

**Sorry but Not Sorry:
Politics of Apology over Comfort Women between Japan and South Korea**

By
Masanori Shiomi

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Dr. Kyoim Yun

Dr. Maggie Childs

Dr. Elaine Gerbert

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The Thesis Committee for Masanori Shiomi certifies that this is the approved version of the following thesis: Sorry but Not Sorry: Politics of Apology over Comfort Women between Japan and South Korea

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Abstract

This study examines the politics of apology between South Korea and Japan over the issue of comfort women. The subject has been one of the primary sources of the intractable relationship between the two countries since the early 1990s when former comfort women broke their silence for the first time in South Korea. Drawing upon English translated materials from Korean and Japanese sources, including academic articles, testimonies of victims and government documents as well as sources from the United States, this research scrutinizes the milestone events in the evolution of the thorny politics related to the issue. These include the ever-problematic 1965 normalization of relations between Japan and the ROK, the bravery of those who brought the first “Me-too” movement to South Korea, and several (dis)agreements that have strained diplomatic relationships between the two countries and caused public frustration in both. In conclusion, this study argues that the gravest hindrance toward reconciliation is the Japanese government’s apathetic attitude toward the victims and its shortsighted, insincere apologies, whose attitude appear as “sorry, but not sorry” to South Korea.

Chronology of Comfort Women Issues

Time	South Korea		Japan	
	President	Event	Prime Minister	Event
1948, 7/12	Syngman Rhee	The establishment of the Korean constitution which states that the Republic of Korea was established by the Provisional Government of the Republic of Korea which was built upon the determination to fight against Japan, which is written in the preface of the Korean constitution	Hitoshi Ashida	
1951			Shigeru Yoshida	Proposal of the Treaty on Basic Relations between Japan and the Republic of Korea was brought up
1965, 6/22	Park Chung-hee	Treaty on Basic Relations between Japan and the Republic of Korea was signed	Eisaku Sato	Treaty on Basic Relations between Japan and the Republic of Korea was signed
1991, 8/14	Roh Tae-woo	Kim Hak-Soon broke the silence	Toshiki Kaifu	
1991, 12/6		Kim Hak-Soon and two other victims filed a lawsuit against the Japanese government, which brought international attention to the comfort women issue.	Kiichi Miyazawa	
1992, 1/8		During the visit of Japanese Prime Minister to Korea, comfort women victims held a protest demanding an official apology, which has been continuing since then.		
1992, 7/6				The Japanese government released the first report on the comfort women issue. They admitted the involvement of the Japanese military in organizing the comfort

				stations. However, it denied the use of coercion during recruitment, and refused to take legal responsibility.
1993, 8/8				Kono, Chief Cabinet Secretary made a statement (Kono's statement): Japan released the second report on the comfort women issue. It admitted the involvement of coercion in the recruitment process, but it shifted responsibility to private recruiters.
1995			Tomiichi Murayama	Asian Women's Fund was established by the Japanese government to distribute (in 2007) monetary compensation and a letter of apology by Jun'ichiro Koizumi to comfort women in South Korea, Philippines, Taiwan, Netherlands, and Indonesia.
2006, 7/5	Roh Moo-hyun	Private organization (The Korean Council for the Women Drafted for Military Sexual Slavery by Japan) sued the Korean government, claiming that the Korean government was not taking any action to solve the issue of comfort women even when it was violating the rights of the victims of comfort women.	Jun'ichiro Koizumi	
2007			Shinzo Abe	Abe denied the reliability of Kono's statement.

2008	Lee Myung-bak		Yasuo Fukuda	The United Nations Human Rights Committee called on Japan to accept legal responsibility of recruiting comfort women and apologize to the victims. International media, not only of Korea and China but across the world, expressed criticisms of Japan's response to the victims.
2011, 8/30		The Constitutional Court held that the failure of the South Korean government to act on the issue of the comfort women issue was unconstitutional. This has forced the Korean government to continue working on solving the comfort women issue.	Naoto Kan	
2013, 3/1	Park Geun-hye	Park gave a speech stating that the relationship of Japan being the wrongdoer and Korea the victim will not change	Shinzo Abe	
2013, 11/4		Park said that there is no value of having a South Korea-Japan top level meeting		
2015				Abe gave a speech at the Asian-African Conference where he specifically did not apologize about the colonization of the Korean Peninsula.
2015, 12/28		The agreement of comfort women was made, and the Reconciliation and Healing Foundation was established to compensate the victims		

2017, 3/10		Park was impeached as the president of the Republic of Korea		
2017, 5/10	Mun Jae-in	Mun Jae-in became the president.		
2017, 7/7	Mun Jae	Had a Summit Conference with Abe for the first time in Germany where they agreed to build a future-directed relationship regarding the comfort women issue.		
2017, 7/10		Chung Hyun-back, the minister in the ministry of Gender Equality and Family, visited the House of Sharing where she told the victims that there were problems with the process and content of the 2015 agreement, and promised that she would work on reevaluating the agreement		
2017, 7/11		Chung Hyun-back expressed a plan to financially support the movement of having testimonies of victims of comfort women recognized as Memory of the World of UNESCO, which the Japanese government opposed. Chung also expressed a desire to build a museum of comfort women in Seoul which Japanese government adamantly opposed		
2017, 7/19		The Mun administration shared a plan of designating a memorial day for the victims in 2018, building the comfort women research institute in 2019, and building a history museum in 2020,		

		which Japanese government opposed		
		Korean government cut all the operating cost of the Reconciliation and Healing Foundation (RHF) from its budget, and Kim Tae-hyeon, the head of RHF, submitted her resignation		Yoshihide Suga, Chief Cabinet Secretary, responded to Kim Tae-hyeon's resignation: "I know of the news, but I do not think the activity of RHF itself will end. The agreement was highly recognized even internationally. I would like to continue executing it while cooperating with Korea."
2017, 7/27		Kim Tae-hyeon, the head of RHF, officially resigned. Chung Hyun-back, the minister in the ministry of Gender Equality and Family, announced that the Korean government formed a team to scrutinize the activities of the RHF		
2017, 7/31		The Korean government started scrutinizing the RHF from the perspective of comfort women victims, and announced that they would file a report by the end of the year		
2017, 8/3				In a Cabinet reshuffle, the Abe administration appointed Kono Taro, who is the first son of the protagonist of the "Kono statement," as Minister for Foreign Affairs
2017, 8/8		Kang Kyung-wha, the Foreign Minister of South Korea, and Kono Taro had a meeting where Kang expressed that the majority of Korean people are not		

		willing to accept the 2015 agreement, while Kono requested a steady execution of the agreement		
2018, 1/9		President Mun announced that they would not renegotiate the agreement but asked the Japanese government for more efforts to restore the dignity of the victims. They also decided to use their own money, ten million dollars, without using the money that the Japanese government gave		Kono Taro did not accept the new direction from Korea, and stressed again to execute the agreement
2018, 3/1		President Mun mentioned in his speech that the Japanese government should not say that the matter was closed		Yoshihide Suga, Chief Cabinet Secretary, stated that Mun's statement (on the left) violated the agreement, and would not be accepted
2018, 4/4		Kang Kyung-wha had a meeting where she announced that she would not demand renegotiation or annulment, but would welcome autonomous and sincere new measures regarding the agreement		

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Introduction

Women who were forced to work as prostitutes or sex slaves for Japanese soldiers during World War II are referred to as “comfort women.” The fact that most of these women were Korean is an especially inflammatory topic between Japan and South Korea.¹ Even today, it is one of the major contributors to the unhealthy diplomatic relationship between them.

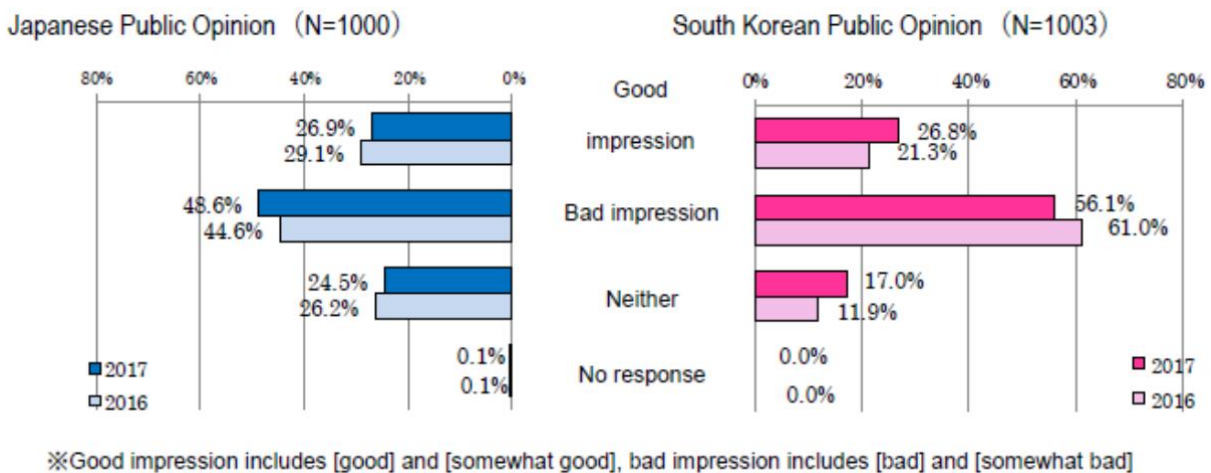


Figure 1: Impressions of each other’s countries

According to a survey conducted in Japan and Korea by the Genron NPO and East Asia Institute (see figure 1), roughly half of each country’s participants have a bad impression of the other country. It is important to note that the Korean survey participants overall viewed Japan more negatively (56.1%) than Japan viewed Korea (48.6%). The survey was conducted among one-thousand people in Japan aged 20 and above and featured varied educational backgrounds

¹ Due to less political effect between Japan in terms of the issue of comfort women in the modern times, I am not discussing specifically about North Korea. This is not to say that there were no North Korean women as victims.

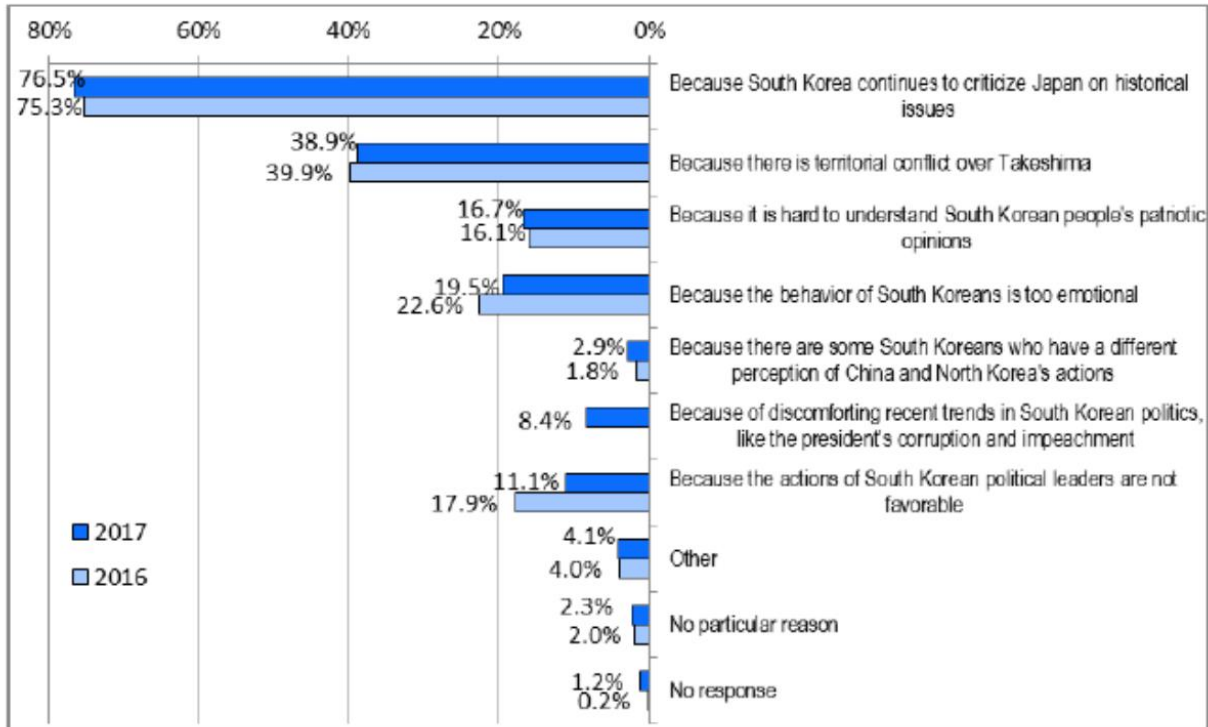
of its participants². In Japan, the elderly generation more commonly has a negative image of South Korea, which could have influenced the results of the survey. In terms of the survey in South Korea, the ages of the 1,003 people were more balanced compared to that of Japan.³

Figure 1 shows a quantified representation of the aforementioned survey. In both countries, the majority has a bad impression of the other country, which includes both answers of a “bad” and a “somewhat bad” impression. An interesting point to note is that the Korean side’s impression of Japan had improved between 2016 and 2017, with fewer people reporting an unfavorable impression (from 61% to 56.1%). Japan, on the other hand, saw an increase of negative answers about Korea (44.6% to 48.6%). These results show that roughly half of each country’s surveyed participants have a bad impression of the other country.

² The participants, of which 48.6% were male, and 51.4% female, varied from having completed high school, college, or graduate school. Notably, thirty-nine percent of the participants were aged 60 years or older, making it the most populous age category in the survey.

³ South Korea survey’s age margin began at age nineteen (compared to Japan’s twenty), and the 60 and above age bracket was still the largest, comprising of 24.5% of the entire group surveyed. This group also had a variety of different educational backgrounds, where junior college graduates and above made up 47.7% of the overall participants.

Japanese Public Opinion (N=486)



South Korean Public Opinion (N=563)

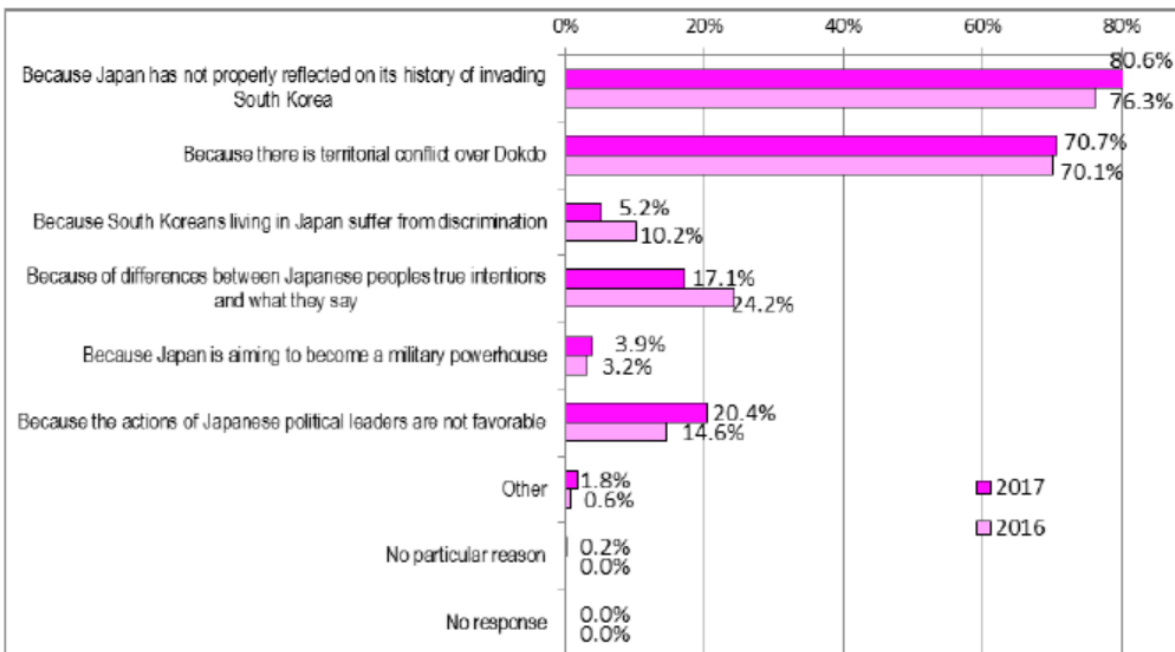


Figure 2: Reason for having a bad impression

Figure 2 shows the reasons that participants from each country have bad impressions of

one another. Japanese participants said they have negative opinions about South Korea, with the top reason being the fact that “South Korea continues to criticize Japan on historical issues,” which most likely refers to problems during Japan’s colonization of Korea, among which the issue of comfort women is one of the biggest topics. With 76.5% of the participants agreeing with this reason, it is a huge majority; additionally, the answer had increased compared to the previous year, which signifies the intensity of historical issues in recent years. A whopping 80.6% of Korean participants answered with the flipside of Japan’s answer, saying that “Japan has not properly reflected on its history of invading South Korea,” the number of which also rose from the previous year.

The most glaring aspect of the results is that both Japan and South Korea are upset by how the opposing country has dealt with it. The important takeaway here is that the Korean side was the victim, while Japan was the culprit and that the culprit Japan, has not properly apologized to the victim, Korea. What does an apology mean from a political standpoint? Objectively and politically speaking, the apologizer can earn a better image as a civilian or humane stance to other political leaders in other countries by apologizing. However, it becomes an issue when the apologizer does not apologize properly to the point that the other party does not accept the apology. This shows that it all depends on the apologizer. As historian Alexix Dudden states,

Leaders maintained that it was pragmatic for Japan to apologize for something called ‘the past’ because doing so would affirm the nation’s current and future ties with its Asian neighbors. Though largely overlooked, since 1992 Japan has issued at least twenty official apologies for the nation’s twentieth- century record.

Despite the official pronouncements of ‘remorse,’ however, Japan remains embroiled in what are known throughout the region as the ‘history problems,’ which are hostage almost entirely now to political policy, meaning that they are no longer about history (if they ever were). In short, Japan’s way of apologizing only perpetuated a disastrous policy failure since so many found Japan’s words so hollow (Dudden 2008: 33).

The problem lies not in *if* Japan has apologized, but in *how* and with *what attitude* Japanese government has been apologizing to South Korea.

The Korean criticism comes from the fact their perception that Japan has not appropriately reflected upon and responded to what they have done. Japan, however, is upset at Korea’s constant criticism of Japan’s wartime actions. All that being said, this problem can be seen in a positive light. If the Japanese government self-reflects and changes its attitude in its apologies, then the main reason for its negative reputation will disappear. This will eventually lead to civilians’ impressions of the other country improving and an overall betterment of the relationship between South Korea and Japan. This also leads to the question, “what should be done to develop Japan-South Korea relations,” whose results are shown below in Figure 3.

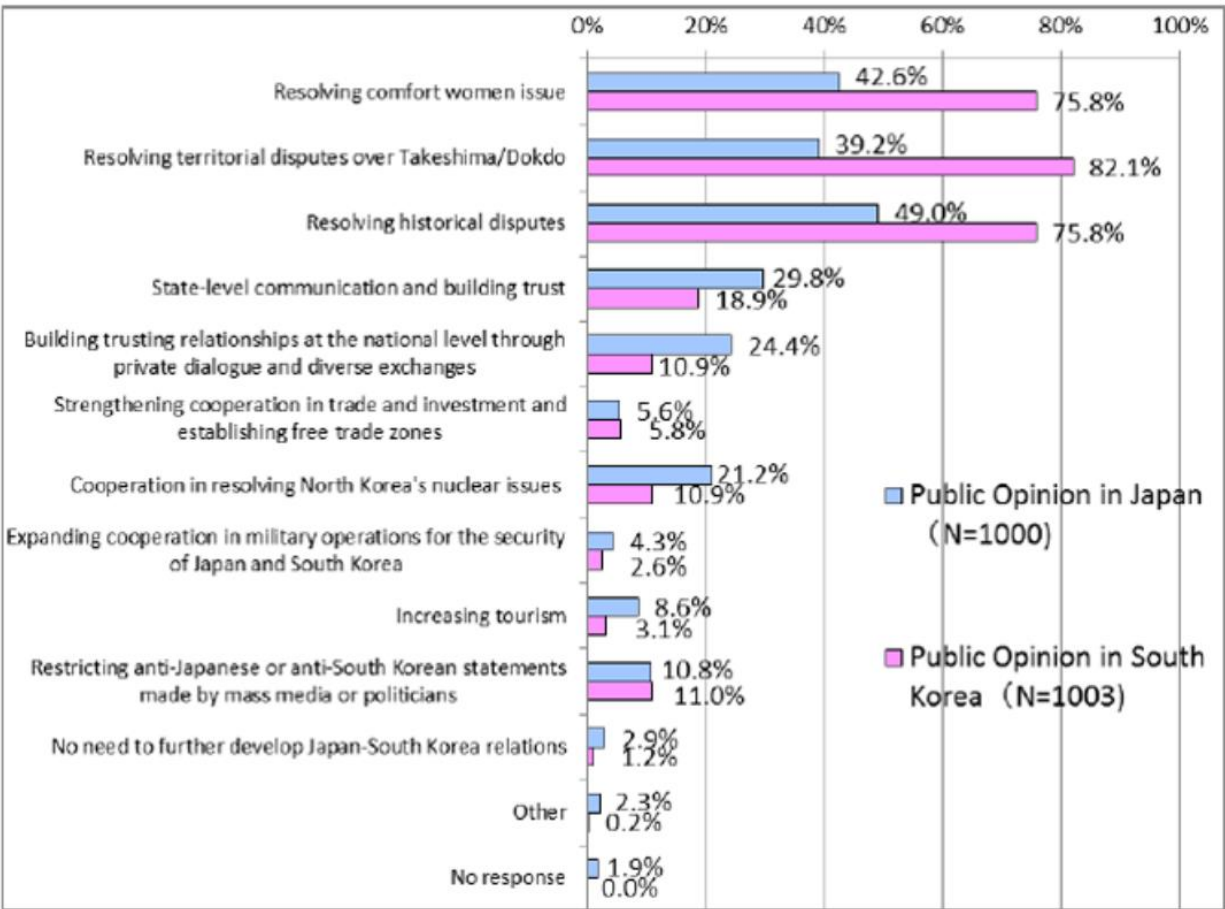


Figure 3: What Should be Done to Improve Japan-South Korea Relations?

The options provided to the survey participants relate to topics including the economy, the military, tourism, politics, territorial disputes and historical issues. Among all of the options, there are staggering results with comparably high percentages to the rest of the those surveyed: 1) Resolving the comfort women issue, with 42.6% of Japanese participants and 75.8% of Korean participants selecting it; 2) Resolving territorial disputes over Takeshima/Dokdo, with the Japanese side at 39.2% and the Korean side at 82.1%; and 3) Resolving historical disputes, with 49% of Japanese participants and 75.8% of Korean participants as selectors. Interestingly, although these options are the top three for both countries, the Korean percentages of the choices are nearly double those of the Japanese survey

percentages. This disparity could be due to how informed the Korean general public is on all of these issues, and how uninformed the Japanese side is in regard to these historical and societal matters, which contributes to worsening the situation between Japan and South Korea as South Korean people become frustrated with the ignorance of Japanese citizens.

That in and of itself is another contributing factor to the negativity between South Korea and Japan. South Koreans, frustrated that Japanese people are unaware or ignorant of what Japan has done to Korea in the past, bring up these issues often in hopes of recognition and in hopes of a proper apology. This, in turn, annoys the Japanese public. The option relating to comfort women specifically—as opposed to it being lumped together with other historical disputes—shows how important or unimportant a problem it is to both countries, and how influential a problem it can be in regards to diplomatic relations.

If the comfort women issue is amicably solved, the relationship between Korea and Japan will inevitably improve. It is to a great extent that the comfort women issue is affecting both countries in various aspects. While it is a fact that both countries have been making efforts to solve the issue of comfort women, they have yet to come to a peaceful agreement. The Japanese, as the former colonizer, cannot sympathize or understand the depth of the historical trauma that Koreans experienced during the colonial and postcolonial periods. It is not only that Japan cannot sympathize or understand them, but it is rather that they often times seem to not want to sympathize or understand them, and because of this fundamental attitude, it shows on the surface as insincere and emotionless when they apologize to South Korea.

Although the Japanese government has apologized and given money to the victims, the victims are dissatisfied, stating that Japan's words of apology are hollow and insincere. While

South Korea continues to criticize Japan's insincerity and lack of effort in making peace, the Japanese are continually upset at how the Korean government and media have continued to criticize them in spite of the apologies and compensation.

This shows that a true apology cannot just be done merely by paying money or offering hollow words; the apologizer must be sincere. Compensation comes to have a meaning for the victims only when sincerity comes with it, and the words will become valuable only when actions taken by Japan are consistent with the words. Japan's words of apology are not followed by congruent actions, therefore, any money given by the government cannot reveal remorse.

Japan's insincere attitude must always be acknowledged in tandem with its continuous negative behaviors that cause the comfort women issue to linger. On the other hand, Korean government officials also took actions with little consideration for the victims but rather for the benefit of its own political agenda. It was only in 2017, over 80 years after the incidents occurred, that the new South Korean President Mun declared a search for a solution from the victims' perspective.

This, then, leaves a question of how and why both Japanese and Korean governments have made the comfort women issue a tool to make their own countries benefit, rather than sincerely facing the tragedy and doing what needs to be done to support the victims and taking actions to minimize or eliminate the potential of such disasters in the future. It is in the process of answering this question that we can come to understand what the Japanese government has done in terms of their diplomacy and politics, and how their attitudes have influenced them. Their choices and actions will influence not only the opposing country, but the rest of the

world. It is also by scrutinizing this issue that we can begin to find hope in the betterment of the relationship between South Korea and Japan.

In summary, as the survey suggests, the unresolved issue of the comfort women is a large contributing factor to the troubled relationship between Japan and South Korea. Furthermore, if we look into the cause of the comfort women issue, we can eventually see the cause of the negative relationship between Japan and South Korea. Through my research, I have reached the conclusion that the negative relationship between Japan and South Korea has much to do with Japan's superficial and insincere attitude about the comfort women issue. This research will highlight the major events that took place between the Japanese and Korean governments after World War II: the treaty on basic relations between Japan and the Republic of Korea in 1965, after the silence was broken in 1991, the comfort women agreement of 2015, and ongoing tensions.

By scrutinizing the diplomatic actions that both governments have taken regarding the comfort women issue, one can begin to understand why the governments approach the issue in the manner that they do, and why the Japanese government's attitude towards this issue is, in fact, the root cause of all these occurrences and outcomes. This study will also help to provide insight into what the Japanese government's attitude is lacking, preventing it from being on the same page as South Korea in working towards a peaceful and satisfactory solution.

Chapter One

“Comfort Women” and Their Suffering

Of all the war crimes perpetrated during World War II, perhaps the worst tragedy to occur to the Korean people was the coercion of Korean women to become “comfort women,” or sex slaves, for Japanese soldiers (Kim 2014: 83). Among the many tragedies perpetrated through Japan’s colonial rule, comfort women recruitment continues to haunt Korea, even seventy years after the end of the colonial period. The system of comfort women is believed to have started in China in 1932, when Japan decided to hire women initially as prostitutes for the Japanese Navy in Shanghai (Tanaka 1995: 8). Initially there were ten of them, but it is reported that by 1936 that there were 102 Japanese and 29 Korean women (Tanaka 1995: 8).

Eventually, however, only non-Japanese women, primarily from Korea and China, served as comfort women in the latter part of the war (Tanaka 1995: 9). The term “comfort women” is a manipulative term purposefully used by the Japanese government to make it seem that these women were taking patriotic actions to support the soldiers who were fighting on the frontlines of the war. Yuki Tanaka, a historian, explains Japan’s justification for exploiting women as sex slaves, or voluntary prostitutes, as follows:

Japan's military leaders organized the comfort women system based on the conviction that they were protecting the moral and physical character of their troops, and protecting Asian civilians, too. They regarded the system as a necessary and effective means of preventing Japanese soldiers from raping civilians and from contracting venereal disease through contact with unauthorized prostitutes (Tanaka 1995: 7).

According to him, the comfort women system helped soldiers function in combat while protecting civilians from abuse.

Tanaka argues that the deeper psychological reasoning of such sexual violence is the desire to control the people they colonize, and this explains why the victims were switched from Japanese women to Korean women (Tanaka 1995: 7). Therefore, the issue of comfort women is both a problem of abusing women and a problem of how the Japanese people perceived Korean people in the depths of their minds, which involves gender inequality and racism. Because of the combination of these two discriminatory factors, Korean women suffered the most. There can be no alleviation of the suffering the Korean people endure today regarding the grim history of Japanese colonization without resolving the issue of comfort women.

The total number of Korean victims varies depending on the sources. For example, a historian Susan Brownmiller estimates that there were about 100,000 comfort women (Tanaka 1995: xv). A comfort women monument at Palisades Park in New Jersey inscribes the estimate of more than 200,000 and states: “In memory of the more than 200,000 women and girls who were abducted by the armed forces of the Government of Imperial Japan 1930-1945 known as ‘Comfort Women.’ They endured human rights violations that no peoples should leave unrecognized. Let us never forget the horrors of crimes against humanity (Rogin 2012).”

Sarah Soh introduces the range of 50,000 and 200,000 as her estimate (Soh 2008: xii). Yuha Park, a professor at the College of Liberal Arts in Sejong University, explains that the origin of the number 200,000 came from a Seoul newspaper which said that the number of Korean and Japanese women who were drafted as *Chonsindae* (volunteer corps) is estimated to be 200,000, while it is said that 50,000 to 70,000 of them were Korean (Park 2004: 63). As can

be seen, there are disparities in number of Korean comfort women depending on resources. Therefore, it is extremely difficult to calculate the accurate number of Korean comfort women. For example, the following table shows the number of comfort stations and comfort women in east-central China between 1938 and 1939.

Place	Army comfort stations	Comfort women
Shanghai	Unknown (seven navy brothels)	300
Hangzhou	4	36
Jiujiang	24	250 (143 Koreans & 107 Japanese)
Wuhu	6	70 (22 Koreans & 48 Japanese)
Wuhan	20	492 ⁴
Nanchang	11	111 (100 Koreans & 11 Japanese)
Zhenjiang	8	Unknown
Yangzhou and Danyang	1	Unknown

Figure 4: Number of comfort stations and comfort women, east-central China, 1938-1939 (Tanaka 1995: 15).

As one can see, toward the beginning of the war there were also Japanese comfort women. However, most comfort women were Koreans. In 1938- 1939, at Jiujiang, almost half

⁴ Not all of them were comfort women; some were waitresses.

were Japanese women, but toward the end of the World War II, most of the comfort women population became Korean women, with almost no Japanese women. Soh explains how comfort women system evolved from being houses of entertainment between 1932 and 1937, to houses of prostitution between 1938 and 1941, and finally to rape camps between 1942 and 1945 (Soh 2008: 133). Houses of entertainment included music performances including dance without any sexual services, and the entertainers were paid (Soh 2008: 133). Houses of prostitution involved sexual services with pay (Soh 2008: 134). As World War II intensified in 1942- 1945, those evolved into rape camps where women (Japanese women were replaced with Korean women by then) were forced work as sex slaves without any pay (Soh 2008: 134).

The Japanese government knew that they were violating international law by recruiting women as comfort women (Yoshimi 1992: 154). The document “Matters Concerning the Handling of Women Sailing to China” that was written on February 23rd, 1938, was sent to all the governors of prefectures and districts in Japan by the Home Ministry’s Chief of the Police Bureau:

If the recruitment of these women [who intend to work as prostitutes] and the regulation of [recruiting] agents is improper, it will not only compromise the authority of the empire and damage the honor of the Imperial Army, it will exert a baleful influence on citizens on the home front, especially on the families of soldiers who are stationed overseas. Also, we cannot be assured that it is not contrary to the spirit of international treaties relating to the traffic in women and girls. You are hereby notified of your orders to handle these matters from now on in accordance with the following instructions (Yoshimi 1992: 155).

The document specifically defines how women should travel to China to serve the Japanese military personnel as prostitutes. The sentence “will exert a baleful influence on citizens on the home front, especially on the families of soldiers who are stationed overseas” proves that the Japanese government was concerned that Japanese citizens would be discouraged if Japanese women were recruited as comfort women. That is because if soldiers found their wives or their daughters near battlefields working as prostitutes, they would lose trust in the army and their country.

That is why the Japanese government decided to recruit women from outside of Japan, where Japanese soldiers were unlikely to know the women. This also explains why the Japanese government did not send this order to the resident generals of Korea and Taiwan, because they did not need to restrict the recruitment of local women in those countries (Yoshimi 1992: 155). Racism in regard to women, in this sense, was rampant on the part of the Japanese people. It was justifiable for the Japanese government to recruit women from other countries since that would not have hurt the feelings of Japanese soldiers.

Sufferings of Comfort Women

The testimony of each survivor is different depending on when and where they were recruited, and while the trajectories are different, it does not deny the brutality of the system of comfort women. Hwang Keum Ju testified that she and other Korean young women were forced to give sexual services to as many as thirty to forty Japanese soldiers a day in old Manchuria (Kim-Gibson 2000: 9-25). Whenever they refused to give sexual services—and sometimes even when they cooperated fully—the women were frequently beaten, starved, or otherwise subjected

to other inhumane treatments, resulting in numerous deaths. Many became pregnant repeatedly, and subsequent medical treatments, including abortions, resulted in their inability to ever get pregnant again (Kim-Gibson 2000: 20-25).

Tokchin Kim shares that a Korean proprietor in Japan recruited her by telling her that there was a job at a factory (Howard 1995: 42). When she went to inquire about the factory job, she discovered that she had been deceived. She was raped in Nagasaki by one of the soldiers and then transferred to Shanghai, China, where she was forced to have sex with thirty to forty men every day. While she was being forced to be a comfort woman, a Japanese officer, Izumi, fell in love with her and eventually released her and four other comfort women upon Tokchin's request. While the Korean proprietor never attempted to compensate the women for the suffering they underwent, the Japanese officer Izumi did, and Tokchin continued to contact Izumi even after they left. In regard to her feelings toward her own country and people, Tokchin shares,

Of course, Japan is to blame, but I resent the Koreans who were their instruments even more than the Japanese they worked for. I have so much to say to my own government. The Korean government should grant us compensation. Life is very hard without a place of my own to live. I think accommodation should be provided at the very least (Howard 1995: 42).

Another survivor, Yi Yongsuk, had a very different experience as a comfort woman. She went to work for a Korean couple when she was seventeen but was handed over to Japanese soldiers. At the second comfort station where she was forced to work, all of the comfort women were Japanese except for her, and she was able to decide when to have sex with soldiers. She was allowed to go outside twice a month, and during this time she was able to go watch movies

at a movie theater. Since she was indebted to her Japanese proprietor, she could not leave the comfort station until she paid off her debt. However, the war ended and Yongsuk was freed from the comfort station. Yongsuk shares:

I am bitter when I think of this, but I am not going to blame others any longer. What happened was destiny. We are finished, and our bodies are useless after so much abuse. It doesn't matter whether we receive compensation or not. After all, what could we do with money, with so few years left before we die? All I can wish for is that my country and my people will prosper so that history can never be repeated (Howard 1995: 45).

Almost all of the comfort women victims also suffered from physical abuse that was combined with sexual abuse. Kaneda Kimiko, which is a given Japanese name, shares her experience of severe physical abuse:

Soldiers came to my room, but I resisted with all my might. The first soldier wasn't drunk and when he tried to rip my clothes off, I shouted "No!" and he left. The second soldier was drunk. He waved a knife at me and threatened to kill me if I didn't do what he said. But I didn't care if I died, and in the end he stabbed me. Here (She pointed her chest). He was taken away by the military police and I was taken to the infirmary. My clothes were soaked with blood. I was treated in the infirmary for twenty days. I was sent back to my room. A soldier who had just returned from the fighting came in. Thanks to the treatment my wound was much improved, but I had a plaster on my chest. Despite that the soldier attacked me, and when I wouldn't do what he said, he seized my wrists and threw me out of the

room. My wrists were broken, and they are still very weak. Here was broken....

There's no bone here. I was kicked by a soldier here. It took the skin right off...

you could see the bone (Digital Museum 1998).

For many comfort women, the end of WWII did not end their suffering. Keum Ju shares her continuing suffering after she was freed from being a comfort woman:

I treated my venereal disease with shots of penicillin smuggled out of American army bases. It took me ten years to cure my disease. The Korean War broke out about three years after I started working in the textile factory. I became a refugee with only my bank book and my signature seal. During the war, I took care of two orphans whom I eventually left at an orphanage. I took care of three other orphans whom I also entrusted later to an orphanage. After the war was over, I farmed for four to five years. During that period, my orphans all came back to me. I married them off and they are doing okay. They still come see me. I can't tell how many times I wanted to kill myself; it was an ordeal simply to survive (Kim-Gibson 2000: 29).

The Japanese government burned most of their governmental documents related to the existence and recruitment of comfort women at the end of the Second World War to erase any proof of recruitment by the government, so how comfort women were recruited remains a controversial topic. Peipei Qiu, who is a Professor of History of Chinese and Japanese at Vassar College, states that “[m]any researchers have revealed that the Japanese military destroyed its own documents at the end of the Second World War, including those concerning the operation of comfort stations. Among these researchers, Yoshimi Yoshiaki conducted extensive

investigations in Jugun Ianfu” (Qiu 2014: 32).

In his 1995 article, “Korean Women Drafted for Military Sexual Slavery by Japan,” Chin Sung Chung also cites recently uncovered documents to demonstrate that the Japanese military “not only secretly operated the comfort women system but also instructed soldiers to destroy records at the end of the war (Qiu 2014: 199).” Because the Japanese government destroyed these documents, the Japanese government continues to state that there is no official document to prove that the recruitment of comfort women was ever supported by the government. However, Hwang who is one of the victims shares her testimony otherwise: “Did you know that of all the women who registered as former comfort women, very few went with an official draft notice like mine? My case is significant because it points directly to official lying by the Japanese government” (Kim-Gibson 2000: 28). It is fortunate and significant fact that there remained some evidence the Japanese government could not eradicate.

There were seemingly two ways of recruiting comfort women: (1) ways that were supported by the Japanese government and (2) ways done by private business groups. There is also controversy whether recruitment of these women was coerced or voluntary. For example, Historian Kim Mikyoung states that some comfort women earned a lot of money, therefore some women decided to be comfort women voluntarily (Kim 2014: 84). Soh also states a possibility of family members voluntarily sending their daughters to the comfort women stations for economic reasons (Soh 2008: 4).

Some victims reported that the Japanese government deceived them when they were initially told that they would be helping at a shoe factory, only to find out that it was a comfort women station. It is also possible that both the government and private organizations conducted

the recruitment of comfort women. Regardless of the truth of the matter, it is undeniable that victims have suffered physical, mental and sexual torture.

The reality of the situation in both countries is that victims' voices are not heard which is very painful, and because of that, they continued to suffer even after they survived the atrocities of the past. This is due to the fact that both the Japanese and South Korean governments have taken actions based on how they can benefit from the issue, rather than thinking of the victims.

Because of these differing diplomatic actions toward each other today, the issue of comfort women has still not been solved. The Korean government began to take victims' perspectives into account only when President Mun took office in 2017. However, until Japan recognizes the perspective of the victims, any apologies or compensation will not matter, nor will they have emotional significance for the victims. This is because Japanese government took actions only directly to the politicians of the Korean government with no case of directly connecting with the actual victims. This makes it seem Japanese government's actions were superficial or out of formality. This is the reason why Korean victims and the public feel that Japan is "sorry but not sorry" when it comes to the issue of comfort women. Naturally, these phenomena continue to fuel the grudge against Japan, which is the opposite result of what Japan's actions of apologies are supposed to be achieving.

Chapter Two

The Normalization Treaty (1965)

The following brief accounting the relation between Japan and South Korea during the time period between the end of the World War II and will explain the significance of the Normalization Treaty. On August 15th, 1945, Japan formally accepted defeat by signing the Potsdam Declaration, which allowed the Allied forces to begin to occupy Japan on September 2nd, 1945 (Kumagai 2016: 65). The declaration was issued by the United States, the United Kingdom, and the Nationalist Government of China, the three countries that made up the allied forces at the time of Japan's surrender.

The Potsdam Declaration was made up of thirteen articles, the last of which called for Japan's unconditional surrender: "We call upon the government of Japan to proclaim now the unconditional surrender of all Japanese armed forces, and to provide proper and adequate assurances of their good faith in such action. The alternative for Japan is prompt and utter destruction." As a consequence of this surrender, Japan had to return all the land that they had colonized, which included Korea.

Thirty-five years of colonization of the Korean peninsula by the Japanese ended on August 15th, which became Korea's Independence Day. However, the allied forces immediately took over the southern part of Korea (present-day South Korea) while the then-Soviet Union took over the northern part of Korea (present-day North Korea). Korea's independence was first guaranteed by the Cairo Declaration in 1943, which stated that Korea will achieve independence after Japan surrendered (Buzo 2017: 85). Korea's situation changed, however, when the Soviet Union issued a declaration of war against Japan on August 8th, 1945, and then advanced to

Ch'ŏngjin-si in the northeast part of Korea on August 13th. Being apprehensive about the movement of the Soviet Union for as in Northern Korea, the Allied forces decided the 38th parallel longitude line as the border between the American army and the Soviet Union army. Therefore, Korean people did not even have a moment of true independence after the war.

Trials after the War

After the war, the United Nation Allies started arresting war criminals, accusing them of many crimes, including rape and murder, at the Tokyo trials. Even though it is commonly believed that most people did not know about comfort women until the 1990s, comfort women or coerced prostitution were discussed during the trials. Kumagai states “[t]he subcommittee [The United Nations War Crimes Commission] drew up a list of war criminals in August 1945 in which a total of 1,448 Japanese military officers were accused of responsibility for rape and other abuses. But the majority of these charges were intermingled with accusations of murder, torture, and other offenses (Kumagai 2017: 85).”

Even though the sexual assaults were reported, they were not considered as an organized system, hence why it was considered on an individual basis, which did not contribute to the discussion of comfort women, which is categorized as an organizational crime. Eventually seven documents gathered by the Allied Nations, which included the Netherlands, China and France, were submitted that explained the sex crimes of rape and forced prostitution by the Japanese forces (Kumagai 2017: 80). However, sex crimes were not considered as “crimes against humanity.” The ambiguity of the crimes was also exacerbated due to the nature of other crimes that also harmed people. Also, lack of evidence of sex crimes made it difficult to accuse

and prosecute the military officers. The amount of evidence collected by the Chinese, French, and Dutch prosecutors was not sufficient to be considered important. Because of these reasons, the court decided to not file charges against the officers in regards to their sex crimes.

Treaty of San Francisco in 1952

The tension between Korea and Japan amplified further after the war beginning with the Treaty of San Francisco between the U.S. and Japan in 1952 (Park 2004: 181). This treaty had three functions: to terminate Japan's position as an imperial power, to designate compensation to Allied people and former prisoners of war due to Japanese war crimes during World War II, and to finish the U.S.-led Allied occupation of Japan after the war and return it to sovereignty.

However, the Allied forces refused to have South Korea be part of the treaty due to their judgement that South Korea had not been a participant in winning the war. In other words, the reasoning by the Allied Forces was that the treaty of San Francisco could only be signed by the countries that lost the war and the countries that won the war, and since South Korea was part of Japan due to colonization, they were not included as a winning country, and hence not part of the treaty. Even though Japan lost and by that logic Korea was part of the losing side, they still were not allowed to participate. This reasoning and not being part of the treaty made the Korean citizens furious, and this intensified the tensions between South Korea and Japan.

In October of 1951, the United States attempted to act as a mediator between Japan and Korea in order to normalize the diplomatic relationship between them. However, both countries could not reach an agreement after South Korea asked for an official apology and reparations for the colonization, which spanned between 1910 and 1945. The Japanese government responded

that their colonization contributed to the modernization of South Korea, and therefore was a good thing, which angered the Korean public.

The Korean President Rhee Syng-man took advantage of people's negative sentiment toward Japan to unite Korea as one and justify his dictatorship in South Korea. The Rhee administration one-sidedly identified a line referred to as the Syng-man Rhee Line in the sea between Japan and Korea and told the Japanese government that the Korean military will indiscriminately capture any Japanese ships that cross the line in 1952. For the next thirteen years, 328 Japanese ships were captured, 3929 Japanese were arrested, and 44 were killed or injured (Nikkan Gyogyou Kyougikai 1968). The Japanese government tried to normalize the relationship between the countries in hopes of resolving these issues, but it did not happen until 1965 when President Park Chung-hee normalized the relationship between Japan and the Republic of Korea.

Reparations Loans and the Park Chung-hee Government

Park Chung-hee, the head of the military government in South Korea and the leader after President Rhee, showed that most of his motivation for reconciliation after World War II was economic. He was smart and cunning, and used the fact that his country had been “both politically and militarily threatened by North Korea during the Cold War” in order to help “suppress anti-government movements” (Kimiya 2011: 66). He also used them as means to “legitimize his authoritarian regime through promoting anti-communism.” The Cold War, to President Park, was also a tool to strengthen South Korea's relationship with the United States (Kimiya 2011: 66).

Originally, President Park supported a strategy known as “inward-looking industrialization,” with the end goal of creating a “self-reliant national economy” for South Korea (Kimiya 2011: 67). The main feature of this strategy was to invest large sums of money into basic industries; it also argued for “guided capitalism,” where the government would control the economy in the name of protecting national interests (Kimiya 2011: 67). However, the inward-looking industrialization strategy failed for a number of reasons. To start, the United States, which South Korea relied on heavily for aid at the time, did not support the notion, and South Korea was not autonomous enough economically to do it without U.S. permissions (Kimiya 2011: 68).

Yet, the government attempted to fund the venture itself through several different means, all of which proved unsuccessful. In order to “absorb surplus money into the government,” the South Korean government decided to attempt a currency conversion; the United States disapproved of this and argued that the measures the South Korean government was taking for the inward-looking, self-sufficient South Korean economy would only make the economy “unnecessarily unstable” (Kimiya 2011: 67-69).

The South Korean government also failed in constructing an integrated steel mill before agreeing to a financial stabilization plan that would prevent the government from investing money into basic industries, such as heavy chemical industries and industries like steel manufacture (Kimiya 2011: 70). The reason they agreed to this plan was that the United States threatened to withhold aid should they disagree (Kimiya 2011: 70). The five-year plan they devised afterwards was markedly different, with free-market economy replacing “guided capitalism”; they would also “now focus on an export-oriented industrialization strategy”

(Kimiya 2011: 71).

After 1965, Japan invested in South Korean interests in order to help stabilize its relationship with South Korea (Kimiya 2011: 66). It was this same year that South Korea-Japan relations were “normalized” through negotiations. These negotiations had started fifteen years earlier in 1950, but were slow and difficult due to differences in interests. It was the United States, who, in the interest of having less involvement with South Korea’s finances, promoted initiating these negotiations (Kimiya 2011: 73). The United States used the fear of North Korea taking advantage of the weakened state of the South Korea economy as leverage to nudge the negotiations forward (Kimiya 2011: 74).

South Korea, under President Rhee when the negotiations began, wanted to “complete the decolonization process,” mainly by securing diplomatic ties with the “postwar, new Japan” (Kimiya 2011: 72). They also wanted an apology, and monetary compensation for the colonization (Kimiya 2011: 73). Japan, on the other hand, wanted to resolve issues regarding fisheries and the abandonment of the Rhee Line, and offered only to pay “just enough” to meet South Korea’s claims (Kimiya 2011: 72-73). The negotiations were completed after President Park assumed power, and his motivations differed greatly from those of President Rhee. Japan similarly had a new administration, the Ikeda administration, come into power during the negotiations.

Eventually, Japan proposed that they solve the issue “politically, not legally” as it would allow Japan to compensate more; they decided to resolve the differences by “providing money, goods, and services as economic aid or gifts in order to clear away the South Korean claims against Japan” (Kimiya 2011: 74). The agreement was that over the span of ten years, Japan

would provide a series of loans, grants, soft loans, and investments to solve the claims (Kimiya 2011: 74). The opposition in South Korea, however, insisted that the government not comply with these terms. In the name of economic growth, however, the Park Chung-hee administration accepted the Japan-initiated resolution “in order to obtain economic cooperation and facilitate their industrialization strategy,” which was now export-oriented (Kimiya 2011: 74).

It is through all of this that it becomes clear that President Park’s motivations were much more economic than his predecessor, President Rhee’s, which focused on “issues related to decolonization” (Kimiya 2011: 74). Thus, it is easy to see why he would accept terms not on a social or humanitarian basis, but rather on the basis of having a strong economy and good international ties. Historian Kim Hyung-a says that Park was “blotted with pro-Japanese collaboration and communist activities (Kim 2011: 25).”

Park was adamantly prioritizing economic change rather than change in any other aspect. Michael Robinson states that Park “believed that development was the key to moving Korean society forward, but he also thought it the necessary basis for strong national defense (Robinson 2007: 129).” And indeed, Park was successful in that endeavor. A historian Jini Kim states: “It has by now become a platitude to say that, while Park must be condemned as a dictator and gross violator of human rights, he deserves praise for leading the country out of poverty and building a strong, industrialized nation (Kim 2018: 87).” As his testament shows, while he dramatically improved the South Korean economy, at the same time he was notorious as a cruel dictator.

On the other hand, Japan also wanted to normalize the relationship with Korea as the Korean military continued to attack Japanese ships. This timely situation in 1965 where both Korea and Japan wanted to normalize their relationship, regardless of their motivations, encouraged them to finally contact each other and sign the Treaty on Basic Relations between

Japan and the Republic of Korea. As part of the agreement, the Japanese government gave Korea three hundred million dollars and loaned Korea five hundred million dollars with low interest to on the condition that the problems concerning property, rights, and interests were to be considered settled completely and finally.

Historian Ishikida Miki states, “Japan provided South Korea with \$300 million in economic aid through products and services and \$200 million in loans with products and services over the next ten years (1965-1975), together with \$300 million in loans for private trust. In exchange, South Korea renounced all rights to request reparation and compensation (Ishikida 2005).” In other words, the compensation that Japan gave was also an agreement that the issues would never be brought up again.

Because of this background behind the signing of the treaty in 1965, it is extremely difficult to figure out which specific wrongdoing of Japan was included in the treaty and its economic settlement. For example, the current Korean President Mun Jae-in made a statement soon after his inauguration in 2017 that South Korea was not only not compensated for the comfort women, but also was not compensated for the forced drafting of Korean people into the Japanese military. However, a few days after his declaration, he withdrew his statement regarding the forced military drafting, mentioning that the compensation for that particular tragedy *was* included in the treaty and its compensation in 1965.

This recent event shows that even today the treaty from 1965 is influencing both countries, and its ambiguous terms in particular continue to set both countries back. The GDP of South Korea then was three-hundred-fifty million dollars, therefore the eight-hundred million dollars that it received from Japan was more than two years’ of its national budget, which was a tremendous help for the country at the time.

Park Chung-hee used the money for three things: transportation, energy, and ironmaking. As for transportation, Park Chung-hee made a highway called the Gyeongbu Expressway that connects Seoul and Busan so that public transportation as well as domestic, ground-based goods distribution would improve. In regard to energy, the government made Soyang Dam in Gangwon Province to generate power through hydroelectricity. Lastly, for ironmaking, the government used twenty five percent of the money they received from Japan to make Pohang Iron and Steel company, which contributed greatly to the development of South Korea (Kim 1989: 260).

Since they focused on these three aspects of economic development, the Korean government did not give any money from Japan to any of their victims who suffered because of them, including former comfort women. Yi Yong-suk, one of the comfort women victims, stated in 1995: “let me finally say something I consider to be important. The Japanese were bad. But the Koreans were just as bad because they put their own women through such terrible ordeals for personal profit (Howard 1995: 57).” This statement shows that not only Japanese or Korean ordinary people, but also the comfort women victims know that Park Chung-hee did not take actions for the sake of his people, but for economic development. While some claim that Park Chung-hee knew of comfort women but ignored them at the time of the agreement, some others argue that the Korean government did not know of the existence of comfort women at that time since their existence was silenced until 1991. Overall, the period between 1945 and 1965 came to an end when the Korean and Japanese governments were able to reach an agreement regarding victims of colonization by Japan for the first time. However, the content of the treaty was ambiguous, and the compensation was not used as agreed, therefore it is difficult to judge whether the compensations specifically for comfort women victims were included at all in this

settlement.

Because of this ambiguity, the treaty has created controversy when both Japanese and Korean governments talk about the comfort women issue. The Japanese government always sticks to the stance that the treaty included compensation for the comfort women victims, and therefore there is no need for further actions or reparations regarding comfort women. The Korean government, however, argues that the compensation did *not* include the comfort women victims, and therefore the Japanese government has to apologize and compensate the comfort women victims specifically. This controversy heated up even more when the silence of the comfort women was broken.

Chapter Three

Breaking Their Silence (1991)

As part of the economic cooperation agreement in the treaty of 1965, South Korea received eight-hundred million U.S. dollars from Japan (Ishikida 2005). Part of the agreement was a stipulation that once South Korea accepted the money, it was no longer going to discuss any of the events that occurred during colonization by Japan between 1910 and 1945. By signing the agreement and taking the money, the treaty stated that all issues “have been settled completely and finally.”⁵

Though South Korean president Park Chung-hee agreed and signed the treaty in 1965, it remains unclear whether he knew about comfort women at the time of the signing. The South Korean public believes that the president did not know about comfort women at that time, whereas the Japanese government believes that the treaty covered any and all matters regarding their colonization of Korea, irrespective of official knowledge regarding comfort women. Hwang Keum-ju, one of the comfort women victims, shares her experience of trying to tell the then First Lady of South Korea in 1965, Mrs. Park, about comfort women:

I told her briefly about myself and the women who served Japanese soldiers and asked why the Korean government did not do something for us. Her face became ashen and she grabbed my hands and said quietly, but with the ring of urgency. ‘Please don’t ever repeat the story. You must not talk about this with anybody

⁵ Agreement on the Settlement of Problems Concerning Property and Claims and on Economic Co-Operation

else. Korea and Japan have already signed a treaty to take care of the matters concerning the two countries during the colonial period. When times are better, when we have true peace, perhaps, something like this could be discussed and resolved. But now is not the best time. Korea needs to move forward. This is a matter of the past that should not be brought up again now.’ She looked into my eyes and stressed again, ‘Do you understand? You never told me this story and you will never mention it to anybody else. This is a dangerous story.’ So I put my story under my feet, turned around and went home crying my heart out (Kim-Gibson 2000: 21).

Even though there is no corroborating evidence suggesting their story considering this indication that the Korean government was not aware of the comfort women victims when they signed the treaty. Regrettably, no scholars or the public take this story seriously, as it is rarely quoted or shared. Regardless of whether Hwang’s testimony is believed or not, it is a reality that the division of opinions regarding what was known or not known has led to sense that the treaty is incomplete and not a final settlement.

Other than Hwang’s testimony, there is no evidence that shows whether or not the leaders in either Japan or South Korea knew about the comfort women issue at the time of signing the 1965 treaty. The treaty itself summarizes the wrongdoings that Japan did but did not specify each of them. The treaty states the following:

The Contracting Parties confirm that [the] problem concerning property, rights and interests of the two Contracting Parties and their nationals (including juridical persons) and concerning claims between the Contracting Parties and their

nationals, including those provided for in Article IV, paragraph (a) of the Treaty of Peace with Japan signed at the city of San Francisco on September 8, 1951, is settled completely and finally.

The ambiguous terms that both sides use in the treaty continue to make the comfort women issue confusing and complex. This is due to the fact that during the thirty-five years of the colonization period, a variety of events occurred such as changes to the education system, military conscription and industrial development under Japan's colonization (Kang 2005: 37). Summarizing all the events that happened in the period of thirty-five years in one paragraph in the treaty cannot be done without omitting most of the events and using broad, vague terms such as "problems," as seen in the actual treaty quoted above.

Though the treaty banned the official discussion of events that occurred during the colonization after the treaty was signed in 1965, the comfort women issue was reported in subsequent years, opening new wounds. As of 2000, there were 1,622 books on the comfort women in an online database in Japan (Soh 2008: 176). Among the published books, many of them were published soon after the vague treaty was signed. The comprehensive bibliography in Asian Women's Fund (AWF) also reports more than two hundred publications between the 1950s and 1989 in Japan. These data show that the issue of the comfort women had begun to surface well before the 1991 public announcement, both in Japan and Korea.

In 1971, an autobiography by a Japanese survivor was published. A documentary film of a Korean survivor named Pae was released in 1979 (Soh 2008: 147), and her biography was published in 1987. The fact that many books dealing with the issue of comfort women were published in Japan reveals that some Japanese people were open to discussing the issue and were

spearheading the movement to spreading awareness. However, the Korean government did not draw attention to the issue of comfort women, due to the fact that they knew that doing so would lead to the discussion of how the Korean government used the compensation money from the Japanese government. A historian Osamu Ota reports that the information of the 1965 treaty was undisclosed until 2005 in South Korea on purpose by the South Korean government (Ota 2006: 1). In other words, the Korean public did not know that Japanese government compensated for its wrongdoing until forty years later, which shows how reluctant the South Korean government was to reveal how the government used its money that was meant to compensate the victims of World War II.

In regards to the knowledge of comfort women, it was not until in 1991 that its information began to spread widely throughout the public in South Korea, when Kim Hak-soon decided to publicly, without using a pseudonym, share her experiences as a comfort woman under the Japanese government, to oppose the Japanese government who rejected any involvement with organizing comfort women system. Kim Hak-soon finally broke the silence from the victims' side and told the truth.

Kim Hak-Soon

In 1991, Kim Hak-soon publicly broke the silence and was the first to reveal that she had been forced into being a comfort woman. Kim disclosed that it happened while looking for work in China with her family and when she was suddenly taken by an officer (Howard 1995: 34). The ethnicity of the officer remains unknown. First, her foster father was taken by the officer,

alleging that he could be a spy, then Kim and a friend were taken to a truck. Looking back in her memories, she shared:

I feel I could tear apart, limb by limb, those who took away my innocence and made me as I am. Yet how can I appease my bitterness? Now I don't want to disturb my memories any further. Once I am dead and gone, I wonder whether the Korean or Japanese governments will pay any attention to the miserable life of a woman like me (Howard 1995: 34).

Kim Hak-soon publicly admitting that she was a comfort woman inspired many other victims to disclose their experiences as comfort woman and, in turn, spread awareness. Hicks states, “[h]er example gave others the courage to join her in a class action [suit] which was launched in the Tokyo District Court on December 6th, 1991 (Hicks 1994: 11).”

According to Keith Howard, who collected testimonies from victims, Kim Hak-soon was born in Jilin, Manchuria, in 1924 (Howard 1995: 32). When she was three months old, her father passed away; her mother moved their family to Pyongyang (in present-day North Korea) to be closer to their relatives. While in Pyongyang, her mother took odd jobs in order to provide for their family, such as working as a farmer, washwoman, and knitter.

When Kim was fourteen, her mother remarried. However, Kim did not get along well with her stepfather, which led her to be detached from her mother as well. At the age of fifteen, Kim was put into foster care by her mother, where she was trained as a *kisaeng*, or an entertainment girl, in exchange for forty yen, agreeing that she would work for a certain number of years (Howard 1995: 33). *Kisaeng* served aristocrats (*yangbang*) and kings during the Chosŏn dynasty between 1392 and 1910 (Lee 1996: 72). Lee explains:

Their repertoire consisted mainly of *chapka* (miscellaneous songs) and *sijo*; they also practiced prostitution. Regardless of the grade of *kisaeng*, most *kisaeng* were involved in ‘entertaining men’ with song, dance or sexually explicit behavior. In both formal and informal functions and parties, the involvement of *kisaeng* was essential, and *kisaeng* appear in almost all contemporary paintings of functions of the Chosŏn period (Lee 1996: 77).

At the age of seventeen, after two years of being trained as a *kisaeng*, Kim’s foster father tried to get her a job. However, the authorities did not allow it as Kim did not meet the age requirement to obtain a *kisaeng* license, which was nineteen years old (Howard 1995: 33). Unable to find a job for Kim, she and her foster father decided to leave for China in 1941 in search of work. When they arrived in Beijing, Kim was taken by a Japanese officer, who then arrested her foster father, on the grounds of his being a potential spy, then took Kim and her Korean friend to a truck. That night, the officer raped her twice and from then on, both the seventeen-year-old Kim and her friend were forced to work as comfort women.

From that point forward, whenever soldiers came back from expeditions, she was forced to have sex with somewhere around seven to eight soldiers a day, each for approximately half an hour. She would even be forced to have sex while menstruating by putting a piece of cloth inside her vagina to catch the blood. Though she was told that she would be paid 1.5 yen for each thirty-minute session and 8 yen for each overnight session, she never received any form of payment.

After four months, she was able to escape by running off in the middle of a night with a Korean peddler, who later became her husband. After returning to Korea, she did various types

of jobs such as selling underwear, using the money for smoking and drinking. She had been separated from her husband, and her son died of a heart attack. Eventually she got a job at a local government office in Seoul, where she met a victim of the atomic bombings in Japan. This meeting inspired her to share her experience as a former comfort woman, an excerpt of which is quoted below:

I harbored a considerable grudge against the Japanese, and my whole life had been loathsome and abhorrent, largely because of them. I had been wanting to talk to someone about my past for a long time, and I told this woman that I had once been a comfort woman. Since then I have been called to speak in many different places, because I was the first of the comfort women witnesses to come forward (Howard 1995: 38).

On May 15th, 1991, an article about comfort women was published on *Hankyoreh* newspaper in which Kim Hak-soon's interview was first introduced using a pseudonym. On August 11th of that same year, another article by the Asahi newspaper was released. Even though the article by Asahi newspaper was widely distributed, Kim Hak-soon's use of a pseudonym made smaller impact on Japanese audience as people did not fully believe her stories. On August 14th, three days after the release of the second article, Kim made the decision to share her story again, but this time with her real name with the public, being the first person to do so (Kaihou Shuppansha 1993). Moreover, she filed a lawsuit against the Japanese government in December of that year. These actions expanded the awareness of comfort women issue exponentially, and many other comfort women victims followed suits to share their experiences as well.

Though victims were discriminated against by society, there were organizations that supported them so that their experiences would be acknowledged, and they could receive reparations from the Japanese government. In 1991, in response to the initial publishing of comfort women's stories, the Japanese government opened an investigation. In 1992, comfort women victims and their supporters started protesting every Wednesday in front of the Japanese Embassy in Seoul. This is referred to as "Wednesday Demonstration (Lee 2014)." The protesters demanded that Japan properly addresses the comfort women issue, and to this day, the protest continues.⁶

Two years later after the Japanese government announced to investigate the credibility of comfort women issue, in 1993, Yōhei Kono, the Chief Cabinet Secretary, published the results of the investigation, along with a formal apology, and "admitted the Japanese government's responsibility for the comfort station operations (Kim 2014: 84)." Kono's statement released on August 4th, 1993, reads as follows:

As a result of the study which indicates that comfort stations were operated in extensive areas for long periods, it is apparent that there existed a great number of comfort women. Comfort stations were operated in response to the request of the military authorities of the day. The then Japanese military was, directly or indirectly, involved in the establishment and management of the comfort stations and the transfer of comfort women. The recruitment of the comfort women was

⁶ This weekly protest eventually led to putting a comfort women statue in front of the Japanese Embassy in Seoul, in commemoration of the thousandth protest in 2011 (Park 2004: 64). Not only is there a statue in Korea today, but a similar one was also erected in Glendale, California in 2013, and yet another was recently built in Shanghai in October of 2016.

conducted mainly by private recruiters who acted in response to the request of the military. The Government study has revealed that in many cases they were recruited against their own will, through coaxing, coercion, etc., and that, at times, administrative/military personnel directly took part in the recruitments. They lived in misery at comfort stations under a coercive atmosphere. As to the origin of those comfort women who were transferred to the war areas, excluding those from Japan, those from the Korean Peninsula accounted for a large part. The Korean Peninsula was under Japanese rule in those days, and their recruitment, transfer, control, etc., were conducted generally against their will, through coaxing, coercion, etc.

Undeniably, this was an act, with the involvement of the military authorities of the day, that severely injured the honor and dignity of many women. The Government of Japan would like to take this opportunity once again to extend its sincere apologies and remorse to all those, irrespective of place of origin, who suffered immeasurable pain and incurable physical and psychological wounds as comfort women. It is incumbent upon us, the Government of Japan, to continue to consider seriously, while listening to the views of learned circles, how best we can express this sentiment.

We shall face squarely the historical facts as described above instead of evading them, and take them to heart as lessons of history. We hereby reiterate our firm determination never to repeat the same mistake by forever engraving such issues in our memories through the study and teaching of history. As actions have been

brought to court in Japan and interests have been shown in this issue outside Japan, the Government of Japan shall continue to pay full attention to this matter, including private researched related thereto. (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan 1993).

This statement had a significant impact, as it marks the first time that the Japanese government acknowledged and apologized for its past wrongdoings concerning comfort women. However, when the South Korean government approached the Japanese government after the statement for reparations, the Japanese referred back to the 1965 Treaty on Basic Relations between Japan and the Republic of Korea, claiming that everything that happened during World War II had been completely and eternally solved. Using this treaty, Japan stated that it had already paid a lump sum to the Korean government and blamed the Korean government for not using the money to support the victims. Therefore, while they admitted guilt, they claimed that their previous reparations were enough compensation (Kyodo 2014).

This shows how insincere the Japanese government is regarding apologies to the Korean government, as well as victims. It is only natural that the victims felt betrayed and ignored when the apology that they received was taken back. Japan's attitude of "sorry, but not sorry" towards South Korea is haunting the issue of the comfort women.

Because the Korean government and its people were not satisfied with Japan's response, the Japanese government decided to try to again resolve the conflict while maintaining its position of "sorry, but not sorry." The Japanese government established the Asian Women's Fund in 1995, which collected donations from Japanese citizens to compensate comfort women victims in five countries: the Philippines, South Korea, Taiwan, the Netherlands, and Indonesia

(Kim 2014: 84).

About \$20,000 was given along with \$30,000 worth of medical and social welfare care to each of the 61 Korean victims and to each of the 13 Taiwanese victims, and \$32,000 was given to each of the 211 Philippines victims. The total amount of the fund was 48 million dollars, of which 42 million dollars was funded by the Japanese government (Kim 2014: 84). Each victim was also given an apology letter from Prime Minister Koizumi of Japan, and all projects led by this fund concluded in 2007. The letter by the Prime Minister is as follows:

Dear Madam,

On the occasion that the Asian Women's Fund, in cooperation with the Government and the people of Japan, offers atonement from the Japanese people to the former wartime comfort women, I wish to express my feelings as well.

The issue of comfort women, with an involvement of the Japanese military authorities at that time, was a grave affront to the honor and dignity of large numbers of women.

As Prime Minister of Japan, I thus extend anew my most sincere apologies and remorse to all the women who underwent immeasurable and painful experiences and suffered incurable physical and psychological wounds as comfort women.

We must not evade the weight of the past, nor should we evade our responsibilities for the future.

I believe that our country, painfully aware of its moral responsibilities, with feelings of apology and remorse, should face up squarely to its past history and accurately convey it to future generations.

Furthermore, Japan also should take an active part in dealing with violence and other forms of injustice to the honor and dignity of women.

Finally, I pray from the bottom of my heart that each of you will find peace for the rest of your lives.

Respectfully yours,

Junichiro Koizumi

Prime Minister of Japan (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan 2001)

The Asian Women's Fund seemed to have been somewhat successful in that each victim had the opportunity to receive a letter of apology from the Japanese prime minister, along with compensation. For example, Shimomura Mitsuko, Director of the Asian Women's Fund at the time, shares her experience of giving the compensation and reading the letter from the prime minister to one of the comfort women victims in South Korea:

Before I presented her with the money I read the letter of apology from the Prime Minister of Japan. Right away, she began to cry. Next I began reading the letter from the President of the Asian Women's Fund. Soon she could not hold back her feelings, and wailed loudly, "Gyaaah!" Her cries welled up from deep inside her. Our President's letter seemed to have more of an effect on her, perhaps because it is longer and some sections have a little more feeling and emotion in them. I suppose the best way to phrase it is, she wept bitterly. I had to stop reading the letter for a while - I too was in shock. She was facing me across the low, Japanese-style dining table, all of us sitting on the tatami mats. I went to her side of the table. I hugged her, saying "I'm so sorry, so very sorry..." We cried together

for a while. I'm not sure why I said that - I simply kept repeating the same thing, and crying, "I'm so sorry..." Then she said through her tears, "You've done nothing wrong." And then she said something about being thankful I had come from so far away to meet her. She was very disturbed, and still crying. We held each other for some time.... Finally I said, "Just now you told me I've done nothing wrong. But I'm Japanese, and as a Japanese person I am in the wrong. I have to apologize to you as a citizen of Japan." These are the kinds of things we said to each other (Digital Museum 1997).

It was the first time that the victims received a letter of apology from the Prime Minister of Japan, and because of that, the impact on the victims was profound. However, many of the victims did not feel satisfied about how their compensation was prepared. There were many victims who refused to accept the compensation because the money was partially funded by ordinary people which made it unofficial (Digital Museum 1997). In fact, the Korean government and a non-governmental organization known as the Korean Council for the Women Drafted for Military Sexual Slavery by Japan (KCWDMSS) which consists of Korean citizens, had told the victims that the organization would pay more to them if they did not accept the compensation and the apology letter from Japan. To explain the details, Kim Dade-Jun, the then new President of South Korea after Roe Tae-Woo, decided that the Korean government would pay about \$30,000 as well as \$4,000 from KCWDMSS. 142 victims accepted this proposal and received money from these sources instead of receiving the compensation from the Asian Women's Fund (Digital Museum 1997).

This is because the South Korean government and KCWDMSS did not support the

approach the Japanese government was taking with partial charity money, and this action also served as a counter-attack to such an approach so that solving the comfort women issue would not be successful. While the Japanese government offered to pay twenty thousand dollars, KCWDMSS offered thirty thousand dollars, surpassing the Japanese government's provision. The Korean media and general public supported KCWDMSS and pressured the victims to choose the side that the government and KCWDMSS offered. In this way, the victims were embroiled in the dilemma of having to choose between Korean and Japanese approaches. Those who received the compensation and the letter from Japan were criticized by the Korean media, which said that they had sold their hearts and were being deceived with money.

The names of those who accepted money from Japan were publicized, which pressured the other victims not to accept the Japanese government's offer (Asahi Shimbun 2019). These actions show that Korea had interpreted Japan's Asian Women's Fund as a form of insincerity, since to them, it was obvious that Japan has not given up its stance of not taking full responsibility to apologize to the victims and the country, but instead they only took actions that would make it seem like they took responsibility. This attitude of the Japanese government apparent from their actions only infuriated the Korean public and the government.

The influence of private organizations related to the issue of comfort women continued to increase, when in 2006, the KCWDMSS sued the Korean government together with comfort women victims, claiming that the Korean government was violating the Korean constitution by failing to protect the human rights of victims by not taking any action to solve the issue of the comfort women. In 2011, a new constitution was adopted which forced the Korean government to discuss the issue of comfort women with Japan. In other words, the constitution stated that it

would now be unconstitutional for the Korean government to *not* discuss the issue of comfort women with Japan in order to resolve it (Yonhap News Agency 2011).

These series of actions from private organizations happened because the Korean government was not actively engaging in trying to solve the comfort women issue for a while. In other words, because of the sexism and patriarchy deeply rooted in Confucianism, both South Korea and Japan did not prioritize relieving the sufferings of the comfort women. Sarah Soh states, “The victimization of colonial Korean women as Japan’s military comfort women is a prominent example of long-standing structural violence embedded in the still-prevalent masculinist sexual cultures of the two countries (Soh 2008: 240).”

The Japanese government’s actions only exacerbated the issue. Japanese Prime Minister Abe, the successor to Koizumi, made a statement in 2007 that the government’s investigation from 1991 to 1993, which led to Kono’s statement, did not show any evidence of direct involvement of the military to the forced recruitment of the comfort women (Joyce 2007).

Dudden states,

“[m]ore widely disseminated affirmations of [focusing on the negative] followed Prime Minister Abe’s March 2007 denial that the thousands of women and girls involved in Japan’s infamous comfort women system had been ‘coerced.’ His party’s policy chief, Nakagawa Shoichi, for one, seemed to have made the assumption that the public had not watched paid any attention to media during the 1990s, when survivors appeared routinely to recount their lived nightmares, and without hesitation, told reporters, ‘There’s currently no evidence that permits us to declare the military, the strongest expression of state authority,

took women away and forced them to do things against their will' (Dudden 2008: 40).

The stance of the Japanese government had gone from apologetic to outright denial of the issues with the change of the prime minister. The Japanese government, more specifically current Prime Minister Abe, has claimed that there never existed an official comfort women system controlled by the government, but that the practice was solely the work of voluntary prostitutes.

This change to denial from the previous apology shows how the Japanese government has no intention of considering the feelings of the victims. Because of these emotionless diplomatic statements, there is no way to deny that Japanese government was unable to forge an amicable and true solution to the comfort women problem. The Korean government as well was unable to look at the issue from the perspective of the victims, even though the Korean public and non-governmental organizations such as KCWDMSS were fighting for the victims. This unfortunate reality would continue even after the new president Park Guen-hye was inaugurated in 2013.

Chapter Four

Comfort Women Agreement (2015)

In November 2015, Japanese Prime Minister Abe met South Korean President Park Geun-hye at the South Korea-Japan Summit (Choe 2015). Park Geun-hye was the first woman to be elected President of South Korea, and she served from 2013 to 2017. Also the first female, popularly-elected head of state official in East Asia, she also had served as a member of the National Assembly. Her father was the previously-mentioned Park Chung-hee, who had served as President of South Korea; he came to power in 1961 and held office from 1963 to 1979, making five consecutive terms. Mikyoung Kim states,

The timing of the Abe administration's actions to reinvestigate the comfort women issues causes concern in South Korea where the first female President, Park Geun-Hye, was recently inaugurated. Park, known for her adamant stance on Korea-Japan historical reconciliation, has reiterated the need for Japan to sincerely confront the unresolved historical issues in order to move forward in bilateral relations (Kim 1989: 84).

Since her father, Park Chung-hee, supported Japan, he had prioritized keeping peaceful relations with Japan rather than fighting to relieve the sufferings of his people. At first, the Korean public was initially worried that his daughter Park Geun-Hye might follow the same path. However, the public was relieved to know that she was courageous enough to adamantly request the Japanese government to resolve the issue of the comfort women as soon as possible. However, the direction she took to approach the issue had not changed from the past: from top, the government, down, the victims, rather than from bottom up.

Agreement Out of the Blue

In December 2015, Japanese Foreign Minister Fumio Kishida and South Korean Foreign Minister Yun Byung-Se met to discuss the issue of the comfort women. This meeting led to their agreement to solve the comfort women issue “finally and irreversibly” through the Japanese government providing funding of one billion yen (approximately ten million USD) to those who suffered from the incident. The agreement included statements that the issue of comfort women was "irreversibly" resolved, and that the two governments "will refrain from criticizing and blaming each other in international society, including the United Nations.”

It also included Prime Minister Abe’s statement that he "expresses anew his most sincere apologies and remorse to all the women who underwent immeasurable and painful experiences and suffered incurable physical and psychological wounds as comfort women (Yan 2015).” In other words, both the Korean and Japanese governments had finally decided to resolve the conflict of comfort women that had lasted for more than eighty years.

As of November 17th, 2016, approximately 100,000 USD has been given to thirty-six of the surviving forty-six victims and 2 million yen has been given to sixty-five out of the 199 bereaved families of the deceased victims. Many people in Korea, however, including the rest of the surviving comfort women, have been against this agreement from the beginning, stating that these actions did not include a “sentimental” (感情的な, *kanjoutekina*) apology and compensation from the government (Sankei News 2016). In other words, to the Korean public, Abe’s “most sincere apologies” did not satisfy their needs, especially seeing as he had previously denied Japan’s involvement. The agreement was also so sudden that the public was shocked when they heard the announcement on the news.

It was as if the decision was made only at the level of top politicians, excluding the people and excluding the victims. Even though so far thirty-six out of forty-six victims, or seventy-eight percent of the victims, have received money from the government, it is not known how they received the money, or if they received the money out of their own volition. The Korean media and public have continued to criticize the way in which the agreement was executed and how both governments did not come to the decision based on the perspective of the victims.

The following graph, introduced in the “Introduction” section, quantifies a survey taken in 2017 in which one thousand Japanese and Korean civilians answered various questions. This particular graph shows the reactions of the Japanese and Korean public regarding the question: “Do you approve of the comfort women agreement?” in reference to the aforementioned 2015 agreement.

Japanese Public Opinion (N=1000)

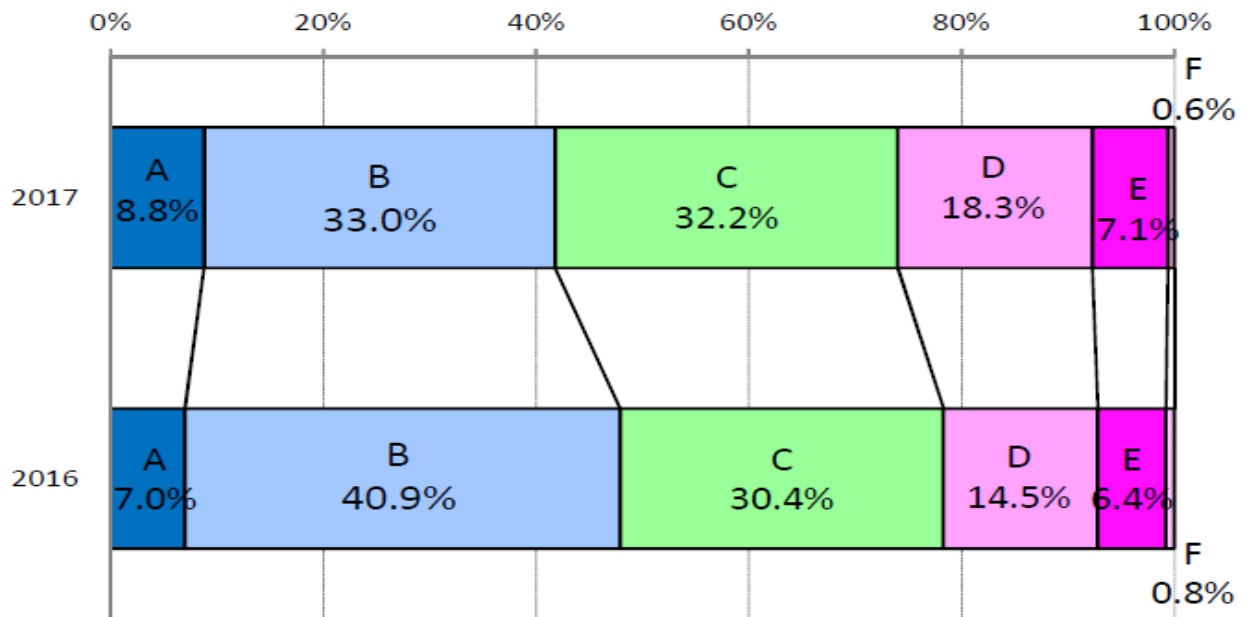


Figure 5: Do you approve of the comfort women agreement?

South Korean Public Opinion (N=1003)

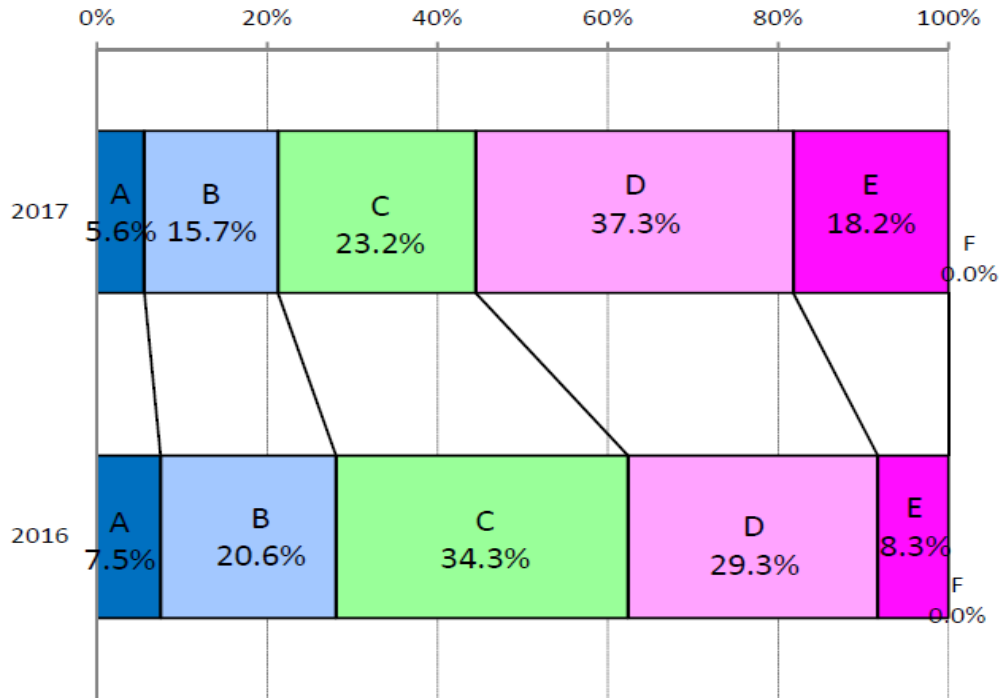


Figure 6: Do you approve of the comfort women agreement?

The responses to the question vary from A: strongly approve, B: approve to a certain degree, C: neither approve nor disapprove, D: somewhat disapprove, E: strongly disapprove, and F: no response. Graph 5 shows the responses from the Japanese public among whom 41.8% approved, while 25.4% of the group did not approve. Comparing these numbers to the 2016 survey, more people from the 2017 survey disapproved of the agreement. Graph 6, on the other hand, is that of South Korean public opinion in response to the same question. The response was that while 21.3% of the public approved the 2015 agreement, 55.5% of the group did not approve.

The disapproval rate in Korea is much higher than that of Japan's, and the fact that

more than half of the entire group disapproves of the agreement shows to what degree this comfort women issue is influencing the country, and how much frustration has accrued in the public at the same time. Dudden says,

How could a survivor of one of Japan's slave labor camps believe the Japanese government's words when a not insignificant number of its democratically elected politicians and highly paid pundits routinely make speeches and publish wildly popular books denigrating the survivors' claims or look soberly into TV cameras and say they are making it all up? If anything, such voices are only amplifying in Japan these days (Dudden 2008: 34).

This history of Japanese government's attitude of "sorry, but not sorry" has haunted the Korean government and public to the point where they have never felt relieved or satisfied with any of the apologies from Japan. As a result, the Korean public does not support this agreement, as they feel there is no sincere, consistent apology behind the movement.

It was not until Park Geun-Hye was impeached and Mun Jae-in was inaugurated as the new president of the Republic of Korea that the Korean people finally saw a beam of hope in regards to finding a solution to the comfort women issue. Since the attempted agreement of the comfort women issue in 2015, Park's administration has lost support, and on top of that, an unrelated scandalous event in 2016 eventually led to the impeachment of President Park.⁷ In

⁷ Her top aide, Choi Soon-sil, was accused of influence peddling. President Park also let Choi have access to confidential government documents, which is unconstitutional.

March of 2017, the impeachment was upheld, effectively forcing her out of office and putting an end to her presidential career (McKirby 2016).

As of 2019, she is serving prison time at the Seoul Detention Center in Seoul, South Korea. Because of the impeachment, the public started to insist that the agreement of the comfort women should be reconsidered. The newly elected president, Mun Jae-in, made his concern about the comfort women issue his public promise during the election campaign. In his speech commemorating the 99th March First Independence Movement Day in 2018, Mun Jae-in said the following:

To resolve the comfort women issue, the Japanese Government, the perpetrator, should not say the matter is closed. The issue of a crime against humanity committed in time of war cannot be closed with just a word. A genuine resolution of unfortunate history is to remember it and learn a lesson from it.

Japan must be able to squarely face the truth of history and justice with the universal conscience of humanity. I hope Japan will be able to genuinely reconcile with its neighbors on which it inflicted suffering and will walk the path of peaceful coexistence and prosperity together. I do not demand any special treatment from Japan. I just hope that as the geographically closest neighboring country, it will be able to move forward toward the future together based on sincere self-reflection and reconciliation (Ministry of Foreign Affairs Republic of Korea 2018).

As soon as Mun became the president, he and his administration started working toward a true solution to the issue of the comfort women based on the victims. Within two months

after Mun became the president, he had a Summit Conference with Abe for the first time in Germany where they agreed to build a future-directed relationship regarding the comfort women issue. A couple days after the Summit Conference, Chung Hyun-back, the minister in the Ministry of Gender Equality and Family, visited the House of Sharing where she told the victims that there were problems with the process and content of the 2015 agreement, and promised that she would work on reevaluating the agreement (MOGEF News 2017). She also expressed a plan to financially support the movement of having testimonies of victims of comfort women recognized as Memory of the World of UNESCO, which the Japanese government opposed, perhaps in the name of protecting its international reputation (Kyodo 2017).

The Mun administration shared a plan of designating a Memorial Day for the victims in 2018, building a comfort women research institute in 2019, and building a history museum in 2020, which the Japanese government also adamantly opposed. Even though the Japanese government has agreed to work with the Korean government toward a future-directed relationship regarding the comfort women issue, it has continued to stick with its political agenda that it is “sorry but not sorry,” and has continued to oppose almost everything that the new Korean administration has been trying to do.

This situation became even worse when the Korean government cut all the operating costs of the Reconciliation and Healing Foundation (RHF) from its budget, and Kim Tae-hyeon, the head of RHF, submitted her resignation. As this was a big part of the 2015 agreement, the Japanese government criticized the action of the Korean administration and expressed its intention to continue executing the agreement (Yi 2018).

Yoshihide Suga, Chief Cabinet Secretary, responded to Kim Tae-hyeon's resignation with the following statement: "I know of the news, but I do not think the activity of RHF itself will end. The agreement was highly recognized even internationally. I would like to continue executing it while cooperating with Korea." However, a week after this statement, Kim Tae-hyeon, the head of RHF, officially resigned. Chung Hyun-back, the minister in the Ministry of Gender Equality and Family, announced that the Korean government formed a team to scrutinize the activities of the RHF based on the perspective of the comfort women victims (The Straits Times 2017).

A couple days after this Korean announcement, the Abe administration in Japan appointed Kono Taro, who is the first son of the writer of the "Kono statement," wherein Japan admitted involvement in the comfort women issue, as Minister for Foreign Affairs through a Cabinet re-shuffle. Kang Kyung-wha, the incumbent Foreign Minister of South Korea, and Kono Taro had a meeting where Kang expressed that the majority of Korean people are not willing to accept the 2015 agreement, while Kono requested a steady execution of the agreement (Yoshida 2017).

President Mun announced a new direction that they would not renegotiate the agreement, but instead ask the Japanese government to make more efforts to restore the dignity of victims. They also decided to use their own money, ten-million dollars, for the project suggested by Japanese government, effectively not using the money that the Japanese government gave. In response to this new development, Kono Taro did not accept the new direction from Korea, and stressed again to execute the agreement (Tatsumi 2018). At the beginning the Korean media and public were excited to know that Kono Taro became the

Minister for Foreign Affairs, since it was his father who officially apologized for Japan's wrongdoing in 1993, but their expectations were in vain when they realized that he was also a puppet of Abe, with no change in his stance.

In January of 2018, Kang had a meeting where she announced that she would not demand renegotiation or annulment but would welcome autonomous and sincere new measures regarding the agreement (The Kyonghyang Shinmun 2018). Tellingly, the Korean government has been making efforts to somehow change the direction of solving the comfort women issue, to where they consider the issue from the perspective of victims. However, the stance of the Japanese government has never changed, and it still sticks with its political agenda, thinking of the benefit of Japan as its priority. This current situation shows that an apology does not work when the apologizing side does not consider the perspective of the people to whom they are apologizing. It also is ineffective if the apologizer mistakes the true target to whom they should apologize.

In the case of Japanese government, they have continued to consider the Korean government as the "person" to apologize to, and even so they have only apologized from their point of view. It is this history and these facts that have made the Korean people upset and lead them to not accept Japan's "apology," and now they are continuing to support President Mun to change Japanese government's attitude so that their apology will be a true sincere apology.

Learning from Germany

Germany is a country that committed numerous war crimes during World War II, but the country has since maintained peaceful relationships with the survivors. This is due to the

fact that Germany has continued to maintain its remorse for what it inflicted on other countries, and the other countries feel its sincerity. In that sense, there is much for Japan to learn from Germany, so that Japan can also follow an amicable path with South Korea, and this is the reason why I will examine Germany's example.

One instance is when Richard von Weizsäcker, president of then-West Germany, said in public that he was sorry for what his nation had done. On May 8, 1985, during his speech to commemorate Germany's fortieth anniversary of defeat, Weizsäcker apologized deeply for the actions of the former Nazi regime of his country. A part of his speech says,

May 8th is a day of remembrance. Remembering means recalling an occurrence honestly and undistortedly so that it becomes a part of our very beings. This places high demands on our truthfulness. Today we mourn all the dead of the war and the tyranny. In particular we commemorate the six million Jews who were murdered in German concentration camps. We commemorate all nations who suffered in the war, especially the countless citizens of the Soviet Union and Poland who lost their lives. As Germans, we mourn our own compatriots who perished as soldiers, during air raids at home, in captivity or during expulsion. We commemorate the Sinti and Romany gypsies, the homosexuals and the mentally ill who were killed, as well as the people who had to die for their religious or political beliefs. We commemorate the hostages who were executed (Weizsäcker 1985).

Even in the words themselves, one can feel nothing but remorse and a deep sense of apology in Weizsäcker's speech. Weizsäcker took great courage to face the truth head-on and sincerely apologize about it directly without making things ambiguous. Dudden shares that Weizsäcker's speech is considered to have fundamentally transformed everything about international apology, and because of it, "Germany has been regarded as the world's apologetic

model in terms of addressing bad history” (Dudden 2008: 32). A country that has perpetrated unthinkable evils in particular has the immense responsibility to apologize for one’s wrongdoing. Only then can other countries learn and follow it, creating a new international standard. On the other hand, if one cannot face the truth but instead avoids apologizing for its wrongdoing, one cannot move forward in the future nor create positive value, which is the case of Japan.

Furthermore, Germany does not only show remorse for tragedy by having its representatives, such as politicians, apologize, but also by educating the youth and new generations about what they had done, so that the events will not be mere a history lesson, but instead a lesson on humanity for the future. For that reason, Germany has continued to work on including its tragic history in its primary school education. In that regard, Dudden states,

Japanese society has not gone nearly as far as Germany’s in terms of incorporating the state’s history of violence into school education, among other things. This became wildly clear during the 1990s, when, in the wake of Emperor Hirohito’s 1989 death, within Japan it suddenly seemed that everything about the war and empire was all being said at once, and, for many, for the first time. Unlike Germany where, since the 1960s, public education has at least made most people aware of stories of death camps and pogroms and collapsed expansionist nightmares, in Japan news of war time atrocities that Japanese committed seemed to appear out of nowhere for most, raising new questions about the meaning of history itself (Dudden 2008: 33-34).

Even though the younger generations in Korea are well-educated on the matter of comfort women, it is not widely known to Japanese people today due to the Japanese government’s continued efforts to suppress information, most notably by omitting it from history classes at schools. While some publishers of public high school history textbooks such

as Tokyo Shoseki (東京書籍), Jikkyo Shuppan (実教出版), and Shimizu Shoin (清水書院) provide a half-page to a full-page of explanations of the comfort women issue, some other publishers such as Yamakawa Shuppansha (山川出版社) and Daiichi Gakushusha (第一学習社) only provide a one-sentence explanation of the issue.

Although a half-page or full-page is by no means a sufficient amount of information to properly inform students, it is disappointing to know that forty percent of the publishers only give one-sentence explanations of the comfort women issue. It is not surprising, therefore, that many younger generations of Japanese people do not know much about the history of comfort women. It is this gap of awareness of the issue of comfort women between the ordinary people in Korea and Japan that contributes to the growing frustrations among Korean people towards Japanese people.

The suppression of history by the Japanese government reflects the insincere attitude about its history, which has hurt the relationship between Korea and Japan in such a way that it influences both countries negatively even in seemingly unrelated areas including commercial, cultural, and academic pursuits. In other words, since a country's attitude is one of the fundamental levels on which all the aspects of a country is based upon, if it fails in having the correct attitude toward a certain issue, everything else, such as how it educates its younger generations, and how it interacts with the people who were involved in the issue, is influenced accordingly. This has been the biggest problem with Japan, and a new positive step toward a peaceful relationship with South Korea can be taken only by Japan if it first realizes that fact. In this sense, historian Park Soon-won reports a beacon of hope in terms of Japanese government's change in recent years:

[Japan and South Korea] 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 re-examined and narrowed down to three salient points: the lack of a collective memory within Japanese society; the conservative leadership's lack of political will to reconcile; and Japan's ambivalent identification as both victim and aggressor in the Second World War. The changes in Japanese court rulings and the out-of-court settlements in the past five 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 (Park 2006: 71-72).

These positive steps that the Japanese government is taking are a reflection of those the German government has taken for the sake of true reconciliation.

Conclusion

The issue of comfort women is not an issue past, nor is it merely an issue of the present: it is both. It is of the past in that the cruel practice of abusing women as sex objects ended with World War II, but the aftermath of how that issue and the victims were handled still are dragging both Korea and Japan down to this day. Because of this unfortunate state of affairs, Japan and South Korea have continued to have a tense relationship in the political respects as well as in economic and cultural spheres. Dudden states,

Now, more than sixty years after the end of the war, the remaining survivors of war time atrocities continue to want their stories heard and measured as significant to modern Japanese history, and yet they are more and more openly derided as only ‘in it for the money.’ Those sympathetic to the victims and to dispelling the ‘Chrysanthemum Taboo⁸’ which discredits them and their histories are again on the defensive, searching for more evidence to prove the already horrible even worse (Dudden 2008: 40).

The major problem in the issue of comfort women between Japan and South Korea lies in the fact that Japan does not understand what may be thought as common sense: the structure of a sincere apology. The victims get to decide if the apology was an apology, or if an attempted apology was merely a hollow statement. It is not Japan, the culprit, that gets to decide whether they have apologized properly or not. Dudden states,

Important always to bear in mind, unless the victim of any wrongdoing accepts the apology at hand, it will remain hollow, regardless of how often someone

⁸ The chrysanthemum taboo (菊タブー Kiku tabū) is the Japanese social taboo against discussion or criticism of the Emperor of Japan and his family.

repeats it. Imagine an English-speaking tourist in the middle of a place where no one speaks English. No matter how many times the tourist asks the same question and no matter how loudly he or she repeats it, there may be no communication at all, despite how friendly or unfriendly everyone involved is (Dudden 2007: 41).

In the case of the Japanese government, its insincere apologies fare worse than silence and it continues to create a larger gap between South Korea and Japan. South Korean people are frustrated in that they cannot describe what to say or what to do to Japan. It leaves South Korea powerless when the offender has no sense of atonement relating to their wrongdoings. In this sense, the seemingly contrasting positions of the Japanese and Korean governments in relation to the comfort women issue is significantly shaped by their tumultuous history, which in turn makes the issue difficult to effectively resolve.

The current South Korean President Mun is taking a grassroots approach to address the issue of comfort women, prioritizing the needs of both the victims and Korean people. As demonstrated by this paper, previous attempts to address the comfort women issue have taken a top-down approach, and all these attempts have failed. This new approach that President Mun is pursuing provides a new light of hope towards resolving the comfort women issue. It gives hope to have a new era of a more amicable relationship between South Korea and Japan, and it will be even more hopeful if Japanese government also follows suit with the approach of South Korea.

Park Yuha said,

The reason that people still discuss the comfort women issue and history textbook issue today is because there still continues a reality that wars and structural dominations are still continuing, and thus the poor and the weak are mobilized. We should stop the situation where a state, men, and adults take advantage of the people, women, and children respectively, for wars. I would like to include inside

the comfort women issue's solution, a new sense of value in which we will not deprive people of peaceful lives by dominating others just because of racial difference or poverty (Park 2004: 313-314).

As Park mentions, the issue of comfort women boils down to the root cause of how Japanese government considers Korean people. Because Japanese government has not put relieving the suffering and anger from the comfort women victims as the first priority or an important mission, the issue still remains as a continuing issue, with their suffering and anger attached. It is because of this fact that this issue of comfort women has remained a heavy anchor that ties people to the past, with no sign of the anchor being lifted for the purpose of a brighter future. In other words, if the Japanese government is considerate of its people or people of its neighboring countries who are suffering because of it, then it will definitely take actions to resolve the issue of comfort woman, but if it lacks the compassion to be considerate of its victims, then it will not take actions actively to support the victims of comfort women.

In this sense, the unresolved situation of comfort women that happened more than seventy years ago is a manifestation of how Japanese and Korean governments think of their people as well as people of other nationalities, including their human rights. In other words, both governments' lack of responsibility to support their victims contributed to their neglect of the comfort women issue until now. In summary, the governments' lack of compassion to help their victims is the cause of the comfort women issue not being solved for more than seventy years, and the unresolved comfort women issue is the cause for the negative political and diplomatic relationships between Japan and South Korea today. Even though both governments are responsible for the stagnation of the comfort women issue, it is needless to say that Japan, who is the wrongdoer, has the biggest responsibility in this.

The issue of comfort women creates an opportunity for Japanese people to reconsider their views of those from other nationalities from a perspective that is beyond race, and consider the best way to respect all people now and in the future. The wrongdoer's stance of "sorry but not sorry" would not work in any situation, whether it be between friends, family members, or among co-workers and their superiors. Politics is no exception to that fact, as governments are still a collection of people. The issue of comfort women is about actual people who went through tumultuous sufferings. It is this fact that President Mun is trying to remind Japan of, and only if Japan realizes this simple yet difficult fact, can a future be seen where comfort women are sincerely apologized to, and better relationships between Japan and South Korea where accountability takes priority emerge.

Potential Future Developments

Pop culture is becoming a promising bridge between Japan and South Korea despite the tense relationship between their governments due to the comfort women issue. Korea's popular K-pop genre of music and the K-drama genre of television shows have become very popular in Japan and have functioned as a way for Japanese people to learn more about Korean culture and its people. In terms of Japanese influence in Korea, it is mainly through anime (Japanese animated shows) and manga (Japanese comic books) that are popular in Korea, and these have also created venues for Korean people to absorb and experience Japanese culture. Overall, blooming popular culture in both countries promotes the exchange of culture and opinions. Because of the cultural exchange that is happening between South Korea and Japan, tourism between the two countries has increased.

In fact, the number of tourists going to Japan from Korea has increased to more than seven million Koreans travelling to Japan in 2017, which calculates to one in every eight Korean people. The same phenomenon is happening among Japanese people as well where, even though the number of tourists significantly decreased after North Korea, South Korea's neighboring country, launched missiles, the number of Japanese tourists to South Korea increased in 2017 (Korea Tourism Organization 2019). This gives hope for betterment of the South Korea-Japan relationship in that even with all the tensions because of the conflicts with comfort women and territorial issues, the actual, ordinary populace like both countries to the extent that they visit each other's country. It is not an exaggeration to say that these cultural exchanges keep both countries connected even in the midst of tense political strife caused by historical and territorial conflicts.

However, on the other hand, the relationship between Japan and North Korea marks a big contrast comparing with the relationship between Japan and South Korea. There has not been any cultural exchange between North Korea and Japan, and due to this fact, many people in Japan are scared of North Korea, as they do not know what is happening within that country, and therefore, they do not know in what way North Korean people view Japan and Japanese people. This might come as a natural fact since there has not been any exchange between North Korea and other countries, but this creates a stark difference in terms of diplomatic relations when there is an existence of cultural exchange, as shown in the case of between Japan and South Korea. With this as a fact, cultural exchange continues to be a key factor for the betterment of the Korea-Japan relationship, since these exchanges continue to relieve tensions between both countries even in the realm of politics.

In the long history of the countries, South Korea, North Korea, and Japan have had both positive and negative events that continue to affect their interactions to this date. In order to tackle some of the historical disputes, the presidents of North and South Korea, Kim Jong-un and Mun Jae-in, respectively, have met and started talking about finally ending the Korean war that has been stuck in a cease-fire for fifty-five years (Ahn 2018). At the same time, the tension between North Korea and Japan was heightened, when three missiles passed over Japan from North Korea for a “missile test,” threatening the entire nation of Japan (BBC News 2017).

The winter Pyeongchang Olympics of 2018 saw a momentous change in that the ice hockey team was combined for South Korea and North Korea. While some media and the public criticized it as both countries merely using the Olympics as a political means for their competitive advantage, at the same time many people found hope when they saw a flag of the entire Korean peninsula being carried by both South Koreans and North Koreans (Keating 2018). Thus, recent events show that North and South Korea have been improving their political relationship.

However, Japan remains on bad terms with both of them, which may give the opportunity for North and South Korea to find common ground to spark kinship in their negative perceptions of Japan. It is this point where the issue of comfort women becomes relevant in this discussion. There were many comfort women from North Korea who suffered at the hands of Japan, and just like South Korean comfort women, their sufferings have not been acknowledged by the Japanese government. In this sense, the comfort women issue has been and will continue to be a large contributing factor to the division among these three East Asian countries.

Since the comfort women issue is a problem of huge scale for women's rights and bodily integrity, for what reason has awareness of it not spread to other countries with similar issues? Hopefully, if both Japan and South Korea can solve the issue of comfort women, then this gives some hope and guidance on how other violations of women's rights and bodily integrity can be solved throughout the world. A prime example is the United States' numerous "camp towns," which are areas where prostitution and sex services are provided. These "camp towns" exist in every single country where there is a United States military base, which includes both Japan and South Korea (Vine 2017: 163-170).

Why, then, have both Japan and South Korea not raised their voices to the same extent about the atrocities the U.S. commits? Most importantly, these prostitution activities conducted by the U.S. military are still developing stories, still ongoing, without any widespread criticism or demonstrations (Vine 2017: 168-170). Dudden shares the opinion of a South Korean who said that "we are Korea, that is why we do not go to the U.S. but go to Japan to criticize (Dudden 2008)." Of course, the world's established political power structure plays a role in influencing every country in the world. However, if South Korea and Japan can successfully acknowledge and respect women's rights and bodily integrity with the comfort women issue as a medium, this should transcend any boundaries and country borders, as women who are victims of sexual exploitation exist in every country.

This issue still has not impacted other countries in terms of rights and laws. If Japan can understand the significant, positive effect they can bring to other countries with women who are suffering, then it might be possible for them to make more proactive changes in terms of their stance on the comfort women issue, and thus contribute eventually to the betterment of women's

rights on a global scale. Indeed, this is what many comfort women victims want to occur; they do not want others to suffer in the same way they did. So long as these human rights violations do not happen anymore, they will be happy. Yi Yong-suk, one of the comfort women victims, shares her experience as a comfort women victim:

It was bad enough that I had to suffer what I did. But it is worse that I was made barren because of this ordeal. I am bitter when I think of this, but I am not going to blame others any longer. What happened was destiny. We are finished, and our bodies are useless after so much abuse. It doesn't matter whether we receive compensation or not. After all, what could we do with money, with so few years left before we die? All I can wish for is that my country and my people will prosper so that history can never be repeated (Howard 1995: 57).

President Mun's approach shows that when we consider the issue of comfort women from the perspective of the victims, we may be able to solve the issue, and we can also prevent these sufferings in the future. If we carry on through the comfort women issue with this humanistic perspective, and with this sense of mission and dedication, then the world surely will evolve into a better place, and as a matter of course, the relationship between Japan and South Korea will naturally be improved.

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