

**The Politics of Apology:  
Comfort Women within the context of regional complexities**

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**Abstract**

The Japanese government established the well-organized comfort system served by women during the Japanese colonial period, in which about 200,000 women were both physically and mentally abused by Japanese soldiers. In a bid to solve the “Comfort Women” issue between the victims (comfort women) and offenders (the Japanese government) during World War II, several justice mechanisms such as trial, tribunal, reparation programs, and resolution have been applied with no fruitful results. In addition, the Japanese government has never given a formal apology accompanied by a descent compensation through the public fund, despite the acknowledgment of wrongdoing by Japanese officers. The research question of this paper is about what makes the Japanese government refuse to offer a formal apology to comfort women for war crimes committed during World War II. This paper investigates the three factors discouraging the politics of apology. Those factors include stated ideology, cultural, and geopolitical elements, which are deeply rooted in the regional politics in East Asia. East Asian countries share similar requisites, which are conducive to the development of the regional politics. The paper shows the politics of apology in Japan’s “Comfort Women” case reinterpreted within the regional context of structural, social, and geopolitical complexities unsuitable to reconciliation.

**Keywords:** Comfort women, politics of apology, geopolitics, East Asia, women rights.

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## **The Politics of Apology: Comfort Women within the context of regional complexities**

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### **I. Introduction**

During the Japanese colonial period, about 200,000 women served as sex slaves to Japanese soldiers under the well-organized comfort women system established and run by the Japanese government. Those comfort women were silent for 50 years in order to avoid bringing shame on themselves and their families (Min 2003). Their stories have been revealed and the justices have been sought since 1991 when the late Kim Hak-Sun, a former South Korean comfort woman, came forward and began speaking publicly about her experiences (Sakamoto 2001). Until the moment when these women stood and narrated their stories in the court, the Japanese government had insisted that the civilians were fully engaged in mobilizing comfort women. After the efforts made by these comfort women to seek justice, Japanese chief cabinet Yohei Kono in 1993 made a

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statement to admit the Japanese military's direct involvement working with civilian contractors in recruiting comfort women and operating the comfort stations (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, 1993). Furthermore, a deal between South Korea and Japan was finally made to set up a foundation for offering \$8.4 million to survivors in December 2015. Nonetheless, Prime Minister Shinzo Abe refused to issue apology letters to comfort women who suffered from the atrocious war crimes committed by the Japanese Army during World War II (The Japan Times, 2016).

Despite the acknowledgment of wrongdoing by Japanese officers, a state's formal apology accompanying with compensation by the Japanese government has not yet been implemented. Why does the Japanese government refuse to offer a formal apology to comfort women for war crimes committed during World War II? East Asian countries share similar elements, which are conducive to the development of the regional politics. The politics of apology in Japan's "Comfort Women" case should be reinterpreted within the context of regional politics with structural, social, and geopolitical elements unsuitable to reconciliation. The paper will attempt to account for Japan's failure to apologize adequately in terms of structural, social, and geopolitical factors. The paper argues that there are three factors discouraging the politics of apology including state-led ideology, cultural aspects, and geopolitical components, which are deeply rooted in the regional politics in East Asia.

Given that the victims' main requests are formal apologies from Japanese government as well as material rewards, it is worthy of grave consideration why few apologies arise from this country. The goal of the paper is to examine transition mechanisms that have been undergone on "Comfort Women" issue, and to address why they failed especially in the form of apology. This paper's aim is to understand the transition process and the politics of apology in Japan by identifying three factors (*i.e.* structural, social, and geopolitical). These studies attempt to uncover the features that display the politics of apology in Japan. Four sections will be included in the paper. The second section will explain traditional mechanisms. Lastly, the factors for discouraging the politics of apology will be addressed in the third section.

## 2. Method

There are a lot of literatures about the politics of apology which take positive positions such as a kind of restitution (Barkan 2003), part of social product (Olick & Coughlin 2003), an interaction between offender and offended (Tavuchis 1991), and political strategies (Nobles 2008). On the other hand, it is argued that apologies may be ineffective since they often bring about domestic resistance by provoking denials and glorification, indicating that an apology does not necessarily play a role as the vital mechanism for resolving age-old issues in international relations (Lind 2008). It is also interesting that Hayner (2002) researches on cultural, religious, and local factors in politics of apology noting that the Cambodian organizations for reconciliation confronted the past in a way of being consistent with the cultural foundations of Cambodian society. Based on arguments from Lind (2008) and Hayner (2002), this paper employs the significance of local or regional element in “Comfort Women” case.

There exist various types of victims and offenders in this case. The primary victims are comfort women from Japan’s former colonies and occupied territories, and the primary offender is the Japanese government which was fully and systematically involved in the comfort women system. The secondary victims are family members of comfort women, and the secondary offenders are the Japanese soldiers who took part in this situation (Mendoza 2003). Table II indicates the detailed list of victims and offenders. The paper mainly focuses on the primary victims and offenders.

**Table II. List of Victims and Offenders.**

The Primary Victims	<b>Comfort women in Japan’s colonies and occupied territories</b>
<b>The Primary Offenders</b>	Japanese government
<i>The Secondary Victims</i>	- Family of comfort women - Women of sexual violence in war ( <i>i.e.</i> Bosnian women in ‘rape camps’ in the former Yugoslavia)
<i>The Secondary Offenders</i>	- Japanese soldiers who took part - The governments or groups that committed the sexual violence in war

Diverse justice mechanisms (*e.g.* truth commissions, trials, tribunals, traditional court, and lustration) have been increasingly utilized to address human rights abuses around the world, designing to transform

the relations between victims and perpetrators (Minow 1998; Bass 2000; Rigby 2001; Hayner 2002; Barrai & Roper 2005; and Clark 2008). In “Comfort Women” issue during World War II, some kinds of justice mechanisms such as trial, tribunal, reparation programs, and resolution (Reuter News 2007; and Park 1997) have also been employed to assuage the conflicts between the victims (comfort women) and offenders (the Japanese government). However, none of them gave fruitful results. Trials, which started in 1991, have not ruled against the Japanese government. Despite the judgment against Japanese war criminals charged with enslaving comfort women, the International War Crimes Tribunal on Japan’s Military Slavery in Tokyo in 2000 was legally ineffective because it was people’s tribunal organized by Asian women and human rights organizations and supported by international NGOs (Sakamoto 2001). The Asian Women’s Fund (AWF), which was considered as a private fund by the Japanese government, was established to compensate comfort women for wrongdoing during World War II (NGO Shadow Report to CEDAW). These justice mechanisms could not produce satisfying results in ‘Comfort Women’ case. Notwithstanding, analyzing the effectiveness of justice mechanism is indispensable for understanding this transition process.

## **II.1. Transitional Mechanism**

### **II.1.1. Trials**

From 1991, silent comfort women continued to sue the Japanese government demanding compensation and an official apology. Japanese courts have been dealing with various comfort women cases since that time. The plaintiffs in those cases faced a lot of legal hindrances such as sovereign immunity, statutes of limitations, and waiver of claims under the San Francisco Peace Treaty. However, efforts have been made to remove the obstacles by taking a legal action against the Japanese government based on international law (The Law Library of Congress 2008).

To date, most cases have been filed against the Japanese government in the Tokyo court in Japan except one sued in the US District Court: 1) 35 members of the Association of Korean Victims (Dec. 6, 1991); 2) 10 South Korean Women (Dec. 25, 1992); 3) 18

Philippine women (April 2, 1993); 4) Song Shin-Do, a native of South Korea (April 3, 1993); 5) 8 Dutch citizens (Jan 24, 1994); 6) 14 Chinese Women (August 7, 1995); 7) 2 Chinese Women (Feb 23, 1996); 8) 9 Taiwanese Women (July 14, 1999); 9) 15 comfort women in the US District Court for the District of Columbia (Sep. 18, 2000); and 10) 8 comfort women from Hainan Island (July 16, 2001). Table II.1.1 presents these cases in detail.

**Table II.1.1 List of Trials.**

<b>Date</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>District</b>	<b>Verdict</b>
Dec. 6, 1991	35 Koreans	Tokyo District	Dismissed
Dec. 25, 1992	10 Koreans	Tokyo District	Dismissed
April 2, 1993	18 Philippine	Tokyo District	Dismissed
April 3, 1993	1 Korean	Tokyo District	Dismissed
Jan 24, 1994	8 Dutch	Tokyo District	Dismissed
Aug. 7, 1995	14 Chinese	Tokyo District	Dismissed
Feb. 23, 1996	2 Chinese	Tokyo District	Dismissed
July 14, 1999	9 Taiwanese	Tokyo District	Dismissed
Sep. 18, 2000	15 comfort women	The US District Court	Dismissed
July 16, 2001	1 Hainan	Tokyo District	Dismissed

**Source: Memory & Reconciliation in the Asia-Pacific (2000).**

Although a number of survivors have filed legal actions in the courts of Japan, most of these suits have made little progress. These failings in the courts of Japan have led the tormented comfort women to sue Japan in US courts. The first lawsuit of comfort women in the United States court was filed by fifteen former comfort women on September 18, 2000 (*Hwang Geum Joo, et al. v. Japan*). The Japanese government was requested to make compensation and offer an apology to comfort women. On October 4, 2001, however, the case was dismissed by the US District Judge on the ground that the resolution should come from diplomatic means, not from the courts. Despite the appeal on the decision of the District Court, the District Court dismissed the appeal on June 27, 2003 (Memory & Reconciliation in the Asia Pacific 2000).

It is worth thinking how this case has not been “internationalized.” The US government urged dismissal of the victim’s claims on behalf of the Japanese government in this comfort women suit. The US government forced the *Hwang* courts to interpret treaties between Japan and the Allies as settling all claims between the parties. This

produces a surprising contrast to the US support for the former victims of Nazi war crimes. In fact, the US government has never asked dismissal of suits against the Nazi regime based on similar postwar treaties involving the US and Germany (Koh 2007). Considering that the US courts depend on executive interpretation regarding the issue in nature of politics, an American executive branch apathetic to Asian victims of war crimes contributes to the failure of “Hwang v. Japan” case. In the European case, the executive interprets that being in favor of victims improves relations and increases trade. Although the US courts may be compassionate toward the claims of Asian victims, they are technically driven by the executive to dismiss these suits (Gao 2007).

### II.1.2. Tribunal

In the International Military Tribunal for the Far East (the Tokyo Trial) established by the US-led-allies in 1945, seven people were sentenced to death. Despite the recognition of the Allies that Japan was implicated in recruiting and exploiting comfort women, no Japanese was charged for the “Comfort Women” cases at the Tokyo Trial (Matsui 2000). The International Military Tribunal for Far East failed to fulfill its duty by being incapable of convicting those who committed the war crime against comfort women (Chinkin 2001). With the motive of preventing the spread of communism in East Asia, the United States considered Japan as the pillar of the region by disregarding to punish war criminals (Koh 2007). This explanation for failing in execution at the Tokyo Trial implies the importance of considering the local factor, which reflects geopolitical factor in Japan’s case. The Dutch Military Tribunal in Batavia was the only exceptional tribunal which indicted Japanese war criminals on charges of enslaving thirty-five Dutch women in Indonesia by passing sentences on nine people (Meade 2002).

In December 2000, the Women’s International War Crimes Tribunal on Japan’s Military Sexual Slavery in Tokyo held by ten countries (*i.e.* South Korea, North Korea, China, the Philippines, Indonesia, Taiwan, Malaysia, East Timor, the Netherlands, and Japan) judged that Japan was responsible for committing crimes against humanity such as slavery, trafficking, forced labor, and rape. The tribunal, moreover, requested the Japanese government to admit the

wrongdoing during World War II by offering an official apology and making reparation to comfort women. However, the tribunal's decision had no legal force due to its lack of legal authority (Sakamoto 2001).

What motivated the Allied Forces not to pursue this issue at the war crimes trials? It has been argued that colonialism and racism were engaged in the Allies' reluctance to solve the issue. The Allies made the decision to prosecute the Axis powers in the name of the United Nations. The Allies with full authority for prosecution accused the Japanese who committed war crimes against their own nationals. The Koreans, victims of Japanese war crimes, were not considered due to its colonial domination. This argument presents how the role of the Allied Forces is of vital importance in discouraging the justice mechanism (Dolgopol 1995).

### **II.1.3. Financial Compensation Program**

With an unofficial apology from the Japanese government in 1993, the lack of compensation remained in Japan's apology politics. The government made an attempt to take financial responsibility by using the Asian Women's Fund (AWF) which Japanese civilians established through private funds in 1995. However, compensation without formal apology and legal recognition of guilt by the Japanese government led comfort women to refuse the financial offer from the AWF. The Japanese government only considered the AWF as a private organization which aims at addressing the financial issues in the comfort women case. The fact that the government depended on the AWF with private sources in dealing with compensation reinforces the belief that Japan avoided any truthful acknowledgement of wrongdoing. The termination of the AWF results from the inability of the AWF to pay reparations to all comfort women and to convince the comfort women that compensation entails legal rather than moral responsibility. Without the acknowledgment of guilt accompanied by a formal apology, women saw this offer as a cheap bargain to buy their silence (NGO shadow report to CEDAW 2009, Meade 2002).

### **II.1.4. Resolutions**

On July 30, 2007, the US House of Representatives passed a resolution (H. Res. 121) in order to put pressure on the government of



Japan to acknowledge legal responsibility, and to issue a formal apology to comfort women. However, this resolution was entirely rejected by the Japanese government (Hayashi 2008). The resolution did not have a significant effect on solving the problem of the “Comfort Women” issue. Nevertheless, it is necessary to understand the politics of this resolution as one of transition processes in justice mechanism. This bill passed by the US House of Representatives was introduced by Congressman Michael Honda, Chairman of Congressional Asian Pacific American Caucus and a long-time advocate of human rights issues. A group of Japanese consisted of historians, political scientists, policy specialists, and security analysts were organized to convince Congress of giving the resolution on the “Comfort Women” issue. Korean-Americans who supported the resolution as well as influential top American politicians were the crucial factors behind the success of the mentioned resolution (Tokudome 2007).

### **III. Results & Discussion**

Over the past 20 years, there have been a handful of apologies from various prime ministers and chief cabinet secretaries. Former comfort women only consider these apologies as an official apology from the Japanese government. The Japanese government never made a formal and legal apology to comfort women. In this section, I will focus on the factors for discouraging reconciliation.

#### **III.1. State-centered accounts**

The state-centered accounts that have been an impelling force for East Asian government policy in modern history laid down a considerable number of State-led-policy in East Asia. In particular, developmentalism was epitomized as the leading role for enormous economic growth in East Asia. The enormous economic growth in East Asia has been explained by developmentalism initiated by states, which led a state to direct, control, and monitor the private sectors so as to boost its national economy (Tun 2011). In addition to developmentalism in state-led-policy, other social policies were also adopted by the state. In South Korea, the Medical Insurance Law (MIL) was revised substantially in December 1976, and it conducted to the mandatory enrolment of the entire population in health insurance.

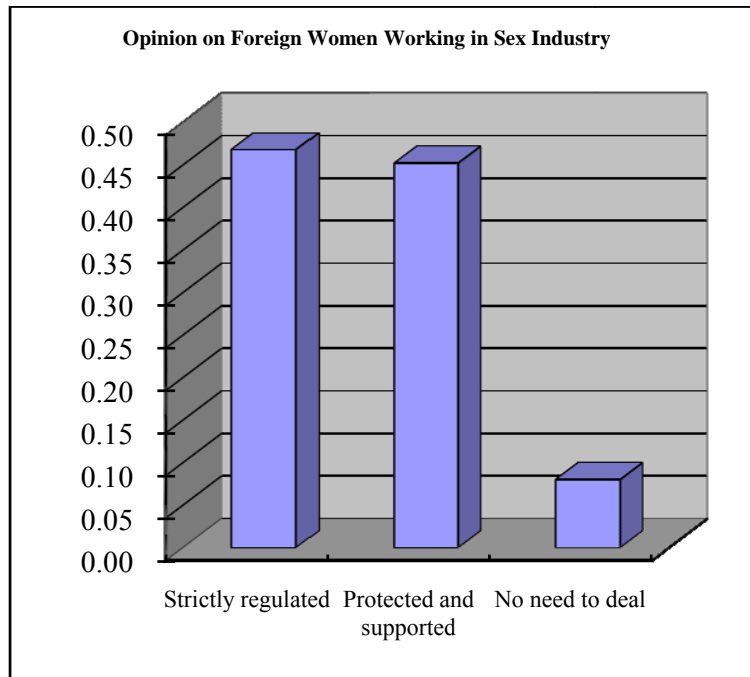
Sociopolitical events around 1975 and competition between the South and North Korean regimes propelled President Park Chung-hee to support for the revision and implementation of the MIL (Joo 1999). Another example is the South Korean government permission for the prostitution system around the US troops during 1960s. Economic activities of the US troops in South Korea accounted for 25% of GNP in the 1960s, and the half of the economy of the US military town was captured by this business. The economic benefits from the presence of the US military army developed the state centered motive to support for organizing prostitutions near the US military bases (Lee 2007).

The organized prostitution system has a long history in Japan. A government- licensed prostitution system has started in Edo period (1603-1867), and maintained until the 20th century (Morishima 2008). The subordinate position of Japanese women before the war indicates the background of the establishment of sexual slavery by the Japanese imperial government during the war. With historical background of exploiting Japanese women, military sexual slavery by Japan during 1932-1945 was a systematically planned institution implemented by the Japanese army (Kwon 1994). The Japanese patriarchal system from the Meiji period possesses the feature of the subordination of each family and woman to the state and the emperor (Min 2003). Comfort stations were created through military policy induced by cooperation among the Japanese military, administrators in government, and the prostitution industry in Japan (Tanaka 2002). The military sexual slavery system was designed to carry out the intended goals including the sexual satisfaction of the Japanese soldiers susceptible to sexual violence against the civilians of occupied territories, and prevention of sexually transmitted diseases among Japanese soldiers (Ling 08). It was imperative to seek a solution for reviving Japan's brutal image in international community after the Nanjing Massacre. The comfort system was approved by top Japanese bureaucrats who perceived comfort stations system as the solution for circumventing the sexual assault against the colonial population (Gao 2007). The importance of the state role in policy explains why apology cannot be its effective mechanism for reconciliation. To apologize means to reject the value of state-centered policies.

### III.2. Cultural / Social Factor

Nami and Keiko (2009) show the survey of perception of Japanese public on women working in sex industry. The data analyzed in their paper are comprised of responses from 5000 men and women nationally from the age of 18 to less than 65 years. Figure III.2.1 provides the opinion over foreign women working in sex entertainment. In response to the question, ‘How should foreign women working in sex entertainment be treated?,’ public opinions are divided into three categories: ‘They should be strictly regulated’ (46.8%), ‘They should be protected and supported’ (45.2%), and ‘There’s no particular need to deal with them’ (8%). Their responses fall mainly into two groups (‘regulation’ and ‘protection and support’). It should be noted that nearly 50 percent of the respondents support for foreign women working in sex industry.

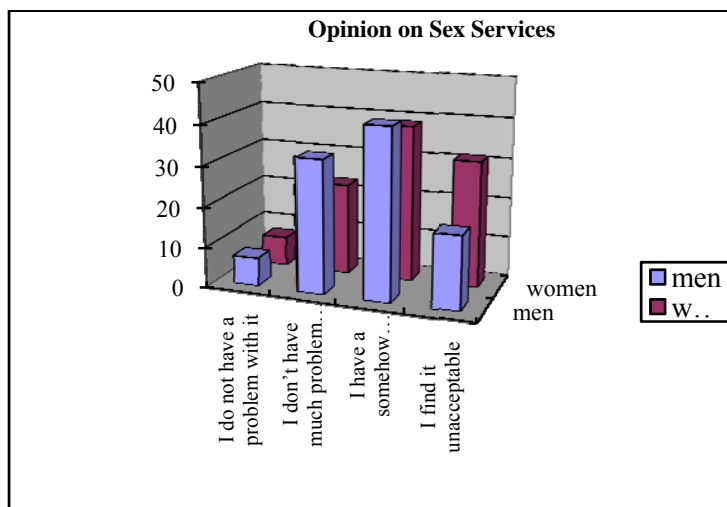
**Figure III.2.1. Japanese Opinion on Foreign Women Working in Sex Industry.**



Source: Nami and Keiko (2009).

Figure III. 2.2 indicates the result of asking respondents about their thoughts on the act of buying sexual services. Respondents were asked to provide answers about how the act of purchasing sexual services as a business transaction is viewed generally by society. Regarding buying sexual services, men had a higher tolerance level than women. For example, in contrast to the approximately 40% of men who answered that society in general was accepting the purchase of services, approximately 30% of women stated the same (the total for ‘I have no problem with that’ and ‘I don’t have much of a problem with that’ responses combined). The responses in each category are as follows: 1) I don’t have a problem with it (men 7% / women 7.3%), 2) I don’t have much problem with it (men 33%/ women 22.8%), 3) I have somehow a problem with it (men 41.9%/ women 38.7%), and 4) I find it unacceptable (men 18.1% / women 31.2%). Hayashi (2008) also provides responses from the mass media in Japan. Most of the media in Japan gave the results of responses unfavorably to “Comfort Women” issue. They insist that the Japanese military comfort women system did not constitute a crime but was a common occurrence during war, the Japanese government has already apologized several times, and Japanese people are not interested in Japan’s war responsibilities.

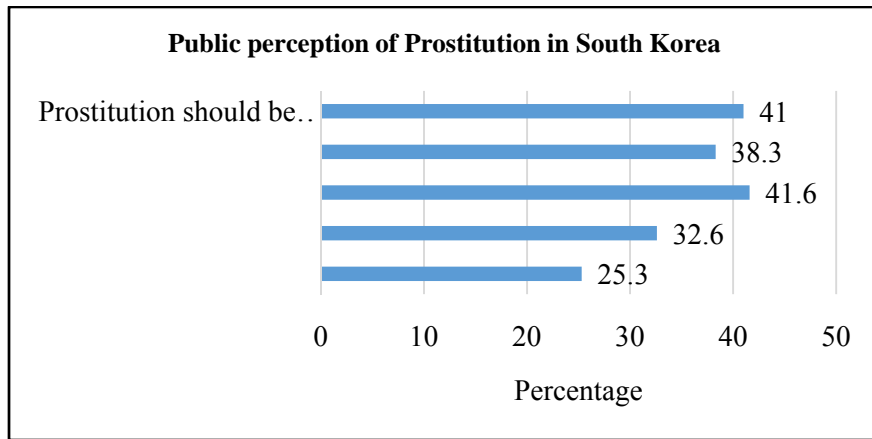
**Figure III.2.2. Japanese Opinion on Sex Services.**



Source: Nami and Keiko (2009).

The results of the survey of South Korea’s public perception on prostitution and sex industry carried out by the Korea Church Women United are illustrated in Figure III.2.3. (Weekly Christian News). 25.3% of those surveyed respond that they do not know about the existing law on prohibition of prostitution. Prostitution is not a matter of morals for 32.6% of the respondents. 41.6% of the respondents answer that prostitution should be partly permitted, and 38.3% of total respondents say that the state-regulated prostitution should be enforced by law. 41% of people believe that prostitution should be recognized as a job.

**Figure III.2.3. Public perception of Prostitution in South Korea**



Source: Korea Church Women United (2003).

According to Lind (2008), due to domestic resistance derived from denials and glorification, apologies may be futile. She argues that clear strategic judgment is not spoiled by even intense emotional reactions. Her argument indicates that apology does not need to be the vital mechanisms for solving problems in international relations. In the society where the majority of the public perceive the women working for the sex industry as the natural culture of their own society, apology for comfort women, viewed as the working women in the sex industry, can provoke the resistance among the public. “Comfort Women” case is considered as the mere issue of women working in the mentioned industry in such a society. The present

public perception on women in society should not be overlooked with regards to the significant role of the existing social system in politics of apology in the region. A social public perception about women and sex workers contributes to rejecting the voices of comfort women in the postwar years.

### III.3. Geopolitical Factor

Regional politics in East Asia cannot be discussed without the geopolitics shaped by the US presence in the region. The US geostrategic intention to contain the spread of communism in the region has affected the economy of countries in the region fostering economic growth in marked contrast to the opposite economic performance in the Middle East & North Africa (MENA). While Germany tried to rectify its injustice in the past through apologies, Japan remained insensitive to its wrongdoing in the modern history by refusing formal apologies. In Northeast Asian area, complicated relationships exist especially among three countries (*i.e.* the US, Korea, and Japan) regarding perpetrators and victims. In the present time, protests in Korea and Japan about the violence and injury inflicted by the US troops stationed in their countries present deep-rooted grievances. The US has avoided direct apologies and restitution for specific wrongs committed in East Asia. The US has not issued apologies for the nuclear bombings with its own record of killing about 100,000 civilian noncombatants (The Associated Press 2005). 200,000 of Japanese women were comfort women for the Occupation troops (*i.e.* US, British and Australian), even though they were paid in US dollars, and their families were saved from starvation after Japan's defeat (Tanaka 2002). The US refusal of apology for its wrong-doing to Japan gives some initiative to Japan not to acknowledge their own past injustices. The US has played a strategic and crucial role in politics of apology in East Asia by making the distinction between victims and perpetrators unclear. There is a relatively low level of support from the US for the politics of apology in the region.

In Germany, the influence of European countries was not disregarded, since former Axis and Allied powers remained in close physical proximity after the war. On the other hand, Japan was defeated by the United States, a nation both geographically and

culturally distant. As the occupying force, the United States did not oversee the enforcement of Japan's reparations practices. Instead, the US was preoccupied with rebuilding and strengthening Japan against the perceived Communist threat and to stabilize US hegemony in Asia. The strategic interest of the United States in Asia allowed Japan to avoid taking sufficient measures to make reparations to its victims in war. The United States facilitated Japan to play a role as a bulwark against communism in order to meet the US interests in East Asia by assisting Japan to restore its devastated economy. These geopolitical situations provided Japan with the leeway to evade the fulfillment of reparation policy with the support of the United States. The brittle relationships between Japan and other Asian countries were formed through peace treaties, which were not signed deliberately due to the US's pressure (Park 1997). Containing the spread of communism was more important than healing the pain of comfort women or redressing Japan's wrongdoings in the region for the US. Herein, Japanese apology is associated to the US geopolitics in the region. Specific local factor should be considered in order to explain why the Japanese government is reluctant to apologize. As Hayner (2002) argues that Cambodia did not opt for a truth commission for its own mechanism in solving the problem because of its reasons based on local factor, Japan has no motive to choose the mechanism for reconciliation due to its regional and local characteristics.

#### **IV. Conclusion**

More than two decades have passed since the victims of the comfort women system broke their long silence to speak the truth and call for resolution of the issue. However, the issue of comfort women still remains unaddressed. A number of the old victims have passed away without seeing the Japanese government offering its official apology and compensation. Although the US House of Representatives and numerous parliaments all around the world have adopted resolutions on comfort women and recommended the Japanese government to address the issue since 2007, Japanese position on comfort women issue is still unchanged. There have been attempts for reconciliation without a formal state apology or national compensation to victims. This lack of appropriate response is based on the logic that Japan has already

apologized on many occasions and that the suffered countries such as China and Korea should stop their actions of provoking past issues. Amazingly, this stance derives from the Japanese public, some intellectuals in Japan as well as officials of the Japanese Foreign Ministry (Hayashi 2008).

This paper has attempted to identify why Japan failed to apologize adequately by examining structural, social, and geopolitical factors. Accounts of this failing are in accordance with the aspects of Lind (2008) on the dilemma of apologies in international relation and Hayner (2002) on the importance of local factors. Given that East Asia has used social policy as part of a state-led ideology seeking to legitimize economic developmentalism and its required sociopolitical order (Goodman et al 1998; Tang 2000; Ramesh 2000; Chen 2000), it is unsurprising that the Japanese government policy in the contemporary period has been pursuing the state-centered ideology. This state-centered ideology is one of the factors which accounts for why the effective mechanism for reconciliation is not Japan's apology. Apology can be linked to objection of the value of state-centered policies. The women working for the sex industry is considered as a natural culture of its own society by the general public in Japan's society, and the public can resist the politics of apology for comfort women. Lind (2008) argues that apologies may be vain in reconciliation because the government often faces severe domestic resistance. Hayner (2002)'s argument is applied in the case of geopolitical factor. Japanese apology is relevant to the politics of apology in the US Its own local factor should be considered in order to explain why Japanese government is reluctant to apologize. Japan has no benefit to choose the mechanism for reconciliation based on this local logic.

One of the goals in reconciliation is to heal the wounds of victims. The elderly and former comfort women have been suffering the most from the delayed resolution of the issue. Considering that the current Japanese society is not sympathetic to these comfort women, Conformity to the current society's perception will lead the loss of a chance for curing the pain of victims. Reconciliation requires to be achieved among the ordinary people in Japan as well as among those in power. In addition, it is important that the international community should neither overlook nor understate the local factor that each



country encompasses in designing the proper reconciliation mechanism. Japan does not apologize for its own wrongdoing because this comfort women policy was derived from both state-centric accounts and the socio-cultural element under the geopolitical situation of the cold war and presence of the US army in the region. Japan's failure for apology in case of "Comfort Women" demonstrates that the regional complexities span to the regional relationship between countries affecting the state's politics of apology in the region.

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