

Japan at War and Peace, 1930-1949: Records of the U.S. State Department Classified Files



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Japan emerged from the 19th Century as the first Asian industrialized nation. Domestic commercial activities and foreign trade expanded dramatically and modernized during the Meiji and Showa eras. The concept of a market economy was embraced and Japan adopted Western forms of free enterprise capitalism. The private sector-- in a nation blessed with an abundance of aggressive entrepreneurs-- welcomed such change. Economic reforms included a unified modern currency based on the yen, banking, commercial and tax laws, stock exchanges, and a communications network.

During the 1920s and early 1930s, Japan progressed toward a democratic system of government. However, parliamentary government was not rooted deeply enough to withstand the economic and political pressures of the 1930s, during which military leaders became increasingly influential.

In the late 1920s, industry outstripped agriculture, and in the 1930s industry, moderately affected by the Great Depression plaguing the rest of the industrialized world, continued to grow. Using the strong Japanese economy to support their imperialistic designs, ultranationalist military officers succeeded in stifling the democratic movement and took control of the government in the name of the emperor. With their power unchecked, the militarist government led the nation into a series of military conflicts that culminated in the almost total destruction of the nation during World War II.

World War II destroyed nearly half of Japan's industry. Japan's economy was completely disrupted, and the country was forced to rely on United States assistance and imports of essential food and raw material. Throughout the Occupation period, the country began the process of rebuilding its economy, industry, political base, and society.

There is essential and unique documentation on a wide variety of topics relating to Japanese internal affairs:

- National preparedness and mobilization
- Bolshevism and radicalism
- Militarism
- Sino-Japanese war and the home front
- International Depression
- Economic markets in China and Southeast Asia
- Social and political control
- Literature and the Arts vs. Militarism
- Labor development and unrest
- Iron and steel industrial expansion
- Rise of the Zaibatsu
- Emigration
- Political relations with Manchukuo
- Gold embargo against Japan
- Oil prospecting in Sakhalin
- Prince Konoe and the War in China
- Japanese military doctrine and the Bushido
- Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere
- Trade and tariffs
- Affects of nuclear bombing of Hiroshima
- Establishment of Occupation Government
- SCAP and shadow Japanese government
- International loans and trade credits

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