

Historical Perception in Postwar Japan

– Concerning the Pacific War –

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Introduction

Historical perception of the Pacific War is a continuous source of contention, as evidenced by the debate surrounding the adoption of the “No War Resolution” by the House of Representatives to mark the 50th anniversary of the end of the war, and the more recent debate on the issue of new history textbooks in schools.

Historical perception can be broadly divided into three categories.¹ The first, reminiscences and recollections derived from personal experience, differ dramatically according to the individuals, places and experiences lived, whether on the battlefield, in internment, during air raids, or in other situations. “Memory” and “testimony,” terms that have recently become a part of the social vernacular, fall into this category. The second, “public memory,” deals with the perception shared by a nation or society, as molded by education, media, family and other sources. The third category is historical perception in academic accounts shaped by historians through analyses of historic material.

These three aspects of historical perception do not necessarily coincide. The reminiscences of individuals must be verified and extracted before they qualify as “public memory,” or historical research, and discrepancies in the goals of history as taught in the classroom and history as academic study frequently arise. In the United States, for example, the Smithsonian Museum exhibit on the atom bomb planned in commemoration of the 50th anniversary of the end of World War II generated intense debate. In this case, “public memory,” which justifies the dropping of the atom bomb with the argument that by doing so the lives of a great number of U.S. soldiers were saved, was opposed by a group of scholars who viewed the use of the atom bomb as unnecessary. Ultimately, the latter yielded.

Historical perception of the Pacific War in Japan differs from that in other countries. While personal experience and individual memories are present, no “public memory” representing a prescribed consensus on the historical interpretation of the war has yet been formed in Japan, as the intense debate on the “No War Resolution” shows.

In this paper, the author will analyze historical perceptions of the Pacific War in postwar Japan, specifically addressing the following: the transformation of the debate in the academic community and the press; the issues concerning the label “Pacific War” itself; the main

¹ These categories are posited by Akira Iriye. Akira Iriye, “Taiheiyō Senso to wa Nandatta no ka (The Pacific War Revisited, Fifty Years Afterward),” *Boeikenkyūsho Senshibu Nenpo (NIDS Military History Studies Annual)*, No. 2, (March 1999), pp. 1-3.

arguments in the controversy over historical perception; historical perception in the political arena, specifically the positions taken by successive Cabinets, “slips of the tongue” by Cabinet ministers, and the “No War Resolution;” and the complex historical perception among the Japanese people that has evolved from the combination all of these elements.

I. Transformation of Historical Perception in Postwar Japan
– Concerning Academia and the Press –
(Refer to appended figure.)

The historical perception of the Pacific War that emerged in Japan after the war falls broadly into two categories. The first category, dubbed the “Tokyo War Crimes Tribunal View of History,” is a historical perception based on the judgment handed down in the International Military Tribunal for the Far East, which prosecuted war crimes from 1946 to 1948. The most salient characteristic of this view is its view of Japan’s actions over a period beginning with the Manchurian incident and continuing through the Pacific War as a “common conspiracy”-based invasion launched by “a select group of militarists.” Traditionally, conservatives have criticized this view of history, seeing it as a symbol of the warped historical perception of the Pacific War in postwar Japan, and criticizing it as an understanding of history rooted in “victor’s justice,” and forced upon the Japanese people.² Leftists, however, have also recently begun to take issue with the fact that Emperor Hirohito and Unit 731 were exempted of responsibility for the war under the Tokyo War Crimes Tribunal.³

The Tokyo War Crimes Tribunal view of history was disseminated among the general public by the Civilian Information and Education Section (CIE) of the General Headquarters (GHQ) of the Supreme Commander for the Allied Powers through articles published in a number of newspapers at the end of 1945, and later in full-length book format in “History of the Pacific War – From the Shenyang (Fengtian) Incident to Unconditional Surrender” (Kenichi Nakaya, trans. *Taiheiyo Senso-shi [Historical Articles on the Pacific War]*, Takayama Shoin, 1946).

The second category, the “Marxist View of History,” emerged among the Communists

² An overview of specific arguments concerning the Tokyo War Crimes Tribunal was addressed at the International Symposium on the Tokyo War Crimes Tribunal held in 1983. For further detail, refer to *Kokusai Symposium, Tokyo Saiban wo Tou (The Tokyo War Crimes Tribunal: An International Symposium)*, Chihiro Hosoya, Nisuke Ando, Yasuaki Onuma, eds., Kodansha International, 1984.

³ Shinobu Oe, “Kokufuku sarenakeraba naranai ‘Tokyo Saiban Shikan’ to wa? (What is the ‘Tokyo War Crimes Tribunal View of History’ that must be Overcome?),” *Tokyo Taimuzu (Tokyo Times)*, January 9, 1989. Shi’nichi Arai, *Senso Sekinin Ron – Gendaishi kara no Toi (War Responsibilities – A Contemporary History Perspective on the Question)*, Iwanami Shoten, 1995, pp. 163-175. From an entirely different standpoint, the “Tokyo War Crimes Tribunal view of history” can also be viewed as a construct created by both Japan and the United States. Masayasu Hosaka, “Dakara ‘Tokyo Saiban Shikan’ wo Koerarenai (Why We Cannot Move Beyond the ‘Tokyo War Crimes Tribunal View of History’),” *Shokun*, January 1998, pp. 142-150.

liberated after the war against a domestic and international political backdrop formed by the founding of the People's Republic of China in 1949, the outbreak of the Korean War the following year, and finally the polarized public opinion that came with the 1951 signing of the San Francisco Peace Treaty and the Treaty of Mutual Cooperation and Security Between Japan and the United States of America (U.S.-Japan Security Treaty). Rather than with the "select group of militarists" as defined in the Tokyo war crimes tribunal, the Marxist view of history imputes problems inherent in modern Japan's post-Meiji Restoration capitalist system, which naturally implies that responsibility lies with those in power, the central authority being the imperial system. This position understands the Pacific War within three frames of reference: a battle between imperialistic powers, a battle between fascists and anti-fascists, and a war waged by oppressed peoples for liberation.⁴

"*Taiheiyo Sensoshi (History of the Pacific War)*," a series of articles edited by "Rekishigaku Kenkyukai (the Historical Science Society of Japan) and published between 1953 and the following year (Toyo Keizai Inc, total of five volumes) and *Showashi (History of Showa)*, an Iwanami paperback edited by Shigeki Toyama are among the most widely recognized literature from this school of thought.

Particularly influenced by the Cold War, the détente pitting capitalism against socialism, the latter considers the Pacific War to have been a battle between imperialistic nations arising from the contradictions inherent in a capitalist system. *Showashi* depicts the large majority of the Japanese people as "victims," and contains strong ideological overtones.⁵ These elements prompted criticism from Katsuichiro Kamei and others and provoked public contention dubbed the "Showa History Debate (*Showashi Ronso*)."⁶

Kamei suggests that the materialistic view of history is as partisan as the prewar imperial view of history, and that the concept that those living today are superior to our predecessors is an "arrogant illusion" to which historians are easily susceptible. He goes on to: (1) posit that there is in reality no group of society that corresponds to "the people" as depicted in treatises built around class struggle; (2) question whether Communists were correct on all fronts; (3) assert that the war was not merely instigated by a ruling class, and that the true sentiments of those who died in the war remain entirely unheard; and (4) suggest that the materialistic view has sought to avoid criticism of the Soviet Union as a participant in the war and the atrocities

⁴ Sumio Hatano, "Taiei Kaisen-shi Kenkyu no Shodankai (Some Phases of Study on the Outbreak of the Pacific War)," *Gunji Shigaku (Journal of Military History)*, Vol. 17, No. 3 (December 1981), pp. 2-5.

⁵ Shigeki Toyama posits the following:

"Based on his 1927 and 1932 theses, the author intends to basically confine himself to the role of historical critic. Other than a group built around a core of Communist Party members, there was no other frontline movement advocating the preservation of peace in opposition to the war plans adopted by a group of people commanding the military." "Gendaishi Kenkyu no Mondaiten (Points at Issue in Contemporary History Research)," *Chuo Koron*, June 1956, p. 60.

⁶ For general information on the "Showa history debate," see Yozo Horigome, *Rekishi to Ningen (History and People)*, NHK (Nihon Broadcasting Corporation), 1965; Giichi Inumaru, "'Showashi' Ronso ('Showa History' Debate)," *Gendai to Shiso*, No. 13 (September 1973), pp. 223-257; and Giichi Inumaru, "'Showashi' Ronso ('Showa History' Debate [Con't])," *Gendai to Shiso*, No. 19 (March 1975), pp. 177-201.

committed in Manchuria.⁷

Pundits charge, however, that this Marxist view of history has developed as “revenge for the Maintenance of Public Order Law” that underlies postwar thinking, and that it is a “grudge-motivated historical perspective.”⁸

The Showa history debate “was significant in providing a critique of the study of Marxist history in postwar Japan, and also in the role it played in stirring the ‘Contemporary History Debate,’ a debate on the form contemporary history should take.”⁹ The gist of this argument was also put forth by Michio Takeyama (*Showa no Seishinshi [A Spiritual History of Showa]*, Shinchosha, 1956) and Shunpei Ueyama (*Daitoa Senso no Imi [The Meaning of the Greater East Asia War]*, Chuokoronsha, 1964), using the same material as Kamei. There was a critique from conservatives, as well.¹⁰

From this time on through 1965, hatred against the United States began to be found on both the left and the right as Japan recovered its self-confidence with the restoration of its independence and the simultaneous beginnings of economic recovery. Fusao Hayashi represented the conservative view with his *Daitoa Senso Koteiron (On Affirming the Greater East Asia War)*, which appeared in serial form from September 1963, and was published by Bancho Shobo in 1964. Despite his capacity as a Marxist-turned-literary critic, he aggressively defended the Pacific War as the culmination of Japan’s fight to liberate Asia, a battle that had been ongoing since the arrival of Commodore Matthew Perry. This position would later be adopted as one of the indicative arguments put forth by conservatives. The underlying anti-U.S. tone among the critical postwar left also increased in intensity at this time, with liberals arguing that Japan must break out of the shackles of subordination to the United States created by the U.S.-Japan Security Treaty and surmount the “quasi-democratization” advanced under U.S. occupation.¹¹

The Vietnam War had a crucial impact on these leftist historians, triggering the development of the “15-Year War Theory,” focusing on the war as an act of aggression by Japan.¹² This stance was laid out in Shunsuke Tsurumi’s essays, and first solidified in Saburo

⁷ Katsuichiro Kamei, *Gendaishi no Kadai (Problems of Contemporary History)*, Chuo Koronsha, 1957, pp. 11-27.

⁸ Ikutaro Shimizu, *Sengo wo Utagau (Postwar Doubts)*, Kodansha, 1980, pp. 10-11, p. 59. At this point, Shimizu was already using the phrase, “masochistic neurotics and those arguing Japan was the bad guy” (p. 261). Ikuhiko Hata, *Showashi wo Juso Suru (Showa History From Beginning to End)*, Graph, Inc., 1984, pp. 146-147.

⁹ Inumaru, p. 232.

¹⁰ The most representative work is Masashi Nezu’s ‘*Gendaishi’he no Gimon (Suspensions about Contemporary History)*, San’ichi Shobo, 1974.

¹¹ Sadao Ariizumi, “Taiheiyo Senso Shikan no Hensen (Transformation of the Historical View of the Pacific War),” *Kikan Asuteion (Quarterly ASUTEION)*, No. 9 (Summer 1988), pp. 72-74.

¹² Marxism itself has been charged with the inherent drawback of requiring not the ruling class, but the general population, to take postwar responsibility for aggression. Shin’ichi Arai, *Gendaishi ni okeru Ajia (Asia in Contemporary History)*, Aoki Shoten, 1977, pp. 5-13. Yutaka Yoshida, “15 Nen Sensoshi Kenkyu to Senso Sekinin Mondai (Study of a 15-Year War History and the Issue of War Responsibility),” *Hitotsubashi*

Ienaga's book *Taiheiyo Senso* (*The Pacific War*, Iwanami Shoten, 1968). The 15-year war theory looks at the decade and a half (more accurately 13 years and 11 months) between the Manchurian Incident and the end of the Pacific War as a war in which Japan invaded Asia, primarily China, censures various acts of brutality committed against Asians, and also examines the Maintenance of Public Order Law and other issues in the national system instituted in Japan prior to and during the war. Under this theory, the Pacific War is understood to be an act of aggression by Japan against Asia, and a victory by the Chinese people and the people of other Asian countries against this aggression, and criticizes the lack of recognition of and remorse for the wrongs perpetrated by Japan as being complicit in an additional "invasion of Asia" during the Vietnam War under the auspices of the U.S.-Japan Security Treaty. In addition to the Pacific War, the criticism leveled by these liberals focuses on the U.S.-Japan Security Treaty, the Japan Self-Defense Forces, and postwar history itself (the postwar structure) and the Japanese historical perception of the Pacific War was intrinsically regarded as being at the root of this critique. In this context, the war dead and other Japanese victims of the Pacific War are not seen as having made "honorable sacrifices in death," but disregarded as "wretched deaths" that merely served to perpetuate an invasive war.¹³

In response to Ienaga's posture, Kiyoshi Ikeda examines the evolution of the Showa history debate, while criticizing a lack of historical objectivity, posing the question, "How meaningful is the contrite judgment rendered by those of us now ensconced at a safe distance judging the thoughts and actions of people in the past from our present position of safety?" Ikeda also asserts the need for those examining the past to "experience firsthand the situation of that time" by placing themselves within the context of the values held at that time.¹⁴

Irrespective of the specific arguments put forward, the view of history set forth in "*Showashi*" and the book "*Taiheiyo Senso* (*The Pacific War*)," written by Ienaga, who was influenced by "*Showashi*," had a major influence on subsequent historical perceptions, taking its place as an archetypal understanding of history in Japan.

Between 1965 and 1975, many countries released an increasing number of historical materials to the public and used refined methods in the study of historical science. Against this backdrop, the impasse regarding the "justness" of the victor nations in past wars – namely the United States, China, and the Soviet Union – evidenced in the conclusions of the Vietnam War, the Cultural Revolution, and the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, brought to the fore a less emotional research focus based on "empirical evidence." This orientation in Japan was, as well, less closely aligned with the ideologies of either the left or the right.¹⁵ Not surprisingly, however, research based on this orientation was the subject of criticism from the Marxist camp as lacking either a robust awareness of the issues of invasion and aggression or of

Ronso, Vol. 97, No. 2 (February 1987), pp. 202-205.

¹³ Hata, *Showashi wo Juso Suru*, Graph, Inc., 1984, pp. 143-145.

¹⁴ Kiyoshi Ikeda, "Dojidaishi Kenkyu no Muzukashisa (Difficulty in Conducting Contemporary Historical Research)," *Shakaigaku no Hoho*, Vol. 4, No. 4, April 1971, pp. 1-7.

¹⁵ Ariizumi, p. 77.

historical theory. Marxists and Takashi Ito also squared off in a “Fascism debate,” arguing whether prewar Japan was in fact fascist or even whether a clear definition of fascism exists.¹⁶ Ito further posits that excessive condemnation of dreams and ideals as “illusory,” and of practical interests as “harmful,” has been an issue since the conclusion of the war and argues that the Japanese must “extricate ourselves from an extremely simplistic ideological view that sees history in terms of conflicts between good and bad guys.”¹⁷

Books such as "*Chugoku no Tabi (Travels in China, Asahi Shimbun, 1972)*" by Katsuichi Honda, which reports on the “acts of brutality” committed by the Japanese military during the Japan-China war, and Seiichi Morimura’s "*Akuma no Hoshoku (The Devil’s Gluttony, Kobunsha, 1981)*," which deals with Unit 731, have continued to address the issue of Japan’s aggression against other Asian countries.

The debate that has come to be known as the “Textbook Incident” of 1982 brought this view to the fore and “internationalized” the debate. China and South Korea objected when media coverage (later determined to be erroneous) of Japanese history textbooks under review reported that the word “invasion” had been replaced with the word “advancement.” Groups in Japan also voiced their opposition to the proposed revision.¹⁸ Since this debate surfaced, the issue of historical perception has gained a prominent focus in diplomatic relations between Japan and its neighbors.

The spotlight on the issue of the Emperor’s responsibility for the war grew particularly harsh during the Emperor’s trip to Europe in 1971, and to the United States in 1975, sparking multiple controversies¹⁹ and laying the ground for a number of authors to advocate that the Emperor be held responsible a trend which reached its peak upon the Emperor’s death.

The death of Emperor Hirohito (the Showa Emperor) and the end of the Cold War (the collapse of “socialism” to a certain degree) opened a new phase in the debate on historical perception. With these events, those who ascribed to the traditional “Marxist view of history” focused on “the character of aggression by Japan before the war,” calling for the uncovering and censure of acts of brutality committed by Japan, the prosecution of war crimes, the awarding of postwar compensation, and inquiries into Emperor Hirohito’s responsibility in the war.²⁰ It has been noted, for example, that the number of publications examining the issue of war responsibility soared during the 1990s in comparison with prior decades, and that these

¹⁶ Takashi Ito, *Showaki no Seiji (Zoku) (The Politics of the Showa Period (Con’t))*, Yamakawa Publishing, 1993, pp. 9-25.

¹⁷ Takashi Ito, *Nihon no Rekishi Dai 30 kan 15 Nen Senso (Japanese History Volume 30: 15-Year War)*, Shogakukan, Inc., 1976, pp. 16-20.

¹⁸ For further details on the “Textbook Incident,” see Shoichi Watanabe, *Manken kyo ni Hoeru (Many Dogs Howl at a Phantom)*, Bungeishunju, 1985, and Fumiyasu Goto, *Goho – Shimbun Hodo no Shikaku (False Reports – Dead Space in Newspaper Reporting)*, Iwanami Shinsho, 1996, pp. 93-97.

¹⁹ Kiyoshi Inoue, *Tenno no Senso Sekinin (The Emperor’s War Responsibility)*, Gendai Hyoronsha, 1975. David Bergamini, author; *Tenno no Inbo (Original Title: Japan’s Imperial Conspiracy)*, Momo Iida, trans., Reopo-ru Shobo, 1973.

²⁰ Fumitaka Kurosawa, “Sengo Nihon no Kindaishi Ninshiki (Contemporary Historical Perception in Postwar Japan),” *Hogaku Kenkyu*, Vol. 73, No. 1 (January 2000), pp. 521-522.

works have begun to focus on a more diverse set of issues.²¹

Historian Takashi Ito suggests that this phenomenon “was transformed into criticism of Japan’s modern and contemporary history in terms of distinguishing between ‘right and wrong’ due to the collapse in the efficacy of Marxism.”²² Critic Masayasu Hosaka posits that Japan’s postwar antiwar, pro-peace ideology lost its footing when the illusion of socialism came to an end, reemerging in the polemic on “comfort women” and other historical perception and environmental issues.²³

This movement generated a widespread backlash among a public that saw it as heavily “masochistic” in character and led to the formation of “*Jiyushugi Shikon Kenkyukai*” (the Association for the Advancement of a Liberalist View of History), “*Atarashii Kyokasho wo Tsukurukai*” (the Japanese Society for History Textbook Reform), and other groups from 1996 on. While historian Kentaro Hayashi considers this movement an “intense counter reaction against a leftwing view of history,”²⁴ the backlash has generated a heated debate within the popular culture over historical perception with regard to the issue of “comfort women,” descriptions in history textbooks, and exhibits at the Japan Peace Museum, as well as the film *Pride, Merdeka*, and Yoshinori Kobayashi’s *manga*, “On War.”

The general public has been involved in an undeniably intense debate on historical perception since the Showa history debate surfaced. It is equally undeniable that the added dimension created by the fact that the parties on both sides of the debate were more likely to be “laymen,” including both grassroots activists and lawyers, than historians has contributed to the “politicization” of the issue. Most historians falling into the “empirical evidence” camp have been forced to keep themselves at a certain distance from the controversies of this debate²⁵ and the present composition of the historical science community, which has proven excessively ideological in postwar Japan. Moreover, the popularization of the study of history keeps the discussion from moving beyond a rough debate to which some have reacted coolly, choosing not to participate.²⁶

Setting these issues aside, the question remains one of the way in which the debate that

²¹ Takeshi Ishida, “Senso Sekininron Saiko (Rethinking War Responsibility),” *Nenpo Gendaishi Dai 2go Gendaishi to Minshushugi*, Azuma Shuppan, 1996, pp. 30-31.

²² Takashi Ito, *Nihon Kindaishi no Saikochiku (Rebuilding Modern Japanese History)*, Yamakawa Publishing, 1993, Introduction pp. i – iii.

²³ Masayasu Hosaka, “Daitoa Senso/Taiheiyo Senso wa ika ni Katararete kita ka (Some Thoughts on the War in the Pacific: Fighting for National Survival?),” *Boeikenkyusho Senshibu Nenpo (NIDS Military History Studies Annual)*, No. 2, pp. 15-16. Masayasu Hosaka, *Omote no Genron, Ura no Genron (Public Arguments, Private Arguments)*, Shumei Publishing, 1999, pp. 8-76.

²⁴ Kentaro Hayashi, “Senso wo Megurru Kakuryo-tachi no Rekishi Ninshiki (Historical Perception of the War in the Cabinet),” *Asahi Shimbun (Asahi Newspaper)*, May 25, 1994.

²⁵ Ikuhiko Hata criticizes this tendency as, “an obsession with asceticism for which the duties of the historian are abandoned.” Ikuhiko Hata, *Gendaishi no Soten (Disputes in Modern History)*, Bungeishunju, 1998, pp. 256-257.

²⁶ Shigehiko Hasumi, Masayuki Yamauchi, *20 Seiki to no Ketsubetsu (Farewell, 20th Century)*, Iwanami Shoten, 1999, pp. 16-17, pp. 267-268.

has unfolded in recent years should be interpreted. Those who are criticized as fashioning a “masochistic view of history” accuse their pundits of ascribing to nothing more than a form of the “revisionist” historical perception that has gained so much prominence among neo-Nazis in Europe.²⁷ Historical revisionism is a method of discounting in their entirety “historical incidents” that have already been established as fact by repeatedly finding fault with contradictions that appear in certain historical materials and testimony. The most well known examples of this revisionism concern the gas chambers at Auschwitz and the question of the credibility of Anne Frank’s diary.

It is a fact that there is an emerging trend in this direction, particularly in methods with regard to what is seen as a “masochistic” view of history.²⁸ It has been noted, however, that this trend can also be understood as part of the “re-evaluation of history” that attended the dying moments of socialism. The author asserts that this trend should be viewed as the simultaneous development of these two ideologies. The “re-evaluation of history” is exemplified in the revision of past ideologies and other political distortions, as well as of exaggerated “falsehoods,” and by revising downward the number of victims of the Katyn forest incident (the execution of Polish army officers by the Soviet military, an act attributed to orders from the German army) and of the Auschwitz concentration camps, figures which had been used to exaggerate Nazi crimes, in an attempt to reach a decisive conclusion on these “historical incidents.”

In Japan, both historical re-evaluation and revisionism should be seen as the concurrent development of aspects of a historical perception, once strongly influenced by ideology, as socialism collapsed and social values otherwise fell into a state of confusion at the end of the century.

II. Issues Involved in Naming the “Pacific War”

The difficulties involved in Japan’s historical perception of the Pacific War are illustrated by the debate surrounding its name. The standards for naming wars in the arena of world history generally focus on the names of the involved nations, the region in which the war was waged, the timeframe in which the war took place, the date on which the war broke out, the parties involved, the scale, or the causes or aims for which the war was fought. Moreover, the names given to World War II stress its historical significance, as illustrated by its denominations in the socialist countries involved – the “Anti-fascism, Anti-Japan War” in China and the “War for the Fatherland” in the Soviet Union.²⁹

²⁷ For a summary of these theories, see Tetsuya Takahashi, *Rekishi/Shuseishugi (History/Revisionism)*, Iwanami Shoten, 2001.

²⁸ Masakazu Yamazaki, “Rekishi no Shinjitsu to Seiji no Seigi (Historical Truths and Political Justice),” *Kikan Asuteion (Quarterly ASUTEION)*, No. 52, November 1999, pp. 9-33.

²⁹ For further detail on the naming of the war, see Jun’ichiro Kisaka, “Ajia/Taiheiyo Senso no Kosho to Seikaku (Naming and Characteristics of the Asia-Pacific War),” *Ryukoku Hogaku*, Vol. 25, No. 4 (March

The following is a summary of the principle designations used for this war in Japan today.

A. Pacific War

Taken from the “*Taiheiyo Sensoshi* (History of the Pacific War),” a series of newspaper articles issued by the GHQ starting on December 8, 1945, “Pacific War” is the most frequently used term in Japan today. In the United States, however, “Pacific War” generally refers to the war between the Peru/Bolivia Allied Forces and Chile fought between 1879 and 1883. Another accepted interpretation for the use of the term Pacific War in English is the Pacific Theater of the Second World War.³⁰

B. Greater East Asian War

“Greater East Asian War” is used to indicate a fight for a “new Greater East Asian order” that would liberate Asia, as well as to place the emphasis on the legal justification for the war. “Greater East Asian War Inclusive of the China (Shina) Incident” was the official title for the war, including the China (Shina) Incident, and was decided upon at the Imperial Headquarters Government Liaison Conference on December 10, 1941 and adopted by the Cabinet on the 12th. Its use was prohibited by order of the GHQ for a period after the war, during which time the government used the provisional title the “Present War.” With the restoration of Japan’s independence, however, the government issued Law No. 81 on April 11, 1952 rescinding all GHQ orders, and there was no subsequent government objection to the use of the term Greater East Asian War. There is, however, deep-rooted opposition to its use from other sectors concerned that the liberation of Asia not be accepted as the purpose of the war.

C. World War II

“World War II” is used as an ideologically neutral label in order to avoid the conflict generated by the terms Pacific War and Greater East Asian War. Historian Seizaburo Shinobu, however, criticizes Takashi Saito, a historian who has advocated the use of this term, asserting that the naming of the war is not a question of upholding or disavowing the purpose of the war. Shinobu advocates “Greater East Asian War” as the most relevant of all the choices given that this is the name in substance under which the Japanese people of that time fought.

The prevalent view, however, that World War II began with Germany’s attack on Poland in 1939 has aroused doubts as to how the Manchurian Incident and the Japan-China War, which took place prior to the German attack, are to be addressed.³¹

1993), pp. 386-434.

³⁰ Hata, *Showashi wo Juso Suru*, p. 149.

³¹ Seizaburo Shinobu, “‘Taiheiyo Senso’ to ‘Daitoa Senso’ (The ‘Pacific War’ and the ‘Greater East Asian

D. 15-Year War

First used in 1956 by critic Shunsuke Tsurumi, this term gained more general recognition with the publication of Saburo Ienaga's "Pacific War" in 1968. It has subsequently come to be used more frequently, primarily by liberals. The term 15-Year War views the Manchurian Incident as the beginning of an uninterrupted phase that cannot be divided into independent wars with a predominant emphasis on mainland China as the primary battlefield and the Chinese people as the victors of this war. It has also been noted that a negative interpretation of the postwar structure in Japan is inherent in the use of this term, as well as concurrent anti-U.S. sentiment and a feeling of atonement and a sense of inferiority toward China.³²

E. Asian Pacific War

Advocated by Junichiro Kisaka in 1985 in light of the growing use of the term 15-Year War, the use of the term Asian Pacific War has been spreading rapidly in recent years. Coined to address the evolved criticism of the term 15-Year War as inaccurate, since the timeframe was in fact 13 years and 11 months, the "Asian Pacific War" describes an "invasive war fought by Japan in East Asia, Southeast Asia and the Pacific Ocean." The purpose is to replace the term Pacific War, with its embedded image of defeat in the face of the material state power of the United States in a war fought primarily in the Pacific Ocean, and to shift the emphasis to the invasion of Asian countries.³³

F. Present War, Preceding War, Excessive War, That Tragic War, etc.

As noted above, the government settled on the provisional term "Present War" during Japan's occupation. Cabinet members and the Emperor have subsequently used this term in public addresses to avoid investing the war with any politically charged values.

G. Others

- East Asian 100-Year War

Coined by Fusao Hayashi in "*Daitoa Senso Koteiron* (On Affirming the Great East Asia War)," this term signifies Japan's resistance and counteroffensive against the white man's

War')," *Sekai*, August 1983, pp. 222-231. Seizaburo Shinobu, *Seidan no Rekishigaku (Historical Study of Imperial Decisions)*, Keiso Shobo, 1992, pp. i – ii. Takashi Saito, "'Daitoa Senso' to 'Taiheiyo Senso' – Rekishi Ninshiki to Senso no Kosho ('Greater East Asian War' and the 'Pacific War' – Historical Perception and the Naming of Wars)," *Sekai*, pp. 280-284.

³² Hata, *Showashi wo Juso Suru*, pp. 143-145, pp. 148-151.

³³ Junichiro Kisaka, "'Dai-Nippon Teikoku' no Hokai (Collapse of the 'Imperial Japan')," *Rekishigaku Kenkyukai; Nihonshi Kenkyukai*, eds., *Koza Nihon Rekishi 10 Kindai 4 (Course History of Japan 10, Modern History 4)*, University of Tokyo Press, 1985, pp. 338-339.

invasion of Asia, beginning with the arrival of Commodore Matthew Perry and continuing through the war in question.

- 70-Year War, 50-Year War, etc.

Stressing Japan's invasion of Asia, the terms 70-Year War and 50-Year War are traced from the dispatch of Japanese troops to Taiwan and the Sino-Japanese War, respectively, through the war in question. The newest variation is the 100-Year War, which sees Japan launching an ongoing invasion of Asia beginning with the Sino-Japanese War and continuing through the recent dispatches of Japan Self-Defense PKO forces.

- Great Showa War

Michio Fujimura has suggested this term as one that encompasses both the Korean and Vietnam Wars in response to the dual connotation of aggression and liberation inherent in the term Pacific War.³⁴

As this list indicates, the influence of the above-mentioned ideologies has divided opinion on the term that should be used to refer to this war in Japan. It can be stated without exaggeration that the choice of a particular term functions as a litmus test – even a test of one's "faith" – of one's preferred historical perception and one's political stance.

III. Controversies in Historical Perception

The preceding sections addressed the transfiguration of historical perception and the symbolic expression of historical interpretations in the naming of the Pacific War. The following section provides a summary of the specific points under dispute.

The first concerns the problem of whether or not the war should be characterized as "aggression," and if so, at what point the aggression began and to what extent it was continuous. Some trace the beginning of Japan's aggression back to the coastal defense policy in the last days of the Tokugawa shogunate, while others propose that Japan's aggression has continued through a postwar "economic aggression" of Asia and the PKO operations mounted today. These concerns are closely correlated with the issue of where Japan's actions should be placed in the context of general world history, particularly with regard to the course of events in an age of imperialism, and how socialism, an element that cannot be dismissed, is to be regarded in light of Japan and the world as a whole in the 20th century. These issues are also relevant to current political disputes in terms of the interpretation of the postwar structures.

The second area of dispute concerns the elements that contributed to Japan's overseas expansion or "aggression." The Marxist view of history cites imperialist-based sociopolitical and economic structures as contributing factors, and stresses that "aggression" was inevitable

³⁴ Michio Fujimura, "'Showa Taisen' to iu Koshō no Teian (A New Name for Japan's Previous War: The Great Showa War)," *Gunji Shigaku (Military History)*, Vol. 32, No. 3 (December 1996), pp. 4-13.

under this system. There are also a few theories that consider the contempt for other Asians and an island mentality to be part of the national character of the Japanese people and the cause of Japan's actions. Any such categorical theory, however, has been met with skepticism in terms of whether such a capsulated causal relationship could be comprehensively correct.

The third controversy surrounds the defining of the types of actions, perpetrated by whom and against whom, to be addressed when assigning responsibility for the war.³⁵ An ambiguous conclusion on this matter precluded any clear definition of responsibility – be it legal, political, or moral - for declaring or for losing the war, or for war crimes. The debate concerning Emperor Hirohito, whether he was a pacifist or if he should be held responsible for the war, sparks particularly strong arguments.

The fourth point of contention concerns the issue of whether or not Japan's actions constitute "aggression." The dispute as to whether the Pacific War was a battle for the liberation of Asia, also phrased in terms of whether or not it was a Greater East Asian War, still rages today. The arguments are split as to the specific role the war played in the independence of the region, with some insisting that independence was the "aim" from the outset, and others dismissing it as nothing more than its "by-product."

A lesser version of this argument asserts that the war was waged as a battle for "survival and self-defense," and constituted the same crime as perpetrated by the British and the Americans in their own colonies, the ultimate outcome of which was a war that laid the cornerstone for postwar prosperity. The propriety of this argument, however, is the subject of much debate.³⁶

The fifth area of dispute addresses the war dead and other Japanese victims in relation to the place the Pacific War holds within a wider context. There is extensive acceptance in Japan, primarily among the surviving families of the war dead, for recognition of death in this war as a death for the larger society and a sacrifice for the nation, and a belief that the personal and natural sorrow of the surviving families for their war dead should be honored in a memorial that would serve as a "cornerstone of peace" and memorialize the "honorable sacrifices in death."

The opposing faction, however, stresses the aggressive aspect of the war and considers the war dead to be both "victims" forced to submit to the will of the nation, and as "aggressors" in a war of aggression. Based on this stance, detractors argue that the deaths in this war were "wretched and shameful."³⁷

Two new arguments have recently emerged with regard to the issue of the war dead. The first, a "history-oriented argument," is based primarily on philosopher Norihiro Kato's ideas. Kato posits that, before turning to the issue of victims in other parts of Asia, the Japanese should first address their feelings about the three million Japanese people who died in the war.

³⁵ This has already been noted in "Senso Sekinin ni tsuite (On War Responsibility)," Masao Maruyama, *Shiso no Kagaku Kaiho*, No. 17 (March 1957), pp. 1-3.

³⁶ See Keiichi Eguchi, *Nihon no Shiryaku to Nihonjin no Sensokan (Japanese Aggression and the Japanese View of History)*, Iwanami Shoten, 1995.

³⁷ *Senso Hakubutsukan (War Museum)*, Shinichi Arai, ed., Iwanami Shoten, 1994, p. 10 and pp. 33-34.

He argues that the Japanese people will only be truly able to mourn for the victims in other Asian countries after coming to terms with the latter. His assertions, however, have been criticized as obscuring the aggression perpetrated by Japan in Asia.³⁸

In "*Sensoron* (On War)," *manga* artist Yoshinori Kobayashi contrasts the "public" and "personal" realms, arguing for the nobility of sacrificing the "personal" for the "public," and aggressively affirming the meaningfulness of the victims' deaths in the Pacific War.³⁹

The sixth controversy surrounds the issue of such "acts of brutality" as the Nanjing Incident and "comfort women." Perception of the factuality of "historical incidents" in terms of the number of victims in the Nanjing Incident and whether the comfort women were in reality "forced" into their positions is still the subject of debate in Japan today. Moreover, opinions differ as to the significance of these incidents within modern Japanese history, and the criminality of these acts when viewed in relation to incidents on the international stage and in terms of international law. The focus of this conflict has coalesced around the content of history textbooks in Japan.⁴⁰

Finally, the seventh point in dispute pits a "future-oriented perspective," which argues that a constructive and positive discussion of Japan's history to help Japan move forward, now that more than 50 years have lapsed since the end of the war, would be more productive, against a "past-oriented perspective," which holds that without a deeper examination of the country's history, one that has thus far been avoided, Japan will inevitably move blindly into the future.

This conflict surfaced in the controversy over the "No War Resolution," and is also symbolized by the debate over the exhibits in peace museums, of which a great number have been constructed in recent years. While the majority of peace museums exhibit photographs and film footage of the tragic "acts of brutality" committed by Japan during the Pacific War, pundits maintain that there is no need for "peace museums" to depict the atrocities of war, and that they should instead actively examine the issue of how to build future peace.⁴¹

IV. Historical Perception by the Japanese Government and the "No War Resolution"

A general survey of successive Japanese Cabinets⁴² indicates a significant change in

³⁸ Norihiro Kato, *Haisen Goron (On Postwar Defeat)*, Kodansha, 1997. Tetsuya Takahashi, *Senso Sekinin Ron (On War Responsibility)*, Kodansha, 1999. For an overview of this debate, see *Senso Sekinin to "Wareware" (War Responsibility and 'Us')*, Kazue Yasuhiko, Yoichi Uozumi, Narufumi Nakaoka, eds., Nakanishiya Syuppan, 1999.

³⁹ Yoshinori Kobayashi, *Shin Gomanizumu Sengen (New Gomanism Manifesto)*, Shogakukan, 1999.

⁴⁰ Hata, *Gendaishi no Soten*, Bungei Shunaki, pp. 254-268.

⁴¹ Jun'ichiro Shoji, "'Heiwa Hakubutsukan' kara Mita Rekishi Ninshiki (Historical Perception as Seen in 'Peace Museums')," *Shokun*, October 2000, pp. 158-169.

⁴² The statements made by Prime Ministers, Cabinet ministers and others are quoted from the newspapers of the day. Statements are paraphrased, not quoted word for word.

historical perception by the first Yasuhiro Nakasone Cabinet. The influence from organized groups of surviving families of the war dead, and the issue of the connection between postwar compensation and the word “aggression,” had kept previous ministerial Cabinets from explicitly using this word. Prime Minister Kakuei Tanaka, for example, stated in February 1973 that “I cannot give a direct answer to the question of whether the war was an aggression or not. I can only say that the matter will be decided by future historians.” No significant opposition to his statement was registered at that time.

In December 1982, Prime Minister Nakasone stated, “we in the government must fully understand the fact that there is strong international criticism of Japan for having launched an aggression.” His reference to international criticism was an allusion to the Textbook Incident that was taking place that same year, an incident that triggered strong accusations against the Cabinet regarding the issue of “aggression.”

During his second administration in October 1985, Prime Minister Nakasone acknowledged the Japan-China war as a war of aggression for the first time when he said, “It’s been called the Pacific War or the Greater East Asian War, but this was not a war that should have happened. It was wrong. I have said as much. I have said that it is also true that there was an aggression against China, as well.”

These statements left subsequent Cabinets unable to reject the idea that the war was an “aggression.” Prime Minister Noboru Takeshita, for example, made remarks in February 1989 similar to those quoted above by Prime Minister Tanaka in 1973, and this time the statement did in fact trigger opposition. Prime Minister Takeshita was forced to frame his apology in the following terms. “It is a fact that Japan caused grave suffering in past wars to the peoples of our neighboring countries. We cannot deny that our action was in fact an act of aggression.”

Typical of this course of events was a statement in August 1993 by Prime Minister Morihiro Hosokawa to the effect that, “I myself recognize that this was an act of aggression, that it was a wrong war. I would like to express once again my deeply felt remorse and apology for the aggressive acts and colonial rule of Japan’s past, which have caused a great number of people unbearable suffering and sadness.” Criticism leveled at him later from opposition parties, however, discouraged Prime Minister Hosokawa from making any subsequent remarks in a similar vein.

Although the Japanese government came to acknowledge an “aggression” through the course of events outlined above, the criticism directed at Prime Minister Hosokawa is indicative of the lack of substantial consensus on the matter. This lack of consensus is symbolized in the “controversial remarks” (slips of the tongue)⁴³ in terms of historical

⁴³ For further detail on “slips of the tongue” made by Cabinet ministers and others, see Shitsugen o Nintei linkai, *Daishitsugen (Major Slips of the Tongue)*, Joho Center Publishing Co., Ltd., 2000; Shigeru Tsuchiya, *Nihon wo Kimeta Seijika no Meigen, Bogen, Shitsugen (Politicians’ Wisecracks, Reckless Remarks and Slips of the Tongue that Have Made Japan)*, Kadokawa Shoten Publishing Co., Ltd., 2001; and Norihiro Kato, “Shitsugen to Byogen – ‘Tatemaie to Honne’ to Senso no Kigen (Slips of the Tongue and Pathological Remarks – ‘Principles and True Sentiment’ and the Roots of Postwar Japan),” *Shiso no Kagaku*, No. 29, June 1995, pp. 4-29.

perception that have been made by Cabinet ministers. Throughout postwar politics in Japan, a significant number of ministers have been forced to apologize for “controversial remarks,” and have subsequently been dismissed or forced to resign. It can also be stated without exaggeration that the large majority of these statements involved issues of historical perception. As recently as February of last year, House of Representatives Budget Committee member Hosei Norota was severely criticized when he remarked, “It is thanks to the Greater East Asian War that colonial rule ended and Asian countries are independent.”

The slips dealing with historical perception can be broadly divided into three categories: denial of an “aggression (war),” justification of colonial rule over the Korean peninsula, and the denial or minimizing of issues that have come into dispute, including the Nanjing Incident and “comfort women.”

Minister of Education Yoshinobu Shimamura (in August 1995) stated, “Whether or not the war was an aggression is a matter of perspective. The act of aggression is war. And, if Japan was the only country to have committed such an act, we would have to give the matter serious thought, but there are a number of similar cases throughout the world.” In addressing the issue of “aggression,” Minister Shimamura’s remarks were echoed by Minister of Education Masayuki Fujio (September 1986), Minister of Justice Shigeto Nagano (May 1994), Director-General of the Environment Agency Shin Sakurai (August 1994), and International Trade and Industry Minister Ryutaro Hashimoto (October 1994).

In speaking about the issue of colonial rule, Director-General of the Management and Coordination Agency Takami Eto stated in October 1995, “If we start talking about the nullification of the Japan-Korea Treaty of Annexation, it would become impossible to conclude any international agreements at all. Japan did also do some positive things during its colonial rule.” Minister of Education Fujio (September 1986) and others have also commented on this issue.

Regard Japan’s relationship with China, the most widely known remarks were made by Minister of Justice Nagano (May 1994), and Shintaro Ishihara, member of the House of Representatives (September 1990), when they spoke to the effect that the “massacre” the Chinese talk about when speaking of the Nanjing Incident is a fabrication.

In connection with the issue of “comfort women” in recent years, Minister of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries Shoichi Nakagawa commented in July 1998, “I am not sure this subject should be included in textbooks as a historical incident.”

It was in this environment that the Japanese government turned its attention to the “No War Resolution” in June 1995. This resolution was studied with the approval of the three-party ruling coalition, which at the time comprised the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP), the Social Democratic Party (SDP), and the Sakigake Party. With their differing historical perspectives, the LDP and SDP clashed on such issues as the definition of “aggression,” the positioning of the war in the context of world history, whether or not a passage of “apology,” one that would lead to postwar compensation, should be inserted into the resolution, and the issue of “war responsibility.” To circumvent these disputes, the following compromise was ultimately reached.

Resolution to Renew the Determination for Peace on the Basis of Lessons Learned from History (No War Resolution)

“On the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the end of World War II, this House offers its sincere condolences to those who fell in action in wars and similar actions all over the world. Solemnly reflecting upon many instances of colonial rule and acts of aggression in the modern history of the world, and recognizing that Japan carried out those acts in the past, inflicting pain and suffering upon the people of other countries, the Members of this House express a sense of deep remorse. We must transcend differences over historical views of the past war and learn humbly the lessons of history so as to build a peaceful international society.”

Passage of this proposed compromise was ultimately secured by setting forth a context for modern world history that considers the United Kingdom and the United States to be equally guilty, replacing the words “aggression” and “apology” with “acts of aggression” and “deep remorse,” respectively, and expressing sympathy with all who died in the war, including Japanese deaths.⁴⁴

The absence, however, of the Shinshin and Communist parties and approximately 70 members from the ruling coalition parties from the House of Representatives voting session meant the resolution only passed by a slight margin of scarcely more than half the members voting in favor, despite the fact that a resolution of this type indicates solidarity across the Diet.

In August 1995, the year the resolution was passed, Prime Minister Tomiichi Murayama went one step further in a discussion commemorating the 50th year anniversary of the end of the war with his statement, “Our country, in the not-so-distant past, instituted an erroneous national policy that led the country on the path to war, threatened our citizens with life-and-death danger, and brought about colonial rule and aggressions, which caused suffering to the people in many Asian countries.” Outside of Japan, however, the semantic differences between this statement and the wording of the No War Resolution has led to misunderstandings as to where Japan’s true feelings lie.

The resolution has also been criticized as glorifying and/or rationalizing an aggressive war, and the Communist Party, whose members had not attended the resolution vote, issued its own proposed resolution.

⁴⁴ For further detail on the trend surrounding the “No War Resolution,” see Kiyoshi Yasumura, *Rekishi wo Sabaita Seijika-tachi – Sengo 50 Nen, Kokkai no Kyoso (Politicians who Judged History – 50 Postwar Years, Uproar in the Diet)*, Tentensha, 1995; “‘Sengo 50 Nen Ketsugi’ Mondai to Nihon no Ajia/Taiheiyo Shinryaku (‘Resolution for 50th Anniversary of End of WWII’ Issue and the Japanese Aggression against Asia-Pacific),” *Zenei Rinjizokan 1996 Seiji Keizai Solan*, Japanese Communist Party Central Committee, June 1996, pp. 27-47; “Fusen Ketsugi wa Hitsuyo datta ka (Was the No War Resolution Necessary?),” Bungeishunju, ed., *Nihon no Ronten 96 (Japan’s Disputes 96)*, Bungeishunju, 1996, pp. 130-139.

“We call upon the government to express deep remorse for an aggressive war, offer a sincere apology to the countries involved, provide national compensation in good faith, uphold the principle of perpetual peace set forth in the Constitution of Japan, and make clear its resolve to never again wage war.”⁴⁵

In Clause 3 of the SDP’s “Basic Policy Tenets, Basic Policy Problems (*Seisaku no Kihon Rinen to Seisaku no Kihon Kadai*),” the party inserted the following phrase on historical perception, “We express our remorse and offer our apologies for the colonial rule and aggressive war in the past, and pledge to the people of all nations that this past will not be repeated...”⁴⁶ The *Yomiuri Newspaper* (*Yomiuri Shimbun*), however, criticized this phrase, editorializing, “What more are we to do? SDP’s proposal presents a masochistic view of history.”⁴⁷

The No War Resolution provoked a diverse array of reactions, as the resolution was charged with “lacking a clear apology,” containing “ambiguous content making an understanding of its true meaning impossible,” and “requiring a greater focus on the future.”

Despite being hailed by those who passed it as, “overcoming differences in historical perception and humbly incorporating lessons learned from history,” the above-mentioned criticisms illustrate the difficulties and complexities Japan faces with regard to this issue.

V. Distinctive Features of Japanese Historical Perception – Context for Complex Beliefs

It is often noted that, in contrast to the German historical perception of World War II, the perception among Japanese people of themselves as victims is stronger than a perception of themselves as victimizers. Although criticizing this point in isolation from a greater context is a simple exercise, it is not difficult to imagine that Japanese with this perception understand historical perception within an all-inclusive framework, considering various complicated factors and contexts to arrive at this perception, which are examined in this chapter.

The first aspect that should be noted in this regard is the multifaceted nature of the Pacific War.⁴⁸ Above all, while the war with the United States began with Japan’s surprise attack on Pearl Harbor, the dropping of the atomic bomb and large-scale air raids, as well as a particular view of the United States in Japan that has evolved since the arrival of Commodore Perry, has also influenced the manner in which this war is understood in Japan. In addition to

⁴⁵ “‘Sengo 50 Nen Ketsugi’ Mondai to Nihon no Asia/Taiheiyo Shinryaku,” p. 34.

⁴⁶ *Gekkan Shakaiminshu*, February 1996, p. 46. The SDP is also compiling a pamphlet entitled *Shokumi’nchi Shihai no Shazai/Shinryaku he no Hansei Mirai no Heiwa he no Ketsui, Kokkai Ketsugi Jitsugen ni Mukete* (*Apology for Colonial Rule/Remorse for Aggression Dedicated to Future Peace Realizing a Diet Resolution*).

⁴⁷ Toshio Asakura, “Torendo (Trends),” *Yomiuri Shimbun* (*Yomiuri Newspaper*), December 28, 1995.

⁴⁸ Kenichi Ito also notes the importance of a multifaceted understanding in “Senso Sekinin: Shin no Rekishiteki Jijitsu wo Katate (War Responsibility – Give us True Historical Facts),” *Sankei Shimbun* (*Sankei Newspaper*, August 11, 1993.)

recognizing that the causes for the war lie with both parties, there is a striking perception among the Japanese that Japan was a victim in the war with the U.S. In the case of the war with the Soviet Union, the Japanese, informed by such events as the one-sided breach by the Soviet Union of the Neutrality Pact in invading Japan, the tragic experience in Manchuria, and the internment of Japanese soldiers in Siberia, tend to see themselves only as victims, despite the passing fascination with socialism that had taken hold in Japan in the past. They nevertheless are unable to formulate a clear-cut criticism of the Soviet Union's actions.

With regard to the war in Asia, when the issue of the cause of the war is set aside, the Nanking Incident and other "acts of brutality" committed by the Japanese army are the predominant images of the war with China. The aim of the war in Southeast Asia was fighting the suzerain states of the United Kingdom and the Netherlands, and the local people were not considered the enemy. Still, the fact remains that suffering was inflicted on the local residents, particularly overseas Chinese, through forced labor and other acts in the process of waging this war. Some Japanese people do consider the war to be a "liberation of Asia" in light of the resulting postwar regional independence. Although colonial governance by Japan in Korea and Taiwan is an issue, it is not one directly related to the Pacific War itself, and the problem arises as to the light in which Japan's colonial governance should be considered in a world history context of an imperialist age. The issue of "forced alliances" during the Pacific War is, of course, problematic, but a sharp distinction should be made from the outset between the Pacific War and colonial rule.

A comparison of Japan and Germany in this regard reveals a more multifarious war fought by Japan, which leads to an inter-layered confusion between the "victims" and "victimizers," and fosters disparity among individuals in terms of personal war experiences.

Accordingly, the war's implications are open to various interpretations as well – as a war between Asians in the form of a Japan-China war, as a "racial war"⁴⁹ between Japan on the one side and European and North American nations on the other with Asia serving as the battlefield, and finally as an "ideological war" with the Soviet Union.⁵⁰ These various implications have left intellectuals and many other Japanese with a strong sense of the Pearl Harbor attack on December 8 as an event that made it possible for Japan to extricate itself from an onerous Japan-China war.⁵¹ Yoshimi Takeuchi has noted that Japan's war was fought simultaneously on two separate fronts, an aggressive war and a war against imperialism. Takeuchi goes on to advocate that Japan need not shoulder the entire burden for the latter.⁵²

⁴⁹ A work that depicts the racial aspects of the Pacific War is John Dower's *Jinshu Henken* (original title: *War Without Mercy*), Genichi Saito, trans., TBS Britannica, 1987.

⁵⁰ For further detail on the various interpretations of the war, see Saiichi Maruya, Takao Sakamoto, and Kazutoshi Hando, "'Daitoa/Taiheiyo Senso' Ron no Ruikeigaku (Typology of Greater East Asian/Pacific War Theories)," *Tokyo-jin*, No. 112, January 1997, pp. 89-102.

⁵¹ For detail on the reaction from the cultural arts community, see Tomio Sakuramoto, *Senso wa Rajio ni Notte (War on the Radio)*, Marujusha, 1985.

⁵² Yoshimi Takeuchi, "Senso Sekinin ni tsuite (Regarding War Responsibility)," *Gendai no Hakken – Senso Sekinin (Contemporary Discoveries – War Responsibility)*, Shunjusha Publishing Co., 1960, p. 13.

For these reasons, the cause of the war is also traced to a variety of sources – aggression by Japan, a self-defensive battle for the country’s survival, and the battle for the liberation of Asia. Surveys of public opinion provide complicated findings that appear at first glimpse inconsistent. Polls find that 52% percent of respondents consider that “the Pacific War was a war of aggression,” 45% that “suffering from a lack of natural resources, Japan was a poor country that had no choice but to advance militarily into other countries to ensure its survival,” and 56% that “both Japan and the United States are responsible for the Pacific War.”⁵³

The second aspect of the Pacific War concerns the issue of whether the war was a matter of subjective choice. Enthusiastic consent and support for the national policy adopted is not as clear-cut or obvious a case among Japanese people at the time as it was with the Nazis in Germany. It surely cannot be denied that a large number of Japanese citizens were simply swept along in the tide of the uncustomary wartime atmosphere. It would also seem natural that these conditions, coupled with the sense of being victimized by the atomic bombs and air raids, would make it difficult to see one’s self as the victimizer. Germans have also noted that the atomic bomb had a considerable impact on the way Japanese people view the war, which includes a sense of victimization.⁵⁴

The third facet of the Pacific War is the lack of political organization in Japan corresponding to the Nazis in Germany. The former Japanese military, specifically the army, has therefore been single-handedly held accountable for nearly everything negative that occurred prior to and during the war; these forces have been obliged to bear the “responsibility for the war.” If there had been a private political organization in Japan comparable to the Nazis, separating, assigning responsibility and condemning this group would have been a relatively easy task. In the case of Japan’s conscription-based armed forces, however, rather than being limited to a specific military organization, this issue of responsibility affects the civilian population as a whole. It is in this context that groups of surviving families and various other organizations oppose the characterization of the war as an “aggression.” Moreover, it is this aspect of the war that has given rise to the problems related to Yasukuni Shrine and the perception of Japan’s self-defense forces in both the domestic and international arenas since the end of the war.

In Germany, blame for the war has traditionally been ascribed without exception to the Nazis, and a myth of an “innocent *Wehrmacht*” (German army) has been built upon a

⁵³ Mitsuhiro Kadota, “Sengo 50 Nen/Nihon to Ajia (50 Years After the War/Japan and Asia),” *Hoso Kenkyu to Chosa (The NHK Monthly Report on Broadcast Research)*, Vol. 45, No. 4 (April 1995), p. 25. Toyoko Akiyama, “Nihonjin no Heiwakan (View of Peace among Japanese),” *Hoso Kenkyu to Chosa*, Vol. 33, No. 4 (April 1983), p. 11; Tomohiro Tsuji, Toyoko Akiyama, “Nichibei Kaisen kara 50 Nen (50 Years After Outbreak of War Between Japan and the United States),” *Hoso Kenkyu to Chosa*, Vol. 42, No. 2 (February 1992), p. 14.

⁵⁴ Former president Richard von Weizsäcker made this point. *Weizsäcker - Nihon Koenroku Rekishi ni Me wo Tozasuna (Records of Weizsäcker Lectures in Japan – Do Not Close Your Eyes to History)*, Chunichi Shimbun Co., eds., Kiyohiko Nagai, trans., Iwanami Shoten, 1996, pp. 65-66.

foundation of “unqualified denials of guilt as a whole.” The explicit demonstration of direct involvement in the Holocaust by the *Wehrmacht*, however, in recent years sparked a heated debate that has yet to be resolved.⁵⁵ Over the more than half century since the end of the war, Germany has gradually come face to face with the same difficult issues as Japan.

The fourth aspect is the issue of the cultural class specific to East Asia symbolized in the *Huayi* World Order in East Asian philosophy that was in place until the beginning of modern history. Since then, during the late 19th century, the traditional relationships between Japan, China and Korea entirely reversed as Japan moved most successfully through modernization. This historical transfiguration complicated relationships among these neighboring countries as inferiority and superiority complexes took hold, and racial homogeneity pushed these relations further along a tenuous course.⁵⁶ These complexities manifest themselves particularly strongly in the relationship between Japan and Korea as regards the issue of colonial rule. Symbolized by a “*Kominka Seisaku*” (national policy of brotherhood under the Japanese Emperor) expressed in the replacing of local names with Japanese-style names and worship at Shinto shrines, Japan’s style of colonial governance differed from the independent colonial governance of the United States and Europe and was met by continually erupting independence movements in Korea. It is in this context that “deep-seated grudges” not easily forgotten even today can be understood.

An additional factor is the key role Japan played in bilateral relations for China and Korea after the modern period, as indicated by the terms “*Konichi Senso*” (anti-Japanese war) and “*Nittei 36 Nen*” (36 years of Japanese imperialism). For Japan, however, ties with China and Korea constituted nothing more significant than two of the many international relationships the country maintained, which included ties with North American and European countries and the Soviet Union, during this same period. The resulting gap in the importance placed on these particular relationships contributed to the backdrop against which competing historical perspectives have formed. China, for example, stresses the 50-year period between the outbreak of the Sino-Japanese War (1894) and the end of the Pacific War, while Japan interprets this history within the context of the 150 years of modernization since the Meiji Restoration.⁵⁷

It should also be noted that the view on China among the general Japanese public has undergone a transformation similar to the one evident in the realm of their historical perceptions. Japanese perceptions of China have traditionally been informed by an admiration

⁵⁵ Jun’ichiro Shoji, “Exhibition of the ‘Past’ and Historical Recognition in Unified Germany,” *NIDS Security Studies*, No. 2, March 2001, pp. 76-85.

⁵⁶ Masatoshi Tanaka, “Ajia Kenkyu ni okeru Kansei to Ronri (Sensitivities and Rationale in Asian Research),” *Rekishizo Saikousei no Kadai – Rekishigaku no Hoho to Ajia (Issues in Rebuilding Historical Images – Methods in Historical Science and Asia)*, Shigeki Toyama, et al., eds., *Ochanomizu Shobo*, 1996, pp. 268-269.

⁵⁷ *Nicchu Kankei no 150 Nen (150 Years in Japan-China Relations)*, Tatsuo Yamada, ed., Toho Shoten, 1994, pp. 2-3. Yamada describes the need to take a multifaceted view of Sino-Japanese relations that includes the elements of “interdependence, coexistence, and hostility.”

for China's expansive landscape and eternal culture and sense of belonging to the "same culture and race." More recent factors include a respect for socialism throughout postwar Japan, a sense of atonement in connection with the Japan-China War, and a respect for China's generosity in exhibiting tolerance toward the events of the war (until the early 1980s). Subjects concerning China that have been regarded as taboo in the past, however, have recently begun, albeit gradually, to lose their forbidden status, and negative, though not "contemptuous," comments regarding the Chinese people and Chinese history have come to the fore.⁵⁸ Certain taboos clearly remain in place, though, despite the emerging willingness among Japanese to speak about arms buildups and other military affairs and human rights problems, particularly the issue of Tibet.

The fifth element affecting historical perception of the Pacific War concerns the particular view on the subject of war and peace held by the Japanese. Compared with another country defeated in the war, the Japanese take a more unqualified "anti-war, pro-peace" stance than Germans. Although Masamichi Inoki has criticized the Japanese posture as, "self-righteous, fanciful pacifism lacking an international mindset,"⁵⁹ others see this pacifist stance as evidence of more serious thought among Japanese given to the issue of war responsibility than among Germans. With Hiroshima and Nagasaki as the locations of the first atomic bombs dropped on the human race, the situation in Japan is undoubtedly unique, and a pacifist sensibility as strongly held as it was more than half a century ago when the war ended is a phenomenon specific to Japan.

This sensibility has been attributed partly to a lack of true war experience. Hyoe Murakami, for example, points out that, "the Japanese people did not truly experience war, and having avoided a direct examination of the war since it ended, the country has become addicted to such word games as, 'the victim's stance and the victimizer's stance.'"⁶⁰ Takao Sakamoto also criticizes the Japanese view, stating, "there is no country less conducive to serious thought on war than Japan is today, and these conditions lead to simple, lazy thinking about war, as well as ethical facile meanness in which this process is broadly recognized in oneself as a moral stance."⁶¹

With the exception of Okinawa, it is a fact that the Pacific War battles were fought outside of Japan, and other than certain exceptions such as the Japanese in Manchuria, the general public did not have any actual experience on the battlefield. For this reason,

⁵⁸ The most well-known of these critics in the area of history and culture, for example, are Mineo Nakajima, Shoichi Watanabe, Hidehiro Okada, Yoshihisa Komori, and Bunyu Koh, as well as Shigeo Hiramatsu and others in the area of military studies. Nakajima, Minori Shibata and others have been critical of China since the Cultural Revolution.

⁵⁹ Masamichi Inoki, *Gunkoku Nihon no Kobo – Nisshin Senso kara Nicchu Senso e (Rise and Fall of Militaristic Japan – From the Sino-Japanese War to the Japan-China War)*, Chuokoron Shinsho, 1995, Preface.

⁶⁰ Hyoe Murakami, *Kokka naki Nihon – Senso to Heiwa no Kensho (Stateless Japan – Verification of War and Peace)*, Simul Press, 1996, pp. 191-200.

⁶¹ Takao Sakamoto, "Sengo 50 Nen Towareru Nihonjin no Rekishi Kankaku (50 Years Beyond the War – Japanese Historical Perceptions in Question)," *Chuo Koron*, September 1995, pp. 64-65.

respondents to public opinion polls and other surveys citing “miserable war experiences” are specifically referring to difficulty in finding food and experiencing air raids.⁶²

This stands in contrast to the German people who were forced to live in a wretched environment in the midst of a battlefield reduced to ashes and “expelled” from the east and other pivotal regions lost in battle. Rather than a profound sense of both “liberation” and “defeat,” the Japanese are more aware of the end of the war as a “conclusion of hostilities,” and not a few are in one sense “pleased Japan lost.” This contrast continued through the postwar Cold War era with the Germans continually confronted with the danger of nuclear and other types of war, whereas the sense of danger in Japan never extended beyond the slogans promoted by certain political factions.

At the same time, Japanese are less likely than Germans to distinguish between “war” and “massacre” and exhibit a more intense aversion to “war” in general. Germans, on the other hand, maintain a clear distinction between these two terms and do not reject “war” in and of itself. Based on these sensibilities and a “reflection on the past” that finds the reemergence of a Hitler inconceivable, Germany made the decision to send active combat troops from the federal army to a region outside of the NATO sphere for the first time since World War II in order to stop the massacre by Slobodan Milosevic. For the Germans, arguments for “building a new peace” and “stopping a second Holocaust” were more compelling than an “anti-war stance” and were not found to be inconsistent in the context of “reflection on the country’s past.”

Ian Buruma, the Dutch journalist whose book “Wages of Guilt” compares the views on war in Japan and Germany, notes the singularity of the views held by the Japanese people. Buruma refers to the relationship between the view of war and historical perception when he states, “postwar Japan differs from Germany in that it was not a ‘normal’ country in terms of national defense. Only by becoming ‘normal’ in this regard will Japan become a country able to debate its past like Germany.”⁶³

Conclusion

Immediately after the war, debate concerning the Pacific War was inseparable from the issue of “war responsibility,” and the “Tokyo War Crimes Tribunal View of History,” Marxism and other ideological interpretations were rife. These interpretations were countered in the ‘Showa history debate,’ which in turn prompted a backlash in the form of arguments “affirming the Greater East Asian War.” This theory was followed by the verification and prosecution of “aggressors’ responsibility” derived from Marxism, as well as an opposing move toward new developments in non-ideological empirical research. Ultimately, however, a

⁶² Toyoko Akiyama, Keifuku Janamoto, “Sengo 40 Nen wo Furikaeru (Looking Back 40 years after the War),” *Hoso Kenkyu to Chosa*, Vol. 35, No. 12 (December 1985), pp. 2-3.

⁶³ Ian Buruma, *Senso no Kioku – Nihonjin to Doitsujin* (original title: *Wages of Guilt*), Shinpei Ishii, trans.,

debate on historical perception was avoided, and research evolved in a polarized and fragmented manner.

The failure to grapple seriously with an interpretation of the Pacific War in the political arena either has meant that debates on such issues as the No War Resolution, postwar reparations, and history textbooks have evolved into political problems each time they have arisen. In diplomatic circles, Japan continues to be the target of severe criticism, particularly from neighboring countries, and ministers have repeatedly resigned to take responsibility for “slips of the tongue.”

The situation, however, has begun to change since the end of the Cold War. With the collapse of socialism, the issue of “comfort women” and other Japanese “acts of brutality” was examined and condemned. A certain degree of excessiveness in this prosecution, however, offended a large segment of the general public for the first time since the end of the war, and a civil opposition movement has evolved. Comprised principally of “laymen,” this movement also encompasses some extreme opinions, which has further provoked Japan’s neighbors. Since the Textbook Incident in 1982, the issue of historical perception in Japan has become increasingly complex, particularly closely linked to diplomatic relations and friendly ties with neighboring countries. The issues related to historical perception in the Northeast Asian countries of Japan, China and the Korean Peninsula, is attributed to “opaque identities” and “unhealthy nationalism” in the region, elements which combine to create a vicious cycle.⁶⁴

The issue of historical perception is easily politicized and inextricably linked with the Constitution, national defense issues, and peace movements, which has not only impeded objective debate on historical interpretation, but has also polarized discussion. The No War Resolution and the recent debate surrounding history textbooks symbolize these complexities.

Despite the widespread interest among the Japanese people in the recent debate surrounding new history textbooks, the issues posited in the Showa history debate were not fully discussed and remain unresolved. Some critics have charged that the debate offered, “little to excite one intellectually and was, more than anything, simply a revival of the ideological conflicts characteristic of the Cold War.”⁶⁵

There is, however, an undeniable presence of a war experience stemming from ideological and geographical factors, and the specific view of war informed by these elements, that provides a background for understanding the above-described history. It is in this respect that Japanese historical perception differs from the view in Germany, another country defeated in the war. Buruma points out that, “the interpretation of the Constitution and other ideologies in Japan are splintered, which has even affected historical interpretation, producing a domestic

TBS Britannica, 1994, pp. 388-390.

⁶⁴ Charles Hill, “Fighting Stories: The Political Culture of Memory in Northeast Asian Relations,” *Remembering and Forgetting: The Legacy of War and Peace in East Asia*, Gerrit W. Gong, eds. (Washington, DC: The Center for Strategic and International Studies, 1996), pp. 1-18.

⁶⁵ Yoichi Yokota, “Tsuminokosareta ‘Showashi Ronso’ (‘Showa History Debate’ Omissions),” *THIS IS Yomiuri*, March 1997, p. 71.

political debate disguised by the mask of history, rather than a rational historical debate.”⁶⁶

The argument has also been made that problems related to a sense of Japan’s responsibility for the war having been endorsed once and for all during the Cold War have surfaced to form the backdrop for recent developments.⁶⁷ This author suggests, however, that the Cold War continues today to be played out on “history’s” stage in Japan and East Asia. During the Cold War, ideological conflicts pivoted on politics, economic policy, and national defense issues, whereas these issues have developed within a new historical context following the collapse of socialism.

The debate on the “masochistic view of history” has also brought charges to the effect of those leveled by Kentaro Hayashi. “Views at variance with the facts must be rejected, but rejecting moves to acknowledge one’s own mistakes as ‘masochistic’ is essentially ‘self-contempt’ that is only hurtful in the process of debasing one’s self.”⁶⁸

Others are of the opinion, however, that a perception of responsibility for past wrongs carried too far is a different matter. Toshio Watanabe, for example, argues, “There are plenty of critics and scholars who are triumphantly proud of their condemnation of the history of their own people. On the other hand, the immature psyche embraces honorable historical events, yet denies disgraceful pasts. These people are overly conscious of how their acts appear in others’ eyes and are compulsively afraid of what other people think.” Watanabe coolly dismisses this as “neurotic.”⁶⁹

As examined in this paper, the easiest way for the Japanese people to face the complex situation regarding postwar historical perception, particularly in their relations with neighboring countries from the relative position of “victimizer,” is to ignore or avoid the facts, to openly justify their actions, or, in the reverse, to adopt an excessively masochistic view of themselves.⁷⁰ “When there is an unbearable dilemma that must be faced, the easiest option, which is also the “psychologically lazy” choice, is to seize upon a sense of justice.”⁷¹

Ultimately, an objective and humble approach to the issue of historical perception is vital, though this process will obviously require a great deal of stoicism.

⁶⁶ Hisae Sawachi, Ian Buruma, “Nihon to Doitsu no Sengo wo Tou (Questioning Postwar Japan and Germany),” *Gendai*, June 1995, pp. 64-65.

⁶⁷ Yutaka Yoshida, *Nihonjin no Sensokan (Japanese View of the War)*, Iwanami Shoten, 1995, pp. 231-232; Takahashi, *Senso Sekinin Ron*, pp. 251-253. Ishida, “Senso Sekininron Saiko,” pp. 30-33.

⁶⁸ Kentaro Hayashi, “Kyokasho de Kakubeki Rekishi (History to be Written in Textbooks),” *THIS IS Yomiuri*, March 1997, p. 59.

⁶⁹ Toshio Watanabe, *Shinkeisho no Jidai (The Age of Neurosis)*, TBS Britanica, 1996, pp. 13-15. Shu Kishida asserts that by offering “deceptive apologies,” Japan exhibits narcissistic, rather than masochistic, tendencies. Shu Kishida, *Nihon ga Amerika wo Yurusu Hi (The Day Japan Forgives America)*, Mainichi Shimbunsha, 2001, pp. 178- 182.

⁷⁰ For specific details on Japan’s relationship with Korea, see Fusako Tsunoda, *Binhi Ansatsu (Assassination of Queen Min)*, Shinchosha, 1988, pp. 364-365; and Akira Tanaka, *Chosen Danso (Random Thoughts on Korea)*, Sofukan, pp. 5-7.

⁷¹ Terumasa Nakanishi, “Rekishi to Do Mukiau ka (How do We Face up to our History?),” *Shokun*, February 2000, pp. 45-56.

Appended Figure: Changing View of “Pacific War”

1948	Tokyo War Crimes Tribunal verdict		Tokyo War Crimes Tribunal view of history	Marxism View of history – Theory of “Imperial system fascism”
1951	Conclusion of Peace Treaty Peace debate		1953 Japan Foreign Diplomacy Society, <i>Taiheiyo Senso Gen'in Ron</i> (On the Cause of the Pacific War) 1955 Takeshi Kurihara <i>Tenno – Showashi boegaki</i> (Showa Emperor – Notes on Showa History)	1953-54 Historical Science Society of Japan, eds., <i>Taiheiyo Sensoshi</i> (History of the Pacific War) 1955 Shigeki Toyama, Seiichi Imai, Akira Fujiwara, <i>Showashi</i> (History of Showa)
1956	Stalin denounced	1956 Michio Takeyama <i>Showa no Seishinshi</i> (A Spiritual History of Showa)		
1960	1960 Campaign against Japan-U.S. Security Treaty 1960's Vietnam War/China-Soviet confrontation China's Cultural Revolution/Japan's student movement		* Beginning of “empirical evidence” – based research 1962 - 1963 Japan Association of International Relations, eds., <i>Taiheiyo Senso e no Michi</i> (Road to the Pacific War) 1964 Fusao Hayashi, <i>Daitoa Senso Koteiron</i> (On Affirming the Greater East Asian War) 1964 Shunpei Ueyama, <i>Daitoa Senso no Imi</i> (The Meaning of the Great East Asian War)	
			1967-1980 War History Department, National Institute for Defense Studies (NIDS), Defense Agency, <i>Senshi Soshō</i> (Official War History Series) 1971-1972 Chihiro Hosoya, Makoto Saito, Seiichi Imai, eds., <i>Nichibei Kankeishi</i> (History of U.S.-Japan Relations), “Lake Kawaguchi Conference”	1968 Saburo Ienaga <i>Taiheiyo Senso</i> (The Pacific War) * Toward History as an Aggressor/”15nen Senso (15-Year War)” 1975 Kiyoshi Inoue <i>Tenno no Senso Sekinin</i> (The Emperor's War Responsibility)
1979	Sino-Vietnamese War/Soviet military invasion of Afghanistan		1976 Takashi Ito <i>15nen Senso</i> (15-Year War), Criticism of fascism theories 1978 Akira Iriye, Nichibei Senso (Japan-U.S. War)	“Asia/Taiheiyo Senso (Asia-Pacific War)” Emperor's war responsibility
1989	Collapse of Berlin wall/Death of Emperor Hirohito			
1993	1993-1995 Prime Minister Hosokawa statement “No War Resolution”	Development of “revisionist” view of history criticized as “masochistic” view	1993 Chihiro Hosoya, Sumio Hatano, Akira Iriye, eds., <i>Taiheiyo Senso</i> , (The Pacific War), “Lake Yamanaka Conference”	Uncovering and censoring “war crimes” “postwar compensation” * Nanjing Incident/731 Unit/“comfort women”
1995		1995 Nobukatsu Fujioka, the Association for the Advancement of the Liberalist View of History 1997 Japanese Society for History Textbook Reform Debate over Peace Museum	1995 <i>Kindai Nihon Sensoshi</i> (Modern Japanese War History), <i>Nihon Kaigunshi</i> (Japanese Navy History)	