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Visiting Fellow Presentation

The Regional Dynamics of Japan's History Debate: Epiphenomena, Substance, and Prospects

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P R O C E E D I N G S

DR. BUSH: Why don't we go ahead and get started. Thank you all for coming on this beautiful, if crisp, morning. It is a pleasure to see you here.

This is the second in a series of talks by our new visiting fellows. Today is the morning for Dr. Matsumura Masahiro, who is going to talk about the regional dynamics of Japan's history debate. It is a very timely topic.

We didn't know when we scheduled him for this day that Prime Minister Abe Shinzo was going to make a trip to China and South Korea only a few days before. I didn't even know it was going to be possible for him to make a trip such as that, but we are not going to -- well, it is nice that we had good timing again, and we are very pleased to have Dr. Matsumura with us this year as the CNAPS Fellow from Japan.

So, Dr. Matsumura.

DR. MATSUMURA: It is my honor to have an opportunity of making a public presentation here at Brookings. Since I came here in late August, I have wondered if Japanese public relations activities do not exist at all or if they are simply stealthy. Either way, I sense a serious dearth of Japanese inputs into intellectual discourse here in Washington.

At this juncture, I would like to pick up one of the most frequently discussed topics about Japan, one that is almost entirely discussed by non-Japanese scholars, analysts and professionals. This topic is the so-called history debate and prospects for Japan's foreign policy.

This topic is particularly relevant because Japan now has a new prime minister, Mr. Shinzo Abe, who has a chance to improve relations with China and South Korea after a protracted standstill under the Koizumi administration. Also, a Japanese perspective is essential for balancing out the currently lopsided discourse, both in factual and analytical aspects, with focus on Koizumi's allegedly "irrational" obsession with his continued official visits to the Yasukuni Shrine. Certainly, Chinese and Korean official protestations against Koizumi in this regard constituted a clear-cut intervention to Japan's internal affairs, at least from the perspective of the broad Japanese general public, while Koizumi's stubbornness offended and even provoked many Chinese and Koreans. Yet, this level of analysis will not lead to a good comprehension of the regional dynamics at work.

It seems to me, there are two kinds of history questions. The first is one that historians study, and the second is one that political scientists deal with. Eventually, I believe, these two get to make an integral whole, but, for analytical purposes, these two have to be differentiated in today's presentation.

Let me elaborate what I mean. Historical research needs to identify what happened how and why, and ultimately to make value judgments on them. Of course, it is critically important to distinguish historical research from historical education which serves for specific political needs of a state, such as its dominant ideology and legitimation. On the other hand, political analysis targets causation at the behavioral level which I believe is not necessarily geared toward making value judgments. In this context and with my academic training, I identify myself as a political scientist. So, in my presentation, I shall first make a causal analysis of the regional dynamics of history debate. Then, I shall come back to implications of my analysis to the historical debate, without taking any particular position, neither the revisionist nor the conventionalist.

I. Regional Dynamics

Japan's history question has been with us for several decades. So, this question needs to be a constant rather than a variable. In reality, as you know, there have been ebbs and flows, ups and downs. We have observed a sporadic outburst of anti-Japanese sentiment incurred by a sudden emphasis of history debate after an extended period of calm, rather than a constant level of anti-Japanese sentiment with a constant level of intensity. It is apparent that there exists a crucial intervening variable which functions as the prime driver of the dynamics.

In order to explain this dynamics, the mainstream Sinologists in Japan, those who specialize in Chinese classics and history, point out the 26th of the thirty six stratagems in Sun Zi's *Art of War* as one of the most conspicuous characteristics of Chinese political behavior: that is 指桑罵槐, read as *"shi-soo-ba-kai"* in Japanese, and *"zhi sang ma huai"* in Mandarin. These four characters are translated as: "By pointing to a mulberry tree, in fact a locust tree is effectively rebuked." In nutshell, this means that you can effectively attack person B as target in mind, by actually assaulting person A, because the person B has high stake in security and welfare of the person A.

Seen from this logic, igniting Japan's history debate is considered as a major instrument of an ongoing political struggle within China and South Korea. These two countries suffer from serious lack of a stable and integrated national identity, while facing intractable and still deepening socio-economic contradictions.

As for China, the artificially created concepts of *"zhongguo ren"* (or Chinese person) and *"zhonghua minzu"* (or the Chinese people) have very short histories and are not effective enough to transmute their political culture in a way to achieve a deeply entrenched national identity and an enduring national integration. In reality, deepening bipolarization between China's coastal and interior areas and between the rich and the poor in the urban sectors impede Chinese political leaders under the regime of developmental dictatorship from aggregating diverse interests and harmonizing popular demands that are quite often conflicting and competing. The political leaders often disagree over specific policies in national development, particularly with regard to the tempo and scope of economic growth and social development. Striking a right balance of the two is very tough.

Japan has been and will continue to be an indispensable source of China's capital, technology, and, to a lesser extent, an export outlet, and essential for both China's economic growth and social development. Thus it is crucial for the ruling top faction leaders to maintain China's good economic and political relations with Japan. At the same time, it is critical for the opposing faction leaders to harass and hinder smooth relations with Japan.

"Japan's history debate" and "unification of Taiwan" are the only two issues that all the Chinese can have a consensus and on which a temporary and precarious sense of unity and cohesion can be fabricated. Politicizing the Taiwan issue, however, may jeopardize stable relations with the United States. Under the prevailing international relations in Northeast Asia, reasonably enough, those obstructionist factional leaders have avoided the Taiwan issue at the sacrifice of "Japan history debate."

Similarly, South Korea is also devoid of a deeply entrenched national identity and balanced socio-economic development. The nation remains divided between North and South as well as among three regions in South Korea, as shown by traditional voting-turnouts of presidential elections. Political leadership is significantly fragmented. South Korea experiences further socio-economic bipolarization as well. In order to reverse a very low approval rate, the current leftist ROK administration cannot but rely on an anti-Japanese approach by igniting not only Japan's history debate but also a territorial issue centered on isles in the Sea of Japan.

II. Koizumi's strategic thinking

Over decades, Japan has barely managed the inside-out dynamics inherent of Chinese and South Korean domestic politics. Using economic assistance as the primary policy instrument, Japan has somewhat succeeded to alleviate their socio-economic conditions in an awkward endeavor to defuse their factional strife, while downplaying its history debate and occasionally appeasing these two neighbors by offering a series of official apologies in principle. It is this conciliatory approach by Japan that has prevented bilateral relations from going bankrupt.

The standstill, ostensibly generated by Koizumi's continued visits to the Yasukini Shrine, has resulted from his decision to abandon such a conciliatory approach, at the very moment when Chinese and South Korean domestic social-economic and consequently political conditions have considerably worsened. With a lost decade of economic stagnation and rapid demographic changes after the burst of economic bubble in early 1990s, Japan has gradually and saliently lost a sense of what role it is to play in world affairs. Thus, it has faced a severe state identity crisis. On the other hand, it has enjoyed a very solid national identity due to its uninterrupted historical continuity. In the ongoing sea changes of international distribution of power, marked by a rising China—as well as India—Japan's state identity as a global economic power had been significantly reduced, while aid outlays have continuously undergone major cuts.

In this context, Koizumi could not easily stop visiting Yasukuni, since doing so inevitably would give the impression to the Japanese general public that Japan submits to Chinese and South Korean intervention to internal affairs, further aggravating the sense of Japan's state identity crisis.

That said, it is necessary to question why Koizumi did not at all attempt to control a downward spiral of diplomatic tensions with the two neighboring countries. He continued to make a series of explicit statements, rather than ambiguous ones, on his intent to visit Yasukuni and actually carried out his commitments. Looking back at his personal history, Koizumi is not one of the most religious political leaders, though he belongs to the conservative wing of the ruling Liberal Democratic Party. Nor was he very consistent in observing some other public pledges, such as dishonoring a ceiling he himself set on national government bonds to be issued for the fiscal year 2003 budget. Neither Koizumi's spirituality nor idiosyncrasy explicates his continued visits to Yasukuni.

It is most likely that Koizumi took advantage of the history debate which China and South Korea restarted due to their domestic needs, prompted diplomatic tensions with them, and highlighted a sense of crisis among the Japanese, so that he could swiftly rectify overly pacifist legal arrangements which straitjacket Japan's security policy.

Koizumi must have been urged to do so because U.S. military power is heavily constrained and constricted by the quagmire in Iraq and Afghanistan, while Japan needs more a reliable security guarantee by the United States in the face of an increasing North Korean threat and a growing potential Chinese threat.

The Koizumi administration achieved unusually swift and extensive security-related legislation and first dispatched Japan's armed forces overseas without the aegis of U.N. peace-keeping operations. These policy actions were taken to support the U.S. global war on terrorism, centered on Afghanistan and Iraq, so as to strengthen the U.S.-Japan alliance which is supposed to be relied upon in anticipated contingencies involving the Korean peninsula and the Taiwan Strait. Certainly, under the ongoing U.S. military transformation, the two governments have taken necessary measures to strengthen the bilateral alliance at the operational level. But, these measures focus more on "nerves" rather than on "muscle."

By "nerves" I mean a higher level of integration in command and control, both in organizational and weapon system aspects, and "muscle" refers to deployed forces or military presence.

Although the U.S. transformation strategy stresses the central importance of transportability and agility in projecting military power, primarily from the continental U.S., the U.S. military virtually lacks capabilities to fulfill this premise, at least at this point. Unlike in blueprints, air-and sea-lift capabilities are limited, and, for example, a Stryker brigade is unlikely deployable to South Korea within 96 hours. This deficiency is critical because U.S. ground forces there suffer from considerably low preparedness due

to extended cannibalization in maintenance, in consequence of repeated rotational missions in the Middle East. As a result, Japan now has to shoulder some major roles and missions which the U.S. forces in Japan and South Korea has traditionally undertaken. In addition, the Marine Corps headquarters in Okinawa will be transferred to Guam, where it is located beyond the effective range of Chinese ballistic missiles deployed in Fujian Province.

III. Prospects

Based on my analysis, I cannot but conclude that relations of Japan, China, and South Korea will continue to be locked in a structure susceptible to acute politicization of Japan's history debate. I contend that this conclusion is tenable as long as Japan is not confident in her security, without an effective U.S. security guarantee or its sufficient independent military power. Or, the conclusion is tenable as long as China and South Korea fail to achieve socio-economic transmutation and authentic national identity and are unable to make a successful transition to modernity and, eventually, to post-modernity. Only when all of these conditions are met, it is possible to create an ideal speech situation for history debate in Northeast Asia, which is free from political distortion. Then, the Japanese will be able to and willing to tackle the history debate in a constructive manner.

At this point, a window of opportunity is open because Koizumi has been replaced by a new prime minister, Abe. The Japanese, Chinese, South Korean governments are trying to defuse tensions, while shelving the history debate. But they are acting out of expediency, and are not oriented to dealing with the root cause.

It is ironic that China under Hu Jintao consistently failed to build good relations with Japan under Koizumi who, earlier in his office, stated that China's rise is not a threat but offers opportunity. Analysts here in Washington D.C. might not be well aware that, since spring 2006, China has gradually, quietly, and unilaterally softened its approach to Japan in a vain endeavor to accommodate unshakable Koizumi's posture on the Yasukuni. While holding a categorical position, "no compromise without solving the Yasukuni issue," China in fact proposed a comprehensive strategic dialogue with Japan without attaching any strings. On June 10, 2006, Hu Jintao even expressed his willingness to visit Japan as the head of the state. After a failed official visit to the United States in April 2006, Hu Jintao has increasingly needed rapprochement with Japan, which is able to offer capital, technology, and export markets indispensable for alleviating deepening socio-economic contradictions in China. Hu Jintao also has to put down a rapidly growing perception among the Japanese of a Chinese threat which would invite significant Japanese remilitarization.

Hu Jintao has fallen into a predicament since Koizumi consistently rejected Hu's approach. Hu attempted to take advantage of divided Japanese public opinion regarding the Yasukuni issue, and hoped in vain that Koizumi would decide to stop visiting Yasukuni. However, Koziumi enjoyed an overwhelming approval rate after his visit on August 15, 2006, as exemplified by an on-air poll of NHK, Japan's national broadcasting

service. Hu Jintao reached the end of the rope in Japan policy. It is clear that Koizumi won a game of chicken with Hu.

In this context, the recent dismissal of Chen Liangyu, a politburo member of the Chinese Communist Party and First Secretary of Shanghai City Communist Party, has a paramount importance since this means that the Jiang Zemin faction is undergoing a major setback. Facing serious economic and social disparities, Hu Jintao has recently emphasized the necessity of balancing economic growth with social development, while Jiang put top priority on growth. According to a book titled "Selected Works of Jiang Zemin," Jiang gathered China's ambassadors from overseas in August 1998, and lectured them on a perpetual and eternal need to emphasize the history question to Japan. In the early 1990s, Jiang Zemin launched a renewed anti-Japan public education drive, while building a number of war museums with focus on atrocities allegedly committed by the Imperial Japanese armed forces. Even after Jiang's formal retirement from top positions, Hu Jintao has had to maneuver through intra-party politics in countering intervention and circumvention by Jiang Zemin, and could hardly control anti-Japanese public education programs buttressed by Jiang. Thus, it is very important to notice that Jiang's book was published August 10, this year, five days prior to Koizumi's visit to the Yasukuni.

In sum, power consolidation by Hu Jiantao may exert a durable impact on preventing Japan's history debate from politicization, though Sino-Japanese relations is potentially volatile as long as Chinese politics is dominated by factionalism without clear rules of leadership succession. My presentation so far does not focus on the South Korean case, but this approach may well be applied to South Korea since its protestation to Japan on the history question becomes a serious regional issue only when it resonates with the Chinese equivalent.

IV. Discourse on history question

History was written, is now being rewritten, and will be rewritten again and again in the future. This tentative nature of historical understanding has to be stressed now because many important historical documents have recently been opened for research purposes, including those from Russia and Taiwan, and a series of new archival and historiographic research works have given us fresh fact-findings which challenge the conventional understanding of historical events and the orthodox interpretation of Japan's history, as well as those of China, Korea, and the U.S.

In Japan, the so-called revisionist challenge against the conventionalists have unchained the general public from the taboo regarding Japan's war guilt, and resulted in open discussion, virtually for first time in the postwar period. The informed public and a significant portion of the general public have become very inquisitive of what happened why and how, and who was responsible. The conventional public education approach hardly satisfies their intellectual and psychological thirsts.

At this point, the revisionists have shown convincing arguments on many, if not all, of individual events with detailed reference, while displaying original archival

documents. On the other hand, the conventionalists are not equipped with effective counter-arguments negating reliability of revisionist footnotes or presenting alternative facts. The conventionalists have rather repeated doctrines of the war guilt public education. My position is that we have to wait for the next five to ten years to make sure whether the conventionalists can present a series of solid fact-findings, analyses, and counter-arguments.

However, it is important to be reminded that, should many of individual Japanese military operations in Asia, particularly in China, be justified as exercise of the right of self-defense, the overall nature of the Great East Asian War may be still characterized as thorough aggression. Japan deployed more than one million soldiers in China at the very end of the war, which, after a chain of events and incidents, might be construed arguably as an overreaction in cumulative terms in contravention of the principle of proportionality. The revisionists must answer this crucial question.

The history debate is a reflective and contemplative process which must be undertaken primarily of the Japanese, for the Japanese, and by the Japanese. Yet, foreigners can make significant contributions by presenting their historical research works, as long as an ideal speech situation is ensured, and as long as these works are based on solid fact-findings. In some cases, the Japanese may be able to eliminate false charges, and in other cases, may have to confront facts of atrocity or aggression. In such a Japanese endeavor, fresh facts may be identified, and an alternative historical interpretation may prevail in a way to challenge conventional views as the backbone of the existing history education in China and South Korea as well as in the U.S. Such a progression of the debate will be detrimental to their legitimation, and may jeopardize the basis of their regime survival. Should Chinese and South Koreans attempt a politically-motivated intervention in the Japanese debate, revisionists would most likely target legitimation as their Achilles heel. At worst, an attempt to manipulate history debate may become a double-edge sword.

Doing nothing about Japan's history debate is detrimental to U.S. interests because of the regional dynamics I have discussed. In order to create a sustainable open East Asian order, the U.S. has to promote the creation of an ideal speech situation for the history debate in which the Japanese could face their past and reach a national consensual understanding on their war years. Taking this approach, the U.S. needs to eliminate as much political distortion spinning off from the domestic politics of China and South Korea as possible. A naïve approach, unaware of the regional dynamics of history debate, not only bewilders the Japanese but also weakens the U.S.-Japan alliance.

Thus it is high time that the U.S. and Japan to have our own version of a Dresden moment for genuine reconciliation. I would like to propose that the Emperor pays a floral tribute to the War Memorial Arizona at Pearl Harbor, and the U.S. president does the same to the Atomic Bomb Memorial at Hiroshima. The two nations have already reached a stage reasonably free from any significant political distortion in the history debate. And, both Japanese and American historians have done significant archival and historiographic research works beyond stereotyped understandings. Bilateral projects have to deal with

those topics which have long been considered as taboo. By squaring historical understanding concerning Japan's inter-state warfare with the United States, the Japanese will be fully ready for tackling another half of the debate on the insurgency and guerrilla warfare in China.

DR. BUSH: Thank you very much, very interesting. Stay right here. We will now open it up for questions. Hiro, I will ask you to field the questions.

When you want to ask a question, just raise your hand and Hiro will recognize you, wait for the mic, and just identify yourself before you ask the question.

Who wants to ask the first one? Mike.

PARTICIPANT: Mike Miyazawa. I have a question about two of the recent remarks by Prime Minister Abe. One of the remarks is like this. He said, "I am not going to make any comment on whether I have visited Yasukuni or whether, i.e., I am going to visit the Yasukuni again." Well, one of the facts I know of is in May of last year, Mr. Abe, then chief cabinet secretary, came to Washington, D.C. and made a presentation here in this very same room, and in the Q&A session, he responded to a question which asked, "If you are elected next prime minister of Japan, do you continue to visit Yasukuni Shrine," and Mr. Abe's response was very clear, whoever is elected next prime minister of Japan, he should continue to visit Yasukuni Shrine.

The other remark he made recently is the so-called Class A war criminals, none of them have been indicted and convicted based upon Japan's domestic law, but again what I know of is the San Francisco treaty mandates that the government of Japan honor and implement the rulings of the Tokyo tribunal.

For the time being, maybe because of the nuclear crisis on the Korean peninsula, the leadership in three countries, Japan, China, and South Korea, appears to have contained this issue, but my question is: What does Mr. Abe really mean by these remarks and what do you think will be the ramifications, fallouts, or consequences of these remarks in the region?

DR. MATSUMURA: For the first question, that's an easier one. I think you have already found the answer in my presentation, but he was, when he made the statement you mentioned -- he was chief cabinet secretary, not the prime minister. He is now prime minister. So he could make very clear-cut statement, but now he can only make ambiguous statement.

But I think he may visit Yasukuni once again, next August, depending upon his prospect for whether he can win the Upper House elections. If he doesn't have any good prospect, he will be determined to go there.

PARTICIPANT: Did you say he will visit Yasukuni if his prospects for re-election are not good?

DR. MATSUMURA: Yeah, because we will have another prime minister. Okay? Exactly the same way that the Prime Minister Koizumi went there after he is reasonably sure that Abe is going to be the next one.

For the next questions, I don't know how to answer, but I feel that Mr. Abe has just stated the principle without really thinking about serious ramifications of his statement, but as you said, Japan did not accept the International Tribunal of the Far East, but it accepted to carry out the judgment of the tribunal. I think he is rather sticking to the bigger point of view rather than thinking much about political its ramification at least at this point.

But such approach will resonate well within the Japanese conservative wings, which further consolidate his political foundation in the LDP, I think.

PARTICIPANT: Hi. I have many questions about your point of view, but just let me pick one aspect and clarify whether I understood you right, that is that in my understanding, what you said is that Koizumi kept on going to Yasukuni even though it was out of his character to do that, because the U.S. does not have enough military capability to deal with the contingency in the East Asia region, therefore, Koizumi by going to Yasukuni, aroused the debate in Japan about the use of Japanese defense capability, so that Japan can strengthen the military capability to fill the void of the U.S. military capability. Is that what you said?

DR. MATSUMURA: Not exactly. Japan has not increased or beefed up the military capability. Actually, the defense budget is decreasing for the portion we can spend for the armament, because of our horrendous commitment to procure the missile defense system. So we have a smaller number of aircraft and tanks and so forth.

But my point was there are several possible explanations why Koizumi stuck to that idea of going to Yasukuni, and I don't believe it's because he is faithful. Koizumi's faithfulness or spirituality doesn't explain his visits, because he is not that kind of person, as long as I know, to my best knowledge.

Also, he said he is a person to observe the public pledge, but he has a record to break his word on the very crucial point of the commitment. So left out is, number one, he secretly, but significantly motivated to transform the Japanese legal system, so that Japan can prepare for and manage the international security relations which have dynamically changed at this point.

In other words, at present the Japanese legal system is not prepared to counter the extremely eccentric guy next door.

PARTICIPANT: So what, in your opinion, was the relationship between the U.S. transformation and Koizumi's insistence on going to Yasukuni?

DR. MATSUMURA: My point is Koizumi's behavior is triggered by the U.S. inability to properly handle the Iraq quagmire, while the Chinese and Korean situation is a great concern, but the real actual cause is rather that the U.S. is less willing and capable of countering the dynamic change in East Asia, and Koizumi should have sensed that.

PARTICIPANT: So it is something that Koizumi sensed by himself and took on his own, or was there a communication between the U.S. and Japanese governments to effect that?

DR. MATSUMURA: Although I had a chance to work in the Japanese Diet, I didn't have any chance personally to talk with Koizumi and make sure this is right or not, but if you have several possible ways to explain Koizumi's behavior, I think that is the most plausible way to explain. So I could say that's my speculation, intellectual guess.

PARTICIPANT: I just had a quick question about your comment on Chinese sense of national identity. I would say that China has at least as strong a sense of national identity as the Japanese or the Koreans, but it does not extend geographically to cover the geographical bounds of the former Qing Empire, or at the beginning of the Republic of China.

Other than that, as Chinese, there is a strong sense of identity, and I just wondered what you based your argument on.

DR. MATSUMURA: Well, I think we have to agree to disagree. For example, imperial Japan had a lot of Chinese students after the Sino-Japanese war, and then at that time, we have a record how the Chinese students at the time to respond to the question "Who are you?". There is no single answer to that point. Some identify themselves as Han, some identify them as Qing, or some identify themselves as coming from Fujian or Shanghai or other local identities.

Then, if you go to China, including hinterlands such as Tibet, Xinjiang, you don't really find the sort of the Chinese identity.

Now, also in the local Chinese provinces, they have competing Chinese, different version of Chinese identity. So there is, I said, no integral solid national identity. That is what I mean.

PARTICIPANT: My name is Larry Li and I am a senior research assistant at Brookings.

I have two questions, but first of all, a quick remark to your suggestion that there is no solid Chinese national identity right at this stage.

I think, first of all, in classic Chinese texts, the term *yi ren* -- I am pretty sure you understand this term -- which literally means the difference or the distinction between the Chinese nation and the "barbarians," of course in quotes, this term always existed, and

the reason or rather the mere fact that a leader can so easily manipulate or, in your term, create this brand-new Chinese national identify also suggests that this creation, this rather recent creation actually accuse or strikes a very, very responsive chord or raising Chinese national consciousness.

So, in that sense, there might be this. Our Chinese national identity may not take a very clear-cut shape at this stage, but at least it is a very deep-rooted fact of life within the Chinese psyche or state of mind or whatever.

Then, comes back to my question. I tend to agree with you that both China and South Korea, are still in the process of national identity-building at this stage. They naturally see Japan as a whipping boy in many instances. However, your analysis also suggests that Japan itself is also in the process of a national identity rebuilding.

DR. MATSUMURA: No—state identity.

PARTICIPANT: Okay, state identity, or whatever. But state identity in many cases, I believe -- well, you simply cannot dissociate that from the national identity, in a sense at least.

So, in that sense -- the Japanese state identity is still in the process of rebuilding -- don't you think that this also provides China and South Korea with certain legitimate reasons for showing some concerns with the direction that Japan is going to take in the future? That's my first question.

My second question is you seem to suggest that domestic factional politics kind of derailed China or rather hindered the development of a rational Chinese approach of foreign policy toward Japan or whatever, but I would say that if your argument is correct that China, South Korea, and Japan are currently, hopelessly locked in the conflict of national identities, then, they are simply –

Okay. Let me restate. My argument is that countries with diverse national identities may not necessarily be locked in the conflict of future destinies.

China and the United States certainly have very diverse national identities, but at least does not necessarily prevent them from shaping, from mapping out certain common strategies for the future.

So my argument or rather my question is if, say, China, Japan, and South Korea can transcend their current history debate and try to work out some certain common strategies or goals or whatever for the future, then this entire history debate will certainly become irrelevant.

So the real point of view is not, say, to accuse each other or rebuke. The real point is how they should say these three countries should establish some institutionalized

or regularized channels of high-level dialogues and the communications to try to achieve the common strategies or whatever.

Thank you.

DR. MATSUMURA: Okay. The first comment, I tend to concur with you. For the two questions, my response is a very clear-cut negative.

I don't say that the Chinese identity has no substance. There is a substance, but never to the extent that they are unable to define clear-cut who belong to China and who does not belong to China.

For the second question, I have to stress that we have to differentiate national identity and state identity.

By national identity, what I mean is that the people feel together, a sense of unity, a communal sense of unity and cohesion. So it primarily depends upon their history and -- but also could be credo commitment to a community they belong to.

State identity is maybe related to the national identity, but it's a dimension. By "state identity," I mean the dimension, the people in the state have to fit in an international society, what is a role Japan have to play in international society, what kind of status Japan has international society. Well, there is two things. So the national identity and state identity are different, and Japan and China and Korea all have identity crises, but different kinds.

Japan had a state identity crisis, the Chinese and the South Koreans have a national identity crisis.

And for the last questions, yes, differences in national identity do not necessarily lead to international tensions and conflict, but my point was the national identity question would be highlighted and could be compounded by the socioeconomic contradictions. Actually, the substance is development problems, poverty and bipolarization, and this problem is highlighted and compounded because China and South Korea don't have a clear-cut integral sense of communal unity and, ultimately, national identity. That is my point.

PARTICIPANT: Emanuel Pastreich. On the issue of Japan's position or its responsibility before 1945, it seemed like you were trying -- or not you personally -- but there is an intent to sort of either put it in one box or another.

As someone who actually worked on the study of Japan's relations with Korea and China, I was always shocked as a graduate student that all of the important research done on this topic was done in the 1930s, so there were actually -- if you look for intellectuals in Japan who were very serious about understanding Korea and China, you actually find them during that period, and in addition, a lot of people who went to Manchuria were not

imperialists in any sense, or they actually were committed to a vision of a sort of a unified Asia that was peaceful.

They may have been a minority, but they were significant, so I was just curious, and not to mention people in the Army and in the Navy, particularly who were explicitly opposed to a lot of the policies.

So, I am sort of curious as why there is a need to decide that, you know, it's either it was right, right, which is obviously I think a complete fiction since there was an amazing degree of brutality and unnecessarily so, or that it was entirely wrong, which also rules out a whole class of intellectuals and government officials.

DR. MATSUMURA: Well, you may be right, but as international relations evolved such, Japan also is to redefine its state identity. Now, I think Japan nation has to confront its past and have to reach the national consensual understanding.

As regard with most of the scholarship done in 1930s, yes, maybe that's right. That's the reason why we have to wait until the historians, both Japanese and non-Japanese, have to dig out new facts. Koreans and Chinese don't have enough historical records on this case.

In similar terms, many, if not all, historical records are kept in Japan's archives, and to a less extent, Russians and the Taiwanese. So we still have to wait what will come out from the archival, historical research.

Okay, go.

MR. NELSON: Thanks. Chris Nelson, Nelson Report. I want to thank Mike Miyazawa for remembering my question to Abe.

My recollection is that it was a two-parter, and the first one was are you worried about the then- obviously deteriorating relations with China and South Korea, and what steps as prime minister would you take, for example, would you continue visiting the Yasukuni Shrine?

And then I am pretty sure I asked him specifically about the Takeshima/Dokdo crisis that was then getting pretty hot.

I don't remember him being quite as clear as you do, Mike, but I will cede to you on that. My memory is that we got –

PARTICIPANT: It’s on the website.

MR. NELSON: Yeah. He gave us a long discussion of the political -- he thought it was a political cycle problem, you know, when the Chinese wanted something of Japan, then they would beat you up. That was my recollection.

But on Takeshima -- and this is going to lead to my question -- he gave a very straightforward answer. He said I will never -- or the next prime minister will never cede on the issue of sovereignty, but, of course, I won't challenge the practical matter of who controls the islands. So that was very pragmatic.

My question. I came in a bit late, so I apologize if you dealt with it at the outset. Is it your view that Japan at some point can deal simultaneously with China and South Korea on this issue, or do you think that China is the big enchilada, you have got to deal with China first, then South Korea falls in line, or would you be willing to consider reversing that and saying given the commonalities that Japan has with South Korea -- a free enterprise democratic system, very vigorous press, lots of cultural exchange, now Abe's wife thinks South Korea is the coolest place -- perhaps South Korea is in some ways more important to deal with because of the very deep-seated memories of the occupation and things like that?

DR. MATSUMURA: Well, most of the Japanese, including myself here, are more optimistic about our future relations with South Korea.

If my theme is correct, the prime driver is underdevelopment, and the Korean had successfully made a transition to more economically developed stage, and actually Korea has made the membership of the OECD.

So they haven't yet completed their modernization, but I hope they are graduating from the stage of modernity, I hope, but at this point, their national identity is very shaky because of the divided Korean peninsula, and this is their problem passed over from the traditional society.

But essentially, despite hugely eccentric statements quite often we face from Korea, over the long term I think South Koreans will be able to build a good relationship with Japan, and if you have talks with South Korean intellectuals, you will definitely understand that China will pose a long-term challenge to Korea, too. So we also share geostrategic interests over the long terms, if not for the immediate future.

PARTICIPANT: Thank you. I am wondering why the politicization of history has become such a contentious issue in Japan's relationship right now with South Korea and China, but perhaps a lot less so in the current Japanese relationships with other parts of Asia, specifically, Southeast Asia.

[Tape change.]

DR. MATSUMURA: [In progress] -- I understand that in the general public of Southeast Asia nations, there is a considerable number of people who have a remorse and grief against the behaviors of the Japanese imperial armed forces. But at state levels, it’s only the two countries, China and South Korea, which have made official protestation to Japan with regard to the history issue.

And then, as I mentioned in my presentation, these two countries, particularly China, have strong and radically conflicting national economic development policies going on and supported by the two conflictual factions.

So these factions would naturally surface up in a different form to their approach to Japan. That is what I am trying to say in my presentation.

PARTICIPANT: My question was related to what Mr. Nelson asked.

I want to ask in terms of history with Japan and level of modernization and in the strategical place in Northeast Asia, China and South Korea is very different.

Probably, from your perspective, you can differentiate China and Korean reactions when they raise questions about definite history.

My second question is that you are rather, more or less, optimistic with relations with South Korea, but we have still problems with territorial and historical problems. What do you think would be -- how would you suggest policy to improve relations between China, South Korea, and Japan?

DR. MATSUMURA: The territorial question is a very difficult question to deal with, but when we could successfully create so-called "ideal speech situations" without political distortions, I think we have a good chance to solve it.

For example, Japanese government has consistently proposed to bring this issue before the International Court of Justice, and then, of course, Japanese have a reasonable expectation that we will win the game, but Korea may win -- but that's how we have to deal with territorial questions. So I think Japanese have to wait until Korea gets cooled down for these questions, but I don't think that the territorial question will by itself be the issue which will drive a very serious wedge between Korea and Japan. This question should not be there, as such.

Mindy Kotler?

PARTICIPANT: Hi. I thought it was a great presentation, and I look forward to hearing more. I have a bit of a cold. So I think I missed a sentence or two -- I am sorry -- and if you could clarify, or maybe I missed a verb tense.

You were talking about the United States and the history problem between the United States and Japan, of which there is actually quite a substantial one, and did you say that Japan and the U.S. is working on the history problem or should be working on the history problem?

One of the things that I come across consistently is that the Embassy of Japan and the Japanese Government have a concerted policy to fight at every level any discussion of the history issue in the United States.

They are spending millions of lobbying dollars that are traceable -- we don't even know what is untraceable, to use former congressman, like former Congressman Tom Foley -- not the other Foley -- and other congressmen, even decorated war veterans, to go up to the Hill to kill anything from women, to POWs, to slave labor, anything that has any hint of resolving a history issue.

People who speak out are ostracized and demonized. In fact, even the Embassy a few weeks ago published for the first time an op-ed article which named the name of a Princeton professor as being sort of off the reservation to criticize the history issue, and I have been double secret ostracized, for those of you who know the movie.

How is that going to be constructive to get to what you want to do? Or, as I said, I didn't hear the verb tense.

DR. MATSUMURA: Okay. Let me carefully restate.

In a sense, two countries, Japan and the United States, are trying now to be engaged with the history debate, at least at social levels.

For example, I see the piece of newspaper articles, a Japanese newspaper article, that soldiers from Japan and the United States had a joint memorial service in Iwo Jima. So they killed -- they tried to kill each other 60 years ago, but now they have a peaceful moment to pay reverence to the dead, both Japanese and Americans, on the island of Iwo Jima. But at a societal-wide level, I don't see any significant engagement in that way.

Maybe this country, the U.S. Government, has intentionally invited a political distortion on the ongoing historical debate because, facing the Chinese and South Korean protestation to Japan, some Japanese right wings—conservative wing, the so-called realists, pro-U.S. realists—mentioned that we shouldn't push this question because this ultimately jeopardize our important relationship with the United States.

Some have virtually tried to stop the ongoing reasonable intellectual discussions, but that is not the way for solving the question for the long term. We have got to tackle the history debate, but maybe this is going to be a long-term enterprise, needing probably two or three decades.

PARTICIPANT: [Inaudible.]

DR. MATSUMURA: Let me give you one example. Your country is also making historical reinterpretations by itself.

For example, I think a couple of years ago, U.S. Congress had enacted a piece of legislation, which rehabilitated the two generals who served in Hawaii at the time of the Pearl Harbor attack. So there is a wave of new fact-findings, and you also have to tackle with the so-called stereotyped understanding of World War II.

Fu-Kuo?

PARTICIPANT: Fu-Kuo Liu, from Taiwan, CNAPS Visiting Fellow this year. I found your presentation is extremely candid, and this kind of discussion on history issue is not really popular everywhere, especially in East Asia, at least as far as my personal observation. I haven't really seen Japanese scholars come up to discuss the history issue with Chinese colleagues, Korean and Taiwanese and even Southeast Asian people, but I think this kind of a discussion would need to develop more.

I think I have two questions to you. The first one is currently, as some of speakers already mentioned, Japan currently involved in lots of territorial dispute with South Korea, with China, with Taiwan, and every time -- once in a while the ministers, all politicians in Japan, would raise a very controversial issue with regard to history, textbooks and all that, and I wonder if Japan really, as you perhaps mentioned privately, that the kind of discussion debate has not been going on in your society that much.

So you perhaps can also suggest in what kind of future occasion Japan may need to gradually find some way to reconcile with Korean, Chinese, and all the East Asian people, because you mentioned, currently, it seems only Korea and China would protest strongly, but, actually, Southeast Asia governments, they also have a different opinion from your government.

In Taiwan, currently, the incumbent government may not have something to say, but in our society, the mainstream also expresses discomfort whenever such kind of things comes up.

So I would say that not long ago I heard that there was some sort of a proposal, perhaps a trilateral or maybe multilaterals, discussing such kind of historic issue with Japan. I don't know whether it is feasible or not.

A second quick question is you also mentioned the debate between Japan and the U.S. on this history issue, and we learned that sometime ago, especially last year, when Sino-Japan's conflict intensified for certain months, we heard the State Department especially only use diplomatic expressions, and it seems to many of us, we look into the discussion and we find that the U.S. seems expressing that in case there is a conflict, the U.S. was not involved in any one side and would encourage both of you to set up peacefully. So I don't know what that means for Japanese.

DR. MATSUMURA: Well, I think you have already found my answer for the second question.

For the first one, I think the multilateral diplomacy will ameliorate ongoing antagonism, but will never solve.

It seems to me every major nations have a problem of the quality of the top leaders or leaderships, and that Japan is no exception, and we don't, and we haven't, and we will not be able to have quality leadership to the extent to effectively manage history questions in the future.

But for me, this is not a strategically-minded answer, but a long-term solution would be to create an ideal speech situation without political distortion—again, like I mentioned in my presentations.

So, for me, the best solution is, after achieving an ideal speech situation, we have to bring these three different cases of territorial questions to the International Court of Justice, but if we decide to bring the case with South Korea to the International Court of Justice, we also have to be prepared to bring the Senkaku case to the International Court of Justice. So we have to be consistent to dealing with our territorial questions, not only with South Korea, but also with China and Russia.

So the Japanese leadership has to make decisive movements to articulate its positions in the future. Otherwise, they really have to deal with ups and downs each time that these questions get politicized.

For the second question, maybe you already find my answer, but, in a sense, Japan faced a two-front war, in the history debate too, one was with China and South Korea and the other war was behind, with the United States.

In some cases, I think your intellectuals are not well aware of the dynamics that I have mentioned. So, if you simply look at the surface, it appears that the Japanese are ignoring strong protestations of Chinese and Koreans.

Now, Japanese are talking seriously about the historical past, but because of political distortions, we will not easily get engaged in a constructive dialogue and discussion among Japanese, as was with the Koreans and the Chinese. That's my point.

The gentleman there.

PARTICIPANT: Dave Fitzgerald. I have the impression from your presentation that you have an idea that history is somehow resolvable, that there is an official view of history that governments can reach agreements as to what happened in history. That is not my understanding of history at all. I was wondering where you got that view from. It doesn't sound like an academic proposition.

It seems to me that politicians in various countries—Japan just being one example, but also in China and South Korea, as you mentioned—you can go anywhere in Europe

and in the Americas and find politicians using historical opinions as wedge issues to legitimate and project their power, but that has nothing to do with truth.

And you haven't made a distinction about truth and history and the like, and it just strikes me as strange that you would even be inviting a U.S.-Japan debate on history because most Americans -- you know, our entire history is subject to a lot of interpretation. Half this country isn't even owned by the government.

DR. MATSUMURA: Okay. I am sorry if I may have incurred some sort of misunderstanding. I don't mean that the history question can be solved in the intellectual sense.

What I sense is that the history question doesn't have to be politicized in the way we observed in Japanese relations with South Korea and China. There are many antagonistic historical relations at the bilateral level—for example, like France and Germany.

Not every history question has a become pivotal, political source of confrontation. So that is my point.

So depoliticization is possible. My idea is that Japan's history question can be de-politicized to some extent, a considerable extent, if we have effectively managed the root cause or the structural cause.

I think that there is a significant number of Chinese and Koreans who suffered in the Japanese imperial era. This remorse and grief will stay forever, and similarly, for the Japanese who lost their relatives in atomic bombs and strategic bombings in Tokyo and elsewhere, this grief will continue for a significant time in the future.

So I am not saying that there will be any panacea, shall I say, for the history question, but there should be a good way to manage the questions in a way to de-politicize.

PARTICIPANT: Thank you. My name is Arthur Lord. I am an MA student at SAIS. Thank you for your comments today.

Regarding the Yasukuni issue, you mentioned that Koizumi won the game of chicken.

I was wondering, in your opinion, what, if anything, Japan gained from winning this game of chicken, or what, if anything, Japan lost from winning this game of chicken.

DR. MATSUMURA: As I stated, Japan didn't get anything from this confrontation from our bilateral relations with South Korea and China, but Japan made relatively -- made successfully reasonable progress in facilitating and accelerating

security-related legislation in a way to be more prepared for possible contingencies in East Asia.

The lady over there.

PARTICIPANT: Hi. Thank you for the presentation. It was really candid. It was great. Thank you very much. I am Yurika Foster from SAIS.

I had one question about Yasukuni because most of the tensions in Asian countries were caused by the visit to the shrine. So I think it is really important to de-politicize the Yasukuni issue for Japan now. I think one way to de-politicize the Yasukuni issue is maybe to create the strategic ambiguity. I think that is what Prime Minister Abe is doing.

On a personal level, he is really idolized. He likes to go, keep on going, visiting the shrine, but he never says, declares, that he has the will in front of China and Korea.

If you agree with the idea, it is now all right to de-politicize the Yasukuni issue, what is another way to de-politicize?

DR. MATSUMURA: I thought it would be decided by who will be the next prime minister after Abe or whether Abe will be able to win the coming upper house election or which political party would be the next ruling one in Japan.

At worst, in the worst-case scenario, Abe will judge that he will not win the next upper house elections. So he will go to Yasukuni on August 15 next year, and the next prime minister—again, we may have Prime Minister Koizumi. That is the worst-case scenario because we don't have any effective alternative prime minister candidates after Abe.

But certainly, we have already -- many people have proposed a different option to de-politicize, including the one option to somehow take out the spirits of class A war criminals from the collective spirit of the 2.5 million there, but options are there. The question is who will take that option.

Over there.

PARTICIPANT: Good morning. I just wanted to compare Prime Minister Koizumi with Prime Minister Mori because I felt Mori was much more controversial by saying Japan [inaudible] and stuff like that, but then, you know, he was popular. In contrast, Koizumi is much more popular, but the Chinese people all seem against both Mori and Koizumi. So I was just wondering: in your view what is the difference between Koizumi and Mori that made Chinese people dislike both of them at the same time?

DR. MATSUMURA: Well, three politicians—Mori, Koizumi, and Abe—are from the same faction. So, from the point of view, the political force is behind them and

kind of the jury is behind them, I think they are, more or less, identical, but their personalities are quite different, and Koizumi is known as a maverick in Japanese political circles, and Mori is known more for teamwork. So there is a significant difference in style, and I don't see a striking difference between them in terms of political creeds and fundamental principles of ideology.

PARTICIPANT: [Inaudible.]

DR. MATSUMURA: Depends, but next summer. Does everyone know the exact date of elections?

PARTICIPANT: [Inaudible.]

DR. MATSUMURA: If he wins, he has to continue to serve the Prime Minister.

PARTICIPANT: [Inaudible.]

DR. MATSUMURA: Well, he has to make a decision, a very tough decision. He may be driven to go there if he could judge that Hu Jintao has consolidated power very well and that there will be no strong attack from China—I mean the Jiang Zemin faction. He may revisit, or he can justify not going to Yasukuni because even he -- even a person like he can stop going to Yasukuni. That will be a somewhat good consolation, justification for the right wing, right wing forces in Japan. So I don't know, or the answer would depend upon the prevailing political situation at that time. I mean in next summer.

PARTICIPANT: Thank you. I am Claudia Delmas-Scherer from the Embassy of France. If I follow your thesis, maybe the question of Yasukuni would be less important if I follow your sense that Prime Minister Koizumi did that because he wanted to change the set of mind in Japan to a difference.

Is the recent nuclear test by North Korea a factor now, in the picture? What is the consequence in the mind of the Japanese people?

And there is a lot of discussion here on consequences of this nuclear test -- would be Japan public opinion, change of mind.

Someone said the other day that it was like a Sputnik kind of shock in Northeast Asia. Is it really realistic to think of Japan going nuclear? I ask only your personal view and maybe your views on how the Japanese mind is.

DR. MATSUMURA: I think you have two questions in your statement.

For the first one, ironically, Japanese conservative forces always take advantage of this kind of sentiment. The fact is that we can now transform our national security posture in a more realistic way.

So now because of the nuclear explosion attempted by North Korea, the Japanese conservative forces don't have to take advantage of the history questions to justify accelerating changes in our preparedness for contingencies.

I don't think Japan will not go nuclear if we can presume the status quo. Abe made a statement that Japan doesn't have any intention to go to nuclear, and his statement is well taken, and that is a fair statement because at this point the approach Mr. Abe has taken reflects the interests of Japan and the general expectation of the Japanese public.

That said, if the situation goes to the extreme and North Korea succeeds in creating an effective nuclear warhead small enough to be carried by a ballistic missile, then at that time Japan will face a very genuine, authentic, realistic threat from North Korea,. If we are not sure of the U.S. umbrella and then if we can somehow be convinced that it's time to upset the NPT-IAEA regime, a regime which originally supposed to design to contain the Japan, Germany from going nuclear. If these conditions all met, it is a very hypothetical situation, an extreme situation, but I cannot, 100 percent, eliminate the possibility that Japan will go nuclear.

There is a scant possibility, but the Japanese people do not hope that such a possibility materializes, and at this point, I am very much optimistic that kind of reality will not unfold. Please join me to have this wish.

DR. BUSH: Well, we all join you in that wish, and on that note, we will close today's session.

Thank you, Hiro, for a stimulating presentation.

[Applause.]

DR. BUSH: Thank you again for coming, and I hope you have a good weekend.

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