

Handout

Timeline of Major Events in Japan, 1853–1919

1853

US Commodore Matthew Perry's "black ships" arrive in Edo Bay, marking Japan's first contact with a technologically superior Western power.

1854

Perry returns and negotiates the Treaty of Kanagawa, the first treaty signed between Japan and the United States. The treaty is instrumental in dismantling the two-century-old policy of isolation. Perry's "gunboat diplomacy" forces the Japanese to acquiesce to American trade demands, a pattern that will continue throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

1856

The shogunate signs the Harris Treaty between United States and Japan, opening up eight Japanese ports to American merchants and giving the US "most favored nation" trade status.

1894

First Sino-Japanese War. Japan is victorious over China and asserts its first gains as an imperial power. Korea is "turned over" (colonized) to Japan, and China cedes Taiwan to Japan. China's defeat signals for the first time a significant shift in regional dominance in East Asia from China to Japan.

1904–1905

Japan is victorious against Czarist Russia in the Russo-Japanese War and, as a result, wins the formerly Russian territory of the southern Sakhalin island. Japan's victory is a watershed moment: it represents Japan's first victory over a Western power, and it happens against a modernized foe.

1914–1918

World War I. Japan is allied with the United States and Great Britain.

1919

The Treaty of Versailles grants Japan control over valuable German concessions in Shandong, leading to outcry in China, which expected to receive the territory.

1. What are the most significant events that occurred in Japan during this period?
2. How did Japan's contact and conflicts with Western empires affect its identity and power in Asia?
3. What are the most significant events that occurred in China during this period?
4. How did China's contact and conflicts with Western empires affect its identity and power in Asia?