

Timeline: Japan

A chronology of key events:

1894 - Japan goes to war with China. Japan's better equipped forces win victory in just nine months.

1895 - China cedes Taiwan to Japan and permits Japan to trade in China.

Quake-prone Tokyo lies at intersection of continental plates
Comprises the 'shi' (inner city) and 'to' (metropolis)
Population: 12.4 million (2003 estimate)

1904 - Japan goes to war with Russia. Japanese victory in 1905.

1910 - Japan annexes Korea after three years of fighting. Japan is now one of the world's great powers.

1914 - Japan joins World War I on the side of Britain and her allies. Japan has limited participation.

1919 - Treaty of Versailles gives Japan some territorial gains in the Pacific.

1923 - Earthquake in Tokyo region kills more than 100,000 people.

1925 - Universal male suffrage is instituted. The electorate increases fivefold.

Ultra-nationalism and war

Late 1920s - Extreme nationalism begins to take hold in Japan. The emphasis is on a preservation of traditional Japanese values, and a rejection of "Western" influence.

1931 - Japan invades Manchuria, renames it and installs a puppet regime.

Emperor Akihito (left), from the world's oldest hereditary monarchy
Until 1945 emperors had the status of living gods
Currently, only males can succeed to the throne
Princess Kiko gave birth to a baby boy in September 2006, potentially resolving a succession crisis

[BBC's John Simpson on emperor's visit to Britain](#)

1932 - Japanese prime minister is assassinated by ultra-nationalist terrorists. The military holds increasing influence in the country.

1936 - Japan signs an anti-communist agreement with Nazi Germany. It concludes a similar agreement with Italy in 1937.

1937 - Japan goes to war with China. By the end of the year, Japan has captured Shanghai, Beijing and Nanjing. Japanese forces commit atrocities, including the "Rape of Nanjing", in which up to 300,000 Chinese civilians are said to have been killed.

1939 - Outbreak of World War II in Europe. With the fall of France to Nazi Germany in 1940, Japan moves to occupy French Indo-China.

Attack on Pearl Harbor

1941 - Japan launches a surprise attack on the US Pacific fleet at Pearl Harbor, Hawaii. Twelve ships are sunk, with a further 9 damaged; nearly 2,500 people are killed. The US and its main allies declare war on Japan the following day.

1942 - Japan occupies a succession of countries, including the Philippines, Dutch East Indies, Burma and Malaya. In June, US aircraft carriers defeat the Japanese at the Battle of Midway. The US begins a strategy of "island-hopping", cutting the Japanese support lines as its forces advance.

1944 - US forces are near enough to Japan to start bombing raids on Japanese cities.

Hiroshima and Nagasaki

Atomic attacks are said to have forced Japan's WWII surrender

1945 - US planes drop two atomic bombs, one on Hiroshima (6 August), the second on Nagasaki (9 August). Emperor Hirohito surrenders and relinquishes his divine status. Japan is placed under US military government. All Japanese military and naval forces are disbanded.

1947 - A new constitution comes into force. It establishes a parliamentary system, with all adults eligible to vote. Japan renounces war and pledges not to maintain land, sea or air forces for that purpose. The emperor is granted ceremonial status.

1951 - Japan signs peace treaty with the US and other nations. To this day, there is no peace treaty with Russia, as the legal successor to the Soviet Union.

Independence

1952 - Japan regains its independence. The US retains several islands for military use, including Okinawa.

1955 - Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) formed. Apart from a brief interlude in the early 1990s, the party governs almost uninterruptedly for the rest of the century and beyond.

Shinto rites are central to the daily life of followers
Rigidly enforced state religion until the 1950s
Followers venerate "kami", spirits who number in the millions
Shinto has no founder, major scriptures or ethical laws
Tens of thousands of Shinto shrines dot the country

1956 - Japan joins United Nations.

1964 - Olympic Games held in Tokyo.

1972 - Japanese prime minister visits China and normal diplomatic relations are resumed. Japan

subsequently closes its embassy in Taiwan.

Okinawa is returned to Japanese sovereignty, but US retains bases there.

1982 - Japanese car firm Honda opens its first plant in the US.

1989 - Emperor Hirohito dies, succeeded by Akihito.

1993 - Elections held against a background of bribery scandals and economic decline see the LDP ousted for the first time since 1955. A seven-party coalition takes power.

1994 - The coalition collapses. An administration supported by the LDP and the Socialists takes over.

Natural and man-made disasters

1995 January - An earthquake hits central Japan, killing thousands and causing widespread damage. The city of Kobe is hardest hit.

Tokyo sarin gas attack, the work of the Aum Shinrikyo cult
 1995 attack on the Tokyo underground claimed 12 lives, injured more than 5,500
 There are thought to be more than 200,000 Japanese cults
 Aum Shinrikyo was founded by Shoko Asahara in 1987 and drew thousands of followers
 Asahara was sentenced to death in 2004 over the Tokyo attack

[BBC's Jonathan Head on trial of Shoko Asahara](#)

1995 March - A religious sect, Aum Shinrikyo, releases the deadly nerve gas sarin on the Tokyo underground railway system. Twelve people are killed and thousands are injured.

Three US servicemen based on Okinawa rape a local schoolgirl. There are mass protests demanding the removal of US forces from the island.

1997 - The economy enters a severe recession.

1998 - Keizo Obuchi of the LDP becomes prime minister.

2000 - Obuchi suffers a stroke and is replaced by Yoshiro Mori. Obuchi dies six weeks later.

2000 November - Peruvian President Alberto Fujimori resigns while on a visit to Japan. He later takes up Japanese citizenship and avoids extradition.

2001 February - A US submarine executes an emergency surfacing manoeuvre off Hawaii and collides with a Japanese training vessel. Nine Japanese are missing after the incident.

2001 March - Mori announces his intention to resign as LDP leader and prime minister.

Koizumi at helm

2001 April - Junichiro Koizumi becomes new LDP leader and prime minister.

2001 April - Trade dispute with China after Japan imposes import tariffs on Chinese agricultural products. China retaliates with import taxes on Japanese vehicles and other manufactured goods.

Yasukuni shrine remembers Japan's 2.5m war dead

Monument also venerates convicted war criminals
 Ceremonies at the shrine raise hackles across Asia; Prime
 Minister Koizumi argues that his visits are to pray for peace

[BBC's Charles Scanlon on Yasukuni visits](#)

2001 August - Koizumi pays homage at the Yasukuni shrine dedicated to the country's war dead, provoking protests from Japan's neighbours. The memorial also honours war criminals.

2001 October - Koizumi visits Seoul and offers an apology for the suffering South Korea endured under his country's colonial rule.

2001 December - Birth of Japan's new princess - first child of Crown Prince Naruhito and Crown Princess Masako - reignites debate over male-only succession law.

2002 September - Koizumi becomes first the Japanese leader to visit North Korea. North Korean leader Kim Jong-il apologises for abductions of Japanese citizens in 1970s and 1980s and confirms that eight of them are dead.

2002 October - Five Japanese nationals kidnapped by North Korea return home to emotional family reunions.

2003 December - Government announces decision to install "purely defensive" US-made missile shield.

Iraq deployment

2004 February - Non-combat soldiers arrive in Iraq in first Japanese deployment in combat zone since World War II.

2004 September - Japan, along with Brazil, Germany and India, launches an application for a permanent seat on the UN Security Council.

2004 October - More than 30 people are killed in powerful earthquakes in the north, the deadliest quakes in almost a decade.

Japanese troops had a non-combat role in Iraq

2004 December - Dispute with North Korea over the fate of Japanese citizens kidnapped by North Korea during the Cold War. Pyongyang says any imposition of sanctions by Tokyo will be treated as declaration of war.

2005 April - Relations with Beijing deteriorate amid sometimes-violent anti-Japanese protests in Chinese cities, sparked by a Japanese textbook which China says glosses over Japan's World War II record.

More than 100 people are killed when a commuter train crashes near the western city of Amagasaki. It is Japan's worst railway accident in more than 40 years.

2005 September - PM Koizumi wins a landslide victory in early general elections called after the upper house rejects plans to privatise the postal service - the key part of his reform agenda. Parliament approves the legislation in October.

2006 March - Japan, China fail to reach a breakthrough at talks in Beijing over the issue of who controls oil and gas reserves in disputed areas of the East China Sea.

2006 July - The last contingent of Japanese troops leaves Iraq.