

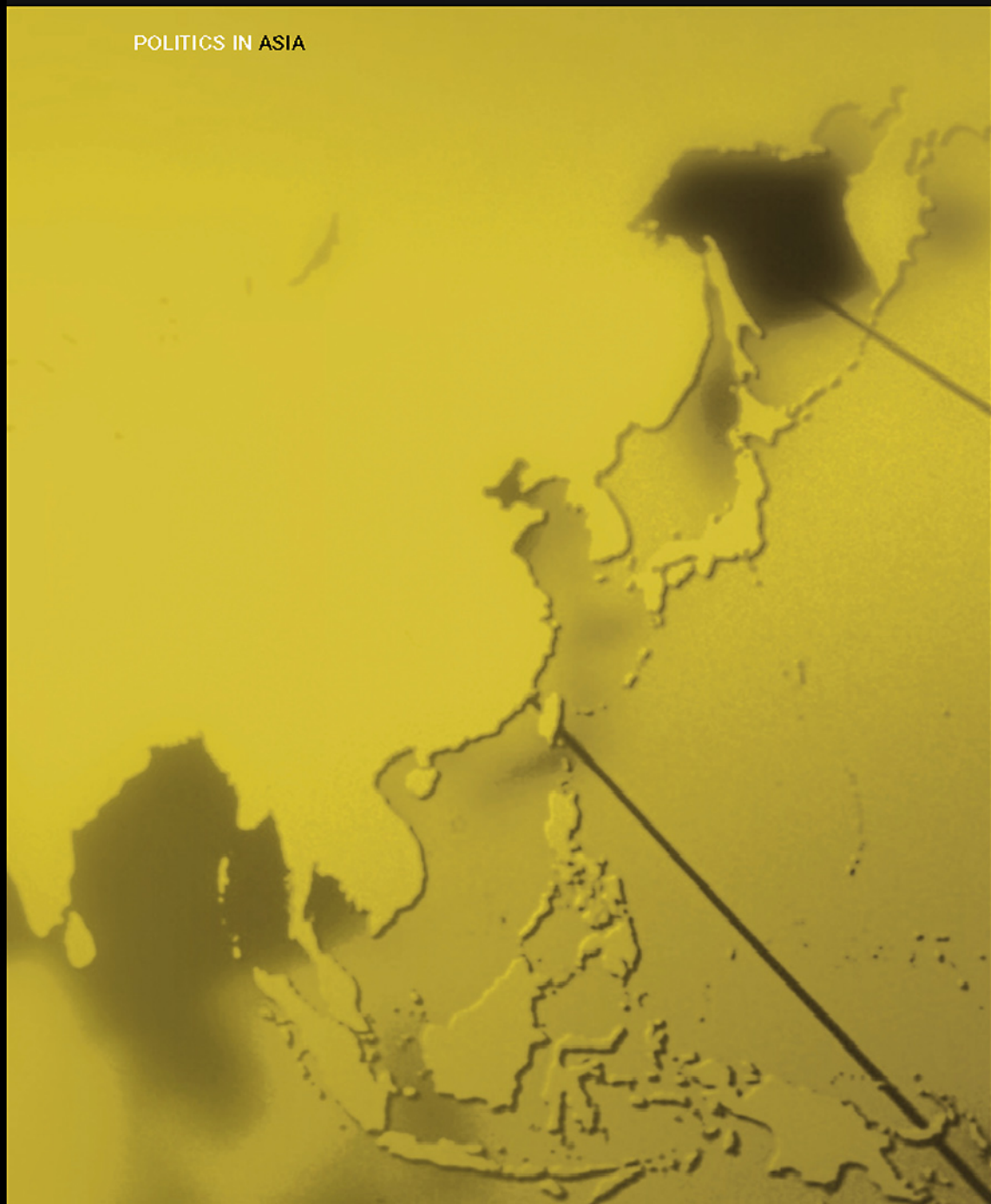
Rethinking Historical Injustice and Reconciliation in Northeast Asia

The Korean experience

Edited by

Gi-Wook Shin, Soon-Won Park, and Daqing Yang

POLITICS IN ASIA



Rethinking Historical Injustice and Reconciliation in Northeast Asia

The Northeast Asian region has witnessed phenomenal economic growth and the spread of democratization in recent decades, yet wounds from past wrongs – committed in times of colonialism, war, and dictatorship – still remain. Of all the countries in the northeast region coping with historical injustice, the Republic of Korea has the rare distinction of confronting internal and external historical injustices simultaneously, both as a victim and as a perpetrator. Korea's experience highlights the major forces shaping the reckoning and reconciliation process, such as democratization, globalization, regional integration, and nationalism, in addition to providing valuable insight into the themes of historical injustice and reconciliation within the region.

The book aims to move beyond a nation-state oriented analysis of Korea as the victim/aggressor, seeking instead to understand reconciliation as a mutual, interactive concept. Although there is no universal formula for reconciliation, the contributors examine the reaction of society from the perspective of citizens' groups, NGOs, and victim-activist groups toward such issues as enforced labor, comfort women, and internal injustices committed during the wars to foster a better understanding of the past and thus aid in future reconciliation between other Northeast Asian countries.

Rethinking Historical Injustice and Reconciliation in Northeast Asia represents the first book written in English to address these significant issues and as such will be of huge interest to those studying East Asian politics, history, and society.

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Introduction

Gi-Wook Shin, Soon-Won Park, and Daqing Yang

The Northeast Asian region has witnessed phenomenal economic growth and the spread of democratization in recent decades. Intraregional exchanges and interactions, especially cultural and economic, have been impressive as well. Yet wounds from past wrongs – committed in times of colonialism, war, and dictatorship – are not fully healed. All Northeast Asian nations have some sense of victimization – Japan *vis-à-vis* the United States and Russia, and China and Korea *vis-à-vis* Japan – and often blame others, rather than taking responsibility.¹ In fact, overcoming historical animosities has become one of the most pressing issues for the region.

This is not entirely unique to Northeast Asia, however. Despite growing global awareness of past injustice, confronting the past is not an easy matter and has become a hotly contested political terrain. Issues of historical injustice still remain unresolved in many parts of the world. Historian Charles Maier has expressed dismay about “our current incapacity to entertain transformative political projects for the future and hence to invest our collective resources in contesting the past.”²

Whether or not one agrees with his pessimism, it is true that such problems have spawned a growing field of scholarly inquiries. At the macro-level, historical injustice can be divided into two categories. *Internal injustice* – where former antagonists have to live together in the same political community, sometimes literally next door, as in a number of Latin American countries, Taiwan, South Korea, and South Africa – is often related to “transitional justice,” as it usually becomes an issue during a period of democratic transition. Here, the challenge is how fledgling democracy should respond to past evils without undermining its new democratic regime or jeopardizing its prospects for equitable and long-term development.³ The second category, *external injustice*, refers to the relationship between separate communities, which are also often separate sovereign entities. Though they may be neighbors, a clear boundary separates former victims and perpetrators. Here the problem is often the “guilt of nations.”⁴ To be sure, these two categories may overlap. Indeed, the Republic of Korea, the primary focus of this volume, presents one of the rare cases that have confronted both internal and external injustices.

How should we cope with historical injustice? Philosopher David Crocker has set forth nine “morally urgent goals”: truth, a public platform for victims, accountability and punishment, rule of law, compensation to victims, institutional reform, long-term development, reconciliation, and public deliberation. While each of these is important, in recent years reconciliation has emerged as an ultimate goal for many dealing with internal (e.g. South Africa’s Truth and Reconciliation Commission) or external historical injustice. A term heavy with psychological connotations, reconciliation can be defined as “restoring friendship, harmony or communion” between individuals or groups “after a traumatic experience(s) locking two peoples in an ongoing cycle of mistrust, fear and/or hatred.” Simply put, reconciliation is the restoration/establishment of peaceful ties and goodwill between former antagonists.⁵ Further, Crocker distinguishes reconciliation into varieties of “thin” – formerly hostile parties continue to coexist without taking active revenge – and “thick,” which entails “forgiveness, mercy, a shared comprehensive vision, mutual healing, or harmony.”

How, then, have countries in the Northeast Asian region dealt with historical injustice? What kind of reconciliation, if any, has been achieved? What are the major forces that shape the process of historical redress and reconciliation? A brief historical survey is in order.

“Thin reconciliation” in Northeast Asia

As with many other cases around the world, reconciliation between countries in Northeast Asia first occurred between governments. Japan established diplomatic rapprochement with countries it once invaded or colonized: with the Republic of China (ROC) (Taiwan) in 1952, with the Republic of Korea (ROK) (hereafter Korea unless specified) in 1965, and with the People’s Republic of China (PRC) in 1972. Japan’s relations with the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (North Korea) still have not been normalized. Each of the cases is distinctive, but some common characteristics can also be seen from postwar relations between Japan and her Asian neighbors.

First, diplomatic normalization has been an important part of the reconciliation process, albeit a first step. It was, however, only a “thin” one because reconciliation was purely a state-to-state affair. Not only was it state-orchestrated, it also left out questions of individual compensation entirely. Even for state relations, the “normalization” was not complete, as territorial disputes were deliberately shelved. Territorial disputes are not unique to the Northeast Asian region but nonetheless they can easily emerge as rallying points of nationalistic elements, as seen recently.

Second, questions remain as to how much domestic legitimacy existed for each case of the “reconciliation” conducted by the respective governments. The amount of popular expression on such “nationalist issues” in each of these countries ranged from virtual non-existence (PRC and ROC) to limited (ROK). Even in ROK, the newly declassified documents on the

Japan–ROK normalization reveal that the Korean government sought lump sum compensation from state to state, against the popular will that wanted individual compensation. In both the ROC and later the PRC popular expression encountered little internal opposition because it was simply not permitted; the ROK witnessed some internal opposition that was forcefully silenced.

Third, such reconciliation was “thin” because in two out of the three cases, both sides, if inadvertently, skirted the issue of even trying to reach a consensus over historical injustice. Geopolitical calculations had the greatest impetus for Japan–ROC and Japan–PRC normalization. In the case of the PRC, for instance, the strategic need to end the US-led isolation of China and to secure support against the threat from the Soviet Union in the late 1960s and 1970s was predominant. If the Cold War logic did not prove to be the sufficient driving force in early Japan–ROK relations, the need for economic assistance did.

Even before the normalization process, the US played a significant role, whether intended or not, in shaping the process of historical redress and reconciliation in the Northeast Asian region. Unlike the Nuremberg trials, the Tokyo trials focused on the actions that most directly affected the Western allies – the attacks on Pearl Harbor and mistreatment of prisoners of war – and largely ignored crimes committed against Asians. Also, the United States and its allies waived their rights to reparations in the San Francisco Treaty of 1952 and Korea was excluded from the treaty. Although the treaty recognized Japan’s responsibility to pay reparations to the governments in the areas Japan had invaded, questions of responsibility for wartime atrocities and compensation for victims remained unresolved. Perhaps most significant was the US decision to keep the emperor system in the belief that it would facilitate the reconstruction process in post-war Japan. Yet, as a recent report by the International Crisis Group properly points out, “the absolution of the emperor left the country without anyone to blame.”⁶ As the importance of Japan as a bulwark against communism in Asia increased, issues of Japan’s historical responsibility, unlike in Germany, were largely overlooked or ignored.

Compared with these cases of external reconciliation, issues of internal injustice emerged much more slowly but still made steady progress, especially in Taiwan and Korea. After the death of Mao and the conclusion of the Cultural Revolution, the new communist leadership under Deng Xiaoping adopted a more pragmatic policy of opening up to the world and pursuing economic modernization. At home, it partially repudiated many of the radical policies of the 1960s and “rehabilitated” many of the purged “class enemies.” While these measures may have satisfied the psychological need of many people in China, the trials of the “Gang of Four” fell far short of delivering justice. In this sense, the PRC experience can only be characterized at best as “thin reconciliation.” More significantly, by the late 1980s, both the ROC and ROK abandoned military dictatorship and embarked on

democratization. Such a process opened internal wounds of the past – e.g. the 2.28 “Incident” in Taiwan and the Kwangju Uprising in Korea – and spurred both governments to seek internal reconciliation. As in other nations under democratic transition, “transitional justice” emerged as a major issue in the democratizing process in these two countries. In the Korean case, furthermore, the democratization, accompanied by the growing voice of citizen groups, had some direct (though limited) impact on external injustice. Korean nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), often in collaboration with their Japanese counterparts, played an active role in addressing past injustice, especially in the comfort women cases.

Major forces affecting reconciliation

Democratization

There exists a strong argument that the voluntaristic and multidimensional essence of reconciliation presupposes a democratic context. For one thing, nongovernmental dialogue – crucial in forging ties and building trust among peoples – in a country lacking any autonomous civil society is going to have little real, lasting meaning. Also, democratic societies allow greater introspection on past internal injustice. The freedom to criticize one’s own government and a willingness to subject one’s own past record to the same standard of moral judgment that one applies to the history of other nations are crucial elements in overcoming a historical bias against a foreign adversary.

There is no doubt that democratization opened the door to the historical redress movement in Northeast Asia. With democratization, both Korea and Taiwan have paid keen attention to redressing past wrongs done by military and authoritarian regimes. They have quite successfully addressed the issue of transitional justice without undermining its democratic development. In the Korean case, fledgling democracy has also raised the question of to what extent it is responsible for external reconciliation. More Koreans came to realize that they were not merely victims but also had been perpetrators. Apart from internal suppression of civilians by the South Korean dictatorial governments, Korean troops committed the same kind of atrocities against innocent Vietnamese that Americans were accused of carrying out against Koreans during the Korean War. Democratically elected President Kim Dae Jung actively pursued reconciliation not only with Japan but also with Vietnam by offering an apology to victims of the Korean aggression during the Vietnam War. Moreover, with political opening, issues of historical injustice was no longer monopolized or controlled by the government. Instead, civil society and transnational NGO groups became increasingly involved in the issues of historical injustice and reconciliation. While the state’s role cannot be denied, it was, quite possibly, the opening up in both Korea and China that brought to the forefront some of the pent-up dissatisfaction with settlements with Japan.

Democratization is no panacea, however. It is not easy in a democracy, especially one that has a dark past to settle, to push for redress and justice. Interpretations of the past are unavoidably political, producing divided memories, and there is a strong temptation to politicize the process of reconciliation for a current ideological purpose.⁷ In Korea, there exist charges that the democratic governments were using the “history card” for narrow, partisan, political interests. As historian Jeffery Herf has shown in his study of postwar Germany, had it not been for leaders like Konrad Adenauer and the Social Democratic opposition, “a West German democracy would have emerged with far less memory, far less justice, and far less compassion for survivors [of Nazi crimes].” Thus, democracy does not necessarily make reconciliation easier. Often the opposite may be true, making reconciliation a messier process. In this regard, enlightened leadership is crucial in building public support for sometimes unpopular policies aimed at reconciliation. It is only through such leadership that reconciliation by a democracy can be accomplished and is likely to have more lasting power.

One problem with the proposition of “democratic reconciliation” is that it offers few solutions involving Japan and China, let alone Japan and North Korea, except that one has to wait until these communist regimes become fully democratic. Still, China is undergoing an important transformation in its state–societal relations, which opens up both opportunities and risks. Even if the regime has a long way to go before becoming a democracy, it has already had to deal with “voices of the people” in ways unheard of since 1949. James Reilly has noted the role of “history activists” in China, who are leading efforts to demand compensation from Japan and mobilizing Chinese public opinion on issues related to Japan.⁸ Here the distinction between democracy and democratic transition is relevant. As Victor Cha has noted in an essay on Japan–ROK reconciliation, whereas “democratic consolidation” is crucial, democratic transition from authoritarianism is often unstable and chaotic, creating new political freedom and an unregulated marketplace of information that is ripe for abuse. Very often, what he calls “democratization hysteria” is targeted against historical enemies.⁹

Globalization

Issues of memories and reconciliation have become a global phenomenon in recent years. In the past, *realpolitik* – the belief that realism rather than ideology or ethics should drive politics – was the guiding principle of international relations. But beginning at the end of the Second World War and accelerating since the end of the Cold War, morality and justice have gained more attention in international diplomacy. The post-Cold War era witnessed renewed global attention to historical injustice (especially in the former Soviet empire) and a massive surge of public and scholarly interest in “coming to terms with the past” as a more universalized topic. Growing global attention to ethnic or national identity, human rights, and historical injustice

has certainly contributed to the rise of the “history problems” in Northeast Asia. Today the UN and other transnational NGOs are actively involved in addressing human rights issues in many parts of the world and we have seen a global trend toward a better appreciation of human rights issues.

More specifically for the Northeast Asian region, globalization has opened up more space for reckoning with the past. First, it broadened and diversified views and approaches to the issue of historical injustice. In the past, for instance, Koreans looked at the issue of comfort women primarily from a nationalist standpoint. More recently, there has been a growing tendency to approach it from a more scholarly feminist or human rights perspective. Second, globalization promoted transnational linkage among NGOs in addressing the issue of historical injustice. Several Asian NGOs have worked together to address the issue of comfort women by jointly sponsoring events such as the International Women’s Tribunal of December 2000. NGOs in Korea and Japan have discussed writing textbooks together as Germany and France did. Third, transnational cooperation has also led people to acknowledge their own wrongdoings. Koreans, for instance, acknowledge their own atrocities made during the Vietnam War, pointing to the parallel between the Korean and the US cases. They are slowly but gradually recognizing that they were aggressors as well as victims. Fourth, by encouraging the breakdown of economic barriers, globalization has promoted intra-Asian regional exchanges in trade and culture.

Regional integration

The success of European integration has often been attributed to a great extent to the success Western Europe has had in reconciling with its history. Though lagging behind Europe, a similar regional dynamic is also developing in Northeast Asia. There are many implications of growing regional interactions, especially economic and cultural, for reconciliation in the region.

First, growing economic interdependence increases intersocietal interaction. Closer economic ties necessarily increase flows of people and other links – even if purely business-related activities – across the border. Shanghai now has one of the largest concentrations of overseas Japanese. In September 2003, the Chinese government quietly introduced an unprecedented measure: Japanese citizens traveling to China for under fifteen days would not need a Chinese visa. While motivated primarily for economic reasons – that is, the promotion of tourism – such measures would no doubt increase societal interaction between the two nations, which could facilitate the reconciliation process.

Second, economic dependency seems to be creating more pragmatism, at least on the part of leaders and some elites. The history issues, although important, are then accepted as only part of the wider range of goals worth pursuing. Recently, the mayor of Nanjing visited Japan’s sister city of Nagoya

to appeal for Japanese investment in his city, most commonly associated with some of the worst Japanese wartime atrocities. The current state of Japan–China ties is such that, while the Chinese government has refused to invite Japanese Prime Minister Koizumi to visit China due to his insistence on visiting the Yasukuni shrine, Japanese investment in China has not been adversely affected. In 2004, China (including Hong Kong) replaced the United States as the biggest trading partner of Japan and Korea. The Chinese government's decision to undertake its high-speed rail link as a France–Japan–China joint project is a case in point, and speaks both to Chinese leaders' pragmatism and to deepening mutual economic dependency.

Third, and perhaps even more significant, cultural interpenetration has become a growing trend within Northeast Asia. The phenomenal success of Korean pop culture known as “hallyu” (the Korean wave) is particularly noteworthy. It has produced more favorable impressions of Korea among Japanese and there is some hope that cultural exchanges will facilitate reconciliation and cooperation in the Northeast Asian region. Although its long-term implications for reconciliation remain to be seen, there is evidence that pop culture genres such as TV dramas, films, and music are having a “softening” effect on once antagonistic relations between Korea and Japan.

To be sure, increased contact between societies does not in itself lead to better mutual understanding. At times, the opposite can be true. For example, the visit of a group of Japanese company employees to Chinese prostitutes in southern China, around the sensitive anniversary of September 18, created a firestorm throughout China. Also, while some expect that generational change and increasing people-to-people exchanges can heal war wounds, the picture seems mixed. In China, surveys among the country's youth regularly register a highly negative view of Japan over history issues. A 2004 survey in Japan by the liberal *Asahi* newspaper showed that support for Koizumi's visit to the controversial Yasukuni Shrine is strongest among younger Japanese (20–30-year-olds). It may be true that the passing of the war generations will end some of the vivid, bitter animosities. On the other hand, the importance that second and third generations attach to past issues and how they perceive them are not only a result of time, but also a reflection of the kind of historical knowledge they acquire.

Nationalism

Despite some encouraging signs, we need to be cautious about unwarranted optimism regarding globalization and regional integration. We see a growing power of “identity politics” in the nations of Northeast Asia and it would be a major obstacle to regionalism and “thick” reconciliation. To be sure, Northeast Asian nations have been democratizing and/or promoting globalization since the 1990s, but neither democratization nor globalization has uprooted or weakened the power of nationalism in the region. If anything,

globalization and regional interdependence may produce a crisis of national identity and thus even strengthen nationalist sentiment in some quarters.

In Korea, nationalism has guided the approach to the issue of historical injustice. Nationalism has produced master narratives of colonial history and offered a dominant framework for dealing with historical injustice such as comfort women and forced labor.¹⁰ It forces issues to be framed in binary opposition – victims versus aggressors – and leaves little room for a shared view of historical injustice. Ironically, the racism or nationalism that gave rise to historical injustice in the first place continues to inform victims' approaches to reckoning with past wrongs. Koreans are reluctant to acknowledge their atrocities during the Vietnam War, but readily criticize similar acts committed by the US during the Korean War. Recent disputes over the history of the ancient kingdom of Koguryō reflect the lingering nationalism in the concept of “irredentism” on the part of South Korea as well as China's rising nationalism.

Japan and China, to a different extent, share Korea's approach to promoting a racialized view of national identity. Although Japan pursued a multi-ethnic empire before 1945, postwar Japan promoted ethnic nationalism, similar to the version that appeared in Korea.¹¹ Ethnic nationalism is a prevailing theme in the military history museum attached to the Yasukuni Shrine, which Mr. Koizumi continues to visit despite outcries from neighboring nations and the concerns of many Japanese. The restoration of such symbols as the flag and the national anthem are part of Japan's quest to become a “normal nation.” Nationalist scholars are making headway in producing textbooks to “make Japanese proud of themselves.” If there is any difference between Korea and Japan, it is that the left in Korea – as opposed to the right in Japan – is at the forefront of nationalist politics of reconciliation.

China does not claim the ethnic homogeneity of Korea and Japan, but is promoting nationalism as a source of social and political cohesion for Chinese who are exposed to the rapid (and disruptive) processes of modernization. Its minority policy is clearly based on the notion of a grand multi-ethnically unified one China. Thus, despite increased intra-Asian trade, cultural exchange, and talks about East Asian community, Korea, Japan, and China all still find politics of national identity appealing. After all, nationalism is not only about ideology, but also thrives on narrowly defined “national interests.” Disputed territories always serve as symbols of national sovereignty that cannot be compromised. The mutual suspicion of Japan and China over the disputed Senkaku/Diaoyu islands and other territorial waters, and the recent escalation of Japanese–Korean tension over Dokto/Takeshima, are but two potent reminders.

Korea's experience with historical injustice

Of all countries in Northeast Asia that are coping with historical injustice, the Republic of Korea stands out. Like other nations under the third wave

of democratization, Korea has sought to redress past wrongs done by military and authoritarian regimes and has successfully done so without undermining its democratic development. Externally, too, reconciliation efforts have become more diverse, including apologies, compensation claims, litigations, and diplomatic interference in history textbook writing, and civil society and transnational NGO groups have also actively been involved and cooperated in the process of reconciliation.

Of particular significance to the process of “transitional justice” in democratizing Korea were successful efforts to redress the atrocities that government troops had committed during the May 18, 1980 uprisings in the city of Kwangju.¹² In 1987, as Korea was embarking on a new path toward democracy, public hearings were held in the National Assembly on the atrocities; the Kwangju Compensation Law was enacted in 1990 for victims and their families; the May 18 Special Act was passed in 1995, leading to the trials of former presidents Chun and Roh. Once labeled a communist-agitated “incident,” the uprising was officially named as the May 18 Democratization Movement.

The successful redress of the past injustices at Kwangju opened the way for the examination of other atrocities that military and authoritarian regimes had committed since 1945. The 4.3 massacre on Cheju Island in 1948 and the mass killings of civilians by government troops during the Korean War have both been reinvestigated. These atrocities had been taboo among Koreans for a long time, because the victims were often portrayed as communists or sympathetic to the North. However, the end of the Cold War, along with democratization, loosened the power of anticommunism. By the 1990s, the state could no longer ignore the histories of social groups and people marginalized or oppressed in the processes of nation-building or incorporation into the world system.¹³

In 2000, the South Korean government established the Presidential Truth Commission on Suspicious Deaths to “promote unity and democracy by uncovering the truth about suspicious deaths which occurred during the democratization movement against past authoritarian regimes.” The Commission has received petitions from families of victims to reinvestigate their suspicious deaths during the authoritarian regimes. A year later, the government established the National Human Rights Commission (*Kukka inkwŏn wiwŏnhoe*), which broadly deals with human rights issues, including the investigation of human rights violations, past and present, and policy recommendations to improve the condition of human rights in Korea in general. More recently, the National Assembly has passed a special law to investigate the wrongdoings of the past authoritarian government.

Overall, South Korea has successfully addressed the issue of transitional justice without undermining its democratic development. It firmly established civilian control of the military, democratized political processes, and successfully transferred power from military/authoritarian to civilian/democratic and then from ruling to opposition parties. Former dictators

were tried and punished, past wrongdoings were reinvestigated, and many victims were compensated.

Externally, new perspectives are emerging on major issues of historical injustice related to Korea's colonial past. Japan annexed Korea in 1910 and ruled the colony until 1945 with an iron fist, during which many Koreans suffered. Besides nationalist and communist leaders who were arrested, beaten, tortured, and killed, many ordinary Koreans, young and old, male and female, educated and uneducated, were forced to "serve" the Japanese empire as soldiers, laborers, or comfort women, or in other capacities. Yet when colonial rule ended, Japan paid no reparation to the Korean victims and Korea was barred from participating in the San Francisco Treaty as a signatory. It was not until 1965, when the two nations normalized their relations, that Japan paid South Korea some compensation under the name of grants and aid – though it practically meant reparation. Japan has not yet paid any compensation to North Korea, and reparation will be an issue in the event of normalization between the two countries.

The scope of external historical injustice has greatly expanded, with multiple subjects such as comfort women, history textbook writing on the dark past, forced labor victims, misstatements by the Japanese political leaders on Japan's role in the colonial past, their visits to the Yasukuni Shrine, enshrinement of Korean victims at the Yasukuni Shrine, Korean B- and C-class war criminals, and the Korean atomic bomb victims. New cases of external injustice emerged too. US atrocities against civilians during the Korean War – another major case of external injustice – came to light in the 1990s. The US investigated allegations, acknowledged its atrocities, and subsequently apologized to Koreans. Reconciliation efforts have also become more diverse, including apologies, compensation claims, litigations, and diplomatic interference in history textbook writing. Finally, not only the state but also civil society and transnational NGO groups have actively involved themselves and cooperated in the process of reconciliation.

Looking back, a milestone in the history of reconciliation in Northeast Asia was reached in 1998. In early October, President Kim Dae Jung of Korea and Prime Minister Obuchi Keizo of Japan issued the Joint Declaration of Partnership in Tokyo. For the first time, the Japanese government offered an explicit apology for the thirty-six years of colonial rule in Korea. In return, President Kim praised Prime Minister Obuchi's gesture and promised to leave the past behind and work for future cooperation between the two countries. Kim's visit to Japan was widely heralded as the landmark event in the Korea–Japan reconciliation. If political forgiveness is understood as the promise not to bring the past into the future, it is quite clear that Kim Dae Jung has offered just that, with the understanding that Japan would abide by the same code of conduct. If the reconciliation between Japan and its neighbors prior to the 1990s belonged to the "thin" variety, 1998 seemed to mark the beginning of a "thick reconciliation" between Japan and ROK; a similar rapprochement between Japan and China remained elusive.

This volume

As illustrated above, Korea has the rare distinction of confronting internal and external injustices simultaneously. Moreover, it is a country in which identities of victim and perpetrator coexist. As such, Korea's experience not only offers a good comparison with its neighbors, but also raises important questions about major forces shaping the process and the outcome of reconciliation. The essays gathered in this volume address many questions confronting Korea and the region: How can we move from the politics of national identity to reconciliation? How can we transform the regional reconciliation process from "thin" to "thick"? What is the relationship between democratization and reconciliation? Will the civil society that emerged during democratization be as active in dealing with issues of external injustice as with the internal ones? Can the momentum gained in the past two decades be sustained? Does regional integration promote reconciliation? Is reconciliation a precondition to cooperation? Or is cooperation a precondition to reconciliation? What larger implications can be drawn from the Korean experience for other countries in the region and beyond? What are the key lessons learned and what future tasks remain for thick reconciliation in the region?

In addressing these questions, we intend to move beyond nation-state-oriented, binary victim/aggressor concepts and approaches, and to understand reconciliation as a mutual, interactive concept. While the state is still a major player, we believe that the reaction of society is the most crucial part of the fuller, thicker coming to terms with the past. The citizens' groups, NGOs, victim-activist groups – be they domestic, transnational, or international, and regardless of political orientation – should command our attention and analysis. We also seek to integrate distinctive national and regional histories and memories into the issue of reconciliation. We believe that there is no uniform universal formula for reconciliation: it is a multi-dimensional process that requires a variety of ingredients and action at many levels. We need more transnational, intersocietal, cross-cultural handling of reconciliation with the past in the Northeast Asian region. We do not, however, seek any dogmatic roadmap or easy answer to reconciliation. Instead, we intend to evaluate the current situation, assess lessons learned, and problematize and raise the new questions on issues of historical injustice and reconciliation. This volume focuses on the Korean experiences from a broader historical, regional, comparative perspective. As a nation that has been both victim and aggressor, and one that has addressed issues of both internal and external injustice in its past, we expect that Korea can offer valuable insights into our themes of historical injustice and reconciliation.

The volume consists of two parts. Part I provides an update on the redress of historical injustices, both external and internal, in the twentieth-century history of Korea. The first three chapters address external injustices committed during the colonial and the Second World War period. Chunghee

Sarah Soh analyzes the Korean comfort women tragedy as a case of “gendered structural violence” in the burgeoning capitalism and female labor market in late colonial Korea. Hideko Mitsui discusses how Asian NGOs worked together to address the issue of comfort women. She argues that globalization promoted transnational linkage among these NGOs to tackle the issue of historical injustice. Soon-Won Park considers the Korean forced labor issue from the 1990s to today in Japan, South Korea, and the United States, and illuminates political-legal activism in the democratizing South Korean government and civil society.

Redress of internal injustices in South Korea is the subject of the ensuing three chapters, with particular focus on the current stage of Korean transitional justice. Recurring themes in these studies are Korea as both victim and aggressor, and the hidden workings of the absolute state power that violated the individual human rights of its citizens. Tae-Ung Baik examines how the government addressed the Cheju April 3 Incident of 1948 in the 1990s and points out the incompleteness of the remedies, which were made not by the judicial branch but by hurriedly passed special legislation with political interests attached. Dong-Choon Kim addresses mass killings of civilians by the South Korean government in the early stages of the Korean War in 1950, and asks how we can incorporate these incidents into new Korean War narratives. In the final chapter of Part I, Kyung-Yoong Bay looks at the problem of civilian massacres committed by the Korean military in the Vietnam War, and analyzes the South Korean state’s abuse of power and the state–society cooperation around the strong sentiment of anticommunist nationalism. New revelations via the news media, as well as the shift of debates on this issue, refreshingly demonstrate the self-reflective power of the democratizing society.

Part II seeks to put Korea’s history of redressing both external and internal injustices in a broader regional and global perspective. Hong Kal compares war museums of Korea (the War Memorial of Korea) and Japan (the Yushukan, attached to the Yasukuni Shrine) to illustrate how ethnic nationalism has colored both Japan’s and Korea’s memories of war experiences and national ethos in the midst of regional integration and globalization. Gavan McCormack’s contrast and comparison of the Second World War and North Korean abduction issues provides new insights from an unexpected angle. The comparison, he argues, reveals Japan’s dualism, hypocrisy, and ethnocentrism in dealing with its Asian neighbors over the history issue. Instead of the frequently invoked yet unfruitful comparison of Germany and Japan, John Torpey concludes this section with a comparative analysis of the genocide of the Herero under German colonial overlordship, the Turkish massacres of Armenians during the waning Ottoman Empire period, and the atrocities committed by the Japanese during the Second World War in Asia. In all these widely deplored and unresolved cases, the role of political concerns over both domestic and foreign policy considerations was crucial in the reluctance and denial of the aggressors.