

Politics and International Relations Workshop II Summary and Discussions

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HOW TO FIND SOMETHING IN COMMON?

Following the first days' seminar on Japan's treacherous image caused by the attack of Pearl Harbor, and on the significance of the controversial use of the two Atomic Bombs in WWII--both of which clarified where the views contradict--the task of the workshop II was, as Professor Yui hoped, to find the way for the 'common' memory.

COMMENTS AND RESPONSE

The session started with Professor Ma's paper who defined the WWII 'not only against fascism but also against racism:' she reminded the Chinese exclusion act in 1882, followed by the Japanese exclusion act in 1904; she showed how the 'coloured' ethnic Americans had to prove their loyalty as 'American Citizens.' She also explained how the Japanese American's memory of internment in WWII gradually receded with the end of cold war, and the upcoming grassroots movement of Chinese Americans has brought the work of Iris Chang's work--*"Rape of Nanking, the Hidden Holocaust,"* that re-united the Chinese Americans including the postwar immigrants in 1970's.

There was couple of immediate comments: Prof Nakano introduced the availability of Japanese American's museum on internet site, and Professor McMahon questioned about the other Asian minority groups, which was to be responded by Professor Jose Ricardo's paper. The moderator, Associate Prof. T Nakao, asked how much the Americans, particularly American Chinese, recognize the "pre-Iris-Chang" Japanese scholarly research efforts on Nanking.¹ Nakao added that the struggle/competition of the secured position of various ethnic groups among Asian Americans resemble to somewhat like children's fight for the love/recognition of their parents, i.e. the Japanese Americans and Chinese Americans, and other Americans tend to emphasize 'how they suffered more' than others, or 'how they were loyal to America' in order to gain the favor by 'Big American Dad/Mom.'" Comparison with the parents-child relationship may not be appropriate, however, this "desire for the recognition" has something in

common with what Prof. McMahon described in the politics of war memory--“monopolization of suffering.” He observes that after the war, each country or ethnic group tends to stress their “uniqueness” of suffering. For Japan, the two A-bombs, for China, the Nanking Massacre or Unit 731, for Manila, the massive killing of the civilians, and for the US, either Pearl Harbor or the Prisoners-of-war and PTSD, are more important in their own context.

Professor Jose Ricardo gave the response paper, focusing on the difficulty of ‘common memory’ in the Asia; mainly, taking example from the positionality of Philippine-US army, he described unfairness which still goes on between the US and the Philippines. He also pointed out the problem on the legacy of the WWII, and wondered why the Japanese apologetic attitude was more serious until 1970’s, when both countries were seeking for stronger economic ties and Japan’s investment.

Among other remnants of Japan’s war atrocities mentioned by Prof. Ricardo, the most striking example that made the audience realize on the difficulty of mutual understandings/common memories of WWII was that of “Lieutenant Onoda’s case.” Lieutenant Onoda remained in Lubang Island near Manila, believing the war was ongoing. In 1974, while Onoda was given clemency by then President Marcos and was welcomed back in Japan, the local Philippine people were demonstrating against the Japanese atrocities of which Onoda was a symbolic figure.² This case shows the post-war distance between Japanese recognition of their past during the war and what is stressed/remembered by people of other South-East-Asian countries, such as the mass killings of citizens in Manila, Indonesians, Burmese Romusha (workers) who were forced to work for Burma-Siam railway and mines, etc. Prof. Jose Ricardo was fair enough not to forget the American Imperialism that proceeded Japanese invasion, and he stressed the importance of the international corroboration in researches that will be helpful for the future education.

Both Prof. Ma and Prof. Ricardo pointed that it was the Cold War that waived the burden of war guilt/responsibility from Japan.

QUESTIONS/DISCUSSION

The following questions and discussion time included the topics such as: the eligibility of the use of the term ‘Holocaust’ for the mass killings in Nanking or Manila; the relations between Chinese Americans and Mainland China; and Korean American’s positionality and the reason why they had struggled with the African Americans.³

Prof. McMahon thoughtfully questioned the adequacy of parallelism of “Holocaust” and ‘Massacre of Nanjing,’ since the Japanese military government’s purpose was, unlike that of the Nazis, not to erase or destroy the whole nation (ethnic group) of the Chinese. Prof. Ma agreed and added that some American Chinese prefer not to use “anti-humanism,” rather than “holocaust” as it leads

people's imagination only to the Jewish sufferings; but the term 'holocaust' assumed the symbolism of the common pain the Chinese people had-whether it was Unit 731, Massacre of Nanjing, "Comfort women" or killings of the Chinese in Hong Kong or Singapore. That is why the Curator of the "Nanjing Holocaust Museum" is from Hong Kong, and Iris Chang herself was born in Princeton, New Jersey, though their parents were immigrants from Central China. In other words, 'Nanjing' and 'Holocaust' have become the conceptual linkage/core/umbrella word under which the "Chinese" of various origins can feel united and share a common identity. As a matter of fact, there would be no Chinese-American's families whose relatives never suffered under the Japanese military hands; and, in moderators' view, it enables the various Chinese people to skip the complicated issue or period of communism/the Great (Proletarian) Cultural Revolution/'two China.' Like the British emphasizing their togetherness with Commonwealth by stressing the memory of WWII on VE day (Victory in Europe, i.e. Nazis) or VJ day (Victory over Japan day), memory of Japan-China war plays a role to glue the Chinese Americans. What is more, it also blurs the fact that the Japanese Army was fighting against communism in WWII. This makes more difficult to have a cooperative relation among Asian Japanese/Chinese/Koreans.

As for the struggle between the Korean Americans and African Americans, Prof. McMahon observed that it is because the Korean immigrants tend to keep small shops in the town and therefore visible, causing the conflict over jobs and employment thus leaving the African Americans the feeling that their jobs were taken by the newcomers, while the Chinese Americans run the larger businesses.

Prof. Ricaldo also reminded that the Philippines had experienced the racial war, and their brave fights in WWII were never duly, or equally, appreciated by the American Legion, though it has changed recently. As an answer to the moderators' question on the Philippines' view of the American colonial era, Prof. Ricardo summarized that the suppressed anger/hatred towards the Japanese military cruelty has been apparent, while the Philippines' attitude towards the (White/Western) Americans are that of "love-hate." Although this love-hate would not make the Filipino people forget the memory of the Japanese atrocity,

As a whole, the discussion was lively and it stimulated our mind. The limitation felt by the moderator is that, in this discussion of "common memory" in the Pacific, the other international relations, such as Dutch and British hegemonic power and their colonial policy before and during the WWII, was rather beyond the scope, and the narrative circulates amongst the Pacific stage--South East Asian countries, the US, and China. In order to cultivate the way to have 'common memory' or 'common textbook of history,' bilateral/binational relations or triangular analysis of Japan-China-US is not sufficient. The complication of the WWII would need to be viewed with the international relations including Africa and Europe. Likewise, the battle between Capitalism/Communism, or that of Royalist/on-Royalist BEFORE the Cold War needs to be discussed. For the moderator, it seemed our next agenda is to find the way to

locate the focal point to discuss the above issue *without* denying the Japanese war responsibility. Though it sounds complicated, the first step to handle this issue is simple--to have an imagination, to put yourself in other's shoes, and, as Lisa Yoneyama called from the US, to be free from "identitarianism".

Last but not the least--as one of the very important issues, is how to maintain the differences amongst Asians and at the same time enjoy what we have in common, cultural-wise and history-wise. For, in our long history in Asia, there have been always respect, despise, struggle and attachment. How to have common idea/definition of 'Asia' without losing one's identity, (or injuring other's identity) is another agenda for us. How can we unite without excluding others? How can we treat each other equally without begging love of 'parental America'?

While I was summarizing this most interesting session--workshop II of Political and International Relations, several incidents that will influence the future of Japan-China-US relations occurred: one is of course the Senkaku-island (Diaoyu) incident; secondly, the visit of US Prisoners of War, who fought in WWII to defend Bataan and Corregidor with the Philippine soldiers--it was for the first time for the ex-POWs to visit, and they asked for the proper apology from the companies they were forced to work for.

However, for me, the most impressive scene in terms of Asian Americans and US relations was a very minor scene in a film, *DIE HARD 4*. The actress struck and reminded me of our exciting discussion in the workshop. In the film, a straight long-haired, slim "Asian-beauty"--actress named Maggie Q, born in Hawaii, plays "Miss MAI", who is beautiful, treacherous, clever, and fierce Cyber terrorist. The Hero (Bruce Willis) curses her with shocking word--"You Asian!" before she fell into the fire and died--as if the rest of the Anglo-Saxons, African-Americans are fair, just and good and live happily ever after (without Asians!). Clearly the Evil here is represented by the image of "Asian." Considering that the film was made in 2007, we cannot but feel some shock as to the positionality of "Asians" in the contemporary United States of America.⁴ Would it be too much to say that there is still a fear towards the 'Asian-Aliens'? Is not there a fear for the 'yellow race'? Are they not fighting the racial war still? This film shows an undercurrent question which lingered me throughout this discussion. To have enemy outside is the best solution to unite within; in the Cold War, the outsider was Soviet Union; In WWII, it was Japan; in War in Iraq, it has been Saddam Hussein or those symbolized as 'Bin Ladin'. Now, what comes next? It is high time for the Asian Americans to stop trying to win the favor from 'Home Country,' and exchange opinions. As a whole, to gain the common memory, each ethnic group has to be free from the temptation of both "monopolization of the victimhood" and "monopolization of victimization"; stop imagining that there exists Evil (them) as a counter part of "Good" (Us), and look back the historical process.

Notes

1. When Iris Chang's work was to be translated by Kashiwa Shobo, the Japanese side asked her for the permission to list the names of the scholarly papers or the explanatory section to her text, which were turned down by her. She rejected any alteration to the text. Iris Chang committed suicide when she was researching the Bataan death March.
2. Lieutenant Hiroo Onoda (1922~) believed that Japan never surrendered and the Japanese government was a puppet regime under the US. Until he "surrendered," he constantly continued to attack the US base, and killed some thirty American soldiers including Filipino policemen.
3. In 1992, the Black (African) Americans, after several frustrating incidents, started to attack the Korean American's shops in Los Angeles. Several Koreans, who used the guns, are said to have been the Koreans who fought in the Vietnam War. In 1970's, the American government allowed the Korean veterans of Vietnam War to immigrate, and the number of the Koreans has become four times as many as before. Prior to this riot between the African American and the Korean American, there are two important incidents happened in 1991: (1) Shooting Rodney King incident (murder of the African American by the White Police men); and (2) Shooting Ms. Latasha Harlins (murder of African American by the Korean American as a result of misunderstanding)
4. In *Die Hard*, "the Evil" is represented as those from "the East Germany" in series I (1988), "Enigmatic Latino person" in series II (1990), and "East-European terrorists" in series III (1995) . Nakatomi, the Japanese company for which the wife of the hero works, appears but remains as the symbol of economic power and even an ally with the Americans.