

Japan's Self-Centered Reflection upon the Asia-Pacific War^{*}

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I. Introduction

The Japanese way of remembering the Asia-Pacific War¹⁾ shows a strong tendency toward victim consciousness, which is characterized by the belief that Japanese were the victims of the war and by the prevalent indifference to other Asian victims of the very same war. Needless to say, many innocent Japanese fell victim to the war; but this cannot and should not justify the widespread neglect found among today's Japanese of other Asian victims of the war which Japan started with its acts of aggression. In the course of its imperialistic expansion starting with the colonization of the Korean peninsula in 1910 and the Manchurian Incident in 1931, Japan invaded and occupied most of northeast China and some major Chinese cities such as Shanghai and Nanking, thereby finally advancing to Southeast Asia. As a result, millions of innocent civilians in China and in Southeast Asia including Indonesia, the Philippines, Singapore, Vietnam, Cambodia, Thailand, Burma, and Malaysia suffered from Japan's brutal violence against noncombatants, both civilians and prisoners of war.

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1) By the Asia-Pacific War, the article means Japan's invasion of China and Southeast Asian Countries and Japan's war with China, the United States, and its allies. The Pacific War is usually about the war between the United States of America and Japan; the Fifteen Years War means Japan's invasion and war with China from Japan's invasion of Manchuria in 1931 to Japan's defeat in 1945.

Nevertheless, these atrocities are not well remembered in Japan; the way the Japanese media addresses the war strongly emphasizes the victim-side of Japan. While the media are busy talking about how miserably the Japanese suffered, they usually hesitate in showing how oppressed other Asians were due to Japan – for example, the sufferings Chinese went through because of Japan’s aerial bombing over Nanjing²⁾ and Chongqing.³⁾ In fact, commemorative documentary films and reports dealing with the war hardly pay attention to the sufferings Japan caused to other Asian people. What the Japanese mass media usually tries to invoke among Japanese people especially every August, the season of war commemoration, are the sufferings their parents or grandparents had to endure during the war, such as the formidable consequences of ruthless aerial bombings over major cities in Japan, the battle of Okinawa, and the atomic bombings over Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Furthermore, the media successfully colors the memories of war in personal, emotional, and ethical hues, focusing on heart - wrenching episodes – for instance, episodes about conscripted innocent young men who had to part with their families and friends and never made it back home. Indeed, the way the Japanese media address the memories of the war epitomizes how strongly many Japanese perceive themselves as victims of the war, in which Japan actually tormented other Asians.

This victim-centered reflection upon the war has blinded Japanese to many atrocities and war crimes committed by the Japanese during the war. Moreover, it has made highly ambiguous the meaning of the peace which Japan has allegedly pursued through its peace constitution, which, enacted in 1947, renounced the right to resort to war as a means to settle international disputes with other countries and renounced armed forces.⁴⁾ Despite the declaration of the abolishment of armed forces, the aspiration for peace devoid of any

2) The aerial bombing over Nanjing took place from August 15, 1937 to December 12, 1937 for four months.

3) The aerial attacks over Chongqing continued from February 18, 1938 to August 23, 1943. These attacks targeted non-military areas such as residential areas, business areas, schools, and hospitals.

4) Article 9 of the Japanese constitution maintains that the Japanese people forever renounce war as a sovereign right of the nation and the threat or use of force as means of settling international disputes.

past reflection failed to lead Japan to regain confidence lost among neighboring Asian countries. Indeed, the majority of Japanese are obscure about what they are sorry for and exactly to whom. Thus, simply for the sake of the future generations of Japan, not to mention for other Asians sake, it is time to examine the cause and effect of the strong victim consciousness of the Japanese.

II. The Root of Self-Centeredness: Personalized Experience-Based Memories of the War in Apolitical and Ahistorical Contexts

The strong sense of victimization comes from Japanese's tendency to reflect upon the past based on personalized experience. As international legal scholar Onuma Yasuaki points out, Japanese have a tendency to reflect upon the war only from their own experiences. Onuma argues that Japanese should generate much wider reflection on the past war through learning and understanding the experiences of those who fell victim to Japan's invasion of Asia.⁵⁾ Of course, victim consciousness reflects only a part of the whole stage of Japan's war experiences. To many Japanese two distinctive memories of the war would exist. On the one hand, they must include the stories about the Great Japanese Empire, which was proud of glorious victories and advances in Asian and Pacific islands at the early stages of the war. On the other hand, they are also composed of those anecdotes about individual Japanese who had to go through all the hardships, troubles, sufferings, and distresses in their hometowns at the final stage of the war. However, what most Japanese remember when reflecting on the war is the latter as their memories of the war become conveniently truncated by the following two factors: first, the Great Japanese Empire lost the war in the end, and consequently went out of existence; and second, many of the actions which the Japanese took in the name of the liberation of Asian nations were found to have been

5) Onuma Yasuaki, *Tokyo saiban kara sengo sekinin no shisou he* [From the Tokyo Trial to the Thought on Post-War Responsibility] (Tokyo: Yushindo, 1985), 116-118.

crimes against peace and conventional war crimes at the Tokyo Trial. Given the circumstances created after Japan's unconditional surrender and the Tokyo Trial, Japanese buried the former memories of the glorious military advanced at the earlier stage of the war and remembered the harsh experiences of Japanese civilians at the last stage of the war.

Since then, the war memories of victim consciousness have mainly constituted the core content of Japanese experience-based reflection of the war, which has been widely shared and continuously reproduced in diverse forms through the news media, literature, documentary films, movies, official history education in public schools, and private family conversations between the old and the young generations. Most Japanese are quite well aware of the stories of the hardships individual Japanese went through – for instance, those stories about the experiences in Tokyo and Osaka under a series of air raids and in Hiroshima and Nagasaki in the summer of 1945, as well as those anecdotes about innocent children who muddled through the hardships of life at an early age separated from their parents and other ordinary Japanese who managed to survive chronic starvation as houses and cities were burnt down.⁶⁾ These stories of personal anguish during the wartime are so appealing that they effectively teach Japanese people how a war can drastically make the lives of millions of ordinary civilians miserable. Furthermore, since they are all fellow Japanese, many Japanese, albeit not directly related, can easily project themselves into the victims' situations and sympathize with the victims. Understandably, when the postwar generation reflects upon the war, they do so self-centeredly.

In addition, the personal experience-based reflection which is bound in terms of time and space has significantly prevented Japanese from linking the study of the causes of the war to the effects of the war. In practice, Japanese tend to consider the war a mere un-

6) Many post-war Japanese novels and movies on the past war highlight the sufferings of innocent children and citizens. *Garasu no usagi* [The Glass Rabbit], a popular movie based on the experience of a teenage Japanese girl who lost her mother and sisters in the Tokyo Aerial Bombing on March 10, 1945, has been shown to many Japanese primary school students. *Hadashi no Gen* [Barefoot Gen] is a classic manga based on the cartoonist's own suffering from the atomic bomb over Hiroshima.

fortunate event or an accident in highly personalized contexts. Needless to say, the unparalleled annihilation of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the indescribable death of many innocent Japanese civilians, and the ensuing torments and gradual deaths following the radiation poisoning have had a definite impact on the minds of Japanese as falling beyond description and imagination. Necessarily, for many Japanese atomic bombs represent absolute evil beyond logic.⁷⁾ Yet, by understanding the war as an unfortunate event occurring to Japanese, many Japanese not only forget to ask for what political purposes Japan assaulted other Asian countries, but also fail to understand why other Asians still harbor doubts about Japan's aspiration for peace despite Japan's having renewed itself as a peaceful state with the peace constitution, which renounces armed force. In the personal experience-based reflection of the war, the fact that it was Japan that started the war has been easily forgotten or neglected, if not totally denied. A total reflection of the war requires Japanese people to reflect upon not only their own experiences but also the sufferings Japan caused to other Asians. The war was unfortunate for many Japanese, but this was far more unfortunate for other Asians, given the fact that Japan was the aggressor.

The full reflection of war, thus, requires Japanese to get out of the self-centeredness and to bring back the political and historical contexts in their reflection upon the war. First, from a political and strategic point of view, reflecting on the war in the political context can help Japanese understand that war in general is something more than a series of unfortunate individual events. As Clausewitz once taught us in the nineteenth century, the essence of war is political.⁸⁾ Only after taking into account the political context of the Asia-Pacific War can Japanese clearly see under what kinds of international and domestic structures Japanese decided to attack China and the United States, and what Japanese did to other people. Considering the war in this political context can also help Japanese critically

7) Japanese Physicists Yukawa Hideki, a Nobel Prize Laureate in physics, declared the nuclear weapons as absolute evil.

8) Carl Von Clausewitz, *On War*, trans. and ed., Michael Howard and Peter Paret (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1976).

and objectively examine right-wingers' ideological excuses for Japan's atrocious actions: saying, for example, that Japan brought benefits to Korea through colonization; that Japan established Manchukuo for the sake of all different Asians in East Asia; or that Japan fought the war to liberate Southeast Asians from the shackles of Western powers.

Secondly, reflecting on the war in a longer historical context could help Japanese delve into the social psychology Japanese has long cultivated. As Onuma Yasuaki persuasively suggests, the past war is located in the continuum of Japan's efforts to emulate the Western modern political and military powers since the Meiji Restoration, which attitude subsequently has been accompanied by Japan's discriminatory and indifferent attitude toward other less modernized Asians.⁹⁾ Onuma particularly points out the historical continuity of Japan's aspiration for the West and discrimination against other Asians during the post-war period in the forms of prevailing legal, social, and economic discriminations in Japanese society, especially against Koreans and Chinese, most of whom were forced to come to Japan during the war and earlier as pottery makers and artisans.¹⁰⁾ Although liberal democracy in post-war Japan replaced the war-time nationalistic fascist regime, according to Takashi Tsumura, the post-war Japanese liberal democracy has been characterized by what Herbert Marcuse called repressive tolerance that has tolerated Japanese democracy's repressive policies and attitudes toward those underprivileged – Koreans and Chinese – through institutionalized inequality.¹¹⁾ By acknowledging this historical continuity, Japanese could be aware of their narrow victim-centered view of the war and understand why other Asians are still skeptical about Japan and the Japanese more than sixty-five years after the end

9) Onuma, 84-86.

10) Onuma, 86-89. One example is that foreigners who stay in Japan for more than a year have the obligation of fingerprinting in residential registration, which system started in 1952. Those who refused the obligation were punished with various measures, among which was the prohibition of reentry into Japan. Among those foreigners for whom fingerprinting was obligatory almost 90% are Chinese and Koreans. The system of fingerprinting was abolished in January 1993.

11) Tsumura Takashi, *Warenano Uchinaru Sabetsu* [Our Discrimination] (Tokyo: Sanichi Shobou, 1970), 26-29. Herbert Marcuse, "Repressive Tolerance," in Robert Paul Wolff, Barrington Moore, Jr., and Herbert Marcuse, *A Critique of Pure Tolerance* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1969), 95-137.

of the war.

III. The Self-Centered Self-Reflection and Ambiguous Sense of Responsibility for Japanese War Crimes

One of the serious effects self-centered reflection has had on Japanese is the ambiguous sense of responsibility for the war crimes committed by their fellow Japanese during the war. Highlighting only the victimization of Japanese out of the historical context, it ignores the contents and victims of Japanese war actions, in this case Asian countries and people. Many Japanese people's sense of responsibility of Japan for the war is quite ambiguous: many Japanese have only a vague idea to whom and for what Japan was responsible with respect to the war.¹²⁾ The details of war crimes committed by Japanese soldiers are not shared as social knowledge in Japanese society. Though some Japanese and Japanese scholars are skeptical about the legitimacy of the Allied Forces' judgment of Japan's war crimes at the Tokyo Trial, especially in terms of the trial's standard of the judgment and punishment of Japanese war criminals,¹³⁾ there has been little effort to make historical and legal reexamination of the trial. To be sure, the Japanese parliament passed parliamentary resolutions in 1952, 1953, and 1955 demanding the release of war criminals based on the argument that there were problems in the Tokyo Trial's standard and method of the judgment.¹⁴⁾ Still, there was no thorough reexamination of the war criminals in a separate form. Arguments among Japanese, both from the right and the left, the former legitimizing

12) Futamura Madoka, *War Crimes Tribunals and Transitional Justice: The Tokyo Trial and the Nuremberg Legacy* (London: Routledge), 100-102.

13) Onuma pp. 140-142. Futamura Madoka's research found that many Japanese interpret the Tokyo Trial as political punishment of Japan as a whole under 'victor's justice.' There was no involvement of Japanese in the judicial procedure of the Tokyo Trial. Furthermore, the selection of war criminals in the Trial has been rather random. Futamura, 124-140.

14) Upon the agreement of the eleven countries involved in the Tokyo Trial, the Japanese government granted pardons to Class-A in 1956 and to Class-B and Class-C war criminals by 1958.

the war and the latter criticizing the war, ended up in an ideological dispute with little objective joint examination, which led the victimization of Japanese serving as the passive consensus across political spectrum. The ahistorical and ethical victim-consciousness of Japanese has been convenient to fill consensus vacuum on the past war in post-war Japan. Thus, the strong sense of victimization shared by many Japanese has played an important role in the reflection of the past war.

True, the political and economic circumstances surrounding post-war Japan, especially the heavy protection of Japan, as a new ally, by the United States, might have deterred any momentum to cast doubt on the Tokyo Trial. The political calculation of the victor, the United States, might have contributed to such an ambiguous sense of responsibility. Unit 731, a chemical and biological weapons research and development unit of the Imperial Japanese Army, committed one of the most gruesome war crimes during the war, a set of inhumane medical experiments on live human bodies in China. Though the activities of Unit 731 constituted a serious case of crimes against humanity, the United States after the war exculpated the unit commander Lieutenant General Ishii Shiro and Unit 731's research and experiments from any legal charge in exchange for the research data on human experimentation. This was because the United States wanted to monopolize the data and hide it, especially from another victor, the Soviet Union,¹⁵⁾ so that the American military could use the data to enhance their biological weapons development program.

Indeed, neither the Japanese government nor the public has ever embarked on an investigation of Unit 731 after the Tokyo Trial.¹⁶⁾ Some individual researchers' efforts to reveal

15) Futamura, 63.

16) The Japanese government's reluctant attitude is known from one of the Japanese history textbook lawsuits. It screened and requested the removal of the description that Unit 731 in the suburb of Harbin caught several thousand foreigners, mainly Chinese, and conducted human body experiments for several years. The Japanese government's explanation was that it was too early to include in the history textbook since there is no credible academic research or studies or articles on Unit 731 and since facts are not well established. In the judgment on August 29, 1997, the Supreme Court criticized the Japanese government's argument and judged that the facts of the existence of Unit 731 and its human body experiment are beyond dispute.

the truth about the unit¹⁷⁾ have not provoked nationwide calls for a systematic investigation on Unit 731. The appeals from the direct victims of Unit 731 have failed to attract wide Japanese public attention. In response to a series of lawsuits filed by 180 Chinese for victim compensation, the Tokyo district court acknowledged in 2002 that the Imperial Japanese Army violated international humanitarian law. And yet it has not been followed by any collective attempts in Japanese society to pressure the Japanese government to admit the political and legal responsibility for the war crimes of biological experiments committed in the name of the Japanese Empire.

The controversy over the Asia Women's Fund was another case in point of the lack of national consensus on Japan's war responsibility. Upon the Japanese government's acknowledgement of the Imperial Army's commitment to the establishment of the institution of comfort women,¹⁸⁾ the Asia Women's Fund was founded as a joint project by the Japanese government and Japanese citizens to take moral responsibility for former comfort women and to make recompense for their loss of dignity and enforced hardships. As a token of Japanese sense of responsibility, former comfort women received a letter of apology from successive Japanese prime ministers¹⁹⁾ and compensatory payment from the Fund, which was funded by the Japanese government and voluntary donations from Japanese citizens.²⁰⁾

However, the establishment of the Asia Women's Fund also clarified the sharp political

17) Some main studies on Unit 731 are as follows: Yoshimi Yoshiaki and Ikou Toshiya, *731 butai to ten-nou no rikugun chuuou* [Unit 731 and the Emperor's Army], Iwanami Booklet No. 389; Keiichi Tsuneishi, *731 butai: seibutsubeiki hanzai no shirjitu* [Unit 731: Truth about Japan's Biological Weapons Program], Tokyo: Koudansha Bunko, 1995; 731 Butai Kokusai Shinpojium Jikkou Iinkai ed, *Nibongun no saikinsen dokugasu sen* [Japanese Biological and Poison Gas Warfare] (Tokyo: Akashi Shoten, 1996).

18) The comment of the Chief Secretary of the Cabinet, Kono Yohei, on August 4, 1993, at http://www.mofa.go.jp/mofaj/area/taisen/pdfs/im_050804.pdf. See also the comment from the Chief Secretary of the Cabinet, Kato Koichi, on July 6, 1992, at <http://www.mofa.go.jp/mofaj/area/taisen/kato.html>.

19) The letter of apology was sent by Prime Minister Hashimoto Ryutaro, Prime Minister Obuchi Kouzou, Prime Minister Mori Yoshirou, and Prime Minister Koizumi Shinichiro.

20) Voluntary donation reached 600 million yen.

cleavages among Japanese over such issues as whether the institution of war comfort women constitutes a war crime or to what extent and in what way the government officially should be considered responsible. The Japanese government's recognition of Japan's involvement in such an institution, its initiative in establishing the Fund, and political and moral apologies to the victims surely attest to progress in the sense that Japan as a nation has begun to face its past war crimes voluntarily. Nonetheless, right-wingers and conservatives have harshly criticized the Fund with strong opposition and denunciations. Most of all, some right-wing or conservative politicians have even rejected the idea that comfort women ever existed, claiming that comfort women were those who were already prostitutes or voluntarily participated to earn money. In addition, they have successfully obstructed further attempts to address the issue of comfort women beyond the Asia Women's Fund. Rightists and conservative politicians thwarted leftists' and center-leftists' thirteen attempts from 1999 to 2006 to pass parliamentary resolutions to conduct an official systematic investigation of the institution of comfort women as the outgrowth of the Asia Women's Fund and to demand that the Japanese government officially apologize to comfort women and to take measures to restore former comfort women's dignity.²¹⁾ As of May 2011, no such parliamentary resolution has been successfully passed nor is there official compensation for former comfort women. The rigidity of the left also contributed to the lack of national consensus on the issue and weakened the political and moral foundation of the Fund. Many of the left, assuming the superiority of legal responsibility over moral responsibility, criticized the Japanese government's moral apology as a cover for the government's evasion of the legal responsibility for the war crime of the institution of comfort women. Leftists' belief in legal responsibility as the ultimate goal, however, neglected the importance of policy practicality of the Japanese government's moral apology. Scholars who engaged in the establishment and management of the Asia Women's Fund criticize the too much emphasis on legal responsibility, arguing that there should be no priority between legal and moral respon-

21) For detailed record, see <http://www.awf.or.jp/e4/legislation.htm>.

sibility and that the bottom line is how to retrieve the dignity of the victims in any form appropriate. Onuma thought that a lengthy process of legislation on legal compensation was unrealistic to save the victims of the comfort women system; most of the victims are elderly and have already suffered long enough not only during the war but also after the war for more than sixty-five years.²²⁾ Thus, in between the extreme demands from the right — wingers and the left — wingers, the Asia Women's Fund failed to gain adequate support for further progress on the issue of former comfort women. As such, the sense of responsibility for war crimes remains vague in Japan.

IV. Self-Centered Self-Reflection and the Meaning of Peace

The experience-based reflection on the war makes Japan's aspiration for peace an empty one. To be sure, after the war, Japanese have embraced a strong aspiration for peace, which led to the idea that absolute peace is achievable if one renounces war and the means of war as the Japanese peace constitution dictates. Sakamoto Yoshikazu points out that Japanese have generated the following ideas as absolute peace after the series of bitter war experiences: no war of aggression; no anti-democratic militarism, which deceived Japanese into believing that Japanese were engaging in a just war; and no nuclear weapons.²³⁾ Among the three, Sakamoto points out the necessity to realize the principle of no war of aggression since Japan's inadequate and ambiguous apology have failed to gain the full confidence of its neighboring countries in Asia. He concedes that the two other elements of absolute peace, no nuclear weapons and no militarism, have been realized with the end of the Cold War and the rise of post-war democracy, which has grown through keeping an eye on any sign

22) Yasuaki Onuma, *Ianfu Mondai toba Nandattanoka: Media, NGO, seifu no kourzai* [What was the Issue of Comfort Women?— Media, NGOs, and the Responsibility of the Government] (Tokyo: Chuko Shinsho, 2007), 157-165.

23) Sakamoto Yoshikazu, *Soutaika no jidai* [The Era of Relativism] (Tokyo: Iwanami Shinsho, 1997), 60-70.

of the Japanese government's rearmament. Sakamoto has a point in clarifying that Japan's ambiguous war responsibility to Asia, which I argue above as resulting from of the self-centered reflection of the war, hinders the credibility of Japan's aspiration for peace.

This leads to the point that Japan's aspiration for peace is quite fragile in that it is based on the sense of war weariness and the belief that the removal of all the things that tormented Japanese and their ancestors would bring peace. The strong desire is to avoid any of the fears, destructions, and sufferings Japanese experienced during the war, particularly aerial bombings and the atomic bombs, as emphasized in Japanese's reflection of the past war. To most Japanese, what Japanese experienced was cruel enough to make them sincerely wish for peace so that they would not observe countless deaths of innocent fellow Japanese and destruction of valuable Japanese property again. Thus, the sense of war weariness comes directly from Japan's war experiences in personalized contexts. The Japanese media have been no exception in connecting such horrible but personal experiences with the meaning of peace: many comments of war survivors and the conclusions of TV documentaries on the war usually include their sincere hope for peace.

As long as the meaning of peace is constituted on the basis of Japanese people's experiences as victims, it would fail to be a universal appeal to other people because it could just mean "no more use of violence to Japanese people." Indeed, many Japanese believe that they or their parents and grandparents suffered enough from the war through aerial bombings, hunger, and the atomic bombs. And they appear to be quite confident in the lesson they learned from the war, which implies that there should be no more war in Japan.²⁴⁾ However, this notion of peace is one-sided, without reflection upon other Asians who became the target of Japanese violence. The notion of absolute peace without any lessons

24) Among the top five answers to the survey on Japanese's reflection of the Pacific War, the idea of war weariness is prevalently seen in the following comments: war should not be repeated; atomic bombs; sad tragedy and misery, starvation. Yomiuri Shinbun Sensou Sekinin Kenshou Inkaei [Yomiuri Newspaper Investigation Committee of War Responsibility], *Kenshou sensou sekinin* [Investigation of War Responsibility I] (Tokyo: Chuou Kouron Sha, 2006/07), 210.

included to be gained from the examination of the atrocities conducted by Japanese military officers and soldiers in Asia would appear hypocritical to other Asians because it could mean only the welfare of Japanese people. The fragility of absolute peace defined as no violence perpetrated upon Japanese is seen in the occasional remarks by rightist politicians to justify the cruelties inflicted on other Asians during the war and in the lack of unified voice or silence of Japanese in protest against such remarks. The prevalent indifference found among Japanese people to Japan's war crimes committed in Asia during the Asia-Pacific War could damage the credibility of Japan's aspiration for peace in post-war East Asia.

The self-centeredness of Japanese reflection could also reduce the trustworthiness of Japan's aspiration for peace. Takeuchi Yoshiro points out the danger that the self-centered reflection of the war might generalize any personal experience as an important lesson of the war for younger generations.²⁵⁾ Takeuchi aptly points out that individual war experiences and the idea of war renunciation cannot be logically connected. He points out that these two are oddly hailed as the main principles for the commemoration of young Japanese fallen soldiers, many of whom died as Kamikaze, suicide pilots.²⁶⁾ In practice, war experiences vary from person to person: some would hate war while others could praise war with a belief that war brought them certain benefits. For instance, some soldiers who came from poor peasant families could describe their days in the army as quite pleasant experiences because their lives in the army were better than their life of destitution back in hometowns. In this case, as he suggests, it would be difficult to establish a logical connection between a particular war experience and the general wish for peace in Japan. In a similar vein, Takeuchi also warns that it is impossible to hand down such a notion of peace derived from personal experiences to younger generations.²⁷⁾ As he reasons, it would be self-de-

25) Takeuchi Yoshiro, "Sensou taiken shisouka no kansei: wadatsuminokoe no soko ni aru mondai [The Completion of the Generalization of War Experiences]," in Takeuchi Yoshiro, *Kokka no genri to ban-sen no ronri* [The Principle of the State and the Logic of Anti-War] (Tokyo: Gendai Hyouron Sha., 1969), 184.

26) Takeuchi, 184-188.

27) Takeuchi, 185.

ceptive if the learning of the importance of peace were possible only through direct experience of war. Takeuchi thus suggests the importance of contrasting various types of lessons generated from war experiences.²⁸⁾ Any glorification of the war also needs to be studied in order to identify such elements that would promote war.

This point leads to the next problem: peace as war weariness fails to present the types of peace Japan wishes to construct in its relations with its neighboring countries. Peace as war weariness does not present a concrete or comprehensive view of peace. The self-centeredness of Japanese people's reflection on the war makes it difficult for them to do so. Yoshikazu Sakamoto in this respect properly points out the passivity of post-war Japanese peace movements that have simply criticized political power without actively engaging in politics to propose the kind of peace they wish for. Although weak, peace movements in Japanese society, as well as leftist parties like the Socialist Party and the Communist Party of Japan, have served as important watchdogs against any Japanese remilitarization during the post-war period opposing war, nuclear weapons, rearmament, and U.S. bases in Japan.²⁹⁾ Still, in spite of the indispensable services rendered, Sakamoto judges, peace movements based on the principle of absolute pacifism in post-war Japan have focused too much on the criticism and monitoring of the pro-American foreign policy of the Liberal Democratic Party, which ruled Japan unchallenged during the Cold-War period.³⁰⁾ True, they failed

28) Takeuchi, 186-67. Tsurumi Yoshiyuki sees the insufficiency of the general consideration of the hardships of the victims in Asia. Tsurumi argues that when people project themselves into the victims' situations, they tend to see the situations only through their perspectives and what they know, which could end up in self-centered projection. In this process, according to Tsurumi, what is important is that observers, projectors, have to be aware that there must be some perspectives and emotions of the victims that are blind to the projectors. Tsurumi Yoshiyuki, *Touman Asia wo shiru houbou* [The Way of Understanding Southeast Asia] (Tokyo: Iwanami Shinsho), 1995, 75-77.

29) Sakamoto, 143-146. Sakamoto also sees that the Japanese notion of human rights comes from the right to survival and life, generated from the miserable and horrible war experiences. This contrasts with the Western origin of human rights as religious freedom. Sakamoto, 144-145.

30) Sakamoto, 146-151. Still, Sakamoto recognizes the contribution of antimilitarism to the development of democracy in post-war Japan in that people's voice of war weariness reflected the post-war Japanese foreign policy.

to make efforts to create constructive foreign policy to lead to international peace and security and to set rules and institutions that would promote Japanese people's constructive reflection on the past war. In this relation, Sakamoto guesses that there would not have been any effort of Japanese society to put Japan's war crimes on trial without the Tokyo Trial by the Allies. He believes that, even if such a trial had ever been realized, it would have been only a trial of revenge, a people's court.³¹⁾ Japanese are yet to establish their own standard to assess the past atrocious conducts of Japan beyond their emotional reaction to the past sufferings.

Holding on to the notion of peace based on war weariness and total rejection of armed forces, Japanese peace movements have been relatively happy with the continuation of Article 9 and official non-existence of the Japanese army. Yet the existence of the Peace Constitution itself does not guarantee peace, and the monitoring of any sign of remilitarization is not enough for the construction of peace. When they clarify the meaning of the past war and the types of peace to seek in a larger historical and geographical context, Japan would assuage other Asians' suspicions about the credibility of Japan's aspiration for peace.

V. Conclusion

Japanese people's tendency to reflect upon the war based on their experiences, a tendency which is behind the strong sense of victimization of Japanese, has had two negative effects on Japanese society. First, it has prevented Japanese from having a clear understanding and national consensus on the war responsibility of Japan. Second, it has generated only the aspiration for peace as war weariness and failed to generate a constructive thought on how to engage in politics to bring and maintain peace with neighboring countries. These constitute an obstruction for credible relations with other Asian states. If Japanese hope for peace and for constructive and trustful relationships with their neighbors, it is crucial that

31) Sakamoto, 146-159.

Japanese reflect upon the war based on their own experiences not only as victims but also as offenders.

The acknowledgement of the victims of Japan's war crimes in Asia itself would no doubt serve as moral compensation to complement the legal compensations under the San Francisco Peace Treaty, bilateral war compensation agreements, and the series of political apologies of the Japanese Emperor and prime ministers, which have succeeded only slightly in regaining victim countries' confidence in Japan.³²⁾ The reflection of the war based on the victims in Asia as well as in Japan is the first step for Japanese to examine the whole aspects of the war and then to contextualize the war in the historical context.

The efforts to reflect upon the war based on the experiences of both Asian and Japanese victims can take place at both the transnational and the governmental levels. The growing weight of transnational relations through the activities of non-governmental organizations and the increasing communications through the Internet and electronic communications would help Japanese society transcend the scope of war reflection beyond Japan's own experiences. Communications at the social level across national borders would facilitate further the dissemination of new facts and the exchange of insights and dialogue among people from different countries.

As of 2011, sixty-six years after the war, Japanese civil society is free to examine the past war on its own, free from the yoke of the Cold War factor. Clarifying Japanese's sense of ambiguities about the war through the work of objective examination of history and acknowledgement of war crimes, regardless of the magnitude of war crimes, and their consequences for civilians would help the notion of absolute peace outgrow war weariness and serve as an important cornerstone for strengthening and consolidating the confidence in Japan among Asians, which the Peace Constitution gained for the Japanese to a certain

32) Emperor Akihito apologized for the colonization of Chosun in 1991. In his visit to Beijing in 1992, he expressed deep remorse on Japan's occupation of part of Chin during 1931-1945. Prime Minister Hosokawa admitted that the Pacific War was war of aggression and apologized for those countries involved. The Japanese government admitted the existence of Comfort Women in 1993.

degree.

The government-led initiative of the establishment of the Asia Women's Fund played a crucial role in acknowledging the Japanese government's involvement in the comfort women institution and in clearly expressing the Japanese prime minister's apologies to the victims. The fact that it was a joint project between the government and Japanese society also has another important meaning. Though it failed to lead to a nationwide consensus on Japan's responsibility for former comfort women, it did place the two opposing views on the table for open dialogue: the right insists that comfort women were just professional prostitutes and the left criticizes the insufficiency of the fund due to lack of the Japanese government's legal responsibility for comfort women. The dialogue has begun. It is important to continue the debate between the two and to lead to a join project to examine the institution of war comfort women.

What cannot be emphasized enough is that an attempt to acknowledge Japanese war crimes and their consequences for innocent civilians in Asia will never deny, neglect, or underestimate the hardships Japanese suffered during and after the Asia-Pacific war. To be sure, the ghastly experiences of the atomic bombs over Hiroshima and Nagasaki in particular leave no room for political or historical comparison or interpretation. Moral indignation at the humanitarian sufferings one's families and friends went through is a natural feeling. Still, such moral anger should allow for political and historical examination of the causes of the sufferings in order to fully prevent another human tragedy. Both the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Museum and the Nagasaki Atomic Bomb Museum go beyond the commemoration of victims, presenting exhibits that show the background of the war in general. It is possible for Japanese to have a binary reflection of the past war, both as victims and as offenders.

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Abstract

Japan's Self-Centered Reflection upon the Asia-Pacific War

Naoko Kumagai

Japan's sense of victimization in the Asia-Pacific War comes from Japanese people's tendency to reflect upon the war based on their experiences of aerial raids on major cities in Japan and the atomic bombs dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. There has been little room for the reflection of the sufferings of people in other parts of Asia where Japan invaded and occupied. Japan's self-centered reflection has had two negative effects on Japanese society: making the war responsibility of Japan ambiguous on the one hand, and rendering Japanese people's aspiration for peace only as war weariness on the other. Japan's objective investigation of what Japan had exactly done to other Asians during the war would be a first step to overcome these two defects and serve as a building block to establish a durable and credible relationship with her neighboring countries. Such an investigation and acknowledgement would not mean any denial of Japanese people's sympathy for the Japanese victims of the war.

□ Key words : Japan, War responsibility, the Asia-Pacific War, War Crimes, Asia

초록

아시아-태평양 전쟁에 대한 일본의 자기중심적 반성

쿠마가이 나오코

자신들이 태평양전쟁에서의 피해자라는 일본의 감정은 일본의 주요 도시에 대한 공습들과 히로시마와 나가사키에 투하된 원자탄 등 자신들이 직접 겪었던 경험에 근거하여 전쟁을 반성하는 일본인들의 경향에 기인한다. 이런 식으로 일본이 침략하고 점령했던 아시아 지역에서 다른 아시아인들이 겪은 고통에 대해 반성할 여지는 거의 없다. 일본의 이 같은 자기중심적 반성은 일본 사회에 대해 두 가지 부정적인 영향을 갖는데, 하나는 일본의 전쟁책임에 대한 이해를 모호하게 하는 것이고, 다른 하나는 일본인들이 갖는 평화에 대한 열망을 오직 전쟁에 대한 피로함으로 이해되게 하는 것이다. 전쟁 중에 일본이 다른 아시아인들에게 정확히 무슨 짓을 저질렀는가에 대한 일본의 객관적인 조사만이 이 두 가지 문제점들을 극복할 수 있는 첫 번째 발걸음이 될 수 있을 것이고 또 다른 이웃 국가들과 항구적이고도 신뢰할 수 있는 관계를 구축할 수 있는 주춧돌이 될 수 있을 것이다. 일본이 과거사에 대해 객관적으로 조사하고 또 인정하더라도 그것이 일본인 전쟁 희생자에 대해 일본인들이 갖는 동정심에 대한 부정을 의미하지는 않을 것이다.

□ 주제어 : 일본, 전쟁책임, 아시아-태평양 전쟁, 전쟁범죄, 아시아

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