

## Memory Divided By More Than An Ocean: The Pacific War in Japan and the US

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### Introduction

Every nation has a collective memory embodied in its history. But that collective memory, like the memory of an individual, is apt to become unreliable. It often fades away with the passage of time. In order to better confront the future, therefore, we sometimes have to re-think, or even deconstruct, the bases of taken-for-granted memory.

In the collective memory of 20th-century Japan, the Pacific War has long occupied a key position. Senzen (the pre-Pacific War period) and Sengo (the post-Pacific War period) are still the terms most often used in outlining histories of the Showa Era, and the collective memory of the Pacific War has remained at the core of Japanese national identity in the 20th century. Our understanding of the preceding century always, in a sense, starts from a shared memory of the Pacific War.

Many Japanese today still conceive of the Pacific War as a war which took place primarily between Japan and the United States. The Pacific War is often referred to in Japan, for example, as *Nichi Bei Senso* — literally, ‘the war between Japan and the United States.’ Many Japanese probably believe that Americans have the same general understanding of the Pacific War. In the mainstream collective memory of the Japanese, it is taken for granted that the war took place in the context of a localized geopolitical situation in which Japan and the United States were competing for hegemony in the Pacific arena.

Indeed, some historians and literary critics in Japan have argued that in the decades immediately preceding the Pacific War, Japan and the United States, sharing a dominant mutual image, regarded each other as “rivals.”<sup>1)</sup> They have therefore paid a great deal of attention to those scholarly works attempting to demonstrate this point. The extent of US-Japan mutual respect and attention to difference that the term ‘rivals’ suggests, however, is well worth questioning.

This short paper, which is a part of my continuing research into the memory of the Pacific War among both the Japanese and Americans, addresses the issue of mutual image and commonsense historical understanding through the analysis of two primary sources from the American side. One is the War Message broadcast by Franklin D. Roosevelt immediately after the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor. The other is a body of material written on Asian matters,

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<sup>1)</sup> Akira Iriye, “Japan as a Competitor, 1895–1917,” Akira Iriye ed., *Mutual Images: Essays in American-Japanese Relations* (Boston: Harvard University Press, 1975), 73–99; Saeki Shoichi, *Nichibeikankei no Naka no Bungaku* [*Literature on Japanese-American Relations*] (Tokyo: Bungeishunju, 1984), 94–121.

Japanese in particular, by two prominent American intellectuals in the 1920s and 30s. This is a work-in-progress that is grappling with some very basic but important questions: what was the Pacific War and who were its participants? These are apparently rather simple questions which nonetheless are not easy to answer, and they are also questions which Japan needs to learn to ask in order to gain a well balanced understanding of its position in the area which encompasses the whole Pacific. This paper thus represents a first, tentative step towards framing an understanding of the complexity of those questions, in its presentation of textual evidence that, in the 1940s, people in the United States and Japan would have answered the questions in very different ways, and that the legacy of those differences lives on today.

### **Roosevelt's War Message**

It may safely be said that in 1941 the majority of the Japanese believed that the attack on Pearl Harbor was the starting point of the war between Japan and the United States. The brilliant achievements of the navy of the Japanese Empire against the Pacific Fleet of the United States at Pearl Harbor made their belief firmer, especially because in the writings of some Japanese popular authors like Tokutomi Soho and Hirata Shinsaku the United States had come to be depicted as Japan's rival in establishing a hegemony over the Pacific Ocean region.<sup>2)</sup> An Analysis of the War Message broadcast by Franklin D. Roosevelt in 1941, however, suggests that Americans at that time may not have shared this Japanese understanding. Did Americans seriously regard the attack on Pearl Harbor as the beginning of a war between the United States and Japan? It seems unlikely. We should turn to the text of Roosevelt's address.

Yesterday, December 7, 1941 — a date which will live in infamy — the United States of America was suddenly and deliberately attacked by navy and air forces of the Empire of Japan.

The United States was at peace with that nation and, at the solicitation of Japan, was still in conversation with its Government and its Emperor looking toward the maintenance of peace in the Pacific. Indeed, one hour after Japanese air squadrons had commenced bombing on Oahu, the Japanese Ambassador to the United States and his colleague delivered to the Secretary of the United States a formal reply to a recent American message. While this reply stated that it seemed useless to continue the existing diplomatic negotiations, it contained no threat or hint of war or armed attack.

It will be recorded that the distance of Hawaii from Japan makes it obvious that the attack was deliberately planned many days or even weeks ago. During the intervening time the Japanese Government has deliberately sought to deceive the United States by false statements and expressions of hope for continued peace.

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<sup>2)</sup> Sawada Jiro, *Kindai Nihonjin no Amerikakan: Nichiro Senso Igo wo Chushin ni [Japanese Images of America: Form the Russo-Japanese War to the Pacific War]* (Tokyo: Keio University Press, 1999), Part I, Chap. 6, Part II, Chap. 2.

The attack yesterday on the Hawaiian Islands has caused severe damage to American naval and military forces. Very many American ships have been reported torpedoed on the high seas between San Francisco and Honolulu.

Yesterday the Japanese Government also launched an attack against Malaya. Last night Japanese forces attacked Hong Kong. Last night Japanese forces attacked Guam. Last night Japanese forces attacked Philippine Islands. Last night the Japanese attacked Wake Island. This morning the Japanese attacked Midway Island.

Japan has, therefore, undertaken a surprise offensive extending throughout the Pacific area. The facts of yesterday speak for themselves. The people of the United States have already formed their opinions and well understand the implications to the very life and safety of our nation.

As Commander in Chief of the Army and Navy, I have directed that all measures be taken for our defense.

Always will we remember the character of the onslaught against us.

No matter how long it may take us to overcome this premeditated invasion, the American people in their righteous might will win through to absolute victory.

I believe I interpret the will of the Congress and of the people when I assert that we will not only defend ourselves to the uttermost but will make very certain that this form of treachery shall never endanger us again.

Hostilities exist. There is no blinking at the fact that our people, our territory and our interests are in grave danger.

With confidence in our armed forces - with the unbounded determination of our people — we will gain the inevitable triumph — so help us God.

I ask that the Congress declare that since the unprovoked and dastardly attack by Japan on Sunday, December 7, a state of war has existed between the United States and the Japanese Empire.<sup>3)</sup>

The message starts dramatically. The first “yesterday” quickly anchors the address to the historical incident which the message insists will live “in infamy” in the minds of the Americans. The details of the unforgettable insult to the United States are then stated after this short announcement.

In the four paragraphs which follow, an explanation of the period which preceded that “Day of Infamy” is given. To begin with, Roosevelt puts an emphasis on the peace of the days before the incident. The United States was at peace with Japan (line 4), and there was peace in the Pacific (6). The government was still in active conversation with the Empire of Japan (5-6). The president acknowledges that the audience has already fully comprehended the ramifications of the Japanese aggression (23-25). But he nonetheless emphasizes their comprehension

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<sup>3)</sup> “Address to Congress, December 8, 1941,” *The War Message of Franklin D. Roosevelt* (Washington, D.C.: The United States of America, 1945), p. 11.

at the beginning of the argument, because it is very important, rhetorically, to enhance the anger of the American people.

What happened to this peace? It was shattered "suddenly and deliberately" by the Japanese attack (2). The Japanese made deceptive statements of hope simply to prolong the illusion of peace (13-14). Judging from the facts, however, it is evident that this attack was deliberately planned "many days or even weeks ago" (11-12). Japan's act of "treachery" against the peace is therefore definitely an "unprovoked" and "dastardly" act (33, 38). The latter half of the second paragraph, beginning with the emphatic "indeed," doubles the outrage against Japan. The selection of words is perfect. The United States government believed in the good faith of the Japanese ambassador, who had the "audacity" to present a formal message, suggesting that the possibility for a diplomatic solution to the preceding crisis still existed, only "one hour after Japanese air squadrons had commenced bombing on Oahu" (6-7). Under the guise of peace negotiations, in other words, the Japanese government had launched an "armed attack" (7-10). The words "the Japanese Ambassador" and "a formal reply," seem to indicate that the Japanese were acting through appropriate diplomatic channels. But the words "armed attack" suggest to the radio audience that they were in reality despicable people who preferred to take action outside the conventions of diplomacy. The rhetorical pattern here emphasizes the duplicity of the Japanese. The first third of the message thus ends with the suggestion of a gush of American anger towards the Japanese.

The point of the latter two-thirds of the message is to argue the necessity of waging war in the future. Roosevelt here makes a clever rhetorical shift which is highly significant in terms of the topic of this paper. He tells the audience that he has already directed that all measures be taken for the defense of the United States, because "the very life and safety of our nation" are in great danger (24-25). What had placed their lives and safety in danger? Obviously, it was an attack made by the Japanese Empire. The question is, however, *which* Japanese attack had endangered the United States. In the middle part of the message, Roosevelt lists the places the Japanese forces have attacked. First, he refers to the attacks against Malaya and Hong Kong (18-19). This quietly extends the realm of the conflicts, joining the United States with the British as partner and ally. The United States involvement is not to be limited. It will become global. The word "also" signals this extension (18). The concluding generalization, "a surprise offense extending throughout the Pacific area," again quietly links the United States with Britain, the Dutch, and the other Allied forces (22-23). This section of two paragraphs, it is to be noted, starts with the word "yesterday," thus making a rhetorical parallel with the first paragraph. As a result, the attacks on Malaya and Hong Kong echo, in substance, the attack on Pearl Harbor; they too become historical incidents which will live on in "infamy." The reference to these attacks prepares the nation for total involvement in a world war, without directly underlining the necessity of an international commitment. The American people, territory, and interest have been placed "in grave danger" not only by the Japanese attacks on Hawaii, but also by Japanese aggression in China and the Philippines (34-35).

This structure of the message suggests that Roosevelt is trying to persuade the audience

that the substantial object of the war is not only to protect the United States from the Japanese Empire, but also to defend the interests of its Allies in the Pacific Area as a whole. Pearl Harbor is therefore depicted not only as the starting point of a limited war between the United States and Japan, but also as the beginning of a broader struggle between the Allied and the Axis powers. Japan was merely one of these enemies.<sup>4)</sup> Close comparison of the historical facts with the contents of Roosevelt's message would show us the hidden structure of the argument which set the Pearl Harbor attack in a different context than that of US-Japan localized competition. But the main point here, in terms of different ways of remembering the Pacific War, is that, on December 8th, 1941, almost every American accepted Roosevelt's interpretation. In Congress, for example, only one vote was cast in opposition to declaring war on Japan. Nonetheless, in Roosevelt's scenario, Japan has only a marginal significance.

Of greater importance was the conception that Japanese aggression in the Pacific — brought home to Americans most profoundly by the “treacherous” bombing of Pearl Harbor — *represented* an escalation of the “local” European war to genuinely global proportions. Within American politics, the objections of the isolationist camps had been permanently discredited. The sanctity of America's boundaries would not be respected in the world war between fascist totalitarianism and noble democracy; American interests were deemed inseparable from the Allied course. In this interpretation, Japan's Pacific invasion was merely a symbol for — a proxy of — Hitler's challenge to the Allied hegemony all over the world.

Indeed, Roosevelt's message never seriously addressed the power of the Japanese forces, essentially because Japan did not, in and of itself, represent any *substantial* threat in the American mindset. Japan was merely the means Roosevelt took to fire the passions of American public opinion, an excuse for total commitment to the war then being lost by the Allies on the European Continent. Roosevelt's War Message is prime historical evidence of the fact that even after December 8, 1941, the primary enemy, dominant in the minds of Americans, was not the Japanese.

This interpretation of the War Message suggests the value of going back to trace the history of American conceptions of Japan during the years preceding the outbreak of war. This leads to the question: what position did Japan hold at that time in America's broader global view?

### American Views of Japan

In the 1920s, two leading American intellectuals, John Dewey and Charles A. Beard, made numerous observations on Japan and Japanese civilization. Both of them visited Japan during the Taisho Era, and both revealed a strong concern for the nation's present and future. An analysis of their mode of interpreting Japan is for this reason a good place to start the next stage of this discussion.

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<sup>4)</sup> About the discussion in this section, I owe much to the article of Harmann G. Stelzner, “‘War Message’ December 8, 1941: An Approach to Language,” *Speech Monographs*, 33 (November 1966): 419–37.

John Dewey and his wife, Alice, left America for a trip to Japan early in 1919. They arrived in Tokyo in February, and traveled in Japan for three months. During their stay, they traveled from Tokyo to Kamakura, Nagoya, Ise, Nara, and Kyoto, and visited several major intellectuals, including Shibusawa Eiichi and Naruse Jinzo. Having received tremendous hospitality from the Japanese, Dewey and his wife left Japan to visit China at the beginning of May. At first, they had intended to stay in China for only a few weeks. May, 1919 was, however, the date when China became embroiled in a period of great social turbulence, beginning with the May Fourth Movement. Dewey, becoming excited over this chance to observe first-hand the upheaval of Chinese nationalism, applied for a year's leave from Columbia University, where he taught philosophy, and managed to stay in China for almost a year. His opinion of Japan was formed mainly on the experiences he gained during this trip to the East.

What most struck him was the great democratic change going on in Japanese society. It was the time of the Hara Takashi cabinet, the first political party cabinet in Japan. During his years as prime minister, from 1918 to 1921, Hara was the main force behind the development of higher education, as well as the improvements in the electoral law. Certainly, he was a symbol of Taisho Democracy, and Dewey keenly penetrated into the atmosphere of the age. Everybody he visited talked to him about the issue of general suffrage, and gave him the impression that "all Japan" was "talking democracy now" and that all Japanese citizens were longing for a representative government chosen by a national election.<sup>5)</sup> So far as the mental readiness for a change was concerned, Dewey said, Japan was in the same condition as it had been during the first years of contact with the West, almost a half century earlier. He knew that, in Japan, while conservative bureaucrats and militarists were strong, the democratic movement was still very young and fragile. During his stay in Kyoto, when he heard the patter of military clogs on the streets, he could not help but feel doubts about the democratization of Japan. Yet, he continued to believe in the possibility of Japanese liberalism at least while he was in Japan. The defeat of Germany in 1918 would, he hoped, be a good lesson to Japan, showing the impossibility of a militaristic nation prospering in the modern world.

What Dewey discovered in China, however, was undeniable evidence of the growth of militarized Japan. In Shagtang Peninsula, Japanese soldiers had taken a fiercely suppressive attitude towards the Chinese, and had occupied almost every part of the railroad and mining industries. In Nanking, Japanese police were surrounding Japanese shops in order to protect their interests from the Chinese boycott movement. It was evident that the Japanese already had such a military hold upon China that, should war break out, they would be able to control the country within a week or so, after only a minimum of fighting. Dewey gradually came to suspect that Japanese liberals had been deliberately deceptive about their Chinese affairs. Their explanation, that the Japanese troops remained in China to restore order, seemed dubious to him. It was universally believed in China that Japan had one mode of diplomacy for the

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<sup>5)</sup> John and Alice Chipman Dewey, *Letters from China and Japan* (New York: E.P. Dutton & Company, 1920), 38.

East and quite another for the West, and that what was said in the West must be read in reverse in the East. Faced with these facts, however, Dewey nonetheless sent to the United States an article entitled "Liberalism in Japan," in which he expressed his firm hope for the democratization of Japan. He told Americans that liberalism was well-established in Japan, and that

"It is coming to possess the present generation of university-taught men. Since I began writing, a delegation of Japanese university students has been in Peking to express to the Chinese their entire lack of sympathy with the policy of Japan towards the China, and to say that their enemy is a common one — Japanese militaristic autocracy. It is impossible for Japan to engage in trade, to exchange commodities and technical science with all the world, to take a part on world politics, and still remain isolated from the world situation and world currents. The significance of this fact has been brought home to Japan with increasing acceleration and momentum by the [First World] war and its conclusion, and the outcome is the present spread of democracy and liberalism."<sup>6)</sup>

It is interesting that, as this quotation shows, Dewey always tended to interpret Japanese politics, both domestic and foreign, in terms of liberalism. Why was he so deeply concerned with the future of Japanese liberalism? The answer to this question is the key to understanding his mode of interpreting Japan.

After finishing his travels in China, Dewey published a pamphlet criticizing American misconceptions about Chinese domestic affairs. The reason for these misconceptions, Dewey argued, was that "more or less unconsciously" Americans tend to "translate foreign incidents into the terms of 'their' experience and environment, and thus miss the point."<sup>7)</sup> What he had uncovered was the typically narrow view most Americans took in their appreciation of foreign countries. Ironically, though, in his own interpretation of Japan, Dewey himself made the same mistake. It seems, to use his own words, that Dewey also "more or less unconsciously" translated Japanese incidents "into the terms of" his own American "experiences and environment" during the post-war period, and thus overestimated the significance of Japanese liberalism. During the 1920s, American intellectuals had been moved to reexamine the righteousness of American civilization. It is more than likely that a major concern of Dewey's at the time was an investigation of his own civilization, in terms of liberalism. The title of the article he sent home to the USA was after all "Liberalism in Japan." This suggests that his primary concern in Japan was not its Shintoism or militarism, but rather its liberalism. We can presume that Dewey identified the problem of American liberalism with the problem of Japanese liberalism. In China, every time he came across a demonstration of young students, he celebrated it, pro-

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<sup>6)</sup> John Dewey, "Liberalism in Japan" originally in *the Dial*, Oct. 4, 1919, compiled in John Dewey, *Characters and Events* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1929), 168-69.

<sup>7)</sup> John Dewey, *China, Japan and the U.S.A.* (New York; Republic Publishing Co. Inc., 1921), 19.

claiming that the power of public opinion was still alive in the world of liberalism. Ultimately, it is accurate to say that Dewey searched in the East for the wisdom and the justification of his own American civilization. In this context, we can look at his positive appraisal of Japanese liberalism as a tacit and displaced affirmation of American liberalism. His argument is in this sense essentially an implicit acknowledgement of American civilization and its future; Japan is secondary, a mere case study reinforcing his conviction that American civilization still has a glorious future. This is clearly the world view most American intellectuals shared in their discussion of Japanese civilization during the 1920s. The substantial points of their arguments concern, in most if not all cases, American or Western civilization. In Dewey's words, the study of history and society is fundamentally a matter of investigating "the present spread of democracy and liberalism."<sup>8)</sup>

Charles A. Beard was as ostensibly pro-Japanese as Dewey. He visited Tokyo twice, in 1922 and 1923, as adviser to the urban planning unit of the Tokyo metropolitan area, directed by Baron Goto Shinpei. As a consequence of his experiences, Beard's discussion of Japan centered on its material culture rather than its liberalism.<sup>9)</sup> Nonetheless, his mode of interpreting Japan is not, in its essence, all that different from that of Dewey, as his writings in *Whither Mankind: A Panorama of Modern Civilization*, published in 1928, make clear. Once again, in this text Japan is only the surface issue in a discussion deeply rooted in the contemporary crisis of American intellectual life.

Beard begins with a summary of the current situation in the 1920s: "All over the world, the thinkers and searchers who scan the horizon of the future are attempting to assess the values of civilization and speculating about its destiny."<sup>10)</sup> He does not deny the existence of conflicts between socialism and capitalism, Catholics and Protestants, the Latin and Nordic cultures, agricultural and industrial civilizations, the East and the West. In his view, the decade of the 1920s is in fact the age when various struggles have become deeply and complexly interwoven. Yet, Beard never loses hope for the future of Western civilization. He illustrates his grounds for hope in a story of an imaginary war between the United States and Japan.

First, judging according to the extent to which each has progressed, he classifies world civilizations in terms of three stages: agricultural civilizations, pre-machine urban civilizations, and mechanical and scientific civilizations. Every civilization is expected to progress, step by step, from the first to the third level. Beard regards Japanese civilization as being at the second stage of this inevitable progress, and the United States as having reached the final stage. What is more, a less-developed country can therefore see its future in the image of developed countries. In this scheme, a struggle between the United States and Japan would lose its fatal sig-

<sup>8)</sup> Dewey, "Liberalism in Japan," *Ibid.*, 169.

<sup>9)</sup> Yasuo Endo, "Biado Fusai to 1920 Nendai no Tokyo [Mr. and Mrs. Beard and the Japan in the 1920s]" Homma Nagayo et al. eds., *Gendai Americazo no Saikochiku [The Reconstruction of the Images of Modern America]* (Tokyo: University of Tokyo Press, 1990), 141-157.

<sup>10)</sup> Charles A. Beard ed., *Whither Mankind: A Panorama of Modern Civilization* (New York, London, Toronto: Longmans, Green and Co., 1928), 1.



nificance, since a struggle between them would inevitably be, at least in theory, not a mutually destructive conflict between two different civilizations, but merely a skirmish between two essentially similar civilizations each destined to progress to its natural mature form. If, in due time, the Japan of the East actually smashed the United States of the West on the battle field, it would only be because the East had managed to overtake the technology of the West, gone it one better, and thus become "more Western." In that case, Western civilization would not disappear, but would merely make a relatively minor shift from the West to the East. Ultimately, Beard concludes, American civilization will in substance live forever.<sup>11)</sup>

This is a somewhat tricky argument. The question of its validity and coherence, however, is not the central point here. What is important is that Beard, like Dewey, was discussing his own civilization under the guise of analyzing Japanese conditions. The point of his argument is that American civilization will exist forever. What he needed for this argument was not, in fact, Japan in particular but any half-progressed "pre-machine urban" country, which he could take as a random example in the exposition of his theory. Just as Dewey never doubted the historical truth of liberalism, Beard always extolled the brilliant future of machine civilization. In both cases, Japan just happened to fit well into the framework they created to support their statements, and as a consequence its own position in their arguments was never more than marginal.

It is important to note that this manner of discussing Japan was typical not only of Dewey and Beard, but of many other American intellectuals as well. We can detect the same general approach, for instance, in the works of left-wing critics during the 1930s and 40s. One telling illustration can be found in the debates which appeared in the *Partisan Review* concerning the meaning of the Second World War. In the latter half of 1941, while Hitler's forces swept over the face of Europe and Japanese militarists clamored for war with the United States, editorials in the *Partisan Review* engaged in a hot debate over the necessity of American enlistment into the Allied war effort. The major discussants were Dwight Macdonald and Phillip Rahv.

The *Partisan Review* was started in 1934 by a group of New York left-wing intellectuals. The political creed they shared was that every human society should have a hypothesis which accounted fully for what was happening within it. It was, however, the period of the Great Depression, and American capitalism had caused a number of seemingly inexplicable phenomena. The government ordered farmers to burn the wheat, plough in the cotton, and slaughter the hogs, for example, at a time when millions of citizens were destitute. Certainly, the American capitalistic system no longer made sense to destitute Americans. Novelists like James T. Farrell and Saul Bellow began to criticize the establishment which, they felt, had no reasonable defense, and wrote short stories for the magazine allegorizing American capitalism's most destructive features. The magazine was set on the quest of generating a new social hypothesis and of creating a new art suitable to the new conditions.<sup>12)</sup>

The existing alternatives to capitalism were either totalitarianism or socialism.

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<sup>11)</sup> *Ibid.* 15-20.

Consequently, in every issue, these ideologies were examined in-depth in articles such as "Speak to me of Mussolini" (March, 1936), "Munich and the intellectuals" (Fall, 1938), and "Marxism in our time" (August-September, 1939). Neither alternative, however, stood up to their expectations. Racism and territorial expansion in Germany showed them totalitarianism was merely another form of capitalist imperialism. The purge and terror of the Soviets during the reign of Stalin thoroughly betrayed their wishes for socialism. The Nonaggression Treaty of 1939 between Germany and the Soviet Union shattered completely their hope for new ideologies. It was in the context of this traumatic intellectual moment that Dwight Macdonald and Philip Rahv discussed the propriety of American participation in the war.

Both Macdonald and Rahv agreed that Hitler's victory would mean the end of Western civilization. Macdonald put it most poignantly: "The Kaiser's victory would not have meant a *break* in our civilization. Hitler's would."<sup>13</sup> Rahv agreed.<sup>14</sup> Macdonald, however, insisted that, for the time being, America should not enter the war, because it would be nothing more than a struggle between the bad capitalism of Roosevelt and Churchill and the worse capitalism of Hitler. Whichever side might win, he went on, the future would still lie under the yoke of the capitalist system. The only way this conflict could favor mankind as a whole, Macdonald concluded, would be through the replacement of the present governments in England and the United States by working class governments committed to a program of pure democratic socialism. In his opinion, what must be done first was not to win the war but to alter the war executors and to renovate the war aims.

In contrast to Macdonald, Rahv proposed that the United States should enter the war as soon as possible. He had a more realistic understanding of what was happening in Europe. Hitler and the Nazis had already conquered the European continent, and if America stayed out of the war, Rahv feared, the Nazi plan would be completely fulfilled. For this reason he insisted that America should allow itself to be fully drawn into the struggle in order to enhance the offensive power of the Allies. He knew that support for the Roosevelt-Churchill war regime meant a recognition of the irrational American capitalistic system. He nonetheless regarded American capitalism as the lesser evil in comparison to Nazi imperialism. He said to Macdonald: "This war, even if it accomplishes the destruction of fascism, is not yet *our* war."<sup>15</sup> Certainly, it was not the progressive, anti-bourgeois war he and Macdonald had wanted: for him, victory for the United States would mean the perpetuation of a dated yet formidable American capitalism.

For me, the conspicuous point in the discussions between Macdonald and Rahv is the ab-

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<sup>12</sup> Terry A. Cooney, *The Rise of the New York Intellectuals: Partisan Review and Its Circle* (University of Wisconsin Press, 1986), Chap. 7; Maekawa Reiko, *Amerika Chishikijin to Rajikaru Bijon no Houkai* [*American Intellectuals and the Fall of Radical Visions*] (Kyoto: Kyoto University Press, 2003).

<sup>13</sup> Clement Greenberg and Dwight MacDonald, "10 positions on the War," *The Partisan Review*, v. 7, n. 4, July-August, 1941, 271.

<sup>14</sup> Philip Rahv, "10 Propositions and 8 Errors," *Partisan Review*, v. 7, n. 6, Nov.-Dec., 1941, 501.

<sup>15</sup> *Loc. cit.*

sence of any interest in or concern about Japan. The date of the controversy, the autumn of 1941, may partly explain their lack of interest in Japan. Nonetheless, even after Pearl Harbor, the *Partisan Review* discussions did not touch on any issue related to the war with Japan for at least several years.

Macdonald and Rahv both agreed that victory for Hitler would have meant the breakdown of Western civilization. Rahv did, in fact, see the goal of the Allies in the war as “the destruction of Fascism.”<sup>16)</sup> This suggests to me that, for Macdonald and Rahv, the war was a struggle between two mutually hostile and inherently destructive civilizations or ideologies. They understood the issue of American involvement in the war in terms of the question of which civilization, American or German, they preferred. With some reluctance, Rahv chose American civilization. Macdonald, however, rejected both. Nonetheless, like Rahv, he explained the nature of the war in terms of a dialectical scheme. Apparently, all they needed to make sense of their controversy on the war was one symbolic enemy, diabolical and dialectical, of American civilization. In their dichotomous perception of the war, the nation which filled the position of the antagonist was Hitler’s Germany. The existence of Japan, in their minds, was subsumed into their image of a single enemy, Fascism, represented by Hitler. Neither Macdonald nor Rahv found it necessary to refer to Japan in their discussion, simply because it did not make any difference to the points of their arguments. In this respect, again, Japan is granted merely a marginal role in the broader struggle between Fascism and Democracy. We can see that Macdonald and Rahv shared with Dewey and Beard the tendency to dissolve the particularity of Japan in their understanding of a larger global picture.

This analysis of the writings of Dewey, Beard, Macdonald and Rahv leads me to conclude that, all through the 1920s and 1930s, Japan itself had little substance in the minds of American intellectuals, except as an image of other more immediate domestic and international concerns.

## Conclusion

Roosevelt, Dewey, Beard, Macdonald, and Rahv were, in every sense of the word, men of their times. Certainly, the turbulent intellectual climate of the 1920s exerted a strong influence on the formation of their approaches toward understanding foreign civilizations. The rhetoric of the controversy in the *Partisan Review*, like the sentence structure of Roosevelt’s War Declaration, show us that, at best, the war that was pictured in the minds of American intellectuals was not really a struggle between Japan and the United States, but rather a greater conflict between the Allied and the Axis forces — between Democracy and Totalitarianism, between Liberalism and Fascism. Dewey, Beard, Macdonald, and Rahv had no conception of the idea of a limited war. Neither did Roosevelt. While it is true that almost every Japanese understood the Pacific War as a war between Japan and the United States, it is clear that this was not an understanding shared by Americans even at the time Pearl Harbor was attacked.

Every nation’s understanding of the past is shaped by its conscious desire to explain the

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<sup>16)</sup> *Loc. cit.*

present. The popular Japanese understanding of the US-Japan relationship, exemplified by the concept of an "equal partnership between Japan and the United States," certainly lies behind their memory that the Pacific War was a war between Japan and the United States. But this will do more harm than good to their understanding of the history of relations not only between Japan and the United States but also among Pacific-rim countries in general. The Japanese have to disillusion themselves a little and give up their cherished memory of the Pacific War. This must be the starting point for the construction of a more accurate understanding of their identity in the past and therefore in the present era, which is now often referred to as the era of the Pacific.