

BOOK REVIEW

Thomas U. BERGER. *War, Guilt, and World Politics after World War II*. Cambridge UK: Cambridge University Press, 2012. 265 pages. ISBN: 9781107674950 (Paperback). 20.48 USD. ISBN: 9781107021600 (Hardback). 76.10 USD.

Berger's study focuses on one particular aspect of war guilt, namely the construction of an *official* narrative by the state in Germany, Austria and Japan to deal with economic, political, security and moral issues that arose as a consequence of their role in WWII. Berger proposes a methodological approach that makes use of historical determinism, instrumentalism and culturalist explanations in an eclectic manner, a method reminiscent of the article by Peter J. Katzenstein and Nobuo Okawara, "Japan, Asian-Pacific Security, and the Case for Analytical Eclecticism," *International Security*, 26.3 (2001/02): 153-85, briefly mentioned by Berger (29, Footnote 60).

Following a concise methodological introduction he presents overviews of post-war politics in those three countries, essential for an understanding of the differences in the way these countries reacted to pressures from domestic and international actors in the aftermath of the wars. Each overview is followed by a brief discussion to what extent historical determinism, instrumentalism and culturalist explanations can be applied to account for similarities and differences observable in the six and a half decades since the end of WWII. The last section of the book takes up Japan's relations with the ROK (South Korea) and the PRC, with only few references to Taiwan and even fewer to North Korea. The book concludes with an evaluation of the merits and demerits of the three methodologies discussed, and raises questions to be dealt with by future research. Berger has to be praised for adopting a systematic approach to these complex issues. In addition to historians and social scientists the book also addresses itself to future policy makers confronted with similar issues.

The major part of his book is taken up by chronological accounts of circumstances that led to shifts in the official narrative(s). He provides essential information that makes it valuable for the general reader interested in the comparative history of these three countries. Berger also adds his personal moral judgement on the official narratives adopted by the three states, the responsibilities of their politicians and pressure groups, and refers to "the transformation of how society remembers the past thanks to changes in the technology of data collection and dissemination, the functional need to create identities on the basis of universal principles in an increasingly pluralistic, multicultural world, and the singular impact of the Holocaust on contemporary politics and culture" (10). Far from taking a simplistic stance, he points out that "...the Asian experience confounds any teleological worldview that holds that there is a general trend toward increased acknowledgement of historical injustices" (176).

Although Berger does refer to awareness of guilt and moral conscience of

individuals in Germany, Austria and Japan, his focus is on the official narratives. He unfortunately omits to give a definition for the term “official narratives.” “Official” statements by Prime Ministers and other leading politicians may have only limited or informal binding force. Laws and other formal acts by the state (government) regulating the payment of damages to victims of their wars are linked to injustices committed by the pre-war state, and therefore constitute a formal acknowledgement of guilt. When expressing regret for its pre-war actions Japan has generally striven to avoid any linkage of payments to crimes against the victims of its aggression. Berger differentiates between utterances by the State and opinions at the “societal” level, but is vague on what constitutes societal (public?) opinion. In addition to concepts also commonly used in the study of international relations such as “regret,” “apologies,” and “excuse” his discourse and analyses focus on terms that were traditionally associated with the moral behaviour and psychological state of minds of individuals and groups, rather than states: (im)penitence, repentance, contrition, remorse, and more general social science terms such as moral culpability, shame, guilt, and collective memory/consciousness. He does refer to specifically Japanese concepts such as *sōzange*, while *kōkai* (“regret”) may also be used as a straight translation of the English concept.

Most of these terms also refer to moral values. Berger mentions religious and moral concepts in Christian Germany and Catholic Austria, wondering how the pre-war behaviour of those nations and states relates to their mainstream religious values, and refers to Japan as a Buddhist and Shintoist country. Even though his research focuses on the state rather than individuals his non-specialist readers would have benefitted from remarks on the different relationship in Japan between “religion” and “religious values” to discourse at the societal and state level. First of all, religious groupings did play a prominent role in pre-war Japan, and so did personal religious convictions of its military and political leaders to a far greater extent than Japanese post-war scholars admit or even seem to be aware of (the name of Tanaka Chigaku is hardly mentioned in post-war Japan). Sections of Buddhist texts were (mis)used by the pre-1945 Japanese state to mobilize the population for war, and Shinto shrines were particularly singled out by the occupation authorities for their role in fostering pre-war nationalism and jingoism. Other groups punished for pushing for war not mentioned by Berger were business conglomerates (resulting in “zaibatsu dissolution”). Any analysis discussing issues related to “values” in countries whose major religion is monotheism, and comparing them with the function of values in East Asian civilizations should take into account that written accounts of history, either official ones commissioned or sanctioned by the state (modern or pre-modern) are a major place for recording “official” values, which values are not simply derived from convictions carried by various religious groupings. The post-1945 Japanese state has tended to avoid any “official” recognition of wrongdoing by pre-1945 governments which might result in accepting material responsibility, including the payment of war indemnities. Related to this issue are differences in the Japanese conceptualization of the dividing line between the “public” (state) and “private” spheres, principles so important for an understanding of Western social/political/economic theory and

practice. This has also implications for the role of “civil society” versus the state in Japan, and the way in which society can or cannot exert pressure involving moral issues. When it comes to the ability of the state in Japan, Germany and Austria to change the collective memory and thinking about past wrongdoings Berger concludes that governments in all three countries have been less than successful in influencing the moral judgments of individuals and civil society.

A major theme of Berger’s study relates to the way the war past of these countries affects their role in the international system. In analysing and comparing the formation of “official” narratives he adopts an eclectic methodology, but his discussion of their impact on the dynamics of the international system avoids opting for a particular school in the study of international relations. This is regrettable, since the theme of this book begs the question how their war past still affects our theoretical definition of the position of Japan, Austria and Germany as sovereign states in the international system. After the war all three countries were incorporated in alliances led by the victor(s) (East Germany under Soviet leadership), and changes in the formal economic integration of Germany and Austria contributed to a mediated membership of both countries in the international system. Japan’s position in the international system was quite different—not just because of its geographical situation. Until the end of the seventies Japan persisted in maintaining the desirability of a UN centred approach, the role of the US merely being a temporary one until the time the UN could fulfil the task of ensuring Japan’s security. Since the eighties Japan moved to conceptualize its place in the international system as an important ally of the US. This was one factor insulating Japan from direct demands and pressures from its neighbours, in contrast with the increasing integration of Germany and Austria. One would have welcomed more comments on how alliance partners were willing and able to influence and co-shape domestic politics and decision making in the three countries after the occupation had ended. Berger’s book would also gain by a deeper theoretical discussion of the implications for the workings of the international system.

Berger is correct in pointing out essential differences between the structure and nature of Japan in the decades before its defeat and the Nazi System—Hitler’s Germany, its collaborators and crimes in occupied countries and “at home”. It is unfortunate that his comparisons showing Japanese aggression as somehow less vicious than Germany’s crimes (128-31) might possibly be misinterpreted as being somehow apologetic for Japan’s behaviour.

Berger generally stays clear of going into details of debates among academic historians, and thus succeeds in presenting a clear and succinct argument. His descriptions and analyses are supported by sources in English, German and Japanese, but his survey is not without shortcomings. His usage of “leftist” or “socialist” is far too broad to do justice to important developments within the three countries that cover a time span of six decades. He should have paid more attention to the way informal (“people’s”) diplomacy contributed to the formation of Japan’s (semi) official narrative of its aggression against China. During the fifties Japan was forced to enter into negotiations with the PRC over the repatriation of roughly

30,000 Japanese PoW and war criminals held by the PRC, which in the absence of diplomatic relations took the form of “People’s Diplomacy,” the basis of (trade) relations with the PRC until the establishment of diplomatic relations in 1972. This period of “semi-official” relations is essential to understand much of the vagueness of Japanese post-1972 narratives, official or otherwise, at the societal level and in the media.¹ Another conspicuous gap is the absence of a thorough discussion of school textbooks in Germany and Austria, while the issue of government approved textbooks has attracted so much attention in Japan. In his study Berger rarely mentions interviews with historical witnesses, politicians or scholars, perhaps not surprising seen his emphasis on “official narratives.”

The book is fairly free of typos, but one error should be mentioned: Hermann Luebbe is the name of a 19th century German philosopher, not the post-war President of Federal Germany, Heinrich Luebke (58).

Berger’s comparative approach forms a valuable contribution that may also trigger further new research on the issues of war, guilt and penitence by other countries and in other parts of the world.

Kurt W. RADTKE
Waseda University (1998-2006)
Kurtradtke@online.nl

¹ Repatriation was basically completed by 1958. See Kurt Radtke, *China’s Relations with Japan, 1945-83: The Role of Liao Chengzhi* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 1990), and “Negotiations Between the PRC and Japan on the Return of Japanese Civilians and the Repatriation of Prisoners of War,” *Leyden Studies in Sinology* (Leiden: 1981).

BOOK REVIEW

Peter NOLAN. *Is China Buying the World?* Cambridge: Polity Press, 2012. 120 pages. ISBN: 978074560783 (Hardcover). 19.95 USD.

Scaremongering about China's rise has become a very profitable cottage industry: China's rise will lead to the West's demise. The question most frequently asked is not if or even when China will dominate, but whether there is anything we can still do to shield us from its worst impact on our prosperity, way of life and values. Peter Nolan, author of *Is China Buying the World?* is one of the most respected economists of China. With his deep knowledge of the Chinese economy in general and Chinese state enterprises in particular, he is one of the best people in the world to put some sense of reality in the China debate. Yes, China has become the second largest economy in the world, and yes, China has amassed huge foreign reserves. China is also investing heavily in resource-rich areas in Africa, Latin America, Australia and Asia. But, as Nolan shows, this does not amount to world domination. It isn't that China isn't important, but rather that the world economy has evolved to the point that it can no longer be controlled by individual countries. Relentless globalization of the world's leading companies and financial institutions has made them—and not the United States, the European Union, or Japan—the real rulers of the world economy. National industrial policy like the one currently pursued by the People's Republic of China (and previously by new industrialized countries such as Japan and South Korea) is essential to prepare national economic actors for a global role, but is not even remotely enough to make a real dent in the dominance of entrenched global firms. Nolan presents a wealth of information to support this basic contention. For instance, he shows that Chinese investments in North America and Europa continue to be dwarfed by the investments of global firms in China. Similarly, China's foreign reserves and the worth of China's leading companies and banks, impressive as they may be, do not even come close to the total assets or volume of trade of global firms, banks, or asset managers.

While Nolan cannot help us understand why western commentators routinely insist on viewing China in combative and antagonistic terms, which is far worse than the Japan-bashing of the 1970s and 1980s, he has done us a great service sifting the sense from the nonsense. Yet I would have liked him to take the analysis a bit farther as too many questions remain. How does the current Chinese development compare with Japan's or South Korea's? Will China's hand-picked top companies eventually be able to copy the experience of leading companies from these two countries that have become global players on a par with American or European ones? Will these companies in time simply outgrow the Chinese national economy and national industrial policy, or will they continue to be needed to shore up their participation in the world economy? If it isn't a matter of China versus the developed world, who then are the real losers of China's rise? And what are the

implications of all of this for China policy-making in Europe, North America and East Asia?

These are big questions that require much more than one book by one individual scholar. However, Peter Nolan's great contribution with this book is that now at least we can ask these questions with much greater clarity and precision.

Frank N. PIEKE
Leiden University
f.n.pieke@hum.leidenuniv.nl

BOOK REVIEW

Susanna Soojung LIM. *China and Japan in the Russian Imagination, 1685-1922*. New York: Routledge, 2013. 240 pages. ISBN 0415629217 (Hardcover). 155 USD.

Historical studies inevitably follow political trends, even if historians do not acknowledge or even realize it. The increasing global shift to Asia, both economically and in geopolitical and military terms, has led to a clear intellectual shift. Asia has increasingly become a framework of discussion even in the context of the histories of non-Asian countries. Russia is an illustrative example. In the past, Russia's relationship with the West, both political and intellectual, served as the primary framework for discussion about the country. Recently, however, a new trend has emerged, which is reflected in an interest in Russia's relationship with Asia. Most of the works on Russian relations with Asia that were published before the end of the USSR deal with Russia's approach to the Muslim world, and in particular those parts of Asia that became a part of the Russian empire and later of the Soviet Union. Only quite recently has Russia's interaction with other parts of Asia started to transform this pattern of scholarly inquiry. There is growing interest in Russia's dealing with East Asia, reflecting the dawn of a "Pacific Century." The appearance of Soojung Lim's *China and Japan in the Russian Imagination, 1685-1922* is one of the signs of this change.

Soojung Lim's book examines Russians' perception of China and Japan from approximately the late 17th century until the very beginning of the 20th, with primary attention being paid to the 18th and 19th centuries. The reviewed book is different from other works on Russia's engagement with Asia, not only because of its focus on China and Japan. Recent works on Russia's relationship with Asia most notably deal with the development of Russia's educational institutions, or, to be precise, with the development of Russian area studies. They elucidate how the study of Asia, mostly of Muslim Asia, emerged and developed in imperial Russia. In contrast, the reviewed book does not spend much time on the development of the study of Japan and China in Russia, instead focusing on the images of China and Japan in Russian literature, art, and public discourse in general.

There is a great deal that is positive that can be said about this book. The author demonstrates clear erudition, and provides a wealth of information useful even for the informed professional reader. One problem with the book, at least from the perspective of this reviewer, is that the social and political context of the change of Russian images of China and Japan is not always sufficiently discussed. The comparative aspect of the study, the way the image of China and Japan interacted in the Russian mind with the image of the West, could have been elaborated on and made clearer. A major thesis or broader theoretical framework would have been helpful, preventing the narrative from being purely descriptive on this point. This is, of course, understandable as the researcher, no doubt, became overwhelmed

by the volume of data and the fascinating details of the flow of cultural images. Altogether, as it stands, this book is a solid piece of scholarship that provides not only a wealth of information but also important insights into the development of Russian and, to some degree, European culture. The fact that the study is organized along chronological lines is also helpful to the reader.

The author's major goal was to trace how the images of China and Japan influenced Russian culture and social thought, and, consequently, to emphasize the importance of both China and Japan in Russian discourse. However, one of the major conclusions of the work could, paradoxically enough, have been quite the opposite. Although China and Japan became known to Russia by the 17th century, or at least Russians' contact with these countries can be traced back to that time, interest in the real China and Japan was minimal. And if Russians addressed China or Japan, it was done in the context of their major preoccupation: themselves and their approach to the West. At least this was the case throughout the 18th and 19th centuries, the period focused on in this book. Russians approached China in the late 17th century assuming that it could be as easily conquered as the peoples of Siberia. As soon as they encountered strong resistance, they lost much interest in their neighbor. As a matter of fact, in the 18th century, Russian rulers had turned their major attention to the West, which they mimicked, France in particular.

It is true, as the author notes, that Catherine II loved to build in the Chinese—or, to be precise, pseudo-Chinese—style (54-55). Still, interest in China in Russia was merely a reflection of a similar interest in China in Western Europe, where China was portrayed as a country ruled by a wise philosopher king. In a way, interest in China was of the same nature as interest in Roman and Greek antiquity. It was a form of addressing the problems and expectations of European society rather than motivated by any interest in real Romans and ancient Greeks. The Russian elite followed the West, mostly the French; and this was the reason for their interest in China. Interest in China and Japan was therefore a peculiar form of Russian Westernism. It was interest in China as envisaged in Paris, not as it actually existed. The real China and Japan were either despised or ignored.

In the early 19th century China became a symbol of stagnation and backwardness. This image was employed by both the political left and right when they addressed their major interest—Russia and the West. Russian nationalists of the early 19th century saw Russia, not China, as the dominant power of the future, and they therefore paid comparatively little attention to China. Even in Grigorii Danilevsky's (1829-1890) 1868 novel, *Life a Hundred Years from Now, 1868*, mentioned in Lim's work, China emerged as a global power in the 20th century and conquered the West only because of Russia's consent. Indeed, China was able to achieve this only as an ally to a Russia that did not intervene during the Chinese grand campaign to take over Europe (106).

In such narratives, China and Russia, both fully autocratic powers, lived in a sort of benign geopolitical symbiosis. By the end of the 19th century, the prospects of China as a global power were bleaker and the very notion of China's role as such was implicitly discarded. In the view of Esper Ukhtomskii (1861-1921), a Russian nobleman who was an Asia specialist, art collector, and advisor to Nicholas II,

China could be easily absorbed by Russia due to the similarity of their cultural and political traditions (127).

Vladimir Solov'ev (1853-1900), the well-known Russian philosopher and poet, saw the "Orientals" as taking over Russia in the future. As Lim rightfully notes, Solov'ev, in this was inspired by Kaiser Wilhelm and the notion of the "Yellow Peril" (109-110). Still, one should remember that his famous poem *Pan-Mongolism* refers to the Mongols, who played no real geopolitical role in Solov'ev's time; and thus the "Mongolian" image, instead of that of the Chinese and Japanese, indicates that Solov'ev used this Asian imagery merely as a symbol of a divine scourge for Russia's moral degeneration. The real, as opposed to the imaginary Orient, was still peripheral in Russian intellectual discourse. Russia had little to do with the actual Asia, which was ignored or marginalized by Russians and seen as alien and exotic, and militarily weak. As a matter of fact, the Russian public regarded the Japanese as exotic creatures or, alternatively, as animals—monkeys, who could be easily crushed. After the Russian Revolution, interest in Asia increased, though it remained marginal in comparison to interest in Europe. Still, it was not interest in China or Japan but in the Huns and later the Mongols which dominated the Asian discourse in Russian thought. This was in spite of the fact that the Mongols played no role in global geopolitics in the beginning of the 20th century, whereas the Huns were only a memory from the distant past and had had relatively little to do with China or Japan. The interest in them was not so much a reflection of interest in Asia but in Russia itself, with the Huns, for example, serving as a symbol of the rising masses whose brutal destruction of the old oppressive order would bring the ultimate liberation of humanity. Thus, this book demonstrates not so much Russian interest in China and Japan from the 17th to the early 20th centuries, but rather Russians' interest in their own as reflected in the images of those two countries. A more genuine interest in China and Japan emerged only comparatively recently as the result of geopolitical conditions that transformed Asia in "the West" into a symbol of rising economic and military might.

Dmitry SHLAPENTOKH
Indiana University-South Bend
 dshlapen@iusb.edu