

**SSUSH19 – Examine the origins, major developments, and the domestic impact of World War II, including the growth of the federal government.**

a. Investigate the origins of U.S. involvement in the war including Lend-lease and the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor.

The United States was cautious in its initial involvement in World War II. The events in Europe threatened American allies and trade. Danger was spreading through Europe in the 1930s with the rise of dictators, who desired to expand their influence by taking over vast areas. Many Americans were reluctant to get involved in this European conflict after the events of World War I. It was not until Japan attacked the United States at Pearl Harbor that there was unified support for America's entry into the war.

Part of the public reluctance to get involved in the war resulted from a mid-1930s Congressional investigation, which indicated banking and munitions interests helped push the United States to enter World War I for their own financial gain. This evidence led Congress to pass a series of neutrality laws that made it illegal to sell arms or make loans to nations at war. The fourth of these acts was passed in 1939 as a recognition of the increasing threat Nazi power posed to Western European democracies. The 1939 Neutrality Act permitted the sale of any materials, including arms, to nations at war on a "cash and carry" basis. This was a way for the United States to help restrict the spread of Nazi influence while at the same time remaining neutral. The cash and carry provision meant that buyers would have to pay cash and send their own ships to American ports to pick up the supplies they were purchasing from the United States. The British and the French were the only countries financially in a position to meet the criteria of the cash and carry Policy. This arrangement kept American ships from being sunk by the German submarines patrolling the Atlantic Ocean.

The Roosevelt administration opposed the proposals because he believed that the laws might restrict the United States if Europe or China needed help in the future. However, the president had no choice but to sign the Neutrality Acts into law because he needed to insure that Congress would pass the remaining parts of his New Deal legislation. Even though the United States was declaring neutrality in World War II, the nation was still supporting the Allied Powers through the transfer of goods.

The cash and carry provision lasted until early 1941. By that time, Great Britain was strained financially to meet the criteria for the cash and carry policy. Nine months before Pearl Harbor, Congress passed the Lend-Lease Act, which created a pathway for American goods to still support the British war effort even though they were short on cash. Under the new provisions of Lend-Lease, the United States could lend military equipment and supplies to any nation the president said was vital to the defense of the United States. Roosevelt approved \$1 billion in Lend-Lease aid to Great Britain in October 1941. When the United States entered World War II, \$50 billion worth of equipment and supplies had already been sent to Great Britain, France, the Soviet Union, and China. These nations became allies of the United States after the attack at Pearl Harbor led to the American declaration of war.

The December 7, 1941 attack on the United States at Pearl Harbor evolved from Japan's desire to conquer all of Asia for its own use. Japan was, and still is, a resource-poor nation. In order to keep its industries going and to feed its people, the Japanese government began a policy of expansion in the 1890s. Japan's military targeted the weaker nations of China and Korea and captured territory from both nations. The United States was angered by Japan's aggression in China. Under U.S. policy, all nations should be able to trade freely in China and respect their territorial integrity. Japan invaded Manchuria in 1931 and engaged China in a full-scale war in 1937. China was quickly conquered, except for the southwestern provinces.

The neutrality laws of the early 1930s prevented the United States from giving aid to the Chinese. However, the passage of the Lend-Lease Law in 1939, allowed the United States to lend money to the Chinese war effort. In 1940, Germany conquered France and the Netherlands and threatened Great Britain. The conquered nations also had rich colonial holdings in Asia. Japan sensed these colonies would be easy to acquire and positioned its military to conquer the entire region. In September 1940, the Japanese occupied French Indochina threatening British Malaysia, the Dutch East Indies, and the American Philippines. The United States immediately placed an embargo on airplane parts and aviation fuel. The United States also re-positioned the Pacific fleet from San Diego to the Hawaiian Islands. In July 1941, the United States placed a total financial and oil embargo on Japan.

The Japanese felt they were being directly threatened by the United States and began to plan operations for the take over of the East Indies, Malay Peninsula, and the Philippines. To prevent any counter-attack, the Japanese military felt it was necessary to destroy the American Pacific fleet. On the morning of December 7, 1941, the Japanese navy launched a surprise attack on the United States Navy base at Pearl Harbor, Hawaii. Over 2,400 Americans were killed and 1,178 more were wounded, 19 ships were damaged, and over 300 aircraft were destroyed. The Japanese attack brought the United States officially into World War II.

### **Define**

### **Lend-Lease**

### **Pearl Harbor**

- 1. What were the Neutrality Acts?**
- 2. Why did Americans not want to get involved with WWII?**
- 3. What is the Cash and Carry Program?**
- 4. How was the Lend-Lease program involvement by US?**
- 5. Why did the Japanese attack Pearl Harbor?**
- 6. How did Pearl Harbor lead to involvement of the US in WWII?**