

STUMBLING INTO GLOBAL WAR: Japan and the United States 1940-1941

March 25, April 1, April 8

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On December 7, 1941, Japan and the United States entered into a war which cost the lives of over 1.6 million Japanese and American soldiers and over 700,000 Japanese civilians. Was this war necessary? Could it have been avoided? How well did each side understand each other? These are some of the questions we will attempt to address. Another interesting topic, given today's current events, is can economic sanctions alone deter aggression? If so, why did the United States' policy of economic deterrence against Japan fail?

This class will focus primarily on the diplomatic give and take between the United States and Japan. We will not be covering military planning or strategy except on a very superficial level. It would also be best to avoid any controversial conspiratorial theories and rely solely on historical fact.

That we can cover as much ground as possible, I am including three documents as background for the lecture. Please try to review them before class. Also, you may want to print them out and bring them with you for reference.

The first document is an historic timeline of key events in modern Japanese history beginning with Commodore Perry's "opening" of Japan. This timeline also encompasses the Japanese war with China up to 1938. There are two YouTube videos attached and I hope you can view them.

The second document is a brief look at the structure of the Imperial Japanese Government during the *Showa Era* (this era represents the reign of Emperor Hirohito aka Emperor Showa).

Finally, I have provided a list of key personages from Japan, United States, Germany, and China that we will meet throughout our journey.

Time permitting, we will also review and discuss some of the critical documents that were associated with the eventual misunderstanding between Japan and the United States. These documents will be addressed in either the second or third lectures and will be sent separately.

Class Schedule

March 25 The Opening Move

Japanese View of the Pearl Harbor Attack (newsreel)

Primary Factors Leading to War

Japan's Dependency on the United States

War in China 1931-1939

Cancellation of 1911 US-Japan Commerce Treaty

Japan and Nazi Germany

US Countermoves

Tripartite Pact

Japan and the Soviet Union

April 1 Lost Opportunities

“John Doe Associates” and the Draft Understanding

A Glimmer of Hope

Matsuoka’s Rage and Hull’s Counter

Whither Japan? North or South?

Miscalculation by Both Sides

Konoe’s Last Bid for Peace

April 8 Road To War

Tojo Assumes Command

Hirohito Approves Move Toward War

Japan’s Dual Peace Plan and Kurusu Joins Nomura

US Shops Modus Vivendi and Togo’s Erroneous Assumption

The Hull Note---The Final Break?

Japan Decides For War

Japanese Deception and Attack