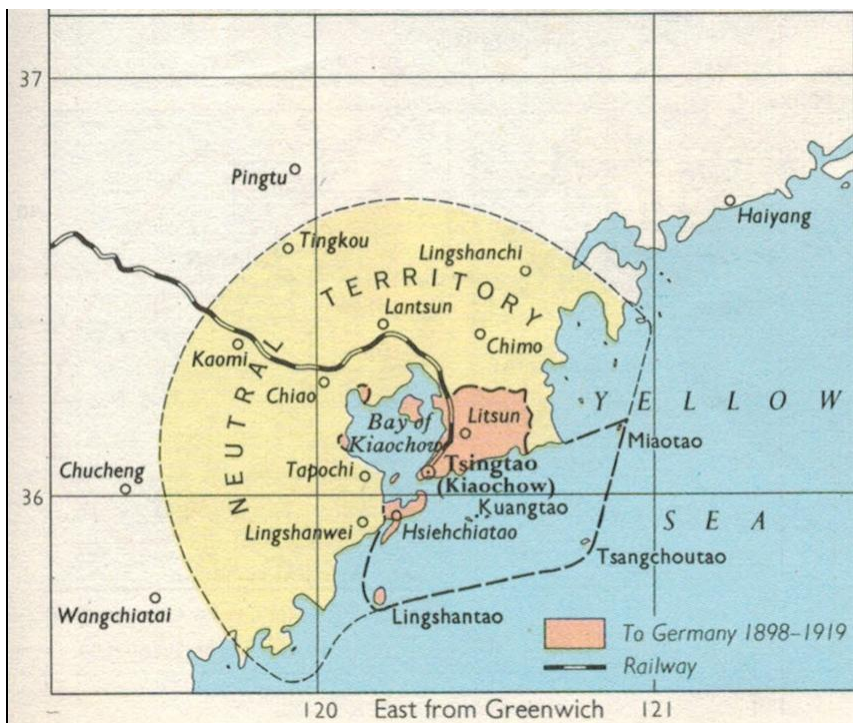


In 1912 emperor Meiji died, and the era of the ruling clique of elder statesmen (genro) was about to end. During the era of the weak Emperor Taisho (1912-26), the political power shifted from the oligarchic clique (genro) to the parliament and the democratic parties.

**In the First World War**, Japan joined the Allied powers, but played only a minor role in fighting German colonial forces in East Asia. On August 23, 1914, the Empire of Japan declared war on Germany, in part due to the Anglo-Japanese Alliance, and Japan became a member of the Entente powers. The Imperial Japanese Navy made a considerable contribution to the Allied war effort; however, the Imperial Japanese Army was more sympathetic to Germany, and aside from the seizure of Tsingtao, resisted attempts to become involved in combat.



At the following Paris Peace Conference of 1919, Japan's proposal of amending a "racial equality clause" to the covenant of the League of Nations was rejected by the United States, Britain and Australia.

Arrogance and racial discrimination towards the Japanese had plagued Japanese-Western relations since the forced opening of the country in the 1800s, and were again a major factor for the deterioration of relations in the decades preceeding World War 2. In 1924, for example, the US Congress passed the Exclusion Act that prohibited further immigration from Japan.

### **Japanese intervention in Siberia and Russian Far East**

The overthrow of Tsar Nicholas II and the establishment of a Bolshevik government in Russia led to a separate peace with Germany and the collapse of the Eastern Front. The spread of the anti-monarchial Bolshevik revolution eastward was of great concern to the Japanese government. Vladivostok, facing the Sea of Japan was a major port, with a massive stockpile of military stores, and a large foreign merchant community.

In late 1917, the Japanese government was alarmed to find that the British government, despite the Anglo-Japanese Alliance, had approached the United States about a possible joint intervention at Vladivostok, without consulting Japan. In December 1917, the British agreed that such a force should include Japan, but before the details could be worked out, the British ordered HMS Suffolk (1903) from Hong Kong to Vladivostok. Japanese Prime Minister Terauchi Masatake was outraged and ordered the Imperial Japanese Navy to reach Vladivostok first. The task was assigned to Rear Admiral Katō Kanji with the battleships Iwami and Asahi. With crews working day-and-night over the new year holidays, Iwami was able to depart from Kure Naval District on January 9, 1918, and arrived at Vladivostok on January 12, only two days before the HMS Suffolk. Asahi arrived in January 17, and became Katō's flagship. The USS Brooklyn (CA-3), which had been stationed at Vladivostok until December 1917, returned on March 1.

It was the original intent that this show of force by Allied warships would enhance the confidence of the local anti-Bolshevik forces and help restore public order; however, this proved to be overly optimistic. After an armed mob looted a Japanese-owned store, killing its owner, the Japanese government permitted the landing of marines, who proceeded to occupy the entire city. The British also landed 100 marines to protect their consulate, but the Americans took no action.

In February 1918, a "Siberia Planning Committee" was formed by the Imperial Japanese Army General Staff and the Army Ministry with the aim of exploring the possibility that the Tsarist collapse was an opportunity to free Japan from any future threat from Russia by detaching Siberia and forming an independent buffer state.

The Army proposed attacking on two fronts, from Vladivostok to Khabarovsk along the Amur River and also via the Chinese Eastern Railway to cut off the Russian Trans-Siberian Railway at Lake Baikal. The Japanese government, then under the civilian leadership of Prime Minister Hara Takashi refused to undertake such an expedition.

In July 1918, President Wilson asked the Japanese government to supply 7,000 troops as part of an international coalition of 25,000 troops, including an American expeditionary force, planned to support the rescue of the Czechoslovak Legion and securing of wartime supplies stockpiled at Vladivostok. After

heated debate in the Diet, the administration agreed to send 12,000 troops, but under the command of Japan, rather than as part of an international coalition.

Once the political decision had been reached, the Imperial Japanese Army took over full control under Chief of Staff Yui Mitsue and extensive planning for the expedition was conducted. The Japanese eventually deployed 70,000 troops – far more than any of the other Allied powers had anticipated. Furthermore, although the Allies had envisioned operations only in the vicinity of Vladivostok, within months Japanese forces had penetrated as far west as Lake Baikal and Buryatia, and by 1920, zaibatsu such as Mitsubishi, Mitsui and others had opened offices in Vladivostok, Khabarovsk, Nikolayevsk-on-Amur and Chita, bringing with them over 50,000 civilian settlers. After the international coalition withdrew its forces, the Japanese Army stayed on.



However, political opposition prevented the Army from annexing the resource-rich region. Japan continued to support White Movement leader Admiral Aleksandr Kolchak until his defeat and capture in 1920, and also supported the regime of Ataman Semenov, whose unstable government collapsed by 1922. In March and April 1922, the Japanese Army repulsed large Bolshevik offensives against Vladivostok.





*Japanese soldiers and an officer in the Russian Far East, 1920. Although the original photo caption reads 'Russian railroad workers killed by the Japanese', it is hard to imagine such workers clad in expensive leather coats. Most likely, the dead were members of the infamous Cheka - the Soviet secret police that was terrorizing the population*

Public opinion in Japan mounted against the cost of the Siberian Intervention, which had absorbed over half the national budget for two years. On June 24, 1922, Japan announced that it would unilaterally withdraw from all of Russian territory with the exception of northern Sakhalin island, which had been seized in retaliation for the Nikolaevsk incident of 1920 by October.

Japan's motives in the Siberian Intervention were complex and poorly articulated. Overtly, Japan (as with the United States and the other international coalition forces) was in Siberia to safeguard stockpiled military supplies and to rescue the Czechoslovak Legion. However, the Japanese government's antipathy to communism, a determination to recoup historical losses to Russia, and the perceived opportunity to settle the "northern problem" to Japan's advantage by either creating a buffer state or through outright territorial acquisition were also factors. However, patronage of various White Movement leaders left Japan in a poor diplomatic position vis-à-vis the government of the Soviet Union, after the Red Army eventually emerged victorious from the Russian Civil War. The intervention tore Japan's wartime unity to shreds, leading to the army and government being involved in bitter controversy and renewed faction strife in the army itself. The official conduct of the Siberian Intervention were later bitterly attacked in the Japanese Diet, with Army being accused of grossly misrepresenting the size of the forces sent, misappropriation of secret funds, and support of figures such as lieutenant general Roman von Ungern-Sternberg, the rumors of whose atrocities had reached the press.

Japanese casualties from the Siberian Expedition included some 5,000 dead from combat or illness, and the expenses incurred were in excess of 900 million yen.



## Early Shōwa period

1926 - 1936

After WW1, Japan's economical situation worsened. The Great Kanto Earthquake of 1923 and the world wide depression of 1929 intensified the crisis. During the 1930s, the military established almost complete control over the government. Many political enemies were assassinated, and communists persecuted. Indoctrination and censorship in education and media were further intensified. Navy and army officers soon occupied most of the important offices, including the one of the prime minister.

### The Rise of Pan-Asianism

Pre-World War II period was also marked by the development of Japanese Pan-Asianism which was, at its core, the idea that Asia should unite against European imperialism. Before and during World War II, this was a major element in Japanese propaganda to justify Japanese external invasions.



*Pan-Asian writer Shūmei Ōkawa*

Japanese Asianism developed in intertwining among debates on solidarity with Asian nations who were under pressure of the West and on aggressive expansion to the Asian continent. However, most Japanese Asianists were nationalistic and imperialistic and were connected with rightist organizations. They discussed self-righteous solidarity which led to ideology such as a "new order" of East Asia and "Greater East Asia Co-prosperity Sphere" based on Japanese supremacy (see below).



## **Manchurian Incident**

Already earlier, Japan followed the example of Western nations and forced China into unequal economical and political treaties. Furthermore, Japan's influence over Manchuria had been steadily growing since the end of the Russo-Japanese war of 1904-05.

When the Chinese Nationalists began to seriously challenge Japan's position in Manchuria in 1931, the Kwantung Army (Japanese armed forces in Manchuria) occupied Manchuria. In the following year, "Manchukuo" was declared an independent state, controlled by the Kwantung Army through a puppet government. In the same year, the Japanese air force bombarded Shanghai in order to protect Japanese residents from anti Japanese movements. International criticism of Japan following the invasion led to Japan withdrawing from the League of Nations.



*Prime Minister Tsuyoshi Inukai*

Prime Minister Tsuyoshi Inukai of the Seiyūkai Party attempted to restrain the Kwantung Army and was assassinated in 1932 by right-wing extremists. Because of growing opposition within the Japanese military and the extreme right to party politicians, who they saw as corrupt and self-serving, Inukai was the last party politician to govern Japan in the pre-World War II era.

In February 1936 young radical officers of the Imperial Japanese Army attempted a coup d'état. They assassinated many moderate politicians before the coup was suppressed.

In its wake the Japanese military consolidated its control over the political system and most political parties were abolished when the Imperial Rule Assistance Association was founded in 1940. Japan's expansionist vision grew increasingly bold. Many of Japan's political elite aspired to have Japan acquire new territory for resource extraction and settlement of surplus population. These ambitions led to the outbreak of the Second Sino-Japanese War in 1937 .

In 1936, Germany and the Empire of Japan signed the Anti-Comintern Pact.

In 1937 Fascist Italy joined the pact, forming the core to what would become known as the Axis Powers.

## Second Sino-Japanese War

July 7, 1937 – September 9, 1945

In July 1937, the second Sino-Japanese War broke out. A small incident was soon made into a full scale war by the Kwantung army which acted rather independently from a more moderate government. The Japanese forces succeeded in occupying almost the whole coast of China and committed severe war atrocities on the Chinese population, especially during the fall of the capital Nanking (12/1937 – 01/1938). However, the Chinese government never surrendered completely, and the war continued on a lower scale until 1945.

Belligerents	
 <b>China</b> (Nationalist Government led a Chinese united front which included Nationalists, Communists, and regional warlords). <i>Foreign support:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li> Soviet Union (1937–41, 1944–1945)</li><li> United States (1941–45)</li><li> British Empire (1942–45)</li></ul>	 <b>Japan</b> <i>Collaborator support:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li> Reorganized National Government (1940–45)</li><li> Manchukuo (1932–45)</li><li> Mengjiang (1939–45)</li><li> Provisional Government (1937–40)</li><li> Reformed Government (1938–40)</li><li> East Hebei (1935–38)</li></ul>
Strength	
 <b>Chinese Nationalist</b> (including regional warlords): <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>1,700,000 (1937)<sup>[1]</sup></li><li>2,600,000 (1939)<sup>[2]</sup></li><li>5,700,000 (1945)<sup>[3]</sup></li></ul>  <b>Chinese Communist:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>166,700 (1938)<sup>[4]</sup></li><li>488,744 (1940)<sup>[4][5]</sup></li><li>1,200,000 (1945)<sup>[6]</sup></li></ul>	 <b>Japanese invading army:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>600,000 (1937)<sup>[7]</sup></li><li>1,015,000 (1939)<sup>[8]</sup></li><li>1,124,900 (1945)<sup>[9]</sup></li></ul> (Excluding Burma campaign and Manchuria)  <b>Collaborators:</b> 900,000 (1945) <sup>[10]</sup>



# THE FAR EAST UNTIL c. 1939

Scale 1:40,000,000 (640 miles = 1 inch)

0 200 400 600 800 Miles  
0 200 400 800 1200 Km.

- British Possessions
- French Possessions
- U.S. Possessions
- Portuguese Possessions
- Netherlands Possessions
- Japanese Possessions
- Extent of Japanese Occupation in China 1939

## THE MARCHES OF THE RED ARMY IN CHINA:

- Revolutionary centres 1933-34
- 1st March: The Long March (Oct. 1934-Oct. 1935)
- 2nd March (Nov. 1935-Nov. 1936)
- 4th March (Mar. 1935-Oct. 1936)
- Area of the Regime of Yen'an 1937





**Chinese Nationalists:***Official ROC data:*

1,320,000 killed,  
 1,797,000 wounded,  
 120,000 missing  
 Total: 3,237,000

**Chinese Communists:***Official PRC data:*

160,603 military dead,  
 290,467 wounded,  
 87,208 missing,  
 45,989 POW.  
 Total: 584,267 military casualties

**Japanese invaders:***Japanese medical data:*

455,700 - 700,000  
 military dead  
 520,000 wounded (1937  
 -1941)  
 430,000 hospitalized and  
 retired for disease (1937  
 -1941)  
 22,293+ captured<sup>[c]</sup>  
 Total: 2 millions+ military  
 casualties (1937 to 1945  
 excluding [Burma](#)  
[campaign](#) and Manchuria)

**Collaborators:**

288,140–574,560 dead  
 742,000 wounded  
 Middle estimate: 960,000  
 dead and wounded

**Total:**

2,960,000+ – 4,987,000  
 military casualties after  
 July, 1937 (Excluding  
 Manchuria and [Burma](#)  
[campaign](#))

In 1940, Japan occupied French Indochina (Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia) upon agreement with the French Vichy government, and joined the Axis powers Germany and Italy. These actions intensified Japan's conflict with the United States and Great Britain which reacted with an oil boycott. The resulting oil shortage and failures to solve the conflict diplomatically made Japan decide to capture the oil rich Dutch East Indies (Indonesia) and to start a war with the US and Great Britain.

*General Hideki Tojo*

In late 1941, Japan's government, led by Prime Minister and General Hideki Tojo, decided to break the US-led embargo through force of arms. On December 7, 1941, the Imperial Japanese Navy launched a surprise attack on the American fleet at Pearl Harbor, Hawaii. This brought the US into World War II on the side of the Allies.

Japan then successfully invaded the Asian colonies of the United States, the United Kingdom, and the Netherlands, including the Philippines, Malaya, Hong Kong, Singapore, Burma, and the Dutch East Indies.

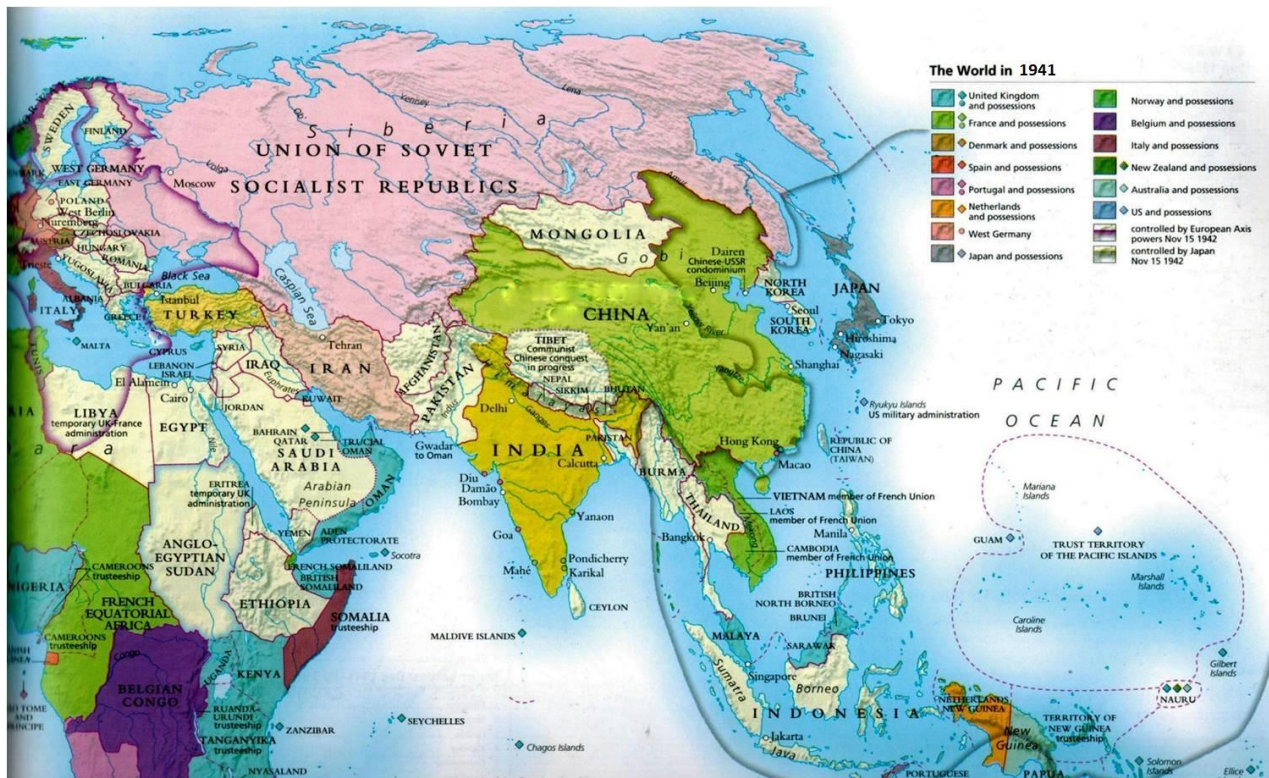
It was able to expand her control over a large territory that expanded to the border of India in the West and New Guinea in the South within the following six months. In the early stages of the war, Japan scored victory after victory.







On April 13 / 1941, Soviet–Japanese Neutrality Pact was signed in Moscow (USSR)





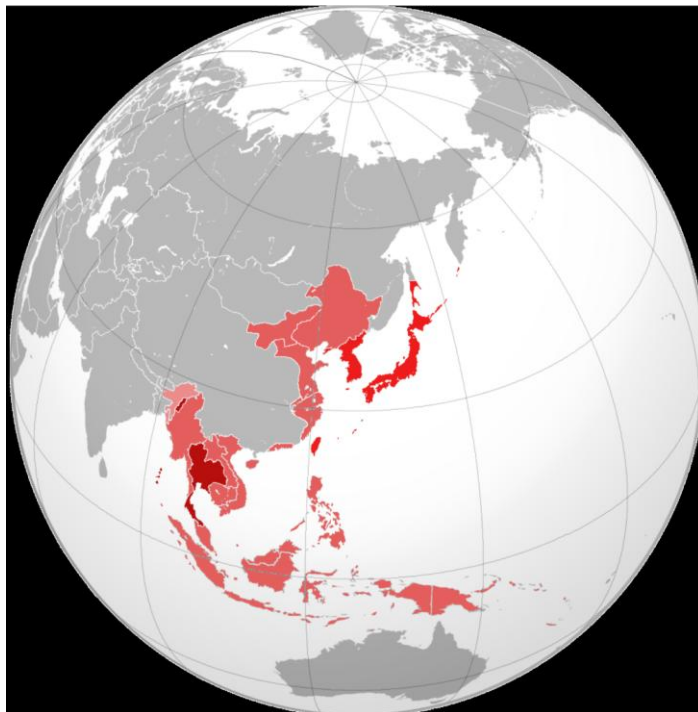
## **“Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere”**

(Japanese: 大東亞共榮圈 Dai Tōa Kyōeiken) was an imperial concept created and promulgated for occupied Asian populations during 1930-45 by the Empire of Japan.



*Hachirō Arita*

It extended greater than East Asia and promoted the cultural and economic unity of Northeast Asians, Southeast Asians, and Oceanians. It also declared the intention to create a self-sufficient "bloc of Asian nations led by the Japanese and free of Western powers". It was announced in a radio address entitled "The International Situation and Japan's Position" by Foreign Minister Hachirō Arita on June 29, 1940.



## Members of Sphere

Real members at dates formally formed the Sphere during maximal area of Japanese expansion:

-  Japan with governments-general
-  Manchukuo 27 September 1940 – August 1945
-  Mengjiang (Inner Mongolia) 27 September 1940 – 1945
-  Reorganized National Government of China 30 March 1940 – 10 August 1945
-  State of Burma 1 August 1943 – 27 March 1945
-  Republic of the Philippines: 14 October 1943 – 17 August 1945
-  Empire of Vietnam 11 March 1945 – 23 August 1945
-  Kingdom of Kampuchea 9 March 1945 – 15 April 1945
-  Kingdom of Laos 1944 – August 1945
-  Azad Hind 21 October 1943 – 18 August 1945
-  Thailand (Khana Ratsadon Period) 21 December 1941–

## The Agony (1942-1945)

The tide began to turn against Japan following the Battle of Midway in June 1942 and the subsequent Battle of Guadalcanal, in which Allied troops wrested the Solomon Islands from Japanese control. During this period the Japanese military was responsible for such war crimes as mistreatment of prisoners of war, massacres of civilians, and the use of chemical and biological weapons. The Japanese military earned a reputation for fanaticism, often employing banzai charges and fighting almost to the last man against overwhelming odds. In 1944 the Imperial Japanese Navy began deploying squadrons of kamikaze pilots who crashed their planes into enemy ships.

Life in Japan became increasingly difficult for civilians due to stringent rationing of food, electrical outages, and a brutal crackdown on dissent. In 1944 the US Army captured the island of Saipan, which allowed the United States to begin widespread bombing raids on the Japanese mainland. These destroyed over half of the total area of Japan's major cities.

The Battle of Okinawa, fought between April and June 1945, was the largest naval operation of the war and left 77,166 Japanese soldiers and more than 140,000 Okinawans dead, suggesting that the planned invasion of mainland Japan would be even bloodier. The Japanese superbattleship Yamato was sunk en route to aid in the Battle of Okinawa.





On July 27, 1945, the Allied powers requested Japan in the Potsdam Declaration to surrender unconditionally, or destruction would continue. However, the military did not consider surrendering under such terms. Accordingly, on August 6, 1945, the US dropped an atomic bomb over Hiroshima, killing over 90,000 people. This was the first nuclear attack in history.

On August 9 the Soviet Union declared war on Japan and invaded Manchukuo, and Nagasaki was struck by a second atomic bomb. The unconditional surrender of Japan was announced by Emperor Hirohito and communicated to the Allies on August 14, and broadcast on national radio on the following day, marking the end of Imperial Japan's ultranationalist ideology, and was a major turning point in Japanese history.





Surgeon General **Shirō Ishii 石井 四郎** (1892 – 1959) was a Japanese army medical officer, microbiologist and the director of Unit 731, a biological warfare unit of the Imperial Japanese Army involved in forced and frequently lethal human experimentation during the Second Sino-Japanese War (1937–1945).



**John Heinrich Detlev Rabe** (1882 –1950) was a German businessman and Nazi Party member who is best known for his efforts to stop the atrocities of the Japanese army during the Nanking Occupation and his work to protect and help the Chinese civilians during the event (12/1937 – 01/1938).

The Nanking Safety Zone, which he helped to establish, sheltered approximately 200,000 Chinese people from slaughter during the massacre. He officially represented Germany and acted as senior chief of the European–American establishment that remained in Nanjing, the Chinese capital at the time, when the city fell to the Japanese troops.



**Chiune Sugihara**, also called **Sempo** 杉原 千畝 (1900 – 1986) was the consul for the Japanese Empire in Lithuania.

During the Second World War, Sugihara helped thousands of Jews flee Europe as well as many Lithuanians by issuing transit visas to them so that they could travel through Japanese territory, risking his job and his family's lives.

A few decades after the war, in 1985, the State of Israel honored Sugihara as one of the Righteous Among the Nations for his actions. He is the only Japanese national to have been so honored.