

# CONFLICT THE EMERGENCE OF PEACE BETWEEN JAPAN AND THE UNITED STATES: A DIALOGUE

Seth Barrett Tillman\*

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## Abstract

*What follows is a dialogue about the difficulties of peace-making at the end of active hostilities, particularly where the conflict is multigenerational, the assignment of responsibility is muddled, and the prevailing power has conflicting demands on its time, people, and resources in connection with current and former allies and opponents, and domestic and foreign security concerns.*

**Keywords:** *peace, democracy, responsibility, intergenerational conflict, allies.*

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\* Seth Barrett Tillman: University of Chicago (BA), Harvard Law School (JD); legal practice and member of the bar in the District of Columbia and Delaware; federal judicial law clerk at the trial court and appellate levels; Maynooth University School of Law and Criminology, Associate Professor; Landmark Legal Foundation's 2024 John Locke Liberty Award; North Carolina Society of Historians: 2021 Award. Legal Publications: *American Journal of Legal History*, *British Journal of American Legal Studies*, *Election Law Journal*, *Harvard Journal of Law and Public Policy*, *Military Law Review*, *Northwestern University Law Review*, *Study on the American Constitution*/, and *Texas Law Review*. Literary publications: *Claremont Review of Books* (US), *Dorchester Review* (Canada), *Gadfly* (US), *Galway Review* (Ireland), *New English Review* (US), and *Quadrant* (Australia). Email: sbarretttillman@yahoo.com.



## I. WHAT ACTUALLY HAPPENED

Between 1945, with the termination of wartime hostilities, and 1951, when peaceful relations were restored, Japan was governed, as a matter of public international law, by the Far Eastern Commission (based in Washington, DC) and the Allied Council for Japan (based in Tokyo).<sup>1</sup>

As a practical matter, Japan was governed by the United States, the dominant occupying power, and by its nominee: the Supreme Commander of the Allied Powers—General Douglas MacArthur.

In 1951, Japan signed a peace treaty with the United States, the United Kingdom, and a host of other Allied nations.<sup>2</sup> The treaty, which went into effect in 1952, ended the occupation of Japan by the United States and its allies. In effect, the 1951 treaty terminated the functions of the Far Eastern Commission and the Allied Council for Japan.

Japan sought this peace treaty—it sought restoration of its sovereignty and national independence. Japan accomplished this goal by making peace with the nations which had defeated it in war.<sup>3</sup>

## II. FICTION<sup>4</sup>

The year is 1966. Japan remains occupied. The occupying forces have been and remain almost entirely composed of United States military personnel (and coordinate civilian foreign aid and other support staff) under the control of their commander: the Supreme Commander of the Allied Powers—originally General Douglas MacArthur, but now General Earle G. Wheeler.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> See generally Immanuel C. Y. Hsu, “Allied Council for Japan” in *The Far Eastern Quarterly* no. 2, vol. 10, February 1951, pp. 173-178 [<https://www.jstor.org/stable/2049096>], 28 November 2025.

<sup>2</sup> See Treaty of Peace with Japan (San Francisco, 8 September 1951), 136 UNTS 45 [<https://tinyurl.com/4yszsby>], 28 November 2025.

<sup>3</sup> The peace was not a cold peace, but a genuine one. So much so that Japan, the occupied nation, subsequently awarded General MacArthur a high order of merit. See “General MacArthur Receives Japan’s Highest Honour” in *British Pathé*, June 1960 [<https://tinyurl.com/bdp68pm6>], 28 November 2025.

<sup>4</sup> Fiction is a regularly used style in modern academic and legal literature. See, e.g., Lon L. Fuller, “The Case of the Speluncean Explorers” in *Harvard Law Review* no. 4, vol. 62, February 1949, pp. 616-645 [<https://www.jstor.org/stable/1336025>], 28 November 2025.

<sup>5</sup> See “General Earle Gilmore Wheeler (1908–1975)” in *Joint Force Quarterly*, Autumn/Winter 1997–1998, p. 135 [<https://tinyurl.com/ycytu4vt>], 28 November 2025.

### III. THE MINUTES

#### **Minutes of the President of the United States' National Security Policy Sub-Committee for Japan and the Far East:**

##### **January 15, 1966 Meeting**

The minutes of the prior meeting of the sub-committee were adopted unanimously.

In attendance were the sub-committee's three regular members: Cleon, Alcibiades, and Diodotus.

### IV. THE DIALOGUE<sup>6</sup>

**Cleon:** The war ended over twenty years ago. We have made peace (of a sort) with Germans and Germany. We have made peace with Germany's former European allies—Bulgaria, Hungary, Italy, and Romania. We coexist (albeit, uneasily) with our former, communist allies: China and the Soviet Union. We have yet to make peace with Japan. And the President's party and its voters are tired of the continued costs, in blood and treasure, of occupying Japan.

**Alcibiades:** Making peace requires a partner who also wants peace.<sup>7</sup> There is, as yet, no peace party in Japan. So we must wait for such a partner to emerge, and, until then, we must continue to occupy Japan.

**Cleon:** That's easy for you to say: "continue with the occupation." You do not have to go before the voters. The Japanese occupation issue is not the only issue facing the President, but with narrow majorities in both houses, that issue might cost his party its congressional majorities in the next election. And G-d only knows what the administration's congressional opposition would do should they take control of one or both houses of Congress. We cannot allow the past,<sup>8</sup> current, and expected future stiff necks and criminality of Japan

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<sup>6</sup> Like fiction, dialogue is also a regularly used style in modern academic and legal literature. See, e.g., Henry M. Hart, Jr., "The Power of Congress to Limit the Jurisdiction of Federal Courts: An Exercise in Dialectic" in *Harvard Law Review* no. 8, vol. 66, June 1953, pp. 1362-1402 [<https://www.jstor.org/stable/1336866>], 28 November 2025.

<sup>7</sup> Seth Barrett Tillman, "Advice to the Allies—1945" in *Claremont Review of Books* no. 2, vol. 15, Spring 2015, p. 13 [<https://tinyurl.com/8f58wn9z>], 28 November 2025.

<sup>8</sup> Seth Barrett Tillman, "The Wartime Statesmanship of Éamon de Valera" in *Quadrant* no. 10, vol. 69, October 2025, pp. 104-106 [<https://tinyurl.com/4fzv883e>], 28 November 2025.

determine how we live in our homes. If that happens, then the sacrifices our people (and our allies) made during the World War were meaningless.

**Alcibiades:** That is entirely wrong. Our people's sacrifice gave us the last twenty years of peace and prosperity. The situation we now face is a new and different situation. We must be forward thinking. If we and the Japanese look only backwards, then no peace is possible, now or ever.

**Cleon:** Again, you are thinking about this problem as one between equals. Japan started and lost a war: that carries consequences.<sup>9</sup> Thus, the question is not how we treat Japan, but what risks we are prepared to take for our own good. You are a highly placed and well compensated civil servant: a permanent bureaucrat. You live in a gated community. You do not have to explain to our citizens, soldiers, and voters why we—alone—continue to pay for the occupation of Japan. Our allies contribute (almost) no soldiers, and they contribute (almost) no coin. You also do not have to explain to our people why our soldiers disappear—only for their battered bodies to be discovered later on. We must staunch the wound, and we must cut our losses.

**Alcibiades:** No, we must wait out the militarists. They are aging and dying, and they will continue to die. The mortality tables are on our side. In the long run, we will prevail. When they are gone, the new generation is more likely to make peace.

**Cleon:** You have been saying that for ten years—since the end of the war in Korea—you are a dreamer. As the post-war generation takes to the political field, they are less likely to make peace and more likely to take up lawfare, if not guerilla warfare from the safety of the hills. They will be supported covertly by the USSR, China, and Cuba—by foreign spies, by domestic traitors, and by other fifth columnists (in the upper echelons of the civil service bureaucracy, in the media, in academia, and in labor unions).

Having been born after 1945, young Japanese citizens, and today's adults who were children during the war, will have had, in fact, no actual connection to Japanese wartime criminal aggression and other violations of the laws of war, including crimes against humanity. As time goes by, they will see the continued Allied (that is, American) presence on their soil as more and more unjustified. Members of the nonaligned bloc, particularly neutrals during

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<sup>9</sup> See Thucydides, "Melian Dialogue" in Thomas Hobbes (trans.), David Grene (ed.), *The Peloponnesian War* Michigan: University of Michigan Press, 1959, 5:84–5:116 [<https://tinyurl.com/heezip95m>], 27 November 2025.

World War II, will be likely to agree with this “new” view. And we need those nations cooperation (or, at least, their passivity) to prevail in the Cold War. It is a question of priorities: *today’s* priorities.

For all these reasons, now is the time we are most likely to strike the best deal. Once we go, it is likely that the Japanese leadership will fall out with one another, and they will spend the next several years (perhaps generations) at one another’s throats. And it is better that they fight one another, than they fight us as a unified polity making use of lawfare and terror tactics.

**Alcibiades:** Who is dreaming now? After a new leadership emerges which feels no connection with Japan’s past wartime crimes, they are likely to instil a new patriotism, and, perhaps, seek to vindicate what was done in the past in the eyes of their own people. How long until they acquire weapons of mass destruction which can be used against us and our allies?

**Cleon:** Terminating any and every occupation risks that the occupied power might subsequently rearm in some threatening fashion. If you believed what you have just said, then that would be a reason to occupy Japan today, to occupy Japan tomorrow, and to occupy Japan forever. Every peace comes at the risk of some future war—just as every occupation encounters pushback from the nationals of the occupied territory. Risk is everywhere and always. Yet some nations have made peace. Actual peace.<sup>10</sup>

**Diodotus:** Surely, there are third options? Options which we could put before the President? We have an entire national security infrastructure outside the regular military, right? Could not we control or, at least, if not direct, then monitor and influence who will govern Japan after we exit? Foreign aid, political donations, government contracts, and, as necessary—blackmail, extortion, bribery, and . . . assassination? What were the policies which made it possible to conclude successful postwar relations with Germany and its allies? Cannot we make use of similar policies here?

**Cleon:** Democracies have a poor record of effectiveness at such efforts to manipulate the internal politics of foreign nations. Less than reliable elements in our bureaucracy will leak to the press and the opposition. And whatever is done, even if kept secret, will be discovered by successor administrations who can use and leak that information for domestic political purposes. Perhaps such foreign policy operations could provide a basis for a future prosecution in a domestic or a foreign court—or, even possibly, in an international court?

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<sup>10</sup> See *supra* note 3.

Eventually, we would be exposed, and that will seal the control of Japan for a generation by its most extremist elements. Such policies, when discovered, as they are sure to be discovered, will make the United States more unpopular among the nations of the nonaligned bloc. I can already hear the “chorus of execration.”<sup>11</sup>

As for why was peace possible between the Allies and the European Axis nations? You know the answer to that. The fascists parties spoke for a plurality or, perhaps, a majority of its peoples, but not all. Fighting and then losing the war, with all the sacrifices endured and territories lost, cost the fascists the bulk of their popular support. And, after they lost, there was an alternative leadership in waiting. It was a leadership which we supported by recognizing them in exile during the war, and by giving them foreign aid after the war.

Japan was entirely different. There was no peace faction seeking recognition as a government-in-exile during the war. Why? Because the population overwhelmingly supported the militarists which took the Japanese nation to war. The postwar Japanese leaders, who brokered the surrender, did not oppose the war at its start; rather, they were just a handful of military officers, civilian bureaucrats, industrialists, and aristocrats who, circa 1943, sought to save Japan, imperial rule, and Japanese traditions from total annihilation.<sup>12</sup> And even then, Yoshida’s peace group was a narrow clique at risk of imprisonment and assassination by the militarists as long as the war lasted.<sup>13</sup> The problem we face in Japan is unique. Is it genetic? —environmental? —a constellation of unfortunate historical facts? I do

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<sup>11</sup> Francis Hitchman, *The Public Life of the Right Honourable the Earl of Beaconsfield, K.G.*, London: Chapman and Hall, 1879, vol. 2, p. 337 [<https://tinyurl.com/5y89aezx>], 29 November 2025.

<sup>12</sup> See Michael Schaller, *The American Occupation of Japan*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1985, pp. 5-6, 10, 17-18 [<https://tinyurl.com/4xm88ums>], 28 November 2025; see also Seth Barrett Tillman, “The European Parliament’s 2016 Sakharov Prize for Freedom of Thought” in *New Reform Club*, 18 September 2016 [<https://tinyurl.com/59vy6cpc>], 27 November 2025; Seth Barrett Tillman, “The European Parliament’s Sakharov Prize for Freedom of Thought 2015” in *New Reform Club*, 18 October 2015 [<https://tinyurl.com/mpvwkfdp>], 27 November 2025.

<sup>13</sup> See also Schaller, *The American Occupation of Japan*, *supra* note 12; cf. Michael D. Pearlman, *Unconditional Surrender, Demobilization, and the Atomic Bomb* Fort Leavenworth, Kansas: Combat Studies Institute, 1996, p. 7 [<https://tinyurl.com/33rwudr5>], 27 November 2025.

not know. And it does not matter. I do know that it is time for us to leave. That is the best policy all things considered. It is 1966, and my primary security concern is the Cold War and all its attendant risks.

**Alcibiades:** The responsible thing to do is to wait for a Japanese peace faction to emerge, and to convince our people that we must not make the same mistake we made at the end of World War I. We must continue to occupy Japan to prevent war from re-emerging.

**Cleon:** Continued occupation is no guarantee of peace, now or later. Our doing so puts at risk the loss of our governing coalition in favor of our less reliable domestic political opponents, and they would entertain even greater political and military risks vis-à-vis enemies of the United States. The Soviet Union and its Warsaw Pact allies are better armed than Japan is today, and the Soviet Union and its allies are better armed than Japan is likely to be any time over the course of the next generation. We must secure *today*—and *tomorrow's* American leadership must be left to govern tomorrow.

**Diodotus:** As we have not reached agreement on these points in prior meetings, I do not see our sub-committee's reaching agreement on these points now. Still, we need to give the President some consensus advice.

**Alcibiades:** We should order our soldiers to remain on the grounds of their bases and out of harm's way. Crimes are manufactured against our military personnel and civilian foreign aid and other support staff—who are then accused of wrongdoing. It is all Hollywood and propaganda. We can reduce this source of tension by grounding our people. We should also focus our attentions on Honshu and Tokyo, and let the lesser islands—Kyushu, Shikoku, and Hokkaido—go. Perhaps we should also consider expanding industry and university exchange programs along with other cultural exchange programs?

**Cleon:** Grounding our people to our military bases (and to compounds for civilian foreign aid and other support staff) will appear as an admission of guilt in regard to past alleged crimes, and an admission that our people's freedom of movement is likely to lead to friction,<sup>14</sup> if not future crimes.

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<sup>14</sup> For a discussion of the possibility of friction in the context of migration, see: Seth Barrett Tillman, "A Dialogue on Migration" in *Eriugena Review*, 18 June 2023 [<https://tinyurl.com/yc6b9unu>], 27 November 2025; Seth Barrett Tillman, "A U.K. Dialogue on Migration" in *News Letter*, 6 October 2025 [<https://tinyurl.com/ms5xvbf>], 27 November 2025; cf. Seth Barrett Tillman, "The Irish Flag War" in *The Galway Review* vol. 14, forth. April 2026, pp. 7-9; Seth Barrett Tillman, "The Irish

Moreover, such a policy will decrease trade, which is one area where we are likely to establish a good record of fair-play with the inhabitants. It may even appear (or be made to appear) that we have adopted this trade-restricting policy as a way to punish or bully the inhabitants. Better to leave Japan than to wave the white flag in this manner.

**Diodotus:** How about this. We recommend to local commanders to advise their soldiers that there are risks involved in mingling with the domestic population. We leave the decision to do so to local commanders and to individual officers and soldiers. We increase our military personnel's net compensation via tax exemptions so that they have the opportunity to spend more money in the local economy. Tax exemptions, as opposed to raising military salaries, will not raise domestic objections that we are engaged in new spending. We announce our departure from the lesser Japanese home islands as a sign of the progress that has been made towards a peace based upon mutual respect and understanding, with the caveat that ending the Far Eastern Commission's and the Allied Council for Japan's administering Honshu and Tokyo awaits a comprehensive settlement supported by the members of the Commission, by the Council, and by Japan's elected government. The future comprehensive settlement and the elected Japanese government's assent to that agreement will show to our people (that is, our electorate) that Japan's future conduct will conform to international law and will be transacted by pacific means.

Can we agree on this proposal?

It is also high time that we direct our press officers to stop speaking about the American "occupation" of Japan, and instead, speak to the American "administration" as governed by public international law. Even better: we should entirely drop the language of "American" occupation and administration in favor of the Commission's and the Council's administration. We should do this as much for our good as for Japan's. It is difficult for a patriot

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Flag War" in *The Galway Review*, 7 September 2025 [<https://tinyurl.com/48adc5ca>], 27 November 2025. See generally Seth Barrett Tillman, "Understanding Nativist Elements Relating to Immigration Policies and to the American Constitution's Natural Born Citizen Clause" in *Study on the American Constitution*/no. 2, vol. 32, August 2021, pp. 1-55 [<https://tinyurl.com/dhkfzby>], 28 November 2025; Seth Barrett Tillman, "East Wall and the Plantations: Ireland and Its New Migrants" in *The American Spectator*, 6 December 2022 [<https://tinyurl.com/2wrnjsjk>], 1 December 2025.



to see his country occupied. And it is more difficult to stomach being occupied by a single foreign power than by the United Nations and by bodies acting under the auspices of public international law. Our using the language of “American occupation” arms the worst elements of Japanese political life with an undeserved propaganda victory. Why do this? Why did we ever do this?

Can we also agree on this proposal?

A vote was taken. Both proposals were recommended to the President absent any recorded objections.

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