

LmunA 2025

Research report

Forum: Historical Security Council

Issue: Preventing escalation and promoting conflict resolution following the attack on Pearl Harbor (1941)

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Position: Chair



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Introduction to your Chair

Hey everyone I'm Sven, I'm 17 years old and I'm very excited to be Chairing the HSC at LmunA. Over the past years I've attended many MUN conferences and I really love them. My first MUN ever was at LmunA, back in 2022 as a delegate, so I'm very excited to be back here chairing. I look forward to meeting you all in October!

Lastly, please join our committee WhatsApp group via this link:

<https://chat.whatsapp.com/BHU6n0CHbV0CsusLos3KT4>



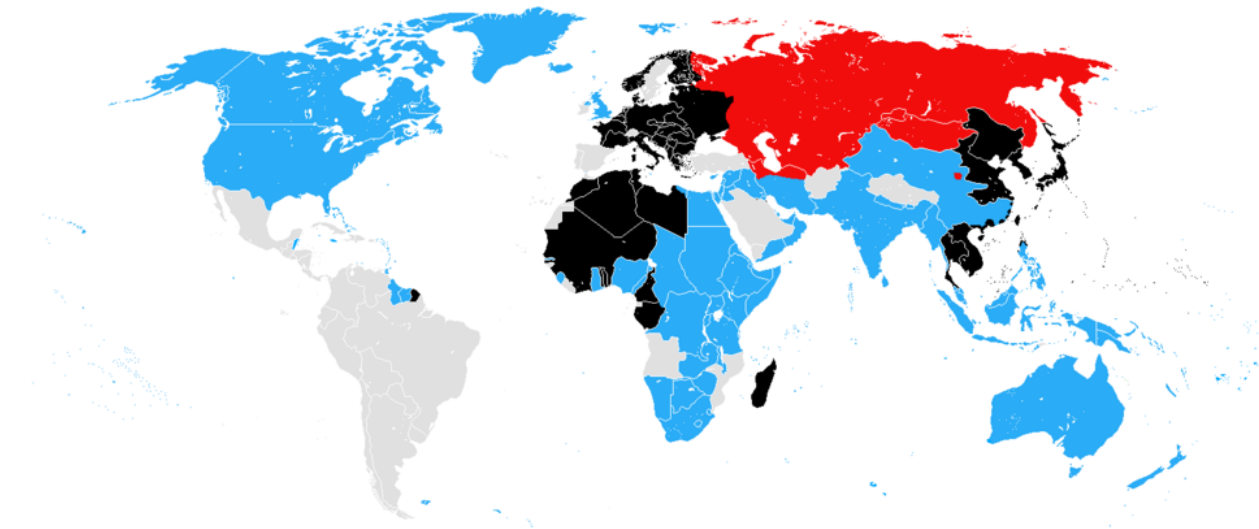
Introduction

On the seventh of December, 1941 Japanese aircraft carried an attack against a United States' naval base at Pearl Harbor. The attack killed more than 2300 American soldiers and left the US Pacific fleet heavily damaged. Following the attack the US declared war against Japan, therefore entering into the second world war.

Japan had formed an alliance with Germany in 1936, which Italy joined in 1937. The alliance was strengthened in 1940 with the tripartite pact. All three nations sought to expand their territories which led them to militarise. These ambitions created tensions with other countries which culminated when Germany invaded Poland in 1939 and Britain and France declared war. This signalled the start of the second world war.

Since the invasion of Poland Germany has also invaded Denmark, Norway, the Netherlands, Belgium, Luxembourg, Yugoslavia and Greece, they have defeated France as well and have started an invasion of the Soviet Union on June the twenty-second, 1941.

Overseas many European countries including Britain, France and Germany as well possessed colonies. All of which were used to contribute to the war effort. This makes the conflict a world war but also sees many people's lives impacted by the war. This global presence can be seen in the map of December 1941 depicted below, where the countries in blue are the western allies and their colonies, the red countries are part of the Soviet Union and its allies and the countries in black are the axis powers.



Definitions of key terms

Allied powers

The allied powers consist of many different nations, yet most notably, Britain, France, the USSR, and following Pearl Harbor the USA. They fight against the axis powers.

Axis powers

The axis powers originate as an alliance between Germany, Japan and Italy, during the conflict some smaller countries join their efforts as well. The main three axis powers are united by their imperialism.

Appeasement

The policy enacted by European leaders, allowing Germany to get away with violations of previously established treaties and promises without major pushback, in order to prevent conflict.

Fascism

A far-right political ideology which promotes an authoritarian state, often with a single leader and a focus on nationalism and militarism. It is key to note that fascist governments varied significantly between states, thus making the concept hard to define.

Imperialism

The policy of extending a country's power and influence through colonization, military force, or economic control.

Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere

Japan's justification for its expansion across Asia, presented as a vision of Asian unity free from Western colonialism, but in practice functioning as a tool of Japanese domination.

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General overview

The treaty of Versailles following the first world war, put the full blame of the conflict onto Germany. They were ordered to pay reparations for the conflict, lost a large area of their territory and its military forces were limited amongst other measures. Many Germans felt this treaty was dishonourable and the treaty left the German state and economy weak, which was worsened during the Great Depression. Adolf Hitler was able to play into many Germans' frustrations by promising work, food, and restoring Germany's glory and power, mainly through rearmament. In 1933 he became Chancellor and started to transform Germany into a totalitarian regime and he started to slowly rearm the nation.

Similarly, in Italy fascism had also risen to power, as Mussolini's promises to tackle unemployment, stop socialism and of Italian unification saw him gain immense popularity and in 1922 he became prime minister. He too quickly transformed the state into a totalitarian one. Militarisation was also glorified and in 1935 Ethiopia was invaded.

On the other side of the globe Japan had started to modernise since the nineteenth century, militaristic ideals developed as a reaction to western interference in other Asian nations. The industrialisation and militarisation was followed by several conflicts including the Russo-Japanese war, which saw Japan win against a major European power and saw an expansion of its territory. Another factor for Japanese expansionism was its lack of natural resources such as oil, which they would seek to get in other Asian territories.

The actions of these three nations caused tensions with other powers. Yet as Germany expanded its borders by reunification of the Saarland, occupation of the Saarland and even Anschluss, the unification with Austria there was no clear sign of pushback from other powers. When Germany occupied the Sudetenland in Czechoslovakia, the Munich agreement was reached where the French and British allowed Germany to annex the Sudetenland. This policy is known as appeasement and was enacted because these powers did not want to go to war because of the memory of the first world war moreover, they were not armed for war either.

However when following the Munich agreement the expansion continued this sentiment started to change. When Germany invaded Poland after having signed a non-aggression pact with the Soviet Union an ultimatum was issued and when it was ignored Britain and France declared war. However they could not prevent Germany from invading Denmark, Norway, the low countries and even France was successfully invaded. Greece and Yugoslavia were taken as well and finally Germany invaded the USSR. Lastly, Japan attacks the US pacific navy at Pearl Harbor which sees the US joining the conflict.

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Major parties involved

Germany

Nazi Germany has overtaken most of Europe and its aggression has allowed a global scale conflict to develop. As an ally to Japan, it has also declared war against the US. Germany's goal is to restore itself to its former glory and avenge the treaty of Versailles.

Japan

With expansion through conflict in Asia and through its attack on Pearl Harbor, Japan has shown significant aggression. Finding an acceptable way to please its imperialist desires in a way that is also internationally acceptable will form the key to preventing further conflict.

Italy

Mussolini's Italy, though militarily weaker, played a symbolic role in the Axis alliance. It invaded Ethiopia in 1935 and Albania in 1939, and joined Germany in campaigns across North Africa and the Mediterranean. Its empire-building ambitions strained its limited resources and tied it closely to German strategy.

United Kingdom

Initially enacting a policy of appeasement, the UK has now declared war against Germany and Japan. It has made efforts to halt German expansion and is keen to protect its overseas empire. Using many of its resources from the Empire in the conflict.

United States of America

As the world's greatest economy the US entry into the war can have grave consequences. Their influence extends over the entire globe. Until Pearl Harbor it has pursued neutrality not believing the conflict in Europe was their issue to solve, but still providing resources to nations most notably the United Kingdom.

Soviet Union (USSR)

Although the USSR signed a non-aggression pact with Germany, following the Germans invasion in June 1941, the USSR declared war against Germany. Moreover the USSR also holds influence in Asia, where it has previously clashed with Japanese interests. Its vast manpower and resources make them a vital player in this conflict.

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Timeline of Key Events

18 September 1931	Japanese invasion of Manchuria
3 October 1935	Italian invasion of Ethiopia
7 March 1936	German remilitarisation of the Rhineland
25 October 1936	Rome-Berlin axis established
25 November 1936	Anti-Comintern pact signed by Germany and Japan
6 November 1937	Italy joins the Anti-Comintern pact
30 September 1938	Munich agreement
15 March 1939	German invasion of Czechoslovakia
23 August 1939	German-Soviet pact of non-aggression
1 September 1939	German invasion of Poland
9 April 1940	German invasion of Denmark
10 May 1940	German invasion of the Netherlands, Belgium, Luxembourg and France
22 June 1940	France surrenders to Germany
27 September 1940	Tripartite pact signed by Germany, Italy and Japan
6 April 1941	German invasion of Yugoslavia and Greece
22 June 1941	German invasion of the USSR
7 December 1941	Japan attacks Pearl Harbor

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Previous attempts to solve the issue

Appeasement in Europe

One of the earliest strategies used to maintain peace in the 1930s was the policy of appeasement, most notably carried out by Britain and France. European leaders, haunted by the memory of World War I, sought to avoid direct conflict at almost any cost. The 1938 Munich Agreement is a clear example: Britain and France allowed Hitler to annex the Sudetenland from Czechoslovakia under the promise that it would be his last territorial demand. This strategy bought temporary peace but ultimately emboldened Germany, signalling that the Allies were unwilling or unprepared to enforce the Treaty of Versailles. Ultimately, appeasement failed because it underestimated Hitler's expansionist ambitions and allowed Germany to grow militarily stronger.

Diplomatic Pacts and Non-Aggression Treaties

Several treaties were also signed in an attempt to prevent war. The most significant was the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact (August 1939), a non-aggression treaty between Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union. This agreement temporarily secured peace between the two powers and even outlined the division of Poland and other Eastern European territories. While it delayed open hostilities between the USSR and Germany, it did not address the underlying tensions. Its collapse in June 1941, when Germany invaded the Soviet Union, demonstrated that such agreements were fragile and often motivated by short-term strategic gain rather than genuine conflict resolution.

Economic Sanctions in the Pacific

In Asia, Japan's expansionist policies were met with various attempts at deterrence. The United States, Britain, and a number of other nations imposed economic sanctions and embargoes on critical resources such as oil, rubber, and steel — all of which were vital for Japan's military campaigns. The U.S. in particular froze Japanese assets in 1941 and restricted oil exports, hoping economic pressure would force Japan to scale back its aggression in China and Southeast Asia. Instead, these measures hardened Japan's resolve to secure resources by military means, culminating in the attack on Pearl Harbor.

The League of Nations

The League of Nations, established after World War I to prevent further global conflict, also attempted to address rising tensions. For example, the League condemned Italy's invasion of Ethiopia in 1935 and imposed economic sanctions. However, the sanctions were weak and failed to deter Mussolini, highlighting the League's inability to enforce collective security. Japan's withdrawal from the League in 1933 after criticism of its actions in Manchuria further undermined the organization's credibility. Without the participation of key powers like the United States, the League lacked the authority and unity necessary to handle aggressive states.

Regional Efforts and Naval Conferences

There were also earlier attempts at arms control and regional peace-building. The Washington Naval Conference (1921–22) sought to prevent an arms race in the Pacific by limiting naval

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construction among major powers, including the United States, Britain, Japan, France, and Italy. While initially successful, Japan grew dissatisfied with the limitations placed on its fleet and eventually withdrew from the agreements in the 1930s. This showed how even well-intentioned efforts at disarmament could collapse without trust and mutual recognition of security needs.

Possible solutions

Any durable resolution must address both the ideological and material causes of Axis aggression. While outright military confrontation now seems inevitable, earlier and alternative strategies could have offered paths to peace.

Addressing Grievances from Versailles

Revising the harshest elements of the Treaty of Versailles might have reduced German resentment. More equitable terms, combined with economic integration, are essential to creating a peaceful resolution with Germany

Economic Cooperation and Resource Sharing

Japan's aggression was driven largely by resource scarcity. International agreements on access to oil, steel, and rubber could provide incentives for peaceful cooperation rather than conquest.

Strengthening International Institutions

The League of Nations failed because it lacked enforcement power and key members like the USA. A reformed system of collective security — with stronger commitments to sanctions and enforcement — might deter further aggression and instead create international connection.

Cultural and Diplomatic Engagement

Fascism and militarism thrived partly because of isolation and mistrust. Programs fostering international cultural exchanges, respect for sovereignty, and recognition of rising powers might create less adversarial relations between nations.

Ultimately, preventing escalation after Pearl Harbor could require both immediate military responses and long-term planning to build a fairer, more cooperative international order.

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