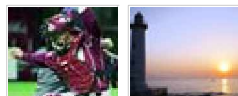


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## Shedding imposed war guilt

By GREGORY CLARK

Tokyo is right to blame the Chinese authorities for failing to prevent damage to Japanese diplomatic and other properties during recent anti-Japanese demonstrations. But the Chinese authorities probably had their reasons. Demonstrations in China can easily turn into ugly antigovernment riots when confronted by state power.

The Tiananmen "massacre" was a good example. The alleged killings of thousands of prodemocracy students in Beijing's Tiananmen Square on June 4, 1989, in fact, as declassified U.S. Embassy documents show, comprised the heavy casualties caused on June 3 when angry rioters, including students, clashed with troops sent to remove the Tiananmen students. One of the Western punishments imposed on Beijing for this nonmassacre of students was a ban on the sale of riot-control equipment.

Ironically, one reason why the Chinese police may have failed to crack down on the anti-Japan rioters could have been the lack of such equipment.

That said, Tokyo is not without fault either. It seems quite insensitive to the damage caused by its anti-China moves and slights. These include everything from very one-sided views of three territorial disputes and tacit promises to cooperate with the United States in military action against China over Taiwan, to homage at Yasukuni Shrine and refusals to admit to the sickening catalog of Japanese atrocities against China before 1945. South Korea is beginning to suffer the same treatment, and is reacting with even greater official vigor.

Claims that Japan has apologized for past aggressions are meaningless. If Japan was really repentant, it would have done something to punish or at least ostracize those responsible for the worst atrocities -- the notorious Unit 731, for example, with its germ warfare and vivisection experiments on live Chinese prisoners. Then we would not have to tolerate the obstinate efforts to deny Japan's wartime military abuse of abducted sex slave "comfort women."

The apology claims are even more meaningless given Japan's tatemae and honne propensity to say one thing and mean something quite different. A good recent example of this is the way Tokyo today blandly insists that the junior high-school textbook revisions that have

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angered South Korea and China so much were made by publishers, when it is obvious to everyone that they were imposed by the education ministry, often against the publishers' will.

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Why is Tokyo so obstinate and unfeeling, to the point of being willing even to push South Korea into a growing alliance with China, and to leave itself isolated in Northeast Asia? Similar clumsiness in the territorial dispute with Russia leaves it even more isolated (see The Japan Times article, March 24, "Northern Territories dispute highlights flawed diplomacy" for details). Even allowing for the emotionalism and ad hoc manner in which Japan conducts much of its diplomacy, it is hard to believe that Tokyo wants deliberately to antagonize its neighbors. Some other factor must be involved, and I suggest that deep down it goes back to Japan's largely unstated view of itself as a victim of obstinacy and insensitivity from others.

In the catalog of Western postwar myths and mistakes toward Asia -- that China attacked India in 1962, that the Vietnam War was sponsored by Beijing, that there was a Tiananmen "massacre" -- high on the list has to be the naive view that the West had no responsibility for Japan's 1930-40s' push into Asia and its 1941 Pearl Harbor attack.

As many Japanese see it, both were the inevitable result of Western pressures. For centuries the Western powers had been pushing their colonial expansions closer to Japan. But the same powers objected when Japan set out to gain its own colonies nearby, in Taiwan, Korea and Manchuria. Japan's late 1930s' push into China is condemned outright in the West. But many conservative Japanese see it as provoked by Western inspired anti-Japan boycotts and incidents in China going back to the early 1930s.

Racist anti-Japanese policies in the U.S. and Australia during the 1930s rankled deeply. Then came the U.S.-imposed 1941 embargo on exports of needed fuel and raw materials to Japan -- a declaration of economic war if ever there was one. The final insults were the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki followed by the flawed Tokyo War Crimes Tribunal passing arbitrary judgments on alleged Japanese war criminals.

Nor is there much remorse over Japan's wartime atrocities. Rationalizations are many -- that they were deliberately exaggerated by anti-Japan elements in Asia, that the Chinese killed each other even more barbarously, that the West committed similar atrocities or, to paraphrase the memorable words about Iraq by U.S. Defense Secretary, Donald Rumsfeld: "Stuff happens."

Resentment over these and other details has been bubbling along for decades in the ultra-rightwing juku (indoctrination schools), conservative lecture halls and the pages of the now powerful rightwing media. It underlies the recent strong rightwing shifts in Japanese attitudes. Tokyo's policymakers seem to feel deeply the need for Japan to shake off the burden of unfairly imposed war guilt and to reassert itself, even if it is misunderstood by others.

One who has said so publicly is leading Liberal Democratic Party

conservative and former MITI (industry and trade) minister Takeo Hiranuma. He calls for Japan to renounce Article 11 of its San Francisco peace treaty with the allied powers, under which Japan promised to accept the war-crimes verdicts. He sees this as an answer to the Yasukuni problem and a key to Japan regaining self-pride.

But there is one puzzle in all this: Why don't Japan's conservatives and rightwingers take out their postwar resentments more on the West, the U.S. especially, rather than on Asian neighbors? Some do, such as Tokyo Gov. Shintaro Ishihara; they are as much anti-America as they are anti-China. The ultraright is violently anti-American.

But most on the right wing also see U.S. help as crucial to the ultimate goal of confronting China once again, beginning with Taiwan. As some point out, failure to get that help before 1941 led to Pearl Harbor and Japan's ultimate wartime defeat.

Critics like to compare Tokyo's attitudes unfavorably with Germany's sincere post-1945 efforts to atone for war guilt. But the analogy is flawed. It should be with Germany after World War I, not Germany after World War II.

Exaggerated efforts by the Allied Powers to impose war guilt and punishments on post-1918 Germany had one ugly result. His name was Adolf Hitler.

Gregory Clark is a former Australian diplomat and vice president of Akita International University. A Japanese translation of this article will appear at: [www.gregoryclark.net](http://www.gregoryclark.net).

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