



# GECMUN X

## BACKGROUND GUIDE

### Historical Committee

*Eradicating the Armed Conflict in the Pacific Frontier After Pearl Harbor*

SDG:

*15. Life on Land, 16. Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions*

*17. Partnerships to achieve the Goal*

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## Committee Introduction

The Historical Committee, unlike most other committees in GECMUN, is not an actual committee represented in the United Nations. Although the historical committee follows much of the same Rules of Procedure as most GA committees, there is a distinct difference in the background setting.

Instead of having current issues as agenda items, the Historical Committee will have an actual historical event as their agenda item. For example, past Historical Committees from other MUN conferences have often dealt with the Cuban Missile Crisis, the Treaty of Versailles, the 9/11 terrorist attack, or even the Congress of Vienna of 1815. As exemplified, the Historical Committee is always represented by a historical event that was thought to be a crisis at that time period. Due to the speciality of the committee, there are a few key points that all delegates must keep in mind as they prepare for the conference.

Firstly, due to the nature of the historical committee, all delegates must act like they are living in the agenda's time period during the conference, and it is assumed that no chairs and delegates know anything about what's going to happen beyond that time. This indicates that delegates may not use sources or information that either would not have existed, or would not have been attainable at the time. Furthermore, during their research, it is essential that the delegates work to fully understand the historical background of the agenda. As the entire committee is based on an actual event that occurred in the past, all delegates should have abundant resources to build a clear knowledge of the historical facts. Delegates should be referencing key historical documents, treaties, traces of letters, newspapers or even real footage during their research. During the conference, some will be representing countries, however, some will be representing actual historical figures. Whether you are assigned a country or an actual figure, it is expected that you display a realistic representation of your respective delegation; a clear understanding of the historical background through meticulous research is needed for this.

As mentioned above, the Historical Committee is a fictional committee. Therefore, the Historical Committee offers the delegates a unique opportunity that is not often given in other MUN committees: the opportunity to be immensely creative and flexible. Although the Historical Committee is based on a real historical event, this does not necessarily mean that the results of the debate must be identical to what actually happened in the past. As long as the delegates are realistic and truthful in their representation of the delegations, the delegates are free to interpret available

information in their own ways and take different paths. All delegates may use specific quotes and actions that were actually taken historically, or, they are allowed to make new decisions based on their judgement of the situation. This is to say that, although the committee will start with a real historical account, it is highly unlikely that the end will be representative of the real event.

## Agenda Introduction

On December 7, 1941, a significant event in world history took place in Pearl Harbor. The Imperial Japanese Navy launched an unexpected military attack against the American naval facility in Pearl Harbor, Hawaii. Key American military locations and ships, in and around Pearl Harbor, were the targets of the Japanese attackers. Battleships, aircraft carriers, and airfields, as well as fuel stations, maintenance facilities, and other infrastructure, were their main targets. Japanese aircraft attacked American ships and infrastructure by launching missiles and dropping bombs. The USS Arizona suffered an enormous explosion and sank in a matter of minutes, killing over 1,100 people on board, making it one of the worst hit battleships. The American Pacific Fleet received serious damage as a result of the attack. Four of the eight battleships were sunk, while the other eight were damaged. In addition, four more ships were sunk or damaged. 2,403 Americans were killed, 1,178 were injured, and roughly 188 aircraft were destroyed.

Following conflicts also produced a lot of harm and injured a lot of people. However, this conference is our moment to make things better and build a brighter future. We are brought together here today to discuss strategies for putting an end to violence and establishing lasting peace on the Pacific border. We are surrounded by professionals and important figures who can assist us with their knowledge and experience. We must communicate with one another and comprehend one another's viewpoints. By doing this, we can resolve our issues, foster trust, and ensure that everyone lives in peace going forward. Instead of fighting, we should communicate with one another and apply diplomacy.

We will review multiple ideas and methods to reduce conflict, establish peace, and aid in healing throughout our conversations and/or debates today. It's crucial to take into account - not only political solutions but also measures to enhance people's lives and guarantee equal treatment for all. Though it won't be simple, we are committed to bringing out peace on the Pacific border. Let's make better use of our knowledge and skills to build a world where everyone can live happily and cooperatively in the future.

## Letter from the Chairs

Dear Esteemed Delegates of the GECMUN X Historical Committee,

My name is Bella Kim, and I will be serving as your Head Chair for the GECMUN X Historical Committee. I am currently a senior attending Busan Foreign School, and this is my 5th year in GECMUN. It is my hope as a Head Chair to gift all delegates the best MUN experience possible. Some delegates will be more experienced than others, however, regardless of your experience levels, I'd like to remind everyone that MUN can only work when everyone communicates and cooperates. After all, that's what MUN is all about. As a Head Chair, I promise to put my best efforts to create a collaborative, comfortable and a memorable experience for all. I'm honoured and extremely excited to see everyone at the conference!

My name is Chloe Chung, a junior at Busan Foreign School, and I have the pleasure of serving as the committee's Deputy Chair. I have participated in multiple MUN conferences, both online and in person. My first chairing experience was in the previous GECMUN, GECMUN IX, held in 2023. I could understand the gravity of the responsibilities given to me. I can promise you that you can approach me anytime you need to ask questions, even if you think the questions are silly. As a Deputy Chair, I will make sure that we create a stimulating and collaborative atmosphere where meaningful conversations are welcomed. I am looking forward to meeting you all at the GECMUN X conference.

My name is Ryan Sim and I am a junior at BFS and will be the associate chair along with Bella and Chloe. As I am also an active MUNer and have participated in GECMUN and other conferences a few times, I am delighted to be able to chair everybody in the Historical Committee. During my experience of MUN, I was able to make friends all across the globe and experience and learn about different cultures and issues. Along with that, I became more prone to public speaking and leading a group of people. I truly hope that everyone in this room will be able to leave with a new friend, experience, or knowledge at the end of this conference. Please feel free to ask me any type of questions, even silly ones, when you need my help or simply do not understand something. As the associate chair and a fellow MUNer, I will work as hard as possible in order to make a wonderful and efficient conference.

Sincerely,

Bella Kim ([2024kimb@bfs.or.kr](mailto:2024kimb@bfs.or.kr))

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## Key Terms

### **Hull Note**

The final note sent by the US to the Japanese government before the Attack on Pearl Harbor. It demands the Japanese troops to completely withdraw from Indochina and China without any conditions.

### **Boycott**

The refusal of any trade with a particular person/group/community/country as an act of protest.

### **Pearl Harbor**

The US Naval base located in Honolulu, Hawaii. This harbor was unexpectedly attacked by the Japanese Navy Air Force on the morning of December 7th, 1941.

### **Treaty of Versailles**

The Treaty of Versailles was a peace treaty signed in 1919, which resulted in ending World War I. Along with ending the war, the treaty established the League of Nations.

### **Racial Equity Proposal**

The Racial Equity Proposal was an amendment proposed by Japan to the Treaty of Versailles. Even though the proposal was not added to the treaty, it was intended to urge for racial equality for all the members of the League of Nations.

### **World War II**

The Second World War was from 1939 to 1945. This world war included various nations including countries such as the United States, and Germany. The main Axis powers were Germany, Italy and Japan, while the main Allies were the UK, China, France, Russia and the USA. The attack on Pearl Harbor occurred in the midst of WW2, due to the various conflicts between the Axis and Allies that increased tensions between Japan and the USA.

### **Second Sino-Japanese War**

The Second Sino-Japanese War, which was the biggest Asian war during the 20th century, was first initiated when China began its resistance against Japan's expansion. During the war, Russian soldiers restricted Japanese forces in Manchuria and the

Japanese eventually surrendered as Japan was bombed by the United States in Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

### **Japanese Imperialism**

Japanese imperialism was mainly about increasing the territory of Japan, however, it was accompanied by a sense of racial superiority. Japan mainly conquered and colonized Korea, Taiwan, Manchuria, and other Pacific islands. The period of Japanese Imperialism ended when the Japanese surrendered to the USA.

# Historical Background

## Introduction

The infamous attack on Pearl Harbor on December 7th of 1941, was preceded by multiple events that slowly increased the tension between the US and Japan. Although the attack itself was unexpected, a war between the two countries was somewhat anticipated by the political conflicts that built up between the two.

## 1890s, USA Expansion

The beginning of the hostile relationship between the two countries can be traced back to 1898, when the US annexed both Hawaii and the Philippines. Through this annexation, the US expanded its military power and influence, which was seen as a threat to the Japanese government. The Japanese military felt that the expansion of the US power was starting to threaten their sphere of influence; this marked the start of the uncomfortable tension that eventually led up to the Attack on Pearl Harbor.

## 1919, Treaty of Versailles

During the various conferences held to bring together the Treaty of Versailles, Japan requested the Racial Equity Proposal to be added to the treaty document. The Treaty of Versailles is famous for its idea of self-determination that allowed the sovereignty of nations. Japan's Racial Equity Proposal further strengthened this exact idea by guaranteeing equality amongst all nations regardless of the race of their citizens. However, when the Treaty was signed in 1919, the Racial Equity Proposal was entirely removed from the document, which, to the Japanese, was seen as an encouragement of racism. Consequently, the tension between Japan and the US was exacerbated.

## 1930s, Japanese Expansion

During WWII, Japan sought to expand their influence and strengthen their military by gaining more raw materials which were scarce on Japanese islands. In order to access the resources they were looking for, the Japanese military force invades the Chinese province of Manchuria in 1931. As the Japanese expansion over the Chinese land continued, brutal war crimes against the Chinese also increased, leading to conflicts between China and Japan.

In 1937, the Chinese nationalist forces began to rebel against the Japanese power and their brutality. This marks the beginning of the Second Sino-Japanese War. Despite the growth of Chinese rebellious forces, they were significantly overpowered by the Japanese military. Inevitably, the Japanese forces rapidly dominated the Chinese territory, eventually collapsing the Nationalist capital of Nanjing. During the process, the Japanese troops massacre the Nanjing inhabitants and destroy the city, an event that

later became known as the Nanjing Massacre. The cruelty and aggressiveness of Japan spread quickly through the media, which turned the Western public opinions against Japan. This once again worsened the relationship between the US and Japan.

### **1940s, Failed Negotiations Between the US and Japan**

In 1940, Japan invaded French Indochina to search for more natural resources that were needed to support their military, such as oil. Knowing that the French military was powerless in the face of the Japanese military, the French government was quick to give up Indochina to Japan. In response to this Japanese expansion, US President Franklin D. Roosevelt ordered the cessation of all exports of steel, airplane parts, oil, etc. to Japan. Being largely dependent on the US for their supply of aviation fuel and materials needed for the maintenance of their military force, Japan felt greatly threatened by this action.

Following the boycott against the Japanese, the US engages in multiple negotiations to relieve tensions between the two countries. The first proposal from Japan suggested that Japanese troops would withdraw from southern Indochina if the US halted their aid to China. On the second proposal, Japan further requested the US to stop sending in Southeast Asia troops and supply Japan with fuel. Although this proposal would've likely eased the tension between the two countries, the US rejects these proposals after realizing that Japan was continuing to deploy troops into Indochina even after making the proposal. The US follows up this rejection with what becomes known as the Hull Note: a demand for Japan to completely withdraw from China and Indochina without any conditions. However, this only angered the Japanese, triggering them to approve and launch an attack on Pearl Harbor. This attack took place on December 7th of 1941: The Attack on Pearl Harbor.



## Current State of Affairs

The attack on Pearl Harbor was an important event in the structure of World War II (WWII) starting in 1941. The Pearl Harbor naval services in Hawaii's island of O'ahu was the target of an unexpected military attack by the Imperial Japanese Navy on December 7th, 1941. The attack was a turning point in WWII because it led to the United States' official entry into the conflict and its participation in the Allied forces' fight against the Axis powers - Japan, Germany, and Italy.

After the attack on Pearl Harbor, American industry and the general public rose up to support the war effort. The United States' involvement in World War II changed the conflict's direction and was crucial to the Axis forces' final loss. The incident also had enormous and lasting impacts on global affairs, changing politics and causing important changes in the balance of power.

Before the attack on Pearl Harbor in 1941, there were already a number of significant wars taking place. The attack on Pearl Harbor was an important factor in bringing the United States into the conflict. One major event was WWII. WWII began in 1939 and involved the Axis powers against the Allied powers. While Japan, under Emperor Hirohito, tried to solidify its control in the Asia-Pacific area, Germany, under the leadership of Adolf Hitler, had been enlarging its holdings in Europe through military victories.

In 1941, during the attack on Pearl Harbor, the United States had adopted a policy of neutrality in the ongoing conflict of WWII. Up to this moment, the United States had stayed out of the war and avoided supporting either the Allied powers or the Axis powers. The policy of neutrality was adopted to keep the United States out of the war and prevent it from being involved in the wars taking place in Europe and Asia. President Franklin D. Roosevelt had frequently underlined the need for the United States to maintain its neutrality and stay out of foreign conflicts. However, even though having a formal policy of neutrality, the United States had been generously supporting the Allied powers through lend-lease programs that allowed it to support the military needs of nations like the United Kingdom, China, and the Soviet Union without directly entering the conflict.

## Stances of Parties

### **Australia**

Australia, although did not have a direct involvement in the Pearl Harbor incident, was part of the Second World War since 1939, 2 years before the infamous attack. Australians fought against Germany and Italy in Europe, the Mediterranean and North Africa, as well as Japan in Southeast Asia. Australia will play a crucial role during the conference as an opposing power against the Axis.

### **Canada**

Canada, like Australia, sided with the Allies during the Second World War to fight against the Axis. The Canadian military, in order to defend against the Axis powers, strengthened their defenses on the West Coast. On the same day the attack on Pearl Harbor happened (December 7th, 1941), Canada officially declared war against Japan. Following this declaration, Canada forcefully relocates the Japanese-Canadians motivated by xenophobia.

### **Chūichi Nagumo**

Chūichi Nagumo was a Japanese Vice Admiral that led the Japanese fleets during the attack on Pearl Harbor. Although he opposed the plan for the attack, he was forced to command the Kido Butai, a carrier-centred air fleet. After receiving a signal from Tokyo on December 2nd, he immediately ordered his fleet to “Climb Mount Niitaka 1208”. This signal indicated that the attack on Pearl Harbor was going to happen, and it’d occur on December 8th (December 7th in Hawaii). Although the first and second waves of attack led by Nagumo ended in success, Nagumo experienced a major loss of planes due to counter-attacks from the US. Nagumo’s air fleet did not have radars, thus, before making the third wave of attack, Nagumo realized that initiating the third attack would put him at great risk of losing even more planes. Eventually, Nagumo retreats his fleets and returns back to Japan in order to prevent the loss of even more planes.

### **France**

France was part of the Allies during WW2. On June 5th of 1940, France signed an armistice and was taken over by the Germans. Although the French forces fought to defeat their land during the Battle of France, the Allies had already lost a significant amount of their troops from the fall of both Belgium and the Netherlands. Thus, France is currently under the control of Germany.

### **Franklin D. Roosevelt (USA)**

Franklin D. Roosevelt is the current president of the USA. President Roosevelt engaged in multiple negotiations with Japan prior to the attack in order to ease the tension

between the US and the Japanese Empire (detailed in the Historical Background section). The USA was part of the Allies during WW2, thus, President Roosevelt now has to fight against Japan and protect the American land from the invading Japanese forces.

### **Germany**

Germany, alongside Italy and Japan, was part of the Axis during WW2. Although Germany did not have direct participation in the attack, their actions during WW2 worsened US-Japan relations. Germany, prior to the attack on Pearl Harbor, had successes in European wars. Germany took over Belgium, Netherlands and even France, leaving critical damage on the Allies military power. Due to the German invasion, many of the European nations' Asian colonies became unstabilized as well. This gave an advantage to Japanese troops who were rapidly taking over Asian land. Japanese expansion over Asia exacerbated their relationship with the US, eventually leading to the attack on Pearl Harbor.

### **Hideki Tojo (General of the Japanese Army)**

Hideki Tojo was the General of the Japanese Army, but was made a prime minister a few months before the attack on Pearl Harbor. Hideki Tojo sought approval from the Japanese Emperor to proceed with the attack on Pearl Harbor. After receiving the Hull Note from America (described in the Historical Background), Tojo assumed that the US was attempting to engage in war with Japan. Interpreting the Hull Note as an ultimatum, Tojo ordered the Imperial Japanese Army to proceed with the planned attack on the US port.

### **Hirohito (Japanese Empire)**

Hirohito is the Emperor of the Japanese Empire. Hirohito approved his army to proceed with the planned attack on Pearl Harbor when Hideki Tojo requested for his approval. Consequently, the Japanese army proceeded with the infamous attack.

### **Husband E. Kimmel**

Admiral Husband E. Kimmel, is the current Commander in Chief Pacific Fleet. As the CICPF, he is the Head of the entire US Fleet. During the attack, the majority of his fleet was located in Pearl Harbor, resulting in 18 of his ships being wholly destroyed. Unfortunately for Kimmel, all his Pacific Fleet currently has left are a few aircraft carriers that were not located in the harbor in the morning.

## **India**

During the Second World War, India was part of the British Empire. The Indian Army is currently playing a major role in helping the British fight against the Axis. The Indian Army is currently known to be fighting against the Germans in Africa and the Japanese in Burma, while invading Italy. As part of the Allies, the Indian Army will have a great impact on the strategic approaches to fight against the Japanese after the attack.

## **Isoroku Yamamoto**

Isoroku Yamamoto, a Japanese officer, perhaps is the most responsible for the Attack on Pearl Harbor. Yamamoto planned the entire plan that would raid the American harbor for 30 minutes with endless strikes from battleships and torpedo planes.

## **Italy**

Italy was one of the Axis Powers during WWII, which meant they were close allies with Germany and Japan. Due to this alliance, Italy's stance should have been mainly aligned with Japan's stance.

## **Korean government in exile**

As the Korean government in exile was under Japanese rule, it was most likely that they had many anti-Japanese sentiments in their government. Their stance on this issue would most likely be the opposite of Japan's stance.

## **Minoru Geneda**

Minoru Geneda, the Japanese naval flight officer, participated in planning the Pearl Harbor attack. While planning for the attack with General Yamamoto, Geneda emphasized on the secrecy of the plan, and also suggested having a three wave attack. This three wave attack method later became a part of the actual plan. Minoru Geneda also directly trained the Japanese soldiers to use torpedoes more effectively, and to maximize the damage for the US Fleet. During the attack, Minoru stayed behind Captain Fuchida's selection and led the attack.

## **Mitsuo Fuchida**

Mitsuo Fuchida was one of the Japanese naval aviators and the commander of the first wave of attack on Pearl Harbor. As he was a Japanese naval aviator who had led this attack, his stance would have aligned with the Japanese in general.

## **Nagano Osami**

Nagano Osami was the Chief of the Imperial Japanese Navy while the attack on Pearl Harbor took place. Similar to Fuchida, Osami's stance would most likely align with the stance of the Japanese Emperor.

## **Netherlands**

Although the Netherlands played no direct role on Pearl Harbor, its colonies located in the Dutch East Indies (in modern-day Indonesia) played a crucial strategic role. Oil was particularly cheap in these territories, which Japan desired to take over in order to support its war effort and regional expansion. The Dutch East Indies invasion that followed the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor triggered the Allied replies and turned an area into an important region of battle during World War II.

## **New Zealand**

As New Zealand was a member of the Allied Powers during WWII, they would likely be against the Axis Powers. As a country located in the Pacific Ocean, New Zealand could be able to play a crucial role as a supporter of the Allied Powers.

## **Philippines government in exile**

Similar to the Korean government, the government of Philippines was also in exile under Japanese occupation during WWII. Their stance would have focused on supporting the Allied Powers to regain independence while opposing Japan.

## **Poland**

As Poland was occupied by Germany during WWII and deeply contributed to the conflict during the war, Poland's stance would most likely be aligned with the Allied Powers in order to support peace initiatives in the Pacific Ocean.

## **Republic of China**

The Republic of China was a key member of the Allied Powers during WWII as China faced significant Japanese aggression during the war. China would mostly be focused on striving for peace and ending Japan's expansion in the Pacific Ocean.

## **Greece**

Greece was also one of the countries that did not directly have connections with the attack on Pearl Harbor. However, Greece was already involved in many conflict with Italy and Nazi Germany. During World War II, Greece was constantly battling and being invaded by both Italy and Germany, the Axis forces.

## **UK**

As also one of the key members of the Allied Powers, the UK was also against the Axis Powers. The UK's stance would be trying to establish peace in the Pacific Ocean and generally achieve a state of peace.

**USSR**

The USSR was also a member of the Allied Powers during WWII and was mostly involved in the battles in Europe and some aggressions between Japan. The USSR would mostly likely be in favor of establishing peace in the Pacific Ocean.

**Walter Short**

Walter Short was the general commander of the US military forces in Hawaii during the time of the Pearl Harbor attack. His stance would mostly align with other Allied Powers and prevent Japan from further expanding and attacking.

## Possible Solutions

The major cause of the attack on Pearl Harbor can be narrowed down to a single issue: the failed negotiations between the US and Japan. Thus, a possible solution to consider is re-attempting the negotiations between the two countries. The final trigger of the attack was the Hull Note – the note to Japan from the US asking it to back out of China and Indochina without any conditions. This was taken as an act of war: a misunderstanding that led to the devastating incident. Unfortunately, there can be nothing done to undo the attack that has already been launched. However, it is crucial to prevent any further, and perhaps, even worse incidents.

The biggest obstacle in having the Japanese retreat from the Chinese territories is the boycott the US is holding. The boycott largely threatens both the Japanese military and the economy. Without the trade of fuel and other goods with the US, Japan cannot support its own economy or its military. Thus, in order to prevent the collapse of their own country, it is highly likely that Japan will refuse to retreat from the conquered lands until the boycott is ceased. A successful negotiation between the US and Japan is essential to ensure that both the boycott and the Japanese brutality are ceased.

Furthermore, the US military and the country's civilians received painful damages and losses, which must be compensated for. Seeing the past actions of Japan during WW2 and the current attack, it is expected for the US to declare war against Japan. However, it must be noted that this declaration will expand the ongoing war and impact all delegation countries. Moreover, the number of casualties and the scale of economic losses will exponentially increase.

Despite the dangers of the war the US may declare against Japan, there is no doubt that the attack was an apparent war crime. The attack killed thousands of innocent civilians and destroyed many US properties. To continue, the Japanese brutality against the Nanking citizens and Chinese territories can also be considered war crimes. Therefore, the repeated crimes committed by Japan cannot be simply overlooked. The delegation countries may require the US to stop the boycott, but hold Japan responsible for the war crimes they have committed. To hold the declaration of war to the very last resort, the delegations may choose to not punish the entire Japanese government, but specific figures who are directly responsible for the attack on Pearl Harbor and other related war crimes.

## Questions to Consider

- What should the US and other delegations offer to Japan for their promise of retreating from the Chinese territories?
- How can other delegation countries assist the US in ceasing their conflict with Japan?
- What promises does Japan require in order to prevent the collapse of their economy?
- What are the compensations needed for the attack on Pearl Harbor?
- How should Japanese war crimes be punished?
- How can the Japanese compensate for the damages they've caused?
- What damages have delegation countries other than the US received from Japan?
- Should the Japanese army be punished for the war crime they've committed?
- What significant international negotiations and actions were there between Japan and the US before the attack on Pearl Harbor?



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