

Northeast Asia Journalists Dialogue 2007

MEETING REGIONAL CHALLENGES IN THE MEDIA



EAST-WEST CENTER

Northeast Asia Journalists Dialogue 2007

MEETING
REGIONAL
CHALLENGES
IN THE
MEDIA



EAST-WEST CENTER

The Northeast Asia Journalists Dialogue, co-sponsored by the East-West Center, the Japan Foundation Center for Global Partnership New York, the Korea Press Foundation and the Pacific Century Institute, brought together Korean, Japanese and American journalists to the East-West Center for three days to discuss complex issues facing the region. While discussion took place as “not for attribution,” this summary captures the diverse perspectives of the participants involved. Opinions expressed do not necessarily represent the views of the East-West Center. The price per copy is \$7.50 plus shipping. For information on ordering contact:

East-West Center
Publication Sales Office
1601 East-West Road
Honolulu, Hawai‘i 96848-1601
Tel: 808.944.7145
Fax: 808.944.7376
Email: ewcbooks@EastWestCenter.org
Website: www.EastWestCenter.org

© East-West Center 2007

Table of Contents

Preface	i
Introduction	1
Breaking the Impasse: Moving Ahead on North Korea?	2
Generational Changes and New Leadership	5
Forces Driving Regional Trade: Integration or Competition?	9
Reconciling Histories in Northeast Asia	12
Regional Changes and Media Challenges	15
Appendix: List of Participants	18

Preface

Raymond Burghardt

Director, East-West Seminars, East-West Center

The first Northeast Asia Journalists Dialogue was held June 4-6, 2007, at the East-West Center. This new EWC program brought together 17 journalists from Japan, South Korea and the United States to discuss important and often sensitive issues impacting the region and relations among the three countries. While diplomats and academics often hold these kinds of trilateral meetings, we believed it was important to draw journalists into their own dialogue since the media are prime shapers of public opinions, perspectives and understanding.

This report presents a summary of discussions on five program themes:

- Breaking the Impasse: Moving Ahead on North Korea?
- Generational Changes and New Leadership
- Forces Driving Regional Trade: Integration or Competition?
- Reconciling Histories in Northeast Asia
- Regional Changes and Media Challenges

The dialogue adhered to the “Chatham House Rules,” under which observations and quotes are not to be attributed by name to individual participants. The views recorded in this report are those of the participants and do not necessarily represent either a consensus of all the journalists or the views of the East-West Center.

We would like to express our sincere gratitude to our co-sponsors of the Northeast Asia Journalists Dialogue: the **Japan Foundation Center for Global Partnership New York**; the **Korea Press Foundation**; and the **Pacific Century Institute**. Mr. Akazawa Tomoki, Deputy Director, The Japan Foundation Center for Global Partnership New York; and Mr. Kim Ji Hyuk, International Program Coordinator, Korea Press Foundation, participated in the dialogue as observers. We thank them and their organizations for their time and support.

Mr. Chang Heng Hoon, Chairman, Korea Commission for the Press, not only participated in the dialogue but also gave a luncheon speech, and we thank him for his informative and interesting presentation.

We would also like to give special thanks to Dr. Sheila Smith, a former fellow in the EWC Research Program who just recently joined the Council on Foreign Relations, for helping us plan and organize this program.

The Northeast Asia Journalists Dialogue was the product of many individuals. Dr. Charles Morrison, EWC president, and Dr. Sheila Smith served as moderators. Susan Kreifels, EWC Media Programs Coordinator, was the overall organizer. David Polhemus, a longtime Hawai'i journalist, was our rapporteur and drafter of this report. Mr. Tom Doyle, Ms. Maya Perry, Ms. Moon Hye Kyung and Ms. Park Sun Ju provided interpretation.

The dialogue was supported by EWC staff: Program Officer Jane Smith-Martin, Secretary Joyce Gruhn, and student assistants Alexandra Hara and Alyssa Valcourt. Abigail Sines assisted with the publication of this report.

The success of this first Northeast Asia Journalists Dialogue was due primarily to the journalists who participated in it. We thank them for their frank and knowledgeable presentations and comments, and for always maintaining an environment of mutual respect no matter how sensitive the issues.

Introduction

Under the overall theme of “Meeting Regional Challenges in the Media,” each of the participating journalists from Japan, South Korea and the United States presented on one of five panel topics, which serve as subheads in the following summary.

The presentations and discussions during this three-day dialogue showed the many different opinions and perceptions held in the journalists’ countries as well as the issues that unite them. Media in each of the three countries have at times been guilty of nationalism coloring their news coverage. Journalists acknowledged the great responsibility they share in providing objective and balanced reports. As one participant noted, journalists do not have to be prisoners of their nationality.

Breaking the Impasse: Moving Ahead on North Korea?

The limitations on North Korea's nuclear weapons program under the 1994 Agreed Framework succeeded for a decade in keeping the known supplies of plutonium at Yongbyon safely under international control. That agreement was reached partly through a strong incentive for the North Koreans—the promise of two light-water nuclear electric power plants (of a sort that would not produce waste that could be used for weapons). But it is clear Pyongyang also blinked when it found the Clinton administration's threat of a military strike to be credible.

With the North's expulsion of International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) inspectors, the Bush administration's abrogation of the Agreed Framework, and then the North's removal of the plutonium to an unknown location, the urgent question became whether and how it might be possible, in the words of one participant, to take "Pyongyang out of the nuclear weapons game at a cost short of war."

While the governments of South Korea, Japan and the United States all strongly support that fundamental goal, their preferred approaches, as our dialogue made clear, diverge strongly. While the three shared common ground 10 years ago, said one participant, all three sides have changed substantially since then. Another participant saw a smaller change, with slightly diverging perspectives on the extent of the threat from North Korea and on how to negotiate with Kim Jong Il. (Interestingly, participants had little to say about the two other members of the Six-Party Talks, Russia and China, even though the latter is often seen as the only party with any real influence on North Korea.)

The South Koreans strongly favor reliance on incentives and promotion of mutual interests, while an internally divided Bush administration has lurched between negotiations and isolation stiffened by sanctions. Only the Japanese, for the moment, appear to consider overt military threat an important option.

The South Koreans have willingly participated in the Six-Party talks, as have the United States and Japan. But they have hedged this bet with hopes for national reconciliation through their Sunshine Policy. Seoul's hope is that North Korea will be nudged toward greater openness and human rights, and away from its truculence, by the hope of peaceful prosperity through economic growth and cross-border interdependence.

Toward this end, trains have now crossed the Demilitarized Zone, tourists travel to the North, families are reunited, and a burgeoning South

Korean-run industrial zone at Kaesong has by one count 14,000 northern workers in 23 factories.

The more cynical view, common both in the United States and Japan, is that the Kim regime cares only for its own survival, and recognizes a Chinese-style opening as sowing the seeds of its own destruction. As such, it provides for its population only as required to forestall rebellion, and entertains limited South Korean initiatives solely because it needs the cash. One participant pointed to a recent book by James Mann, *The China Fantasy*, which attacks as naïve those who think economic growth and interconnectedness, which undeniably are occurring on a vast scale in China, will automatically bring democratization there.

It is even less likely in North Korea, this participant said, which explains Japanese annoyance with South Korean faith in dialogue as the answer. “American and Japanese intellectuals instantly know this is fantasy, but they hesitate to say so for fear they’ll be called neocons,” the journalist said.

This participant offered the example of the 1962 Cuban missile crisis—“no sense of appeasement in those days”—as the more effective approach, suggesting that the Bush administration’s recent swing toward talks, which led to the February 13 agreement with North Korea, had contributed to a sense in Japan of diminished U.S.-Japan unity. (Would the United States be pursuing normal relations with Cuba, wondered a Japanese participant, if Cuba had been kidnapping 14-year-old American girls and testing nuclear weapons?)

The South Koreans, on the other hand, are thinking beyond the nuclear impasse, about how North Korea can be integrated into the outside world and Northeast Asia. Further, said another participant, they were frightened by the approach of the hardliners in Bush’s first term—applying pressure and hoping for collapse. These measures included name-calling (“Axis of Evil”), the scheduled pullback of U.S. troops from their “tripwire” position at the DMZ, civil sanctions such as banking and trade restrictions, and, on occasion, the position that to talk to the North at all, in any context, would be to reward bad behavior.

South Koreans worried that the U.S. role as “spoiler” might provoke the North Koreans and that the collapse of the North Korean regime would lead to an economic and humanitarian disaster of unprecedented proportions. Meanwhile there is a fairly popular notion in South Korea, particularly among the young, that North Korea as a nuclear power might be a threat to Japan, but certainly not to South Koreans. (Many Japanese agree that they are the prime target, with a sensitivity heightened by the Hiroshima and Nagasaki experiences in 1945.)

Thus the South Koreans see pursuit of lasting peace through their bilateral dialogue as essential whether the Six-Party Talks are active or stalled, while the Japanese tend to see Seoul as suffering something of a “Stockholm syndrome,” undermining the regional approach.

The delay in implementing the February 13 agreement, suggested one participant, was due in part to the unexpected effectiveness of the financial squeeze on North Korea implemented by the U.S. Treasury Department. The North had difficulty in recovering its suspect \$25 million from Banco Delta Asia in Macao, perhaps because Western banks saw more risk than reward in handling the tainted funds. Or perhaps more than just the money, Pyongyang wanted renewed access to the international financial system.

The second-term policy team led by Condoleezza Rice has brought more pragmatism and less ideology to U.S. foreign policy in general and North Korea policy in particular. That is partly because of the departure of many of the hawks who dominated Bush’s first term. But the Banco Delta Asia matter gave North Korea cover to delay its obligation under the February 13 agreement to shut down the Yongbyon reactor, which in itself is only a preliminary step toward denuclearization. It is not unlikely that Bush, frustrated by the North’s foot-dragging (amid the growing realization that Kim Jong Il is simply trying to outlast the Bush administration), its undiminished human rights abuses and mounting criticism of Rice’s policy by hawks, will reverse course yet again.

On Bush’s watch, said a participant, “one of the world’s most dangerous regimes has built up a modest nuclear arsenal, sowing the seeds for new risks of nuclear terrorism and for possibly historic changes in Northeast Asia if Japan and South Korea ever decide they don’t want to rely on only the American nuclear umbrella.”

In the future are deeper implications: If North Korea is successful in bartering its nuclear aspirations for renunciation of a U.S. nuclear umbrella for South Korea and Japan, then Japan, facing Chinese and Russian missiles, would likely embark—disastrously for the region—on its own nuclear development.

There are deep divisions on this issue among the region’s journalists, said one participant. The Japanese view that North Korea will not be changed by talks and enticements might be reasonable, this journalist said, but it can only succeed in raising regional tensions and sowing the seeds of greater nuclearization. The greatest challenge, the participant concluded, is to help North Korea comply with the February 13 agreement.

Generational Change and New Leadership

Across all three countries, incumbents are in trouble, some for obvious reasons. In the United States' 2008 election, the Iraq war will be a focal point, but so will a long list of domestic issues. In upcoming elections in South Korea and Japan, the U.S. defense relationship may be an important issue, as both governments attempt to maintain the right distance from Washington, balancing a fear of being abandoned with a fear of being overly dependent.

Japan: Diplomatic trends in Northeast Asia are exceedingly complex, so it is important to look at how they are reflected in differing perceptions by different publics. Key political, economic and social conditions in the region are undergoing significant transformation, led by younger leaders in government, media and elsewhere. But one cannot appreciate these changes without seeing how the past informs the present.

In Japan, Prime Minister Shinzo Abe's public support rate is at its lowest level since he took office last September, increasing chances that the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) and its coalition partner, New Komeito, could lose their majority in a July upper house election.

A loss in July would not automatically turn Abe out of office; that is the job of the more powerful lower house. But it could bring legislative deadlock, which in turn could force Abe to call a snap election for the lower house.

Since the July election was called, there has been a sudden change in the political climate. First, the Social Insurance Agency, which manages the pension system, has admitted that data on 50 million premium payments have been mixed up. The failure to keep track of the payments means some people are probably getting smaller pensions than they are entitled to. A second shock has been the suicide of the agriculture minister in the midst of a bid-rigging scandal.

Dialogue participants were concerned that these two issues could deflect attention from what should be the central issue in the election: how defense policy is managed (or mismanaged) under the pacifist constitutional provision that was imposed by General Douglas MacArthur's postwar occupation authority. Some analysts suggest that Abe's campaign focus on his pledge to rewrite Article 9 to give the military a bigger role overseas was doing little to attract voter support.

Because Japan is incapable of dealing with external events, or deterring external threats, as long as Article 9 remains in its present form,

a United States security presence is permanently required (and Japan cannot be a “normal” nation). That necessity has put an unfair burden on Okinawa, where more than three-fourths of U.S. ground forces in Japan are based.

The perception in Okinawa is that many facts challenge the logic of the U.S. forces’ location there; for example, the sealift required to move U.S. Marines to hot spots is located many hours away in mainland Japan.

It had been hoped that the political situation would have put Japan in a position finally to begin frank discussion—a discussion avoided for many years—of a 21st-century defense posture commensurate with Japan’s rise as an important regional power. This discussion would need to fully acknowledge Japan’s 60-year dependence on U.S. defense forces and the unequal burden that has been placed on Okinawa due to the basing of those forces.

South Korea, meanwhile, has in some ways progressed further in updating its defense relationship with the United States. A projected reduction and relocation plan will move U.S. ground troops to the south of Seoul, relinquishing Yongsan Army Garrison, which is located in the heart of the capital. The impetus for this realignment is partly the desire of the Bush administration to free troops based in Korea for availability elsewhere (amid a more general rethinking of forward deployment policies in Japan and Korea). It is also a response to various waves of anti-American sentiment (such as the 2002 Highway 56 incident in which two middle-school girls were killed by a U.S. armored vehicle), to a growing resentment of South Korea’s status as “junior partner” to the U.S., and to diverging perceptions of and solutions to the North Korean threat.

It is becoming clear that South Korea’s “new generation” will have crucial influence in the coming December presidential election, as well as on the country’s nationalism, foreign policy and approach to North Korea in coming years.

For the new generation, the 1997 financial crisis brought a new pragmatic conservatism and nationalism. These younger South Koreans have experienced both abundance and poverty as they attended college and then struggled to find work because many of their parents were forced into retirement by the financial crisis. They face relatively high unemployment today. The remaining scars have left this generation indifferent to ideology (although they love politicians as celebrities and politics as drama). This is a huge change from the days when students formed the backbone of the radical left.

A large majority of the new generation calls itself moderate or conservative. They are more concerned about economic growth than about the growing disparity between rich and poor. They are pragmatically democratic: They see no irony in burning U.S. flags at a demonstration and then heading to McDonald's for hamburgers.

A rising number of younger South Koreans no longer regard the North as hostile. A surprising number in one survey (66 percent) suggested that in the event of war between the U.S. and North Korea, they would side with the North, while about 28 percent would favor the United States. They prefer a non-nuclear North Korea, but are well aware that in the event of reunification, their united country would be nuclear-armed.

They like the idea of reunification, but they do not want to sacrifice for it, meaning that more than three-fourths are content with the status quo. They like China better than the United States as a helpful partner, although they remain aware of the many times in history that Koreans have been forced to defend themselves against Chinese attacks.

The bottom line suggests that the new generation favors the conservative Grand National Party (GNP), but it is not clear whether this generation will assert that preference by actually voting. In any case, because the Uri Party so far lacks an appealing candidate, the GNP is favored to win in December.

United States: Despite the fact that the domestic economy is quite strong and there has been no new terrorism attack on U.S. soil since 9/11, the insecurity of American voters shows up in a variety of issues including immigration, health care, job losses and trade.

Because both parties will be seeking to distance themselves from the increasingly unpopular Bush administration, it remains to be seen whether, in the name of change, policies widely seen as successful will be thrown out.

In addition to managing an increasingly unpopular war, the administration is being dogged by a growing number of corruption scandals. On top of that, it was remarkably overconfident going into the midterm elections last year.

The outlook for the 2008 elections is still quite fluid. The front-runners have failed to get traction, while new candidates threaten to reorder the process.

The struggle in Iraq proceeds amid talk of imperial overreach. A huge defense budget reflects America's position in a unipolar world. The casualty rate in Iraq is much lower than those of Vietnam or Korea,

underlining a perpetual problem for Washington hawks of the short-lived popular resolve for conflict.

Asia, of course, has puzzled for years over U.S. staying power. There is a danger now that looming failure in Iraq will not only be disastrous in the Middle East, but also spur a buildup in Northeast Asia as confidence in the U.S. security umbrella wanes.

Deeper questions become unavoidable: Does the U.S. public really buy into the notion of long-term military struggle against “Islamofascism?” And is the Iraq war germane to this larger struggle? There may be a sophisticated argument in favor of pursuing present military policies, but the Bush administration has not done a good job of selling it.

The strongest political card for the Democrats—anger over the Iraq war—could become a weakness with their base as they balk at an abrupt pullout. Republicans are hobbled by the Iraq legacy, but ironically they have more running room to take a more responsible position on ending the war.

On the issue of job security, Democrats are being pulled leftward by the populism of John Edwards and his “Two Americas” theme. Edwards is pushing to undo some of former President Bill Clinton’s centrist formula in launching a new war on poverty. It is a unique era, with a strong popular feeling of job insecurity despite a strong economy. The angst over outsourcing is broad, with bipartisan sponsorship of bills targeting China and promoting trade sanctions.

A related issue is health care. There is growing frustration at today’s terrible hybrid system, which is run by the private sector yet fails to hold down costs or realize the benefits of competition.

Forces Driving Regional Trade: Integration or Competition?

While the North Korean nuclear issue may seem to be an abstraction, trade is not; it is a matter of hard numbers on paper. Liberalized trade is contentious; indeed, no other issue more divides the public. Globalization increases trade and growth, but it also increases displacement and disruption. With tens of thousands of American jobs moving overseas each month, anti-free trade sentiment is raging in the United States.

The potential for demagoguery on Capitol Hill is thus great, giving rise to the latest case of Asia-phobia among politicians. While the overall case against China actually is weak, Congress is actively targeting trade, with help from the media, amid calls for sanctions on products from China and Vietnam because they are non-market economies. A key upcoming question is whether Congress will renew President Bush's "fast-track" trade promotion authority, which expires July 1, 2007.

Few doubt that the blocking of the purchase of Unocal by a Chinese oil company and of the bid to operate American ports by a Dubai concern were based more on visceral nationalist feeling than any dispassionate look at the merits.

It is not often pointed out who is harmed by raising trade barriers. When China's central bank accused Washington of protectionism, it underscored this point in saying it harms not only Chinese workers but American consumers as well. It is easier for American politicians, of course, to blame China and other trading partners than to look at America's overconsumption and failure to save. With all the talk of manufacturing, how many Americans know what a killing their financial companies are making in China?

The Korea-U.S. Free Trade Agreement, concluded in April, is seen as a clear victory for the Bush administration in strategic terms as an improvement of an important bilateral relationship. But as the most commercially significant deal for the United States since NAFTA, it got a cool reception in Congress. Members are already demanding side letters and amendments, seeking greater conformity, for example, with international labor standards as a way of keeping the agreement from undercutting U.S. employment.

In Korea, supporters of the FTA are mostly conservative realists, who see a continuing U.S.-South Korea defense relationship as the paramount concern. President Roh Mu Hyun received accolades from the conservatives, who previously had been deeply unhappy with his administration. They see the FTA as putting South Korea on a better footing with the world's greatest superpower, taking the alliance to a higher level. Some think Roh

was accommodating on the FTA to win American support for an inter-Korean summit, with an eye toward how that would play in the December election.

Roh, who has less than a year remaining in office, would like to see the FTA ratified during his term. Talks on the Korea-Japan FTA, stalled for more than two years, are not likely to proceed until Roh is gone.

Looking solely at South Korea's dealings with North Korea, it appears the South is no longer willing to march in lockstep with Washington. But one participant suggested that Seoul was sacrificing some considerable domestic discomfort down the road, when the particulars of the FTA go into effect, for a strengthening of the bilateral security relationship now. The internal changes the FTA will bring to South Korea are enormous, given the significant compromises to which its negotiators acceded. The modern FTA is no longer a matter of lowering tariffs; the impact will be much greater on a small country like South Korea.

There is even the suggestion that it might bring the "Americanization" of the Korean economy. In the early days of the Roh administration, there was talk of emulating a Netherlands, Ireland or Scandinavia model. But perhaps because so many Korean bureaucrats are U.S.-educated, the American model appears to have won out.

The American model, with its lack of a social safety net, spells big problems for South Koreans, especially farmers who may face great displacement under the FTA. The American model also comes with an ominously growing gap between rich and poor. The FTA will force Korea to adopt the same kind of institutions and systems that are producing these negative side effects in the United States.

It is also possible to see Washington's rush to sign an FTA with Seoul as having much to do with China, which already has an FTA with ASEAN and is exploring FTAs with South Korea and Australia.

One of the dialogue's participants suggested that the overriding U.S. purpose in the Korea FTA is to create a counterbalance to China's rush to power. That is why, he said, former U.S. Trade Representative Robert Zoellick has characterized the FTA as a U.S. security concern. Because South Korea started to diverge from Washington on North Korea beginning with the Kim Dae Jung administration, and also began moving closer to China, a clear need was seen in Washington to take a firmer hold on a wavering South Korea by drawing it closer economically. The question is: Will the strategic impact of the FTA trump opposition to it in Congress?

Through its FTA with Korea, said a participant, the U.S. has rebuilt the trilateral fortress that anchored its position in Northeast Asia

throughout the Cold War. The participant compared the Korea-U.S. FTA with the one concluded in 2000 with Jordan, which effectively contained Lebanon and Syria and ultimately made Jordan play an important role in reshaping the Middle East regional order after the Iraq invasion. The United States intends Korea to be the Jordan of East Asia.

Many observers were surprised that the Korea-U.S. FTA was completed before the Korea-Japan pact. The longer the Japan agreement takes, the less benefit it will bring to either side. Korea is dependent on Japan; its core technology still comes from there. Accordingly, Korea needs to engage in technological partnership with Japan more than ever. Thus Korean companies will press for serious negotiations to get the Japan deal done during the next government.

The relationship between effecting an FTA and resultant bilateral economic integration is not a direct one. The Korea-U.S. trade agreement coming before a pact with Japan might suggest U.S.-South Korean integration will also happen first. But certain aspects of the Korean and Japanese economies are already highly integrated, such as media and technology. Integration between Korea and China is also proceeding. With China's rapid economic growth, Korea is enjoying a trade surplus with China that offsets its growing deficit with Japan. But it is important to recognize that most Koreans do not want economic integration with China. Rather, they want to use China as an engine for their own economic development. Historic experience leads them to worry as China grows stronger.

When the Korea-U.S. negotiations were announced in 2006, many people thought this was a Korean tactic to pressure Japan to conclude an FTA. Similarly, a participant predicted that Korea would enter into talks with China, using China as a card to leverage more benefits from its emerging FTA with Japan.

In the event of the conservative opposition coming to power in South Korea's December election, it was predicted that a South Korea-Japan FTA would be negotiated in about a year. If the party currently in power continues, an FTA would require two to three years at most.

Reconciling Histories in Northeast Asia

The persistence in East Asia of demands for apology and compensation, of expressions of victim hood and deep resentment, suggest they are no longer matters of historical interpretation, but seminal contemporary political and diplomatic issues.

“Watching French President Nicolas Sarkozy visit Germany to meet Chancellor Angela Merkel on the same day he was sworn in, I wondered if Korea-Japan relations could be like the French-German relationship in 10 or 20 years,” one participant mused.

This comment pointed to the central question of a respectful, thoughtful and articulate dialogue on Asia’s most sensitive topic, which remains the elephant in the regional parlor today: Why can we not put World War II behind us?

This is not just a problem for Japan and Korea, however. Sensitivities over the past continue to affect U.S.-Japan relations as well. The issue boiled over yet again a month after the Northeast Asia Journalists Dialogue, when Japan’s defense minister resigned after suggesting the U.S. atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945 were inevitable. The comment stirred up a storm of criticism in a country where the bombings are seen by many as an unjustified slaughter of civilians.

Minister Fumio Kyuma, a native of Nagasaki, said he did not mean to condone the attacks. “I just meant that there was nothing we could do about it,” he said.

But to suggest that the weapons had hastened the war’s end, and thus saved lives, was seen by Kyuma’s critics as paving the way to future use of atomic weapons. Their point was that use of such weapons can never be acceptable.

Japan’s debate over World War II history has been central to its postwar national identity, as well as to its postwar diplomacy. Japan has apologized more than once and in several forms. In a statement on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the war’s end, then Prime Minister Tomiichi Murayama said:

“Following a mistaken national policy, Japan advanced along the road to war, only to ensnare the Japanese people in a fateful crisis, and, through its colonial rule and aggression, caused tremendous damage and suffering to the people of many countries, particularly to those of Asian nations. In the hope that no such mistake be made in the future, I regard, in a spirit of humility, these irrefutable facts of history, and express here once again my feelings of deep remorse and state my heartfelt apology. Allow me also

to express my feelings of profound mourning for all victims, both at home and abroad, of that history.”

Why has that not been good enough for Japan’s neighbors? Part of the answer lies in the tone-deafness of many Japanese leaders: in former Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi’s insistence on visiting Yasukuni Shrine, in Prime Minister Shinzo Abe’s remarks appearing to imply complicity by “comfort women,” in textbook revisions that omit or minimize the events for which Murayama apologized.

Until only a few years ago, said a Korean participant, a typically simplistic Korean report from Hiroshima might have complained that the war’s offender, Japan, had recast itself as the victim; that Japanese leaders were cynically manipulative in their use of Hiroshima; and that Japan was arrogant in ignoring the harm it caused other nations while trying to heal—and demanding sympathy for—its own wound.

The Korean said he could not personally demand an American apology for dropping atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki when he considered that these events brought about the liberation of his country. Another participant suggested that Japan seemed to treat these calamities as isolated events—that “they simply dropped out of the sky” with no Japanese role in causing them. A Japanese journalist cited a kamikaze pilot who apologized if he seemed selfish when he thanked those who dropped the atomic bombs for saving his life.

Another Japanese participant pointed out that, perhaps from Cold War considerations, the Americans suppressed much of the horrific details of the atomic bombings, not telling even their own troops of the dangers in their participation in nuclear tests during the ensuing decades. This journalist added that the justification at first for the atomic bombings was that they had saved the lives of 20,000 to 40,000 Americans who would have died had they been forced to invade the Japanese mainland. Those numbers had risen to 200,000 by the time President Harry Truman died, and ultimately to 1 million.

(The United States has never apologized for using atomic weapons in Japan, one participant reminded the others—“not even President Clinton, who apologized for just about everything else.”)

History also has everything to do with discussion about whether Japan should revise Article 9 of its constitution. One faction in Japan has had enough of this U.S.-imposed “humiliation.” Under Article 9, Japan cannot behave militarily like a “normal” nation; it must rely on an American nuclear umbrella for its peace of mind; it cannot get a

permanent seat in the Security Council even though it is the second largest financial contributor to the United Nations.

On the other hand, a faction in the United States wants to see Japan come of age and shoulder its regional military responsibility. There is also an American faction that has horrific memories of World War II, from the Bataan death march to Pearl Harbor to Iwo Jima, and this group is not entirely convinced that history will not repeat itself. That fear is exponentially stronger in Korea and China.

In Japan, even as pacifism itself may be losing its force, there is still a feeling that the movement to rewrite Article 9 has something to do with U.S. designs for Japanese cooperation in a shadowy military agenda.

In East Asia, historical issues are becoming security issues, one participant observed. "There's definitely an arms race already under way in the region," said another.

Progress in healing these dangerous old wounds depends on politicians better refraining from manipulating them for their own short-term ends, and on journalists doing a better job of shining light into these dark corners. The *Yomiuri Shimbun's* series on Japan's wartime responsibility is a fine example.

"Japan's public discussions focus only on its defeat in the Pacific War and the resulting occupation by the Allies," wrote the normally conservative *Yomiuri*. "Japanese perceptions lack foundations fundamental to a clear understanding of the war." One is "an attempt to see the Pacific War within the framework of World War II... The war finally destroyed the fascism regime in Japan, which in 1940 signed the Tripartite Treaty with Germany and Italy... The other point to remember is the fact that the government has neglected to fulfill its responsibility to fully explain what led to the series of wars in the Showa era and what actually happened in them."

While resolving the region's differences over history may be difficult, continued regional dialogue on the impact of national debates on history are crucial to mutual understanding of the dynamics that shape regional diplomacy. Journalists play a key role in this representation of national identities and are uniquely placed to explore such political currents in multi-country regional dialogues.

The Northeast Asia Journalists Dialogue, one participant said, provided "the venue to talk about them."

Another participant poignantly noted: Journalists don't have to be prisoners of their nationality.

Regional Changes and Media Challenges

Presenters looked at various aspects of how globalization and nationalism were affecting the media in Japan, South Korea and the United States. South Koreans worried that media provisions under the pending U.S.-South Korean FTA might unleash multinational giants that would result in cultural subordination. A Japanese presenter cited instances where nationalistic impulses had tainted news coverage, both by Japanese and American media.

At the same time, popular culture operates as a force of its own, argued yet another presenter: Television, radio, the internet, literature and film are all part of a process both dividing and uniting us in ways that are not fully understood.

Japan and Korea, to use one example, are becoming more of a single culture through movies, sports and the media. Adoring fans in Japan and Hawai'i await the latest "K-Drama." Korean baseball fans watch broadcasts of Yomiuri Giants games in Tokyo, and Japanese fans watch Seattle Mariners games because the Giants have a Korean star and the Mariners have a Japanese star. It is difficult to measure how this cultural integration offsets Korean annoyance over Yasukuni Shrine visits by Japanese leaders, or Japanese displeasure over American military bases in Japan.

Korea's industry insiders believe that FTA provisions will permit a number of media giants to acquire local broadcast channels, thereby directly penetrating markets and combining with regional system operators to increase their reach. This leads to concern that transnational media companies, especially American ones, may pose a serious threat to Korea's media sovereignty. So the opening by the FTA of the broadcasting market presents not simply a trade or economic issue, but, because broadcasting directly shapes culture, an issue of national identity. Especially when American media are the interlopers, cultural imperialism is the fear.

An American journalist suggested this fear is overblown, saying experience shows that native media will always be quicker and better able to adapt to changing public whims than foreign providers.

Meanwhile an example of nationalism coloring news coverage was the difference between American and Japanese interpretations of Secretary of State Colin Powell's 2003 presentation to the United Nations, which provided "proof" of Iraq's weapons of mass destruction. While American reporters exclaimed that the "smoking gun" had been laid bare, Japanese reporters found his case unconvincing.

A Japanese presenter suggested that, given the circumstances, the appearance of patriotism in the American reports (patriotism being defined as a natural, wholesome reaction that allows for tolerance of patriotism in others) was understandable. But he was concerned that their coverage was colored by a surge of nationalism (occurring when reporters become so self-centered that they can no longer see the other side).

“Shortly thereafter,” the presenter wrote in a paper, “the Iraq War began and American flags flooded the nation. TV newscasts displayed the national flag in the background as they reported about the war. Famous TV anchors triumphantly entered Baghdad with the U.S. troops, and the media coverage of the war was at its apex. Fox Broadcasting Co. started using the phrase ‘our forces’ and soon everyone else started following suit. Verification is still needed to determine whether these broadcasts were patriotic—or were they in fact nationalistic?”

Other presenters suggested that excessively nationalistic reporting by both Japanese and Korean media had harmed the relationship between their two nations. The same effect was noted when Chinese and Japanese media covered demonstrations in China in March 2005 objecting to Japan’s desire for a seat on the U.N. Security Council. Chinese argued that since Japan did not regret its World War II history, it had no right to a permanent seat. The Japanese countered that the Chinese were being “quite rude” in ignoring the many apologies tendered by Tokyo in the past. Some of the most negative reporting may have resulted in misperception of the Chinese government’s role, if any, in fomenting the demonstrations.

One presenter also worried that Japanese coverage of North Korean abductions of Japanese citizens over the years may have been excessive. “Of course, these abductions are an unforgivable crime that goes against the very nature of humanity. However, there are such a large number of abductee reports by the Japanese media, and many of them attempt to appeal to the emotions [of viewers].”

One participant, citing another participant, related that currently within the commercial television industry of Japan, there is a term known as “R Purge.” This means a self-imposed restriction by commercial programs whereby they will not invite any commentators to their show who have a moderate view of the abductee issue. The letter “R” comes from the word “rachi,” which is the Japanese word for abductees.

“This kind of thinking as well as [the] attitude by the media not only plays into the desires and feeling of certain people and politicians; it has to be said that it is also a form of the media’s hidden inner nationalism.”

One reason media may yield to the temptation of nationalism is that they think they are providing what their viewers or readers want, and that in so doing they can enhance their market share. “We simply presented the patriotic feelings of many of the American people,” John Stack, vice president of Fox News, was quoted as saying. “Viewers watch the news to confirm their own opinions, and we fulfilled this need.”

How can nationalism in media reporting be prevented? Focus on good, old-fashioned journalism, on fact-based, objective reporting that strives to tell all sides of the story. Peter Jennings, the late ABC News anchor, was quoted as saying: “I think that we cannot deny that some of the U.S. media were broadcasting with a nationalistic slant. We must always be aware of the difference between patriotism and nationalism in our minds as we tell the news. For the mission of the media is to be a ‘watchdog’ of the government, on behalf of its citizens.”

When a nation’s media become obsessed with war fever, as in the U.S. in 2003; or with the need to become a “normal” nation in Japan; or with annoyance in Korea over revisionist Japanese textbooks, the media are dividing us along national lines. However, even as the U.S., Japanese and Korean media sometimes emphasize cultural, political, economic and social differences, they also are spreading a form of monoculture that makes communication and understanding easier, if less nuanced.

At the same time that it is becoming harder to find objective reporting of the sort of information required for a democratic system to function successfully, we also find a proliferation of media alternatives with a high degree of diversity and a low degree of reliability. The acceleration of electronic interconnectedness is turning us into a global village, even as national and religious divisions are enhanced as new forms of propaganda.

Appendix: List of Participants

Japan

Mr. Fujisawa Hidetoshi

Bureau Chief, General Bureau for America, NHK (Japan Broadcasting Corporation)

Mr. Ina Hisayoshi

Columnist and Vice Chair of Editorial Board, *The Nikkei Newspapers*

Ms. Kunieda Sumire

Los Angeles Bureau Chief, *The Mainichi Newspapers*

Mr. Mizuno Takaaki

New York Bureau Chief, *Asahi Shimbun*

Mr. Yara Tomohiro

Editorial Staff and Acting Vice Director of Social Section, *Okinawa Times*

Korea

Mr. Chang Heng Hoon

Chairman, Korea Commission for the Press

Mr. Choi In Han

Deputy Manager of International News, *Korea Economic Daily*

Mr. Choi Yong Oh

Reporter of International Desk, *Busan Ilbo*

Mr. Hwang Jun Ho

Staff Reporter of World Desk, Pressian (internet news)

Mr. Jo Seung Hee

Deputy Manager of Overseas News Team, YTN (cable news)

Ms. Kim Jeong Seon

Staff Reporter of International Affairs, *KyungHyang Shinmun*

Ms. Park Sun Young

Staff Reporter of International Affairs, *Hankook Ilbo*

United States

Mr. Jerry Burris

Public Affairs Editor, *The Honolulu Advertiser*

Mr. John Lewis

Media Relations Specialist, Office of External Affairs, East-West Center

Mr. Tom Omestad

Senior Writer/Diplomatic Correspondent, *US News and World Report*

Ms. Kitty Pilgrim

Anchor/Correspondent, CNN

Mr. Hugo Restall

Editor, *Far Eastern Economic Review*

The East-West Center promotes the development of a stable, prosperous, and peaceful Asia Pacific community through cooperative study, training, dialogue and research. Just over half of the Center's funding comes from the U.S. government, with the remainder provided by private foundations, media organizations, corporations and governments throughout the Asia Pacific region.

The Northeast Asia Journalists Dialogue brings together Japanese, Korean and U.S. journalists to discuss regional issues and media coverage of these issues. The Dialogue is one of the 10–12 journalism programs sponsored each year by the East-West Center to respond to the needs of journalists in the region by providing a platform for learning and exchange of ideas and diverse perspectives. These programs help build a dynamic network of professionals who share an interest in issues facing the region.

For more information,
please contact:



EAST - WEST CENTER

East-West Seminars
1601 East-West Road
Honolulu, Hawai'i 96848
Phone: (808) 944-7384
Fax: (808) 944-7600
E-mail: Seminars@EastWestCenter.org
Website: www.EastWestCenter.org/journalismfellowships