

1 JAPANESE EXPANSIONISM IN EAST ASIA

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

Conceptual understanding

Key concept

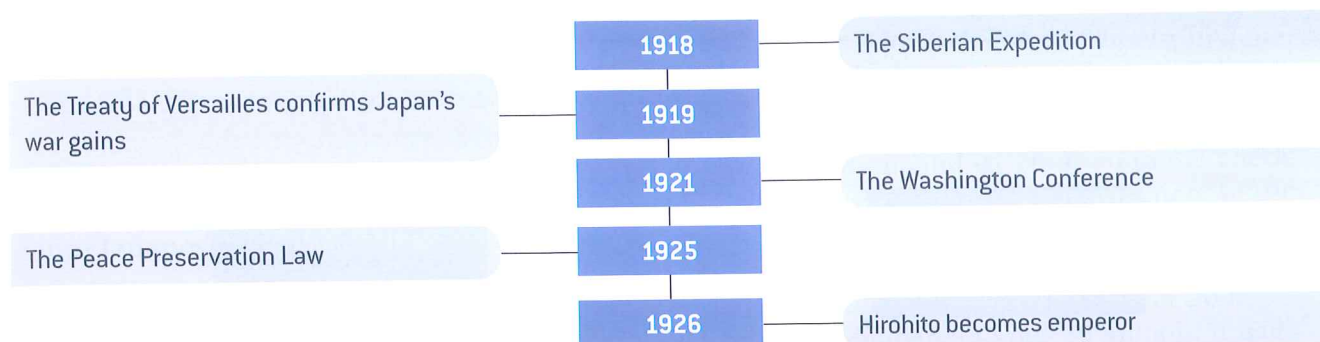
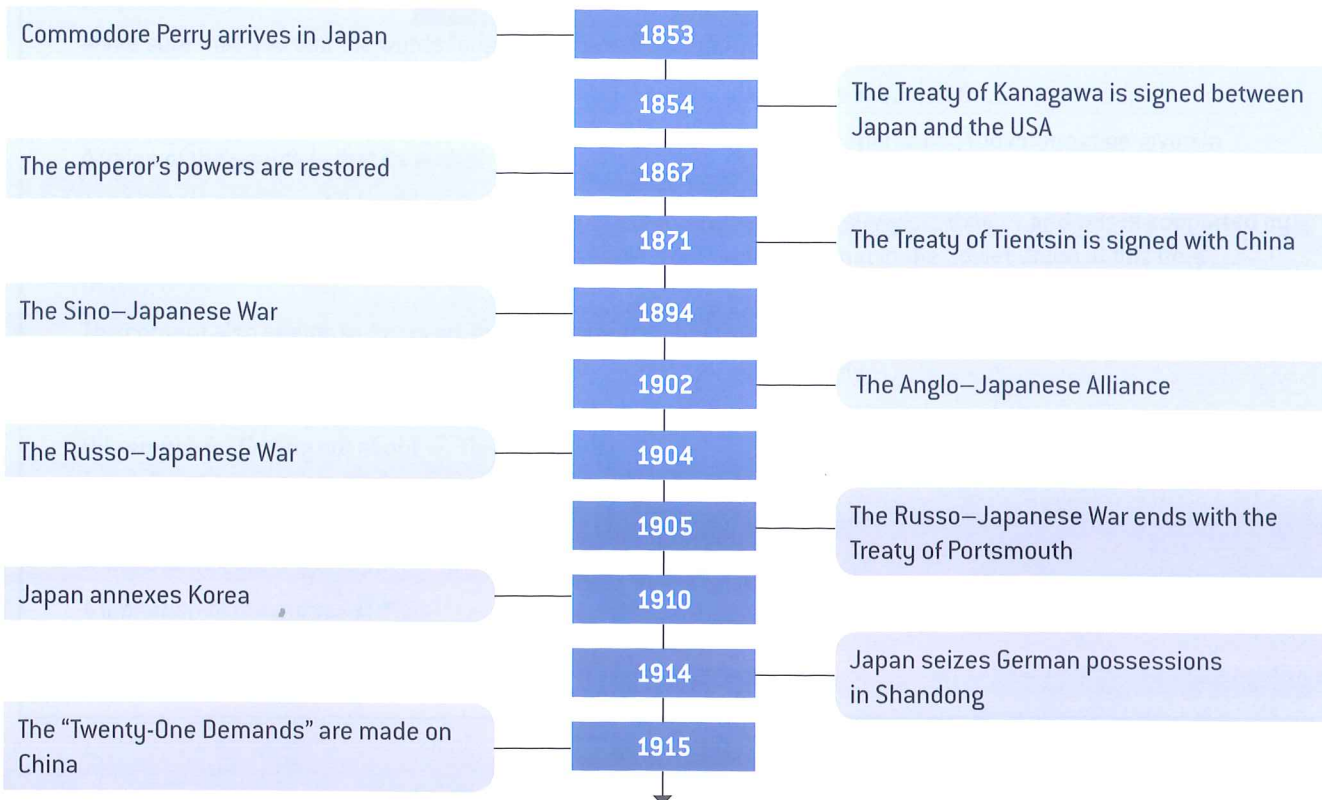
- Causation
- Significance

Key questions

- Assess the origins of Japanese nationalism and militarism.
- Examine the reasons for Japan following an expansionist foreign policy in the 19th century.



▲ General Tojo bowing to Emperor Hirohito, 1940



What were the origins of Japanese nationalism and militarism?

In order to understand the events of the 1930s in Asia, it is important to look at the roots of Japanese **nationalism** and **militarism**, which started in middle of the 19th century.

Several factors contributed to the growth of Japanese nationalism:

- the determination to transform Japan into a Western-style power, which was linked to the desire for equality with Western powers
- Japan's belief in its destiny as the leader of Asia
- the need to obtain raw materials and to secure markets in East Asia, and to stop other countries from doing this
- the need for strategic security
- the actions of the Western powers
- growing popular support for militarism and expansionism within Japan.

The impact of these factors was not only to promote nationalism in Japan but also to link that nationalism with an **imperialist** foreign policy as Japan took over other Asian territories in pursuit of its nationalist goals. Nationalism in Japan also became linked with militarism because Japanese expansion was dependent on the military taking action and making political decisions.

Japanese nationalism began in the second half of the 19th century when Japan had its first contact with the West. Up until this time, it had been isolated from the outside world in an attempt to shield its civilization from the perceived threat posed by Christianity. This had been the policy of Japan's rulers, the **shogun**, who had effectively ruled the country since 1192.

Nationalism

When the people of a country strongly support the interests of their own nation, possibly to the detriment of the interests of other nations.

Militarism

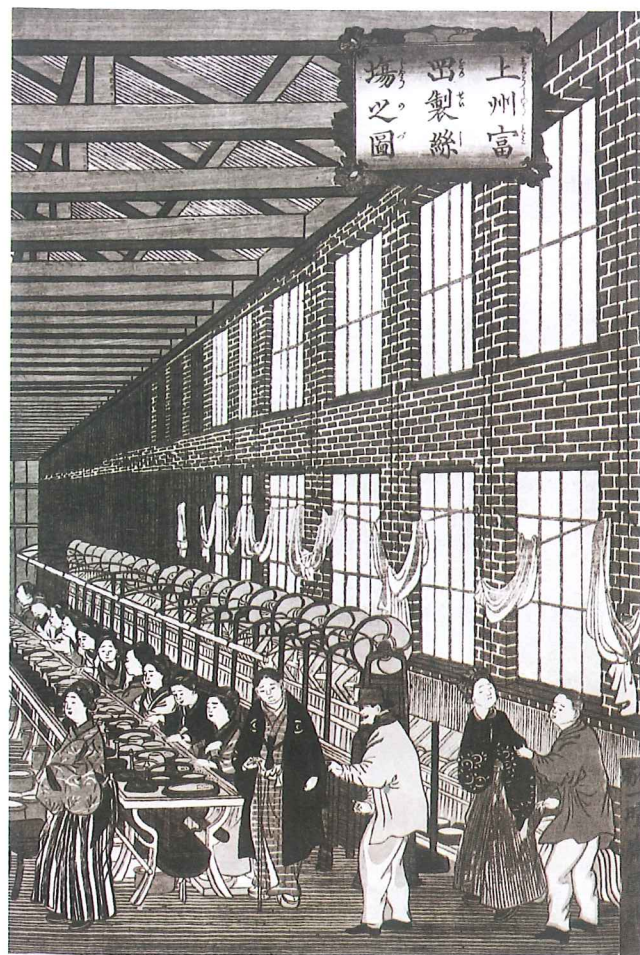
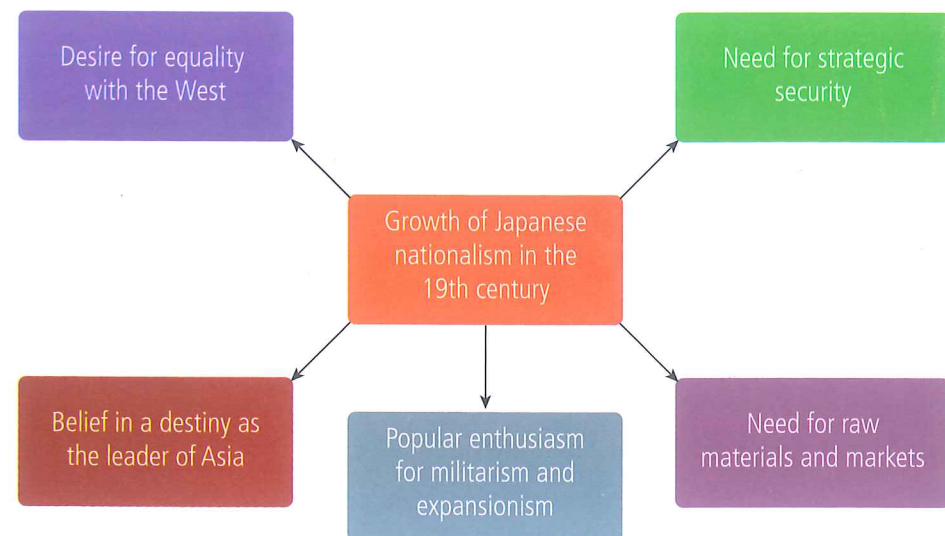
When a government or the people of a country believe that it is necessary to have a strong military in order to both defend and to promote the interests of their country.

The Shogun

Since 1192, Japan had been ruled by a feudal military dictatorship called the bakufu. Although the emperor was still officially the ruler, in practice the power lay in the hands of the Shogun who was a military dictator. Beneath the Shogun were the daimyo or feudal lords, and under the daimyo were the samurai or warriors.

Communication skills

Copy out this mind map. As you read through this chapter, identify motives and events that support each of the five factors given below. Add this evidence to your mind-map.



▲ A representation of a factory in Meiji, Japan

However in 1853, an American naval officer, Commodore Matthew Perry, arrived on the shores of Japan with several US steamships. He was determined to get Japan to open up to US demands for trade. Intimidated by Perry's "Black Ships", and mindful of what had happened to China which had attempted to resist the West and had been forced to sign a series of humiliating treaties, the ruling Shogun, Tokugawa Yoshinobu, signed the Treaty of Kanagawa with the USA in 1854.

The effects of this treaty on Japan were immense. Political power now returned to the emperor, who became known as the Meiji or "enlightened" emperor. His government began modernizing Japan, dismantling the feudal system and establishing a limited form of democracy. Major reforms took place in all areas: industry, education, fashion and, perhaps most significantly, the military. At the same time, the Meiji government promoted national unity and patriotism; the reforms were led with the cry of "rich country, strong military".

Japan's military reforms included modernizing the army and adapting German military tactics. Japan also established a new navy with the help of the British. The results of modernization were significant. In the Sino-Japanese War of 1894–95, Japan defeated China, thus positioning itself as a world power with an empire. The Treaty of Shimonoseki gave the Pescadores Islands, Formosa and Liaodong Peninsula to Japan, recognized Korean independence and obliged China to pay a large indemnity, to open additional ports and to negotiate a commercial treaty.

Source skills

Source A

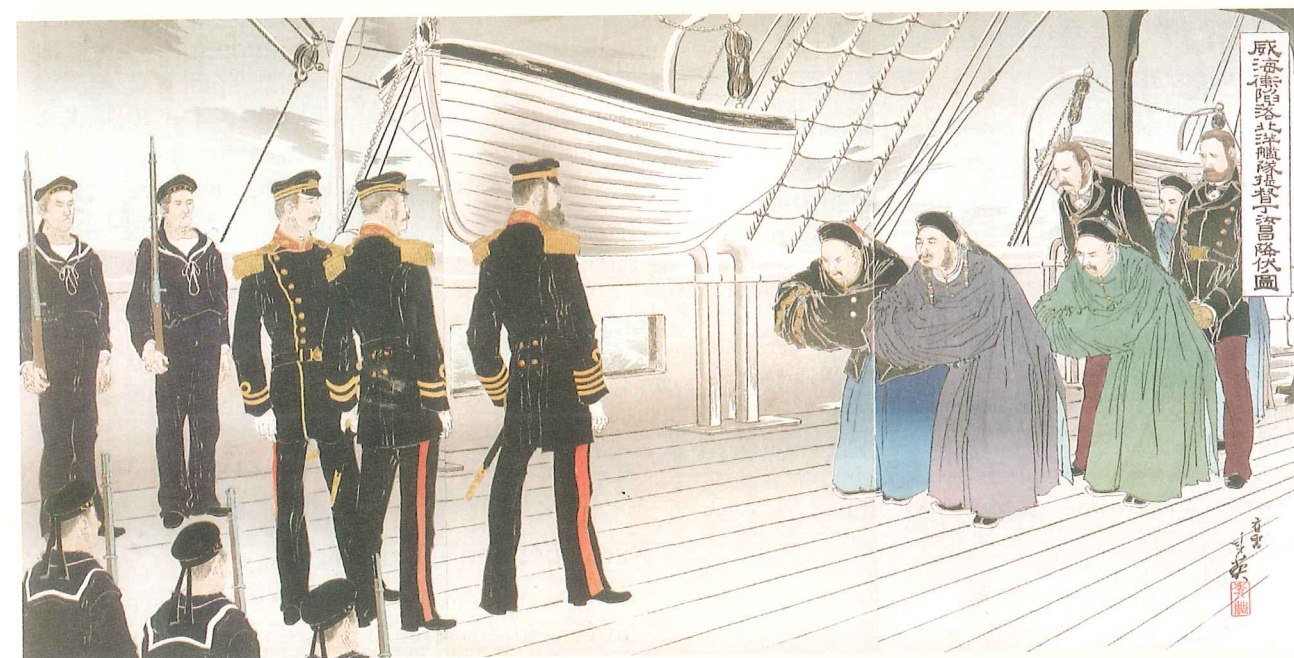
An extract from a memoir, written in 1931, by Ubukata Toshiro, a journalist-novelist, who was a teenager at the start of the Sino-Japanese War.

... Everybody agreed that it would be very difficult to capture Pyongyang, since the city held huge British cannons. However, in August, the Japanese army overpowered Pyongyang with so little effort that it almost was disappointing – and the Japanese people were enraptured. My home town had no telephone system back then. News of victories came to the police before the newspaper received it, thanks to a telegraph line between the post office and police station. All news was

put upon the message board in front of the police station, and we children ran to check it several times a day. The excitement of the Japanese people was beyond imagination. After all, China was thirty times as big as Japan, and its population was over 200 million, compared to our 30 million. It had such a competent leader in Li Hongzhang... and this was our first war with a foreign country, a country supported moreover by the British. Everyone – adults, children, the aged, the women – talked about war and nothing else, day and night ... no one ever had been as happy as when we learned of the fall of Pyongyang...

Source B

A Japanese artist depicts Chinese officials surrendering to naval officers in 1895.



First question, part a – 3 marks

According to Source A, why were the Japanese so excited about the victory over China in 1895?

First question, part b – 2 marks

What is the message of Source B?

Second question – 4 marks

With reference to its origin, purpose and content, assess the values and limitations of Source A for historians studying the impact of the Sino-Japanese War of 1895.

In pairs consider the skills you have used to answer these source based questions: interpreting the message of each source; extrapolating information and evaluating the provenance and content of a source. Discuss how these are similar to the methods used by historians to gain knowledge.

Source skills

Source C

An extract from Japanese government official Hayashi, written in June 1895 following the Triple Intervention.

We must continue to study and make use of Western methods ... If new warships are considered necessary we must, at any cost, build them; if the organisation of our army is inadequate we must start rectifying it from now; if need be, our entire military system must be changed.

At present Japan must keep calm and sit tight, so as to lull suspicions nurtured against her; during this time the foundations of her national power must be consolidated; and we must watch and wait for the opportunity in the Orient that will surely come one day. When this day arrives Japan will decide her own fate; and she will be able not only to put into their place the powers who seek to meddle in her affairs; she will even be able, should this be necessary, to meddle in their affairs.

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

Germany, Russia and France, concerned with Japan's growing power and its impact on Asia as a whole, forced Japan to give up the Liaodong Peninsula in what was known as the Triple Intervention. Much to Japan's fury, Russia then took the Liaodong Peninsula for itself, while Germany secured control over Shandong Province. France and Great Britain took advantage of the weakened China to seize port cities on various pretexts and to expand their spheres of influence. The impact of this can be seen in the sources below.

Source D

John Hunter Boyle. *Modern Japan: The American Nexus* (1993).

Speaking for many of his countrymen, journalist Tokutomi wrote that the Triple Intervention was to transform him psychologically and dominate the rest of this life. "Say what you will, it had happened because we weren't strong enough. What it came down to was that sincerity and justice didn't amount to a thing if you weren't strong enough." Japan had learned to emulate the West. It had played by the rules. From the standpoint of the victim, they were not particularly fair rules, but they were the established rules of imperialism. Now, in Japan's moment of victory, it found that it was reviled by yellow-peril sloganeering and denied equal membership in the imperialist club. Japanese, even those who had been most enthusiastic about Western models, became convinced, as Marius Jensen writes, that international law and institutional modernization alone would never bring full respect and equality from the West.

Third question – 6 marks

Compare and contrast the views expressed in Source C and Source D regarding the views of the Japanese towards Western countries.

The military success of the Sino–Japanese War, the gaining of land and also the frustration at having to give up some land to a Western power, encouraged the growth of nationalism and also militarism in Japan. It reinforced the idea that a strong military was necessary for Japan to be successful as a world power and to defend itself against other Western powers and against the Russians. Japanese military expansion increased between 1895 and 1905, and ministerial representatives of the army and navy were now to be drawn only from the upper ranks of the armed forces. This kept a military presence at the heart of the government.



There was a determination to strengthen Japan in all respects. Industrial production soared as Japan sought to become less reliant on imports of iron and steel. The population was told to "endure through hardship" as huge amounts of money were spent on the army and navy. A patriotic society, the Amur River Society, was established to promote the idea of Japanese expansion on the mainland.

Japan after 1900

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

Japan's position was further strengthened by the signing of an alliance with Britain, the Anglo–Japanese Alliance, in 1902. This not only ended Japan's diplomatic isolation but was also the first time a military alliance had been signed between a Western and a non-Western nation.

When Japan and Russia clashed over their interests in Korea and Manchuria, Japan went to war, with a surprise attack against the Russians in 1904. It was successful in its land battles, although with great loss of life; however, it was the war at sea that was decisive. The Russian fleet sailed halfway round the world from its base in the Baltic Sea to Vladivostok. When it arrived in the Tsushima Strait, it was destroyed by Admiral Togo and the new Japanese fleet.



▲ The Russo–Japanese War, 1904–05

Why was Manchuria so important to Japan?

Manchuria was the area of China closest to Japan. Four times larger than the Japanese islands, it was agriculturally rich with mineral resources. This meant it provided important opportunities for the supply of resources to Japan. Manchuria also offered the possibility of providing living space for the rapidly growing Japanese population and, strategically, it could act as a buffer against the threat from Russia.

Thinking skills

The Russo–Japanese War
An extract from Kenneth B. Pyle, 1996. *The Making of Modern Japan*, page 191.

The [Russo–Japanese] war required an unprecedented mobilization of the nation's resources. The government mobilised one-fifth of the male working population for some form of war service and sent 1 million men to the front. Casualties amounted to more than 100,000 and the financial cost was immense. Its cost was ten times that of the Sino–Japanese War and stretched the economy to the limit. To sustain so heroic an effort, the war was justified as a great popular undertaking. Nothing in the nation's history had so heightened political awareness as this war.

Questions

- 1 According to this source, what effects did the Russo–Japanese War have on Japan?
- 2 Discuss how Pyle has used language to present his argument.

ATL Thinking skills

An extract from Kenneth B. Pyle, 1996. *The Making of Modern Japan*, page 196.

Japanese imperialism was driven by continuing preoccupation with strategic advantage and a peculiar combination of nationalist pride and insecurity ... This pursuit of empire and status as a great power coloured all other aspects of Japan's national development ... If the drive for industry and empire was to be sustained, national loyalties would have to be continuously reinforced and every effort made to overcome the forces of disintegration.

Question

What are the implications of Pyle's assessment of Japan by 1906?

The Russians were forced to accept the Treaty of Portsmouth. Many Japanese were disappointed with the terms of this treaty as they had been led to expect much more. However, Japan gained control of Korea and much of South Manchuria, including Port Arthur. It also gained railway rights in Manchuria along with the southern half of Sakhalin Island.

The war earned Japan not only the respect of the West but also the admiration of other Asian countries, who saw the Japanese as a role model for how they, too, might take on the West and win. It also affirmed Japan's own belief in its destiny as leader of Asia.

Some Japanese were worried about the impact that such imperialism was having on Japanese society. The cost of the wars had an impact on its economy, and the need to defend its new territories brought with it the demand for a stronger army and fleet. However, the voices of those who argued for a less ambitious foreign policy were overwhelmed by those who wanted to improve Japan's position in Asia.

How did Japan benefit from the First World War?

The First World War gave Japan the opportunity to expand its influence in Asia further. Japan demanded German colonial territory in China and when this demand was ignored, Japan declared war on Germany, seizing Germany's military bases on the Shandong Peninsula in the north of China in 1914. Meanwhile, its navy occupied Germany's South Pacific possessions.

With the Allies distracted, Japan then issued China with the "Twenty-One Demands". The most important of these required China to agree to the Japanese remaining in Shandong and to grant Japan extra commercial privileges in Manchuria. China was also not to lease any more coastal territory to other powers, and was to accept political, financial and military advisers sent from Japan. These demands caused a sharp reaction from Britain and the USA, and also angered those within the Japanese government who believed that such actions stood only to damage Japan's reputation. As a result, the demands were modified.

Economically, Japan was able to take advantage of the First World War by supplying goods to the Allies and also by supplying orders to Asian markets that the Allies were unable to fulfil. Thus, exports flourished. Japan also became more self-sufficient as it developed industries to produce goods previously imported.

Another opportunity for Japan to expand came with the Bolshevik Revolution in Russia in 1917. Following the Russian withdrawal from the war, after it had signed the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk with the Germans, the Allies sent an invading force to support the Whites in the Russian Civil War against the Red Army of the Bolsheviks. The Japanese sent 70,000 men to support the Whites, even though they had originally agreed that they would send only 7,500 men. The Japanese also stayed on after the end of the civil war and after the British, US and French forces had left. Ultimately, however, they were defeated by the Bolsheviks and had to withdraw in 1922. The whole venture encouraged mistrust of Japan in the USA and Britain. At home, there were attacks on the government because of the cost of intervention in Russia, the loss of prestige and the failure to control the army, which had largely acted independently of the government during the expedition.



The results of the First World War for Japan

At the Versailles Conference that followed the First World War, Japan secured the former German Pacific islands as a mandate and Germany's former economic privileges on the Shandong Peninsula of China. These gains firmly established Japan as an important economic power on the Asian mainland and as the main naval power in the Western Pacific.

However, Japan was reminded that it was not fully a member of the "Western Club" by its failure to get racial equality clauses included in the Charter of the League of Nations. This was because leaders in Britain and the USA were afraid of the implications this would have for Japanese immigration into their countries (see right for more details).

ATL Social skills

Look back at the six factors, listed on page 15, that contributed to the growth of Japan's nationalism after 1853. In pairs or small groups, copy out the spider diagram and work together to add evidence from pages 15–21 to support these factors.

Japan in the 1920s

How peaceful was Japan in the 1920s?

Influenced by Shidehara Kijuro, who was ambassador to Washington in 1921 and foreign minister in 1924–27 and 1929–31, Japan changed to a foreign policy of internationalism during the 1920s. This aimed to develop Japan's economy via peaceful means: keeping good relations with the USA, a key trading partner, and continuing to seek economic advancement in China, but within the framework of international agreement.

Thus Japan was a signatory to several international agreements. At the Washington Conference of 1921, the Americans insisted that the Anglo-Japanese Alliance of 1902 should be replaced by a Four-Power Treaty; in this treaty Britain, Japan, the USA and France agreed to confer should the rights or possessions of any of the four countries be threatened in the Pacific. A Nine-Power Treaty, signed by China, Belgium, Italy, the Netherlands and Portugal as well as the signatories of the Four-Power Treaty, was concluded in February 1922. This undertook to respect Chinese independence and integrity, and to respect the "sovereignty, the independence and the territorial and administrative integrity of China". Japan agreed to return the German concessions in Shandong seized during the First World War.

Meanwhile, the Five-Power Naval Treaty restricted competition in battleships and aircraft carriers by setting a ratio of 5:5:3 for Britain, the USA and Japan respectively. France and Italy would each be allowed a 1.75 ratio. This treaty required Japan's Imperial Navy to abandon its plans for a massive expansion and was deeply opposed by the Navy General Staff.

These treaties together formed the Washington Treaty System and indicated that Japan was committed to international cooperation in the 1920s.

Japanese immigration to the USA

The flow of Japanese immigrants to the USA increased substantially after 1900. They worked mainly in unskilled jobs and faced discrimination in all areas. A growing fear of "the yellow peril", perpetuated by the US press, drove various anti-Japanese laws; the Japanese were not allowed to become US citizens and in states such as California were prevented from owning land. The 1924 Immigration Act discriminated against Japan by making it the only country not to be allowed **any** quota of immigrants into the USA.



▲ Shidehara Kijuro

The Washington Treaty System

Four-Power Treaty:

This ended the Anglo–Japanese Alliance. The USA, Britain, France and Japan were to confer if there was a crisis in the Pacific.

Five-Power Naval Treaty:

This limited the tonnage of the US, British, Japanese, French and Italian navies.

Nine-Power Treaty:

Japan, the USA, Britain, France, Italy, China, Portugal, Belgium and the Netherlands were to respect China's integrity and independence and abide by "open door" principles.

This change to a more international approach in foreign affairs was supported by internal developments that seemed to point to a more liberal and more democratic Japan. The term "Taisho democracy" referred to a series of reforms instituted during the latter years of Emperor Taisho's reign. As part of Taisho democracy, it became common for the prime minister's position to be given to the leader of one of the two main political parties that controlled the Diet in the 1920s. This was significant because it meant that those now gaining political power were doing so because of their experience rather than because they were members of the elite. Meanwhile, the electorate was extended until, in 1925, all adult males were given the vote. Society became more open and mass media more influential.

Prime Minister Hara's government lasted from 1918 to 1921 and introduced social and economic reforms. The military was contained and Hara's government led Japan into the League of Nations, where its membership of the Council showed that it was accepted as one of the world's leading powers.

What problems did Japan face in the 1920s?

Despite the moves towards democracy and internationalism in the 1920s, there were underlying problems in Japanese government and society, which came together in the 1930s to lead Japan towards a military dictatorship.

1. A fragile democracy

Japan's democratic reforms remained fragile. Financial scandals and election law violations eroded public support for the political parties. The links of each party with either the country's big business in the cities or landlords in the countryside also deepened the public's suspicions. The system no longer inspired respect.

In addition, there was a fear of left-wing radicalism. The year that saw the extension of the franchise also saw the government, via the Peace Preservation Law, clamping down on anyone who opposed Japan's political structure. This was aimed particularly at the Communist Party, which had been established in 1920. The passing of these two laws, one extending the franchise and the other limiting the public's right to engage in open discussion, indicated a 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

Many Conservative groups in the government, along with the army, questioned Shidehara's approach to international relations, seeing it as a betrayal of Japan's interests. The Washington Treaty System, for example, was seen as "an Anglo-Saxon 'iron-ring' preventing Japan from expanding abroad" (Bix, 2001: 226). They continued to advocate an aggressive policy in China and to see Japan's destiny as being the leadership of Asia.

The conservatives' dislike of Shidehara's policies was confirmed when the USA passed a bill limiting immigration from all countries to 150,000 a year, and specifically excluding "Asiatics" from the quota (see information box on page 21). This was very offensive to the Japanese and provoked strong protest from the Japanese press who called it a "grave insult" and "deliberate slap in the face". It played into the hands of the military and other opponents of Shidehara's policies, who saw the immigration bill as provocation by the West.

When Emperor Taisho died, the coming of new Emperor Hirohito was celebrated with a revival of the idea of the emperor as a living god, along with the revival of nationalism and the idea of Japan's special destiny in the world.

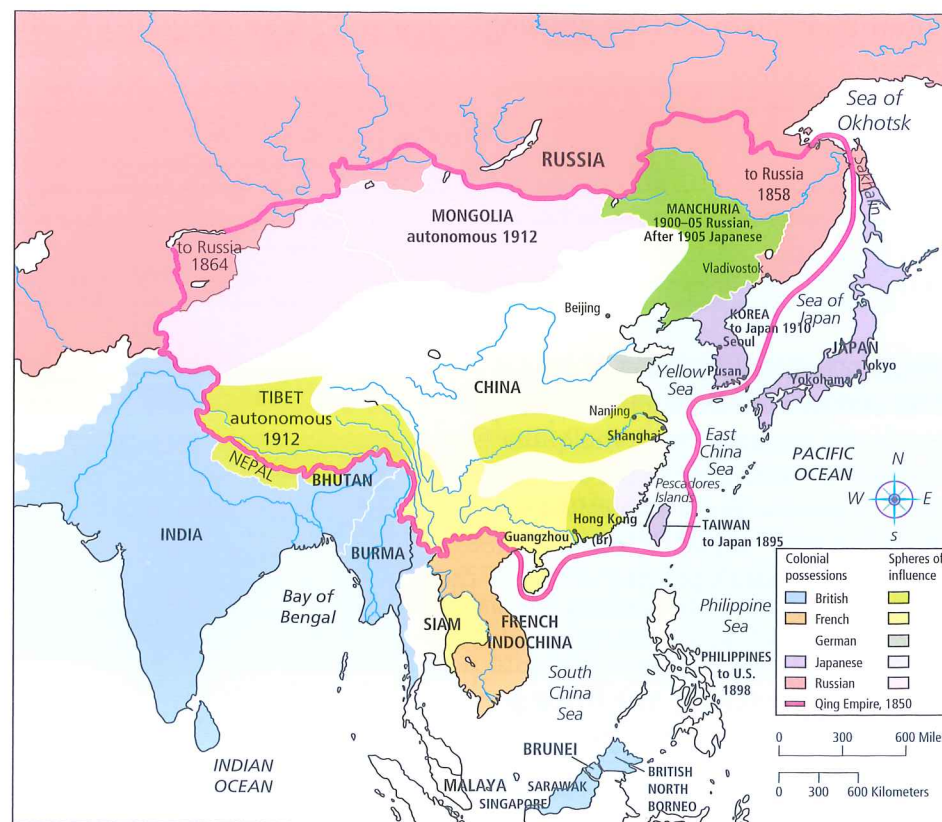
3. A growing economic crisis

The economic boom of the war years lasted only until the middle of 1921, when Europe began to revive and take back lost markets. Unemployment and industrial unrest developed and, in 1921, a bitter strike paralysed Japan's docks. There was a large divide between the cities and rural areas, and farmers suffered from the falling price of rice caused by good harvests and cheap imported rice. When farmers and workers tried to organize themselves politically, they were suppressed by the police. This again increased dissatisfaction with a political system that crushed the left and that seemed to be intimately associated with the *zaibatsu* (big business companies) and the landlords. The real economic crisis, however, came with the outbreak of the global depression following the Wall Street Crash in the USA in 1929.

Indeed, by the end of the 1920s, following a series of domestic and foreign crises, the Japanese government would 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?

China's political instability was key in encouraging imperial competition on its mainland and preventing Japanese expansion into Korea and Manchuria.



▲ A map depicting how colonial powers carved up China, 1850–1910

Source skills

A French political cartoon from 1898.



First question, part b – 2 marks

What is the message of this cartoon with regard to China in the 19th century?

During the course of the 19th century, as European powers competed to gain colonies, China had been forcibly opened up for trade by the West. Although this had also been the case for Japan, following Perry's arrival, it had managed to turn this situation to its advantage, borrowing Western ideas to become a strong country after 1868.

However, China went on to become a semi-colonial country. Following China's defeat by the British in the Opium Wars (1839–42 and 1856–60), European powers gained extraordinary economic, military and legal privileges on Chinese soil, especially along the coast in the treaty ports. Officially, the Chinese Empire was still an independent power, but in reality it was at the mercy of other powers and

their treaties, which were backed up by "gunboat diplomacy" or armed power. In addition, Christian missionaries flooded into the country

As we have seen, Japan wished to achieve equality with the West which, of course, also meant acquiring colonies. The Meiji ambition to be a "first-class country" helped to encourage the drive for expansion on the mainland. Naturally, this would also help provide economic benefits: the raw materials and the markets of East Asia. Japan could see the European powers sharing out the spoils of China and they were concerned that they would lose out if they did not also stake claims on the mainland. Strategically, Japan was also alarmed at the possibility of other powers having political control in Korea (seen as "a dagger thrust at the heart" of Japan) and China; it believed that Japan's security depended on it having a dominant influence in such areas. The Sino-Japanese War (see page 18) was fought over influence in Korea, and China's weakness compared to the newly modernized Japan was evident in its quick defeat. A revolution in China in 1911 toppled the Manchu dynasty. However, the country remained weak and divided. It was dominated by warlords who had fought among themselves and prevented any kind of national unity.

By the 1920s, the main political force in China was the Guomindang Nationalist Party (GMD) which, after 1925, was led by General Jiang Jieshi. However, the Communist Party of China (CCP) had been set up in 1921. The rivalry between these two political groups was to cause further instability in China in the late 1920s and 1930s, as you will read in the next chapter.

Research and thinking skills

- 1 Add more evidence to your spider diagram (see page 16) on factors that had contributed to the growth of Japanese nationalism by the end of the 1920s. Which of these factors do you consider to be the most important?
- 2 Identify the factors that encouraged the influence of the military to grow in Japan during this period.
- 3 In pairs, discuss the role of China in encouraging Japanese expansionism in this period. Be ready to feed back your discussion to the class.

TOK

After you have discussed the review questions consider the following:

Did your class agree on which events were most significant? How might your choice of events impact the conclusions you draw about historical events?

Now discuss more generally who decides which events are historically significant and how this impacts our understanding of the past.

Source help and hints

You need to find three clear points to answer part a of Question 1 on the document paper. When reading through the source it is a good idea to first underline or highlight these points before writing them out.

First question, part a – 3 marks

(See page 17.)

According to Source A, why were the Japanese so excited about the victory over China in 1895?

Source A

An extract from a memoir, written in 1931, by Ubukata Toshiro, a journalist-novelist, who was a teenager at the start of the Sino-Japanese War.

Everybody agreed that it would be very difficult to capture Pyongyang, since the city held huge British cannons. However, in August, the Japanese army overpowered Pyongyang with so little effort that it almost was disappointing – and the Japanese people were enraptured. My home town had no telephone system back then. News of victories came to the police before the newspaper received it, thanks to a telegraph line between the post office and police station. All news was put upon the message board in front of the police station, and we children ran to check it several times a day. The excitement of the Japanese people was beyond imagination. After all, China was thirty times as big as Japan, and its population was over 200 million, compared

to our 30 million. It had such a competent leader in Li Hongzhang... and this was our first war with a foreign country, a country supported moreover by the British. Everyone – adults, children, the aged, the women – talked about war and nothing else, day and night ... no one ever had been as happy, as when we learned of the fall of Pyongyang.

Cited in *Modern Japan, A History of Documents*.
J.L. Huffman, OUP, 2004

Once you have found three clear points, it is an easy process to write your answer:

Example answer

Firstly, according to Source A, the Japanese were excited about the victory over China because the capture of Pyongyang was achieved very easily, "with so little effort", despite the fact that they had thought it would be "very difficult". Secondly, the Japanese were excited because China was so much bigger than Japan and had a good leader; this made the victory seem even more remarkable. Finally, they were excited because they had been successful in their first war with a foreign country.

Examiner's comment: This answer would be likely to achieve three marks because there are three clear points. Note the brief quotes to support points, though you do not need to quote the sources directly. Make sure that you do not repeat the same point.