**Why did the Japanese invade China in 1931?**

In the early twentieth century Japan had taken control of a number of different areas in and around China:

* In 1895 Japan had taken Formosa (Taiwan).
* In 1905, after the Russo-Japanese War, Japan took the Liaodong Peninsula and the South Manchurian Railway.
* In 1920 Japanese troops seized Korea.
* During the First World War Japan took the area of Kiaochow, which had been controlled by the Germans.
* The 21 Demands allowed Japan more control over this area in 1915.

Japan had become the first industrialised nation in Asia and her rapid economic growth was making her the dominant power in the region. Many people in China looked to Japan as an example of a modern nation, which had, not only a developed economy, but also a democratic system of government.

By 1927 Japan had complete control of Manchuria’s economy. They ran mines, railways, factories and ports. They had a large army stationed in the region to protect Japanese investments there. Manchuria was attractive to the Japanese because it had rich natural resources but a small population.

Zhang Zoulin was the leader in Manchuria. He was the most powerful warlord in China, and controlled large amounts of territory. He had been in control of Manchuria since the overthrow of the Manchus in 1911 but was concerned that his son, Zhang Xueliang would not be a suitable ruler to follow him. He was a drug addict and a gambler and did not seem cut out to have such power. Zhang Zoulin was sympathetic to Japanese rule. **Why?** (Think about who in China was more of a threat to his power and how the Japanese could help him.)

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| **Here are the problems that Japan faced in the following years. Use your textbook to work out how you could solve them.** |

However in 1928 Zhang Zoulin changed sides. He decided to support the new Chinese ruler, Chiang Kai Shek, and the Japanese felt that their authority in this area was threatened. What could the Japanese government do to deal with this?

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| Your advice | What did the Japanese government do? |

By 1931 the Japanese had firm control of Zhang Xueliang and of Manchuria’s economy. This did not, however, solve their basic economic problems at home. The Wall Street Crash of 1929 had hit the Japanese economy hard, half of the country’s factories had closed and trade had slumped. The Japanese needed to find a way to stimulate the economy and get trade going again.

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| Your advice. | What did the Japanese do? |

The Japanese could not simply take action; they needed an excuse. The army would therefore need to wait for a reason, which could take a long time.

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| Your advice. | What did the Japanese do? |

The Chinese now looked to the League of Nations (an early version of the United Nations) for help. The League had been set up after the First World War to give ‘Collective Security’ to the world’s nations. Countries would work together to solve problems rather than going to war. The League could take action against Japan, for example by stopping other countries from trading with them or even sending troops. A Commission of Enquiry was sent to China to investigate the situation.

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| Your advice. | What did the Japanese do? |

Using the information you have gathered about Japan’s actions in the 1930s, explain below why the Japanese invaded Manchuria. Remember that you need to come up with at least 3 reasons. Write each reason in a separate paragraph and explain fully how it led to the invasion of China. At the end write a conclusion explaining which reason was most important and why.