

Regarding Tadashi Hama's review of this book --- by Seishiro Sugihara

It is my great pleasure to be presented with Mr. Tadashi Hama's review of *Bridging the Atomic Divide: Debating Japan-US Attitudes on Hiroshima and Nagasaki*, my collaboration with Harry Wray published in 2019 in the United States by Lexington Books. This is the English edition of a book we released in 2015 in Japan through Nisshin Hodo, entitled *Nihonjin no genbaku toka ron wa konomama de yoi no ka: genbaku toka wo meguru Nichi-Bei no hajimete no taiwa* [Is it acceptable for the Japanese to have this understanding of the dropping of the atomic bomb: First dialogue between Japan and the United States over the atomic bombing]), and I would like to extend my sincere thanks to Mr. Hama.

After reading this review, I would like to raise the following three issues.

1) Hama's review is a harsh rebuke of the United States, but it is true that prior to the Second World War white nations had clear racial biases and racial discrimination was unmistakable around the world. When discussing this matter in the present day, one can either point out the facts in a dispassionate manner, or point them out while still harboring all the old animosities. In historical discourse, a tendency towards the former grows with the passage of time, nevertheless this is not to say that adopting the latter approach is in itself incorrect.

In any case, as discussed by John Dower whose work I consider below, the war between Japan and the United States clearly had elements of a race war.

However it must also be pointed out that the dropping of the atomic bombs, while connected with this race war, was also inextricably linked to the war leadership of US President Franklin Roosevelt. The war between Japan and the United States was one which Roosevelt manipulated Japan into launching, and which the United States wanted but Japan did not. Roosevelt expanded this war until it could only be stopped by the dropping of the atomic bombs.

It was my intention in this book to fully elucidate this point for Wray's benefit, since his appreciation of the issue was not entirely satisfactory.

Just how malign or misguided was Roosevelt's expansionary war leadership?

Even on the European front, the Soviet Union, together with Germany under the leadership of Adolf Hitler, launched an invasion of Poland; in that sense it was one of the nations which clearly started this war of aggression and brought about the Second World War. So even while supporting the Soviet Union in its war against Germany, a push had to be made to end the war when German troops were driven out of Soviet territory. Regarding the war against Japan, when the fall of Saipan from Japan's perspective occurred in July 1944, Japan had lost the means to resist and the outcome of the war between Japan and the United States had been virtually decided, so the war should have been brought to an end at this moment. As pointed out in this book, for the Japanese side 80 percent of the casualties of the war between Japan and the United States occurred in the final year of this war. In fact, the same could be said about casualties among American troops.

Roosevelt's flawed war leadership was the reason why the United States, after ending its war with Japan, went on to sacrifice approximately 40,000 troops in the Korean War and about 50,000 in the Vietnam War.

It is regrettable that Wray, along with Americans in general, lack an awareness of Roosevelt's failings. This is why I have squarely confronted the issue here. I have explained at length in this book that, regarding the dropping of the atomic bomb, the leader who must shoulder the greater responsibility is not President Truman but President Roosevelt.

On the other hand, Wray contends that the Occupation of Japan under the US military was the most benevolent and democratic occupation in world history, and it must be said that this is entirely correct in light of the hostility Americans harbored towards Japan and the Japanese people till that time, and when compared to what might have happened under a Soviet military occupation. However, with regards to the issue Wray raised regarding democratization, Japan conceivably had already realized its own democracy during the prewar period of constitutional monarchy, as discussed in the book by Kanji Katsuoka mentioned below, and one could claim that, at the very least, Japan had already laid the groundwork for the acceptance of an American-style democracy; Wray does not necessarily demonstrate an unequivocal understanding that this may have made it easier for the Occupation's democratization policies to succeed, so it is worth making that point again here. Wray may have overlooked Article 10 of the Potsdam Declaration, whose acceptance by Japan brought the war to an end, which set forth that, "The Japanese Government shall remove all obstacles to the revival and strengthening of democratic tendencies among the Japanese people." This sentence highlights what I am referring to here.

Nevertheless, to recall the title of the Japanese edition of this book, Wray certainly makes the case when posing the question: "Is it acceptable for the Japanese to have this understanding of the dropping of the atomic bomb?" As a Japanese myself, I feel he has given me ample cause for reflection. As Wray argues, although the principal aim for dropping the atomic bombs was clearly to bring a swift end to the war, Japanese school textbooks and the Hiroshima Peace Museum propose instead that they were deployed, even though their use was already unnecessary, to ensure American supremacy in postwar international relations. An American would find this hard to swallow, and as a Japanese I feel I can't help but agree.

In this sense, it can be argued that this book is the first robust debate on the issue of the dropping of the atomic bomb by someone from the side which deployed the bombs, and someone from the side on which they were used. As Professor Shigeki Kaizuka (Musashino University) observed in his review on the back cover of the English edition, it certainly succeeds in its ambition to be the first dialogue between an American and a Japanese on this subject:

"The act of interpretation is an integral part of human life, and therefore varies depending on an individual's perspective. Although there can be only one set of historical facts, the interpretation of those facts may differ according to point of view. It is only natural then that the understanding of the dropping of the atomic bombs will also vary between the side which used them and the side on which they were used. Even so, a flawed understanding of historical fact will result in faulty interpretations, and a stubborn insistence on those unsound interpretations can lead to the corruption of the national moral code. This book presents the first dialogue between two scholars, one Japanese and one American, which tries

to put an end to these flawed interpretations while acknowledging real differences in position. It represents a genuine reconciliation between Japan and the United States over the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki.”

2) While not entirely related to the arguments presented in Hama’s review, the publication of the Japanese edition in 2015 predated that of the English version (2019), and this review was accepted on that basis. I would like to point out though the changes that were made to the contents of the book for the English edition.

The English edition includes the following three appendices:

Appendix A: Supplemental Commentary—Diplomacy at Start and End of Japan-US War and Subsequent Problems;

Appendix B: Regarding Wray’s Examination of the Pearl Harbor Issue; and

Appendix C: The Historical Significance of President Obama’s Visit to Hiroshima

Of these three, Appendix A is identical to the “Supplemental Commentary” in the Japanese version, so there is no difference here between the two editions. However, Appendices B and C only appear in the English edition, and are absent from the Japanese edition.

I would like to describe here my intentions for compiling Appendix B. Because the war between Japan and the United States came to an end with the dropping of the atomic bomb, the use of those bombs was a major issue, but it was inevitable that my attention would turn to how this war was started and how it was concluded. While Wray and I never communicated with each other directly on the matter, curiously he had done some research on the issue of the attack on Pearl Harbor by the Japanese Navy. I too had written many pieces on the Pearl Harbor attack, but Wray had also published a study about it. Since the study had been released quite some time ago it did not fully reflect subsequent advances in research into the Pearl Harbor issue; nevertheless, for the purposes of discussing the question of Pearl Harbor as it concerned the dropping of the atomic bomb, when releasing this collaborative effort in an English edition I decided to feature Wray’s theories on the Pearl Harbor issue, and presented my commentary on them.

Appendix C was developed in the following manner. The original Japanese edition of this book, which preceded the English version, was released on December 8, 2015, (the anniversary of the Pearl Harbor attack, Japan time); but about six months later, US President Barack Obama became the first incumbent president to visit Hiroshima, the place of the atomic bombing, laid a wreath at the cenotaph commemorating the victims of the bombing, and paid his respects to the souls of the victims. I personally felt that, coming seventy-one years after the atomic bombing occurred, this event should be carved into the annals of history, so I did my best to record my thoughts on the historical significance of the visit. Consequently, I felt it was essential to include this essay in the English version of this collaborative work which critiques Japanese atomic bomb theories, and it is incorporated here as Appendix C.

In addition, the Japanese version of Appendix B will appear in the March 2019 edition of the journal *Sengo kyoikushi kenkyu* [Research Bulletin of Educational History of

Postwar Japan] published by Meisei University Research Center for Japan's Postwar Education History. Both the Japanese and English versions of Appendix C may be found on the Society for the Dissemination of Historical Fact website.

3) It is my great privilege to be asked to introduce Tadashi Hama's review for the Society for Dissemination of Historical Fact on my collaborative work with Harry Wray, entitled *Bridging the Atomic Divide: Debating Japan-US Attitudes on Hiroshima and Nagasaki*, formally published in 2019 by Lexington Books.

Wray, an American from the side which dropped the atomic bomb, and myself, a Japanese from the side upon which the bomb was dropped, discuss the atomic bombings critically in this book, and I would like to take the opportunity afforded here by SDH's introduction to add a few words for the benefit of those reading the English edition.

I mentioned the distinguished historian John Dower briefly in the "Afterword to the English Edition" towards the end of the book. He wrote how, at the first meeting between Emperor Hirohito and General Douglas MacArthur on September 27, 1945, the emperor came to MacArthur to plead for his life.

There could be no greater misunderstanding of the emperor or the emperor system. Without a doubt, Hirohito was committed to preserving the emperor system at the time of surrender. However, in no way could this be seen as pleading for his own life. The emperor's existence was dedicated to praying for the happiness of the people, and the emperor system was predicated on that.

In the Afterword to the English edition, I asserted the following:

"Emperor Hirohito shouldered the glorious legacy of the Taisho and Meiji eras, and acted faithfully in accordance with the Constitution, by fulfilling his role as monarch in this constitutional monarchy. In my commentary for chapter 8, I discuss how afraid Hirohito was that the emperor system might collapse as the war came to an end. He was the 124th emperor since Emperor Jinmu, and could not let the emperor system fall on his watch. Nevertheless, when the Soviet Union began its invasion and it became apparent that the Occupation policy of the US occupation army was to abolish the emperor system, what was the mission of the last remaining emperor? As touched upon in my commentary for chapter 4, it would probably have been to ensure the survival of as many Japanese as possible. This devotion to the people had been the fundamental mission of successive emperors throughout history, and this was why the people had faith in the emperor."
[p. 298.]

I would like to add to this excerpt the following question: if in the process of surrendering the emperor system was actually to be dismantled, what would probably have been his final inescapable duty as emperor? This would undoubtedly have been to save the lives of as many Japanese as possible. It would have meant saving the lives of all the people of Japan without exception, even those in the Japanese Communist Party who at the time called for the overthrowing of the emperor system. This was the essential substance of the emperor and emperor system that evolved over the course of Japanese history.

These are the thoughts I wanted to raise for those reading the English edition, as SDH announces the publication of this book. I would also recommend *Tenno to kokumin no kizuna: senryoka no kunan wo koete* [The bond between the emperor and the people: overcoming the hardships of the Occupation] (Tokyo: Meiseisha, 2019) by Mr. Kanji Katsuoka, which examines how the emperor system with regards to Emperor Hirohito is viewed in the English-speaking world.