

# 1.2 Japanese expansion in South-east Asia, 1931–1941

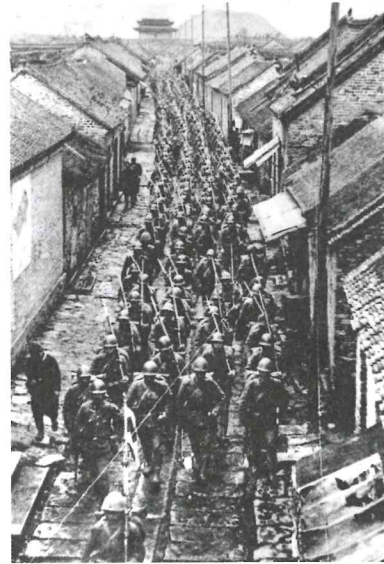
## Conceptual understanding

### Key concepts

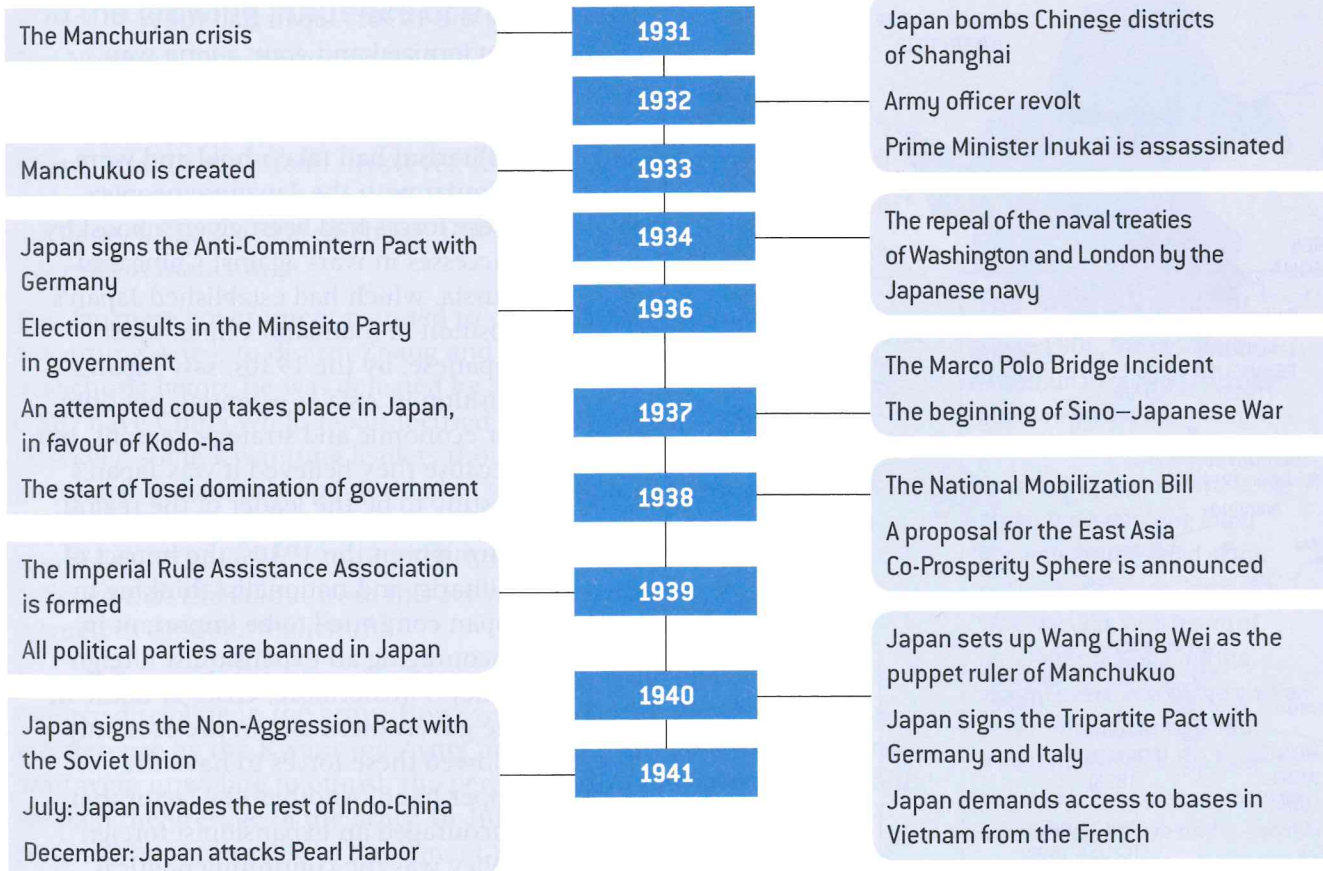
- Causation
- Change
- Perspective

### Key questions

- Assess the impact of nationalism and militarism on Japan's foreign policy in the 1930s.
- Examine the impact of economic factors on Japan's foreign policy.
- Discuss the impact of the political instability within China on Japan's actions in Manchuria and mainland China.



▲ Japanese forces in Manchuria, 1931



Between 1931 and 1941, Japan's foreign policy continued to be defined by the growth of nationalism and the growing power of the military that you read about in Chapter 1.1. This led to intervention in China, a deteriorating relationship with the West and, ultimately, to the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor in 1941 and the development of global war.

There are different perspectives regarding what led to the war between the USA and Japan in the Pacific:

- It could be argued that from the early 1930s, Japan had planned a war with the aim of dominating Asia. Japan's aims in the region could only be achieved through war; therefore, war in the region was inevitable. Japan used negotiations to delay an international response to their expansion for as long as possible.
- However, it could also be argued that although Japan did plan to expand its empire in Asia, war was not inevitable. This was because Japan was willing to achieve its objectives through negotiation. If possible, war with the major powers was to be avoided. However, if negotiation failed, Japan needed to be prepared for war.
- In addition, it could be argued that Japan was forced into war by the actions of the USA. Japan had legitimate aims for the region. The USA and Britain were determined to contain Japan.



## Causes of expansion

By the 1930s, Japan had fully modernized and gone a long way towards achieving equality with the West. The forces of nationalism and militarism had taken hold and were popular with the Japanese people; these forces had been given a boost by successes in wars against China and Russia, which had established Japan's position in mainland China. Most Japanese, by the 1930s, saw Japan's position in Asia as essential, not only for economic and strategic reasons, but because they believed it was Japan's destiny to be the leader of the region.

Throughout the 1930s, the impact of militarist and nationalist thinking in Japan continued to be important in encouraging an expansionist foreign policy. Furthermore, crises at home in the government and in the economy allowed these forces to have the upper hand. Another key factor that encouraged an expansionist foreign policy was the continuing political instability that existed in China.



## Political instability in China

By the late 1920s, a new situation had emerged in China. It was this situation, combined with the growing strength of the military and the economic crisis in Japan, that precipitated the Manchurian crisis of 1931.

Encouraged by public outrage concerning the behaviour of foreigners in China, Chinese nationalism had grown. The Nationalist Party in China, the Guomindang (GMD), led by Jiang Jieshi, began a campaign of national unification. This included anti-foreigner rhetoric and demands to end the unequal treaties that the great powers, including Japan, had forced China to sign.

By 1921, a new political party, the Communist Party, had been set up in China. Initially, the Communists, led by Mao Zedong, joined with Jiang Jieshi to form the United Front. The United Front launched a “Northern Expedition” to consolidate central government control and wrest power from the **warlords**. However, ultimately, the Nationalists and the Communists were to clash in an all-out civil war which, from 1927, directed the energies and focus of Jiang towards defeating the Communists rather than the Japanese.

This changing situation in China was to have an impact on the actions of the Japanese government and military.

## Japanese domestic issues before 1932: Political crises and the growing influence of the military

The Northern Expedition, which had been launched by Jiang Jieshi with the Communists, was regarded with some degree of concern by the Japanese government. The Japanese had backed the warlord in Manchuria, Zhang Zuolin. However, Zhang had become very powerful and attempted to expand into Northern China, which made him a target for Jiang. If Jiang defeated Zhang, this could impede Japan’s special interests in Manchuria.

The Japanese government planned to use its army in Manchuria, the Kwantung Army, to disarm Zhang and to force him to retreat back to Manchuria before he was defeated by Jiang. The policy was to let Jiang’s GMD have China while Japan focused on its interests in Manchuria. However, some Kwantung leaders thought that Zhang should not be treated so leniently and decided to take action themselves. First, they forced Jiang’s Northern Expedition to halt at Jinan. They then assassinated Zhang on 4 June 1928. Some of the Kwantung assassins believed that the fallout from this act would provide the excuse they wanted to conquer Manchuria.

Japan’s Prime Minister Tanaka was instructed by the emperor to enforce discipline in the army. However, despite Tanaka’s anger at this interference by the Kwantung Army in government policy, the General Staff were unwilling to punish the perpetrators as they claimed it would weaken the prestige of the army. In July 1929, Tanaka was forced to resign as he was unable to implement the emperor’s wishes. Therefore, as early as the summer of 1929, it was clear that the army could ignore

### The warlords

The warlords were local or regional military leaders that had their own armies. They would rule areas of China as their own territories. Rivalries and competition between warlords meant that at times they were at war with each other.

### The Kwantung Army

Since 1906, the southern Manchurian railway had been guarded by the Kwantung garrison, which in 1919 developed into the Kwantung Army. The Kwantung Army became a stronghold of the radical Kodo-ha or “Imperial Way” faction, with many of its leaders advocating the violent overthrow of the civilian government to bring about a military dictatorship (see page 39). They also advocated a more aggressive and expansionist foreign policy.

the government with impunity. This fundamentally undermined liberal democracy in Japan.

The leader of the Minseito Party, Hamaguchi Yuko, became prime minister but had to call an election in 1930 as he did not have a majority in parliament. He won a sound majority from the public on his manifesto of good relations with China, disarmament and an end to corruption. However, his government soon faltered as the impact of the Great Depression started to affect the economy (see below). Hamaguchi did not have the funds to help industry and so he cut government salaries for both the civil and military sectors. The military were unhappy with this move, but were then outraged when Hamaguchi agreed to the decisions made at the London Naval Disarmament Conference to limit Japan's naval growth. Criticism of the government, particularly in military circles, grew. In November 1930, things came to a head when Hamaguchi was shot by a right-wing radical. His injuries forced him to resign in April 1931 and he died in August.

### Japanese domestic issues: Economic crisis

The global economic crisis which started in 1929 following the Wall Street Crash in the USA called into question the whole international economic order. This, in turn, cast doubts on the trustworthiness of the USA and other democratic nations, and on Japan's own parliamentary government.

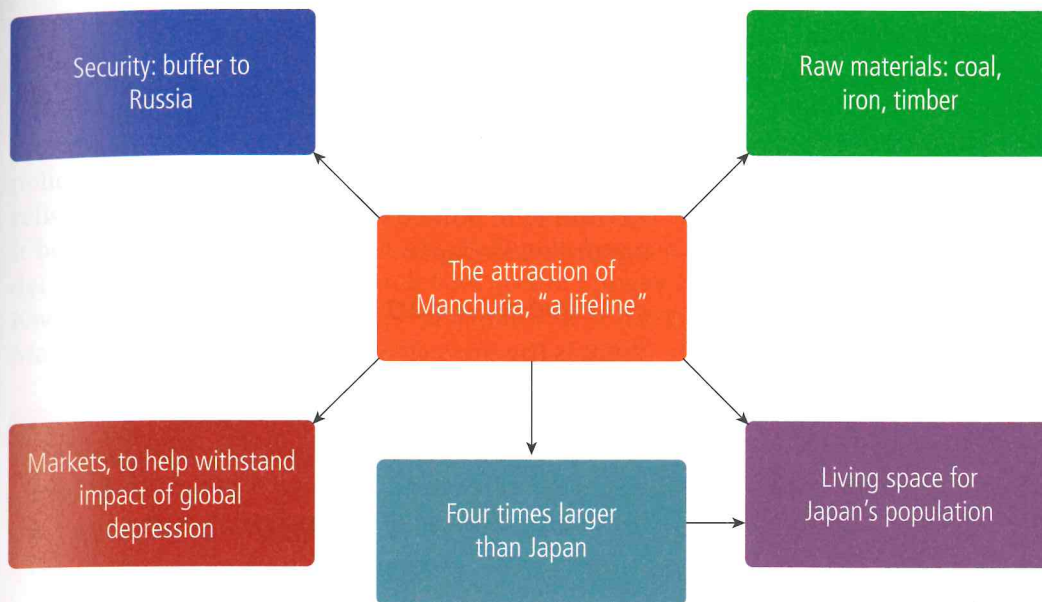
Japan was dependent on world trade and its exports fell drastically as countries put up tariffs to protect their own industries. The Smoot-Hawley Tariff Act, signed into law by President Herbert Hoover in 1930, brought in the highest protective tariffs in US peacetime industry. Duties on Japanese goods rose by as much as 200%.

The worst hit industry was the silk industry. By 1932, the price of silk had fallen to less than one-fifth of what it had been in 1923. Farmers were hit particularly badly since over half of them relied on silk production. The result was desperate poverty as unemployment rose to 3 million.

*The responsibility for Japan's plight was placed squarely on the shoulders of the liberal reforms of the 1920s. Taisho democracy and Taisho internationalism, never very robust and possibly doomed anyway, were about to become two more victims of the world depression. — Boyle, 1993*

In this dire economic situation, Manchuria became even more important to Japan's interests. As you have read in Chapter 1.1, Japan had gained control of Port Arthur, as well as control of railway and mineral rights, when it defeated Russia in the Russo-Japanese War in 1904–05. Manchuria's wealth of resources (coal, iron and timber) were increasingly enticing to a Japan suffering the deprivations of the depression. If Japan took over Manchuria it would control these resources and also gain a market for its manufactured goods.

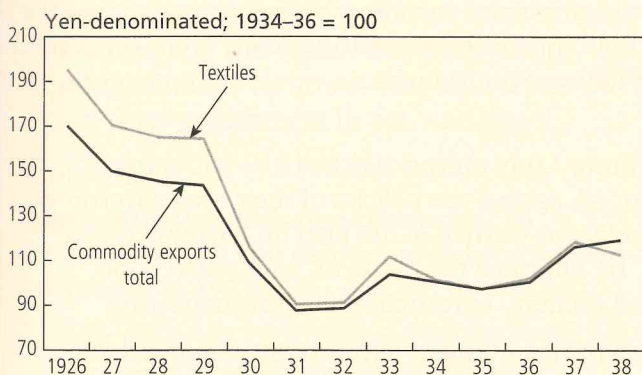
Manchuria could also provide living space for an over-populated Japan. In fact, Manchuria was depicted by the diplomat Yosuke Matsuoka (who became Foreign Minister in 1940) as a "lifeline" and "our only means of survival".



### Source skills

#### Source A

A graph showing Japanese exports 1926–38.



I. Yamazawa and Y. Yamamoto. 1978. *Estimates of Long-term Economic Statistics of Japan since 1868*. 14: *Foreign Trade and Balance of Payments*.

#### Source B

Contemporary observation, 1929.

In this climate of economic despair and political decline, the military emerged as a seemingly shining and pure example of the true spirit of the nation. Aided in part by decades of indoctrination, the military found its most fervent support in the down-trodden

rural areas. For many rural youths, military service was their escape from poverty and degradation. Military leaders and organizations such as the Imperial Reservists' Association promoted the idea that the "soldiers were the arms and legs of the empire ..." and better than civilians. It stated that young peasant men struggling to survive "consider it to be the greatest honour attainable, once they enter the army to become a private superior class."

#### Source C

Herbert Bix, an American historian who specialises in Japanese history, in an academic book *Hirohito and the Making of Modern Japan* (2000).

Thus ideas advanced by Japan's leaders to justify their actions in Manchuria gained reinforcement from the breakdown of global capitalism, emergent monetary and trade blocs, and contending domestic systems of politics and ideology. In a lecture delivered at court before Hirohito and his entourage on 28 January, 1932, former army minister General Minami emphasized national security, raw materials, and the need for territory to explain the army's creation of an independent

Manchurian state. “Japan-Manchuria joint management”, he told the emperor, would enable Japan to “withstand an economic blockade from abroad” and continue “indefinitely as a great power”. The acquisition of Manchuria in its entirety would also solve the Japanese “population problem” by providing space for Japan’s rapidly increasing people, whose numbers by the end of the decade were expected to reach 70 million.

### First question, part a – 3 marks

According to Source B, why did the military have a particular appeal for the Japanese peasants?

### First question, part a – 3 marks

According to Source C, why was Manchuria important for Japan?

### First question, part b – 2 marks

What is the message of Source A?

### Second question – 4 marks

With reference to its origin, purpose and content, assess the values and limitations of Source C for historians studying the Manchurian crisis.

Despite Japan’s plans for Manchuria, it became clear that, given the aims of the Northern Expedition, China would fight for Manchuria. The Kwantung Army’s hope that the assassination of Zhang would destabilize the situation and allow for Japan to seize control was not fulfilled, as the warlord was succeeded by his son, Zhang Xueliang, who allied himself with Jiang. Indeed, the Chinese Nationalists rallied behind anti-Japanese propaganda. While the Japanese government still aimed to follow peaceful principles to maintain Japan’s position in the North-East of China, militants in the Kwantung Army were concerned that their objective of taking over Manchuria would become more difficult to achieve.

Thus, a group of Kwantung Army officers hatched a plot to seize Manchuria once and for all, against the policies of their own government. Prime Minister Wakatsuki was warned of the plan by Japanese consul officials in Manchuria. He informed the emperor, who ordered the minister of war, General Minami, to restrain the Kwantung Army.

Minami responded by writing an urgent letter to the commander of the Kwantung Army, but this letter was intentionally held back by the general tasked with delivering it. The plotters therefore executed their plan before receiving the emperor’s command to cancel any action against the Chinese. As the historian Herbert P. Bix writes: “[Emperor] Hirohito and his top palace advisers ... never imagined that the Kwantung army would seize the initiative, completely overturn the Minseito cabinet’s policies, and undermine the emperor’s authority” (Bix, 2000).

## Events in Manchuria, 1931

### The impact of nationalism and militarism on Japan’s foreign policy

On the evening of 18 September 1931, near Mukden, there was an explosion on a section of the Japanese-owned South Manchurian Railway. Immediately afterwards, officers of the Kwantung Army claimed that the railway had been blown up by the Chinese. However, there is evidence that the perpetrators were members of the Kwantung Army.

#### ATL Social skills

In pairs or groups, use the sources and the information in this section to assess the impact of the economic crisis on

- the political situation in Japan
- the position of the military
- the overall foreign policy of Japan.



The Kwantung Army had its “excuse”. Within hours, the Japanese had forced the Chinese to retreat from Mukden. The following day, the Kwantung Army entered Changchun to the north.

Wakatsuki’s government attempted to regain control and declared a policy of “non-expansion of hostilities”, but the Kwantung Army was relishing its victories and did not heed the orders coming from Tokyo. It began to seize more territory. On 24 September, the government declared that the army would fall back to the railway zone, but again the Kwantung Army ignored the government and pushed further into the Manchurian countryside.

## Source skills

### Source A

**An extract from Kenneth B. Pyle, *The Making of Modern Japan*, page 189 (1996).**

The weakness of the government, the diffuseness of decision-making power, the general confusion and uncertainty attending both the domestic and foreign turmoil – all created an opportunity for resolute action by the Kwantung Army. It pushed ahead to conquer all of Manchuria and establish a Japanese puppet state, Manchukuo. Wakatsuki resigned and was replaced by a Seiyukai cabinet headed by Inukai Tsuyoshi. It was the last party government in pre-war Japan.

### Source B

**Prime Minister Wakatsuki’s appeal to the secretary of the respected Prince Saionji Kinmochi in 1931.**

I am not being kept informed by either the Foreign Ministry or the Army Ministry ... I have just warned them through Chief of Cabinet Secretary Kawasaki ... The Chinese forces in Manchuria and Mongolia number more than two hundred thousand [sic] while we have only some ten thousand. I asked the army minister, “What are you going to do if, by chance, your challenge causes something you haven’t anticipated – something that given you are so outnumbered you can’t stop?”

The army minister told me, “We’ll send in troops from Korea ... indeed, they may have already gone in.” I rebuked him: “How can you allow dispatch of soldiers from Korea without government authorization?” He said, “Well, the fact is that during the Tanaka cabinet [1927–29] troops were dispatched without imperial sanction.” I gathered he had not foreseen any problem at all ... under these circumstances I am quite powerless to restrain the military. How can his majesty’s military act without his sanction? What can I do? Maybe I should not be talking to you like this, but can you do anything? ... I am in serious trouble.

Cited in *Hirohito and the Making of Modern Japan*, page 236, by Herbert P. Bix

### First question, part a – 3 marks

According to Source A, why was the Kwantung Army able to seize control of Manchuria?

### First question, part a – 3 marks

According to Source B, what problems did Wakatsuki face in responding to events in Manchuria?

### Third question – 6 marks

Compare and contrast the views in Source A and Source B regarding the weakness of the Japanese government during the Manchurian Crisis.



## Thinking skills

In pairs, identify the factors in Japan and China, which led to the Mukden Incident in Manchuria.

## What were the results of the Manchurian crisis?

### The results for Japan's international relations

To the outside world, Japan's proclamations of peaceful intent seemed deceitful, as its army continued to expand in Manchuria. The breakdown of control over the Kwantung Army had not been fully appreciated.

Thus there followed, in the 1930s, a marked deterioration in relations between Japan on the one hand and the USA and Britain on the other. Although, as you will read in the next chapter,

the West's response to the Manchurian crisis in 1931 was rather cautious, nevertheless, its condemnation of Japan for using force caused Japan to leave the League of Nations.

The historian Kenneth Pyle sees the Manchurian crisis as a "turning point" for Japan. Indeed, it led to Japan's isolation as it now seemed to have abandoned international cooperation and the Washington Treaty System. Within Japan, the League of Nations, international law and the West were attacked not only by the military but also by politicians. The League's resolutions on the Manchurian crisis were compared to the Triple Intervention of 1895 (see page 18) and Foreign Minister Uchida claimed that "*Recognition of the new state [of Manchukuo]*

*in no way conflicts with the Nine-Power Treaty*". As in 1895, the West was seen as holding back the legitimate needs of Japan for racist reasons, as upholding international law only when it suited themselves and allowing their own imperialist actions to go unchallenged.

Following on from this, and as the military gained more power in the 1930s, there was a degree of admiration within Japan for Nazi Germany which had also walked out of the League of Nations. In contrast, the new Soviet communist regime was both an ideological and a territorial threat to Japan, with its interests in Manchuria. By the 1930s, the Japanese viewed the Soviets as their key potential opponent in the region. Increasingly concerned by the relationship between

### Source skills

Japanese troops marching into a Chinese town, Manchuria, circa September–October 1931.



First question, part b – 2 marks

What is the message of this photograph?





China and the Soviet Union, Japan signed the Anti-Comintern Pact with Nazi Germany in November 1936. However, it is important to note that unlike Italy and Germany, Japan never had a Fascist Party leading the government nor did it abandon elections or cabinet governments, even during the Second World War.

## The results for Manchuria and China

By the beginning of 1932 Manchuria was wholly under the control of Japanese forces. The Japanese in Manchuria set up an independent government under the puppet rule of Pu Yi (the last emperor of China) and called the new state “Manchukuo”.

In January 1932, fighting had also broken out between Japanese and Chinese forces in Shanghai. The city was bombed by the Japanese with widespread devastation of the Chinese districts. The intense bombing over the densely populated residential area of Chapei, with the thousands of casualties and refugees that were created as a result, intensified Chinese outrage and helped turn world opinion against Japan. Four divisions of Japanese troops landed to assist the navy stationed in Shanghai. After six weeks, Chinese forces were forced to withdraw.



▲ Smoke rises from buildings in Shanghai’s native business district, where Japanese troops launch an attack against defending Chinese, 1932.

### ATL Thinking skills

Extract from Herbert P. Bix, *Hirohito and the Making of Modern Japan*, page 251 (2000).

Neither army nor navy drew any conclusions from the heavy losses they incurred in this first large battle with a modern Chinese army. They continued as before – utterly contemptuous of the Chinese military and people, whom they saw as a rabble of ignorant, hungry peasants, lacking racial or national consciousness, that could easily be vanquished by one really hard blow.

#### Question

What point is Bix making regarding the attitude of the Japanese military in China?

## The results for the Nationalist Party in China

China’s response to the Manchurian crisis was to call on the League of Nations. Jiang Jieshi, the leader of the Nationalist Party, was now focused on defeating the Chinese Communists and did not want to get involved in another conflict. He knew that he was unlikely to receive

## ATL Thinking skills

I. Hsü, *The Rise of Modern China*, page 550. Published in 1995 by Oxford University Press, Oxford, UK

In retrospect, one cannot help feeling that such a negative approach could hardly achieve positive results. If the government had authorised the Northeastern army to resist the invader, the glamour of aggression might have been dimmed, thus providing a chance for the more moderate civilian government in Tokyo to have had a greater voice in the China affair. Moreover, if Nanking [Nanjing] had pursued an active policy of negotiations with Tokyo, it might have reaped more positive results. Unfortunately, it followed neither course. Instead it placed its reliance on protests to Tokyo and on appeals to the League of Nations.

According to Hsü, how could events have been different if China had been more active in solving the Manchurian issue itself?

The Monroe Doctrine was a 19th-century US policy, which set out to prevent the European powers expanding their colonial interests in North or South America. Japan's version of the Monroe Doctrine would be a policy limiting European influence in Asia.

the kind of support he needed from the Western powers, but hoped nevertheless that he could gain time to organize his defences. He also did not directly negotiate with the Japanese government. This combination of “non-resistance”, no-compromise and non-direct negotiation was unlikely to benefit the Chinese position (see historian Immanuel Hsü’s view to the left).

Although Jiang was reluctant to confront Japan directly, the Chinese people responded with fury at Japan’s actions. There was a boycott of Japanese products, which had an impact on Japan as it reduced sales of its goods in China by two-thirds. This did little to stop Japan’s actions, however, or to change Jiang’s priorities in dealing with the Communists first before dealing with the Japanese. Thus, following the bombing of Shanghai and Japan’s continued expansion in the north, China continued to cede territory. Japanese control of Manchuria was accepted in May 1933 in the Treaty of Tanggu. Jiang further agreed to the seizure of parts of inner Mongolia and, in June 1935, agreed to remove all troops from Hebei province. Jiang’s strategy against Japan derived from his belief that, given the size of China, Japan would exhaust itself in the process of trying to occupy it. He believed that the Japanese “were a disease of the skin while the communists were a disease of the heart”; thus, he considered “selling space to buy time”, a viable strategy.

### The results for the Japanese government

Japan benefited economically from the occupation of Manchuria. However, the cost of maintaining a sizeable army on the Chinese mainland to some extent negated the benefits and there was an increase in taxation back home in Japan. Indeed, by going it alone internationally and also declaring its responsibility for maintaining peace in Asia through the “Asia Monroe Doctrine”, Japan was potentially overstretching itself. It needed to be able to protect itself against the Soviet Army and the US navy, and also to make the Chinese government accept its position in Manchuria and Northern China. This precarious situation was the result of decision-making by the army rather than the government and of the nationalist sentiment that had been growing in Japan.

Following the Manchurian crisis, there was little hope that the government would regain the upper hand. Indeed, the Japanese government’s position was further undermined by public support for the Kwantung Army’s actions in China. There was a celebration of the “heroes” of Manchuria; the embarrassed Japanese government had to go along with the wave of popular opinion and accept the conquests rather than demonstrate the loss of control it had over the army. Foreign criticism and condemnation also galvanized Japanese nationalist sentiments.

## ATL Communication skills

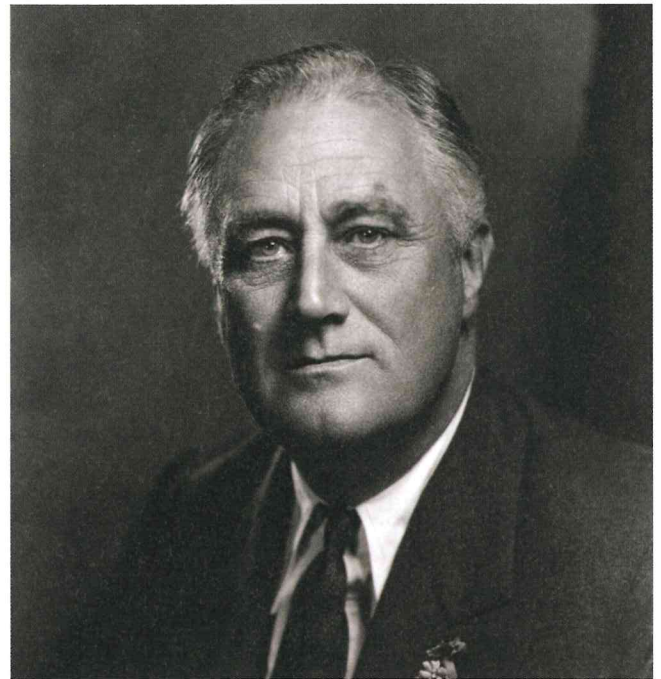


Go to the link [www.youtube.com/watch?v=0Ex0fMnK-R4](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0Ex0fMnK-R4), or search “Evidence of Japanese accusation at WW2 #1”, to watch Japanese Foreign Minister Matsuoka at the League of Nations, February 1933, defending Japan’s China Policy

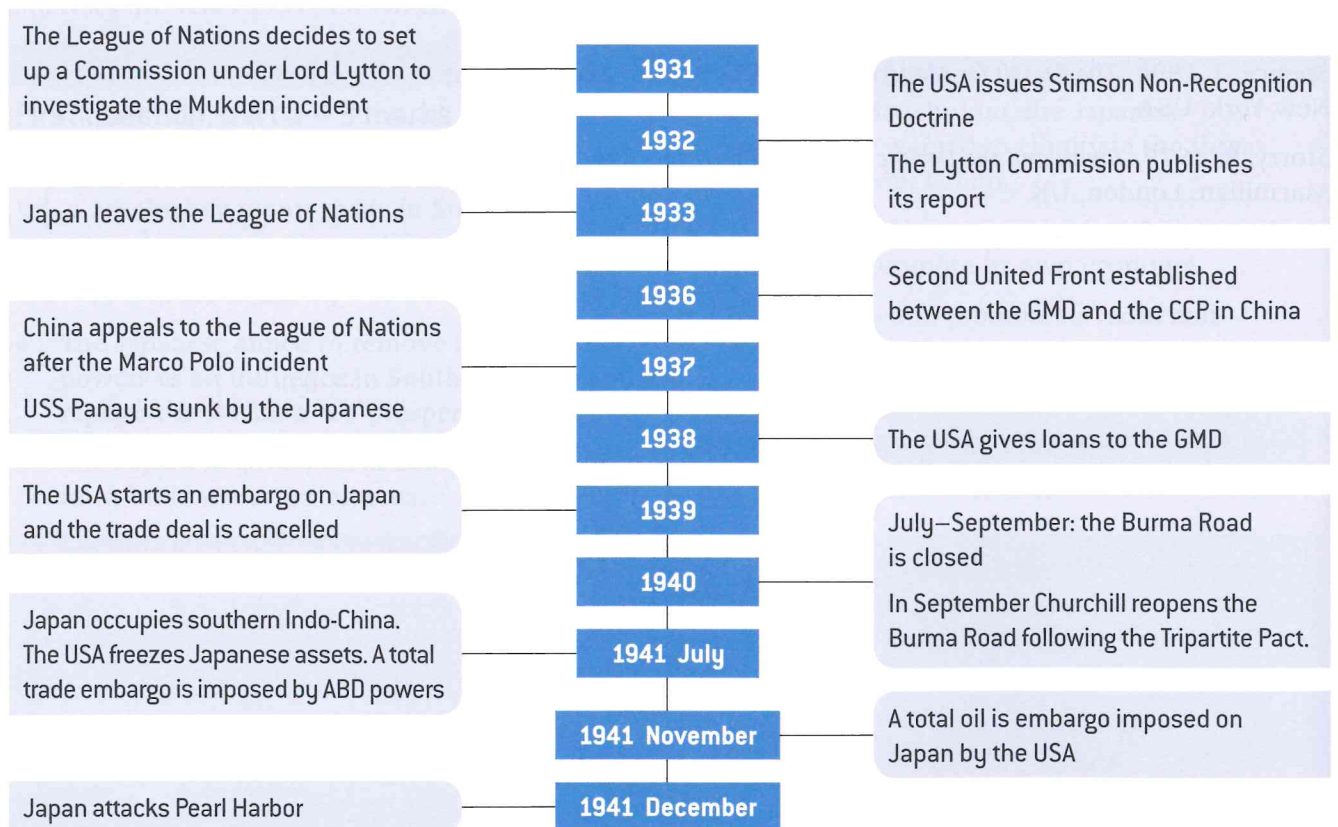
# 1.3 The international response to Japanese aggression, 1931–1941

## Conceptual understanding

- Consequence
- Significance



▲ Franklin D Roosevelt, US president from 1933





## The League of Nations' response to events in Manchuria 1931–36

Japan's action in the Mukden Incident was the first significant challenge by a major power to the new international system that had been set up in Europe after the First World War. This international system centred around the concept of *collective security* – that states would take joint action to deal with aggression. To facilitate such action, the League of Nations, a body where all states could be represented, was established in 1919. In addition, various treaties, such as the Washington Conference System, the Nine-Power Treaty (see page 22) and the Kellogg-Briand Pact reinforced the idea of peaceful international cooperation.

### Kellogg-Briand Pact

This pact was signed in 1928 and the signatory states promised not to use *war* to resolve “disputes or conflicts of whatever nature or of whatever origin they may be, which may arise among them”. Instead, it called for the peaceful settlement of disputes. Japan signed this pact in 1928 along with 14 other nations. Ultimately, the pact was signed by 62 nations.

### Source skills

#### Source A

Extract from Akira Iriya. *The Origins of the Second World War in Asia and the Pacific* (1987).

The term “the Washington Conference system”, or “the Washington system” for short, was not in current use in the 1920s, nor was it subsequently recognized as a well-defined legal concept. None the less, immediately after the conference there was much talk of “the spirit of the Washington conference”, and a country's behaviour in Asia tended to be judged in terms of whether it furthered or undermined that spirit. ... it expressed the powers' willingness to co-operate with one another in maintaining stability in the region and assisting China's gradual transformation as a modern state. It was opposed to a rapid and wholesale transformation of Asian international relations, such as was being advocated by the Communist International and by an increasing number of Chinese nationalists. Rather, the Washington powers would stress an evolutionary process of change so as to ensure peace, order and stability.

#### Source B

A cartoon published in *Outlook*, a US magazine, in 1931.



#### First question, part a – 3 marks

What, according to Source A, were the aims of the Washington System?

#### First question, part b – 2 marks

What is the message of Source B concerning Japan's actions in Manchuria?



## The organization and aims of the League of Nations

The League of Nations consisted of the Assembly of the League and the Council of the League. The assembly was made up of the representatives of all member states; it met yearly and each state had one vote. The council consisted of the major powers Britain, France, Italy and Japan plus four other members elected by the assembly. The council made most of the key decisions; in particular it was the body that could take action against a member of the League who resorted to war.

The Covenant of the League of Nations was the document which set out how the League was to achieve its aims of promoting international cooperation and maintaining international peace and security.

### ATL Social skills

Read these articles of the Covenant of the League which set out how the League should solve international disputes and so prevent war.

In pairs discuss the following questions. Listen carefully to each other's ideas and agree a joint response.

- 1 What actions could the League take against aggressor states?
- 2 Which of these actions do you think would be most effective in solving disputes?
- 3 Can you identify ways in which these methods might **not** be effective?

**Article 10** The Members of the League undertake to respect and preserve as against external aggression the territorial integrity and existing political independence of all Members of the League. In case of any such aggression or in case of any threat or danger of such aggression the Council shall advise upon the means by which this obligation shall be fulfilled.

**Article 11** Any war or threat of war, whether immediately affecting any of the Members of the League or not, is hereby declared a matter of concern to the whole League, and the League shall take any action that may be deemed wise and effectual to safeguard the peace of nations ...

**Article 12** The Members of the League agree that if there should arise between them any dispute likely to lead to a rupture they will submit the matter either to arbitration or judicial settlement or to enquiry by the Council, and they agree in no case to resort to war until three months after the award by the arbitrators or the judicial decision, or the report by the Council. In any case under

this Article the award of the arbitrators or the judicial decision shall be made within a reasonable time, and the report of the Council shall be made within six months after the submission of the dispute.

**Article 13** The Members of the League agree that whenever any dispute shall arise between them which they recognise to be suitable for submission to arbitration or judicial settlement and which cannot be satisfactorily settled by diplomacy, they will submit the whole subject-matter to arbitration or judicial settlement ...

For the consideration of any such dispute, the court to which the case is referred shall be the Permanent Court of International Justice ...

The Members of the League agree that they will carry out in full good faith any award or decision that may be rendered, and that they will not resort to war against a Member of the League which complies therewith. In the event of any failure to carry out such an award or decision, the Council shall propose what steps should be taken to give effect thereto.

**Article 15** If there should arise between Members of the League any dispute likely to lead to a rupture, which is not submitted to arbitration or judicial settlement in accordance with Article 13, the Members of the League agree that they will submit the matter to the Council. Any party to the dispute may effect such submission by giving notice of the existence of the dispute to the Secretary General, who will make all necessary arrangements for a full investigation and consideration thereof ...



**Article 16** Should any Member of the League resort to war in disregard of its covenants under Articles 12, 13 or 15, it shall *ipso facto* be deemed to have committed an act of war against all other Members of the League, which hereby undertake immediately to subject it to the severance of all trade or financial relations, the prohibition of all intercourse between their nationals and the nationals of the covenant-breaking State, and the prevention of all financial, commercial or personal intercourse

between the nationals of the covenant-breaking State and the nationals of any other State, whether a Member of the League or not.

It shall be the duty of the Council in such case to recommend to the several Governments what effective military, naval or air force the Members of the League shall severally contribute to the armed forces to be used to protect the covenants of the League.

## What actions did the League take in response to the Mukden incident?

Following the Mukden incident, China appealed to the League of Nations. This was an example of one member state attacking another; China hoped to invoke the principle of collective security and thus get action taken against Japan as set out in Article 16 of the Covenant.

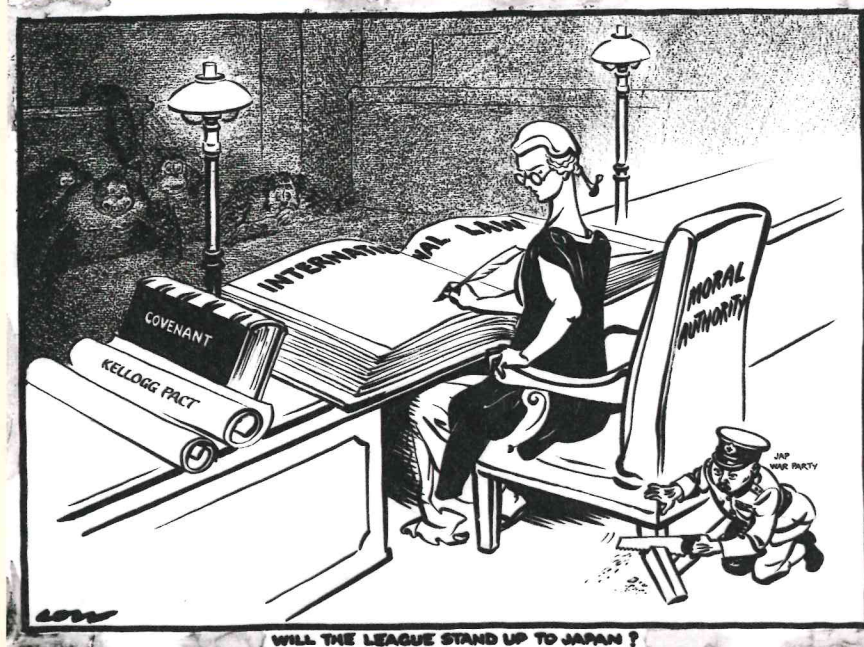
However, the League acted cautiously. It held several meetings to discuss what action should be taken. These meetings were attended by the Japanese government in China and the USA (who, although not a member of the League, was invited to send representatives to the council). The source on the next page sets out the Japanese government's position on the Manchurian crisis.

While the Japanese government seemed to be cooperating with the League, the army continued to expand its influence over Manchuria in defiance of a request from the League that Japanese troops should withdraw to the railway zone.

The League then decided to send a fact-finding commission led by Lord Lytton to Manchuria. This commission took several months to arrive in Manchuria and then several months to complete its report on the situation. During this time, the Kwantung army was able to continue expanding throughout Manchuria. In March 1932, Manchuria was declared the state of Manchukuo – a puppet state under the control of Japan with China's last emperor, Pu Yi as its ruler. The Japanese claimed that the Manchurians were now free from Chinese domination.

### Source skills

A cartoon by David Low published in the UK newspaper the *Daily Mail* on 17 November 1931, "Will the league stand up to Japan?".



### First question, part b – 2 marks

What is the message of this cartoon concerning the League of Nations' role in the Manchurian crisis?

## Source skills

### Japanese Government statement, 24 September 1931.

For some years past... unpleasant incidents have taken place in the regions of Manchuria and Mongolia, in which Japan is interested in a special degree... Amidst the atmosphere of anxiety a detachment of Chinese troops destroyed the tracks of the South Manchuria Railway in the vicinity of Mukden, and attacked our railway guards, at midnight on 18 September. A clash between Japanese and Chinese troops then took place... Hundreds and thousands of Japanese residents were

placed in jeopardy. In order to forestall an imminent disaster the Japanese army had to act swiftly... The endeavours of the Japanese Government to guard the SMR [South Manchurian Railway] against wanton attacks should be viewed in no other light... It may be superfluous to repeat that the Japanese government harbours no territorial designs on Manchuria.

### Second question – 4 marks

With reference to the origin, purpose and content assess the value and limitations of this source for historians studying the Manchurian Incident.

One year after the Mukden incident, the Lytton Commission's Report was published. It stated the following:

- Japan did in fact have special interests in Manchuria but the use of force by the army, and its takeover of the whole of Manchuria, was unacceptable and unjustified.
- Japan should give up the territory and withdraw its forces.
- Manchukuo was not an independent state and could not be recognized as such.
- Manchuria should become independent but under Chinese sovereignty.

The Commission stressed that the problem of Manchuria could only be solved by a general improvement in Sino-Japanese relations. It recommended that, following Japan's withdrawal of troops back to the railway zone, the two countries should negotiate a non-aggression pact and a trade agreement.

Such recommendations ignored the fact that Japan wanted Manchuria and was not prepared to compromise. Japan declared that the League's members were hypocritical in their attitude towards Japanese actions in China; after all, had not the British and French established their enclaves there by force? Japan did not accept the report and withdrew from the League in protest in March 1933. The US Ambassador to Japan, Joseph C Grew, reported that:

*The military themselves, and the public through military propaganda are fully prepared to fight rather than surrender to moral or other pressure from the West. The moral obloquy [condemnation] of the rest of the world serves only to strengthen not modify their determination.*

### Why did the League not take stronger action against Japan?

No further action was taken against Japan. Why? France, as one of the key members of the League, felt that it had no real reason to fall out with Japan. As the colonial power in Indo-China, it also had much to gain from a weakened China.

## TOK

Look at the sources on pages 64–66. Make a note of the following:

- the choice of language
- the selection of events and supporting details.

Discuss in small groups in what ways the sources contain *bias*. Do some sources seem to be more objective? Which sources seem the most biased? Feedback to the class. In pairs attempt to write a brief account of the Manchurian Crisis that is without "bias" - attempt to be as objective as possible. Discuss as a class the extent to which it is possible to describe historical events without bias or subjectivity.



Britain was also cautious in its response. Although there were some in the ruling Conservative Party who believed that the principle of collective security should be upheld, it was unwilling to act when its own interests were not at stake. In any case it lacked the military means to resist Japan.

In addition, both countries were suffering from the economic effects of the Great Depression which made them hesitant to spend resources on either economic or military actions. Moreover, the fear of communism in both countries meant that Japan was viewed as an ally in containing communist Russia in the Far East.

## Source skills

### Source A

**Extract from Alan Farmer. *Britain Foreign Affairs, 1919–39* (1996).**

If action was to be taken, US support was vital, but that support was not forthcoming. Japanese imperialism, although a potential threat to British interests in the Far East, was not an immediate danger. Indeed Japanese expansion in northern China could be seen as reducing the risk of Japanese expansion in other, more sensitive, areas (for example, Southeast Asia).

Economic sanctions were unlikely to achieve much. The Royal Navy was not strong enough to enforce a trade embargo, and the USA, Japan's biggest trading partner, made it clear it would not support any League action. The best policy therefore seemed to be to accept Japan's takeover of Manchuria and to hope that the Japanese threat did not develop.

### Source B

**Winston Churchill speaking in the House of Commons, 17 February 1933.**

Now I must say something to you which is very unfashionable. I am going to say a word of sympathy for Japan, not necessarily for her policy, but for her position and her national difficulties. I do not think the League of Nations would be well-advised to quarrel with Japan. The League has great work to do in Europe ... there is no more use affronting Japan than there would be in ordering the Swiss and Czechoslovak navies to the Yellow Sea ... I hope we in England shall try to understand a little the position of Japan, an ancient State, with the highest sense of national honour and patriotism, and with a teeming population and a remarkable energy.

On the one side they see the dark menace of Soviet Russia. On the other the chaos of China, four of five provinces of which are now being tortured under Communist rule.

Cited in Ronald Cameron, *Appeasement and the Road to War* (1991)

### Source C

**Extract from Akira Iriya. *The Origins of the Second World War in Asia and the Pacific* (1987).**

Unfortunately for China, the international system with which it so strongly identified and to which it turned for help, was itself going through a major crisis of another sort; the beginning of the world depression. Those powers that had constructed and preserved the international system – advanced industrial economics – were in the midst of a severe crisis. Between 1929 and 1931 industrial production, employment, commodity prices, purchasing power – all such indices of economic health, had plummeted, with national incomes cut to nearly one-half in the United States, Germany, and elsewhere. The situation severely affected their economic interactions, and thus the world economy as a whole ... international co-operation, in other words, had already begun to break down when the Manchurian Incident broke out.

### First question, part a – 3 marks

What, according to Source A, were the reasons why Britain failed to take any further action against Japan?

### Fourth question – 9 marks

Using the sources and your own knowledge, examine why the League of Nations did not take stronger action to deal with the Manchurian crisis.





## What was the impact of the League's failure to take action over Manchuria?

The failure of the League to respond to the Manchurian incident meant that Japan was able to continue with its expansion; it may also have contributed to Mussolini's decision to invade Abyssinia in 1935.

### Source skills

#### Source A

Extract from R.J. Overy, *Origins of the Second World War* (2008).

In 1933 Japan left the League and effectively removed the Far East from the system of collective security. In 1934, in violation of international agreements to preserve an "open door" policy in China, the Japanese government announced the Amau Doctrine, a warning to

other powers to regard China as Japan's sphere of influence and to abandon trade with the Chinese and the provision of technical aid to them. There is no doubt that Japanese leaders, spurred on at home by the military, were encouraged to go further after 1932 than they might otherwise have done because of the weak response from the major powers.

#### Source B

A cartoon by David Low, "The Doormat", published in the UK newspaper the *Evening Standard*, 19 January 1933.



#### First question, part a – 3 marks

What, according to Source A, was the result of the Manchurian crisis for Japan's future actions in China?

#### First question, part b – 2 marks

What is the message of Source B?

#### ATL Communication skills

By examining the language he uses, can you identify Overy's opinion in Source A on the results of this crisis?