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The Origins of the Second World War in Asia and the Pacific: Synthesis Impossible?

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Diplomatic History, Volume 20, Issue 2, 1 April 1996, Pages 241–260,
<https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-7709.1996.tb00624.x>

Published: 01 June 2007

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Scholars studying the origins of the Second World War in Asia are almost universally agreed on two points. A new synthesis is required to cover new work, especially new work for players besides the United States and Japan.

For this very reason, a more satisfactory name for the conflict would be in order, since “Pacific War” seems inadequate. Unfortunately, this agreement exists despite international efforts at scholarly cooperation and exchange spanning decades and unparalleled in comparison to any other topic in the history of American foreign relations.

In fact, the first generation of scholarship on the war's origins was itself characterized by team studies. William Langer and Everett Gleason's classic two-volume work has stood the test of time.¹ On the Japanese side, a team of scholars collaborated to produce a five-volume *History of the Pacific War*, a deliberate attempt...

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Online ISSN 1467-7709

Print ISSN 0145-2096

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