
The Round Tablette

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Welcome to the second March meeting of the Harold C. Deutsch World War II History Round Table. Tonight's speaker is Jeffrey Record, a professor of strategy at the Air War College in Montgomery, Alabama, and the author of *A War that it Was Always Going to Lose*. He will be discussing the struggle between the Japanese civilian and military leaders on whether to launch a war on the United States and its Allies in order to obtain raw materials needed for its imperial ambitions.

No country goes to war expecting to lose. Just because a country has few resources or a small population does not mean it cannot defeat a stronger nation. Two examples of this, have occurred in America history; first, the American colonies defeating Great Britain to gain its freedom, and second, the United States defeat by the small country of North Vietnam in the 1960's. Japan's push for an East Asian empire also meant that it would have to engage four imperial powers, Great Britain, France, the Netherlands, and the United States to obtain its goal.

The Japanese Empire moved toward a Pacific war with several assumptions about their projected adversaries and while they were, in the end, faulty, they were not made in a psychotic haze..

First, the Japanese assumed that Nazi Germany would continue to be victorious against Great Britain and the Soviet Union in Europe and the Mediterranean. The German conquests would continue to divert British resources and American attentions away from the Pacific. Unable to defend their colonies, the Americans would grow tired and negotiate for peace.

A second Japanese assumption was that the alliance between the United States and Great Britain was indivisible. This was the view of the Japanese navy, but not the Japanese army. The army believed that if Japan stayed away from American possessions they could avoid war with the United States. But the Japanese navy believed the British and Americans could not be separated and remained committed to that belief. One of those "what ifs" of history is: if the Japanese had left American possessions alone would the US have even fought in the Pacific.

The third Japanese assumption was obvious, that time was working against them. The economic sanctions imposed by the United States would strangle the Japanese economic and military capabilities. They would be unable to keep pace economically with the United States. In 1941, the Japanese were close to the US in industrial military output but they would only get weaker every year as the US grew stronger.

This growing economic disparity brings to the fore the fourth assumption by the Japanese, that a long war would doom them to defeat. Therefore, Japan had to engage in an Asian *Blitzkrieg* to bring the United States to a negotiated peace settlement.

If the Japanese could race to fortify the central and southwestern Pacific then, they could engage the United States in an exhausting war. This led to the fifth assumption by the Japanese that their war would become too much for the American public to bear and they would not continue the fight. The Japanese hoped to turn the Southwestern Pacific into a impenetrable fortress that would cost too many American lives. The Pacific war did become a war of attrition that proved to be a bloody slog through the island chains toward the Japanese home islands. However, the Japanese

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underestimated the American peoples' bloodlust for revenge after Pearl Harbor. The attack eliminated the possibility of a negotiated settlement.

Finally, the Japanese assumed that their racial and spiritual superiority would defeat the American economic superiority. Much like Adolf Hitler, the Japanese looked at this capitalist nation of immigrants as soft, effete, and pacifistic. They thought we were a weak, mongrelized, society. The Japanese believed that they were a strong willed, disciplined, warrior race able to withstand the privations of war. Their race would ultimately win out over American resources. Unfortunately, for the Japanese they were not very good students of American history. They failed to see the continental nation which viewed war with disdain, but once provoked would devour its adversaries.

Countries do not go to war *believing* they are going to lose, and no war is inevitable. Different assumptions and strategies by either side might possibly have brought Japan to victory, but it was not to be.

Further Reading:

- Jeffrey Record, *A War it Was Always Going to Lose* (Washington DC: Potomac Books, 2011).
- Jeffrey Record, *The Specter of Munich* (Washington DC: Potomac Books, 2007).
- Jonathan Utley, *Going to War with Japan, 1937-1941* (Bronx, NY: Fordham University Press, 2005).
- Alan Zimm, *The Attack on Pearl Harbor: Strategy, Combat, Myths, Deceptions* (Havertown, PA: Casemate, 2011).

Announcements:

- Twin Cities Civil War Round Table** - May 15, 2012 Guerrilla Warfare in the Western Theater www.tccwrt.com - 612-724-3849
- St Croix Valley Civil War Round Table** - Mar. 26, 2012 First Manassas - Steve Anderson - 715-386-1268
- Rochester WWII History Round Table** – Apr. 9, 2012 Navajo Code Talkers, 507-280-9970; www.ww2roundtable-rochester.org
- Fort Snelling Civil War Symposium** Apr. 14, 2012, <http://www.tccwrt.com/symposium.html> or tccwrt@yahoo.com
- Minnesota Military Museum**, Camp Ripley, 15000 Hwy 115, Little Falls, MN 56345, 320-616-6050, <http://www.mnmilitarymuseum.org/>
- Air Show - Eden Prairie** - July, 14-15, 2012; <http://www.airexpo-mn.org/> - 952-746-6100

Honor Flight - Jerry Kyser - crazyjerry45@hotmail.com - 651-338-2717
CAF - Commemorative Air Force - www.cafmn.org or Bill at 952-201-8400
Minnesota Air Guard Museum - www.mnangmuseum.org 612-713-2523
Friends of Ft. Snelling, www.fortsnelling.com

Round Table Schedule 2011-2012

2012

Apr 12 Jedburgs-Jumping Behind Enemy Lines
 May10 Battle of Leyte Gulf

If you are a veteran, or know a veteran, of one of these campaigns – contact Don Patton
coldpatton@yahoo.com

This is our 25th Year!

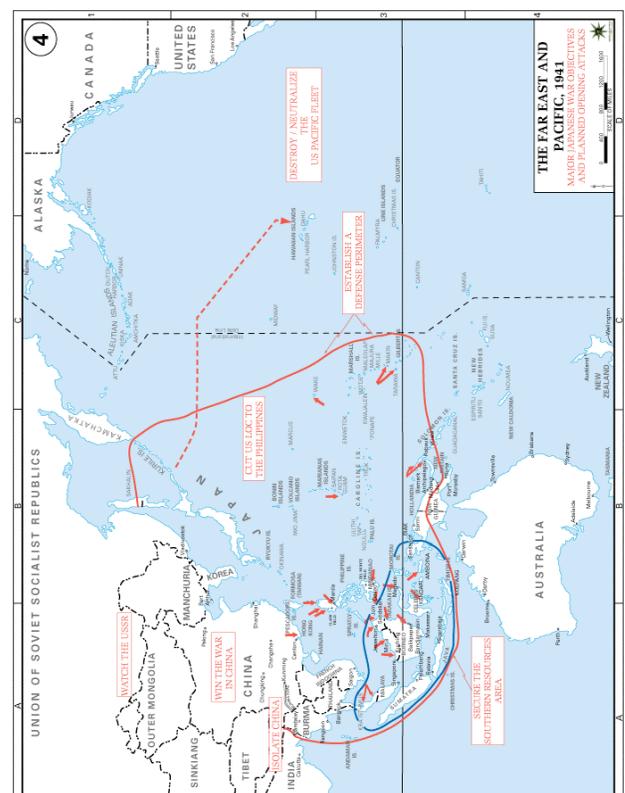
Some Comparisons

	Japan†	US
Population*	148 mil.	150 mil
Resources:	% of World	Production
Iron	3	31
Nickel	0	86 (NAmer)
Manganese	1.3	1.4 (NAmer)
Copper	4.7	32
Chromium	3.3	5 (NAmer)
Tungsten	7.7	9.6
Vanadium	0	6.4
Molybdenum	0.4	87.3
Crude Oil	0.2	49.8
Coal	4.6	35.8
Crude Rubber	0	0
Bauxite Ore	0	9.9
Steel	4.6	39.2

† Includes Empire *Includes possessions.

NAmer=US and Canada

O’Neil, *Interwar US and Japanese National Product and Defense Expenditure*, CIM D0007249.A1



USMA History Department, Online Atlases, WWIAsia04

If you liked tonight’s program, view our prior programs: [Pearl Harbor \(Patterns, Motives\)](#) in Dec. 2001, [Pearl Harbor \(Dr. Zimm\)](#) in Dec., 2010, or What Ifs of WW2 (HCD) 3:2 Nov.1989. You may order these tonight for delivery next month by seeing Rob at the desk, or online at: www.barros.us/online-store.cfm or contact Rob at (763) 639-3399