

Nationalism in Japan and Germany

Compare and Contrast Japanese and German Nationalism in the years leading up to World War II.

Letter of General Tanaka, 1927

The following excerpt is from a letter that General Giichi Tanaka, the prime minister of Japan, is believed to have written to the Japanese emperor in 1927.

England can afford to talk about trade relations only because she has India and Australia to supply her with foodstuff and other materials. So can America because South America and Canada are there to supply her needs. ... But in Japan her food supply and raw materials decrease in proportion to her population. If we merely hope to develop trade, we shall eventually be defeated by England and America, who possess unsurpassable capitalistic power. In the end, we shall get nothing. A more dangerous factor is the fact that the people of China might some day wake up. Even during these years of internal strife, they can still toil patiently, and try to imitate and displace our goods so as to impair the development of our trade. When we remember that the Chinese are our sole customers, we must beware, lest one day China becomes unified and her industries become prosperous ... our trade in China will be ruined. ... Our best policy lies in the direction of taking positive steps to secure rights and privileges in Manchuria and Mongolia ... The way to gain actual rights in Manchuria and Mongolia is to use this region as a base and under the pretense of trade and commerce penetrate the rest of China. Armed by the rights already secured we shall seize the resources all over the country. Having China's entire resources at our disposal we shall proceed to conquer India, ... Asia Minor, Central Asia, and even Europe. But to get control of Manchuria and Mongolia is the first step.

Source: "Japan and the Next World War, Secret Memorial." The China Critic, IV (September 24, 1931).

Speech of Adolf Hitler, 1930

If the German people does not solve the problem of its lack of space, and if it does not open up the domestic market for its industry, then 2,000 years have been in vain. Germany will then make its exit from the world stage and peoples with more vigor will come into our heritage. Space must be fought for and maintained. People who are lazy have no right to the soil. Soil is for him who tills it and protects it. If a people disclaims soil, it disclaims life. If a nation loses in the defense of its soil, then the individual loses. There is no higher justice that decrees that a people must starve. There is only power, which creates justice ... Parliaments do not create all of the rights on this earth; force also creates rights. My question is whether we wish to live or die. We have more right to soil than all the other nations because we are so thickly populated. I am of the opinion that in this respect too, the principle can be applied: God helps him who helps himself.

Source: Völkischer Beobachter, May 7, 1930.

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1. According to Tanaka, how is Japan different from England and the United States?	2. According to Hitler, how is land ownership determined?
3. What are the similarities between Tanaka's and Hitler's arguments for expansion? What will happen to their nations if they do not expand?	
4. What argument could be made against Tanaka's justification for expansion?	5. What argument could be made against Hitler's justification for expansion?
6. In what ways are Hitler and Tanaka taking the same position on the importance of industrialization for their countries' power relative to other countries? What economic benefits come from the acquisition of territory?	
7. What language and/or rhetoric was used to prepare each countries citizens for war?	