

**Japan and Korea in China-U.S. Relations**  
**Core Working Group Workshop**  
**17-18 December 2019**  
**National Library of Korea, Seoul, South Korea**

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING**

**I. Participants' Names/ Attendance**

1. Jaewoo Choo, Kyunghee University - 18 Dec
2. Brendan Howe, Ewha Women's University - 17, 18 Dec
3. Sung Chull Kim, Seoul National University - N/A
4. June Park, American University of Beirut - 17, 18 Dec
5. Haruko Satoh, Osaka University - 17, 18 Dec
6. Carmina Untalan - 17, 18 Dec
7. Xiangfeng Yang, Yonsei University - 17 Dec

**II. Agenda**

1. Schedule for the March workshop
2. Set future output goals
3. Discussion based on Prof. Satoh's handouts
4. Discussion of future projects and partnerships e.g. Phase two of the KF Project

**III. Future Activities**

- A. Schedule March 2020 Workshop in Osaka, Japan
  1. 2<sup>nd</sup> week of March (final date undecided)
  2. With other participants
- B. Future Project/Long-term Goals
  1. Set-up a centre in Kansai on Northeast Asia security (away from Tokyo)
  2. Establish a cluster of Korea Studies outside Kyoto; need for a neutral ground to involve 'othered' actors such as *zainichis*
- C. Decide on possible outputs for the project
  1. Outputs should address/convey the following:
    - a. Public policy message useful for both the West and East
    - b. Respond to American-driven narrative and scholars' inadequate interpretation of East Asian politics; European view is one-dimensional and tends to focus on the economic side e.g. trade.
    - c. Need for a comprehensive view of Asia to make it properly appreciated
    - d. Do something in English with a multidisciplinary perspective (why nobody in the group is from area studies)
  2. Output forms - Combination of academic and non-academic outputs
    - a. Policy Papers
    - b. Journal Articles/Special Issue (possible journals: Asian Affairs, Asian Perspectives; Pacific Focus; Asia Politics and Policy; International Relations of Asia-Pacific; Asian International Studies Review)
    - c. Edited Book (possible publishers: Brill; Palgrave MacMillan)

d. Policy articles to reach a broader audience

D. Future partnerships

a. Dr. Lam Peng Er's Project might coincide with this project; might co-host a workshop in Singapore.

#### **IV. Notes (based on the questions Prof. Satoh distributed and comments. Please refer to the handouts for the questions; some of the content also came directly from Prof. Howe's document)**

##### **A. The Future of the international liberal order (ILO)**

1. The depressing future of the ILO: Challenges and alternatives (Brendan Howe)

a. Unlike in the past, neither peer competitors (Russia and China) is offering an alternative framework.

- The key differences between previous and present behaviour/conduct of U.S. biggest challengers or peer competitors, Russia (USSR), China and the Beijing Consensus. Before, the peer competitors fundamentally rejected US-led ILO's normative underpinnings and offered alternative epistemological and practical set of rules.

b. The U.S. is biggest challenge to international order because of its failure to abide by its own rules and by actively undermining them.

- U.S. as a hegemonic norm entrepreneur where, most states, including the U.S. were conspicuously law-abiding; their pursuit for self-interests trickle down and benefits other states.
- In the age of Trumpism, the interpretation of realism no longer holds.
- Consequences to international organizations would be disastrous; even liberal organizations that previous administrations (e.g. Clinton) used to trust appear to wither away with international cooperation towards global challenges.

2. U.S.-China Relations and China's integration to the ILO (Xiangfeng Yang)

a. More work about China's integration in the ILO needs to be done.

- Liberalist and constructivist paradigms are untenable in the era of "Great Leap Backward"
  - Liberals and constructivists perceived China as a recipient of norms; it was typecast as reactive but also passive and eager to join the international system and will eventually democratise internally
  - However, political scientists have already established that China is not going to be a democracy.

b. Dealing with the two layers of ILO: free trade and liberal democracy

- China prefers a separation of capitalism from democracy and export over import of goods..
- Profs. Satoh and Howe pointed out the importance of cultural basis for trade relations and preferences. E.g. Japan's protectionism and preference for products that suit the local market (in contrast with U.S. mass production style), and South Koreans' boycott of Japanese goods demonstrate. Japan's defence of China in G7 summit demonstrates

its preference for collaborative effort; collective benefit and perhaps, the will to prevent China from going into its own myopic ways.

- Such cultural basis for trade relations could be a benchmark for measuring China, but we need to create a new lexicon for it.
- Perhaps, the Asian way of doing things, which is not limited to Japanese developmentalism, but also a different way of interpreting human security.

### 3. Towards the Internet of Things (June Park)

a. The current direction is no longer a single undertaking but a club membership or regional deal.

- Focus on energy tech-related issues e.g. dual-use technology and nuclear energy.
- The competition between the U.S. and China is about who wins the bulk of the share of global economy; playing the game of standardization.

b. Political systems matter; the type of economic system would drive the change e.g. free market vs. planned economy

c. The crux of trade war: Internet of Things

- This is not a global regulatory system; China wants to establish its own and the U.S. is also tired of the WTO (especially when they did not win the appeal)
- A major pivot to the trade war: Europeans and Americans no longer agree on the WTO system
- Control of semi-conductor is the future: U.S. lost control to Japan in the 1980s, then 2000s to ROK, now in AI and 5G.
- No state has a complete control over the Internet of Things YET, even with China building the digital Silk Road; U.S. is collaborating with China to cope with it.
- Prof. Choo added that we are moving towards a more digitalized economy where a new 'WTO' would be created to accommodate digital economy and cyber security.

c. Problems with East Asia

- Intra-ministerial organisational conflicts
- ROK did not respond to the Japanese warning of free tech trade and not reporting/properly tracking where technology comes from.

### 4. East Asian Alternatives (Prof. Brendan Howe)

a. East Asia as a potential source for alternative frameworks.

- In the age of Trumpism, realist interpretation no longer holds.
- Trump's inconsistent behaviour could either be construed in terms of incompetent realism, or give a sense of hope that once he is out of the office, the U.S. would return to international cooperative scene.
- The foreseen end of ILO does not mean a return to realism, but an opening to alternatives in East Asia
- Greater hope for regional cooperation based on shared perspectives and inter-regional cooperation based on overlapping consensus where there is a rejection of liberal

universalism, but an affirmation of shared responses of international challenges (see Kalinowski's Clash of Capitalisms)

- Rather than focus on universal human rights, we will increasingly focus on universal human wrongs.

b. Three spheres to tackle

- Cultural: U.S. way of doing human rights that ignores specific cultural traditions and historical circumstances of Asian societies East Asian states moving to localized versions of diplomacy.
- Economic: prioritising development of Asian societies through eradication of poverty.
- Political: questions the motives of the West of using human rights merely as an instrument of for advancing Western economic or security interests.

c. Plurality of sources/practices to learn from

- **A localized variant of sovereignty** that allows criticism of domestic policies and limited domestic pressure during humanitarian crises.
- Convergence with R2P comes with a distinct understanding of its implications and relationship with human security; Western interpretation of human security is very narrow while the Eastern one is broader and more developmental; biggest failure of the West is **responsibility post-protection**.
- In ROK and Japan, R2P is not directly linked to human security and humanitarian intervention.
- Rejection of top-down approach from the West, but agreement with prioritising human security.
- Geographically, Korean Peninsula could be a point of convergence to tackle human security issues such that of the Uighurs.

d. Challenges to a unified East Asian Alternatives: Points of convergence and divergence (group discussion)

- Convergence on SGDs but from differing epistemological perspectives; variegated policy priorities from different regions; but this is also worrying because even if everybody signed up for it, there are diverting ways.
- Looking at Japan as a "regional office" for human security.
  - Prof. Satoh: Japan's interpretation of Freedom from Want has democracy in Southeast Asia as an inadvertent consequence.
- Need for an engagement with China
  - Prof. Howe: There is a need to think about new paradigms for new international cooperation; good things are immediately followed by bad things.
  - The problem is Asians do not communicate their actions to each other.
  - Prof. Xianfang: Functional cooperation about human security; **trade is the place where things could happen, since the Chinese are obsessed with sovereignty**. However, Prof. Howe explains that China is beginning to embrace principles of human security because it is where you get an

overlapping consensus, not human rights.

- Absence of consensus on what is an Asian Way
  - There is a potential for an “Asian Way” (not Asian Values), where politics is taken out of saving lives; Western approach is so politicised, boasting about how string their sanctions are while they kill thousands of children.
  - Prof. Howe suggested that we look at Human Security at its core so different regimes could share (same interest of regime legitimization)
    - ✧ Freedom from Want of having a good life. This is covered in MDG but they are not “human security”
    - ✧ Freedom from Want of an empowered life - no consensus on what it means to have the right to be empowered
  - Prof. Satoh agrees. China already has an idea because feeding its people has become a priority. East Asian perspectives may be state-centric as well, but states do not do it in competitive terms. The Chinese model is like a revamped Japan.
  - The question for Prof Satoh is, how do we get the three big countries to be cooperative and to acknowledge that they are on the same page, part of this is re-appraising America’s role in the region.
  - Prof. Howe argues that the problem with the region is the perception of the other as a monolithic. What we need is a constructive alternative (different from Latin America) so that people will listen to you. Not an Asian Values debate, but Asian Way/perspective.
  
- How to deal with the “Chinese Alternative”?
  - In terms of multilateral institutions, Prof. Park explains that WTO is not broken down entirely. Emerging institutions are still consolidating (e.g. RCEP if India is not there, Japan won’t be there).
  - The incoming international order also raises questions such is, Will China rule the peacekeeping council. Although U.S. is no longer willing to pay for everything, it won’t just sit there and let it happen.
  - Prof. Satoh said that if China is going to be responsible, then the more the region needs collaboration. We might be expecting too much from China.

## **B. The San Francisco System (SFS): Its Legacies and Limitations**

### **1. Benefits and Trade-offs in the East Asian Security Architecture (Prof. Howe)**

a. SFS benefitted most actors in the region; the hub (U.S.) in terms of strategic foothold and hegemonic projects, while the spokes in terms of preferential trade and a subsidised security umbrella. China also benefited because it prevented Japan, ROK and Taiwan from nuclearization.

b. However, it has also undermined the development of regional security architecture, and the spokes from coming to terms with their past, and dealing with its impact in the present.

- Japan-ROK relations.
  - The current feud was triggered by ROK President Moon Jae-in unwillingness to block the court rulings on Japanese conglomerates' use of slave labour during WW II. This contradicted previous settlements with Japan.
  - Japan's Abe Administration built its political capital on "normalising" Japan. It retaliated with a trade barge against ROK on the grounds of lost of trust - something that arguably was taken out of Trump's 'playbook'.
  - The Korean public response of boycotting Japanese products, and demanding for a tough government response is perhaps inevitable in the context of the history problem. Public sentiment is a force to reckon with. It is up to the ROK government to either go against it or exploit it.
  - ROK is becoming more assertive in the international stage, aware that previous agreements were perhaps not as legitimate. It is also taking a more nationalist tone with Japan, as Moon demonstrated in his Liberation Day Address on Aug 15<sup>th</sup>.

c. Impact on the U.S. alliance system where Japan and ROK are major spokes.

1. The growing distrust on both sides led ROK to refuse to renew the General Security of Military Information Agreement.
2. Military intelligence sharing becoming an issue
3. U.S. under Trump are more preoccupied with troubles elsewhere, which arguably makes it more difficult for Japan and ROK to resolve their collective action problems.

d. Both sides do not see each other eye-to-eye

1. Propensity of both sides to pander on nationalist base Koreans are magnifying the gravity of historic abuses.
  - Abe maintains his "strong Japan" stance, and the public becoming exhausted with repeated apologies and rejection.
  - Need to remember that the Korean public rejected the 1964 and 2015 agreements. There has been regular anti-Japan demonstrations and vigils around the comfort women statue often to maximise the embarrassment to Japan.
  - Leaders however, appear to be more willing to deal with history issues diplomatically. E.g. ASEAN+3 Summit where Moon and Abe had an 11-minute discussion, the first time the two leaders met privately since September 2018. Both leaders affirmed the important of Japan-ROK relations.
  - However, the Japanese government explained that Abe is standing by Japan's "principled position" which means that forced labor issues were completely resolved during the 1965 claims agreement.

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3. Possible 'solutions'

- a. For the longest time, the focus is on conflict management then conflict resolution **without managing transforming unequal relations** (bottom-up approach)
  - For Prof. Choo, we should see this from a collective security angle where the goal is to

establish a collective security foundation in pivotal regions e.g. NATO, SEATO. He later labeled it as an “**intra-alliance**” system, based on Prof. Howe’s comment of being careful not to conflate NATO (military alliance) with collective security. **Collective security in East Asia includes China, so it would be contradictory to have a collective security arrangement against China/conflict management against China.**

- Re-think about the rhetoric of China’s peaceful rise and its implications to the history problem in East Asia

### **C. Discussion: East Asian Modernity and the global historical perspective**

#### 1. On Revisionist Historiography

a. For Prof. Howe, East Asian historians should (?) write about the other, have the other check it then revise it until the other is satisfied with the way you tell your story.

**There should be a promotion of understanding the other.**

b. A way to do this is to involve non-government parties (such as the National Library), similar to a Track 3 model, where each country takes turn to host and invite a third neutral party. Public sentiment clearly plays a big role in dealing with history issues.

c. Perhaps, there is also a need for a NE IR book that involves a proper discussion of the history problem as an IR problem.

#### 2. Challenges

a. Prof. Satoh sees that Japan, China and ROK are moving in different phases of history and **each one wants to set the clock according to their own time**. She also sees that one of the major hurdles are the Japanese historians themselves who are usually left-leaning.

b. Prof. Howe observes that **history has been internalised in the region**

- The prevalent mythification of history is a testament of continuity of culture in East Asia, unlike Europe where history is broken down into civilisations. e.g. Korea’s 5000-yr myth, where historiography is about identity not facts
- Japan escapes from history, Korean maintains it, China invents it.

c. The U.S./West’s historical misreading of China. U.S. thought they have a big leverage weapon against China, but now they find themselves empty-handed.

- Until now, we cannot be fully confident about what China wants to do.
- For Prof. Park, China wants to be a dominant power in the cyber world, even extending to Europe.
- For Prof. Jaewoo, China does not want to be a hegemon, but it wants to dominate by influence through big data and AI.

#### 3. Options: What kind of future do we want in East Asia?

##### a. Possible ways

- Prof. Choo suggests a **two-track approach** where governments leave history aside and concentrate on bilateral relations on trade and security.
- Prof. Howe suggests a **bottom-up approach**. Actions are already being done on the ground-level and what needs to be done is to include them.

## V. Outstanding Issues

### A. Theoretical: A need for an alternative framework in understanding the future of IR

1. Politics, economy and culture: a trilemma?
  - a. Realism, liberalism and constructivism provide insufficient explanations.
  - b. Is it possible to separate political values (liberal democracy) and economic concerns (free trade) in East Asia?
  - c. The “Chinese alternative” exceeds the theoretical expectation of prevalent paradigms.
  - d. Integrating culture in our understanding of East Asian international relations?
    - Cultural basis for trade relations
    - East Asian historiography is steeped in cultural identity reproduction.
    - Help better understand China’s behavior towards the U.S., and Japan’s and ROK’s responses.
2. The Internet of Things as the new battlefield for global powers
  - a. How to include cybersecurity, digitized economy and technology into the analysis of the future of global politics.
  - b. Implications to the alliance system e.g. how does/will Japan and ROK respond to and influence the tech and trade wars, the digital Silk Road etc.
  - c. What sort of institutions could emerge out of this “new” configuration?
3. A shift from the Asian values debate to constructively thinking about Asian way of doing things.
  - a. Doing so could address the misunderstandings we derive from Eurocentric views of IR and East Asia.
  - b. It could also help us focus more regional dynamics, idiosyncrasies and alternatives East Asia offers.
    - Overlapping interests, different interpretations of principles and mechanisms (particularly in addressing humans security issues).
    - Bottom-up approach – domestic and local practices are rich sources of learning; Public sentiments are showing palpable convergence *and* divergence from high politics.
    - Japan’s approach to Human Security and its implications to U.S.-China relations as a possible area to explore, because it overlaps and diverges with some of U.S. interests, and some of China’s interests.
  - c. How do/can Japan and ROK help spell out the East Asian way, and help us to come up with a new lexicon to understand China.

### B. Policy: How do we address conflicts of interest/sentiments among East Asian states and international poliitcs

1. Collaborative over antagonistic responses
  - a. On international politics
    - The U.S. cannot do it alone. It needs China to deal with international issues, including the Internet of Things
    - Tap geography as an important aspect of crafting policy recommendations e.g. Korean peninsula as a point of convergence
    - Japan and ROK working on the Clash of Capitalisms without compromising their



relations with China and the U.S.

- Preparing for the possible decay/transformation of liberal institutions and emergent ones.

b. On the “history problem”

- Proper accounting of the legacies of the San Francisco System (perhaps come up with ways for East Asia to ‘own’ the postwar legacies through multiplying points of references e.g. what it was for Koreans, Japanese and Chinese, outside the narrative of the prevailing parties)
- China, Japan and Korea need to work together with neutral parties to transform unequal relations, nationalism and other factors that feed the impossibility of reconciliation.

Compiled by:

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