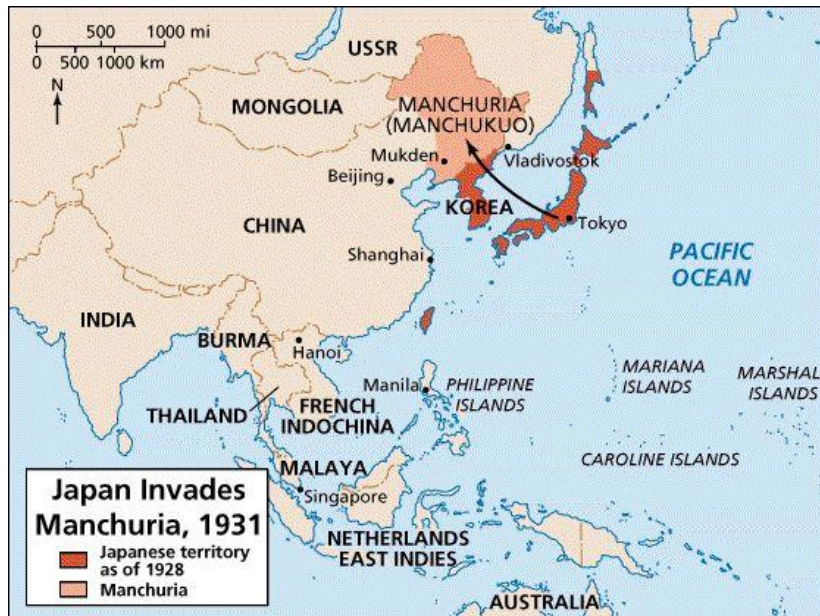


Forum: Historical Joint Crisis Committee

Issue: The Manchuria Crisis of 1931

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Introduction:

The Manchuria Crisis of the early 1930s marked a significant turning point in international relations and balance of power in the lead-up to World War II.

In September 1931, following the **Mukden Incident**, the Japanese Army launched a retaliatory invasion into Manchuria; whilst the Japanese **Kwantung Army** claimed Chinese rebels to be responsible for the explosion, the Chinese refuted that claim. As of the crisis start date, there isn't any evidence to suggest who is responsible for the explosion.

In response to the invasion, China submitted a formal request for assistance from the League of Nations for intervention and condemnation of Japan's actions. Although the League of Nations launched an investigation (the Lytton Commission) into the Mukden Incident and subsequent invasion, no state came to China's military aid and within a few months Japan had consolidated power in the region. As of the crisis start date, the Lytton Commission hasn't delivered a verdict.

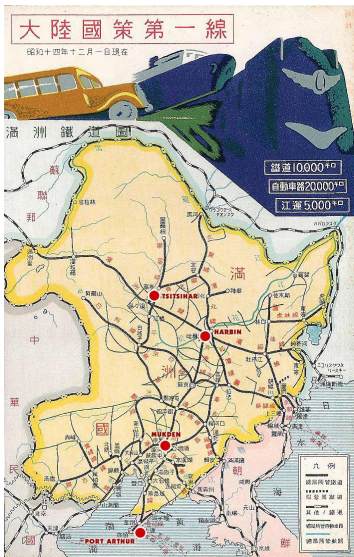
The international response to the invasion was largely negative. The US heavily criticised the invasion and later issued the **Stimson Doctrine**. The UK adopted a similar stance to the US but neither took any decisive action. The USSR had a more complex response. Immediately following the Mukden Incident the Soviets stressed on solving the issue diplomatically, however, remained weary of Japan's expansionist rhetoric.

The **crisis will begin** on the **16th of February 1932** following the Japanese declaration of the state of Manchukuo. As part of HJCC procedure, ministers should not consult or refer to any information past this date.

Definition of Key Terms:

1. **Invasion:** Defined by the oxford dictionary as 'an unwelcoming intrusion into another's domain'. In this scenario it pertains to the invasion of Manchuria by the Japanese Army
2. **League of Nations:** First worldwide intergovernmental organisation whose principal goal was to maintain world peace.
3. **Mukden Incident:** An explosion on the Japanese controlled Southern Manchuria Railway near the city of Mukden that took place on the 18th of September 1931.
4. **Kwantung Army:** A branch of the Japanese military responsible for the protection of the Japanese owned South Manchuria Railway.
5. **Stimson Doctrine:** An American stance that stated that the US would not recognise agreements between the Japanese and Chinese that inhibited free commercial business in the region

Background Information



South Manchuria Railway: 1898 onwards

In 1898, the Chinese were forced to lease the Liaodong peninsula in southern Manchuria to the Russians. In the same year, the Russians began construction on the South Manchuria Railway. Following the Russo-Japanese War which ended in a Russian defeat in 1905, the Russians handed control of the Liaodong peninsula to the Japanese. The South Manchuria Railway would then aid Japan's exploitation of Manchuria's natural resources such as coal and iron. This made the railway of key strategic importance for whoever controlled it. It would also become the site of Huanggtun and Mukden incidents.

1911 Xinhai Revolution: 1911 - 1912

The 1911 revolution was an uprising that ended imperial rule in China. Anti-imperial sentiment grew throughout the 19th century as China suffered a series of humiliating defeats from the Opium Wars to the Sino-Japanese War. This eventually resulted in the revolution. It began on October 10th 1911 and lasted just over 4 months until the 12th of February 1912. This ended the rule of the Qing dynasty. The Republic of China was then established and in 1913, the US formalised diplomatic relations with it. The UK, Japan and Russia soon followed suit. However, the new government struggled to consolidate power in all parts of the country. This allowed warlords to thrive in certain areas, including Manchuria. Thus began the Warlord Era in China, where most regional power belonged to former military cliques.



Huanggutun Incident: 1928

The Huanggutun Incident in June 1928 was the assassination of Zhang Zuolin by the Japanese. Zhang Zuolin was the Chinese warlord who ruled over the region of Manchuria. Zhang acted as an ally to Japan in the region for many years, helping Japan further their interests in the region in exchange for military aid. When Zhang began talks about trade with both the US and UK, Japan became weary. Hence, in hope of establishing a pro-Japanese leader in Manchuria, Colonel Komoto of the Kwantung army orchestrated the bombing that would kill Zhang Zuolin. However, this plan didn't go as Komoto wished since the leadership of the Japanese military were unaware of what was going on and couldn't capitalise on the opportunity. The international reaction to this incident was heavily critical of Japan and even Tokyo refused to speak in support of the assault.

The Great Depression: 1929 onwards

In October 1929 the Wall Street market crashed, leading to what is now known as the Great Depression. It made governments less willing to engage in distant conflicts and hence contributed to the lack of a foreign military response to the Mukden Incident and subsequent invasion. This period of economic downturn will continue through the current crisis date (16 February 1932) and play a significant role in determining the internal and external policies of all nations with an interest in this conflict.

Current Situation

Mukden Incident: 1931



On September 18th 1931, an explosion took place on the Japanese owned South Manchuria Railway. The Kwantung Army **alleged** that Chinese nationalists in the area were responsible for the attack and in response moved to occupy the nearby city of Mukden. The Chinese unequivocally denied these allegations, yet the Japanese decided to respond immediately. The following day, the Kwantung Army began an artillery attack on a Chinese garrison. As the Japanese began to launch an invasion the

Chinese continued to deny the allegations and claimed that this invasion was unprovoked. As of the crisis start date, it is unclear who is responsible for the explosion.

Invasion of Manchuria: 1931 - 1932



3 days after the Mukden incident, Japanese reinforcements arrived from Korea and the Japanese began an offensive in northern Manchuria. The offensive was successful and met with little resistance as the Chinese government ordered a policy of “nonresistance and

withdrawal,” in order to better consolidate control over the rest of the country. In around 3 months, the Kwantung Army occupied the majority of Manchuria. Soon after he was appointed in December, Prime Minister Tsuyoshi officially sanctioned the actions of the Kwantung Army. It is estimated that there were around 500 Chinese and 2 Japanese casualties during the invasion.

Establishment of Manchukuo: 1932



On the 16th of February 1932, Japan declared the establishment of an **independent state** in the Manchuria region. Known officially as the State of Manchuria, Manchukuo is being led by the former emperor of China, Puyi, of the Qing dynasty. Manchukuo currently operates as a Japanese client-state.

Major Parties Involved and Their Views

Japan

Since the start of the Meiji period, Japan consistently sought equality with the West. In the 1890s, Japan encountered its first conflict with China. Back then, Korea was heavily under Chinese control and had sought Chinese aid to suppress a local rebellion. China turned to Japan for help, and the intervention succeeded. However, tensions escalated when Japan refused to withdraw, leading to the outbreak of the Sino-Japanese War in 1894. Japan demonstrated superiority in naval and land power, resulting in a favorable treaty. This treaty granted Korea independence and required China to cede several islands to Japan. Additionally, in February 1904, Tsar Nicholas II of Russia invaded Japan, believing it would be an easy battle, thus initiating the Russo-Japanese War. The war continued until September 1905, with Japan emerging as the clear victor. This victory provided a significant propaganda boost and bolstered confidence in the island nation to tackle larger challenges. Driven by a desire for access to the abundant regional resources, Japan sought to expand its power. The turning point came in 1931 with the Mukden Incident, where Japan alleged that Chinese forces had blown up a section of a railway. This incident presented Japan with an opportunity to exploit the favorable situation and gain access to the oil, gold, and minerals abundant in Manchuria.

China

China seeks recognition and protection as a historically disadvantaged nation. Its troubled 19th-century history began with economic decline due to the Opium Wars. A war with France and loss of French Indo-China followed. In 1894, the Sino-Japanese War further weakened China, leading to the Treaty of Shimonoseki and significant land losses. Around the 20th century, Sun Yat-Sen created the Revolutionary Alliance, which became the Kuomintang. By 1911, the Qing dynasty fell, and China became the Republic of China. Sun briefly served as president before stepping down. The new Republic thrived until a mysterious explosion on the Manchurian Railway in 1930, triggering confusion and Japanese allegations of Chinese involvement.

Soviet Union

The Soviet Union wants recognition and wants to finally show off the might of their new communist headswent through a high amount of trouble at the turn of the 20th Century. At first, when it was still the Russian empire, it went through a series of revolutions as well as an embarrassing loss with the Japanese in 1905. Through world war 1 it suffered not only terrible losses but even a blow to its reputation due to the mishandling by Tsar Nicolas II. Furthermore, when the Bolsheviks took over the country through the revolution, it sparked a civil war. The Soviets became extremely suspicious of both the US and UK due to their stance as the opposition during the civil war with those tensions being unable to subside throughout the 20s. By the time the Mukden incident occurred the USSR also wanted to understand what occurred but they also had an interest in a new communist party led by revolutionaries in China. The USSR is against the current Chinese government and is for the communist revolutionaries within. They have a neutral stance but has plans to choose a side in order to gain as much resources and political power as possible.

United States

The United States, a key player in World War I, aimed to surpass the UK as a global superpower. By the early 20th century, it was one of the most economically developed nations globally. Its transformation from an agricultural to an industrial economy during the 19th century made it a leader in processed goods. In the 1910s, the U.S. strengthened its economic position, notably with Henry Ford's assembly line in 1913, which boosted arms production during World War I. The U.S. and its allies defeated Germany in the war and benefited from the Treaty of Versailles. It also garnered goodwill by establishing the League of Nations and aiding Germany through the Dawes and Young plans. The Wall Street Crash and the Great Depression dealt a severe blow, causing job losses and economic hardship. By 1930, the U.S. began to recover but maintained an isolationist policy for prosperity. However, when news of the Mukden incident arrived, the U.S. was uncertain about its response. It sought to launch an investigation to identify the true culprit but was cautious due to its fragile economic condition. The US sides with China in this issue

United Kingdom

The UK remained one of the superpowers in the early 20th century and wanted to remain at that stature. It remained uninvolved with global politics apart from during world war 1 where it won alongside the allies. It was not very involved in the different steps the US took to ensure peace in the West but it was pivotal in the Locarno Treaties and the League of Nations council. In 1929 it was heavily affected by the great depression as it was a major

trading partner which meant the 1930s was a time of rebuilding. However, it was a surprise to them when they heard what occurred in Manchuria and alongside the US wanted to know who was responsible. The United Kingdom is currently neutral, seeking for peace, but is strong Allie's with the US.

UN Involvement, Relevant Resolutions, Treaties and Events

The United Nations did not exist during the Manchurian Crisis as it was only established after World War II in 1945. However, the League of Nations, which was handling the Manchuria Crisis served as a precursor to the challenges faced by the United Nations in maintaining peace and security in years to come.

Relevant Resolutions

- Stimson Doctrine (1932): U.S. Secretary of State Henry Stimson articulated the Stimson Doctrine in response to the Manchuria Crisis. It stated that the United States would not recognize any territorial changes resulting from Japan's invasion of Manchuria. This doctrine was more of a diplomatic statement rather than a binding international agreement.
- Shanghai Communique (1932): Following the escalation of hostilities in Shanghai in 1932, an agreement was reached between Japan and China on May 5, 1932. The Shanghai Communique led to the establishment of a demilitarised zone in Shanghai and the withdrawal of some Japanese forces. However, the agreement did not address the broader issues of the Manchuria Crisis.

Treaties and Events

- Treaty of Portsmouth (1905): The Treaty of Portsmouth was signed between Japan and Russia at the end of the Russo-Japanese War (1904-1905). The treaty granted Japan territorial control over southern Manchuria, including the Liaodong Peninsula and the South Manchurian Railway (owned by Russia), which established Japan's foothold in the region.
- South Manchurian Railway Incident (September 18, 1931): On this date, a section of the Japanese-controlled South Manchurian Railway was intentionally damaged, and

the Japanese Kwantung Army blamed Chinese dissidents for the incident. Using this as a pretext, the Japanese military launched a full-scale invasion of Manchuria.

- Mukden Incident (September 18, 1931): Also known as the Manchurian Incident, the Mukden Incident was a staged event by the Japanese Kwantung Army in which they bombed a portion of the South Manchurian Railway near Mukden (now Shenyang). Japan used this as a justification for their invasion of Manchuria, claiming that they were protecting their interests in the region.

Possible Solutions

1. Diplomatic talks: Reaching a peaceful resolution to the problem may have been achieved by diplomatic talks between the parties involved, mainly China and Japan with assistance from the rest of the nations combined. Ministers can utilise meetings to discuss formal plans to try and resolve the issue such as by dividing resources between the 2 nations as that would mean both parties get what they want.
2. International mediation: Through the use of external parties such as the League of nations, it is possible for the situation to solve itself. Although not as successful as diplomatic talks, international mediation may allow for more civilised and fruitful talks as it will be bound by decorum and rules. The League of Nations, which would be the collection of delegates in the committee, will try and settle the dispute through a series of caucuses, speeches, and planned out meetings, leading to China and Japan having more productive and discussions.
3. Economic penalties: Although this brings about conflict it cannot be left out as a solution. Economic penalties such as tariffs, embargoes and quotas are quite useful but cabinets should be mindful about how it can spark discontent among others and lead to an all out war. This may be placing banning the

trade of oil with Japan, or the US imposes an embargo on all Japanese products

4. Military involvement: Arguably a last resort, military intervention can be a solution in the case of a standstill. Although the chair would prefer to refrain from these means, military involvement, strategically planned involvement that is, can definitely work. This may include Japan taking over further territory within China,

Bibliography

Useful Links

[Mukden Incident Summary Britannica](#)

Important sources/links:	Criteria: <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Make sure they're at the appropriate level for all delegates- Make sure they're relevant to the issue
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