

Why did Japan eventually lose the Pacific War?

- 1) **The sheer massive power of America overwhelmed Japan once the USA got itself fully organized.** Her ability to produce war goods and her man power totally outstripped Japan. Also all her factories were on the US mainland so they were free from any fear of bombing. Do note that the attack on Pearl Harbor sunk a number of ships including 3 battleships - this made great propaganda for the government but the ships were not critical from a military point of view and were easily replaced in the numerous shipyards in America.
- 2) **Japan only had 10% of America's economic might and was very short of basic and vital minerals especially iron and oil.** America had both of these in huge quantities. If the Americans lost a capital ship (a battleship or aircraft carrier) it was simply a loss. If the Japanese lost a capital ship it was a disaster as it could not be easily replaced. After the *Battle of Leyte Gulf* (Oct 1944) the Japanese Navy all but ceased to exist. The navy minister, Admiral Yonai, said with regards to the result at Leyte Gulf, "*I felt that that was the end.*"
- 3) **The American submarine service** targeted Japanese merchant ships transporting goods from mainland Asia to Japan. She had 8.9 million tons of shipping of which the **submarines alone sunk 55%**. Thus **Japan was starved of needed commodities**. She only had 3% of America's farmland so food was a real problem. When **America** had the range she **bombed Japanese cities and factories**. 43,000 tons of bombs were dropped on factories in Japan and 104,000 tons on 66 cities. The bombing of factories was effectively a waste of time as they were already starved of raw materials anyway. The fire-bombing of Tokyo made it clear to the Japanese government that it was facing complete destruction.
- 4) US forces in the Pacific were commanded by **Douglas MacArthur**. He realized that the Japanese Imperial Army would take years to defeat if every island in the Pacific was fought over. The American casualties would be massive. Her forces at Iwo Jima and Okinawa had taken many deaths from just a handful of defenders. **He adopted a policy of taking the main islands only and ignoring the smaller ones** which could be ignored and isolated with the troops on them being left without any transport to get off of them. This was called "**island hopping**" and the small islands were "*left to wither on the vine*". This does explain why Japanese troops were found on Pacific islands some years after the war but it also confirmed to those who had fought that the Japanese were fanatics who would have inflicted massive casualties on Allied troops if each island had been taken.
- 5) In mainland Asia, **British and Commonwealth forces had pushed back the Japanese as they approached India**. Fierce fighting took place on the mainland though it was rarely reported back home in Britain and the men who fought out in the Far East frequently referred to themselves as "*The Forgotten Army*". Orde Wingates's '*Chindits*' fought the Japanese using what would now be called Special Forces tactics - dropping by parachute behind enemy lines, disrupting their supply routes and generally causing the Japanese the maximum damage.

- 6) American intelligence estimated that if a land invasion of Japan was to take place i.e. if Japan refused to surrender, then America would have to expect at least one million casualties which would be politically and militarily unacceptable. It was thought that the Japanese would get together a Home Guard of at least 14 million to guard both the country and the emperor. With the example of kamikazes, many generals in America feared that the war would go on for a long time and that surrender would have to come from the emperor for all Japanese to obey it. With this background, President Truman authorized **the use of the atomic bomb**. On August 6th, 1945 Hiroshima was attacked and on August 9th, Nagasaki. The emperor ordered surrender.

Once America had got herself prepared, Japan could not have won the Pacific War. Her overwhelming industrial might, her vast food producing capacity, her huge manpower and her freedom from bombing, meant that Japan had to take on the world's most powerful nation. The fact that it took so long for this victory can be explained by the ferocious commitment of the Japanese soldier and the geography of the region. But nearly all historians are of the opinion that an Allied victory was inevitable.



US propaganda showing the importance of women in the US workforce during WWII

Why did Japan lose WW2?

- Victory over Russia and 1930's battle successes in China lead to Japan becoming **overly confident** in their military capacity. However, Japanese ministers knew it would be nearly impossible to win over a giants like the U.S.
 - The Japanese realized early that it was going to be a tough battle, despite their successes in the bombing of Pearl Harbor and advanced into IndoChina, Burma and Thailand.
 - **Japan faces political and economic difficulties, resources were scarce.**
 - Workers became short in supply – so **lack of workers**
 - **Politically, Japan lacked** the kind of **unity** it needed. Prime Minister Tojo was often not the first to hear plans of military attacks. Other political figures seemed to know more than the Prime Minister did...
 - Tojo lacked the ability to unite the government with the military as he had no effective control over it. He was put in this situation because of the ministers of the army and navy reporting to the Emperor instead of to him.
 - The ministries and sections of government all wanted own power which lead to Tojo losing the unity that he needed.
 - Additionally, this is an important factor which prevented Japan from becoming a Nazi-like state. One party or one individual never received soul power.
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- Japan had made **serious errors in judgment when dealing with the U.S.**
 - Japan obtained resources they needed from their Southeastern colonies and they continued to obtain more and more territory and gain strategic positions in the Pacific.
 - April 1942 – Americans start bombing Japanese soil.
 - The U.S had risen to the challenge. Japan did not count on this.
 - Compared to Japan, **the U.S could make more airplanes, submarines, carriers etc. as they produced more resources and had more man power.**
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- Early months of **1945** – **Japan lost the Philippines** as General MacArthur marched his troops into the country and took over the country as well as the resources.
 - This was a severe loss for Japan as they now had lost a tremendous amount of resources that they were in desperate need of to be able to maintain their military actions.
 - The Japanese could no longer afford to fight the same kind of war as they had done before as they were **short on manpower, aviation materials, oil, iron, petroleum etc.**
 - The **Americans used flammable material on cities in Japan which not only devastated life but also transportation, shipping, production and communication.**
 - **A-bomb:** Japan surrendered after the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki.