

Japanese pearl harbour bombing

[Literature](#), [Russian Literature](#)



By the end of WWI, Japan had emerged as a global superpower gaining recognition from Western Powers like the British and Americans. Japan's influence in the Asia Pacific region during WWII was of particular concern to the Americans and European powers especially in regards to Japan's imperialistic activities. With growing opposition from the US who were against Japan's policies of nationalism, militarism, and imperialism, tension built up to a Pacific war.

In response to a series of US foreign policies and the breakdown of international diplomacy, the Japanese decided to attack the American Pacific Fleet at Pearl Harbour Hawaii on December 7th 1941. The Japanese hoped that this surprise attack would prevent war with the US for at least two years, allowing time to conquer the Asia Pacific. Ultimately, the bombing of Pearl Harbour is a result of the growing tension in Japanese – American relations due to conflicting interests, and triggered when a compromise between these countries could not be agreed upon.

One significant factor that led to the bombing of Pearl Harbour is the Nationalistic and militaristic attitudes of the Japanese. Japan's desire for recognition as a strong military power saw the implementation of many aggressive foreign policies. The outbreak of WWII provided an opportunity for Japan to conquer Eastern Asia since the European powers were focused on war with Germany, leaving the USA as the only country that could thwart Japanese goals. Along with adopting nationalistic policies, Japan also saw that militaristic policies were needed to maintain its power status.

The militaristic nationalists rise to power in the 1930s like PM Tojo, saw Japan inclination towards military action should there be conflict in the Pacific, and this inclination was enhanced by the rivalry between the Army and the Navy. The Navy wished to match the glory of the Army who succeeded in many military campaigns, which eventually led to the bombing Pearl Harbour, a plan developed by Admiral Isoroku Yamamoto. Finally, Japan sought to end the restrictions placed on their navy at the Washington Conference in 1922 and entered the Tripartite agreement with Germany and Italy which increased tension with the US and Allies.

Thus based on these policies, when Japan implemented martial law in 1938 the militarists and nationalists who supported Japanese expansion urged an attack on Pearl Harbour to increase Japanese world status and maintain colonial interests. Japan's introduction of imperialism in the late 1800s stemmed from the Japanese sense of nationalism and desire to build empires like the West is the driving factor that resulted in the Pearl Harbour attack. The main imperialistic aim was to create the Greater East Asia Co-prosperity Sphere.

This was to end Western influence in Asia but was in fact an excuse to conquer Asia and facilitate the growth of the Japanese empire. Japan's invasion of China and Indo-China resulted in the establishment of embargoes and economic sanctions by the US. With little resources left because of these sanctions, Japan began preparing for Pacific war. Peace talks failed and the Japanese now certain that the US would enter the war wanted to achieve

their imperial aims of conquering the resourceful lands of Malaya and Dutch East Indies before the Americans intervened.

This led to the bombing of Pearl Harbour to destroy the US Pacific Fleet in order to postpone American interference with Japanese imperial expansion. Knowing that the US would recover within two years the Japanese believed that they would have conquered South East Asia by then, obtaining resources like rubber and oil for war, and a strategic position to fight the US. Ultimately, the attack on Pearl Harbour was a tactic used by the Japanese to postpone war with the US as to achieve imperial aims. After WWI, the US attempted to remain neutral to international conflicts that did not concern them under their Isolationism policy.

This policy allowed the Japanese to expand their empire without American intervention and also led to the Pearl Harbour attack. Despite the isolationist stance many including President Roosevelt wanted to intervene, as Japan's invasion of China violated America's Open Door policy whereby China was to be left independent so that trade was to be left unimpeded by other dominant powers. Since Japan's resources came mainly from America, the US implemented a series of sanctions and embargoes, attempting to pressure the Japanese into stopping their expansionist activities.

This began in 1938 with the 'moral' embargo to restrict aircraft support. By 1941 all Japanese assets in US were frozen and oil exports reduced by 90%. Having lost their primary supplier of war resources and left with a minimal amount of resource, Japan had to make a decision of whether to give in to American demands or conquer South East Asia for its resources. The

militaristic Japanese government decided to respond to these US policies bombing of Pearl Harbour, hoping to prevent the US from thwarting their imperialistic goals.

By the time the Americans recovered, Japan hoped to have gained a large empire and resources thus no longer requiring American trade and hoped that the Americans would realise war would be too costly. Reaching the height of tension between the Japanese and Americans diplomatic dialogue may have prevented the bombing of Pearl Harbour and thus preventing a Pacific war. However in 1933, Japan left the League of Nations thus destroying any platform for international dialogue to resolve disputes.

With the establishment of the American embargoes, the Japanese took a dual approach on the situation. This was to negotiate with the Americans for peace agreements whilst preparing for war. The Japanese High Command offered to withdraw from Indo-China and in exchange they would maintain control of the Chinese regions they have conquered and America would reopen trade and unfreeze assets. The American Secretary of State Cordell Hull refused this offer, stating that trade and unfreezing assets would only happen if Japan left Indo-China and China and abiding the US Open Door Policy in China.

Feeling unsatisfied, the High command of Japan rejected this offer on December 1st 1941 during the Imperial conference and so proceeded to bomb Pearl Harbour on December 7th. As mentioned, this was a dual approach; the breakdown of international diplomacy triggered the Japanese Navy to proceed with the bombing of Pearl Harbour hoping that this surprise

attack would prevent the Americans from entering war before Japan could conquer South East Asia. Governed by a nationalistic and militaristic government that focused on the imperialism, tension between Japan and the US accumulated during the 1930s.

The outbreak of WWII saw Japan's desire to conquer South East Asia for resources. To accomplish this the Japan needed a tactic to prevent US intervention with their expansion for two years and this attack on the American Pacific Fleet at Pearl Harbour was a reasonable plan. While many argue that the US government's foreign policy forced the Japanese to attack as an excuse to go to war, ultimately the build up of tension between the two countries due to conflicting interests based on nationalism, militarism and imperialism and the inability to reach a compromise due to lack of diplomacy is what caused the bombing of Pearl Harbour in 1941.