

# Success and Defeat in the Second World War

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## Abstract:

During the Second World War (WWII), many nations from all over the world were divided into two major alliances – Germany, Japan and Italy forming the Axis Powers and the Allied forces led by the ‘Big Three’, i.e. Great Britain, the Soviet Union and the United States. Firstly, this essay will analyse the strategic failure of the Wehrmacht, the German Armed Forces and the Imperial Japanese forces in WWII. Secondly, it will also address the importance of having both tactical and strategic success as crucial factors to winning a war. Lastly, it will examine the factors that allowed the Wehrmacht and the Imperial Japanese forces to succeed in their early conquest and the reasons why they failed at the end.

*Keywords: Axis; Allies; Military Strategy; Swift and Decisive Operations; Tactically Competent*

## INTRODUCTION

The Second World War (WWII) is often described as a ‘total war’ as it entailed entire national economies, industries and whole nations’ work forces to support the war. It was a war between two major alliances, the Axis Powers<sup>1</sup> and the Allied forces.<sup>2</sup> Germany and Japan accomplished great success in the initial years of WWII, but subsequently failed to win the war.

Clausewitz defined tactics as the “theory of the use of armed forces in battle” and strategy as the “theory of using battle for the purposes of the war.” From these definitions, it can be discerned that by achieving tactical success on the battlefield, strategic victory should ensue consequently. If this was true, then why did the Germans and Japanese fail to be victors in WWII? After all, their tactical and operational prowess overwhelmed the enemies in swift and decisive campaigns in the early years of WWII.

This essay aims to examine the reasons behind the strategic failures of the Wehrmacht and the Imperial Japanese forces in WWII.<sup>3</sup> It argues that tactical

successes on the battlefield devoid of strategy will not necessarily win the war. Firstly, the essay will examine the relationship between tactical/operational success on the battlefield and strategic/war victory. Next, it will discuss why the Wehrmacht and Imperial Japanese forces were successful in their tactical and operational conquests in the initial years of WWII. Finally, it will study the reasons why they ultimately failed in the strategic contest. This essay is limited to selected battles of WWII and does not seek to address the chronological events leading to failures by the Wehrmacht and the Imperial Japanese forces. It is also limited to Germany and Japan as part of the Axis Powers and excludes Italy.

## BATTLEFIELD TACTICAL SUCCESS = STRATEGIC VICTORY?

The notion of the complete defeat of the enemy in the battlefield has existed since the Machiavellian era. Wars traditionally ought to be ‘short and sharp.’ Great military strategists, such as Machiavelli and Napoleon, espoused that wars ought to be ended as quickly as



*Map of Japanese military advances, until mid-1942*

possible and this could only be achieved by bearing the full force of the military on the opposing enemy armies, even if the enemy is of apparent inferior strength. Jomini argued that pitting one's fighting power on another is inadequate to win battles. Instead, he proposed that the full force should be concentrated at a decisive point to weaken the enemy, thereby defeating him.<sup>4</sup> Combining these two thoughts, we can discern the notion of swift and decisive victory.

Clausewitz highlighted that defeating the enemy's armed forces and his will does not end the war in itself but provides a means to accomplish political objectives. The outcomes of wars are not just influenced by the capabilities of a nation's military forces but also by

other national instruments of power as represented by the Diplomatic, Information, Military, and Economic (D.I.M.E.) framework to form a Grand Strategy.<sup>5</sup> It is important for nations or alliances to develop a Grand Strategy encompassing various instruments of national power, as military power alone is insufficient to win wars.

Military strategy can be defined as the "application of armed forces in attaining national goals." Military strategy and tactics need to operate synergistically to achieve political aims. The relationship between ends, ways and means occurs in both tactics and strategy and in the overall execution of war. At the tactical level, the strategic goals may not be so apparent, but



*View of London after the German "Blitzkrieg", 29<sup>th</sup> December 1940*

they will always be potentially present. Any military act at the tactical or operational level can directly or indirectly influence strategic aims. However, such tactical or operational endeavours are only successful if "its outcomes advance the strategic plan." Hence, battlefield gains alone, devoid of strategic goals, will not necessarily win wars. In addition, strategy is also affected by other macro-environmental factors – political, economic, social and technological (PEST).<sup>6</sup> It is imperative for military leaders to consider these elements to derive a coherent military strategy so as to achieve the national strategic goals. Additionally, one can also develop strategic options to counter the enemy's strategy based on PEST factors.

## INITIAL SUCCESS

### War Aims

Hitler wanted Germany to be a superpower by readjusting the regional balance of power in order to gain a new world order.<sup>7</sup> To achieve this, he wanted to establish a German-dominated Europe by controlling Eastern Europe to create *Lebensraum* and secure the notion of racial superiority.<sup>8</sup> This meant ending the threats of war from two fronts: to the West with Poland, France and Britain, and to the East with the Soviet Union. In order to keep the United States (US) out of the war,<sup>9</sup> there was a need to secure a rapid campaign victory by: (1) defeating France and attaining an agreement with Britain, and (2) defeating the Soviet Union.<sup>10</sup>

In the Far East, the Japanese leadership wanted to establish a Japanese-dominated 'Greater East Asia Co-prosperity Sphere,' which meant securing Manchuria, China, Korea and South-East Asia. Lacking in basic resources, the Japanese conquest was mainly economic, which obliged it to take the imperialism road. By 1941, the Japanese had invaded Manchuria and China and that brought about international strains with the Western nations.<sup>11</sup> In order to sustain its economy, Japan had to extend its conquests to include the Dutch East Indies and to push deep into the Pacific to prevent the Americans from its sea and air bases.

### Significance of 1940-1942

Between 1940 and 1942, the world witnessed two battles: the invasion of France by the Germans in Western Europe and the fall of Malaya and Singapore by the Japanese in South-East Asia. These conquests brought about an 'aura of invincibility' and confidence

to the Germans and Japanese.<sup>12</sup> Using these two battles, the reasons why the Wehrmacht and Imperial Japanese forces were successful will be discussed.

### Preparations for War

Both the Wehrmacht and the Imperial Japanese forces emphasised sheer fighting skills and this generated success for them between 1940 and 1942. Their fighting abilities were not just determined by employing weapons but by training, organisation, morale and military verve. Although the Japanese soldiers were substantially outnumbered by the British in Malaya, they were better prepared, led, trained, and fought well.<sup>13</sup> This could have been attributed to the battle experience gained in China. In Europe, the French were also ill prepared to bear the full brunt of the main German attack through the Ardennes. The Germans were pitting their best units against a mediocre French side and they broke through at



*German Panzer I tanks near the city of Bydgoszcz, during the Invasion of Poland, September 1939*



Houx, Montherme and Sedan with ease. The poor preparations for war by the French and British contributed to the successful invasions of France and Malaya by the German and Japanese forces.

### Swift and Decisive Operations

The Germans and Japanese exhibited superior military conduct at the operational and tactical levels, which contributed to their battle successes between 1940 and 1942. Both employed joint and combined arms campaigns effectively, which inevitably devoured their enemies in Western Europe and South-East Asia.

The introduction of the *Truppenfuhrung* manual, during Ludwig Beck's term as Chief of General Staff between 1933 and 1938, guided the German military planning and preparations for war. The manual stressed doctrines of movement, comprising tank forces, artillery and infantry, with tanks as the *tonangebend* in the battle zone.<sup>14</sup> However, it was the younger technocratic officers, influenced by Ludendorff's insistence on victory at any price, who became the advocates of *Blitzkrieg*.<sup>15</sup>

The core of *Blitzkrieg* operations anchored on operational unscrupulousness and management that exploited the fullest potential of success with any available means, specifically the integration of the Luftwaffe (Air Force),<sup>16</sup> to provide tactical air support, and Heer (Army) mechanised forces, to drive its advance.<sup>17</sup> *Blitzkrieg* emphasised the importance of speed by concentrating its forces at a decisive point, bypassing enemy's strengths into the depths. To augment *Blitzkrieg*, the command decision-making processes at the lower echelons needed to be made quickly and executed expeditiously.<sup>18</sup> This was achieved by the principles of *Auftragstaktik*—a term to denote 'directive control'—in which the freedom of decisions and actions was accorded to the subordinate commanders through higher command's intent rather than orders.

The success of the *Blitzkrieg* operations was evident in the invasion of France in 1940, a swift and decisive campaign that ended in merely 39 days, aided by: (1) the ill-preparedness of the French and British forces and (2) the successful deception by the Germans to lure French and British forces to reinforce Belgium while the main attack came through the assumingly impenetrable Ardennes.<sup>19</sup>

*Victories in Continental Europe and South-East Asia brought vast spoils to the German and Japanese empires. With the conquests of Malaya and Dutch East Indies, the Allied forces were denied crucial supplies of rubber, tin, oil and bauxite.*

Likewise, the Japanese invasion tactics were similar to the Germans. The speed of the Imperial Japanese advance into South-East Asia was tremendous. The most striking feature of the Malayan campaign, which led to the eventual fall of the 'impregnable fortress' of Singapore in slightly less than two months, was the joint and combined arms campaign executed by the Japanese.<sup>20</sup> This was mainly accomplished through effective joint operations, where landings of troops were made on beaches by cruisers and destroyers, and combined arms operations, where the full force of infantry, artillery and tanks were concentrated on enemy airfields. Dive-bombers and fighters were then flown in to shield the main force. The presence of engineers operating together with the advancing forces also allowed the Japanese to quickly eradicate counter-mobility obstacles built by the enemy, and to smoothen the advance towards the South.

Additionally, the Malayan terrain also played a significant part, as it was more suited to the operations by the Imperial Japanese forces than to the

British. The cumbersome British lorries proved to be a hindrance rather than assistance due to the terrain. The British were mainly confined to the roads, while the Japanese were operating unrestrictedly through the dense jungle and rubber or oil palm plantations to by-pass the enemies into the depth. These minor tactics proved to be highly successful as the British were beaten time and time again.<sup>21</sup>

### Other contributory factors

In the initial years of WWII, Germany's and Japan's war economies were largely enhanced through the successful invasions of Continental Europe and South-East Asia. Up to 1942, prior to the United States' involvement in the war, the balance of economy favoured the Axis Powers. Victories in Continental Europe and South-East Asia brought vast spoils to the German and Japanese empires. With the conquests of Malaya and Dutch East Indies, the Allied forces were denied crucial supplies of rubber, tin, oil and bauxite. The conquest of France and the Low Countries changed the condition for the Germans in terms of steel, iron ore and foreign exchange. All these inadvertently accorded Berlin and Tokyo a solid economic foundation to continue on with their war efforts.<sup>22</sup>

In summary, the Wehrmacht and Imperial Japanese forces were successful in the initial years of WWII because they were tactically competent in the conduct of battles and operations. However, their success was magnified due to the inadequate preparedness and incompetence of the Western Allies forces to resist the enemies' rapid advance, and the increase in resources from the conquered lands.<sup>23</sup>

### STRATEGIC FAILURES

The Wehrmacht and Imperial Japanese forces failed to win the war due to poor development of strategies at both the alliance and military strategic levels. Although they applied the same tactical and operational art from the early years of WWII, they were unable to secure swift and decisive strategic

victories. On the other hand, the Allies won because they possessed coherent strategies to defeat Germany and Japan.

### Grand Strategy

There was a lack of unified global strategy between Berlin and Tokyo, as both nations were self-serving and unwilling to lower their own national interests to common strategic objectives. Prior to Operation Barbarossa, Hitler ordered that the Japanese were not to be informed,<sup>24</sup> probably due to his belief that the Soviets would be easy opponents.<sup>25</sup> Although they were urged to attack the Soviets in Siberia once Operation Barbarossa was underway, the Japanese could not be tempted to do so as their immediate concern was the developing crisis with the US in the Pacific. The Japanese could have impacted the German campaign greatly if they had chosen to attack.<sup>26</sup> Similarly, opportunities for the Imperial Japanese Navy (IJN) and the Kriegsmarine to operate together were scant, as the U-boats were based in the North Atlantic while the Japanese surface fleet was in East Asia.<sup>27</sup>

The Grand Alliance was more unified and coordinated. Although they were not allies in any formal sense,<sup>28</sup> the coalition survived through a common interest in the defeat of Germany first followed by Japan.<sup>29</sup> The Allies agreed during the Casablanca Conference in January 1943 on the decisions to: (1) invade Sicily to apply pressure on Mediterranean and (2) pursue the policy of the unconditional surrender of Germany, among other decisions. Although they fought in separate fronts: US in the Pacific, the Soviet Union in Eastern Europe and, Britain and US in the Mediterranean and Western Europe, it was the Allied Systems that kept the coalition functioning together. The systems were run by a centralised staff with broad powers but operated in a "good degree of delegated responsibility". Though the system was not perfect, it worked well to bind the

Instrument	Allies	Axis Powers
<b>Diplomatic</b>	US lend-lease aid to Russia (Herring, 1969). Common interests and strategy between the Allies (Overy, 1995)	Lacked global strategy. Germany was unable to tempt the Japanese to attack Russia when Barbarossa was underway (Warren, 2008).
<b>Information</b>	Employed information warfare. Enhanced Allied Intelligence through the breaking of Japanese Naval and Diplomatic codes, and German Ultra Code (Biard, 2006; McLendon, 1994).	No unified PsyOps, probably due to self-serving interests. Nazi Germany Propaganda in Europe (Miloiu, 2010). Japanese conducted intelligence operations against British in Burma and Malaya (Lebra, 1975).
<b>Military</b>	Allied Strategic bombing of Luftwaffe targets (to gain air superiority before land invasion - Operation Overlord) followed by key installations and infrastructures in 1943-44. Allied strategic bombing led to the decrease of Japan's economy (Overy, 1995).	No common objectives as they all fight separate wars. Failure of the sea blockade in Atlantic paved the way for the utility of Allied national power in the Atlantic (Black, 2003). Failure of the Japanese Imperial Navy paved the way for the utility of Allied national powers in the Pacific (Overy, 1995).
<b>Economic</b>	Germany and Japan's economy crippled by Allied strategic bombing and sea blockade (Overy, 1995). Soviet Union shifted their factories eastwards to the rear areas and torched whatever they couldn't carry; farther away from Germany's hands and gave them the ability to generate war materials (Warren, 2008).	Failed to pool resources together towards common objectives. Both Germany and Japan failed to utilise resources effectively to optimise their economic advantages in the initial years of WWII. Homegrown economic failures; rivalry between businessmen and the military (Overy, 1995).

Figure 1: Instruments of National Power as Applied on the Grand Alliance and Axis Powers.

Allies together. This was primarily because the system was run by a committee, and not by individual national leaders bearing their influence on the system.

The absence of a sound Grand Strategy between the Axis Powers contributed to its eventual defeat. The Axis was so fixated on the military (M) element that they failed to utilise other instruments of national power (D, I and E). On the other hand, the Allies were more successful in doing so albeit conflicting national interests between them, as they were more willing to put aside differences for common goals that led to its ultimate victory. The following table summarises the components in D.I.M.E. used by the Allies, and the lack of them by the Axis Powers (See Figure 1).

## MILITARY STRATEGY

Germany and Japan did not have coherent military strategies to defeat their enemies to win the war. As highlighted, strategies and tactics operate synergistically to achieve national aims. Without a lucid strategy, tactical successes alone are insufficient to gain victory in strategic contests. In the next few paragraphs, the failures of the Wehrmacht and the Imperial Japanese forces at the military strategic level will be discussed.

### Wehrmacht Strategic Failures

The Wehrmacht failed to produce sound strategic planning during WWII. Most of the strategic planning was conducted via the Schlieffen Convention of

encirclement and annihilation of the opposing armed forces. Here, it was evident that traces of Ludendorff's notions of total war were largely still at play which advocated swift and decisive victories by pursuing complete destruction of enemies at all costs.

Hitler wanted to put Britain out of the equation prior to invading the Soviet Union as he did not want to fight on two fronts.<sup>30</sup> However, Operation Sea Lion proved to be a failure<sup>31</sup> as the *Blitz* failed to break the population's morale or destroy the critical infrastructures, such as airfields, in British cities.<sup>32</sup> The Wehrmacht's leadership had misperceived that the British were fighting a 'people's war' and therefore identified the civilian population as the Centre of Gravity (COG).<sup>33</sup> The bombings, however, were mostly inaccurate, largely due to the poor development of the Luftwaffe, and lacked a systematic focus on the British industries to degrade their war-making capabilities.<sup>34</sup> This dearth of understanding of Britain's COG proved to be a strategic error made by the Wehrmacht's leadership. Furthermore, with the stalemate in the Battle of Britain, Hitler had failed to secure peace in Western Europe so that "he could launch his attack on the Soviet Union without fear of being attacked in the rear". In the end, the *Blitz* concluded as the Germans transferred its Luftwaffe's attention to the eastern front instead.

The Wehrmacht failed to develop a competent Luftwaffe capable of strategic offensive bombings as well as an effective air defence system to protect the Germans' war-making industries against Allied long-range fighters in the subsequent Allied Combined Bomber Offensive (CBO). The Luftwaffe was

inadequately developed to support a major conflict due to the failure of the German air industry. Although the Luftwaffe was able to successfully support *Blitzkrieg* operations, it did not have the capability of accurate long-range strategic bombings, which could have led to victory in Operation Sea Lion. With the identification of the Luftwaffe as the COG to gain air superiority by the Allies prior to Overlord, the defeat of the German air force became top priority. The consequences of the CBO came in two folds: (1) it caused the Wehrmacht's leaders to drain the air strength from the fighting fronts, thereby weakening the German resistance in Soviet Union and the Mediterranean and (2) the defeat of Luftwaffe, coupled with a poor air defence system, eradicated the shield against destruction of the Third Reich and its war-making industries. Inevitably, Berlin's economy and resources were considerably weakened to provide any additional assets to the fighting fronts.

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The failure to conquer the Soviet Union in Operations Barbarossa was termed as 'the greatest mistake' by Shulman. Hitler's ultimate goal was to secure *Lebensraum* and wanted the Soviet Union at all costs. The plan was to drive the advance swiftly into the interior and thereafter to destroy the Red Army by "a large

German encirclement from the Baltic to the Ukraine." Poor intelligence assessments of the Red Army's forces and its combat power led to Hitler taking the Soviet Union venture with an expectation of a swift and decisive victory.<sup>35</sup> However, the attack on the Soviets lacked any clear goal. Time and efforts were wasted on battles of encirclement instead of advancing forward swiftly to achieve the aim of the strategic



campaign. For example, Hitler made a strategic blunder when he diverted his Panzer divisions to perform an encirclement of Soviet forces in Ukraine, instead of concentrating the advancements of the forces towards Leningrad and Moscow. Hitler's insistence to push deeper into the Soviet Union also caused the Wehrmacht to be over-stretched. The vast terrain produced logistical problems, as there was no proper strategic plan to augment the fighting front with sufficient and adequate logistical support.

Additionally, the remarkable recovery by the Soviets played a major role to turn the tide against the Germans.<sup>36</sup> After stalling the Germans' advance into Stalingrad and Kursk, the Soviets were able to conjure their resources together to conduct counter-offensives to drive the Germans back.

### Imperial Japanese Strategic Failures

Japan committed the mistake of 'rushing' the US involvement into the war by raiding Pearl Harbour. The

Wehrmacht	Imperial Japanese Forces	Strategy Adopted by Allied Forces
<u>Political</u> Hitler subjugated the German General Staff; personally directing the tactical moves of the <i>Wehrmacht</i> ; unwilling to listen to his military advisers; gained confidence in his military expertise in early successes and resolve his will for <i>Lebensraum</i> (Black, 2003).	<u>Political</u> Tojo's premiership confirmed the ascendancy of the military in Japanese politics; wanted a quick war due to economic constraints; surprise attack on Pearl Harbor brought absolute war instead of limited war (Fuller, 1962).	<u>Political</u> Strategy to defeat Germany first, followed by Japan (Farrell, 1997). Produced two fronts to defeat Germany; West (Britain and US) and East (Soviet Union) (Overy, 1995).
<u>Economic</u> Battle of Britain drained German resources (Overy, 1995). Over-stretched in resources due to large territories (Warren, 2008).	<u>Economic</u> Constrained by the lack of resources. Dependent on resources of territorial gains (Fuller, 1962). Failed to utilise the resources optimally (Overy, 1995).	<u>Economic</u> Sea blockade to cripple the German and Japanese war productions. CBO targeted German and Japanese economy and resources. Allied manufacturing capacity outdid the Axis (Overy, 1995).
<u>Social</u> People feared retribution and thus accepted apocalyptic war (Geyer, 1986). Signs of public discontent with Nazi Propaganda (Welch, 2004). Assassination plots of Hitler showed discontent within the military (Thomsett, 2007). Heavy bombings by the Allies caused severe impact on German's morale (both soldiers and civilians) (Overy, 1995).	<u>Social</u> Underrated American's resolve to end the war (Black, 2003). Japanese civilian supported war efforts by labour but lacked resources for war production (Kotkin, 2000).	<u>Social</u> <i>Blitz</i> on British cities and Pearl Harbor raid justified the war against Germany and Japan. Therefore, public supported the retaliatory bombings and attacks on German and Japanese cities and population (Overy, 1995). Public supported the war production efforts (women contributed to factory work) (Dobie & Lang, 2003)
<u>Technological</u> Poor development of <i>Luftwaffe</i> (long-range bombers) and <i>Kriegsmarine</i> for major conflicts (Black, 2003). Faulty torpedos from U-boats caused limited damage to British shipping to dent its economy (Warren, 2008). Lack secure communications means (Overy, 1995).	<u>Technological</u> Lacked secure communications means (Overy, 1995). Emphasised 'spirit' of its people over technology (Black, 2003).	<u>Technological</u> Battle of the sea won because of technological advances of the Allied Forces - aircraft, radar and radio intelligence (Overy, 1995). Development of bouncing bomb to destroy hydroelectric power in German cities and industries (Whalley, 2002). Development of atomic bombs that were dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki to end the war (Overy, 1995).

Figure 2: Macro-Environmental Factors as applied on Wehrmacht and Imperial Japanese Forces Military Strategy and PEST Strategies Adopted by the Allied Forces.

raid was a success because the US planners believed that the Japanese would not be so irrational as to attack them in the first place, a 'mirror-imaging' fallacy.<sup>37</sup> Although tactically successful, it was of a lesser strategic significance as (1) the Japanese failed to destroy the American Pacific Fleet as they were not in harbour, and (2) the Japanese failed to destroy the oil stores that crucially supported the US Fleet. The Imperial Japanese leadership failed to identify and annihilate the strategic targets that would impact their expansion in the Pacific. However, this strategic concept of eliminating the American Pacific Fleet from the equation was gravely flawed to begin with. The Japanese Fleet was significantly superior to the US Pacific Fleet, especially in carriers, cruisers and battleships, which posed insignificant threats to the Japanese in the subsequent invasions in South-East Asia. Hence, the Pearl Harbour raid was unnecessary and irrelevant to begin with.

Nevertheless, the Imperial Japanese leadership was fixated on annihilating the American Pacific Fleet. In the Battle of Coral Sea and Midway Island, the intent was to lure and defeat the US fleet. However, the IJN lost the strategic initiative at sea when they lost their naval air power to the Allies instead.<sup>38</sup> The battle was decisive because: (1) it reduced its carrier strength to such a low level that the Japanese would never be able to catch up with the American production and (2) it ended the prospect of hostile landings in Australia and secured the supply lines from the South. More importantly, the Imperial Japanese leadership failed to consider the consequences and actions to be taken if carriers and pilots were ever lost. Although

the Japanese shipyards provided three more aircraft carriers in 1943, the pilots were almost irreplaceable. The loss at Midway was decisively devastating to Tokyo.

Midway also cost them the vital naval air support in the subsequent Leyte Gulf battles, in which they had to depend only on their battleships and heavy cruisers – a dramatic backward step from the creative manner air power had been used in the raid of Pearl Harbour. Consequently, the IJN no longer posed a threat in protecting the vital sea lanes of communications (SLOC) which prevented the shipping of raw materials back to Japan, and also paved the way for the Americans to project their national power in the Pacific.

Without a sound strategy, the Imperial Japanese Army faced insufficient ground troops for further operations after the first round of victories. Like Wehrmacht, they too were over-stretched in the Pacific. The main bulk of the army was deployed in China and Manchuria and the Japanese leadership was reluctant to divert more troops to the operations in South-East Asia. This persisted even after the Japanese Imperial Navy was heavily defeated in Midway and Leyte Gulf and the possibility of an Allied counter-offensive was evident. As a result, the Japanese were unable to put up a strong resistance to defend its early territorial gains.

The defeat of the Axis should not only be attributed to the failures of the Wehrmacht and the Imperial Japanese forces. The Allied Forces employed successful strategies against the Axis that brought them the final victory. Using the PEST framework, the table below broadly presents the macro-environmental factors that shaped

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the military strategy failures by the Wehrmacht and the Imperial Japanese forces, and the PEST strategies adopted by the Allies to attain victory in WWII (See Figure 2).

## CONCLUSION

The Wehrmacht and Imperial Japanese forces were tactically successful from the onset of WWII up to 1942. This essay has shown that the initial successes can be credited to both the incompetence of the Western Allies as well as the speed, mobility and tenacity of the advance by the Wehrmacht and the Imperial Japanese forces. However, tactical/operational successes alone, devoid of strategic considerations, will not win wars as evident when the Axis lost the strategic initiatives subsequently. The failures can be attributed to the: (1) absence of a Grand Strategy at the alliance level, (2) lack of national strategies to utilise other instruments of national power apart from the military, (3) dearth of military strategies to galvanise the utility of the military means to meet the political goals, and (4) failure to consider the macro-environmental factors that can influence the outcomes of wars.

On the other hand, WWII can also be viewed as a victory to the Allies. The victory can be attributed to the: (1) unified Allied agreement to a Grand Strategy, (2) employment of other instruments of power (D, I and E) to augment the military (M) and (3) the use of PEST strategies to counter the adversary. All these culminated in the defeat of the Wehrmacht and the Imperial Japanese forces in WWII. 🌐

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## ENDNOTES

1. Consisting of Germany, Italy and Japan. The Tripartite Pact was signed in September 1940, in recognition of their initial successes (Overy, 1995).
2. Otherwise commonly known as the Grand Alliance. Though there were many nations that declared war against the Axis Powers, the Grand Alliance's leadership was generally held by the 'Big Three': Winston Churchill (British Commonwealth), Joseph Stalin (Soviet Union) and Franklin D. Roosevelt (United States of America) (Edmonds, 1991).
3. Germany's Armed Forces from 1935 to 1945.
4. The decisive point is not just any point of the enemy army itself. It could be any point that can seriously imperil the enemy such as a road junction, a supply base, a river crossing, a mountain pass or the open flank of the opposing enemy (Shy, 1986).
5. The DIME framework is a comprehensive framework to gain a better understanding of the values from the angle of grand strategy. The elements of Diplomatic, Informational, Military and Economic are complementary of each other to form a nation's grand strategy.
6. The PEST analysis "enables specific macro-environment analysis in the strategy formulation process" (Lämsiluoto, 2004).
7. Both military and economic balance of power. Germany lacked basic resources and thus set out to seek them beyond its boundaries.
8. Living space.
9. As in World War I, US was a great reservoir of power and as such, there was a need to keep them out of the war.
10. Learning from WWI's experience, the Germans did not want to fight on two fronts at the same time. This was removed by the signing of a non-aggression pact with Stalin on 23 August 1939, whereby the Soviets would join Germany to partition Poland and received German acknowledgement that the Baltic states were a Soviet sphere (Warren, 2008).
11. In the late 1941, US imposed a de facto trade embargo.
12. Coined by a German senior staff general, Gunther Blumentritt (Overy, 1995).
13. In contrast, the British troops were poorly trained and incompetently led (Black, 2003).
14. Tanks as the leading element.
15. Lightning War – term to describe the German's fighting tactics.
16. Germany's Air Force.
17. Germany's Army.
18. Division level and below.
19. Other successful conquests included Denmark, Norway, Poland, Holland, Belgium, Yugoslavia, Greece and to a lesser extent, western parts of Soviet Union.
20. Air power, in the form of bombers, working closely with the army and the fleet.
21. Furthermore, the Pearl Harbor raid by the Japanese on 7 December 1941 contributed, to some extent, to the successful Japanese advance southwards. The battered US naval forces in Hawaii were neither able to hinder nor interfere in the Imperial Japanese invasions into Malaya and Singapore (Warren, 2008).



22. To a certain extent, the Battle of the Atlantic in the early months of 1942, also contributed to the success of the German's invasion of Continental Europe and Japanese conquests of Malaya and Singapore. The Allies lost massive amount of shipping, up to 2.6 million tons between January and April 1942 (Overy, 1995). This greatly decreased the economic power of the Allies. It also kept the British navy fighting at the western front and away from South-East Asia.
23. Referring to France and Britain.
24. The Japanese, too, did not inform the Germans prior to the raid of Pearl Harbor. Although Berlin was surprised by it, they welcomed the attacks and also declared war on the US soon after on 11 Dec 1941.
25. Incorrect intelligence assessments on the strength of the Red Army also cemented Hitler's belief that the Soviets would be easily defeated (Black, 2003).
26. Furthermore, the Japanese chose not to assist the Germans as they had signed a Neutrality Pact with Soviet Union in April 1941, in order to protect their rear while they expand into South-East Asia (Black, 2003, p. 83).
27. Germany's Navy.
28. An alliance of cooperation was initialed by Britain and Soviet Union in May 1942. However, US declined to join into any fixed agreements with either Britain or Soviet Union. Like the Axis, they served their own national self-interests and survived as long as they needed each other to achieve victory (Overy, 1995, p. 3).
29. The agreed grand strategy between the Allies was the 'Germany first' policy in which the primary aim was the defeat of Germany, being the most powerful member of the Axis Powers, first before pursuing Japan.
30. As experienced during World War I; Germany, as part of the Central Powers, had to fight on two fronts: with France in Western Europe and Russia in Eastern Europe.
31. The daylight air campaign and night Blitz in the Battle of Britain (Warren, 2008).
32. Term to describe the strategic bombing of Britain.
33. Strange (1996, p. 3) described COG as the "agents and/or sources of moral or physical strength, power and resistance." In this case, the COG should be directed at the British industries to keep them out of the equation to wage war in the later part of WWII.
34. The Kriegsmarine, specifically its U-boats, was also unsuccessful in diminishing Britain's economy by submarine blockade in the Atlantic (Black, 2003).
35. Term to denote the Soviet Army.
36. Soviet Union's mobilization and military capacity build-up.
37. "Mirror-imaging" is the belief that others would act the same way as you do. In the Pearl Harbor raid, the Americans thought that the Japanese would not attack a superpower whose resources far exceeded them. The Americans also underestimated the technological capabilities of the Japanese Navy to conduct such an attack despite a successful precedent assault on the Italian Fleet at Taranto by Swordfish bi-planes launched from British carriers (Porch & Wirtz, 2002).



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