

# DISCORDANT APOLOGIES: JAPAN AND THE UNITED STATES

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## INTRODUCTION

If Wikipedia can list 50 apologies for World War II made by the Japanese government between 1957 and 2015, and Wikipedia does, how can we explain the repeated claim that the Japanese have not apologized for World War II?

If, furthermore, Japan is repeatedly unfavorably compared with Germany when it comes to making apologies about the war, and yet an equivalent Wikipedia search comes up with: “*The page “Germany World War II apologies” does not exist,*” what can explain the high apparent “failure rate” of Japanese workmanship when it comes to apologies?<sup>1</sup>

This research was originally inspired by that very question with respect to the relationship between Japanese people and South Koreans. In 2009 and 2010, my Korean graduate students, in a Korean Graduate Peace Institute mostly admitted to some level of hostility towards the Japanese government, a hostility energized either by the depredations of colonization and war or by the inadequacy of Japanese official apologies for these depredations. The fact that they personally enjoyed visiting the country and meeting Japanese people seemed not to be in conflict with this attitude to Japan as a nation. Also, it is abundantly clear that the millions of Koreans who remained in Japan after World War II have experienced significant inter-ethnic discrimination, rained down on them by their Japanese neighbors. Were these two linked? Was Japan failing as an apologizer because of its attitudes to those who suffered?<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> This is not to suggest that Wikipedia is a definitive statement of reality, only to suggest that public discourses can create conflicting pictures of reality.

<sup>2</sup> For readers interested in how outsiders describe the historical context and the current situation in which Korean complaints about Japan and apology comparisons with Germany unfold, there are excellent, current sources. Thomas U. Berger (*War, Guilt, and World Politics after World War II*, 2012) offers a three-way study of Germany, Austria and Japan which, among other things, finds both the admiration for Germany and the repudiation of Japan’s efforts over-rated. Alexis Dudden (*Troubled Apologies Among Japan, Korea, and the United States*, 2008) in a three-way study of Japan, South Korea and the United States finds that the US also has much to apologize for, to both Asian nations. Officials in the US are quick to dismiss any suggestion of apology in the only issue still visible in US public policy, namely the use of Atomic bombs in Hiroshima and Nagasaki. See the Obama — Abe dialogue below. For a detailed discussion of a single Japanese/Korean apology encounter, by Japanese rather than Euro-American academics, see Mariko Kotani — A Rhetorical Analysis of Japanese Apologetic Discourse: A Rhetorical Genre and Takeshi Suzuki — A Media Analytic Approach to the Study of Japanese Apologetic Discourse: A Case of the Korea Herald in Naomi Sugimoto Ed. (*Japanese Apology Across Disciplines*, 1999).

That explanation cannot be rejected. The discrimination issue remains a painful issue particularly in Japan, but this paper will put forward another and, I will argue, a useful additional explanation: Japanese practices when things go wrong are distinctly different from those in other places. I will go so far as to argue that they are unique, that no-one else trains very young children in apology strategies that resemble Japanese methods of “apologizing,” that no-one collectivizes mistakes as thoroughly. This paper will present a number of specific examples. There is a myriad of ways the handling of mistakes and apologies in Japan is distinctive.

However, I will also be presenting evidence that there is considerable variation between any pair of nations in their “national” apology processes, much more than we currently credit. South Korea dealing with internal political corruption handles its process uniquely. The USA handling corporate malfeasance like the BP and Exxon oil spill calamities handles them in a unique manner. The UK handles disasters, like the 2017 Grenfell public housing tower inferno in London, in its unique way.<sup>3</sup>

It used to be true that such uniqueness mattered only a little, since national boundaries mostly kept politics and business in discrete units. Globalization of business, globalization of trade, globalization of media and nearly two centuries of extended imperialism combined with global warfare have made it urgent that we examine much more carefully than we have what happens when mistakes and disasters demand action and results across national and cultural frontiers.

In the last twenty years or so, whether or not some nation apologizes and offers gestures for repair and restitution has become a prominent topic, though human nations like human families are pretty inconsistent about whether apologies are required or not. In 1999, President Bill Clinton apologized to the indigenous peoples of Guatemala for the lethal consequences that resulted from various US government interventions in Guatemalan domestic politics. Soon after Pope John Paul II, issued a Millennial apology, one of many during his reign, seeking forgiveness on behalf of the Church for

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<sup>3</sup> There is a considerable scholarly literature which examines culture, law and apology, centering on litigation in its cultural context, which presents quite different issues from the significant public mistakes that are the center of this paper. See Ilhyung Lee “The law and culture of apology in Korean dispute settlement (with Japan and the United States in Mind)” *Michigan Journal of International Law* Volume 27, Issue 1 2005 pp1-53 Masahiro Suzuki; Akinori Otani, “Myths of restorative features in the Japanese justice system and society: The role of apology, compensation and confession, and application of reintegrative shaming.” *Restorative Justice* 2017 5(2): 158-177

that institution's sins against women, Jews and minorities. In the 1990s the German government restarted that part of its reparations program that was aimed at Germans who were stripped of civic rights and property in wartime, thereby addressing neglected claims from what was formerly East German territory. It took until 2000 for the country to establish the German Federal Foundation "Remembrance, Responsibility and the Future" to compensate war-time Forced Laborers. In the recently re-intensified debate about racial justice in the United States, demands for reparations for US slavery have become more pressing partly as a result of the 2015 publication of Ta-Nehisi Coates's book *Between the World and Me*. In 2009 the US Congress had issued a resolution apologizing for slavery, but of course simply saying one is sorry is not necessarily enough.<sup>4</sup>

So apology is a timely issue and an increasingly international one, and one that has a direct impact on official relationships between countries. It is also one which can arouse fervent populist sentiments. Adding a full discussion of populism, apology and education to this paper would make it even longer than it already is. Nonetheless, I will assert here that clear evidence exists that Japanese schooling and family life lay the foundations for their particular, very local kinds of apology in the education of very young children. Furthermore, a good deal of comparative research demonstrates that US schools are quite different from Japanese schools when it comes to what the Japanese call "moral education" which in the USA is commonly termed "character education." I have come to believe, though at this point am not quite ready to spell out, that one reason apology and restitution, or the lack of them can so easily raise massive demonstrations of civic and populist ire is that we humans learn our culture's particular norms about wrongdoing very young. This is a topic for another setting — I presented an outline of that work at the Association for Moral Education in December 2016 — and there are references available from the author for those who want to pursue the topic, but this is not the context for a detailed discussion of populism and apology.

## THEORY

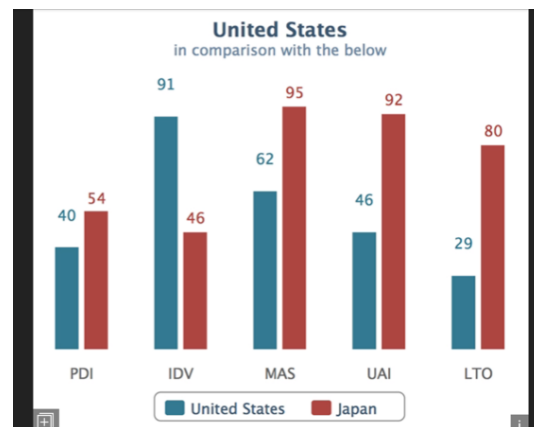
This paper was first presented at an academic conference, an explicitly interdisciplinary conference to be sure, but the venue demanded that theory come early in the exposition. Were I teaching

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<sup>4</sup> Analyses of many, many more cross-boundary apologies can be found in an annotated bibliography available from the author: meyerknh@evergreen.edu. This is indeed an *Age of Apology* (2008) which is the title of a disappointing collection of essays describing itself as examining "Western" apologies for slavery, colonization etc. and which for some reason includes Japan in the category "western."

undergraduates I would set out a series of comparative cases first and then supply the explanatory analysis. Here, I begin by naming several luminaries in the academic world whose work guided this comparative exploration of how cultures structure “what one ought to think about” and also “how to speak and hear” with respect to apologies.

1) Essentialism first: I am writing about and describing responses to “big public mistakes,” topics which are generally examined and resolved inside or because of nation states. Cultural essentialism applied to Japan and the USA, of the kind now attributed to Ruth Benedict (*The Chrysanthemum and the Sword*) and Takao Doi (*Anatomy of Dependence*), is tricky terrain, but this research demands attention to something scholars nowadays often call “national consciousness.” I recognize and will assume explicitly that none of the standpoints described here are shared by everyone in any given nation. Nonetheless, like Geert Hofstede and other sociologists in his tradition, I consider it important to try to characterize cultural patterns comparatively, particularly when examining relations between “nations” as political entities. In four of Hofstede’s five dimensions there are meaningful differences between Japan and the USA, all of which pertain to discussions of wrongdoing.<sup>5</sup>



2) Next: approaches to forgiveness in Western European thought. If a mistake has been made and an apology offered, surely there must come a time for forgiveness? Here I follow Hannah Arendt who argues that it was Christianity that made forgiveness a pivotal cultural attribute in the Christian-dominated parts of this world, parts that then spread their colonies and religious convictions far and wide. Arendt’s book *The Human Condition* spells out the proposition in detail. In brief, it is her contention that the human capacity to start over afresh is our condition because each of us is born into life on earth a completely new person who has never existed before. That starting anew was given divine sanction in Christianity by the forgiveness embodied in Jesus. Based on my own

<sup>5</sup> Hofstede first unfolded his model of distinctive cultural interactions in research conducted for IBM which, as a corporation, was attempting to adapt its management practices appropriately to the many countries in which the company was operating. The research has since been replicated many times by a large number of different research teams. PDI = Power differential, IND = Individual/Community MAS = Masculine/feminine UAI = tolerance for ambiguity LTO = long term orientation

research into mercy I would add that whatever its origin, in the Christian mindset forgiveness is also embodied in Mary, as intercessor with God on behalf of the people. It is important to note here that Japan, a modernized and highly industrialized nation, is one of the few non-European nations that was never colonized, neither by Europeans nor by its own more immediate neighbors. Unlike Korea where nearly 30% of the population is Christian, Christianity has never made meaningful inroads in Japan, not even after government barriers to missionary work were dismantled 150 years ago. Neither Buddhism nor Shinto, Japan's dominant belief systems, is much concerned with sin or wrong-doing.

3) Next an aphorism about making mistakes: "To Err is Human." This idea is famous in the English speaking world, and is said to have been first made explicit by the Roman stoic philosopher Seneca (4 BCE – CE 65). Later it was amplified by Alexander Pope, a British Poet of the 18th century enlightenment, who added "and to forgive divine," by which he meant that as we humans forgive, we are manifesting divine energy.<sup>6</sup> Though not exactly "theory," this standpoint, so widely assumed wherever English is the dominant language, has no counterpart in Japan where it runs up against some deeply held, diametrically opposed cultural values easily encountered in everyday life. One small example: Many Japanese students I know are deeply shy about spontaneous English language conversation, even those whose grammar in the written language is impeccable — an unrehearsed sentence is so likely to contain mistakes.<sup>7</sup>

These three thinkers then, in different ways provide a theoretical framework around which to examine descriptions of Japanese and indeed other national cultures as distinctive. The next two theorists influence the nature of the description provided.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Seneca's line comes from Letters to Lucillus and Pope's addition from line 275 in his extended poetic tract *Essay On Criticism*

<sup>7</sup> In this the Japanese appear to differ to some degree from the Koreans and Chinese people one meets in casual settings like coffee shops. This may be beginning to change. Just as there is actually no "Western" attitude to mistakes, there is no "Asian" way either.

<sup>8</sup> A few words about my scholarly background: Although important parts of this analysis center on words, linguistics is not my field. Rather my expertise is in political studies (not political science), one focus of which has always been on matters of meaning and interpretation — philosophy if you will. But my background also includes considerable work in communications; indeed it was a unique (at the time) degree in Communications which brought me to the USA in the late 1960s. So the question of how and whether words shape thought and epistemology is well-trodden terrain.

4) For this project Anna Wierzbicka, in particular her book *Imprisoned in English* stands out. Wierzbicka offers example after example of ways in which an English word I understand easily from both my native England and my adopted American usage, has no simple counterpart in other languages.<sup>9</sup> Wierzbicka's empirical work demonstrates that the concepts "good" and "bad" are so widespread as to be legitimately called "universal" while the concepts "right" and "wrong" are not. Indeed her study of the word "right" demonstrates that it has so many different meanings in English that most other languages have to use almost as many different words when seeking native equivalents. For key terms used in Japanese in dealing with apologies and wrong doing it is as hard to find English equivalents as it is to find a single word in other languages which carries as many meanings as the English word "right."<sup>10</sup>

5) One last theoretical source: Michael Walzer's short book *Thick and Thin, Moral Argument at Home and Abroad*. The title obviously takes up the anthropologist Clifford Geertz's notion of "thick description," the argument that while a given culture might have patterns that can fit into the kinds of categories scholars routinely apply to the analysis of cultural forms, to use a word like "kinship" by itself is "thin." To understand what "kinship" might mean in a particular place one has to complete a "thick" description, which examines who is included in the term, what their blood and other bonds might be and what the consequences of those bonds are. For Walzer this means that while an idea like "apology" might be comprehensible across linguistic barriers, its actual implementation, and discerning the particulars of the craftsmanship behind a real world apology for a specific wrong-doing, entail quite different practices in each place. That is where the argument in this paper begins.

## THE ARGUMENT

So, some "thick" description of ways that apologies transmitted by people from one nation might resonate as "off key" or worse in the minds of those to whom the apology is being directed. Before the first case — a series of successful ceremonial and commemorative meetings between President Obama and Japanese Prime Minister Abe in 2016 — some explanation of Japanese language usage in apologies.

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<sup>9</sup> I grew up English/German bilingual in the UK and moved as an adult to the USA where I have lived ever since.

<sup>10</sup> Wierzbicka, Anna. "Right and Wrong: From Philosophy to Everyday Discourse." 2002.

## Hansei, Owabi etc.

The Japanese routinely describe themselves as a people who apologize all the time unlike the rest of us. In one sense that is true. The words “gomenasai” (ごめなさい), roughly “please forgive me,” and “sumimasen” (すみません), roughly “excuse me,” are heard all day long, spoken by people who inadvertently bump into each other and even by someone entering a shop. Neither signals that an error has been made. Rather, they are an acknowledgment of someone else’s likely experience, that one has obstructed or intruded into another person’s space, life.<sup>11</sup> They indicate sensitivity to the other, but not that one has made an actual mistake.<sup>12</sup> Official statements of regret about big issues do not use either of these everyday terms, and anyone using one of the more serious terms for apology, for example “owabi” (お詫び), understands that they might well be in high stakes territory.

Where Japan is genuinely distinctive is in the process by which people arrive at a decision to respond in the appropriate way to actual wrongdoing. This ubiquitous process is known as “hansei,” and it is used everywhere from preschool classrooms to corporate workgroups, to parliamentary debates about ministerial malfeasance. Written in Japanese as 反省, it may well be that none of you can read it. In that case it likely does not help to offer you the version in the Japanese alphabet はんせい. You can read “hansei” but have probably have never heard the word. 反映会, はんしえかい, “hansei-kai” is Japanese for the meeting/setting in which hansei occurs. Hansei is often translated as “serious reflection,” reflection that is sometimes private, but if others are involved, the reflective process must actually be collective. Hansei-kai can be daily affairs at school, a time in a small group (han) where children decide, without adult intervention, how well, collectively speaking, they have achieved their goals for that day and what it would take to do better. If a class, or a work group at an office, or a sports team has in some sense failed, it will be during hansei-kai that the members explore in depth what happened, not to assign blame but to come up with convincing strategies and commitments so as to avoid repeating that particular failure.

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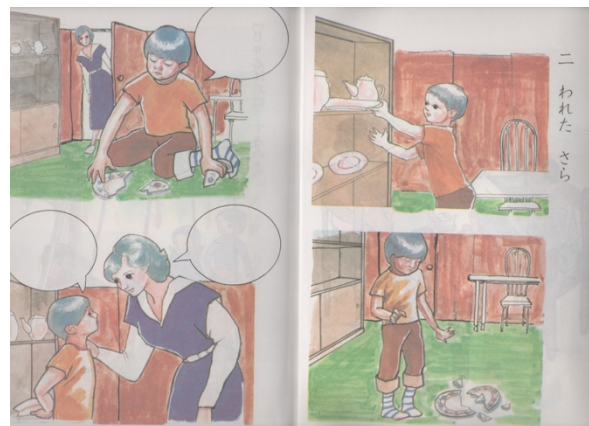
<sup>11</sup> See Sugimoto (1999) for the similarities between apologies and saying “thank you” in Japan.

<sup>12</sup> The word “sumimasen” (すみません) can actually also be used for saying thank you, in other words for expressing gratitude that the listener has made the time for the intrusion or demands being made by the speaker.



In a US playground, when a fight breaks out the key question is “who hit first?” In other words “who is to blame?” In a Japanese school playground, the key questions are “what part did all of us play in setting up the situation which enabled the fight?” and “how can we prevent that from arising again?” In a work group, a Japanese office team will explore any problem that arises collectively even if some identifiable individual played a precipitating role. During office discussions the workers are expected to be detailed and honest, to avoid trying to find excuses or mitigating factors, as we Americans might, in our attempt to avoid shouldering too much of the blame.<sup>13</sup> More controversially, an avowed commitment to collective responsibility for Japan’s suffering during World War II has enabled Japanese Cabinet leaders to visit Yasukuni Shrine, in veneration of the souls of every single person who died for the Emperor whenever the Japanese nation was at war. This includes the souls of the 14 leaders executed by the US and its allies for their “Class A” war crimes. Those who venerate at Yasukuni collectivize wars, refusing to blame the Emperor Hirohito or any individual for their actions during the war so as to ensure that the suffering and souls of all who have died are never to be disrespected, no matter how or why they died.<sup>14</sup>

In addition to collectivizing wrong-doing and planning for a better future, hansei requires recognition of the suffering one’s actions may have caused other people and statements of remorse for having caused it. It is the suffering which inspires remorse, more than the mistake itself. Thinking about suffering is the topic of the very first lesson in a typical, government-approved Moral Education textbook for first graders: われたさら, (wareta sara) “broken plate.”



Pictures read from top to bottom, right side to left

<sup>13</sup> Business consultants advising Americans trying to be good employees in Japan have been particularly explicit in explaining Japanese resistance to excuses. See Koop and Rudlin in the list of references.

<sup>14</sup> Judge Pal, of India, was the one jurist in the Tokyo war crimes trials who refused to convict, believing that the war itself was the cause of the crimes, and that it was wrong to single out specific leaders. Australia conducted Class B and C trials for crimes against prisoners of war and the execution of Allied air men. They were conducted by military courts held at Morotai, Wewak, Labuan, Rabaul, Darwin, Singapore, Hong Kong and Manus Island. 924 Japanese servicemen were accused in 300 trials. 644 were convicted and 148 were sentenced to death, although 11 had their sentences commuted. The souls of the class B criminals are venerated without controversy.

No words, no suggestions, just the requirement to think about what his mother might be feeling. Filling in the blank bubble text, the child engages in hansei, and even though he is only 5 years old, this will not be his first time doing such formal reflection.

### International Hansei in Two Places

On the international stage, political leaders enter into another country's state of mind all the time, sometimes quite successfully. Over the course of a year, between December 2015 and December 2016, Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, representing Japan, engaged in reconciliation projects both with the United States and with South Korea. These were formal events, not personal encounters between two colleagues, one a complete success, the other much less likely to settle relations.

With President Obama, he appeared first in Hiroshima and then at Pearl Harbor and both times, both leaders' speeches were heard with respect and gratitude. Obama's visit was the first any US President had ever made to Hiroshima — would there be an apology for the Atomic Bomb or not? There was not. Instead President Obama spoke the language of remorseful hansei to perfection:

Why do we come to this place, to Hiroshima? We come to ponder a terrible force unleashed in a not-so-distant past. We come to mourn the dead, including over 100,000 Japanese men, women and children, thousands of Koreans, a dozen Americans held prisoner. . . .

Hiroshima teaches this truth. Technological progress without an equivalent progress in human institutions can doom us. The scientific revolution that led to the splitting of an atom requires a moral revolution as well.

That is why we come to this place. We stand here in the middle of this city and force ourselves to imagine the moment the bomb fell. We force ourselves to feel the dread of children confused by what they see. We listen to a silent cry. We remember all the innocents killed across the arc of that terrible war and the wars that came before and the wars that would follow.

President Obama demonstrated explicitly that he personally had engaged in deep reflection, contemplating what had happened that day. He demonstrated that it was in his identity as American President that he was making the speech, not as a father or ordinary person. And he devoted more than half the speech to the specific strategies it would take to avoid a catastrophe like Hiroshima in the future. He also made it clear that as far as the USA was concerned, the war with Japan was behind them and done.

(S)ince that fateful day, we have made choices that give us hope. The United States and Japan have forged not only an alliance but a friendship that has won far more for our people than we could ever claim through war.<sup>15</sup>

Prime Minister Abe echoed these themes at Pearl Harbor several months later. Without an apology made or expected from either side, each leader was able to visit a site commonly regarded as the manifestation of, as Roosevelt put it, “a day of infamy” and to return home with dignity. The suffering and long term consequences were in full view and so was nation-to-nation friendship.

One other thing notably missing from these Obama/Abe encounters was any sense of personal emotional energy. German Chancellor Willy Brandt is still remembered for the way he fell to his knees on his first official visit to the site of the former Warsaw Ghetto. Brandt’s body, in the classic posture Christians adopt when begging for forgiveness, filled many in the audience with admiration for the sincerity that he conveyed.<sup>16</sup> Obama’s national stature often gained in the early days from a certain orator’s distance: carefully crafted text, eloquently spoken with words that cut right through to the issue. Unlike President Clinton, no one ever accused President Obama of gaining points by looking as though he was saying “I feel your pain.” Indeed, in the middle years of his presidency, Obama’s rhetorical reserve was often held against him. In Japan, it seemed just right. In a Japanese workplace or school, sincerity is manifest not by emotive talk but in embodying fully one’s role at that moment. Hence, it is natural to a Japanese audience that Prime Minister Abe would speak one way at a memorial meeting in Pearl Harbor and speak from a very different perspective in another setting. Japan’s first explicit use of the word “owabi” (apology) in relation to World War II, used during Prime Minister Murayama’s speech on the 50th anniversary of the war’s ending, was undone in the eyes of many outsiders by the fact that he did not use the very same word in a speech to Japanese war veterans a few days later.<sup>17</sup> To Japanese ears, to have given the same speech in two

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<sup>15</sup> The White House: 2016 “Remarks by President Obama at Hiroshima.”

<sup>16</sup> Sincerity is a topic mentioned repeatedly in the two detailed analyses of the Korean/Japanese exchange Kotani and Suzuki. in Sugimoto, *Japanese Apology Across the Disciplines*. 1999. Regardless of culture, sincerity seems to matter in apologetic exchanges, but the manifestation varies and can be challenging for outsiders to appraise successfully.

<sup>17</sup> Barry James, “Asian Leaders Welcome Step : Murayama Apology Still Critics Abroad, But Debate Isn't Over” *New York Times* August 16, 1995

such different settings would have been de facto insincerity. In other countries, specifically South Korea, any difference, any inconsistency, becomes itself proof of insincerity.

During that same period, between 2015 and 2016, Abe was working on Japanese-Korean relations as well. Between Japan and South Korea, more than one “apology” issue remains unsettled even though it is well over 100 years since Japanese colonization of Korea began and over 70 years since Japan’s surrender at the end of World War II liberated Korea. The two nations signed a “normalization of relations” agreement in 1965, which used the words *fukaku hansei* (深く 反省 meaning deep, profound), and transferred large sums in reparations money, but echoes of the suffering continued. The plight of South Korean war-time sex slaves is one, a plight the South Korean government itself even refused to address until the early 1990s, and one which remains abrasive more than 20 years after it first came onto the agenda in international negotiations. In December 2015, the Japanese side offered new money to fund programs to repair the “health and dignity” of the 48 women still alive then (out of about 50-200,000).<sup>18</sup> The core *hansei* hope embodied in the text was stated in just the same way in both the Japanese and the South Korean segment of the joint text:

(T)his issue is resolved finally and irreversibly with this announcement, on the premise that the (Japanese) Government will steadily implement the measures specified above . . . In addition, (the two governments) will refrain from accusing or criticizing each other regarding this issue in the international community, including at the United Nations.<sup>19</sup>

The governments agreed it was over, and the Korean government even agreed to try to limit populist protests in support of the women. It was not enough. The agreement created dismay among the few living survivors because they had not been consulted beforehand. Wider public protests began within a month. By the spring of 2017, the South Korean president who had negotiated the deal, Park Geun-Hye, had been impeached and South Korea’s new president, Moon

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<sup>18</sup> As of August 2017, the remaining number of Korean survivors is 37. As the Asian Women’s Fund notes, “there are no documents with comprehensive data one could use to determine the total number” of the so-called ‘comfort women’. Japanese historian Yoshiaki Yoshimi estimated their number to be between 50-200,000. In her 2013 book ‘Comfort Women of the Empire’, Korean historian Park Yu-ha writes that while 200,000 women were recruited, not all of those were made to work as ‘comfort women’, with the number closer to 50-70,000. See Asian Women’s Fund. 2002. The “Comfort Women” Issue and the Asian Women’s Fund. and Park, Yuha. 2013. Comfort Women of the Empire (Jegug-ui wianbu). Puriwaipari. pp.42-43

<sup>19</sup> “Full Text: Japan-South Korea Statement on ‘Comfort Women’” Wall Street Journal, 2015.

Jae-in, began at once to speak publicly about “historical issues” that still impeded his country’s good relations with Japan. Abe and Park Geun-hye had failed in one of hansei’s primary objectives: to put the issue behind one.

### The language of Blame and Apology in the USA

Before the next pair of comparison cases — responses to commercial catastrophe in the Deepwater Horizon oil spill and the Fukushima Daichi nuclear power plant meltdown — some analysis of the English language as it is used in the US cultural context when wrong-doing occurs is necessary. There is considerable convergence in descriptions of US “situation-management” norms, whether from a legal, an organizational or a psychological perspective.<sup>20</sup> A standard organizational model: “Negative Outcome → Causal Determination → Responsibility Assessment → Blame → Punishment.” A standard legal model: “competing interests and disputants . . . invoke legal rights, duties, and procedural requirements, backed by recourse to formal law enforcement, strong legal penalties, litigation, and/or judicial review.” A standard psychological model: “Once strong negative reactions are evoked by harmful conduct, then people’s desire to blame kicks into gear, and their assessment of factors like foreseeability, intent, and causation is colored by their motivation to understand the conduct as highly blameworthy. On this account, people blame early, then justify the blame assessment by pointing to corresponding levels of foreseeability, intent, and causation.”<sup>21</sup>

Among many possible US models of wrong-doing, and they are innumerable, the word “blame” is a commonplace one. The assignment of responsibility comes first, since those who are responsible

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<sup>20</sup> “In terms of the causal sequence, a blame assignment begins with a negative, often unexpected event (e.g. a nurse makes an error in the type of medication to be given a patient), followed by a cognitive process in which an observer determines the cause of the event (e.g. the nurse manager determines that this nurse’s oversight caused the negative outcome). Next, an assessment is made as to whether the target is responsible (e.g. yes, the nurse manager believes the nurse should have caught the error). Based on this assessment, an assignment of blame is made (e.g. the nurse manager writes a memo to the team outlining her findings). It is important to note that responsibility assignment is distinct from blame assignment; an observer may perceive that someone is responsible for an act but not find them blameworthy . . . To find someone blameworthy, there is typically a judgment of moral responsibility: the offender has violated a norm (whether societal, organizational, or group) that is deserving of sanction . . . Blame assignment is then followed by possible punishment (e.g. the nurse is told that a notation will be put in her file and given a warning not to do this again).” Gibson, Donald E. “Blame Assignment in Organizations: A Quality of Work Life Approach.” 2011

<sup>21</sup> Organizational model: Gibson, op. cit. Legal Model: Kagan, Robert A., “Adversarial Legalism: Tamed or Still Wild.” 1998 Psychological Model: Alicke, Mark D. “Culpable Control and the Psychology of Blame,” 2000.

are likely blameworthy and being blameworthy imposes an obligation to reimburse tangible costs of repair and to finance the punitive costs levied as recompense for pain and suffering. This in turn means that among the commonplace elements in the adjudication of corporate malfeasance is a stern injunction from defense legal advisors that institutions and individuals must never apologize, lest the act of apology be taken as the assumption of responsibility and thus open the blame → punishment circuit. So, wrong-doing in the USA, even when those accused are clearly responsible, is rarely accompanied by any direct apology. Instead, negotiating a way to accept the responsibility to pay compensation, and thus forgoing a trial, is considered enough to “make whole” that which was damaged. Indeed many a text of an agreement to pay money actually includes some equivalent to the phrase “without admitting responsibility/culpability.”

### Responsibility and Blame in two places.

This is not the setting in which to set out a full comparison of the Deepwater Horizon and Fukushima Daichi cases. Instead, two documents, which were issued to mark the same significant turning point — an end to the causal investigative process — will be used to represent US and Japanese national differences:

- (1) Press release on BP’s corporate website which describes key elements of the settlement agreement, what the law calls the “consent decree” between BP and the US Federal Government<sup>22</sup>
- (2) Chairman Kiyoshi Kurokawa’s letter, the opening to the Fukushima report — the findings of Japan’s first ever truly Independent, though government-funded investigative commission.<sup>23</sup>

Repair and restitution at both sites is going to take years — a minimum of 15 years for Deepwater and an unknown number in Fukushima — so these are not final statements. Nonetheless, at each site the responsible parties have now been designated. The two documents are strikingly different, even at a glance.

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<sup>22</sup> BP settlement page website <https://www.bp.com/en/global/corporate/media/press-releases/bp-to-settle-federal-state-local-deepwater-horizon-claims.html>

<sup>23</sup> Chairman’s Introductory letter (English) [http://www.nirs.org/wp-content/uploads/fukushima/naaic\\_report.pdf](http://www.nirs.org/wp-content/uploads/fukushima/naaic_report.pdf) p.9 and Chairman’s Introductory letter (Japanese) [http://naaic.go.jp/blog/reports/main-report/introduction/\(外部サイト\)](http://naaic.go.jp/blog/reports/main-report/introduction/(外部サイト))

(1) Turning to Deepwater first. It takes up less than five pages, roughly equally divided in three among remarks from BP's executive leadership about the nature of the situation, a 17 year schedule of payments and a series of explanatory and cautionary legal and fiduciary notes. The leaders' remarks explaining the significance of the agreement take up a page, roughly the same amount of space as the letter by the Fukushima commission's chairman. And this is what they say (repair/reponsibility statements in green – the rest is financial/legal):

Carl-Henric Svanberg, BP's chairman, said: "Five years ago we committed to restore the Gulf economy and environment and we have worked ever since to deliver on that promise. We have made significant progress, and with this agreement we provide a path to closure for BP and the Gulf. It resolves the company's largest remaining legal exposures, provides clarity on costs and creates certainty of payment for all parties involved.

"In deciding to follow this path, the Board has balanced the risks, timing and consequences associated with many years of litigation against its wish for the company to be able to set a clear course for the future.

"The Board therefore believes that this agreement is in the best long-term interest of BP and its shareholders. The Board set out its position on the dividend at the first quarter and this remains unchanged by the agreement."

Bob Dudley, BP's group chief executive, said: "This is a realistic outcome which provides clarity and certainty for all parties.

"For BP, this agreement will resolve the largest liabilities remaining from the tragic accident and enable BP to focus on safely delivering the energy the world needs.

"For the United States and the Gulf in particular, this agreement will deliver a significant income stream over many years for further restoration of natural resources and for losses related to the spill.

"When concluded, this will resolve not only the Clean Water Act proceedings but also the Natural Resource Damage claims as well as other claims brought by Gulf States and local government entities."

BP's chief financial officer, Brian Gilvary, said: "The negotiations were carried out with the goal of reaching a collective solution that would be acceptable for all parties. For BP this will provide certainty with respect to BP's financial obligations for the matters settled, particularly with the ability to spread payments smoothly over many years.

"The impact of the settlement on our balance sheet and cashflow will be manageable and enables BP to continue to invest in and grow its business, underpinned by a resilient and robust financial framework."

BP assumed enormous financial responsibilities, more than \$62 billion worth. It agreed that there was an accident and that as a consequence, the company had both violated the Clean Water Act and harmed specific states and cities. In the clarifying paragraphs it acknowledges that there will be continuing responsibilities going forward, but nothing anywhere explains how the accident happened, and nothing anywhere acknowledges that BP will have to prevent similar accidents in the

future. Governments along the Gulf Coast will enjoy 17 years of new revenue. Deepwater will keep paying out until 2032, but despite the cost BP shareholders will be able to look ahead to the future with confidence, knowing that they understand fully the costs the company will have to carry. Not a single paragraph discusses new methods of deep-water oil drilling, rig safety, protecting the environment around new wells, or training contractors who operate wells. The only pressing issue spelled out in detail is a predictable financial future, richer for the governments and poorer for BP. None of this is much of a surprise. This is what US “consent” decrees look like. Blame morphs into a combination of punitive payments and repair costs.

(2) After Fukushima, the Japanese found themselves in a very different situation. For one thing, their national government stepped up immediately to pay the costs. That too is not a surprise.

Worldwide, utility companies generally operate nuclear power plants under the protective financial cover of their national governments, which indemnify them in the event of an accident. And the Japanese government has done so at Fukushima, paying many costs directly, while funneling some, specifically the personal costs of farmers and families evacuated due to the accident, through the power company TEPCO’s bank accounts. It may look to the private citizens who once lived around the plant as though the corporation is helping but it is public knowledge and not a surprise that the company has nothing like the reserves and resources needed to cover the costs of its “negligence.”

In fact, the Chairman’s introduction to the Commission’s report never uses the word negligence.

Quite the opposite:

This report singles out numerous individuals and organizations for harsh criticism, but the goal is not — and should not be — to lay blame. The goal must be to learn from this disaster, and reflect deeply on its fundamental causes, in order to ensure that it is never repeated.

You would be right if you said this does not sound at all American. The last sentence looking forward to prevention in the future is classic hansei, and in Japan the refusal to blame specific people was to be expected even after a catastrophe as severe as the Fukushima nuclear disaster. So this is not the sentence which would be striking to a Japanese audience even though it caught the attention of many energy experts around the world. In fact, there was so little expectation of blame for individuals that the topic does not even appear in the Japanese version of the same part of the report. The sentence that did astonish in Japan is the one that says in the English language version:



[The accident's] fundamental causes are to be found in the ingrained conventions of Japanese culture: our reflexive obedience; our reluctance to question authority; our devotion to 'sticking with the program'; our groupism; and our insularity.

And the Japanese version is considerably more detailed, more specific and more blighting:

Its fundamental causes date back to the time when Japan was achieving high economic growth. Political circles, government civil servants and business circles unified, and collectively created national policies to support common goals. And thus entangled with each other, a complicated system of "regulatory capture" was born. One-party rule lasted 50 years, based on a well-established organizational structure of government and professional benefits, that begin with graduate recruitment, and continue with seniority-based workplace advances and lifetime employment, all of which have come to seem natural in the Japanese "mindset." Along with economic growth, "confidence" gradually turned into "arrogance." What mattered most was to maintain established relationships and practices, and to protect the interests of the organization for the benefit of the "rising elites," whose professional advancement came to be based on nothing more than rising seniority year after year.

Sadly the mutual entanglement so damned in the report has already reproduced itself in the decisions made about carrying the costs of recovery.

In the Chairman's introduction to the Fukushima report, the nearest thing to an apology is an international one, a recognition that high-tech Japan violated the world's trust in allowing such shoddy design and risk management in a nuclear power plant. BP's settlement statement does not even go that far. With the daily footage of oil gushing into the sea nearly seven years behind us, BP is probably glad that their corporate name and logo escaped being tied to the crisis forever in the way Exxon's oil tanker, the Valdez, lives on as a reminder of an Alaskan oil spill now decades ago. TEPCO is still operating, still generating and selling power, and although Japanese society survived a nation-wide nuclear power plant shutdown for two years, as well as a powerful lift in national solidarity working together to cope with the energy shortfall, TEPCO like BP continues to exist as a corporation, each in their traditional national styles. As the Fukushima report reminded us, it is normal in Japan that scientists, TEPCO officials and the government ministries would become professionally entangled. Nowadays, this same management system keeps trying and failing to complete the next phase of shutdown at Fukushima, but notwithstanding the lack of progress, the government of Japan has begun urging former residents to return, to act as though the past is now thoroughly behind them, to take hansei into action.

Both BP and TEPCO have thus far done what was expected of them and in neither case was the result transformative. Corporations, including these two, will continue to put the global ecology and the humans in their immediate vicinity at risk. In Japan, the situation is very different for individuals when, as individuals, they have come to be seen as embodying the country's self-respect and prowess, whether of a technical or a sporting kind.

### Second Chances — two cases

This pair of cases returns us to Japan and Korea. The national icon issue came to my attention because I was in Korea around the time that Japan's Mao Asada lost out on Olympic gold to Korean Kim Yu-Na in 2010. Though Asada came back to skate internationally once more, Japan is rarely a land of second chances. A matched set of scientific research scandals illustrates the severity of the cost of a mistake in Japan, while at the same time demonstrating deep differences between Japan and South Korea. In Japan, the scientists were working on embryonic genetics; in South Korea, they worked on stem cells. The Japanese team was led by Professor Yoshiki Sasai, a world-famous scientist and a Japanese national icon. When fraud was uncovered, the lead author and researcher, Sasai's younger colleague, Haruko Obokata, was stripped of her PhD and her job. Sasai, accurately assessing that he too was responsible, opted to commit suicide. In an article in *The New Yorker* that appeared soon afterwards, the junior scientist was quoted: "There is no second chance for failures. I am socially killed and my future is gone. . . . My Ph.D. is forfeited, but I still dream of doing laboratory work every night."<sup>24</sup>

Sasai's death of course evokes the mythic or not so mythic heroic Japanese leader who in loss of honor realizes he must kill himself. His counterpart in Korea seems to meet a very different fate. Professor Woo-suk Hwang, the leader of a stem cell research project whose alleged successes made global headlines, confessed to having manipulated data. Hwang, consider a cloning pioneer and nicknamed the "Pride of Korea", subsequently found himself on trial for fraud, bioethical violations and embezzlement. He was convicted of the latter two but cleared of fraud. Having had his two year sentence suspended, he was soon back in his lab, and a mere six years later he was

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<sup>24</sup> Goodyear, Dana. "The Stress Test." *The New Yorker*. p. 56 2016

being invited by Chinese officials to set up the world's biggest animal cloning center in the People's Republic.

Few people in Korea will have been surprised at his swift rehabilitation. Koreans are used to seeing presidents, politicians and powerful business leaders serve jail terms for corruption. If they are in business, upon their release, they normally return to the very same positions they once held. In 2017, the vice chairman and de facto leader of Samsung, Jae-young Lee, was sentenced to five years in prison after being found guilty of crimes including bribery, embezzlement and perjury. His father, convicted of corruption in 2008, was pardoned in 2009 by then-president Lee Myung-bak and returned to his post a mere twenty months after his sentencing, as did several others caught up in the same scandal.

#### **Former Samsung Chairman Lee Returns to Post**

SEOUL, South Korea (AP) -- Lee Kun-hee, the former chairman of Samsung Electronics who was convicted of tax evasion and later pardoned by South Korea's president, has returned to lead the company after a nearly two-year absence, Samsung announced Wednesday. . .

Presidential pardons for convicted tycoons are common in South Korea. . . .

Hyundai Motor Co. Chairman Chung Mong-koo received a presidential pardon in 2008 after a conviction for embezzlement. Two other prominent business leaders received pardons at the same time.<sup>25</sup>

Suspended jail terms, followed by a return to a powerful position are the fate of many among the Korean elite, including politicians, particularly presidents. If Jae-young Lee's jail sentence is upheld upon appeal, it would represent a watershed moment for South Korea jurisprudence.<sup>26</sup>

Like Professor Sasai, Professor Hwang was a national icon. I understand Japan well enough to understand Sasai's death, but despite extended periods working in Korea, I still find these rapid rehabilitations hard to grasp. I now consider that the profound difference between national cultures that these two stories embody must play a part in the long-standing failure of these two countries to settle their differences over the past.

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<sup>25</sup> The Associated Press, March 23, 2010.

<sup>26</sup> Sang-hun Choe et al. "Samsung Verdict Sends a Tough New Message to South Korea Inc." The New York Times, The New York Times, 25 Aug. 2017, [www.nytimes.com/2017/08/25/business/samsung-bribery-embezzlement-conviction-jay-lee-south-korea.html](http://www.nytimes.com/2017/08/25/business/samsung-bribery-embezzlement-conviction-jay-lee-south-korea.html).

If being identified personally as the source of a problem in Japan can be actually or virtually fatal, it is hardly surprising that in situations as diverse as a pre-school hansei-kai and the final report on the Fukushima Daichi crisis, Japanese society does everything it can to avoid laying the blame on particular individuals. Since second chances are to be expected and even admired in the USA, it is hardly surprising that President Donald Trump is lauded for his capacity to bounce back from defeat, and that BP does not even need to mention that it is continuing to operate as an energy company. If Koreans can accept that a corporate leader convicted of corruption can return to the very same leadership post from which he conducted his illegal transactions, it is hardly surprising that making an apology must look like an important but not a lethal choice. Hence, a Japanese government leader's failure to perform an apology acknowledging the Japanese government's direct responsibility for the women's suffering would, in Korea, seem willful at best.

### Japan and the USA and the crash of JAL 123

The truly vast difference between Japan and the USA on big public issues became much clearer to me in 2017, during a visit to a Japan Airlines (JAL) museum at Tokyo's Haneda Airport. No, this is not the Boeing Museum of Flight in Seattle – a love song to airplanes, to technology, to American “can do”, and a great place to take a school class on a field trip. There are no children at the Japan Airlines' Safety Education Center, although every single new JAL employee visits it, as do the employees of many of the airline's subcontractors and of a number of other airlines from around the world. For children and tourists, JAL has another museum at Haneda.

The JAL Safety Promotion Center dissects, in the most remarkable detail, the situation surrounding the crash of Japan Airlines Flight 123 on August 12, 1985, in which all but four of the 524 people on board the Boeing 747SR died, in what remains the single-aircraft disaster with the highest number of fatalities. One display unfolds the entire sequence of interactions between flight crew and ground control from flight plan to crash, including a heart breaking moment when, after the outcome became clear, the pilots were allowed to switch from their standard communications language English back to their native Japanese. At the other end of the gallery, there are displays of small personal items retrieved from the crash site: a passenger's glasses and a notebook, for example.

But what people did and said on the day of the crash do not explain what made the plane crash. That explanation is to be found in the displays of tangled wreckage from the actual jet. The chain of the events causing the crash began seven years earlier, when the aircraft's tail assembly was damaged, having struck the runway during landing. Boeing sent out a repair team of over 40 people -- engineers, inspectors and others, to repair the damaged tail. The engineers did so correctly around most of the enormous rear pressure bulkhead -- approximately 4.5 meters in diameter -- but fatally, they carried out improper repairs, different from the intended corrective measures, along about one meter of the over 14-meter circumference. The incorrect repair, which greatly reduced the part's resistance to metal fatigue, remained undiscovered by inspectors from Boeing, JAL and Japan's Civil Aviation Bureau. During the over 12,000 successful flights the aircraft made between the faulty repair and the crash, stress cracks developed but were never identified during maintenance inspections. These cracks eventually led to the rupture that blew off the tail fin and tore the lines of all four hydraulic systems, rendering the plane uncontrollable. The pilots managed to keep the crippled plane in the air for over half an hour but eventually could not avoid disaster.

Boeing did exactly what Americans would expect an American company to do. It helped to pinpoint the mechanical failure that caused the crash, paid compensation to the airline and to the families of those who died. It did so respectfully and quickly. Japan Airlines did exactly what Japanese would expect a Japanese company to do. This crash, of Japan's national, flag carrier airline, was the result of a huge public error. JAL Chairman Yasumoto Takagi bowed deeply as he apologized remorsefully and repeatedly, including on national television. In December of the same year, he resigned, again apologizing for the disaster in front of the company's shareholders, holding a minute of silent prayer for the victims.<sup>27</sup> JAL also arranged compensation and they have carried through on their commitment never to forget. Ever since, the company has helped arrange annual hikes through the mountains to the crash site for the victim's families as well as for its own employees, the late former chairman also joining these gatherings.

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<sup>27</sup> In the aftermath of the incident, Hiroo Tominaga, a JAL maintenance official, died in an apparent suicide. A note found near his body said, "I am atoning with my death." UPI "J.A.L. Official Dies, Apparently a Suicide" *New York Times* 22 September 1985 URL: <http://www.nytimes.com/1985/09/22/world/jal-official-dies-apparently-a-suicide.html>

JAL built the museum so as to provide inspiration and education for its employees for the foreseeable future, so that each one will do everything they can do to avoid causing a plane to crash. Each new employee fills in a commitment card after visiting the display, and one wall of the museum is covered with these cards, regularly updated as new employees come through. However, to the Japanese “mindset,” with a sense of full responsibility to a community which relies on hansei, there is one absolutely vital piece of information missing. Though under pressure to do so, Boeing never enabled Japanese prosecutors, the airline, or anyone else fully to question the specific engineers who carried out the faulty repair. Fearful of the consequences of pinpointing blame so directly, Boeing continued to shield its workers and instead took on full responsibility at the corporate level.

Desperate to learn what it would REALLY take to prevent some engineer from making a faulty repair in the future, the Japanese tour guide and her American guest ended my visit talking about the wide gap between our two cultures. They absolutely need to know. We, living by US standards, absolutely cannot tell them. And for the Japanese that means 反省 is still not complete.

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### Commentary

Were this a traditional academic conference paper, having presented the data and the theory, I would now be pointing to the various ways data confirm theories or theories offer illuminating explanations of the data. This particular section would be called “Discussion” rather than “Commentary” and another section, “Conclusions”, would close the paper with a few paragraphs about directions for future research alongside a restatement of those bits of this paper which can now be considered a good basis from which such future research can develop.

Given where this paper fits in my professional trajectory — officially semi-retired, actually engaged as intensely in this project as I have ever been in any prior work — conclusions are out of the question. So what comes next makes links between this work and my earlier projects on history, memory and peace-making in Japan and elsewhere. I will end with a comment about my own future work. “National apology” is a potent political trope, I now think in part because it taps into visceral

and automatic cultural knowledge; international apologies may well be difficult to create such that they actually contribute usefully to international peace or harmony.

### Apology, War and Peace-ability

There is another museum in Tokyo which, unlike the one about JAL 123, is packed with thousands of children throughout the fall and spring school field-trip seasons. The Edo-Tokyo museum is a historical museum, set up to encourage a whole-body engagement with the capitol's evolving life over time. There is a Kabuki stage and a lovely and large wooden model of an Edo-era aristocrat's housing complex. Students can lounge in a jinrikisha – the 19th century version of a taxi drawn across town by human power – and look at 1950s kitchen equipment. One largish corner of the museum is devoted to life in Tokyo during World War II and includes samples of the war weapons used by the Japanese on their enemies. One display which continuously commands deep attention is the moving, shifting fire-red map of the damage in Tokyo from firebombing air raids by the U.S. Air



Force in the spring of 1945. In this museum, the causal sequence is clear. Japanese weapons sit along one wall, the fiery display on the adjacent wall, and Japanese children, many from Tokyo, can see the date and time their particular neighborhood was burned to the ground. There are no demands or offers of apologies here, but my earlier comparative studies of the consequences of school field trips to war-related sites have demonstrated that Japanese school children are considerably more doubtful about the value of war than either their South Korean or US counterparts.<sup>28</sup>

The official memorial park devoted to the victims of the single deadliest air raid in World War II, which is sited not far from the museum, is normally deserted. However, every Japanese school child grows up learning about, and even visiting the Hiroshima memorials and museums, and many children now live in cities which just like Tokyo, were reduced to burning shards in the spring of

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<sup>28</sup> My university-based website: [blogs.evergreen.edu/meyerknh](http://blogs.evergreen.edu/meyerknh) has many pages devoted to explanation and discussion of this research under the rubric: History Becomes Heritage

1945. From Himeji to Osaka, from Kyushu to Okinawa, there are local stories, local museums and local memorials to local people who suffered in the war. In Okinawa, they are still suffering because the leftover legacies of the Cold War and the US military occupation of Japan still do damage to the islands' ocean-centered ecology and social integrity.

As a result of the original US military occupation and coercion in 1945, Japan has for the last 70 years lived with and adhered to a constitution which prohibits the country from developing the military capability to carry out comparable firebombing raids on other countries. The prohibition lives in Article 9. This article, combined with an authentic horror about what the atomic weapons did to two key cities and what the ground war did in Okinawa, and a determinedly peace-oriented teachers' union mean that to this day, the majority of Japan's ordinary people support the country's continued status as a bastion of peace.<sup>29</sup> The current administration in Japan seems bent on gradually, skillfully, and imperceptibly abandoning the intent behind Article 9 and rejoining the "club" of the powerful, which means the militarized nations. This particular part of a generally nationalist government agenda remains deeply unpopular with many Japanese citizens, but the momentum seems clear. Japan will likely one day abandon its pacifist stance. And when it does so, South Koreans will say, "You see — they really never did mean it. They are not and never were sincere in their apologies for World War II."

As an analyst concerned to see her work contribute to a more peace-able world, I have begun to wonder how long Japanese leaders ought to be expected to carry one particular part of the burden they are carrying from World War II's atrocities, namely that of being judged the "only government" which has not shown enough remorse for their actions during the war.<sup>30</sup> In fact, neither the U.S. nor the U.K. government has ever



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<sup>29</sup> Surveys suggest a gradually increasing amount of support for remilitarization, not least because of the increasingly bellicose language and increasing number of missile tests out of North Korea. A High School survey of more than 12,000 students found 68% convinced that the Constitution had helped keep the peace in the postwar world with fewer than 30% attributing Japan's peace to America's security umbrella in NE Asia. *Japan Weekly Press*, 2013.

<sup>30</sup> The Dutch Government, whose country sent nearly 100,000 Jews to their deaths has never apologized and took until 2000 to start paying reparations. The Belgian government apologized for its part in the Holocaust in 2007, the Norwegians apologized in 2012 and in France apologies began in 1995.



apologized for their air raids, raids that killed at least 800,000 German civilians and hundreds of thousands of Japanese – the number is still not clear. History texts in both countries still describe the nightly raids almost entirely from the point of view of the generals and the pilots. U.S. and British school children are rarely required to examine pictures of stacks of burned corpses, though some iconic sights, like August Schreitmüller's sandstone sculpture "Die Gute" staring down at a skeletal Dresden from the city hall's tower, are widely reproduced. Most writing about dead Japanese and German women and children, their homes reduced to rubble and ash, whether journalistic, scholarly or educational, comes off as an apologia, meaning justification, not as apology for wrongs done.

In the contest for standing among the worlds "Great Powers," Japan has been carrying a lonely burden: that of being the only country, alongside Costa Rica, to repudiate war as a strategic option. The mayors of Hiroshima and Nagasaki should probably congratulate themselves that they, and their cities, have effectively led the world in preventing any further use of nuclear warheads, a ban which one hopes will last hundreds of years. It has already lasted 70. But no other country has followed Japan's much broader commitment to repudiating war. One need only see the bombed out streetscapes of Aleppo in Syria, or Mosul in Iraq, to understand why 65.6 million refugees – men, women and children, many fleeing the catastrophes of war – were on the move in 2017, and thus to mourn the continued isolation which surrounds the peaceful focus in Japan and Costa Rica.

### Work for the Future

In 2016, in yet another museum in Tokyo, Yoko Ono, collaborator and widow of the Beatle John Lennon, was offered a solo retrospective exhibition. Among the many wonderful pieces a small corner was devoted to the time when Lennon and Ono produced work together to draw attention to the devastating experiences of life during the American War in Vietnam, proposing a different kind of world.

As they put it "**War is over**, if you want it."

I have always known that war is one of the biggest mistakes human beings make. So a good deal of my work nowadays is devoted to figuring out how to instill human skills that might help us avoid it,

to nurture “peace-abilities,” particularly in young people. The list below is a product of decades of research into peacemaking and is now central to my own current work. It was derived several years ago, in full consciousness that societies vary immensely and that even these words will not resonate in exactly the same way anywhere. The reception this notion of peace abilities has received has varied, and I am clear that there is plenty of work ahead in trying to figure out how communities and families might teach their next generations such skills. I hold no conviction that the Japanese way of handling public mistakes is the way the rest of us should go. The Fukushima Daiichi nuclear disaster is testimony enough to challenge that idea. However, it seems right to say that when any particular war ends, what is needed is not so much an apology but a truthful commitment to the real purpose of hansei 反省: the commitment never to make that mistake again. Seneca asserted millennia ago that, while error is human, to continue making the same mistake is diabolical. For 70 years, Japan made and adhered to a commitment never to make the mistake of war again. It is deeply sad to see among among Japan’s current leaders the commitment is beginning to fade.

## PEACEABILITIES

Craftsmanship

Good Name

Adaptability

Courage

Unassuming Modesty

Hospitality

Forbearance

Determination

Remembrance

Generosity

A Sense of Timing

## APPENDIX

While this paper has been focused on big public mistakes, one reason for drawing attention to hansei is that it permeates so much of Japanese working life on an everyday basis. Few individual professionals make mistakes that rise to the level where they result in a criminal trial or even suicide. For us scholars, that is surely good news. Still, in the interests of thick description it seems useful to introduce a “business advice book” produced in Japan to help both Japanese employers and their American workers navigate the tricky terrain between the U.S. blame culture and the Japanese hansei culture. The chapter headings make a revealing comparative list:



Americans complain a lot	Japanese are not good at discussion
Americans like to be praised	Japanese speak in Japanese even in the USA
Americans can't be patient	Japanese get transferred too often
Americans are impressed by authority	Japanese set unrealistic goals
Americans can't handle criticism	Japanese never answer questions directly
Americans are so secretive	Japanese cannot make decisions quickly
Americans say “can do”	Japanese make everything “urgent”
Americans say “that’s not my job”	Japanese don’t talk things out enough
Americans repeat the same mistakes	

The author of this book, Rochelle Koop, makes a number of smart suggestions about how U.S. and Japanese colleagues working for the same Japanese company might become more naturally collaborative.<sup>31</sup> Each of them makes sense. At the same time, these kinds of strategies are unlikely to bridge the most intensely felt international gaps.

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<sup>31</sup> Koop, Rochelle, 2008. 反省しないアメリカ人をあつかう方法 “How to deal with Americans who don’t Hansei.” This table is derived from the chapter headings in her book.

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