

DUNMAN HIGH MODEL ASEAN PLUS SUMMIT

6 - 8 June 2019



Study Guide

HISTORICAL CRISIS COMMITTEE

The Battle of Malaya



INTRODUCTION

The Battle of Malaya was a military conflict in 1941 over the territory of Malaya, mainly spearheaded and dominated by Britain and Japan. It was one of the numerous conflicts involving Allied (Britain, France, China) and Axis (Japan, Germany, Italy) forces. Long established as a land full of natural resources coupled with its strategic location as a trading port, Malaya was one of the most valuable British colonies. With conquering Malaya being a key milestone for Japan's conquest of Asia, it was clear that Malaya would soon be a place that would come under conflict. The Battle of Malaya was a major battle in the Pacific War - a key milestone in the timeline of World War 2.

Malaya and Singapore were brought under British control between the 18th and the 20th centuries. British Malaya included the Malay States and the Straits Settlements. Given the strategic location and abundant supply of natural resources in Malaya and Singapore, both regions were thriving in the 1930s, benefiting from high export rates and trade opportunities. This made them potentially lucrative possessions for Japan.

Approaching the late 1930s, Japan sought expansionist measures which forced the international community into two opposing blocs. Hostility between Japan and China built up throughout the 1930s due to the Japanese invasion of Manchuria and the possibility of a full-scale Pacific war was on the horizon. Against the backdrop of a seemingly never-ending military campaign in China, the subsequent trade embargoes on Japan by the United States of America (USA), together with Japan's increasing demand for resources due to a growing population, put a strain on Japan's economy. Japan was hence forced into dealing with its internal problems while simultaneously carrying out their invasion plans.

Japan was heavily reliant on foreign trade, with imports making up 90% of the oil consumption of Japan. The situation worsened after US President Roosevelt issued an executive order on 26 July 1941 to freeze all of Japan's assets and embargoed all oil exports to Japan in response to Japan's aggression in Manchuria. Furthermore, the Dutch government was successfully persuaded by the Allied Forces to break their economic treaty with Japan, joining the embargo in August 1941. Given Japan's severe inability to sustain its war efforts, the Dutch East Indies became Japan's primary target as this colony possessed abundant valuable resources that Japan desperately needed, such as rubber plantations and fossil fuel. Japan yearned to colonize the Dutch East Indies - the fourth largest oil exporter - to secure the oil supply for themselves. To facilitate the invasion of the Dutch East Indies, Japan sought to conquer Malaya and Singapore because of its strategic location as part of Japanese ambitions to dominate Southeast Asia. The abundant supply of natural resources in the Malay Peninsula made the invasion of Malaya an even more attractive option. Figure 1 shows Japan's interest in invading these territories.

Considering the context of the crisis, it is up to the delegates to do their utmost best to protect their land. While defending control of Malaya and the prestige of the UK, it is critical to bear in mind your country's national interests. Given the disagreements that will arise amongst delegates regarding the importance of the upcoming problems, the onus is on you to handle the crisis decisively.



Figure 1: Political cartoon entitled 'Stepping Stones?', warning of Japan's possible invasion route in Asia, firstly invading Malaya and Singapore to move down to their main goal of conquering Dutch East Indies, published 20 February 1941

CONTEXT

Start date of the crisis

This crisis officially begins on 5 December 1941, with delegates debating on the vital execution of Operation Matador following the prospects of a looming Japanese invasion.

Current situation

As of 5 December 1941, Britain had just declared war on Finland, Hungary and Romania, who had allied themselves with the Axis powers. Facing a growing number of enemies, both Britain's military capability and resources were stretched thinly between having to defend their homeland and colonies across Europe, the Middle East, India, and Southeast Asia. The execution of Operation Matador could be a potential turning point in the history of the Battle of Malaya. Delegates should realise the implications of any decisions made here, for they could potentially lead to profound consequences for Britain, Japan, Malaya, and Singapore.

Operation Matador 1941 was a plan crafted by the British Malaya Command to move forces into position to counter a potential Japanese amphibious attack on Kota Bharu, Malaya. Based on British military intelligence reports, Japan was predicted to land in Siam (present-day Thailand) and launch an attack on Malaya by the eastern coast of the peninsula. Large military reinforcements were recommended to be sent from Britain to be stationed at Malaya, but plans were ignored and denied by the main military base back home. Britain was set to mobilise its troops against Finland, Hungary, and Romania as these countries were more accessible to British forces due to their sheer proximity to Britain. Hence, it was simply not possible to risk the homeland of Britain to launch a preemptive strike on Siam prior to any Japanese landings. Furthermore, the British Army was still recovering from the Battle of Dunkirk followed by the Battle of Britain. The outcome of the Battle of Dunkirk in June 1940 forced the UK into an anti-invasion preparation for WW2 which entailed a large-scale diversion of military resources from their colonies and civilian mobilisation. This proved that the UK's army force was not in top condition, hence war efforts and troops in their homeland could not have been mobilised to Malaya unless the supremacy and sovereignty over their colonies were directly challenged.

Considering the aforementioned events, it should be noted that the potential execution of Operation Matador will be a key feature in the Battle of Malaya. Its successful execution can potentially present Britain with a decisive advantage over Japan, while failing to achieve the objectives of the Operation may give Japan the upper hand. It is necessary to note that the decision to execute Operation Matador involves several considerations from many stakeholders, and its execution may not necessarily bring about its intended outcome - Japan was well prepared for the invasion of Malaya and multiple battle routes had already been planned (see Figure 2). Delegates are required to make decisions to protect Malaya while maintaining their political stances.



Figure 2: Map of Thailand, Malaya, Singapore and the Dutch East Indies, showing the planned possible routes of Japan invasion and routes to be taken for the execution of Operation Matador.

HISTORICAL TIMELINE

1897 - 1912	<p>Japan became a leader in the industrial revolution.</p> <p>Japan experienced great empowerment in the development of industrialisation after the success of the Industrial Power Plan during the Meiji Dynasty era. Furthermore, Japan gained victory and glory in significant wars such as the First Sino-Japanese War (1894-1895) and the Russo-Japanese War (1904-1905)¹. These allowed Japan to present herself as the leader of the East, creating her motto "Asia for Asians" and envisioning the "Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere". Japan embarked on her journey to invade nearby lands to increase her sphere of influence. In order for Japan to gain power and prestige, control over resource-rich areas such as the East Indies, Malaya and Singapore were key to maintain their war efforts.</p>
19 September 1961	<p>Japanese Invasion of Manchuria, China</p> <p>Japan seized Manchuria in order to protect her interests in the Kwantung Leased Territory. China was defeated and Japan created a new puppet state, Manchukuo. This isolated Japan internationally while border disagreements with China carried on with growing intensity. Furthermore, this was a major battle for Japan, where they used up a large portion of war resources. It is important for delegates to note that Japan's relentless expansion and subsequent invasion of countries after the invasion of Manchuria had stretched Japanese military resources.</p>
7 July 1937	<p>Official Start of the Second Sino-Japanese War (Marco Polo Bridge Incident initiated by Japan)²</p> <p>The war lasted several years and was still ongoing on 5 December 1941, the start date of the crisis. This proved to be a major setback for Japan as the war had put extreme pressure on the Japanese economy and military. Japan's supply of natural resources was pushed to the breaking point due to the oil embargo placed on them by the USA. It is important for delegates to note that this was the flashpoint when Japan started sourcing for strategic locations in the Pacific in order to carry on with their invasion plans.</p>
14 June 1939	<p>Tientsin Incident - First Japan Confrontation with Western Powers.</p> <p>The incident arose from a blockade by Japan of the British settlements in the North China treaty port of Tientsin (present-day Tianjin). What originated from a minor administrative dispute ultimately escalated into a major diplomatic incident. The British wanted to lift the blockade, and after some consideration concluded that the only possible means to do so was military intervention. Yet, the Royal Navy needed to be stationed in Europe as a deterrent to Germany from invading Poland, and the Americans would not intervene despite requests from the British. This incident highlighted Britain's weak position and influence in Asia, both militarily and diplomatically, given its failure to enlist the USA into taking a stronger position to support them. Due to the aforementioned reasons, the British were forced to compromise when it came to securing control and defending Malaya. Hence, the Japanese had an advantage in conquering Malaya and Singapore.</p> <p>The Manchurian crisis culminated in more economic sanctions and trade embargoes being imposed upon Japan by the West in retaliation to Japanese aggression, further aggravating Japan's economic woes and lack of natural resources. This drove Japan to view the occupation of Southeast Asia as a viable solution to acquire natural resources.</p>

HISTORICAL TIMELINE

10 May 1940	Winston Churchill inaugurated as Prime Minister of Britain³. Churchill was engaged in the ongoing war with France, especially seen in his well-known speech, "We shall never Surrender" ⁴ . Given his high level of attention given to the war back home, the amount of resources allocated to defend Malaya was limited.
10 May 1940	Invasion of Iceland (Operation Fork) Britain occupied Iceland shortly after Denmark fell to Germany in early 1940. The invasion was a bid to prevent Iceland, as a strategic foothold in the North Sea, to be used by Germany to support its war efforts. This was only one out of the many conflicts involving the UK in WW2. Considering the short duration between this invasion and the potential conflict happening in Malaya, it is important to note that the UK's external military aspects were greatly weakened. Apart from this, the UK's internal social cohesion and societal welfare were greatly compromised due to their heavy participation in war, as families were separated when the military went to war, and food supplies were depleting ⁵ .
22 September 1940	Japanese Invasion of French Indochina⁶. Japan invaded French Indochina to support its efforts in the Second Sino-Japanese War. By conquering Vietnam, Japan planned to close off China's southern border to stop its supply of weapons and materials, with China subsequently having little choice but to surrender to Japan. Moreover, due to its strategic location, Vietnam fit into Japan's long-term imperial plans - the creation of an economic coalition of Asian nations. The invasion of Vietnam was a vital move for Japan to swiftly invade the neighbouring territories and make their way down south to the Malay Peninsula.
3 September 1939 - Present	Battle of the Atlantic The Battle of the Atlantic was a war between Britain and Germany which started immediately after the European war, also known as the "Phoney War". The battle was seen as the most complex naval battle in history. Similar to the implications of the Invasion of Iceland, this incident made it potentially harder for the UK to shift its focus from homeland battles to the Battle of Malaya.
5 December 1941	Start Date of Crisis Britain declared war on Finland, Hungary and Romania. Operation Matador was once again brought forth for discussion of its immediate execution.

CONTEXT OF COMMITTEE: THE JOINT CABINET OF MALAYA (THE BRITISH)

Britain was involved in major mainland battles in Europe since the late 1930s. By 1941, Britain's economic and military performance was heavily threatened due to their extensive military expenditure. Hence, Britain was held in a similar circumstance as Japan – increasing supply of natural resources was key for the continuation of war efforts. British colonies had large amounts of natural resources, with Malaya and Singapore not only containing various oil and food supplies, but also having a strategic location which was easily accessible by sea. Thus, the British had generated a sizeable amount of profits from these colonies and therefore would not easily give up on the territories they had been benefiting from. As seen in Figure 3, Britain was keen to defeat Japan in the event of an invasion by rallying the locals' support.



Figure 3: Poster for Britain's army to raise their morale, highlighting the necessity to successfully protect Singapore due to its importance in sustaining Britain's resources

However, delegates ought to understand that the British leaders were faced with a major dilemma in supporting war efforts in either Asia or Europe. Upon the appointment of Winston Churchill as Prime Minister, he made clear his stand that in the event of war breaking out in Southeast Asia, priority would be given to finish the war in Europe and to protect India. Furthermore, Winston Churchill was evidently over-confident of military defences in Malaya. Hence, he rejected requests for additional military resources to be deployed to Malaya⁷. Despite efforts by the British military in Malaya to undermine Japanese attacks and create detailed war plans, they were denied resources by the British military in Europe. As such, the desired Malayan air force strength of 300-500 aircraft was never reached due to higher priorities in the allocation of men and resources for Britain and the Middle East. Ultimately, Winston Churchill never believed that a war with Japan over Malaya would ever break out.

CONTEXT OF COMMITTEE: THE JOINT CABINET OF MALAYA (THE BRITISH)

Economic Scene

Following the Great Depression in the 1920s to 1930s, Britain's economy was back on the right track in 1940, with maximum production and output of resources. However, although they were able to obtain resources from the British Empire and the Commonwealth, the British economy had stagnated. In order to sustain the economy, Britain had to depend largely on external support and increasingly relied on financial aid from the USA from 1940-1941. Furthermore, given that Britain was mainly concerned with the production of high-quality military weapons where cost was not of worry, it was not surprising that Britain's economy was facing an impending decline. By the third quarter of 1940, the volume of British exports was down by 37% compared to 1935. Britain was suffering from a trade deficit due to higher spending but lower revenue in return, resulting in greater debt. As seen in Figure 4, the rise in UK national debt also meant that little funds could be pumped into sustaining the war efforts in Malaya. However, in comparison with Japan, they still held an economic advantage since Japan was already suffering from a war-torn economy due to its numerous invasions leading up to 1941.

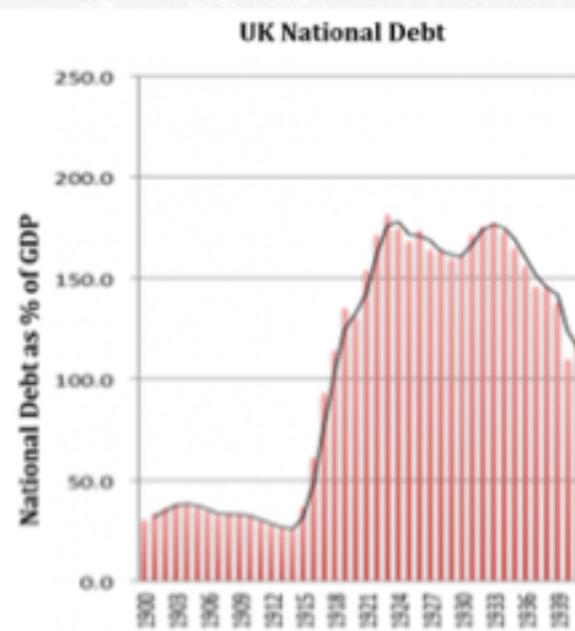


Figure 4: During 1933-1939 (the recovery period of the Great Depression), Britain's national debt decreased. However, its national debt increased sharply from 1940-1941, leading up to the Battle of Malaya⁸.

Military Capabilities

After WW1, Britain started building its military defences in Malaya and Singapore. The defence of Malaya and Singapore thus hinged on the Singapore naval base at Sembawang, which had been operational since 1938. Although the British had little knowledge of Japan's military capacity, Britain simply assumed that their navy was superior and would easily put down potential threats despite their numerical disadvantage⁹. The British assumed that the immediate dispatch of capital ships to the naval base would be a successful defence against potential aggression.

CONTEXT OF COMMITTEE: THE JOINT CABINET OF MALAYA (THE BRITISH)

In 1940, a larger proportion of Britain's expenditure went to aircraft production, focused on only five types of aircraft – fighters, bombers, reconnaissance, carrier-borne-fighters and transport aircraft – to optimise output, as seen in the immense increase in wartime aircraft production figures in Figure 5. Labour was moved from other aircraft work to factories manufacturing these aircraft, with the delivery of new fighters rising from 256 in April 1940 to 467 in September 1940¹⁰. However, most of these were produced as standby for war in the homeland and Europe and were not dispatched to Malaya even upon request.

Wartime Aircraft Production Figures

Year	1939	1940	1941
UK	8,190	16,149	22,694

Figure 5: Comparison of Britain (UK)'s military production over the years. It is important to note that the figures for Britain include those of the Commonwealth, thus the actual military capacity in Britain was lower than seen¹¹.

Furthermore, Britain's limited military supply was not the only cause for concern. With the weaknesses of the British Commonwealth in juggling wars in both the Eastern and Western theatre, this only sought to undermine the British war credentials in the East. Coupled with the military's weak training structures and lack of material resources, this only served to stack up the odds against any Commonwealth general at the outset of WW2, resulting in the army being ill-prepared as compared to the Japanese troops¹².

Social Stability

Despite Britain taking part in battles from the late 1930s onwards, the domestic social situation within Britain was fairly stable and widespread support from the masses was given to the military in hopes of victory. From 1939-1941, Britain was successful in mobilising the home front to support the war effort through having the greatest proportion of potential workers, maximising output, assigning the right skills to the right task and maintaining the morale and spirit of people. As such, unemployment in Britain fell to an all-time low which was a huge improvement, especially after the Great Depression. Much of this success was due to women supporting war efforts, making rationing of consumer goods a success. This partially alleviated Britain's economic woes and allowed Britain to allocate more of its resources to Malaya.

CONTEXT OF COMMITTEE: THE JOINT CABINET OF MALAYA (MALAYA & SINGAPORE LOCALS)

Throughout the years, the colonisation by Britain had brought general discontentment from the locals, as they presented their unhappiness and disapproval of British rule through several strikes. This was observed during the Kreta Ayer Incident in 1927, which was a clash between the British and local Kuo Min Tang supporters¹³. However, upon news of the possible Japanese invasion, together with the Japanese campaign in China, local organisations such as the Malayan Communist Party (MCP), Malay Regiment and the Straits Settlement Volunteer Force (SSVF) came together to protect Malaya and Singapore. Although these organisations were set up to work together with the British army to defend their land, there were times where they were against the British and were not agreeable to their plans. Yet, it was clear that the locals were against a Japanese invasion especially after many of them started volunteering to fight against Japan to prevent them from further increasing their sphere of influence and colonising neighbouring countries¹⁴. This was exemplified by the Malayan People's Anti Japanese Army (MPAJA), which fought back against the Japanese.

It is key for delegates to note that local military forces, including the Malay Regiment and SSVF, were weaker and inexperienced compared to the military strength of Japan. As such, cooperation with the British Commonwealth forces was preferred over working in silos. This also meant that the respective military groups had to resolve any possible conflicts and disagreements promptly to ensure smooth collaboration.

Economic Scene

Malaya was a leading exporter of raw materials such as tin, rubber, timber, oil and an importer of manufactured goods. As such, Malaya heavily depended on earnings from exports of primary commodities to maintain the standard of living. Rice had to be imported as domestic production could only supply 40% of demand¹⁵. Given that export prices remained high till the late 1930s, profits to capital and good smallholder incomes supported an expanding economy.

However, by 1941, Britain started to impose taxes on Malayan exports. Although one of its justifications was to prevent Japan from importing sufficient amounts of oil and natural resources in order to stop their invasion plans, this move had instead caused a great decline in Malaya economy as exports dropped significantly. With a damaged economy, prices rose and the cost of living increased. The rapid deterioration in living standards created an environment which was fertile for social unrest.

CONTEXT OF COMMITTEE: THE JOINT CABINET OF MALAYA (MALAYA & SINGAPORE LOCALS)

Military Capabilities

There were two main military forces in Malaya and Singapore - the Malay Regiment and SSVF. The Malay Regiment was an all-Malay military force formed on 1 March 1933 under the command of British officers. By 1941, this was a relatively experienced military force compared to other local military organisations, given its previously important role played in maintaining order during a labour dispute in Selangor, Malaya which earned the regiment a special commendation from the Malayan governor. They also participated in various training exercises in Singapore in 1937 and 1938 with a continuously increasing number of recruits. Upon the outbreak of war in Europe in 1939, the Malay Regiment was mobilised with intensified training. In 1940, they were deployed to Singapore for standby in case of an emergency¹⁶.

The SSVF was a military reserve force in the Straits Settlements, which was under British rule. As international tensions heightened during the 1930s, an increasing number of men of different nationalities joined the SSVF. The SSVF included naval forces, air forces, special operations, irregular units and home guard units. By 1940, the SSVF units were mobilised and underwent intensive training. For example, SSVF carried out experimental dive-bombing techniques and tried to fit bomb racks on their aircraft. Unfortunately, these trials sometimes caused unnecessary casualties among the volunteers, decreasing the size and strength of the army available to defend Malaya¹⁷.

Social Stability

Upon British colonisation of Malaya and Singapore, the colonial authorities utilised "divide and rule" tactics to maintain their domestic control¹⁸. Locals of different race lived in their own neighbourhoods, practised their own religions, spoke their own languages and formed their own political organisations. By the 1930s, ethnically-oriented nationalist currents began to stir in Malaya and Singapore, where violent conflicts between different races were on a rise.

After Britain imposed taxes on some Malayan goods in the 1940s, Malayan traditional industries were severely affected and the incidence of local poverty increased. Many Chinese found jobs in tin mines or fields, responsible for the trade of materials. However, this, in turn, increased inter-ethnic tensions as the Malays believed that the Chinese had replaced them in certain jobs, making it tougher to be employed. Malays were then forced into the rubber industry, which was heavily dependent upon volatile world prices, causing great unhappiness and decreased social stability. This forced the Malayan government to shift their focus from military defence to resolving social conflicts, possibly causing a poorly planned military execution in the event of war.

However, in May 1941, Britain established the headquarters of Oriental Mission in Singatpore to plan and operate subversive activities in territories with interests that aligned with the enemy.

CONTEXT OF COMMITTEE: THE JOINT CABINET OF MALAYA (MALAYA & SINGAPORE LOCALS)

Japan

Japan had extensive military experience, especially since Japanese forces had momentum due to continuous battles, while the British and their allies had been in retreat and on the defensive for most of the European campaign. Furthermore, the Japanese were more prepared for war as their troops had more rigorous training, with brutal punishments. This, coupled with the mentality that whatever they were doing was for their emperor, gave the Japanese troops a powerful motivation, hence making them a deadly force to combat¹⁹. Britain had their best pilots remain in Europe, which was of a higher priority to them, while they sent their less experienced pilots to defend their colonies. Thus, the British forces in Malaya were ill-equipped as compared to those of the Japanese. On top of this, the Japanese had studied the entire peninsula extensively; they could move faster and were well-versed in jungle warfare. Japan also had an effective intelligence unit which sourced for relevant information before attacks were launched²⁰. Members of the unit were tasked to find out more about the geographical positioning of their targets so that they would be able to map out their enemies bases and capture them effectively.

The Imperial Japanese Army had 51 divisions and various special-purpose artillery, cavalry, anti-aircraft, and armoured units with a total of 1,700,000 men²¹. In the 1930s at the beginning of WW2, most of the Japanese Army was stationed in China, during the Manchurian campaign. Although Japan's military capacity was large to start off with, their capacity decreased immensely following the large number of military campaigns they participated in en route to increasing their sphere of influence.

It is important for delegates to sieve through various military tactics. With the ability to understand how the Japanese forged an advantage for themselves in the Battle of Malaya, delegates may be able to counter these plans in time to seize victory.

Thailand

Due to the start date of this crisis, Thailand will be an extremely important international player who can potentially steer the direction of crisis. As stated in Britain's Operation Matador, Thailand was regarded as the most favourable location for Japan to prepare for its first attack on Malaya. Hence, it is recommended that Britain attempt to secure an alliance with Thailand to prevent Japan from entering.

However, historically, this was a difficult task. Thailand had been looking for an opportunity to avenge its humiliation by France in 1893 when its boundaries were redrawn in a series of treaties. After France fell to the Nazis, Thailand sought assistance from Japan for help. Furthermore, Thailand was convinced that Japan would be the ultimate victor in WW2, and hence was more inclined to form a military alliance with Japan in times of emergency. As such, it was clear that Thailand was slightly more inclined to support Japan rather than Britain in war. However, it is ultimately still up to delegates to maintain strong relations with other countries through diplomatic measures or otherwise.

CONTEXT OF COMMITTEE: THE JOINT CABINET OF MALAYA (MALAYA & SINGAPORE LOCALS)

The United States of America

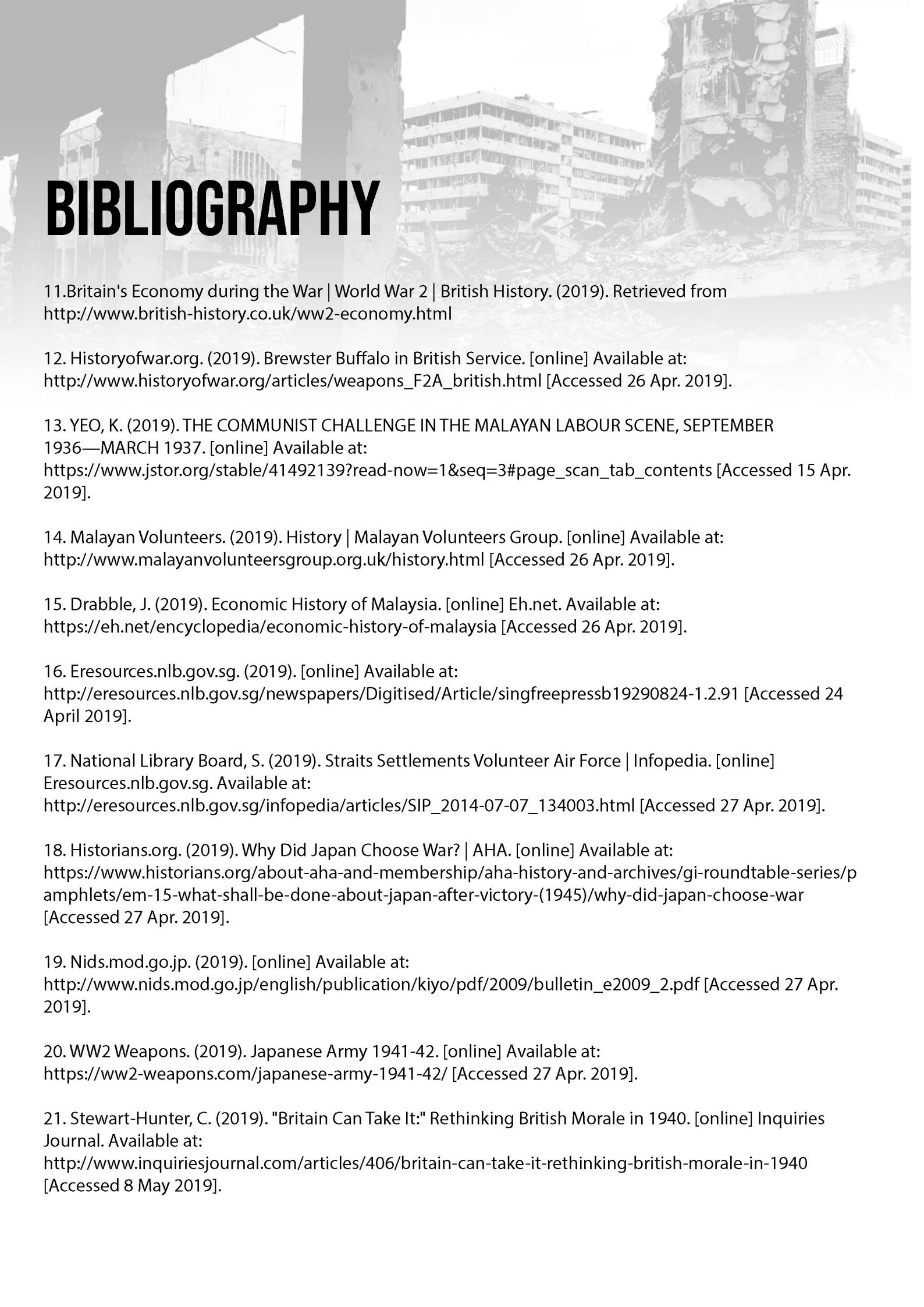
Given that USA and Britain have always had a close political relationship and that they had a common interest in defeating the Axis powers, delegates can consider the possibility of seeking help from the USA to provide Britain with support in the event of Japanese invasion. Given that Britain's economy and military capacity were declining, the USA started to provide Britain munitions through the Lend-Lease agreement in 1941. It is important to note that the Roosevelt administration was extremely committed to large-scale economic support of Britain, agreeing to give Britain supplies totalling USD\$31.4 billion which never had to be repaid. Furthermore, given that the USA had not been particularly involved in any ongoing wars occurring in WW2, their resource supplies and military capacity were of the greatest potential. Hence, in any case when Britain is in extreme danger, the USA will be a formidable ally.

However, delegates should note that the USA was not willing to engage in any direct military conflict at this point in time, also meaning that it may be difficult for Britain to secure the necessary aid in the Asia Pacific from the USA in the event of war.

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