

Rise of Japanese Militarism

- *Japan embarked on an expansionist foreign policy and expanded overseas*
 - *The tensions between the civilian politicians and military leaders worsened as the ultranationalist military commanders grew in prominence and influence in Japan's politics (cuz of the military victories in the early 1900s against China and Russia) → Many Japanese military commanders were ultranationalists*
 - *They believed that military service was an honour and a noble calling → felt that it was Japan's destiny to remove the Western powers from Asia and expand its rule over Asia → beliefs would become extremely popular in Japan, especially after the annexation of Manchuria*
- *On the other hand, the civilian politicians increasingly lost the trust of the people who perceived them to be weak*
 - *During the 1930s the military became increasingly dominant, and by 1936 it was effectively running Japan → The Japanese saw B,R,US as rivals and Obstacles to achieving their ambitions*
 - *In their view, the United States had already abandoned them with its economic policies against Japan in 1930s, leaving thousands of Japanese workers in unemployment when it stopped importing goods from Japan*
- *The USSR was seen as a big threat too, as they were pro-communist, in which communism teaches that societies should not be run by emperors and kings but by the people → communism was a dangerous ideology that had to be combated + USSR's border with Japan's empire in Manchuria was a major cause for concern*
- *In 1936, Japan signed the Anti-Comintern Pact with Italy and Nazi Germany to avoid communism → another powerful reason for Japan to control territories in Asia— to hold back the USSR and gain the resources it would need if it ever warred against the USSR*
Manchurian Crisis

With the changes in domestic politics, worsening relations with the Western powers and the economic problems in Japan, building a new empire was a means to protect their economy → For the great majority of these commanders and politicians, the obvious place for Japan to expand was through the conquest of China's territory, particularly in Manchuria

- *By 1931, the idea that influence and control should be extended over Manchuria had gained a lot of ground in Japan → Manchuria was rich in coal and iron and was seen as the perfect solution to Japan's lack of natural resources*
 - *China was facing some troubles and instability at that time, which seemed to provide the perfect Opportunity for Japan to expand further and annex Manchuria → Japan realised that the instability China was facing could even be used as an excuse for the expansion—Japan could claim to be trying to stabilise the region*
 - *In September 1931, a part of the railway track at Mukden was blew up → The Japanese blamed it on the Chinese government and used it as an excuse to take over Manchuria*
- *By December, they controlled most of the region*
- *Followed by the success of conquering Manchuria, the Japanese aeroplanes and gunships bombed Shanghai later in 1932*
- *On 7 July 1937: a full-scale war broke out between China and Japan because of the Marco Polo Bridge incident*
- *As the Allies were preoccupied with their colonies, the Japanese seized the opportunity to advance in the East, to build a Great East Asia Co-prosperity Sphere → Japan's desire to build a powerful empire led them to having conflicts with the US → caused the deterioration in the relations of both countries and tensions to rise*
- *This ultimately lead to the outbreak of WW2 in Asia-Pacific Failure of the LON*
- *For the LON, this was a serious test to see if they were capable of solving an international dispute and force an aggressor state to back down → LON presented the Lytton report on the incident only after a whole year (September 1932)*

Lytton Report

- *The conclusion was clear—Japan had acted unlawfully and Manchuria should be returned to the Chinese → February 1933: instead of withdrawing from Manchuria, the Japanese announced that they intended to occupy more of China*
- *On 24 February, the Lytton Report was approved by 42 votes to 1 in the League's General Assembly, only Japan voted against it → rejected the Lytton Report + resigned from the League on 27 March*

- LON's economic sanctions were powerless without the support of the United States, Japan's main trading partner + B also did not sanction Japan as it seemed more interested in maintaining a good relationship with Japan + LON could not ban arms sales to Japan because the member countries could not agree on that
 - They were worried that Japan would retaliate and escalate the situation → B+F would not risk their navies or armies in a war to stop Japan → only US and USSR would have the resources to remove the Japanese from Manchuria by force, but they were not League members
 - The USSR even sold a railway line in northern Manchuria to the Japanese

Consequence of the Manchurian crisis

- It tarnished the prestige of the League and demonstrated that the League was helpless in the face of aggressor nations such as Japan
- It also undermined the confidence of League officials to tackle future crises
- The LON failed to solve many issues happening in the world and caused tensions to rise high between the countries · This ultimately contributed to the outbreak of WW2 in Asia Pacific

Japan-United States Relations

- Great Depression: the United States introduced a range of tariffs in 1930 to protect its own economy
- 1937: tensions between Japan and the United States rose once again with Japan's invasion of China → US condemned Japan's actions and provided financial and military aid to the Chinese leader, Chiang Kai-Shek → also prompted the US government to take a progressively harsher line on Japan
- President Roosevelt was worried about Japan's growing ambitions and wanted to keep its expansion in check. Thus, he announced a series of financial and economic measures designed to halt Japan's aggressive foreign policy → The initial sanctions proved to be ineffective, and Japan occupied French Indochina in 1940 → an embargo was placed on raw materials such as steel and iron in October 1940

- *After the failure of the negotiations between the United States and Japan, and the refusal of Japan to withdraw from China and Indochina → oil embargo was imposed in August 1941*
- *Roosevelt resurrected a law from WWI, Trading with the Enemy Act, which seized Japanese assets in the United States, making it unable to buy essential goods → an attempt to strangle Japan financially → The most serious impact was that Roosevelt's measures would cut off almost 90% of Japan's oil supplies*
- *The US demanded that Japanese troops withdraw from China and promise not to threaten any territories belonging to the United States or its allies → completely unacceptable to the Japanese → would mean Japan could be bullied and intimidated by the US + the only alternative seemed to be a conflict with the US*
- *The US policy led to Japan and US relations deteriorating and causing tensions between both countries*

Attack on Pearl Harbour [Trigger]

- *Even with the increased output of Manchuria, Korea and all its other territories, Japan could not challenge the power of the US outright*
- *In September 1940, Japan signed the Tripartite Pact, which made it an ally of Germany and Italy → meant to be insurance against US intervention*
- *The Japanese commanders also decided that they needed to deliver a quick knockout blow to the United States from which the latter would take time to recover → In that time, Japan would be able to conquer new territories, build up its economic resources and match US power*
 - *Admiral Yamamoto Isoroku devised a preemptive strike against the United States → targeted the powerful US Pacific Fleet base at Pearl Harbour which protected US and other Western interests in Asia*
- *7 December 1941: 300 planes took off from Japanese aircraft carriers to launch their attack on Pearl Harbour*
- *While the attack caused widespread destruction, Japan failed to destroy American repair shops, fuel-oil tanks and other crucial naval installations → All 3 of the US Pacific Fleet's aircraft carriers escaped unscathed as they were not present at Pearl Harbour → After the attack, the US declared war on Japan which triggered outbreak of WWII in Asia Pacific*