

The fall of japanese imperialism



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The Empire of Japan started their imperial ways back in 1868 and was brought to an end in 1947. The downfall of the empire started during the second World War, after trying to take over many territories around the Pacific region. The Japanese provoked many of the Allied forces during their take over of these territories. After the U. S. embargoed oil to the Japanese, the Japanese retaliate by bombing Pearl Harbor in December 1941. This led to bringing the U. S. into WWII and declaring war against Japan. These actions were fatal for the Japanese Empire, and it eventually led to their demise. After losing significant battles and not being able to get access to outside resources, the Japanese lost their imperial grasp on the Pacific. Their pride and honor fueled their actions and would not accept defeat until the very end. Even after losing most of the territory that they had gained over the years, the Empire still refused to surrender. Surrender eventually came in 1945, after the U. S. dropped two atomic bombs on the Japanese homeland. This led to a change in the political system of Japan and forever has changed the country.

The Battle of Midway, which took place from June 4 to 7, 1942, was an important battle for the Japanese to win. ^[1] The Japanese believed if they could defeat the American naval and air forces, then they would rethink the war between the two countries. Japan was hoping that they could submit the Americans into a surrender, just six months after starting the war with them when they bombed Pearl Harbor in December. Their plan was to lure the Americans into a trap so that they could destroy their aircraft carriers as well as occupy the island of Midway. This island was an important strategic location for the Japanese to take over. It would extend the defensive barrier

that Japan was forming in response to air raid bombings and it would also help with future plans for attacks on other Allied territories, such as Fiji, Samoa, and Hawaii. It also served as a refueling and resupplying station for American submarines which allowed them to extend their radius of movement by around 1,200 miles as well as a seaplane base which allowed for bomber planes to attack Wake Island. ^[2] So taking this island away from the Allied forces would be a decisive win for the Japanese and would setback America in the Pacific Theater.

The Japanese attack on Midway island did not go according to plan. The American forces became aware of Japan's plan to attack the island due to their code breaking of the Japanese Naval codes. ^[3] The Americans after breaking the code started to hear information on an upcoming attack on an objective, which they eventually realized was Midway island. In an attempt to distract the enemy, the Americans told their men on Midway to send out an uncoded broadcast radio message that they are running out of water due to their water purification machine breaking. ^[4] This message made it to the Japanese, and within less than a day, the American code breakers were hearing about it over Japanese communications. ^[5] What was interesting was that the Japanese did not question the legitimacy of the uncoded broadcast, even though it was so close in range to the Japanese. The American codebreakers continued to listen and crack Japanese encoded messages, learning that they would attack Midway island sometime on the 4 or 5 of June. Just a few weeks before the planned attack the Japanese changed their code to protect their messages from the codebreakers, but the new code only took a few days to crack. ^[6] The Americans had all the information they

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needed to form a strategy for the upcoming attack. They knew where and when the attack would be taking place, as well as knowing the numbers and strength of their attacking forces. The Japanese had the numbers advantage, but since their forces were divided into four separate squadrons, they would be unable to provide support to their comrades in other squadrons due to their distance from one another. All this knowledge gave the Americans quite a good advantage over the Japanese attacking forces.

The Japanese thought they were setting up a trap for American forces. They planned to keep all of their battleships concealed before striking, so that they would wipe out the American forces and not give them time to call in for reinforcements. They also had some battleships several hundred miles out from Midway to intercept any American ships that would come to aid in the battle. To throw the American fleet off, the Japanese set a small force to attack and invade some of the Aleutian Islands, Attu and Kiska. ^[7] This region of the Alaska territory allowed the U. S. to send land based bomber planes from there all the way to Japan for bombing raids. The Japanese took control of these two islands and was the first time that the U. S. has had its land occupied by a foreign entity since the War of 1812. ^[8] This invasion of American territory was done also to take away ships that would otherwise have been used in the defense at Midway. This operation took place just one day before the planned attack on Midway, though it was planned for the same day. Time zones throw off the execution date resulting in an early attack. The Japanese occupied these islands till July 29, 1943.

When it was time for the battle to commence on June 4, the Japanese sent planes from their aircraft carriers to the island of Midway to begin the fighting. The Japanese were still unaware that an American fleet of ships was just east of Midway, waiting for the Japanese attack. When the Japanese planes went to go refuel and resupply on ammunition, they discovered the waiting American fleet. ^[9] The American forces attacked the Japanese forces, destroying three out of the four airship carriers that Japan had brought with them. The remaining Japanese carrier then sent a counterattack against the American's airship carriers, crippling one of the American carriers. The American fleet eventually found the remaining Japanese carrier and was able to disable its launch pad before it was sunk. The battle continued on for the next two days on land at Midway as well as on sea. By the end, the American forces emerged victorious after destroying four carriers as well as two heavy cruisers and around 300 planes. ^[10] The American forces only lost one carrier, one destroyer, and 144 planes. ^[11] This loss was the first decisive defeat for the Japanese forces, creating a large setback in the war to come. This battle not only destroyed many important ships and air vessels on the Japanese side, but it also the spirits of the Japanese fighters. The Japanese lost the ability to have an offensive naval strategy and was never able to rebuild it back to the power it once was. This battle was a turning point in the war, which would eventually lead to the downfall of the Japanese forces.

Soon after their defeat at the island of Midway, the Japanese decided to target an Allied airstrip that resided at Milne Bay, which was located at the eastern tip of New Guinea. The Japanese believed this bay was not well defended, only thinking that two or three companies would be defending the Allied

airstrip. When it came time for the attack and invasion, on August 25, 1942, of the land, the Japanese were met with a surprising number of troops. Instead of encountering the expected number of troops, around 600, the Allied forces had almost 9,000 troops ready to fight off the Japanese. ^[12] This put the Japanese at a large disadvantage, since they only had less than 2,000 troops themselves. ^[13] Japanese intelligence work done before this mission was not the best, and it put the Japanese at a significant setback. This led to the Japanese coming up with a plan to try and land their troops behind the defending Allied forces. As the Japanese forces approached the bay on landing boats, Allied aircrafts were able to destroy a number of the soon-to-be-landed boats filled with Japanese troops. Those troops who were able to make it to land pushed inwards towards the targeted airstrip. The Australian Militia created a line of defence for the oncoming Japanese invaders and were met with a heavy resistance. The Australian Militia had to fall back, but this is when their reinforcements decided to join the battle. With the unexpected appearance of the Second Australian Imperial Force, the Japanese were extremely outnumbered and outgunned. ^[14] After days of fighting and Allied air support helping significantly in defending against the Japanese, the Japanese forces withdrew from the attack on September 7, 1942. They had suffered heavy casualties, leading to a larger gap in troop numbers between the two forces, were running low on supplies, and spirits were low. The Battle of Milne Bay was one of the first battles that the Allies had significantly defeated Japanese land forces. This was not the first battle for the Japanese to lose, but it was the first for them to have to withdraw and abandon their mission at hand. The battle showed the limited power that

Japan had with their small forces of troops. For most of the war, Japan was at a numbers disadvantage against the ever growing Allied forces and air support. This battle was a morale booster for Allied troops, it showed them just how weak the Japanese forces were compared to theirs. This was a great setback for the Japanese and would eventually lead to their demise.

World War II was coming to an end soon, and by 1944 it was not looking good for Japan. Allied forces by now have captured or destroyed most of Japan's strategic outposts. Japan also was suffering from on sea as well. Allied submarines were a vital contributor to the impending defeat of Japan in the Pacific Theater. U. S. submarines alone were able to take out 55% of Japanese merchant ships, with other Allied forces adding to that percentage.

[15] This was a significant contributing factor to the demise of Japan's economy. In order to maintain a domestic economy and military power during the war, Japan require 6 million tons of shipping. When they attacked Pearl Harbor in 1941, their nation's shipping capacity was at 6.5 million tons. By the end of the war Japan was left with an approximate 1.46 million tons of shipping power, less than a fourth of the shipping power they had at the start of the war. [16] Over the course of the war, U. S. submarines were able to sink around 1,300 Japanese merchant ships and around 200 military ships. Overall Allied forces were able to sink 2,117 Japanese merchant ships, which is calculated to around 8 million tons worth of shipping power. [17] These submarine attacks were a contributing factor to the surrender of Japan in 1945.

Just two months after winning the war in the European Theater, Allied forces wanted to bring an end to the war in Pacific Theater with the Potsdam Declaration on July 26, 1945. This declaration from the U. S., Britain, and China announced the terms of surrender for Japan. The Japanese had to accept their terms, no changes or exceptions. The Potsdam Declaration stated, “ We will not deviate from them. There are no alternatives. We shall brook no delay.” The Japanese were left with this ultimatum, if not accepted they would be met with “ prompt and utter destruction”. The Japanese did not come to terms with the declaration and ignored the Allies’ threats. One day earlier on July 25, orders were given for atomic bombs to be dropped on four Japanese cities. Then on August 6, eleven days after the Allied forces demanded unconditional surrender, the “ Little Boy” atomic bomb was dropped on Hiroshima. Confusion went around the Japanese on what happened to Hiroshima. They would have known of a large scale bombing raid or if there were large quantity of explosives in the city. A pilot took off from Tokyo to assess the damage and report back with his findings. The pilot was able to see a large cloud of smoke from 100 miles away from Hiroshima. After circling the city to see the damage, the pilot landed and started to organize relief. It took the Japanese military officials 16 hours after the bomb dropped for them to realize Hiroshima had been destroyed by a new bomb after President Truman announced the success of the bomb. ^[18] Also during his announcement, Truman stated, “ If they do not now accept our terms, they may expect a rain of ruin from the air, the like of which has never been seen on this earth. Behind this air attack will follow sea and land forces in such numbers and power as they have not yet seen and with the fighting skill of which they are already well aware.” A broadcast was sent over radio <https://assignbuster.com/the-fall-of-japanese-imperialism/>

waves every 15 minutes to Japan with a similar message, warning that other Japanese cities will be bombed if Japan does not agree to the Potsdam Declaration. ^[19] The Prime Minister met with Japanese press and informed them that the government plans to ignore the Allies' demands and is still continuing to fight. The Chief of the Naval General Staff, Admiral Soemu Toyoda, figured that the Allies could only have one or two more bombs left at the ready and decided that Japan could endure the remaining attacks. The next atomic bomb, the "Fat Man", was dropped on Nagasaki on August 9, just three days after the first bomb destroyed Hiroshima. The Japanese war council was meeting when they heard news of Nagasaki, they were already debating surrender now that the Soviet Union had just declared war on them that day and invaded Manchuria. The council needed to have a unanimous decision on the matter of surrender and the vote was split down the middle. After meeting with the Emperor, the Prime Minister informed the council of the Emperor's will to surrender. ^[20] Six days after the bombing of Nagasaki, Japan announced their surrender on August 15. They signed the instrument of surrender to the Allied forces on September 2, concluding World War II.

The end of the Japanese Empire was brought by Western powers, the same powers that influenced them to start their imperial ways in the first place. After facing defeat in World War II, Japan entered the period of Occupied Japan. As the allied forces occupied Japan, they made Japan change the Constitution of the Empire of Japan, also known as the Meiji Constitution, and revise it in its entirety. The new Japan's constitution, named the Constitution of Japan or the Postwar Constitution, changed the Emperor's power into just symbolic power and their government became a parliamentary style system.

Since its enforcement in 1947, the Empire of Japan was renamed to just simply Japan. ^[21]

The Constitution of Japan changed the principle laws that governed the country. Their new parliamentary system government was not favored by all, with the loss of power of the Emperor and his shift to a ceremonial role. The militaristic monarchy system that was previously in place was taken down and a liberal democracy took form. A notable article, Article 9, that was put into the constitution, forced the nation to lose the right to militarize. With the new Article 9 states “Aspiring sincerely to an international peace based on justice and order, the Japanese people forever renounce war as a sovereign right of the nation and the threat or use of force as means of settling international disputes.” This new article stripped away the Japanese right to use force in order to solve any international dispute, making Japan a pacifist nation. The article goes on to state, “In order to accomplish the aim of the preceding paragraph, land, sea, and air forces, as well as other war potential, will never be maintained. The right of belligerency of the state will not be recognized.” This part of the article took away the right for Japan to have any form of military and any right to warlike behaviour will not be recognized by any other nation. ^[22] Ever since the enactment of the constitution, it has yet to have been amended. No amendments can be made to the constitution unless two-thirds of both houses of the Japanese Diet and a majority approve a referendum.

The Japanese were responsible for their own demise of their imperial empire. They over extended their reach, while at the same time angering many other

countries in the process. This, as well as provoking the U. S., led to the Allies going to war with the Japanese. The Allied forces brought down the Japanese Empire and reformed their government system. They stopped the Japanese imperialism and brought Japan into a new era. The once great power in the Pacific was no more and they were on the mend for many years to come. With their new system, Japan was able to recover from the war and rebuild their country and economy. The end of Japanese imperialism did not mean an end for Japan. Japan is a thriving country now, even without imperialism.

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