism. The Japanese victory against exactly that type of threat, at least in Ottoman eyes, was considered as the final test on the way towards modernization, and passing this test also meant successful finalization of the modernization period. In addition to this, the Japanese example was regarded to be an answer to a long debate on whether a total repression of the local pre-modern culture and institutions and their replacement by Western culture, science and institutions was a necessity for modernization or not. Many Ottoman intellectuals and decision-makers considered that Japan exemplified a modernization that incorporated local core traditions and the social identity, imported only the necessary technical and scientific knowledge. Within this

²⁶ Ian Nish, *The Origins of Russo-Japanese War* (New York: Longman, 1994), pp. 18, 242.

²⁷ Worringer, pp. 9, 54. On the contrary to other European nations, Russians in general considered the Japanese as inferiors, and their knowledge about the Japanese nation and the army were simply wrong. This approach was one of the main reasons for their defeat. (Edgerton, pp. 100-102)

perspective, Japan represented the perfect example of Westernization, and even for some, it replaced the West as the model to copy.

Pertev Bey was one of the persistent supporters of this perspective and like other Ottoman intellectuals, he considered the Japanese victory to be an outcome of this correct form of modernization. According to the perception of Pertev Bey, Westernization was a dangerous but necessary tool, and if it was not used correctly, it might lead a nation to its demise. For him, the traditions of a nation were a unique treasure, and losing them would result in the total devastation of the nation. The Japanese people were able to perfectly set boundaries to the extent of Westernization and constituted an example for other non-Western nations with their success.²⁸

He systematized this view using a 'lessons to be learned' analytical framework. This framework helped to narrow down the concepts and variables of interest, differentiating what was useful from those aspects that were redundant or harmful. This permitted the to focus on only the 'necessary' important parts of modernization while ignoring the rest. For him, foreign examples and concepts should not be considered in their totality but should carefully be examined so that only the necessary parts could be isolated and imported. In this way, the extent of change could be controlled, avoiding any harmful and unneeded changes that weaken the nation. He considered this understanding to be the key element underlying the Japanese miracle. With their strict discipline, the Japanese perfected this method and never fall under the spell of Western pleasures, never wasted time, were never corrupted, and eventually triumphed.

However, despite making these negative statements against the West, Pertev Bey cannot be considered as a traditionalist or an enemy of Western civilization. As Renée Worringer remarked, like the other Young Turks, who had sensitive approaches towards westernization, Pertev Bey gladly accepted that he was enlightened by Western civilization and learned the art of war from Europeans (particularly Germans).²⁹ He represented himself as an admirer of Western music, dancing, intellectual thinking, military history, and always preferred Western-style clothing. He had no communication

²⁸ Worringer, pp. 39, 157.

²⁹ Worringer, pp. 133-134.

problems with Europeans, never considered himself as an outsider among them, and even considered Colmar von der Goltz as a “father”, especially after his real father died in 1904.³⁰ He never objected to the presence of elements of Western culture in non-Western countries, but feared that if not checked by state action, they might come to replace the original cultural elements that belong to those countries, weakening national cohesion.

Selçuk Esenbel remarks that the Japanese and Turkish intellectuals that had considered Western history as their model, saw the multicultural mixture, which was an output of the modernization process, as incoherent in comparison to the classical West or considered that it has its distinctive characteristics, which provide a different, but positive alternative than the West in approaching modernity.³¹ It seems that the perspective of Pertev Bey suits the latter interpretation. He considered this mixture of cultures as crucial for survival and, as a person who was familiar with both cultures, achievable. For him, importing German military doctrines and institutions to Japan was extremely crucial, but preserving the old Japanese military traditions was crucial too, and this cultural mixture produced an unstoppable power.³² He usually was reproachful of attempts to use Turkish traditional cultural elements in order to reject interaction with Western culture. As an admirer of classical music, he complained that Turkish folk songs had never been performed by symphony orchestras and considered this an example of backwardness due to isolation (but still considered as a cultural treasure).³³

He was justly sensitive about the ratios of the mixture and considered that if the local and the foreign elements were too low or drained, the output would be useless. From his perspective, Japan replaced Europe as a model exactly because of its ability to perfectly balance the mix in their modernization program. He assumed that Turkish and Islamic military culture also shared many common elements with Japanese *bushido*, and consequently it should not be hard for the Ottomans to increase the power of their army to the level

attained by the Japanese. He remarked that Muslims have the same self-sacrifice tradition as the samurai in saying “We also know that ‘martyrdom’ (*şehadet*) and ‘holy war’ (*gâza*) which are part of jihad, have a great spiritual influence on soldiers...”³⁴ “For Muslims, it is not hard to understand the reason for giving no value to life. Our own life has no importance to us since we believe in the afterlife and fate.”³⁵

Pertev Bey also stated that the Japanese had made an excellent decision in not abolishing *bushido* principles together with the samurai class, and thanks to this decision, now they were ingraining the warrior features of samurais into the Japanese youth by education.

The era of feudalism had ended with the era of shogunate, and the class of daimyos and the samurai were officially abolished since Emperor Mutsuhito moved to Tokyo from Kyoto as the sole ruler of Japan. However, now the rules of bushido are obeyed more than ever, and the people show their loyalty and devotion which they showed to feudal chiefs in past, to their emperor, the sole ruler of the nation... The military service which was only limited to feudal circles is now expanded to the whole nation and now (the Japanese) can use the excellent virtues of bushido abroad...³⁶

For him, if the Ottomans properly ingrain their traditional military values into their society as a whole and integrate modern military doctrines, there is no reason not to elevate the strength of their army to the level of the Japanese, and this alternative mixture would be even better than the European Armies since they were not familiar with that kind of self-sacrifice based moral values.³⁷

Tracing the Prussian Core within the Japanese Army and Society

The Ottoman and Japanese Armies had a fundamental common qualification; both armies had been adapted to the Prussian military system after an initial French influence. As a product of Prussian military école, Pertev Bey easily

30 Pertev Demirhan, *Hayatımın Hatıraları: Rus-Japon Harbi 1904-1905* (Memoirs of my Life: Russo-Japanese War 1904-1905) (Istanbul: Matbaa-i Ebüzziya, 1943), p. 84.

31 Selçuk Esenbel, *Japon Modernleşmesi ve Osmanlı: Japonya'nın Türk Dünyası ve İslam Politikaları* (Istanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2012), p. 248.

32 Akyüz, pp. 214-215.

33 Pertev Demirhan, *Musiki Düşüncelerim* (My Thoughts on Music) (Istanbul: Matbaa-i Ebüzziya, 1946), p. 11.

34 Akyüz, p. 202.

35 Akyüz, p. 213.

36 Akyüz, pp. 214-215.

37 Akyüz, pp. 202, 213-215.

identified the Prussian elements within the Japanese Army. He observed that the command-and-control practices and army institutions (like the general staff and medical service corps) were identical to those of the Imperial German Army. He stated that he witnessed the same practices when he served in the Imperial German XVI Corps.³⁸

For him, Japanese victory also meant confirmation of the Prussian military école. For him, the Japanese had achieved superiority over the Russians exactly for this reason. He especially drew attention to the incorporation in the Japanese army of the German *Auftragstaktik* doctrine, with its focus on initiative by subordinate command echelons. He noted that the Japanese possessed the ability to conduct spontaneous movement, and this initiative at the tactical level caused the remarkable operational inequality between the two armies.

*Spontaneous movement ability is especially important in modern battles. Because casualties among officers and non-commissioned officers have dramatically increased in comparison with older battles and the battlefields have extremely expanded so that a company may now occupy a 200-300-meter-wide area. Under these circumstances, soldiers may find themselves out of the chain of command and having to make decisions on their own. Thanks to the excellent peacetime drills and training, Japanese troops overcame even the most critical moments. However, when Russian officers were put out of action, troops became like a herd of sheep without a shepherd and always fled in disorder.*³⁹

A 'spontaneous movement' order is only acceptable if the commanded and commander are trained in the same style, with the same thought. If this condition is not fulfilled and the commanded and the commander do not understand each other, spontaneous movement could even be harmful. The Japanese won the last war (Russo-Japanese War) with a remarkable glory and honor thanks to Jacob Meckel, the pupil of Helmuth von Moltke, who taught the modern conduct of war to the Japanese commanders and their

38 Perteve (Demirhan), *Mançuri Darü'l-Harbinde On Bir Ay Zarfında Tarafeyn Ordularının (Japonya-Rusya) Usul-i Harbiyle Teşkilat, Teçhizat Hususatına Dair Layiha* (1321) (The Report of Conduct of War, Organizations, and Equipments of Russian and Japanese Armies in Manchurian Battlefield within Eleven Months), İstanbul Büyükşehir Belediyesi Atatürk Kitaplığı (İBBAK), Nadir Eserler, Belediye Yazmaları, BEL_Yz. B.000043, pp. 3-4, Akyüz, pp. 188, 200.

39 Akyüz, p. 187.

*general staff corps.*⁴⁰

As Perteve Bey remarked, the German system was much more reliable for the modern battlefield. Russian operations were likely to cease in some locations of the field, due to command and control problems, while Japanese ones were usually kept going on under the same conditions.

Besides the military doctrines, it seems that Perteve Bey also detected the influence of Prussian militarism in Japanese society, yet he had not mentioned the fundamental origin of this aspect. Like military doctrines and institutions, the idea of indoctrinating the youth and preparing them for the military service by education (explained above) was also imported from Germany.⁴¹ Perteve Bey identified the name of the concept; the "Nation in Arms" (*Das Volk in Waffen* in German, *Millet-i Müselleha* in Ottoman Turkish), but did not describe it as part of Prussian militarism and instead introduced it as an original Japanese concept.⁴²

Unlike Perteve Bey, British observer General Ian Hamilton (1853-1947), an officer from a non-Prussian school of military education, failed to detect in detail the German elements present in the Japanese Army. He mentioned that the Japanese Army had been strictly modeled on the Prussian organization model, and argued that this helps to explain some of its characteristics, as he went on to note that in the second volume of his Russo-Japanese War memoirs.⁴³ However, he never named those characteristics, as Perteve Bey did. Also, like Perteve Bey, he regarded the militarism of Japan as a purely Japanese aspect whose roots belonged to the history of the nation and never used the term "Nation in Arms".⁴⁴

Anatomy of his Report to Abdülhamid II

After he returned to Istanbul in 1906, he gave a detailed report to Sultan Abdülhamid II (never published). Five years later, he published *Material*

40 Akyüz, p. 200.

41 Meirionand Susie Harries, pp. 39-40.

42 Akyüz, pp. 231-232.

43 Ian Hamilton, *A Staff Officers Scrap Book During Russo-Japanese War*, Vol. II (London: Edward Arnold, 1906), pp. 17, 133.

44 See Hamilton, *A Staff Officers Scrap Book During Russo-Japanese War*, Vol. I and Vol. II.

and *Moral Lessons Taken from the Russo-Japanese War and the Reasons of the Japanese Victory*, a compilation of his observations, analyses about Japan, and his suggestions to the Ottomans. Since both writings are aimed at teaching lessons, both of them pointed out military and political problems, and naturally, both of them were politically oriented. However, because of the occurrence of the Young Turk Revolution, a fundamental political alteration that happened in 1908 in which the class of Pertev Bey, the staff officer corps, was the protagonist, these works have a different character from each other.

Abdülhamid was an autocratic leader who wanted to control all political elements within the country. As the army posed the most crucial domestic threat to his throne, Abdülhamid was always suspicious about the intentions of his officers, and probably the army suffered the most from Abdülhamid's authoritarianism and paranoia. Because of the fear of a coup attempt like the one that brought him to power, Abdülhamid tried to design an apolitical officer corps that was completely loyal to him. However, seeking loyal officers rather than capable ones and designing army institutions according to this aim seriously undermined the war-fighting capability of the army. He always avoided appointing his talented German-educated and military academy graduated staff officers to the senior command post, retaining instead officers loyal to him in high posts for long years.⁴⁵

To ensure loyalty, he attached the general staff to the *Seraskeriye*, an obsolete legacy of the French military model implemented in the 1840-1880 period, which was led by officers who had not graduated from the military academy or war school. In addition to this, he founded the *Teftiş-I Askeri Dairesi* (Department of Military Inspection) and *Maiyet-I Seniye-I Erkan-ı Harp Dairesi* (Department of Privy General Staff), which were commissariat institutions aimed to check and control the *Seraskeriye* and the general staff.⁴⁶

Besides the leadership, he also tried to keep the army itself in a condition that rendered it incapable of taking action against him. The army was never allowed to make divisional and higher-level unit maneuvers. In addition to this, real bullets were never given for fire exercises, all combat training was always made with unloaded weapons, and troops were not even allowed to

properly arm themselves with the newest weapons from the inventory.⁴⁷

Those problems were to come to the surface with the Greco-Turkish War of 1897. The result was a victory for the Ottomans in the Thessaly front (the Epirus front was a stalemate, and the Ottoman army was defeated in Crete); but, the ineptitude of the Ottoman high command was very significant and the enemy was too inferior to consider this victory as a success. The war revealed that the Ottoman command and control system was very deficient and troops were inept at maneuvering. The units always had problems with deployment and making contact with the enemy. Flanking and envelopment maneuvers mostly ended up in frontal attacks and Ottoman troops could not conduct successful pursuits.⁴⁸ In addition, the Hamidian policies of restricting the ability of the military were catastrophic at the sea, where the smaller Greek navy was dominant, a factor that largely explains the minor gains for the Ottoman military on land.

During the war, in continuation of peacetime policy, the German-educated officers were systematically kept away from positions of high command. Pertev Bey was even kept away from the war itself. He was in Germany when the war broke out. He went to the Ottoman Embassy and requested to join the war, but his request was denied; naturally, he took it as personal insult. Like Pertev Bey, military academy officer graduates became seriously disillusioned with Abdülhamid's leadership during this war and considered his behavior as a security risk.⁴⁹

His post as an observer obliged Pertev Bey to write a report to Abdülhamid and with this opportunity, he found a perfect platform to deposit his critiques to him, which his fellow officers usually did not have. It seems he did not miss that chance and dedicated the first three parts of the first chapter of his report (general evaluation chapter) to Abdülhamid's influence on the army and the general staff. However, he never openly criticized Abdülhamid, but only gave examples for comparison from the Japanese and Russian Armies with some suggestions. The Russo-Japanese War provided him a parallel dimension to draw attention to the realities of the day which he was not able to do by giving direct examples from Abdülhamid's leadership. In this dimension, the

45 Mesut Uyar and Edward J. Erickson, *A Military History of the Ottomans: From Osman to Atatürk* (Santa Barbara: ABC CLIO, 2009), p. 206.

46 Ibid. p 206

47 Mesut Uyar and Edward J. Erickson, p. 211.

48 Mesut Uyar and Edward J. Erickson, p. 211.

49 Pertev Demirhan, *Generalfeldmarschall Colmar Freiherr von der Goltz*, p. 35.

Russians mainly resembled that day's Ottomans, a nation which had lost its way, and the Japanese resembled what the Ottomans ought to be.

He dedicated the first three parts of the first chapter to his subtle critiques. In the first part, titled "The Commanders", he evaluated the level of initiative which was given to Japanese generals and admirals. He stressed that the Emperor of Japan never intervened in the war effort and left the decision-making to his commanders. Pertev argued that this liberty was very crucial for the Japanese victory. In addition to the example of the Russo-Japanese War, he also remarked that the Prussian King Wilhelm never intervened in operations during the Franco-Prussian War of 1870-1871, and totally left the initiative to his generals, and the French lost the war because of the intervention of civilian bureaucrats and Emperor Napoleon III.⁵⁰

Pertev Bey was completely correct about the freedom granted to the Japanese generals; however, he omitted that the Russian generals also enjoyed more or less the same freedom, which means that the Japanese had no superiority over Russians in this aspect. Also, his history of the Franco-Prussian War was inaccurate. He was right that the Prussian monarch never intervened in the war, but omitted that his main civilian servant, Chancellor Otto von Bismarck (1815-1898) regularly intervened in the operations of the war and had long disputes with the Commander in Chief Helmuth von Moltke (1800-1891).⁵¹ His stress on the non-intervention of monarchs in the operational conduct of wars, which covered most of this part (he left a short section to discuss the skills of the commanders who had joined the war), was a subtle reference to the Greco-Turkish war and the attempt by Sultan Abdülhamid to control almost every aspect of the army in this war. The Greco-Turkish War would probably be the best example of that era of the ill effects of monarchical intervention in the conduct of war. However, he avoided mentioning the Greco-Turkish War by giving opposite (but less accurate) examples for political reasons.

The second part is devoted to the discussion of the general staff. This time, he openly criticized the Ottoman Army (but not Abdülhamid himself) and gave no negative example from the Russian Army. He remarked that

Japanese staff officers occupied every post which was necessary for their career, and he considered this practice crucial for the formation of a capable staff officer. Then he criticized the Ottoman system where staff officers were never assigned to field command, and instead given redundant bureaucratic positions. He stated that a staff officer corps with no field experience would have no value in wartime and suggested copying the Japanese example of assigning staff officers to every level of troop units, according to their ranks, joining maneuvers, the conduct of map maneuvers (war games), and other tactical and operational based educational activities. In addition to the condition of staff officer corps, he also criticized the Ottoman General Staff. He suggested disbanding redundant branches which were not relevant in a modern general staff and prepared a suggested new general staff branch schema.⁵²

In the third part (titled *The Infantry*), Pertev Bey touched on the issue of training and maneuvers. He remarked that Japanese troops had excellent training and their performance was so good that the soldiers knew what to do even when their officers were taken out of action in the battle. Like soldiers, officers had serious experience, thanks to the continuous field and map maneuvers. For Pertev Bey, peacetime maneuvers and hard training were the most crucial factors contributing to the Japanese victory. In contradiction to the Japanese, the lack of realistic training, the dominance of obsolete methods of command and control among Russian troops, and the lack of field experience of the Russian officer corps led the Russians to a bitter defeat.⁵³

The other parts of the chapter (Cavalry, Artillery, Engineer Troops, Uniform, Logistics, Sanitary Services, Ammunition, and the Future of the Russian Empire respectively) contained general evaluations and lessons learned, with no critical approach to the Ottoman Army and Abdülhamid himself (except a short reference in the part devoted to the artillery, in which Pertev Bey complained about the low-level training of the artillery corps). In this chapter, Pertev Bey totally discredited the Russian Army (though this was not a unique perception since most other foreign observers shared similar denunciations) and represented the Japanese Army as the icon of

50 Pertev (Demirhan) 1906: 1-3.

51 Edgar Feuchtwagner, *Bismarck* (London: Routledge, 2003), p. 174.

52 Pertev (Demirhan), 1906: 3-5.

53 Pertev (Demirhan), 1906: 5-6.

perfection, whose practices needed to be copied. However, in other chapters (which were left for his observations with fewer evaluations) he was not as critical of the Russians as he was in the first chapter. Indeed, later in this report he noted many tactical and operational mistakes on the part of the Japanese. Those chapters are very accurate and contain vivid descriptions of the battlefield.

Pertev Bey had very different remarks in *Material and Moral Lessons Taken from the Russo-Japanese War and the Reasons of the Japanese Victory*, compared to his earlier report to Abdülhamid. Since it was written after the Young Turk Revolution of 1908 and the dethronement of Abdülhamid in 1909, the army was under the control of the German-educated staff officers, and the problems that were stressed by Pertev Bey in his original report had all been solved. There was a large purge of the officers that had been promoted to command position by Abdülhamid, and the staff officers now were able to occupy their long-desired posts. The *Seraskeriye* and the other inspector institutions were abolished and the general staff remained as the sole administrative institution of the army. The reform of the general staff, which had been suggested by Pertev Bey, was completed by Ahmet İzzet Pasha (1864-1937), another protégé of Colmar von der Goltz. The fall of Abdulhamid also saw the inauguration of a program of large-scale maneuvers and realistic training for the troops. Naturally, Pertev Bey did not repeat the tacit critiques and call for reform that he wrote in 1906 in his new *Material and Moral Lessons*, which was published in 1911. In the book, he argued that the Ottoman Empire was carefully following the steps of Japan, and the halfway point of reform was attained with the Young Turk Revolution and the reforms which followed it. At the end of the *Material and Moral Lessons*, he described the Ottomans as an old nation which was being reborn and argued that the state's imminent threat of dissolution was about to end and the future of the empire would be bright.⁵⁴

Doctrinal Lessons from the Russo-Japanese War

Pertev Bey's arguments about the war and Japan as a country reflected the typical ideas of an educated non-Western person focused on the question of

modernization in the face of the threat of imperialism. In the same way, his arguments about military lessons to be extracted from the war reflected the attitudes of a German educated staff officer and were quite similar to those of other western-educated military officers.

Pertev's staff training provided him the skills of an excellent observer. But when it came to drawing conclusions, he extracted from what he saw, and critical thinking skills inherent in staff training did not protect him from committing serious fallacies. In his report, his observations were very realistic and he pictured the battlefield in every detail. On the contrary, his evaluations of what he observed were very unrealistic.⁵⁵ The ever-developing weapon technology had already rendered the mass infantry assault tactics used by the Japanese obsolete since the 1850s. The battlefields of the Russo-Japanese war confirmed the tactical lessons of the Austro-Prussian War of 1866, the Franco-Prussian War of 1870-1871, and the Russo-Ottoman War of 1877-1878. Infantry assaults against defended positions cause horrendous losses for the attacker. The war proved that current weapon technology was dramatically in favor of the defender. Maneuvering, advancing to the enemy in open ground, and especially frontal attacks were extremely lethal, and achieving objectives was much harder than in old battles which made a deadlock on the battlefield very likely.

Yet, Pertev Bey regarded that frontal bayonet attacks (arguably the most dangerous and hardest tactical operation in battle), were still feasible and necessary to attain a decisive result. This, he held, was the case even if the attacker was outnumbered, and he argued that the Japanese victory was a confirmation of the superiority of the offense at both the operational and tactical level (but mostly at operational level). He thus did not argue for any fundamental change in current tactics.⁵⁶

⁵⁵ It can be said that the "Material Lessons" chapter of the *Material and Moral Lessons Taken from the Russo-Japanese War* was mainly related to his observations and the "Moral Lessons" chapter was mainly involved his evaluations and conclusions. In the Material Lessons chapter, he describes fundamental changes in the nature of warfare and conduct of war, however, in Moral Lessons chapter he almost totally ignored those changes, confirmed the usefulness of conventional tactics, and stated that the superior moral values of the Japanese were the most determinant and remarkable factor of the war.

⁵⁶ Akyüz, pp. 200-202.

⁵⁴ Akyüz, pp. 235-236.

He did draw attention to the lethality of modern weapons and their ability to stall an attack numerous times (especially if it was conducted against fortified positions) and approved of every precaution the Japanese took against these factors. His descriptions of the battlefields are very terrifying. However, his final conclusion was that the suicidal Japanese tactics had overwhelmed technology. He ignored the lethality of modern weapons and argued that the Japanese way was the path to victory. He always praised the warrior spirit of self-sacrifice, which, he argued, guided the Japanese soldier, and resulted in repeated determined Japanese attacks until victory was achieved, no matter how horrendous the losses. Conversely, he derided the Russian defensive tactics and stance, and attributed their defeat also to their unwillingness to take the offensive.

Japan influenced Pertev Bey in many aspects, but the moral values of the Japanese soldier obviously influenced him the most. Like many military men, he regarded the Japanese victory as the confirmation of the effectiveness of the offensive tactics on the modern battlefield and concluded that a morally superior army with disciplined and trained soldiers who are willing to sacrifice themselves would overcome any obstacle.⁵⁷ According to this train of thought, his main advice was to achieve the Japanese spirit, rather than tactical and organizational changes to the doctrine by which the army fought.

Many of the officers of Western armies came to almost the same conclusions as Pertev Bey. Almost every observable element was written down in this war, yet the lessons they chose to extract from their observations was tinged by a bias that still sought to stress a Napoleonic focus on the offensive spirit. Pertev Bey stated that “this war taught us almost no material lessons, the fundamental principles of (the nature of) warfare haven’t been changed”, as a general evaluation of the war in the introduction of *Material and Moral Lessons Taken from Russo-Japanese War*.⁵⁸ Field Marshal Ferdinand Foch (1851-1929), a French military theorist who developed the official doctrine (regulations) of the French Army prior to the First World War (1913 and 1914), wrote almost the same sentence in reaction to the Russo-Japanese War. He stated that there was nothing in the Russo-Japanese War that would “affect the fundamental

principles of the conduct of war” in the second edition of his book, *Conduite de la Guerre* (1909).⁵⁹

These conclusions inevitably affected future wars in a negative way. Military historians today regard the Russo-Japanese War as ‘the war of lessons never learned’ due to the failures in the First World War. However, erroneous tactical conclusions from the Russo-Japanese War dominated the conduct of the 1912-1913 Balkan Wars and they were the main reason for the Ottoman defeat in detail and heavy casualties on all sides. Pertev Bey was occupying the post of the Second Deputy of the Commander in Chief before and during the 1st Balkan War and was tasked with preparing the war plan. His plans were strongly influenced by the conclusions he had extracted from his observations in the Russo-Japanese War. There was a focus on the operational offensive with a very sudden and aggressive attack against Bulgaria, to knock it out as soon as possible, and then focus on the other foes (like the German Schlieffen Plan in World War One).⁶⁰ The condition of the Ottoman Army was definitely not suitable for an offensive operation at that time (especially an energetic one as Pertev Bey planned), and even its chances in defensive warfare were doubtful. The task given to the army by Pertev Bey was beyond its ability, and disaster followed the implementation of his war plans.

After the failure, Pertev Bey blamed deceased War Minister Nazım Pasha (1852-1913), arguing that conducting an offense against the Balkan Alliance was Nazım Pasha’s. He claimed that he had suggested defense and continuously warned Nazım Pasha that the army was not ready for an offensive operation yet.⁶¹ Nazım Pasha was not able to defend himself from these accusations (both Pertev Bey’s and other officers’)⁶² since he had

⁵⁹ Joseph C. Arnold, “French Tactical Doctrine, 1870-1914”, *Military Affairs*, Vol. 42, No. 2, Apr. 1978, pp. 64.

⁶⁰ There were twelve pre-prepared plans for the operations in Balkans and all of them were prepared by Ahmet İzzet Pasha. Plan No. V among them was the sole plan which was based on fighting against four Balkan nations and this plan dictated defense. However, Pertev Bey put into practice Plan No. I for the Eastern Army, a defensive plan solely against Bulgaria and modified this plan to attack, and Plan No. IV for the Western Army, another defensive plan against Bulgaria, Serbia, and Montenegro. No plan was put into practice against Greece because they hadn’t declared war on the Ottoman Empire yet at that time.

⁶¹ Pertev Demirhan, *Balkan Savaşı’nda Büyük Genel Karargâh* (General Headquarters in Balkan War) (Istanbul: Alfa Yayınları, 2012), p. 20.

⁶² Edward Erickson, *Büyük Hezimet, Balkan Harpleri’nde Osmanlı Ordusu* (Istanbul: İş Bankası Yayınları, 2013), p. 111.

⁵⁷ James D. Sisemore, *The Russo-Japanese War, Lessons not Learned*, U. S. Army Command and Staff College, 2003 (unpublished MA thesis), p. 109.

⁵⁸ Akyüz, p. 160.

been assassinated by men in league with Enver Pasha during the raid on the Sublime Porte coup on January 23, 1913.

Pertev Bey's defense contradicts his arguments as put in writing before the First Balkan War. In those writings, he argued for an offensive stance as the only possible option for attaining victory. The war plan put into effect by the Ottoman army in the initial weeks of the First Balkan War was one based on the cult of the offensive, and in many ways carried the stamp of the Japanese experience in the Russo-Japanese war. In the end, whether he prepared the Balkan War plan willingly or not, the new regime apportioned blame to him, painting him as an ambitious officer enthralled by the cult of the offensive. His military career was virtually devastated. He never occupied important posts in either the First World War or the Turkish War of Independence, never was appointed to general headquarters again, nor commanded troops on the battlefield.

As mentioned above, war plans that sought to end a potential future war quickly via a reliance on the offensive were a general trend at that time. The Balkan opponents of the Ottomans also relied on brutal infantry assault tactics, with the Bulgarians especially relying on massed bayonet attacks (though they preferred, if possible, to conduct them during the night). Of course, nuance existed. The Serbians made excellent use of their quick-fire artillery for supporting their assaults, a combined arms approach that had been seen as the answer to the limitations of the offense as far back as 1864. All other European officers who had extracted the same conclusions as Pertev Bey from the Russo-Japanese War were solid supporters of the operational offense. As a result, they planned the first stages of what became the First World War with a focus on rapid offensive operations. The result was debacle, stalemate and trench warfare. The moral factors that they had all stressed as explaining the Japanese success would come to play a different role, keeping armies and societies willing to continue an increasingly costly and long-enduring war effort.

Conclusion

Japan and its modernization effort influenced many Ottoman intellectuals, politicians, and military men. One of the spaces this influence can be seen is

in the influence that the Russo-Japanese war casted on their writings about political issues. This was the case with Pertev Bey, who extracted from his observation of the Russo-Japanese War a number of radical conclusions about Japan, the path to modernization, and military policy. What makes him unique among many others is that he remained loyal to his initial conclusions well into the 1940s.

He idealized many aspects of Japan: its social framework, its internal and external political functions, its military (both its doctrines and its structure), its religious attributes, and above all its method of modernization. For him, Japan was an icon of success in modernization, and he recommended that the Ottoman modernization effort should model itself after the Japanese. In the end as an (apolitical) officer he could only affect the question of military modernization. He failed to convince Sultan Abdülhamid to implement army reforms according to the view he had formed of the Japanese Army.

Those reforms were actualized by the staff corps after the declaration of the Second Constitution, but that was only because his ideas and views were widely shared by his contemporaries. The organization and training reforms he had stressed as playing a role in the Japanese victory gave the Ottomans a reformed army that (though defeated in the First Balkan War), was able to hold its own in the First World War and provided the foundation for victory in the Turkish War of Independence. On the other hand, when given the opportunity to put to practice his doctrinal conclusions from the Russo-Japanese War (that stressed the offensive), the result was a disaster for the Ottoman Army in the First Balkan War. On a career level, his fidelity to his idealized model of Japan had proved to be detrimental.

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Railroads of the Glorious Empires in the late 19th Century: From the Great Game to the Russo-Japanese War of 1904-5

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Introduction

The course of the nineteenth century until the aftermath of the Russo-Japanese War of 1904-5 reveals invaluable information as to countries’ railroad development. Railroads built by the British Empire, the Russian Empire, and the Empire of Japan –the most prominent empires of the nineteenth century– have changed the currents of world history. Moreover, worth mentioning is the Great Game theory, based on the rivalry between the British and the Russian Empires. The Great Game enabled the framework for a design of more extensive railroads constructed in Afghanistan, such as the Trans-Caspian railway built in 1880. Moreover, it is plausible to draw a more general outline by elucidating the retaliation by the British Empire that resulted in the structuring of the “Harrai Road Improvement Project.” The reprisal by the British created pressure on the Russian part, leading the Russians to construct a line developed as the Sind Peshin State Railway.¹

Railroads gained momentum and became pivotal for countries’ development, intelligence sharing, and expansion, with numerous conflicts to ensue. Consequently, railroad construction enabled the Russian Empire, the British Empire, and the Empire of Japan to confer prestige on their territorial borders –or colonies– as the world’s most notable ones. However, it is of ultimate

¹ Farnworth, Roger. “Railways in Iran – Part 6 – Foreign Articles – Collection A.” Roger Farnworths, 2012.