

The Cold War in Japan in Terms of Book Reviews

Yoshiaki Katada

Introduction

This paper will explore several books in order to consider the Cold War in Asia, particularly in Japan. In so doing, I will summarize the following books in terms of the role of the Imperial Household, economic systems, and the United States-Japan economic relations.¹⁾

Book Reviews Regarding the Cold War in Japan

In 2000, John Dower received the Pulitzer Prize for his *Embracing Defeat*.²⁾ Following his reception of the Prize, Herbert Bix also won the same prize for his *Hirohito and the Making of Modern Japan* in 2001.³⁾ This means two American historians in the field of modern Japanese history were honored as winners of the most prestigious American literary award for two consecutive years.

It is noteworthy that these two prize-winning books share the same topic as an important component. That is, they shed close light upon the political role of the previous emperor, Hirohito as a human being in the Pacific War and henceforth.

In prewar Japan, the emperor played an extremely crucial role. In a speech on February 5, 1943 in a committee of the 81st Imperial Diet, then Premier Hideki Tōjō, who was executed as a war criminal most responsible for the War, stated as follows: “The reason why I can shine is due to our emperor. Without the emperor’s warm blessing, I could not do anything.” This statement shows even when Tōjō was at the pinnacle of power, he based his political leadership upon the emperor’s authority.⁴⁾ Therefore the most influential person in Japan’s political arena during the Pacific War, had to use the emperor’s authority. Thus, Dower and Bix explore the matter that was hard for prewar Japanese historians to deal with.

In his book, Dower emphasizes that Supreme Commander for the Allied Powers (SCAP) tried to take advantage of the existing emperor’s authority for enhancing his goal. Because many Americans and America’s allies such as China, Australia, Philippines, and the Soviet Union, wanted to try the emperor as a war criminal, General MacArthur had to prove how he could use the emperor effectively

1) This paper is based on my presentation regarding “Recent Interpretations and New Archival Resources on the Cold War” at 2005 Book Roundtable at the 31st International Congress of Military History in Madrid, Spain.

2) John Dower, *Embracing Defeat* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1999).

3) Herbert Bix, *Hirohito and the Making of Modern Japan* (New York: Harper Collins Publisher, 2000).

4) Akira Tanaka, “Kindai Tennōsei no Rironteki Shomondai” in *Kindai Nicchū Kankeishi Saikō* (A Reconsideration of the History of Sino-Japanese Relationships in the Modern Period), edited by Akira Tanaka (Tokyo: Nihon Keizai Hyōron sha, 2002).

in the Occupation.

Although many interpretations have demonstrated that the goal of the Occupation changed from “the demilitarization and democratization of Japan” in the beginning, to “the foundation of Japan as a bulwark of anti-communism” in the end, Dower pays attention to the changing role of the emperor in the transformation of this goal. In the beginning, MacArthur intended to use the emperor’s authority in order to stabilize the society in chaos, and then he expected Hirohito to become a symbol of Japan which was supposed to cooperate with the United States foreign policy goals, in particular towards Communism.

Dower also points out that the postwar Japanese economic model is not its own model but a hybrid Japanese-American model. He thinks that controlling the economic system during the period of Japan’s prewar totalitarianism was combined with the postwar bureaucratic system of the occupation force. This newly emerged system led to the rise of the bureaucratically-oriented model which would exercise great power of the government over the guidance and protection of private business in postwar Japan. He called this model “a SCAPanese model.”

The essence of his interpretation regarding the Occupation, was that SCAP’s democratization of Japan ironically promoted further bureaucratization of Japan in the context of the Cold War. In its occupation process, General Headquarters (GHQ) itself as a bureaucracy, was linked with the prewar Japanese bureaucracy. Hence, the goal of Japan’s democratization resulted in promoting the future intervention of the Japanese government. This kind of intervention had some in common with a socialist economy of the Soviet Union of which GHQ had been very critical.

Regarding the nature of the Allied powers’ occupation of Japan, Herbert Bix suggests in his book that they were based upon “real politics” in the Tokyo tribunal court, so that they put priority on their own national interests rather than on their own moral standards. According to him, even Chiang Kai-shek decided not to ask for the indictment of the former emperor as a war criminal although Chiang believed Japan’s prewar militarism was associated with the imperial regime. Bix points out that Chiang expected the maintenance of the emperor system to prevent the expansion of communism in Japan and its filtering into China. At that time, Chiang was about to wage a war against communists. He even tried to urge the defeated Japanese military to remain in China since he wanted to use the military in his anticipated war against Mao Zedong.

Bix suggests that MacArthur also did his own best in order not to put the emperor into indictment. Bix indicates the example that MacArthur sent President Truman the following telegram. It read, “His indictment will unquestionably cause a tremendous convulsion among the Japanese people, the repercussions of which cannot be overestimated. He is a symbol which unites all Japanese. Destroy him and the nation will disintegrate.... It is quite possible that a million troops would be required which would have to be maintained for an indefinite number of years.”

Akira Iriye’s *Japan & the wider world* shows the characteristics of the Cold War from the Japanese point of view.⁵⁾ Iriye, a Harvard professor and a leading diplomatic historian, gives us a basic foundation for understanding Japan’s foreign policies in the context of the Cold War.

5) Akira Iriye, *Japan & the wider world* (Longman: New York, 1997).

In spite of the United States occupation force's original goal of "demilitarization and democratization of Japan," the United States attitude towards Japan changed to make Japan its ally against Communism in Asia. According to Iriye, in its surrounding Cold War atmosphere, Japan became enthusiastic to expand trade with China in addition to trade with the United States and Southeast Asia while a majority of Japanese sought their national security by means of allowing United States military bases in Japan.

In terms of the United States-Soviet relations, the 1950s witnessed a contradictory situation in the sense that military competition and *détente* coexisted. In the 1950s, both the United States and the Soviet Union were in very stiff competition for further military expansion while they accelerated collective multi-national securities by internationally organizing military alliances. At the same time, these two countries entered the era of "*détente*" after Stalin's death in 1953. In 1956, the United States did not dare to intervene in the democratic movements in Poland and Hungary, thus avoiding a military conflict with the Soviet Union. In 1959, President Richard Nixon visited the Soviet Union and Nikita Khrushchev visited the United States.

As another crucial characteristic of the world in the 1950s, Iriye pays attention to the non-alliance of the Third World that criticized the Cold War as a quest for the traditional sphere of influence and imperialism. He highly regards the assertion of the Third World as the Bandung spirit. However, as seen in China's attack on Quemoy and Matsu in 1958, China tried to exercise hegemonic power over Asia, and the Bandung spirit faded away.

In this decade, Japan sought to construct friendly relationships with Asian neighbors. In particular, a certain number of Japanese were eager to establish a close relationship with China because of its desire to enhance trade; out of respect for China's Communism and anti-imperialism; and from guilt for its wartime aggression there. In order to strengthen ties between these two countries, the Japan-China Cultural Exchange Association was founded even though many Japanese were sent to the United States under the Fulbright program.

However, as Iriye points out, Japan could not indicate a clear role in Asia. Japan participated in the Bandung Conference, yet it did not join the Asian-African Conference. Japan agreed to pay war reparations with Burma and Philippines, but it did not reach an agreement with Korea.

Despite this ambiguous stance of Japan's foreign policy during the Cold War period, it is clear that Japan has been putting first priority on economic interests to the extent that Japan wanted to ease even the COCOM (the Coordinating Committee for Export Control over Trade with the Soviet Union) restrictions. Japan's stance to prioritize economic development was inherited into the following decades after the 1950s.⁶⁾

When Hayato Ikeda succeeded Shigeru Yoshida as Prime Minister, he adopted the same line

6) According to Iriye, even though this stance was challenged in many respects, Japan's adherence to its economic growth persisted. As in other countries in the 1960s, Japan was also under the influence of U.S. pop culture which was derived from the youth movement in the U.S. against the existing mainstream value system. Another challenge which Japan faced in the 1960s, stemmed from ethnic movements in the Third World countries, most of which were members of the United Nations. Confronting these challenges, the Japanese government continued to maintain the policy to pursue economic interests in the 1960s, and the following decades.

as his predecessor by campaigning his double income policy in the 1960s. Indeed, Japan's GNP increased by 10 percent annually in the 1960s. Thus, during the Cold War era, Japan could ironically focus upon industrial development by relying on United States military protection.

However, Iriye, a scholar favorable to Wilsonianism, stressed that after the Cold War was over, Japan's interests should be based not on the hitherto economic calculation but on international cooperation. He also says that if we look at the problem of poverty, similar problems exist in the United States as in the Third World. It is apparent that the United States globalized at the same time the world was Americanized.

Walter LaFeber's Bancroft Prize winning book, *The Clash: U.S.-Japanese Relations throughout History* also reveals the characteristics of the Cold War in Asia from the perspective of the United States-Japanese relationships.⁷⁾ As is well known, LaFeber, a widely published historian in the field of United States diplomatic history and his other book, *America, Russia, and the Cold War, 1945–1996*, has been used at many universities in the United States and is one of the most popular assigned textbooks for graduate students majoring in modern United States history.⁸⁾

Although LaFeber has been regarded as a member of “the Wisconsin school” led by William Appleman Williams, *The Clash* is not so embedded in ideological terms. Despite his emphasis on economic factors in examining United States diplomatic history, this book is not shaped by the extreme “economic determinist” view and freed from overestimating an imperialistic element in United States foreign policy. Thus, the book is sound enough to give us an objective view of United States-Japanese relations over the Pacific.

LaFeber's *The Clash* can be summarized as follows: After the Chinese revolution in 1949, China became a powerful menace to the United States. At that time, Japan's neighboring trading partners could have been China and Southeast Asia. Premier Yoshida however, was interested in Sino-Japanese trade.

Even though the United States led Japan to pursue the Asian market, it expected Japan to enter only the Southeast Asian market, not the China market. The United States wished to maintain the containment policy towards communism. Many American leaders such as George Kennan, Dean Rusk, and Dean Acheson thought that, for its economic recovery, Japan needed the Southeast Asian market not only for its exports but also for its imports, particularly rice, to ensure the national food supply.

In the 1950s, Japan's private firms' trade with China increased after they secured contracts with the country. This trade increase was seen by the United States government as ignoring the spirit of CHINCOM (the Coordinating Committee for Export Control over Trade with China). Despite the United States government's dissatisfaction with Japanese firms' flirtation with China, Japan's trade with China further expanded after these firms signed more trade contracts with China in 1962. In the future, these contracts would be known as L-T trade. Japanese firms' desire to maximize business interests by means of trade continued into the 1960s to the extent that they exported a certain amount

7) Walter LaFeber, *The Clash: U.S.-Japanese Relations throughout History* (New York: W. W. Norton Company, 1997).

8) Walter LaFeber, *America, Russia, and the Cold War, 1945–1996* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1967).

of goods to China and North Vietnam even during the Vietnam War.⁹⁾

Concerning Japan's trade with the United States until 1965 the United States had maintained a trade surplus with Japan, however from this date the balance shifted towards Japan. Even confronting Japan's rising exports, the United States government showed a generous stance towards the Japanese government. This generosity was reflected in so-called, Lindon Johnson's domino theory.¹⁰⁾ President Johnson's way of thinking was a revival of the way many United States leaders thought in the 1950s. Therefore, although the Japanese government had demonstrated a cooperative stance towards the United States government by ratifying the United States-Japan National Security Treaty in 1960, many Japanese firms were able to extend their reach into China and other Asian countries. The United States was preoccupied and distracted by the war in Vietnam from 1965 to 1973.

However, once Richard Nixon started to improve the ties with China in 1971, the United States attitude towards Japan changed from an ally in the Cold War to a rival in a globally competitive economy. Then President Jimmy Carter imposed a twenty-five percent tariff on the exports of small-sized trucks from Japan in the late 1970s. Concurrent with the rise of the tariff, the total sum of Japan's trade with the Soviet Union increased.

To conclude, LaFeber sees the characteristics of United States-Japanese relations after the 1970s differ from those before the 1960s. Throughout the Cold War, Japan has insistently concentrated on the enhancement of its economic-wellbeing. He thinks that this difference is due to the change of United States foreign policies toward communist countries. The United States had maintained an accommodating stance towards Japan as an ally. However, since Nixon improved its relationship with China, the United States has regarded Japan as a rival in the global economy.

Although *Modernization as Ideology: America's Social Science and "Nation Building" in the Kennedy Era* written by Michael E. Latham, is not directly related to the issues of the Cold War in Asia, this book will show us an idea of how to perceive these issues in ideological terms.¹¹⁾ Because John F. Kennedy was extremely concerned about the war on Communism in Asia, particularly in Vietnam, it is useful to refer to Latham's book.

As the title indicates, Latham examines United States foreign policies by shedding light on modernization as ideology. In so doing, he explores Modernization theory, the Peace Corps, the Alliance for Progress, and the Strategic Hamlet Program in Vietnam in the context of the Cold War.

His approach to these issues is influenced by Michael Hunt's book, *Ideology and U.S. Foreign Policy*, in the sense that both Hunt and Latham do not deal with "state" as a central actor in formulating the people's ideology and that they do not regard national interests as an evident concept.¹²⁾ They

9) Regarding Sino-Japanese relations, I referred to Takahiro Okada's book entitled *Nijū Isshū no Chūgoku zō* (The Image of China in the 21st Century), (Tokyo: Yūhikaku, 2001). (Professor Okada is my colleague at Nagoya University of Commerce and Business. I am greatly in debt to his clear explanations about Sino-Japanese relations.) In the term of L-T trade, L stood for Liao Cheng Zhi while T signified Tatsunosuke Takasaki.

10) This theory is; if South Vietnam came under the control of communists, Japan would rely upon the Chinese market, thus leading Japan to eventually become a communist country too.

11) Michael E. Latham, *Modernization as Ideology: America's Social Science and "Nation Building" in the Kennedy Era* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2000).

12) Michael H. Hunt, *Ideology and U.S. Foreign Policy* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987).

consider that especially when many Americans think about the concept of their national interests, they perceive it as the interests of the United States vis-a-vis those of other countries.

According to Latham, this concept itself has not been formulated on the rationalistic calculation of United States interests against the outside world, but rather in the combination of domestic factors such as its own culture and historical experiences. Therefore, it is easy to understand why Latham, as well as Hunt, is strongly affected by a famous article, *Ideology as Cultural System* by the well-known cultural anthropologist, Clifford Geertz.¹³⁾ Latham seeks to pay attention to various factors which characterized the Cold War ideology in the United States, without being biased neither by psychological nor by economic determinist's point of view when examining the Cold War.

In the end, I want to introduce *Ajia reisen shi (A History of the Cold War in Asia)*. Although this book is written in Japanese by Nobuo Shimotomai, there are few Japanese books from the 1990s till the present, which explore the Cold War in Asia as a whole.¹⁴⁾ His book is valuable in dealing with this topic from the Soviet Union's viewpoint. In spite of being small-sized book aimed at the general public, the author uses a wide range of Russian primary sources which were recently released to the public.

In considering the Cold War, Shimotomai examines three major factors composed of ideology, geopolitics, and nuclear power. Regarding the role of ideology, he thinks that ideology has not insistently been the most significant matter in Asia. For example, in the early 1990s after the collapse of the Soviet Union, Kazakhstan tried to change the nation's slogan from "scientific socialism" to "scientific ethnicism" in the government conference in regard with its ideology. Thus, it was easy even for a chief component of the former Soviet Union to change the orthodoxy from "socialism" to "nationalism" upon which the government's power was based.

Regarding geopolitics, Shimotomai suggests that the Soviet Union tended to think of itself as a member of Europe. This tendency was inherited from the era of Imperial Russia. However, he also points out that as many Asian countries started to expand their economies greatly, Russia became eager to link its own with Asian economies. Hence, as is often the case, economic interests largely affected how the nation behaved internationally.

At last, according to him, nuclear weapons are seen as the ultimate symbol of advanced technologies for many Asian countries, insuring them of catching up with industrialized countries. Also, nuclear weapons are the means to assert their national independence.

Conclusion

As a result of the defeat of World War II, Japan has been insistently concerned with promoting its own economic well-being during the Cold War period while maintaining its own national security by following United States foreign policies. The relationship between the United States and Japan in

13) Clifford Geertz, "Ideology as a Cultural System" in *Ideology and Discontent* edited by David E. Apter (New York: The Free Press, 1964).

14) Nobuo Shimotomai, *Ajia reisen shi (A History of the Cold War in Asia)* (Tokyo: Chuō Kōron Shin sha, 2004).

the field of their foreign policies is exemplified in the following formula: $Y=F(X)$ on the condition that Y stands for Japan's foreign policy while X stands for the United States foreign policy. As Dower and Bix suggest in the aforementioned books, for Japan, there has not been any other room except for seeking to maximize its own economic interests.

In its incessant quest for economic growth, the public sector greatly intervened in the private sector, sometimes to the extent that the Japanese government seemed to ignore the discipline of a free-market economy. Therefore, regarding Japan's attitude towards the Cold War, one of the most conspicuous characteristics is that the nation has not necessarily pursued a purely capitalistic economy even though a major conflict between the United States and the Soviet Union was reflected in a struggle between their own economic systems, namely a free-market economy vis-à-vis a planned economy.

Former Foreign Minister Nobutaka Machimura in his recent book entitled *Hoshu no Ronri* (The Theory of Conservatism), states that the Japanese economy has been based upon social democracy.¹⁵⁾ His book indicates that postwar Japan's conservatism has been characterized not by enhancing free-market economy in capitalistic terms, but by respecting traditional culture. He thinks that the Imperial Household has always been situated in the center of the Japanese culture.

However, as demonstrated in Machimura's book, many political leaders have not clarified the detailed substance of Japan's traditional culture. With the ambiguous grasp of its culture, respecting the Imperial Household and maintaining the United States-Japan Security Treaty became a major pillar of "the conservatives" who were politically represented by the Liberal Democratic Party.

Under the rule of the LDP which has been in power for almost an entire postwar period, the Japanese leaders have enjoyed a free hand in choosing its own domestic economic system between a market economy and a planned economy on the condition that they are supported by this pillar. As Iriye and LaFeber suggest, Japan's economic policies were flexible enough to adjust to the changing international relations. As indicated in the word "United States-Japanese trade war," these policies were sometimes even in conflict with United States economic policies. Therefore, the above mentioned pillar played the role of indulgence in allowing the Japanese freely to exercise its own economic activities.

15) Nobutaka Machimura, *Hoshu no Ronri* (A Theory of the Conservatives) (Tokyo: PHP Kenkyū sho, 2005).