



PROJECT MUSE®

---

## Fairness, Globalization, and Public Institutions

Dator, Jim

Published by University of Hawai'i Press

Dator, Jim.

Fairness, Globalization, and Public Institutions: East Asia and Beyond.

Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2006.

Project MUSE., <https://muse.jhu.edu/>.



➔ For additional information about this book

<https://muse.jhu.edu/book/64094>

torical perceptions between transnational groups is possible even if building a global/human history is still unrealistic. In fact, various kinds of transnational networks have developed. For example, as we have said, VAWNET has contributed to clarifying the situation of “comfort women” or “sexual slaves” to the world. It may help women around the world share historical memory based on the perspective of gender.

Democratization around the world can help build a transnational history. For example, democratization of Asian countries in the 1990s has stimulated the growth of pluralistic societies in Asian countries. People in these countries have developed critical views of their governments as well as of the nationalistic textbooks in Japan. For example, Koreans criticized the nationalistic textbook and the MOE’s approval of it in Japan, and yet at the same time they were also critical of their government’s textbook policy. Textbooks of Korean language, social studies, and ethics are published by the government in Korea. Critics see the history in these textbooks as an “official” history, and they raise questions of whether or not it is a “public” history. The answer depends on the definition of “public,” which is usually used in three contexts: “official,” “common,” or “open.” Is the history contained in Korean textbooks commonly shared by many Korean people?

National governments have used history textbooks as a tool for building national identity among people, and they have developed screening/authorizing systems. History textbooks screened/authorized by public institutions are assumed to reflect the public memory, or commonly shared historical perceptions. The history textbook issue has not been politicized in the United States, where public memory of major wars is established, but it has been a big political issue in Japan because Japan has no single public memory of World War II.

Under this situation, it is difficult for Japanese to build a shared memory with people of other nations. Creating a transnational history is a realistic alternative beyond national history in the age of globalization, and it is a first step toward building a public memory in the Asia-Pacific region.

## FURTHER THOUGHTS

### **Globalization and Japan**

*Jim Dator*

JAPAN IS ONE of the few countries in the world that has had two chances to respond to massive global pressures for governance reform. The first opportunity, already discussed briefly in chapter 16, was in the second half of the nineteenth century, when Japan was forced to end its centuries-long self-imposed global iso-

lation and transform itself into a modern nation against its will. Japan accomplished the feat extremely effectively and in an extraordinarily short period of time by inviting in scores of foreign experts on all aspects of society (and then escorting them all home within a decade), while also sending young Japanese observers overseas to study what were then the “best practices” of nations around the world, especially in Europe and North America.

As a consequence of these rapid and profound internal reforms and the foreign policies flowing from them, Japan quickly became a major global military power in the twentieth century and (emulating and exceeding its tutors’ most extravagant expectations and outrageous examples) adroitly attacked and conquered surrounding nations until it eventually overreached and was devastatingly defeated in World War II.

Subsequently, it was immediately provided a second chance at major governance reform via global pressure. Taking advantage of an extraordinarily open, but brief, window of opportunity, Japanese constitutional lawyers in 1947 quickly drafted, adopted, and implemented what some scholars have convincingly argued is the “best” constitution in the world of the many created during the twentieth century (e.g., Beer and Maki, *From Imperial Myth to Democracy: Japan’s Two Constitutions*). However, the major lesson that Japan learned from its defeat in World War II was that while imperialistic military might define a powerful nation in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the future belonged to economically powerful nations. And so Japanese decision makers consciously set out to make Japan a leading economic power. “For example, ‘Long Range Prospects of the Japanese Economy’ published in August 1960 by the Economic Council is the first result of future research activities by the government in postwar Japan. On October 27, 1965, officials of the Economic Planning Agency blue-printed ‘A Vision of Affluent Japan after Twenty Years’ ” (Yujiro Hayashi, “Japan Society of Futurology”). To imagine in the 1960s that Japan would be “affluent” by the 1980s was certainly audacious, but indeed as early as 1970 futurist Herman Kahn published a book titled *The Emerging Japanese Superstate: Challenge and Response*. This was followed later, in 1979, by Kahn’s and Thomas Pepper’s *The Japanese Challenge: The Success and Failure of Economic Success*—the same year that respected Japan scholar Ezra Vogel published *Japan as Number One: Lessons for America*.

Japan was indeed a (if not *the*) major economic superpower over the 1980s, with Japanese banks as well as automotive and electronic corporations ranked among the top five or ten in the world. Some observers even anticipated that the yen would replace the dollar as the world standard. And then the bubble burst (as bubbles do), and Japan entered a prolonged economic stagnation that persists to the present time. A great many words have been written about the wretched condition of the Japanese economy and how unemployment (virtually unknown

from the mid-1950s) and crime were both on the rise. Countless foreign advisors from the IMF, World Trade Organization, World Bank, and the like have urged Japan to adopt the draconian policies that they inflicted elsewhere.

But the Japanese have steadfastly refused. Did they refuse because of the entrenched and fossilized bureaucracy and political system? That is what almost all observers contend. Or did they refuse because of their wise realization that slowing the transition from myriad “mom and pop” factories and retail outlets to offshore factories and a few externally controlled “box stores” is better for Japan, politically and culturally, than the humiliating and severe “shock treatments” endured by Russia, Brazil, Thailand, Korea, and many other places (as I feel very strongly is the case)? It is a subject to debate.

From my point of view, Japan, along with Malaysia and Singapore, both of which consciously learned from Japan in their own way, are, by and large, three excellent examples of how political institutions in Asia might “respond to globalization in fairness.” The Japanese economy is, after all, still the second largest in the world, while the standard of living of most Japanese is the envy of everyone in many aspects. Would that all economies were so “stagnant”!

However, in his contribution to our volume, Professor Oshiba shows that “responding to globalization in fairness” is much more than merely an economic issue. There are cultural dimensions as well, largely devoid of any economic import whatsoever. His example is the extremely interesting and complex issue of how officially recognized secondary-school history textbooks (intended only for Japanese students) deal with Japan’s role in World War II. It is an issue that not only has profound implications for future generations of Japanese themselves, but also for relations between Japan and its neighbors presently. Something seemingly as utterly “local” as a few words in a nation’s school textbooks has substantial and unintended global ramifications.

### Notes

1. All Japanese names will be written in Japanese style, i.e., surname then first name.

2. Nishio Kanji, ed., *Atarashii Rekishi Kyokasho* (New history textbook) (Tokyo: Fusho, 2001).

3. MOE examiners raised the question of appropriateness of topics for junior high school textbooks when we were faced with discussions of increasing numbers of divorce, single mothers, and the system of husband and wife retaining separate family names. According to MOE examiners, recent textbooks on home economics tended to emphasize the importance of individuals too much, while placing less importance on family values.

4. Nishio, ed., *Atarashii Rekishi Kyokasho*.

5. Yui Daizaburo, *Nichibei Senso Kan no Sokoku—Masatsu no Shinso Shinri* (View of war in Japan and the US: Psychology of U.S.-Japan frictions) (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1995).

6. Abe Kiyoshi, *Samayoeru Nashonarizumu* (Whither nationalism?) (Kyoto: Sekai Shiso-sha, 2001).

7. Laura Hein and Mark Selden, eds., *Censoring History: Citizenship and Memory in Japan, Germany, and the United States* (Armonk, N.Y.: An East Gate Book, 2000).