

Old and New Models of Textbook Revision and Their Impact on the East Asian History Debate

Falk PINGEL, Georg Eckert Institute
for International Textbook Research

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International school textbook revision and research has broadened its scope and methodological approach considerably since the collapse of the bi-polar world. Today, a number of different agencies such as international governmental institutions, NGOs, as well as academic and pedagogical institutions are involved in projects on the revision of history textbooks and curricula in post-conflict societies. New approaches are no longer aiming at developing a harmonized joint version of contested histories and conflicting collective identities. Instead, they are helping build strategies of how to deal with controversial and sensitive issues in an open, discursive and comparative manner. Modern textbook revision must be placed into the broader context of transitional justice. Issues such as truth commissions, trials, and compensation play a role here. Can the model of textbook revision developed in Europe after the Second World War be transferred to the East Asian context? In which way should it be adapted to the particular politico-cultural environment of the region?

Keywords: international textbook revision, reconciliation, history teaching, post-conflict education, East Asia

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Falk PINGEL, Georg Eckert Institute
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I. A New World Order Challenging Western and Eastern Nationalism

International textbook research and revision has undergone considerable changes since the collapse of the Soviet block. Due to the dismemberment of the Soviet Union and its reign of influence, the bi-polar world is turning into “one world” characterized by the process of globalization. However, this new world order is not void of conflicts and factions. It is deeply divided according to differences in economic power, political systems, social living conditions, and cultural traditions.

The process of transition did not always evolve in a peaceful way.

* This article draws on my experiences in international textbook revisions in Europe and East Asia. Not being an expert in East Asian studies, my knowledge of the East Asian context here relies on what I have learned in projects, conferences, seminars, and meetings with textbook experts from the region. I am particularly grateful to Takahiro Kondo, Biao Yang, Yao Bao, Un-suk Han, and my former colleague at the George Eckert Institute, Claudia Schneider. I also thank the Northeast Asian History Foundation for inviting me to take part in the 2010 NAHF Fellowship Program. However, the responsibility for accurateness of facts and appropriateness of interpretations given is solely with me.

On one hand, countries such as Poland and Czechoslovakia, which were torn by internal conflicts during the time of Soviet domination, have been able to establish a democratic, post-socialistic order by consensus. The two Germans were able to manage re-unification without internal violence or foreign intervention by force. Even the Baltic States, which were abandoned during Soviet rule, were able to regain their sovereignty without major violent clashes.

On the other hand, the forces of the old regimes remained strong in some countries and were willing to resist radical changes by force. Romania was able to abolish communist rule after hard internal fighting. The dissolution of socialist Yugoslavia triggered the most severe war Europe has seen since the end of the Second World War, so that NATO intervened in Kosovo and Bosnia-Herzegovina with troops from EU member countries. Ukraine has not yet found an internal balance and is threatened by political instability and is sometimes in turmoil and on the brink of open violence. The whole Caucasus region is still marked by internal and external conflict. Authoritarian personal rule overrides democratic procedures and endangers transparent institutional political structures. Border disputes and struggles over minority rights lead to the outbreak of open violence and even to war from time to time. The new order in Russia is not yet stable with conflicts predominating on her borders such as in Chechnya. One of the new states emerging from the dissolution of the Soviet Union, Moldova, is divided and no solution is in sight. One part of Moldova, west of the Dniester River, wants to be integrated into Western Europe and, in the end, into its center of gravity, the European Union; the other, Eastern part is oriented to Russia. Russia has become militarily involved in both the Caucasus and Moldova.

Furthermore – what is sometimes forgotten outside of Europe – some old conflicts survived the changes of the 1990s such as the conflicts in Cyprus and Northern Ireland. It was possible for a political settlement to be reached in Northern Ireland, which is, however, not yet fully secured. Cyprus is still another divided country whose eastern part

has been occupied by Turkish troops illegally – according to international law as interpreted by the European Union and UN. As Cyprus in its entirety is a member of the European Union, the Union has inherited a conflict with a state which is not yet a member of the Union but is striving to become one, namely Turkey. Thus, in spite of the positive examples mentioned above, one can hardly say that Europe has been pacified through or since the dissolution of the Soviet Union.

In view of this picture, the transition from a divided to a single world seems to have affected Europe much more than East Asia. Here, the winds of change have blown almost exclusively inside the communist countries of China and Vietnam. They are turning their socialist economic orders step by step into capitalist systems, thereby maintaining one-party rule and state economic planning. This change enhances cross-border economic cooperation and the flow of trade and capital. It also eases and further develops political contacts and consultations. With the exception of minor border disputes, the end of the divided world has stabilized the region economically and politically. However, in contrast to Europe, the Cold War is not yet really over as Korea is still divided along the old lines, and the Taiwan issue has not been able to be resolved. In addition, although China is economically booming and politically stable, the suppression of democratic and minority movements – the latter foremost on border regions – bears unpredictable risks in the longer run.

The picture seems to display a paradoxical situation: whereas the European space is – mostly on its periphery – shaken by violent conflicts, it generally enjoys the reputation of being a peaceful area where international and social security as well as human rights are safeguarded by European and even trans-Atlantic institutions like the EU, the Council of Europe, and OSCE. The wounds of the Second World War are apparently healed, and former enemies have become allies. Even though East Asian countries have lived in peace since the end of the Vietnam War, they have hardly been able to create a similar image of

peaceful and mutually prosperous relations as the Europeans have. The scars of the Second World War are still open in East Asia. There is a widespread feeling that border issues and the impact of war crimes committed during the 1930s and 1940s may still endanger peaceful relations between East Asian states. Peace is not yet associated with regional cooperation in East Asia, unlike in Europe, but with individual national policies. The nationalization of political values has survived the rise of globalization in East Asia, in contrast to the European theatre.

It is true that most young Europeans still place more trust in their national political institutions than in the respective European ones. However, European organizations are seen as the most powerful and trustworthy instruments of safeguarding general values like peace and human rights (Eurobarometre 72, 2010). Whereas in Europe the threatening constellation of the Cold War period has been transformed into a sphere of political, economic and cultural cooperation that may resolve and control existing and possible future conflicts, East Asia has not (yet) reached this “collectivization” of political values that are shared by a community of sovereign states. Europe is not void of economic competition. However, from its very beginning in the post-war years, economic recovery was embedded in and steered by European institutions, in the capitalist “West”¹ as well as in the communist “East.” The European Union has created instruments for redistributing economic wealth between its member states and thus increasing the developmental capacities of weaker states or regions.

A similar framework that tames competition and mitigates its aggressive character is missing in East Asia. Here, instead, the dominant role of Japan’s economy has raised suspicions of the new “zone of co-prosperity” that is feared will prove disadvantageous for the growing

¹ When in double quotes, the term is used as a politico-cultural concept that includes the geographical South and North of Europe. It is opposed to the “East” which was represented by the Soviet sphere of influence.

economies of the other East and Southeast Asian states. Likewise, the booming Chinese economy and the increasing role of South Korea in international political cooperation and consultation procedures are seen by other East Asian nations as threats to their own positions rather than as an advantage giving the whole region more weight and opening up promising perspectives for all countries. Conflict issues as well as peaceful cooperation are negotiated mainly on a bi- or multi-lateral *national* level, but rarely and less powerfully when they are on a *supranational* platform.

In a sense, the foreign relations structures in East Asia resemble the model of European relations before 1914, when, in a phase of high prosperity and growth, the fear of falling behind the competitors created increasing suspicion and mistrust that eventually made the societies of the imperialistic European powers ready to wage war. Taking into account these experiences and learning from them, and in view of global economic and political consultations, it is not likely that booming East Asia will go exactly the same way, but it is somewhere on the same road when today's disputes over small inhabited rocky islands are treated in the media with war-like language and lead to an international security debate. This shows that emotions are still running high and rational strategies for solving the question with appropriate means are urgently needed.

The changes of the global political order affect the historical consciousness and peoples' mutual perceptions. The European Union, which was conceived and remained mainly as an instrument of economic coordination until well into the 1980s, now evokes a vision of the rule of democracy, human rights, peace, and social security that, while not (yet) fully realized, serves as a common denominator for future hopes and plans (Pingel, 1995 & 2000). In many history textbooks of European countries, the fall of the Berlin Wall does not just stand for what Europe represents today in terms of cooperation, power and competition in the fields of economy, politics and culture, but also serves as a symbol of a

future reign of social justice and internal as well external peace. This positive European ideology does not always reflect reality but opens up a view to a common future.

Until the end of the bi-polar world, international textbook revision was mainly concerned with external relations between two or more states that were the focus of joint textbook consultations. The interpretation of “the other” was at stake, whereas the respective self-images remained largely untouched. This approach was a precondition for textbook talks that transgressed the then “iron curtain.” Although this was only seldom the case, the Soviet-USA textbook talks and the textbook conferences Germany held with Eastern European countries – not only with Poland in the first place but also with the Soviet Union and Czechoslovakia, for example – could only be conducted with the provision that the different politico-economic systems not be taken into question.

The process of European integration is going to alter this traditional paradigm. As the politico-economic systems have become more alike, there is no longer a need to taboo their treatment in textbook talks. Furthermore, as violent conflicts occur mainly at the periphery, the relevance of post-conflict textbook consultations between sovereign states is decreasing in the central areas of Europe. That does not mean that comparative textbook talks are becoming irrelevant. They now tend to address different problems which call for applying different procedures. European laws, conventions, and regulations affect more and more daily life in the member states of the European Union and the Council of Europe. Their citizens have rights and obligations on a supranational level.

In order to create an understanding for this process and its historical roots, the European dimension gains in importance in the teaching of civics, geography and history across Europe. As teaching time for these subjects is not likely to be expanded, the increase of European topics is made at the expense of dealing with national history. This is by far not an uncontested issue in Europe (Kokkinos & Gatsotis, 2008; Capita et al.,

2004). However, bi-national textbook talks are not an appropriate means to tackle this issue. To reconcile the claim for a more in-depth treatment of general European developments with the need for teaching about one's own nation, international organizations such as the Council of Europe, the Georg Eckert Institute for International Textbook Research, the Association of European History Teachers, EUROCLIO, and various educational foundations or institutions work now on a multilateral level and bring together scholars, representatives of ministries of education, teachers and textbook authors in seminars and conferences with the aim of developing the concepts of how to deal with the shared history and common space of Europe in the classroom (Crossroads, 2006; Council of Europe, n.d.; EUROCLIO, n.d.; Georg Eckert Institute, n.d.). In spite of a number of *multinational* history projects that came into being in East Asia in the last decade, a concerted *supranational* cooperation does not yet exist.

II. Changing Patterns of Conflict Resolution and Textbook Revision

1. The Post-war Model: Revising the Image of the Other

Immediately after the Second World War, the victorious allied powers imposed radical reforms in education on the German and Japanese authorities. Incriminated racist or militarist textbooks had to be withdrawn, teachers were dismissed and a new legislation for a democratic, non-discriminatory education was enacted. After this first phase of intervention, more cooperative forms of reeducation were introduced; the occupation powers supported textbook authors and curriculum experts who were critical of authoritarian or dictatorial traditions and open to a peace-oriented education. With the end of the occupation period, conservative groups regained influential positions in governments and administrations in both countries and partially reversed

the re-education process (Dierkes, 2010; Shibata, 2005).

Although West Germany's and Japan's situations under occupation resembled one another in many respects, they differ in an important historical dimension. For Germany, it was the second defeat, and it was as total as the war had been. Foreign armies entered German territory fighting and the Allies divided the country. In contrast, almost no Japanese territory was occupied during the war except for Okinawa. The borders remained intact with the exception of territories formerly conquered by Imperial Japan outside the Japanese islands proper. As Japan was allowed to keep the Emperor in his place, traditional authoritarian-religious attitudes were able to survive the introduction of the democratic system. As the Emperor represented high moral authority in Japan, the guilt for crimes committed in the war was attached to a small group of mostly military leaders, not to larger political or military organizations as a whole as in Germany. Therefore, the question of collective guilt that was extensively debated in Germany and even had an impact on the historical consciousness of young people born after the war was not a pressing issue in Japan (Nozaki, 2008). The politico-ideological system that the vast majority of the German people had admired was completely broken down. Therefore, the Germans accepted integration into the democratic, pluralistic "West" and into the newly-founded European organizations as the only road to regaining political independence. They welcomed the supranational ideology of cooperation and common heritage that did not abandon the nation-state and national feelings, but tamed them and placed them in a wider Euro-Atlantic context. A respective supranational regional orientation was not able to emerge in Asia or East Asia with Korea shattered, first by war, then by dictatorship, China belonging to the communist system, Vietnam divided and then in war with Japan's closest but far-away ally, the USA. Quite similar to Germany after the First World War, nationalistic aspirations and traditionalist attitudes characterized the leading strata of Japanese society challenged by strong and sometimes radical, but less influential

left-wing movements.

In Germany, national as well as international textbook revision was initiated during the occupation period and further developed through the foundation of the Braunschweig International Textbook Institute in 1950. The Institute continued organizing textbook seminars with authors from other Western European countries and abroad, examined history textbooks and published textbook reviews in its international yearbook (*Internationales Jahrbuch*, 1950). In addition to and often in cooperation with the Institute, the Council of Europe and other European institutions were also active in this area, along with UNESCO, which held some world-wide conferences on textbook revision from the late 1940s with large participation from Western European countries, including Germany. Although the findings and recommendations of these conferences and consultations were based on scholarly textbook analysis, they did not, as a rule, apply very sophisticated methods: hermeneutic, qualitative content analysis prevailed and quantitative methods played a minor role. Normally, only the books in use were examined and neither the broader pedagogical context nor the political ramifications of teaching history were researched in any detail. These activities nevertheless strengthened the awareness of the importance of textbooks as an emanation of society's dominant "Zeitgeist," attracting more interest in textbook studies independent of the revision process. The increased interest produced longitudinal textbook studies that provided a deeper understanding of textbooks as transmitters of state ideology and of the educational philosophy behind the selection of facts on which the construction of the narrative was based (Fitzgerald, 1979; Altbach et al., 1991; Choppin, 1992; Marsden, 2001).

Neither was a similar textbook revision process initiated in (East) Asia, nor did textbook research here develop into an acknowledged academic sub-discipline. Only a few Asian states sent representatives occasionally to the world-wide UNESCO seminars, amongst them, Japan and China. Interestingly, those seminars were mainly devoted to the

presentation of Europe in Asian textbooks (Abraham, 1959/1960; Recommendations, 1959/1960) and did not deal with inter-Asian issues. The International Textbook Institute already developed contacts with Japan in the 1950s and the Georg Eckert Institute conducted a series of textbook conferences in conjunction with the Japanese International Society for Educational Information where issues of each other's presentation in history and geography textbooks were treated but problematic topics like the Second World War and war crimes remained untouched (Hillers, 1980). Controversy over this issue aroused only in a joint meeting held in Tokyo in April 1998 (Henry & Riemenschneider, 1998). The aforementioned Japanese partner institute also held textbook consultations with other countries, but all of them followed the UNESCO model to examine the image of the other critically so that Japan's self-image was not at stake in international textbook consultations. The contacts established with German textbook researchers nevertheless proved useful, when the Ienaga trials ignited a fierce textbook debate inside Japan that also attracted international attention (Buruma, 1994; Saaler, 2005).

In this context, some Korean and Japanese scholars and textbook authors studied the way the Europeans coped with a difficult past. They tried to apply the European approach to the East Asian debate. Among others, Prof. Takahiro Kondo published about textbook revision in Japan. In Korea, Prof. Lee Tae-young started to conduct conferences where Korean and Japanese textbooks were analyzed. Although many of the conference papers were made available in printed form, only a small number of experts took notice of them. The conferences had hardly any effect on the political level. They established, however, contacts between scholars who were open for an exchange of opinions and prepared the ground for more in-depth textbook studies in Japan. The Korean Education Development Institute, and later on the Academy of Korean Studies, analyzed the image of Korea in textbooks of foreign countries. This one-sided activity led to a number of smaller studies that were

meant to provide foreign textbook authors with “correct” information on and propagate a positive image of Korea. It lacks a multilateral, comparative approach (Academy for Korean Studies, n.d.; Center for International Affairs, n.d.). In sum, comparative, mutual, and research-based textbook analysis was not widely known in East Asia when new forms of textbook revision emerged in the 1990s.

2. Textbook Revision within the Framework of Transitional Justice

Whereas in the decades following the Second World War textbook revision concentrated on the schoolbooks and took hardly into account the wider societal context of education, today it is embedded in the wider frame of transitional justice.² The process of decolonization and the fight against dictatorial, racist or authoritarian regimes, in particular in South America and Africa, have created a range of educational, judicial and financial tools to cope with the legacy of a “negative past.” Although the term is relatively new, many of the factors that constitute transitional justice were already applied in Germany and Japan after the Second World War. Besides proper judicial measures like the Nuremberg and Tokyo trials, the vetting or purging of state bureaucracy and governments, re-education, compensation and reparations fall under this category. New institutions emerged in the 1980s and 1990s such as various forms of truth commissions and official apologies for crimes that have been committed in the name of one’s own nation.

The German authorities have dealt with issues of transitional justice throughout the Federal Republic’s history – despite setbacks in the 1950s after the end of the occupation. Material reparations already had to be paid and delivered during the occupation time, and the last compensation

² Regarding the concept, visit the homepage of the International Center for Transitional Justice, <http://www.ictj.org/en/tj/>.

payments for slave labor have been processed in recent years. A portion of the compensation funds provided by the federal government and private enterprises has been set aside for educational activities.³ Since 1946, not one year has passed without people being on trial for Nazi crimes.

Since the Korean War, Japanese society was less actively confronted with the legacy of past war crimes than German society. The treaties with China and South Korea concluded under the impact of the Cold War, stipulating quite favorable conditions for Japan and regulating compensation payments before Imperial Japan's damages and crimes had ever been recognized in detail by the Japanese government or extensively researched and documented. A comprehensive frame of transitional justice never developed under these political conditions. The renewed historical debate has brought all the issues to the fore again. As the textbook problem triggered extensive disputes on Japan's difficult past, it brought a heavy political burden. In contrast, textbook revision in Germany was one of the means to lower the burden of the "negative past." Since the 1980s, the textbook issue has ignited controversies in Japan that go far beyond education, whereas in the German-Western European context, textbook revision has consolidated cooperation which already started with the former enemies in the fields of politics and economy in the late 1940s. In the case of Germany, history education was one of the most important transmitters of reconciliation.

3. Critical Examination of the Self-image

The structure of armed conflicts and wars has changed with the new world order. Up to the end of the Second World War, most wars were

³ Visit the homepage of the Foundation, "Erinnerung, Verantwortung, Zukunft (Remembrance, Responsibility, and the Future)," <http://www.stiftung-evz.de/eng/>.

fought between states. Since then, however, internal wars between political, ethnic, cultural or religious groups within a state or society have increased considerably. This trend has become even more dominant since the 1990s so that the methods of conflict resolution changed accordingly (Chojnacki, 2006; Münkler & Camiller, 2005). In the case of civil and internal wars, peace talks have to be held not between representatives of sovereign states but often between social, political, cultural groups that are not clearly defined. As a rule, all sides have to seek a new balance of power in order to reconcile the divided parts of the society whether they are winners or losers.

NGOs often take a decisive role in negotiation and reconciliation after conflicts. They may act in parallel to, in cooperation with, or instead of state institutions. External institutions are frequently asked to act as a neutral mediator because all partners may be regarded as partisan in internal conflicts. NGOs have also become driving forces in textbook talks dealing with the resolution of internal conflicts. In most post-socialist countries, the transition from Marxist educational philosophy to democratic, pluralistic thinking was managed through a number of curriculum reforms. The reform process was supported through an intensive exchange of experience with domestic as well as foreign experts and NGOs. In this context, textbook conferences were held and joint research projects conducted (de Keghel & Maier, 1999; Höpken, 1996). In countries where the transition process caused violence, textbook revision was often implemented only after international intervention. International foundations and NGOs provided expertise, stimulated a research-based approach, played a mediating role, and helped disseminate results through training seminars (Koulouri, 2002; Dimou, 2009).

Not only the former socialist countries but also many Western European countries underwent a self-critical historical debate during the past decades. In France, the overestimation and heroization of the resistance movement against the Nazi occupation was counterbalanced

with a more realistic evaluation of widespread assimilation and even collaboration. Step by step, the Vichy regime was allotted almost the same space as the resistance movement in French history textbooks. It was only in the 1990s that the trauma of the Algerian War could be openly addressed and conceived as a liberation war which legitimately brought French colonialism to its very end (Kohser-Spohn & Renken, 2006; Delissen & Abdelfettah, 2005). Such critical introspective processes are never uncontested in society. The French government recently tried to reverse anti-colonialist intellectual attitudes and even to enforce through legislation that textbook authors should also refer to the good sides of colonialism which was said to have civilized the colonized population. After a fierce political and academic debate, the law had to be abandoned (Rémond, 2006). It took a long way in Italy to make the Mussolini regime an integral part of history textbook presentation. Until well into the 1960s, the presentation of contemporary Italian history ended with the time when Mussolini came to power (Cornelißen, 2004). Poland was shattered by an in-depth debate on Polish anti-Semitism when confronted with research revealing that parts of the Polish population helped the Nazis to annihilate the Jews (Polonsky, 2004). Without these self-critical debates, it would not have been possible in Europe to develop multinational history textbooks.

Textbook revision in European countries of transition continued well into the first decade of the 21st Century, and is still going on in regions where the transition had caused violence. In addition, the accelerated process of European integration enabled new forms of multilateral textbook work that transgressed the limits of nation-centered approaches to history education. A multinational team of authors, who represented – with one exception – “Western” Europe, wrote a “European history textbook,” which is intended to deliver an integrated view of traits of development characteristic for Europe as a whole (Delouche, 1993). It was not meant to replace the regular national textbooks but to be used as complementary material. The Council of

Europe, teachers associations and NGOs developed regional materials covering the history of a number of neighboring states foremost in areas of conflict. Pupils taking part in the German-French Youth Exchange went even further. They suggested writing a history textbook which could be used in German and French schools alike. The two governments endorsed the idea and a German and a French publishing house were commissioned to develop a joint history textbook that appeared in identical versions – albeit in two different languages. This history textbook has been approved for use in schools in Germany and France (Le Quintre et al., 2006 & 2008).

In the longer run, East Asian countries also profited from the more open international climate. The appearance of the European history textbook aroused interest in Korea and Japan, where an annotated translation was published (Center for Education, 1997). Several bi- and tri-national groups of scholars and pedagogues started in the second half of the 1990s to develop joint teaching material that should be used in schools of the project participants' home countries. On the one hand, these groups of concerned academics and teachers took advantage of the new model of non-state-guided work on reconciliation through history education because the governments were apparently still not able to engage in joint activities. On the other hand, their work lacked the long period of mutual contacts, analyses and step by step textbook revision as have evolved in Europe. They started with what has been the last phase in the European context: the production of joint material. Like the "European history textbook," and in contrast to the bi-national German-French textbook that covers the curricula of both countries, their products are extracurricular. The materials offer innovative ideas, interpretations and approaches that seem to be too radical to be introduced by official authorities. The authors admit that their materials address teachers in the first place: only excerpts should be handed out to pupils. This has the advantage that the material does not need to be approved by the authorities. The disadvantage is that teachers are often not familiar with

it and shy away from using it. The overloaded curricula make it difficult anyway to find free or additional time to integrate complementary material into the curricular teaching process. Also, teachers may be afraid of political pressure or interventions from their colleagues and parents to bring to the class material which is not officially recognized and is suspected of deviating from mainstream national historiography.

The crux of the matter is that the textbook systems of the three countries differ. China does not have a private textbook market so that educational authorities commission and directly control the development of textbooks (Yang, 2001). In contrast, private publishing houses can produce schoolbooks on their own initiative in Korea and Japan; the books then have to be approved by the ministries of education. The Japanese ministry has a long record of intervention, sometimes even prescribing the wording for the description of sensitive topics that are related to issues of national pride and identity (Chang, 2011; Nishino, 2008). Regardless of these differences, official curricula in all East Asian countries have an authoritative character and only offer textbook authors and teachers a very limited freedom of choice. The approved textbooks play a dominant role in the teaching process, and students as well as parents trust in that they reflect mainstream interpretations that are not controversial in society. In addition, examinations play a crucial role in streamlining the learning process and leave almost no room for the experimental teaching of topics not covered by the curriculum or for the discussion of interpretations that are not in line with traditional historiography. Therefore, complementary teaching material co-written by authors from foreign countries can easily be denounced as serving foreign interests.

Furthermore, complementary material does not change the existing regular textbooks, and it is doubtful whether future textbook authors will respond positively to the challenge it poses to the established narratives. As mutual textbook revision in the East Asian context did not enjoy governmental support, their results had – and still often have – the scent

of alternative politics and did not enjoy the reputation of serious pedagogy. Civil society emerged late in Korea, it is hardly entrenched yet in China, and although well established in Japan and particularly active in the field of remembrance, its activities are strongly connected with left-wing political movements and are not associated with state authority and traditions of remembrance that play a vital role in Japanese society (Yamane, 2009). The bi-national historical commissions Japan has established with South Korea in the last decade focus on the political, economic and cultural relations between the countries, but they treat fewer domestic issues. The current commission seems to be in a deadlock because the two sides cannot agree whether they should deal with research topics only or also include schoolbooks. The Chinese-Japanese commission has not even touched textbook issues yet. During the first years of the encounters, even the non-governmental textbook projects followed the traditional model of post-World War II textbook revision which was directed towards the examination and revision of the image of the other. The textbook debate in East Asia was for a long time Japan-centered. Japan was the only culprit who was expected to change its textbooks whereas the historical conceptions as laid down in Chinese and Korean textbooks were hardly taken into examination. This one-sided approach neglects the inextricable relation which exists between self-image and the image of the other because any definition of the collective self implies an exclusion of those who do not belong to one's own collective.

NGO work is only a weak substitute for mutual official recognition. Its achievements are hardly acknowledged as a value in its own right. At best, it is seen as a means to pave the way for governmental textbook agreements. The debate is still polarized: on one side the nationalistic right wing and on the other the international left wing. For future activities, it seems to be important to overcome this polarization between left and right as well as between civil society activities and rapprochement on the political level.

III. De-nationalizing History: Regional and Research-based Approaches

To enhance regional cooperation and awareness, Korea is introducing the new sub-discipline of Asian History into the history curriculum. This new subject may pose a challenge to Chinese and Japanese curriculum experts to also think more in inclusive regional than in exclusive national concepts. Although it would be premature to conceive a common textbook on this subject, East Asian countries, including perhaps also Vietnam, could jointly develop guidelines according to which East Asian studies should be taught. Such an approach would fit into the rising discussion over the concept of Asia and East Asia, as compared and opposed to the concept of Europe (Lee, 2008). A regional approach could be all the more so useful, as the teaching of international or world history is traditionally oriented towards the Western world more than to Asia in the curricula of all the three East Asian countries. However, the proposal has already met with reservations on the Japanese and Chinese sides. Instead of grasping the opportunity for outlining a shared history, suspicious attitudes prevail that Korean educational authorities are going to invent a new version of an Asian prosperity zone, this time dominated by Korean cultural and interpretative hegemony (Chung et al., 2009; Ijuin, 2011).

Giving more space to the international dimension does not necessarily mean “de-nationalizing” history. Recent changes in the Chinese history curriculum led to an increase of international contents but did not alter China’s central role in the narrative. On the contrary, the novel global lens should only reflect China’s new role in world economy and global policy. It can be interpreted as a means of adjusting the traditional notion of Chineseness as embedded in Chinese textbooks of the past to the context of globalization and characterizing China’s unique role in this process (Xu, 2007; Vickers, 2006; Croizier, 1990). It must not be misunderstood as moving the focus from the nation to the globe, as an

innovative world history textbook written by Shanghai textbook authors shows. They overestimated the room of manoeuvre granted to the Shanghai authorities to develop textbooks that are allowed to deviate from the central Beijing-made curriculum in order to familiarize Shanghai pupils with the city's worldwide relations. They wrote a world history book that was based on a history of civilization concept and played down Chinese national history to an extent that was not tolerable to the Beijing authorities. The book caused a scandal and had to be withdrawn (Albers, 2009).

Still, a critical evaluation of the Chinese Civil War evolving within the Chinese-Japanese war in the 1940s is not possible, not to speak of the catastrophes that were generated through the dreadful internal political and economic decisions of China's leadership under chairman Mao. China's concept of history teaching is hardly less politicized than that of Japan which is so often criticized by Chinese scholars and politicians (Z. Wang, 2008; Jones, 2005). In contrast, the South Korean case shows that critical examination of the self-image and openness to the narrative of the "other" are linked. The growing readiness on the Korean side in the 1990s to become engaged in mutual international textbook revision was strengthened through the revision of Korea's own recent past. Critical investigation into Korea's period of authoritarian and military rule deepened the understanding of Japan's problems questioning the traditional apologetic narrative (Han, 2011).

Many internal controversies over history textbooks in Japan have induced, in fact, alterations of the mainstream narrative from time to time. However, there were always backlashes that attracted much more public attention, in particular outside of Japan, than the slight changes that have been achieved in the majority of books which are more widely disseminated than the extreme right ones (Schneider, 2008; Saaler 2005). Both public opinion and teachers are much more open than most of the politicians to revising the traditional interpretation according to which the Japanese army fought a just and self-defensive war with just a few

instances of misconduct that would always happen in war or were caused in reaction to inappropriate actions of the enemy. A few nationalistic textbooks which deny that the Japanese army intentionally committed mass crimes as well as reactionary symbolic acts of politicians, who worshipped at shrines where culprits are remembered, constantly arouse more attention than positive changes in textbook representation (Arai, 2010). Also, interest in denying Japan's problematic role in the war is declining as opinion polls show although it is hardly noticed by the media outside of Japan. Longitudinal textbook studies have proven that the way issues such as the abuse of women as "sex slaves" have been dealt with or neglected in Japanese schoolbooks changed over time depending on internal political power struggles (Sin, 2005).

The media's concentration on what has not yet been achieved cements an image of an inflexible, nationalistic Japanese intelligentsia. Instead, the focus should be directed more on internal Japanese debates and strengthening the position of those who are conscientious about Japan's war crimes and of the suffering Japan's aggressive warfare brought to its neighboring peoples. Even confessions of guilt from politicians fitting into the new culture of apology are not acknowledged, and are not accepted as a trustworthy point of departure for reconciliation if other leading politicians do not follow the same line (Dudden, 2008). Intransigent behavior still shapes the foreign perception of Japan's attitude towards its role in the Second World War. This view isolates academics and teachers who want to revise the (textbook-) historiography of the Second World War rather than strengthening their position.

In fact, it is not easy to de-politicize history in East Asia. Some recent history projects have been so closely linked to obvious political interests that their academic seriousness and honesty is put into question. They should clearly justify or refute minority politics or territorial claims. If the South Korean government responds to the Chinese challenge of the Northeast Project (Choe, 2009) with even higher

investments in proving the Korean identity of minorities living in the North of China, it is reacting on the same level as the Chinese act: making history the servant of political objectives (Ahn, 2005; Li, 2005; Lim, 2005). This diminishes the academic reputation and independence of institutions which work on textbook revision and research on contested issues between neighboring states. A more effective response could have been to set up an international research project with participation from Asian countries on related issues such as the historiography and geopolitics of the nation-state taking the Koguryo (or Goguryeo) case as one example but not to focus exclusively on it. The same applies to the Dokdo issue. Research on both sides that proves the ownership of the island to one or the other side can only sharpen the conflict at this stage. In contrast, research that does not follow current political interests would strive to analyze the conflict conditions and to develop options for solving the conflicts. The question is not to whom Dokdo belongs; the question is why it is becoming a contentious issue now. The Northeast Asian History Foundation has issued publications in this direction, albeit with little overarching theoretical concepts (Bae et al., 2009; Kang, 2009). The same holds true for the Northeast Project. There is nothing against doing research on minorities in Northern China: problematic is the construction of political identities – on both sides of the border – ranging over hundreds of years in a territory that changed ownership several times during this period (Seo, 2008).

The Academy for Korean Studies has launched an ambitious project called “History of Korean Science and Civilization Project.” A number of renowned international researchers have been asked to take part in the project. A large series of basic sources accompanied with scientific articles will be published and translated into English. They should provide foreign researchers who are not specialized in Korean history with original knowledge so that the image of East Asian history is no longer almost exclusively shaped through research publications on Japan and China because these are available in foreign languages. Such a

corpus of sources and essays is needed, indeed, as most textbook authors and even university scholars do not have access to Korean historiography because not much is published in international languages. The launching of the project follows long-term Korean foreign interests. Korea is positioning herself in the changing global and regional context. The country's growing engagement in international organizations and global governance should enhance its international status and give Korea's voice more weight in regional matters. The outlines of the aforementioned project can be read in this context as the project is expected to "rival *Science and Civilization in China*, the impressive work ... by Needham Research Institute of Cambridge University and *the History of Science and Technology in China*, published by the Chinese government" (Academy of Korean Studies, n.d.). This link to interests of image-building need not have negative effects on the scholarly work as long as the research activities within the framework of the project are free. Also, the aim of the project should not be constructing national identity patterns over long time periods to "rival" Chinese and Japanese national historiography (Kim, 2009). Such an aim would run contrary to the above-mentioned new East Asian approach that should raise awareness of mutual relations and influence.

To upgrade the status of textbook revision so that it can establish a discourse in its own right vis-à-vis political objectives, the following steps should be envisaged:

1. Textbook *revision* must constitute textbook *research* as a field independent of short-sighted political interests. To this aim it is important to conduct more longitudinal, comparative studies that are not closely connected to projects on revising the current textbooks or producing new ones. Such studies are indispensable for providing uncontested context data for projects whose explicit objective is to change educational practice. Instead of waiting for more and more sustainable political apologies, teachers and scholars should strive

to give professional academic and pedagogical textbook work more weight and make it more independent from political influences. They can raise their voices in the media without constantly, uniformly garnishing the presentation of research findings with political rhetoric that asks Japanese politicians to fall to their knees and confess. Teachers and researchers undermine their own work if they measure its value against the effect it has in the political arena on a short-run basis. Experience has shown that continuous professional activities generate a growing constituency of concerned academics, textbook authors and teachers who are willing to introduce changes step by step without necessarily altering the official curriculum framework (Pingel, 2011). The clearer projects show that to the extent their results are not the outcome of political negotiations but are based on serious research work, the greater are the chances to establish research-based textbook comparison and revision as an independent academic discipline which is not blurred with problematic political compromise.

2. More human resources for both practice- and research-oriented projects should be recruited. Projects should try to win the cooperation or at least participation of “normal,” i.e. mainstream textbook authors, teachers and academics, and to involve them in conferences, training seminars and research activities to overcome the peripheral position textbook research has had in the academia up to now.

3. The participation of researchers and textbook authors from South(east) Asian countries and Vietnam could contribute to a pluralistic debate. Their involvement could counterbalance the rivalries between the East Asian countries. Seen from Singapore or India, Japan’s colonialism and expansionism takes on a different meaning. China’s notion of Chineseness will be confirmed and challenged at the same time members of the Chinese minorities in Southeast Asia take part

in the deliberations, because they have their own view of Chinese identity (Tu, 1994; G. Wang, 2000, 2003). South Korea's preferred role as a neutral, peace-loving mediator could be better played as an uncontested trump card in an all-Asian context. The opening up of the historical debate to South(east) Asia could create a win-win situation for all.

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