The Rise and Fall of Imperial Japan
World War II
The Pacific Ocean
Western countries merely wished to exploit Asia and showed much prejudice against its people.

The 19th century Western carving up of China had been a warning to Japan. (spheres of influence)

Japan realized that to retain its independence and national character it had to adopt some Western ideas, and quickly.

In particular Japan copied Western military ideas, for example her navy started building a ‘dreadnaught’ battleship in 1905 - a year before HMS Dreadnaught was started in Britain.

Japan’s modern military then set about finding ways to promote Japanese interests abroad.

China was defeated in battle in 1894-5 and Japan got influence on the mainland and Taiwan. This was the First Sino-Japanese War. (Sino=Chinese)
A Japanese print of the Sino-Japanese war of 1895. The Japanese are in white.

How are the Chinese soldiers portrayed here?
One Western power, Russia, dared to challenge this new Japan.

They sent a fleet of powerful ships to establish order in the East. The Russian fleet was decisively smashed at Tsushima 1905.

This gave Japan control of Manchuria and knocked out Russian influence in the East.
Battle of Tsushima 1905

Of the Russian fleet of 11 battleships and 8 cruisers, plus other ships, only 2 destroyers and a yacht made it to safety. The Japanese lost 4 small gunboats.
The Japanese Empire

- Japan had a severe lack of natural resources.
- Nearby Manchuria had plenty of coal, plus industries and ports.
- China had already been carved up by the Western powers. Why shouldn’t Japan do the same?
- 1910 Japan moved into Korea.
Japan astutely joined Britain and France for WW1 and took over German Chinese possessions as soon as she could.

In 1915 Japan presented China with the 21 Demands, taking even more power from China, and indirectly depriving China of its best leader Yuan Shikai.

After WW1 Japan was not asked to return any Chinese land, despite China supporting the British and French in the war. This caused the May 4 riots in China 1919.
Zhang Zuolin was the Chinese warlord of Manchuria 1928.
He began to show sympathy for Chiang Kaishek and the new China.
The Japanese army planted a bomb in his private train and killed him.
The Manchurian Incident 1931

• The Great Depression in the USA was devastating to Japan.

• Many people were in poverty, and half the factories had closed.

• The Japanese army saw conquest as a way out of this.

• The army was also afraid of Chiang Kaishek’s moves to unify China. They thought he would take Manchuria from them.

• Claiming Chinese sabotage of a railway, the Japanese army occupied Manchuria. They renamed it Manchukuo and put the deposed Chinese Emperor Pu Yi up as a figure head.

• This was the run-up to the Sino-Japanese war 1937-45
Japanese Propaganda Poster

- Notice the flags: Japan, Manchukuo and China.
- What is the purpose of this poster?

Time Magazine with Pu Yi

- Who published this magazine?
- Why?
The deposed Chinese Emperor Pu Yi was now seized upon by the Japanese as the new puppet ruler of Manchukuo.

Manchukuo means land of the ‘Manchu’. What more fitting than a Manchu leader?

Why the Japanese would want to do this?
The Emperor Hirohito 1926-1989

• The Emperor Showa of Japan.
• He had complete control over, and commanded complete loyalty from his subjects.
• It was his responsibility for starting and ending the wars against China, USA, Britain etc.
• He was protected from prosecution in 1945 by the US who needed him to keep Japan from collapsing.
General Hideki Tojo

- Prime Minister of Japan and primary military leader.
- Rose to power in the Manchukuo ‘Kwantung’ army.
- Keen on ultra nationalistic secret societies.
- Responsible for 8 million civilian deaths, countless deaths and experiments on prisoners of war.
- Commemorated at the Yasukuni Shrine.
- Apologized for military atrocities on his death.
- Executed for war crimes in 1948.
Gradual Japanese Advances

The Japanese army gradually crept Southward, through China, fighting all the way.
• 1937 the Japanese army clashed with the Chinese at the gates of Beijing (the Marco Polo Bridge).

• This photo is just after the fighting had finished, leaving the Japanese in control.
Japanese Occupation of China

• By 1938 there were 1 million Japanese troops in China.
• By 1941 2 million troops, but this was still not enough.
• Japan could occupy only key areas and cities.
• Out of fear they adopted The ‘Three All Campaign’ (‘Kill all, burn all, destroy all’)
• Japan simply didn’t have enough soldiers however.
• By 1945 4 million Chinese people had died and 60 million had been displaced.
• Many Chinese cities lay in ruins.
A baby caught up in the bombing of a Shanghai railway station.
A Japanese Tank in Shanghai.

Chinese soldiers 1939

Great cruelty against the Chinese.
The Japanese army rapidly advanced through China, Indochina, Malaya, and Indonesia.

Some Asian people welcome them as liberators. Soon they were generally feared as new imperialists, not as Asian liberators from Western Imperialists.

They treated non-Japanese peoples with ruthlessness, cruelty and severity.
Imperial Japanese Expansion 1941
(in brown)
Japanese War Technology

Much faster and more maneuverable than any other fighter at the time.

The ‘Zero’ Fighter Plane.
The Two Biggest Battleships at Sea

Battleship Yamato fitting out on September 1941
Japanese Battleship Musashi leaving Brunei, 1944

Japanese Battleship Yamato on trials, 1941
Only a few people realized that old battleships were finally made obsolete by the airplane.

Pacific naval wars were to be decided by planes from ships, not by big guns.
Japanese army bike

The army could move very quickly through the region whether or not roads were good.

Japanese Soldiers

Soldiers were highly skilled in attack, defence, and jungle warfare. Highly motivated to defend their Emperor and their land to the death.
• By November 1941 the Japanese were poised to even strike Australia.
• Campaigns to attack Burma and Midway Island were to be a prelude to this.
• The bombing of Darwin Island was a precursor of invasion.
The Prince of Wales and the Repulse, both sunk on December 1941.

- The British government - alarmed at the rapid Japanese advance - decided to send some big warships to show strength.
- They ignored the advice of the navy that already knew that airplanes could now sink ships easily.
- Both ships were sunk by over 100 Japanese planes.
- It was a major blow to Britain. Another pointer to the new nature of naval warfare.
The Japanese Capture Hong Kong
December 24, 1941
The major fleet base of the US navy in the Pacific. It was home to all the major US warships in the Pacific. Destruction of these ships would take out all the resistance to Japanese expansion to the East and South.
The Japanese launch a surprise attack.

The Japanese had been shown how to attack a harbour with planes by the British attack on the Italian fleet in Taranto 11.11.1940. The US navy had chosen to regard the feat as a ‘fluke’.

US warships sinking at anchor.

Japanese carrier planes ready to take off.
The US Fleet Lies Destroyed
Unfortunately the Japanese destroyed battleships, but no US aircraft carriers. They also failed to either destroy or capture the harbour.

The USS Enterprise

Only luck kept this ship out of Pearl Harbor on the 7th. She arrived the following day.

She was to lead the US Navy back into the fight in the Pacific.
Singapore Surrenders
February 15, 1942

General Percival comes out to surrender to the Japanese. It was Britain’s greatest ever military defeat.
Burma, March, 1942

- The Japanese pushed out British forces by superior jungle fighting techniques.
- The British reliance on motor vehicles was exploited as a weakness by simple tree-felled road blocks.
- The Japanese prepared to attack India.
- The British counter attacked in Arakan but were again beaten.
The infamous Burma railway. This is where the Japanese put civilian and military prisoners to work in the rain forest. Huge numbers died.
Burma 1944

- The British adopted new techniques. Instead of trying to hold territory generally they made sure of holding well-defended ‘boxes’ of strategically important land.

- The Japanese found themselves unable to defeat their enemy and unable to utilise the land to their advantage. They also now found themselves dependent on hugely long, and very vulnerable, supply routes.

- Battle of the ‘Admin Box’ was a British victory in 1944. The Japanese army had, at last, to retreat.
The Burma Road, a Lifeline to China

- Built at huge effort this road was a link between the allies in Burma and China.
- Vast amounts of supplies were trucked over the mountains to help the fight against the Japanese.
The Rape of Nanking
Dec 1942-Feb 1943.

The Japanese army were allowed to run riot.
Up to 300,000 civilian Chinese deaths
1,000 rapes a day
Hospital patients tortured.
Soldiers bayonetted and shot people at will.
Five Chinese civilians being buried alive.

Japanese soldiers use prisoners for bayonet practice.
Up to May 1942 the Japanese are unstoppable. They possess territory from the border of India to the Soviet Union, and from the Aleutian Islands to nearly Australia. They have not defeated their enemies’ forces however.
The British Army is retraining in jungle warfare. The USA and Britain join forces. The US navy is quick to realize the importance of carriers and sets up ‘naval task forces’. The US marines train to fight in jungles and attack islands.
Massive American industrial resources are brought against Japan.

Modern business techniques produce huge amounts of warships, guns, planes and everything else.

Modern design technology means that Japanese know-how was rapidly outstripped.

Both Britain and the US send war material to help Chiang Kaishek fight the Japanese in China.
• US aid to China included these Curtis fighter planes, the ‘Flying Tigers’.
• They actually had shark mouths painted on because it was thought the Japanese were afraid of sharks!
Fantastic industrial output allows the US to pour new ships into the Pacific.
Midway Island. May, 1942

US aircraft carriers outclass the Japanese carriers and catch them off guard. The Japanese navy loses 4 of its precious aircraft carriers in this one battle. Japan cannot replace the loss quickly—unlike the US. It is the turning point of the war.
The Japanese Shinano

To make up for losses, the Japanese built the world’s largest aircraft carrier. Due to bombing it had to put to sea whilst still unfinished, and with workers onboard still building it! It was sunk by a US submarine shortly afterwards, still incomplete.
Mighty Japanese battleships are pounded to pieces by US carrier planes. They are obsolete.
The USS IOWA

Battleships found a new role in bombarding Japanese held island defenses.

Tarawa Atoll

Despite battleships the Japanese were masters of defence.

US marine casualties were horrendous at every island attacked.

Japanese defenders inevitably fought to the death.
Iwo Jima

- The island where the film ‘Flags of our Fathers’ was set.
- Horrendous casualties on both sides.
Carrier battles were fierce.

Japanese islands acted as permanent aircraft carriers.

If you crashed in the Pacific you were unlikely to be found or rescued.
Kamikaze

• Kamikaze: ‘Divine Wind’.
• It became obvious that the US possessed more and better war technology.
• In desperation Japan ordered her young men to beat the enemy by flying bombs into the enemy (and dying in the process).
• These suicide bombers flew planes, or manned suicide torpedoes.
The US carrier St. Lo, attacked and sunk by Kamikaze.
US ships ablaze after kamikaze attacks.

Another US ship in flames. replacements were already on their way.

A US sailor commented ‘the fight might be tough on land, but you can’t dig foxholes in the sea’!
Okinawa Island, May 1945

- This island is within bomber range of Japan. If it falls Japan will, at last, be vulnerable.
USS West Virginia (BB-48) fires her main armament of 16-inch guns as amtracs prepare to land on the beach.

Okinawa, Ryukyu Islands
April 1, 1945
Kamikase attacks reach their peak.

- Even the Yamato battleship is sent on a suicide mission (and is sunk)
• US anti-aircraft fire became monstrous.
• Kamikase attacks occurred all day and all night.
• Nerves were worn to shreds as combatants were unable to rest.
Civilians Caught up in the Fighting

American soldier assists Japanese civilians. Note boy in stroller

US Marines of the 6th Division use flame throwers on caves in Southern Okinawa

Okinawa, Ryukyu Islands
June 22, 1945

US Marine assists elderly civilians

Okinawa, Ryukyu Islands
May 1945
The first Atomic bomb to be used in war... ‘little boy’.

This bomb was shipped from the US a mere 4 hours after the ‘Trinity’ A-bomb test in the US.

The actual radioactive material inside was the size of an orange.

The Enola Gay. The US plane chosen to drop the Atomic bomb on Japan.
The USS Indianapolis

- Delivered the first atomic bomb to the US air force.
- July 30 1945 sunk by Japanese submarine off the Philippines on the way home.
- Because of her ‘special mission’ her journey was ‘secret’.
- Of 1200 crew, 900 survived the sinking only to find themselves at sea with no rescuers even looking for them.
- Sharks were quickly attracted and after 4 days only 300 men were left, mostly terrified out of their minds.
- It was the worst US Navy disaster in history.
Hiroshima, Aug 6 1945

The effect of ‘little boy’
Nagasaki
Aug. 10, 1945
Atomic Bomb
number 2.
The Soviet army, having defeated Germany, now came east to share in the kill with the USA.

It invaded Manchukuo with little resistance from the Kwantung army.

Here are Soviet tanks in the Capital of Manchukuo.

Uncertainty about what was the ‘Chinese’ border will lead to border fighting after the war.
The Japanese surrender party on board a US battleship in Tokyo Bay 15.9.1945. They are ‘enduring the unendurable’ at the Emperor’s request. The Emperor finally concedes that Japan cannot face US technology and survive.
Over Tokyo Bay
VJ Day
(Victory over Japan Day)

- The scene in Times Square August 14, 1945.
- News has just been released that Japan has formally surrendered.
- World War two has ended. But the Cold War has already begun....
Japan Retreats

- Japan withdrew all forces from the Pacific and from the mainland.
- So widely scattered were soldiers, and so dedicated were they to their cause, that old soldiers were still coming out of hiding 20 years later.
- Shoichi Yokoi was discovered in the jungles of Guam on January 24, 1972 after 28 years in hiding alone.
End of the War

- Japan lost 2.5 million people in the war.
- China lost 10 million people.
- The Yasukuni shrine is still contentious. Hirohito refused to visit in his last years due to rumors that it housed Japan’s war criminals. The present day prime Minister still visits.
- The USA rebuilt Japan to enable it to recover as a source of American influence in Asia.
- The Atom bomb was seen as the crucial symbol of political power. The USA was shortly to consider using it again, this time on China.