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America's Influence in pre-WW2 Japan

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Abstract:

One of the things that prides modern Japan the most is their uniqueness in respect to their society, history, culture, etc., and indeed, it is true that through history Japan's geography and politics had allowed the country to remain relatively uninfluenced by foreign intrusions. However, by reviewing a detailed depiction of a specific period in Japan's history, and its interactions with other countries during that time, it will be proven the falseness of this concept. For that purpose, this thesis will rely on historical evidence provided by historians, as well as several academic studies exploring the influences Western countries had in Japan during different historical periods, from 1543 to 1941. More precisely, this study attempts to show how one specific interaction; the arrival of a Commodore of the U.S navy to Japan in 1853, resulted in a series of changes (within Japanese culture and society) which eventually led to the 1941 attack on Pearl Harbor. By connecting said interaction to an event of such importance to the world history as WWII it will be proven how Japan has indeed been greatly affected by external influences throughout its history.

Keywords: America, Japan, Commodore Perry, Meiji Restoration, Pearl Harbor.

Resumen:

Una de las cosas de las que más se enorgullece el Japón moderno es la unicidad de su sociedad, su historia, su cultura, etc., y de hecho, es cierto que a lo largo de la historia la geografía y la política de Japón han permitido que el país se mantenga relativamente ajeno a las intrusiones extranjeras. Sin embargo, al examinar una descripción detallada de un período específico de la historia de Japón, y sus interacciones con otros países durante ese tiempo, se demostrará la falsedad de este concepto. Para ello, este artículo presentará pruebas históricas proporcionadas por libros, así como varias tesis que describen las influencias que los países occidentales ejercieron sobre Japón durante diferentes periodos históricos (desde 1543 hasta 1941). Más concretamente, este artículo trata de mostrar cómo una interacción específica; la llegada de un comodoro de la armada estadounidense a Japón en 1853, dio lugar a una serie de

cambios (dentro de la cultura y la sociedad japonesas) que finalmente condujeron al ataque a Pearl Harbor en 1941. Al relacionar dicha interacción con un acontecimiento de tanta importancia para la historia mundial, se demostrará cómo Japón si ha sido afectado por influencias externas.

Palabras clave: América, Japón, Comodoro Perry, Restauración Meiji, Pearl Harbor.

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1- Introduction

Japan's self-identification as unique in the world is not exclusive to them; it is a widespread idea around the Western world as well.

On the one hand, Japanese like to think of their society, their culture, as having this unique identity that is sort of inaccessible to foreigners. On the other hand, foreigners, particularly Westerners —North Americans and Europeans— have always regarded Japan as this very unique distant culture. (Bestor 2002).

That unique identity is embodied by a concept known as *nihonjinron*, which literally translates as theories or discussions regarding Japanese people. *Nihonjinron* defines japaneseness (or Japanese identity) based on “the analysis of theories, discussions, reflections and thoughts that focus on issues of nationalism and cultural identity in varied fields as history, sociology, anthropology, philosophy, science, psychology, linguistics, music and the arts” (Shirley 34).

As we will see below, there was a time when the geopolitical characteristics of the country allowed for the establishment of an isolationist period, called *Sakoku*, in which Japan was closed to the world for 214 years, from 1639 to 1853. During that period of isolation, the influence that other countries could exert over Japan was minimal, as anyone who tried to enter or leave the country without permission (and not many permits were granted) would risk being executed. However, prior to that time, it cannot be denied that Japan was influenced by other countries, mostly China. This influence is observable today in the language (*kanji*) and food, both of which are considered very important features of modern Japanese identity. Similarly, as presented henceforth, Western influence also played their role in the historical development of the country at the time.

If we turn our gaze to the contemporary era, it is practically impossible to say that one country is unique or does not receive influences from another. In the case of Japan (as well as many other countries) the greatest influence nowadays is that exerted by America both

during and after World War II. Such influence is observable in food, entertainment, politics, etc.

However, there is another period in which I believe American influence was of great importance and yet, it has not received as much academic attention; pre-WW2 influence is eclipsed by that of post-WW2. For this reason, some interactions in between both countries have been left unexplored.

More precisely, I have observed that researchers had left one particular interaction unstudied. That interaction being the arrival of Commodore Perry of the U.S navy and the four steam ships under his command to Tokyo Bay in 1853 and the consequent ending of the aforementioned Sakoku Period. Scholarly explorations of this event never went past the immediate consequences of what happened. They focused on the singularity of the event itself without connecting it to others, remaining wholly unrelated to other events which changed the world. That is what constitutes the central thesis of this study: the firm belief in the relation between Commodore Perry's arrival in Japan in 1853 and the attack on Pearl Harbor in 1941.

For this purpose, the body of the project will be divided into three parts: the first one will review the events that preceded the isolationism period and how European influence affected such event and the second part will present Commodore Perry's arrival and what it eventually led to. The third and last part will showcase how the changes that were caused by Japan's opening to the world were perceived by Japanese society and how these are related to the attack on Pearl Harbor.

The first two parts will then consist of a selection of historical events that occurred in Japan and how western influence affected them, this will be the historical part, and as such, the study relies on historical accounts by different historians. The third part will be a theoretical part and so, this study will rely mostly on other sources such as dissertations and journals.

2- First Western Contacts, Sengoku Jidai, Unification and the Sakoku Period.

It is important to study the first interactions in between the European countries and Japan because, even though these are not the main focus of this dissertation, they help to prove the idea that external forces did influence Japanese culture and society of the time. And, more importantly they serve as a context to understand Japan's reaction to the arrival of Commodore Perry.

The first of those contacts took place in 1543 when a Portuguese ship disembarked off the coasts of Japan after having gone astray. Six years later, in 1549, the Spanish Jesuit missionary Francisco Javier arrived at Kyushu (located in the south of Japan). It was then that the spread of Christianity in Japan started. As we can observe in by Ronald E. and Robert L's work: "within two years [the Portuguese] were making regular port calls... European firearms, fabrics, glassware, clocks, tobacco, and other Western innovations were traded for Japanese gold and silver." (24) These, among other European innovations, were introduced to a Japan still living in a feudal system.

That system was based around three figures: emperor, *shogun*, and *daimyo*. The emperor was technically the highest authority in Japan. Said authority was granted from his divine origin, for he was considered a descendant of Amaterasu, one of the main deities in Shintoism. The shogun was appointed by the emperor, and he was the one who effectively ruled the country, acting as the highest civil, military, diplomatic and judicial authority. The figure of the daimyo was that of a feudal lord designated by the shogun that ruled over a certain territory.

Prior to the arrival of the Europeans there had been a war in between the emperor and the shogun, which resulted in the establishment of two imperial courts. Eventually the two courts reunified but due to the long period of separation the central political power had weakened greatly. So, when the Europeans arrived the system was in chaos, the weakness of

the central government spurred an era of instability and wars known as Sengoku Jidai, which lasted from 1467 to 1615. This situation is described by Henshall:

These first Europeans found a land torn apart by civil war, a land of warlords who recognised no effective central government and simply grabbed as many neighbouring fiefs as they could, either by force of arms or treachery. (43)

Such instability favored the increase of independence and a subsequent growth of the power sustained by the daimyos, specially of those further away from the influence of the court. In this way the daimyos started to fight against each other to further increase their power and territories.

It was these conflicts between powers which allowed the Portuguese to establish a strong position in Japan. This was because the commerce with Europe allowed the daimyos of the western regions of Japan to increase their economic power as described by Ronald E. and Robert L.: “Wealth was accumulated on a major scale through trade, and lesser daimyo, especially in Kyushu, greatly increased their power.” (25) Apart from this, new weapons and new technologies also meant the growth of their military strength over other daimyos. It was because of this that many daimyos gave permission to the Portuguese to trade within their lands, together with the opportunity to expand Christianity. In this way, the westward expansion of the Christian faith began. In such way, by 1560 it had already reached Kyoto and several hundred thousand people had converted.

While Christianity gained importance and the trade with Europe developed, events took place in Japan that would put an end to Sengoku Jidai and would lead to the unification of the country. During this time “three major figures dominated the period [of unification] in succession: Oda Nobunaga, Toyotomi Hideyoshi and Tokugawa Ieyasu.” (Ronald E. and Robert L. 25)

Oda Nobunaga was a daimyo who stood out for his military capabilities, which allowed him to gain control over his native province and obtain victories over opposing daimyos. Such accomplishments allowed him to be appointed as *kanrei* or vice-shogun. However, he was not interested in the offer and instead tried to limit the power of the shogun at the time. This together with his growing power represented a threat to the shogun and so he decided

to form a coalition with other daimyos and Buddhist sects of warrior monks, to fight Nobunaga.

It was one of their battles that constitutes the first instance of the use of European firearms, which were called *tanegashima*. Prior to this they were not very well known and considered expensive, however after it, the numbers of *tanegashima* only grew, until they became a primary weapon in any Japanese army. This fact is shown in Henshall's work:

...significant use of firearms in Japanese warfare, and showed Nobunaga's astuteness in realizing the potential of this weapon that the Europeans had brought with them. (45)

Eventually Nobunaga defeated the shogun, consolidating his position in the government. After this, he continued with his unifying campaign in Japan, until, in 1582 he was betrayed and assassinated by one of his generals after having gained control of a third of the territory. This is where the next important figure for the unification of Japan comes in, Toyotomi Hideyoshi.

Following his lord's footsteps, Hideyoshi continued with the unification of Japan. Eventually the rest of the daimyos surrendered, and the military reunification of Japan was complete. At the same time that Hideyoshi took control over the country by military means, he also asserted his political control by establishing administrative bodies to strengthen the newly established central government. He also relocated the dominions of some distrusted daimyos so that an insurrection was not easy to carry as they were surrounded by daimyos trusted by him. It was at this point that his interests ran into Christianity, which he considered to be a threat to the newly unified Japan.

Christians had formed strong business ties with certain daimyos throughout the previous decades. This was thus an impediment to Hideyoshi's desire of a central government that held control of the trade associations, which would allow him to regulate commercial activities with foreign countries. Likewise, these daimyos had obtained so much power thanks to the commerce with the Europeans made him doubt the loyalty of these daimyos, and thus the subversive potential of Christianity. These fears were further increased by the colonizing efforts of Europe in Asia at the time.

Hideyoshi's opinions and fears are clearly expressed in a letter he sent to the viceroy of the Indies in 1591. In it he describes how Shintoism, Buddhism and Confucianism are aspects of the same reality and serve to guarantee social order and peace. However, when describing Christianity, he wrote:

In your land one doctrine is taught to the exclusion of others, and you are not yet informed of the [Confucian] philosophy of Humanity and Righteousness. Thus, there is no respect for God and Buddha and no distinction between sovereign and ministers. Through heresies you intend to destroy the righteous law. (De Bary et al. 326)

In these lines Hideyoshi speaks of how Christians do not respect other religions and establish their own forcibly. He also mentions how he thinks that through their heresies they intend to end the social order and the newly acquired peace.

Eventually, he began to take action against everything related to Christianity. In 1587, he expelled the Christian missionaries from Kyushu to gain the support of the Buddhists and also took control over Portuguese commerce. This persecution stopped when Hideyoshi died in 1598 after a sudden illness and a succession dispute started due to the young age and perceived weakness of his heir.

Hideyoshi was later on succeeded by Tokugawa Ieyasu which was appointed shogun in 1603. This marked the beginning of the Tokugawa shogunate, which would last until 1867. Having obtained full control of the government, there was only one force that still posed a threat to his rule, Christianity. This was evidenced in Ronald E. and Robert L.'s study: "The 'Christian problem' was, in effect, a problem in controlling both the Christian daimyo in Kyushu and trade with the Europeans." (30)

This fact was ignored for some years until 1609 and 1613 when Dutch and English Protestants arrived in Japan, and, intending to wrestle the control that Spain and Portugal had hitherto had over trade with Japan, warned Ieyasu of Spain's territorial expansion intentions. They apprised that the expansion of Christianity was the pavement for those intentions. Contrary to that, they promised to limit themselves to trade and not to establish missionary activity in the country.

Considering then Christianity as a threat, just like Hideyoshi did, Ieyasu issued an edict forcing Christians to convert or leave the country. This edict proclaimed that Christians were destabilizing Japanese society and that their followers contravene governmental regulations, translate Shinto, calumniate the True Law, destroy regulations, and corrupt goodness.

They [Christians] were not content sending their trading ships and introducing their goods, they also wanted to disseminate a heretical doctrine, disrupt orthodox religion and, in this way, overturn the government of our country and take it over. This is the early warning sign of great troubles. Therefore, it is necessary to suppress them. (Sûden's Anti-Christian Edict [1614])

Half of the ecclesiastics left the country, but the Christian community that had built up during the years remained, which prompted the government to order the execution of Christians in order to suppress and eliminate the potential threat. An example of this practice would be "the great martyrdom" of 1622 where 30 Christians were executed.

The culmination of these anti-Christian protectionist policies was a series of edicts issued between 1633 and 1639. These considered the increase in the number of Christians as a threat to Japanese society, together with the belief that Spain, which was in the midst of colonial expansion in Asia, might try to take over Japan. Under this pretext, the government issued the following regulations:

1. The sending of Japanese ships to foreign countries is strictly forbidden.
 2. The travel of Japanese people to foreign countries is forbidden. If a person secretly travels abroad, that person will be punished with death, and the ship along with their captains must be detained while the incident is reported to the authorities.
 7. When southern barbarians (Westerners) teach the faith of Christianity or commit other crimes, they must be, as before, locked up in a prison in Omura.
 11. A written enumeration of goods from foreign ships must be forwarded to Edo (the capital at the time, now Tokyo), as before, and goods may be sold before a reply.
- (Lu 221)

These rules resulted in the isolation of the island of Japan from the outside world, a period known as Sakoku (closed country), which lasted 214 years. Commercial dealings with the Dutch and Chinese were the only exceptions.

As a result of the loss of trade with the West, the daimyos who had once acquired power and wealth, gradually lost it, guaranteeing Ieyasu's supremacy over them, as well as the much-desired stability that characterized a period of peace.

3- Crisis of Tokugawa Shogunate, Kurofune, Bakumatsu, Meiji Restoration.

The economic and social bonanza that characterized the early Sakoku period was cut short by a period of economic stagnation and famines that fueled anti-shogunate sentiments within the different strata of the Japanese society.

Advancements in techniques and technologies previously introduced by the Europeans, together with the period of peace, ensured the initial growth of the economy, spearheaded by the development of agricultural activity. The increase in food production and the absence of armed conflicts in turn led to population growth. In the cities, which were the main beneficiaries of this increase in population, there was a boom in trade, on which these cities depended due to their lack of sufficient production of their own. This meant the rise of the merchant or *chonin* class over the noble class (daimyos and samurai) who depended on trade for their supplies.

Several droughts that took place between 1675 and 1837, consequently followed by crop shortages and famine, put an end to the previous period of prosperity. As a result, “peasant unrest grew, and by the late eighteenth century, mass protests over taxes and food shortages had become commonplace” (Ronald E. and Robert L. 33). To remedy the situation, the government decided to strengthen isolationist policies and promote austerity within the noble classes, instead of attacking the root of the problem which were various institutional problems. It was in this situation that a sentiment against the shogunate arose, which was blamed for the situation, “from around the 1830s in particular, there was a growing feeling that the shogunate was losing control, and with it came a loss of respect... [society was] upset by the inefficiency and corruption of officialdom.” (Henshall 67)

It is in this context that contacts with the West begin to increase. These contacts are represented by the so-called *kurofune* or black ships. This term refers to all of the western vessels that arrived in Japan in between the 16th and 19th century, however, to fulfil the

purpose of the dissertation the focus will be set on the American black ships, which were of the utmost importance to ending the isolationist policies along with the shogunate.

The first contact between the American kurofune and Japan was established in 1791 when the explorer John Kendrick reached the southern shores of Japan. He apparently attempted to trade with them but was rebuffed. This was recorded in his logbook from which we can also deduce that the isolation policies were still in force at that time.

Remarks on Tuesday May ye 3rd 1791:

Begins Rainy wind NE the Natives came al long side & make all signs for aus to go to sea. They seem to want nothing we can offer them they give aus to understand that their Chiefs or head men will not a low them to trade or supply aus with anything if they do they signify they shall be put to death for it. (Logbook for Brig “Grace”)

During the following decades there were several attempts by the American government to establish contact. However, the Japanese would not allow them to land. In 1846, Major James Biddle was sent to open trade, but his demands for a trade agreement were unsuccessful. In 1848 Capitan James Glynn conducted the first successful negotiation.

These explorations are justified by the American interest in establishing relations with Japan, which in turn is due to several reasons. The opening of Chinese ports to trade with the West after the first Opium War, as well as the annexation of California, meant the establishment of a regular maritime route between North America and Asia. Thus, the Americans would need places to refuel and supply themselves during the voyage. Japan would then be a gateway to China as it fit these requirements perfectly, both because of its geographical location and because it possessed coal deposits to fuel the steamships. Additionally, the American whaling industry had pushed into the North Pacific, and was looking for safe harbors, help in case of shipwrecks and supply stations.

Complementing these two economic motives was the idea of Manifest Destiny which expressed the belief that the United States was a chosen nation destined to expand from the shores of the Atlantic to the Pacific. Thus, many Americans believed that they had a responsibility to modernize and civilize the societies of Japan and China and that forcing

them to interact with open commercially to the world was a necessity that would benefit both countries.

It is with these ideas that, in 1853, Commodore Mathew Perry arrived in Edo Bay in command of four warships carrying a letter from the President of the United States addressed to the Emperor of Japan.

However wise this policy [of isolationism] may originally have been, it is unwise and impracticable now...

Many of the large ships-of-war destined to visit Japan have not yet arrived in these seas, though they are hourly expected; and the undersigned, as an evidence of his friendly intentions, has brought but four of the smaller ones, designing, should it become necessary, to return to Edo in the ensuing spring with a much larger force. (“Meiji Japan”)

From the previous extracts from the letter, we observe how the American President criticizes Japanese isolation policies, which he says cannot be prolonged. The intent of the letter is made threateningly explicit on the second extract: Agree to trade in peace, or face the consequences, that is, war.

The letter, together with Commodore Perry’s demonstration of power left the *bakufu* (shogunate) in a state of chaos and two factions arose from it: those who proposed to open to foreign trade and those who wanted to maintain their traditional state of seclusion. In the end, in 1854, they conceded to Perry’s request and the treaty of Kanagawa was signed. In it the bakufu agreed to help shipwrecked sailors and ships in need of aid with food, shelter, or whatever supplies they required, they also opened two ports to American vessels, and the right to appoint consuls in those ports. And, even though the treaty did not provide for trade, “it contained a most-favored-nation clause, so that all future concessions Japan granted to other foreign powers would also be granted to the United States.” (Junichi 2015)

Commodore Perry’s kurofune also showed how Japan’s isolationist phase had left them in a position of backwardness in terms of military strength and technology. The American steamboats not only astounded the shogunate, but they also left a deep impression in Japanese

society of the time. Said impression is observed in a popular poem of the time whose translation is as follows:

The steam-powered ships
break the halcyon slumber
of the Pacific;
a mere four boats are enough
to make us lose sleep at night.

(“Japan Faces the Outside World”)

This realization, together with the acceptance of the treaty further weakened the vision that the Japanese had of the bakufu. Commodore Perry’s intrusion, therefore, only deepened the intramural crisis that the shogunate was already facing, leading to the collapse of the Tokugawa Shogunate, the last years of which are known as Bakumatsu.

The weakened bakufu tried to regain some strength by consulting with the daimyos about the situation, expecting to achieve a consensus and thereof take a stance from which to assess the issues raised by the American on their shores. The unprecedented nature of this consultation is described in Gordons work: “It [Perry’s intrusion] also sparked an extremely unusual step, indeed unprecedented, by the bakufu. Hoping to rally a consensus for its choice to make some concessions and avoid a war, the bakufu actually requested that daimyo submit their advice in writing on how best to deal with the Americans.” (49). However, the consultation had the unintended consequence of revealing the bakufu’s weakness to (*tozama*) daimyos critic of the government, which simultaneously distressed those (*fudai*) daimyos supporting the shogunate. At the same time, from within the supporting (*fudai*) daimyo, surged anti-foreign and pro-imperialistic voices.

The bakufu took its final blow in 1858 when it was forced by the United States to sign the Treaty of Amity and Commerce, which meant the opening of more ports to the Americans as well as liberty to trade freely withing those ports. It also incorporated a system of extraterritoriality which meant that foreigners were not subject to Japanese laws but rather their own country’s.

The pro-imperialistic and anti-foreign daimiyos, together with Japanese society, felt that by signing the unequal treaty, the bakufu had betrayed the core values of Japanese society and needed to be overthrown. Even losing the support of the emperor which supported the anti-foreign sentiment, the measures the bakufu took to reassert its dominance were not enough and in 1867 war broke out. Anti-tokugawa daimiyos (tozama), which had grown powerful due the long bakufu's weakness and their newly acquired western weapons and army tactics, toppled the shogunate, putting an end to the Tokugawa shogunate which had lasted for 264, declaring an imperial restoration in the name of the young emperor Meiji, known as Meiji Restoration.

The restoration was the beginning of a new era in Japanese history, an era of transformation towards modernity. The commitment which the new government had for that transformation was shown in the Charter Oath, which in five articles outlined the main aims and the course of action to be followed by the new government.

-Deliberative assemblies shall be widely established and all matters shall be decided by general discussion based on public mind.

-All people, regardless of their respective status in society, shall unite their hearts and minds, and vigorously contribute to the development of the country.

-It shall be ensured that all people, officials, civilian or military as well as the general public, may accomplish their personal calling and not lose their spirit for life.

-Out-dated and harmful practices should be abolished, and everything shall be based on universal principles.

-The nation's core shall be vitalized by gathering knowledge from all over the world, while cherishing our beautiful culture and tradition centering the emperor.

As our country is facing a situation which imposes imminent and unprecedented changes, I Myself, taking the initiative, pledge to all deities to firmly establish these policies, and I am determined to secure the path of further stability and development of the whole nation. Therefore, also the people, knowing the importance of the aim of this oath, should be encouraged to join their hearts and minds, and make their utmost effort.

March 14, 1868 (proclaimed by Emperor Meiji) ("The Charter Oath")

Out of the five clauses of this oath, the ones that led to the majority of reforms that indeed made Japan a modern nation are the last two. The fourth one briefly declares their intentions towards the previous government ideals, leading to administrative, and social reforms. The fifth one proclaims that by observing other countries advancements, and at the same time maintaining Japanese core values and the image of the emperor as the center of them, the country will be strengthened. These ideas motivated as series of economic, military, and religious reforms which were the main exponent of the Restoration.

As refers to the administrative organization of the country, the old system was divided into 306 *han*, territories over which daimyos ruled. After the war, the shogunate's land was taken by the government and divided into prefectures. A year later, in 1869, the old feudal lords (daimyos) handed over their territories to the central government. In this way the national government had control of the whole country and divided it into 47 prefectures.

As pertains the social system, "the old Tokugawa class system of samurai, farmer, artisan, and merchant was abolished by 1871" (Ronald E. and Robert L. 38), and a new system was constituted which contained three classes. Two of those were privileged: *kazoku*, nobility with title and *shizoku*, nobility without title. Last one was comprised of the commoners (named *heimin*), that is, farmers, artisans and merchants. Mixed matrimones between people of different classes were no longer prohibited and restrictions to traveling and changing of profession were abolished. Heimin were able to receive a name, until then that privilege had been reserved to nobility, and a population register was created.

Also, before the Restoration, nobility received an annual pension equivalent to 30% of the country's total budget. To alleviate the burden of the state this system of stipends was abolished. Samurai were also forbidden to carry a katana in public. As a result of this policy, there were no longer any differences between them and commoners, which led to their disapproval of these laws, and eventually, to riots.

And there were also some economic reforms. During the Meiji period, contacts with European powers and the United States, made the new government realize that change was needed in order to create a powerful nation. In this way, Japanese academics were sent to foreign lands to acquire the knowledge that would shape this ideal nation, this can be observed in Gordon's work: "those who traveled abroad were profoundly impressed with the

energies unleashed by industrial capitalism. Manufacturing and trade seemed as important a source of European national power as did battleships and cannons.” (70). In this way, by adopting British and North American forms of free enterprise capitalism, Japan came out of the Tokugawa-Meiji transition as the first Asian industrialized nation.

Economic reforms implemented during this time such as a modern currency based on the yen, stock exchanges, banking, commercial and tax laws, etc. allowed for an accelerated industrialization process, which resulted in the development of heavy industries such as shipyards, iron smelters, mining, chemicals, etc.

The military was also significantly renovated. We can observe this through the slogan *fukoku kyohei* or “Enrich the country, strengthen the military”, which represented the main objective of the Imperial government. This was actually one of the reasons behind the rapid industrialization of the country, heavy industries supported the creation of modern machinery and armament.

In a matter of a few decades, the Japanese military had transformed itself from Armor-clad samurai wielding swords, to conscripted soldiers bearing machined rifles and heavy artillery. Japanese ships went from wooden sailing ships powered by the wind, and large rowing oars, to large steam-powered juggernauts. Japanese citizens could traverse the island by railroad and communicate by telegraph. (Prevo 20)

Apart from this, the old regional armies which were under the commandment of a daimyo were substituted for a national army, commandment of which lied solely on the shoulders of the emperor. Other reforms included the implementation of mandatory military service for people at the age of 20 and the creation of a police force.

Religious reforms also happened. In order to support the government with the emperor at its nucleus, Shinto was reorganized and brought within the structure of the state administration. To validate the role of the emperor, Amaterasu, a deity who was related to the imperial family, was given a more important role in Shinto. For this reorganization of Shinto, the government intervened by creating an Office of Shinto Worship and supporting Shinto teachings.

4- Commodore Perry's Intervention in Japan and its Consequences.

The historical context of the relations, or rather, interactions, between Japan and Europe and the United States until the 1900s is of great importance to understand the setting in which Commodore Perry arrived and the reaction this arrival produced in all of the strata of Japanese society, forever changing the course of the country's history and the country itself. It is for this reason that the aim of this thesis is set after the historical body; without understanding what preceded Perry's arrival, it cannot be understood the reaction his arrival instigated.

Then, the aim of this study is to demonstrate how America's early interactions with Japan are inevitably connected, years later, to the latter conducting the attack on Pearl Harbor, effectively joining the Axis powers during WWII. To put it in other words, Commodore Perry's early incursion in Japan in the late nineteenth century would somehow trigger Japan's stance in WWII in the mid twentieth century. The arrival of Perry kickstarted a chain of interconnected reactions which concluded in the attack on Pearl Harbor. This chain of three reactions could be represented as follows: Commodore Perry's arrival generated a sentiment of hatred towards foreign influence, which in turn resulted in the weakening of the government. Said weakness is what allowed the U.S to force the signing of unequal treaties, adding to the animosity. Lastly, even when the treaties were renegotiated under more equal conditions, the U.S still did not perceive Japan as an equal partner, further adding to the distrust and bad relations in between both countries.

Then, Perry's arrival in Japan provoked a reaction of opposition to America, and as an extension of it, the western world. This reaction is what constitutes the first link of our chain.

As explained above, Commodore Perry's arrival led the Japanese government (bakufu) to a fork in the road: either they softened their isolation and engaged with other countries, or they risked going the way of China, i.e., being taken over by force.

To put this situation in perspective, I would like to introduce two small texts. The first one is an anonymous Japanese poem which was used before with a different translation. It clearly depicts the fear that Perry's kurofune instilled in the population.

Breaking the halcyon slumber
of the Pacific;
The steam-powered ships,
a mere four boats are enough
to make us lose sleep at night.

The second is a poem, also anonymous, taken from Feifer's study, which in this case shows not the fear, but the rejection towards foreign intrusion and what it meant.

The Japanese did not seek, they
abjured our company. It was only the
terror of our fleets which
thrust our society upon them against
their will. (103)

To understand both the rejection and fear of Japanese society, it is necessary to look at those who represent it, which in this case were 3 groups, the bakufu (government), the daimyo (nobles) and the emperor.

Following the study of Lebedova (2016) we note that, after Commodore Perry's arrival, the daimyo were asked what course of action they thought the country should follow, expecting a joint answer. However, the opposite was the case:

Abe Masahiro called a meeting regarding the new threat ... he hoped for a united course of action ... just two of the daimyo agreed to the American terms ... a number proposed that the shogunate should trade with America only until it was fully prepared for war ... a number were unable to make a decision and eleven daimyo wanted to confront the foreigners and fight. (44)

We can see through her words how fragmented the political stance was and as an extent of it we can say that the society's was too. No agreement was reached and, in the end, the bakufu had no other choice but to negotiate with the Americans alone:

Although the bakufu knew that they would likely be unable to avoid the creation of some kind of agreement ... the shogun [bakufu] was sure he had chosen the lesser evil path, that is accepting America's request, he did so without the approval of the emperor. (Lebedová 47)

As a result of that, the Japan-US Treaty 'of Peace and Amity' was signed. However, due to the setting under which this first treaty was signed, it deepened even further the crisis of the shogunate for it had then created powerful enemies among the daimyos which did not support relations with foreign powers and supported the emperor as the head of the country.

The further weakening of the government allowed for the signing of the next treaty with the U.S, a treaty that presented a major problem for those that did not support the opening of the country. This was because such treaty opened two major ports to commerce with the U.S, while at the same time it established a low import duty.

The establishment of the treaty then created two major problems in the cities where trade was allowed. First foreign goods started to pour into the Japanese market. These, having lower prices thanks to industrial manufacturing and the low import tax, crashed the local market which could not compete with their prices.

[The unequal treaties] ... forcing Japan to accept many Western goods tariff-free and to charge no more than 5 percent on the value of all others, as opposed to the 15 to 20 percent Western nations collected for themselves. Those conditions, imposed by Americans (forgetful of their own Boston Tea Party) prevented Japan from growing its infant industrial capacity and obtaining more than slim revenue from its foreign trade. (Feifer 107)

Second, the arrival of goods coincided with the arrival of foreign traders and diplomats. Here the problem lied in the co-existence of Japanese and foreigners, due to cultural differences as well as the resentment created in Commodore Perry's first contact.

Examples of these cultural differences can be observed in Lebedová's work as she presents several such cases and the solutions the Japanese government tried to put in place.

An attack took place on a Russian doctor who was returning home on a horse when he was attacked by a man with two swords (only high-rank Samurais were entitled to bear two swords). A possible motive for the attack could be an insult the Russian doctor may have inadvertently committed – the right to travel on a horse was a privilege of high-rank Samurais. (51)

To prevent such attacks the government tried to segregate the population, creating separated neighborhoods, but for those that had already established themselves in houses this presented a problem. And, in the end this only helped to increase tensions.

As Lebedová's claims, the weakness of the government was caused by the lack of a firm stance from the government and the different daimyos to answer Commodore Perry's arrival and the hatred aimed at foreign influence. This resulted in the bakufu signing the treaties without the approval of the rest of the government (even though they didn't want to). However, she does not make any reference to the nature of the treaties. It is Feifer (2007) and Junichi (2015) that further develop the unfairness behind them and how the government reacted to the problems they created.

The unfair provisions of the 'unequal treaties' Edo was compelled to sign in Perry's wake-which were indeed another form of aggression. (Feifer 107)

Although the first works clarify the terms of the treaties, they do not explicitly state that Japan was forced, coerced and imposed to accept conditions that generated arduous problems in the country.

In order to deal with these injustices and solve the problems that arose from them, the government was unified under the figure of the emperor, thus forming the great empire of Japan. This was so as to have a strong government that focused its efforts on Japan becoming a world power, so that they could renegotiate the unequal treaties from a position of equality with the countries of the West. To achieve this goal, part of western culture was adopted, and social and industrial reforms were implemented, as well as the creation of a powerful modern navy (these are the reforms of the Meiji Restoration mentioned before).

The importance of the figure of the emperor is shown in Junichi's study, where he describes how "the rapid progress is ascribed by the people more to the virtues of Emperor Meiji and of the Imperial Ancestors than to the character and ability of that unique group of men who guided the state through the period of national reorganization and through two victorious foreign wars." (Junichi 70)

Feifer (2007) explains how the government understood, having seen the power of the kurofune, that to protect themselves and not succumb to foreign powers they had to build up a strong military: "The government indeed began to 'enrich the nation, strengthen the military' and do it hugely. Japan could only save itself from Western imperialism only by acquiring and producing Western weapons. ... Japanese... to acquire their first real warship in centuries." (109)

Both Junichi (2015) and Feifer (2007) argue that, in order to put an end to the inequality behind the previously mentioned treaties, the government was unified under the figure of the emperor and the idea of strengthening the nation. But even after such premises were achieved, they still felt that the U.S did not perceive them as equal partners.

This can be observed in Junichi's study where he mentions how "the founding fathers of the Empire of Great Japan... did not think Japan's equal treaty relations with the great powers, which were achieved in 1894 and 1911, meant Japan was perceived as equal partner." (84)

Although it was clear that America did not consider them (Japanese) as equals based on the unequal nature of the treaties they forced them to sign, even when said treaties were renegotiated and Japan obtained better clauses, the problem persisted. An example of this is shown in Junichi's research, where a scholar named Cecil Uehara is quoted: "The U.S. had, at times, displayed arrogance towards Japan" (68). Said arrogance is then exemplified in the case of the revision of the first unequal treaty in 1894. Such event was of great importance for the Empire of Japan as it represented a reward to its efforts, however America signed the treaty one month after everybody else.

In spite of this, then we can say that the problem did not arise exclusively from the unequal treaties but that there were other factors (also related to the U.S view of Japan as

inferior to them) adding to this perception of inequality between both countries. One of those factors is how after such “rapid growth”, economically, socially, politically, etc. and two victorious foreign wars (Russo-Japanese war and the first Sino-Japanese war), Japan received compliments and flattery from the West which only steamed a growing national pride under the image of the emperor.

However, such brisk development caused the emergence of certain problems: “population confined to a few crowded islands; a worldwide depression which created for Japan a serious problem of unemployment; and the raising of trade barriers everywhere, which meant great hardship because Japan depended heavily upon imports of raw materials and exports of finished goods in order to live” (W. Schroeder 7). To solve such problems Japan turned to the system of those that had “pushed” them into progress, that is, the Western countries: “Japan, the most Westernized of Asiatic nations sought a typically western solution to her problems-imperialism”. (Schroeder 7)

All the compliments and flattery coming from the West had steamed a growing national pride under the image of the emperor. However, that pride was “hurt” once the west started to show disapproval towards Japan’s imperial aspirations, and implanted measures to show their dissatisfaction, such as export bans for Japanese goods, (immigration) exclusion acts, etc. Such behavior is explained in Feifer (2007): “It deeply resented Western interference in its empire-building, undertaken in imitation of the West.” (107)

Under the premise that the U.S was disparaging Japan’s solution to its problems, together with the countermeasures designed to punish them, a movement started to grow powerful within the government, militarism:

“Through the exclusion acts against Japanese immigrants to the U.S. in the 1920s and the Great Depression in 1929, the Japanese militarists, who had a plan to build a state-controlled economy with the capability of waging a total war between “haves” and “have-nots”, grasped more political power than ever.”(Junichi 72-73) In this quote we can already (more than a decade before Japan attack Pearl Harbor) foresee a possible bellicose conflict in the making. Reason for it being that “The militarists in the 1920s were a new generation who did not share the experiences of humiliation with the founding fathers ... were ambitious and reckless, and believed in the notion of the survival of the fittest.” (Junichi 84)

The warmonger nature of this new political faction, together with the fact that they had never experienced defeat, and the circumspect reactions of the U.S to their actions, created a climate of distrust and tension where a small spark could ignite a big conflict.

The Japanese conquest of Manchuria and the American attempts to stop it through diplomacy served to create a mutual tension that was slow to subside and easy to reawaken. (Schroeder 10)

In the end, the aforementioned “spark” ended up being an embargo on oil and scrap metal put up by the U.S to deter Japan for further expanding into China. Japan’s fleet was completely dependent on those resources, and so, to secure them, Japan decided to launch a preventive attack into the United States Pacific Fleet, located in Pearl Harbor.

5- Conclusion.

After having studied the different reactions that make up the hypothesis, together with the evidence of the studies, this thesis has revealed certain connections that link the reactions of the Japanese society to Commodore Perry's arrival together and with the extremes, these being the arrival of Perry in 1853, and the attack on Pearl Harbor in 1941.

In other words, the different studies have allowed us to prove that Perry's arrival was directly related to the weakening of the government, which in turn allowed the U.S. to impose unequal treaty conditions on Japan. Then, these unequal treaties, along with other factors, revealed that the U.S. did not see Japan as an equal and rejected its advances, which favored the emergence of a militaristic class, whose pro-war views fed the tensions between the two countries that eventually resulted in the attack on Pearl Harbor. It is in this way that we can appreciate the true extent of Commodore Perry's arrival with his four kurofune in Tokyo Bay in 1853.

However, it is necessary to mention that this conclusion is only appreciable when we study these factors as a chain, which most scholars have failed to do. Most authors relate the attack on Pearl Harbor to the negative reaction to Japanese colonialism (explained in the third reaction).

There is, however, one exception. George Feifer presents the events following Perry's arrival as a chain as well, following which we can observe how relations between America and Japan fluctuate and gradually lead to the emergence of a warlike climate in the Pacific Ocean.

The significant difference is that Feifer does not relate the events and reactions directly to each other, but through a common factor that exists in all of them, Japanese pride and nationalism. That is, he relates Commodore Perry's arrival to the attack on Pearl Harbor by observing how American actions affect Japanese pride and nationalism.

Then, as Feifer claims: "However the lesson of that reaction remains lost even now; a connection is rarely made between Perry's self-admiring intimidation of Japan and December 1941." (103). The rest of the scholars, seeing the facts individually, that is to say, one reaction at a time, but without relating them to each other, leave, in my opinion and in Feifer's, an enormous historical void. By "historical void", I mean that if we consider this relationship of events as valid, we could safely say that the attack on Pearl Harbor was not an unprovoked attack by Japan. Whereas if we look at the events individually, Perry's arrival was nothing more than an event that opened Japan to the world, and the attack on Pearl Harbor was a crime.

As a last remark, even though this study has explored how the American presence and politics in the Pacific affected Japan's actions, it should be made clear that America was not the only party exerting influence over Japan at the time. Other countries in the West, both inside and outside the Axis also exerted their influence in different and perhaps no less significant ways.

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