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Historical disputes are central to current relations among Northeast Asian nations and promoting historical reconciliation will be critical not only to ensuring regional peace and security but also protecting American interests in this important region. The primary aim of the article is to explore whether the U.S. has any role to play in the process of historical reconciliation in Northeast Asia. After reviewing past attempts at historical reconciliation, it is argued that the U.S. is not an outsider nor free of responsibility for the history problem in the region and that it can play a constructive role in facilitating regional reconciliation.

Northeast Asia and the History Question

It is now well known that over the last fifteen years Northeast Asia has witnessed growing intra-regional exchanges and interactions, especially in the realms of culture and economy. China has become the number one trading partner of South Korea, and Chinese products constitute the largest share of Japanese imports. Reflecting such economic exchanges, there has been a marked increase in the number of Northeast Asian people traveling to other nations within the region. There are growing numbers of Chinese students studying in Japan, and Korean films and dramas have been popular in China and Japan. China, Japan, and South Korea are active participants in regional institutions such as ASEAN Plus Three and the East Asian Summit, which often excludes the United States.

Yet wounds from past wrongs—committed in times of colonialism and war—are not fully healed and have become highly contentious “diplomatic” issues. All nations in the



region have some sense of victimization and often blame others, rather than taking responsibility. Anti-Japanese sentiments seem undiminished in China and Korea, even among the younger generation with no direct experience of colonialism or war. The Japanese suffer from “apology fatigue,” questioning why they must continue to repent for events that took place six or seven decades ago. Ironically, increased regional interaction has not diminished but rather intensified disputes and contention over the past.

According to a 2006 survey, Chinese listed their top four reasons for unfavorable views of Japan, as related to history issues: the most often selected was the Nanjing massacre (42.19%) followed by historical issues (19.76%), denial of historical crimes (15.62%), and visits to the Yasukuni shrine (10.19%). More than half of the respondents (54.78%) said that the difficulties of Sino-Japanese relations should be resolved by addressing “historical issues first.” Another survey of Koreans conducted in 2005 shows that 93% of the respondents said that “unresolved historical issues are very important or somewhat important to Korea-Japan relations.” Japanese largely concur with Chinese and Koreans in their view of the importance of resolving historical issues as a way to improve their relations with China and Korea.²

As with many other cases around the world, reconciliation between countries in Northeast Asia first occurred between governments. Japan established diplomatic rapprochement with countries it had once invaded or colonized: with the Republic of China in 1952, with the Republic of Korea in 1965, and with the People’s Republic of China in 1972. The ROK also normalized its relations with former enemies, the PRC and Russia, in the early 1990s, and inter-Korean relations have improved significantly in the last decade.

Yet, reconciliation in Northeast Asia has been “thin” since these nations have failed to come to terms with the past. Japan paid no reparations to its former colonies—though it gave “grants and aid” to South Korea for normalizing their relations. China and Korea were excluded from the San Francisco Treaty that settled Japanese war crimes and atrocities. Historical issues such as war responsibilities, disputed territories, and Japan’s colonial rule and crimes against humanity were largely overlooked in the Cold War system.

The question of history has now become a central one across Northeast Asia. It is not simply about what has happened in the past but touches upon the most sensitive issues of national identity, including the formation of historical memories and national myths that have a powerful role to play. Whether it is Japanese atrocities in China or the American decision to drop atomic weapons on Japan, no nation is immune from the charge that it has formed a less-than-complete view of the past. And all nations, sharing a reluctance to



fully confront the complexity of that past, tend to blame others.

To be sure, there is widespread recognition of the need for reconciliation and the final resolution of historical injustices. In fact, many Asians have sought to achieve that goal through various tactics—apology politics, litigation, joint history writing, and regional exchanges. All of the nations involved, however, are still bound by very distinct perceptions of history, often contradictory and separated by different accounts of the past and of the context of events. These perceptions are deeply embedded in public consciousness, transmitted by education, the arts, museums, popular culture and through mass media. Increased interaction among these nations in trade and cultural/social exchange in recent years gives some hope for Asian regional cooperation, but until they come to terms with the past, I believe, there are clear limits to how far they can go.

Northeast Asian nations need to promote “thick” reconciliation that will foster a shared vision for the region that transcends victimhood and narrow, exclusive notions of history and identity. Overcoming the historical injustice that has divided the countries of Northeast Asia is not only a sensible basis for true reconciliation; it is a prerequisite for building a new regional community. In so doing, it is crucial to understanding the complex layers of Northeast Asian history and reconciliation. It would be misleading to mechanically compare Northeast Asia to Western Europe in their respective ways of dealing with the past. Both regions have very distinctive histories, experiences, and memories. Instead, we must continue to search for a Northeast Asian method of reconciliation, while learning from the European experiences. Such a model, I argue, should include the U.S. as a key variable since its role has been instrumental in shaping post-war regional order in Northeast Asia, including the history question. In the final analysis, resolving historical disputes would benefit not only those in the region but the U.S. itself and thus the U.S. can ensure its own interests by helping the process of reconciliation in Northeast Asia.

Past Efforts of Reconciliation

As Yoichi Funabashi notes in a recent volume on Asia-Pacific reconciliation, there is no uniform universal formula for reconciliation; it is a multifaceted process requiring varied inputs and action at many levels. While reconciliation is something of a current Asian trend transcending culture, country, and creed, he contends, the existence of a number of dynamic variables unique to each case calls for a more contextual rather than systematic



reconciliation process. As such, it is worthwhile to review each of the modes of reconciliation—apology politics, litigation, common history, and regional activism/exchanges—to assess their achievements and shortcomings before exploring whether or not the U.S. can play a constructive role in furthering historical reconciliation in the region.

Apology

Apology diplomacy has been a major tactic in the reconciliation process. Since 1984, as Table 1 shows, there have been seven official apologies in the course of the Japan-Korea summits: by Emperor Hirohito during President Chun’s visit in 1984; by Emperor Akihito during President Roh’s visit in 1990; by Prime Minister Miyazawa (focusing on the comfort women issue) in his visit to Seoul in 1992; by Emperor Akihito during President Kim Young Sam’s visit in 1994; by Prime Minister Murayama Tomohiro in 1995 (in commemoration of the fiftieth anniversary of the end of the war); by Prime Minister Obuchi Keizo during President Kim Dae Jung’s visit in 1998; and by Prime Minister Koizumi Junichiro during his Seoul visit in 2001. Japan has also apologized with regards to China (sometimes directed to other Asian neighbors as well) a total of six times since 1990 (See Table 1). In addition, as Table 2 presents, there have been a number of “unofficial” apologies or expression of regret made by Japanese leaders.

Table 1. List of Official Apologies made by a Japanese Head of State³

Year	Who	Context
1984	Emperor Hirohito	During Korean President, Chun Do Hwan’s visit
1990	Emperor Akihito Prime Minister Toshiki Kaifu	During Korean President Roh Tae Woo’s visit
1991	Prime Minister Kaifu	Visit to Singapore: discussing history of the early half of the century and its effects on Japan’s Asian neighbors
1992	Prime Minister Miyazawa Emperor Akihito	During Miyazawa’s visit to Seoul and focusing on the Comfort Women issue During visit to China, Akihito vocally expressed (with “remorse”) the suffering inflicted on the Chinese by the Japanese
1993	Prime Minister Hosokawa	At National Memorial Service for the War Dead, paid tribute to victims in neighboring Asian countries.



Year	Who	Context
1994	Emperor Akihito	During Korean President Kim Young Sam's visit
1995	Prime Minister Murayama Tomohiro	In commemoration of the 50 th anniversary of the end of WWII (with regards to victims in Korea and China alike)
1998	Prime Minister Obuchi Keizo	During Korean President Kim Dae Jung's visit Vocally addressing Chinese President Jiang Zemin, before signing of Joint Declaration that recognizes officially Japan's responsibility of past atrocities
2001	Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi	During Koizumi's visit to Seoul During Koizumi's visit to the Memorial Museum of the Chinese People's War of Resistance to Japan

Table 2: List of Unofficial Apologies Issued by Japan to East Asia⁴

Years	Who	Key Terms
1980-	P.M. Zenko Suzuki	"painfully aware," "with remorse," "regrettable,"
1989	Chief Cabinet Secretary Kiichi Miyazawa P.M. Yasuhiro Nakasone P.M. Takeshita Noboru	"deep remorse," "unfortunate past," "deep regret," "profoundly regretted," "regret and resolve not to repeat," "deep regret and sorrow"
1990-	Minister of Foreign Affairs Taro Nakayama	"deeply sorry," "sincere apology and remorse,"
1995	Chief Cabinet Secretary Koichi Kato Chief Cabinet Secretary Yohei Kono P.M. Morihiro Hosokawa P.M. Tomiichi Murayama	"apologies and remorse," "express our remorse for the past," "remorse and apology," "profound apology"
1996-	P.M. Ryutaro Hashimoto	"deep remorse and the heart felt apology,"
2000	Emperor Akihito Consul-General of Japan in Hong Kong Itaru Umezu	"deep sorrow," "sincere apologies and remorse," "deep remorse and ... heartfelt apology"
2001-	Chief Cabinet Secretary Yasuo Fukuda	"humbly accept ... deep remorse and heartfelt apology," "deep remorse and heartfelt apology,"
2007	Minister of Foreign Affairs Makiko Tanaka P.M. Junichiro Koizumi P.M. Shinzo Abe	"remorse and heartfelt apology," "feelings of profound remorse," "deep remorse and heartfelt apology," "heartfelt apology," "apologize here and now"

Despite Japan's efforts noted above, its neighbors continue to view the Japanese as lacking sincerity and remain skeptical of repeated formulaic apologies.⁵ From their perspective, as Caroline Rose points out, Japan's various efforts to "apologize" for wartime



atrocities have not been backed up by actions to “reinforce the apologies”; instead, they are often coupled with counterproductive actions on the part of the government.⁶ As Chinese President Jiang Zemin stated during his 1998 visit to Japan: “No matter how beautifully the words are written, if they are not put into effect then they mean nothing.”⁷ In fact, throughout the 1990s, Japanese political elites showed almost schizophrenic ambivalence—to borrow *Asahi Shimbun*’s Wakamiya Yoshiyumi’s term—between formal apology and frequent misstatements that glorified their colonial rule.⁸ The reascent Japanese right mounted vocal attacks on official and officially-inspired apologies, directing their fire in particular at Murayama’s efforts to express the kind of apology that would satisfy Asian sentiment. Instead of acknowledging culpability in colonial/imperial aggression, some senior officials blatantly defended Japan’s position so as to evade any responsibility for wartime misdeeds. One official states: “It is nonsense to call Japan the aggressor or militaristic... I still think it is wrong to define [The Greater East Asia War] as a war of aggression ... The objective of the war itself was a justifiable one, which was permissible in principle in those days.... I think the Rape of Nanking is a fabrication.”⁹ Another is quoted as justifying Japan’s role in annexing Korea in terms of an “Asian Liberation” from voracious Western powers: “Japan’s annexation of Korea rested on mutual agreement both in form and in fact. As such, the Korean side also bears some responsibility for it ... Can we be sure that China or Russia would not have meddled in the Korean peninsula if Japan had not annexed it?”¹⁰(See Table 3).

Table 3 Examples of Japanese Official Statements Denying Wartime Responsibility¹¹

Year	Who	Excerpt from Quote
1980-1989	Masayuki Fujio, Education Minister (1986, 1988)	Suggested Rape of Nanking wasn’t a big deal, “it is not murder under international law to kill in war... the conflict in China started accidentally ... Japan fought to protect itself at a time when the white race had turned Asia into a colony”,
	Okuno Seisuke, Director General of the National Land Agency (1988)	“It was the Caucasian race that colonized Asia ... If anybody was the aggressor, it was the Caucasians. It is nonsense to call Japan the aggressor or militaristic”



Year	Who	Excerpt from Quote
1990-1995	Shintaro Ishihara, Japanese writer/politician (1990)	"People say that the Japanese made a holocaust there (Nanking), but it is a lie."
	Hashimoto Ryutaro, LDP president (1993)	"Whatever better options may in hindsight appear to have existed -- I cannot bring myself to dismiss curtly as a war of aggression"
1996-2000	Shigeto Nagano, Justice Minister (1997)	"the so-called rape of Nanjing and related atrocities supposedly committed by the Japanese military are fabrications."
	Professor Nobukatsu Fujioka, Professor of Education, Tokyo University (1997)	"The Americans brainwashed the postwar Japanese into believing they had committed terrible war crimes."
	Kajiyama Seiroku, Japan's Chief Cabinet Secretary (1997)	"Foreign 'Comfort Women' conscripted for Japanese Army brothels were prostitutes"
2001-Present	Toru Toida, Governing Party Lawmaker (2007)	"We are absolutely positive that there was no massacre in Nanjing."
	Shinzo Abe (2007)	"There is no evidence to prove there was coercion, nothing to support it," (referring to the Comfort Women accusation)
	Tamogami Toshio, Former Chief of Staff of Japan Air Force (2008)	"...It is often those who never directly saw the Japanese military who are spreading rumors about the army's acts of brutality... It is certainly a false accusation to say that our country was an aggressor nation."

Japanese Prime Minister Koizumi's ostentatious visits to Yasukuni Shrine in his official capacity provided another revealing illustration of the confusing message conveyed to Asian neighbors. Similarly, the outpouring of Japanese books, films and magazines raising doubts about the Nanjing massacre leads many Asian neighbors to question the sincerity of the Japanese apology. Not surprisingly, according to 2005 surveys



of South Koreans and Chinese, “Japan’s apology” was still considered to be “the most important element to solve the disputes over history between the two countries” (42.6% for Koreans and 48.2% for Chinese). Such critical attitudes by Koreans and Chinese toward Japan’s apology, in turn, have led to a negative response in Japan, even to the extent of “apology fatigue,” according to the conservative Japanese press like *Sankei Shimbun*. They have also provoked reaction from nationalistic Japanese: in December 1996, the Society for Creating New Textbooks (*atarashii kyokasho tsukurukai*), a symbol of rightist neo-nationalism in Japan from the mid-1990s, for instance, was organized in response to this mood of repentance and reconciliation.¹²

The most significant lesson of this apology tactic was that it revealed weakness in the Japanese political elites’ commitment to the cause. The weakness may have also reflected their own sense of victim consciousness which will be discussed below. In the end, lack of courage prevented them from recognizing past wrongs and moving forward. People in Korea and China have slowly but gradually realized that the formal ritual of apology is but one element in the complexities of the politics of remembrance between the two countries.¹³ It is questionable that apology diplomacy has much utility left any more as a means of furthering historical reconciliation. According to Alexis Dudden’s recent arguments, politics surrounding state-issued apologies have largely negated the putative intent of apologizing and, if anything, set Japan back in terms of legitimately reconciling with its East Asian neighbors. Overall, the political value associated with an apology for historical issues in Japan has superseded substance and frustrated victim consciousness. Dudden labels this as East Asian “apology failure” (apologizing for the past as a means to capitalize off it in the future) – not its failure to apologize – and asserts that the general effect has only “perpetuated a disastrous policy failure.”¹⁴ Decades of this kind of apology failure have created a deadlock in the East Asian reconciliation process that cannot be broken until one state is able to pinpoint and address its own “identity mythmaking” and re-direct the process all together to benefit rather than belittle wartime victims.

Litigation

Compensation for the victims of Japanese aggression has been another contentious issue between Japan and its neighbors. Most Koreans and Chinese believe that Japan has yet to compensate the victims, while Japan has objected to such compensation on strictly legalistic grounds. In seeking a settlement between the victims and those responsible for crimes against them, litigation has been adopted as a major tactic in redressing historical



injustice. Unlike in the West, however, its efficacy has proven to be very limited. Almost all lawsuits filed by Asian victims in Japanese courts were either thrown out or unresolved, although courts have recognized the fact of their suffering. Cases filed by those victims in U.S. courts did not fare any better. Generally speaking, the tale of victims in Japanese war crimes seeking redress is one of “betrayal punctuated by glimmers of hope.”¹⁵

Beginning in late 1991, forty women, represented by the Association of Pacific War Victims and Bereaved Families, filed the first suit against the Japanese government addressing systematized sex slavery during the war. The following year an additional group of former sex slaves (this time primarily Korean women) filed in the Yamaguchi District Court in Fukuoka, demanding an official apology from the government along with 2.3 million US dollars in reparations. Then in April of 1993, another group of sexual slaves, consisting of largely Filipina women, went to the Tokyo District Court and asked for 20 million yen per plaintiff. After years of litigious battling, the Tokyo District Court rejected the demands made both by the NGO-represented group and the Filipina group. As discussed below, article 14 of the 1951 San Francisco Treaty of Peace between Japan and the Allied Powers was cited as the primary legal ground. Surprisingly though, in 1998 the Fukuoka District Court found in favor of the Korean group; citing UN international terminology concerning slavery, the Court concluded that the Japanese government had violated basic human rights through “forcing them into sexual slavery” and found the government in violation of statutory and constitutional law.¹⁶

However, in 2001 the Hiroshima High Court overturned the Fukuoka decision, turning to the articles of reparations in the postwar treaties with the US and holding that the government was not legally accountable to apologize or to compensate. While this process of litigation has been revisited several times by thousands of former “comfort” women, the government has successfully escaped accountability on the following legal basis: “1) International criminal law may not be applied retroactively, 2) the comfort station system did not involve the crime of slavery, and even if it did, the prohibition of slavery was not a customary norm of international law at the time, 3) rape was not prohibited during wartime by either the Hague Convention or by customary norms of international law, and 4) as Korea was an internationally recognized annexed part of Japan’s empire during World War II and thus not considered an adversary, the laws of war are inapplicable to Korean nationals.”¹⁷ If anything though, while the demoralizing task of gaining legal accountability for these war victims has wholly failed to produce any form of reparation, thousands have been mobilized and suits continue to be filed. Additionally, some who failed in Japan have taken their plight to the US in hopes of finding a more sympathetic legal ear.



The legal authority for foreigners to file outside claims in U.S. courts is the two centuries old Alien Tort Claims Act of 1789 (ATCA). This statute provides a general basis for non-citizens to seek recourse in the U.S.A. for violations of standing international law and has been the legal hook utilized in recent decades by a variety of non-U.S. plaintiffs. Since Japanese “comfort” women had anticipated little if any chance of success in Japanese courts, they saw ATCA as a window of opportunity and in 2000 fifteen former comfort women filed a class action suit in the District of Columbia District Court. The plaintiffs of “Hwang Geum Joo, et al. v. Japan” hoped to circumvent previous rejections by Japanese courts by arguing that the Japanese military had engaged in a commercial activity through the setting up of a networked system of “comfort” stations and collecting money for their services. This was argued to have had “a direct impact in the United States ... constituting an implicit waiver”¹⁸ of San Francisco’s established immunity. As a response to these claims of “systematized sex,” however, the Japanese government filed a counter motion to dismiss. When the case was heard by the Supreme Court, Associate Justice Ginsburg reaffirmed the district court’s judgment in 2005, finding that the Japanese government did indeed enjoy sovereign immunity from such claims as set forth at the San Francisco Peace Conference and that the legal interpretation of peace treaties must remain at a “government-to-government level.”¹⁹ Ginsburg concluded her opinion for the Court majority by stating that the “question of whether the war-related claims of foreign nationals were extinguished when the governments of their countries entered into peace treaties with Japan ... concerns the United States only with respect to her foreign relations [and]... Insistence upon the payment of reparations in any proportion commensurate with the claims ... would wreck Japan’s economy, dissipate any credit that it may possess at present, destroy the initiative of its people, and create misery and chaos in which the seeds of discontent and communism would flourish”²⁰

Korean forced laborers’ unsuccessful litigation struggle using the Hayden Bill of California State between 1999 and 2004 further proved the limits of the litigation tactic. Introduced in the California State Legislature by long time civil rights activist turned politician Tom Hayden, the Hayden Bill provided what was initially seen as a means to circumvent “an international legal deadlock” resulting from the US and Japanese governments’ official positions regarding war reparations and the specific terms of the postwar settlements. In the years leading up to the Hayden bill petitions to both governments had been consistently rejected by citing the previous state-to-state normalization treaties.²¹ However, the legislation eliminated – at the level of State law -- the statute of limitations and redefined the classification of war crimes victims to include those affected by allies of Nazi Germany. This resulted in a number of California-filed



suits against the Japanese government including forced labor victims, American POW detainees, and survivors of the Japanese military's systematized sex or "comfort" system. While this legislation initially encouraged and mobilized victims' groups to file their claims in California courts, it ultimately failed to secure a new forum for compensation

Thus, it seems clear that we cannot expect any different outcome until there are new interpretations of the San Francisco Treaty and the later bilateral treaties between Japan and its neighbors are rendered. Moreover, it is not likely that, absent concerted efforts by the international community, especially by the U.S. (as discussed below), new legal interpretations in Japanese claims cases will soon be adopted.

Shared History

Common history writing has been another approach to achieving historical reconciliation. The frequent clashes over history textbooks in Northeast Asia, for example in 1982, 2002, and 2005, demonstrate that history is not simply about the past but also about the present and the future. The situation attests to the central importance of a reconciled view of history in achieving overall regional reconciliation. One approach to solving this problem has been to form both official and unofficial joint committees to study history and create jointly written textbooks and supplementary materials.

The first official attempt to deal jointly with history textbooks was undertaken by South Korea and Japan. In October 2001, Prime Minister Koizumi visited South Korea and agreed with President Kim Dae-Jung to establish the Japan-ROK Joint History Research Committee. The committee was formed in May 2002 as a gesture of commitment to a state-sponsored effort toward a reconciled view of history and the placing of their common past in a new regional history framework. Japan and China launched a similar effort that was also part of the thaw in relations following the leadership transition in Japan from Koizumi to Abe. During Abe's October 2006 visit to Beijing, the two countries announced an agreement to form a "China-Japan Joint History Research Committee" with the plight of putting the history issue in the hands of historians rather than politicians. Both Joint Committees adopted the UNESCO model of writing a "parallel history."

Such official efforts, which involve a complex, long-term process, are still ongoing, and it is too early to make a final judgment about their efficacy. It is already evident, however, that this approach is fraught with difficulty and far from achieving reconciliation, though it has offered many good lessons for those nations involved. By-and-large, it seems



almost impossible to arrive at a common rendition of historical events, particularly regarding the most controversial period of history. Writing a shared regional history might be feasible intellectually but not politically. In Northeast Asia, government still has considerable influence over the people's understanding of history, especially through history textbooks. With such heavy state involvement, the resulting history textbooks can easily turn into issues of diplomacy and international relations as we have seen. It is no coincidence that textbooks have become a nexus for significant international tension in the region, especially between Japan and China and between Japan and the two Koreas.²²

Besides official efforts to compile joint history textbooks, scholars of Northeast Asia have also worked together toward a mutual understanding of regional history. The first such effort was the Japan-South Korea Joint Study Group on History Textbooks, which was organized in the late 1980s, long before the official efforts. The group was organized without the direct involvement of either the Korean or the Japanese governments and met a total of four times from spring 1991 to fall 1992. In addition, scholars, teachers, and activists from China, Japan, and South Korea published in early 2005 the first-ever East Asian common history guidebook, *A History That Opens to the Future: The Contemporary and Modern History of Three East Asian Countries* (*Mirai o hiraku rekishi* or *Miraerül Yönün Yöksa*).²³ In the spring of 2007, after ten years of work, another group of forty historians and experts from Japan and Korea published a history of Korea-Japan relations. This book, entitled *A History of Korea-Japan Relations* (*Han'il kyoryu üi Yöksa*), covers relations between the two nations from ancient times to the present. However, it remains to be seen how these “unofficial” history books will be incorporated into the teaching of history in schools. It is only hoped that they will help to achieve one of the most challenging, long-term goals of regional reconciliation: the teaching of a reconciled past to the young people of Japan, Korea, and China.

Regional Exchanges and Activism

Finally, there have been increased inter-societal exchanges and efforts to redress historical injustice. The 1998 official cultural opening of the two societies, co-hosting of the 2002 World Cup Games, and the pop culture industry boom, which even coined a term “Hallyu (the Korean wave),” have all softened deep-seated antagonism, mistrust, and fear. Many young Japanese are aware of the recent Korean cultural renaissance in TV drama and film making, and the Japanese media are increasingly buying these Korean cultural products. Survey results from 2005 show that 40% of Japanese respondents say that they have



become “friendlier towards Korea after exposure to Korean popular culture”: the figure increases to 69% for those who watch Korean movies or TV dramas “frequently” or “sometimes.” The figures are lower for Koreans but still 42% of those who watch Japanese movies or TV dramas “frequently” or “sometimes” say that they have become friendlier toward Japan. High school history teachers and students of both countries are holding joint summer camps every year to learn more about Japanese and Korean history. Increasing number of Koreans study in China and Japan, and China has been attracting increasing number of Japanese and Korean tourists. This kind of multi-level cultural interactions across the borders will be useful resources in achieving the ultimate grace of forgiveness, the liberation from the old victim/aggressor identity, and the development of a new regional identity based on the vision of peaceful coexistence, but this will be a long-term process.

In addition, increasing numbers of civic activist groups, especially in Japan and South Korea, worked together in history redress movements, including data and testimony collection, documentary film making, and public history propaganda work. Bilateral, state-oriented approaches to this history issue have now expanded to multifaceted, transnational activism in which government, civil society, academics, and the media all became involved.

For instance, several Asian NGOs have worked together to address the issue of comfort women by jointly sponsoring events such as the International Women’s Tribunal of December 2000. This was preceded by the groundbreaking creation of the Asian Women’s Fund -- the first time Japan sought to confront its past through a public-private collaboration.²⁴ A sort of ripple effect took place as civil society in both Korea and Japan enlisted several NGOs to the cause of confronting the two states’ divided conceptions of their shared history. In November of 2004, a group of Korean and Japanese scholars formed the Hanil Yondae 21 (Korea-Japan Solidarity 21) with a clear aim to promote deep introspection and to build regional solidarity between the two nations for future generations. In addition, a regional NGO collaborative effort made up of Chinese, Japanese, and Korean historians introduced the first-ever East Asian common history guidebook. This, among other similar efforts, conveys the hopes of a growing civil society that East Asia can confront its future as a regional collaborative entity, rather than as a region wracked by division and misinterpretation.

Despite tremendous headway, East Asian civil society remains very weak compared to Western civil society and the role that transnational non-state actors have played there. Many have compared Japan unfavorably with Germany in this respect and suggest that East Asia is lagging far behind in achieving a substantive reconciliation with the victims of



its unfortunate past. One explanation for this difference is that central governments in East Asia wield the preponderance of power, leaving most transnational activity and civil movements under state authority or influence and constraining civil society the ability to reach society at large.²⁵ Moreover, East Asian civil society needs to use multilateral strategies that will not “wag a finger at Tokyo” but widen the focus beyond Japan’s crimes to consider atrocities during war in general. This could, as Lind argues, give Japanese nationalist less ammunition and circumvent the traditional backlash associated with Japanese efforts at contrition.²⁶

U.S. Responsibility in Historical Disputes

In Northeast Asia, as noted above, governments have been a main agent in dealing with the unfortunate past. Although some NGOs have been engaged in redressing historical injustice, in comparison to Europe, civil society has been weak (Japan), almost non-existent (communist China), or not much interested in historical issues (Korea). There exists no major transnational organization or culture that can be used in achieving historical reconciliation. In this regard, to use David Croker’s terms, reconciliation in the region has been only “thin.” Besides, the United States did not press Japan to reconcile with its neighbors as it had Germany right after 1945. Instead, as Japan’s importance as a bulwark against communism in the region increased with the intensification of the Cold War, the United States sought to quickly put aside issues of historical responsibility as in the case of Japan-ROK normalization of 1965. In fact, Washington supported the purging of left, pro-communist officials even though it was the political left that had opposed Japanese imperialism and “was more likely to favor justice and remembrance.”²⁷ Ironically, the officials that took their place were largely former war criminals. Geo-politics prevailed over justice in Northeast Asia.

It is therefore only fitting to raise the question of U.S. responsibility in dealing with the unfortunate past in Northeast Asia. By all means, the United States has been deeply involved in Northeast Asian affairs, especially since 1941. They played a crucial role, albeit not always intended, in dealing with historical issues in the immediate aftermath of the Pacific War. It was the undisputed leader in the Tokyo War Crimes Tribunal, although it was conducted under the auspices of the Allied Powers. Also, as noted above, the San Francisco Treaty of 1951, in which the U.S. played the key conceptual and leadership role, has been cited as the legal basis to block Asian victims from filing suits against the



Japanese government and corporations for wartime grievances. Moreover, the U.S. has not come to terms with its own actions that many see as crimes against humanity: its atomic strikes and firebombing of Japanese cities toward the end of the war. As nations of Northeast Asia are seeking to come to terms with their unfortunate past, it is now time to bring up the thorny question of the U.S. responsibility and potential role in resolving historical disputes in the region. That is, the U.S. should be treated not as an outsider but as an integral part to Northeast Asian historical reconciliation.

Tokyo War Crimes Tribunal

The United States bears responsibility for what can be regarded as the tribunal's failure fully to address Japanese war crimes and for the occupation's inadequate measures to "re-educate" the Japanese about the history of their country's colonial and wartime actions. After the Japanese defeat in the Pacific War, the International Military Tribunal for the Far East (known as Tokyo War Crimes Tribunal) was convened in Tokyo to address the question of Japan's war crimes and atrocities. Unlike the Nuremberg trials, however, it did not have sufficient representation by Asians, though they were the ones who suffered the most by Japanese aggression: only three of the eleven judges at the trial represented Asian countries, and there was no representative from Korea. As a result, the U.S.-led tribunal failed to appreciate—or at least to acknowledge-- the massive suffering of Chinese and Koreans at the hands of Japanese invaders and colonizers and the need to dry up the deep well of anger left behind. The proceedings paid only cursory attention to Japanese aggression against Asians, such as Japan's invasion of Manchuria in 1931, the Nanjing massacre, the use of forced Korean labor in Japanese mines and factories and the "comfort women" by the Japanese military.²⁸ Instead, the tribunal focused on the Japanese actions that had most directly affected the Western allies – the surprise attack on Pearl Harbor and the mistreatment of Allied prisoners of war. Moreover, the United States provided immunity to those Japanese who tested biological weapons on live prisoners of war and civilians, in exchange for information obtained from the experiments.²⁹ This neglect of crimes against Asians is, in one Korean scholar's view, "one of the most serious defects of the Tokyo trial...[since] many of the victims of these crimes were left helpless by the injuries they suffered, and they have been left without redress to this day."³⁰ These flaws and specific omissions, as many scholars argue, "discredited the evidence of war crimes that the trials did uncover, tainted the concept of postwar justice, and restored the legitimacy of the very leaders the trials had sought to impugn."³¹



Perhaps the most significant outcome of the Tokyo Tribunal in shaping the future process of dealing with Japan's past wrong doings was the decision to preserve the Showa Emperor and the U.S. once again played a decisive role in the decision. U.S. leaders in the Allied Forces in Japan believed that keeping the emperor as a social institution deprived of political power would facilitate the occupation and reconstruction of postwar Japan. There is still no consensus over the extent of the emperor's responsibility for Japanese militarism and war crimes,³² but it is unmistakable that the Japanese people fought and died in his name. Even in the tribunal, there were disputes over the emperor's responsibility. The Australian judge and chair of the tribunal, Sir William Webb, opposed the idea of keeping the imperial institution intact, calling the emperor "the leader in the crime."³³ However, his was a minority view in the U.S.-dominated court. According to Arnold Brackman, a correspondent for United Press who covered the Tokyo war crimes trials, "Keenan (the Allied chief prosecutor) and his staff argued that in both theory and practice the evidence showed that 'the Emperor's role [was] that of a figurehead,' 'following the line laid down by MacArthur and the Truman administration.'³⁴ Unlike in Europe in which Hitler and other key leaders of the war and the holocaust were punished for their atrocities and crimes, the opportunity to address the personal and institutional role of the emperor in the Japanese historical injustices was clearly lost.

The failure to confront and address this issue of Emperor Hirohito's war responsibility greatly shaped the ways in which Japanese would remember the war years and address reconciliation issues with their Asian neighbors. As Lind asserts, "psychological warfare officials and Occupation authorities alike crafted a mythology of Japanese victimhood in which the public had been duped by a militarist clique into launching an ill-fated war." This "military clique thesis," according to her, pardoned Japan of guilt and fostered an already ubiquitous "sense of self-pity." The Japanese elite also attempted to "protect the throne, its occupant, and their own rule" by linking Hirohito to "the idea of peace,"³⁵ and the campaign to promote the myth of the emperor's innocence or victim of the militarists only strengthened Japanese victim consciousness and impeded the search for historical truth. As Japanese historian Herbert Bix acutely notes, "as long as Hirohito remained on the throne, unaccountable to anyone for his official actions, most Japanese had little reason to question their support of him or feel responsibility for the war, let alone look beyond the narrow boundaries of victim consciousness."³⁶ A recent study on historical disputes in Northeast Asia by the International Crisis Group reached a similar conclusion: "the absolution of the Emperor left the country without anyone to blame."³⁷



The San Francisco Treaty

The San Francisco Peace Treaty of 1951 formally ended the war, settling Japan's obligations to pay reparations for its wartime acts. It was a settlement made between the Allied Powers and Japan but once again the U.S. was a key player. However, neither the Republic of Korea nor the People's Republic of China was invited to the San Francisco Peace Conference, and neither were party to the 1951 Treaty. The Republic of China concluded a separate Treaty of Peace with Japan in 1952. These Asian nations, while being main victims of Japanese aggressions through colonialism and war, were not part of the formal process of settling Japan's responsibilities. By then, the PRC had become an enemy of the U.S. and Korea was weak, divided, and in the midst of a major war. Japan's responsibility toward the PRC and the ROK was not settled but overlooked.

Nevertheless, the 1951 Treaty became a major basis of later court rulings on war-time atrocities and crimes. For instance, in April 2007, Japan's Supreme Court foreclosed all pending and future lawsuits arising from actions taken by Japan in the course of colonialism and war. The court cited as a main ground the relevant provisions of the San Francisco Treaty, especially article 14. The article 14(b) stated that "Except as otherwise provided in the present Treaty, the Allied Powers waive all reparations claims of the Allied Powers, other claims of the Allied Powers and their nationals arising out of any actions taken by Japan and its nationals in the course of the prosecution of the war, and claims of the Allied Powers for direct military costs of occupation." The article had no separate mention about Japan's reparations for its Asian victims and the article has been interpreted as waiving their rights to claim all together. Apparently, as discussed above, the Japanese Supreme Court regarded the treaty, drafted at the height of the Cold War largely by the United States and without the participation of China and Korea, as having stripped them and their citizens of legal means to obtain compensation.

For U.S. cases, the same article has been cited as well. In the *Hwang Geum Joo vs. Japan* decision handed down by the U.S. DC Circuit Court of Appeals on June 28, 2005, for example, the presiding judge noted that this article "expressly waives 'all claims of the Allied Powers and their nationals arising out of any actions taken by Japan and its nationals in the course of the prosecution of the war.'" Chinese, Taiwanese, and Korean plaintiffs in this case, who were "comfort women" (sex slaves used by Japanese troops), objected that their countries were not party to the 1951 Treaty. They also argued that subsequent treaties between their nations and Japan should not prevent private tort suits. However, this argument was rejected on the standard, and rigidly mechanical reasoning that claims waiver stipulations applied in these subsequent treaties as well.



In addition, the San Francisco Treaty (i.e., its deficiencies) sowed the seeds for the current territorial disputes in Northeast Asia. For instance, early drafts of the Treaty specified that Tokdo/Takeshima (Liancourt Rocks in English) was a Korean territory, but then transferred its ownership to Japan (1949), and in the end omitted any designation of this area. Similarly, the USSR was initially specified as the recipient of the Kurile islands but this was deleted in the final stage of treaty drafting as well. However, the lack of specification was neither coincidence nor error. Instead, as Kimie Hara points out, “various issues were deliberately left unresolved due to the regional Cold War.” The United States commanded responsibility for designating sovereignty over the islands in question today but “sidestepped doing so at the time, making Washington’s feigned disinterest ever since the proverbial elephant in the room.”³⁸ As Hara explains further, “Earlier drafts were, as a whole, based on US wartime studies and were consistent with the ‘punitive peace’ plan and the Yalta spirit of inter-Allied cooperation. However, with the emergence of the Cold War in the peace terms changed from punitive to generous as US strategic thinking focused on securing Japan within the Western bloc and assuring a long-term US military presence in Japan, particularly in Okinawa.”³⁹

There was an opportunity to remedy the deficiencies of the San Francisco Treaty when Japan and ROK normalized their relations but the questions of historical injustice and territorial issue were once again put aside. In 1965, under heavy pressure from a United States anxious to solidify its Cold War security alliance system and to bolster the South Korean economy, the Republic of Korea agreed to normalize relations with Japan in the midst of strong domestic protests. Korea received substantial Japanese economic assistance but Japan refused to term this “reparations.” Issues such as disputed territories and Japan’s colonial rule were again swept under the rug. Unlike in Western Europe, where the United States established a multilateral security arrangement (i.e., NATO) and pushed for Franco-German reconciliation, in Northeast Asia the United States established a bilateral “hub and spoke” alliance system with Japan and the ROK and did not press for a fundamental historical reconciliation between the two U.S. allies.⁴⁰ As a result, “normalization” occurred at the governmental level but without addressing popular demands for the redress of historical injustices. As one former U.S. senior diplomat points out, “for American policy makers, strategic considerations have consistently trumped issues of equity in historic disputes involving Japan since World War II.”⁴¹



U.S. “Crimes Against Humanity” in Japan

Reckoning with the past is not simply a matter of passing judgment on Japan’s actions and the U.S. must ultimately confront its own “crimes against humanity.” Japan was unquestionably a major aggressor in the region and must acknowledge more fully its responsibility. At the same time, we need to recognize that American actions that could be seen as “crimes against humanity” have never been officially addressed by the U.S. It is hardly any secret that Japanese, many of whom were civilians, suffered from the U.S. military actions toward the end of the war. Besides the well-known atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki that killed about 140,000 and 70,000 civilians, respectively, the United States killed more civilians through massive firebombing of Japanese cities. For instance, the firebombing of Tokyo alone on March 9-10, 1945, led to the death of about 100,000 people and the destruction of one million homes. At the time, the targeting for destruction of entire cities with conventional weapons (known as “area” or “carpet” bombing) was still controversial.⁴² Japan to this day remains as the only country hit by nuclear weapons.

While American leaders maintained that these bombings were necessary to defeat the Japanese military while minimizing American casualties, there exist dissenting views of the American actions. Justice Pal of India even argued during the Tokyo trial that “in the war in Asia the only act comparable to Nazi atrocities was perpetrated by the leaders of the United States.”⁴³ Nevertheless, no discussion of American bombing on civilians was ever allowed at the Tokyo Tribunal and to this day the United States has made no official acknowledgement of human sufferings from its firebombings or atomic bombings of Japan.⁴⁴ This double standard or victor’s justice, in the view of John Dower, “provided fertile soil for the growth of a postwar neo-nationalism” in Japan and hindered Japanese efforts for historical reconciliation.⁴⁵ A recent case in point is an award-winning essay by then-Chief of Staff of the Japanese Air Self-Defense Force, General Tamogami in the fall of 2008. In what the Economist labeled as a “barely warm hash of thrice-cooked revisionism,” Tamogami claims that the war was Japan’s attempt to defend its legal territories of China and Korea against Communist conspirators, Pearl Harbor was nothing but an American trap, and colonial rule was a benevolent undertaking that is viewed with gratitude from East Asian neighbors.⁴⁶ Any accusation of wartime atrocity is nothing more than a misconceived “rumor” and Japan must fight to “reclaim its glorious history... for a country that denies its own history is destined to fall.” Tamogami’s accusatory essay strongly suggests that unless the U.S. addresses its own history issue with Japan, this kind of rightist view will continue to find ground in Japan.



Although Tamogami has advocated a rather extremist view among Japanese, according to a survey of Japanese opinion conducted by the Asahi Shimbun on April 2000, only 17% said that “the [Tokyo] trials justly judged those who were responsible for the war,” while 34% said they believed that “the trials were an unjust and unilateral judgment of the defeated nations by the victor nations.”⁴⁷ Justice Pal’s dissenting view, which was dismissed at the time of the Tribunal, has been given attention in Japanese history textbooks (see “Tokyo war crimes tribunal” at the popular *Yamakawa Japanese History B*). Reflecting such victim identity, Yasukuni Shrine Yushukan annex museum inscriptions prepared in the early 2000’s make no reference to invasion, aggression, massacres or atrocities committed by Japanese troops. Instead, a revised display blames the American President (FDR) for provoking war with Japan. As Kingston points out, “Japanese suffering is the only suffering on display” (2008, 5). While they are a less explicit than the Yasukuni museum language, even historical museums addressing the atomic bomb present a view that questions America’s justification for the bombs and leave open the question of general responsibility for the war. The Hiroshima Peace Memorial Museum, for instance, asserts that “the atomic bomb had cost 2 billion dollars and mobilized, at its peak, over 120,000 people. Linking this weapon to the end of the war would help justify that expenditure. In addition to the desire to force Japan’s surrender, these considerations led the US to proceed with the atomic bombings.” This general accusation is backed by depictions of US behavior immediately following the bomb and characterizations of perceived American insensitivity to the resulting damage. At one point, the exhibits devote several captions to the suggestion that the horrific casualties had inspired a U.S. reaction more attuned to scientific research than medical and humanitarian aid.

This difference in interpretation of American responsibility is also prevalent in Japanese media. According to Kiyoteru Tsutsui’s content analysis of editorials published in three major Japanese newspapers from 1945 to 2000, “evasion” has been the most dominant approach in the postwar Japanese media discourse on the war. The evasion frame partially accepts the guilt but evades the trauma of perpetration by shifting the focus to its own victim consciousness. With this frame, often employed by progressive media elements, the Japanese highlight the suffering of Japanese citizens during the Asia-Pacific War, while ignoring Asian victims of Japanese aggressions. In addition, they have employed a “displacement” frame, claiming that other Western nations were committing equally terrible or worse violations of human rights in their colonies. This discourse, often favored by Japanese conservatives, downplays the severity of Japan’s war crimes. As discussed above, the decision against trying the emperor in the Tribunal and its perception as a “victor’s justice” fueled the promotion of the two frames.



Can the United States Play Role?

As noted above, many efforts for historical reconciliation from apology to litigation to joint history writing seem to hit but never clear the wall in Northeast Asia. Even when the governments of Japan, China, and South Korea tried to move away from being held hostage to history, public perceptions did not always follow or support the political lead. Not only in democratic societies like Japan and South Korea but even in China political leaders have to accommodate popular perceptions and demands in their policy making. As scholars and experts have noted, reconciliation is a long-term, multi-faceted process, involving various groups and actors, and it requires patience, especially in Northeast Asia where efforts for historical reconciliation did not begin until the 1980s. We can and should learn from other successful experiences of reconciliation such as the European one but ultimately have to develop a model or strategy that fits historical experiences and contemporary politics of Northeast Asia. In this context, I argue that the U.S. can and should play a constructive role in breaking the current stalemate and in facilitating a renewed effort for historical reconciliation.

There has been some debate in U.S. academic and policymaking circles about the role the United States might play in helping to resolve historical disputes and to achieve reconciliation in Northeast Asia. A predominant view has been that this is primarily a matter for Asians and better left to their historians. By taking a specific position, its proponents fear that the United States could be pulled into the Sino-Japanese rivalry or forced to take sides between its key allies in the region, i.e., Japan and South Korea.⁴⁸ In this vein, the US State Department has taken a position that the San Francisco Treaty protected Japan from demands for compensation from victim nations. The contrary view contends that the United States can hardly afford to stand outside these disputes, particularly when it was a key player in their creation. Referring to the recent dispute over the naming of Tokdo/Takeshima island, Alexis Dudden aptly points out that it has “brought us back to 1952, when America’s occupation of Japan ended, and the United States determined who owned what in East Asia and the Pacific.” She asserts “Washington must not overlook its place in the problem now.”⁴⁹ Gil Rozman went one step further, urging the United States to “explicitly challenge revived nationalist interpretations in Japan while also trying to calm historical grievances in South Korea and China.” U.S. efforts in the region need to be more directed and with the purpose of narrowing the historical divide in East Asia, while acting as the impetus towards increased mutual understanding. Rozman exhorts that it is vital for the U.S. to step up in the form of proactive leadership while at the same time evading problems with its allies. After all



“benign neglect of Japanese nationalism threatens to unravel the spirit of reconciliation in East Asia.”⁵⁰

Yet, despite its proclaimed neutrality, the US government has not acted always so. When former forced laborers filed claims against Japan, for instance, the U.S. took a position that was very different from the one that they had taken in the German case. The U.S. government pressed hard to force the reluctant German government and corporations to admit their role and responsibility, make a public apology to the victims, and provide compensation. Toward the Japanese government, however, the U.S. position was precisely opposite, protecting it against claims at every step, even before the San Francisco Treaty. The 1951 Treaty once again became the legal basis of the argument that Japan has no more responsibility to fulfill toward foreign forced laborers.

Despite the policy stance adopted by the U.S. executive branch, the U.S. House of Representatives took up Asian history issues more proactively by introducing various bills on Japan’s responsibility for wartime comfort woman. For instance, in April 2006, two members of the US Congress, representatives Lane Evans (D-Illinois) and Chris Smith (R-New Jersey), introduced a non-binding resolution that called on the government of Japan to “formally acknowledge and accept responsibility for its sexual enslavement of young women” during the 1930s and 1940s. Although previous efforts failed, the House in 2007 passed a resolution, H. Res. 121, criticizing the Japanese handling of the “comfort women” issue. Introduced by Representative Mike Honda, a Japanese American legislator, it called on the Japanese government to “formally acknowledge, apologize, and accept historical responsibility in a clear and unequivocal manner for its Imperial Armed Forces’ coercion of young women into sexual slavery, known to the world as ‘comfort women’, during its colonial and wartime occupation of Asia and the Pacific Islands from the 1930s through the duration of World War II.” The resolution urged that Japan “should educate current and future generations about this horrible crime while following the recommendation of the international community with respect to the ‘comfort women.’”⁵¹

As many have noted, any reexamination of the U.S. “national myth” with respect to wartime atrocities is likely to provoke controversy and spirited rebuttals in the United States and understandably some object to any decision to open up this “Pandora’s Box.” As in Asia, the history question can be easily politicized in the U.S. Still, Washington must not overlook the issues at hand and needs to reconsider its “hands-off” posture and be more proactive. The United States not only has a responsibility for helping to resolve the disputes but also has a clear interest in ensuring that the peace and prosperity of a region so vital to its future is not undermined by controversies rooted in the past. In other words, resolving the history issue is not simply a matter of assisting Asians to achieve over-due



reconciliation; it is important if not imperative for U.S. alliance relations and strategic equities in the region as well. As the recent dispute between South Korea and Japan over the naming of Tokdo/Takeshima illustrates, the history question can easily spill over into the United States.

Then, how can the U.S. be involved in facilitating historical reconciliation in the region? Some experts advocate an active U.S. intervention in Asian history issues by pressing Japan to confront the unfortunate past. For instance, G. John Ikenberry argues that Japan's history problem is an American problem and therefore "Washington should encourage Japan to pursue [a] German path, tying 'normalization' to redoubled commitments to regional security cooperation."⁵² In my view, it is a noble aim but not an effective strategy. It won't be convincing in the eyes of the Japanese who have their own victim consciousness vis-à-vis the U.S., desiring "true closure with the U.S. over World War II" first. In addition, many in the region, especially in Korea, want the U.S. to take a clear position on contested historical and territorial issues. However, that does not appear to be a sensible approach either, since – as skeptics have noted— the U.S. would be forced to take sides between two vital allies.

Instead, I would argue for a self-critical, self-reflective approach on the part of the U.S. That is, the United States needs to first and foremost acknowledge its own past wrongdoings in the region and any responsibility in handling or mishandling of history issues. For instance, it can acknowledge the sufferings of Japanese victims by the atomic bombing and express regret for having paid scant attention to Asian issues during the Tribunal. This will help to endow the U.S. with moral power and establish a basis for encouraging Japan to address the history question. In doing so, however, the U.S. must make it clear that such expression or action is not meant to vindicate Japan's victim identity or to support Japanese rightist views that assign blame to the U.S. for Japanese imperialism and human sufferings during the Pacific War. It also must be clear that Japan is expected to follow suit with its Asian neighbors. It should not be seen as siding with Japan over China or Korea regarding historical disputes. In addition, the U.S. can help efforts to reinterpret article 14 of the San Francisco Peace Treaty to allow the victims to file claims against the Japanese government and corporations as was done with Germany. Such proactive actions by the U.S., it is hoped, would encourage the Japanese to explore with greater sincerity and depth their own record of the unfortunate past and overcome victim consciousness. This might even open up the new process of reconciliation in the region that is badly needed.

In this context, it is worth revisiting some suggestions and proposals on the part of a number of experts and policy makers. One is a proposal put forth by the Japanese



journalist Fumio Matsuo on historical reconciliation between the U.S. and Japan. In his view, many Japanese feel most uneasy about the lack of “true closure” between the two countries over the war, and that needs to be addressed first. He proposes a step-by-step process of historical reconciliation led by U.S. action as follows: “as a starting point, Japan must face up to its past and its unfortunate war with the U.S. After we remove that remaining thorn, Japan will have to... [admit] the simple truth to the rest of Asia that Japan started the war. From that start, we can begin to remove the thorns, one by one, between Japan and its neighbors, just as we are asking the Americans to pay respects to our war victims, and bring closure to a sad chapter in our history.” Referring to the “Dresden moment” in which the military leaders of Germany’s former enemies attended the 50th anniversary of the Allied bombings of the city, Matsuo suggests that the U.S. President visit and lay a wreath at the Hiroshima Peace Memorial, followed by similar actions of the Japanese leader vis-à-vis Japan’s Asian neighbors.⁵³ Although it holds the potential dangers of portraying U.S. and Japan as equally culpable in wartime atrocities of seemingly validating Japan’s victim identity or rightists views, this is one such concrete strategy that the U.S. should consider seriously. Such an action by the U.S. President could also enhance the U.S. international image as champion of human rights and peace, one that has been tainted in recent years with a resulting sharp rise of anti-American sentiments in many parts of the world.

As to the San Francisco Peace Treaty, David Palmer, an Australian scholar, advocates the need to use a new interpretation of international law. As discussed earlier, the 1951 treaty has been the basis for rejection of individual tort claims in both the U.S. and Japan. Thus far, international law has been interpreted such that only governments retain the power to advance claims on behalf of injured nationals; this has deflated victim awareness and any hope of receiving reparations. Although the traditional state-centric view of international law holds that individuals lack any independent standing while only states possess claims rights, Palmer points out that an increasing number of international jurists is questioning this view. Palmer cites as one example the International Criminal Court, whose main objective has been to empower individuals to bring claims when their governments cannot or will not. Here too, the U.S. can play a leading role by seriously considering the possible reinterpretation of the San Francisco Treaty in ways to allow the victims to redress social injustice through the legal system. Palmer specifically offers a four-pronged approach to empower individual claims and aid Japan and the United States to pursue a mutual apology and mutual compensation that can result in the reinterpretation of normalization treaties and empower victims. First, both states need to create a legal climate more conducive to additional claims. Continued court claims will



provide increasing information and eventually lead to broader judicial interpretations of the international treaties to include the recognition of individual claims. Essentially the more the specific issues are heard; the more likely victims will find a sympathetic legal ear. Second, specific actions by government leaders and heads of state are necessary to signify to the world that reparations and reconciliation are not impossible ventures. This process should be launched by a means of a “long overdue” U.S. apology for the atomic bombings to establish a basis for mutual reparations. Third, government-to-government consultation and action with the aim of creating an environment of increased awareness and mutual understanding is needed. Palmer suggests this has already begun between Japan and Korea in the form of increased dialogue and efforts to lay the groundwork for further compensation. The process stands to be even more successful if the U.S. were to take a leadership role in recognizing specifically Korean victims and looking more closely at the implications of the two treaties. Fourth and finally, the role and significance of international civil society through social movements and transnational cooperation is a necessary and sufficient variable for Japan and the United States to mutually compensate and apologize. Bottom-up pressure from international citizenry will continue to aid the process of bringing both Japan and the United States to terms with their respective roles in the unfortunate past.⁵⁴

Generally, cases brought by individual victims of Japanese war crimes in U.S. courts have been dismissed on the ground that they would open a Pandora’s Box having uncertain but predictably negative consequences for healthy bilateral and economic relations. Robert Bork, former Solicitor General and President Regan defeated nominee for the Supreme Court, asserts that individual tort cases filed against governments will have a “certain potential to interfere with United States foreign policy.”⁵⁵ However, the general U.S. aversion to consideration of such cases begs the question of the difference between the Japanese and German case with regards to the American role in reparation and reconciliation. The U.S. government played a facilitating role in the negotiations between Nazi slave-labor victims and the German government and companies that led to the creation of the German Slave Labor Foundation. In contrast, the U.S. government (the Justice Department in close consultation with the State Department) filed a statement of interest in the cases of litigation against the Japanese government and companies favoring the Japanese defendants.⁵⁶ In other words, the U.S. government took a largely *political* approach toward the German case, encouraging both parties in the litigation to make settlements, whereas it took a strictly *legalistic* approach toward the Japanese case, denying the rights to claim by individual victims referring to the San Francisco Treaty.⁵⁷

However, the U.S. government needs to consider adopting a more political approach



toward the Japanese case, as it took with the German case. In fact, it was a largely political decision on the part of the U.S. government when it granted Japan a waiver of all reparation claims in the San Francisco Treaty. As John Dower, the author of the Pulitzer Prize winning 2000 study “Embracing Defeat” asserts, “we wanted Japan on our side because China was now seen as an enemy. And this meant not burdening Japan with reparations (any more than necessary), not burdening Japan with future claims. That is the treaty of 1951... And it also meant the Americans set about whitewashing and sanitizing Japan’s war responsibility and war crimes.”⁵⁸ In this context, one can certainly question the validity of the strictly legalistic interpretation of the Treaty born out of political considerations. Here the U.S. must show political leadership in encouraging Japan to be more receptive to reparation issues for historical reconciliation.

Finally, academic institutions and NGOs in the U.S. can play a role in promoting dialogue between U.S. and nations of Northeast Asia. Then-Deputy U.S. Secretary of State Robert Zoellick, speaking in Japan in 2006, suggested that one way to defuse tensions would be a non-governmental effort by historians and scholars in China, Japan, and the United States to examine the history of World War II and perhaps other periods as well. In order for this to take place though, Zoellick specifically mentions the need for certain aspects in China’s own historical record to be a “more open, dispassionate, transparent view [that] can benefit all parties, not only dealing with the World War II history.”⁵⁹ Gilbert Rozman went a step further by calling for “US efforts to narrow historical differences and to set in motion a process of joint study of historical materials and increased mutual understanding [between Japan and Korea].”⁶⁰ In fact, in recent years, several American academic institutions have been engaged in various projects dealing with the history issue in Northeast Asia. Harvard University, for instance, carried out a multi-year project studying the Sino-Japanese war that held conferences in 2002 and 2004. The Sigur Center at George Washington University has a project on Memory and Reconciliation in the Asia-Pacific consisting mainly of creating an information database. Stanford University’s Shorenstein Asia-Pacific Research Center has been engaged in a multi-year project on Divided Memories and Historical Reconciliation in collaboration with East Asian institutions. All these efforts take the U.S. as integral to the history problem in Asia and should be encouraged to continue. In more general terms, as Andrew Horvat points out, Western civil society has the means to exert a positive influence on historical reconciliation in Northeast Asia: “The independently run, well funded, and professionally managed foundations of the United States and Europe have both the experience and the resources needed to initiate programs in this area and to function as Transnational Non-state Actors.”⁶¹



The U.S. in New Northeast Asia

It is time for Americans to take seriously issues of historical injustice and responsibility in Northeast Asia, including their own. Simply put, the United States is not an outsider nor free of responsibility for the history problem, especially with regard to the history of World War II and postwar settlements. The U.S. has played a crucial role in shaping the contour of this region for much of the second half of the twentieth century and still has a significant stake. It is a critical time for a new Northeast Asia as well. Increased regional interaction in recent years has not diminished the importance of the past. On the contrary, the past has become even more contentious as nations vie for regional leadership. In fact, as Daniel Sneider points out, the emergence of history textbooks as a diplomatic issue in the early 1980s was a response to Japan's bid for regional leadership, propelled by its economic success.⁶² The multiple layers of disputes among Northeast Asian nations over history and territorial issues in the region of new formulation should give rise to concern among American policy-makers. Now, as China rises as an economic power and competitor with Japan for leadership in an integrated Northeast Asia, the past is taking on ever more importance.

Despite the centrality of the history question in Northeast Asia, however, the United States has not played the same kind of proactive role that it embraced in the formation of a new European community in the postwar era. Unlike in Europe, where it has promoted reconciliation between France and Germany, the United States has done little to promote comparable reconciliation between China and Japan. In part, this was because China was communist and the system of bi-lateral security alliances built in the Cold War period has worked well to meet American interests. In recent years, the U.S. may have been simply too occupied with other pressing issues, the Middle East and Islamist terrorism in particular, to devote policymaker attention to this issue. But, as former Deputy Assistant Secretary of State Randall Schriver argues, the United States cannot afford to stand outside in shaping a new Northeast Asia.⁶³

It is important to note that international society must understand the complex layers of Northeast Asian history and reconciliation. It is simply misleading to mechanically compare, as many casual observers do, the ways that Northeast Asia and Western Europe have dealt with the past. It cannot and should not be expected that Northeast Asia will just repeat or emulate the experiences of Western Europe. The regions have distinctive histories, experiences, and memories, and perhaps even different cultural modes of reconciliation.⁶⁴ In fact, the German model was probably historically unique.⁶⁵ Accordingly, we must search for a Northeast Asian method or strategy of reconciliation,



while using the European experiences as a reference. We also need to be patient with the rather slow progress in Northeast Asian efforts for reconciliation—even in Europe it took a long time to achieve significant progress and efforts in Northeast Asia are relatively recent. Reconciliation is inherently a multi-layered, complex, long-term process involving multiple actors, including the state, civil society, and international organizations. In this context, the U.S. can be a player in facilitating the complex process of reconciliation.

In the final analysis, overcoming the historical grievances that divide the nations of Northeast Asia is not just a necessary condition to avoid conflict and enhance cooperation; it is a prerequisite for building a new regional community and has policy importance for the United States as well. Northeast Asia is too vital for the U.S. to ignore. Instead of standing aside, American policymakers must pay attention to the deeper meaning of historical disputes and reconciliation in Northeast Asia with far greater seriousness. They must look for ways to facilitate historical reconciliation as integral to their policy toward the region. That would benefit not only those in the region but the U.S. itself for years to come. ■



Endnotes

- ¹ **This is a paper in progress. Please do NOT cite or quote any part of it without permission of the author.** I'm grateful to Hilary Izatt for excellent research assistance and to Don Keyser for his insightful comments. Comments and suggestions are welcome and should be sent to the author at gwshin@stanford.edu.
- ² See <http://www.mansfieldfdn.org/polls>.
- ³ For apologies directed at countries including China, see: Caroline Rose *Sino-Japanese Relations: Facing the Past, Looking to the Future?* (London: Routledge, 2005), pp. 101-02.
- ⁴ While there is no complete list of all unofficial apologies made by Japan, the author measures unofficial in terms of context the statement was made and key terminology used.
- ⁵ In retrospect, the years of the mid-nineties—centered as they were on Prime Minister Murayama's leadership—were a high point in apology diplomacy between Japan and Korea. Murayama created the Asia Women Fund through an unofficial channel, for the purpose of compensating comfort women, showing his administration's commitment to the cause (although the Korean government rejected the proposal in the end). In June 1996, every one of the seven new middle-school history textbooks selected by the Education Ministry included a one-line description of the comfort women. It was a significant gesture of repentance from the Japanese political leadership to clear up the comfort women controversy.
- ⁶ Caroline Rose, *Sino-Japanese Relations: Facing the Past, Looking to the Future?* (London: Routledge, 2005), p. 102.
- ⁷ *Asahi Shinbun*, 24 November 1998, no. 5, as quoted in in Rose, p. 108.
- ⁸ For more on the Japanese conservatives' view of Asia, see Wakamiya Yoshiyumi, *Sengo hoshu no Ajia kan* (Tokyo: Asahi Shimbunsha, 1997). Translated into English as *How Japan's Conservatives View Asia*.
- ⁹ *Mainichi Shimbun*, 5 May 1995, as quoted in Wakamiya Yoshiyumi, *The Postwar Conservative View of Asia: How the Political Right Has Delayed Japan's Coming to Terms With its History of Aggression in Asia*, (Tokyo: LTCB International Library Foundation, 1998), pp. 11-13.



¹⁰ *Bungei shunju*, October 1995, as quoted in Yoshibumi. Yoshibumi also utilizes the phrasing of “Asian Liberation” a term that was used to justify colonial endeavors by several conservative public officers., pp. 11-13.

¹¹ See Seth Cropsey, Heritage Lecture no. 353, 30 November 1991, “On the Pearl Harbor Anniversary, Japan Still Says Don’t Blame Me” At<
<http://www.heritage.org/research/asiaandthepacific/hl353.cfm>> (Accessed 18 February 2009),
For a list of several compiled quotes from Japanese officials see,
<http://www.users.bigpond.com/battleforaustralia/WarCrimeIntro.html>. Specifically looking at
LDP president Hashimoto Ryutaro, see LDP Monthly, October 1993 in Wakamiya Yoshibumi, 21,
Okuno Seisuke, Director General of the National Land Agency, Asahi Shimbun, April 26, 1988
Wakamiya Yoshibumi, p. 11.

¹² See *Han’guk Ilbo* (October 16, 2001).

¹³ Victor Cha argues that the issue of apology is necessary, but not sufficient for reconciliation to begin. See Victor Cha, “Hypothesis on History and Hate in Asia: Japan and the Korean Peninsula,” in Yoichi Funabashi, ed., *Reconciliation in the Asia-Pacific* (Washington, DC: USIP Press, 2003), pp. 37–59.

¹⁴ Alexis Dudden, *Troubled Apologies Among Japan, Korea, and the United States*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008), p. 33

¹⁵ Ivy Lee, “In Search of Redress for Historical Injustice: The Slave Labor Lawuits Against Japanese Corporations,” *East Asia* 19, no. 4 (Winter 2001), p. 144.

¹⁶ U.N. Commission on Human Rights: Update to the Final Report on Contemporary Forms of Slavery; Systematic Rape, Sexual Slavery and Slavery-Like Practices During Armed Conflict: Report of the Special Rapporteur, Gay J. McDougall, U.S. ESCOR, 52nd Sess., Prov. Agenda Item 6, UN DOC E/CN.4/Sub2/2000/21 (2001). As Quoted in Susan Jenkins Vanderweert “Seeking Justice for “Comfort” Women: Without an International Criminal Court, Suits Brought by World War II Sex Slaves of the Japanese Army May Find Their Best Hope of Success in U.S. Federal Courts,” *North Carolina Journal of International Law and Commercial Regulation*, (2001), pp. 141-82.



¹⁷ Susan Jenkins Vanderweert, pp. 160-64.

¹⁸ Memorandum of Points and Authorities in Support of Plaintiff's Motion for Declaratory Judgment that Japan Cannot Claim Sovereign Immunity in Defense of Claims of Systematic Sexual Slavery During World War II, Hwang Geum Joo, et al., v. Japan, no. 00-CV-2288, renumbered 00-CV2233 (D.D.C. motion filed 5 March 2001) as cited in Susan Jenkins Vanderweert, p. 176.

¹⁹ United States District Court for the District of Columbia, Civil Action 00-02233 (HHK), Hwang Geum Joo, et al. v. Japan, Henry H. Kennedy Jr., United States District Judge, Memorandum: 4 October 2001, At < <http://www.cmht.com/pdfs/comf-decision1.pdf> > (accessed 2 February 2009), p. 23.

²⁰ Ibid, 12.

²¹ Lisa Yoneyama, "Traveling Memories, Contagious Justice: Americanization of Japanese War Crimes at the End of the Post-Cold War," *Journal of Asian American Studies* 6, no. 1 (February 2003), p. 62-4.

²² While Europe grappled with this issue from the earliest days of the postwar period as an international relations issue, history textbooks did not emerge as an international battlefield in Northeast Asia until the early 1980s. Before then, textbooks were almost purely a domestic issue, mainly within Japan. The "history problem" between Japan and its Asian neighbors is generally considered to have begun in the early 1980s, triggered by the so-called textbook controversy of 1982. The timing can best be explained by domestic as well as international conditions. To varying degrees, each of the three societies underwent profound changes in the 1980s. The role of emerging civil society in Japan's neighboring countries was particularly important. Issues of historical injustice was no longer monopolized or controlled by governments. Instead, civil society and transnational NGO groups became increasingly involved in the issues of historical injustice and reconciliation. While the state's role cannot be denied, it was, quite possibly, the increasing freedom of speech in both Korea and China that brought to the fore some of the pent-up dissatisfaction with earlier settlements with Japan. The shifts in geopolitics and the winding down of the Cold War allowed governments to reassess external priorities and, at times, to allow the history issue to dominate state-to-state relations. The end of the Cold War ideological confrontation was also influenced by the rise of national "identity politics" that appeared in many



parts of the world. Growing global attention to national identity, human rights, and historical injustice has certainly contributed to the rise of the “history problems” in Northeast Asia.

²³ Even in this book, complete agreement is not possible to achieve. According to a key participant in this project, all three nations are producing a slightly different version of this common history book. For instance, when referring to “comfort women,” the Korean version uses “sex slaves” while the Japanese one uses “ianfu” (Japanese for “comfort women”). See also Chapter xx in this book.

²⁴ See Andrew Horvat, “A Strong State, Weak Civil Society, and Cold War Geopolitics: Why Japan lags behind Europe in Confronting a Negative Past?,” in Gi-Wook Shin, Soon-Won Park, and Daqing Yang, eds., *Rethinking Historical Injustice and Reconciliation in Northeast Asia* (London and New York: Routledge, 2007), p. 222.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Jennifer Lind, *Sorry States: Apologies in International Politics*, (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2008), pp. 194-95.

²⁷ Ibid, p. 32.

²⁸ In Dower’s view, the Tokyo trials focused on “crimes against peace” but ignored “crimes against humanity,” including “murder, extermination, enslavement, deportation, and other inhumane acts committed before or during the war, or persecutions on political or racial grounds in execution of or in connection with any crime within the jurisdiction of the Tribunal, whether or not in violation of the domestic law of the country where perpetrated.” Many war crimes against Asians such as forced labor, “comfort women,” and mass killings of civilians belong to the second category. John W. Dower, *Embracing Defeat: Japan in the Wake of World War II* (New York: Norton and Co., 2000), 473-474, p. 456.

²⁹ A former judge at the Tokyo trial, B. V. A. Röling, recalled in 1983: “The prestige of the trial has also been severely damaged by the revelation of the existence in Manchuria of a Japanese laboratory for research into bacteriological weapons. These weapons were tested on prisoners of war and cost thousands of lives. This incident would have provided a case, rare at the Tokyo trial, of centrally organized war criminality. But everything connected with it was kept from the



tribunal. The American military authorities wanted to avail themselves of the results of these experiments, criminally obtained by Japan, and at the same time to prevent them from falling into the hands of the Soviet Union. The judges in Tokyo remained ignorant. The Japanese involved in these crimes were promised immunity from prosecution in exchanges for divulging the information obtained from the experiments.” See his “Introduction” in Hosoya et al., *The Tokyo War Crimes Trial*, p. 18.

³⁰ This Korean scholar (Paik Choong-Hyun) contended that “historical evidence demonstrates that there was a larger number of cases of crimes against humanity: murder, extermination, enslavement, deportation, and other inhumane acts committed by the then existing Japanese government, or with the acquiescence of that government, against minority populations in Japan, Korea, Manchuria, China, the Philippines, and the other Asian regions under Japanese control. But the victorious Allied powers paid very little attention to crimes committed against these colonial peoples, perhaps because the victims of these crimes were not nationals of the victorious nations.” Chihiro Hosoya, Andō Nisuke, Ōnuma Yasuaki, and Richard H. Minear, eds., *The Tokyo War Crimes Trial: An International Symposium* (Tokyo 1986, Kodansha Ltd), p. 54.

³¹ Lind, pp. 30-31.

³² An April 2006 survey by the Asahi Shimbun shows 16% of the respondents believing that the emperor bears “extremely heavy responsibility” for the war, while 15% say that he has “no responsibility.” Another 22% think that the emperor bears “heavy responsibility” and 42% say that he has “some degree of responsibility.” See <http://www.mansfieldfdn.org/polls/poll-06-3.htm> (accessed 27 April 2008). For excellent accounts of the Japanese emperor Hirohito’s war responsibility, see Herbert P. Bix, *Hirohito and the Making of Modern Japan* (New York: HarperCollins Perennial Edition, 2001) and “War Responsibility and Historical Memory: Hirohito’s Apparition,” *Japan Focus* (May 2008) (<http://japanfocus.org/products/details/2741> (accessed 12 May 2008)).

³³ Hosoya et al., *The Tokyo War Crimes Trial*, xx.

³⁴ Arnold C. Brackman, *The Other Nuremberg: The Untold Story of the Tokyo War Crimes Trials* (New York: William Morrow and Company, Inc, 1987), 86. He also noted that “to his credit, Keenan admitted after the trial that ‘we gave a good deal of thought’ to indicting him and that ‘strictly legally Emperor Hirohito could have been tried and convicted because under the



Constitution of Japan he did have the power to make war and stop it.' That, of course, was the Australian argument."

³⁵ Bix, "War Responsibility and Historical Memory," p. 12.

³⁶ Ibid, p. 17.

³⁷ International Crisis Group, "Northeast Asia's Undercurrents of Conflict," December 2005. The report can be accessed on-line at <http://www.crisisgroup.org/home/index.cfm?id=3834>.

³⁸ Alexis Dudden, "Dangerous Islands: Japan, Korea, and the United States," *Japan Focus* (August 11, 2008), p. 2.

³⁹ Kimie Hara, "Cold War Frontiers in the Asia-Pacific: The Troubling Legacy of the San Francisco Treaty," *Japan Focus* (September 4, 2006), 2. See also her book, *Cold War Frontiers in the Asia-Pacific: Divided Territories in the San Francisco System* (London: Routledge, 2006).

⁴⁰ Another example is the contrasting role of the United States in dealing with foreign forced labor. As David Palmer points out, "the U.S. pressed hard to force the reluctant German government and corporations to admit their role, make a public apology to the aggrieved, and provide compensation. Toward the Japanese government, by contrast, the U.S. position was precisely opposite, protecting it against claims at every step, even before the San Francisco Treaty." David Palmer, "Korean Hibakusha, Japan's Supreme Court and the International Community: Can the U.S. and Japan Confront Forced Labor and Atomic Bombing?" *Japan Focus* (February 2008), 6, At< <http://japanfocus.org/products/details/2670>> (accessed on 12 May 2008).

⁴¹ David Straub, "The United States and Reconciliation in East Asia," in Tsuyoshi Hasegawa and Kazuhiko Togo, eds, *East Asia's Haunted Present: Historical Memories and the Resurgence of Nationalism* (Westport, C.T.: Praeger, 2008), p. 215.

⁴² Mark Selden, "Japanese and American War Atrocities, Historical Memory and Reconciliation: World War II to Today," *Japan Focus* (15 April 2008), At<<http://japanfocus.org/products/topdf/2724>>, (accessed on 21 July 2008).

⁴³ Dower, *Embracing Defeat*, pp. 473-74.



⁴⁴ President Ronald Reagan signed the Civil Liberties Act of 1988, which offered apologies and reparations to survivors among the 110,000 Japanese and Japanese Americans who had been interned by the US government in the years 1942-45. In this case, however, as Mark Selden noted, “the victims’ descendants are American citizens and apologies proved to be good politics for the incumbent.” See Selden, “Japanese and American War Atrocities,” p. 14.

⁴⁵ Dower, *Embracing Defeat*, p. 444

⁴⁶ *The Economist*, “The Ghost of Wartimes Past,” 5 November 2008.

⁴⁷ The remaining 48% answered that “the trials had problems, but were necessary to bring closure.” See <http://www.mansfieldfdn.org/polls/poll-06-3.htm> (accessed on 12 April 2008).

⁴⁸ See Straub, “The United States and Reconciliation in East Asia.”

⁴⁹ Alexis Dudden, “Dangerous Islands: Japan, Korea, and the United States,” *Japan Focus* (11 August 2008), pp. 2-3.

⁵⁰ Gilbert Rozman, “Japan and Korea: Should the US be Worried About Their New Spat in 2001,” *Pacific Review* 15, no. 1 (2002), p. 26.

⁵¹ <http://thomas.loc.gov/cgi-bin/bdquery/z?d110:HRes121>: (accessed 10 May 2008).

⁵² G. John Ikenberry, “Japan’s History Problem,” *The Washington Post* (17 August 2006). See also Gi-Wook Shin, “Beyond Apology, Moral Clarity,” *The Christian Science Monitor* (2 April 2007) At< <http://www.csmonitor.com/2007/0402/p09s02-coop.html>> (Accessed 17 February 2009).

⁵³ Fumio Matsuo, “Tokyo Needs Its Dresden Moment,” *The Wall Street Journal* (16 August 2005).

⁵⁴ David Palmer, “Korean Hibakusha, Japan’s Supreme Court and the International Community: Can the U.S. and Japan Confront Forced Labor and Atomic Bombing?,” *Japan Focus* (20 February 2008) At< <http://www.japanfocus.org/products/details/2670>>. Accessed 17 February 2009.

⁵⁵ Susan Jenkins Vanderweert, p. 181.



⁵⁶ See Kinue Tokudome, “POW Forced Labor Lawsuits Against Japanese Companies,” JPRI Working Paper no. 82 (November 2001).

⁵⁷ One reason for the contrasting response by the U.S. government action may have to do with the apparent difference between Japanese and German war crimes. While there have been controversies over the extent and responsibility of Japanese war crimes, Nazi war crimes were better documented and could not be denied, such that the German right-wingers lacked the political ammunition to engage in any kind of denial politics. As such, the U.S. was able to better accept German war crimes and deal with them accordingly.

The other reason may have to do with the difference in political mobilization of respective ethnic communities. The Jewish American community has been better organized and continuously pressured the U.S. government to be proactive in dealing with this history issue. See Michael J. Bazzyler, *Holocaust Justice the Battle for Restitution in America’s Courts*, (New York: New York University Press, 2003), Marianne R. Sanua, *Let Us Prove Strong: The American Jewish Committee, 1945-2006*, (Waltham, M.A.: Brandeis University Press, 2007), Shilomo Shafir, *Ambiguous Relations: The American Jewish Community and Germany Since 1945*, (Detroit, M.I.: Wayne State University Press), Yossi Shain, “Ethnic Diasporas and U.S. Foreign Policy,” *Political Science Quarterly* (1994), pp. 811-41. On the other hand, the Asian American community is newer to the country and has been far behind in addressing the history issue in their home countries, though they were quite successful to redressing the war-time interment of Japanese-Americans. However, recently they have been more active as illustrated by the case of the House Resolution 121 on the comfort woman. It was Mike Honda, a Japanese American legislator, who introduced the resolution and the Chinese and Korean American communities were mobilized in support of that. It is likely that the Asian-American community will be more active on the history issue in the coming years and that as American citizens, they can pressure the U.S. government to be more forthcoming. Asian American activism is an area that merits more careful attention as far as the U.S. role in dealing with the history question in Northeast Asia is concerned.

⁵⁸ Tokudome, “POW Forced Labor Lawsuits,” p. 11.

⁵⁹ Robert B. Zoellick, “U.S. Relations with the Peoples Republic of China (2006)” United States Department of State, Press Round Table in Japan, At http://hongkong.usconsulate.gov/uscn_state_2006012301.html (Accessed last 14 February 2009).



⁶⁰ Gilbert Rozman, “Japan and Korea: Should the US be Worried About Their New Spat in 2001,” *Pacific Review* 15, no. 1 (2002), p. 26.

⁶¹ Horvat, “A Strong State, Weak Civil Society,” p. 207.

⁶² Daniel Sneider, “The War Over Words: History Textbooks and International Relations in Northeast Asia,” paper presented at a conference on “Divided Memories: History Textbooks and the Wars in Asia” held in February 2008 at Stanford University.

⁶³ Randal Schriver, “Asia and Our Challenges: A U.S. Perspective” in Gi-Wook Shin and Daniel C. Sneider, eds., *Cross Currents: Regionalism and Nationalism in Northeast Asia*, (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press), pp. 277-86.

⁶⁴ For instance, Christian groups, imagery, and language played an important role in the Franco-German reconciliation, and the concept of reconciliation has Christian overtones (i.e., forgiveness). It is hard to expect the same experiences in Northeast Asia, which does not have the same degree of presence of transnational Christian groups. For a discussion of the problem of Christian overtones in the reconciliation process, see Elizabeth A. Cole, “Introduction: Reconciliation and History Education,” pp. 1-28 in her edited book *Teaching the Violent Past: History Education and Reconciliation* (Boulder, C.O.: Roman and Littlefield, 2007).

⁶⁵ See also John Torpey, “Dynamics of Denial: Responses to Past Atrocities in Germany, Turkey, and Japan,” pp. 173-191 in Gi-Wook Shin et al., *Rethinking Historical Injustice*.



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Professor Gi-Wook Shin is the director of Shorenstein APARC; the Tong Yang, Korea Foundation, and Korea Stanford Alumni Chair of Korean Studies; the founding director of the Korean Studies Program; senior fellow at FSI; and professor of sociology at Stanford University. As a historical-comparative and political sociologist, his research has concentrated on areas of social movements, nationalism, development, and international relations. Dr. Shin has served as editor of the *Journal of Korean Studies*, a premier journal in the field of Korean studies.

Shin is the author/editor of many books and articles that include: *Cross-Currents: Regionalism and Nationalism in Northeast Asia* (2007); *Rethinking Historical Injustice and Reconciliation in Northeast Asia* (2006); *Ethnic Nationalism in Korea: Genealogy, Politics and Legacy* (2006); *North Korea: 2005 and Beyond* (2006); *Contentious Kwangju* (2004); *Colonial Modernity in Korea* (1999); and *Peasant Protest and Social Change in Colonial Korea* (1996). His articles have appeared in academic journals such as the *American Journal of Sociology*, *Nations and Nationalism*, *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, *International Sociology*, *Asian Survey*, and *Asian Perspectives*.

Shin has just completed a new book titled *One Alliance, Two Lenses: U.S.-Korea Relations in a New Era* (Stanford University Press, 2009). It is based on analyses of more than 8,000 newspaper articles published in the U.S. and South Korean media from 1992 to 2004. He is editing two more books with his colleagues, respectively titled *Divided Memories and Reconciliation in Northeast Asia* and *First Drafts of Korea: The U.S. Media and Perceptions of the Last Cold War Frontier*. He is also engaged in a project addressing historical injustice and reconciliation in Northeast Asia with a particular focus on the U.S. responsibility and role in resolving the history question in that region.

Shin is not only the recipient of numerous grants and fellowships but has also actively raised funds for Korean/Asian Studies at Stanford. He gives frequent lectures and seminars on topics ranging from Korean nationalism and politics to Korea's foreign relations and the plight and history of Korean-Americans. He also writes op-eds in Korean and American newspapers and serves on councils and advisory boards in the United States and South Korea.

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