

***US Pacific Victory
in
World War Two***

**BY
BILL BRADY**

GRATIAE

My deepest gratitude goes to my long-suffering family. I have now written several books and each one has impacted on them more than I would like and they deserve. My wife Kathleen, daughters, Lorraine and Michelle and grandchildren Devin, Tayla, Chloe and Ava have tolerated my preoccupation with 'the book' and all that goes with being a busy writer and military historian, with great fortitude and understanding.

Finally, to my wider family and close friends who have inspired me throughout. I am particularly grateful to my long-standing friend and former colleague Dr. Graham L Coggin for his outstanding editorial skills and constructive criticism throughout this work.

Thank you.

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FOREWORD

This book is absorbing and is written persuasively. In the *US Pacific Victory in World War Two*, the author furnishes his readers with multiple intellectual dimensions, and makes it possible for us to learn from alternative military cultures in this broad overview of the making of war; from conventional weaponry to nuclear destruction.

Brady provides ample evidence that the advances of technology not only provided more deadly means of making war, but created conditions that made warfare more deadly. He has a wonderful command of his subject that involves the reader in his main argument while intriguing him with the unsuspected significance of seemingly minor details.

He accomplishes this feat with amazing dexterity. A brilliant feat of scholarly compression in which the author deploys the fruits of years of research, teaching, and thought, on the subject of war; I do not know a work in which such an encyclopaedic range of military knowledge is so well arranged. This is military history at its very best.

Dr. GL Coggin

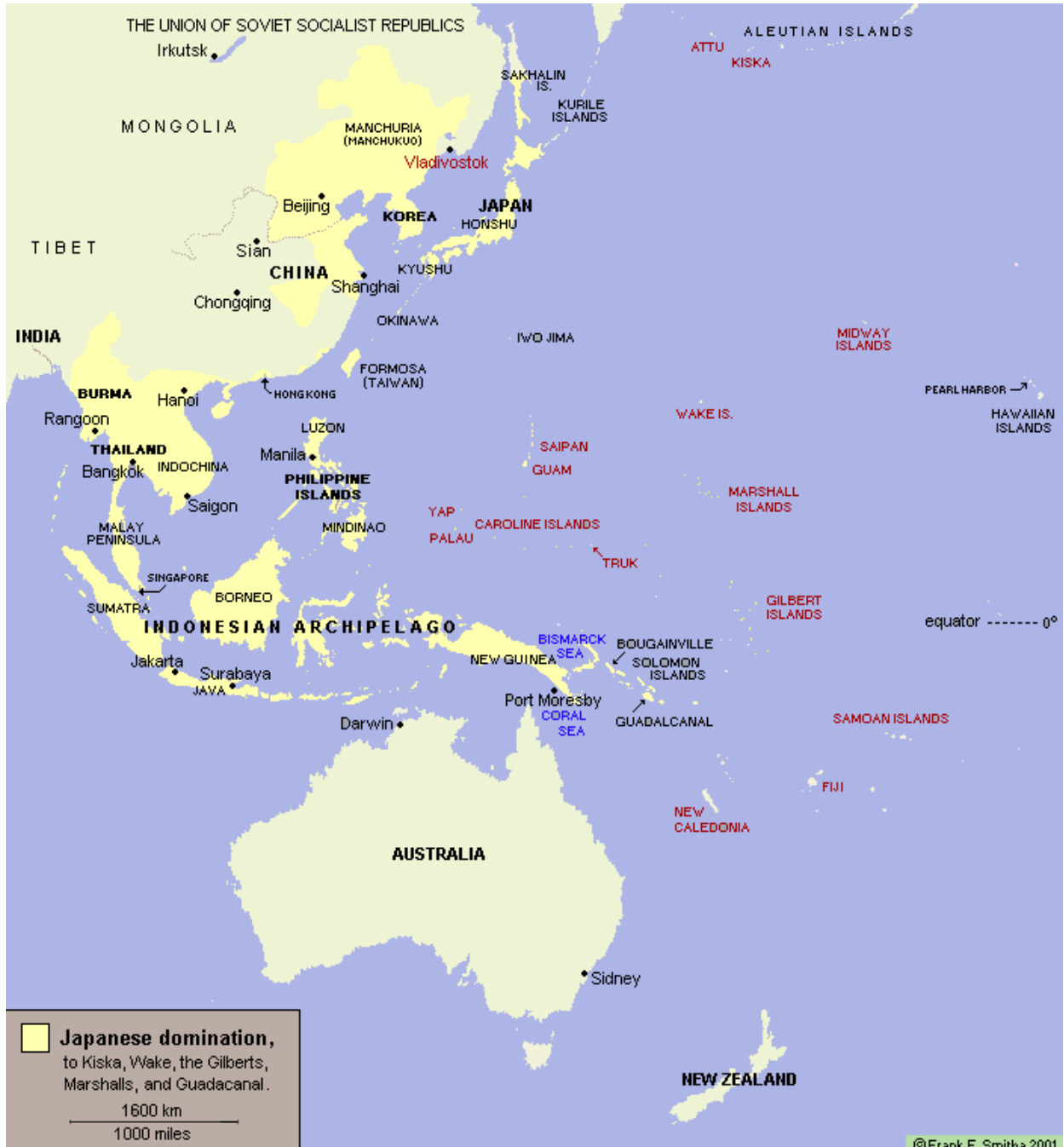
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US PACIFIC VICTORY IN WORLD WAR TWO.

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Also by Bill Brady

*World War Two, Cause and Effect
The Global Tragedy and Triumph 1939-45*



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Chapter one

The U.S. Enters World War Two

In September 1939, when the European war broke out, opinion polls showed that the great majority of Americans favoured the Allies, although most were firmly opposed to joining them in their struggle against the Nazis. This dilemma was only to be resolved by factors unrelated to Europe. President Roosevelt was committed to the Allied cause, yet to win acceptance for this policy of support, he had to promise that he would not send American troops to fight in Europe. Roosevelt and his closest advisers, felt unable to say openly what they recognised in private: that Britain, by the end of 1940 could not win the war without American armed intervention. Therefore, rather than risk alienating the American public, Roosevelt judged that the best course was to win support for a policy of all aid; short of war. This was a significant shift away from strict neutrality.

All he could do was try and break down, bit by bit, the extreme neutrality behind which the United States had chosen in the 1920's and 1930's. Isolationism was as old as American history, it was the expression of a newly-independent nation's attitude towards its European ancestry. In general, Europe represented the corrupt and the decadent. Americans had no interest in European power politics, and wished to be left alone to construct their new society.

The product of this combination of moral disdain and political self-sufficiency took the form of a rigid abstention from what were described as 'entangling alliances', whether defensive or offensive. The much invoked Monroe Doctrine, which, with its hemispheric demarcation line between the virtuous New World and the amoral Old World was accepted by Americans as self-evident as those 'rights' which had justified their original breakaway.

Lacking any commitment to action, condemnation of Japan's aggression in the Far East served only as an irritant to the Japanese without deterring them in the slightest from realising their imperial goals. The fear of foreign entanglement was so intense that the administration went to great lengths to avoid open cooperation with the League of Nations. The refusal by the United States to agree to any positive commitment in the event of aggression killed the Geneva disarmament conference in 1934, for in the pursuit of the preservation of American freedom of action, America steadfastly refused to commit herself to action.

The results of the United States joining World War One in 1917 were the exact opposite of what they had expected. The Americans sincerely believed that the war had been 'the war to end all wars'. They had set out to put the world to rights, but the war itself, the peace negotiations, and the Treaty of Versailles had disillusioned them. And when in 1920 the Senate failed to ratify American membership in the League of Nations, the cause of collective security suffered a setback from which it did not recover for 20 years. By the time Roosevelt himself had become Democratic presidential candidate in 1932, he had hopelessly compromised his stand on foreign policy by repudiating the League. Whatever his private views on internationalism, Roosevelt was content, throughout his first term as President, to swim with the tide of isolationism which was sweeping the country.

The lessons of 1917-19, economic nationalism, the failure of the European nations to honour their war debts, all these seemed to confirm Washington's original opinion that it was in the United States' best interests to dissociate itself entirely from European affairs. The most extreme expression this attitude of mind came from was the isolationist bloc in Congress, and it was they who were responsible for those self-imposed shackles on American foreign policy; the neutrality laws.

The pressure for such legislation stemmed from the Senate's investigation of the munitions industry. It was alleged that the United States had gone to war in 1917 to protect the interests of profiteering bankers and munitions makers. The Senate pressed for legislation to prevent the circumstances of 1917 from recurring. The 1935 Neutrality Act put an embargo on the export of all war materials to belligerents, so as to preclude the possibility of arms manufacturers involving the nation in another foreign war (a ban on loans to belligerents was added in 1936).

The act also forbade American vessels to carry munitions to belligerents, and gave the President power to withhold protection from United States citizens travelling on belligerent vessels. The effect of these clauses was to surrender the freedom of the seas, and so the rights of neutrals which Wilson had gone to war to defend in 1917 were voluntarily given up. In 1937, however, the Neutrality Act was amended so as to incorporate a cash-and carry principle, whereby belligerents could purchase goods in America, but only if they paid cash, and transported them in their own vessels. This was the logical conclusion of Congress's concern to prevent contact with belligerents as far as was possible; short of undermining the American economy

Roosevelt was, however, becoming increasingly disturbed by the spread of violence in the world, and America's negative response to it. In an effort to abate the tendency to seek solution to political problems without resorting to war. He formulated an ambitious plan to call together a world conference to lay down the basic principles to be observed in international relations.

Roosevelt had succeeded only in puzzling his chiefs of staff, and infuriating his Secretary of State, Cordell Hull, who promptly vetoed publication of the world conference plan, which Roosevelt was forced to let drop, therefore, the Conference never got off the ground.

At Munich in 1938, he would not arbitrate, and he refused even to allow an American representative to attend the conference. Rather, he announced on 27th September that "the government of the United States seeks no political involvements in Europe, and will assume no obligations in the conduct of the present negotiations". What steps he did take in 1938 were entirely within the context of hemisphere defence. His speech at Kingston, Canada on 18th August pledged American support to Canada, and in November he announced a \$300 000 000 increase in defence expenditure.

As it happened, while expanding the home defence, Roosevelt was well aware that the armaments system he was developing could be brought to the aid of Britain and France in the event of a war with Germany. He hoped to give the maximum aid to the democracies consistent with remaining neutral. This meant rearming the democracies in peacetime, and amending the neutrality legislation so as to supply

them in wartime. During the course of 1939, both Roosevelt and his Secretary of State issued numerous warnings against leaving the neutrality laws as they were. For instance, in January, the President sent a message to Congress stating “we have learned that when we deliberately try to legislate neutrality, our neutrality laws may operate unfairly, and may actually give aid to an aggressor and deny it to the victim”. He cautiously concluded that “calling attention to these facts does not suggest that the Congress or the President have any thought of taking part in another war on European soil”.

Roosevelt had been considering action against Japanese aggression in China and the Far East for a long time. But up to this point he had done no more than endorse the State Department's repeated complaints to Japan, although it was to be many more months before even the most limited sanctions were applied. It should be realised that the adherents to the isolationist tradition were also believers in another traditional American foreign policy- the 'Open Door' in China. Americans considered the Far East more their sphere of interest than Europe. But their interest did not prevent them from greatly underestimating Japan's military strength.

If the administration was prepared to flex its muscles in the Pacific, its reaction when war eventually broke out in Europe illustrates perfectly the view of the world that Americans had created for themselves. Its first step was to demand a new neutrality law, without any arms embargo. Roosevelt used all his skill to overcome Republican opposition.

After six weeks, Congress conceded the main points: the arms embargo was dropped, and the Allies could now have access to American resources. The 1939 act, although a step away from the blinkered isolationism of 1935 and 1937, reaffirmed America's basic intention of clinging to a rigidly defined neutrality - a neutrality which specifically surrendered the internationally recognised rights of neutrals. Woodrow Wilson's 'mistake' of fighting to uphold the freedom of the seas would not be repeated. Hitler had won this first Battle of the Atlantic without a blow being struck.

The basic intention of the administration was firmly expressed by Roosevelt as soon as the war broke out: “I hope the United States will keep out of this war. I believe that it will. And I give you assurance and reassurance that every effort of your government will be directed to that end”.

On the face of it, this seems a complete concession to the isolationist case. Yet it is difficult to see what else Roosevelt could have said. An opinion poll taken immediately after the outbreak of war revealed that 30% of Americans wanted complete neutrality and a total embargo on belligerents, and another 37% wanted neutrality while allowing trade on a cash-and-carry basis. In other words, two-thirds of the nation wanted strict neutrality observed.

Only a tiny percentage of those polled were pro-Hitler, though this was only to be expected from a nation which abhorred Hitler's politics and aggression, and which had fought with Britain and France against Germany in 1917-18. But the lesson of the First World War which had made the deepest impression on the American people was that if war could not achieve everything, it could achieve nothing. For all

the pro-Allied feeling, Americans were strongly in favour of the neutrality laws, with their avowed intention of preserving the United States from entering the war. In a speech a few hours after the British and French declarations of war, Roosevelt had expressed the mood of the nation very accurately: "This nation will remain a neutral nation, but I cannot ask that every American remain a neutral in thought as well. Even a neutral has a right to take account of facts. Even a neutral cannot be asked to close his mind or his conscience".

The simple truth of the matter was that while United States foreign policy was based on purely moral and legal considerations, which excluded the possibility, except where the Western hemisphere was concerned, of even the threat of action, it was doomed to failure. A nation's moral influence is in direct relation to its preparedness to use physical force. Roosevelt could condemn aggression as often as he liked, but while the tradition of isolationism forbade any intervention, and while the neutrality laws failed to make any distinction between aggressor and victim; Russia and Germany could safely invade Finland, and Denmark, and Norway, in the certainty that American protests would never be translated into deeds.

This was exemplified by the Finnish episode, which illustrated this in a particularly unhappy way. Americans were almost unanimous in condemning Russia's attack at the end of November 1939, and Roosevelt immediately imposed a moral embargo on the USSR. But neither the administration nor Congress was willing to allow the Finns to borrow money to buy arms abroad, which they desperately needed; and by the time Congress passed a bill allowing Finland \$20 000 000 credit for non-military supplies, the 'Winter War' was practically over.

However, Hitler's offensive in the West, beginning on 10th May 1940, completely changed all American calculations. No longer could Roosevelt assume that the Allies would win with American material aid only; no longer could the nation assume that it was in no direct danger; indeed, there was a widespread fear that Hitler would soon be reaching across the Atlantic.

The President therefore immediately demanded a billion dollars from Congress to mechanise the army and enormously to expand aircraft production - and Congress granted a billion and a half. On 31st May, in the middle of the Dunkirk evacuation, Roosevelt sent another message to Congress: "The almost incredible events of the past two weeks necessitate another enlargement of our military program. As long as a possibility exists that not one continent or two continents, but all continents, may become involved in a world-wide war, reasonable precaution demands that American defence be made more certain". In reply, Congress voted another billion dollars for the army, and nearly 700 million dollars for the navy. By October, defence appropriations totalled over 17 billion dollars.

Little could be done, however, to alleviate the plight of the Allies. Roosevelt made repeated efforts to dissuade Mussolini from entering the war; but he turned down the suggestion that he should send the American Atlantic Fleet to the Mediterranean to give weight to his persuasion. And he was helpless to answer the French and British pleas to enter the war.

It was at this point that Churchill made a series of specific requests, of which the most important was for the loan of 40 or 50 destroyers; and he also suggested that supplies from America should continue to flow even after Britain's financial reserves had been exhausted. Roosevelt pledged what little surplus was available. But the destroyer loan had to be rejected, for the administration did not relish the prospect of asking Congress to authorise the dispatch of vessels which, though old, were still on active service, and seemed essential for hemisphere defence. As for sending Britain supplies without cash payment, this was specifically forbidden by the neutrality laws.

On 10th June 1940, the day Italy declared war, Roosevelt made a major policy speech in Charlottesville, Virginia; in the heat of his indignation, he bitterly denounced Mussolini's 'stab in the back' (and so lost thousands of Italian-American votes in the 1940 presidential election). More important, he gave the most explicit pledge to the Allies, and linked it to a full-scale rearmament programme: "We will extend to the opponents of force the material resources of this nation, and at the same time we will harness and speed up the use of those resources in order that we ourselves in the Americas may have equipment and training equal to the task of any emergency".

But this commitment, firm as it was, could not save France, nor even that element in the French cabinet which wanted to prolong the battle. Reynaud, the French Prime Minister, had repeatedly begged Roosevelt to, declare war on Germany, but Roosevelt did not go beyond his Charlottesville stand. Indeed, this stand represented American public opinion accurately: 67% of the nation favoured all aid to the Allies, but only 27% were prepared to go to war-and by July this figure had dropped to 15%.

Churchill was quick to ask for the material pledge in the Charlottesville speech to be honoured. The day after the speech, he reiterated his urgent request for destroyers, to ward off the threatened German invasion and to counter the intervention of the Italian navy.

Roosevelt's advisers came up with a brain-wave. They suggested that the destroyer loan could be made more attractive to Congress by swapping the ships for British bases in the western hemisphere. The administration could argue that the deal would strengthen American defence, and would therefore conform to the provisions of the new act. The idea was quickly adopted, and effectively killed any opposition, as the isolationists had long argued acquisition of such bases.

The destroyers deal was of striking significance. First of all, it made it crystal clear that the United States had adopted, to all intents and purposes, a non-belligerent posture: neutrality precluded only armed intervention. Secondly, it was widely approved by the American public, and was not made the subject of partisan debate. It is the emergence of this new consensus which was the most important development in the United States in 1940.

It was undoubtedly the German conquest of France that brought about the acceptance of this loose interpretation of neutrality. The humiliating defeats inflicted on the Allies brought home to the American people that the only barriers between the United States and Germany were the empty Atlantic and an ill-equipped, hard-pressed Britain. The possibility suddenly opened up of Hitler attacking South

America, and it seemed to more and more people that America's western frontier extended as far as Europe. The impact of the German successes was thus immediate and striking and there was a sudden upsurge in Roosevelt's popularity. Faced with the European crisis, Roosevelt decided to flout tradition, and stand for a third term as President.

On 19th June Roosevelt shrewdly appointed two leading Republicans, Stimson and Knox, to key positions in his cabinet: Secretary of War and Secretary of the Navy. The sympathies of both were strongly pro-Allied, and Stimson quickly persuaded Roosevelt to introduce peace-time conscription. The United States, in the name of hemisphere defence, had taken another step towards intervention in Europe.

The support of leading Republicans for Roosevelt's foreign policy was highly significant. Constantly in American history, Presidents had been unable to pursue an active foreign policy in the last year of their term of office, because they lacked any guarantee of continuity. But with the Republicans approving selective service and the destroyers, the whole issue of support for Britain was removed from the election campaign.

After June 1940, it was not *whether*, but *when*, America would enter the war. But this could not be asked openly: the illogical American public wanted to help Britain, but did not want to go to war. Towards the end of the presidential campaign, Roosevelt, for all his support for Britain, was forced repeatedly to insist that the United States would not be dragged into foreign conflicts. It was impossible to avoid giving this pledge: but it was a dishonest one, for by that time nearly all Roosevelt's advisers - and the President himself - realised that in the last resort America would have to intervene to defend Britain.

It was a cruel dilemma for Roosevelt: having made this pledge, he could not possibly enter the war till Germany or Japan thought it opportune to strike at America. Yet without such a pledge, Roosevelt could not be sure of winning a third term in which to give Britain the fullest possible aid.

The first priority was to keep the lifeline open, food had top priority, and Stimson and Knox advocated seizing German and Italian vessels in American ports, and handing them over to the British to fill the gaps in their cargo fleet. But this could only be a stop-gap. The two long-term measures which might save Britain were for the United States to supply all Britain's needs, without thought of payment, and to provide US Navy escorts for the British cargo vessel convoys.

The idea of Lend-Lease developed from a number of schemes suggested by cabinet members, and Roosevelt himself played a major part in the final formulation of the plan. In one of his most effective press conferences, on 17th December, 1940, he argued that, if your neighbour's house were on fire, you would lend him your garden hose to stop the fire spreading, and not demand cash payment for the hose. Lending or leasing American war material would keep Hitler at bay, without contravening the letter (if not the spirit) of the neutrality laws. Britain's desperate financial straits made Lend Lease essential.

In a 'fireside chat' on 29th December, Roosevelt developed the idea that the fullest possible aid to Britain would keep America out of the war: 'We must be the great arsenal of democracy,' he urged. 'We must admit there is a risk in any course we may take. But I deeply believe that the great majority of our people agree that the course I advocate involves the least risk now and the greatest hope for world peace in the future.'

There was a tremendous popular response to this speech. Taking up Roosevelt's calculated gamble, the opinion polls discovered that 70% of the electorate were now prepared even to risk war in order to help Britain. But there was still a large percentage opposed to immediate American entry into the war, and Lend-Lease had yet to pass the Congressional hurdle. The debate in Congress dragged on for two months before Lend-Lease was finally approved, by reassuringly large majorities.

Churchill welcomed Lend-Lease as a 'new Magna Carta', and the *New York Times* hailed it as the end of the great retreat which had begun with rejection of membership of the League of Nations in 1920. Roosevelt himself described Lend-Lease as a commitment to collective security. But although the passing of the Lend-Lease bill was one of the turning points in the war, it certainly did not mark a sudden change in American foreign policy. This much is clear from Roosevelt's 'State of the Union' speech to Congress at the beginning of 1941. In this, he identified the two guiding lines of American foreign policy, national defence, and support for democracies resisting aggression: "We are committed to principles of morality and considerations for our own security". And as if to underline the moral basis of his foreign policy, Roosevelt pledged himself to the defence of the four freedoms: freedom of speech and of worship, and freedom from fear and from want.

For the American people, Lend-Lease constituted no revolution in foreign policy: it was just another step in their slow weaning from isolationism. Indeed, the whole point of the operation was to keep within the limits of the neutrality laws. The isolationists were quick to denounce Lend-Lease as an evasion of the laws. They were undoubtedly right: but the administration was not yet prepared to challenge the Neutrality Act itself

Lend-Lease in itself would not win the war. The first appropriation of seven billion dollars (approved on 27th March) would make no difference to the Battle of the Atlantic. American industry in any case responded sluggishly to the increased demand; and there still remained the problem of making sure that the goods were delivered once they had been produced. But the question of convoying was one which Roosevelt was only too anxious to avoid.

The President was prepared to commit himself to a certain extent, and he took a number of steps to ease the pressure on the British. He secured from Congress authority to take over the Italian and German vessels in American ports, which enlarged the hard-hit shipping pool. The neutrality zone from which German warships had been warned to keep clear, was extended so as to take in the whole of Greenland; and eventually, Greenland was officially taken under United States protection. America also gradually took over the supplying of British troops in Egypt.

Throughout 1941, secret staff conferences were hammering out a joint Anglo-American strategy, in the event of the United States entering the war. From convoying, however, Roosevelt held back. Logic pointed towards it, and, indeed, this was just what Roosevelt feared, for the isolationists insisted that the logic of the President's actions would inexorably drag America into the war.

If a lack of public support dissuaded Roosevelt from establishing a convoy system, long-term strategic considerations also argued against a confrontation with Germany in the Atlantic, for the most direct threat to America came from Japan, whose ambitions could not be frustrated indefinitely. The danger from Japan had been contained in February 1941, by the strong hint of possible Anglo-American action, but the signing of the Russo-Japanese neutrality pact in April cancelled this out to some extent and brought about a renewed belligerency in the tone of Japan's pronouncements on Asian affairs.

American strategy was consistently aimed at keeping Japan quiet while ensuring that Britain held her own against Germany. On the one hand, this meant avoiding a German-American clash in the Atlantic, for fear of bringing Japan into the war under the terms of the Tripartite Pact, by which Germany, Italy, and Japan agreed to come to each other's aid if attacked by any power not yet in the war. On the other hand, it meant that the Pacific fleet had to be maintained as a deterrent against Japan, and could not be used to reinforce the Atlantic patrols.

The German invasion of Russia in June 1941 changed all these calculations. In the short run, it provided a breathing space for Britain, and allowed Churchill and Roosevelt to make the first of their wartime rendezvous. This resulted in little progress in military planning but, almost as an after-thought, the two leaders issued the Atlantic Charter. Although this document was welcomed by Churchill as another opportunity to identify United States' interests with those of Britain, its main significance was its anachronistic references to the moral issues which had always preoccupied American politicians, such as free trade and disarmament. It was a depressing throwback to the age-old moralising of American foreign policy.

Yet the invasion of Russia was simultaneously undermining this old approach. How could America continue preaching high ideals while providing (admittedly with great misgivings) Lend-Lease to the world's greatest totalitarian country, and endorsing, however reluctantly, the Anglo-Soviet takeover of Persia? Again, the attack on Russia emphasised once more the urgent need for American intervention in the European war. Stalin himself told Hopkins, Roosevelt's emissary to Moscow: "The one thing that would defeat Hitler, and perhaps without ever firing a shot, would be the announcing that the United States was going to war with Germany". .

The most important result of the invasion of Russia was that it released, much more effectively than the Russo-Japanese neutrality pact, all of Japan's forces for the long expected expansion into South-East Asia. It was in this area that America was to discover the real meaning of collective security, Japan threatened British, Dutch, and American interests equally. So closely did they depend on each other that a direct attack on any of them would almost certainly bring war between America and Japan, and not even the four-year-long Japanese invasion of China had brought this about. So great now was the Japanese menace that the administration found itself faced

with the agonising prospect of fighting Japan while staying at peace with Hitler who everyone agreed was the real enemy.

Consequently, a much harsher note entered Roosevelt's Atlantic policy. From July, preparations were made to occupy Iceland, which would release much-needed British troops for other tasks. This highly provocative act brought plaintive demands from Admiral Raeder, Commander-in-Chief of the German navy, to Hitler, to be allowed to attack all American shipping. But Hitler was by no means anxious to bring America into the war (despite his contemptuous assessment of America's war potential), and withheld permission.

Roosevelt's next step was to organise protection of convoys as far as Iceland, though once again, his nerve failed him, and at the last moment, he excluded British ships from American protection. But a clash between an American destroyer and a U-boat gave Roosevelt an excuse to extend the American protection to all merchant shipping in United States 'defensive waters'. Although the clash had been provoked by the destroyer, Roosevelt announced a policy of 'shoot-on-sight'. This still failed to dislodge Hitler, who maintained his orders to avoid, as far as possible, any incidents with American ships.

The repeal of the Neutrality Act, and Roosevelt's orders to shoot on sight, were undoubtedly good enough reasons for Hitler to declare war on America. Yet he maintained his stiffly correct posture, and ordered his navy to defend itself, but not to fire the first shot. If America was fighting an undeclared war, Hitler was doing all he could to keep out, and succeeded for another month.

Meanwhile, war was drawing closer in the Far East. The movement of Japanese troops into French Indo-China had at last provoked the United States into freezing Japanese funds in America, and a ban on oil exports to Japan brought trade between the two countries almost completely to a halt. This severe economic pressure was backed by Britain and the Netherlands, and was bound to push Japan one way or the other. A majority of the Japanese cabinet favoured seizing the materials they needed by conquest; and the American Secretary of State, Cordell Hull, was under no illusions about Japan's intentions. "Nothing will stop them except force. The point is how long we can manoeuvre the situation until the military situation in Europe is brought to a conclusion".

The Japanese Prime Minister, Prince Konoye, in an effort to contain the pressures from his military colleagues, appealed to Roosevelt throughout August and September of 1941 for a personal meeting to resolve their countries' differences. But the President replied that he saw no point in such a meeting while Japan was still intent on expansion. Intercepted messages (the US navy had broken the Japanese codes) from Tokyo to Nomura, the Japanese ambassador in Washington, confirmed Secretary Hull's opinion that Japan was preparing to go to war in South-East Asia.

The replacement in October of Konoye by War Minister Tojo was not a hopeful development. But Tojo's Foreign Minister, Togo, persuaded the cabinet to wait for another round of talks before starting military operations. Yet at this very moment, the Japanese navy was making its final preparations for the attack on Pearl Harbour, and the proposed negotiations, if they were not successful, were clearly intended to

act as a cover for a surprise attack. In a message to Nomura, immediately deciphered by the US navy, Togo warned: "This is our last effort, the success or failure of the pending discussions will have an immense effect on the destiny of the Empire. In fact, we gamble the fate of our land on the throw of the dice".

Although a number of plans were drafted by both sides, the Japanese could not hope to satisfy American demands that they end the war in China, withdraw their troops from Indo-China, renounce their obligations under the Tripartite Pact, and pledge themselves to peaceful methods of resolving disputes. The only hope was for a limited *modus vivendi*. But the Chinese reaction to such a proposal, the starting of Japanese troop movements, and the knowledge that the Japanese war deadline had been fixed for 29th November persuaded Hull to give up the idea of a *modus vivendi*. Instead, on 26th November, he presented a ten-point peace plan, which was totally unacceptable to the Japanese. From then on, despite a last-minute diplomatic flurry by Roosevelt, it was simply a question of when the war would start.

Although cabinet members gave solemn warnings to the nation to expect a surprise attack at any moment, the strict legalism of American foreign policy reasserted itself for one final, paralysing fortnight. Despite the sure knowledge of an impending Japanese attack, the administration could not conceive of striking the first blow: it could only sit and wait. Indeed, it was intensely worried by the possibility that Japan would strike at Siam first: could the United States go to war to defend Siam? It was almost a relief and a complete surprise, despite a warning from the American ambassador in Tokyo that Japan attacked Pearl Harbour.

In a wave of conquest unmatched in both world wars, Imperial Japan launched several operations simultaneously against American, British, and possessions across several thousand kilometres of the Pacific Ocean. One by one the great bastions of American and European possessions fell before the Japanese conquerors.

7th December 1941 effectively introduced the Americans to "total war." Nothing experienced by any nation in both world wars even remotely compared with the catastrophic naval defeat suffered by the United States on that fateful day in world history. Their unsuspecting fleet at Pearl Harbour was caught completely unawares when over three hundred and fifty aircraft from six Japanese aircraft carriers decimated the US Pacific Battle Fleet, inflicting the worst military defeat suffered in America's two hundred year history, leaving them totally bewildered and completely astonished.

The sheer audacity of the raid on Pearl Harbour is without parallel and merits a special place in naval warfare. In a masterful stroke, a Japanese carrier task force steamed undetected across five thousand kilometers of open sea to launch the greatest combined air/sea operation of all time. Japan's success at Pearl Harbour was made possible due to superb training and remarkable duplicity. As a result she was placed in a position of overwhelming strength throughout the Far East.

Even as the attack on the U.S. Pacific Fleet was taking place at Hawaii, Japanese troops were already landing on the Malay Peninsula and preparing to advance overland to Singapore, later to capitulate after Japan inflicted on the British their most humiliating defeat in its history. This was accomplished by skillfully executed

tactics that almost entirely eliminated the British as combatants in the Far East.

On the 10th December, just three days after Pearl Harbour; HMS Prince of Wales and HMS Repulse under the command of an admiral totally disbelieving in air power, also made history by becoming the first battleships to be sunk from the air in open sea. In an era when the battleship was considered to be the ultimate maritime weapon, the fate of these two great ships proved once and for all that powerful naval vessels battleships were prone to destruction from the air. With great reluctance it was now accepted that naval air power had come of age. Ironically, this was only accepted after every allied battleship in the Far East, ten in all, were either sunk or put out of action.

Imperial Japan's political concept was to promote a self-sufficient bloc of Asian nations led by Japan, free of Western colonialism and influence. In reality it was nothing more than a scheme to control countries in which puppet governments would manipulate its economies and peoples for the benefit of Imperial Japan. Without these economic resources and raw materials Japan would never become a dominant power in the region.

Facing economic collapse and withdrawal from recently acquired territories, Japan had come to the conclusion that further talks towards the lifting of sanctions were futile. Their only alternative was war, or the abandonment of their objectives to dominate the Far East.

On this basis, if there had to be war, then the present time seemed opportunistic for Japan. At this stage the German armies were threatening both Moscow and Egypt. A great part of the United States Navy was engaged in an undeclared war in the Atlantic against the U-Boat menace. Therefore, the Japanese military leaders prepared to exploit this deepening world crisis and seize the mineral rich territories in Asia; which, they considered to be theirs by right and were prepared to challenge the Western powers for possession.

Admiral Yamamoto, the commander of Japan's Combined Fleet believed if there was to be war with the U S, Japan would have no hope of winning unless the US Fleet at Pearl was knocked out. He calculated that the United States would be so weakened by this proposed attack that she would be unable to mobilise sufficient strength to go over to the offensive for about two years. By that time, the conquered territory would be strengthened and Japanese resistance would undermine American determination to continue the war. The Japanese speculated that the United States, in the face of potentially unacceptable losses would negotiate peace, thus allowing Japan to retain her territorial gains.

Yamamoto had been strongly influenced by the successful British Fleet Air Arm operation at Taranto, Italy, the previous year when three Italian battleships had been put out of action by only twenty-one Swordfish torpedo planes launched from a single aircraft carrier. Consequently, Yamamoto planned and organised a massive Strike Force consisting of six aircraft carriers, two battleships, three cruisers and eleven destroyers to attack Pearl Harbor.

The strike force left Japan on 26th November and proceeded in utmost secrecy on a

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