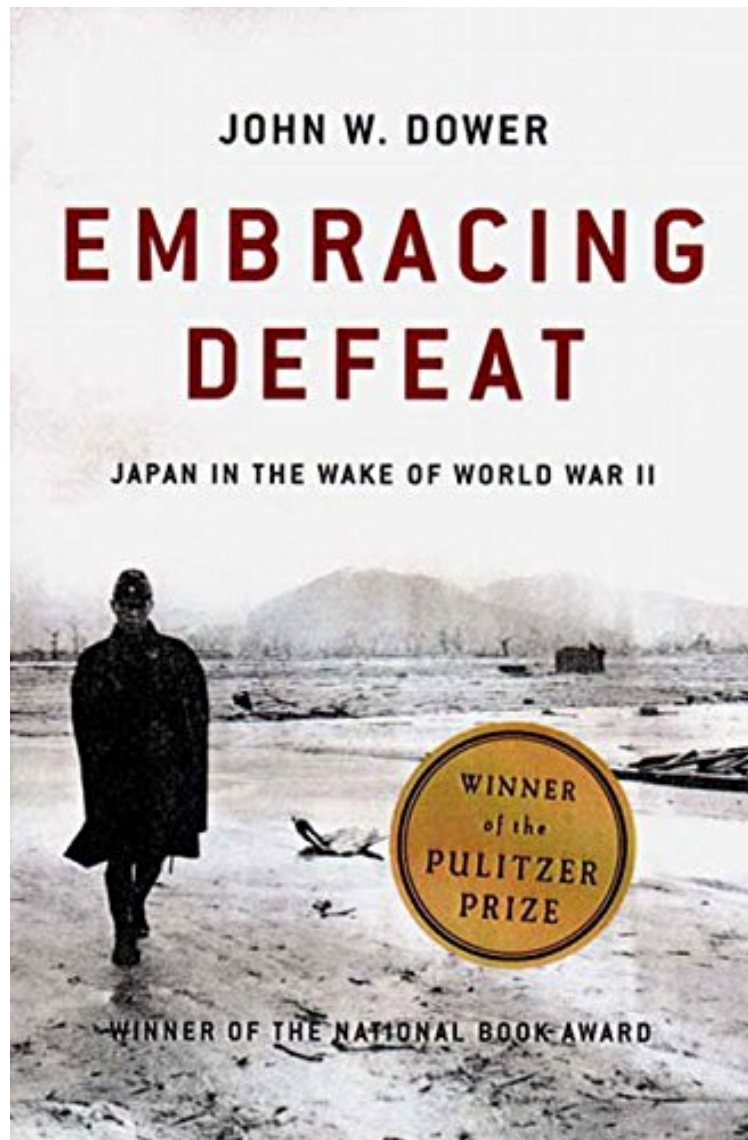


[Free download] Embracing Defeat: Japan in the Wake of World War II

## Embracing Defeat: Japan in the Wake of World War II

*John W. Dower*

*audiobook / \*ebooks / Download PDF / ePub / DOC*



[Download](#)

[Read Online](#)

#62968 in Books W W Norton Company 2000-06-17Original language:EnglishPDF # 1 9.30 x 1.20 x 6.10l, 1.79 #File Name: 0393320278688 pagesW W Norton Company | File size: 39.Mb

**John W. Dower : Embracing Defeat: Japan in the Wake of World War II** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Embracing Defeat: Japan in the Wake of World War II:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Wonderful Overview of Occupied and Post-WWII JapanBy Kyle BunkersThe fact that there is so much to cover after Japan surrendered to the US is both surprising and unsurprising. Unsurprising because many eras have been extremely well researched. Surprising, because so much changed for Japan in such a short time, and it is all quite interesting.Dower does an excellent job of explaining the thoughts of all sides

(and taking to task the stupidities that some people took), and also telling us why people thought of doing these things. He starts with the utter devastation of WWII, explains the economics of the early years and the enormous want right after surrender. People took advantage of the situation, and many felt despair. Dower covers culture, the occupation's goals and thoughts, the "justice" that was imposed, and finally the boom from the Korean War. Dower always keeps a keen eye on explaining things in a way that does not ascribe some special "Japaneseness/Orientalism" that is alien to the rest of the world. This is for the better, as explaining things through "Japaneseness/Orientalism" is hardly an explanation at all. The amazing results of Japan were done through specific circumstances and people being at the correct time to act. Overall, I found the book to be what I wanted -- a great explanation of how Japan "embraced defeat" and started on the path to becoming the nation it is today. Dower clearly explains how this was done. The style is definitely academic, but I never found it dull, and Dower skewers views when they deserve to be skewered. I'd definitely recommend it to anyone interested in Japan.

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Useful, educational but not quite on target  
By Dutiful son-in-law  
Somewhat disappointing, perhaps because it did not match my expectations. The book is as much about the philosophy and cultural issues involved as the details of how Japan was put together. Many pages covering how grim things were for people, and even how sex lives of the people were affected. But not as much detail as I had hoped for on who did what when. And the book ends quickly after the end of the US occupation of Japan, so one cannot watch the political system rebuild itself. I learned a great deal by reading the book. It was interesting to learn how much of a victor's justice it was, and how poorly the war crimes trials were set up. So a very useful and educational read, but with some serious editing of some parts and more detail in others I would have enjoyed it more.

4 of 4 people found the following review helpful. Top Japan Scholar Writes of Postwar Japan and the Occupation Years  
By Edward Savelle  
Book Review: Embracing Defeat: Japan in the Wake of World War II. By John W. Dower. (New York and London: W. W. Norton Company, Ltd, 1999. Pp 676. ISBN 0-393-04686-9)  
Embracing Defeat begins where the Pacific War ends. It is a detailed examination of Japan in the aftermath of the war. John W. Dower adroitly leads the reader through the arc of this history as Japan literally rises from ashes at war's end on August 15, 1945, and then guides us through the US Occupation period and beyond. Rather than a simple chronology, Dower organized his book into sections and topics that focus on the Japanese people, their sufferings, the rationalization of their defeat, and their adjustment to a "New Japan." Dower's organization provides the reader insight and sensitivity to the range of difficulties faced by a country devastated by war and left with unimaginable challenges to reconstruct a livable country. Clearly, Dower mastered his subject. The depth of the Japanese plight is borne out in sections with titles like "Shattered Lives," "Displaced Persons," "Stigmatized Victims," and "Mocking Defeat." Japan, a country that was an industrial power in the 1920s, had become a "fourth-rate nation" by war's end. (44) And while the allies' story may be explained in the word victory, Dower digs deep in his account of the diverse opinions, emotions, actions, and motivations held by the Japanese people, brought about by the word defeat. A further example of Dower's organization is that, although General MacArthur's name is frequently cited, he is almost never the central figure in the narrative. The view is clearly from and about the Japanese. Perhaps the most enlightening sections of Dower's work are the first few chapters which focus on the conflicted Japanese people. Japanese culture worshipped the Emperor as Deity, in a way comparable to the worship of Jesus Christ to the Christians. To die for the Emperor was deemed an honor to many. The abrupt end to the war and the devastating defeat was literally and figuratively a bombshell which was universally felt by the Japanese people. When Emperor Hirohito broadcast via radio that the war was over, that the war had been in vain, that Japan had been defeated, it was the first time nearly anyone in Japan had heard his voice. Dower tells us that at the time of Emperor Hirohito's radio broadcast on August 15, approximately 9.0 million people in Japan were homeless and that "approximately 6.5 million Japanese were stranded in Asia, Siberia, and the Pacific Ocean area." (47, 48) Although Dower tells us that repatriation was "an impressive accomplishment," many Japanese returned to a country they hardly recognized. "Many adults who returned after years abroad found that their families had been shattered. Urban neighborhoods had been obliterated." (57) Many never returned. Returning soldiers were often stigmatized victims, according to the author. Many who had been sent off to war with victory parties and chants of "100 million hearts beating as one," were frequently viewed as pathetic outcasts. In some respects they had let the Emperor down. Onlookers dubbed their military uniforms as "defeat suits," their shoes as "defeat shoes." (170) Outcasts represented a large part of the population and included not only veterans, but the homeless, the hungry. Daily living was as hard as imaginable for the impoverished postwar survivors who received little sympathy. Dower characterizes Japanese culture as a harsh environment for outcasts. He states: "There existed no strong tradition of responsibility toward strangers, or of unrequited philanthropy, or of tolerance or even genuine sympathy...toward those who suffered misfortune." (61) The US Occupation began in late August and the formal surrender took place aboard the USS Missouri on September 2, 1945. General MacArthur, the Supreme Commander of Allied Forces ("SCAP") was given unprecedented authority to bring order to chaos. "SCAP's mission was nothing less than to carry out the demilitarization and democratization of Japan." (77) While millions of Japanese were homeless and starving, initial SCAP orders seemed insensitive. They were "not [to] assume any responsibility for the economic rehabilitation of Japan or the strengthening of the Japanese economy....The plight of Japan is the direct outcome of its own behavior." (529) Almost from the beginning though, this order began to soften; it would change

dramatically over time. Dower shows us that over the six-year and eight-month US Occupation, the world changed; thus as new conflicts emerged, the relationship between the United States and her allies changed. These unforeseen changes altered the US-Japanese relationship during the occupation well beyond what could have been imagined in 1945. Amidst the human misery that was so visible in Japan in 1945 and 1946, SCAP proceeded with what must be considered a radical agenda for a victorious occupying power—the implementation of democracy and the development of a new Japanese constitution. “The Americans had long looked askance at the Meiji charter, deeming it incompatible with the healthy development of responsible democratic government.” This made the existing charter incompatible with the primary goals of the United States, its allies, and SCAP. (346) Initially, SCAP endeavored to work through an array of influential Japanese to revise the existing charter or encourage development of a constitution that would be consistent with liberal and democratic ideals required by SCAP and the Potsdam Proclamation. Dower discusses in great detail several unsuccessful Japanese attempts toward this end. The author cites that SCAP’s authority to impose a new constitution on Japan could be rationalized by its authority under Section 6 of the Potsdam Declaration, which stated, “There must be elimination for all time the authority and influence of those who have deceived and misled the people of Japan into embarking on world conquest.” Dower intimates that this was interpreted as requiring the establishment of constitutional protections against future abuses of authority. (347) Dower also cites Sections 10 and 12 as other sections of the Potsdam Declaration that supported SCAP’s involvement in the establishment of a new constitution. After several months and seemingly frustrated, MacArthur and his top aides in Government Section [of SCAP] concluded that “the [Japanese] government was incapable of proposing revisions that would meet the Potsdam requirements.” (360) In February 1946 MacArthur ordered that Government Section draft a new constitution for Japan. This bold act, characteristically MacArthur, was an unprecedented act by an occupying power. Produced in secret in order to devise a way to give it Japanese authorship, this draft, with relatively minor changes, ultimately became the new Japanese constitution in May 1947. It was by all accounts an exceptionally liberal constitution which included reforms such as female suffrage, agrarian reform, and a highly controversial “Article 9” which denounced war. Dower demonstrates in many ways how the relationship between the vanquished Japanese and the allies represented by SCAP began to shift over time. The most notable of several examples was caused by the emerging Cold War. Initially, SCAP sought to foster reconstruction of Japan on a lesser economic scale and Section 9 forced demilitarization. But as Dower explains, “Driven by Cold War considerations, the Americans began to jettison many of the original ideals of ‘demilitarization and democratization’ that had seemed so unexpected and inspiring to a defeated populace in 1945.” (525) Instead of breaking up big business and prosecuting prominent capitalists and bureaucrats, as Cold War fever mounted, Americans sought to reinvigorate the economy with Japan ultimately viewed as a first line “bulwark against communism.” In the vernacular of the times, this dramatic change was referred to as the “reverse course.” When the Korean War erupted on June 25, 1950, Japan and its US Occupation forces were nothing less than an asset against communist aggression. Moreover, the period leading up to the war saw the revitalization of key heavy industrial expansion in Japan which proved a boon to her economy. Dower tells us that during the Korean War period, American “special procurements” from Japan amounted to billions of US dollars in Japanese exports. These purchases continued for years after the end to the Korean War. Dower states: “This prolonged windfall enabled Japan to increase its imports greatly and virtually double its scale of production in key industries.” (542) Embracing Defeat is a most important contribution to modern Japanese history. On one hand it can be viewed as a capstone to Pacific War history for it does provide an insightful epilogue to the war. In another sense this work provides a genesis to the Japanese Miracle because it ends just as Japan, Inc. is acquiring its economic footing. Dower’s ability to aptly organize his abundant scholarship into very readable prose is also noteworthy. The book belongs on the shelf of any serious student of Japan, or for that matter, any serious student of twentieth-century history.

Winner of the Pulitzer Prize, the 1999 National Book Award for Nonfiction, finalist for the Lionel Gelber Prize and the Kiriya Pacific Rim Book Prize, *Embracing Defeat* is John W. Dower's brilliant examination of Japan in the immediate, shattering aftermath of World War II. Drawing on a vast range of Japanese sources and illustrated with dozens of astonishing documentary photographs, *Embracing Defeat* is the fullest and most important history of the more than six years of American occupation, which affected every level of Japanese society, often in ways neither side could anticipate. Dower, whom Stephen E. Ambrose has called "America's foremost historian of the Second World War in the Pacific," gives us the rich and turbulent interplay between West and East, the victor and the vanquished, in a way never before attempted, from top-level manipulations concerning the fate of Emperor Hirohito to the hopes and fears of men and women in every walk of life. Already regarded as the benchmark in its field, *Embracing Defeat* is a work of colossal scholarship and history of the very first order. John W. Dower is the Elting E. Morison Professor of History at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. He is a winner of the National Book Critics Circle Award for *War Without Mercy*. 75 illustrations and map

.com *Embracing Defeat* tells the story of the transformation of Japan under American occupation after World War II. When Japan surrendered unconditionally to the Allied Forces in August 1945, it was exhausted; where America's

Pacific combat lasted less than four years, Japan had been fighting for 15. Sixty percent of its urban area lay in ruins. The collapse of the authoritarian state enabled America's six-year occupation to set Japan in entirely new directions. Because the victors had no linguistic or cultural access to the losers' society, they were obliged to govern indirectly. Gen. Douglas MacArthur decided at the outset to maintain the civil bureaucracy and the institution of the emperor: democracy would be imposed from above in what the author terms "Neocolonial Revolution." His description of the manipulation of public opinion, as a wedge was driven between the discredited militarists and Emperor Hirohito, is especially fascinating. Tojo, on trial for his life, was requested to take responsibility for the war and deflect it from the emperor; he did, and was hanged. Dower's analysis of popular Japanese culture of the period--songs, magazines, advertising, even jokes--is brilliant, and reflected in the book's 80 well-chosen photographs. With the same masterful control of voluminous material and clear writing that he gave us in *War Without Mercy*, the author paints a vivid picture of a society in extremis and reconstructs the extraordinary period during which America molded a traumatized country into a free-market democracy and bulwark against resurgent world communism. --John Stevenson

From Publishers Weekly

The writing of history doesn't get much better than this. MIT professor Dower (author of the NBCC Award-winning *War Without Mercy*) offers a dazzling political and social history of how postwar Japan evolved with stunning speed into a unique hybrid of Western innovation and Japanese tradition. The American occupation of Japan (1945-1952) saw the once fiercely militarist island nation transformed into a democracy constitutionally prohibited from deploying military forces abroad. The occupation was fraught with irony as Americans, motivated by what they saw as their Christian duty to uplift a barbarian race, attempted to impose democracy through autocratic military rule. Dower manages to convey the full extent of both American self-righteousness and visionary idealism. The first years of occupation saw the extension of rights to women, organized labor and other previously excluded groups. Later, the exigencies of the emergent Cold War led to American-backed "anti-Red" purges, pro-business policies and the partial reconstruction of the Japanese military. Dower demonstrates an impressive mastery of voluminous sources, both American and Japanese, and he deftly situates the political story within a rich cultural context. His digressions into Japanese culture--high and low, elite and popular--are revealing and extremely well written. The book is most remarkable, however, for the way Dower judiciously explores the complex moral and political issues raised by America's effort to rebuild and refashion a defeated adversary and Japan's ambivalent response to that embrace.

Illustrations. Copyright 1999 Reed Business Information, Inc.

From Library Journal

Dower's magisterial narrative eloquently tells the story of the postwar occupation of Japan by departing from the usual practice of making the story part of General MacArthur's biography and instead focusing on the citizens. With historical sweep and cultural nuance, and using numerous personal stories of survival, loss, and rededication, he follows the astonishing social transformation of a people. (LJ 4/1/99) Copyright 2000 Reed Business Information, Inc.