

## **FORGET PEARL HARBOR! REMEMBER THE MAINE!**

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Let me establish some credentials for a minute. I was born in upper New York State, but reared and educated in Florida, Georgia, and North Carolina. My additional college education was in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania; Washington, DC; Alexandria, Virginia; New Haven, Connecticut; Ann Arbor, Michigan; and Dallas, Texas. I have taught at the University of Maryland and Virginia Polytechnic Institute. And I have traveled to and spent some time in almost all parts of the US.

Jim knows America.

But I also lived and taught for six years in Japan in the 1960s. I went there prepared to live in Japan forever, but I decided, very reluctantly, that I could never become Japanese, no matter how hard I tried, and that I was less and less useful to the Japanese as I understood and embodied the US less and less accurately.

So I left Japan and went to VPI. I endured the mainland US for as long as I could--three years--and then eagerly accepted a job here in Hawaii since it was appropriately positioned between the US and Japan. I have been here ever since--except for a two years' leave of absence in Toronto, Canada, and many trips abroad as consequence of my being Secretary General and then President of the World Futures Studies Federation.

So Jim knows Japan. And, if I may say so, Jim knows the world.

And so my dream for the future of Japan-US relations comes out of that knowledge and experience. I am fully aware of and concerned about the many dark sides of Japan as well as its bright aspects, as I am of the US. And I am very, very pessimistic about the interrelated future of the two countries. The current trajectory is headed straight

towards renewed military conflict. But today I will try to speak, not of my fears, but of my dreams. So:

I have a dream!

I have a dream that one day we will Forget Pearl Harbor. My slogan is: "Don't Remember Pearl Harbor." Or, "Don't Harbor Pearl Harbor" because he who remembers history is condemned to repeat it.

As a futurist, I have always been ambiguous about "history," and the uses of the past. However, reading our local newspapers in recent months, and especially weeks and days, has convinced me that what is apparently the current attitude of Japanese young people towards the past is infinitely better than ours.

Perhaps you saw the article in the *Star Bulletin* last week which complained that history is not taught--or is only sketchily taught--in Japan, in contrast with the US, and most other places. Never mind that the article did not point out that the initial reason for the exclusion of history from the Japanese curriculum comes from the American Occupation. We initially exorcised history, ethics, and geography from the Japanese elementary and secondary public curriculum, and then internal Japanese politics--struggles between the left-wing teachers' unions and the right-wing bureaucrats in the Ministry of Education, among other things--has prevented an agreement from being reached on what to teach, so that not much of anything is taught of Japan's modern history. As a consequence, Japanese students get to spend more time on other, more worthwhile, things--on science, math, technology, economics, and the creation of the future.

Anyway, the article stated that the ignorance of the recent past among young Japanese is so profound that a Japanese student at a prominent women's university in Tokyo apparently was totally unaware of the 2nd World War. When hearing that the US and Japan had fought, she was dumbfounded, and didn't believe it. When finally convinced that it did happen, she asked: "So, who won?"

That is a very good question.

Anyone who has ever taken my classes in Japanese politics, or read anything I have written about this period, knows that I believe that a good case can be made for the position that while the US is the only nation to come out of The War victorious--and it has been downhill ever since then--a better case can be made that Japan won the war inasmuch as it achieved its objectives better in defeat than it would have obtained them in victory.

If America's purpose was to prevent, and Japan's purpose was to achieve, the creation of the Greater East Asia Co-prosperity Sphere, then we clearly failed, and they succeeded.

There may have been other purposes or reasons for the war, of course.

But never mind. My point is that we should try to remember the future, and not the past. Dream of the world as you want it to be, and try to make your dreams come true. Do not dwell in the past of hatred and warfare, but in the future of nonviolence, social justice, economic equity, and ecological balance (or whatever your preferred future is. That is mine).

It is frequently said that the US, and American citizens, are ahistorical. In one sense that is certainly true. We don't know much about dates and specific events in specific places in the past--or the present, for that matter. But we live in a very rich mythic culture of fear of foreigners, and of self-righteous faith in the nobility and purity of God-blessed America. Part of our American mythic culture involves deeply held beliefs about the past that are patently false--beliefs about Columbus; about the Puritans, Squanto, and Thanksgiving; about the American military overthrow of the Hawaiian monarchy; about Remembering the Alamo; about Remembering the Maine; and certainly about Remembering Pearl Harbor.

But go back to "remembering the Maine" for a minute. How many of you under 40 "Remember the Maine?" Who will tell me what it is about?

In another recent article, written by a longtime Japan-hand in which he partly bashed, and partly praised, Japan vis a vis Pearl Harbor, the author pointed out that, for his Japanese college students, Pearl Harbor is an event as remote in their past as "The Maine" was for him when he was their age in the US in the mid 50s. He recollects wondering then why in the world anyone in 1955 should "Remember the Maine," a military event of February 15, 1898. (Remember?)

The author did not go on to point out something else, even more interesting about that ancient episode: The explosive sinking of the Maine, a US ship in Havana Harbor in Cuba, and the death of 268 US citizens, was widely alleged and believed in the US to be a dastardly deed of the Spanish, who then were the colonial masters of Cuba, which started what the US called the Spanish-American War.

But the truth may be either that long-smoldering coal inside the ship's hold suddenly exploded into flame spontaneously, or that US agents, not the Spanish, sank the ship themselves in order to whip up Americans so that they would be willing and eager to go to war against the Spanish. The controversy over who or what sank the Maine is the more interesting parallel with Pearl Harbor, it seems to me.

So that is my second dream. If Americans can not join the Japanese in not remembering the past--in being ignorant of history and instead focusing fully on the future--then I wish they could know their history better. Again, "Forget Pearl Harbor." The war between the US and Japan did not start there. It has a much longer history which should be understood by anyone interested in remembering Pearl Harbor. I personally agree with the basic position of some of the revisionists in Japan that the events which led to Pearl Harbor began with the West's invasion and colonization of Asia two hundred, or more, years before. Japan, Korea, China, India, the Southeast Asian countries and the rest were all peacefully (or not so peacefully) minding their own business when the Spanish, the Dutch, the English, the French, the Germans and then, very belatedly the Americans and the Russians, among others, began brutally colonizing Asian and Pacific peoples and countries (including, it should be Remembered, the Hawaiians).

During all of this time, Japan was quietly dozing through the 200 year long Tokugawa Gidai, doing its level best not to be seen or noticed by the outside world. Japan was totally uninvolved in colonizing anything, and certainly did not want to be colonized itself. It just wanted to be left alone.

But that was not to be, because all of the West, including the US, wanted Japan, and it was in fact the Americans, via Perry's Black Ships, who shook Japan awake, creating an internal revolution during which the old shogunate was overthrown, and new, young, restless, intelligent, and eventually Western-educated men took over, vowing never to be colonized by the West; and more: vowing that if Japan was going to be forced to join the world community then it was damn well going to be Number One.

And so within a ten year period after Perry's so-called Opening of Japan, Japan set upon a course of modernization and industrialization unequalled anywhere in the world for its speed, thoroughness, and success--if having a big, successful army, with many factories pouring out weapons, and many schools and colleges pouring out soldiers, and many colonies providing cheap resources, labor, and lots of lebensraum was the measure of success. And it definitely was: not only did all of European history and then-current policies say so, but so did all of American history and policies agree.

And so Japan invaded Russia, and won, then Manchuria, and won, then China, and won, and then the US (or at least Hawaii), and lost.

In my opinion, it is NOT true, as some Japanese revisionists would have it, that Japan fought the West in order to throw out the Western Barbarians and free Asia from the White Man's Yoke. Well, it is true that Japan did this, but not to set Asia free. Rather Japan wanted to prove to the West that Japan was the proper colonial ruler of Asia, not Europe and the US.

But that, regrettably, was the way the World Game was played back then.

Far worse, that is the way the US is still playing it, if you care to Remember The Bay of Pigs, Vietnam, Chile, Nicaragua, Guatemala,

Panama, Grenada, Libya, the recent Gulf War or scores of other US military atrocities all around the world.

And speaking of sneak attacks! America is the master of the sneak attack, and in fact the master of fighting without ever getting a formal declaration of war from its own Congress, as required by the sacred US Constitution. And in skillfully lying to its people about the reason for, and conduct of, war. Give me a break! There is no way the Japanese in 1941 matched the US for sneakiness and unnecessary resort to military violence, then or now.

So that leads me to my third dream: that the US can finally learn what Japan learned by its defeat: that war is utterly obsolete as an instrument of national policy. That the way to be dominant is through economic power, not military power. A sub-lesson of this, is that the US should learn from the Japanese the value of keeping a large middle and working class involved in the production of goods and services, and in the ownership of the means of production. A big mistake the US made, assuming "national interest" is important (a point I will get to in a minute) was purposefully to destroy its mom and pop farms, factories, and stores, and to encourage, in the name of economic efficiency and rationality, the global domination of local enterprise by faceless transnational corporations. While that has been American economic policy, especially since the 2nd World War, that is what (among other things) Reagan/Bushnomics means with a vengeance: wrapping the American Flag around the corpse of the US economy while creating a world economy in which some Americans will be major players, but almost all Americans will not.

We can plainly see the consequence of those policies here in Hawaii where everything of any value is or soon will be owned from the outside by people who don't give a damn about Hawaii but who only care, and care very much, about their immediate bottom line. They will drain--are draining--Hawaii dry, and then they will move on to rape and pillage elsewhere, as others, once here, have before them. Again, there was a recent newspaper article about how that process has resulted not only in severe unemployment and economic devastation all over the mainland, but also in deadly and very long-lasting environmental pollution from unregulated industrial processes--unregulated, or course, in the name of economic efficiency

and rationality, and "the magic or the marketplace". We are experiencing the same here as labor-, fertilizer-, and pesticide-intensive agriculture deserts Hawaii, and leaves behind polluted ground and water, as well as many unemployed and underemployed persons.

And it is of course this that is at the heart of US Japan-bashing: we want Japan to destroy its mom and pop industries, farms, stores, and distribution systems, and to allow in American (but more likely, German) transnational operations. This will surely kill Japan as it has killed the US.

But my final dream is that both the US and Japan will learn that the nation-state is virtually dead anyway, and that it is pernicious in most respects in what little still lives. What matters now are global and local concerns. The nation-state is too small to control the global economic, technological, cultural, and especially ecological processes of the present, and certainly of the future. We need systems of global governance to anticipate and address them. Current national policies, though perhaps in the "national interest" of each nation individually (and though some nation's policies may be significantly better than others), are at odds with what is best for the planet and its people overall.

At the same time, local concerns are more real and important than those of any nation. For example, locally, Hawaiian sovereignty must be attained. And if Kailua wants to secede from Honolulu, then I, for once, am with Mayor Fasi: Shaka, brah! Let 'um go. They are only the first in what will be the fragmenting of Hawaii, the US, and all existing political boundaries everywhere in the world.

OK, one more dream: I wish that both Japan and the US could learn that racism is absolutely intolerable. Japan is a dangerously racist nation. But, Lordy, Lordy, so is the US. And so, it turns out, is Europe.

In my opinion, neither ethnicity nor gender are acceptable bases for personal or political identity. They are quite appropriate interim political tactics, but they are completely unacceptable ultimate goals. Personal identity can no longer come from the past or from outside. It can only come from the future, and within each person uniquely.

It is not what we have been--what we can remember and resurrect or invent from our past--that is important about each of us. It is what we are, and, far more importantly, what we can, or feel we should, or want to become. Establishing pride in one's ethnicity and overthrowing patriarchy may be necessary in order for some people to establish a satisfactory personal identity within an equitable and just social environment. But we are spending far, far too much time on inventing the past, and far too little on creating the future. And of course, everyone wastes even more precious energy trying to hold on to the pathologies and the inequities of the present.

The problems and opportunities rushing at us from the future are so great, so interrelated, and so novel, that if we continue to Remember Pearl Harbor, and argue about who is and who is not Number One, then we may well have no future at all. And probably will not deserve to have one.

[\*] Thanks to Toneko Hirai for inspiring me to make uncertain virtues out of certain necessities.