**Daryl Borgquist**

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**Military History Program**

**Norwich University**

**“Pearl Harbor”: Strategic Realities Versus the American Emotional Reactions**

The attack on Pearl Harbor took place on December 7, 1941. But “Pearl Harbor” – the iconic American expression that encompasses the emotional aftermath of the attack -- has remained a salient issue in American political and historical debate for more than 70 years. Americans did not put the issue into the same global historical context as rest of the world and remained emotionally detached outsiders to growing world conflict. For Americans, Pearl Harbor was the beginning of World War II. December 7/8, 1941 is the date that divides the twentieth century for Americans. Japan coordinated attacks at 29 locations over many time zones on both sides of the International Date Line during a 24-hour time period. Most of the events occurred on December 8 on the western side of the Date Line. Pearl Harbor was on the eastern side of the Date Line where it was December 7. From the beginning, Americans emotionally separated Pearl Harbor from the other events of the “day.” The question of the causes from the American point of view developed into exchanges between two schools of thought that generally form up along lines of defenders or critics of Roosevelt. Critics of Roosevelt also tend to be defenders of the Pearl Harbor commanders. Defenders of Roosevelt also tend to be critics of the Pearl Harbor commanders.

The intensity of the debate over Pearl Harbor by historians and the American public depends on how and when the war came into one’s consciousness. Choosing what is history is a matter of weighing the strategic realities against the emotional American response. For the American public, one day the strategic realities belonged to others, the next day was different. This project examines how emotional involvement affected policies and historical views connected with “Pearl Harbor.” The American public created a myth, or a common core of understanding, from the world view of the day in which to channel the emotions to deal with Pearl Harbor. There were also official investigations and reactions from the government that contributed to the common body understanding. Then, there were the Pearl Harbor survivors along with military and government records about the event that emerged later. But they came long after public opinion and the official positions were established. What was “history” translates in common parlance to the causes, responsibilities, duties, omissions, failures, and, ultimately, to the blame for Pearl Harbor.[[1]](#footnote-1) How one was emotionally involved with or affected by Pearl Harbor tended to reflect how the historical outcomes were interpreted.

*The Japanese Sense of Strategic Decline Created an Emotional Environment for War*

Japan’s pursuit of economic invulnerability became an obsession in the early twentieth century that brought it into conflict with its Asian neighbors, the United States, and the international community in a progression that diplomatic historians have carefully traced leading to the Pearl Harbor attack on December 7/8, 1941. Japanese military strategy from 1931 to 1945 exhibited their sense of being of a declining military state, especially from 1937 until the Pearl Harbor attack. Korean military strategist Don Sung Lee has suggested a predictive theory for explaining Japanese political and military thinking that resulted in the attack on Pearl Harbor in *Power Shifts, Strategy, and War*. He held that “the military strategy of declining states is the key determinant of whether power shifts result in war or pass peacefully.”[[2]](#footnote-2) Lee’s theory predicts that Japan had a strong motive for preventive action and military confidence, but would fail to achieve diplomatic success because of its status. As it lost ground in economic completion, it would begin falling behind in military capability as well. Japan’s preventive motivation for war would be high, because Japan’s maneuver strategy would soon become obsolete. Japan’s aim in the Hull-Nomura talks in fall of 1941 coming with the rapid deterioration of strategic position was to stop its power decline through diplomatic settlement.[[3]](#footnote-3)

Witnesses to an event can give very different accounts based on where they were standing, what they saw, and when they began observing the event. Similarly, descriptions of how and when World War II began vary based on whether the account begins in Europe, Great Britain, Soviet Union, Asia, the Pacific, or the United States. The war came differently depending on where you stood. It made a difference whether one was assigned to a Navy ship in Pearl Harbor, sitting at home in Chicago, suffering under occupation in China or Indo-China, or in Tokyo on December 7/8, 1941. The Japanese and Asians view the war as one continuous war from Japan’s invasion of Manchuria in 1931. A few Asian historians begin the war with the Japanese assassination of the Manchurian war lord Chiang Tso-lin in 1928. The “Pacific War” beginning with the attack on Pearl Harbor in December 1941 represents the primary American battlefield after the Pearl Harbor attack on December 7/8, 1941. American conscious involvement in World War II began with the Pearl Harbor attack. That is where they stood. And for the average American, that was the first contact with strategic reality and drew the first reactions.

Pearl Harbor is a good example of Carl von Clausewitz’ statement that “war is not merely an act of policy but a true political instrument, a continuation of political discourse, carried on with other means.” Clausewitz argued that “When whole communities go to war – whole peoples and especially *civilized* peoples – the reason always lies in some political situation and the occasion is always due to some political object.”[[4]](#footnote-4) The Japanese were civilized and followers of international rules. Japanese-American interactions in the early twentieth century affected Japanese public opinion toward the United States. In 1905, the mediation of the Russo-Japanese War by President Theodore Roosevelt failed to produce a widely expected indemnity payment to Japan. There were riots across Japan when the victorious Japanese did not receive their economic reward. Racial segregation of Japanese children following the 1906 San Francisco earthquake for which Japan made a larger humanitarian contribution than all other nations combined was another. Another perceived slight was a series of anti-Asian immigration policies implemented in the United States.[[5]](#footnote-5) Such events registered in the Japanese consciousness and set the stage how the Japanese would react in the aftermath of World War I. Japan’s sense of inferiority and being disrespected in world affairs grew deep emotional roots. Historians of international relations argued that “Pearl Harbor” came about largely because of Japanese aspirations and policies for economic expansion that conflicted with American policies of protectionism, isolationism, and racism. For the West, Japan’s discomfort was not a strategic reality as Japan was only being treated in terms of its proper “place.”

From the end of the nineteenth century, Japan desired to eliminate Western extraterritoriality and to restore of its tariff economy. International relations historian Michael Barnhart traced the roots of Japan’s aggressive, expansionist foreign policy to concerns over its economic vulnerability. Japan’s sense of being a great power was shaken by the defeat of Germany in 1918, according to Barnhart. In Germany’s World War I loss, Japan saw that even a powerful and skilled army could be paralyzed, if the nation did not have economic security. Japan came to believe that it could not protect itself unless it had greater access to resources and was expanding its territory. Japan gained control Taiwan after the first Sino-Japanese War in 1895 and annexed Korea in 1910 after the Russian navy in the Russo-Japanese War of 1904-1905. Japan’s new program of empire building began in 1931 with the invasion of Manchuria. Japanese policy led to increasing Chinese resistance finally resulting in a series of incidents in 1937. In response, Japan deployed more than half of its military forces creating economic pressures that would build. Japan used most of its fuel reserves and committed most its civilian economic resources to respond to these incidents and preserve its dignity.[[6]](#footnote-6)

The Japanese expansion south just prior to the Pearl Harbor attack was not as sudden as it may have appeared to American observers. According to Howard Dick, Japanese economic penetration of the Netherlands East Indies occurred in two periods.[[7]](#footnote-7) During World War I, Japan seized German possessions in China’s Shantung Province, most importantly the port of Tsingtao, and in the North Pacific the Mariana Islands and the Caroline Islands. Japan also stepped into the trade vacuum of the British and Dutch territories when ships could not safely make the trip to European ports and back, demonstrating the economic value of the South Pacific to the Japanese. The second period of Japanese expansion began around 1931 to counter the balance of payments crisis when Japanese silk exports halved in value between 1929 and 1930. Economic problems increased when Japan left the gold standard. Japanese penetration into the South Pacific economy undermined the Dutch-controlled distribution system, while the value of Japanese imports grew more slowly than Indies exports creating a large imbalance. The Indies were a prime target for the Japanese trade offensive, especially in textiles. Behind the Dutch economic concerns “lay a growing apprehension that economic penetration was merely a prelude to, and to some extent a vehicle for, eventual Japanese military occupation.”[[8]](#footnote-8) The Dutch pushed the Japanese out of its shipping ports, but the Japanese established a large port and air base on Palau which had no trade. Its only value was for military purposes. According to Dick, historians have missed the Palau connection to trade imperatives because current maps do not place Palau in the Southeast Asia. This air base was used to attack Australia in 1941 validating the Dutch concerns. For psychological reasons, former colonial powers do not want to revisit the earlier history and talk about Japan’s pre-war expansion program he argues. Japan achieved all of its pre-war economic goals in spite of their crushing military defeat as current trade and economic figures show. But from where those in the southern Pacific region stood, the coming of the war was not sudden and evidence predicted its coming well in advance.

Japan had enough confidence in their military to consider preventive military campaigns against non-Asian military forces on account of its weakening national defense capabilities as Lee’s theory predicted. Not all analysts agree, however, according to international relations historian Minoru Nomura, Japan’s military confidence was based on a miscalculation of how long it could sustain a war. Japan considered only quick, short military options. It did not study how it would obtain essential elements of food and fuel to fight a war. The Japanese were unable to exert sufficient pressure on the Dutch East Indies to obtain necessary petroleum and were unprepared for the full oil embargo by the United States, Britain, and the Netherlands in the summer of 1941. In the Japanese analysis, they could not compensate for the petroleum crisis for more than two years unless they went to war by October 1941.[[9]](#footnote-9)

Pan-Asian ideology united and energized the Japanese population. According to Eri Hotta, Pan-Asianism in Japan was defined as “an assertion that Asian nations should unite under Japanese leadership to resist Western Great Powers invasion of Asia.”[[10]](#footnote-10) Japan’s shift from internationalism to Pan-Asianism was not sudden or associated with a particular event. Japan was sensitive to public opinion as it brought Pan-Asianism to life. It took care to legalize its actions in Manchuria to comply with the Nine Power Treaty to avoid antagonizing the United States. The confrontational style of U.S. diplomacy was another factor in Japanese sensitivity. From the Japanese point of view, there were legitimate historical reasons for Japan to feel threatened and humiliated which pushed them towards confrontation. Hotta argued that Pan-Asianism was an integral part of making and prolonging the Fifteen Years’ War dating from Japan’s invasion of Manchuria in 1931. This is when war came for the Chinese and Japanese. Some Japanese trace the beginning of the war period a few years earlier to 1928 when Manchurian warlord Chang Tso-lin was assassinated by Japanese forces. Japan was unique among the Asian nations in that it was the only Asian nation not colonized. The Japanese came to believe that they had a special mission to save weak Asia from Western domination. The cultural motivations and the force of the ideology driving Japan into the Fifteen Years’ War were not well understood in West. An emotional gap opened and widened between the United States and Japan over Japan’s invasion of China.

*American Attempts to Influence Japan and Support China*

Japan had become one of the Great Powers after World War I, but it did not command the same respect as the other Great Powers. The United States and Britain sought to control Asia through the Washington Conference System. The U.S. kept an “Open Door” to support the Chinese government. The “open door” of the 1930s brought western Christian moral influence through the 7,000 missionaries in China and limited American business opportunities, but without any real emotional attachment. Japan expanded into China in 1931 without the approval of the other Powers, but neither was it condemned. The Asians were not viewed as a real military threat and affairs could be handled through diplomacy. The strategic military map began changing in the late 1930s with increasing concerns for the United States policymakers, but these were the concerns only the U.S. Navy and a few thinkers in government.

The Roosevelt administration consistently implemented economic, political, and military policies to change Japanese motivations in conformance with its long established policy from 1905. By the late 1930s, U.S. military leaders were concerned these policies risked potential conflict with Japan when U.S. military readiness and stockpiles of equipment were low. While non-military officials noted risks of conflict, Japan was not taken as a serious military threat. The United States’ provided limited moral and military support for China largely with American interests in mind, but complicating its Asian relationships. For example, the Standard Vacuum Oil Company received Washington’s support for eliminating Chinese competition in the oil refining business in southern China in the early 1930s. The U.S. did not come to China’s aid because of silver interests who were interested in making money regardless of the damage to China’s economy. American policy in China was really a product of U.S. domestic interests rather than altruistic, long-range calculations. Thus, there was no systematic response to Japan’s military aggression or to assist China.[[11]](#footnote-11)

In 1931, U.S. trade and investment with Japan was twice that with China. Britain, on the other hand, had nine times the U.S. investment in China. Thomas Lambert of the Morgan group, a British investment firm, sympathized with Japan’s ambitions in Manchuria. The investor argued with the Hoover Administration that the U.S. should accept Japan’s sphere of influence to stabilize local politics, serve as a barrier to Soviet communism, and convince Japan to accept the U.S. presence in the south and the Philippines. This would be consistent with U.S. policy since 1905. The subsequent policy came to be known as the “Stimson Non-Recognition Doctrine.” President Herbert Hoover and Secretary of State Henry Lewis Stimson determined that the United States would not go to war over China. This policy continued in place into the Roosevelt Administration, as the new Secretary of State Cordell Hull viewed it in the context of his own free trade ideology. If nations removed their business restrictions and embraced free trade, the impetus for war would largely be reduced.

In 1934, Japan introduced its “Co-Prosperity Sphere in Greater East Asia,” a Japanese Monroe Doctrine in which Japan would take the leadership in making Asia prosperous for Asians. The U.S. did not like it but did not voice its displeasure, because it was not going to war over China.[[12]](#footnote-12) The U.S. “Open China” policy created years of friction between Japan and the United States. By the late 1930s, U.S.-Japanese friction over China was high as the U.S. continued to assist China. In the fall of 1938, the U.S. Export-Import Bank proposed a small loan of $25 million to China to finance a project with an American consortium to buy Chinese tung oil for paint in exchange for China purchasing American trucks and trucks parts. It barely complied with the Nine Power agreement to avoid government interference in China. Following several weeks of internal debate over the proposed loan, Roosevelt approved it in early December 1938. While the loan was small, it encouraged other countries to follow suit. Most importantly, it created hope and improved public morale in China. This pressured Japan to change its policies while avoiding direct conflict. The move was also intended to keep Japan from controlling all of China.[[13]](#footnote-13)

But it was the U.S. oil embargo against Japan in July 1941 was the tipping point. The decision did not come without strong debate over strategic issues between civilian and military officials in the United States. The U.S. Navy was divided over the decision to embargo fuel to Japan. Secretary of Navy Frank Knox was inclined to use the pressure of an embargo. Admiral Harold Stark, the Chief of Naval Operations, and the majority of the Navy admirals stated that the Navy was not ready for war and favored giving Japan the fuel it requested to avoid conflict too early. The Dutch in Indonesia were pressuring the U.S. through the State Department not to embargo fuel to take the Japanese pressure off of them. Admiral Harold Stark was willing to let Japan become stronger in order to have the resources to keep the sea lines of communication open in the Atlantic, which the British could no longer do. The U.S. Navy did not have ships to commit to the Pacific. In the end, President Roosevelt enacted a full oil embargo on July 25, 1941. The President thought that as long as Britain stood, Japan would not go to war. . Legally shipped petroleum products sent to Japan were not directly usable for airplane fuels, but the octane could be easily increased with an additive. These loophole provisions in 1941 in all likelihood meant that the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor was undertaken with fuel it purchased from the United States and was shipped by American refiners. U.S. Secretary of Treasury Morgenthau, Secretary of War Henry Lewis Stimson, and Secretary of Interior Harold Ickes encouraged the export of lower octane fuels.[[14]](#footnote-14) While officials did voice their worry that certain policies might bring conflict with Japan that did not mean it was a predetermined result. Historians and readers must be careful not to read too much into them.

The U.S. bore a huge burden to respond to Japan’s aggressive military actions and was in no mood for concessions to Japan. According to international relations historian Waldo Heinrichs, the problem for the United States in 1941 was that it had tolerated and acquiesced to Japan’s stridency in Asia for more than 10 years and never formally disapproved of any Japanese actions that violated the spirit of policies established by a long succession of U.S. officials. Neither had the United States condoned Japanese aggression, instead it had regularly protested treaty violations and damages to American interests. The United States had remained emotionally uninvolved and outside of world conflicts.[[15]](#footnote-15) On April 14, 1941, the day after the U.S. Neutrality Pact was signed a new list of restricted exports was published. At the same time, President Roosevelt authorized American military pilots to resign from their services to fly for China. The group become known as the Flying Tigers. The United States also gave assurances to China that they would be included in the lend-lease program. Diplomacy waned and the Japanese became fatalistic when they were faced with the logical end of a declining power and rapidly losing strategic military power.

In November 1941, the United States delivered a comprehensive set of conditions to Japan in order to satisfy China, and began to develop a coalition to defeat Germany. Ambassador Grew sent a message to Washington on November 3, 1941, stating his opinion that continued economic pressure was not going to stop Japan’s militancy without war or resolution through peace talks. Grew’s sense of urgency continued to grow through the fall of 1941.[[16]](#footnote-16)

In the course of German military success in Europe, the United States found itself tied to the Soviet Union in the European War. The United States could help the Soviet Union by providing equipment and supplies. But equally important, the United States needed to prevent the Japanese from taking advantage of the German assault and attacking the Soviet Union on its rear flank. The last 10 days of July 1941 determined American-Japanese relations for the near future. Between July 25 and 30, the encirclement of the Japanese by the United States, Great Britain, New Zealand, and the Netherlands with an oil embargo was nearly complete. According to Akira Iriye, the U.S. policy highly successful in changing Japanese strategy. Between July 2 and August 9, Japan cancelled its northern offensive against the Soviet Union and replaced it with a passive stance in the north. Japan’s thrust for resources turned to a southern advance. But the United States policy sought to stop them there as well and to hold Japan in place.[[17]](#footnote-17) But what may have given the administration and pacifists encouragement as a policy success was more an ironic coincidence. Waldo Heinrichs tempers the apparent success of U.S policy in with the suggestion that Japan and the United States both reached the conclusion at the same time that Russia would survive the German invasion in the summer of 1941. While the U.S. took steps to prevent Japan from attacking the Soviet Union’s rear, Japan had already decided to postpone the northward movement. Japan would move southward towards the oil resources that the United States and its friends were moving to cut off.[[18]](#footnote-18)

The U.S. hoped to keep Japan burdened in China and insecure in its relations with the U.S. to prevent them from attacking the Soviet Union. It was a risk of war, but there was a lot at stake and very large goals.[[19]](#footnote-19) Germany wanted Japan to invade Siberia to divide Russian forces, but the Japanese were drawn to the military resources in the South that were their political objective. Gordon Wright argued in *The Ordeal of Total War: 1939-1945* that Japan’s sudden entry into war was not as a loyal Axis partner responding to Hitler’s appeal, but in response to tensions between the United States and Japan. The Soviet Union had closed off the northern resource area after Japan’s defeat at Nomonhan. The knockout blow to the U.S. Navy fleet at Pearl Harbor was to give the Japanese time to control Southeast Asia and the Southwest Pacific.[[20]](#footnote-20)

Roosevelt officials were globalists in their ideology, but their globalism was tempered by American preconceptions as outsiders. American foreign policy was dominated by isolationism, domestic affairs, and complacency. The American worldview included a distaste for foreign entanglements in the aftermath of World War I. The Paris Peace treaties did not have the desired effects and the victors of World War I were blamed for world problems as much as the losers. The economic depression of the 1930s made the military threats to the United States seem distant.[[21]](#footnote-21) Complacency and disinterest were a reasonable approach to the world. According to international relations historian Abraham Ben-Zvi, senior U.S. officials, including Secretary of War Henry Lewis Stimson, Secretary of the Treasury Henry Morgenthau, Secretary of State Cordell Hull, and State Department Far East Advisor Stanley Hornbeck were unable to understand Japan’s political objective.[[22]](#footnote-22) The Tripartite Pact reflected divided interests. The Germans and the Italians were hopeful that Japan would take pressure off of the Axis belligerents by threatening the Europeans. The Japanese wanted to pressure on the Europeans to open up Pacific and Asian territories for Japanese expansion. There was speculation in the press just before the Pearl Harbor attack that there would be war between Japan, the United States, Britain, the Netherlands, and Russia in the *winter* of 1941.[[23]](#footnote-23) The Italian government is not happy with Japan’s failure to cooperate. The Tripartite Pact was not popular in Japan. It was opposed by Prime Minister Konoe Fumimaro, the Emperor and the Japanese people. The Japanese were livid over Germany’s invasion of Russia. U.S. Ambassador Grew in Japan clearly identified the issues and accurately communicated the situation in Japan to Washington, but the issues were not understood or acted on in Washington. There was no conspiracy to bring America into the war by provoking Japan. “The private diaries of these policy makers, as well as other contemporary evidence, indicate strongly that they were all motivated by a sincere desire to avoid a Pacific war,” according to Abraham Ben-Zvi. Their policies were impotent and the means that they chose to attempt to maintain peace unfortunately led to war.

The Allied powers believed at the time of the Pearl Harbor attack that the Germans had pushed the Japanese to attack the United States. But evidence from post-war study of government documents by historian H.L. Trefousse showed that Germany wanted the United States to remain neutral for a longer period.[[24]](#footnote-24) The intention of the Tripartite Pact was for Japan to attack the European nations’ territories in the Pacific with the hope of further weakening them and perhaps drawing their military resources away from Europe to defend these territories. But the Japanese refused and even tried to come to agreement with the United States. It was only when Japan attacked the United States that Germany supported Japan as an ally.

*The European War Gives the Japanese Hope of Obtaining Economic Security*

The European war created opportunities for Japan to pursue its political ambitions through military options in the military vacuum that opened before them. According to Anthony Best, Japan could improve its position in the Pacific at the expense of Britain. After the Tientsin crisis in the summer of 1939, Britain may have been forced to officially approve of Japan’s expansionism. Forced appeasement to Japan would risk losing American public support. Japan’s use of the Trans-Siberian Railway to resupply Germany was a backdoor the British wanted to close. Japan’s cooperation was needed. Britain hoped that the United States could provide a deterrent to war. It was prepared to give a weak response to Japan’s invasion of Indo-China in June 1941, but backed off once it learned that the United States was going to freeze Japanese assets and license all exports.[[25]](#footnote-25)

German and Italian victories over Britain and France kept the European powers divided, allowing Japan to reduce their interference in China, international relations historian Akira Iriye pointed out. If Russia and the United States were also compelled to divert their attention to the European conflict, they would be much less willing to challenge Japan and might even end their resistance to Japanese expansion in Asia and in the South Pacific. Japan’s partnership with Germany was made with the belief that Germany would crush its European enemies leaving their Asian colonies open for Japan to seize the living space that it felt it needed. Washington’s relations with the Japanese proceeded with the firm belief that they would never become the military threat that Germany was. The Japanese could be compelled to become responsible international citizens again. But America’s return to the internationalism of the 1920s in the late 1930s came too late. Only the collapse of the British Empire would bring Japan’s economic opportunity. For the Japanese, if the Chinese Republic was gone, then U.S. and British resistance to Japan’s pan-Asian policy would cease.[[26]](#footnote-26)

The correlation of Europe and Asia in the global timeline began earlier than the immediate tensions of the late 1930s. According to Waldo Heinrichs, the merging of interests occurred throughout the period of 1931 to 1941. The period from 1931 to 1937 was a hazy interval of world economic crisis, in which the internationalism of the 1920s was repudiated. The London Economic Conference ended a common approach to currency and trade enlargement, the system of naval limitation collapsed in London in 1935, the Locarno Pact dissolved with the occupation of the Rhineland. The Nine Power Treaty preserving the status quo in China ended with the Brussels Conference in October and November 1937. The ensuing Nine Power statement on November 15, 1937 accepted Japan’s contention that its invasion of China did not constitute a violation of the Nine Power Treaty. The world was becoming a dangerous place.

The late Interwar Period was also a time in which there was “no clear picture . . . of the American transition from . . . benevolent neutrality to active belligerency on the Atlantic in 1941.” The lack of historical writing Heinrichs traces to most historians of foreign relations not being comfortable with naval matters and the lack of an adequate operational history of the U.S. Atlantic Fleet in 1941.[[27]](#footnote-27) According to historian Mark Lowenthal, the late interwar period was a time in which Roosevelt was searching for alternatives as more military means became available, but used with reluctance.[[28]](#footnote-28) There was divergence of fundamental policy and grand strategy. In keeping his options open, Roosevelt left his subordinates to make plans based on the realities as they understood them. It was during the search for alternatives that Roosevelt’s failure came. He was unwilling to face the implications of his policy that disrupted coherence between policy and planning creating a policy vacuum.

The relationship between the U.S. and Japan changed when China had become an object of European power politics. Heinrichs examined the interplay between the European and Asian theaters from 1939 to 1941. After Munich and Prague, Germany sought an alliance with Japan against France, Britain, and the Soviet Union. On July 26, 1939 the United States gave Japan a six-month notice that it was terminating its 1911 commercial treaty with Japan. There was American public outrage after the Japanese bombing of Chongqing that just missed the USS *Tutuila*, as well as violating the rights of British citizens. Americans had come to view exports to the Japanese that assisted their aggression as immoral. In March 1939, Japan annexed the Spratly Islands. The USS *Panay* and the HMS *Ladybird* were bombed and sunk in the Yangtze River along with several other U.S. cargo ships. In 1939, the U.S. did not engage in diplomacy but enacted sanctions against Japan.[[29]](#footnote-29)

World events in the late Interwar Period were rapidly showing the interconnectivity of Europe and Asia in the lead up to war. In 1939, the small, four-month, undeclared war, the conflict is known in Japan as the Nomonhan Incident and in the Soviet Union as the Battle of Kholkin Gol played a key role in shaping later events in World War II was overlooked by most historians.*[[30]](#footnote-30)* The height of the fighting coincided with the conclusion of the German-Soviet Nonaggression Pact on August 23, 1939 triggering the invasion of Poland a week later. With the Non-Aggression Pact, Germany would not have to fight Britain, France, and Russia at the same time with the Soviet military occupied in Siberia against the Japanese. The battle also isolated Japan from Germany giving the Soviet Union the opportunity to deal with Japan’s aggressiveness without worrying about Germany attacking. The battle demonstrated the close interrelationship between the Europeans and Asian theater as well as shaped the future course of World War II. Japan never attempted to go north again into the Soviet Union and turned its attention on the resources in the South. Once the Russian army went back east and became locked in battle with the German invasion of Russia, the Japanese knew their northern flank was clear and they could safely move south and east without fear. The Russian action, then, became the trigger for removing the British and Americans from the Western Pacific.

In the summer of 1940, Germany occupied the Denmark, Norway, the Netherlands, Belgium and France. On September 27, 1940, Japan, Germany, and Italy signed the Tripartite agreements pledging themselves to go to war if any of them were attacked by a power not presently at war, catching the State Department and Ambassador Grew in Tokyo completely by surprise. “In 1940, the United States crossed two important thresholds, the stationing of the fleet at Pearl Harbor and the start of a slow economic squeeze of Japan. The Axis alliance deepened the rift,” Heinrichs wrote.

*Creating Hope and Confidence Amidst American Isolationism*

As the strategic military situation changed through the 1930s, Roosevelt and senior leaders sought to strengthen the U.S. military position. Isolationism, while still widely prevalent, was becoming untenable in the face of growing conflict abroad. Emotionally, the American public felt confident and comfortable. Conflict was distant, but there was concern about infiltration at home that could affect America’s security. American attitudes about security began to change as Britain was threatened and the security of the Atlantic began to disappear. Roosevelt insisted on giving military aid to the Soviet Union in 1941 and to Britain in 1940 and 1941 over the objections of his military advisors. They argued that the United States needed to build up its own military defenses and had none to share after years of isolationism and lack of military spending. Even when he agreed with his military advisors, there was debate over the policies until the President decided what he would accept.[[31]](#footnote-31)

President Roosevelt’s response to the sinking of the USS *Panay* and the HMS *Ladybird* in the Yangtze River by the Japanese in China in 1937 represent a strong reaction by an angry President to implement a stronger neutrality as he told reporters. President Roosevelt’s quarantine speech of October 6, 1937 presented the President’s reasoning for a naval blockade of Japan. According to historian John McVicker Haight, the incident heightened President Roosevelt’s anxiety over the Far Eastern situation.[[32]](#footnote-32) The United States asked Britain to join the United States in the blockade, but Britain refused because it did not want to be fighting a future war on three fronts at once. Britain, however, suggested that the United States encourage South American nations to cooperate in the quarantine. This incident gave Japan a warning of the kind of future economic responses the United States might give if its neutrality was infringed on. With the *Panay* incident, there was a heightening of strategic reality that would be reflected in future policy.

From 1937 forward, American defense policies were rapidly evolving in the face of changing world security. According to Stetson Conn, former Chief Historian in the Office of Military History, there were five stages of evolution between 1937 and 1941.[[33]](#footnote-33) From 1937 to late 1938, U.S. defense policy focused on defense of the U.S. territory only. From late 1938 to the summer of 1940, defense policy increased to cover hemispheric defense. Both the Army and Navy, according to Stetson, were the better prepared for war during this period before mobilization started and large numbers of untrained recruits entering the services reduced readiness. From August 1940 until September 1941, defense policy included limited alliance with friendly belligerents. Rapid mobilization beginning during this period hampered military readiness, when the Army found it difficult to keep even a single Division ready for action. From September 1941 until the Pearl Harbor attack in December, U.S. defense policy increased to limited war in the Atlantic. After December 1941, the United States was engaged in unlimited war.

The strategic context of war planning from the Japanese and American perspectives is useful for untangling the historical threads of Pearl Harbor and separating them from the myth. And many observers note that all too frequently armies train for the last war they fought. War plans are an essential element of training and preparing to fight. The U.S. never considered a two-ocean war, largely because the U.S. never contemplated an Atlantic war with a friendly British Royal Navy. Planning for war with Japan, War Plan Orange was a problem studied extensively by the Navy, but had been superseded by events, commitments to the British, and U.S. joint coalition planning had begun. But in 1941 the Navy was tied down with Atlantic conveys and neutrality patrols in the Atlantic and Caribbean. Most of the Navy’s assets were not in the Pacific when war came there. The distraction and division of naval forces were an important policy that affected Pacific readiness. Plan Dog from the Atlantic Conference in August 1941 stipulated that the European/Atlantic theaters would be given preference over the Pacific and Asia.

The war plans do provide a good view of the how the generation of officers which led the U.S. military were trained and how they thought. Steven Ross in *American War Plans 1890-1939* described the Army War Plans Division production of a series of plans called Plan White in the 1920s and 1930s designed to suppress domestic disorder and address radical and counter-radical actions. They were regional in nature. Most were destroyed by the army, but a few have survived. Virtually all army officers of Short’s generation were trained in them. They included counter sabotage and counter espionage actions that all officers would fall back on in the absence of other guidance.[[34]](#footnote-34)

Mainstream historians found that the Color Plans of the interwar period failed to prepare the United States for total war, were not aligned with world affairs, and did not envision coalition warfare. Army historian Henry Gole has challenged this widespread interpretation. The Army War College curricula included extensive student exercises for war with allies in the late 1930s. During the Interwar Period, the Army primarily developed capable officers trained in tactical and strategic planning.[[35]](#footnote-35) The Rainbow Plans drafted by the army and the navy superseded the individual color plans. After the fall of France in 1940, twenty-one nations of the Western Hemisphere joined together for collective security against Germany in the Act of Havana on July 30, 1940. In August 1940 the United States and Canada established a Joint Board of Defense. The army established an armored force in July 1940. Gole points to these developments as solid evidence of realistic war planning. It is an exaggerated interpretation of the condition of the American military to say that it was jarred out of hibernation by the attack on Pearl Harbor, Gole contends.[[36]](#footnote-36) But this does not mean that its condition was without flaws and weaknesses.

The United States’ planning context and assumptions for Pacific military operations had already been set by the Joint Planning Committee’s paper submitted to the Joint Board on May 13, 1936. It stipulated the importance of defending Pearl Harbor against sea, air raids, sabotage, and armed insurrection. Insurrection, sabotage, and espionage became the main focus of Army G-2. In August 1936, President Roosevelt suggested that the name of every American of Japanese descent or Japanese national be kept on a list. The threat of sabotage was considered high.[[37]](#footnote-37) The actions of military commanders across the Pacific in the fall of 1941 reflected a high priority to defend U.S. facilities against sabotage consistent with U.S. policy. It was also a priority for which the commanders had been given resources by the Congress and Washington as no special military equipment was required. At the end of the war public opinion had changed about preparations for war at the Interwar Period. Where the public had been skeptical and hesitant before, at the end of the war the public viewed Roosevelt’s efforts to join the conflict and become involved more favorably. Appearances that the Pearl Harbor commanders did not prepare properly were viewed unfavorably.[[38]](#footnote-38) On the other hand, General George Marshall could be credited with demanding and instituting the largest military exercise in U.S. history in Louisiana in the summer of 1940 that tested new strategy and tactics before the war. The memory of new untrained recruits sent immediately to France in World War I being easily killed was seared in his mind.[[39]](#footnote-39)

In examining Army medical readiness preparations in Hawaii, Mary Ellen Condon-Rall traced the increased medical preparations to suit the requirements of the forward-based Pacific Fleet beginning in 1940 to the 1933 Emergency Plan White, a civil disturbance plan aimed at controlling riots in the islands. In February 1941, emergency aid stations were established and began operating. Colonel King who was the senior officer had requested 80 medical officers, 100 nurses, and 600 enlisted to support the increased hospital staffing to support the Pacific Fleet and increased number of Army personnel. None of the requested personnel had arrived even by the end of December 1941 as rapid military mobilization had completely outpaced medical recruitment and deployment. The civilian-military cooperation and the preparation of thousands of dressings made by the Hawaiian Chapter of the American Red Cross, and Army designation of vehicles for ambulances and facilities for emergency use would be the essential factors for the success of the medical response in the aftermath of the attack on Pearl Harbor.[[40]](#footnote-40) The preparations are a credit to the Hawaiian army command.

The British-American Rainbow 5 war plan contained key points about strategic bombing, but no operational plans. According to J.A. Jacobs, strategic bombing was only vague defined in American national strategy. The Pacific area was unfortunately ignored and relegated to a secondary status.[[41]](#footnote-41) When the Army took delivery of the B-17 in 1937, the U.S. Army Air Corps had an airplane that could really deliver bomb loads of the desired capacity effectively.[[42]](#footnote-42) And the B-17 was a great flying airplane, but there were very few of them, and the crews of December 1941 had little experience especially in long over-water navigation. This was one of the reasons that they were not used for reconnaissance to protect Pearl Harbor. Even for a period after the attacks of December 7/8, 1941, the use of B-17s against Japanese warships was a failure despite historians’ attempts to gloss over the bombers’ lack of success in early actions.[[43]](#footnote-43) The battle of Midway – what we know today as a great Naval aviation success – was reported as an Army Air Corps success, because of the initial false claims of Air Corps pilots. That record was not corrected for several years.[[44]](#footnote-44)

According to the assumptions of the U.S. Joint Board, the Japanese were loyal, docile, and courageous, but lacking in initiative and inventiveness.[[45]](#footnote-45) The strategic perspective and assumptions of the United States did not match the reality. The common assumptions about the Japanese people was one of the contributing factors for the shock that gave power to the Pearl Harbor Myth. The Japanese behavior on December 7/8, 1941 was out of character with public perceptions of Japanese people and their military capabilities. The highly sophisticated, well-coordinated attacks across a wide geographic area and across many time zones with huge success in all cases was entirely unexpected. More importantly, the depth and sophistication of the Japanese plans show their commitment to achieving their political object in the face of failed international negotiations, although it was Japanese treachery that became the common perception.

*American and Japanese Government Operations in Support of National Goals*

Despite growing tensions since 1937, Japanese intelligence offices had not prepared for war with the United States by 1941. In his book, *Japanese Intelligence in World War II*, Japanese historian Ken Kotani found that Japanese records showed that it was not necessarily a failure of intelligence of the Japanese organizations so much as it was the culture and bureaucracy of the Japanese military.[[46]](#footnote-46) The Japanese army and navy did not communicate with each other, accordingly intelligence did not flow up and down their chains of command. Before the Pearl Harbor attack the Japanese were interested in breaking U.S. codes to understand what U.S. intentions were rather than creating codes to protect their information. Imperial Japanese Army (IJA) internal eavesdropping limited the ability of moderate Japanese to seek diplomatic compromise before the Pearl Harbor attack. Japanese intelligence had no analysis section, each section interpreted and analyzed the information that it found and formed its own conclusions, and thus, did not share intelligence across branches. The Imperial Japanese Navy that provided most of the intelligence for the Pearl Harbor attack. Japanese intelligence was very good at the tactical level for the Pearl Harbor attack and Malaya, but poor strategically. Planning was based on a short war with Japan smashing opponents on the battlefield and concluding peace treaties immediately. Historian and military writer Williamson Murray explains in the introduction to Kotani’s book that the language barrier prevented a thorough review of Japanese intelligence records for many years delaying their assessment in the Pearl Harbor story. This fits the strategic pattern of a decline nation proposed by Dong Sung Lee. The Pearl Harbor attack planning was based on short-sighted tactical information not a long-range strategic plan. The IJA had assumed there would be war with the British in Southeast Asia, not the U.S. The U.S. was the responsibility of the Imperial Japanese Navy (IJN). The IJA was studying for war against the Soviets in 1941, because they believed that war with the U.S. would not go beyond the spring of 1942. The IJN assumed there would be a German victory in Europe and Russia which would be essential for Japanese success in Asia. The Japanese also assumed that war weariness was part of American character.[[47]](#footnote-47)

According to Ken Kotani, development of a plan to attack Pearl Harbor began in January 1941 when the Germans shared captured British documents from the British Blue Funnel Liner *Automedon* that was sunk in the Indian Ocean in November 1940. The documents provided a copy of minutes of a British cabinet meeting being sent to Singapore indicating that Britain would not attack Japan or intervene if the Japanese invaded Indochina. This was information that would later support the Japanese strategic military planning to seize the southern resource area in the push for economic security. The discovery of these documents did not automatically mean that Japan would attack the United States. But they would support a preventive attack strategy.[[48]](#footnote-48)

President Roosevelt and his military advisors tried to create hope and confidence in American security as isolation was becoming less and less of an option. The buildup of personnel and equipment in the United States began late in the 1930s after war was already occurring in Asia since 1931. In the meantime in Europe, Germany had already stockpiled a disturbing and destabilizing amount of supplies. The British air panic in 1935 over Germany’s air capabilities and the belief that bombers would always get through to deliver a potential “knock out” blow showed a need for the government to affirm security.[[49]](#footnote-49) The mobilization of American resources was accomplished through the close cooperation of Secretary of War Henry Lewis Stimson, Secretary of Treasury Henry Morgenthau, Army Chief of Staff General George Marshall, and Presidential confident Harry Hopkins. Secretary of War Stimson’s immediate predecessor, Henry H. Woodring, an ardent isolationist, was still in place in the Roosevelt Administration as late as 1940.[[50]](#footnote-50)

The year 1941 was a confusing year for the U.S. Navy. It was operating under “Plan Dog” of November 1940, which advocated priority against Germany rather than Japan. Still planning for a defensive war against Japan, planners engaged in the initial stages of an offensive war in the Atlantic. At the end of March, British-American staff talks produced plan. The ABC-1 plan contained specific assignments for vessels from both navies, mostly to protect convoys and for U.S. neutrality peacetime patrols which identified locations of German vessels via open radio communication for British ships to attack them. Operational responsibilities and expansion created serious problems. Ships were undermanned with newly trained crews; Sonar operators were in short supply. Evidence of a German attack on the Soviet Union was clear through intelligence, diplomatic dispatches, and decrypts through April that pointed to German concentrations in the East but, as at Pearl Harbor later in December 1941.

The specific operational timeframe was hard to discern in order to avoid surprise. There were many events occurring almost simultaneously across the world. German disinformation pointed towards Britain as the target. Under Western Hemisphere Defense Plan 1 in late April 1941, the Battle of the Atlantic was beginning. Western Hemisphere Defense Plan 2 came the following month with modification not allowing use of force in and near territorial waters. The Russo-Japanese neutrality pact concluded on April 13, 1941, secured Japan’s northern flank to allow it to concentrate in a southern move. The U.S. Coast Guard was given the task of preventing the Germans from establishing bases in Greenland, since the Germans occupied Denmark. Roosevelt was concerned about German occupation of Iceland and made the decision to send forces on June 4. A battleship guarded the harbor at Hvalfjorder, Iceland from July 30 onwards. The sinking of the USS *Greer* which became known on September 4 after the rescue crew arrived in Brazil mobilized public support for naval action in the Atlantic. Western Hemisphere Defense Plan 4 with combined convoys of U.S. and Icelandic ships, and American and Canadian navies sharing convoy duty was implemented by the end of the summer. But convoy support was severely limited by a shortage of ships even after depleting the Pacific Fleet.[[51]](#footnote-51) In May 1941, some B-17 bombers were sent to the Hawaii to provide limited defense as partial replacement for transferred ships. But there were very few aircraft of any kind to send as 68 percent of all aircraft production in the United States was sent to the anti-Axis powers, according to Richard Overy.[[52]](#footnote-52)

Japanese historian Minoru Nomura concluded Japan was prodded into war by fear of future national defense and a miscalculation about how long it could sustain a war. Japan did not study how it would obtain essential elements of food and fuel to fight a war. The Japanese were unable to exert sufficient pressure on the Dutch East Indies to obtain necessary petroleum and were unprepared for the full embargo of the United States, Britain, and the Netherlands in the summer of 1941. In the Japanese analysis, they could not compensate for the petroleum crisis for more than two years unless they went to war in October 1941.[[53]](#footnote-53)

Akira Iriye argues developments in Europe were the most important factors determining Japanese relations between China and the United States. The Japanese were acting opportunistically hoping to capitalize on European weakness. German and Italian victories over Britain and France kept the European powers divided allowing Japan to reduce their interference in China. If Russia and the United States were compelled to divert their attention to the European conflict, America would be much less willing to challenge Japan and might even end its resistance to Japan’s expansion. Japan’s partnership with Germany was made with the belief that Germany would crush its European enemies leaving their Asian colonies open for Japan to seize the living space that Japan felt it needed. Washington’s relations with the Japanese proceeded with the firm belief that Japan would never become the military threat that Germany was and that the Japanese would be compelled to become responsible international citizens again. But America’s return to the internationalism of the 1920s in the late 1930s came too late to influence the Japanese. Only the collapse of the British Empire would bring Japan’s economic opportunity. To the Japanese, if the Chinese Republic was gone, then American and British resistance to Japan’s Pan-Asian policy would cease, so Japan continued its war against the Chinese to ensure there would be no reason for Britain or America to return.[[54]](#footnote-54) The Japanese actions stemmed from poor strategic leadership driven by an opportunistic regime that did not really understand the nuances or potential blowback in foreign relations.

Japanese and American military and civilian intelligence organizations were ineffective and inept in providing realistic assumptions and adequate strategic understanding about each other to their national leaders. What the Japanese knew about American planning, which was limited, led them to believe that that the U.S. would not attack in the home waters of Japan, but would start in the south and begin a protracted war that would favor the U.S. with its greater industrial capacity. American army intelligence estimates of Japanese aircraft production during the final week of December 1941 underestimated Japanese aircraft production by more than 50 percent. The Army estimated their production at 200 aircraft per month when it was 426. Policymakers were unaware of how asymmetrical the relationship between Japan and the United States had become.[[55]](#footnote-55) Admiral Nobumasa Suetsugu, former Japanese commander of the fleet, developed plans in 1941 for land-based aircraft on the Southern Pacific Islands to form a defensive fence or outer aerial barrier, to protect the Japanese home islands and seized territory for the southern resource area.[[56]](#footnote-56) Japan had gained a strategic victory at the Washington Conference in 1922 when the U.S. was denied the ability to build bases in the Western Pacific. In 1941, massed air power could not reach across the great distances of the Pacific and land-based airpower could decisively affect naval operations.

Regarding American intelligence organizations, Jeffery Dorwart in *Conflict of Duty*[[57]](#footnote-57) argues that operational naval intelligence conducted by the Office of Naval Intelligence (ONI) became conflicted because of new counter espionage and counter sabotage duties that President Roosevelt assigned to the office. Roosevelt was keen on spying by ONI from the days when he selected Navy spies during the First World War. As Roosevelt sought to create new intelligence policy at the critical moment in the summer of 1939, Roosevelt replaced the competent, long-time direct of ONI, Ralston Holmes, with Rear Admiral Walter Stratton Anderson. This office was considered a dead end for aspiring flag officers. In his first few months on the job, Secretary of Navy Claude A. Swanson died. Acting Secretary Charles Edison was deaf and ill. And Chief of Naval Operations Admiral William D. Leahy reached mandatory retirement, leaving Anderson without anyone to guide him in the Navy. Roosevelt took over that job and began directing him into spying and counter espionage. Naval intelligence became an appellation of the Federal Bureau of Investigation receiving coaching, assistance, and training from them and U.S. Representative Martin Dies, Jr. of the House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC). The office became dominated by the domestic agendas of those two organizations at the expense of operational intelligence. Even the invasion of Poland did not spur the office into immediately developing mobilization plans to ramp up operation from the Interwar Years when the office was maintained at minimal levels. As a result, Navy intelligence was strained to provide the necessary data for the Rainbow Plan.

Navy officers serving in the U.S. Asiatic Fleet in the period before Pearl Harbor recorded that ONI provided no intelligence flow to the Pacific commands. They sent information to ONI but got nothing back.[[58]](#footnote-58) Rear Admiral Thomas Hart, drafted a memorandum for his file to this effect in July 1940 regarding ONI’s communications should he need to defend his performance. Kemp Tolley, who had served as a junior officer with Rear Admiral Hart in the Asiatic Fleet, learned in his retirement years that Admiral Husband Kimmel had made a similar complaint. Kimmel wrote Chief of Naval Operations Harold Stark on February 18, 1941 about the lack of information coming from ONI, and received a reply that ONI knew what its responsibilities were to provide information. But there was no subsequent information flow. Officers in Washington were aware of an intra-service fight in which ONI thought it was Operations function to inform the fleet, while War Plans considered it ONI’s. The two offices maintained their stand-off and neither provided information to the fleet.[[59]](#footnote-59)

*Americans’ Emotional Response to the Pearl Harbor Attack Affects Their View of History*

Once Japan attacked the United States, Americans shock over the attack and the loss of their sense of military security, invulnerability, and isolationism was used by the Roosevelt administration to direct attention away from its policies and to focus attention on negative Japanese character and on military damage and failure in Hawaii through press censorship, security policy, and selective release of information creating an American myth about Pearl Harbor.

Psychologist George Victor,[[60]](#footnote-60) who became fascinated by the Pearl Harbor Story, argues that a myth was established in the American mind that stands in the way of working out how the United States entered World War II. Psychologists who find meaning in how things are said observed that Roosevelt did not speak of a “sneak attack” in his Day of Infamy Speech on December 8, 1941, but he did suggest that deceptiveness was a Japanese trait. This may seem like semantics and a small point, but the public was in shock and they focused on every word. The idea of a sneak attack became the basis upon which Americans came to terms with the defeats not just in Hawaii, but across the Pacific on December 7/8, 1941 (the attacks occurred in a similar time frame across the International Date Line and were in the same 24 hour period). Typical rhetoric of the period was that the United States had offered compromises to Japan that were rejected, but the public did not know that the Roosevelt administration was uncompromising and expected their lines of negotiation to be rejected and would lead to war. Victor notes that other national disasters in the United States also resulted in shock and a search for scapegoats in their aftermath.[[61]](#footnote-61) Many wild ideas took root and there was widespread fear of invasion of the continental United States by Japan.

Former New York Times military reporter Hanson Baldwin wrote after the war that there was a great body of American racial mythology about the Japanese and their lesser abilities. The war would quickly change this mythology as the night fighting abilities of the Japanese became apparent. The faster and more heavily armed Japanese ships and the quality of their weapons would also add to the shock affect as Americans came into contact with the Japanese during the early months of the war.[[62]](#footnote-62) The irrationality of the Japanese and their “madness” was a theme that emerged in the United States Congress and newspapers almost immediately.[[63]](#footnote-63) David Kahn wrote Americans found that Pearl Harbor was a great shock that “destroyed the national myth of isolation and invulnerability.”[[64]](#footnote-64)

Charles A. Beard in *President Roosevelt and the Coming of War 1941: A Study in Appearances and Realities*, argues using official public statements and primary material from the Joint Congressional Committee for the investigation of Pearl Harbor that Roosevelt created an “official thesis” to present the best case for the administration during a national crisis. Beard argues that this approach favored the administration not being held accountable and leaving the Pearl Harbor commanders catching the blame.[[65]](#footnote-65) The administration would be in a tough place trying to present information. Prior to December 7, 1941 it was operating in an isolationist atmosphere and Roosevelt felt he could not be seen giving the appearance of aggression. And Roosevelt promised American young men would not be called on to fight in a foreign war during his 1940 campaign.[[66]](#footnote-66) The government was engaged in a policy of neutrality in the Atlantic and Caribbean; this policy was more opaque in response to Japanese activities in Asia and the Pacific. The economic sanctions freezing Japanese assets in the United States and the July 1941 oil embargo were seen by pacifists and isolationists and powerful members of the Congress as peaceful activities. Beard had testified against the passage of Lend-Lease and was opposed to weapons and guns. When writing his histories after the war, he wrote as a disillusioned Roosevelt supporter. But in the Interwar Period just before Pearl Harbor, he represents exactly the kind of influential opinion maker that Roosevelt is trying not to antagonize.[[67]](#footnote-67) In this respect, Roosevelt was doing what was expected. Public opinion can be very fickle when the tide changes.

Secretary of State Cordell Hull released two statements on December 7, 1941, placing the blame on the Japanese and declaring that they came with a war declaration after the attack had begun. This was technically true. It was an act of treachery in keeping with the character of the Japanese people the State Department declared. The next day in his speech to the Congress delivering what is known today at the “Day of Infamy” speech, Roosevelt continued along the same theme and focused only on Hawaii. Then on December 9 Roosevelt delivered a national radio address to the American people and sent a message to the Congress on December 15, 1941 distancing his administration from blame, arguing that the attack on Pearl Harbor occurred while the United States was still in conversation with Japan and defended the administration’s record of diplomacy. Roosevelt and his officials had begun writing this speech two weeks before in November as tensions between the United States and Japan grew. Roosevelt would need to more fully explain the status of Japanese American relations to the American people at some point in the near future. Historian John Wiltz viewed this effort to craft a message to the Congress that would outline American interests in Southeast Asia as “a device for warning the Japanese that new aggression on their part might bring a clash with America, and also conditioning the United States to the prospect of hostilities.”[[68]](#footnote-68) In the scenario described by Wiltz, war at this point in late November and early December is still distant. Another reading of the scenario would be that war is much closer and the President is sensing the need for another preparatory step for the nation. Roosevelt moved slowly, reluctantly, and only when he was force to change. This need of Roosevelt’s to communicate is a significant sign that he senses a coming change. Sumner Welles, undersecretary of State argued with Roosevelt on the evening after the Pearl Harbor attack that this was the speech that should be delivered to the Congress on December 8, but it was held for the fireside chat on December 9 and the Message to the Congress on December 15, 1941.[[69]](#footnote-69) This exchange reveals in part Roosevelt’s understanding of the event itself being sudden and harsh. It was not the time for a dialogue about foreign relations until the public could get more context and details. Roosevelt presented Japan as the lone aggressor without Germany.[[70]](#footnote-70)

The Pearl Harbor commanders were quietly relieved of their duties. They remained silent so as not to compromise future military proceedings when they could defend themselves and make their cases. When some of the Roberts Commission Report was released in January 23, 1941, White House Press Secretary Steve Early did not fully release the reports for security reasons, but it was implied that the Pearl Harbor commanders were to blame. The Pearl Harbor commanders were encouraged to retire and both submitted their resignations. Both contributed to the war effort as civilians. Later in the summer of 1942, the White House gave limited information to White House reporter Forrest Davis and State Department reporter Ernest K. Lindley, who produced *How the War Came: An American White Paper* using that exclusive material which reinforced the official thesis of the Administration.[[71]](#footnote-71)

The first break in the “official thesis” came when Senator Harry S Truman wrote an article in *Collier’s Magazine* in August 1944 accusing Kimmel and Short of failing to cooperate with one another. Kimmel decided to break four years of public silence. He responded that all of the story had not yet been told in a letter to Senator Truman that was released to the public. Senator Truman publicly responded that he had non-public information which corroborated his claim. This opened the door to additional official investigations.[[72]](#footnote-72) The Congress extended the two-year statute of limitations for Admiral Kimmel and General Short several times as the Roosevelt administration pushed off the opportunity of the Pearl Harbor commanders to defense themselves. Admiral Husband Kimmel and Lieutenant General Walter Short would get their opportunity to defend themselves, but it would be an uphill battle against the popular opinion. The American public was not inclined to believe that its military forces could be so taken by surprise and suffer such destruction unless there was some shortcomings on the part of the military forces in Hawaii.

Public assessment of the performance of the Pearl Harbor commanders – and to a lesser extent the Pearl Harbor survivors – was made in the context of American racial prejudices about the Japanese. Ugly stereotypes made for different public perceptions between the Atlantic/European and the Pacific/Asian theaters. Harvard historian John Dower made extensive studies of U.S-Japan relations and of the attitudes the citizens of each country towards one another.[[73]](#footnote-73) In both the United States and Britain, the Japanese were hated before and even more after Pearl Harbor. The perception of the Japanese was monolithic. Unlike the Germans, among whom Americans believed there were some “good’ Germans, this was never the case with the Japanese. The Japanese were a race, even a species, apart from the rest of humanity. The intensity of the public perception increased with the *Why We Fight* films produced by Frank Capra in Hollywood at the request of the Roosevelt administration between 1942 and 1945. The films were effective propaganda for Americans to support the war that was approved by officials at fifty federal agencies. It was in the midst of this widespread belief that the Japanese were inferior that the Pearl Harbor commanders had to defend their performance in the face of Japanese success. There was no getting around that. This was also a major difference between the Hawaii and the Philippines. The Philippines did not have a large Japanese population and relations with the Philippines was good. These differences distinguished Hawaii from the rest of the Pacific. Lieutenant General Walter Short resisted plans to place the Japanese national and Japanese residents in internment camps because there were too many and they represented virtually all of the field workers who were needed to keep Hawaiian agricultural industry operational. But his practical considerations, which were supported by Hawaiian business owners, made him look sympathetic to the Japanese.

The official U.S. Army and U.S. Navy history series thoroughly cover the military events, but do not ever address the causes of the conflict between Japan and the West. Nor do they cover the controversy of America’s military preparedness or whether the Pearl Harbor commanders acted appropriately or were treated fairly in the aftermath of the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor. And some historians would argue that it was not the job of the official histories on World War II to do so, as they were dispassionate works. Historian Samuel Eliot Morrison expressed awareness of the difference in the public reactions even two decades after the Pearl Harbor attack. Pearl Harbor had become iconic and caused what happened there to be seen differently. Morison wrote in *The Two-Ocean War*:

One of the strange things in popular psychology is the different reactions of the American people to disaster at Pearl Harbor, and to disaster at Manila. The one completely overshadowed the other; it seemed so overwhelming that people could take in no bad news elsewhere. Yet the attack on Pearl Harbor was the lesser of the two evils. It was a hit-and-run raid, and the hit was not decisive.[[74]](#footnote-74)

Morison’s description of the American public perspective is largely unchanged five decades later. The focus of historians and the American people has remained on Pearl Harbor as an event separated from other contemporaneous events. But, in retrospect, the reaction of the American people was not so surprising. That was where the Roosevelt Administration placed the focus. Roosevelt’s “Day of Infamy” speech made the case for Japanese treachery that outraged the American public and formed the basis of their response. It mentioned the other attacks in passing, but placed the sole focus on Hawaii. The early draft of the speech was balanced between the Philippines and Hawaii, but that balance disappeared almost immediately by Roosevelt’s own hand the afternoon of December 7 when he was editing his speech.[[75]](#footnote-75) Later, only “Pearl Harbor” received further investigations. The accused were promised a fair and full hearing in the future. As Admiral Husband Kimmel and Lieutenant General Walter Short were forcibly retired and pushed out of service, they really had no choice.

Public perception of the destruction of the U.S. fleet at Pearl Harbor and the public’s total focus on Hawaii explains this differentiation between Hawaii and the Philippines. The attack on Pearl Harbor was the costliest destruction in U.S. history, which ensured that analysts would continue to focus and study on Pearl Harbor, wrote Indian historian Indira Vidyalankar.[[76]](#footnote-76) But the cost in human lives from the loss of the Philippines far exceeded Pearl Harbor. Vital naval stores of torpedoes and forward supplies of fuel as well as strategic position that cost many lives to retake made the cost of Philippines very high. John Mueller, a professor of political science, offers an unusual argument that historians (John Toland, Samuel Eliot Morrison, Roberta Wohlstetter, Ronald Spector, Lewis Morton, and Gordon Prange) exaggerated the extent of the disaster to the fleet.[[77]](#footnote-77) These historians perpetuated the mistaken public perception for another 40 years with Wohlstetter and Prange being the most influential of historians for a long period. The destruction was largely inflicted on old, outdated equipment and really had little military significance, while the base remained operational. The original targets were the aircraft carriers which were the most important. If they had been in port, then the Japanese would have made the third attack on the Pearl Harbor tank farms as well. In the immediate aftermath of the Pearl Harbor attack it was important not to disclose that the base was still operational, but later after the war there was no need for it to be a secret. U.S. industry quickly made up for the lost equipment, most of which was repaired, and built a massive arsenal. The real disaster he argued was arming and moving to revenge in hot war that he argues might just as easily have been contained with a cold war and without such horrific loss of life. Hypothetical arguments such as this sometimes bring facets of a situation to light. But the purpose of the extensive negotiations between Japan and the United States in the summer and fall of 1941 was to avoid war as Mueller rightly argued would have avoided a very bloody war.

Roberta Wohlstetter in her 1962 book *Warning and Decision* concluded that the specific information about an attack could not be discerned from all the intelligence and plethora of irrelevant material. According to historian Abraham Ben-Zvi, Wohlstetter used theories of perception and misperception in which policy makers based their decisions on preconceptions that inspired other historians.[[78]](#footnote-78) Her explanation was more persuasive as it explained the Pearl Harbor surprise better than revisionists’ analytic theory. Historian John Costello in his 1981 book, *The Pacific War 1941-1945*, one of the first histories to be produced after the opening of archival records from World War II, repeats Wohlstetter’s conclusions.[[79]](#footnote-79) However, Costello takes a different position in his later book, *Days of Infamy*, and asks the question why the actions of the Philippine commanders did not receive the same official review as the Pearl Harbor commanders.[[80]](#footnote-80)

Wohlstetter’s specialized area of intelligence expertise has not gone without criticism, but it did not come immediately. New York Times Military Reporter Hanson Baldwin complained that she wrote a monumental work in which she concluded that no one could be blamed with certainty, either in groups or individuals, and we had to live with the element of uncertainty in intelligence.[[81]](#footnote-81) Intelligence historian David Kahn challenged her information theory, stating that it was not too much information, but a dearth of real intelligence that was the problem for intelligence officers. There was no message that Pearl Harbor was the target and would be attacked. The intelligence offices were reading diplomatic messages, not operational messages. Kahn argues that even if Kimmel and Short had the received the MAGIC/PURPLE material, it would not have helped them identify the specific time period in which the attack would occur.[[82]](#footnote-82) Kimmel argued before the Navy Court of Inquiry and the Army Pearl Harbor Board when he learned that the United States had some decrypted Japanese communications that it would have made a difference if Washington had provided this intelligence.[[83]](#footnote-83) But the signs were hard to spot before Japanese actions on December 7/8, 1941, and they did not give specific timing of operational importance. Waldo Heinrichs identified the important pieces as discordant signs of Japanese instructions in MAGIC that failed to attract special attention of intelligence officers. These included directions for agents in Manila to investigate coastal defenses on Luzon and the dispatching of a ship to bring Japanese citizens home from the Middle East, India and East Asia by November 20, 1941. The most significant for Hawaii was the October 9 request to Honolulu to report the precise location of Fleet vessels tied up to wharfs, docks, and buoys.[[84]](#footnote-84)

U.S. Department of State records show that the U.S. Embassy in Tokyo repeatedly told officials in Washington that failure of diplomatic talks between the two nations would lead to war, but they also do not identify the specific period of time unless it had been known when the Japanese ships had departed. Investigations from 1941 to 1946 showed that laxity and drinking were not a problem in Hawaii and that men were fit for duty on Sunday, December 7, 1941, but the impressions endured. The first investigation by Roberts concluded erroneously that Short and Kimmel failed to cooperate. This idea caught and was repeated later by Vice President Truman in 1944 and later in 1958 by Representative Clarence Cannon in the U.S. House of Representatives. Victor held that these accusations bear striking resemblance to the German stab-in-the-back myth from World War I reflecting rumors and ignoring findings that were available.[[85]](#footnote-85) “Book after book accepted the claim that lack of funds and staff had prevented military intelligence from discovering plans for the Pearl Harbor attack; the claim became an enduring part of the myth,” Victor stated. However, there was a fully operational intelligence staff and it was funded, but the public did not learn of it until many years later. Even then, these facts were obscured.

According to the Pearl Harbor Myth, Japan attacked the United States without provocation. According to the Myth, the United States offered compromises, but Japan refused. But as discussed earlier, it was Japan that offered compromises and concession and the United States that encountered with increased demands and would not consider concessions.[[86]](#footnote-86) The myth has often doubled as history over the past 70 years.

Military, diplomatic, international and domestic business, economic and other civilian participants in the events related to “Pearl Harbor” released documents and information about the events over the ensuing 70 years have helped to understand this history better. But the historiography of “Pearl Harbor” has benefited greatly from the contributions of Asian historians, who were generally unwelcome to or considered irrelevant by Americans in the years following the “Pacific War.” The general perception in America for many years now was that there really is nothing new to learn about Pearl Harbor. Why should anyone want to go over this ground again? It was the iconic “Pearl Harbor” mentality that obstructed the larger context in which the events of “Pearl Harbor” take place and without which it is impossible to understand them.

In *Days of Infamy: MacArthur, Roosevelt, Churchill: The Shocking Truth Revealed*, John Costello argues that the vehemence of Roosevelt’s language in his “Day of Infamy” Speech became a leitmotif of Japanese treachery. There was a collective American incredulity that the small country of Japan dared to attack and the United States and delivered a humiliating defeat to the American military. But it was not Pearl Harbor that was the greater strategic blow, it was the Philippines where “the second day of infamy” occurred that was the greater blow ten hours after the Pearl Harbor attack. Roosevelt, Costello continues in his argument, never publicly acknowledged the Japanese raid that destroyed greatest concentration of American airpower outside the United States at Clark Field like sitting ducks.[[87]](#footnote-87) This loss of more than half of U.S. air strength ended the ability to defend the Philippines, led to the loss of Malaya and the Dutch East Indies. Washington’s public attention remained on Hawaii and dropped the Philippines. Costello calls this “The Pearl Harbor Syndrome.” The oil in the Dutch East Indies and the resources in Indo-China were the Japanese objectives. To obtain it the Japanese had to put the U.S. Navy fleet out of commission in order to establish their hold on the Southwest Pacific and Southeast Asia. Geography was to play a role in how the events would be remembered in the American mind, because psychologically Hawaii was part of the United States and the Philippines was not. We remembered Pearl Harbor, not the Philippines.[[88]](#footnote-88)

*Defenders and Critics of Roosevelt and Pearl Harbor Commanders Debate in the Emotional Aftermath of Pearl Harbor*

Many official records contain relevant information about the daily operations of agencies and principal government officials at the seat of government in Washington. The principal source of historical information about the Pearl Harbor attack are the nine Pearl Harbor investigations. The two most influential investigations in shaping initial American attitudes about Pearl Harbor were the first two authorized by President Roosevelt. Immediately after the Pearl Harbor attack, the President dispatched Secretary of the Navy Frank Knox to Hawaii to conduct an investigation. The President released a summary of this investigation immediately upon his return. Then, under an Executive Order dated December 18, 1941, the President authorized a commission to investigate the Pearl Harbor attack. It was headed by U.S. Supreme Court Associate Justice Owen Josephus Roberts, and included board members Admiral William H. Standley, Admiral Joseph M. Reeves, General Frank R. McCoy, and General Joseph T. McNarney. The presidential commission took on the chairman’s name and became known as the Roberts Commission. It became the first official investigation of the Pearl Harbor Attack. Its hearings were closed and its report was completed January 23, 1942. Portions of the reports were released while the rest remained non-public for security reasons.

Subsequently, as the major military investigations were delayed due to the length of war and there was concern that witnesses would be killed, the Secretary of the Navy sent retired Admiral Thomas C. Hart, to obtain testimony and pertinent records from personnel who may be on dangerous missions from February until June 1944. The official service investigations were conducted concurrently from July to October 1944: The Army Pearl Harbor Board (July 20 – October 20, 1944) and the Navy Court of Inquiry (July 24 – October 19, 1944). The President and the services did not like the results of the two official service investigations and commissioned further investigations. Following the Army Pearl Harbor Board, Army Chief of Staff George Marshall commissioned Colonel Carter W. Clarke on oral orders to obtain testimony from August to September 1944 and to make findings concerning sharing of certain TOP SECRET intelligence (primarily MAGIC) during the pre-Pearl Harbor period. As an additional follow up to the Army Pearl Harbor Board, Secretary of War Henry Lewis Stimson commissioned Maj. Henry C. Clausen to continue the Army Pearl Harbor Board’s investigation into “unexplored leads” from January to September 1945.[[89]](#footnote-89) Following the Navy Court of Inquiry, Admiral H. Kent Hewitt was charged with following up specific questions from May to July 1945.[[90]](#footnote-90)

The ninth investigation was the Joint Congressional Committee for the Investigation of Pearl Harbor that met from November 1945 until May 1946. It was an independent Congressional inquiry. The Joint Committee was appointed “because of deep suspicions and bitter accusations about the events leading up to the attack,” according to Roland W. Worth.[[91]](#footnote-91) The Joint Committee was the only public investigation with open testimony. The records of the Joint Congressional Committee (JCC) include the reports of all of the previous investigations, all printed in 39 volumes that consume 39,000 pages and are a major historical resource. The Pearl Harbor attack remains the most investigated event in American history. Yet, the outcome regarding causes, responsibility, and blame continue to be debated seventy years later.

While the investigations produced voluminous records, a few sections of the JCC’s records and hearings drew special attention because of their importance in resolving the greater issues of Pearl Harbor for the American public. Historian Roland Worth isolated a good selection of these passages which go to the point of why the Pearl Harbor investigations results were equivocal and could only partially influence public opinion.

Worth identified three selections as examples of testimony speaking to how the seat of government was operating in the final steps to war.[[92]](#footnote-92) Secretary of War Henry Lewis Stimson’s testimony to the Army Pearl Harbor Board described regular “War Council” meetings on Wednesdays each week of a small select group of high level officials including: Secretary of State, Secretary of War, Secretary of the Navy, Army Chief of Staff, and the Chief of Naval Operations.[[93]](#footnote-93) This council did go over the messages that would be sent to the Philippines and Hawaii to warn of war as well as the small numbers of aircraft dispatched in the fall of 1941 on which American security depended. Secretary of State Cordell Hull’s testified to the Committee (in response to written questions) that intragovernmental discussions about the danger of war in November 1941 had moved from “whether” to “when.” The Administration appears as a group to accept the inevitability of conflict, and Hull acknowledges that the Japanese are not going to bend to U.S. demands. The last was Ambassador Joseph Grew’s testimony on whether the Japanese and American notes exchanged in November 1941 constituted an ultimatum. Ambassador Grew agreed under close questioning that both sides considered their notes to be ultimatums to the other, because neither side would withdraw any elements of their demands. However, he would not make a categorical statement that it was an ultimatum despite being asked directly several times by the congressional committee’s counsel.

Americans also learned about the inner workings of the intelligence, counterintelligence, and law enforcement communities to defeat espionage and to gain information.[[94]](#footnote-94) The American people learned how American espionage was defeated because America could not gain entry into the closed society of Japan from Brigadier General Sherman Miles and Ambassador Grew.[[95]](#footnote-95) On the other hand, the Japanese could more easily gain intelligence in Hawaii because of the large Japanese population, according to George W. Bicknell, assistant G-2 of the Army’s Hawaiian Department before the Joint Congressional Committee. However, the Japanese only made observations and did not develop agents. But in the end conflict between agencies such as that between the Navy and FBI in overlapping responsibilities such as wiretapping of key individuals might fail because the agencies did not get along and both might cease critical intelligence gathering.[[96]](#footnote-96) The public learned this from the investigation of Lieutenant Col. Henry C. Clausen in testimony before the Joint Congressional Committee.[[97]](#footnote-97)

Americans placed great faith in new technology, but learned that the introduction of the radar in Hawaii might have been a missed opportunity on December 7, 1941. But the operators and supervisors were still in training. [[98]](#footnote-98) One advance in technology that was strategically deployed to provide security in the Western Pacific was the U.S. arsenal of B-17 bombers. This was described in a secret press conference for seven major news reporters with General George Marshall on November 15, 1941 later revisited many years later by Robert Sherrod, one of the reporters who attended.[[99]](#footnote-99) General Marshall asks the reporters not to write so much about the build-up in the Philippines which the United States is trying to keep the Japanese from learning. Marshall displayed large maps showing the reach of the deployed bombers and how they will be deployed to deter the Japanese in place of Navy. General Marshall was convinced that airpower might fill the deterrence void left by the ships diverted to service in the Atlantic. In response to questioning by New York Times Reporter, Hanson Baldwin, it became clear that the bombers could not reach the targets General Marshall described. According to Sherrod, General Marshall was also aware that there were insufficient fields for dispersing aircraft. Sherrod said that General Marshall was honest, but it was some of the worst guessing by a great commander. Mark Stoler in his book *George C. Marshall* takes a more critical view declaring that Marshall had little if any background in strategic planning and the uses of airpower.[[100]](#footnote-100) Marshall had been opposed to the build-up in the Philippines and was not an airpower advocate until the summer of 1941 when he and his staff reevaluated the potential of airpower to address the strategic problems of the Pacific. General Marshall, Admiral Harold Stark, and their staffs had been so preoccupied that they were blinded to the Japanese capacity to attack the Philippines or the Hawaiian Islands. This event remains a footnote and the loss of all these aircraft in the Philippines never had the same significance attached to them in the public discussion as at Pearl Harbor. In 1994, John Costello in his book *Days of Infamy* took a different approach from his 1981 book and wrote that the revisionists are right but for the wrong reasons based on his changed opinion of what happened in the Philippines. The debacle in the Philippines resulting in one-half of all U.S. bombers being destroyed more than 10 hours *after* the Pearl Harbor attack stands as evidence against the Roosevelt administration and its poor handling of relations with the Japanese, intelligence, and military ineptness. Costello asks why there was no investigation of the Philippines debacle. Costello believes that too many historians and Americans have come under the spell of a Pearl Harbor Syndrome.[[101]](#footnote-101) The Philippines was separated in the public mind from Pearl Harbor and they were more concerned about the defense of the homeland. Pearl Harbor represented the defense of the homeland; the Philippines was an advance outpost of a larger American Pacific defense and at the furthest reach of America’s periphery. It was not considered part of the domestic sphere.

Americans could also revel in the codebreaking ability of American military offices. But while the results provided useful information, the results were not always useful and the testimony was inconclusive on whether intercepts like the so-called “Winds” message instructing Japanese embassies to destroy codes was ever sent. Testimony by Captain Laurence F. Safford, chief of the Navy Department’s security section on this point also included testimony that he found whole sections of pertinent records had disappeared relating to critical periods of interest to the Joint Congressional Committee. The question of whether Japanese language translator Commander Alwin D. Kramer was pressured to change his testimony by other officers and senior leaders.[[102]](#footnote-102) Both Captain Stafford’s and Commander Kramer’s testimony stirred suspicions of cover-up that ensured some areas of the investigation would never be resolved. The conduct of the investigations, the production of witnesses, and instructions to witnesses about what material on which they could testify would remain a matter of discussion. Admiral Husband Kimmel reviews the frustrating process of the investigations and the papers and evidence that would be made available. Executive privilege did play a clear role in what information was made available and there was intense internal debate in the Truman White House about how much access to files and personnel there would be as the files on the Truman memorandums of President Harry S Truman of November 7 and 9 1945 to cooperate with the Joint Congressional Committee show.[[103]](#footnote-103)

The American public which had felt secure and invulnerable prior to the Pearl Harbor attack learned from testimony by Admiral Husband Kimmel, Lieutenant General Walter Short, Major General Henry T. Burgin[[104]](#footnote-104) how frail the line of defense was in Hawaii. Their sense of security had been misplaced as the shortages of equipment was described in great detail. The Army had limited planes ready to fly because the parts necessary to keep half of them flying were being used as replacement parts for planes transiting through Hawaii to the Philippines. These planes received priority over local planes for reconnaissance. The primary military threat was perceived to be in the South Western Pacific. Communication between the senior officers in the Navy and War Departments was limited and cryptic. What was clear was that the Army and Navy were still mobilizing men and equipment at the time of the Pearl Harbor attack and they were not the fighting force that they would become later. By the time the congressional hearings began, the war in both Europe and the Asian-Pacific areas was over. The public was celebrating the victory. While the revelations from the hearings generated some headlines, this was old news. Moreover the fighting capabilities of American forces in the war would be compared by the public with what their unrealistic perceptions of its capabilities in 1941. In Admiral Husband Kimmel’s opinion, the public was fed up with the Pearl Harbor investigations by their end. The inquiry was confusing and it was very hard to find salient facts amid the material.[[105]](#footnote-105) The Administration and military officials in Washington were treated more as a group – “Washington” – and given a pass by the public. The Pearl Harbor commanders were linked as individuals with the Pearl Harbor disaster and would be treated as such.

The critics and defenders of Roosevelt focused on solving the military problem of Hawaii, because that was the emotional focus of the American public. The war came to the United States through Pearl Harbor. The unstated thought behind the iconic expression “Pearl Harbor” gives it power and meaning is: The war would have come to the United States differently if it had been better prepared and if it had acted differently. The question then becomes: *who* should have acted differently? Someone in Washington? Someone in Hawaii? Someone elsewhere? Or all of them?

The most obvious way in which the war would have come differently was if the Japanese never attacked Pearl Harbor. But the unswerving American focus on solving the military problem of Hawaii for seven decades implies that there was an American solution to the problem. The Japanese were an untrustworthy, treacherous people with inferior military capabilities to the United States. The Japanese should never have been able to surprise and destroy the U.S. fleet in Hawaii. Answering the question this way – and this was how the public and historians have sought to answer the question – means that someone in the American national command authority (the President) and military chain of command from Hawaii to Washington was responsible. Not surprisingly, the debate back and forth is based on selective records and testimony that “point” to the person(s) responsible. From the outset, the most vulnerable in the process were the Pearl Harbor commanders and the military personnel in Hawaii. They were at the point of contextual change when the war came. But as the Pearl Harbor investigations showed the Pearl Harbor commanders had reduced resources.

The problem for critics of Roosevelt was proving the President’s and his advisors’ intentions contributed to Japan’s decision to attack when the United States was unprepared. But even if the critics solved that problem that would still not explain the military tactical surprise.[[106]](#footnote-106) Samuel Bemis in the first critique of revisionist historiography warned that the greatest danger from revisionism was undermining sound foreign policy that might lead to neutrality and isolationism leading to further war as happened with President Woodrow Wilson’s policies after World War I.[[107]](#footnote-107) This was an early warning from an historian that conspiracies and creating doubt about American policy would not be welcome.

Critics of the Roosevelt Administration on the issue of Pearl Harbor and performance of the military commanders face the problem of showing that there is a causal link to the President. They also must show that the Pearl Harbor commanders were aware of their strategic context and did all that they could with the intelligence, equipment, and personnel under their commands. Attempts to show a “conspiracy” on the part of the Administration have generally been rejected for lack of evidence. For example, John Costello, writes that so-called revisionists of the 1950s like Charles Callan Tansill in *Back Door to War: The Roosevelt Foreign Policy, 1933-1941* and Robert A. Theobald, *The Final Secret of Pearl Harbor: The Washington Contribution to the Japanese Attack* lacked merit.[[108]](#footnote-108) But the strongest argument against Roosevelt rushing to get the United States into the war as critics charge was that Admiral Stark and General Marshall argued in the strongest terms for foreign policies that would not provoke a war with the Japanese while U.S. military readiness was still so low in 1941.[[109]](#footnote-109) The Pearl Harbor hearings provide page after page documenting the low state of readiness.

Warren Kimball examined early accusations that President Franklin Roosevelt’s prewar foreign policy deceived the American people about his goals using lend-lease as a case study. Kimball concluded that lend-lease reflected the accepted view of a steady escalation of American involvement. The impression that Roosevelt was deceptive came from the fact that actions were done in secret for security and that while his actions had bipartisan support dissent received little attention.[[110]](#footnote-110)

Another key argument of the critics of Roosevelt was that he had issued an ultimatum which drove Japan to war.[[111]](#footnote-111) Norman Hill examined the question of whether or not there was actually an ultimatum presented to the Japanese or whether they presented one to the United States. He concluded neither the United States nor Japan did make an ultimatum. However, despite the lack of an ultimatum by either Japan or the United States, both sides clearly expected war reducing the issue to an interesting diplomatic technicality.[[112]](#footnote-112) The lack of an ultimatum reduces the strength of the war warnings of late November 1941 sent by Admiral Stark and General Marshall to the Pearl Harbor commanders, but only nominally. Akira Iriye explained in his comments on the Hull note of November 26, 1941: “rather than a *modus vivendi* proposal, meant that the U.S. government had decided against seeking a temporary compromise with Japan.”[[113]](#footnote-113) Regarding the document, Iriye wrote:

The document, then reflected the official U.S. view that the crisis between the two countries – “ the road to Pearl Harbor,” as it would come to be called – began in 1931 and that if the two nations were to live in peace again, it would be necessary to return to the conditions of the 1920s.[[114]](#footnote-114)

Many Pearl Harbor survivors and Pacific Navy personnel never quite accepted that Washington had done its best or kept them fully informed. Washington’s comments about them being drunk on duty and derelict had stung deeply and still did 60 years later. Ken Landis, the last surviving member of Admiral Kimmel’s staff, expressed exactly those sentiments in his 2001 book whose title, *Deceit at Pearl Harbor: From Pearl Harbor to Midway*, captures this sense of abandonment and rage at being ignored.[[115]](#footnote-115) He makes no new arguments and reaches for arguments that are weak and cannot be confirmed. It is painful to read how let down by Washington Landis and his fellow Pearl Harbor survivors felt. Those who make the argument that the Pearl Harbor commanders and the Pearl Harbor survivors were treated fairly by history were not those whom the country blamed for letting them down. Pearl Harbor survivor stories and oral histories abound. Some like *“Lest We Forget”: Report of the Japanese Raid on Pearl Harbor*, a compilation of command and ship reports from December 7, 1941 prepared by Gary Gibson and Bill Berger (Yale, Oklahoma: GB Publishing, 1991) were published at the author’s own expense to ensure the records of their defense were preserved. The Pearl Harbor survivors went to great lengths to ensure that the records were kept with which to defend their performance against public accusations of dereliction of duty even decades later.

Psychologist George Victor in *The Pearl Harbor Myth[[116]](#footnote-116)* writes that the myth of “Pearl Harbor” prevents real understanding its causes and real accountability and responsibility. Victor notes that many national disasters and the shock in their aftermath result in a finding scapegoats. Not for the first time, Americans feared a Japanese invasion of the West Coast. Wild ideas took root and people to blame were sought out. While Roosevelt in his “Day of Infamy” speech did not speak of a “sneak attack” or suggest that deceptiveness was a Japanese trait, they became essential parts of the myth through which Americans could come to terms with the disaster at Pearl Harbor. It was a simple explanation and fit the stereotype of the Japanese in 1941. According to President Roosevelt, Japan deceived the United States with talk of peace. This became a part of the myth.

David Kahn refutes Australian codebreaker Eric Nave’s claims in *Betrayal at Pearl Harbor* that a British codebreaking unit at Singapore, where Nave worked, broke the operational code JN25 before the Pearl Harbor attack and that Churchill knew about the attack. The Japanese code from December 1, 1940 onwards was JN25b and was never broken. A codebreaker’s diary records Churchill’s reaction to the news about Pearl Harbor. He was surprised by the attack. Churchill was also disappointed because he wanted the U.S. in a war to help Britain in Europe not in the Far East.[[117]](#footnote-117)

The problem for defenders of Roosevelt as time has gone along has been the continual release of memoires and records of the administration – things that were not available when most of the Pearl Harbor investigations took place or when the early histories were written. The death of President Roosevelt and Secretary of Frank Knox before the war was over, and Secretary of War Henry Lewis Stimson’s and Secretary of State Cordell Hull’s extreme illness and frailty when the war ended made getting at the detailed information nearly impossible. This situation insulated the legacy of the Roosevelt Administration from more thorough examination. There were also historians such as Jesuit historian John McKeehney who dismissed inconvenient statements of Administration officials as rash statements by junior officials and Roosevelt inimates in unguarded moments.[[118]](#footnote-118) The weakness of McKeehney’s argument is that the officials he called “junior” were cabinet secretaries and included U.S. Supreme Court Associate Justice Felix Frankfurter and the “rash” statements were carefully debated policies of the Roosevelt Administration.

Former State Department Economist Herbert Feis’ defended the Roosevelt administration using his direct access to many administration officials and records that were not available to other writers. Feis summarizes the Japanese perception of the American negotiating position as not representing a “valid attitude.” His use of this expression represents the racial perception of the Japanese with which the public of 1940 could identify. What the Administration viewed as “valid” negotiating positions were those that reflected their “place” in the world racial order. Feis states that President Roosevelt could not decide on a position and could not decide on “what action was essential, and what Congress and the people would approve,” so the President left it for Japan to decide war or peace. His defense that “This course lessened the risk of blunder and costly confusion at the instant hour” reflects the equivocal nature of the period alternating between isolationism and the desire keep conflicts far from American shores.[[119]](#footnote-119)

John Wiltz states categorically in his historiography of Pearl Harbor that “No historian has minimized the importance of the freezing order” for a full economic boycott of Japan and embargoing oil deliveries.[[120]](#footnote-120) The Administration’s perceptions of Japan as a friendly country should have changed when Japan went to war against China, but this did not happen.[[121]](#footnote-121) Lee’s strategic military theory of declining states’ behavior (or those who perceive themselves as declining) best explains the impact of the freezing order and why Japan reacted as it did when faced with Roosevelt’s foreign policies and Congress’ anti-Japanese/anti-Asian laws. The Administration failed to adjust its policies to avoid war.

Defenders of Roosevelt focus on the “war warnings” sent to the Pearl Harbor commanders in November 1941 as evidence of Washington carrying out its responsibilities. Public support for the administration depended in part on offering a “solution” for the military disaster at Pearl Harbor as the public perceived it. From his location in Hawaii, thousands of miles from the continental United States, Kimmel explains he received a letter from the Chief of Naval Operations, Admiral Harold Stark, stating that war with Japan was not probable. The war warnings of later November all identified locations other than Hawaii as the probable destinations of Japanese military forces. Also, the messages gave conflicting information. The Navy war warnings told Kimmel to reinforce the Marine units with twenty-five Army pursuit planes, while the Army sent Lieutenant General Short a message that the Army was to relieve the Marine units on Wake and Midway Islands. Both Kimmel’s and Short’s staffs concluded this exchange was not feasible. The Army had no guns, either surface or antiaircraft, with which to equip the troops, but while the Marines there already had the weapons and were well trained. The only solution was to leave the Marines there and to bring them more equipment. The same day that the war warnings came was the same day that the Army suggested sending half its pursuit planes to Wake Island, or split between Wake, Guam, and the Philippines. Admiral Kimmel wrote: “In these circumstances, no reasonable man in my position would consider that the ‘war warning’ was intended to suggest the likelihood of an attack in the Hawaiian area.”[[122]](#footnote-122) The “war warnings” were for areas in the western and southwestern Pacific thousands of miles from Hawaii.

As part of an effort to keep the blame on the Pearl Harbor commanders, John W. Lambert and Norman Polmar, wrote *Defenseless: Command Failure at Pearl Harbor[[123]](#footnote-123)* in response to the U.S. Senate vote of May 25, 1999 clearing Admiral Kimmel and General Short of blame for the Pearl Harbor attack by 52 to 47. The authors argued that revisionist historians are wrong in trying to portray Kimmel and Short as innocent scapegoats. Jack Lambert was motivated by conversations with Army Air Force fliers who had been based in Hawaii before the Pearl Harbor attack and who believed that they were improperly used. The pilots’ chief complaint was lack of warning and not high enough alert status. Army Pearl Harbor Board member Major General Henry Dozier Russell remembered witnesses’ testimony were consistent in describing the insufficiency of forces on the island to maintain a constant all-out alert. He also recalled that had such an alert been necessary witnesses said that it would have seriously interfered with training troops on the island. Additionally, an Army Air Corps officer testified that his unit had been repeatedly depleted by the forward deployment of his very best men to the Philippines. The defense of Pearl Harbor and the training of men were missions that went together.[[124]](#footnote-124)

Operational intelligence produced by Army G-2 before the Pearl Harbor attack was limited and consisted of only four significant documents according to Army Pearl Harbor Board investigators. Three of these were sent to Lieutenant General Walter Short in Hawaii. On October 16, 1941, the Navy sent a message to Admiral Kimmel stating that there was a strong probability of war with Japan in the immediate future. This message was shared with Lieutenant General Short by Admiral Kimmel. On October 18, the Army sent Lieutenant General Short a message endorsed by Generals Marshall, Miles, and Leonard T. Gerow that the Navy was wrong in its estimate that war was imminent and should not be regarded too seriously. The Army Pearl Harbor Board concluded that this October 18 message was the only one sent to Lieutenant General Short for more than a month during the critical period of fall 1941. Then, the ambiguous message No. 472 sent on November 27. This was the very last message the Army sent Lieutenant General Short before the Pearl Harbor attack on December 7. Since this is the message upon which the responsibility of the Pearl Harbor commanders centers, it is noteworthy that the Army Pearl Harbor Board could not find witnesses initially as to who wrote the message or were willing to testify. The “do-don’t” message using Board Member Major General Walter Frank’s language as the message came to be known, was allegedly written by a Col. Bundy (as described in the testimony) who was killed in an aircraft accident before the investigation took place. It was too convenient of an answer for the board and they would not accept that there was no living person to explain the document, according to Henry Russell. The fourth document of importance to Major General Russell was General George Marshall’s and Admiral Harold Stark’s message to the president of November 27, 1941, outlining an agreement on countermeasures if the Japanese advanced beyond a 100 degrees east and south of 10 degrees north. This message was not shared with Lieutenant General Walter Short. In fact, the Board was presented with innocuous information by then Col. Clark that could be found in public sources. Army intelligence was completely closed to providing information to the Board.[[125]](#footnote-125)

A radical alternative view to solving the “problem” of Pearl Harbor was taken by political scientist John Mueller argued that the Pearl Harbor attack was really only a military inconvenience when it did occur, but more importantly the shooting war could have been avoided entirely and remained a cold war if the Roosevelt administration had handled it differently.[[126]](#footnote-126) But the American public did not see the attack as a military inconvenience.

Waldo Heinrichs suggested a wider approach to viewing U.S. relations with Japan. The problem for the United States in 1941 was that it had tolerated Japan’s stridency for more than 10 years. The United States never formally disapproved of any Japanese actions that violated the spirit of policies established by a long succession of U.S. officials. The U.S. bore a huge burden to respond to Japan’s actions by 1941. Ambassador Joseph Grew in Tokyo had sent a message to Washington on November 3, 1941, stating that continued economic pressure was not going to stop Japan’s militancy without war or resolution of peace talks. Ambassador Grew’s sense of urgency continued to grow replacing his earlier optimism.[[127]](#footnote-127) Defenders of Roosevelt and accusers of the Pearl Harbor commanders point to the war warnings of November 27, 1941 as evidence of their blameworthiness need to note as does Beard that the war warning was sent *before* the Japanese had sent their negative reply to the negotiations on November 28.[[128]](#footnote-128) The timing is important. It suggests that the Roosevelt administration had awareness that it was pushing a declining state into a shooting war by its uncompromising negotiating strategy. It suggests *intention*. But, as Ben-Zvi suggested, the military had a clearer picture of the Japanese, but surprise was achieved by an accumulation of various bureaucratic, organizational, technical, communications, political, and perceptual factors.[[129]](#footnote-129) Also neither, the Army Pearl Harbor Board, the Navy Court of Inquiry, of the Joint Congressional Committee (especially the minority report) support the innocence of the administration.

University of Maryland history professor Gordon W. Prange studied on Pearl Harbor for 37 years. He was also General Douglas MacArthur’s chief historian from 1945 to 1951. He died before any of his books appeared. However, two of his students, Donald M. Goldstein and Katherine V. Dillon, completed five books[[130]](#footnote-130) based on his vast material that became standard histories. His books were generally accepted as thorough and unbiased. *At Dawn We Slept: The Untold Story of Pearl Harbor* was the first. *December 7, 1941: The Day the Japanese Attacked Pearl Harbor* tells the story of the attack from the viewpoint of the Americans on the ground and the Japanese fliers conducting the attack. In the introductory material in *At Dawn We Slept*, we learn that Prange felt that few events in history demonstrated the human element as much as Pearl Harbor. Prange rejected the thesis that Roosevelt provoked Japan to attack to get the U.S. into the war, according to Goldstein and Dillon. Goldstein and Dillon offer a response to “revisionists” in their introduction and in an appendix. But the Pearl Harbor Myth is to be found in the prefaces and introductions as well.

In the preface to *The Pearl Harbor Papers: Inside the Japanese* Plans, Goldstein uses the professionalism and talent of the Japanese planners to rebut Hector C. Bywater’s claim to be the originator of the Pearl Harbor attack plan as an exercise Bywater developed. The Japanese plans were far more detailed operationally. The Japanese papers also rebut the belief that the Japanese were backward and not capable. But this also rebuts the principal racial assumptions upon which the Administration was negotiating with the Japanese. This picture also runs counter to the racial perceptions then prevalent in the United States in 1941 that underpinned the Pearl Harbor Myth in public opinion at the time. Goldstein does not make these connections or apply them to the evaluations of Roosevelt’s defenders.

Henry C. Clausen coauthored the book, *Pearl Harbor: Final Judgment-The Shocking True Story of the Military Intelligence Failure at Pearl Harbor and the Fourteen Men Responsible for the Disaster*.[[131]](#footnote-131) Lee claims Clausen’s to have been the most revealing investigation into the proximate causes of Pearl Harbor. Most of these causes involve claims of failure to communicate or communications that Clausen believed should have indicated to the Pearl Harbor commanders to be prepared for the attack on Sunday morning, December 7, 1941.

Percy L. Greaves, Jr., minority counsel for the Joint Congressional Committee, finished *Pearl Harbor: The Seeds and Fruits of Infamy* in 1984, but passed away and his wife rewrote the book and published it two decades later in 2012.[[132]](#footnote-132) Greaves went back through the materials of the Joint Committee Investigation and explains hearings and decision of the members of the Committee from the vantage point of the Republic minority and expands some points based on interviews he conducted with those involved with Pearl Harbor over the next 40 years until his death. The one revelatory find at the end of the book is that Roosevelt appears, according to Greaves, to have had a speech ready for the second week of December 1941 in which the United States attacked Japan first. As one who spent some years of his career on Capitol Hill, Greaves places the responsibility for the operation of the executive branch upon the president. He wrote this without malice.

Rear Admiral Edwin T. Layton as intelligence officer at Pearl Harbor was a key defender of Admiral Husband Kimmel. He authored the book *“And I Was There”* for this purpose. Layton concluded that Admiral Kimmel and General Short were sacrificed “to placate the wartime outrage of the American people and save the prestige of the United States military leadership.” He testified that Kimmel did not receive intelligence information warning of an attack from Washington that those in Washington claimed. He maintained this position through all of the Pearl Harbor investigations.[[133]](#footnote-133)

These historians’ and memorist’s work reflect the ongoing power of the Pearl Harbor myth on the general public and the historical profession.

*Balancing Emotions About Pearl Harbor – the Unending Search for Meaning*

American historical writing has followed the American public’s fascination with Pearl Harbor when on a quiet Sunday family life across America was interrupted by radio news about an attack in a place many Americans could not locate on a map. Their sense of security was shattered and they were appalled at the loss of life.*[[134]](#footnote-134)*

American public opinion about Pearl Harbor was formed largely on the basis of widely held racial attitudes about the Japanese which had already existed. Pearl Harbor just added another dimension. The American public had high expectations of American military performance regardless of the situation. The challenges of military mobilization, training, readiness, and equipment shortages, and incomplete construction of defensive infrastructure were understood but not sufficient to change expectations. The expectations may have been unrealistic and unfair to the Pearl Harbor commanders, especially when Washington would put the best face on its own performance in an attempt to reassure the public. For the American people, Pearl Harbor represented the strongest point of American defenses which was why the Pacific Fleet had been intentionally based there to deter the Japanese.

Before and during World War I and during the Interwar Period, Japan exhibited military aggressiveness toward its Asian neighbors that previewed its behavior towards Western Powers. The racial view of the Western Powers that the Japanese were docile and would accept their “place” kept them from recognizing that signs that the Japanese really would attack a Western power. The inability to settle policy and alternatives in the period before Pearl Harbor created a policy and power vacuum in which officials were left to make their own decisions based on the realities that they saw. The Japanese view that Americans were soft and did not have the character to respond to a preventive military action and would turn to diplomacy and yield the territory that Japan desired showed that they did not understand American character. American anger did stem in part because the Japanese did not accept their place, but more importantly, because they were not acting in the expected character. Japanese actions were viewed as irrational. To the public, the Japanese became “madmen.” In this environment, it was hard to accept that the Japanese gained surprise by deception and had made a genuine effort at resolution of issues with the United States in 1941.

The extensive Pearl Harbor investigations did not settle the issues of Pearl Harbor for several reasons. Like the public, investigators had a hard time accepting the military failures even though there were clearly issues with communication, readiness, construction of new infrastructure, and shortages of equipment. The early investigations along with news reports and official statements had set the tone and established a common understanding about Pearl Harbor. This would not shift easily. Roosevelt’s management style and creation of many overlapping agencies made understanding his administration difficult. Accountability was even more difficult, especially with Roosevelt and so many senior officials dead or extremely ill.

Suspicions about Roosevelt’s policies would remain among many Pacific sailors and soldiers who were forward deployed before and during the Japanese attacks on December 7/8, 1941. The Pearl Harbor survivors would remain defensive over how many Americans had viewed them as being unprofessional resulting in the disaster. Conspiracy theories would always hold some attraction because it was always just too hard to believe that a non-Western power would gain the element of surprise over us the way the Japanese did.

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1. As a disclaimer, the author is a U.S. Navy Captain and serves as a public affairs officer. This paper reflects the opinion of the author and in no way reflects an official position of the U.S. Department of Defense or the U.S. Navy. The author is interested in Pearl Harbor for what it means, how to talk about it, how to learn from it, and how military policy subsequent to Pearl Harbor was affected. Public reactions to military actions and adverse situations is an important consideration of military communication. Pearl Harbor stands out as one of the most complex, emotional, and difficult examples for communication of a military event. The author is *not* a revisionist. The author declares up front his interest in how the forward-deployed military units and officers were affected by what happened at the seat of government (“Washington”) and the national command authority (President Roosevelt, “senior officials,” and the White House), not only *before* Pearl Harbor but *afterwards*. The specific event of Pearl Harbor occurred on December 7, 1941, but it has been with the U.S. Navy ever since. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
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61. Admiral Husband E. Kimmel’s book, *Admiral Kimmel’s Story* (Chicago: Regnery, 1955) in Chapter 9, “Vilification and Encouragement,” contains examples of the offensive mail and rumors that circulated about Admiral Kimmel and his family for several years following the Pearl Harbor attack. The most puzzling rumor wsa the one that began right after the Pearl Harbor attack in December 1941 and persisted for a couple of years in which Mrs. Kimmel had forced a pregnant woman off of the Pan American Clipper in Honolulu while demanding that all of her excessive luggage be loaded on the aircraft. In truth, the Navy did not have lodging for spouses and family in Hawaii – even for a four-star admiral – and she had never been to Hawaii or flown on the Pan Am Clipper. The story was aired news organizations almost immediately after the attack in a complete form without fact-checking which would imply that it was supplied by a reliable source. The source was familiar with Army procedures not Navy procedures. Admiral Kimmel’s papers at the American Heritage Center, University of Wyoming, Laramie contain hundreds of offensive letters. General Short and his family also received lots of offensive letters, but they apparently destroyed them as I never found any copies of them in his papers at the War College in Carlisle, Pennsylvania or at the Hoover Institution (I was one of the few persons to whom the family authorized access to General Short’s papers there). [↑](#footnote-ref-61)
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65. Charles A. Beard, *President Roosevelt and the Coming of the War 1941: A Study in Appearances and Realities* (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 1948): 177, 221, 274-275, 288-289. Beard complained at the time he wrote in 1948 that the Roosevelt Presidential Library and Roosevelt officials would not share their documents with him or the public. [↑](#footnote-ref-65)
66. Franklin D. Roosevelt, “I have said this before, but I shall say it again and again and again: Your boys are not being to be sent into any foreign wars.” Roosevelt made five major speeches in October 1940 which included this theme. The quote is significant because it followed Roosevelt signing the Selective Training and Service Act on September 16, 1940 authorizing the first peacetime draft. <https://presidentialcampaignselectionsreference.wordpress.com/overview/20th-century/1940-overview/> (accessed October 28, 2015). [↑](#footnote-ref-66)
67. Novick, *That Noble Dream,* locations 6993, 6898. Novick notes how different historians treated the pre-war mobilizations for World War I and World War II. Before World War I they raised questions about historical objectivity, whereas for World War II historians sustained and reinforced the ideal of involvement. This benefitted Roosevelt as his actions to involve America were treated more favorably. [↑](#footnote-ref-67)
68. John Wiltz, *From Isolation to War, 1931-1941*, Crowell American History Series (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell, 1968), 129. [↑](#footnote-ref-68)
69. Papers of Franklin D. Roosevelt Speech File, Folders 1400-1408, December 8 – 15, 1941. The folders cover all of the official speeches over this period including drafts and contributions. Franklin Delano Roosevelt Presidential Library, Manuscript Division, Hyde Park, New York. [↑](#footnote-ref-69)
70. It should be noted that Grenville Clark, the author of the Soldier Sailor Act of 1940 who was at the White House on the afternoon of December 7, 1941, drafted two declarations of war for the Congress to approve: one with Japan alone and one that also included Germany, should Germany have immediately declared its intention to joint Germany in war. The documents are located in the Public Papers of Henry Lewis Stimson, Reel 105, 39-41. Yale University Library, New Haven, Connecticut. Duplicate copies accessed at the Library of Congress, Manuscript Division, Washington, D.C. [↑](#footnote-ref-70)
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79. John Costello, *The Pacific War 1941-1945: The first comprehensive one-volume account of the causes and conduct of the World War II in the Pacific* (New York: Quill, 1981), 608-609. [↑](#footnote-ref-79)
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82. David Kahn, “The Intelligence Failure of Pearl Harbor,” *Foreign Affairs* 70, no. 5 American and the Pacific, 1941-1991 (Winter 1991): 148-149. <http://www.jstor/org/stable/20045008> (accessed July 18, 2015) [↑](#footnote-ref-82)
83. Husband Kimmel, *Admiral Kimmel’s Story*, 109-111. [↑](#footnote-ref-83)
84. Waldo Heinrichs, *Threshold of War*, 192. [↑](#footnote-ref-84)
85. Victor, *Pearl Harbor Myth*, 13. [↑](#footnote-ref-85)
86. Otto D. Tolischuss, “Japan Now Looks to U.S. for Reply, Public Takes New Hope from Cabinet Decision to Go on with Parleys – Foreign Office Organ Declares America Must Change View – Burma Road Bombed,” *New York Times*, December 2, 1941: 5. [↑](#footnote-ref-86)
87. General Lewis Brereton who commanded the U.S. Army Air Forces in the Philippines offers an account that was written from recollections after the original notes were destroyed to prevent them from potentially coming into Japanese hands. See Lewis H. Brereton, *The Brereton Diaries: The War in the Air in the Pacific, Middle East, and Europe: 3 October 1941- 8 May 1945* (New York: William Morrow and Company, 1946): 38 - 41. Elsewhere in this paper, New York Times Military Reporter Hanson Baldwin appears to reject the account and compares the state of the aircraft in the Philippines to that of Hawaii hours earlier. Other firsthand reports also would lead us to believe that no word of the Pearl Harbor attack or increased alert status was passed to the troops. The extent of the Japanese success with hours of warning to the Philippines argue in favor of rejecting Brereton’s account. When Brereton had no orders for offensive action, it would have made more sense to use the firepower of the bombers to disrupt an enemy attack given their belief that the bombers would survive better than other aircraft. [↑](#footnote-ref-87)
88. John Costello, *Days of Infamy*, 2-11. [↑](#footnote-ref-88)
89. Clausen Investigation, in U.S. Congress, 79th Congress, First Session, *Hearings before the Joint Committee on the Investigation of the Pearl Harbor Attack*, Part 35, 6-7 (pagination of the original investigation). These “unexplored leads” were specific questions of the Secretary of War concerning army and navy communications with their counterparts in Washington; proper approval of orders issued in Hawaii; handling and distribution of “magic” intercepts; and whether the elements of the Anglo-British-U.S. Joint Action Agreement known by key subordinate army and Navy Officials. [↑](#footnote-ref-89)
90. Proceedings of the Hewitt Inquiry, in U.S. Congress, 79th Congress, First Session, *Hearings before the Joint Committee on the Investigation of the Pearl Harbor Attack*, Part 34, 1-4 (pagination of original investigation). The Secretary of the Navy established eleven precepts concerning: information available at Washington, Pearl Harbor, and Cavite; deployment of Japanese submarines around Hawaii; intelligence, intercepted Japanese messages; and Admiral Kimmel’s approval of the joint coastal defense plan. [↑](#footnote-ref-90)
91. Roland W. Worth, Jr., *Pearl Harbor: Selected Testimonies, Fully Indexed, from the Congressional Hearings (1945-1946) and Prior Investigations of the Events Leading Up to the Attack* (Jefferson, North Carolina: McFarland, 1993), xi. [↑](#footnote-ref-91)
92. Worth, *Pearl Harbor*, 3-34. [↑](#footnote-ref-92)
93. Worth, *Pearl Harbor*, 3-4. [↑](#footnote-ref-93)
94. Worth, *Pearl Harbor*, 35-70. [↑](#footnote-ref-94)
95. Worth, *Pearl Harbor*, 46-47. [↑](#footnote-ref-95)
96. Worth, *Pearl Harbor*, 53-61. [↑](#footnote-ref-96)
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98. Worth, *Pearl Harbor*, 71-120. [↑](#footnote-ref-98)
99. Robert Sherrod, “Secret Conference with General Marshall,” in David Brown and W. Richard Bruner, *I Can Tell It Now* (New York: E.P. Dutton, 1964), 39-45. [↑](#footnote-ref-99)
100. Mark A. Stoler, *George C. Marshall: Soldier-Statesman of the American Century* (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1989), 66-67, 74-75, 85, 87. [↑](#footnote-ref-100)
101. John Costello, *Days of Infamy, 2-11*. [↑](#footnote-ref-101)
102. Worth, *Pearl Harbor,* 145-211. [↑](#footnote-ref-102)
103. Public Papers of Harry S Truman, Truman Presidential Library, Independence, Missouri. File OF 400 – Hawaii – Pearl Harbor. The memoranda were unofficial lettered executive orders of November 7 and 9, 1945. They were lettered and never entered the official numbered executive orders files. As unofficial orders compliance was voluntary not compulsory as implied in their printed inclusion in the Joint Congressional Committees record on page 9 when they were presented in opening of the hearings on November 15, 1945. Although the files showed that almost all federal agencies complied with negative replies except the military departments and a few others by the author’s best determination. There is no record of any communication from a head of agency listing either information or personnel that had been identified. [↑](#footnote-ref-103)
104. Worth, *Pearl Harbor*, 229-267, 287-325. [↑](#footnote-ref-104)
105. Kimmel, *Admiral Kimmel’s Story*, 169. [↑](#footnote-ref-105)
106. Vidylankar, 848. [↑](#footnote-ref-106)
107. Samuel Flagg Bemis, “First Gun of a Revisionist Historiography for the Second World War,” The Journal of Modern History 19, no. 1 (March 1947): 55. [www.jstor.org/stable/1875652](http://www.jstor.org/stable/1875652) (accessed July 16, 2015) This article was a review and response to *George Morgenstern, Pearl Harbor: the story of a secret* *war* (New York: Devin-Adair Company, 1947). [↑](#footnote-ref-107)
108. John Costello, *The Pacific War 1941-1945: The first comprehensive one-volume account of the causes and conduct of World War II in the Pacific* (New York: Quill, 1981): 608. See Chapter 37 for his “after-action report” that covers. Even Roosevelt’s Navy Historian Samuel Eliot Morison makes the same point about the Philippines in *Two Ocean War: A Short History of the United States Navy in the Second World War* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1963). [↑](#footnote-ref-108)
109. For example, James H. Herzog, “Influence of the United States Navy in the Embargo of Oil to Japan, 1940-1941,” *Pacific Historical Review* 35, no. 3 (August 1966): 317-328. [↑](#footnote-ref-109)
110. Warren F. Kimball, “FDR-The Dilemma of Democracy and Foreign Policy,” in Warren F. Kimball, ed., *Franklin D. Roosevelt and the World Crisis, 1937-1945,* 48-49. [↑](#footnote-ref-110)
111. John E. Wiltz, *From Isolation to War, 1931-1941,* 117-118. [↑](#footnote-ref-111)
112. Norman Hill, “Was There An Ultimatum Before Pearl Harbor?” *The American Journal of International Law* 42, no. 2 (April 1948): 355-367. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2193677> (accessed October 18, 2010) [↑](#footnote-ref-112)
113. Akira Iriye, *Pearl Harbor and Coming of War*, 73. [↑](#footnote-ref-113)
114. Iriye, Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-114)
115. Ken Landis, Rex Gunn, and Robert Andrade, *Deceit at Pearl Harbor: From Pearl Harbor to Midway* (N.P.: 1st Books, 2001). The book was privately published at the author’s own expense. Landis quoted the author’s1999 article from *Naval History*. There was deep pain in his voice as he talked with me on the telephone describing how he felt as a Pearl Harbor survivor, especially one from Kimmel’s personal staff. Those who knew and worked for Kimmel certainly did not view him as the derelict that Washington did, or else they would have exposed him long before. The cost of defending Kimmel and his staff was high, the cost of giving him up was nothing. In military circles, there is great significance for a staff to be this loyal and dedicated even to their dying day. The deployed military or those on ships saw only slices of the picture, which later made them wonder what they had been a part of just before Pearl Harbor. This was capture very well from the enlisted perspective by Raymond O’Connor. Raymond G. O’Connor, “The American Navy, 1939-1941: The Enlisted Perspective,” *Military Affairs* 50, no. 4 (October 1986): 173-178. http:/www.jstor.org/stable/1988006 (accessed July 16, 2015). [↑](#footnote-ref-115)
116. Victor, *The Pearl Harbor Myth*, 1, 9, 11, 13-15. [↑](#footnote-ref-116)
117. Kahn, 149-150. [↑](#footnote-ref-117)
118. John McKeehney, “The Pearl Harbor Controversy: A Debate Among Historians,” *Monumenta Nipponica* 18, no. 1/4 (1963): 46-48. [↑](#footnote-ref-118)
119. Feis, *Road to Pearl Harbor*, 333. [↑](#footnote-ref-119)
120. John E. Wiltz, *From Isolation to War 1931- 1941*. The Crowell American History Series. (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Company, 1968), 116-117. [↑](#footnote-ref-120)
121. Vidyalankar, 853. [↑](#footnote-ref-121)
122. Kimmel, *Admiral Kimmel’s Story*, 45-48. Lieutenant General Short wrote no memoires of his thoughts on these same matters. He died in 1948. Historians such as Wiltz write off Kimmel’s and other military officers’ comments as “revisionists” when they offer explanations of military behavior. [↑](#footnote-ref-122)
123. John W. Lambert and Norman Polmar, *Defenseless: Command Failure at Pearl Harbor* (St. Paul, Minnesota: Motorbooks International, 2003): 7-10. Lambert’s motivation is described in the introduction. [↑](#footnote-ref-123)
124. Henry Dozier Russell, *Pearl Harbor Story* (Macon, Georgia: Mercer University, 2001): 71. This book was written shortly after the Pearl Harbor investigations in the 1940s and circulated among friends, but not formally published until 2001 almost 60 years later. [↑](#footnote-ref-124)
125. Russell, *Pearl Harbor Story*, 41-43, 45-46. [↑](#footnote-ref-125)
126. Mueller, 172-203. [↑](#footnote-ref-126)
127. Waldo Heinrichs, “Ambassador Joseph C. Grew and the U.S.-Japanese Crisis,” in Iriye, *Pearl Harbor and the Coming of the Pacific War*, 150-152. [↑](#footnote-ref-127)
128. Beard, 526, 528. [↑](#footnote-ref-128)
129. Abraham Be-Zvi, “The Study of Surprise Attacks,” *British Journal of International Studies* 5, no. 2 (July 1979): 143. <http://www.jstory.org/stable/20096859> (accessed November 11, 2015) [↑](#footnote-ref-129)
130. Gordon W. Prange, in collaboration with Donald M. Goldstein and Katherine V. Dillon, *At Dawn We Slept: The Untold Story of Pearl Harbor* (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1981); Gordon W. Prange with Donald M. Goldstein and Katherine V. Dillon, *Pearl Harbor: The Verdict of History* (1987); Gordon W. Prange with Donald M. Goldstein and Katherine V. Dillon, *Dec. 7, 1941: The Day the Japanese Attacked Pearl Harbor* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1988); Gordon W. Prange with Donald M. Goldstein and Katherine V. Dillon, *God’s Samurai: The Lead Pilot at Pearl Harbor* (1990); Donald M. Goldstein and Katherine V. Dillon, eds., *The Pearl Harbor Papers: Inside the Japanese Plans* (Paperback edition 1993: Dulles, Virginia: Brassey’s , 2000) [↑](#footnote-ref-130)
131. Henry C. Clausen and Bruce Lee, *Pearl Harbor: Final Judgment-The Shocking True Story of the Military Intelligence Failure at Pearl Harbor and the Fourteen Men Responsible for the Disaster* (Kindle reprint 1992: New York: Open Road, n.d), preface. [↑](#footnote-ref-131)
132. Percy L. Greaves, Jr., Bettina Bien Greaves, ed. *The Seeds and Fruits of Infamy* (Auburn, Alabama: The Ludwig von Mises Institute, 2012). [↑](#footnote-ref-132)
133. Edwin T. Layton with Roger Pineau and John Costello, *“And I Was There:” Pearl Harbor and Midway-Breaking the Secrets* (New York: Quill William Morrow, 1985: 17-22. The book was researched and largely completed by the time of Layton’s death, but finished by Pineau and Costello. [↑](#footnote-ref-133)
134. Ian Toll, *Pacific Crucible* (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 2012): 23-24. [↑](#footnote-ref-134)