

U.S./Japan War Talks 1941 - Could cooler heads have prevailed?

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Objective/Guiding Question – December 7, 1941 was a date, which will live in infamy. Between 1941-1945 Japanese and American soldiers subsequently died in a 10/1 ratio, resulting in hundreds of thousands of deaths. The civilian cost is immeasurable. Was the Pearl Harbor attack inevitable? Could alternative foreign policy decisions made by diplomats from the U.S. and Japan to prevent the Pacific War? Consider ways American diplomats provoked and tried to avoid provoking the Japanese. Why did Japan choose the Southern Strategy over the Northern Strategy? What was the strategy of the U.S. military leading up to Pearl Harbor? How did Japan attempt to create a Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere? Was it successful? How and why did the U.S. object to Japan's ambitions?

Prior to the Lesson- Students should review and familiarize themselves with important vocabulary, the timeline, maps/geography of the region, and cultural differences between the U.S. and Japan. The teacher can include historical events dating back to the Meiji Restoration. This can be done in a whole class format or as independent seatwork practice.

From March to December 1941 Secretary of State Cordell Hull and Japanese ambassador to the U.S. Kichisaburo Nomura met fifty times in Hull's suite at the Wardman Park Hotel, Washington D.C.

Objective – Assume the role of a special envoy assisting U.S. Secretary of State Cordell Hull. You will be interacting with Japanese Ambassador Kichisaburo Nomura and diplomat Saburo Kurusu. It is late November 1941. Address your telegram to Cordell Hull. Interpret primary sources and intercepted messages to formulate a winning foreign policy plan.

Your ten-point plan must reflect – War Plan Orange, War Plan Dog, ABC-1, The Victory Program, the Chinese Civil War, the Sino-Japanese War, Lend-Lease Aid, the Undeclared Atlantic War, the Fall of France, the Battle of Britain and the Blitz, Operation Barbarossa, Japan's Northern Strategy, Japan's Southern Strategy, The Neutrality Acts, U.S. Isolationism

Task Write a 10-point draft proposal representing America's diplomatic perspective. The perspective must first provide a path to the achievement of Allied objectives. You must ascertain your objectives through primary source interpretation. Second,

it must prevent war and a breakdown in diplomatic talks. However, you must consider how achieving your objectives will affect the bellicosity of Japanese hard-line militarists

Materials – Included primary Sources, U.S. History Textbook, David M. Kennedy’s *Freedom From Fear, The American People in Depression and War, from 1929-1945*. New York. Oxford Press. 1999.

The following digital or hard copy resources:

Documents relating to World War IIⁱ -
<http://www.mtholyoke.edu/acad/intrel/ww2.htm>.

1941 Documents – U.S. Japan Diplomatic Communicationsⁱⁱ -
http://www.historyteacher.net/APUSH-Course/Weblinks/1941_documents_us.htm

Standards - Minnesota Department of Education Social Studies Standards 2004

Strand - U.S. History.

Sub-strand - H. World Wars and the Emergence of Modern America, 1900-1930s.

Standards The student will demonstrate knowledge of the political, geographical, cultural, social, and economic forces shaping the modern United States.

Benchmarks - 2. Students will know and understand the United States' actions in the Pacific, and resulting international reactions.

Examples - 1. The Battle of Manila Bay, the annexation of the Philippines, and the rise of the U.S. as a world power **2.** Panama Canal, the annexation of Hawaii, Boxer Rebellion, the Russo-Japanese War, and the guerilla war in the Philippines, “Banana Wars”

Strand - U.S. HISTORY

Sub-strand - I. A World at War 1930s-1945.

Standards 2 - Students will analyze the major causes and effects of American neutrality and eventual involvement in World War II, including the America First movement, lend-lease, and the impact of Pearl Harbor.

Benchmarks - 3. Students will recognize major events, battles and significant leaders in World War II and analyze their impact, including Franklin Roosevelt, Harry S. Truman, Winston Churchill, Adolph Hitler, the Battle for Midway, the invasion of Normandy, and the decision to drop the atomic bomb on Japan.

Examples 2 - Trade restrictions on Japan, economic impacts of the Great Depression.

Important Vocabulary

To be delivered via lecture, discussion, or independent study.

Vocabulary Terms: China, Meiji Restoration 1868, Manchuria, John Hay, Open Door to China, Boxer Rebellion, Warlords, Russo-Japanese War 1905, Battle of Tsushima Straits, Theodore Roosevelt, Portsmouth Agreement, Gentlemen's Agreement of 1908, 1919 Versailles Peace Treaty, Washington Naval Disarmament Conference 1922, National Origins Immigration Law 1924, China Incident, Kwantung Army, Manchukuo, Stimson Doctrine, Chiang Kai-shek, Chunking, Kuomintang Nationalists, 1937 Sino-Japanese War, Rape of Nanking, Mao Zedong, Communists, Blitzkrieg, Operation Barbarossa, Prince Fumimaro Konoye, Hardliners, General Hideki Tojo, Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere, Asia for Asians, Emperor Hirohito, Militarism, Raw Materials, 1940 Tripartite Pact, Northern Strategy, Southern Strategy, French Indochina, Vichy France, Dutch East Indies, Burma Road, Lend-Lease Aid, FDR, Ambassador Joseph Grew, Secretary of State Cordell Hull, Japanese Ambassador to the U.S. Kichisaburo Nomura, Saburo Kurusu, Secretary of the Treasury Henry Morgenthau, Harold Ickes, Cryptanalysts, Japanese Code Purple Code, JN-25, Magic, Escalation, American Neutrality Acts, Isolationism, Gerald P. Nye, Atlantic Charter, Albert Wedemeyer, Victory Program, Plan Orange, War Plan Dog, Japanese Purple Code, Magic

Statecraft – the language of diplomacy. The objective is to avoid war in the Pacific. How do we achieve Roosevelt's goal of cultivating maximum uncertainty in Japan about future American intentionsⁱⁱⁱ. The more ambiguous the U.S. position the more time U.S. shipyards and aircraft plants had to churn out war material. According to Henry Stimson, "the question is how we should maneuver them (Japanese) into the position of firing the first shot without allowing too much danger to ourselves?"^{iv}

War Plan Orange – America's strategic doctrine for war against Japan. Theodore Roosevelt started the plan in 1890 in case of war with Japan. The strategy was highly influenced by naval strategist Alfred Thayer Mahan. Orange assumed in case of war the Japanese would occupy the Philippines. U.S. and Filipino soldiers must hold out for three or four months while the U.S. fleet crossed the Pacific, met the Japanese fleet, and eventually destroyed it. In 1934, revisions to the plan called for the capture of the Marshall and Caroline Islands as staging areas for the main engagement with the Japanese fleet. The plan was practiced over one hundred times at the U.S. Naval War College.^v

Victory Program – preparedness plan created by Major Albert Wedemeyer and his team in the Army's War Plans Division. The document served as a basic planning matrix for American mobilization. It meticulously defined the weapons needed to defeat the Axis in possible theatres from the Atlantic to the Mediterranean and from western Europe and Siberia to the islands and seas of the far western Pacific. The U.S. will have to enter the war, and only land armies can finally win wars. 1 July

1943 is the earliest date US armed forces can be mobilized, trained, and equipped for extensive operations. The U.S. Army would eventually have to field 215 divisions, totaling some 8.7 million men. The military buildup and eventual war would cost \$150 billion. The main objective of the U.S. and its allies is the complete military defeat of Germany.^{vi}

War Plan Dog –The fourth item D in a memorandum by FDR’s chief of naval operations, Harold Stark. Ratified an older strategic doctrine, code-named Rainbow 5, an American military contingency plan drafted in the prewar years. The plan anticipated waging war simultaneously against two or more enemies, Germany and Japan in particular. Britain’s survival is of indispensable importance. According to Stark, “if Britain wins, we could win everywhere.” Moreover if Britain loses, “we might possible not win anywhere.

War Plan Dog – A two-front war requires aid to bolster Britain and a defensive posture in the Pacific. The British struggle against Hitler given the top priority. Primary objective of U.S. armed forces is the defeat of Germany. No squandering of scarce resources even in defense of the Philippines. Possible economic sanctions imposed against Japan.^{vii}

ABC-1 – January 29th to March 29th 1941 conference known as American-British Conversation Number 1. Economically, the meeting lays the groundwork for FDR’s lend-lease program. The conference reaffirmed the strategy of War Plan Dog.^{viii}

Argentia, Newfoundland – Top-secret Anglo-American conference between FDR, Churchill, and allied planners from the U.S. and England. The Grand Alliance agreed upon Atlantic Charter unifying the Allied cause and was a precursor to the formation of the United Nations in September 1945.

Asia for Asians – Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere, cleansing the Pacific of Western colonial powers, turning the region into a Japanese lake – run wild for six months

Japanese Northerner Strategy– favored jointing Hitler’s attack on the Soviet Union, secure Japan’s Siberian flank, extinguish Russian threat, redemption for the November 1939 defeat against Russia in Soviet Mongolia, retribution for TR’s Portsmouth Conference humiliation and the Versailles Treaty

Japanese Southern Strategy – favored seizing Southeast Asia’s rice paddies, rubber plantations of British Malaya and the strategic petroleum objective of the Dutch East Indies. Japan humiliating dependence on American oil, only a two-year reserve of oil, 18 months under war conditions. The plan required Japan to knock out British Singapore, occupy the American base in the Philippines, and cripple the U.S. Pacific Fleet at Pearl Harbor, Hawaii.

Admiral Yamamoto – lightning blow – America will lose the will to fight a protracted war and accept a negotiated settlement guaranteeing Japan a free hand in Asia. A complete defeat of the U.S. is viewed as impossibility.

Tripartite Pact – Germany and Italy – signatories pledged to assist one another with all political, economic, and military means when one of the three contracting Parties is attacked by a power at present not involved in the European War or in the Sino-Japanese conflict – intended to force the U.S. into remaining neutral with the prospect of a two-ocean war

American/Allied Hard Liners – Secretary of Treasury Henry Morgenthau, Secretary of the Interior Harold Ickes, Generalissimo Chiang Kai-Shek, Winston Churchill

American Appeasers – Ambassador Joseph Grew, Secretary of State Cordell Hull, Montana Senator Jeannette Rankin, North Dakota Senator Gerald P. Nye, Charles Lindbergh,

Japanese Hard-Liners – Foreign Minister Yosuke Matsuoka, War Minister General Hideki Tojo – saw a narrow window of opportunity to occupy and consolidate their gains in the Oceanic realm.

Japanese Appeasers – Admiral Takijiru Onishi, Prime Minister Konoye – if America chose to fight a war to the finish, Japan is almost certainly doomed

Trade Sanctions – prohibited the sale of iron ore, scrap iron, steel, high-octane aviation gasoline, copper, brass – pressure Japan by economic means without driving Tokyo to war – force a Japanese withdrawal from China – buy time for an American naval and military buildup to alter the balance of forces in the Pacific – an embargo on petroleum products could possibly involve the U.S. in early war in the Pacific. Sanctions could prod the Japanese seeking alternative sources of supply, by military force if necessary Japan will in all probability send her fleets down to take French Indochina and the Dutch East Indies – Ambassador Grew – Autumn 1939 – Japan

Economic Embargo- the ultimate trade weapon, July 26, 1941 – FDR declares an immediate freeze on all Japanese assets in the U.S., requiring any further Japanese purchases to be cleared through a government committee that would unblock dollars to pay for the exports – aggressive officials such as Assistant Secretary of State Dean Acheson effectively cut off all trade with Japan^{ix}.

Timeline to Pearl Harbor -

To be delivered via lecture, discussion, or independent study.

1868 – Meiji Restoration leads to modernization and industrialization of Japan.

1905 – Japan becomes a great power as a result of the Russo-Japanese War and battle of Tsushima Straits bolster Japanese confidence in naval warfare and colonial expansion.^x Japan is greatly dissatisfied with TR's mediation and the Portsmouth peace treaty.

September 18, 1931 – Japanese conquest of Manchuria China. The puppet government known as Pu Yi, the last emperor of China, leads Manchukuo. 500,000 Japanese colonists settle the region.

July 7, 1937 – China incident at the Mukden Bridge triggers the second Sino-Japanese War. The Rape of Nanking results in a hidden holocaust of Chinese civilians.

1939 – The Kwantung Army is soundly defeated by Soviet forces at Nomonhan, located on the frontier between Soviet Mongolia and Japanese Manchukuo.^{xi}

July 26, 1940 – FDR declares an embargo on the shipment to Japan of premium grades of scrap iron and steel, as well as high-octane aviation gasoline.^{xii} Iron ore and pig iron are added in December. Additional materials such as copper and brass are prohibited in January^{xiii}.

September 27, 1940 – Japan officially joins the Axis by signing the Tripartite Pact with Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy.^{xiv}

March 1941 – Meetings begin between Japanese Ambassador Kichisaburo Nomura and U.S. Secretary of State Cordell Hull.^{xv}

June 22, 1941 – Hitler invades Russia, over 3.6 million German Wehrmacht soldiers cross into the Soviet Union.

July 2, 1941 – The Imperial Conference attended by Emperor Hirohito agree on employing the Southern Strategy.^{xvi}

June 26, 1941 – FDR declares an immediate freeze on all Japanese assets in the United States.^{xvii} This effectively ends all trade between the feuding nations.

July 21, 1941 – U.S. Navy War Plans Division warns that an oil embargo would probably result in a fairly early attack by Japan on Malaya and the Netherlands East Indies, and possibly would involve the U.S. in early war in the Pacific.^{xviii}

September 6, 1941 – Japan’s Imperial Conference stipulates that if a reversal of the American policy were not achieved through diplomatic means by early October, Japan should launch the “Southern Operation.”^{xix}

September 6, 1941 – Prime Minister Konoye meets secretly with Ambassador Joseph Grew, pressing for a secret meeting with FDR. Grew insists on Japanese abandonment of China as a precondition for such a meeting. The suggestion collapses and Konoye is ousted as prime minister October 16.^{xx}

November 5, 1941 – The American Joint Board of the Army and Navy reaffirm that the primary objective of the United States is the defeat of Germany.^{xxi}

November 5, 1941 – The Japanese Imperial Conference directs that war plans go forward by November 25 if final diplomatic efforts fail.^{xxii}

November 20, 1941 – Nomura and Kurusu ask for Hull for a free hand in China and an end to American trade restrictions, in return for a Japanese withdrawal from Indochina and a pledge to undertake no further armed advances in Southeast Asia.

November 20, 1941 – FDR considers abandoning China, circulating his draft notes to the outrage of Winston Churchill, Chiang Kai-Shek, and his Cabinet. . What would happen if Hull, FDR accepted this offer? China would be demoralized and collapse. Chiang Kai-Shek could be overthrown. Japan would be free to invade Siberia, aiding Hitler in the collapse of the U.S.S.R. Hitler could commence an aerial attack and eventual amphibious invasion of the British Isles.

November 26, 1941 – Cordell Hull hands Nomura and Kurusu a ten-point statement of the American position, reiterating the last two years of American policy

December 6, 1941 – FDR sends a personal message to Emperor Hirohito. Roosevelt views Magic decrypts of the Japanese reply to Hull’s November 26 ten-point statement.

Sources

- ⁱ Ferraro, Vincent. *Documents related to World War II*. Mount Holyoke College. From <http://www.mtholyoke.edu/acad/intrel/feros-pg.htm>. May 21, 2011.
- ⁱⁱ Author Unknown. *1941 Documents – US-Japan Diplomatic Communications Prior to Pearl Harbor*. From http://www.historyteacher.net/APUSH Course/Weblinks/1941_documents_us.htm. May 21, 2011
- ⁱⁱⁱ Kennedy, David M. *Freedom from Fear, The American People in Depression and War, 1929-1945*. New York. Oxford University Press. 1999. Page 511.
- ^{iv} IBID. Page 515.
- ^v IBID. Page 534.
- ^{vi} IBID. Page 485-488.
- ^{vii} IBID. Page 481.
- ^{viii} IBID. Page 482
- ^{ix} Kennedy, David M. *Freedom from Fear*. Page 511.
- ^x IBID. Page 500.
- ^{xi} IBID. Page 509.
- ^{xii} IBID. Page 505.
- ^{xiii} IBID. Page 507.
- ^{xiv} IBID. Page 505.
- ^{xv} IBID. Page 507.
- ^{xvi} IBID. Page 509.
- ^{xvii} IBID. Page 510.
- ^{xviii} IBID. Page 510.
- ^{xix} IBID. Page 512
- ^{xx} IBID. Page 513.
- ^{xxi} IBID. Page 513.
- ^{xxii} IBID. Page 513.

FDR Quarantine Speech - <http://www.vlib.us/amdocs/texts/fdrquarn.html>

WWII Documents - <http://www.mtholyoke.edu/acad/intrel/ww2.htm>

FDR to Hitler - <http://www.mtholyoke.edu/acad/intrel/WorldWar2/fdr3.htm>

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Japan Pre Pacific -

<http://www.ibiblio.org/pha/monos/147/147chap1.html#Japan%27s%20National%20Policy%20to%20Cope%20with%20the>

Hull Note - <http://faculty.virginia.edu/setear/students/japanwc/HullNote.htm>

Magic - <http://www.ibiblio.org/pha/magic/vol-3.html>

U.S. Japan 1941 - http://www.historyteacher.net/APUSH-Course/Weblinks/1941_documents_us.htm

BBC Japan's Quest for Empire -

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