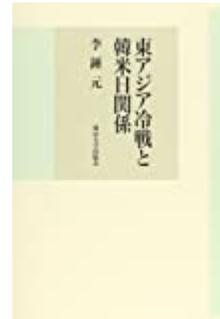




**Jong Won Lee.** *Higashi Ajia reisen to kan-bei-nichi kankei* (<i>U.S.-Korean Relations and Japan in East Asia's Cold War</i>). Tokyo: Tokyo Daigaku Shuppankai, 1996. v + 301 pp. 5,562 Yen (cloth), ISBN 978-4-13-036086-9.



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## U.S. Korea Policy in the 1950s

First of all, the title of this book is a bit misleading: in fact, it deals with the United States' Korea policy from 1953 to 1960 in the context of the Cold War situation and the United States' Asia policy on the whole. Japan's position in consideration of these two countries is taken into account, but Japan does not appear as a player on its own. I must admit that I am not sufficiently familiar with the field to comment on the relevance of this book within the previous literature, but Lee claims that there has been very little research on this particular aspect. Besides, most of the used literature are primary sources, mainly unpublished US documents, e.g. from the National Security Council or Joint Strategic Survey Committee. Thus this is probably a good source for information you would otherwise have to dig up in the archives—even for non-Japanese native speakers...

Lee's aim is to place the US Korea policy after the Korean War within the global and regional context. Although the focus is still much on the personalities of Syngman Rhee in Korea and Dwight D. Eisenhower in the US, he aims at explaining their actions within the situation. On the one hand, Rhee's anti-Japanese position is often

regarded as purely personal, whereas Lee tries to show the context of Japanese-Korean relations, from which at least part of this anti-Japanese sentiment was inevitable. Of course this attitude toward Japan also shaped the relationship between South Korea and the United States—as Lee repeatedly says, the 'Japan factor' was always at the back of US-ROK relations, more or less visible. On the other hand, and that is where Lee's emphasis lies, Eisenhower's policies, after originally having been held in very low esteem, have more recently been interpreted as a realistic and rational grand strategy by the so-called Eisenhower revisionists. Lee briefly describes these historiographic movements and sides with the critics of this Eisenhower revisionism, who claim that Eisenhower's New Look strategy has not worked just as well as is now said, and that there were inconsistencies and irrational policies. He objects, however, to the method of showing irrationalities from without (e.g., from the viewpoint of Third World nations who lost faith in the US). Instead, he wants to detect discrepancies and inconsistencies within the United States' policy, putting particular emphasis not only on the decision making process, but also on the expressed aims and goals of various US decision makers.

This leads to sometimes rather bothersome descriptions of who said what, but that is after all the point of this analysis: there are indeed a lot of inconsistencies, in two dimensions: the regional policies (and policy aims) are quite different in the case of the United States's Japan and Korea policies, and in this respect Lee tends to defend Korea's anti-Japanese stance. The US policies also varied over time, as becomes particularly clear in those detailed discussions and decisions about aid and troops.

The book is divided in its dealing with the military aspects, and with the economic aspects of the Cold War and the 'New Look' strategy. First, the discussions evolving around Korean security are explored. This includes mainly arguments about the size of the Korean military and the level of US troops stationed in South Korea and / or Japan. The US had actively supported a stronger South Korean military during the Korean war, and in a way also appreciated it within the New Look strategy, because it allowed for a reduction of US troops and accordingly US military spending. They objected, however, to Rhee's military build-up, fearing that it would rather destabilize the region. Rhee wanted to strengthen the South Korean military not only to counter communism, but also as a shield against Japan (and accused the US of being too pro-Japanese when they did not support this build-up); he also offered to send Korean troops to Vietnam, which was rejected. In this context, Korean antipathy against Japan plays some part, especially as the Korean side always perceived US policies to be in favour of Japan. This argument is even stronger in the economic discussions, and both aspects are clearly interwoven. The main point of the New Look policy was to save military expenditures by strengthening the economies of non-communist states; but Rhee accused the US of giving economic aid to South Korea only in order for Japan to profit from it. Japan was the major supplier for consumer goods and cheap technology for Korea, and could profit from those exports and in turn import better technology. In this sense, Japan does feature prominently in the book, although the Japanese position is not further explored. Interestingly, the South Korean business world apparently supported this aid system and wanted to import goods from Japan, quite contrary to Rhee's boycott—this would rather support the viewpoint that Rhee's position was indeed special. A further chapter deals with the trend of the Cold War later on to develop into economic rivalry between East and West rather than military antagonism. In the US-ROK relationship this leads to controversies over the general strategy, with Rhee favouring a roll-back, while the US strategy had shifted to economic

rather than military aid, combined with an expansion of trade in order to develop Asian economies. For this purpose, the US insisted that better Japanese-Korean relations were necessary—but they weren't successful in their appeal. Lee argues that the dilemma of US policies in Asia was that, according to the regional approach of strengthening non-communist Asian nations, Japan was a central figure—unfortunately Japan was disarmed, even under pressure unwilling to re-arm, and besides hated and feared by other Asian countries. In addition, there was not as much common culture among the Asian countries as there was in Europe. All this complicated the strategy of strengthening regionalism and reducing engagements with the US military—which explains the inconsistencies in Eisenhower's policies.

The text has endnotes after each chapter, giving the sources and sometimes additional information. I found the amount of notes (about three or four pages per chapter) rather agreeable, although I sometimes thought they might be a bit scarce considering the mass of detail packed in the text. (This may be a rather German viewpoint, though: I think on international and particularly Japanese standards they are quite detailed). Unfortunately, there is no additional bibliography at the end of the book, and the notes use short citation forms after the first appearance, which is a bit annoying if you are looking for just one source and have to browse through all the previous notes to get the full information. Actually, the index seems to cover the notes as well, but is not always comprehensive enough to find the first quotation. It is very detailed, though, and a very useful tool. The index also gives the Romaji for Western names, which are usually written in Kana, with Romaji added at the first mentioning. Korean names are given only in Kanji, with Japanese Furigana in the index. Here, I would suggest that the official romanization would also be useful because of the extreme variations in transliterations of Korean names (e.g. Lee, Rhee, Yi ...). Apart from personal names, names of agencies as well as policy slogans or important expressions are often given in English. Along with a complete bibliography, I missed a list of abbreviations, which would be helpful, especially for those who don't read the book from the beginning, but just consult one or two chapters.

Overall, I found this a very detailed academic book, maybe too detailed if you just want to gain an overview over the topic, but certainly useful if you are looking for specific information. For Japanese native speakers it is apparently convenient to have the mainly English language sources bundled in a Japanese text. However, even

non-native speakers who don't read Japanese very fluently may find it useful, as the index allows for searching specific topics. The style is clear enough to pose no major problems, even if you have to look up some words (as I had to). There are no tables or illustrations, but the main points are usually summarized and numbered, so there is

no danger of missing one by mistake.

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