

Section C: Move to Global War

Japanese expansion in East Asia (1931–1941): Events

Source A

Extract from the Three Powers Pact (Tripartite Pact) between Germany, Italy and Japan, Berlin, 27 September 1940 (<http://avalon.law.yale.edu/wwii/triparti.asp>)

The governments of Germany, Italy and Japan have agreed as follows:

ARTICLE ONE: Japan recognizes and respects the leadership of Germany and Italy in establishment of a new order in Europe.

ARTICLE TWO: Germany and Italy recognize and respect the leadership of Japan in the establishment of a new order in greater East Asia.

ARTICLE THREE: Germany, Italy and Japan agree to co-operate in their efforts. They further agree to assist one another with all political, economic and military means when one of the three contracting powers is attacked by a power at present not involved in the European war or in the Chinese-Japanese conflict.

Source B

*Ian Kershaw, a professor of Modern History, in an academic book **Fateful Choices: Ten Decisions That Changed the World, 1940-1941**(2007). (Publisher London: Penguin)*

By September 1940, Britain could be assured of continued American support, and the United States had already implemented some of its embargoes against Japan. Under the circumstances, there would have been no way in which an axis pact would cause the Anglo-American powers to soften their stand. On the contrary, the pact could be expected to give them added resolve to stand firm. This is exactly what happened. Japanese and German negotiators were fully aware of the developing ties between America and Britain, and for this very reason they hoped their alliance would serve to check and reduce the effectiveness of American intervention.

By then, as Matsuoka (the Japanese Foreign Minister) explained at the time, it was becoming obvious that the United States was steadily involving itself not only in European but in Asian-Pacific affairs as well. It was tying itself not just to the British in the Atlantic but to the Commonwealth in Asia and the Pacific. The United States, in fact, would establish itself as a global power, with its influence in the Atlantic, Canada, the Western hemisphere, the Pacific Ocean and Asia. It followed then, that it would be an American led coalition that Japan had to confront and be prepared to fight. It would no longer be China in isolation, but China assisted by the Soviet Union, Britain, and especially the United States.

Source C

*Akira Iriye, a professor of History, in an academic book, **The Origins of the Second World War in Asia and the Pacific**, (1992). (Publisher London: Longman)*

The American response quickly revealed the folly of Matsuoka's claim – that the Tripartite (Three Power) Pact would serve as a deterrent. Instead, it merely confirmed American views that Japan was a belligerent [warlike], bullying, imperialist force in the Far East, an Asian equivalent of Nazi Germany, and had to be stopped. Such views seemed confirmed by the entry of Japanese troops into French Indochina on 23 September 1940

The essential purpose of the Tripartite Pact, from the Japanese perspective, was to deter the United States from intervening to prevent the southern advance seen as necessary to ensure Japan's control of raw materials and, therefore, her future economic and political security.

The gamble in the pact was self-evident. What if the United States did not regard the pact as a deterrent, but as a provocation? What if the effect was to reinforce the determination to prevent Japanese expansion by threatening the lifeline of oil supplies? But from a Japanese perspective at the time, the gamble had to be taken. To take it held great dangers, but also the potential of enormous rewards. Not to take it meant long-term domination by the Anglo-American powers. It meant, too, that the China War had been in vain. The need for boldness, not caution carried the day in such a mentality

Source D

Cartoon: Japan announces a "new order" in greater East Asia. Published 6th August 1940



Questions

9. a) What, according to Source B, were the effects for Britain of signing the Three Power Pact? [3 marks]
9. b) What message is conveyed by Source D? [2 marks]
10. With reference to its origin, purpose and content, analyze the value and limitations of Source A for historians studying the Three Power Pact (September 1940) [4 marks]
11. Compare and contrast what Sources B and C reveal about the significance of the Three Power Pact. [6 marks]
12. Using the sources and your own knowledge, evaluate the consequences of the Three Power Pact for Japan, China and the US up to the end of 1941. [9 marks]

Section C: Move to Global War

9. a) *What, according to Source B, were the effects for Britain of signing the Three Power Pact?*

The signing of the Three Power Pact reinforced and strengthened the Anglo-American alliance. As the Axis powers consolidate their alliance, American support for the British were further reassured as the Three Power Pact failed to deter American involvement into the Second World War.

b) *What message is conveyed by Source D?*

Source D shows 2 figures, Mussolini and Hitler, sitting in a box, and another figure, Japan, joining the group. The 3 figures brought different things to share – a piece of meat, a bone and a bowl representing Indo-China. Putting these 3 figures together in a box suggests that they are cooperating, compromising, or working together. At the very least, they are sharing, which means the Axis powers are expanding to include Japan into the 'share-out'.

10. *With reference to its origin, purpose and content, analyze the value and limitations of Source A for historians studying the Three Power Pact (September 1940).*

Source A is a primary record of the Three Power Pact itself from an online archive. Its purpose is to record the terms of the pact signed in September 1940 and to inform the general public at that time the terms of the pact and hence the agreements made between the respective countries that signed it. It is a valuable source as it is the official document of the pact, which shows us the actual terms agreed on, the relationship between Italy, Germany and Japan at that time and their respective commitments as stated by the pact. It is limited however, because it does not show the effect or impact of the pact for the Axis or Allied powers, hence, may be insufficient for the study of the Three Power Pact.

11. Compare and contrast what Sources B and C reveal about the significance of the Three Power Pact. (6 marks)

Both Source B and C agree that the Three Power Pact was signed primarily to act as a deterrent to Anglo-American axis from interfering. Both Source B and C agree that the pact backfired and acknowledged the failure of the pact based on its foreseen aims, as it gave the Anglo-American axis 'added resolve to stand firm' (Source B) and 'confirmed American views that Japan was a belligerent' (Source C). Source B mentioned the impact of the Three Power Pact for China, as China would now be supported by the Soviet Union, Britain and the US against Japan, the 'American led coalition', while Source C did not touch on the effect of the pact for China. Source C also mentioned that the failure of the pact to meet its initial aims to deter American involvement in Asian Pacific affairs meant that the China War had been fought in vain, whereas Source B only mentioned the US' growing influence in Asia Pacific. Source C explained the mentality of the Japanese in taking on such a gamble of signing the Three Power Pact, which suggests the importance of the pact because it was signed despite great risks, but Source B failed to explain the Japanese's mentality. Both Source B and C suggest the importance of signing the pact for both the Axis powers, due to the US' expanding influence and potentially establishing itself as a global power, hence justifies Axis powers' needs to sign the pact, which in turn suggests that should the pact fail, consequences

would be huge; and the US stopping Japan in the East by threatening its oil supplies (Source C).

12. Using the sources and your own knowledge, evaluate the consequences of the Three Power Pact for Japan, China and the US up to the end of 1941.

The Three Power Pact, also known as the Tripartite Pact, was signed between Germany, Italy and Japan on 27th September 1940 with the aim of hastening Britain's defeat and serve as a deterrent to the United States in intervening (Source C). But instead, the pact reinforced the United States' determination in fighting against Japanese expansion and confirmed the view that 'Japan was a belligerent' (Source C). The pact carried great consequences for Japan, China and the US, as it also recognized the German-Italian 'new order' in Europe, and the Japanese authority in East Asia.

Firstly, for Japan the pact was a miscalculation and a mistaken strategy. Initially, Japan's aim was to deter the US from intervening in Asia by becoming allies with Italy and Germany. However, Japan saw the US steadily 'involving itself not only in European but in Asian-Pacific affairs as well' (Source B). The US had extended its influence 'not just to the British in the Atlantic but to the Commonwealth in Asia and the Pacific,' (Source B) and established itself as a superpower. Japan was then confronted not only by the US, but an American-led coalition. Also, the alliance between the Axis powers after the signing of the Tripartite seemed rather uncoordinated, as their respective policies against Russia were different, hence, unable to achieve sound results. Japan was also a far ally all the way in the East, which proved difficult for effective military cooperation. In fact, the Axis countries never seemed to trust each other very much.

As for the United States, the pact failed to deter her involvement but instead bolstered the US' relations with other Allied countries, and eventually led her into the Second World War in December 1941. Japan's image as a bully and an 'imperialist force in the Far East' (Source C) seemed to be confirmed by the US when Japanese troops entered French Indochina on 23rd September 1940, shortly before signing the pact, which was further justified after Tripartite was signed. The pact was seen more as a provocation than a deterrent, and carried enormous effect for the US as it was later drawn into the war in December 1941. The pact prompted the US to step out of its 'splendid isolation', and step up its degree of involvement to fight against Japanese aggression. Hence, the greatest consequence for the US was the push to get further involved, and ultimately joined the war.

The pact was also important for China, because the pact meant that the line between the two opposing camps in the war was more clearly defined, hence, China is no longer alone in the fight against Japanese aggression – she now had the help from the Soviet Union, Britain and the US (Source B). This is due to the strengthened diplomatic relations between Britain and the US as the pact reaffirmed their perception of Japan as a belligerent and an imperialist, both image were a threat to the US and Britain. China became better protected, hence, benefitted from the signing of the pact. Also, the United States recognized that at that time, as long as suspicions continue to exist in the minds of the American people against the Tripartite Pact, it would be very difficult to withdraw support for Chiang Kai-Shek's China. The US asserted that abandoning their policy of supporting China would have been just as difficult as withdrawing support for Britain. Hence, the Tripartite Pact justified the US' actions of supporting China, due to their greater enemy, Japan. This again reassured American support for China.

In conclusion, the Tripartite pact carried significant consequences for Japan, the United States and China, which greatly altered the playing field of the Second World War. Alliances were strengthened, both the Allies and the Axis powers, which further polarized the two camps of the war, hence created a greater rift and tensions. The failure of the pact to meet Axis powers' intention of forcing the United States to continue to stay as isolationist and not get involved in the Second World War also meant that the Axis powers further bolstered relations of the Allies, pushed more countries onto China's side against Japan, and eventually prompted the US to join the war. This of course posed as a threat to the Axis powers' chances of winning the war.