

早稲田法学部 THEME 16 秋

P.A.C. O'CONNOR

WEEK 8 TRADE WARS GO TO THE PICTURES

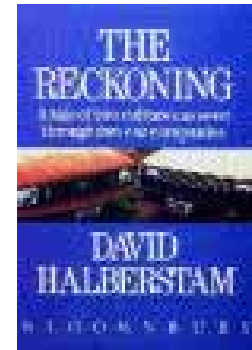
- Trade friction and business gurus
- **FILM:** Gung Ho (1985)
- QUESTIONNAIRE

READING 1 TRADE FRICTION AND BUSINESS GURUS



"Today we'll be talking about some new approaches" © Wall Street Journal

AFTER THE INITIAL SHOCK of Japanese economic success in the US, scholars and business people realised that US business could benefit if it could observe and even mimic Japanese technology and business strategies, and started bringing out books which confronted 'the Japanese way' of doing



business. Two of the best known were William Ouchi's *Theory Z* (1981) and David Halberstam's *The Reckoning* (1986)

IN 1981, *THEORY Z* sold more than 150,000 copies and stayed on the bestseller list for nearly six months in 1981. Ouchi was a Japanese American. *Theory Z* was traditional self-help dressed up as Eastern business wisdom. He talked about J-type companies (Japanese type), standard failing American companies which he called A-type companies, and a new type of successful American companies which he called a Z-type company. Only the Z-type company could beat the Japanese at their own game. The A-type company was doomed.

IN 1986, *THE RECKONING* was another bestseller, though it took a more measured approach to the subject. Halberstam's book compared the Ford Motor Company's struggle during the 1974 oil shock to the success of Nissan Motors. Halberstam showed that America was in many respects, a blessed country. It was blessed with plentiful land, had a strong agricultural economy, huge mineral resources and a dynamic venture capital system. However, its public school system achieved an extraordinarily low level of literacy, and it was ill prepared for the new world economy, or for any diminution of expectations. America did not know or even try to learn how to use the much that it had in order to survive in 'a harsh, unforgiving new world'. Halberstam's cover design ▲ showed two cars bumper-to-bumper, a collision of two forces that he seemed to think was inevitable.

READING 2: TRADE WARS GO TO THE PICTURES: *Gung ho* (1985)

Michael Chrichton's *Rising Sun*, Ezra Vogel's *Japan as No.1: Lessons for America*, Ouchi's *Theory Z* and Halberstam's *The Reckoning* all presented Japan as a threat to the United States, where fear, especially fear of a foreign or alien danger, seems to be a strong motivating force. All of them warned America to start learning from Japan, if it wanted to survive economically.

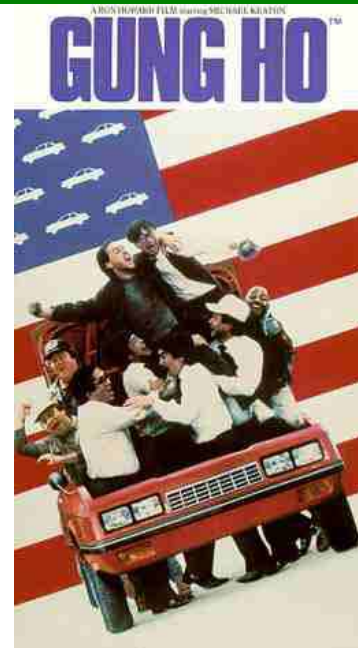
Gung Ho (1985), the film we are going to watch this week, takes a lighter view of Japanese economic success, even though the essential message is the same.

The film *Gung Ho* was an American production, made in 1985 at the height of Japanese car imports into the US, and just after Honda opened its first US factory. *Gung Ho* dealt with a campaign by a Pennsylvania town to persuade a Japanese car manufacturer to reopen its car factory in the town. Sheilah Johnson summarizes the movie thus:

"The movie is full of crude stereotypes of both Japanese and Americans, used for comic effect. The Japanese bosses are portrayed as work-obsessed martinets, wholly preoccupied with the quality and quantity of the cars produced. A boss whose wife is about to have a baby does not leave his post to be by her side. By contrast an American worker demands time off when his son is having his tonsils removed. The American workers are depicted as being skilled and capable of hard work but also as anarchic: they dress sloppily, bring cassette players to work and brawl and drink after hours.

In the end, however, a kind of reconciliation is reached between the American workers and their Japanese bosses. The American shop steward reminds his men about America's traditional "do-or-die spirit" and then comments. "They're [the Japanese] kicking our butts and that ain't luck.... They have it and we'd better get it back fast." Meanwhile one of the Japanese managers tells *his* superior, "We work too damned hard.... Our friends, our families should be our lives.... We have things we can learn from the Americans" (Johnson 1988: 142).

In the 1980s and 1990s, many in the United States realised that it wasn't enough to cry 'foul!' about Japanese imports. In the long term import quotas and trade barriers wouldn't help, because other countries would use them too. The trick was to look, learn, adapt and beat the Japanese at their own game. The US press was divided but someone had to respond to the workers who wanted to smash up Japanese cars and even murder Asian immigrants, as happened in one case. In any case, the focus shifted in the 1990s as the Japanese economy bogged down, and China (and beyond China, India) seemed to pose a new 'Oriental' threat.



The Idea of Japan [II] Week 8 QUESTIONNAIRE: <i>GUNG HO</i> (1985)	Name Date	No.
1. What is this film about?	2. Do you think the Japanese characters were like real Japanese people?	
3. Do you think the American characters were like real Americans?	4. Do Japanese car workers work so hard in Japan?	
5. Is this film just entertainment or can we learn something from it?	6. Why do Japanese car companies open factories in foreign countries?	
7. One day, would you like to work for an American company and have an American boss?	8. Is there anything special in Japanese business methods, do you think?	
9. Is Japan really such a hi-tech, powerful, industrialized society?	10. Any other comments on this film?	