
UNIT 13 JAPAN'S COLONIAL EMPIRE AND ITS DEFEAT

Structure

- 13.0 Objectives
- 13.1 Introduction
- 13.2 Imperialism: Definitions and Debates
- 13.3 The Framework of Japanese Expansion
 - 13.3.1 The Initial Phase
 - 13.3.2 Japan's Formal Empire
 - 13.3.3 Colonial Administration
 - 13.3.4 Economic Relations with the Colonies
- 13.4 Ideologies of Expansion
- 13.5 Colonial Policy: Assumptions and Premises
- 13.6 Japan: Expansionist Policy Since 1931
 - 13.6.1 Establishment of Manchukuo
 - 13.6.2 Continued Aggression in China
 - 13.6.3 Japan Joins the Axis Powers
 - 13.6.4 World War-II
- 13.7 Let Us Sum Up
- 13.8 Key Words
- 13.9 Answers to Check Your Progress Exercises

13.0 OBJECTIVES

After reading this Unit, you will be able to know about:

- the chief characteristics of Japanese imperialism,
- the extent and nature of control Japan exercised over its formal and informal empire,
- how Japan strengthened its hold on China,
- the objectives and ideology of pan-Asianism, and
- the social and political groups behind Japanese expansion.

13.1 INTRODUCTION

The transformation of Japan in the middle of the nineteenth century was accompanied by the building up of a network of relations with other countries. Japan had been relatively isolated from the rest of the world and had followed a policy of “closed country” (sakoku). However, this did not mean that Tokugawa Japan had no dealings with other countries. Tokugawa Japan had cut off relations with the Western nations but continued to maintain diplomatic relations with Korea and sought to establish a basis of equality with China. This experience enabled the Japanese to come to terms with the Western powers when they forced Japan to enter into diplomatic relations and open itself to foreign trade.

The pattern of Japan's relations with the world was conditioned by the context of Western imperialism which generated a sense of crisis. This fear of subjugation enabled the Japanese oligarchy to mould the nation as well as provided it with a rationale for expanding its borders in the interests of security or to capture markets and ensure a supply of raw materials which were crucial for its development. The reasons for Japan's expansion have been explained in a variety of ways. Some scholars have attributed it to the persistence of feudal militarist values, others have argued that it was because of a lack of capital and the only way Japan could accumulate the resources necessary for development. Yet others have seen political and nationalist strivings behind Japan's expansionist policies. This Unit deals with the expansionist policies of Japan. Starting with a discussion on the theory of imperialism, it goes on to analyse why and how Japan became an imperialist power.

13.2 IMPERIALISM: DEFINITIONS AND DEBATES

The nature of imperialism has been examined by many scholars and it would be useful to indicate very briefly some of these arguments before considering the position of Japan. The most influential argument on the reasons for imperialist - expansion was advanced by J. Hobson in 1902. He argued that countries such as Great Britain had an excess manufacturing capacity and the surplus capital which could not be invested in the country was forced to seek new areas. This need of bankers and financiers was behind the political policies to expand control and establish an empire. V. Lenin further elaborated this argument and showed that imperialism was a product of monopoly capitalism when surplus capital could not be absorbed by the domestic market and capitalists sought higher profits in colonies or spheres of influence which were politically protected markets.

These arguments have been debated and modified. The 1953 article of Gallagher and Robinson, "The Imperialism of Free Trade" put forward three stages of development. In the first stage of mercantilist imperialism the home country used its political authority to secure economic benefits from colonies. The third stage was the same as identified by Hobson but the second was the imperialism of free trade where the security to trade was of the greatest importance and Great Britain, which best represented this stage, was willing to limit its formal empire. That is why in China and Latin America protectorates and spheres of influence could be established. It was during this period that the greatest expansion of the empire took place.

Joseph Schumpeter and other scholars have focused on factors other than economic to explain the reasons for expansion and imperialism. Carlton Hayes has argued that nations expand because they desire to increase their national prestige. Schumpeter argued that capitalism was a rational economic system and therefore, expansion had nothing to do with capitalism but rather represented pre-capitalist forces. Expansion was supported by a militarist, landowning aristocracy and therefore showed that capitalism was still undeveloped. Schumpeter was of course arguing with the example of Germany in mind.

The case of Japanese expansion has been examined by scholars from different perspectives. The most influential early Marxist work was by O Tanin and E.

Yohan who argued that Japan first expanded her territories after 1894 because of the samurai desire to establish control on the Chinese mainland and fight “white imperialism”. Japan lacked the strength to push a course of independent expansion and therefore, entered into an unequal alliance with Great Britain. Till the Russo-Japanese war Japan was attempting “primitive capitalist accumulation” to increase her economic power and her expansion was not the product of “finance capitalism”. After the Russo-Japanese war Japan became more of a capitalist society but the social basis of her expansionist policies continued to be the alliance of the military and the rising bourgeoisie under the Emperor. This alliance was forged with the Meiji Restoration which was an incomplete bourgeois revolution. The persistence of feudal relations, particularly in agriculture, acted as a constraint on the domestic economy, where the purchasing power was low, forcing industry to seek markets outside. Japanese imperialism was thus primarily concerned with trade and raw materials rather than with the export of capital.

Japanese historians within the Marxist tradition have largely followed this analysis. Scholars like Inoue Kiyoshi have stressed that the Meiji government was “absolutist”, that is no single class was able to dominate the political order and therefore, an alliance of the bureaucracy, the landowners and the rising bourgeoisie exercised control over the masses by using the Emperor System ideology. This structure of domination within the country was also responsible for extending this domination outside. The Russo-Japanese war marked a crucial turning point when Japan entered a modern capitalist stage. From that point Japan was not merely reacting to Western pressure but had emerged as a partner of the other imperialist powers. The Russo-Japanese war was fought by Japan partially in the interests of the Western powers for it opened up Asia to further exploitation. The expansionist policies were supported by the military and enabled it to increase its influence. The business houses or zaibatsu benefited from this but not always. As W.G. Beasley writes that by this argument “Japanese imperialism becomes the illegitimate child of Western imperialism, with international rivalry as midwife.”

Marius Jansen has argued that in the nineteenth-century imperialism was the social norm and not something to be criticized. The Japanese accepted the Darwinist ideas that a constant struggle-for survival was an inevitable process and Japan must strive to expand her borders to ensure her survival. Akira Iriye has identified a number of factors at work behind this. He argues that economic and military compulsions were inextricably linked in the early phase of Japanese imperialism. After World War-I Japanese industry competed with Western firms and economic reasons became important factors in Japan’s expansion. However, the international framework was accepted and it was only in 1929-30, with the disruption in trade and economy; that Japan rejected the idea of co-operating with the Western powers. Japan began to fear that it would be excluded from markets and sources of raw materials and it would have no area for its surplus population. This fear pushed Japan to build a Co-prosperity Sphere which inevitably led her to war.

The Co-prosperity Sphere was studied by F.C. Jones and he argued that its formation was caused as much by imperialist policies as by the desire for Asian solidarity. The military which had seemed to be losing its importance in

formulating policy in the 1920s asserted itself and it was helped by the prevalence of feudal attitudes as well as an institutional framework which allowed the military to function without a check by the Diet. The social turmoil caused by industrialization, particularly in the rural areas was also crucial in generating discontent and a desire for a “Showa restoration”. These desires enabled the young officers and patriotic societies to extend and deepen their influence to push Japan towards expansion and war.

13.3 THE FRAMEWORK OF JAPANESE EXPANSION

The roots of Japan's expansionist policies have been traced by some scholars to the sixteenth century when Hideyoshi tried to conquer Korea but it would be realistic to consider modern Japan's search for wealth and security to appreciate the creation of its formal and informal empire. The process of transformation under Western pressure enabled the Meiji oligarchy to argue for a policy based on “rich country strong army” (fukoku Kyobei). This was the paramount objective and other demands were either suppressed or neglected. In particular, political democracy was seen as a threat to social order and with the objective of containing dissent a highly restrictive parliamentary system was erected. The real pillars of the political order were the military and bureaucracy which functioned under the Emperor and were largely insulated from political pressure. The education system was used to inculcate and spread ideas which would work in random with this institutional structure. Above all loyalty to the nation and Emperor and obedience to the Meiji political structure were stressed. Political patriotic societies to extend and deepen interests and therefore were considered divisive by the militarists and ultra-nationalists.

The threat of Western imperialism had also created and reinforced an “Asian consciousness”. This stream of thought represented the ideas of people from diverse backgrounds but broadly they argued that the only way Japan could defend itself from Western depredation was to unite with Asian countries which were part of a common cultural tradition; This alliance meant that Japan must help to modernize and develop these countries.

13.3.1 The Initial Phase

The initial thrust for Japanese expansion was allied with the People's Rights Movement which was demanding a democratic political structure in Japan. Some of its advocates and supporters had begun to support the demands of Korean nationalists and others- were in favour of the demand to invade Korea. The seikan ron or the debate on whether to invade Korea was motivated by many factors. An important reason advanced for supporting the invasion was that it would give jobs to unemployed samurai who had been deprived of their traditional monopoly over military functions with the universal conscription law. However, equally important was the perception that Japan had the right to help Korea to enter the modern world . Japan would do this as an ally. This position gradually deteriorated to Japan acting as a leader and finally a colonizer. The process by which these pan-Asian ideas were transformed from dreams of Asian solidarity

to the reality of Japanese domination is hotly debated but Japanese scholars would agree that till the 1900s pan-Asian ideas were non-expansionist but subsequently they became an ideology to justify the demands of groups like the military to expand Japan's territorial holdings in the interests of wealth and security

13.3.2 Japan's Formal Empire

The formal Japanese empire included Taiwan, Korea, Sakhalin, the Kwantung Territory and the Pacific Islands. Taiwan was the first colony acquired by the Japanese in 1895 after the Sino-Japanese war. Taiwan provided Japan not only with the experience to manage colonies but was also an important source of sugar and rice. Taiwan was highly profitable and the colony became financially self-sufficient within five years of its annexation. Karafuto, acquired in 1905, after the Russo-Japanese war was populated mostly by Japanese and the native Ainu, with the Koreans forming a small and declining part of the population. The administration was more closely integrated with the Japanese administration. Military rule ended in 1907 and in 1943 it became part of Japan proper.

Korea was the most important colony (gaichi) and was annexed in 1910 by a treaty which promised equal treatment for the Koreans. The Koreans, who had been subject to Japanese pressure and presence, possessed a strong and vibrant cultural tradition. They adamantly resisted Japanese attempts to integrate them into Japan. Thus on the one hand, there were large number of Koreans employed in the civil and police administration and on the other there was a strong movement for independence.

The Kwantung territory on the Liaotung Peninsula was first ceded to Japan in 1895 but because of the Triple Intervention it reverted to China and subsequently it was leased by the Chinese to Russia. After the Russian defeat in 1905 Japan acquired the territory as well as control over the South Manchurian Railway. This was leased territory but, because the Japanese had the right to administer the territory around the South Manchurian Railway as well, the Kwantung army of Japan used this to extend its control into Manchuria and by 1934 the Japanese Governor-General of Kwantung was also appointed as the Ambassador to the Japanese puppet state of Manchukuo.

Japan also acquired control over a large number of tiny islands in Micronesia. The islands had been controlled by Spain and then Germany purchased them. After World War-I they were taken by the Japanese navy. The League of Nations termed them as C-class territories and allowed the Japanese to administer them. Japan withdrew from the League in 1933 but retained control over these islands. The native population was ruled by its chiefs and the Japanese administration functioned over them.

13.3.3 Colonial Administration

The colonial administration differed in detail from colony to colony with the officials in Korea enjoying the highest status. The Governor-General of Korea (sotoku) was either a general or an admiral and till 1919 reported directly to the Emperor and after that to the Prime Minister. All other colonial governors reported to cabinet level colonial officers. After 1919 all governors were civilians. This

was in accordance with the growing importance of democratic ideas in Japan and because of this there was a separation of “civil” and “military” functions. However, Korea continued to be the exception and military officers continued to be appointed as governors there.

In Japan colonial affairs were handled from 1895-1929 by a bureau attached to the Prime Ministers office or to the Home Ministry. In 1929 a Ministry of Colonial Affairs was created so that there could be some uniformity in the administration of the colonies. However, the colonial governors retained considerable powers. When Manchukuo was created in 1934 a special bureau to handle its affairs was also established in the prime minister's office and this bureau also looked after the Kwantung territory.

In November 1942 the Greater East Asia Ministry was established to replace both the Manchurian Bureau and the Ministry of Colonial Affairs. This Ministry looked after the Kwantung Territory, Manchukuo, the Pacific Islands and other occupied territories. The Home Ministry was responsible for Korea, Taiwan and Karafuto. The other ministries were allowed to involve themselves in their respective areas in the colonies as well so that these areas could be more closely integrated with Japan proper.

13.3.4 Economic Relations with the Colonies

Manchuria was not really a colony and Korea till 1910 was also not a colony but Manchurian trade is shown separately from Chinese trade in Japanese records after 1907. Taiwan, Korea and Kwantung-Manchuria between 1910-1914 provided from one-seventh to a quarter of Japan's imports. Manchuria exported soyabeans and millet, Korea rice and Taiwan rice and sugar. In turn they absorbed Japanese cotton textiles and consumer goods. These areas played a key role in providing cheap food for Japan's urban population.

In the field of foreign investment Japan's position reflected the changing character of its economy. The Anglo-Japanese alliance enabled Japan to borrow overseas to invest in railway development in China and Korea. However, till 1914 Japan's economy was not in a position to invest in any large way in China. Even when political participation in bank consortiums in China put it in a position to play a role it could not invest much. Thus by 1914, as a member of the bank consortium it had advanced only 1.8 per cent of the total loans.

The South Manchurian Railway (Mantetsu) is a good example of how the Japanese: government guaranteed investment so that banks could channel funds from abroad to build up the railways. The railways, which formed 55 per cent of Japanese investments in China in 1914, had a turnover of 81 million yea. In the rest of China the financial houses individually carried out investment projects with government backing. Sometimes they collaborated as was the case in 1908 when Mitsui, Mitsubishi and Okura formed an affiliate called the Taiping Company for overseas arms sales. The Hanyehping Coal and Iron Company was also a major area of Japanese investment and Japan was a source of credit and loans in return for which coal and iron was supplied at fixed prices. Hanyehping supplied 60 per cent of the iron ore and pig iron to Yawata, the biggest steel producer in Japan. In other areas Japanese capital played a small role compared

to Western capital and most of it was in commerce and small industry rather than in finance.

In the period from 1914-1930 Japan had greater capital to invest and its lending to the Chinese government increased. Companies such as Mitsui and Okura established large projects and there was an expansion of cotton textile manufacture. Japanese investment was now comparable to that of other Western countries and consequently rivalries also increased. Japan's interests were conditioned by this character of their economic interests as well as by the fact that by 1930 there were 2, 70,000 Japanese residents in China.

Check Your Progress 1

- 1) Write a note on Japan's formal empire.

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- 2) What were the prominent features of colonial administration?

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- 3) Outline Japan's economic relations with the Colonies.

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13.4 IDEOLOGIES OF EXPANSION

Japanese imperialism was inspired, justified, and moulded by ideologies which have been described as "ultra-nationalistic" and "fascist". Common to these ideas was a belief that Japan needed to defend her traditions and culture together with the countries of Asia; in particular, the East Asian countries. These ideas had emerged over the years. Various political societies had at different times propagated such views. For example:

- The supporters of Saigo Takamori (who had led the Satsuma rebellion of 1877) formed the Genyosha (Dark Ocean Society). This society advocated an expansionist policy which was supported by many leaders within the government as well.
- Kokuryukai (Black Dragon Society), formed in 1901 by Uchida Ryohei, was another ultra-nationalist society. It propagated the liberation of Asian countries from European rule under Japanese leadership. Internally it emphasised on strengthening morality and traditions.
- Among the post World War-I societies were Koku Suikai (Japan National Essence Society formed in 1919) and Kokuhonsba (National Foundation Society formed in 1924). One of the main objectives of these societies was to save Japan from socialism. They had many military officers as members. Kita Ikki and Okawa Shumei had formed the Yuzonsba which espoused military expansion abroad and military takeover at home.

Kita Ikki (1883-1937), an early socialist, later became the inspiration for many patriotic army officers to attempt a “Showa restoration” and bring about direct Imperial rule. In 1919 he wrote a book entitled *An Outline Plan for the Reconstruction of Japan*. This book presented plans related to external relations as well as internal policies. Kita argued for Japan to lead Asia against Britain and Russia, who between them dominated a large part of the globe. Japan, after reforming itself, could take the leadership in a federation of China and other Asian countries, including India. Kita Ikki's domestic reforms were based on developing an industrialized Japan but one in which the power of rich capitalists would be controlled. He also advocated a military coup d'état to achieve the true objectives of Meiji Restoration.

There were other expansionists who had a more agrarian vision of Japan and who drew their inspiration from Japan's agrarian past. Both trends were increasingly critical of the corruption of party politics and the economic problems faced particularly in rural Japan. By the beginning of the 1930s there was a prevailing mood against the Diet, the bureaucracy and business leaders and a demand that the system be, overhauled. Just as the Meiji Restoration had given Japan a new direction and a revolutionary programme of transformation, the expansionists felt that now Japan needed a “Showa restoration” to meet the demanding times.

Konoe Fumimaro, who in 1938 proclaimed the New Order and one time Prime Minister had by 1918 become disillusioned with the Western nations and was advocating that Japan seek to change an unequal situation where she was denied equal access. He wrote that Japan would be “forced to destroy the status quo for the sake of self-preservation”. In the army patriotic societies also debated these questions and planned ways to change the situation. The main groups were known as the Imperial Way faction (Kodo ha) and the Control faction (Tosei ha).

The Imperial Way faction was led by Araki Sadao and stressed the importance of the Emperor, cooperation with China, and war against Russia. Cooperation, of course, meant cooperation under Japan's direction. The ‘Imperial Way’ argued within the framework of pan-Asian doctrines. The Control faction, which had

Nagata Tetsuzan and Tojo Hideki and came to dominate after 1936, argued that Japan needed to be mobilized for the coming war. This would mean gearing up the economy and the people and expanded its territories to be able to meet the challenge. Ishiware Kanji played a crucial role in the formulation of its plans and ideas.

Ishiware Kanji argued that Japan must prepare to fight a series of wars against Russia, then Britain and then the United States. Japan would be the champion of Asia. To be able to carry out this role effectively just unity was not enough but Japan must be totally geared for the war. He said that political, economic and social policies should be fully integrated for the defence of Japan and for him the army was the prime mover of national policy.

13.5 COLONIAL POLICY: ASSUMPTIONS AND PREMISES

Japanese colonial policy was grounded in assumptions which had points of similarity as well as differences with European colonial ideas. Japan did not start with a fully articulated view of what approach should be adopted for its colonies. These views, in fact, developed over time. One assumption which they shared with European views was that different people had different capabilities and these were inherent qualities. European powers controlled very different cultural regions and hence such views developed to justify their rule. The Japanese too saw their colonization process as a mission in which they would civilize their neighbours who were not as developed. This national, conservative and paternalist view was widely accepted and propounded by intellectuals and administrators like Nitobe Inazo and Goto Shimpei.

However, Japan's colonial empire extended over people who shared cultural and racial affinities and this was particularly so with Taiwan and Korea. Thus there grew a view that these regions would be assimilated (*doka*) into the home country, Japan. The assimilationist view saw these countries as sharing a common cultural heritage specifically composed of Confucian values. The mythical link between the Japanese people and the Imperial family was also extended to include other people who thus became "imperial peoples". Such ideas were often vague and ambiguous and therefore could be used to justify a range of positions. At their best they promoted policies which sought to integrate the colonized closely to Japan by the extension of laws and institutions. Japanese policy tried to Japanize the people and forced them to learn Japanese and live and dress like Japanese. The liberal face of Japanese colonial policy was represented by Hara Takeshi who as Prime Minister advocated assimilation through education and the spread of civil liberties. He said that most Koreans did not desire independence but wanted equality with the Japanese.

However, in the 1930s, this very gradual assimilation was transformed into a strict policy which sought to regiment the people under Japanese authority. The stress was on the obligations that these people owed to Japan. Even the language reflected this for Japan and its possessions were classed into an "inner territory" and an "outer territory", National identities had little meaning within this classification and Japan asserted its rights as a master race over a subject people.

13.6 JAPAN: EXPANSIONIST POLICY SINCE 1931

We have seen earlier how the militarists took over the government in Japan. Since the beginning of the 1930s and till the end of the Second World War the militarists played a predominant role in the decision-making process of the country. The military was convinced that the “soft” China policy pursued by the government was to endanger Japan’s economic interest in the country. Japan increasingly felt that the Western powers effort was to “contain” Japan’s progress in China and not to co-operate with it. In fact Japan was disillusioned with the United States which adopted the 1924 Exclusion Act and the high tariff policy after, the Great Depression. Britain also opposed Japan’s “special interests” in China. It was clear to the Japanese leaders that more could be gained by consolidating and expanding its position on the mainland than by cooperating with the Western powers.

The environment of discontent at home resulting from both economic and political crisis, it was felt, could be smoothened by offering them expectations of prosperity through foreign expansion. Here we will discuss briefly certain aspects of Japan’s expansionist policies since 1931.

13.6.1 Establishment of Manchukuo

Japan’s economic interests in China particularly in Manchuria were growing and Japan’s Kwantung army stationed here to protect Japanese interests and railroads felt that pursuance of an aggressive policy was essential to obtain a guarantee for Japan’s special position in Manchuria. This view was shared by other sections as well and the difference was one of approach only.

On 18 September 1931, officers of the Kwantung Army in Manchuria overran Southern Manchuria. The pretext for this action was provided by an explosion near Mukden which slightly damaged the Japanese railway. The Kwantung army had been trying to look out for or, even create such an “opportunity” since a long time but were dissuaded by the government in Tokyo. Manchuria was made ‘independent’ of China and a puppet government was installed and Pu Yi the last of China’s former Manchu emperors was made head of the new state now called Manchukuo. The Japanese government was faced with a fait accompli and ultimately the cabinet had to approve the establishment of the puppet government in Manchuria,

13.6.2 Continued Aggression in China

Japan which came under severe criticism for its activities in Manchuria from the world community withdrew from the League of Nations. This act symbolized Japan’s parting of ways from the Western countries.

However, the Western powers did not come to the support of China against Japan’s advancement. Japan after quick victory in Manchuria in 1933 resumed her operations in the northern provinces of China and Jehol was soon added to Manchukuo.

Japan continued with its advances in China on a small scale and in intervals. It also intervened in the politics of the provinces especially those in the north and supported those political movements which might be willing to accept “autonomy” under the patronage of Japan.

The Chinese opposition to Japanese expansion in their country increased and was further strengthened when Jiang Jieshi (Chiang Kaishek) reached an agreement with the communists in 1936 to join hands against Japan.

Japanese military leaders were convinced that to have a total domination of China, a large scale conflict was inevitable. The army was also dominated by men who believed in the Japanese expansionism on the mainland. Besides it had become necessary to ease the political tensions at home which was possible to some extent if the Japanese army made remarkable gains in China which was expected of them by the public.

On 7 July, 1937, fighting broke out between Chinese and Japanese troops at Marco Polo bridge and shortly this incident turned into a major war between the two countries. By August Peking and Tientsin were occupied. Hostilities spread further and Japanese captured Chiang Kai Shek’s capital Nanking, in December 1937. The Japanese army indulged in full scale murder, loot and rape and about 12,000 Chinese civilians were killed.

By 1938, Japan had captured Hankow (after Nanking, Chiang had moved his capital to Hankow) and Canton. After the fall of Hankow Chiang again moved his capital to Chungking. Japan controlled several of the major cities and railways by 1938 but still its political control was not well consolidated. Japanese continued to face tough resistance from the Chinese guerrillas. Economically, maintaining its gains in China and fighting the guerrillas put a great strain on Japan.

Gradually, Japan was caught in the vortex of international events leading it to ultra-nationalism at home, world isolation and war with the United States.

13.6.3 Japan joins the Axis Powers

In 1939 war broke out in Europe. With the fall of France and Netherlands in 1940 Japan was convinced that the Axis powers (Germany and Italy) were sure to win the war. In 1940 Japan entered into a Tripartite Pact with Germany and Italy declaring its opposition to the other Western powers. In 1941 Japan signed a non-aggression pact with the Soviet Union. Japan, now certain of the security of its northern frontiers in China, could freely move southward towards in French, Dutch and English colonies.

The US was highly agitated with Japan’s expansionist policies. In 1940 the Japan-US’ trade treaty was allowed to expire. After the Tripartite Pact was concluded, and Japan moved into South Indo-China in 1941 US, Britain and Holland placed a total embargo on exports to Japan. Japan suffered a severe setback for oil and rubber supplies were to be affected by this step. US had also restricted the sale of strategic goods to Japan whereas Japan’s war industry was heavily dependent on the import of iron and oil.

For the military it was necessary to overcome the barriers placed by the Western powers. Talks were held between the US and Japan in 1941 but there was a deadlock since both the sides were determined not to compromise. The US demanded that Japan withdraw not only from Indo-China but also from China. Japan was determined that the US lift its oil embargo, recognize Japanese hegemony in the Far East and refrain from extending support to Jiang Jieshi (Chiang Kai shek).

Japanese military officers were convinced that ultimately a war with the US was inevitable and that planning in this direction had to be made. It was in anticipation of war that Tojo Hideki was made Premier in October 1941. For Japan war was more preferable than withdrawing from China. It was now a question of not only demonstrating that Japan was a power to reckon with but it was also an economic necessity.

By this time Japan had also drawn up a plan of turning the whole area into a Greater East Asia Co-prosperity sphere, which include South and South East Asia. After joining the Axis powers Japan was in high spirits to carry on its plans.

13.6.4 World War-II

One last effort, however, was made to avoid war. Japan in return for halting its advancement elsewhere proposed that the US withdraw from China and grant extensive economic concessions to Japan. US rejected the proposal and on 1 December 1941 the Japanese imperial conference of civilian and services leaders decided to declare war on the US. On 7 December 1941 Japan made a surprise attack on Pearl Harbour and was victorious. Japan overran the Philippines, and captured Hong Kong, Singapore and Indonesia. Japanese troops landed in Burma and occupied it and were also preparing to take over India. By mid 1942 the region from Rangoon to the mid-Pacific and from Timor to the Mongolian steppe was under Japanese control. It is not possible to give all the details of the war.

The Pacific war lasted till 1945 and Japan suffered untold losses in terms of material, men and money. The US after Pearl Harbour was determined to crush Japan. Soon Japanese victories were turned into defeats.

In January 1943 the allied leaders met at Casablanca and agreed to further strengthen their efforts in the war against Japan. Soon Japan lost several strategic islands in the Gilbert and Marshall islands. The Allies directed two massive commands towards Japan. One captured Saipan in the Marianas in June 1943, and Jima in March 1945. The other captured Philippines in February 1945. From here the two commands were able to act in unison and their target was Okinawa which they won in June 1945.

The Allied forces now had landed on the very footsteps of Japan and were within the bombing range. Since late 1944 Allied forces constantly bombed Japanese cities killing thousands and thousands of civilians and destroying property.

On 26 July 1945 the Potsdam Declaration was issued to Japan calling for its unconditional surrender, to be followed by its military occupation, demilitarization

and loss of territory. On 6 and 9 August atom bombs were dropped at Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Japan accepted defeat and surrendered on 15 August 1945.

Check Your Progress 2

- 1) Explain the various ideologies of expansion.

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- 2) Elaborate on the “assimilationist view” of colonial policy.

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- 3) Write a note on the establishment of Manchukuo.

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13.7 LET US SUM UP

Japanese imperialism arose in a period of Western expansion and rivalry. Japan was faced with the dual task of establishing a basis of equality with the Western nations by dismantling the unequal treaty system and at the same time expanding her control and hegemony. Japanese leaders were aware of the danger that the Western nations posed and they in turn believed that it was imperative to control the resources and markets of the Chinese mainland to ensure Japan's well being. Japanese interest in China brought it into conflict with Britain and the United States but Japan had also developed trade and social links with these two countries. At times the interests of Russia and Japan seemed to be similar but they also conflicted. Japanese policy makers differed at times on the thrust of their policy but initially Japan joined the Anglo-Japanese alliance and the Open Door policy but after 1905 it took measures to carve out an independent sphere of influence in Manchuria. This was justified on grounds of the security of Korea and the annexation of Korea had, in part, been justified by the security needs of Japan. Japan then went on to extend and increase her privileges in China. On the other

hand there were ideologues who argued that China and Japan needed to cooperate to fight the incursions of the West and for this Japan needed the resources and the markets of China.

Japanese imperialism thus was not based on a single motive but comprised at least two elements:

- i) There was the formal empire of colonies from which Japan derived food resources and strategic benefits.
- ii) Japan was a member of an 'international system which gave it treaty rights and privileges in China. These privileges expanded with the growth of the Japanese economy and its political power and these advantages were important for Japan's growth and development-both politically and economically.

With the collapse of trade in the 1929 depression, this order was seriously disrupted and Japan set about to protect her interests. This, it was perceived required not only guarding strategic interests but protecting markets and areas which supplied raw materials and resources. This need to carve out an area led ultimately to the formation of the Greater East Asia Co-prosperity Sphere. In this sphere Japan, Korea, Manchukuo, North China and Taiwan would form the inner industrial belt while south-east Asia and the Pacific islands and the rest of China would serve to supply resources. Japanese imperialism created an area of influence for Japan.

The Japanese because of the element of anti-Westernism were able to utilize and inadvertently help anti-colonial movements in Asia and were responsible, in part, for the Dutch, British and French being driven out of this region. In China, Japanese actions strengthened the hands of the Chinese Communist Party. At the end of the war Taiwan and Manchukuo reverted to China while Korea was divided by the war in 1950. The Japanese "civilizing mission" proved to be short lived and unsuccessful. The legacy of bitterness which still exists in these countries is ample testimony to this fact. Yet it may also be noted that both Taiwan and South Korea which were part of Japan's colonial empire are today successful industrialized countries and Manchuria a centre of heavy industry in China.

13.8 KEY WORDS

Asian Consciousness: The ideology that argued that the only way Japan could defend its country and culture from Western depredation was to unite with Asian countries which formed part of a common cultural tradition.

Bank Consortiums: Associations of several banks.

Co-prosperity Sphere: A term used by Japan to link the economic interests of Asian countries against Western powers. However, this was used by Japan to further its own interests.

Micronesia: Islands in Pacific sea.

Showa Restoration: In 1926 Showa became the Emperor of Japan. The ultra-nationalists and young military officers, in order to get their ideas approved and restored, talked of Showa Restoration.

13.9 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

Check Your Progress 1

- 1) The formal Japanese empire included Taiwan, Korea Sakhalin Kwantung Territory and the Pacific Islands. Expand your answer to include all these territories; See Sub-sec. 13.3.2
- 2) Colonial administration varied from-colony to colony of which Korea enjoyed the highest status. Your answer should also include role of bureau attached to the Home Ministry. See Sub-sec. 13.3.3
- 3) See Sub-sec. 13.3.4

Check Your Progress 2

- 1) Base your answer on Sec. 13.4
- 2) Base your answer on Sec. 13.5
- 3) Consult Sub-sec. 13.6.1



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