STEAMING TOWARD WAR: ON THE ROAD TO PEARL HARBOR

THE JAPANESE AND AMERICAN NAVIES
1922: The Washington Treaty Constrains Force Levels
Battleship Ratio is 5 to 3 in Favor of the US Navy

Battleship Tosa,
used as a target in 1924-1925
The Two Navies Adapt

Battlecruiser Akagi being rebuilt as an aircraft carrier
Japanese Naval Strategy: Initially Wait and React to US Move
Japanese Operational Approach: Aggressive Defense Based on Cumulative Attrition of US Battleships
Japanese Tactical Doctrine: Daytime Submarine Attacks and Night Torpedo Attacks by Cruisers and Destroyers

Heavy Cruiser Aoba
US Naval Strategy: Offensive, to Blockade Japan
US Operational Approach: Aggressive Movement into Japanese Waters to Force an Major Fleet Engagement
US Tactical Doctrine: Repel Torpedo Attacks; Maneuver Away from Japanese Night Battle Formations
The Clash of Battle Fleets: Planned but Not Executed
TBD-1s on *Saratoga* 1938.
6 IJN Carriers, 353 Aircraft

Nevada at Pearl Harbor
Learning to Fight:
USN Interwar Doctrinal Development
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The U.S. Navy’s Learning System

In the early years of the 20th century, the U.S. Navy developed a sophisticated learning system that led to repeated doctrinal innovations.

How was this done?
“Planning System”
Interwar Learning Cycles

- Chief of Naval Operations
- General Board
- Fleet Command
- Naval War College
Annual Cycles of Exercises
Fleet Problems
1919: Principles of War

1. The Objective
2. The Offensive
3. Superiority
4. Security
5. Surprise
6. Simplicity
7. Movement
8. Economy of Force
9. Cooperation
1930: Vocabulary for Battle Plans
Tactical Heuristics

• Aggressive Action to Seize the Initiative

• Attack Effectively First
  – Long Range Gunnery
  – Carrier Strikes
  – Night Battle Practice

• Decentralized Decision-Making
  (and Doctrinal Development)
By 1941...

- Learning system is well-established
- Doctrine presents a diverse set of options
1942: Carrier Raids

Remaining Options Exploited
Heuristics Prove Effective
1943: Learning System

Lessons from First Year of War Exploited