

# **“Remember Pearl Harbor”: Variant Notes and Example**

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## **More of a good thing**

While our variant involves some changes to Mark Herman’s *Empire of the Sun*, it is motivated by a fascination with and love of the campaign game. The principal “problem” addressed is simply that we want to play more of it!

The Political Will system in the standard rules undeniably creates tension in the game, and the War Progress mechanic definitely serves the intended purpose of discouraging passive Allied play prior to 1944, when decisive superiority in numbers and quality is achieved. In fact, these elements of the game may work a little too well, since with the standard +8 Political Will starting point, many games seem to end with Japanese Political Will victory in 1943. The mechanism of bidding Political Will can be used to avoid this outcome, to some extent, although unless the bid is so high as to make Political Will almost irrelevant, a significant fraction of games will still end prematurely. The primary aim of the variant is ensure that the nearly all games will continue until Turn 12, allowing players to “play on” and enjoy more of the game.

## **First, do no harm**

Any attempt to mitigate the automatic Japanese Political Will victory must avoid two potential pitfalls.

First, both sides should have a roughly equal opportunity to win in game terms if they play equally well. If early Political Will victory is eliminated, Japan must be able to survive through Turn 12 about half the time. Given the Allies’ late-war advantages, there must be some way for Japan to, in effect, run out the clock (shorten the game) by effective defensive play.

Second, to avoid an uninteresting mid-game and preserve the tension level, the Allies should not be free to await their massive reinforcements before taking the offensive. Some form of War Progress requirement is still necessary.

## **Historical perspective**

Any changes must also respect (and preferably strengthen) the historicity of the simulation. The historical point of view of the variant can be summarized as follows:

- The Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor galvanized American public opinion, and would not have been easily forgotten (hence the variant’s name). We view it as unlikely that American morale would have collapsed to the point of negotiating a settlement in 1943, with armadas of new ships being commissioned, phalanxes of new planes rolling off the assembly lines, and millions of men who enlisted after Pearl Harbor just completing basic training. Hence, the game cannot end in an early negotiated settlement.

- The principal challenge for Nimitz and MacArthur (who the Allied player represents) in mid-war was not a premature negotiated settlement, but relegation of the Pacific to a (temporary) holding action while the “Germany First” strategy advocated by the US Army and America’s British allies was pursued in earnest. “Germany First” was, in fact, the official policy throughout the war, but often as not it was “honored in the breach”. Nimitz (reflecting the navy’s institutional resistance to the Germany First strategy) and MacArthur (driven by his “moral obligation” to liberate the Philippines) largely succeeded in thwarting a true Germany First policy by pressing the issue in the Pacific with inadequate forces, winning victories and forcing commitment of more resources to the theater. The variant therefore takes a slightly different angle on War Progress during the middle turns. Rather than leading to an early negotiated settlement, insufficient progress will lead to diversion of logistical and command resources (in the form of Strategy Cards) to the European theater. Only by achieving early success on the battlefield can the Allied player ensure that the Pacific remains a priority in the allocation of resources. In the variant, Allied success is now also tied to Tojo’s resignation, a prerequisite for victory without invasion of Japan. The more victories the Allies win in 1943, the more likely an early retirement for Tojo, followed by Soviet intervention and the Enola Gay.
- The true test of American “Political Will” came in 1945, when Germany’s surrender and long casualty lists coming from small islands nobody could find on a map of created real pressure to end the war as quickly as possible, with a minimum further loss of American life. The prospect of invading Japan itself was a sobering one to military and political leaders, and the only apparent alternative – a blockade – threatened to drag out the war indefinitely. The combination of Soviet intervention and the atomic bombs spared the Allies from this Hobson’s choice, of course, but as *Empire of the Sun* properly reflects, Pacific theater commanders were not privy to the Manhattan Project, and until the Trinity test in late July there was no assurance (especially if you were a general, admiral or politician rather than a physicist) that the weapon would work at all, much less produce results devastating enough to break the Japanese will to resist. Thus, as in the standard rules, the Allied player cannot rely on the atomic bomb, and the most likely path to Japanese victory will be to persuade the Allies to back down from unconditional surrender demands and avoid the costs of undertaking or completing the conquest Japan itself.

### **No substitute for victory**

A central feature of the variant is the importance of “victories”. This is a refinement of sorts to the “named location” concept in the standard rules. In our experience, under the standard rules, the War Progress mechanic, combined with the Political Will penalties for US casualties that he can ill afford, forces the Allied player into a hunt for named locations that can be taken without fighting. Rather than formulating a long-term strategy, the Allies must opportunistically seek out weak spots that can be taken without risking a casualty hit. There are actually two related issues. One is that both sides know the War Progress threshold is exactly five named locations, allowing them to artificially

manipulate it. The other is that taking ten named locations is no better than taking five, and taking zero is no worse than taking four. To address these aspects which tend to distort play and sometimes channel it into ahistorical lines, we have made War Progress less predictable and dependent on a die roll. We have also made victories in battle (or at least with the prospect of battle) more important. Theaters like New Guinea and Burma rarely made the headlines – it was dramatic amphibious operations (which made the lines on the map move significantly) that captured the public’s attention. The penalty for US casualties has been softened, so that a single bloody invasion need not permanently hamstring the Allies, while ensuring that multiple bloodbaths – even on the same turn – have proper cumulative effect.

The level of Allied logistical support (card draw) is now directly dependent on Political Will, and victories in the previous turn act like “temporary” Political Will. Insufficient war progress saps Political Will, while success creates a “bounce” effect (bonus card), ensuring the Allies can climb out of any temporary hole eventually. Making Political Will losses for territorial objectives reversible avoids overvaluing the importance of raids on places like Midway and the Aleutians, and makes reconquest of colonies like Burma and the Philippines politically important near the end of the game.

A simple way of thinking about the War Progress effect is that the Allies have to “earn” their cards for the next turn by success on the battlefield, while the number of victories required to earn a full hand is increased by erosion of Political Will through past failures. Japan can (in effect) shorten the game by putting up stiff resistance that deprives the Allies of cards. Repeated war progress failures in 1943 carry forward due to the “memory” of Political Will, meaning the Allies will have fewer cards in 1944 when they need them to use all their long-awaited reinforcements. The Allies will still have a chance, but will have to do more with less. With submarine warfare and strategic bombing eventually becoming almost automatic victories every turn, in most games the Allies should have a full hand on Turn 12, even if the mid-war has gone poorly, but the question is: will it be enough? (*A detailed example illustrating the variant War Progress mechanics is provided at the end of this article.*)

### **“...not necessarily to Japan’s advantage...”**

Under this variant, most games should be decided (formally at least) on Turn 12. We have done detailed simulations of millions of games attempting to project the likely situation on the last turn. The Japanese player has a tough decision to make with regard to the *Tojo Resigns* event. Playing this event early will definitely make the mid-game tougher on the Allies – in effect it means they need two more victories every turn of the game to “break even” on their card draw. Even if the Japanese decline to play *Tojo* voluntarily, there is a roughly 50% chance its play will be forced anyhow. Should the Japanese play the card as soon as possible, or gamble that it won’t be forced? If the Japanese never play *Tojo Resigns* voluntarily, the chance of “atomic bomb” victory pre-conditions being met is roughly 20% (military success on the map will influence this probability, however). If the Japanese play *Tojo* voluntarily at the first opportunity, this probability can be as high as 30%. A more flexible strategy is also possible, sacking *Tojo* if the card is drawn early, but attempting to bury it after a certain point in the game.

Another imponderable is the War in Europe, which in the variant must be Level 0 for atomic victory. If both sides play all their War in Europe cards as events, there is only about a 67% chance of achieving Level 0 by the end of the game (but again, the number of cards each side draws, which is driven by success on the map, can influence this probability).

It is reasonable to suppose that the Allies will win at least 90% of the time, if all pre-conditions for the atomic bomb are met (although it is not absolutely guaranteed). For the game to be balanced, that means if the “atomic bomb” conditions are not fulfilled, Japan should have about a 65% chance of holding at least one hex of Honshu at the end of Turn 12. Assuming each hex of Honshu is garrisoned by a 9-12 infantry unit, which should be difficult but not impossible to achieve without premature concession of Japan’s forward defenses and resource areas, the Allies can (barely) conquer the island with a full hand if they have their most or all of their ground force pool available and Japan’s air and naval forces have been neutralized.

A Japanese “turtle” strategy of withdrawing all their ground units to Honshu early is unlikely to unbalance the game, first because the Allies will meet War Progress and have a full hand every turn, and second because this strategy significantly increases the chance of atomic bomb victory by giving the Allies more opportunities to force Tojo’s resignation and bring in the Soviets. We anticipate the point of balance will be the extent to which Japan accepts attrition and loses units to resist in the mid-game, at the cost of weakening the ultimate defense of Honshu. Withdrawing to the Home Islands gives the Allies the luxury of more cards and more time to conquer Honshu, while maximum resistance will probably mean few Japanese defenders left in 1945, and correspondingly improved prospects for Allied conquest of Honshu.

### **“These proceedings are closed”**

Based on simulations and analysis, we believe the variant is free of glaring pathologies. Because so many campaign games to date end early, however, it is difficult to gauge the course of the final turns. The variant mechanics are critically dependent on how many “victories” the Allies can expect to win every four months, which is in turn critically dependent on exactly what counts as a victory. In our models, we have assumed that with a full hand, the Allies should win 0.7 “victories” for each available ASP. This is based on the observation that three invading ground units (and hence, three ASPs) can capture an island port (two victories) defended by a 9-12 infantry unit without risk of unit elimination. We expect that victories gained without ASPs (e.g. in Burma or New Guinea) will roughly cancel out, with a slight advantage to the Allies. Only play experience can tell us whether our projections are accurate, or unrealistic for one side or the other. In the latter case, a bid of one Political Will point is essentially equivalent to one victory per turn either way, and if necessary, the definition or value of War Progress “victories” can be fine-tuned in a future version of the variant.

Play on!

## ***Detailed War Progress Example***

This example illustrates the changes in War Progress mechanics that are the heart of the variant. Because we go through several hypothetical scenarios in some detail, the example appears lengthy, but the basic mechanics are straightforward.

### **Starting Situation**

It is Turn 4 of an *Empire of the Sun* campaign game. US Political Will was +8 after Operation Z, but Japan has conquered Malaya, the Philippines, the Dutch East Indies and Burma, and the Allies have not recaptured any of these areas (PW → +4). The Allies have played the *Doolittle Raid* event (PW → +5) but the Japanese currently occupy the Aleutians (PW → +4). The War in Europe status is Level 1. Japan controls Guadalcanal.

### **Turn 4 Strategic Warfare Phase**

Allied submarine warfare is ineffective and there are no B-29's in the game yet, so the "Strategic Bombing" victory marker (which in this variant is used to track both successful strategic bombing and submarine warfare attacks) is set to zero and Japan receives seven cards. Since it is Turn 4, the Allies automatically receive seven cards as well.

### **Turn 4 Offensives Phase**

The Allies play the Operation Watchtower event, and succeed in capturing Guadalcanal. Since Guadalcanal is a port, one Allied victory marker is placed in the hex. Since its capture resulted from an Amphibious Assault or battle, a second Allied victory marker is placed there. Use rotated control markers or chits borrowed from another game as victory markers.

In a subsequent offensive, the Japanese player attempts to recapture Guadalcanal with an invasion of his own. If the attack succeeds in capturing the hex, both Allied victory markers are removed, *and* two Japanese victory markers are placed in the hex. If the attack fails, an additional Allied victory marker (making three total) is placed in the hex, for defeat of the Japanese Amphibious Assault.

### **Turn 4 National Status Segment**

Depending on the outcome of the Japanese counter-attack, there are either three Allied or two Japanese victory markers in Guadalcanal. If the current owner of the hex cannot now trace a normal supply line to Guadalcanal, those victory markers are lost and not counted. Otherwise, count all victory markers on the map which can trace a supply line, mark the net total on the Strategic Record Track, and then remove all victory markers from the map. Here we assume the only victory markers are those in Guadalcanal.

### **Turn 4 Political Will Segment**

The Allies must make a War Progress roll. The Allied player adds up US Political Will (+4), successful Strategic Warfare attacks this turn (0) and the victories just recorded (either +3 or -2, depending on who ended up with Guadalcanal). This "Political Value"

is thus either +7 or +2. The Allied player then rolls a d10 and adds the War in Europe level (1) to it.

- If the modified roll is less than the Political Value, the Allies have made sufficient War Progress; if *Tojo Resigns* is drawn on Turn 5, it must be played as an event, and (if their base card draw would be less than seven) the Allies will receive a bonus card on Turn 5. Point the US Political Will marker up to record this.
- If the modified roll is greater than the Political Value, the Allies have failed to make sufficient War Progress; US Political Will is reduced (PW  $\rightarrow$  +3) and *Tojo Resigns* may be played as OC or discarded during Turn 5. Rotate the US Political Will marker down to record this.
- If the modified roll is equal to the Political Value, there is no effect (Political Will is unchanged and *Tojo Resigns* need not be played as an event if drawn). Rotate the US Political Will marker sideways to reflect this.

## Turn 5 Strategic Warfare Phase

Submarine Warfare is again ineffective, so the Strategic Bombing Marker remains at 0. The Allies now determine their card draw for the turn. This will depend on who scored the victories for Guadalcanal, and the Turn 4 War Progress roll. The Allies add their current Political Will, the number of successful strategic warfare attacks this turn and the number of victories recorded last turn to determine the base card draw, which can never be less than four or greater than seven. The Allies also receive a bonus card (up to the maximum of seven cards) if their last War Progress die roll was successful.

There are actually six possibilities, which we cover for completeness:

- If the Allies scored 3 victories for Guadalcanal and made a successful War Progress roll (i.e. the US Political Will marker is oriented up): the Allies receive the maximum hand of  $4(\text{PW}) + 3(\text{victories}) = 7$  cards. Successful War Progress would entitle the Allies to a bonus card if their hand were otherwise reduced, but they can never draw more than 7 cards.
- If the Allies scored 3 victories for Guadalcanal, and the War Progress roll was a tie (i.e. the US Political Will marker is facing sideways): the Allies again receive 7 cards.
- If the Allies scored 3 victories for Guadalcanal but failed their War Progress roll (i.e. the US Political Will marker is facing downward): Political Will is +3, and the Allies have 3 victories recorded: they receive only 6 cards for Turn 5.
- If the Japanese scored 2 victories for Guadalcanal, but the Allied War Progress roll was successful: the base Allied card draw is  $4 (+4(\text{PW}) - 2(\text{victories})) = +2$ , but the base card draw can never be less than 4). Since the Allies made a successful War Progress roll, however, they receive a bonus card and draw a total of 5 cards.
- If the Japanese scored 2 victories for Guadalcanal and the War Progress roll was a tie: the Allies receive the minimum hand of 4 cards for Turn 5, since they are not entitled to a bonus card in this case.
- If the Japanese scored 2 victories for Guadalcanal, and the War Progress roll was unsuccessful, the Allies again receive the minimum hand of 4 cards for Turn 5.