

"History and Reconciliation: An International Comparative Study" (Summary)

On 12th October, 2017, JIIA held a symposium titled "History and Reconciliation: An International Comparative Study." The discussions therein are summarized as follows:

1. Keynote Speech by Dr. Shinichi Kitaoka, President, Japan International Cooperation Agency)

After the welcoming remarks by Ambassador Yoshiji Nogami, President, JIIA, Dr. Kitaoka delivered a keynote speech summarized as follows.

- This symposium is part of our efforts to continue the discussion about the 70th anniversary of the end of WWII in the "Advisory Panel on the History of the 20th Century and on Japan's Role and the World Order in the 21st Century."
- In my keynote speech, I would like to present various issues regarding history and reconciliation as food for thought in this symposium.
- Classically, the major issues of diplomacy were high politics, war, peace, and territory. After WWII, we saw the emergence of economic matters as major issues of diplomacy. However, nowadays, enhancing one's own image and undermining the images of others have become the central focus of diplomacy. Unlike disputes involving international trade, there has not been institutionalization of struggles involving images so, in fact, the fruits of the long-lasting peace of the postwar era have crumbled because of image contestation.
- Looking at past colonial rule by various powers, there seems little correlation between the size of damage and the scale of economic investment on the one hand, and remaining dissatisfaction, complaints, or the difficulty of reconciliation on the other. For instance, British or French colonial rule cannot be said to have been merciful, but their relationships with their former colonies are relatively good. Comparing Japanese colonial rule in Korea and in Taiwan, although the numbers of the victims in the two cases seem very similar, Taiwan is friendlier to Japan than is Korea.
- One of the conditions that promote reconciliation is the size of shared interests in realistic terms. The major basis of the Germany-France and US-Japan reconciliations was the Soviet threat. In terms of the relationship between reconciliation and political systems, it was Polish democratization

that sped up the reconciliation process between Germany and Poland. On the other hand, authoritarian regimes can manipulate their public images of other states through such measures as controlling descriptions in textbooks. While time passes, memory does not fade. The problems of history cannot be resolved simply with the passage of time. In this context, the type of regime matters. South Korea is a democratic country, but there seems to be a unique idea that, for certain incidents or conduct, not only individuals but also groups should bear responsibility.

- As for the issues of responsibility and apology, individuals should bear most of the burden. There should be different levels of responsibility between leaders who made decisions based on lots of information, and the public who only supported the government. If young Japanese have a certain kind of responsibility, it would seem to be the responsibility to learn precise and accurate history.
- Even if we cannot reach a common recognition of history, it is important to conduct joint historical studies by comparing our perspectives with those of others. In other words, constructing so-called “parallel histories” is essential. In addition, I suggest we conduct multinational joint research of history involving not only the parties involved in the historical issues but also third parties. Sharing historical perspectives as “international history” through the participation of scholars and historians from various countries may promote reconciliation.

2. Part I: “Case Studies on Reconciliation”

In Part I, panelists compare various cases of relatively successful reconciliation and discuss what elements promoted reconciliation. The introductory statements by the panelists are summarized as follows:

(1) Brahma Chellaney (Professor, Centre for Policy Research, India)

- History is rarely objective. It is not uncommon for nations to create sanitized self-serving historical narratives. In authoritarian states such as China, governments dominate the historical interpretation.
- When the British gained a toehold in India, India was one of the richest lands in the world. Brutal British rule, however, through loot and plunder, turned India into one of the poorest lands. Against this background, India in fact has

never demanded an apology from Britain. The simple fact is that India decided long ago not to hold a grudge against Britain; rather than look back, India decided to look ahead. In some Asian countries such as China, a historical consciousness has been deliberately cultivated and harnessed for negative political reasons. In India, there has never been such an effort, in large part because India since independence has been a genuine democracy. The principle of Karma, which is deeply embedded in its social philosophy, has contributed to India reconciling with Britain by encouraging individuals and communities to look ahead, not to look back.

(2) Lily Gardner Feldman (Senior Fellow, American Institute for Contemporary German Studies, Johns Hopkins University)

- By reconciliation, I mean the process of building long-term peace between former enemies through bilateral institutions across governments and societies. Reconciliation involves the development of friendship, trust, empathy, and magnanimity, not necessarily forgiveness. Reconciliation is not an easily approached terminal condition but rather an ongoing lengthy, nonlinear, messy process.
- In the case of German-Polish relations, such factors as German acknowledgment of its crimes during WWII, its recognition of victims' suffering, initiatives taken by civil society actors, political leadership in the relevant countries, the commitment of young people, a supportive international environment, and various efforts to reduce differences in historical understanding have promoted reconciliation.

(3) Fumiaki Kubo (Professor, The University of Tokyo)

- Reconciliation worked out well between the US and Japan, even though negative feelings involving such incidents as Pearl Harbor and the atomic bombing of Hiroshima have not faded out. The fact that the occupation by US forces was mild and generous promoted reconciliation. The intensifying Cold War had a major impact as well. It motivated the US and Japan to form an alliance. Since then, the US and Japan have tried to overcome issues involving the memories and hostilities of WWII, and have promoted reconciliation through such efforts as the amendment of the US-Japan Security Treaty and the reversion of Okinawa. Even after the Cold War, the

two countries maintained their willingness to strengthen their alliance and actually have done so.

- Considering their huge differences in terms of race, religion and culture, the fact that the US and Japan managed to overcome a tragic past and achieved relative success in reconciliation should be highly evaluated in the context of world history.

(4) Nobukatsu Kanehara (Assistant Chief Cabinet Secretary/ Deputy Secretary-General, National Security Secretariat)

- The following remarks are my personal views.
- Reconciliation depends upon not only national interests in international relations but also the identities of the countries involved. The identity of a state affects its views on history, and influences the reconciliation process. If there is a common past, there can be a common future and the inverse is also true.
- In the 20th century, the biggest forces were ethnic self-determination in Asia and Africa, including the abolition of ethnic discrimination, and universalization of Western values such as democracy, human rights and liberty. What became clear after the Cold War was the liberal global order led by the US.
- Many Asian and African countries will try to redefine their identities and histories in the process of incorporating themselves into the liberal global order of universal values. We need to face such new histories woven by them and find out where Japanese history can be located in global history.

(5) After these remarks, discussion and Q&A sessions followed. It was pointed out that, against the backdrop of economic development in Asian countries, history has been used as a tool to advance national interests and time has not been a healer in Asia.

3. Part II: "What Promotes and Prevents Reconciliation?"

Part II examines why there are successful and unsuccessful cases of reconciliation. It sheds light on the effects of identity, culture, and political systems as promoting and preventing factors.

(1) Yinan He (Associate Professor, Lehigh University)

- National mythmaking, which is essentially the politicization of history, can cause sharp disagreement between former enemy countries on matters of historical interpretation. Divergent memories in turn generate negative emotions and perceptions of hostile intention between former enemies.
- As for the case of Sino-Japanese relations, from the 1980s onwards national mythmaking continued in both countries and, as a result, a mixture of conflictual narratives in the official rhetoric and narratives in the popular discourse developed, which activated the mechanisms of emotion and intention that severely impeded reconciliation. Since 2010, their history disputes have been closely intertwined with their territorial disputes, seriously straining the relationship between Japan and China.
- Leaders should take historical memories seriously, especially to emphasize the construction of a shared history and memory.

(2) Ji Young Kim (Associate Professor, Graduate School of Arts and Sciences, the University of Tokyo)

Over the comfort woman issue, there is a gap between the international community and the Japanese government. It could be said that what the Japanese government has done in the series of agreements with Korea remains a tactical concession. Domestic backlash against international pressure has blocked Japan from accepting international norms and discussions involving the comfort woman issue at the UN and elsewhere in the international community.

(3) Kazuya Sakamoto (Professor, Osaka University)

- There are two important principles in the context of history and reconciliation between states. The first principle is that, if there is a gap in the perception of history between nations, one should not forcibly try to fill the gap. The other is that history is something to learn, not to use in criticizing other people.
- In the drafting process of the San Francisco Peace Treaty, reconciliation was more important than history (condemning the past) in the context of the Cold War. John F. Dulles and other drafters avoided touching upon war crimes during WWII in the treaty, applying lessons learned from the failure of the Treaty of Versailles.
- Emotional pain and negative feelings brought about by perceptions of history can perhaps be suppressed with the passage of time.

(4) Thongchai Winichakul (Professor Emeritus, University of Wisconsin-Madison/ Institute of Developing Economics, Japan External Trade Organization)

- In discussing history, justice cannot be overlooked. Although it is difficult to decide right or wrong in the context of international relations, we should not drop the word “justice.”
- Learning history is for intellectual maturity. History is not for emotional attachments such as nationalism. By learning everything but not attaching ourselves to the parties in conflict, perhaps we can approach the question of justice easier. This may enable us to think about what justice is for human beings.

(5) After these remarks, discussion and Q&A sessions followed. It was pointed out that there is not enough history research being done and that it is oversimplifying to see the comfort woman issue as a conflict between Japan and the international community.

4. Part III: “Reconciliation and Nationalism”

Part III focuses on nationalism. The participants discussed how and when nationalism transforms into a factor preventing reconciliation, and how we can build future-oriented relations in East Asia.

(1) Yuichi Hosoya (Professor, Keio University)

- When you think about nationalism and reconciliation in terms of international politics, you should consider how power and justice are correlated. In other words, if the balance of power among parties changes, their recognition of justice and history also changes.
- When the world tried to construct a new international order after WWII, it was the victors of the war who defined justice. Asian countries, including China and South Korea, could not take part in this process. However, when these countries begin to emerge, and the strategic environment and the balance of power start to change, they try to embed their concepts of justice into the existing world order. One of the frictions in this process is the issue of recognition of history.
- In this context, based on historical facts, we need to deepen our understanding about justice as claimed by China or Korea and try to

harmonize various concepts of justice in order to create some kind of shareable justice.

(2) Lung-chih Chang(Deputy Director, Institute of Modern History, Academia Sinica)

- Nationalism has two dimensions. On the one hand, it can bring people together but, on the other, it can divide people into different camps or groups. Nationalism is often a factor preventing reconciliation. However, in Taiwan, nationalism played a positive role in creating the multiethnic and multicultural identity of Taiwanese nationals and promoting democratization.
- In the modern Japan-Taiwan relationship, nationalism is not seen as a factor preventing reconciliation. This is because Taiwan has embedded the memories of the Japanese colonial era into its own history in shaping the Taiwanese identity. Taiwan's relief support to Japan after the 3.11 earthquake and pop cultural exchange are also playing a positive role.

(3) Da-qing Yang (Associate Professor, George Washington University)

- China curtailed its nationalism from 1945 to the 1970s because it hoped to win Japanese diplomatic recognition during the Cold War and because the ideology of the Communist Party had an element of internationalism. Therefore, in the first half of the postwar era, China and Japan experienced something like a thin reconciliation as opposed to a deep or thick reconciliation. Since the 1990s, after China experienced a dramatic ideological shift, Chinese nationalism has surged. That is one of the factors that prevented Japan-China reconciliation.
- In order to move forward in this age of resurging nationalism with the goal of promoting reconciliation, we should harness some of the positive dynamics in the East Asia region being brought about by economic growth and interdependence. We also need to work together to counterbalance the nationalist narrative by embracing global history as a changing way to look at the past to relativize nation states. In this regard, we should make efforts to build a network of historians and history educators in East Asia.

(4) Yu-ha Park (Professor, Sejong University)

- Japan attempted to settle the comfort woman issue through the Kono statement, the Murayama statement, and the Japan-ROK agreement in

2015. However, these efforts are not reported by Korean media appropriately, and biased information prevails in ROK. Therefore, the voices of Korean activists who oppose measures taken by the Japanese government have gained the recognition and understanding of the Korean public.

- One of the reasons why the comfort woman issue has become the biggest challenge in the history of Japan-ROK relations is that ideological disputes between the left and the right in Korea have been linked with their historical views towards Japan. That is, the left in Korea regarded Japan as imperialist and was hostile to it during the Cold War, and it maintained such a political stance even after the Cold War.
- In order to solve the issue, Japan and Korea should share not only information but also rational and ethical ways of thinking. We should also adhere to the basic stance of regarding colonial rule as problematic.

(5) Shin Kawashima (Professor, Graduate School of Arts and Sciences, The University of Tokyo)

- Japan sought postwar settlements through such legal frameworks as San Francisco Peace Treaty and other bilateral treaties. However, many of its counterparties were authoritarian states at that time and some of their domestic actors were not fully involved in the settlement process. Now they claim that the existing treaties with Japan do not solve all the issues relating to WWII.
- In the history of Japan-China relations after WWII, both countries attempted to make concessions at differing times and these efforts failed to coincide.
- While there are an abundant amount of exchanges, dialogues and joint research efforts between historians in Japan and China, their accomplishments have not been recognized by the public in either country.

(6) After these remarks, discussion and Q&A sessions followed. It was pointed out that, although the Japanese public felt guilty about the comfort woman issue, the activists on this issue did not pursue justice in a manner that could be shared by the public in both countries and, consequently, the feeling of guilt among the Japanese public has been fading. It was also pointed out that we should take into consideration not only power but also interests when considering the issues of nationalism and reconciliation.