

International History Textbook Work from a Global Perspective: The Joint Franco-German History Textbook and Its Implications for Northeast Asia

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With the release of the Franco-German joint history textbook in 2006, the national history education of the two countries entered a new era of international understanding. In turn, it is heralding an era of historical reconciliation between countries hitherto regarded as irreconcilable enemies. This paper will delineate the characteristics of this history textbook, its connection to previous Franco-German cooperation on history textbooks, and its significance in this era of globalization. This paper also focuses on the implications of the joint textbook for the ongoing history textbook disputes of Northeast Asia.

Keywords: Joint history textbook, two points of view, reconciliation, history conflicts, *Vergangenheitsbewältigung*

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I. Introduction¹

In 2004, I heard from one of my acquaintances that Germany and France were going to produce a common history textbook. I wondered if such an undertaking would even be feasible, though it was surely desirable and possible to improve national history textbooks by incorporating a multinational and European perspective. I was well aware of the history of reconciliation between Germany and France, which by then had already spanned more than 50 years. Nevertheless, given the two countries' vastly divergent national traditions, making and using a common history textbook appeared to be a daunting challenge. Then, in spring 2006, major newspapers in both countries reported that the release of a common Franco-German history textbook was imminent. I was very

¹ This paper uses some parts of the author's critical review of *Histoire/Geschichte* III (Kim, 2008 spring), written when the latter was first published. What sets this paper apart from the critical review is that it examines both *Histoire/Geschichte* II and III and discusses the joint history textbook's implications for Northeast Asia.

surprised. That summer, I visited Germany for an international conference in Braunschweig. In Berlin, I had the opportunity to interview Mr. I. Koerner-Wellershaus of the Klett-Verlag, who was in charge of editing the joint history textbook. (Ernst Klett-Verlag and Editions Nathan were chosen as the publishers on the German and French sides, respectively, of the world's most adventurous history textbook project). Mr. Koerner-Wellershaus said, "A week ago, I was interviewed by journalists from Japan's NHK, and today, I have Korean scholars visiting me. I am happy and surprised at how much interest this textbook is arousing in East Asia." When I returned to Korea, I saw that the Franco-German textbook was receiving a lot of media attention. According to major French and German newspapers, the release of this one-of-a-kind schoolbook would usher in a new era, marking a seismic shift from nation-centered history education to international understanding and reconciliation between countries once considered to be hereditary enemy states. One way of realizing such a degree of understanding and reconciliation is for students of the two countries to learn how to cross the national borders of history (*Le Monde*, 2006, May 1; *Frankfurter Rundschau*, 2006, May 5).

The joint Franco-German history textbook has also received a great deal of attention from academics. The most analytical of articles about this unique textbook have tended to address the following questions: 1) To what extent do the textbook's contents reflect the most recent research findings? 2) Are they academically correct? and 3) How effective is the Franco-German textbook from a didactic point of view?² The present paper intends to look at the Franco-German textbook within the context of its long historical process; it will examine the Franco-German consultations on history textbooks and the uniqueness, strengths, and

² One analysis of *Histoire/Geschichte* III can be found in a special issue of *Dokumente* (2006, June 5).

weaknesses of the joint Franco-German history textbook vis-à-vis national history textbooks. This paper will also discuss this textbook's implications for and influence on Northeast Asia, which is still embroiled in nationalistic controversies concerning divergent interpretations of history.

II. Basic Characteristics of the Joint Franco-German History Textbook

The direct impulse for the joint Franco-German history textbook came from 550 high school students in the Franco-German Youth Parliament. They convened in January 2003 on the 40th anniversary of the signing of the Elysée Treaty between France and Germany. As per this treaty, the Franco-German Youth Office [*Office franco-allemand pour la jeunesse/Deutsch-Französisches Jugendwerk*] had been set up in 1963. Marking the 40th anniversary of the Elysée Treaty, the students of the Youth Parliament called for a joint Franco-German history textbook. French President Jacques Chirac and German Chancellor Gerhard Schröder endorsed the proposal. With political backing from the top brass, a Franco-German project team was organized in June 2003. The team came up with formal and conceptual guidelines for the project and won over a bi-national team of editors to put the book together. Editions Nathan (France) and Ernst Klett Verlag (German) were chosen as the official publishers. The Franco-German joint history textbook comprises three volumes, of which Volume III (*Histoire. l'Europe et le monde depuis 1945/Geschichte.Europa und die Welt seit 1945*) and Volume II (*Histoire. L'Europe et le monde du congrès de Vienne à 1945/Geschichte. Europa und die Welt vom Wiener Kongress bis 1945*) were published in 2006 and 2008, respectively, while Volume I is scheduled to come out next year. *Histoire/Geschichte* is intended for use in high schools (Gymnasiums Oberstufe in Germany and Lycées in France) in the two countries (Claret, 2006, pp. 57-61; François, 2007, pp. 73-76;

Defrance, 2008).

The world's first bi-national history textbook *Histoire/Geschichte* might have been unthinkable and unachievable without earlier Franco-German consultations on history textbooks, which have a long history. Indeed, these consultations have contributed to the taming of nationalistic history teaching on both sides. France and Germany have been adversaries in four wars during the past 150 years, from the Napoleonic era to World War II. Biased national history education has been considered a main instigator of the catastrophes in Europe caused by these two enemy nations. Visionaries among French history educators had already recognized the dangers posed by distorted history education during the inter-war period and tried to mitigate the image of the enemy in the portrayals of Germany and Germans in their history textbooks. G. Lapierre, the chairman of a French national history teachers' syndicate, argued in 1926 that "those schoolbooks which easily lead young people to the 'museum of the horror of war' should not be used anymore, ... sow seeds of mistrust, hate, disdain, and wars" [Rapport tendant à la radiation des livres scolaires de tendances bellicistes figurant sur les listes départementales] (Schueddekopf, 1967, p. 19). Jules Isaac, a French historian and author of a history schoolbook used very widely in junior high schools, wrote a notable textbook that included the German points of view on World War I and other such events. He thought that these alternative points of view could help students see French national history from another standpoint and help them gain a deeper understanding of historical truth. He called his own method of writing the "deux points de vue" ["two points of view"] (Bendick, 2000, p. 312). In today's terminology, this is known as the multi-perspective method or the "approche croisée." After World War II, Georg Eckert worked on international textbook cooperation on the German side, for the same purpose and using the same method as Isaac. The Braunschweig Georg Institute for International Textbook Research, founded by Eckert, has played a great role in this field (Eckert, 1951, pp. 140-146; Harstick,

2000, pp. 105-115).

Franco-German consultations on history textbooks started in the 1930s. Even though participants from both countries issued a meaningful document of recommendation for treating burdensome historical problems in textbooks [*Les manuels scolaires d'histoire en France et en Allemagne*], the consultations did not bear fruit because of the emergence of the Nazi regime. However, these bi-national consultations resumed immediately after World War II. Their most important achievements were two documents of recommendation: *Deutsch-französische Vereinbarung über strittige Fragen europäischer Geschichte* (1951) and *Deutschland und Frankreich, Raum und Zeitgeschichte* (1988) (Riemenschneider, 1991, pp. 137, 148). The key goal of the 1951 recommendation was to rectify each nation's one-sided, nationalistic view of history and its hostile stereotypes of the other. In contrast, the main purpose of the 1988 recommendation was to enhance mutual understanding between France and Germany by teaching students in each country more about the history of the other. The common thread between the two recommendations is a reflective and critical eye toward the kind of nationalism that culminated in National Socialism and fascism in Europe. Germany has contributed to reconciliation in Europe not only through its steady *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* but also by playing an important role in European integration. Franco-German consultations on history textbooks proceeded in tandem with these historical processes.

Peter Geiss, the writer-in-chief on the German side, characterized *Histoire/Geschichte* as follows: “You always have two views, at least two views, and that allows pupils to develop their own standpoint, their own image of history.” “That’s very useful within democratic and liberal teaching of history. One needs to know others’ points of view and think of the history of one’s own nation in that way (*Deutsche Welle*, July 10, 2006).” In the meantime, Etienne François, one of the French members of the ad hoc joint history committee, had the following to say:

If we, the French members of the Franco-German joint history textbook team, had believed that the German people had always been the aggressor that caused the wars, our joint work would not have succeeded. And if either national side had tried to find excuses for its own invasion and occupation of the other side, and to legitimize those actions, it would have led to the same result, too. For instance, if the German members had insisted that the unfair Versailles Peace Treaty inevitably brought about the Nazis' rise to power in Germany, we would not have continued our joint work any more. It is natural that there should be light and gloomy sides in any national history. What is a great story for one could be a curse for the other. This applies to the fact that France attacked and annoyed its neighboring countries during the Napoleonic era. It is only when each national side has the courage to reveal the dark sides of its own national history, as has happened, that work on the joint history textbook becomes possible (*Chosun Ilbo*, 2006, July 10)

The above remarks highlight the fact that *Histoire/Geschichte* embraces and applies the basic thinking (criticism of nationalism) and methods ("*deux points de vue*," "*approche croisée*") that have come out of the two countries' efforts to bring about historical reconciliation since the 1930s. This is itself one of the outstanding achievements of Germany and France's long-term endeavor.

III. *Histoire/Geschichte* and National History Textbooks³

Since the rise of the modern nation-state in Europe, history education has been nation-centered, with the prime goal being that of getting students

³ The analysis of national history textbooks in this chapter is based on the book by Kim and Lee (2008, pp. 160-205).

to identify with it with their respective national history (Berghahn & Schissler, 1987, pp. 1-16). Thus, when it comes to a joint bi-national textbook, finding a common denominator for the portrayal of national histories—and especially for national histories that have developed very differently and are saddled with numerous hostilities—seems to be the greatest challenge. However, this has not been the case for the authors of *Histoire/Geschichte*. For them, the biggest obstacle was finding an acceptable balance between (the) different concepts of history teaching. Such a pedagogical dilemma extended to the formulation of a history curriculum, the practices of history instruction, textbook composition, and so on (Geiss, 2006, p. 97). Although this point merits more attention, this paper will not delve into it due to limitations of space. Generally speaking, *Histoire/Geschichte* seems to be more in line with French, rather than German, practices of historical pedagogy. How were the ten authors able to find a common denominator in terms of content for *Histoire/Geschichte*? Principally, it was because *Histoire/Geschichte* was founded on numerous breakthroughs spanning over 70 years of Franco-German history textbook research.

In general, in the history textbooks of both countries published from the 1950s through the 1960s, the respective national histories have been revised according to the recommendation of 1951. Let's look at some examples. Regarding the Franco-Prussian War in 1870, the 1951 recommendation called on both countries to incorporate the other's position in their respective history textbooks and to look at the war as a result of the escalation of mutual distrust. Furthermore, the recommendation suggested that history textbooks rectify historical errors, such as "falsifying the Ems Dispatch," and avoid using offensive expressions, such as "playing treacherous tricks," "hate," and "hereditary enemy," and so on in the absence of a sound reason for doing so (Deutsch-Franzoesische Vereinbarung, 1951, Nr. 7-8).

Lehrbuch der Geschichte (Stein & Kolligs, 1912), a German history textbook, highlighted France's belligerent attitude toward

Germany (p. 246). *Geschichte des deutschen Volkes fuer den deutschen Schuljugend* (Verlag Emil Roth Siegen, 1934) stigmatized French people as “unverschaeamt” and “Kriegstreiberei” because “they strenuously opposed the unification of Germany” (p. 259). In contrast, a textbook published in 1970, *Spiegel der Zeiten 3* (Verlag Moritz Diesterweg, 1970), described the political goals of the government of Napoleon III from the French point of view.

To some extent, Napoleon’s attitude toward the efforts of Germany and Italy for national unification was at first rather amicable. But he felt afraid that Prussia would extend its territory as far as France’s eastern border. Faced with this threat, he made efforts to establish a buffer zone. He also tried to stem the southern German countries from entering the North German Confederation for as long as possible. The majority of German people thought of this German policy on the part of the French government as unbearable because it would hinder German unification (p. 191).

Let’s take a look at certain French history textbooks. According to *Histoire de la France et de ses institutions et quelques notions sommaires d’histoire générale* (Rieder, 1916), “It was Prussian Chancellor Bismarck who should be held responsible for the outbreak of this war (Franco-Prussian War). He played treacherous tricks to make the war unavoidable” (p. 456). *Histoire, cours supérieur, 1852 à nos jours* (J. de Gigord, 1926) blamed Bismarck for distorting and publicly releasing the Ems Dispatch, which played up alleged insults between the Prussian king and the French ambassador and led to war (p. 34). But a history textbook published in 1962, *Histoire de France, cours moyen* (Hachette, 1962), took a more objective stance.

The outbreak of the Franco-Prussian War in July of 1870 was what Prussian Chancellor Bismarck wanted. He expected that a Prussian victory

would lead other German countries to support Prussia and bring about German unification. Similarly, Napoleon III and some of his aides wanted this war; they expected that a French victory would give the government enough power to oppress its internal political enemies (p. 123).

If you compare the descriptions of the 1870 War in the textbooks published before World War II with those published after the 1960s, it is obvious that both nations adopted the 1951 recommendation. The portrayal of the 1870 War in *Histoire/Geschichte* II reflects the progress achieved thus far in the history education of both countries:

German political unification seemed to be impossible, according to Bismarck, without conflict with France because French security and power interests would inevitably conflict with the new, powerful state in the middle of Europe. This had already become apparent in the Austro-Prussian War of 1866 when Napoleon III tried to trade Luxemburg as well as the neutrality of the southern German countries for his non-intervention in the war. But the policy of Napoleon III was rejected by Bismarck.

Bismarck's rejection incurred a wave of national anger in France which was exacerbated in 1870, when Leopold von Hohenzollern-Sigmaringen, a relative of the Prussian monarch, was reported to be the successor to the Spanish throne. The French Foreign Minister, Gramont, was afraid that France would be encircled by the Prussian monarch, and asked the Prussian king for an everlasting declaration to the effect that he would abandon any opportunity to inherit the Spanish throne through his relatives just after Leopold abandoned the candidacy. Bismarck did not miss the opportunity to force France into war. He came to know that Wilhelm I had rejected Gramont's demand through the Ems Dispatch. Bismarck released this dispatch in a provocative, shortened form. This was an affront of which the French government took advantage in order

to declare war on Prussia on July 19, 1870 (p. 38).

Histoire/Geschichte II provides students with an additional “dossier” on Alsace-Lorraine, a disputed area annexed by Prussia after the Franco-Prussian War of 1870. The section explains the reasons why France and Germany fought over this region for over one hundred years and presents the historical legacies of this drawn-out conflict (pp. 58-59). The Franco-German history textbook also includes a special section entitled “Mutual Perceptions of the French and the Germans.” The section is designed to help students understand why and how the concept of hereditary enemies (*Erbfeinde/ennemis héréditaires*) developed and why this concept has been losing its relevance (p. 77).

Post-WWII materials appear to have caused the authors less trouble than pre-WWII materials. However, there still are topics about which the authors of the two sides have divergent assessments, one of which is the role of the USA in Europe. Guillaume Le Quintrec, the writer-in-chief on the French side, said, “The French found the Germans to be pro-American and the Germans found our viewpoint to be anti-American” (*Deutsche Welle*, 2006, July 10). However, they found a solution, namely, to openly discuss this very discrepancy:

The two countries differ in their perception of the relationship between Europe and the US. In the eyes of West Germany, the US has been the power that supports Europe economically (Marshall Plan) and protects it (NATO) because the FRG directly experienced the division of Europe into two ideological camps. Conversely, most French people have thought of the US as an imperial power and of ‘atlantisme’ as an American hegemonic policy, because of the influence of the policy of self-reliance pursued by General de Gaulle. In West Germany “Westintegration” has been more commonly used than “Atlantizismus” (*Histoire/Geschichte* III, p. 127).

Histoire/Geschichte is also meaningful in that students are presented with in-depth coverage of the other country's history. Existing German and French history textbooks had only provided scant coverage of one another's history, despite having taken into consideration one another's viewpoint. In contrast, there are chapters in *Histoire/Geschichte* that treat French and German histories within the same time span — e.g., *Longing for National Unification: The German States (1850-1870)* (pp. 34-35) and *Democratic Despotism: The Second French Empire* (pp. 36-37). These chapters provide pupils with materials that had previously been unavailable to them in traditional history textbooks. For instance, French students can learn more about the Weimar Republic and East Germany, while German students can learn more about the Third Republic and the French colonies. This was exactly what the 1988 recommendation had suggested. *Histoire/Geschichte* III juxtaposes the political developments on both sides of the Rhine after WWII, and provides comparative questions in a dossier entitled “France and Germany, Two Models for a Democracy.” Students are asked to “compare the political structures of France and Germany and discuss their strengths and weaknesses” (*Histoire/Geschichte* III, Ch. 14 & 15). While the book has separate chapters on the political developments of France and those of Germany, it includes the economic and social developments of the two countries in the same chapter, entitled *The Economic and Social Development of France and Germany after WWII: Similar Development*. The chapter offers students insight into the similarities and differences between France and Germany's economic growth in the post-war period. The sections offering comparative perspectives, unique to *Histoire/Geschichte*, are very important in light of historical didactics.

Histoire/Geschichte also advances the European perspective. Since the commencement of European integration in the 1950s, Europe has been a factor in taming nationalistic history teaching and bringing differing national perspectives thereof into harmony. Franco-German consultations on history textbooks have helped propel this trend.

However, the ways by which French and German history textbooks have each arrived at a transnational European point of view are a little different. In Germany, where there is a strong federal consciousness and a clear historical discontinuity concerning the concept of nation, nationalism was completely discredited after WWII. This helped German history education to move beyond national canons and embrace a transnational European perspective that was not abandoned even after German unification. On the other hand, in France, where a stronger tradition of mixing nationalism and universalism has existed since the French Revolution, universal elements of national “Frenchness” developed in favor of a European identity as European integration has advanced. Thus, the concept of national identity approximates that of the transnational European in France (Soysal et al., 2005, pp. 13-34). *Histoire/Geschichte* follows this trend in both countries. However, compared to the usual national history textbooks, *Histoire/Geschichte* puts more emphasis on the European perspective than on national history, and provides more detailed explications of European integration after WWII. Moreover, in Volume II there is a special chapter entitled “Europe and its Nations: Conflicts and Challenges (1815-1945)” that discusses the era of nationalism (pp. 356-369). This section, which reflects the results of historical research on European integration, is unique to *Histoire/Geschichte*.

IV. Criticism of the Franco-German Common History Textbook

In spite of the merits mentioned above, there are also aspects of the Franco-German joint history textbook that need to be critically reviewed. While it is claimed that the French and German versions of *Histoire/Geschichte* are identical, in actual fact they are not. While the numbers of Jewish and gypsy victims of the Nazi regime are listed as 6,000,000 and 500,000, respectively, in the German version, they are listed as 5,000,000

and 200,000, respectively, in the French version (*Histoire/Geschichte* III, p. 14). Each pair of numbers seems to be generally accepted by academics in the respective countries. The authors may have left this discrepancy in without any additional explication because they thought the difference was trivial. However, there are other more significant cases of discrepancy that remain unexplained. For example, the French and German authors offer different versions of Germany's reconstruction after WWII. According to the German version, "Rebuilding a democratic and peaceful Germany was the first purpose of the allies; of course, the USSR interpreted the concept of democracy in an authoritarian and collectivistic way." (*Histoire/Geschichte* III, p. 26) Interestingly, the last phrase about the USSR is not present in the French version. This is a noticeable, though admittedly small, difference that requires some explication. There is a special section (*Histoire/Geschichte* III, p. 127) in which the differing opinions held in each country about the reception of communism are explained. The fact that communism was more negatively received in Germany than in France is probably the reason for its omission from the French version.

Another criticism of the joint Franco-German history textbook is that while it claims in its title to be a European and world history book, it focuses too much on the French and German perspectives. The third volume is entitled *Europe and the World after WWII* while the second volume is called *Europe and the World from the Vienna Congress to 1945*. The textbook does not cover the 19th century histories of Austria-Hungary, Russia, and the United States—subjects which most other national history textbooks address. Students using the joint Franco-German textbook will not be able to learn about the history of the abolition of slavery in the United States, the political career of Abraham Lincoln, or the American Civil War unless their history teachers provide them with additional materials (Roszkowski, 2009). However, the authors defend the textbook against this criticism by arguing that a conscious decision was made to focus on French and German histories at

the expense of some world events and processes that are included in most other national history textbooks. This is why *Histoire/Geschichte* is called a European history textbook and is centered on France and Germany.

However, a harder criticism to account for, given that it comes from Poland, should be taken into serious consideration. It has now been over thirty years since Germany (West Germany) started to work with Poland to improve history textbooks. Some of the achievements that have resulted from this cooperation are neglected in the Franco-German joint history textbook. For example, the textbook mentions that Poland acquired “a considerable part of West Prussia and the District of Poznan,” but it does not mention that those lands were inhabited mostly by Poles (*Histoire/Geschichte* II, p. 222). Thus, the passage suggests that Poland was granted lands to which it was not entitled. As a Polish member of the European Parliament put it, the history of the German-Polish border area, like that of West Prussia, has been a source of heated controversy which the German-Polish history schoolbook committee has made every effort to resolve in the best interest of each country (Gemeinsame deutsch-polnische Schulbuchkommission, 1995; Roszkowski, 2009). It may be argued that the passage mentioned above constitutes a distortion of history by omission. Indeed, the passage is probably one of the impetuses behind the recent discussions about creating a joint German-Polish history textbook (Strobel, 2008, pp. 26-28).

With regard to East Asia, *Histoire/Geschichte* contains instances of inadequate and inaccurate information. The book claims that “crime against humanity” was one of the charges for which World War II war criminals were indicted in the war crimes tribunals in Nuremberg (Germany) and Tokyo (Japan) (*Histoire/Geschichte* III, p. 14). But in fact, “crime against humanity” was not used as a legal basis in Tokyo. For instance, the Japanese 741 Military Corps, notorious for having conducted various experiments on living human beings, was not indicted.

This was one of the reasons why the Tokyo war crimes trials were considered to have been less thorough and less satisfactory than the Nuremberg trials. Japan eased its way back into the good graces of the international community almost immediately after its surrender. This is why Japan was able to get away with not sufficiently coming to terms with the atrocities it had committed against its neighboring countries. Therefore, it is very troubling that Japan is portrayed as having properly and thoroughly dealt with the past in *Histoire/Geschichte*.

From Appraisals of War to “Duty of Memory”

Japan officially apologized for the brutal atrocities inflicted upon its neighboring countries during its military occupation of them. Nevertheless, anti-Japanese feelings have deteriorated in China (*Histoire/Geschichte* III, p. 32).

Material 3. The First Official Apology Made by Japan

During a certain period in the not too distant past, Japan, following a mistaken national policy, advanced along the road to war, only to ensnare the Japanese people in a fateful crisis, and, through its colonial rule and aggression, caused tremendous damage and suffering to the people of many countries, particularly to those of Asian nations. In the hope that no such mistake be made in the future, I regard, in a spirit of humility, these irrefutable facts of history, and express here once again my feelings of deep remorse and state my heartfelt apology. Allow me also to express my feelings of profound mourning for all victims, both at home and abroad, of that history (Prime Minister of Japan Tomiichi Murayama, 1995) (*Histoire/Geschichte* III, p. 33).

This section is followed by an interesting exercise question: “How did Japan face up to its past after WWII?” (*Histoire/Geschichte* III, p. 33).

How would French and German students respond? Upon reading the materials presented above, students cannot but receive a positive impression of Japan's post-war efforts to bring closure to the past. Moreover, a very touching remark by Murayama is also included following the above statement: "Japan, as the only victim of the atomic bomb, will do its best to dispose of all nuclear weapons and support such international cooperative efforts as the Treaty on the Non-proliferation of Nuclear Weapons" (*Histoire/Geschichte* III, p. 33). I wonder whether the authors of this bi-national history textbook would have presented Japan's post-WWII actions in this way if they had considered the conflicts caused by national discourses and activities in Japan, including its prime ministers' continued visits to the Yasukuni Shrine. This special place is hallowed by some Japanese, who regard the war as having been waged for a right cause even though it ended in military defeat. *Histoire/Geschichte* II does deal with the atrocities committed by Japan during WWII in detail, and even raises the following important question: "Consider whether Japanese atrocities can be compared with the brutalities committed by Nazi Germany" (*Histoire/Geschichte* II, pp. 316f.). Axel Schildt, a German historian, has pointed out that this section is inappropriate (Schildt, 2006, pp. 65-66). Nevertheless, it still does not outweigh the problematic coverage of Japan's post-WWII efforts at historical reconciliation. I would suggest that the authors add a question that contrasts Japan's insincere attitude with Germany's genuine and proactive approach, and provide additional materials that cover the oft-repeated historical conflicts in East Asia.

V. Reception by Northeast Asia

As mentioned in the introduction, Korea and Japan have shown a lot of interest in the Franco-German joint history textbook. Volume III of this book was translated and published in 2008 in both Northeast Asian countries. While the Japanese translation was undertaken by a publishing

house, the Korean one was initiated by the government-supported Northeast Asian History Foundation, which was established in 2006 when history controversies involving Korea, China, and Japan were at their peak. Koreans and Japanese have been interested in the revisions of the Franco-German history textbook since 1982 when the first Japanese history textbook conflict occurred. That first controversy flared up after the Japanese government “revised” the contents of school history textbooks to promote Japanese nationalism. The term “invasion by” was changed to “the advancement of” (the Japanese Empire) to describe Japan’s aggression against its neighboring countries. This sounded an alarm bell for Japan’s regional neighbors concerning the right-wing orientation of Japanese education.

A small group of progressive scholars in South Korea and Japan began searching for solutions. They came up with the idea of studying the German approach to resolving historical traumas caused by its Nazi aberrations and finding ways to apply relevant aspects to apply to the resolution of controversies over interpretations of history in Northeast Asia. History textbook improvement was an important part of Germany’s process of overcoming its troubled past. Korean and Japanese scholars paid more attention to the German-Polish history textbook project than to the Franco-German one because the relationship between Germany and Poland seemed similar to that between Japan and Korea in terms of their relative political and economic power. In 1983, Nishigawa Masao, a Japanese expert of German educational history, organized a small group to study the improvement of the German-Polish history textbook and the recommendation of 1977. He emphasized the guiding principle of the German-Polish textbook project, namely, a critical self-reflection on nationalism. “The recommendation of the German-Polish textbook committee consisted of a statement urging people in both countries to critically reflect on their own historical consciousness” (Naghara, 1983, pp. 71-81; Masao, 1985, p. 127; Sin, 2008, p. 31).

In Korea, people started paying a lot of attention to the European

textbook projects in the early 2000s, the same period in which the second Japanese history textbook conflict occurred as well as the one in which the Chinese Northeast project was launched, causing disputes between China and Korea over ancient history (Ahn, 2006, pp. 15-30; Fuhr, 2006, pp. 45-57). Hahn Unuk, Kim Seung-Ryeol, and other Korean historians have published books and articles on the efforts to improve the German-Polish and Franco-German history textbooks. They, too, stressed Germany's history of overcoming the burdens of its past. They looked at how Germany was able to move beyond a narrow-minded national historical consciousness by employing the "two points of view" method advocated by Jules Isaac (Kim & Lee, 2008; Hahn et al., 2008). The translation of *Histoire/Geschichte* was also carried out. The former South Korean President Roh Moo-hyun, who helped establish the Northeast Asian History Foundation, stressed that the peoples of Asia "need to confront the past and build a common ground of historical understanding. Germany, by thoroughly reflecting on its past since WWII, has helped heal the long-festering wounds of European history, laying a psychological foundation for European integration. It also produced a tangible outcome, exemplified by Germany's initiative in co-authoring history textbooks with France and Poland" (2007). In 2007, the subject of East Asian History was introduced into the national school curriculum in order to turn parochial nationalism, a root cause of intra-regional conflicts, into an open nationalism that fosters mutual trust and understanding. The Northeast Asian History Foundation, which developed the East Asian history curriculum, refers to *Histoire/Geschichte*. Thus, *Histoire/Geschichte* can serve as a model for transnational history textbooks throughout the world.

In Northeast Asia, there have been several multinational cooperative projects to improve history textbooks, of which the work of the Association of Comparative History and Comparative History Teaching initiated by Nishigawa Masao constituted the first attempt to improve such textbooks. The association organized several international

conferences for comparative history teaching in Asia in the 1990s. However, it was not until 2001-2002 that full-fledged international collaboration was initiated and began to yield results. The Korea-Japan and China-Japan historical committees were established by the respective governments, but these attempts have not been productive because government-led projects are bound to the government's official stance and public opinion (Sin, 2008, pp. 15-53). In contrast, civil society (NGOs, scholars, and teachers) organizations ended up producing many useful auxiliary materials. One material worth noting is a common Northeast Asia auxiliary history book named *History That Opens the Future: The Modern History of East Asia* (Korea-China-Japan Joint History Textbook Committee, 2005). This book, the result of three years of tri-national cooperation between Korea, China, and Japan, was published simultaneously in these countries in 2005, attracting a lot of attention from the public.⁴

International history textbook projects are not free of criticism. Bekki Atshitto, head of the investigation committee of the Information Center for International Education—an organization aimed at correcting false or negative information about Japan in foreign textbooks—gave an unfavorable assessment of the German-Polish history textbook project. “European countries have recently tried to find a kind of compromise to eliminate sentences depicting histories in a negative way in history textbooks.... For instance, through international textbook work with Poland, Germany accepted a recommendation not to write about the German-Russian non-aggression pact in history textbooks as it was likely to raise anti-German feelings among Polish people.... This seemingly has many implications for the problem of the disputable expression ‘invasion by the Japanese Empire’ among the countries of East Asia”

⁴ This book will be translated into English and published in the fall of 2009 by the University of Hawaii.

(Atshitto, 1983, p. 177; Sin, 2008, pp. 24-25). Nakasone, a former Prime Minister of Japan, seems to have (had) a similar train of thought about the work to improve European history textbooks. As one of Japan's most influential conservative politicians, Nakasone proposed in April 2008 that Japan and China emulate Germany and France in order to overcome their historical differences and create a broad-based relationship for the promotion of prosperity and stability in Asia. Although his suggestion seems to be future-oriented and reconciliatory, it in fact failed to take note of what Germany has done to atone for its past and of the lasting positive effects of the German practice of providing compensation and apologies to individual victims of Nazi crimes (Hovat, 2008). Takahiro Kondo, a student of Nishigawa Masao, points out that such an interpretation of joint European history textbook projects is nothing less than a distorted appropriation which deliberately evades the need to come to terms with unresolved issues such as the Nanking Massacre, forced labor in wartime, and colonial rule of the Korean Peninsula (Kondo, 2000, pp. 322-331).

VI. Conclusion

Histoire/Geschichte is a one-of-a-kind work in that the French *Histoire* and the German *Geschichte* consist of the same contents written by authors from two countries considered to be hereditary enemies. *Histoire/Geschichte* cherishes and develops the basic ideas and methods proposed in the recommendations of 1951 and 1988. By the end of 2008, about 80,000 copies of Volume III had been sold in both countries. As mentioned in the preface of *Histoire/Geschichte* III, students from both sides of the Rhine will gain a deeper understanding about each other and develop a more open and encompassing European perspective. Learning history helps reduce interstate animosity and conflicts. History education can also bring the history of national conflicts more in line with a common European historical consciousness.

Histoire/Geschichte is sometimes criticized for claiming to be a European textbook while centering on France and Germany. However, this is unavoidable because the textbook is made for French and German students. It will not be long before another joint history textbook - this time, created by Germany and Poland—comes into being. Whether it be common history textbooks or consultations for improving history textbooks among European countries, various types of cooperation on history textbooks will help enhance European historical consciousness. To this end, *Histoire/Geschichte* can serve as a model for improving bi-national history textbooks.

Histoire/Geschichte has been under the spotlight not only in Europe but also in Northeast Asia. It is well known that Northeast Asia is still subject to the lasting effects of the nationalism of the late 19th and early 20th centuries when Asian countries became aware of national identities and consciousness. In 1982, a small group of scholars in Japan and Korea became interested in the role of history education in the aftermath of national conflicts. It was only about a century ago that nationalism began its development in Northeast Asia. Therefore, these scholars looked to Europe for applicable lessons on ways to overcome nationalism. The findings of their studies began to be published in 2000 (Korea-China-Japan Joint History Textbook Committee, 2005; Joint Korean-Japanese History Textbook Group, 2005; Association of Korean History Teachers & History Educational Conference of Japan, 2006; Korea History Textbook Research Group & Japan History Education Research Group, 2007). Although their findings have been put together in the form of auxiliary textbooks, their works do have an influence on national history textbooks in Northeast Asian countries. Consultations on history textbooks in Northeast Asia are still in the initial stages—the countries involved are learning about one another’s historical interpretations and viewpoints. As such, *Histoire/Geschichte* will provide hope and serve as a guiding light for Northeast Asia’s joint history textbook projects.

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