Japanese Imperialism, 1868-1945

- Prologue: Tokugawa Japan and the Sinocentric regional order (1600-1868)
- Japan joins the Western imperial order (1868-1914)
- World War I and the new international order (1914-31)
- Japan challenges the Anglo-American order (1931-45)
- Epilogue: Japan in the Cold War and Post-Cold War orders
The Chinese Tribute System (1)
The Chinese Tribute System (2)
Tokugawa Japan and the World

- Relative seclusion: closed to most Europeans (Christianity prohibited)
- Limited relations with Dutch, Chinese traders through Nagasaki
- No formal diplomatic relations with China
- Attempt to create Japan-centered regional order of civilization and barbarity: Ryukyus, Dutch, Koreans, Ainu
Changing Foreign Relations

- 1780s ff.: Competition and conflict with Russia in Ezo (Hokkaido)
- increasing presence of Western ships
- 1825: shogunate issues “shoot on sight” order
- 1839-42: Opium War in China; shogunate rescinds shoot on sight order
- 1853: Commodore Perry “opens” Japan
- 1854: US-Japan Friendship Treaty
The Ansei ("Unequal") Treaties, 1858

- Treaty ports to be opened
- Restrictions on Japanese tariff autonomy
- Extraterritoriality
- Triggers political crisis that will topple Tokugawa
Meiji Restoration and Meiji Revolution (1868-1890)

- New government established under emperor
- Radical reorganization of government, military, economy, society using Western models
- Goal is revision of unequal treaties, establishment of Japan as equal among great powers
Japan’s Emergence as an Imperial Power, 1870s-1910
Rivalries over Korea
Early-Meiji Relations With Korea

- 1870-73: Korea rejects Japan’s new diplomatic and trade initiatives
- 1873: Meiji government splits over question of invading Korea; anti-invasion party wins
- 1876: Kanghwa Treaty – gunboat diplomacy to “open” Korea; unequal treaty imposed on Korea
- 1884: failed coup attempt by pro-Japanese reformers; Chinese troops enter
- 1885: China and Japan agree to stabilize situation; but China extends political authority over Korea
Fukuzawa Yukichi

- Theorist of civilization and enlightenment
- Author of “Goodbye to Asia,” 1885 – reaction to failed pro-Japanese reforms in Korea
Yamagata Aritomo

- “Line of Sovereignty” -- territorial boundaries
- “Line of Interest” -- necessary buffer zone
- Korea seen as “dagger pointed at heart of Japan”
Japanese demands for reform of Korea, 1894: used to provoke war with China
Sino-Japanese War, 1894-95
Treaty of Shimonoseki (1895)

- China pays large indemnity
- China recognizes “independence” of Korea
- Taiwan and Liaodong Peninsula (Port Arthur) to Japan
- Japan gains investment rights in China
Triple Intervention (1895):
Russia in Southern Manchuria

- Russia, France, & Germany compel Japan to return Liaodong Peninsula
- Russia then leases it from China (1898)
- Russia also developing railways in Manchuria, across Siberia; expanding activities in Korea
- 1900 Boxer Expedition – Russia keeps troops in Manchuria
Anglo-Japanese Alliance (1902): against Russian expansion
Russo-Japanese War, 1904-05
Portsmouth Treaty (1905)

- Liaodong Peninsula, Southern Sakhalin to Japan
- Russia withdraws from Korean affairs
- Taft-Katsura Agreement: US recognizes Japan in Korea, Japan recognizes US in Philippines (secret agreement)
“School is about to open in the Far East”

(American views of Japan)
Annexation of Korea
(1910)
Changing Contexts, 1914-31

- New “rules” of geopolitics
- How to avoid great power conflicts?
- How to deal with the rise of Chinese nationalism?
Japan During WWI

- Seizes Shandong Peninsula, Pacific Islands from Germany (1914)
- Imposes 21 Demands on China (1915) – gains further economic advantages, but fails to turn China into protectorate
- Sends 70,000 troops to Siberia in effort to carve out sphere of influence (1918)
Treaty of Versailles (1918)

- Japan joins Big Five
- keeps Shandong – triggers mass nationalist protests in China (May Fourth Movement)
- but fails to obtain racial equality clause – source of bitterness to many Japanese
Cooperative Diplomacy:
Washington Treaties (1921-22)

- Guarantee Open Door in China
- Japan withdraws from Shandong, Siberia
- Naval arms limits: 5:5:3 ratio for capital ships, GB:USA:Japan (still enough for Japanese superiority in W. Pacific)
“Positive Diplomacy”

- Criticize “week-kneed” cooperative approach
- Emphasize Japan’s special interests in East Asia
- Claim Manchuria is separate from China – need to keep out Nationalists and Communists
- Use Japanese military to block Northern Expedition, 1927-28
- Assassinate Manchurian warlord Chang Tsolin, 1928
- But this is not the dominant position in the 1920s
London Naval Treaty (1930)

- Japan tries for 10:10:7 ratio, but gets 10:10:6
- Still has effective hegemony in Western Pacific
- But decried as “sell-out” of national security -- PM Hamaguchi assassinated
Manchurian Incident (1931)

- Japanese army stages attack on South Manchurian railroad, uses as pretext to occupy Manchuria
- Establishes puppet state of Manchukuo (1932), leaves League of Nations (1933)
- Planning for total war with USSR: militarization of empire, with colonies as forward bases
- Effort to create regional bloc economy
- 1932-37: will attempt to create buffer zone in North China, keep out Nationalist forces, Communists
War with China, 1937: Creating a “New Order in East Asia”
Japanese Atrocities, Chinese Resistance
From lightning advances to quagmire
From Northern Strategy to Southern Advance

- Japanese troops badly beaten by Soviet forces in Mongolia (1938-39); Hitler-Stalin pact leads to Japan-Soviet non-aggression pact (1941)
- Japan joins Axis with Germany, Italy (1940)
- France defeated in Europe: Japanese forces enter Indochina in hopes of breakthrough in China, access to SE Asian resources
- Brings Japan onto collision course with USA
War with the Allies, 1941-45: Japan as the “Light of Greater East Asia”
India, now is the time to rise up!
“People of the Southern Region”
“Japan takes on Chiang Kai-shek, Roosevelt, and Churchill in the ring”
Impact of Japanese Imperialism in Southeast Asia

- Destroy prestige of white colonial rulers
- Promote local Asian nationalisms, organize military groups, youth groups
- Grant “independence”
- But sympathy for Japan fades in face of brutal rule – resistance grows
- After Japan’s defeat, former colonial powers will be unable to reassert control
Aftermath in Northeast Asia: Into the Cold War era

- China: Japanese invasion paves way for Communist victory
- Taiwan: different developmental trajectory from mainland China; fuels tensions between Nationalists and native Taiwanese
- South Korea: ambivalent legacy of colonial rule
- North Korea: claims to be true Korean resistance
- Japan: now becomes economic engine of US containment policy in East Asia, subordinates its foreign policy to US policy
After the Cold War

- Japanese economic investment in East and Southeast Asia grows; hear calls to “re-Asianize” foreign policy
- Frictions with USA
- Resurgent Japanese nationalism
- Frictions with Koreas, China
- The past and the politics of the present