How the Attack on Pearl Harbor Affected America

Recently, Americans celebrated Pearl Harbor Day, a day to honor the sacrifices and heroic deeds of American soldiers when the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor. This attack affected many people. The attack on 7 December 1941 immediately forced American Society prepare for the upcoming war that was unwanted as well as other adaptions such as increased bomb shelters being built, women going into the workplace, Japanese-American internment, and American becoming interventionalist rather than isolationist and the economy finally improved.

After World War I, The League of Nations was created to keep world peace. The League of Nations relied on the members of the League to enforce the rules because it did not have an army of its own. Because of this, the League of Nations did not have any real authority. With the rise of communism from Japan and German, came the formation of two alliances. The Axis powers were manly Germany, Italy and Japan, versus Allies which included The United States, Britain and France. The United States resisted entering World War II for as long as long as possible. It was only because of Japan’s surprise attack on Pearl Harbor Naval base in Hawaii that the United States went to war (“World War Two” n. pag.).

Another effect of the attack was the creation of the CIA. Up until WWII, The United States did not feel the need for an established centralized intelligence organization. On 7 December 1941, the need for a centralized intelligence organization was clearly pointed out when waves of Japanese aircraft came in without any struggle or warning to bomb U.S. Navy ships and Army equipment around Pearl Harbor (“Intelligence”). This led to the creation of government organizations like the CIA. In the period between World War I and World War II, the US's foreign policy was known as isolationism, which meant it wanted to be separated from other countries conflicts and affairs. They knew that if they went to war with one of the countries they would have to face the whole Axis powers. The ideas and plans of the fascist powers in Europe during World War II and the growing conflicts with Germany made American Society fear for the security of the nation. The Attack on Pearl Harbor was the final straw. This brought an end to isolationism in The United States and introduced the new policy of interventionism. The United States official joined the war that day on 7 December 1941 After World War II. The U.S. became fully interventionist. “US interventionism was motivated primarily by the goal of containing the influence of communism, and essentially meant the US was now a leader in global security, economic, and social issues” (“Interventionism” n. pag.).

Additionally, American society completely changed after the attack on Pearl Harbor to prepare for the upcoming war. The United States began to ready for war by strengthening its military. The Government put out many advertisements trying to influence men and women to join in the war efforts. The United States began to strengthen alliances and relationships with countries like Great Britain, Knowing that the war could not be won on their own. With the new policies of interventionism in the United States came a more patriotic and pro-war out look towards World War II. People were doing all they could to support the war effort. People were donating goods to the military and raising money for military funding. The government used propaganda in advertisements to make men see joining as their duty for their country. War songs of bravery and love for soldiers were also very popular during this time. Around 6 Million men left their normal lives to join in the war efforts. Another 10 million were drafted. In 1940 United States enacted Selective Training, “which required all men between the ages of 21 and 45 to register for the draft. This was the first peacetime draft in United States' history” (“World War Two” n. pag.).

The war even changed relationships and the women’s roles in society. When the war began, “quickie marriages” became the normal thing in American Society. Teenagers married each other before the men went overseas to fight in World War II (“Women in WWII” n.pag.). Since millions of men went out to fight in Europe and Asia, There wives were given the responsibility of providing enough money to support their families. As the men fought abroad, women on the Home Front worked in factories and volunteered for war-related organizations, also keeping up with their households responsibilities. “Nearly 350,000 American women served in uniform, both at home and abroad, volunteering for the newly formed Women’s Army Auxiliary Corps (WAACs, later renamed the Women’s Army Corps), the Navy Women’s Reserve (WAVES), the Marine Corps Women’s Reserve, the Coast Guard Women’s Reserve (SPARS), the Women Air force Service Pilots (WASPS), the Army Nurses Corps, and the Navy Nurse Corps” (“Women in WWII” n.pag.). Women took office and clerical jobs in the armed forces in order for the men to fight. Women also drove trucks, repaired airplanes, worked as laboratory technicians, rigged parachutes, served as radio operators, analyzed photographs, flew military aircraft across the country, test-flew newly repaired planes, and even trained anti-aircraft artillery gunners by acting as flying targets.” After the war, many women were forced out of their jobs by men returning home. “Between 1940 and 1945, the female percentage of the U.S. workforce increased from 27 percent to nearly 37 percent, and by 1945 nearly one out of every four married women worked outside the home” (“World War II” n.pag.). Government campaigns aimed towards women were addressed at housewives, to influence women in the work force. “One government advertisement asked women, "Can you use an electric mixer? If so, you can learn to operate a drill” (“Women in WWII” n.pag.) Rosie the Riveter was the icon of this movement in the United States, representing the strength and independents a woman can have. The roles of women in society would never be the same after WWII.

One positive affect was the improved economy. The United States’ Great Depression was the most severe economic downfall in history. In the United States, the Great Depression started right after the stock market crash in October 1929. This made Wall Street panic and drop out millions of investors. By 1933, when the Great Depression reached its worse, 13 to 15 million Americans were unemployed. The Unemployment rate went from 3.2 percent to 25 percent. Almost half of the United States’ banks had failed. For the United States, World War II was the most important economic event of the twentieth century. The war was the turning point and ending of the Great Depression. World War II created many job opportunities in factories, shipyards and for military positions. Factories converted went from producing their usual good too only producing war supplies. “Conversion” was a controversial issue in The United States economic life between 1940 and 1942. In some industries, mainly automobile companies were not willing to converting to military production because they did not want to lose consumer to other companies whom did not convert. Conversion became a goal urged by public officials and labor leaders. Another way World War II affected the United States economy was the increase of taxes. Taxes provided about $136.8 billion of the war’s total cost of $304 billion (“World War Two – Statistics” n.pag ). To pay the other $167.2 billion of war debt, the United States’ Treasury Department introduced the use of war bonds. The first war bond was purchased by President Roosevelt on May 1, 1941. Even though the bonds only had a 2.9 percent annual interest after a 10-year maturity, they served an important source of revenue for the federal government and an extremely important investment for many Americans. The war bonds were a way for citizens to make an economic contribution to the war effort. By the time war-bond sales ended in 1946, 85 million Americans had purchased more than $185 billion worth of the securities. World War I also brought many scientific and technological changes which created a great demand for scientists, engineers and government officials, opening many jobs. ”On 28 June 1941, Roosevelt signed Executive Order 8807, which created the Office of Scientific Research and Development (OSRD)” (“Wars Update: Perspective” n. pag.).

Another change that came in America after the attack on Pearl Harbor was the increase of bomb shelters or fallout shelters. After the surprise bomb attack, American society feared for the chance of getting attacked again. The amount of bomb shelters in The Unites States especially increased after World War II and during the Cold War. The cold war took place right after World War II. It was mainly between The United State and the Soviet Union. The two countries were constantly competing to see who could create the biggest and deadliest weapons. The Cold war was known as an arm race. Because of this, President John F. Kennedy told American families to build bomb shelters to protect them in case of an atomic war. By the end of the cold war the countries each had enough atomic power to blow the earth up several times. “Only one year later, true to Kennedy's fears, the world hovered on the brink of full-scale nuclear war when the Cuban Missile Crisis erupted over the USSR's placement of nuclear missiles in Cuba” ("Kennedy Urges Americans” n. pag.). Americans were constantly preparing for nuclear war by stocking and saving up canned goods and building bomb shelters in their back yards. Luckily neither country used there destructive atomic bombs, which would have resulted in thousands of deaths or worse, a World War III .

One of the biggest and most looked down upon changes in American Society after the attack on Pearl Harbor was the racism and stereotyping of Japanese Americans. Without any evidence or reasoning, “Japanese Americans were suspected of remaining loyal to their ancestral land. In the event of a Japanese invasion of the American mainland, Japanese Americans were feared as a security risk” ("Japanese-American Internment" n.pag). Anti- Japanese American movements increased because of the large population of Japanese-Americans on the West Coast. The paranoia grew so out of hands that President Roosevelt signed an executive order in February 1942 ordering that all Japanese Americans move out of their homes and relocating to consecration camps in the “interior” of the United States. This left thousands of families to have leave there businesses and sell their houses in less than a week. Over 127,000 United States citizens were imprisoned during World War II.

There was a massive push to get people out of the general population. Evacuation orders were posted in Japanese Americans communities giving the people instructions on what do in order to follow the executive order. Many families sold their homes, their stores, and most of their personal belongings. They could not know if their homes and possessions would still be there when they got back. Because everyone was trying to sell their properties, they were often sold at a less than a quarter of what the value was. The conditions were not good. After being forced from their communities, Japanese families were taken to military style barracks. Until the internment camps were completed, many of the families had to stay in temporary housing, such as horse stables at local racetracks or local ware houses. These temporary housings were used a long as 6 months.

Even worse was the fact that many of the residents were technically American citizens. Over half of the Japanese Americans in the internment camps were born in the United States. “It made no difference that many had never even been to Japan. Even Japanese-American veterans of World War I were forced to leave their homes. Ten camps were finally completed in remote areas of seven western states” ("Japanese-American Internment" n.pag). The Internment camps were not very complex, mainly made of tarpaper barracks. The camps were often too cold in the winter and too hot in the summer because of the lack of insulation. The food was mass produced army food that was often referred to as “grub”. There were usually community mess halls, where hundreds of Japanese Americans would gather and eat at a scheduled time. Children attended school and adults could work for a salary of $5 per day. Even after World War II hostility against Japanese Americans remained high across the West Coast. Many towns made signs telling evacuees to never return. In 1988, Congress attempted to repay for the action by giving each surviving intern $20,000. Even though the American concentration camps never reached the levels of Nazi death camps, they remain a shameful mark on the Untied Stated record of liberty ("Japanese-American Internment" n.pag).

World War II officially ended in the summer of 1945. It is estimated that over 50 million people lost their lives. It ended when the axis power surrendered. Germany surrendered on May 5th to the Allies about a week after Adolf Hitler, Germany’s dictator, committed suicide. Hitler committed suicide when the Soviet Union was cracking down on him had had him cornered in an army base. Japan held out for another few month. Japan finally surrendered on 2 September 1945 after The United states dropped two atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. World War II ended with a death toll of over 50 million people, 420,000 of them being American citizens. The attack on Pearl Harbor was one of the most significant moments in American history. American’s went from trying to avoid war to going into the next world war. Despite the tragedy and negative effects, there were also positive things that came out of it. It’s a historical event that should never be forgotten.

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