Notes: Pacific War

Questions/Main ideas:

**Beyond Pearl Harbour**

On the morning of December 7th, 1941, the Japanese struck across a 10,000 km arc from Hawaii to Singapore and Manila. All at the same time, they attacked Pearl Harbor, Hong Kong, Rangoon, Manila, and Midway. It was one of the single most successful pre-emptive attacks in history. This was the beginning of a 6 month series of victories that threw the colonial powers out of Asia. While Japan was attacking Hawaii Japanese forces under the leadership of General Yamashita’s were landing in Malaya where the were meant to cut off the Burma Road that wound over the Himalayas to Chungking, and was being used to supply Jiang and his supporters. Hong Kong was attacked and a contingent of Canadian , Indian and Scottish troops held out in the face of overwhelming odds for two weeks before the invaders cut off the island’s water supplies. General Saki responded to his frustration over the delay by unleashing an orgy of pillage and murder that would become routine for Japan’s armies in cities they captured all over Asia. Supporters of Jiang Jieshi faced instant execution

The Japanese also rounded up British and American gunboats on China’s rivers while their air force bombed Guam, (Guam fell on Dec,10) Wake Island, (fell on Dec. 23) and Midway. In the Philippines at Clark Field air base. There General Brereton watched as Japanese airplanes destroyed the fleet of B-17 bombers. General Mac Arthur had refuse to put the B-17s in the air until he was certain war had been declared, this destroyed the planed American air raid on Formosa. The loss of Clark Field air base leaves the Philippines without air defence. Before the war in the Pacific was over the Japanese would have landed troops in Alaska, Tried to set fire to Canada’s northern forests occupied all of Southeast Asia except Thailand and threatened India and Australia with invasion

**Victorious Japan: Japanese Strategy**

The war’s origins were in the struggle between Japan, China, and Russia, over the mineral rich regions of Korea and Manchuria.

After 1941, decisive battles were fought between the Americans, British, and Japanese, however the war only ended with the dropping of the atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945.

When the Japanese invaded China in 1937 Jiang Jieshi withdrew his Nationalist forces up the Yangtze River to Chungking, where he continued to receive support from his British Soviet and American Allies.

It was in an effort to cut off this aid that Japan decided to expand its war effort. When the USSR was able to drive back Japanese land and air attacks the Japanese adopted a naval strategy that would give them control of Southeast Asia. The main battle plan called for a simultaneous attack against all foreign colonial possessions in Asia. the primary thrust was at the mineral wealth of Malaya, the Philippines and the Dutch East Indies.

**Japan’s Plan To Dominate Southeast Asia**

After driving out the imperial powers in Asia the Japanese planned to fortify an arc of islands stretching out into the Pacific toward North America as an outer defence perimeter. The idea was that any attempt to break through the island chain would result in such heavy casualties that the aggressor would be force to withdraw. As always the major objective was to gain recognition of Japan’s right to Manchuria. The Japanese plan depended upon quickly forcing the Allies to negotiate.

Prime Minister Tojo said it was like a blind man jumping from the heights of a temple into a dark ravine below “Sometimes it has to be done” (P.M. Tojo)

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Questions/Main ideas:

**Beyond Pearl Harbour Continued**

The day after the attack on Pearl Harbour President Roosevelt (USA) announced a massive armaments program. The US plan was to out-build it’s enemies

Faced with a two front war the US establishes a “Europe First” strategy, on the belief that Germany with it’s industrial capacity represents a bigger threat than Japan. This allowed the Japanese to take the Dutch East Indies in Jan. of 1942, and begin plans for the invasion of Australia. The Japanese also began to construct air bases on Florida Island and Guadalcanal in the Solomons

The decision by the Japanese to expand the war was controversial. The army would not release soldiers from Mainland China or from along the frontier with the USSR. Although the Soviet and Chinese fronts were relatively quiet there was no guarantee that they would stay that way. The generals argued that further expansion was unnecessary and impractical. The Navy however disagreed and wanted to maintain the momentum of Japanese expansion. The admirals were convinced that the Americans and British could be forced to negotiate if continuous pressure was applied.

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Questions/Main ideas:

**The Doolittle Raid**

The Doolittle Raid marks a decisive turn in the war. This was the result of General Doolittle’s scheme to fly a small # of bombers off an aircraft carrier and attack Tokyo.

His fifteen B-25 bombers flew over Tokyo (the Japanese capital) one noon hour.

As sirens wailed American bombs caused shock and panic. The bombers overshot Japan and made for Chinese air bases on the mainland (one plan ended up in Vladivostok where the crew was interned for the rest of the war)

Not much damage was done. Fewer than 50 people were killed, however the raid set off a chain reaction.

Fighter planes pursued the bombers and the Japanese home fleet sailed off to find the American aircraft carriers, and saturated the air-waves with radio signals

The Americans were able to break the Japanese codes (part 2) by using these signals and for the rest of the war the Allied commanders in Asia would know about the plans of the Japanese.

On the Chinese mainland the Japanese responded by going on a rampage of killing (the feeling was that their emperor had been insulted)

Hundreds of Chinese peasants were killed in a massacre similar to the Rape of Nanking

The fanatical response to the raid by army and civilian leaders (many even contemplated “seppuku” suicide) amazed the Allies.

The most critical result of the Doolittle raid was the decision by Japan to capture Midway Island.

This would give the Japanese a forward outpost in the Pacific from which they could send reconnaissance planes to patrol toward the west coast of North America

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Questions/Main ideas:

**The Battle Of Midway – The Turning Point**

Japanese naval units were recalled from the Indian Ocean so they could escort invasion forces against Australia prior to the Midway operation. This force was repelled after the battle in the Coral Sea

The first part of the Midway operation involved landing Japanese troops on the Alaskan islands in an attempt to draw N. American Allies away from the main battle .This didn’t work because the Americans did not change their plan of attack and did not drive the Japanese off the islands until a joint Canadian-American sortie in 1943. Meanwhile the Americans were able to ambush Japanese fleets converging on Midway. American torpedo planes and dive-bombers caught the Japanese aircraft carriers as they were refueling and rearming their own planes. The American planes started infernos that destroyed the core of Japan’s naval air force4. In just over 5 minutes the Pacific war had turned around. The Japanese navy would no longer dominated the Pacific. The loss was so devastating that Japanese survivors were kept in isolation for the rest of the war so that the news would not be made public

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Questions/Main ideas:

**After The Battle Of Midway**

After the battle of Midway the Allies went on the offensive in Asia. The first attacks were aimed at Japanese air bases on Florida and Guadalcanal islands. It took American maries six months to get the Japanese off of Guadalcanal (it became known as the island of death). Hand to hand combat was routine and it was said that “uncommon valor became a common thing”. In 1945 on Iwo Jima, Japanese defenders had to be dug out of defensive positions one by one. At the end of the battle of Iwo Jima some Japanese injected themselves with poison while others (including women and children) jumped from cliffs into the sea rather than surrender. Only 216 of the 50 000 defenders were taken alive (6000 Americans died taking Iwo Jima)

Okinawa was worse. At Okinawa the Japanese used Kamikazes. 1000’s of Japanese pilots volunteered for suicide missions.

This forced the Allies to ask the question: If the Japanese were willing to go this far to defend the outer islands how would they behave when defending their homeland? This experience ultimately helped the Americans to decide to use the atomic bomb on Hiroshima and Nagasaki

The Americans were concerned about how many casualties would be involved in the invasion of Honshu.

While this was happening Australian and Americans land forces set about clearing New Guinea and then in 1944 they moved on to the Philippines.

The initial battles were fought by Australian forces in New Guinea’s Owen Stanley Mountains, along the Kokoda.

Bitter fighting lasted over a year before Gen. Mac Arthur could focus on the liberation of the Philippines. From there he intended to invade Japan Christmas of 1945

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Questions/Main ideas:

**The Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere**

Wherever the Japanese forces advanced, they were greeted by a significant portion of the local population as liberators from European colonial rule.

The Japanese failed to harness this support.

By 1942 they had captured more resources than they could use and had a much larger population than the US. There was a considerable amount of support for the concept of a Co-Prosperity Sphere of independent nations in the Pacific. Nationalist movements throughout the region were encouraged to embrace the hope of self-government. In Burma and the Philippines a form of independence was granted, however the other colonies were told they would have to wait until the war ended

**The Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere: The Flaws**

Although the Japanese said they wanted a commonwealth of Asian nations they had no desire to give their conquered territories over to the individual nationalist leaders. The Japanese were not really interested in liberating the Asian nations from European dominance, they were interested in creating an Asia dominated by Japan instead of the Europe. The Japanese could not risk the possibility that one of the nationalist movements in the regions of Asia taken from European control by the Japanese would emerge as a rival power. The Japanese tried to direct independence movements in a direction that would be beneficial primarily only to Japan.

The nationalist leaders of the conquered Asian nations were deeply unhappy about the brutal treatment of their people and the exploitation of their resources. Hundreds of thousands of people were sent to work in mines in Korea or to build railways and air bases often without their consent and far from home

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Questions/Main ideas:

**The Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere:** Treatment Under Japan’s Rule

The Japanese were often brutal in their governing of subject Asian nations.

The cruel treatment shown to prisoners and allied non-Japanese peoples was often truly horrific in nature.

The Japanese occupation forces believed that they could only maintain order through terror and violence

Troops were known to bayonet civilians in the streets for no apparent reason the Rape of Nanking and the atrocities committed in Kowloon and Hong Kong were far from isolated incidents, but more like a general philosophy regarding subject peoples and prisoners of war.

In Singapore for instance; hospitals were sacked the wounded murdered, nurses and babies brutally slaughtered, thousands of people used for bayonet practice, and prisoners of war tortured, executed and generally brutalized.

**The Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere: The Bataan Death March**

According to the philosophy of the Japanese prisoners of war were considered to be disgraced by surrendering, they had allowed themselves to become without honour. They were often herded on long marches with inadequate provisions, and harsh and brutal treatment at the hands of their captors.

These marches would bring the POW’s to concentration camps with inadequate food and water for their numbers. Those who were unable to keep up the pace were routinely clubbed to death and left along the way. Perhaps one of the worst examples of this practice was the Bataan death march. In this death march approximately 7000 Filipinos died on the way to concentration camps in addition to a number of American POW’s

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Questions/Main ideas:

**The Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere:** Government And Military Policy. Prime Minister Tojo invited Nationalist leaders to Tokyo in fall 1943. There they reached an agreement on the creation of a common market intended to take advantage of the economies in the region. Burma and the Philippines were given immediate republic status and Independence tor the other conquered regions was promised in the near future. Unfortunately for the regions occupied by the Japanese military, the army itself did not agree with the policy of self determination and limited Japanese involvement suggested by the government back home. Despite the official government policies the occupying military forces continued to ambush POW’s and Asian nationals alike. The concept of the CO-Prosperity Sphere had failed

**Allied Strategy**

The Anglo-American strategy began to gel in the fall of 1943. British forces planned to strike from India into Burma. The Americans would attack the Philippines and Japanese held islands. They would settle for nothing less than unconditional surrender. The restoration of the original borders of China, including Manchuria, and the elimination of all trade concessions on the mainland. Every effort was made to enlist active Chinese support in the war. Jiang Jieshi was brought to Cairo where he met with Roosevelt and Churchill in 1943. Roosevelt far preferred the idea of Jiang to the idea of a communist China. The British were more concerned in regaining control of Burma and Malaya. American lack of support for the reclamation of lost colonial territories strained relations between the Allies, however they were temporarily overlooked in order to move the war effort forward. Jiang agreed in Cairo to construction of American air bases in exchange for loans. 500,000 workers began construction on the 9000 meter runways needed for the American B-29 bombers “flying fortresses”. Cairo, Roosevelt and Churchill met with Stalin and Teheran agreeing to declare war on Japan after the defeat of Germany.

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Questions/Main ideas:

**Allied Strategy: The Role Of Nationalist China**

These bases were near Jiang’s stronghold in Chongqing. The construction of these bases would rekindle the war on the Chinese mainland , largely dormant since 1937. The Japanese recognized the potential danger represented by the long-range bombers and overran the air bases and drove the Chinese even deeper inland.

**The Role Of The Soviet Union In China**

The promise of Soviet involvement meant that allies were no longer dependent on the (weak at best) involvement of Jiang’s forces. The Soviet Army planned to sweep across Manchuria, taking back all the land they had lost in the Russo-Japanese war

The Soviets intended to regain their Eastern empire including Port Arthur, and control of the Manchurian railway system. In addition to these gains the Soviets were given rights over the southern half of Sakhalin Island.

**The Terror Bombing Of Tokyo**

The air assault on Japan began in November, 1944, and continued with few interruptions until August of 1945 (with the atomic assault on Nagasaki and Hiroshima.) Initially the raids were carried out at high altitudes in attempts to take out strategic military and industrial targets, these failed as the bombs usually missed. The strategy then shifted to carpet or “saturation” bombing , over large regions suspected of having military significance, but this also failed. General LeMay proposed to shift to terror tactics by beginning to raid densely populated cities. The intent was to set Japan on fire

In the first attack on suburbs outside Tokyo, Hundreds of bombers dropped sticks of phosphorus on the city the firestorm created was hotter than those at either Dresden or Hamburg. At it’s height the heat reached 1000 degrees Celsius and boiled rivers dry. People and buildings actually spontaneously combusted.

In the aftermath, a 26 square km area of Tokyo had ceased to exist

A total of 61 cities would suffer.

These attacks only hardened the Japanese resolve to persevere.

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Questions/Main ideas:

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In the first attack on suburbs outside Tokyo, Hundreds of bombers dropped sticks of phosphorus on the city the firestorm created was hotter than those at either Dresden or Hamburg. At it’s height the heat reached 1000 degrees Celsius and boiled rivers dry. People and buildings actually spontaneously combusted. In the aftermath, a 26 square km area of Tokyo had ceased to exist. A total of 61 cities would suffer. These attacks only hardened the Japanese resolve to persevere.

**The Terror Bombing Of Japan**

Tokyo was only the first of Sixty one other Major Japanese cities to experience LeMay’s 1000 bomber strong force carrying out the strategy of terror bombing. Despite the destruction and horrific death toll the Japanese were not demoralized as LeMay and the other allied strategists had hoped

Instead much like the British response to the Battle of Britain and the London Blitz the Japanese civilians responded by becoming more committed to the war effort than ever. LeMay estimated that it would take his armada of bombers at least another year to finish the task of demoralizing the Japanese citizenry to force their government to abandon the war

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Questions/Main ideas:

**The Allies’ Post Atomic Plan**

In Manila, General MacArthur began assembling the invasion forces to go ashore on Honshu in December. A million American deaths were expected during the assault to take Japan and the surrounding islands. A number of plans were thought of in order to avoid the invasion, these included releasing poison gas onto the main island and wiping out the population, another plan involved destroying the Japanese rice crops and starving the population into surrender. None of these were thought to be acceptable by the American people. At this point, Roosevelt died and Harry Truman became president of the US

Truman had been informed of a new “wonder weapon” called the atomic bomb which would put a decisive end to the Pacific War. Truman felt that the elimination of the need to invade the home islands after the horrible losses experienced taking the areas the Japanese had acquired during the war was highly desirable. In Truman’s opinion the projected loss of a million American soldiers was unacceptable and the potential loss of civilian Japanese lives was not considered a valid reason not to use the bomb.

The bomb also eliminated the need on the part of the Americans to continue to depend on Soviet support. They could now win the war with out them

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Questions/Main ideas:

**Hiroshima And Nagasaki**

On August 6, 1945 The “Enola Gay“ piloted by an American dropped “Little Boy” (15 kilotons) the first atomic bomb used as a military weapon on the Japanese city of Hiroshima. Everything within the fireball of the impact zone ceased to exist inside of milliseconds. Outside the fireball shock waves flattened buildings and the intense heat (10 times hotter than the surface of the sun vaporized humans and objects. When the Japanese did not immediately agree to an unconditional surrendered the Americans bombed Nagasaki (August,9th) with “Fat Man” five kilotons larger than “Little Boy”

During the interval the Soviet marched armies into Manchuria

**The End Of The Second World War In The Pacific**

The Japanese had a difficult time accepting the reality of nuclear war. However they understood that the Soviet invasion of Manchuria meant that they could no longer pull their forces in China and Manchuria back to defend the homeland from an American invasion.

The cabinet leaders asked the emperor for his advice and Hirohito advised them to end the war

On 28th of August 1945 The American battleship Missouri entered Tokyo and 5 days later formal surrender ceremonies wore conducted aboard the ship

As the documents were signed 1900 aircraft began to drop off the hundreds of thousands of men and women who would become the American occupation force.

The Second World War was over A century in Five Minutes

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