

“Historical Issues” in Japanese Diplomacy
Toward Neighboring Countries

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I. Preface

I would like to begin this paper by relating my personal experience, which I believe to be best suited for this topic.

I entered the Japanese Foreign Ministry in April 1970 after my college graduation. During my three-month stint at the Foreign Service Training Institute, the Korean situation was taken up as an exercise in on-the-job as well as language training. Many lectures covered the Korean Peninsula's politics, history, society, and culture from varying perspectives. As a new member of the work force who had lived through the age of college disputes, it was very interesting to learn about this topic in the context of the ongoing Cold War. Some lectures even allowed us glimpses of the thoughts of actual foreign policymakers. In July 1970, I was posted to the China and Mongolia Division and began my on-the-job training. What I learned first-hand there was that Japan's post-war was not yet over. This was only natural, given that the San Francisco Peace Treaty and the Treaty of Peace between Japan and the Republic of China were mentioned daily and work completed according to their principles.

After three years of language training abroad, I returned to the China and Mongolia Division to take charge of negotiations on the fisheries agreement with China and on the economic cooperation agreement with Mongolia. The former involved converting an existing private agreement into an official bilateral agreement following Sino-Japanese normalization of relations, and was in a sense forward-looking. The latter was, in one word, a war settlement with Mongolia. Of course, negotiations were pursued by offering a forward-looking settlement of economic cooperation as Japan's war settlement. These negotiations also involved convincing the Mongolians to withdraw what could be considered outrageous demands, such as indemnities for the 1939 Nomonhan Incident and the August 1945 start of Japanese-Soviet hostilities.

I was posted to China, Taiwan, and South Korea in the following years. There I had the opportunity to observe first-hand the start of economic cooperation toward China and the effects of various problems involving textbooks and comfort women, among others. Immediately preceding my posting at Harvard University, I managed disarmament issues at the Japan Institute of International

Affairs, where I dealt with the disposal of chemical weapons abandoned by the former Japanese Imperial Army in China.

Thirty years have passed since I joined the Foreign Ministry, but in this manner war responsibility has yet to be settled. As a personal interest, I have studied why Japan fought World War II, but in my work I cannot help but hold a sort of doubt as to how long Japan must be thus affected by this war.

Even after achieving postwar reconstruction, regaining a place in international society, and becoming the number two economic power in the world following a period of rapid economic growth, Japan is still criticized internationally for having not settled issues of the war. Furthermore, this issue has even become an obstacle to Japan fully contributing to the international community. Why is this? It cannot be beneficial for neighboring nations if Japan continues to be affected by the specter of war, yet these countries continue to criticize Japan on this issue, something which I cannot understand.

Today, Japan is expected to increase its international contribution as an American ally in East Asia. Thus the United States cannot welcome fissures between Japan and its neighbors due to problems of the past. However, even the United States cannot seem to voice its opinion on this problem. It merely hopes, as a third power, that the issue does not become more complicated. Those powers directly concerned, such as Japan, China, South Korea, and North Korea, are not necessarily eager to have this problem solved on the international stage. The problem's complex nature may provide some explanation, but I cannot help but feel lacking an effort to perceive the concerned states' arguments from an objective perspective.

This paper will first examine the ideas with which Japan conducted its so-called war settlement and how this was accepted internationally. Then the development of the so-called historical issues beginning in the 1980s will be traced to analyze the characteristics of today's historical issues.

II. Japan's Postwar Settlement

1. Settlement of War

There are many disputed points concerning the so-called "historical issues" that greatly influence

Japan's foreign policy, especially with regard to its neighbors. Here I would like to address how Japan has recognized its use of armed force against China from 1931 until the 1945 acceptance of the Potsdam Declaration, and what influence this has had on Japan's foreign policy to today. In this case, one must examine, with due regard to the contemporary setting, how Japan dealt with "war responsibility" and resolved it following the end of World War II.

First, the idea of "war responsibility" can be traced only to the twentieth century, more specifically the Kellogg-Briand Pact of 1928, which renounced wars (except those conducted in self-defense) as instruments of national policy. Its Article I, "The High Contracting Parties solemnly declare in the names of their respective peoples that they condemn recourse to war for the solution of international controversies, and renounce it, as an instrument of national policy in their relations with one another," became a theoretical pillar to the idea of war responsibility in interstate relations. Consequently, in wars until then, the defeated powers paid indemnities to the victorious powers for their responsibility. (In Japan's case, China ceded Taiwan and paid indemnities to Japan as a result of the 1894-95 Sino-Japanese War. The Japanese government's failure to obtain indemnities from the 1904-05 Russo-Japanese War even led to the burning of a community police station by citizens critical of the government's weak stance.)

War responsibility was discussed during World War I as well. Article 231 of the Versailles Treaty states, "The Allied and Associated Governments affirm and Germany accepts the responsibility of Germany and her allies for causing all the loss and damage to which the Allied and Associated Governments and their nationals have been subjected," and Germany was charged an astronomical indemnity figure based on this assertion. What should also be perceived is the developing idea that war was becoming too great a problem to remain one component of foreign policy, particularly as modernized warfare meant total war, which did not discriminate between victor and vanquished in causing great damage to the people. This period can thus be interpreted as one in which the idea that war was generally "evil" was developing. With this background, the Allied nations, based on the Versailles Treaty, designated numerous major war criminals beginning with the German Kaiser and demanded their

extradition. These war crimes trials were eventually conducted by domestic German courts, which tried only twelve suspects and passed guilty albeit light sentences.¹ However, this must be kept in mind as the period setting for considering conceptions of war responsibility at the conclusion of World War II.

After the Potsdam Declaration was accepted and the American-led occupation began, there was obviously no room for discussion of war responsibility in Japan. The designation and arrest of war criminals, start of the Tokyo Trials, and the purge from public office of those considered responsible for the war, such as military officials, did not change the situation. There is no evidence that any in-depth debate occurred concerning war responsibility, even if there was some questioning of responsibility for defeat. If there was, it consisted of the so-called progressive forces such as the Communist Party criticizing the oppression of militarism and denouncing Japan's erstwhile leaders as a conclusion of their ideological arguments; these lacked in substance from the standards of today concerning war responsibility.

As Japan's postwar reconstruction progressed, occupation policies shifted as the Cold War heightened and the Korean War broke out. Accompanying these various domestic and international changes in environment was a rapid movement toward a peace treaty. For Japan, a peace treaty was a precondition for ending occupation and regaining independence, but it also forced the country to substantively address the issue of war responsibility. Various problems arising from international circumstances created obstacles to the peace treaty, but in the end many of the nations with which Japan had been at war signed the 1951 San Francisco Peace Treaty with Japan. With China, against which Japan had inflicted the most damage, the Treaty of Peace between Japan and the Republic of China was concluded. Thus Japan terminated the state of war that existed with most of its major adversaries except the Soviet Union and recovered its independence. With reparations agreements being concluded with successive Southeast Asian countries based on the peace treaty, Japan was clearly moving ahead with its settlement of World War II.

¹ Kis a Yoshio, *What Is War Responsibility?* [*“Senso sekinin” towa nanika*] (Chuko Shinsho 1597), p. 125.

2. How Was Japan's War Settlement Conducted?

With the above awareness of the circumstances, peace or reparations treaties were concluded with multiple nations, and for those nations that forfeited their right to reparations, economic cooperation agreements were concluded in turn. The understanding was that war responsibility could be satisfied by ending the state of war by concluding a peace treaty, settling resulting territorial issues, paying reparations if necessary, and reaching an agreement concerning properties and claim rights resulting from war. Current perceptions may consider this manner of thinking a classic way of concluding wars, but from a contemporary Japanese perspective one cannot deny that it was considering war responsibility in good faith.

Looking substantively at the issue, first, Article 14 of the San Francisco Peace Treaty states, "It is recognized that Japan should pay reparations to the Allied Powers for the damage and suffering caused by it during the war." This authorizes reparations by recognizing war responsibility. Other claims rights and settlement of property rights, return or compensation for Allied property, compensation for Japanese mistreatment of Allied prisoners of war, resolution of the claims rights of neutral nations, and debt return from the prewar period, etc., are minutely specified in Articles 15 to 18. This may differ slightly from the war responsibility being debated today, but Japan here indicated an attitude to deal sincerely with war responsibility and resolving the various problems arising from the war.

Based on the peace treaty, Japan concluded reparations agreements with the Philippines and South Vietnam and concluded individual peace treaties and reparations agreements with Burma and Indonesia, which were not parties to the San Francisco Peace Treaty. Cambodia and Laos were parties to the San Francisco Peace Treaty but forfeited their right to claim indemnities, so Japan concluded grant capital aid cooperation agreements with these two countries in return. (This type of aid is classified as "quasi-reparations" in Japan, and in the domestic budget is included not in the general account but in the special reparations account.) With another non-participant in the San Francisco Peace Treaty, India, Japan concluded a peace treaty in June 1952, ending the state of war and confirming India's renunciation of indemnities from Japan.

Japan recognized its war responsibility and agreed to pay indemnities in these various peace and reparations agreements. In the reparations agreements with the Philippines and South Vietnam, there is no clear reference to war responsibility, but given that these treaties were based on Article 14 of the San Francisco Peace Treaty, in which “it is recognized that Japan should pay reparations to the Allied Powers for the damage and suffering caused by it during the war,” obviously there was no need to repeat these provisions.

In the individually concluded peace treaty with Burma, Japan recognized its responsibility by stating that “Japan is prepared to pay reparations to the Union of Burma in order to compensate the damage and suffering caused by Japan during the war.” There is a similarly worded article in the peace treaty with Indonesia, based upon which a reparations agreement is concluded. Although not specifically reparations, Japan concluded so-called grant capital aid agreements in the 1960s and provided grant loans as a form of quasi-reparations to Malaysia and Singapore, whose ethnic Chinese communities strongly demanded redress for damage suffered from Japanese occupation. These agreements state, “Japan recognizes that the (early and total) resolution of problems arising from unfortunate incidents during World War II in Malaysia (Singapore) would contribute to promoting its friendly relations with Malaysia (Singapore).” They thus recognize Japan’s responsibility, and further state that the contracting parties “agree that all problems arising from unfortunate incidents during World War II are hereby totally and conclusively resolved.”

With China, due to the international environment Japan concluded a peace treaty with the Republic of China on Taiwan. Although no provisions similar to the above were included, Article 11 states, “Unless otherwise provided for in the present Treaty and the documents supplementary thereto, any problem arising between Japan and the Republic of China as a result of the existence of a state of war shall be settled in accordance with the relevant provisions of the San Francisco Treaty.” Furthermore, in the protocol to the treaty, “As a sign of magnanimity and good will towards the Japanese people, the Republic of China voluntarily waives the benefit of the services to be made available by Japan pursuant to Article 14 (a) 1 of the San Francisco Treaty.” This provision presupposes Japan’s recognition of

responsibility to pay indemnities arising as a result of war. In this sense, it recognizes war responsibility, albeit indirectly.

The Joint Declaration by the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics and Japan, which ended the state of war with the Soviet Union, also includes no direct reference to war responsibility, but Article 6 states that “The Union of Soviet Socialist Republics renounces all reparation claims against Japan.” Thus, the provisions indirectly recognize war responsibility, similar to the case with the Republic of China.

With South Korea, since a state of war never existed, one cannot argue along similar lines as the above countries. However, Japan did attempt to resolve, the various problems concerning property rights arising from colonial possessions as claims rights problems. Japan also considers the payment agreement concluded with South Korea as a quasi-reparations agreement. The Treaty on Basic Relations between Japan and the Republic of Korea and the Japan-Korea claims rights and economic cooperation agreements also obviously contain no direct provisions or any provisions from which an inference can be drawn to war responsibility. In the process of the 1965 normalization talks, Japanese Foreign Minister Shiina Etsusaburo released a statement in which he recognized that “From ancient times, as neighbors separated only by a small belt of water, Japan and South Korea have maintained strong ties culturally and economic ally, as well as with regard to the exchange of people. It is regrettable that an unfortunate period existed in our countries’ long history of relations, and I deeply self-reflect upon this.” In this manner, although not in a government document, Japan has recognized its responsibility through official pronouncements.

As another document that recognized Japan’s war responsibility and expressed a sense of apology, there is the 1972 Joint Communiqué of the Government of Japan and the Government of the People’s Republic of China, which normalized relations between Japan and China. The preamble of this document states, “The Japanese side is keenly conscious of the responsibility for the serious damage that Japan caused in the past to the Chinese people through war, and deeply reproaches itself.” This document recognized Japan’s war responsibility so directly for several reasons. First, the degree of damage caused

by the war situation was on a far greater scale in China than compared to other nations. Second, thirty years had passed since the end of the war and the domestic and international environment in which Japan found itself was largely transformed. Third, the document was composed as a Joint Communiqué and not as a treaty because of Japan's legal position that the state of war between Japan and China had been ended and all war indemnity issues resolved by the 1952 Treaty of Peace between Japan and the Republic of China. A peace treaty is customarily concluded to settle wars, usually containing no direct reference to war responsibility or expressions of apology by the defeated power. In the Sino-Japanese case, due to this legal position taken by Japan, the above-cited expression was possible because it was understood that the Joint Communiqué was not a peace treaty in a strict legal sense.

3. The Tokyo Trials

Another facet of war settlement is the clarification of where war responsibility resides and the pursuant punishment. As a country that had not experienced defeat since the establishment of a people's state, Japan had not even considered this aspect. With the acceptance of the Potsdam Declaration, a vague recognition concerning the existence of war responsibility began to take shape. This awareness was sharpened through the arrest of war crime suspects by occupation authorities and the opening of the Tokyo Trials. The Japanese people thus came to recognize that the resolution of this issue was an important factor in the war settlement process.

Item 10 of the Potsdam Declaration states, "stern justice shall be meted out to all war criminals, including those who have visited cruelties upon our prisoners." Therefore, with the war's end Japan was aware of the need to deal with the Allies' war crimes punishment policy. Even perhaps from before the end of the war the Japanese government prepared for the occupation by burning important documents, carefully destroying anything that may become evidence for postwar war crimes trials. (Destruction of documents and evidence materials was obviously conducted not only in Japan but in the occupied territories and colonies. For example, the leadership of Unit 731 in Harbin, which conducted biological warfare research, destroyed its facilities and documents and withdrew its personnel immediately after the

Soviet invasion commenced on August 11, 1945.)

At the war's end, however, although severe punishments for normal war crimes was expected, there probably was no awareness of what would be revealed during the Tokyo Trials as charges of war responsibility based on "crimes against peace." The benefit of hindsight can shed some light on this. Take the example of Konoe Fumimaro—many must agree that he led the country toward plunging into the Pacific War—who entered the Higashikuni Cabinet of the immediate post-war as vice prime minister, worked with General Douglas MacArthur on Japan's war settlement, and continued as the negotiator with whom the General Headquarters (GHQ) of the Supreme Commander of the Allied Powers worked on issues such as constitutional revision even following his cabinet's resignation. Considering this, one can speculate that the GHQ was also unable to formulate a clear policy concerning war responsibility. Of course, for a group of leaders whose leading role in the war against the United States was clear, such as Tojo Hideki, it was expected in case of defeat that the Allies would demand an accounting of responsibility, but the ensuing development at the Tokyo Trials was not expected at all. (Many military leaders committed suicide following the end of the war, perhaps to atone for sending numerous subordinates to their deaths or to take responsibility for losing the war, but also because they could expect to be tried as war criminals.)

The arrest of war criminals began on September 11, 1945. The shock of defeat was still so strong that responsibility for defeat more than responsibility for war probably made these arrests seem unavoidable. Official policy also considered Japanese internal punishment of war crimes, and there were instances of sentences being handed down in Japan's military court.

The Nuremberg Trials opened in Germany in November 1945 based on the Charter of the International Military Tribunal. Three categories of war crimes were recognized: A. "crimes against peace" (conspiracy to wage or waging a war of aggression), B. "war crimes" (violations of customs of war such as abuse or murder of civilians or prisoners of war, plunder, or devastation of cities unnecessary militarily), and C. "crimes against humanity" (such as persecution based on political, religious, or racial grounds). Defendants considered to have been involved in the war of aggression as a member of the Nazi

government or its supporter was to be tried based on individual indictments. This policy was maintained through the Tokyo Trials, which opened on May 3, 1946. After the fall of 1945, war crime suspects were arrested in rapid succession, with even Konoe being designated a war criminal, but it was only at this point that the Japanese government and people realized that what the Allies meant by war crime trials differed from conceptions in normal wars until then. The consciousness of a “victor’s justice” may have taken root in the context of Allied pursuit of crimes where not expected.

This sort of emotion never became expressed forcefully as numerous facts came to light for first time to the people in the Tokyo Trials. The intrigue-filled process leading to the war with China, the secret strife amongst the military leadership, the atrocities committed in China—as these facts became clear, many Japanese felt vindication and anger at being duped by the military leadership. Combined with occupation censors, the trials were accepted as something that could not be helped.

What is interesting in the trial process is the difficulties evident in the reasoning of the prosecution. Because indictments were attempted based on the same reasoning as in Germany, charges of conspiracy to wage a war of aggression and crimes against humanity became difficult to prove in the Japanese case. The provisions for crimes against humanity, in particular, were formulated with Nazi atrocities against Jews in mind, and proved impossible to indict upon in the Japanese case. Therefore, at the Tokyo Trials the war crimes categories B and C were merged. Additionally, in order to prove that Japan had planned to wage a war of aggression similar to Nazi Germany’s case, the prosecution presented evidence of dubious authenticity, tarnishing the credibility of the trials. One example was a document by former Prime Minister Tanaka Giichi, Tanaka Jousoubun, that the Chinese believed indicated that Japanese aggression against China had been planned as early as 1929.

Due to these various problems, criticisms that the Tokyo Trials were nothing but a “victor’s justice” continue even today and will probably not cease. However, when viewed from the perspective of how the Japanese people recognized war responsibility, they unmistakably saw that the trials could not be helped because of Japan’s status as a defeated country.

The Japanese people’s response to the Tokyo Trials as reported in American sources appears

reasonable: “The [Japanese] papers report that people on the street mostly felt that the trials were largely fair.”² Awaya Kentaro, in his book *War Responsibilities, Postwar Responsibilities*, provides excerpts of editorials of the *Asahi Shimbun* from November-December 1948. One editorial states, “We now debate the dictatorial rule of the military, but if the people did not support or at least did not follow it, such dictatorial rule could not have been possible. In this sense, the people cannot be held totally free of responsibility for the crimes committed by the military.” Another one states, “The general population, which supported or followed the so-called “national policy” of them [war criminals], need to deeply self-reflect,” expressing the opinion that the result of the trials cannot be pushed solely onto the war criminals but must be shouldered by the people as well. An editorial immediately following the execution of the convicted war criminals states, “We must first consider whether there may still be some among us who could be ashamed to have escaped unscathed, or some easy thinking among our people that with this tragic end to the trials all past Japanese mistakes had been atoned for and the people were released from all responsibility.” This indicates the desire of the people to transfer the responsibility of defeat to an Allied trial and thus escape Japan’s responsibility for the war. It also probably led to the growth of the national feeling that with the execution of Class A war criminals Japan had already fulfilled its war responsibility.

III. The Textbook Issue

Japan’s postwar settlement was considered resolved by most Japanese when the so-called historical issues saw new developments in the 1980s, when the postwar generation had already come to dominate society. The Nakasone administration, which sought a “full settlement of post-war politics,” came to power in 1982. Relations with China improved dramatically with the August 1978 conclusion of the Treaty of Peace and Friendship. Ironically, the renewed tension over war issues occurred in a period evaluated by the Chinese side as seeing “the best relations ever” between the two countries due to

² Awaya Kentaro, *War Responsibilities, Postwar Responsibilities [Senso sekinin, sengo sekinin]* (Asahi Sensho 1994), pp. 117-118.

progress in economic cooperation. At the same time, the tensions indicated the lack of depth in Sino-Japanese relations and Japan's deficient recognition of war responsibility.

1. What was the issue?

The textbook issue arose as a result of an unexpected incident. With the 10th anniversary of normalization of relations with China approaching in late June, the Japanese press ran highly critical stories of the just-concluded textbook evaluation process, which is conducted every three years. For example, *Mainichi Shimbun*'s top story on June 26 stated "'Invasion' of China changed to 'advance'" and criticized the Japanese government's behavior for allowing the Ministry of Education to instruct a change in an expression describing the Sino-Japanese War. The article also predicted that criticism from China, South Korea, and others was unavoidable. On the very same day, the Xinhua News Agency reported on Japanese press reports criticizing textbook evaluation problems. With continuing negative press in Japan and the start of critical press accounts in South Korea, the *Chinese People's Daily* also ran an article that introduced negative Japanese news reports of the textbook evaluation system on June 30. With this, the Chinese Communist Party could no longer ignore the issue, and made clear some sort of response was imminent.

Original Japanese press reports that prompted this incident have since been revealed to have been a case of inaccurate reporting. On September 7, 1982, *Sankei Shimbun* reported that initial press accounts that stated that "'invasion' had been changed to 'advance' in the process of [this year's] evaluations" were mistaken, and no such changes had actually been made. The Ministry of Education had not forced any textbook changes using its governmental authority, and there were textbooks that had passed evaluations still using the expression "invasion." The Ministry had merely made a "suggestion for improvement" in the evaluation process that consisted of the following points: "In the original text of history textbooks, general descriptions of the war commonly use expressions such as "advance" (for example, the advance into China of the 19th-century Great Powers) and "offensive," while the expression "invasion" to describe Japan's advance into China is not seen elsewhere. We suggest unifying the expression to "advance" or

“offensive,” which are more objective expressions that more than satisfy describing the objective facts.” Furthermore, the Ministry of Education had been conducting textbook evaluations with the attitude embodied in the above “suggestion for improvement” since the 1970s, so news reports that the 1982 evaluation process gave rise to the rewriting of expressions problem was also inaccurate.

However, from the start Chinese and Korean criticism had concentrated on the Japanese government’s above attitude toward evaluations, and the concession that this attitude had been maintained for over a decade only spurred the fire of these nations’ condemnation. On the Japanese side, the Ministry of Education in particular believed it could satisfy the Chinese by explaining that the evaluation system did not force publishers to accept official interpretations but merely presented one opinion to make descriptions more objective. The Ministry also believed it could force back criticisms by making the other side understand that their criticisms were based on mistaken news accounts and misunderstandings. In hindsight, the Ministry was clearly naïve in its evaluation of the circumstances and did not understand the real character of criticisms leveled against it. This naïveté enfeebled Japanese responses to the incident and forced critical countries to escalate the level of their criticisms, greatly aggravating the problem.

2 . How did the issue develop?

The development of this event into a diplomatic incident with China is chronologically traced below. From initial reports of the textbook issue in June until late July, there were no noticeable activities. Seeing Japanese press accounts and the Korean response, from around July 20 Chinese papers began to print critical accounts with fanfare. On July 26, the Chinese side submitted a complaint at the level of its foreign ministry bureau chief to the Japanese embassy’s minister, the gist of which was as follows: “According to Japanese press reports, the Ministry of Education instructed certain changes during the textbook evaluation process. For example, the Manchurian invasion was changed to advance, invasion of China was changed to offensive, the 918 Incident was changed to the South Manchuria railroad explosion incident, and the Nanking Massacre was changed to an overreaction by the Japanese

Imperial Army to Chinese military resistance that resulted in the deaths of many Chinese soldiers. These changes are incorrect and constitute a falsification of history. Because they hurt the feelings of the Chinese people as well as the spirit of the Sino-Japanese Joint Communiqué and the Treaty of Peace and Friendship, the Chinese government cannot help but be deeply concerned about this matter. It sincerely hopes that the Japanese government will take note of this Chinese position and correct the textbook's mistakes."

In response to this, the Japanese side responded on July 28 at the minister level. The response stated that "Japan's recognition of the past war has been expressed in the preamble to the Joint Communiqué as 'The Japanese side is keenly conscious of the responsibility for the serious damage that Japan caused in the past to the Chinese people through war, and deeply reproaches itself.' Our recognition has not changed in the least." Based upon this, the response continued, "we obviously believe that this recognition should be correctly reflected in school education, but concerning the Chinese government's request, we would like to humbly consider it." It also offered for the Ministry of Education to clarify the textbook evaluation system, concerning which the Chinese side had raised objections. This explanation was conducted on July 29 by the relevant Ministry of Education bureau chief to a minister of the Chinese Embassy in Tokyo.

The Ministry of Education restricted its explanation to the textbook evaluation system and sought to gain the understanding of the Chinese. To understand the Ministry's reasoning, one may refer to the Elementary Education Bureau chief's July 29 statement in front of the Education Committee of the Diet Upper House. The statement was, in summary, as follows:³

- (1) With historical facts, sometimes incidents are evaluated as an "invasion" and sometimes not. Hence we suggested a modification in expression to "advance" or "offensive," which would be more acceptable expressions.
- (2) The suggestion at issue here concerning "invasion" was a suggestion for improvement that is made as

³ Furukawa Mantaro, *Sino-Japanese Relations after World War II [Nicchu sengo kankeishi]* (Hara Shobo 1988), p. 457.

instructive advice and is not binding in the evaluation system. We suggested a change to unify expressions, and the textbook writer changed it. We must explain that our textbook evaluation system is different from that of other countries.

- (3) For a textbook writer to revert to something changed pursuant to a suggestion for improvement cannot be considered an improvement.

This sort of explanation was not sufficient to gain the understanding of the Chinese. China immediately expressed that although it would take note of the Japanese Foreign Ministry's explanation, it could not accept the Education Ministry's explanation. Japanese high officials' comments further worsened the situation. Science and Technology Agency Director-General Nakagawa stated at a cabinet meeting, "Isn't it a serious problem if foreign countries always intervene on the content of our textbooks?" National Land Agency Director-General Matsuno also commented, "Those of the left like the Japan Teacher's Union and various leftist forces are in league with foreign countries. It's troubling to have them bending history and putting the country into confusion." He also asked, "Britain does not admit that the Opium War was an invasion of China. In foreign countries, they write entry or advance instead of occupation. Why is only Japan criticized when we write advance?"⁴

From these domestic Japanese responses, China and South Korea hardened their stances even more. Some domestic pressure did exist from the start, but the Ministry of Education had always felt displeased with China's attitude concerning the textbook problem. The Ministry lacked awareness that this problem could potentially develop into a "historical awareness problem" that would soon shake the foundations of Sino-Japanese relations. Thus it considered the textbook evaluation system a basic principle of the Japanese education system not to be criticized by foreign countries. It also pointed out that China and South Korea both make statements privileging their own countries' interpretation of events in their national textbooks. Considering these circumstances, the Ministry believed that explaining Japan's evaluation system must and would make the other side understand Japan's position. Thus the Ministry of Education announced after the July 29 explanation that Education Minister Ogawa had been

⁴ Furukawa, *Sino-Japanese Relations after World War II*, p. 459.

invited to China, indicating its perception that the incident had been settled with the explanation of the evaluation system. The Chinese side responded by retracting the invitation, considering a visit by the Education Minister inappropriate before the incident was resolved. This surfacing of differences in perception between China and Japan led to further hardening of the Chinese position.

On August 2, when Education Minister Ogawa announced the postponement of his China visit, the *Jiefang Junbao*, the official paper of the People's Liberation Army, published a commentator piece (an official statement one level below that of an editorial) titled, "Beware the logic of militarism." The piece criticized Japan's response in the following manner: "When the Japanese Ministry of Education evaluated history textbooks, they changed invasion into China to advance. This is not a small problem. It is an important signal that Japanese militarism is reviving. On this issue, people in the field of education or popular opinion and those who care about historical facts and Sino-Japanese friendship are strongly criticizing the Ministry. Sino-Japanese friendship is a current of history that cannot be reversed, and to achieve this goal, the people of both countries must try to strike a blow at those who would have militarism revived." Following these developments, on August 5, Chinese Vice Foreign Minister Wu Xue-qian protested to the Japanese ambassador to China, in essence, as follows:

"In its July 26 response, the Chinese government took note of the Japanese government's basic position concerning Sino-Japanese relations, but could not agree to the explanation by the Education Ministry concerning the textbook evaluation system. The Japanese government cannot avoid taking responsibility for problems arising from the textbook evaluations. Some Japanese high officials have not only trampled on the principles of the Sino-Japanese Joint Communiqué but have slandered the Chinese government's suggestions for negotiation as 'intervention in domestic matters.' The related problems arising from the Education Ministry's textbook evaluation process all go against historical facts, trample on the principles of the Sino-Japanese Joint Communiqué, and weaken the foundation of Sino-Japanese friendship. This is not an issue that can stop at Japan's borders. It is China's self-evident and just right, stemming from its great suffering in an invasive war, to express its opinion concerning erroneous historical fabrication and to demand the correction of this mistake. The Japanese government's scheme to

obscure the facts by slandering China as intervening in domestic matters will be increasingly opposed by the Chinese people. The Chinese government demands once again that the Japanese government take the necessary measures to right the mistakes arising from the Education Ministry's textbook evaluations, in order to respect historical facts, protect the principles of the Sino-Japanese Joint Communiqué, and in the spirit of the friendship between the peoples of China and Japan."⁵

In this manner, China's demands to Japan continued to escalate as a result of Japan's inadequate responses, but China's internal circumstances were also reflected in this development. China had been conducting open reforms under the leadership of Deng Xiao-ping since 1979, and Japan actively supported these efforts by providing yen loans. On the other hand, Ronald Reagan (who had clearly voiced his support of Taiwan during his presidential campaign) had just taken office in the United States, leading to shaky relations with China, but Deng needed to improve relations with the United States to make progress in reforms. In the August 17 Communiqué, China had to compromise by de facto accepting US provision of arms to Taiwan. Under such circumstances, Deng faced the need to display a hard line stance toward a foreign country.

Ian Buruma writes in his *The Wages of Guilt*, "The controversy [textbook issue] came at a good time for the Chinese government. Deng Xiao-ping was being criticized by the army and by rivals in the Communist Party for being soft on the United States and Taiwan. And a Japanese trade delegation had visited Taipei just before the Japanese Prime Minister's planned visit to Beijing. So it was in Deng's interest to embarrass the Japanese, to twist the knife a little."⁶

That the Japanese trade mission's visit (Esaki Mission) contributed to China's hard line stance is stretching things a bit too far, but it is more than likely that conservative forces in the Chinese leadership opposed to closer relations with Japan were increasing their opposition to Deng. Considering his degree

⁵ The July 26 complaint stated, "sincerely requests that the mistakes [of the textbook] be corrected." By contrast, the August 5 complaint stated, "demands once again" the correction. We can perceive the escalation of internal Chinese attitudes toward this incident: "sincerely requests" was changed to "demands" and the "once again" emphasis implies that the word "demand" was used from the first time, probably as a result of strong criticism in China that the first complaint was too weak.

⁶ Ian Buruma, *The Wages of Guilt* (New York: Meridian, 1995), pp. 126-127.

of control over power, Deng needed to explain acceptance of economic cooperation from Japan not as a form of submission but as something initiated by Japan as a substitute for reparations, with the historical issues as a background.

3. Tentative Solution

The rift between Japan, China, and South Korea concerning the textbook evaluations initially saw a greater flare-up with South Korea, which had more freedom of speech. However, because the Chinese side soon used this problem as a “history card” (as it would come to be called) and used it as a diplomatic tool, in the end resolving the problem with China became Japan’s biggest problem. In particular, for Japan 1982 was a year to be commemorated as the 10th anniversary of normalization of relations with China. A September visit to China by Prime Minister Suzuki was being planned, making a quick resolution of the textbook problem a necessity. Backlash was strong against China’s intervention in a domestic matter such as textbook evaluations, but the Education Ministry came under criticism at the same time, particularly as the Ministry’s evaluations had already been a subject of contention amongst the left as the subject of the “textbook trials.” Back then, the idea of a “self-abusive historical perspective” (*jigyaku shikan*) was not too widespread, and led by the postwar generation there dominated the general feeling that although the Chinese side was going too far, Japan was being too stubborn as well.

With these circumstances as a backdrop, Prime Minister Suzuki had ordered the early resolution of the issue from an early stage. Criticisms of the Education Ministry’s evaluation attitude began to be raised even among cabinet ministers, who stated that Japan’s past acts were an invasion. As a result, a political settlement was attempted by suppressing the Ministry of Education, which clung to a refusal of textbook revisions based on the idea that the evaluation system was a basic principle of the Japanese education system. At a August 23 press conference following the closing of the Diet session, Prime Minister Suzuki stated, “Concerning the textbook evaluations, we would like to make efforts to improve textbooks so they will be more appropriate. It is true that our country’s prewar actions are criticized internationally as being an “invasion,” and this should be sufficiently acknowledged by the government.

By my own responsibility, I would like to reach a resolution to this issue.” On the same day, Chinese Communist Party chairman Hu Yao-bang responded, “China highly evaluates Prime Minister Suzuki’s policies. There is no need to link the textbook problem with Prime Minister Suzuki’s policies.” Further, Vice Minister for Foreign Affairs Qian Qi-zhen stated that Prime Minister Suzuki would be welcomed in China. Following these exchanges, on August 26 Chief Cabinet Secretary Miyazawa Kiichi attempted a resolution to this issue by announcing an informal address that accepted Chinese and Korean criticisms. The address covered the following points:

- (1) There is no change whatsoever in Japan’s recognition expressed in the Sino-Japanese and Korean-Japanese Joint Communiqués (“Japan deplores its relations with South Korea in the past and deeply reproaches itself,” “The Japanese side is keenly conscious of the responsibility for the serious damage that Japan caused in the past to the Chinese people through war, and deeply reproaches itself.”)
- (2) This spirit should obviously be respected in Japan’s school education and textbook evaluations, but has faced criticism from South Korea and China, among other countries. Japan will fully take these criticisms into account and the government will take responsibility to rectify them.
- (3) Concerning textbook evaluations in the future, we will take care to sufficiently realize the above view by revising the standards of evaluations. For those textbooks already evaluated, we will promptly take measures, but as an interim measure, we will clarify the Education Minister’s views and ensure that the views expressed above in point 2 are sufficiently reflected in the classroom.
- (4) Japan will continue to contribute to the peace and safety of the world and of Asia by making efforts toward the development of friendly cooperative relations and promoting mutual understanding with neighboring nations.

The Japanese government’s view basically accepted all Chinese demands, and domestic criticisms that the concessions went too far were very strong. Relations with South Korea were settled with this address, but the Chinese government, although valuing the Japanese government’s informal address, did not immediately agree to the settlement, stating that the specific measures to be undertaken were unclear. The Japanese side made further explanations, and finally on September 9 the Xinhua News

Agency published an article expressing the Chinese side's basic acceptance of the settlement. "We highly evaluate the specific measures to correct mistakes proposed by the Japanese side. Although there are still sections which are vague and cannot satisfy us, compared to previous explanations this has clearly been a step forward. We will continue to keep abreast of specific actions to be taken in the future and their effects." Here again, one can perceive the strength of domestic Chinese forces insisting on a hard-line stance against Japan and critical of the leadership of Deng Xiao-ping and Hu Yao-bang, who were pushing forward with opening China to the world.

4. Diplomatic Card

The 1982 textbook controversy was thus settled for the moment, and Sino-Japanese relations soon saw remarkable development. Several points were made clear through Sino-Japanese interaction concerning this problem. First, the Chinese side realized that it could use the so-called "history card" in its relations with Japan. Sino-Japanese relations developed rapidly in the 1970s, with the normalization of Sino-Japanese relations, the conclusion of the Treaty of Peace and Friendship, and the building of economic cooperation relations. However, throughout this period there was a tacit understanding between Japan and China to consider "problems of the past" as already resolved. Thus the Chinese government did not bring the subject up in its relations with Japan and the issue was something of a taboo for the Chinese people, as a problem on which they could not voice their opinions. This taboo was broken with the textbook incident, and became a potential flashpoint in Sino-Japanese relations. In Japan's relations with South Korea, the "problems of the past" were constantly an issue, but with this incident the South Korean government realized as a result of its cooperation with China that the "history card" held a larger role in foreign policy toward Japan. At the same time, in Japan the problems of the past and war responsibility had not been fully settled, although that had always been recognized as problematic in some parts of Japanese society. With this incident, it became clear that this problem contained the potential danger to explode at some impetus. This gave rise to the realization that a cautious response was necessary in relations with neighboring nations on this issue, and "self-reflection

on the past” came to act as a type of litmus test in Japanese politics. (From this point on, Japanese cabinet officials would lose their positions should they take a mistaken attitude toward “problems of the past,” and it became a requirement upon assuming a cabinet post to follow the official policy concerning this issue.)

IV. The Yasukuni Shrine Problem

In the 1980s, the Japanese and Chinese leadership shared a recognition (especially strong among the former) that Sino-Japanese relations had entered a stage of development aiming to build a new, future-oriented relationship. With the 1978 Treaty of Peace and Friendship, all the treaties for which negotiations were promised in the Sino-Japanese normalization talks were concluded, leading the Japanese side to perceive Sino-Japanese normalization as finalized both in name and in reality. Based on this perception, Japan pushed forward with economic cooperation, mostly providing yen loans to actively support China’s reform and open policy being implemented from 1979.

With relations with South Korea, the confusion following the 1979 assassination of President Park Chung Hee gradually subdued and the strengthening of relations with Japan was reconfirmed as a common perception of both countries. South Korea was also returning to the economic development track from the 1970s onwards. (Passing through this run-up period, the South Korean economy would achieve rapid growth after 1986, and with the hosting of the 1988 Olympics and a change in administration as a result of direct presidential elections, it plunged into a stage of development as an advanced democratic state.)

However, as the 1982 textbook incident happened to demonstrate, the foundation for Japan to enter into such relationships with its neighbors was still very weak. This incident was somehow resolved by the efforts of the Japanese, Chinese, and South Korean governments, and Japanese relations with both countries seemed to be developing smoothly thereafter. However, in 1985—the fortieth anniversary of the end of World War II—Japanese relations with China and South Korea, as well as with other neighboring nations, would become tense once again. This was prompted by the official visit of Prime

Minister Nakasone to the Yasukuni Shrine.

To examine the background to this issue of prime ministerial visits to the Yasukuni Shrine, which would develop into a diplomatic problem and long obstruct relations with neighboring nations (in particular China and South Korea), we must consider the postwar history of the Yasukuni Shrine and its relationship with Japanese domestic politics.

1. What is the Yasukuni Shrine?

The Yasukuni Shrine has its origins in the Tokyo Shokonsha built in 1869 to honor those who died for the emperor in wars since the Boshin War. Becoming the Yasukuni Shrine in 1879, it was the central shrine in the “State Shinto” system created by the Meiji Government as a spiritual pillar of imperial rule. State Shinto is clearly a religion when measured by today’s standards, but to achieve the early revision of the unequal treaties the Meiji government stressed the “Shinto as non-religion theory,” upon which the theory of State Shinto was constructed. This approach was taken because the Meiji government feared this issue could obstruct the revision of unequal treaties concluded with Western nations, which respected the freedom of religion. The new Meiji government’s major diplomatic goal was the revision of these treaties with imperial powers that were forced upon late Tokugawa Japan. To convince not easily persuaded Western nations to do so, Japan needed to build a constitutional state with comparable standards to the West. With this background, the Army and Navy Ministries were put in charge of the Yasukuni Shrine, which honored the war dead as its gods.

State Shinto “rules above other religions as a ‘super-religion,’ and its legal, political, and social establishment as a basic system of governance can be traced to around 1900, despite various theories.”⁷ In prewar Japan, the Yasukuni Shrine was built into this state structure and hence existed as a central body for Japanese national ideology, not just as a religious body. For this reason, its existence quite naturally came under threat in the post-war when the US occupation army sought to promote democratization and root out the sources of militarism.

⁷ Tanaka Nobuhisa, *Postwar History of Yasukuni [Yasukuni no sengoishi]* (Iwanami Shinsho), p. 7.

In the immediate postwar period, there appeared to be some suggestions to preserve the Yasukuni Shrine as a memorial to the war dead, but the Japanese government decided to let Yasukuni continue as just one regular shrine. As a result of the Shinto Orders (*Shinto Shirei*) announced on December 15, 1945, the Yasukuni Shrine had no choice but to continue as a religious corporation independent from the state. (The Shinto Orders abolished state guarantee, support, protection, guidance, and propagation of State Shinto (Shrine Shinto).)

2. State Protection of Yasukuni

As a religious corporation, the Yasukuni Shrine was closely monitored by the GHQ during occupation due to its history, but otherwise it was not criticized externally for comforting the souls of the war dead as long as it followed the precepts of separation of church and state. Prime ministers would sometimes even pay their respects at Yasukuni's Spring and Fall Great Festivals (*taisai*).

On the other hand, it was only natural for Japanese to feel, as the families of the war dead did, greatly dissatisfied with Yasukuni's separation from the state and the government's position that, because the Yasukuni Shrine was just another religious corporation, the state would not extend protection to a shrine that honored the war dead who had been sacrificed for the sake of the country. Postwar organizations of families of the war dead eventually lead to the formation of the Nihon Izokukai (Japan Association of War-Bereaved Families) in March 1953. In the beginning, overt activities of these organizations focused on demanding social welfare provisions for families of the war dead. As postwar reconstruction progressed, these voices of dissatisfaction were organized into a pressure group that insisted that the Yasukuni Shrine be given state protection, similar to its prewar status.

However, reflecting the complex political circumstances of postwar Japan, the process by which this movement transformed into political initiatives was slow from today's point of view. The first demand that the state provide funds for Yasukuni's events to comfort the spirits of the war dead was made in November 1952, immediately following the end of occupation. The Izoku Kosei Renmei (League for Welfare of War-Bereaved Families), forerunner of Nihon Izokukai, passed a resolution stating that "The

spirit-comforting events held by the Yasukuni Shrine and other *gokoku* shrines (shrines honoring those who died for the country) should be funded by national or regional expenditures due to their nature.” In 1956, the Nihon Izokukai began to put forward the concept of “state protection,” by which “the state or local public bodies should protect Yasukuni and *gokoku* shrines.” Initially, this concept simply demanded state funding for spirit-comforting events, but demands were later expanded to state financial support of shrines themselves, as in the prewar period. Similar resolutions were passed repeatedly, and pressure was exerted through lobbying at the Diet, but these demands were in the end stopped by the constitution’s provisions concerning separation of church and state and could not be realized.

How to comfort the spirits of the war dead was a problem that could not be ignored by both the conservative and progressive political parties. Separate from demands for state protection of the Yasukuni Shrine led by the Nihon Izokukai, the Socialist Party put forward its own idea for a Yasukuni Peace Hall, which respected the separation of church and state. However, the Yasukuni Shrine insisted on protecting its traditional religious ceremonies and strongly protested against ideas that sought to resolve the problem by separating the religious dimension. Thus in the 1960s, the problem of state protection for the Yasukuni Shrine saw no progress.

Even during this time, with a grounding in straightforward empathy that the state should obviously somehow comfort the spirits of those who died for the country, the movement for making Yasukuni into a state body for comforting the spirits of the war dead was gradually gaining ground, including among the common people. 1969 was the 100th anniversary of Yasukuni’s founding and also saw the submission to the Diet of the Yasukuni Shrine bill. This bill walked a fine line between satisfying the Nihon Izokukai and shrines by leaving room for interpretation that Yasukuni’s religious nature remained through careful use of expressions, without violating the constitution’s provision for separation of church and state. For this reason, even though it was submitted as a bill, its passage was expected to be extremely difficult from the beginning. In the end, the bill was shelved in 1974 as a result of a political compromise that allowed its passage in the lower house but led to its disposal in the upper house by uncompleted deliberations. As a background to this compromise is the “Constitutionality of the

Yasukuni Shrine bill” submitted by the Lower House Legislation Bureau on May 13 of the same year. This opinion expressed basic support for the reasoning of state protection, but saw the need for large modifications in the spirit-comforting ceremonies conducted at Yasukuni due to constitutional restrictions. The opinion saw state protection as “motivated by a straightforward and pure desire to respond to popular demands for state protection of the spirits of those who sacrificed their lives for the country.” The danger of achieving a victory only in name should the bill become law was made clear for the promoters of this bill, led by the Yasukuni Shrine and Nihon Izokukai.

Japan’s domestic political situation would change dramatically in the following years. The political emergence of conservative-progressive parity, together with the receding political power of families of the war dead as thirty years passed since the war and war memories grew dim, made Yasukuni state protection promoters shift their activities to achieving official visits to the Yasukuni Shrine by the emperor and prime minister.

The first Yasukuni visit by a prime minister was by Yoshida Shigeru for the 1951 Fall Great Festival, and had been continued by all prime ministers except Hatoyama Ichiro and Ishibashi Tanzan. (The 1945 Fall Great Festival immediately following the war’s end was attended by the emperor, prime minister and other government officials, and GHQ representatives, but this was before Yasukuni became a religious corporation and should be interpreted as a different situation.) In 1975, however, Prime Minister Miki for the first time visited Yasukuni not for the Great Festival but on the anniversary of the war’s end, August 15. This raised an uproar in terms of domestic politics, concerning whether his visit was official or private. At this point, Asian neighbors such as China and South Korea expressed their displeasure but did not make it into a diplomatic problem.

3. War Criminal Enshrinement Problem

Prime Minister Miki’s visit to Yasukuni was acknowledged henceforth as a peculiarly domestic problem, the most contentious point being whether his visit violated the constitutional principle of separation of church and state. At every prime ministerial visit, the question was raised whether the visit

was in private or official capacity, and the government intentionally repeated incomprehensible replies. It was natural that Prime Minister Nakasone Yasuhiro, who took office in 1982 declaring a “full settlement of post-war politics,” sought to resolve this problem as well. In July 1982, he established a Committee on Cabinet Ministers’ Yasukuni Shrine Visits as a private advisory body to the Chief Cabinet Secretary, who was charged with considering an official prime ministerial visit. In doing so, his primary concern was how to reconcile this visit with the constitution, and from these circumstances he unsurprisingly lacked the awareness that consideration from a diplomatic standpoint was necessary. As will be noted below, the Yasukuni Shrine enshrined the spirits of class A war criminals (including Tojo Hideki) in 1978, but it obviously followed that the Japanese government, beginning with the prime minister, lacked sufficient awareness of the diplomatic implications of this act.

In summary, the enshrinement of class A war criminals came about in the following manner. The Yasukuni Shrine honors the war dead as gods and comforts their spirits, which simply put is what “enshrinement” is. Before the war, since Yasukuni was under the joint administration of the Army and Navy Ministries, quite obviously the government decided who would be enshrined, and Yasukuni followed these decisions. When Yasukuni became a religious corporation after the war, the shrine was given final authority over who to enshrine, but to research the names of each and every person who died for the country in order to enshrine them was an impossible task to complete without government cooperation. Thus after the Army and Navy Ministries were abolished, the Demobilization Ministry and then the Ministry of Health and Welfare (which took over the former’s tasks) in fact assisted Yasukuni in this task. Given the restrictions of separation of church and state, government cooperation in this case was explained as not constituting a violation. The standard for enshrinement was decided as all those who were subject to the Families of the War Dead Assistance Law and Pension Law (temporarily suspended after the war but resumed in 1953), and the government notified Yasukuni of the names of those meeting the criteria. The coverage of these laws was soon enlarged to include not only members and associated members of the armed forces but also crew members of enlisted ships and firefighters or their supporters killed in air raids, and Yasukuni moved to enshrine these people as well. Under these

circumstances, those who were executed for war crimes or died in prison for serving war crime sentences became subject to the Families of the War Dead Assistance Law. Saying it was merely following government policy, Yasukuni thus began to include war criminals as enshrinement prospects. This enshrinement of war criminals was not done all at once but started with class B and C war criminals first. Concerning class A war criminals, the Ministry of Health and Warfare provided the necessary documents (specifically a list of names meeting enshrinement standards) to the Yasukuni Shrine in 1966. Yasukuni fully understood the political implications of enshrining class A war criminals and thus did not proceed immediately, but waited until 1978 to conduct the enshrinement. This fact was reported by Kyodo News Service in April 1979, giving rise to various debates but not developing into a diplomatic problem. Prime Minister Ohira's Yasukuni visit in the very midst of these debates did not become a great problem either. So when the Yasukuni visits became a diplomatic issue in 1985, from the situation in 1979 it is fully understandable that both Prime Minister Nakasone and Chief Cabinet Secretary Gotoda, somewhat surprised by at the course of events, explained that they did not know class A war criminals were enshrined at Yasukuni and that they would have acted differently had they known.

4. Nakasone's Official Yasukuni Visit

Since taking office in November 1982, Prime Minister Nakasone had made "full settlement of post-war politics" his political mission and sought to resolve the Yasukuni Shrine problem. His specific plan of action was to achieve an official visit to Yasukuni on August 15, the anniversary of the war's end, and pave the way for making annual visits. Thus from 1983, he repeatedly visited Yasukuni for the Great Festivals and anniversary of the war's end without clarifying whether he was doing so in a private or official capacity. To clear the constitutional obstacle, he established the above-mentioned Committee on Cabinet Ministers' Yasukuni Shrine Visits as a private advisory body to the Chief Cabinet Secretary in 1984.

The committee's final report was issued on August 9, 1985. It took mourning for the war dead to be a universal emotion and urged consideration of official visits by the prime minister and cabinet

ministers in an appropriate manner that did not violate the separation of church and state as required by the constitution. Considering who should be enshrined at Yasukuni, the report noted that the enshrinement of class A war criminals had been raised as problematic in the course of debate, and pointed out the necessity of taking this point into account for official visits. However, given that the report did not clarify who had raised this issue, its perspective was domestic and hardly extended to diplomatic considerations.⁸

Given this report, Chief Cabinet Secretary Fujinami released an informal address on August 14, the gist of which follows below. On August 15, Prime Minister Nakasone officially visited the Yasukuni Shrine along with the Chief Cabinet Secretary and Minister of Health and Welfare, the cabinet ministers with ties to this issue.

- (1) Tomorrow, August 15 is the “day for mourning the war dead and praying for peace,” and is to be commemorated as the fortieth anniversary of the war’s end. On this day, the prime minister will visit the Yasukuni Shrine in his official capacity as prime minister.
- (2) This visit is based on the strong desires of the people and many families of the war dead to realize an official visit to the Yasukuni Shrine, which they consider the central institution for mourning the war dead of our country. The visit’s objective is only to mourn the war dead, who sacrificed their precious lives to protect their country and compatriots, and this will renew our resolve for the peace of our country and that of the world.
- (3) The government’s unified position on official visits to the Yasukuni Shrine was previously expressed on November 17, 1980. Then, the government reserved judgment on the constitutionality of official visits, concerning which many interpretations existed. The policy has been to take a careful stance on the issue, given its nature, and to refrain from official visits, since doubts that this sort of visit was

⁸ The report included the following description concerning enshrinement standards: ““People who died while participating in affairs of the state’ are to be enshrined at Yasukuni, but in the course of debate, opinions were expressed that the enshrinement of class A war criminals as judged by the Tokyo Trials was problematic, given that for example Yasukuni does not enshrine the dead of the anti-imperial forces from around the time of the Meiji Restoration.” In this manner, the enshrinement of class A war criminals was debated as parallel to the enshrinement of anti-imperial forces, indicating a lack of awareness for external considerations.

unconstitutional could not be denied.

- (4) However, consulting the report by the Committee on Cabinet Ministers' Yasukuni Shrine Visits and based on careful considerations, the government has concluded that an official visit conducted in this year's manner does not fall under the category of religious activities as considered by today's society and as prohibited by the constitution. Therefore, the realization of this year's official visit represents a change in the government's unified position.

Some references were made to aspects of international relations in this informal address: "We hope to make sufficient efforts to gain the understanding of foreign countries that [the official visit] mourns the war dead as well as deeply prays for world peace." This indicated the government's confidence in being able to control negative foreign reactions, should there be any.

5. Reactions from Foreign Countries and Areas

Prime Minister Nakasone had expected to some degree that the Yasukuni issue would develop into a problem with neighboring Asian countries. However, as will be noted next, friendly relations with these countries had been steadily progressing, and with strong personal relationships with their leaders, Nakasone was confident that he could deal with any problems.

From the moment he took office in November 1982, Nakasone energetically conducted diplomatic activities to improve relations with Japan's neighbors. To tackle the pending issue of improving relations with South Korea, Nakasone suddenly visited Seoul in early January 1983 and resolved the long-pending issue of economic cooperation by meeting directly with President Chun Doo Hwan. President Chun thus gained international recognition, consolidating his domestic authority, and at the same time the Korean economy made large strides toward taking off.

In terms of relations with China, Nakasone had always considered himself a pro-China politician, and upon assuming office he utilized his proven track record of exchanges with China to conduct his foreign policy toward China. In particular, he had strong connections with Hu Yao-bang and Hu Qi-li through direct or indirect interactions from youth exchanges. Nakasone believed that he had built a

relationship of trust with Chinese leaders that no Japanese leaders until him had achieved. Further, China was increasing its dependence on Japan as its most important partner in promoting its open reform policy. In line with this, Japanese private economic cooperation toward China, mostly in the form of yen loans beginning in 1980, was getting underway.

Deepening interdependence and progress in exchanges beginning at the leadership level generally encouraged thinking that relationships with neighboring nations did not have to be so reserved as before. However, the result was that things did not progress as expected. Of the Asian nations, China naturally reacted most vehemently to the prime minister's Yasukuni visit and took the longest to agree to a diplomatic solution due to the deep roots of its response. Below follows an analysis of China's case.

The first Chinese reaction to the proposed Yasukuni visit appeared in the August 11 *Chinese People's Daily*, which reported on the official decision concerning the visit and noted that this was "the first official visit for a postwar prime minister." It also reported on opposition to the visit, mainly from within Japan. On August 14, a Foreign Ministry spokesman issued a Chinese government comment for the first time, stating that this visit would "hurt the feelings of the people of Asia, including the Chinese and Japanese, who suffered damage from Japanese militarism." Following this comment, direct references to the Yasukuni visit were not made. Anti-Japanese campaigns customarily intensify in China starting with the July 7 anniversary of the Marco Polo Bridge Incident (which triggered the Sino-Japanese War in 1937), through the August 15 anniversary of the war's end until the September 18 anniversary of the Manchuria Incident (occurred in 1931), and this year was no exception. In particular, as the fortieth anniversary of the war's end, Chinese criticisms of the Japanese invasion were somewhat expected to be intense and not be cause for diplomatic alarm. By the end of August, key Chinese leaders, in particular conservatives such as Yao Yi-lin and Hu Qiao-mu, were reported as making statements such as "The Japanese prime minister's official visit to the Yasukuni Shrine, which enshrines the spirits of class A war criminals, hurts the feelings of the people of Asia, including the Chinese and Japanese" and "The former invaders and their sympathizers are making every effort to reverse the strict rulings of the Tokyo Trials and distort the character of the war."

The Yasukuni visit problem continued to develop in the context of criticism of Japan's invasion. From China's perspective, although it had never been positively inclined toward the Yasukuni Shrine (which was symbolic of militarism), the overwhelming majority of people enshrined there were common people with whom China was attempting to build solidarity as "victims of Japanese militarism." Furthermore, China could not deny the fact that most families of the war dead were merely comforting the spirits of the war dead by visiting Yasukuni. To criticize the prime minister's Yasukuni visit, the Chinese government needed some logical backing that would convince not only the Chinese people but also the Japanese people. The enshrinement of class A war criminals was thus made a problem, as it was considered likely to gain the understanding of the intended people. In this vein, one can understand why China did not criticize the enshrinement of class A war criminals when it came to light in 1979 or make into diplomatic problems the Yasukuni visits of prime ministers that were continued thereafter.

Another important element is the existence of a conservative faction that did not like and was even opposed to the open reform policy in China. China's opening had been progressing rapidly under the leadership of Deng Xiao-ping since late 1978, making forces critical of Deng fear for the future of Chinese socialism. These forces waged a power struggle by appealing to patriotism, employing the common Chinese Communist Party tactic of using the power of ideologically pure students who had come of age under Maoism.

Chinese criticisms were reported in Japan but were very restrained, as noted above. "Some college students living in Beijing conducted a protest demonstration around September 18, yelling slogans such as 'Oppose Yasukuni visit,' 'Down with Japanese militarism,' 'Boycott Japanese products,' and 'Oppose Japan's economic invasion.' The movement spread rapidly to cities such as Xian and Chengdu."⁹ Anti-Japanese activities, which spread to rural areas, peaked in late September in the province of Sichuan. In response, the Foreign Ministry and city authorities dispatched officials to talk to students, while in Beijing Vice Premier Li Peng and Politburo member Hu Qi-li had to go so far as to gather student representatives for a talk in order to bring the situation under control. Concerning these

⁹ Liu Deyou, *Tokiwa Nagarete* vol.2 (Fujiwara Shoten), p. 619.

Chinese responses, at the October 1985 second conference of the Twenty-First Century Committee for Sino-Japan Friendship, former Chinese Ambassador to Japan Fu Hao stated as follows: “[Despite Japan’s repeated statements since the signing of the Sino-Japanese Joint Communiqué that it regrets the past,] on August 15 many Japanese cabinet ministers visited the Yasukuni Shrine—which enshrines class A war criminals such as Tojo Hideki—in their official capacities. They publicly stated that the intention of their visit was to ‘mourn the war dead who sacrificed their precious lives to protect the country and their compatriots.’ This sort of act distorts the character of the invasive war, rubs Chinese feelings the wrong way, and unites with and helps those forces scheming to revive Japanese militarism. We must express grave concern over this.”

The Yasukuni visit developed into a major diplomatic problem mainly in Sino-Japanese relations, but anti-Japanese activities were also observed in neighboring countries, beginning with South Korea. Under these circumstances, whether Prime Minister Nakasone should officially visit Yasukuni for the Fall Great Festival, as he had publicly pledged, was debated in Japan. In the end, Nakasone forwent the visit because of “scheduling issues such as with the Diet.” On November 15, an explanation was issued as the government’s official position, which stated that an official visit did not rehabilitate class A war criminals and that official Yasukuni visits were not institutionalized and would be decided each time by the prime minister and cabinet ministers. The November 7 *Chinese People’s Daily* reported in detail on this development under the title, “Nakasone does not intend rehabilitation of war criminals by visit,” and the two governments attempted to resolve the issue.

The Japanese public could not hide its surprise at the development of the Yasukuni issue in an unexpected direction with regard to foreign countries. Even before discussing the merits of Chinese criticisms, debate focused on whether China expressing its opinion on a Japanese domestic issue constituted an intervention in domestic matters. On the other hand, the Japanese government was attempting a compromise with the Chinese side, and for example suggested moving the spirits of class A war criminals to another location, but the Yasukuni side reportedly rejected this proposal. Given these developments, prime ministerial visits to the 1986 Spring Great Festival and August 15 anniversary were

foregone. The latter visit's cancellation was accompanied by an informal address of the Chief Cabinet Secretary, the gist of which was as follows:

“[The aims of a Yasukuni visit are to mourn for the war dead and renew our resolve for the peace of our country and that of the world, but] since the Yasukuni Shrine enshrines so-called class A war criminals, last year's official visit was criticized by the people of neighboring nations, who suffered great pains and damages from our country's past actions, as paying respect to these class A war criminals who were responsible for our country's such actions. Japan, which values its foreign relations, must give due consideration to the national feelings of our neighbors. The government, having cautiously and independently considered these various circumstances from an overall standpoint, has thus decided to forgo an official Yasukuni visit.”

6. Conclusion

The prime minister's 1985 Yasukuni Shrine visit did not become a major diplomatic problem as the Japanese government forewent prime ministerial visits for a period of time. Thus its effects were limited to critical reporting every summer when cabinet ministers visited Yasukuni. In China, Hu Yaobang was removed from power in January 1987; one factor behind his removal is said to be his conciliatory stance toward Japan. It is clear that the 1985 Sino-Japanese diplomatic exchange had complicated political circumstances as a background not only in Japan but also in China. At the same time, it indicated that policies toward Japan were an important element in Chinese politics' power struggles, and that settlement of the past and war responsibility problems could easily become the focus of debates in that context. This tendency would become a thorn in the side for conducting Sino-Japanese relations. It was an ironic result that a “full settlement of post-war politics” would lead to awakening the sleeping giant in Sino-Japanese relations.

V. Issues for the Future

The so-called “historical issues” in relations between Japan and its Asian neighbors occurred at a

very surprising time for Japan. These problems further developed into an unexpectedly large issue, which has not been resolved even as we enter the twenty-first century. It has become a long-term issue that can be termed a fetter on Japanese diplomacy. We can summarize the points discussed in the preceding analysis as follows:

First, after World War II, Japan conducted war settlements, but in a manner taking after the traditional way in which wars were settled after World War I. This meant concluding a peace treaty with adversaries to end the state of war, delineating territorial boundaries, and settling reparations and claims. On this point Japan differs from Germany, which could not conclude a peace treaty under Cold War situations. Because Germany could not settle the war by traditional means, it attempted to regain a state of peace by settling the illegal actions of the Nazi regime and thus ending the state of war tentatively. Japan concluded a peace treaty in the traditional manner and thus regained peace with the outside world. By imposing upon itself a peace constitution with a war renunciation clause seen hardly anywhere else in the world, Japan considered the past settled.

Second, Japan's "war settlement" was considered concluded with normalization of relations with South Korea in 1965 and with China in 1972 (although strictly speaking the 1978 Sino-Japanese Peace and Friendship Treaty achieved real normalization), with the exception of relations with North Korea. In the 1980s, relations with Southeast Asia entered a new stage with the so-called Fukuda Doctrine, South Korea's economy was about to take off as a result of strengthened relations with Japan, and economic cooperation relations with China were steadily developing. In such a period, something that had been deemed a purely domestic problem—the textbook evaluations—prompted a flood of criticism from neighboring nations, which was not only unexpected but also forced a fundamental reevaluation of Japan's diplomatic relations as a peaceful state, steadily built over forty years since the war's end. In this respect, Japan faced an extremely difficult problem to manage.

Third, the Japanese government and people also did not recognize the 1985 Yasukuni Shrine issue as something that could greatly affect foreign relations, and they consequently found criticisms from China and South Korea unexpected. The issue's development into a historical problem was thus a

surprise; although Japan could understand the logic of neighboring countries' criticisms to some degree, a backlash against intervention in domestic matters by foreign countries tended to assert itself more.

Fourth, reflecting on these circumstances, whether it be the textbook or Yasukuni problem, Japanese reactions went along the lines of "Why are you digging up a problem that has already been solved?" This tendency was pronounced among the general populace, which was not too attuned to foreign relations, and among the ministries overseeing domestic matters. The Education Ministry's belief that explaining the evaluation system would settle the textbook evaluation problem is but one indication of this tendency. The problem's resolution was complicated and became a lasting diplomatic issue because the Japanese government as a whole took a while to understand that the essence of the problem had very deep roots in different perceptions of history.

Fifth, because both the textbook and Yasukuni problems were originally domestic issues, Japanese critics of the government linked up with China and South Korea, complicating and delaying the problem's resolution. (The comfort women issue in the 1990s demonstrates this tendency even more.) Due to these circumstances, criticisms from various countries ended up being criticized in turn as an intervention in domestic matters, and this emotion again fed into complicating and delaying the problem's resolution.

Sixth, both the textbook and Yasukuni problems occurred at a time when relations between Japan and its neighbors were deepening and interdependence rising. This led to Japanese hopes that the various demands and criticisms of their neighbors could be contained by virtue of their good relations. But since these issues were "historical issues" with deep roots, no country could compromise easily. Japanese hopes were as a result betrayed, and worse still, that the Japanese perceived the situation as such again triggered a backlash from neighboring nations.

1. Textbook Problem: Aftermath

The 1982 textbook problem was settled for the time being when the Chief Cabinet Secretary issued an informal address expressing the government's official position before the prime minister's

China visit. The textbook problem would arise again in 1986, albeit on a smaller scale. The National Committee to Protect Japan (formed mainly by right-wing scholars and critics in the mid-1980s), unsatisfied with the Japanese government's conciliatory behavior on the issue, wrote its own textbook, which did pass evaluations although it was subjected to various opinions. Right before the textbook was finally approved, the *Asahi Shimbun* published an article titled "A Japanese history textbook with revisionist overtones" that described the content of this textbook, attracting much attention. After the textbook's approval, its correction was demanded over four occasions. This correction was directed by the Ministry of Education to comply with the 1982 government policy, and thus differed from the 1982 situation. But outwardly, China and South Korea both issued correction demands, protesting in a way that questioned the Japanese government's perception of history. Thus if handled badly the issue could well have rekindled the 1982 confrontation. The Japanese government's quick response, however, ensured that outward promises took precedence over lingering domestic discontent that correcting a textbook that had passed evaluations would go against the principles of the evaluation system. The incident therefore did not develop into a diplomatic problem.

Problems also erupted during the 2002 history textbook evaluations. The right-wing Committee to Develop a New Textbook, formed in 1997, submitted a junior high school history textbook for evaluation, and its approval was debated extensively. The debate further expanded to whether other textbooks' historical descriptions complied with the 1982 government policy. On this occasion, mainly South Korea raised the issue. Japan responded quickly and forged measures to gain the understanding of China and South Korea, thus resolving the issue swiftly. As a background to this, opinion exchanges on history textbooks with South Korea had deepened mutual understanding on this issue, and with South Korea joining the ranks of developed democratic nations, Japanese-Korean mutual understanding had also deepened in general, preventing the problem from becoming serious. A similar development can be seen in relations with China.

2. Yasukuni Problem: Aftermath

After Nakasone's 1985 official visit to the Yasukuni Shrine became a major diplomatic problem, prime ministers ceased to visit Yasukuni on August 15 or even for the Spring and Fall Great Festivals, as had been customary until then. Cabinet ministers continued to visit Yasukuni, and Chinese and Korean criticisms were a daily occurrence, but the whole matter had become to some degree a diplomatic routine event, and did not develop into a major diplomatic problem.

Prime Minister Hashimoto, who assumed office in January 1996, had been chairman of Nihon Izokukai. As he had been visiting Yasukuni annually, as prime minister he visited it on July 29, 1996; this was the first for a prime minister in 11 years. Contrary to Prime Minister Nakasone, he did not seek to characterize the visit by the capacity in which he was visiting. Instead he chose the anniversary of his cousin's death for the visit, carefully putting forth the impression that the visit was a personal matter. China and South Korea naturally objected and protested strongly, stating that the visit went against the understanding reached in 1985. In response, Prime Minister Hashimoto clearly denied a change in government policy and maintained his position that the visit was a personal matter. To China's reference to the problem of class A war criminals being enshrined, Hashimoto replied that for him Yasukuni was not such a place, and that the enshrinement of class A war criminals was not something that was pertinent to him.¹⁰ On the August 15 anniversary of the war's end, Prime Minister Hashimoto referred to Japan's responsibility for inflicting harm upon the people of Asia, and indicated that government policy had not changed by expressing his deep self-reflection and condolences. Based upon this, he stated to the effect that, "As prime minister, I must act carefully not to raise unnecessary doubt about Japan or cause any problems." This was reported as indicating his intention to "refrain from visiting Yasukuni while in office" and the problem's resolution was thus attempted.

Prime Minister Hashimoto's Yasukuni visit indicated that this problem was not one to fade away. This is particularly marked in light of the passage of fifty years since the war's end and the 1995 official apology by Prime Minister Murayama on the fiftieth anniversary of the war's end. He admitted then that Japan had followed "a mistaken national policy" and conducted "colonial rule and aggression" for which

¹⁰ Tanaka, *Postwar History of Yasukuni*, p. 200.

he expressed his “feelings of deep remorse and ... heartfelt apology.”

The next two succeeding prime ministers, Obuchi and Mori, had been committed visitors of Yasukuni as Diet members, but did not visit Yasukuni during their terms as prime minister. Prime Minister Koizumi, who took office in April 2001, had publicly pledged to visit Yasukuni on August 15, and this issue was discussed both within the country and abroad from the moment he took office. In the end, from various political and diplomatic considerations, he refrained from visiting on August 15 and instead visited on August 13, during the week of *obon* when the Japanese pay respect to their ancestors. Koizumi attempted to head off the situation by emphasizing his understanding of “historical issues,” but China and South Korea harshly and repeatedly condemned his visit. When Koizumi visited China and South Korea soon after, he sought to demonstrate his sincerity and bring the diplomatic situation under control, in particular in China by visiting the Marco Polo Bridge. However, in April 2002, he visited Yasukuni once again for the Spring Great Festival, developing this issue once again into a major diplomatic problem.

3. Issues and Responses for the Future

As the above analysis has revealed, the “problems of the past” or “historical issues” between Japan and its Asian neighbors had been considered resolved in the 1970s but were rekindled in the 1980s and have burst forth periodically since then. Diverging views on the means by which World War II should be ended lie in the background of this problem.

Japan sought approval for settling the war by legalistic, traditional means that were ordinary at the time. The Japanese people accepted the government’s methods as ordinary and believed that it would be accepted internationally as well. However, in the 1980s, unexpected incidents led the problem to surface, and Japan was criticized internationally for not having settled its past. However, Japanese domestic political forces were clearly instrumental in amplifying these voices, also complicating the problem in terms of domestic politics and making it difficult to resolve.

As problems of the past develop, controversies deepen, and even the methods by which the past

was settled come under question. This can be seen in the individual reparations claims by so-called comfort women, and the issue of forced labor during World War II that has become a major problem in recent years. With the spread of human rights and an increasing tendency to review problems of the past with today's human rights sensibilities, this problem has become even more complex to solve practically, as it encompasses a whole range of issues. Practically, to solve a complex problem, the proliferation of points of contention needs to be prevented. From this point of view, it seems we have no choice but to use our current sensibilities to resolve problems stemming from World War II. In this sense, any problems left unresolved should be settled as soon as possible.

To resolve problems of some complexity, the solution cannot help but be vague on some points. In particular, for problems of the past, to prove anything obviously becomes difficult as time passes, to review once again matters that have already been settled threatens legal stability, and to unnecessarily complicate problems can only be termed unproductive behavior. I believe some tolerance is necessary toward vagueness in solutions to problems of the past.

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