

Pearl harbor: components, causes, events, significance and intelligence failure

War



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The Pearl Harbor incident of 7 December, 1941, was a very important episode in the history of international affairs. The Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor dragged the United States into the Second World War and it surely changed the trend of the war. So long United States remained aloof from the War due to its avowed policy of isolation from European affairs. But the Pearl Harbor crisis directly fell upon it and naturally, as retaliation, the United States waged war against Japan. Due to this event, the War which broke out in 3 September, 1939, took a Global shape.

Moreover, before the Pearl Harbor incident, it was in favor of the Axis powers. But the American involvement rapidly changed the tide and ultimately the United States and its Allies came out victorious. Tension between Japan and the United States It is a cardinal truth that the United States raised a strong protest against the Manchurian adventure of Japan and former also refused to accord official recognition to Manchukuo. The United States made it crystal clear that they would never diverge from their treaty rights and not recognize any change in China affected by unilateral action of Japan.

The Japanese Government, in turned also resented this attitude of the United States; resultantly the tension gradually evoked, and though the intensity rose from time to time, it began to mount at a steady base. It future reaches up the ladder in 1937 when Japan began her full scale invention in China. In short the Government of the United States which had all along stood for the principle of ' Open Door' involving equality of opportunity could hardly be accepted to view it complacency Japan's attempt to close that door by an

imperialistic attitude disguised under the schemes of 'new order' and 'co-prosperity sphere'.

Thus when Japan began her full scale invention in 1937, American opinion branded Japan as a wonton aggressor against China. All though the United States refused to ratify the League of Nations due to some constitutional reasons, but it co-operated with the later in its efforts to restrain Japan and participated in Brussels conference of 1937, which was meant to minimize the difference between Japan and China. But the Japanese government totally repudiated the views of the Brussels conference and definitely announced that they would not, by means, tolerate any shorts of interference by third party regarding in the issue of China and Japan.

As soon as the Second World War broke out the positions of Britain, France and Holland on their extra colonial possessions in East Asia became weak. Hence, at that time, Japan grabbed the opportunity to builds its own hold in Eastern Asia. Japan sought to strengthen their positions through diplomatic preparations. In the mean time they had already joined Germany and Italy in the anti-communist impact. In the year 1940 Japan signed a treaty of military alliance with these two powers. According to this treaty, these powers were mutually independent to one another, in terms of both military and economic affairs.

The treaty further acknowledged that, in any one of these three countries were attacked by a power not yet involved in the European war or the Sino Japanese conflict; they would unitedly face the invader. Clearly, this treaty was a serious warning to the United States to remain in a neutral position.

Another major diplomatic stamps led by Japan was their foreign minister, <https://assignbuster.com/pearl-harbor-components-causes-events-significance-and-intelligence-failure/>

Matsouka, to Berlin in order to study the European situation. But actually the real purpose was to conclude an agreement with Russia. During his tour to Russia, Matsouka visited Moscow and entered into a neutrality pact with Soviet Union.

By this pact both the powers agreed to respect each other's territorial integrity and to remain in a neutral position if either were attacked by a third power. Thus, with the finalization of all her diplomatic arrangement with Russia, Germany and Italy, Japan felt herself encouraged to push on her plans in the Far East. Due to all search diplomatic attempts made by Japan to impose their hegemony. On the Far East, the United States, resultantly, stiffen her attitude towards Japan. When Japan joined the Rome-Berlin Axis, then in the year 1940 United States imposed an embargo on the export of scrap-iron and petroleum to Japan.

But Washington refused to recognize the puppet government set up by Japan at Nan king in the year 1940 and instead extended financial credit to Chiang Kai-shek's regime. But when the weak Vichy government of France gave permission to Japan for occupying Indo-China and to use its airfields, then in 1941 the United States captured Japanese goods and thus, trade with Japan was made more difficult and made the later very angry. At that time the United States was the only power, who lay across the path of their imperialistic designs.

That time Great Britain faced life and death struggle with Germany, and France and Netherlands were strongly dominated by Hitler. None of these powers were in the position to defend their colonial possession in East Asia.

Hence the temptation to size them was very strong for Japan. But Japan
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faced only obstacle from the United States. So they determined to overcome from this obstacle. The government of Tojo sent a special envoy to the United States for a peaceful understanding settlement. But when the negotiation had just begun the Japanese dropped bombs on American naval base at Pearl Harbor on 7th December, 1941.

America suffered a massive loss for this incident. Similarly they bombed in Singapore, Guam and the strategic centers of the Philippines and announced war with the United States and Britain. On the following day the United States, Britain and the Netherlands East Indies declared war on Japan. The European war thus developed into global conflict. International effect - Success of Japan The Japanese attack upon Pearl Harbor precipitated the United States into active belligerency and this inaugurated the Pacific phase of the Second World War. The initial success of Japanese was phenomenal.

Simultaneously with their attack on Pearl Harbor the Japanese struck at the American base Guam and Wake and captured the islands. Next they took Hong Kong from the British and seized the capital of Sarawak, a British protectorate in Borneo. They sank two big British battleships, Prince of Wales and Repulse off the eastern coast of Malaya. Then they moved rapidly down the Malaya peninsula, slashing through impassable jungles, and received the unconditional surrender of Singapore with its impregnable naval base in the year of 1942. The Netherlands East Indies were attacked at various points.

British and American ships, as well as Australian troops were rushed to the help of the Dutch forces. But all these forces were scattered by the Japanese after a brief fighting. In the Philippines the local forces, helped by the Americans, offered a gallant resistance for about four months. However, all <https://assignbuster.com/pearl-harbor-components-causes-events-significance-and-intelligence-failure/>

the resistance collapsed with the capture of island of Corregidor by the Japanese in May 1942. About this time, the Japanese had made themselves masters of Burma. Thailand aligned herself with the Japanese and, although theoretically independent, felt the heavy hand of her powerful ally.

In the North Pacific, Japan had established footholds in the Aleutian Islands and in the south west, they had seized a considerable portion of New Guinea and the Solomon Island. Thus, within six months after their attack on Pearl Harbor, the Japanese had wiped out the colonial possessions of the British and the Dutch in the far east and the south eastern Asia up to the borders of India and had made themselves masters of the American outputs in the Western Pacific and the of the Philippines and American protégé. It was an amazing record of victory at that time.

Great East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere Japan had been demanding for sometime past of a ' new order in East Asia' as a sort of justification for her invasion of China. Japan conquered and brought under her control practically the whole of south eastern Asia. They expanded their conquest and declared their intention of setting up a ' Greater Asia co-prosperity sphere'. Japanese recent success against the western powers made them enable to assume the role of liberators of the people of East Asia from the white man's yoke.

They professed that their object was to eliminate the Anglo-American imperialism and to substitute in its place a self-sufficient economic system in which all the people would enjoy prosperity in common. The Greater East Asia was to be welded together into an economic whole in which Japan Manchukuo and parts of China would be the industrial centers and other countries, within the spheres, had to co-operate with them by <https://assignbuster.com/pearl-harbor-components-causes-events-significance-and-intelligence-failure/>

providing raw materials. In this way, under Japanese direction, trade and commerce would flourish to the benefit of all the countries concerned.

In the areas which they liberated from foreign rule, the Japanese set up independent Governments, but took care to select such collaborators as would govern along the lines laid down by them. In the name of economic development, they rather exploited the occupied regions for their own benefit instead than that of the conquered peoples. They posed as liberators, but in fact, they wanted to remain as conquerors and exploiters and sought to disguise their intention by setting up a pattern of rule they had already over in Manchuria and in occupied China. Causes of Japan's Defeat Japan had begun well and achieved a series of astonishing success.

But the strain of carrying on a far flung war began to tell upon her. As a matter of fact, she did not possess the reserves of men and material to meet the counter-attack of the power which she had deliberately provoked. The United States with her enormous resources in men, money and material produced new ships, aero planes, guns and other arms and ammunitions of war in almost unlimited number and that with a rapidity which Japan could not anticipate. Hence in spite of the priority given to the war in Europe, is the use of American men and materials, the United States could quickly bring sufficient armed might to bear on the Japanese.

Besides, the continued resistance of China was a serious drain of Japan's men and money. It virtually handicapped her war efforts in other quarters and gave the Allies the much needed berathing spell. The first major attack on Japanese positions in the Pacific was made by the United States in 1942.

In that year, a concentration on of the Japanese shipping was met by a force
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of American Aircraft under the command General McArthur of the North East Coast of Australia in the Coral Sea. In a six-day battle, the Japanese were defeated and turned back.

Thereafter followed the naval battle of Midway in which the Japanese suffered heavy loss. This victory prevented the extension of Japanese power towards the South East Pacific. These were in the main defensive operations. But in August 1942, the United States took first step towards recovering the lost territories by an attempt to clear the Japanese forces out of the Solomon Island in South West Pacific. The Allied strategy was to capture the Japanese bases in that region and then to proceed North on the route to Tokyo.

By severe amphibious warfare, the Americans secured a foothold on Guadal Cannel, a strong Japanese airbase in the Solomon's. This was the beginning of the Island-hopping strategy by which the Japanese outputs were conquered and converted into Allied bases, and then used as springboards for further attacks and progress towards Japan. By the spring of 1944, the Gilbert and Marshall Islands were captured from the Japanese and these successes opened the way to Saipan and Tinian in the Marians. These advances were made at a heavy cost for Japanese, fortified in pill-boxes and protected by mines, greeted the invaders with intense cross-fires.

The advance through the Marians prepared the way for McArthur's re-conquest of the Philippines. His landing on the island of Leyte was fiercely contested by the Japanese. The Japanese fleets, which sought to intercept the landing, suffered a disasters defeat in the battle for the control of the Leyte-Gulf in October 1944. This battle, known as the Second Battle of the Philippine Sea, shattered the moral power of Japan. Henceforth, the Japanese
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wave continued to recede. The Philippines fell in July 1945. At the same time, island-hopping of the Allies continued.

They stormed Iwo Jima, one of the Bonin Islands and less than eight hundred miles from Tokyo, after a heavy aerial bombardment which lasted without intermission for two months. The next target was Okinawa, one of the islands in the Ryukyu group, and a 'door step' of Japan. Here was fought one of the bloodiest battles of the war. The Japanese casualties were very heavy, but they made effective use of 'suicide planes' and hit from the air about two hundred enemy vessels of the classes including battleships and cruisers and took a heavy toll of American lives.

By July 1945, an Anglo-American squadron was able to sail along the Japanese coast and drop shells on Honshu. At the same time, the fighting airships, the B 29s, hurled death and destruction on the important cities of Japan which, thus, was rapidly nearing her doom. In July 1945, the representatives of the Allied powers (Great Britain, America, China and Russia) met in a conference at Potsdam and called upon the Japanese Government "to proclaim the unconditional surrender of all Japanese armed forces, and to provide proper and adequate assurance of good faith in such actions.

The alternative for Japan was prompt and utter destruction". The Japanese ignored the ultimatum and continued the losing fight. Thereupon, on August 6, the Americans dropped an Atomic Bomb on Hiroshima which wiped out more than half of the city - Hiroshima had ceased to exist. Three days after, i. e. on August 9, a second and more destructive Atomic Bombardment destroyed the city of Nagasaki, a ship building port and industrial center. On <https://assignbuster.com/pearl-harbor-components-causes-events-significance-and-intelligence-failure/>

the following day, the Japanese Government sued the peace and Emperor Hirohito acquiesced in unconditional surrender on August 14, 1945. The Japanese dream of Empire suddenly vanished in the thin air" (Shankar). Some questions But some questioned remain to be unanswered. First, why did Japan attack Pearl Harbor? Secondly, why did America join the war against Japan? Was not an ultimatum sufficient for the purpose? Was the Pearl Harbor incident real reason for the American involvement in Second World War? It is stark reality that the Paris Peace Conference had failed to satisfy the colonial ambition of both Italy and Japan. The spoils of colonial expansion were shared by Britain, France and America (Clement, C.).

Naturally it joined Italy and Germany and formed the Axis-Alliance for clearing a ' New Order'. Soon it began to expand towards China and established the puppet government. It surely embitters its relations with America which too had some interests there. Moreover, America, had in the meantime occupied a vast area in the Pacific and Japan's ambitions in the East was evidently against the American policy. For all these reasons, a confrontation was inevitable. But both of them remained passive onlookers at the first stage of the war. America, of course, had some sympathy for the Allies.

But as the Monroe-Doctrine prevented it from taking a part in the League of Nations and similarly discouraged to be involved it in the post-war European politics and the war of 1939 (Mowat, R. B). But it was against the Axis power, because it feared that democracy might face a crisis if these powers won the war. One juncture president Roosevelt even asked the ' Dictators' to assure that they would not commit any aggression against 25 nations ranging from

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Finland to Iran (Sen, A). But as the 'phony war' was ensuring the Axis victory in an electric speed, America became very much anxious about the future.

In order to help the Allies, it even changed its policy of 'catch and carry', and switched over to that of 'lend and lease'. He even informed Mr. Churchill that he would be gradually provocative in spite of the avowed policy of neutrality. It is true that the Congress of America had so long kept in outside the European politics, because it was satisfied with the territorial settlement much in Europe (Tandon, M. P.). But the rapid failure of the Allies to cope with the military brilliance of the Axis powers convinced America that its interference was an avoidable necessity.

Of course, Japan was guilty of an unprovoked attack on it. But when Japan felt that Italy was reaping the harvest and Germany was breaking up the Allied-empire like a castle of cards, it could not sit idly any more. On December 7, 1941, its aim for its suddenly attacked Pearl Harbor and, there, its war with America began on that day. It was surely a case of Japanese hypocrisies because it did it, "... while its diplomats were smilingly discussing minor difficulties in Washington" (Wells, H. G.). The American fleet was idling and unprepared and Japan did not declare a war. Naturally, America answered in a language of arms.

Intelligence Crisis According to some historians, the Pearl Harbor affair was the outcome of an intelligence-failure on the part of America. Similarly, in spite of initial success, Japan pathetically lost the war mainly because of its failure in the intelligence operations. To begin with, the Pearl Harbor affair is regarded as the worst case of American military intelligence. First, for a long time, the relationship between the United States and Japan was fast-
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deteriorating, but the American naval intelligence did not even have the minimum amount of strategic or tactical speculation about it.

It simply thought that, Japan might attack Thailand at that time. As Philippines were the strong hold in the Pacific, the American intelligence apprehended that Japan might launch an attack on that island. In short, Pearl Harbor was out of American calculation of any probable Japanese aggression. Secondly, another problem was that America lacked Human intelligence on Japan. America had a few geisha girls on the payroll, but no agents in the Japanese Elite or military hierarchy. This is another reason for the American intelligence problems regarding any probable Japanese attack in the Harbor.

Thirdly, America came out successful in breaking the Japanese code, but what they were really intercepting was some diplomatic and espionage-information, nothing off the nature of Japanese military plans or war-targets. Japan also tactfully changed their codes some days before the Pearl Harbor affair and the American intelligence failed to cope with it. The American fleets stationed at the Harbor to protect it, were too weak to face the Japanese heavy naval power. These fleets were inferior in quality and, in such case, a combat with the Japanese navy would have been a mere suicidal attempt.

These fleets were neither capable of countering a air-attack nor a naval attack. Clearly, the American intelligence had least expectations for any attack on the Pearl Harbor. On Japan's part, similarly, there were some intelligence failures. The Japanese very tactfully attacked Pearl Harbor and it was a grand success for the former. But due to lack of proper intelligence service, it could not keep up the trend of its initial victory. First, its <https://assignbuster.com/pearl-harbor-components-causes-events-significance-and-intelligence-failure/>

intelligence actually underestimated the American potentiality in the economic and military affairs.

Economically, America was the richest country of the world and its industrial development was enough to supply the war materials which were enough to bring Japan under control. Moreover, as war started, America stopped all exports to Japan, particularly iron and steel, which materially affected Japan's war preparations. Thus, it was a dismal failure of Japanese intelligence. Secondly, the Japanese also failed to hit the strategic targets of America. Particularly oil-depots, large ammunitions depots etc remained outside the Japanese military target.

Japanese intelligence actually failed to supply its air force the correct information regarding the important places which, militarily were to be regarded as of basic importance for America. Finally, another fatal flaw of the Japanese intelligence service was that it failed to supply the correct information to the military department about the public moral which was galvanized during the war. The people so long remained isolated from European affairs and perhaps, the Japanese intelligence thought that such peace-loving people could hardly fight against such a military debacle.

But after the initial shock of Pearl Harbor, both the military and the ordinary people united like a solid phalanx which, ultimately brought out American victory over Japan. Was it really an Intelligence Failure? But one point is yet to be discussed with all seriousness. Was the Pearl harbor-crisis an outcome of the failure of American Intelligence Service? As Clyde P. H. observes, "Responsibility for the Pearl Harbor disaster presents a complex problem with

which historians will wrestle for years to come (Clyde, 614). It is really a very complex question on which the historians have quarreled with one another.

It is true that the growing power of Hitler convinced the Americans that their own security was linked up with the war fortunes of the Allied powers and that Hitler, in full of control of European continent, would precede to the conquest of America. As Keswani K. B. points out, “ On September 16, 1940, Congress passed the Compulsory Military Service and Training Law whereby conscription was introduced for the first time in the history of the country” (Saha). Thus, it is evident that, America was preparing for the impending war. But, surely, it was seeking for an excuse.

When Japan, the Asiatic ally of Hitler, bombards Pearl Harbor, America exactly found an opportunity to join the war. Whether it was a failure of intelligence service or not, is obviously a crucial question. As Clyde points out, by July 1946, there had already been eight official investigations – yet it seemed that the full story had not been revealed. The earliest investigation, made by the then secretary of the Navy, Frank Knox and Associate Supreme Court Justice, Owen Roberts, laid the major responsibility on the Pearl Harbor commanders, Admiral Husband, S. Kimmel and General Walter C.

Short. But later investigations, including that of a joint Congressional Committee, laid less blame on the commanders and more upon departments and personalities in the Government at Washington. Whatever the ultimate verdict of history may be, the Pearl Harbor attack was of tremendous importance not merely as a military catastrophe, but also in its political and intelligence implications. Most probably, it was not a matter of failure in the

intelligence service. There are both immediate and long range reasons suggesting that the attack should have been anticipated.

J. C. Grew, the American Ambassador at Japan, had warned the State Department, eleven months in advance that if war came, Japan might open hostilities with an attack on Pearl Harbor. From September onwards, intercepted Japanese messages revealed a sharp interest in the location of ships at Pearl Harbor. Grew had also given repeated warning that the Japanese might depend on surprise attack at several points - particularly at Pearl Harbor. Now, it is a question, why did the American Government not take sufficient measures in order to prevent such a naval onslaught.

It isto be rememberedthat the casualties were as staggering as the damage of the fleet - 2343 dead, 1272 wounded and 960 missing. At least nineteen ships were totally wrecked by the Japanese attack. The reason of this catastrophe is perhaps not the failure of the intelligence service - it was probably an outcome of a deliberate policy of American Government. Conclusion History has not as yet uncovered the full explanation of Pearl Episode. So theories and hypothesis were abundant. Most probably, America was awaiting an opportunity to join the war.

When the Pearl Harbor incident took place, President Roosevelt took the opportunity to convince the Congress and the American people that a war with Japan was inevitable. So, some historians like Clyde, believed that it was planned and plotted by the American Government in order to find out a scope to join the war. In this way, the President surmounted the obstacle raised by the Monroe Doctrine in joining the European politics and discarding the doctrine of isolation from international affairs.

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