

# Chronology for U.S.-Japan conflict

## The road to war, 1904-1941

1904-05 Japan defeats Russia; Tokyo's ambitions in Northeast Asia (sphere of influence in southern Manchuria and annexation of Korea in 1910) stir American fears.

1921-22 Washington conference brings U.S., Japan, and other major powers into agreement on naval limits, status quo in the Pacific, and open door in China.

1928 Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek as leader of China's Nationalist Party establishes new government in Nanjing after a decade of rising nationalist ferment.

1929 beginning of world depression. In response to severe contraction of global trade, Japan creates economic bloc encompassing Japan, Korea, Taiwan, and (after 1931) Manchuria.

1931-32 Japanese conquest of Manchuria and establishment of puppet state of Manchukuo; erosion of civilian control in Tokyo by radical nationalists and young officers. Hoover administration in Washington critical of militarization of Japanese policy, but engages only in moral condemnation.

1933-34 Japan quits the League of Nations over Manchuria and asserts special position in China.

1935 Limits on naval construction set in 1922 terminate; naval arms race intensifies. U.S. Congress passes neutrality acts designed to prevent involvement in foreign wars, reflecting "isolationist" sentiment especially strong in Midwest.

1936 Japan signs anti-Comintern pact with Germany directed against Soviet Union (Nov.) as first step toward Axis alliance.

1937 Outbreak of full-scale Sino-Japanese War (July); Chiang's Nationalists and Mao Zedong's Communists form a united front to resist Japanese aggression. In Dec. Japanese sink U.S. warship on Yangtze River (*Panay* Incident), and Japanese troops commit Nanjing massacre. Chinese Government retreats to interior, ultimately to Chongqing.

1938 Franklin D. Roosevelt administration steps up military procurement and tightens export of aircraft and parts to Japan. Prime Minister Konoé announces Japan's decision to establish a New Order in Asia (Nov.) even as Japanese army gets bogged down in China.

1939 Secretary of State Hull terminates U.S.-Japan trade treaty (July), presaging policy of economic sanctions. Hitler-Stalin non-aggression pact (Aug.) facilitates German decision to attack Poland on 1 Sept. (beginning of World War II in Europe). Soviet armies defeat Japanese forces on Mongolian-Manchukuo border, convincing Tokyo to focus on southward expansion.

1940 Foreign Minister Matsuoka announces the Co-Prosperity Sphere (Aug.), signaling determination to dominate Asia, including Europe's colonies in Southeast Asia. Washington bans export of scrap iron and steel to Japan (Sept.) at the same time Japan formally allies with Germany and Italy. U.S. breaks Japanese secret military/diplomatic code ("Operation Magic").

1941 Japan signs Neutrality Pact with Soviet Union (Apr.). Hull-Nomura negotiate to avert war (Apr.-Nov.). In June Germany invades the Soviet Union; the Grand Alliance of the U.S., Britain, and the USSR takes shape. U.S. Navy helps British convoys across Atlantic and establishes bases in Iceland and Greenland. In July Japanese forces advance into Indochina, prompting U.S. freeze of Japanese assets and block of aviation fuel and oil to Japan.

Hull and Japanese diplomats deadlock on terms to avert war (Sept.-Oct.). Japanese cabinet decides on war (Oct), reaffirmed on 1 Dec.. Japanese forces attack Pearl Harbor (7 Dec.) and overrun the Philippines, Wake Island, and Guam as well as Hong Kong, Malaya, Singapore, Dutch East Indies, and Burma. U.S. Congress declares war against Japan, and Germany declares war against U.S.

### **War, 1942-1945**

(*Italics* indicate points along U.S. drive from the southern Pacific toward Okinawa and Japan; **bold** identify the U.S. line of attack across the central Pacific)

1942 battles of *Java Sea* and *Coral Sea* as attempts at spoiling Japanese advance (Feb. and May); battle of **Midway** (June) marks turning point in naval war; *Guadalcanal* campaign (Aug.) beginning of U.S. offensive in southwestern Pacific directed by Gen. Douglas MacArthur.

1943 *Guadalcanal* taken (Feb.). New island-hopping strategy applied to *Solomon Islands*. **Tarawa** falls (Nov.), opening drive across central Pacific directed by Adm. Chester Nimitz.

1944 **Kwajalein** and **Eniwetok** taken (Feb.); battle of *Philippine Sea* (June); **Saipan** captured (June-July). Japanese Prime Minister Tojo government falls leaving military and civilian leaders divided over response to looming defeat. Taking of *Peleliu* (Sept.). *Leyte* landing initiates Philippines campaign (Oct.); first kamikaze attacks. Steady bombing of Japan begins from U.S. bases in the Pacific directed by Gen. Curtis LeMay (Nov.).

1945 U.S. landing on *Luzon* (Jan.); battle for *Manila* and **Iwo Jima** (Feb.-Mar.); battle for Okinawa (Apr.-June); FDR's death in Apr. puts new president Harry S. Truman in charge of concluding the war.

Truman learns of top-secret Manhattan project's successful atomic test at Alamogordo, New Mexico (21 July) while at meeting of the Allies in Potsdam (outside Berlin). Potsdam proclamation publicly reaffirms unconditional surrender while implying that Japan's imperial system might continue into the postwar period.

U.S. atomic bombing of Hiroshima with some 100,000 immediate deaths (6 Aug.). Soviet declaration of war against Japan (8 Aug.) Atomic bombing of Nagasaki killing 60-70,000. (9 Aug.). Japanese government offers to surrender providing emperor's prerogatives are preserved (10 Aug.). After Emperor's formal intervention, Tokyo announces surrenders on the basis of the Allies' implicit recognition of the emperor's special position (14 Aug.).

Following official surrender ceremony in Tokyo Bay (2 Sept.), U.S. military occupation and remaking of Japan begins under the direction of MacArthur with Emperor subject to MacArthur's orders.