

Chapter 5: Forcing Japanese Foreign Ministry to Deny Accusations 20 Years Too Late Third delegation (February 2016)



Our third delegation to the UN in Geneva (February 2016)

A. Japan-Korea Agreement and its Aftermath

By Fujioka Nobukatsu

The conclusion of the Japan-Korea Agreement

As we saw in the last chapter of this book, the Alliance for Truth about Comfort Women sent a second delegation to the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women in July, 2015. With the help of an NGO, two women each gave two-minute speeches denying the forced recruitment and sexual enslavement of comfort women. These two women were Yamamoto Yumiko and Sugita Mio. This was a truly landmark event, for up to then left-wing NGOs held a stranglehold on access to the UN. The UN committee members were allowed for the first time to hear a point of view entirely contrary to what they had heard for many years.

In this short essay, consisting mainly of documents, I will take up the subject of the Japan-Korea Agreement, which was brokered outside the UN through bilateral diplomatic negotiations, between the July 2015 preliminary session of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, which discussed the comfort women problem, and the main session, convened over half a year later in February 2016. I am discussing the Japan-Korea Agreement here because of the significant impact it had on the UN's deliberations on the comfort women problem.

In Seoul, on December 28, 2015, the foreign ministers of Japan and South Korea each announced, from their own standpoints, the contents of the agreement they had reached. The statement of Japanese Foreign Minister Kishida Fumio, as recorded on the website of the Foreign Ministry, is as follows.

1. Foreign Minister Kishida

The Government of Japan and the Government of the Republic of Korea (ROK) have intensively discussed the issue of comfort women between Japan and the ROK at bilateral meetings including the Director-General consultations. Based on the result of such discussions, I, on behalf of the Government of Japan, state the following:

(1) The issue of comfort women, with an involvement of the Japanese military authorities at that time, was a grave affront to the honor and dignity of large numbers of women, and the Government of Japan is painfully aware of responsibilities from this perspective. As Prime Minister of Japan, Prime Minister Abe expresses anew his 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.

(2) The Government of Japan has been sincerely dealing with this issue. Building on such experience, the Government of Japan will now take measures to heal psychological wounds of all former comfort women through its budget. To be more specific, it has been decided that the Government of the ROK establish a foundation for the purpose of providing support for the former comfort women, that its funds be contributed by the Government of Japan as a one-time contribution through its budget, and that projects for recovering the honor and dignity and healing the psychological wounds of all former comfort women be carried out under the cooperation between the Government of Japan and the Government of the ROK.

(3) While stating the above, the Government of Japan confirms that this issue is resolved finally and irreversibly with this announcement, on the premise that the Government will steadily implement the measures specified in (2) above. In addition, together with the Government of the ROK, the Government of Japan will refrain from accusing or criticizing each other regarding this issue in the international community, including at the United Nations.

Japanese reactions to the Japan-Korea Agreement

The Japan-Korea Agreement was praised not only by, of course, the ruling Liberal Democratic Party, but also by the opposition parties. Even the Communist Party supported it. This was a rare show of unanimity. Kono Yohei, the author of the Kono Statement, also supported the agreement, marveling that, "The Prime Minister has made an excellent decision."

Among the opposition parties, only the Party for Japanese Kokoro expressed opposition. Nakayama Kyoko, the party's representative, issued a statement concerning the Japan-Korea Agreement on the 28th. Though acknowledging that the Japanese government "had made efforts to forge a future-oriented partnership between Japan and South Korea," she asserted that, "We

believe this will become the greatest stain on Prime Minister Abe's diplomacy, and must express our strong disappointment." Ms. Nakayama pointed out that Foreign Minister Kishida had stated at the joint press conference following the Japan-Korea Foreign Ministers' Conference that recruitment of comfort women took place "with involvement of the Japanese military," and she said that, "The government needs to make clear on what historical facts this is based." She also stressed that, "No definite commitment was ever made" concerning the removal of comfort woman statues in the United States and in front of the Japanese embassy in Korea.

There were even some conservative media outlets that endorsed the agreement. Their reasons for doing so were that the deal had "finally and irreversibly" settled the dispute, that it was a diplomatic triumph over South Korea, or that international opinion leaders such as the United States government and the *New York Times* approved of it. A great many of these editorials delved into topics unrelated to the comfort women problem, such as whether or not they supported the Abe government.

The opinion of GAHT

The Global Alliance for Historical Truth (GAHT), an organization participating in the campaign to remove comfort woman statues in the United States, announced its stance towards the Japan-Korea Agreement on December 29:

On December 28, in the final days of the year 2015, the Foreign Ministers of Japan and South Korea held a joint press conference in Seoul to announce that their two nations had reached a "historic" final agreement on the comfort women problem. What did this agreement actually resolve and what remains to be done? In our view, the agreement did not resolve anything.

In contrast with Japanese Foreign Minister Kishida's triumphant declaration of a final settlement, the Korean side made no substantive promises. The Foreign Minister of South Korea declared that Korea would exert new effort on various matters while monitoring Japan's progress in implementing the deal. On the other hand, Mr. Kishida proclaimed the final resolution of the problem without attaching any such condition. Thus, the Korean side demonstrated far superior diplomatic skill. Japan announced its intention to donate almost one billion yen, but Korea made no reference to the donation. What's more, this agreement was merely an oral statement issued at the press conference, and was not released as a written document. There is a risk that it will not be honored by the next administration.

In the first place, it was South Korea that forced the comfort women problem on Japan. Japan declared the problem to have been fully settled through the 1965 Treaty on Basic Relations between Japan and the Republic of Korea. It is the South Korean economy that has been suffering due to the deterioration of Korea-Japan relations. Tourism, investment, and imports from Japan are all in decline. Although the United States government requested that Japan resolve the comfort women problem, Japan had no reason of its own to seek such a resolution. There was no need for the Foreign Minister to make a special trip to Seoul and no need to accept the plethora of demands made by South Korea.

In spite of this, the Japanese side made numerous missteps. Firstly, the Japanese government admitted, albeit in a non-legal capacity, its involvement in recruitment of comfort women until the end of World War II and apologized for it. Secondly, Japan offered to provide government funding, though from a purely humanitarian standpoint. These acts were entirely unnecessary. The Kono Statement is still in effect, and moreover, the payment of reparations will be used as proof that a crime was committed. As a result of this agreement, the Japanese government will no longer be able to claim innocence concerning the comfort women. It will make the work of private groups who deny that the comfort women were sex slaves that much more difficult.

Even worse, the Korean side made no meaningful pledges whatsoever. The Korean government did promise to cease bringing up the controversy, but all the ongoing problems concerning the comfort women are being caused by non-governmental organizations. The comfort woman statue in front of the Japanese embassy in Seoul was set up by the Korean Council for the Women Drafted for Military Sexual Slavery by Japan, and the comfort women statue in Glendale was similarly erected by a private organization called the Korean American Forum of California. The Korean government did commit itself to endeavor to have these groups remove the statues, so most likely they will receive at least a letter from the government. Nonetheless, it is clear that the recipients will ignore the Korean government's objections, as they have already stated that they will. The Korean government also affirmed that it will not criticize Japan at the United Nations, but it is not clear whether or not its submission to the UNESCO Memory of the World Register constitutes "criticism".

In other words, Japan stood at an advantageous position, but cast off all these advantages and left itself at the mercy of Korea's diplomatic strategy. Quite contrary to Foreign Minister Kishida's declaration, this agreement will probably go down in history as a tremendous stain on Japanese diplomacy.

The malicious intent behind the words "military involvement"

Viewing the comfort women controversy from a historical perspective reveals numerous problematic points in the Japan-Korea Agreement. I would like now to point out seven such problems with the text of the agreement.

First and foremost, there is the problem of the phrase "with an involvement of the Japanese military authorities." I feel that the individuals who deliberately inserted this loaded expression into the very start of the agreement must have done so with extremely malicious intent towards Japan. I say this because "military involvement" is the same insidious expression that the *Asahi Shimbun* exploited in order to manufacture the comfort women problem.

The phrase "military involvement" was taken up by the Kono Statement in 1993, and with that, the Japanese government had adopted the very term devised by the *Asahi Shimbun* as part of its strategy. The Kono Statement concluded that the recruitment of comfort women "was an act, with the involvement of the military authorities of the day, that severely injured the honor and dignity of many women." The Japan-Korea Agreement lifted this part of the Kono Statement almost word for word.

At the time that the Kono Statement was released, most Japanese people were still being kept in the dark about the truth of the comfort women. Twenty-three years has passed since then, and it was two years ago that the *Asahi Shimbun* admitted its own misreporting and dramatically retracted the news articles that it had published on the comfort women problem. Even though the *Asahi Shimbun* confessed to total capitulation, Kishida's statement adhered to the *Asahi's* fabrications as if the retraction had never happened.

To what extent was the Japanese military actually "involved" in the administration of the comfort stations? The comfort women system originated from military demand, and the establishment and operation of comfort stations was possible only through the permission granted by the military to private brokers. It is thus obvious that the Japanese military was "involved". Military authorities were involved insofar as they enacted regulations on the administration of comfort stations, put in place a pricing system, and carried out health inspections on comfort women. However, under this system, it was the brokers who ran the comfort stations, and the Japanese soldiers were their customers. Therefore, "military involvement" meant that the military was protecting the comfort women so that the brokers could not unilaterally impose cruel working conditions upon them.

The art of diplomatic ambiguity

In consideration of the aforementioned facts about "military involvement," some of the individuals who support the Japan-Korea Agreement have argued that the Foreign Minister's statement was perhaps a fair representation of the truth. However, this line of thinking is deeply problematic. When we talk about someone's "involvement" in an incident, it typically refers to involvement in some sort of wrongdoing. In Japan, the connotations of this word became fixed from news reporting on crimes and scandals such as the kind that newspapers printed in their local news section. For this reason, the Japanese government's own admission of "military involvement" at the start of the agreement gives the impression that the Japanese government affirms and admits its role in the alleged mistreatment of the comfort women that has already become the subject of so much international propaganda. Furthermore, the wording of the agreement expressed the nature of the wrongdoing in clear and direct terms. It stated that the comfort women system "was a grave affront to the honor and dignity of large numbers of women." This completed the perception that the Japanese military was guilty of a crime.

One might then ask the question of why they went out of their way to compose such an easily misunderstood statement. In fact, this was diplomatic jargon, deliberately crafted to maximize its ambiguity, so that both sides could interpret it in a way favorable for their own needs. In this case, the South Korean government would be able to use the statement to convince the comfort women lobby, such as activist groups, that "The Japanese government has admitted its guilt as outlined in the agreement."

Although the Japan-Korea Agreement was the product of diplomatic word games between Japan and South Korea, it was also the expression of Japan's official position to the rest of the world. Consequently, it was only natural that the foreign media, which had long been critical of Japan's stance on the comfort women, jubilantly reported the deal as being a belated admission of guilt on Japan's part. It was clear from the beginning that this would happen.

For example, the American newspaper *The New York Times* ran an editorial on December 30 entitled "At Last, a Real Apology From Japan." The editorial praised the "landmark" Japan-Korea Agreement on the comfort women and stated that, "Mr. Abe has moved further than expected in personally accepting Japan's responsibility to address the past." Let's not delude ourselves. Praise from a notoriously anti-Japanese newspaper should not be taken by Japan as a "diplomatic achievement."

The Australia-Japan Community Network, an activist group that campaigned successfully to prevent the construction of a comfort woman statue in Australia, drew up a report that collected news coverage about the agreement from media around the world. I despaired on seeing how many media outlets made comments far removed from the facts about Japan having apologized.

Words denunciatory of Japan

The second problematic point in the wording of the agreement is the claim that the comfort women system "was a grave affront to the honor and dignity of large numbers of women." Every time that I hear or read this catch phrase, I angrily think to myself, "What about the honor of the Japanese soldiers who gave their lives for their homeland on the battlefield?" Japan's soldiers were by nature gentle-hearted Japanese men, and rarely would they do any harm to women.

Despite this, stories about Japanese soldiers torturing Korean comfort women, cutting off their limbs, and even boiling human flesh and forcing other women to eat it are all written in the Coomaraswamy Report as if they were true eyewitness reports. Our ancestors are being falsely portrayed as rapists, perverts, and homicidal fiends.

When people say that the honor of the women was sullied, it is clear enough that they are basically referring to the fact that the comfort women were prostitutes. However, if that's the case, the Japanese government ought to apologize to the women who worked in brothels in Japan as well, as brothels were legal at that time. If, on the other hand, they are saying that having to provide companionship to soldiers on the battlefield "was a grave affront to the honor and dignity" of the comfort women, then this is simply an expression of anti-military sentiment. However, it is not acceptable for a country to turn against its own military and denounce the soldiers who served in its past wars.

Thirdly, there is the problem of the phrase "the Government of Japan is painfully aware of responsibilities from this perspective." Concerning the word "responsibilities," the Korean government argued over the course of the negotiations that the term "legal responsibility" should be used, whereas the Japanese government favored the term "moral responsibility." According to newspaper accounts on the behind-the-scenes talks, the two sides deadlocked and so settled on just the word "responsibilities". Thus, they erred on the side of ambiguity. Both sides would be able to interpret it as it suited them. Nevertheless, as Nishioka Tsutomu pointed out in an article in the newspaper *Sankei Shimbun* on December 29, this also means that the Japanese government has not denied that the "responsibilities" in question were legal responsibilities.

Foreign Minister Kishida's statement continued: "As Prime Minister of Japan, Prime Minister Abe expresses anew his 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."

The Prime Minister's expression of sympathy for the circumstances of the comfort women was a naturally human thing to do, and he acknowledged that state responsibility is a different matter. The Prime Minister repeats this phrase at every possible opportunity. And yet, the English translation of the Prime Minister's words ended up reinforcing the "comfort women = sex slaves" argument in ways that were not present in the original Japanese. For example, whereas the Foreign Ministry's English translation refers to the "immeasurable and painful experiences" of the comfort women, the original Japanese uses the far more subdued expression *amata no kutsu* [great suffering]. In addition, the Japanese-language phrase *shinshin ni watari iyashigatai kizu wo otta* [suffered physical and mental wounds that will not be easily healed] became "suffered incurable physical and psychological wounds" in English. The Japanese version seems to gently convey a sense of sympathy for the victims, but the English version is more reminiscent of the fabricated tales of tortured slaves.

These are the actual effects that such stock phrases are having overseas, and foreign newspapers accordingly quote them as the official admissions of the Prime Minister of Japan. These words have had serious implications.

Crossing the Treaty on Basic Relations redline

Fourthly, there is the matter of the one billion yen that the Japanese government will contribute to a foundation to be set up by the South Korean government to settle the grievances of comfort women and their surviving family.

According to Kishida's statement, "The Government of Japan has been sincerely dealing with this issue. Building on such experience, the Government of Japan will now take measures to heal psychological wounds of all former comfort women through its budget."

The words "Government of Japan" and "through its budget" are expressly included. By contrast, the now defunct Asian Women's Fund collected donations from private Japanese citizens to distribute to the comfort women. However, the comfort women activist group, the Korean Council for the Women Drafted for Military Sexual Slavery by Japan, insisted that only funds from the government were acceptable. The Korean Council opposed the work of the Asian Women's Fund and even tried to prevent elderly comfort women from receiving Japanese donations.

This time, the Japanese government honored Korea's wishes and emphasized that the funds would come from its budget.

However, this decision will have truly grave consequences. As part of the postwar settlement between Japan and South Korea, both countries signed the Agreement Concerning the Settlement of Problems in Regard to Property and Claims alongside the Treaty on Basic Relations in 1965 in

order to "completely and finally" extinguish the right to claim compensation. Even Japan's weak-kneed government had at least refused to renege on this point. If the Japanese government provides state funds to Korea, no matter how much money it is or what form the payment takes, the rest of the world will believe that Japan has backpedaled on its earlier position and admitted it was in the wrong.

Through the Japan-Korea Agreement, Japan has actively violated the terms of the Property and Claims Agreement. It has abandoned its longstanding position that the matter of state reparations is already closed, and has caved in to the Korean activist groups demanding that the Japanese government indemnify the comfort women. It would be fair to say that Abe Shinzo has done more damage to his own country than even socialist former Prime Minister Murayama.

From the outset, South Korea has proven itself to be a country that is unable to respect its own agreements. By treating Korea as an equal partner, Japan seems to have brought itself down to Korea's level, as a state with little respect for the rule of law that will ignore even the international treaties it has signed on its own accord.

The meaning of "finally and irreversibly"

Fifthly, there is the meaning of the Foreign Minister's confirmation that the Japan-Korea Agreement has resolved the comfort women problem "finally and irreversibly". In full, the statement in question reads, "While stating the above, the Government of Japan confirms that this issue is resolved finally and irreversibly with this announcement, on the premise that the Government will steadily implement the measures specified in (2) above."

In the face of threats from one nation to scrap a signed bilateral treaty, Japan committed the inexcusable blunder of paying the ransom and renegotiating the treaty. There is a terrible dissonance involved in willingly overturning the "complete and final" settlement contained within the 1965 Property and Claims Agreement for the purpose of concluding a "final and irreversible" settlement. It should be said in no uncertain terms that the Japan-Korea Agreement will not resolve the comfort women problem "finally and irreversibly."

Because Japan's own actions are in violation of past agreements, there will certainly be many more "final and irreversible" settlements from this point on, and even though Japan will fork over more money each time, there is nothing in principle to stop it from repeating in perpetuity.

Just as North Korea will never let go of its nuclear weapons, so too will South Korea never let go of the comfort women problem. Japan is a ready source of extortion money and will continue to be an irresistible target for the victim industry. The people and government of Japan should mark my words: our naïveté is not sustainable.

What, in the view of the Japanese government, is "a resolution to the comfort women problem"? For those of us who have been confronting this problem up to now, "a resolution to the comfort women problem" means clearing up the misunderstandings that have spread around the world, such as the myth that the comfort women were sex slaves. By contrast, all that the Japan-Korea Agreement, Foreign Minister Kishida's self-styled "historic, groundbreaking achievement," has

effectively done is to keep President Park Geun-hye quiet for the time being. Naturally, the work of private groups was left entirely unchecked. The Japan-Korea Agreement will have close to no impact on their anti-Japanese activities. Once a new president enters office, we will end up right back where we started. Calling this situation a "resolution" is both arrogant and foolish.

Gagging the Japanese government's voice of opposition

Sixthly, concerning the comfort woman statue in front of the Japanese embassy in Seoul, there is the assurance of the Korean government that it would "strive to solve this issue in an appropriate manner through taking measures such as consulting with related organizations." News reports published up to this point have indicated that, as a prerequisite for entering into negotiations with South Korea, the Japanese government demanded the removal of this comfort woman statue as its minimum condition. Nonetheless, as one can see in the declaration made before the joint press conference, the Korean government only said that it would "strive" to have the statue removed and made no promises beyond that. South Korea can merely claim to have tried, unsuccessfully, to have had the statue removed, and could still say that it kept its commitment. In fact, Korean activist groups released a statement in advance affirming that they have no intention of removing the statue.

The Japan-Korea Agreement made no mention of the comfort woman statues cropping up across the rest of the world. Shouldn't the Japanese government have insisted during the talks that all the comfort woman statues around the world be removed under the supervision of the Korean government? There is little doubt that the Korean campaign to "discount Japan" through worldwide installation of comfort woman statues will continue in the future.

Seventhly, there is the matter of Japan and South Korea's extremely significant commitment to "refrain from accusing or criticizing each other regarding this issue in the international community, including at the United Nations." For Korea, this commitment means little, as it ignores the private groups that are not controlled by the government. Conversely, it is possible that Japanese people, and especially the Japanese government, will find it much more difficult to make a proper rebuttal to misconceptions about the comfort women.

For example, on January 14, 2016, Diet member Sakurada Yoshitaka stated before a joint committee of the Liberal Democratic Party that, because Japan's Anti-Prostitution Law did not come into effect until the 1950s, "Until then, prostitution was a vocation and a business. We are too easily misled by propaganda acting as if these prostitutes were victims." The Japanese press, including the *Asahi Shimbun*, was quick to pounce on the remark, and Sakurada was forced to make a retraction. The next day, Prime Minister Abe affirmed in response to a question in the Diet that he believed that individuals affiliated with both the government and opposition parties should speak in accordance with the spirit of the Japan-Korea Agreement. We have regressed to an earlier, darker time in which truthful comments like those of Mr. Sakurada are suppressed while lies go unchallenged. The system in place several decades ago, in which the *Asahi Shimbun* hunted down the politically incorrect and the government repressed politically incorrect comments, seems now to be returning with a vengeance.

And that is not all. In anticipation of the February meeting of the UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, the Japanese government had drawn up a splendid set of prepared answers, but it was replaced with a document devoid of all contents in the name of not "accusing or criticizing" Korea on the issue.

History wars: The defeat of 2015

Prime Minister Abe proclaimed himself to be a leader who could restore the pride of the Japanese people that had been tarnished by historical falsifications. His government came into being backed by the hopes of a great many Japanese people. The year 2015, the seventieth anniversary of the end of the war, was notable as a year in which a variety of battles were fought in these "history wars."

And yet, the Japanese government continued to chalk up defeat after defeat on the diplomatic front of the history wars.

In June, when seeking World Heritage Site status for " Battleship Island," the Japanese government committed the grave error of recognizing that "forced labor" took place there during World War II. In August, the "Abe Statement" effectively told the rest of the world that Japan admitted to having waged wars of aggression. Even so, I accepted the Abe Statement as a necessary evil in order to preserve the government. In October, the "Nanking Massacre" was registered in the UNESCO Memory of the World Programme.

Finally, the Japan-Korea Agreement at the end of the year marked the nadir. With that, the Abe government violated the ultimate taboo of making an admission that put the very pride of Japan at stake. Even if the United States put pressure on Japan to "resolve" the comfort women problem (in other words, forcing Japan to "admit" its guilt) and claimed to offer national security concessions in exchange, even then this could not possibly be a justification for turning our national honor into a bargaining chip.

Private groups had been making herculean efforts to deal with the comfort women problem. Even the Abe government agreed in 2014 to set up the Study Team on the Details Leading to the Drafting of the Kono Statement. On June 20, the Study Team released its report, making clear that no evidence of forced recruitment was found at the time that the Kono Statement was drafted and that the Japanese government never admitted that any forced recruitment took place. This was not only a crucial step towards nullifying the Kono Statement, but the investigation also led the *Asahi Shimbun*, which feared that its president would be summoned before the Diet, to form an investigative committee of its own. On August 5, in a dramatic development, the *Asahi Shimbun* admitted errors in its news articles relating to Yoshida Seiji and retracted them. And yet, with the conclusion of the Japan-Korea Agreement, it almost seems as if we have relapsed to the way it was before the total defeat of the *Asahi*.

The AJCN Report: A game-changer

Nonetheless, it was only about three weeks after the conclusion of the Japan-Korea Agreement that the Abe government made a *de facto* policy reversal. I will now describe how this came about.

The Australia-Japan Community Network, an activist group that launched a successful campaign to prevent the installation of a comfort woman statue in Australia, issued a report that gathered together worldwide media coverage on the Japan-Korea Agreement. The contents of this report are as follows:

AJCN Report
How Have Foreign Media Reported on the Japan-Korea Agreement on the Comfort Women Problem? A Total Defeat in the History Wars That Passed Over the Heads of the Japanese People

January 7, 2016

AJCN President Yamaoka Tesshu

A nation of sex crimes and the trafficking of girls

As we stated in "The Opinion of the AJCN", released on January 2, foreign media responded in unison to the conclusion of the Japan-Korea Agreement on the comfort women problem of December 28, 2015, by reporting that Japan had finally admitted to the wartime sexual enslavement of comfort women and apologized. Since then, we have received numerous requests from individuals who would like us to provide specific examples. For this reason, our members have jointly researched the issue and produced this report.

The task of sifting through such an unimaginable torrent of anti-Japanese denunciation proved to be extremely psychologically stressful. Of course, this should normally be the job of overseas diplomatic and consular staff. Though the Foreign Ministry did investigate the issue, it never informed the people of Japan what was happening and may also have filtered its own findings. Japan's media have exercised their "freedom to not report", and have hardly said anything about the actual situation abroad. As a result, the debate in Japan is fully isolated from the rest of the world. The AJCN decided to release this second statement in the hopes that it will give the Japanese people a broader understanding of the real situation and will spur the Japanese government to make the appropriate response that the AJCN sought in its previous written opinion.

According to our research, there were no foreign media outlets opining that, "The Japanese government made an apology in good grace and Korea should accept it." What all the foreign media did share in common was their affirmations that Japan had finally recognized its involvement in the sexual enslavement of the comfort women, who were mostly Koreans. They also revived the figure of 200,000 forcibly recruited comfort women, a fallacious claim which had almost disappeared after being discredited by private organizations in Japan. Several foreign news articles reprinted horror stories about Japanese men kidnapping innocent teenage girls, forcing them to become prostitutes, and finally killing them. This is a trend that is becoming more and more extreme with time. Judging from the occasional appearance in recent years of China's conspicuous figure of 400,000 forcibly recruited comfort women, we can assume that extensive propaganda operations are being undertaken by forces that want to demonize and isolate Japan. As we feared, foreign media also emphasized that Japan should

compensate countries other than South Korea. The following is a selection of these foreign media reports.

2015-12-28, *The Guardian* (Australia)

"The Japanese government also conceded that its military authorities played a role in the sexual enslavement of the women... There is disagreement on the exact number of women forced into prostitution by Japan during its 1910-1945 colonial rule of the Korean peninsula. Campaigners say as many as 200,000 women were forced or tricked into working in military brothels... In 1995, it set up the privately run Asian women's fund, which drew on private donations. But many women refused money unless it came directly from the Japanese state. Only about 260 former sex slaves received cash – worth about 2m yen each."

2015-12-28, *BBC Web* (Asia)

"It is estimated that up to 200,000 women were forced to be sex slaves for Japanese soldiers during WW2, many of them Korean... Japan has repeatedly apologised or acknowledged its responsibility for wartime sex slaves, most notably in a 1993 statement by the then-chief cabinet secretary Yohei Kono."

2015-12-28, *Wall Street Journal* (World-Asia)

"South Korea and Japan reached an agreement that aims to resolve a decades-old dispute over Korean women who were used as sex slaves by Japanese soldiers during World War II... No reliable records are known to exist on how many women were involved, but mainstream historians' estimates range from 20,000 to 200,000. Former comfort women have consistently said females as young as teenagers were coerced or tricked into joining brothels serving Japanese soldiers."

2015-12-30, *The Sun* (UK)

"Forced to have sex with 40 men a day: Japan finally apologises for brutal 'comfort women' policy... Chong Ok Sun was just 13 when she was abducted by police from her family home in South Hamgyong Province, in the north of the Korean peninsula... Many of the victims were children aged 14 to 18 so that the military could ensure their virginity, and in some cases family members who resisted the abduction were simply killed."

2015-12-30, *The Sydney Morning Herald* (Australia)

"The Japanese military organised the sexual enslavement of women in an Australian territory during the war (New Guinea), which we inexplicably failed to prosecute in trials after the war. Civic groups in Papua New Guinea today retain evidence of tens of thousands of cases of Japanese military war crimes, and cry out for assistance in approaching Japan for recognition and restitution."

2015-12-31 *CNN* (USA)

"The leading scholar in China on comfort women, Su Zhiliang, of Shanghai Normal University, told me the number of victims may be much higher – 400,000 – with 200,000 Chinese women forced to work as unpaid prostitutes."

2015-12-31, Counterpunch (Website)

"The so called 'comfort women' system was the planned, organized, systemic trafficking and sexual enslavement of hundreds of thousands of young women all over Asia... As the system progressed and developed, it may have started out with some actual prostitutes, but it quickly devolved into an industrial system of sexual exploitation of women... The 'comfort women' system was to wartime prostitution what the holocaust was to homicide: the industrial-scale factory farming of rape: the wholesale, organized, rationalized procurement, imprisonment, torture, brutalization, sexual enslavement, and terrorization of women."

2015-01-01, The New York Times (USA)

"As survivors have testified, many targets of this brutal system of sexual slavery were not 'women,' but girls of 13 or 14. Many had not even begun menstruating when they were shipped as human cargo to battlefronts across Asia and subjected to daily rape. These were not only war crimes, but crimes of child sex trafficking."

2016-01-03, Ottawa Citizen (Canada)

"What he did not say is that his country takes full legal responsibility for systematically luring under false pretences and outright kidnapping up to 410,000 girls and women throughout Asia so that soldiers in the Second World War could rape and imprison them in brothels, and for the fact that most of those sex slaves died and most survivors were left infertile and diseased. Unsurprisingly, some of the 46 Korean survivors reject what Abe calls an apology. They probably could not have accepted even a more fulsome apology from a man... whose wife posted Facebook pictures of a shrine honouring convicted war criminals on the very day that her husband offered his non-apology. But according to reports, Japan is turning a evasive manoeuvre into a cheap bribe. If these reports are true, the government has attached strings to the \$11.5 million..."

Apologies imply punishment

In international society, when a country issues a rash apology, far from being forgiven, it exposes itself to a barrage of criticism. Obviously, we still haven't learned from past experience that the more we apologize, the worse the situation becomes.

Even here in Australia, Australian Foreign Minister Julie Bishop stated the following at the beginning of an official message welcoming the Japan-Korea Agreement.

"Australia welcomes the announcement on 28 December by the Governments of Japan and Korea regarding comfort women. The widespread use of sexual slavery brought great suffering and personal trauma to many women during the wartime period."

Foreign Minister Bishop used the term "sexual slavery", which clearly indicated that Australia understood the agreement as an admission on the part of the Japanese government that the comfort women were sex slaves. If Japanese Ambassador Kusaka Sumio will not immediately correct her by saying, "The Japanese government expresses its deepest sympathy with and appreciation for the former comfort women, but the comfort women were not sex slaves," the

Japanese government will have acknowledged Foreign Minister Bishop's interpretation as correct. We request rapid responses on the part of Japan's embassy.

On January 6, a protest against the Japanese government was carried out in front of the Japanese consulate in Brisbane, Queensland, a community that had been quiet up to then.

People with no interest in seeking solutions or verifying facts

Over the course of working in the AJCN, we have been made painfully aware of the fact that the Koreans not only do not want an amicable resolution to the comfort women problem, but also have no interest in verifying the facts of the case. Their objective is to use the comfort women problem to vent the ethnic resentment that has built up over history, and powerful forces would be inconvenienced if the issue was resolved. While continuing to promote anti-Japanese education and to exploit and support these forces, the Korean government has made the comfort women problem into a political tool in order to divert the political frustrations of the people on to Japan. Japan's attempts to bring about reconciliation with such people and their government have been terribly naive. Japan's negotiating partner will inevitably blame the Japanese government's unreasonable demands for making a harmonious solution impossible. The only way to stop the anti-Japanese activities of China and Korea is to make them understand that such games aren't going to work any longer. Japan can do this through timely, fact-based rebuttals. It is clear enough, judging from his comments at the time he visited Japan, that President Obama has also fallen for Korea's stories. It can be assumed that he exerted pressure on the Japanese government during his visit on the basis of his understanding of the problem, but one wonders if the Foreign Ministry made even a single attempt to explain the reality to him.

The Japanese government should immediately reveal what it does and does not acknowledge and make its position clear. Because Korea's anti-Japanese stance is being exploited by China for the political purpose of driving a wedge between Japan on the one side and Australia and the USA on the other, the Japanese government should explain to the Australian and American governments, who are stakeholders in the Pacific region, that thoughtless criticism of Japan will play into the hands of China and its hegemonic ambitions. Furthermore, government officials and private groups must work together to undertake rapid-response media management abroad. If we ignore the media, foreign governments might feel compelled to adopt punitive measures against Japan in response to public pressure.

A national awakening is our only hope

Japan is already embroiled in the maelstrom of an intense "information war". This is not a war without a purpose. It appears that Japan has been caught in a two-front war between those forces that are plotting to brand Japan as a criminal state, isolate it, and finally subjugate it, and those forces, seemingly aligned with the former group, that are attempting to undo the work of those who want to restore Japan's honor. The age when Japan could afford to stay silent and submissive, while focusing only on economic activity, has long since passed. Japan is a defenseless country in a world becoming increasingly hostile as American influence declines. It is no exaggeration to say that Japan's survival depends on whether or not the Japanese people awaken from their slumber and become aware of the dangers facing them. In

the name of a political compromise, Japan sacrificed reality-based political decision-making and confessed to being a sexually deviant nation involved in the trafficking of girls. The AJCN, which works overseas, believes strongly that this is something that all Japanese people ought to know...

Nakayama Kyoko's questions to the Diet

The AJCN sent the preceding report to every political party, the residence of the Prime Minister, and high-ranking officials. It had a huge impact. Those who learned about the international situation for the first time thanks to that report began to call for reappraisal of the Japan-Korea Agreement. Ms. Yamamoto Yumiko, President of Japanese Women for Justice and Peace, handed the information to Nakayama Kyoko, a Diet member and leader of the Party for Japanese Kokoro, during the taping of a Channel Sakura program. On the basis of this information, Ms. Nakayama posed the following questions before the House of Councillors Budget Committee on January 18, 2016.

Nakayama Kyoko: I am Nakayama Kyoko of the Party for Japanese Kokoro.

As of December 21 of last year, we have changed our party name to the Party for Japanese Kokoro, or just Japanese Kokoro for short... On December 28, one week after our party changed its name, an announcement was made at a joint press conference conducted by the Foreign Ministers of Japan and South Korea. Astonished to read the contents of the announcement, I issued a statement as leader of the Party for Japanese Kokoro. I have distributed copies of that statement to all the esteemed committee members seated before me...

According to the joint press announcement, the comfort women system caused severe damage to the honor and dignity of many women with the involvement of the Japanese military. The Japanese government affirmed its painful awareness of its responsibilities and pledged to take measures to restore the honor and dignity of all the former comfort women and heal their psychological wounds.

This announcement restored the honor and dignity of the former comfort women only in exchange for permanently taking away the honor and dignity of the Japanese soldiers who fought for their country. In addition, the Japanese people as a whole have been portrayed as monsters, and this has caused irreparable harm to Japan's honor...

I would like to introduce the issue of how foreign media reported on the recent joint press announcement of the Japanese and Korean Foreign Ministers, which was mentioned this morning in the question of the committee member Mr. Uto.

The materials that I have distributed to you contain a list of the major news articles published by foreign media in the immediate aftermath of the conclusion of the Japan-Korea Agreement. The list was compiled by Yamamoto Yumiko, President of Japanese Women for Justice and Peace. According to The Guardian of Australia, the Japanese government admitted that its military had been involved in the sexual enslavement of women. The New York Times wrote that Japan was guilty not only of war crimes, but also of the crime of trafficking girls. Highly

distorted news coverage was published by the BBC and by other American and even Canadian media. As an example, I have distributed to you a copy of the news article printed in The Sun. It includes a photograph of the Japanese and South Korean Foreign Ministers. Anyone, at any time, can access this article on their computer.

Because of Japan's admission of military involvement, foreign media reports portraying Japan as a fiendish country began appearing immediately after the press announcement. While the people of Japan celebrated the agreement, its true effect has been to increasingly entrench a warped view of the Japanese as a cruel, beastly people. We need to unflinchingly accept that there is no hope of changing the opinion that the people of the world have formed of us following the joint announcement...

It does not seem that the answer from the Foreign Minister will suffice to erase the extremely harsh criticism of Japan that is circulating throughout the world as I speak. I would like the government to clearly state what it meant by "military involvement".

Prime Minister Abe, you have said that we must not saddle our children and grandchildren, and the children of future generations, with the burden of having to go on apologizing forever. I agree. However, as you can see, since the joint press announcement of the Japanese and South Korean Foreign Ministers, warped and counterfactual ideas about the Japanese people are proliferating. Because the Japanese government recognized that its own military severely damaged the honor and dignity of the former comfort women, the idea that Japan sexually enslaved women has become accepted truth throughout the world.

Our children and grandchildren, and the children of future generations, will perhaps not apologize again, but they will live in a world coldly believing that their Japanese ancestors did horrible things to women. We have burdened future generations with a terrible fate. I would like Prime Minister Abe to counter these misunderstandings and slanderous attacks on the truth by explaining the proper facts of history to the whole world and to do his utmost to protect the honor of Japan and the Japanese people.

Prime Minister, what do you think should be done to reverse this trend? I would like to hear your opinion.

Prime Minister Abe Shinzo: As the Foreign Minister answered for you earlier, it is true that there has been slander based on inaccurate facts, including in the foreign press.

It is not true that there were 200,000 comfort women or that they were sex slaves, but these criticisms have been made and the government would like to continue to make clear that these are not facts. In 2007, at the time of the Abe Cabinet, the First Abe Cabinet, the government presented a written response to the written question of Diet member Tsujimoto Kiyomi outlining its position that none of the documents that the government had discovered up to that point showed any evidence that the so-called "forced recruitment" was directly undertaken by the military or state authorities. That was a decision reached by the cabinet, and I would like to reaffirm that the government's position has not changed since then.

Furthermore, "with an involvement of the Japanese military authorities at that time" means, as I have always affirmed, that comfort stations were set up at the request of military authorities, that the Japanese military was involved directly or indirectly in the establishment and administration of comfort stations and the transportation of comfort women, and that the recruitment of comfort women was undertaken at military request, mostly by private brokers.

Regardless, what is important is that this agreement marks a definitive break with our previous approach to the comfort women problem and is the first time in history that Japan and Korea have jointly confirmed that the comfort women problem is resolved finally and irreversibly. I am determined to not saddle our children and grandchildren, and the children of future generations, with the burden of having to continue to apologize, and I decided to approve this agreement as a means to realize that determination.

Nakayama Kyoko: In your answer, the Prime Minister referred just now to the involvement of military authorities as stated in the Japan-Korea press announcement. I believe that military involvement means the participation of the military in the setting up of comfort stations, health inspections, hygiene maintenance, and transportation. Is my interpretation correct?

Prime Minister Abe Shinzo: As I said, the military was involved in the establishment and administration of comfort stations, including hygiene maintenance as well.

Nakayama Kyoko: The Prime Minister's clear response has reassured me somewhat. We also intend, henceforth, to do our utmost to faithfully transmit these sentiments to the rest of the world and to refute misconceptions about Japan. I hope that the members of the government will also make a nationwide effort to protect Japan's honor.

I cannot believe that our short-sighted, makeshift diplomacy will bring any real peace to Japan. I shouldn't need to say how great the long-term losses to Japan are when our nation's credibility is damaged through the global spread of deceitful ideas about the Japanese people that are contrary to historical facts.

The Japanese people themselves are the only ones who can defend Japan's honor. The United States and the world's other countries could care less about Japan's good name. However, Japan does not keep the peace with military force. When Japan keeps the peace through its own spirit and culture, the people watching Japan from overseas and their appraisal of us is very important. I find it extremely distressing and regrettable that we have created a situation in which our children and grandchildren, and the children of future generations, will be slandered even though the aspersions being cast on their ancestors, that they committed inhuman acts without a second thought, have no basis in fact.

We should strictly refrain from any diplomacy that invites misunderstandings or contempt of Japan, and we must take immediate measures to regain the ground we have lost. I ask the government to also pursue these principles, and with that, I will end my interpellation.

The significance of the Abe government's policy U-turn

Naturally, Prime Minister Abe could not respond to Ms. Nakayama, who previously served as his hardworking right-hand on the North Korean abduction problem, in the same manner that he answered questions from members of the Democratic Party. This time, the Prime Minister steeled himself to give a candid answer. Because of that, what the Prime Minister said was very important. As can be seen in the cited minutes, Prime Minister Abe acknowledged the baseless "slander" being disseminated by the global mass media on the comfort women problem, including the standard trifecta of anti-Japanese criticism: "forced recruitment," "200,000 comfort women," and "sexual slavery." He asserted that, "The government would like to continue to make clear that these are not facts."

Prime Minister Abe effectively backtracked on the spirit of the Japan-Korea Agreement. It was expected that under the Japan-Korea Agreement, the Japanese government would be prevented from making rebuttals on details relating to the comfort women problem. The Prime Minister's reply was a violation of this. Officials in the Foreign Ministry may have been listening to the Prime Minister's reply with trepidation, that South Korea would prompt another international scandal by accusing Japan of violating the agreement.

The Diet's question-and-answer session of January 18 proved that, in the political arena, information collected by private groups has the power to change the government's policies.

And yet, it is probably difficult, in light of the unqualified praise that initially greeted the Japan-Korea Agreement, to understand the watershed significance of the January 18 question-and-answer session.

In late January, Deputy Chief Cabinet Secretary Hagiuda Koichi reinforced the government's position by recognizing that rebuttals relating to the facts of the case were not equivalent to criticism of the South Korean government.

These developments led ultimately to the report presented to the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women in Geneva by Japanese Deputy Foreign Affairs Minister Sugiyama Shinsuke on February 16, 2016. For the back-and-forth exchange that resulted from the government's written response, please read the following report by Ms. Sugita Mio.