

Further, the book seems to claim more than it can deliver with its limited set of cases, treating only US allies Japan and South Korea and overlooking the actual diversity of international relations in the region. North Korea, for example, refuses an East Asian international order controlled by the US. China intends to push the US out of East Asia, far from accepting the American-centered hierarchical order. In reality, more nations in East Asia reject this hierarchical order than accept it. Would it not be more accurate, then, to say that international relations in East Asia are characterized by balance of power instead of hierarchy?

On the empirical side, the book somewhat recklessly treats Japan and South Korea as equivalent in terms of their external behavior and their status in the East Asian international system. As the author herself writes in chapters 2 and 3, Japanese and Korean responses to the ‘Western shock’ in the 19th century were completely different. Japan rushed to join the West by rapidly modernizing and Westernizing. In contrast, Korea, linked closely to China by geography and history, continued to see China as the center of civilization and derided Japan for its Western-oriented external relations. When Japan lamented the stagnation of Asia and resolved to turn away from it and follow Western models, Korea took the exact opposite approach. Compared to Korea’s tributary state relationship with China, Japan’s ties with China were tenuous. China viewed Japan as primitive, and Japan was part of the Sinocentric system for only a short period of time. Moreover, the influence of Confucianism differed greatly in Japan and Korea. The Confucian doctrine of government that defined the hierarchical relationship between rulers and subjects was not nearly as influential in Japan as in Korea. It seems more appropriate, therefore, to treat Japan and Korea as contrasting cases rather than similar ones.

Inspired by Benedict Anderson’s *Imagined Communities*, Park uses the phrase ‘imagined hierarchy’. Following Anderson, Park sees hierarchy as the product of institutionalized practices that reproduce identities. Park’s ‘imagined hierarchy’, however, does not provide a valid framework to help us grasp the essence of international relations in East Asia, in the way that Anderson’s ‘nation’ is part of reality and generally recognized as such. Behind the superficial power asymmetries of international relations is a balancing mechanism at work in East Asia. Hierarchy exists neither as a shared recognition nor as institutionalized customs. International relations take place, as they always have, in an anarchic world. The universal logic at the root of international order since the Treaty of Westphalia still holds true in East Asia.

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The History Problem: The Politics of War Commemoration in East Asia, by Hiro Saito. Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 2016, 325 pp., \$62.00 (ISBN: 978-0-824-85674-8)

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Hiro Saito’s book *The History Problem: The Politics of War Commemoration in East Asia* has two overarching aims: First, to understand how issues of history became so contentious in Japan’s relations with neighbouring states, primarily China and South Korea. Second, to offer suggestions for how this problem might be solved. The book takes the history problem to consist of a number of

issues related to commemoration of the Asia–Pacific War. These issues include portrayals of the war in Japanese history textbooks, Japanese prime ministerial visits to the Yasukuni Shrine, and apologies and compensation to victims of Japanese aggression.

The book contends that commentary on the history problem has been dominated by an orthodoxy that has been excessively concerned with the Japanese side of the problem. This orthodoxy has highlighted Japanese nationalist commemoration and lack of contrition as the main reason for the persistence of the history problem. Saito, by contrast, argues that even though those factors certainly matter, such a one-sided approach is insufficient for fully grasping the problem. Instead, he suggests that the history problem is fundamentally relational and that it is therefore necessary to focus not only on Japanese, but also on Chinese and South Korean commemoration and on the interactions between them.

Theoretically, the book suggests that history-related disputes can be understood as entailing interaction between nationalist and cosmopolitan commemorative logics. The nationalist logic, which historically has been dominant, tells stories about a national community with the intent of constructing a *national* collective memory. In narrating the past, it seeks to construct a positive national identity for those seen as belonging to the collective, while it more or less disregards the views and experiences of foreign others who do not belong to the national collective. It follows that if two or more national collectives commemorate the same events or episodes in incompatible ways, the result is likely to be international distrust and deteriorating bilateral relations.

Even though nationalism has long dominated, argues Saito, it is not the only logic in play within the context of the East Asian history problem. The other logic, cosmopolitanism, entails an openness to foreign others; instead of disregarding their experiences, it includes them. In addition, cosmopolitanism engages in dialogue with those foreign others and allows them to contribute to commemorative activities and the construction of accounts about the past. The book suggests that the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization's (UNESCO) World Heritage program exemplifies cosmopolitan commemoration as it aims to preserve various sites all over the world as heritage shared by all of humanity. Cosmopolitanism, in other words, 'takes humanity, rather than nationality, as a primary frame of reference' (7).

As the book traces the history problem during the postwar period, it argues that for the first few decades after the end of the war, Japanese commemoration was dominated by the nationalist logic. In the 1990s, however, cosmopolitanism gained ground but did not replace nationalism. Instead, Japanese commemoration is now characterised by both cosmopolitanism and nationalism, and both make demands on official commemoration. Sometimes, Saito argues, cosmopolitan commemoration has aggravated the history problem because its proponents—for example, NGOs and leftist politicians—have based their position on the outcome of the Tokyo Trial when putting pressure on the Japanese government. In this view, the Tokyo Trial promoted a problematic account of the war whereby only Japan did wrong during the war, and thus only Japan bore responsibility. In addition, it failed to recognise that the Japanese were victims of war crimes perpetrated by the Allies, and it only held a few Japanese leaders accountable while effectively absolving the majority of Japanese.

This problematic view, Saito argues, bred resentment among the Japanese people and prevented them from truly reflecting on their own war responsibility. It also underpins nationalist commemorations in China and South Korea, even though there have been some cosmopolitan initiatives. These cosmopolitan efforts include bilateral and trilateral exchanges and dialogues among historians, along with joint research that has resulted in the publication of textbooks and other publications. Such initiatives, Saito argues, can contribute to solving the history problem because they allow each side to point out problematic aspects of the other's nationalist commemoration. It also encourages reflection that can make commemoration more cosmopolitan in all three countries. It is thus necessary, but not

sufficient, for Japan to recognise the suffering of those it victimised. It is also essential for the other parties to commemorate the past in more nuanced ways and acknowledge that the Japanese also suffered and were victimised.

The book is very well written and makes important contributions. To begin with, by understanding the history problem through the theoretical lens of nationalist and cosmopolitan commemoration, it offers a new approach to the issue. Most importantly, the book not only seeks to *understand* the history problem but also—through its focus on cosmopolitanism and the role of historians—*discusses possible solutions* to an extent rarely seen in research on this issue. While many publications have presented policy advice or suggestions on how the history problem might be solved, few have done so in this much detail. This is a laudable effort that future research should engage with.

Like all important research publications, the book is likely to contribute by spurring further academic debate. There are, however, a couple of issues that I would like to discuss. To begin with, this reviewer largely agrees with Saito that much of the commentary on the history problem has been preoccupied with Japanese commemoration, while little attention has been paid to that of China and South Korea. Given this observation, however, I would have expected the book to adopt a more directly comparative approach that analyses Chinese and/or South Korean commemoration to the same extent as Japanese commemoration. Instead, the book comprehensively examines Japanese commemoration and how Chinese and South Korean actors have sought to influence it, while Chinese and South Korean commemoration receives relatively limited attention by comparison.

One problem with this stronger focus on Japan is that the solution proposed in the book may be more appealing to Japanese people than to Chinese and South Koreans. It is easy to see how the proposed solution—to reassess the Tokyo Trial's view of the war where Japan is the sole perpetrator and Japanese victimhood is not recognised—would be welcomed by many Japanese. However, it is less obvious why Chinese and South Koreans would support such a solution. It might, of course, provide benefits in the form of less bilateral friction with Japan, but perhaps for those countries some things are more important than avoiding such friction. Specifically, in the current situation, the history problem allows Chinese and South Koreans to construct positive identities for themselves through the juxtaposition of a righteous, heroic self against a wicked, aggressive Japanese other (cf. [Gustafsson 2014; 2016](#)). Reassessing the Tokyo Trial might threaten that identity. Had the analysis focused on China and/or South Korea to the same extent as Japan, perhaps the proposed solution would have been different. Moreover, this point highlights the role of identity in the history problem.

References to 'identity' appear throughout the book, but because it does not unpack the concept of identity, the term cosmopolitanism remains somewhat underspecified. It is therefore not completely clear how exactly cosmopolitanism functions and how it is related to national identity. In the book's theoretical discussion of cosmopolitan commemoration, it seems to hint at two slightly different definitions of cosmopolitanism. First, it is stated that through 'cosmopolitanism, people can doubly include foreign others in commemoration: they remember what happened to foreign others as members of humanity, but they also invite those others to contribute to shaping the content of commemoration' (7). Second, cosmopolitanism 'takes humanity, rather than nationality, as a primary frame of reference' (7).

These excerpts illustrate what appears to be a tension in the book's understanding of cosmopolitanism. On the one hand, there is what might be labelled a 'thin' cosmopolitan logic that acknowledges the other's experiences and incorporates them into one's own narrative about past episodes. This logic recognises the other as part of humanity, but self and other nonetheless remain more or less separate, and national identity is largely taken for granted instead of problematised. On the other hand, the theoretical discussion also hints at the existence of a 'thick' cosmopolitanism. This thick cosmopolitanism seems to involve transcending the self/other binary to a much greater extent so

that instead of identifying with and stressing the national identity category, one identifies with and emphasises humanity much more. For this kind of cosmopolitanism, humanity is clearly the ‘primary frame of reference’ (7). Most of the empirical analysis in the book seems to deal with the thin rather than the thick type of cosmopolitanism.

Such thin cosmopolitanism could perhaps be a way of managing the history problem and improving bilateral relations to a degree. However, because it appears to involve acknowledging the suffering and experiences of the other *as other*, it might actually reinforce rather than problematise national identity. As long as commemoration supports and reinforces, rather than challenges, the logic of national identity, it seems unlikely to move beyond the mindset of prioritising one’s own experiences over those of the other. One might, of course, argue that because the world is currently divided into nation states, it is necessary to come up with solutions within this existing framework. It still seems, however, that for cosmopolitanism to offer a solution it needs to weaken, rather than support, the ideology of national identity and the nation state that nationalism is so fundamentally dependent on.

The suggestion that UNESCO’s World Heritage program exemplifies cosmopolitanism because it aims to ‘preserve natural and cultural sites around the world as shared heritage for humanity as a whole’ is similarly problematic. Rather than constructing a cosmopolitan collective memory for humanity, there are several examples of states (particularly in East Asia) competing to have their national experiences and narratives recognised by UNESCO in order to increase the legitimacy of their historical accounts. For this reason, states have strongly criticised and felt threatened by other states’ attempts to have their collective memory recognised by UNESCO. For example, China was against the inclusion of the Hiroshima Atomic Bomb memorial site, and Japan has objected to Chinese proposals to include war-related sites and documents (Gustafsson 2014; Nakano 2018). It seems to this reviewer that for commemoration to be truly cosmopolitan it would need to move beyond emphasising national experiences as such and instead take humanity as the ‘primary frame of reference’. In practice, this would involve constructing narratives about the past that both problematise the national identity category and emphasise other categories, including humanity.

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This book arrives at an interesting time, when it seems that democracy in Japan is experiencing great challenges under Prime Minister Abe Shinzō. Japan’s placement in the Press Freedom Index fell from