

Comments

KONDO Takahiro

NAGOYA UNIVERSITY

Introduction

First of all, I want to express my appreciation for all the keynote speakers who made wonderful presentations.

Historical problems between Japan and the United States are a big challenge for my area of study, that is, international history textbook research. In other words, though the relationship between the two countries is very important for Japan, their historical problems were not deeply studied in the past, but this does not mean that the problems are not serious.

For instance, an American business executive recently contributed an article to the newspaper in the cities of Berlin and Potsdam, and it prompted a dispute. The city of Potsdam, which is famous as the location of the Potsdam Conference, had a plan to build a memorial in front of the residence where President Truman was staying at the time of the conference. However, the proposed inscription, "The order to drop the atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki was given by President Harry S. Truman from this place. Their destructive power killed hundreds of thousands and brought terrible suffering to the people," was disliked by the American businessman. According to him, this distorts history and ignores the weak sense of morals of the Japanese people who have refused to take responsibility for their Asian victims by emphasizing that they were victims of the atomic bombs.

However, his article resulted in more and more critical comments about the United States as a nuclear power. The readers in Berlin and Potsdam protested, saying that this American businessman himself was distorting history by using the Japanese people as an excuse.

For good or bad, this dispute in Germany has not been intensively discussed in Japan. However, it suggests that the US-Japanese history problems might have a deeper meaning than we feel in Japan or in the United States. The history problems have not only a bilateral, but also a universal character. Therefore, I would first like to explain the results of my studies on Europe and East Asia, and I would like to fulfill my obligations as a commentator by examining the extent to which these findings would be effective when considering trans-Pacific historical issues.

I. Historical problems in the Asia-Pacific region and history dialogues in Europe

It has long been noted that the perspective of history possessed by a citizenry as well as history education (which attempts to influence that perspective) are causal factors of international conflicts. For example, Bertrand Russell states the following in his book *Education and the Social Order* (1932):

Throughout the Western world boys and girls are taught that their most important social loyalty is to the State of which they are citizens, and that their duty to the State is to act as its government may direct. Lest they should question this doctrine, they are taught false history, false politics, false economics. They are informed of the misdeeds of foreign States, but not of the misdeeds of their own State. They are led to suppose that the wars in which their own State has engaged are wars of defense, while the wars of foreign States are wars of aggression.

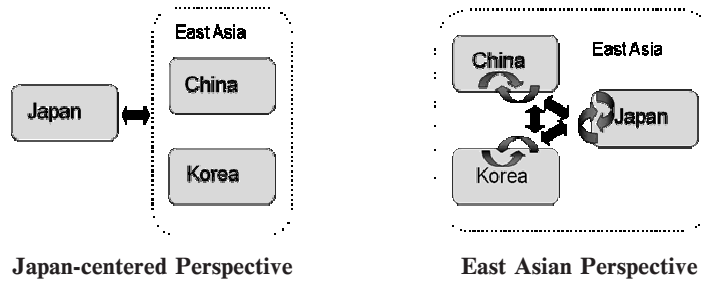
Just as is symbolized in Russell's words, the opinion that the countries of the world should reform their nationalistic history education and that international cooperation is desirable for this end had already brought forth a number of supporters in the prewar world.

However, they were in the minority in most countries, and with the exception of regional cooperation in northern Europe, the real development of international cooperation in the area of textbooks would have to wait until the end of World War II. Although these activities and international history textbook research would develop quickly within the countries of Europe (centered in Germany), the Asia-Pacific region lags far behind. Dialogues on history between the governments of Japan and Korea finally began in 2002, and dialogues between Japan and China did not begin until 2006. However, these discussions were based on the presumption that the governments concerned would not be able to resolve these internationalized historical problems, which is to say these discussions began by pushing this difficult problem onto the historians. So, it is thought that these kinds of discussions will require a considerable amount of time to produce any kind of results.

Given these circumstances, it is perhaps not surprising, then, that even today there are considerable differences in the perception of history between Japan and the United States, on a wide range of issues such as Pearl Harbor and the nuclear attacks on Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

In East Asia in particular, one of the reasons why it is so difficult to resolve historical problems lies in the fact that they are not simple confrontations between states. As Professor Yoneyama indicated, even when only taking China, Japan and Korea into account there are confrontations in historical perspectives and historical policies in each country. Through mutual stimulation among the countries, historical problems are formed. The following chart shows this point.

A concrete example of this in Japan is the fact that for 30 years beginning in



the 1960s, multiple lawsuits were raised regarding the legality of the textbook approval process. The point of confrontation here is not only a difference in the interpretation of the constitutionality of the approval system. Rather, the confrontation was a more fundamental problem between the perspective of reformist historians and the historical perspective of the Ministry of Education under a conservative administration. This type of tension between the right and left has been mitigated to a point with the end of the Cold War, but has not been eliminated in its entirety to this day. Within this transnational framework, the right-wing intellectuals oppose not only the left wing inside Japan but also the historical perspective expressed by historians in neighboring countries, and this opposition gives them a measure of support from the Japanese people.

On the other hand, the positioning of the Japanese government, unable to rid itself of the assertions of the right wing, has in Korea provided the leftist force partisans with opportunities to criticize the right wing of the country as being “weak-kneed” and pro-Japanese. This criticism, at the same time placing pressure on the right wing to take a strong diplomatic stance against Japan, invigorates Japanese nationalists who are critical of so-called anti-Japanese collaboration between the Japanese and Korean left.

The conditions in China, which has not adopted a parliamentary democracy, differ to some degree. That is to say that a difference can be seen between the vast numbers of people critical of the historical perspective seen in Japan and Korea in relation to issues such as the Sino-Japanese War and the ancient Goguryeo Dynasty, and a group of historians critical of the government that fuels those nationalist sentiments. When the discussions of these reformist intellectuals become the subject of clampdowns by the government, right-wing intellectuals in Japan and Korea are able to effectively condemn the suppression of free discussion by Chinese nationalism-integrated communism.

The existence of close connections between domestic and international confrontations means that it is easy for such historical problems to happen. The barriers to communication between countries have been lost, and today we see a common communication bloc being formed. The result is that domestic political speech and behavior increasingly possesses a latent danger of having an impact on international relations.

The current conditions in East Asia are contradictory to the relationship

between Germany and France, which already share a common high school-level history textbook; or to the relationship between Germany and Poland, which are currently in the process of producing this kind of textbook.

Of course, the fact that these kinds of activities are being advanced in Europe does not mean that no historical problems exist there. From 2006 to 2007, the right-wing administration in power in Poland at the time was embroiled in a bitter confrontation with a German victims' group driven from Poland at the end of World War II. However, immediately after the right-wing administration left office, the German Foreign Minister proposed to Poland the idea of producing a common history textbook. It must therefore be seen that the nature of the relationship among these European countries differs from international relations in East Asia.

When we think about what could have divided Europe and East Asia, the first thing that comes to mind is the postwar international environment. Next is the political will to create mutual trust and to increase cooperation.

First, let us briefly recount the sequence of events behind the discussions advanced by German and French historians in the postwar period.

The beginnings of discussions of history between the two countries can be traced to the occupation policies of France, but real discussions did not begin until 1950. The discussions at that time were advanced by the history teachers' unions in both countries, but following the conclusion of a cultural exchange agreement between Germany and France in 1954 these activities began to receive clear support from the governments of both countries. Furthermore, in 1963 the Élysée Treaty was concluded, reconfirming the direction of these kinds of cultural policies.

The first period of discussions lasted from 1950-1967, the second period from 1980-1987, and the third period began in 2003, the 40th anniversary of the Élysée Treaty. There is no doubt that these activities were supported by diplomatic policies of both countries. The close partnerships between political leaders Adenauer and de Gaulle, Kohl and Mitterrand, and Schroder and Chirac were always present in the background of these activities.

It is important to note that these activities were not advanced merely to serve as a way to resolve the differences in historical perspective. There were also practical goals such as the pursuit of peace through European integration, and ensuring that Europe had a voice equal to that of the United States and the Soviet Union under the Cold War regime. The political will was to overcome the international environment of the Cold War and other confrontations since the 19th century. It can be said that these two goals provided historians from both banks of the Rhine with a forum for significant discussion.

This also applies to the discussions of history being carried out by Germany and Poland. Discussions between these countries officially began in 1972, and continue to this day. It is interesting that the start date coincides almost perfectly with the end of the first period of Franco-German activities. Discussions

with Poland were intensively carried out from 1972-1977, when the textbook recommendations were publicized, and in the early 1990s following the democratic revolutions of Eastern Europe. These two periods coincided with effective pauses in the activities with France.

Within the progression of history discussions between Germany/Poland and Germany/France one can see resonating German diplomacy's so-called "pendulum phenomenon" (a term used to describe Germany's alternating periods of high levels of interest in the East and West).

Furthermore, close investigation of the sequence of events leading up to the start of discussions with Poland reveals that they were made possible by the Treaty of Moscow and the Treaty of Warsaw, both concluded in 1970. Under the Cold War regime, West Germany and Poland were in opposing camps, and additionally there was the problem of Germany's old eastern territories between the two countries. The German refugees that were not able to return to areas placed under Polish jurisdiction after the war demanded the return of their former territory and assets, and as long as the government supported this position, discussions on history would not be possible. As part of the world detente that was occurring at that time, the Brandt administration effectively abandoned territorial claims through these two treaties and made possible discussions between the two countries. In addition, it is fair to say that what Willy Brandt called the "Neue Ostpolitik" that came to symbolize this treaty would require discussions on history. Discussions after 1990 as well would be greatly influenced by changes in international relations in Europe.

Throughout the 1970s and 1980s, historians from West Germany made progress in their discussions with Polish historians operating under the communist system, but their debates carried political restrictions with them. That is, if any historical perspectives or realities inconvenient to the communist administrations in Poland or the Soviet Union were attempted to be touched upon in the official document, it likely would have led to a breakdown in discussions. As a result of these restrictions, the textbook recommendations made public in 1977 had far more revision recommendations for West German textbooks than they did for their Polish counterparts.

However, the changes in systems that took place in 1989 allowed freedom of expression in Poland, and during the accompanying surge of nationalism, a by-product of this new freedom, the necessity of history education reform emerged. Since that time, discussions between Germany and Poland have become increasingly reciprocal.

From the difference between the activities in the 1970s and those that took place in the 1990s, one can infer the importance of international relations in these discussions, as well as the importance of the political will to work towards building trust, regardless of the difficulties of the situation. This of course is true regarding the political will for discussions on history, as well.

II. What are the common issues that exist between Japan and the United States?

How effective is the information gained from the history discussions in Europe shown above in explaining historical problems that exist in the Asia-Pacific Region?

No concrete movements have been made in the Asia-Pacific Region that correlate to those made in Europe towards its unification. This difference manifests itself in Asia's lateness in handling its historical problems. Certainly the construction of an Asian Community or East Asian Community has been drawing attention in recent years and, each time it is proposed, interest in discussions on history is heightened. However, discussions on regional integration stagnate in the midst of China and America's leadership struggle, and it is difficult to envision Japan and South Korea engaging in pro-active cooperation to realize this goal.

Fundamentally, compared to Europe with numerous medium- to small-scale states, in the Asia Pacific Region there are presently two superpowers, America and China, as well as the other significant presence of Russia. Add to this the fact that there are two Chinas and two Koreas. Therefore, it doesn't seem strange that there are no realistic prospects for regional integration. As a result, it is difficult to hold out hope for any discussions on history.

However, disadvantages in the international environment are not the only causes for the lateness in dealing with historical problems. In the Asia-Pacific Region, there has clearly been a lack of political will to resolve these problems. Even if a relationship in which both parties proactively seek to understand the position of the other country (such as was advanced between Germany and France after the war) cannot be developed within the Asia-Pacific Region, it still should be understood that there is also a discussion style in which one party seeks to proactively learn from the other party. This is the type of discussion that West Germany and Poland engaged in during the 1970s.

In concrete terms, the 1965 conclusion of the Treaty on Basic Relations between Japan and the Republic of Korea and the normalization of diplomatic relations between Japan and China in 1972 seem to have been excellent opportunities to begin discussions. In particular within the process of negotiations leading to the conclusion of the Treaty on Basic Relations between Japan and the Republic of Korea, the great differences in historical perspectives between the two countries became a problem, focused primarily on the Japan-Korea Annexation Treaty (1910). However, these differences of understanding were put aside and even today remain as a point of confrontation between the governments of both countries. From the 1970s, the analysis of Japanese history textbooks progressed in Korea, and coming into the 1980s, the Koreans tried to establish a forum for debate between the two countries to revise the accounts given in the Japanese textbooks. However, such suggestions were rejected by the Japanese government until the end of the 20th century.

The asymmetrical relationships that have long existed between Japan and Korea and between Japan and China seem to be reflected here. That is, there has long been an aspect in which most Japanese political leaders accept the dissatisfaction of these countries as requests for increased amounts of development aid. In postwar Japan, which places central its relationship with the United States, it is quite possible that building trust with neighboring countries has had only secondary significance.

In this way, the current situation of history problems in East Asia, and above all Japan's history policy, can be explained to a large degree from two standpoints: that of a close connection to the international environment, and that of the lack of political will.

However, when examining transatlantic history problems, there are still facets that are not touched upon sufficiently from these standpoints.

Undoubtedly, the relationship between Japan and the United States is not as equal as the relationship between France and Germany. This phenomenon is shown in the very recent sequence of events in which former Prime Minister Hatoyama boldly stated he sought an equal relationship with the United States, only to be bogged down in the management of the administration. However, the relationship between Japan and the United States is far more stable than that between Japan and China or Japan and South Korea. In spite of the fact that each side is aware of the differences in opinion regarding issues such as Pearl Harbor and the nuclear attacks, little conscious effort has been made to bury those differences in understanding. This situation seems quite unusual. To say the least, it is impossible to think that the Japanese side is not aware of the importance of building trust.

This raises the question as to whether there is some problem besides lack of will for discussions on history.

Just to confirm, in neither Japan nor in the United States is there a dearth of information regarding so-called "historical dialogues." The Japanese Foreign Ministry established the International Education Information Center, and since the end of the war has been engaged in researching information written about Japan in foreign textbooks. When historical anachronisms regarding geisha, Mt. Fuji, or harakiri and so on are discovered, the Center contacts the publisher asking for a revision. The Center also closely exchanged information with the Georg Eckert Institute for International Textbook Research, the organization primarily charged with advancing historical dialogues in Germany.

As a matter of fact, Germany and the United States have also had experience in conducting historical discussions with each other from 1953 to 1967 and from 1979 to 1989. In particular the latter discussions were conducted at Southern Illinois University, which receives assistance aid for the International Communication Agency, and at Germany's Georg Eckert Institute.

It is not the case that neither country has had experiences in engaging in activities related to historical dialogues, as seen above. Nevertheless, there have

never been any discussions between Japan and the United States worthy of the name.

What is important is that the activities of the International Education Information Center and the ICA were both advanced as a part of public diplomacy. In other words, these activities are implemented by each country to spread internationally a “correct” image of that country. Learning from the partner to revise the historical perspective in one’s own country was never a major goal.

Japan and the United States worked to have the other country revise its historical perspective, when a difference was recognized between the home country and the other country. In terms of goodwill, both countries may consider that having a partner country understand the true nature and form of the country without glorification is what achieves trust. However, it seems that there was little in the way of understanding regarding the fact that the reform of one’s own historical perspective brings a base of trust; in particular it is important that public institutions encourage the domestic citizenry to change.

In Japan, at least, the reformist powers that criticized the nationalistic historical perspective in the textbooks regarded it as unnecessary and dangerous that the Japanese government executes any domestic historical policy (“Geschichtspolitik”). This kind of view of historical policy likely also exists in the United States.

International dialogues on history cannot be advanced when the historical policy meant for domestic society is impermissible. In other words, it is not the case that the will to conduct discussions is weak in Japan and the United States. Rather, it can be said that such a discussion has been regarded as impermissible.

Conclusion: Can freedom be realized?

The posturing towards historical dialogues by Japan and the United States is not necessarily exceptional in the modern world. This kind of thinking is likely to be in the majority, primarily in the developing countries. If international society is perceived to be a place where countries fight for their own national interests, it is not strange to think that if another country changes its historical perspective, it is a victory, and if one’s own country changes, it is a loss. It will be also important to ascertain that the states that possess this view of international society can be states that guarantee a large degree of freedom in historical perception among its individual citizens.

However, the price for this freedom is not small. With the advance of democratization in the world, there is the possibility that conditions similar to the historical problems in East Asia could occur in other regions. When domestic and international tensions around historical perspective are complexly intertwined a doubt appears concerning whether the diversity of historical perspective that is hoped for with the achievement of freedom will truly take on a significant form.

In the end, through confrontations among identity groups, will not the diversity of historical perspective be lost?

On the other hand, internationally speaking, unlike Japan, which has already been pushed into discussions with Korea and China, the United States possesses massive assets, markets, technology and military power. This allows the American citizenry to enjoy a small extension of time, but the present situation will not be able to continue long. The historical issue in Potsdam that I mentioned at the beginning of my comments shows that international relations concerning history are more complicated than some Americans estimate.

The solution to the historical problems between Japan and the United States may be for both countries to engage in appropriate practices to gain the wisdom to add a self-image as modest learner to the image of themselves that they project to the world.