

The Motivations Behind the Pearl Harbor Attack: A Focus on Energy Security

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Abstract— Japan attacked to Pearl Harbour had been happened in December 1941. There some conclusion had been founded. Regarding to Japan, there are five reasons: economic reason, financial reason, expanding living space, securing from political domestic unrest, and to win the war speedily. However, the war is a pragmatism choice of Japan and heavily motivated by energy security agenda. Therefore, even they saw to probability to win the war was low, they still committed to have the war. For the US, the reasons to wage war to Japan was more than the anger of Pearl Harbour being devastated, it was a political justification to keep the global domination, especially toward Japan's steady of growth and expansion. The reason of war is still relevant today as there is some similarity of great powers competitions. Therefore, it needs to be taken as the important lesson learned, in order to make war as history only to the human civilization and maintaining world peace and security.

Keywords— War, Cause, Energy Security, Global Domination

I. INTRODUCTION

On December 7, 1941, even those who anticipated conflict with Japan were stunned by the attack on the U.S. Pacific Fleet at Pearl Harbor, nearly 4,000 miles from Tokyo. On December 2022, the editor of the *National Geographic* released a special edition tagged by the title of “Japan had little chance of victory—so why did it attack Pearl Harbor? (National Geographic, 2022). Japan was conducted war against US, and therefore US declared war toward Japan. The raid had raised US to enter the World War II (WW-II), and create the most devastated war along the human history.

The attack has began at 07.55 local time, for 1.15 hours. The striking forces consisted of 353 aircrafts, included 40 torpedo planes, 103 level bombers, 131 dive bombers, and 79 fighters. The attack also consisted of two heavy cruisers, 35 submarines, two light cruisers, nine oilers, two battleships, and 11 destroyers. The attack had killed 2,403 U.S. personnel, including 68 civilians, and destroyed or damaged 19 U.S. Navy ships, including 8 battleships. The battleship USS *Arizona* remains sunken in Pearl Harbor with its crew onboard. Half of the dead at Pearl Harbor were on the *Arizona*. However, there were three aircraft carriers of the U.S. Pacific Fleet were out to sea on manoeuvres that the Japanese were unable to locate them and were forced to return home with the U.S. carrier fleet intact. The Japanese lost 29 aircraft and 5 midget submarines in the attack (National WW2 Museum, 2001).

There was a scenario, the Japanese planned to give the U.S. a declaration of war before the attack began so they would not violate the first article of the Hague Convention of 1907, however, the message was delayed and not relayed to U.S. officials in Washington until the attack was already in progress. However, the attack had failed to completely destroyed the U.S. forces, especially the US fleet. With the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, the U.S. could no longer avoid an active fight, as on December 8, U.S. President Franklin Delano Roosevelt asked Congress for and received a declaration of war against Japan. The Congress had accepted. The war toward Japan has begun. Japan military leader, Admiral Yamamoto had feared that the United States, with its enormous industrial potential, would soon recover and fight back. And, he was right. US had already recover, developed their

military forces, fight back, and Japan was lost in the Pacific War in 1945, and by the entering US into the war, make the total war of WW-II has ended by the lost of the Axis-Forces: Germany-Italy-Japan.

US Military Personnel (1939-1945)

Tabel 1. US Military Personnel (1939-1945)

Year	Army	Navy	Marines	Coast Guard	Total
1939	189,839	125,202	19,432		334,473
1940	269,023	160,997	28,345		458,365
1941	1,462,315	284,427	54,359		1,801,101
1942	3,075,608	640,570	142,613	56,716*	3,915,507
1943	6,994,472	1,741,750	308,523	151,167	9,195,912
1944	7,994,750	2,981,365	475,604	171,749	11,623,468
1945	8,267,958	3,380,817	474,680	85,783	12,209,238

*Cost Guard listed only as wartime strength

Source: Research Starters: US Military by the Numbers | The National WWII Museum | New Orleans (nationalww2museum.org) <https://www.nationalww2museum.org/>

The number of US military personnel increased from 334,473 in 1939 to 11,623,468 in 1944. The US military's productivity and innovation allowed it to operate systematically and efficiently. By 1945, the US had become the world's leading military power by a massive margin. Between 1942 and 1945, the US built 2,000 ships (including 175 aircraft carriers) and 300,000 aircraft, which is an epic feat on an unprecedented scale. The ability of the US military to project force around the globe simultaneously is often overlooked when comparing militaries, but it is the largest part of military strength. Logistics is king, and since 1940, no one has come close to matching the USA's logistics capability (National WW II Museum). As a result, the US won on all war fronts in the Pacific and brought Japan to despair. The US bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki with atomic bombs in August 1945 was a significant turning point that led to Japan's surrender.

There are many discourses regarding the Japanese attack on the US military base at Pearl Harbor, which ultimately led to Japan's defeat in its aim to become the dominant country in the Pacific, a goal that it had pursued since 1939-1940. This paper aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the historical evidence and Japan's energy security agenda surrounding the attack.

II. METHODOLOGY

The research method will be employed qualitative method, and technics of historical research approach. Historical research methods enable institutions to collect facts, chronological data, and other information relevant to their interests. However, historical research is more than compiling a record of past events; it provides institutions with valuable insights about the past to inform current cultural, political, and social dynamics. Historical research methods primarily involve collecting information from primary and secondary sources. While differences exist between these sources, organizations and institutions can use both types of sources to assess historical events and provide proper context comprehensively. Using historical research methods, historians provide institutions with historical insights that can give perspectives on the future. In the research, the relevant data would be collected from the secondary sources, from literatures both analogical and digital ones.

III. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Theoretical Perspective

Contemporary theories of the causes of war divide roughly into two major schools. One attributes war to certain innate biological and psychological factors or drives, the other attributes it to certain social relations and institutions. Both schools include optimists and pessimists concerning the preventability of war. The biological school was known as ethology, which started with the argument human warfare have basic similarities to the animal warfare. The aggressive behavior that led to the warfare arises from several drives: rivalry for possession, the intrusion of a stranger, or frustration of an activity. The major conflict situations leading to aggression among animals, especially those concerning access of males to females and control of a territory for feeding and breeding, are usually associated with patterns of dominance. The psychological school mentioned about

the psychological problem of the decision makers of other countries and their leaders that posit an innate aggressiveness in man. There is also understanding, that the psychological reason caused by the tension or stress caused by the public opinion .

However, there is a third approach to understand the cause of war: social factor . The liberal school of social of warfare-caused theories found that the cause of war was at the three level of analysis: individuals, society, and the state—and regarded the state as the outcome of the interaction of the former two. The neorealist, as Kenneth Waltz (2001) found that the cause of war was at the three level of analysis, they were: individuals, states, and international system. The individual-based warfare-case was caused by the nature of the aggressive leader. The state-based warfare-case was caused by the expansionist character of a state's political and/or economic system. The international system-based warfare-case was caused by the anarchic structure of the international system, in terms of no authoritative or supreme body that governs the interactions among states.

The socialist school of social of warfare-caused theories was based on Karl Marx theory on class conflict (Marx, 2010). The school was found that the warfare was happening between the different class-structure at the national as well as international level. The cold-war was one of the most observed examples of the school. The socialist school had a similar approach regard to the “state's based warfare” of Waltz (2001) as the idea was a different and conflicting system, ideas, and interest among states, included conflict that caused by the aggressivity of the state with capitalist system as well as its idea and interest.

In order to have the more comprehensive understanding on Japan attack to US, the theoretical discussion would be enlarged by mentioning two classic war's scholars, Clausewitz (1780 – 1831) and Haushofer (1869 – 1946). Clausewitz (2007), found that war is the extension of political decision. In Nugroho (2018) terms, the political decision of the government, as the state administrator, is the public policy. As far as it is a politics, it is not executable. Public policy is when the political decision packaged into a formally-legally by the policy maker's institution. Therefore, herewith, the researchers assumed that the meaning of “war is the extension of politics” would be the “war is the extension of the (state's) policy”.

Clausewitz found that war is nothing but a duel on a larger scale. War is thus an act of force to compel our enemy to do our will. War can be of two kinds, in the sense that either the objective is to overthrow the enemy—to render him politically helpless or militarily impotent, thus forcing him to sign whatever peace we please; or merely to occupy some of his frontier-districts so that we can annex them or use them for bargaining at the peace negotiations. The fact that the aims of the two types are quite different must be clear at all times, and their points of irreconcilability brought out. This distinction between the two kinds of war is a matter of actual fact. But no less practical is the importance of another point that must be made absolutely clear, namely that war is nothing but the continuation of policy with other means. (Clausewitz, 2007: 7, 13). However, for Clausewitz, war, whatever causes, is a pragmatic decision that taken by the state to exercise their will, however the victory is merely a probability, if a state need to do it, if there be nothing to do. Therefore, whether counting on physical or moral advantages, we should always try, in time of war, to have the probability of victory on our side. But this is not always possible. Often, we must act against this probability, should there be nothing better to do should there be nothing to do. Were we to despair here, we would abandon the use of reason just when it becomes most necessary, when everything seems to be conspiring against the state (Clausewitz, 1942: 2).

Clausewitz premises might be developed by Haushofer , that war is regard the interest of every state to pursue their needs in their security. There are two approaches on security: the passive security, as a freedom of war (Bellamy, 1981: 102), or as the absence of threat to acquired values (Wolfers, 1962: 150); and active security. In 1935, Haushofer remarked the understanding of the geopolitics as the duty to safeguard the right to the soil, to the land in the widest sense, not only the land within the frontiers, but beyond the frontiers. Haushofer idea was applied to the Germany in the 1930s, that concluded “the duty to safeguard the right to the soil, to the land in the widest sense, not only the land within the frontiers of the Reich, but the right to the more extensive Volk and cultural lands” . He was acknowledged as the initiator of the concept of geopolitical-lebensraum, which then adopted by Adolf Hitler, Germany Nazi's Party leader, into his political thinking of meinkampf (Hitler 1943; Herwig, 1999).

The Cause of Japan Attack On Pearl Harbour

After Meiji Restoration, Japan had undergone the tremendous acceleration in its modernization, instead of merely “westernization”, that means Japan was not copying the western civilization, but put their national value into the transferring modernization from the West (Hall, 1971). In 1919, Japan was seated among the “Big Four” of the worlds which meet in Versailles together with Britain, Italy, France, and US (The Treaty Of Versailles And Japan). It was the acknowledgment that Japan was one of “Great Nations” among the world. Japan then intensifying the industrialization, and economic development, and

peaceful relationship among states, in order to had supply on raw materials, especially grains, iron ore, and oil, and to sell their finished goods. Japan had a good relationship with Manchuria (for grain and oil core) and US (for oil) (Hackler, 2001).

The great depression in US in 1930s, had contagious effect to Japan. Japan had a severe economic crisis. In China, there was worrying phenomenon of the rising of nationalism. Japan needs to secure its raw material supply to fuel its growing industries¹. Support by its military forces, Japan attacked and occupied Manchuria in 1931. By 1937 Japan controlled large sections of China, and war crimes against the Chinese became commonplace. US and other countries against Japanese aggression, but shied away from any economic or military punishments. However, the US-Japan relations worsened further by Japan invasion to Indochina to capture oil-rich areas of the East Indies. Japan had acknowledged as a country with less natural resources. Japan's mineral reserves are small, and the quality of those mined is often poor. However, coal, iron ore, zinc, lead, copper, sulfur, gold, and silver are among the most abundant minerals (in relative terms), with lesser quantities of tungsten, chromite, and manganese. Japan also has large deposits of limestone (<https://www.britannica.com/place/Japan/Finance>). There is an almost complete lack of nickel, cobalt, bauxite (the ore of aluminum), nitrates, rock salt, potash, phosphates, and crude petroleum and natural gas (<https://www.trumanlibrary.gov/education/presidential-inquiries/invasion-manchuria>), which is now is Indonesia –in that time was colonized by Dutch dan British. The plan to invade the East India was having a local political support, as the long-time colonized people found the “elder brother” that helped them to ended the colonialization (Puspongoro & Notosusanto, 2008). Japan saw the opportunity to occupy the East and Southeast of the Asia. However, US found that the succeed of Japan to find the substitute for supply of raw material to Japan, would reduce US bargaining power to Japan.

In responding the Japan threat to occupy the East and Southeast Asian region, by seeing the aggressivity of Japan military action, US placed an embargo on scrap metal, oil and aviation fuel heading to Japan and froze Japanese assets in the U.S, and demanded Japan to withdraw from China and Indochina. Japan, sensing conflict was inevitable, began planning for an attack on Pearl Harbor by April, 194 (<https://www.trumanlibrary.gov/education/presidential-inquiries/invasion-manchuria>). .

The finding regard to Japan expansion to ensure their economic growth should be sustain, was in accordance with the theory of war the biological school with the argument that the warfare arises from the drives of rivalry for possession –rather than the psychological school. The finding also acknowledged the theory the state-based warfare-case; that the war was caused by the expansionist character of a state's system. However, the finding also in accordance to the theory of the international system-based warfare-case was caused by the anarchic structure of the international system, in terms of no authoritative or supreme body that governs the interactions among states. It was found, that the League of Nations, which championed by U.S. President Woodrow Wilson, that approved at the Paris Peace Conference on January 1919, was not effective. There was a global body that have no authoritative function and supremacy. There had to be unanimity for decisions that were taken. Unanimity made it really hard for the League to do anything. The League suffered big time from the absence of major powers — Germany, Japan, Italy ultimately left — and the lack of U.S. participation (Waxman, 2019).

In July 1941, the U.S. ended all trade with Japan and froze all of Japan's assets in the U.S. Great Britain, China and the Netherlands joined the U.S. in placing an embargo on oil exports to Japan. The question is, why US put the policy to sanction Japan that hard? US foreign policy was to forced Japan into international bankruptcy to deter its aggression. The Japanese government had a huge cache of dollars fraudulently hidden in New York. In July 1941, President Roosevelt froze the money to "bring Japan to its senses, not its knees," Miller asserts. Roosevelt's intentions were thwarted, however, by U.S. bureaucrats who were determined to deny Japan the dollars needed to buy oil and other resources for economic survival. The deprivations facing the Japanese people as a result of the fund cutoff buttressed Japan's choice of war at Pearl Harbor (in December 1941) (Miller, 2008). Therefore, the premise of the Japanese expansionism (<https://www.britannica.com/place/Japan/The-emergence-of-imperial-Japan>) was less relevant, in comparison the expansionism of British and some other European states. The Japan's reason for war is symmetrical to the Germany-Hitler war. Weikart (2011), found that though one of Hitler's goals in gaining living space was economic— especially increasing food production—those who argue that Nazi expansionism was economically, but not racially, motivated misunderstand the whole thrust of Nazi Lebensraum ideology. Nazi expansionism was intended to gain agricultural (and mineral) resources. The point was to increase the German population by providing land for German settlers and food for a burgeoning German population (Weikart 2011: 159-160)

Therefore, the issue is: it was a policy war (see, Nugroho, 2018) among states, Japan vs US. Japan needs to fulfil their economics domestic demand, while US secure its global domination. The Japan choice to make war to US paralel to the Clausewitz premise, as he mentioned that war was a pragmatic choice, include even by seeing that the war might not be won. As, by the US policy, Japan was now deprived of several vital resources necessary for its economic survival. At that moment, Japan had several choices. Option One was to stop and abandon its imperialistic conquests in Asia. Option Two was to maintain the “status quo” which would have ultimately forced Japan’s economy to grind to a halt. Both of these options would have caused Japan to “lose face.” (Hackler, 2001). The effort for Japan was to speed the winning of the war by occupying the raw material areas in the southern region, and put the US in laggard response as their military force had been devastated by attacking their prominent military hub. The recognizing of the failed of the Pearl Harbour by Yamamoto shown that the war was merely a pragmatcal decision, instead of ideological one.

However, the finding of Hall (1971) found that the military aggressivity of Japan’s authority was stemmed from the domestic condition. Hall found that in 1930s, the great depression led to the political unrest, as people had not accepted to their civilian political leaders. In 1930s, there were a “smooth revolution” in which military had taken control the political process, and it was supported by the Emperor –instead of having a kind of intense domestic political conflict. Military decide to increase the power of the nation by making strong the military force, by developing intensively the military industries. In consequences, it took more and more raw material on iron ore and oil. The domestic policy to shift the domestic political conflict toward a common vision of making “the Great Japan” –started from the Versailles acknowledgment.

The policy was symmetrical to Germany chauvinism under Nazi (Fairweather, 1932). It was argued that the Japan understanding of “natural expansion” was inspired by Haushofer (Spang, 2013), as he had been appointed as the Germany Military Attace at Tokyo in November 1908, received by Emperor Meiji and became acquainted with many important people in politics and the armed forces². Therefore, it would be not such of surprise of saw the alliance between Japan and Germany in the WW II.

However, there was an interesting finding by Yashuba (2009), that until the end of the nineteenth century, Japan raised its per capita income, starting from a low level, by exporting primary commodities and importing manufactured goods. And, indeed, around the turn of the century, Japan became a net importer of natural resources. Yashuba (2009) finding was it is doubtful that Japan ever suffered severely from a shortage of natural resources before the Manchurian Incident of 1931. It was the military expansion in the 1930s that created an artificial shortage of mineral resources, the wholesale exodus of population, and a lowering in the standard of living of the general public. In sum, the policy that support all-military-action has led to the next level of Japan’s natural and energy resources scarcity.

IV. CONCLUSION

There were five reasons for Japan to attack Pearl Harbor. First, the Japanese government needed to secure the supply of raw materials, such as grain, iron ore, and oil, to sustain industrialization and political support domestically. Japan also needed substitutes or alternatives for its industry's raw materials. Second, Japan aimed to rescue its frozen assets in the US and its allies. War with the US was a pragmatic choice rather than an ideological one, as there was no alternative to secure Japan's national policy and interest. Even Yamamoto acknowledged that Japan would not win the war, but it was the only choice. Some argue that it was a kind of total obedience to the emperor, while others believe that the people of Japan had no other choice but war, even if they would lose.

Third, Japan aimed to expand its "living-space" or lebensraum. Perhaps coincidentally, Hitler's advisor for lebensraum was also present in Japan before the war, but his presence might have strengthened the belief that prevailed among Japan's leaders. Japan's self-confidence had been bolstered since it was accepted as one of the "Five Greatest Nations" in Versailles.

Fourth, the military, as the political elite dominator, aimed to ensure that its presence was fully supported by domestic politics, even by creating another method: developing the ultra-nationalization of Japanese. Although the program was successful and continues to this day, it was a means to an end.

Fifth, the military aimed to win the war swiftly. The alternative scenario for Japan was to form a coalition with local people in the occupied region, especially in East India (Indonesia). However, the military's mindset and strategy were solely focused on winning the war against the US, even if it meant sacrificing local people. The policy of *romusha* in East India and other occupied regions in Southeast Asia turned sympathy toward Japan into antipathy. Therefore, the first scenario of winning quickly and creating a defense belt in the southern region of Japan failed and could not be recovered.

There were three reasons why the US went to war against Japan. First, the US had a strong interest in controlling global politics through controlling the global economy, and the instrument was the industry's most critical raw materials. The emergence of Japan's modernization instead of westernization alerted US and its allies. Japan's effort to find substitutes or alternatives for its industry's raw material alarmed US interests. At that time, the global political instrument was natural resources, especially the industry's most critical raw materials ie. oil, iron and grain.

Second, the peaceful relationship between the US and Japan created a condition in which the US became a strong market for Japan's goods. Japan's ability to accumulate capital in US currency (in US deposit) on one side alarmed the US, but on the other hand, put the US in a better position to determine the winning strategy: just freeze Japan's assets.

Third, the US's anger created US ultra-nationalism, allowing the nation to mobilize its military forces and weaponry in a short time. The ideology of a free nation effectively brought in the best talent in Europe to flee to the US, especially those who were targeted by Nazi Germany.

Energy security was a significant factor behind the Pearl Harbor attacks. Japan relied heavily on imported raw materials to fuel its industrialization and military expansion, including oil, iron ore, and grain. However, in the late 1930s, the United States and other Western powers began imposing economic sanctions on Japan in response to its aggressive military actions in Asia. These sanctions severely limited Japan's access to vital resources, especially oil.

In response, Japan's leaders believed that they had to secure new sources of raw materials to sustain their economy and maintain political support domestically. They saw the United States as the main obstacle to achieving this goal and believed that a surprise attack on the U.S. Pacific Fleet at Pearl Harbor would give Japan time to seize control of resource-rich territories in Southeast Asia and the Pacific without interference.

Thus, the Pearl Harbor attacks were part of Japan's larger energy security agenda, as they were intended to secure vital resources and remove a significant obstacle to Japan's expansionist goals.

V. LESSON LEARNED

There is always a unique reason of every war. It needs to be taken importantly, as it helps to get the better understanding regarding the war, and prepare the state, the leaders of the state, and the global leaders, to see the potency of war in the future. The 1941 attack of Pearl Harbour causes of war were still relevant today. It was a war on policy and economic winning and survival. Historical lessons from Pearl Harbor attack highlights the critical role that energy resources can play in shaping international relations and conflicts.

In the modern day, energy security continues to be a significant issue in the relationship between the US and Japan. Japan is heavily dependent on energy imports and is the world's largest importer of liquefied natural gas. The US, on the other hand, has become a major exporter of natural gas in recent years due to the shale gas boom. This has created a potential competition between the two countries, as the US seeks to expand its market share in Asia and Japan seeks to diversify its sources of energy.

Furthermore, the US and Japan have also engaged in energy-related cooperation and competition in other areas, such as nuclear energy. The Fukushima nuclear disaster in 2011 led to a shift in Japan's energy policy towards reducing its dependence on nuclear power, but the country continues to face challenges in meeting its energy needs. The US, as a major producer of nuclear technology and equipment, has been involved in discussions with Japan on nuclear energy cooperation and technology transfer. Overall, the examples from WWII and the current energy security situation between the US and Japan highlight the importance of energy security as a factor in international relations, and the potential for cooperation and competition in this area.

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