

# 1 Japanese expansionism in East Asia

## 1.1 The impact of nationalism and militarism on Japan's foreign policy: the origins, 1853 - 1930

What were the origins of Japanese nationalism and militarism?

- roots of Japanese nationalism and militarism start in middle of 19<sup>th</sup> century
- factors contributing to growth of Japanese nationalism: determination to transform into Western-style power (desire for equality), belief in its destiny as leader of Asia, need to obtain raw materials and secure markets, strategic security, actions of Western powers, popular support for militarism and expansionism within Japan
- nationalism is linked with imperialist foreign policy
- second half of 19<sup>th</sup> century: Japan has first contact with West; before that it was isolated from threat posed by Christianity; policy of Japan's rulers (shogun) who ruled since 1192
- 1853: American naval officers arrives on Japanese shores: determined to get Japan to open up to US demands for trade; Japan is intimidated, knows what happened to China, sign treaty
- Treaty of Kanagawa (1854) has immense effects on Japan: political powers returns to the emperor; government begins modernizing Japan, dismantling feudal system and establishing limited form of democracy, reforms in all areas, significantly in military
- military reforms include modernizing of army and adapting German military tactics; establish navy with help of British
- Japan defeats China in Sino-Japanese War (1894-95) and positions itself as a world power with an empire; treaty with China follows which harms China

The effects of the First Sino-Japanese War on nationalism and militarism

- Triple Intervention: Germany, Russia, France get worried about Japan and its impact on Asia: force Japan to give up Liaodong Peninsula (taken from China in treaty)
- Russia takes Peninsula for itself, Germany secures control over Shandong Province, France and GB take advantage of weakened China and seize port cities
- military success, gaining of land, frustration of giving up some land encourage nationalism and militarism in Japan: reinforces idea that strong military is important
- military presence at heart of government
- industrial production soars: Japan seeks to be less reliant on imports

## Japan after 1900

How did international events contribute to the growth of nationalism and militarism?

- Anglo-Japanese Alliance (1902): Japan's position further strengthened; Japan ends diplomatic isolation; first alliance between Western and non-Western
- Japan and Russia clash over interests in Korea and Manchuria: Japan attacks with a surprise attack; land battles are successful but war at sea is decisive: Russian fleet sails halfway around the globe from base in Baltic Sea, but is destroyed by Japanese fleet
- Russians are forced to accept Treaty of Portsmouth: Japanese are disappointed as they expected more; Japan gains control of Korea and South Manchuria and railway rights in Manchuria and southern half of Sakhalin Islands
- war earns Japan respect of the West and admiration of other Asian countries

Why was Manchuria so important to Japan?

- four times as large as Japanese Islands: important opportunities for supply of resources
- offers possibility for rapidly growing population; can act strategically as a buffer against Russia

## How did Japan benefit from the First World War?

- Japan can expand its influence in Asia further: demands German colonial territory in China and when this is ignored they declare war on Germany
- Allies are distracted: Japan issues China with „Twenty-One Demands“: requires China to agree to Japanese remaining in Shandong and grant Japan extra commercial privileges in Manchuria
- demands cause sharp reaction from Britain and USA; also angers these that think it will damage Japan's reputation: demands are modified
- Japan benefits economically by supplying goods to Allies and orders to Asian markets which the Allies are unable to fulfill: exports flourish
- Japan becomes more self-sufficient as it develops industries
- Japan sends troops alongside Allies to Russia against Bolsheviks; the Whites; stay long after British, US and French leave; ultimately they are defeated by Bolsheviks; mistrust of Japan in USA and Britain
- attacks on Japanese government due to cost of intervention in Russia, loss of prestige, failure to control army which largely acted independently

## The results of the First World War for Japan

- Japan secures former German Pacific islands as mandate and Germany's former economic privileges on Shandong Peninsula at Versailles Conference: establish Japan as important economic power on Asian mainland and main naval power in Western Pacific
- Japan is reminded that it is not fully member of „Western Club“: failure to get racial equality clauses included in Charter of League of Nations
- leaders fear the implications on Japanese immigrations if it was in the club
- Japanese immigrants substantially increase to USA after 1900; fear of „yellow peril“ drives anti-Japanese laws; Immigration Act (1924): Japan only country not allowed any quota to immigrate

## Japan in the 1920s

### How peaceful was Japan in the 1920s?

- changes to foreign policy of internationalism during 1920s: aims to develop Japan's economy via peaceful means, keeping good relations with USA, continuing to seek economic advancement in China but within framework of international agreement
- Washington Conference (1921): Americans insist that Anglo-Japanese Alliance (1902) should be replaced by Four-Power Treaty (Britain, Japan, USA, France): agree to confer should the rights or possessions of any of the four be threatened in the Pacific
- Nine-Power Treaty (China, Belgium, Italy, Netherlands, Portugal, signatories of Four-Power Treaty; 1922): respect Chinese independence and integrity
- Five-Power Naval Treaty: restricts competition in battleships and aircraft carriers: 5:5:3 ratio for Britain, USA, Japan respectively; France and Italy have 1.75 ratio
- treaty requires Japan's Imperial Navy to abandon its plans for massive expansion
- treaties above form the Washington Treaty System, indicate that Japan is committed to international cooperation in the 1920s
- those now gaining political power in Japan are doing so because of their experience rather than because they are members of the elite
- electorate is extended until all adult males are given the vote in 1925
- Prime Minister Hara's government lasts from 1918 to 1921: introduces social and economic reforms, military is contained, Japan joins the League of Nations

### What problems did Japan face in the 1920s?

- underlying problems in Japanese government and society, coming together in 1930s to lead Japan towards a military dictatorship

#### 1. A *fragile* democracy

- democratic reforms remain fragile: democratic scandals and election law violations erode public support for parties
- link of each party with either country's big business in cities or landlords in countryside deepen the public's suspicions

- fear of left-wing radicalism; Peace Preservation Law clamps down on anyone opposing the political structure aimed at Communist Party
- law extending the anti-left franchise and the other limiting public's right to engage in open discussion: dilemma in the Meiji government's ruling circles as to how much political freedom to allow

## 2. Opposition to Shidehara's internationalism and the growing influence of the military on foreign policy

- conservative groups see Shidehara's approach to international relations as a betrayal of Japan
- opposition advocates an aggressive policy in China and see Japan's destiny as Asian leaders
- US immigration bill plays into opposition's hands: provocation by the West
- after death of Emperor Taisho, Emperor Hirohito replaces him: he is celebrated, revives idea of emperor as living god, nationalism and Japan's special destiny in the world

## 3. A growing economic crisis

- economic boom only lasts until mid 1921: Europe recovers, takes back lost markets
- large division between cities and rural areas
- when farmers and workers try to organize themselves politically, police suppresses them
- real economic crisis comes with the outbreak of the global depression in 1929
- end of 1920s: domestic and foreign crises cause Japanese government come down on the side of repression rather than democracy

## What was the role of political instability in China in encouraging Japanese nationalism before the 1930s?

- key in encouraging imperial competition on Chinese mainland and preventing Japanese expansion into Korea and Manchuria
- during European drive for colonies in 19<sup>th</sup> century, China is forcibly opened to trade by the West; happens in Japan as well, but it manages to turn it to its advantage and borrows Western ideas to become a strong country after 1968
- after Chinese defeat by Britain (Opium Wars: 1839-42, 1856-60), European powers gain extraordinary economic, military, legal privileges on Chinese soil, especially in ports
- officially Chinese Empire is still an independent power
- Japan wishes to achieve equality with the West: also wants to acquire colonies
- Japan sees European powers sharing out spoils of China: concerned that they lose out if they do not also stake claims on the mainland
- Japan believes its security depends on control of Korea and preventing the West to have it
- Sino-Japanese War shows China's weakness against modernized Japanese army
- China remains weak and divided; dominated by warlords fighting among themselves
- rivalry between GMD and CCP causes further instability in China in late 1920s and 1930s

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

- growing Japanese nationalism and power of military leads to intervention in China, a deteriorating relationship with the West and Japanese attack on Pearl harbor in 1941
- different perspectives on what leads to war between USA and Japan: Japan planned war with aim of dominating Asia and negotiations were only to delay international response to their expansion; Japan plans expansion but war is not inevitable but negotiations fail; Japan is forced into war by US actions

## Causes of expansion

- 1930s: Japan is fully modernized and nationalism and militarism take hold in society
- most Japanese see their position in Asia as essential for economy, strategy and destiny
- crises at home allow these forces to have the upper hand
- key factor encouraging expansionist forces is Chinese political instability

## Political instability in China

- Chinese nationalism grows due to public outrage concerning the behavior of foreigners: Nationalist Party (GMD) under Jiang Jieshi begins a campaign of national unification
- Communist Party is set up (1921) which forms the United Front to crush the warlords in their “Northern Expedition” but they end up in a civil war against each other

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

- Northern Expedition concerns the Japanese government: Japanese back the Manchurian warlord Zhang Zuolin, but he gets powerful and wants to expand into Northern China
- if Jiang defeats Zhang it can impede Japan's special interests in Manchuria
- Japanese plans to use its army in Manchuria (Kwantung Army) to disarm Zhang and force him to retreat before he is defeated by Jiang
- some Kwantung leaders take action themselves: force Jiang's Northern Expedition to a halt and then they assassinate Zhang (4 June 1928)
- Japan's Prime Minister Tanaka is instructed to enforce discipline in the army; General Staff is unwilling to punish the perpetrators as this would weaken the prestige of the army
- Tanaka is forced to resign as he is unable to implement the emperor's wishes: as early as summer 1929 it is clear that the army can ignore the government with impunity
- Hamaguchi Yuko becomes prime minister; wants good relations with China, disarmament and end to corruption: government falters due to the effects of the Great Depression
- military is outraged when Hamaguchi agrees to decisions made at the London Naval Disarmament Conference limiting Japan's naval growth
- criticism of the government by military circles grows and peaks when Hamaguchi is shot

## Japanese domestic issues: Economic crisis

- Wall Street Crash calls into question the whole international economic order: casts doubts on trustworthiness of the USA on Japan's own parliamentary government
- Japan is dependent on world trade and exports fall drastically as countries put up tariffs to protect their industry
- silk industry is hit the worst: price falls to one fifth, farmers are badly hit as well as half of them rely on silk production: desperate poverty and unemployment
- Manchuria becomes even more important due to economic situation; coal, iron, timber present
- Manchuria can also provide living space for an over-populated Japan
- given the aims of the Northern Expedition, it is clear that China would fight for Manchuria
- assassination of Zhang does not destabilize the region and he is succeeded by his son, Zhang Xueliang who allies himself with Jiang
- Japanese government aims to follow peaceful principles to maintain Japan's position in North-East of China; militants of Kwantung Army are concerned taking Manchuria is more difficult
- group of Kwantung Army officers plot to seize Manchuria, against the policies of their government; Prime Minister Wakatsuki is warned and informs the emperor, minister of war (General Minami) is ordered to restrain them; his letter is unintentionally held back and the plotters execute their plan before receiving the letter

## Events in Manchuria, 1931

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

- evening of 18 Sept. 1931: explosion on section of Japanese-owned South Manchurian Railway near Mukden; Kwantung officers claim it is blown up by Chinese
- Kwantung Army has its “excuse” and enter Changchun to the north
- Wakatsuki's government attempts to regain control but the Kwantung Army is relishing its victories and does not listen to orders from Tokyo; seize more and more territory
- 24 Sept.: government declares the army would fall back to railway zone, but army ignores this and pushes further into the Manchurian countryside

## What were the results of the Manchurian crisis?

### The result for Japan's international relations

- Japan's proclamations of peaceful intent seem deceitful as the army continues to expand
- 1930s: deterioration in relations between Japan and USA and Britain
- West's response to Manchurian crisis is rather cautious but its condemnation of Japan for using force causes Japan to leave the League of Nations
- Manchurian crisis leads to Japan's isolation
- West is seen as holding back the legitimate needs of Japan for racist reasons as upholding international law only when it suits themselves and allowing their own imperialist actions to go unchallenged
- military gains more power in Japan and there is an admiration for Germany
- Soviet communist regime is an ideological and territorial threat to Japan with its interests in Manchuria: Japanese view the Soviets as their key potential opponent
- Japan signs the Anti-Comintern with Nazi Germany (Nov. 1936) because it is concerned by the relationship between China and the Soviet Union
- unlike Germany and Italy, Japan never has a Fascist Party leading the government

### The results for Manchuria and China

- beginning of 1932: Manchuria is completely under Japanese forces; Japanese set up an independent government under puppet rule of Pu Yi of state "Manchukuo"
- Jan. 1932: fighting breaks out between Japanese and Chinese forces in Shanghai; city is bombed by Japanese; Chinese outrage helps turning world opinion against Japan

### *The results for the Nationalist Party in China*

- China's response is a call on the League of Nations
- Jiang Jieshi is focused on defeating the Chinese Communists and does not want to get involved into another conflict but also does not negotiate with Japan
- Chinese people respond with fury at Japan's actions: boycott of Japanese products which reduces Japanese sales by two-thirds
- Japanese control of Manchuria is accepted in May 1933 in Treaty of Tanggu
- Jiang's strategy (as he gave the Japanese other parts as well): belief that, given size of China, Japan will exhaust itself in the process of trying to occupy it

### *The results for the Japanese government*

- Japan benefits economically from the occupation
- cost of maintaining a sizable army negates the benefits and there is an increased taxation in Japan: potentially overstretching itself
- needs to protect itself against Soviet Army, US navy and make the Chinese government accept its position in Manchuria and Northern China
- precarious situation is a result of army's decision-making rather than government
- little hope that the government regains the upper hand: Japanese government's position is further undermined by public support for the Kwantung Army's actions
- embarrassed Japanese government has to go along with the wave of popular opinion

## Years of turmoil: The descent into "the Dark Valley"

### Japanese domestic issues after 1932

#### *Political crises and the growing influence of the military*

- growing momentum behind militarist groups that want to replace the government with a military junta; two key groups that want more influence of the military: Koda-ha (Imperial Way fashion) and Tosei-ha (Control fashion); both are imperialist and want Japanese expansion
- Koda-ha is generally more radical; believe that military dictatorship brings the state socialism; war with Soviet Union is inevitable; emphasize "national spirit" over material force
- Tosei-ha are against terrorism and use of force; wish to use legal means to foster military power; want to maintain good relations with Soviets; modernization of army and industry
- three major assassination plots destabilize the government between 1932 and 1936

- May 15<sup>th</sup> Incident: army and navy officers attack banks, party officers and police headquarters in Tokyo; Prime Minister Inukai is shot; enhances influence of army further and undermines the democratic government
- subsequent governments of Admiral Saito and Admiral Okada are interim governments in which the army plays out its power struggle between Koda-ha and Tosei-ha
- Admiral Saito (May 1932 - July 1934): seems to favor Koda-ha faction (appointment of three Koda-ha members to high positions), but Saito takes a firm stance against the radical factions; after a plot against him is discovered he promotes members of the Tosei-ha to minister of war
- Admiral Okada (after July 1934): during his leadership the Koda-ha produce a publication promoting the idea that the army should control the economy
- Koda-ha minister is sacked because he does not keep control of his young officers; a Koda-ha officer assassinates the leader of Tosei-ha (General Nagata)
- assassin is executed; Koda-ha attempt a revolt to seize power in Feb. 1936: soldiers march into Tokyo, take over parliament buildings, war office, police headquarters, prime minister's residence; brutally murder many officials
- Koda-ha faction is discredited and from then on members of Tosei-ha are important for developing army planning: army takes firmer control of the country
- Admiral Okada resigns and is followed by the very weak Hirota Koki; agrees to many military actions and basically hands control of the government to the military
- Koki signs the Anti-Comintern Pact with Hitler (Nov. 1936)
- when National Diet declares alarm at military's direction, the government is brought down
- General Hayashi is in power between Feb. and June 1937
- Diet is only instrument of power left attempting to limit military power, but politicians are divided
- Prince Konoe Fumimaro takes over as prime minister; wants to restrain army but it is soon apparent that he will not be able to
- sixteen weeks into Konoe's power, Japan's army commanders order the invasion of China

### *The Sino-Japanese War of 1937*

- fighting breaks out at Marco Polo Bridge near Beijing between Japanese and Chinese forces on 7 July 1937; limited evidence that clash is deliberately set up
- reinforcements are sent and it leads to a full scale-war with China
- Japan is engaged in north and around Shanghai and is therefore in a two-front war
- Japanese attack is brutal, more devastating air raids, terrorize Chinese refugees

### *The Rape of Nanjing*

- Chinese nationalist government moves capital to Nanjing, which falls to Japanese on 13 Dec.
- Chinese and soldiers are subjected to appalling atrocities
- in Nanjing is a period of terror and destruction that is one of the worst in modern warfare

### *What were the results of the Sino-Japanese War for Japan?*

- war with China is not a war the army General Staff wants; until the time Japan is preparing for a major war with Soviet Union
- Jiang Jieshi's new commitment to resist Japanese makes Marco Polo incident escalate fully
- hope is that China capitulates quickly and accepts Japanese leadership in a new Asian order
- underestimate Chinese nationalism and outrage caused by events such as Rape of Nanjing
- despite lack of effective weapons, defeats and industrial support, Chinese refuse to agree to terms for peace: Japan has to push further: supply lines become overstretched and Japanese forces more vulnerable to Chinese guerrilla attacks
- two centers for Chinese resistance are developed: one by Jiang Jieshi, other by Mao Zedong
- Nov. 1938: Japanese government declares creation of new political, cultural, economic union between Japan, Manchukuo, China: Jiang rejects it and continues war
- key problem for Japan is on how to end the war in its favor

### Why did the conflict deepen after 1938?

#### *The militarists take control*

- Prince Konoe returns as prime minister in July 1940 after resigning in Dec. 1938
- still aims to limit military power; creates a unity party (Imperial Rule Assistance Association) which fails to control militarists again
- military is in total control in Oct. 1941 when Konoe resigns and is replaced by General Tojo

### *The impact of the war in Europe*

- with Hitler's victories in summer 1940, military is drawn into Europe's colonies
- Nov. 1940: Japan pressures occupied France into permitting Japan's forces to have troops and airfields in Indo-China: first stage in conquest of South East Asia

## Events 1940 - 41

### *The Three Power/Tripartite Pact and Neutrality Pact*

- Sept. 1940: Japan signs Tripartite Axis Pact which agrees that Germany and Italy will dominate Europe and leave Japan to dominate East Asia
- April 1941: Japan is able to secure its northern border after signing a pact with the Soviet Union
- during war with China, Japan clashes twice with Soviets over border disputes in 1938 and 1939
- Nazi-Soviet Pact of 1939 is a set-back for Japan
- Neutrality Pact between Soviets and Japanese is mutually beneficial: Soviets can concentrate their forces in Europe and Japanese can move forces further south
- Nazi victories in Europe create great opportunities for Japan to take over Asian colonies of Britain, France, Netherlands; USA and Britain are alarmed and stop all foreign trade with Japan and increase aid to Jiang
- with Hitler's victories in early 1941 Japan expands its ambitions for the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere: South East Asia is included
- suggested that Japan enters into war with China with no clear plan of how to end it

### *Why did Japan attack Pearl Harbor on 7 December 1941?*

- Japan's foreign policy is determined by domestic issues: increasing control the military now has and economic concerns arising from the US blockade
- economic embargo is fatal for Japan in the long term: Japanese cannot sustain war with China without their key war supplies: war of conquest to gain and ensure resources from European colonies seems to be the only option
- USA wants Japan to agree to respect the territorial integrity of their neighbors, to pursue policy by peaceful means and continue to maintain an "open door" trade policy
- Japan cannot agree to these conditions and deadlock continues into August
- military in Japan makes alternative plans: if diplomatic measures fail until the first ten days of Oct. they will commence hostilities against the USA, Britain and Netherlands
- final Japanese mission is sent to Washington, but at the same time a huge naval task force is prepared secretly to attack the USA (naval base in Hawaii) should negotiations fail
- 2. Nov.: final Imperial Conference: decision not to let US dictate them and move to war
- Japanese bombers attack US ships and installations at Pearl Harbor in an attempt to destroy the US Pacific fleet; will render US temporarily helpless to resist Japanese expansion
- attack incurs huge losses with 90% of mid-Pacific air and sea power destroyed or damaged; US aircraft carriers are not damaged because several are out on maneuvers and are not hit: fatal mistake for Japan
- US government is outraged; many deaths and casualties before war declaration is made
- attack on Pearl Harbor is not in line with Japan's long-term planning and is caused by the oil embargo which forces Japan into the war
- Japan takes Indo-China, Siam, Dutch East Indies, Malaya, Singapore, Philippines by mid-1942

## **1.3 The international response to Japanese aggression, 1931 - 1941**

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

- Japan's action as first significant challenge to the new international system in Europe
- system centers around concept of collective security: joint action against aggression
- League of Nations is established in 1919
- treaties such as Washington Conference System, Nine-Power Treaty and Kellogg-Briand Pact (1928, signatories promise not to use war to solve disputes) reinforce cooperation

## The organization of the League of Nations

- consists of the Assembly of the League and the Council of the League
- assembly is made from representatives of all states, meets yearly, each state has one vote
- council is the major powers Britain, France, Italy, Japan and four other members elected by the assembly; council makes most of key decisions
- Covenant of the League of Nations: document setting out how to achieve international cooperation and maintaining international peace and security

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

- following the incident, China appeals to League and hopes to invoke principle of collective security and thus get action taken against Japan
- League acts cautiously; holds several meetings; USA is also in these meetings
- Japanese government seems to be cooperating but army continues to expand its influence over Manchuria in defiance of the request to withdraw
- League sends a fact-finding commission which takes several months to arrive and then several months to complete the report; meanwhile Kwantung Army expands further
- report states following: Japan has special interests in Manchuria but use force by army is unacceptable, Japan should give up territory and withdraw forces, Manchukuo is not independent, Manchuria should become independent under Chinese sovereignty
- commission stresses that problem can only be solved by a general improvement in Sino-Japanese relations; recommends to negotiate non-aggression pact and trade agreement
- recommendations ignore that Japan wants Manchuria and is not prepared to compromise
- Japan sees League's members as hypocritical, does not accept report and withdraws

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

- no further action is taken against Japan
- France feels no real reason to fall out with Japan, can gain from weakened China
- Britain is unwilling to act when its own interests are not at stake
- both countries suffer from economic effects of Great Depression and are hesitant to spend
- fear of communism; Japan as ally containing communist Russia in the East

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

- Japan is able to continue with its expansion
- may contribute to Mussolini's decision to invade Abyssinia in 1935

## The response of the League and Europe to events after 1932

- China appeals to League after Marco Polo Bridge Incident and bombing of Shanghai: League condemns Japan for breaking the Nine-Power Treaty
- in reality League is impotent and can take little practical action; preoccupied in Europe
- Nov. 1937: Nine-Power Treaty Conference convenes a last time and condemns Japanese actions but produces no measures to stop aggression

## The response of China to events after 1932

### The establishment of the Second United Front

- Jiang's insistence to fight Communists over Japanese loses him support even in his party
- multiple protests at his failure to stand up to Japanese
- Dec. 1936: amidst a campaign against Communists, Jiang is kidnapped by troops under Zhang Xue-liang, the Manchurian warlord and son of Zhang Zuolin
- Jiang changes opinion and a Second United Front is created; civil war is suspended

### China's actions following the Marco Polo Bridge incident

- national conference is held including Communists and Nationalists; Mao declares a policy of "total resistance by the whole nation"

- despite Second United Front, war goes badly for Chinese: 1938 Beijing, Shanghai, Ghangzhou and Nanjing had fallen to Japan; GMD government has to withdraw capital to Chongqing
- escalation of the war caused by the Chinese United Front draws Japan into a conflict that they do not want and do not have the resources for
- Japanese attempt to create puppet governments; Wang Jingwei as most important puppet ruler; former GMD; rival of Jiang; agrees in 1940 to become head of New Government of China
- regime is recognized by Manchukuo and Axis powers but not Western Powers
- 1938: China is divided into three main areas: Nationalist China based in Chongqing, Communist China based in Shaanxi and Japanese-occupied China in the east and north
- despite United Front, tensions between Nationalists and Communists remain high and there is a deterioration in 1941 when Jiang attacks Communists
- with attack on Pearl Harbor and declaration of war on USA, Jiang realizes that Japan will ultimately be defeated

## The USA's response to Japanese actions 1931 - 37

- USA's main foreign policy in 1930s: stay out of international crises and pursue its own interests
- Wall Street Crash of 1929 reinforces concentration on its own issues (isolationism)
- USA is concerned by Japanese actions, but takes little action itself: US interests and security are not directly threatened by the Manchurian incident
- USA lacks a credible naval force in Pacific
- USA has much more important trade ties with Japan than with Chinese Republic and it does not want to jeopardize its investments there
- 7. Jan. 1932: USA declares it will not recognize any agreement that violates China's territorial or administrative integrity or goes against open door policy or Kellogg-Briand Pact
- Hitler's policies take most of USA's attention

## The USA's response to events 1937 - 38

- Japan's military and economic actions are becoming a threat to USA; still hesitant approach
- Japan's naval building programme upsets balance of power in Pacific; economic penetration into north and central China threatens US interests and concept of open door policy
- Roosevelt has sympathy with China's position and gives financial aid
- but there is no political intervention
- July - Nov. 1937: USA rejects ten British appeals to participate in a joint offer of mediation in the Sino-Japanese conflict
- Neutrality Acts: prevent US involvement in conflicts that do not specifically involve USA
- public opinion in 1937 in USA is to stay isolated
- USA shows itself unwilling to go beyond verbal condemnation against Japan
- Roosevelt indicates to impose sanctions but calls it back after public outcry
- USA's trade until 1939 plays a key role in supporting Japan's war effort

## Why did the USA change its policy towards Japan after 1938?

- Roosevelt decides to act against isolationists and gives Nationalists more active support
- Japan's announcement to create "a new order in East Asia" as the turning point
- US fear that Jiang might join Japan in "new order"
- possibility that if US does not help sufficiently, the Soviets might step in and increase influence in China further
- Tripartite Pact of Axis Powers convinces many Americans that war in Europe and war in Asia is the same war

## The advance to war: US pressures on Japan

- July 1939: long-standing trade agreement with Japan is suspended
- throughout 1940/41 USA gives Chinese millions of dollars of aid
- July 1941: Japan moves south rather than moving north to attack Soviets; USA freezes all Japanese assets and imposes a trade embargo in November including oil
- Britain and Netherlands also impose a total trade embargo
- Japan is totally dependent on US oil and embargo creates a crisis

- if all oil resources run out, Japan is unable to continue the war against China: negotiations and a diplomatic mission follows to the USA
- agreement stalls over fact that USA insists that Japan withdraws from China

## **What was the reaction of the USA to the attack on Pearl Harbor?**

- attack unites the American people for a war against Japan
- congress agrees on declaration of war on 8. Dec.