Name of Student

Name of Professor

Name of Class

Day Month Year

**The Triumph and Tragedy at Pearl Harbor**

**Introduction**

The USA’s naval base adjacent Honolulu is known as “Pearl Harbor.” On December 7th, 1941, it came under the attack of Japanese forces. It was a Sunday morning when hundreds of Japanese fighter planes made a surprise attack on the base. They succeeded in taking down 20 US naval vessels. There were more than 2300 American causalities, including civilians and more than 1000 others wounded, added to the sum. The attack on Pearl Harbor is also known as the battle of Pearl Harbor. The battle of Pearl Harbor also played as United States’ entry ticket to World War II.

The attack was referred to as "Hawaii Operations" and "Operation AI" by the Japanese Military. The intention behind this attack by Japan was to prevent US's involvement in its planned Military activities in South Asia in contradiction of external grounds of Netherlands, UK, and USA. These outbreaks were synchronized Japanese attacks. Within seven hours the attacks were made on the USA, Wake Island, Guam, Hong Kong, British seized Singapore; US seized Philippines and British Empire in Malaya[[1]](#footnote-1).

**History**

The attack was initiated just before 8 am. It was 7:48 am following Hawaiian time, on a Sunday morning. 353 Japanese jets took on the base taking Americas by surprise. The eight US battleships were damaged due to the attack, and four of the eight ships sunk. A total of’ 188 US aircraft were destroyed in the attack as well. There were many causalities as mentioned above, with the majority being the American navy and civilians. Around a thousand others were injured in the process. The Japanese were much less in comparison.

This surprise attack shocked all the Americans and held their hand to World War II. After the attack on Pearl Harbor on the 7th of December, immediately the next day 8th December, America professed war on Japan. Further, upon USAs’ declaration of war against Japan, on December 11th, Italy and Germany declared war against the US. The US responded to them with the announcement of war against both the countries as well.

Plenty of historical examples were present for the surprise attack by Japan. Never the less, there was the absence of any warnings, that too when peace negotiations were current. This pushed President Franklin D. Roosevelt to decree the attack on Pearl Harbor 7th December 1941; as a day that will be forever dated in history as a representation of dishonor. Quote “Yesterday, December 7th, 1941-a day that will live in infamy.” Since there were no prior warnings of the war made by Japan, the attack on Pearl Harbor was judged by the Tokyo Trials and deemed to be a war crime.

President Roosevelt claimed; it did not matter that how long it took for the US to get back on its feet after the sudden attack, but they will continue in the right direction. He also said that the people of America, together, will put this incident behind them and taste victory soon. He stated that he was in full belief of the fact that he was making this statement in synchronization with the thoughts of the Congress, as well as the people of the country. He made sure to make his point by saying; that never again will the country be taken by surprise and go through such deceit.

**The motive behind the Attack**

The Japanese Government made a firm decision of taking down Pearl Harbor after the US cut off their oil exports to Japan. This cut off was made before the war in the summer of 1941. The Japanese depended on the oil exported from the US. The 80% of the oil that they needed for their navy came from the US. The Japanese Navy could not have functioned if it was not for the exported oil.

The US was not pleased with Japan. The fact that Japan was gravitating towards its neighbor China was causing the US unease. On the contrary, the Japanese Government believed the view, that the demographic and economic problems faced by them could be solved if they extended into the neighboring country. The hold on China's import market would have given them an edge and proved to be beneficial. This caused the US to retaliate by cutting off the oil supply and access to money and goods. The US believed that the shortage of oil would strap Japan from extending to China. This move, of course, sealed the deal for Japan to go to war with the USA[[2]](#footnote-2).

When Japan attacked the Pearl Harbor, they were eyeing the US Pacific fleet. They wanted to damage the Pacific fleet as much as possible so that they could provide their navy complete control to the Pacific. The Pacific fleet was the only hurdle that was containing Japan from the subjugation of Malaya and Dutch East Indies, and to take over Southeast Asia without any intrusion.

Japan was also driven by the idea of "Asia for Asians." The view supported that Japan takes control of the Asian colonies under the reign of the US and Europe. They felt that the plan was solid, as Dutch, French and British were against a war with Europe. Since Europe was in the war already, they will not be able to preserve their Asian colonial holdings. As mentioned above, following their plan, Japan not only attacked Pearl Harbor but also went after Wake Island, Guam, Hong Kong, British seized Singapore, US seized the Philippines and British Empire in Malaya[[3]](#footnote-3).

**The Premonitions concerning the attack**

It is a fact that the US was held impromptu for the attack on Pearl Harbor. If it were not for bad luck, things would have come out different for the United States. The Japanese diplomatic code was broken by the US in the project known as "Magic." Post breaking the code General George Marshall on holding the now broken code, warned the Pearl Harbor to stay alert prior to the attack. But due to adverse weather conditions, the message never reached the base on time.

The US thought that the Japanese attack was forthcoming in the Pacific. The US military believed that the Philippines or any other area close to Japan would be the target. They never expected Japan to come as far as Pearl Harbor base. Since the distance between Japan and Pearl Harbor was 3,500 miles, the US Government and Navy declared it to be a doubtful target. Japan used this as an advantage and hit where they were least expected.

**The Navy Preparations**

The planning to carry the attack on Pearl Harbor, to preserve the move of Dutch East Indies and Southeast Asia, initiated earlier in 1941. The full-on preparations were proceeding by spring 1941. The planners behind thoroughly studied the British air attack on the Italian fleet. It was dated to 1940 and served as a perfect learning foundation for the planners. Even though, according to a US poll, above 50% of the American saw a war coming between Japan and USA. While this might have given the US a heads up, but their underestimation of Japan led to the attack being a success[[4]](#footnote-4).

Over the months, Japan trained its pilots and gave proper instruction to the navy. Every step was being held meticulously, but Emperor Hirohito had his doubts. He did not give his approval for the war till early November, post the third Imperial Conference. The planning was done strategically, and not a single loophole was left. Japan also wanted to break America's perception, that they cannot mount more than one naval operation simultaneously.

**Japan’s Declaration of War**

It is evident in history that indeed the attack made by Japan on Pearl Harbor was without any formal declaration of war. That might be the case, but it was not the intent of Japanese Admiral Yamamoto. His view was that the war would not inaugurate till the US was notified. The war was initially to start 30 minutes after informing the US that the peace treaty between the two nations is over.

Sadly, the war started prior to being informed. Tokyo did transmit the notification consisting of 5000 words to the Japanese Embassy situated in Washington, but it took them a long time to decode it. Hence, the Japanese ambassador could not deliver the message before the war. Though the US code breakers had already decrypted the notification before the ambassador's word, but they were also behind.

Many military and government officials went through every detail minutely post-war. While the war was inevitable, there were no indications to when it was going to break out. Other than that, Japan never officially broke the diplomatic relations between the two countries before the attack either. After a thorough look at the scenario by a professor of International relations and Law, it was clear that Japan never intended for the US to find out about their intentions. They never formally ended the peace treaty nor the diplomatic relation with the US, even after decoding the message delivered by Japan, there is no direct mention of it.

**The American Fatalities and Blight**

Within 90 minutes of the attack, it was all over. Around two thousand sailors died, over 700 others were injured, above 200 soldiers were killed and over 350 wounded, more than a 100 marines were taken down while 69 left severely hurt. Lastly, 68 civilians died in the attack, and 35 were left wounded. A total of 2335 American fatalities with over a thousand people poorly wounded. Half of the American causalities were the cause of the explosion made on the battleship Arizona. Eight battleships in total were destroyed and sunk. Amongst a total of 402 American jets, 188 were taken down, and more than 150 jets were damaged. Having said that, none of the jets were ready to take off and fight to protect the base. There were around nine civilian jets in the vicinity, three of those planes were also taken down[[5]](#footnote-5).

**Japanese Damages**

The Japanese faced far less damage contrary to Americans. Only 55 aviators were taken down, along with them nine submariners also died. Japan had more than 400 planes at its disposal, of which only 29 were lost during the war, while 74 of them were damaged through fire from the ground.

**Accomplishment through tragedy**

While it is true that the attack on Pearl Harbor is one of the most noted tragedies of the United States, but it is safe to say that America achieved "Triumph through this Tragedy." Over seventy years ago Japan took America by surprise, and a huge sum of fatalities was the result. This war led to America's entry in the World War II. This step changed the destiny of many and resulted in a term which many call "The Greatest Generation," known as the ones who helped detain a global threat. Pearl Harbor indeed became an event that could never be forgotten, amongst tragedies of 9/11 and John F. Kennedy’s assassination.

December 7th carries great importance for all Americans. From this tragedy, a sense of unity rose amongst the people of the country. After the dreaded attack, many capable people stepped forward to join the army and serve the US military abroad while trying to support the exertions on home ground. While many lives were lost in the process, but it all aided in eliminating oppression for good by mid-1945[[6]](#footnote-6).

Prior the attack on Pearl Harbor, the departments of State, Navy and War all compromised of one single building near the White House. Two years into following, the world’s most prominent organization “The Pentagon” came in the picture as the massive National Security Establishment.

In the case of Japan, Pearl Harbor served as a tactical success and an epic strategic mistake. Tokyo misread the democratic debate as a symbol of corruption and expected America to sue for peace, but that backfired majorly. The postwar Japan jumped into accepting the American enforced constitution disowning offensive war. There was a time when America viewed Japan as untreatable militarist, now the same country feels the need to push Japan to invest additional money in its defense.

The same way Americans cannot forget about Pearl Harbor, the Japanese cannot let go Hiroshima and the bombing of Tokyo. There are many offended Japanese who do not like the fact that it is stated in history; the war instigated by Japan was in response to America's decision of cutting the oil supply[[7]](#footnote-7). While this was not the case, the attack on Pearl Harbor was being planned way before America caused the oil shortage. This might be the history, but Japan's history taught in schools on the war with China contradicts from what actually happened. Never the less, Japan regenerated stronger. They came forth as a free society. They emerged as one of the most generous foreign aid donors[[8]](#footnote-8).

Pearl Harbor also served the post-colonial world. It initiated the unanticipated liberation. While for super patriots, Pearl Harbor was an admonitory fiction. Finally coming to the world; for the world, Pearl Harbor brought the message of the collapse of fascist tyranny. This aided in faking a democratic union, which overcame Soviet oppression. It is true that the event of Pearl Harbor led to Hiroshima and the bomb, but it also instigated the United Nations and the worldwide declaration of Human rights[[9]](#footnote-9).

**Conclusion**

Pearl Harbor did not just start a war; it started a whole new era. Today the US might be facing a lot of issues, but that only ensures that the obstacles are going to lead to success. A lot of American blood was spilled on 7th December 1941, and the event caused more bloodshed in the future. All these events led to America becoming invincible from being vulnerable. The message of the attack on Pearl Harbor and the events triggered by it is clear; there are no challenges that a country cannot meet, and there are definitely no challenges that a country cannot overcome. The people who lost their lives seventy years ago deserve a salute to what they started. They began a frenzy that cannot be stopped. This extraordinary moment in history should be reflected on by everyone. It is remarkable how America rose from the ashes and brought upon light in the darkest hour. The US took its deceit and turned it into one of the biggest Triumphs, known to this day.

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