PART VI

Global Repercussions
The First World War was a seminal event in the chronicles of mankind. The greatest conflagration in military history until then, it generated political and social developments that signalled the end of an era and shaped much of the twentieth century. For the last nine decades countless books and articles have sought the reasons for the occurrence of this titanic conflict. They often cite the system of alliances before the war, and imperialism, nationalism and militarism as its primary underlying causes. Others have focused on the immediate causes of the war, particularly the slide, some referred to it as an ‘accident’, that led to a clash five weeks after it was supposedly sparked by the assassination of the Austrian Archduke Franz Ferdinand in Sarajevo on 28 June 1914.\(^1\) None of these studies deems the Russo-Japanese War a major cause for the outbreak of the First World War, and most of them overlook the earlier clash altogether, treating it at best as a remote colonial war temporarily affecting Russia.\(^2\) Studies on the Russo-Japanese War itself fared no better and for years none of them argued for any causal relations between the two events. This view has changed recently, starting perhaps with a major edited volume on the war entitled: *The Russo-Japanese War in Global Perspective: World War Zero* (2005). The editors maintain in the preface that the modern era of global conflict began with the Russo-Japanese War rather than in 1914.\(^3\) Although they do not argue explicitly for a link between the two conflicts, nor elaborate much on their contention, the intriguing title inspires an inevitable question: in which way did the Russo-Japanese War affect the outbreak of the First World War?

The effect of the Russo-Japanese War on the subsequent Great War, I argue in this chapter, was momentous and far-reaching. It went well