

**International Lecture of the Eurasia Foundation, Fall Semester 2022**  
**Series Lectures (11): “Asian Community: The Construction and Transformation of East Asiaology”**

**Topic: Reconciliation in History Issues and New History**

For the 11th Eurasia Foundation International Lecture of 2022 at the Chinese Culture University, we invited Professor Liu Jie (劉傑) from School of Social Sciences, Waseda University to give a lecture entitled “Reconciliation in History Issues and New History.” Professor Liu first stated that “realizing reconciliation” is an important task to be completed in East Asia. There are many complex relationships in East Asia, and the negative legacy including wars and colonial rule has become an unstable factor that causes confrontation and conflicts in East Asia, and this unstable factor is expanding. When discussing how to overcome the unstable factors in East Asia, Professor Liu first used three examples for explaining the understanding of the reconciliation process in East Asia. These three examples were the reconciliation process “between Japan and the Republic of China (ROC),” “between Japan and the People’s Republic of China,” and “between the two sides of the Taiwan Strait.” Then, Professor Liu talked about the possibility of establishing a “new history, in an attempt to reach a real reconciliation in history issues on the premise of promoting understanding between countries.

**The process of reconciliation between Japan and the Republic of China**

On August 15, 1945, President Chiang Kai-shek called on his compatriots to “Let bygones be bygones” and “be kind to others” in Chiang Kai-shek’s Victory Speech 1945, and declared that ROC “only considers the Japanese militaristic warlords as enemies, not all the people of Japan.” Professor Liu said that this was the most important reconciliation reached in East Asia after World War II. On April 28, 1952, ROC and Japan signed a peace treaty. The treaty declared the end of the state of war between the two countries. In the treaty, ROC renounced its claim of war compensation against Japan, while Japan side showed its willingness to help the Republic of China become a powerful country. We can observe from the results that the Republic of China adopted a very tolerant and friendly policy towards Japan after the war, which contribute to a smooth and rapid process of reconciliation between China and Japan.

In 1972, Japan turned to the establishment of diplomatic relations with the People’s Republic of China and abandoned diplomatic relations with the Republic of China. From later developments, we can know that although Taiwan condemned the Japanese government, it did not interrupt the process of reconciliation with Japan, but deepened the reconciliation between the two countries. Professor Liu said that this proves that the Sino-Japanese

(Taiwan-Japanese) reconciliation established in 1945 is very stable, and it is very important case deserves attention to understand for the reconciliation in East Asia.

### **The process of reconciliation between Japan and the People's Republic of China**

In September 1972, Japanese Prime Minister Kakuei Tanaka visited China, and Japan and China signed a joint statement. The statement declared an end to the abnormal state of affairs between the two countries. The background of this era of reconciliation is caused by changes in the international situation on the one hand, and China's revision of domestic policies to implement the policy of economic modernization on the other hand. The signing of this reconciliation document has been a while since the end of the war. The starting point was strategic and tactical, and thus, it was a very unstable reconciliation.

The textbook issue in 1982 and Yasuhiro Nakasone's visit to the Yasukuni Shrine in 1985 caused cracks in the reconciliation between the two countries. At that time, the governments of the two countries did not want these issues to cause confrontation between the two countries, so they reluctantly maintained the continuation of the reconciliation. During the six years of Junichiro Koizumi's administration (2001-2006), the heads of state of the two countries seldom communicated with each other, which shows that the reconciliation between the two countries has stagnated.

In 2006, Prime Minister Shinzo Abe publicly acknowledged Japan's aggression against China, and expressed deep reflection on its past to the victimized country. This has been highly appraised by the Chinese government and people. The next year, Wen Jiabao also clearly pointed out that after the war Japan followed the path of peaceful development. This is a further thaw in the reconciliation between the two countries after the textbook issues and other incidents.

### **The process of reconciliation between the two sides of the Taiwan Strait**

The cross-strait reconciliation started, after the end of the Cultural Revolution. China revised its domestic and foreign policies in January 1979, and especially its Taiwan policy changed from "liberating Taiwan" to "peaceful reunification" and "one country, two systems." After the 1980s, some Taiwanese businessmen started to invest directly in China, and personnel exchanges between the two sides of the Taiwan Strait also began. In November 1987, Taiwan lifted the Martial law, allowing Taiwanese people to visit their relatives in China. In October 1990, President Lee Teng-hui established the National Unification Committee, which announced the promotion of national reunification based on the principles of "democracy, freedom, and equal wealth." In 1993, the Koo-Wang talks were held in Singapore.

After the end of the Cultural Revolution and on its way of the process of reform and opening up, China achieved reconciliation between the two sides of the Taiwan Strait. In order to promote the goal of modernization, China hoped to rely on Taiwan's economic cooperation and needed to maintain a good relationship with Taiwan. Except for the national feelings of "we are all Chinese," this long road to reconciliation was mainly because of China's policy shift, which has contributed to the process of cross-strait reconciliation.

### **The possibility of a "new history"**

This year marks the 50th anniversary of the resumption of diplomatic relations between China and Japan, and the 50th anniversary of the severance of diplomatic relations between Taiwan and Japan. Looking back on the past 50 years, we can clearly find that the reconciliation between Taiwan and Japan has been stably maintained due to the period and method of reconciliation, the sentiments of the people, and as well as the changes in Taiwanese society. However, the reconciliation between China and Japan was not based on the level of national sentiment, and remained in the stage of strategic reconciliation in 1972.

Historical experience tells us that when there is a major crisis in the historical reconciliation between China and Japan, China's historical understanding is an important factor that cannot be ignored. That is, what kind of historical view China holds is an important condition for whether historical reconciliation can be maintained. A settlement cannot sustain if it is only strategical. Therefore, it is necessary to establish a "historical community" or a "intellectual community" among East Asia to jointly face political challenges to history. If we have a "historical community," it will be an important basis for achieving stable reconciliation.

A historical community must transcend borders and transcend political influence. Professor Liu said that the historical issues facing East Asia can be broadly classified into three groups. That is, 1) the historical problems that need to be solved urgently. 2) Interpretation of historical facts, resulting in opposing viewpoints. 3) The problem of mixing history and politics. To solve these three problems, scholars in East Asia need to establish an intellectual community and rebuild a "new history." This new history should be able to discuss these three groups of issues, and at the same time provide explanations for the problems caused by the so-called popularization of history. Therefore, in addition to solving the above three groups of historical problems, the new history also needs to solve the complicated problem of historical popularization. Regarding the obstacles to be encountered by this new historical method, it needs to be further explored.

(Web link: <https://eurasia.pccu.edu.tw/index.php>)

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