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國際學碩士學位論文

**The Role of the United States  
in the Comfort Women Controversy  
between South Korea and Japan**

한일간 위안부 문제에서  
미국의 역할

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國際學科 國際地域學專攻

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**The Role of the United States  
in the Comfort Women Controversy  
between South Korea and Japan**

A thesis presented by

Eun Young Lee

To

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In partial fulfillment of the requirements

For the degree of master in International Studies

Graduate School of International Studies

Seoul National University

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# The Role of the United States in the Comfort Women Controversy between South Korea and Japan

한일간 위안부 문제에서 미국의 역할

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## Abstract

# The Role of the United States in the Comfort Women Controversy between South Korea and Japan

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On April 30, 2015, Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, became the first Japanese prime minister to deliver a speech to a joint session of the U.S. Congress. Critics hoped to see Abe's acknowledgement on the coercion and involvement of the Japanese government in the comfort women issue, but Prime Minister strayed away. The Korean media took it as a failure of the South Korean government in the zero-sum game to get America's support.

As such, in a recent occurrence, the 'comfort women' issue between South Korea and Japan has taken place in the U.S. soil by Korean-American communities erecting monuments and statues commemorating comfort women. The U.S. Congress also passed bills and resolutions regarding the 'comfort women' issue, perceiving the issue as a violation against women's rights, intertwined with the universal values and norms that the United States advocates. President Barack Obama and government officials have also revealed their concerns on the issue that is becoming an impasse between South Korea and Japan. In this context, this paper looks at the role and stance of the United States in comfort women issue, which it

perceives a human rights issue and an impediment against cooperation between its two most important allies in Northeast Asia.

The goal of this paper is to scrutinize (1) U.S. stance along the lines of South Korea-Japan relations regarding the comfort women issue and (2) the dynamics between the U.S. government and the U.S. Congress in order to analyze the United States' official role in the comfort women issue that does not directly involve the United States and is not exactly a national security issue.

**Keywords: Comfort Women, South Korea-Japan Relations, United States and its Allies, U.S. Foreign Policy**

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## **Introduction (The Puzzle)**

South Korea and Japan have served as cornerstones of U.S. security architecture in Northeast Asia since the end of WWII. While both countries share universal values and norms such as human rights, democracy, and free market system, historical issues have become serious impediments to South Korea-Japan cooperation. One of the biggest issue on the agenda is the so-called ‘comfort women,’ a euphemism for women, many of them Koreans, who were forced to provide sex to wartime soldiers of imperial Japan. The ‘comfort women’ controversy has become one of the major obstacles between South Korea and Japan for almost three decades since the disclosure of the issue by former comfort women Kim Hak-sun. Despite numerous attempts by both governments and civil societies, the issue remains an urgent yet difficult issue between South Korea and Japan. As of 2015, South Korea has become more determined to resolve the issue, mainly to get a formal recognition and apology from the Japanese government because among the 234 former comfort women currently registered with the South Korean government, only a few dozen are still alive.

In a recent occurrence, the ‘comfort women’ issue between South Korea and Japan has taken place in U.S. soil by Korean-American communities erecting monuments and statues commemorating comfort women. The U.S. Congress also passed bills and resolutions regarding the ‘comfort women’ issue perceiving this not only as a historical dispute, but also a women’s rights violation issue, intertwined with the universal values and norms that the United States advocates. President Barack Obama and government officials have also revealed their concerns on the issue that is continuing the impasse between South Korea and Japan.

In this context, this paper looks at the role and position of the United States in comfort women issue, which it perceives a human rights issue and an impediment against cooperation between its two most important allies in Northeast Asia. The comfort women issue not only involves South Korea, but also other countries such as Taiwan, China, Philippines, Malaysia, Indonesia, East Timor, and the Netherlands; with the number of South Korean women being the highest.<sup>1</sup> In order to be recognized as a universal human rights issue, support from the United Nations is important, but from the South Korean government perspective, reinforcement from the United States who is an ally and the world's leading power is meaningful. Tracing the moments of cooperation and conflict between South Korea and Japan, this paper aims to answer questions such as "What is the United States' stance in the comfort women issue? How does America's role and opinion influence South Korea and Japan? What role can we expect the United States to play in the midst of few surviving former comfort women?"

To answer the questions above, this paper examines the executive and legislative branch of the United States, the two actors in America's foreign policy making process. Official statements and documents by high-level officials will be taken into account. This includes remarks, Congressional reports, resolutions, bills, and letters by Congressmen and officials. According to the research data, the appointment of the Secretary of State and the configuration of the Congress become determining factors in the positions and strategies of the United States in the comfort women issue.

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<sup>1</sup> Digital Museum: The Comfort Women Issue and the Asian Women's Fund. accessed April 19 2015.

While the Korean-American community, NGOs, and other interest groups are important actors in the issue, with local governments also taking action due to the demands by voters and residents, the decision-maker is the executive branch. Thus, local governments will be treated as part of the legislative branch. I would also like to take note that the executive branch does not implement an agenda nor execute a policy that is not in accord with the legislative branch, and vice versa.

It is true that the aim of United States' foreign policy on South Korea-Japan relations is to strengthen bilateral relations, but the United States has always been careful not to be seen as taking sides. Especially when it comes to issues such as comfort women which is very sensitive yet not related to national security. Whenever there is friction between the two countries, the United States has always been present, at times being visible, at times not visible, exercising political leverage. What is consistent is that the United States was never truly absent. The United States' foreign agenda on the comfort women issue is hard to define and not always consistent, I measured America's involvement by measuring the intensity of engagement (y-axis) and the level of visibility (x-axis). Through this measure, this paper organizes U.S. agenda into four different approaches, according to the framework by Cheol Hee Park (2011), in a paper on U.S. leadership in general historical issues between South Korea and Japan.<sup>2</sup> I will borrow Park's agenda, and slightly alter the framework adaptable to comfort women issue.

The first chapter is an overview of the comfort women issue, such

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<sup>2</sup> Cheol Hee Park, "Getting Away or Getting In: U.S. Strategic Opinion in the Historical Controversy between its Allies," in *U.S. Leadership, History, and Bilateral Relations in Northeast Asia*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

as the facts, the international society's efforts to defend former comfort women's human rights, comfort women issue in the U.S. before the Obama administration, and how the United States' foreign policy is made and Obama administration's liberal values. The following three chapters will deal with the time period starting from 2009 to 2015, with each chapter devoting to two year intervals. The chapters will first depict the South Korea-Japan relations during the given time period, analyze the U.S. government's reaction, then that of the Congress. This research paper maps out four types of strategies and behaviors that the United States took under President Obama's administration. This paper is an analysis of the comfort women issue particularly from the United States' point of view by examining U.S.' behavior and agenda that is preceded by any event between South Korea and Japan.

# Chapter 1. Theoretical Framework

## 1-1. Literature Review

In order to understand the politics of the wartime atrocity issue, I refer to Jennifer Lind's *Sorry States: Apologies in the International Politics* (2008), and *Troubled Apologies Among Japan, Korea, and the United States* (2008) by Alexis Dudden. I also referred to Woon Chun's *How U.S. Foreign Policy is Made: Freedom and Leadership* (2007) to understand the policy-making process of the United States.

*U.S. Leadership, History, and Bilateral Relations in Northeast Asia* (2011) edited by Gilbert Rozman is a compilation of historical controversies in Northeast Asia.<sup>3</sup> While most discussions of history have centered on the rift between Japan and the victimized countries, this volume devotes a section on the role of the United States in the political impasse between South Korea and Japan on historical memories.

Kazuhiko Togo's contribution to the edition, "Japan-South Korea Relations and the Role of the United States on History," offers three approaches that the United States took in the historical dispute between South Korea and Japan.<sup>4</sup> According to Togo, the United States took an established practice of "non-intervention" during the 1965 Normalization process. While the United States had the legitimate interest in expecting closer relations between its two allies, they believed it was best to stay away

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<sup>3</sup> Rozman, Gilbert. 2011. *U.S. Leadership, History, and Bilateral Relations in Northeast Asia*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

<sup>4</sup> Kazuhiko Togo, "Japan-South Korea Relations and the Role of the United States on History," in Gilbert Rozman eds. *U.S. Leadership, History, and Bilateral Relations in Northeast Asia* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 97-123.

from concrete historical controversies for an intervention by an outsider may produce negative outcomes. Another approach that Kazuhiko puts forth is the “historically integrated” approach in which the United States was actually involved. This approach can be seen during the Katsura-Taft Agreement in which the United States “approved” Japanese annexation of Korea, and became an inside participant. Finally, Kazuhiko argues that the Congress of the United States took the “judge-mediator” position in the comfort women issue when the U.S. Congressional Resolution on the comfort women issue passed on July 30, 2007.

Cheol Hee Park also investigates the United States’ strategy concerning history issues between South Korea and Japan in the same edition under the title, “Getting Away or Getting In: U.S. Strategic Opinion in the Historical Controversy between its Allies.”<sup>5</sup> According to Park, there are four logical possibilities of U.S. engagement in the history issue: active disengagement, passive disengagement, passive engagement, and active engagement. Proving the approaches by providing empirical evidence, Park claims that the U.S. Congress adopted “active engagement” approach in the comfort women issue in 2007. The United States actively engaged by acting as a referee and trying to come to a resolution. Like Kazuhiko, Park refers to the U.S. Congressional resolution on comfort women after Abe’s statement on comfort women in 2007.

## **1-2. Argument**

Although the two scholars used different frameworks in analyzing

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<sup>5</sup> Cheol Hee Park, “Getting Away or Getting In: U.S. Strategic Options in the Historical Controversy between Its Allies,” 124-142.

U.S. role in historical disputes, the two agree that the United States (the Congress) approached the ‘comfort women’ in an active manner. Togo analyzed the United States—specifically the U.S. Congress—role in the “comfort women” issue as the “judge-mediator” and Park also concluded that the Congress of the United States took an “active engagement” approach in the ‘comfort women’ issue.

Much has been written on the comfort women issue and other history disputes between South Korea and Japan, but the works of Togo and Park are distinct in putting the U.S. role at the center of attention.<sup>6</sup> Both Togo and Park deals with South Korea-Japan historical memories in general, and emphasize the comfort women issue as a case where the Congress of the United States actively engaged. Thus, I was impelled to dig in deeper into the comfort women issue, and explore the dynamics of the U.S. Congress that has been very active in other countries’ dispute and the U.S. government.

Regarding historical conflict between South Korea and Japan, the United States has shown particular interest in the comfort women issue, perceiving it as human trafficking and human rights issue (while it has avoided engagement in other historical issues such as history textbook, Yasukuni Shrine visit, and the Dokdo/Takeshima issue). The comfort women issue between South Korea and Japan is a subtle and sensitive issue, yet it is an interesting case in which the United States shows interest in an issue that does not evolve around national security, and one that is between its most important allies in the region. However, the comfort women "uproar" within the United States and in the international society in

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<sup>6</sup> Gilbert Rozman (2011).

the recent years has not yet paved the way for the issue to be resolved. I argue that disalignment between the U.S. government and Congress' policy line sends South Korea and Japan wrong signs on the issue of comfort women that continues to distance the U.S' two allies.

### **1-3. Time Frame of the Research**

This paper will analyze the first and second Obama administration's foreign policy agenda on comfort women. Specifically from January 2009 when Democrat candidate Barack Obama became President, until the time when Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe made a historical speech in front of the U.S. Congress.

For the first time in history, the Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ) became the ruling party and produced Prime Minister Yukio Hatoyama who placed emphasis on Asia-centered policy more than U.S.-Japan relations. From 2009 to December 2012, three DPJ Prime Ministers—Yukio Hatoyama (Sept. 2009-June 2010), Naoto Kan (June 2010-Aug. 2011), Yoshihiko Noda (Sept. 2011-Dec. 2012)—reigned for three years from 2009 until December 2012 when Abe Shinzo of the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) took over the office. Prime Minister is the first prime minister to be elected twice and also the first prime minister to stay in office for more than a year since Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi (2001-2006).

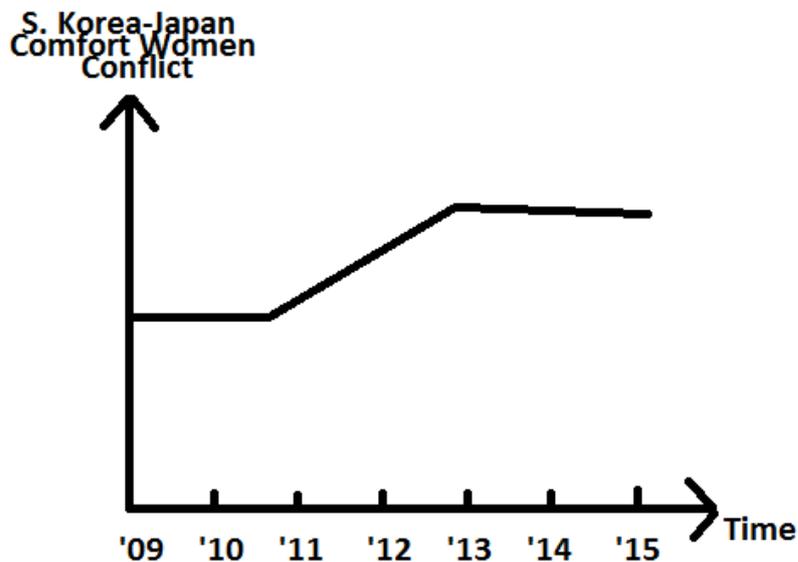
In South Korea, former businessman President Lee assumed presidency in February 2008, stressing the need to improve ties to the United States and Japan during the first three years.<sup>7</sup> However, the Korean Constitutional ruling on comfort women on August 30, 2011, that enforced

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<sup>7</sup> Cheol Hee Park (2011).

government-level discussion with Japan plagued bilateral ties. The first bilateral meeting between President Lee and Prime Minister Noda in Kyoto on December 17-18 marked the beginning of downfall of South Korea-Japan relations.

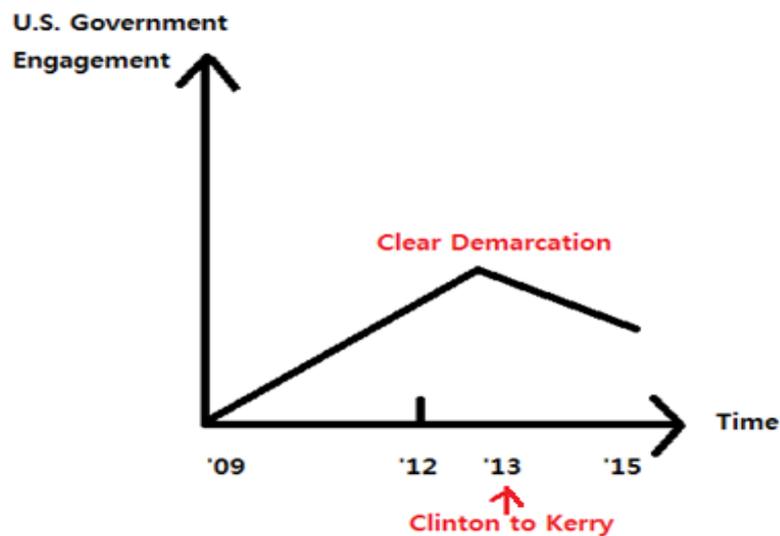
The bilateral relations continued to deteriorate as history revisionist Prime Minister Shinzo Abe and South Korea's first female President Park Geun-hye took office in 2013. The distance between Prime Minister Abe and President Park is more pronounced than any pair of leaders in Japan and South Korea in recent memory. Prime Minister Shinzo Abe has a history of claiming that "there is no evidence of coercion" of the women into working as comfort women. Unlike her predecessors—whose initial position on history was always positive in signaling future-oriented relations without recourse to history but in the latter part of the administration always referring to history—President Park did not repeat the course and brought the comfort women issue to the forefront from the beginning of her presidency. Since the early stage of her term, she has repeatedly refused to meet Prime Minister Shinzo Abe until the issue is resolved, and as a result, the two leaders have yet not met after three years of taking office. It can be said that from 2009 to 2011, South Korea-Japan relations were in relatively good terms, and then went downhill since 2011.



In the United States, the Obama administration came into office in 2009 after 8 years of Republican President, George W. Bush. As a candidate for president, Barack Obama railed against the Bush administration’s human rights policy and expressed particular interest in women’s rights and human trafficking of women and children. Hillary Clinton became the Secretary of State during the first term of Obama’s presidency. As a woman herself, She integrated women’s issues into foreign policy, linking the status of women to economic development and global stability. She also made engagement the centerpiece of foreign policy and announced the “Pivot to Asia” foreign strategy which means to shift America’s focus from the Middle East to Asia. Under Clinton, the keywords for U.S. foreign agenda were “Asia” and “human rights.”

However, since John Kerry took over in 2013, the keywords went back to the “Middle East” and as a war veteran, the areas that he focuses are

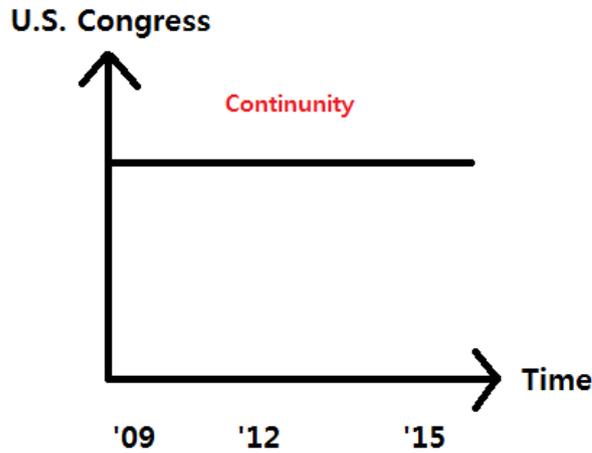
more practical with realist approaches. While Kerry and Clinton share the same idea under the same president, their styles and focus area are slightly different. The stark difference is that Clinton is a presidential aspirant and Kerry is a presidential also-ran.<sup>8</sup> This marks the clear difference between the two Secretaries of State.



In Congress, both the Senate and the House were initially dominated by the Democratic party from 2009 to 2011, but gradually transformed into Republican party-dominated Congress, starting with the House, and then both the Senate and the House by 2015. This implies in the beginning of Obama's presidency, the legislative branch was relatively in line with the executive branch. However, as the Republicans began to expand its power in 2011, and dominated the Congress in 2015, it became more and more difficult to make foreign policy decisions as can be seen in the table.

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<sup>8</sup> *The Week*. Nov. 26, 2013.



Time	111 <sup>th</sup> Congress (2009-2011)	112 <sup>th</sup> Congress (2011-2013)	113 <sup>th</sup> Congress (2013-2015)	114 <sup>th</sup> Congress (2015-2017)
Senate	Democrats (55D,+41R)	Democrats (51D+47R)	Democrats (51D+27R)	Republicans (44D+54R)
HoR	Democrats (256D+175R)	Republicans (241R+198D)	Republicans (241R+198D)	Republicans (247R+193D)

Analysis of America’s position will be carried in four distinct periods; 2009-August 2011; September 2011-2012; 2013-April 2015. This paper will first analyze South Korea-Japan relations and turn to U.S. government and Congress’ reactive behavior and agenda which will in turn, affect South Korea-Japan relations indirectly.

#### 1-4. Methodology

This thesis will mainly examine U.S. behavior and position directed to the ‘comfort women’ issue between its two allies—South Korea and Japan. I will be looking at remarks made by high officials of the U.S. State Department as well as the President; official documents such as resolutions, bills, letters, and reports by the U.S. Congress and the Congressional

Research Service (CRS). Finally, I will also consider physical objects such as the monuments and statues erected on U.S. soil, commemorating ‘comfort women.’

In order to analyze America’s behavior and mechanisms between the executive and legislative branch, I will adopt Professor Park’s two-by-two framework of active-passive dimension and engagement-disengagement that he used to analyze America’s approach in historical issues between South Korea and Japan (2011).<sup>9</sup> According to Park, there are four logical possibilities of U.S. engagement in the history issue: active disengagement, passive disengagement, passive engagement, and active engagement. Active disengagement is used when there is no guarantee that it would produce positive outcomes when U.S. engages.

The second strategy is to “passively disengage” and it is the most often used U.S. position in history issues. Under this strategy, the United States closely tracks the controversy, but does not dare to support either. The highly sensitive Dokdo/Takeshima issue that touches upon sovereignty is an example in which the United States implemented the second approach by closely tracking down the controversy to prepare for any potential crisis development.

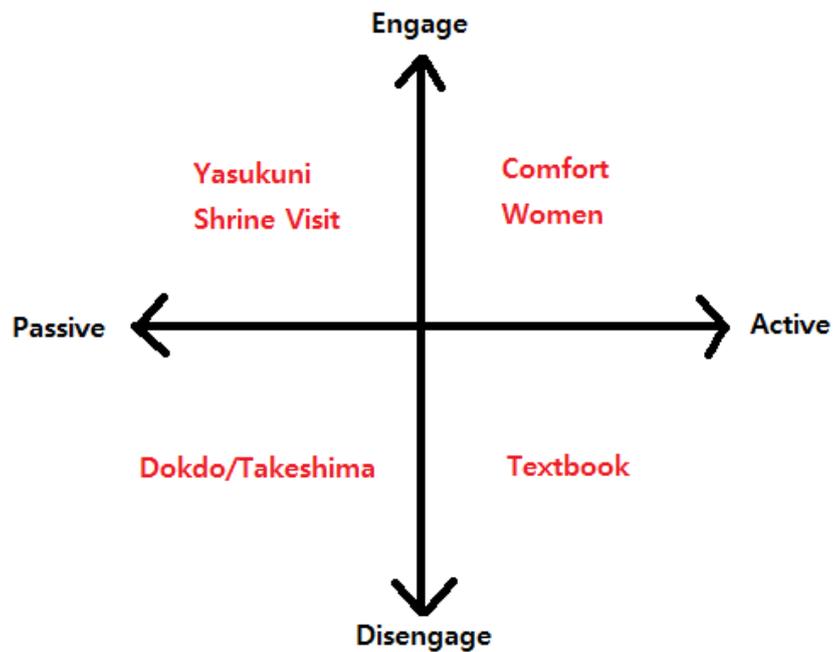
The third approach is “passive engagement” where the U.S. plays the role of coordinator, mediator, and moderator without taking any sides. This approach lets the U.S. to facilitate dialogue while avoiding an intense struggle in order to stop any escalation in the conflict. The United States can dispatch an envoy or ask both sides to keep calm behind the scenes. This approach is reflected in U.S. behavior toward Koizumi’s frequent visit to the

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<sup>9</sup> Park (2011)., 138.

Yasukuni Shrine in which the United States gave friendly advice not to provoke South Korea.

Lastly, “active engagement” which is rarely seen, was implemented on the comfort women issue. The United States actively engaged by acting as a referee and trying to come to a resolution. This approach allows the United States to take sides in which it states its own opinion about the history controversy, clearly stating which side is right and which side is wrong according to U.S. value and norms. Like Kazuhiko, Park refers to the U.S. Congressional resolution on comfort women after Abe’s statement on comfort women in 2007.



Because Professor Park’s framework revolves around historical issues between the two countries, I will reframe the framework into one that is more adaptable to the comfort women issue. As this paper looks into the

development of the issue, it will look at the intensity of engagement, and in this case, the level of “visibility”—in order to describe how much concern the United States is revealing to its allies. Moreover, the term “active” in the case of comfort women would be strong in describing the actions taken by the U.S. government, so I refined the term into a more neutral term, and any intentions of the U.S. government may either be visible or not visible.



*Lower Left Corner (2009-2011)*

This sector indicates that America does not do anything in particular, as it does not see the comfort women issue as upfront conflict between South Korea and Japan. The United States takes this approach when South Korea and Japan are both keep low profile on the comfort women issue. Although the U.S. views the comfort women issue as a human rights issue, they avoid making a fuss out of it. However, this does not imply disinterest from the U.S. side, but evidence of America’s stance that depending on the

strategic context in which the comfort women issue unfolds—in this case, when comfort women issue is put aside—the United States does not take any risks. This approach was taken during the first two years of Obama’s presidency (Hillary Clinton as Secretary of State) when South Korea-Japan relations were in good terms. It was also not long after the House Resolution 121 (H.Res. 121) passed by the full house on July 30, 2007 in the United States. Because it has not been long since the comfort women issue uproar, the Japanese government was especially careful not to annoy the United States nor South Korea.

*Upper Right Corner (2011-2013)*

Under this sector, the United States act meticulously and get involved in the issue in which it is prominently getting involved in the issue by passing the bills and approving resolutions. This approach lets the U.S. to insert its voice on the issue and is implemented when the South Korea-Japan relations is at its lowest point. The United States see deteriorated South Korea-Japan relation as an indicator that might negatively influence U.S.’ policy in the East Asia region. Thus, the United States approach the comfort women issue directly, admitting that there is a thorny issue between South Korea and Japan, but encourages the two countries have more areas that needs cooperation and more shared values.

Under this approach, the United States warns Japan to face the issue while it urges the South Koreans to see the other side that needs cooperation from Japan. This approach is not welcomed by both South Korea and Japan, for Japan does not want to confront, but South Korea wants confrontation and settlement of the issue. This approach was used under the last two years of Obama’s first presidency term, and the U.S. Congress fits into this category

as well. According to Professor Park's article on *Asahi shimbun*, South Korea-Japan relations began its downfall at the Noda-Lee summit in Kyoto on December 2011.<sup>10</sup> Lee's first four years are described as the best period for South Korea-Japan relations since the end of WW2, however, due to assertive actions and provocative words, deeds, and speeches throughout the year 2012, it reaches the lowest point in 2012.

#### *Upper Left Corner*

This sector is taken by the U.S. Congress who continuously stands by the comfort women side, but not necessarily on the South Korean side. The Congress does not view the comfort women issue as a foreign affairs issue, but a universal women's right issue. This is perhaps why the Congress can actively engage while the U.S. government that views the comfort women issue as women's rights issue as well as conflict between U.S.' most trusted allies.

#### *Lower Right Corner*

Under the lower left corner, the United States seems like it is doing something, but in reality, does nothing. Easily put, it is a show in which America pays lip-service to its two allies. When President Obama and Secretary of State Kerry visited Japan and South Korea consecutively, the two American leaders did not mention the comfort women issue while in Japan, but did give sympathizing comment while in Korea. This approach allows the United States to use different methods to South Korea and Japan, by showing grievance to the former, and avoiding discussion with the latter,

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<sup>10</sup> *Asahi shimbun*, Feb. 25, 2013.

and eventually getting what they want—bypass the issue. It is a silent warning to Japan not to make any provocative remarks and to Korea not to use it as leverage and at the same time encourages both sides to overcome the issue through bilateral talks. The United States appear to be the mediator, encouraging the two countries to “retreat” from the issue. This approach shows the U.S. stance in which they view this issue as a trivial foreign affairs issue and are not paying much attention, but rather want to get over it. It is a tactic that Secretary of State Kerry is using. It is the most practical and reasonable approach from the United States’ standard and it is most often used.

## Chapter 2. Overview of the ‘Comfort Women’ Issue

Japanese ‘comfort women’ is a euphemism for young girls who were taken and coerced into providing sexual services to the Japanese army during the Second World War.<sup>11</sup> The comfort women issue came to light in 1991 when former comfort women Kim Hak-sun made the first confession in Seoul on her experience as ‘comfort women’ serving Japanese soldiers during the war.

The Japanese Imperial Army established ‘comfort stations’ in the territories that it conquered from the 1930s throughout Asia. According to the report of the head of Reward Section of the War Ministry dated September 3, 1942, there is a passage that states that there were approximately 400 comfort stations for officers and men.<sup>12</sup> The number of women forced to serve as comfort women is not clear. General estimations range from at least 50,000 or 80,000 to 200,000 at the most.<sup>13</sup> There are two issues at point in which the first one lies on whether Korean women were “forcefully” taken by Imperial Japan, and second, whether the comfort stations system were run by the Japanese government or not, in other words, whether the Japanese government was responsible for the stations.

The official position of the Japanese government was that although comfort stations had existed during the war, it was a private operation and the women working in these stations were prostitutes being there of their own accord. Then, a researcher of Japanese history discovered an official

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<sup>11</sup> Digital Museum: The Comfort Women Issue. [www.awf.or.jp](http://www.awf.or.jp) (accessed May 1, 2015).

<sup>12</sup> Ibid..

<sup>13</sup> The number of the direct victims of the comfort stations system has been estimated at not less than 50,000, and the number could be as many as 80,000-200,000, if those detained for a certain period of time or sexually harassed are included. According to Youn Myoung-sook (2008).

document in the in 1992, proving the military involvement, forcing the government to investigate the matter in depth.<sup>14</sup> On August 4, 1993 Japanese Chief Cabinet Secretary Yohei Kono released a Statement acknowledging that the Japanese Imperial Military had forced women, known as comfort women to work in military-run brothels during World War II and expressed “apologies and remorse” for inflicting deep wounds on the women.<sup>15</sup> The Kono Statement admits "the recruitment of the comfort women was conducted mainly by private recruiters who acted in response to the request of the military." In addition "in many cases they were recruited against their own will, through coaxing, coercion, etc.," in recognition of the fact that the Japanese military was, “directly or indirectly, involved in the establishment and management of the comfort stations.”<sup>16</sup>

The Kono Statement also led to the creation of the Asian Women’s Fund in 1995. While insisting that all war reparations issues between the two countries were settled when they normalized their diplomatic relationship in 1965, the Japanese government nevertheless helped organize a campaign to collect donations from the private sector for payments of “atonement money” to former comfort women in several countries including South Korea with a letter of apology signed by prime ministers from Ryutaro Hashimoto to Junichiro Koizumi. However, many former comfort women in South Korea refused to accept the money, demanding official compensation from the Japanese government. As a result, the prime ministers’ apologies were not widely accepted in the country and remained

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<sup>14</sup> Library of the National Institute for Defense Studies

<sup>15</sup> The Ministry of Foreign Affairs

<http://www.mofa.go.jp/policy/women/fund/state9308.html>

<sup>16</sup> Ibid,

unknown to most South Koreans when the fund was closed in 2007.<sup>17</sup>

## **2-1. ‘Comfort Women’ Issue as Human Rights Issue in the International Society**

*1990s*

The comfort women issue gradually gained international attention as a human rights issue. On February 25, 1990, the Korean Council for Women Drafted for Military Sexual Slavery by Japan (정대협) raises the comfort women issue at the United Nations Commission on Human Rights.<sup>18</sup> Since then, the Korean government continued to raise the issue at the United Nations Human Rights Committee (UNHRC). The ‘comfort women’ issue first entered the international society as a human rights violation in August 1993, when the U.N. Sub-Commission on the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights appointed Linda Chavez as Special Rapporteur with the task of undertaking an in-depth study of the situation of systematic rape, sexual slavery and slavery-like practices during periods of armed conflict. After research on comfort women by a third party was made, the very first report on “comfort women” submitted by the Special Rapporteur on Violence Against Women, Radhika Coomaraswamy was submitted in January, 1996. The report referred to comfort women as “military sex slaves” and included six recommendations for the Japanese government, such as acknowledging legal responsibility and paying

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<sup>17</sup> *Asahi shimbun* March 31, 2012.

<sup>18</sup> The e-Museum for the Victims of Japanese Military Sexual Slavery. <http://www.hermuseum.go.kr/english/> (accessed June 2, 2015).

compensation to the victims.<sup>19</sup> In June 1998, Gay McDougal's report on comfort women was submitted to the United Nations Commission on Human Rights (UNCHR; the precursor to the UNHRC) Sub-Commission on the Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities. This became the clearest denunciations of the comfort women system as an international crime against human rights. After five decades, the comfort women were finally acknowledged as victims of sexual slavery during wartime.

### *2000s*

If the 1990s were about understanding the problem, the 2000s were about "solutions." The U.N.'s solution to the comfort women referred to Japanese government's compensation to the victims. In September 2001, the UNCHR recommended to Japan that "victims of Japan during WW2 must be compensated."<sup>20</sup> In 2005, once again UNCHR and Amnesty International called for the government of Japan to provide direct compensation to former comfort women, this time also criticizing the Asian Women's Fund as a Japanese government's tactic to avoid any official responsibility. After 2001 and 2005, the UNCHR for the third time recommended Japan to take immediate action to correct its past wrongdoings toward former comfort women who were passing away rapidly.

### *2010s*

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<sup>19</sup> Report on the mission to the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, the Republic of Korea and Japan on the issue of military sexual slavery in wartime <http://www1.umn.edu/humanrts/commission/country52/53-add1.htm> (accessed April 2, 2015).

<sup>20</sup> The e-Museum for the Victims of Japanese Military Sexual Slavery. <http://www.hermuseum.go.kr/english/> (accessed June 2, 2015).

2010s marked the era of maturity of the comfort women issue. Continuous efforts by the UNCHR and NGOs pressed the Japanese government to make action, however the recommendations and proposals had no legal binding and the Japanese government showed no reaction. Nevertheless, the international society continued to raise their concerns. In June 2010, UNHRC released “Thematic Report on Reparations for Women Subjected to Violence, A/HRC/14/22” by U.N. Special Rapporteur Rashida Manjoo, stressing perpetrator government’s responsibility for resolution of the issue. In July 2012, after U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton’s correction of the “comfort women” to “enforced sex slaves,” UNCHR asks Japan to use the phrase “enforced sex slaves” when referring to women who were forced to work at military brothels during the Pacific War, according to a news report. After Osaka Mayor Hashimoto’s remarks that outraged the world by saying the comfort women system was “necessary” in wartime, a United Nations committee (UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights) on May 21, 2013 called on Japan to prevent actions that degrade former ‘comfort women’ and portray them as prostitutes for Japanese troops in WW2.

With rapidly decreasing former comfort women, and the increasing animosity between South Korea and Japan, in 2014, UNCHR made some serious discussions on the issue. A UN human rights panel called on Japan on July 24 to undertake independent investigations of the wartime “comfort women” issue and apologize to the women who were victims before it was too late. Referring to the “comfort women,” the UNHRC recommends that the Japanese government investigate and publish sexual slavery and other human rights violations by its wartime military; give victims and their families justice and reparations, disclose all evidence; educate students and

the public about the issue, including through textbook references; officially apologize and take responsibility for the human rights violations; and condemn attempts to defame victims or deny that the events took place. The same year in August, U.N. Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination urged Japan to conduct an investigation and apologize to "comfort women" who were forced to provide sexual services to wartime Japanese military personnel. Although not legally binding, it contains about 30 items that the panel felt the Japanese government should work on (This was the third set issued to Japan since it joined the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination in 1995).

Other international organizations have also viewed the comfort women issue as a violation against human rights. The International Labor Organization (ILO; 1996) in a report said Japan violated ILO Convention No. 29 that bans forced labor and slavery; the International Court of Justice (ICJ; 1994) also reported a research report on the 'comfort women' advising the Japanese government to apologize and make compensation to the victims; and the International Labor Organization (ILO) in a report in 1996 concluded that the atrocities against the comfort women is against the ILO Convention 293 and thus, the comfort women can be referred to as 'sex slaves.' Among the many NGOs, Amnesty International, the largest and most active human rights protection group, raised its voice on the issue, by appointing the Japanese 'comfort women' issue as 2005 Campaign theme. Amnesty International criticized Japan's inaction on the issue of "comfort women" in its annual report on the state of human rights around the world, released on May 2013, and also for re-examining an apology over its wartime actions and many others after Prime Minister Abe reflected his attempt to review the Kono Statement which in and of itself increased

tensions with neighboring countries as it was seen as an attempt to deny governmental responsibility.

## **2-2. U.S. Foreign Policy Making and Obama Administration's Liberal Values**

U.S. foreign politics is complex, and there are many interest groups and NGOs involved in the comfort women issue. Although it is the executive branch that makes the decisions in America's foreign policy, according to the United States Constitution, the Congress has bigger leverage than the Presidency.<sup>21</sup> The Congress has the power to raise, supply govern the military and define international law, the President of the United States has to get approval when appointing an ambassador that it looks like as if America's foreign policy making is divided between the legislature and the executive branch.<sup>22</sup>

In 2009, the new Democrat government under President Obama came to office who made engagement the centerpiece of a foreign policy and emphasized freedom, democracy, and human rights. Obama already established in his first year that he is the president least fearful of addressing values issues in a complex way. As a candidate for president, Barack Obama railed against the Bush administration's human rights policy and expressed particular interest in women's empowerment and human trafficking of

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<sup>21</sup> Yoo, John. 2015. "Mechanisms for making Foreign Policies in the U.S." at Seoul National University.

<sup>22</sup> Foreign Policy Association  
[http://www.fpa.org/features/index.cfm?act=feature&announcement\\_id=45&show\\_sidebar=0](http://www.fpa.org/features/index.cfm?act=feature&announcement_id=45&show_sidebar=0) (accessed June 18).

women and children. Among his policies and actions, he has taken new steps to end modern slavery. For example on September 25, 2012, Obama announced unprecedented government actions to combat one of the greatest human rights abuses of our time—human trafficking—which affects more than 20 million people around the world, most of them women and children.<sup>23</sup> In 2013, he signed a Presidential Memorandum that ensures that advancing the rights of women and girls remains central to U.S. diplomacy and development around the world and issued Trafficking Victims Protection Reauthorization Act of 2013 (TitleXII of the Violence Against Women Reauthorization Act of 2013).<sup>24</sup> The President also signed Executive Order 13627 to strengthen the U.S. Government’s policy on trafficking in government contracting, and launched other new initiatives to identify and assist survivors, increase resources, plan for future action, and grow public-private partnerships.<sup>25</sup> These efforts will continue to be led by public servants at the highest levels of the U.S. government.<sup>26</sup>

Obama administration’s emphasis on human rights is especially prominent in the “Human Rights and Labor Country Reports on Human Rights Practices,” that is reported every year by the Bureau of Democracy. It shows stark difference between the previous administration that had different values. In 2008 Human Rights Report on Japan which was reported February 25, 2009, the comfort women issue is under the “Government

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<sup>23</sup>The White House <https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2013/04/19/fact-sheet-obama-administration-s-comprehensive-efforts-promote-gender-e>

<sup>24</sup> U.S. Department of State <http://www.state.gov/j/tip/laws/>

<sup>25</sup> The White House. <https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2014/08/26/fact-sheet-obama-administration-record-women-and-girls>

<sup>26</sup> The White House <https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2013/01/30/presidential-memorandum-coordination-policies-and-programs-promote-gende>

Corruption and Transparency” section.<sup>27</sup> However, as soon as President Obama came into office in 2009, the comfort women issue fell into the “women” section and states. In regards to the comfort women, the 2009 Reports on Human Rights Practices states,

Despite apologies by successive Japanese political leaders, a number of NGOs continued to criticize the country's apologies to and compensation for "comfort women" (the victims of forced prostitution during World War II) as inadequate. The government provided compensation payments through a government-initiated private fund, expressed remorse, and extended apologies to the victims.<sup>28</sup>

In the 2011 report, it becomes succinct and straightforward by stating, “Faced with continued calls for apology and compensation for “comfort women” (foreign and citizen victims of forced prostitution during World War II), government officials continued to express remorse and pointed to previously provided compensation payments.”<sup>29</sup> In the 2012 and 2013 report, instead of the “foreign and citizen victims of forced prostitution during World War II” phrase, it instead cites “women who were trafficked for sexual purposes during World War II.”

Compared to Hillary Clinton, the current Secretary of State John Kerry is not as enthusiastic as his predecessor on the issue. Clinton’s approached the issue in terms of a human rights issue, however, Kerry approaches it as a foreign affairs matter—conflict between two countries

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<sup>27</sup> 2008 Human Rights Report: Japan

<http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/hrrpt/2008/eap/119041.htm>

<sup>28</sup> 2009 Human Rights Report: Japan Report March 11, 2010

<http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/hrrpt/2009/eap/135993.htm>

<sup>29</sup> U.S. Department of State

<http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/hrrpt/2011humanrightsreport/index.htm#wrapper>

and the report gets more specific and fastidious. The 2014 Human Rights Report on Japan's comfort women issue, specifically mentions "South Korean survivors," and one can also notice the phrase "women who were trafficked for sexual purposes during World War II" from the 2012 report that was written in early 2013, the year Kerry became Secretary of State. Because Kerry saw this as a foreign affairs issue that is between two individual countries in which the United States is not directly involved, in his view, it seems the U.S. engagement is not appropriate, and thus, he avoids involvement in the issue. On the other hand, a human rights activist Clinton views comfort women issue as a human rights issue in which it is appropriate for the United States to be involved, she actively pursues to resolve the issue given the dwindling number of remaining survivors. The most recent report writes:

The government reiterated its apologies to World War II "comfort women" (women trafficked for sexual purposes during the war). South Korean survivors and their supporters continued to call for a formal apology and compensation from the government.<sup>30</sup>

There are other sources that unveil Kerry's thoughts on the comfort women issue. At the Secretary for Political Affairs Wendy Sherman's remarks at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, she alludes to the quarrel between Tokyo and Seoul and Beijing on comfort women issue, saying that while the dispute is understandable, "it can also be frustrating." The South Korean media has made a big issue over her remarks saying "nationalist feelings can still be exploited, and it's not hard for a political leader

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<sup>30</sup> Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2014  
<http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/hrrpt/humanrightsreport/index.htm#wrapper>

anywhere to earn cheap applause by vilifying a former enemy.”<sup>31</sup> The South Korean media perceived the political leader exploiting nationalist feelings as President Park. She adds that such provocations produce paralysis, not progress. Even during the daily press briefing, when asked about the comfort women bill in January 2014, spokesman Jen Psaki does not know of the bill and answers that she will check on it.<sup>32</sup> From these statements and documents, it is clear that under Secretary of State Kerry, the U.S. policy direction on the comfort women issue has changed, and the United States is becoming irritated by the prolonged issue that has now been on the table for several years.

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<sup>31</sup> Remarks on Northeast Asia by Wendy R. Sherman (Feb. 27, 2015) [www.state.gov/p/us/rm/2015/238035.htm](http://www.state.gov/p/us/rm/2015/238035.htm) (accessed May 1, 2015).

<sup>32</sup> <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/dpb/2014/01/219935.htm#JAPAN>

### **Chapter 3. The Beginning of Democratic Party Government, 2009-2011**

During the first two years of President Obama, the United States made no particular movement regarding the issue, as it did not see the comfort women issue as upfront conflict between South Korea and Japan. From the year 2009 to 2011, South Korea-Japan relations were in good terms, one can even say that the relation was at its peak since postwar period. No one could have ever guessed that it was right after the time when House Resolution 121 (H.Res. 121) was passed by the full house on July 30, 2007 in the United States. The 2007 House Resolution on comfort women refrained Japan from getting entangled in the comfort women issue.

The House Resolution on comfort women was in response to the statement that then Prime Minister Shinzo Abe (first Abe Cabinet from 2006 to 2007) made during the Diet session on March 1, 2007.<sup>33</sup> Prime Minister Abe remarked, “There may be enforcement in mobilizing the comfort women in a broader sense, but I do not think that the Japanese government or the military was directly involved in mobilizing them.” The comfort women controversy ignited by Prime Minister Abe’s remarks was raised in 2007 more in the United States and Europe than in Korea and Asia. Surprised by such unexpected response, Prime Minister Abe expressed in a telephone conversation with President George W. Bush his “heartfelt” apology for the comfort women, who were put in a position to endure real

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<sup>33</sup> *Asahi shimbun*, March 3, 2007.

pain” on April 3, 2007.<sup>34</sup>

Despite such efforts, the House Foreign Affairs Committee passed the Resolution with unanimous consent. H. Res. 121 is a resolution about comfort women co-sponsored by U.S. Rep. Bill Pascrell and Japanese-American Congressman Mike Honda of California’s 15<sup>th</sup> congressional district. It was passed by Congress formally recognizing the sexual enslavement of women during WW2 and called on the Japanese government to apologize. It asks that the Japanese government apologize to former comfort women and include curriculum about them in Japanese schools, citing 1921 International Convention for the Suppression of the Traffic in Women and Children that Japan has ratified and United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325.<sup>35</sup>

The U.S. government played no small role in advising the Japanese government how to respond to this issue. The United States had value judgments based on their contemporary notion of human trafficking, and advised Japan not to enter into public rebuttal of possible congressional resolutions, to maintain the Kono statement and to express, one way or another, sympathy toward those who had suffered.<sup>36</sup> These messages were transmitted publicly or privately. Mike Green privately advised Foreign Minister Aso, after Abe’s March 1 press statement, “not to make a rebuttal against the U.S. media; confirm that your heart aches but do not go further; stick to the Kono statement.”<sup>37</sup> Mike Green’s advise in advance helped keep the dispute calm. In August 2007, Undersecretary of State John Negroponte,

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<sup>34</sup> Ibid..

<sup>35</sup> Ibid..

<sup>36</sup> Interview with Michael Green, Asahi shimbun, March 10, 2007.

<sup>37</sup> Yomiuri shimbun, April 6, 2007.

while criticizing the prewar system of human trafficking, publicly acknowledged that “the Japanese government has already taken a series of measures, including an apology, and Prime Minister Abe also confirmed this position in October 2006.”<sup>38</sup>

### **3-1. South Korea-Japan Relations at its Best**

It was the beginning of the new conservative administration under Lee Myung-bak, determined not to repeat Roh Moo-hyun’s outbursts. During the three presidencies of Kim Young-sam, Kim Dae-Jung, and Roh Moo-hyun, the initial position on history was always positive in signaling future-oriented relations without recourse to history. On each occasion, however, during the latter part of the administration, relations turned bitter over the historical memory issue.<sup>39</sup> President Lee was not an exception. In the beginning of his administration, Lee promised that he will focus on future-oriented relations with Japan, avoiding any discussions on historical issue, but he as we find out, he did not keep his promise. However, for until the summit meeting with Prime Minister Noda on December 2011, Lee kept his words.

On the Japanese Side, for the first time in history, non-LDP party, the Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ) dominated the Diet with Asia-centered political tendency. Yukio Hatoyama became the first DPJ Prime Minister in the history of Japanese politics. While LDP leaders have emphasized U.S.-Japan alliance, Prime Minister Hatoyama valued relationship with Asian countries over U.S.-Japan relations, such as proposing the idea of East-Asia

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<sup>38</sup> Asahi shimbun, August 4, 2007.

<sup>39</sup> Kazuhiko Togo, (2011), 109.

Community. After Hatoyama resigned in May 2010, Kan Naoto preceded. Kan Naoto focused on recovering the deteriorated U.S.-Japan relations over the Futenma military base, but Prime Minister Kan also inherited the legacy to strengthen relations with Asian countries, especially that of South Korea to contain China.<sup>40</sup> On August 10, 2010, he made a statement that acknowledged the annexation of Korea in 1910 was against the Korean's will and also returned 1,200 books that Japan had taken away during its colonial rule.<sup>41</sup>

### **3-2. Government's Emphasis on Asia and Universal Human Rights**

With launch of a new government under Democrat President, the agenda was to distinguish itself from the previous government, especially distancing itself from dealing with post-Cold War peace dividend in the continued wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. The new government's attempt is especially vivid in its foreign strategy. In October 2010, in the President's hometown, Honolulu, Hawaii, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton made a speech on the United States' engagement in Asia-Pacific, the so-called "Pivot to Asia" or "Rebalancing towards Asia," that explained its shift from the Middle East that "exhausted" United States' resources, to the Asia-Pacific region where U.S. could "recharge" itself.<sup>42</sup> During her remarks at the Asia Society, New York on February 13, 2009, she implied the importance of Asian partners and all the nations in the Pacific region and

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<sup>40</sup> Cheol Hee Park, *The Rise and Fall of the Democratic Party of Japan* (2014)

<sup>41</sup> Statement by Prime Minister Naoto Kan

[http://japan.kantei.go.jp/kan/statement/201008/10danwa\\_e.html](http://japan.kantei.go.jp/kan/statement/201008/10danwa_e.html)

<sup>42</sup> <http://www.cfr.org/asia-and-pacific/clintons-speech-americas-engagement-asia-pacific-october-2010/p23280>

stated that much of United States' future depends upon its relationships with Asia and "equally know that our capacity to solve a lot of the global challenges that we're confronting depends upon decisions that are made there."<sup>43</sup> As reflection of her idea, Hillary chose Asia as first stop as foreign mission (since taking office in January) because of its strategic importance and among them, the first stop would be Japan (Feb. 16-18) and South Korea the third (Feb. 19-20; after Indonesia and before China).

Clinton's regional focus being Asia, her other area of focus was human rights, especially that of women. Emphasizing openness, dialogue, and soft power, Clinton called to end human trafficking while in office. As Secretary of State, she emphasized international cooperation in anti-trafficking movement. After all, it was also her husband, President Clinton who signed the Trafficking Victims' Protection Act that provided tools to bring traffickers to justice and to provide victims with legal services and other support. In 2010, Secretary Clinton renewed her call to end human trafficking in an op-ed published by newspapers around the world. She especially emphasized the vulnerable—women and children and governmental efforts to strengthen anti-trafficking law. She writes:

It is especially important for governments to protect the most vulnerable – women and children – who are more likely to be victims of trafficking. They are not just the targets of sex traffickers, but also labor traffickers, and they make up a majority of those trapped in forced labor: picking cotton, mining rare earth minerals, dancing in nightclubs. The numbers may keep growing, as the global economic crisis has exposed even more women to unscrupulous recruiters.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> [http://seoul.usembassy.gov/p\\_sec\\_021309b.html](http://seoul.usembassy.gov/p_sec_021309b.html)

<sup>44</sup> U.S. Department of State <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2010/11/150701.htm>

In her op-ed, she emphasizes global efforts to fight modern slavery, and urges countries to act according to the U.N. Trafficking Protocol, and to strengthen their anti-trafficking laws so that they can devote more resources to finding victims and punishing human traffickers. Clinton did not mention imperial Japan's atrocities against former comfort women during wartime, for the issue had not been ignited to be cited. The comfort women issue has been daunted after the 2007 House Resolution in the United States at government levels and comfort women and other historical issues between South Korea and Japan were set back during the first two years while Clinton took the leadership of U.S. foreign affairs. Even during the first trilateral meeting in the United States on December 6, 2010, there was no discussion on comfort women nor on conflict rooted in grievances going back to Japan's colonization of the Korean Peninsula from 1910 to 1945.

The historical trilateral meeting underscored the three countries shared commitment to advancing regional peace, prosperity, and stability and strengthened the two bilateral relationships between United States with South Korea and Japan, respectively, as well as the value of partnership between South Korea and Japan. These discussions illustrate the importance of the deep bilateral relationships that the United States has with Japan and South Korea, as well as the value of the partnership between Japan and South Korea.<sup>45</sup> The focal point of the trilateral meeting was to confirm their shared interest and establish foundation for the unified position that our countries are taking with respect to North Korea.

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(accessed June 6, 2015).

<sup>45</sup> Remarks with Japanese Foreign Minister Seiji Maehara and South Korean Foreign Minister Kim Sung-hwan.  
<http://www.state.gov/secretary/20092013clinton/rm/2010/12/152443.htm>

### **3-3. The Congress and Comfort Women Memorials**

Despite the ameliorating relations between South Korea and Japan, a monument commemorating comfort women was erected in Palisades Park city, a suburb of New York City (more than half of the district's 20,000 people are of Korean descent) on October 23, 2010. This was the very first monument of the seven monuments and statues (as of summer 2015) commemorating comfort women as part of the campaign to raise global awareness about the plight of comfort women and Japan's attitude toward the issue initiated by South Korean civic groups.

The monument, with an image of a soldier towering over a cowering woman engraved on a 60-cm-by-60-cm copper plaque on a granite stone reaching about waist height is erected on the side of a library in a residential area of Palisades Park city. The inscription reads, "In memory of more than 200,000 women and girls who were abducted by the armed forces of the government of Imperial Japan."<sup>46</sup> After the erection, Japanese consul general in New York visited Mayor of Palisades Park, James Rotundo and pointed out that the monument serves as a hurdle to friendship between U.S.-Japan relations while making a proposal to donate cherry trees in Palisades Park, however, the mayor rejected the proposal.

Japan first tried to dismiss the campaign as unworthy of attention and also comforted itself with the thought that the U.S., its ally and protector, would stand firmly by the Japanese under any circumstances. In fact, Washington had not shown particular interest in the reemergence of nationalism and revisionism in Japan, until Shinzo Abe took the office for

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<sup>46</sup> [http://peace.maripo.com/p\\_comfort\\_women.htm](http://peace.maripo.com/p_comfort_women.htm)

second time in December 2012.

The very first comfort women monument in the soils of the United States in New Jersey did not ignite the Japanese government as much as it did when the comfort women statue portraying a young girl in traditional Korean dress with an empty seat next to her—a replica of the Little Girl’s Peace Statue in front of the Japanese Embassy in Seoul—was erected in Glendale, a city near Los Angeles, California on July 30, 2013. Protest by Japanese nationals and Japanese-Americans against the installation came even before the approval of the statue in Glendale, with an assemble in the gallery section of the city council on July 9, 2013. The Los Angeles Times described their protests: “It began as a trickle, but transformed into a tsunami.”<sup>47</sup> The council voted 4-1 for the monument to be erected in Central Park. The statue alarmed the Japanese in which a group of Japanese residents sued the City of Glendale, California claiming it violates the U.S. Constitution by interfering with the federal government’s authority to set foreign policy. The lawsuit demanding the statue’s removal was filed in the U.S. District Court for the Central District of California on Feb. 20 by the Global Alliance for Historical Truth (GAHT), a nonprofit group made up of Japanese citizens living in the United States and naturalized Americans from Japan. It says the city’s actions could cause confusion over U.S. diplomatic relations with Tokyo given Japan’s stance over the delicate and controversial issue. In October 2013, Japan did score a small victory when a Japanese-American resident dissuaded the Buena Park City council in California from erecting a comfort women statue. In Tokyo, Chief Cabinet Secretary Yoshihide Suga clearly empathized with the lawsuit in a news

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<sup>47</sup> The Los Angeles Times, July 10, 2013. <http://articles.latimes.com/2013/jul/10/local/la-me-ln-glendale-korean-comfort-woman-statue-20130710>

conference held Feb. 21.

“It is extremely regrettable that the statue was erected,” he said. “Japanese residents in America felt the same way as the Japanese government over the statue and resorted to the lawsuit.”<sup>48</sup>

Similar local battles are spreading around Los Angeles through grass-roots efforts to erect comfort women monuments. The movements were galvanized after the U.S. Congress passed a resolution in 2007 calling on Japan to “formally apologize and accept historical responsibility.” While the resolution set aback Japanese government from making any statements or position on the issue, Japan’s ignorance to the nonbinding resolution prompted human rights groups to go local, serving as a momentum for grass-roots efforts in the United States to launch a well-organized campaign on the back of the growing population of Korean-Americans as well as Chinese-Americans, who are gaining influence in U.S. local politics thanks to their financial affluence and growing political awareness. This is where the Japanese suddenly realized how poorly they are represented in American society, in terms of number of immigrants, organization, political relevance and lobbying power.

According to *The Diplomat*, in contrast to the Korean-American and Chinese-American communities, which comprise mostly new arrivals, the Japanese-American community consists mainly of third-or fourth-generation immigrants whose “blood link” with Japan is quite diluted.<sup>49</sup> The few modern-day newcomers from Japan are generally business or academic-related individuals who are not interested in U.S. citizenship and

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<sup>48</sup> The Asahi shimbun Feb. 23, 2014.

<sup>49</sup> *The Diplomat*, March 6, 2014. Japan’s Uphill PR Battle.

even less in U.S. politics. Even the Japanese American Citizens League, America's largest Japanese-American and Asian-American civil rights organization, said it will not take a position on the issue. Unlike many Chinese and Korean youth who dream of the "American-dream," few Japanese youth are today interested in leaving the comforts of home to settle abroad. Thus, while Korean-American, as well as Chinese-American communities represent for American politicians a whole new army of wealthy and generous voters with strong ties to Korea and China, Japanese have traditionally been Washington-centered in their ties with the U.S.<sup>50</sup> Since the Palisades Park monument, there are now 5 monuments and 2 statues in the United States.

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<sup>50</sup> The 2010 statistics by the U.S. Census Bureau records the number of Americans of Japanese ancestry stood at about 1.3 million. With 270,000, California is home to the largest community of Japanese-Americans. In comparison, the Korean-American population numbers 1.7 million nationally. California has the largest such population, with 450,000.

<b>Year</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Monument/Statue</b>
Oct. 23, 2010	Palisades Park, NJ	Monument
June 18, 2012	Nassau County, NY	Monument (Veterans Memorial at Eisenhower Park in Westbury)
March 9, 2013 (World's Women's Day)	Bergen County, NJ	Monument
July 30, 2013	Glendale, CA	Memorial Statue
May30, 2014	Fair Fax County, VA	Comfort Women Memorial Peace Garden (Monument)
Aug. 4, 2014	Union City, NJ	Monument
Aug. 16, 2014	Southfield, MI	Memorial Statue

## **Chapter 4. U.S. Foreign Policy under Hillary Clinton, 2011-2013**

The year 2011 marks several significant events regarding comfort women in South Korea. On August 30, 2011, Constitutional Court of South Korea ruled that the South Korean government's failure to make efforts to negotiate individual compensation claims with Tokyo was unconstitutional. The Court rules that the South Korean government's failure constitutes unconstitutional negligence and urges government action. Following this ruling, the South Korean government proposes talks on the issue twice in September and November 2011. The Japanese government refuses, repeating its position that the compensation issue had been settled with the 1965 South Korea-Japan Basic Treaty to normalize diplomatic relations between the two nations and ended the possibility of future claims against Japan.

On October 11, South Korea raised the issue of former comfort women at the Third Committee (Social, Humanitarian and Cultural Affairs) of the U.N. General Assembly in New York and argued that the women have the right to claim individual compensation. Later that year on December 14<sup>th</sup>, weekly protest by former comfort women and their support marked its 1,000<sup>th</sup> protest in front of the Japanese Embassy in Seoul. The support groups erected a statue depicting a young girl near the embassy that they say will be a "cornerstone of peace." From 2011, Korea actively begins to bring up the comfort women issue inside and outside Korea.

### **4-1. Beginning of Deep-Seated Tension between U.S.' Two Allies**

Since becoming president in February 2008, Lee has tended to avoid direct criticism of Japan. That was partly due to the slide in bilateral relations that occurred under his predecessor, Roh Moo-hyun, who put great emphasis on history-related issues. Lee has tended to emphasize economic benefits in his dealings with Japan. However, that does not necessarily mean that Lee harbors special feelings toward Japan. For one thing, Lee continues to resist overtures to make a state visit to Japan. The invitation was first extended in 2009. Lee offered no time frame for visiting Japan, apparently because a formal visit would come with a heavy political burden that would require him to produce results. Domestic political factors also make it more difficult for Lee to commit to a state visit to Japan.

After the Constitutional ruling however, President Lee finally arranged a trip to Japan on December 17-18, 2011 to Kyoto. During the meeting, for the first time, President Lee raised the comfort women issue and urged Prime Minister Noda to take a proactive approach to issue compensation to former comfort women during his visit to Kyoto. Noda however, repeated the Japanese government's oft-stated position that the issue was resolved in 1965 when the two countries normalized their diplomatic relations. During his visit to Japan, President Lee held talks in Osaka local Headquarters of the Korean Residents Union in Japan, known as *Mindan*, where he expressed his hope that Japan would take steps to resolve the issue of compensation to former comfort women. It was the first time that South Korean president talked about comfort women issue clearly in a public forum.<sup>51</sup>

The 2011 bilateral talk in Kyoto becomes the turning point where the

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<sup>51</sup> The Asahi shimbun, Dec. 19, 2011.  
[http://ajw.asahi.com/article/behind\\_news/politics/AJ201112190013](http://ajw.asahi.com/article/behind_news/politics/AJ201112190013)

tacit thorny issue changes to a dominating issue, shepherding South Korea and Japan into the phase of plagued relationship. Afterwards, South Korea's assertive approach to the issue sequences. For the first time in four years of presidency, President Lee on March 1, 2012 spoke ill of Japan on the anniversary of the anti-Japanese independence movement under colonial rule, calling on Japan to "urgently" solve the issue of comfort women, alluding to the fact this is a "humanitarian issue" that must be tackled with great urgency.<sup>52</sup> He firmly repeated Japan's handling of the issue on August 15, the anniversary of Korea's liberation from Japan, saying that "the (comfort women) was a breach of women's rights committed during wartime as well as a violation of universal human rights and historic justice. We urge the Japanese government to take responsible measures in this regard."<sup>53</sup> However, Tokyo has not budged from its basic stance that the matter was resolved by an agreement on compensation rights signed by both countries when they normalized diplomatic relations in 1965. And while Tokyo insists that the issue was resolved by the 1965 agreement, Seoul argues that the comfort women issue was not part of that agreement.

Another factor behind South Korea's recent assertiveness is its growing confidence on the international stage. U.S. President Barack Obama in a meeting with Lee last October called South Korea a "global partner" of the United States, leading to the feeling in South Korea that it had reached the same level as Japan as a major power in Asia.<sup>54</sup> March 2012 Nuclear Security Summit in Seoul set a clear example of tension between two

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<sup>52</sup> <http://www.korea.net/Government/Briefing-Room/Presidential-Speeches/view?articleId=99114>

<sup>53</sup> Asahi shimbun Aug. 15, 2012.

[http://ajw.asahi.com/article/special/isles\\_dispute/AJ20120815re0099](http://ajw.asahi.com/article/special/isles_dispute/AJ20120815re0099)

<sup>54</sup> The Asahi shimbun Aug. 18, 2012.

countries. President Lee, held separate bilateral talks on the sidelines with leaders of participating countries such as the United States and China, but did not schedule a meeting with Prime Minister Noda.

In response to South Korea's domestic political upheaval on comfort women issue, the Japanese officials' have been making remarks that raise questions about Japan's views of its wartime acts. In 2007, for example, then Prime Minister Shinzo Abe claimed that the comfort women were not coerced by the Japanese military into sexual service. This in turn, led to the passing of House Resolution 121 in the U.S. Congress that is discussed in the previous chapter, and for a while, there were no remarks that caught the public's attention until 2012 when a parade of remarks continued. Referring to the wartime Imperial Japanese Army's "recruitment" of Korean women for sexual services, Tokyo governor Shintaro Ishihara asserted "(Those women) chose their profession of their own accord. Show me any proof that the Japanese army forced those Koreans into prostitution."<sup>55</sup> During the Upper House Budget Committee session on Aug. 27, Prime Minister Noda also said accounts by former comfort women confirmed that they were forced to work at military brothels during WW2, but he also said there are no documents or testimonies on the Japanese side that confirm the women were coerced. He did however, say that he would adhere to Kono statement. Another figure, Jin Matsubara, chairman of the National Public Safety commission suggested a re-examination of the Kono statement. It was during this time when Japanese right-wing officials' provocative remarks begins to place itself a concerning factor. During the LDP presidential campaign in September, when Abe said a review should be made of a 1993

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<sup>55</sup> Asahi shimbun, Aug. 29, 2012.

statement that expressed an apology and remorse by the central government on the “comfort women” issue. He also denied the Japanese military involvement in the “comfort women” issue. The election of right-wing Prime Minister in Japan brought U.S. senior officials to the center stage. A high-level U.S. delegation urged key allies Japan and South Korea to mend strained ties that have hurt security cooperation. It reminded the new government in Tokyo that any disavowal of its apology for the use of sex slaves in World War II would make matters worse. Having been experienced humiliation by the House Resolution in 2007, unlike his first term, Prime Minister Abe said he would shelve his long-held plan to review the 1993 government statement that expressed remorse for the suffering of comfort women, saying that “the matter should not be turned into a political and diplomatic issue” during at the Lower House in response to a question by Kazuo Shii that was carefully prepared in order to alleviate strain with South Korea.<sup>56</sup>

The return of Abe to power has been accompanied by growing controversy due to his nationalistic agenda and revisionist views toward history. While the Japanese public welcomed the new prime minister, Abe was seen overseas in a quite different light. The Western media were especially critical. Warnings about Abe’s nationalist roots appeared in major US dailies which sparked a series of rebuttals in op-eds and commentaries from scholars and think-tanks seeing Abe instead as a pragmatic leader who had learned from his unsuccessful first term.

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<sup>56</sup> Asahi shimbun, Feb. 1, 2013.

## 4-2. Comfort Women as Universal Human Rights Issue

Obama administration officials have pushed for Japan to deal with comfort women issues in a cautious manner in the hopes of improving relations between South Korea and Japan. During the daily press briefing in early July of 2012, the U.S. government extended its sincere and deep sympathy for Korea's comfort women. Speaking at the press brief on Monday the U.S. State Department spokesman Patrick Ventrell clarified Washington's position on the matter that quote "it was a grave human rights violation of enormous proportions." However, he was unclear about the official terminology the U.S. government would use to refer to the women.<sup>57</sup> Few days later on July 9, South Korean newspaper Chosun Ilbo reported that Clinton reportedly corrected a State Department official who referred to women drafted into prostitution by the Japanese during WW2 by the widely used term "comfort women," asking that the Department instead call it like it is and say "enforced sex slaves." The State Department neither confirmed nor denied the report that the Secretary of State had corrected the State Department official, which allegedly happened at a closed-door meeting. The Nelson Report, which is widely read in Washington political circles, also reported that Clinton is interested in the issue and considers the treatment of the victims a serious human rights violation at similar timing. It was reported that Clinton demanded that all official documents refer to women drafted as prostitutes for the Japanese military during WW2 as "enforced sex slaves" rather than by the euphemism "comfort women."The

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<sup>57</sup> U.S. Department of State  
<http://www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/dpb/2012/07/194761.htm#JAPAN2>

paper also noted that historically the U.S. “has avoided getting involved in the painful history dividing Korea and Japan.” Until this event, the U.S. has been removed from the comfort women debate between its many allies.

Clinton’s correction for an official terminology at the risk of annoying Japan shows her willingness to change the issue, even subtle matters, to focus on her “signature issue” of women’s rights worldwide. Chosun Ilbo also reported that she is “interested in the issue and considers the treatment of the victims a serious human rights violation.”<sup>58</sup> The impact of U.S. Secretary of State was vital, soon after the report, according to the news report, the United Nations has asked Japan to use the phrase “enforced sex slaves” when referring to women who were forced to work at military brothels during the Pacific War.<sup>59</sup>

At the Daily Press Briefing a month later, a reporter asked to clarify the United States terminology on *ianfu*, between the two terms ‘comfort women’ or the ‘sexual slavery.’ Spokesperson Victoria Nuland answered,

Well, as you know, we speak to this issue in our Human Rights Report on an annual basis. We always raise it in bilateral dialogue. We sometimes use the one term, we sometimes use the other term. There’s no particular mystery to that. [...] We’ve made clear to both governments, all governments, that we use the terms interchangeably and will continue to do so.<sup>60</sup>

Nuland’s response marks the U.S.’ official stance, deviating from previous “non-interference” to actively engaging in the issue of human rights. Clinton did not shy away from revealing her opinion and the U.S. stance afterwards.

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<sup>58</sup> <http://www.thewire.com/global/2012/07/hillary-clinton-and-japan-are-tiff-over-sex-slaves-and-comfort-women/54502/>

<sup>59</sup> [http://www.koreatimes.co.kr/www/news/nation/2014/07/116\\_161213.html](http://www.koreatimes.co.kr/www/news/nation/2014/07/116_161213.html)

<sup>60</sup> U.S. Department of State  
<http://www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/dpb/2012/08/196589.htm#JAPAN>

United States' approach on comfort women became most vivid after renowned history revisionist Shinzo Abe once again became the prime minister of Japan. On January 15, 2013, in which Assistant Secretary of State Kurt Campbell and Assistant Secretary of Defense Mark Lippert and National Security Council Senior Director for Asian Affairs Daniel Russel visited Seoul (15<sup>th</sup>) and Tokyo(16<sup>th</sup>). The high-level U.S. delegation urged key allies Japan and South Korea to mend strained ties that have hurt security cooperation. In response to Prime Minister Abe's plan to review the 1993 Kono Statement in which he alluded to the public during his campaign, senior U.S. government official has cautioned the Japanese government about revising a 1993 statement acknowledging the Japanese military forcefully recruited "comfort women" to provide sex for soldiers during WW2.<sup>61</sup> At the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, a Washington think tank, Campbell said a key reason for the U.S. delegation's visit was to ensure both governments are committed to "rebuilding" their ties.<sup>62</sup>

Upon the new Prime Minister's visit to Washington, a top White House official, National Security Council Senior Director for Asia, Danny Russel said that Japan should do more to address lingering regional and international anger over its handling of wartime atrocities, including the forced sexual enslavement of comfort women.

President Obama knows full well that there are very sensitive legacy issues from the last century and believes that it's important to take steps to promote healing. So our position has always been to encourage Japan to take steps that will foster better relations, that will foster closer relations with all of its neighbors. At the same time, we would hope and

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<sup>61</sup> Asahi shimbun 2013.01.19

<sup>62</sup> Asahi shimbun Jan.12, 2013.

[http://ajw.asahi.com/article/behind\\_news/politics/AJ201301120015](http://ajw.asahi.com/article/behind_news/politics/AJ201301120015)

expect that others would reciprocate to constructive and positive steps the Japanese government might take.<sup>63</sup>

Although Russel declined to say whether Obama would raise the issue directly with Abe, the White House and the Department of State has made clear move in the issue, viewing it as a violation of human rights issue.

The essence of the problem is different between Japanese officials and the rest of the world. While Japanese politicians argue that the Japanese government does not bear responsibility because there was no systematic abduction or trafficking of comfort women based on the will of the state, the current understanding of women's rights held by Washington and the rest of the international community is that if the women could not quit being comfort women on the battlefield and if they could not get out of the state of detention at the comfort stations that were managed by the Japanese military, then it is clear the women were "slaves" and the government cannot avoid being held responsible.

### **4-3. Congressional Report and the Media**

The White House and State government have never been more active during this period, especially with Clinton's countenance on the issue by referring to comfort women as "enforced sex slaves." Her remarks although behind the curtains created and expanded the public's awareness and accelerated interested lawmakers and governors. The comfort women issue had been limited to only a handful of politicians in the Congress. However, from this period and on, many other politicians, especially the ardent human

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<sup>63</sup> Foreign Policy Feb. 21, 2013. White House: Japan should do more to address 'comfort women' issue.

rights activists showed interest in the issue and claimed Japan to make amends for the victims. In May 2013, The Congressional Research Service (CRS) released a report in which said “Statements suggest that Abe embraces a revisionist view of Japanese history that rejects the narrative of imperial Japanese aggression and victimization of other Asian nations.”

With regard to moves in Japan to re-examine the 1993 Kono statement, former U.S. Ambassador to Japan Tom Schieffer said no one in the United States would accept such a move. “Politicians on the right in the United States don’t want to condone prostitution; politicians on the left in the United States don’t want to condone the ‘exploitation of women,’” Schieffer said. “They may come to the issue from different perspectives, but they wind up in the same place, and that is with no sympathy for Japan--the argument that some in Japan make--on the issue.”<sup>64</sup>

Growing public attention on the issue activated State governments, especially states that encompass high number of Korean descendents, where a series of events took place. Most importantly, second comfort women monument was erected at the Veterans Memorial at Eisenhower Park in Westbury, New York on June 2012. Prior to the erection, NYT reported the issue of comfort women under the headline “Memorial for ‘Comfort Women’ Deepens Old Animosity.” Also on January 19, 2013 for the first time, a comfort women Resolution passed the New York State senate and House, recognizing the survivors, followed by the New Jersey State House’s passage of comfort women resolution on March. Home to many Korean-Americans, Bergen County of New Jersey installed the Comfort Women

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<sup>64</sup> Asahi shimbun May 10, 2013.  
[http://ajw.asahi.com/article/behind\\_news/politics/AJ201305100061](http://ajw.asahi.com/article/behind_news/politics/AJ201305100061)

Memorial on March 9<sup>th</sup>, 2013, which is also World Women's Day. The memorial is in Memorial Island Park in front of the Bergen County Court, and honors the memories of numerous comfort women of WW2, including Koreans, Chinese, Netherlanders, Filipinas, and Taiwanese. It first started by a female librarian's fund raising in July 2012 who felt resentful about the lack of response from the Japanese government in the five years following the passing of House Resolution 121.

Prime Minister Abe's Chief Cabinet Secretary Yoshihide Suga shocked the world by suggesting that the Abe government will review the 1993 Japanese government statement apologizing for the Japanese military's treatment of the comfort women and acknowledging the military's role in setting up "comfort" stations during the war. The upheaval backed off Prime Minister Abe who said that his government was shelving plans to review the 1993 statement. At the Lower House meeting on January 31, Prime Minister Abe said that the matter should not turn into a political and diplomatic issue. He added that,

There have been many wars throughout history, involving infringement on the human rights of women, and when it comes to the issue of comfort women, my heart aches acutely when I think about those who had to go through painful experiences beyond description. I am no different from successive prime ministers on that point.<sup>65</sup>

However, Prime Minister Abe's assurance did not soothe some U.S. lawmakers, who issued statements calling on the Japanese government to do more to make amends. On February 20, 2013, before Prime Minister Abe's

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<sup>65</sup> Asahi shimbun Feb. 1, 2013.

[http://ajw.asahi.com/article/behind\\_news/politics/AJ201302010077](http://ajw.asahi.com/article/behind_news/politics/AJ201302010077)

first visit to the United States, Representative Mike Honda, Steve Israel (D-NY) and other House members sent a letter to Kenichiro Sasae, the Japanese ambassador to the United States, warning that revising the Kono statement could have a significant impact on bilateral relations. “Japan’s government must fully acknowledge, apologize for and increase awareness of its history of comfort women,” said Representative Steve Israel in a statement.<sup>66</sup> He continued, “These survivors of physical, sexual and psychological violence that was sanctioned by the Japanese government deserve this apology. But beyond that Japan must prove to the rest of the world that it is willing to express sincere regret for a systematic atrocity that was committed in its country’s history in order to move forward as a democracy.”<sup>67</sup> The Mayor of Glendale also visited Korea in April 2013, making a remark, “I cannot understand the reason why a democratic country like Japan does not admit the comfort women issue that the whole world acknowledges.”

With the advent of Prime Minister Abe, and Secretary of State Clinton’s terminology incident, the executive and legislative branch begins to be aware of the issue. The reason why America is so keen on the issue is that they perceive that Japan in general has not sent a clear signal that it recognizes and repudiates its wartime violence. According to Jennifer Lind, Japanese apologies are associated with individual prime ministers rather than seen as expressions of national sentiment.<sup>68</sup> The Diet has never offered a gesture that people perceive as a national acceptance and repudiation of past violence. The 1993 Kono Statement about comfort women was a very

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<sup>66</sup> Foreign Policy Feb. 21, 2013. White House: Japan should do more to address ‘comfort women’ issue

<sup>67</sup> Ibid..

<sup>68</sup> Asahi shimbun Feb. 9, 2014

important gesture, but many people in Japan clearly reject it and would like to see it repudiated.<sup>69</sup> Japanese apologies also have not impressed observers because they are often contradicted. Japanese people often argue that Tokyo has offered many apologies to the comfort women, but at the same time, as some Japanese leaders apologize, others decry the apology and even deny the historical facts of this atrocity.<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>69</sup> Asahi shimbun Feb. 9, 2014

<sup>70</sup> Jennifer Lind, *Sorry State: Apologies in International Politics* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2008), chapter 2.

## **Chapter 5: U.S. Foreign Policy under John Kerry, 2013-2015**

According to Victor Cha, a former White House director of East Asia policy, the U.S. will be quietly urging Prime Minister Abe's government against such a step to review or revise the Kono Statement. But he added that the U.S. will not want to be seen as publicly mediating in a touchy historical dispute. He says, "You will ever succeed and both sides will end up hating you for it."<sup>71</sup> On the other hand, Professor Gerald Curtis from Columbia University said that the Obama administration made it clear that it would publicly criticize the Abe administration should it decide to review the Kono statement.<sup>72</sup> This is the U.S.' final policy direction on the issue of comfort women between its two allies—while being present in the issue, the U.S. will make subtle moves to mediate the issue, sometimes visible yet, sometimes invisibly engaging.

### **5-1. Relations at Dead-end and Signs of Amelioration**

Unlike previous president, from the beginning President Park took a firm stand. At the annual ceremony held to commemorate the "three-one movement" on March 1, President Park called on Japan to take specific action to resolve the controversies over history perceptions that have plagued relations. President Lee criticized Japan's historical memory in public speech not until his last term year. During President Park's visit to the U.S., Park referred to relations with Japan, saying that Tokyo needs to have correct historical perceptions to realize peace in Northeast Asia. Park's

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<sup>71</sup> Asahi shimbun. Jan. 12, 2013.

<sup>72</sup> Asahi shimbun April 4, 2013.

words came after Abe's controversial remarks in the Diet. "The definition of aggression remains unclear both academically and internationally," Abe had told the Diet. This prompted strong criticism in Korea with many considering the remark a denial of Japan's colonial domination of the Korean Peninsula and military invasion. "That led to the immediate spread of the sense that the only way to stop the Abe administration from running out of control, was to depend on foreign pressure in the form of the United States," a South Korean government source said.<sup>73</sup>

The return of Abe to power has been accompanied by growing controversy due to his nationalistic agenda and revisionist views toward history. While the Japanese public welcomed the new prime minister, Abe was seen overseas in a quite different light. The Western media were especially critical. Warnings about Abe's nationalist roots appeared in major US dailies which sparked a series of rebuttals in op-eds and commentaries from scholars and think-tanks seeing Abe instead as a pragmatic leader who had learned from his unsuccessful first term.

Encouraged by the provocative prime minister, The Osaka Mayor Toru Hashimoto at the city hall said that "comfort women" were a necessary part of war and made a proposal that legalized sexual services be used to keep Okinawa Marines' sexual appetites under control when he visited US Marine Corps Air Station Futenma in Okinawa Prefecture in early May. Hashimoto told reporters, "The sex industry, if not the comfort women system, is necessary." He said he told the commander that "Japan has places where sexual energy can be released within the law. It is impossible to control the sexual energy of hotblooded Marines properly unless such places

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<sup>73</sup> Asahi shimbun May 10, 2013.

are officially made use of. Principles aside, I ask you to make good use of such places.”<sup>74</sup>

Washington was outraged by Hashimoto’s suggestion. Even members of the Abe administration were distancing themselves from Hashimoto who was once considered potential prime minister. For South Korea, Hashimoto’s remarks were one of the series of infuriating statements and actions by Japanese officials on history, and it was mainly the U.S. that raised concerns of the Japanese government. In September 2013, Prime Minister Shinzo Abe pledged to extend more than \$3 billion in ODA over three years to promote women’s rights in a speech to the United Nations. Abe’s emphasis on women’s rights was intended to tamp out smoldering concerns among some countries over his administration’s stance on the issue of “comfort women.” Abe also said he will cooperate with the International Criminal Court and the special representative of the U.N Secretary General on Sexual Violence in Conflict.<sup>75</sup> At the Upper House plenary session, Abe also revealed that his current views on historical issues are in line with Japan’s past leaders and with regard to the wartime comfort women issue, he said, “my heart aches for those who suffered terrible experiences beyond description. My feelings are no different from those of previous prime ministers. I believe that this issue should not be turned into a political or diplomatic matter.”

The next year it became worse in which Nobuo Ishihara, a former deputy chief Cabinet Secretary who helped draft the 1993 Kono statement of apology said that the military’s involvement mentioned in the statement was based on witness accounts, not documents at a Lower House Budget

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<sup>74</sup> Asahi shimbun May 14, 2013.

<sup>75</sup> [http://www.kantei.go.jp/foreign/96\\_abe/statement/201309/26generaldebate\\_e.html](http://www.kantei.go.jp/foreign/96_abe/statement/201309/26generaldebate_e.html)

Committee session as an unsworn witness. Following Ishihara's response, Chief Cabinet Secretary Yoshihide Suga suggested the government may re-examine statements given by former "comfort women" that formed the basis of a formal apology Japan made 21 years ago. Upon the Nuclear Summit in March, Prime Minister Abe vowed to uphold the Kono statement while Chief Cabinet Secretary of State Suga announced that Japan still plans to investigate doubts raised on its veracity to determine if Korea played a role in producing the statement and to check the accuracy of testimonies provided by former Korean comfort women. Two month study on the Kono statement released that stated that there was frequent exchanges of opinions between officials of the Japanese and South Korean governments. In response, the South Korean government said it will compile a white paper on comfort women to put international pressure on Japan to resolve the long-standing wartime issue.

South Korean government continued its efforts to appeal to international opinion. In a keynote address at the UN Human Rights Council on March 5, 2014, Korean foreign minister Yun Byung-se has raised the dispute with Japan over comfort women at a United Nations forum, for the first time. Calling the wartime system of sexual enslavement a "universal human rights issue," he also lambasted recent moves by political leaders in Japan who want to revise a landmark 1993 government statement of apology to former comfort women issue. In return, on March 6, at a meeting of the U.N. Human Rights Council on March 6, Takashi, ambassador of the Permanent Mission of Japan to the United Nations and Other International Organizations in Geneva cited Chief Cabinet Secretary Yoshihide Suga's declaration that the Abe administration has never denied the 1993 government statement that expresses 'remorse and apologizes' to former

comfort women. Later that year, the Japanese Japanese government also asks for a partial revision of a 1996 report on wartime “comfort women” by a United Nations special rapporteur but was rejected.<sup>76</sup>

However, by the second half of 2014, the two sides, aware of U.S. pressure and also realizing that this is going towards the dead-end, both sides began to soften their behavior. High-ranking officials of the foreign ministries of Japan and South Korea met on September 19 in Tokyo to discuss the comfort women issue and other matters. It was the first such meeting since April. At the U.N. speech on September 24, South Korean President Park Geun-hye avoided the contentious “comfort women” label in her keynote speech at the United Nations General Assembly, a possible concession to improving Japan-South Korea relations. A week later, Abe stated he has no plans to issue a new statement to replace a landmark 1993 apology to former comfort women forced to provide sex to wartime Japanese soldiers. And by November, the two leaders met briefly on the sidelines of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation forum in November, and pledged to encourage working-level officials to come to an understanding.

## **5-2. U.S. Government’s Lip Service Strategy**

When Secretary of State Kerry visited Korea in February 2013, he said “close trilateral cooperation among Washington, Seoul, and Tokyo remains essential,” alluding to both states to take sideline on history and focus on security. Former soldier John Kerry, the new Secretary of State is a

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<sup>76</sup> Asahi shimbun Oct. 14, 2014.

pragmatic realist and a Middle East expert who has different values from his predecessor. With the change of leadership in America's foreign affairs department, the U.S. policy line on the comfort women issue changed as well. Unlike the visible and active engagement it has shown over the past two years, United States remained visible, but the level of engagement compared to its visibility and rhetoric lagged behind.

The most striking difference between the two years is that former Secretary of State viewed the comfort women issue as a women's right issue while the current Secretary of State Kerry sees it as a diplomatic issue. The way the two secretaries define 'comfort women' demonstrates their view, for example, Clinton termed comfort women as "enforced sexual slaves," on the other hand, when Kerry went to Japan and South Korea to promote "healing and reconciliation" on May 18, 2015, he used the term that Prime Minister Abe used in his speech in Boston during an April visit to the United States, describing the issue as "the trafficking of women for sexual purposes by the Japanese military," also referring to President Obama's reference when he visited South Korea in April 2014, saying it was a "terrible, egregious violation of human rights." Not only the tone of the term becomes more neutral, from "enforced sex slaves," to "trafficking of women for sexual purposes," Kerry borrowed all the official terms and did not come up with his own opinion. This is a striking difference of perception whereas for Clinton, human rights and women's empowerment were her major area of focus and Kerry is more focused on security issue in East Asia.

The most symbolic of U.S.' stance of paying lip service to the two nations in the comfort women issue was the trilateral meeting on the sidelines of the Nuclear Security Summit in The Hague on March 25, 2014 which was held before Obama's trip to Asia. It was the first time that Prime

Minister Shinzo Abe and President Park met at a time when relations between South Korea and Japan were strained by the legacy of Japan's imperial past. The meeting was a result of the ongoing effort by Washington to ease the tensions between its two most important allies in northeast Asia part to form a united front against North Korea and address the reclusive country's nuclear program. It was reported that the Obama administration had also lobbied Japan informally to not review the Kono statement. In addition, South Korea agreed to have the three-way talk under the condition that Abe clearly state his intention to maintain the 1993 statement. As a result, at the March 14 Upper House Budget Committee session, Abe clearly stated that he had no intention of revising the Kono statement (but still plans to investigate whether Korea played a role in producing the statement and to check the accuracy of testimonies). In turn, U.S. State Department spokeswoman Jen Psaki called Japan's continued commitment to the Kono statement a "positive step." In a briefing on March 10, Psaki said, "We encourage Japan's leadership to approach this and other issues arising from the past in a manner that is conducive to building stronger relations with its neighbors."<sup>77</sup> The United States' stance is that as long as Prime Minister upholds the 1993 statement, there is no need for its two allies to continue their conflict.

Traditionally, the United States has avoided mediating between South Korea and Japan over their disagreements, however, in order to make some progress before Obama launches his trip to Asia (which includes Japan and South Korea), the United States urged both countries since earlier that month. The main topic on the agenda was nuclear nonproliferation and North Korea's nuclear

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<sup>77</sup>U.S. Department of State  
<http://www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/dpb/2014/03/223197.htm#JAPAN2>

weapons program, and the primary issue of comfort women and other historical disputes were not discussed. Although it was a significant moment that marked the first face-to-face encounter between Prime Minister Abe and President Park since both took office over a year ago, and the bilateral ties did not tighten. One high-ranking official said, “The most important element politically will be to have a photo taken of the leaders meeting each other.”<sup>78</sup> Also at the Press gaggle before President Obama’s arrival to Seoul, Deputy National Security Advisor for Strategic Communication, Ben Rhodes said, when asked about Japan’s attitude towards history, Rhodes answered that the trilateral meeting in The Hague where President Obama successfully brought the leaders together he said that Prime Minister Abe has made some constructive statements about upholding the previous apologies.<sup>79</sup> Like spokesman Psaki, he just wants to highlight the trilateral meeting that involved no discussion on the comfort women issue, but emphasizing the procedures that led to the meeting, which is Prime Minister Abe’s concession. “what we’ve seen is good progress in this area since the trilateral meeting in The Hague -- the President was able to bring the leaders together. Then following on those discussions, there have been working-level discussions at the trilateral level and there’s a sincere willingness on both sides to build out that cooperation.”<sup>80</sup>

One month after the trilateral meeting, U.S. President Obama makes a four-nation visit in Asia—Japan, South Korea, Malaysia, and the Philippines with the mission to increase U.S. diplomatic, economic and security engagement in the region. However, with regard to South Korea and Japan, it is more complicated than that. The visit to Japan was confirmed but South Korea was not initially on the list. However, with Prime Minister Abe’s Yasukuni Shrine visit, the dynamics suddenly changed. Obama’s advisors recommended that it would be politically right for Obama to meet both Prime Minister Abe and President Park. The

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<sup>78</sup>Asahi shimbun, March 22, 2014.

<sup>79</sup> The White House <https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2014/04/25/press-gaggle-deputy-national-security-advisor-strategic-communication-be>

<sup>80</sup> Ibid.

announcement of Obama's visit came as U.S. Secretary of State Kerry was visiting South Korea, who said in a veiled effort to encourage an improvement in ties between South Korea and Japan, "close, trilateral cooperation among Washington, Seoul, and Tokyo remains essential."<sup>81</sup>

While Obama was in Japan, he did not mention the comfort women to the Prime Minister, but when he went to South Korea and was asked about the comfort women issue, the President made strong remarks on the humanitarian issue. Calling what happened to these women a "terrible, egregious violation of human rights and stating that "they deserve to be heard [and] respected."<sup>82</sup>

President Obama unusually spoke out on the comfort women issue while he was visiting Korea. He urged Japan to settle the disputes over the issue and publically called on South Korea and Japan to work together to resolve historical tensions and to move forward for their common interests. However, his emphasis was not on the humanitarian issue, but more on the diplomatic relations. He alluded to their shared values and the future generation's future and the possibility of peace and prosperity for all people.

### **5-3. Forerunner of the 'Comfort Women' Issue, Congressman Mike Honda**

Since "history revisionist" Prime Minister Abe became the leader of Japan for the second time, the U.S. lawmakers have become keen on Japan and the comfort women issue. Moreover, while the issue was actively

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<sup>81</sup> Asahi shimbun, Feb. 14, 2014.

<sup>82</sup> The White House <https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2014/04/25/press-conference-president-obama-and-president-park-republic-korea>

claimed by Mike Honda for the past decade, other lawmakers, both Democrats and Republicans began to pay attention to the issue as it unrolled.

On January 15, the U.S. House of Representatives passed a bill with an attached document urging the Secretary of State to encourage the Japanese government to address the issues contained in the House's "comfort women resolution" in 2007. The 2014 spending bill for the U.S. government pass after being put to a vote before the entire house. The document about the comfort women is included in a report that addresses spending for the State Department. The section draws attention to the July 30, 2007 passage of House Resolution 121 that dealt with the comfort women issue and strongly urges the Secretary of State to encourage the Japanese government to resolve the issues that are contained in that resolution. It is likely to have considerable political impact, pushing the U.S. executive branch to renew diplomatic efforts to bring about a change in the attitude of the Japanese government. It states that the Federal Government must abide by the reports attached to the spending bill in its implementation of the bill. Since the U.S. executive branch must report to Congress at the end of the year about the extent to which it implemented the statements of the bill, it inevitably is pressured by the Congress. Mike Honda said that the U.S. executive branch has the most influence on the Japanese government and that this bill is intended to bring about a shift in Japan's attitude. It is a message from the House of Representatives to the executive branch (both Kerry and President Obama), because it is the president's signature that implements the law. The bill was led by Mike Honda because he was disappointed about Japan's reaction to the passage fo the resolution in 2007. Japan denied its past actions. The House Resolution was symbolically important but it was mostly a proclamation that ended with its adoption by

the House of Representatives, but the bill will force the U.S. administration to put political and diplomatic pressure on Japan. It also shows that the American politicians regard the issue as a human rights, a universal human value.

Two weeks later, Representatives Adam Schiff (D-Burbank), Bill Pascrell (D-NJ) and Scott Garrett (R-NJ) sent a letter to Secretary of State John Kerry urging him to address issues related to the comfort women with the government of Japan.

Other congressmen include US Representative Ed Royce, chairman of the House Committee on Foreign Affairs is also an active member who offered flowers to a comfort woman memorial statue in California and went to Japan, urging Tokyo to resolve the issue in February 2014. Congresswoman Loretta Sanchez of the House Armed Services Committee said that Japan's wartime sexual enslavement of women is inextricably linked to the U.S.' strategic rebalancing plan toward Asia. In June, three U.S. senators (Tim Johnson -South Dakota, Martin Heinrich-New Mexico and Mark Begich- Arkansas) called for redoubled efforts to address the issue of Japan's sexual enslavement of Korean and other Asian women during World War II in a formal request to President Barack Obama. Congressional Research Service (CRS) also criticized the Japanese Government's attempt to revise the Kono Statement that threatens U.S.' national interest. Finally, just before Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe's visit to the U.S., 25 U.S. representatives, along with the chair of the House Committee on Foreign Affairs, put their signatures on a letter to the Japanese government urging Abe to reaffirm the Kono Statement (as well as the Murayama Statement) and to face the facts of history. "We sincerely hope Prime Minister Abe's visit will lay the foundation for healing and humble reconciliation by

addressing the historical issues,” wrote members of Congress including Rep. Ed Royce, Chair of the House Committee on Foreign Relations, and Mike Honda (D) in the letter, which was sent to Japanese Ambassador to the US Kenichiro Sasae on Apr. 23.

The same month, New York Times carried an editorial titled ‘Japan’s historical blinders’ after Japan issued a review on the Kono Statement on June 20. The official mood in Washington concurred that the review was a useless addition to efforts to resolve the issue.<sup>83</sup>

At state level, three monuments and two memorial statue were installed in the states of Virginia, New Jersey, Michigan, and in California and Michigan. The memorial statue is the controversial Glendale memorial commemorating the sixth anniversary of the passage of House Resolution in July 2007, and another most recent figure in Southfield Michigan which was installed in August 2014. The monument in New York too place at the Veteran’s Memorial in Long island, and the Virginian monument is at Fairfax County, Northern Virginia, where an emerging voice and influence of Korean Americans live. For the most recent monument in Union City, New Jersey, two comfort women survivors came to join the ceremony. The states that embrace comfort women memorials have high population of Korean-Americans and the memorial movement throughout the United States has proven the power of grass-roots.

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<sup>83</sup> Kazuhiko Togo.(2008).

## **Conclusion**

Throughout the Obama administration, the Executive Branch first engaged actively under Clinton, but gradually disengaged itself by Kerry, while the legislative branch was mostly consistent in criticizing Japan for violation of human rights. This is due to different values and interest of the two leaders of America's foreign affairs department, albeit under the same liberal Democrat president. On the other hand, Mike Honda, Japanese descendent, was the most ardent forerunner of the comfort women issue since the beginning of his political life in California, and the historic 2007 House Resolution on comfort women. He was told by his fellow Korea-Americans that he should re-issue another resolution, but Honda said that it was not the right time. Honda, a former history school teacher and an intern during WWII knows Japan's wartime atrocities, and believes that Japan can only move onto become the world's greatest power if it sincerely apologizes and uphold the previous statement.

From 2009 to 2011 when South Korea and Japan were in amicable relation, the United States made no explicit approach in the issue. Moreover, it was not long after the 2007 House Resolution that for the first time brought the comfort women issue to the U.S. political arena. The Japanese were also very cautious not to make any provocative remarks against its neighboring countries and especially to United States. South Korean President Lee also avoided discussion on history issues with Japan for the sake of economic and security cooperation. It was not until his last year of five year presidency that he first raised the issue during the summit with Prime Minister Noda. However, there was one occurrence in the State of

New Jersey where a monument commemorating comfort women was first erected in the United States. For the monument establishment was developed by grass roots, it is hard to say the monument embraces the United States official stance. The first phase of Obama administration saw no visible engagement regarding comfort women.

The two years after Lee-Noda summit in Kyoto marked downhill of South Korea-Japan relation. Moreover, new leadership taking place in both South Korea and Japan, complicated the issue even more. Prime Minister Abe's election drew attention from both executive and legislative branch for his remarks and behavior on history. To bring "Japan Back" again, he denied the past atrocities during wartime and neglected responsibility of the Japanese government and military of the comfort women brothels. President Park, unlike other previous presidents of South Korea did not repeat the pattern of avoidance to claiming Japan's apology, but from the beginning showed firm resistance to the revisionist counterpart. The United States encouraged both sides to lead a future-oriented relation for next generation and was not only present, but actively engaged and voiced out its opinion on the issue. The peak of U.S. engagement happened in the summer of 2012 when the Nelson report reported Clinton's interest in the comfort women issue. Clinton's push for an official terminology change at the risk of annoying Japan shows her willingness to change even subtle parts to focus on her "signature issue" of global women's rights. After the election of Abe Shinzo as Prime Minister, U.S. Congressmen and officials became wary of the possibility of the review of 1993 statement that Abe had claimed during his campaign. With the Palisades Park memorial in 2010, passage of comfort women resolutions and installation of memorials at state level became prominent than ever. At all levels and all entities, the United States

did not hesitate to engage in comfort women issue. To Americans, comfort women was more close to universal values and women's rights issue rather than a diplomatic conflict between its two allies.

After Kerry stepped in as the new Secretary of State, the executive branch renewed its policy on comfort women. After experiencing both Japan and South Korea's behavior regarding the comfort women issue, the United States began to play the rhetoric card, paying lip service to both sides. Rhetorically speaking, the United States empathized with South Korea but also sided with Japan after Abe declared that Japan will not review or revise the previous statements. Especially after the trilateral summit on the sidelines of the Nuclear Summit, Park and Abe began to ameliorating actions due to U.S. pressure. Although there were no talks on the comfort women issue during the meeting, the United States perceived as a meaningful sign of reconciliation of its two allies. Kurt Campbell said that the U.S. encouraged those consultations to take place privately and the U.S. has no intention to play an intermediating role. The United States continuously "encouraged" the two countries to forge a future-oriented relations through dialogue. Under Secretary Clinton, the issue was a human rights issue at both the executive and legislative level, however, as Kerry stepped up, the executive branch perceived the issue as more of an international relations issue and became more cautious not to hurt relations with Japan. However, the Congress has never been more active during past two years, passing bills, urging the President and Secretary of State to discuss the issue with Japanese counterparts.

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*Asahi Shimbun*

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*Foreign Affairs*

*The Week*

## Appendices

### **Appendix 1. U.S. State Department > Bureau of Democracy > Human Rights and Labor Country Reports on Human Rights Practices Human Rights Report: Japan**

2014 Human Rights Report: Japan> Women

“The government reiterated its apologies to World War II “comfort women” (women trafficked for sexual purposes during the war). South Korean survivors and their supporters continued to call for a formal apology and compensation from the government.”

<http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/hrrpt/humanrightsreport/index.htm#wrapper>

2013 Human Rights Report: Japan> Women

“Faced with continued calls for dealing with the issue of the “comfort women” (women who were trafficked for sexual purposes during World War II), the government continued to stand by its previously extended apologies and offers of financial assistance.”

<http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/hrrpt/2013humanrightsreport/index.htm#wrapper>

2012 Human Rights Report: Japan> Women

“Faced with continued calls for dealing with the issue of the “comfort women” (women who were trafficked for sexual purposes during World War II), the government continued to stand by its previously extended apologies and financial assistance.”

<http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/hrrpt/2012humanrightsreport/index.htm#wrapper>

2011 Human Rights Report: Japan> Women

“Faced with continued calls for apology and compensation for “comfort women” (foreign and citizen victims of forced prostitution during World War II), government officials continued to express remorse and pointed to previously provided compensation payments.”

<http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/hrrpt/2011humanrightsreport/index.htm#wrapper>

2010 Human Rights Report: Japan> Women (Report April 8, 2011)

“Despite apologies by successive Japanese political leaders, a number of NGOs continued to criticize the country's apologies to and compensation for "comfort women" (the victims of forced prostitution during World War II) as inadequate. The government provided compensation payments through a government-initiated private fund, expressed remorse, and extended apologies to the victims.”

<http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/hrrpt/2010/eap/154386.htm>

2009 Human Rights Report: Japan> Women (Report March 11, 2010)

“Despite apologies by successive Japanese political leaders, a number of NGOs continued to criticize the country's apologies to and compensation for "comfort women" (the victims of forced prostitution during World War II) as inadequate. The government provided compensation payments through a government-initiated private fund, expressed remorse, and extended apologies to the victims.”

<http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/hrrpt/2009/eap/135993.htm>

2008 Human Rights Report: Japan > Government Corruption and Transparency (Report February 25, 2009)

“Government Corruption and Transparency>During the year the UN Human Rights Council and NGOs, including Amnesty International and Vital Voices, criticized the country's apologies to and compensation for "comfort women" as inadequate. Japan provided compensation payments through a government-initiated private fund, expressed remorse, and extended apologies, to the victims of forced prostitution during World War II beginning with the Kono Declaration in 1993, and in a 2001 letter from then prime minister, Junichiro Koizumi, sent to all identifiable victims. Prime Minister Koizumi wrote: "As Prime Minister of Japan, I extend anew my most sincere apologies and remorse to all the women who underwent immeasurable and painful experiences and suffered incurable physical and psychological wounds as comfort women. (Japan) must not evade the weight of the past, nor should we evade our responsibilities for the future.”

<http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/hrrpt/2008/eap/119041.htm>

**Appendix 2. Daily Press Briefing from the State Department > Excerpts from  
'Comfort Women'**

**Victoria Nuland**  
**Spokesperson**  
**Daily Press Briefing**  
**Washington, DC**  
**August 16, 2012**

**QUESTION:** Okay. My question is not about the territory issue. There were so many women who were forced into sexual slavery during the Second World War. The South Korean called them the *wianbu* in Korean, and this – I know you called them sometimes comfort women and sometimes sexual slavery. So I'd like to know what is your principle to call them, the comfort women or the sexual slavery?

**MS. NULAND:** Well, as you know, we speak to this issue in our Human Rights Report on an annual basis. We always raise it in bilateral dialogue. We sometimes use the one term, we sometimes use the other term. There's no particular mystery to that.

**QUESTION:** One more question.

**MS. NULAND:** Yeah.

**QUESTION:** There was a report about that. Secretary Clinton called them sexual slavery during the meeting with the South Korean – the Foreign Minister. And Secretary Clinton also told him that from that times the Department of State would call them the sexual slavery not the comfort women. Is that report right or wrong?

**MS. NULAND:** Well, first of all, I'm not going to get into her private diplomacy and back and forth with individual ministers. We've made clear to both governments, all governments, that we use the terms interchangeably and will continue to do so.

<http://www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/dpb/2012/08/196589.htm#JAPAN>

**Victoria Nuland**  
**Spokesperson**  
**Daily Press Briefing**  
**Washington, DC**  
**January 7, 2013**

**QUESTION:** Yes. The question about – it’s Japan, that the new Japanese administration is talking about reviewing the so-called Kono Statement on the comfort women issue, and that this is thought to have ripple effects for the Japan-Korea alliance – I’m sorry, Japan-Korea relations. And the question is: Is the U.S. concerned that these tensions that could come up with the review of the Kono Statement could have a bleed-over to trilateral relations between U.S.-Japan in particular but also U.S.-Japan-Korea relations?

**MS. NULAND:** Well, with regard to the issue at hand, we continue to hope that the countries in the region can work together to resolve their concerns over historical issues in an amicable way and through dialogue. As you know, we have no closer ally than Japan. We want to see the new Japanese Government, the new South Korean Government, all of the countries in Northeast Asia working together and solving any outstanding issues, whether they are territorial, whether they’re historic, through dialogue.

<http://www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/dpb/2013/01/202522.htm#JAPAN>

**Kurt M. Campbell**  
**Assistant Secretary, Bureau of East Asian and Pacific Affairs**  
**Daniel Russel ,National Security Council Senior Director for Asian Affairs**  
**Tokyo, Japan**

**January 17, 2013**

**QUESTION:** Why don't (inaudible) message about the Japan (inaudible) relations and the Japan-China relationship, relating to the Senkakus and Takeshima and such issues including "comfort women." What are your (inaudible)?

**ASSISTANT SECRETARY CAMPBELL:** Our general proposition is that, increasingly, Northeast Asia is the cockpit of the global economy. It's remarkably important for global growth. We believe that good relations between Japan, China, and South Korea are in the best interests of all concerned. We have encouraged those consultations to take place privately. The United States has no intention to play an intermediating role, but we do support the efforts that the Japanese government has taken to reach out to South Korea, to reach out to China. We want those conversations to continue.

<http://www.state.gov/p/eap/rls/rm/2013/01/202960.htm>

**Jen Psaki**

**Spokesperson**

**Daily Press Briefing**

**Washington, DC**

**May 16, 2013**

**QUESTION:** Hi, my name is Takashi from Japanese newspaper *Asahi*. Osaka City Mayor Hashimoto recently made a comment on the so-called "comfort women" issue, arguing that even though it is unacceptable from the moral perspective value, but the comfort women were necessary during the war period. And he also argued that it is not fair that only Japan is criticized by the United States and other countries, because there are other country military that were provided sexual service by prostitute. And do U.S. has any position on his comment or criticism against the United States?

**MS. PSAKI:** We have seen, of course, those comments. Mayor Hashimoto's comments were outrageous and offensive. As the United States has stated previously, what happened in that era to these women who were trafficked for sexual purposes is deplorable and clearly a grave human rights violation of enormous proportions. We extend, again, our sincere and deep sympathy to the victims, and we hope that Japan will continue to work with its neighbors to address this and other issues arising from the past and cultivate relationships that allow them to move forward.

**QUESTION:** Do you describe this issue sex slave or comfort women?

**MS. PSAKI:** Again, I don't know that I'm going to define it. You kind of laid out the specific details there, and we have described this issue in the past as comfort women<sup>[ii]</sup>.

<http://www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/dpb/2013/05/209511.htm#JAPAN>

**Jen Psaki**  
**Spokesperson**  
**Daily Press Briefing**  
**Washington, DC**  
**January 16, 2014**

**QUESTION:** I have a quick question about comfort women issue, because as we know, the U.S. House of Representative passed the Fiscal Year 2014 budget bill on Wednesday, and this bill requires the Secretary of State urge the Japanese Government to comply with the comfort women resolution. How does the U.S. --

**MS. PSAKI:** This is a bill in Japan?

**QUESTION:** No. This is just a bill including some – the – I mean, comfort women resolution.

**MS. PSAKI:** But is it a bill in the United States or it's a bill in Japan?

**QUESTION:** In United States.

**MS. PSAKI:** I'm not familiar with the specifics of the bill. Obviously, our position

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**QUESTION:** Okay.

**MS. PSAKI:** -- hasn't changed on this. If it's an ongoing piece of legislation, it's unlikely we'd have any further comment on it, but I'm happy to check with our team on it.

**QUESTION:** How about – because the South Korea official says they plan to partner with other countries to – seeking to obtain United Nations world documentary heritage status for comfort women. And as we know that there is a comfort women statute in southern California, which lots of Japanese politicians ask for removal of it. How does the State Department react to this?

**MS. PSAKI:** I'd have to look closer – more closely into whether we have a view on that particular piece of legislation. It's unlikely given it sounds like it's happening in a state.

<http://www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/dpb/2014/01/219935.htm>

**Jen Psaki**  
**Spokesperson**  
**Daily Press Briefing**  
**Washington, DC**  
**March 10, 2014**

**QUESTION:** Okay. It's about Japan's comfort women. The Japanese Government is going to reexamine the process, how it was made by the previous government in early '90s. It's called about the Kono Statement on comfort women. And Japanese Government also said that it's not going to change the statement per se.

**MS. PSAKI:** Mm-hmm.

**QUESTION:** So I was wondering if you have – can any comment or view on this process.

**MS. PSAKI:** Sure. Well, the apologies extended by previous Prime Minister Murayama and former Chief Cabinet Secretary Kono marked an important chapter in Japan improving relations with its neighbors. We note that Chief Cabinet Secretary Suga stated to the press on March 3<sup>rd</sup> – so last week – that the position of the Abe government is to uphold the Kono statement. We encourage Japan's leadership to approach this and other issues arising from the past in a manner that is conducive to building stronger relations with its neighbors, so we felt that was a positive step.

<http://www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/dpb/2014/03/223197.htm#JAPAN2>

**Marie Harf**  
**Deputy Spokesperson**  
**Daily Press Briefing**  
**Washington, DC**  
**April 17, 2014**

**QUESTION:** Okay. And – sorry, staying in Asia. Sorry, Matt. I had one more question. So there will be a meeting between South Korea and Japan at the directors general level on comfort women. It's going to be specifically on comfort women. And I was wondering if you thought that this was a concrete step towards the amelioration of the relationship, or whether you thought --

**MS. HARF:** A what step?

**QUESTION:** A concrete step.

**MS. HARF:** A concrete step.

**QUESTION:** Or whether you think that this is kind of papering over and whether they're doing this because President Obama will be in the region?

**MS. HARF:** Well, I think it's important that our friends and partners and allies in the region talk to each other. I don't know why they're having this meeting. I don't have any analysis of that to do for you. But we obviously think it's important for dialogue to happen between them directly. Obviously, the President has a full agenda for his trip to the region, which I know the White House will be outlining in more detail. But the improving relationship between our friends in the region is certainly at the top of that agenda.

<http://www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/dpb/2014/04/224953.htm#JAPAN>

**Jen Psaki**

**Spokesperson**

**Daily Press Briefing**

**Washington, DC**

**August 5, 2014**

**QUESTION:** On Asia, can you confirm a report that the State Department had a meeting with former comfort women from South Korea last week? And if that's the case, could you share who met from the State Department and who requested this meeting?

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, at their request, two members of the House of Sharing met State Department officials on July 31st and discussed their experiences. It's

important to note that State Department officials have periodically met with members of the House of Sharing in the past, so this is not the first time or it's not without precedent. I don't have any other updates on the level. Of course, it was here in Washington, so from our bureau here.

**QUESTION:** So you don't know if it's requested from South Korean Government?

**MS. PSAKI:** They were – no, it was requested from the members of the House of Sharing.

**QUESTION:** Okay. Do you have any concern this kind of meeting might have a negative impact on U.S.-Japan relationship, given Japan has different opinions on these issues?

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, I think this is an issue that we have discussed, certainly, in the past with Japan. As we've stated many times, it is deplorable and clearly a grave human rights violation of enormous proportions that the Japanese military was involved in the trafficking of women for sexual purposes in the 1930s and 1940s. And we – as we know, that was quite a long time ago, but we encourage Japan to continue to address this issue in a manner that promotes healing and facilitates better relations with neighboring states. We have had meetings – State Department officials have periodically met with representatives from this group in the past, so it shouldn't set a new precedent. And obviously, there's a great deal we work with Japan on.

**QUESTION:** Last question: So you don't rule out any future meeting like this?

**MS. PSAKI:** I don't think I'm ruling it out. I think we meet periodically with representatives from this group.

<http://www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/dpb/2014/08/230249.htm#SOUTHKOREA>

**Sung Kim**  
**Special Representative for North Korea Policy**  
**Tokyo, Japan**  
**December 9, 2014**

**QUESTION:** I have a question to you as Deputy Assistant Secretary for Japan and South Korea. How do you say about the current standoff between your two allies? Especially, I am wondering how you are evaluating the Japanese government's efforts about the "comfort woman" issue.

**AMBASSADOR SUNG KIM:** Well, as we've said many times, Japan and Korea are two of our closest allies and two of our closest friends. Good relations among the three of us – and good relations between Japan and Korea – are not only in the interest of Japan and Korea, but also in the interest of the United States. So we would like to see our two close friends continue to have constructive relations. With regard to the "comfort woman" issue, we know that this is a very difficult and painful issue between our two friends. We know that both governments are making an effort, and we hope that there will be some progress on this issue sometime soon.

<http://www.state.gov/p/eap/rls/rm/2014/12/234841.htm>

**Marie Harf**  
**Deputy Spokesperson**  
**Daily Press Briefing**  
**Washington, DC**  
**March 6, 2015**

**QUESTION:** Yes. This one's on Japan. Last December, Japanese Government officials contacted McGraw Hill, the publisher of a world history textbook, asking them to revise or remove two paragraphs about Japan's wartime comfort women system. The publisher said no, they wouldn't make any changes. And now, in the latest issue of the American Historical Association's *Perspectives On History*

magazine, there's a letter signed by 20 historians condemning the Japanese Government's action as an effort to censor history.

So I guess our question is: Do you agree with these historians that the Japanese Government went too far in contacting an American publishing company and asking for revisions to a history textbook?

**MS. HART:** I haven't seen any of those reports and don't know any of those details. If you give it to us after the briefing, I'm happy to look into it. I'm just not familiar with the details.

<http://www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/dpb/2015/03/238615.htm#DEPARTMENT>

**Jeff Rathke**  
**Acting Deputy Spokesperson**  
**Daily Press Briefing**  
**Washington, DC**  
**May 1, 2015**

**QUESTION:** The South Korean foreign ministry put out a statement yesterday expressing disappointment that Abe didn't go far enough in acknowledging the comfort women issue in his address to Congress. Obviously, this has been a priority for the U.S. trilateral relationship to get Japan to acknowledge in a forthright way the sins of World War II. Is there any disappointment on the U.S.'s side that Abe wasn't more forthright during his address?

**MR RATHKE:** Well, at the press conference over at the White House on April 28th, Prime Minister Abe reaffirmed that his cabinet upholds the Kono Statement, has no intention to revise it – we certainly take note of that point – and also that he upholds the views of previous prime ministers in that regard, but I don't have anything more to add on that.

<http://www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/dpb/2015/05/241412.htm#JAPAN2>

## 국문초록

# 한일간 위안부 문제에서 미국의 역할

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미국은 중국의 패권주의와 북한의 핵무장에 맞서 한국과 일본과의 3자 공조가 중요하다는 외교적 판단에 따라 그 동안 3국 협력을 피하며 한국과 일본 그 어느 한 곳의 손을 들어주지 않으며 중립을 지켜왔다. 그러나 한국과 일본 2011년 양국 정상회담 이후 위안부 문제로 대치가 날로 격화하면서 결국 미국은 양국 경쟁의 주요 무대가 되고 있다. 한국은 미국에게 위안부를 국제 인권문제로 봐달라고 호소하고 있는 반면 일본은 일본과 미국이 1951년 맺은 샌프란시스코 조약과 같이 한일간 위안부 문제는 이미 1965년 국교정상화 때 법적으로 모든 처리를 끝냈다는 입장을 고수하고 있다.

이에 따라 미국 정부, 의회, 그리고 시민사회가 각각 중요한 주체가 되어 각자 나름대로 한일간 위안부 문제를 다루고 있다. 본 논문은 한일간 협력과 갈등을 통해 각각의 주체들의 태도와 행동을 분석하여 위안부 문제에 있어서 미국이 과연 어떠한 역할과 입장을 취하고 있는지 살펴보고자 한다. 첫 번째로는 2009년 이후 6년째 미국의 정세를 이끄는 오바마

대통령과 2009년부터 2013년까지 국무장관을 한 힐러리 클린턴 장관과 2013년부터 국무장관이 된 존 케리 장관과 그 외의 관계자들이 위안부 문제에 대해 한 말과 행동들을 통해 미국 정부의 입장을 분석하고자 한다. 두 번째로 의회의 구조, 적극적인 의원들, 법안, 전문 등을 통해 미국의 외교 정책에서 매우 큰 역할을 하고 있는 미국 의회와, 마지막으로 미국에서 최근 세력을 넓히고 있는 한인 사회의 행동범위를 살펴보고자 한다.

특히 미국 거주 한인들의 활동과 전 역사 선생님 출신인 마이클 혼다 캘리포니아 주의원은 꾸준히 위안부 문제에 대해 적극적으로 호소하고 해결하고자 노력해왔다. 미국 내 한인 단체의 활동은 2010년 뉴저지주 팰리세이즈파크시에 일본군 위안부 기림비를 세우며 눈에 띄는 활동을 시작하여 2013년에는 서울의 일본대사관 앞의 위안부 소녀상과 똑같은 소녀상을 세우는데 이어 뉴욕주, 뉴저지주 등에서 위안부 법안을 추진해왔다. 마이클 혼다 일본계 민주당 의원은 정계에 입문한 1999년부터 위안부 문제를 이끈 ‘위안부 전문가’로 미국 내에서뿐만 아니라 국제 사회에 일본의 전쟁 중 만행과 위안부 할머니들의 존재를 알리는데 적극적이다. 반면, 미국 정부는 다소 일관된 모습을 보여주지 않고 있다. 2009년부터 2011년까지 한일관계가 최고로 좋았을 때에는 위안부 문제에 대해 별다른 입장을 취하고 있지 않던 미국이 2011년 한일 양국간 관계가 위안부 문제를 중심으로 악화되자 힐러리 클린턴 장관의 발언과 함께 위안부 문제를 세계 인권 문제로 바라보고 적극적으로 다루었으나, 2013년 케리 국무장관으로 교체되면서 인권 문제가 아닌 한일 양국간 외교적 문제로 바라보면서 다소 입장을 달리 하고 있다.

Keywords: 한일관계, 종군 위안부, 한미일 협력, 미국의 대외 정책