

Japanese Industrialization and Imperialism During the Meiji Restoration

Introductory Question: What are the 2 main reasons nations become imperialistic?

- 1.
- 2.

Why did Japan industrialize during the Meiji Period? How did industrialization affect Japan? Explain the social, political, and economic impacts of industrialization on Japan during the Meiji Restoration.

The Tokugawa Shogunate was the government that rule Japan from 1600 to 1868.

Tokugawa Laws of Japan in 1634

- Japanese ships shall not be sent abroad.
- No Japanese shall be sent abroad. Anyone breaking this law shall suffer the penalty of death...
- The arrival of foreign ships must be reported to Edo (Tokyo) and a watch kept over them.
- The samurai shall not buy goods on board foreign ships.

Source: January 2002 Global History and Geography Regents Exam.

1. Based on the Tokugawa Laws of Japan in 1634 what was the Tokugawa Shogunate's point of view concerning people outside of Japan?

2. Review: Explain the historical context for the issuing of the Tokugawa Laws of Japan in 1634.

3. What effects do you think the Tokugawa Shogunate's policies had on Japan?

Why did Japan end its isolation? Why did Japan industrialize during the Meiji Period?

Directions: Read the text below and answer the questions that follow.

The Tokugawa Shogunate (1603-1867) isolated the island nation of Japan from the rest of the world for more than 200 years. During this period, the emperors ruled in name only. The real political power was in the hands of the shoguns all of whom were from the Tokugawa family. The Tokugawa maintained a feudal system in Japan that gave them and wealthy landowners called daimyo power and control. After negative experiences with Europeans in the 1600s, the shoguns were extremely resistant to trade because they viewed outsiders as a threat to his power.



Landing of Commodore Perry, officers & men of the squadron, to meet the Imperial commissioners at Yoku-Hama July 14th 1853. Lithograph by Sarony & Co., 1855, after W. Heine.

Japan's isolation came to an end in 1853 when **Commodore Matthew Perry** of the United States Navy, commanding two steamships and two sailing vessels, sailed into Tokyo harbor. He sought to force Japan to end their isolation and open their ports to trade with U.S merchant ships. At the time, many industrialized nations in Europe and the United States were seeking to open new markets where they could sell their manufactured goods, as well as new countries to supply raw materials for industry. The Japanese, because of their years of isolation, had no navy with which to defend themselves, so they agreed to the demands of the United States. In 1854, the Treaty of Kanagawa was signed which permitted trade and opened Japanese ports to merchant ships.

Commodore Matthew Perry's actions showed that Japan's ruling Shogunate was weak and unable to defend the nation against a threat from the Western powers. Convinced that modernization depended on abolishing [getting rid of] the Shogunate and the feudal order, a group of middle-ranking samurai overthrew the military government of the Shogun in 1868 and set to modernize and industrialize. The period of industrialization in Japan starting with the fall of the Tokugawa Shogunate is known as the **Meiji Restoration (1868-1912)**.

- 1. Before 1867, what was the political structure of Japan like? Who had the power?**
- 2. Why did the Tokugawa government distrust foreigners?**
- 3. Why did Commodore Matthew Perry enter the Tokyo harbor with military ships?**
- 4. What were the effects of Commodore Matthew Perry's demands?**

Why did Japan industrialize during the Meiji Period? How did industrialization affect Japan? The Meiji Restoration (1868-1912): Japan Industrializes and Modernizes



A sketched portrait of the Emperor Meiji, 1888.

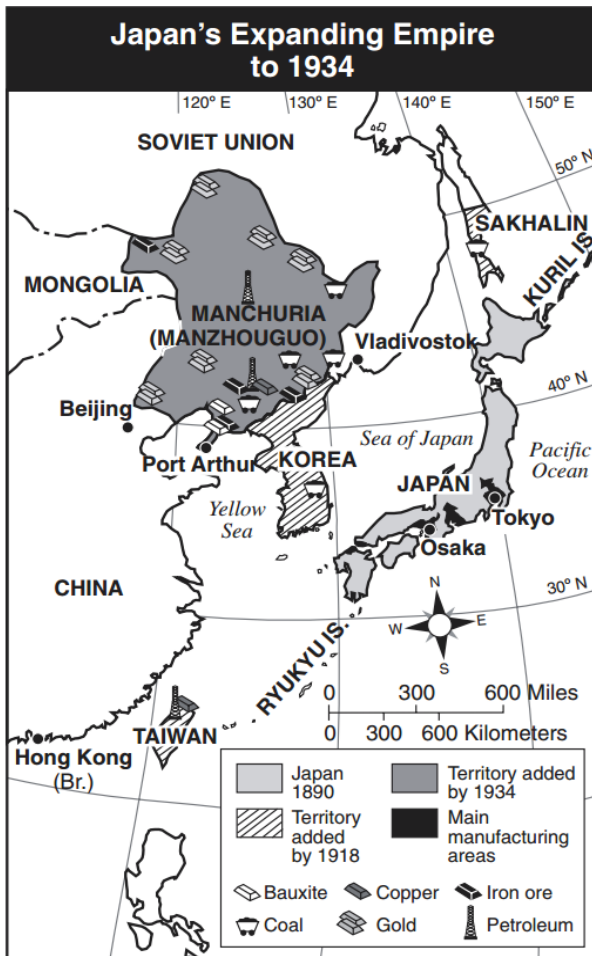
The arrival of warships from the United States and European nations, their advanced and formidable technology, and their ability to force the Japanese to agree to trade terms that were unfavorable for Japan sparked a period of rapid industrialization and modernization called the Meiji Restoration. This reaction was called the Meiji Restoration because *Meiji* (meaning “enlightened rule”) was the name taken by the emperor, and during this period he was “restored” as the leader of the nation, though like in monarchs of England or France at the time, he had very little real power. Under the slogan of “National Wealth and Military Strength,” the Meiji government adopted a number of ideas from European countries and the United States relating to government, and technologies to bolster industry, communication, and transportation that greatly impacted Japanese and global history.

Japanese Geography and the Problem with Industrialization

During the **Meiji Restoration** (1868-1890), the Japanese studied the political, economic, and social institutions of the Western powers and selectively adopted certain institutions to meet their needs. For example, they modeled their constitution and government after Western European ones, but gave their emperor more power than European kings had in limited monarchies. They also elevated the status of merchants, a class that had been looked down upon in Japanese society but was respected in the West. A national military and universal conscription were established, and compulsory public education was introduced both to teach the skills needed for the new nation and to teach values of citizenship in all Japanese.

Most importantly, the Japanese industrialized during the Meiji Restoration and experienced many of the same effects that England had earlier in the century. Cities grew as more Japanese moved from farming into jobs in factories and offices. In the countryside larger landlords came to own more and more land, and the number of poor tenants increased.

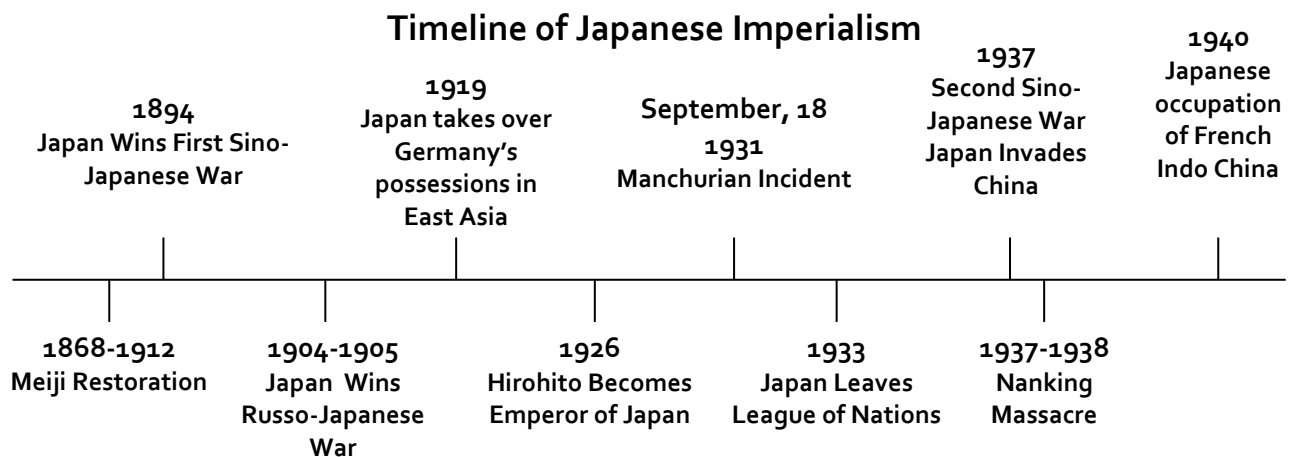
Unlike England, who had an abundance of coal and other natural resources necessary for industrialization, Japan had very few of these raw materials. Instead, the Japanese traded for raw materials to fuel their factories and make their products. In the 1920s, for example, the Japanese traded goods like steel and silk stockings, which were very popular in the United States, for raw materials. The strategy of trading for natural resources worked well for Japan until the Great Depression hit the world in 1929. [You will learn more about the Great Depression in a later lesson.] As a result of the Great Depression, foreign governments and companies had little money to spend on Japanese goods.



Source: Elisabeth Gaynor Ellis and Anthony Esler, *World History Connections to Today: The Modern Era*, Prentice-Hall (adapted from the NYS Global History and Geography Regents Exam, January 2003).

1. In terms of access to natural resources, how did Japan differ from England?	2. How did Japan acquire the natural resources needed for industrialization before the Great Depression?	3. What was the effect of the Great Depression on Japan's ability to trade for raw materials?

Imperial Japan



To get the raw materials they needed, the Japanese decided to do what European had started earlier in the century: imperialize. First, the Japanese, with their new industrial strength and modern weapons, renegotiated the unequal treaties they made with Western nations like the United States when Commodore Matthew Perry forced them to open up to trade. Then, Japan fought a war against China in 1894-95 over the control of Korea and gained Taiwan, Japan's first colony. In 1902, Japan signed an alliance with Great Britain, which signified a dramatic increase in international status, and in 1904-5, Japan won a war against Russia, one of the major Western powers. In the process Japan expanded its empire, annexing Korea in 1910. Japan was allied with the United States and Britain in World War I, and expected territorial gains at the Versailles peace conference in 1919. Instead Japan met with strong opposition from the United States, and again learned the lesson that the West regarded imperialism very differently if it was the imperialism of an Asian nation rather than a European power.

In the 1900s, before the Great Depression, how did Japan acquire raw materials for industrialization?

Which countries/regions did Japan conquer between 1894 and 1940?

Summarize: Why did Japan become an imperial nation in the 20th century?