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After world war one, the treaty of versailles was signed by the Allies. It made Japanese people feel as if they were not being treated as fair or well as they deserved. Japanese people began to promote the spread of their race and rule. In order to show the world that they were a top powerhouse nation, the Japanese began to conquer land throughout southeast Asia. The United States did not agree with the actions taken by Japan and from 1937 to 1941 and tensions grew between the two nations. Japan's strive for world power and dominance and the United States posing as a potential threat helped cause the attack on Pearl Harbor.

During the 1930's and 1940's the spread of Japanese rule skyrocketed. It began in 1932 when Japan conquered Manchuria, a territory located in present-day China. Because of Manchuria, Japan was now in control of land on mainland China. This was a huge benefit for them and was able to aid them in future conquests. Following Manchuria in 1937, Japan attacked China. The map, document B, shows all of the land taken over by Japan during the late 1930's and early 1940's. After controlling Manchuria and taking over China, the Japanese continued their reign by gaining rule over Thailand, Burma, French Indochina and the Philippines. By building their empire, the Japanese were able to show the world what they were capable and that they were willing to stop at nothing until they achieved their goal. The document "30 Pearl Harbor" states "In Asia, Japan has earlier occupied Manchuria and other parts of China and has just invaded French Indochina in July 1941. Japan is also threatening Thailand, the Philippines and other Pacific nations." Many of the lands that Japan was attempting to conquer were allies with the United States. From a U.S standpoint, those countries deserved some help and should not be taken over by Japan. However they were not formally involved in the war yet so did not offer much help.

At the time, Japan's government was basically controlled by the Government. In order to gain support for the war effort and gain support against the Americans, the Japanese encouraged their citizens that they were fighting to honor their emperor. A Japanese textbook from the 1940's states "the way of subject is to be loyal to Emperor in disregard of self, thereby supporting the Imperial Throne coexistence with the heaven and the Earth." Many Japanese people were blind to what was actually happening, and what Japan's actual motives were. They were also encouraged to promote the Japanese race "Japan is the fountain source of Yamato race. Manchuria is its reservoir and East Asia is its paddy field." This ties into the attack on Pearl Harbor because in order to get people to fight they had to be persuaded by the government.

Many of these conquests were fueled by the want and need for more military goods. Starting in 1937, the United States began to slowly withdraw their exports to Japan. According to Document D, from 1937-1941 the amount of exports of Petroleum, Steel, and Scrap Iron decreased by over 90 percent. Because the U.S was a leading trading partner for Japan, they had to find other ways to get the items needed to build up their military, thus conquering more lands, especially ones that were oil rich. In addition to a stop of trade, the United States froze all of the Japanese money that was in U.S banks. According to the article "December 7, 1941 A Date That Will Live in Infamy" by Jennifer Rosenberg, "The Japanese were tired of negotiations

with the United States. They wanted to continue their expansion within Asia but the United States had placed an extremely restrictive embargo on Japan in the hopes of curbing Japan's aggression. Negotiations to solve their differences hadn't been going well." The Japanese wanted to prove their power and then move on. They did not want to spend or waste time with the Americans, because in their eyes, it got them nowhere.

In addition, the United States had created a very strong naval and army base in the Pacific known as Pearl Harbor. Pearl Harbor was the United States base to Japan. Japan felt threatened and were afraid that the United States would expand and eventually attempt to take over Japan or land the Japanese had taken over. A quote from Hideki Tojo, Prime Minister of Japan at the time, states "When I think about the strengthening of American defenses in the Southwest Pacific, the expansion of the American fleet... I see no end to difficulties.. I fear that we would become a third-class nation after two or three years if we just sat tight."

Eventually, Japan had had enough with the United States, and on December 7, 1941 they attacked Pearl Harbor early in the morning. The attack took the United States by complete surprise and the following day the United States declared war on Japan, thus marking their entry to World War Two. Japan's decision to bomb Pearl Harbor developed over a series of events. An increased amount of tensions between the nations had grown over the years. Those tensions, and completely opposite viewpoints helped cause the bombing of Pearl Harbor.