

American Renaissance

There is not a truth existing which I fear, or would wish unknown to the whole world.

—Thomas Jefferson

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What Makes a Nation: The Case of Japan

An expert's two-part report on a country that is doing a few things right.

by Steven Howell

Let us be honest: The Japanese have left us behind. Americans are bad losers and prefer not to admit it, but in nearly every way, Japan puts us to shame. Whether it is crime rates, literacy, GNP growth, investment rates, life expectancy, or even the yearly number of patents per capita, Japan is well ahead of us and of nearly everyone else.

Unlike the United States, which is worried about the future, always slipping behind and cutting back, Japan is optimistic. Only 45 years after B-29s nearly destroyed it, Japan is bursting with energy—investing, building, expanding, ready for the future. Before long, a few rocky islands in the Pacific could be the dominant economic and cultural force in the world. How have the Japanese done it?

People who visit Japan are tempted to think that the Japanese are just like us. They dress like Westerners, they build skyscrapers, they believe in efficiency, and listen to Beethoven. Many of them even speak English. Virtually every analysis of Japanese success therefore concentrates on such things as fiscal policy and management techniques. This is no more useful than explaining American ghetto poverty in terms of federal jobs programs.

Not Like Us

I have spent many years in Japan. The Japanese are not like us. In some

ways, they are as we used to be, and in others they are unlike anything we have ever been. But the essential thing is that Japan is, and will always be, *Japanese*. It has an almost 19th century sense of nationhood, and a fierce resolve to maintain its national traditions, come what may. Unlike Americans or common-market



Europeans, Japanese have a near-instinctual sense of who they are. This gives Japan the community and purpose that will carry it well into the next century.

Uniqueness

Japanese have an almost touching, “Wogs-begin-at-Calais” conviction of their own uniqueness. No people in the world spends as much time meditating on, glorying in, or apologizing for its singularity. There is an entire publishing genre one might call “theory-of-the-Japanese,” in which authors agonize happily over

how inscrutable Japanese are to everyone else.

Naturally, a highly developed sense of uniqueness requires a sharp distinction between Japanese and others. Even in the 17th century, Japanese were so determined to keep their land untainted by foreigners that they closed themselves off to the world for two centuries. Their forced re-entry into international affairs in 1853 did not essentially change their sense of separateness. The rule is simple: The only way to become Japanese is to be born that way.

The best illustration of this is the way Japan treats resident Koreans. Many Koreans migrated to Japan between 1910 and 1945, when Korea was part of the empire. There are now thousands of third-generation Koreans, who look, act, and sound just like Japanese. They have permanent legal residency but they are not citizens. They cannot vote or hold government jobs, and most Japanese would rather not marry or employ them. Lately, there has been some liberal clucking in the press about this, but the general feeling is that if Koreans don't like it, they can always go back to Korea, which is where they belong.

The word “nation” comes from the Latin *natio*, meaning “race” or “breed,” and from *nasci*, meaning “to be born.” Japanese feel this vividly. No matter how “Japanese” a third-generation Korean may seem, his cultural pedigree is alien. I have asked Japanese how many generations it would take before Koreans would really be Japanese. They look at me as if I were stupid, and say, “They'd always be Korean.”

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Letters from Readers

Sir — Miss Richards' review in the August issue prompted me to read Larry Auster's *The Path to National Suicide*, which I had ordered some time ago. It is just as intelligently and gracefully argued as she reported, and I have seldom spent a more worthwhile three dollars. It is true that despite some very keen observations on the subject of race, Mr. Auster stops just short of the conclusion towards which logic seems to impel him; that any race-blind immigration policy will eventually destroy the character of our nation. Nevertheless, in a book offered to the general public, it may be best to let readers draw their own subversive conclusions.

Miss Richards did not mention this, but Mr. Auster also touches on a different subject that is very important. On page 48, he writes: "Even if there were no immigration at all, America would still be experiencing what can only be called a terrifying social and moral decline." This is a tantalizing sentence, with which anyone who has a sense of the past is likely to agree. Nevertheless, since Mr. Auster does not elaborate, it is impossible to know whether he and I are terrified by the same declines. I hope that Mr. Auster will some day write another book, on the larger subject of why so many of the virtues our ancestors took for granted have largely disappeared.

Be that as it may, Mr. Auster goes on to point out that other nations have, in the past, recovered from grievous collapse, but only because their national identities, "the spiritual spark of their civilizations," had survived. In the United States, not only is there little sense of decay, or urgency about

the need for renewal; massive non-white immigration could snuff out the spiritual sparks that are still burning. Name Withheld, Frankfort, Ky.

Mr. Auster has promised to write a reply to Miss Richards' review of his book. We look forward very much to publishing it in the next issue. — Editor

Sir — As a charter subscriber to *AR*, I have grown accustomed to anticipating each new issue with great pleasure. I am sure that you and your staff have received many compliments on your fine articles and always fascinating book reviews. However, I would like to send a specific thank you to whomever is responsible for the wonderful, witty, always apt art work. It is a constant source of delight. I enclose my renewal check with the anticipation that your artistic inclinations will continue to grow and flourish.

Joy McGuire, Asheville, N.C.

Sir — Your August cover story on Detroit was chilling. I weep for my country to think that people actually come from all over the world to watch Americans set fire to their own city every Halloween. What must they think of us?

I live in Los Angeles, another city that lost its white majority long ago, and one that better reflects the ethnic future of the United States than does Detroit. I assume that you will include *The City of the Angels* in your series on American cities.

In that connection, I wish to call your attention to a forthcoming book

to be published by Simon & Schuster, called *Los Angeles—Capital of the Third World*. According to advance reports, it is an unblinking account of unchecked illegal immigration and the social collapse this has brought about. I hope you will consider reviewing it. Andrew Nagy, Los Angeles, Cal.

Sir — In your August issue you note that the NAACP has accused insurance companies of "racism," because they charge more to insure an automobile in 70 percent-black Detroit than they do to insure a vehicle in the white suburbs. Obviously, the insurance companies do this because they must cover themselves against higher theft and accident rates.

Your readers may not know this, but at one time life insurance companies discriminated—with good reason—by race. Blacks, partly because of bad health habits, do not live as long as whites do. Insurance companies charged them the statistically appropriate supplement on life insurance premiums. Years ago, this practice was found to be "racist," and life insurers may no longer adjust premiums according to race. This means that whites pay slightly higher rates to subsidize cheaper rates for blacks.

Karl Humphries, Hopewell, N.J.



"What-is-Racism" Issue Reprinted

We have had so many requests for extra copies of the July issue of *AR* that we have reprinted it. The price per copy is \$2.50, which includes postage. For orders of ten or more, the price is \$2.00 per copy.

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Japanese are just as suspicious of their countrymen who have emigrated. Someone who has left Japan to live in Brazil or the United States has forever renounced his status as a Japanese. Should he or his descendants ever want to come back to Japan, they would be just as unwelcome as Koreans. Japanese who



Sword hilt, 19th century.

emigrate know this, and they throw themselves wholeheartedly into the culture of their new homeland.

Japanese and Race

Since Japanese feel so distant from people who are racially and culturally indistinguishable from themselves, it is not hard to imagine how they feel about people who are obviously different. In 1986, the then-Prime Minister of Japan, Yasuhiro Nakasone, casually mentioned to a group of journalists that large numbers of blacks and Hispanics were a drag on the American economy and made the country less competitive. Although the remark provoked outrage in

America, in Japan, it was accepted as obviously true.

In 1990, when a cabinet minister congratulated the police on clearing the sex trade out of a residential neighborhood, he likened the arrival of prostitutes to the appearance of blacks in an all-white neighborhood. They lower the tone, he said, and the solid citizens clear out. American commentators choked with anger. Of course, whites have fled a thousand American communities that were turning black, but Japanese cabinet ministers are presumably not supposed to have noticed.

A distaste for blacks is nothing new. One of the consequences of the post-war occupation of Japan was a crop of mixed-race children, left behind when the Americans went home. The half-white children were grudgingly tolerated. The ones who were half-black were bundled off to Brazil, along with their mothers.

Linguistically, culturally, and racially, Japan is one of the most homogeneous countries in the world. This means that it never even thinks about dozens of problems that are worrying America nearly to death. Since Japan has only one race, no one ever uses the word "racism." There was no "civil rights movement," no integration struggle, and no court-ordered busing. There is no bilingual education, and no affirmative action.

There is no tyranny of "political correctness." No one is clamoring for a "multi-cultural curriculum," and no one wants to rewrite history. When a company needs to hire someone, it doesn't give a thought to "ethnic balance;" it just hires the best person

for the job. No one has ever been sent to a reeducation seminar because of "insensitivity."

Japan has no Civil Rights Commission and no Equal Employment Opportunity Commission. It has no Equal Housing Act or Equal Voting Rights Act. No one worries about drawing up voting districts to make sure that minorities get elected. Japan has no noisy ethnic groups trying to influence foreign policy. Japanese haven't the slightest idea what a "hate crime" could be. There is no end to the things Japanese *don't* have to worry about.

And put that way, one wonders what half the people in America would do for a living or what journalists would think to write about, if it weren't for the looming presence of race. The time, money, effort, and agony that Americans lavish on race doesn't tighten a single bolt or bake a single bun, and Japanese can put the effort to productive use.

"Progressive" Americans believe that a great deal of racial scurrying



Sword hilt, 19th century.

around is somehow good for us, and they work themselves into self-righteous frenzies over the Japanese compulsion to draw boundaries between themselves and others. Of course, an insistence on boundaries is one of Japan's greatest and most obvious strengths. Though Americans have been trained to pretend otherwise, it is a natural part of any healthy society. Nothing in Japan would be the same if Japanese did not draw such a firm line at the water's edge. ●

Steven Howell is the pen name of a consultant to American companies doing business in Japan. He speaks fluent Japanese and is the author of a book about the Japanese national character. The second part of his article will appear in the October issue.

The Animal in the Man

Carl N. Degler, *In Search of Human Nature*, Oxford University Press, 1991, 400 pp., \$24.95

reviewed by Thomas Jackson

Current assumptions about the nature of man are based as much on ideology as on research.



In *In Search of Human Nature*, by Professor Carl Degler of Stanford University, is an attempt to understand how environment displaced heredity as the accepted explanation for human behavior. It would be hard to think of an intellectual revolution that has so profoundly influenced social policy, and it is high time it attracted the attention of a historian as eminent as Prof. Degler.

His book is also a cautious account of how biology, after its virtual elimination as an influence on human behavior, has finally begun to regain some of the ground it lost to the champions of environment. The questions Prof. Degler raises are the very ones that have been forced underground: Are men and women different by nature? Are the races equally intelligent? Is eugenics moral? Is man formed more by his genes than by his environment? The search for human nature has great consequences, for the societies that men build reflect the answers they think they have found.

For the most part, Prof. Degler answers the taboo questions exactly as the current intellectual climate requires. Nevertheless, even if he lifts the lid of Pandora's box only to slam it shut again, he gives us a glimpse of where resurgent biology might lead.

He has drawn a rough map of the intellectual landscape, and though he warns us away from certain regions, there is some good merely in pointing out that they exist.

In Search of Human Nature is in two parts. The first and vastly better one traces the currents of thought that unthroned the view that biology governs behavior. The second part, which describes the new legitimacy of biology, is distinctly inferior. Whereas Prof. Degler has combed the archives for trenchant nature/nurture arguments of 50 or 100 years ago, his references to contemporary studies are embarrassingly one-sided and only serve current academic fashion.

Biology Regnant

In the first part of his book Prof. Degler explains that it was Charles Darwin (1809-1882) and Gregor Mendel (1822-1884) who laid the foundations for the view that natural laws apply to men just as they do to animals. Darwin taught that man is a product of the same forces that created other living things: all are the result of millions of years of random evolution during which only the fittest survived. Though his influence came later,

No other intellectual revolution has so profoundly influenced social policy.

Mendel demonstrated the inevitable link between the biological characteristics of one generation and the next.

These new doctrines could explain social class. If only the fit survive and prosper, the rich and powerful must have gotten that way because they were particularly fit. Darwin thought that evolution not only explained social hierarchy but justified it. It would be folly to try to raise the pauper to the level of the merchant if the pauper did

not have the necessary biological endowment.

Likewise, no one needed to devise elaborate environmental explanations for different levels of achievement by race. Darwin thought that the races



did not have the same average levels of intelligence. If the pauper was poor because he had bad genes, the primitive races were likewise shortchanged.

Herbert Spencer (1820-1903), worked these ideas into a system known as "Social Darwinism." Government should interfere as little as possible with the struggle for survival, and should never tax the productive in order to subsidize the unproductive. Nor should individuals be too free with misguided charity. As Spencer put it: "To aid the bad in multiplying is, in effect, the same as maliciously providing for our descendants a multitude of enemies." He thought that no environment could make up for debauched genes.

Better Breeding

Darwinism and genetics led to the eugenics movement. Although it is now condemned as sinister and right wing, Prof. Degler points out that in the early part of the 20th century it was thought progressive and humanitarian. Socialists were among its ardent proponents, and some of the most respected people of the time supported it. Winston Churchill was vice president of the International Congress of Eugenics, as was Charles