

**Japan's Postwar Settlement in U.S.-Japan Relations:  
Continuity of Prewar Ideology in Domestic Politics**  
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**Introduction**

This year (2006) marks the sixty-first year since Japan surrendered to the Allied Forces in the Pacific War and accepted the terms of the Potsdam Declaration. Since then, Japan has apologized many times for the wrongs it committed during its era of militarist expansion. Japan has paid reparations in various forms, including provision of products and services, monetary indemnities and Official Development Assistance (ODA)<sup>1</sup>. Nevertheless, many northeast Asians, namely people in China and South Korea, still believe that Japan has not sufficiently atoned for the wrongdoing it committed during its period of militarist expansion. This can be confirmed by the series of violent anti-Japan demonstrations that erupted this past spring (2005) in mainland China. Vehement protests by South Koreans early last year (2005), upon the submission of a bill by the assembly in Shimane Prefecture (Japan's closest province to the disputed island of Takeshima/Tokdo) to set up a symbolic prefectural ordinance establishing February 22 as Takeshima Day, also reveal much unresolved sentiments among Japan's neighbors. Opposition by Chinese and South Korean governments to Japan's bid for a permanent member seat in the United Nations Security Council is another evidence of their dissatisfaction with Japan's way of dealing with its past. In other words, "although the postwar period is becoming a distant past, it is not over yet, as far as the history issue is concerned."<sup>2</sup> Japan's militarist past not only still haunts but also complicates the country's diplomacy today even more than before.

Why is there such a deep discrepancy of perception towards Japan's postwar atonement between Japan and its northeast Asian neighbors? Problems lie on both sides. On one hand, governments of China and South Korea cannot escape from root causes, including their history education that has been suspected to be problematic in terms of its objectivity. On the other hand, Japan must not be excluded from being blamed, either.

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<sup>1</sup> I acknowledge that the issue of individual compensations is still debated at present. But, since it is not included under the legal framework of the 1951 San Francisco Peace Treaty, I wrote that Japan legally compensated as a state. Meanwhile, I also acknowledge that a confidentially exchanged letter between Japan and the Netherlands just before the San Francisco Peace Treaty that was signed was declassified in April 2000. This may open the way for private war claims against Japan among nationals of the Treaty signatories: The letter pledged that Japan would not nullify private claims by Dutch nationals, to whom Japan paid reparations totaling \$ ten million in 1956. Since Article 26 of the Treaty guarantees same war claims advantages with any signatories, and now that it was revealed that Japan pledged to the Dutch not to nullify private claims, nationals of all other signatories would be legally eligible for making private claims. In this sense, one could argue that there still remains room for Japan to compensate as a state in response to individual claims. Thus, in this paper, I state that Japan has sufficiently atoned legally as a state, on a state to state basis.

<sup>2</sup> Funabashi Yoichi, "Hajimeni" in Funabashi Yoichi (ed.), *Ima rekishimondaini do torikumuka*, Iwanami Shoten, Tokyo, 2001.

This paper focuses on one major cause stemming from the Japanese side in the context of U.S.-Japan relations. I argue that the wide perception gap is largely because Japan 'legally' atoned 'as a state' (on a state to state basis), but this occurred only within the postwar geopolitical framework of the Cold War defined by the United States vis-à-vis the rise of communism. As a consequence, Japan, 'on an individual level' including Diet members, did not go through complete cleansing of prewar ideology based upon the emperor system. Such continuity of prewar ideology is reflected in the country's domestic politics where its inconsistent and ambivalent stance towards, the so called "history issue" (*rekishi mondai*) continues to provoke controversies from its neighbors today.

To be precise, the U.S. geopolitical interest in the postwar period shifted from punishing Japan as an enemy to avoid having Japan as an ally to fall under the Soviet sphere of influence<sup>3</sup> by facilitating the reconstruction and preventing the spread of communism to Japan. This shift of the U.S. geopolitical interest allowed the emperor system, the very fighting cause for the Japanese in the Pacific War and thus "a force for postwar stability and reform in a highly uncertain country"<sup>4</sup> to be preserved. It also allowed some class-A war criminals who were conservative prewar elites to be returned to the central stage of Japanese politics. The less than adequate punishment of those responsible for Japan's aggression has left, in the Japanese mind, an ambiguous sense of guilt towards their country's deeds during the war. In short, I would argue that Japan has atoned as a state in a legal framework shaped by great powers of Europe and the United States, but not completely on the individual psychological level.

On one hand, I generally agree with the argument by Kitaoka Shinichi, a leading Japanese historian, that "Japan has already been made to pay for the war in legal terms. Accordingly, no further changes to this legal response need be considered. There is no possibility that reparation will satisfy everybody."<sup>5</sup> Yet, if legal settlements have not been enough morally to heal the wounds of victims, and since Japan's militarist past has been still haunting the country's diplomacy, especially in northeast Asia, there is an ample reason for Japan to cope squarely with this issue in various ways besides legal settlements from the country's national interest viewpoint.

In this paper, I will mainly discuss, 1) how the allies, namely the United States, in the face of the Cold War, softened Japan's war responsibilities in the postwar period through the International Military Tribunal for the Far East, occupation policies and the San Francisco Peace Treaty, and 2) how the prewar ideology has been preserved in postwar Japanese domestic politics as a result.

### **U.S. postwar settlement of Japan in the Cold War**

In the introduction, I argued that Japan atoned legally as a state within the legal framework that was formulated to serve the strategic interest of the United States vis-à-vis communism in the postwar international environment. First of all, as far as the Tokyo

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<sup>3</sup> Marc Gallicchio, "Occupation, Dominion, and Alliance: Japan in American Security Policy, 1945-1969," in Iriye Akira and Robert Wampler, (eds.), *Partnership: The United States and Japan, 1951-2001*, Kodansha International, Tokyo, 2001, p. 140.

<sup>4</sup> Walter LaFeber, *The Clash: U.S.-Japanese Relations Throughout History*, W.W. Norton & Company, New York, 1997, p. 238.

<sup>5</sup> Kitaoka Shinichi, "The Folly of the Fiftieth Anniversary Resolution", *Japan Echo*, Vol.22, No.3 (Autumn 1995), pp. 66-74.

trials are concerned, they were greatly influenced by the geopolitical interests of the United States, largely because the United States was virtually in charge of the Allied Forces occupation policies in Japan. The selection of judges was not impartial in a sense that there were only three Asians among eleven judges, in spite of the fact that Asian countries suffered the most serious damages by the Japanese Imperial Army during the Second World War.

Furthermore, the selection of defendants was deeply distorted. For instance, it has been recently revealed that General Douglas MacArthur<sup>6</sup> granted an exemption from war responsibility to members of the 731 unit, a secret military medical unit of the Imperial Japanese Army headed by Ishii Shiro, a lieutenant general, who researched germ warfare in China through human experimentation, in exchange for the submission of their research data to the U.S. occupation forces.

Moreover, despite the criticism from other countries of the Allied Forces such as the Russians and the British, MacArthur sought to immunize Emperor Hirohito from war responsibility. From his successful experience with the psychological warfare against the Japanese in the Philippines, MacArthur knew the profound presence of the emperor in the minds of the Japanese. He wanted to retain the emperor to ensure peaceful control over the Japanese people in his occupation policy. Unless more official documents and information are disclosed by Japan's Imperial Household Agency and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, it remains uncertain to what extent the emperor was involved in the process of the Japanese military expansion. In that sense, it would be premature to judge the emperor guilty at this point. However, at least, "MacArthur's truly extraordinary measures to save Hirohito from trial as a war criminal had a lasting and profoundly distorting impact on Japanese understanding of the lost war."<sup>7</sup> Because the Japanese people were indoctrinated to fight the war for the emperor, the fact that the emperor, the central cause for whom they fought the war, was not indicted and executed failed to completely convince them of their country's war guilt.

In addition, even Chiang Kai-shek opted not to indict the emperor in December 1945. "Faced with a civil war with the Chinese Communists, Chiang was afraid of Japan becoming communist if the indictment of the emperor and the abolishment of the emperor system took place."<sup>8</sup> Besides, by cooperating with the United States, he wanted to obtain the U.S. financial and military assistance and the use of surrendered Japanese military in China to fight against the Communists. In short, the advent of the Cold War greatly discouraged the extent to which the Allied Forces prosecuted Japan.

Besides, the start of the Cold War made the Tokyo trials different from the German trials. While the German tribunal took place before the Cold War, between November 20, 1945 and October 1, 1946, the Tokyo tribunal started in May 1946 and adjourned more than two years later in November, 1948 during which time the Cold War is thought to have started in early 1947. In other words, "while the German trials were

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<sup>6</sup> Supreme Commander for the Allied Powers. He presided over General Headquarters (GHQ) in Tokyo.

<sup>7</sup> Herbert P. Bix, *Hirohito and the Making of Modern Japan*, HarperCollins, New York, 2000, p. 585.

<sup>8</sup> Awaya Kentaro, "Tokyo saiban ni miru sengoshori," in Yamaguchi Yasushi (ed.), *Sensosekinin, sengosekinin: Nihon to Doitsu ha dochigauka*, Asahi Shimbunsha, 1994, pp. 90-91.

consistent and unaffected by the Cold War, the contradiction of the Tokyo trials further deepened, influenced by the Cold War between the US and the Soviet Union.”<sup>9</sup>

In addition to the Tokyo trials, the U.S. occupation policy in Japan itself was reversed as the Cold War proceeded, and “by 1947, Japan had been replaced by a new American enemy, the Soviet Union.”<sup>10</sup> As the only superpower immediately after the war, the United States had to restore the health of the world economy, for which “the new goal was the reconstruction and flourishing of the German and Japanese industrial economies as engines of world growth.”<sup>11</sup> As a consequence, the grand purpose of the U.S. occupation policy towards Japan changed from democratization and demilitarization to economic reconstruction<sup>12</sup>. Moreover, the United States initially planned to rearm Japan by creating a Japanese army with some three hundred thousand men and in ten fully equipped combat divisions by 1953. The plan was not realized due to a strong opposition by Yoshida Shigeru, Japan's prime minister at the time. It was, however, a complete policy reversal compared to the Potsdam Declaration in July 1945 which banned Japan's rearmament in every way. This suggested plan of rearmament demonstrates how much the Cold War triggered the United States to be willing to reverse its occupation policy of Japan in such a short period after the war, despite the fact that militarism was one of major factors that caused Japan's acts of fanaticism before and during the war.

Even before the end of the Second World War by 1944, proposals to have Japan “integrated into a U.S.-created system”<sup>13</sup> became the basis of the U.S. postwar occupation policies. This was mainly because Chiang Kai-shek's regime, for the purpose of keeping his armies intact for a future war against the Communists, became uncooperative to the United States by refusing to commit his troops in Burma and China. This led the United States to cease regarding China as a potential postwar policeman, when, to begin with, “[President] Roosevelt did not at all intend to turn Asia over to Chiang.”<sup>14</sup> In addition, the Soviet Union was beginning to be viewed as a potential postwar threat against the United States.

Rescission of purging the Japanese war criminals detained at Sugamo Prison that accompanied the Tokyo trials also illustrated how the Allied Forces, namely the United States, reversed their occupation policy. As the Cold War intensified, the United States was beginning to lose the incentive of conducting the trials further. In order to ensure that Japan would not become communist, the General Headquarters/Supreme Commander for the Allied Powers in Tokyo reversed their policy from weakening old conservatives to nurturing anti-communist political power in Japan. As a result, many class-A war criminals including Kishi Nobusuke, Shigemitsu Mamoru and Sasagawa Ryoichi not only were released from prison but were allowed to climb up the social ladder again as prominent figures in politics and business. In fact, “forty-two percent of those elected to the lower house in October 1952, six months after the [San Francisco

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<sup>9</sup> Yamaguchi Tsutomu, “*Futatsuno gendaishi*” in Yamaguchi Tsutomu (ed.), *Senseokinin, sengosekinin*, Asahi Shimbunsha, Tokyo, 1994, p. 249.

<sup>10</sup> Bruce Cummings, “Japan's Position in the World System” in Andrew Gordon (ed.), *Postwar Japan as History*, University of California Press, Berkeley, 1993, p. 36.

<sup>11</sup> Yamaguchi, “*Futatsuno gendaishi*”, p. 37.

<sup>12</sup> Remarks by Yang Daqing, in Washington DC, November 26, 2001.

<sup>13</sup> LaFeber, *The Clash*, p. 237.

<sup>14</sup> LaFeber, *The Clash*, p. 231.

Peace] treaty came into force, were former purgees.”<sup>15</sup> This created the continuity of the prewar ideology in Japanese politics, which will be explained more in detail later. Accordingly, “Defendants who had been convicted and sentenced to imprisonment became openly regarded as victims rather than victimizers.”<sup>16</sup> In other words, “the Tokyo trials and the purges that accompanied them failed to solve the many-sided problem of war responsibility.”<sup>17</sup>

Meanwhile, the U.S. softening policy towards defeated Japan was incorporated into the 1951 San Francisco Peace Treaty. To begin with, among forty eight signatories, neither Communist China in Beijing nor Nationalists in Taiwan, who received the most severe damage during the war by the Japanese, were invited. Reflecting an increasingly intense confrontation between the East and the West, “the Peace Treaty turned out to be one sided”<sup>18</sup> in a sense that it concluded peace with “countries excluding those in the Eastern bloc under the Cold War structure.”<sup>19</sup> Yugoslavia, India and Burma rejected their participation, although they were invited. The Soviet Union, Poland and the Czech Republic participated but refused to sign, opposing the contents of the Treaty.

It has been pointed out by many historians that it was a generous and non-punitive treaty, because “with the consideration by the United States and Great Britain, the reparation clause was softened.”<sup>20</sup> Article 14 (a) of the Treaty states that “it is recognized that the resources of Japan are not presently sufficient, if it is to maintain a viable economy, to make complete reparation for all such damage and suffering and at the same time meets its other obligations.”<sup>21</sup> In short, it allowed Japan to pay reparations according to its economic capabilities at the time and in the form of goods and services of the Japanese people in production, rather than financial reparation. It also allowed Japan to negotiate with victimized countries to decide the total amount of reparations and contents instead of unilateral decisions of reparation by the allied countries.

Such moderate reparation treatment was partly because John Foster Dulles who was charged with negotiating the Treaty believed at an early stage of the Treaty formation that severe punishment would be counterproductive in the long run. Such belief was based upon a widely recognized theory and his own belief that harsh terms imposed upon Germany at the Treaty of Versailles after World War I caused the later collapse of their economy and the rise of fascism (Nazism) in Germany. At the same time, this softened reparation policy stemmed from the new geopolitical reality based on which “U.S. officials regarded Japan’s allegiance in the Cold War as absolutely essential, for without Japan, it was argued then, the ‘global balance of power’ would shift in favor of the Soviet Union.”<sup>22</sup> In fact, it was a generous treaty compared with the Peace Treaty with Italy, another Axis country, because the Italian Peace Treaty was punitive overall in

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<sup>15</sup> Richard B. Finn, *Winners in Peace: MacArthur, Yoshida, and Postwar Japan*, University of California Press, California, 1992, p. 296.

<sup>16</sup> John W. Dower, *Embracing Defeat: Japan in the Wake of World War II*, W.W.Norton & Company / The New Press, New York, 1999, p. 513.

<sup>17</sup> Bix, *Hirohito and the Making of Modern Japan*.

<sup>18</sup> Yoshida Yutaka, *Nihonjin no sensokan*, Iwanami Shoten, Tokyo, 1995, p. 68.

<sup>19</sup> Iokibe Makoto, *Nichibeji senso to sengo Nihon*, Osaka Shoseki, Osaka, 1989, p. 204.

<sup>20</sup> Nagano Shinichiro and Kondo Masaomi, *Nihon no sengo baisho*, Keiso Shobo, Tokyo, 1999, p. 4.

<sup>21</sup> Excerpts from Article 14 (a) in Treaty of Peace with Japan, September 8, 1951

<sup>22</sup> John W. Dower, “Yoshida in the Scales of History” in John W. Dower (ed.), *Japan in War and Peace: Selected Essays*, The New Press, New York, 1993, p. 230.

every aspect. For instance, it demanded a specific amount of financial payment as reparations (the total of 360 million dollars)<sup>23</sup>, while the San Francisco Peace Treaty allowed Japan and Allied Powers whose territories were damaged by Japan to negotiate contents of compensations.

In the end, with strong pressure from the United States that advocated a non-reparation policy for Japan, most allies relinquished reparation rights. As a result, the only reparation that Japan paid was to four countries, including the Philippines in 1956, Indonesia in 1958, Burma in 1954 and South Vietnam in 1959, in the form of goods and services spread out over many years. Other Asian countries including Cambodia, Laos, Malaysia, Singapore, Thailand and North Vietnam decided to make an economic cooperation agreement with Japan, instead of claiming reparations. It is a well known fact that these capital transfers to countries in Asia in the form of economic cooperation eventually helped the rise of the East Asia economy, which in turn provided Japanese companies with manufacturing bases. With regards to Korea which was seriously damaged by Japan, Japan eventually provided South Korea an economic aid package as grants and 'loans'. As for China, Zhou Enlai, the country's premier then, agreed to surrender all claims to war reparations from Japan in the context of its normalization of diplomatic relations with Japan in 1972, and Japan agreed to provide official development assistance (ODA) to China, both in grant and "yen loans". Komori Yoshihisa, a prominent Japanese journalist, argued that it should be helpful for South Korea and China to have been provided with low interest loans<sup>24</sup>. However, I would argue that, as alternative means to wartime reparations<sup>25</sup>, provisions of economic aid as 'loans' would not send a message of apology and repentance from China's perspective, particularly because unlike other victimized countries in Asia, it generously gave up the claim for war time reparations. Sincere apology must not accompany mercantile calculations.

Yoshida Shigeru, Japan's prime minister in 1951, seemed to have been reluctant to attend the Peace Conference in San Francisco, not because he was opposed to the Peace Treaty itself but because he was opposed to the bilateral U.S.-Japan security treaty which the United States made an absolute condition for Japan to sign concurrently in order to obtain the country's sovereignty through the Peace Treaty. It was an inequitable security treaty that subordinated Japan. In reality, the primary purpose of the security treaty was to project U.S. power in Asia all the way to the Middle East by allowing the United States to station its troops in bases in Japan including Okinawa. Although the Treaty stated "to deter armed attack upon Japan"<sup>26</sup> by external threats, in fact, by allowing the U.S. troops to station in bases in Japan, Japan would have had to face external threats such as the Soviet Union, which it would not have had to face without the presence of the U.S. troops.<sup>27</sup> "It integrated Japan into the anticommunist camp and

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<sup>23</sup> Toyoshita Narahiko, *Anpojoyoyaku no seiritsu*, Iwanami Shinsho, Tokyo, 1996, p. 231.

<sup>24</sup> Remarks made by Komori Yoshihisa, Senior Editor, Sankei Shimbun, at Sigur Center for Asian Studies at George Washington University on December 5, 2001.

<sup>25</sup> The Japanese government makes a distinction between wartime reparations and official development assistance (ODA), stating that ODA is not reparations.

<sup>26</sup> Excerpt from Security Treaty Between the United States of America and Japan.

<sup>27</sup> On this point, there exists a split of interpretations. For example, according to Iokibe Makoto, Yoshida well recognized that the presence of US troops in Japan, by concluding the US-Japan security treaty, was

simultaneously created a permanent structure of U.S. control over Japan.”<sup>28</sup> In short, Yoshida knew that Japan would gain independence and softened wartime reparation treatment by the Peace Treaty but at the same time would face subordination by the Security Treaty.

### Continuity of Prewar Ideology in Japanese Politics

So far, I have explained how the U.S. postwar settlement with Japan was reversed and softened in the face of the Cold War, how such policy failed to cleanse Japan's prewar ideology based upon the emperor system and, how it complicated the understanding by the Japanese people of their country's war responsibility as a wartime aggressor. In fact, the continuity of the prewar ideology and incomplete sense of guilt as an aggressor could be observed in many aspects of the postwar Japanese domestic politics. This was greatly because “Washington restored to power many of the old conservative guard who had guided Japan's imperial policies”<sup>29</sup> by releasing them from Sugamo Prison in Tokyo<sup>30</sup>.

For instance, the inauguration of Yoshida as prime minister is one evidence that the prewar ideology continued and was embraced in Japanese politics even during the postwar period. Yoshida is known as the most prominent political figure of the postwar period of Japan. With hindsight, he made an enormous contribution to Japan by laying the foundational direction for the country's postwar reconstruction and successful economic prosperity. Nevertheless, I would argue that he was a prewar politician who preserved the old ideology. The fact that someone like him who had “profound devotion to the emperor system” and whose “number-one priority in the aftermath of the war was the preservation of the emperor system”<sup>31</sup> became Japan's postwar prime minister right after the country's defeat in the war suggests that Japan did not fully learn a lesson. In fact, “Yoshida was ideologically opposed to virtually all basic reforms associated with the early Occupation ‘democratization’ agenda”<sup>32</sup>. Moreover, although he was not imprisoned as a war criminal, he once served as the counsel general of *hoten*<sup>33</sup> in Manchuria and later as the vice minister of foreign affairs, and he played an active role in Japan's act of aggression in China. Furthermore, Yoshida, “without questions, had an obvious racial prejudice against people and countries in Asia.”<sup>34</sup> For instance, Yoshida reveals his discriminatory view towards Asians, in his memoir, *Kaiso Junen*<sup>35</sup> in which he states that Japan which has been an independent state since the Meiji era and the rest of Asian states which newly became independent should be treated differently and that Asian states are with low cultural standards and remain in the stage of underdevelopment.

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not the cost but vital importance for Japan's security from the Soviet Union. See Iokibe Makoto, *Senryoki: shusho tachino shinnippon*, Yomiuri Shimbunsha, Tokyo, 1997, p. 387.

<sup>28</sup> John W. Dower, “Peace and Democracy in Two Systems: External Policy and Internal Conflict,” in Andrew Gordon (ed.), *Postwar Japan as History*, University of California Press, Berkeley, 1993, p. 11.

<sup>29</sup> Mike M. Mochizuki, *Japan Reorients: The Quest for Wealth and Security in East Asia*, Brookings Institution Press, Washington D.C., Forthcoming.

<sup>30</sup> For example, between 1951 and 1952, about 200,000 former officers were de-purged. For more detailed accounts, see Michael Schaller, “Altered States: The United States and Japan Since the Occupation”, Oxford University Press, New York, 1997, p. 38.

<sup>31</sup> Dower, “Yoshida in the Scales of History”, p. 218.

<sup>32</sup> Dower, “Yoshida in the Scales of History”, p. 224.

<sup>33</sup> Today's Shen Yang in Liaoning, China.

<sup>34</sup> Wakamiya Yoshibumi, *Sengohoshu no ajiakan*, Asahi Shimbunsha, Tokyo, 1995, p. 57.

<sup>35</sup> Yoshida Shigeru, *Kaiso Junen*, Shinchosha, Tokyo, 1957.

And, Wakamiya Yoshiyumi, a chief editor of Asahi Shimbun, argues that one should not ignore how much influence his racial prejudice against Asians had on postwar Japan because Yoshida is the one who laid the foundation of Japan's postwar politics<sup>36</sup>.

Another indication that proves "continuity of prewar and postwar politics"<sup>37</sup> in Japan is that Kishi Nobusuke, who was once a class-A war criminal, not only returned to the country's central political arena but also became prime minister in 1957. During the era of Japan's military aggression, he served as minister of commerce and industry and was a leading economic planner in the puppet state of Manchukuo in the 1930's. Under the Tojo Cabinet, he was a vice minister of munitions in 1943 and 1944. For these reasons, he was accused as a class-A war criminal and imprisoned at Sugamo Prison from late 1945 to 1948. However, with a drastic shift of the U.S. occupation policy, he was not only released without trial but was allowed to return to the political arena.

Kitaoka Shinichi points out two facts about Prime Minister Kishi as some evidence that Japan has apologized on numerous occasions<sup>38</sup>: 1) Prime Minister Kishi apologized for Japan's act of aggression during the war before the Australian parliament, and 2) he also sent a message of apology to President I Seung-man of South Korea shortly after taking office. On one hand, it is not a matter of objection or criticism and was in fact a legitimate act for the Japanese prime minister to express apology to victimized countries. That a straightforward apology was expressed by the Japanese prime minister to those victimized should be highly valued and it should be regarded as a case of evidence that Japan has apologized. It was foreseeable that members of the Australian parliament and the South Korean President at that time would accept Prime Minister Kishi's sincere apology "as an individual." On the other hand, however, it was highly plausible that they would have, at the same time, deeply questioned Japan's ability to repent its past guilt "as a country" which, to begin with, allowed someone like Kishi who was once a class-A war criminal to serve as the head of the state. The fact that a class-A war criminal served as prime minister clearly demonstrates that Japan did not embrace a strong sense of guilt and war responsibility. In this sense, Kitaoka Shinichi overlooked the negative image of Japan to the world caused by a former class-A war criminal serving as a head of the state, when viewed from the rest of the world, especially from victimized countries' perspective.

Among other examples that illustrate continuity of prewar and postwar politics, the fact that Hatoyama Ichiro became prime minister after Yoshida was equally problematic. He was also purged but had a record of having supported not only Japanese aggression in the Second World War but also the suppression of dissent in the 1920's and 1930's.

Shigemitsu Mamoru who became vice prime minister and foreign minister in 1954 in the Hatoyama Cabinet that succeeded the Yoshida Cabinet was also a class-A war criminal. He served as foreign minister under the Tojo Cabinet during the war and was sentenced to seven years' imprisonment after the war. Nevertheless, he was paroled with other class-A war criminals in 1950 without fully serving his sentence and returned to the public life, becoming party leader of Reform party and serving as foreign minister and vice prime minister afterwards. Moreover, he was awarded the First Order of Merit

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<sup>36</sup> Wakamiya, *Sengohoshu no ajiakan*, p. 59.

<sup>37</sup> Mochizuki, *Japan Reorients: The Quest for Wealth and Security in East Asia*, Forthcoming.

<sup>38</sup> Kitaoka, "The Folly of the Fiftieth Anniversary Resolution".



by Emperor Hirohito in 1957. In short, the fact that those who were once war criminals returned to the national politics and took up extremely important positions in the Diet "made Japan's war responsibility ambiguous all the more"<sup>39</sup>.

There are many other examples in the Japanese central political arena that demonstrate the continuity of prewar ideology in the postwar politics up to the present. A series of remarks repeatedly made that deny Japan's acts of aggression during the war by the Cabinet members, including Fujio Masayuki<sup>40</sup> who was minister of Education in the Nakasone Cabinet until 1986, and Nagano Shigeto<sup>41</sup> who resigned his post as minister of Justice in the Hata Cabinet in 1994, are obvious ones. The quagmire at a time of the Murayama Cabinet in 1995 in formulating a "no-war" resolution to commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of the end of the Pacific War would be another. Besides, in 2000, former Prime Minister Mori made a controversial remark that Japan is *kaminokuni*, a divine nation with the emperor at its center, which is reminiscent of Japan's pre-World War II creed and violates the country's postwar constitution that states that sovereign power resides with the people. He also let it slip once that we needed to protect *kokutai*, national polity which is the structure of a state centering on the emperor. Furthermore, the current Prime Minister Koizumi has called some of the class-A war criminals buried at the Yasukuni Shrine "martyrs," and he keeps paying homage at the shrine in his official capacity even at the cost of further deteriorating the country's relations with China and South Korea. These remarks are just representative of the idea that many political leaders still embrace the prewar ideology even at present and that they have not fully atoned psychologically apart from the country's official stance on Japan's militarist past.

In addition, one could observe other elements of the prewar ideology besides the emperor worship and justification of Japan's act of aggression that are preserved and exercised in Japan's postwar foreign policies. For instance, Ohira Masayoshi, who became prime minister after Tanaka Kakuei in late 1978, seemed to have still preserved Japan's prewar idea of the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperty Sphere. In the course of drastically increasing trade with China after signing a Treaty of Peace and Friendship in 1978, Ohira began to advocate a "Pacific rim strategy to integrate China and Southeast Asia's raw materials and markets into Japanese capital and technology."<sup>42</sup> This is slightly different in a sense that before the war, Japan did not have capital and technology and attempted to exploit natural resources by force. But, the idea seems similar in a sense that Japan attempted to take a hegemonic role in Asia, this time in terms of economic integration. In fact, Japan gradually pursued this foreign economic policy, this time not by military might but by economic might.

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<sup>39</sup> Wakamiya, *Sengohoshu no ajiakan*, p. 49.

<sup>40</sup> In an interview for *Bungei Shunju* in September 1986, he made controversial statements regarding Japan's role in World War II, claiming that "killing people in war is not murder in terms of international law" and that the Tokyo War Trial "cannot be considered correct." He also equated Japanese visiting Yasukuni Shrine as Chinese visiting Confucius temples, and argued that the Nanjing Massacre is a fabrication. He was promptly fired by prime minister Nakasone, as he refused to apologize and withdraw his statements.

<sup>41</sup> In May 1994, he publicly stated that Japan did not invade Asia, the Rape of Nanjing was a fabrication, and that military comfort women were simply prostitutes. He once held his position as Army Chief of Staff.

<sup>42</sup> LaFeber, *The Clash*, p. 369.

Ohira also pursued a defense policy that reflected the prewar ideology that caused the war. Proposing a military policy, "Comprehensive National Security", the Ohira Cabinet sought to "include more cooperation with Western militaries, to raise Japan's military profile."<sup>43</sup> A report made by Japan's Defense Agency in July 1980 "noted the termination of clear American supremacy in both military and economic spheres" and "urged building up Japan's defenses, especially to secure oil supplies."<sup>44</sup> The period of the Ohira Cabinet as well as the period of Tanaka Kakuei and Fukuda Takeo as prime ministers from the early 1970's coincided with Japan's drastic increase of economic power. From this perspective, it appeared a reasonable want for the country to attain a more independent defense policy commensurate with its economic power. In particular, Japan has always been dependent upon the United States in defense under the U.S.-Japan security treaty since it was signed in 1951, and the country has never been able to formulate a fully independent defense policy<sup>45</sup>. However, one could observe, in the report, the revival of the prewar idea, "building up defenses to secure oil supplies", that led the country to a quagmire of war. It would not have been unreasonable for observers to argue that Japan has not fully learned a lesson from its militarist past after more than fifty years since its defeat in the war.

Another element of the prewar ideology is Japan's racial prejudice against other countries in Asia<sup>46</sup>. This could be observed in remarks made by Nakasone Yasuhiro who was prime minister in 1980's. For example, he wrote in 1978 about "a new civilization that would integrate less developed countries under Japan's guidance."<sup>47</sup> One cannot fully ascertain his discriminatory ideology against countries in Asia only from this remark, but one could at least sense the prewar idea preserved in his mind that Japan would guide the rest of Asia as a hegemon.

One could observe from the examples above that postwar major political leaders of the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP), whose mainstream political philosophy is derived from that of Yoshida, did not cleanse but retained the prewar ideology that caused the war of aggression, without going through full psychological atonement. And, to begin with, it was originally the United States, with its newly formed geopolitical interest under the emerging Cold War international structure, that allowed those prewar conservative elites to return to Japan's central political arena. With hindsight, the LDP leadership greatly contributed to Japan's postwar reconstruction and subsequent economic prosperity. And yet, because the LDP dominated Japanese politics since 1955 for half a century up to the present, it would not be an exaggeration to say that the Japanese public, in one way or another, has been psychologically influenced by the prewar ideology through the LDP politics.

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<sup>43</sup> LaFeber, *The Clash*, p. 370.

<sup>44</sup> LaFeber, *The Clash*, p. 370.

<sup>45</sup> On this point, there is a debate over whether Japan did not have autonomy over its postwar defense policy or it actually chose to depend on the United States in defense in spite of having a high degree of control over its defense policy. For a view that supports postwar Japan having maintained its autonomy, see Mike M. Mochizuki, "U.S.-Japan Relations in the Asia-Pacific Region" in Iriye Akira and Robert Wampler, (eds.), *Partnership: The United States and Japan, 1951-2001*, Kodansha International, Tokyo, 2001, pp.13-32.

<sup>46</sup> On this point, John W. Dower described extensively in *War without Mercy: Race and Power in The Pacific War*, Pantheon Books, New York, 1986.

<sup>47</sup> LaFeber, *The Clash*, p. 373.

Postwar Japan succeeded in attaining its economic prosperity, yet at the cost of suffering from the “history issue” that haunts its diplomacy in the long run.

### Conclusion

I have emphasized in this paper that the United States, with its strategic interest in the postwar international environment of the Cold War, has been a major factor in the Japanese people's failure ‘as individuals’ to psychologically atone for its militarist past. Yet, I do not intend to argue that it is the only root cause. Certainly, there are other factors that have made it difficult for the Japanese to squarely acknowledge their country's war responsibility.

On an individual level, unquestionably, the country's experience of Hiroshima and Nagasaki is another factor. “The Japanese feeling of being victims of the war [by the American atomic bombings] complicated their effort to recognize fully their past mistakes.”<sup>48</sup> In fact, the Japanese people, especially atomic bomb victims, have long struggled between legal and moral justice on Hiroshima and Nagasaki: Because the United States won the war, it was not ‘legally’ responsible for its acts of atomic bombings, yet ‘morally’ such acts must be blamed, from their perspective. Moreover, if the United States did not win the war, these acts would have been legally regarded as war crimes by the international community through a war crime tribunal led by countries of victors. Besides, if the United States and European powers did not win the war and their former colonies in Asia had more political power in the international society, their acts of colonialism would have been regarded as crimes and legally punished through an international tribunal. In other words, the definition of criminal acts largely changes depending on which country wins the war and who has stronger political power in the world. Because a legal framework is made by victors, it privileges the victors and disfavors the vanquished. In short, while a moral definition of crime is immortal, a legal framework is transient.

The idea of victors' justice, however, must not allow Japan to fail to atone wholeheartedly for the wrongs it committed during its era of militarist expansion, either. In this sense, I agree with Richard H. Minear that “We have found its [the Tokyo trial's] foundation in international law to be shaky. We have seen that its process was seriously flawed...’Victors’ justice’ is a harsh judgment, but a harsh judgment is called for.”<sup>49</sup> In short, no matter how imperfect the legal justice may be, only those who observe it and first acknowledge the mistakes of their own could gain respect and a voice in the international community.

Okazaki Hisahiko, a leading critic of international affairs in Japan, argues that since the history issue was first brought up again as a problem by some left wing Japanese, when these groups of Japanese disappear, it will fade. He further argues that when all the Japanese argue back to Chinese as an interference with the domestic politics, China will stop complaining about this issue<sup>50</sup>. His view turned out to be too optimistic and is increasingly unsupported by recent events: The more Japan insists that it is an interference with Japan's domestic politics for China to demand Prime Minister Koizumi

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<sup>48</sup> Mochizuki, *Japan Reorients: the Quest for Wealth and Security in East Asia*, Forthcoming.

<sup>49</sup> Richard H. Minear, *Victors' Justice: The Tokyo War Crimes Trial*, Princeton University Press, New Jersey, 1971, p. 180.

<sup>50</sup> Okazaki Hisahiko, *Shigemitsu, Togo to sonojidai*, PHP Kenkyusho, Tokyo, 2001, p. 23.

to stop visiting the Yasukuni shrine, the more vehemently China reacts, worsening the bilateral relations. The issue can no longer be simply dealt with as a domestic policy, as it has an increasingly significant implication to Japan's international relations. This can be observed by Japan's current stumbling in gaining support from its neighbors for becoming a permanent member of the UN Security Council. On one hand, from a short-term perspective, Okazaki's view may be tactically clever as a diplomat. In fact, Japan's quiet response to the Chinese anti-Japan demonstrations and violence against the Japanese assets in China in spring of the year 2005 temporarily discouraged the Chinese government from using the history issue as a diplomatic card for fear of hurting its international image. On the other hand, however, Japan's continued disregard on this issue will never heal but rather worsen the wound of victims in Asia. And unless the general public in these countries are convinced of Japan's sufficient moral atonement, the issue will continue to haunt Japan's diplomacy, particularly in the area of security policy.

The end of the Cold War has brought back and revealed that the United States pardoned Japan in order to fight against communism in the Cold War. As a result, the United States softened the postwar settlement of Japan and it has maintained one of the most solid bilateral security alliances with Japan. Certainly, this has aided Japan's recovery and contributed to its remarkable economic presence in the world. Concurrently, however, there is a setback of the U.S. postwar settlement which has begun to appear even within the United States. In recent years, there has been a spate of lawsuits filed against Japan and Japanese companies by former U.S. prisoners of war, although private war claims have been legally rejected on the U.S. federal level.

Legally, Japan, as a state, has atoned for its militarist past on a state-to-state basis, although there remains the questioned legal liability of private claims, as mentioned above. In this sense, at least 'thin reconciliation'<sup>51</sup> has been made between Japan and other victimized countries in Asia including China.<sup>52</sup> The challenge for Japan is to attain 'thick reconciliation' with them. This is particularly needed in the post Cold War world where state level legal settlements are no longer sufficient and voices of non-state actors as war victims significantly shake state level international politics. Therefore, Japan's next agenda is to heal the wounds of people in Asia from a moral perspective, and for this reason, it would be imperative for the Japanese people to nurture a higher sense of war responsibility as individuals. Just as Japan has struggled between legal and moral justice on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, Asia has suffered from how to assess Japan's way of dealing with its past mistakes. Without Japan's effort sufficiently to atone psychologically on an individual level, the militarist past will continue to haunt Japan's diplomacy and it will never cease to hurt its national interest.

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<sup>51</sup> For discussions on thin versus thick reconciliation, see works by David A. Crocker, including "Reckoning with Past Wrongs: A Normative Framework" in *Ethics & International Affairs*, 13, 1999, pp. 43-64.

<sup>52</sup> Yang Daqing, "Nichuryokoku no wakai: Sono mondaiten to tenbo" in Funabashi Yoichi (ed.), *Nihon no senseosekinin o dokangaeruka*, Asahi Shimbunsha, 2001, p. 234.

## Japan's Postwar Settlement in U.S.-Japan Relations

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