

Reconsidering Postwar Japanese History: A Handbook

Edited by Simon Avenell

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Abbreviations

ACJ	American Council for Japan
AUKUS	Australia, the United Kingdom and the United States (trilateral security partnership)
BHC	Benzene hexachloride
BRI	Belt and Road Initiative
CDP	Constitutional Democratic Party (Rikken Minseitō)
CEDAW	Convention on Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women
CGP	Clean Government Party (Kōmeitō)
CIC	Counter Intelligence Corps
CIE	Civil Information and Education Division
CoJ	Constitution of Japan
DBJ	Development Bank of Japan
DDT	Dichlorodiphenyltrichloroethane
DPHD	Department of Public Health Demography
DPJ	Democratic Party of Japan
DSP	Democratic Socialist Party
EEOL	Equal Employment Opportunity Law
EPL	Eugenic Protection Law
ESS	Economic and Scientific Section (of SCAP)
ESS-FI	Finance Division in the Economic and Scientific Section (of SCAP)
EU	European Union
FRBNY	Federal Reserve Bank of New York
FY	financial year
FOIP	Free and Open Indo Pacific
G2	Assistant Chief of Staff (Intelligence)
GARIOA	Government Account for Relief in Occupied Areas
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GHQ	General Headquarters (of SCAP)
IPH	Institute of Public Health
IPP	Institute of Population Problems
IWSA	International Woman Suffrage Alliance
JCP	Japanese Communist Party
JEB	Export Bank of Japan
JEXIM	Export-Import Bank of Japan
JFIC	Japanese Foreign Investment Council
JIP	Japan Innovation Party
JNR	Japan National Railways
JSDF	Japan Self-Defense Forces
JSP	Japan Socialist Party
JTU	Japan Teachers' Union
KMT	Kuomintang

KRTV	Radio Tokyo Television
LDP	Liberal Democratic Party
LEA	(Law) Concerning the Organization and Management of Local Educational Administration
M&B	Money and Banking Branch (of SCAP)
MAF	Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry
MITI	Ministry of International Trade and Industry
NET	Nippon Education Television
NGO	Nongovernmental organization
NHK	Nippon Hōsō Kyōkai
NHK BCRI	NHK Broadcasting Culture Research Institute
NTV	Nippon Television
NTT	Nippon Telephone and Telegraph
OBOS	<i>Our Bodies, Ourselves</i>
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
OKED	Okinawa Engineer District
PA	polyamide
PE	polyethylene
PO	public opinion
PO & SR	Public Opinion and Social Research Section
PP	polypropylene
PRC	People's Republic of China
PS	polystyrene
PVC	polyvinyl chloride
PVDC	polyvinylidene chloride
QUAD	The Quadrilateral Security Dialogue
RFB	Reconstruction Finance Bank
ROC	Republic of China
RYCOM	Ryukyu Command
SCAP	Supreme Commander for the Allied Powers
SDF	Self-Defense Forces
TBS	Tokyo Broadcasting System
TTC	Television Tarento Center
UN	United Nations
USCAR	United States Civil Administration of the Ryukyu Islands
WAPOR	World Association of Public Opinion Research
WCTU	Women's Christian Temperance Union
WEF	World Economic Forum
WWII	World War II

Preface

Simon Avenell

Around eighty years have passed since Japan's defeat in the Asia-Pacific War and the beginning of the country's reemergence as a prominent global economy and liberal democracy. While the sense of a postwar era faded quickly for many other nations involved in World War II, for Japan the idea of the "postwar" has remained salient through to the present, albeit fading somewhat with each subsequent generation. The reasons for this persistence are complex, partly relating to wartime and colonial issues that remain unresolved but also due to the symbolism of the "postwar" as a marker for a positive turn away from a seemingly defective past. The essays in this volume attempt to rethink Japan's postwar era from multiple perspectives. As readers will discover, the authors hardly speak with one voice about the postwar era—no doubt to be expected when tracing the multiple and complex histories of such a tumultuous period in Japan's modern history. Nonetheless, in one way or another, all of the essays in this handbook point to the ongoing validity of understanding the period after August 15, 1945, as a coherent one, while also revealing how the era itself has incorporated identifiable sub-eras and phases. It is the authors' hope that readers will be encouraged to think not only about the specific content of the chapters, but also the larger question of the "postwar" in Japan and why the notion has persisted for so long.

I would like to sincerely thank all of the authors who contributed to this handbook. It was an honor to edit their work from which I learned so much. The willingness of such a distinguished group of scholars to join this project and the effort they put into their contributions was truly humbling. Thank you to Bennett Richardson for initially contacting me about editing a handbook in this series. I fondly recall our first meeting together with Mark Gresham in Fujisawa City on the eve of the pandemic in early 2020. My deepest gratitude to Mark Gresham who was enthusiastically supportive of this project from the outset and thereafter provided an astounding level of support as the handbook took shape. Mark's steady hand and wise judgement made this volume better in innumerable ways. Thanks also to Shin Takahashi who served as a reviewer for the handbook. Likewise, Shin's feedback helped to improve the final product.

Finally, a few words on style. The handbook utilizes the Hepburn system of romanization for Japanese terms, including the names of organizations, publications, persons and places. Long vowels for "o" and "u" are denoted by a macron (i.e., ō and ū) except for place names and words that are commonly used in English (such as Tokyo, Kyoto, Osaka). The Japanese convention of family name followed by given name has been adopted throughout the handbook. Unless otherwise noted, all translations in the handbook are those of the authors.



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Introduction

Imagining Japan's Postwar Era

Simon Avenell

The idea of postwar Japan

Japan's postwar era beginning in 1945 and (arguably) continuing to the present is now around the same duration as the prewar and wartime periods combined (1868–1945). Although politicians, bureaucrats, commentators and historians alike have ceaselessly declared the end of this era, both the postwar (*sengo*) and postwar Japan (*sengo Nihon*) have been remarkably durable concepts and, if usage is any indication, actually appear to have grown in frequency throughout this almost-eighty-year timespan. In its most straightforward connotation—although nothing is ever absolutely straightforward in historical periodization—the postwar simply refers to the era after the end of Japan's war in the Asia-Pacific region. As the grammatical construction “*the* postwar” denotes, in Japanese *sengo* is used as both an adjective—as in “postwar Japan”—but also as a noun with its own “substance.”¹ In this sense, the postwar as both an idea and as a lived experience has for many Japanese represented the transition to a new nation—a severing of what came before. As Carol Gluck has observed, part of the attraction (or the repulsion) of the postwar idea has been the way it speaks to this sense of “utter rupture” and the “inversion of the prewar.”² This attribute of re-creation, rebirth and/or redemption may help to explain why the idea of the postwar has retained such currency and provoked so much animosity for such a long period of time both in popular consciousness and among historians and other observers.³ Interesting too, is the fact that the idea of postwar Japan as a comprehensible slice of history has resided quite comfortably alongside other period markers, like the imperial eras of Shōwa (1926–1989) which crossed the war divide, Heisei (1989–2019) which has come to represent a lost Japan, and Reiwa (2019–) whose beginning roughly coincided with the onset of a historic global pandemic. These eras certainly have their own historical resonances, yet they have not undermined consciousness of the postwar era as a contemporaneous historical overlay.

Although immediately after defeat postwar simply meant after the war—*après-guerre*—it has somehow managed to become more than this, certainly because of its inextricable link with the war but, just as importantly, because of its association with a *zeitgeist* or mentality that has continued to make sense to many people across a great many years. For some, the

persistence of the idea is a serious problem for Japan, either in the sense of it holding back the country from becoming “normal” or because it exposes the reality that certain legacies of colonial empire and militarism have not been resolved—both of which may indeed be true. From an intellectual perspective, of course, if the postwar and postwar Japan are concepts that continue to have meaning for people, if they continue to be debated and discussed, and if they offer us avenues to understand Japan, then they represent valid points of conceptual entry into a slice of Japan’s past and present. This is the core motivation underlying the essays in this volume: while retaining a critical perspective on the very idea of the postwar, we want to use it as an entry point into the complex history of Japan over the past eighty years or so.

Nonetheless, as with all other ways of carving up time—reigns, centuries, decades, etc.—as historical interlocutors of the postwar era we must remain vigilant to the potential tyranny of periodization and, moreover, be willing to use the postwar idea as a device for its own modification or even destruction. As Green has warned, “once firmly drawn and widely accepted, period frontiers can become intellectual straitjackets that profoundly affect our habits of mind, the way we retain images, make associations, and perceive the beginning, middle, and ending of things.”⁴ While we might accept that the postwar and postwar Japan have experiential validity and intellectual worth, we must also realize that, as exercises in historical morphology, these concepts are replete with all the inconsistencies, contradictions, complications and silences necessarily contained in the value judgements rendering particular stretches of chronological time into coherent things.⁵ Most obviously, the postwar idea, while unequivocally connoting a Japan that wanted and needed to remake itself after the ruins of war, also remained problematically silent about a Japan that needed to remake itself after colonial empire. In other words, the postwar idea tended to mask Japan’s contemporaneous condition of postimperiality—a condition which remained relatively unaddressed and a constant thorn in the side of the country’s interactions with its neighbors throughout the postwar era. Very few speak about postimperial Japan and, accordingly, the postimperial never became an era marker like the postwar. Postimperial would always be a subservient adjective and never a self-assured noun.⁶

The postwar thus came to be associated with an arguably blinkered national experience. In the historian Narita Ryūichi’s telling, the naturalization of the “postwar” involved the formation of a “postwar identity” which “unconsciously affirmed current conditions” and eschewed any “active transformation.”⁷ In turn, this consciousness of the postwar as something “self-evidently” uniform—free of “tears,” “ruptures,” “unevenness,” and “perspective”—affected the ways the postwar would be imagined and narrated.⁸ Indeed, so imagined and chronologized, the postwar arguably restricted and silenced other temporal and spatial imaginaries that might have drawn historical consciousness backwards or amplified its geographical horizons. Somewhat more technically, the idea of the postwar also arguably produced what I call a “historical infinity problem.” While the beginning of the postwar era can roughly—and I emphasize roughly—be dated to August 15, 1945, because it is an era defined by what came before (i.e., prewar, war and defeat), determining just when the period ended or if it will ever end is impossible.⁹ The unceasing declarations and prognostications of postwar endings over the years only evidence this situation, as too does the perpetual debate among political adversaries over whether it is “good or bad to be in a state of postwar.”¹⁰ Viewed in this way, we can see how the postwar is as much a state of mind and a political position as it is a period marker, making it all the more difficult for historians to grasp in their quest for morphological certainty and their desire to discipline *durée*.

Yet this uncertainty and contested nature is precisely what makes postwar Japan so interesting as an object of historical study—especially this study in which we attempt to rethink the era. Indeed, as I noted above, we want to use the postwar and postwar Japan as heuristic devices in the very truest sense of the term: while these concepts clearly do not capture the reality of the past eighty or so years with absolute fidelity (period markers never can), they represent convenient tools for us to organize and reorganize, to re-temporalize and re-spatialize, or perhaps even to obliterate a history otherwise naturalized in time and space. In this volume we reconsider how postwar Japan has been understood and narrated to date and what new theoretical and empirical boundaries remain undeveloped or unexplored—the silenced histories so to speak. How, for example, has the postwar era been chronologized thus far and how might we rethink, subvert, or enhance such interpretations? What can we learn by adopting either a more fine-grained or expansive approach to seemingly established moments and subperiods such as the Occupation, the era of high-speed economic growth, the sixties, the bubble economy and Heisei Japan? What new issues might we introduce to subvert accepted understandings of the postwar era and its various sub-eras? Moreover, how might Japan's internal postwar be expanded and opened up by rethinking the era through novel historical frameworks and regional imaginaries, such as East Asian history, Cold War history, environmental history and transnational and global history? As I explain in this chapter, the historiography on postwar Japan has its own history and, by better understanding the political and intellectual factors underlying this, we may be able to unlock new and provocative perspectives and interpretations. There is a tendency to think about periodizations like structured frameworks, but what becomes visible when we imagine them as elastic and amoeba-like?

The history of postwar Japanese historiography

The term “postwar” was in use immediately on war's end, initially in its simplest connotation of after the war.¹¹ Publications on “postwar Japan” began to appear more and more frequently from around the early to mid-1960s and from the outset the phrase denoted a specific era beginning on August 15, 1945 and running through to the never-ending present. Historiography on postwar Japan arguably began with the publication of Tōyama Shigeki, Imai Seiichi, and Fujiwara Akira's provocative *History of Shōwa* (*Shōwa shi*) in 1955, although only 33 out of 238 pages in that volume were devoted to the postwar era and it was not the primary concern of the authors. The first comprehensive history of postwar Japan I have been able to identify is *A Concise History of Postwar Japan* (*Sengo Nihon shō shi*) published in two volumes in 1958 and 1960 and edited by Yanaihara Tadao, the historian and former University of Tokyo president (1951–1957). Yanaihara's volume began with a chapter on the significance of the Pacific War (interestingly, beginning with the Manchurian Incident of 1931), followed by a history of the Allied Occupation, and thereafter thematically organized chapters on democracy, economy, labor, politics, law and education.¹² Soon thereafter the Historical Science Society of Japan (*Rekishigaku Kenkyū Kai*, or *Rekiken*) published its monumental five-volume *History of Postwar Japan* (*Sengo Nihon shi*) (1961–1962), beginning its narrative on August 15, 1945 and ending in late 1960, just after the massive anti-US-Japan Security Treaty protests and murder of Japan Socialist Party chairman, Asanuma Inejirō.

Although the “postwar” was widely discussed in mainstream publications and scholarly journals, we do not see any major book-length works on postwar Japan thereafter until the late 1970s with Yamada Takao’s *Postwar Japanese History* (*Sengo Nihon shi*) (1979), Masamura Kimihiro’s *Postwar History* (*Sengo shi*) (1985), and three volumes on the postwar era in the ten-volume *History of Shōwa* (*Shōwa no rekishi*) (1989).¹³ With the death of Emperor Hirohito in 1989, the ending of the Cold War, and the bursting of Japan’s economic bubble at around the same time, the 1990s and beyond witnessed a flurry of histories on both the Shōwa and postwar eras. Interestingly enough, as much as pundits were proclaiming the end of the postwar era around this time, authors continued to produce more and more publications on it, constantly drawing the postwar era into its never-ending future. In addition, these comprehensive histories now also shared a space in bookstores with an increasing number of postwar histories on specific domains of activity—postwar histories of education, gender, minorities, diplomacy, etc. The number of volumes whose titles include “postwar history” in the National Diet Library catalogue continues to increase yearly.

The project of writing a historiography of the postwar and postwar Japan also struck roots abroad. Masataka Kosaka’s 1972 work, *100 Million Japanese: The Postwar Experience*, appears to have been one of the earliest comprehensive English language histories of postwar Japan and, like most of its Japanese language counterparts, began with Emperor Hirohito’s surrender broadcast of August 15, 1945, thereafter tracing developments through to the time of its publication. Writing in the foreword, historian and former US ambassador to Japan, Edwin Reischauer, praised Kosaka’s book for providing an insight into the “true reasons for Japanese success” which had “not always been perceived” and, thus, “misunderstandings of the story” may have resulted in “many false starts and disappointments elsewhere.” As Reischauer noted, “The Japanese experience may be our best chart for perceiving what lies ahead in the world, because the bulk of the world’s people are non-Western and are attempting to parallel, if not follow, the Japanese path toward industrialized affluence and modernized institutions.”¹⁴ Somewhat at odds with Reischauer’s characterization, Kosaka’s book offered a more nuanced image of Japanese “success” and hardly advocated for its replication in other developing nations.

Mirroring the growth in Japanese language postwar histories, the real burst in English language publications on postwar Japan occurred in the 1990s with pioneering works like the 1993 *Postwar Japan as History*, edited by the historian Andrew Gordon, and thereafter comprehensive histories like Dennis Smith’s *Japan Since 1945: The Rise of an Economic Superpower* (1995), David Bailey’s *Postwar Japan: 1945 to the Present* (1996), and Gary Allinson’s *Japan’s Postwar History* (2004). Apart from offering comprehensive overviews of the postwar era, these publications went a long way to legitimizing the period after 1945 in Japan as one worthy of historical inquiry (as opposed to other disciplines) in English language scholarship. Leading the way here were scholars such as John Dower whose Pulitzer Prize winning *Embracing Defeat: Japan in the Wake of World War II* (1999) set the standard for historical writing embedded in the postwar. The range of English language histories on aspects of postwar Japan proliferated in subsequent years and, of late, have even begun to cluster around certain sub-eras and thematic strands of this period. Among the more recent comprehensive publications on postwar Japan is *Japan Since 1945: From Postwar to Post-Bubble* (2013), edited by Christopher Gerteis and Timothy George. Replicating the somber and pessimistic mood of a Japan in the turmoil of economic decline, demographic mutation, and post-tsunami and

nuclear-meltdown trauma, the introductory chapter reassured readers that “of course Japan matters.”¹⁵

Understandably, all of these works—whether in Japanese or English—imagine postwar Japan in terms of the present in which they were written and published, hence the shifting tone from the uncertainty of the early 1960s, to the confidence of the late 1970s, and the despondency of the new millennium. Changing mood nonetheless, the relative regularity with which such works have appeared and their growing frequency over time is testament to the ongoing relevance of the postwar and postwar Japan as concepts signifying some kind of discernable and shared historical experience for people—potholed and myopic that may be.

Questions of chronology: Beginnings, watersheds, endings?

How then have historians narrated and chronologized the postwar: when does it begin, how and when has it changed and what about the question of endings? Surveying just those publications offering comprehensive accounts of postwar Japanese history, it becomes very apparent that there are as many answers to these questions as there are authors. Moreover, as the postwar becomes chronologically longer, earlier phenomena quite naturally dominate less of the narrative as new phenomena are incorporated. For example, in Masamura’s 1972 *Postwar History* eight out of fifteen chapters were devoted to the Occupation period (1945–1952), but in later works by Smith (1995), Bailey (1996), Allinson (2004), Nakamura (2005), Narita (2015) and others the Occupation is relegated to a single chapter. This is hardly surprising: as more things happen over time, historians are forced to consolidate earlier phenomena.

One interesting aspect that has become more and more prominent in such works over time, however, is critical attention to what Seaton in this volume calls the “myth” of August 15th and the accompanying necessity to more consciously anchor postwar Japan in a longer “transwar” history. On the most microscopic level, historians like Narita Ryūichi remind us that the assumption the war ended and the postwar began on August 15th is factually tenuous. Even after the declaration of surrender, military exchanges with Soviet forces continued on Karafuto and Chishima and in Manchuria, and war’s end for civilians and military personnel scattered throughout the Asia-Pacific region was not simultaneous. Moreover, technically speaking, the postwar did not officially begin until the signing of the surrender instruments on September 2, 1945. Attention focuses on August 15th, but the reality is that there were many endings.¹⁶ But, more significantly, the notion of transwar encourages us to think beyond the great divide of August 15th. Drawing on a growing bank of scholarship, most comprehensive histories of postwar Japan now contain a precursor or “antecedent” chapter contextualizing the era in the longer durée.¹⁷ Gary Allinson, for example, begins his postwar history of Japan in 1932, arguing that the Keynesian policies of finance minister Takahashi Korekiyo “provoked broad social changes and structured developments in the industrial economy until the 1970s.”¹⁸ In doing so Allinson wants to temper what he believes is an over-emphasis on the impact of the reforms of Allied Occupation, many of which had “prewar antecedents and Japanese advocates.”¹⁹ Allinson sees transwar continuities “embedded” in individuals whose “life chances” in the postwar were shaped by earlier experience, and in institutions such as the bureaucracy and business.²⁰ Although he retains the “postwar” nomenclature, then, Allinson is clearly pointing toward another temporal imagination. Andrew Gordon thinks similarly, persuasively arguing that “memories of ‘rebirth’ and an

America-centered narrative of revolution from above as frames for analysis limits understanding of the experience of postwar Japanese history” and that “the midcentury decades stretching across the war appear as a different, ‘transwar’ phase of history, prelude to what people usually identify as a truly ‘postwar’ condition.”²¹ In other words, for Gordon, the postwar does not really begin until sometime around the mid- to late-1950s. Some, like Narita, use the analytical framework of the “total war system” (*sōryokusen taisei*) to suggest a continuity from wartime military rule under the imperial state to postwar military rule under the Allied Occupation. As Narita explains, the separation of ownership and management, the intensification of social mobility, the incorporation of social movements and the labor movement and governmental intervention in the economy under the Occupation were all in one way or another extensions of the total war system.²² The Occupation, Narita argues, continued to eat away at vested interests and their foundations—like large land owners—just as the now-defunct total war regime had been doing.²³

If the beginning seems less certain as a result, then what of the watersheds and transitions of postwar Japan? As I have indicated, the ways of slicing up the postwar are manifold and author-dependent. Most recognize a distinct Occupation era, an age of high-speed economic growth and conservative political domination, and—in more recent accounts—a postgrowth era of stagnation and loss. The question for historians then becomes one of how these broad phases might be further subdivided or if they adequately capture experience. If politics matters most then years such as 1955 (the formation of the Liberal Democratic Party) and 1960 (the massive anti-US-Japan Security Treaty protests, the defeat of militant labor, the resignation of the Kishi Nobusuke Cabinet and the shift to unabashed economic growthism) feature prominently. But there are other just as valid ways of subdividing the postwar era in economic, cultural, social, international and other terms—some of which neatly overlap, others of which are not entirely in sync. Indeed, this is the challenge of historical morphology. As Green explains, unlike biologists who are able to classify living objects based on tangible structure and form, historians must identify the morphology of historical periods which only exist in the abstract. The practical problem for historians is that “rates of change differ widely among ... politics, economics, demographics, and cultural values,” meaning that subdivision of an era by culture, for example, may not correspond neatly with political or other subdivisions.²⁴ Table 0.1 summarizes the various sub-periodizations some historians have offered for the postwar.

One way around this dilemma of a postwar delineated by chronological phases and watersheds, of course, is to consider not one but multiple postwars. As Michael Lucken puts it, the postwar “cannot be taken as a simple period of time. It is plural and complex. It is a network of historical time periods, rather than a single period, whatever may be the limits that one attributes to it. To use intellectual language, we are talking of a unit of measure that is metachronal.”²⁵ In this way, the postwar-as-amoeba and not the postwar as a unilinear structure reveals uneven, overlapping topographies and intersecting but not necessarily interlocking postwars. Carol Gluck, for example, has proposed five postwars: the mythistoric postwar, the postwar as inversion of the prewar, the Cold-War postwar, the progressive postwar, and the middle-class postwar, while Narita suggests postwars of social movements, conservative rule, and economics.²⁶ This approach has its advantages and disadvantages. On the downside, it makes the task of writing comprehensive history more difficult on a technical level because each postwar will have its own unique morphology, making synthesis all the more difficult. A postwar history through the lens of social movements, for example,

Table 0.1 Chronologies of Postwar Japan

Gordon (1993)	Smith (1995)	Bailey (1996)	Allinson (2004)	Nakamura (2005)	Narita (2015)	Oikawa (2016)
	1868–1945 Vital legacies	1868–1945 Path to 1945	1932–1945 Antecedents			
1945–1955 Immediate postwar	1945–1952 Occupation	1945–1952 American interregnum	1945–1955 Revival	1945–1960 Establish- ment of the postwar	1945–1954 Defeat, occupation, recovery	1945–1947 Occupied Japan
1955–1970 High-growth	1952–1960 Political stability and economic growth	1950s–1960s Creation of LDP and political conflict	1955–1974 Growth	1960–1973 Consolida- tion of the postwar	1955–1964 1955 System and pre- high-speed growth	1947–1952 Cold War and peace settlement
	1960–1973 High-speed growth				1965–1974 High-speed growth	1955–1970 Era of high-speed growth
1970–1990 Late postwar	1973–1982 Oil shocks & miracle falters	1970s–1980s Economic superpower	1974–1989 Affluence	1973–1990 Instability of the postwar	1975–1984 Stable growth and economic superpower	1971–1989 Becoming an economic superpower
	1982– Economic superpower				1985–1994 Bubble and end of Cold War	1989– Japan in the contempo- rary world
		1990s– End of LDP hegemony	1989– Immobility	1990–2000 End of the postwar	1995–2004 Lost Decade	
					2005– Age of searching	

Sources: see list of references

might see watersheds in 1947, 1952, 1960 and 1968, while a political postwar history might emphasize 1955, 1960, 1982, 1993, 2009 and 2012.

On the positive side, however, acceptance of multiple postwars can obviously expand our understanding of this period, making space for histories otherwise obscured or silenced. This possibility is particularly important in the context of addressing the methodological nationalism almost hardwired into the process of national history writing. If we accept the postwar-as-amoeba, it becomes possible to see beyond what Deokhyo Choi has called “is-land history,” effectively expanding not only the temporal but also transcending the spatial (i.e., sovereign national) boundaries of the postwar. Recent scholarship on Japanese postwar history has begun to address this lacuna and we advance the same intellectual mandate in this volume too.²⁷ As Ōno and Banshō argue in an important recent volume aptly titled *Reconsidering Postwar History: Comprehending “Historical Fractures”* (*Sengo shi saikō: “Rekishi no sakeme” o toraeru*), “knowing, learning, and writing postwar history is a political act that presupposes the aggregation of the nation as given and substantiates this as a single unified entity.” As historians we need to “learn” by looking into the “fractures and discords concealed

beneath a seamless ‘national history.’”²⁸ Incorporating minority, transnational, regional and global narratives of postwar Japan certainly contributes to enriching the content of the postwar itself, but importantly it also allows us to address the blind spot of postimperiality that I mentioned earlier. The concepts of the postwar and postwar Japan have assisted in rendering invisible Japan’s postimperial condition or what might be called postimperial Japan. The concepts are the linguistic manifestations of Japan’s shortcomings in addressing the “totality of colonialism in Japanese modernity [manifested in] the invasion of the colonies and the formation of empire.”²⁹ Only by accepting a multiplicity of postwars do such silences become audible. At the same time, like transwar narratives which would trace the beginning of the postwar to before 1945, these narratives that expand postwar Japan spatially and invoke the specter of postimperiality provide no answer as to what new conceptual terminology might better encapsulate the complex totality of this period.

This brings us, then, to the issue of endings. How will we know if the postwar has ended, when it will end, or if it will ever end? Eric Seizelet neatly sums up the conundrum here, observing that “the postwar was defined at the outset by the identification of a founding moment clearly situated in time, whereas no particular event, no objective fact, exists that would allow one to proclaim and date its ending.”³⁰ Nonetheless, many have tried. As Andrew Gordon put it in 1993, the “temptation” to declare the end of the postwar has been intoxicatingly “hard to resist.”³¹ Michael Lucken, for instance, suggests that “the postwar will remain an essential chronological framework and an essential issue” until the country experiences “an event having a scope comparable to that of the Second World War”—although he provides no advice about what that event might be.³² In his postwar history of 2005, Nakamura Masanori confidently predicted that the postwar would end with three accomplishments: the ending of subservience to America, the resolution of historical issues with Asian countries, and Japan’s permanent membership of the United Nations Security Council while maintaining its peace constitution.³³ Drawing on the notion of a multiplicity of imaginable postwar eras, Oguma’s chapter in this volume suggests that the end of the era may ultimately depend on the lens through which people define it. For example, for those who see the postwar era as defined by the new constitution or the various treaties signed in the early 1950s, the postwar era will not end until the constitution is revised and the US-Japan Security Treaty abrogated. From a different perspective, if the postwar era is defined in terms of the survival of memories and traumas of the war, then it may not end until those possessing such memories die out—but even then it may not end if the memories are inherited by a new generation.

As I mentioned earlier, not only historians but pundits from all spheres have repeatedly declared the postwar over—from as early as 1956 when a government economic white paper warned the Japanese that the postwar was over and now they would need to survive in a hostile global economic market, to as recently as 2020 when the scholar Kenneth Pyle declared that “Japan’s long postwar era is finally coming to an end.”³⁴ In 2019 the historian Hosaka Masayasu even argued that from around the middle of the Heisei Era (around 2005) the term “postwar” became more and more obsolete thanks to generational change, the fading of ideals like democracy and human respect, the failure to properly pass on the war experience, and the role of Prime Minister Abe Shinzō in attacking the so-called “postwar regime” of national humiliation.³⁵ Nonetheless, contrary to Hosaka’s observation, the postwar and postwar Japan have survived and arguably even thrived if usage is any indication. In the spirit of this volume, I will leave it up to the contributors and readers to make their own evaluations here. What I might suggest, however, is that looked at through the lens of a multiplicity of

postwars, some of Japan's postwars have certainly ended while others continue. Perhaps there will be some event in the future that ties all of these postwars together and offers us a widely accepted ending, but until then, our best approach may be to accept the postwar-as-amoeba and all of the multifarious postwars or other historical imaginaries that this makes possible. The challenge will be, on the one hand, satisfying the desire for precision and avoidance of arbitrariness, while, on the other, allowing different periodizations to "reflect their own sense of the 'style'" of that particular postwar.³⁶

Organization of the volume

The chapters in this volume are organized under six broad themes. Part 1, the Origins of the Postwar, contains two chapters providing new perspectives on the early postwar years. Choi's chapter challenges what he calls the "historiographical amnesia of empire" by examining two related phenomena: the "liberations" of Korea and Koreans in Japan, and Japanese colonial settlers' repatriation from Korea. By doing so he hopes to "expand the scope of postwar history" by "decentering" the "dominant framework of US-Japan(ese) relations." Bytheway's chapter analyzes the understudied history of money, banking and fiscal reforms during the Allied Occupation. Contrary to the vision of a well-planned Occupation, what we see in these domains are a series of "perfunctory, performatory, and uninspired" reforms undertaken by occupiers who overlooked or under-regulated key areas of finance once thought essential to the Occupation's mission. As a result Japanese finance emerged from a war, one it was alleged to have started and funded, without having to meaningfully engage in external audits, rigorous self-scrutiny, or almost any reforms that threatened deep and irreversible change. Fiscal reforms ended with the Dodge Line, austerity policies, and a campaign of mass retrenchments across the public service which, in turn, caused widespread anger and resentment against the Occupation.

Part 2, the Political Postwar, contains four chapters on the actors and institutions that have shaped politics during this era. Bronson's chapter traces the history of how public opinion polls have been critically debated, interpreted and applied to different projects in postwar Japan. We see how polls were used in political arguments that shaped culture over time and, moreover, how arguments over the interpretation and conduct of opinion polls generated new questions among a broad range of political actors and experts on all sides of politics. Babb's chapter offers a thought-provoking reconsideration of postwar political history by positing a critical pivot from the Left to the Right, particularly the rise of the Left up to the 1970s and the rise of the Right thereafter. As Babb reminds us, the meaning of left and right in Japan, and even what it means to be Japanese, experienced a much more radical transformation over postwar era than most historians and certainly most Japanese might believe. Naono's chapter turns to the history of pacifism in the postwar era through an examination of the Confederation of Atomic and Hydrogen Bomb Sufferers Organizations (Hidankyō), one of the most prominent pacifist organizations during this era. By closely looking at Hidankyō's political action and discursive strategies the chapter shows how pacifism in postwar Japan has been shaped through its changing relations with nationalism and the state, which are often articulated via war memories. Related, Winkler's chapter tackles the ongoing battles over Japan's postwar constitution. As he notes, the debate over the desirability and necessity of amending or revising the 1947 constitution reflects the nature of postwar conservatism,

which has always had two distinctive sides: one that pragmatically accepted or embraced the postwar status quo centered on the constitution, and another that has rejected or attacked this status quo as an imposition on Japan by the US.

The chapters in Part 3, Postwar Culture and Society, delve into continuity and change in the institutions and practices of postwar culture and society. Chapman and Macnaughtan examine the gendering of postwar Japanese society through the lens of work as a broad experience of both paid and unpaid labor. Why, they ask, has it been so difficult to move away from economic and social gender norms for both men and women in Japan, thereby limiting progress in gender equality by international standards? Siniawer looks at popular anxieties, insecurities, and uncertainties to position the early 1970s—the “era of anxiety”—as a significant inflection point in the postwar era (similar to Babb’s chapter on the Left and Right). How, Siniawer asks, might we begin to position the end of high-speed economic growth, the destabilization of middle-class life, and insecurities about the future into the longer arc of the postwar era? What was transient, what endured, and what fundamentally pivoted or shifted at this time? Focusing on post-compulsory education, Cave’s chapter similarly suggests a 1970s inflection, as increasing numbers of youth began to study beyond compulsory education (lower secondary). Cave’s chapter examines the postwar history of Japanese education through the lens of the sharp differences between compulsory and post-compulsory education. While compulsory education has witnessed sustained efforts to equalize the provision of resources, instruction and treatment of pupils, post-compulsory education has adopted a model in which institutions are hierarchized and students compete to enter, in the process being differentiated by credentials. Attempts to eliminate or reduce hierarchization of high schools met with limited success. Surveying this history Cave asks if the post-compulsory education system has done enough to enable children to attain their potential regardless of their socioeconomic situation. Cwiertka turns attention to another transformation of the high-growth era, namely, the encroachment of plastics. As she shows, the Japanese embraced the “plastic dream” into their *akarui seikatsu* or bright new lives through voracious consumption of electrical appliances and various forms of packaging and wrapping. Despite its centrality in stimulating domestic demand—which was, in turn, indispensable for high-speed economic growth—plastic has been largely missing from existing accounts of the postwar era. Cwiertka shows, however, just how deeply plastic has been embedded in the story of postwar Japan—from the environmental and human tragedy at Minamata, to the transformation and growth of Japan’s petrochemical industries, and ultimately the evolution of a culture of consumption based on an uncompromising demand for convenience and a disregard for environmental consequences. Borland’s chapter has a similar environmental perspective but shifts emphasis to the intersection of children and birds. As Borland shows, throughout the postwar era, children played an important role in protecting birds and their habitats as well as raising social awareness of the need for nature conservation. While scholarship on environmental activism in Japan to date has focused mainly on contention, protest and resistance, Borland’s chapter reveals how children pursued their environmental agenda as “charismatic conservationists” utilizing cooperation and consistent effort. Finally, in his chapter on television celebrities, Kim traces the links between the rise of so-called television *tarento* as accessible, multi-talented entertainers appealing to a broad public and contemporary discussions about media and democracy. Focusing on the 1950s and 1960s, Kim ponders the possibilities *tarento* culture demonstrated in the society that emerged from the war and the Allied Occupation. As both cultural icons and core elements of a rising TV culture,

“tarento” were expected to contribute to the mediation between television and its viewers, and by extension, the mediation between mass media and people, ultimately leading to the creation of postwar democratic culture in Japanese society.”

Part 4, the Transnational Postwar, contains two chapters exploring border-crossing phenomena throughout this era through the lenses of feminism and reproduction and population. Bullock's chapter explores the development of postwar Japanese feminism through a transnational frame. The chapter identifies three forms of transnational activity that have been especially important to the development of Japanese feminist discourse: the physical movement of female intellectuals and feminist activists as they ventured outside the country (or non-Japanese ventured in), the role of translation of foreign texts and concepts as a process of knowledge transfer and negotiation and the participation of Japanese women in international organizations and frameworks, such as United Nations (UN)-sponsored conventions and non-governmental organizations (NGOs). As Bullock observes, “while feminists in Japan have learned much from like-minded activists and theorists abroad, the rest of the world might do well to take its own lessons from the experiences of Japanese women too.” Homei's chapter traces the development of reproductive and population policies after the war, showing how apparently domestic phenomena were in fact shaped by political and historical factors in Japan's region and globally. Looking at two interlinked episodes shaping reproductive and population politics in Japan between 1945 and the 1960s, the chapter reveals “both the precarity of Japan as a political unit and the intersections of domestic and transnational negotiations that profoundly shaped postwar Japan's experiences with reproduction and population.”

Linked to the theme of transnationalism, Part 5 is titled Japan's Postwar Era in Asia and the World. Envall's chapter reconsiders Japan's American alliance which has so deeply shaped the contours of this era. Tracing the evolution of Japan's approach to the alliance during the postwar, Envall argues that Japan has repeatedly prioritized deterrence over the desire for autonomy. Such an interpretation, he argues, does not fit easily with many past understandings of Japanese policymaking as being incoherent or absent. On the contrary, Japan's alliance history has arguably been consistently pragmatic “in its strategic thinking, attuned to fluctuations in power, and capable of fine calculations of its strategic interest.” Despite hints that Japan might be moving toward a new balance between autonomy and national strength or deterrence in the early 2000s, with the rise of China and a less secure environment, Envall suggests that of late the appeal of increased autonomy has “shrunk significantly.” Franks' chapter further explores the US-Japan alliance from the perspective Okinawa which is home to over 70 percent of American military bases on Japanese soil. As Franks shows, while the fate of Okinawa has often been determined by decision makers in Tokyo or a world away in Washington, the Okinawans have played an “outsized role” in defining the parameters of identity and the place of minorities in Japan's postwar era. Hara's chapter shifts focus from the USA to Japan's regional neighbors and the country's struggle to develop an identity in East Asia in the face of unresolved territorial disputes and historical issues. Reflecting on Japan's historical tendency to “leave Asia and join the West” and its ambivalent engagement with regional imaginaries like Pan-Asianism, Hara argues that, even with growing economic interdependence and security dialogues, the persistence of these unresolved disputes remains as a constant source of instability, potentially reigniting into conflict at any time. Finally, Suter's chapter examines Japan in the world through the lens of the production, circulation and consumption of manga in the postwar to reflect on the intersection between notions of

national identity and internationalization (*kokusaika*). Suter argues that transnationalism has been part of the medium throughout the postwar era, challenging the view that manga is a uniquely Japanese cultural product. The evolution of postwar manga's themes and styles as well as its institutions have been characterized by a constant oscillation between inward and outward drives, and between shunning manga in the domestic arena and promoting it as a valuable cultural export on the international level.

The chapters by Seaton and Oguma in Part 6, Defining, Delineating, Historicizing and Chronologizing the Postwar Era, return to broader questions about the era. Seaton's chapter challenges the idea of a temporally and spatially contained postwar by questioning the August 15th "myth," the assumed absence of war in the postwar, the failure of deimperialization in the wake of colonial empire, and the many disjunctures that belie the existence of a unitary era from 1945 to the present. Despite ceaseless contestation over the past throughout the postwar era, Seaton argues that the term postwar embeds a conservative continuity at the heart of public national discourse relating to the war. Finally, Oguma's chapter investigates popular perceptions of the postwar in the thirty or so years since the end of the Cold War—a period roughly coinciding with the imperial era of Heisei (1989–2019). Using debates among political and cultural elites and public opinion polls conducted during the Heisei era, Oguma teases out what the "postwar" has meant for the Japanese, the senses in which it has (or has not) ended and the ways in which it continues in the present. For Oguma, the long-postwar in Japan shares similarities with memory of the slave trade in the United States: "it has nothing to do with whether the generation that experienced it is still alive, or whether this generation has correct knowledge such as years or dates." Just as memories of the slave trade might not disappear from the United States "until racial discrimination disappears," in Japan, "the postwar era might not end until US military bases disappear" or the unresolved history of transgression against Japan's neighbors is settled once and for all.

Notes

¹ Carol Gluck, "The 'End' of the Postwar: Japan at the Turn of the Millennium," *Public Culture* 10, no. 1 (1997): 3.

² Gluck, "End of the Postwar," 4.

³ See Oguma in this volume for another explanation for the durability of the idea of the postwar.

⁴ William A. Green, "Periodization in European and World History," *Journal of World History* 3, no. 1 (1992): 13.

⁵ Green, "Periodization," 14.

⁶ On the question of so-called deimperialization see Seaton in this volume. See also Simon Avenell, *Asia and Postwar Japan: Deimperialization, Civic Activism, and National Identity* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2022).

⁷ Narita Ryūichi, "*Sengo*" *wa ikani katarareru ka* (Tokyo: Kawade Bukkusu, 2016), 9–10.

⁸ Narita, "*Sengo*" *wa ikani katarareruka*, 10.

⁹ Oguma suggests some possible endings in his chapter in this volume.

¹⁰ Michael Lucken, "Introduction," in *Japan's Postwar*, ed. Michael Lucken, Anne Bayard-Sakai and Emmanuel Lozerand; and trans. J. A. A. Stockwin (Oxon, UK: Routledge, 2011), 2.

- ¹¹ *shūsengo* (after the war) and *haisengo* (after defeat) were also used at the time.
- ¹² Yanaihara Tadao, ed., *Sengo Nihon shōshi*, 2 vols (Tokyo: Tokyo Daigaku Shuppankai, 1958, 1960).
- ¹³ In the *Shōwa no Rekishi* series see the volumes by Kanda Fuhito, *Shōwa no rekishi 8: Senryō to minshushugi* (Tokyo: Shōgakkan, 1989); Shibagaki Kazuo, *Shōwa no rekishi: Kōwa kara kōdo seichō e* (Tokyo: Shōgakkan, 1989); and Miyamoto Ken'ichi, *Shōwa no rekishi 10: Keizai taikoku* (Tokyo: Shōgakkan, 1989).
- ¹⁴ Edwin O. Reischauer, "Foreword" in *100 Million Japanese: The Postwar Experience*, by Masataka Kosaka (Tokyo and Palo Alto: Kodansha International, 1972), 7–8.
- ¹⁵ Christopher Gerteis and Timothy S. George, "Revisiting the History of Postwar Japan," in *Japan since 1945: From Postwar to Post-Bubble*, eds. Christopher Gerteis and Timothy S. George (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2013), 1.
- ¹⁶ Narita Ryūichi, *Kingendai Nihon shi to no taiwa: Senchū—sengo—genzaihen* (Tokyo: Shūeisha, 2019), 134.
- ¹⁷ See, for example, Andrew Gordon, "Society and Politics from Transwar through Postwar Japan" in *Historical Perspectives on Contemporary East Asia* ed. Merle Goldman and Andrew Gordon (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2000); John Dower, "The Useful War," in John Dower, *Japan in War and Peace* (New York: New Press, 1993); Yasushi Yamanouchi, "Total War and System Integration," in *Total War and Modernization*, ed. Yasushi Yamanouchi, J. Victor Koschmann, and Ryuichi Narita (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University East Asia Program, 1998); Sheldon Garon, *The State and Labor in Modern Japan* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1987); and Chalmers Johnson, *MITI and the Japanese Miracle* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1982).
- ¹⁸ Gary D. Allinson, *Japan's Postwar History* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 200), 46.
- ¹⁹ Allinson, *Japan's Postwar History*, 7.
- ²⁰ Allinson, *Japan's Postwar History*, 5–6.
- ²¹ Gordon, "Society and Politics," 273.
- ²² Narita, *Kingendai Nihon shi*, 153.
- ²³ Narita, *Kingendai Nihon shi*, 153.
- ²⁴ William A. Green, "Periodization in European and World History," *Journal of World History* 3, no. 1 (1992): 14–15.
- ²⁵ Lucken, "Introduction," 2.
- ²⁶ Gluck, "End of the Postwar," 4–7; Narita, *Sengo wa ikani katarareruka*, 45.
- ²⁷ See for example: Simon Avenell, *Transnational Japan in the Global Environmental Movement* (Honolulu, HI: University of Hawai'i Press, 2017); Pedro Iacobelli, Danton Leary, and Shinnosuke Takahashi, eds., *Transnational Japan as History: Empire, Migration, and Social Movements* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015); Tessa Morris-Suzuki, *Borderline Japan: Foreigners and Frontier Controls in the Postwar Era* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010); and Tessa Morris-Suzuki, *Exodus to North Korea: Shadows from Japan's Cold War* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2007).
- ²⁸ Ōno Mitsuaki and Bانشō Ken'ichi, "Hajime ni," in *Sengo shi saikō: "Rekishi no sakeme" o toraeru*, ed. Nishikawa Nagao, Ōno Mitsuaki, and Bانشō Ken'ichi (Tokyo: Heibonsha, 2014), 11–12.
- ²⁹ Nakano Toshio, Takahashi Tetsuya, Nakanishi Shintarō, and So Kyong-sik, "Tettei tōron 'sengo saikō': 'Sengo' to wa nan dattanoka," *Zen'ya* 3 (Spring 2005): 57.
- ³⁰ Eric Seizelet, "The Postwar as Political Paradigm," in *Japan's Postwar*, ed. Michael Lucken, Anne Bayard-Sakai and Emmanuel Lozerand; and trans. J. A. A. Stockwin (Oxon, UK: Routledge, 2011), 14..
- ³¹ Gordon, "Conclusion," 463.
- ³² Lucken, "Introduction," 4.
- ³³ Nakamura Masanori, *Sengo shi* (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 2005), 286–88.
- ³⁴ Kenneth, B. Pyle, "The Making of Postwar Japan: A Speculative Essay," *The Journal of Japanese Studies* 46, no. 1 (2020): 143. The Economic Planning Agency announced the postwar had ended in its 1956 economic whitepaper. See Keizai Kikakuchō, *Shōwa 31 nen: Nenji keizai hōkoku*, online: <https://www5.cao.go.jp/keizai3/keizaiwp/wp-je56/wp-je56-0000il.html>. See the section "Ketsugo." Oguma Eiji posits three postwars: 1945–1955, 1955–1990, and 1990 and beyond. See Oguma Eiji, "Minshu" to "aikoku": *Sengo Nihon no nashonarizumu to kōkyōsei* (Tokyo: Shin'yōsha, 2002), 12, 81. See also Oguma in this volume. Handō Kazutoshi views the reversion of Okinawa to Japan in 1972 as the end of the postwar. See Handō Kazutoshi, *Shōwa shi sengohen 1945–1989* (Tokyo: Heibonsha, 2009), 531. Andrew Gordon has proposed the end of the 1980s as the end of the postwar. See Gordon, "Conclusion," 463. Carol Gluck also discusses various postwar

era endings in her essay in the same volume. See Carol Gluck, “The Past in the Present,” in *Postwar Japan as History*, edited by Andrew Gordon (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1993), especially 92–95.

³⁵ Hosaka Masayasu, *Heisei shi* (Tokyo: Heibonsha, 2019), 147–49.

³⁶ Peter Toohey, “The Cultural Logic of Historical Periodization,” in *Handbook of Historical Sociology*, edited by Gerard Delanty and Engin F. Isin (London: Sage, 2003), 210.

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