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Japan's Monroe Doctrine?: Re-Framing the Story of Pearl Harbor

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WALT DISNEY'S *Lion King I* and *II* were both box-office hits. As a follow up, the Disney Company did something curious; they released *Lion King 1½* in 2004. In the promotional trailer for the new film, the two supporting characters from the first and second films, Pumbaa (a warthog) and Timon (a Meerkat), explain the rationale. Pumbaa: "So we are going back to the beginning and telling our side of the story?" Timon: "No, we are going back *before* the beginning." By doing so, audiences see that the heroic lion of *Lion King I* and *II* couldn't have done it without his erstwhile assistants. It was Pumbaa and Timon who taught the young lion cub the skills he needed to be king later on. The premise is an interesting one. When does a "story" begin? How do the chronological parameters of a story alter the message or interpretation of events?

Such questions have been the subject of spirited debate among world historians. For example, *World Civilizations: The Global Experience* by Peter Stearns, Michael Adas, Stuart Schwartz, and Marc Jason Gilbert utilizes non-traditional time periods as a means of presenting a different view of world history. Rather than pivoting at 1500 CE (or from Columbus on), the second half of their text starts in 1450—giving a different feel to the "rise of the West," in particular. China, India, and the Ottoman Empire were certainly more "advanced" than the West at the beginning of *this*

time period (with greater wealth and sophisticated technology, advanced mathematics, astronomy, etc.). The traditional narrative, where the rise of the West seems inevitable, is harder to sustain under this model (the *Lion King 1½* approach?). Clearly, the timeframe historians choose to begin their stories can make a significant difference.¹

Unfortunately, this movement has not caught on in American history circles—where periodization schemes have not changed much in over a hundred years. It is certainly not a part of the historiography concerning the “road to Pearl Harbor,” as it is often called. Ever since War Department propaganda films set the mold, historians have pretty much followed: the road to Pearl Harbor began in 1931 with Japanese aggression in Manchuria.² Of course, any “revision” regarding the War in the Pacific has its own set of problems—engendering controversy, often running up against patriotic sentiments and the tendency in American culture to see things in black and white, good vs. evil. The controversy over the Smithsonian’s *Enola Gay* exhibit, an exhibit originally designed to show multiple viewpoints regarding the dropping of the atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki during the Second World War, makes this abundantly clear. The exhibit met with a storm of protest, particularly from World War II veterans, the Air Force Association, House Speaker Newt Gingrich, former head of the National Endowment for the Humanities Lynne Cheney, and radio personality Rush Limbaugh. Within a year, the exhibit was cancelled. A new exhibit showing only the technical details of the *Enola Gay*, the B-29 aircraft (without mentioning the controversy around the decision to use the bomb or the casualties involved) opened in 2003.³

No wonder there has been little interest in reexamining the events leading up to Pearl Harbor. Like the history of the United States’ decision to drop the atomic bomb, the origins of the War in the Pacific have suffered from limited renditions of history, often tied up in patriotic lure rather than historical scholarship. As historian John Dower put it:

All narratives have their icons, and the heroic narrative of World War II has several. One stands at the beginning of the war and another at the end. The first symbolizes treacherous victimization and humiliation, the second triumph. The U.S. battleship *Arizona*, sunk with over two thousand American sailors on board in the Japanese surprise attack on Pearl Harbor, is the first of these icons, and the *Enola Gay* the second. Although the *Enola Gay* is clearly the more ambiguous, the veneration of both symbols in patriotic circles amounts to a civil religion.⁴

Of course there have been disagreements over whether or not Franklin Roosevelt knew about the attack on Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941 ahead of time. And some historians have blamed State Department recalcitrance, a refusal to negotiate on the part of Washington by 1940, usually

tracing the problem from 1931 to 1941. Nevertheless, almost none of the available works go back much further than 1931 in trying to trace and understand the causes of the conflict between the United States and Japan. And by framing the story this way—in such a limited fashion—something very important gets lost.⁵

In fact, to go back further in an attempt to fully understanding the road to Pearl Harbor requires letting the Japanese tell the story, a story that starts with Japan's first Western and American contact in the nineteenth century. Such a view tends to shift the blame onto the United States. It sounds something like this: the United States held Japan to a double standard. The United States was free to establish a "closed door" policy in the Western Hemisphere, under the Monroe Doctrine (by the early 20th century extending this so far as to exclude and expel Japanese companies from Mexico and other parts of Central America and the Caribbean). Meanwhile, Japan could not pursue similar policies in Asia—Japan could not declare its own "Monroe Doctrine for Asia." To do so would have clashed with America's "open door" policy, America's unilateral declaration claiming rights to free trade and other privileges in China. Another bit of history that may have led Japan to embark on imperialist ventures was the Opium Wars in China (1839-1854), which imposed unequal treaties privileging Westerners in China. To avoid similar treatment, Japan decided to take a "if you can't beat them, join them" view of world politics. By the turn of the twentieth century, emulating the West even to the extent of practicing its own imperialist expansion was seen in Japan as a defensive reaction to Western and American aggression, and was a common argument in Japan prior to World War II. Unfortunately, it is starting to resurface today, wrapped in a new ultra-nationalism, adopted by groups like the Liberal Historiography Study Group, a group that downplays Japanese atrocities in Korea and China. As such, careful prewar scholarship focused on Japan's side of the story leading up to Pearl Harbor—works by many Japanese scholars and intellectuals—has been ignored on both sides of the Pacific due an emotionally charged atmosphere involving Japan's role in the Second World War. On the American side, this is caused not only by "remembering Pearl Harbor" but by starting the story with Japan's invasion of Manchuria in 1931.⁶

Pearl Harbor and American Memory

Explanations regarding the origins of the War in the Pacific have become mythic tales, some of the most one-sided beliefs in American culture. Following arguments first made popular by the United States War Department during World War II, American history textbooks, popular culture,

and even the *U.S.S. Arizona* memorial in Hawaii take a simplistic line. The first iteration of the standard story—that the United States reacted to Japanese aggression from 1931 to 1941—was made popular by the Frank Capra series, a film series commissioned by the War Department entitled *Why We Fight*. Meant to rally the nation during the war, it showed a very black and white view of World War II (where the “free world” was locked in battle with the “slave world”). Buttressed by firsthand accounts in the memoirs of Secretary of War Henry L. Stimson and Secretary of State Cordell Hull, along with the writings of historians during the 1940s and 50s, such as Herbert Feis, William Langer, and S. Everett Gleason, this view made its way into history textbooks as well as American memory, where it remains firmly entrenched.⁷

For example, the widely used textbook, Thomas A. Bailey and David M. Kennedy’s *The American Pageant* refers to Pearl Harbor as “Japan’s hara-kiri gamble in Hawaii.” The sanctions imposed on Japan in 1940 were part of a “devil’s dilemma,” as the United States “wished to halt Japan’s conquest in the Far East—conquest that menaced not only American trade and security but international peace as well.”⁸ Tracing the roots of the conflict only as far back as the Manchurian incident of 1931, readers are left with the image of a “rampaging Japan” stealing “the Far East spotlight.”⁹ Gerald A. Danzer’s *The Americans* begins in 1931 with Manchuria as well, and immediately links Japan with Hitler and Nazism, ignoring the fact that Japan did not join the Axis alliance until September 1940. Students are told that “halfway around the world from Germany, nationalistic military leaders in Japan were trying to take control of their government. These leaders shared Hitler’s belief in the need for more “living space” for a growing population.”¹⁰

A visitor to the National Park Service’s *U.S.S. Arizona* Memorial would get the same picture. A guide to the site begins with Manchuria and follows the usual pattern: “The attack on Pearl Harbor was the culmination of a decade of deteriorating relations between Japan and the United States over the status of China and the security of Southeast Asia. The breakdown began in 1931 when Japanese army extremists, in defiance of government policy, invaded and overran the northern-most Chinese province of Manchuria. Japan ignored American protests, and in the summer of 1937 launched a full-scale attack on the rest of China.” It then links Japan to Nazi Germany: “Over the next three years, war broke out in Europe and Japan joined Nazi Germany in the Axis Alliance.” The guide mentions negotiations: “The United States applied both diplomatic and economic pressures to try to resolve the Sino-Japanese conflict. The Japanese government viewed these measures, especially an embargo on oil, as threats to their nation’s security. By the summer of 1941, both countries had

taken positions from which they could not retreat without a serious loss of national prestige.” But then it dismisses the seriousness of diplomatic negotiations: “Although both governments continued to negotiate their differences, Japan had already decided on war.... the attack on Pearl Harbor was part of a grand strategy of conquest in the Western Pacific.” This, in effect, presents the story as “inevitable” war between the forces of “good” and “evil”.¹¹

Such views resonate in American popular culture. The good vs. evil version of Pearl Harbor had been a favorite of Hollywood long before Jerry Bruckheimer and Michael Bay's recent portrayal in *Pearl Harbor* (2000) starring Ben Affleck. *Thirty Seconds Over Tokyo* (1945) and *The Sands of Iwo Jima* (1949), both box-office successes, have replayed on television countless times since their releases. There is even a Pearl Harbor T-shirt company which features the “Remember Dec 7th” T-shirt. “This double-sided tee shirt shows a war torn American Flag at half mast and reminds us of the Americans that lost their lives on this fateful day in 1941. The back contains statistics about Pearl Harbor.” These shirts can be ordered on-line at www.soldiercity.com, along with the “Infamy T-shirt” and the “Doolittle's Raid On Japan T-shirt.”¹² Johnny Lightning toy replica cars include the “Pearl Harbor: Day of Infamy” set, complete with the “Schofield Barracks ambulance” used at Pearl Harbor to care for the dead and wounded after the attack.

In short, Pearl Harbor has entered into American popular culture and myth. What does it stand for? The answer runs something like this: Japan attacked the United States for no reason. If there were negotiations going on prior to December 7, 1941, they don't matter; the war was unavoidable because “an evil empire,” to borrow Ronald Reagan's description of the Soviet Union, was bent on world domination and only the well-intentioned United States stood in the way. An innocent United States was dragged into the “good war” and became a superpower. History is more complex, however, and it is a useful exercise to explore how events can be viewed in a different light from another nation's view of its history. This other view is encapsulated by the notion of a Japanese Monroe Doctrine for Asia, a Japanese policy that was rejected by American policymakers during the 1930s and 40s, ignored during the war, and forgotten ever since.

A Japanese Monroe Doctrine for Asia

President Theodore Roosevelt (T.R.) first suggested a “Japanese Monroe Doctrine” to his fellow Harvard classmate and Japanese journalist Kentaro Kaneko in July of 1905. The two met regularly that year as the President brokered an end to the Russo-Japanese War that would earn him a Noble

Peace Prize. The President told Kaneko that “the future policy of Japan towards Asiatic countries should be similar to that of the United States toward their neighbors on the American continent. A ‘Japanese Monroe Doctrine’ in Asia will remove the temptation to European encroachment, and Japan will be recognized as the leader of the Asiatic nations, and her power will form the shield behind which they can reorganize their national system.”¹³ During further discussions of the Russo-Japanese War, Roosevelt told both Kaneko and Japanese ambassador Kotoro Takahira that it would make sense for Japan to become “paramount in the region around the Yellow Sea, just as the United States was paramount in the Caribbean.”¹⁴ Taking his cue from the British, who had recently concluded an alliance with Japan, Roosevelt gave a tacit green light to Japan’s annexation of Korea, and, of course, outright approval to Japan’s occupation of Southern Manchuria, as granted in the Portsmouth Treaty that ended Japan’s war with Russia. Within a decade, commentators on either side of the Pacific began to draw comparisons between American and Japanese foreign policy in the wake of the Russo-Japanese War. Further strengthened during the Lansing-Ishii Agreement in 1917, when Woodrow Wilson’s Secretary of State Robert Lansing secretly recognized Japan’s “special interest” in China, a notion of Japan’s Monroe Doctrine for Asia steadily gathered momentum in the decades leading to Pearl Harbor.

For many Japanese intellectuals and policymakers alike, the notion of a Japanese Monroe Doctrine came to symbolize two things. First, that its acceptance would be an admission on the part of the Western powers that Japan, too, sat at the table of Great Power diplomacy, and that it too had “special interests” that other nations were bound to respect. Second, it also became a shorthand method for highlighting a double standard inherent in American policy during much of the twentieth century, or what historian Gaddis Smith has called “the sauce-for-the-gander problem.”¹⁵ Many Japanese—such as diplomats-turned-scholars Yamato Ichihashi and Inahara Katsuji, journalist Kiyoshi Kawakami, and policymakers like Matsuoka Yosuke—began to ask how it was that the United States could claim an “open door” in China, while maintaining a “closed door” in the Western Hemisphere. The idea of Japan’s Monroe Doctrine for Asia emerged along side Japan’s victory in the Russo-Japanese War in 1905. For Japan, however, defeating Russia was part of a larger struggle stretching back to the 1830s, to the Opium Wars in China and the beginning of Western dominance in Asia.

The first “Opium War” in 1841-1842 between Great Britain and China began the process of forcing open China to European trade on terms dictated by the West which continued until the onset of the First World War, a process complicated and facilitated by internal upheaval in China.¹⁶ When

in the 1850s Admiral Perry and the United States took the lead in an effort to similarly open Japan and was backed up by European states, turmoil ensued in Japan. However, whereas China failed to establish strong central government leadership and failed to adopt aspects of Western policies to strengthen the state, in Japan events took a different course. The restoration of the Emperor to power in 1868 was accompanied by the growth of a strong central government pledged to modernization following many Western models (the Meiji period that extended to 1912).¹⁷ Internal politics were largely responsible, but those who advised the Emperor could always point to the fate of China, whose territorial sovereignty was being nibbled away by the European States, beginning with Britain's acquisition of Hong Kong. Japan quickly became one of the Great Powers, defeating Russia in 1905, laying claim to Southern Manchuria in the process. Japan also seized Korea as well and later became an ally of Britain and joined the allies during World War I. As one of the "allied powers," Japan quickly expelled Germany from its Asian-Pacific holdings. Writers began to call Japan the "Britain of the Far East." It had certainly joined in Great Power diplomacy, and in doing so, it was on a collision course with an equally expansionist United States.

The United States had joined in the dismemberment of China only to the extent of demanding equal trade privileges (an "open door") and extraterritorial protection for its citizens. Since in a sense the U.S. came in after the kill, China dubbed ours "jackal diplomacy." However, as Japan began its policy of imperial expansion she came into increasing rivalry with the United States. This clash of interests became clear in 1898—in the wake of the Spanish-American War. In a burst of energy, the United States occupied Guam, Western Samoa, and the Philippines, annexing Hawaii as well. After declaring the "Open Door" in China in 1900, the United States sent Marines into China during the Boxer Rebellion. Yet, while becoming a Pacific power, the United States continued to claim special rights in the Western Hemisphere (under the Monroe Doctrine and the Roosevelt Corollary), intervening on a regular basis throughout the Caribbean and Central America as well. American troops invaded Cuba (1898-1902, 1906-1909, 1912, 1917, 1922), the Dominican Republic (1904), Haiti (1916-24), Honduras (1912-19, 1924-25), Nicaragua (1912-25, 1926-33), Colombia (1903), and Mexico (1914-1917). That Japan was following a similar course in Asia escapes most Americans.

The American claim to special rights in the Western Hemisphere was precisely the view advocates of "Japan's Monroe Doctrine" tried to articulate for East Asia. Kiyoshi Kawakami, a Japanese journalist living in the United States in the years between World War I and World War II, was the first to bring American attention to such views. A Christian-convert

and author of hundreds of articles and several books on United States-Japanese relations, Kawakami urged Japan to play a larger role in Asia and warned against “preponderating Western influence” in China and areas “contiguous or adjacent” to Japanese territory.¹⁸ In his *American-Japanese Relations: An Inside View of Japan's Policies and Purposes*, published in 1919, Kawakami devoted a chapter to “Japan and the Monroe Doctrine.” “Many Japanese see how the Monroe Doctrine becomes a handy tool in the hands of American politicians,” he wrote. “They make piquant and flippant remarks about the peculiar psychology of American publicists who failed to see their inconsistency in trying, on the one hand, to exclude all Japanese enterprise from Mexico, while, on the other hand, they have no scruple in urging the extension of American interests in China and Siberia.” Here he was referring to Woodrow Wilson’s well known “consortium” idea, which allowed American investors to develop railways in Northern China and Siberia. American investment of this sort went full steam ahead just as the Lodge Corollary gathered support in the American press and in the halls of Congress. This proposed interpretation of the Monroe Doctrine, named for Senator Henry Cabot Lodge, enlarged on the Roosevelt Corollary to the Monroe Doctrine, and called for the blocking of Japanese investment in the Western Hemisphere. Kawakami found it odd that the “apostles of the Monroe Doctrine...could blandly and with no feeling of embarrassment advise their government to finance the Chinese Government, build railroads in China, purchase Manchurian railways, control the Philippines, procure shipyards on the Chinese coast and even assume control of the Siberia railroad.”¹⁹

The Japanese intellectuals-turned policymakers Yamato Ichihashi and Inahara Katsuji kept the spotlight on such contradictions. A technical advisor to the Japanese government during the Washington Conference on disarmament in 1921-22 and Professor at Stanford University (1913-1942), Ichihashi published *The Washington Conference and After* in 1928. Elsewhere, Ichihashi noted evidence that .by the turn of the century, Japan had decided to imitate the conduct of the Western powers when it came to relations with China, writing:

She joined the international expedition against the Boxers; she formed an alliance with Great Britain; she fought and defeated Russia; she was now a full-fledged Great Power. But the West began to apprehend this aggressive Asiatic nation, and, when she proved herself so successful in her economic enterprises in South Manchuria, Europe and America became hostile to her. *Japan was severely criticized by her Western colleagues for doing what they were doing* [emphasis added]; she was vehemently charged with violating the sacred open-door principle.²⁰

Katsuji, a journalist who had studied at Stanford and Harvard Univer-

sities before attending the Washington Conference as a member of the Japanese delegation, echoed Ichihashi's sentiments. The author of several books on foreign policy, Inahara also wrote for the prestigious Japanese journal *Ekonomistuto* (*The Economist*). In a December 15, 1931 article at the height of the international crisis caused by Japan's apparent takeover of Manchuria, he asked how could "this nation [the United States] with a grave criminal record... establish itself in a position to watch over Japanese activities in Manchuria?" In an April 1932 article for the same publication, Inahara pointed to the contradiction in United States policy towards Japan. "After all," he wrote, "as long as the United States maintains the Monroe Doctrine—that is, a 'closed door policy'—and still insists on enforcing the Open Door policy [in China], it is only natural and should not be objectionable at all that Japan, acting on the principle of equality, should establish an Asian Monroe Doctrine—that is, 'a closed door policy'—and further demand that the Open Door policy be applied to Central and South America."²¹

Matsuoka Yosuke, famous for leading Japan's delegation out of the League of Nations—dramatically walking out of the League conference on Manchuria in the spring of 1933—and declaring the "Greater East Asia Co-Prosperty Sphere" as foreign minister (1937-41), went further. Matsuoka fully embraced the idea of Japan's Monroe Doctrine for Asia. As historian Kimitada Miwa noted, Matsuoka oversaw the "first serious attempt by the Japanese to acquire for themselves a status of equality with the United States." Matsuoka asked "if the United States could rely upon the Monroe Doctrine to support its preeminent position in the Western Hemisphere in order to sustain American economic stability and prosperity, why could not Japan do the same with an 'Asian Monroe Doctrine'?"²² In an address to the Japanese Diet in January 1941, Matsuoka pointed to this in no uncertain terms:

The United States has evinced no adequate understanding of the fact that the establishment of a sphere of common prosperity throughout greater East Asia is truly a matter of vital concern to Japan. She apparently entertains an idea that her own first line of national defense lies along the mid-Atlantic to the East, but westward not only along the eastern Pacific, but even as far as China and the South Seas. If the United States assumes such an attitude, it would be, to say the least, a very one-sided contention on her part, to cast reflections on our superiority in the Western part of the Pacific, by suggesting that it betokens ambitious designs. I, for one, believe that such a position assumed on the part of the United States would not be calculated to contribute toward the promotion of world peace.²³

Ironically, in the last official Japanese communication before the outbreak of war between the United States and Japan, in Tokyo's famous "counter-

proposal” of December 7, 1941, a similar theme was sounded:

It is impossible not to reach the conclusion that the American Government desires to maintain and strengthen, in coalition with Great Britain and other powers, its dominant position it has hitherto occupied not only in China but in other areas of East Asia. It is a fact of history that the countries of East Asia for the past hundred years or more have been compelled to observe the *status quo* under the Anglo-American policy of imperialistic exploitation and to sacrifice themselves to the prosperity of the two nations. The Japanese Government cannot tolerate the perpetuation of such a situation since it directly runs counter to Japan’s fundamental policy to enable all nations to reach their proper place in the world.²⁴

Of course, Japanese officials like Matsuoka saw a dominant Japan in Asia as part of its “proper place in the world.” They were as one-sided as their American counterparts. How did they differ? Japan lost the War in the Pacific and many of their myths regarding Japanese superiority were punctured, only to reemerge recently. Not so in the United States. Because the U.S. was victorious, there has been very little impetus for “re-framing” the story of Pearl Harbor, and no room, as such, for understanding or evaluating Japanese views involving the conflict.

The Double Standard in Action: The U. S. State Department and the Rejection of a Japanese Monroe Doctrine

Stanley K. Hornbeck, head of the State Department’s Far East Division (1928-1937) and the State Department’s Special Adviser on Political Affairs (1937-1944), was the leading opponent of the notion of a Japanese Monroe Doctrine for Asia. During his long career, Hornbeck rejected Japanese claims that the American Monroe Doctrine had been a pretext for the creation and maintenance of an American sphere of influence in the Western Hemisphere. He dismissed any parallels between United States policy in the Americas and Japanese policy in Asia, particularly any comparisons between United States intervention in the Caribbean and Central America and Japanese intervention in Manchuria and Northern China. Hornbeck assigned nothing but pure motives to United States policy in Latin America. For Hornbeck, the Monroe Doctrine was the cornerstone of the United States’ efforts to defend and protect the Western Hemisphere. It was not, in his mind, a vehicle “to restrain or coerce the other American states.” Nor was it an excuse for imposing a “closed door” policy in the Western Hemisphere and the creation of an exclusive American sphere of influence. This, of course, was the sticking point between Hornbeck’s orthodox reading of the Monroe Doctrine and the logic inherent in Japan’s Monroe Doctrine for Asia. “The United States,” he would often claim, “never asked

any American state for special privileges or self-denying promises in any way comparable to those which Japan has exacted of China.”²⁵

Hornbeck held steady when it came to his views. Just after Japan's invasion of Manchuria in 1931, for example, he reminded Secretary of State Henry Stimson:

For nearly twenty years, Japanese statesmen and writers have been speaking of a “Japan's Monroe Doctrine for Asia”. Some years ago they were given to comparing the position of Japan vis-a-vis China with that of the United States vis-a-vis Mexico. More recently they have insisted that Japan's relationship to Manchuria is essentially that of the United States toward weak countries of the Caribbean. They not infrequently say: “The South Manchuria Railway is our Panama Canal.” During the past few weeks they have compared their activities in Manchuria with those of the United States in Nicaragua. The fact that these comparisons and analogies are not sound is neither here nor there. Many Japanese believe them to be so, and not a few of our own people accept as gospel the allegations that they are so.²⁶

At a deeper level, any such claims of a Japanese Monroe Doctrine for Asia offended Hornbeck's sense of history. For Hornbeck—like many of his generation—the expansion of Western power was a fact bound up with a Whig interpretation of history (the idea that history was developing toward a certain end, toward a world of democracy and free market capitalism) and notions of racial hierarchy. His ideas were similar to Woodrow Wilson's famous dictum that the United States intervened in Mexico in order to “teach the Mexicans how to elect good men.” For them, the idea that Japan (considered a racially inferior people) should stand as a “teacher” in Asia or in any way on a level equal with the West was preposterous. Japan's claims of a Monroe Doctrine for Asia threatened to unravel a 500-year process of Western domination in Asia, a development contrary to the overall flow of world history itself.²⁷

Clark University Professor and part-time State Department advisor on the Far East, George Hubbard Blakeslee, echoed Hornbeck's views in a 1933 article for *Foreign Affairs*, entitled “Japan's Monroe Doctrine.” It was written shortly after the League of Nation's censure resolution in response to Japan's invasion of Manchuria. While Blakeslee allowed that there was, as Japanese policymakers claimed, some similarity to United States policy in the Western Hemisphere and the Caribbean in particular, he argued that these were not analogous situations, that “the position of Japan in Asia in certain important respects [failed] to parallel the United States in America.” First of all, there were differences in size. Japan was small in relation to Asia, and especially compared to China. The United States was a colossus in relation to its immediate neighbors to the south. “An attitude which therefore appears *natural* [emphasis added] for the United

States [that of regional policeman] does not appear natural for Japan to take toward China.” He saw no similarity to the actual principles contained in any would-be Japanese Monroe Doctrine and American policy. Blakeslee argued that the “the doctrine of the right to live, the life line, and economic expansion” which Japan put forth in defense of the Manchurian invasion, was “exclusively Japanese.” The United States, Blakeslee insisted did “not need to use military force to induce the Caribbean republics to permit American capital to find profitable investment. The doors are *voluntarily* wide open [emphasis added].” And lastly, there were no “statements in the American press that the status quo in the Caribbean should be changed to the economic and political advantage of the United States,”—none like those filling the Japanese press in the 1930s. In addition to these important differences, Blakeslee explained that other powers were involved in the Far East and had certain “rights” in China and elsewhere in the region, whereas none had any similar claims in the Caribbean.²⁸

However, Hornbeck was not above manipulating the historical record in order to preserve a one-sided view of United States-Japanese relation and as a means of undermining Japanese arguments in favor of Japan’s Monroe Doctrine. When the editor of the series *Foreign Relations of the United States*, the State Department’s official public collection of documents, informed Hornbeck that documents regarding the Lansing-Ishii Agreement were to be published in 1936, Hornbeck raised concerns. He did not want “the story of the Lansing-Ishii separate (‘secret’) protocol and the use subsequently made of it to be made public.” He asked that the matter be taken up with the Secretary of State and also that George Blakeslee look into the matter. Blakeslee came back with less than what Hornbeck wanted to hear, writing, “The record is one in which it appears that we led Ishii into making of a commitment, which was to be kept secret, and we afterwards used the commitment as a diplomatic club toward compelling them to make other commitments.” Consequently, information regarding these negotiations was not published by the State Department in 1936. Given the fact that these agreements were known—for example, *Time Magazine* ran a story about the Lansing-Ishii Agreement in its foreign news section on April 7, 1923—Hornbeck’s behavior here is rather strange. Perhaps it was a matter of timing. Publishing these documents in 1936 might have supported Japanese claims at the time, lending credence to the notion of Japan’s Monroe Doctrine for Asia.²⁹

Hornbeck was engaged in more than a war of words, however. Insisting on a hard-line against Japan during his long career, he helped convince Secretary of State Cordell Hull and President Franklin Roosevelt to reject Japanese attempts at peace talks in 1939 and 1940. As the head of the Far Eastern Division, Hornbeck discouraged both the Grew-Nomura

conversations (talks between Ambassador Joseph Grew and Japanese Foreign Minister Nomura Kichisaburo), and proposals for a high-level meeting between the President and Japan's Prime Minister Prince Fumimaro Konoye. Whether such talks would have prevented the war in the Pacific is impossible to say. But certainly, given the catastrophic nature of that war—with millions of deaths, culminating with the dropping of atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki—that the State Department rejected any meaningful chance for dialogue is important in and of itself.³⁰ Moreover, the clear connection between Hornbeck's selective reading of history—his unequivocal rejection of Japan's Monroe Doctrine—and the breakdown of diplomacy between the United States and Japan leads to some disturbing revelations about how foreign policy is made that offer lessons for the future and for world peace. Hornbeck's perspective seems far from unique. In fact, Hornbeck's black-and-white vision of the world seems typically American. It certainly squares with the standard story of Pearl Harbor that Americans subscribe to. However, such black and white views are as dangerous now as they were seventy years ago when they guided Hornbeck's thinking at the State Department. In short, such an unequivocal rejection of the other side's point of view is not conducive to diplomacy and finding peaceful solution to international problems. Americans then and now fail to recognize a blatant double standard: the United States could occupy Nicaragua, but Japan could not occupy Manchuria. Certain rules applied to "them," but not "us." Breaking out of the traditional chronological parameters would certainly help dilute such tendencies. Viewing the "road to Pearl Harbor" as starting well before 1931 and making room for Japanese arguments contained in the idea of a Japanese Monroe Doctrine for Asia makes this clear. Beginning the story much earlier lends credence to a Japanese view, a view epitomized by pre-war arguments for a Japanese Monroe Doctrine.³¹

Lessons to Be Learned from Re-Framing the Story of Pearl Harbor

Too useful as a symbol of American righteousness perhaps to be questioned, Americans have not thoroughly reexamined the standard narrative regarding the "day that will live in infamy."³² Instead, Japanese voices such as Kiyoshi Kawakami's, Yamato Ichihashi's, Inahara Katsuji's, and those of other prewar-Japanese scholars and intellectuals, epitomized by the argument and concept of a Japanese Monroe Doctrine for Asia, have been long forgotten—edited out of the narrative, so to speak.³³ Instead, a limited story, beginning with Japanese aggression in Manchuria in 1931, prevails.

There is a cost to such selective vision, however. If foreign policy is,

as famous Cold War diplomat and policymaker George F. Kennan once said, “really a series of responses to challenges, and that the responses are largely determined by, first, our own principles of conduct and ethics, and, secondly, our concept of ourselves as a nation and its past in the world,”³⁴ then any meaningful change in America’s relations with the rest of the world must begin with a reevaluation of American history. If, perhaps as historian Michael Wood has recommended, Americans can learn to “see themselves as they would a foreign country,” then the kind of double standards that have been applied to America’s conduct in world affairs in so many instances may be corrected, and therefore be less likely to antagonize people around the world.³⁵ It might erode simplistic arguments concerning United States policy in the Middle East, for example. Here the same good vs. evil and selective chronological approach has yielded violent results.³⁶ Few commentators, for example, trace current problems involving the United States and the Middle East to the Eisenhower years—when the CIA helped topple the democratically elected government of Iran, setting off a chain reaction of Muslim resentment and distrust of American intentions in the region. Obviously, the stakes are high, and a fundamental rethinking of American history could begin a dialogue leading to a more peaceful world in the near future. Clearly, addressing American myths surrounding Pearl Harbor, breaking old molds and experimenting with new chronological parameters, is a good place to start.

Notes

1. In addition to Peter Stearns *et al.*, *World Civilizations: The Global Experience* (New York, 2004) see Ross Dunn, “Periodizing World History,” in *The New World History: A Teacher’s Companion*, ed. Ross Dunn (Boston, 2000), Jerry Bentley’s “Cross-Cultural Interaction and Periodization in World History,” *American Historical Review* 101 (1996), and David Northrup, “Globalization and the Great Convergence: Rethinking World History in the Long Term,” *Journal of World History*, vol. 16, No.3 (September 2005). Scholars of literature have grappled with this issue as well, re-examing major writers, genres and themes in relation to their traditional period affiliations. See, for example, Lawrence Besserman, *The Challenge of Periodization: Old Paradigms and New Perspectives* (New York, 1996), Joyce Warren ed., et al., *Challenging Boundaries: Gender and Periodization* (Atlanta, 2000) and Marshall Brown ed. “Periodization: Cutting Up the Past,” *Modern Language Quarterly*, Vol. 62, No. 4 (December, 2001).

2. See, for example, *Pearl Harbor Reexamined: Prologue to the Pacific War*, eds. Hilary Conroy and Harry Wray (Honolulu, 1990). In this collection of seventeen articles from prominent American and Japanese historians none delve into the deeper past involving US-Japanese relations prior to 1931. One of the most notable exceptions

is Walter LaFeber's, *The Clash: U.S.-Japanese Relations Throughout History* (New York, 1998). LaFeber traces conflicts back to the beginning of US-Japanese relations in the 1850s, stressing the incompatibility of the two countries' economic goals and systems. For the historiography of Pearl Harbor see Charles Lutton, "Pearl Harbor: Fifty Years of Controversy," *Journal of Historical Review*, Vol. 11, No. 4. The connection between War Department propaganda and the standard view of Pearl Harbor will be explored below.

3. In addition to the website mentioned above, see "Group Seeks to End Enola Gay Display at the Smithsonian," *The New York Times*, January 20, 1995 and "The New Enola Gay Controversy: Historians Protest the Latest Smithsonian Exhibit," by the Committee for a National Discussion of Nuclear History and Current Policy, <http://hnn.us/articles/1773.html> (visited February 4, 2006). On Newt Gingrich, Lynne Cheney, and Rush Limbaugh, see Mike Wallace, "Culture War, History Front," in Edward Linenthal et al., *History Wars: The Enola Gay and Other Battles for the American Past* (New York, 1996).

4. John W. Dower, "Three Narratives of Our Humanity," in Edward Linenthal et al., *History Wars: The Enola Gay and Other Battles for the American Past*, p. 88-89.

5. See Lutton, "Pearl Harbor: Fifty Years of Controversy."

6. See Rebecca Clifford, "Cleansing History, Cleansing Japan: Kobayashi Yoshinori's *Analects of War* and Japan's Revisionist Revival," Nissan Occasional Paper Series No. 35, 2004 available at the Nissan Institute (Oxford University), <http://www.nissan.ox.ac.uk> (visited 5 February 2006) and Ian Buruma, *Inventing Japan, 1853-1964* (New York, 2004). Buruma traces the reemergence of this view from Hayashi Fusao's 1964 book, *In Affirmation of the Great East Asian War*, p. 87-88.

7. See Frank Capra's film series *Why We Fight*. There is a striking similarity between these wartime films and Henry L. Stimson's account of the road to Pearl Harbor in his memoirs, *On Active Service in Peace and War* (New York, 1948) and in his *The Far Eastern Crisis* (New York, 1936). Stimson's view—that the road to Pearl Harbor started in 1931 with the failure of the U.S. or the League of Nations to take military action against Japanese aggression—was echoed by State-Department-official-turned-historian Herbert Feis, *The Road to Pearl Harbor* (Princeton, 1950), Feis was a member of the State Department from 1931-1945, and William Langer and S. Everett Gleason, *The Undeclared War: 1940-1941* (New York, 1953). It has been repeated by many scholars ever since. Stimson was the Secretary of War during the Second World War and Secretary of State during the Manchurian Crisis, and, as Barton Bernstein has shown, not above manipulating his various accounts of events prior to 1945 to suit America's interventionist Cold War foreign policy. See Barton Bernstein, "Seizing the Contested Terrain of Nuclear History," *Diplomatic History* (Winter 1993). Bernstein shows how Stimson and others engaged in a public relations campaign to both justify the use of the atomic bomb and to perpetuate President Harry Truman's claim that it saved a million American lives, an assertion that many scholars have found doubtful. See, for example, Gar Alperovitz, *The Decision to Use the Atomic Bomb* (New York, 1996), Ronald Takaki, *Hiroshima: Why America Dropped the Atomic Bomb* (New York, 1996) and J. Samuel Walker, *Prompt and Utter Destruction: Truman and the Use of Atomic Bombs Against Japan* (Chapel Hill, 2004). As in his attempt to steer the direction of the atomic bomb debate, Stimson seems to have set the mold when it comes to Pearl Harbor as well. In addition to Stimson's memoirs, see Cordell Hull, *The Memoirs of Cordell Hull* (New York, 1948).

8. Thomas A. Bailey and David M. Kennedy, *The American Pageant* (Ninth Edition), p. 834.

9. *Ibid*, p. 779.

10. Gerald A. Danzer, et al., *The Americans* (Evanstown, 1998), p.709. Other history texts could be added to the list, such as Pauline Maier, et al, *Inventing America; A History*

of the United States (2003), James L. Roark, et al, *The American Promise: A History of the United States* (1998), George Tindall and David Shi, *America: A Narrative History* (2002), Paul Boyer, et al, *The Enduring Vision: A History of the American People* (2004), and Alan Brinkley, *American History* (2003). With the exception of Roark (who begins the story in the 1890s) all of these textbooks begin the story in 1931. None mention the idea of Japan's Monroe Doctrine or U.S. policy in Latin America in the context of Pearl Harbor.

11. USS Arizona Web Site, <http://www.nps.gov/usar/home.htm> (visited February 3, 2006).

12. Soldier City website, http://www.soldiercity.com/cgi-bin/Web_store.cgi?page=New/0501/pearlharbor.htm (visited February 3, 2006).

13. Kentaro Kaneko, "A 'Japanese Monroe Doctrine' and Manchuria," *Contemporary Japan* (Tokyo), Vol. I, 1932, p.176-184. Here Kaneko recounts his days and conversations as T.R.'s guest during the negotiations over the Portsmouth Treaty.

14. Theodore Roosevelt to Cecil Arthur Spring Rice, June 13, 1904 in *The Letters of Theodore Roosevelt*, ed. Elting E. Morison (Cambridge, MA 1951-19545), p. 829-30. In a posthumous article entitled "The League of Nations," published in the *Kansas City Star* on January 13, 1919, Roosevelt made similar remarks. "The American people do not intend to give up the Monroe Doctrine," he wrote. "Let civilized Europe and Asia introduce some kind of police system in the weak and disorderly countries at their threshold." See H.W. Brands, *T.R.: The Last Romantic* (New York, 1997), p. 530 as well.

15. Gaddis Smith, *The Last Years of the Monroe Doctrine, 1945-1993* (New York, 1994), p. 35.

16. See Michael Schaller, *The United States and China in the Twentieth Century* (London, 1991); Ian Buruma, *Inventing Japan, 1853-1964* (New York, 2003); Felipe Fernandez-Armesto, *Millennium: A History of the Last Thousand Years* (New York, 1995); and Walter LaFeber, *The Clash: U.S.-Japanese Relations Throughout History* (New York, 1998).

17. Walter LaFeber, *The Clash: U.S.-Japanese Relations Throughout History* (New York, 1998), p.xviii.

18. Kiyoshi K. Kawakami, *American-Japanese Relations; An Inside View of Japan's Policies and Purposes* (New York, 1919). Kawakami's other books include *American-Japanese Relations* (New York, 1912); *Asia at the Door* (New York, 1914); and *Japan in World Politics* (New York 1917).

19. *Ibid.*, p.96.

20. Yamato Ichihashi, *The Washington Conference and After: A Historical Survey* (Stanford, 1928), p. 341. Ichihashi is probably best know for his dairies and collection of letters regarding Japanese-American internment during the Second World War. See Gordon Chang's *Morning Glory, Evening Shadow: Yamato Ichihashi and His Internment Writings, 1942-1945* (Stanford, 1999).

21. *Ibid.* p. 129. For an extensive look at Matsuoka Yosuke, see David Lu's *Agony of Choice: Matsuoka Yosuke and the Rise and Fall of the Japanese Empire, 1880-1946* (Lanham, Maryland, 2003).

22. Kimitada Miwa, "Japanese Images of War with the United States," in Akira Iriye, ed., *Mutual Images: Essays in American-Japanese Relations* (Cambridge, 1975), p. 133.

23. Transcript appeared in *Contemporary Japan* (Tokyo, February 1941).

24. *Department of State Bulletin*, Vol.V. No. 129, December 13, 1941.

25. Stanley K. Hornbeck, *Contemporary Politics in the Far East* (New York, 1916), p. 353.

26. See Hornbeck memo, "Manchuria Situation: United States and Japan: Conflict of Policies; Japan's 'Monroe Doctrine for Asia,'" January 14, 1932 in Justus Doenecke, ed., *The Diplomacy of Frustration: The Manchurian Crisis of 1931-33 as Revealed in the Papers of Stanley K. Hornbeck* (Stanford, 1981) p. 127. For American media coverage of this debate see "The Monroe Doctrine for Asia," *New York Herald Tribune*, June 24, 1932 and "Monroe Doctrine for Japan Stirs American Criticism," *Washington Star*, July 4, 1932.

27. See John R. Murnane, "The Guardians of Progress: The First Generation of 'Action Intellectuals' and America's Failed Search for a new World Order Since 1917," Diss. (1999).

28. Ibid. and George H. Blakeslee, "The Japanese Monroe Doctrine," *Foreign Affairs*, 11 (July 1933).

29. On Hornbeck and the publication of the Lansing-Ishii documents, see Stanley K. Hornbeck Memorandum "Reference: Galley Proofs 92 GGX to 95 GGX and 14 TC," February 17, 1936, Stanley Hornbeck Papers, Box : 273, Folder: Lansing, Ishii Agreement (Hoover Institution, Stanford University) along with George Blakeslee to Hornbeck letter, February 19, 1936. See *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1921 Volumes 1, 2, and 3 (Washington, 1936).

30. On Japan's peace talk proposals see R.J.C. Butow, "Backdoor Diplomacy in the Pacific: The Proposal for a Konoye-Roosevelt Meeting, 1941," *The Journal of American History*, 59 (June 1972) and Hilary Conroy, "Ambassador Nomura and His 'John Doe Associates': Pre-Pearl Harbor Diplomacy Revisited," and Jonathan G. Utley, "Cordell Hull and the Diplomacy of Inflexibility," both in Conroy and Wray, *Pearl Harbor Reexamined*.

31. Stanley Hornbeck's or George Blakeslee's views are certainly not unique. Such black and white views of American history have deep roots stretching back to colonial times. See Anders Stephanson, *Manifest Destiny: American Expansion and the Empire of Right* (New York, 1995); Michael H. Hunt, *Ideology and U.S. Foreign Policy* (New Haven, 1987); and Bert James Lowenberg, *American History in American Thought: Christopher Columbus to Henry Adams* (New York, 1972).

32. Charles Krauthammer called the September 11th terrorist attacks of 2001 our generation's Pearl Harbor, for example. See Charles Krauthammer, "Voices of Moral Obtuseness," *The Washington Post*, September 21, 2001. Reprinted in *The Iraq War Reader: History, Documents, Opinions* eds. Micah Sifry and Christopher Cerf (New York, 2003), p. 217-219.

33. Other Japanese intellectuals could be added above. For example Hasegawa Nyozeikan wrote, in an April 1942 article called "The Greater East Asia War," that after repeated attempts at "Amaterasu diplomacy—to assuage with words—the nation [Japan] found to its dismay that its pacific character remained misunderstood and belittled by the Western powers. Japan had no choice now but to pluck up [it enemies] like young reeds, crush them, and send them flying in the wind." And this coming from a man historian Andrew Barshay called "an outsider" and a critic of mainstream Japanese society, a man critical of the state, power and authority. See Andrew E. Barshay, *State and Intellectual in Imperial Japan: The Public Man in Crisis* (Berkeley, 1988). My point is to show that many intellectuals and policymakers felt that Japan was backed into a corner and subjected to an unfair "double standard." None of this means that Japan was therefore in the "right," anymore than American claims, usually of self-defense, historic mission, or of protecting the national interest, during various interventions throughout American history were "right."

34. The quote from George F. Kennan can be found in LaFeber, *The Clash*, p. i.

35. Michael Wood, *Legacy: The Search for Ancient Cultures* (London, 1992). On the

widespread hate and distrust for the United States see The Pew Global Attitudes Project for statistics at <http://pewglobal.org/reports> (visited 9 February 2006). Only British, Canadian, Polish and Indian citizens polled had favorable views of the United States. America's image has become so bad that the Bush administration has hired a media consultant company, The Lincoln Group, to circulate favorable news regarding US efforts in Iraq and Afghanistan, see Jeff Gerth "Iraq Info War Vast, Secretive," *New York Times* December 11, 2005. Meanwhile the recent release of Turkish film, "Valley of the Wolves: Iraq," a film featuring atrocities by American soldiers, is the best selling Turkish film of all time (grossing \$10 million to date). See Benjamin Harvey, "Anti-U.S. Film a Blockbuster in Turkey: American Soldiers Cut Down the Innocent in New Movie," *Worcester Telegram and Gazette*, February 6, 2006.

36. Understanding, debunking, and demonstrating the dangers of holding such simplistic views of the "other" was the cardinal point of Edward Said's work, much of it focused on Western perceptions of the Middle East. See, for example, Edward Said, *Orientalism* (1978); *Covering Islam: How the Media and the Experts Determine How We See the Rest of the World* (1997); *Culture and Imperialism* (1993); and "Permission to Narrate" (1984). Others have followed Said's lead, such as Kathleen Christison *Perceptions of Palestine: Their Influences on U.S. Middle East Policy* (1999) and Douglas Little, *American Orientalism: The United States and the Middle East Since 1945* (2002). For an overview of Said's work see *The Edward Said Reader*, eds Moustafa Bayoumi and Andrew Rubin (2000).