

## Two Persian texts from the Qajar Period on the Russo-Japanese War: A comparative analysis of *Bahr al-Fawa'id* and *Mikadonamah*

Seyed Ayat Hosseini \*

Department of East Asian Languages and Literatures, Faculty of Foreign Languages and Literatures, University of Tehran, Tehran, Iran.

Article Info	Abstract
<p>Original Article</p> <p>Main Object: International Relations                      Scope: Iran, Russo-Japanese War</p> <p>Received: 10 November 2024                      Revised: 25 November 2024                      Accepted: 26 November 2024                      Published online: 30 November 2024</p> <p><b>Keywords:</b>  <i>Bahr al-Fawa'id</i>, constitutionalism, Japan, <i>Mikadonameh</i>, Russia.</p>	<p>Previous studies on Iranian perspectives regarding the Russia-Japan War have highlighted works written by Qajar-era Iranians in support of Japan. This article, by comparing two Persian texts from the Qajar period, first aims to illustrate the diversity and divergence of Persian-language viewpoints on the Russia-Japan War; secondly, to contribute to a clearer understanding of how Iranians' mental image of other nations was formed in the modern era. The author of <i>Bahr al-Fawa'id</i> supports Russia, arguing that Russia's defeat in this war would be detrimental to Iran, citing economic, cultural, and political reasons. He emphasizes the role of Britain and other Western powers in instigating and prolonging this war, ultimately leading to Russia's defeat. From his perspective, the best way to strengthen the nation is through popular support for the reigning monarch. In contrast, the author of <i>Mikadonameh</i>, a figure associated with the Constitutional Movement, views the Russia-Japan War through the lens of constitutionalism. He sees Russia as Iran's historic enemy and considers Britain the ideal model for the world, believing that national strength can only be achieved through the establishment of a constitutional government and the promotion of knowledge and justice. In summary, the authors of both works hold extreme and opposing views in their support of contemporary powers and adopt entirely conflicting stances on the Russia-Japan War and its implications for Iran.</p>

**Cite this article:** Hosseini SA. (2025). "Two Persian texts from the Qajar Period on the Russo-Japanese War: A comparative analysis of *Bahr al-Fawa'id* and *Mikadonamah*". *Countries Studies*. 3(2): 55-59. doi: <https://doi.org/10.22059/jcountst.2024.385186.1183>.



Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International License

Website: <https://jcountst.ut.ac.ir/> | Email: [jcountst@ut.ac.ir](mailto:jcountst@ut.ac.ir) |

EISSN: 2980-9193

Publisher: University of Tehran

## Extended Abstract

### Introduction

The Russo-Japanese War (1904–1905) not only reshaped geopolitical dynamics in East Asia but also left a significant cultural and ideological imprint on various regions, including Iran. Previous research on Iranian perspectives of the Russo-Japanese War has often emphasized the pro-Japanese sentiment prevalent among Qajar-era Iranian writers.

### Aims

By examining *Bahr al-Fawa'id* and *Mikadonamah*, this paper highlights the nuanced diversity of Persian-language perspectives on the war, thereby contributing to a broader understanding of the complex ways in which modern Iranian perceptions of foreign powers were shaped.

### Methods

This study expands on such findings by comparatively analyzing two Persian texts from the Qajar period that engage with the Russo-Japanese War. The first text, *Bahr al-Fawa'id*, authored by Mohammad Yousuf Mohajer Heravi under the pen name Riazi, comprises twelve chapters, with the concluding chapter—“An Account of the Conditions and Battles of the Russian and Japanese States”—entirely devoted to the Russo-Japanese War. The second text, *Mikadonamah*, is a substantial epic poem of over two thousand verses on the Russo-Japanese conflict, penned in 1906 by Hossein Ali Tajer Shirazi, a merchant and poet supportive of the Iranian Constitutional Movement.

### Findings

This study uncovers a broad spectrum of attitudes within Qajar-era Persian writings on the Russo-Japanese War. The findings reveal that the author of *Bahr al-Fawa'id* demonstrates a marked affinity for Russia, viewing it positively and interpreting its defeat as adverse to the welfare of Iranians and Muslims. He articulates twelve economic, political, and cultural arguments, suggesting that Russia's loss detrimentally impacts these groups. In his assessment, Russia showed restraint in its initiation of the conflict and sought peace to prevent unnecessary loss of life. The author lauds Peter the Great, attributing Russia's later difficulties to a departure from his principles. He critiques Western nations, especially Britain, as instigators of global instability, alleging that Britain incited Japan to prolong the war against Russia. Moreover, he attributes Japan's success to military, political, and intelligence support from Britain, the United States, and France. He disapproves of the constitutionalist movement, viewing Russian insurgents as constitutionalists, and contrasts Japan's citizen loyalty to the emperor with what he perceives as a lack of loyalty among people in Muslim lands.

In contrast, the poet of *Mikadonamah* offers a distinctly pro-Japanese viewpoint, celebrating Japan and rejoicing in Russia's defeat. He portrays Russia as a longstanding antagonist to its neighbors, including Iran, suggesting that many Iranians eagerly anticipated its loss. Unlike the author of *Bahr al-Fawa'id*, this poet admires Britain as a model of modern progress, advocating friendly relations with Britain and an emulation of its institutions. As a supporter of the Iranian Constitutional Movement, he interprets the Russo-Japanese War through a constitutionalist lens, making "constitutionalism" a central theme in his work. He contends that nations such as the United States, Britain, and Japan advanced through constitutional governance and parliamentary institutions, where justice prevails, rulers act judiciously, and investments in education and science yield both qualitative and quantitative growth. He argues that Iran should adopt constitutionalism to overcome formidable adversaries like Russia, advancing through justice and scientific inquiry.

The creators of these works, like other Qajar-era intellectuals, take divergent and often extreme positions in their allegiances to Russia and Britain. The author of *Bahr al-Fawa'id* venerates Russia while condemning Britain as a pernicious force, whereas the poet of *Mikadonamah* regards Russia as an enemy and Britain as a paragon of modernity.

### **Conclusion**

By examining these two texts in tandem, this study deepens our understanding of how Qajar-era writers engaged with global political events to reflect on Iran's place in the modern world. Their works reveal that attitudes toward foreign powers were not monolithic but rather shaped by complex factors, including personal affiliations, political ideologies, and visions for Iran's future. This comparative analysis enriches the historiography of Iranian intellectual thought, offering new insights into the diversity of Persian-speaking perspectives on the Russo-Japanese War and the evolving Iranian perception of foreign nations in the early modern period.

### **Conflict of interest**

The author declared no conflicts of interest.

### **Ethical considerations**

The author has completely considered ethical issues, including informed consent, plagiarism, data fabrication, misconduct, and/or falsification, double publication and/or redundancy, submission, etc. The authorship of this article was not given to artificial intelligence.

### Data availability

The dataset generated and analyzed during the current study is available from the corresponding author on reasonable request.

### References

- Abedi K. (2023). *Selected Japanese Studies by Iranians in the Age of Modernity*. Tehran: Jahan-e Ketab. [in Persian]
- Brun H, Hersh J. (1976). *Socialist Korea: A Case Study in the Strategy of Economic Development*. New York, NY & London, UK: Monthly Review Press.
- Connaughton RM. (1988). *The War of the Rising Sun and the Tumbling Bear: A Military History of the Russo-Japanese War 1904–5*. London, UK: Routledge.
- Foroughi MA. (2009). *Daily Notes of Mohammad Ali Foroughi* (Afshar I, Ed.). Tehran: Library, Museum, and Documentation Center of the Islamic Consultative Assembly. [in Persian]
- Haag-Higuchi R. (1996). "A topos and its dissolution: Japan in some 20th-century Iranian texts". *Iranian Studies*. 29(1-2): 71-83.
- Hirama Y. (2004). *The World History Changed by the Russo-Japanese War: One Century of the "Samurai"-nation Japan*. Tokyo: Fuyo Shobo. [in Japanese]
- Hwang KM. (2010). *A History of Korea*. London, UK: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Jukes G. (2002). *The Russo-Japanese War 1904–1905*. Essential Histories series. Wellingborough, UK: Osprey Publishing.
- Kasravi A. (1978). *The History of the Iranian Constitutional Revolution*. Tehran: Amir Kabir. [in Persian]
- Kim SS. (2006). *The two Koreas and the Great Powers*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Krebs G. (2012). "World War zero? Re-assessing the global impact of the Russo-Japanese War 1904-05". *The Asia-Pacific Journal*. 10(21): 2. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/20620667>.
- Maragheh'i Z. (1978). *The Travelogue of Ebrahim Beyg*. Mo'meni MB. (Ed). Tehran: Nashr-e Andisheh. [in Persian]
- Malikyans M. (2017). *The Country of the Rising sun, or the Government of Japan*. Corrected, annotated, and commented by Danianour A. Tehran: Safir Ardehal. [in Persian]
- Naghizadeh M, Zakeri G. (2018). *Japanology in Iran: A study of the Evolution of Iranian Perceptions of Japan*. Tehran: Alhoda International Publishing. [in Persian]
- Palasz-Rutkowska E. (2000). "Major Fukushima Yasumasa and his influence on the Japanese perception of Poland at the turn of the century". In Edström B. (Ed.). *The Japanese and Europe: Images and Perceptions* (pp. 223-240). Japan Library.
- Rajabzadeh H. (2004). *Japan, Yesterday and Today*. Tehran: Cultural Studies Publication in cooperation with the International Centre for Dialogue Among Civilizations. [in Persian]
- (1992). "The Russo-Japanese War as narrated by Iranians". *Ayandeh*. 6(Spring-Summer), 91-105. [in Persian]
- Riazi Heravi MY. (2021). *Ayn al-Waqaye': The History of Afghanistan in the Years 1207-1324 AH*. Fekrat Heravi MA. (Ed.). Tehran: Dr. Mahmoud Afshar Publications in cooperation with Sokhan. [in Persian]
- (1906). *Bahr al-Fawa'id*. Mashhad: Sacred Razavi Publishing House (Lithograph). [in Persian]
- Schimmelpenninck van der Oye D. (2005). "The immediate origins of the war". *The Asia-Pacific Journal*. 3(12): 1-15.
- Sorkhi M. (2023). *The Russia-Japan War, 1904 to 1905: The first Modern War in the World*. Tehran: Arman Roshd. [in Persian]
- Steinberg JW. (2008). "Was the Russo-Japanese War World War Zero?". *The Russian*

- Review*. 67(1): 1-7. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9434.2007.00470.x>.
- Storry R. (1979). *Japan and the Decline of the West in Asia, 1894–1943*. New York, NY: St. Martin's Press.
- Tajer Shirazi H. (2006). *Mikadonameh*. Miransari A. (Ed.). Supplement to *Ayeneh Mirath Quarterly*. New Series 4(Supplement 9). Research Center for Written Heritage in cooperation with Osaka University of Foreign Studies. [in Persian]