

## Can Nations Forgive? Japan, Korea, and China Remember the Past and Face the Future\*

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### **Abstract**

Throughout the world we can observe numerous cases of prolonged animosity among nations. Even though most do not degenerate into warfare, these instances of national hatred make it seem as if international reconciliation is an unattainable dream, and that the most we can do is manage conflict so that all-out war does not erupt. These conflicts often involve historical national enemies, who keep alive memories of some abuse in the past. It is not uncommon that later generations feel the anger more acutely than the people who initially were wronged. Political forces can deliberately fan the flames of bitter memory in order to foster national unity and secure the favor of their domestic constituencies.

This study reviews the historical abuses that today divide Japan, China, and Korea. War memory and colonial memory impede neighborly friendship, the settlement of territorial disputes, and the formation of needed security frameworks in East Asia. Drawing from the field of peace research, the author posits the need for restorative justice rather than retributive justice, and explores five processes that must be completed before “deep interstate reconciliation” will occur in the East Asian context: truth telling, bringing wrongdoers to justice, reparation, contrition and apology, and forgiveness. Some of the processes have taken place.

Forgiveness completes the process of reconciliation. In forgiving, a nation sets aside bitter feelings about the past and treats a wrongdoer people as a nation in good standing. International forgiveness is rarely explicit, but usually takes place implicitly over a period of time. This study treats some historical examples of implicit forgiveness. What steps can Korea, China, and Japan take to achieve international forgiveness?

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\* This paper is intended to contribute to scholarly work that is bridging the fields of East Asian international relations and peace studies. Peace studies as an academic field of inquiry is an interdisciplinary effort aiming at the prevention and solution of conflicts by peaceful means. While classical thinkers like Immanuel Kant devoted much thought to the subject of peace, it was in the 1960s that peace studies began to emerge as a discipline of learning with research tools, concepts, and forums for discussion. Beginning in 1959 with the International Peace Research Institute, Oslo, governments and universities have established centers for peace research around the world. In the following pages, the author applies some of the concepts of peace research to the conflicts that alienate China and Korea from Japan in the wake of war and colonialism.

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## I. Introduction: Thais remember the war and the Japanese

A few years after the end of World War II, the Thai novelist Thommayanti wrote *Khu Kam*, a love triangle set in wartime Thailand that depicted a romance between an Imperial Japanese Navy officer, Kobori, and a stunningly attractive Thai woman named Ang. The story has been translated into Japanese and adapted into a stage musical in Bangkok and several Thai film productions. So beloved is the story, it has been dubbed “Thailand’s *Gone with the Wind*”.

The film portrays widely contrasting images of the behavior of the Japanese military in Thailand during the war. In one memorable scene, where Kobori first meets Ang, the naval officer applies his medic skills and shares medicines with an ailing grandmother. In a graphic torture scene, Thai conscripted laborers are caught stealing gasoline from military stores, and petrol is poured down their throats. The couple marries, Ang conceives Kobori’s child, and finally the young officer dies in an Allied air raid on the naval base.

When I conducted interview research in Thailand in 2009, Thais repeatedly pointed to this story as a reliable depiction of wartime relations between Thai civilians and Japanese soldiers stationed at bases in Thailand. What is particularly striking is that those speaking about the novel and film referred only to the movie’s scenes of positive fraternization. The Japanese of wartime are remembered by Thais today as generous to the local population, sharing food and helping with home repairs. Thai mothers in turn are said to have extended maternal care to the young, homesick Japanese soldiers. Thailand and Japan had much in common as two eastern Asian, Buddhist monarchies that had withstood European imperialism. Leaders of Siam since King Chulalongkorn in the late nineteenth century admired Japan for its success at industrialization and military modernization. When the Japanese military needed labor for the Burma-Thailand Railway – so Thai historical memory goes – they conscripted Asian workers from Malaya and Singapore and Australian and British prisoners of war. Thai laborers and supplier merchants were paid, and some got rich. In Bangkok and Chiang Mai, Japanese soldiers were well disciplined in their relations with their Thai allies. General Nakamura Aketo, the Japanese commandant, was welcomed back to Thailand with flowers and speeches when he made a return visit in 1955.<sup>1</sup>

At the same time, it would be quite reasonable to comb through the factual material concerning the Japanese wartime presence in Thailand and construct a history of imperial hegemony and foreign abuse. Thai leaders were not united in their willingness to accommodate the Japanese military in the opening days of the war. There were pockets

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<sup>1</sup> Reynolds, E. Bruce. 1988. “General Nakamura Aketo – a Kahaki-clad Diplomat in Wartime Thailand”. In Khamchoo Chaiwat and E. Bruce Reynolds, eds. *Thai-Japanese Relations in Historical Perspective*. Bangkok: Institute of Asian Studies, 193, 194.

of armed Thai resistance and Thai blood was shed. Thailand's ambassador to Washington refused to deliver his country's January 1942 declaration of war against the United States, and became an overseas leader in the Free Thai movement. The Thai government was forced to "loan" Japan money to fund Japan's capital projects in Thailand, including the infamous Death Railway and a northern Thailand "Burma Road" from Chiang Mai through the mountains to the Burma border. The Thai economy was disrupted and set back for years by ravenous inflation and a trade imbalance heavily favoring Japan.<sup>2</sup> In the Thailand-Burma Railway project, remembered in the West through the movie *The Bridge on the River Kwai*, some 12,000 Allied POWs and upwards of 70,000 laborers from Malaya as well as Thai Chinese died of disease, hunger, exhaustion, and beatings, a majority of them on Thai soil.<sup>3</sup> In the Thai "Burma Road" project, thousands of overworked Thai workers died of malaria.<sup>4</sup> Thailand's relationships with the nations that would become the victors in the war were compromised, and national leaders who had cooperated with Japan were disgraced. But this is not the historical memory of most Thais today.

The story of postwar Thai-Japanese relations might be called an instance of successful, post-conflict reconciliation and a concomitant reconstruction of history. It involved Japanese reparations, huge injections of overseas development assistance, an infusion of popular culture, and the construction of historical memory (or, a serious case of national amnesia) that allowed for amicable feelings. Even though Thailand is not one of Japan's near neighbors and though it can be argued that the case bears significant differences from the heavy handedness Japan exercised toward China and Korea, the Japan-Thai case is evidence that negative historical memories can be reframed or set aside and a victim nation achieve friendly ties with a former abuser, even Japan.

Koreans and Chinese nurture to this day bitter memories of Japan's dealings with them and their nations from the late nineteenth century through the end of the Second World War. Popular animosity persists into four generations despite shared cultural traits, robust and mutually beneficial economic relations, and even common enemies during the era of the Cold War. These hard feelings have impeded cultural exchange and prevented the creation in East Asia of mechanisms of bilateral and multilateral security and cooperation which play so prominent a role in international order in Europe and the North Atlantic today. For instance, South Korea and Japan were set to sign their first military pact in spring 2012, an agreement that would have facilitated exchange of intelligence about North Korea's arms programs and other defense issues. But angry

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<sup>2</sup> Suwannathat-Pian, Kobkua. 1955. *Thailand's Durable Premier: Phibun through Three Decades, 1932-1957* (Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press, 267-269.

<sup>3</sup> McCormack, Gavan and Hank Nelson, eds. 1993. *The Burma-Thailand Railway: Memory and History* (Chiang Mai: Thailand: Silkworm Books, 1, 62.

<sup>4</sup> Boggett, David. "Japan's 'Burma Road': Reflections on Japanese Military Activities in Northern Thailand", [www.kyoto-seika.ac.jp/researchlab/wp/wp-content/uploads](http://www.kyoto-seika.ac.jp/researchlab/wp/wp-content/uploads).

reaction from Korean opposition parties and activists forced President Lee Myung-Bak to twice postpone the signing, due to historical issues and the Takeshima/Dokdo dispute.<sup>5</sup>

In the case of China, Japan's modern abuses date from the First Sino-Japanese War (1894-95) when Japan established its predominant position in Korea and imposed on defeated China unequal commercial treaties. Japan secured additional territorial and economic privileges in Manchuria in the Russo-Japanese War (1904-1905) and in China proper in the First World War. Military opportunism in the late 1920s and early 1930s led to the conversion of Manchuria and bordering territories into the Japanese puppet state of Manchukuo. Full-scale invasion after 1937 saw the notorious Nanjing Incident, the introduction of aerial bombing of civilian areas, chemical warfare, and the enlistment of 40,000 Chinese laborers sent to Japan. Chinese claim some ten million deaths as a result of this Second Sino-Japanese War (1937-45).<sup>6</sup>

As for Korea, Japan declared the peninsula first a protectorate and then in 1910 a colony. The Japanese applied assimilation policies which required Koreans to use the Japanese language and venerate the Emperor. In 1938, Koreans were forced to take Japanese names. The most desirable products and profits of Korean agriculture and Japan-installed industry were sent to Japan. During Japan's war with China and the Allies, over 100,000 Korean men were sent to Japanese factories and mines to join underpaid Chinese labors working under harsh conditions, while some 200,000 Korean young women – euphemistically called “comfort women” – joined a lesser number of Chinese and Japanese in the military sex trade. The Comfort Women issue stayed under wraps until elderly Korean victims went public with their experiences in the 1980s. Japanese actions toward colonized Korea represent a phenomenon that peace researchers call structural violence, where systemic abuse emerges from an unequal distribution of power and resources.

In this paper I should like to draw from the field of peace research five issues that must be addressed in the process of international reconciliation. I will assess the extent to which progress has been made in these regards in Japan's relations with its continental neighbors, the People's Republic of China and the Republic of Korea. These issues are:

Truth telling and historical memory  
Bringing wrongdoers to justice  
Reparation  
Contrition and apology  
Forgiveness

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<sup>5</sup> *Japan Times*. 2012. “Lee Raps Cabinet for Balking on Intel-sharing Pact”, July 3.

<sup>6</sup> He Yanan. 2009. *The Search for Reconciliation: Sino-Japanese and German-Polish relations since World War II* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 116-117, n. 3.

## II. Truth telling and historical memory

When Emperor Hirohito went on the radio to announce Japanese surrender on August 15, 1945, he vindicated a war which the nation had waged “to insure Japan’s self-preservation and the stability of East Asia”. He justified surrender as a measure to relieve the suffering of “the wounded . . . and those who lost their homes and livelihood”.<sup>7</sup> This was the first postwar utterance of two themes that rile the publics in Korea and China today – benign Japanese intentions and Japanese victimization.

The Allied Occupation (1945-1952) carried out purposeful programs of truth-telling. Repatriated Japanese soldiers recounted their misdeeds in daily press features and radio programs called “Truth Box” and “Now It Can be Told”.<sup>8</sup> Textbooks promoting the *kokutai* ideology of national uniqueness and praising the valor of soldiers and sailors in past wars were at first cleansed of offensive content using the black brush and later replaced by new texts. Japan’s enduring postwar constitution, hastily composed in English by a committee of Americans, incorporated rhetoric denoting a state of post-defeat and a unique Article 9 which denied to the state the right to wage war and maintain armed forces.

At the same time, actions by the Allies in the war and its aftermath served to handicap the Japanese in dealing with their military past and relating constructively to their abused neighbors. In the final months of the war, Allied firebombing of 67 urban areas, a brutal invasion of the home prefecture of Okinawa, atomic bombings of civilian targets, and harrowing experiences in the repatriation of seven million Japanese soldiers and civilians from the continent planted the seeds of a post-Occupation shift whereby the Japanese viewed themselves as primarily victims rather than perpetrators of the ravages of war.<sup>9</sup> Civilian suffering in war and during the impoverished decade following surrender seemed like sufficient atonement for any war responsibility the average Japanese carried. Also undergirding the Japanese sense of victimhood was the Allied doctrine – voiced in wartime propaganda, eloquently stated in the Potsdam Declaration of July 26, 1945, and applied in the Tokyo War Trials – that a narrow clique of militarists had misled the Japanese people and dragooned them down the road to war. This tenet, like Allied

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<sup>7</sup> Emperor Hirohito Radio Broadcast. August 14, 1945.  
<http://www.mtholyoke.edu/acad/intrel/hirohito.htm>

<sup>8</sup> Mayo, Marlene J. 1988. “The War of Words Continues: American Radio Guidance in Occupied Japan”. In Burkman, Thomas W., ed. *The Occupation of Japan: Arts and Culture*. Norfolk VA: The MacArthur Memorial. 57-60.

<sup>9</sup> At the Tokyo trials, a defense counsel asserted that the widespread death of civilians by the atomic bombs was a violation of the Hague Convention IV, the Laws and Customs of War on Land. Tanaka Yuki and Richard Falk. 2009. “The Atomic Bombing, The Tokyo War Crimes Tribunal and the Shimoda Case: Lessons for Anti-Nuclear Legal Movements”. In *Japan Focus*, Vol. 44. <http://japanfocus.org/-Richard-Falk/3245>. In her book, Lori Watt argues that the sufferings endured by repatriated soldiers and civilians after the war contributed to the view that Japanese, along with Chinese and Southeast Asians, were victims rather than perpetrators of war: Watt, Lori. 2009. *When Empire Comes Home: Repatriation and Reintegration in Postwar Japan*. Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press.

war excesses, relieved the populace of guilt and responsibility for the war. Studies of Japanese public opinion during the 1930s conclude that there were few Japanese – not even so-called internationalists – that disagreed with their government’s and military’s expansionist goals on the Asian mainland.<sup>10</sup> As the Occupation’s mentality absolved most of the Japanese people, it also exonerated the Emperor, the very symbol of the Empire in whose name colonization and imperial expansion had taken place. Hirohito was not indicted for war crimes – despite His Majesty’s offer to take full personal responsibility – but rather was kept on the throne and utilized to maintain social stability and support the Occupation’s democratization reforms.

In Occupation policy, the decision most consequential for Japan’s inability to satisfy its neighbors regarding its wartime past was the plan to keep the existing Japanese government in power and implement reforms through its auspices. Despite temporary purges of politicians and military officers who had contributed in carrying out the war, the body politic of Japan remained intact. The *kokutai*-ridden Meiji Constitution stayed in place for almost two years, the father-figure of the familial state remained on the throne, and conservative bureaucrats held their posts to become a major force for Japanese self-vindicating nationalism in the decades that followed. A convicted Class-A war criminal, Shigemitsu Mamoru, emerged from two years in Sugamo Prison and eventually returned to his wartime post as foreign minister in 1954. The mainstream prewar political parties resumed activity in 1945, combining their forces in the conservative Liberal Democratic Party in 1955. Kishi Nobusuke, Commerce and Industry Minister in the 1941 Cabinet of General Tojo Hideki and purged and imprisoned by the Occupation, shaped LDP positions as a prime minister (1957-1960) and the party’s most prominent senior statesman until his death in 1987.<sup>11</sup> By contrast, the government of Germany was totally disbanded in 1945. The Nazi regime was judged so diabolical that it was exorcised and replaced by the Occupation itself. When full self-rule returned to West Germany in 1955, it was easy for German governments and their leaders, compared to Japan’s politicians, to disavow the actions of the Hitler regime and express national contrition, for their government claimed no ties to the old regime of aggression and atrocity.

There is an important gap in historical memory of postwar Japan depending upon which side of the Pacific Ocean one sits. Citizens of the United States tend to view Japan as profoundly changed through the reforms of the Allied Occupation. In the understanding of Americans, purges, war crimes trials, a new constitution, and a plethora of political and social reforms of democratic intent and consequence gave birth to a new Japan, of a genre wholly different from the “feudal” (a term of common parlance during the Occupation) nation that colonized Korea, invaded China, and attacked Pearl Harbor.

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<sup>10</sup> Burkman, Thomas W. 2008. *Japan and the League of Nations: Empire and World Order, 1914-1938*. Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 216-217.

<sup>11</sup> Lind, Jennifer. 2008. *Sorry States: Apologies in International Politics*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 31-32.

This is a self-congratulatory view of history, buttressing the notion that the United States can be a nation-builder, that it has the ability to reform rogue nations and shape them and the world in accordance with its ideals. In the 21<sup>st</sup> century this view of a regenerated Japan gives rise to a distinct America nostalgia in the face of “failed occupations” in Iraq and Afghanistan. Chinese and Korean people, on the other hand, look upon Japan today as the same Japan that intruded into their space and brutalized them. Since the end of the war, a fear has persisted in China and Korea that a rearmed and militarized Japan would, given opportune circumstances, conduct itself in accordance with historically established, atavistic patterns. These fears are not mollified by arguments that Japanese military aggression is unthinkable in an Asia policed by American and – increasingly – Chinese power, an Asia where trade has displaced colonial aggrandizement as the measure of national stature. Those on the Continent who harbor such anxiety ask, “What if circumstances changed?” Contemporary utterances by right-wing voices in Japan vindicating the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperty Sphere, ministerial visits to Yasukuni Shrine which venerates convicted war criminals, school textbooks depicting Japan’s wartime behavior in benign language, and assertion of Japanese sovereignty over islands claimed by China and Korea all serve to add fuel to these fears.

Before the Allied Occupation of Japan ended, the Cold War set in. In this context, a conservative trend began which would profoundly shift Japan’s historical consciousness. Purged militarists were freed while leftists were removed from positions of political influence and educational policy making. As the Korean War erupted, Occupiers and courts found ways to excuse defensive military forces within the framework of Article 9. The “Japanese miracle” of industrial rebirth gave rise to national self-confidence that called for a history that young Japanese could take pride in. Ministry of Education-approved textbooks muted the language of aggression by describing Japan’s “advance” into China. Passive voice replaced active in accounts of Japan’s capture of Nanjing in 1937. Until the 1980s, political leaders in China and Korea – who practiced atrocity against their own citizens as they struggled for internal hegemony and were eager for Japanese aid and trade – did not openly challenge these trends. The relaxation of citizen political restraints in both China and Korea changed this picture since the 1980s, with loud popular reactions to Japanese expressions of a historical memory different from their own. By contrast, during this same period into the 1980s West Germany under socialist leadership stepped up political education programs to stem the rise of neofascist youth organizations. West Germany shifted the focus of its war history from German suffering to German guilt.<sup>12</sup>

One problem is that Japan, a democratized and pluralistic nation, does not speak with a single voice when it comes to perceptions of its own history. Most approved textbooks in Japan today cite the Nanjing Massacre and the use of Comfort Women as atrocities of

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<sup>12</sup> Lind. *Sorry States*, 129, 130.

the war. Prime Ministers and private organizations have offered clear acknowledgments of this tarnished history to continental victims of Japanese aggression. But nationalistic conservatives in the Diet argue publicly that comfort women were not coerced, and when this happens Chinese and Koreans doubt the sincerity of those who declare contrite views of history. In China, opinion voiced on an issue of national concern is expected to reflect the officially endorsed national consensus. Korea's experience with political diversity is much shorter than Japan's and still limited. To expect all Japanese to fall in step with an official posture of contrition would be akin to assuming that all Americans could join in condemning the atomic bombs of 1945 or the invasion of Iraq in 2003. Japanese unanimity on war memory is not within the realm of possibility, nor should it be expected in a liberal democracy. At the same time it should be recognized that Korea and China do not always speak with one voice. This raises questions for peace research: How can a pluralistic society or nation effectively acknowledge guilt and express contrition regarding its history? Germany has had success at this, but only by making it illegal to exonerate Nazism. How can an offended society accept an apology when the apology is accompanied by mixed messages?

Another problem for peace scholars is, what standards of justice should we apply to offenses that occurred in the historical past? Most of those who stood in the dock of the Tokyo Trials defended their actions by arguing that Japan had fought a war of self-defense against imperialist powers with the added purpose of liberating other Asians from Western colonialism. Nationalist scholars in Japan continue to believe and assert that the war was a conflict among imperialists, that it was in accordance with the then-existing norms of international law, and that the war should not be evaluated *ex-post-facto* by contemporary notions of justice and world order. Even in the case of the Comfort Women, Japan's defenders contend that prostitution was not illegal in Japan or its colonies at the time. Here both sides need to exercise empathetic understanding. On the one hand, the Japanese nationalists' case makes legal sense, but is offensive to contemporary moral sensibilities. That laws and codified standards evolve over the years, and that published international concepts of human dignity also evolve do not justify in a moral sense past actions that fail to measure up to later standards. On the other hand, offended parties should acknowledge that many Japanese perpetrators of what have come to be defined as war crimes, crimes against humanity, or crimes against the peace did so with a clear conscience and without criminal intent.

In the project of restorative justice around the globe, truth commissions have attracted notice. They have been applied in some twenty states emerging from periods of internal unrest, civil war, or dictatorship. South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission, established by President Nelson Mandela and chaired by Archbishop Desmond Tutu after apartheid, is popularly heralded as a model of truth commissions. Except for East Timor and South Korea, truth commissions have not operated in Asia. The commission in the Republic of Korea that operated from 2005 to 2010 did not



address war and colonial issues, but dealt with the abuses of authoritarian regimes through 1993. It operated under restrictions that severely limited the scope of the process. There is a movement in Taiwan to establish a truth commission to deal with the period of “White Terror” under the Guomintang. Truth commissions to date have mostly treated domestic conflicts of relatively recent occurrence. The closest thing to a truth commission regarding Japanese war and colonial issues was the Women’s International War Crimes Tribunal for Japan’s Military Sexual Slavery that took place under non-government auspices in December 2000. Victims, including comfort women, gave testimony, and the Showa Emperor was condemned for war crimes. While the Women’s Tribunal may have given rest to the hearts of individuals and helped to publicize the issues of Japanese wrongdoings, it did not produce a national catharsis. Nor did it result in any significant moderation in international animosities. Could a TRC function effectively between nations, and seventy and more years after the crimes at issue? Such a project would be without precedent.

Noble efforts have been undertaken by historians of the three countries to produce joint history textbooks that bridge major differences as well as provide a place for reasonable expression of conflicting historical views. Such a book was produced in the Franco-German instance, and a private East Asian trilateral historians’ group published *History that Opens the Future* in three language editions in 2005. A government-sanctioned, Japan-China Joint History Research Committee has been in place since 2006 and is chaired by Tokyo University’s Kitaoka Shinichi.<sup>13</sup> While joint research can narrow gaps in understanding and interpretation and produce reputable studies, it is not likely to preclude the behavior of nation-states to write and perpetuate self-serving national histories. However, reconciliation can proceed while making space for divergent views of the past.

A noteworthy model could be the historians’ commissions that have been set up in Europe to investigate and report on controversial epochs in the past. The Swiss Independent Commission of Experts (ICE) was set up in 1996 to look into dormant Swiss bank accounts belonging to victims of the Holocaust and broader issues of the relationship of Switzerland to Nazi Germany during the Second World War. In Finland, a commission has investigated war victims of the War of 1918. A Swedish historians’ commission has probed the debated issue of the neutrality of Sweden during World War II. In the Scandinavian cases, the process supports the publication of research studies that do not all come to the same conclusions. One purpose of these commissions’ work is to provide sound studies based on documentary evidence that will act as articulate expressions of varying views on these painful national travails. The principle they have applied is, it is more important to hear and understand history as projected by the Other than to agree with the Other about history.

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<sup>13</sup> Los Angeles Times. 2009. “South Korea and Japan Consider History Textbook with China”. October 30.

### III. Bringing wrongdoers to justice

The Potsdam Declaration, the Allied formula for surrender, stated that “stern justice shall be meted out to all war criminals”.<sup>14</sup> In short summary, the International Military Tribunal for the Far East, held in Tokyo and roughly analogous to the Nuremberg Trials, brought 28 indicted, Class-A political and military figures before a panel of eleven judges representing as many Allied nations. Twenty-five received sentences, including seven death by hanging. Simultaneously, forty-seven courts in seven countries tried B- and C-Class defendants for conventional war crimes. In these tribunals, 5,700 were indicted and 984 received death sentences. The Nanjing massacre was an allegation raised at the trials; the issue of sexual slavery involving Asian women was not raised.<sup>15</sup> Charges related to the macabre human experiments conducted in Harbin under the auspices of the notorious bacteriological and chemical warfare Unit 731 were brought before the Soviet military tribunal in Khabarovsk, but nowhere else. By the terms of the San Francisco Peace Treaty (1952), Japan was obligated to carry out the prison sentences of convicted war criminals of the Tokyo Trial, unless a majority of the countries represented in a tribunal agreed to reduce the sentences. Even before the treaty came into effect, the Japanese government began efforts to grant parole and clemency. By 1958, all criminals of all classes were released from incarceration.

The release of war criminals is a significant illustration of how Japan deals with its wartime past. In being released, war criminals returned to Japanese society – some repatriated from overseas prisons – with their criminality forgotten. They emerged as veterans, eligible for government benefits as were their colleague soldiers. For Japan, their debt had been paid by incarceration, and by their payment the nation had again atoned for its wrongs. By contrast, Germany under socialist leadership in the late 1960s and 1970s instigated its own trials of Nazi criminals and initiated new compensation programs for victim populations – both inside and outside the country – previously overlooked.<sup>16</sup>

Closely tied to the issue of justice for war criminals is the controversy over Yasukuni Shrine. This Shinto institution, located just outside the Imperial Palace moat in Tokyo, was established by order of the Meiji Emperor in 1869 to pay tribute to the anti-Shogunate forces who had given their lives. Yasukuni was a place to remember national heroes and give their spirits a place of communal rest. Through succeeding history, soldiers and sailors who fought for their country in several international engagements were enshrined at Yasukuni.<sup>17</sup> The wars and soldiers’ recollections are memorialized in

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<sup>14</sup> Potsdam Declaration, July 26, 1945.

<sup>15</sup> At the Batavia trial in 1948, Japanese officers were charged and sentenced for sexual slavery of Dutch women.

<sup>16</sup> Lind, *Sorry States*, 108, 109, 198.

<sup>17</sup> Tanaka Akihiko. 2008. “The Yasukuni Issue and Japan’s International Relations”. In Hasegawa Tsuyoshi

the adjoining Yushukan Museum.

The ceremonies and exhibits of the shrine display victimization, where everyone including *kamikaze* pilots and the Emperor suffered due to decisions by military leaders and the strength of the enemy. The shrine calls for Japan to be a “normal country”, where people can honor war dead like in any other nation. The sanctuary exudes the search for national pride, the desire to revisit and momentarily bask in the past glories of the nation-state.

Yasukuni Shrine, while in its best respect a conventional memorial to fallen soldiers, has become a sticking point in Japan’s relations with China in particular because its inclusion of war criminals. In 1953 the Diet revised the Bereaved Family Support Law to provide benefits for the families of war criminals. Their death was given a special category, *homushi*, or “death in the line of duty”. In 1959, the shrine enshrined the names of 1000, convicted B- and C-class, war criminals who had died. The enshrinement of Class-A criminals was a matter handled very gingerly. In 1966 the Health and Welfare Ministry handed over the names of nine deceased Class-A criminals to Chief Priest Tsukuba Fujimaro, who took no action on the matter before his death in 1978. Tsukuba’s successor, Matsudaira Yoshinaga, was more amenable to the pressures of veterans’ organizations, and in October 1978 quietly enshrined fourteen Class-A criminals. Not until six months later did the press reveal this action to the public. We know now that the Showa Emperor was not pleased. From this point Hirohito ceased making visits to Yasukuni Shrine.<sup>18</sup>

Those who sought the re-nationalization of Japan wanted to see Yasukuni Shrine supported by the national budget. Several bills to provide government funding for the shrine were supported by the Liberal Democratic Party in the post-Occupation period, but they all failed because of minority party and public attachment to the newly instilled principle of separation of religion and the state. As a fallback measure, right-wing organizations like the Japan Association of Bereaved Families of the War Dead campaigned for government officials to visit the shrine in their “official capacity”. Nakasone Yasuhiro, who became prime minister in 1983, publicly asserted his intention to resolve postwar political issues. He made an “official” visit to the shrine on August 15, 1985. In response, the Chinese government fired the first salvo of criticism that would greet all visits to Yasukuni by Nakasone’s LDP successors through the last visit by Prime Minister Abe Shinzo in December 2013. In response to Nakasone’s initial “official” visit in 1985, Deng Xiaoping told a group of visiting Japanese that he was concerned about “the movements of the militarist elements in Japan”. In September, Chinese students took up anti-Japanese protests in Tiananmen Square and in major cities throughout China, saying

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and Kazuhiko Togo, eds. *East Asia’s Haunted Present: Historical Memories and the Resurgence of Nationalism*. Westport CT: Praeger, 120, 121.

<sup>18</sup> Tanaka. “The Yasukuni Issue”, 123, 124.

that the shrine visits justified Japanese aggression. Nakasone refrained from visiting the shrine during the remainder of his tenure as prime minister. When in 1986 his minister of education, Fujio Masayuki, published an article criticizing the rulings of the Tokyo Trials and charging Korea with responsibility for its colonization, Nakasone dismissed the minister. Nearly a decade passed before prime ministers resumed their visits to Yasukuni. The most upsetting case is Premier Koizumi Junichiro who visited six times during his tenure of 2001 to 2007. A climactic moment was the anti-Japanese riots that took place in the spring of 2005 throughout China. Koizumi did not bend, but bilateral meetings between Koizumi and the leaders of China and Korea, a regular practice until then, ceased after 2005.<sup>19</sup> Koizumi's "the protestors be damned" attitude also is said to have incapacitated the intentions of South Korean President Kim Dae-Jung to move to a new era of reconciliation between Korea and Japan.

In probing the matter of justice for wrongdoers, peace research would raise the distinction between criminal justice and restorative justice. The war crimes trials were based on the principles of criminal justice. In a criminal justice paradigm, crime is a violation of laws. Punishment is the legal satisfaction of that violation. The war criminals of Japan were tried on the basis of laws allegedly violated. These laws were drawn from international agreements and conventions, and even involved the creation of uncodified proscriptions of "crimes against humanity" and "crimes against the peace". Those who were convicted of violating the laws received punishment. Under this regime, Japanese can rightfully claim that in the war crimes process Japan met the requirements of the law as imposed by the victorious nations. Case closed. The appeals of Chinese and Koreans since the 1980s, on the other hand, are more in line with the paradigm of restorative justice. In this regime crime is a violation of people and relationships, and settlement involves putting things right and addressing victim needs as long as they exist.<sup>20</sup>

## IV. Reparation

After the war, Japan paid reparations to victor nations and those territories it had overrun. The United States received some US\$50 million in confiscated Japanese assets in the US. Japan also paid \$580 million for the costs of the seven-year Occupation. The United States renounced further claims in 1951. Invaded countries in Asia kept the Japanese assets within their borders (valued at approximately \$25 billion in 1945). Additional payments were made in the form of machinery exported from what remained of Japan's industrial plant. In accordance with the terms of the San Francisco Peace Treaty, Japan negotiated reparations settlements with fifteen Asian and European countries and made payments in the form of monetary aid, with the last obligation

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<sup>19</sup> Tanaka, "The Yasukuni Issue", 124-137.

<sup>20</sup> Zehr, Howard. 2002. *The Little Book of Restorative Justice*. Intercourse PA: Good Books, 21.

satisfied in 1977. While some countries used part of the money to compensate individual citizens for personal losses during the war, most of it was consumed in national development projects. Some of these funds were tied to products or services provided by Japanese vendors, and served to forge trade and economic ties to formerly occupied territories. Otherwise, the San Francisco Treaty waived “claims of the Allied Powers and their nationals”.<sup>21</sup>

After years of negotiations, Japan and the Republic of Korea concluded a Treaty of Basic Relations in 1965, normalizing diplomatic relations for the first time since the early 1900s. The Park Chung-Hee regime at the time was eager for Japanese economic assistance, and assumed a conciliatory posture on most issues. South Korea negotiated a US\$800 million compensation package, consisting of a \$300 million grant, \$200 million in low-interest loans, and \$300 million in private credits from Japanese financial institutions. The treaty contained no reference to apology or reparations, the funds labeled “economic assistance”. Nothing was paid directly to victims, and the Comfort Women question had not yet come to light. The treaty terms were not popular with many ROK citizens. Korea’s opposition parties charged a “sellout” and boycotted ratification proceedings. Violent anti-government protests led the Park government to impose martial law.<sup>22</sup>

The Treaty of Basic Relations included a claims waiver clause. Similarly, when Japan and China normalized their relations in 1972 by a Joint Communiqué, the document stated that the PRC “renounces its demand for war reparations from Japan”.<sup>23</sup>

Japan was careful to meet the needs of its own citizens who were ravaged by the war. This included pensions for veterans and their families and the families of soldiers killed. Japanese victims of the atomic bombings (*hibakusha*) were compensated. In 1946 Japan made payments amounting to about \$560 million to Japanese companies that sustained losses during the war. However, individual non-Japanese victims of Japanese abuses were not compensated. This included foreign laborers, military prostitutes, and victims of the atomic bombs. The government denied the existence of forced labor, euphemizing the phenomenon as “voluntary contract labor”.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Dower, John W. 1991. *Embracing Defeat: Japan in the Wake of World War II*. New York: W.W. Norton, 82; Berger, Thomas U. 2008. “Dealing with Difficult Pasts: Japan’s ‘History Problem’ from a Theoretical and Comparative Perspective”. In Hasegawa and Togo, eds. *East Asia’s Haunted Present*, 28; “Reparations”, <http://www.infoplease.com/ce6/history/A0841546.html>; Noguchi Hikaru. “Japan’s Records on War Reparations”, <http://www.jiyuu-shikan.org/e/reparations.html>; Togo, Kazuhiko. 2008. “Comfort Women: Deep Polarization in Japan on Facts and on Morality”. In Hasegawa and Togo, eds. *East Asia’s Haunted Present*, 146.

<sup>22</sup> Congressional Research Service. 2001. “North Korea-Japan Relations: The Normalization Talks and the Compensation/Reparations Issue” June 13. <http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/library/report/crs/RS20526.pdf>.

<sup>23</sup> Togo. “Comfort Women”, 146.

<sup>24</sup> Lind. *Sorry States*, 34, 35.

Wartime foreign laborers who remained in Japan initiated lawsuits in the 1970s, claiming underpayment compared to their Japanese counterparts. Japanese courts have consistently rejected such suits, citing the claims waiver clauses of the normalization treaties with South Korea and China. Similar court rejection is the lot of Korean Comfort Women and Korean *hibakusha*. However, in a 2007 verdict, the Japanese Supreme Court advised that the Nishimatsu Construction Company, a wartime employer of 360 Chinese laborers, should “make efforts to provide charitable relief for the losses suffered by the victims in this case”. In an October 2009 “settlement”, the company agreed to pay 250 million yen as compensation to surviving workers and families of the deceased.<sup>25</sup>

Once Korean Comfort Women came out in the 1980s and movements formed to advance their case for compensation from Japan, the Japanese government did engage in a carefully guarded program intended to compensate individual victims of military prostitution. This was the Asian Women’s Fund, instituted to give substance to a set of official apologies proffered by Japan in 1995, the fiftieth anniversary of the end of the war. Each woman was to receive a letter of apology signed by the prime minister in office and an atonement of two million yen (about US\$20,000). The administrative costs of the program were carried by the government. But in order to protect the government’s position that reparations had been settled, the money to be distributed was to come from private contributions. Women from five nations received compensation. Only seven Korean women accepted payout (compared to 285 from Taiwan and 79 from the Netherlands), because public opinion in South Korea was strongly provoked by the Japanese government’s refusal to make official compensation. The Fund concluded its work in 2007.<sup>26</sup>

In sharp contrast, the German government has demonstrated the willingness to compensate domestic and foreign individuals and to undertake new payment programs subsequent to postwar reparations agreements. New memorials to victims of the Holocaust are being built. These official programs inherently and explicitly acknowledge wrongdoing and attempt to atone for crimes.

## V. Contrition and apology

Apology is a conventional part of social relations in East Asia. In everyday life, apologies are expected for infractions ranging from forgotten appointments to traffic violations that result in injury to person or property. Apology plays a part in lesser utilization of lawsuits and attorneys throughout East Asia, as compared with the West.

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<sup>25</sup> Kang, Jian, Arimitsu Ken and William Underwood. 2009. “Assessing the Nishimatsu Corporate Approach to Redressing Chinese Forced Labor in Wartime Japan”. *The Asia-Pacific Journal*. Vol. 47-1-09. November 23, 7.

<sup>26</sup> Togo. “Comfort Women”, 148.

When public entities apologize, they express remorse for misdeeds performed in their name. When expressed in full sincerity, an apology nullifies the actor's commitment to an injustice, obliges the actor to repair the injustice to the extent of the actor's ability, and begins the process of the healing of soul for both the abuser and the victim.<sup>27</sup>

Postwar demands from Japan's enemies for apology began with Korea in the 1950s. Attempts to normalize relations between Japan and South Korea were stalled by Syngman Rhee's insistence that Japan apologize for colonialism. It was not until the 1960s that progress was made, when the Park Chung-Hee regime was willing to subordinate ideational issues to the pragmatic need for Japanese-Korean economic cooperation. For China's part, The People's Republic was internally preoccupied at first with programmed social change and then, after the late 1950s, externally with strained relations with the Soviet Union. Japan went about the business of healing its internal wounds and rebuilding the country. The Japanese government and people were morally content that the loss of empire, the suffering of its citizens in war and repatriation, the humiliation of occupation, the death and jail sentences of war criminals, and the payment of reparations had atoned for their misdeeds. Nonetheless, the normalization agreements with the Republic of Korea (1965) and the PRC (1972) were accompanied by diplomats' statements that Japan had reflected upon its past. In 1984, Emperor Hirohito himself voiced "regret" to visiting South Korean President Chun Doo-Hwan for the "unfortunate period" in history.<sup>28</sup>

A number of factors in the 1980's heightened demands on the part of Koreans and Chinese that Japan assume a contrite posture regarding its colonial and wartime past, voice apology, and give substance to contrition through such actions as compensation to victims and conveying to its own youth a self-effacing rendition of history. These factors include the economic rise of Korea and China and concomitant emergence of a new nationalism; the relaxation of Cold War tensions, removing the fixation on external threats which they faced in common with Japan; the reduction in authoritarian controls on the expression of long-repressed public resentments; instability in the bodies politic on the mainland; the example of German contrition; and the Japanese reassertion of national pride. Evidence of a new nationalism in Japan was seen in the memorializing of the war dead and the provocative publication of school textbooks purveying a benign picture of Japan's historical past. Recognizing its need for healthy ties with its immediate neighbors to support its quest for a permanent seat in the UN Security Council, Japan began to speak more pointed apologies.

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<sup>27</sup> Philpot, Daniel. 2009. "After Intractable Moral Disagreement: The Catholic Roots of an Ethic of Political Reconciliation". In Cunningham, Laurence S., ed. *Intractable Disputes about the Natural Law: Alasdair McIntyre and Critics*. Notre Dame IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 183.

<sup>28</sup> Dudden, Alexis. 2008. *Troubled Apologies among Japan, Korea, and the United States*. New York: Columbia University Press, 34.

Japanese leaders have expressed numerous apologies to Chinese and South Korean officials – at least twenty official statements of contrition since 1992. The clearest statement was by non-LDP prime minister Maruyama Tomoichi in 1995 on the fiftieth anniversary of Japan’s defeat. Backed by his cabinet, Maruyama stated “deep remorse” and “heartfelt apology” for “the tremendous damage and suffering” that Japan inflicted on the continent through imperialism and colonialism. This statement became the template for Japan’s reconciliation policy since that time. Subsequent LDP prime ministers fell in line, even Yasukuni-trotter Koizumi Junichiro who restated Murayama’s words almost verbatim at a conference of Asia-African heads of state in Bandung in 2005.<sup>29</sup> But nationalist Diet members and TV commentators took the microphone on the occasion of each apology, asserting that Japan had nothing to apologize for. In reaction, journalists and agitated publics on the continent seized upon the mixed messages from Japan as evidence that the leaders’ statements were insincere. It was common in China and Korea to draw a distinction between “regret” and “apology”, the former being a superficial sentiment unaccompanied by true sorrow and deeds of restitution. Other continental critics said that nothing short of an apology voiced by the Emperor or voted in the Diet would hold credibility. And so the domestic and international politics of apology drags on to this day.

Dartmouth College political scientist Jennifer Lind, in her significant 2008 book, *Sorry States, Apologies in International Politics*, treats the problem of contrition and backlash in depth. She observes that in Germany, conservative backlash that accompanied apology did not come from political leaders, and was roundly rejected by a society committed to atonement. She concludes that heavy backlash, as found in Japan, makes apology a potentially counterproductive instrument of reconciliation.<sup>30</sup> I argue, as I have above, that mature democracies are pluralistic, and cannot be expected to speak with a single voice. That a prime minister in an environment of controversy will dare to voice contrition knowing that it will incur backlash gives that utterance, I believe, even more weight. In the process of reconciliation, deeds should accompany pronouncements. Nonetheless, tokens count. Getting apology in the official record in the mid-1990s was a seminal step in the process of changing the rhetoric and substance of Japanese relations with its former enemies.

To be efficacious for comity among former enemies, apologies, acceptance of apologies, commemorations, and rituals of contrition must be repeated, often and over a long period of years. No isolated apology will convince. There must be multiple instances of what peace scholar Daniel Philpott calls “apology incidents”.<sup>31</sup> In a historical sense, Japan has just begun, and must pursue this practice well into the future. Graphic

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<sup>29</sup> Dudden. *Troubled Apologies*, 33; Togo Kazuhiko. 2008. “Japan’s Historical Memory: Overcoming Polarization toward Synthesis”. Hasegawa and Togo, eds. *East Asia’s Haunted Present*, 70, 71.

<sup>30</sup> Lind. *Sorry States*, 181, 182.

<sup>31</sup> Philpott. “After Intractable Moral Disagreement”, 183.



enactments – as when Chancellor Willy Brandt in 1970 fell to his knees at a memorial in Warsaw for victims of the ghetto uprising – also help to establish new perceptions of the abuser at home and abroad. National enemies can become friends; they can reach what political scientist Yanan He terms “deep interstate reconciliation”.<sup>32</sup>

While apology is beneficial in a process of reconciliation, it is not absolutely required. Jennifer Lind points out that the dominant national sentiment of the French people toward Germany turned from negative to positive during the pre-1965 period, before German official apologies were commonplace. No Japanese apologies are recorded in the restoration of Japan’s relationship with Thailand or Singapore. Moreover, the national reconciliation process that has proceeded successfully between the Japan and the United States after a bitter war has never seen an official apology, not for Pearl Harbor and not for Hiroshima.<sup>33</sup>

The process of reconciliation is a two-way street. Apology is a one-sided act, incomplete as a transaction when the goal is comity rather than humiliation. “Deep interstate reconciliation” requires that the offended party be active – even proactive – in acceptance and forgiveness.

## **VI. Forgiveness**

Forgiveness between nations resembles forgiveness between persons. It is a decision – not a feeling – to renounce anger, resentment, and the will to revenge. It is a commitment to relate to the perpetrator of a wrong as a person in good standing, without reference to the past. Like apology, the act of forgiveness – whether by a person or a society – is a cleansing event, enabling the offended party to psychologically close a chapter of painful relationship and go on with life unburdened by hateful attitudes.

Forgiveness should not be misconstrued as forgetfulness. Forgetting past wrongs is impossible, and it impedes perpetrators and victims from deriving important lessons from conflict. Forgiveness may involve the cancelling of obligations owed by the guilty party, and it may not. Forgiveness may be spoken, it may be implicit. Forgiveness may take place in a defined moment of time; it may require years, decades, even centuries to effectuate. Forgiveness can complete the transaction of reconciliation.

The Buddhist principles of compassion, interdependence, and mutual responsibility can encourage the act of forgiveness. Because we are part of each other, I recognize myself as a participant in the wrong that was done to me. I must break down the walls of

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<sup>32</sup> He. *The Search for Reconciliation*, 12, 13.

<sup>33</sup> Lind. *Sorry States*, 110, 111, 124, 156.

negative resentment that separate me even from those who have harmed me. Christians are likewise enjoined to model their behavior after God's gracious act of forgiving sinners who have no merit in themselves.

The person who does not forgive lives under the psychological control of the person who harmed that person. Though the unforgiving person may think that he is punishing the wrongdoer by acting resentfully, he suffers the greater pain by reenacting the wrong and keeping it alive in his heart. The one who benefits most from forgiveness is the forgiver.

Forgiveness seems most appropriate as a response to apology. After an apology is voiced, acceptance of that apology by the offended party is a huge step in the direction of forgiveness. Forgiveness does not require an apology. If forgiveness takes place without contrition on the part of the offending party, the transaction of reconciliation is incomplete. But forgiveness not preceded by apology can still be worthwhile, for it can bring release to the offended party. Moreover, forgiveness in spirit can actually facilitate an apology, for it signals the wrongdoer that vengeance is unlikely. In an unforgiving world of criminal justice, nations have every reason to refrain from admission of guilt and voicing apology.

The history of restorative justice includes instances of forgiveness. Desmond Tutu and Nelson Mandela are admired around the world for having both spoken and lived out the virtue of forgiveness.<sup>34</sup> Between nations, the vocal iteration of forgiveness is rare indeed. In postwar East Asia, the statesman who came closest to acting out forgiveness was Kim Dae-Jung. Kim was a personal victim of the dictatorial regimes in South Korea in the years before the 1980s. He had been imprisoned and tortured, and he fled for his life to Japan. In 1973 he was abducted from Japan by South Korean agents and returned to prison in Korea. When he eventually won the South Korean presidency in 1998, he openly forgave those involved in the 1973 kidnapping. In the 1998 Japan-Republic of Korea Joint Declaration of Kim and Japanese Prime Minister Obuchi Keizo, it was pre-arranged that a Japanese formal apology would be followed by a Korea statement of acceptance. A few months later, when China's Jiang Zemin came to Japan expecting a similar, clear apology, he went away without one because the Japanese feared that an apology would be left hanging without acceptance. This episode brought another downturn in Sino-Japanese relations. The Chinese side was angry because of Japan's lack of contrition; the Japanese side was upset by the prospect that China would never forgive.<sup>35</sup> In the strained international relations of East Asia, the fundamental steps of

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<sup>34</sup> Helmick, Raymond G. and Rodney L. Petersen, eds. 2001. *Forgiveness and Reconciliation: Religion, Public Policy, and Conflict Transformation*. Philadelphia: Templeton Foundation Press, 326.

<sup>35</sup> He. *The Search for Reconciliation*, 264; Berger. "Dealing with Difficult Pasts", 33; Jin Linbo. 2008. "Japan's Neo-Nationalism and China's Response". In Hasegawa and Togo, eds. *East Asia's Haunted Past*, 176.

reconciliation have themselves become implements of battle. The rituals of reconciliation have become politicized, thereby losing their efficacy to bring people together. One can conclude that reconciliation will not take place in this environment as a transaction of overt contrition and forgiveness; rather, the long-term process of implicit forgiveness is the best that can be hoped for – and perhaps the most efficacious.

Can *nations* forgive? When resentments are held corporately rather than by an individual, the process of forgiveness gets complicated. Because of the impulses of nationalism and patriotism, we encourage each other to feel deeply the wrongs done to our people, and we create national enemies. We perpetuate bitterness toward national enemies in ourselves and our children through stories, education, memorials, war museums, and film. When a neighbor country is constructed as national enemy, the animosity can last centuries.

However, the process of implicit forgiveness by nations has taken place in history time and again. It happens whenever enemies of one generation become, a generation or many generations later, friends. The postwar comity between Japan and Thailand, cited in the opening paragraphs, is one example. In the case of the United States, the national, hateful obsession with England throughout most of the history of the republic is worth remembering. Great Britain was the colonizer, the political and economic exploiter of its North American empire. Americans fought a war of independence and another War of 1812 against the British. During the US Civil War of the 1860s, the danger of British collusion with the renegade South was widely feared in the Union and almost provoked another Anglo-American war. Economic competition in the Caribbean and South America was a constant source of conflict. American diplomatic historian Bradford Perkins wrote about “the almost instinctive American dislike of England” from the time of settlement to 1914. An Englishman living in America in the years before World War I described the average American’s contrary feelings toward England: “He saw her hand in nearly every disaster, domestic and foreign; he suspected her interference in every election that ran counter to his wishes; . . . and he rejoiced over her misfortunes, crowed over her mistakes, and thanked God he was not an Englishman”. This animosity prevailed despite cultural bridges similar to those that link Japan and the continent: common race, religion, ethical norms, language, artistic traditions, and social institutions.

Yet Perkins in his now classic book, *The Great Rapprochement*, documented how by the beginning of the twentieth century that hatred had become ritualized, and there was nothing of present substance on either side to justify a quarrel. The common project of the First World War finally laid the national animus to rest.<sup>36</sup> Today, it is unthinkable among Americans that the British should be feared or distrusted. In the implicit process

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<sup>36</sup> Perkins, Bradford. 1968. *The Great Rapprochement: England and the United States, 1895-1914*. New York: Atheneum, 3-11.

of British-American rapprochement there was never a British apology for the slave trade, for colonization, or for imperialism. While harboring historical memory that is by any measure anti-British, Americans relate to Great Britain without feelings of resentment or desire to take revenge. That is reconciliation; that is the substance of forgiveness.

Like Thailand, Singapore has also turned the page in its attitudes toward Japan. In the Greater East Asian War, the suffering of Singaporeans – especially those of Chinese ancestry, is duly memorialized in Singapore in battle monuments, museums, and annual remembrance ceremonies at military cemeteries. I spoke with a Singaporean Chinese whose brother had been murdered by the Japanese after surrender in the Sook Ching massacre. The brother's crime was being Chinese and pro-British. Up to 25,000 Singaporean civilians met a similar fate.<sup>37</sup> Yet, the surviving brother, like the Singaporean government, never voiced a demand for a Japanese apology, nor do Singaporeans call for a revision of Japanese textbooks.

Singapore's people have not forgotten; they have decided to give up resentment. Singapore and Japan today enjoy healthy political, economic, and cultural relations. In the crucial postwar years, Singapore's pragmatic leadership decided that it was more beneficial to foster business and trade ties than to fixate on the wrongs of the past. In the arena of international relations, the behavior of Singapore demonstrates what implicit forgiveness is.

International resentment – as in the case of the United States and Great Britain – can last centuries. Thais harbor deep resentment toward the Burmese for an invasion that destroyed the Thai capital centuries ago in the 1600s, and the preserved ruins of the ravaged capital Ayutthaya keep historical memory alive. The history of Japan's status as Korea's national enemy goes back at least to the time of Hideyoshi's invasion in 1598, and nearly every historical museum on the peninsula makes this abundantly clear. Once an enemy is classified as a national enemy, deep reconciliation is impeded. But it need not last forever. Great Britain is no longer the national enemy of the United States. France has given up its national resentment toward Germany.

## **VII. Building a hopeful future**

The case of Japan's relations with its near continental neighbors is not one where reconciliation is on the horizon. Japan is a historical enemy and a national enemy, especially of Korea. Popular animosity toward Japan has provided political benefits for regimes in China and Korea since the war. There are internal threats to stability in both China and South Korea, and South Korea faces an external threat as well across the

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<sup>37</sup> Singapore Infopedia, [http://infopedia.nl.sg/articles/SIP\\_40\\_2005-01-24.html](http://infopedia.nl.sg/articles/SIP_40_2005-01-24.html).

Demilitarized Zone. Japanese are not united in a contrite view of history; Japanese believe that their punishment for the war has been paid; and younger Japanese have little interest in the issues that agitate their counterparts across the water. On top of all this, there are island territorial disputes that interface with war and colonial memory and perpetuate emotions of fear and distrust on all sides.

Japan and South Korea should be natural allies. They share cultural traditions, trade and industrial relations. They hold common alliances with the United States and common apprehensions about the military threat of North Korea and the economic competition of China. Despite these commonalities, relations between across the Tsushima Strait are at a low point since the two nations normalized relations in 1965. Their leaders have not met since May 2012. Korea's president, Park Geun-Hye, refused to meet with Japan's Prime Minister Abe Shinzo at two regional summits in October 2013, and declared that she saw no point in seeing him unless Japan apologized for its past wrongs. A survey released at that time showed that 62% of South Koreans feel militarily threatened by Japan.<sup>38</sup>

Squabbles and negative attitudes on both sides seem not to have diminished trade, but they have had material consequences. Exchange of persons in tourism, entertainment, business, and research has been hurt. East Asia languishes for a security framework that could reduce mutual fear and distrust and address in common the threats of atomic warfare, terrorism, climate change, and food supply. Compromises that could conclude island disputes cannot be achieved in an atmosphere of resentment born of war and colonialism that ended three generations ago. Beginning in 2013, the United States has voiced to Japan and South Korea its dismay over their inability to deal constructively with their pasts.

Nonetheless, the passage of time can bring about deep interstate reconciliation among these nations. The cases of Thai-Japanese relations, Singapore-Japanese relations, US-British relations, and French-German relations demonstrate that national enemies can become friends. The following practices, pursued on all sides, can facilitate the process of peacebuilding in East Asia:

- Conduct the rituals of reconciliation on all sides. Apologies should be made, repeatedly, and graphically. Official, public apologies – such as that of Chief Cabinet Secretary Kono Yohei (1993) and Prime Minister Murayama Tomoichi (1995) – should be repeated, and in dramatic ways that will catch attention and become established in memory. It will be a grave mistake for the Japanese government to weaken or withdraw these historic apologies. Formal apologies should also be diplomatically negotiated so that an apology receives a publicized official response. That response should as a minimum be recognition; better yet, acceptance; and best of all,

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<sup>38</sup> *Japan Times*. 2013. November 20, 1.

forgiveness.

- Accept the inevitability of contrarian voices and movements on all sides in the process of reconciliation.
- Avoid deliberate provocations – such as, official visits to Yasukuni Shrine, statues of Ahn Jung-Guen, political excursions to disputed islands, and intrusive air defense identification zones. It is a positive sign that Prime Minister Abe Shinzo has not returned to Yasukuni since 2013, and has delayed his agenda of Constitutional revision.
- Establish the goal of restorative justice rather than criminal justice. In Japan's case, focus on victim needs by compensating the individual victims/families of egregious abuses (such as “comfort women” and wartime foreign laborers).
- Engage in multi-national history projects. Construct joint, reconciling histories, but allow space and mutual respect for conflicting national histories.
- Establish in war museums and memorials the consciousness that the victims of war lie on both sides of battle lines. The Okinawa Prefectural Peace Memorial Museum achieves this awareness graphically in its multi-national Cornerstone of Peace, where the names of all victims of the Battle of Okinawa are inscribed.
- Encourage people-to-people exchanges and the sharing of popular culture.
- Explore and apply the reconciling teachings of religions and secular moral systems.

Those who cherish the hope for deep interstate reconciliation in East Asia must take a long-term historical view and draw strength from the evidence that such rapprochement has taken place in unexpected places across the world. When Korea, China, and Japan learn to set aside their resentments, peoples across the world will know that even national enemies can forgive and become friends.