

# HISTORY OF CHINA AND JAPAN FROM 1900 TO 1976 A.D

18BHI63C (UNIT IV)

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III B A HISTORY - VI SEMESTER

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## **Great Leap Forward**

In January 1958, Mao launched the second **Five-Year Plan**, known as the **Great Leap Forward**, a plan intended to turn China from an agrarian nation to an industrialized one<sup>[190]</sup> and as an alternative model for economic growth to the Soviet model focusing on heavy industry that was advocated by others in the party. Under this economic program, the relatively small agricultural collectives that had been formed to date were rapidly merged into far larger **people's communes**, and many of the peasants were ordered to work on massive infrastructure projects and on the production of iron and steel. Some private food production was banned, and livestock and farm implements were brought under collective ownership.

Under the Great Leap Forward, Mao and other party leaders ordered the implementation of a variety of unproven and unscientific new agricultural techniques by the new communes. The combined effect of the diversion of labour to steel production and infrastructure projects, and cyclical **natural disasters** led to an approximately 15% drop in grain production in 1959 followed by a further 10% decline in 1960 and no recovery in 1961.<sup>[191]</sup>

In an effort to win favour with their superiors and avoid being purged, each layer in the party hierarchy exaggerated the amount of grain produced under them. Based upon the fabricated

success, party cadres were ordered to requisition a disproportionately high amount of that fictitious harvest for state use, primarily for use in the cities and urban areas but also for export. The result, compounded in some areas by drought and in others by floods, was that rural peasants were left with little food for themselves and many millions starved to death in the [Great Chinese Famine](#). The people of urban areas in China were given food stamps each month, but the people of rural areas were expected to grow their own crops and give some of the crops back to the government. The death count in rural parts of China surpassed the deaths in the urban centers. Additionally, the Chinese government continued to export food that could have potentially been allocated to the country's starving citizens. These factors led to the deaths of an estimated 52 million citizens.<sup>[192]</sup> The famine was a direct cause of the death of some 30 million Chinese peasants between 1959 and 1962.<sup>[193]</sup> Furthermore, many children who became emaciated and malnourished during years of hardship and struggle for survival died shortly after the Great Leap Forward came to an end in 1962.<sup>[191]</sup>

The extent of Mao's knowledge of the severity of the situation has been disputed. Mao's physician believed that he may have been unaware of the extent of the famine, partly due to a reluctance to criticise his policies, and the willingness of his staff to exaggerate or outright fake reports regarding food production.<sup>[194]</sup> Upon learning of the extent of the starvation, Mao vowed to stop eating meat, an action followed by his staff.<sup>[195]</sup>

Hong Kong-based historian [Frank Dikötter](#),<sup>[196]</sup> challenged the notion that Mao did not know about the famine throughout the country until it was too late:

The idea that the state mistakenly took too much grain from the countryside because it assumed that the harvest was much larger than it was is largely a myth—at most partially true for the autumn of 1958 only. In most cases the party knew very well that it was starving its own people

to death. At a secret meeting in the Jinjiang Hotel in Shanghai dated March 25, 1959, Mao specifically ordered the party to procure up to one third of all the grain, much more than had ever been the case. At the meeting he announced that "To distribute resources evenly will only ruin the Great Leap Forward. When there is not enough to eat, people starve to death. It is better to let half of the people die so that the other half can eat their fill."<sup>[197][198]</sup>

Professor Emeritus Thomas P. Bernstein of [Columbia University](#) offered his view on Mao's statement on starvation in the March 25, 1959, meeting:

Some scholars believe that this shows Mao's readiness to accept mass death on an immense scale. My own view is that this is an instance of Mao's use of hyperbole, another being his casual acceptance of death of half the population during a nuclear war. In other contexts, Mao did not in fact accept mass death. Zhou's *Chronology* shows that in October 1958, Mao expressed real concern that 40,000 people in Yunnan had starved to death (p. 173). Shortly after the March 25 meeting, he worried about 25.2 million people who were at risk of starvation.<sup>[199]</sup> But from late summer on, Mao essentially forgot about this issue, until, as noted, the "Xinyang Incident" came to light in October 1960.<sup>[200]</sup>

In the article "Mao Zedong and the Famine of 1959–1960: A Study in Wilfulness", published in 2006 in *The China Quarterly*, Professor Thomas P. Bernstein also discussed Mao's change of attitudes during different phases of the Great Leap Forward:

In late autumn 1958, Mao Zedong strongly condemned widespread practices of the Great Leap Forward (GLF) such as subjecting peasants to exhausting labour without adequate food and rest, which had resulted in epidemics, starvation and deaths. At that time Mao explicitly recognized that anti-rightist pressures on officialdom were a major cause of "production at the expense of

livelihood." While he was not willing to acknowledge that only abandonment of the GLF could solve these problems, he did strongly demand that they be addressed. After the July 1959 [clash at Lushan](#) with [Peng Dehuai](#), Mao revived the GLF in the context of a new, extremely harsh anti-rightist campaign, which he relentlessly promoted into the spring of 1960 together with the radical policies that he previously condemned. Not until spring 1960 did Mao again express concern about abnormal deaths and other abuses, but he failed to apply the pressure needed to stop them. Given what he had already learned about the costs to the peasants of GLF extremism, the Chairman should have known that the revival of GLF radicalism would exact a similar or even bigger price. Instead, he wilfully ignored the lessons of the first radical phase for the sake of achieving extreme ideological and developmental goals.<sup>[199]</sup>

In *Hungry Ghosts: Mao's Secret Famine*, [Jasper Becker](#) notes that Mao was dismissive of reports he received of food shortages in the countryside and refused to change course, believing that peasants were lying and that rightists and [kulaks](#) were hoarding grain. He refused to open state granaries,<sup>[203]</sup> and instead launched a series of "anti-grain concealment" drives that resulted in numerous purges and suicides.<sup>[204]</sup> Other violent campaigns followed in which party leaders went from village to village in search of hidden food reserves, and not only grain, as Mao issued quotas for pigs, chickens, ducks and eggs. Many peasants accused of hiding food were tortured and beaten to death.<sup>[205]</sup>

Whatever the cause of the disaster, Mao lost esteem among many of the top party cadres. He was eventually forced to abandon the policy in 1962, and he lost political power to moderate party leaders such as [Liu Shaoqi](#) and [Deng Xiaoping](#). Mao, however, supported by national propaganda, claimed that he was only partly to blame for the famine. As a result, Mao was forced to step down as President of the Communist Party of China on April 27, 1959, but was

able to remain in his top position as Chairman of the Communist Party, with the Presidency of the party and the state transferred to Liu Shaoqi.

The Great Leap Forward was a tragedy for the vast majority of the Chinese. Although the steel quotas were officially reached, almost all of the supposed steel made in the countryside was iron, as it had been made from assorted scrap metal in home-made furnaces with no reliable source of fuel such as coal. This meant that proper [smelting](#) conditions could not be achieved. According to Zhang Rongmei, a geometry teacher in rural Shanghai during the Great Leap Forward:

We took all the furniture, pots, and pans we had in our house, and all our neighbours did likewise. We put everything in a big fire and melted down all the metal.

The worst of the famine was steered towards enemies of the state.<sup>[206]</sup> As [Jasper Becker](#) explains:

The most vulnerable section of China's population, around five per cent, were those whom Mao called '[enemies of the people](#)'. Anyone who had in previous campaigns of repression been labeled a 'black element' was given the lowest priority in the allocation of food. Landlords, rich peasants, former members of the nationalist regime, religious leaders, rightists, counter-revolutionaries and the families of such individuals died in the greatest numbers.<sup>[207]</sup>

At a large Communist Party conference in Beijing in January 1962, dubbed the "[Seven Thousand Cadres Conference](#)", State Chairman Liu Shaoqi denounced the Great Leap Forward, attributing the project to widespread famine in China.<sup>[208]</sup> The overwhelming majority of delegates expressed agreement, but Defense Minister [Lin Biao](#) staunchly defended Mao.<sup>[208]</sup> A brief period of liberalization followed while Mao and Lin plotted a comeback.<sup>[208]</sup> Liu Shaoqi and [Deng Xiaoping](#) rescued the economy by disbanding the people's communes, introducing elements of

private control of peasant smallholdings and importing grain from Canada and Australia to mitigate the worst effects of famine.<sup>[209]</sup>

## **Consequences**

At the [Lushan Conference](#) in July/August 1959, several ministers expressed concern that the Great Leap Forward had not proved as successful as planned. The most direct of these was Minister of Defence and [Korean War](#) veteran General [Peng Dehuai](#). Following Peng's criticism of the Great Leap Forward, Mao orchestrated a purge of Peng and his supporters, stifling criticism of the Great Leap policies. Senior officials who reported the truth of the famine to Mao were branded as "right opportunists."<sup>[210]</sup> A campaign against right-wing opportunism was launched and resulted in party members and ordinary peasants being sent to prison labor camps where many would subsequently die in the famine. Years later the CPC would conclude that as many as six million people were wrongly punished in the campaign.<sup>[211]</sup>

The number of deaths by starvation during the Great Leap Forward is deeply controversial. Until the mid-1980s, when official census figures were finally published by the Chinese Government, little was known about the scale of the disaster in the Chinese countryside, as the handful of Western observers allowed access during this time had been restricted to model villages where they were deceived into believing that the Great Leap Forward had been a great success. There was also an assumption that the flow of individual reports of starvation that had been reaching the West, primarily through Hong Kong and Taiwan, must have been localised or exaggerated as China was continuing to claim record harvests and was a net exporter of grain through the period. Because Mao wanted to pay back early to the Soviets debts totalling 1.973 billion [yuan](#) from 1960 to 1962,<sup>[212]</sup> exports increased by 50%, and fellow Communist regimes in [North Korea](#), [North Vietnam](#) and [Albania](#) were provided grain free of charge.<sup>[203]</sup>

Censuses were carried out in China in 1953, 1964 and 1982. The first attempt to analyse this data to estimate the number of famine deaths was carried out by American demographer Dr. Judith Banister and published in 1984. Given the lengthy gaps between the censuses and doubts over the reliability of the data, an accurate figure is difficult to ascertain. Nevertheless, Banister concluded that the official data implied that around 15 million excess deaths incurred in China during 1958–61, and that based on her modelling of Chinese demographics during the period and taking account of assumed under-reporting during the famine years, the figure was around 30 million. The official statistic is 20 million deaths, as given by [Hu Yaobang](#).<sup>[213]</sup> [Yang Jisheng](#), a former [Xinhua News Agency](#) reporter who had privileged access and connections available to no other scholars, estimates a death toll of 36 million.<sup>[212]</sup> Frank Dikötter estimates that there were at least 45 million premature deaths attributable to the Great Leap Forward from 1958 to 1962.<sup>[214]</sup> Various other sources have put the figure at between 20 and 46 million.<sup>[215][216][217]</sup>

### **Split from Soviet Union**

On the international front, the period was dominated by the further isolation of China. The [Sino-Soviet split](#) resulted in [Nikita Khrushchev](#)'s withdrawal of all Soviet technical experts and aid from the country. The split concerned the leadership of [world communism](#). The USSR had a network of Communist parties it supported; China now created its own rival network to battle it out for local control of the left in numerous countries.<sup>[218]</sup> Lorenz M. Lüthi argues:

The Sino-Soviet split was one of the key events of the Cold War, equal in importance to the construction of the Berlin Wall, the Cuban Missile Crisis, the Second Vietnam War, and Sino-American rapprochement. The split helped to determine the framework of the Second Cold War in general, and influenced the course of the Second Vietnam War in particular.<sup>[219]</sup>

The split resulted from [Nikita Khrushchev](#)'s more moderate Soviet leadership after the death of Stalin in March 1953. Only [Albania](#) openly sided with China, thereby forming an alliance between the two countries which would last until after Mao's death in 1976. Warned that the Soviets had nuclear weapons, Mao minimized the threat. Becker says that "Mao believed that the bomb was a 'paper tiger', declaring to Khrushchev that it would not matter if China lost 300 million people in a nuclear war: the other half of the population would survive to ensure victory".<sup>[220]</sup>

Stalin had established himself as the successor of "correct" Marxist thought well before Mao controlled the [Communist Party of China](#), and therefore Mao never challenged the suitability of any Stalinist doctrine (at least while Stalin was alive). Upon the death of Stalin, Mao believed (perhaps because of seniority) that the leadership of Marxist doctrine would fall to him. The resulting tension between Khrushchev (at the head of a politically and militarily superior government), and Mao (believing he had a superior understanding of Marxist ideology) eroded the previous patron-client relationship between the [Communist Party of the Soviet Union](#) and the CPC.<sup>[citation needed]</sup> In China, the formerly favoured Soviets were now denounced as "revisionists" and listed alongside "American imperialism" as movements to oppose.<sup>[citation needed]</sup>

Partly surrounded by hostile American military bases in South Korea, Japan, and [Taiwan](#), China was now confronted with a new threat from the Soviet Union north and west. Both the internal crisis and the external threat called for extraordinary statesmanship from Mao, but as China entered the new decade the statesmen of China were in hostile confrontation with each other.<sup>[citation needed]</sup>

## **Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution**



During the early 1960s, Mao became concerned with the nature of post-1959 China. He saw that the revolution and Great Leap Forward had replaced the old ruling elite with a new one. He was concerned that those in power were becoming estranged from the people they were to serve. Mao believed that a revolution of culture would unseat and unsettle the "ruling class" and keep China in a state of "perpetual revolution" that, theoretically, would serve the interests of the majority, rather than a tiny and privileged elite.<sup>[221]</sup> State Chairman [Liu Shaoqi](#) and General Secretary [Deng Xiaoping](#) favoured the idea that Mao be removed from actual power as China's head of state and government but maintain his ceremonial and symbolic role as Chairman of the Communist Party of China, with the party upholding all of his positive contributions to the revolution. They attempted to marginalise Mao by taking control of economic policy and asserting themselves politically as well. Many claim that Mao responded to Liu and Deng's movements by launching the [Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution](#) in 1966. Some scholars, such as Mobo Gao, claim the case for this is overstated.<sup>[222]</sup> Others, such as [Frank Dikötter](#), hold that Mao launched the Cultural Revolution to wreak revenge on those who had dared to challenge him over the Great Leap Forward.<sup>[223]</sup>

Believing that certain liberal bourgeois elements of society continued to threaten the socialist framework, groups of young people known as the [Red Guards](#) struggled against authorities at all levels of society and even set up their own tribunals. Chaos reigned in much of the nation, and millions were persecuted. During the Cultural Revolution, nearly all of the schools and universities in China were closed, and the young intellectuals living in cities were ordered to the countryside to be "re-educated" by the peasants, where they performed hard manual labour and other work.

The Cultural Revolution led to the destruction of much of China's traditional cultural heritage and the imprisonment of a huge number of Chinese citizens, as well as the creation of general economic and social chaos in the country. Millions of lives were ruined during this period, as the Cultural Revolution pierced into every part of Chinese life, depicted by such Chinese films as *To Live*, *The Blue Kite* and *Farewell My Concubine*. It is estimated that hundreds of thousands of people, perhaps millions, perished in the violence of the Cultural Revolution.<sup>[217]</sup> This included prominent figures such as Liu Shaoqi.<sup>[224][225][226]</sup>

When Mao was informed of such losses, particularly that people had been driven to suicide, he is alleged to have commented: "People who try to commit suicide—don't attempt to save them! . . . China is such a populous nation, it is not as if we cannot do without a few people."<sup>[227]</sup> The authorities allowed the Red Guards to abuse and kill opponents of the regime. Said Xie Fuzhi, national police chief: "Don't say it is wrong of them to beat up bad persons: if in anger they beat someone to death, then so be it."<sup>[228]</sup> As a result, in August and September 1966, there were a reported 1,772 people murdered by the Red Guards in Beijing alone.<sup>[229]</sup>

It was during this period that Mao chose Lin Biao, who seemed to echo all of Mao's ideas, to become his successor. Lin was later officially named as Mao's successor. By 1971, however, a divide between the two men had become apparent. Official history in China states that Lin was planning a military coup or an assassination attempt on Mao. Lin Biao died on September 13, 1971 in a plane crash over the air space of Mongolia, presumably as he fled China, probably anticipating his arrest. The CPC declared that Lin was planning to depose Mao and posthumously expelled Lin from the party. At this time, Mao lost trust in many of the top CPC figures. The highest-ranking Soviet Bloc intelligence defector, Lt. Gen. Ion Mihai

Pacepa described his conversation with Nicolae Ceaușescu, who told him about a plot to kill Mao Zedong with the help of Lin Biao organised by the KGB.<sup>[230]</sup>

Despite being considered a feminist figure by some and a supporter of women's rights, documents released by the US Department of State in 2008 show that Mao declared women to be a "nonsense" in 1973, in conversation with Kissinger, joking that "China is a very poor country. We don't have much. What we have in excess is women... Let them go to your place. They will create disasters. That way you can lessen our burdens."<sup>[231]</sup> When Mao offered 10 million women, Kissinger replied by saying that Mao was "improving his offer".<sup>[232]</sup> Mao and Kissinger then agreed that their comments on women be removed from public records, prompted by a Chinese official who feared that Mao's comments might incur public anger if released.<sup>[233]</sup>

In 1969, Mao declared the Cultural Revolution to be over, although various historians in and outside of China mark the end of the Cultural Revolution—as a whole or in part—in 1976, following Mao's death and the arrest of the Gang of Four.<sup>[234]</sup> In the last years of his life, Mao was faced with declining health due to either Parkinson's disease<sup>[235]</sup> or, according to his physician, amyotrophic lateral sclerosis,<sup>[236]</sup> as well as lung ailments due to smoking and heart trouble.<sup>[237]</sup> Some also attributed Mao's decline in health to the betrayal of Lin Biao. Mao remained passive as various factions within the Communist Party mobilised for the power struggle anticipated after his death.

The Cultural Revolution is now officially regarded as a "severe setback" for the PRC.<sup>[238]</sup> It is often looked at in all scholarly circles as a greatly disruptive period for China. While one-tenth of Chinese people—an estimated 100 million—did suffer during the period,<sup>[239]</sup> some scholars, such as Lee Feigon and Mobo Gao, claim there were many great advances, and in some sectors the Chinese economy continued to outperform the West.<sup>[240]</sup> They hold that the Cultural

Revolution period laid the foundation for the spectacular growth that continues in China. During the Cultural Revolution, China detonated its [first H-Bomb](#) (in 1967), launched the [Dong Fang Hong](#) satellite (on January 30, 1970), commissioned its first nuclear submarines and made various advances in science and technology. Healthcare was free, and living standards in the countryside continued to improve.<sup>[240]</sup> In comparison, the Great Leap probably did cause a much larger loss of life with its flawed economic policies which encompassed even the peasants.<sup>[239]</sup>

Estimates of the death toll during the Cultural Revolution, including civilians and Red Guards, vary greatly. An estimate of around 400,000 deaths is a widely accepted minimum figure, according to [Maurice Meisner](#).<sup>[241]</sup> MacFarquhar and Schoenhals assert that in rural China alone some 36 million people were persecuted, of whom between 750,000 and 1.5 million were killed, with roughly the same number permanently injured.<sup>[242]</sup> In *Mao: The Unknown Story*, [Jung Chang](#) and [Jon Halliday](#) claim that as many as 3 million people died in the violence of the Cultural Revolution.<sup>[243]</sup>

Historian Daniel Leese notes that in the 1950s Mao's personality was hardening:

The impression of Mao's personality that emerges from the literature is disturbing. It reveals a certain temporal development from a down-to-earth leader, who was amicable when uncontested and occasionally reflected on the limits of his power, to an increasingly ruthless and self-indulgent dictator. Mao's preparedness to accept criticism decreased continuously.<sup>[244]</sup>

Foreign policy of China

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The [People's Republic of China](#) is a [Communist state](#) that came to power in 1949 after a civil war. It became a [great power](#) in the 1960s and today has the world's largest population, second largest GDP (after the U.S.) and the [largest economy in the world by PPP](#). [China](#) is now

considered an [emerging global superpower](#).<sup>[1][2][3][4][5][6]</sup> In 1950-1953 it fought an undeclared war in Korea against the United States. Until the late 1950s it was allied with the Soviet Union but by 1960 they began a bitter contest for control over the local Communist movement in many countries. It reached detente with the United States in 1972. After [Chairman Mao Zedong](#) died in 1976, [Deng Xiaoping](#) led a massive process of [industrialization](#) and emphasized trade relations with the world, while maintaining a low key, less ideological foreign policy, widely described by the phrase *taoguang yanghui*, or "hide one's talent and bide one's time".<sup>[7]</sup> The [Chinese economy](#) grew very rapidly giving it steadily increasing power and ambition.

Since [Xi Jinping](#) assumed to [General Secretary of the Communist Party of China](#) in 2012, China has expanded its [foreign policy](#) ambitions on the global scale, with special emphasis on the East China Sea. China is investing heavily in global infrastructure, citing a desire for [economic integration](#). It is also investing in strategic locations to secure its trade and security interests. It calls these programs "[One Belt, One Road](#)" and the "[Maritime Silk Road](#)", which it sees as part of its goal of self-sufficiency.<sup>[8]</sup> In the 2019, the Pew Research Center made a survey on attitude to Xi Jinping among six-country medians based on Australia, India, Indonesia, Japan, Philippines and South Korea. The survey indicated that a median 29% have confidence in Xi Jinping to do the right thing regarding world affairs, meanwhile a median of 45% have no confidence. These number are almost same with those of North Korean leader Kim Jong Un (23% confidence, 53% no confidence).<sup>[9]</sup>

Since 2017 it has engaged in a large-scale [trade war](#) with the [United States](#). It is also challenging U.S. dominance in the Pacific and Indian Ocean, expanding its [military naval](#) and diplomatic efforts.<sup>[10]</sup> Part of this is the [String of Pearls strategy](#) securing strategic locations in the Indian Ocean and [Strait of Malacca](#) region.<sup>[11]</sup>



Long-term goals[[edit](#)]

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Political scientist Dmitry Shlapentokh argues that [Xi Jinping](#) and his top leadership are developing plans for global predominance based on rapidly growing economic power. The ideological framework is a specialized blend of Marxist-Leninism, coupled with China's pre-1800 historic claims to world dominance. China's trade policy and drive for access to essential natural resources, such as gas, are articulated in terms of these ideological approaches. Beijing balances both purely economic goals with geopolitical strategies regarding the United States, Russia and other powers. Balancing those two powers gives China a clear advantage, for its totalitarian government could plan for generations and could change course regardless of the wishes of the electorate or clearly defined interest groups, as is the case with the modern capitalist West.<sup>[12]</sup>

Lowell Dittmer argues that in dealing with the goal of dominance over East Asia, Beijing has to juggle its relations with the United States, which has more military and economic power in the region because of close U.S. ties with Japan, South Korea, Taiwan, Vietnam, Australia and other countries.<sup>[13]</sup>

Regarding the Middle East, where the United States has staked out a major position, China is tentatively moving in a much smaller scale. Analysts argue that Beijing is not yet ready to become a major force in shaping regional politics.<sup>[14][15][16]</sup>

China has shown a moderate interest in the Caribbean region in recent years, but not nearly on the same scale as its interest in Asia and Africa. It has been developing ties with Cuba, the Bahamas, Jamaica, the Dominican Republic and Haiti, as well as Colombia. These small

countries have not by 2019 noticeably changed their foreign or domestic policies because of their new economic linkages with China. Nevertheless the governments pay more attention to Beijing's views. On the other hand, China's push into the Caribbean is increasingly resented by the United States and further escalation between the two major powers is a possibility in the region.<sup>[17][18]</sup>

#### Status of Taiwan<sup>[edit]</sup>

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China considers [Taiwan area](#) administered by [Republic of China](#), part of its inviolable sovereign territory. In China's view, Taiwan is a [separatist](#), [breakaway province](#) that must be [reunified](#), by force if necessary. China exerts efforts for countries recognizing the ROC to switch their recognition to the People's Republic of China (PRC).<sup>[19][20][21][22]</sup> This has forced Taiwan to go to great lengths to maintain its extant diplomatic relations, particularly with countries that recognize the Republic of China as [the one "China"](#).<sup>[23]</sup>

It has passed the controversial [Anti-Secession Law](#) authorizing the use of military force in the event of unilateral separatist activity by the [Government of Taiwan](#),<sup>[24]</sup> as outlined in [§ PRC's condition on military intervention](#).

#### South China Sea<sup>[edit]</sup>

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*Further information: [Territorial disputes in the South China Sea](#) and [Great Wall of Sand](#)*

China has staked its territorial claims in the [disputed South China Sea](#) with the [Nine-Dash Line](#). Its claims are disputed by other countries.<sup>[25][26]</sup> The contested area in the South China Sea includes the [Paracel Islands](#),<sup>[note 1]</sup> the [Spratly Islands](#),<sup>[note 2][27]</sup> and various other areas including [Pratas Island](#) and the Vereker Banks, the [Macclesfield Bank](#) and the [Scarborough](#)

Shoal. The claim encompasses the area of Chinese land reclamation known as the "Great Wall of Sand".<sup>[28][29][30]</sup>

The United States Navy has conducted freedom of navigation operations asserting its position that some waters claimed by China are international waters.<sup>[31]</sup>

On July 12, 2016, an arbitral tribunal constituted under Annex VII to the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea ruled that China has no legal basis to claim "historic rights" within its nine-dash line in a case brought by the Philippines. The tribunal judged that there was no evidence that China had historically exercised exclusive control over the waters or resources within the Nine-Dash Line.

The ruling was rejected by both Taiwan and China.<sup>[32][33]</sup> The People's Republic of China and the Republic of China (Taiwan) stated that they did not recognize the tribunal and insisted that the matter should be resolved through bilateral negotiations with other claimants.<sup>[34]</sup> However, the tribunal did not rule on the ownership of the islands or delimit maritime boundaries.<sup>[35][36]</sup>

Scholars have been probing the Chinese motivations and long-term expectations. One approach is to compare trends in multilateral Code of Conduct negotiations between 1992 and 2016. In general, the sovereignty issue regarding contested waters is no longer a central major concern. For three reasons: the inconsistency of China's official claims over time, China's increased bargaining power, and the importance of the shelved sovereignty axiom since the era of Deng Xiaoping.<sup>[37][38]</sup>

Economics[[edit](#)]

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Beijing has encouraged and helped finance Chinese firms to develop enormous overseas interests since 2000. More established American and European corporations have strong locks on major



markets, so the Chinese companies focus on areas with high political risks, such as Myanmar. The communist government in Beijing has increasingly intervened to secure these overseas business interests. The Chinese businessmen are encouraged to cultivate social institutions in key markets. In the case of Myanmar, China is confronting a much better established position of India. <sup>[39][40][41]</sup>

Japanese militarism

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### **Rise of militarism**<sup>[edit]</sup>

The military had a strong influence on Japanese society from the [Meiji Restoration](#). Almost all leaders in Japanese society during the [Meiji period](#) (whether in the military, politics or business) were ex-[samurai](#) or descendants of *samurai*, and shared a set of values and outlooks. The early Meiji government viewed Japan as threatened by western [imperialism](#), and one of the prime motivations for the *Fukoku Kyohei* policy was to strengthen Japan's economic and industrial foundations, so that a strong military could be built to defend Japan against outside powers.

The rise of universal [military conscription](#), introduced by [Yamagata Aritomo](#) in 1873, along with the proclamation of the [Imperial Rescript to Soldiers and Sailors](#) in 1882 enabled the military to indoctrinate thousands of men from various social backgrounds with military-patriotic values and the concept of unquestioning loyalty to the Emperor as the basis of the Japanese state (*kokutai*). Yamagata, like many Japanese, was strongly influenced by the recent striking success of [Prussia](#) in transforming itself from an agricultural state to a leading modern industrial and military power. He accepted Prussian political ideas, which favored military expansion abroad and authoritarian government at home. The Prussian model also devalued the notion of civilian control over the independent military, which meant that in Japan, as in Germany, the

military could develop into a state within a state, thus exercising greater influence on politics in general.<sup>[3]</sup>

Following the German victory in the [Franco-Prussian War](#), the [Army Staff College](#) and the Japanese [General Staff](#) paid close attention to Major [Jakob Meckel](#)'s views on the superiority of the German military model over the French system as the reason for German victory. In response to a Japanese request, Prussian Chief of Staff [Helmuth von Moltke](#) sent Meckel to Japan to become an [O-yatoi gaikokujin](#).<sup>[4]</sup> In Japan, Meckel worked closely with future [Prime Ministers](#) General [Katsura Tarō](#) and General [Yamagata Aritomo](#), and with army strategist General [Kawakami Soroku](#). Meckel made numerous recommendations which were implemented, including reorganization of the command structure of the army into [divisions](#) and regiments, thus increasing mobility, strengthening the army logistics and transportation structure with the major army bases connected by railways, establishing [artillery](#) and engineering regiments as independent commands, and revising the [universal conscription](#) system to abolish virtually all exceptions. A bust of Meckel was sited in front of the Japanese Army Staff College from 1909 through 1945.<sup>[5]</sup>

Although his period in Japan (1885–1888) was relatively short, Meckel had a tremendous impact on the development of the Japanese military. He is credited with having introduced [Clausewitz](#)'s military theories<sup>[6]</sup> and the Prussian concept of war games (*[Kriegsspiel](#)*) in a process of refining tactics.<sup>[7]</sup> By training some sixty of the highest-ranking Japanese officers of the time in tactics, strategy and organization, he was able to replace the previous influences of the French advisors with his own philosophies. Meckel especially reinforced [Hermann Roesler](#)'s ideal of subservience to the [Emperor](#) by teaching his pupils that Prussian military success was a

consequence of the officer class's unswerving loyalty to their sovereign Emperor, as expressly codified in Articles XI-XIII of the [Meiji Constitution](#).<sup>[8]</sup>

The rise of political parties in the late Meiji period was coupled with the rise of secret and semi-secret patriotic societies, such as the [Gen'yōsha](#) (1881) and [Kokuryūkai](#) (1901), which coupled political activities with [paramilitary](#) activities and [military intelligence](#), and supported [expansionism](#) overseas as a solution to Japan's domestic issues.

Japan felt looked down on by Western countries during the late 19th century. The phrase [fukoku kyōhei](#) (rich nation, strong army) was created during this time and shows how Japanese officials saw imperialism as the way to gain respect and power.<sup>[9]</sup> With a more aggressive foreign policy, and victory over China in the [First Sino-Japanese War](#) and over [Russia](#) in the [Russo-Japanese War](#), Japan joined the imperialist powers. The need for a strong military to secure Japan's new overseas empire was strengthened by a sense that only through a strong military would Japan earn the respect of western nations, and thus revision of the [unequal treaties](#).

### **Economic factors**[\[edit\]](#)

During the 19th century, [Great Power](#) status was considered dependent on resource-rich [colonial empires](#), both as a source of raw materials for military and industrial production, and international prestige.

Due to the lack of resources in [Japanese home islands](#), raw materials such as iron, oil, and coal largely had to be imported. The success of Japan in securing [Taiwan](#) (1895) and Korea (1910) had brought Japan primarily agricultural colonies. In terms of resources, the Japanese military looked towards [Manchuria](#)'s iron and coal, [Indochina](#)'s [rubber](#), and China's vast resources.

However, the army was at variance with the [zaibatsu](#) financial and industrial corporations on how to manage economic expansion, a conflict also affecting domestic politics.<sup>[10]</sup>

### **Independence of the military**[\[edit\]](#)

Also forming part of the basis for the growth of militarism was the freedom from [civilian control](#) enjoyed by the Japanese armed forces. In 1878, the [Imperial Japanese Army](#) established the [Imperial Japanese Army General Staff](#) office, modelled after the [German General Staff](#). This office was independent of, and equal (and later superior) to the [Ministry of War of Japan](#) in terms of authority. The [Imperial Japanese Navy](#) soon followed with the [Imperial Japanese Navy General Staff](#). These General Staff offices were responsible for the planning and execution of military operations, and reported directly to the emperor. As the Chiefs of the General Staff were not cabinet ministers, they did not report to the [Prime Minister of Japan](#), and were thus completely independent of any civilian oversight or control.

The Army and the Navy also had decisive say on the formation (and survival) of any civilian government. Since the law required that the posts of Army Minister and Navy Minister be filled by active-duty officers nominated by their respective services, and since the law also required that a prime minister resign if he could not fill all of his cabinet posts, both the Army and the Navy had final say on the formation of a cabinet, and could bring down the cabinet at any time by withdrawing their minister and refusing to nominate a successor. In reality, while this tactic was used only one time (ironically to prevent a General, [Kazushige Ugaki](#), from becoming Prime Minister in 1937), the threat always loomed large when the military made any demands on the civilian leadership.

### **Expansionism**[\[edit\]](#)

During the [Taishō period](#), Japan saw a short period of [democratic rule](#) (the so-called "Taisho democracy"), and several diplomatic attempts were made to encourage peace, such as the [Washington Naval Treaty](#) and participation in the [League of Nations](#). However, with the beginning of the [Shōwa era](#), the apparent collapse of the world economic order with the [Great Depression](#) starting in 1929, coupled with the imposition of [trade barriers](#) by western nations and an increasing radicalism in Japanese politics including issues of domestic terrorist violence (including an assassination attempt on the emperor in 1932 and a number of attempted [coups d'état](#) by ultra-nationalist secret societies) led to a resurgence of so-called "jingoistic" patriotism, a weakening of democratic forces and a belief that the military could solve all threats both domestic and foreign. [Patriotic education](#) also strengthened the sense of a [hakko ichiu](#), or a divine mission to unify Asia under Japanese rule.

Those who continued to resist the "military solution" including nationalists with unquestionable patriotism, such as generals [Jotaro Watanabe](#) and [Tetsuzan Nagata](#) and ex-Foreign Minister [Kijūrō Shidehara](#) were driven from office or an active role in the government.

A turning point came with the ratification of the [London Naval Treaty](#) of 1930. Prime Minister [Osachi Hamaguchi](#) and his [Minseito](#) party agreed to a treaty which would severely limit Japanese naval power. This treaty was strongly opposed by the military, who claimed that it would endanger national defense, and was portrayed by the opposition [Rikken Seiyukai](#) party as having been forced upon Japan by a hostile United States, which further inflamed growing [anti-foreign sentiment](#).

The Japanese system of party government finally met its demise with the [May 15 Incident](#) in 1932, when a group of junior naval officers and army cadets assassinated Prime Minister [Inukai Tsuyoshi](#). Although the assassins were put on trial and sentenced to fifteen years' imprisonment,

they were seen popularly as having acted out of patriotism and the atmosphere was set where the military was able to act with little restraint.

### **Growth of military adventurism**[\[edit\]](#)

Japan had been involved in the Asian continent continuously from the First Sino-Japanese War, [Boxer Rebellion](#), Russo-Japanese War, World War I and the [Siberian Intervention](#). During the term of Prime Minister [Tanaka Giichi](#) from 1927 to 1929, Japan sent troops three times to China to obstruct [Chiang Kai-shek](#)'s unification campaign. In June 1928, adventurist officers of the [Kwantung Army](#) embarked on unauthorized initiatives to protect Japanese interests in Manchuria, including the assassination of a former ally, warlord [Zhang Zuolin](#), in hopes of sparking a general conflict.

The [Manchurian Incident](#) of September 1931 did not fail, and it set the stage for the Japanese military takeover of all of Manchuria. Kwantung Army conspirators blew up a few meters of [South Manchurian Railway](#) Company track near [Mukden](#), blamed it on Chinese saboteurs, and used the event as an excuse to invade and seize the vast territory.

In Tokyo one month later, in the [Imperial Colors Incident](#), military figures failed in an attempt to establish a [military dictatorship](#), but again the news was suppressed and the military perpetrators were not punished.

In January 1932, Japanese forces attacked Shanghai in the [First Shanghai Incident](#), waging a three-month undeclared war there before a truce was reached. The civilian government in Tokyo was powerless to prevent these military adventures, and instead of being condemned, the Kwangtung Army's actions enjoyed considerable popular support.

Inukai's successors, military men chosen by [Saionji Kinmochi](#), the last surviving [genrō](#), recognized [Manchukuo](#) and generally approved the army's actions in securing Manchuria as an industrial base, an area for Japanese emigration, and a potential staging ground for war with the Soviet Union. Various army factions contended for power amid increasing [suppression of dissent](#) and more assassinations. In the [February 26 Incident](#) of 1936, the Army's elite [First Infantry Division](#) staged an attempted coup d'état in yet another effort to overthrow civilian rule. The revolt was put down by other military units, and its leaders were executed after [secret trials](#). Despite public dismay over these events and the discredit they brought to numerous military figures, Japan's civilian leadership capitulated to the army's demands in the hope of ending domestic violence. Increases were seen in defense budgets, naval construction (Japan announced it would no longer accede to [disarmament](#) treaties), and patriotic indoctrination as Japan moved toward a wartime footing.<sup>[5]</sup>

In November 1936, the [Anti-Comintern Pact](#), an agreement to exchange information and collaborate in preventing communist activities, was signed by Japan and [Germany](#) ([Italy](#) joined a year later). War was launched against China with the [Marco Polo Bridge Incident](#) of July 7, 1937 in which a clash near Beijing between Chinese and Japanese troops quickly escalated into the full-scale warfare of the [Second Sino-Japanese War](#), followed by the [Soviet-Japanese Border Wars](#) and the [Pacific War](#).

Despite the military's long tradition of independence from civilian control, its efforts at staging a coup d'état to overthrow the civilian government, and its forcing Japan into war through insubordination and military adventurism, the military was ultimately unable to force a military dictatorship on Japan.

Under Prime Minister [Konoe Fumimaro](#), the Japanese government was streamlined to meet war-time conditions and under the [National Mobilization Law](#) was given absolute power over the nation's assets. In 1940, all [political parties](#) were ordered to dissolve into the [Imperial Rule Assistance Association](#), forming a [one-party state](#) based on [totalitarian values](#). Even so, there was much entrenched opposition from the government bureaucrats, and in the 1942 general election for the [Japanese Diet](#), the military was still unable to do away with the last vestiges of party politics. This was partly due to the fact that the military itself was not a monolithic structure, but was rent internally with its own [political factions](#). Even Japan's wartime Prime Minister, [Hideki Tōjō](#), had difficulty controlling portions of his own military.

Japan's overseas possessions, greatly extended as a result of early successes in the Pacific War were organized into a [Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere](#), which was to have integrated Asia politically and economically—under Japanese leadership—against Western domination.

Militarism was even reflected in the clothing trends of the 1930s. Male [kimono](#) designs adopted explicitly militaristic imagery, including soldiers, [bombers](#) and tanks.<sup>[11][12]</sup> These designs were not on public display but on linings and undergarments. They symbolised – or in the case of boy's clothes, were hoped to bring about – the alignment of the individual's goals with those of Japan as a whole.<sup>[13]</sup>

### **Opposition to militarism**[\[edit\]](#)

Despite the apparently monolithic national consensus on the official aggressive policies pursued by the Imperial government in the first part of the [Shōwa era](#), some substantial opposition did exist. This was one of various forms of [Japanese dissidence during the Shōwa period](#).



The most organized open opposition to militarism was from the [Japanese Communist Party](#). In the early 1930s Communist activists attempted to influence army conscripts, but the party was suppressed during the mid-1930s within Japan.

Personal opposition included individuals from the fields of party politics, business and culture.

Some notable examples include:

- [Hara Takashi](#), a commoner and liberal thinker of the [Rikken Seiyūkai](#), had become [prime minister](#) in 1918 with the rallying cry of "Militarism is dead." Three years later, however, Hara was assassinated.
- [Kijūrō Shidehara](#) followed a non-interventionist policy toward China, attempting to stabilize its relations with Great Britain and the United States. The term "Shidehara diplomacy" came to describe Japan's liberal foreign policy during the 1920s, and was assailed by military interests who believed it was weakening the country.
- Baron [Takuma Dan](#), director of [Mitsui](#) Bank, was an important opponent of Japan overseas interventions and was known for his pro-American views. He was murdered on March 5, 1932 in the [League of Blood Incident](#).
- [Minobe Tatsukichi](#), a respected professor at [Tokyo Imperial University](#) declared the emperor to be a part of the constitutional structure of Japan rather than a sacred power beyond the state itself in 1935. His constitutional interpretation was overwhelmingly accepted by bureaucrats until the 1930s. In the increasingly militant 1930s, these ideas led to attacks against Minobe in the [House of Peers](#) and his resignation from that body.
- [Saitō Takao](#), a graduate of [Yale University](#) was a member of the [Rikken Minseitō](#) party. On February 2, 1940, he made a speech in the [Diet](#) in which he sharply questioned the prosecution and justification of [Japan's "holy war" in China](#). He was expelled from the Diet

on March 7, 1940 and his speech also led to the creation of the [League of Diet Members Believing the Objectives of the Holy War](#) by [Fumimaro Konoe](#).

- Admiral [Sōkichi Takagi](#), an opponent of Japan's decision to declare war on the United States, was asked by Navy Minister [Shigetarō Shimada](#) to compile a report analyzing Japanese defeats during the Pacific campaign of 1942. His analysis convinced Takagi of Japan's inevitable defeat. Believing that the only solution for Japan was the elimination of the Tojo-led government and a truce with the United States, Takagi began planning for the assassination of Prime Minister [Hideki Tōjō](#) before his removal from office in July 1944.
- [Kanō Jigorō](#), creator of [Judo](#) and founder of the modern Japanese educational system, member of [Japan's Olympic Committee](#), and de facto foreign minister for Japan was a staunch opponent of militarism. Concerned that his Judo school, the Kodokan, would be used as a military training center, he obtained a promise from the Emperor that it would not be. Alternate sources list different causes of death, and some consider his passing to be suspicious.

## **Japan attacking Pearl Harbor**[\[edit\]](#)

*Main article:* [Attack on Pearl Harbor](#)

The surprise attack on Pearl Harbor happened on December 7, 1941. [Multiple events led to the attack](#), such as the Japanese peoples' opposition to [Westernism](#) and the breaking off of negotiations between Japan and the United States.<sup>[14][\[better source needed\]](#)</sup> Japan had plans to take over other Asian countries, which resulted in the US to strip any war materials and resources to be sold to the Japanese and froze all assets and bank accounts in the US. The US fleet moved from being stationed in California to be moved in Pearl Harbor to somewhat control Japan's

aggression and imposed an embargo of essential materials, because Japan was trying to take over and control more territories.<sup>[14]</sup><sup>*[better source needed]*</sup>

## **Post-war**<sup>[edit]</sup>

Despite efforts to totally militarize Japanese society during the war, including such measures as the [National Service Draft Ordinance](#) and the [National Spiritual Mobilization Movement](#), Japanese militarism was discredited by the failure of Japan's military in [World War II](#) and by the [American occupation](#). After the [surrender of Japan](#), many of its former military leaders were tried for [war crimes](#) before the [Tokyo tribunal](#). Furthermore, its government and educational system were revised and [pacifism](#) was written into the post-war [Constitution of Japan](#) as one of its key tenets.

**Japan participated in [World War I](#)** from 1914 to 1918 in an alliance with [Entente Powers](#) and played an important role in securing the sea lanes in the West Pacific and Indian Oceans against the [Imperial German Navy](#) as a member of the [Allies](#). Politically, the [Japanese Empire](#) seized the opportunity to expand its [sphere of influence](#) in [China](#), and to gain recognition as a [great power](#) in postwar [geopolitics](#).

Japan's military, taking advantage of the great distances and [Imperial Germany's](#) preoccupation with the war in [Europe](#), seized German possessions in the Pacific and East Asia, but there was no large-scale mobilization of the economy.<sup>[11]</sup> Foreign Minister [Katō Takaaki](#) and Prime Minister [Ōkuma Shigenobu](#) wanted to use the opportunity to expand Japanese influence in China. They enlisted [Sun Yat-sen](#) (1866–1925), then in exile in Japan, but they had little success.<sup>[12]</sup> The [Imperial Japanese Navy](#), a nearly autonomous bureaucratic institution, made its own decision to undertake expansion in the Pacific. It captured Germany's Micronesian territories north of the equator, and ruled the islands until they were transitioned to civilian

control in 1921. The operation gave the Navy a rationale for enlarging its budget to double the [Army](#) budget and expanding the fleet. The Navy thus gained significant political influence over national and international affairs.<sup>[3]</sup>



## Events of 1914

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In the first week of [World War I](#) Japan proposed to the [United Kingdom, its ally since 1902](#), that Japan would enter the war if it could take Germany's Pacific territories.<sup>[4]</sup> On 7 August 1914, the British government officially asked Japan for assistance in destroying the raiders from the [Imperial German Navy](#) in and around Chinese waters. Japan sent Germany an ultimatum on 15 August 1914, which went unanswered; Japan then formally declared war on [Germany](#) on 23 August 1914 in the name of the [Emperor Taishō](#).<sup>[5]</sup> As [Vienna](#) refused to withdraw the Austro-Hungarian cruiser [SMS Kaiserin Elisabeth](#) from [Tsingtao](#) (Qingdao), Japan declared war on Austria-Hungary, too, on 25 August 1914.<sup>[6]</sup>

Japanese forces quickly occupied [German-leased territories](#) in the Far East. On 2 September 1914, Japanese forces landed on China's [Shandong](#) province and surrounded the German settlement at Tsingtao. During October, acting virtually independently of the civil government, the [Imperial Japanese Navy](#) seized several of Germany's island colonies in the Pacific - the [Mariana](#), [Caroline](#), and [Marshall Islands](#) - with virtually no resistance. The Japanese Navy conducted the world's first [naval-launched air raids](#) against German-held land targets in Shandong province and ships in Qiaozhou Bay from the [seaplane-carrier Wakamiya](#). On 6 September 1914 a seaplane launched by *Wakamiya* unsuccessfully attacked the Austro-Hungarian cruiser *Kaiserin Elisabeth* and the German gunboat *Jaguar* with bombs.<sup>[7]</sup>

The [Siege of Tsingtao](#) concluded with the surrender of German colonial forces on 7 November 1914.

In September 1914, by request of the Imperial Japanese Army, the [Japanese Red Cross Society](#) put together three squads, each composed of one surgeon and twenty nurses, which were dispatched to Europe on a five-month assignment. The teams left Japan between October and December 1914 and were assigned to [Petrograd](#), [Paris](#), and [Southampton](#). The arrival of these nurses received wide press coverage, and their host countries subsequently asked for these teams to extend their assignment to fifteen months. <sup>[8]</sup>

Events of 1915–1916[[edit](#)]

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In February 1915, marines from the [Imperial Japanese Navy](#) ships based in [Singapore](#) helped suppress a [mutiny by Indian troops against the British government](#).

*Further information:* [Twenty-One Demands](#)

With Japan's European allies heavily involved in the war in Europe, Japan sought further to consolidate its position in China by presenting the [Twenty-One Demands](#) to Chinese President [Yuan Shikai](#) in January 1915. If achieved, the Twenty-One Demands would have essentially reduced China to a Japanese [protectorate](#), and at the expense of numerous privileges already enjoyed by the European powers in their respective spheres of influence within China. In the face of slow negotiations with the Chinese government, widespread and increasing anti-Japanese sentiments, and international condemnation (particularly from the United States), Japan withdrew the final group of demands, and a treaty was signed by China on 25 May 1915.

Throughout 1915–1916, German efforts to negotiate a separate peace with Japan failed. On 3 July 1916, Japan and Russia signed a treaty whereby each pledged not to make a separate peace

with Germany, and agreed to consultation and common action should the territory or interests of each in China be threatened by an outside third party. Although Russia had a claim to Chinese territory by the [Kyakhta](#) and other treaties, Japan discouraged Russia from annexing [Heilongjiang](#) and began to slowly push the other powers out, such as the Germans in the [Twenty-One Demands](#) (1915). The delineating line between Russian (north) and Japanese (south) spheres of influences in China was the [Chinese Eastern Railway](#).<sup>[9]</sup>

Events of 1917[[edit](#)]

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On 18 December 1916 the British Admiralty again requested naval assistance from Japan. The new Japanese cabinet under Prime Minister [Terauchi Masatake](#) was more favorably inclined to provide military assistance, provided that the British government back Japan's territorial claims to the newly acquired German possessions in the South Pacific and Shandong. When Germany announced the resumption of unrestricted submarine warfare on 1 February 1917, the British government agreed.<sup>[10]</sup>

Two of the four cruisers of the First Special Squadron at Singapore were sent to [Cape Town](#), [South Africa](#), and four destroyers were sent to the Mediterranean for basing out of [Malta](#), headquarters of the Royal Navy's Mediterranean Fleet. Rear-Admiral [Kōzō Satō](#) on the [cruiser Akashi](#) and 10th and 11th [destroyer](#) units (eight destroyers) arrived in Malta on 13 April 1917 via [Colombo](#) and [Port Said](#). Eventually this Second Special Squadron totaled three cruisers (*Akashi*, *Izumo*, *Nisshin*, 14 destroyers (8 [Kaba-class destroyer](#), 4 [Momo-class destroyer](#), 2 ex-British *Acorn-class*), 2 sloops, 1 tender (*Kanto*).

The 17 ships of Second Special Squadron carried out escort duties for troop transports and anti-submarine operations against attacks from German and [Austro-Hungarian](#) submarines operating

from bases along the [eastern Adriatic](#), the [Aegean Sea](#), from [Constantinople](#), thus securing the vital eastern Mediterranean sea route between the [Suez Canal](#) and [Marseilles](#), France.

The Japanese squadron made a total of 348 escort sorties from Malta, escorting 788 ships containing around 700,000 soldiers, thus contributing greatly to the war effort, for a total loss of 72 Japanese sailors killed in action. A total of 7,075 people were rescued by the Japanese from damaged and sinking ships. This included the rescue by the destroyers *Matsu* and *Sakaki* of nearly 3000 persons from the troopship [SS Transylvania](#) which was hit by a German torpedo on 4 May 1917. No Japanese ships were lost during the deployment but on 11 June 1917 *Sakaki* was hit by a torpedo from Austro-Hungarian submarine [U-27](#) off Crete; 59 Japanese sailors died.

With the [American entry into World War I](#) on 6 April 1917, the United States and Japan found themselves on the same side, despite their increasingly acrimonious relations over China and competition for influence in the Pacific. This led to the [Lansing–Ishii Agreement](#) of 2 November 1917 to help reduce tensions.

On July 9, Commander [Kyōsuke Eto](#), military attaché with the [Royal Navy](#), was killed in the [Vanguard](#) disaster.

In late 1917, Japan exported 12 [Arabe-class destroyers](#), based on *Kaba*-class design, to France.

The British under Admiral [George Alexander Ballard](#) gave strong praise to the high operational rate of the Japanese squadron, and its quick response to all British requests. In return, the Japanese absorbed British anti-submarine warfare techniques and technologies and gained invaluable operational experience. After the end of the war, the Japanese Navy brought back seven German submarines as prizes of war, which greatly contributed to future Japanese submarine design and development.

Events of 1918[[edit](#)]

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*Main articles:* [Russian Civil War](#) and [Siberian intervention](#)

In 1918, Japan continued to extend its influence and privileges in China via the [Nishihara Loans](#). Following the [Bolshevik Revolution](#) in Russia, Japan and the United States sent forces to [Siberia](#) in 1918 to bolster the armies of the [White movement](#) leader Admiral [Alexander Kolchak](#) against the [Bolshevik Red Army](#). In this [Siberian Intervention](#), the [Imperial Japanese Army](#) initially planned to send more than 70,000 troops to occupy Siberia as far west as [Lake Baikal](#). The plan was scaled back considerably due to opposition from the United States.<sup>[11]</sup>

Toward the end of the war, Japan increasingly filled orders for needed war material for its European allies. The wartime boom helped to diversify the country's industry, increase its exports, and transform Japan from a debtor to a creditor nation for the first time. Exports quadrupled from 1913 to 1918. The massive capital influx into Japan and the subsequent industrial boom led to rapid inflation. In August 1918, [rice riots](#) caused by this inflation erupted in towns and cities throughout Japan.<sup>[12]</sup>

Events of 1919[[edit](#)]

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The year 1919 saw Japan's representative [Saionji Kinmochi](#) sitting alongside the "[Big Four](#)" ([Lloyd George](#), [Wilson](#), [Clemenceau](#), [Orlando](#)) leaders at the [Paris Peace Conference](#). Tokyo gained a permanent seat on the Council of the [League of Nations](#), and the [Paris Peace Conference](#) confirmed the transfer to Japan of Germany's rights in [Shandong](#). Similarly, Germany's more northerly Pacific islands came under a Japanese [mandate](#), called the [South Seas Mandate](#). Despite Japan's prowess on a global scale, and its sizable contribution to the allied war effort in response to British pleas for assistance in the Mediterranean and East Asia, the United



Kingdom and the United States leadership present at the Peace Conference rejected Japan's bid for a [racial equality proposal](#) in the [Treaty of Versailles](#).<sup>[13]</sup> Japan nevertheless emerged as a [great power](#) in international politics by the close of the war.

Aftermath[[edit](#)]

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The prosperity brought on by World War I did not last. Although Japan's [light industry](#) had secured a share of the world market, Japan returned to debtor-nation status soon after the end of the war. The ease of Japan's victory, the negative impact of the [Showa recession](#) in 1926, and internal political instabilities helped contribute to the rise of [Japanese militarism](#) in the late 1920s to 1930s.

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