

The reality of the relationship between Korea and Japan

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I believe that many people are well aware of the reality of the relationship between Korea and Japan, which has been severely deteriorated due to the territorial controversies and historical recognition controversies. The Abe administration of Japan, a right wing conservative cabinet, unleashes provocative comments that stir unrest in Korea and China. This brand of behavior, I believe, is one of the founding factors that have caused the deterioration, making the Korea-Japan relationship irrecoverable.

Japan states that Korea's stubborn attitude is the cause of this deterioration, however, I believe that the underlying cause is the way of thinking possessed by the majority of intellectuals in Japan which has persisted for some time.

The bill to amend the Constitution by the Sankei Newspaper of Japan, a newspaper agency representing the conservatives of Japan and the Liberal Democratic Party of Japan, modifies Article 20 of the Constitution, "Freedom of Religion, by stating that government ministers may participate in 'conventional religious events.' This amendment has been proposed so that visits made by the Japanese prime minister or cabinet ministers to the controversial Yasukuni Shrine may not be considered unconstitutional. The Yasukuni Shrine matter originated from the building of a memorial site, which consist of small shrines, in 16 places within the Chōshū Domain (Prefecture, Yamaguchi Prefecture) after the Chōshū Domain brought down the Edo Shogunate in the 1860s.

After constructing the new Meiji government after overthrowing the Edo Shogunate, they built a memorial site in Tokyo under the name of Tokyo Shokonsha, and changed the name to Yasukuni Shrine, ten years later. The purpose of the Yasukuni Shrine is to elevate the status of the war dead through prayer and glorification as gods, in order to summon strength and perseverance in time of war. This current atmosphere of thought envelopes consumes the Chōshū Domain and Shinzō Abe, who is a descendant of Chōshū Domain and is inheriting this kind of Yasukuni spirit and is seeking to return the purpose of the

Yasukuni Shrine to as it was before 1945. If Japan begins to have a formal military, there will be people dying from wars that are engaged in by that military, and Shinzō Abe will likely enshrine those war dead at Yasukuni Shrine, just as his predecessors did before him. The Chōshū Domain produced many outstanding individuals who created modern Japan, such as Ito Hirobumi, by capturing the center of the Meiji government. Because Shinzō Abe's hometown is in the Yamaguchi Prefecture, the former Chōshū Domain, he has the will and intent to inherit the glory of his descendants. His maternal grandfather was Nobusuke Kishi, a politician from Chōshū Domain and a Class-A war criminal. Consequently, Shinzō Abe denies Class-A war criminals to restore the honor of his maternal grandfather and denies the decision made by the Tokyo Tribunal, hence, the International Military Tribunal for the Far East, which designated war criminals.

Shinzō Abe holds the belief that the Asia-Pacific war was a liberation war that liberated Asian people who were suffering under Western control. His erroneous belief gave rise to his absurd remarks, "The definition of invasion has not been determined internationally or academically."

However, Article 11 of the San Francisco Peace Treaty shows that Japan was able to become independent again by accepting all decisions made by the International Military Tribunal for the Far East. Japan recognized Class-A war criminals by signing on the San Francisco Peace Treaty on September 1951, and knows that is how Japan was able to gain independence once again. Nevertheless, Shinzō Abe does not hesitate in making statements that ignore the world's order under the UN or the San Francisco system.

Currently, the Abe administration is determined to secretly circumvent the UN system and the San Francisco Treaty formed after the war. Their allegations stating that there was no coercion in the gathering of Korean comfort women, the proof of the Nanjing Massacre was fabricated, or Korean Patriot Ahn Jung-geun was a terrorist, came out of their plan to instill a distorted historical sense that Japan was justified in its past war activities and to deny the dishonorable past of Japan.

Their goal is to revise the status of Japanese self-defense forces into a formal national defense force by amending the Constitution. In order to amend the Constitution, they must obtain 50% or more votes by Japanese citizens for the approval of the amendment of the Constitution through a referendum. Thus, the Abe administration, which is heavily influenced by conservative thought, views this agenda as an urgent priority and is trying to change the minds of the Japanese people by frequently making absurd remarks designed to fan conservative flames.

The old Japanese army did not engage in wars, such as the Manchurian Incident or the Sino-Japanese War, through the direct order of the central government of Japan. Actually, they continued denouncements by

creating a situation in which the central government could not help but to confirm, after local Japanese soldiers voluntarily carried out military operations. The military officers assassinated Inukai, the Japanese prime minister, when criticizing the puppet state of Manzhouguo, established by Japan in Northeast China. They attempted the assassination of Okada, the Japanese prime minister, during the 2.26 incident.

There has been no incident in which Japan vigorously regretted its denouncements and attacks that destroyed the order of the old Japanese military. This is exactly the reason why Korea is concerned that the Japanese military may be revived again. Perhaps the most troubling concern for Korea is the will of Japan to restore a formal military while not truthfully expressing regret over its past. The pretext of exercising a right to their self-defense may have some merit, it cannot be fully known what types of acts will be conducted by the Japanese military.

I hope that the United States and Western advanced countries help to put a halt to the actions of the Japanese government in the context of its history and how this has been fueling great anxiety among Koreans. As the United States and Western advanced countries played a leading role in the post-World War II re-shaping of Asia, it is not an exaggeration to say that the continuing peace of Asia depends on the great influence of the United States and Western advanced countries. I hope that these nations may take the lead on these topics, so that Korea, Japan, and China may reach true reconciliation for true collective prosperity and peace in our region.