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Between Republic and Empire: The Trajectory of Postwar Japanese Historical Studies of American Politics and Diplomacy

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Sixty-nine years ago today [June 7, 2014] Okinawa was in the last stages of a ferocious battle between invading American troops and Japanese defenders. After landing on the main Okinawan island on April 1 the American troops steadily cornered the resisting army, which had taken with it many civilians to the southern part of the island. At last, the organized resistance of the Japanese army dissolved. The commanding general and the chief of staff of the 32nd Army, the main force defending Okinawa, committed ritual suicide on June 22. Afterward, resistance by guerrillas gradually tapered off, but it continued sporadically until the official surrender was declared. In the battle of Okinawa, one of the bloodiest in the entire Pacific War, civilian deaths and injuries were particularly appalling, not only because the victims were subject to fierce shelling from US sea and land forces, but also because many Okinawans, including even young women and children, were forced to cooperate with the Japanese army and were thus deeply involved in the defensive war of attrition.

Today, at this especially memorable occasion of the first conference of the Japanese Association for American Studies to be held in Okinawa, I would like to review the development of American studies and history in postwar Japan and focus on the areas of politics and diplomacy. Prior to

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starting this task I would like to remind you of what happened here sixty-nine years ago and note that we owe much to the enormous sacrifices of the Battle of Okinawa for Japan's current peace and prosperity. From the perspective of the present political and intellectual state of things, however, I should emphasize that postwar Japan has largely failed to ponder the meaning of the disastrous war experience of people on the Japanese mainland let alone on Okinawa. The lesson of these experiences has hardly been incorporated into the so-called postwar regime. Today we are now paying the cost of this failure. Controversies continue over questions of US military bases in Okinawa, the right of collective self-defense, the revision of the Japanese constitution, a defensible historical perspective, and other serious issues.

Let me go back sixty-nine years. Immediately after landing on the main Okinawan island, the American forces began to remold Okinawa into an advanced base for attacking the Japanese mainland. The US government and military had anticipated massive resistance from the Japanese military and civilians, who were desperate in their determination to fight to the death. That was why the US military so persistently bombed Japanese cities in advance of the landing operation. As the US military intended, these strategic bombings, which culminated in Hiroshima and Nagasaki, completely demoralized the Japanese people. The latter had already been worn down by incessant notices of deaths in oversea battlefields, innumerable family breakups, and above all widespread starvation. This weariness enabled the US troops eventually to enter and occupy the Japanese mainland with little resistance.

In his 2013 book entitled *Year Zero*, which refers to the year 1945 and the start of the postwar world, Ian Buruma undertook a comparative examination of various experiences across the world immediately after the termination of World War II. He begins his fascinating study by pointing to a "liberation complex," which was typically observed among those who were freed from concentration camps, slave labor camps, prisoner-of-war camps, or displaced persons camps. In the words of one witness, the liberation complex "involved revenge, hunger and exultation." These three qualities "combined to make displaced persons, when newly liberated, a problem as to behavior and conduct, as well as for care, feeding, disinfection and repatriation." As Buruma states, the liberation complex was not necessarily confined to inmates of the camps. It could be found in "entire countries newly liberated, and even in some respects the defeated nations."¹

Many Japanese quickly developed exactly this kind of complex after

their country's surrender. Like people who had been held in camps, Japanese citizens had plenty of reasons for holding sentiments of vengeance. But unlike former inmates who could wreak their revenge rightfully upon their enemies, the vengeance of this defeated nation was frustrated and directed inward. The people felt betrayed by the emperor and his government and most of all by military authorities who had wielded absolute power over the entire nation until only a few days before the war's end. But, above all, most Japanese in Year Zero were disappointed with themselves and their blind past enthusiasm for such a hopeless war.

Hunger, shipwrecks, and suicide attacks were the chief reasons for fatalities among Japanese soldiers in the Pacific War. According to a historical estimate, roughly 60 percent of the total deaths of about 2,300,000 soldiers and paramilitary personnel between 1937 and 1945 were caused by hunger and diseases related to malnutrition.² This number indicates the utter failure of the Japanese military in logistics. But it was not only men on the fighting front who starved. The prolonged war and a poor crop of rice in 1945 worsened a terrible food shortage that also afflicted the civilian population in the homeland. There was hunger all over the country well before the end of the war.

The surrender declared by the emperor no doubt shocked the Japanese nation into a state of profound grief. But, in the above mentioned psychological and physical situation, the defeat itself proved a kind of liberation to many. Now at last they were freed from incessant air raids, jackboot militarism, a stringent war economy, the suppression of free speech, and so on. Although the widespread hunger was of course not adequately addressed instantly, the vast amount of food that the GIs brought into the devastated country at least kindled Japanese hopes of an escape from the dire plight of famine. Except for some war leaders, fanatic right-wingers, or ultranationalists, the bitter grief over the defeat was accompanied by the exultation of being liberated. This is one of the main reasons why the landing of US troops on mainland Japan took place relatively peacefully.

Looking backward from today, it was fortunate for the Japanese people, including their anti-Communist war leaders, to be invaded and occupied almost solely by US forces. This is not to say that the rule by Occupation forces was lax. Free speech under the Occupation was suppressed as harshly as under the ultranationalist regime. The number of violent crimes committed by GIs was never negligible, especially in the early days of the Occupation. But atrocities and oppressive measures were far fewer than most Japanese had feared. This was somewhat comforting to a populace that had been

brainwashed about “demonic Anglo-Americans.” Japanese demobilized servicemen returning from China and other Asian countries surely knew from their own and fellow soldiers’ barbarian conduct how brutal invading and occupying forces could be against civilians in occupied areas. And many civilians who were repatriated from Manchuria in the last stage of the war had witnessed the viciousness of attacking Russian soldiers. These returnees anticipated that the future of their country under the foreign occupying forces would be grim indeed. The fear of the Japanese, however, quickly diminished when they met actual GIs, who tended to be far friendlier, easy-going, and less arrogant and authoritarian than Japanese soldiers.

The foregoing brief account of what happened in Japan around Year Zero suggests the immeasurable importance of the presence of the United States for reconstructing postwar Japan. As one young historian recently emphasized, one ought to remember that everything began with the utter defeat of the ultranationalist state and the power vacuum that this defeat left in the Japanese polity.³ The United States, as represented by its military, swiftly filled that vacuum. For this reason, after Year Zero, America suddenly loomed large in the eyes of the Japanese. America now appeared as an enormous irresistible reality in national life. To Japanese of the postwar era, this initial reality provided the basic framework for accepting and understanding America.

From the very beginning, most Japanese felt ambivalent about this American influence. On the one hand, the United States was a domineering superpower. The American war machine, particularly the two atomic bombs, left an indelible sense of dread on the Japanese national psyche. The Japanese felt at once the enormous gap between Japanese and American power. This was amplified by the physical presence of cheerful well-fed GIs. Later it was impressed on the national psyche more decisively through the somewhat ignominious picture of the emperor standing side by side with General MacArthur. US military bases, which continued to stand long after the Occupation ended, always caused mixed feelings among Japanese people: while they aroused a sense of fear and awe, they also provided a demilitarized nation with an invincible citadel. This was particularly true after the start of the Cold War. In the end, Japan was left with few options other than uneasily placing itself within the domain of the American empire.

On the other hand, America served as the model of a prosperous democratic society. The US occupying forces came to Japan not only as victorious oppressors but also as great benefactors to a war-torn country.

The postsurrender policy of the United States naturally focused on restoring and stabilizing national life. The Japanese people were supplied with indispensable resources for surviving these critical times. The United States appropriated a part of its military expenditures for funding the program known as Government and Relief in Occupied Areas (GARIOA), which aimed at mitigating starvation, disease, and social unrest. The program provided Japan with daily necessities, including food, medical supplies, and chemical fertilizer. In addition, the United States implemented another program, Economic Rehabilitation in Occupied Areas (EROA). This was also funded through the military budget and served mostly to foster economic reconstruction. The Japanese government used much of this fund for importing industrial raw materials such as cotton and wool. Aid to Japan under GARIOA-EROA amounted to about \$2 billion from 1947 to 1951.⁴

The early Occupation policy also provided a substitute for democratic revolution and planted in the Japanese a taste for the freedom found in a democratic society. The occupying forces led by the Supreme Commander for the Allied Powers (SCAP) and his General Headquarters (GHQ) pursued two main lines: demilitarization and democratization.⁵ Among the major reforms during the early years of occupation were the complete destruction of the Japanese military organization, the dissolution of the *zaibatsu* (financial conglomerates), the disbandment of ultranationalist and paramilitary societies, and the purge of about two hundred thousand leaders active in the war period. It also included educational reforms, fundamental agrarian land reform, the encouragement of a labor movement, and the denial of the emperor's divinity. Shinto was dismantled as a state-supported national religion. All these reforms culminated in the new constitution. Before the start of the Cold War began to color Occupation policy, the United States sought to lead Japan out of a fascist regime based on the emperor system into an American-style democracy. From the Meiji Restoration to World War II Japan had concentrated its modernization effort chiefly on the improvement of the nation's defenses and economy. Now, through the early Occupation policy, the Japanese for the first time glimpsed ethical aspects of modernity such as freedom of speech, freedom of religion, universal human rights, and self-government. As an agent of these modern projects the United States showed a different face to the Japanese than in its effort to build its empire. Against the backdrop of occupation, this face was far from congenial or agreeable, but it still represented America the republic.

While most Japanese first encountered and coped with American power in the wake of the war, Japanese American studies struggled to free

themselves from their worst predicaments. Academic American studies in Japan sprouted in 1918, when a new chair in the American Constitution, history, and diplomacy was established at the Law Department of the University of Tokyo. This chair was endowed by the American banker A. Barton Hepburn, who intended to promote Japanese understanding of the American nation. A few private universities followed suit and started their own American studies program. These incipient programs of American studies, however, were not necessarily regarded as a fully independent and legitimate academic discipline in the Japanese academe. This was partly because in the humanities departments of prewar Japanese universities American studies were usually categorized as an insignificant subfield of Western studies in general. Moreover, American-style republicanism was seen as utterly incompatible with Japan's national orthodoxy, the notion of a "national polity" (*kokutai-ron*). Some diehard conservative scholars of the Law Department of the University of Tokyo despised Americanization and democracy and even opposed the establishment of the so-called Hepburn chair in their department.⁶

Nonetheless, the Hepburn chair was eventually established and filled by the scholar Yasaka Takagi (1889–1984), a promising young intellectual who came from the aristocratic circles of Meiji Japan.⁷ Before starting to teach American political and diplomatic history in 1924, Takagi had gone to the United States to study at Harvard University with Frederick Jackson Turner. It was the heyday of the influence of Progressives in the field of history, and Takagi developed his framework for understanding the United States under the influence of the era's outstanding proponents, including Turner himself, Edwin Seligman, Charles Homer Haskins, Edward Channing, Samuel Eliot Morison, Charles H. McIlwain, Andrew C. McLaughlin, and Charles A. Beard.

After returning home Takagi inaugurated the Hepburn chair. In 1927 he published his first scholarly article, "The Significance of Land in the Political History of the United States." This study launched professional American studies in Japan. As its title indicated, it was written under the strong influence of Turner's frontier thesis, which, along with Puritanism—Takagi himself was a disciple of Kanzō Uchimura, the leading Puritan-inspired Christian in Meiji Japan—would become one of two major pillars supporting Takagi's understanding of American history. From this dual point of view Takagi was to write his first major book, *An Introduction to American Political History* (1931), which established his position as the pioneer of American history in the Japanese academe, where Europe had

always served as the major fountainhead of knowledge and inspiration since the early years of Meiji.

In the meantime, the relationship between the United States and Japan was worsening. The Japanese were offended by US laws prohibiting Japanese immigration; the Americans protested the escalation of the Japanese armed invasion of China. While building his academic career, Takagi soon became an authority and trustworthy source of information regarding current American politics and diplomacy. He was looked to by elite circles within the Japanese government and became an active member of the famous transnational organization known as the Institute of Pacific Relations. From the Manchurian Incident to Pearl Harbor and throughout the years of the Pacific War, Takagi quietly assumed multiple roles of scholar, teacher, adviser, and even negotiator of US-Japan relations. Remarkably, in those difficult years he maintained his high scholarly standard with great composure and never lost his admiration for the achievements of American civilization and for American democracy.

Before and during the war a few young scholars and journalists independently began to investigate US politics and economics, which they saw as formidable rivals to their Japanese equivalents. These included Shigeharu Matsumoto (1899–1989) of the Dōmei News Agency; Moritane Fujiwara (1901–1977), who led the newly established Institute for American Studies at Rikkyō University (b. 1939); Keiji Ohara (1903–72) of the Tokyo School of Commerce; Hiroshi Shimizu (1907–93) of Rikkyo University; and Ken'ichi Nakaya (1910–1987) also of the Dōmei News Agency. When the war ended and Japan found itself tossed around in the torrent of democratization, these young scholars rallied to support Takagi's project of organizing the discipline of American studies in response to a mounting national interest in American civilization. They were motivated, as Takagi later recalled, chiefly by a deep regret for their complete failure to stop Japan's reckless attack on the United States. It was this small group of Americanists who in 1947 gave birth to the first Japanese Association for American Studies.

According to Makoto Saitō (1921–2008), Takagi's successor as the Hepburn chair and the youngest member of this association, Takagi intended to make the new association as purely academic an organization as possible. Takagi had rejected all influence and funding from the Occupation army.⁸ The association's activities centered on frequent study meetings in which primary historical documents of American civilization were read and discussed. Based on these activities the organization published its monthly

journal *The American Review* for three years.⁹ Later it issued its six-volume *Documentary History of the American People* (1950–57).¹⁰ This stood as a monument to the first generation of postwar Japanese American studies and laid a solid foundation for younger generations of Americanists.

In the meantime, however, America and the world were changing with unexpected velocity. Many of the younger Japanese Americanists had been university students who had been drafted and set to fighting against the United States in the war. They had been more severely buffeted by war and defeat than their elders, and it therefore took them much time to recover from their physical and psychological wounds and return to academic life. It was around 1950 that some Americanists of this generation were sent to the United States under the sponsorship of the GARIOA aid programs, the American Council of Learned Societies, or private organizations such as the Rockefeller Foundation and the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. It was now the age of McCarthyism, the Korean War, and the height of the Cold War. While studying at major American universities during the early 1950s, young scholars from Japan could observe the democratic processes of the American Republic in full. They could also witness its dark aspects and confronted the relentless face of American empire. Owing to that experience, their view of America was considerably more nuanced and complex than that of the preceding generation, which had often simply sought to adjust their country's future to the American model.

Saitō, for instance, ranked among the young scholars who studied American politics and history in the heyday of the consensus. Although his major field was early American political and constitutional history, he was so impressed with the limited war that the United States was fighting in Korea, with the American people's reaction to the war, and particularly with the prevalence of conformism and intolerance in American society and politics in the early 1950s that he began to incorporate both the American Republic and the American Empire into a contextually integrated view of US political and diplomatic history. Under the strong influence of the consensus historians, particularly of Louis Hartz, with whom Saitō worked at Harvard, Saitō tried to place McCarthyism within the broad context of US politics and diplomacy under the pressure of the Cold War, as well as within the long historical framework of American liberal democracy.

In his article tracing the historical origins of the paranoia of disloyalty in McCarthy's America, Saitō reached a kind of Tocquevillian view of the American Republic and argued that the problem was rooted in individuals' loss of a "sense of belonging" in a mass society.¹¹ Although Saitō as a

historian was careful enough to locate the time of the establishment of mass society during the 1920s, he, borrowing from Alexis de Tocqueville, pointed out the authoritarian disposition inherent in an independent but lonely citizen in a democratic society. Tocqueville found that an individual in a democratic society tended to seek “a huge entity” “as the sole and necessary support of his individual weakness,” one could therefore see in the individual the two conflicting passions for freedom and the need of guidance at the same time.¹² In Tocqueville’s argument Saitō perceptively read the paradox of individualism in modern democracy. Saitō thus found in McCarthyism the most recent manifestation of this paradox. To him, McCarthyism was simply the expected product of the American Republic.

Japanese Americanists of Saitō’s generation also encountered the dramatic shift of American diplomacy brought on by the increasing intensity of the Cold War. Saitō later recalled that as he faced American politics at Harvard during the days of the Korean War, he was deeply impressed with the reaction of the public to such key incidents as General MacArthur’s returning home and the presidential election of 1952.¹³ He found in American diplomacy a unique tendency to stress morality and beliefs in decision making, which he defined as “a moralistic and creedal approach.” And he thought this characteristic of American diplomacy was once again the result of the incompleteness and insecurity of national integration based on deep-seated individualism and a multiethnic composition. He thus invented and proposed an integrated view both of the American Republic and the American Empire.

After returning home in 1953 Saitō published several pioneering articles based on the scholarship he had acquired in the United States. Saitō’s interpretation, however, did not always fully convince other Japanese Americanists. During the early postwar years under the Occupation Japanese views of America diverged considerably. Before turning to other perspectives, a few more remarks should be made concerning the characteristics of the conceptual framework that Takagi and Saitō endeavored to establish in order to better understand US politics and diplomacy.

Both Takagi and Saitō directed their interest to dichotomous aspects of the American political tradition. Takagi proposed a pivotal dichotomy for grasping the unique development of the American polity: Puritanism and the existence of the frontier. For Takagi, Puritanism was the everlasting cultural fountainhead from which sociopolitical reforms of later periods derived their inspiration. For him as for Turner, the frontier, above all the vast amount of free land found there, represented a unique stage of national

development, one in which people could bring democratic ideas to new locations and develop forms of self-governance on their own initiative.¹⁴ We can see behind Takagi's view of American civilization an optimistic Whig conception of historical progress. According to Takagi, American westward expansion during the nineteenth century meant establishing American democracy on a continental scale. In this construction we find little contradiction between republic and empire. In a public lecture in 1946 in which he attempted to explain the foundation of American diplomacy in relation to the American national character Takagi pointed to a dual purpose in current American diplomacy: America assumed a great international role with the aim of "maintaining and propagating democratic thought" and, at the same time, wished to "solve the real and economic national problems by . . . expanding overseas markets and achieving full employment." The apparent contradiction between these two purposes, however, was blurred in his conclusion that "the American nation is now launching out into the construction of a new international order . . . from a highly idealistic position."¹⁵

Following Takagi, Saitō also proposed a powerful cognitive dichotomy as a framework for understanding American political and diplomatic history. But Saitō's binary opposition was not as harmonious as Takagi's notions of Puritanism and the frontier. Instead, Saitō focused on inherently contradictory forces working in American politics such as freedom versus power, diversity versus integration, and centrifugal versus centripetal force. In Saitō's view of American political history nothing proceeded in one direction forever. No historical act resulted in the precise consequences originally intended. In McCarthyism, for example, Saitō saw a typical case of this contradiction of American history, in which the suppression of freedom was justified by the pretext of fighting for freedom against communism. By interpreting the dynamics of American history Saitō thus disagreed with Takagi, who found only the same static, democratic ideal at the core of the American republic and empire. For Saitō, it was the dialectic interaction between the opposing poles of freedom and power, or diversity and integration, that provided American history with a powerful source of change.¹⁶

Returning now to the general development of American studies in postwar Japan, I must refer to the rise of the Marxist view of America in the context of the Cold War.¹⁷ As I mentioned earlier, for many Japanese, their country's defeat was also experienced as a liberation. This was particularly true for Marxists affiliated with the Japanese Communist Party (JCP). This party had firmly resisted the brutal oppression of the ultranationalist government.

When, after the war, the GHQ decided to free about three thousand convicted political criminals including the leaders of the JCP, the party won an almost complete liberation that was experienced as something of a revolution. Almost overnight the party's standing and popularity soared. In the first postwar general election in 1946 the JCP succeeded in obtaining 2.1 million votes and five seats in the House of Representatives. Along with this political ascent, Marxism quickly spread among intellectuals and academics. The collapse of the prewar *kokutai* seemed to attest not only to the gallantry of the party's activists but also to the scientific verity of the official Marxist doctrine that determined the party line. Orthodox Marxism as a comprehensive scientific theory took a strong hold on the minds of many academics in the natural sciences, social sciences, and humanities. History was no exception, and Marxists assumed leading roles in various historical associations or study groups in postwar Japan.

America as an academic subject, however, was at first a conundrum to postwar Marxists. To them America appeared at once as a friend and as an enemy, a liberating force and a quintessential form of capitalism. At first the JCP understood (or misunderstood) that the initial Occupation policies for demilitarization and democratization were in substantial agreement with their party line opposing the prewar regime. The seeming agreement between the GHQ's purpose and the JCP's aspirations worked favorably for the party, at least temporarily. Despite the growing displeasure of SCAP, the JCP increased its electoral power in the 1949 election, winning 3 million votes and thirty-five seats. But this meager success augured ill for the future of the party. In the following year the party split over Cominform criticism of its pursuit of "peaceful revolution" and its lukewarm attitude toward reforms under the Occupation. While some top leaders of the party accepted criticism from the international Communist camp, SCAP launched a "Red purge" and banned the party's top leaders from engaging in political activities. As the Cold War intensified, the honeymoon between the JCP and the so-called liberation army of MacArthur came to a quick end. Now Marxists began to regard the United States as a capitalist, imperialist, and thus intrinsically corrupt, undemocratic force.

American studies of the Marxist sort engaged in criticism and concentrated mainly on the seamy side of capitalist America. Downplaying or overlooking America's founding ideals and its republican and reform traditions, they tended to focus on topics such as slavery and racial segregation, military invasion of other countries, fascist-like political oppression, and suppression of labor unions. McCarthyism, from this point of view, was nothing but a

decisive proof of the corrupt nature of American democracy under unbridled monopoly capitalism. This type of stereotyped view tended to stifle interest in the indigenous reformist tradition of the American Republic. For such scholars, the United States could not serve as a model republic for Japan. All interests and research about the American domestic scene converged on a critique of American imperialism. In other words, the interest in the American Republic became subordinate to criticism of the American Empire. Ironically, postwar Japan thus again developed its version of American studies as an investigation of the archenemy. The difference was that this time the investigation was launched not from the right but from the left.

In sum, America in the wake of the Pacific War showed Japan two opposing faces: empire and republic. It was not easy even for professional Americanists to produce a fully integrated and consistent image of this Janus-faced Leviathan. But one could distinguish at least three important schools of interpretation on this question. First, scholars who had started their careers as Americanists before the war tried to grasp American diplomacy as a natural extension of reformist democracy. This type of interpretation was indebted to the Progressive school of American history and political thought. Second, another group of scholars, deeply steeped in Marxism, sought to characterize the essence of US diplomacy and internal politics as the political manifestation of monopoly capitalism. Third, some Americanists, starting after the war under the strong influence of the consensus school of social sciences and history, stressed political contradictions as a key to understanding American political and diplomatic history. According to this interpretation, the contradictions between freedom and power, diversity and integration, and idealism and reality have always lurked behind the American political scene. They explained political change as a matter of breaking the deadlock between such factors.

During the first two decades after the war—that is, during the so-called golden age of American politics and economy, America took the intellectual initiative in the world of knowledge. Americans of that period (particularly the best and the brightest) had little doubt that their science and technology, their democratic political thought and practice, and their capitalist economy were universally applicable and that the United States could serve as a model for all other nations. This belief crystallized into a modernization theory that proposed a universal pattern for the development of decolonized nations after World War II. According to this theory, American policymakers

promoted the transplantation of their sociopolitical scheme for creating a modern society into those nations. In Europe the modern ideals of the Enlightenment and the dream of perpetual progress of human beings had been fatally destroyed during the war years. By the early 1960s people in the United States believed that in the Western world only their country could escape the European fate and continue to keep the torch of Enlightenment burning. To them America could and should be an invincible bulwark against totalitarianism as well as a dependable protector of decolonized but underdeveloped nations. America alone still maintained the success story of the modern world.

From the late 1960s to the early 1970s, however, a sea change occurred in the American polity. The long and ugly war in Vietnam, intermittent racial riots in big cities, violent revolts on campuses, and the Watergate scandal shattered the Americans' optimism and complacency. Americanists, particularly those with leftist inclinations, increasingly turned their academic interests to the negative side of current American politics. As Robert Bellah deplored in 1975, the American covenant that crystallized in the Declaration of Independence, the Bill of Rights, and the Fourteenth Amendment to the Constitution was "betrayed by its most responsible servants and, what is worse, some of them, including the highest of all [Richard Nixon], do not even seem to understand what they have betrayed."¹⁸ As the foundational covenant was thus broken, the American Republic lost its former integration. The economic crisis caused by the Vietnam War and by what were seen as extravagant welfare policies also resulted in the decline of American economic prestige. The foundation of the American empire was also undermined. Now the grand narrative of America's success story lost its credibility. International trust in US political and intellectual leadership fell into decline.

It was at this critical juncture that American studies in Japan witnessed the rise of a new generation originating from the New Left movement.¹⁹ Like their counterparts in other advanced capitalist countries, the New Left in Japan was composed of two distinct layers: the close-knit political sects that had splintered from the JCP and a much larger loose gathering of insurgent youth. The latter included politically oriented and culturally oriented groups, but the common denominator was what might be termed the culture of negation. The list of what the Japanese New Left negated was long: American imperialism, of course, but also Stalinism, capitalism, corporations, state power, every kind of bureaucracy, the police, existing political parties (particularly the LDP and the JCP), the mass media,

universities, academics, professors, anyone with privilege or prestige, every authority, the family, every established status (including that of student), and eventually even the self. The only people who were spared negation were those who supposedly had nothing to lose: poor people in the third world and the urban slums in the big capitalist countries. Behind the façade of the culture of negation, however, as Christopher Lasch later pointed out with his characteristic poignancy, there lay the culture of narcissism and an insatiable desire for authenticity. What then did America mean in the culture of this Japanese New Left? Not much beyond a short-lived opposition to the renewal of the US-Japan Security Treaty of 1970. Of course America was a prime object of the New Left politics of negation, particularly when it was seen from the third world's point of view. The Vietnam War provided the foremost example, but the oppressive presence of CIA agents in the small countries of Asia, Latin America, the Middle East, and Africa was also detested. Race riots raging in American cities every summer were nothing but third world revolts against America from within.

The New Left school of American studies in Japan reflected these characteristics of the movement. Like its predecessors it owed its methodology and perspective to a group of American historians. This loose gathering of various "left" views represented the historical revisionism that severely criticized mainstream liberalism and the consensus history. They also rejected elite history and espoused instead a history "from the bottom up." Under the influence of those New Left historians plus new social historians in America, their Japanese counterparts cast doubt on the verity of the foregoing understandings of the American Empire and American Republic.

The Japanese New Left historians saw America from quite a different perspective than not only liberals and conservatives but also orthodox Marxists. Unlike those Marxists who viewed Japanese capitalism as basically dependent on its American counterpart, the New Left indicted Japanese imperialism as an independent force. Also, unlike orthodox Marxists, the New Left abhorred the Stalinist Soviets as much as imperialist America. Strangely enough, because the New Left negated almost every existing political regime, their image of America did not differ in essence from that of other political regimes. In addition, partly because New Left revolts were taking place simultaneously all over the world, and partly because a cosmopolitan or global youth culture was on the rise, national boundaries separating peoples were softened and carried far less psychological weight. As a result, after the 1970s, young scholars and

students felt much more at ease studying America than the previous generations, who had suffered under harsher political and cultural constraints. After the New Left revolt subsided, therefore, American studies in Japan as a scholarly field began to flourish, at least quantitatively: in the amount of research, the number of fields and topics explored, the number of PhDs in American studies minted, and the quantity of publications issued.

By the end of the 1970s, however, the American polity had begun to undergo a set of long-term transforming phenomena that also would deeply affect the existing paradigm of social sciences and humanities, including American studies. At the center of the problem was the decline in sovereign power of the federal government. The prolonged war, stagnating economy, increasing taxes, endless racial problems, political corruption, and high crime rates all aggravated public distrust of the government. This tendency has not proved short-lived. During the succeeding years public trust in the federal government in United States has never recovered to the level that existed in the early 1960s. This is part of the universal tendency toward the degeneration of the sovereign state in global society, which some political scientists have interpreted as the end of the Westphalia system. The globalized free market economy, frequent civil wars, low-intensity conflicts, and rampant international terrorism have weakened the once absolute control of sovereign states over their national affairs. Simultaneously, out of distrust of national governments, a number of nongovernmental, subnational, and transnational organizations have sprouted throughout the world.

Even the United States, the superpower, could not escape this process of the relativization of national sovereignty. Since the 1980s the American Republic has often (particularly in wartime) witnessed the eruption of jingoistic nationalism and almost unanimous support for the actions of the federal government. But each time, the forged national unity has proved short-lived and left behind much deeper cracks in the polity. In the meantime, New Deal liberalism was replaced by neoliberalism as the basic tenet of the American Republic. Some historians and social scientists loosely combined as a "Republican school" and deplored the loss of public virtue owing to prevalent egotism. This school explored the possibility of recovering "the Good Society." The American Republic, now divided into so many self-assertive groups, faces a difficulty in proposing to the nation a set of coherent and consistent policies to sustain itself, let alone the American Empire.

Japanese Americanists are now confronted with an American Republic and American Empire with completely different faces from those represented by MacArthur. We can no longer draw relevant connections between the

American Republic and American Empire. In fact, we can hardly even speak of one American Republic or a single American Empire. If we are not to replicate the shortcomings of older writers we must take into account the multiplicity and diversity of American power and then analyze specific aspects of US politics and diplomacy. Such research requires, as always, solid sources and documents. Numerous good monographs on American politics, history, and culture, based on accurate documentation and meticulous research, are today available in Japan. This must be counted as remarkable progress, the result of much work over the past four decades. The problem is, however, that when research timidly seeks refuge in “facts” whose selection and interpretation is not subject to reflection or in empirical investigations behind which stands at best an anemic postmodern micropolitics, the presumed transcendence of the political in fact becomes a step backward. The price for progress then turns out to be ignorance of the most fundamental question of all, the one that must properly continue to stand at the center for Japanese Americanists: What does America or Americanness mean to us today?

NOTES

This is a slightly edited version of my presidential address given at the 48th annual meeting of the Japanese Association for American Studies on June 7, 2014, at Okinawa Convention Center, Ginowan City, Okinawa.

¹ Ian Buruma, *Year Zero: A History of 1945* (London: Atlantic Books, 2013), Kindle Edition, loc. 233–40.

² Yoshida Yutaka, *Ajia-taiheiyō Sensō* [The Asian Pacific War] (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 2007), 186.

³ Satoshi Shirai, *Eizoku Haisen Ron: Sengo Nihon no Kakushin* [A view of perpetual denial of a losing war] (Tokyo: Ōta Shuppan, 2013).

⁴ Takashi Momose, *Jiten: Shōwa Sengo-ki no Nihon* [Encyclopedia: Japan during the post-war Shōwa period] (Tokyo: Yoshikawa-Kōbun kan, 1995), 72–73.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 73–126.

⁶ Makoto Saitō, “Nihon no Amerika Kenkyū Zenshi” [“An early history of American Studies in Japan”] in *Amerika Kenkyū An'nai* [A Guide to American Studies], eds. Hitoshi Abe and Takeshi Igarashi (Tokyo: University of Tokyo Press, 1998), 257–58.

⁷ The following description of Takagi’s biography is based on Makoto Saitō, et al., eds., *Amerika Seisin o Motomete: Takagi Yasaka no Shōgai* [In the pursuit of the American spirit: The life of Takagi Yasaka] (Tokyo: University of Tokyo Press, 1985).

⁸ “Saitō Makoto Sensei ni Kiku,” [An interview with Professor Makoto Saitō], Japan Oral History Series 28 (1991), Center for American Studies, University of Tokyo, 62–63.

⁹ *Amerika Kenkyū* [The American review] (Tokyo: The Association for America Studies, 1948–1950)

¹⁰ *Genten Amerikashi* [Documentary history of the American people] (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1950–1957)

¹¹ Makoto Saitō, “Amerika Dokuritsu Kakumei no Ichi Kōsatsu” [An aspect of American Revolution], *Kokka Gakkai Zasshi* [Journal of the Association of Political and Social Sciences] 69, nos. 11–12 (April 1956), 529–44.

¹² Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, ed. J. P. Mayer and Max Lerner, trans. George Lawrence (New York: Harper and Row, 1966), 648, 667.

¹³ “Saitō Makoto Sensei ni Kiku,” 47–51.

¹⁴ Yasaka Takagi, *Bei-koku Seiji-si ni okeru Tochi no Igi*, vol. 1 of *Takagi Yasaka chosakushu* [Collected works of Takagi Yasaka] (Tokyo: University of Tokyo Press, 1970), 455–518.

¹⁵ Yasaka Takagi, *Bei-koku Kokumin to sono Gaiko Seisaku no Kichō*, vol. 3 of *Takagi Yasaka chosakushu* [Collected works of Takagi Yasaka] (Tokyo: University of Tokyo Press, 1971), 67–71.

¹⁶ See his lifework, Makoto Saitō, *Amerika Kakumeishi Kenkyū: Jiyū to Tōgō* [An interpretation of the American Revolution: confederation vs consolidation] (Tokyo: University of Tokyo Press, 1992).

¹⁷ On post-war Japanese American Studies from the Marxist point of view, see Jun Furuya, “Japanese Reception of American and Soviet Culture during the Cold War, 1945–1963,” *The Hokkaido Law Review* 54 (August 2003), 1030–42.

¹⁸ Robert N. Bellah, *The Broken Covenant: American Civil Religion in Time of Trial*, 2nd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1975), 142.

¹⁹ On the New Left perception of American society and politics, see Jun Furuya, “Predecessor: A Personal View,” in *Predecessors: Intellectual Lineages in American Studies*, ed. Rob Kroes (Amsterdam: VU University Press, 1999), 337–38.

