

Ezra's Archives

A Publication of the
Cornell Historical Society

Thirteenth Edition

2023

Acknowledgments

It is with great gratitude that the Editorial Board thanks for their continued support of our lovely faculty advisor, Professor TJ Hinrichs, the Executive Board of the Cornell Historical Society, and our amazing editorial teams, without whom this publication would not be possible. We would also like to thank Judy Yonkin, the Cornell University History Department, the Student Activities Funding Commission, the authors published within this edition, and all the students who submitted their work for consideration within this publication.

*Ezra's Archives is a publication of the Cornell Historical Society. All rights reserved.
Reproduction in whole or in part is prohibited.*

The Editorial Board

Editor-in-Chief

Aosheng Pusztaszeri '23

Managing Editor

Kate Sullivan '25

Senior Editors

Zhiyuan Zhou '23

Aidan Uckun '24

Michaela Ferrario '24

Staff Editors

Daniel Cao '25 Myka Melville '25

Michael Raybetz '25 Ruqian (Sophie) Liu '25

Julia Fritsch '25 Landon Le '25

Stella Zhang '26

On the Writers

EMILY HAMILTON is graduating with honors from Regent University with a Bachelor of Arts in Politics and History. She plans to continue pursuing academic and career experiences in the field of political science.

CARTER PATTON is a graduating senior at Denison University in Granville, Ohio. He studies History and Chemistry and has an eye on medical school in the future. His research interests include the history of Modern medicine and also the Mediterranean Basin during the Early Modern period. In his free time, Carter enjoys traveling with his family and friends, playing trumpet, studying maps, and cheering on sports teams from Cincinnati.

ZOE DAVIDSON is a junior at Columbia University majoring in history and public health. As the co-editor-in-chief of the Columbia Journal of History, she is passionate about encouraging student scholarship in History. In her senior year of college, Zoe is looking forward to continuing historical research and engaging with undergraduate publications.

MATTHEW OEY is a junior at Columbia University majoring in history. He grew up between Singapore and rural Vermont. His research interests lie in combining intellectual history, history and philosophy of science, and war and peace studies. After graduating, he hopes to pursue a career at the intersection of legal practice and academia.

HUANJUN ZHOU is a senior at the University of British Columbia pursuing a combined program of History and International Relations, with a minor in Political Science. He puddles around complicated concepts of imperialism, nationalism, and transnational legality through reading and writing Republican Chinese history, with a focus on the Guomindang Nanjing

regime's diplomatic encounters with the aging British Empire. He treasures history as a field for fruitful imagination backed by rigorous research.

Table of Contents

Letter from the Editors	6
Civilian Soldiers and the Standing Army Dilemma	8
The Ideological History of the Second Amendment to the United States Constitution	
Emily Hamilton	
Love + Kisses, Denny	34
The Importance of Letter Writing for an American Army Surgeon during World War Two	
Carter Patton	
Disease Response or Diseased Response	62
Spain's Smallpox Public Health Campaigns in the Americas, 1780 – 1806	
Zoe Davidson	
The Anthropologists' War	89
Orientalism, Pragmatism, and Mythology in American cross-cultural studies on Japan during World War Two	
Matthew Oey	
Vanguard and Lion's Share of the Far East	124
Understanding Britain's Far Eastern policy from its Perceptions of Japan, 1929-1932	
Huanjun Zhou	
About the Cornell Historical Society	159

From the Editors

It is with great pleasure that we present the thirteenth edition of *Ezra's Archives*. This journal represents the hard work and dedication of a small group of undergraduates committed to carrying on the tradition that Maya Koretzky and Andrew White first began in Spring 2011. Their goal: to provide a space for undergraduates to share exemplary historical research. In their original letter from the editors, published in the very first edition of *Ezra's Archives*, Maya and Andrew asked two simple questions: Why study history? Why write and read history? They rightly observed that the practice of studying history, of putting it into words, and sharing it with others gives us the context necessary to understand our present.

Ezra's Archives, however, does not operate in a bubble. The recent global pandemic has forced many of us to re-evaluate what matters and why we do what we do. This includes why we study history. History, of course, is not an instruction manual. We cannot look to the past to find neat morals or lessons. Regardless, we believe that looking to the past is one of the ways that we can best understand the present and imagine a new future. In moments like these, the mission of history is particularly important.

This is why the editors of *Ezra's Archives* have always aimed to provide a platform for undergraduate historians working in under-studied areas. Since the first issue, the journal has showcased research on diverse topics, from Christian polemics in Umayyad Spain, the economy of the Viceroyalty of Peru, blood and militarism in colonial Hawai'i, and even German water policy in Quindao from 1898 to 1914.

As in past years, we received a variety of submissions from undergraduates across the country and beyond, at institutions both large and small. This year, we are proud to offer new research on the ideological history surrounding

the Second Amendment, letter writing during World War II, Spain's smallpox public health campaigns in the Americas, American anthropological studies of Japan during World War II, and Anglo-Japanese diplomacy during the Interwar period.

In the next year, we hope to increase collaboration with our authors. One benefit of the switch to more virtual modes of instruction has been the ability to connect across great distances. We hope to further harness this technology in subsequent publications, reach out to more authors across the globe, and connect them with our editorial team. We appreciate all of the support we have received from the editorial team of *Ezra's Archives*, members of the Cornell Historical Society, and faculty members. Without them, this publication would not be possible. We are pleased to present the thirteenth edition of *Ezra's Archives*, and we hope you enjoy.

Sincerely,
Aosheng, Kate, and Zhiyuan

Civilian Soldiers and the Standing Army Dilemma

The Ideological History of the Second Amendment to the United States Constitution

Emily Hamilton

Introduction

Nothing, it would seem, is more fundamentally American than the US Armed Forces. But the American military would not exist in the form it does today if the Framers and Ratifiers of the Constitution had their way. Influenced by their English ideological roots and their own experiences, the American Founders feared large, professional, paid standing armies kept up in times of peace. Such forces, separate from the body of the people and beholden only to the ruler, could easily be used by the ruler to enslave and tyrannize the people. Opponents of standing armies argued that all of history proved oppressors and dictators found in standing armies their tyrannical tool of choice. When the power of the sword entirely rested in a distinct, mercenary body, nothing but personal goodness could prevent a ruler from turning that sword upon the people. For Englishmen on both sides of the Atlantic, personal goodness was too fragile a security upon which to entrust their liberties. But standing armies posed another danger since whoever wielded the power of the sword wielded ultimate power in the country. An army that could tyrannize the people at a ruler's command could also depose the ruler and institute military rule. These dangers, inherent in standing armies, caused Englishmen and Americans to view standing armies as an unspeakable evil, a great threat to liberty, and utterly unnecessary.

Standing armies could only be unnecessary, however, if in place of an army, the power of the sword rested ultimately with the people. Political thinkers in England and America believed the safest place for the power of the sword to rest was in the militia: the entire population of capable male citizens trained in arms and prepared to defend their homeland. This alternative to a standing army had several benefits. Militias were cheaper than keeping a standing army. They purportedly made citizens virtuous by entrusting them with the duty of community defense. But more important, militias precluded the dangers of tyranny and enslavement. How, it was thought, could a ruler use the power of the sword possessed by a militia to oppress the people when the people constituted the militia? The people would not turn their arms upon their neighbors and friends, they would not succumb to pecuniary interest like a career soldier, and they were anxious to protect the people's liberty since they themselves shared in this liberty. With the power of the sword securely resting with the people, the country would have the military strength to defend itself from invasion while avoiding the danger of that military strength turning upon the people.

However laudable and optimistic the concept of virtuous citizens rising to defend their homes and liberties then returning to civilian life, militias always operated better in theory than in practice. As early as the 1560s, citizens ignored militia duty when they were not faced with impending danger, and counties and states in England and America repeatedly neglected training, disciplining, and deploying the militia.¹ Perhaps most significantly, part-time civilian soldiers were not a match for trained, professional military forces. By the Constitutional Convention in 1787, the probable need for a standing army of some sort was apparent to many of the delegates. The question for the Framers and Ratifiers of the Constitution became how best to minimize the need for a standing army and to secure the rights of the people against the dangers of a standing army if such a force became

¹ Joyce Lee Malcolm, *To Keep and Bear Arms: The Origins of An Anglo-American Right* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1994), 6-7; Neil H. Cogan, ed., *The Complete Bill of Rights: The Drafts, Debates, Sources, and Origins* (Oxford University Press, Incorporated, 2015), 288.

necessary. The Second Amendment to the US Constitution represents part of the Founder's solution to the standing army dilemma. The reason for the Second Amendment's inclusion in the Bill of Rights was to ensure that the power of the sword would still remain ultimately in the hands of the people.

Historiography

Historians of the Second Amendment have presented a variety of reasons for why the Amendment was included in the Bill of Rights. The traditional historiographical positions approach the history in terms of the modern debate over an individual versus collective right to keep and bear arms. A vocal proponent of the individual-right perspective of the Second Amendment is Stephen Halbrook. In his books, including *That Every Man be Armed: The Evolution of a Constitutional Right* and *The Founders' Second Amendment: Origins of the Right to Bear Arms*, Halbrook argued that Federalists and Antifederalists believed individuals had a right to bear arms, and it was this universally undisputed right the Second Amendment secured.² Other historians, notably Joyce Lee Malcolm, also argue from an individual-right perspective. In her book, *To Keep and Bear Arms: The Origins of An Anglo-American Right*, Malcolm explored the English heritage of the Second Amendment. She argued that, for Englishmen, bearing arms evolved from neglected and unpleasant militia duty to an individual right to bear arms enshrined in the English Bill of Rights. According to Malcolm, this context helps explain the individual-right intent of the Second Amendment.³

Arguing from a collective rights perspective, some authors, such as Lawrence D. Cress in *Citizens in Arms: The Army and the Militia in American Society to the War of 1812*, argued that the Second Amendment was less an

² Stephen P. Halbrook, "Encroachments of the Crown on the Liberty of the Subject: Pre-Revolutionary Origins of the Second Amendment," In *University of Dayton Law Review* 15, (1989); Stephen P. Halbrook, *The Founders' Second Amendment: Origins of the Right to Bear Arms* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 2008); Stephen P. Halbrook, *That Every Man Be Armed: The Evolution of a Constitutional Right*, rev. ed. (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2013).

³ Joyce Lee Malcolm, *To Keep and Bear Arms*.

individual right than a right for states to regulate and oversee their militias. Cress argued that the militia was a collective means to protect Republican ideals.⁴ Lois G. Schworer's scholarship also differs from the individual view and perhaps corresponds best with the collective perspective. As a historian of England, she presented the English context of American thought. In "No Standing Armies!" *The Antiarmy Ideology in Seventeenth-Century England*, she traced the history of the English fear of standing armies through to its influence on America.⁵ In *Gun Culture in Early Modern England*, she argued that regardless of whether the Second Amendment protected an individual right, the English Bill of Rights certainly did not.⁶

More recently, scholars have forged new alternatives to the traditional individual-versus-collective debate that focus more on eighteenth-century beliefs than on a modern debate foreign to eighteenth-century thought. Noah Shusterman endeavored to explain the significance of militias in eighteenth-century life in his book *Armed Citizens: The Road from Ancient Rome to the Second Amendment*. He explained that for early Americans, "the question was never whether or not there was a right to bear arms but, rather, who had the right to bear arms."⁷ Saul Cornell, in *A Well-Regulated Militia: The Founding Fathers and the Origins of Gun Control in America*, refuted both the traditional positions and presented a new alternative: a civic right comparable to jury duty.⁸

Another set of scholars view the Second Amendment as merely a relic of long-forgotten eighteenth-century ideas with little or no modern application. Richard H. Uviller and William G. Merkel set forward this

⁴ Lawrence D. Cress, *Citizens in Arms: The Army and the Militia in American Society to the War of 1812* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1982).

⁵ Lois G. Schworer, "No Standing Armies!" *The Antiarmy Ideology in Seventeenth-Century England* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2019).

⁶ Lois G. Schworer, *Gun Culture in Early Modern England* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2016).

⁷ Noah Shusterman, *Armed Citizens: The Road from Ancient Rome to the Second Amendment* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2020), 12.

⁸ Saul Cornell, *A Well-Regulated Militia: The Founding Fathers and the Origins of Gun Control in America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006).

argument in *The Militia and the Right to Arms, Or, How the Second Amendment Fell Silent*.⁹ To a lesser extreme, in *The Mythic Meanings of the Second Amendment: Taming Political Violence in a Constitutional Republic*, David C. Williams argued that the Founders' ideology relied on a unified body of citizens who agreed "on a shared set of norms for the appropriate use of political violence," but must be adapted to work in a deeply divided modern society.¹⁰ The historians representing each of these positions recognized the Second Amendment's connection with anti-standing army ideology, but they have not focused their research on how this connection affected the balance of power established for the power of the sword in the Constitution and Bill of Rights.

English Heritage

American colonists inherited a fear of standing armies from England. The 1689 English Bill of Rights declares, "That the raising or keeping a standing army within the kingdom in time of peace, unless it be with consent of Parliament, is against law."¹¹ Soon after the enactment of the English Bill of Rights, debate over standing armies erupted in 1697-1699 when King William III sought to maintain his wartime army after the country established peace.¹² Outraged English pamphleteers took to the press and expounded on all the traditional arguments against standing armies. John Trenchard explained in a popular pamphlet¹³ that a government was truly free only when the sovereign *could not* tyrannize the people, not when the sovereign merely *did not* tyrannize the people.¹⁴ According to Trenchard and others,

⁹ Richard H. Uviller and William G. Merkel, *The Militia and the Right to Arms, Or, How the Second Amendment Fell Silent* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2002).

¹⁰ David C. Williams, *The Mythic Meanings of the Second Amendment Taming Political Violence in a Constitutional Republic* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003), 9-15.

¹¹ "English Bill of Rights 1689: An Act Declaring the Rights and Liberties of the Subject and Settling the Succession of the Crown," In *17th Century Documents: 1600 – 1699, The Avalon Project*.

¹² Schwoerer, "No Standing Armies!" 155.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 169, 190.

¹⁴ John Trenchard, *A short history of standing armies in England* (London: 1698), 38.

like Walter Moyle and Andrew Fletcher, a standing army gave the king the ability to tyrannize the people.¹⁵ Thomas Gordon, a collaborator of Trenchard's,¹⁶ found standing armies under the authority of the monarch a "Power inconsistent with Liberty, and with [the] Constitution."¹⁷ Even Daniel Defoe, who served in William's court as a "paid pamphleteer"¹⁸ and argued against Trenchard's view, only accepted standing armies under the same caveat mentioned in the English Bill of Rights. He believed Parliament must approve standing armies; the monarch should not solely possess the power of the sword.¹⁹ Both these anti-army and pro-army writers recognized the dangers a standing army posed to liberty and expected at least some guards against these dangers.

For Trenchard, Gordon, and others, rather than national security belonging to the crown through a standing military force, which could just as easily enslave as protect, national security was the province of the people. If standing armies threatened liberty, militias preserved liberty.²⁰ After declaring a permanent standing army unlawful, the English Bill of Rights stated, "the subjects which are Protestants may have arms for their defence suitable to their conditions and as allowed by law."²¹ Citizen militias gave the people a measure of control over warfare and law enforcement. Monarchs who lacked recourse to a standing army could not impose oppressive laws on the whole body of people, but contented citizens would be ready to take up arms to defend the country against invasion or rebellions. Gordon

¹⁵ Halbrook, *That Every Man Be Armed*, 47.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 30.

¹⁷ Thomas Gordon, *A Discourse of Standing Armies; Shewing the Folly, Uselessness and Danger of Standing Armies in Great Britain* (London: Printed for T. Warner, 1722). While all citations retain their original grammar, spelling, and punctuation, the medial or long 's' has been replaced with the short 's' for ease of legibility.

¹⁸ Schwoerer, "No Standing Armies!" 178.

¹⁹ Daniel Defoe, *A Brief Reply to the History of Standing Armies in England: With Some Account of the Authors* (London, 1698), 6-7.

²⁰ Malcolm, *To Keep and Bear Arms*, 125.

²¹ "English Bill of Rights 1689."

explained that “When the People are easy and satisfy’d, the whole Kingdom is his [the king’s] Army...”²²

The ideas presented by authors like Trenchard, Gordon, and Fletcher were reflected in British thinking for years. In the 1760s, William Blackstone continued to warn of the dangers posed by standing armies. In his *Commentaries on the Laws of England*, he wrote, “In a land of liberty it is extremely dangerous to make a distinct order of the profession of arms,” and the “military power” should never be “too distinct from the people.”²³ Blackstone saw the arms provision in the English Bill of Rights as “The fifth...auxiliary right of the subject,” a restricted version of the “natural right of resistance and self-preservation” that was suitably restrained for use in a society.²⁴ Blackstone said this right safeguarded the people “when the sanctions of society and laws are found insufficient to restrain the violence of oppression” for, as a last recourse to vindicate violated rights, the English had “the right of having and using arms for self-preservation and defence.”²⁵ In 1774, James Burgh drew on the writings of Trenchard, Gordon, Fletcher, and Blackstone for his work *Political Disquisitions*.²⁶ Burgh called standing armies one of the “most dangerous of abuses” and maintained that “no nation ever kept up an army in times of peace, which did not lose its liberties.”²⁷

These English ideas deeply influenced America. The works of Trenchard, Gordon, Blackstone, and Burgh found wide circulation among

²² Gordon, *A Discourse of Standing Armies*, 30.

²³ William Blackstone, “Blackstone’s Commentaries on the Laws of England,” In *The Avalon Project*.

²⁴ Blackstone, “Blackstone’s Commentaries”.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ James Burgh, *Political Disquisitions, or, An Inquiry into Public Errors, Defects, and Abuses: Illustrated by and Established Upon Facts and Remarks Extracted from a Variety of Authors, Ancient and Modern*, vol. 2 (Philadelphia: Robert Bell, 1775), *Sabin Americana: History of the Americas, 1500-1926*, viii – xii.

²⁷ Burgh, *Political Disquisitions*, 341, 349.

the colonies.²⁸ American colonials were granted the full rights of English citizens—which included the provisions related to arms and standing armies in the English Bill of Rights—in their colonial charters or laws, and every colony required militia service of its capable male citizens.²⁹ Colonial authors espoused the English conviction that standing armies were inconsistent with liberty, gave rulers the power to enslave the people, and were unnecessary in times of peace. Josiah Quincy explained that “absolute monarchies” are “established” and “supported by” standing armies, and absolute monarchies “endeavour to render useless and contemptable *the militia*, when this institution is the natural strength, and only stable safeguard, of a free country.”³⁰ Quincy went on to explain why the power of the sword should ultimately rest with the people:

No free government was ever founded or ever preserved its liberty without uniting the characters of the citizen and soldier in those destined for defense of the state. The sword should never be in the hands of any, but those who have an interest in the safety of the community, who fight for their religion and their offspring;—and repel invaders that they may return to their private affairs, and the enjoyment of freedom and good order. Such are a well regulated militia composed of the freeholder, citizens and husbandman, who take up arms to preserve their property as individuals, and their rights as freemen.³¹

Ultimately, whoever held the power of the sword was the “supreme power.”³² This power rested most securely in the people. Other American colonists, including Thomas Jefferson, John Adams, and George Mason,

²⁸ Schwoerer, “No Standing Armies!” 196; Leonard W. Levy, *Origins of the Bill of Rights* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001), 138; Malcolm, *To Keep and Bear Arms*, 142.

²⁹ Levy, *Origins of the Bill of Rights*, 139.

³⁰ Josiah Quincy, *Observations on the Act of Parliament Commonly Called the Boston Port-Bill: With Thoughts on Civil Society and Standing Armies* (Boston, N.E: Edes and Gill, 1774), *Sabin Americana: History of the Americas, 1500-1926*, 40.

³¹ Quincy, *Observations on the Act of Parliament*, 41.

³² *Ibid.*, 52.

wrote to similar effect.³³ The anti-standing army logic expressed for decades by English authors was thoroughly adopted by the American revolutionaries. These ideas had a lasting influence on the government these revolutionaries would later create.

Colonial Experience

In the tumultuous years from the late 1760s to 1770s, the British army seemed to validate all standing army fears. This was especially evident in the British occupation of Boston when the colonials, who had been thoroughly influenced by the British warnings against standing armies, faced the reality of occupation by a British standing army. British authors had explained that standing armies were tools of tyrants, and a British standing army in America only validated the colonials' fear that England meant to enslave them. The September 13, 1768 "Resolutions of the Boston Town Meeting" protested not just taxation without representation, but also the threat of standing armies kept among the colonists without representation. The committee reiterated their right as Englishmen: "the raising or keeping a standing army, without their [Bostonian's] consent in person or by representatives of their own free election, would be an infringement of their natural, constitutional, and charter rights."³⁴ The Town Meeting also voted for a convention at Faneuil Hall on September 22 where Thomas Cushing, the chairman writing for the committee at Faneuil Hall, expressed concern over a British standing army coming to the colony contrary to the English Bill of Rights. A large and powerful standing army, Cushing wrote, would "render every Right and Possession dreadfully precarious."³⁵ With the conviction that standing armies were used to enslave and that a people could not remain free with an

³³ Schwoerer, "No Standing Armies!" 197.

³⁴ "Resolutions of the Boston Town Meeting; September 13, 1768," In *The Avalon Project*.

³⁵ Thomas Cushing, *Boston-Gazette, and Country Journal* (Boston, Massachusetts: Sep. 26, 1768).

army kept among them, the threat of a British army coming to occupy Boston predictably alarmed the people.

Bostonians were even more alarmed when the British began making attempts to disarm the people. Standing army opponents had long seen disarming citizen militias and raising standing armies as dual preconditions for enslaving the people. By removing the power of the sword from the people, the British standing army seemed to be taking the next step toward tyranny. In 1774, another Faneuil Hall publication claimed the British were limiting arms shipments into Boston.³⁶ In the 1775 declaration “Setting Forth the Causes and Necessity of Their Taking Up Arms,” the Second Continental Congress described a situation where the Massachusetts Governor, General Thomas Gage, promised Bostonians they could leave town upon depositing “their arms with their own magistrate,” but instead Gage “ordered the arms...to be seized by a body of soldiers.”³⁷ Shortly after this seizure, the Provincial Congress of Massachusetts wrote an appeal to Gage humbly mentioning that, while not intending to question the governor’s honor, his delay in returning the people’s arms could appear to his detractors like a duplicitous attempt to disarm citizens.³⁸ Not far from Boston, the first shots of the Revolution rang over Lexington when the militia attempted to prevent Gage’s British soldiers from seizing the colonials’ arms.³⁹

³⁶ “At a Meeting of the Freeholders and Other Inhabitants of the Town of Boston, at Faneuil-Hall, on Wednesday the 7th Instant, by adjournment,” *Boston-Gazette, and Country Journal* (Boston, Massachusetts: Dec. 12, 1774).

³⁷ “A Declaration by the Representatives of the United Colonies of North-America, Now Met in Congress at Philadelphia, Setting Forth the Causes and Necessity of Their Taking Up Arms,” In *The Avalon Project*.

³⁸ Massachusetts Provincial Congress, *The journals of each Provincial congress of Massachusetts in 1774 and 1775, and of the Committee of safety, with an appendix, containing the proceedings of the county conventions-narratives of the events of the nineteenth of April, 1775-papers relating to Ticonderoga and Crown Point, and other documents, illustrative of the early history of the American revolution* (Boston, Dutton and Wentworth, Printers to the state, 1838)

³⁹ Halbrook *That Every Man Be Armed*, 66; Shusterman, *Armed Citizens*, 88-9; Levy, *Origins of the Bill of Rights*, 141.

America's experience with disarmament under a British standing army had a lasting impact. The traditional fear of standing armies and the realization of that fear under British occupation are both represented in America's revolutionary-era government documents. The Declaration of Independence listed several grievances related to standing armies: "He has kept among us, in times of peace, Standing Armies without the Consent of our legislatures," "He has affected to render the Military independent of and superior to the Civil power," and "For Quartering large bodies of armed troops among us."⁴⁰ After the colonies declared independence and the states set about forming their own governing systems, every state that included a bill of rights as part of their constitution included provisions against standing armies and protected the rights of the people to bear arms.⁴¹ Even America's first constitution, the 1778 Articles of Confederation, reflected the fear of a standing army's power to tyrannize and a trust in the people to hold the ultimate power over the sword. The Articles allowed states to maintain an army and navy only as big as Congress deemed necessary for the state's defense. Instead of a powerful standing army, the Articles stipulated that "every state shall always keep up a well regulated and disciplined militia."⁴² The colonial experience only reaffirmed the belief that a concentrated body of professional soldiers was dangerous to liberty; the only safe place for the power of the sword was with the people.

Constitutional Convention

During the private 1787 Constitutional Convention proceedings, however, delegates openly voiced doubts regarding the militia's suitability. They recognized it was not sufficient to trust the nation's defenses exclusively to the militia. As part of Edmond Randolph's argument for

⁴⁰ "The Declaration of Independence," National Archives.

⁴¹ "The American Constitution - A Documentary Record," in *The Avalon Project*; Halbrook *That Every Man Be Armed*, 69-70.

⁴² Donald S. Lutz, ed., *Colonial Origins of the American Constitution: A Documentary History* (Indianapolis, IN: Liberty Fund, Incorporated, 1998).

scrapping the Articles of Confederation, he explained the militia's deficiencies. Randolph argued that the Articles were incapable of supporting a war because the government had to rely on militias which were "difficult to be collected and almost impossible to be kept in the field..."⁴³ For Randolph, "Nothing short of a regular military force will answer the end of war, and this [was] only to be created and supported by money."⁴⁴ Part-time civilian soldiers were no match for a trained, professional military force. England had been aware of the necessity of an army for a century, and by the end of the 1600s, not even England's most vigorous opponents of armies advocated for no army whatsoever.⁴⁵ Many, though not all, of the Framers likewise realized that a standing army of some sort would likely be necessary for America as well. While the Founders still respected the institution of the militia and expected militias would remain a vital part of the Union, they gave the federal government extensive control over the militias and left open the possibility for a standing army. The final Constitution gave Congress the power "To raise and support Armies," with the only safeguard that "no Appropriation of Money to that Use shall be for a longer Term than two Years."⁴⁶ To some, this would appear a perilous step, but by the time of the Convention, many delegates recognized the militia's defects and the need for an army.

When the topic of whether to limit or prohibit standing armies came up for debate, Luther Martin and Elbridge Gerry's proposal to limit the size of a standing army to a thousand men failed.⁴⁷ Gerry, well aware of public sentiment on the subject, noted quite astutely that "the people were jealous on this head, and great opposition to the plan would spring from such an omission."⁴⁸ The other delegates, however, disagreed with the need to

⁴³ Max Farrand, ed., *The Records of the Federal Convention of 1787, vol. 1* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1911).

⁴⁴ Farrand, *The Records vol. 1*.

⁴⁵ Schwoerer, "No Standing Armies!" 153-54.

⁴⁶ US Constitution, art. 1 § 8.

⁴⁷ Max Farrand, ed., *The Records of the Federal Convention of 1787, vol. 2* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1911).

⁴⁸ Farrand, *The Records vol. 2*.

specifically limit the size of a standing army. Hugh Williamson argued that limited funding was the best and surest limit on a standing army, and Jonathan Dayton realized that “preparations for war are generally made in peace; and a standing force of some sort may, for ought we know, become unavoidable.”⁴⁹ Rather than limit the federal government blanketly, it would be better to leave open the possibility for a standing army and allow the people to hold their representatives accountable if they abused the power. The other delegates seemed to agree, for James Madison noted that Martin and Gerry’s motion failed “nem. con.,” or unanimously.⁵⁰

The topic of federal government control over the militia garnered more debate. Some delegates favored giving substantial control over the militias to the federal government because the states often neglected their militias, and a lack of uniformity in training caused problems on the battlefield. Other delegates believed the states would not willingly give up control over their militias, and the states would need to retain control over their militias to enforce their state laws.⁵¹ In the final compromise, the delegates divided the power of the sword between the people, the states, and the federal government. Congress could call forth the militia when needed, and could “provide for organizing, arming, and disciplining, the Militia, and for governing such Part of them as may be employed in the Service of the United States.”⁵² But the states still had the power to appoint officers, and, though Congress would decide how to train the militias, the states had authority over the training.⁵³ Though there was no direct provision against standing armies, the people ultimately had control since appropriations only lasted for two years, the same timeframe as House of Representatives appointments. The people could easily hold representatives accountable for decisions they made regarding a standing army since, if the representatives abused this power, the people could quickly vote them out of office.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Farrand, *The Records vol 2*.

⁵² US Constitution, art. 1 § 8.

⁵³ Ibid.

The Constitutional Convention succeeded in striking a delicate balance between the necessity of an army and the danger inherent in that army. While it did not include the typical warnings against standing armies, the Constitution did prevent Congress from funding an army for more than two years at a time. The Constitution also gave the federal government the authority to federalize the militia in times of crisis (though this power was cautiously granted “only under a system of cooperative federalism designed to maintain the integrity of the militia”⁵⁴) in hopes that by doing so a standing force would be less necessary.

Ratification

Just as some delegates predicted, the powers over the militia and the possibility for keeping up standing armies proved contentious during the ratification debate. One of those dissatisfied with the Constitution’s provisions was Luther Martin, a delegate to the Convention who refused to sign the final document and returned home to explain to the Legislature of the State of Maryland what he thought were the defects in the Constitution. Among these defects, Martin believed the Constitution supplied the federal government with the power to commit the atrocities about which the opponents of standing armies warned. He said that the Constitution as written invited the federal government to “subvert the *liberties* of the *States and their citizens*,” since “when a government *wishes* to deprive its citizens of freedom, and reduce them to *slavery*, it *generally makes use of a standing army* for that purpose, and leaves the militia in a situation as contemptible as possible, lest they might oppose its arbitrary designs.”⁵⁵ Martin relayed the argument from the Convention that the states would need complete control over their militias to prevent overreach from a powerful federal government. But under the provisions of the Constitution, the states would “not have any possible

⁵⁴ Akhil Reed Amar, *The Bill of Rights: Creation and Reconstruction* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998), 54.

⁵⁵ Max Farrand, ed., *The Records of the Federal Convention of 1787, vol. 3* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1911).

means of self-defence.”⁵⁶ Martin feared the people might even appreciate neglect of the militias since “thereby they would be freed from the burden of militia duties.”⁵⁷ The balance of military power in the Constitution was abhorrent for Martin and others who feared the government would use their power to disarm citizens and destroy the militia to create the pretense for raising a standing army in the militia’s stead.

Despite their personal reservations about militias, the writers of the Federalist Papers sought to defend the Constitution against such Antifederalist arguments.⁵⁸ Alexander Hamilton, explained that the provision for armies outlined in the Constitution was not so different from the state constitutions: it placed the decision to raise an army in the hands, not of the executive, but of the legislative branch.⁵⁹ This was comparable to the system outlined by the states and to the English requirement for Parliamentary approval of standing armies. Hamilton further explained the inherent defects evident in the practical application of militias. The power of national defense could not practically or safely reside in the hand of the people through the militias alone:

The American militia, in the course of the late war, have, by their valour on numerous occasions, erected eternal monuments to their fame; but the bravest of them feel and know, that the liberty of their country could not have been established by their efforts alone, however great and valuable they were. War, like most other things, is a science to be acquired and perfected by diligence, by perseverance, by time, and by practice.⁶⁰

Even with the necessity of a standing army, the government would not have the power to create a standing force so large as to overcome the militias, “the great body of the people of an immense empire, who are in a situation, through the medium of their state governments, to take measures for their

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Cornell, *A Well-Regulated Militia*, 47.

⁵⁹ Hamilton, Jay, and Madison, *The Federalist*, sec. 24, 118.

⁶⁰ Ibid., sec. 25, 125.

own defense...” Hamilton even believed that the federal government’s authority to raise and regulate the militia, rather than being the disaster the Antifederalists claimed, would instead help lessen the need for a standing army; the federal government could ensure the militias were in a state of readiness and could easily federalize the militia rather than only have recourse to a standing army.⁶¹ There was no need to fear federal government control over the militia because the ultimate power still rested with the citizens. “Where...are our fears to end,” questioned Hamilton of those skeptical of the Constitution’s provisions, “if we may not trust our sons, our brothers, our neighbours, our fellow citizens?”⁶²

Federalist Paper co-author James Madison also explained how, under the new system, the ultimate power over the sword still rested with the people under the state militias. In defending the Constitutional balance of power between the states and federal government, Madison wrote that even if the federal government sought to tyrannize the people and amassed a standing army as large as its limited resources could afford, opposed to the federal government’s army would be “a militia amounting to near half a million of citizens with arms in their hands, officered by men chosen from among themselves, fighting for their common liberties, and united and conducted by governments possessing their affections and confidence.”⁶³ Madison saw armed citizens, united under their local governments, as a “barrier against the enterprises of ambition.”⁶⁴ Like so many other aspects of the Constitution, the power of the sword was divided between the branches of the federal government. But the Constitution also used the principles of federalism and divided the power of the sword between the federal and state governments. The people had a voice at every level of government that had authority over the power of the sword, but the people were also supposed to hold the ultimate power of the sword since they

⁶¹ Ibid., sec. 29, 141.

⁶² Ibid., sec. 29, 143.

⁶³ Ibid., sec. 46, 247.

⁶⁴ Ibid., sec. 46, 247.

themselves made up the main fighting force that would be stronger than any feasible standing army.

The author of the Antifederalist Brutus Letters disagreed and explained the problems posed by the Constitution due to “that dangerous engine of despotism a standing army.”⁶⁵ He felt he did not have to prove that standing armies were dangerous to liberty since this was a point upon “which the friends of liberty, in all countries, have so universally agreed;” the people of America had “so long and so generally” received the arguments against standing armies “as a kind of axiom.”⁶⁶ He refuted Hamilton’s arguments in the Federalist Papers and deftly argued that the reasons Federalists gave for bestowing the federal government with broad powers over a standing army could still be realized even with greater restrictions on the federal government’s power. He also reiterated the two dangers of standing armies typical in English authors:

The liberties of a people are in danger from a large standing army, not only because the rulers may employ them for the purposes of supporting themselves in any usurpations of power, which they may see proper to exercise, but there is great hazard, that an army will subvert the forms of the government, under whose authority, they are raised, and establish one, according to the pleasure of their leader.⁶⁷

As case studies, the author referenced the history of Rome under Julius Caesar and Britain under Oliver Cromwell to show how free citizens lost their liberties to standing armies. The author believed that, but for George Washington’s honor, America could easily have met a similar fate under the Continental Army of the Revolutionary War. “Fortunately indeed for this country,” he wrote, “it had at the head of the army, a patriot as well as a general; and many of our principal officers, had not abandoned the

⁶⁵ Hamilton, Alexander, James Madison, and John Jay, *The Federalist: With Letters of Brutus*, edited by Terence Ball (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 499.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 487, 491.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 495.

characters of citizens, by assuming that of soldiers...”⁶⁸ The author offered an alternative to the Constitution’s provision that warned against standing armies, made provision for such small garrisons as were “absolutely necessary,” authorized Congress to raise an army to repel an attack, and prohibited Congress from creating a peace-time standing army unless it could garner supermajority support for such a measure.⁶⁹ Finally, the author raised a typical Antifederalist argument against the Federalist’s claim that the representative nature of the Constitution’s system would limit the dangers of a standing army: he argued that the Constitution’s system was not adequately representative.⁷⁰

The Constitutional provision for federal control over militias and lack of provision against standing armies remained a ratification barrier for the states. Of the nine states that submitted proposed amendments to the Constitution, six proposed a right to bear arms, seven wanted to require a congressional supermajority to approve of standing armies, five wanted to specify that the military was subordinate to the civil power, four proposed limits on the federal government’s ability to call the militias out of their respective states, and six wanted the militia under state control.⁷¹ During the Pennsylvania ratification debate, Antifederalist John Smilie objected “to the power of Congress over the militia and to keep a standing army” because this power took away “The last resource of a free people...”⁷² During the Virginia ratification debate, George Mason feared that Congress could abuse its power over the militia by either making militia duty so “odious” the people would demand a standing army or by completely neglecting the militia and letting it “perish, in order to have a pretense of establishing a standing

⁶⁸ Ibid., 495-96.

⁶⁹ Ibid., 499.

⁷⁰ Ibid., 500-01; Cress, *Citizens in Arms*, 98-102.

⁷¹ *The Documentary History of the Ratification of the Constitution and the Bill of Rights Volume 37: The Bill of Rights, no. 1, Origins*, edited by John P. Kaminski, Thomas H. Linley, Elizabeth M. Schoenleber, Timothy D. Moore, Oindrila Chattopadhyay, Dustin M. Cohan, Anna M. Biermier, Christopher S. Berry, Sarah K. Danforth, and Daniel J. Hoefs (Wisconsin Historical Society Press, 2020), 233-240.

⁷² Cogan, *The Complete Bill of Rights*, 285.

army.”⁷³ James Madison responded to this by explaining that the power to arm the militia was “concurrent, and not exclusive”—both the state and the federal government had the power and were responsible to see the militias armed, a concurrent power that was clearly necessary since the states often neglected their militias.⁷⁴ Patrick Henry, objecting to Madison’s explanation, pointed out the textual difficulties of such an interpretation and asked “If gentlemen are serious when they suppose a concurrent power, where can be the impolicy to amend it?”⁷⁵

Bill of Rights

Madison apparently did not see any impolicy in amending it, and, during the first session of Congress after the Constitution’s ratification, he immediately set about fulfilling his campaign promise to propose amendments to the Constitution. Madison explained that the amendments he proposed would be “provisions for the security of rights” that he believed were generally accepted by all.⁷⁶ He specifically ignored the more substantive of the states’ proposed amendments and focused on the universally agreed upon rights-based amendments in hopes that this action would calm Antifederalist fears without taking away power from the federal government.⁷⁷ One of these generally accepted rights-based amendments that Madison proposed stated, “The right of the people to keep and bear arms shall not be infringed; a well armed, and well regulated militia being the best security of a free country: but no person religiously scrupulous of bearing arms, shall be compelled to render military service in person.”⁷⁸ Rather than alter the structure of the Constitution or take away power from

⁷³ Ibid., 287.

⁷⁴ Ibid., 288.

⁷⁵ Ibid., 291.

⁷⁶ *Documentary History*, 315.

⁷⁷ Patrick T. Conley, and John P. Kaminski, eds, *The Bill of Rights and the States: The Colonial and Revolutionary Origins of American Liberties* (Madison, Wisconsin: Madison House Publishers Inc., 1992), 47.

⁷⁸ *Documentary History*, 317.

the federal government to federalize the militia or create a standing army, Madison made it clear that the power of the sword was a right of the people that must not be infringed.

Though the other representatives eventually obtained the present system of listing amendments separately at the end of the Constitution, Madison believed it would be clearer to incorporate amendments directly into the part of the Constitution they amended.⁷⁹ Madison originally intended to add the militia amendment to article 1 section 9 of the Constitution⁸⁰—a section discussing the powers from which Congress was specifically prohibited. The federal government would be expressly forbidden from doing what Antifederalists feared: it could not remove the power of the sword from the people by neglecting and disarming the militias and using this as a pretext to place the power of the sword with a standing army.

With representatives still focused on securing liberty from the dangers of a standing army, much of the House debate centered around how best to word the amendment to avoid neglect of the militia and the formation of a standing army. The purpose of a militia, as Gerry put it, was to “prevent the establishment of a standing army, the bane of liberty.”⁸¹ Both the House and the Senate proposed additions to this amendment that required a supermajority to approve an army and subordinated the military to the civil power, but neither the House nor the Senate additions garnered the two-thirds support required to pass.⁸² Gerry objected to the phrase “the best security” because it might be said to imply “that a standing army” was second best, but it was ultimately the Senate that clarified this wording.⁸³ Thomas Scott feared the wording for conscientious objection to militia service could lead to an undependable militia and a standing army, but this wording also

⁷⁹ Ibid., 351.

⁸⁰ Ibid., 316-17.

⁸¹ Ibid., 401.

⁸² Ibid., 403, 439, 446.

⁸³ Ibid., 403.

remained unchanged until the Senate's revisions.⁸⁴ The House finally passed the version, "A well regulated militia, composed of the body of the People, being the best security of a free State, the right of the People to keep and bear arms, shall not be infringed, but no one religiously scrupulous of bearing arms, shall be compelled to render military service in person."⁸⁵ The Senate simplified this into what would become the language of the Second Amendment. The old English fear of standing armies led the Framers of the Constitution and the members of the First Congress to enshrine within the Constitution and Bill of Rights every protection possible to prevent abuse from a standing army, limit the need for a standing army, and secure to the people the ultimate power over the sword through their role in the militia.

Conclusion

The Second Amendment took its place in the Bill of Rights in December 1791 after three-fourths of the states ratified it with little further controversy.⁸⁶ The final version stated, "A well regulated Militia, being necessary to the security of a free State, the right of the people to keep and bear Arms, shall not be infringed."⁸⁷ Though the Constitution did not state the typical warning against standing armies and though the Constitution allowed for the federalization of the militia in times of conflict, the Second Amendment helped calm Antifederalist fears that the federal government could neglect or abuse the militias as a pretext for forming a standing army. The Second Amendment made it clear the people's right to ultimate power over the sword could not be taken away by the federal government. It even slightly and indirectly denounced standing armies by describing militias as "necessary to the security of a free State" rather than "the best security."⁸⁸ Even with the need for a professional army and federal authority over the

⁸⁴ Ibid., 417.

⁸⁵ Ibid., 434.

⁸⁶ Conley, and Kaminski, *The Bill of Rights and the State*, 55.

⁸⁷ "The U.S. Bill of Rights," National Archives.

⁸⁸ "The U.S. Bill of Rights"; *Documentary History*, 434.

militia, the Founders had created every possible precaution to show the power of the sword was to remain ultimately in the hands of the people.

The need for a fully trained, professional military force has never been more apparent, but at the same time, America has abandoned many of the safeguards against the danger of a standing army intended by the Founders. The history of the Second Amendment does not delineate a clear and unarguable solution to modern debates regarding the Second Amendment. One thing is certain: America lost something the Founders saw as significant when Americans began expecting the government alone to protect their communities and defend their nation. Perhaps it is time to rethink the modern-based terms of debate over Second Amendment history and rediscover the eighteenth-century ideology that put it in place. Perhaps it is time to consider if those eighteenth-century fears have any application for Americans today.

Bibliography

- “A Declaration by the Representatives of the United Colonies of North-America, Now Met in Congress at Philadelphia, Setting Forth the Causes and Necessity of Their Taking Up Arms.” In *The Avalon Project*.
- Amar, Akhil Reed. *The Bill of Rights: Creation and Reconstruction*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998.
- “The American Constitution - A Documentary Record.” The Avalon Project.
- “The Annotated Newspapers of Harbottle Dorr, Jr.” Massachusetts Historical Society.
- Blackstone, William. “Blackstone’s Commentaries on the Laws of England.” The Avalon Project.
- Bollan, William. *Continued corruption, standing armies, and popular discontents considered and the establishment of the English colonies in America, with various subsequent proceedings, and the present contests, examined, with intent to promote their cordial and perpetual union with their mother-country, for their mutual honour, comfort, strength, and safety*. London, 1768.
- Burgh, James. *Political Disquisitions, or, An Inquiry into Public Errors, Defects, and Abuses: Illustrated by and Established Upon Facts and Remarks Extracted from a Variety of Authors, Ancient and Modern*. Vol. 2. Philadelphia: Printed and sold by Robert Bell, 1775. *Sabin Americana: History of the Americas, 1500-1926*.
- Cogan, Neil H, ed. *The Complete Bill of Rights: The Drafts, Debates, Sources, and Origins*. Oxford University Press, Incorporated, 2015.
- Conley, Patrick T., and John P. Kaminski, eds. *The Bill of Rights and the States: The Colonial and Revolutionary Origins of American Liberties*. Madison, Wisconsin: Madison House Publishers Inc., 1992.
- Cornell, Saul. *A Well-Regulated Militia: The Founding Fathers and the Origins of Gun Control in America*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2006.
- Cress, Lawrence D. *Citizens in Arms: The Army and the Militia in American*

- Society to the War of 1812*. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1982.
- Defoe, Daniel. *A Brief Reply to the History of Standing Armies in England: With Some Account of the Authors*. London, 1698.
- The Documentary History of the Ratification of the Constitution and the Bill of Rights Volume 37: The Bill of Rights, no. 1, Origins*. Edited by John P. Kaminski, Thomas H. Linley, Elizabeth M. Schoenleber, Timothy D. Moore, Oindrila Chattopadhyay, Dustin M. Cohan, Anna M. Biermier, Christopher S. Berry, Sarah K. Danforth, and Daniel J. Hoefs. Wisconsin Historical Society Press, 2020.
- “English Bill of Rights 1689: An Act Declaring the Rights and Liberties of the Subject and Settling the Succession of the Crown.” In *17th Century Documents: 1600 – 1699. The Avalon Project*.
- Farrand, Max, ed. *The Records of the Federal Convention of 1787, vol. 1*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1911.
- . *The Records of the Federal Convention of 1787, vol. 2*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1911.
- . *The Records of the Federal Convention of 1787, vol. 3*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1911.
- Gordon, Thomas. *A Discourse of Standing Armies; Shewing the Folly, Uselessness and Danger of Standing Armies in Great Britain*. London: Printed for T. Warner, 1722.
- Halbrook, Stephen P. “Encroachments of the Crown on the Liberty of the Subject: Pre-Revolutionary Origins of the Second Amendment.” *University of Dayton Law Review* 15, (1989): 91-124.
- . *The Founders' Second Amendment: Origins of the Right to Bear Arms*. Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 2008.
- . *That Every Man Be Armed: The Evolution of a Constitutional Right*. Rev. ed. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2013.
- Hamilton, Alexander, James Madison, and John Jay. *The Federalist: With Letters of Brutus*. Edited by Terence Ball. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003.
- Hamilton, Alexander, John Jay, and James Madison. *The Federalist*. Edited

- by George W. Carey and James McClellan. Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 2001.
- Konig, David T, “The Second Amendment: A Missing Transatlantic Context for the Historical Meaning of “The Right of the People to Keep and Bear Arms.”” *Law and History Review* 22, no. 1 (2004): 119-159.
- Levy, Leonard W. *Origins of the Bill of Rights*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001.
- Locke, John. *The Works of John Locke, vol. 4 Economic Writings and Two Treatises of Government*. London: Rivington, 1691.
- Lutz, Donald S., ed. *Colonial Origins of the American Constitution: A Documentary History*. Indianapolis, IN: Liberty Fund, Incorporated, 1998.
- Malcolm, Joyce Lee. “The Right of the People to Keep and Bear Arms: The Common Law Tradition.” *Hastings Constitutional Law Quarterly* 10, (1983):
- . *To Keep and Bear Arms: The Origins of An Anglo-American Right*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1994.
- Massachusetts Provincial Congress. *The journals of each Provincial congress of Massachusetts in 1774 and 1775, and of the Committee of safety, with an appendix, containing the proceedings of the county conventions-narratives of the events of the nineteenth of April, 1775-papers relating to Ticonderoga and Crown Point, and other documents, illustrative of the early history of the American revolution*. Boston, Dutton and Wentworth, Printers to the state, 1838.
- Quincy, Josiah. *Observations on the Act of Parliament Commonly Called the Boston Port-Bill: With Thoughts on Civil Society and Standing Armies*. Boston, N.E: Printed for and sold by Edes and Gill, 1774. *Sabin Americana: History of the Americas, 1500-1926*.
- Reid, John P. *In Defiance of the Law: The Standing-Army Controversy, the Two Constitutions, and the Coming of the American Revolution*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1981.
- “Resolutions of the Boston Town Meeting; September 13, 1768.” The Avalon Project.

- Schworer, Lois G. *Gun Culture in Early Modern England*. Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2016.
- . “No Standing Armies!” *The Antiarmy Ideology in Seventeenth-Century England*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1974.
- Shusterman, Noah. *Armed Citizens: The Road from Ancient Rome to the Second Amendment*. Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2020.
- Trenchard, John. *A short history of standing armies in England*. London, 1698.
- “The U.S. Bill of Rights.” America’s Founding Documents. National Archives.
- Uviller, Richard H., and William G. Merkel. *The Militia and the Right to Arms, Or, How the Second Amendment Fell Silent*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2002.
- “Virginia Gazettes.” Colonial Williamsburg.
- Weatherup, Roy G. “Standing Armies and Armed Citizens: An Historical Analysis of the Second Amendment.” *Hastings Constitutional Law Quarterly* 2, no. 4 (1975): 961-1001.
- Webster, Noah. *An Examination Into the Leading Principles of the Federal Constitution Proposed by the Late Convention Held at Philadelphia: With Answers to the Principal Objections that Have Been Raised Against the System*. Prichard & Hall, in Market Street the second door above Lætitia Court, 1787.
- Williams, David C. *The Mythic Meanings of the Second Amendment Taming Political Violence in a Constitutional Republic*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003.

Love + Kisses, Denny

The Importance of Letter Writing for an American Army Surgeon during World War II

Carter Patton

Introduction

In the winter of 1944, Dr. Dennis Megenhardt was stationed with the 104th General Hospital somewhere near Southampton in southern England. As an American Army surgeon spending his second holiday season away from his family, Dr. Megenhardt wrote home to his wife about how his mental health had hit “a new low” multiple times in the month of December.¹ Soldiers started pouring into English hospitals after the Allied offensive in France in June 1944, with over 100,000 Allied casualties in the first month after D-Day.² By December, Dr. Megenhardt treated patients mainly coming from the Battle of the Bulge in the Ardennes Forest, which in the course of just over a month claimed over 50,000 American casualties.³ As more patients steadily entered his hospital from the battle raging in mainland Europe, Dr. Megenhardt sent his wife 58 letters in December 1944 alone, illustrating the importance he placed on letter writing in his daily routine. On Christmas Day, he described how in the past 48 hours, he had seen over 900 patients, and throughout the month details the difficulties he

¹ Dennis Sommers Megenhardt to Mary Virginia Megenhardt, *Letters*, December 13, 1944, in the author’s possession.

² Vagts, “Battle and Other Combatant Casualties,” 261.

³ Alfred Vagts, “Battle and Other Combatant Casualties in the Second World War, I,” *The Journal of Politics* 7, no. 3 (1945): 280.

faced while putting on a brave face for his patients.⁴ The interactions with patients throughout the Winter of 1944 and how he described his feelings illustrated the great strain Dr. Megenhardt faced throughout the war and how he expressed himself through letter writing.

As the first in his coal-mining family to graduate from college, Dennis Megenhardt charted a path unlike his eight siblings. Dr. Megenhardt was a lifelong Hoosier born outside Center Point, Indiana, in 1905. After surviving battles with typhoid fever, smallpox, and the influenza epidemic of 1917 as a child, Dr. Megenhardt decided he wanted to pursue a career in medicine. After graduating from Indiana University Medical School in 1932, he started practicing as a general surgeon in Indianapolis. As World War II progressed, he was drafted into the United States Army's 32nd General Hospital in 1943, comprised predominantly of Indiana medical personnel.⁵ The unit trained in Brownwood, Texas, before departing for England. In Texas, Dr. Megenhardt developed a letter-writing habit that lasted throughout his Army career. After leaving Texas for England, Dr. Megenhardt would not return to America for three years.

Broadly, American Army physicians' personal lives are not significant in previous historical accounts of World War II. Historians have previously analyzed the professional life of American military physicians and the personal lives of enlisted soldiers during World War II. However, little historiography surrounds the personal lives and correspondence of Army physicians, specifically surgeons. Accounts predominantly focus on the military and medical side of their wartime experiences.⁶ While some of these

⁴ D.S. Megenhardt to M.V. Megenhardt, *Letters*, December 25, 1944.

⁵ Gregory H. Mobley, "Historical Note: 32nd General Hospital Collection, ca. 1918-1997," Indiana University Archives.

⁶ For accounts of the work life of military physicians, see Graham A. Cosmas and Albert E. Cowdrey, *Medical Service in the European Theater* (Washington: Center of Military History, 1992); Richard V.N. Ginn, *History of the U.S. Army Medical Service Corps* (Washington: Center of Military History, 1997); Richard A. Gabriel, *Between Flesh and Steel: A History of Military Medicine from the Middle Ages to the War in Afghanistan* (Washington: Potomac Books, 2013); John Hedley-Whyte and Debra R. Milamed, "American Surgeons at Musgrave Park Hospital in World War II: Surgical Giants,"

accounts argue for the effectiveness of different treatment methods versus contemporary counterparts, others chronologically trace the development of Army hospitals during the war. Scarce primary accounts from World War II medical personnel exist but lack any analysis outside of forewords that preface the source.⁷ Many of these sources focus on recollections by physicians about their time in the Army, with only Laura Cantor Zelman's compilation of her father's letters similar to the extant collection from Dr. Megenhardt.⁸ In contrast, World War II letter writing and socializing have a substantial historical discussion surrounding the topics.⁹ Historical background and comparisons from Dr. Megenhardt's extant letter collection to other contemporary textual sources allow for analysis of the content of the letters. While separate historical discussion exists surrounding the topics of the professional lives of wartime physicians and the personal lives of enlisted men, the private lives of Army surgeons remain an area with potential for greater scholarship. After initially reading letters written by Dr.

Ulster Medical Journal 85, no. 2 (2016): 107-112; Nicolas Rasmussen, "Medical Science and the Military: The Allies' use of Amphetamine during World War II," *The Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 42, no. 2 (2011): 205-233; Tracy Shilcutt, *Infantry Combat Medics in Europe, 1944-45* (London: Palgrave MacMillan), 2013.

⁷ For firsthand accounts of the conditions of military personnel, see Zachary B. Friedenber, *Hospital at War: the 95th Evacuation in World War II* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2004); Bernard L. Rice, "Recollections of a World War II Combat Medic," *Indiana Magazine of History* 93, no. 4 (1997): 312-44; Laura Cantor Zelman, *In My Father's Words: The World War II letters of an Army Doctor* (Scotts Valley, CA: CreateSpace, 2016); Paul A. Kennedy, *Battlefield Surgeon: Life and Death on the Front Lines of World War II*, ed. Christopher B. Kennedy (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2016); Keith Winston, *V-Mail: Letters of a World War II Combat Medic* (Chapel Hill: Algonquin Books, 1985).

⁸ See Zelman, *In My Father's Words*.

⁹ For differing opinions on letter writing during the war, see Judy Barrett Litoff and David C. Smith, "'Will He Get My Letter?' Popular Portrayals of Mail and Morale during World War II," *Journal of Popular Culture* 23, no. 4 (Spring, 1990): 21-43; David Lundberg, "The American Literature of War: The Civil War, World War I, and World War II," *American Quarterly* 36, no. 3 (1984): 373-88; Howard Peckham and Shirley Snyder, *Letters From the Greatest Generation: Writing Home in WWII* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2016).

Megenhardt, the fundamental problem I approached for my research is how did Dr. Megenhardt's letter writing help him get through the war?

The main source for my analysis was a collection of 1,162 letters Dr. Megenhardt sent to his wife, Mary Virginia, from March 1943 through January 1946. Writing almost every day, Dr. Megenhardt's account provided a snapshot of the daily proceedings of an American Army surgeon, as well as insight into his thoughts and emotions throughout the war. With his volume of letter writing, I could not fully analyze the entire collection with the time constraints of a semester, which could be a future point of research. For the scope of this project, I selected the mail from six months over his 32-month stay in Europe: August 1943, December 1943, June 1944, December 1944, May 1945, and December 1945.¹⁰ Selecting all the correspondences from the six separate months amounted to 231 letters out of the 1,162 Dr. Megenhardt sent to Mary Virginia during his time in the service. I chose these months because they constituted a representative sample of months across Dr. Megenhardt's service, with the months spaced out biannually throughout his stay in Europe. Certain months also contained significant events affecting his life and work, including the influx of patients after D-Day in June 1944 and the Battle of the Bulge in December 1944, and as his workload decreased and freedom increased with Victory in Europe Day in May 1945. Dr. Megenhardt was a prolific writer across the months selected, writing close to two letters per day during select months. These letters paint a broad picture of his time in Europe, starting in 1943 in southern England and ending after the war in Italy in 1946 via a 6-month stay in Paris. I predominantly chose letters from months he spent in England, with five of the six months coming from his time in wartime Britain. Future studies could focus on his change of emotions after the war surrounding his reassignments to France and Italy.

An unfortunate note about the collection is the absence of almost all the correspondence Mary Virginia sent to Dr. Megenhardt, losing a significant part of the story. While some historians across time have noted

¹⁰ D. S. Megenhardt letters to M.V. Megenhardt, August 1943 to December 1945.

and analyzed the importance of both male and female perspectives on the war, others have not mentioned gender dynamics when discussing letter-writing during the era. D'Ann Campbell and Alison Twells argue for more historical discussion surrounding the role of letters originating from the home front, which women predominantly wrote.¹¹ A few holiday cards remain from Mary Virginia, along with a sizable number of photos, but none of the more frequent Victory mail.¹² Dr. Megenhardt noted he received letters from Mary Virginia at a similar rate that he sent mail to her. He also described how he had limited storage space within his quarters, and his disappointment when having to throw her letters out because he didn't have enough room to store them.¹³

Dr. Megenhardt's letters survived through the meticulous caretaking of Mary Virginia throughout the war. She methodically and chronologically organized and saved the letters and accompanying materials he sent her. After the war, she stored them safely in a plastic-wrapped tin box in her attic. As they passed down to her daughter Marilyn after her death, they were kept intact in Marilyn's basement. The collection was subsequently not examined until I performed my analysis for this project. As Marilyn's grandson, I had the opportunity to fully access the collection, for which I am extremely appreciative.

I begin this paper by arguing how writing letters allowed Dr. Megenhardt to remain connected to the home front while bringing into the conversation a 1992 oral account by Dr. Megenhardt about his service. I then shift towards framing letter writing during World War II and the importance soldiers, including Dr. Megenhardt, place on writing during their daily life. Later, I argue that events and activities put on as a form of leisure temporarily distracted Dr. Megenhardt but not as effectively as letter writing, and how

¹¹ D'Ann Campbell, *Women at War with America: Private Lives in a Patriotic Age*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1984); Alison Twells, "Sex, Gender, And Romantic Intimacy in Servicemen's Letters During the Second World War," *The Historical Journal* 63, no. 3 (2020): 732–53.

¹² M.V. Megenhardt to D.S. Megenhardt, *Letters*, February 14, 1944.

¹³ D.S. Megenhardt to M.V. Megenhardt, *Letters*, May 4, 1945.

these activities, along with socialization, inconsistently impacted Dr. Megenhardt's day-to-day life. I wrap up my discussion by examining how the implications of different forms of censorship limit the full potential of the letters, and how self-censorship could also have played a factor.

Throughout this paper, I craft an argument from the selection of Dr. Megenhardt's letters illustrating the personal life of a World War II Army surgeon in a general hospital, including how censorship limited the medical and military details he could describe. The complete collection of Dr. Megenhardt's letters and accompanying materials and the significant volume of his correspondence separate this collection from many other World War II letter archives. The only other published letter collection from an Army physician is less than half of the size of Dr. Megenhardt's portfolio, and its editor offered no analysis or interaction with other historical literature.¹⁴ Dr. Megenhardt's writings describe in detail his emotions, socialization, activities, and events he participated in during the war, which evolved throughout the course of his time abroad. The act of letter writing for Dr. Megenhardt was one of the most stable parts of his day-to-day life. I argue that letter writing provided one of the few consistent distractions for Dr. Megenhardt throughout World War II. While experiencing varying other socialization activities and events throughout his time in Europe, Dr. Megenhardt used letter writing to sustain himself through the war: helping him connect to the home front, share personal anecdotes, and discuss his mental health.

Home Front Connections

Dr. Megenhardt's frequency of sending and receiving letters allowed him to feel connected to events on the home front while providing a stable and consistent feature of his daily routine. Soldiers during World War II exchanged a significant volume of letters across a variety of methods, including telegrams, air mail, and Victory mail. During June 1944, the average

¹⁴ See Zelman, *In My Father's Words*.

servicemember sent home 6.04 letters a week.¹⁵ Dr. Megenhardt wrote more frequently than average but was not an outlier. For the first few months of his deployment, Dr. Megenhardt sent predominantly air mail letters, occasionally sending telegrams.¹⁶ Air mail was the primary method for exchanging letters before the outbreak of World War II and was well established by the time Dr. Megenhardt arrived in Europe in 1943.¹⁷ By the end of 1943, however, Dr. Megenhardt, along with most soldiers, altered his methods, primarily sending Victory mail, or V-mail. As a note, once the V-mail program ended after the end of the war, Dr. Megenhardt returned to sending predominantly air mail letters.

The sudden shift in letter style can partially be explained by the widespread adoption of the V-mail system, which was introduced into the Army in 1942 to increase the efficiency of wartime correspondence. The worldwide system photographed letters, then sent the film to the letter's final destination, where microfilm was enlarged to half the size of the original letters and delivered to their recipient.¹⁸ 150,000 letters typically weighed 2,575 pounds via air mail but using the V-mail system, they only weighed 45 pounds.¹⁹ Reducing the weight of the up to 7 million letters sent daily by 98% allowed the army to have more room to ship other war material. The V-mail was highly valued, enough so that after a plane crashed carrying 50,000 V-mail letters, the original letters were photographed again and sent on a separate plane.²⁰ While it took time for soldiers to completely adopt the system, by the end of the program in 1945, over 1 billion letters had traveled via V-mail.²¹ The total amount of mail exchanged also significantly increased,

¹⁵ *A Wartime History of the Post Office Department, World War II, 1939-1945*, (Washington DC: Post Office Department, 1951), 77.

¹⁶ D.S. Megenhardt to M.V. Megenhardt, *Letters*, August 22, 1945.

¹⁷ *A Wartime History of the Post Office Department*, 5.

¹⁸ The Office of War Information, "News Service Speeds Mail to U.S. Troops," *United News* video, 1944, archived in *Smithsonian National Postal Museum*.

¹⁹ George Raynor Thompson, *The Signal Corps: The Test (December 1941 to July 1943)* (Washington: Center of Military History, 1978), 408.

²⁰ Litoff and Smith, "'Will He Get My Letter?' Popular Portrayals," 23.

²¹ *A Wartime History of the Post Office Department*, 93.

from 571 million pieces sent overseas in 1943 to 3.5 billion pieces of mail sent overseas in 1945.²² The V-mail system allowed for censors to have easier access to letters, which continued to limit the content of the letters sent home. Dr. Megenhardt sent over 800 V-mail letters during his time abroad, the vast majority of his extant letter collection.

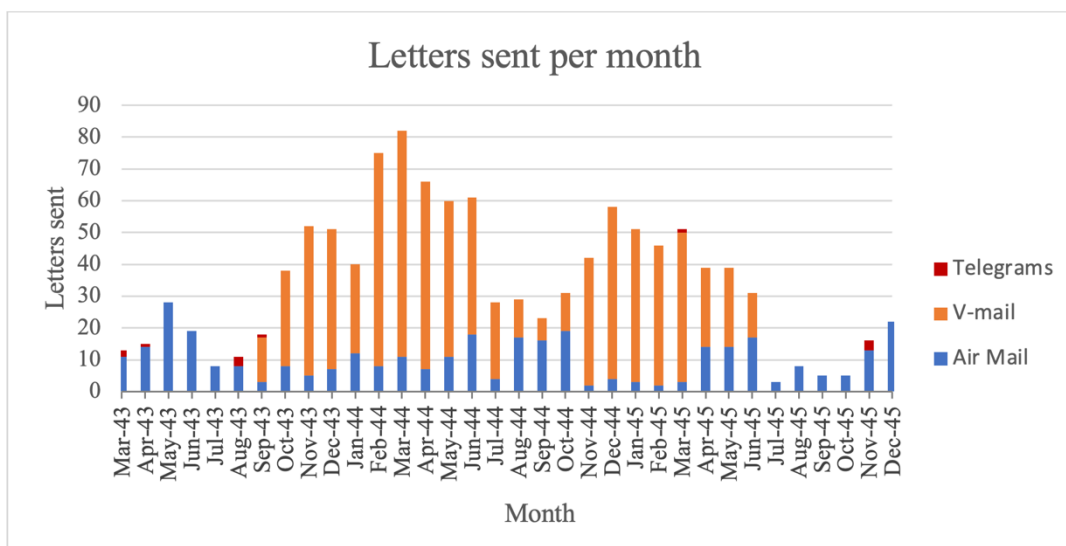


Figure 1. Visualization of the type and volume of mail Dr. Megenhardt sent to Mary Virginia.

Historians agree upon the importance American soldiers abroad placed on exchanging letters with loved ones during World War II. Judy Barrett Litoff and David C. Smith argued that sending and receiving mail was one of the most important components of the life of the average soldier. They believed that exchanging letters during World War II helped maintain the morale of soldiers, so much so that it was a factor in winning the war.²³ They focused their argument surrounding the implementation of the Victory mail system. B. Lee Cooper supported and illustrated this belief separately, arguing that letter exchange had a large cultural impact during the war.

²² Litoff and Smith, “‘Will He Get My Letter?’ Popular Portrayals,” 23.

²³ Judy Barrett Litoff and David C. Smith, “‘Will He Get My Letter?’ Popular Portrayals of Mail and Morale during World War II,” *Journal of Popular Culture* 23, no. 4 (Spring, 1990): 22.

Cooper used audio recordings, such as records and radio broadcasts, to illustrate examples of how the government and popular musicians of the era brought attention to letter writing as an important escape for soldiers.²⁴ Cooper highlighted songs recorded during the era that incorporated letter exchanging in their lyrics and believed their popularity helped the public understand the importance of letter writing for soldiers. Litoff, Smith, and Cooper provide significant contextual details to better understand the culture surrounding letter writing during Dr. Megenhardt's wartime service.

From early in his time abroad, Dr. Megenhardt was a prolific writer and equally yearned to receive mail from loved ones. Dr. Megenhardt awaited mail delivery and wrote about whether he received mail almost daily, illustrating how much he valued the letters sent to him. In his first week away, he wrote that "One can realize the importance of mail to enlisted men and fighting soldiers when a group of officers such as us who have a relatively easy life want mail so badly."²⁵

He continued expressing similar sentiments throughout his time in the service, at one point mentioning, "I am looking for mail today. I really need some to pick up my morale."²⁶ Litoff and Smith emphasized how the Post Office Department knew the importance of exchanging mail for soldiers, including how the department in 1942 explicitly reported that "frequent and rapid communications with parents, associates, and loved ones strengthens fortitude."²⁷ During the war, V-mail letters became ingrained in American culture, becoming synonymous with frequent communication. Truman Capote provided passing references to V-mail in his novel *Breakfast at Tiffany's*, illustrating the system's literary impact.²⁸ The popularity of letter exchanging, specifically V-mail, is further supported by the significant

²⁴ B. Lee Cooper, "From 'Love Letters' to 'Miss You': Popular Recordings, Epistolary Imagery, and Romance during War-Time, 1941-1945." *Journal of American Culture* 19, no. 4 (Winter, 1996): 19.

²⁵ D.S. Megenhardt to M.V. Megenhardt, *Letters*, September 3, 1943.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, December 13, 1943.

²⁷ Litoff and Smith, "'Will He Get My Letter?' Popular Portrayals," 22.

²⁸ Truman Capote, *Breakfast at Tiffany's* (London: Penguin, 1958), 20.

number of songs written about the process during the war.²⁹ The V-mail system's wide popularity and cultural acceptance reinforce the importance of the primary letter-writing technique for Dr. Megenhardt.

Notably, The V-mail system altered Dr. Megenhardt's writing style by constraining him to only one page per note. Dr. Megenhardt frequently wrote three or more pages per airmail note and compensated by sometimes writing multiple V-mail notes simultaneously. He also mentioned times when he would respond to V-mail from others on the home front or serving elsewhere, as soldiers typically could write inter-Army letters without needing postage.³⁰ Some days, he responded to as many as 15 letters from others.³¹ His frequency of correspondence serves as another illustration of the popularity of the system and the importance of the letters to their writers, at one point writing "we have nothing to do today besides write, read, and talk, which is our usual pastime..."³² This phrase illustrates the broad appeal for letter writing for soldiers, as they oftentimes had limited activities.

Dr. Megenhardt fostered emotional connections with friends and family on the home front predominantly through exchanging letters. Dr. Megenhardt frequently described how he enjoyed the letters and photos he received and continued to ask his family to send more throughout the war. Dr. Megenhardt stated, "I can see Marilyn in each of your letters. I enjoy them so much and live from one letter to the next."³³ This quote emphasizes the importance of receiving letters for Dr. Megenhardt's mental health. Oftentimes, he would share who else he corresponded with that day, including other family members like his parents and in-laws or colleagues on the home front. He noted in his return letters whenever he received mail from anyone, and what the contents entailed. He emphasized how he

²⁹ B. Lee Cooper, "From 'Love Letters' to 'Miss You': Popular Recordings, Epistolary Imagery, and Romance during War-Time, 1941-1945," *Journal of American Culture* 19, no. 4 (Winter, 1996): 19.

³⁰ United States Post Office Department, *A Wartime History of the Post Office Department*, 76.

³¹ D.S. Megenhardt to M.V. Megenhardt, *Letters*, June 7, 1944.

³² *Ibid.*, December 1, 1943.

³³ D.S. Megenhardt to M.V. Megenhardt, *Letters*, December 16, 1943.

enjoyed hearing updates about events on the home front, allowing him to feel consistently connected. He would sometimes respond directly back in the same letter, providing a glimpse of the topics Mary Virginia mentioned to him. He often reassured her and once told her, “Please don’t worry about me, ever.”³⁴ Even though it typically took two weeks to receive any letter, Dr. Megenhardt engaged and responded to Mary Virginia’s letters as if they were carrying on a conversation.

Dr. Megenhardt illustrated his longingness for home when writing about how much he missed his newborn daughter, Marilyn Sue. Marilyn was born in Indianapolis in June of 1943, by which point Dr. Megenhardt had already left home for basic training in Texas. He only met her once before he left for Europe, as Mary Virginia drove Marilyn and herself from Indianapolis down to Brownwood, Texas. Throughout the collection, Dr. Megenhardt frequently professed how much he missed her and wished to be with her for many of the early milestones in her life. He profusely thanked Mary Virginia and others whenever they sent him pictures or updates about Marilyn. Pictures of Marilyn were some of the few things he saved and brought back after the war, illustrating their importance to him as a new father.

Additional photos sent from Mary Virginia to Dr. Megenhardt provide greater insight into the couple’s relationship and the perspective of women writing to their spouses from home. Mary Virginia saved 145 photos she sent to Dr. Megenhardt that he returned home with after the war, stored separately from the letter collection. Of these, Mary Virginia wrote captions on the back side of 45 photos. Captioned on a photo of baby Marilyn on a rocking horse Mary Virginia wrote as Marilyn saying, “Hi, Daddy! We’re on our way over to see you. Note: 1) the bare chubby (but small) feet 2) the elbow dimple 3) the dress from Grandma M and the bow on the “behind” and mama way over on the edge.”³⁵ Her use of specific details to call Dr. Megenhardt’s attention to items in the photo gave him the sense that he could experience activities on the home front. Of the 45 pictures captioned,

³⁴ Ibid., June 22, 1943.

³⁵ M.V. Megenhardt to D.S. Megenhardt, *Letters*, 1944.

Marilyn, Mary Virginia, and other family members were the primary subjects. The tone of her captions illustrated Mary Virginia's aim to incorporate her husband into her daily life. In December 1943, for the holiday season, Dr. Megenhardt claimed that "Marilyn's pictures were my most precious gift."³⁶ The captions illustrate mutual feelings of love and respect between the couple for their child. Mary Virginia designed the photos and captions to boost Dr. Megenhardt's morale by predominantly sending pictures of their beloved daughter and including self-deprecating humor. She provided details of Marilyn's growth and milestones to allow him to feel like an active part of Marilyn's upbringing.

In his letters, Dr. Megenhardt often approached significant milestones throughout the war with a mixed perspective, providing an underlying tone for his mood on the war in general. Dr. Megenhardt frequently wrote about these wartime milestones, including three letters on June 6th, 1944, the day the D-Day operation commenced, as well as four letters dealing with Victory in Europe Day.³⁷ A prime example of this perspective is how Dr. Megenhardt revealed mixed emotions describing his feelings toward Victory in Europe Day, or V-E Day, throughout letters surrounding May 8th, 1945. Prior to V-E Day, he felt saddened by the lack of celebrations planned for his unit and the typical operational attitude in the hospital.³⁸ While discussing the end of the war, he stated he was "not too happy except I am glad to know the slaughter has ceased."³⁹ Dr. Megenhardt's inability to celebrate due to his standard workload provides an instance where he wrote about working conditions he detested, a persistent theme in other World War II narratives.⁴⁰ He described the work assigned to him on V-E Day itself as "such crap."⁴¹ As Americans and Allies across the world celebrated the end of part of the war, Dr. Megenhardt detested how he continued to work on patients with

³⁶ D.S. Megenhardt to M.V. Megenhardt, *Letters*, December 26, 1943.

³⁷ D.S. Megenhardt to M.V. Megenhardt, *Letters*, June 6, 1944, and May 8, 1945.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, May 7, 1945.

³⁹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁰ See Friedenber, *Hospital at War*; Zelman, *In My Father's Words*.

⁴¹ D.S. Megenhardt to M.V. Megenhardt, *Letters*, May 7, 1945.

little reprieve. In comparison, Dr. Milton Cantor, an Army physician stationed in Germany, wrote about his excitement surrounding the armistice while also emphasizing his medical obligations that hindered his celebration.⁴² For Dr. Megenhardt, his negative sentiments around V-E Day evolved with time, as he stated his mood improved by May 9th, and he had “so much fun” joining one of the many effigy burnings of Hitler across England.⁴³ During this cathartic release of emotions, he met Member of Parliament Colonel John Mills. This meeting eventually benefited Dr. Megenhardt, as Mills subsequently extended Dr. Megenhardt an invitation to attend a session of Parliament. Even though Dr. Megenhardt expressed initial apathy at the prospect of the war ending and his unending workload, the invitation lifted his spirits. Drs. Megenhardt and Cantor both experienced internally conflicting feelings while celebrating the war’s end, although they felt relieved about the end of bloodshed.

Events & Activities

Dr. Megenhardt’s frequent discussions surrounding free time provide a novel perspective of leisure activities for a physician and examples of the unique opportunities available for certain Army personnel. While these events helped keep Dr. Megenhardt occupied throughout the war, they typically did not provide as much enjoyment or benefit to his mental health as letter writing. The act of letter writing itself could be taxing for Dr. Megenhardt. In December 1943, he wrote how, “I get so lonely after writing you a love letter that I cannot do it too often.”⁴⁴ Writing letters served as one of Dr. Megenhardt’s strategies to help alleviate his low morale, but the strategy occasionally backfired and depressed his mood further. Soon afterward, he wrote, “I am so lonesome for you tonite [sic] I just had to write you another letter and tell you how much I love you and Marilyn. I try to do things to pass the time and I really have a good time but always get around

⁴² Zelman, *In My Father’s Words*, 223.

⁴³ D.S. Megenhardt to M.V. Megenhardt, *Letters*, May 9th, 1945.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, December 14, 1943.

to thinking of you two gals and get a little lonesome.”⁴⁵ Fundamentally, Dr. Megenhardt sought distractions from his loneliness by participating in social activities.

While Dr. Megenhardt attended many events put on by the Army, his letters home indicated he only enjoyed some of the activities. During his early months of the war, Dr. Megenhardt described how “our activities are so limited. Either read, rest, go for a walk or show.”⁴⁶ The Army provided entertainment through different outlets with gradually increasing options as the war progressed. Watching movies became one of Dr. Megenhardt’s most frequent activities; his Army base eventually started showing them weekly. The Army provided recent releases, oftentimes being released simultaneously to the general population back home. Dr. Megenhardt frequently enjoyed movies, specifically mentioning *Keys to a Kingdom*, *White Cliffs of Dover*, *Lady in the Dark*, *I’ll Be Your Sweetheart*, *Crazy House*, and other popular contemporary titles.⁴⁷ Other historians previously argued for the importance of movies for soldiers’ morale during the war, but when Dr. Megenhardt’s morale was down, movies were not always helpful.⁴⁸ Dr. Megenhardt lived 100 yards away from the on-base theater, but sometimes going to watch things like a “gloomy mystery movie” did not help his mood.⁴⁹

Dr. Megenhardt also tried other physical activities to sustain his morale. During the later stages of the war, he mentioned playing golf five times in one month and detailed multiple trips away from his base, including visiting the Isle of Wight and London.⁵⁰ The letters and accompanying

⁴⁵ Ibid., December 17, 1943.

⁴⁶ Ibid., June 10, 1944. As a note, Dr. Megenhardt expressed a nearly identical sentiment December 1, 1943.

⁴⁷ Ibid., June 3, 1944, December 16, 1944, May 19, 1945.

⁴⁸ Andrea Kelley, “Mobilizing the Moving Image: Movie Machines at US Military Bases and Veterans’ Hospitals during World War II,” in *Cinema’s Military Industrial Complex*, ed. Haidee Wasson and Lee Grieveson (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2018) 44.

⁴⁹ D.S. Megenhardt to M.V. Megenhardt, *Letters*, December 13, 1944.

⁵⁰ Ibid., May 1945.

artifacts bring to life Dr. Megenhardt's private life and illustrate how his account does not completely align with previous narratives concentrating on the hardships of being an Army physician. For example, Dr. Zachary Friedenbergr, an Army physician stationed in the Mediterranean theater, briefly mentioned the limited events and activities he experienced while on leave during his time as an Army physician. However, Dr. Friedenbergr predominantly focused his account on patient interactions and hospital logistics.⁵¹ Drs. Friedenbergr and Megenhardt both mention movies as a primary source of entertainment, supporting Andrea Kelley's belief that movies were an integral feature at Army Hospitals.⁵²

Dr. Megenhardt was afforded unique opportunities with his position as a high-ranking officer and surgeon. He had the opportunity to engage with many notable Britons, including the Dodge family of automobile fame, and multiple members of Parliament. He also got to meet celebrities like British actress Margaret Lockwood. After operating on her daughter in December 1944, they developed a strong bond. He even invited her to America to visit his family once the war ended.⁵³ Dr. Megenhardt's personal connection with Lockwood provides an example of where his medical practice overlapped with his personal life. Illustrating this point further, Dr. Megenhardt included in his letter from May 17th, 1945, a bulletin from a charity showing of her movie *I'll Be Your Sweetheart*, with the proceeds going towards the *Gaumont-British Comforts for the Royal Navy Fund*.⁵⁴ Other organizations, including the United Service Organizations, or USO, also created funds for soldiers and the wounded.⁵⁵ USO shows and other charity benefits for soldiers provided needed reprieve for soldiers, including Dr. Megenhardt. As early as December 1943, Dr. Megenhardt and 93 of his compatriots organized a trip off base to attend a performance by the London Symphony.⁵⁶ This event

⁵¹ Friedenbergr, *Hospital at War*, 26.

⁵² Andrea Kelley, "Mobilizing the Moving Image," 53.

⁵³ D.S. Megenhardt to M.V. Megenhardt, *Letters*, May 17, 1944.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵⁵ Meghan K. Winchell, *Good Girls, Good Food, Good Fun: The Story of USO Hostesses during World War II* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2008), 5.

⁵⁶ D.S. Megenhardt to M.V. Megenhardt, *Letters*, December 3, 1943.

provided Dr. Megenhardt with a nice time to connect with other soldiers in his unit in an attempt to boost morale. The frequency of these events ebbed and flowed throughout his years serving and oftentimes changed with the number of patients in his hospital. Still, Dr. Megenhardt's letter writing remained a constant in his life.

Socialization

While Dr. Megenhardt frequently notes interactions with coworkers and colleagues, he expressed in his letters home difficulties in maintaining consistent friendships. He mentioned these connections frequently throughout his letters, but the relationships did not fully satisfy him, and he wrote about how he missed people stateside. He wrote about having to keep a tempered attitude as he and his coworkers and friends transferred into and more frequently out of different Army medical units. As an example, Dr. Megenhardt felt lonelier during his second Christmas abroad than his first because he felt he had "more in common" with his friends the previous year.⁵⁷ Dr. Megenhardt's ability to socialize evolved with the war; initially, he socialized more frequently, already knowing some of his colleagues in the 32nd General Hospital and having a smaller workload. As more patients arrived and he was transferred to the 104th General Hospital in the Summer of 1944, he noted how he lost many of his friends.⁵⁸ He finally received more free time as the war drew to a close, and he enjoyed getting to know members of the 104th General Hospital more. This inverse relationship between the volume of patients he treated, and his connections, formed provides a snapshot of many gatherings and activities not frequently discussed within historical conversations around physicians during World War II.

A central pastime Dr. Megenhardt used to lift his mood in pleasant weather was going on a walk into the countryside with colleagues. He often wrote how excited he was to visit certain vistas with different people and

⁵⁷ Ibid., December 12, 1944.

⁵⁸ Ibid., July 20, 1944.

how he someday wanted to take Mary Virginia to many of these places.⁵⁹ Walking was one of the few social activities Dr. Megenhardt mentioned, which he always participated in with a friend or colleague throughout his time abroad. However, he mentioned multiple times how his walks would be more enjoyable with Mary Virginia by his side. He also exclusively went on walks in “nice weather,” which he explained happened quite infrequently.⁶⁰

One of the most meaningful connections for Dr. Megenhardt with home was Wanda Plunkett. As previously mentioned, she served as a Nurse with Dr. Megenhardt for almost half of his time in Europe and was a close friend to Mary Virginia. Plunk and Dr. Megenhardt knew each other well as she had served as a bridesmaid at Dr. and Mrs. Megenhardt’s wedding. She wrote letters at a similar rate to Mary Virginia, with unfortunately only one of her letters surviving in Mary Virginia’s collection. Plunk and Dr. Megenhardt got along well and socialized together, and even worked in the operating room together.⁶¹ As she and Mary Virginia conversed about personal matters and updates, she could provide an outsider’s view on how Dr. Megenhardt fared while abroad. Plunk stayed with the 32nd until June of 1944, when she was transferred to a unit treating patients in Scotland.⁶² Dr. Megenhardt expressed disappointment when seeing his friend leave, and she was one of the few women he mentioned socializing with throughout the letters.

Telling the full story?

Overall, Dr. Megenhardt’s letter writing benefitted his mental health. However, he omitted certain stories in his letters home that comprised an important part of his experience abroad. While explicitly mentioning how letter writing continued to be an important part of his life, Dr. Megenhardt

⁵⁹ Ibid., June 10, 1944.

⁶⁰ Ibid., June 17, 1944.

⁶¹ Ibid., December 13, 1943.

⁶² Ibid., June 22, 1944.

possibly left valuable details out of his original letters, based upon admissions in a subsequent interview. Close to 50 years after the war, in 1992, Dr. Megenhardt recorded an interview with the Indiana University Medical School Oral History Collection about his service, elaborating on multiple different points than what he included in his letters to his wife. This recounting followed a national trend of increasing interest in personal World War II narratives at the end of the 20th century, after a lengthy absence from American cultural memories around the war.⁶³ Key elements of the interview match his previously sent letters. Critically, he also describes new stories not mentioned within the letters. As Patrick Hagopian noted, veterans who record their wartime memories for oral history collections sometimes embellished narratives around their service.⁶⁴ While considering the possibility of embellishment, Dr. Megenhardt's new stories remained possible and reasonable after cross-referencing with other sources.

Dr. Megenhardt's most prominent new inclusion was accounts about meeting General Dwight Eisenhower. General Eisenhower commanded the American forces in England starting in December 1943, and according to the 1992 interview first interacted with Dr. Megenhardt in March 1945.⁶⁵ Dr. Megenhardt first impressed General Eisenhower by being the only surgeon to schedule surgeries on the day Eisenhower visited, planning 67 on his visit day.⁶⁶ As Megenhardt recounted the story in 1992, he was promoted on the spot after Eisenhower remarked that he "liked the name Megenhardt."⁶⁷ This story about his promotion to Lieutenant Colonel was not mentioned in his letters, and the only detectable difference after his promotion was a new

⁶³ Robert Blaskiewicz, "A Conspicuous Absence: Combat Veterans and America's Memory of WWII," *Intersections* 22, (Winter 2019): 3.

⁶⁴ Patrick Hagopian, "Voices from Vietnam: Veterans' Oral Histories in the Classrooms," *The Journal of American History* 87, no. 2 (2000): 594–595.

⁶⁵ Craig L. Symonds, *Neptune: The Allied Invasion of Europe and the D-Day Landings* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 71.

⁶⁶ Megenhardt, Interview, 24.

⁶⁷ Dennis Megenhardt, "Dennis Megenhardt, M.D.," Interview by Chad Berry (Indiana University Oral History Research Center, September 4th, 1992), 24.

return address.⁶⁸ As evidence of change, however, on March 6th, 1945, he signed his letter as a Major and the following day he signed his letter as a Lieutenant Colonel. Censorship could have hindered his initial ability to discuss Eisenhower's visit and the story behind his promotion.

Continuing with an additional Eisenhower story, Dr. Megenhardt described another significant reason why he might not have shared every piece of information with his wife. Dr. Megenhardt explained how Eisenhower ordered him to medically treat Eisenhower and his secretary, Kay Summersby, who was also Eisenhower's girlfriend at the time.⁶⁹ In a token of appreciation for his services, Dr. Megenhardt remarked in his 1992 interview how Eisenhower mentioned, "You're the only other person that can kiss her," and admitted to kissing her "a time or two."⁷⁰ With both men having wives back home, this anecdote contrasts Dr. Megenhardt's frequent reiterations throughout his letters about maintaining fidelity to Mary Virginia. Dr. Megenhardt even devotes the subject of an entire letter to the topic, writing about it in a V-mail on December 14, 1943:

I'm quite sure many of the wives are more sensitive about being jealous, suspicious, etc. than you and they might have had reasons to feel that way. . . Most are not behaving any differently than they did at home. I am so happy you feel the way do about me. As far as I am concerned, you don't need to worry one minute about me and I'm quite sure it would be foolish to worry about other people's problems. I love you too much and I have been able so far to live the way you would prefer me to live with ease.⁷¹

⁶⁸ D.S. Megenhardt to M.V. Megenhardt, *Letters*, March 7, 1945.

⁶⁹ The exact relationship between Summersby and Eisenhower remains unknown, but Dr. Megenhardt noted her as the "girlfriend" of Eisenhower. For Summersby's account, see Kay Summersby, *Past Forgetting: My Love Affair with Dwight D. Eisenhower* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1976). For other assessments of the relationship, see Geoffrey Perry, *Eisenhower* (London: Random House, 2000): 213-215; Susan Wittig Albert, *The General's Women* (Bertram, TX: Perservo Press, 2017): 353-376.

⁷⁰ Megenhardt, Interview, 25.

⁷¹ D.S. Megenhardt to M.V. Megenhardt, *Letters*, December 14, 1944.

Dr. Megenhardt's experiences not described within his letters to Mary Virginia bring into question the concept of his self-censorship. In his 1992 interview he admitted to having kissed another woman during the war, complicating the assurances he gave about his exclusivity towards Mary Virginia in this specific letter and throughout his time abroad. He provided further reassurances when he mentioned that his daughter Marilyn was his "Pinup gal, really."⁷² A common occurrence during the war, "pin-up gals" were posters with appealing women pinned near a soldier's bed.⁷³ Also, when visiting London, he mentioned taking a walk near Piccadilly Circus, a known location for sex workers known as commandos: "Piccadilly Commandos were really out as you can imagine however there were no temptations I can assure you."⁷⁴ These various accounts illustrate how throughout the war, Dr. Megenhardt wrote about how his devotion and love to his family replaced his need for romantic love.

While looking at narratives about Dr. Megenhardt's relationships with women, contradictions emerged; he may have told different stories for several reasons. The conflicting accounts could reflect cultural norms of greater tolerance of infidelity by soldiers during the war, as discussed by Jane Mersky Leder.⁷⁵ While a possible instance of greater tolerance, Dr. Megenhardt's frequent professions of his love for his wife throughout his entire time in Europe and his omission of discussing significant women in his life illustrate how his letters do not tell his entire story. Another possibility is that he could have misremembered or forgotten certain details as an 87-year-old discussing an event almost 50 years beforehand. However, as an indication of his mental acumen, he practiced surgery beyond the age of 80

⁷² Ibid., 1944.

⁷³ Robert B. Westbrook, "I Want a Girl, Just Like the Girl That Married Harry James": American Women and the Problem of Political Obligation in World War II," *American Quarterly* 42, no. 4 (1990): 592.

⁷⁴ D.S. Megenhardt to M.V. Megenhardt, *Letters*, December 3, 1944.

⁷⁵ Jane Mersky Leder, *Thanks for the Memories: Love, Sex and World War II* (Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers, 2006), 102.

and mentioned multiple times how the only reason he stopped was because of the rising cost of malpractice insurance.⁷⁶

Later context further suggested that Dr. Megenhardt likely omitted information about additional amorous relationships when writing to his wife. Well after the war, Dr. Megenhardt started a relationship outside of his marriage with one of his nurses in Indianapolis. This extramarital relationship eventually ended his marriage with Mary Virginia. By the 1992 interview, Mary Virginia had passed away, which also could have given Dr. Megenhardt more confidence to speak about his experience as the only perspective remaining.

Another underlying storyline alongside the unfaithful behavior Dr. Megenhardt described in the 1992 interview could be the presence of one of Mary Virginia's nursing classmates and closest friends in his unit, Wanda Plunkett. Plunk, as she was affectionately known, served as a Nurse with the 32nd General Hospital from August 1943 through June of 1944, being with Dr. Megenhardt for nearly half of his time abroad. Plunk and Mary Virginia corresponded so much throughout the war that Dr. Megenhardt frequently responded to questions Mary Virginia asked Plunk in his letters.⁷⁷ Mary Virginia also sent supplies to both Dr. Megenhardt and Plunk in one package that they would share.⁷⁸ The frequent communication between the women could have provided Mary Virginia assurances that Dr. Megenhardt remained faithful to her during the time that he and Plunk worked together. Overall, different retellings of events by Dr. Megenhardt later in his life complicate the completeness and veracity of his initial accounts.

Censorship

Censorship was a subtle, recurring theme throughout Dr. Megenhardt's letters. While letter writing provided Dr. Megenhardt a major outlet to express his emotions, censorship hindered the amount of

⁷⁶ Megenhardt, Interview, 30.

⁷⁷ D.S. Megenhardt to M.V. Megenhardt, *Letters*, December 6, 1943.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, December 11, 1943.

professional information he could share in his letters, frustrating him and constraining analysis surrounding the authentic conditions he experienced. The United States government aimed to control the spread of information throughout the war by forming the Office of Censorship headed by Byron Price in 1941, eventually employing over 16,000.⁷⁹ The office formed with a directive from President Franklin Roosevelt that “It is necessary to the national security that military information which might be of aid to the enemy be scrupulously withheld at the source.”⁸⁰ This equated to the OOC along with additional agencies, including FBI and Bureau of Customs, working to limit the spread of military information. Censorship was one of the most significant factors limiting Dr. Megenhardt’s letters daily, which he derided. Dr. Megenhardt started writing about censors the week he arrived in England. He told Mary Virginia, “Our [mail] may be even though we are the censor for each there are not censors who will check so I will not tell anything of a military nature for our own protection.”⁸¹ Ironically, this letter’s accompanying envelope indicated it was opened by an Army Examiner, reviewed, and resealed before sending. With the constraints the Army imposed on his writing, the majority of Dr. Megenhardt’s content was not military in nature and focused on his personal life.

In certain situations, Dr. Megenhardt used innovative abbreviations and contextual details to circumvent censors and provide information back to the home front about situations he experienced. He never explicitly mentioned the number of patients he saw in a day but would provide comparisons to his hometown or to his former hospital. Saying that he saw as many patients as “3x the population of CP” equaled around 1,000 patients, as he referred to his hometown of Center Point, Indiana, which had a population of 332 in the 1940 census.⁸² He also referenced patient numbers compared to the Methodist Hospital of Indiana, where he worked in

⁷⁹ Byron Price. “Governmental Censorship in War-Time” In *The American Political Science Review* 36, no. 5 (1942): 842.

⁸⁰ Price, “Governmental Censorship,” 841.

⁸¹ D.S. Megenhardt to M.V. Megenhardt, *Letters*, August 30, 1943.

⁸² U.S. Census Bureau, *1940 Census of Population: Volume 1*, 340.

Indianapolis before and after the war.⁸³ He shared with Mary Virginia “If you could imagine me having two times as many patients as the MEH [Methodist Hospital] would hold, swamped with no let up.”⁸⁴ Mary Virginia would have known the number of patients as she worked as a nurse in the hospital, illustrating an effective form of spousal shorthand. Dr. Megenhardt wisely used abbreviations that censors would not reject to convey information about his work to Mary Virginia.

Dr. Megenhardt was not always clever enough to evade censorship. In June of 1944, Dr. Megenhardt expressed anger at censors for them removing and inspecting items he sent in a package, saying, “There was no excuse for taking out the thing they did but they did it that’s that. Before long we won’t even be allowed to tell you how much we love our own wives + family. You see how I feel about it.”⁸⁵ In one paragraph, Dr. Megenhardt illustrates his continued disappointment regarding the censorship he experienced. He closed a letter directly by stating, “[I] can tell you so little, I had better close before I say something I should not.”⁸⁶

Dr. Megenhardt occasionally sent home souvenirs from different events or activities he attended that passed through censors. Dr. Megenhardt sent items from restaurants, shows, parliament invitations, and even a beach chair ticket. Further research could be performed on the artifacts to better understand their importance to Dr. Megenhardt and their context to the letters. Each artifact supports the authenticity of his accounts of his activities relayed in the collection of letters. All the items included are corroborated with the content of their respective letters. For example, when Dr. Megenhardt referenced an audience with Pope Pius XII, he included his entry ticket into the Vatican and a carte-de-visite from the Pope.⁸⁷ Dr. Megenhardt frequently mentioned that he enclosed photos with his letters.

⁸³ Edward A. Leary and Daniel T. Miller, *The History of Methodist Hospital of Indiana Inc.: A Mission of Compassionate Health Care* (Indianapolis: Methodist Hospital Foundation, 2007), 97.

⁸⁴ D.S. Megenhardt to M.V. Megenhardt, *Letters*, December 7, 1944.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, June 4, 1944.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, June 29, 1944.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, December 10, 1945.

However, only a select few of his photos survive in the collection. This could indicate that Mary Virginia kept certain images to display as Dr. Megenhardt did with photos of Marilyn, not returning them afterward to their original envelopes. As a note, throughout the collection, Dr. Megenhardt self-censored effectively; although censors reviewed many letters in the collection, no content was ever noticeably censored. Censorship provided a drawback to the letter exchange process, but Dr. Megenhardt used creative methods to share information and turned his focus to his personal activities.

Conclusion

The importance of writing letters for Dr. Dennis Megenhardt's morale cannot be understated. Throughout the war, he signed most of his letters *Love + Kisses, Denny*. Dr. Megenhardt relied on writing to Mary Virginia as his main way of connecting home and consistently shared with her his feelings and longing for home. Dr. Megenhardt shared high and low points, while also possibly leaving some significant points out. Exchanging letters was his primary form of connecting with home and a consistency throughout his time in the service. Even as he participated in an increasing number of social activities as the war went on, his dedication to writing letters was his one constant. The analysis of Dr. Megenhardt's letter collection provides additional scholarly insight into what sustained an American Army Surgeon during World War II. Dr. Megenhardt's accounts provide a glimpse into the importance of letter writing for maintaining a soldier's mental health as he faced some of the toughest obstacles of his life.



Figure 2. Mary Virginia and Marilyn sending mail. Photo in author's possession.

Bibliography

Primary Sources

- Megenhardt, Dennis Sommers. *Letters and Artifacts*, 1943-1946. In the author's possession.
- . "Dennis Megenhardt, M.D." Interview and transcript by Chad Berry. Indiana University Oral History Research Center. September 4th, 1992.
- Price, Byron. "Governmental Censorship in War-Time." *The American Political Science Review* 36, no. 5 (1942): 837–49.
- Summersby, Kay. *Past Forgetting: My Love Affair with Dwight D. Eisenhower*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1976.
- The Office of War Information, "News service speeds mail to U.S. troops," *United News* video, 1944, archived in *Smithsonian National Postal Museum*.
- U.S. Census Bureau. *1940 Census of Population: Volume 1*.

Secondary Sources

A Wartime History of the Post Office Department, World War II, 1939-1945.

Washington DC: Post Office Department, 1951.

Albert, Susan Wittig. *The General's Women*. Bertram, TX: Perservo Press, 2017.

Blaskiewicz, Robert. "A Conspicuous Absence: Combat Veterans and America's Memory of WWII." *Intersections* 22 (Winter 2019): 1–29.

Cosmas, Graham A; Cowdrey, Albert E. *Medical Service in the European Theater*. Washington: Center of Military History, 1992.

Cooper, B. Lee. "From "Love Letters" to "Miss You": Popular Recordings, Epistolary Imagery, and Romance during War-Time, 1941-1945." *Journal of American Culture* 19, no. 4 (Winter, 1996): 15-27.

Crowley Mark J., and Sandra Trudgen Dawson, eds. *Home Fronts: Britain and the Empire at War, 1939-45*. Suffolk: Boydell & Brewer, 2017.

Friedenberg, Zachary B. *Hospital at War: the 95th Evacuation in World War II*. College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2004.

Gabriel, Richard A. *Between Flesh and Steel: A History of Military Medicine from the Middle Ages to the War in Afghanistan*. Washington: Potomac Books, 2013.

Gascoigne, John. *Science and the State: From the Scientific Revolution to World War II. New Approaches to the History of Science and Medicine*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019.

Ginn, Richard V.N. *History of the U.S. Army Medical Service Corps* (Washington: Center of Military History, 1997).

Hagopian, Patrick. "Voices from Vietnam: Veterans' Oral Histories in the Classroom." *The Journal of American History* 87, no. 2 (2000): 593–601.

Hedley-Whyte John and Debra R Milamed. "American Surgeons at Musgrave Park Hospital in World War II: Surgical Giants." In *Ulster Medical Journal* 85, no. 2 (2016): 107-112.

Kennedy, Paul A. *Battlefield Surgeon: Life and Death on the Front Lines of World War II*. Edited by Christopher B. Kennedy. Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2016.

Leary, Edward A. and Daniel T. Miller. *The History of Methodist Hospital of*

- Indiana Inc.: A Mission of Compassionate Health Care*. Indianapolis: Methodist Hospital Foundation, 2007.
- Lebovic, Sam. “‘A Breath from Home’: Soldier Entertainment and the Nationalist Politics of Pop Culture during World War II.” *Journal of Social History* 47, no. 2 (2013): 263–96.
- Leder, Jane Mersky. *Thanks for the Memories: Love, Sex, and World War II* (Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers, 2006).
- Litoff, Judy Barrett and David C. Smith. “‘Will He Get My Letter?’ Popular Portrayals of Mail and Morale during World War II.” In *Journal of Popular Culture* 23, no. 4 (Spring, 1990): 21-43.
- Mobley, Gregory H. “Historical Note, 32nd General Hospital Collection, ca. 1918-1997.” Indiana University Archives.
- Peckham, Howard, and Shirley Snyder. *Letters From the Greatest Generation: Writing Home in WWII*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2016.
- Perry, Geoffrey. *Eisenhower*. London: Random House, 2000.
- Rasmussen, Nicolas. “Medical Science and the Military: The Allies’ use of Amphetamine during World War II.” *The Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 42, no. 2 (2011): 205-233.
- Rice, Bernard L. “Recollections of a World War II Combat Medic.” *Indiana Magazine of History* 93, no. 4 (1997): 312–44.
- Rostker, Bernard. “World War II.” In *Providing for the Casualties of War: The American Experience Through World War II*, 175–240. Arlington: RAND Corporation, 2013.
- Steckel, Francis C. “Morale Problems in Combat: American Soldiers in Europe in World War II.” *Army History*, no. 31 (1994): 1–8.
- Shilcutt, Tracy. *Infantry Combat Medics in Europe, 1944-45*. London: Palgrave MacMillan, 2013.
- Symonds, Craig L. *Neptune: The Allied Invasion of Europe and the D-Day Landings*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014.
- Thompson, George Raynor. *The Signal Corps: The Test (December 1941 to July 1943)*. Washington, DC: Center of Military History, United States Army, 1978.
- Vagts, Alfred. “Battle and Other Combatant Casualties in the Second

- World War, I.” *The Journal of Politics* 7, no. 3 (1945): 256–94.
- Westbrook, Robert B. “‘I Want a Girl, Just Like the Girl That Married Harry James’: American Women and the Problem of Political Obligation in World War II.” *American Quarterly* 42, no. 4 (1990): 587–614.
- Whitehead, Don. *Combat Reporter: Don Whitehead's World War II Diary and Memoirs*. New York: Fordham University Press, 2009.
- Winchell, Meghan K. *Good Girls, Good Food, Good Fun: The Story of USO Hostesses during World War II*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2008.
- Winston, Keith. *V-Mail: Letters of a World War II Combat Medic*. Chapel Hill: Algonquin Books, 1985.

Disease Response or Diseased Response

Spain's Smallpox Public Health Campaigns in the Americas, 1780 – 1806

Zoe Davidson

Introduction

In the fall of 1492, an expedition sailed from Spain to the Americas. Exactly 311 years later, in the fall of 1803, a second expedition charted a nearly identical course. Everyone knows the first expedition; it was, of course, Christopher Columbus's fateful journey to the so-called New World. Among the most infamous consequences of this start to European conquest was the introduction of novel diseases to the Americas. Indeed, diseases imported from the Old World killed an estimated 95% of the indigenous population in the Americas in the years following 1492.¹ The most famous of these diseases, smallpox, made its way to the Western Hemisphere within just fifteen years of Columbus's arrival.² Over the next several centuries,

¹ Jared Diamond, *Guns, Germs, and Steel: The Fates of Human Societies* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1997), 77-8.

² Some contemporary writers cite 1520 as the year in which smallpox arrived in the Americas, purportedly brought to Mexico in that year by an enslaved African man (see, e.g., "The Story Of... Smallpox – and other Deadly Eurasian Germs," on the PBS website and "How Europeans brought sickness to the New World," by Heather Pringle on science.org). There is evidence for earlier outbreaks, though, as mentioned in Michael Smith's "The 'Real Expedición Marítima de la Vacuna' in New Spain and Guatemala" (6), and Kristine Patterson and Thomas Runge's "Smallpox and the

smallpox wreaked havoc on the Americas. It became endemic, periodically exploding in devastating attacks such as the 1779-80 outbreak in Mexico City which claimed over 20,000 lives.³ From 1550 – 1850, an estimated three million indigenous people died from smallpox in the Western Hemisphere.⁴

The 1803 expedition is less well known. Its story begins seven years prior, when in 1796, British physician Edward Jenner created a smallpox vaccine, revolutionizing the medical field's approach to fighting the disease.⁵ Jenner's cowpox procedure was the first vaccine in medical history, and its efficacy made waves: within just a few years, smallpox vaccination became widespread in Europe.⁶ Spanish overseas colonies, meanwhile, did not yet have access to the vaccine.⁷ Transporting live cowpox across the Atlantic Ocean was virtually impossible with the technology of the time because there were no refrigerators and travel took weeks if not months.⁸

Then, in 1803, Guatemalan physician José Flores proposed a radical plan to get the vaccine to the colonies.⁹ The smallpox vaccine causes its recipients to form a pustule on their arm, and the liquid contains cowpox

Native American,” (217). Perhaps the discrepancy is due to the definition of the first smallpox case in the Americas: it seems that the disease did not reach the *continental* part of the Spanish colonies (modern-day Central America) until 1520, and that earlier outbreaks were limited to islands.

³ Michael M. Smith, “The ‘Real Expedición Marítima de la Vacuna’ in New Spain and Guatemala,” *Transactions of the American Philosophical Society* 64, no. 1 (1974): 7-8.

⁴ Kristine Patterson and Thomas Runge, “Smallpox and the Native American,” *The American Journal of the Medical Sciences* 323, no. 4 (2002): 218.

⁵ Stefan Riedel, “Edward Jenner and the history of smallpox and vaccination,” *Baylor University Medical Center Proceedings* 18, no. 1 (2005).

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ Smith, “The ‘Real Expedición Marítima de la Vacuna’ in New Spain and Guatemala,” 12.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 12.

⁹ Smith, 13; Martha Few, “Circulating Smallpox Knowledge: Guatemalan Doctors, Maya Indians and Designing Spain’s Smallpox Vaccination Expedition, 1780-1803,” *The British Journal for the History of Science* 43, no. 4 (2010): 520.

and can be used to vaccinate another person.¹⁰ Flores proposed that an expedition set sail with a group of young boys who would be vaccinated on a staggered schedule, preserving the vaccine by transferring it from person to person.¹¹ By November of that year, Spain had approved this plan and formed the “Real Expedición Filantrópica de la Vacuna,” our second expedition to cross the Atlantic.

The Real Expedición lasted from 1803 to 1806, led by Spanish physician Francisco Xavier de Balmis, who set sail with a small crew and twenty-two orphaned boys, aged eight through ten.¹² They travelled (in two teams) to the Canary Islands, Puerto Rico, Venezuela, Columbia, Ecuador, Peru, Cuba, Mexico, the Philippines, Macau, Canton, and Saint Helena, vaccinating an estimated 100,000 colonial subjects.¹³ Thus, around 300 years after Spanish colonization introduced smallpox to the Americas, Spain also introduced a solution.

Many scholars, especially those with scientific backgrounds, have lauded the Real Expedición as a nearly unqualified good.¹⁴ Writing more recently, other scholars problematize Spain’s approach to controlling smallpox, often arguing that it reinforced colonialism.¹⁵ My paper offers a

¹⁰ Smith, 11-2.

¹¹ Smith 13; Few, “Circulating Smallpox Knowledge,” 520.

¹² Carlos Franco-Paredes, Lorena Lammoglia, and José Ignacio Santos-Preciado, “The Spanish Royal Philanthropic Expedition to Bring Smallpox Vaccination to the New World and Asia in the 19th Century,” *Clinical Infectious Diseases* 41, no. 9 (2005): 1286.

¹³ Franco-Paredes et al., “The Spanish Royal Philanthropic Expedition,” 1286-8; Antonio J. Aldrete, “Smallpox Vaccinations in the Early 19th Century Using Live Carriers: The Travels of Francisco Xavier de Balmis,” *Southern Medical Journal* 97, no. 4 (2004): 375.

¹⁴ Aldrete, “Smallpox Vaccinations in the Early 19th Century Using Live Carriers”; Catherine Mark and José G. Rigau-Pérez, “The World’s First Immunization Campaign: The Spanish Smallpox Vaccine Expedition, 1803–1813,” *Bulletin of the History of Medicine* 83, no. 1 (2008); Smith, “The ‘Real Expedición Marítima de la Vacuna’ in New Spain and Guatemala.”

¹⁵ Allyson Poska, “Experiencing Locally, Thinking Globally: Smallpox Vaccination as a Framework for Understanding the Global Early Modern,” *Modern Philology* 119, no. 1

reconciliation between these two groups of scholars. I will argue that it was precisely the impressive efficacy of Spain's public health response to smallpox, which the older group of scholars praise, that made it so problematic. Indeed, Spain's post-Enlightenment-era invocation of science and technology as a tool of public health acted as a new means of imperial control.

This paper will explore the Spanish response to smallpox, ranging from approximately the last two decades of the 18th century through 1806, with the conclusion of the Real Expedición. In addition to studying vaccination, I will also look at the empire's earlier public health campaigns such as the aggressive quarantine policies in the Americas from the 1780s and 90s and the practice of variolation. I will demonstrate that technology reinforced colonialism through four mechanisms: contrasting colonial science with the "ignorance" of indigenous people, invoking the benevolence of the Crown, expanding colonial government, and controlling indigenous bodies.

Historiography

As previously mentioned, historians disagree about the merits of Spain's colonial smallpox interventions in the late 18th and early 19th centuries. One group of scholars, writing between twelve – fifty years ago, celebrate the Spanish Crown's response to smallpox—particularly the Real Expedición—as a victory of public health. One of the earliest thinkers to join this scholarly camp was Michael Smith, who wrote "The 'Real Expedición Marítima de la Vacuna' in New Spain and Guatemala" in 1974, an impressive overview of Francisco Balmis's vaccination mission in the Spanish colonies. The article lauds the Real Expedición. For example, in his preface, Smith writes, "Indeed, the Royal Expedition was the most ambitious

(2021); Paul Ramírez, "‘Like Herod's Massacre’: Quarantines, Bourbon Reform, and Popular Protest in Oaxaca's Smallpox Epidemic, 1796—1797," *The Americas* 69, no. 2 (2012); Martha Few, see e.g., her book *For All of Humanity: Mesoamerican and Colonial Medicine in Enlightenment Guatemala*.

medical project conceived and carried out to its day. Its name should be written large on the pages of medical history.”¹⁶ He also dispenses praise on a smaller scale, for example writing about the “understandable zeal of the Ayuntamiento [town council of Veracruz, Mexico] to disseminate the vaccine throughout Veracruz” and that “its extraordinary energy in dispatching the lymph to other localities, at its own expense, merits special attention.”¹⁷ Additionally, Smith discusses the vaccination effort only from the perspective of the Spanish physicians on the Real Expedición and colonial elites in the Americas. There is a notable absence of indigenous voices and any mention of dissent in Smith’s writing. Thus, his article paints a rosy, celebratory picture of Spanish colonial public health interventions.

Similarly, in 2004, medical doctor J. Antonio Aldrete published a brief summary of the Real Expedición, also praising its success. For example, he writes “Passing lymph from a skin ulceration to another child may not be an acceptable method by today's standards, but at the time it was an ingenious and effective way to carry the inoculating fluid from one continent to two others when refrigeration, sterility, and asepsis were unknown.”¹⁸ He also calls the Real Expedición a “great disease prevention enterprise.”¹⁹ Much like Smith, he primarily writes about the colonial actors involved in the campaign, omitting dissenting voices or perspectives from colonial subjects.²⁰

Finally, scientists-turned-historians Catherine Mark and José G. Rigau-Pérez, in 2009, wrote yet another description of the Real Expedición, also highlighting its impressive public health impact. Mark and Rigau-Pérez are not shy with their praise, including sentences like:

¹⁶ Smith, 4.

¹⁷ Ibid., 24-5.

¹⁸ Aldrete, 377.

¹⁹ Ibid., 377-8.

²⁰ On page 377, Aldrete does briefly mention that the children that Balmis brought with him from Mexico to the Philippines to continue the chain of vaccination lived in abysmal conditions on the ship and ended up falling ill, but that is the only critique he raises.

The Royal Philanthropic Vaccine Expedition represents an extraordinary administrative and sanitary achievement. In remote locations, individuals, or even local institutions, would not have been able to overcome the obstacles to the transport of viable vaccine over long distances, often far from the usual routes of maritime or land transportation. Smallpox eradication would have to wait until the second half of the twentieth century for the establishment of ordered infrastructures supported by a synchronized system of local, national, and international institutions.²¹

Their paper analyzes the Real Expedición as a “precedent for modern vaccination campaigns,” a framework that acts as a tacit endorsement of the efficacy of the process.²² Unlike Smith and Aldrete, Mark and Rigau-Pérez do include some criticism of the expedition, under the section heading of “Ethical Issues.”²³ This section is only three paragraphs, however, and the rest of the paper is largely laudatory.

In contrast to these papers, scholarship in the past 10 years has complicated the narrative of the Spanish smallpox response as an unmitigated public health success, problematizing colonial measures by highlighting the objections of indigenous communities. Historian Paul Ramírez, for example, demonstrates in his article “‘Like Herod's Massacre’: Quarantines, Bourbon Reform, and Popular Protest in Oaxaca's Smallpox Epidemic, 1796—1797” how indigenous communities rejected colonial quarantine measures because of their economic consequences, coercive implementation, and culturally insensitive components. He tells the story of an indigenous town in Oaxaca called Teotitlán de Valle which experienced a

²¹ Mark and Rigau-Pérez, 93.

²² Mark and Rigau-Pérez, “The World’s First Immunization Campaign,” 63-4.

²³ *Ibid.*, 90 – 92, the two ethical issues they raise were the use of orphaned children to transport the vaccine (four died) and the occasional coercion of colonial subjects to be vaccinated.

smallpox outbreak in the summer of 1795.²⁴ This infection occurred shortly after the implementation of a 1788 Viceregal order based on Spanish doctor Francisco Gil's treatise on smallpox cures, which touted the benefits of quarantining sick individuals and isolating infected villages.²⁵ Acting on this advice, local colonial agents implemented harsh measures like banning villagers from tending to their fields, requiring that the dead be buried outside the traditional church burial ground, and mandating the removal of the sick to a newly built infirmary.²⁶ In response, many of the indigenous villagers, led by women, rioted.²⁷ They defiantly performed a funeral service for a dead child outside the church and forced their way into the infirmary to retrieve several of the quarantined sick.²⁸ Ramírez's narration of this protest in Teotitlán complicates the image of smallpox control measures as a welcomed public health campaign. Unlike earlier scholarship, he includes voices of indigenous dissent, highlighting the coercive nature of some of Spain's public health policies.

Similarly, historian Allyson Poska has documented local indigenous responses to vaccination, showing that indigenous communities, especially mothers, often objected to the Real Expedición. In her paper "Experiencing Locally, Thinking Globally: Smallpox Vaccination as a Framework for Understanding the Global Early Modern," Poska points out that in Mexico, colonial subjects were so resistant to receiving the vaccine that Balmis worried he would lose it for lack of a constant chain of human hosts.²⁹ Other members of the expedition experienced similar resistance in other colonies.³⁰ This narrative of indigenous protest complicates scholarship that paints a

²⁴ Ramírez, "Like Herod's Massacre," 211-2.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 204-5.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 212-4.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 215-6.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 215-17.

²⁹ Poska, "Experiencing Locally, Thinking Globally: Smallpox Vaccination as a Framework for Understanding the Global Early Modern," 121.

³⁰ *Ibid.*

purely celebratory view of Spanish smallpox measures. Indeed, Poska writes, “Although scholars have generally described Spain’s smallpox vaccination campaign, especially the Royal Philanthropic Expedition, as the triumphant extension of a new European medical technology on a global scale, a simultaneous analysis of the local and the global offers a much more complicated picture.”³¹

Finally, Martha Few, a prolific scholar of smallpox in turn-of-the-18th century Guatemala, has voiced several concerns about colonial Spanish medicine in several articles and a book. Her critiques address a broad range of public health measures, including quarantine, variolation, and vaccination. On quarantine, for example, she discovered that during an outbreak in the Guatemalan town of Tajumulco, indigenous people could be punished for breaking quarantine by being publicly beaten.³² Turning to variolation, Few has written extensively about the downsides of the program. In her book, for example, she mentions that colonial officials often performed variolation without consent and would forcibly round up all of the young people in a town, shave their heads, and then cut open their arms to perform variolation.³³ On vaccination, she has written “the discourses and practices of vaccination rested on hierarchies of race, ethnicity and status, and on colonial relations of power (medical, religious and military), in ways that continued to reinforce hierarchical differences between the colonizer and colonized.”³⁴ These are only a few examples of the objections that she has raised to Spanish public health policies; indeed, her scholarship on the subject is extensive.

³¹ Ibid., 119.

³² Martha Few, *For All of Humanity: Mesoamerican and Colonial Medicine in Enlightenment Guatemala* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2015), 140.

³³ Ibid., 144, Few explains that colonial officials would cut the hair of those waiting to be variolated because they believed it made the process less painful and that it would help with the aftercare of smallpox pustules that grew on patients’ heads.

³⁴ Few, “Circulating Smallpox Knowledge,” 537.

These two groups of scholars —the older contingent that praises Spain’s public health accomplishments and the newer one that views these same accomplishments as a problematic extension of colonialism—initially seem irreconcilable. Further consideration, however, reveals that these accounts are not mutually exclusive: Spain’s reliance on technology (quarantines, variolation, and vaccination) to address smallpox was impressive, but it was the impressive nature of this technology that made it a potent tool of colonialism.

Scholars have made this argument about colonialism and technology more broadly. For example, Michael Adas’s seminal book, *Machines as the Measure of Man: Science, Technology, and Ideologies of Western Dominance*, published in 1989, argues that Western colonialists, from the fifteenth century through the twentieth, have viewed their scientific advancements as proof of their superiority and therefore as a justification of conquest.³⁵ Similarly, bioethics scholar Nicholas King, in his essay “Security, Disease, Commerce: Ideologies of Postcolonial Global Health,” has written:

Europeans contrasted their own medicine and public health, symbolizing rationality and modernity, with putatively superstitious and primitive indigenous medical beliefs, which they denigrated and sought to eliminate as part of the larger ‘civilizing mission’ of colonialism. The medical modernization of native populations, via export of Western medical theories and practices, was part of the ‘ideology of colonial healing’, that justified colonialism as an ultimately humanitarian endeavour.³⁶

Both Adas and King highlight how science and technology can be weaponized as a tool of colonialism.

³⁵ Michael Adas, *Machines as the Measure of Men: Science, Technology, and Ideologies of Western Dominance* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1989), 4-7.

³⁶ Nicholas B. King, “Security, Disease, Commerce: Ideologies of Postcolonial Global Health,” *Social Studies of Science* 32, Special Issue: Postcolonial Technoscience (2002): 765.

In her book, *For All of Humanity: Mesoamerican and Colonial Medicine in Enlightenment Guatemala*, Few begins to stake out this argument in the context of Spain's smallpox response. For example, she writes, "The reach of medicine through public health efforts extended the symbolics and practice of colonial rule to subject populations in colonial Central America, including to its majority indigenous populations, in new and intimate ways and on a massive scale not seen since the religious conversion campaigns and extreme epidemic-disease mortality rates of the first decades after conquest."³⁷ Indeed, as previously described, her writing has generated several examples of this dynamic.

Few's work provides a strong beginning, but no scholar has comprehensively and concisely fleshed out the mechanisms through which Spain extended its colonial power through its reliance on medicine and science to respond to smallpox. Instead, work on this subject is scattered between several different publications. In the remainder of this paper, I pull together these threads from secondary literature and include my own primary source analysis to offer a comprehensive summary of the avenues through which Spain's vaccination effort introduced a new and powerful dimension to the empire's colonial control. My paper adds important nuance and clarity to ongoing historiography of Spanish colonialism and smallpox medicine.

There are four primary ways in which Spain expanded colonialism by relying on science and technology to address smallpox: contrasting colonial science with the "ignorance" of indigenous people, invoking benevolence, activating bureaucracy, and controlling indigenous bodies.

Contrasting Colonial Science with the "Ignorance" of Indigenous People

One of the most obvious ways Spain weaponized science in the vaccination campaign was to establish a narrative about the supremacy of

³⁷ Few, *For All of Humanity*, 197.

their medicine in contrast to the “ignorance” of indigenous people. This framing allowed colonial officials to espouse problematic rhetoric and even carry out violent action.

In terms of rhetoric, primary sources from colonial doctors and bureaucrats often describe indigenous people as ignorant. One untitled document from Guatemala in 1804, which reproduces the royal order from the Spanish Secretary of Justice and Grace, José Antonio Caballero, announcing the Real Expedición, typifies these sentiments. The royal order states, “However, if there are difficulties with the Indians and other ignorant people, judges, priests, doctors, and educated people will be dedicated to overcoming these issues with persuasion, example, and other gentle and prudent means...”³⁸ This sets up a binary of educated Spanish agents of the state and church (judges, priests, and doctors) versus “ignorant” indigenous people. Caballero makes no attempt to understand why indigenous people might be hesitant to receive the vaccine; he instantly jumps to the conclusion that it is because of their supposed intellectual inferiority.

Similarly, one colonial official and doctor in Cuba who was central to distributing the vaccine, Tomas Romay, wrote in an 1804 pamphlet (“Memoria Sobre la Introducción y Progresos de la Vacuna en la Isla de Cuba”) that “ignorance and fanaticism has obstructed the progress [of vaccination]” in certain towns.³⁹ Again, he perpetuates a narrative about the ignorance of colonial subjects. Although not explicitly about indigenous people, we can infer that because he references people living in towns, he is likely not directing his contempt towards white colonial elites. In this era, Romay wrote this pamphlet to be read by members of the Sociedad Económica de la Havana, an organization composed primarily of

³⁸ *El Excelentísimo Señor D. José Antonio Caballero, Secretario de Estado, y del Despacho Universal de Gracia y Justicia: Con Fecha 1. De Septiembre Proximo Pasado Me Comunicó la Real Orden, y a Su Continuacion Dicté el Decreto que á la Letra Una y Otro Dicen Asi* (Guatemala: 1804), Wellcome Collection, 8.

³⁹ Tomas Romay, *Memoria Sobre la Introducción y Progresos de la Vacuna en la Isla De Cuba* (Havana: 1805), 12.

intellectuals (presumably all white) in Cuba.⁴⁰ Thus, the problematic sentiments that he includes in his writing were likely shared by other members of Sociedad Económica and colonial elites more broadly.

Even Balmis himself engaged in this type of rhetoric, saying: America is less enlightened [than Europe] and the character of its natives is commonly indolent. They look upon even the greatest benefit that outsiders propose for them with the greatest suspicion. They prefer to follow their erroneous ways and fall victims to deadly epidemics rather than accept the remedies which physicians commissioned by the leaders of the American dominions offer them.⁴¹

It is not surprising, then, that the Real Expedition aimed to primarily train white people to perform vaccinations, turning only to others in remote, primarily indigenous areas.⁴²

This rhetoric was not just limited to the vaccination campaign. Paul Ramírez, discussing quarantine protests in Oaxaca, writes that Esteban Melgar, a colonial official in charge of Teotitlán, “lamented that Indians clung to their ‘old customs’ and refused to submit to ‘rational methods.’”⁴³ Melgar, writing to the Oaxaca intendant, Antonio de Mora y Peysal, is referring to Mayan peoples’ distrust of the infirmary system. Ramírez writes more generally that “This ungenerous but common refrain among administrators betrayed a prominent school of thought regarding the incompatibility of ‘modern’ medicine and the practices of the lower classes.”⁴⁴

⁴⁰ Amauri Batista Salvador, Alodio Mena Campo, and Isabel García González, “La Sociedad Económica de Amigos del País de La Habana: contribución al progreso sociocultural,” *Varona. Revista Científico Metodológica*, no. 66 (2018).

⁴¹ Francisco Balmis, “Balmis to Iturrigaray, 5 Septiembre 1804,” AGN, “Epidemias,” v. 10, exp. 7: fs. 72-75v, quoted in Michael Smith, “The ‘Real Expedición Marítima de la Vacuna’ in New Spain and Guatemala,” 37.

⁴² Smith, 55.

⁴³ Ramírez, 218.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

Few has also written about this dynamic in the context of variolation. In her essay “Medical Humanitarianism and Smallpox Inoculation in Eighteenth-Century Guatemala,” she argues that colonial elites in the 1780s saw providing modern medical care, including variolation, to indigenous people as a moral responsibility, a concept that she terms “medical humanitarianism.”⁴⁵ Medical humanitarianism was not an equal exchange: it framed colonial medicine as superior to the practices of subjects.

On occasion, Spanish colonial elites’ belief in the supremacy of their public health measures became violent. For example, in Guatemala, doctors frequently came in conflict with Mayan communities over their use of *temascales*, a steam bath that indigenous healers used to treat illness.⁴⁶ At one point, as Few discusses in an article, colonial officials called on the military to destroy the *temascales* in certain Mayan towns.⁴⁷ In another town, a provincial leader destroyed the *temascales* as a form of punishment for indigenous people’s refusal to receive variolation.⁴⁸

Overall, from rhetoric to the violent destruction of Mayan medical practices, the Spanish framing of their colonial medicine as being superior to the ignorance of indigenous people exacerbated colonial power dynamics.

Invoking Benevolence

Spain also expanded their colonial power using technology and medicine through the government’s frequent invocation of the benevolence of their public health campaigns. Framing smallpox control measures as an act of generosity justified Spanish colonial presence in the Americas and

⁴⁵ Martha Few, “Medical Humanitarianism and Smallpox Inoculation in Eighteenth-Century Guatemala,” *Historical Social Research* 37, no. 3 (2012).

⁴⁶ Martha Few, “Epidemics, Indigenous Communities, and Public Health in the COVID-19 Era: Views from Smallpox Inoculation Campaigns in Colonial Guatemala,” *Journal of Global History* 15, no. 3 (2020): 389-9.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 390.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

demarcated a clear hierarchy between white elites and indigenous people. Documents from bureaucrats and doctors in this era frequently employ this theme of benevolence. For example, in the previously discussed untitled document from Guatemala in 1804, reproducing a royal order from the Spanish Secretary of Justice and Grace announcing the Real Expedición, the Secretary writes:

The King, desiring to stop the damages caused in his domains of the Indies by the frequent epidemics of smallpox and to provide his beloved subjects with the aid dictated by humanity, the good of the State, and the mutual interest of individuals as well as the most numerous classes...has resolved, after hearing the opinion of the Council and of some wise men, that we bring the vaccine to both the Americas, and if possible to the islands of the Philippines at the expense of the Royal Treasury, accredited in Spain, and in almost all of Europe as a protection against natural smallpox.⁴⁹

Here, we see a high-up official claiming that the king's goal in establishing Real Expedición was to "stop the damages" of smallpox on behalf of his "beloved subjects." The Spanish Secretary of Justice and Grace also places particular emphasis on the Crown's willingness to spend money on the expedition. This implies that colonial subjects should be grateful for the king's generosity, solidifying the legitimacy of his imperial power.⁵⁰ The secretary employs highly affective language, playing into a framing that justifies colonial presence through "aid dedicated to humanity." The

⁴⁹ *El Excelentísimo Señor D. José Antonio Caballero, Secretario de Estado, y del Despacho Universal de Gracia y Justicia: Con Fecha 1. De Septiembre Proximo Pasado Me Comunicó la Real Orden, y a Su Continuacion Dicté el Decreto que á la Letra Una y Otro Dicen Asi* (Guatemala: 1804), Wellcome Collection, 1.

⁵⁰ Martha Few and Allyson Poska have both cited this announcement in their scholarship (see Few, *For All of Humanity*, 5, and Poska, "Experiencing Locally, Thinking Globally," 116) however neither scholar quite articulates the purpose of this framing.

language also reinforces hierarchy with the Spanish King at the top and colonial subjects on the bottom.

In a similar but slightly different vein, Dr. Tomas Romay, the Cuban doctor who researched the history of the colony's vaccination effort, invoked the glory of the king to argue that Cuba should maintain their own supply of the vaccine, writing, "Let us, then, become independent from all overseas resources, when we can easily perpetuate in our children and households that glorious monument [the vaccine], consecrated to the preservation of Humanity and to the benefit of our august Sovereign."⁵¹ This frames continuing vaccination as an act of preserving humanity, linking colonial medicine to morality, and thereby legitimating imperial presence.

Doctors and bureaucrats did not limit their praise to just the king. Indeed, documents describe lesser colonial officials as benevolent as well. For example, in the previously mentioned 1797 document titled "Instruccion para Inocular Las Viruelas y Método de Curarlas con Facilidad y Acierto," the unspecified author writes of the Viceroy of Mexico:

The esteemed Sr. Viceroy, Marques de Branciforte, wishing to prevent these disgraces [of smallpox], has seen fit to circulate specific and rigorous orders to this end: he has taken all of the opportune measures proper to his zeal and wise insight...His excellency will surely recommend and applaud the generous resolution of distinguished families who will give a noble example of humanity to the whole empire, so that in imitation of them, the people will voluntarily give their consent with docility and constancy.⁵²

The first half of this quote celebrates the Viceroy for his "zeal" in fighting smallpox and willingness to provide "specific and rigorous orders" on variolation, similar to the language used in the announcement of the Real

⁵¹ Romay, *Memoria Sobre la Introducción y Progresos de la Vacuna*, 27.

⁵² *Instruccion para Inocular Las Viruelas, y Método de Curarlas Con Facilidad, y Acierto*, (Puebla de Los Angeles: 1797), Wellcome Collection, EPB/AM/M.73, 2-3.

Expedición. The second half takes this tactic and applies it to families who wish to variolate their children, claiming that they too will “give a noble example of humanity to the whole empire.” This shows how the invocation of benevolence could be used to encourage colonial subjects to submit to state-run medical programs, thereby expanding the state’s power and justifying their interventions. This source also demonstrates how this framing of benevolence pervaded all levels of colonial government.

Finally, in the aforementioned instructional pamphlet published by the Real Tribunal del Protomedicato, the Protomedicato praises the goodwill of those willing to perform variolations, writing, “Hopefully, the effects of this simple instruction correspond to the good intentions of those who promote it, moved by the most tender feelings of humanity, and of those who in their gift are using the short work of their training.”⁵³ This again shows how colonial institutions, in this case the Real Tribunal del Protomedicato, could justify colonial endeavors like variolation by framing it as an act of humanity. It reinforces an invisible hierarchy between white colonial administrators and their indigenous patients.

Activating Bureaucracies and Extending Colonial Government

Another avenue through which Spain’s public health technologies extended colonialism was its activation of various bureaucracies, which in turn expanded the reach of colonial government. A prime example of this phenomenon is the Juntas de Vacuna created by Francisco Balmis as part of the Real Expedición. In nearly every place his expedition landed, Balmis assembled committees (Juntas) dedicated to continuing the vaccination process after the Real Expedición had to move to another city or town.⁵⁴

⁵³ Real Tribunal del Protomedicato, *Método Claro, Sencillo, y Fácil que para Practicar la Inoculación de Viruelas Presenta al Pública el Real Tribunal del Protomedicato de esta N. E. por Superior Órden el Excmó. Señor Marqués de Branciforte Virrey de Este Reyno*, Wellcome Collection, 7.

⁵⁴ Smith, 21-2, 30, 36, 39, 43, 53, 55.

These Juntas played an essential role in coordinating the complex logistics of vaccination. For example, because the vaccine could only be stored in human carriers, an organization had to monitor its continual transfer from body to body to keep it alive after Balmis left. Juntas also had to oversee the diffusion of vaccines from the urban centers of the colonies to the moral rural outposts.⁵⁵ In some places, the bureaucracies of the Juntas were impressively complex. In Guatemala, for example, authorities established a central vaccination board of Guatemala City, which oversaw three regional boards in smaller cities, each of which had local boards under them.⁵⁶

Unsurprisingly, these Juntas were controlled entirely by colonial elites. Although each board had slightly different configurations, they typically featured many of the same figures: government officers, representatives of the Catholic Church, and doctors. The Junta in Mexico City for example, was comprised of the “regidor decano [a religious leader] and the procurador general [attorney general] as permanent members, eight leading civil and religious figures, and six distinguished physicians.”⁵⁷ In the Junta in Guatemala City, “Permanent members included the archbishop of Guatemala, the regent of the Audiencia, and the royal protomedico. The elected officials included one representative each from the ecclesiastical cabildo, the Ayuntamiento, and the medical community.”⁵⁸

As Poska and Few have argued, these Juntas expanded both the power and reach of the colonial government in the name of science. Poska writes “The creation of vaccination boards, Juntas de Vacuna in major cities and Juntas Subalternas in smaller towns, was critical to both the expansion of the imperial bureaucracy and the institutionalization of vaccination.”⁵⁹ Few similarly argues that “Once the Central Vaccination Committee formalized and centralized the spread of the Jenner vaccine, colonial power had the

⁵⁵ Ibid., 21.

⁵⁶ Ibid., 55.

⁵⁷ Ibid., 36.

⁵⁸ Ibid., 55.

⁵⁹ Poska. 119.

potential to reach into colonized bodies even in the remotest areas of Central America.”⁶⁰

Prior to the vaccination campaign, other smallpox measures also served to expand colonial bureaucracy. Local government officials were often tasked with tracking down colonial subjects with smallpox so they could be isolated. For example, in 1797, the Mexican Viceroy, Marques de Branciforte, published an order detailing measures to stop the spread of an impending outbreak. In it, he writes “With this very important object, which is almost the only known way to stop the spread of this terrible disease, parish priests, prelates, doctors, and subordinate judges will immediately report any smallpox cases that they have knowledge of to the magistrate or chief justice so that he can put the sick person in quarantine.”⁶¹ All of these religious figures, doctors, and judges act as agents of the state, expanding the government’s reach. Later in the order, Branciforte decrees that towns be divided into smaller sections led by various colonial officials, so that cases can be more readily identified. Thus, the Viceroy leveraged the public health emergency of the outbreak to justify activating a network of colonial bureaucracy.

Controlling Indigenous Bodies

The most extreme way in which the Spanish colonial government leveraged science and medicine to expand their power was the policing of indigenous bodies. This ranged from controlling the diets of colonial subjects to enforcing quarantines to coercing them into variolation or receiving the vaccine.

In terms of controlling the diets of indigenous peoples, colonial doctors often laid out intricate suggestions for how subjects should live to

⁶⁰ Few, *For All of Humanity*, 183.

⁶¹ Viceroy Branciforte, *A Esfuerços de mis Estrechas Providencias para que se Cortara y Extinguiera, ó quando Méenos se Evitase la Propagacion de la Terrible Enfermedad de Viruelas* (Orizaba: 1797), Wellcome Collection, EPB/AM/M.151.

stay healthy. A prime example of this is an undated instructional pamphlet published by the Real Tribunal del Protomedicato (a board of physicians) about inoculation titled “Método claro, sencillo, y fácil que para practicar la Inoculacion de viruelas presenta al publico el Real Tribunal del Protomedicato de esta N.E. por Superior orden del Exmo. Señor Marques de Branciforte Virrey de este Reyno.”⁶² It was written to be adopted in areas with very few healthcare resources, presumably in primarily indigenous communities, and although the exact audience is unclear, it seems to be targeted towards colonial officials.⁶³ The Protomedicato recommends extensive lifestyle changes that those practicing inoculation should instruct colonial subjects (in this case children) to adopt before and after variolation. For example, they advise that in the days leading up to inoculation, patients should be “eating a lot of fatty, salty meat, eating anything spicy or drinking boiling hot things, rigorously exercising, using herbs in food, fruit and seeds, drinking cooling drinks like serums, cooking barley, oat or vinegar or lemonade, and taking fresh air in the morning.”⁶⁴ They also have a very detailed treatment plan for after inoculation, involving laxatives and more dietary instructions.⁶⁵ Assuming that the Protomedicato wrote this pamphlet for colonial officials to use when inoculating children, it is possible that these children had little to no say in the adoption of these measures to regulate their bodies. Regardless of whether there was consent, this pamphlet shows the lengths to which the Spanish colonial government would police the bodies of their subjects in the name of public health.

⁶² “Protomedicato,” Encyclopedia.com.; Real Tribunal del Protomedicato, *Método Claro, Sencillo, y Fácil que para Practicar la Inoculacion de Viruelas*.

⁶³ In the first section of the pamphlet, the Protomedicato advises its readers to select children whose parents consent to the operation. This led me to believe that the document was not designed for colonial subjects, because if it were, there would be no need to add in the clause about consent.

⁶⁴ Real Tribunal del Protomedicato, *Método Claro, Sencillo, y Fácil que para Practicar la Inoculacion de Viruelas*, 2-3.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 4-7.

A similar document from 1797, titled “Instruccion para Inocular Las Viruelas y Método de Curarlas con Facilidad y Acierto,” provides instructions on safe practices for the operation and on general methods for treating smallpox.⁶⁶ The document recommends, for example, that people cut off their hair, take laxatives, and eat specific foods at different phases of the illness.⁶⁷ All of these measures are highly intrusive. Indeed, Martha Few has written about these colonial recommendations for indigenous people, arguing that for Mayan communities, “the extension of anti-epidemic campaigns also came at the cost of direct colonial interventions into their culture, medicine, living practices, diet, and even dress.”⁶⁸ Also, not all these suggestions were safe; laxatives, for example, were damaging to smallpox patients.⁶⁹

The Spanish colonial government also policed indigenous bodies through extensive quarantines. As Paul Ramirez discusses, quarantines became especially popular in the colonies during the last decade of the 18th century, following the distribution of an excerpt of Spanish doctor Francisco Gil’s *Disertacion* on smallpox.⁷⁰ Gil’s *Disertacion* heavily promoted isolating the infected, among other measures to control indigenous bodies. For example, he writes “It will be required and obligated, under rigorous penalties, that all of the neighbors in every town, especially the doctors and surgeons, report any smallpox cases to the *Justicia*, so that without the slightest delay the sick person can be [isolated].”⁷¹ He also promotes cordoning off sick towns from healthy towns: “The justicias of towns bordering an infected one will take

⁶⁶ *Instruccion para Inocular Las Viruelas, y Método de Curarlas Con Facilidad, y Acierto*, (Puebla de Los Angeles: 1797), Wellcome Collection, EPB/AM/M.73.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 25-37.

⁶⁸ Few, “Epidemics, Indigenous Communities, and Public Health in the COVID-19 Era,” 389.

⁶⁹ Smith, 10.

⁷⁰ Ramirez, 204-5.

⁷¹ Francisco Gil, *Extracto de la Obra Publicada en Madrid el Año Pasado de 1784 con el Título de Disertacion Físico-Médica, en la qual se Prescribe un Método Seguro para Preservar a los Pueblos de Viruelas* (Mexico: 1788), Wellcome Collection, EPB/AM/M.61, 4.

care to restrict all traffic and commerce, instituting grave penalties for people who transgress these important rules.”⁷² Colonial officials took these suggestions to heart. The Mexican Viceroy Marques de Branciforte, in 1797, for example, praised the success of quarantines, writing:

This success has been due to the vigilance and efficacy with which, in compliance with my active and repeated orders that have been carried out despite many obstacles, the quarantining of the first patients, the burying of bodies in removed cemeteries, the prohibition of any contact with infected towns, and finally variolation, which when all else has failed, has been introduced and has been practiced voluntarily and happily.⁷³

In the name of science, colonial officials could detain indigenous people in quarantines, keep them locked up in their towns, and even dictate where they had to bury their relatives.⁷⁴

Finally, colonial officials even went as far as forcing their subjects to be variolated or vaccinated in certain instances, despite these procedures being theoretically voluntary. During variolation in Guatemala, for example, officials (assisted by armed forces) in towns could publicly round up children and young adults and variolate them in front of their parents, cutting their hair off and isolating them during recovery.⁷⁵ Few has written that this forced separation after inoculation in quarantine centers “functioned as militarized space and as a kind of jail. Quarantine soldiers and other hired men guarded the building to ensure that those inside could not leave and to prevent others from entering, including concerned family members.”⁷⁶ During the Real Expedition, there were a couple of instances where Balmis or his team forced

⁷² Ibid., 9.

⁷³ Viceroy Branciforte, *A Esfuerzos de mis Estrechas Providencias*.

⁷⁴ Both Martha Few and Paul Ramirez have written extensively about quarantines. See Few, *For All of Humanity*, 137-41 and Ramirez, “Like Herod’s Massacre.”

⁷⁵ Few, *For All of Humanity*, 144.

⁷⁶ Ibid., 150.

colonial subjects into receiving the vaccine to prevent it from dying out.⁷⁷ At another point, the team coerced twenty mothers into vaccinating their children, despite their clear opposition.⁷⁸

It is also worth noting that the great irony of colonial officials policing the bodies of their subjects is that in many cases, without these same bodies, their public health campaigns would have failed. The vaccine, for example, was transported via the bodies of oppressed subjects. Beyond the Spanish orphans used in the initial leg of the journey, doctors used a two-year-old enslaved girl to transport the vaccine to Puerto Rico and “two young mulatto maids” to transport it to Havana.⁷⁹ When Balmis left Cuba to travel to Mexico, he purchased four slaves to keep the vaccine alive during the journey.⁸⁰

Conclusion

Reckoning with the legacy of Spain’s smallpox public health campaigns from 1780 – 1806 presents a complicated moral quandary: how should history weigh the medical success of quarantines, variolation, and vaccination against the human ramifications of these interventions’ expansion of colonialism? Indeed, as previously outlined, scholars have debated this very question for years. The older group, with several scientists and doctors, praises Spain’s interventions without qualification. The newer group, composed of historians, denounces Spain’s interventions as colonialist. These scholars, however, are talking past one another; both arguments are true. It is this efficacy of these campaigns which the older group praises that enacted the expansion of colonialism of which the second group of scholars denounced. Secondary literature and primary source

⁷⁷ Mark and Rigau-Peréz, 91-2.

⁷⁸ Ibid., 92.

⁷⁹ Smith, 20, 22.

⁸⁰ Ibid., 23.

documents from doctors and colonial officials demonstrate how science and technology expanded colonialism.

For all its work to reinforce colonialism, the Real Expedición Filantrópica de la Vacuna, and Spain's broader response to smallpox from 1780 – 1806 was ultimately an agonal gasp of Spanish imperialism, not lasting a reinvigoration of empire. Indeed, over the course of the 19th century, Spain's overseas empire would all but collapse. In February of 1808, just two years after the conclusion of Balmis's vaccination campaign, Napoleon Bonaparte captured Spain, ending the rule of the Spanish King.⁸¹ Although the monarchy was re-established in 1813, Spain's woes were far from over.⁸² Over the course of the next twelve years, Spain lost all of their colonies in Central and South America.⁸³ Although they retained some island colonies, these would fall by the end of the 19th century with the Spanish-American War. Thus, after over four hundred years, the Spanish empire ended shortly after the Real Expedición.

Why, then, is it important to study the ways in which Spain's use of medicine and technology expanded colonialism if it was not effective in the long term? The answer is that these tactics became a playbook, so to speak, for other colonial powers. Western nations have frequently used medicine and technology as tools of imperialism in the two centuries since the Real Expedición, and arguably continue to do so into the present day. For example, when cholera began to spread around the globe in the 19th century, colonial powers proposed limiting the Hajj and quarantining participants.⁸⁴ During a plague outbreak in Bombay around the turn of the 20th century, the British colonial government used disease concerns as an excuse to target the

⁸¹ "French Defeated in Spain, Ending the Peninsular War," History.com, July 27, 2019.

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ *Britannica*, s.v. "Western Colonialism," accessed December 18, 2021.

⁸⁴ Mark Harrison. "Quarantine, Pilgrimage, and Colonial Trade: India 1866-1900," *The Indian Economic and Social History Review* 29, no. 2 (1992): 118-9.

property of their impoverished subjects.⁸⁵ Even today, Western countries often set public health goals for other nations, representing a modernized form of colonialism.⁸⁶ Infamously, for example, George H. W. Bush's administration touted abstinence-based education as a remedy for HIV/AIDS in lower-income countries receiving funds from the United States.⁸⁷ With recent global health crises like the COVID-19 pandemic, these concerns are more relevant than ever. Spain's smallpox public health response was not the first or the last time Western powers used technology and medicine to target non-Western nations. Studying the Real Expedición, therefore, provides potent insight into the often insidious interplay of colonial power and public health.

⁸⁵ Kidambi, Prashant. "‘An Infection of Locality’: Plague, Pythogenesis and the Poor in Bombay, c. 1896-1905." *Urban History* 31, no. 2, (2004).

⁸⁶ William Muraskin, "The Power of Individuals and the Dependency of Nations in Global Eradication and Immunisation Campaigns," In *The Politics of Vaccination: A Global History*, ed. Chistine Holmberg, Stuart Blume, and Paul Greenough (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2017), 331.

⁸⁷ Paula Akugizibwe, "(Purse) Strings Attached: From Dependency to Decolonization in Global Health," *The Republic*, August 14, 2020.

Bibliography

Primary Sources

- El Excelentísimo Señor D. José Antonio Caballero, Secretario de Estado, y del Despacho Universal de Gracia y Justicia: Con Fecha 1. De Septiembre Proximo Pasado Me Comunicó la Real Orden, y a Su Continuacion Dicté el Decreto que á la Letra Una y Otro Dicen Así.* Guatemala: 1804. Wellcome Collection.
- Gil, Francisco. *Extracto de la Obra Publicada en Madrid el Año Pasado de 1784 con el Título de Disertacion Fisico-Médica, en la qual se Prescribe un Método Seguro para Preservar a los Pueblos de Viruelas.* Mexico: 1788. Wellcome Collection, EPB/AM/M.61.
- Instruccion para Inocular Las Viruelas, y Método de Curarlas Con Facilidad, y Acierto.* Puebla de Los Angeles: 1797. Wellcome Collection, EPB/AM/M.73.
- Real Tribunal del Protomedicato. *Método Claro, Sencillo, y Fácil que para Practicar la Inoculacion de Viruelas Presenta al Pública el Real Tribunal del Protomedicato de esta N. E. por Superior Órden el Exmó. Señor Marqués de Branciforte Virrey de Este Reyno.* Wellcome Collection, EPB/AM/M.161.
- Romay, Tomas. *Memoria Sobre la Introducción y Progresos de la Vacuna en la Isla De Cuba.* Havana: 1805.
- Viceroy Branciforte. *A Esfuerzos de mis Estrechas Providencias para que se Cortara y Extinguiera, ó quando Méenos se Evitase la Propagacion de la Terrible Enfermedad de Viruelas.* Orizaba: 1797. Wellcome Collection, EPB/AM/M.151.

Secondary Sources

- Adas, Michael. *Machines as the Measure of Men: Science, Technology, and Ideologies of Western Dominance.* Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1989.
- Aldrete, J. Antonio. "Smallpox Vaccinations in the Early 19th Century

- Using Live Carriers: The Travels of Francisco Xavier de Balmis.” *Southern Medical Journal* 97, no. 4 (2004): 375-8.
- Akugizibwe, Paula. “(Purse) Strings Attached: From Dependency to Decolonization in Global Healthl” *The Republic*, August 14, 2020.
- Diamond, Jared. *Guns, Germs, and Steel: The Fates of Human Societies*. New York: W. W. Norton, 1997.
- Few, Martha. “Circulating Smallpox Knowledge: Guatemalan Doctors, Maya Indians and Designing Spain’s Smallpox Vaccination Expedition, 1780-1803.” *The British Journal for the History of Science* 43, no. 4 (2010): 519-537.
- . “Epidemics, Indigenous Communities, and Public Health in the COVID-19 Era: Views from Smallpox Inoculation Campaigns in Colonial Guatemala.” *Journal of Global History* 15, no. 3 (2020): 380-393.
- . *For All of Humanity: Mesoamerican and Colonial Medicine in Enlightenment Guatemala*. Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2015.
- . “Medical Humanitarianism and Smallpox Inoculation in Eighteenth-Century Guatemala.” *Historical Social Research* 37, no. 3 (2012): 303-317.
- Franco-Paredes, Carlos, Lorena Lammoglia, and José Ignacio Santos-Preciado. “The Spanish Royal Philanthropic Expedition to Bring Smallpox Vaccination to the New World and Asia in the 19th Century.” *Clinical Infectious Diseases* 41, no. 9 (2005): 1285–1289.
- “French Defeated in Spain, Ending the Peninsular War.” History.com. July 27, 2019.
- Harrison, Mark. “Quarantine, Pilgrimage, and Colonial Trade: India 1866-1900.” *The Indian Economic and Social History Review* 29, no. 2 (1992): 117-144.
- Kidambi, Prashant. “‘An Infection of Locality’: Plague, Pythogenesis and the Poor in Bombay, c. 1896-1905.” *Urban History* 31, no. 2, (2004): 249-267.
- King, Nicholas B. “Security, Disease, Commerce: Ideologies of

- Postcolonial Global Health.” *Social Studies of Science* 32, Special Issue: Postcolonial Technoscience (2002): 763-789.
- Mark, Catherine and José G. Rigau-Pérez. “The World’s First Immunization Campaign: The Spanish Smallpox Vaccine Expedition, 1803–1813.” *Bulletin of the History of Medicine* 83, no. 1 (2008): 63-94.
- Muraskin, William. “The Power of Individuals and the Dependency of Nations in Global Eradication and Immunisation Campaigns.” In *The Politics of Vaccination: A Global History*, edited by Chistine Holmberg, Stuart Blume, and Paul Greenough. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2017.
- Patterson, Kristine and Thomas Runge. “Smallpox and the Native American.” *The American Journal of the Medical Sciences* 323, no. 4 (2002): 216–222.
- Poska, Allyson. “Experiencing Locally, Thinking Globally: Smallpox Vaccination as a Framework for Understanding the Global Early Modern.” *Modern Philology* 119, no. 1 (2021): 111-26.
- “Protomedicato,” Encyclopedia.com.
- Salvador, Amauri Batista, Alodio Mena Campo, and Isabel García González. “La Sociedad Económica de Amigos del País de La Habana: contribución al progreso sociocultural.” *Varona. Revista Científico Metodológica*, no. 66 (2018).
- Smith, Michael M. “The ‘Real Expedición Marítima de la Vacuna’ in New Spain and Guatemala.” *Transactions of the American Philosophical Society* 64, no. 1 (1974): 1-74.
- Riedel, Stefan. “Edward Jenner and the history of smallpox and vaccination.” *Baylor University Medical Center Proceedings* 18, no. 1 (2005): 21-5.
- Ramírez, Paul. “‘Like Herod’s Massacre’: Quarantines, Bourbon Reform, and Popular Protest in Oaxaca’s Smallpox Epidemic, 1796—1797.” *The Americas* 69, no. 2 (2012): 203-235
- Webster, Richard A. “Western Colonialism.” In *Britannica*.

The Anthropologists' War

Orientalism, Pragmatism, and Mythology in American cross-cultural studies on Japan during World War Two

Matthew Oey

Abstract

An overlooked episode in the historiography on WWII was the mass hiring of social scientists by American intelligence agencies interested in producing population-wide studies for the war. This paper hones in on one corner of this narrative—how the Office of War Information (OWI) enlisted anthropologists to study Japanese culture in the Pacific Theater. The relationship between social scientists and military intelligence is examined through an intellectual history of the “National Character” study, an anthropological method specially curated for the war effort by Margaret Mead and Ruth Benedict. I analyze how the proponents and critics of National Character debated its efficacy as a tool of practical knowledge, and how the asymmetrical relationship between social scientists and their military employers shaped that debate. My argument is threefold: these cultural studies must be understood within the context of an infrastructure of knowledge production that privileged pragmatic and “Orientalist” studies that reinforced the racially-essentializing zeitgeist; second, that the military’s enlistment of anthropology was not merely passive, but actively shaped the discipline; third, that anthropologists had little control over how their ideas were understood and circulated, and were thus not central determinants behind public perception and military policy but were primarily used as *ex*

post facto justification. By examining how the war shaped the production, reception, and dissemination of cultural knowledge about Japan, this analysis serves as a microcosm of the broader literature on the relationship between politics and knowledge in America's 20th-century rise to global dominance.

“The administrator uses social science the way a drunk uses a lamppost, for support rather than for illumination.”

- Alexander Leighton on the relationship between social science and the military¹

WWII and The *Levée en Masse* of American Social Science

In 1793, as a cabal of European monarchies bore down on the nascent French republic, the National Assembly decreed the *Levée en Masse*. An embryonic articulation of total mobilization, it dictated that no human or material resource—no force of production or facet of society—was exempt from the war effort. In the 20th century, the United States underwent two similar nexus events around 1916 and 1941. These historical junctures conjure up images of men in uniform and women in factories, the seismic social implications of which have spawned myriads of literature. However, these wars also transformed the nature of knowledge. WWII was a flashpoint for American engagement with the world, which marched hand-in-hand with the numerous intelligence services borne from the cradle of its wartime needs.² Though we tend not to think of it, this intellectual dimension is paramount to understanding how war shapes the production of ideas.

America's post-war transition into a new epoch of global hegemony was complemented by the exponential rise and institutionalization of its

¹ Alexander H. Leighton, *Human Relations in a Changing World: Observations on the Use of the Social Sciences* (Whitefish, MT: Literary Licensing, 2012), 128.

² Nicholas Dirks and Nils Gilman, “American Knowledge of the World,” Chap. in *The Cambridge History of America and the World*, ed. by David C. Engerman, Max Paul Friedman, and Melani McAlister (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2022), 102; Alexander Walker, “Franklin D. Roosevelt and the Creation of the United States Intelligence Community,” Unpublished Thesis, 28.

intelligence apparatus,³ epitomizing the indivisibility of knowledge and power. Before 1941, American knowledge about the globe existed in relative oblivion; after Pearl Harbor, Washington quickly acquired a vested interest in *knowing*—knowing everything from foreign “military capabilities and natural resources to economic organization, politics, demographics, languages, and culture.” The impetus for such a radical shift was the totalizing logic of WWII, which made “apparent the importance of [understanding] as much as possible about the world for strategic military purposes.”⁴ Large numbers of academics thus poured into government service, and many were propelled to political and academic prominence throughout the war.⁵ All are familiar with Eisenhower’s “military-industrial complex.” Senator William Fulbright has more aptly coined this amalgamation “the military-industrial-*academic* complex,”—a *levée en masse* of social scientists by the military and the harnessing of knowledge itself for the purpose of waging modern war.⁶

The symbiosis between WWII and social science was most emphatically personified in the Office of War Information (OWI). Created by Roosevelt in 1942, the OWI hired academics to conduct large-scale studies on domestic and foreign populations for the “propaganda war.”⁷ They applied psychology to improve domestic support for the war effort, while targeting enemy civilians and combatants with the inverse goal of undermining their morale and inducing defeatism. Thousands of carefully-engineered messages were disseminated to Axis territories through radio broadcasts and pamphlets dropped from the same bomb-carrying compartments of America’s awesome air fleets—historians emphasize the

³ David Jones, “Measuring and Mobilizing the Media, 1939-1945,” *Midwest Quarterly* 26 (1984), 38.

⁴ Dirks and Gilman, “American Knowledge of the World,” 103-104.

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ *Ibid.*, 103.

⁷ Allison Gilmore, *You Can’t Fight Tanks with Bayonets: Psychological warfare against the Japanese army in the southwest Pacific* (Nebraska: Bison, 1998), 13; Laurie Clayton, “The Ultimate Dilemma of Psychological Warfare in the Pacific: Enemies who don’t surrender and GIs who don’t take prisoners,” *War & Society* 14, no. 1 (1996): 103.

bomber's dual, idiosyncratic role in modern war as both the harbinger of armageddon and guarantor of safety via these "surrender leaflets."⁸ That the mind was accepted as a valid target of the war effort represented an escalation towards the fullest manifestation of "total war." Moreover, it was this peculiar aspect of the war that put a high premium on social scientists in the government-military agencies whose *raison d'être* was engaging this abstract, furtive dimension of modern combat.⁹

Although the literature on this topic has disproportionately focused on the European Theater, the social scientists of the OWI made their greatest contributions in the Pacific War. Unlike "The Good War" in the West, the Japanese were the object of American resentment and racism, and the combat exhibited all the hallmarks of a colonial war of extermination.¹⁰ The propaganda effort against Japan was thus complicated by this cultural dimension in dire need of navigation.¹¹ It was here that the OWI requisitioned the full force of American anthropology—which included canonical names such as Margaret Mead, Gregory Bateson, and Ruth Benedict—to make sense of a foreign enemy demonized as barbaric and incomprehensible.¹² However, anthropology was also weaponized in the

⁸ Monica Kim, *The Interrogation Rooms of the Korean War: The Untold History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2019), 18-19.

⁹ Lynette Finch, "Psychological Propaganda: The War of Ideas on Ideas During the First Half of the Twentieth Century," *Armed Forces & Society* 26, no. 3 (2000): 370-372 discusses how large-scale social scientific and psychological studies arose from the inter-war concern with fighting propaganda war, personified in the figure of Walter Lippman.

¹⁰ John Dower, *War Without Mercy: Race and Power in the Pacific War* (London: Pantheon, 1986), 13.

¹¹ Virginia Yans-McLaughlin, "Mobilizing Culture and Personality for World War II," in *Malinowski, Rivers, Benedict and Others: Essays on Culture and Personality*, ed. George W. Stocking, vol. 4 (Madison, WI: U. of Wisconsin Press, 1987), 184; David H. Price, *Anthropological Intelligence: The Deployment and Neglect of American Anthropology in the Second World War* (Durham: Duke Univ. Press, 2008), 28; Michael H. Hunt and Steven Levine, *Arc of Empire: America's Wars in Asia from the Philippines to Vietnam* (University Of North Carolina Press, 2014), 96-97;

¹² "Out of the 300 anthropologists in the United States during WWII, all but half a dozen served in the OWI" cited in Thomas K. Nakayama and Rona Halualani, *The*

process. The war gave rise to and popularized a new method of surveying other cultures called the National Character study, an evolution of the “Culture and Personality” school of the 1930s but specially tailored to America’s wartime needs. This paper will analyze the wartime studies on Japan that institutionalized this method to better elucidate the relationship between social science and military intelligence.

A secondary aim of this analysis is to unpack how a group of progressive, anti-racist, and culturally-tolerant anthropologists came to produce the most racially-essentializing images of Japan during the war. The figure that towered over American anthropology at the time was Franz Boas, and it was his successors, namely Mead and Benedict, who went on to author the most influential cultural studies on Japan at the OWI. Boas’ “Copernican Shift” in the social sciences was his refutation of biologically-determinist theories of behavior (those typically associated with race science) in favor of cultural explanations. This Boasian approach, called “historical particularism,” argued that behavioral differences between races and cultures originated from their divergent histories and environments, rather than any innate biological characteristics. Put differently, it viewed culture as a product of history, which influenced the psychological disposition of individuals.¹³ This may seem obvious to us living in the 21st century, but we need to keep in mind that it was incredibly radical at the time. The irony is that Mead and her contemporaries championed Boas’ legacy of cultural tolerance while simultaneously creating and popularizing the National Character method—their studies repackaged a whole slew of anti-Japanese stereotypes as “objective” science, which tended, instead, to reinforce racist thinking.¹⁴

The tension on display here between scientific objectivity and racist tropes reflects a pattern in the intellectual history of cross-cultural

Handbook of Critical Intercultural Communication (West Sussex: J. Wiley & Sons, 2013), 23, 27;

¹³ Regna Darnell, *Invisible Genealogies: A history of Americanist Anthropology*, vol. 1 (University of Nebraska Press, 2001), 35, 40, 43.

¹⁴ Dower, *War Without Mercy*, 122.

observation. In his seminal work *Orientalism*, Edward Said illuminates this European tradition of caricaturing the Orient through mirror images of the West. Those fabrications then perpetuate themselves as empirical fact through a discourse that reproduces its own biases. More broadly, his ideas call attention to the fact that cross-cultural observation does not exist in a vacuum; rather, the creation of such knowledge is conditioned by the positionality of the subject within a discourse that refracts the object it studies. This prefaces one of Said's more abstract caveats: the production of cultural knowledge is inherently political.¹⁵ Intellectual historians Nils Gilman and Nicholas Dirks draw a similar conclusion in their meta-analysis of the rise of American knowledge in the 20th century: the United States became "conscious of the world for clear and practical reasons"—the need to fight a world war. Its production of global knowledge has thus always been intertwined with "strategic, corporate, and political interests."¹⁶

This paper aims to triangulate these tangential literatures on knowledge production to a common denominator in the Pacific Theater of WWII. In the tropical labyrinth of 1940s Asia, where anthropologists fought the war from afar using pen and paper, the pragmatic policy aims of the military intersected Orientalist traditions of defining the *Other*. Adapting Osama Khalil's argument from *America's Dream Palace* to the Pacific Theater, I argue that these wartime cultural studies map onto a pattern in the history of American intellectual engagement with the world in which social science is instrumentalized to fit the practical demands of military strategy and foreign policy.¹⁷ Second, I show that the military's enlistment of American anthropology was not merely passive. Their patronage of the National Character study—a method with lower epistemological standards than traditional ethnography—actively transformed the academic field. Third, I argue that anthropologists had minimal influence on public perceptions of Japan and Washington's military or foreign policy. Their job was to produce

¹⁵ Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (London: Penguin Books, 2019), 10.

¹⁶ Dirks and Gilman, "American Knowledge of the World," 122.

¹⁷ Osamah F. Khalil, *America's Dream Palace: Middle East Expertise and the Rise of the National Security State* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2016), 21, 307.

knowledge, but they had little control over how that knowledge was internalized and then used. Therefore, the over-prevalence of racially-essentializing studies is not simply a product of academia's integration into the military, but must be understood within the context of the knowledge production infrastructure of the OWI and its preference for reductionism over nuance. I begin by tracing a brief intellectual genealogy of the National Character method, and then analyze the influential publications in which it was applied to study Japan; I then look at how the proponents and critics of the method debated its efficacy, and how military agencies may have influenced this debate by privileging the studies that utilized National Character.

The Historiographical Debate on Anthropological Intelligence in the Pacific War

The narrative of racial brutality that looms large over the literature on the Pacific Theater comes from historian John Dower's *War Without Mercy*. "Japs, yellow monkeys, mad dogs"—such epithets were commonplace in the rhetoric that animated anti-Japanese enmity.¹⁸ Dower and others have also drawn attention to the intellectual undercurrents that propagated this discourse. As mentioned, often-overlooked cultural studies on Japan provided scholarly legitimacy to the popular racism of the time, and its expositors influenced wartime intelligence on the Japanese enemy.¹⁹ The most famous study was Ruth Benedict's *Chrysanthemum and the Sword*, commissioned by the Office of War Information (OWI) in 1944. Together with Weston La Barre and Geoffrey Gorer, the latter of whose essay "Themes in Japanese Culture" was considered by Dower "the single most influential academic analysis of Japan during the war," this intellectual

¹⁸ Dower, *War Without Mercy*, 79-83.

¹⁹ Ibid., 119; see also Richard H. Minear, "Cross-Cultural Perception and World War II: American Japanists of the 1940s and their Images of Japan", *International Studies Quarterly* XXIV; Minear, "The Wartime Studies of Japanese National Character," *Japan Interpreter* XIII (1980).

triarchy monopolized cross-cultural perceptions of Japan and contributed to America's post-war occupation policy.²⁰

The National Character method operated on two axioms: cultures imposed fixed patterns of behavior on individuals. Therefore, national cultures were a monolith that constituted a valid object of behavioral analysis. In other words, National Character was a synthesis of anthropology and psychoanalytic-psychology that attributed to entire cultures distinct universal personalities—or archetypal characteristics—which ostensibly represented all individuals of its nation. Although intended to engender a sense of cultural relativism and tolerance, these studies instead reinforced the popular zeitgeist that Japanese culture was despicable and inferior—that their “national character” was truly *sui generis*.²¹ A wide range of studies spearheaded by historian Richard Minear has lampooned these caricatures for personifying the exact type of intellectual dehumanization elucidated in *Orientalism*.²² Dower makes the similar point that anti-Japanese rhetoric could

²⁰ Naoko Shibusawa, *America's Geisha Ally: Reimagining the Japanese Enemy* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2010), 60-61 provides the most comprehensive study on the rehabilitation of Japan's post war image in Western eyes, and she attributes Benedict's *Sword* with institutionalizing the entire generation of myths that influenced this undertaking; see also Dower, *War Without Mercy*, 124; Patrick Porter, *Military Orientalism: Eastern war through Western Eyes* (Columbia: Columbia University Press, 2009), 52.

²¹ Dower, *War Without Mercy*, 122.

²² One of the early expositions on Orientalism in American perceptions of Japan is Richard Minear's, “Orientalism and the Study of Japan,” *The Journal of Asian Studies* 39, no. 3 (1980); “Much of the wartime research into Japanese character was entrusted to anthropologists who had no prior contact with Japan.” They thus tended to rely on comparative analysis that substituted objectivity for reductionist us-versus-them distinctions. This is explained further by Minear in “Cross-Cultural Perception and World War II,” 38-39; see also Minear, “The Wartime Studies of Japanese National Character;” Peter Suzuki, “A Retrospective Analysis of a Wartime National Character Study,” *Dialectical Anthropology* 5, no. 1 (1980): 33-46; Porter, *Military Orientalism*, 48-52; Frederico Neiburg and Marcio Goldman, “Anthropology and Politics in Studies of National Character,” *Cultural Anthropology* 13, no. 1 (1998): 56-81; Philip Gleason, “Americans all: World War II and the shaping of American Identity,” *The Review of Politics* 43, no. 4 (1981), 506.

be transposed seamlessly onto the 16th century decimation of indigenous populations in the New World, or any conflict for that matter where the West came into contact with its inferior, non-Western antithesis; the term “Japanese” simply filled the amorphous void on this continuum for any cognate of the pejorative “barbarian.”²³ In this regard, Benedict and her colleagues have been accused of merely dressing up the crude racializations of wartime propaganda in intellectual garb.

American anthropologists were also enlisted by the Psychological Warfare Branch in the Pacific Theater to help improve anti-Japanese propaganda.²⁴ Established by MacArthur in 1944, the PWB was tasked with surveilling the psychology of Japanese soldiers in order to increase their infamously-abysmal surrender rates. They hired academics from the OWI through a sub-organization, the Foreign Morale Analysis Division (FMAD), to conduct large-scale analyses of “prisoner of war interrogation reports; captured diaries, letters, and official documents.”²⁵ These reports then informed the creation of propaganda leaflets and radio broadcasts that disseminated alongside American armies as they slogged through the Pacific archipelagos. Although primitive and ineffective at first, the PWB’s propaganda assessments leveraged an iterative process to eventually arrive at accurate depictions of enemy morale. Their success stemmed from the astute assumption that the Japanese military was an aggregate of “fundamentally human” individuals, not a fanatical monolith—they were thus able to dichotomize the soldier from his national caricature and, in turn, provide military planners with “rational” and “scientific” appraisals of the enemy.²⁶

²³ Dower, “Yellow, Red, and Black Men,” Chap.6 in *War Without Mercy*, 146-150 this chapter draws parallels between the “war of words” against Japan and the time-old rhetoric used to describe Native Americans, African Americans, and any ‘other’ non-western category in the Anglo-American tradition. Dower cites *Orientalism* amongst a plethora of studies that delve into the rhetorical dynamics of cross-cultural conflict.

²⁴ Gilmore, *You Can’t Fight Tanks with Bayonets*, 14; Porter, *Military Orientalism*, 51-52.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 128.

²⁶ Cited in Akira Iriye, *Power and Culture: The Japanese-American War, 1941-1945* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1982), 210; see also Eleanor Sparagana, “The Conduct and Consequences of Psychological Warfare: American Psychological

For instance, an FMAD study concluded that only 10 percent of Japanese diarists qualified as the “ruthlessly fierce, tough, strongly indoctrinated fighter” that had become emblematic of Japan’s national character across American propaganda and cultural studies.²⁷ Historian Allison Gilmore’s monograph on the PWB in *You Can’t Fight Tanks with Bullets* exemplifies a revisionist trend in the literature on psywar that seeks to complicate the Orientalist veneer of wartime cross-cultural analysis. They assert, instead, that American anthropological intelligence in the Pacific resisted racial stereotypes and produced a more scientific, more humane characterization of the Japanese fighting man than one might surmise from Dower’s diorama of a “hateful race war.”²⁸

However, these were the same group of anthropologists whose studies reproduced numerous racial stereotypes about the Japanese. How did the same actors produce such a mixed range of observations? Did they challenge or reinforce the Orientalist overtones of the time? Were their studies objective or essentializing? These contradictions lie at the heart of this historiography. The international relations theorist Patrick Porter is the first and only scholar who has attempted to resolve this oscillation between empirical observation and caricature. His article “Paper Bullets” calls this “an uneasy symbiosis of myth-making and science, an ongoing tension between ideological vision and painstaking critical observation.”²⁹ Porter’s solution is that the accuracy of cross-cultural intelligence maps onto its respective level

Warfare Operations in the War Against Japan, 1941-1945,” Unpublished Thesis, Brandeis University (1990), 16-17.

²⁷ Cited in Gilmore, *You Can’t Fight Tanks with Bayonets*, 164.

²⁸ The main proponents of this argument are Allison Gilmore, *You Can’t Fight Tanks with Bayonets*; Gilmore, “We Have Been Reborn: Japanese Prisoners and the Allied Propaganda War in the Southwest Pacific,” *Pacific Historical Review* 64, no. 2 (1995); and Douglas Ford, “US Perceptions of Military Culture and the Japanese Army’s Performance During the Pacific War,” *War & Society* 29, no. 1 (2010): 71-93; see also Sparagana, “The Conduct and Consequences of Psychological Warfare”; Patrick Porter, “Paper Bullets: American Psywar in the Pacific, 1944-1945,” *War in History* 17, no. 4 (2010): 491-98; for an alternate view of the PWB that disputed its success see Laurie, “The Ultimate Dilemma of Psychological Warfare.”

²⁹ Porter, “Paper Bullets,” 483-84.

of analysis—at the “tactical combat’ level where the PWB appraised the Imperial Japanese Army,” their methods were “scientific;” at the strategic foreign policy level, where the unit of analysis was a nation, their observations devolved into mythology. The reason for such a discrepancy, he adds, is pragmatism, or lack thereof. The “needs of the military” at the tactical level forced the PWB to pursue objective intelligence, whereas the absence of a clear goal at the grand strategic level left a void to be filled with the “pre-existing ideology” of National Character analyses.³⁰

However, this view is contested by anthropologists Frederico Neiburg and Marcio Goldman, who posit that strategic-level wartime needs provided the practical impetus for the widespread institutionalization of National Character in the 1940s.³¹ This paper attempts to complicate Porter’s framework with Neiburg and Goldman’s assessment. I concur that the creation of knowledge at the strategic-foreign policy level had its own expedient function within the larger military-industrial-academic complex. Still, Porter’s thesis serves as a great starting point for investigating these contradictory claims over the accuracy of anthropological intelligence. If he is right, then the veracity of cross-cultural knowledge can be easily traced along the two levels of analysis: tactical-scientific versus strategic-mythological. However, I argue that this oversimplification elides the political and pragmatic necessities that conditioned the larger production of cultural knowledge—that of a rising global power in desperate need of information about the foreign world.

The Rise of National Character and Orientalism in Wartime Studies on Japan

The landscape of American anthropology in the interwar period was highly diffuse. Even within the Boasian school, there existed a plethora of

³⁰ Ibid., 510-11.

³¹ Neiburg and Goldman, “Anthropology and Politics in Studies of National Character,” this is also argued in Daniel Pipes, “The Great Inquiry into National Character,” *Academic Questions* 35, no. 1 (March 18, 2022): 20.

divergent interpretations, and its disciples were not a homogenous group.³² That the particular vogue of National Character would go on to take center stage during WWII was not inevitable. A brief genealogy of this methodology traces its inception to the “Culture and Personality” movement of the late 1920s.³³ Although there is some scholarly dispute over its intellectual roots, the main progenitors of this movement were Edward Sapir, Margaret Mead, and Ruth Benedict. The neologism “Culture and Personality” was first coined by Sapir in a Yale lecture, and later formalized by Mead in her seminal book *The Coming of Age in Samoa*, published in 1928.³⁴ The movement, broadly speaking, was an interdisciplinary merging of social and cultural anthropology with “the psychology of personality” in an attempt to delineate the influence of cultures on individual behavior.³⁵ However, the movement was not a unified whole, and itself housed an array of disagreements and methodologies.³⁶ For example, Benedict’s configurationist approach—culture as a series of intelligible, integrated patterns—was rejected by Sapir who viewed culture as a shifting constellation of language.³⁷

The National Character studies that arose in the 1940s was an evolution of the “Culture and Personality” movement specially adapted to the war effort by Mead, Benedict, and Bateson. In effect, National Character leaned into Benedict's configurationist approach to anthropology but expanded its scope from the study of small, primitive societies to entire

³² Philip K. Bock, *Rethinking Psychological Anthropology: Continuity and Change in the Study of Human Action* (Prospect Heights, IL: Waveland Press, 1999), 41-42.

³³ Jack David Eller, *Psychological Anthropology for the 21st Century* (London: Routledge, 2018), 52.

³⁴ Neiburg and Goldman, “Anthropology and Politics in Studies of National Character,” 62.

³⁵ Denoted in the simple equation C=P in Eller, *Psychological Anthropology*, 37-38; Robert A. Levine, “Culture and Personality Studies, 1918-1960: Myth and History,” *Journal of Personality* 69, no. 6 (2001): 808.

³⁶ Neiburg and Goldman, “Anthropology and Politics in Studies of National Character,” 63; Levine, “Culture and Personality Studies,” 808.

³⁷ Neiburg and Goldman, “Anthropology and Politics in Studies of National Character,” 63-64; Eller, *Psychological Anthropology*, 40.

countries.³⁸ Moreover, as the objects of analysis were nations the US was actively at war with, its methodology relinquished fieldwork for a reliance on popular sources, such as literature, films, and propaganda. This approach is thus sometimes referred to as the “Study of Culture at a Distance,” taken from its successor movement after the war.³⁹ The first applications of National Character—Bateson’s “Morale and National Character” (1942) and Mead’s *Keep Your Powder Dry* (1942)—assessed American culture for the purpose of improving wartime morale. However, the movement’s intellectual framework originated earlier in Benedict’s 1934 book *Patterns of Culture*, a theoretical formulation of her disposition within the Culture and Personality school at the time.⁴⁰

In *Patterns of Culture*, Benedict laid out the central propositions that would later develop into the National Character model of the 1940s. She proposed that “cultural configurations” are critical to “the understanding of group behavior,” as culture is “individual psychology thrown large upon the screen.”⁴¹ The essence of this theory is synthesized in the trite aphorism: “a culture, like an individual, is a more or less consistent pattern of thought and action.”⁴² The central assumptions outlined here—that culture was a coherent and intelligible aggregate of individual personalities—weighed on the entire cohort of American anthropologists called up to study Japan during the war. Geoffrey Gorer first applied this methodology towards understanding the peculiarities of Japanese culture in “Themes in Japanese Culture.”⁴³ Together with Weston LaBarre’s “Some Observations on Character Structure in the Orient” and Benedict’s own acclaimed book, *The Chrysanthemum and the Sword*, this trifecta of publications popularized the

³⁸ Ibid., 63.

³⁹ Price, *Anthropological Intelligence*, 172.

⁴⁰ John Embree, “Standardized Error and Japanese Character: A Note on Political Interpretation,” *World Politics* 2, no. 3 (1950), 439.

⁴¹ Ruth Benedict, *Patterns of Culture* (Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin, 1959), 23-24.

⁴² Benedict, *Patterns of Culture*, 46.

⁴³ John Embree, “Standardized Error and Japanese Character,” 439.

intellectual brand of National Character that would hegemonize cross-cultural perceptions of Japan.⁴⁴

The first of these to gain widespread influence was Gorer's 1942 publication "Themes in Japanese Culture". Developed from a memorandum he wrote for the State Department, the paper was an early attempt at explaining the "savagery, lust and [destructiveness]" of Japanese culture using the National Character framework.⁴⁵ Gorer began with a list of twelve postulates central to his methodology, many of which are taken directly from Benedict's *Patterns of Culture*. For example, number three stated that "in all societies the behavior of the component individuals...shows a relative uniformity in similar situations;" a synthesis of postulates nine and twelve asserted that all "adult behavior is motivated by learned drives or wishes superimposed...[by] existing social institutions."⁴⁶ Gorer then identified a universal Japanese trait in the "constant urge to control the environment as completely as possible," which he elevated to an explanatory framework for Japanese history.⁴⁷ The confidence and ease with which he moved from cursory observation to hypostatized fact is indicative of the causal historical explanations that the National Character method attempted to extract from behavioral analysis.

Weston LaBarre's 1945 publication "Observations on Character Structure in the Orient" echoed much of the same reasoning. There exists "such a thing as [a] psychological nationality" shared between individuals and their collective grouping.⁴⁸ In characteristically Orientalist fashion, he then emphasized that "the typical character structure of the Japanese is discernibly different from that of the American"—the Japanese are "the most compulsive people in the world ethnological museum," which he defined using a litany of pejoratives including "self-righteousness, fanaticism,

⁴⁴ See footnote 18.

⁴⁵ First footnote in Geoffrey Gorer, "Themes in Japanese Culture," *Transactions of the New York Academy of Sciences* (1943).

⁴⁶ Gorer, "Themes in Japanese Culture," 107-108.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 123-24.

⁴⁸ Weston LaBarre, "Some observations on character structure in the Orient," *Psychiatry* 8, no. 3 (1945): 321.

arrogance, conformity to rule, sadomasochistic behavior, jealousy, and enviousness,” just to name a few.⁴⁹ LaBarre then elevated Gorer’s behavioral-determinist understanding of history to the extreme. “Even Pearl Harbor,” he argued, was an “instance on the international level of this same surreptitious ‘terroristic’ manner of expression aggression.”⁵⁰ And adopting Freudian ideas, both traced this “expression aggression” to the failure of potty training at the “anal level of development.”⁵¹ Such uncanny remarks were the intellectual offspring of the National Character movement—a process that obfuscated socio-economic explanations for the war by reinforcing the popular sentiment that it stemmed from the innate degeneracy of Japanese culture.

Along this succession, Benedict’s 1946 magnum opus, *The Chrysanthemum and the Sword*, became the single “most famous American social-science contribution to [WWII].”⁵² Based on a series of reports she created for the OWI on Japanese culture, the book demarcated a break from the Freudian-centric analyses of her predecessors in favor of a more holistic attempt at patterning Japanese behavior at a distance.⁵³ Nevertheless, it was no less full of myth and platitudes. An intellectual genealogy of her work found that it was “most significantly shaped” by the Japanese-American

⁴⁹ LaBarre, “Some observations on character structure,” 322, 326.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 337; LaBarre also conducted his study on nisei detained at Japanese American internment camps without properly acknowledging the limitations that would post on the epistemology of such a study. His methodology is torn apart in Suzuki, “A Retrospective Analysis.”

⁵¹ Gorer, “Themes in Japanese Culture,” 119; LaBarre, “Some observations on character structure,” 326.

⁵² Price, *Anthropological Intelligence*, 177.

⁵³ Benedict’s *Chrysanthemum* was based on a report, “Japanese Behavior Patterns,” given to the OWI in 1945. The only additions made from the report to *Chrysanthemum* were “an overview of Japanese domestic history since the Meiji Restoration” and “a chapter about child-rearing practices,” among minor editorial changes. For these reasons, though published after the war, *Chrysanthemum* is still a valid work for understanding what kind of ideas circulated through the OWI during the war. See footnote 10 in Price, “Anthropology and Nihonjinron at the Office of War Information,” in *Anthropological Intelligence*, 177.

Inazo Nitobe's study *Bushido: The Soul of Japan*.⁵⁴ Published in 1899, Nitobe's book explained Bushido, feudal Japanese samurai code, for an American audience by presenting it in analog to Western chivalry.⁵⁵ The dogmatic acceptance of this idealized militarism as fundamental to Japanese culture pervaded Benedict's thinking. She wrote, "all the ways in which the Japanese departed from Western conventions of war were data on their view of life and their convictions."⁵⁶ She then outlined a series of dichotomies emblematic of Japanese National Character: "to the highest degree, [they are] both aggressive and unaggressive, both militaristic and aesthetic, both insolent and polite..."⁵⁷ The reason for the former overpowering the latter she attributed to a culture of shame and repression.⁵⁸ Like Gorer and LaBarre, Benedict surmised from these behavioral tendencies a historical explanation for Pearl Harbor—an "old and dangerous pattern of aggressiveness" turned outward "against [other] nations..., unrighteously [offending the] international peace by their act of conquest."⁵⁹

Benedict typified what Richard Minear calls "*nouveaux Japonistes*."⁶⁰ These were anthropologists who had "no prior contact with Japan," and who were intensely committed to the American war effort in a way that correlated with their strong negative reactions to Japanese culture.⁶¹ Their chief contribution to early understandings of the war was this positing of a direct causal relationship between National Character and foreign policy, purporting psycho-behavioral explanations for Pearl Harbor.⁶² However,

⁵⁴ Price, *Anthropological Intelligence*, 176.

⁵⁵ Alexander Bennett, "Introduction: Bridging Eons and Oceans," in *Bushido: The Samurai Code of Japan*: (North Clarendon, VT: Tuttle Publishing, 2019), 38-41; the other work that primarily influenced Benedict was *Suye Mura* by John Embree, to be discussed later.

⁵⁶ Ruth Benedict, *The Chrysanthemum and the Sword: Pattern of Japanese Culture* (Rutland, VT: Tuttle, 1978), 20.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 2.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 165, 296, 315.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 300, 169.

⁶⁰ Minear, "The Wartime Studies of Japanese National Character;" 38.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 45; Minear, "Cross-Cultural Perception" 559.

⁶² Minear, "The Wartime Studies of Japanese National Character;" 45

Benedict and her enterprise of National Character were not without their critics. Minear aptly labeled this opposing group of anthropologists “The Critical,” which included Charles Burton Fahs and John Fee Embree.⁶³ I focus on how these thinkers offered methodological alternatives to the National Character school while simultaneously challenging their epistemological oversights.

Starting in 1933, Charles Fahs spent three years studying Japanese language, culture, and politics in Paris, Kyoto, and Tokyo. When the war began, he was recruited by the Office of Strategic Services and eventually promoted to lead its Far East division.⁶⁴ His only major work, *Government in Japan: Recent Trends in its Scope and Operation*, prophesied the Orientalist turn that would be ushered in by the National Character movement years later:

Peace negotiations may easily be jeopardized by *emotional biases such as have been encouraged during recent years by the repeated charges of ‘fascism,’ ‘totalitarianism,’ ‘militarism,’ and ‘feudalism’ made in discussions of Japanese political trends.* It is [my] considered opinion that these epithets, at least in the derogatory sense in which they are usually applied, are dangerously misleading and that their use is due to lack of perspective. They are *superficial judgements on political tendencies...*⁶⁵

Decades ahead of his time, Fahs further cautioned that, although “Japan has peculiarities enough to mislead the average Western observer,” it was clear that “in domestic politics, Japanese statesmen were no different” than the West. He thus deduced economic motives for pre-1940 Japanese expansions, emphasizing that its causes were “worldwide, not local, in character.”⁶⁶ Published in 1940 before America knew it would be at war with Japan, Fahs

⁶³ Minear, “Cross-Cultural Perception,” 566.

⁶⁴ “A Memorial to Charles Burton Fahs.” (Oxford: Miami University Libraries Digital Collections, 2013).

⁶⁵ Charles B. Fahs, *Government in Japan: Recent Trends in Its Scope and Operation* (New York, NY: Institute of Pacific Relations, 1940), xi; italics added.

⁶⁶ Fahs, *Government in Japan*, 88.

preempted the National Character analyses that would prevail over explanations for Pearl Harbor.

The most ardent critic of National Character, John Embree, was the only Western anthropologist who had conducted fieldwork in Japan before the war, which he published in a 1939 ethnography titled *Suye Mura: A Japanese Village*.⁶⁷ After moving through several military-intelligence services, he became a supervisor in the “Psychological Warfare program at the OWI,” where he worked personally with Benedict.⁶⁸ Unanimous across the secondary literature and even in his own obituary, Embree is lauded as a paragon of “wartime dispassion” in his examination of Japan.⁶⁹ He published a slew of short polemics both throughout and after the war, which included a 1945 article that condemned “National Character structures” for sounding “suspiciously reminiscent of the racism of an earlier day.” In a footnote on the same page, he accused a social science conference on Japan of hypocrisy in their attribution to the Japanese of “‘adolescent’ and ‘gangster’” qualities while overlooking “the youth of American culture...American lynching parties, and race riots.”⁷⁰ Embree’s critiques writ large scoffed at the self-professed “objectivity” of National Character despite the ethnocentrism that riddled the movement and its desperate need “to ‘explain’ the international and domestic behavior of Japan.”⁷¹ Together with Fahs, he provided alternatives to the reductionist explanations that connected Pearl Harbor to cultural behavior.

⁶⁷ Dower, *War Without Mercy*, 129; Price, *Anthropological Intelligence*, 173.

⁶⁸ Price, *Anthropological Intelligence*, 174.

⁶⁹ John Pelzel, “John Fee Embree, 1908-1950,” *The Far Eastern Quarterly* 11, no. 2 (1952), 221; Minear, “The Wartime Studies of Japanese National Character,” 50-51, 55 & “Cross-Cultural Perception and World War II,” 566; Price, *Anthropological Intelligence*, 174; Dower is more critical of Embree than the rest of the literature, and emphasizes that although he distanced himself from the “‘National Character’ vogue,” his 1943 work *The Japanese* was still used in popular sources to justify popular racism. However, he too admits Embree was more “temperate and balanced” than the rest in *War Without Mercy*, 128-129.

⁷⁰ John Embree, “Applied Anthropology and its relationship to Anthropology,” *American Anthropologist* 47, no. 4 (1945), 636.

⁷¹ Embree, “Standardized Error and Japanese Character,” 442.

Embree's 1945 study, *The Japanese Nation*, can be read as a direct response to the Orientalist depictions of Japan that crystallized around the war. He outlined the purpose of his work with this in mind: "a spate of books and articles on Japan and the Japanese began to appear to make up for the void in our knowledge. Some writers seemed to have swallowed whole Japan's official mythology."⁷² Embree stressed the importance of "socio-economic causes, such as industrialization and European colonization in Asia, [in explaining] the complex phenomena of modern wars." He strongly disputed any behavioral explanations:

This brief summary of Japanese behavior traits...*does not provide a magical explanation for Japanese aggressive warfare* any more than a similar summary of national behavior traits would explain why the United States once attacked Mexico, the British empire took on an Empire, or the French swept over Europe under Napoleon...behavior patterns help to predict how individuals of a given culture behave in a particular social context; *they neither cause nor can they 'explain,' why nations go to war or remain at peace.*⁷³

Embree evidently wrote this with his contemporaries at the OWI in mind. The methodology he outlined, moreover, stood in direct contrast to the orthodoxy of National Character studies. He described his study as an application "of social anthropology to a survey of a modern nation," and emphasized that "the book pays little attention to the material aspects of Japanese culture such as art and architecture"—aspects which carried greater weight in Benedict's writings. Embree's cautionary warnings against racialized observation and emphasis on a socio-economic impetus for the war read presciently like modern understandings of Japanese expansion. Yet, despite being the only anthropologist with extensive pre-war expertise in Japanese culture, Embree's publications faded into obscurity.⁷⁴ Minar points out the great irony that, in his place, the "*nouveaux Japonistes*" with no

⁷² John F Embree, *The Japanese Nation: a Social Survey* (New York, NY: Farrar & Rinehart, Inc., 1945), 3.

⁷³ Ibid., 235-36; italics added.

⁷⁴ Price, *Anthropological Intelligence*, 175.

prior experience in Asia became the chief authorities on Japan during the war.⁷⁵

The Janus Faces of Pragmatism in Post-war Discussions on National Character

This study has thus identified that the National Character genre did not develop without opposition and that an alternate range of anthropological methods existed even within the OWI. The question remains: how do we explain the dominance of the “*nouveaux Japonistes*” and their National Character approach in the cross-cultural discourse on Japan? Embree himself offered an explanation across several of his post-war critiques:

Judging by the avidity with which the new characterizations of culture have been seized upon, especially by non-anthropologists, they must fill a *real social need*—a need for *easy phrases to describe foreign cultures and to justify our behavior towards them*.⁷⁶

A similar paper chastised the loss of impartiality during the war:

We anthropologists pride[d] ourselves on our objectivity in regard to cultures...[but] when we found ourselves attacked by an Oriental nation, some of us seem suddenly to have lost our objectivity and decided that those objectionable little people must have an evil, a ‘pathological,’ or at best an ‘adolescent’ culture.⁷⁷

Embree’s polemics coalesce around a meta-critique of the way that knowledge, when filling pragmatic needs, tended to favor practicality over accuracy. He cited a little-known 1927 book by the ethnologist Vilhalmur Stefansson titled *The Standardization of Error*, which postulated that “errors which fill social needs become standardized” to the point that “it might be

⁷⁵ Minear, “The Wartime Studies of Japanese National Character,” 38.

⁷⁶ Embree, “Standardized Error and Japanese Character,” 439; italics added.

⁷⁷ John Embree, “A note on ethnocentrism in anthropology,” *American Anthropologist* 52, no. 3 (1950), 430.

construed as antisocial to try to destroy them” even through fact. There thus arose “an advantage to knowledge by definition as opposed to knowledge by observation.”⁷⁸ Embree used this to denounce the National Character school for embodying the (anti-)intellectual convenience of “knowledge by definition.” The Japanese were “defined” in a particular way based on previous Western stereotypes, creating “standardized errors” which received “wide acceptance” and immunity from any contradictory observation.⁷⁹ The dynamic that Embree described here—erroneous caricatures propagated by a self-reinforcing discourse—reads like a nascent formulation of Said’s work almost 30 years early. He identified, in essence, the tension between myth (“knowledge by definition”) and objective empiricism (“knowledge by observation”) that is the subject of this paper. Moreover, he connected the overrepresentation of the former directly to the instrumentalization of knowledge to serve the war.

Interestingly, the expositors of National Character studies themselves recognized that they were stretching the epistemological limits of anthropology and reflected on the pragmatic relationship between their research and wartime needs. LaBarre seemed to have shoehorned his findings around the question, “what follows from this by way of implication for political and military action?”⁸⁰ Benedict prefaced her study with a list of the wartime hypotheticals that guided her research, such as “was capitulation possible without invasion?” She conceded that the war forced her “to forgo the *most important* technique of the cultural anthropologists: a field trip,” but reassured “confidence [that her] techniques” were adequate for understanding “Japanese habits of thought and emotion” for the “all-out war.”⁸¹ Mead in two retrospective discussions of National Character candidly emphasized the same point: that its “*raison d’être*” was the wartime demand

⁷⁸ Embree, “Standardized Error and Japanese Character,” 439.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 440.

⁸⁰ LaBarre, “Some observations on character structure,” 341; Suzuki in “A Retrospective Analysis of a Wartime National Character Study” discusses how LaBarre’s attempt to be ‘useful’ in the war effort demolished the intellectual credibility of his work.

⁸¹ Benedict, *The Chrysanthemum and the Sword*, 4-6; italics added.

for a “rapid diagnostic study” of enemy nations. It was “an emergency option” in which anthropologists “worked out the rationale for their methods as they went along.”⁸² Yet, she defended its viability on the grounds that it proved efficacious:

With the disturbed state of the world today and *the need for rapid* and often contradictory programs on the part of national states, the *usefulness of a method* which is able to include the immediate concrete situation within a systematic scientific framework is very great.⁸³

Benedict recognized she skimmed on a crucial part of cultural anthropology. Mead admitted that National Character methodologies were an *ad-hoc* reaction to the war effort. This shift from empirical fieldwork to the “study of culture at a distance” was thus, in effect, a lowering of the epistemological threshold for scientific validity in the field. Mead and Benedict’s defense of National Character simply invert Embree’s critiques—both parties concurred that the rules of anthropology were being bent into conformity with the exigent imperatives of war and both cognized the political impetus behind the National Character method. The proponents of National Character simply saw their reach for pragmatism over objectivity as strengthening rather than invalidating their work; they genuinely believed that the circumstances of war justified the slackening of epistemological standards.

These contradictions about the efficacy of instrumentalized knowledge are central to understanding how and why Embree’s ideas were cast aside. The most comprehensive attempt at unraveling the dynamics between anthropologists and policymakers at the OWI comes from anthropologist David Price’s book *Anthropological Intelligence*. Price documents that “few in civilian or military command circles seriously considered” the analyses of OWI anthropologists. Instead, “important decisions were usually made on

⁸² Margaret Mead, “National Character and the Science of Anthropology,” In *Culture and Social Character* 4 (1961): 22, 16.

⁸³ Margaret Mead, “The Study of National Character,” In *The Policy Sciences: Recent developments in scope and method* (1951): 84; italics added.

the basis of preconceptions and evidence was used only when it fit those preconceptions.”⁸⁴ Alexander Leighton, one of few sociologists who shared their personal experience at the OWI, shed light on this dynamic:

Most policymakers were either unaware of social science or skeptical and mistrusting. In the limited number of instances in which policymakers were encountered...it usually emerged sooner or later that *what they really wanted was evidence to support a course of action to which they were already deeply committed*...it was found that when conclusions reflected the prevailing ideas and beliefs of an important group of officials in the government, its reports were circulated widely and to the top. On the other hand, reports of a contrary nature had a limited circulation and traveled upward in the hierarchy only as the first line of disagreement.⁸⁵

Leonard Doob echoed identical sentiments in his autobiographical account of social science at the OWI. “Policymakers had no respect for social scientists;” important proposals or reports rarely got more than a glance before they were tossed on desks already “littered with unread or undigested reports.”⁸⁶ Like Embree, he identified a dialectic between practical and scientific knowledge, in which the former tended to always dominate. “The [social scientist] excelled only as a critic [as he tended to be] less subjective, less ethnocentric...[however] a critic is seldom popular, and the research race in the OWI tended to be won by the swift and the glib. In a competition between shrewd or wild guesses and scientific hypotheses or theories...brevity was almost always [preferred].”⁸⁷ In short, the intellectual milieu of the OWI valued simplicity over detail. “A strict adherence to the scientific *credo* in such circumstances [left] the social scientist impotent and sterile as far as policy is concerned...Social scientists who deliberately sought to be useful, therefore, were impelled to adapt themselves to the people and

⁸⁴ Price, *Anthropological Intelligence*, 186-87.

⁸⁵ Leighton, *Human Relations in a Changing World*, 120-121; italics added.

⁸⁶ Leonard Doob, “The Utilization of Social Scientists in the overseas branch of the Office of War Information,” *American Political Science Review* 41, no. 4 (1947): 662, 665.

⁸⁷ Doob, “The Utilization of Social Scientists,” 655, 664.

problems confronting them. This required a kind of plasticity which had no relationship to social science.”⁸⁸

These memoirs illustrate how the production of objective, erudite academic knowledge was never a primary concern of the OWI. Citing these among other instances where the OWI cherry-picked from a cornucopia of social-scientific knowledge to serve its policy needs, Price concludes that such agencies evinced “widespread interest in the sort of one-dimensional psychological studies that Embree had critiqued” because they tended to buttress rather than challenge “prevalent views of the enemy.” This explains why scholars with prior expertise in Asian studies were “ignored in favor of analyses that reinforced commonly held prejudices.”⁸⁹ The OWI was not interested in using knowledge to inform policy, but in confirming what they already knew—as if academic support conferred some arcane stamp of “scientific” legitimacy on their preconceived courses of action. It was not the case that a narrow political agenda defined the production of knowledge about Japan, but that only studies which fit that agenda received patronage in the system. The complex dynamic here between social science and their military intelligence employers is key to understanding the ascendancy of the *nouveaux Japonistes* and the National Character method over contemporary alternatives to cross-cultural observation.

The influence of wartime politics on these infrastructures of knowledge underpins the discrepancy between the tactical and strategic levels of cross-cultural knowledge. This is illustrated in a little-known interview with George Taylor, an academic with a pre-war background in Asian studies who served as deputy director of the Pacific Region at the OWI. Taylor “was shocked by the crudeness” of anti-Japanese propaganda, and thus founded the Foreign Morale Analysis Division (FMAD) to redesign the pamphlets using anthropology. It was FMAD, as a direct result of his intervention, that was able to provide the military with accurate, impartial portrayals of enemy morale, and who contributed most to the success of the

⁸⁸ Ibid., 663, 667.

⁸⁹ Price, *Anthropological Intelligence*, 174-75.

propaganda war.⁹⁰ Once Taylor realized that the Japanese *did* surrender, he “came to see his job as” bridging “this [dangerous] knowledge gap” in the military and White House.⁹¹ Yet the attempt to translate a tactical victory into a strategic one, so to speak, was undermined by a political-military edifice that had already decided on a shared set of axioms about the nature of Japanese culture. They were only interested in intellectual contributions insofar as they licensed existing policy. Therefore, what made FMAD’s anthropological contributions at the tactical level so accurate relative to the nation-wide cultural studies on Japan was the absence of political forces dictating the knowledge apparatus at the granular level of the propaganda war. At the OWI, by contrast, anthropologists had minimal control over how their research would be digested and then applied by policymakers.

Returning to our earlier conundrum, what we thus find is that Patrick Porter’s thesis is overly reductionist—if the accuracy of knowledge was determined by the respective dimension of analysis, be that strategic or tactical, it does not explain how anthropologists such as Embree and Fahs adhered to strict epistemological standards even when studying the entire Japanese nation and it overlooks influential historical actors such as George Taylor. Rather, the issue is that they were passed up at the OWI in favor of

⁹⁰ The scholars in the secondary literature who argue that anthropological intelligence about Japan was objective, scientific, and successful are almost exclusively referring to FMAD’s intervention in the propaganda war, which was largely precipitated by George Taylor; for more, see historiography section.

⁹¹ All of this comes from a 1996 interview between David Price and George Taylor cited and explained in Price’s article, “Lessons from Second World War anthropology: Peripheral, Persuasive and Ignored Contributions,” *Anthropology Today* 18, no. 3 (2002): 18; Taylor is forthcoming about the overwhelming racism and ignorance he had faced in getting the military to take his anthropological findings seriously. He describes an interaction where General Joseph Stilwell where, upon trying to educate him on the findings of psychological warfare, Stilwell scoffed at “academicians” teaching him his job and brought out “five captured Japanese soldiers; right in front of Professor Taylor” he had a soldier “shoot the other four in their heads. The fifth prisoner was then to be flown behind enemy lines and set loose so that he could tell his countryman.” To this Stilwell proudly exclaimed, “now *that’s what* I call psychological warfare!”

the more efficacious yet overly platitudinous writings of the National Character school, ones that leaned on the side of myth and Orientalism. Ignoring this is to miss the practical military and political concerns that governed the production, reception, and subsequent dissemination of knowledge even at the strategic-foreign policy level. The historiographical debate over the accuracy of wartime anthropology is therefore fundamentally flawed in its attempt to assess at face value the veracity of cross-cultural intelligence. Cultural knowledge cannot be decontextualized from the infrastructures of its production—understanding this point is crucial to resolving the debate.

Total Mobilization and Terraforming Knowledge

The historiographical discourse over the accuracy of anthropological intelligence obscures a far more complex infrastructure that cannot be reduced to the binary oppositions of “myth” and “science.” The production of anthropological knowledge was part of a network that interlocked military aims, foreign policy, politics, and pragmatism—animated, above all, by racism. Moreover, the relationship between military intelligence and anthropology was not one directional. While anthropology served the war dutifully, the war, in turn, terraformed the landscape of American anthropology.⁹² The rise and institutionalization of National Character, only for the method to fall out of favor early into the Cold War, is a case in point.⁹³ Although its intellectual genealogy had pre-war roots in the Culture and Personality school, the audacious leap that Benedict and her peers took from ethnographic work in small, primitive communities, to the relatively gargantuan task of studying entire nations at a distance was driven by a self-aware desire to instrumentalize knowledge for the war. In the process, Benedict and her peers were catapulted to prominence. Their work, however, paid the price in objectivity, proliferating a whole assemblage of myths that for decades colored popular depictions of Japanese culture and

⁹² Price, *Anthropological Intelligence*, xiv.

⁹³ This is the thesis of Levine, “Culture and Personality Studies.”

the Pacific War. Still, the National Character genre was not without opposition. Scholars such as Embree and Fahs, using alternate methodologies, challenged the orthodox narrative that hoisted on Japan cultural-behavioral explanations for its aggressive foreign policy.⁹⁴ Their writings contain clairvoyant polemics years ahead of their time—Embree’s critiques impressively preempt both the modern consensus that Japanese aggression was socio-economic, not cultural, in nature and that his contemporaries exemplified Orientalism to the highest degree.⁹⁵

A distinctively “modern” critique of cross-cultural analyses thus existed during WWII; what changed over time was a “correcting” of the discourse and the retroactive vindication of Embree’s work. It was not simply that the war forced the exclusive production of pragmatic knowledge, but that it put a premium on the anthropologists whose ideas *conformed* to the crude contours of existing racism.⁹⁶ The dynamic of cross-cultural

⁹⁴ Helen Mears is another author who attempted to push back against popular Orientalist conceptions of Japan. Like Embree, she had personally visited Japan before the war and used that as the basis for her 1945 book, *Mirror for Americans: Japan*, which argued that Japan and America were more similar than different. However, as she was a popular author, not an academic, and did not work at the OWI, she is omitted from this paper. Still, her contributions to the discourse deserve recognition. For more, see Richard Minear, “Helen Mears, Asia, and American Asianists,” *Asian Studies Committee Occasional Paper Series* 7 (1981).

⁹⁵ For modern readings on the socio-economic impetus behind the Pacific War see Paine Mallory, *The Wars for Asia 1911-1949* (New York, NY: Cambridge Univ. Press, 2014), Hunt and Levine, “Securing Dominance,” in *Arc of Empire*, Dower, “Global Policy with the Yamato Race as Nucleus,” in *War Without Mercy*, & Bennett, “Bridging Eons and Oceans,” 25.

⁹⁶ This paper recognized Dower’s argument, mentioned in an earlier footnote, that some of Embree’s critiques, particularly from his 1943 work *The Japanese*, do read ethnocentric, and were used by popular sources to justify crude racism along the lines of the National Character thinkers. However, only a small portion of Embree’s ideas—those that supported Gorer’s and Benedict’s—were reproduced and popularized amongst his sea of critiques.

That only Embree’s less-critical ideas get cherry-picked out of context for circulation supports this paper’s argument that a highly one-sided ‘economy of ideas’ dictated the flow of knowledge.

knowledge production within the OWI, and its propensity to circulate select viewpoints over less-desired ones, thus reveal an edifice like an economy of ideas—one emphatically distinct from Oliver Wendell Holmes’ “free marketplace” in which ideas *freely* compete for their adherence to the truth. Rather, academic knowledge at the OWI underwent rigorous homogenization by government and military officials who favored the reductionist myths that concurred with prevailing views. There was simply no market for the nuanced and dispassionate appraisals being conjured up by “The Critical.” In other words, these anthropological theories were subject to an intellectual economy that favored the digestible, reductionist, essentialized maxims that masqueraded anti-Japanese racism as “science.”

Yet, curiously, many anthropologists on the National Character aisle were self-aware of these discursive shifts, and the Faustian bargain that one had to produce reductionist yet *useful* knowledge to excel in the system. This sentiment is captured in a popular epigram that circulated through government agencies at the time: “the administrator uses social science the way a drunk uses a lamppost, for support rather than for illumination.”⁹⁷ Some took the liberty of providing that lamppost; fewer took the path less traveled. The question of why the expositors of National Character felt justified in contorting anthropological standards for the war effort is an important one that deserves further investigation. One tentative answer is Richard Minear’s postulation that the bifurcation of the *nouveaux Japonistes* and its critics happened along patriotic lines—how fervently one felt committed to the national struggle.⁹⁸ For many of these anthropologists once ardently committed to progressive anti-racism, the exigencies of total war not only slackened their moral reservations, but the epistemological threshold of “valid” academic knowledge too. This demonstrates the complex ways that war can affect the production, reception, and dissemination of knowledge. To what extent this typifies larger trends in the history of war and society remains to be answered.

⁹⁷ Leighton, *Human Relations in a Changing World*, 128.

⁹⁸ Minear, “The Wartime Studies of Japanese National Character;” 45; Minear, “Cross-Cultural Perception” 559.

Whether it is “knowledge by definition,” “mythmaking,” or Orientalism, these concepts converge around a broader critique of the pragmatic impetus behind American knowledge about the world. However, what this study finds is that erudite academic knowledge was not a key determinant behind military or political decision making, but an afterthought only used for retroactive justification. This challenges a strand in the literature on the Pacific War which views the academic arm of the military-industrial complex as a powerful influence on government policy and public perceptions of Japan.⁹⁹ Rather, the causal relationship seems to be reversed: the social scientists who curated their research around utility had their work circulated *because* it reinforced existing views. The war not so much defined the limits of discourse in the Foucauldian sense of a rigidly-circumscribed ontology, but dictated which parts of it would seep into the policy landscape.¹⁰⁰ The influence of military politics on the production of knowledge reflects Dirks and Gilman’s thesis that America’s ascent to global dominance is interwoven with its rising consciousness of the world.¹⁰¹ One only need fast-forward to the intelligence disasters of the Iraq War to see how weaponizing knowledge can also lead down a dangerous path.¹⁰²

The episode of American wartime studies on Japan thus sits at a crucial intersection on these related historical continuums: an early model of how the military-industrial-academic complex repackaged bias intelligence as “objective science” for political purposes, while also illustrative of the

⁹⁹ The most authoritative expositors of this view are John Dower’s *War Without Mercy* and Naoko Shibusawa’s *America’s Geisha Ally*, discussed previously in the historiography section.

¹⁰⁰ This paper defines Foucault’s concept of discourses according to Ian Buchanan’s entry, “Discursive Formation,” in the *Dictionary of Critical Theory* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018): there are “systems of rules governing the production of [possible] statements in a particular society at a certain moment in history.” The purpose of this paper has been to show that America’s wartime knowledge apparatus did not so much exert set parameters on the production of ideas, but dictated which ideas would be disseminated to policymakers and the wider public.

¹⁰¹ Dirks and Gilman, “American Knowledge of the World.”

¹⁰² Dexter Filkins, “Colin Powell’s Fateful Moment,” *The New Yorker*, October 18, 2021.

transformative impact that WWII had on American society. But the tendrils of total mobilization reached far beyond the material and the social—enlisting social scientists and cultural knowledge *en masse*, the U.S. marched to war with a newfound hunger for intellectual engagement with the world.

Bibliography

- “A Memorial to Charles Burton Fahs.” Oxford: Miami University Libraries Digital Collections, 2013.
- Benedict, Ruth. *Patterns of Culture*. Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin, 1959.
- . *The Chrysanthemum and the Sword: Pattern of Japanese Culture*. Rutland, VT: Tuttle, 1978.
- Bock, Philip K. *Rethinking Psychological Anthropology: Continuity and Change in the Study of Human Action*. Prospect Heights, IL: Waveland Press, 1999.
- Buchanan, Ian. *Dictionary of Critical Theory*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018.
- Darnell, Regna. *Invisible genealogies: A history of Americanist anthropology*. Vol. 1. University of Nebraska Press, 2001.
- Dirks, Nicholas, and Nils Gilman. “American Knowledge of the World.” Chap. in *The Cambridge History of America and the World*, edited by David C. Engerman, Max Paul Friedman, and Melani McAlister, 102–23. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2022.
- Doob, Leonard W. “The utilization of social scientists in the overseas branch of the office of war information.” *American Political Science Review* 41, no. 4 (1947): 649-667.
- Dower, John. *War Without Mercy: Race and Power in the Pacific War*. New York: Pantheon Books, 1986.
- Eller, Jack David. *Psychological Anthropology for the 21st Century*. London: Routledge, 2018.
- Embree, John F. “A note on ethnocentrism in anthropology.” *American Anthropologist* 52, no. 3 (1950): 430-432.
- . “Applied anthropology and its relationship to anthropology.” *American Anthropologist* 47, no. 4 (1945): 635-637.
- . “Standardized Error and Japanese Character: A Note on Political Interpretation.” *World Politics* 2, no. 3 (1950): 439-443.
- . *The Japanese Nation: a Social Survey*. New York, NY: Farrar & Rinehart, Inc., 1945.

- Fahs, Charles B. *Government in Japan: Recent Trends in Its Scope and Operation*. New York, NY: Institute of Pacific Relations, 1940.
- Filkins, Dexter. 2021. "Colin Powell's Fateful Moment." *The New Yorker*, October 18, 2021.
- Finch, Lynette. "Psychological Propaganda: The War of Ideas on Ideas During the First Half of the Twentieth Century." *Armed Forces & Society* 26, no. 3 (2000): 367–86.
- Ford, Douglas. "US Perceptions of Military Culture and the Japanese Army's Performance During the Pacific War." *War & Society* 29, no. 1 (2010): 71-93.
- . "US Assessments of Japanese Ground Warfare Tactics and the Army's Campaigns in the Pacific Theaters, 1943–1945: Lessons Learned and Methods Applied." *War in History* 16, no. 3 (2009): 325–58.
- Gilmore, Allison B. "In the Wake of Winning Armies: Allied Psychological Warfare Against the Imperial Japanese Army in the Southwest Pacific Area during WWII." Unpublished Thesis, The Ohio State University, 1989.
- . "“We Have Been Reborn”: Japanese Prisoners and the Allied Propaganda War in the Southwest Pacific." *Pacific Historical Review* 64, no. 2 (1995): 195–215.
- . *You Can't Fight Tanks with Bayonets: Psychological warfare against the Japanese army in the southwest Pacific*. University of Nebraska Press, 1998.
- Gleason, Philip. "Americans all: World War II and the shaping of American identity." *The Review of Politics* 43, no. 4 (1981): 483-518.
- Gorer, Geoffrey. "Themes in Japanese culture." *Transactions of the New York Academy of Sciences* (1943).
- Hunt, Michael H., and Steven Levine. *Arc of Empire: America's Wars in Asia from the Philippines to Vietnam*. Univ Of North Carolina Pr, 2014.
- Iriye, Akira. *Power and Culture: The Japanese-American War, 1941-1945*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1982.
- Jones, David Lloyd. "Measuring and Mobilizing the Media, 1939-1945." *Midwest Quarterly* 26 (1984): 35-43.

- Khalil, Osamah F. *America's Dream Palace: Middle East Expertise and the Rise of the National Security State*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2016.
- Kim, Monica. *The Interrogation Rooms of the Korean War: The Untold History*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2019.
- LaBarre, Weston. "Some observations on character structure in the Orient." *Psychiatry* 8, no. 3 (1945): 319-342.
- Laurie, Clayton D. "The Ultimate Dilemma of Psychological Warfare in the Pacific: Enemies who don't Surrender, and GIs who don't Take Prisoners." *War & Society* 14, no. 1 (1996): 99-120.
- Leighton, Alexander H. *Human Relations in a Changing World: Observations on the Use of the Social Sciences*. Whitefish, MT: Literary Licensing, 2012.
- LeVine, Robert A. "Culture and personality studies, 1918–1960: Myth and history." *Journal of Personality* 69, no. 6 (2001): 803-818.
- Mallory, Paine. *The Wars for Asia: 1911-1949*. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2014.
- Mead, Margaret. "National character and the science of anthropology." *Culture and Social Character* 4 (1961).
- . "The study of National Character." *The policy sciences: Recent developments in scope and method* (1951): 70-85.
- Minear, Richard H. "Helen Mears, Asia, and American Asianists." *Asian Studies Committee Occasional Papers Series* 7 (1981).
- . "Orientalism and the Study of Japan." *The Journal of Asian Studies* 39, no. 3 (1980): 507-517.
- . "The wartime studies of Japanese National Character." *Japan Interpreter* 13, no. 1 (1980): 36-59.
- . "Cross-Cultural Perception and World War II: American Japanists of the 1940s and Their Images of Japan." *International Studies Quarterly* 24, no. 4 (1980): 555–80.
- Nakayama, Thomas K., and Rona Halualani. *The Handbook of Critical Intercultural Communication*. West Sussex: J. Wiley & Sons, 2013.
- Neiburg, Federico, Marcio Goldman, and Peter Gow. "Anthropology and

- Politics in Studies of National Character.” *Cultural Anthropology* 13, no. 1 (1998): 56–81.
- Nitobe, Inazo, and Alexander Bennett. “Introduction: Bridging Eons and Oceans.” Essay. In *Bushido: The Samurai Code of Japan*, 13–50. North Clarendon, VT: Tuttle Publishing, 2019.
- Pelzel, John. “John Fee Embree, 1908-1950.” *The Far Eastern Quarterly* 11, no. 2 (1952): 219–25.
- Pipes, Daniel. “The Great Inquiry into National Character.” *Academic Questions* 35, no. 1 (March 18, 2022): 15–33.
- Porter, Patrick. “Paper Bullets: American Psywar in the Pacific, 1944–1945.” *War in History* 17, no. 4 (2010): 479–511.
- Porter, Patrick. *Military Orientalism: Eastern war through Western eyes*. Columbia University Press, 2009.
- Price, David H. *Anthropological Intelligence: The Deployment and Neglect of American Anthropology in the Second World War*. Durham: Duke Univ. Press, 2008.
- Price, David. “Lessons from Second World War anthropology: Peripheral, persuasive and ignored contributions.” In *Anthropology Today* 18, no. 3 (2002): 14-20.
- Said, Edward W. *Orientalism*. London: Penguin Books, 2019.
- Shibusawa, Naoko. *America's Geisha Ally: Reimagining the Japanese Enemy*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2010.
- Sparagana, Eleanor Anne. “The Conduct and Consequences of Psychological Warfare: American Psychological Warfare Operations in the War Against Japan, 1941-1945.” Unpublished Thesis, Brandeis University, 1990.
- Suzuki, Peter T. “A Retrospective Analysis of a Wartime ‘National Character’ Study.” *Dialectical Anthropology* 5, no. 1 (1980): 33–46.
- Walker, David Alexander. “Franklin D. Roosevelt and the Creation of the United States Intelligence Community.” Unpublished Thesis, University of California, Davis, 2000.
- Yans-McLaughlin, Virginia. “Mobilizing Culture and Personality for World

War II.” Essay. In *Malinowski, Rivers, Benedict and Others: Essays on Culture and Personality* 4, edited by George W Stocking, 4:184–217. Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1987.

Vanguard and Lion's Share of the Far East

Understanding Britain's Far Eastern policy from its Perceptions of Japan, 1929-1932

Huanjun Zhou

Abstract

The Interwar period witnessed the British Empire's continuous setbacks from irresistible local actors' challenges in East Asia. This paper focuses on Anglo-Japanese diplomacy from 1929 to 1932, during which pessimism dominated Foreign Office minds. Split by the Manchurian Crisis of September 18, 1931, this period symbolized the changing trend in Britain's Far Eastern policy: from suspicion of Japan as a local destabiliser to appeasement to it. The paper explores the complex relationship between racist thinking and politics that shaped Britain's paranoia at this time. In Interwar East Asia, major diplomatic disputes, such as British interactions with Japan, centered around a rising nationalist China. Contemporary helplessness enhanced British statesmen's pessimism, memories of the 'glorious past,' and alienation of East Asia. For Britain, Japan's strong dissent to British ways foreshadowed a gloomier future accompanying the rise of China.

I. Introduction

On December 16, 1926 - another chilly winter day at Beijing's Legation Quarter - the British *Chargé d'Affaires* handed his foreign colleagues an

unprecedented but unsurprising note. After months of hesitation, Whitehall eventually agreed to pursue the negotiation-based peacemaking principles outlined in the 1921-22 Washington Conferences. Britain's revised China policy would be a "constructive policy [...] towards meeting the legitimate aspirations of the Chinese nation," which "disclaim[s] any intention of forcing foreign control upon an unwilling China."¹ Later known as the December Memorandum, the document became vital in modern Sino-British diplomacy because, for the first time, British policy officially submitted to ever-growing waves of Chinese nationalism. On May Thirtieth 1925, the notorious Shanghai Incident, in which British police of the International Settlement brutally oppressed Chinese protests, imposed unwanted tension between the ageing Empire and a rising China, which the former found impossible to suppress. And so for Britain, the obligatory option was to befriend this nationalist sentiment.² In less than one year, the unsettled nationalist Guomindang would start another northward conquest and become the new nominal ruler of China. During this period of rapid change, bitterness for admitting the loss of traditional honour persisted among British statesmen, primarily Conservative, who compared angry China to its "more civilized" neighbour, Japan.

These Englishmen remembered an imperial golden age, when Japan's partnership with Britain worked hand in hand, such as when Japan helped contain Russia and Germany and should have continued working in the defence against Chinese nationalism. The harmony quickly ceased with the futile negotiations at the Washington Conferences, which were backed by an

¹ H. M. Chargé d'Affaires at Peking, "British Memorandum on China, communicated on December 16, 1926," *Journal of the Royal Institute of International Affairs* 6, no. 1 (January 1927): 63.

² Donald Jordan's comment went: "The British had borne the burnt of the long boycott in 1925 and 1926, but it was soon to be Japan's turn to be the leading representative of imperialism in China." See Donald A. Jordan, *Chinese Boycotts versus Japanese Bombs: The Failure of China's "Revolutionary Diplomacy," 1931-32* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1991), 8.

ineffective League of Nations and its supporters at home.³ In only three years, Britain was destined to confront the Chinese threat in this disgraceful way.

Opposite to Britain's downfall, Japan was prospering and did not need to myth make the "good old times" like the Britons. Japan seemed to be the sole capable and interested Power in filling the power vacuum left by Britain. Even the Great War, which severely harmed the foundation of British power, provided an opportunity for Japan to expand its "sphere of influence" with the voracious "Twenty-One Demands" that demanded numerous unprecedented special privileges in China's Shandong Province.⁴ The Japanese Empire experienced a cultural and economic boom in the Taisho Era-prosperity, which triggered an expansionist outwardness to boom.⁵ Although Foreign Secretary Kijūrō Shidehara reinforced friendliness in Japanese foreign policy in 1926 and later from 1929 to 1931, everyone knew his diplomacy was temporal. Shidehara's conciliatory attitude to China was unique among his colleagues, and his position was constantly in threat due to Japan's unstable domestic politics.⁶ The only question was, how would Japan treat the still-lasting British interests in China?

³ Antony Best, "The 'Ghost' of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance: An Examination into Historical Myth Making," *The Historical Journal* 49, no. 3 (2006): 820-823.

⁴ The notion "sphere of influence" has been a commonly recognized concept in both scholarly discourses and public media. It was challenged in 1931 because "the sphere of interest which Japan possessed in South Manchuria even after 1915 was not exclusive in law." Nevertheless, Japan's unique interests became vital excuses for its so-called 'anti-bandit operations' in Manchuria after September 1931, so the mentioned challenge never failed to revolutionise the scholarly discourse. For the author's special argumentation and his study of the Sino-Japanese agreements respecting the Manchurian problem, see C. Walter Young, *Japan's Special Position in Manchuria: Its Assertion, Legal Interpretation, and Present Meaning* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1931), 183-192.

⁵ It was generally believed that Japan's limited harm from the Great War can be an important reason in explaining its enthusiasm for expansion. See Tamio Takemura, *Taisho Bunka: Teikoku No Utopia*, trans. Ouyang, Xiao (Shanghai: Shanghai Joint Publishing Company, 2015), 175-176.

⁶ Zhang, Yanru, *Jindai riben de yuanlao, gongzhong shili yu neige (Genrō, Forces of the Palace and Cabinets in Modern Japan)* (Beijing: China Social Sciences Press, 2014), 175-189.

Stemming from this question, this paper has chosen the special period of 1929 to early 1932 because it symbolises a decade-long transition of imperialist autonomy from Britain to Japan. From 1929 to 1931, there was China's abortive negotiation with the Powers regarding the abolition of extraterritoriality, the abnormal practice in Asia where foreigners were entitled to be juridically reigned by consuls according to foreign codes. The Japanese invasion of Manchuria on September 18, 1931 was a turning point: the international community immediately shifted focus to this militaristic and territorial dispute, and hence, extraterritoriality negotiations were halted.

This article briefly surveys the British paradoxical perception of Japan during its downfall. It argues that the mixed British sentiments of delight, fear, and helplessness toward Japan identified the Empire's bitterness in preserving imperialist prestige through a weakening strength. Since Interwar Far Eastern affairs were highly intertwined between China and Japan, Britain's diplomacy with China ultimately played in British attitudes toward Japan. In their nationalist rises, Japan – the vanguard of the “yellow race” - and China – the lion's share - preserved their cultural uniquenesses, and thus assembled “a heretic version alien to orthodox (i.e., Western) civilisation” in the arrogant British eyes. But Britain no longer had the power to contain these two Far Eastern states in their homeland. The pessimistic Foreign Office was forced to adopt compromises with both China and Japan.

The main sections of this paper will discuss Japan's paradoxical “dual faces”: its willing adoption of Western principles and its insistence on the Japanese nation's unique interests. Part II will lean toward a historical survey. Then, Part III will exemplify British worries and responses to increasing Japanese ambition. The final Part IV will examine Britain's Far Eastern policy and trace its pretext: Sinophobia.

II. Vanguard of the Far East: Rise of Japan

Historian Antony Best summarized Japan's rise in British eyes as: “a country that had a constitutional monarchy and which put great stress on property, tradition, and the upholding of law and order, Japan possessed

values that British conservatives could understand.”⁷ His words identified the British key criterion in judging another state’s “scale of civility”: similarity to British ways. Appealing to the arrogant British, Japan was a vanguard within the Far East to revise its system to meet foreign expectations. Until the 1920s, Japan had made enormous progress in its impossible pursuit of true “Westernisation”: recognition from the West.

Japan’s success in acquiring the recognition benefitted from two coincidental developments around the *fin de siècle* in East Asia. The first was the birth of nationalism in the ancient Chinese empire since the Boxer Rebellion, a spontaneous nationalist movement that indiscriminately attacked all foreigners between 1899 and 1901 in northern China, which gave Japan an opportunity to participate in a multinational overseas expeditionary force for the first time to crush the uprising. The Japanese performance was a significant success and allowed the Japanese government to receive a higher level of respect and recognition from other imperialist Powers.⁸ As a rehearsal of the later alliance, the Anglo-Japanese cooperation within this expedition confirmed Japan’s capability and willingness to make “good use” of Western technologies and principles. Nevertheless, in its primitive and disorganized phase, Boxers’ nationalism – though still harm-inducing to foreigners - was less frightening to the British diplomatic settlement than the organized uprising in 1925. Popular diplomacy was not in place. What mattered was Beijing, where different Powers’ plenipotentiaries in the Diplomatic Body engaged with China’s no-longer mysterious Imperial Palace.

The second and more critical change centered around the complex dynamics of foreign presence in China. The British Empire acquired a *prima facie* consciousness of its inability to contain other Powers’ ambitions in the fragile *status quo*. The Franco-Russo-German Triple Intervention after the Sino-Japanese war of 1894 was a dangerous signal for Britain: Russia, the

⁷ Best, “The ‘Ghost’ of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance,” 822.

⁸ Hamish Ion, “Towards a naval alliance: some naval antecedents to the Anglo-Japanese Alliance, 1854-1902,” Chapter 2 in *The Anglo-Japanese Alliance, 1902-1922*, ed. Phillips Payson O’Brien (London: Routledge, 2004), 37.

most prominent strategical opponent stepped into cooperation with the other Powers and threatened Britain's "Splendid Isolation" in East Asia.⁹ This isolation seemed to be extending from East Asia to the entire realm of the British Empire, especially after the unpopular Boer War that exhausted the Empire.¹⁰ Cooperation with the United States allies, the British public's favourable strategy due to the perceived shared Anglo-Saxon ethnicity, remained on paper and never became a political reality.¹¹ This worsening diplomatic environment persuaded Britain to consider some non-traditional choices. and Japan soon became the optimal option. Beyond strategic concerns, economic cooperation with this new industrial Power and a desire to reduce naval costs in the imperial peripheries added evidence to the apparent benefits of cooperating with Japan.¹²

The consequential Anglo-Japanese honeymoon during the alliance granted Britain satisfactory outcomes. Strategically, it witnessed the demise of Russian and German threats. Although the Empire's navy alone was not overwhelming for Russia, the combination with the Japanese one, which had been "hastily created for the protection of Japanese interests against Russia," would lead to naval domination to flank and blockade this continental

⁹ For the "mounting Anglo-Russian tensions" and possible British isolation in the Far East, see Ion, "Towards a naval alliance," 36-40.

¹⁰ Ian Nish, "Origins of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance: In the shadow of the Dreibund," Chapter 1 in *The Anglo-Japanese Alliance, 1902-1922*, ed. Phillips Payson O'Brien (London: Routledge, 2004), 14.

¹¹ Zoltán I. Búzás, "The Color of Threat: Race, Threat Perception, and the Demise of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance (1902–1923)," *Security Studies* 22, no. 4 (2013): 593-594. Duncan Bell made a careful survey of the ideological foundation of the Anglo-Saxon across-Atlantic unity, see Duncan Bell, *Dreamworlds of Race: Empire and the Utopian Destiny of Anglo-America* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2020), 1-43.

¹² Christina Davis made a table to demonstrate the British and Japanese strategic and economic interests in the alliance's three phases. It was simplified but direct. See Christina L. Davis, "Linkage Diplomacy: Economic and Security Bargaining in the Anglo-Japanese Alliance, 1902-23," *International Security* 33, no. 4 (Winter 2008/2009): 155.

Power.¹³ Russo-Japanese War, the alliance's first highlight, forced the defeated Russia to drop its aggressive foreign policy, which positively impacted the icebreaking of the Anglo-Russian relationship in 1907.¹⁴ The British fear of enforced isolation seemed to disappear due to this alliance. While the Empire entered the naval competition with Germany in Europe, the Japanese presence was the best safeguard to prevent the same worry from emerging in East Asia.¹⁵ The second highlight was during the Great War, when Japan was invited to unitarily counter the German threats in China and the Pacific Islands: it successfully helped safeguard the naval routes to the Far East and relieved the defence burdens of the Pacific dominions.¹⁶

The consequential secure political environment helped foster the British primary considerations on maximal profits as an “imperialism of free trade”, by increasing national inputs via commercial activities and decreasing as many outputs as possible.¹⁷ Thanks to Japan's strong presence in the West

¹³ Keith Neilson, “The Anglo-Japanese Alliance and British strategic foreign policy, 1902-1914,” Chapter 3 in *The Anglo-Japanese Alliance, 1902-1922*, ed. Phillips Payson O'Brien (London: Routledge, 2004), 51.

¹⁴ Neilson, “The Anglo-Japanese Alliance and British strategic foreign policy, 1902-1914,” 57. However, see his pages 58-59: underneath the fruits of collaboration with Japan, British officials started to feel new danger from this rising Power. The decrease of the Russian influence and the corresponding rise of Germany – a European Power all meant that the Anglo-Japanese alliance had terminated its original mission in 1902.

¹⁵ See the Anglo-German naval competition in Ben Wilson, *Empire of the Deep: The Rise and Fall of the British Navy* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2013), 358-366.

¹⁶ To read Britain's invitation of Japan into the war and its initial hopes, see Peter Lowe, “Great Britain and Japan's entrance into the Great War, 1914-1915,” Chapter 9 in *The Anglo-Japanese Alliance, 1902-1922*, ed. Phillips Payson O'Brien (London: Routledge, 2004), 160-164. The Japanese protection of trade routes was an important contribution to the Triple Entente. See J. Charles Schencking, “Navalism, naval expansion and war: the Anglo-Japanese Alliance and the Japanese Navy,” Chapter 7 in *The Anglo-Japanese Alliance, 1902-1922*, ed. Phillips Payson O'Brien (London: Routledge, 2004), 131.

¹⁷ John Gallagher, Ronald Robinson, “The Imperialism of Free Trade,” *The Economic History Review* New series 6, no. 1 (1953): 1-6. Their theory had faced controversies,

Pacific that made a strategic flanking of the “opponents” possible, the utilitarian Empire could re-orient defensive duties back onto the critical interests of the metropole and India, instead of exhausting its limited finance on the arms race to defend the less important interests in East Asia.¹⁸ There was also an enhanced commercial tie with the Japanese Empire. Restricted by its lack of capital and resources, Japan’s heavy reliance on external financial investments to accomplish its urbanisation and expansive projects pushed forward its integration into the Western financial system, such as the symbolic construction of the Anglo-Japanese bank.¹⁹

Culture played a vital role in shaping Britain’s perception of Japan. After all, Japan’s unique political culture attracted the affinities of British statesmen for this Far Eastern monarchical regime. As another island race, Japan’s navalism for Far Eastern marine hegemony allowed Britain to see a mirror of itself.²⁰ Moreover, foreign observers labelled a “Taisho Democracy” in the 1920s. The Japanese public was demanding civil participation in politics during the ill Emperor Taisho’s more liberal and democratic regime in comparison to Meiji’s. However, in unseen corners, militarism was expanding at a rapid rate.²¹ The Japanese Government

which desired to understand imperialism through more comprehensive glances like culture, but it explained imperialist economic concerns well.

¹⁸ In his book, Hyam discussed the three layers of the British imperial defence according to their respective importance. His discussion could be found in Ronald Hyam, *Britain's Imperial Century, 1815-1914: A Study of Empire and Expansion* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2002), 257-258.

¹⁹ A key example would be the Anglo-Japanese bank, listed on p. 184. See Janet Hunter, “Bankers, investors and risk: British capital and Japan during the years of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance,” Chapter 10 in *The Anglo-Japanese Alliance, 1902-1922*, ed. Phillips Payson O’Brien (London: Routledge, 2004), 176-198.

²⁰ There was an impression that the Japanese navalism was resembling that of Britain 10 to 15 years ago. See Schencking, “Navalism, naval expansion and war,” 128.

²¹ See Japan’s democratic movements and rise of militarism in Takemura, *Taisho Bunka*, 37, 151-154.

voluntarily sent its students to learn Western civility overseas.²² Among them included Prince Hirohito, the late Emperor Shōwa, who highly treasured teachings from Britain's King George V during his official visit to Europe in 1921.²³

Another significant cultural factor was the sensitive legal question of extraterritoriality. As the most prominent symbol of the West's legal imperialism, the nineteenth-century imposition of extraterritoriality in China and Japan demonstrated the Western prejudicial mistrust of these states' own pluralist legal practices.²⁴ They feared these "alien" local laws would be purposely applied to discriminate Western interests. To prevent such assumed consequences, these expansive Powers turned to their Westphalian system that attached law with territory-based sovereignty and "civility", a more anti-foreign than the East Asian "pre-modern" practices.²⁵ Treaties granted consuls in Chinese and Japanese ports special jurisdictional power to reign foreign criminals, referencing only foreign laws. With conflicting jurisdictional systems (Chinese paralleling with different foreign nations' codes) co-functioning in the same place, extraterritoriality triggered crime

²² Noboru Koyama, "Cultural Exchange at the time of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance," Chapter 11 in *The Anglo-Japanese Alliance, 1902-1922*, ed. Phillips Payson O'Brien (London: Routledge, 2004), 199-207.

²³ Herbert P. Bix, *Hirohito and the Making of Modern Japan* (New York: Harper Perennial, 2001), 115-122.

²⁴ For "legal imperialism" of the Western Powers, see Turan Kayaoglu, *Legal Imperialism: Sovereignty and Extraterritoriality in Japan, the Ottoman Empire, and China* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 1-16. For the Chinese and Japanese practices of "legal pluralism" before Westerners arrived, see Pär Kristoffer Cassel, *Grounds of Judgement: Extraterritoriality and Imperial Power in Nineteenth-Century China and Japan* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 15-38.

²⁵ This Western international (legal) system had its constructivist vision and the foundation of Westphalian sovereignty. This Western system satisfied the interests of commercial Powers because it disabled the local merchants to utilise the protectionist local customary laws. All of these were, extending from Said's critique, "orientalist" and excluded the Eastern regimes from the system-designing process. See Kayaoglu, *Legal Imperialism*, 19-39. Kayaoglu's idea was echoed in Brett Bowden, *The Empire of Civilization: The Evolution of an Imperial Idea* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2009), 124-128.

and instability and impeded host states' legal sovereignty.²⁶ The irony was: in a strict Westphalian system, legal sovereignty should have been protected. Unfortunately, with the evident Western advantage over the Orient, the former designed and enforced the game rules regardless of self-contradictions. Respecting local sovereignty seemed trivial in comparison to the overwhelming foreign concern for their economic or physical security that was assumed to be "at stake". Therefore, East Asian players' successful abolition of extraterritoriality often paralleled a faithful adoption of Western legal systems - one criterion of the West's judgement for "civility", but more importantly, local adoptions relieved these foreigners' paranoia.²⁷

Hometown of the legal English school, which favoured an exclusive club of "civilized" members in the international society, the British Empire faithfully believed in the cultural prestige of preserving extraterritoriality, and therefore, stood still on the differential views of Japan and China.²⁸ Contrary to China's nationalist hatred, Japanese politicians advocated abandoning their past legal practices as a critical step in its pursuit of modernity. Experts learned foreign legal principles overseas to introduce a revolutionary reform at home. Persuaded by this top student's remarkable progress, its Western teachers submitted to the treaties abolishing extraterritoriality.²⁹ This

²⁶ The extraterritorial system operated in a professionalized manner in Shanghai in the 1930s through the Mixed Court. A popular description of the realities in Shanghai under extraterritoriality was in the memoirs by the 'China hand' Carl Crow. See Carl Crow, *Foreign Devils in the Flowery Kingdom* (Hong Kong: Earnshaw Books, 2011), 99-111.

²⁷ Kayaoglu stressed that "legal instrumentalization" was the most important prerequisite for the Western Powers to accept the abolition of extraterritoriality. See Kayaoglu, *Legal Imperialism*, 47-51. The situation was slightly different in China, but that question is out of this paper's scope of analysis.

²⁸ Core argument of the English School went: "while all states are part of the international system, only a subset of states composes international society. States that are part of the international system, but not of international society, can enter international society if they fulfill certain membership requirements." See Kayaoglu, *Legal Imperialism*, 59-60.

²⁹ For Japan's struggle for abolishing extraterritoriality, see Cassel, *Grounds of Judgement*, 149-160. Kayaoglu's study of the same issue is in Kayaoglu, *Legal Imperialism*, 66-103.

diplomatic and legal victory trademarked Japan's preliminary success in winning a seat at the Westerners' club, which added fuel to its ambition to "leave Asia and join Europe".³⁰ Since then, Japan has actively participated in the imperialist world order as a key member, the most notorious effort of which was the acquisition of overseas territories. Mimicking Western logic, the "Empire of the Rising Sun" even began asserting extraterritorial rights in China, ignoring the possible trauma from these abnormal legal practices on the East Asian neighbour, which the Japanese people acutely experienced before the abolition of Westerners' extraterritoriality.³¹

New Japanese extraterritorial rights on Chinese soil had two vital historical importance. They re-confirmed extraterritoriality's discriminative nature as an imposed instrument coming with the imperialist invasion. More importantly, harm from Japanese imperialism forced the Chinese to understand Japan more as a partner of the Westerners. All these developments seemed to have satisfied Meiji statesmen's ambitious dream, but unfortunately, as the upcoming sections will explore, perceived "natal incompetence" as an Asiatic Power was a concurring source for Western suspicion. Between 1929 and 1931, Chinese nationalist hatred of extraterritoriality pushed Britain and Japan into a fragile bloc – one of the last chances for these two Powers to cooperate under the gloomy shadow of mistrust.

III. British Apprehensions of Japan

³⁰ This thought trend and its derivatives are in Luo, Fuhui, *Huanghuolun: Dongxi wenming de duili yu duihua (The Yellow Peril: Opposition and Communication between the Oriental and Occidental Civilisations)* (Taipei: New Century Publishing Company, 2007), 148-149.

³¹ For Japan's expansion of extraterritorial privileges and their execution in China, see Cao, Dachen, "Jindai riben zaihua lingshicaipanquan shulun (Brief introduction of Japan's extraterritoriality in modern China)," *The Journal of Studies of China's Resistance War Against Japan*, no. 1 (2008): 2-17. A side argument excusing for Japan's ignorance was that it was much less harmed by extraterritoriality than China. There were few foreigners in Japan, the duration of extraterritoriality was relatively short, and the Japanese society embraced integration into the West. See Cassel, *Grounds of Judgement*, 180-183.

Handling Japan: Suspicion in Extraterritoriality Negotiations

On 27 April 1929, Wang Zhenqiang, Chinese Minister for Foreign Affairs under Nanjing's new National Government, delivered a note to the six interested foreign legations (except Japan) respecting China's ambition to abolish extraterritoriality.³² It was not an unpredicted move for the Powers, but the Chinese note undoubtedly intensified the solemn atmosphere at the Legation Quarter. The plenipotentiaries had to figure out how to cope with the Chinese demand.³³ Since the Paris Peace Conference, China had been open about its nationalist hatred against extraterritoriality. The results of the Commission on Extraterritoriality of 1926 were far beneath China's satisfaction: it recommended a gradual relinquishment of extraterritoriality during which China should ensure stability and adopt Western law to a further level.³⁴ Apparently, the futile struggle in 1926 was unable to refrain China from the determination to change the *status quo* in the imminent future.

³² China was not opposed to "extraterritoriality" as a common diplomatic practice. It hoped to abolish its unequal derivative: "consular jurisdiction," i.e., granting consuls the juridical power to reign legal cases of foreigners in China. Across British literature, these two terms naturally coincided in the Chinese context with the simple word "extraterritoriality" or a rarer term "extrality". This paper has been and will be using this English style to ensure narrative consistency, but please remember these two layers of definitions. For this Chinese view, see Yang Peng, "Zuihou zhengzha zhong zhi lingshicaipanquan (Consular jurisdiction in its last struggle)," *Guowen zhoubao*, volume 8, number 17 (May 4, 1931): 5. For Wang Zhenqiang's ambition under this move, see "Waijiao buzhang Wang Zhenqiang cheng Guomin Zhengfu wei chengbao ye zhengshi zhaohui yingmei deng liuguo chefei lingshicaipanquan (Foreign Minister Wang Zhenqiang to National Government, respecting the Note sent to the six plenipotentiaries on the abolition of consular jurisdiction)," May 2, 1929, 'Academia Historica,' Taiwan, China, 001-064410-00001-001.

³³ For British and American intelligence of and early responses to the Chinese note, see Wesley R. Fishel, *The End of Extraterritoriality in China* (Berkeley & Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1952), 154.

³⁴ See the recommendations in US Department of State, *Report of the Commission on Extraterritoriality in China, Peking, September 16, 1926* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1926), 107-110.

Restricted by the December Memorandum's commitment to the Washington Treaties, Britain devoted itself to a negotiation with the interested Powers. When Miles Lampson, the British Minister to China, returned to his post on May 8, he immediately communicated with the other five plenipotentiaries. Although everyone at the meeting was suspicious of Japan's absence from the list, Lampson affirmed the desirability to bring in Japan later to his colleagues and soon in a telegram sent back to London.³⁵ Lampson's refrained decision reflected Western Powers' helplessness, since evidently, he did not have to cautiously show a friendly gesture to his fellow "Westerners". His words confirmed that, though Japan suspiciously received no note, its influence was too highly integrated into the maintenance of foreigners' privileges to be ignored.

This initial worry for Japan lasted for roughly a week, during which London's anxiety rose to the breaking point. When Chamberlain received false reports indicating Japan's intention to act independently on its Chinese policy, he immediately ordered a serious protest without asking diplomats in Tokyo to check its validity.³⁶ Fortunately, at such an early stage of extraterritoriality negotiations, both Whitehall and the Legation acted pragmatically and rationally. Lampson and his French colleague invited the Japanese *Chargé d'Affaires* to exchange views on the 15th.³⁷ Back at home, Chamberlain's meeting with the Japanese ambassador on the same day partially comforted his concerns, but his words foreshadowed an increasing estrangement in the upcoming months. Advising Japan not to write identical

³⁵ "No. 4: Lampson (Peking) to Chamberlain, May 8, 1929," *Documents on British Foreign Policy, 1919-1939 (DBFP)*, ser. 2, vol. 8, eds., Rohan Butler, J. P. T. Bury, and M. E. Lambert (London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1960), 29-30. Lampson's concern was strengthened by Wang Zhengting, who explained in a May 7 meeting that Japan would conduct independent negotiations with Japan. See "No. 10: Lampson (on tour) to Chamberlain, May 15, 1929," *DBFP ser. 2 v. 8*, 35-36.

³⁶ It was paralleling the Embassy question, which arose from the Chinese request to upgrade the Powers' Legations to Embassies. For this issue's development, see footnotes nos. 1 and 3 under "No. 7: Chamberlain to Lampson, May 13, 1929," *DBFP ser. 2 v. 8*, 32-33.

³⁷ "No. 10: Lampson (on tour) to Chamberlain, May 15, 1929," *DBFP ser. 2 v. 8*, 40.

notes to China but instead to express its unique conditions and drives, the British attitude was an early compromise – and an unwilling one – to Japan’s open expansionist wishes.³⁸ Since then, Japan continued to raise its special desires – e.g., entire openings of China’s interior – in the Diplomatic Body’s meetings, which eventually led to its final isolation from the other Powers.³⁹

This “recovered” relationship was only temporary. Like how the alliance rose and failed, shared imperialist interests bound the two empires on a cooperative yet fragile line. As long as the main enemy – Chinese nationalism – remained aggressive, cooperation could and should last. This simple rationale explains Lampson’s invitation to the Japanese representative and the Japanese ambassador’s visit to the Foreign Secretary.

Nevertheless, in beneath the scene correspondence among British statesmen, dissatisfaction and antagonism toward Japan continued to thrive concerning the perceived (and true) Japanese diplomatic autonomy from the other Powers. Staying in the Foreign Office, Chamberlain unwillingly agreed to re-word the British draft reply to China due to Japan’s objections.⁴⁰ His successor Arthur Henderson, serving from mid-1929 to mid-1931, mistrusted Japan’s potential leadership in the negotiations with China.⁴¹ At Beijing’s Legation, the elite consular official Eric Teichman envisioned an embarrassing British and American position if Japan gave way.⁴² Perhaps the

³⁸ “No. 9: Chamberlain to Lampson, May 15, 1929,” *DBFP ser. 2 v. 8*, 34-5.

³⁹ See Japan’s claims in “No. 29: Lampson to Chamberlain, May 31, 1929,” *DBFP ser. 2 v. 8*, 59.

⁴⁰ “No. 38: Chamberlain to Hewlett (Nanking), June 6, 1929,” *DBFP ser. 2 v. 8*, 66-67.

⁴¹ Henderson believed that “it is cardinal point in Japanese policy to represent to Chinese that their attitude about extraterritoriality is milder than that of other Powers.” See “No. 89: Henderson to Lampson, August 23, 1929,” *DBFP ser. 2 v. 8*, 141-142.

⁴² Teichman’s role was vital because he played an important role in the negotiations and drafted the extraterritoriality treaty with the Chinese official Xu Mo. In this specific report concerning China’s possible unilateral abolition, he argued that the French and Dutch influences were “largely immaterial.” This interesting report was sent from Lampson in a personal letter to Wellesley, the Foreign Office official in direct charge of Far Eastern Affairs. Lampson’s letter contained enormous panic and helplessness. See “No. 87: Letter from Lampson (Peitaiho) to Wellesley, August 11,

more explicit comments from his superior Lampson pointed out the essence of excessive British concerns: a racialized distrust and fear of the yellow race. When drafting a new plan for the Shanghai Municipal Council, the Minister was anxious that “Japanese members of the Council may side with the Chinese and thus constitute an Asiatic majority, which will be able to outvote the European-American element.”⁴³ Japan was not wrong in its pursuit of unique interests respecting the extraterritoriality question; Britain did the same.⁴⁴ The Japanese “natal sin” was its akin race and civilization to China, something impossible to be detached from no matter how hard Meiji statesmen tried to reform and detach their born identities. It had to suffer subtle discrimination as a constant suspect collaborator with Chinese nationalism.

Therefore, dreams recollecting the “imperial golden age” could only stay buried in the graveyard of the Anglo-Japanese alliance. British racist paranoia shoveled much dirt into this tomb. Tracing back to the pre-War years, suspicion of Japan began to emerge early in pre-War’s Imperial Conference of 1911, in which the Pacific Dominions specifically added the purpose of defending Japan’s threat to the British Pacific Empire to the third phase of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance.⁴⁵ This special design was built upon two assumptions. First, Britain recognized the untamable Japanese shadow

1929” and “Enclosure in No. 87: Notes from Mr. Teichman on the possible consequences of a unilateral denunciation of Extraterritoriality by the Chinese, August 7, 1929,” *DBFP ser. 2 v. 8.*, 138.

⁴³ “No. 40: Lampson (Nanking) to the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs (still vacant), June 7, 1929,” *DBFP ser. 2 v. 8.*, 71.

⁴⁴ An example of British interest-based policy appeared in a later communication to the Dominions in “No. 358: Henderson to Ingram (Peking), February 18, 1931,” *DBFP ser. 2 v. 8.*, 469-471.

⁴⁵ Neilson, “The Anglo-Japanese Alliance and British strategic foreign policy, 1902-1914,” 57-58. The Australian and New Zealand’s policy, as Pacific Dominions, had been mostly focusing on the containment of the Japanese threat. Australia was prominent because of an exclusory policy of the Labour Party to create a “white Australia.” See the Australian perspective across the Imperial Conferences from 1911 to 1921 in Peter Lowe, “The round table, the dominions, and the Anglo-Japanese alliance, 1911–1922,” *The Round Table* 86, n. 341 (1997): 86-91.

over its East Asian interests. Second, it knew an amiable alliance under Western principles could temporarily contain Japan due to the latter's humble wish to receive Western recognition by respecting international law. After approximately twenty years, in 1930, the Foreign Office concluded that "[the Anglo-Japanese alliance] had been misused by Japan to further her own interests with little or no regard to those of her partner."⁴⁶ Produced in the middle of extraterritoriality negotiations, this bitter statement subtly concurred with Britain's worsening inability in the Far East, but evidently, the racist ego persisted.

Latent months of extraterritoriality negotiations involved adequate Japanese participation, but imaginably, limited progress was made. On July 15, 1929, Japanese, British, and United States legations reached a consensus on a united front against any Chinese resort to a unilateral abolition.⁴⁷ – again, “the enemy's enemy is our friend”. However, no further accounts indicated what this ‘united front’ would and could affirmatively do. The Powers tried hard to clear up this issue, but disparity always jumped in, bringing negotiations to a deadlock.⁴⁸ China left unrestrained. On December 28, the National Government issued a Mandate, declaring to abolish extraterritoriality unilaterally on January 1 next. The Mandate was never executed, but it had already witnessed the foreigners' deepest fear and helplessness on this question.⁴⁹

⁴⁶ “No. 1: Foreign Office Memorandum of January 8, 1930, on British policy in China,” *DBFP ser. 2 v. 8.*, 24-25.

⁴⁷ “No. 66: Lampson (Peking) to Henderson, July 15, 1929” *DBFP ser. 2 v. 8.*, 113-115.

⁴⁸ Lampson recorded a meeting among the Powers in mid to late December 1929. The Powers reaffirmed their principles, but disparity in interests brought another deadlock. Lampson argued that British officials like Teichman contributed much to forming the principles, while the Japanese delegate “showed no inclination to participate actively in the discussions.” He then left for Nanjing and Shanghai to discuss with British representatives there. See “No. 66: Lampson to Henderson, March 17, 1930” *DBFP ser. 2 v. 8.*, 319-321.

⁴⁹ The Chinese logic went: January 1, 1930 was the theoretical date of abolition; before completion of negotiations and new protocols outlined from the Juridical Yuan, the *status quo* should remain. See the Mandate's English translation and some early

A revisit to these years of extraterritoriality negotiations revealed a striking pattern: prominent British accusations of Japan centred in mid-1929, i.e., the early phases. The reason was Britain's increasing exhaustion from the uncoordinated attitudes of its "allies". Approaching mid-1931, its new objective was to reach a speedy agreement, therefore relieving the fear of China's possible appeal to unilateral action at any time.⁵⁰ Thus, from the British perspective, the Western Powers appeared as, or even more stubborn than Japan. This made the sole accusation of Japan pointless. As Wesley Fishel pointed out in his survey, the attitude change was a partial consequence of the Chinese National Government's success in its tactic of "divide and conquer":

Throughout the period of negotiation, the Chinese tried time and again to frighten and confuse the American and British governments into agreeing on a complete and immediate termination of extraterritorial rights. The attempt was made to play one government against the other, to the extent that the Chinese foreign minister accused the United States of endeavouring to prevent the British from proceeding too rapidly with their negotiations in Nanking.⁵¹

Outside this dispute within the "Anglo-Saxons", France adopted an even more stubborn insistence on its interests.⁵² Japan proposed likewise firm proposals.⁵³ Exhausted in coordinating the disparity between Whitehall

comments from Wang and Lampson in "No. 66: Lampson to Henderson, December 30, 1929" *DBFP ser. 2 v. 8.*, 252-253.

⁵⁰ The Foreign Office wanted to ignore the other Powers and initiate a quick, independent negotiation with China so that Britain could "stand aside and leave China to tackle France and Japan." See "No. 432: Henderson (from Wellesley) to Lampson, May 19, 1931" *DBFP ser. 2 v. 8.*, 524-525.

⁵¹ Fishel, *The End of Extraterritoriality in China*, 184.

⁵² France wanted the preservation of extraterritoriality over the Yunnan Railway zone. See "No. 370: Lampson to Henderson, March 12, 1931," *DBFP ser. 2 v. 8.*, 480.

⁵³ See the Japanese proposals and Wang Zhengting's discords in Li, Enhan, *Beifa qianhou de "geming waijiao" (The Nationalist China's "Revolutionary Diplomacy"), 1925-1931* (Taipei: 'Institute of Modern History Archives, Academia Sinica', 1993), 272-274.

policy and his foreign colleagues' firm demands, Lampson bitterly complained: "it is not easy to keep this mixed team in line and good humour but I am doing my best."⁵⁴ At this point, Britain began assimilating the Japanese attitude with the other Powers' inflexibility. The discourse reversed: in 1929, Britain worried that Japan might go too fast; in 1931, it was Japan that made this protest.⁵⁵ Britain's rapid shift of attitude revealed the flexibility of racist arguments as an instrument to defend imperialist arrogance: when real political matters were on the rise, racial considerations had to stand by because the Empire was too exhausted to concern about the irrelevant prestige. A perfect example of this sentiment was Lampson's complaints. As this paper will explore, exhaustion continued to guide British policy after September 18, 1931.

Here and now, the Foreign Office comment in 1921 appeared incredibly abrupt and sarcastic. It "praised" Japan as "the only non-white first-class Power" and claimed, "in every respect, except the racial one, Japan stands on a par with the great governing nations of the world."⁵⁶ This British comment was probably a humble compliment considering the "yellow peril" theory's popularity across the West. Unfortunately, like in China, nationalism was on its high in Japan. Japan had realized the futility of its Meiji dream and was unable to sympathise with Westerners' rare charity of fame; its public and military demanded to make a change. The military's most notorious trial occurred in Shenyang city of Manchuria, on September 18, 1931. Despite being recognized as a day of national humiliation in China, it was a significant triumph for Imperial Japan. In the upcoming days, Japan taught Britain an introductory lesson on respect. The latter's weakness gave an excuse for passive responses, later known as appeasement.

⁵⁴ "No. 379: Lampson to Henderson, March 28, 1931," *DBFP ser. 2 v. 8.*, p. 487.

⁵⁵ "No. 370: Henderson to Lampson, April 27, 1931," *DBFP ser. 2 v. 8.*, 504.

⁵⁶ Foreign Office Memorandum "Racial Discrimination and Immigration" of October 1921 qtd. in Akira Iilura, "The Anglo-Japanese Alliance and the question of race," Chapter 13 in *The Anglo-Japanese Alliance, 1902-1922*, ed. Phillips Payson O'Brien (London: Routledge, 2004), 232.

Handling Japan: Appeasement after Manchuria

Archival sources help modern readers recollect Lampson's initial reactions to the sudden news in September's Manchuria. At around 1 a.m. on the 19th, information from Young Marshal Zhang Xueliang, with whom he dined the peaceful night before, circulated at Lampson's desk. In panic himself, the Young Marshal knew nothing about what happened, but he ordered his troops to "refrain from all form of retaliation and provocation."⁵⁷ Before noon, the Minister heard a pressing ringtone. It was the call from China's reputed diplomat Gu Weijun, who worked under Zhang's instructions at that time. Gu was anxious to hear Lampson's opinions, but the Englishman was "extremely guarded" in his replies. The latter regrettably believed that his government would not take any individual action due to its close and friendly relationship with Japan.⁵⁸

The cold, emotionless tone in the documents suggested that Lampson, the experienced professional diplomat, might be initially surprised but then quickly turned to a pragmatic calmness; the crisis would inevitably outbreak; it just came too soon. After all, Sino-Japanese antagonism about Manchuria was on the high due to numerous unsettled incidents.⁵⁹ Lampson's duty as the Minister required him to advise in the best interest of Britain. The ageing Empire could not bear the burden of aggressively accusing Japan, especially as no one knew what truly happened. Even China could be appeased; its unstoppable nationalism had successfully "coerced" a draft extraterritoriality

⁵⁷ "No. 506: Lampson (Peking) to the Marquess of Reading, 10.20 a.m., September 19, 1931," *DBFP ser. 2 v. 8.*, 665.

⁵⁸ "No. 507: Lampson (Peking) to the Marquess of Reading, 3.45 p.m., September 19, 1931," *DBFP ser. 2 v. 8.*, 665-666.

⁵⁹ The Kwantung Army had been drafting their invasive plan since 1930. They initially hoped to start the crisis in late September, but fearing a possible intervention from the Emperor, Army officials executed the plan earlier to kidnap Tokyo's Cabinet policy through the *fait accompli*. Early incidents included Wanbaoshan and the extraterritorial killing of Nakamura. See Minoru Kawada, *Riben lujun de guiji: Yongtian tieshan de gouxiang ji qi zhimai (Trail of the Japanese Imperial Army: Design of Tetsuzan Nagata and its Derivatives)*, trans. Wei, Pinghe, (Beijing: Social Sciences Academy, 2020), 31-40.

treaty on June 6.⁶⁰ Unfortunately, but inevitably, tolerating the invasion of the much stronger Japan was the best alternative that Britain ought to pursue.

Lampson was correct in his assumption about British reactions.⁶¹ On September 29, the Foreign Secretary outlined the fundamental policy “to avoid any action that might be felt by Japan or China as a British judgement on them.” Feeling ignorant of actual developments in Manchuria, Whitehall was anxious to send observers, but they cautiously did so by stressing that it was a French idea.⁶² This telegram’s main points could be summarized with a simple sentence: watch consciously but do nothing productive. Foreign Office’s optimistic intention was to interpret the Manchurian Crisis as a regional dispute and therefore denounce the affair’s international implications.

However, this was an impossible goal. As a traditional arena of power search for multiple imperialist Powers, Republican China’s political affairs, domestic or international, had been firmly attached to foreign presence.⁶³ Gu Weijun’s call to Lampson on September 19 exemplified all Chinese governments’ reliance on foreign efforts to maintain justice. On the other side, Japan under Shidehara’s service hoped to achieve goals on both sides

⁶⁰ See the full text of the Sino-British draft extraterritoriality treaty in “Enclosure 3 in No. 458: Draft Extraterritoriality Treaty, Nanking, June 6, 1931,” *DBFP ser. 2 v. 8.*, 546-559. This draft treaty was rejected by Britain’s new National Cabinet, in which Ramsay MacDonald remained as the Prime Minister but Arthur Henderson resigned from the Foreign Secretary post. See David Carleton, *MacDonald versus Henderson: The Foreign Policy of the Second Labour Government* (London: MacMillan Company, 1970), 184.

⁶¹ He must be correct. As the plenipotentiary *en frontier*, his view was vital in implementing London’s policy.

⁶² “No. 538: The Marquess of Reading to Lindley (Tokyo), September 29, 1931,” *DBFP ser. 2 v. 8.*, 688-689.

⁶³ This statement was inspired by Luo Zhitian, who argued that “through the informal control by the treaty port system, the foreign presence in China was symbolising both an external oppression and an integral of China’s political structures [translated from Chinese].” See Luo, Zhitian, “Diguo zhuyi zai zhongguo: Wenhua shiye xia tiaoyue tixi de yanjin (Imperialism in China: Evolution of the Treaty System in Cultural Perspective),” *Social Sciences in China*, no. 5 (2004): 194-195.

of the dilemma: strengthening Japanese interests in Manchuria – which violated the *status quo* – and a relatively unchanged Japanese position in relation to the other Powers – which could only preserve the *status quo*.⁶⁴ Japanese ambitions, especially the latter, required British consent. Therefore, in this Sino-Japanese clash, Britain felt stuck in between, being forced to claim support by biasing one side. Caution was the most reasonable attitude.

In most circumstances, unfortunately, applying the most reasonable way did not mean the results could be unquestionably optimal; so were Britain's futile efforts. Staying neutral satisfied neither side. Both China and Japan read London's policy as a discriminative disregard for their 'legitimate' demands.⁶⁵ When meeting Lampson, China's Minister of Finance Song Ziwen pessimistically stated that "there was always the last resort of war with Japan and inevitable defeat" - the most undesirable outcome for Britain.⁶⁶ Lampson interpreted this Chinese attitude exemplified by Song's statement as an "apparent Chinese manoeuvre" to complicate matters. But there was nothing he could do besides digesting the unpleasant feelings. The only agreed options between him and his consul colleagues were to kick the responsibilities to respective Governments: report developments and await instructions.⁶⁷ In Whitehall, the Permanent Under-Secretary for Foreign Affairs Robert Vansittart sympathized with Lampson on the "manoeuvre" judgement. In a personal letter to the Ambassador to France, he wrote,

⁶⁴ The Japanese Foreign Office wanted to show respect for the League of Nations, the key Interwar institution symbolising international order. League spirits required Japan to be equal among the other Powers and China in China. In a communication between the Vice Minister for Foreign Affairs and British Ambassador Francis Lindley, the former argued that the active phase of the incident was over, which meant that the civil Cabinet thought Japan had successfully reinforced its interests. See "No. 526: Lindley to the Marquess of Reading, September 24, 1931," *DBFP ser. 2 v. 8.*, 688-689.

⁶⁵ From the contemporary perspective, China was much more on the right side, but this view was far beneath a consensus in 1931.

⁶⁶ "No. 545: Lampson to the Marquess of Reading, September 30, 1931," *DBFP ser. 2 v. 8.*, 695.

⁶⁷ "No. 558: Lampson to the Marquess of Reading, October 5, 1931," *DBFP ser. 2 v. 8.*, 710-712.

worrying about Britain's "most invidious position": "Britain was manoeuvred into isolated action in Tokyo which could only be interpreted by Japan as inspired by a less friendly feeling towards them."⁶⁸ He was correct. Unlike China's more implicit approaches to expressing dissatisfaction, Japan directly and constantly pressured Britain's Ambassador in Tokyo.⁶⁹ Britain's concerns demonstrated that the Sino-Japanese clash in Manchuria was far beyond the smoke of gunpowder on the battlefield (fighting was relatively limited); it was more resembling an ideological quarrel for justifying one side's moral righteousness.

When both extremes were trying to appeal or coerce a British accord, the most affected British individuals were the plenipotentiaries *en frontier*, i.e., Minister to China Lampson and Ambassador to Japan Francis Lindley. Their viewpoints, which seemed to be pro-China and pro-Japan, were partially influenced by high authorities and the public atmospheres in the respective host states. After their opinions circulated back home, debating perspectives pushed London to choose one as the essence of British policy. After all, Britain could not evade its judgemental duty as the most influential foreign observer.

Yet the above was the surface of the debate within the Foreign Office's Far Eastern Division. There was a fundamental question left to approach the debate's essence: were Lampson and the side he represented "pro-China"? Accounts after the Far Eastern Crisis showed that prominent British statesmen thought he was - at least close.⁷⁰ However, this view might be too simplistic. Lampson was apparently not equipping Sinophilia. As this paper

⁶⁸ "No. 563: Letter from Vansittart to Tyrrell (Paris), October 6, 1931," *DBFP ser. 2 v. 8.*, 714-715.

⁶⁹ See an example of Japanese threat in "No. 531: Lindley to the Marquess of Reading, September 25, 1931," *DBFP ser. 2 v. 8.*, 684-685.

⁷⁰ Lampson's attitude was milder than his successor Alex Cadogan's, who was less sympathetic and tended to measure China through Western standards. The former was disliked by Britain's new Commander in Chief in China. See these recollections, especially in footnote no.5, in Christopher Thorne, *The Limits of Foreign Policy: The West, the League and the Far Eastern Crisis of 1931-1933* (London: MacMillan Education, 1972), 393.

has mentioned, the Minister to China was sceptical of China's "manoeuvre" for a long time. In mid-October, he was open with his concern about British interests in Shanghai (namely, the International Settlement), a buffer zone for the moment, but would potentially become the battleground in the clash between a rising "Chinese agitation" and resentful Japanese responses.⁷¹

A report of his interview with China's Generalissimo Jiang Jieshi suggested the more probable answer to the earlier question: instead of "pro-China", the Minister was simply frightened of Japan's quick advances and its consequential implications on the British position in East Asian and worldwide affairs. In disaccord with Japan's attempts to marginalise the issue, Lampson agreed with Jiang that "no one in their senses could call the Manchurian question a minor issue" because it "affect[s] the peace of the world."⁷² Britain had given the word to defend this peace in the December Memorandum, and more importantly, in its dedication to the global governing structure: the League of Nations. The expanding Japanese appetite behind the September invasion marked a direct challenge to these promises. With a conscious recognition of the Empire's falling power, diplomatic professionals' internal "debate" was essentially concerning the defence of international confidence in British commitments and capability; there were only yes and no answers without any middle ground. China and its "moral high ground" were irrelevant to the question; no decision-maker was "pro-China". Through earlier directives, the Foreign Office had already decided to marginalise the affair, like what Japan was trying to do. Lampson's strong attention to the Crisis's worldwide consequences contradicted Whitehall's intention to hear concurring opinions from diplomatic establishments in East Asia; his loss in the 'debate' was destined.⁷³

⁷¹ Lampson feared that China might take advantage of this neutral territory to vent its anger on Japan. See "No. 663: Lampson (Nanking) to Patterson (Geneva), October 19, 1931," *DBFP ser. 2 v. 8.*, 797.

⁷² "No. 663: Lampson to the Marquess of Reading, October 19, 1931," *DBFP ser. 2 v. 8.*, 801-804.

⁷³ When the faithful advocate of the League Robert Cecil wanted to introduce publicity to the Crisis's resolution, he faced immediate rejection from Eric Drummond, the League's Secretary General. This was another sign of London's

Therefore, Lindley achieved his victory in this “debate” not through rational persuasion, but a coincidence with London’s intention to appease Japan. The Ambassador did the best he could in the direction he favoured. A true appreciator of the tremendous progress in Japan, he felt sorry for Britain’s simultaneous weakening of prestige and position there; this gloomy observation set tone for his interactions with Japan after September 18 – in a direction outlined by the Foreign Office.⁷⁴ On the 20th, he attributed the Crisis’s fault to China’s “exasperating policy” that for him attempted to undermine the Japanese position in Manchuria.⁷⁵ Lindley’s concerns, therefore, centered on dissolving Japan’s dissatisfaction with Britain, though he knew this was another impossible goal like Sisyphus’s stone. On November 2, he invited Japanese journalists to the British Embassy and tirelessly explained Britain’s friendly policy and its opposition to Chinese boycotts of Japanese goods (as a means against the Japanese invasion). In a telegram back home, the Ambassador confessed with pity that he “[was] not so naïf [sic]” as to imagine his efforts’ influence on either the antagonized relationship or the Manchurian dispute, but “I do not think it can have done any harm.”⁷⁶

On December 22, a Foreign Office memorandum written in defence of Lindley’s policy concluded the “debate”. It outlined the Ambassador to Japan’s duties: the “permanent and paramount function” was to promote British interests in the Far East through “maintenance of really cordial

insistence on the traditional secretive diplomacy. See their letter communications in “No. 10: Letter from Cecil to Drummond, December 18, 1931,” “No. 34: Letter from Drummond to Cecil, December 29, 1931,” & “No. 40: Letter from Cecil to Drummond, December 31, 1931,” *Documents on British Foreign Policy, 1919–1939* (DBFP), ser. 2, vol. 9, eds., Rohan Butler, Douglas Dakin, and M. E. Lambert (London: Her Majesty’s Stationery Office, 1965), 22, 56–58, 61.

⁷⁴ “No. 495: Lindley to Henderson, July 23, 1931,” *DBFP ser. 2 v. 8.*, 640–644.

⁷⁵ “No. 509: Lindley to the Marquess of Reading, September 20, 1931,” *DBFP ser. 2 v. 8.*, 667.

⁷⁶ ‘Japan Times’ accused Britain, especially Lampson, of supporting China’s boycotts against Japan. See Lindley’s report on his meeting with the Japanese journalists in “No. 724: Lindley to Simon, November 11, 1931,” *DBFP ser. 2 v. 8.*, 888–890.

relations with Japan, for in the absence of such relations our Far Eastern policy would necessarily fail”; the submissive one was the defence of the League of Nations principles of peace and justice.⁷⁷ Anxiety about reducing Japanese antagonism would continue overriding London’s commitment in the December Memorandum to China’s territorial sovereignty. After all, British statesmen noticed that “the Japanese have ever since regarded us as the ringleader of the anti-Japanese crusade and Japanese public opinion has been extremely bitter against us.”⁷⁸ Foreign Office pessimism was diffusing to the Cabinet through the new Foreign Secretary John Simon. Simon’s memorandum affirmed Japan’s hatred against China as a real and acute one, and advised not doing anything to further aggravate the situation.⁷⁹ At this point, *realpolitik* triumphed over normative faiths; it became the official consensus of Britain’s Far Eastern policy.

IV. Forthcoming Lion’s Share: An Asian ‘Revenge’ Paranoia

No matter how British perception of Japan developed, the essence was the ageing Empire’s lost autonomy in East Asian affairs. Both suspicion and appeasement were sensitive reactions to stimuli, provoked by the strengthening local states: China and Japan. The disparity in British attitude across time not only triggered the nostalgia of the “imperial golden age”, but also witnessed the collapse of Britain’s “yellow hope” for Japan in guiding

⁷⁷ “No. 31: Memorandum by Wellesley, December 22, 1931,” *DBFP ser. 2 v. 9.*, 31-33.

⁷⁸ See the footnote in “No. 16: Holman (Peking) to Simon, December 20, 1931,” *DBFP ser. 2 v. 9.*, 27.

⁷⁹ “No. 769: Memorandum by the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs respecting Manchuria, Paris, November 23, 1931,” *DBFP ser. 2 v. 8.*, 943-947. Later, Simon was accused of being a “Japanese-ophile” in this foreign policy, but his negative reputation hid the widespread pessimism of senior officials or diplomats in the Foreign Office. Simon shared the same ground, but he could not appease Japan if the civil servants refused. See Michael Hughes, *British Foreign Secretaries in an Uncertain World, 1919-1939* (London and New York: Routledge, 2006), 94-96.

China toward “civilization”.⁸⁰ Another arrogant overgeneralization of the *extrême-orient* was on its rise. Lampson was clearly under its influence. “Anything is possible in dealing with the Orientals,” the Minister judged.⁸¹

Why was ‘anything possible’ in the Orient? First and most evident, China and Japan had alien political systems to the West and the potential for domestic instability.⁸² In China, civil wars and internal political rivalries never ceased with the establishment of Nanjing’s new government.⁸³ In Japan, though it resembled British political systems much more than China, the imminent death of the ageing *Gēnro* Saionji implied an unclear new future of its domestic politics, while the unsettled constitutional question was pointing at a monarchical autocracy.⁸⁴ The Manchurian Crisis was an early and severe indication of this evolution’s harm to the *status quo*; the Army was independent of Cabinet commands and claimed its only obedience to the Emperor’s orders.⁸⁵

For the British, the more serious issue was that both states struggled to achieve true independence from Western guidance; these were irreversible trends after decades of unpleasant experiences with the West. Guomindang, a manipulator of Chinese nationalism and now the basis of the new central government, had been executing an aggressive “revolutionary diplomacy”.⁸⁶ With its imperialist ambition and nationalist hatred against isolation at the climax, Japanese young generations committed to extremism and imagined

⁸⁰ Faith in Japan as a ‘yellow hope’ arose as the reversive discourse of China as the ‘yellow peril.’ See Michael Keevak, *Becoming Yellow: A Short History in Racial Thinking* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011), 138.

⁸¹ “No. 92: Lampson to Henderson, August 27, 1929,” *DBFP ser. 2 v. 8.*, 145.

⁸² This perception, though prejudicial, was correct.

⁸³ Zhang, Yufa, *Zhonghuaminguo shigao (Draft History of the Republic of China)* (Taipei: Linking Publishing, 2001), 185-246.

⁸⁴ “No. 43: Lindley to Simon, December 31, 1931,” *DBFP ser. 2 v. 9.*, 71-74.

⁸⁵ Despite that the Japanese were denouncing this fact, it was widespread across Western Embassies. See Japan’s objection in “Enclosure 2 in No. 2: Report on a Visit to Manchuria by Lieutenant-Colonel Simson (date unspecified),” *DBFP ser. 2 v. 9.*, 7.

⁸⁶ Li, *Beifa qianhou de “geming wajiao” 1925-1931*, 1-17.

a prosperous, post-Western future.⁸⁷ Historian of Japan Marius Jansen outlined the essence of the Japanese view:

The echoes of Western “yellow peril” argumentation produced a new Asian consciousness in Japan. From this perspective Japan’s need to affiliate with China was clear. And if the Chinese government should prove incapable of response or inflexible in assumptions of Chinese leadership, the cultivation of possible alternatives to that regime became wise.⁸⁸

Japan, the supposed “yellow hope”, was no longer interested in joining Britain to contain Chinese nationalism but pursued an independent nibbling of spheres of influence there. A courageous but notorious plan to lead Chinese nationalist anger, later known as the “Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere”, was merging among young military officials.⁸⁹

Opposite to these high antagonisms was Britain’s bitterness and helplessness in seeing its decline. Directives like the December Memorandum implied that the Foreign Office was overwhelmed by its bureaucratic atmosphere of short-term pessimism and opportunistic long-term hope.⁹⁰ Pessimism came from a lack of capability to contain these regional threats. Hope was the anxious wish to maximally safeguard both spectrums of the dilemma: preservation of normal diplomatic relationships, and at the same time, keeping imperialist prestige to comfort British subjects’ mistrust of host governments. In this “anything-is-possible” orient, sudden incidents constantly contradicted the Empire’s unrealistic hope. The preference of Whitehall and its plenipotentiaries was the former, i.e., safeguarding diplomacy.⁹¹ After all, London had proclaimed in 1930 that

⁸⁷ “No. 43: Lindley to Simon, December 31, 1931,” *DBFP ser. 2 v. 9.*, 71-74.

⁸⁸ Marius B. Jansen, *Japan and China: from War to Peace, 1894-1972* (Chicago: Rand McNally College Publishing Company, 1970), 161-162.

⁸⁹ See Kono Cabinet’s announcement and its implications in Kawada, *Riben lujun de guiji*, 192-208.

⁹⁰ Thorne, *The Limits of Foreign Policy*, 235.

⁹¹ British response to a famous Thorburn case of 1931 (a missing British subject was executed by the Chinese Military even with extraterritoriality’s protection) exemplified the diplomatic machine’s tendency to maintain diplomacy over anything else. See R.

“our policy, instead of being one of spontaneous relinquishment of our privileged position, became an enforced retreat, necessitating endless rearguard actions, and in which our main effort is directed towards preventing it from being turned into a rout.”⁹² British responses to extraterritoriality and Manchuria questions paralleled this tendency.⁹³ China and Japan, if riled, could make this inglorious imperial retreat more inglorious at any time.

Staying in this passive position with constant local pressure, the notorious “yellow peril” theory was re-emerging. Before Japan’s rise, “yellow peril” was mainly used against China in two streams. One was the “peril of migration”: rising overseas Chinese immigration was perceived to be squeezing out the white workers’ jobs.⁹⁴ The other was the “peril of indestructibility”: the Powers’ scramble for spheres of influence ceased to destroy China’s autonomy but triggered the Boxers’ revengeful counterattack.⁹⁵ China’s enormous scale, multinationality, and political unity

A. Bickers, “Death of a Young Shanghailander: The Thorburn Case and the Defence of the British Treaty Ports in China in 1931,” *Modern Asian Studies* 30, no. 2 (May 1996): 297-299.

⁹² “No. 1: Foreign Office Memorandum of January 8, 1930, on British policy in China,” *DBFP ser. 2 v. 8.*, 3-4.

⁹³ In comparison to the Manchurian episode, British responses to the extraterritoriality question was more turbulent. Yet after all, there was a Whitehall preference for appeasing China’s nationalist demands. Henderson outlined: “His Majesty’s Government, however, believe that the true criterion is not whether the Chinese are fit to assume jurisdiction over foreigners, but whether the Chinese are politically sufficiently stabilized to give effect to their determination to put an end to the extraterritorial system.” See “No. 366: Henderson to Lindsay, March 7, 1931,” *DBFP ser. 2 v. 8.*, 478.

⁹⁴ Yang, Jui-song, *Bing fu, Huanghuo, yu Shuishi: “Xifang” shiye de zhongguo xingxiang yu jindai zhongguo guozu lunshu xiangxiang (Sick Man, Yellow Peril and Sleeping Lion: Chinese Images from “Western” Perspectives & the Discourses of Modern Chinese National Identity)* (Taipei: Chengchi University Press, 2016), 77-79.

⁹⁵ This was edited from Búzás’s “peril of arms.” For his theorisation, see Búzás, “The Color of Threat,” 581. My revision came from the Foreign Office comment: “This cultural unity, based on the moral philosophy of Confucius, has bound the Chinese together for some 2,000 years in solid indestructible mass, in spite of the fact that

reminded the West of the fragility of their contemporary privileges built upon savage exploitation. After Shanghai's nationalist movements in 1925, foreigners' fragility was unfortunately confirmed.

With Japan's rise, the target of the "yellow peril" theory shifted to this "Britain of the Far East".⁹⁶ Japan had proved its strength to Westerners through the Russo-Japanese War and the First World War, but apparently, it did not hope to apply the "Splendid Isolation" as Britain's policy for continental Europe. Shidehara, the "friendly" Foreign Secretary, explicitly expressed in his speech in the Japanese Diet: "China's steps were at last resolutely set on the 'trail once blazed by Japan in her struggle to emerge from a position of international inequality.'"⁹⁷ Shidehara's scheme demonstrated Japan's ulterior motive, i.e., accumulating China's rich resources to "tit for tat" combat Western arrogance.⁹⁸

Japanese desires to mobilise Chinese resources and Britain's caution of Shidehara's words demonstrated the essence of "yellow peril" - Sinophobia, perceiving China as a turbulent threat to West-centric harmony. Early in 1905, Sidney Gulick, an American missionary to Japan, commented on the eventual destiny of the "yellow peril":

For when China moves, fifty or a hundred or two hundred years hence, to throw off the incubus of a long established tyrannical white peril, she will be intelligent and equipped with modern weapons. And with her countless millions she will overwhelm the white man by the torrent of her hatred.⁹⁹

their political organisation was of an amorphous and rudimentary character." See "No. 290: Foreign Office Memorandum respecting the Prospects of Stable Government in China, July 19, 1930" *DBFP ser. 2 v. 8.*, 384.

⁹⁶ Luo, *The Yellow Peril*, 38.

⁹⁷ "No. 354: Snow (Tokyo) to Henderson, January 28, 1931" *DBFP ser. 2 v. 8.*, 462-464. Nevertheless, Snow argued that the Japanese scheme would become useless because of China's disaccord to be led.

⁹⁸ Lindley made a similar observation in "No. 24: Lindley to Simon, December 23, 1931" *DBFP ser. 2 v. 9.*, 36.

⁹⁹ Sidney Lewis Gulick, *The White Peril in the Far East: An Interpretation of the Significance of the Russo-Japanese War* (New York: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1905), 169.

For Gulick, the “yellow peril” was a response to the “white peril”, i.e., the “white man’s” exploitation in East Asia, with hatred. Japan’s example proved the theoretical capability for the “yellow race” to be “modern” and showed China a feasible approach to becoming a “second, but more influential Japan”. China’s much more enormous weight - the root of Sinophobia - enhanced pessimism. If the nation-state became modernized and then returned to its traditional privilege as the ‘master’ of the Sino-centric East Asian order, or even being led by a strong vanguard like Japan, which was the main Japanese objective in its “Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere,” the bitter East Asians would extend their dominance across the world, particularly the West, through a savage way, just like what the West did.

In the West’s unsympathetic eyes, after the Far Eastern Vanguard fails to integrate into the West-centric order (not obvious to them, due to the West’s mistrust), Lion’s Share’s resources would ensure a powerful counterattack. In early 1932, Britain was unsure whether China could preserve its autonomy after Japanese nibbles, but the “Orientals” shared the same antagonism against Western imperialist presence. No matter which of the two would win, the result was destined to be gloomy for Westerners, not to mention that “anything is possible in dealing with the Orientals.” Britain could only helplessly observe the rapid changes in the Far East, appease the two nationalist states with suspicion, and wait for the unscheduled death knell. The British retreat finally became a “rout” Japan occupied the International Settlement in 1941; China ruthlessly bombarded HMS Amethyst on the Yangtze River in 1949.

Conclusion

The Far East from 1929 to 1932 was still an arena of various imperialist Powers, but local players played increasingly important roles. As the vanguard of the Far East to adopt Western principles, this period witnessed Japan’s increasing ambition to break from Western influences. Its new ambition was to become the vanguard in controlling China, starting from the

adventure in Manchuria; this was a courageous plan never succeeded by any other Power.

Japan's action concerned the most traditional Power, the British Empire, which developed a paradoxical sentiment mixed with delight and fear. On the night before the Shanghai Incident of January 28, 1932, the latter portion became more and more prominent. The two regimes entered a relational honeymoon during Japan's anxious years to westernise, but this fruit from practical interests quickly ceased when Britain's arrogance and suspicion prevailed. Until September 18, 1931, Britain unwillingly saw Japan's power growing to a regional destabilising factor in East Asia. However, restricted by its weakening presence in China, the gloomy Foreign Office could not think of any reasonable solution rather than appeasement. In their earnest wishes, at least the latter could help the Englishmen tactically face the historical trend of imperial retreat from China, instead of falling into a "rout".

Beneath Japanese ambition and British fear, there was a vital variant: a rising and resource-rich China. Chinese nationalism had forced Britain to concede. Partly due to Britain's determination of appeasement, the nationalists met a setback in the clash with Japan. It could have conceded; Japan was a vanguard in combating foreign racist prejudices. But its fourteen years of anti-Japanese warfare have proven that China, feeling oppressed for a century, chose to fight against its chains. It did not want Japan's imposed imperialist plan. Lion's Share of the yellow race demanded its unique destiny, *prima facie* through full-scale independence. As for imperialism, whether Japanese or Western, For "Ocean" Thou Art and unto "Ocean" Shalt Thou Return.

Bibliography

Primary Sources

- Butler, Rohan, et al. (eds.). *Documents on British Foreign Policy 1919-1939 (DBFP), Second Series, Volume VIII*. London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1960.
- . *Documents on British Foreign Policy, 1919–1939 (DBFP), Second Series, Volume IX*. London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1965.
- Crow, Carl. *Foreign Devils in the Flowery Kingdom*. Hong Kong: Earnshaw Books, 2011.
- Guowen zhoubao (Guowen Weekly), volume 8, number 17, May 4, 1931.
H. M. Chargé d'Affaires at Peking. "British Memorandum on China, communicated on December 16, 1926." *Journal of the Royal Institute of International Affairs* 6, no. 1 (January 1927). 62-68.
- US Department of State, *Report of the Commission on Extraterritoriality in China, Peking, September 16, 1926*. Washington: Government Printing Office, 1926.
- Volume I of "Lingshicaipanquan chefei (Abolition of Consular Jurisdiction)." "Academia Historia," Taiwan, China. 001-064410-00001.

Secondary Sources (in English)

- Bell, Duncan. *Dreamworlds of Race: Empire and the Utopian Destiny of Anglo-America*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2020.
- Best, Antony. "The 'Ghost' of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance: An Examination into Historical Myth Making." *The Historical Journal* 49, no. 3 (2006): 811-831.
- Bix, Herbert P. *Hirohito and the Making of Modern Japan*. New York: Harper Perennial, 2001.
- Bickers, R. A. "Death of a Young Shanghailander: The Thorburn Case and the Defence of the British Treaty Ports in China in 1931." *Modern Asian Studies* 30, no. 2 (May 1996): 271-300.

- Bowden, Brett. *The Empire of Civilization: The Evolution of an Imperial Idea*. Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2009.
- Búzás, Zoltán I. "The Color of Threat: Race, Threat Perception, and the Demise of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance (1902–1923)." *Security Studies* 22, no. 4 (2013): 573-606.
- Carleton, David. *MacDonald versus Henderson: The Foreign Policy of the Second Labour Government*. London: MacMillan Company, 1970.
- Cassel, Pär Kristoffer. *Grounds of Judgement: Extraterritoriality and Imperial Power in Nineteenth-Century China and Japan*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2011.
- Davis, Christina L. "Linkage Diplomacy: Economic and Security Bargaining in the Anglo-Japanese Alliance, 1902-23." *International Security* 33, no. 4 (Winter 2008/2009): 143-179.
- Fishel, Wesley R. *The End of Extraterritoriality in China*. Berkeley & Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1952.
- Gallagher, John., Robinson, Ronald. "The Imperialism of Free Trade." *The Economic History Review* New series 6, no. 1 (1953): 1-15.
- Gulick, Sidney Lewis. *The White Peril in the Far East: An Interpretation of the Significance of the Russo-Japanese War*. New York: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1905.
- Hughes, Michael. *British Foreign Secretaries in an Uncertain World, 1919-1939*. London and New York: Routledge, 2006.
- Hyam, Ronald. *Britain's Imperial Century, 1815-1914: A Study of Empire and Expansion*. New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2002.
- Jansen, Marius B. *Japan and China: from War to Peace, 1894-1972*. Chicago: Rand McNally College Publishing Company, 1970.
- Jordan, Donald A. *Chinese Boycotts versus Japanese Bombs: The Failure of China's "Revolutionary Diplomacy," 1931-32*. Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1991.
- Kayaoglu, Turan. *Legal Imperialism: Sovereignty and Extraterritoriality in Japan, the Ottoman Empire, and China*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010.

- Keevak, Michael. *Becoming Yellow: A Short History in Racial Thinking*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011.
- Lowe, Peter. "The round table, the dominions, and the Anglo-Japanese alliance, 1911–1922." *The Round Table* 86, n. 341 (1997): 81-93.
- O'Brien, Phillips Payson (ed.). *The Anglo-Japanese Alliance, 1902-1922*. London: Routledge, 2004.
- Thorne, Christopher. *The Limits of Foreign Policy: The West, the League and the Far Eastern Crisis of 1931-1933*. London: MacMillan Education, 1972.
- Wilson, Ben. *Empire of the Deep: The Rise and Fall of the British Navy*. London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2013.
- Young, C. Walter. *Japan's Special Position in Manchuria: Its Assertion, Legal Interpretation, and Present Meaning*. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1931.

Secondary Sources (in Chinese)

- Cao, Dachen. "Jindai riben zaihua lingshicaipanquan shulun (Brief introduction of Japan's exterritoriality in modern China)." *The Journal of Studies of China's Resistance War Against Japan*, no. 1 (2008): 1-22.
- Li, Enhuan. *Beifa qianhou de "geming waijiao" (The Nationalist China's "Revolutionary Diplomacy") 1925-1931*. Taipei: 'Institute of Modern History Archives, Academia Sinica,' 1993.
- Luo, Fuhui. *Huanghuolun: Dongxi wenming de duili yu duihua (The Yellow Peril: Opposition and Communication between the Oriental and Occidental Civilisations)*. Taipei: New Century Publishing Company, 2007.
- Luo, Zhitian. "Diguozhuyi zai zhongguo: Wenhua shiye xia tiaoyue tixi de yanjin (Imperialism in China: Evolution of the Treaty System in Cultural Perspective)." *Social Sciences in China*, no. 5 (2004): 192-204.
- Kawada, Minoru. *Riben lujun de guiji: Yongtian tieshan de gouxiang ji qi zhimai (Trail of the Japanese Imperial Army: Design of Tetsuzan Nagata and its Derivatives)*, trans. Wei, Pinghe. Beijing: Social Sciences Academy, 2020.
- Takemura, Tamio. *Taisho Bunka: Teikoku No Utopia*, trans. Ouyang, Xiao. Shanghai: Shanghai Joint Publishing Company, 2015.

- Yang, Jui-song. *Bing fu, Huanghuo, yu Shuishi: "Xifang" shiye de zhongguo xingxiang yu jindai zhongguo guozu lunshu xiangxiang (Sick Man, Yellow Peril and Sleeping Lion: Chinese Images from "Western" Perspectives & the Discourses of Modern Chinese National Identity)*. Taipei: Chengchi University Press, 2016.
- Zhang, Yanru. *Jindai riben de yuanlao, gongzhong shili yu neige (Genrō, Forces of the Palace and Cabinets in Modern Japan)*. Beijing: China Social Sciences Press, 2014.
- Zhang, Yufa. *Zhonghuaminguo shigao (Draft History of the Republic of China)*. Taipei: Linking Publishing, 2001.

About the Cornell Historical Society

The Cornell Historical Society (CHS) is an undergraduate organization at Cornell University founded in the fall of 2010. Our mission is to foster an appreciation and understanding of historical topics and methodology within the undergraduate student body and the general community at Cornell. Our largest endeavor is the annual publication of *Ezra's Archives*, which showcases original undergraduate research in the field of History. In addition, we support the History Advising Program for undergraduate students, host speaker events, and foster a sense of community among undergraduates, graduate students, and faculty in the Cornell History Department. If you wish to learn more, please contact us at cornellhistoricalsociety@gmail.com.

If you are an undergraduate or recent graduate and would like to submit a work of original research for a future edition of *Ezra's Archives*, please contact our editors at ezrasarchives@gmail.com or visit our website (<https://history.cornell.edu/ezras-archives>) for more information.