

**Policy Recommendations**  
**by**  
**the Japan Institute for National Fundamentals**

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**The Government should establish  
an Office of International Public Diplomacy  
responsible for fact-based perception of history**

**INTRODUCTION**

Vicious campaigns to spread groundless anti-Japanese propaganda abroad continue to gather momentum. As a result, a United Nations special rapporteur compiled a highly misleading and false report on so-called World War II comfort women, lawmakers in a number of countries including the United States adopted anti-Japanese resolutions based on inaccurate allegations and anti-Japanese activists built statues of comfort women in various locations abroad. More recently, baseless criticisms of Japan have become “official” because of UNESCO’s registration of new World Cultural Heritage sites and its inclusion in the Memory of the World Program list of documents, with anti-Japanese allegations attached. The governments of Japan and South Korea recently agreed that “the issue of so-called comfort women will be resolved finally.” However, we are concerned that the Japanese government’s pledge with South Korea to “refrain from denouncing each other over the issue in international forums such as the United Nations” would only make it difficult to continue fact-based assertions against anti-Japanese campaigns of untruths.

The root cause of all those problems is the failure on the part of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to refute and correct every false allegation by providing comprehensive fact-based explanations. For its part, the Japan Institute for National Foundations (JINF) has earnestly dealt with this matter to date. For instance, the JINF ran two opinion advertisements in major Japanese newspapers on July 19, 2014, (“Verification of the ‘Kono statement’ is far from over yet”) and on September 21 of the same year (“Repulse international slander over ‘comfort women’”).

However, contrary to its earlier public pledge to carry out strategic international public diplomacy with regard to this particular issue, the Abe administration has virtually left the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in charge of dealing with it. As such, it can hardly be said that the administration has done enough to address the issue. Given that those large-scale anti-Japanese campaigns have been orchestrated by the governments of certain countries, Japan, needless to say, ought to implement a government-initiated strategy to put forward fact-based statements in a systematic and persistent manner so as to ward off adverse effects of such campaigns. To that end, this Institute, therefore, sets out the following recommends:

## POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The government should establish an Office of International Public Diplomacy, which will be independent of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and exclusively responsible for international public diplomacy pertaining to fact-based, systematic historical perceptions to continuously make Japan's fair and just position on the matter known to the rest of the world.
2. The Diet should pass new legislation, tentatively called "the Special Law for the Safeguard of the Japanese Dignity," to oblige the government to refute groundless anti-Japanese campaigns.
3. The government should facilitate private-public collaboration in the country's international public diplomacy by actively taking advantage of the expertise of those private-sector experts who have thus far been involved in refuting baseless anti-Japanese allegations.

## BACKGROUND

Historical perceptions held by a nation are a pillar of support for its sovereign and national independence with which no other nations may interfere. Nevertheless, since the early 1980s, groundless, antagonistic historical perceptions toward Japan have obstructed it in the field of diplomacy to the extent that its national dignity and national interests have been greatly hindered. Three factors have exacerbated such an anti-Japanese climate. First, such Japan-bashing campaigns were initially kindled by those Japanese news media as well as scholars and activists that were antagonistic toward their own nation. Second, seizing on groundless allegations originally raised in Japan, the governments of both China and South Korea began brought forward historical perception issues as formal diplomatic agenda items in talks with Japan, making demands that were tantamount to an act of interfering with internal affairs of Japan. Third, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan has not dismissed such unjust Chinese and South Korean demands by contradicting their arguments with fact-based, comprehensive rebuttals. The consequence of those developments is the further complication of the matter due to the Japanese government's apologies, acknowledging that Japan had a moral responsibility, and eventually making a less well-thought-out offer of compensation in the name of humanitarian assistance despite the fact that Japan and neighboring countries had signed a set of treaties and relevant agreements many years earlier, formally settling the issue of compensation.

As for the first factor—home-grown ant-Japanese campaigns—the Asahi Shimbun acknowledged in 2014, only after years of much criticism at its coverage of the comfort women issue, that the Japanese newspaper made erroneous reports about the case as those articles were based on fabricated testimony. As a result, Japanese society has since become aware of the truth about the issue to a greater extent. However, it is private-sector efforts that finally led the newspaper to admit to its errors, while the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and other government branches remained on the sidelines, doing little to correct the situation<sup>1</sup>. In the 1990s, those home-grown anti-Japanese activists began presenting their arguments before the United Nations and the U.S. Congress, among other overseas fora, aiming to influence international public opinion in their favor. They kept denouncing their own country, misleading international audiences that had little knowledge about what were actually happening to such groundless allegations in Japan<sup>2</sup>.

China and South Korea embarked on anti-Japanese diplomatic moves in connection with historical perceptions—the second factor—in 1982 when the first round of bickering over Japanese history textbooks broke out<sup>3</sup> and then their diplomatic offensives were in high gear in the 1990s. It is noteworthy that the level of anti-Japanese sentiment in China and South Korea is higher among the younger generations than it is among the older ones. This is a phenomenon that is thought to be attributed more to the political indoctrination of their own people China and South Korea have carried out since the 1980s for the reasons below than to those people’s experiences before and during World War II<sup>4</sup>.

In the 1980s, the Chinese Communist Party capitalized on anti-Japanese sentiment in China to press Japan in diplomatic talks into agreeing to extend massive amounts of financial assistance necessary to promote its reform and opening-up policy. At the same time, the Chinese leadership began suddenly taking issue with Japan over the “Nanjing Massacre” and the enshrinement of the so-called Class A war criminals at the Yasukuni Shrine as a way of preventing the spread of civil dissent that could threaten to topple the Communist Party’s dictatorship<sup>5</sup>.

In the 1990s, China shifted the focus of anti-Japanese campaigns from trying to gain as much financial resources as possible from Japan to prioritizing the political indoctrination of its people to preserve the dictatorial party’s hold on power. The pro-democracy Tiananmen Square protests of 1989 and the demise of the Soviet Union and other East European communist regimes made the Chinese Communist Party really worry about the survival of its dictatorial rule. As the party had already adopted a market economy, it was no longer able to repeat its traditional maneuver of inciting internal civil campaigns against “class enemies,” such as landlords, wealthy farmers and rightists, to cement its grip on power. Alternatively, it started vehemently indoctrinating the Chinese people into a campaign to label Japan as a militarist nation that had to be denounced as China’s enemy. In the wake of the Tiananmen Square Incident, Jiang Zemin became general secretary of the Chinese Communist Party in 1993. He implemented systematic anti-Japanese education across China in the name of “patriotic education.” The Jiang leadership also adopted a national policy of persistently persecuting Japan on the diplomatic front and, to that end, took the initiative in setting up a global network of anti-Japanese organizations<sup>6</sup>.

In the early 1980s, South Korea under the presidency of Chun Doo-hwan, for its

part, raised the historical perception issue in diplomatic talks with Japan for the first time. The Chun regime initially tried to let Japan extend a considerable amount of economic aid in the name of military cooperation in supporting its Cold War security infrastructure. When Japan refused to comply with the request, South Korea adopted an alternative policy to take advantage of the issue of history so as to pressure Japan into generously providing it with economic assistance. Roh Tae-woo, who succeeded Chun as president of South Korea in 1988, also chose to keep pace with the Chinese Communist Party in dealing with Japan and used anti-Japanese sentiment in South Korean society as a diplomatic bargaining chip, successfully receiving both financial and technical assistance from Japan<sup>7</sup>. In those days, North Korea had to face the fact that it became apparent that the North was lagging far behind the South in terms of economic development. Pyongyang then shifted the focus of its political propaganda operations vis-à-vis South Korea from clinging to the long-standing rhetoric on the “supremacy of communism” to portraying itself as the “legitimate” flag bearer of anti-Japanese nationalism on the Korean Peninsula. North Korea argued that South Korea did not prosecute those Koreans who behaved as pro-Japanese collaborators, called derogatorily as Chinilpa in Korean, before and during World War II. Pyongyang accused Park Chung-fee, the pro-Japanese president who rose to power in the early 1960s, of normalizing diplomatic relations with Japan in 1965 while leaving past issues unsettled. The North also justified the legitimacy of calling itself as the real flag bearer of anti-Japanese nationalism—it said North Korea, founded by Kim Il Sung, an anti-Japanese partisan hero, punished pro-Japanese people and kept adhering to anti-Japanese nationalism. The North thus inducted South Korean public opinion to turn against the South Korean leadership by instilling its version of historical perceptions into the South<sup>8</sup>.

In the 1990s, Kim Young-sam came to power and began levelling lopsided criticism at Japan by playing up the issue of Takeshima Island in the Sea of Japan. Kim seized on anti-Japanese sentiment to boost public approval ratings of his administration—he adopted policies that pleased public opinion, now infected by North Korea’s version of historical perceptions. Indeed, at around that time, South Korean leaders started using anti-Japanese sentiment in South Korean society as ammunition to help improve public approval ratings rather than utilizing it as a diplomatic leverage for receiving as much economic assistance as possible from Japan<sup>9</sup>.

Against these backgrounds, groundless anti-Japanese campaigns abroad have gathered momentum. In Japan, the Abe administration came into being in December

2012, declaring that it would conduct strategic international public diplomacy. As a result, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs secured a huge year-on-year increase of 50 billion yen (\$416 million) in its annual budgetary outlay in fiscal 2015 for overseas dissemination of information on Japan's domestic situations and foreign policies. Nevertheless, the ministry has neither reflected upon its failure in the past 30 years or so to deal squarely with the issue of history in its international public diplomacy activities nor made comprehensive fact-based rebuttals yet to groundless anti-Japanese allegations abroad. The lack of effort on the part of the Japanese ministry has resulted in the issuance of a misguided statement by the U.S. government to express its “disappointment” at Prime Minister Shinzo Abe’s visit to the Yasukuni Shrine<sup>10</sup>. The ministry has also failed to stop “comfort woman” statues from being built in various locations in the United States and other countries. Likewise, it has done little to prevent groundless anti-Japanese allegations from becoming “official,” in rapid succession, through UNESCO’s registration of new World Cultural Heritage sites and its inclusion in the Memory of the World Program list of documents.

The root cause of all the problems is the failure of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to make any comprehensive fact-based rebuttal at all to correct groundless anti-Japanese allegations<sup>11</sup>. The situation has not improved even since Prime Minister Abe took the helm of the government. In October 2014, the ministry posted a new statement in both Japanese and English (October 2014: “Measures Taken by the Government of Japan on the Issue Known as ‘Comfort Women’”) as part of a section titled “Issue Known as ‘Wartime Comfort Women’”) on one of its web pages. The statement still remains the Japanese government’s up-to-date stance with respect to the issue of comfort women. It merely refers to two past events: Since the release in 1993 of a statement by then Chief Cabinet Secretary Yohei Kono, the Japanese government has “expressed its sincere apologies and remorse to the former comfort women on many occasions” and it undertook a program, through the Asian Women’s Fund, “to provide necessary assistance” to them.

In the wake of the Asahi Shimbun’s apologies in 2014 for its erroneous coverage of comfort women—which the newspaper said was based on what it described as fabricated testimony of Seiji Yoshida who claimed he abducted Korean women who were forced to become comfort women—the Ministry of Foreign Affairs asked Radhika Coomaraswamy, former special rapporteur on violence against women at the United Nations Commission on Human Rights, to amend her 1996 report on wartime comfort women. It also asked a major American publishing company to change groundless

passages on comfort women in its high school history textbook. As for both cases, the ministry, however, has not disclosed specifically what parts of the U.N. report and the U.S. textbook it requested to be corrected. Moreover, ever since the Asahi Shimbun acknowledged that the account given by Seiji Yoshida was a fabrication, the ministry has issued no official statements yet to tell the rest of the world of the truth about the controversy over comfort women. As such, we can hardly expect the international community to remove its misperception and have a correct understanding of the issue. What is worse, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and a group of experts who are close to the ministry have evaded responsibility for scoring an “own goal” or choosing to offer apologies first in the early 1990s without making due investigation on their own into the issue of comfort women. They are still excusing themselves by saying, for example, “the issue can hardly be resolved as the other side continues to shift the goalpost”<sup>12</sup>. Additionally, a number of former officials of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs have publicly castigated as an “act in defiance of history” efforts in Japan to refute anti-Japanese allegations with respect to the Nanjing Incident and the issue of comfort women<sup>13</sup>

In late December 2015, the governments of Japan and South Korea agreed to “finally and irreversibly resolve” the issue of comfort women. But it must be remembered how the issue of comfort women on earth emerged and developed into a diplomatic row between the two countries. A series of false reports about the case by Japanese news media and an ensuing series of offhand apologies by the Japanese government are to blame. To truly resolve the issue, the two countries should have been faced indispensably and squarely with the inconvenient truth that comfort women represented a tragedy caused by wartime poverty. The recent agreement between the two governments made no mention of this particular point. In this context, what the government did late in 2015 was a myopic diplomatic concession for the sake of improving relations with South Korea, an event that runs the risk of causing trouble to posterity. From Japan’s standpoint, there can be no solution to the issue of comfort women without restoring its honor impaired by the abovementioned false reports and subsequent false allegations based on such reports. Nonetheless, if Japan has to forgo its opportunity to make its assertion known to the international community because of the recent pledge between the governments of Japan and South Korea to refrain from denouncing each other over the issue in international forums such as the United Nations, the recent agreement could rather prevent the issue from being truly resolved.

As the Coomaraswamy report marks its 20th anniversary in 2016, the Ministry

of Foreign Affairs should have already embarked on an urgent diplomatic task to reach out to and talk member countries of the United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC)—the successor to the United Nations Commission on Human Rights—into agreeing in the 2016 general assembly of the UNHRC to appoint a new special rapporteur to investigate the issue of comfort women anew. But the ministry has shown no signs of making such a diplomatic endeavor. Despite its public pledge to carry out strategic international public relations activities, the Abe administration has effectively left the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to decide how and what to do in relation to the issue of comfort women. The administration has thus kept neglecting to submit comprehensive fact-based rebuttals to groundless allegations abroad—the crux of the country’s public diplomacy.

Groups of people at home and abroad who are antagonistic toward Japan have been staging anti-Japanese campaigns full of groundless allegations for more than 30 years now. To remove adverse effects of those large-scale malicious anti-Japanese campaigns abroad orchestrated at government level on the national interests and dignity of our country, it is logical for Japan to make fact-based rebuttals to them in a systematic and persistent manner at state level. We call for a national movement to correct misperceptions on the part of the international community about Japan’s history. To that end, both the Diet and local assemblies should form federations of parliamentarians and those of local assembly members, respectively, to confront groundless propaganda against Japan by anti-Japanese groups. At least for more than years to come, the pillar of Japan’s international public diplomacy should be the submission of fact-based rebuttals as to historical perceptions. The Japan Institute for National Fundamentals therefore put forward the aforementioned recommendations.



<sup>1</sup> The most typical examples of groundless anti-Japanese campaigns within Japan were the so-called first textbook issue of 1982 and a series of developments related to the issue of comfort women in 1992. For more in-depth information, refer to “Nikkan Gokai no Shin’en” (The Abyss of Japan-South Korea Misunderstanding) by Tsutomu Nishioka (1992) as to the 1982 campaigns and “Asahi Shimbun ‘Ianfu Hodo’ ni Taisuru Dokuritsu Kensho-iinkai Hokoku” (A Report by the Independent Investigation Committee on the Asahi Shimbun’s Coverage of Comfort Women)(2015) with regard to the latter, which can be accessed through

<http://www.seisaku-center.net/sites/default/files/uploaded/dokuritsukensyouiinkai20150219-C20150227.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> A Japanese lawyer, known for his anti-Japanese activities, was the first person to refer to comfort women as “sex slaves” when he brought the issue of comfort women to the United Nations Commission on Human Rights in 1992. For details, refer to “Zohoban: Yokuwakaru Ianfu Mondai” (Enlarged Edition: An East-to-Understand Look at the Issue of Comfort Women) by Tsutomu Nishioka (2012).

<sup>3</sup> It was in 1982 when the Chinese and South Korean governments raised the issue of history during diplomatic talks with Japan for the first time since normalizing diplomatic relations with Japan in 1972 and 1965, respectively. The People’s Republic of China and South Korea did not do so for 10 years and 17 years, respectively. Moreover, never did the Republic of China try to do so when it had diplomatic relations with Japan. For normal countries in the world, it is a common norm to settle issues of history through the conclusion of treaties and agreements and not take up such problems afterward as diplomatic issues. It is a matter of purely internal affairs for each country to determine what textbooks for its schools should contain and how its people should pray for the souls of the war dead.

<sup>4</sup> The notion that “anti-Japanese sentiment” had been fabricated in South Korea was analyzed in detail in the September, October and December 2001 issues of “Gendai Korea” and in the January-February 2002 issue of the same journal.

<sup>5</sup> The Nanjing Massacre Memorial Hall, formally known as “the Memorial for Compatriots Killed in the Nanjing Massacre by Japanese Forces of Aggression” was opened in 1985. In August of the same year, the Chinese government lodged a protest over Prime Minister Yasuhiro Nakasone’s visit to the Yasukuni Shrine on the ground that Japan’s Class-A war criminals were enshrined there together with the war dead. Yasukuni’s co-enshrinement of the Class-A war criminals took place in April 1979. For the six-year period between the co-enshrinement and Nakasone’s 1985 visit to the shrine, Prime Ministers Masayoshi Ohira and Zenko Suzuki as well as Nakasone paid homage to the war dead by going there on a total of 21

occasions from 1979, but China lodged no such protest at all

<sup>6</sup> In August 1994, the Chinese Communist Party announced the Outline on the Implementation of Patriotic Education. The outline was designed to force not only schools but also the whole of Chinese society, including movies, TV programs, memorials and museums, to stage anti-Japanese political propaganda campaigns.

In December of the same year, more than 30 anti-Japanese organizations comprising Chinese, Korean and Japanese residents mostly in the United States, Canada and Hong Kong joined hands to establish the “Global Alliance for Preserving the History of WW II in Asia” to take up the issue of Japan’s wartime responsibility. Michio Ezaki pointed out in his book, “Kominterun to Ruzuberuto no Jigenbakudan” (The Time Bomb Set by the Comintern and Roosevelt) (2012) that the Global Alliance was an overseas version of the anti-Japanese patriotic education guideline in China.

In August 1998, President Jiang Zemin told a conference of Chinese foreign affairs officials, including ambassadors summoned back to Beijing, that China “must not only keep warning Japan as to the issue of Taiwan but also keep going on emphasizing the issue of history, from beginning to end, and, more importantly, condemning Japan forever.” (“Kotakumin Bunsen”=A Collection of Jiang Zemin’s Speeches, 2006)

<sup>7</sup> The diplomatic tactics of the South Korean government under the leadership of Chun Doo-hwan to capitalize on anti-Japanese sentiment as a leverage for gaining greater economic assistance from Japan were analyzed in detail by Tsutomu Nishioka in an article headlined “Kankoku-ban Kyokusa-shikan ga Umu Hannichi to Kankan no Rensa” (The Chain of Anti-Japanese Sentiment and Anti-Korean Sentiment Caused by the Extreme Leftist View of History in South Korea) carried by of monthly “Gekkan Seiron” (July 2015). As for the diplomatic tactics adopted by the Roh Tae-woo administration, which succeeded the Chun regime, Takabumi Suzuoki, a Nihon Keizai Shimbun correspondent in Seoul at the time, cited an interesting event in the January 1993 issue of “Gendai Korea.” When Suzuoki interviewed a member of the newly installed cabinet, the South Korean minister responsible for economic affairs, reportedly warned that “anti-Japanese sentiment is likely to mount if Japan does not cooperate” with the Roh regime by transferring new technologies to his country and supporting South Korea’s measures to reduce its lopsided trade deficits with Japan. When the Japanese correspondent then reminded the minister of the possibility of anti-Japanese sentiment backfiring on South Korea itself, the Korean cabinet member retracted his earlier remarks.

<sup>8</sup> Lee Myung-young, then a professor at Sungkyunkwan University in Seoul known as a leading authority on North Korean studies, referred to “anti-South sentiment” in 1996 in an article headlined “Kankoku no ‘Hankan’ Shikan” (“Anti-South’ View of History in the Republic of Korea) in the December issue of “Gendai Korea” of the same year. In 2004, South Korea shifted the across-the-board use in schools of government-compiled national history textbooks to the adoption of textbooks compiled by private publishers, albeit to the screening by the government. The deregulation resulted in the mushrooming of history textbooks based on an anti-South view of history. Responding to the situation, a group of professors of common sense formed the “Textbook Forum” in January 2005. Lee Yong-hoon, a Seoul National University professor who spearheaded the move to organize the forum, summarized how people held on to the anti-South view of history perceived the history of their own country as follows:

“The *Joseon* Dynasty blessed with a jewelry-like beautiful culture was invaded by Japan that was a bandit. The country then had to undergo a period in which the traitors of our nation who turned out to be friends of Japan kept swaggering around our soil. Our land was liberated from Japanese rule by another occupation force—the Americans. Then, those pro-Japanese traitors turned out to be pro-American toadies all at once. Those traitors should be to blame for the division of the nation and the tragedy of the Korean War. The Rhee Syng-man regime and the Park Chung-hee regime [that ruled South Korea] in the 1960s and 1970s prolonged the history of treason. They boasted of economic development but they lost their all-important hearts as nationals [of Korea]. Justice of this kind was lost (“Daikan Minkoku Monogatari”=The Tale of the Republic of Korea)(2009)

<sup>9</sup> Refer to “Koria Tabu wo Toku” (Unveiling the Korean Taboos) by Tsutomu Nishioka (1997).

<sup>10</sup> The U.S. government said, “...the United States is disappointed that Japan’s leadership has taken an action that will exacerbate tensions with Japan’s neighbors” (the December 26, 2013, press lease issued by the U.S. Embassy in Tokyo). This means that the U.S. government expressed its disappointment at the possibility of Prime Minister Shinzo Abe’s visit to the Yasukuni Shrine causing Japan’s relations with its neighbors to deteriorate further, not at his visit to the shrine itself.

<sup>11</sup> When China and South Korea took up the issue of history as a diplomatic matter with Japan for the first time in 1981 (note 3) when the first textbook issue emerged in Japan, the Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA) forced Japan’s textbook screening criteria to be revised despite the resistance from the Ministry of Education that said the MOFA should not

yield to the Chinese and South Korean moves to interfere in Japan's internal affairs. Even though Chinese and South Korean protests were based on false news reports in Japan, the MOFA did not make any effort to refute to their protests by asserting that their protests had been based on wrong information.

In 1996, the MOFA tried to make an elaborate, fact-based rebuttal on the issue of comfort women—which was virtually the only effort of its kind by the ministry for over a long period of time. Specifically, the MOFA released a lengthy statement refuting the report by Radhika Coomaraswamy, special U.N. rapporteur on violence against women. However, after copies of the statement were circulated to the relevant U.N. office, the MOFA withdrew the statement and substituted it with a new statement that stated to the effect that Japan had already made apologies and compensations, apart from the presentation of its refutation. The gist of the retracted statement was disclosed by Tsutomu Nishioka in a book “Asahi Shimbun: Nipponjin eno Taizai” (The Asahi Shimbun Has Committed a Deadly Crime against the Japanese People)(2014).

<sup>12</sup> It seems that diplomat-turned commentator Kunihiko Miyake was the first person to the English phrase of “move the goalposts” to refer metaphorically to what has been going on between Japan and China and South Korea. The reference appeared in the Sankei Shimbun's column “Miyake Kunihiko's World Watch” on July 25, 2013. The phrase written in katakana (the Japanese syllabary used to express foreign words) has since been so often used that the Advisory Panel on the History of the 20th Century and on Japan's Role and the World Order in the 21st Century, an ad hoc advisory body to the prime minister, used the phrase in its report issued in August 2015.

<sup>13</sup> Sakutarō Tanino, a former high-ranking official of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs who was involved deeply in the compilation, of both the Kono statement and the Murayama statement, criticized the moves to “vindicate the honor of Japan.” Tanino said as follows:

“There can be many ways of interpreting history. That's natural. However, in recent years, some people in Japan have been campaigning to ‘restore the honor of Japan’ and, therefore, trying to deny ‘history’ that cannot be denied. Without facing history squarely, they have been defiantly saying, ‘All of them became comfort women for money’ and ‘The Nanjing Incident was a fabrication!’ Even when someone tries to study modern and recent history as extensively as possible”, they say, “It's biased by the self-tormenting view of history. It's forgivable. So, don't do it.”

“I really want them to understand that in the eye of the international community that it is their remarks that have been resulting in hurting the honor of the people of Japan in the most serious way.” (Diamond Online, August 13, 2015)

Masatoshi Muto, who served as Japan’s ambassador to South Korea from 2010 to 2012, published a book titled “Nikkan Tairitsu no Shinso” (The Depths of the Japan-South Korea Confrontation). In the book, Muto, arguing that Japan should refrain from making any fact-based rebuttal with regard to the issue of comfort women, commented:

“What Japan has to keep in mind is that Japan should never insist that ‘in a narrow sense of the term, there was no coercion’ [in the recruitment of the women]. Because such an insistence would rather give the international community the impression that Japan has made ‘no remorse for its inhumane acts of the past’ and cause it to distrust this country. At the end of the day, such a Japanese attitude could only make the international community become increasingly sympathetic toward South Korea. In dealing with this issue, it is necessary to understand how the world perceives it.” (Pages 23-24).

Then, Muto, while saying he had no documents as evidence, that comfort women might have been forcibly recruited by the military. He went on to say: “First and foremost, I wonder if Japan can definitely assert that there was no ‘coercion’ on the part of the military. Can such a fact that there exist no documents be acceptable as a reason for making such an argument? It is inconceivable that the military would have bothered to document about forcible recruitments if that had been the case. Also, I don’t think it is possible to discover evidence that definitely rules out coercion by the military.” (Page 54)

Kunihiko Miyake, who used to be an official of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, defended the ministry by denying the advisability on the part of the government of making fact-based rebuttals pertaining to the issue of comfort women and the Nanjing Incident. He said as follows:

“It is not an act of historical revisionism to discuss and reassess ‘facts’ of the past on the basis of the ‘evaluation criteria’ of the past. However, if [Japan] wants the international political realm to give a just cause to such an intellectual activity, debate based on ‘universal value’ will be imperative. It is not wise to react easily to provocative assertions by foreign countries that are narrowly and intentionally focused on small parts of history relative to the ‘issue of comfort

women' and the 'Nanjing Massacre.'

"If someone wants to reassess facts of the past on the basis of the evaluation criteria of the past, he or she should go back to a university to take a history course. If someone wants to use facts of the past for diplomatic purposes, it will be necessary for those facts to be revalued on the basis of universal value. It is good enough to let scholars evaluate history. In modern diplomacy, countries trying to press ahead with its arguments on history stand no chance of achieving its goal if those arguments are not based on universal value. ""(Kunihiko Miyake, "Chukan no Kohosenryaku wa Genkai ni / Nihon wa Sekai no Kyokan wo Uru Koho Bunka Gaiko o" (The Limitation of the PR Strategies of China and South Korea; Japan Ought to Pursue Public Diplomacy and Culture PR to Gain Empathy of the World) in Web magazine WEDGE Infinity on May 25, 2005)

Yukio Okamoto, a former official of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, made a negative comment on the opinion ad a group of Japanese citizens ran in a U.S. newspaper in 2007 to rebuke a move in the U.S. House of Representatives to pass a "comfort women" resolution. (The Sankei Shimbun, July 23, 2007)

Okamoto said; "The U.S. House of Representatives was discussing a resolution that would seek Japan's apologies in late April (2015) when Prime Minister Abe visited the United States. The apologetic attitude Abe displayed in the U.S. capital helped calm down [anti-Japan] sentiment to the extent that the passage of the resolution looked less likely. However, a group of Japanese people ran a full-page ad in the Washington Post [in June] to make a fact-based rebuttal quickly rekindled sentiment in favor of the resolution. As a result, the House Foreign Affairs Committee voted 39-2 to endorse the resolution. The House of Representatives' is now mostly likely to pass it.

Why did the House eventually pass the resolution while its members saw the opinion ad contain facts? Because the House had already reached a consensus on its own that its debate on the factual aspects of the resolution left no room for dispute. Then, the American lawmakers became attentive to knowing what kind of subjective view the Japanese people would had in presenting its case on the past events. It is natural for Japanese people to make rebuttals, but the crux of the matter we must keep in mind is to know what kind of subjective view we talk about history with is the focus of interest to people in other countries as to the issue of history."