

# Timeline Modern Japan 1854-1938

## Perry “Opens” Japan

**1853:** Commodore Matthew Perry lands in Japan, which the Tokugawa Shogunate had ruled since 1603.

**1854:** Commodore Perry returns to Japan and at cannon point forces the Shogunate to sign the *Treaty of Kanagawa*. This ends Japan’s 251-year isolation.



Perry’s Black Ships arrive in Edo (Tokyo) Harbor 1854

## The Harris Treaty

1858: Townsend Harris, first U.S. Counsel to Japan, convinces the Shogunate to sign *Treaty of Amity and Commerce*, which grants the U.S. access to eight Japanese ports and Most Favored Nation status. European nations followed close behind the Americans and established their own treaties with Japan. All these treaties, like the treaties Western countries had with China, were un-equal treaties which meant Japanese had no rights within foreign enclaves and foreigners were not subject to Japanese laws.



Townsend Harris, First U.S. Counsel  
Japan

## Meiji Restoration

1868: The Shogunate was disposed after a brutal civil war, and the Emperor now becomes “Head of State”. This was known as the *Meiji Restoration* named for the Emperor Meiji. Japanese leaders traveled to Europe to determine which form of government might best suit Japan. They decided to model Japan on the German Imperial system and a constitution, known as the *Meiji Constitution*. A unique feature of the Constitution was that the Army and Navy reported directly to the Emperor and had no responsibility toward the civilian government. The Japanese military was also based on European models. The Army initially modeled on France’s military, settled on the German model, after Germany defeated France in 1870. The Navy was based on the British model.



Emperor Meiji

## First Sino-Japanese War

1894-95: First Sino-Japanese War erupts over perceived Chinese meddling in Korean affairs. Japan easily defeats China and obtains Formosa (Taiwan), Ryukyu and Pescadores Islands and the eastern portion of the Liaodong Peninsula on the Chinese Mainland through the *Treaty of Shimonoseki*. Russia also coveted The Liaodong Peninsula. Russia joined with France and Germany to force Japan to “return” the captured land to China in exchange for China paying for Japan’s war debt.



Signing of the Treaty of Shimonoseki 1895

## **Boxer Rebellion**

1900: Japan militarily joins Western nations threatened by the Boxer Rebellion in China. As a result of its efforts, Japan obtained special privileges. These privileges later played a role in the commencement of the China Incident of 1937.



Japanese Troops during the Boxer Rebellion...Beijing 1900

## Japanese-British Naval Alliance

1902: Japan and Britain sign a Naval Alliance between the two island nations. Both countries see the alliance as deterrent to Russian hegemony and to protect mutual interests in China. It also marks Japan's break from living under Europe's shadow and unequal treaties. The alliance ended with the advent of the Washington Naval Agreement 1922.



## Russo-Japanese War

1904-05: Japan had harbored resentment against Russia since the Japanese ceded territory won during the first Sino-Japanese War. Meanwhile, Russia was expanding its influence in China's northern regions, especially Manchuria. Russia was also attempting to increase its influence in Korea. This was intolerable to the

Japanese, who notified the Russians that they would need to take appropriate action when necessary. They did this by launching a surprised attack on Russian forces at Port Arthur in Manchuria. Fierce land battles between the Japanese and Russians were fought, with both sides sustaining high casualties. Hoping to crush the Japanese, the Tsar sent his Baltic Fleet from Europe to the Sea of Japan for a decisive battle. Japanese Admiral Togo outfought the Russians and scored a dramatic victory.



Japanese Fleet defeats Russian Baltic Fleet in the Tsushima Straits

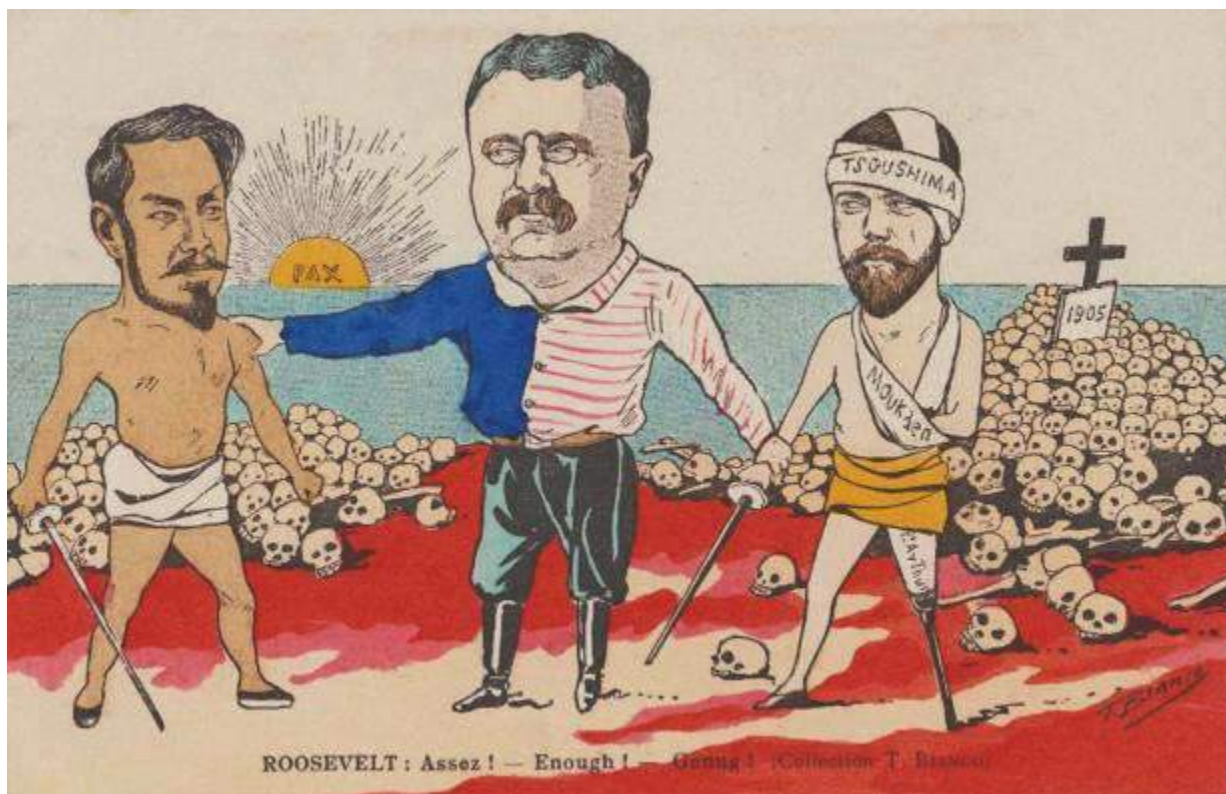
## Treaty of Portsmouth

**1905:** After the Battle of Tsushima Straits, the Japanese asked President Theodore Roosevelt to help negotiate a peace between Russia and Japan. At first, Roosevelt favored the brash Japanese against the Russians, but he began to grow weary of perceived threats to American interests if Japan became too strong.

Japan's priorities were to secure control in Manchuria, Korea, retain all of Sakhalin Island and receive an indemnity from Russia paying for Japan's war cost. This latter demand was essential as the war had financially devastated Japan.

Russia's demands were retention of Sakhalin, no indemnity payment, and the right to partially keep a portion of its fleet in the Pacific.

Japan, which had not won a decisive enough victory, was convinced by Roosevelt to give back the northern part of Sakhalin to Russia and to not request an indemnity in return for receiving much of southern Manchuria and Korea. The Japanese public was outraged with the treaty. After the death of over 100,000 soldiers and a broke treasury, they had expected at least an indemnity from Russia. Anti-treaty and Anti-American demonstrations soon erupted in Japan over the indemnity issue.



## Annexation of Korea

**1910:** Two months following the *Treaty of Portsmouth*, Korea, became a protectorate of Japan. The Korean monarchy tried to bring its grievances regarding Japan to world attention, but instead Japanese pressure increased until August 22, 1910, when the *Japan-Korea Treaty of 1910* formalized the annexation of Korea into the Japanese Empire.

The "Japan Times" Extra.

明治三十三年八月二十九日發行 號外 (明治三十三年八月二十二日 第三種新聞紙認可)

Tokyo, Monday, August 29, 1910.

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# JAPAN AND KOREA MADE ONE.

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## THE EMPEROR OF JAPAN REIGNS OVER CHOSEN NOW.

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### FOREIGN INTERESTS IN KOREA RECEIVE FULL PROTECTION.

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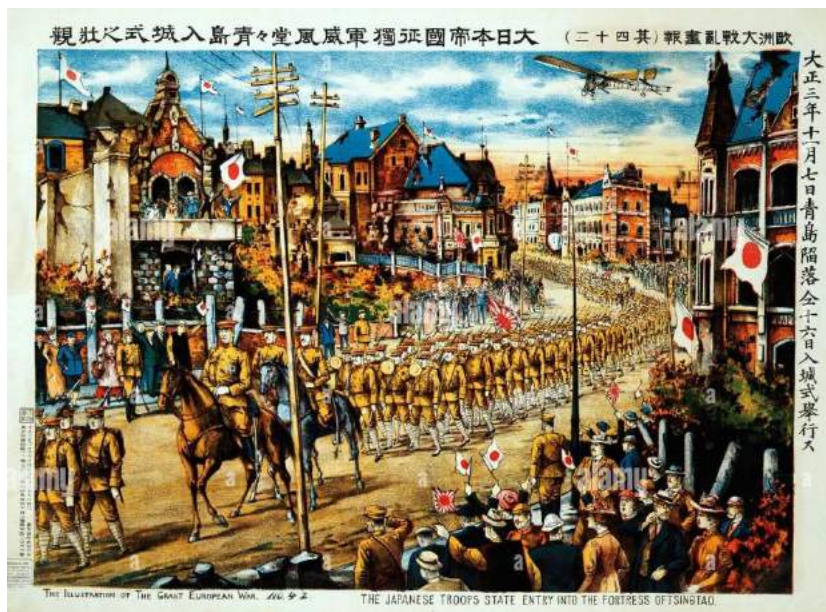
<p><b>DECLARATION.</b></p> <p>Notwithstanding the earnest and laborious work of reforms in the administration of Korea, in which the Governments of Japan and Korea have been engaged for more than four years since the conclusion of the Agreement of 1905, the existing</p>	<p>foreign as well as Japanese, will these be admitted and goods may be imported into and exported from those ports.</p> <hr/> <p><b>THE TEXT OF THE TREATY OF ANNEXATION.</b></p>	<p>Treaty, and have affixed thereto their seals.</p> <p>Viscount MASAKATA TERAUCHI, Resident-General.</p> <p>The 22nd day of the 8th month of the 43rd year of Meiji.</p> <p>YE WAN YONG, Minister President of State,</p>	<p>arrangement, telegraphed to the Japanese Government in the evening of the 20th, the final draft of the Treaty of Annexation, and requested that it be submitted to His Majesty the Emperor of Japan for approval. His Majesty referred it to the Privy Council which specially met on the 22nd, and Imperial sanction was then</p>
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## World War I: Japan Joins the Allies

**1914-1918:** Honoring its Alliance with Britain, Japan sent Germany an ultimatum on August 15, 1914 demanding all German shipping leave Japanese and Chinese waters and that Germany surrender its Chinese treaty concession of Tsingtao (Qingdao). Upon receiving no reply, Japan declared war on Germany August 23, 1914. Japan laid siege to Tsingtao on August 27 and the city fell on November 7, 1914. Japan now had another foothold on China and had defeated another major European nation.

With the advent of unrestricted submarine warfare by the Germans, Britain asked the Japanese Navy to assist the British Navy. Japan agreed if the British recognized its gains in China and its control over the German colonies in the Pacific. Britain agreed to Japan's demands.



Japanese Troops March Into Tsingtao—November 1914

## Twenty-One Demands

**1915:** Japan issued a set of demands to China on January 18, 1915, known as the *Twenty-One Demands*. These were secret demands that would significantly extend Japan's control of China. Under the secret demands, Japan would retain Tsingtao and gain special privileges in Manchuria and southern Mongolia. The Japanese would also expand control of Chinese railways. Section Five of the demands were the most onerous. It would provide Japan with means to control China's finance, policing, and government affairs. Thus, making China a protectorate of Japan. China released the secret demands to the Western Powers which leaned upon Japan to drop the demands, especially Section Five.

In 1916, Japan did eliminate Section Five and submitted a much weaker set of demands. China instituted a nationwide boycott of Japanese goods, which decreased Japan's exports. This, and the fact that in 1917 China joined the Allied cause, which increased Western pressure, forced Japan to further limit its demands to those it had already obtained from China before 1914, with exception of retaining control of Tsingtao. The United States considered Japan's actions to be a violation of the "*Open Door Policy*."

*Chicago Daily News* March 13, 1915



## Siberian Expedition

**1918-22:** During the Russian Revolution, the Czech Legion became cut off in Siberia. It was apparent to President Woodrow Wilson that the Japanese were marching to help the Czechs but also to expand their influence in Manchuria and beyond. Wilson was determined that the Japanese should not take unilateral action. Both countries agreed to send 8,000 troops to Vladivostok to maintain order and to patrol the Siberian railway, so that the Czechs could escape.

By the time the U.S. troops arrived, their presence was no longer necessary. The Czechs had already escaped and there was nothing for the American troops to do, other than tussle with the Japanese troops, which had increased its contingent by adding 12,000 troops. The Japanese began expanding over a vast territory including parts of Siberia and Manchuria. This caused a great deal of consternation among the American leadership since Japan's actions had little to do, in American eyes, with the original defined mission.

Finally, without really consulting Japan, Wilson unilaterally withdrew U.S. forces from Siberia. Since the Japanese were still fighting the Bolsheviks, they increased their troop total to approximately 80,000. The Japanese withdrew from Siberia in 1922, and the animosity between the U.S. and Japan continued to fester and grow.



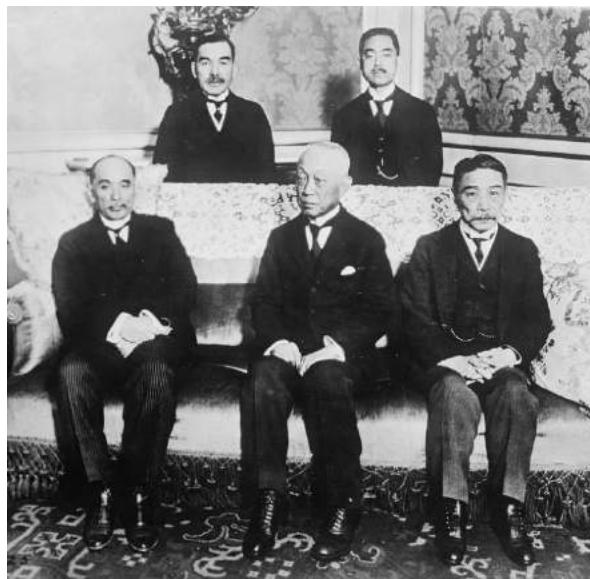
Troops from various nations involved in the Siberian Expedition

## Versailles Peace Treaty & League of Nations

**1919:** Japan was viewed as one of the major victorious powers following World War I along with the United States, Britain, France and Italy.

One of Japan's initial claims was the Shandong peninsula which contained Tsingtao. China vehemently protested Japan's claim as did the other Western Powers, including the U.S. Japan, however, threatened to withhold support from the League of Nations, so Wilson and the Western Powers relented. Japan was permitted to control Tsingtao until 1922. The Powers also mandated all of Germany's Pacific Island territories to Japan. Japan in turn did support the League and became one of four permanent members to the organization.

Another significant difference arose between the United States and the Western Powers on one hand and Japan and China on the other. Both Japan and China wanted a clause introduced in the treaty that guaranteed racial equality for all nations and peoples of the world. This was something that the Western colonial powers and the United States would never agree to, thus it was vetoed. This was noticed by a rising Japanese statesman and later three time premier Konoe Fumimaro, who prior to the Peace Conference had written an essay entitled, *"Reject the Anglo-American Centered Peace."*



Japanese Delegation Paris Peace Conference 1919

## Washington Naval Conference

**1922:** Following the “War to End All Wars”, nations began to turn away from the use of force as national policy. The world entered a period of treaties, principles and abiding by the rule of law. This was the time of “Wilsonian Internationalism”. Although the U.S. did not join the League of Nations, it did actively participate in the formulation of many of the major treaties, such as the *Kellogg-Briand Treaty* which “outlawed” war.

A major arms reduction initiative was the Washington Naval Conference. The outcome of this conference was designed to create parity among the world’s naval powers. With regard to the Pacific, the United States and Great Britain felt that Japan had the distinct advantage of focusing solely on the Pacific and not requiring a two ocean navy as the other two powers. A maximum ratio was set for battleships beyond which each nation would need to destroy existing ships or cease building new ships. The ratio was based on 100,000 tons of shipping. The United States and Britain negotiated a ration of 5:5:3, with Japan receiving the lesser amount. The U.S. Navy, for example, scrapped 15 existing battleship and ceased building two new battleships. Japanese negotiators reluctantly agreed, much to the chagrin of nationalist and Navy leaders, who felt the ratios were unfair. The Japanese did utilize some of the scrapppd hulls to construct a new type of ship not covered by the treaty...the aircraft carrier.



HONOURABLE RATIO:  
OR, NAVAL CONVERSATIONS IN LONDON.  
"THE HONOURABLE RATIO WAS NOT THE ONLY ONE INTRODUCED AT  
THE WASHINGTON CONFERENCE AND TREATY."

## The Nine Power Treaty

**1922:** As the Washington Conference was underway, the United States decided to raise the issue of the “*Open Door Policy*” regarding China. Specifically, the Americans wanted all countries with an interest in China to allow equal access to their treaty ports and their various spheres of influence. The U.S. also wanted to ensure Japan honored its commitment to exit the Shandong Peninsula and Tsingtao. An agreement was drawn up and signed by nine nations that guaranteed the sovereignty and integrity of China, which at the time was nothing more than a gaggle of warlords fighting for control of provinces.



## Anti-Japanese Immigration Laws

**1921-24:** There had been deep racial discrimination against Asians in the United States since the 1880s. The first set of exclusion acts were targeted at Chinese immigrants beginning in 1882 with the Chinese Exclusion Act. The act was made permanent by the Geary Act in 1902.

After World War I, Japanese immigrants became victims of racial targeting, even though they were allowed to settle in the United States as stipulated in the 1911 Commerce Treaty. The primary anti-Japanese movements were focused on the west coast with California and Washington leading the way. White farmers were concerned regarding the competition from Japanese farmers, who were outproducing them. A series of land laws were passed to ensure only U.S. citizens could own farmland, but the Japanese farmers found loopholes, angering the White population even more.

Another bone of contention was citizenship. Japanese immigrants were prohibited, unlike European immigrants, from becoming U.S. Citizens. Two Supreme Court decisions validated this perception of U.S. Immigration laws. Then in 1924, Congress passed the Immigration Act of 1924, which cutoff all immigration from Japan to the United States. This set off anti-American riots in Japan and a Japanese citizen even committed ritual suicide in front of the U.S. Embassy.



## London Naval Conference

**1930:** The world's naval powers reconvened in London to determine tonnage ratios for heavy cruisers and destroyers. Once again the United States and Britain attempted to saddle Japan with a lower ratio. Japan did win some small concessions but in the end the final ratio was 10:7 in favor of the U.S. and Britain. Japanese opinion of the agreement was highly negative and brought forth a wave of nationalism and militarism that would not abate until 1945.



Delegates London Naval Conference-1930



## Manchurian Incident & U.S. Non-Recognition

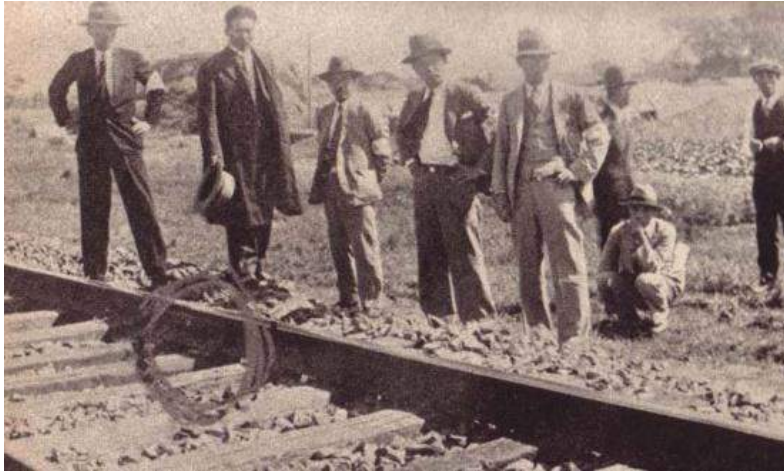
**1931-33:** Militarism was on the rise in Japan, especially among the lower and middle echelon of the officer corps in both the Army and Navy. An action sprang from this group which would affect Japanese policy until the attack on Pearl Harbor. This action was called ***Gekokujo***. Simply, *Gekokujo* meant that actions taken by lower level field and bureaucratic commanders directly impacted decisions taken by Upper and Top Level Military & Civilian leaders.

On September 18, 1931, two Army officers attached to the Kwantung Army, which was assigned to protect the Japanese owned South Manchuria Railway (SMR) or *Mantetsu*, ordered their troops to place a small bomb under SMR track. The explosion did practically no damage (the track was repaired in five minutes) but the Japanese used it as a means to launch an attack against the Chinese led by warlord Marshall Zhang Xueliang. Zhang, had allied himself with the Nationalist (Kuomintang) leader, Chiang Kai-shek.

The Japanese Army leadership and government attempted to stop the fighting and halt its troops, but efforts by the local Japanese commander in Korea prevented any stoppage and the Kwantung Army spread throughout Manchuria driving out Zhang's troops.

Japan now declared that its troops were provoked and added it had aided a spontaneous uprising of the Manchu people against their Chinese oppressors.

U.S. Secretary of State Henry Stimson was not buying what Japan was selling. Instead, Stimson issued a policy of "Non-recognition" which stated that any treaty or agreement made by force in China was a direct violation of the *Nine Power Treaty*. Britain was asked to join the U.S. in this policy but declined wanting instead to rely on the League of Nations.



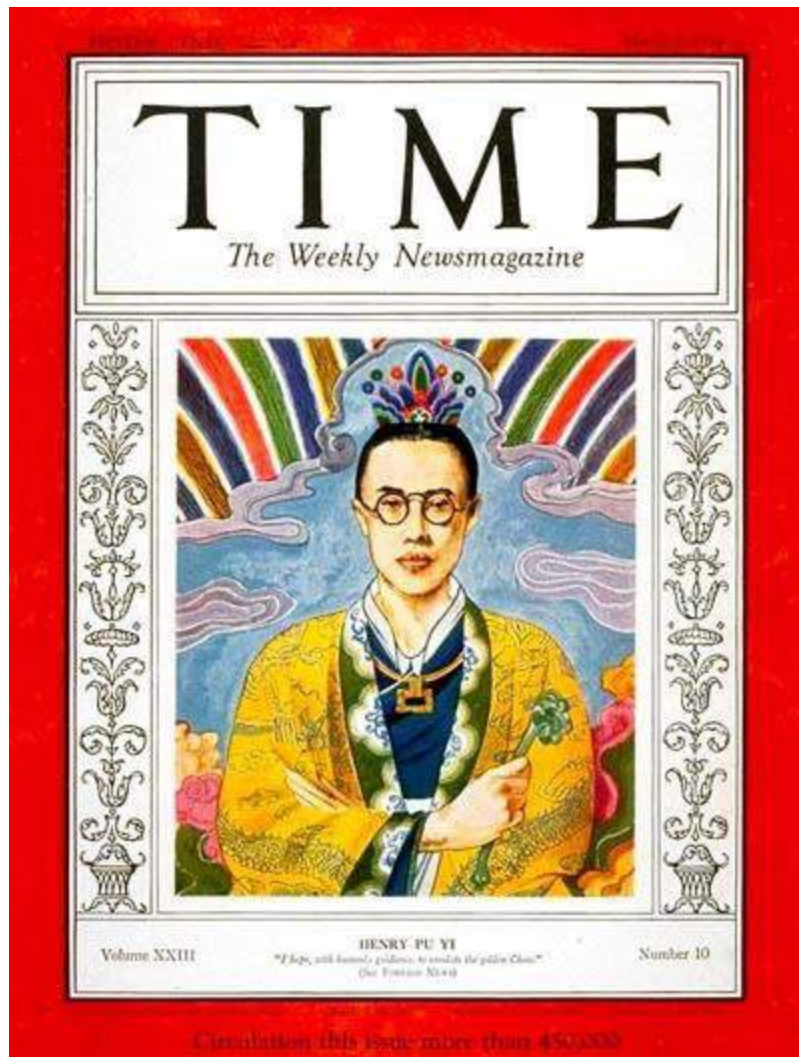
The circle is the spot where the bomb which set off the Manchurian Incident was placed.

## **Japan Exits the League & Manchukuo is Formed**

**1933-34:** The Lytton Commission was established by the League of Nations to determine what actually happened in Manchuria and whether it was a national uprising or an act of Japanese aggression.

While the Commission did claim that Japanese rights and interests should be recognized in Manchuria, it flatly stated that Japan was the aggressor and no internal independence movement existed. The League approved the Commission's findings, resulting in Japan walking permanently out of the League. (We'll see a clip of this in class).

In 1934, Aisin Gioro Puyi (Henry Puyi), who had been the last emperor of China, became the first emperor of the new state of Manchukuo. Simultaneously, Japan seized territory in North China and Inner Mongolia to form a buffer around Manchukuo and protect it both from the Chinese and Soviet incursion.



First Emperor of Manchukuo...Aisin Gioro Puyi

## He-Umezu Agreement

**1935:** The Japanese government attempted to improve relations with China. Japan negotiated a deal whereby China would cease boycott of Japanese goods and anti-Japanese protests. A local Japanese commander, however, was not amiable to improving relations. Based on the pretext that a pro-Japanese newspaper editor had been assassinated, he created an incident by which he demanded the Chinese governor be removed. Four other onerous demands were

submitted by the Kwantung Army. Chiang Kai-shek, who was still engaged in a civil war with the Communists had no choice but to relent.



Kwantung Army

## Japan Renounces Naval Treaties

**1934-37:** With Nationalism and Militarism on the rise and Japan reaching for equal footing among the great powers, the Japanese first renounced the Washington Naval Treaty and later, in 1937, the London Naval Treaty. Japan embarked on a drive that would provide it with naval superiority in the Pacific. Soon after Japan declared its intention to leave both treaties, the United States and Britain also gave notice that they would begin expanding their own respective fleets.



Newsreel clip of Japanese Ambassador Saito Hiroshi explaining why Japan is leaving the Washington Treaty

## Xian Incident

**1936:** While not directly related to Japan, the “Xian Incident” did impact events in 1937 which culminated in the outbreak of war between China and Japan.

As previously mentioned, warlord Zhang Xueliang was driven from his homeland of Manchuria in 1931. Since the Japanese occupation of Manchuria, Zhang and his Manchurian troops had been allied with Chiang Kai-shek fighting Communist forces in Northwestern China. Zhang’s troops were restless and wanted to return home to fight the Japanese.

When Chiang visited Zhang's headquarters in December 1936, Zhang had Chiang kidnapped. For a while it was uncertain what would happen to Chiang. His own generals wanted to bomb the area and Communist leader Mao Zedong wanted Chiang executed. Through the work of Zhou Enlai and Chiang's wife, Soong Meiling, Chiang was freed and accompanied back to Nanjing (the Nationalist Capital) by Zhang (who would remain under house arrest for 50 years).. There simply was no one else to lead China but Chiang. After his release, Chiang called for a "United Front" of Kuomintang and Communist against the Japanese. From this point on, China would not take one step back against Japan.



Zhang Xueliang (left) and  
Chiang Kai-shek (right)

## “The China Incident” Erupts

**1937:** Feeling empowered by the He-Umezu Agreement and leaning on their privileges obtained from the Boxer Rebellion, Japanese troops held frequent military maneuvers around Beiping (as Beijing was known at the time). During one such maneuver on July 7, 1937, Chinese and Japanese troops opened fire upon each other near the Marco Polo Bridge (Lugouqiao) outside of Beiping. Even though local Chinese and Japanese commanders resolved their conflict, both Nanjing and Tokyo were not satisfied with the results. As other incidents occurred both sides began to escalate. After the murder of a Japanese naval officer and his aide in Shanghai, the Japanese Navy began to call troops to protect its sailors and marines. The Japanese mobilized three divisions, while Chiang Kai-shek (this time not backing down) mobilized four of his best German trained divisions and sent them to Shanghai.



Japanese Ambassador Saito explains Japanese incursion into China 1937

## Fall of Shanghai and Nanjing

**1937:** Chinese troops fought valiantly but the Japanese defeated the Chinese pushed on toward the Kuomintang capital of Nanjing.

Both the Japanese Military and government, under Premier Konoe Fumimaro, believed that once Nanjing fell, Chiang would plead for peace. Nanjing did fall in December 1937. During the initial occupation, Japanese troops committed horrendous atrocities, murdering between 100,000 to less than 200,000 people according, author Richard Frank. China has claimed more than 400,000 perished.

Additionally, the Japanese attacked and sunk the U.S.S Panay, which was transporting international refugees from Nanjing. Japanese forces also damaged the HMS Ladybird. Japan claimed the attack was a mistake and paid the U.S. an indemnity of more than \$2 million.

The British asked for joint action against Japan, but Secretary of State Cordell Hull, quite possibly remembering the British refusal to back the U.S. Non-Recognition policy, said the U.S. would follow a policy of parallel diplomacy, but not joint policy with Britain regarding Japan.



Competition between two Japanese Officers as to who can decapitate the most Chinese heads. The score is 106-105.



## Japan Calls For A “New Order In East Asia”

**1938:** One of the first mentions of Japan’s “special” mission in Asia was made in 1934 by Amo Eiji, who was a spokesperson for the Foreign Office. Amo stated that “Japan has a special mission to keep order in East Asia.” He also warned Japan would oppose any foreign assistance to China that it felt may encourage Chinese resistance to Japan. This was known as the “*Amo Doctrine*”.

After the fall of Nanjing, much to the disappointment of Premier Konoe, Chiang did not ask for peace but retreated into the Chinese hinterland. Konoe declared that Chiang had become nothing but a local warlord and he refused to recognize Chiang’s government as the legitimate government of China. Konoe also declared in December 1938, the formulation of the “*New Order in East Asia*”, which was to be formed by the joint effort of China, Manchukuo and Japan.

The coming of the “New Order” marked the end of Japan’s involvement with Wilsonian Internationalism. Foreign Minister Arita Hachiro emphasized this point by stating that both the “*Open Door Policy*” and the Nine Power Pact were obsolete. Asia, he said, belonged to the Asians under the leadership of the Japan.

Another outgrowth of Japan’s “*New Order*” was the notion of regional hegemony and Pan Asianism. Japan saw itself no different from any of the other global powers and their spheres of influence. They specifically pointed to the United States and compared its “*Monroe Doctrine*” to Japan’s “*Asian Monroe Doctrine*”. Japan’s position was outlined by Takaishi Shingoro, chairman of one of the largest publishing companies in Japan and an ardent supporter of Pan Asianism.

“...a Pan-Asiatic Movement Requires Able Leadership. ***Japan, let us Frankly Concede, is the Logical Nation to Assume Leadership***, Just as the United States is the Logical Leader on the American Continents.”



Japan's "New Order In East Asia"  
Manchukuo, Japan, and China

## China Lobby and American Public Opinion

American public opinion concerning the China Conflict was influenced by two factors. First, were the media reports and newsreels emanating from the battlefield. The bombing of civilians and the brutality of Japanese troops, especially in Nanjing, began to turn Americans sharply away from Japan. Secondly, the formation of the "China Lobby", which was composed primarily of people associated with the missionary community in China, stirred opinion through anti-Japanese literature, boycotts and fund raising. Two prominent

members of the China Lobby were the author, Pearl Buck and the publisher of Time/Life, Henry Luce. Luce named Chiang Kai-shek and his wife Soong Meiling Time Magazine's "Man and Woman of the Year" in 1937.

An opinion poll, conducted in 1939, indicated that Americans overwhelmingly condemned Japan:

- 75% Favored China over Japan
- 66% Boycott Japanese Goods
- 70% Halt Arms Sales to Japan

