

## The Pearl Harbor Attack and the Origins of the Pacific War: Contested Memories in the United States and Japan

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This article will explore the longstanding, and continuing, gap between American and Japanese understandings of and perspectives on the December 7, 1941, attack on U.S. military installations in Hawaii. That assault, of course, triggered the mutual declarations of war by Japan and the United States and brought on a brutal three-and-half-year war. Within official American public memory, as reflected in the speeches and statements of U.S. leaders from Franklin D. Roosevelt right up to the present, Pearl Harbor stands as an unambiguous symbol of Japanese treachery and betrayal, and as the singular reason for U.S. entry into the Pacific War against Japan. It stands, as well, as an event curiously without historical context in U.S. public memory. Rarely, if ever, do the security fears and the perceptions of vulnerability that set the Japanese attack in motion receive any attention whatsoever in the United States. Similar perceptions of American innocence and victimhood are reflected in American popular culture. They are confirmed by polling data, moreover, as the overwhelming pivot around which U.S. memories of the Pacific War's origins are organized.

Japanese public memory of the Pacific War, on the other hand, tends to emphasize notions of Japanese victimhood by dwelling more on Allied air bombardment of Japanese cities and the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki than on the event that prompted the formal U.S. declaration of war. The military assault on Pearl Harbor, within Japanese societal memory, is typically placed within the context of a broader clash between Japan and an imperialist West, while the elements of stealth and treachery so common in U.S. remembrances are either downplayed or ignored completely.

This essay seeks to explain the sharp divergence between American and Japanese memories of this seminal event. It will also discuss the ways that both nations depict themselves as the innocent victims of an attack by the other. Finally, it will offer some thoughts about how Japan and the United States might begin to accept a more sophisticated and more historically grounded common memory of the Japanese-American War. Achieving that goal requires a collective focus on the wider historical contexts that scholars typically deploy when seeking to make sense of the opening (Pearl Harbor) and the closing (Hiroshima and Nagasaki) acts of this epochal conflict.

On the morning of December 7, 1941 (December 8 in Japan), the air and naval forces of Imperial Japan launched a devastatingly successful, surprise attack against U.S. military installations on the island of Oahu, the home of America's Pacific Fleet. The attack claimed 2,400 American lives; another 1,200 suffered wounds, many of them severe. It was the greatest loss of life on American soil in any engagement since the nation's Civil War close to a century earlier. Of the almost 400 military aircraft deployed across Oahu, 188 were destroyed and 159 damaged. Eighteen battleships, cruisers, and destroyers lay in ruin. The Pearl Harbor disaster easily ranks as the worst military defeat for the United States at the hands of a foreign foe since the War of 1812.

Shock and unbridled anger were the most common reactions by ordinary Americans to the news about the crippling Japanese air strike. "For most," recalled historian Gordon Prange, "Pearl Harbor was a deep emotional experience, indeed, a traumatic shock.... The American people reeled with a mind-staggering mixture of surprise, awe, mystification, grief, humiliation, and, above all, cataclysmic fury."<sup>1</sup> That fury was fueled by a righteous sense of indignation at an act of betrayal by a people whose diplomats were, at the very moment that bombs were raining down on Hawaii, deceptively conducting negotiations in Washington aimed at a peace settlement. Newspaper editorials throughout the United States excoriated Japanese treachery in scathing language. One proclaimed that words failed "to express the utter duplicity of the Japanese..." Another condemned "the sly cowardly attack executed at the very hour Japan's Machiavellian envoys were conducting 'peace' negotiations with our government..."<sup>2</sup>

"Tracherous" almost immediately became "the single word favored above all others by Americans as best characterizing the Japanese people," notes historian John W. Dower. "For the duration of the war," he emphasizes, "the surprise attack on the U.S. Pacific Fleet remained the preeminent symbol of the enemy's inherent treachery."<sup>3</sup> The attack, furthermore, inspired a thirst for revenge on the part of Americans that bordered on genocidal bloodlust. South Pacific Fleet Commander Admiral William Halsey went so far as to vow that by the end of the war Japanese "would be spoken only in hell." He rallied his men around such barbarous, if popular, slogans as, "Kill Japs, kill Japs, kill more Japs." The U.S. Marines developed their own popular refrain: "Remember Pearl Harbor-keep 'em dying." Dower rightly labels wartime U.S. attitudes toward the Japanese as nothing less than "exterminationist."<sup>4</sup>

Allan Nevins, the best-selling Columbia University history professor, reflected on that prevailing sentiment in an essay that he wrote at war's end for a mass-circulation periodical, titled "How We Felt About the War." In it, he compared the emotional rage felt by Americans toward the Japanese enemy as something not experienced "since our most savage Indian wars." Nevins attributed those powerful emotions to the "infamy" of the attack on Pearl Harbor, reinforced by reports about Japan's wartime atrocities. During the Pacific conflict, Nevins observed soberly, the Japanese were probably more detested than

any previous American foe in the nation's history.<sup>5</sup>

President Roosevelt helped enshrine and give sanction to those emotionally charged images of the deceitful Japanese in the dramatic, short address that he delivered to the American people in the wake of the Pearl Harbor attack. "Always will we remember the character of the onslaught against us," he vowed. Famously identifying December 7 as "a date which will live in infamy," FDR called on Americans to avenge Japan's "treachery" and its "unprovoked and dastardly attack."<sup>6</sup> Significantly, he did not seek to rally his fellow citizens around the cause of protecting vital national interests or around the imperative of standing firm against aggression. Rather, he employed what historian Emily S. Rosenberg has identified as the sole framework of "infamy." That framework derived its power, she suggests, in large part from its resonance with earlier national myths--especially those surrounding the Alamo and Custer's Last Stand--that circulated widely throughout American popular memory. Each of those episodes, drawn from the colorful tapestry of mythical tales woven into America's frontier heritage, fit nicely within a broader national narrative that privileged virtue and heroic exceptionalism. The Alamo and Custer's Last Stand each stood as an iconic representation of that story: an innocent people, attacked with overwhelming force by an evil, deceptive foe, rose up in righteous fury to bring despised, deceitful enemies to their knees. "The basic allegory of Pearl Harbor," Rosenberg contends, thus "predated the attack itself. It fit preexistent traditions, updating the Custer and Alamo motifs that held such emotional power in national memories before World War II."<sup>7</sup>

Roosevelt thus structured his infamy narrative to fit within a preexisting tradition, consigning the treacherous Japanese to the unenviable status previously conferred on the treacherous Mexicans and Indians--while simultaneously lumping the Japanese together with the equally depraved German and Italian militarists. In his nationwide radio address of December 9, 1941, which followed on his heels of the more famous "Day of Infamy" speech, the president referred to Pearl Harbor as a "criminal" attack that provided "the climax of a decade of international immorality." Once again, he condemned the "treachery" of Tokyo's rulers--a term that, tellingly, he did not confer on the other Axis states. Collectively, the Axis powers constituted, in his depiction, a gang of "crafty and powerful bandits" bent on world conquest. These "powerful and resourceful gangsters" needed to be stopped by the United States and "other free peoples." Yet the Japanese were singled out for an extra dose of opprobrium due to the character of the dastardly attack of December 7. "Not only must the shame of Japanese treachery be wiped out," FDR proclaimed, "but the sources of international brutality, wherever they exist, must be absolutely and finally broken."<sup>8</sup>

The cry "Remember Pearl Harbor," consequently, acquired transcendent emotional power in the days that followed the Hawaii attack, and it remained a potent reference point throughout the duration of World War II. That popular slogan simultaneously looked backward and forward. Ritualistic incantations of

“Remember Pearl Harbor” served not just as a convenient device for mobilizing the American citizenry behind the war effort; constant repetition of the phrase also helped to fuse current history with the remembrance of past atrocities--as well as the remembrance of how those atrocities had been avenged in the past by a virtuous and mighty populace. The resulting iconography deepened Americans’ self-conceptions about the essential innocence and nobility of their national story. Tellingly, one of the earliest and most famous of wartime propaganda posters symbolically featured a tattered but still waving American flag. The words “Remember Dec. 7<sup>th</sup>!” emerged against the poster’s backdrop of the black smoke of war. As that poster’s ubiquity signified, both the Pearl Harbor disaster and the date on which it occurred fast attained iconic status across American society. When the famous director John Ford produced the first feature-length documentary film about the Pearl Harbor attack, much of which incidentally was staged, he titled it simply, “December 7.” In a similar vein, a character in an early wartime feature film made the following pledge: “There’s a date we’ll always remember--and they will never forget!”<sup>9</sup>

But forget they have--at least many of them. I was recently reminded of the fact that the date of the Pearl Harbor strike is hardly etched in the memories of contemporary Japanese citizens. Visiting the Hiroshima Peace Park and Museum for the first time in the summer of 2009, I was struck by the references in the exhibit to the date December 8 for the Pearl Harbor attack. I mentioned to my young Japanese guides that it was ironic--even a little jarring--for an American to see that date associated with Pearl Harbor. December 7, I remarked, has long been one of the most famous dates in the United States, commemorated solemnly each year. He looked at me, somewhat confused, and said “We don’t know this date.” It quickly became apparent that the confusion stemmed not from the time differences between Washington, Honolulu, and Tokyo, but from the more fundamental factor that he (an undergraduate history student no less) had no comprehension of the profound symbolic significance in the United States of the Pearl Harbor episode--whether dated in U.S.-time or Japanese-time.

A generational divide? Perhaps. More likely, though, this encounter reveals a deep cultural, ideological, and even moral divide between Japan and the United States within the domain of Pacific War remembrance. Fundamentally divergent historical memories about World War II have long circulated within the two societies. Over time they have become ever more fixed.

For the Japanese, Pearl Harbor forms a subset of the wider issue often referred to as the “History Problem.” Japan’s reluctance to apologize to countries such as China and South Korea for its aggressive actions during the 1930s and first half of the 1940s, along with the whitewashed version of those events presented in some Japanese textbooks, has, over the past few decades, intermittently stoked tensions and triggered angry public demonstrations. Statements of contrition from political leaders in Tokyo, when they have come, oftentimes--if paradoxically--

wound up compounding the very misunderstandings they were designed to alleviate by triggering a backlash among conservative nationalists in Japan. Textbook controversies, the acknowledgment, or non-acknowledgment, of the plight of the “comfort women,” sharply differing assessments of the toll exacted on Chinese civilians during the Nanjing massacre, efforts to defend or rationalize Japan’s record as a colonial power in Korea—all those sensitive issues have fanned the flames of mutual suspicion and mistrust between Japan and its Asian neighbors. Visits to Tokyo’s controversial Yasukuni Shrine by prominent Japanese political figures have further exacerbated the history problem, serving as lightning rods for critics outside Japan who claim that its people have never truly confronted their country’s record of militarism and wartime atrocities. In 2006, no fewer than ninety-six member of the Diet paid their respects at the Shinto shrine. The politically inspired visits may have placated rightist elements at home, but that has come at the steep price of intensifying the suspicion and distrust of contemporary Japan by Chinese, South Korean, and other victims of its past aggression.<sup>10</sup>

Interestingly, Japan’s failure to apologize for the Pearl Harbor air strike, or for the 2,400 American lives lost in it, has not sparked a comparable history controversy with the United States. When politicians, academics, and journalists in Japan speak about the unresolved history dilemma stemming from the Pacific War, they are referring invariably to recurrent tensions with South Korea, China, Taiwan, the Philippines, and Australia. They are decidedly not thinking about the United States.

This puzzling oversight demands an explanation. It was the Pearl Harbor attack, after all, that brought the United States into the ongoing war in Asia. More to the point, it was the Pearl Harbor attack which set in motion the chain of events that culminated with the mushroom clouds over Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the devastation of Japan’s sixty-eight largest cities, and the humiliating, total defeat of a proud empire that just a few years earlier had held sway over much of the Asia-Pacific region. Without the Japanese assault on the territory of the American homeland, it is difficult to imagine how President Roosevelt—even had he so desired—could have attained Congressional support for a declaration of war against Japan. How, accordingly, could so critical an event—arguably one of the most momentous in modern world history, surely one of the most fundamental in Japanese history—not occupy an important space in the collective memories of the Japanese people?

I would like to suggest that there are five major factors that together help explain why the Pearl Harbor attack plays but a minor role in collective Japanese memories of World War II. First, the U.S.-dominated occupation regime that assumed responsibility for reforming and reconstructing civil society in Japan, following surrender, actually sanctioned and encouraged a degree of public amnesia about the origins, and savagery, of the U.S.-Japanese conflict. It did so because, in the wake one of history’s most devastating wars, American authorities

believed that dwelling on the recent past might act to subvert the goals they were then laboring to achieve: namely, reconciliation between Washington and Tokyo and, after 1947, the solidification of a pro-Western, anti-communist Japan willing to make common cause with the United States in the containment of the Soviet Union. In short, the United States did not *pressure* the Japanese to apologize or atone for Pearl Harbor. And, with their former foe neither demanding a public act of contrition nor insisting upon a historical reckoning, no powerful sectors of Japanese society stepped up to call for the initiation of so inherently painful a process of self-reflection.<sup>11</sup>

Second, the conclusion of a formal U.S.-Japanese security treaty in the early 1950s furthered the inclination, on both sides, to sidestep rather than confront the ugliness of the recent conflict--or its causes. The political scientist Jennifer Lind, in her wryly titled *Sorry States: Apologies in International Politics*, argues that the absence of contrition on the part of a nation that precipitated aggression against or visited atrocities on another generates friction in contemporary relations between those states only when a strong degree of mistrust already exists or when one society harbors suspicions of the other's future intentions.<sup>12</sup> The hair-trigger responses of ordinary South Koreans and Chinese to textbook revisions approved by Japan's Education Ministry can be read in that light. By contrast, the United States moved speedily to forge alliance ties with a reconstituted, democratic Japan, attaining military base rights which, in Okinawa, carved out an area of outright American sovereignty on Japanese soil. The United States thus had no reason to mistrust Japan or to question its intentions, enmeshed as it had become in a U.S.-dominated alliance system. From Washington's perspective, Japan had metamorphosed, under U.S. tutelage, into an invaluable Cold War ally, one whose leaders were willingly subordinating their country to its superpower patron and protector. Why, under such circumstances, would American leaders risk upsetting a highly favorable status quo by insisting upon an apology for an incident suddenly relegated--however ironically--to the category of almost ancient history?

A third factor, internal to Japan, also lay behind the fading of Pearl Harbor from Japanese public memory. In the aftermath of the Pacific War, Japanese elites and ordinary citizens alike embraced the status of victims rather than that of victimizers. In those early postwar years, Japanese commemorations and ceremonies focused on Japanese deaths and suffering, largely ignoring the deaths and suffering of foreigners. That sense of victimization proved pervasive throughout Japan. Official government policy abetted the natural inclination of families to mourn their own losses. And the Pacific War, it bears remembering, had claimed the lives of literally millions of Japanese soldiers and civilians, directly touching nearly every family in Japan. Monuments and museums both reflected and reinforced notions of Japanese victimhood. When the Hiroshima museum opened in 1955, its exhibits took the atomic holocaust of August 6 as the starting point for its exhibits, erasing the complicated history that preceded that event. A "renegade view" of the war took hold among the Japanese populace that

blamed a small, unrepresentative military clique for hijacking the country and forcing it on an ill-fated course of military expansionism. Since their suffering came overwhelmingly at the hands of the United States, rather than at the hands of Asian neighbors, the idea that the Japanese should apologize to the *Americans* doubtless seemed perverse to a people who had lost so much--and so many. American authorities, it bears reemphasizing, did not insist on Japanese contrition for the Pearl Harbor attack, nor did they challenge the widespread pattern of unapologetic remembrances of Japanese victims, conjoined with societal amnesia about foreign victims.<sup>13</sup>

Two additional factors have buttressed that pattern. One derives from the broader historical context for the Pearl Harbor attack, a context which provided ammunition to a “we had no other choice” rationalization. The other stems from the disproportionality of Japanese to American pain and suffering. In perhaps one of the more extreme manifestations of the former tendency, Norota Hosei, the former head of the Japan Defense Agency and a member of the Diet, stated, in 2001, that “Japan had no other choice but to venture out southward to secure natural resources.... In other words, Japan had fallen prey to a scheme of the United States.”<sup>14</sup> The museum accompanying the Yasukune Shrine goes so far as to portray the United States as engaged in a nefarious plot to encircle and strangle Imperial Japan, imposing no other option on an endangered Japan but a brave counter-strike aimed at protecting the nation’s vital security interests.

The proportionality issue, whether stated or unstated, conscious or unconscious, seems to form a central component of Japanese recollections of World War II. Japan killed 2,400 U.S. military personnel on December 7, 1941; the United States, in response, killed as many as *one million Japanese civilians*. Since the death and destruction that rained on Japan were exponentially greater than anything it inflicted on the United States, most Japanese doubtless felt, and still feel, no compelling moral obligation to apologize for Pearl Harbor. Were they not victimized *by* the Americans? How could they simultaneously be the perpetrators? Anyone who has read the gruesome eyewitness accounts to the firebombing of Tokyo or the atomic attacks on Hiroshima and Nagasaki can appreciate that understandable human reaction.

Those may be rationalizations, of course, but they are not historically groundless ones. The death and devastation wreaked on Japan by the United States, especially from the air, *was* vastly disproportionate to that borne by Americans at Japanese hands. Likewise, the historical context out of which Tokyo’s decision to hit Pearl Harbor sprouted must be recognized as a fundamental component of the wider story that, at a minimum, complicates the self-assured moral clarity of FDR’s “day of infamy” narrative. Scholars in both the United States and Japan have long recognized the crucial relationship that obtained between the U.S. policy of steady pressure on Japan throughout 1940 and 1941, capped by the crippling oil embargo of July 1941, and the resulting fear and insecurity in Tokyo. It was that fear and insecurity, born of a sense of heightened

vulnerability, that produced the ill-fated assault on the U.S. Pacific Fleet.

The attack may have been “treacherous” in the favored language of FDR, but it was hardly a bolt from the blue. Rather, it sprang more from strategic fears—*genuine* fears, however misplaced or exaggerated they might have been, than from the crazed thirst for conquest and global supremacy that drove Hitler’s armies into Western Europe and the Soviet Union. The intense debates that Japanese military strategists undertook in the summer and autumn of 1941 are littered with references to America’s “increasingly undisguised” threats to “the existence of our Empire”; to the menacing measures Washington was taking “to tighten the encirclement of Japan”; and to the necessity of assuring “the self-preservation and self-defense of our Empire,” which “cannot be attained through diplomacy...”<sup>15</sup> “American’s policy toward Japan has consistently been to thwart the establishment of a New Order in East Asia, which is our immutable policy,” declared Foreign Minister Togo Shigenori, at an Imperial Conference on December 1, 1941. “We must recognize that if we were to accept their present proposal the international position of our Empire would be reduced to a status lower than it was prior to the Manchurian Incident, and our very survival would inevitably be threatened.”<sup>16</sup>

American societal memories of the Pacific War hewed, throughout these years, to familiar patterns established during the war. From the 1980s onward, Japan has increasingly been forced to grapple with the embarrassing legacy of its aggression toward its Asian-Pacific neighbors and has continued to sweep the Pearl Harbor problem under the rug. At the same time, a memory boom with respect to virtually all aspects of its involvement in World War II has swept the United States over the past two decades, solidifying Pearl Harbor’s iconic significance for Americans. Born of a nostalgia for a time of national self-exertion and self-sacrifice in a just and moral cause, the memory boom led to the veneration of America’s so-called “greatest generation.”

This phenomenon reached a crescendo in 1991, the fiftieth anniversary of the Pearl Harbor attack. Efforts on the part of some groups, Japanese as well as American, to promote reconciliation between Japan and the United States as part of the anticipated commemoration ceremonies came up short. Prominent U.S. veterans groups insisted that any participation of Japanese representatives in the planned activities in Honolulu would be highly inappropriate. The acting director of the National Park Service denigrated the idea that the fiftieth anniversary festivities could be used to foster Japanese-American reconciliation as an “inappropriate, possibly offensive” gesture. In a similar vein, the national president of the Pearl Harbor Veterans Association rejected the suggestion that Japanese veterans be invited to attend the commemorative activities as something that 99.9% of the association’s members would oppose. “We did not invite the Japanese 50 years ago,” he said, “and we don’t want them now.” Eager to avoid unwanted controversy, President George H. W. Bush announced that the



commemoration would be strictly a national event, for Americans only.<sup>17</sup>

The president, a fighter pilot during the war who had been shot down by hostile Japanese fire, delivered two moving speeches in Hawaii on December 7, 1991. Each emphasized reconciliation and forgiveness. In the first, at a memorial to U.S. war dead, he used the occasion to issue a heartfelt apology for the internment of Japanese-Americans during World War II. In the second, at the harborside memorial to the *U.S.S. Arizona*, Bush told an audience of Pearl Harbor survivors that he had “no rancor in my heart” toward the Japanese. Yet, in the body of that speech, he focused not on the hostilities between the United States and Japan but on broader themes of sacrifice and patriotism, themes that both reflected and reinforced the national glorification of America’s fast-aging World War II generation.<sup>18</sup>

The fiftieth anniversary of the Pearl Harbor attack lay bare in stark fashion the radically distinct historical memories that Americans and Japanese held, and still hold, about the violent episode that had triggered war between their respective nations. For their part, the Americans continued to view the Japanese assault on Oahu as an outrageous act of brutality and treachery. For theirs, the Japanese clung to memories of American economic aggression that had painted Tokyo’s rulers into a corner from which they had little choice except to seek desperately an escape route. Each, in sum, saw the other as the provocateur—itsself as a victim. A short-lived apology contretemps erupted, in 1991, when the Japanese Diet, in response to popular pressure emanating from veterans groups in the United States, debated the propriety of a formal apology for the Hawaii assault only to reject the suggestion. The foreign minister, instead, expressed “deep remorse” for the Pearl Harbor attack. But that language proved insufficient to assuage those American groups who had demanded something more.<sup>19</sup>

Yet the brief flap over the non-apology did not much engage the bulk of the American populace. Past Japanese aggression was for them a historical issue, not a burning contemporary one. Unlike the Chinese and South Koreans, the Americans had no reason to question the peaceful intentions of the Japanese people or the essentially friendly and constructive nature of the bilateral ties that existed between Washington and Tokyo. Former National Security Adviser McGeorge Bundy took the high road when he asserted, in *Newsweek*, that “in the end the attack was good for both” nations because it led to the “victory that made lasting peace possible.”<sup>20</sup> He might as well have been speaking for the American Government and for ordinary Americans alike in highlighting the favorable circumstances that happily obtained five decades after the onset of one of history’s most savage conflicts. Those circumstances enabled Pearl Harbor to persist as a potent symbol of many things for Americans without ever threatening to turn into an emotionally-charged symptom of unresolved historical issues in the manner of the Nanjing massacre or the comfort women.

Americans might still cling stubbornly to the “day of infamy” framework. Yet they have managed to do so without holding any particular resentment or

anger toward the perpetrators of that infamy. As Rosenberg has rightly observed, the fiftieth anniversary commemorations of Pearl Harbor accentuated themes of national unity, patriotism, and self-sacrifice--themes *internal* to the United States--rather than issues of bilateral tension and conflict. "Reflection and personal memory, rather than vengeance and acrimonious relations with Japan, set the dominant tone," she notes.<sup>21</sup>

Well-meaning scholars and journalists in the United States and Japan sometimes propose a dual set of grand gestures to promote an even deeper reconciliation between the two Pacific War rivals. A Japanese prime minister, some suggest, should travel to Pearl Harbor, preferably on a 7<sup>th</sup> of December, and issue a formal apology for the lives lost to Japan's hostile action. An American president, then, should journey to Hiroshima, preferably on a 6<sup>th</sup> of August, and apologize for the horrendous toll exacted by the atomic weapon that America dropped on that city.

Let me close with some different advice for our respective leaders: Don't succumb to the temptation of the grand gesture, however well-intentioned and carefully scripted it might be. A backlash would almost certainly ensue in both countries, in which nationalistically-inclined and politically-motivated commentators would excoriate the apologetic leaders as weak and unpatriotic individuals tarnishing the heroism of an earlier generation. Historical debates would soon morph into political debates, harming the very process of mutual understanding that the apologies aimed to further. A common American colloquial expression aptly captures my proffered advice: "Let sleeping dogs lie!" Or, if one prefers classic folk wisdom: "Leave well enough alone!" Those admonitions carry a wise warning. At least one more generation should be allowed to pass before parallel Pearl Harbor-Hiroshima expressions of regret and apology should be risked.

But, to end on a more optimistic note: I am certain that day will arrive. It is worth noting that at this year's sixty-fifth anniversary of the Hiroshima bombing, a U.S. diplomatic envoy, Ambassador John V. Roos, for the first time participated in the annual ceremony (though he remained silent).<sup>22</sup> A week and a half later, on August 15, 2010, Japanese Prime Minister Kan Naoto offered remorse for the suffering Japan caused throughout the Asia-Pacific region during World War II (though he said nothing about Pearl Harbor).<sup>23</sup>

We should not rush this process of contrition and reconciliation. For now, let's leave history to the scholars and to the students--and let's leave the negotiation of contemporary bilateral challenges to our respective elected leaders. It is still too soon, in my humble judgment, to risk mixing the two.

## Notes

1. Gordon W. Prange, *At Dawn We Slept: The Untold Story of Pearl Harbor* (New York: Penguin, 1982), p. 582.
2. *Ibid.*, pp. 582-83. For the most recent, and authoritative, account of the inner struggle within the Japanese Government that led to a delay in the Japanese Embassy's official notification to the State Department that it was breaking off peace negotiations, see Iguchi Takeo, *Demystifying Pearl Harbor: A New Perspective from Japan* (Tokyo: International House of Japan, 2010). The book was first published in Japanese in 2008.
3. John W. Dower, *War Without Mercy: Race and Power in the Pacific War* (New York: Pantheon, 1986), p. 36.
4. *Ibid.*, pp. 36-37.
5. Quoted in *ibid.*, p. 33.
6. Quoted in Emily Rosenberg, *A Date Which Will Live: Pearl Harbor in American Memory* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003), p. 11.
7. *Ibid.*, pp. 12-15, 33.
8. Roosevelt address, December 9, 1941, in Samuel I. Rosenman, ed. *The Public Papers and Addresses of Franklin D. Roosevelt, 1941* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1950), 522-23, 526-28.
9. Rosenberg, *A Date Which Will Live*, p. 16
10. Jennifer Lind, *Sorry States: Apologies in International Politics* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2008). My understanding of the complexities of Japan's "history problem" has been greatly enhanced by my participation in Professor Hideki Kan's research project on "The History Question and the International Order in East Asia."
11. John W. Dower, *Embracing Defeat: Japan in the Wake of World War II* (New York: Norton, 1999), pp. 485-521.
12. Lind, *Sorry States*.
13. *Ibid.*, pp. 37-39.
14. Quoted in *ibid.*, p. 77.
15. Minutes of Imperial Conference, September 6, 1941, in Michael H. Hunt, *Crises in U.S. Foreign Policy: An International History Reader* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996), p. 96.
16. Minutes of Imperial Conference, December 1, 1941, in *ibid.*, p. 107.
17. Rosenberg, *A Date Which Will Live*, pp. 102-03.
18. *Ibid.*, p. 105.
19. *Ibid.*, p. 112. See also *New York Times*, December 7, 1991, p. 9; Watanabe Toru, "1991: American Perceptions of the Pearl Harbor Attack," *Journal of American-East Asian Relations* 3 (Fall 1994): 269-278.
20. McGeorge Bundy, "Pearl Harbor Brought Peace," *Newsweek*, December 16, 1991, 8.
21. Rosenberg, *A Date Which Will Live*, p. 105.
22. *New York Times*, August 7, 2010, p. 4.
23. *Columbus Dispatch*, August 16, 2010, p. 7.