

**The Road from Perry's Arrival to Pearl Harbor:
Why America started a War against Japan?
(Summary)**

While there are a number of historically proximal events that culminated into the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, one should also consider distal events. The current article suggests that the journey to Pearl Harbor began with the arrival of Commodore Mathew Perry and his ships into Edo Bay on July 8, 1853. Based on the Japanese perspective of this intrusion, one could conclude that a conflict between Japan, as the soon-to-be first independent Asian nation to industrialize, and America, a white nation with an evangelical foreign policy, was perhaps inevitable.

The author points out that the arrival of Perry in Edo, now Tokyo, Bay was not the magnificent awe-inspiring event as western textbooks have described it. In fact, the crew and Perry are characterized as little more than pirates in naval uniform. The arrival itself ignored protocol as foreign ships were to dock in Nagasaki and not Edo Bay. This rude arrival led to permanently overturning Japan's social and political order. Edo's defenses were no match against the firepower at Perry's disposal—any display from the “Black Ships” guns would have devastated the city and possibly lead to vast casualties. Perry's own motives were likely beyond simple desires to “open trade” with Japan and have good relations with Japan. The article suggests that the true purpose of Perry's visit was to secure a permanent base for the US Navy.

There is also the western impression that Edo, and the rest of Japan, at the time of Perry's arrival was “uncivilized” and ruled by an aristocratic clique. In fact, Japanese culture is a product of the common people. Furthermore, the Japanese people, at that time were highly literate, even women and children, thanks to the existence of “temple schools”. It was such an egalitarian society, based on education and not status or race, that inspired the Japanese propose an amendment to the League of Nations charter to abolish racial discrimination. Predictably, the white European nations, including the US, turned down this proposal. The article gives an overview of European rule over Asian colonies, clearly showing why native peoples saw the Japanese as liberators during the Great East Asian War. Again, perhaps it was inevitable, given the injustice perpetuated by Europeans in Asian countries, that a clash would occur between European colonialists and Japan.

A final irony of the Great East Asian War is the displaying of Perry's flag on the deck of the battleship *USS Missouri*, aboard which Japan signed the instrument of surrender. While Perry was unable to secure a base with his incursions, almost 100 years later, the US finally got its naval base, at Yokosuka, after thoroughly decimating Japan. While Japan suffered defeat, Asian countries rose up and declared independence from their European masters. Thus, Japan offered hope in the midst of tragedy.