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By Ian Nish



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This comprehensive, up-to-date analysis of Japanese policy between the two world wars utilizes both English and Japanese sources to present Japan as an independent agent, not a state whose policy was determined by the actions of other countries. Beginning with Japan's disappointment with the Versailles Peace Treaty in 1919, Nish examines the roots of Japanese discontent and feelings that ambitions in China were being unreasonably restrained. He explains British and American policies in the region as reactive, but concludes that their responses helped to determine which factions would dominate Japan's political arena. This non-partisan account is even-handed in apportioning responsibility for the events leading to the Second World War.

While some Japanese politicians in the 1920s tried to follow the international path, there were others who tended to side with the army in establishing Japan's position, first in Manchuria and later in North and Central China in the 1930s. Conscious of the nation's unpopularity in the western world, Japan allied itself with Germany and Italy in the Anti-Comintern Pact of 1936 and the Tripartite Alliance of 1940. To pursue its own national objectives, Japan joined her allies in making war on the United States and the colonial empires of Britain, France, and the Netherlands. Its forces succeeded in overrunning many colonial territories; and, with a view to easing the problems of occupying them, Japan liberalized its harsh military policies, granting independence to Burma and the Philippines and welcoming Asian leaders to Tokyo for the Greater East Asian Conference of November 1943.



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Review

"Students of Modern Japan and international history are indebted, once again, to Ian Nish, who is the world's leading authority on the Anglo-Japanese alliance....Nish wields the steady hand of a master craftsman in a new synthesis of Japanese diplomacy from 1919-1943....As an up-to-date compendium of recent European scholarship on Japanese imperialism, this is an invaluable survey. As a compact yet authoritative synthesis of Japanese foreign policy initiatives from 1919 to 1943, it will remain a standard reference for years to come."-International History Review

"[p]rovides a good if basic introduction to Japanese international relations between 1919 and 1943, and as such will serve as a useful supplement for classes addressing prewar Japanese history."-H-Net Reviews

"Nish provides a well-structured survey of Japan's struggle for its own national and international identity from 1919 through 1943 as it emerged as one of the great powers in Asia and the world....Anchored in ten years of extensive research, this is a lucidly written, useful addition to a growing summa of interpretations on the controversial Japanese foreign policy during the interwar era. Recommended. Graduate students, researchers, and faculty."-Choice

"Numerous scholars have written about Japanese foreign policy in the interwar period, and one is tempted to wonder if yet another account is genuinely needed, but when it comes from the pen of such a senior historian as Ian Nish, the answer is a resounding "yes." Nish has produced an archetypal study through his careful collection of evidence, through his judicious assessments, and through his lucid presentation: in short, this study is a hallmark of professional maturity and sophistication."-The American Historical Review

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International History Review

About the Author

IAN NISH is Professor Emeritus of International History at the London School of Economics and Political Science. His most recent publications are *Japan's Struggle with Internationalism, 1931-33* (1993) and *The Iwakura Mission in America and Europe* (1998).

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