

Izabela Plesiewicz-Świerczyńska, *Od konfliktu do konfliktu. Relacje japońsko-amerykańskie 1853–1941* [From Conflict to Conflict. Japanese-American relations 1853–1941], Wydawnictwo Glow Book, Sieradz 2021, pp. 307

Recently, there have appeared a few scientific papers devoted to the Japanese state and Japanese-American relations in the historical context on the Polish publishing market. As shown by the history of Japanese-American relations and the proposed book by Izabela Plesiewicz-Świerczyńska, these relations have a rich past. They have been shaped over many decades, contributing to the continuity of Japanese-American ties despite various wars and conflicts between the American and Japanese people. At this point, it is worth adding that an important and, at the same time, essential element, which is a prelude to further considerations, is the editorial note. It contains a description of the transcription (e.g. Hepburn, pinyin) of Japanese, Korean, Chinese and Russian words, or McCune’s-Reischauer notation system.

This part of the work was also an excellent place to include the glossary of terms and concepts that was finally covered at the end of the work. Of course, this fact has no impact on the content

and vastness of the author’s knowledge of the reviewed work.

The work consists of, apart from the foreword by Maria Bartakhanova, an introduction and an ending of 5 extensive chapters. Before the author discussed such reports, in the introduction, she introduced the reader to the significance of many factors, such as religious ones. The statement was rightly used, saying: “The influence of the religious factor on international relations depends on the existing political situation. In the past, it influenced the formation of nations and the maintenance of national consciousness and the formation of nationalist movements. An example of this is Japan, where the system of government was closely related to Shintoism. The religious factor causes many conflicts (currently between Christian and Muslim countries)” (pp. 22–23). This is a pertinent observation, as we can see the animosity between Sudan and South Sudan, wherein one country is Muslim and in the other Christian, or between Iran and the United States, which, in addition to a political context, also has a religious one. There is also a political and religious conflict between Chechens and Russians (Muslim-Orthodox), where this conflict turned into two Chechen wars. The directions in foreign policy, from expansionism to isolationism, were also indicated. Here, the author recalls the cases of the Russian

Empire from the 14th to the 19th century, where the policy of expansion was implemented, and North Korea, which continues to implement this theory in the international arena since the beginning of the Korean War (1950–1953). Therefore, going to the first chapter: *Ideological inspirations of conceptual formulas in international political relations between Japan and the USA* are devoted to shaping Japanese-American correlations in terms of international relations.

The author points out that the isolationism of Japan meant that no connections were initiated with any of the countries, and no contacts were established with foreigners, whether they were Americans, British or from another country. This statement may apply to North Korea's case of being an island country away from the Asian continent. The reason for limiting contacts with the outside world was the threat resulting from the willingness of other countries to subordinate the territory of Japan and the fear of decentralization of power (p. 38). According to the author, she rightly mentions that the 13th-century Mongol invasions made isolationism acceptable to the Japanese. It is worth adding that the adverse effects were felt, among others, by Chechens and other North Caucasus peoples. They had to abandon their lands and, under the influence of the Mongol invasion, convert animism and Christianity into Islam. Therefore, here we can risk a statement that the Japanese could have been forced to abandon their previous faith, beliefs and convert to Islam.

On the other hand, Chapter 2 – *The Real Consequences of the Application of the Isolationism Doctrine for Japanese-American Relations*, is devoted to the extensive and concise Japanese-American relationship, which had many effects. From trade to politics and military. Before there was any relationship between the Japanese and the Americans, it was for an extended time due to Japanese isolationism that many foreigners tried to establish contacts, but to no avail. For many years, such significant countries as, for example, the Russian Empire, Great Britain or France could not reach it in any way. As the author of the study notes, it was only that in the 19th century, the Russians were the first to get the Japanese Archipelago. And a little earlier, it was done by the Americans – on May 6, 1791, when two American ships, commanded by Kendrick and Douglas, docked on the island of KiiOshima (p. 128). In my opinion, this moment can be considered the beginning of the opening of new contacts between the Japanese and foreigners, especially in the USA. The next chapter, *The Origins and Circumstances of the Birth of Imperialism in Japan*, is devoted to the paradigm shift in the theory of international relations from isolationism to Japanese imperialism. It was only from the end of the 19th century that, according to the author, which had been ignored and insignificant on the Asian continent, Japan began to play a dominant role in Asia.

The alliances with the Americans and the British contributed to this and further developed, and both foreign trade and the trade with Korea and China expanded.

As noted by I. Plesiewicz-Świerczyńska, the initiative of *Kampak*, Toyotomi Hideyoshi, who in 1590 organized an expedition to conquer Korea, had an enormous impact on outlining the vector of foreign policy. Hideyoshi turned to the Ryukyu Kingdom for help (p. 152). The reign of Emperor Meiji changed Japan significantly on many levels. For example, in domestic and foreign policy, where it was considered possessive, European solutions were copied from Germany and Great Britain. A lot of changes took place in the Japanese military, e.g. modernisation and better, modern military equipment.

Soldiers are better trained, and they are acquiring new skills needed on the battlefield. Political Development and Japan's modernity have helped many other countries, e.g. South Korea. After 36 years of Japanese colonial rule (1910–1945) and three years of American occupation, South Korea became a democratic republic on August 15, 1948. The purpose of this is to show that South Korea has developed the ability to exist as an independent state. On the foundations of Japanese influence, it created a state structure and administration. And when we talk about Japanese-American relations, it is worth mentioning that Japan was one of the countries that contributed significantly to the construction of the American economy during the industrial revolution, where labour was needed more than ever. According to the author, the first Japanese workers came to the independent Kingdom of Hawaii in 1885 (p. 173).

The penultimate chapter, *The Political Consequences of Japanese Expansionism in the Light of Activities on the International Forum*, was focused on discussing the consequences of Japan's foreign policy in the international arena. Problems arose at the moment, as I. Plesiewicz-Świerczyńska pointed out when the communists won the Russian Empire and transformed this country, first into Soviet Russia and then into the Soviet Union and the growing nationalism in China. On the other hand, in the context of Japanese-American relations, the author noted that the decisions of the Washington Conference, leaving the League of Nations, and the tightening of anti-immigration regulations resulted in tensions on the Tokyo-Washington line (p. 229).

On the other hand, the last chapter in the discussed book *The Escalation of Nationalist Ideas and the Culmination of Imperial Policy of the Japanese Empire* focuses on consolidating powers in Japanese politics in the interwar period. The discussed part of the work in the context of relations between the Americans and the Japanese ended with a discussion of the Japanese air attack on the American Pearl Harbor bases at the end of 1941, which was the catalyst for the war in the Pacific.

At this point, it is worth mentioning that this work contains a considerable number of attachments – 39 in total. Especially, sources that are difficult to access in Poland, such as the Protocol of the proclamation of the Manchukuo state (August 15, 1932), or the document confirming the US declaration

of war by Japan in 1941, or the text of Japan's breaking the Washington Treaty (December 29, 1934). An excellent glossary of terms and concepts is also included. Therefore, to sum up, the discussed work *From Conflict to Conflict. Japanese-American relations 1853–1941* by Izabela Plesiewicz-Świerczyńska is an essential source of knowledge about the history of Japanese-American relations, as well as the history of the American

state's foreign policy and the history of the Japanese nation, the state of Japan and Japanese foreign policy for scientists, experts or students who are educated in the field of political science, but also history, eastern studies, oriental studies, as well as Japanese and American studies.

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