

Origins of World War II

Class 2

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Hitler's Policy Goals

Hitler had four major policy goals prior to World War II

- Bringing Germany out of the Great Depression by ending unemployment
- Preparing Germany economically and militarily for its wars of conquest
- Forestalling any Allied intervention against Germany before she was ready for war
 - This involved peace propaganda and diplomacy
- Removing the Jews from German public life and forcing them out of Germany

Preparing Germany for War

Preparing Germany for war involved the following

- Bringing the German military on board
 - The Night of the Long Knives
 - Rearmament
- Remilitarization of the Rhineland
- Seizure of Austria, the Sudetenland (and the rest of Czechoslovakia), Danzig, and the Polish Corridor
 - Increase the military manpower and economic resources available to Germany
- Protection of his eastern flank
 - Getting Hungary and Poland to join the Anti-Comintern Pact
 - Agreeing to a Pact with Stalin

More on Hitler's World Views

Hitler was a racist who saw history as a sequence of Darwinian struggles for existence in which the superior race survived and the inferior races became extinct

Racial survival and progress meant territorial expansion

For Germany, geographic expansion meant war and conquest of Eastern Europe and Russia

- But first France had to be conquered and Britain neutralized

After the defeat of France (and Britain) and the conquest of Russia, the next war would be with the United States

More on Hitler's World Views

Hitler was a racist who saw history as a sequence of race struggles

- Progress in both the animal and human world was the result of selective breeding of the fit and elimination of the undesirable and inferior
- Nations rose as a result of the dominance and efforts of racially pure Aryans
- Nations fell when pure Aryans lost their dominance
- Since nations and empires fell when their elites and populations saw their superior racial traits diluted or eliminated by marriage or sexual contact with racial inferiors, laws must be passed to prevent such dilution

Since races were engaged in a continual struggle for existence (i.e. for living space which to Hitler meant agricultural land), war followed as a logical corollary in which inferior races in turn would be eliminated

More on Hitler's World Views - 2

To Hitler, racial progress implied territorial expansion

- People could either adjust the population to a given space or adjust the space to the population
 - Adjusting population to a limited space meant emigration, birth control, and abortion which meant racial decay
 - Adjusting space to population meant wars of conquest with the native but racially inferior population being either expelled or exterminated, not assimilated

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Given Germany's location, initial geographic expansion should most logically take place in eastern Europe and Russia west of the Urals

This view was reinforced by the notion that, except for the ethnic Germans residing in eastern Europe and the Volga Germans, the area was inhabited by racially inferior Slavs and Jews

Territorial expansion meant war, especially war with Russia

- Hitler saw the Russian Revolution as a boon to Germany since it had eliminated Russia's Germanic-origin ruling classes
- As a result, Russia was now being ruled by Jews and Slavs who could easily be defeated

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To Hitler, the problem with attacking eastward was France

To Hitler, France was the great strategic enemy

- To Hitler, the enmity between France and Germany was based on much more than the hatreds arising from World War I
- To Hitler, France was an Aryan nation that had betrayed its Aryan heritage – i.e. was a race traitor
 - France, via the French Revolution, had contributed the concept of “égalité” to European culture
 - It had emancipated and granted equality to the Jews
 - It had introduced Blacks into Europe during World War I
- France had to be defeated before Russia was attacked

More on Hitler's World Views - 5

To Hitler, Britain was a fellow Aryan nation to which he felt a mixture of admiration and hate

- He saw the British as fellow Aryans dominated by an upper class that was the product of selective breeding
- He saw British rule in India as a model for his own schemes of conquest
- He saw Jews as having great influence in Britain
- It was a democracy, which by definition destroyed responsibility and leadership
- It was a predominantly industrial and commercial society which Hitler saw as occupationally unhealthy and socially debilitating

He was both frustrated, puzzled, and enraged that Britain aligned itself with Hitler's enemies rather than with Germany

More on Hitler's World Views - 6

While the U.S. had a large number of Aryans, it had become a mongrelized nation largely dominated by Jews and Blacks

After the defeat of France (and Britain) and the conquest of Russia, Hitler saw the next war as a fight between a German-dominated Europe and the United States

- Thus preparing Germany for war with the U.S. was one of the tasks of the Nazi movement

The problem in defeating the U.S. was in engaging American forces on American soil

- It was the Atlantic Ocean and the large American fleet that were the problems

Hitler's World Views and Global Strategy

From his world views followed Hitler's strategy for global conquest

Conquest would take place in stages, with each stage allowing Germany to acquire the strength and resources necessary to succeed at the next stage

The stages:

- Incorporating the Germans of Austria, the Sudetenland, and Poland into the Reich – This meant conquest of Czechoslovakia and Poland
- Conquest of France
- Either the surrender of, or a negotiated peace with, Great Britain
- Conquest of Russia
- War with, and invasion of, the United States
- Eventual war with Japan followed by a world under German rule

Nazi Preclusive Diplomacy - 1

To preclude a preventive strike against Nazi Germany before she could fully rearm

- The Nazis launched a peace propaganda campaign and exploited people's fear of another war
 - Hitler spoke continuously of the desire of Germany to live in peace with its neighbors
- The Nazis saw negotiations and treaties as a way of postponing troubles considered dangerous at the moment
 - Hence, the Nazis often made major concessions since they assumed that they would violate or abrogate the treaty when conditions were right

Nazi Preclusive Diplomacy - 2

Peace propaganda and diplomatic concessions had their own dangers

- The first danger was that the German people would take the peace propaganda seriously
- The second danger was that German rearmament would put the German government under time pressure
 - German rearmament would set off an arms race with its potential enemies
 - Germany would have a limited window in which to strike since its potential enemies had a greater resource base at its disposal and, starting later, would more likely have more advanced weapons systems
 - Thus ,Germany would have to strike before its enemies were fully rearmed
- The third danger was that once countries lost faith in German professions of peace, it would be impossible to get them again to the negotiating table

The Rise of a Militaristic Japan

Notes on Japanese Culture - 1

The dominant religion was Shinto influenced by Buddhism

According to the Shinto creation myth, the Japanese home islands were created by gods for the Japanese people who in turn were created by greater or lesser gods (*kami* or *ujigami*)

- The most significant goddess was *Amaterasu*, the goddess of the Sun or of the universe. From her, the Japanese emperor traced his descent and divinity

The status of the clan or family depended upon the closeness or distance of its *kami's* relationship to *Amaterasu* which meant the clan's or family's closeness or distance to the Imperial family.

- Each Japanese clan was descended from a god (*ujigami* or *kami*)
- Non-Japanese were not descended from a god and thus of inferior status

Amaterasu



Notes on Japanese Culture - 2

The role of the family and individual was to offer worship to the *kami* or *ujigami* at either a public or a home shrine

The individual was of little significance in comparison with the family, the clan, or the Japanese people since individuals lived only briefly while the other entities were potentially immortal

- Thus the focus was not on the individual but on the family and the clan

Thus society was more important than any individual and could demand any sacrifice from that individual

Men are by nature unequal and should serve loyally in the particular status into which they had been born

- Thus traditional Japanese culture was hierarchical and patriarchal

Notes on Japanese Culture - 3

Unlike Abrahamic religions, Shinto was not linked to a code of ethical behavior.

- Its concept of an afterlife is similar to that of the Greek *Hades*.

With the Meiji Restoration in 1868 (and especially from the late-1920s to 1945), traditional Shinto became State Shinto

What State Shinto did was take certain aspects of traditional Shinto and place a strong emphasis upon these aspects

- It also incorporated into Shinto other concepts as well

Notes on Japanese Culture - 4

State Shinto emphasized the following:

- The divinity of the Emperor
- The uniqueness (*kokutai*) of the Japanese people as descended from divine beings
- The obligation of Japanese to “offer yourselves courageously to the State and thus guard and maintain the prosperity of Our Imperial Throne”
- The concept of *Bushido* (“the way of the warrior”)
 - Strong sense of loyalty
 - Strong sense of honor
 - In the context of World War II, it led to the *kamikazes*
 - Strong sense of shame

Hirohito



Politics in Japan - 1

The Meiji Restoration of 1867 transferred power to a modernizing oligarchy led by 4 clans that were linked to the Imperial Court and leading mercantile families like the Mitsui and Mitsubishi

In 1889, they promulgated a Constitution that provided for a bicameral legislature (known as the Diet) with an elected House of Representatives and a House of Peers

- Legislation had to be passed by the Diet and signed by a minister of state (the equivalent of our Cabinet Secretary)

The ministers, established a Council of State, were responsible to the Emperor and not the Diet

Politics in Japan - 2

The Emperor, while theoretically a god and absolute ruler, was in practice expected simply to ratify and promulgate the decisions of the Council of Ministers. i.e. He reigned but did not rule

The War Minister and the Navy Minister were selected not by the Emperor or the Premier but by the Army and Navy respectively

- This meant that if either of the Services did not like either the composition of the Council or its policies, they could either direct the minister to resign from the Council or refuse to nominate a minister

The Japanese Economy

With the introduction of Western sanitation and public health measures into Japan, the rural population began to increase

- This put pressure on the land which reduced many Japanese peasants to poverty and turned them from landowners to either full- or part-time tenants
- It led to second and third sons to migrate to the cities where they took jobs as low-wage workers in the new industries. It also many to emigrate and others to enlist in the Army

Since Japan lacked natural resources and had neither the land or fodder for dairy, wool, or meat production

- Its only indigenous export goods were seafood, silk, and forest products
- Consequently, its economy had to be based on the conversion of imported raw materials into finished products (like textiles) that could be exported

Earlier Japanese Expansion

Since Japan lacked essential raw materials, could be cut out of export markets by high tariffs, and faced increasing barriers to emigration, Japan was tempted to use her increasing industrial and military might to conquer new territory

- 1894-95 – War with China which led to Japanese seizure of Taiwan and the Pescadores Islands and forced China to grant independence to Korea
- 1904-05 – War with Russia which led to Japanese seizure of southern Sakhalin and cession of the Russian lease on Liaotung
- 1910 – Japanese annexation of Korea
- 1914-18 – Japan seized the German Pacific islands north of the Equator (the Marshalls, the Carolines, and the Marianas) as well as the German holdings on the Shantung Peninsula

Japan in the 1920s

Five events in the 1920-1930 period served to alienate Japan from the United States and pave the way for the rise of the militarists

- The Washington Naval Conference of 1921-22
- The Asian Exclusion Act of 1924
- The Smoot-Hawley Tariff Act of 1930
- The Great Depression which began to hit Japan hard in 1930
- The London Naval Conference of 1930

Asian Exclusion Act of 1924

• Barred immigration from an Asia-Pacific triangle that included Japan, China, Korea, India, and Southeast Asia

- Barred immigration of any persons ineligible for naturalization
 - Non-whites were not deemed eligible for naturalization

• Provoked an official diplomatic protest from Japan

Foreign Tariffs & Japanese Economic Policy

The Smoot-Hawley Tariff raised duties on Japanese goods by an average of 23 percent.

- This greatly hurt the Japanese textile industry which employed a quarter of the Japanese work force and accounted for 2/3rd of Japanese exports
- It also led American textile companies to replace Japanese silk with cotton and American-manufactured rayon, further hurting Japanese exports

Japan's economic problems were aggravated by the policies of Prime Minister Hamaguchi Yuko.

Japan and the Great Depression

The Great Depression had a shattering effect on Japan

- Led to a major slump in farm prices and serious rural poverty
- Greatly hurt the Japanese textile industry

The rural impact of slumping prices was magnified by a high birthrate

The existence of rural poverty and the inability of democratically-elected politicians to effectively deal with the issue

- Discredited Western-style democracy
- Played into the hands of military extremists
 - Most Army officers and enlisted were second and later sons of rural landowners and tenant farmers
- Gave strong impetus to militarism and military conquest

The London Naval Conference of 1930

Resulted in a treaty which:

- Changed the battleship ratio from 5:5:3 to 10:10:7
- Differentiated light cruisers (with 6.1" guns or less) from heavy cruisers (with up to 8" guns)
- Set limits on the numbers of cruisers that Great Britain, the U.S., and Japan could have
- Placed some restrictions on submarines

In Japan, this led to a major political battle between the Treaty faction which supported the treaty and the Fleet faction which strongly opposed it

- With the support of Prime Minister Hamaguchi Osachi, the treaty was ratified by the Diet
- This led to the assassination of Hamaguchi and the purging of admirals in the Treaty faction

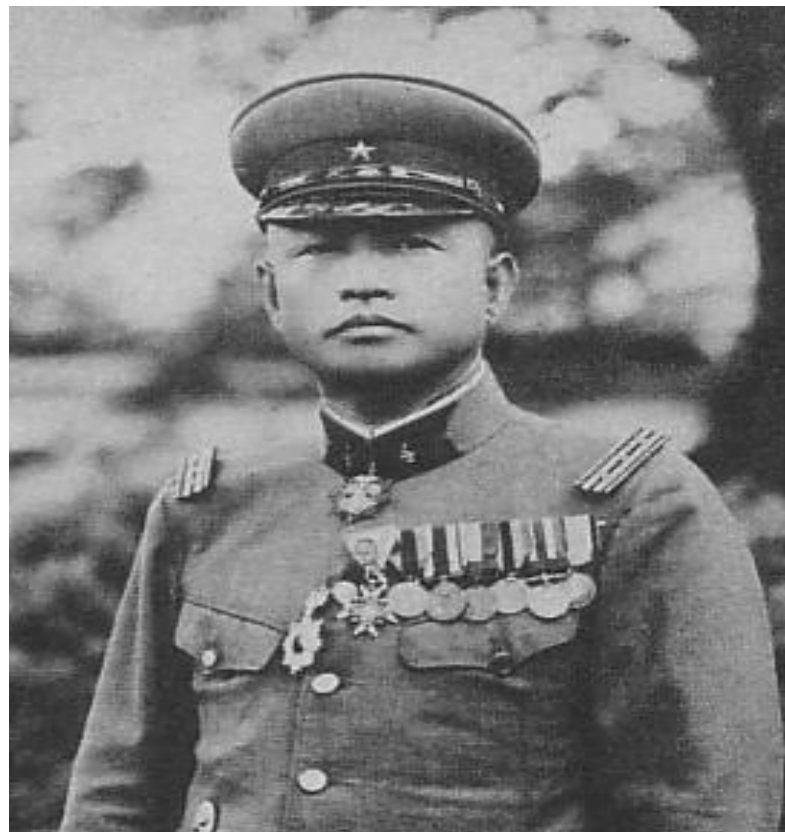
The Manchurian Incident - 1931

The event in Manchuria that set Japan on the path to World War II was set off not by a decision of the Japanese government but by the actions of a brilliant but fanatical Lieutenant Colonel named Ishiwara Kanji

- Saw the Japanese Army as a divinely-ordained instrument of global salvation destined to bring the world under one enlightened Japanese roof
- Prior to this utopia, there would first be a final war, with Japan's chief enemy being the United States
- To prepare for this apocalyptic conflict, Japan needed to seize control of Manchuria

As chief planning officer for the Kwantung Army in Manchuria, Ishiwara could make things happen

Ishiwara Kanji



The Manchurian Incident - 2

Ishiwara persuaded key staff members of the Kwantung Army to join the plot, including Colonel Itagaki Seishiro, the senior staff officer

- Ishiwara and Itagaki also drew the Tokyo Supreme Command into the plot
- Kwantung Army did not receive urgings to “cool it”
- Using explosions along the railway as a pretext, the Kwantung Army attacked and soon overran Manchuria
- Army defied Hirohito’s order to withdraw

Unable to admit that it could not control its own Army, the Japanese government tried to justify the Army’s actions to the League of Nations and the world

Japanese Troops in Shenyang



The Manchurian Incident - 3

Japan set up a puppet state in Manchuria which it named Manchukuo that had Henry Pu-yi as puppet emperor but was run by the Japanese

After sending an investigative commission – headed by Earl Victor Bulwer-Lytton – to investigate, the Lytton Commission produced a report which condemned Japanese actions

When the report was presented to the General Assembly of the League of Nations, the Assembly condemned Japan's actions

This led Japan to withdraw from the League of Nations

The Manchurian Incident - 4

Discredited the League of Nations and the concept of collective security

Worsened relations between China and Japan

Led to Japan's diplomatic isolation

- This gave impetus to further expansion, leading to eventual war with China

Led to further plots and assassinations

- 2-26 Day Plot failed but it intimidated the government and put the Army in charge
- With it now being law that Service Ministers had to be active duty military, it gave the Services veto power over Cabinets and policy

Placed Japan face-to-face with the Soviet Union

Why War with China

A China beset by civil strife and warlordism seemed like easy pickings for Japan

- China in the 1930s was beset by warlordism so that the Government of Chiang Kai-shek controlled only a few provinces
- Class conflict between landlords and poor peasants fostered the rise of the Chinese Communist Party and war between it and the Chinese Nationalists or Kuomintang

Lure of Chinese rice and resources

- Japan and Korea could supply only 80 percent of their rice
- China had many resources that Japan needed

The Japanese Army had a Militarist faction eager for war that the Japanese government could not control and which could intimidate the government to adopt policies it otherwise would not

War With China

On 7 July 1937, war between China and Japan broke out when fighting erupted between the 4,000-man Japanese garrison in Peking and Chinese forces at the Marco Polo bridge.

Fighting soon spread and as they advanced they followed a policy of brutality towards the civilian population

- The most infamous Japanese atrocity was the “Rape of Nanking” in which roughly 50 to 60 thousand were killed
- Interestingly, the only Japanese leaders ever brought to account for the Rape of Nanking were the two Japanese generals most outraged about it

The Canary that Tried to Swallow the Cat

China had a land mass nearly the same as the U.S. with a population of over 600 million vs Japan's 73 million

Despite its brutality (and perhaps in part because of it) Japan found itself drawn into a seemingly endless war, which it dare not lose but could not win or end.

- Japan could and did win almost every battle but could not either withdraw lest it lose face nor achieve victory

To achieve victory, the Japanese did two things that boomeranged

- They tried to terrorize the Chinese population into submission which led to the bombing of civilians, the Rape of Nanking and other atrocities
- They tried to search for allies which led them to ally with Nazi Germany

Consequences of the “China Incident” - 1

The war put serious strains on the Japanese economy

- Shortages became common, leading to rationing and import substitution
- Imported goods disappeared from store shelves
- Civilians were urged to recycle

American public and elite opinion turned increasingly hostile

- Thanks to the China lobby – a group of American missionaries, Foreign Service officers, and businessmen – and extensive war reporting, American public opinion became increasingly anti-Japanese
- Roosevelt and many elite Americans were Sinophiles

Consequences of the “China Incident” - 2

Japan and Russia came into conflict at Nomonhan (Khalkin Gul)

- Led the Japanese Government to abandon the Northern Attack favored by the Army in favor of the Southern attack favored by the Navy

It led the Japanese military to escalate the conflict – it sought to cut China off from foreign arms and supplies

- This led the Japanese on 24 September 1940 to occupy Vietnam to cut China’s railroad links to the port of Haiphong

It led the Roosevelt Administration to begin a series of embargoes

Japan into Southern Vietnam

In July 1941, Japanese troops landed at Cam Ranh Bay and the Saigon airport in southern Vietnam

On 26 July, Roosevelt issued an Executive Order freezing Japanese assets in the U.S. and embargoing all oil sales to Japan

- Japan produced less than 12 percent of her peacetime consumption and imported the other 88 percent – 80 percent of that came from the U.S.

On 26 July, Roosevelt called the Philippine Army into service and restored GEN Douglas MacArthur

This action made war inevitable unless a diplomatic solution to the impasse over Vietnam and China were resolved