



# THE AGENDA AND POTENTIAL OF THE EAST ASIAN COMMUNITY: A Critical Historical Sociological Analysis of Imperialism in Asia\*

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*We must not allow the System to exploit us. We must not allow the System to take on a life of its own. The System did not make us: we made the*

*System.*" (Haruki Murakami, "Jerusalem Prize" address, February 16, 2009)<sup>1</sup>

## I . Asia without the Peace Dividend

During the Cold War, while Europe was frozen with the fear of nuclear annihilation, Asia suffered from a series of hot wars and massacres. In the post-1945 era, Asia has been continuously destructed by highly intensive and severe wars, massacres and famines, with a death toll in the tens of millions.<sup>2</sup> Except for the case of Pol Pot's massacre, none of these large-scale atrocities have been legally settled by domestic or international law.

While state-to-state conflict is unthinkable in Europe, Asia is still burdened by the risk of anachronistic conflicts, typically over borders. The Korean War has not yet legally ended, but rather paused with an armistice signed in 1953.<sup>3</sup> In post-Cold War Europe, the risk of major armed conflicts has been reduced to a quite low level,<sup>4</sup> while non-traditional threats, such as terrorism and energy shortage, currently dominate European security concerns. In Asia, by contrast, the picture is much gloomier—there is still a high risk of interstate

armed conflict as a result of excessive power struggle, as well as non-traditional security threats. Two flashpoints remain in East Asia, namely the Korean Peninsula and the Taiwan Strait, where the risk of interstate conflict involving weapons of mass destruction (WMD) cannot be ruled out as the conflicts escalate. Additionally, the East China Sea and Spratly Islands remain risk zones for armed conflicts over territory and natural resources, as China is intensifying its natural resources hunting with expanding military power. China's rapid military build-up is a challenge to many countries in the region. Meanwhile, the U.S. overseas forces are undergoing global re-deployment and reorganization, which affects the Asia-Pacific region, adding another uncertain factor to the regional security balance in the coming years. The lack of credible regional confidence and security-building measures in East Asia is only making the current situation more

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volatile.

According to the Uppsala Conflict Data Program (UCDP), Asia is one of the most conflict-burdened regions in the world.<sup>5</sup> The UCDP defines an armed conflict as “a contested incompatibility which concerns government and/or territory where the use of armed force between two parties, of which at least one is the government of a state, results in at least 25 battle-related deaths”; if a conflict involves at least 1,000 battle-related deaths in a year, it is regarded as having the intensity level of war.<sup>6</sup> From the UCDP data on aggregated armed conflicts 1946–2007, Asia can be identified as having the second largest number of conflicts after Africa, and the greatest number of “wars,” i.e. conflicts of high intensity with over 1000 battle-related deaths per year. Noteworthy is that conflicts in Asia are dominated by territory-related disputes. In the aggregate data for armed conflicts in 1946–2007, Asia has been most prone to major conflicts, and as of 2007 Asia had the greatest number of active armed conflicts. Furthermore, it should be recalled that the UCDP does not cover large-scale atrocities caused by political power struggles, such as Mao Zedong’s Great Leap Forward (1958–61) and the North Korean famines that occurred during the 1990s. In addition to major armed conflicts and atrocities, Asia is most vulnerable to large-scale natural catastrophes—such as the 2004 tsunami (nearly 0.3 million killed), Cyclone *Nargis* in Burma in 2008, and the 2008 Sichuan earthquake in China—due to the region’s high density of population, poverty and unequal socioeconomic structure.

Such negative trends in Asia continue well into

the post–Cold War period; this is well reflected in the trend of military expenditures by region since 1988, as shown by the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) data.<sup>7</sup> In terms of U.S. dollar at constant 2005 prices and exchange rates, military expenditure in East Asia has been constantly increasing even during the post–Cold War period, which is in stark contrast to Western Europe, whose military expenditure has stagnated during the same period. China’s double-digit military expenditure growth is the major reason behind the region’s military expenditure increase. Such data clearly show that Asia has suffered greatly from many severe wars and major armed conflicts after 1945; even after the Cold War, Asia has not benefited from the so-called peace dividend. Rather, as the next section shows, Asia has many signs of potentially highly destructive conflicts which may have global consequences.

In East Asia, there remain many territorial disputes due to the legacy of war, involving the major countries of China, Japan, Korea and Russia. China’s rapidly growing military power and its tendency to resort to force to further its interests (as seen in the East China Sea and the South China Sea) increase the risk of conflict. According to a quantitative analysis of the militarized interstate dispute data (1816–1992) by Vaequez and Henehan (2001), territorial disputes increase the probability of war and have a higher probability of triggering war than other kinds of disputes, such as struggles over policy and regime.<sup>8</sup> With its legacy of war, colonialism and complicated ethnicity, Asia is prone to territorial disputes, and this has to be addressed in a more proactive way.

## II. Beyond the Official History of the War Legacy

The arms race in East Asia is fuelled by the abuse of arbitrary offensive defense, which has largely

originated from the war legacy, i.e. the Second World War, the Korean War, and the Cold War,

affecting the psychology and the threat perceptions of the nations involved. If such perceptions deriving from historical trauma are converted and hardened into military doctrine and national consciousness, they can be transmitted and amplified through political discourse, education and the media; this can in turn narrow policy options and exclude alternatives. Therefore, it is highly important for the East Asian regional powers to thoroughly and critically review their war history to achieve a common understanding of existing, highly controversial historical issues.

In East Asia, the war legacy continues to generate negative psychology and perceptions among nations in the region.<sup>9</sup> Legally, Japan's war reparations issues were settled by the 1951 San Francisco Peace Treaty and other bilateral treaties. However, the war legacy problem remains as an issue of psychology, perception and a twist of the state-individual nexus of war compensation. Indeed, in recent international legal discourse, the concept of war compensation is extended as follows: "any damage or losses, whether physical or psychological, must be compensated by a state involved in a war, regardless of victory or defeat of the state in question."<sup>10</sup> According to this, war compensation includes not only material reparation, but also apology, probing truth, recovering honor and even history education<sup>11</sup>. Regarding Japan's war reparation, the 1951 San Francisco Peace Treaty settled the issues of Japanese overseas territories (albeit with some ambiguity) to be renounced by Japan, Japanese overseas assets to be confiscated by the Allied forces, compensation to Allied civilians and prisoners of war (POWs) and compensation to Allied territories occupied by Japan (Burma, Philippines, Indonesia and Vietnam). Toward other afflicted countries, bilateral treaties were applied to settle the *de facto* reparation issue in the form of economic cooperation, in return for those claimant countries abandoning of their rights

to claim war reparations. This is exemplified in the cases of the 1965 Japan-South Korea normalization treaty,<sup>12</sup> the 1972 Japan-China normalization treaty,<sup>13</sup> and other bilateral treaties between Japan and Cambodia, Laos, Malaysia, Singapore and Micronesia.<sup>14</sup> Although the war reparations issue was settled at a government-to-government level, the lack of direct individual compensation to the Asian victims—albeit agreed upon by Japan and the respective recipient governments—has caused the widespread sentiment that Japan has not compensated for the war damage sufficiently. Meanwhile, some Japanese politicians' occasional insensitive remarks, the Yasukuni shrine issue, the Japanese history textbook issue and the reignited issue of the comfort women, non-Japanese soldiers and personnel mobilized for the Japanese military, are fuelling such sentiment, politicizing the war legacy issue.

The Sino-Japanese relationship is heavily burdened by the historical controversy, and has been seriously depressed by a number of problems and neo-nationalism prevalent in both countries. A series of insensitive remarks by the Japanese cabinet members and violent anti-Japan mass demonstration in China in 2005 are merely the tip of the iceberg.<sup>15</sup> The problem is that the war history has not yet been thoroughly scrutinized in a strictly academic/scientific manner either in Japan or in China. In the case of Japan, interestingly, there are many historical studies coming out 60 years after the war on how the war ended, who exactly was responsible for the fatal decisions of the Pearl Harbor attack in the war-time cabinet (group dynamics inside the Imperial Headquarter) and whether Emperor Showa was responsible for the war decision. For instance, in the midst of the controversy over the Yasukuni Shrine issue, a memo by Tomita Tomohiko, a grand steward of the Imperial Household Agency, which recorded remarks Emperor Showa [Hirohito] made in April

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1988 was disclosed in Nikkei Newspaper on July 20, 2006.<sup>16</sup> The memo suggests that the emperor had stopped paying visits to Yasukuni Shrine (the last visit was November 1975) where the spirits of Japan's war dead are honored, after the chief priest of the shrine decided to include in the enshrined spirits those A-class war criminals executed after the Tokyo trial in 1978.<sup>17</sup> The disclosure of the "Tomita memo" had a significant impact on the domestic debate on the Yasukuni Shrine issue, which is in favor of the liberals opposing the enshrinement of the A-class criminals in the shrine, particularly in connection with the repeated visits to Yasukuni Shrine by Prime Minister Koizumi Junichiro. A number of books on the Yasukuni Shrine issue have been published in Japan both by opponents and advocates concerning public officials' visit to the shrine. Such active debate will enhance the understanding of the problem domestically and internationally, and eventually a reasonable solution acceptable to all parties concerned with the Yasukuni controversy can be sought.

For improving Sino-Japanese relations, which is a vital factor for peace in East Asia, there are many agendas that China could also tackle positively. For instance, the Chinese government used to accuse Japan of "not paying the war compensation" by concealing the very fact that Mao Zedong had opted for economic assistance while abandoning the right to claim individual war compensation at the time of Sino-Japanese rapprochement in 1972. This was a mutually agreed-upon compromise: Beijing was badly in need of funds and infrastructure for development, while Tokyo wanted to normalize the bilateral relations for political and economic calculations without touching upon the sensitive war history issue. Based on such agreement, Japan has provided large-scale official development assistance (ODA) and favorable yen-loan to China since 1979, amounting to over 80 billion USD

(1USD=80JPY) in total: The aggregate ODA since 1979 is 3.1331 trillion yen (JPY) in loan aid, 145.7 billion yen in grant aid, and 144.6 billion yen in technical cooperation.<sup>18</sup> Besides the ODA, Japan has also provided favorable yen-loans from the Japan Export-Import Bank worth 3.224 trillion yen in total. Such large sums of Japanese economic assistance have contributed to the construction of a number of important social and economic infrastructures in China. The following are a few examples of the many projects that have been initiated (data from the Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *op. cit.*):

- The Tianshengqiao Hydroelectric Power Project (118.0 billion yen);
- The Beijing-Qinhuangdao Railway Expansion Project (87.0 billion yen);
- The Guiyang-Loudi Railway Construction Project (30.0 billion yen);
- The Shanghai Pudong International Airport Construction Project (40.0 billion yen);
- The Beijing Capital Airport Terminal Area Expansion Project (30.0 billion yen);
- The Chongqing Urban Railway Construction Project (27.1 billion yen);
- The Beijing Subway Construction Project (19.7 billion yen);
- The Datong-Qinhuangdao Railway Construction Project (18.4 billion yen);
- The Hangzhou-Quzhou Expressway Construction Project (30.0 billion yen);
- The Liangping-Changshou Highway Construction Project (24.0 billion yen); and
- The Xinxiang-Zhengzhou Highway Construction Project (23.5 billion yen).

Thus, it is no exaggeration to state that Japanese funds have contributed to a large part of China's lifelines and social/economic/industrial infrastructures since the 1980s, when China was still starved for capital and much less developed

in infrastructure. If such simple and basic facts were properly told to the common Chinese people, their hostile feelings toward Japan stemming from misunderstanding and lack of knowledge could be reduced significantly.

Another major myth of the war history is the atomic bomb. According to the prevalent idea, using the atomic bomb was the only way to avoid an invasion of Japan and force Japan to surrender due to A-bomb terror, thereby saving “half a million or a million of American lives.”<sup>19</sup> According to Gar Alperovitz,<sup>20</sup> an outstanding scholar of Cold War diplomatic history, using the atomic bomb was not necessary to end the war against Japan;<sup>21</sup> rather, it was the genesis of the Cold War confrontation between the U.S. and the Soviet Union. Based on thorough intelligence analysis, Truman and his advisers knew the alternatives to using the bomb was 1) to clarify the surrender formula to provide assurances for Japan’s emperor, and 2) to inform the Japanese about the Soviet attack scheduled three months after Nazi Germany’s defeat (around August 8) that Stalin had pledged to Roosevelt at the Yalta Summit.<sup>22</sup> Although Truman understood that using the bomb was not necessary to end the war before an invasion, he opted for its use in order to impress the Soviets, as a new “master card to make Russia more manageable.”<sup>23</sup> Militarily, the use of the atomic bomb was not necessary, but was rather used as a “master card” of diplomacy. Thus, Gar Alperovitz points to the genesis of the Cold War in the U.S.’s atomic bomb decision making. History shows that the atomic bomb ceased to be a “master card” for the U.S. only four years later: The Soviet Union conducted its first nuclear weapon test in 1949, followed shortly by the U.K. in 1952, France in 1960 and China in 1964.

War legacy is part of national memory, and it passes on via education and media. Because national memory is so important to national

identity (and even the legitimacy of regime in the case of an authoritarian regime), the war legacy issue is liable to be politicized through manipulation and propaganda purposes. Thus, the history textbook issue is particularly sensitive. As long as the war legacy problem is exploited by state power for political manipulation and propaganda, Asia cannot achieve authentic regional cooperation based on the consensus of “community” and common ground of humanity as the Europeans did after 1945 and again after the Cold War. Most experts agree that European integration was not possible without the reconciliation between Germany and other nations such as France and Poland. While European politicians were sincere in the war legacy issue, European scholars made serious efforts to achieve a shared understanding of the most brutal wars and atrocities of the 20th century. In East Asia, due to the lack of maturity of civil society, such efforts could not have been made until recently. In Japan since the 1980s, surging external criticism of a new Japanese history textbook promoting a revisionist view of Japanese history, prompted a serious review of war history with the consciousness of “war responsibility”; hundreds of serious studies have been published, some of them even in English, such as *From Marco Polo Bridge to Pearl Harbour: Who Was Responsible?* compiled by the Yomiuri Shimbun War Responsibility Re-examination Committee.<sup>24</sup> Even contentious issues such as the Nanjing incident have been thoroughly scrutinized by hundreds of serious Japanese scholars, together with several academic associations focusing on the subject.<sup>25</sup> If such solid war studies by serious scholars are encouraged, the war legacy issue will become a promising ground for mutual (not necessarily “shared” due to formidable perception gaps) understanding, rather than an area of political manipulation and propaganda. The Japanese and South Korean

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governments launched “the Japan-ROK Joint History Research Committee” (first phase, 2002–05; second phase, from 2007 onwards) for “promoting mutual understanding concerning accurate facts and recognition of history.”<sup>26</sup> The Japanese and Chinese governments also launched “the Japan-China Joint History Research Committee” in December 2006,<sup>27</sup> hoping to submit a concluding report by 2008; this, however, was largely delayed due to irreconcilable views, and eventually they issued their respective reports in January 2010. While the Japanese and Chinese

experts agreed to include different views and analyses on contentious issues such as the Nanjing incident, reportedly the Chinese side is resisting the inclusion of any description of the 1989 Tiananmen incident or the anti-Japan Patriotism Education Law (imposed by Jiang Zemin in 1994) in the articles produced by the Japanese.<sup>28</sup> Unless a mature civil society with freedom of press and expression ensuring solid and objective research is found in China, there is no chance for Japan and China to reach mutual understanding of history by overcoming the war legacy.<sup>29</sup>

### III. The Root Causes of the Conflicts in Asia: Ethno-Nationalism and Chauvinism

In East Asia, the war legacy is the major root cause of many territorial disputes and political/diplomatic frictions. The war legacy has not only remained with the wars waged by Japan, i.e. the Sino-Japanese Wars (1894–95 and 1937–45), the Russo-Japanese War (1904–05) and the Pacific War (1941–45), but also with the wars triggered by China, i.e. the protracted Chinese Civil War (1927–37, 1946–50), the Korean War (1950–53), the Vietnam War, and many other armed conflicts and insurgencies that claimed massive casualties in post-1945 Asia, as detailed in the first section of this chapter. The previous sections note that most of the conflicts in Asia derived from territorial disputes, a distinct feature compared with other regions such as Europe and Africa, and that East Asian states tend to resort to the arbitrary “offensive-defense” rhetoric, fuelling the arms race in the region. North Korea’s two nuclear tests (October 2006 and May 2009) and test fires of long-range missiles (1993, 1998, 2006, 2009), all carried out under the name of “deterrence and defense,” present an extreme case of such problem in East Asia.

Johnston (1998) analyzed China’s militarized interstate dispute behavior between 1949 and 1992, concluding that “China will be more likely to resort to force—and relatively high levels of force—when disputes involve territory and occur in periods where the perceived gap between desired and ascribed status is growing or large.”<sup>30</sup> The study finds that China was the most dispute/violence-prone among the major powers, i.e. the U.S., USSR, U.K., France and India until 1992, and China tends to resort to the highest scale of military action (clashes) in territorial disputes.<sup>31</sup> This study also finds that once in a militarized dispute, China tends to escalate to a relatively high level of force, and in the absence of alternative forms of crisis management, tends to opt for the use of force in a militarily offensive manner, even for politically “defensive” purposes, with doctrinal changes that stress the offensive, even pre-emptive, use of military power.<sup>32</sup> Japan in the pre-1945 period also showed excessive emphasis on the use of force even for “defensive” purposes. From the Japanese point of view, both the Sino-Japanese War (1894–95) and the Russo-Japanese

War (1904–05) were basically for “defense” against the threat of Imperial Russia’s expanding power in the Far East. For the Japanese, even the 1931 Manchurian incident was initially for defending Japanese economic interests (the South-Manchurian railway and large industrial infrastructure investment for extracting oil, iron, coals etc.), and for “the first defense line” by the military. The Manchurian incident triggered the Sino-Japanese War (1937–45) and the Pacific War (1941–45), which eventually ruined the whole nation.<sup>33</sup> Most of the armed conflicts in East Asia in the post-1945 period also derive from territorial/border disputes.

A question persists as to why East Asian countries stick to such anachronistic values and concepts in the 21st century. One possible explanation is found in a peculiar modern nation-state building process in East Asia. Japan was the first country in Asia that achieved modernization. Japanese feudalism since the 17th century had been stable without any disturbance of wars/battles under Tokugawa Shogun’s hegemony (the Tokugawa Bakufu, 1603–1867). While the Tokugawa Bakufu introduced national seclusion policy (1635–1854) to control the influence from the West, the Tokugawa period saw significant development in terms of social economy, bureaucratic institutions, culture and even science through *rangaku* (蘭学 Dutch/Western learning). However, such domestic tranquility under isolationism was abruptly challenged when U.S. Commodore Perry, with a fleet of four warships (“*kurofune* [black ships]”) arrived off the coast of Edo (Tokyo) to convey the U.S. claim for Japan to open for shipping supplies to and trading with the U.S.<sup>34</sup> Under the threat of the overwhelming American military power, the Tokugawa Bakufu had to concede to the U.S. claim to abandon its seclusion policy, open two ports, and sign a treaty of trade including the most-favored-nation clause

with the U.S. in 1854. From then on, similar agreements were concluded between Japan and Britain, France, Russia and the Netherlands (Hane, 2001). Such traumatic experience of Western pressure triggered strong domestic challenges against the Bakufu (the old regime) among the Japanese opponents (reformists) advocating the *sonno-joi* principle (尊王攘夷 to revere the Emperor and repel the barbarians). This eventually led to the fall of the Tokugawa Bakufu in 1867, thus starting the modern nation-state building with the 1868 Meiji Restoration. Noteworthy is that the modern Japanese nation-state building was initially triggered by “the Western threat”; thus, the rebellion against the *ancien régime* (Tokugawa Bakufu) was initially accentuated and driven by a strong sentiment of xenophobia and national chauvinism. This initial momentum of modernization as a counter-force against “the Western threat” remained as a peculiar characteristic of modern Japanese nationalism, although during the Meiji period, the reformists driving the modernization of Japan turned the guideline to *wakon-yosai* (和魂洋才 Japanese spirit combined with Western learning).

Many Asian intellectuals, inspired by the Japanese modernization experience, attempted to save their nations. Sun Yat-sen, the “Father of modern China,” frequently came to Japan and stayed there in exile over 10 years in total during his decades-long struggle for Chinese revolution, where he received strong support in terms of financial grants, weapons (for the failed 1895 coup), politics and ideology, among them from Miyazaki Toten (宮崎滔天), a Japanese democratic revolutionary, and Umeya Shokichi (梅屋庄吉) who were Sun’s life-time supporters and friends.<sup>35</sup> In Korea, Kim Ok-kyun, a reformist who attempted to modernize Korea through the Japanese experience and instigated the Gapsin/Kapsin Coup in 1894 with Japanese

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support, was influenced by top modern Japanese intellectuals such as Yukichi Fukuzawa (福沢諭吉), a pragmatist and the “Benjamin Franklin of Japan.”<sup>36</sup> The coup failed only after three days due to China’s military intervention led by Qing Empire General Yuan Shi-kai upon Queen Min’s request.

These examples demonstrate the extensive impact of the Japanese modernization experience on other Asian nations. One can assume that the overall modern nation-state building process and nationalism in Asia retained the characteristics of Japanese modernization. The international and domestic political conditions those Asian nations faced were also similar to those of Japan before the Meiji restoration: “Western threat” and severe confrontation between the old/existing regime and reformists/modernists. Therefore, it is not surprising to find a strong sentiment of xenophobia and national chauvinism in other East Asian countries. Examples of this include the Donghak (東学 Eastern Learning) Peasant Revolution (1894), an anti-government, anti-yangban (兩班 the traditional ruling class of dynastical Korea) and anti-foreign uprising in 1894 in Korea which eventually catalyzed the First Sino-Japanese War; the Boxer Rebellion/Uprising (義和團 1898-1901), a brutal anti-foreign, anti-Christian movement against the imperialist expansion, missionary evangelism, domestic crisis and disasters in China; and the May Fourth Movement (1919), an anti-imperialist, cultural,

and political movement growing out of student demonstrations in Beijing, protesting the Chinese government’s weak response to the Treaty of Versailles. In such cases, reaction to the Western threat and imperialism triggered the uprisings, and the movements were accentuated with xenophobia and strong ethno-centric nationalism. In the cases of Japan, China and Korea, the modern nation-state building was prompted as a reaction to ‘the Western threat’, which possibly resulted in the characterization of Asian nationalism as involving offensive defense, xenophobia and ethnocentrism. This could explain why East Asian countries are still troubled by the recurrent eruption of incidents driven by anti-foreign, ethnocentric nationalism and anachronistic border frictions.

East Asia has been heavily burdened by the war legacy, and sincere reconciliation is vitally important to regional peace and prosperity. However, the Asian-style ethnocentric nationalism aggravates the war legacy problem. Serious and objective study on the war history of the region conducted jointly by international scholars would be helpful to overcome the war legacy in the promotion of mutual understanding. Such objective and impartial study of history and its dissemination requires a sound academic milieu, i.e. freedom of information and expression. Eventually, whether East Asia is able to overcome the war legacy problem in a constructive way or not hinges on the degree of maturity of civil society in the region.

#### **IV. Old and New Imperialism in Asia<sup>37</sup>**

The rise of China brings up many questions, foremost of which is as follows: Will powerful China be a responsible member of the international community, complying with established rules and norms of the current global system? Or will it

defy global standards, and strive instead to project its own rules and norms, thereby challenging the world order established by the United States? China is eager to dispel vigilance about its rise by trumpeting rhetoric such as “peaceful rise”



or “peaceful development.” The connotation is that China has learnt from history that emerging Nazi Germany and Imperial Japan directly challenged Anglo-American hegemony, which in turn triggered the Second World War and resulted in the ruin of both nations. Instead, China will progressively acquire global influence without clashing with the United States. However, since his consolidation of power in 2003, Chinese president Hu Jintao has successfully implemented a proactive foreign policy to secure Chinese footholds globally in strategically important countries in terms of natural resources and geopolitics, from Africa and Central Asia to Latin America. The intention is to build up an international coalition, mostly consisting of non-democratic states, which challenge U.S. hegemony.

China is also pursuing a highly sophisticated strategy towards geo-strategically important neighboring countries, including North Korea and Burma, which are rich in natural resources yet domestically politically repressive. If Imperial Japan’s Manchukuo policy during the 1930s is interpreted as 1) significant investments in economic infrastructure for extracting natural resources, 2) military interventions for protecting economic interests and 3) social-political absorption/annexation via installation of puppet governments, then China’s current strategy towards these countries could also be explained with such a model, namely the quasi-Manchukuo model. China’s current trajectory shares elements with Imperial Japan’s Manchuria strategy in terms of the incremental and discreet expansion of its strategic front, initially disguised as industrial infrastructure investment or “economic cooperation.” This suggests that China could be becoming a new imperial power, notwithstanding its rhetoric of “peaceful rise” or “peaceful development.”

Taking advantage of North Korea’s isolation,

China is steadily enclosing this country. China is the chief food supplier for North Korea, and accounts for nearly 90 percent of its energy imports and 80 percent of its consumer goods imports. China–North Korea bilateral trade continues to increase, including Chinese transfer of luxury goods which are banned by UN Security Council Resolution 1874, implemented after North Korea’s nuclear test in 2009. Overall, China accounts for over 70 percent of North Korea’s trade, and nearly 90 percent of foreign direct investment, of which almost 70 percent is for mineral resource extraction, including coal, iron, gold, copper, zinc and lead. China has acquired exclusive rights to develop the Musan iron ore mine, originally developed by Mitsubishi in the 1930s and the largest open-air iron mine in Asia, as well as Rajing Port, a strategically important gateway to the Sea of Japan, originally developed by Imperial Japan in tandem with its development of Manchuria. Through robust targeted infrastructure investment, China is now integrating North Korean natural resources as a part of its own north-eastern industrial zone. This area overlaps with Manchuria, where Imperial Japan invested heavily in industrial infrastructure, heavy industry and munitions manufacturing during the 1930s.

Upon acquisition of the South Manchuria Railway in Northeast China following the Japanese victory in the Russo-Japanese War (1904–05), Japan deployed the Kwantung Railway Garrison in 1906 to defend the railway and its economic interests. In 1919, this railway garrison evolved into the Kwantung Army that later triggered the Manchurian Incident of 1931, where Japanese forces staged an explosion along the railway line, which was blamed upon the Chinese, and resulted in the creation of the Japanese puppet state Manchukuo (1932), leading to the second Sino-Japanese War (1937–45). The South Manchuria Railway Company became the heart

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of Imperial Japan's political, economic, industrial and military activities in Manchuria, accompanied by a large-scale Japanese migration program along the gradually extending railway. The 1931 Manchurian Incident was a result of the Kwantung Army's long-term strategy and careful planning to secure mineral resources. Indeed, without the abundant mineral resources and heavy industry in Manchuria, the Imperial Japanese Army could not have pursued or even contemplated a war with the Anglo-American imperial powers. Manchuria was the military-economic prerequisite for Imperial Japan to wage the Pacific War.

China's recent investment in large-scale industrial infrastructures—roads, railways and pipelines—in strategically important but internationally and domestically weak countries, such as North Korea and Burma, is similar to Japan's Manchuria's policy of old: a platform of economic activities to secure natural resources exclusively. China's policy, often under the cover of "development" or "cooperation," has solely strategic purposes such as establishing military bases, as in the case of Burma's Coco Islands. In addition, just as dual-use civilian-paramilitary Han-Chinese workers have migrated to the Tibet and Xinjiang provinces, such as through the Xinjiang Production and Construction Corps, the same could occur in Burma and other locations. In retrospect, Japan's Manchukuo policy was a sophisticated strategic measure of *stealth imperialism* for a relatively weak latecomer imperial power trying to expand its own interests discreetly and incrementally, avoiding direct confrontation with established imperial powers such as Great Britain and the United States. Likewise, China's quasi-Manchukuo strategy is a measure of stealth imperialism for latecomer China to expand its footholds in its vested interests while avoiding immediate confrontation with other major powers over strategically vital countries

such as North Korea and Burma.

China's increasingly aggressive territorial claims in the Yellow, East- and South China Seas betray its imperialistic nature, and provide evidence that China does not abide by the basic international Westphalian system by which states' borders are respected by international rule of law and mutual recognition of sovereignty. Instead, according to prominent Chinese military analyst Hiramatsu Shigeo, China adapts the People's Liberation Army's doctrine of "strategic frontier." This is a denial of the Westphalian system based on geopolitical landscape, and is potentially aggressive and expansionistic, implying that strategic frontiers can be expanded corresponding to an individual state's national power and force. Accordingly, the Chinese military has adapted the "Offshore Defense Strategy" for offensive operations along the First- and Second-Island Chains that cover the entire Yellow, East- and South China Seas, Taiwan, and Okinawa (Ryukyu Islands), as far as the Japanese archipelago, and expanding to the Philippines and Guam.

Being driven by its rapidly expanding national power and strong self-confidence, China has started acting as a new imperial power, while trying to disguise its imperialistic ambition behind its self-invented rhetoric of "peaceful rise" or "peaceful development" (for details on this argument, see Ikegami 2009). China's quasi-Manchukuo strategy is a measure of "stealth imperialism" to expand footholds of its vested interests while avoiding immediate confrontation with other major powers over strategically vital countries such as North Korea and Burma. On the one hand, China's political and economic institutions still maintain characteristics of Leninism, which makes China virtually the successor of the Soviet Union, in spite of its careful introduction of a market economy. On the other hand, China is learning from the U.S. know-how when it comes to "soft power" such as

extensive utilization of mass media, cultural and academic activities for sophisticated propaganda. In this regard, China is a new hybrid empire of the 21st century. The history did not end, even though the Cold War ended with the decay of the Soviet Union. We might be witnessing a new age of empires. Does this mean a prelude to a new Cold War?

If the Cold War of the 20th century is interpreted as a confrontation between two empires, the United States and the Soviet Union, there might well be another Cold War in the 21st century between the United States and PRC China. Indeed, Hu Jintao's proactive diplomacy in Africa, Central Asia, and Latin America and elsewhere can be

viewed as assimilate block formation, countering the other coalition making led by the United States. As China, out of its strategic calculation, incorporates states of concern, failed states and other authoritarian states, this will inevitably lead to block formation (for details, see Ikegami 2009-a). As the Soviet Empire needed satellite states in the Eastern block to maintain the empire, the PRC is possibly also building a block of satellite states in order to maintain its own empire. This explains well why China is trying to protect and sustain the North Korean and Myanmar regimes by all means, even at the expense of massive criticism and friction with the international community.

## V. The East Asian Community against Imperialism

Asia's modern history has suffered from imperialism, including colonization by Western imperialist nations, great power games among old and new imperial powers (Western imperial powers, Russia and Imperial Japan), which triggered the Second World War in the Asia Pacific. Even the Cold War can be interpreted as confrontation between two "empires," i.e. the United States and Soviet Union. After the Cold War ended, China has risen by increasingly challenging the U.S. hegemony economically, militarily and diplomatically in terms of international "block" making. The emerging U.S.-China rivalry can be understood with the analogy of a "new Cold War." On the other hand, as discussed at length in the above, China's current approach to its strategically important neighboring countries has many parallels with Imperial Japan's Manchukuo strategy in the 1930s, as a measure of "stealth imperialism."

As the worst case scenario, high tension may emerge relating to the territorial disputes in the

Asia Pacific region if China takes an aggressive stance by employing quasi-Manchukuo strategy of "stealth imperialism" to expand its strategic frontiers. This expansion of strategic frontier in the Asia Pacific region would inevitably challenge the U.S. hegemony in the area, just as Japan's Manchukuo strategy inevitably collided with the U.S. and U.K. interests in China, thereby increasing the risk of conflict. China might well review carefully Japan's pre-war Manchukuo strategy that triggered the catastrophic war to ruin Imperial Japan in the end. International relations theory teaches us that the risk of large-scale war is high at times of hegemony shift. Do we want to see another age of empires in the 21<sup>st</sup> century? This guides us to ponder and envision a new fair world free of coercive systems of empire or imperialism.

In 1924, Sun Yat-sen made his last visit to Japan and delivered the speech titled "Greater Asianism" in Kobe. While Sun Yat-sen praised Japan's victory in the Russo-Japanese war (1904–05) as "a new hope to all Asiatic peoples,"<sup>38</sup> he

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requested Japan's self-restraint. Sun Yat-sen argued that "European civilization is nothing but the rule of Might (霸道)," while characteristics of Oriental civilization are "benevolence, justice and morality, the rule of Right or the Kingly Way (王道)," and inquired the enthusiastic Japanese audience:

Which civilization, the rule of Might or the rule of Right, will prove to be beneficial to justice and humanity, to nations and countries? You can give your own answer to this question ... Pan-Asianism is based on the principle of the rule of Right, and justifies the avenging of the wrongs done to others ... Japan today has become acquainted with the Western civilization of the rule of Might, but retains the characteristics of the Oriental civilization of the rule of Right. Now the question remains whether Japan will be the hawk of the Western civilization of the rule of Might, or the tower of strength of the Orient. This is the choice which lies before the people of Japan. (Sun Yat-sen's "Greater Asianism" address, Kobe, 28 November 1924, *ibid.*)

Sun Yat-sen emphasized the importance of justice, humanity and morality as the rule of the Kingly Way. Ironically, at that time, Japan was increasingly acting as a new imperial power, while Sun Yat-sen was being conciliated by the Soviet Union, another empire, causing the Japanese leaders to distance themselves from Sun Yat-sen. Once, through Sun Yat-sen and his powerful Japanese supporters' friendship and collaboration, Japan and China intended to counter the threat of Western imperialism to defend and restore Asia. Sadly, this critical collaboration against Western imperialism was ruined by their own inclination to imperialism. Now the East Asian community of the 21<sup>st</sup> century must learn from the failed collaboration between Sun Yat-sen and his Japanese supporters, and adhere to the stance of anti-imperialism, as well as

justice, humanity, and morality.

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## Notes

- \* This paper is based on my presentations at the Hagi Seminar, Tohoku University, October 16, 2011, and the East Asia Community Conference, Sun Yat-sen University, Guangzhou, September 6, 2011.
- 1 Murakami 2009 (emphasis added by the author).
  - 2 See *Death Tolls for the Major Wars and Atrocities of the Twentieth Century. In: Historical Atlas of the Twentieth Century* (<http://userp.erolp.com/mwhite28/20centry.htm>), Jung/Halliday 2005. The estimations of such figures vary and some are contentious.
  - 3 Amidst the tension following its second nuclear test,

- on May 27, 2009, North Korea announced its intent to withdraw from the armistice.
- 4 “Europe has been the region that annually experienced the lowest number of major armed conflicts, and since 2000 after the conflicts in the Balkans in the early 1990’s, the only active conflict in Europe has been that between Russia and Chechnya” (Appendix 2A. Patterns of major armed conflicts, 1990–2005. *SIPRI Yearbook* 2006, pp. 109-111).
  - 5 The Uppsala Conflict Data Project was established at the Department of Peace & Conflict Research, Uppsala University, Sweden in the mid-1980s. The data have been published, with respect to major armed conflicts, in the *SIPRI Yearbook* (Stockholm International Peace Research Institute) since 1988. See <http://www.pcr.uu.se/research/UCDP/index.htm>.
  - 6 [http://www.pcr.uu.se/research/UCDP/data\\_and\\_publications/definitions\\_all.htm](http://www.pcr.uu.se/research/UCDP/data_and_publications/definitions_all.htm).
  - 7 SIPRI 2008.
  - 8 Vasquez & Henehan 2001.
  - 9 See, for instance, Funabashi 2005.
  - 10 Asahi Shimbun War Compensation Study Group 1999, p. 150.
  - 11 Ibid.
  - 12 In January 2005, the South Korean government released its detailed, behind-the-scenes negotiations with Japan over the reparations to Korean victims of Japan’s colonial rule and other issues prior to the normalization of bilateral ties in 1965. The document revealed that Seoul pledged not to demand any further compensation to wartime victims, thereby depriving individuals of the right to seek reparations from Japan: Seoul agreed to demand no compensation, either at the government or individual level, after receiving USD 800 million in grants and soft loans from Japan as compensation for its 1910–1945 colonial rule in the treaty. The South Korean government claimed that it would handle individual compensation to its citizens who had suffered during Japan’s colonial rule, rejecting Japan’s proposal to directly compensate individual victims. South Korea, however, received the whole grant on behalf of the victims (Kyodo, August 26, 2005; UPI, January 17, 2005; *Mainichi Shimbun*, January 17, 2005). [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Treaty\\_on\\_Basic\\_Relations\\_between\\_Japan\\_and\\_the\\_Republic\\_of\\_Korea](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Treaty_on_Basic_Relations_between_Japan_and_the_Republic_of_Korea).
  - 13 “The Government of the People’s Republic of China declares that in the interest of the friendship between the Chinese and the Japanese peoples, it renounces its demand for war reparation from Japan” (Joint Communique of the Government of Japan and the Government of the People’s Republic of China, September 29, 1972).
  - 14 Even Mongolia and Thailand, which were involved marginally with the war with Japan, received economic assistance in this context (Asahi Shimbun War Compensation Study Group, 1999, pp. 16-19).
  - 15 The 2005 anti-Japanese demonstration, sparked by issues such as a Japanese history textbooks and the proposal that Japan might be granted a permanent seat in the UN Security Council, spread rampantly in China. Businesses with connections to the Japanese were vandalized, while Japanese goods/products were boycotted. Chinese mobs attacked and damaged the Japanese embassy and diplomatic installations and injured several Japanese, while the Chinese government refused to apologize or compensate for these actions (BBC, April 10, 2005, Khan 2005, Cody 2005).
  - 16 *Japan Echo* 2007.
  - 17 “I [Emperor Hirohito] learned at some point that A-class [convicts] had been enshrined, including even Matsuoka [Yosuke] and Shiratori [Toshio]. I had heard that Tsukuba [Fujimaro, the previous chief priest] had shown circumspection in handling the matter [holding out against the suggestion to enshrine the A-class criminals]. What could have been on the mind of [former Imperial Household Minister] Matsudaira’s [Yoshitami] son [the current chief priest], lightly [agreeing to do such a thing]? Matsudaira felt strongly about peace; I think this is a case where ‘the child doesn’t know the parent’s heart.’ For that reason, I have not made a visit since then. This is my heart” (Memo 2007).
  - 18 “Past ODA projects in China included large-scale economic infrastructure projects, i. e. the building of roads, airports, and power stations, as well as infrastructure projects in medical and environmental areas. These projects have played a significant role in the realization of China’s current economic growth” (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan 2005).
  - 19 According to Barton Bernstein, the claim of a half million American lives was a post-war creation. During his presidency, Truman usually placed the number at about a quarter million or at only 200,000. But after leaving the White House, Truman began raising this number; 300,000 in the first draft of his memoir, then “half a million” by the time the book came out in 1955; and occasionally he doubled it to a million. In reality, U.S. military planners had estimated at most 46,000 or possibly lower number of American lives would cost for an invasion of Japan (Barton J. Bernstein, ‘A Postwar Myth: 500,000 U.S. lives saved’, *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists* (June/July 1986), pp. 38-40).
  - 20 Gar Alperovitz, ‘Hiroshima: Historians Reassess’, *Foreign Policy*, No. 99 (Summer 1995), pp. 15-34.
  - 21 “All separately examined World War II U.S. military planning documents [...] indicate that if an initial November 1945 landing on Kyushu had gone forward, estimates of the number of lives that would have been lost (and therefore possibly saved by use of the atomic bombs) were in the range of 20,000-26,000” (Ibid., p. 25).
  - 22 According to Alperovitz, as early as April 29, 1945, the Joint Intelligence Committee (JIC), in a report titled *Unconditional Surrender of Japan*, informed the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) that “the entry of the USSR into the war would, together with the foregoing factors, convince most Japanese at once of the inevitability of complete defeat.” (Ibid., pp. 20f). Alperovitz also reiterates that by mid-June 1945, George Marshall (then U.S. Chief of Army) advised Truman directly that “the impact of Russian entry [into the war] on the already hopeless Japanese may well be the decisive action leveraging them into capitulation at the time or shortly thereafter if we land in Japan” (ibid., p. 21). More noteworthy is Dwight Eisenhower’s remarks in his 1963 *Mandate for Change* when Secretary of War Stimson informed him that the atomic bomb would be used: “first on the basis of my belief that Japan was already defeated and that dropping

- the bomb was completely unnecessary, and secondly because I thought that our country should avoid shocking world opinion by the use of a weapon whose employment was, I thought, no longer mandatory as a measure to save American lives” (quoted in *ibid.*, p. 23f).
- 23 According to a concerned scientist Leo Szilard, State Secretary James Byrnes explained to him that, “Russia might be more manageable if impressed by American military might” (Alperovitz, *op. cit.*, p. 32).
- 24 James E. Auer (ed.) (2006) *From Marco Polo Bridge to Pearl Harbour: Who Was Responsible?* Tokyo: Yomiuri Shimbun.
- 25 One of the most solid studies, conducted by a top expert who somehow remains ideologically neutral, is Hata 2007. Good references available in English are, “An Overview of the Nanjing Debate: Reprints of articles from *Japan Echo*, 1998 to 2007 with new commentaries”, Tokyo: *Japan Echo* (2008), and “Nanjing Incident,” *Japan Echo*, Vol. 34, No. 6 (December 2007), D. Askew “New Research on the Nanjing Incident”, *Japan Focus* <<http://www.japanfocus.org/-David-Askew/1729>>. According to these studies, among serious scholars, including Chinese historians, there is a consensus that the PRC government’s claim of “300,000 killed” is “a political figure.” The actual number of the victims would be up to around 40,000 (see Hata 2007). Hata notes that the Chinese government’s recent official number of the Sino-Japan war casualties (“35 million”) also deviates considerably (more than 10 times) from “3.2 million military casualties” testified by the then Chinese defence minister Ho Ying-chin at the Tokyo War Crimes Tribunal (*ibid.*, p. 318).
- 26 The Japan-ROK Joint History Research was launched based on the understanding regarding the history textbook issue shared by Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi and the then President Kim Dae Jung of the Republic of Korea (ROK) at the Japan-ROK Summit Meeting held in October 2001 (“Disclosure of the Report by the Japan-ROK Joint History Research Committee,” <http://www.mofa.go.jp/region/asia-paci/korea/report0506.html>).
- 27 The research project was agreed upon between the Japanese and Chinese leaders in October 2006 when Shinzo Abe, the then Japanese Prime Minister, visited China (<http://www.mofa.go.jp/region/asia-paci/china/meet0612.html>; [http://www.mofa.go.jp/mofaj/area/china/rekishu\\_kk.html](http://www.mofa.go.jp/mofaj/area/china/rekishu_kk.html)).
- 28 *Sankei Shimbun*, January 15, 2009.
- 29 For the necessity of an objective study on history see, for example, Hiatt 2005.
- 30 Johnston 1998, p. 29.
- 31 *Ibid.*, p. 17.
- 32 *Ibid.*
- 33 The death toll of Japanese during the Second World War was over 3.1 million; military 2.3 million and civilian nearly 1 million (Shakai-jitsujō date) <<http://www2.ttcn.ne.jp/honkawa/5227.html>>. Robert McNamara, former U.S. Secretary of Defense, who was assigned to the U.S. Air Force as an architect of the B-29s incendiary bombs against Japanese cities during the Pacific War, asserted “Why was it necessary to drop the nuclear bomb if LeMay was burning up Japan? And he went on from Tokyo to firebomb other cities. 58% of Yokohama. Yokohama is roughly the size of Cleveland. 58% of Cleveland destroyed. Tokyo is roughly the size of New York. 51% percent of New York destroyed. 99% of the equivalent of Chattanooga, which was Toyama. 40% of the equivalent of Los Angeles, which was Nagoya. This was all done before the dropping of the nuclear bomb, which by the way was dropped by LeMay’s command. Proportionality should be a guideline in war. Killing 50% to 90% of the people of 67 Japanese cities and then bombing them with two nuclear bombs is not proportional, in the minds of some people, to the objectives we were trying to achieve.” (The Fog of War: Transcript <[http://www.erroldmorris.com/film/fow\\_transcript.html](http://www.erroldmorris.com/film/fow_transcript.html)>).
- 34 For details, see Hane 2001.
- 35 According to Hirama 2008, after the Russo-Japanese War, as many as 12,000 Chinese students came to Japan, being fascinated by “the Asian’s victory over Western imperialism,” and tried to learn from Japanese modernization. There was extensive Japanese support for enhancing modernization in China, including modern science education and military training. More than 30 per cent of the Chinese military officers involved in the revolutionary uprisings during 1913–15 had been educated and trained at the Japanese military academy. Chiang Kai-shek met Sun Yat-sen at the Tokyo-based Chinese Allies Association (中国同盟会), when Chiang was in Japan for military training. Behind the Japanese strong support for Chinese revolution might have been their grand strategic consideration to counter expanding Russian presence in the Far East.
- 36 Initially, Fukuzawa tried to inspire Korean reformists to encourage Korea’s modernization and gain independence from Qing China. However, when the Gapsin Coup failed, Fukuzawa wrote an essay titled “Datsu-A Ron” [Good-bye Asia] in 1885 as a response to a failed attempt by Koreans to organize an effective reform faction.
- 37 This section is based on Masako Ikegami (2011), “New Imperial China: a Challenge of the U.S.-Japan Alliance,” *Asia Pacific Bulletin*, No. 122, East-West Center in Washington DC <<http://www.eastwestcenter.org/sites/default/files/private/apb122.pdf>>
- 38 “For the first time in the history of the last several hundred years, an Asiatic country has defeated a European Power. The effect of this victory immediately spread over the whole Asia, and gave a new hope to all Asiatic peoples ... We regarded that Russian defeat by Japan as the defeat of the West by the East. We regarded the Japanese victory as our own victory” <[http://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Sun\\_Yat-sen%27s\\_speech\\_on\\_Pan-Asianism](http://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Sun_Yat-sen%27s_speech_on_Pan-Asianism)>.

