

# The Need for Education in Korean History as International History: Centered on the historical illustration of the mutual impacts and comparative aspects between Korea and Germany under the influence of the foreign policy of the USA from 1945 to 1990

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## 1. Introduction

My principal aim in this paper is to broach the need to understand education in Korean history as a form of international history. To raise this as an issue I will first describe the present situation of history education in Korea in relation to world history that will highlight the problematic separation between the two. After this I will throw light on Korean history in the guise of international history drawing on a number of relevant historical illustrations. Above all, I will describe the impact of the Korean War on Germany and Europe during the first half of the 1950s. In particular, attention will be given to West German *Ostpolitik* and its influence on Korean South-North relations under the U.S. detente policy during 1969-74. At the time, the burgeoning historical process of European integration and the unification of Germany motivated discussions on the topic of Korean South-North relations in the context of ideas about a possibly common, if albeit, distant East Asian future. These discussions found concrete expression in the policies of the Republic of Korea, and especially over a decade and a half later in the optimistic sunshine policy of the administration of President Kim Dae-Jung

Let me further specify my aims in this paper: I do not focus on describing the present situation of education in world history in Korea; rather my aim is to illustrate Korean history as mode of international history. In particular, my goal, to reiterate, is to emphasize the necessity of integrating Korean history and world history under the concept of Korean history

qua international history. A deeper analysis of the situation of education in world history in Korea will be treated in future independent research work

## **2. The Situation of Education in Korean History as International History in Korea**

At present Korean history and world history are taught separately in South Korea. As a result, Korean history as a form of international history does not figure on the school curriculum. This absence is indicated in the patent fact that there are no world history textbooks which treat Korean history sufficiently in global context. Korean history and world history are not seen as being mutually linked so school students are not able to grasp the position of Korean history against the panoramic vista of world history. Conversely, world history is not considered in relation to Korean history. Thus there is a patent need for reform of the school history curriculum in Korea that offers understanding of the interrelations between Korean history and world history.

Now for some important historical background: Education in world history began in Korea in 1955. The U.S. military government of occupation after World War II introduced world history into the school curriculum but it was taught separate from Korean history. Education in world history education was established as a non-compulsory subject, while Korean history was required. Then, from 1963 to 1973, world history and Korean history were integrated as “social education,” but from that date Korean history began to be taught in separation from world history.<sup>1</sup> As a result more emphasis was placed on Korean history, while the overall history portion of the school curriculum was weakened.<sup>2</sup> In fact, from 1981 to 1987 the world history component of school history was given even less attention. World history had become completely integrated into social studies so it was not taught by historians at all. During this period then the segregation of Korean history and world history was absolute. Between 1987-1992 this separation was ironical in the light of the fact that the Asian Games and the Olympic Games has both been held in Korea.<sup>3</sup> The Asian game was held in 1986. Since the early 1990s, what with the deepening internationalization of Korea, it might have been expected that education in world history would have been strengthened. However, it was even more neglected and weakened, whereas teaching about the world economy and politics were emphasized more in the context of government policy of internationalization (in Korean “*seghewa*”).

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1 구난희, “세계사 교육과정과 교과과정의 바람직한 편성”. *교육연구논총* (2002), pp. 37-45.

2 강택구, 세계사 교육의 개선을 위한 몇가지 제언: 중,고등학교 교육을 중심으로”, *용인대학교 논문집*, 14 집 (1977), pp. 12-24.

3 유용태, “교육과정속의 역사, 세계사”, *아시아사 역사교육*, 82 집 (2002), p. 26.

At last, and over more than a decade later, on December 26, 2006, the Ministry of Education of Korea proclaimed that school history would be separated from social studies and that Korean history and world history would be taught integrally. The ministry underlined that the history books would be edited in line with this policy. According to this proclamation, we should begin the new curriculum from the year 2010. This was really good news for the history teaching profession in Korean schools. However, in order for the potential of this innovatory policy to be realized, Korean history needs to be understood as a form of international history — and first and foremost in Korea itself! Against this specifically national background here, today, at this conference on world history, I want to underline the contribution that international archives can make to effective world **and international** history education.

Let me now turn to considering a selection of historical Illustrations of the need for education in Korean history as international history

### **3. Historical Illustrations of the Need for Education in Korean History as International History**

#### *3.1. Korea, the United States, and Germany at the Time of the Korean War*

The Korean War acted as a mirror which reflected the mutual impacts between South Korea and Germany on the one hand and East Asia and Europe on the other hand under the involvement of the United States. The invasion of North Korea into the South on June 25, 1950, was perceived as a strategy of the Soviet Union to attack West Germany and Western Europe. So, not surprisingly, the Korean War heightened the consciousness of anti-communism in West Germany, West Europe and the USA.<sup>4</sup> These developments influenced, for example, the nascent process of West European integration, in the form of the establishment of the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC) very positively, and accelerated the up and running debate on West German rearmament. The United States, which had taken a leading role in the Korean War, strongly insisted on the establishment of a West German army. The United States also wanted to mitigate restrictions on the productive capacity of heavy industry — including the important chemical industry — of West Germany in order to strengthen its defense potential.<sup>5</sup> Eventually post-war West Germany had its own army and enjoyed successful economic growth owing to rapid progress precisely in these

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4 Wilfried Loth, „Die Kinder des Koreakrieges“, in: Wilfried Loth (ed.), *Ost-West-Konflikt und deutsche Frage*, München 1989, pp. 89-120, esp. pp. 93-96.

5 *Ibid.*, pp. 115-120.

industries. From the long-term perspective, then, the Korean War contributed significantly to the Miracle on the Rhine River — the so called “*Wirtschaftswunder*.” In the same context the Korean War influenced positively the establishment of the social market economy system (“*Soziale Marktwirtschaft*”) in West Germany.<sup>6</sup> In fact the Korean War led to a worldwide increased demand for goods, and the resulting shortage helped overcome lingering resistance to the purchase of German products.

Under these developments the Europeans initiated the idea of the “European Defense Community (EDC)” and it catalyzed heated discussions. The countries of West European neighboring Germany — and especially France — were adamantly opposed to establishing a West German army and wanted instead to install a common European common army.

These historical occurrences in Western Europe compounded the Cold War international system and influenced again Korean South-North relations — as I will discuss in the next section of my paper. The reciprocal impact between Korea and Germany, and East Asia and Europe, were possible because of the Cold War constellation after World War II that included the divided Koreas and Germanys. Notably, South Korea (the Republic of Korea from 1948) became the frontier against communism in East Asia, while the eastern border of West Germany was the bolster against the Soviet Union in the middle of Europe.

In the historical scenario I have just sketched we have clear evidence of Korean history as international history. Now I want to be more specific about East Asia and Europe with special regard to Germany and Korea under the influence of U.S. Foreign Policy in the period of 1969-74 — precisely that of the chancellorship of Willy Brandt in West Germany and the presidency of Richard Nixon in the USA.

### *3.2. East Asia and Europe: Germany and Korea under the Influence of U.S. Foreign Policy (1969-74)*

#### 1) U.S. DETENTE POLICY TOWARD CHINA AND WEST GERMAN *OSTPOLITIK*

In March 1969 the border war between China and the Soviet Union broke out at the Ussuri River in the Northeast of China south of the Russian Far East and fighting continued throughout the year. For some time before Sino-Soviet border conflict the Soviet Union had been wary of possible hostilities from China. Military hostilities with China put the Soviet Union on edge and as a reflex be more cautiously flexible towards Western Europe. At that time the United States was mired in the Vietnam War, and to be free from this “headache” needed close cooperation with both China and the Soviet Union. The Nixon administration, inaugurated in January 1969, conceived the strategy of developing détente with China which

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<sup>6</sup> Werner Abelshauser, „Korea, die Ruhr und Erhards Marktwirtschaft: Die Energiekrise von 1950/51“, In: *Rheinische Vierteljahresblätter* 45 (1981), pp. 287-316, p. 302.

could “checkmate” the Soviet Union. On this bold idea the Soviet Union could be absorbed effectively into the US-American détente concept. These ideas, conceived by Kissinger, the security advisor to Nixon, were established as the core of the new foreign policy concept of the Nixon administration. Given the conflict with the Soviet Union and the depressed domestic situation caused by “Cultural Revolution,” from the standpoint of realpolitik China was willing to engage with the United States.<sup>7</sup>

But the tentative rapprochement between the United States and China was going to compromise politically the Soviet Union. So, not surprisingly in this situation, it was eager for Soviet Union to cultivate cooperative relations with western countries.<sup>8</sup> In this context the Soviet Union and other East European countries reinforced their suggestion to create an organization for collective security cooperation between the East and West European states. The Soviet Union turned out also to be very interested in the treaties and negotiations with West European countries for the purpose of keeping the status quo in Europe in peaceful ways. In particular, it sought for cooperation especially with the Federal Republic of Germany, namely West Germany. At this moment the new government in West Germany, led by Willy Brandt, which came into office in September 1969, was about to launch its *Ostpolitik* in earnest. *Ostpolitik* referred to the reconciliation policy of West Germany with East Germany and other East European countries through exchanges and cooperation during Brandt period as chancellor (1969-74). But to realize this new diplomatic orientation the West German government needed to gain the cooperation of the Soviet Union. Especially, its political influence was called upon to convince the German Democratic Republic to consent the terms of *Ostpolitik*. Thus the international constellation was very friendly to *Ostpolitik* in the starting point. Willy Brandt and his aids could note that the Soviet Union reacted very flexibly and positively towards their new diplomatic initiative. In accordance with their expectations, the Soviet Union influenced East Germany to engage in fruitful negotiations for the purpose of the establishment of a Basic Treaty between the two German states. This maneuvering of the Soviet Union played an important role also in the concluding of the various treaties between West Germany and East European Countries, including East Germany, with whom contacts were intensified.

Historical occurrences in East Asia then influenced historical developments in Europe including, and importantly, West German *Ostpolitik*.

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7 Chen Jian, The Path toward Sino-american Rapprochement, 1969-1972, in: David C. Geyer and Bernd Schaefer (ed.), *American Détente and German Ostpolitik, 1969-1972*, German Historical Institute 2004, p. 26.

8 Mary E. Sarotte, “Take No Risks (Chinese)”: The Basic Treaty in the Context of International Relations, in: David C. Geyer and Bernd Schaefer (ed.), *American Détente and German Ostpolitik, 1969-1972*, German Historical Institute 2004, p. 109-117.

## 2) WEST GERMAN *OSTPOLITIK* AND KOREAN NORTH-SOUTH RELATIONS

When the United States and China began their rapprochement, they realized the necessity to stabilize the Korean Peninsula. Without the de-escalation of conflict and the consolidation of peace between the divided Koreas in the inexorable Cold War context, their strategy for rapprochement could not be fruitful. To them the progress in inter-German relations and the new *Ostpolitik* were very impressive. The United States had been keenly observing the development of *Ostpolitik* in Germany with its special interest for the Korean case. They came to the conclusion that the model of constructive inter-German relations in the form of *Ostpolitik* should be introduced on the divided Korean peninsula. For example, at the end of 1960s into the early 1970s the United States strongly recommended the government of the Republic of Korea to start peaceful exchanges with the North given the precedent of the burgeoning moderate and positive relations between West and East Germany.

For instance, in February 1970, William J. Porter, the United States ambassador to the Republic of Korea, asked the government to consider the matter of intra-Korean talks seriously, according to the reports given by him to the U.S. Senate Committee on Foreign Relations.<sup>9</sup> In his report Porter made the point clear that he had emphasized to the South Korean government that talks would be better than maintaining stubborn hostility towards the development of working intra-Korean political relations.

Here is another piece of evidence in the same vein. According to an airgraph which Porter sent to the State Department on June 11, 1970, it appeared clear that the United States tried to persuade the Korean government of the usefulness of dialogue with the North: "Reunification through direct negotiation."<sup>10</sup> This approach to the question has long been favored by the North Koreans and to some extent is implicit in our efforts to encourage the South Koreans to consider proposals for family visits, exchange of mail, etc. Such proposals, if ever pursued, would inevitably mean direct negotiations between the two parts of the country which, under favorable circumstances, could lead to a reduction in tensions, further exchanges, and possibly eventual direct negotiations for reunification.

The United States intended to apply the German model even to Vietnam. For example, *The Christian Science Monitor* of July 5, 1972: "... but if divided Koreans and Germans now feel the international situation permits them to reassert their common nationalism, perhaps they can set an example for the most tortured of all divided nations. Its name is Vietnam."<sup>11</sup>

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9 U.S. Congress, Hearings before the Subcommittee on United States Security Agreements and Commitments Abroad of the Committee on Foreign Relations. Senate, 91st Congress 2nd Session, part 6 (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1970), 1680-1681

10 NARA, Pol 32-4 KOR. S., Box 2423. Airgram from the American Embassy, Seoul to the Department of State, Washington D.C., June 11, 1970

11 Compare *The Baltimore Sun*, July 6, 1972.

This kind of expression of informed public opinion revealed the intention of the United States to try to solve the question of the war in Vietnam while clearly maintaining the status quo. We see here the impact of the U.S.-German relations on U.S.-Korean relations. The Republic of Korea established the National Unification Board in 1969, which made contact with ministries of the Federal Republic of Germany for intra-German relations and foreign affairs. The representatives of this board were invited frequently to Bonn to deepen mutual understanding on the question of national division and the ways to overcome it. The West German specialists visited Seoul also for the similar purposes. Meanwhile, the South and North Korea released a Joint Communique on the July 4, 1972, that was surprising in a number of ways. This Joint Statement implied above all the renunciation of the use of the force for the purpose of the unification and any other. It also advocated the reunion of dispersed families through the activities of the two Red Cross organizations.<sup>12</sup> This Communique promised to establish a hot-line (direct telephone connection) between the two heads of government, and to set up a coordinating committee for the purpose of discussing peaceful ways of unification.

The limited developments were the concrete result of the U.S.-China rapprochement in relation to dialogue between the two Koreas on the basis of the German Model. President Park Chung-hee proclaimed a new concept of South-North relations on June 23, 1973, to North Korea and all the nations of the world.<sup>13</sup> This 6.23 declaration represented also the influence of West German *Ostpolitik* on Korean South-North relations at the time because it clearly showed that the South Korean government had given up the Hallstein Doctrine. The latter was the foreign policy of West Germany that refused diplomatic relations with any country that recognized the independent national sovereignty of East Germany. A version of this policy had been adopted by government of the Republic of Korea. It also adopted from Germany the idea of South Korea and North Korea entering the U.N. separately. President Park underlined the will of his regime to inaugurate official relations with the countries which endorsed the separate existence of North Korea, namely South Korea. Newspapers like *The Los Angeles Times* commented that this declaration was the official beginning of the adoption of the West German way.<sup>14</sup> Of course, President Park's regime stressed that entrance to the U.N. should not in any way imply acknowledgement of North Korea as a sovereign independent state and it should also not hamper work towards reunification.

At any rate, we see here also clear evidence of Korean history as international history.

### 3.3. *European Integration, German Unification, and the Tasks of Korean Unification*

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12 Diplomatic Archives of the MOFAT, Classification Number 726.21, microfilm number D-0012.

13 The Special Statement Regarding Foreign Policy and Unification by His Excellency Park Chung Hee, President of the Republic of Korea, dated 23rd June, 1973, PAAA, Bestand B 37, Bd. 211.

The European dimension of the “German Question” and *Ostpolitik* stimulated debates on the East Asian dimension of the “Korean Question” and on South Korean policy towards the North. In the process Koreans began to try to understand the relations between and the comparative aspects of the German *Ostpolitik* in the European context and Korean North Policy in the East Asian context. German unification duly contextualized with regard to European integration has for some time been influencing the ideas and political strategies for the unification of Korea. The process of European Integration and the unification of Germany motivated Koreans to have critical views on the nationalistic understanding of history. Namely, Koreans began to develop supranational ways of understanding the history under the influence of the European and German experiences. This fact impacted to the activating of the discourses of East Asian history over the nationalistic Korean history.

#### **4. Conclusion**

This paper has described illustrations of cases of the reciprocal impacts between Korean history and German history in the context of world history. These examples should have indicated sufficiently the need to integrate Korean history and world history under the concept of Korean history as international history. This kind of national history and world history would enhance our consciousness on world community. This kind of consciousness would help us in overcoming the exclusive nationalism towards the world citizen society of peace, democracy and common prosperity. In this sense, it is very meaningful, to discuss transnational history, supranational history and global history. In Korea Korean history is called “national history” which contains the flavor of patriotism and nationalism. The history teaching profession in Korea faces the challenge of corporately realizing the proclamation of the Ministry of Education of December 26, 2006, that was briefly discussed at the outset of this paper.

If I have one final general message to communicate it is this: The illustrations of the documents of the various historical archives for the world and international history education class are strongly recommended.

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14 *The Los Angeles Times*, June 24-26, 1973.