

History, Politics, and Security in Northeast Asia: Implications for Peace and Conflict

A Conference Report

By Brad Glosserman

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Northeast Asian History Foundation (NAHF) is a government-affiliated organization established in 2006. NAHF seeks to contribute to peace and prosperity in Northeast Asia by clarifying historical facts in Northeast Asia that are often misinterpreted and mispresented. To achieve this goal, the NAHF focuses on conducting long-term and comprehensive research on Northeast Asian history, establishing systematic and strategic policies, and supporting promotion and education activities. The particular research focuses of the NAHF are Korea-China relations, Korea-Japan relations, and Dokdo-related issues.

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Based in Honolulu, the Pacific Forum CSIS operates as the autonomous Asia-Pacific arm of the Center for Strategic and International Studies in Washington, DC. The Forum's programs encompass current and emerging political, security, economic, business, and oceans policy issues through analysis and dialogue undertaken with the region's leaders in the academic, government, and corporate areas. Founded in 1975, it collaborates with a broad network of research institutes from around the Pacific Rim, drawing on Asian perspectives and disseminating project findings and recommendations to opinion leaders, governments, and members of the public throughout the region.

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Opening Remarks by Kim Hosup

Ladies and Gentlemen, I am Hosup Kim, president of the Northeast Asian History Foundation. On behalf of the foundation, I am delighted to be able to attend today's seminar on "History and Security in Northeast Asia." I believe that the seminar will be an occasion for experts to discuss matters involving history and security in Northeast Asia and search for policy alternatives to such issues.

I would like to take this opportunity to talk about the background to establishing the Northeast Asian History Foundation in September 2006, and the issues the Foundation has been trying to resolve.

September 21, 2016 marks the 10th anniversary for the foundation. In September 2006 the Chinese government actively promoted the Northeast Project lasting for five years from 2002 to 2007. The project centered on an argument that the history of nations within the current borders of China had all belonged to Chinese history. This study assertion that the history of Koguryo, and related historical sites and relics in the region of Manchuria were part of the history of one local government of China. Koreans would not accept this historical interpretation as we believe Koguryo is an integral part of the history of Korean nation and have been educating our younger generation with this historical identity.

The Foundation was established mainly for responding to the domestic need to educate and research the historical evidence of Koguryo as Korean history. It also works to deny the interpretation that Koguryo in part of the past of Chinese local government. Another task of the Foundation is academic research on Dokdo, well-known as a key element of historical conflicts between Korea and Japan, and on history textbooks of contemporary Japan in regard to militarism. In other words, the essential assignment of the Foundation is to research and study current historical issues inseparable from diplomatic conflict.

Conflicts over history have become prevailing issues between countries in Northeast Asia including Korea, China, and Japan. In fact, international conflicts due to differing perceptions and interpretations of history have always been present around the world. And such historical conflicts sometimes turn into diplomatic or domestic political issues.

In East Asia, historical conflicts have long gone beyond the realm of academia and into diplomacy. Coupled with matters of territory and security, they have emerged as critical factors that either threaten regional order or hinder the formation of regionalism. There are several explanations for these developments.

One aspect would be the source of historical conflicts in East Asia. Such conflicts seem to have been caused by diverging views about Japan's past. From the viewpoint of countries like Korea and China, which fell victim to Japan's militarism, Japan has not yet sufficiently apologized for or cleared up after the inhumane crimes it committed against

East Asian countries and their people during World War II. The same can be said for the territorial disputes over Dokdo. The Korean often look at the Japanese claim over Dokdo as continuation and manifestation of history that modern Japan established in the process of its imperialist expansion. Koreans also look at China's attempt through its Northeast Project to incorporate the history of the ancient Korean kingdom of Koguryo into its own history as the same expansionistic understanding of history.

Despite different historical experiences, Korea, China, and Japan share a very similar paradigm in which to systemize their own history by placing their nation at the center of their history and focusing on the nation's origin, formation, and development. Such a historiography usually portrays the invasion of a neighboring nation or country as progress or advancement whereas the process of founding a nation-state in modern times tends to be described as honorable resistance against foreign power. This implies that historical conflicts in East Asia need to be understood as outcomes of a modern transition that East Asian countries, obsessed with "dreams of becoming powerful," that occurred as they built nation-states. Therefore, resolutions to those historical conflicts need to begin with a comprehensive examination of such understandings.

Another aspect has to do with the political use of history in domestic politics. As is well known, the peace and order of a region can be threatened by promotion of popular nationalism, which is usually fueled by the nationalist historiography prevalent in the three countries. China and Japan have already deviated from their course to the point of projecting their future regional strategies into an arrangement of their national history. An example would be the historical perception behind China's Northeast Project, not to mention Japan's Uyoku interpretation of militaristic history. In particular, the rationale that Northeast Asia has traditionally belonged to China is widely interpreted in Korea not only as an excuse for taking the Chinese nation's expansion for granted within the region, but also as a response to the rapidly changing current situation in the region including the Korean Peninsula. Besides projects on the histories of Mongolia or the Qing dynasty, which extend beyond China's current borders, can be considered to be examples in which China tries to establish its future regional policies based on a new paradigm of history. These are identified by South Korean scholars as a form of the Chinese strategy based on territorial expansionism.

Koreans are especially concerned about the political and diplomatic implications of issues involving history. That may be due to the geopolitical circumstances where Korea has been situated. With the rise of China, East Asia now witnesses a power transition at the regional level. Due to its geopolitical location, Korea is concerned about being sandwiched by the conflict between China's strategy of expansion and Japan's selfcentered regional strategy. Korea is now facing the dual challenge of stopping the state of deterioration, which has led the different historical understandings of the three countries immediately into diplomatic conflict, while seeking a formula for regional order that ensures peace and prosperity in East Asia. I believe that overcoming the challenge will be a common goal of specialists on Northeast Asia, whatever their nationality. The Northeast Asia History Foundation has strived to create an atmosphere of mutual respect and tolerance, predicated on a historical reflection of 'the modern' plagued with imperialist aggression and nationalist resistance. This effort will contribute to pave the way toward reginal peace in East Asia in a true sense.

I expect that today's conference will touch on a variety of current issues in this area, to be discussed by eminent Northeast Asia specialists, and serve the objective of the Foundation with constructive outcomes.

History, National Security, and Northeast Asia: A Conference Report

By Brad Glosserman

The problems triggered by divergent interpretations of history are by no means unique to Northeast Asia, but they have a special intensity and resonance in that part of the world. They have assumed a prominent role in domestic politics and frequently top the diplomatic agenda. The past is increasingly present in Northeast Asia and its impact – both positive and negative – is growing. As Kim Hosup, president of The Northeast Asia History Foundation (NAHF), argues, "conflicts over history have become prevailing issues between countries in Northeast Asia. ... Coupled with matters of territory and security, they have emerged as critical factors that either threaten regional order or hinder the formation of regionalism." Cognizant of that trend, NAHF and the Pacific Forum CSIS, with support from the Foreign Ministry of the Republic of Korea, convened in September 2016 a small group of historians, foreign policy specialists, and former government officials to explore the relationship between history and national security in Northeast Asia. As we tried to unravel the tangled threads that confound an accurate assessment of the roots, meaning, and impact of those issues, we encountered few surprises. Yet while we should be accustomed to the power of history to continue to influence developments in Northeast Asia, we may be entering a period of flux that magnifies their influence. It is therefore incumbent on all supporters of the US-ROK alliance, as well as those who believe that positive and supportive Korea-Japan relations are also important to regional security and stability, to strive to better understand both history and contemporary politics and ensure that the forces of disruption are contained and channeled to constructive ends.

History and Northeast Asia

What explains history's virulence in Northeast Asia? There are a number of variables, ranging from the structural to the ephemera of politics. A Korean speaker outlined the structural factors. First among them is the presence of global powers in the region. The United States, the world's only remaining superpower, and China and Russia, two regional powers with global ambitions, are all present and active in Northeast Asia. They have important interests in the region and keep a close on developments and their impact on them. Second, and related to this first feature, is a competition for power - if not hegemony - among those countries. Washington and Beijing, in particular, and Moscow to a lesser degree, seek to be the most important outside power in the minds of regional decisionmakers, and hope to use their power and influence to shape actions and outcomes among smaller countries in Northeast Asia. A third structural factor is globalization which magnifies the influence of external forces on domestic decision making. Understanding the impact of globalization is vital because it is complex and creates competing tensions: while it increases openness to foreign forces, and in theory at least, should increase tolerance of differences and promote cooperation, it at the same time nourishes resistance to intrusions on national sovereignty because it appears to undercut the authority and legitimacy of domestic decision making.

All these factors reflect a larger process and phenomenon: the incomplete transition to modernity among the societies of Northeast Asia. As one Korean speaker explained, "historical conflicts in East Asia need to be understood as outcomes of a modern transition that East Asian countries, obsessed with 'dreams of becoming powerful,' underwent as they built nation-states." History is central to this process because it explains how countries were – or are being – made. It is the foundation of the narrative of national modernization and realization as conscious, competent, and coherent states. These structural factors shape the telling of those narratives and the way that sovereignty is achieved. And significantly, as a Korean speaker added, the prevailing logic in Northeast Asia is Western – that is to say, it was imposed by external powers during the 19th and early 20^{th} centuries, and rests heavily, if not uneasily, upon the indigenous logic and order of Northeast Asia. In other words, there is an inherent tension (some might say weakness) in the historical foundation of contemporary Northeast Asian societies.

A US participant identified two other, inter-related, factors that contribute to the contemporary salience of history issues. The first is the spread of democracy, which dilutes the authority and influence of elites in managing foreign relations. Traditionally, bureaucracies and political alliance managers have been able to diminish the weight afforded historical concerns and focus on issues of national security as they have defined them. The empowerment of ordinary citizens (and their opinions) offers the opportunity to rewrite national narratives and the identification of heroes and villains within them. Second, and similarly, the articulation and proliferation of human rights norms provide a new baseline to evaluate state behavior. These new standards subvert conventional historiography, often validating longstanding complaints that have traditionally been marginalized or dismissed. While it is tempting to dismiss charges of historical wrongdoing as politically correct hindsight -- taking contemporary standards out of context – the sense of grievance is nevertheless real.

These structural factors and ideational factors assume additional weight and significance as the countries of Northeast Asia consider regional integration. The geography, resources, and interests of four key actors – South Korea, Japan, China, and Russia – give those governments ample reason to pursue deep forms of cooperation to promote economic development and regional stability. Such thinking was impossible during the superpower standoff of the Cold War. The collapse of the Soviet Union and the end of the ideological conflict between communism and capitalism would seem to have eliminated one critical obstacle to such cooperation. Yet the end of that faceoff and tentative steps toward integration instead prompted politicians and societies throughout the region to look backward, not forward, to focus on history rather than the future. Historical resentments rose to the surface and politicians proved eager to exploit them for partisan and narrowly defined – rather than national – advantage.

This relationship between politics and history, reported another Korean speaker, manifests in three distinct ways. First, there is the political use of history. In this case, politicians whip up or emphasize nationalism to win or grow their popular support. Examples of this type of behavior are legion: Japanese Prime Minister Abe Shinzo visiting Yasukuni Shrine or President Lee Myung Bak flying over Dokdo island. Second, history itself can serve as a constraint. For example, President Park Geun-hye has difficulty compromising with Japan on some issues because the historical acts of Imperial Japan have considerable weight within South Korean consciousness (and public opinion). The third way in which history matters is as a political constraint. In other words, acts by Korean political figures to address historical concerns assume a substance of their own. An example of this is the way that President Park is limited in her room for political maneuver because she must contend with the legacy of her father, Park Chung Hee, who as president of Korea normalized relations with Japan. In this case, history is instrumentalized as the specific acts of contemporary political figures. In each case, a US speaker noted, history limits the scope of political action. Frequently, these decisions are beholden to short-term interests; when mishandled, they make relations between countries worse.

Today, the scars of history on Northeast Asia are deep and instantly recognizable. As one South Korean speaker explained, "China, having suffered indignity and humiliation, tends to be assertive and self-righteous." Japan is "understandably defensive" and "sometimes reacts with antagonism," which can be expressed as *Kenkan* or Korea-hating. At the same time, it is inward-looking and seeks the support of its "big brother (the United States), which Japan hopes will side with it in disputes with neighbors" in return for support for US security interests and efforts. Finally, Koreans manifest "suspicion, vilification, paranoia," which results in "fluctuation between, and mixture of, flunkeyism and xenophobia." As a result, "Koreans tend to have difficulty to accept compromise and equal relationship between nations." This, a US participant agreed, reflected Korea's geopolitical position – "hemmed in," and forced to "tightrope walk" between two bigger regional powers, China and Japan.

Nevertheless, insisted another US participant, Korea can and should expect more from Japan. Japan is a democracy, and thus values human rights and the individual. It should therefore be sensitive to and accepting of historical interpretations that hold regimes accountable for violations of human rights. Moral pressure can then play a larger role in domestic assessments of behavior, past and present.

Discussion raised several important questions. First, we challenged the premise that history in Northeast Asia has a "unique" resonance and virulence. Similar issues dog relations between Israelis and Palestinians, Turks and Armenians, or, closer to home, between Indonesians and Papua New Guineans, as well as Indians and Pakistanis. The assertion that Northeast Asian history is singular – in ways that go beyond the singularity of all historical experiences – may not be helpful if it does not permit the import or application of lessons learned elsewhere.

Second, we probed the difficulty in distinguishing between cause and effect in the relationship between history and conflict. Do historical disputes cause conflict between countries or do they reflect conflicts? Are they the tinder that sustains a fire or the spark of confrontation? Within politics, these questions take another, considerably simpler form, namely, do leaders follow public opinion or do they lead it? Are politicians

"pushed" by history to take particular stands, or do they exploit history to justify their actions. The answers are rarely clear cut and often depend on very particular circumstances. What is clear, however, is the centrality of history and patriotic education to national security narratives and that fact that competing narratives create or fuel tension, if not conflict, between countries.

This notion of history as narrative is central to the problem of history more generally. Narratives make sense of the world, explaining (if not creating) national interests and the appropriate accounting of costs and benefits that derive from political decisions. But a narrative is invariably artificial. It is story created and told from a particular perspective that uses some facts and discards or ignores other. In other words, it is socially constructed, the product as much of the larger social context within which a story is told as it is a factor that shapes that same social context. Since such tales are derivative, they can change, and indeed, historical context, if not history itself, is not fixed: it ebbs and flows. This holds out some hope for retelling history in ways the "fix" "bad" interpretations of history. Unfortunately, this process takes time and risks a passivity in addressing historical problems, letting them burn out over a generation rather than taking aggressive action to fix them now.

History and Japan

Historical issues are at the heart of Japanese Prime Minister Abe Shinzo's agenda. As our Korean speaker noted, Abe seeks the "departure from the postwar regime." By that, he means in general terms rethinking the meaning of patriotism and the nature of national and civic virtue in Japan – ultimately, giving more respect to "traditional" Japanese values and revising conventional interpretations of the behavior (and culpability) of Imperial Japan – and specifically, revising the constitution, in particular Article 9 which restricts Japan's ability to possess the instruments of war and use force in its foreign and security policies. This approach would also manifest in the creation of new symbols of the state – a flag and national anthem – along with rewriting historical narratives in textbooks and reassessing national declarations, such as the 1993 Kono Statement on Comfort Women or the 1995 statement by then Prime Minister Murayama Tomoiichi to mark the 50th anniversary of the end of World War II.

"Education and history issues are at the core of Abe's politics of identity," explained our Korean speaker. For Abe, like other Japanese conservatives, "education is not simply a matter of learning and teaching but a matter of recovering Japanese national body and regenerating Japanese spirit which they believe were damaged and distorted" after defeat in World War II. A National Security Strategy that prioritizes national values along with national interests infuses education and history into national diplomacy and security. This thinking, warned our Korean speaker, threatens to undermine the basis of Japan's relations with neighboring countries, and is responsible for the deterioration in relations between Japan and South Korea since 2011. Moreover, he continued, Japan's focus on courting US support and opinions, rather than that of its neighbors and regional partners as well, will render impossible long-term and enduring reconciliation with those

countries. To accomplish this, Tokyo must address South Korean concerns directly and "must show sincerity."

Our US speaker agreed that Abe and fellow conservatives are attempting to push a nationalist agenda, but he emphasized the powerful constraints the prime minister and his supporters face as they pursue that goal. Japanese leaders seek a renewed sense of national purpose to rally the country to address threats posed by China and North Korea, as well as domestic problems, in particular to rebuild and re-energize the economy after two "lost decades." External challenges blunt some of the public's concerns about nationalism – a genuine security threat validates calls for a strengthened defense posture -- but the majority of Japanese do not share the conservative belief in the magical power of nationalism to remedy all the nation's ills. The power of these constraints has been evident throughout the second Abe administration (since he and his Liberal Democratic Party returned to power in December 2012). Constitutional revision has been relegated to a secondary priority and the debate over national security reform has focused more on the limits of change rather than breaking new ground. After much handwringing by commentators, both foreign and Japanese, Abe's remarks to commemorate the 70th anniversary of the end of World War II were generally applauded and many were relieved that they hewed as closely as they did to traditional sentiments. Finally, the December 2015 Comfort Women agreement demonstrates a commitment to finding common ground to resolve contentious issues between the two governments rather than the renunciation of formerly agreed compromises. But while Abe has shown a penchant for pragmatism over a stubborn commitment to conservative principles, it will take, our US speaker concluded, a more moderate Japanese politician to forge an enduring relationship with South Korea.

There was little dissent from these broad principles during our discussion. It was noted that the LDP was, from its inception, a revisionist party dedicated to constitutional revision and education reform to instill more patriotism among Japanese. Significantly, several speakers highlighted the longstanding consistency in Japanese public opinion on matters of national security and constitutional revision, even after the recent spirited public debate on defense policy and the rising sense of threat from China and North Korea. The most notable change in recent years has been growing acceptance of the Self-Defense Forces (SDF) among the public, but this reflects the SDF's heroic performance during the March 11, 2011 triple catastrophe – earthquake, tsunami, and nuclear accident at the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power plant – more than anything else. And, most importantly, as a Korean participant added, North Korean nuclear and missile developments appear to suggest a fundamental change in the regional security environment. As he explained, "we can no longer indulge in history histrionics when it comes to protecting the national interest." Consistent with that logic, another Korean participant applauded the changes in Japan's interpretation of the exercise of the right of collective self-defense, noting that they are good for Korean security and should not be directly opposed.

History and the future

Security concerns, and the argument that they must take precedence over history issues, dominated our discussion of history and the future. The most striking feature of the Asian security environment is the absence of a regional architecture, a void that is striking given the speed with which profound change can occur, the tensions, along with "the politics of confrontation and antagonism" that persist, and the lack of any long-term vision for East and Northeast Asia. The competition between the US and China for regional leadership (if not domination) compounds the pressures and magnifies the impact of instability. Analysts and policy makers worry about the growing power of China's military and fear that the US military edge is eroding.

This structural problem is troubling enough, but there is also mounting concern among regional security planners that North Korea mistakenly doubts the US commitment to South Korea's defense or regional stability and security more generally, and will provoke a conflict. To ensure that it does not, the US, Japan, and South Korea must cooperate and coordinate closely to maintain escalation dominance.

This assignment takes on new challenges as Korea is forced to navigate between Washington and Beijing. South Korea must, our speaker argued, use all available means – diplomatic and military – to deal with and contain the North Korean threat. Many Koreans believe China has influence over Pyongyang and thus Seoul must maintain a good relationship with Beijing to ensure that China is ready to work on behalf of South Korean interests when dealing with the North. But if many in the US worry that Seoul has gone too far to accommodate China, our speaker worried about US reluctance to back South Korea if Seoul feels compelled to launch a preemptive strike against the North. Essential to the credibility of the US deterrent and peninsular (and regional) stability is US military dominance.

Our discussion then expanded to take on the question of historical reconciliation, with our US speaker cautioning that there is a "myth of the failure of reconciliation" in Northeast Asia. He had a definitive answer to the causation question raised earlier, concluding that the prospects for reconciliation are shaped by the strategic environment, but not determined by it. When they are compelled to do so, Northeast Asian regional leaders have taken practical steps to overcome historical problems. He credited the rise of democratization and civil society for the improvement of relations; extensive contacts at the grassroots level promote a better understanding of each country within the other and afford calmer, more rational voices an opportunity to be heard. (Of course, democratization can also empower more extreme views, but the experience of South Korea and Japan reveals that grassroots contacts and activism have promoted good bilateral relations rather than inhibited them. The independence of such groups and the vibrancy of civil society within democracies suggest that the odds are better for improved relations between the ROK and Japan than they are for Japan and China. Still, he warned, there are a number of issues that can undermine any attempt at reconciliation between Seoul and Tokyo, the forced labor issue topping his list.

Central to the effort to dampen historical tensions is addressing inconsistencies, contradictions, and misunderstandings in national education systems. Considerable time and energy have been devoted to efforts to draft mutually agreed-upon history textbooks; unfortunately, those projects have had little success in lowering tensions. Too often, the process is politicized, with governments denouncing the teams working (ostensibly) on their behalf for being insufficiently rigorous in defense of the prevailing national narrative. (It is worth pondering the degree to which any such effort will fail to win approval from conservatives; is a mere readiness to discuss compromise of a historical narrative disqualifying?) Several participants argued that writing a national textbook is too ambitious; instead, the goal should be creation of acceptable supplemental texts that add color and nuance to nationally produced volumes. Such texts are in use in South Korea, but not in Japan. This can be complemented by academic and student exchanges that give educators and their charges a richer understanding of the issues that are the source of bilateral tension. Equally valuable are exchanges among museum directors, culture creators, the media, and other individuals who can play an outsized role in shaping, in subtle but important ways, perception of "the other" in Northeast Asia. Most attention is devoted to politicians and other acknowledged opinion leaders, but there is much that can be done indirectly to shape views of neighbors. Ultimately, and invariably, however, political leaders must lead. It is their duty to develop and sustain a national narrative that transcends narrowly defined political interests and serves those of the nation as a whole.

Finally, it was explained that a call for acts of remembrance is more easily accepted than demands for apologies. The difference is subtle, but important. Remembrance may seem to be more passive than an actual apology, but it suggests a permanence and continuity insofar as remembering is ongoing; an apology can be "one and done."

Current issues and Northeast Asia

Topping the list of current Korean concerns is the US election campaign. Republican Party nominee Donald Trump's remarks on the campaign trail about the Korea-US military alliance and the Korea-US free trade agreement (KORUS) and his thinking about trade in general are generating anxieties throughout the Korean government and the Korean public. His claim that Korea is "free-riding" on the alliance with the US, his threat to draw down US forces in Korea, and statements encouraging the ROK to go nuclear have sparked "grave concerns" about the two nations' relationship if he is elected. Koreans also worry that the assertive posture against China adopted by both Trump and Democratic nominee Hillary Clinton will pose a dilemma for Seoul as it searches for ways to navigate between Washington and Seoul and advance and protect its own national interests, especially when dealing with North Korea.

If that balancing act is not already difficult enough, a number of other domestic developments complicate the efforts of Korean politicians and bureaucrats to walk that tightrope. One list of worries includes continuing economic weakness, a slowdown in exports, bankruptcies (or near bankruptcies) in shipping and maritime businesses, and a high unemployment rate among college graduates. The political situation is only compounding those concerns. President Park is entering the last year of her presidency, and her low approval ratings spark fears that she is already a lame duck. The ruling Saenuri Party's defeat in the April 2016 parliamentary election has deprived her of important support in the National Assembly and has empowered the opposition as a presidential campaign approaches. Popular sentiment is negative toward the Blue House and the pro-Park faction in both the Saenuri Party and the National Assembly. The debate over the deployment of the Terminal High Altitude Area Defense (THAAD) system has compounded public anger and uncertainty. (It does not help that all major presidential candidates from the opposition Minju party oppose THAAD in one sense or another.)

The result is a leadership vacuum as South Korea descends into the blood sport of a presidential campaign. Our Korean speaker warned that "almost every foreign policy issue will be politicized in the presidential election: THAAD, inter-Korean relations, Korea's position on the South China Sea, Korea-Japan relations, the Korea-Japan compromise on comfort women, and other issues such as whether Korea should pursue a pro-US or more balanced foreign policy."

These two developments – a US presidential campaign followed by a similar election in the ROK – are each potentially troubling on their own. As a one-two punch, however, they could do serious damage to the bilateral relationship. As our speaker noted, "Korea may not be able to meet all US demands coming from the charged atmosphere of the post-election US landscape." Frustration in the US could easily be matched by anger and anxiety in Korea as well. "Inordinate demands from the US may trigger another round of anti-Americanism amid the 2017 Korean presidential campaign, similar to that during the 2002 Korean presidential election."

Our US speaker widened the aperture and tried to tie those developments to questions of national identity and history. As he explained, President Park's "Asia Paradox implicitly linked three sources that have traditionally defined South Korea's national identity as challenges to be overcome in a regional security context: anticommunism with North Korea via Trustpolitik, anti-colonialism with Japan, and the 'shrimp among whales' paradigm, which categorizes South Korea's relationship to prospects for major power rivalry, especially between China and the United States." Unfortunately, however, the major initiatives that she launched all stalled, the victim of larger geopolitical trends and trajectories.

The December 2015 Comfort Women deal broke the deadlock, however, and the fourth North Korean fourth nuclear test that was held only days later managed to overshadow domestic resistance to the agreement and raised yet more doubts about the triangulation strategy that Seoul pursued to win Chinese support for dealing with Pyongyang. With considerable assistance from the United States, Seoul and Tokyo have restored a positive trajectory to their relationship and now seem to prioritize the security concerns over issues of history and identity. That may not last, however.

Doubts about the wisdom of the Comfort Women agreement persist. Surveys show support for the deal is higher among the older supporters of President Park and is lower among the younger voters that back the opposition parties. The April 2016 National Assembly elections confirmed the vulnerability of the Park administration to attacks on its policy toward Japan, a vulnerability evident in subsequent public opinion surveys. According to the 2016 Genron NPO/East Asia Institute poll of attitudes in Korea and Japan, Japanese impressions of South Korea dropped to 44 percent unfavorable (from 52 percent the previous year), while ROK views of Japan "improved" to 61 percent unfavorable (from 72.5 percent unfavorable in 2015). Similarly, South Korean assessments of current relations with Japan improved to 62 percent unfavorable (dropping 16 percent from 2015), while Japanese assessments improved to 50 percent from 65 percent. Our US speaker was as anxious as his Korean counterpart when considering the impact of the 2017 Korean presidential campaign on the US-ROK relationship, but he argued that Park's legacy, ironically after three years of little and mostly begrudging contact with her Japanese counterpart, is likely to be an improvement in Seoul-Tokyo relations.

There was little dissent from either country about the potentially deleterious impact of the back to back campaigns. One worry was the prospect of a split between Seoul and Washington if a progressive reclaims the Blue House in 2017. While the uncertainties surrounding a Trump presidency are too many to systematically contemplate, it is possible to envision a Trump administration, skeptical of entanglement with the ROK, indifferent to the resumption of a "Sunshine like" policy in North-South relations. For a Clinton administration, however, which would likely be more hawkish in its policy toward Pyongyang, an accommodative stance in Seoul toward the North could create a rift in the alliance.

US participants also worried that even a Clinton victory would have a hard time restoring Korean (and other allies') faith in US commitments. Skeptics can point to opinion polls that show a growing US weariness with and wariness of foreign intervention, a concern about being "the world's policeman" as domestic problems fester, and a similar resentment or suspicion of foreign engagement among their own publics. Public disillusionment with the political establishment is a real phenomenon throughout the developed world and a problem that both countries (and others) must address and correct in a meaningful way. The next US president will need to do more to quell foreign doubts about US credibility but the likely continuation of political gridlock in Washington even after a Clinton victory will make any new initiatives difficult to establish or sustain.

What is emerging, however, is a growing sense of security interdependence among South Korea and Japan, a development for which North Korea can take credit. It is noteworthy too that Japan has been a strong advocate of ROK positions in matters of regional diplomacy and security policy and there are no apparent gaps between Seoul and Tokyo on issues regarding the Korean Peninsula. Japan has been a vocal supporter of the unification of the Korean Peninsula under Seoul, prompting one participant to note that South Korea needs to start thinking now about one critical choice to be faced when unification occurs: will it prefer to rebuild the northern part of the country with Chinese money or Japanese money?

Once again, the problem of China presented itself. Even though there is growing anger at Beijing in South Korea, there remains a belief among Koreans – mores so than Americans or Japanese – that good relations with China are critical to the realization of South Korean interests and ambitions. Currently, the three allies are more closely aligned in their thinking about North Korea than any of them is with China, but there is a potential for divergence that will pose problems for bilateral cooperation (with both Japan and the US) as well as trilateral cooperation among the three. Currently, historical concerns are being subsumed by anger and fear, but one ROK participant warned that Koreans cannot see the end state of US-China relations. With China becoming ever more central to regional economies, Korea cannot afford to antagonize Beijing or ignore its concerns. Thus, he continued, "if the US expects some degree of balancing against China from the ROK, we have a problem." Worse, after unification there will be no reason to hedge and policy makers in Seoul need to begin to contemplate their reaction when forced to "choose" between the US and China.

That fateful decision is likely years in the future. More immediately, however, there are several pressing tasks for supporters of the US-ROK alliance. First, there is the need to make more strongly the case for the alliance and to counter the charges made by Donald Trump about Korean free- or cheap-riding. Americans need to better understand the reality of our partnership and Koreans need to know that Trump does not speak for a majority of Americans when he makes his fact-free claims. Second, Koreans who back a strong relationship with the United States and a forward-looking partnership with Japan must be ready during the upcoming ROK presidential election campaign to challenge those who seek to misuse history for their political ends. This will not be easy given the emotions and the stakes that are involved, but serious historians must be prepared to counter opportunistic and unfounded assertions about Korea and its historical relations with neighbors. Third, there should be more systematic and unflinching efforts to study past efforts at historical reconciliation between Korea and Japan to gain a crystal-clear understanding of successes and, most importantly, failures. Fourth, similar studies should be conducted to see if there are examples of reconciliation elsewhere in the world to emulate or apply in Northeast Asia. This must be a discriminating and detailed assessment, as the particularities of any historical relationship are vital. Nevertheless, there may be projects and programs that have been tried in other parts of the world that can offer lessons in what to do, or what to avoid.

Finally, it is especially important to bring young experts, scholars, decisionmakers, and opinion shapers into this dialogue. Too often, these discussions are dominated by the older generation, who have long track records working on these issues and have shown commitment to reconciliation. Their record is mixed, however: after all, we still see this as a problem. Ultimately, success depends on building a cadre of young professionals committed to reconciliation. Also, ironically, it may be important to bring dissenting voices into the dialogue, to ensure that the most important arguments are addressed and the widest possible constituency be established. This is likely to

complicate the already difficult process of reaching consensus, but these views must be addressed eventually. As the record makes plain, hoping that time will heal all wounds is a fantasy. Historical reconciliation demands active efforts and the potential security consequences of inaction are dire.

Why and how history matters

Keynote speech by Han Sung-Joo

First, there is the issue of how we handle history today

We ask the Japanese to have regret (反省 *banseong*) on their past. The fact is that there is no adequate translation of that word, *banseong*, - in English dictionary translation will tell us it means self-reflecting, self-examination, or introspection. But to Koreans or Chinese, that is too weak and insufficient. They would like it to mean more like atonement or expiation. But it has far too much religious connotation and voluntary acceptance of guilt which the descendants of perpetrators do not feel. In any case, the victims and their descendants want the perpetrators and their descendants to admit their guilt and recompense for it.

There is the second issue of how history (the past) affects the present and the future. When history is not handled well, there will continue to exist the basis and seeds of conflict and antagonism, mutual distrust and even hatred. The German and Polish handling of territorial issues related to Silesia and east of the Oder-Niesse Line is a case in point. In 1990, the newly reunified Germany and the Republic of Poland signed a treaty accepting the post-World War II arrangement by which the Soviets compensated the Poles for the east Polish territories that it annexed by establishing the Polish western borders on the Oder-Neisse Line. We are not 100 percent certain that this issue will not be reopened, but for the moment we can be at least 99 percent sure that the issue is pretty much settled.

Japan-Korea relations present a contrast in how they have handled history. They have not settled historical issues to the satisfaction of both sides and continue to have disputes on such issues as textbooks, Yasukuni Shrine, comfort women, and Dokto-Takeshima. The interesting thing about Yasukuni Shrine is that Koreans and Chinese object more vociferously than the Americans to Japanese prime ministers visiting the Shrine because there are 14 A-Class war criminals enshrined in it. The war in which they are supposed to have committed crimes is the Second World War, which the Japanese call the Great East Asian War, and where Japan's main enemy was the United States.

Regarding the territorial issues, Japan tends to lump together the Dokto, Senkaku/Diaoyutao, and Northern Territory issues and treat them as if they are disputes of the same nature. In fact, they are quite different nature from one another. The Northern Territory is a case where the Soviet Union took over what were clearly Japanese islands after World War II. The Dokto/Takeshima case is quite different. Japan incorporated it as its territory when Japan was usurping Korea's sovereign rights. If anything, it is more similar to the Senkaku/Diaoyutao case, the difference being that Japan is the current possessor and is trying to ward off challenges by China. Dokto is currently possessed by South Korea, a status quo that Japan is challenging, claiming that Korea is unlawfully occupying what is rightfully Japan's territory. Next, let me briefly touch upon how each of the Northeast Asian countries is handling the issue of what to do with the past or history. In the case of Japan, the continuation and preservation of the Emperor system makes it difficult for the Japanese to make full and unconditional apology and make amends for past deeds: By contrast, it is much easier for Germany to apologize for the deeds of the Nazi regime which became extinct.

Regarding recent history, China wishes to make up for the humiliation and losses it suffered before the war. Regarding the more ancient history, it wishes to reenact and restore the stature and territory of its old "empire" and regain respect and recognition. In East Asia, it wants to establish a G-2 by bringing about what it calls "big-power relationship" with the U.S. This is reflective of its "China-centeredness (pti xhonghua) of the past.

Korea, having been the victim of aggrandizement by its more powerful neighbors, has what I would call "Victim's complex." Koreans are suspicious of outsiders and seek their remorse, apology, compensation, and atonement.

For the United States it is probably difficult to understand Koreans' attitude toward outsiders, friends, and adversaries alike, particularly of the fact that Koreans don't seem to let go of grievances related to the past, demanding restitution for too long and perhaps too insistently.

How does the past affect the present? Regarding the more recent past of what happened in the first half of the 20^{th} century, China, having suffered indignity and humiliation, tends to be assertive and self-righteous.

Japan is understandably defensive, sometimes reacts with antagonism (expressed in *Kenkan* "Korea-hating"); tends to be inward-looking and seeks big-brother the US, which Japan hopes will side with it in its disputes with victimized neighbors in return for its support of US security interest and effort in the region.

Korea shows suspicion, vilification, paranoia and a "Fluctuation between, and mixture of, flunkeyism and xenophobia." As a result, Koreans tend to have difficulty accepting compromise and an equal relationship between nations.

The US after World War II moved from being pro-China to pro-Japan. In terms of security interests and personal relationships, from MacArthur (pro-Consul of Japan) to Dean Rusk to George Bush and Barack Obama, Americans demonstrated sympathy for Japan in its handling of history and its troubled relationship with its neighbors. Clearly there were strategic and geo-political reasons. Japan has been a loyal ally. Is there some sense of guilt regarding Hiroshima/Nagasaki? Obama's visit to Hiroshima, although quite recent, seems to be reflective of such guilty feelings.

First, there was the Soviet Union to contend with, and now there is China vis-àvis which Japan has become even more invaluable. As for South Korea, the North Korean threat (nuclear weapons, missiles, etc.) and extensive, if not lopsided, economic relations with China make it difficult for it to tilt 100 percent toward the United States as Japan does. This sometimes places Korea in a difficult position as shown in making decisions on the deployment of the THAAD system and on other disputes between the United States and China such as the South China Sea.

Regarding politics and history, I would like to posit three ways in which one is related to the other.

First, there is the political use of history. Politicians whip up nationalism or do things to emphasize nationalism to garner and increase popular support. (e.g., Koizumi, Abe, visiting Yasukuni.) Second, there is history as constraint. In this case, a Korean president finds it difficult to seek a compromise solution with Japan (on the Comfort woman issue, for example) or has to do it (as did President Park Chung Hee when pushing Korea-Japan normalization) with considerable political cost and risk.

Third, there is politics as constraint. The fact that President Park Geun-hye's father was an officer in the Japanese Army and later signed the normalization agreement makes it difficult for her to act more magnanimously toward Japan. The fact that Abe's maternal grandfather, Nobusuke Kishi, was an accomplice of the Second World War, makes it more difficult for him to freely apologize to Korea and China.

Uneasy triangle: China, Japan, and Korea

Now I would like to talk about the triangular relationship in Northeast Asia among China, Japan, and Korea, with a particular focus on Korea's tightrope-walking relationships with the two bigger powers, China and Japan. In the second decade of the 21st century, the three countries, close both in geography and cultural legacy, are moving in opposite directions: toward cooperation and integration on the one hand, but toward conflict and a disintegration of cooperative links on the other. The move toward integration is aided by increasing economic interdependence, the accompanying imperative to cooperate, and the expansion of social networks and person-to-person exchanges among the three countries.

Unfortunately, the push to unravel regional ties is abetted by even stronger forces: nationalistic sentiment, historical baggage, opportunistic and politically driven policies, and contending territorial claims.

The changing power configuration among the three countries requires greater cooperation among the three countries and, at the same time, fosters greater suspicion and a perceived need to counter and check the others. China is in the process of surpassing Japan in national power and international standing, and Korea is trying to move from a distant third in the pecking order to a position closer to that of a coequal. China's support for and shielding of North Korea, a country that threatens the rest of the region with nuclear weapons, long-range missiles, provocative behavior, and socioeconomic insolvency, leads to concern and frustration in South Korea and Japan.

China once considered Japan's and South Korea's alliances with the United States to be a necessary evil to maintain regional stability and to prevent Japan's rearmament. Now, however, China regards the US alliance system as mainly aimed at containing and encircling it, not at contributing to regional integration in Northeast Asia. China disparages US alliances as a legacy of the Cold War. Therefore, in the absence of a viable security structure in this region, the alliances and alignments have strained relationships among Northeast Asian countries in recent years as much as they have stabilized them.

Nationalism and territorial claims

The divergent perspectives and interests of the three Northeast Asian countries make cooperation difficult. Sixty-seven years after the end of World War II, why are we suddenly witnessing an outburst of nationalistic sentiment piled on top of a spate of territorial claims and disputes? I can offer a few explanations.

First, China's drive for economic development forced its leaders to focus first on reform, internal cohesion, and management of an economy that was growing explosively. Assertion of historical territorial claims took a back seat to those other tasks. China now feels ready to retrieve what it considers territories it should own but which were lost during the period of weakness and underdevelopment. But as it focuses belatedly on those claims, China sees Japan contesting them and the United States checking and encircling it with regional alliances and alignments. Despite Tokyo's explanation that the nationalization of Senkaku/Diaoyutao was intended to pre-empt a move by ultranationalists in Japan to purchase the islands, China regards the move as a direct and unambiguous challenge to its claims.

Another element in Chinese behavior on this issue is its penchant to "teach a lesson" to its adversaries now and potential adversaries in the future. Just as it went to war against India (in 1962) and Vietnam (in 1979), to teach them a lesson about the costs of offending China, it now wishes to send a signal to Japan and others with which it has territorial disputes. It will not tread softly in asserting its territorial claims. Chalmers Johnson, an American political scientist, argued in his 1962 book *Peasant Nationalism and Communist Power* that Mao Zedong's Communist movement succeeded because of the strength of peasant nationalism in China. The current Chinese leadership (the fifth generation since 1949) seems to be carrying on the tradition of legitimizing its rule on the basis of nationalist credentials. Nationalism continues to be a potent force in Chinese politics, as shown by the fact that demonstrators in the recent Senkaku/Diaoyutao dispute were seen carrying Chairman Mao's portrait.

China also seems to see a hidden US hand in the vigorous territorial claims of Japan (and for that matter those of Vietnam and the Philippines in the South and East China seas). It sees US support to those nations and the "pivot (or rebalance) to Asia" as encouragement to defy China. China's leadership, now in the midst of a transition, has the political motivation to take a strong stand on territorial issues. The United States, for its part, appears to be confirming China's fears and suspicions by actions such as the dispatch of aircraft carriers to the South China Sea and the East China Sea.

Second, sentiment is rising in Japan that the deal it made after World War II as a defeated power, including the Peace Constitution and the renunciation of military forces, is an anomaly that should be corrected. Japan, this argument goes, must again become a "normal state" with the right to a military and to the exercise of collective self-defense. The slowdown of the Japanese economy for more than two decades has caused the Japanese people to develop a sense of relative decline vis-à-vis the other Northeast Asian countries, a sense that seemed to have been given further impetus as a result of the great tsunami-related disasters of March 2011. Such sentiments can easily stimulate a more nationalistic and assertive posture.

Japan's feeling that its neighbors are attempting to take advantage of its relative decline and are beginning to look down on Japan is seen not only among ultranationalists but also among the larger population, especially younger people. They question why those generations of Japanese who had nothing to do with pre-war Japan's imperialistic and militaristic behavior should feel responsible for things that happened more than 70 years ago. They claim that Japan has issued numerous apologies and sufficient financial compensation for its past misdeeds. They ask: How much longer should apologies and financial compensation continue? Why should Japan continue to maintain a constitution that hinders, if not prohibits, it from maintaining regular defense forces and exercising normal collective self-defense? Why should Japan feel guilty about possessing and wanting to possess territories that it considers rightfully its own? It is, however, to the credit of the maturity and openness of Japan that even in Japan, dissenting voices on the territorial issues are expressed and heard.

Even as Japan pushes back against the territorial challenges that China and Russia present, its government recognizes that there are limits to what it can do. Russia is still a military superpower and China is becoming an economic superpower. Russia has resumed its extensive sea and air military exercises around the Japanese archipelago, an act that Japan tends to downplay as being aimed primarily at China. Pressed at home by nationalistic sentiment in the general public and among some politicians, Japan's leaders find it politically useful to hammer on what it claims is a territorial dispute with Korea, a country that is neither militarily nor economically as formidable as China or Russia.

Third, Japan's immediate neighbors, which were victims of Japanese imperialism and militarism, believe that despite expressions of regret and apology, expressions they see as superficial and lacking in sincerity, Japan has not fully accounted for its misdeeds and the damage it caused. Koreans are particularly upset by Japan's refusal to acknowledge officially its wartime sex slavery and to apologize to and compensate the victims, who are euphemistically called "comfort women." The South Korean Constitutional Court ruled in 2010 that the South Korean government was negligent in implementing the relevant provisions of the constitution to protect the rights of its citizens. The court criticized the administration for not pressing the Japanese government more vigorously for apologies and compensation. In the Korean view, the territorial dispute over the island of Dokto (which Japan calls Takeshima) is not so much an issue of territorial claims as it is a problem of historical records, because the island had been incorporated into Shimane-ken in 1905 in the course of Japan's colonization of Korea and as a result of Japan's imperialistic designs. The 2015 agreement between Japan and Korea on the comfort women issue has helped to go over one hurdle, but the issue continues to play havoc on more cordial relations between the two countries.

Fourth, the disposition of territories occupied by Japan before World War II remained ambiguous after the end of the war. For strategic and geopolitical reasons, the San Francisco Peace Treaty of 1951 that officially concluded the war failed to settle territorial issues between China and Japan and between Korea and Japan that plague regional relations today. Thus, both the historical and territorial issues that were swept under the rug in the interest of US-Japan cooperation against the Soviet threat and expansionism in the post-World War II years, never went away, giving reasons and bases for today's claims and counter-claims.

The problem is that these trends toward nationalism and conflict often reinforce one another and appear simultaneously. Furthermore, no leadership is found in Northeast Asia, least of all in Japan, that can and will transcend the current territorial and nationalistic disputes and guide the region to a more constructive and future-oriented relationships.

Needless to say, in each of the three countries, there are many different views about regional relations. Some are nationalistic and some are chauvinistic, but I think the larger number of people share more internationalist, moderate, and pragmatic views that can be harnessed in the interest of regional cooperation. So, one should not say that the outlook is grim. As the old American pop song goes, we have to accentuate the positive and eliminate the negative.

It is most important that the three countries take care that emotional and thorny territorial and nationalistic issues do not spill over to trade, investment, finance, and other areas where pragmatism should rule. Leaders in all three countries must act with enlightened self-interest to keep tempers cool.

Commenting on the Sino-Japan territorial feud, Yan Lianke, a Chinese writer, said in a column for the *International Herald Tribune* that "Cultural bonds between China and Japan must be used to calm the outbursts that inflame territorial disputes." Cultural bonds, commercial incentives, security imperatives, a sense of shared regional destiny, and sheer reason – all these factors can hamper or promote regional peace and cooperation. We have to make them work for regional peace and cooperation rather than for conflict and disunity.

APPENDIX A

PACIFIC FORUM CSIS

동북아역사재단 NORTHEAST ASIAN HISTORY FOUNDATION

History, Politics, and Security in Northeast Asia: Implications for Peace and Conflict Royal Lahaina Resort • Maui • September 1-2, 2016

AGENDA

Thursday, September 1, 2016

5:00 PM Welcome and Keynote

Welcoming Remarks: Jim KELLY Opening Remarks: KIM Hosup Keynote Speech: "How and Why History Matters" *HAN Sung-Joo*

7:00 PM **Dinner**

Friday, September 2, 2016

8:00 AM Breakfast

9:30 AM Session 1: History and Current Implications: Temporal Perspective Moderator: Ralph COSSA

"Northeast Asian security architecture and historical origins of discord" *CHUN Chaesung*

"Uses and misuses of history in current conflicts in Northeast Asia" *Denny ROY*

10:50 AM Coffee break

11:00 AM Session 2: Historical Issues and International Relations: Spatial Perspective Moderator: Ralph COSSA

"Trade-off between history and security: Abe's strategy" *CHOI Woondo*

"Squaring the Circle: Abe's efforts to reconcile his domestic ideological agenda with external sensitivities" *Thomas BERGER*

12:30 PM Lunch

2:00 PM Session 3: History and Future Moderator: HYUN In-taek

"Future of history: How to avoid the next great war?" *HONG Kyu-Dok*

"Is there a pathway toward reconciliation on history issues in Northeast Asia?" *Daniel SNEIDER*

3:20 PM Coffee break

3:40 PM Session 4: Current Issues and Northeast Asia Moderator: HYUN In-taek

"2016 US presidential election and challenges for the Korean and US leadership" SOHN Byoung-kwon

"Leadership and national identity in Northeast Asia: viability of the comfort women agreement and North Korea's nuclear threat" *Scott SNYDER*

- 5:00 PM Discussion Moderator: HYUN In-taek
- 5:50 PM Meeting adjourns

<u>APPENDIX B</u>

PACIFIC FORUM CSIS



History, Politics, and Security in Northeast Asia: Implications for Peace and Conflict Royal Lahaina Resort + Maui + September 1-2, 2016

PARTICIPANT LIST

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APPENDIX C

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

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Professor Han, Sung-Joo is Chairman of the International Policy Studies Institute of Korea. He is also a Professor Emeritus at Korea University. Prof. Han previously served as the Minister of Foreign Affairs (1993-94), UN Secretary-General's Special Representative for Cyprus (1996-97), a member of the UN Inquiry Commission on the 1994 Rwanda Genocide (1999), Chairman of the East Asia Vision Group (2000-2001), Ambassador of the Republic of Korea to the United States (2003-2005), and Acting President of Korea University(2002, 2006-2007)

Prof. Han is a graduate of Seoul National University (1962) and received a Ph.D. in Political Science from the University of California, Berkeley (1970). Previously, he taught at City University of New York (1970-78) and was a visiting Professor at Columbia University (1986-87) and Stanford University (1992, 1995). He was also a Distinguished Fellow at the Rockefeller Brothers Fund (1986-87).

His English publications include *Korean Diplomacy in an Era of Globalization* (1995), *Korea in a Changing World* (1995), and *Changing Values in Asia* (1999). He has many publications in Korean, including *Nam Gwa Puk, kurigo Sekye* (The Two Koreas and the World) (2000).

Kim, Hosup, President, NAHF

Hosup Kim is currently president of the Northeast Asia History Foundation. Before this post, he served as Vice President of Chung-Ang University (2013), and Professor of Department of International Relations of Chung-Ang University (1992-2015). He received his B.A. and M.A. from Seoul National University, and holds a Ph.D. in political science from the University of Michigan.

He wrote over 50 academic papers on the relationship between Japan and Korea in English, Japanese and Korean.

Brad Glosserman is executive director at Pacific Forum CSIS and co-editor of *Comparative Connections*. He is also the director of the Pacific Forum's Young Leaders Program. Mr. Glosserman is the former director of research at Pacific Forum. He has authored dozens of monographs on topics related to US foreign policy and Asian security. His opinion articles and commentary have appeared in media around the world. Prior to joining Pacific Forum, he was, for 10 years, a member of The Japan Times editorial board, and continues to serve as a contributing editor for the newspaper. Mr. Glosserman has a J.D. from George Washington University, an M.A. from Johns Hopkins University's School of Advanced International Studies (SAIS) and a B.A. from Reed College.