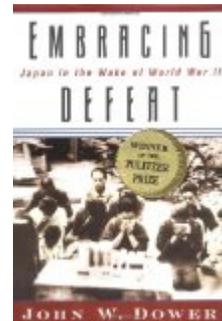


John W. Dower. *Embracing Defeat. Japan in the Wake of World War II*. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1999. 676 pp. \$29.95 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-393-04686-1.

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Published on H-US-Japan (June, 2000)



Phoenix from the Ashes: Saving the Emperor and Creating a Constitutional Democracy in Japan

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John W. Dower, Elting E. Morison Professor of History at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, received his doctorate in History and Far Eastern Languages from Harvard University in 1972. Professor Dower's interests are concentrated in modern Japanese history and his scholarship has centered on issues of war, peace, power, and justice in Japan and in United States-Japanese relations. He has published numerous articles and a dozen books, including *War Without Mercy: Race and Power in the Pacific War* (1986), a National Book Critics Circle Award winner for Nonfiction and the winner of the Ohira Masayoshi Memorial Prize for distinguished Asian-Pacific scholarship. His book *Empire and Aftermath: An Analysis of the Life and Times of Yoshida Shigeru* (1979) focuses on that Japanese diplomat and politician who became prime minister, and considers pre- and post-war Japan in terms of continuities and dissipations.

Dower's *Japan in War and Peace: Selected Essays* (1993) is a corpus of previously published articles informed by Dower's own brilliant introductory essay "The Useful War." In addition, he served as executive producer of the documentary film entitled *Hellfire: A Journey from Hiroshima*, which was an Academy Award nominee in 1988. Because of these and other significant works [1], John Dower has significantly affected how Americans and other westerners view Japan and the Japanese as he considers topics such as racism and stereotypes as well as socioeconomic and political factors.

In a synthesis entitled *The Clash* (1997), historian Walter LaFeber reported the cultural and diplomatic relations between the United States and Japan from 1850 through the 1990s, while Richard Frank in his recent book *Downfall* (1999) emphasized 1945 in his assessment of the ending of Japanese Empire. Harvard historian Akira Iriye, who is concerned primarily with the prewar era and World War II as well as its aftermath, has also written extensively about the occupation period.[2] Dower's *Embracing Defeat: Japan in the Wake of World War II* expands LaFeber's brief analysis of the occupation period, beginning his detailed assessment at the point Frank ends, and he amplifies Iriye's writings. The clarity of purpose, writing style, remarkable factual detail and documentation, and insightful analysis are among the reasons that Dower's *Embracing Defeat* has quickly become the definitive, landmark history of the transformation of Japanese society under American occupation after World War II, and why he is the 1999 National Book Award winner for non-fiction and the 2000 Pulitzer Prize winner for General non-fiction for this distinguished work. Readers will be pleased to learn that *Embracing Defeat* will be published in a paperback edition in August 2000.

In his monumental and original *War Without Mercy*, Dower presents an analysis of the Pacific Theater of World War II by examining the racist stereotypes which often dominated American and Japanese views of one another. He employs both Japanese-based and United

States-based sources, including propaganda films, songs, colloquial expressions, and cartoons, as well as traditional, recently declassified, archival materials in this eloquent history of anti-Western attitudes in Japan and anti-Japanese attitudes in America. Dower chronicles the six-year period from the shattering defeat of the Japanese Empire and the material and psychological impacts that affected every level of society – from peasant farmers, former soldiers, politicians, and emperor, through wartime occupation and control, to the Korean War and the re-emergence of the postwar nation.

In the introduction, which surveys the period from Commodore Matthew Perry's arrival in 1853 through the end of the American occupation of Japan in 1952, Dower argues that "I have tried to convey 'from within' some sense of the Japanese experience of defeat by focusing on social and cultural developments as well as on that most elusive phenomena, 'popular consciousness' – departing, in the process, from the approach taken in most historical accounts, including my own writing. To put it a little differently, I have tried to capture a sense of what it meant to start over in a ruined world by recovering the voices of the peoples at all levels of society. World War II did not really end for the Japanese until 1952, and the years of war, defeat, and occupation left an indelible mark on those who lived through them. No matter how affluent the country later became, these remained the touchstone years for thinking about national identity and personal values" (p. 25). He also states that "I myself find the concrete details and textures of this extraordinary experience of a whole country starting over absorbing, but they do not strike me as alien, exotic, or even mainly instructive as an episode in the history of Japan or U.S.-Japanese relations. On the contrary, what is most compelling from my own perspective is that defeat and occupation forced Japanese in every walk of life to struggle in exceptionally naked ways, with the most fundamental of life's issues – and that they responded in recognizably human, fallible, and often contradictory ways that can tell us a great deal about ourselves and our world in general" (p. 29). The introduction surveys the period from Commodore Matthew Perry's arrival in 1853 through the end of the American occupation of Japan in 1952.

Part I: "Victor and Vanquished" begins with Emperor Hirohito's speech of capitulation on 15 August 1945 exhorting his countrymen to "endure the unendurable." Dower takes the reader through euphemistic versus unconditional surrender, the destruction of documents, the signing of the formal instrument of surren-

der on 2 September, and quantifying defeat. The sobering statistics are that there were more than 2.7 million Japanese casualties among a population of 74 million, 66 major cities were essentially destroyed, nine million were homeless, and 6.5 million Japanese had been stranded in Southeast and East Asia (China, in the main), Siberia, and in the Pacific.

The stage for a precarious democratic "revolution from above," the processes of demilitarization and democratization under General Douglas MacArthur as Supreme Commander, and the advent of the International Military Tribunal for the Far East, e.g. the Tokyo Tribunal or war crimes trials, are recounted. Defeating the European Axis powers was the first order of business for the Allies, which would provide only a general model for the occupation of Japan. Reforms began with the destruction of sacrosanct traditional ways including the abolishment of state Shinto on 15 December 1945.

In part II, "Transcending Despair," Dower examines the various cultural forms that arose after the war, in spite of the physical hardships the Japanese endured in the immediate postwar period. Malnutrition (including protein deficiency and an adult average intake of only one-third to one-quarter of the recommended 2200 calories per diem), diseases, and psychological and social collapse (crowding, alcoholism, robbery, serial murders, social disorder, economic inflation, looting, and the Black Market) are reviewed. Dower remarks that "decadence itself emerged as a provocative challenge to old orthodoxies" (p. 120). The marginalization of groups (especially "third-country people," e.g. Taiwanese and Koreans); "panpan" girls (prostitutes), smut, and strip shows to "service the conqueror"; and Black Market entrepreneurship and gang control are documented.

Of particular interest is that although paper was in critical supply until 1951, there were 16,500 different newspaper titles published between 1945 and 1949 in addition to more than 45,000 books. Bestsellers during this period included guides to English conversation, poetry, Nagai Takahashi's moving *The Bells of Nagasaki* [3], and the Japanese language translation of Norman Mailer's World War II novel *The Naked and the Dead*.

Part III: "Revolutions" examines the various ideological forms that arose during the occupation. MacArthur is characterized as a charismatic, "blue-eyed shogun, paternalistic military dictator, grandiloquent but excruciatingly sincere Kabuki hero" who was "indisputable overlord," and seen by the Japanese as a "living savior" with Buddha-like compassion (p. 203, 229). Dower reminds us

that in this neocolonial environment, the victors served as viceroys and that the most redundant phrase the Japanese encountered may have been “By Order of the Occupation Forces.” The replacement of Joseph Grew by Dean Acheson as Undersecretary of State, the character of “the China crowd,” and the American civilians and elite on MacArthur’s staff who disdained Asian specialists – especially the “old Japan hands” and their culturalist approach – are documented. The advent of radicalism, liberalism, Marxism, and Communism among components of the Japanese population is also assessed. MacArthur himself was embraced and showered with gifts and praise by the Japanese, but the old guard at his GHQ (General Headquarters) reluctantly went along with his reformist agenda which included gender equality, trade unions, and educational innovations.

Dower also reports that many words and phrases associated with the democratic process and reformation were borrowed directly from English. In addition, we are informed that the election of 1946 included 2,770 candidates (95 percent of whom had never before held public office) representing 363 political parties. At the same time, there were disorderly minorities, protest rallies, an attempted general labor strike (1 February 1947), and the “emergence of a virulently anticommunist democratization movement” (p. 272).

Part IV: “Democracies” examines the complexities of implementing a new constitution in a conquered country. Dower reminds us that the feudal shogunate and samurai-led social structure was discarded with the founding of the Meiji dynasty under Hirohito’s grandfather in 1868. The initial chapter concerns the employment of psychological warfare and the need to maintain the imperial institution and enforce the Potsdam stipulations regarding unconditional surrender. No sooner had the Japanese formally surrendered when MacArthur’s Psychological Warfare Branch, and specifically Brigadier General Bonner Fellers, sought to utilize the emperor for their own purposes by erecting a barrier between the emperor and the war criminals. The infamous photograph of MacArthur and Hirohito (only one of three images taken of both men during ten meetings) was exploited for its propaganda value both in Japan and in the United States. The emperor’s true feelings are expressed in a 9 September 1945 letter to Crown Prince Akihito. Hence, Hirohito was transformed into a new symbol of peace and democracy and the emperor’s status was revised.

The International Military Tribunal for the Far East was inaugurated on 19 January 1946 and the war crime

trials were scheduled to begin on 3 May (Dower returns to this story in Part V). In the interim, a major effort was launched to isolate Hirohito from the status of “war criminal” – the alternative, General Fellers believed, would be chaos – and to change a manifest deity into a new person, and a celebrity in the British royal style. As a result, Hirohito travelled throughout Japan (33,000 km over 165 days from 1946-1947 and 1949-1952), talked with citizens, and both asked and responded to questions. His awkwardness and attempts at conversation provoked a wave of popular sympathy for the sheltered and vulnerable emperor who was constantly protected by American soldiers, including U.S. Army Military Police.

In accordance with Sections 6 and 12 of the Potsdam Declaration, the preparation of a new national charter to replace the 1890 Meiji Constitution began on 25 October 1945 by establishing a seventeen-member Constitutional Problem Investigating Committee chaired by Matsumoto Joji. The committee struggled with the differences between Japanese and Western (American and German) legal systems, legislative and administrative law, and popular sovereignty and human rights. Conservatives, liberals, Communists, and Socialists, among others, also submitted proposals. The committee’s inability to produce a viable document led MacArthur’s impatient GHQ – actually General Courtney Whitney of SCAP (Supreme Command for the Allied Powers) – to direct the GHQ’s task of drafting a new constitution in order to protect the emperor.

The draft was prepared in six days and on 11 February was approved by MacArthur “for presentation to the completely unsuspecting Japanese government” (p. 373). Matsumoto’s committee finally completed their own draft on 8 February and they thought that a scheduled 13 February meeting with Whitney was to discuss their document rather than the GHQ’s version. Dower notes that the stunned Japanese found that this version had basic non-negotiable principles.

Dower provides the reader with splendid insight into this period, the legal and extra-legal manipulations, American views on democratic principles, and the role of Jewish-Austrian woman Beate Sirota, who had been raised in Japan, in preparing the draft and advocating equal rights provisions that were the most advanced for any peoples of this era. The author also provides an excellent overview of the reactions of the Japanese prime minister and cabinet, the furious internal struggle that ensued, a delayed distribution of the draft to the government, “substantial changes” in translation, and finally

the unveiling of the draft constitution to the public on 6 March along with the emperor's imperial rescript to revise the Meiji Constitution. For technical reasons the draft was submitted as an amendment to the 1890 constitution.[4]

The draft document met with a positive popular reaction, with opposition coming only from the Communist party, but the Japanese Diet would debate 114 days and make only thirty minor revisions. Article 9, Renouncing War, carried with it the implication of allowing self-defense, but this article would remain controversial for decades to come. The Diet voted to accept the document (House of Representatives voting 421 to 8 and the House of Peers, in a standing vote, 298 to 2). The new constitution was promulgated on 3 November 1946 and came into effect on 3 May of the following year, the date the trials began. Twenty million pocket-size copies of the new constitution were distributed, and it became clear to the Japanese that the emperor was no longer a deity but a symbol of national unity. Japanese politicians initially believed that they would later modify this constitution, yet more than fifty years later, it is yet unamended.

Chapter fourteen concerns the role of the "never officially acknowledged" Civil Censorship Detachment or CCD (p. 407) which, in four years with 6,000 employees, monitored 330 million pieces of mail, 800,000 private telephone conversations, 1,000 motion pictures, 16,500 different newspaper titles, more than 45,000 books, plus unstated numbers of radio scripts and texts of theatrical productions. Professor Dower includes the list of the "categories of deletions and suppressions" (p. 411); some of these categories are rather broad and subjective. An enlightening volume by Kyoko Hirano, *Mr. Smith Goes to Tokyo* (1992), documents the Japanese domestic motion picture industry.[5] Although the rationing of newsprint played a role in dissemination of the approved political philosophies, much leftist literature was also published. Overall, he states that "the amount of censorship was small in comparison to the overall deluge of words" (p. 438). Nearly all of the censored and uncensored material was saved and transferred to the University of Maryland.[6] Known as the Prange Collection, it is a veritable goldmine of original documents awaiting further assessment by future historians, and includes 600,000 censorship documents. Perhaps Dower's "small in comparison" may be an overstatement

Part V: "Guilts," analyzes the process of bringing the various war criminals to justice. The International Military Tribunal for the Far East's (e.g., the Tokyo Tri-

bunal) trials began on 3 May 1946 and continued to 1952, although most were completed by 1949. Stern versus showcase justice is considered in which the positions Secretary of State Hull for "drumhead" justice versus the reality of the Tokyo Tribunal are contrasted. Hull's strict interpretation of the Potsdam Declaration was based in part on the Allied POW casualty rate in German and Italian camps, about 4 percent, in contrast to 27 percent among Allied POWs held by the Japanese.

War crimes were divided into classes: "Class "B" ("conventional" atrocities or crimes against humanity) and "Class C" (planning, ordering, authorizing, or failure to prevent transgressions at higher levels in the command structure). "In practice the two were often confused and it became common to refer to 'B/C' war crimes" (p. 443). Dower concentrates on the Class B/C War Crimes: 5,700 (mostly enlisted men) were indicted – 920 were executed (of 984 condemned), 475 received life sentences, 2,944 were sentenced to limited prison terms, 1,118 were acquitted, and 279 were not sentenced or not tried. The eleven Allied jurists included Dutch, British, Australian, Chinese, American, French, and Filipino justices, several of who lacked actual court experience. On the other hand, the Soviets conducted secret war crimes trials and executed an estimate three thousand Japanese.

Dower believes that the trial of the major war criminals was an exercise in revenge. The Tokyo trials were tried by eleven justices and took 31 months. By contrast, the Nuremberg trials utilized four justices, began on 20 November 1945 and were completed in ten months. Readers may be surprised to learn that no official Tokyo trial proceedings were ever issued (p. 453), by comparison with the 42 published volumes of the Nuremberg trials.

Dower also provides other startling contrasts between the two sets of trials. The selection of the justices, different national philosophies of legal interpretation, variances in the rules of evidence allowed, and the impact of the Cold War (particularly the descent of the Iron Curtain), played significant roles in the Tokyo trials. Dower demonstrates that the Tokyo Tribunal had a theatrical and Hollywoodesque flavor of dispensing "white man's justice." Like many other historians, the author is critical of the moral and legal issues that were pervasive in the war crimes trials. Nonetheless, your reviewer wishes that Professor Dower had provided additional details on the Tokyo Tribunal trials, particularly a more fulsome comparison with the Nuremberg trials. Herein lies another book to be written.

Chapter sixteen is an eloquent assessment of the responsibility, guilt, and grief felt by Japanese survivors, the importance of Buddhism as a means of repentance and establishing Tojo Hideki as the archvillain who would become a barometer of the mood of the times: aggression, defeat, punishment, etc. The two-volume expose entitled *The Twenty-year Whirlwind*, an “inside story” best-seller assembled by a team of Japanese journalists, covers the periods 1926-1936 and 1936-1946 and sought to explain why Japan lost the war. Dower also reviews the issue of responsibility and guilt in novels such as Takeyama Michio’s *Harp of Burma*, and he writes that the documentation of the *Rape of Nanking* and the *Rape of Manila*, neither of which reported in the Japanese domestic press at the time, once revealed, came as shock to the Japanese. The contrast between Tsugi Masanobu, a fugitive war criminal who became rehabilitated, and General Homma Masaharu, who was executed, is notable.

Part VI: “Reconstructions” looks at the period from the end of the tribunals to the end of the American occupation. Original plans called for an Allied occupation for three years but this became six during the fragile peace of the incipient Cold War. Dower provides an enlightening brief history of zaibatsu (oligopolic holding companies), inflation, planned and unplanned development, and Detroit banker Joseph Dodge as the “economic czar.” The beginning of the Korean War on 25 June 1950 had a dramatic impact upon the Japanese economy, especially in the strengthening and realignment of four conglomerates including Mitsui, Mitsubishi, Sumitomo, and Yasuda, and the formation of six new zaibatsu: Asano, Furukawa, Nissan, Okura, Nomura, and Nakajima. Commercial-industrial agglomerates, keiretsu, replaced without destroying the zaibatsu, so that the end of the Korean War saw Mitsui, Mitsubishi, Sumitomo, Fuji, Daiichi, and Sanawa as the economic powers in Japan. Dower characterizes this as “an abnormalization of Japan’s economic structure” in that promoting democracy had the effect of promoting bureaucratism and restrictive foreign trade (p. 546). The remilitarization of the Japanese via the National Police Reserve (where military tanks were termed “special vehicles”), President Truman’s dismissal for insubordination of General Douglas MacArthur on 11 April 1951, and the end of the MacArthur mystique preceded the formal termination of the occupation on 28 April 1952.

John Dower’s *Embracing Defeat* contains insightful assessments of the practices, pretensions, philosophies, and power plays that took place during the allied occupation of Japan. He has prepared a masterful analysis of how the American objectives of democratizing

Japan, retaining the position and person of the emperor, and punishing war criminals for their atrocities were attained. The exercise of power by the victors over the vanquished, and shielding the emperor and avoiding social upheaval that might be exploited by Socialists, Communists, and other left wing groups are well told factual stories. American assistance in helping Hirohito evade his responsibilities for war atrocities and placing the burden of guilt upon Tojo Heideki and his colleagues, helped to shape Japanese postwar consciousness. MacArthur kept his own name in the international public eye as he groomed himself for the American presidential race in 1948 and 1952.

Three quotes from Professor Dower’s Epilogue serve to summarize the era: “The structural legacies of wartime Japan to the post-surrender decades was enormous” (p. 559). MacArthur’s “extraordinary solicitous treatment of Emperor Hirohito compounded the problem [of infusing democratic principles] by retarding rather than advancing the cause of genuine pluralism, participation, and accountability” (p. 561). And “the lessons and legacies of defeat have been many and varied indeed; and the end is not in sight” (p. 564). Although some readers may have the impression that Dower is overly sympathetic to the Japanese and certainly was no advocate of Douglas MacArthur, he has documented an extraordinary experience of political and economic recovery by employing both Japanese and American archival materials and citing a variety of people from all social levels. Indeed, he does convey a sense of what it is like to start over and, as he anticipated, we learn about ourselves in the bargain. Professor Dower has given us a compelling and exceptionally balanced account of this era fulfilling his stated purpose (p. 25) to document from within this defeat turned into a victory.

Notes

[1]. Among John W. Dower’s other books are *Origins of the Modern Japanese State: Selected Writings of H. E. Norman* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1975), a compendium edited by Dower that characterizes E. Herbert Norman’s essays on Japanese government; and *Japanese History and Culture from Ancient to Modern Times: Seven Basic Bibliographies* (New York: Marcus Wiener Publisher, distributed by Publishers International Corporation for Japan, 1986).

[2]. Akira Iriye, a schoolboy in Japan during the occupation, is the co-author or author of more than a half-dozen significant works that elucidate United States-Japanese relations. Among these are: *Power and Cul-*

ture: *The Japanese American War, 1941-1945* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1981); and *The Origins of the Second World War in Asia and the Pacific* (London and New York: Longman, 1987) concerning diplomatic history and foreign relations. He has also edited several collections of essays, including *Mutual Images: Essays in Japanese-American Relations* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, Harvard Studies in American-East Asian Relations 7, 1975), the papers presented at a bi-national conference held at Kauai, Hawaii, June 1972; with Yonosuke Nagai, *The Origins of the Cold War in Asia* (Tokyo: University of Tokyo Press, 1977); with Warren I. Cohen, *The United States and Japan in the Postwar World* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1989) emphasizes foreign economic relations and is based upon papers presented at a 1984 conference co-sponsored by the Japan Society for the Promotion of Science and the Joint Committee on Japanese Studies of the Social Science Research Council and the American Council of Learned Societies.

The same authors also prepared two edited volume on United States-Japanese foreign relations entitled *American, Chinese, and Japanese Perspectives on Wartime Asia, 1931-1949* (Wilmington, DE: SR [Scholarly Resources] Books, 1990) and *The Great Powers in East Asia, 1963-1960* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1990); with Edward R. Beauchamp, *Foreign Employees in Nineteenth-century Japan* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1990), a history of the use of alien labor and technological transfer. Akira Iriye's latest work is *Japan and the Wider World: From the Mid-nineteenth Century to the Present* (London and New York: Longman, 1997).

[3]. Nagai Takahashi, a Catholic scientist who lived in Nagasaki and would die of radiation poisoning in 1951, authored *Nagasaki no Kane*, translated by William Johnston as *The Bells of Nagasaki* (Tokyo: Kodansha International, 1984).

[4]. Three volumes on the "making" of Japan's constitution provide much additional detail and deserve mention: Koseki Shoichi's *Shen Kempo no Tanjo* (Tokyo: Chuo Koronsha, 1989) edited and translated by

Ray A. Moore as *The Birth of Japan's Postwar Constitution* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1997); Kyoko Inoue's *MacArthur's Japanese Constitution: A Linguistic and Cultural Study of Its Meaning* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991); and Nakamura Masanori's *The Japanese Monarchy: Ambassador Joseph Grew and the Making of the "Symbolic Emperor System," 1931-1991* (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 1992).

[5]. Kyoko Hirano in *Mr. Smith Goes to Tokyo: Japanese Cinema under the American Occupation, 1945-1952* (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1992) demonstrates how the occupation forces used the censorship of the Japanese film industry to eradicate feudal tendencies and introduce democratic principles.

[6]. Contrary to Professor Dower's endnote comment (p. 618-619, note 6.) that "due to the deteriorating condition of materials, the Prange Collection has been essentially closed to researchers since the early 1990s," the corpus is available to researchers and many of the unique, fragile documents have been preserved on microfilm. Microforms are available on site for patron use and access to original materials may be arranged by making an appointment with the Manager of the Prange Collection. Additional information is available on the Prange Collection web site: <http://www.lib.umd.edu/UMCP/PRC/splash.html>

In addition to a major finding aid, Eizaboro Okuizumi (compiler and editor), *User's Guide to the Gordon W. Prange East Asia Collection*, McKeldin Library, University of Maryland at College Park, Part I: Microfilm Edition of Censored Periodicals, 1945-1949 (Tokyo: Yushodo Booksellers, 1982), the University of Maryland's McKeldin Library has seven others related to various components of the Prange Collection. There is also a Japanese-language web site.

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Citation: Charles C. Kolb. Review of Dower, John W., *Embracing Defeat. Japan in the Wake of World War II*. H-US-Japan, H-Net Reviews. June, 2000.

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