

# Korea's Movement to Settle the Issues of the Past and Peace in East Asia

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## Abstract

*This research investigates achievements to settle the issues of the past in South Korea and its possible contributions to the East Asian history. Japanese colonial policy was dependent on compelling force, and the imperial policy was justified as the policy to make civilized East Asian nations. As for a look back at the 100 Years of Japanese annexation of Korea, this research is composed widely of two parts: first, the problem of imperialistic consequences such as the relationship between a colonized nation and its colonizer, which still remains today. In the context of the East Asian history, the colonized nation has a right to require compensation and apology for damages received from the colonizer. However, the hegemonic power of the United States over Japan and Korea has made this difficult. Second, the efforts of South Korea to solve the issues of the past created some achievements but have limitations because of the current government-level policy and their attitude for its people. Today, education for history and examination of the true history appear as issues. For peace in East Asia, the role of South Korea in rectifying East Asia's history has a great significance. At the end, this paper describes the role of South Korea as recognizing the characteristics of the East Asian Cold War history of the nations such as Taiwan, Okinawa, and Vietnam based on the identity.*

**Keywords:** colonization, modernization, colonialism in East Asia, Cold War order, Japan's annexation of Korea, Truth and Reconciliation Commission of the Republic of Korea (TRCK)

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## **Resolving the Issues of the Past: A Look Back at the 100 Years that Followed Japan's Forced Annexation of Korea**

The actualization of principles such as justice, human rights, and rule of law in individual countries, as well as the forging of intergovernmental ties and cooperation on the international stage, can be achieved when an aggressor state apologizes for wrongs it committed in the past in a particular country and then takes the necessary steps to mend the unfairly caused damages. These actions will help the reconciliation between the parties concerned. While domestic political conflicts and internal violence and international disputes and hostility are the results of conflicting interests, the majority of these conflicts are also, in fact, the result of an inability to rectify the wrongs of the past.

Injustice and affronts to democracy and human rights have been common phenomena in the various countries that make up the region known as East Asia. In addition, tension and hostility among East Asian countries have remained high, and the risk of war in the region is an ever-present possibility. The incapacity to settle the wrongs of the past that occurred between previously colonized nations and their colonizers, the failure to eradicate the distorted power relations and ruling order formed during the colonial era and continued through the Cold War order, and each state's ruling groups' exclusive monopoly or dominance over the memories of the past have all contributed to the persistence of injustices. Although colonialism formally disappeared 65 years ago, the legacies of colonialism are enmeshed in the political and social fabric of countries that were colonized in the past, thereby obstructing the advent of a future-oriented system.

Unlike what occurred in the rest of the world, colonialism in East Asia was implemented by Japan, a country which had previously existed within the same cultural zone as its neighbors. Japan became the conqueror while many of its neighbors became its colonies or semi-colonies. As a result, Korea, which once boasted similar levels of development as Japan but then became its colony, developed an attitude toward its colonizer more negative than any

other colonized people in Asia or Africa.<sup>1</sup> Unlike Western imperialist countries, Japan advocated a colonial system that resorted to violence, forced assimilation, and economy-first policies. Such a system was necessary because it could not conquer Joseon in terms of culture and spirit. Meanwhile, contrary to the situation that developed in Europe after World War II, the United States acquired monopolistic rights in Asia following the collapse of Japan in 1945. The repositioning of the world into the new Cold War order had the effect of propelling East Asia to the frontlines of the Cold War. This geo-political situation played an important role in the relationship established between the United States and Japan as well as between Japan and the remaining East Asian nations. In the end, the history of Japan's colonial rule in East Asia was swept under the rug as if it had never happened. In other words, the Cold War obstructed the process of resolving the issues of past colonialism; however, the collapse of the Cold War system in the 1990s triggered a new wave of interest on this topic at the civil society level in East Asia.<sup>2</sup>

Some have argued that the ever-present threat of war in East Asia means that the Cold War has not quite ended in East Asia. The continuous threat of war that looms over East Asia is, in reality, closely related to the inability to resolve the issue of past colonialism. It has already been 100 years since Japan's forced annexation of Korea. Earlier this year, the Prime Minister of Japan, Naoto Kan,

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1. A Western scholar viewed Korea's relationship with Japan during the early stage of colonization as follows: "In terms of Asian culture, Korea was an advanced country . . . . If we compare Korea with Japan in respect to the structural development of the state, Koreans were far from inferior to Japan" (Ireland 1926, 100-130).
  2. It is ironic that Japan began the 1990s with a dispute over the content of history textbooks. In response to Hosokawa Morihito's use of the term "war of aggression" (he was the first Japanese prime minister to do so), rightists organized an Association for New History Textbooks in 1996 and passed the Framework Act for Education, which called for the need to instill patriotism in education. Conversely, it was also during this period that an organization for the wartime Asian comfort women called for the victims to be compensated by a "national fund" in lieu of an apology or compensation at the state level.

issued yet another apology for Japan's cruel colonial rule.<sup>3</sup> Nevertheless, the two countries have yet to achieve genuine reconciliation. Japan has failed to earn the degree of trust needed among East Asian countries for it to play the kind of role that Germany played in the process of establishing the European Union (EU). Simply put, Japan has failed to establish sincere and friendly relations with the other East Asian nations. Therefore, the history of colonialism has remained a very sensitive political issue in East Asia rather than being limited to the topic of historical study.

For Japan, the process of addressing the past can be separated into two points: acknowledging its colonial responsibilities and admitting its wartime culpabilities.<sup>4</sup> The former responsibility refers to the need to recognize the fact that Japan conquered its neighbors illegally. It needs to submit a thorough apology to the residents of its former colonies who suffered during the colonial era, compensate them, and rewrite its own history textbooks. The latter responsibility refers to the need to apologize and reflect on the various cruel actions committed by the Japanese military, and the righting of war records. Meanwhile, for Korea, one of the Japan's former colonies, the task of settling the issue of past colonialism includes identification of pro-Japanese people who benefitted from the colonial period, identification of the casualties of Japanese imperialism, and the restoration of honor to victims of war and national violence. Additionally, much like the case of Taiwan, there is a need to find the truth behind what occurred during the establishment of the Cold War world order that emerged in the aftermath of the colonial era. In the case of China, damage caused by events such as the Nanjing Massacre still poison its relationship with Japan, yet China must also search for the truth

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3. On August 10, 2010, the Japanese Prime Minister Naoto Kan offered a renewed apology to South Korea for Japan's brutal colonial rule. In the statement, he promised to return historical documents and other cultural artifacts that were taken from the Korean peninsula during Japanese colonial rule.

4. Recently, Japanese scholars have moved away from their previous position of pushing "'war responsibilities' by introducing the concept of 'colonial responsibilities.'" See Yoko (2009).

regarding the internal violence that accompanied the Great Cultural Revolution.<sup>5</sup> As such, while a thorough apology is incumbent upon Japan, China, Taiwan, and Korea must also acknowledge their own culpabilities that occurred after 1945 in their respective territories.

The 100th anniversary of Japan's forced annexation of Korea can be regarded as an opportunity for East Asian countries to review the possibility of establishing new relationships with Japan. However, this can also serve as an opportunity for East Asian countries to reexamine their own histories of modernization marked by colonization and the Cold War, and to search for methods to establish a new society and new East Asian order in which peace, human rights, and welfare are guaranteed. In this regard, the biggest obstacles to a brighter future in East Asia and to the establishment of an East Asian community are not only the continued failure to settle issues of the past and bring about reconciliation between Japan and other Asian countries, but also the nationalism-laden interpretations and education of past history. The most important reason why Japan, China, and Korea have been unable to establish friendly relations may be their collective failure to dismantle the power of the neocolonial forces which have maintained the Cold War order within each of these countries; more fundamentally, the unchanged attitudes of the United States and Japan continue to contribute to the three countries' relations.

### **The Past History of Korea within the East Asian Context**

Numerous instances of state-led violence and infringements on human rights were carried out during Korea's modern history, a period characterized by landmark events such as Japanese colonial rule, the Cold War order, the division into North and South Korea, the Korean War, and the advent of successive military regimes. The number of individ-

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5. Some Chinese anti-system activists have argued that Mao killed more Chinese than the Japanese did (*International Herald Tribune*, June 8, 2005). Tu Weiming also studied the atrocities committed during the Cultural Revolution (1996, 149-181).

uals who were victimized during this period runs well into several million. Responsibility for the issues of forced mobilization and military sexual slavery, events which also affected China, Taiwan, and the Philippines, can be primarily attributed to Japan, the only sovereign state at the time. Uniquely Korean issues include the experiences of Sakhalin Koreans, Japanese Koreans, and Korean victims of in Hiroshima and Nagasaki. However, responsibility for White Terror, in which inhumane treatment and massacres occurred, during the establishment of the extreme right-wing and anti-communist system in the aftermath of World War II and the establishment of the Republic of Korea, rests with South Korea itself. Nevertheless, the unresolved events that emerged under the United States-led political umbrella, or what has come to be referred to as the reorganization of the East Asian order after national liberation on August 15, 1945, cannot be regarded as solely the responsibility of Korea, a case similar to Taiwan, which had to go through similar hardships. In other words, the resolution of these historical problems cannot occur through the will of the current Korean government or political forces alone.<sup>6</sup>

For the Korean people, Japan's forced annexation and colonization of Korea were the result of the failure of the ruling order of Joseon to bring about modernization and form a nation-state. This failure was caused by a pervading Sinocentric perception of the world and by Korea's backwardness vis-à-vis Japan from both a military and economic standpoint. However, from the standpoint of international law, the forced annexation and colonization of Korea were the result of Japan's illegal absorption of Joseon. On one hand, Japan sought to break Joseon Korea's tributary relationship with Qing on the grounds that Joseon constituted an independent state and to have Korea accepted as a sovereign state under the Law of Nations (*manguk gongbeop*). Yet it simultaneously imitated the ways of Western imperialism by illegally annexing Korea based on the notion of a civilized-barbarian dichotomy. Although Japan played a proxy role for Western imperialism, it nevertheless had to resort to

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6. For more on Taiwan's 2.28 incident, see Lee (2008).

economic domination rather than persuasion to subjugate the countries in its vicinity, all of which possessed levels of civilization that were similar to its own. As such, its ruling system was oppressive and violent (Osterhammel 2005, 16). To this end, the exploitative and assimilation-oriented policies implemented under the wartime system exhibited not only economic attributes but also genocidal characteristics in that Japan sought to eradicate Korean national identity.<sup>7</sup>

Newly liberated from Japanese imperialism, Korea faced the tasks of holding a Japan now defeated by the Allied Forces responsible for its invasion of Korea and identifying and punishing those Koreans who cooperated with Japanese imperialism. As the pain and suffering experienced by Koreans under Japanese colonial rule were the results of Korea's colonial status, loss of sovereignty, and the absence of responsible public powers, the overcoming and eradication of the colonial system should have been at the core of all these issues, the inevitable goal of the newly sovereign state. In addition, the state had the obligation to raise the matter of the suffering of its citizens, examine the actual state and scope of this suffering, and request an apology and compensations to the offending party for such damage and loss. However, Korea failed to enact this vital obligation over the ensuing period marked by the division of the nation into North and South Korea, the emergence of a military regime with no legitimate support amongst the people, the economic development-first policy, and national mobilization. On the issue of Dokdo,<sup>8</sup>

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7. Some scholars have argued that colonialism and racism are a form of genocide because these ideas seek to delete the very physical or spiritual existence of a colonized people. The exterminatory rhetoric of the racists and colonists was given form in the policy of domination. See Moses and Stone (2007).

8. "The issue of Dokdo began to emerge between Korea and Japan on January 18, 1952 when the Japanese Government objected to the Korean Government's Presidential Declaration of Korea's Rights in the Surrounding Seas (Declaration of the Peace Line). . . . The Korean Government's official standpoint on the dispute against Japan concerning the possession of Dokdo is that 'Dokdo is historically, geographically, and according to international laws a territory of Korea. As Korea has actually occupied it and has been practicing all the rights in and around Dokdo, the issue of Dokdo cannot be a dispute of possession or the subject of diplomatic negotiations'" (<http://en.dokdo.go.kr/>; accessed October 30, 2010).

although the Syngman Rhee administration initiated the so-called Peace Line to reinforce South Korean sovereignty over the island, the United States' tacit support for the Japanese position left Korea with no other choice but to acquiesce to the American position.<sup>9</sup> By securing economic cooperation funds during the process of normalizing Korea-Japan relations in 1965, the Park Chung-hee regime attempted to assuage the suffering of the Korean people caused by the deaths and injuries associated with the forced mobilization by the Japanese imperial forces and the stealing and illegal export of cultural property. However, by gaining these funds, the Korean government agreed to Japan's proposal which made it impossible for individual Koreans to claim compensation from the Japanese government or enterprises. Moreover, it did not launch any basic investigations of the actual state and scope of the damage that had been caused. In other words, the South Korean government did not carry out its basic function as a sovereign nation-state, which must bear responsibility for its people.

Various impediments to the activities of the Special Committee on Punishing Anti-National Conduct (SCPNC) established in 1948 and the subsequent establishment of the Japanese collaborator group as the ruling class in Korea under the guise of anti-communism had the effect of leaving incomplete the search for the truth about Japanese collaborators and the punishment thereof as part of the process of settling the issue of the past history.<sup>10</sup> In this regard, SCPNC's failures

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9. In the San Francisco Peace Treaty of 1952, reached among Japan, the United States and Great Britain, no mention is made of Dokdo. Article 2 states, "Japan recognizing the independence of Korea, renounces all right, title, and claim to Korea, including the islands of Quelpart, Port Hamilton, and Dagelet" without mentioning Liancourt Rocks (Dokdo). When the South Koreans came to the realization that they were not being fairly represented, President Rhee took matters into his own hands by declaring a "Peace Line" that included Dokdo as part of the South Korean territory.

10. The Korean National Assembly passed the Special Act on Punishing Anti-National Conduct in September 1948. Even President Rhee, who aligned himself with many of the former collaborators, felt compelled to accept and create the Special Investigation Committee (SIC). The first attempt at historical justice and truth did not last long. No sooner had the Special Investigation Committee been founded than it began to be assaulted by conservatives who were themselves former collaborators or had aligned with the latter for personal gain. From the outset, the Rhee govern-

proved to be the decisive move which all but doomed future attempts to settle the issue of the past to failure. The matter of punishing the individuals guilty for the death and suffering of fellow nationals by having cooperated with imperialism and fascism became a hotly contested issue in the immediate aftermath of the liberation of the nation in 1945. However, most of those who were responsible for such acts are now dead. The damage caused by such individuals affected not only individual members of the nation but also the state and nation as a whole. Thus, the failure to identify those who actively cooperated with the fascist ruling policy of Japanese colonial rule, and thereby bring to light the nature of their wrongdoings and punish them accordingly, has delayed the identification of the negative impacts this period had on South Korean history.

Japan's invasion of Joseon came about as part of an unwritten agreement by the great powers of the world, in particular the United States, to divide the world into spheres of colonial influence. In this regard, the international order that was created after 1945 was one in which the colonial powers were once again exempt from having to take responsibility for their actions amidst the emerging Cold War. The grievances of victims were again swept under the proverbial rug. As part of its efforts to restrain Russia and China from communizing, the United States not only white washed Japan's colonial and war responsibilities, but even upgraded Japan's status to that of a trustful partner in order to maintain hegemony in East Asia. Not only did Japan enjoy impunity for its war crimes, but in exchange for the oppression of socialist and communist groups at home, South Korea reappointed those who had collaborated with Japan to positions of power.<sup>11</sup> Moreover, while Okinawa was allowed to remain a colony

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ment hindered the Act's implementation by accusing the SIC of being characterized by communist-influenced leadership and protesting that the Act might be misused to arrest "patriots" who fought against the communists. Within a year, the SIC was disbanded, without ever having produced any concrete results.

11. The responsibility of the United States in the subsequent war crimes in East Asia has been emphasized by many scholars. See Bix (2001), Johnson (2001), and Selden (2010).

for all intents and purposes in the 27 years following 1945, Taiwan became an outpost to counter communist China. Under these circumstances, the Korean War provided the United States with an opportunity to further maintain its Cold War policies. In the name of the war against communism, the pro-Japanese collaborators, who were allowed by the United States to flood the ranks of the police, military, and government, set out to “eradicate leftists.” Fear regarding their previous actions ensured that Korea’s pro-Japanese collaborators were especially stringent in their anticommunist zeal, a zeal that was evident in their violence and attempts to crush all opposition forces. These individuals not only inherited the oppressive traditions of the Joseon dynasty but also applied methods of torture and destruction that they had learned from imperial Japan to their own people. As such, although external colonialism disappeared, internal colonialism still existed.<sup>12</sup>

The civilian massacres committed by the South Korean government before and South after the Korean War are akin to massacres that occurred in Taiwan, Greece, and Vietnam, nations which also established extreme right-wing governments during the forging of the global Cold War order. The causes of the Jeju Uprising, Yeosu-Suncheon Rebellion in 1948, and Korean War were ultimately related to the tasks of settling the colonial system and establishing a unified state, although all of these can be ascribed to conflicts between communist and democratic forces. However, all the incidents were explained only in terms of the Cold War order, serving as justification for the revival of the colonial era pro-Japanese collaborator group in South Korea as well as the revival of the colonial forces in Japan after World War II. The massacres committed during the Korean War can be regarded as directly related to the pardoning of Japanese war criminals and the implementation of a capitalistic growth strategy—both realized as part of the United States’ general East Asian strategy

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12. The top-ranked commanders in the early South Korean military and police had, for the most part, served in the Japanese imperial army and police. They also applied a similar rooting-out policy that the Japanese Imperial army had employed against their “fellow citizens” during the lead-up to the Korean War. See D. Kim (2004).

after World War II—as well as to the maintenance of the colonial ruling system in South Korea as had been the case in Greece, nationalists and the general population alike strongly rejected the United States' efforts to bring fascist forces back to positions of power in South Korea as part of the anticommunist campaign directed at Soviet Communism. The massacres can be regarded as the attempts of the vested powers in South Korea, which enjoyed the strong support of the United States, to suppress their opposition (D. Kim 2007, 2009). The United States did not overtly orchestrate these massacres. However, it was the Cold War strategy of the United States that paved the way for these massacres.

Japan's refusal to own up to its colonial relationships with Taiwan and Korea was primarily related to its own national conscience and morals. However, on a more fundamental level, the country's stance can also be regarded as an inevitable outcome of U.S. strategy. Above all, the United States (in the form of the military regime established by General MacArthur), which was the main actor in the establishment of a new constitution for postwar Japan, never mentioned Japan's previous status as a colonial overlord. It allowed Japan's imperial system, which had served as an important impetus for Japan's invasions and wars, to continue to exist. The conclusion of the U.S.-Japan Mutual Security Treaty, the San Francisco Peace Treaty, and the Mutual Defense Treaty between the Republic of Korea and the United States should be viewed as part of U.S. efforts to establish a Northeast Asian order which placed a premium on security alliances between the United States and Japan as well as between the United States and South Korea. In this environment, the United States was willing to help Japan ignore its obligations to address and take responsibility for its colonial past or provide compensation to its victims. As such, Japan developed an outlook in which compensation was viewed as an opportunity to gain leverage in the economic development of the countries it had victimized rather than as a means to redeem itself within the international community by paying its proverbial dues to victims. This attitude was also reflected in the position adopted by the Supreme Commander of

the Allied Powers (SCAP) led by General MacArthur. The legal vacuum in which South Korean residents in Japan found themselves and the blocking of efforts of Koreans in Sakhalin to return to Korea can be seen as the results of the United States' policy toward Japan, which allowed Japan to forget about the past and focus on postwar restoration within the security umbrella of the United States, in exchange for a U.S. free hand in Okinawa.

The subsequent collapse of the Syngman Rhee government in South Korea can be regarded as the result of the typical ambivalent nature of United States policy toward the third world. Put differently, the collapse was the result of a policy which supported anti-communist dictatorships but withdrew such support when the authority of the United States was damaged by the dictatorship's loss of domestic base. Under the cover of economic development, the United States subsequently accepted Park Chung-hee's military coup and turned a blind eye to the human rights violations committed by the Park Chung-hee dictatorship. The human rights violations committed during the Park Chung-hee regime should be viewed in the same context as U.S. intervention in the establishment of the Pinochet government in Chile and the suspicious deaths and disappearances of opposition figures in Chile and Argentina. These actions were implemented against a backdrop characterized by the official and unofficial support of the United States for pro-American and anti-communist governments in the third world. The United States' intervention in the Vietnam War, the massacre of Vietnamese civilians during the suppression, and the numerous civilian casualties that emerged during the aerial bombardment campaign were in many ways a repetition of what occurred during the Korean War. Although the massacres committed by the Pol Pot regime in Cambodia in the late 1970s were directly caused by the chaos of revolution, the United States' carpet bombing campaign in Cambodia should also be identified as one of the elements that facilitated these massacres.

The Gwangju Massacre of May 1980 shares many similarities with the massacres that occurred in Indonesia during the emergence of the Suharto regime in 1965, the terror and massacres committed

by rightist groups following the emergence of the Somoza dictatorship in Nicaragua, the massacres in Guatemala, and the racial discrimination and massacres that happened in South Africa. In all such cases, specific societal groups, or what were referred to as “impure elements” were sacrificed in the name of the military government’s recapturing of the reign of power.<sup>13</sup> While these events did not occur in times of war, they were, nevertheless, like the massacres that happened during the Korean War, the product of a political environment that revolved around the preservation of the extreme rightist anti-communist system. With the notable exception of the April 19 Student Revolution of 1960 and the Gwangju Massacre of 1980, the great majority of the state violence and massacres committed by Korea’s military regime from the 1960s onward can be regarded as having occurred on a relatively smaller scale when compared to the damage that occurred in Latin America and South Africa. However, this situation was not the result of the fact that the Korean military regime was more democratic or favored more human rights-friendly policies than the rightist dictatorship regimes that became entrenched in other countries, but rather unfolded because the South Korean regime had already removed most of its internal foes during the epochal event that was the Korean War.

Further discussion needs to be held on the question of whether the massacres and human rights violations that occurred in many East Asian nations were part of a general phenomenon that emerged in modern states that were based on the notion of modern rationalism, or whether they are legacies of Japanese imperialism. However, what is clear is that these massacres and human rights violations were concealed by the Cold War politics that advocated an extreme right-wing form of anticommunism. Mass casualties committed under the guise of the discourse of extreme right-wing anticommunism occurred whenever the deeply entrenched fascist forces experienced crises. The South Korean government’s widespread control and subsequent execution of political offenders, the horrors of the Jeju Upris-

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13. See Shin and Hwang (2003); and Katsiaficas (2000).

ing, and the massacres committed by Korean soldiers during the Korean War were implemented and justified under the banner of “ultrarightist anticommunism.” However, the events in Korea can also be characterized by what we refer to as pseudo-racism (the “reds” discourse) (D. Kim 2009). In addition to these physical characteristics of civil war, Japan and South Korea both experienced a revival of fascist forces during the establishment of the Cold War structure in both of these nations.

While Korea was a victim of Japan and the United States for the better part of a century, it willingly became a victimizer on behalf of the United States by sending troops under the guise of the Korea-Japan-U.S. military alliance to wage war in Vietnam. South Korea’s decision to dispatch its military forces to Vietnam coincided with the signing of the Treaty on Basic Relations between Japan and the Republic of Korea. Here, special attention must be drawn to the fact that this occurred amidst circumstances in which the Park Chung-hee regime essentially accepted the logic of Japan’s self-justification regarding its invasion of Korea. In other words, the United States’ bombing of North Vietnam, Korea’s decision to participate in the Vietnam War, Japan’s attempts to justify the colonization of its neighbors, and the conclusion of the Treaty on Basic Relations between Japan and the Republic of Korea all prove that the status of South Korea at the forefront of the anticommunist campaign in East Asia should be perceived in the context of extension of the colonial period, and that South Korea’s participation in the Vietnam War should not be regarded as the actions of a sovereign state. The United States campaign against Vietnam was largely orchestrated by the Okinawa military base, an area that was, for all intents and purposes, an American colony. As the U.S.-Japan-Korea military alliance was the base of the Vietnam War, Korea’s participation in the Vietnam War should not be perceived as the result of any independent determination or decision. Nevertheless, many Korean soldiers inflicted great harm on Vietnam civilians during the ground operations.

In conclusion, the modern history of individual East Asian countries should not be perceived as separate histories, but rather as

being intricately intertwined with the history of Asia and the world. In other words, while each country's history may appear to be unique, considering these events from the standpoint of the United States can lead to the conclusion that the history of East Asia developed in different manners in these countries. In this regard, the histories of Okinawa, South Korea, and Taiwan should be regarded as being particularly intertwined with one another. Therefore, the history of modern Korea can be better understood when approaching it in conjunction with the history of modern Japan, Okinawa, and Taiwan, or viewing the region as having one single history. The Cold War, or what we can refer to as the United States' strategy for reviving capitalism, should, however, be regarded as the biggest factor why East Asia failed to shed light on the crimes committed by Japan and receive due apologies. The division of China and Korea as well as the spread of communism not only facilitated the U.S. policy of militarizing Japan and transforming it into an anticommunist bulwark, but also resulted in the whitewashing of Japan's colonial and war responsibilities. Moreover, Japan's gain of an economic foothold in the other East Asian countries on behalf of the United States was implemented as a part of the latter's policy of strengthening its anti-communist bulwark. As such, a structure was established in which the United States continued to control the region politically and militarily and Japan gained leverage over the economic sphere in East Asia, with the United States importing items from Japan, Korea, and Taiwan. Furthermore, although the military and police forces within each country primarily used their power to ensure the preservation of existing systems, their information and intelligence services were fundamentally dependent on the United States.

The rehabilitation of war criminals in Japan, the seizure of power by pro-Japanese forces in Korea, the United States' occupation of Okinawa, the massacres in Korea and Taiwan, maintenance of the military dictatorship in Taiwan and Korea, continuous instances of state violence and human rights violations, and the Gwangju Massacre of 1980 should all be seen as intricately related to the revival of Japanese capitalism and the strategy of creating an anti-communist

bulwark established under the leadership of the United States in East Asia.

### **The Movement to Settle the Issue of Past History in Korea: Results and Limitations**

The movement to resolve the issues of the past in South Korea has been marked by repeated failure since 1945. Nevertheless, it has continuously been attempted. It began with investigations of the near past, in the form of the search for the truth behind the Gwangju Massacre of 1980, and expanded to include demands for the truth behind various questionable deaths and incidents that occurred under the military regime. This in turn expanded to include demands for the truth regarding the massacres of civilians committed by Korean soldiers and U.S. forces before and after the Korean War, the forced mobilizations that occurred during the Japanese colonial era, and the issue of pro-Japanese collaborators. As such, the movement to settle the issues of the past history began with interrogating the responsibilities of the authoritative regime, and eventually expanded to include responsibility for the formation of the anticommunist state that supported the authoritative regime, the Korean War, U.S. support for the establishment of such authoritative regimes as well as the responsibilities of Japanese imperialism. The matter of searching for the truth pertaining to the forced labor by imperial Japan eventually transformed into demands that the Korean government initiate its own search for the truth regarding such forced labor and provide direct compensation for the victims. Such a move was necessitated by the fact that representatives from Korea and Japan secretly negotiated an agreement regarding the compensation of the victims of forced labor during the process leading up to the normalization of Korea-Japan diplomatic relations in 1965. In this agreement, Korea agreed to not only refer to the compensation granted for such forced labor as economic cooperation funds, but also, swayed by the allure of Japanese grants, to abandon its rights to mount any further claims against

Japan.<sup>14</sup> The disclosure of the facts surrounding the Nogeun-ri Massacre that occurred during the Korean War provided an opportunity to move beyond the assessment of responsibility for the civilian damages accidentally caused by U.S. soldiers and shone the spotlight on the various massacres committed by U.S. soldiers in wartime.<sup>15</sup>

In the aftermath of the failure of the Special Committee on Punishing Anti-National Conduct, South Korea has been unable to find answers to the issues related to past history such as the need to punish pro-Japanese collaborators; the provision of compensation for the victims of forced labor undertaken during the Japanese colonial era; the search for the truth behind the various kinds of state violence and questionable incidents that occurred in the aftermath of the establishment of the government of the Republic of Korea and the punishment of the concerned parties; and the restoration of victims' honor. The Special Act on the May 18 Democratization Movement, enacted because of the persistent demands of the victims and civil society organizations in the aftermath of the 1987 Democratization Movement, has been evaluated as a good example of an attempt to resolve crimes against humanity and massacres of the past using legal and institutional mechanisms. However, from the standpoint of the victims and the general population, such efforts have yet to yield the desired effects.<sup>16</sup> Contemporary South Korean history can be regarded

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14. In 1965, South Korea's President Park Chung-hee signed a deal between Japan and South Korea. Japan agreed to give 800 million dollars in grants and soft loans to the country, in exchange for South Korea's promise to never again ask for compensation for anything that happened during the colonial period.

15. The role of the media in publicizing the No Gun ri incident must be remembered. See Hanley, Cho, and Mendoza (2001) and Hanley (2008).

16. When the victims of the Gwangju Massacre tried to hold individuals such as Chun Doo-hwan responsible in 1994, the prosecutory authority determined that it did not have the authority to prosecute these events, on the grounds that the Gwangju Massacre was not subject to a judicial review. Strong opposition to this decision resulted in the passage of the Special Act on the May 18 Democratization Movement, which in turn ushered in the prosecution of Chun Doo-hwan and Roh Tae-woo for mutiny and high treason. However, the discussions about pardoning them started at the first court trial. They were pardoned shortly after having been sentenced by the Supreme Court. The limited nature of the Special Act on the May 18

as the history of the failure to resolve the issues of the past. To be more precise, it would be no exaggeration to state that modern Korean history is a series of collective memories fabricated by those forces that should have been punished but were able to grasp power and eradicate the forces of peace and conscience, distort history, and obstruct the pursuit of justice. To this end, the South Korean government and ruling elite's demands that the Japanese government cease its distortions of history and reckless remarks can be regarded as having little moral basis until they have conducted a proper introspection of their roles in South Korea's own past history.

Under circumstances in which it has been impossible for government to play the leading role in settling issues of past history, the task of finding clarity regarding the past has become a social movement of sorts in South Korea. In particular, many of the democratization movements that emerged in the aftermath of the collapse of dictatorship administrations were directly related to the movements to resolve past issues. The inability of democratization movements to make headway has also more often than not coincided with the inability to resolve issues of the past. In this regard, Korea shares common ground with some nations in Latin America and South Asia. In terms of the attempts to settle issues of the past, the main difference between Korea and those nations is that Korea remains the only divided country where traces of the Cold War order still remain. This Cold War system has meant that the settling of the issues of the past in Korea inevitably has had to be carried out in a limited manner. As such, although partially the case in other countries as well, the movement to settle the issues of the past in Korea has involved not only the settling of things that happened before, but also comes as part of political agenda inevitably accompanied by conflicts and struggles among current power holders. In this regard, a perfect example of this phenomenon is the Special Investigation Commission for Anti-

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Democratization Movement was the result of the fact that it was implemented amidst a general unwillingness to search for the truth. Its passage caused various problems as far as compensation at the individual level was concerned. See Han (2005, 998-1045).

National Activities initiated 60 years to the day after the collapse of Japanese colonial rule.

Over the 20 years following the onset of democratization, the settlement of the past has been an ongoing part of Korea's political and social agenda. Although the various committees related to the issue of resolving history suffered many twists and turns, they were able to complete their tasks, and we have now reached the level where the focus should be placed on the evaluation of their activities. The amendment of the Special Act on the Investigation of Anti-National Activities during the Japanese Colonial Period passed by the 16th National Assembly in February 2003 and its connection to the Special Investigation Commission for Anti-National Activities (SKAA)<sup>17</sup> to some extent facilitated the task of concluding the work of settling the issues of the past history of the Japanese colonial era. The three committees related to settling issues of the Japanese colonial era were SKAA, Investigation Commission for Forced Labor under Japanese Rule (ICFL)<sup>18</sup> and the Investigation of Pro-Japanese Collaborators' Property (PJCP).<sup>19</sup> Furthermore, full-scale attempts at divulging the truth regarding the civilian massacres committed before and after the Korean War from 2000 onwards resulted in the passage of the Framework Act on Clearing Up Past Incidents for Truth and Reconciliation (FACPIR), an act which deals with incidents that were not discussed during the Presidential Truth Commission on Suspicious Deaths (PTCSD) by the National Assembly on May 3, 2005. The attempts also involved investigating other suspicious incidents that emerged in con-

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17. The special law for the Investigation of Anti-National activities committed during Japanese rule was enacted on March 22, 2004, and the commission finished its work in 2009.

18. This commission finished its mission and transferred successive measures to a new organization. See <http://www.gangje.go.kr/>

19. On July 13, 2006, the Special Act to Redeem Pro-Japanese Collaborators' Property was passed in Korea's National Assembly, and the Investigation of Pro-Japanese Collaborators' Property was established (<http://www.icjcp.go.kr/english.pdf>). After a 4-year investigation, assets were seized from 169 accused Japanese collaborators. The Commission announced that all the property they acquired will be used to commemorate "men of merit" (*JoongAng Daily*, September 7, 2010).

temporary history. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of the Republic of Korea (TRCK) established in accordance with this act has by now almost completed its activities after four years.<sup>20</sup> Furthermore, government agencies such as the National Intelligence Service (NIS), police, and military have also organized committees within themselves to investigate past incidents regarding the abuse of public power and instances of tax evasion that occurred under the military regime. South Korea has become a leader in East Asia in conducting introspections of its past history. This denouement has influenced Korea, the relationship between the two Koreas and between the United States and Korea, as well as East Asian relations.

The furious objection of the Grand National Party and the major conservative media outlets to the Special Investigation Commission for Anti-National Activities (SICAA) clearly proves that the issue of searching for the truth regarding pro-Japanese activities in Korea is not solely a matter of the past; rather, it is closely anchored in the present as well. These objections may simply be the result of concerns that such investigations of the truth regarding pro-Japanese activities have become an overly politicized issue. However, it also shows that the anticommunist faction that monopolized Korean government for some 60 years and the pro-Japanese group that formed the core of this anticommunist faction still make up an important part of the ruling system of various elements in Korean society.

The issue of the civilian massacres committed before and during the Korean War has also remained taboo in South Korea under the anticommunist ideology. The search for truth and reconciliation in conjunction with the Geochang Massacre and the Nogeun-ri Incident, as well as the Jeju Uprising, has been completed to some extent. Prompted by this, the search for the truth regarding all of those civilians who were sacrificed during this period became established as the task of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC). As the interpretation of the Korean War became the basis for the division of

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20. See <http://www.jinsil.go.kr/English/index.asp>. The official report (TRCK, *TRC Report*, 2008) can be found on this website.

the two Koreas and the existence of the Republic of Korea, it remains one of the most sensitive ideological issues. Although the actual implementation of the task is inherently limited without the active cooperation of North Korea, there have also been investigations of the damage caused by leftists and North Korean soldiers, which were expected to be the basis for North and South Korean reconciliation.

The damage caused by the authorities under the military regime is very complicated in nature. PTCSD did, in fact, deal with the various suspicious deaths and injuries that occurred at the hands of the state, and also included investigations of espionage operations and court sentences that were meted out despite unclear legal procedures. Unlike in previous eras, such investigations focused more strongly on the activities of various public security organizations that were involved with the illegal inspection of civilians following the emergence of military regimes. As well, the Commission looked into the question of pro-Japanese collaborators' acquisition of property as part of efforts to reveal the role of the military and police at the time.<sup>21</sup> In this regard, an inquiry into the past as it relates to the Gwangju Massacre of 1980 was carried out through the Special Act on the May 18 Democratization Movement. Additional investigations of the suspicious deaths related to the democratization movement of the 1980s were also carried out by PTCSD. To this end, the issue of the military regime's state violence is directly related to the power structure and ruling order that is still in place in the contemporary era. Furthermore, serious right-wing opposition to these investigations can be understood to result from the fact that the majority of the perpetrators of these crimes are not only alive but still occupy official posts. Such a settling was inevitable for the public security organizations, which long ruled over the people as oppressive organizations to transform themselves into true protectors of the public and stabilize democracy.

However, the issue of compensation for the victims of sexual slavery and forced labor cannot be resolved without the Japanese

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21. Refer to PTCSD (2004).

government. Cooperation from Japan is also essential in investigating the truth behind pro-Japanese collaboration with Korean citizens. Coming to terms with the massacres committed during the Korean War will in turn require the cooperation of the United States. In particular, as South Korea was not a sovereign state during the period known as the U.S. Army Military Government in Korea (USAMGIK), the matter of how the damage caused by public authorities during this period should be assessed remains unresolved. As such, the settling the issues of past history in South Korea cannot be completed within the sphere of Korean sovereignty.

Attempts to clear the past in South Korea have been carried out despite the continuous obstruction, disparagement, disregard, disinterest, and complaints of the powers that prevailed under the Cold War structure. The insincerity of the Japanese government has ensured that the movement to resolve Korea's past conflicts with Japan has made little progress to date. Meanwhile, the civil suits launched within the United States were implicitly obstructed by the U.S. government. The issue of the damage caused by U.S. forces during the Korean War has, with the exception of the statement of regret issued by former President Clinton regarding the Nogeun-ri Incident, drawn muted silence in the United States.<sup>22</sup> It would be no exaggera-

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22. California's 1999 legislation of the Hayden Act—which gives anyone forced into labor without pay by the Nazis, their sympathizers, or allies, for any period of time between 1929 and 1945, the right to file suit to recover monetary compensation from the entity, or the successor of the entity for whom the labor was performed, in superior court either directly against the entity or through a subsidiary or affiliate—was very well received by Koreans in the United States who planned to file suits for the victims of the forced mobilizations carried out by imperial Japan. Encouraged by this legislation, they filed suits against Japanese companies such as Mitsubishi on behalf of those who were subjected to forced labor and comfort women. During this court process, the Japanese government defended itself by stating that the right to initiate individual claims had ended with the signing of the San Francisco Peace Treaty of 1952 and the Korea-Japan Claims Settlement Agreement of 1965. The U.S. government also took the side of the Japanese government, and pressed for these suits to be thrown out. The U.S. Supreme Court eventually rejected the suit on February 18th, 2006 (Chung 2008, 27). For all the rules, see [http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/tools\\_citationguide.html](http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/tools_citationguide.html).

tion to state that the process of settling the issues of past history amidst such limitations and obstruction has been designed to minimize the political and social impact of such revelations. Put differently, the focus of such investigations has been on reparations to victims rather than on the punishment of the perpetrators of such crimes. Only a limited number of new facts about the history of the colonial period have been released. As the process has focused on individuals who were involved in such events rather than on the resolution of issues related to past history such as pro-Japanese collaboration and the massacres committed during wartime through the legal system, the connection between the settlement of past history and contemporary institutional reform has, in essence, been severed. For example, although countless human rights violations were committed under the auspices of the National Security Law, the legacy of colonialism as well as the symbol of the Cold War still remains in place today. Even human rights activists and pro-democracy groups have shown a tendency to display a lack of any historical awareness on how the current democratization process should be connected to the settling the issues of past history. In the end, the movement to resolve the issues of past history has been implemented in an isolated manner.

### **The Settlement of the Issues of Past History between Japan and Korea and Peace in East Asia**

The task of settling issues of past history was launched about two decades ago in East Asia, a region where traces of colonialism and the Cold War were still omnipresent. The work of searching for the truth behind state-inflicted violence against civilians is also beginning to take place in other Asian countries such as Cambodia, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, and Nepal.<sup>23</sup> South Korea has played an active leading

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23. For more on the general features of the attempts to resolve the past, see Suzannah (2009), Hayner (2002). It appears that this book was published by Routledge in both London and New York.

role in the pursuit of investigations into the past via national organizations born out of the democratization movement. Thus, the Korean democratization movement can be regarded as having provided the mechanism and opportunity for such movements to attempt the resolution of historical issues. In this regard, how can South Korea's attempts to clear up the past contribute to establishing true peace and a sense of community in East Asia?

First, there is a need to redefine the term "Cold War" in East Asia. Two wars emerged in East Asia during the Cold War era, namely the Korean and Vietnam Wars. Although these wars were in many ways a means for the United States and Russia to test each other's capabilities, they were full-scale wars that caused tremendous damage for the concerned parties. The use of a scorched earth policy by the United States in both wars ensured that the Cold War was fundamentally different in East Asia than in Europe. Second, contrary to what occurred in Europe, there was no eradication of colonialism in East Asia after 1945. U.S. forces occupied Okinawa from 1945 to 1972, at which time its sovereignty was returned to Japan. During the occupation, though, Okinawa was a *de facto* colony of the United States. Nevertheless, even since 1972, violence in Okinawa has continued unabated—a legacy of its colonial past.<sup>24</sup> South Korea, which still does not exercise wartime command over its own forces, should not be regarded as having been a completely sovereign state. Third, the fact that all that ensures peace in Korea is a ceasefire makes it amply evident that, in reality, the war has not ended on the Korean peninsula. The joint military exercises held by the United States and

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24. In this regard, Nakano Toshio believes that the post-war era finally began in the 1990s when the Cold War structure collapsed. Nakano has stressed that the developmental dictatorships and new colonialism that emerged during the Cold War period all but ensured that the remnants of colonialism could not be done away with once and for all. He has also stated that the onset of demands for examinations of national-level crimes in Germany and France which emerged during this period was closely related to the collapse of the Cold War structure. He defined the violence towards citizens committed in surrounding countries during the colonial period as pre-war violence, and the violence that occurred up to 1990 as post-war violence (Kim and Nakano 2008, 27).

Korea and North Korea's artillery volley in the aftermath of the sinking of the Cheonan is proof of the fact that the Korean peninsula remains a place where war can break out anytime. North Korea's development of nuclear weapons, the military conflict between China and Taiwan, and the growing possibility of the intervention of Japanese self-defense forces have ensured that the risk of military confrontation is ever-present in Northeast Asia. Fourth, although the same holds true in the United States, the Cold War was, in effect, also a class war and struggle for power within individual states and societies. In other words, the institutionalized Cold War system has been one characterized by the pursuit of militarism under the guise of preparations for war, ruling structures that have made use of oppressive organizations, close relationships between the bureaucracy and monopolistic capital, and the alienation of Labor.

Under such circumstances, raising issue with the damage caused by Japan's war policies and colonial rule and the human rights violations committed in East Asia during the Cold War period may appear to be extremely soft attempts to curb the "hard politics" at the individual country level. However, such efforts have slowly begun to influence changes in the policies of the United States which, in the aftermath of World War II in East Asia, blocked attempts to settle the past by approving regimes which oppressed their respective societies, and thereby facilitated the war crimes that subsequently occurred.

The settling of the issues of past history and the successful conclusion of the search for the truth behind the events that occurred during the colonial and national division eras at the state level in South Korea may help to apply subtle pressure on the Japanese government, especially if the results of such undertakings can be internationalized. With the support of Japanese civil society, the task of exploring the truth behind the Japanese colonial era in Korea was carried out by questioning Japan's responsibility for these events. Such efforts, along with the search for the truth about the victims of the colonial era and their reparations undertaken in South Korean society in the 1990s, began to influence Japan, other neighboring countries, and their civil societies. Once the data on the scale and

details of the forced labor undertaken by the Japanese colonial authorities have become more objectively accepted (an issue on which the Korean government has almost finished its own investigation), it will become increasingly difficult for Japan to deny this issue in the international community. Furthermore, the clear establishment of the historical facts surrounding issues such as the massacre of Korean refugees in Manchuria, the Nanjing Massacre, and the massacre of Koreans committed during the Great Kanto Earthquake of 1923 as well as the activities of Unit 731 Experimental Camp, will help to shed further light on Japan's war crimes and the violence of colonialism, matters which were not dealt with during the International Military Tribunal for the Far East in Tokyo after 1945. In particular, this will change the perceptions of Japanese society by the right-wing groups that have existed under a collective state of ignorance when it comes to history, and will especially serve as a force to stem the spread of distorted history textbooks. In addition, the increased publication of data related to the Cold War order, and in particular the U.S.-Japan Security Alliance forged in the immediate aftermath of the Korean War and the inability of the Park Chung-hee government to face the issue of Korea's past history with Japan during the process of normalizing Korea-Japan relations, will let the international community be more aware of how the United States indulged Japan's negligence of its colonial and wartime responsibilities in East Asia.

On the other hand, Japanese people could remain idle onlookers of the civilian massacres committed in Korea before and during the Korean War. Such massacres, however, should be seen as proof that the Korean War was a legacy of the colonial era, and that the economic growth of Japan and the right-wing turn taken by Japanese society were facilitated by the sacrifices of North and South Koreans alike. The revelation of the truth behind the civilian massacres before and during the Korean War can contribute to revealing the true meaning of the Korean War in East Asia by correcting the U.S.-driven perception of the Korean War expounded upon within the framework of the Cold War. The massacres and instances of White Terror in South

Korea that happened following the Jeju Uprising occurred in an almost simultaneous manner as the instances of White Terror that were recorded in Taiwan. The Korean War was directly related to the colonial rule of Japan in East Asia, the U.S. presence in Northeast Asia, and the establishment of right-wing dictatorships. The U.S. bombings in the Korean War and the civilian massacres committed by Korean soldiers during this same conflagration should be perceived as precursors of the indiscriminate carpet bombing campaigns initiated by U.S. forces in Vietnam War after 1965 and the Vietnamese civilian massacres U.S. and Korean soldiers. As such, we can see that these events featured similar patterns and that Okinawa played an important role as the key military base from which the United States implemented these two wars. The widespread revelation of the facts surrounding the civilian massacres committed during the U.S. forces' indiscriminate carpet bombing campaigns in the Korean War can be connected to similar hardships experienced by civilians in Afghanistan and Iraq, and further highlight the dark side of U.S. interference in Asia. By recognizing this fact, the need to establish a peaceful order throughout the Asian region is further emphasized.<sup>25</sup>

While both the state and civil society in Vietnam have yet to fully raise issue with the suffering inflicted upon Vietnamese civilians during the Vietnamese War, the eventual advent of such an understanding will help to transform the memories of wars in East Asia into shared memories, which, to date, have been fragmented and limited to national histories.

On the other hand, while the search for the truth behind human rights violations and suspicious deaths that occurred in South Korea from the 1970s onwards will primarily contribute to the improvement of human rights in South Korea, one cannot ignore the impact that it

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25. In this regard, the annual conference led by Suh Sung, titled "East Asia Cold War and State Violence International Conference" held during the late 1990s to early 2000s contributed greatly to forge common ground amongst East Asian activists and scholars. The articles presented during these conferences were simultaneously published in Korean and Japanese (Korean Commission for Peace and Human Rights in East Asia 2001).

will have on other East Asian countries and the region as a whole. When viewed from the larger Asian context, the human rights violations and massacres committed during the Korean War can be justifiably compared to the massacres carried out under the Suharto regime in Indonesia in 1965 and the subsequent instances of White Terror there, as well as to the Martial Law regime in Taiwan. As these events also share many similarities with the collective massacres in Bangladesh during its march towards independence and in Sri Lanka and Nepal during their respective civil wars, they can be regarded as being related to the process of settling the issues of past history in these countries as well. It is a generally accepted fact that South Korea's Gwangju Democratization Movement stimulated democratization activities in other East Asian countries. Attempts to resolve the problems raised during settling the issues related to the Gwangju Massacre also encouraged democratization activities in East Asian countries and contributed to highlighting other human rights violations committed in the name of anti-communism in East Asia. Additionally, by stimulating Indonesia and other countries where the search for the truth regarding human rights violations committed by past military dictatorships was begun but ultimately frustrated, it has led to the weakening of extreme fascism in those countries.

Meanwhile, various instances of suppression and human rights violations have emerged in China in the process of introducing a market economy system. In this regard, it is essential that China take a close look at South Korea's efforts to settle the issues of its past history. Such a move is necessary in order to ensure that China becomes a democratic leader in East Asia without making the human rights violations committed by the military government of Korea. China will not be able to become a leader in Asia until it seeks to justify the anti-human rights policies it has implemented vis-à-vis its own people, while criticizing the war crimes committed by Japan in the past.

It is expected that progressive initiatives conducted at the academic and civil society levels in Korea and Japan, such as the Korea-China-Japan joint history textbook publication project, will be continued. There is a need to address issues as suits regarding sexual slav-

ery and forced labor, Okinawa-Korea cooperation on the resolution of the issues concerning U.S. military bases, and the movement to oppose worship at the Yasukuni Shrine. Koreans have long criticized the Japanese right-wing's distortion of history in textbooks. However, South Korean history textbooks are as laden with state-oriented Cold War viewpoints as the ones published in Japan (S. Kim 2002). To this end, there is an urgent need for the results of the search for truths conducted by various investigative committees to be reflected in Korean history textbooks. On the other hand, it is also necessary to launch a movement to change the nature of memorial halls found in Asian countries, which were established based on the state-oriented concept, such as the peace memorial halls which highlight the damage caused by Japan, the War Memorial of Korea which evokes memories of the Korean War, and the memorial halls of other Asian countries. Korea's establishment of memorial halls for the victims of the Korean War as well as for victims of human rights violations committed under the military dictatorship will facilitate the attempts of other countries which have experienced similar incidents and historical contexts, such as Okinawa, Taiwan, and Indonesia, to establish similar memorial halls that are more focused on revealing the truth about history. Exchanges between such halls and existing ones will also help to create a new sphere for history education that can help facilitate the establishment of a new order in East Asia based on peace and respect for human rights.

The establishment of an East Asian community will remain a pipe dream as long as a common memory of colonialism in East Asia and a truthful history of war have not been achieved.<sup>26</sup> Although the establishment of an East Asian community will be motivated by the economic necessities of the capitalist forces within each country, the depth and speed of this process will depend on the establishment of a common memory and regional identity. The creation of such a memory and identity will, however, remain impossible as long as histori-

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26. The determination of what should be remembered and what can be forgotten in the history can be regarded as a social construction. See Bigger (2003, 69).

cal issues are not resolved. In turn, the development of shared memory is preconditioned on the establishment of a new identity for each country in East Asia, for it is difficult to construct a common memory based solely on the efforts of civil society without each country's efforts to systematically change its own identity. Much like the issue of Okinawa in Japan, the unification of Taiwan and China and the reunification of the two Koreas are directly related to the establishment of a "normal state" through the settlement of past history, and the establishment of a new constitutional order. The establishment of a "normal state" involves more than restoring military sovereignty; it also involves a rediscovery of the power of tradition in East Asia and the search for a new regional community to contribute to global civilization through the power of such traditions, as well as the removal of the delusions of imperialism, nationalism, Western-centrism, and anticommunism that brought about such tragedies in East Asia during the twentieth century.

This study seeks to emphasize the fact that the solutions to various problems such as political backwardness, weak civil societies, low rates of welfare and high rates of suicide plaguing the countries of East Asia, particularly South Korea and Japan, are closely related to the settlement of issues in history. This can be inferred from a redefinition of the term "Cold War" introduced earlier as the struggle for power within the state and between classes. While the United States and MacArthur frustrated efforts to resolve the past history of colonialism and pushed for the entrenchment of capitalism in East Asia, the capitalism that has taken root in East Asia today can be characterized as capitalism without democracy or justice, capitalism from which labor is excluded, and capitalism without welfare. It was the advent of this capitalism that made possible Japan's achievement of rapid economic growth. However, it also served as a means to stymie the labor unions and civil society that opposed capitalism. This erratic development in Japan and Korea should not be seen as the result of a simple cyclical financial crisis, but rather as stemming from the characteristics of a form of capitalism that rooted itself in the region over a long period of time. In other words, the majority of

the political and social problems that now plague these nations are the results of the weakness of the social safety net, a weakness caused by the presence of a right-wing ruling structure and bureaucracy and the excessive transplantation of U.S. liberalism. As such, changing the national identity of each East Asian country means shifting from security and economy-first states to welfare states, and becoming states in which social equity is guaranteed.

## **Conclusion**

The settling of the issues of past history has been carried out as part of South Korea's responsibilities as a sovereign state. However, the objective nature and implications of the process of settling the issues of past history make it something that must be tackled at an intrastate, rather than national, level. The settling of issues regarding Japanese colonialism was primarily designed to establish a new national identity. It also had the effect of highlighting the brutality of Japanese colonial policies, the United States' interference with the resolution of Japan's war crimes and past history in Korea and East Asia, and the illegitimate policies of the Korean military government. The search for the truth behind the massacres of civilians committed during wartime and the restoration of honor to victims was also primarily implemented to raise awareness of the crimes committed by the South and North Korean governments. However, this process also exposed how colonialism was connected to these massacres during the Korean War, and how the U.S. Cold War policies toward Japan and Korea helped to create and sanction these civilian massacres. As such, the resolution of history in Korea has raised questions about the responsibilities of Japan and the United States with regards to Korea and the history of colonialism in East Asia. It has provided a blueprint with which to see how these events were connected to the damage caused by war in Taiwan, Okinawa, and Vietnam, and to the suffering caused by human rights violations.

The passiveness of the South Korean government under the lead-

ership of President Lee Myung-bak and the general disinterest displayed by the mainstream media towards these important results have raised the risk that such seminal findings will be minimized or completely buried as a mere historical bookmark with no real connections made to contemporary politics. In other words, although the resolution of past history in South Korea could have created a deep political and educational impact similar to that achieved by the Nuremberg Trials of Germany rather than developing a consensus within society and heightening sensitivity toward such issues, its impact has been limited to the discovery of new material for researchers and the facilitation of victims' applications for compensation. The limited results achieved by those seeking to resolve past history in South Korea can be explained by the continued presence of the U.S.-led Cold War structure in East Asia, which can be seen as impeding the resolution of past history into a "shared memory." Furthermore, the ruling classes in individual East Asian countries have benefitted from the Cold War system.

Therefore, the essential tasks that have not been carried through by the state must inevitably come from the pressure of civil society. In this regard, it is necessary to establish a new alliance under which each country's civil society can develop shared memories of war and aggression, damage, and suffering through such means as the compilation of textbooks, public education, mounting of legal responses, and the establishment of memorial halls. In addition, there is a need to emphasize the fact that the movement to resolve history both at the individual country and civil society levels in East Asia should be perceived as part of the task of establishing a sound, healthy capitalist society cured of the ills caused by "pariah capitalism" based on the ties between the bureaucracy and monopolistic capital and the exclusion of labor. Here, it is essential to emphasize that the resolution of past history does not stop with past history, but also is an important element of the process of reforming the politics and societies of contemporary East Asian countries.

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