Interview with Tsuchiya Yuka

Fourth Part of Interview Series: Taking Stock of Cold War Research

Interview by Klaas Voß

The Cold War was a global conflict and Cold War scholars are among the most international of academic communities - research on this time period is a collaborative effort of scholars from all over the world. Our interview series Taking Stock of Cold War Research probes the past and present evolution of this field − but also looks ahead, trying to decipher future trends and developments in this highly diverse research landscape. This seven-part series is a cooperation of the Berlin Center for Cold War Studies and the Military History Portal. The interviews were conducted by Dr. Christoph Nübel (Humboldt University of Berlin) and Dr. Klaas Voß (Hamburg Institute for Social Research).

This week: Prof. Dr. Tsuchiya Yuka, Professor of International Studies at Ehime University (Ehime, Japan).

Part I: Origins and Evolution of Cold War Studies

Q: "Are we currently experiencing a new Cold War"? This question has recently been discussed in European and American media with regard to Ukraine and the new tensions between NATO countries and Russia. What is your perspective on this?

A: To discuss whether a certain phenomenon is a new Cold War or not, probably we first need to agree on the definition of the Cold War. If we define the Cold War as "a total war" involving ideological, political, economic, military and cultural competitions, recent tensions between NATO countries and Russia is something other than a new Cold War. It seems to be a form of regional power game in a multi-polarized world. We are experiencing other regional conflicts in many parts of the world as a result of power transition, including one between China and surrounding countries.

Q: Can you tell us a bit about the development of Japanese scholarship on the Cold War? How important are Cold War Studies as a field? Which new perspectives and approaches were explored in the last 25 years?

A: Japanese Cold War studies have traditionally built on English-language scholarship, especially imported from the United States. Even today, diplomatic historians and political scientists specializing in US and Europe are most actively pursuing issues related to the Cold War. Recently, however, diverse scholars are joining the field, including Asian and African studies scholars, cultural historians, media historians, and historians of science and technology. One of the strongpoints of Japanese Cold War scholarship lies in elaborate archival research, often involving multi-archival methodologies. On the other hand, its weakness lies in the lack of international academic dialogue. Although most scholars are well versed in Western scholarship, they tend to talk to each other within their domestic academic circles. There are at least three loosely-knit groups of scholars explicitly engaged in the Cold War studies. First, Professor Hideki Kan and his colleagues have long been engaged in the positivistic studies of the Cold War, especially US diplomatic relations with other countries. I have been a member of the most recent project of his group. This project has resulted in a two-volume collection (coming soon) that compares German and Japanese experiences of the Cold War in terms of nuclear policies, relations with the United States, historical reconciliation, and regional politics. Another research team emerged out of a group of scholars led by Professor Minoru Masuda who translated Odd Arne Westad's Global Cold War in 2009-2010. This group has published a collection of articles titled Re-examining the Cold War History: Cold War and Other Historical Trends (Minerva Shobo, 2015). The main interest of this group rests on distinguishing between direct effects of the Cold War as opposed to developments caused by factors other than the Cold War. The book consists of three parts: Part I on the inner relations of the Western bloc; Part II on Asian and African decolonization, and Part III on the Cultural Cold War and Cold War cultures. The third group consists of diplomatic historians led by Hosoya Yuichi who published Post-WWII History of Europe-Asia Relations (Keio University Press, 2015). They prefer to use the framework of "postwar history" rather than the Cold War history because they identify the Cold War as one phase of a longer postwar history. They also try to shift the focus away from the United States, which had long been the central theme of

Japanese diplomatic history. The book especially focuses on four "divisions" namely West and East Germany, two Chinas, two Koreas, and Indochina. Other than the above-mentioned research groups, scholars in diverse academic disciplines are interested in the Cold War history. For example, there are historians of science who explore the international transfer and development of scientific knowledge. Masakatsu Yamasaki, and Hiroshi Ichikawa, for example, examine the history of Japanese and Soviet nuclear power development, respectively. Some diplomatic historians focus on the reversion of Okinawa and of US military bases on the same island. Some sociologists and media scholars, such as Shun'ya Yoshimi, are interested in the development of Japanese media and popular culture during the Cold War. There is an increasing amount of dialogue and collaboration between the traditional diplomatic historians and cultural, social, and media historians. Still, there is a wide gap between the academic disciplines. A group of graduate students at the University of Tokyo is hosting a monthly forum for diverse Cold War studies, where scholars from different disciplines and research fields can meet and exchange ideas.

Q: In more general terms, how "global" has Cold War historiography become? Do you feel that there is enough interaction between, for example, scholars in East Asia and Europe and/or the United States?

A: As I mentioned previously, Japan-based scholars tend to talk to each other. However, the situation is changing. Those who receive doctoral degrees in US and European universities and who know how to present or publish in Western countries are increasing in number. On the other hand, there is little communication between Japanese Cold War scholars and those in other East Asian countries. Language is part of the problem, but I feel research interests and methodologies are a more serious issues. Japanese diplomatic historians have mostly been interested in US-Japan (and more recently Europe-Japan) relations. Asian Studies scholars in Japan, on the other hand, are not necessarily interested in the Cold War. By contrast, for example, Korean historians are interested in the Japanese colonial legacy and the North-South division. Because Japanese and Korean scholars do not share common interests, they cannot start a fruitful academic discussion. There is a growing collaboration, however, between Japanese scholars of Korean history and Korean

scholars of Korean history, although they still remain personal, not organized, networks.

Part II: The Status Quo

Q: As someone who has emphasized the Cultural Cold War, Cultural Diplomacy, and Soft Power in her own work, do you think that Cold War Studies have shifted their focus away from traditional political and diplomatic history?

A: No, I do not think so. Although Cold War studies in many countries including Japan experienced the “cultural turn” in the past few decades, traditional political and diplomatic historians still occupy the central stage of the Cold War studies. They no longer hesitate to include scholars of Cultural Diplomacy and Soft Power in their collaborative research projects, but I sometimes feel we are mere "guests" in the house of diplomatic historians. Probably scholars of Cultural Diplomacy and Soft Power should pay more serious attention to realistic power relations that influence (or are influenced by) culture. If we give culture a privileged status detached from real politics, scholars of culture and soft power can never start dialogues with diplomatic and political historians, and will remain marginal in the Cold War studies. In addition, I feel there is a kind of backlash against the "cultural turn" of the Cold War studies – or any other field of studies. Because there are so many regional tensions in today’s world, governments tend to concentrate their limited resources on security studies and practical policy-making. In this context, Cultural Diplomacy and Soft Power are regarded as luxury topics of academic research. In Japan, social scientists are being encouraged to pursue "practical" and "useful" researches, which I am afraid will narrow the spectrum of academic researches.

Q: How do Japanese academics conceive of Japan's role in the Cold War? In fact, how important is the Cold War as a concept in Japanese contemporary history?

A: The Cold War has been an important concept in many academic fields. Perhaps this importance explains why the concept itself has recently been a focus of debate. As I have already mentioned, some scholars are discussing what belongs to the Cold

War, and what does not. Others quite consciously avoid using the term “Cold War” in their efforts to situate it within the longer history of the post-WWII period. These tendencies, I believe, testify to the currency that the concept of the Cold War remains to have. Also in East Asia, legacies of the Cold War are still living realities. When a “new Cold War” is discussed in Europe, such discussion implicitly holds that the old Cold War has ended. In East Asia, by contrast, the old Cold War has never clearly ended, but it was transformed into multiple regional conflicts. The current problems in East Asia are not a new “Cold War,” but they definitely fall under the long shadow of the old Cold War.

Q: Can you tell us something about the status quo of Cold War Studies in the wider East Asian region? For example, are there any impulses coming from China, South Korea, or the Southeast Asian states which influence your own academic community?

A: I am afraid that there are little academic contacts between the Cold War historians of Japan, China, South Korea and the Southeast Asian countries. As I have mentioned, there is a fairly large cohort of Cold War scholars in Japan, and it includes some Korean and Chinese scholars. However, they are Japan-based scholars rather than home-based scholars. Works by Cold War scholars in the People's Republic of China, such as Niu Jun and Shen Zhihua, have been introduced in Japan and are widely read by Japanese historians of China as well as Cold War historians. However, I do not know of any Korean or Taiwanese diplomatic historians engaged in archival research on the Cold War. Also, I do not know of any organized efforts to establish collaboration between Cold War scholars in Japan and those in other East Asian countries. This is perhaps due to the U.S. and Europe-centered tradition of diplomatic historians in Japan. I have the impression that Chinese scholars are more well-connected with Japanese East Asian historians rather than with the Cold War historians. Many Japanese scholars are connected with Korean or Chinese scholars on the personal levels. For example, I am in touch with a few Korean scholars specializing in films and culture during the Cold War. However, more organized efforts are necessary in the future.

Part III: Looking Ahead

Q: What, in your opinion, can we learn from studying the more cooperative aspects of Cold War history, such as cultural and academic exchange, aid programs, etc.?

A: From studying cultural and academic exchange or aid programs, we can probably learn about shared ideas, interest, or genuine friendship and love beyond national and cultural boundaries. At the same time, however, we can probably see power relations hidden behind the benevolent faces of cooperation. Although I understand that culture sometimes by-passes politics, or works subversively against political order, historians should not enshrine culture as something detached from political power. I have been studying the US nuclear technological aid for Japan, which led Japan to rely on US nuclear reactors for many years to come. This is just one example of how aid program and political power are inter-related.

Q: How powerful continue the legacies of the Cold War continue to be in the »Far East«? Do you think the Cold War will have a lasting impact on future politics and policies in the region?

A: Some scholars say the Cold War has never ended in East Asia. Korea remains divided, and so does China. Japan, Korea, Taiwan, and the Philippines have concluded bilateral security treaties with the United States, which have protected these countries on the one hand, while greatly limiting their diplomatic alternatives on the other. Although today’s problems in East Asia are not a simple extension of the Cold War, the Cold War has definitely formed the basic framework of East Asian international relations.

Q: Which new impulses for historical research and for other disciplines could be emitted by Cold War Studies in the next few years? And in which direction(s) might Cold War Studies evolve?

A: First of all, I hope Japanese Cold War studies will become more closely connected with counterparts in other countries, including those in Europe and East Asia.

Second, an increasing number of younger scholars are conducting multi-archival research using more than one language, and this tendency will continue. Their work will contribute to establishing a more precise and nuanced understanding of how today's world was constructed, and will influence history education in many countries. In my university, a graduate student from Mongolia is exploring how Japan and Mongolia developed diplomatic relations in the early 1970s, using Japanese and Mongolian archival records. I hope young scholars like her will re-write the diplomatic history of East Asia. Third, I hope there will be continuous and expanded dialogues between diplomatic historians and historians of Cultural Diplomacy and Soft Power. A constructivist approach that emphasizes the role of ideas and norms might be able to bridge the gap between culture and diplomacy. Fourth, Cold War scholars can shed more light on the peripheries. Although peripheries might not have radically changed the superpower politics, knowledge on peripheries can help develop a just and fair view of the Cold War world. For example, I have been interviewing retired seafarers in small villages on the Pacific coast of Japanese islands who experienced the Cold War on the ocean. Their stories – including their encounters with thermonuclear tests – will enrich our understanding of the Cold War, especially with regard to its impact on marginalized peoples.