## Chapters

## Foreign Policy Failure

> After the U.S. invasion and occupation of Iraq, those who search military history for a strategic imbecility comparable to December 7, 1941, will no longer come up dry.[15] –John Dower, 2009

After the *9/11 Commission Report* concluded that "imagination failure" was one of the factors contributing to the government's failure to anticipate 9/11 or effectively manage its aftermath, **John Dower** expands the concept of "imagination failure" to begin in the years before Pearl Harbor and stretch all the way to the American intervention in Iraq in *Cultures of War: Pearl Harbor/Hiroshima/9-11/Iraq* (2009). This course reader uses an excerpt from that book titled**, "The Failure of Imagination: From Pearl Harbor to 9-11, Afghanistan and Iraq."**

**The Failure Of Imagination: From Pearl Harbor to 9-11, Afghanistan and Iraq.**
John Dower with an Introduction by Laura Hein
September 6, 2010
http://apjjf.org/-John-W.-Dower/3405/article.html

Introduction

The Asia Pacific Journal *is proud to offer its readers a preview of John W. Dower's new book,* Cultures of War: Pearl Harbor/ Hiroshima/ 9-11/ Iraq *(New York: Norton 2010). In the first days after the Al Qaeda attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon on September 11, 2001, prominent American news sources reacted by invoking the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor in 1941, and President Franklin D. Roosevelt's description of the event as an act of "infamy." That analogy caught the attention of many people, but Dower has thought more deeply than most about the underlying issues. The resonances between the past and the present are profound and disturbing.*

*Dower attends to what people do and also how they justify their actions, because he wants to know why smart people—and smart societies—do such stupid things. More precisely, he is interested in why they do the same stupid things over and over again, often with such malevolent consequences. His conclusions about the cultures of war do not bode well for the future. This excerpt focuses on why the United States government was unprepared for the attacks in 1941 and again in 2001 and, to a lesser extent, on the reasoning of both sets of attackers. The "failure of imagination" he analyzes was systemic, involving the failure to*

[15] John Dower, *Cultures of War*, pp. 17-18. "Strategic imbecility" was the original expression of Samuel Eliot Morison, Dower, pp. 26, 115.

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