

## CHAPTER 5:

### REASONS FOR THE OUTBREAK OF WW2 IN THE ASIA-PACIFIC

TRIGGER EVENT: Bombing of Pearl Harbour on 7 December 1941.

| Role of Japan                                                                                                                               |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
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| Factors                                                                                                                                     | How did this shape the Japanese perception towards expansionism?                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           | How did this cause the outbreak of WWII in the Asia-Pacific in December 1941 ( <i>how will you land on this date?</i> )?                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
| <b>EARLY MILITARY SUCCESSES:</b><br><br>Sino-Japanese War (1894 – 1895), Russo Japanese War (1904 – 1905), Involvement in WW1 (1914 – 1918) | <p>These successes fostered a sense of national pride (Japan had the ability to defeat powerful countries!)</p> <p>They increased confidence in Japan's military power.</p> <p>They led to the belief that territorial expansion was key to ensuring Japan's security, resources, and status as a global power.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        | <p>By the 1930s, Japan's militaristic and expansionist mindset drove it to invade Manchuria and China, seeking resources to sustain its industrial economy. As Western powers imposed sanctions in response, Japan saw war as the only way to secure vital resources, <b>leading to the attack on Pearl Harbor in 1941 and the outbreak of World War II in the Asia-Pacific.</b></p>                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| <b>DIVIDE BETWEEN CIVILIAN POLITICIANS AND MILITARY LEADERS</b>                                                                             | <p>The civilian politicians preferred to advance Japanese interests by peaceful means. The military leaders promoted the idea of "Asia for Asians," arguing that Japan needed to free Asian countries from Western control and create a new order where Japan was the leader.</p> <p>As the problems within Japan increased, public dissatisfaction with the civilian politicians increased, and the military's ideas resonated with the Japanese people more.</p> <p>The civilian politicians found it increasingly difficult to control the military leaders. This ultimately set the stage for Japan's imperial conquests and involvement in the war, as the country moved towards the use of military means to solve its problems.</p> | <p>The divide contributed to the outbreak of World War II in the Asia Pacific by shifting power to the military, which prioritised aggressive expansion over diplomacy. Public dissatisfaction with civilian leaders amid economic and social issues bolstered support for the military's vision for dominance in the region. With weakened civilian control, the military pursued expansionist policies, including the invasions of Manchuria and China, <b>ultimately leading to the decision to attack Pearl Harbor in 1941</b> to secure resources and challenge Western powers.</p> |

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| <p><b>JAPAN'S EXPERIENCES WITH THE WESTERN POWERS</b></p> <p>Britain, the USSR and the US:</p> | <p>Japan's experiences with Western powers made it realise that in order to be treated with respect and avoid being colonised, it needed to become a strong, modern nation.</p> <p>Western Powers had built their power through empire-building, and Japan believed it needed to do the same.</p> <p>Japan's leaders saw expansion as a way to protect their country, gain resources, and ensure that Japan could compete with the Western powers on equal terms. This mindset pushed Japan toward aggressive expansionism, which eventually contributed to its involvement in conflicts across Asia and, ultimately, World War II.</p>                                                                                                                                                 | <p>Japan's experiences with Western powers convinced its leaders that building a strong empire was crucial for survival and status. Inspired by Western colonialism, Japan pursued aggressive expansion to territory and resources, leading to conflicts in Asia and tensions with Western powers. Sanctions and embargoes from Western powers were seen as threats, <b>ultimately driving Japan to attack Pearl Harbor in December 1941, sparking World War II in the Asia-Pacific.</b></p>       |
| <p><b>IMPACT OF THE GREAT DEPRESSION</b></p> <p><b>JAPAN'S SEARCH FOR SELF SUFFICIENCY</b></p> | <p>Japan was an island nation with limited natural resources like oil, coal, and iron, which were essential for its growing industrial economy. As Japan's economy struggled, the idea of self sufficiency (also called autarky) became more appealing to Japan's leaders.</p> <p>The Great Depression worsened Japan's economic problems, leading to the belief that the only way to survive was to expand its empire and become self-sufficient. Relying on foreign trade was impossible especially when Western countries were focused on protectionism.</p> <p>The military's rise to power and the success of early expansion efforts, like the invasion of Manchuria in 1931, convinced Japan that aggressive expansionism was the key to its future security and prosperity.</p> | <p>Japan's economic struggles, worsened by resource shortages and the Great Depression, pushed its leaders toward self-sufficiency through aggressive expansion. Early military successes, like the 1931 of Manchuria, reinforced the belief that empire-building was essential for survival. Western sanctions and embargoes on vital resources further pressured Japan, <b>leading to the attack on Pearl Harbour in December 1941 and the outbreak of World War II in the Asia-Pacific.</b></p> |

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| <b>JAPAN'S SUCCESSFUL ANNEXATION OF MANCHURIA IN 1931</b> | <p>The Kwantung Army acted independently, invading Manchuria after the staged Mukden Incident, seizing the region and establishing a puppet state to secure valuable resources like coal and iron.</p> <p>The League of Nations sent the Lytton Commission to investigate the Manchurian Crisis. While the Lytton Report condemned Japan's aggression and called for a withdrawal, Japan rejected the findings and continued its expansion.</p> <p>The League of Nations' weaknesses, including its lack of enforcement power, slow responses, and the failure of collective security, played a major role in encouraging Japan's expansionist policies.</p> <p>By failing to effectively respond to Japan's aggression in Manchuria, the League not only allowed Japan to consolidate its gains but also emboldened Japan's military and ultranationalist factions to push for even greater territorial expansion.</p> | <p>Japan's annexation of Manchuria in 1931, enabled by the weak response of the League of Nations, emboldened its military leaders to pursue further expansion. The League's failure to enforce collective security allowed Japan to consolidate its gains and encouraged continued aggression in Asia. This unchecked expansion escalated tensions with Western powers, leading to sanctions and embargoes that ultimately prompted Japan to attack Pearl Harbour in December 1941, starting World War II in the Asia Pacific.</p> |

| Role of the USA          |                                                                                                                                                                                                            |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
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| US Economic War on Japan | <p>&gt; More urgent to expand to Southeast Asia to obtain oil for the military.</p> <p>&gt; Feared that if they withdrew, Manchukuo would be endangered and control of Korea would also be threatened.</p> | <p>When USA imposed economic sanctions and embargoes on Japan, in response to Japan's aggressive expansion in Asia, these actions were seen by Japan as a direct threat to its survival and ambitions, escalating tensions between the two nations. Unable to resolve the conflict diplomatically, <b>Japan launched a preemptive attack on Pearl Harbor in December 1941</b>, aiming to weaken the U.S. Pacific Fleet and secure dominance in the region. This <b>prompted the USA to declare war on Japan</b> as it was viewed as an unprovoked act of aggression against American territory and forces.</p> |