

Historical Animosity is What States Make of It:

The Role of Morality and Realism in Korea-Japan Relations

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[ABSTRACT]

This article argues that we should take into account the role of historical animosity seriously in explaining Korea-Japan relations as the conventional wisdom (or psycho-historical approach) emphasizes. However, this argument

does not rely on the idea that historical animosity is largely influenced by irrational emotionalism. Rather, the persistence of historical animosity is not only the result of emotionalism, but also more importantly the result of two states' *Realpolitik* consideration and Korea's resentment toward Japan regarding unresolved historical injustices. This article focuses on the intricately inseparable nature of Realism, morality and emotions. A recent view that historical animosity as a constant cannot explain the variations in Korea-Japan relations is not well-founded in the sense that it assumes historical animosity is purely irrational and emotional phenomenon. Rather, the historical animosity itself demonstrates the usefulness of Realism and its limitations in explaining state behaviors, as well as the importance of matters of justice many Realist scholars have usually ignored. In this context, subtle but positive changes in Japan regarding historical injustices since the 1990s should be noted.

I . Introduction

To many students of international relations, morality (norms) and Realism (rationality) may sound contradictory as justice and power seemingly belong to different categories. However, this article starts with the idea that we need inter-paradigmatic inquiry as well as an interdisciplinary approach in studying state behaviors due to the complexity of human nature—complicated by rationality, morality, emotions, and even religion, all at the same time. Some may view the ensuing analysis of Korea-Japan relations as being inconsistent because it does not exclusively rely on a certain theory/paradigm, whether it is Realism (Neorealism), Liberalism (Neoliberal Institutionalism), Marxism, or Constructivism. However, focusing on just one aspect of human nature, or just one paradigm among several, may stand in the way of explaining and understanding state behaviors including Korea-Japan relations.¹⁾

1) Previously I employed Realism in explaining variations of cooperation and frictions in Korea-Japan relations, arguing the existent 'discrete Realism' needs to be modified to more 'realistic Realism' and that Realism broadly understood is still a powerful tool for explaining

As used when we talk about the role of historical animosity in Korea-Japan relations here, the term ‘animosity’ is defined as “a feeling of strong dislike, ill will, or enmity that tends to display itself in action,” and “feeling” is defined as “an emotion or emotional perception or attitude.”²⁾ Accordingly, historical animosity can be defined as “an emotion or emotional perception or attitude of strong dislike, ill will, or enmity that has historically developed between states and that tends to display itself out in the states’ actions.” Thus the word animosity indicates it is simultaneously a type of emotion and *perception*. The usual identification of emotion with irrationalism is somewhat misleading since scholars who study emotion do not regard it as always irrational but rather consider emotion as rational sometimes. Emotion and perception are not necessarily separate phenomena; they could also reinforce each other.³⁾

With this in mind, this article purports to analyze the nature of historical animosity in Korea-Japan relations from a theoretical perspective that regards historical animosity as being inseparably intertwined with both a state’s *Realpolitik* calculation of its national interest and its moral consideration of justice in its bilateral encounters.

Here I will discuss, first, the role of morality and Realism in international relations in general; second, Realist nature of historical animosity in Korea-Japan relations; third, history perception gap, historical injustices, and historical animosity in Korea-Japan relations. Then, I conclude persisting historical animosity in Korea-Japan relations is not just the effect of emotionalism and irrationality. Rather, its persistence is the result of both the

the bilateral relations. However, I also emphasized the limitations of the Realist paradigm. As it were, we need conditional generalization regarding the usefulness of each paradigm. See Tae-Ryong Yoon, “Fragile Cooperation: Net Threat Theory and Japan-Korea-U.S. Relations” (Ph.D. Dissertation, Columbia University, 2006). For a recent discussion on rationalism, constructivism, and eclecticism in matters of emotion and reconciliation in international relations and their implications for Korea-Japan relations, see Hak-Sung Kim, “Chung’o wa hwahae ui kukje chongchi” (International Relations of Hatred and Reconciliation), *Kukje chungchi nonchong* (The Korean Journal of International Studies) 51-1 (2011).

2) Webster’s Encyclopedic Unabridged Dictionary of the English Language (New York: Gramercy Books, 1996).

3) See Neta C. Crawford, “The Passion of World Politics: Propositions on Emotion and Emotional Relationships,” *International Security* 24-4 (Spring 2000); Jon Elster, *Alchemies of the Mind: Rationality and the Emotions* (Cambridge University Press, 1999); “Rationality and Emotions,” *Economic Journal* 106-438 (September 1996); Klaus Scherer, “Emotions Can Be Rational,” *Social Science Information* 24-2 (1985).

two states' *Realpolitik* consideration and Korea's resentment towards Japan regarding unresolved historical injustices. At a general level, I also conclude the persistence of historical animosity itself demonstrates the usefulness of Realism and its limitations in explaining state behaviors, as well as the necessity of rectifying historical injustices for stable peace in their relations.

II. Morality and Realism in International Relations

Reinhold Niebuhr noted, "Order precedes justice in the strategy of government; but ... only an order which implicates justice can achieve a stable peace. An unjust order quickly invites the resentment and rebellion which lead to its undoing." Similarly, Blaise Pascal expressed, "Justice without force is impotent, force without justice is tyrannical ... It is necessary, therefore, to unite justice and force to make that which is just strong and that which is strong just."⁴ Niebuhr and Pascal reveal a perspective which emphasizes the important role of justice (or morality) in maintaining a stable peace in political life without ignoring the reality where power (or force) also looms large in shaping order in politics.

Since Thucydides, Realists have usually relied on the logic of "might is right," loving to quote from his work: "While the strong do what they can and the weak suffer what they must."⁵ Therefore, instead of the spiral model, offensive Realists prefer the deterrence model based on the logic of "If you want peace, prepare for war."⁶ However, we often witness historical cases where pride goes before a fall: no empire heavily relying on military power alone lasted long, and "the biter is sometimes bit" by the challenger. It seems to be true that "the pen is mightier than (or as mighty as) the sword" if we believe that soft power (or persuasive power) is critical in maintaining U.S. hegemony in the post-Cold War era.⁷ In a sense, soft power is a kind of

4) Re-quoted from Gregory T. Russell, "(Review on) Order and Justice in International Relations," *Ethics & International Affairs* 18-1 (2004), p. 107 and p. 109.

5) Thucydides, *The Peloponnesian War*, the Crawley trans. (New York: The Modern Library, 1982), Book V: 89, p. 351.

6) For a seminal discussion of the deterrence and spiral models, see Robert Jervis, *Perception and Misperception in International Politics* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1976), pp. 58-67.

7) For the discussion on the concept of soft power, see Joseph S. Nye, Jr., *Soft Power: The*

power justifying the existent order without necessarily using raw force, which is ultimately related to human yearning for justice in the international arena.

According to Hedley Bull, there are certain ideas or beliefs as to what justice involves in world politics, and demands formulated in the name of these ideas play a role in the course of events. Ideas of justice belong to the class of moral ideas, ideas which treat human actions as right in themselves and not merely as a means to an end.⁸⁾ Bull argued the existing framework of international order fails to satisfy some of the most deeply felt and powerfully supported of the aspirations for justice.⁹⁾ He also pointed out that violent assaults on the existing order aimed at just change may have the effect of altering what the existing consensus is; sometimes the struggle for change itself creates a consensus in favor of this change that did not exist when the struggle was first undertaken, which is exemplified by the process of delegitimizing sovereignty of colonial powers over their subject territories.¹⁰⁾

As I will demonstrate, we indeed witness subtle but meaningful changes happening in the baseline of Korea-Japan relations in the 1990s and thereafter.

Meanwhile, as Robert Jervis—as a Realist—points out, we could be also somewhat narrowly concerned about the role of morality, not in setting national goals, but in influencing the means states employ: that is, morality as a restraint—doing less harm to others at some cost to the state’s short-run interest. Jervis associates morality with “living by values that are not strictly self-interested.” Doing things to benefit others, suffering so that others will gain (or will not suffer), not taking advantage of others’ weakness: these are the sorts of things which come under the heading of morality.¹¹⁾ Morality can help ameliorate problems of security by helping decision makers to reach a solution acceptable to both sides. Although to imagine that it could solve our most pressing international conflict is unrealistic, morality has several

Means to Success in World Politics (New York: PublicAffairs, 2004); idem, *Bound to Lead: The Changing Nature of American Power* (New York: Basic Books, 1990).

8) Hedley Bull, *The Anarchical Society: A Study of Order in World Politics* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1977), p. 78.

9) *Ibid.*, p. 87.

10) *Ibid.*, p. 98.

11) Robert Jervis, “Morality and International Strategy,” in *The Meaning of the Nuclear Revolution: Statecraft and the Prospects of Armageddon* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1989), pp. 107-114.

functions: first, it serves to keep before us the criteria and standards we as human beings must strive for; second, it can help statesmen avoid pseudo-Realism—the preoccupation with power and interest narrowly conceived that so often is not only evil but self-defeating; third, when consequences are hard to judge, statesmen might take more guidance from principles of ethics.¹²⁾

As I will show, in the post-Cold War era morality or ethics plays a certain role in Korea-Japan relations. This may be related to what Mervyn Frost points out: the Cold War blocked the emergence of ethical theories within the discipline. In a “life or death” struggle there was not much point in discussing a just world order because survival took precedence over justice.¹³⁾ Nevertheless, this doesn’t mean we didn’t have any normative concerns during the Cold War. As Christian Reus-Smit and Duncan Snidal argue, scholars have never fully abandoned their practical ambitions: Realists prescribe what rational states ought to do; postmodernists recommend practices of scholarly resistance and deconstruction; whenever they make such prescriptions, they engage in the normative as well as the empirical.¹⁴⁾ E. H. Carr, a leading precursor of Realist discourse also noted, “Political thought is itself a form of political action. Political science is the science not only of what is, but of what ought to be.”¹⁵⁾ They are all well aware of the necessity of positivistic and normative inquiry in international relations.

In this vein, here I will employ a theoretical perspective that ignores neither empirical (positivistic) nor normative aspect of the inquiry on Korea-Japan relations.

12) *Ibid.*, pp. 133-135.

13) Mervyn Frost, *Ethics in International Relations: A Constitutive Theory* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), p. 5.

14) Christian Reus-Smit and Duncan Snidal, “Reuniting Ethics and Social Science: The Oxford Handbook of International Relations,” *Ethics & International Affairs* 22-3 (Fall 2008), p. 263.

15) Edward Hallett Carr, *The Twenty Years’ Crisis, 1919-1939: An Introduction to the Study of International Relations* (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1964), Reprint Edition (Originally published in 1939 with a second edition in 1946), p. 5.

III. Realist Nature of Historical Animosity in Korea-Japan Relations

There is a tendency for most experts on Korea-Japan relations to regard historical animosity as a phenomenon related to irrational emotionalism. I will repudiate such a notion as frictions arising from historical animosity are anomalous, irrational, emotionalist, and inconsistent with Realist logic.

1. *Geopolitics and Cognitive Tendencies*¹⁶⁾

The geographical closeness between Korea and Japan is often expressed by a set phrase: “Japan and Korea are close but distant neighbors,” namely, close in geography but distant in mind. This cliché is often used to underline the abnormal nature of Korea-Japan relations. However, it is the prevalent phenomenon that geographical contiguity intensifies the security dilemma among neighboring states. Considering the water between the two alleviates the security dilemma, there is no wonder the proximity of the two distrusting states should make each feel insecure, making an amicable relationship hard to develop. Technological advancement (including weapons technology) will shorten the ‘psychological geography’ further, worsening the security dilemma.¹⁷⁾

Moreover, once harbored, historical animosity is not easy to eliminate because “decision-makers tend to fit incoming information into their existing theories and images”¹⁸⁾ and “scholars and decision-makers are apt to err by being too wedded to the established view and too closed to new information.”¹⁹⁾ Also, there is a tendency for decision makers to see other states as more hostile than they are, and actors tend to see the behavior of others as more centralized, disciplined, and coordinated than it is.²⁰⁾ The Korea-Japan

16) This part is a summary version of this author’s previous work: Tae-Ryong Yoon, “Searching for a New Paradigm for Korea-Japan Relations,” *Kukje kwan’gye yan’gu* (IRI Review) 12-2 (Ilmin International Relations Institute, Korea University, Fall 2007).

17) For a discussion of the relationship of technology, geography, and security dilemma, see Robert Jervis, “Cooperation Under the Security Dilemma,” *World Politics* 30-2 (January 1978), pp. 194-199.

18) Robert Jervis, “Hypotheses on Misperception,” *World Politics* 20 (April 1968), p. 455.

19) *Ibid.*, p. 459.

20) *Ibid.*

relationship is no exception to these biased cognitive tendencies, which still obstruct reconciliation. All this suggests that the continuity of the historical animosity and bilateral frictions can be due to other factors than just irrational emotionalism.

Those who employ a ‘psycho-historical’ approach emphasize the overshadowing influence of historical animosity.²¹⁾ This ‘traditional’ approach, though, has one thing in common with a recent and sophisticated version of the Realist analysis of Korea-Japan relations²²⁾: Both regard historical animosity not only as irrational emotion but also as unrelated to *Realpolitik* thinking.²³⁾ The former emphasizes the continuity, and the latter underlines the change in Korea-Japan relations, but neither focuses on the *change and continuity* at the same time.

However, persistent historical animosity is not necessarily contradictory to the Realist logic. For instance, considering Neorealism’s usual assumption of ‘worst case scenario’ in state relations, we may infer that lasting historical animosity in Korea-Japan relations is a reflection on Japan’s possible reemergence as a hegemon in Northeast Asia. Then, contrary to the common belief on the nature of historical animosity, *too much Realism* is a problem rather than too little Realism (or too much emotionalism).

21) For recent examples, see Brian Bridges, *Japan and Korea in the 1990s: From Antagonism to Adjustment* (Cambridge, UK: Edward Elgar, 1993); Chae-Jin Lee, “U.S. and Japanese Policies toward Korea: Continuity and Change,” in Hong Yung Lee and Chongwook Chung (eds.), *Korean Options in a Changing International Order* (Institute of East Asian Studies, University of California at Berkeley/ Korea Research Monograph 18, 1993); Chae-Jin Lee and Hideo Sato (eds.), *U.S.-Japan Partnership in Conflict Management: The Case of Korea* (Claremont, CA: The Keck Center for International and Strategic Studies, 1993); Chong-Sik Lee, *Japan and Korea: The Political Dimension* (Stanford, CA: Hoover Institution Press, Stanford University, 1985); Chae-Jin Lee and Hideo Sato (eds.), *U.S. Policy Toward Japan and Korea: A Changing Influence Relationship* (New York: Praeger, 1982); Hong N. Kim, “South Korea’s Relations with Japan,” in Young C. Kim (ed.), *Foreign Policies of Korea* (The Institute for Asian Studies, Washington, D.C./ Institute for Far Eastern Studies, Kyungnam University, 1973).

22) Victor D. Cha, *Alignment Despite Antagonism: The United States-Korea-Japan Security Triangle* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1999).

23) The tendency for identifying historical animosity with irrational emotionalism is particularly strong in the western scholarship adopting the Great powers-centered approach.

2. Conflict of Interests on Grand Strategy in Northeast Asia

Paying exclusive attention to the existent common threats while overlooking the intrinsic ‘conflict of interests,’ most Realists have difficulty explaining the Korea-Japan relationship. However, as aligning against the common threats is in Korea-Japan’s interest, so is friction over conflicting interests consistent with the Realist logic.

In 1946, when the U.S.-Soviet talks on a unified Korea were nearing a stalemate, words of warning started spreading through a Korean rhyme:

Ssoryôn saram ege sokji malgo [Don’t be deceived by the Soviets],
Miguk saram mitchi malla [Don’t count on the Americans],
Ilbon saram irônani [The Japanese will soon rise again],
Chosôn saram choshim hara [So, Koreans, look out for yourselves]!

This vigilance was natural to Koreans who had suffered from foreign invasions. Most recently, Japan annexed and colonized Korea, forcefully abolishing the Choson Dynasty, symbol of a long tradition. The rhyme is an expression of *Realpolitik* concern by the Korean people hating to see their country dominated again by external powers.

In the postwar period, the official state-to-state relations between Korea and Japan were delayed until Japan regained its sovereignty in 1952. Korea’s independence was also delayed until 1948. Only after the American Occupation of South Korea was over did Korea’s official policy toward Japan begin to form.

The first president of South Korea, Syngman Rhee, notorious for his anti-communism, is also infamous for having utilized anti-Japanese emotionalism for domestic political purposes. However, the bilateral frictions in the early formative period were not just the result of historical animosity itself. Especially, after the Korean War broke out on June 25, 1950, the common threats from the communist neighbors were clearly perceived both by Korea and Japan. Also as a response to heightened threats, the U.S. re-engaged in the Korean peninsula, assuming an influential position that could play both positive and negative roles in the process of Korea-Japan reconciliation.

The U.S. role was positive in that American officials pressured the two to start normalization talks by playing a go-between role. However, the U.S.

role also had a negative aspect. For instance, in September 1951 during the Korean War, the United States and forty-seven other nations signed a peace treaty with Japan in San Francisco. Simultaneously, as the essential *quid pro quo* for this “generous” peace treaty on the part of the United States, a bilateral U.S.-Japan Mutual Security Agreement was signed at the same time. In April 1952 the Occupation of Japan formally ended and Japan reentered the global arena as the key U.S. ally in Asia.²⁴⁾

The Korea-Japan bilateral conflicts in this formative period are usually attributed to historical animosity and emotionalism between the two states, and especially to Korean president Syngman Rhee’s anti-Japanism. However, evidence exists that suggests that President Rhee *did* want to overcome the historical animosity and was well-aware of the necessity of building a strategic partnership with Japan. However, Rhee had a different grand strategy in mind in dealing with the communist threats in Northeast Asia, and Washington did not share his views. He wanted to see America keep the earlier policy toward Japan summarized as democratization and demilitarization or as building Japan as “a Switzerland in East Asia.” But after America reversed course, Rhee’s strategic views could no longer be shared by a United States trying to rebuild Japan first as the “bulwark against communist threat” instead of putting priority on strengthening South Korea, as Rhee had wished.

The U.S. changed the earlier policy of weakening Japan into that of strengthening Japan. As John Dower commented, if the peace treaty was really “generous” to Japan it must have been at least partly at the cost of South Korea’s national interests.²⁵⁾ At least from the perspective of the Korean people who were just liberated from Japan’s colonial rule, Japan was overprotected by Washington’s grand strategy against the communist threats.

24) John W. Dower, *Japan in War and Peace: Selected Essays* (New York: New Press, 1993), p. 156.

25) For instance, President Rhee complained that the United States was not concerned about the ROK but only cared about strengthening Japan; and that the United States forced the ROK to buy Japanese products without building factories in Korea. See Pak Sil, *Han’guk oegyo pisa* (A Hidden History of Korean Diplomacy) (Seoul: Kirinwon, 1980), p. 382.

3. *The Impact of the Korean War on Historical Animosity in Korea-Japan Relations*

It is interesting to know that there existed at all such a rare case of politicians tapping the possibility of a Korea-Japan military alliance during the Korean War, which heightened the level of threat perception²⁶⁾; especially, the war increased Korea's incentives for cooperation with Japan. The U.S. re-engagement resulted from U.S. leaders' strategic belief that Korea could be one in a chain of falling dominoes.²⁷⁾ The increased threats and U.S. pressure lead us to anticipate more Korea-Japan cooperation. Simultaneously, the U.S. intervention led Korea and Japan to afford not to cooperate too much because they could count on (or free ride on) the United States.

In this light, it is remarkable that President Syngman Rhee even tapped the possibility of a military *alliance with Japan* though it was privately sought and destined to fail due to Japan's entrapment fear.²⁸⁾ As long as the United States strongly supported South Korean military to expel the immediate North Korean threat, Japan had an incentive to avoid direct military involvement. Moreover, Japan was more concerned about its relations with its other powerful neighbors.²⁹⁾

According to Selig Harrison, most Japanese appear less fearful of an eventual Communist triumph in Korea than of two other possible outcomes. One would be a conflict entailing U.S. intervention that could in turn embroil Japan militarily, complicating relations with other powers. The other fear involves precipitate U.S. disengagement from South Korea that would not allow Japan time to reshape its approach to the peninsula. Similarly, Kei Wakaizumi emphasized the "profound apprehension that such a conflict may draw Japan into a conflict with China or the Soviet Union, or that it may

26) See Sung-Hwa Cheong, *The Politics of Anti-Japanese Sentiment in Korea: Japanese-South Korean Relations Under American Occupation, 1945-1952* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1991), p. 83.

27) See Robert Jervis and Jack Snyder (eds.), *Dominoes and Bandwagons: Strategic Beliefs and Great Power Competition in the Eurasian Rimland* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), p. 83.

28) For the concept of abandonment/entrapment fears, see Glenn H. Snyder, *Alliance Politics* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1997); idem, "The Security Dilemma in Alliance Politics," *World Politics* 36-4 (July 1984).

29) See Sung-Hwa Cheong, *op. cit.*, p. 83.

damage its relations with the United States.”³⁰⁾

It is also noticeable that the normalization talks started during the Korean War in October 1951, which indicates an effect of perceived common threat (and U.S. pressure). In addition, despite the continuation of President Rhee’s concern for Japan’s possible re-domination over Korea, other evidence suggests that Korea-Japan cooperation increased rapidly under the heightened external threats. Despite Japan’s indirect and direct (though covert) participation in the war, the deep U.S. engagement relieved Japan’s abandonment fear and heightened its entrapment fear instead. The conservative Japanese government resisted American pressure for rapid remilitarization and continued to do so over the ensuing decades. To avoid the situation where the increase of Japanese military forces leads to an irresistible American pressure, Prime Minister Yoshida and successors in their secret conversations with the U.S. leaders frequently referred to popular support for the constitutional restraints on rearmament. The “spirit of Article Nine” was one of their most effective bargaining cards.³¹⁾

In other words, Japan was playing a delicate game of maintaining an appropriate level of cooperation with Korea. Although perceived threats compelled Japan do something for American war efforts, deep U.S. engagement allowed Japan not to cooperate overtly for fear of entrapment into the Korean War. This dynamic in Korea-Japan relations indicates that historical animosity is inseparably related to the two states’ *Realpolitik* concerns.

4. The Enemy of My Enemy is My Friend

In the case of Korea-U.S. relations, the logic of “the enemy of my enemy is my friend” worked. The U.S. decision to be a “friend in need” for Korea made the dormant historical animosity in the South Korean people’s mind lack salience. (Remember, “*Miguk saram mitchi malla* [Don’t count on the Americans]” in the aforementioned rhyme?)

Compared with Korea-U.S. relations, Korea-Japan relations improved very slowly, with a series of confrontational incidents occurring before their final

30) Franklin B. Weinstein and Fuji Kamiya (eds.), *The Security of Korea: U.S. and Japanese Perspectives on the 1980s* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1980), p. 44.

31) *Ibid.*, p. 231.

achievement of diplomatic normalization in 1965. The major reason for this retardation of the good relationship was neither the lack of vision of a desirable goal, nor the lingering historical animosity alone. In fact, countless political disputes occurred between the two due to conflicting self-interests and confusing self-identities. For its own domestic and international political reasons Japan neither firmly committed itself to the defense of South Korea, nor did it close the possibility of normalizing relations with North Korea by maintaining its principle of *seikei bunri* (separation of politics and economy).

In other words, Japan's political decision to be neither a 'clear friend' of South Korea nor 'clear enemy' of North Korea created the problem of identity confusion. Therefore, in the case of Korea-Japan relations, the logic of "the enemy of my enemy is my friend" did not work. The North-South Korean confrontation has put Japan in an awkward situation, hindering the rapid development of positive relations with all its neighbors.

In light of the discussion above, to see historical animosity as the immediate cause of Korea-Japan friction is to put the cart before the horse. However, nor is it appropriate to regard historical animosity as insignificant in explaining Korea-Japan relations. Historical animosity intervenes as an *inflaming factor* when political disputes result from divergent decisions made by Korean and Japanese politicians due to their different conception of self-interest. Perception can be changed if it is misperception. Only when politicians have the will, intellectual ability to persuade themselves and people by their logic, and political ability to survive under the situation, will they be able to change their own and people's perception by their willful political decisions.

IV. History Perception Gap, Historical Injustices, and Historical Animosity in Korea-Japan Relations

In this section, I will address the issues of historical animosity which are inseparably intertwined with normative/moral concerns as well as *Realpolitik* consideration.

1. Necessity for Addressing the Normative Aspect of Korea-Japan Relations

A majority of the experts analyze Korea-Japan relations in terms of historical animosity, focusing constantly on the conflictive side of the relationship. They have provided a detailed diplomatic history of Korea-Japan relations full of conflictive incidents, and produced a bulk of literature on Korean nationalism or the history of Korean independent movement against the Japanese imperialism.³²⁾

Historical animosity indeed has affected Korea-Japan relations even since their diplomatic normalization in 1965,³³⁾ twenty years after the end of Japan's colonial rule over Korea (1910—1945). Many analysts argue that Korea and Japan have a 'special' historical relationship that cannot be understood without considering the two states' history perception gap. They usually stress the idiosyncratic nature of the relationship, which without 'burden of history' should have been much more cooperative during the Cold War.

According to one version³⁴⁾ of this approach, the Korea-Japan relationship is characterized by a series of "quasi-crises." These crises result from the history perception gap.³⁵⁾ However, while this approach can describe the unstable baseline of or the continuity in Korea-Japan relations, it cannot explain the *change*—a series of ups-and-downs, especially the cases of "ups"—in their relations. The psycho-historical approach regards bridging the perception gap as the most important factor for amicable relations. This approach is usually pessimistic about the prospect of the relationship as long as the perception gap between the two peoples remains unchanged.

Contrarily, Victor Cha criticizes that "scholars and practitioners have grown accustomed to throwing up their hands in frustration and blaming historical

32) See footnote 21.

33) For the analysis of 1965 Korea-Japan diplomatic Normalization process, see Tae-Ryong Yoon, "Learning to Cooperate Not to Cooperate: Bargaining for the 1965 Korea-Japan Normalization," *Asian Perspective* 32-2 (Summer 2008).

34) Chung-In Moon, "International Quasi-Crisis: Theory and a Case of Japan-South Korean Bilateral Friction," *Asian Perspective* 15-2 (Fall-Winter 1991).

35) For a Japanese historian's urge to bridge the perception gap by first correcting the Japanese people's distorted view of Korea, see Takashi Hatada, "Han-Il kwan'gye wa yoksahak" (Japanese-Korean Relations and Historiography), *Han-Il kwan'gyesa ui chaejom'yong* (Refocusing on History of Korea-Japan Relations) (Seoul: Yoksa yon'guhoe, 1992).

animosity,” and argues that “this has become a stale and over-utilized argument.”³⁶⁾ Instead, Cha’s quasi-alliance model,³⁷⁾ by employing Glenn Snyder’s theory of alliance politics and the concept of “alliance security dilemma”³⁸⁾—that is, the inverse structure of abandonment/entrapment fears—explains Korea-Japan cooperation/frictions as a function of the U.S. engagement in or disengagement from the Northeast Asian region: When the United States disengages from Northeast Asia, there is Korea-Japan cooperation because of their multilateral symmetric abandonment fears regarding the U.S.; when the United States engages in the region, there is Korea-Japan friction because of their bilateral asymmetric abandonment/entrapment fears.

This version of realism pays exclusive attention to the indirect or unintended consequences of the U.S. policy on Korea-Japan relations, while ignoring other multiple or contradictory aspects of U.S. policy.³⁹⁾ In other words, in analyzing Korea-Japan relations, Cha, not unlike those who employ historical animosity alone, makes the same mistake of “putting all his eggs in one basket” in the sense that he is trying to explain too much with a single variable: the U.S. policies. An oversimplified analysis runs the risk of not only distorting the reality but also providing irrelevant policy prescriptions.⁴⁰⁾

I do not deny the significance of the U.S. role in Korea-Japan relations. However, Korea and Japan themselves do have their own roles to play. The long history of Korea-Japan relations tells us a simple fact that the two states themselves are the more important actors in Korea-Japan relations. No matter how important the roles the U.S. and other states including enemy states (or

36) Victor D. Cha, *op. cit.*, p. 5.

37) Cha defines quasi-alliance as “the relationship between two states that remain unallied despite sharing a common ally.” See *Ibid.*, p. 36.

38) See Glenn H. Snyder (1997), *op. cit.*; Glenn H. Snyder (1984), *op. cit.*

39) Korea-Japan relations are affected by the United States in a significant way. At least, we could consider six causal lines of Korea-Japan relations where the U.S. role is looming large but contradictory in its effect on Korea-Japan cooperation. For details, see Tae-Ryong Yoon (2007), *op. cit.*, pp. 189-194.

40) For a critical view of Cha’s model, see Seongji Woo, “Naengjon sigi han’guk-ilbon hyopryok ui pojul: pulgaeip gasol tae gaeip-yonhap chongch’i gasol” (Explaining South Korea-Japanese Cooperation during the Cold War Era: Disengagement Hypothesis vs. Engagement-Coalition Politics Hypothesis), *Han’guk chongch’i hakhoebo* (Korean Political Science Review) 37-3 (September 2003). He argues that Korea-Japan relations are the most cooperative when the U.S. engages in East Asia and when the conservative political forces are strong at the same time in Japan’s domestic politics.

threats) may play, they are all outsiders that have only secondary influence.⁴¹⁾

In this light, one of the most important tasks for analysts is to figure out why historical animosity is so persistent and how to overcome it. As some scholars point out, “the argument for a coalition among the three liberal markets still hinged on a traditional strategy of balancing against the socialist bloc and did not actually address the next key question: *How can Koreans and Japanese actually resolve historical questions and facilitate their growing need for mutual security cooperation?*”⁴²⁾

In the same spirit, I will address the issues of historical animosity which are closely related with both Korea’s normative/moral and *Realpolitik* concerns.

2. Colonialism

Right after the end of the Second World War, the South Korean leadership preferred early settlement of the disputes with Japan. President Rhee was aware of the benefits that the good relations with Japan would bring about under the increasing communist threats. He set a clear goal of diplomatic normalization. The real problem was never the lack of a vision of a desirable common goal—alignment with Japan against the communist threats, but the obstacles Korea and Japan faced in the process of achieving that goal, especially the ‘perception gap’ on the issue of the colonial past between Japanese and South Korean leaders. Japan’s rejection to apologize for the past colonial rule intensified the impression that the Japanese are unrepentant about the past wrongdoings under a favorable international situation in which Japan’s strategic role as a bulwark against communist threats was highly appreciated by the United States.

In this context, different views between Korea and Supreme Commander of

41) For an exemplary analysis from this perspective, see Tae-Ryong Yoon, “Learning to Cooperate Not to Cooperate: Bargaining for the 1965 Korea-Japan Normalization” [see footnote 33]. See also Cheol Hee Park, “Cooperation Coupled with Conflicts: Korea-Japan Relations in the Post-Cold War Era,” *Asia Pacific Review* 15-2 (2008); Cheol Hee Park, “The Pattern of Cooperation and Conflict between Korea and Japan: Theoretical Expectations and Empirical Realities,” *Japanese Journal of Political Science* 10-3 (2009). He emphasizes the importance of convergence of threat perception between Korea and Japan in promoting bilateral cooperation.

42) Tae-Hyo Kim and Brad Glosserman (eds.), *The Future of U.S.-Korea-Japan Relations: Balancing Values and Interests* (Washington, D.C.: The CSIS Press, 2004), p. x.

the Allied Powers (SCAP) authorities in Japan on Korea-related issues such as the legal status of the Korean residents in Japan or their properties⁴³⁾ reinforced the impression that the U.S. mediation was not fair by siding with “*morally wrong*” Japan. Therefore, the U.S. pressure or ‘intended silence’ was not so effective in narrowing the perception gaps between the two states.

What would have happened if Japan had apologized at that time as Emperor Akihito did in October 1998? During the state visit by South Korean President Kim Dae-jung, Emperor Akihito said, “The history of close exchange had a reverse side at one period when Japan brought great suffering on the people of the Korean Peninsula. The deep sorrow that I feel over this never leaves my memory.”⁴⁴⁾ Prime Minister Obuchi Keizo also expressed “poignant remorse” and “sincere apology” for Japan’s conduct during its colonial rule of the Korean Peninsula and President Kim accepted the apology.⁴⁵⁾ One Korean proverb says, “One piece of word can pay for debts of a thousand-*ryang*.”⁴⁶⁾ Korea-Japan relations may have progressed much faster if Japan’s top leaders had expressed similarly in the early formative period. This kind of apology would have relieved Korea of the confusion about Japan’s identity and have had a positive effect on their relations thereafter.

A series of negotiations took place after the first preliminary talks for normalization failed in October 1951. After the first two conferences failed, the third conference resumed from October 6-26, 1953 after the Korean War. The chief of the Korean delegates, Minister Kim Yong-sik, requested the withdrawal of Japan’s claims on Japanese property in Korea the Japanese had left after Japan’s defeat, which were obviously made as a ‘bargaining chip’ for neutralizing any type of South Korea’s property claims in Japan. He pointed out the ROK was making no claim for compensation for “losses sustained by the Korean people under the thirty-six years of rule by the Japanese government.” At least to the Korean people, Japan’s property claims were outrageous because they felt unbearably exploited under Japan’s rule. This led to an exchange of mutual recrimination between Kim and the chief

43) The Korean residents in Japan were not allowed to take all their properties when they wanted to return to Korea after the end of the war.

44) Nicholas D. Kristof, “Korean Leader, in Japan, Urges Healing of Old Wounds,” *New York Times* (8 October 1998).

45) *Asahi Shimbun* (9 October 1998).

46) Ryang is Korea’s unit of currency in the past before the Won started to be used.

of the Japanese delegate, Kubota Kanichiro. Kubota argued,

Japan has rights to demand compensation, because Japan had given a lot of benefits to the Koreans for 36 years, such as reforestation, construction of railways, reclamation of land, and so forth ... If Japan had not advanced to Korea at that time, Korea would have naturally have been occupied by some other country, and would have experienced a more miserable situation than under Japanese rule ... The state of the Korean people as that of enslavement the Cairo Declaration described is only an expression of excitement embraced by the Allied Powers at the time of hostility ... All the actions taken by the Allied Powers after the termination of the War were in violation of international law.⁴⁷⁾

The exchange of views between Kim and Kubota reveals the complicated nature of the issues on the negotiation table, which brings back the bitter memories of the past and intensified historical animosity. The two sides' perception gaps on the past experience hindered the practical discussion of the present problems.

Japanese foreign minister Okazaki made a remark that supported Kubota on October 22, 1953, although later he said Kubota expressed only his personal view and not the Japanese government's view.⁴⁸⁾ Kubota's remark offended the ROK government and people, and the conference broke off as a result. It was not resumed until Japan publicly withdrew Kubota's statement four years later in 1957. As Lawrence Olson commented, Japanese negotiators included some hard-bitten, unregenerate types, especially in the early stages; they were unremorseful about their country's record in Korea. Most Japanese found it almost impossible to regard the Koreans as autonomous equals. The Japanese occupation had developed Korea, albeit for Japan's own interest; this had involved much repression, but the Koreans ought to be grateful for what Japan had built; few Japanese felt much guilt for past treatment of Koreans in Japan.⁴⁹⁾

47) *Korean Survey*, II 10 (December 1953), p. 13. See also "Actual Facts about the Kubota Statement," *Shinwa* (親和) (December 1953), pp. 6-17. (Quoted from Soon-Won Lee, "Korean-Japanese Discord, 1945-1965: A Case Study of International Conflict" (Ph.D. Dissertation, Rutgers University, 1967), pp. 157-158.

48) Kim Yong-sik, Saebiyok ui yaksok: *Kim Yong-sik oegyoo 33-nyon* (Promise at the Dawn: Thirty Three-Year Diplomacy of Kim Yong-sik), (Seoul: Kimyongsa, 1993), pp. 208-209.

Bruce Cumings also noted, “Many Japanese leaders cling to the idea that they did wonders for Korea during the colonial period.”⁵⁰⁾ I quote Olson and Cumings just to make a point that in international relations *moral* questions are ceaselessly raised. Without narrowing the perception gaps on issues related to moral or normative problems first, it is not only hard to start a cooperative relation, but also difficult to expand the hard-won cooperation.⁵¹⁾

It is most difficult to agree on such issues as involve Realist concerns, normative values, national prestige, and historical animosity at the same time. In analyzing such issues it is pointless to insist either Realist concern or normative concern is more important than the other. These kinds of complicated issues in Korea-Japan relations include property claims, fisheries problems, legal status and treatment of Koreans in Japan, and the problem of title to Dokdo/Takeshima islets, etc., which are usually and mistakenly attributed to historical animosity alone just because they have developed against a long historical backdrop.⁵²⁾ However, for instance, Dokdo/Takeshima is to the Koreans a symbol of national interest and national prestige. Any part of a state’s territory is strategically important to its own people for the maintenance of its territorial integrity—which is a Realist first priority in pursuing national interest. More than that, however, Japan’s claim on Dokdo gives an impression to Koreans that the Japanese are callous to the historical *injustices* they inflicted because Koreans believe that Japan’s claim to the island is based on the fact that it was forcefully incorporated into the Japanese territory in 1905 when Korea was deprived of its diplomatic sovereignty by Japan. Colonial experience is such a physical and moral humiliation to Koreans that the “Never again” syndrome is strong toward Japan.

Although Kubota’s statements left deep scars, in the long run it was also a part of “learning” experiences to Japan that such remarks would set back the relations to an enormous extent.⁵³⁾ After the break-off of the conference due to

49) Lawrence Olson, *Japan in Postwar Asia* (New York: Praeger, 1970), pp. 103-104.

50) Bruce Cumings, *Korea’s Place in the Sun: A Modern History* (New York and London: W. W. Norton, 1997), pp. 318-319.

51) For a discussion of moral aspect of international politics, see Mervyn Frost, *op. cit.*

52) For detailed discussions of the bilateral pending issues, see Kwan Bong Kim, *The Korea-Japan Treaty Crisis and the Instability of the Korean Political System* (New York: Praeger, 1971), pp. 40-77; Soon-Won Lee, *op. cit.*, pp. 41-126.

53) For a discussion of the importance of learning in promoting cooperation among states, see George W. Breslauer and Philip E. Tetlock (ed.), *Learning in U.S. and Soviet Foreign*

Kubota's remarks, the ripple effect was felt throughout the relations in general. The ROK National Parliament issued a resolution criticizing Japanese foreign minister Okazaki as well as Kubota, urging the ROK government to catch the Japanese ships violating the Rhee Line (Peace Line). On October 23, 1953, two days after the break-off, Japan decided to forcefully close the Korean Mission to Japan unless the ROK agreed reciprocally to allow Japan to open the Japanese Mission to Korea in Seoul. Japan also announced it would stop offering subsidiaries to the Korean residents in Japan, and that it would repatriate illegal Korean residents to the homeland.⁵⁴⁾

Kubota's remarks and Japan's initial support of his position not only aroused the Korean people's anti-Japanese emotion but also instigated the ROK's *fears of losing autonomy* regarding Japan from the *Realpolitik* consideration. Kubota's statement led the ROK to believe that Japan was a potential enemy, "virtual adversary" or "quasi-adversary," possibly reasoning that if Japan regards its colonial rule over Korea as justified by the logic of international power politics and thinks there is no reason for apology because it is natural in the Hobbesian anarchic world that "might is right," Japan would be willing to dominate or even invade Korea again without hesitation if given the opportunity.

In this volatile situation, Kagawa Toyohiko⁵⁵⁾ and President Rhee exchanged open letters in December 1955. This exchange suggests not only that Korea's *Realpolitik* fears of losing autonomy regarding Japan impedes Korea-Japan cooperation, but also that moral/normative aspects are very important in promoting cooperative relations in actual international relations; and both are inseparable. As Kagawa wrote,

The Japanese tortured Your Excellency and oppressed your people ... I apologize to your Excellency, and ... beg for your forgiveness. Forgive like the Lord who forgave His enemies on the Cross and bring ... permanent peace between Great Korea and Japan.⁵⁶⁾

Policy (Boulder and Oxford: Westview Press, 1991); Joseph S. Nye, Jr., "Nuclear Learning and U.S.-Soviet Security Regimes," *International Organization* 41-3 (Summer 1987).

54) Pak Sil, *op. cit.*, pp. 309-310.

55) Kagawa Toyohiko is a well-known Christian leader. He had written an open letter, "Appeal to President Syngman Rhee," in the Japanese daily *Mainichi Shimbun* on 13 December 1955.

56) Lawrence Olson, *Japan in Postwar Asia* (New York: Praeger, 1970), p. 110.

What would have happened if the Japanese leaders or negotiators for the first normalization talks had shown similarly repentant attitudes toward Koreans as this Japanese intellectual did? President Rhee replied to Kagawa in his open letter,

Even if I am reportedly not a friend of Japan, I am willing to forget the past completely and am ready for restarting for new relations with Japan if the Japanese show the same cooperative spirit ... I asked Japan to extend generosity to the ROK, a weaker neighbor, in the same spirit as shown by the U.S. to Japan ... Your apology for the forty years of Japanese rule over Korea drew my serious attention because it was the first statement of such nature I have ever heard from prominent Japanese people. In the absence of such expressions as yours, we have believed that the Japanese intent is not to be friendly toward the ROK, but to redominate Korea.⁵⁷⁾

On the one hand, a notoriously anti-communist politician, Syngman Rhee's demands on Japanese repentance and apology could not be satisfied by other Japanese conservative counterparts. On the other hand, Kanzaki Yoshio, one of three councilmen of the Japan Communist Party (JCP) said in August 1957, "Before the Tokyo government starts blaming Korea, it should improve its treatment of Korean residents and repent more Japan's oppression of Korea," adding that Japan should stop looking down on Koreans.⁵⁸⁾ Early opinion surveys by the American Military Government established that a majority of the Korean people favored socialist economy.⁵⁹⁾ In Japan the first lower house election held in April 1947 gave the Japan Socialist Party (JSP) a plurality of seats and resulted in the establishment of Japan's only Socialist-led government, with Katayama Tetsu, leader of the JSP's right wing, as prime minister.⁶⁰⁾ Therefore, the possibility of moderate or neutralist regime did exist.

57) *Mainichi Shimbun* (21 December 1955). Quoted from Kwan Bong Kim, *op. cit.*, pp. 44-45.

58) Douglas H. Mendel, Jr., *The Japanese People and Foreign Policy: A Study of Public Opinion in Post-Treaty Japan* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1961), p. 181.

59) Donald Stone Macdonald, *U.S.-Korean Relations from Liberation to Self-Reliance: The Twenty-Year Record: An Interpretative Summary of the Archives of the U.S. Department of State for the Period of 1945 to 1965* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1992), p. 230.

60) Gerald L. Curtis, *The Japanese Way of Politics* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988), pp. 10-11.

This suggests that if progressive (or moderate) political forces had taken power both in Japan and South Korea, which had not been impossible without the U.S. and the Soviet interventions, Korea-Japan relations might have improved much earlier and faster although the assumption of the two emerging superpowers' non-intervention itself is a big if.

3. Norm of Reciprocity and Mistrust

Another reason for the lingering historical animosity in Korea-Japan relations is that the Korean leadership commonly held the view that in Korea-Japan relations, the norm of reciprocity or sovereignty⁶¹⁾ was violated. As Welfield points out, "Korea, despite repeated Japanese attacks on its territory between the fourth and the seventh centuries, and again in the sixteenth century, never attempted to invade its eastern neighbor, although it certainly possessed the means to do so."⁶²⁾ Korea's indignation for Japan's violation of the *norm* of reciprocity is also related simultaneously to the *Realpolitik* concern.

When South Korean government invited experts on Japanese history, politics and economy to the Blue House presidential office on numerous occasions to hold study meetings for preparing the state visit in October 1998, President Kim Dae-jung once asked Choe Sang-yong why Japan and South Korea cannot settle their past the way Germany and France did. "Japan and Germany are different," Choe answered. "Germany basically had the Nazis take war responsibility but Japan could not and did not blame the emperor. Furthermore, Germany and France fought three wars in the past with both sides winning and losing them. But Japan colonized South Korea."⁶³⁾ We can infer that ROK's leadership and Korean intellectuals generally share similar views that the norm of reciprocity was violated in that Korea was unilaterally victimized by the Japanese.

61) The norm of reciprocity is implied by that of sovereignty. See Robert O. Keohane, "International Institutions: Two Approaches," in Robert O. Keohane, *International Institutions and State Power: Essays in International Relations Theory* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1989), p. 165.

62) John Welfield, *An Empire in Eclipse: Japan in the Postwar American Alliance System: A Study in the Interaction of Domestic Politics and Foreign Policy* (London: The Athlone Press, 1988), p. 2.

63) "Kim Took a Realistic Approach; Now It's Japan's Turn," *Asahi Shimbun* (12 October 1998).

After President Park Chung-hee was elected as civilian president in 1963, he expressed similar views reminding of reciprocity norm. While he was making a state visit to West Germany in December 1964 and talking with German Chancellor Erhard, who recommended President Park to hasten Korea-Japan Normalization following the example of German-French relations, President Park responded as follows,

Korea-Japan relations are different from German-French relations. You [German and French people] fought each other fairly with might and main. Thus it is also easy to apologize and correct the past wrongdoings. However, we were stabbed in the back [by the Japanese] even without having a chance to fight a war with Japan.⁶⁴⁾

The discussion above indicates that Korea-Japan's perceived common threats, the U.S. role in Korea-Japan cooperation/conflict, Korean resentment on historical injustices not rectified, historical animosity, and the norm of reciprocity are interacting in complicate fashion, resulting in the present state of Korea-Japan relations.

Indeed, Realist theory more broadly understood is not necessarily diametrically opposed to the traditional 'psycho-historical' approach. A Realist theory, especially Stephen Walt's balance-of-threat theory,⁶⁵⁾ emphasizes the importance of perceived threats in alliance formation, one of whose components is the aggressive intentions of the other states.⁶⁶⁾ In a sense, Walt departs from Neorealist emphasis on states' capabilities in the absence of crystal-clear criteria of judging the intentions of states. As Wendt points out, in an important revision of Waltz's theory, Stephen Walt implies threats are socially constructed.⁶⁷⁾ In Walt's balance-of-threat theory,

64) Yi Tong-Won, *Taet'ongryong ul kurimyo* (I Miss President Park) (Seoul: Koryowon, 1992), pp. 98-100.

65) Stephen M. Walt, *The Origins of Alliances* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1987); see also Stephen M. Walt, "Alliance Formation in Southwest Asia: Balancing and Bandwagoning in Cold War competition," in Robert Jervis and Jack Snyder (eds.), *Dominoes and Bandwagons: Strategic Beliefs and Great Power Competition in the Eurasian Rimland* (New York/Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991).

66) According to Walt, "The degree to which a state threatens others is the product of its aggregate power, its geographical proximity, its offensive capabilities, and the aggressiveness of its intentions." Stephen M. Walt (1987), *op. cit.*, p. 22 and p. 265.

perceived threat is mainly determined by whether perceived intentions of other states are aggressive or not. In this process of defining a state's perceptions on other states' threats and intentions, historical experience or the history of reciprocity could play a significant role.

The process of forming perceptions is fundamentally an "intersubjective" one. As Inis Claude pointed out, "mistrust is directed not against power per se, but against particular holders of power"; "the identity of the preponderant power is a significant determinant of the attitudes of weaker states" toward the former; and "the tolerability of inferiority heavily depends on assessment of the motives, *morals*, and purposes of the superior." Statesmen usually shape their reactions to the power of other states in accordance with their answers to the question "What are they likely to do with their power?" as well as to the question "How much power do they have?" The strongest is not necessarily the one against whose attack precautions should be taken.⁶⁸ In this light, in the process of assessing the motives, morals and purposes of the Japanese state (or the Korean state), the management of historical animosity between Japan and South Korea will play an important role in qualitative evaluation of their relationship.

In short, history matters because "threats are socially constructed"⁶⁹ (through the social relationship among states) against the background of historical experience or the interaction of a state with other states. Therefore, we can argue that the Realist approach and the "psycho-historical" approach are compatible. In the process of forming a new identity, Korea-Japan relations would be largely determined by how skillfully the problem of historical animosity is managed by the decision-makers of the two states.

4. Wartime Atrocities: Sex Slavery ('Comfort Women'), Forced Labors, and Biological Warfare Experiment

Masao Maruyama related Japan's wartime atrocities with the Japanese sense of superiority and transfer psychology, putting it as follows,

67) Alexander Wendt, "Anarchy Is What States Make of It," *International Organization* 46-2 (Spring 1992), p. 396.

68) Inis L. Claude, *Power and International Relations* (New York: Random House, 1962), pp. 64- 65.

69) Alexander Wendt, *op. cit.*, p. 396.

The entire educational apparatus of the military establishment was directed towards cultivating ... ‘vertical’ pride ... The armed forces were thoroughly imbued with this notion of superiority ... Just as Japan was subject to pressure from the Great Powers, so she would apply pressure to still weaker countries—a clear case of the *transfer psychology* ... Their [rank-and-file soldiers’] acts of brutality are a sad testimony to the *Japanese system of psychological compensation*.⁷⁰⁾

The issue of Japan’s wartime atrocities was dormant for long during the Cold War because the emergence of normative or ethical issues was blocked in a life-and-death struggle between the two ideological blocs. Therefore, it is not until the end of the Cold War that the issues of Japan’s atrocities were openly raised.

1) Sex Slavery (‘Comfort Women’)

The tragedy of ‘comfort women’—young females of various ethnic and national backgrounds forced to offer sexual services to the Japanese troops before and during the Second World War—is the most internationally sensationalized issue among unsettled legacies of Korea’s colonial history. Estimates of their total numbers range between fifty thousand and two hundred thousand. A great majority are believed to have been Korean. The ordeals suffered by comfort women are not only an example of *historical injustices* but also a contemporary issue.⁷¹⁾

The problem never received serious consideration by political leaders of the postcolonial Korean government. It was only after Korean women leaders and victim-survivors brought the comfort women issue to the attention of the United Nations in 1992 that the international community redefined the issue as that of “military sexual slavery.” With the help of international human rights activists and the active participation of several victim-survivors, the

70) Masao Maruyama, “Theory and Psychology of Ultra-Nationalism,” in Ivan Morris (ed.), *Thought and Behavior in Modern Japanese Politics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1963), pp. 14-19.

71) Chunghee Sarah Soh, “The Korean ‘Comfort Women’ Tragedy as Structural Violence,” in Gi-Wook Shin, Soon-won Park, and Daqing Yang, *et al.* (eds.), *Rethinking Historical Injustice and Reconciliation in Northeast Asia: The Korean Experience* (London: Routledge, 2008), p. 17 and p. 20.

Korean activists helped to elevate the comfort women issue from a postcolonial bilateral dispute between Korea and Japan into a universal issue of violations of women's human rights in armed conflict.⁷²⁾

The 1990s witnessed numerous civil lawsuits filed by Asian survivors of sexual slavery and forced labor against the Japanese government and major Japanese corporations. However, the government of Japan has repeatedly stated that the issue had already been resolved, and that reparations had been made in the form of compensation for the losses suffered by the states fighting Japan, as stipulated by multinational (San Francisco) and bilateral (various state-to-state) treaties in the early postwar period.⁷³⁾ The survivors of sexual slavery asked for the Japanese government's *official* apology and reparations, but no progress has been made yet. Therefore, international pressure on Japan is mounting.

For instance, in 2007 the U.S. House passed a resolution urging Japan to apologize for coercing thousands of women to work as sex slaves for its World War II military. Though largely symbolic, the nonbinding resolution has caused unease in Japan. Rep. Tom Lantos, chairman of the House Foreign Affairs Committee, labeled as "nauseating" what he said were efforts by some in Japan "to distort and deny history and play a game of blaming the victim." He also said, "Inhumane deeds should be fully acknowledged ... The world awaits a full reckoning of history from the Japanese government."⁷⁴⁾ The House resolution urges Japan to "formally acknowledge, apologize and accept historical responsibility in a clear and unequivocal manner" for the suffering of so-called "comfort women."⁷⁵⁾

Japanese prime minister Abe caused anger throughout Asia, and among even supporters in Washington, in March 2007, when he said there was no evidence that the women had been coerced into working as prostitutes. After decades of denial, the Japanese government acknowledged its role in wartime prostitution after a historian discovered documents showing government

72) *Ibid.*, pp. 21-22.

73) Hideko Mitsui, "The Resignification of the 'Comfort Women' through NGO Trials," in Gi-Wook Shin, Soon-won Park, and Daqing Yang, *et al.* (eds.), *Rethinking Historical Injustice and Reconciliation in Northeast Asia: The Korean Experience* (London: Routledge, 2008), p. 36.

74) "House Wants Japan Apology on Sex Slaves," *New York Times* (31 July 2007).

75) *Ibid.*

involvement. In 1993, the government issued a carefully worded official apology, but it was never approved by parliament. Japan has rejected most compensation claims, saying they were settled by postwar treaties.⁷⁶⁾

2) Forced Labors

Roughly seven million Koreans were mobilized for labor during wartime in 1939-1945. Five million of them, including student laborers and female laborers, were mobilized in worksites within Korea. Roughly two million were sent overseas. They were mobilized without justifiable employment for the war effort. The majority of forced laborers were sent to three major destinations in Japan: coal mines, construction sites, and industrial plants. By 1945 roughly one-third of the total coal miners and construction workers in Japan were Korean forced laborers. Others were sent to metallurgical mines and industrial sites such as iron and steel plants, shipyards, and other factories in the Japanese empire. Under brutal police control, management surveillance, and debilitating working conditions, the Korean laborers suffered from hunger, fear, torture, and murder.⁷⁷⁾

In the post-Cold War 1990s, a renewed effort to redress the injustices of the past began to redefine these victims. Democratization in South Korea has gained momentum under presidents Kim Young-sam, Kim Dae-jung, and Roh Moo-hyun, and the political leadership and growing civil society of this era paid renewed attention to the Second World War atrocities, reparations, and broader themes of coming to terms with the past, which had been constrained before. Since a law suit was filed in Tokyo District Court against the Japanese government on December 6, 1991, a series of lawsuits followed. Through these law suits, both countries have learned the lesson that the political will of the leadership is essential to reconciliation, because in the end remembrance is a political act. In the lawsuits of the 1990s the reasons behind Japan's reluctance to embrace responsibility for the historical problems with Korea were reexamined and narrowed down to three salient points: the lack of a collective memory within Japanese society; the conservative leadership's

76) *Ibid.*

77) Soon-Won Park, "The Politics of Remembrance: The Case of Korean Forced Laborers in the Second World War," in Gi-Wook Shin, Soon-won Park, and Daqing Yang, *et al.* (eds.), *Rethinking Historical Injustice and Reconciliation in Northeast Asia: The Korean Experience* (London: Routledge, 2008), pp. 56-57.

lack of political will to reconcile; and Japan's ambivalent identification as both victim and aggressor in the Second World War.

However, the changes in Japanese court rulings and the out-of-court settlements in recent years strongly suggest that *Japan is slowly moving toward accepting responsibility* for compensation after 1945 and admitting that it violated the human rights of the victims of forced labor.⁷⁸⁾

3) Biological Warfare Experiment

In 1925 the Geneva Convention prohibited the use of chemical and bacteriological weapons. However, Unit 731—the secret biological warfare unit—was set up by the Japanese military in the northeast of China following the Japanese invasion. The headquarters were on the outskirts of Harbin in Manchukuo. As part of its research program, it experimented on humans and animals. Unit 731 used large numbers of Chinese people for experiments. Many Chinese who rebelled against the Japanese occupation were arrested and sent to Pingfan where they became guinea pigs for Unit 731. Some Russian prisoners were also victims. The prisoners subjected to experiments were called “*maruta*” (literally “logs”) by the Japanese. Every year the military police and the Manchukuo civilian police rounded up approximately 600 *maruta* to send to Pingfan. They were infected with particular pathogens by such means as injections or being given contaminated food or water. They would then be observed and their symptoms meticulously recorded. After succumbing to disease, the prisoners were usually dissected, and their bodies were then cremated within the compound.⁷⁹⁾

Unit 731 also conducted frostbite experiments on the *maruta*. The prisoners were tied up outdoors in temperatures as cold as -20 degrees Celsius and parts of their bodies were sprayed with salt water in order to induce frostbite. Their arms were hit with hammers to determine whether they were frostbitten. They were then immersed in hot water of ranging temperatures in order to determine how recovery from frostbite could best be facilitated. *Maruta* were also subjected to poisonous gas experiments.⁸⁰⁾ Although these kinds of experiments themselves are appalling, it is more surprising to know that no

78) *Ibid.*, p. 60 and pp. 71-72.

79) Yuki Tanaka, *Hidden Horrors: Japanese War Crimes in World War II* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1998), pp. 135-139.

80) *Ibid.*, pp. 138-139.

one, including Shiro Ishii who was in charge of the unit, was indicted.

Undoubtedly, the United States unduly allowed the Japanese misbehaviors to go unpunished. A newspaper article epitomizes the nature of U.S.-Japan “cooperation” right after the war, which was achieved at the expense of “justice.” And it evidences how devastatingly distorting effects the compelling Cold War situation made on the East Asian international politics. Reportedly, the United States even paid money and gave other benefits to former members of a Japanese germ warfare unit two years after the end of World War II to obtain data on human experiments conducted in China, according to two declassified U.S. government documents.⁸¹⁾

Sheldon Harris, a U.S. historian, gives us a more dismal picture of the reality. The ultimate disclosures in the mid- to late-1940s of Japanese biological warfare human experimentation did not appall those individuals who were apprised of these criminal acts. Instead, the disclosures whetted the appetites of scientists and military planners among both the victors and the vanquished. Rather than being motivated to abandon such actions, research using involuntary or uninformed subjects proliferated. Scientists in the United States alone conducted at least several hundred tests with human subjects who were not informed of the nature of the experiments, or of the danger to their health. In 1993 and 1994 the Clinton administration began to lift the veil of secrecy concerning United States’ experiments with human subjects in hundreds of studies. We now know that American scientists tested humans with mustard gas, other chemical agents, exposed others to radiation tests, and still others to a variety of pathogens without the subjects’ knowledge or consent.

In Japan, scientists who participated in involuntary human experiments during World War II dominated the administration and controlled the areas of research of the country’s National Institute of Health (NIH) for one half-century after the war ended. At least seven of the NIH’s directors and five of the Institute’s vice directors, during the 1930s and 1940s, engaged in biological warfare experiment which employed human test subjects. But these known war criminals were employed by this institution, were given great powers within the organization and continued to use humans without their consent during the course of more than forty years. Experiments were authorized on prisoners, babies and patients in psychiatric hospitals in 1947,

81) “U.S. Paid Unit 731 Members for Data,” *Japan Times* (15 August 2005).

and from 1952 until 1955 by vice director of the NIH, Masami Kitaoka. Another researcher conducted bacteriological experiments on infants hospitalized in Tokyo's National First Hospital in 1952. Similar experiments continued thereafter.⁸²⁾

Reflecting on this reality, in August 2002 in a court ruling on the case of the vivisection and biological warfare victims of Unit 731 v. the Japanese government, the Tokyo District Court ruled that the Japanese government should pass a special act on this issue in the Diet,⁸³⁾ though the Japanese government has not taken actions yet.

On December 6, 1991, a renewed historical controversy erupted between Korea and Japan when three Korean former "comfort women," with support from feminists in Korea and Japan, and other male victims of the war among the resident Koreans in Japan brought a suit against the Japanese government. Simultaneously, the Society for Pacific War Victims and Surviving Family Members filed in Tokyo District Court the first lawsuit demanding compensation from the Japanese government. The thirty-five plaintiffs in this case included former soldiers, civilian employees of the military, forced laborers, and the three surviving comfort women. Since this case was filed, around sixty more lawsuits have been brought in Japanese courts and around forty in U.S. courts by war victims of various nationalities. The defendants were the Japanese government, private corporations, and sometimes both.⁸⁴⁾

The victims groups developed inter-group exchanges and bonding in terms of spirit, tactics, and political, legal, and international networking. The proactive publicity tactics of the Council for Countermeasures of the Labor Volunteer Corps (Chongdaehyop) successfully politicized the issue under President Roh Tae-woo and it was further internationalized under the UN-led global feminism movement. The council's adoption of the tactic of litigation in 1991 along with other victims also inspired legal activism among various victims groups in the following decade. This tactic challenged the conventional

82) Sheldon H. Harris, *Factories of Death: Japanese Biological Warfare, 1932-45, and the American Cover-Up* (London and New York: Routledge, 1994), xi.

83) Soon-Won Park, *op. cit.*, p. 62.

84) *Ibid.*, p. 60.

concept of interstate compensation for historical injustices and stressed individual rights to compensation from government and private corporations for past injustices. The leadership of the UN in the human rights and women's rights movements played an important role in establishing the idea that individuals have standing in international law and a right to claim enforcement of fundamental human rights and freedom, as well as restitution. The internationalization of the comfort women issue was a good example of the proactive role of the UN.⁸⁵⁾

Rulings in the lawsuits filed in 1991 started being announced in 1997. Most of the cases were dismissed, with the courts citing either the validity of the compensation waiver agreement in the 1965 Basic Treaty or the expiration of statute of limitations. However, some jurists and private corporations are moving toward accepting the concept of "Japan's responsibility for compensation after 1945." Whether or not the plaintiffs won their cases, the litigation had several profound effects on the reconciliation between the two countries. First, it provided a grand educational opportunity for Japan and Korea. Second, victimhood was redefined in the process and a more comprehensive approach to psychological and cultural healing, through restoring universal human rights of the victims, was adopted. Third, the litigation illuminated the divided nature of Japan's memories of the Second World War and underscored the lack of political will for reconciliation among the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) leadership. Japanese jurists and even private corporations are now increasingly pressuring Japanese conservative political elites to accept Japan's responsibility and come up with a political solution for the redress movement. Fourth, an empowering transnational civic activism developed. The court battles provided for rallying points for victims, civil society activists, research groups, human rights lawyers, and journalists in both societies.⁸⁶⁾

Good signs also appear at the government level. For instance, in 2008, as in 2007, the two governments made meaningful progress in resolving past history issues caused by Japanese colonial rule. As a part of the three-year plan to accept all ethnic Koreans in Sakhalin, who were forcefully relocated by Japan, the Korean government brought home 305 ethnic Koreans from

85) *Ibid.*, pp. 60-61.

86) *Ibid.*, pp. 61-63.

October to December of 2008 with Japanese financial support. In addition, 160 remains of Koreans returned home in January and November of 2008, who were forced to move, died, and were buried in Japan. The return was made possible by the agreement of the two heads at the ASEAN+3 meeting in 2007. Also, 130 Hansen's disease patients who were quarantined at a hospital in Sorok-do during the Japanese colonial period received monetary compensation from the Japanese government in 2008. The 'Atomic Bomb Survivors Relief Act of Japan' was revised in June 2008, entitling Korean survivors to receive Atomic Bomb Survivor's Certificate and be paid relief allowances through the Japanese embassy and consulate in Korea. The Korea-Japan Joint History Research, which began in 2002 in order to establish an accurate perception of Korea and Japan's shared history, commenced its second-term activities in 2007 and held a joint symposium in Tokyo on December 19, 2008.⁸⁷⁾

V. Conclusion: Historical Animosity Is What States Make of It

Analyzing historical animosity in Korea-Japan relations, I argued that historical animosity is not just a matter of irrationality and emotionalism; rather, it is inseparably intertwined with the two states' *Realpolitik* consideration of their national interests, and Korea's normative resentment on historical injustices. Historical animosity is what Korea and Japan themselves have made of it throughout their bilateral interactions. Its persistently negative effects on the bilateral relations substantiate that unjust order imposed by the strong in the Cold War context, has been fragile since the historical injustices were not rectified by the willful actions by both at the level of the elites and the citizen body.

Until now, the studies on Korea-Japan relations have focused on either psycho-historical, or *Realpolitik* nature of the relationship. I argue both *normative* and *Realpolitik* nature of the historical animosity should be addressed at the same weight.

Fortunately, in the post-Cold War era some positive *changes* are occurring

87) MOFAT (Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade), *2009 Diplomatic White Paper*, p. 53.

in the baseline of Korea-Japan relations. These delicate changes in the long run coexist with the repeated ups-and-downs due to *Realpolitik* calculations of the two states. For instance, the recent changes in Japanese court rulings and the out-of-court settlements suggest that Japan is slowly moving toward accepting responsibility for compensation after 1945 and admitting that it violated the human rights of the victims of forced labor. In August 2002 in a court ruling on the case of the vivisection and biological warfare victims of Unit 731 v. the Japanese government, the Tokyo District Court ruled that the Japanese government should pass a special act on this issue in the Diet. And some jurists and private corporations are moving toward accepting the concept of Japan's responsibility for compensation after 1945, increasingly pressuring Japanese conservative political elites to accept Japan's responsibility and to come up with a political solution for the redress movement.⁸⁸⁾

The U.S. role in Korea-Japan relations also showed meaningful change. For instance, in 2007 the U.S. House passed a resolution urging Japan to apologize for coercing thousands of women to work as sex slaves for its World War II military. Though largely symbolic, it indicates the United States started to address historical injustices. Despite these positive changes, most bilateral issues including the territorial dispute on Dokdo/Takeshima are difficult to resolve because of their *Realpolitik*, normative and emotional nature. The mixed nature of the pending issues in Korea-Japan relations is not peculiar at all in international relations. Such a mixture should be regarded as natural rather than as an anomaly.

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