

The Invasion of China, 1931

- European imperialism, particularly by the British, had destabilized the Chinese Empire during the 19th and 20th centuries (1800-1900s). Much of the empire had been divided up into European “spheres of influence” which undermined the Emperor of China’s government.
- The Emperor of China was deposed in 1911 as the country descended into a period of Civil War. There were many different groups vying for power, including individual warlords, but by the late 1920s the two principal factions were:

The Communist Party headed by
Mao Zedong
&

The Kuomintang headed by Chiang Kai-shek



The Situation in The Far East by Tse Tsan-tai, ca. 1900.



Chiang Kai-shek



Mao Zedong



Pu Yi as Emperor of Manchukuo

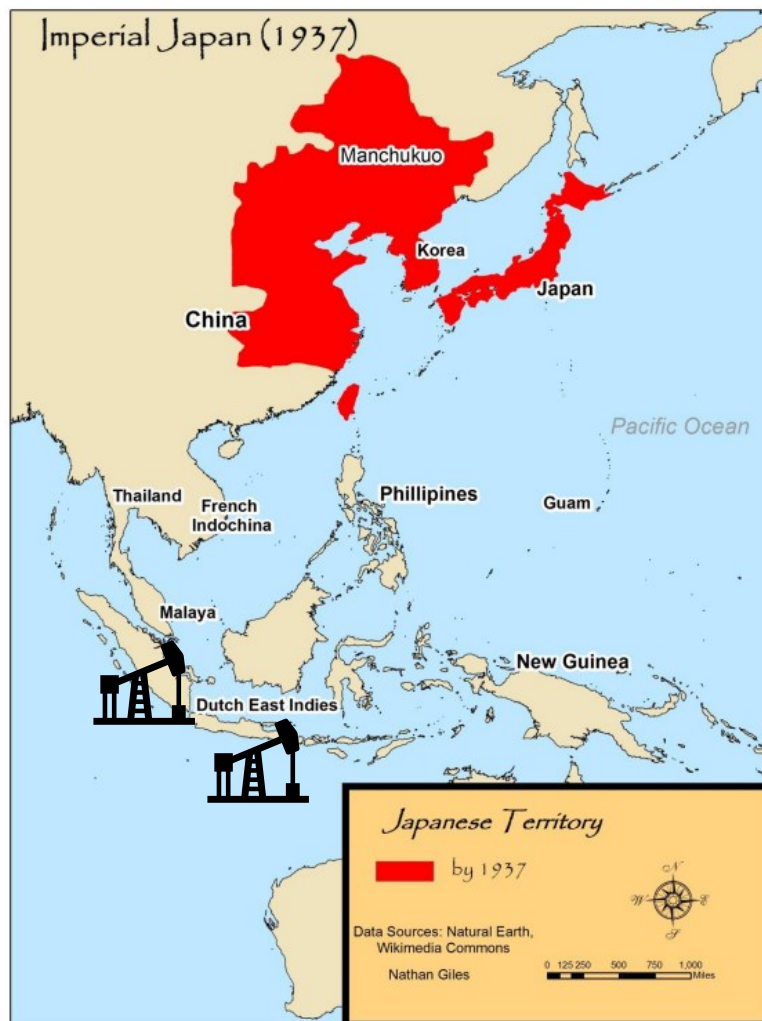
- Capitalizing on China's internal strife, the Japanese Empire invaded Manchuria in 1931, conquering the province and installing the former Emperor of China, Pu Yi, as a puppet (Japanese-controlled) Emperor of Manchukuo (the name given to the Japanese-controlled state).
- Anti-Comintern Pact, agreement concluded first between Germany and Japan (Nov. 25, 1936) and then between Italy, Germany, and Japan (Nov. 6, 1937) is focussed on the fight against communism but was really directed at the Soviet Union. This agreement will become the foundation of the 1940 Tripartite Pact uniting Germany, Italy, and Japan against the allied powers.
- Following the establishment of Manchukuo, the Japanese invaded China on July 7th, 1937, beginning a brutal campaign marked by war crimes. Japanese troops poured into China, attempting to occupy its western provinces and create a Japanese-controlled state like Manchukuo.
 - In December 1937 the Japanese captured the Kuomintang capital, Nanjing (aka Nanking). Filled with Kuomintang refugees from the rest of the country, hundreds of thousands of Chinese people were slaughtered by the Japanese over six-weeks in what is now called "The Rape of Nanking."
- By 1939, when war erupts in Europe, China had already been fighting the Japanese for eight years and endured over 2 million casualties, as well as famine and disease.
- While Japan declared China as "conquered," the reality was much different. The Kuomintang and Communists largely suspended their hostilities so that they could focus on the Japanese threat – Japan was never able to fully subdue the vast country, although many atrocities were committed in their effort to.



A problem for the Japanese Empire

- One of the main goals of the Japanese Government was the establishment of **The Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere** (aka A Japanese Empire in the Pacific) that would replace European empires in the region.
- There was a major problem in their ability to achieve this: Oil.
 - The Japanese military had carefully studied the lessons of the First world War, in which oil and the internal combustion engine had proved of decisive importance. The Japanese military machine was almost entirely dependent upon imported oil from the United States, which supplied about 80 percent of Japan's supplies in those days.¹ **Why is this a problem?**

Where to go?



¹ Yergin, D. (1991, December 1). *Blood and oil: Why Japan attacked Pearl Harbor*. The Washington Post. Retrieved November 8, 2022, from <https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/opinions/1991/12/01/blood-and-oil-why-japan-attacked-pearl/1238a2e3-6055-4d73-817d-baf67d3a9db8/>

